

Success of work team key in defining photonics career success, finds SPIE survey

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Across the international optics and photonics community, from academia to for-profit organizations to government and military institutions, workers say the success of their work teams is among top factors in defining their career success.

But the sectors have widely varying responses as to what other factors complete the definition.

The findings are part of the latest annual salary survey of the global optics and photonics community conducted by SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics.

Results of the survey, the largest such international study of the industry, were released earlier this month by SPIE. The survey was conducted in February, with just over 6,000 valid responses from 103 countries.

While the top two career success factors are the same for academics and government and military workers – scientific discovery followed by team success – for-profit workers' top two are team success followed by the organization's success. The trends hold across regions of varying pay ranges as well as varying work-week lengths.

Along with the question about [career success](#), respondents were also asked for the first time this year about job mobility. North American respondents reported the most frequent job changes—only 10% of North Americans have worked at the same organization throughout their

entire careers. By comparison, 27% of higher-income Asians said they were at the same organization, along with 38% of higher-income Europeans and 50% of lower-income Asians at 50%.

Among continuing trends, aerospace, with a median annual income of US\$116,269, remains the highest-paid sector, while the median salary for all respondents this year is the equivalent of US\$73,000, similar to previous years' results.

Salary-wise, the gender gap is still in play. Median salaries are 40% higher overall for men than women. Women make more than men only in Latin America and the Caribbean, where their salaries are 10% higher. Elsewhere in the world, women's median salaries range from 11% lower in Oceania to 67% lower in Africa and higher-income Asia.

Time spent in the work week varies geographically as well. Romania tops the list for heavy workload, with 21% of respondents reporting they work 55 hours or more per week. In the highest-paid countries, those in Japan report working the most hours (20% work more than 55 hours per week), and those in Australia and Sweden work the least, with only 5% of Australians and no Swedes reporting work weeks longer than 55 hours.

Job satisfaction continues to be high among photonics workers, and the top factors do not correlate with salary or hours on the job. A strong majority of respondents agreed with job-satisfaction statements saying:

- I respect the work of my peers. (88%)
- I enjoy my work. (85%)
- My work is meaningful. (84%)
- I love my work and feel fortunate to get paid for doing it. (78%)

"The considerable level of [job satisfaction](#) should come as no surprise to

those of us who [work](#) in the photonics industry," said SPIE CEO Eugene Arthurs. "Throughout the world, throughout the various sectors of the industry, we value the ability to play a part in solving the world's important challenges and the opportunity to contribute to making tangible improvements in the lives of others."

Job satisfaction as well as good pay and opportunity for advancement are key messages in reaching out to students to encourage them to pursue optics and photonics, Arthurs said. However, the gender salary disparity hurts not only women looking for rewarding careers, but society as a whole.

"We cannot afford to continue to discourage 51% of the next generation from working to help find the vital solutions to the world's challenges in developing sustainable energy supplies, improving healthcare, ensuring viability of our communication networks, and safeguarding our communities," Arthurs said.

Provided by SPIE—International Society for Optics and Photonics

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