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# EHS & Sustainability Career Profiles and Skills for Success



In collaboration with *Protecting Worker Health*

National Association for Environmental Management

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## Letter from Executive Director

On behalf of NAEM, I am pleased to introduce the latest report in NAEM's comprehensive research series on how the EHS&S function is structured from an organizational design perspective.

Using a combination of quantitative data and qualitative insights, this report offers a detailed analysis of the education, skills and knowledge areas that EHS&S professionals need at each stage of their careers. This report also documents the success factors and outside influences that shape career paths, as well as the personal attributes that make EHS&S professionals unique among their peers. The result is a unique portrait of the profession that I believe belongs on the desk of all those responsible for designing and developing the EHS&S function today.

As the leading professional association for corporate EHS&S leaders, NAEM initiated this research to address our members' needs. Our goal was to provide our members with a profile of the professionals they should recruit or develop to build a healthy pipeline for succession. To do so, this report not only documents what EHS&S professionals do, but also how they think, how they behave and how they shape their internal culture to advance their goals.

Because no two companies or EHS&S professionals are the same, we do not make specific recommendations; we do, however, offer you information you can use to benchmark your own career progression or those of the employees on your team. The full report also offers more than 28 charts per profile that you can use to recruit, evaluate and develop your entire EHS&S staff.

I gratefully acknowledge the members of our advisory committee who helped to shape the questionnaire, and thank all those who participated in the research. I would also like to extend a special thanks to the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) for collaborating with us on the research. The generosity of time and knowledge from everyone involved in this project has helped advance our understanding of the profession and its value to this critical business function.

Sincerely,



**Carol Singer Neuvelt**  
**Executive Director**  
**NAEM**

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## About NAEM

The National Association for Environmental Management (NAEM) empowers corporate leaders to advance environmental stewardship, create safe and healthy workplaces, and promote global sustainability. As the largest professional community for EHS and sustainability decision-makers, we provide peer-led educational conferences, benchmarking research and an active network for sharing solutions to today’s corporate EHS and sustainability management challenges. Visit NAEM online at [www.naem.org](http://www.naem.org).

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# How to Use this Report

# How to Use this Report

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NAEM's *EHS&S Career Profiles and Skills for Success* report is designed to be an in-depth guide to those who are interested in advancing their own careers, and an essential resource for EHS&S hiring managers and training leaders. This is the first benchmark that comprehensively documents each step of the career path for corporate EHS&S managers as they rise to leadership positions.

## What You'll Find Inside

Divided into five-year increments, this report combines quantitative and qualitative data to shed light on how professionals begin their career, position themselves for succession, and progress from manager, to leader, to decision-maker. It documents the core educational background, knowledge areas, skills and responsibilities for those at each stage of their career. Importantly it also demonstrates the importance of specific leadership attributes and personal behaviors to the success of leaders at all levels. The following is a snapshot of the main content areas included within this report:

- Job Titles
- Salaries
- Job Responsibilities (including Shared vs. 'Owned' Responsibilities)
- Professional Experiences Outside of EHS
- Degrees and Certifications
- Core Technical and Business Skills
- Core Technical and Business Knowledge Areas
- Key Leadership Attributes and Behaviors that Drive Success

## How to Apply this Knowledge

This report will help you broaden your thinking beyond what is happening in your own organization by allowing you to benchmark your own or your team's skills and responsibilities against those of other professionals in the field. Specifically, you can use this report to:

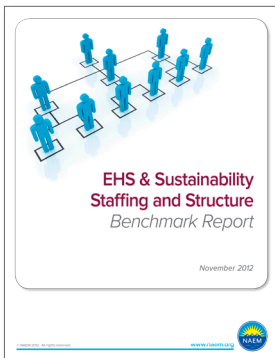
- Write job descriptions
- Screen applicants for the right mix of skills
- Establish appropriate job titles
- Define job responsibilities
- Evaluate job performance
- Develop training programs
- Set salaries and pay increases
- Determine whether your EHS&S team members have the appropriate mix of skills and attributes
- Identify those with the most potential for succession

# How to Use this Report

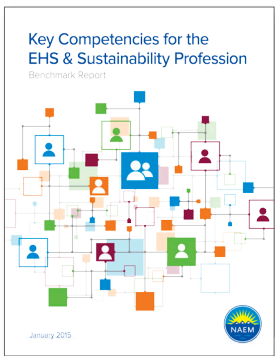
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## How to Find More Benchmarking on this Topic

NAEM's landmark series on the Management of the EHS&S function is a comprehensive research portfolio on how companies design, budget and staff their EHS&S function. If you are seeking to benchmark how your peers structure their departments, learn what the average headcount is for a company at the same risk level as yours or find out which core competencies most EHS&S professionals share, consider purchasing another publication from this suite today.



*EHS & Sustainability Staffing and Structure* is the most in-depth benchmark of the EHS&S function. It is the only benchmark that looks at EHS&S staffing and structure based on industry sector, level of risk and corporate revenue. The report includes the roles and responsibilities of the EHS and sustainability function as well as staffing levels, budgets and salaries.



*Key Competencies for the EHS & Sustainability Profession* was released in 2015 and looks at the skills, attributes and knowledge areas that are necessary to achieve the business objectives of the EHS&S function. *Key Competencies* provides a detailed portrait of the diverse capabilities of the EHS&S professionals who are leading a broad range of regulatory compliance and sustainability activities for their companies.

## The Environment for New EHS Professionals

The other publications from our Career Profiles series can help you build a deeper understanding of the skills that your company's new EHS professionals possess, as well as what they expect to accomplish career-wise in the future. [http://www.naem.org/?survey\\_2015\\_careerpr](http://www.naem.org/?survey_2015_careerpr)





## Survey Definitions

The following is a list of terms used throughout the benchmark study and the definitions associated with them.

**EHS:** Environment, health and safety

**EHS&S:** The term that is used to define the EHS and sustainability business function

**Function:** While many companies may use the term ‘function’ interchangeably with ‘department,’ this study defines ‘function’ as the role or purpose of the respondents themselves. In some companies, for example, the EHS function may reside in multiple departments

**Level:** The term level is used throughout the report to describe where respondents sit within their organizations. In addition, it is used to help define the extent of responsibility respondents have for activities they are involved in at their current position

**Profiles:** The five different career stages NAEM has defined, for the purpose of identifying distinct stages of a professional’s career

**Competencies:** The general term which includes skills, knowledge areas, attributes and behaviors that help professionals to do their job

- **Skills:** The abilities of individuals, often gained through training. Within the report they are separated into technical, business and interpersonal spheres
- **Knowledge Areas:** The areas of expertise or specialization that individuals use in their work. They are separated into technical and business areas within the report
- **Attributes:** The qualities that individuals characteristically exhibit, as related to the performance and progression of their EHS&S function
- **Behaviors:** The actions that individuals take or exhibit, as related to the performance and progression of their EHS&S function

## Key Responsibility Areas

The following is a list of definitions for the categories of responsibilities most common among EHS and sustainability professionals.

**Responsibilities:** The activities that may be included in the role of an EHS and sustainability professional

- **Prevention and Disposal:** Knowledge and experience necessary to properly address the management of hazardous materials. This includes materials/emissions control/reduction, waste identification/disposal and emergency response, including remediation of environmental contamination

- **Tracking and Monitoring:** Familiarity with the requirements and techniques needed to quantify potential hazardous releases/exposures. This includes the ability to gather and present accurate data to respond to surveys and reports detailing emissions, use and exposures from products or operations, and the ability to utilize data management tools to their fullest capability
- **Compliance:** Being conversant with all regulations or other requirements applicable to operations or products. Able to apply that knowledge in developing/implementing audits and other compliance activities for operations or other areas of concern. Maintaining awareness and addresses ongoing advances in scientific understanding of workplace hazards and potential regulatory changes
- **Health, Safety and Security:** Broadly capable across several exposure control functions to facilitate development and implementation of training, control and emergency response programs that address applicable physical risks. This includes measurement/control of personnel exposures/risks and protection of company assets
- **Energy Management:** Technical competency in selecting and using equipment and/or procedures to measure, manage and reduce energy use
- **Products and Purchasing:** Being conversant in relevant aspects of product lifecycle requirements. This includes the knowledge needed to reduce environmental impacts of products and supplier operations
- **Reporting, Strategies and Communications:** Being able to understandably communicate environmental program elements to audiences with varying technical understanding and subject matter interest. This includes knowledge of appropriate metrics to both measure and project the impact of operations or products, and the ability to select and use data to develop control and planning strategies
- **Fleet Management and Transportation:** Being conversant with rules and technical aspects of vehicle use. This includes ensuring proper permits and licensing along with emissions reduction planning/implementation

## Overview of Methodology

This report is based on quantitative and qualitative research that took place from August 2014 – May 2015. The quantitative survey was fielded to a broad audience of EHS&S professionals through the NAEM membership and network in collaboration with other organizations.

The responses to the survey and interviews were primarily drawn from in-house EHS&S professionals within U.S.-based companies; consultants and service providers were excluded. This report represents the input from 498 respondents who met the eligibility criteria.

## Survey Development Process

In the spring of 2014, NAEM established an advisory committee of EHS&S leaders to help the association develop a new survey that reprised core concepts from NAEM's 2012 EHS and Sustainability Staffing and Structure benchmark. The advisory committee was composed of nine senior EHS&S leaders from a variety of industry sectors. Their input helped to define the objectives, guide question development and beta-test the initial draft questionnaire before it was launched to the broader audience of EHS&S professionals within corporations. In addition, the committee provided guidance and recommendations for analysis of the survey response data.

## Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed through SurveyMonkey to members of the NAEM network, members of The Conference Board Chief EH&S Officers' Council, members of the World Environment Center and members of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA). The recipients were also encouraged to share the survey with colleagues in their function to capture input from those at different levels within an EHS organization.

The online survey was fielded by NAEM between August and September of 2014 and re-fielded by NAEM and AIHA between April and May of 2015 to gain a broader depth of respondents.

## Collaboration with AIHA

Learning about industrial hygiene competencies and responsibilities adds depth to the NAEM research and better represents the profession, as NAEM members often focus their efforts on environmental and sustainability initiatives. In re-fielding the survey during the spring of 2015, NAEM partnered with the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) to ensure a better balance of environment, health, safety and sustainability professionals in the survey responses. Similar to NAEM members, the majority of AIHA members who responded to the survey are highly experienced professionals.

## Outline of the Quantitative Survey

The online survey consisted of approximately 55 questions; the exact number answered depended upon self-identified responsibilities. The survey was broken into five sections covering:

- Company Demographics
- Individual Job Responsibilities
- Individual Skills, Knowledge Areas and Attributes
- Educational Background and Professional Experience
- Salaries and Bonus Potential

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of involvement in 73 EHS&S activities. These responsibilities evolved from the list included in prior NAEM benchmarking and from suggestions from the advisory committee.

To parse the varying levels of responsibility EHS&S professionals have for each activity, respondents were asked to identify the extent to which the activities fall within their role. The five levels to choose from included:

- I am responsible but not involved with executing this activity
- I lead this activity and I am directly responsible
- I lead this activity but share responsibility with others
- I am involved without responsibility
- N/A

In addition, respondents were asked to self-assess their proficiency in 33 knowledge areas and 30 skills identified to be relevant to the EHS&S function.

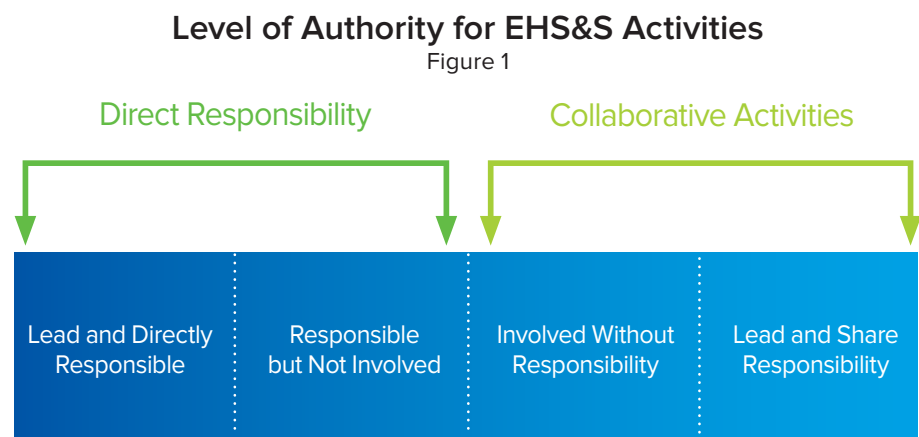
Qualitative Interviews

In order to add context and depth to the survey data for this report, a discussion guide and questions were developed in partnership with corporate decision makers to conduct qualitative interviews with in-house EHS&S professionals.

In total, NAEM conducted 15 one-on-one interviews. The participants came from a variety of industries, backgrounds and job titles, with three interviews conducted for each profile segment, based on their years of professional experience.

Analytical Approach

To capture the nuances of each EHS&S manager’s role, we asked respondents to indicate their level of involvement with a set of detailed activities. We then categorized their responses in terms of ‘responsibility’ and ‘collaboration’. The rubric for this categorization is reflected below.





Demographics

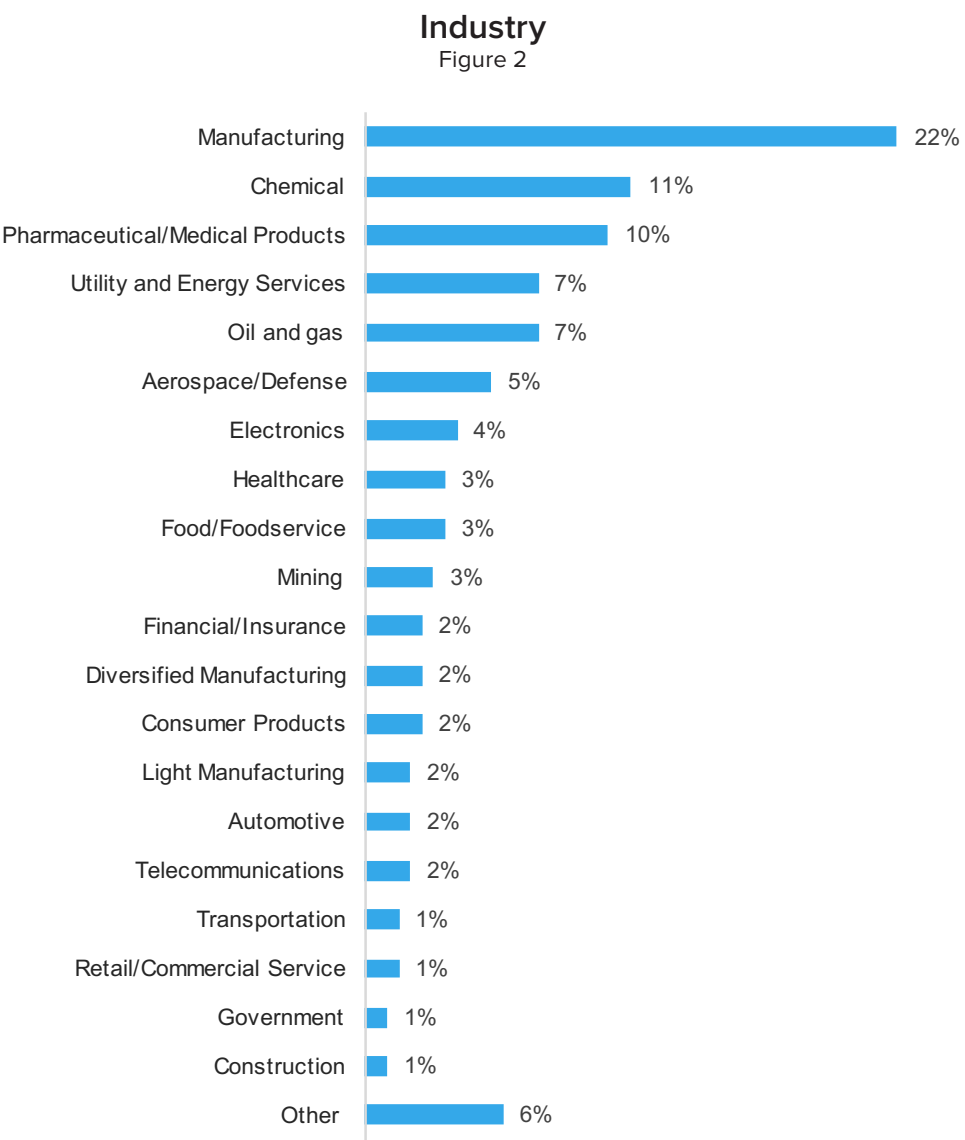
# Demographics

The following section provides an overview of those survey respondents with 21 years of experience or more. Although the full survey had 498 responses overall, this section reflects the demographics for the 290 individuals at this career stage. The demographics are provided for both the companies they work for and for the individuals themselves.

## Company Demographics

### Diverse Representation of Industries

Because the survey audience included responses from more than one employee per company, the below chart has been refined to accurately reflect the range of industries represented among the survey audience. The largest segment of companies represented belongs to the manufacturing sector, with a fairly consistent representation among the other industries.



N=209

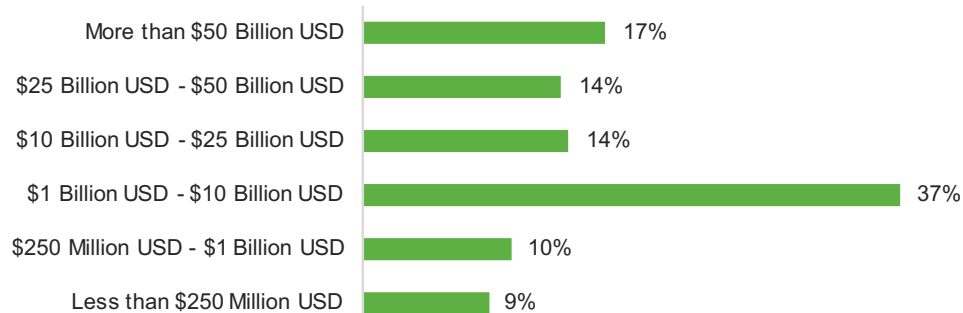
# Demographics

## Respondents work for Companies of all Sizes

The annual revenues for the responding companies cover a broad range, from those with revenue of less than \$1 billion (19%) to those with more than \$50 billion (17%). Most respondents in this segment, however, tend to be concentrated within companies with revenues of between \$1 billion and \$50 billion (65%).

Annual Revenue

Figure 3



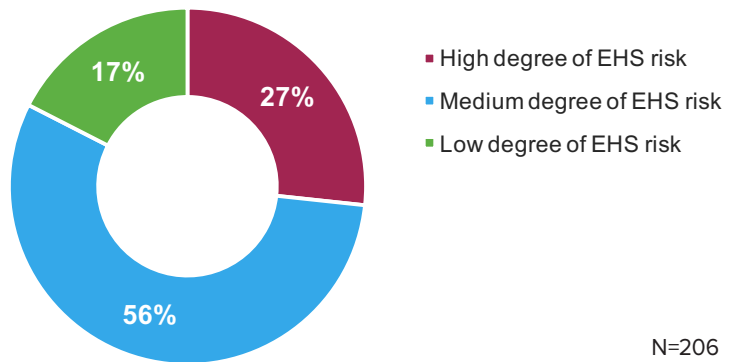
N=198

## More than Half of Respondents Work for Companies with Medium-Risk Operations

When asked to self-assess the level of EHS risk at their companies, most of the respondents in this segment characterized their operations as 'medium risk' (56%). An additional 27 percent have operations that fall into the 'high risk' category.

Company Risk

Figure 4



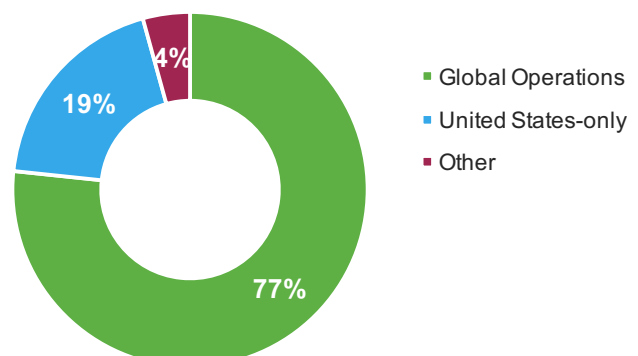
N=206

## Respondents in this Segment Mainly Work for Companies with a Global Presence

Consistent with the demographic composition of the full respondent pool, those in this segment primarily work for companies with global operations (77%).

Company Operations

Figure 5

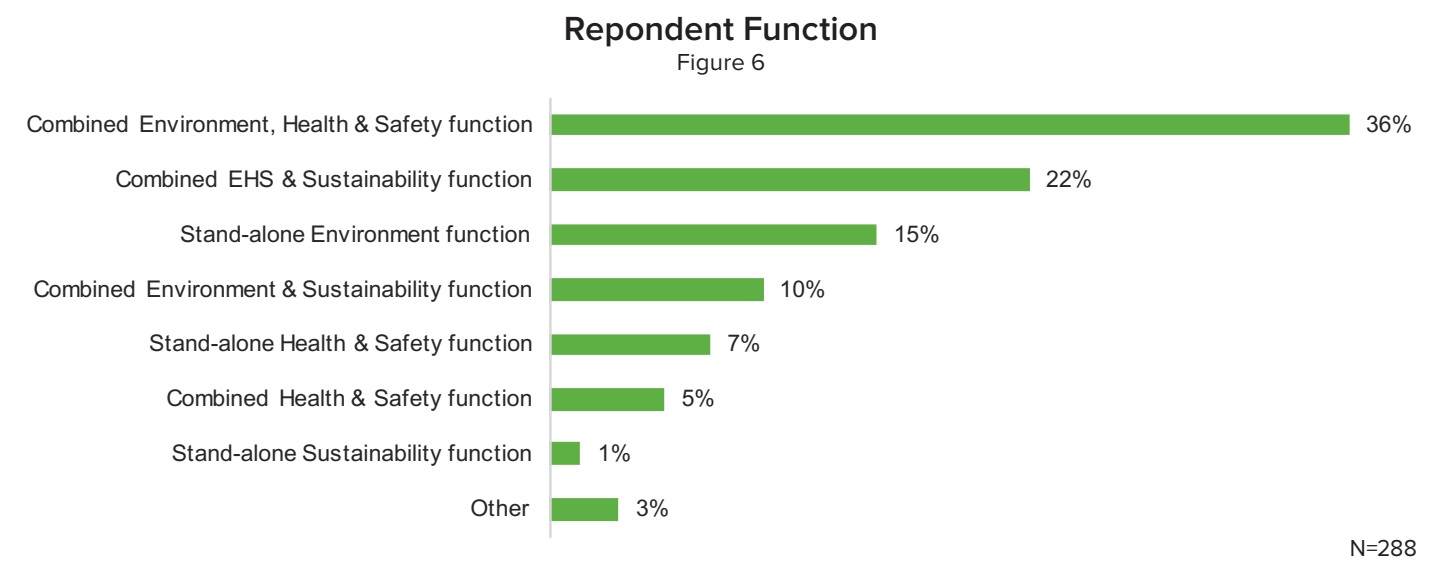


N=210

Respondent Demographics

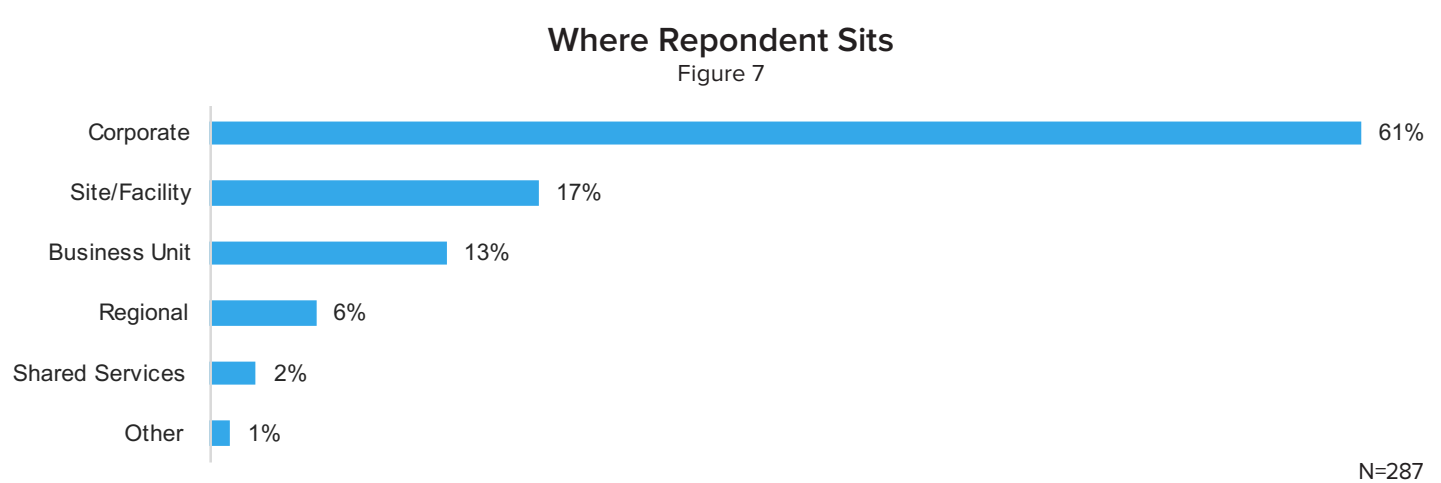
About a Third of Respondents in this Segment Work within a Combined Function

Among survey respondents in this segment 36 percent work within a combined EHS function and an additional 22 percent work within a function that combines EHS and sustainability. There was also a strong representation of stand-alone environmental practitioners in this segment (15%).



Most Respondents in this Segment Work at the Corporate Level

Consistent with their years of EHS&S experience, respondents at this level tend to work at the corporate level of their companies (61%), while 17 percent work at the site or facility level, and 13 percent work at the business unit level.

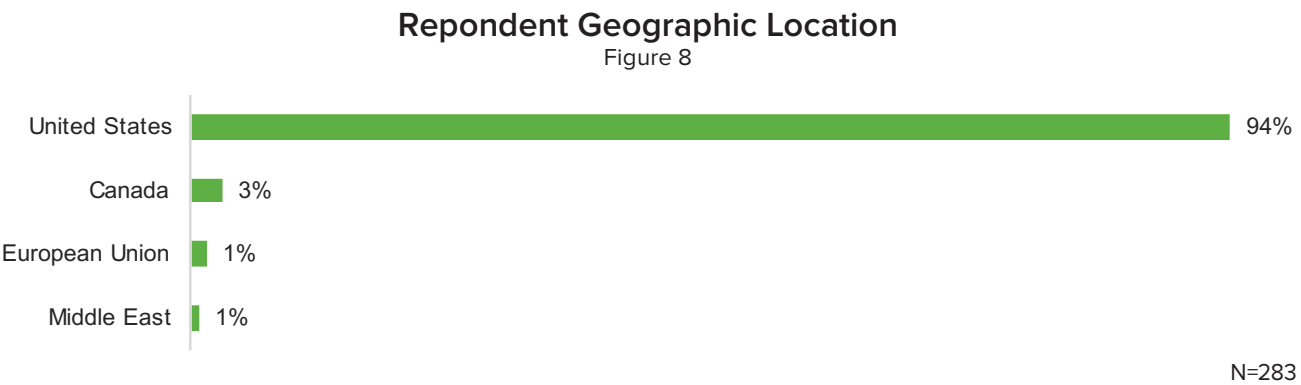




# Demographics

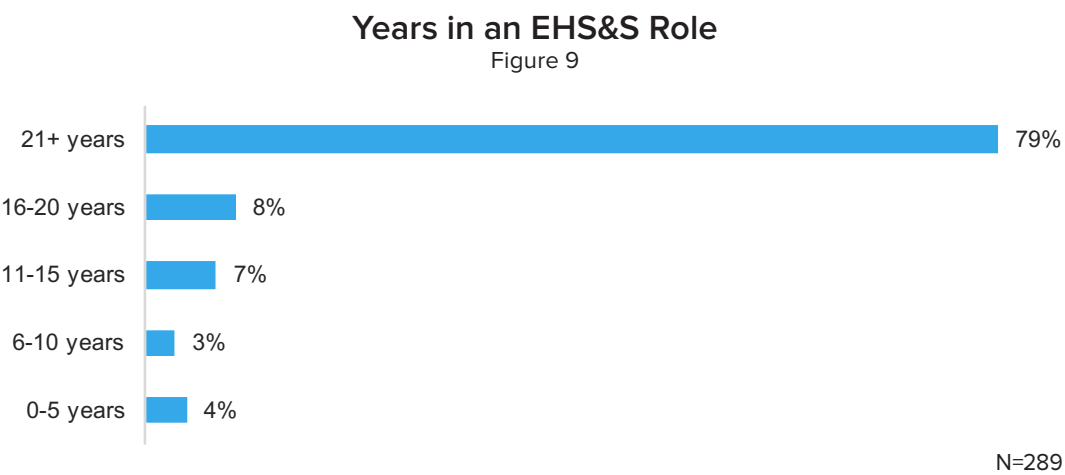
## Respondents are primarily U.S.-based

The respondents in this segment are primarily based in the United States (94%).



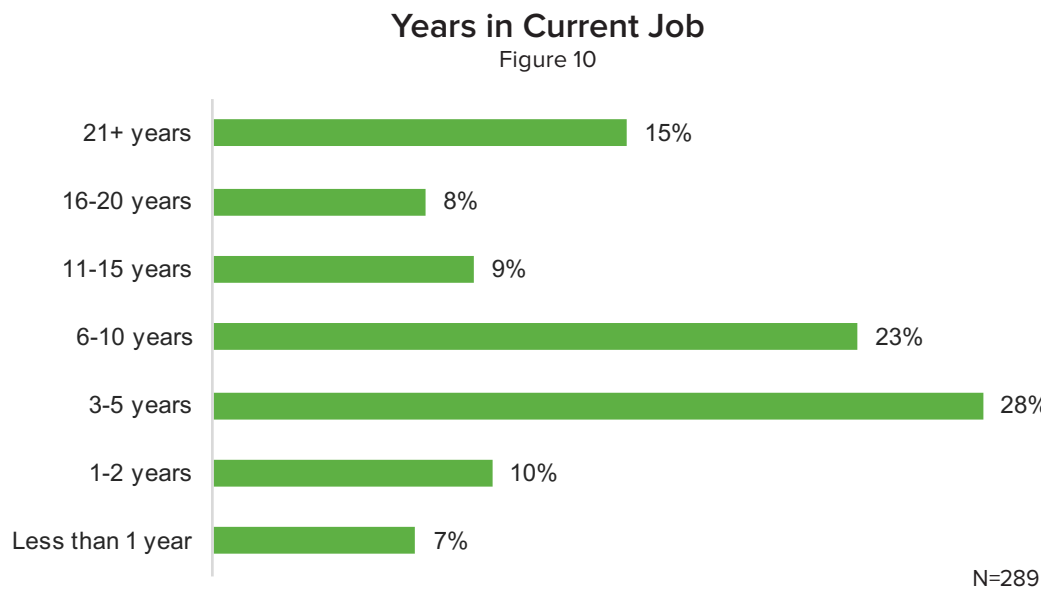
## Respondents in this Segment are Mature Professionals

The majority of respondents within this segment have gained their professional experience in the EHS&S field (79%).



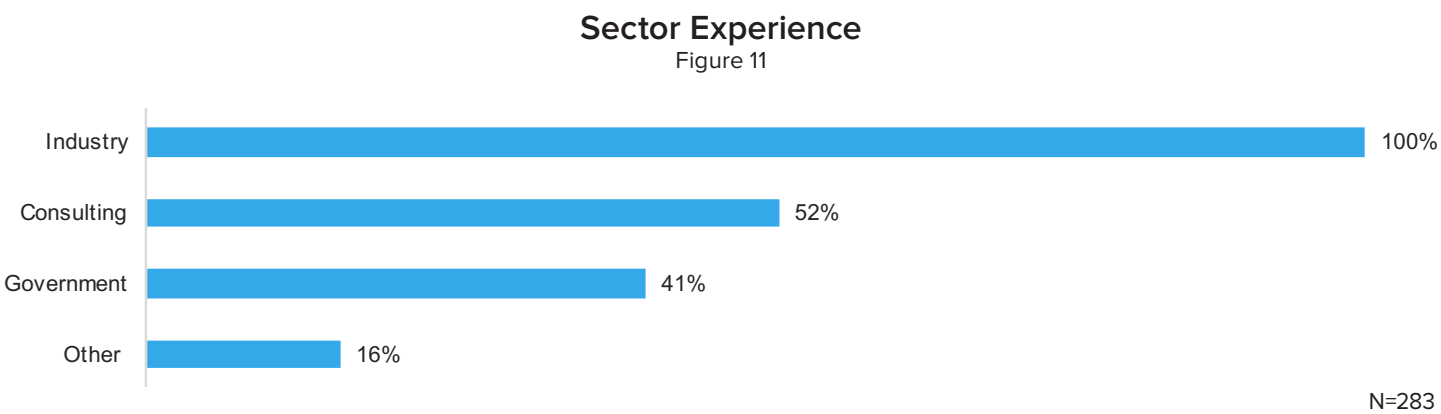
Almost half of Respondents Have Been in their Current Roles for Less than Five Years

At this stage, 45 percent of respondents have been in their role for less than five years; a full 68 percent have been in their roles for less than a decade.



Respondents are Bringing a Variety of Experiences to their In-house Roles

EHS&S professionals often begin their careers in other areas of the field. Within this segment of the respondents, more than half also had experience in consulting (52%), while an additional 41 percent had worked within government.





# Introduction

In documenting the stages of a corporate environment, health and safety, and sustainability (EHS&S) manager's career, the underlying hypothesis was that distinct changes in responsibilities, knowledge areas and skills would emerge based on the numbers of years of a professional's experience. The quantitative analysis revealed, however, that the core competencies remain largely the same over the course of a career. Instead, it is how EHS&S professionals apply those core competencies, demonstrate personal initiative, achieve their level of accountability and expand their sphere of influence that evolve over time.

While EHS professionals' careers do not likely advance in symmetrical phases, an analysis of the data based on years of experience does reveal shifts in respondents' responsibilities, the application of their skills and the focus of their professional development efforts.

The profiles of each career stage featured later in the report will provide a detailed analysis of how and when these subtle shifts take place, highlighting how professionals at each stage arrived at their current position, the defining characteristics of that stage of their career, their current role and responsibilities, the key knowledge areas and skills for their career stage and what awaits them in the next phase. These profiles represent each of five 'stages' of an EHS career, characterized as follows:

### **0-5 Years: Early Career Professionals: Building Skills and Learning to Lead**

At the entry level, EHS professionals are focused on task-based work as they apply their foundational education in science or engineering and explore the opportunities of their new field. In addition to applying their technical knowledge, early professionals communicate their operational goals with coworkers and cooperate in their implementation. Some professionals in this career stage will seek a career boost from a graduate degree or certifications.

### **6-10 Years: Advancing Managers: Increasing Responsibility and Specialization**

With proven experience of delivering and demonstrating basic leadership skills such as effective communications and influencing, EHS professionals start to gain increasing responsibility for program management. This is also a time when they may be completing graduate degrees or achieving a first round of certifications, as they start to specialize in the areas of strongest professional interest to themselves. At the same time, they may seek out mentoring to help them round out their business acumen or gain the executive visibility they will need to continue to advance along a management track.

### **11-15 Years: Emerging Leaders: Refining the Career Path and Expanding the Sphere of Influence**

This career stage is marked by increasing responsibilities and broader involvement in EHS-related activities across the business. It is also a time when a split seems to take place between those with a stronger technical orientation and those who are pegged for succession, who will be presented with new management opportunities. Because there are more competent managers than available leadership positions, those who exhibited weaker leadership attributes or were less directed earlier in their careers may reach a period of 'career doldrums,' finding themselves without sufficient opportunities for advancement.

## 16-20 Years: Advancing Leaders: Accountability with a Global Reach

Those who have actively invested in their professional growth and demonstrated continued leadership potential throughout their careers may start to gain accountability at this stage of their careers. They might be the head of a functional aspect of EHS (e.g. safety or environmental), or gain authority over the full function itself. In addition to having more direct authority, their role broadens to become increasingly strategic in nature and global in its scope.

## 21+ Years: Experienced Decision Makers: Business Strategy and Legacy

At this stage, EHS leaders start to shift their focus to broad questions of business strategy and risk management from an EHS perspective. Those who have achieved these positions of leadership are likely also thinking about organizational design and succession planning as they consider how to add value to their companies during their remaining years at the helm.

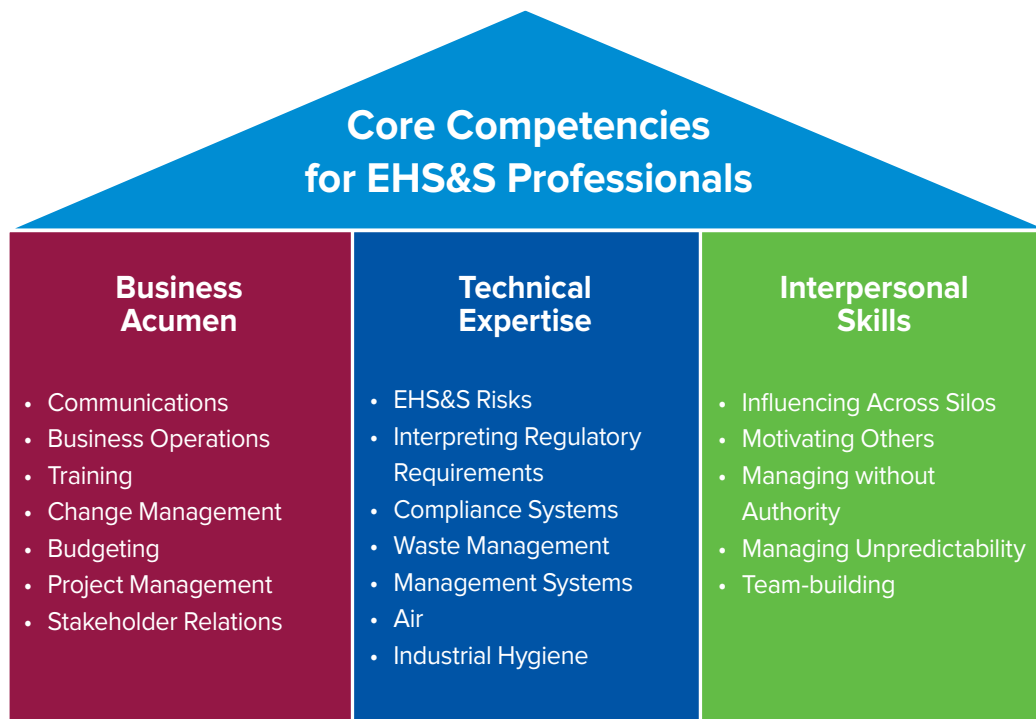
The research also revealed a number of broad insights that apply to EHS professionals regardless of the career stage:

### *Successful EHS&S leaders are well-rounded professionals*

One of the key findings of *EHS&S Career Profiles* is that it takes more than technical know-how to be a successful EHS&S professional. The most effective EHS&S professionals possess systemic thinking and communications skills to explain technical processes across departments, functions and geographic borders. Additionally, the EHS&S professional's ability to transition from a manager to a leader to a decision maker rests on business acumen, interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate effectively.

## Core Competencies

Figure 11

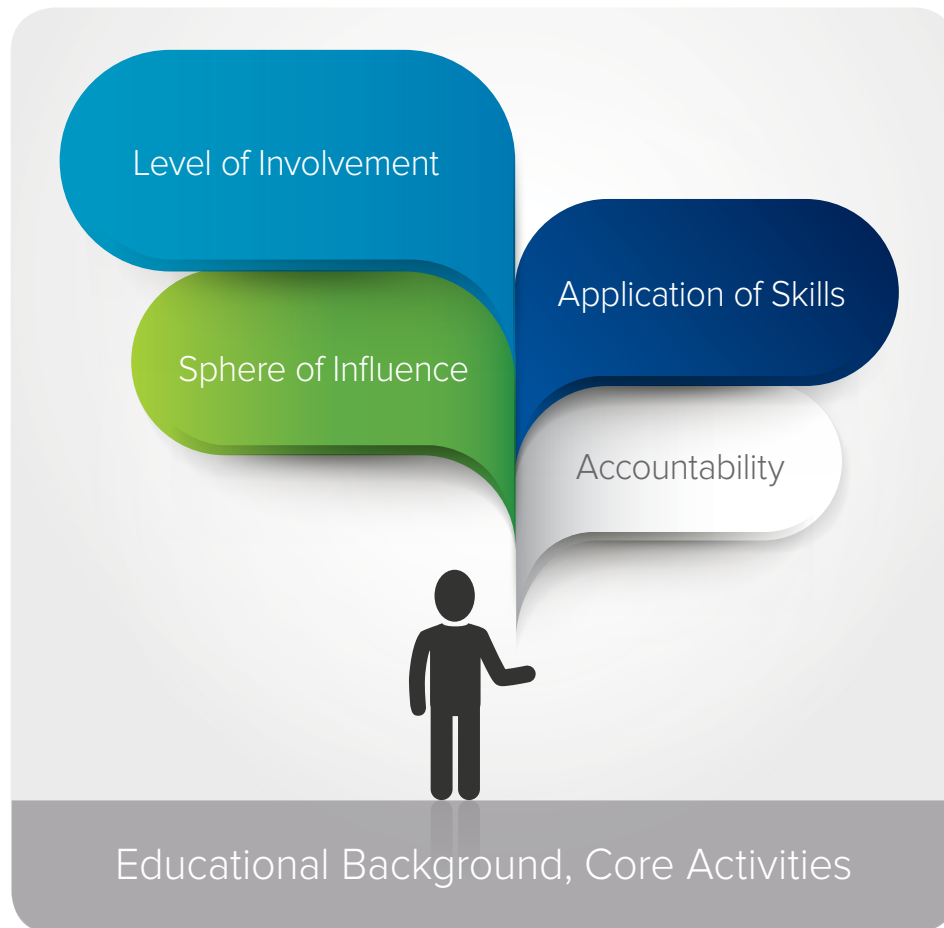


## *As EHS&S managers advance, they apply their core competencies in different ways*

Technical knowledge, business acumen and interpersonal skills are the three core aspects of an EHS professional's skill set. As they progress through their careers, there are differences in how EHS professionals apply their core competencies to their role, their involvement with activities outside of their core 'function,' their level of accountability for the outcomes and the scope of their sphere of influence.

### **How Core Competencies are Applied to EHS&S Roles**

Figure 12



## *Collaboration is a key aspect of an EHS&S professional's job*

As agents of change, EHS professionals are responsible for collaborating across functions to advance their programs. They do so, however, with limited direct authority except at the upper levels of management. Even then, the ability to collaborate, to communicate effectively and to be politically-savvy remain key skills as the sphere of their influence continues to broaden.

## *Advanced degrees and certifications are valuable for demonstrating expertise or helping EHS professionals round out their skill sets*

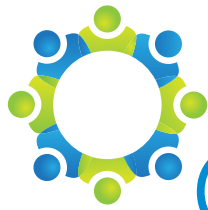
While most professionals in the field tend to have bachelor's degrees in engineering or the sciences, 51 percent of respondents also hold a master's degree, and another 57 percent have specialized certifications. For some, a certification may pave the pathway for more rapid advancement, as described by one interviewee: "If I wanted to move up quickly in the profession I needed to supplement that because I don't have years of experience - so how do I make myself stand out? How do I prove that I'm more worthy than somebody else? [The certification] was the ticket to it."

## *EHS managers need to be self-directed*

With job descriptions that provide a breadth of latitude, EHS management roles are best-suited to self-starters who can identify opportunities for continuous improvement and drive value through leadership. The initiative and creative problem-solving they bring to their work often means that successful EHS professionals have carved out unique roles for themselves within their organizational structure that would not be easily filled by just any other candidate with a similar skill set.

## *Leaders tend to have a growth mindset*

Regardless of their level within a company, those who expressed an interest in a leadership position also demonstrated a desire to master new skills and actively sought out new opportunities to learn. Indeed, one interview respondent summed up his leadership advice as follows: "Being naturally curious and always being in a learning mode," he said. "I think the biggest thing that prevents a lot of people from progressing in our field is that they think that if they get a certification then it's just stop, or they think that if they get a degree... now they own the world. They get into their role but they just kind of do it fast enough; they don't try to learn further. That's one piece and then the second thing I would say is always trying to push the limits or always trying to kick up the ambition levels."



# Career Stage Profile

**21+ Years: Experienced Decision Makers**

Leadership and Legacy

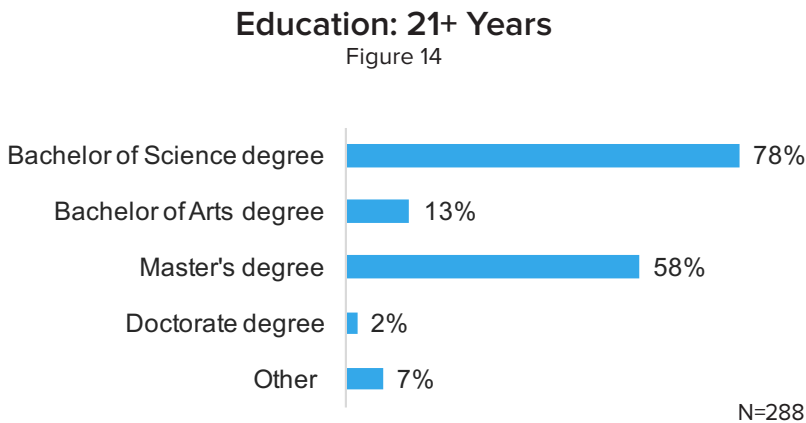


# Profile: 21+ Years

This career stage is characterized by the demonstration of leadership and awareness of one’s impact and contribution to the organization. For some, the role fully matures into that of an executive-level business leader. These experienced decision makers with 21 years of experience or more have well-rounded skill sets thanks to their technical expertise, well-developed communication skills, political savvy and commitment to lifelong learning. At this stage, they use these skills to manage organizational risks, establish functional priorities, develop succession plans and mentor those on their leadership team. In this profile, we’ll explore how these seasoned EHS&S leaders think about their role, how they drive change in their organizations and the factors to which they attribute their current success.

## Path to Their Current Role

Like those starting out in an EHS&S career today, most experienced decision makers hold a bachelor of science degree (78%), most commonly in biology, chemical engineering or chemistry.



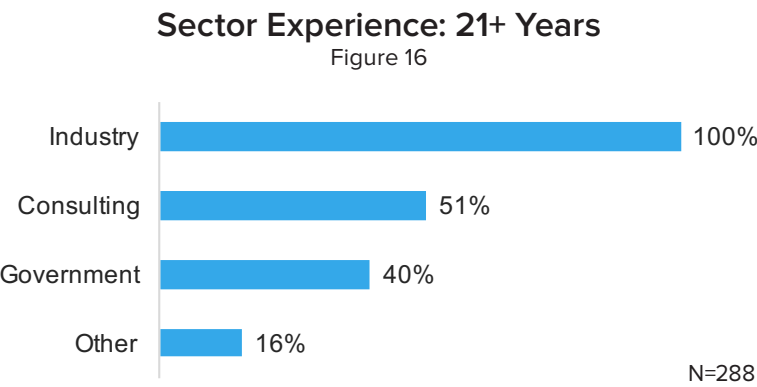
**Bachelor’s Degrees: 21+ Years**  
Figure 15

Degree	Percentage
Biology	20%
Chemical Engineering	15%
Chemistry	15%
Environmental Science	12%
Geology	6%
Environmental Engineering	6%
Civil Engineering	5%
Occupational Safety	3%
Mechanical Engineering	3%
Business	3%
Other	15%

N = 288

# Profile: 21+ Years

Slightly more than half (51%) spent time working in consulting; an additional 40 percent have government experience.



External influences, such as the development of environmental regulations, often affect career choices professionals make. EHS&S professionals with 21+ years work experience today were just entering the workforce when many environmental regulations were in their infancy and companies needed people to manage those compliance efforts. This required a different skill set and education than what many new professionals need today.

The value of working in different sectors was articulated by one interviewee: “This was in the early to mid-’80s, and hazardous waste, the whole RCRA thing, was just coming into effect and it was starting to impact industries [and affecting] how they were going to handle these new regulations along the lines of things like Superfund and managing waste. Some of the environmental regulations at the time were just really starting to kick in from a water and air pollution standpoint. This company, seeing that I had worked with the DNR on this specific topic, they thought, ‘Heck, here is the guy that had [a] waste internship; he’s got a master’s of planning. Maybe he can come in and help us as an industry.’ So they hired me, and then it just went from there.”

Indeed, more than half have a master’s degree (Figure 14, 58%); the most common master’s are business administration (13%), engineering (12%) and environmental science (11%).

**Master’s Degrees: 21+ Years**  
Figure 17

Degree	Percentage
Business Administration	13%
Engineering	12%
Environmental Science	11%
Public Health	6%
Industrial Hygiene	5%
Environmental Engineering	3%
Industrial Safety	3%
Environmental Management	2%
Environmental Health	2%
Occupational Health	2%
Other	15%

N = 288

## Profile: 21+ Years

More professionals at this level have an MBA than at any other stage of the career (Figure 18), which likely reflects the importance of business acumen to their career progression as well as to their role as business leaders.

### Hold a Master's of Business Administration by Years of Experience

Figure 18

Years' Experience	Percentage	N=
21+ Years	13%	290
16-20 Years	8%	64
11-15 Years	2%	57
6-10 Years	9%	46
0-5 Years	0%	30

This group also had the highest percentage of respondents with certifications (70%), a slight uptick from those with 16-20 years of experience (69%), according to the survey results.

### Hold a Certification by Years of Experience

Figure 19

Years' Experience	Percentage	N=
21+ Years	70%	290
16-20 Years	69%	64
11-15 Years	65%	57
6-10 Years	61%	46
0-5 Years	20%	30

The biggest increases in certifications held by those with 21+ years of experience compared with those at the 11-15 and 16-20 year ranges are in Certified Industrial Hygienists and Certified Safety Professionals. The increase seen in Certified Industrial Hygienists could be due to the AIHA respondents who participated in the survey. Certified Hazardous Materials Management certifications, on the other hand, decline slightly from 14 percent among the 16-20 year range to 12 percent among this group.

### Top Certifications by Years of Experience

Figure 20

Certification	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	21+ Years
CIH - Certified Industrial Hygienist	12%	9%	24%
CSP - Certified Safety Professional	18%	11%	21%
CHMM - Certified Hazardous Materials Manager	11%	14%	12%
Six Sigma Green Belt	21%	17%	11%
PE - Professional Engineer	4%	6%	10%
N=	57	64	290

## Profile: 21+ Years

---

The pursuit of certifications among experienced decision makers fits within a broader portrait of these leaders as self-motivated to invest in their careers at every stage. This emerged clearly from the qualitative interviews with leaders at this level, who talked about their certifications in terms of specific actions and decisions they made to create their success.

“I was pursuing the credentials during the specialist years, getting a graduate degree, getting my CSP, attending conferences to make sure I’m educated, keeping up on not just the technical skills but also developing strong computer skills background and then also seeing and observing how those people that I consider my mentors who are also my boss, my manager, our leader, observing how they interact. You know, picking up a book, reading a book on leadership skills, reading a book on financial intelligence,” one interviewee said.

This growth mindset, or attitude that talents can be improved and skills can be acquired, seems to show up among those on a leadership trajectory and characterizes this group in particular. One interview participant demonstrates this mindset in action: “It’s not only how do you improve your own performance, but how much of your personal success, your career success, comes from hard work versus natural talent?” he said. “When I look for candidates, I am looking for somebody who has shown that they can implement processes, is diligent, seeks opportunity out. I am looking for somebody motivated. I am eager when a candidate says, ‘What do I have to do to get to the next position?’”

The willingness and ability to take initiative was, indeed, a factor to which many of the experienced decision makers attributed their success. During a previous career in consulting, for example, one interviewee asked for more opportunity: “I noticed the one guy wasn’t doing too well with one of his teams. It was called training coordinator teams. So I had worked with my boss at the time and I said ‘Listen, I already talked to him. He doesn’t want to do this. Why don’t you give it to me?’ So I asked for it.”

He repeated this success tactic when he later switched to industry and had the opportunity to interview for a promotion within the EHS&S function. He said he was chosen over other internal candidates because “I came prepared to the interview. And usually it’s a small, small group. So what I did is I showed up to the vice president of human resources’ office for my interview with a presentation on the organizational structure. . . I had a pretty well-developed straw man that I had worked a couple of weekends to go over, not just my own personal skills, subject matter expertise, leadership skills, but also a plan in hand that could be worked and implemented fairly quickly. I also had an idea of how I would enhance the capabilities of the EHS team as far as bringing them up to a higher level of expertise and also bringing them together across all common processes.”

The interviewees also talked about the role mentoring played in advancing their careers. One interview participant observed how his willingness to take initiative and his growth mindset led to new skills through a mentoring relationship: “I said, ‘What is it that I have to do to move into those types of positions?, This was when I was an early manager, and at the time they said what you need is not an executive development course. What you need is a mentor, so they identified our vice president of operations as a potential mentor. . . we had conversations about different philosophies of leadership. We did a project together which was a corporate business continuity planning practice, which to me was invaluable because what that did was it gave me the capacity of looking at things from a much broader implementation perspective, how things get incorporated not just within my division but across all divisions. Then I had the capability of presenting the entire process to our senior staff at headquarters and implementing it at that level. So I got a little bit of what I would call executive visibility.”

The curiosity these experienced decision makers demonstrated throughout their careers revealed itself to be independent of their job title or level within the company. They described times when they took on new responsibilities, changed functions and even left positions with bigger titles to pursue roles that would give them additional opportunities to grow. This was the case of one director-level experienced leader, who left a company where he was the head of the entire EHS organization for a position with another company because it aligned more with his emerging interests.

## Profile: 21+ Years

“I was ready for something a little different,” he said. “I had been business director and done some of the global things, and I thought I would be interested in getting more involved in some of the risk management, risk control, loss control aspects of it. I had been working with our director of loss control at the time, and I thought risk management might have been a nice turn and a nice twist utilizing my experience, combining with some of the risk aspects of insurance and all those things. So I went to a smaller company that was looking for a director of loss control that would handle safety and some of their risk management services. It was a new company, and I thought it was a nice experience, so I jumped over to that.”

### Roles and Responsibilities: Strategists, Influential Leaders

Starting at the 16-20 year mark, the titles of those in an EHS&S management track start to shift from managers to directors. While some experienced decision makers bear the title of Vice President, the presence of director-level titles continues among those with 21 years of experience or more, as the levels of accountability remain unchanged or as professionals reach the ceiling of their company’s organizational structure.



Some may belong to an EHS&S leadership team, each with specialized responsibilities, reporting into an overall director-level position, as was the case for one interviewee with a director title: “We are under a director of environmental, health and safety that reports up to our law department, and I am the safety side of it, and then there is a counterpart on the environmental side, but we are all really one department. It’s not that much in separate silos.”

Regardless of their title, respondents’ role may encompass direct reports or a mix of direct reports and surrogates, who execute their programs but over whom these EHS&S leaders have no direct authority. In the first case, one interview participant described his role as follows: “I have managers reporting to me. I don’t have specialists reporting to me. I have currently five business areas. Each business has a manager with either dedicated full-time professionals or even dual- and triple-hatted personnel reporting to them from our small locations.”

For yet another interview participant, with more of a sustainability focus, his role brings broad accountability for outcomes without dedicated full-time employees. “I have lots and lots of people who take my direction, but I have nobody who I am actually doing performance reviews for,” he said.

## Profile: 21+ Years

The list of top responsibilities for this group strongly resembles those of EHS&S professionals at other stages of the career. The difference at this stage, according to the interviews, seems to be in how they do their job, which carries an emphasis on strategic planning, risk management and organizational development.

### Respondent Leads and Shares Responsibility or is Directly Responsible: 21+ Years

Figure 22

Responsibility	Percentage
Auditing	55%
Reporting to meet internal and external requirements	54%
Regulatory tracking	51%
EHS management information systems	50%
Setting EHS goals	49%
Environmental compliance	46%
Health and safety compliance	45%
Identifying key performance indicators for EHS	44%
Right-to-know	41%
Due diligence	40%
Information management	39%
Incident and safety management	39%

N=290

“I am responsible for the overall strategy and safety programs [for the company],” one interview participant said. “That means deciding what approaches we should take, and bigger scale, what do we try to pursue for our programs and our processes, what things do we think are important, which strategies we think will get [the company] where we want to be from an overall safety performance standpoint. Within that, certainly, there are individual responsibilities. I am responsible for our audit program, our procedure development and review. Some program components are behavioral-based and kind of are cultural processes and programs that we do.”

For another interview participant who belongs to the company’s sustainability function, his responsibilities have a policy and tactical component. “While there is a high-level group that manages environmental issues [at the company], the execution of specific parts are then delegated to the specific business units,” the interviewee explained. “Out of my group, we are responsible for implementing [a] worldwide program for achieving compliance with the conflict mineral requirements.”

Beyond the explicit programmatic areas, experienced decision makers are also often tasked with staff development, organizational design and succession planning, too. One interviewee described how he created a “book club” to help a member of his team who needed leadership development and support to adopt stronger interpersonal skills. Another participant said that he trains his team on the business concepts they need to see the bigger picture.

## Profile: 21+ Years

“From a business skills standpoint, I like to make sure that my group understands where the company stands as far as their financial performance. So I will explain the metrics that we discuss. I’ll talk about finances. I’ll talk about how cash flow is a critical point right now. That way they take it personally,” he said. “It’s the reality of the situation, and we need to be responsible to support that from our functional understanding.”

Thinking long term about the needs of the business and designing an EHS&S organization to address those needs are part of EHS&S leadership responsibilities, too. “As we grow globally, we are dealing a lot with English as the second language, and our experience levels are lower because we are finding we bring people in and they get a few years in with an international corporation and they leave, the turnover rate is higher, and we have younger, less experienced coordinators,” one interviewee said. “We are realizing that in order for us to be successful, we have to start thinking about how do we develop both what we have and how do we make sure they are successful. Some of our more sophisticated approaches, when you are dealing with less experienced people, sometimes fall flat. So maybe it’s recognition of, especially on an international basis, what levels we are dealing with and how do we develop that from a company standpoint because it’s just not there globally in some of our locations. So it’s one of the things we are thinking about from a plant standpoint.”

### Knowledge Areas and Skills

The technical skills, business knowledge and interpersonal savvy that experienced decision makers consider important to their roles look similar to those at other levels but are likely brought to bear in new ways at the top levels of corporate leadership.

#### Technical Knowledge Areas and Skills

At the top of the list of important knowledge areas among those with 21 years of experience or more is environment, health and safety risks (62%).

### Top Technical Knowledge Areas and Skills: 21+ Years

Figure 23

Technical Knowledge	Percentage	Technical Skill	Percentage
Environment, health and safety risks	62%	Interpreting regulatory requirements	56%
Regulatory compliance systems	54%	Written communications	49%
Management systems	36%	Oral communications	46%
Industrial hygiene	24%	Risk assessment	45%
Air	20%	Interpreting technical concepts into accessible language	33%
Waste management	17%	Auditing	31%
Environmental remediation	16%	Training	21%
Behavioral safety	16%	Innovation development	16%
Information management	15%	Quantitative analysis	13%
Engineering concepts	14%	Process safety management	11%

N = 289

N = 287

## Profile: 21+ Years

Given the importance of this knowledge area among this group, it's perhaps not surprising, then, that risk assessment is likewise more important among experienced decision makers than those who are earlier in their career. Almost half of those with 21 years of experience or more (45%) identified risk assessment as one of the most important technical skills, versus 43 percent of those with 11-15 years of experience and 34 percent at the 16-20 year mark. Only those in the 6-10 year group rated this as more important (53%). At the experienced decision-maker level, however, the focus on risk may be broader and more organizational in nature, encompassing aspects of financial, climate and business continuity alongside traditional EHS compliance areas.

### Risk Assessment Skill Important by Years of Experience

Figure 24

Years' Experience	Percentage	N=
21+ Years	45%	290
16-20 Years	34%	64
11-15 Years	43%	57
6-10 Years	53%	46
0-5 Years	38%	30

Interpreting regulatory requirements remains the top technical skill for this group, with 56 percent (Figure 23) identifying this as most important to their role. Written communications (49%) and oral communications (46%) skills also rise to the top, as they do for every other group.

### Business Knowledge Areas and Skills

Knowledge of communications (79%) and business operations (66%) continue to rise to the top among this group, reinforcing their importance in the career-long success of an EHS&S professional. "I endured the pain of presentations and I think I got better at it," one participant said. "So I do a lot of presentations now on various topics."

### Top Business Knowledge Areas and Skills: 21+ Years

Figure 25

Business Knowledge	Percentage	Business Skill	Percentage
Communications	79%	Decision making	59%
Business operations	66%	Program management	52%
Training	53%	Change management	44%
Budgeting	36%	Strategic planning	42%
Stakeholder relations	31%	Project management	30%
Finance	10%	Policy development	23%
Marketing	6%	Political savvy	19%

N = 287

N = 286



## Profile: 21+ Years

Knowledge of communications is about more than just memos and presentations, however. Communications also enable experienced decision makers to drive the outcomes they seek, as one interview participant with a sustainability role explained: “One of the prides of my career has been taking all of these concepts in environmentalism and turning them into something that engineers can incorporate... How do you actually go to an engineer and say, ‘Design that to be more sustainable?’ That’s not going to get anything, but if you can go to the engineer and say, ‘Here, we’ve done a lifecycle assessment. We’ve numerically identified what we believe is the environmental impact with this product and how the product manifests these environmental impacts. Your job now is to look at these areas that we have defined and redesign your product to mitigate or reduce them.’”

As a further reflection of their authority and accountability, this group identifies decision making as the top business skill (59%), compared with 54 percent among those with 11-15 years of experience and 55 percent among respondents in the 16-20 year group. The second most important skill is program management at 52 percent. This is on par with those at the 16-20 year mark, perhaps because there is overlap in responsibilities between those with this level of experience, depending on how the company structures the function. There is a marked increase in the importance of strategic planning among those at the 21+ level (42%), when compared to their counterparts with 16-20 years of experience (34%), which may underscore their role as strategists.

### Top Business Skills by Years of Experience: 21+ Years

Figure 26

Skill	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	21+ Years
Decision Making	54%	55%	59%
Program Management	51%	52%	52%
Strategic Planning	37%	34%	42%
N=	57	64	286

### Interpersonal Skills

When it comes to the softer skills, influencing across silos (61%), influencing upwards (51%) and managing without authority (46%) are the top interpersonal skills for experienced decision makers, as they have been throughout their careers. At this level, EHS&S leaders are looking to integrate concepts into business operations, as well as to drive change across the organization. “As you learn early on, it’s more than just following regulations, the rules and procedures, but how do you motivate, how do you influence from outside, how do you influence people that don’t work directly for you, why do people make the choices they do, what influences behavior both at an individual and an organization standpoint?” one participant noted. “It continues to be what interests me the most, kind of how do you influence change in organizations?”

Influencing change effectively requires communication skills, interpersonal savvy and deep understanding of how organizations work. One interview participant, whose role relies on finding surrogates to assist with his strategies, described his process. “Very quickly you can look at an organization or work with an organization, and you really do begin to identify these people who really are the ones who are pushing the organization forward. They are the ones who have been given the responsibility by the company to really drive the company forward, and those people are not necessarily the president of the company. They can be people throughout the organization,” he said.

## Top Interpersonal Skills: 21+ Years

Figure 27

Interpersonal Skill	Percentage
Influencing across silos	61%
Influencing upward	51%
Managing without authority	46%
Motivating others	39%
Team-building	29%
Managing unpredictability	27%
Conflict management	26%
Managing others	22%
Negotiation	19%

N = 287

As described by the interviewees in the context of their roles and responsibilities, leadership skills such as motivating others (39%), team-building (29%) and conflict management (26%) are also important for these leaders (Figure 27).

It's noteworthy that being ethical is dramatically more important to those at this level versus their counterparts at other career stages. After collaborative (cited by 51%), 49 percent of experienced decision makers reported that this was the most critical attribute for being effective in their role. This may reflect their role as more than just a leader but as the moral compass for their company or as a role model for their team. Accountability also ranked high on the list of critical attributes (46%), which is consistent with the level of involvement these professionals have in the day-to-day management of EHS activities within the company.

## Most Critical Attributes for Being Effective in Current Role: 21+ Years

Figure 28

Critical Attribute	Percentage
Collaborative	51%
Ethical	49%
Accountable	46%
Approachable	36%
Trustworthy	32%
Flexible	30%
Respectful	24%
Committed	23%
Creative	20%
Objective	20%

N=290

Supplemental Information

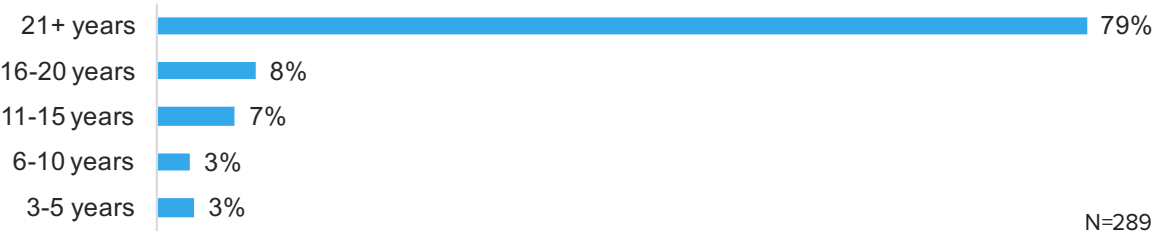
The full survey included questions on respondents' education, professional background, salary and the behaviors and attributes that are critical to success in their role. Below is a list of supplementary figures for professionals with 21+ years of experience.

Salary: 21+ Years  
Figure 29

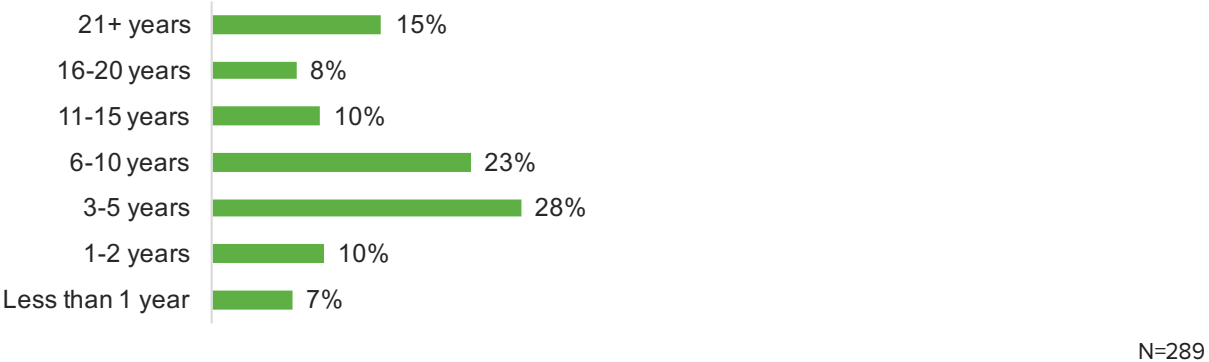
25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile	100th Percentile	Average
\$99,527	\$120,000	\$154,000	\$290,000	\$131,429

N = 167

Years in an EHS&S Role: 21+ Years  
Figure 30



Years in Current Job: 21+ Years  
Figure 31



**Most Critical Behaviors for Being Effective in Current Role: 21+ Years**  
Figure 32

Critical Behavior	Percentage
Action-oriented	48%
Attention to detail	42%
Considers stakeholder interests and concerns	32%
Positive attitude	32%
Multi-tasking	31%
Business acumen	27%
Customer service-oriented	26%
Good listener	24%
Systems thinker	24%
Long-term thinker	23%
Deals well with ambiguity	22%

N = 288

## Parting Thoughts

For those who have reached the top of their careers, the next steps are about the value they hope to create for their companies and the impact they want to have on the people who succeed them. Through the qualitative interviews, respondents also shared their wisdom regarding the attributes that make a good leader:

### On the Value of Expertise

“Experts are a dime a dozen...I think people who are effective at getting things done are not a dime a dozen. If someone can effectively be a change manager, bring change and get that change accepted, approved and implemented within a company, that ability is not nearly as common as the experts.”

### On the Importance of Being a Role Model

“To me, the initiative piece and the drive are critical to leadership, because you want your people to look at you and say, ‘[I] aspire to be that way,’ and they have an idea of what they can do to get to that position. So part of that is continual education, continuous striving to be better and also solving problems for the company. They kind of all meld together, I think, as providing a good leadership approach.”

### On Learning How to Build Consensus

“I had a tendency in the past to talk over people and just take charge. So I’ve learned I need to really step back, listen a whole lot more and bring in people that I probably wouldn’t bring into a normal meeting because I thought, ‘Well, we’re not going to get along,’ and it was more [about] their personality. They might be an introvert, and I don’t relate as well to an introvert, or they might be some other type of personality I might not relate to well. Well, my thinking is now, ‘That’s who I want in this meeting, because they’ll be my devil’s advocate and we’ll have a better process for it.’”

### On Continuing to Grow, Every Day

“I think you never stop learning what it is that motivates people, and to me, it’s always a challenge, even with senior management. I mean, as many years as I have been doing that, there is always something that you learn. There are some really talented, sharp people at the top, and just kind of seeing how they approach problems or issues when you are dealing with bigger issues and seeing their approach or how they tackle a particularly complex issue. Those are things that you can never stop learning, because they are always a little bit different and the approach that they take...I am always seeing things that other people have done outside and inside our group that are just like “Oh, that was a really smart way to do that.” So just continually identifying those things is always something you grow with.”



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