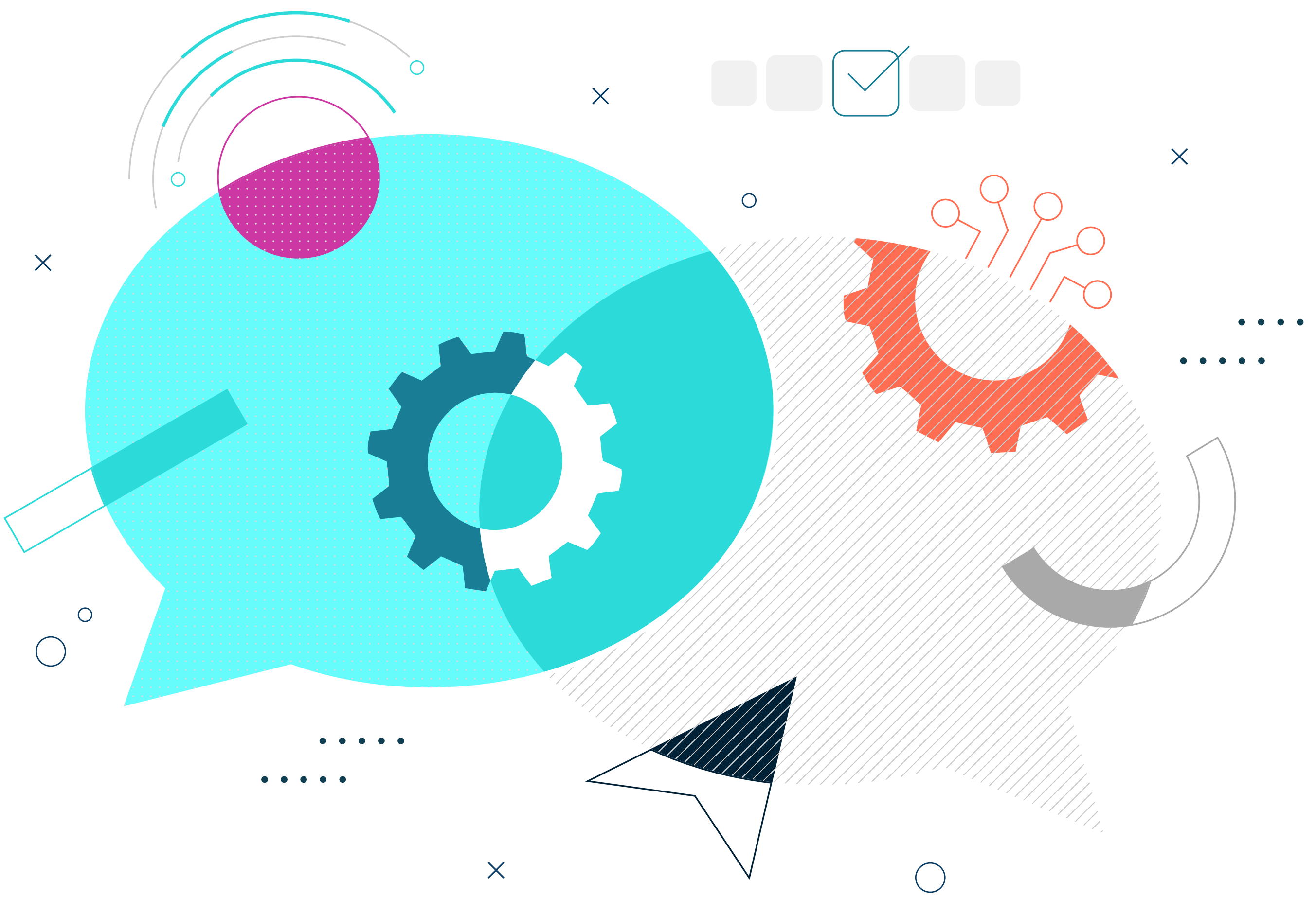
2026
US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey



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A message from the authors

Welcome to the *2026 US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey*, our survey focused on professional services partners' compensation, as well as their role structures, support ratio, and expectations.

For this report, Heidrick & Struggles compiled compensation and organization data from a survey of 163 partners in the professional services industry in the United States. We hope to expand the number and scope of respondents in future years.

We hope you enjoy reading the report. As always, suggestions are welcome, so please feel free to contact us—or your Heidrick & Struggles representative —with questions and comments.

With warmest regards,

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Methodology

In an online survey, we asked participants to provide information on their role, their sales revenue targets, and data on compensation for the 2025 fiscal year. All data collected was self-reported and has been aggregated.

On confidentiality

The US professional services partner compensation survey, 2026, has been conducted on an anonymous basis. All data is reported anonymously and in aggregate.

Compensation

Compensation trends for professional services partners in 2026 reflect a market that remains strong at the top but is increasingly falling short of expectations for a meaningful share of professionals. More than one-third of respondents reported earning less than they anticipated this year, including 12% who earned "significantly" less. While this pattern is broadly consistent with 2024, it marks a clear deterioration from the more optimistic outlook seen in 2022.

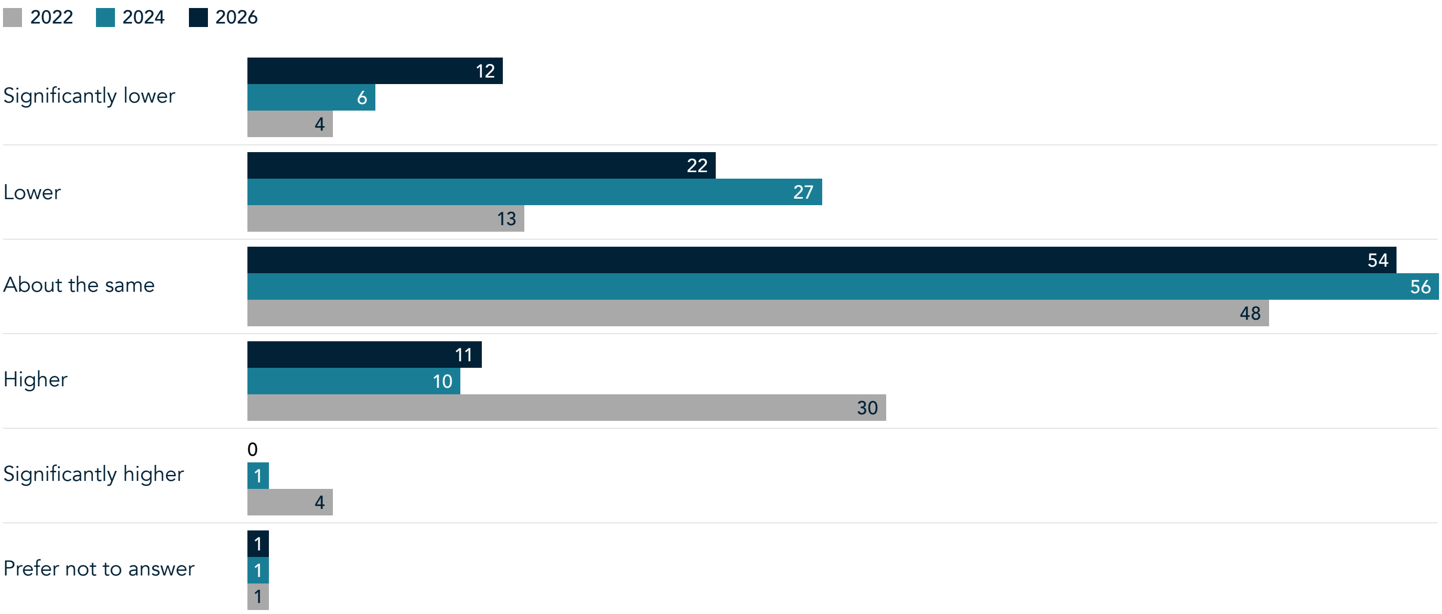
These elevated expectations are likely driven, at least in part, by ambitious revenue targets. The most common personal revenue target falls between $5 million and $10 million, though roughly half of respondents are aiming even higher. Private equity ownership and investor pressure are also reinforcing aggressive growth and profitability expectations, contributing to higher performance demands and greater compensation concentration among top performers.

Despite this gap between expectations and outcomes, absolute compensation levels remain robust. A notable 41% of respondents reported total cash earnings exceeding $1 million, a figure that has held steady in recent years and highlights the continued earning power at the senior level.

However, the structure of compensation appears to be shifting. Just 55% of respondents now receive non-cash compensation, down from 66% in 2022. Among those who do, three-quarters report that these components account for less than 25% of total pay. Restricted stock units remain the most common vehicle for non-cash compensation.

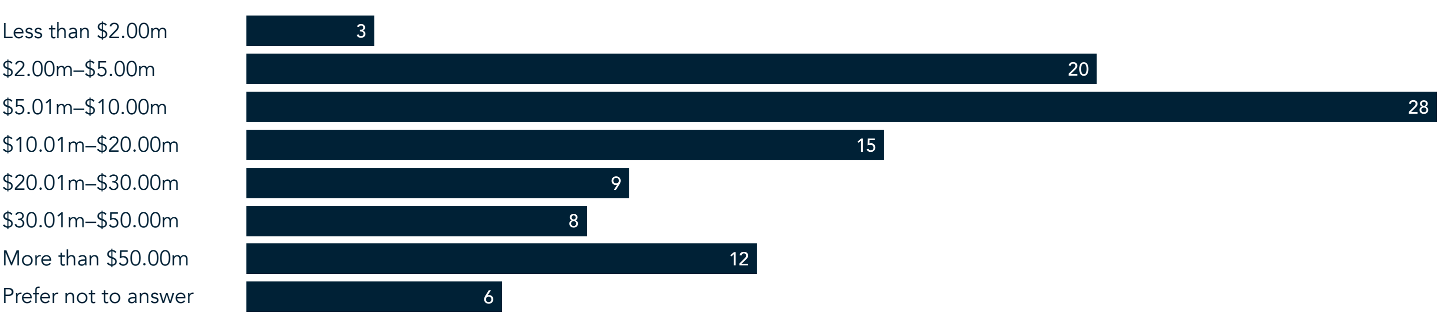
Overall, these dynamics point to a compensation model that remains financially strong but is showing early signs of strain. These pressures are likely to intensify as AI reshapes traditional leverage models and client delivery expectations, putting additional pressure on long-standing compensation structures and increasing reliance on cash-based retention strategies.

Total compensation compared to expectations (%)



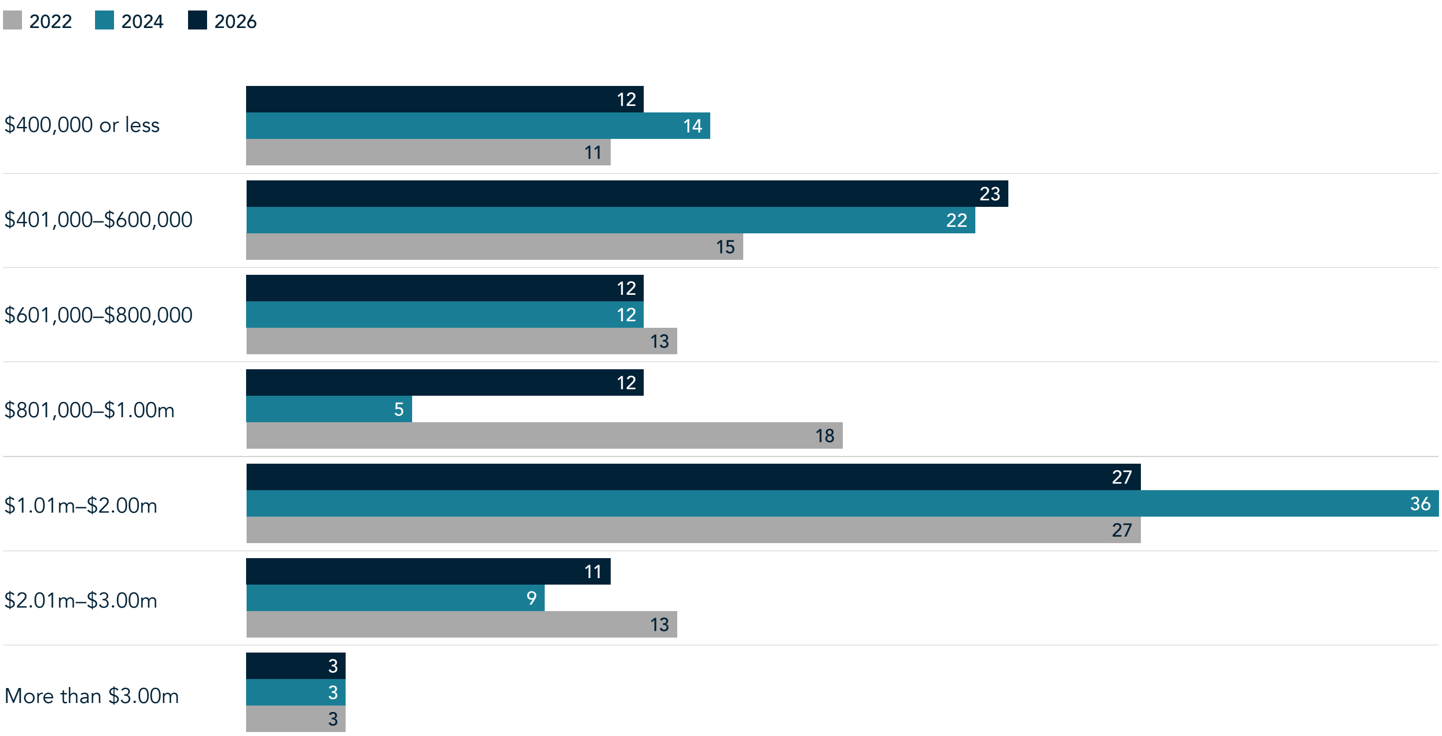
Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 147); 2024 (n = 144), 2022 (n = 179)

Personal revenue targets (%)



Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 163)

Total cash compensation (%)

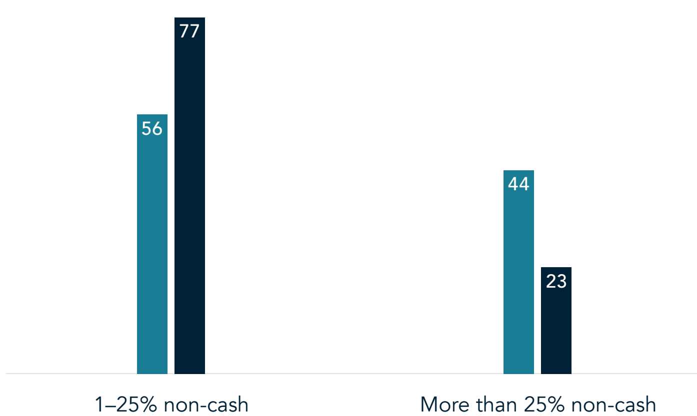


Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 163); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Non-cash element to compensation (%)

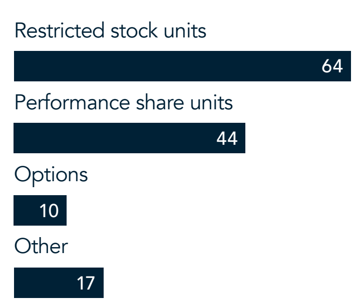
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 162); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Of those with non-cash compensation, percentage of total compensation that is non-cash (%)



Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 70); 2024 (n = 84)

Form of non-cash compensation (%)



Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 72)

Compensation breakouts

Compensation data is available in the tables that follow for total cash compensation, equity (non-cash) compensation, and the share of total compensation that is non-cash. Breakouts are provided by firm type, firm revenue, gender, tenure as a partner, tenure at the firm, and tenure in the current role.

Trend data for total cash compensation is also available by firm type, firm revenue, gender, tenure as a partner, and tenure at the firm.

Some notable data points include:

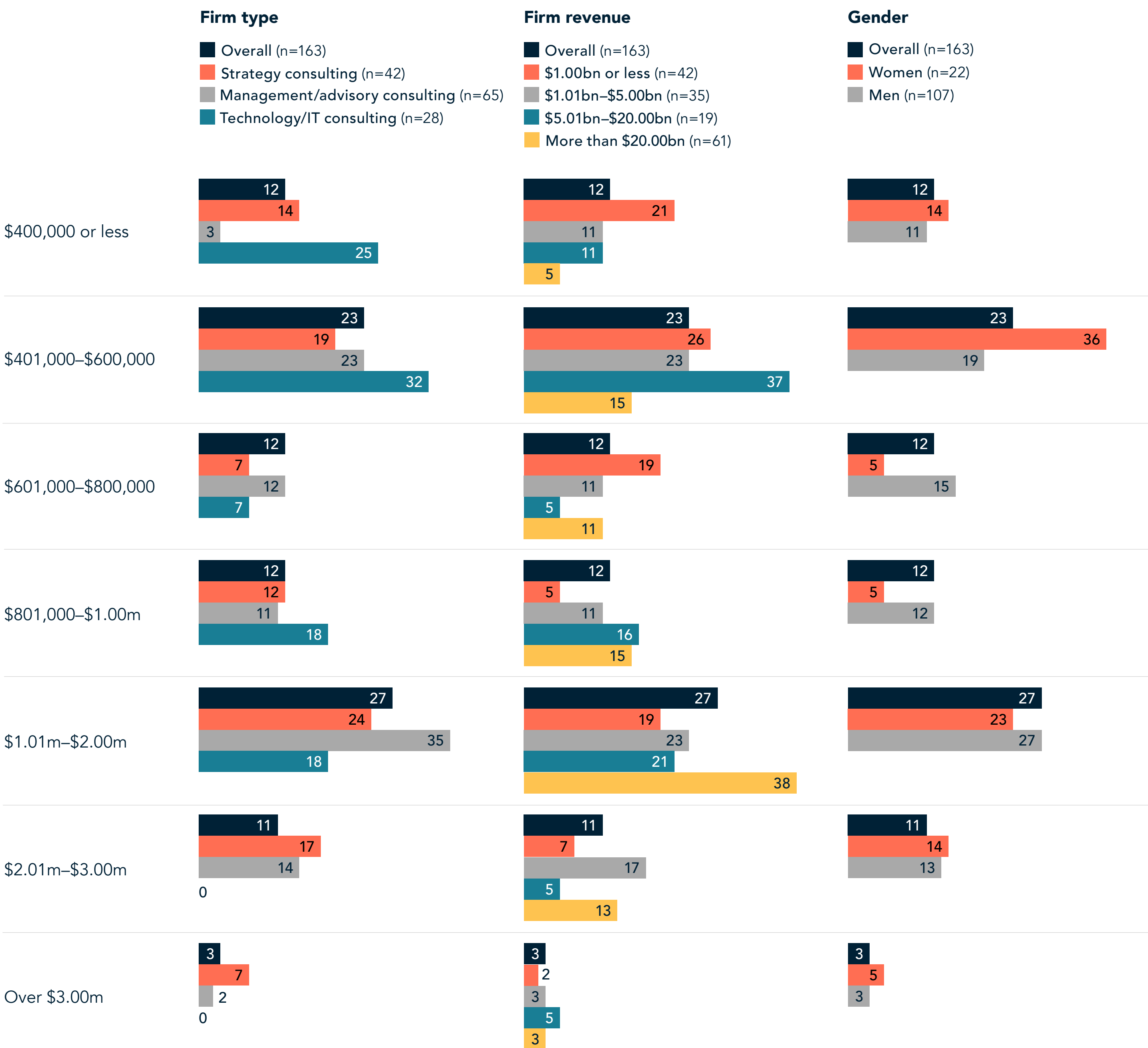
- **Pay is de-equitized—except in tech and IT.** Outside of tech and IT, the economics of equity and long-term incentives are quietly being hollowed out as firms shift back toward cash-heavy packages. Non-cash instruments still exist, but for most partners, they now represent a modest kicker, not a defining leg of the compensation model, dampening upside and weakening the link between firm value creation and partner wealth. Tech and IT consultancies are the main outliers: they continue to lean more heavily into equity and higher non-cash mix, but many of these firms are struggling in their stock price due to AI's impact on the capital markets.

- **The million-plus band is sticky, not expanding.** The $1M–2M cash band has become a plateau rather than a stepping-stone: a large share of partners cluster there, with limited flow-through into $2M+ even in strong individual years. From a market perspective, the story is less "runaway partner inflation" and more "entrenched upper-mid compensation," with incremental dollars increasingly reserved for a relatively small group of outliers. For many senior partners, the real risk is compensation stasis—maintaining nominal levels while workload, governance, and growth expectations continue to ratchet up.

- **Early-tenure partners are bearing the brunt.** Economically, the partnership is bifurcating; experienced partners have largely preserved their position at the top of the compensation stack, while newer partners are being pulled down into lower bands. Entry into the partnership no longer comes with an automatic glide path into seven-figure compensation; instead, ramp times are lengthening and downside volatility is higher in the first five to seven years. Frequent lateral moves and PE-driven reshufflings effectively "reset the clock" for many partners, creating a cohort of permanently early-tenure partners whose compensation never fully converges with legacy peers.

- **Firm archetype and scale are driving structurally different earnings curves.** The compensation story now differs meaningfully by firm archetype; management/advisory platforms are behaving more like operating businesses with concentrated rewards at the top, while strategy firms and boutiques are experiencing more compression in the middle. Scale amplifies this divergence: larger, often PE-backed platforms are using aggressive targets and sharper differentiation to push more dollars to the highest performers, while partners at sub-$1B firms are more exposed to demand volatility and under-delivery against expectations. For an individual partner, "where they sit" on the firm-type/scale matrix now matters almost as much as their own book in determining the shape of their earnings.

Total cash compensation (%)



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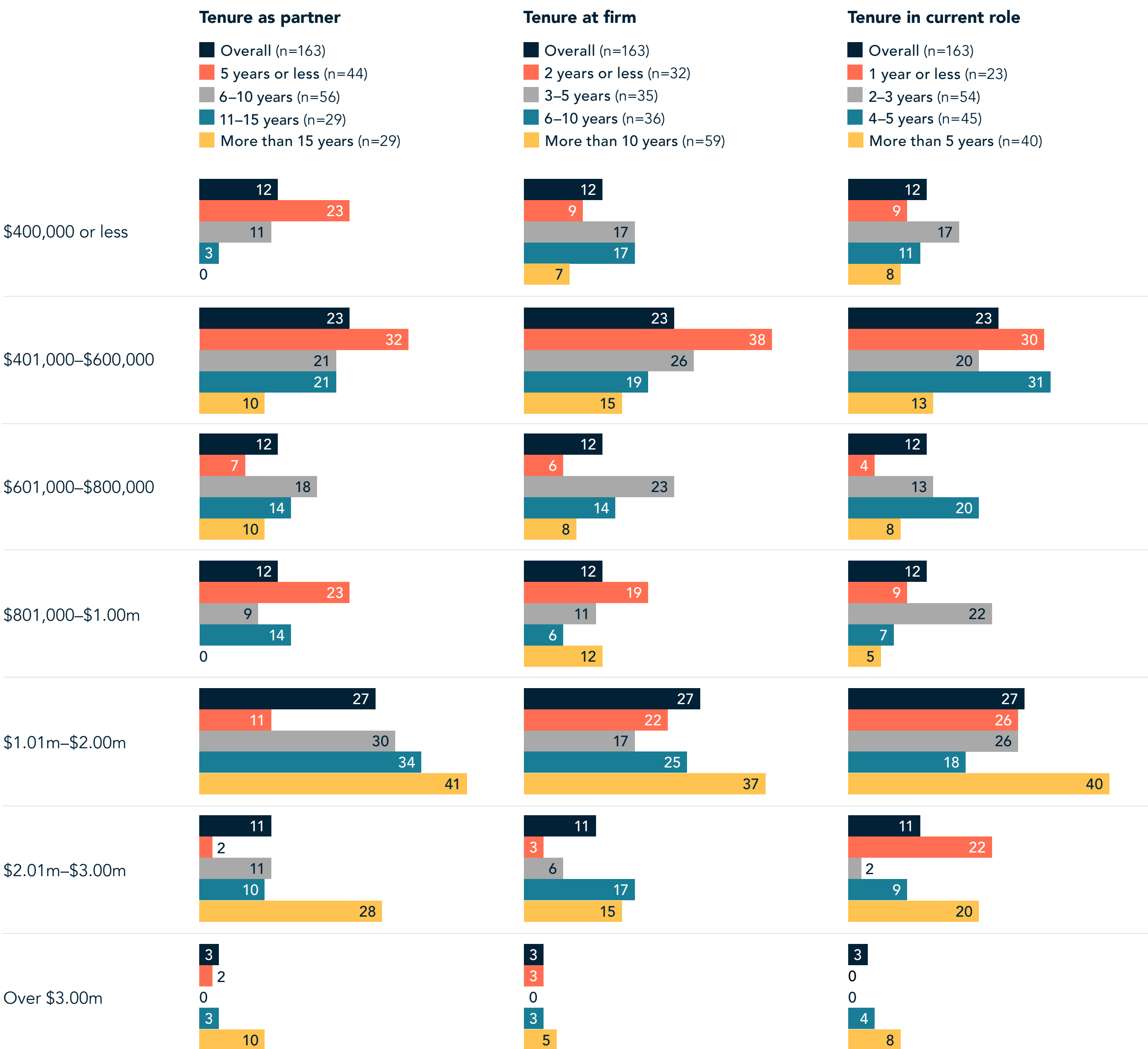
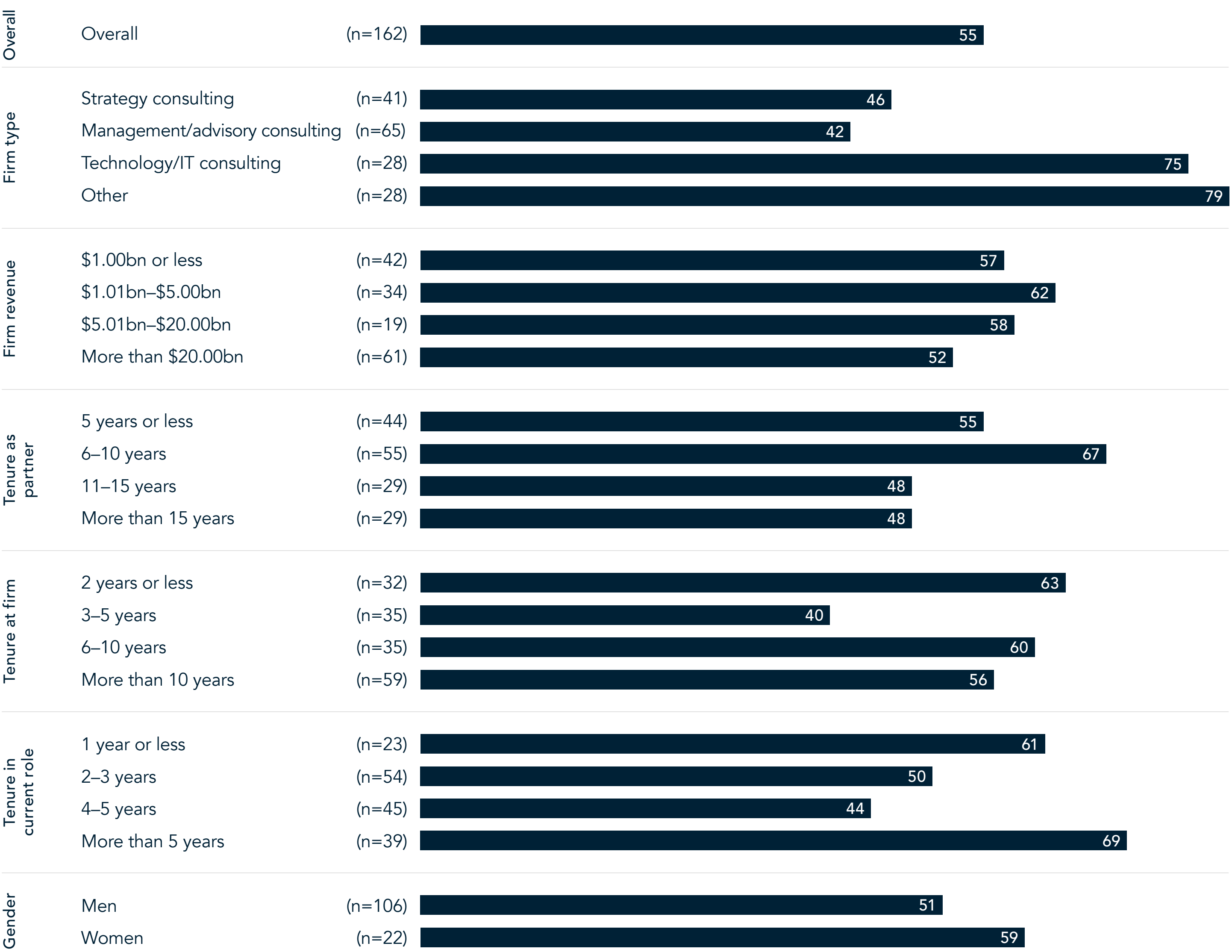


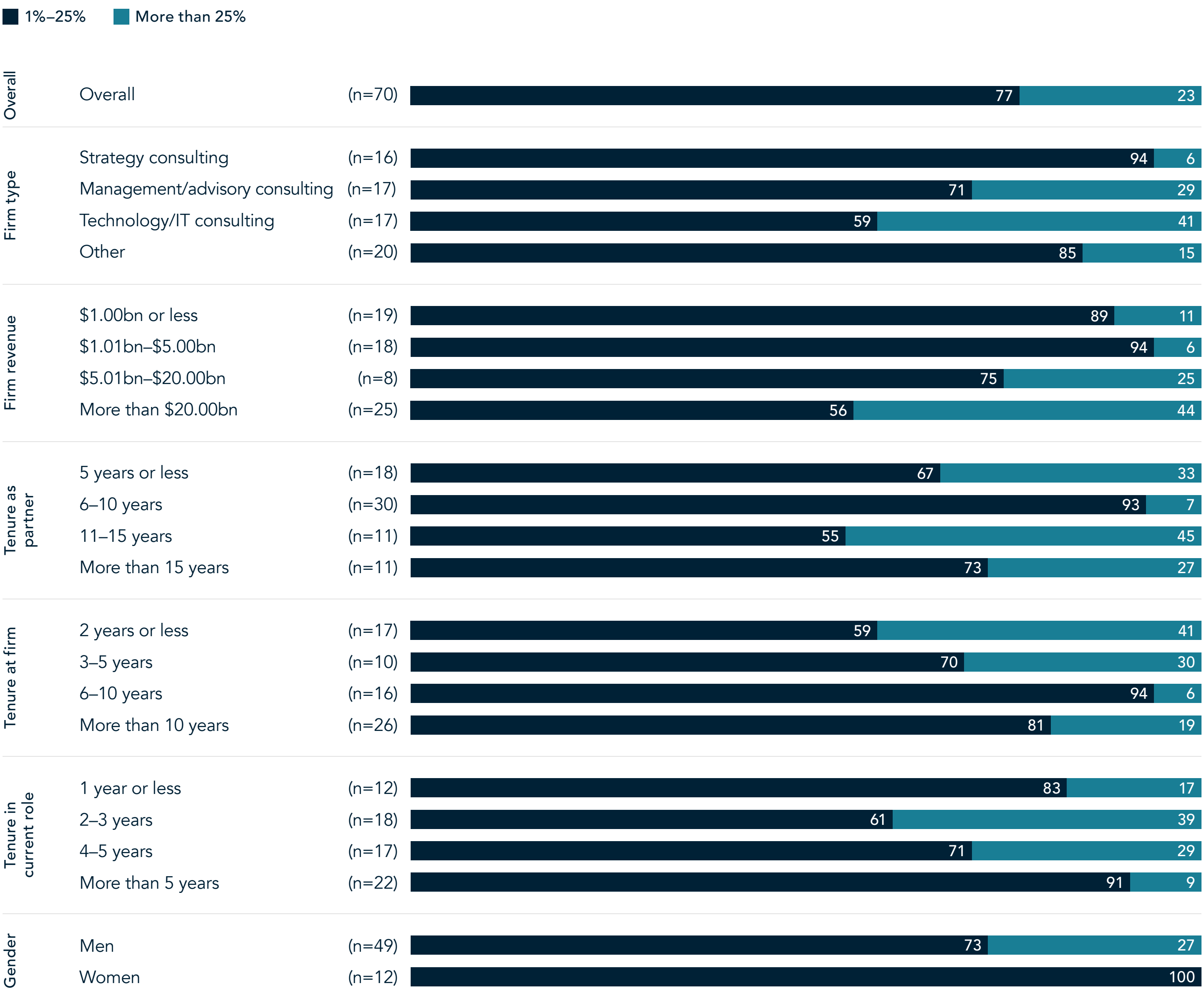
Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 163)

Compensation: share who receive non-cash compensation (%)



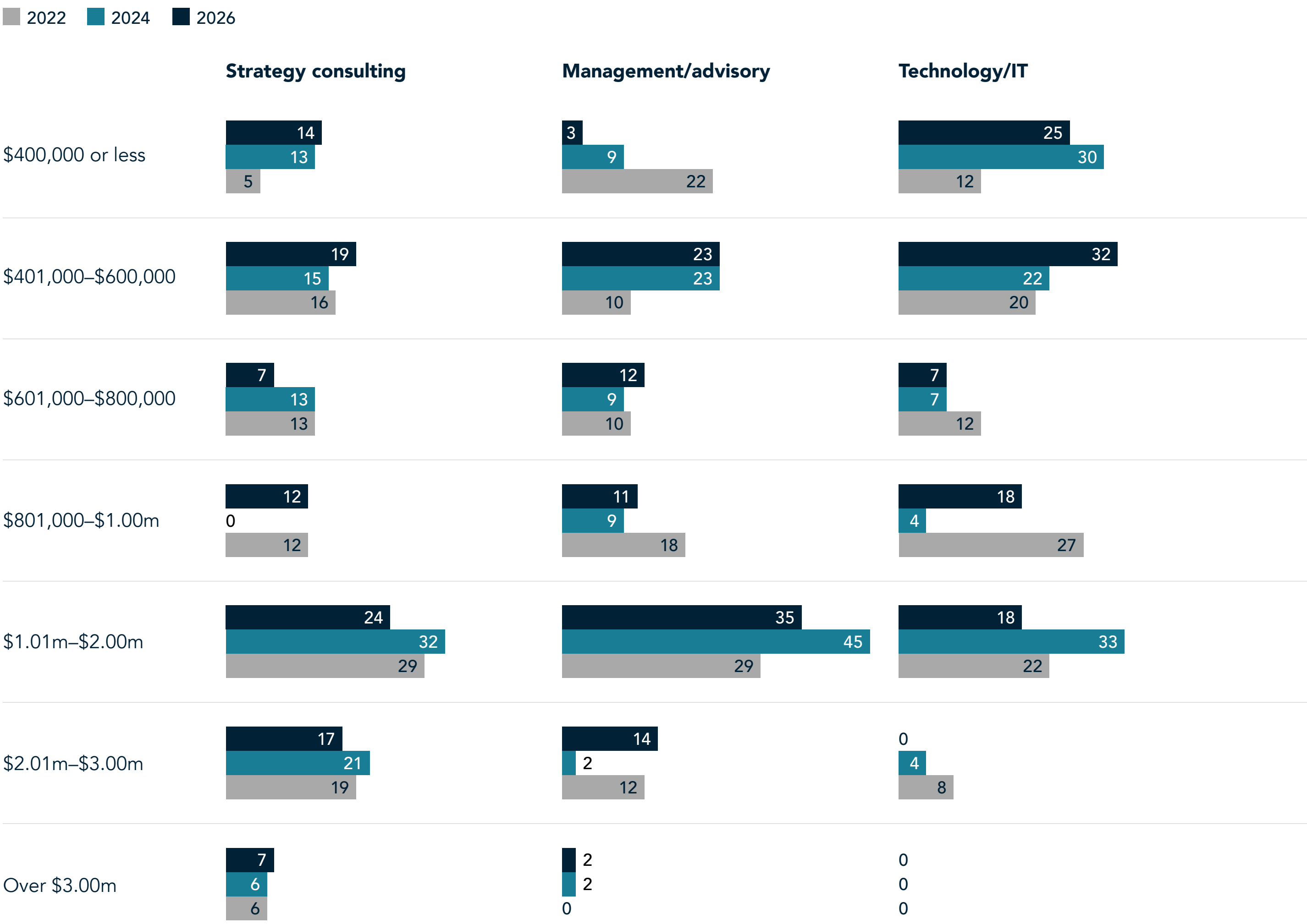
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 162)

Compensation: share of total compensation that is non-cash (%)



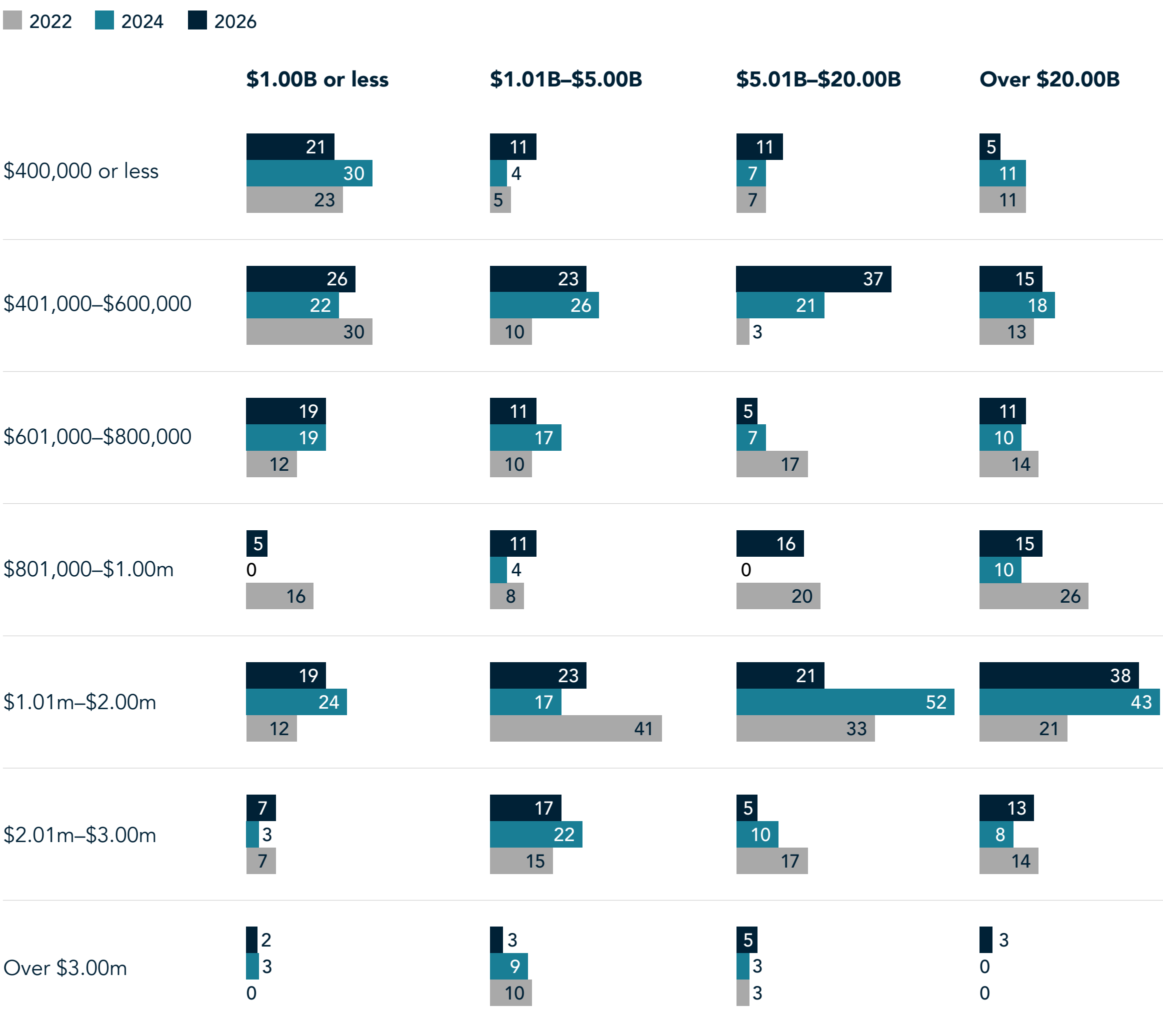
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 70)

Total cash compensation trends, by firm type (%)



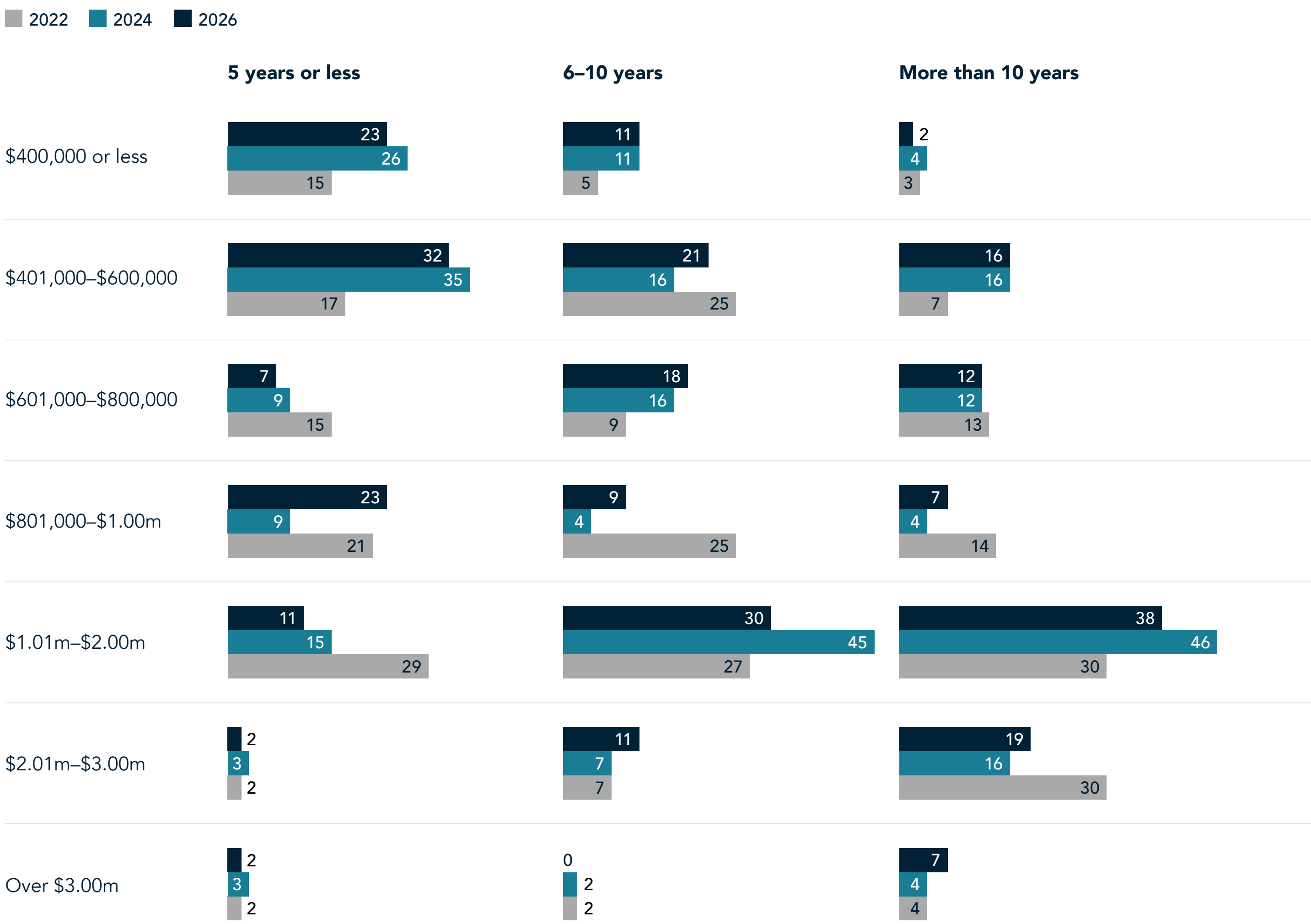
Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 163); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Total cash compensation trends, by firm revenue (%)



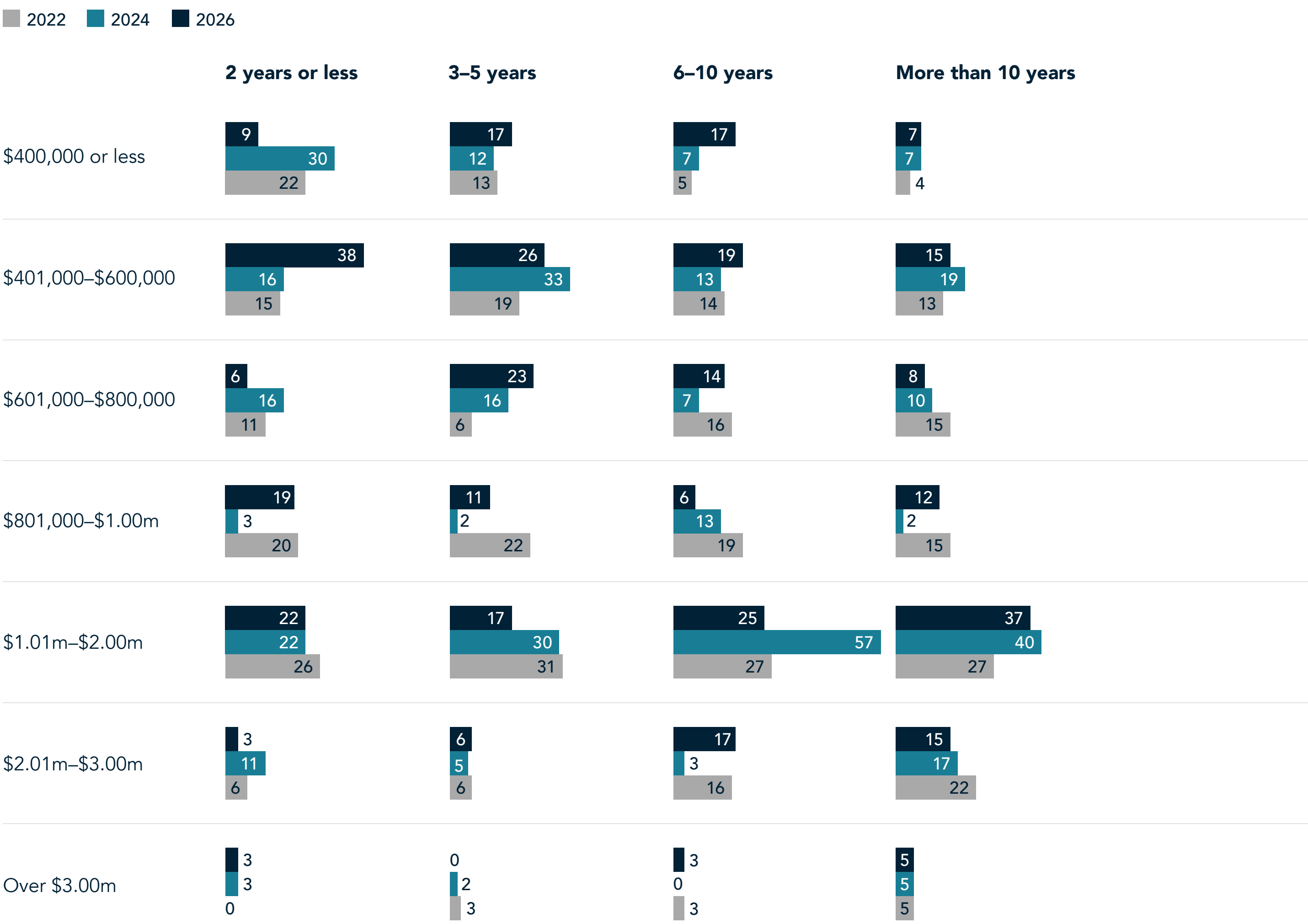
Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 163); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Total cash compensation trends, by tenure as partner (%)



Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 158); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Total cash compensation trends, by tenure at current firm (%)



Note: Numbers may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.
Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 162); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n =

Total cash compensation trends, by gender (%)

Source: Heidrick & Struggles US Professional Services Partner Compensation Survey, 2026 (n = 135); 2024 (n = 155), 2022 (n = 192)

Global Technology & Services Practice

Heidrick & Struggles' Global Technology & Services Practice solves senior executive leadership issues that will not only grow and evolve an organization but also enable business transformation over a longer period of time.

Technology companies today are experiencing tremendous challenges and fundamental change. Our clients are part of the evolving business landscape and turn to our experts to help them face many important issues, including globalization, emerging and converging technologies, identifying new sources of revenue, and talent management and retention.

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