

2021 Private Equity–Backed Chief Executive Officer Compensation Survey



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Introduction

Welcome to our *2021 Private Equity–Backed Chief Executive Officer Compensation Survey*, which gathered data on these leaders' compensation in countries around the world. Together with our surveys of private equity investment and operating professionals and PE-backed chief financial officers, these reports help to create a comprehensive picture of the compensation that key executives are currently receiving in PE firms and portfolio companies.

For this report, Heidrick & Struggles compiled compensation data from 879 CEOs around the world in a survey fielded in March and April of 2021. Because there were relatively small numbers of respondents in countries other than the United States, this public report only includes full data on the 654 CEOs in the United States.

We hope you enjoy reading the report and we welcome suggestions, so please feel free to contact us questions and comments.

With warmest regards,



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Methodology

In an online survey, we asked participants to provide their base compensation for 2021, as well as the value of cash bonuses and equity they received in 2020. CEOs also provided information on their companies, the PE firms backing them, and their own race and gender. All data collected is self-reported and has been aggregated.

All compensation figures in tables and charts are reported in USD thousands.

On confidentiality

The private equity–backed chief executive officer compensation survey, 2021, has been conducted on an anonymous basis, and all data is reported in aggregate.

Acknowledgments

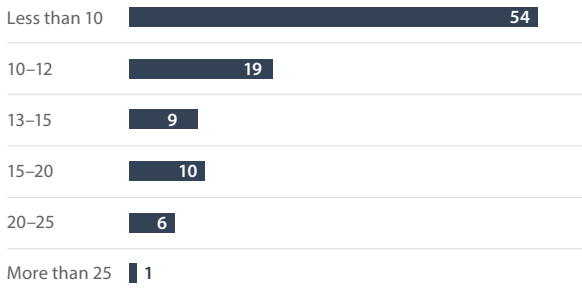
The authors wish to thank **Mohd Arsalan** and **Daria Sklyarova** for their contributions to this report.

Who are the CEOs?

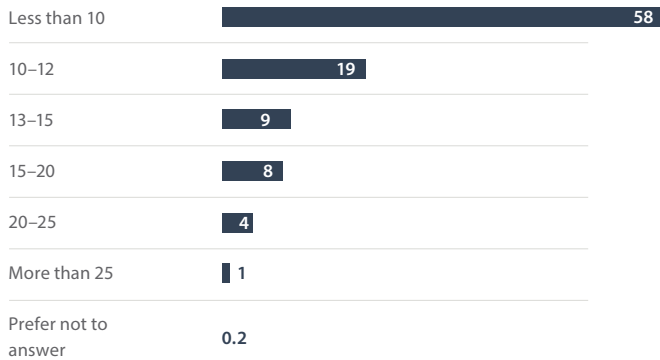
The CEOs who responded to the survey most often had less than 10 years of experience in the CEO role and in the private equity industry.

Overall respondent demographics

CEO experience (years, %)



Experience at PE-backed companies (years, %)



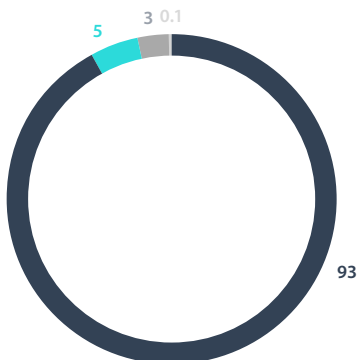
And, as is typical across PE, the vast majority of CEOs were male and white.

It is important to note, however, that PE firms of all sizes are making increasing efforts to increase both gender and racial or ethnic diversity in their own ranks and at their

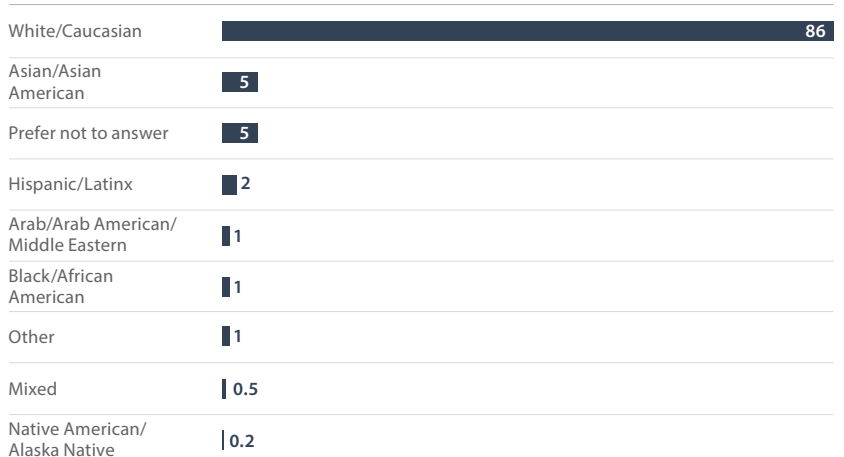
portfolio companies. Indeed, we see increasing competition, and often higher offers, for diverse investment professionals at these firms and senior executives at the companies they back. On the portfolio company side, more and more female leaders, in particular, are thriving.¹

Gender (%)

Male Female
Prefer not to answer Non-binary



Race and ethnicity (%)

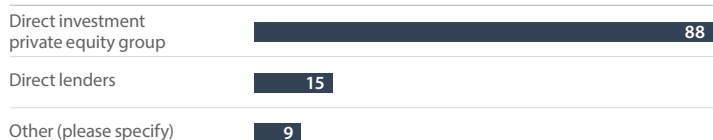


¹ For more on the perspectives of three female CEOs at PE-backed companies, see Stephen Schwanhauser and Amanda Worthington, "Insights from women CEOs at PE-backed companies," Heidrick & Struggles, on heidrick.com.

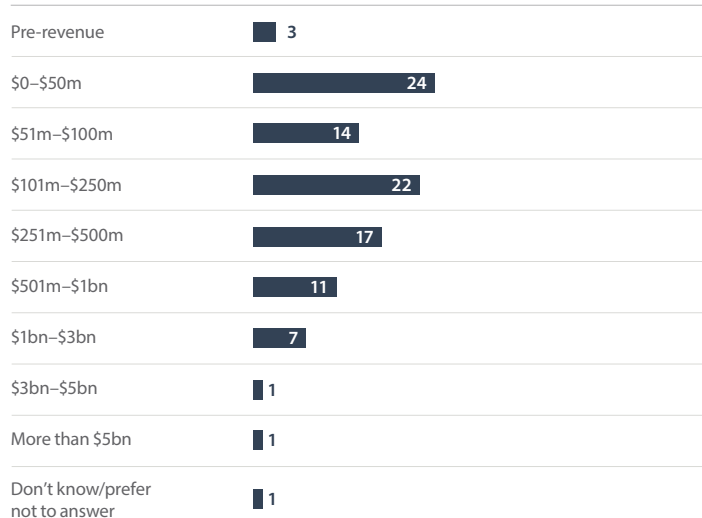
In terms of their backers, a strong majority of firms had direct investors. And their companies ranged across industries and sizes.

Company background

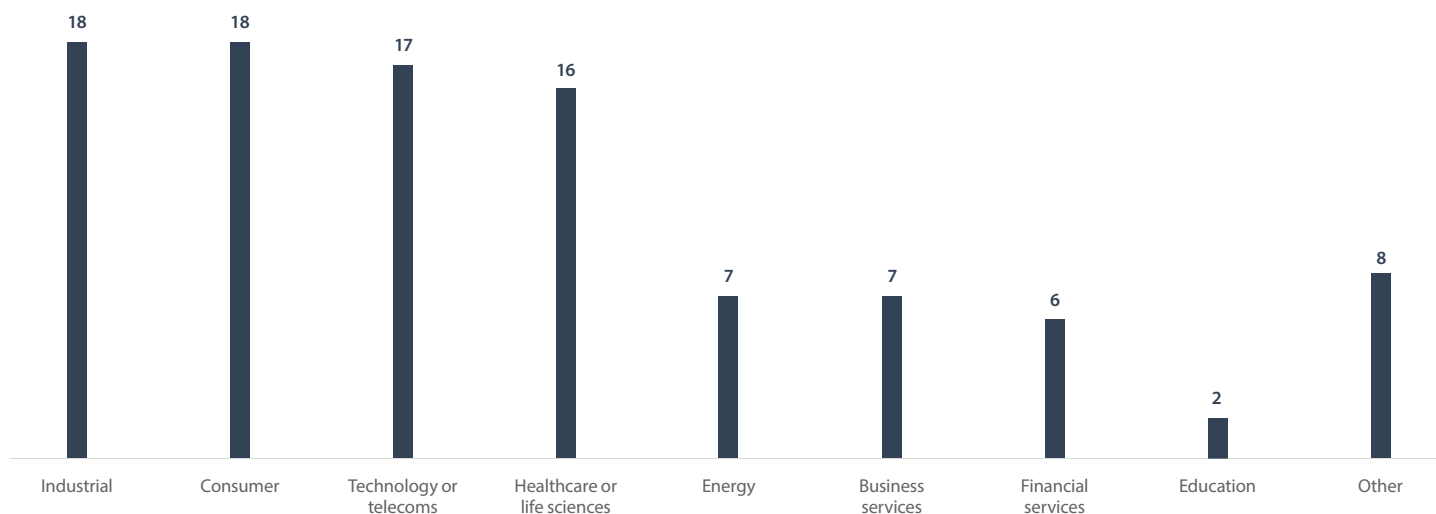
Financial investors (%)



Revenue (%)



Industry (%)

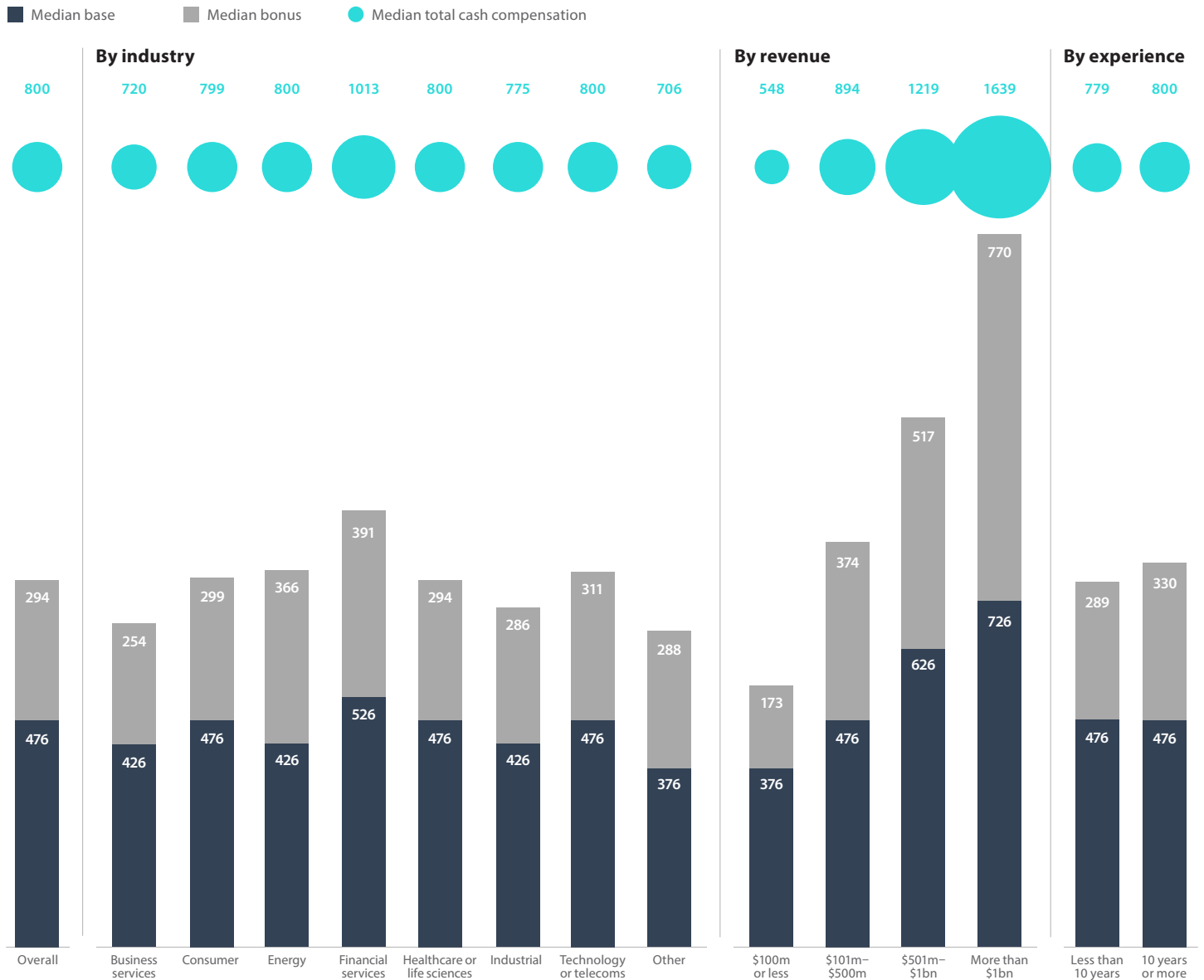


US CEO compensation

The median base compensation among US CEOs surveyed for this report was \$476,000 in 2021, and the median cash bonus received in 2020 was \$294,000, for a total median cash compensation of \$800,000. (Eleven percent of CEOs said they received no cash bonus in 2020.) By company size, base, bonus, and

total cash compensation all rise as revenue does, with total median cash compensation coming in at \$1,639,000 at companies with revenue above \$1 billion. By industry, CEOs at financial services firms are paid the most: \$1,013,000 in median total cash compensation.

Median base and bonus (USD, thousands)



Forty-one percent of US CEOs reported that they received no equity in 2020. Among those who did, the median value was \$876,000.

Median base, bonus, and equity

	Median base (USD, thousands)			Median bonus (%) (Note: 11% reported no cash bonus in 2020)			Median bonus (USD, thousands)			Median total cash compensation (USD, thousands) (For respondents reporting base and bonus)			Median equity (USD, thousands) (Note: 41% reported no equity in 2020)		
	25th	Median	75th	25th	Median	75th	25th	Median	75th	25th	Median	75th	25th	Median	75th
Overall (n = 654 for base cash compensation)	376	476	626	46	56	88	171	294	546	548	800	1,132	276	876	1,600
By industry															
Business services (n = 48)	326	426	613	39	56	88	150	254	415	475	720	1,131	276	526	976
Consumer (n = 116)	376	476	626	36	56	88	163	299	550	599	799	1,176	426	976	1,800
Energy (n = 45)	326	426	626	46	88	113	150	366	707	530	800	1,293	225	401	1,369
Financial services (n = 32)	376	526	713	46	88	88	242	391	638	706	1,013	1,364	276	976	1,500
Healthcare/life sciences (n = 122)	426	476	626	46	56	88	196	294	475	635	800	1,188	476	901	1,500
Industrial (n = 114)	376	426	526	46	56	88	137	286	462	511	775	958	225	426	976
Technology/telecoms (n = 116)	326	476	576	46	68	88	182	311	594	548	800	1,119	526	976	3,000
Other (n = 61)	326	376	576	36	62	88	99	288	518	430	706	1,082	376	801	2,000
By revenue															
\$100m or less (n = 269)	326	376	476	26	46	68	99	173	289	430	548	767	225	476	976
\$101m–\$500m (n = 266)	426	476	626	46	68	88	238	374	594	694	894	1,176	476	976	2,000
\$501m–\$1bn (n = 67)	526	626	776	56	88	113	350	517	820	906	1,219	1,552	826	976	2,500
More than \$1bn (n = 48)	638	726	976	88	88	113	546	770	1,183	1,270	1,639	2,078	976	2,100	4,000
By experience															
Less than 10 years (n = 361)	376	476	576	46	56	88	171	289	481	578	779	1,051	276	776	1,575
10 or more years (n = 292)	376	476	676	46	68	88	171	330	594	552	800	1,270	326	926	1,500

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CEO & Board Practice

Heidrick & Struggles' CEO & Board Practice has been built on our ability to execute top-level assignments and counsel CEOs and board members on the complex issues directly affecting their businesses.

We pride ourselves on being our clients' most trusted advisor and offer an integrated suite of services to help manage these challenges and their leadership assets. This ranges from the acquisition of talent through executive search to providing counsel in areas that include succession planning, executive and board assessment, and board effectiveness reviews.

Our CEO & Board Practice leverages our most accomplished search and leadership consulting professionals globally who understand the ever-transforming nature of leadership. This expertise, combined with in-depth industry, sector, and regional knowledge; differentiated research capabilities; and intellectual capital, enables us to provide sound global coverage for our clients.

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Private Equity Practice

Heidrick & Struggles' global Private Equity Practice combines a deep understanding of private equity markets with world-class expertise across all major industries and functions to provide a broad range of value-adding services.

With more than 80 consultants in 50 offices around the world, our expertise shadows the private equity life cycle from pre-deal due-diligence support to pre- and post-acquisition executive search, leadership assessment, proactive introductions, and the construction of advisory boards for both private equity firms and their portfolio companies.

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ONE LEADERSHIP TEAM AT A TIME®

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