

2023 Virginia Economic Development Salary Survey



*Sponsored by: Virginia Economic Developers Association and
Creative Economic Development Consulting*

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Executive Summary

Ensuring your economic development organization has a competitive pay and benefits structure is critical to recruiting and retaining talented people. The 2023 Virginia Economic Development Salary Survey is designed to capture trends and practices in pay and other compensation practices across the economic development profession in Virginia. With 30% of respondents reporting retirement plans within the next 10 years, it's more important than ever for economic development organizations (EDOs) to evaluate compensation structure to recruit future talent and keep the pipeline strong. This survey, along with national data from the International Economic Development Council, can help EDOs be confident they have the latest information about the profession.

A few notable results of the 2023 salary survey ones:



83% of respondents work at a local EDO



78% received an increase in pay last year.



44.2 Average Age

The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) and Creative Economic Development Consulting (Creative EDC) sponsored the salary survey in order to provide information to EDOs. The survey was designed to closely mirror the survey administered by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), in order to draw comparisons between state and national data. The survey was distributed by VEDA and Creative EDC in January 2023. The survey findings were presented at the 2023 VEDA Spring Conference and the report is available to members and nonmembers via VEDA and Creative EDC websites.

The survey had 155 responses, of which 92% were practitioners. These are the responses included in this analysis, as the purpose of the survey is to assist EDOs with establishing compensation and benefits practices to retain and attract talent.

The average respondent was the top executive working for a local government economic development organization in a jurisdiction of less than 250,000 people. The budget size of the respondents' organization was across a wide range, with 35% of budgets above \$2 million and 28% at \$400,000 or below. The typical staff size of a Virginia economic development office is smaller than the national average, with 62% of economic development offices having four or fewer people.

The average age of respondents is 44.2 and ages ranged from 24 to 69. Thirty percent of respondents plan to retire in less than 10 years. Racial diversity lags the national data, although gender diversity is at parity and comparable to national data.

30% retiring in <10 years



96% hold bachelor's degree or higher

Practitioners in Virginia have a higher level of professional development training than the national average. Nearly all respondents, 92%, have had formal economic development training, with 84% attending the Basic Economic Development Course. Nineteen percent of

19% are CEcDs

respondents are Certified Economic Developers. Ninety-six percent have a Bachelor's degree and 46% have Master's degrees. The average respondent has been working in the industry for 14 years, and in their present position for 5.2 years.

The average salary of a Virginia economic developer is \$104,177.

Title	VA Average 2022 Salary
CEO/Executive/Head of Organization	\$134,008
VP/Division Manager/Department Head/Deputy/Assistant Director/CFO/Controller	\$107,050
Program Manager Business Retention Manager/Business Recruitment Manager/Marketing Manager/Research Director or Manager/Policy Government Affairs Manager	\$86,322
Other Administrative/Support Staff/Consultant	\$61,750
Entry Level ED Staff	\$49,425

\$104,177
average salary

There is the opportunity for additional cash compensation for only 28% of respondents. Of those receiving additional cash compensation, the average received was \$4,755 and the median was \$3,500. Most economic developers do not have an employment contract in place.

As of January 1, 2023, 78% of respondents reported receiving an increase in base pay. The average increase was 7.3%. Nearly all agencies offer economic developers medical insurance and a retirement plan. A large majority of respondents are offered "paid time off," with an average amount of 3.7 weeks. Non-cash benefits are diverse and include technology, such as cell phones and laptop computers, as well as mileage reimbursement and use of a company credit card.

The salary survey offers insights into the pay and benefits levels that will be needed to attract professionals. Salaries are increasing, many are relatively new to their jobs, and a sizable portion are planning to retire in less than ten years.

As the economy continues to recover, there will be more competition for economic development professionals in the marketplace. The profession, led in Virginia by VEDA, should continue efforts to raise awareness of economic development as a rewarding career and to provide professional connection, training, and resources such as this report.



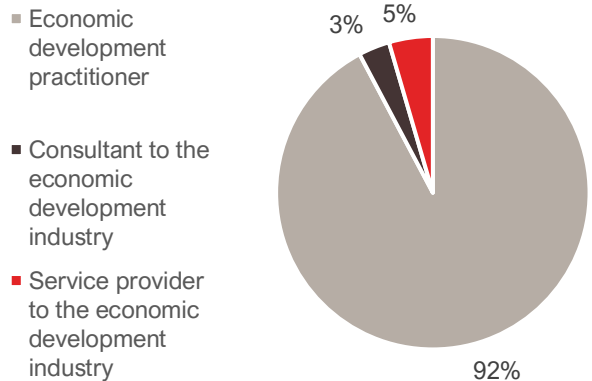
Findings - Who Responded

In January 2023, VEDA and Creative Economic Development Consulting surveyed economic development agencies across Virginia via an online survey. Responses were received from 155 participants, representing 27% of VEDA’s membership. The published survey report excludes some responses to include only the economic development practitioner responses, which were 92% of the total. The published report includes only the responses from this practitioner group.

The average survey respondent works for a local government economic development organization in a jurisdiction of less than 250,000 people. Of the survey respondents, 60% work in jurisdictions of 250,000 or fewer; 20% work in areas of more than 2 million residents.

Of the 155 surveys, three percent are consultants to the economic development industry and five percent are service providers to the industry, leaving 92% as economic development practitioners. Since the purpose of the survey is to provide information for Virginia economic development organizations for establishing salaries and other compensation and for recruiting and retaining talent, we only include the responses of the 92% who identified as a practicing economic developer.

What is your primary role?

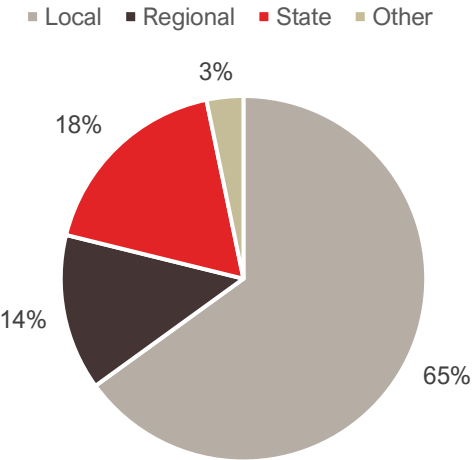


Looking strictly at the pool of economic development practitioners, survey respondents were substantially weighted (65%) toward those practicing economic development at the local level. Of those in a local agency, 92.5% work in a local government, 7.5% work for a private, nonprofit organization. There were no respondents in the Virginia survey from chambers of commerce, which is a common structure for local economic development in neighboring North Carolina as well as across the United States. The IEDC Economic Development Salary Survey for 2021 – the most recent available at the time of this writing – shows that seven percent of national respondents worked in chambers of commerce. Overall, survey participation was lower for state-wide (18%) and regional (14%) economic development programs. A small number of respondents represent utility economic development programs.

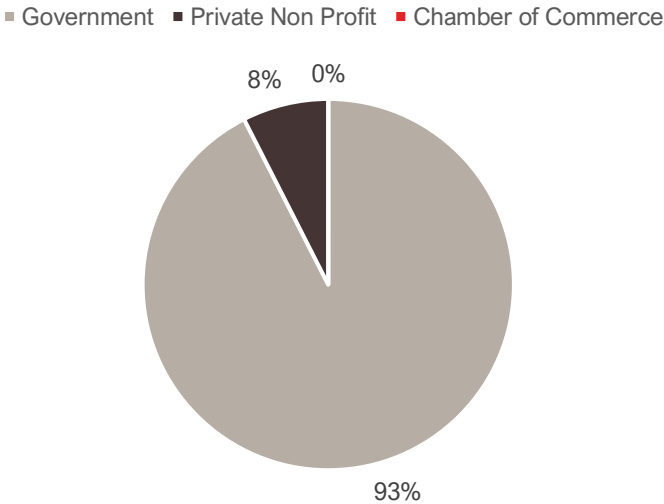
According to the latest survey published by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in 2021, the organization profile of economic development agencies in Virginia differs considerably from respondents to the national survey. While the national results show 35% are public-private partnerships, only 8% of Virginia’s respondents represented them. Conversely, where only 46% of national organizations were public, fully 60% of Virginia respondents work in public agencies with a local focus and another 18% work for state-wide agencies which are also likely to be public.



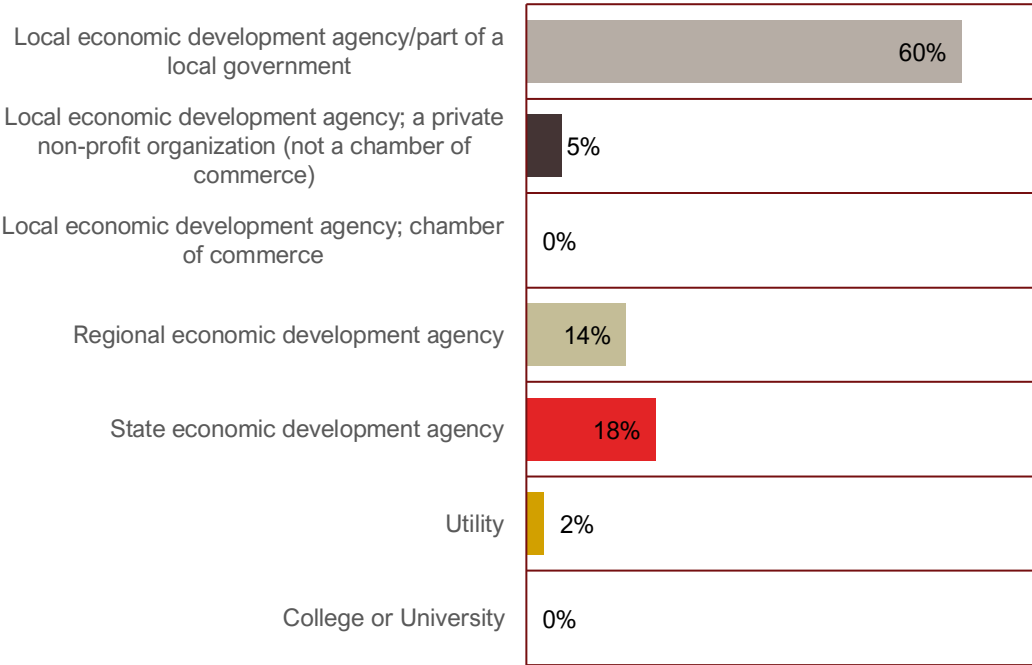
Where are Economic Developers Practicing?



Local Developers by Type of Organization



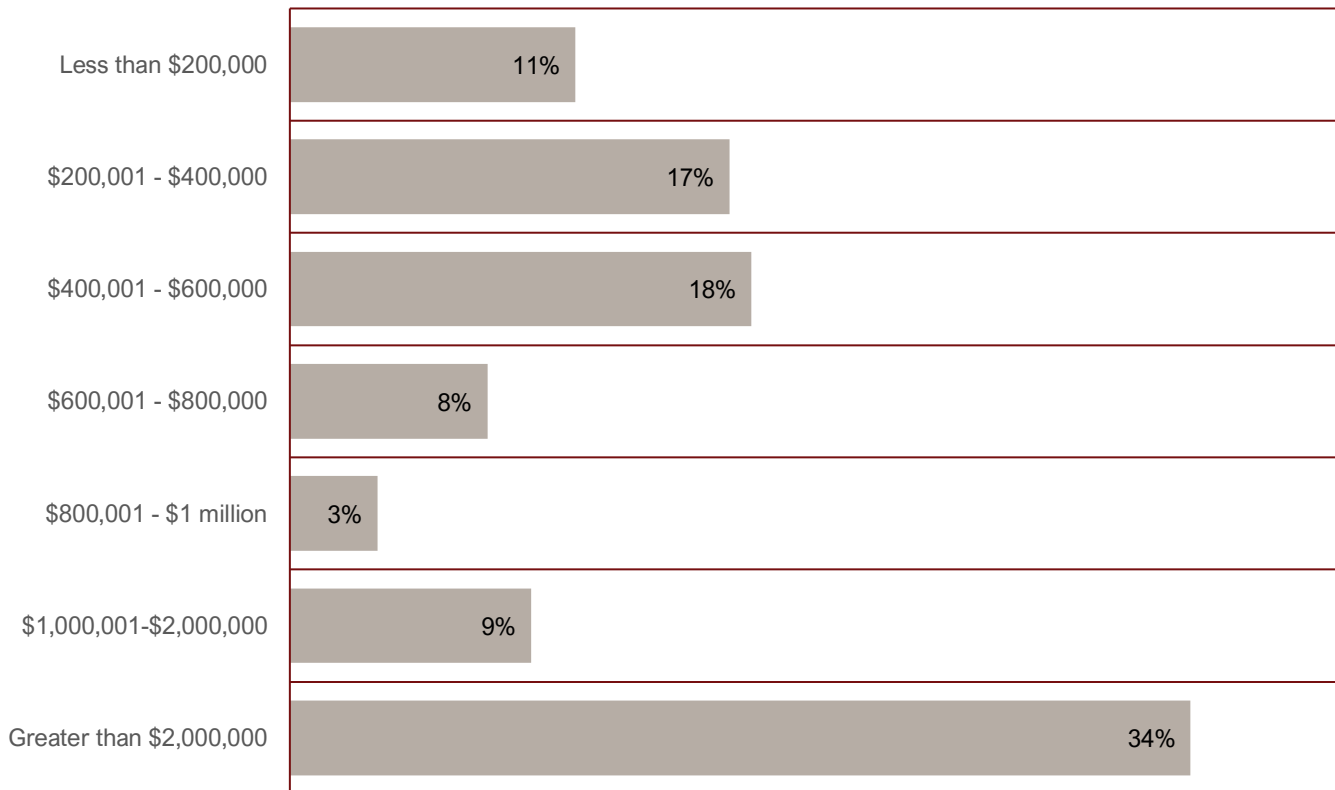
What sort of organization do you work for as an economic development practitioner?



Looking at the distribution of organization by budget range, the largest proportion - 35% - fall between \$200,001 and \$600,000. There is a sizable portion - 34% - that are in organizations with budgets exceeding \$2 million. These are likely the local economic development agencies embedded in larger city and county governments.

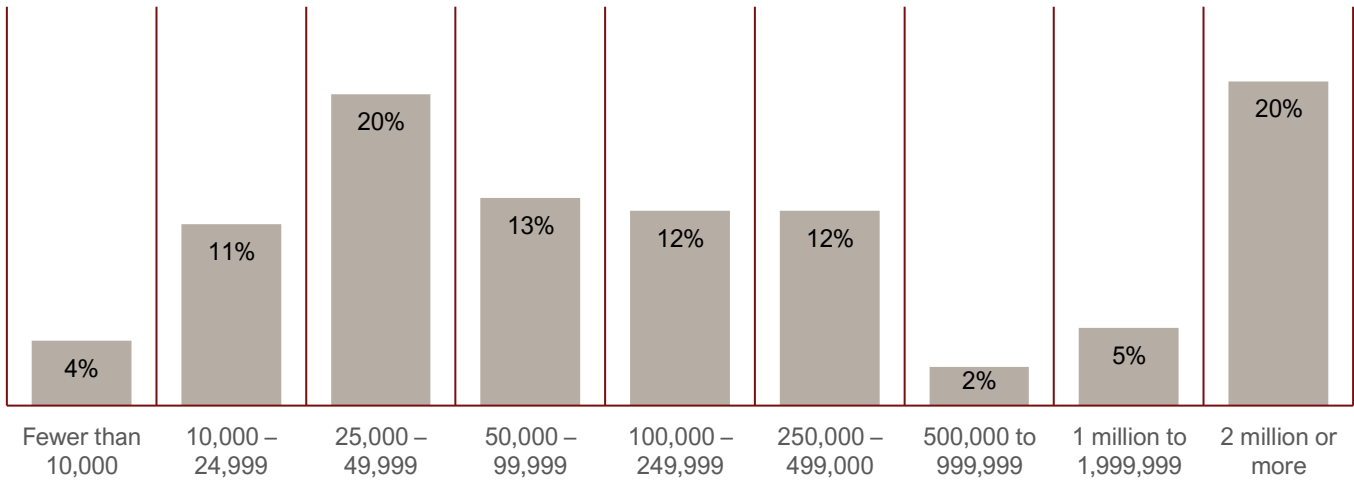
The IEDC survey includes organizations with higher funding levels than are found in Virginia. For public economic development agencies at the local level, more than 50% have budgets of \$500,000.

What is the total budget of your organization?

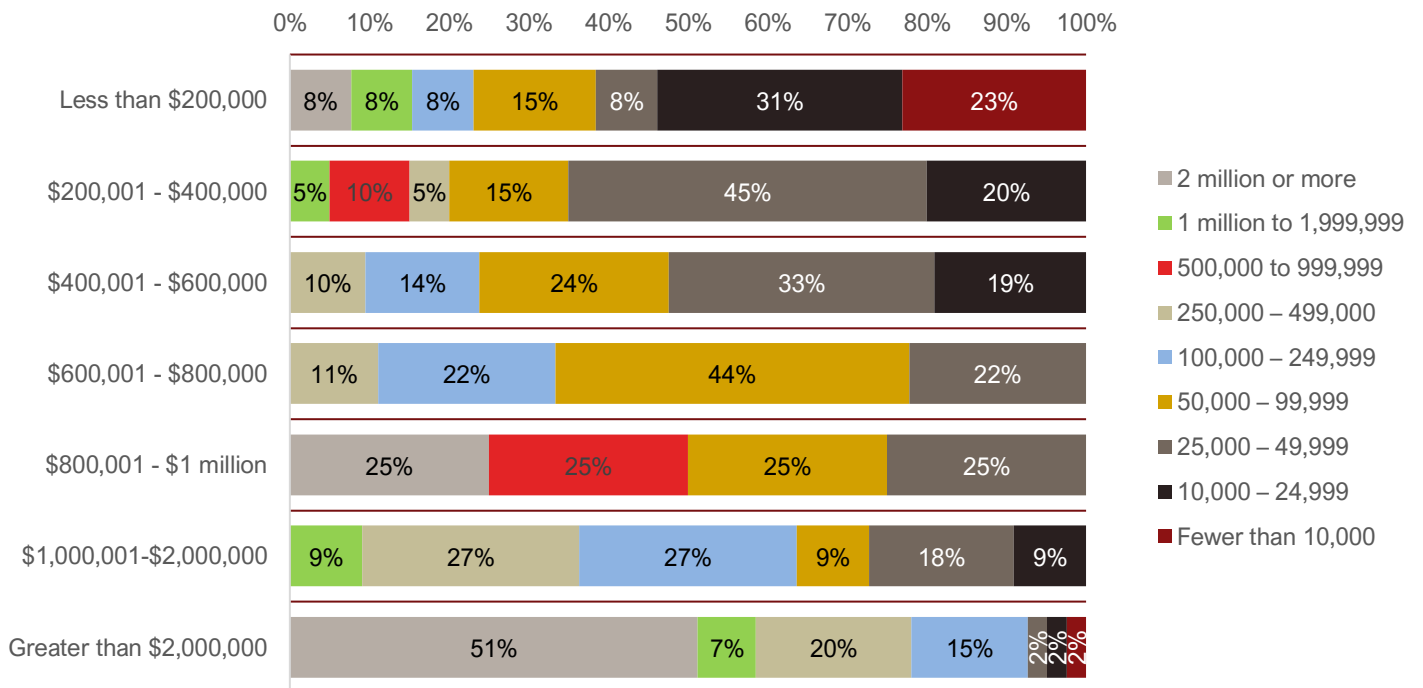


The populations served by the survey respondents are evenly distributed across a range from fewer than 25,000 to more than two million. Nationally, IEDC reports that more than half - 54% - of economic development programs housed in local governments serve fewer than 50,000. This is an indication of strong economic development programs in Virginia in communities of every size, including regional and state-wide programs.

What is the population of the area served by your agency or organization?



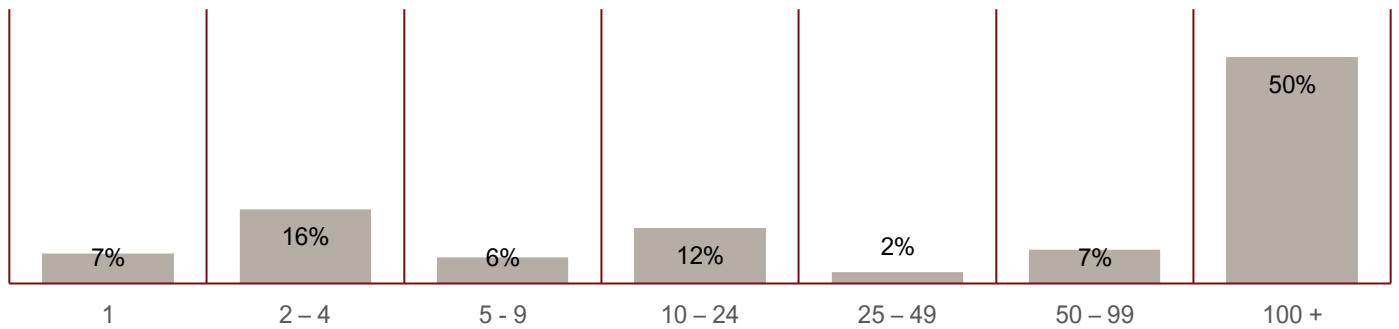
Population of the area served by budget category.



Organization and Staffing

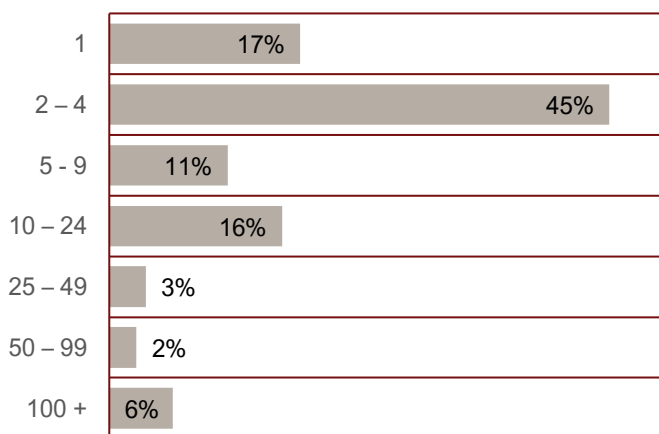
Half of the survey respondents work in organizations with more than 50 employees, signaling a level of sophistication and support for the economic development function as part of wider agencies.

Including yourself, how many full-time employees work for your organization or agency?



Nationally, IEDC respondents also reflect larger organizations, especially since they include multiple state and provincial governments with thousands of employees. Smaller agencies are also less likely to participate in the IEDC survey. This is probably due in part to the fact that in smaller offices staff have responsibilities for a wider range of activities; there are fewer titles/positions, and budgets are smaller. The organization size is important background when comparing salary and compensation practices since smaller organizations may be more informal and have fewer resources.

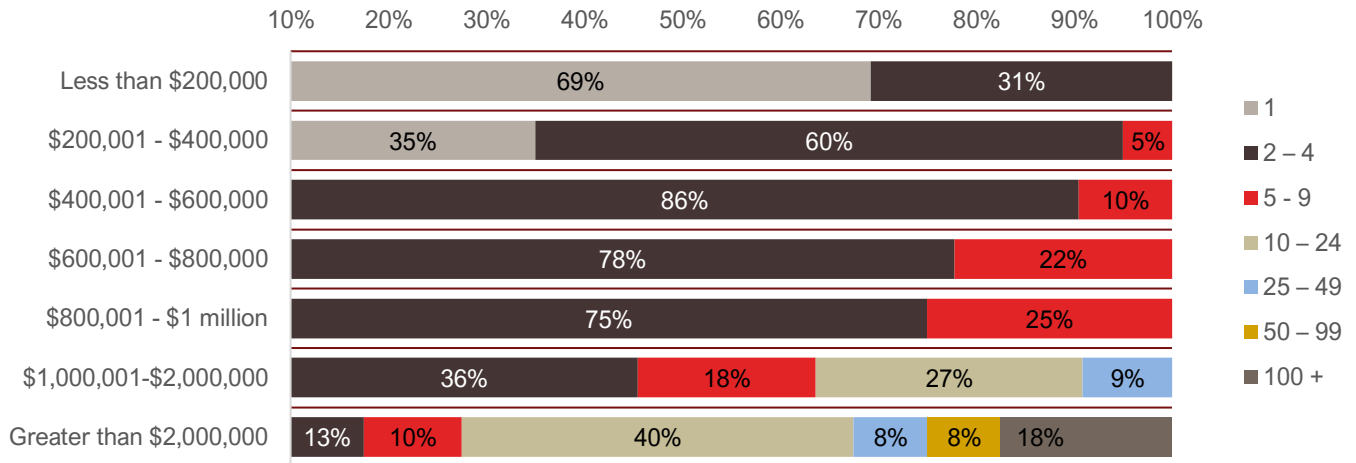
Including yourself, how many full-time employees work in your ED Department or operations?



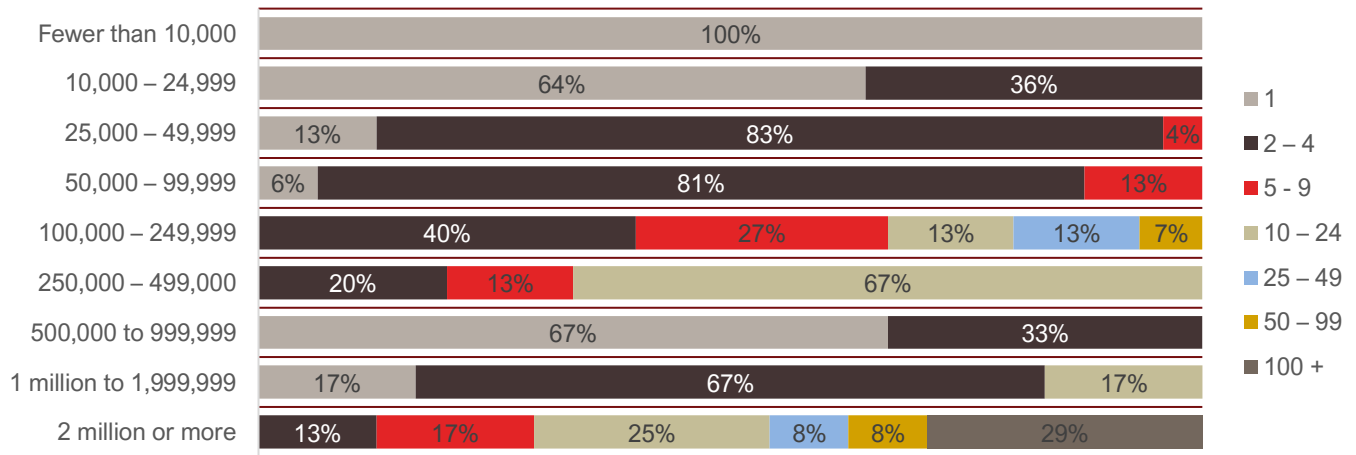
When asked to identify the number of employees working specifically in economic development functions, by far the largest portion of respondents (45%) chose two to four employees, while only 17% indicated one employee. In national data from IEDC, 51% of respondents reported an economic development department of four or fewer employees, which was a decline from the prior year survey. Another 11% of Virginia respondents have between five and nine employees. This reveals that Virginia's economic development staffs are predominantly (62%) four or fewer people.



Full-time ED employees by budget.

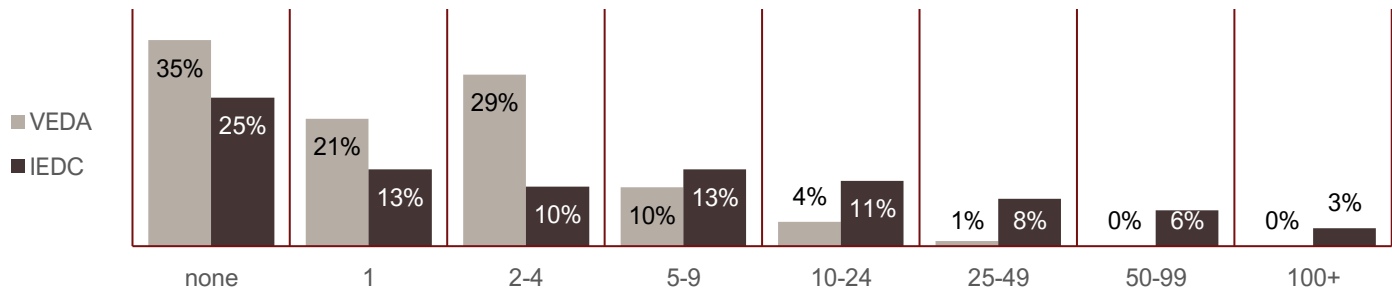


Full-time ED employees by population.



Respondents were asked how many employees they supervise, directly or indirectly. The largest percentage - 35% - indicated that they do not supervise anyone, and the next largest groups supervise only one person or supervise two to four people. This indicates that although these respondents may work in organizations with large budgets, the actual economic development function is relatively small across all respondents, where 85% supervise four or fewer people.

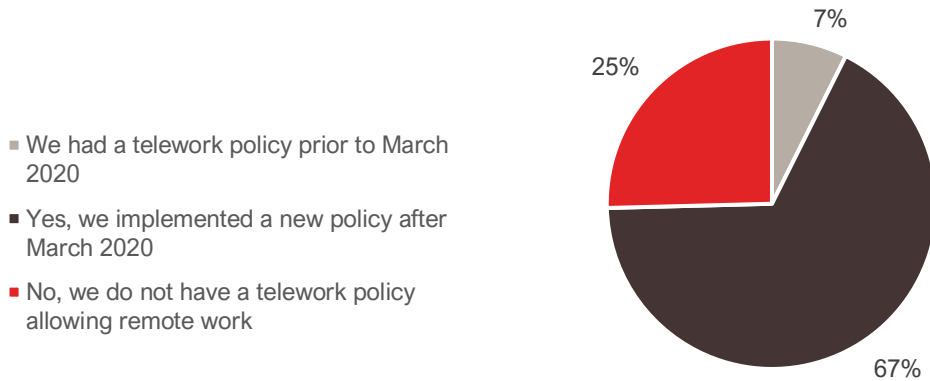
How many employees do you supervise, either directly or indirectly?



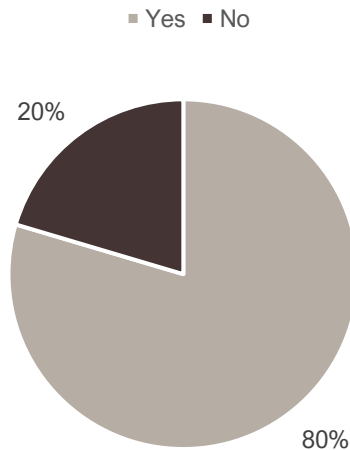
Remote Work as an Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

There are many lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in compensation and management practices, including the emergence of remote work. In order to see if remote work has been integrated into the workplace, the survey asked about remote or telework policies. A large majority, 67% of respondents, say that their workplace implemented a remote work policy after March 2020. A smaller number - 7% - had a remote work policy in place before then, leaving a significant group - 25% - of Virginia economic development organizations which do not have a policy for remote work. Nationally, 35% of organizations had a remote or telework policy in place prior to March 2020 and 76% of agencies have one in place now.

Did your organization implement a new telework policy allowing remote work since March 2020?



If you answered yes to the telework policy question above, is the policy still in effect today?



Demographics

The biggest issue in economic development today is talent retention and attraction for communities. This is also an issue in the economic development industry, relative to its own talent pipeline. Survey respondents were asked to indicate their age as of January 1, 2023. The average respondent is 44.2 years old; the youngest is 24 and the oldest is 69. This survey had 12% of respondents age 29 or younger and 22% of respondents age 55 or higher. Nationally, 25% of respondents are 55 or older. Virginia respondents are slightly younger relative to respondents to the IEDC national survey.

44.2
average age

30% retiring in
<10 years

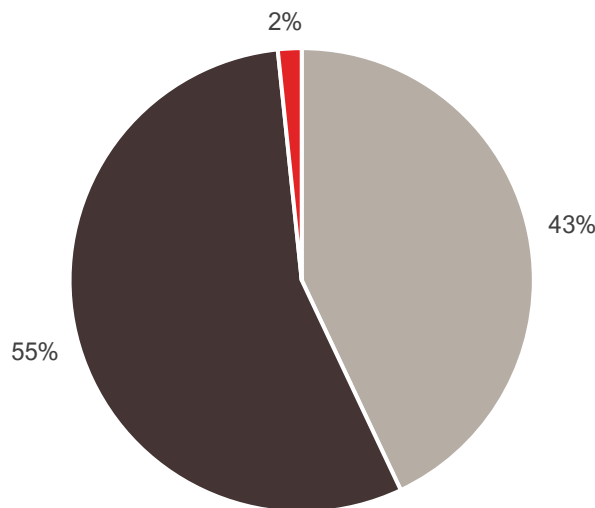
Of respondents to this survey, 19% plan to retire in fewer than 5 years and another 11% indicate plans to retire in 5 – 10 years. This makes the job outlook for economic development in Virginia promising, with 30% of respondents planning to retire in less than 10 years. This calls attention to the continuous need to attract new entrants into the profession including support and mentoring programs offered by VEDA. It also underscores the need for competitive salary and benefits information in a time of keen competition and

demand in this sector, as local governments and nonprofits compete to attract and retain talent to replace exiting professionals. Finally, this supports the need for well-developed pipelines of talent to enter the profession.

When asked to indicate their gender, results were 55% female and 43% male, with two percent preferring a different response. Nationally, gender distribution is also mostly female for the first time in that survey, with 46% male and 52% female.

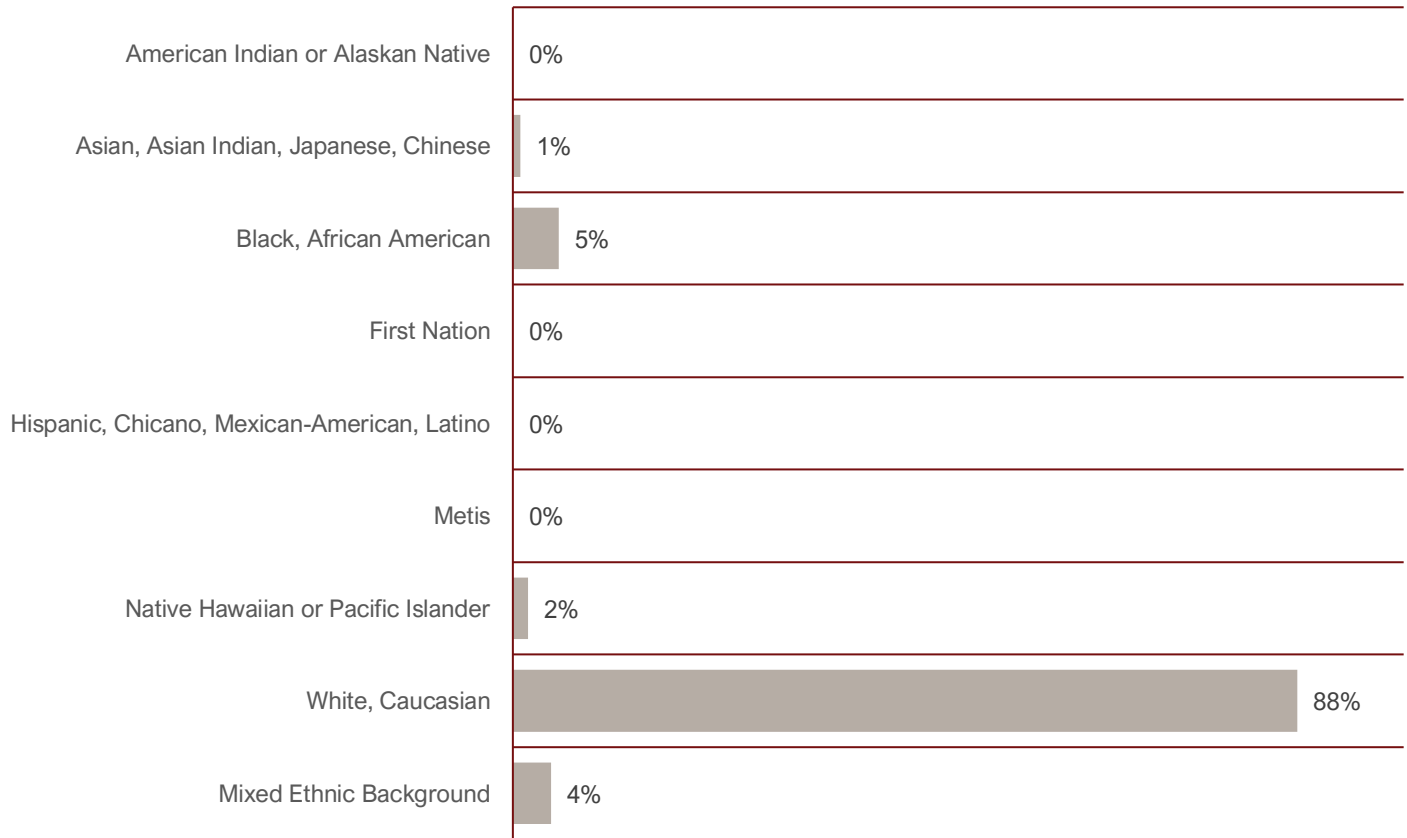
What is your gender?

■ Male ■ Female ■ Prefer to self-describe, not to say, or non-binary



The majority of respondents (88%) describe themselves as White or Caucasian, while five percent identify their racial/ethnic background as Black or African American. Nationally there was a wider distribution, with 73% identifying themselves as White or Caucasian, a reduction from 83% in the prior IEDC survey. Seven percent describe themselves as Black or African American, 13% as Hispanic, Latino/a/x or Spanish Origin, 6% American Indian, and 4% Asian. Virginia economic developers are not as racially and ethnically diverse as the nation.

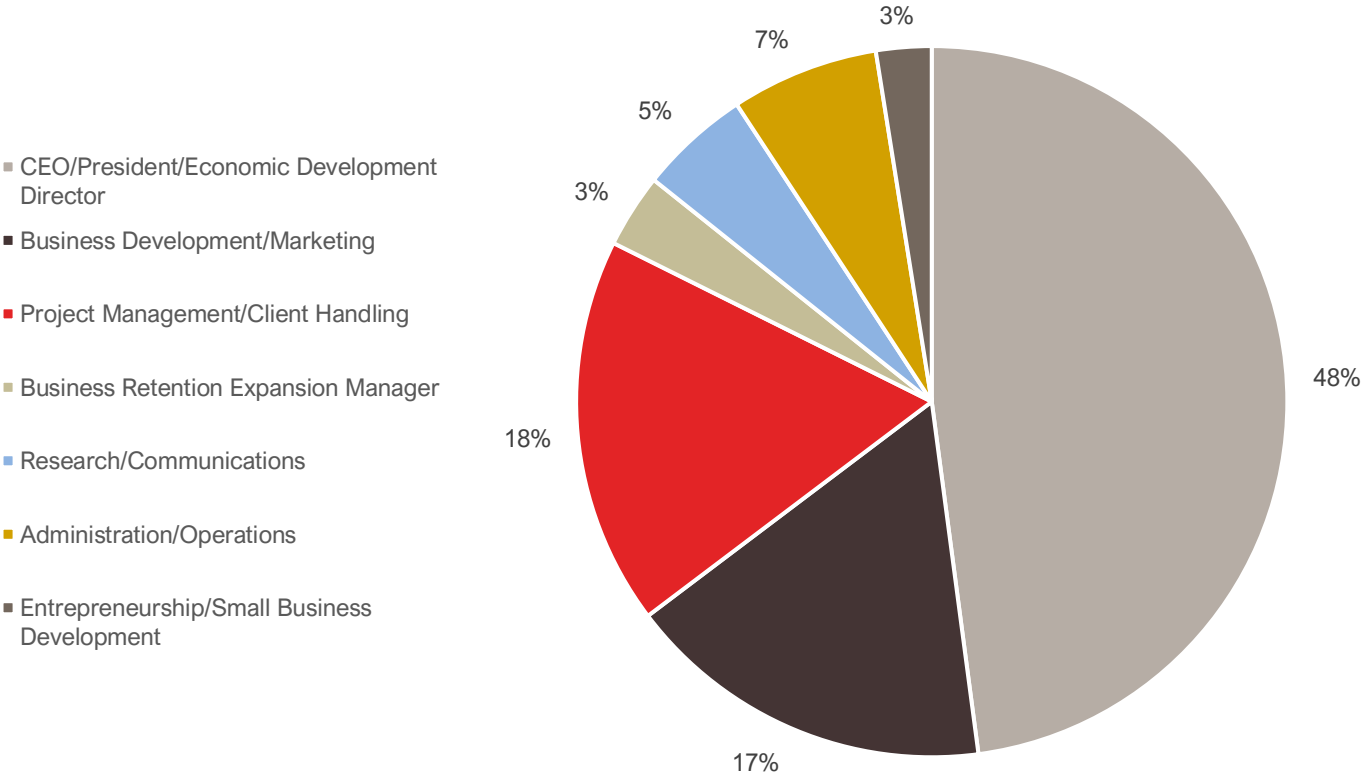
How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?



Professional Roles and Activities

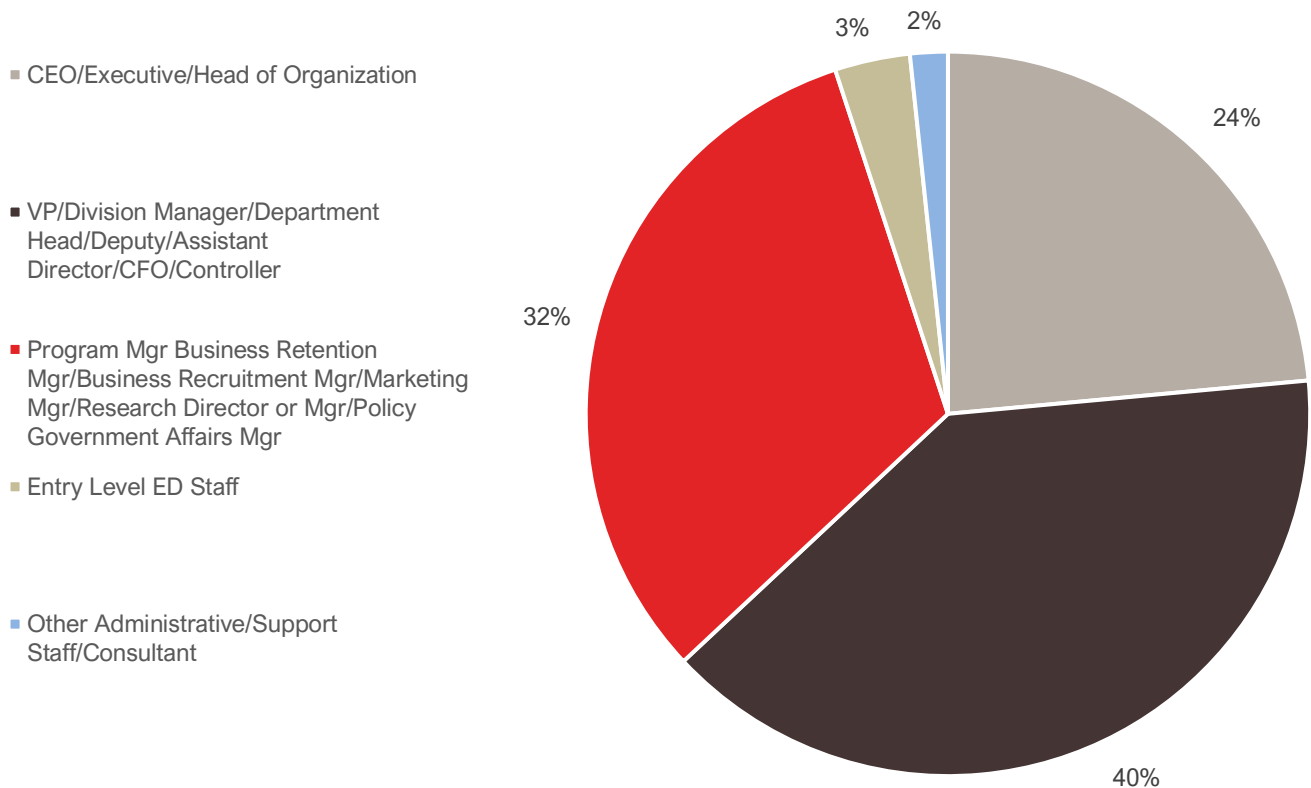
As may be expected, nearly half of all respondents are the Director or CEO of their organizations. The next largest share, 18%, indicate they work in Project Management/Client Handling, The third-largest group (17%) work in Business Development/Marketing. This gives an overview of the economic development talent profile in Virginia. The survey covered a wide variety of roles within economic development agencies.

What best describes your role/function at this economic development organization?



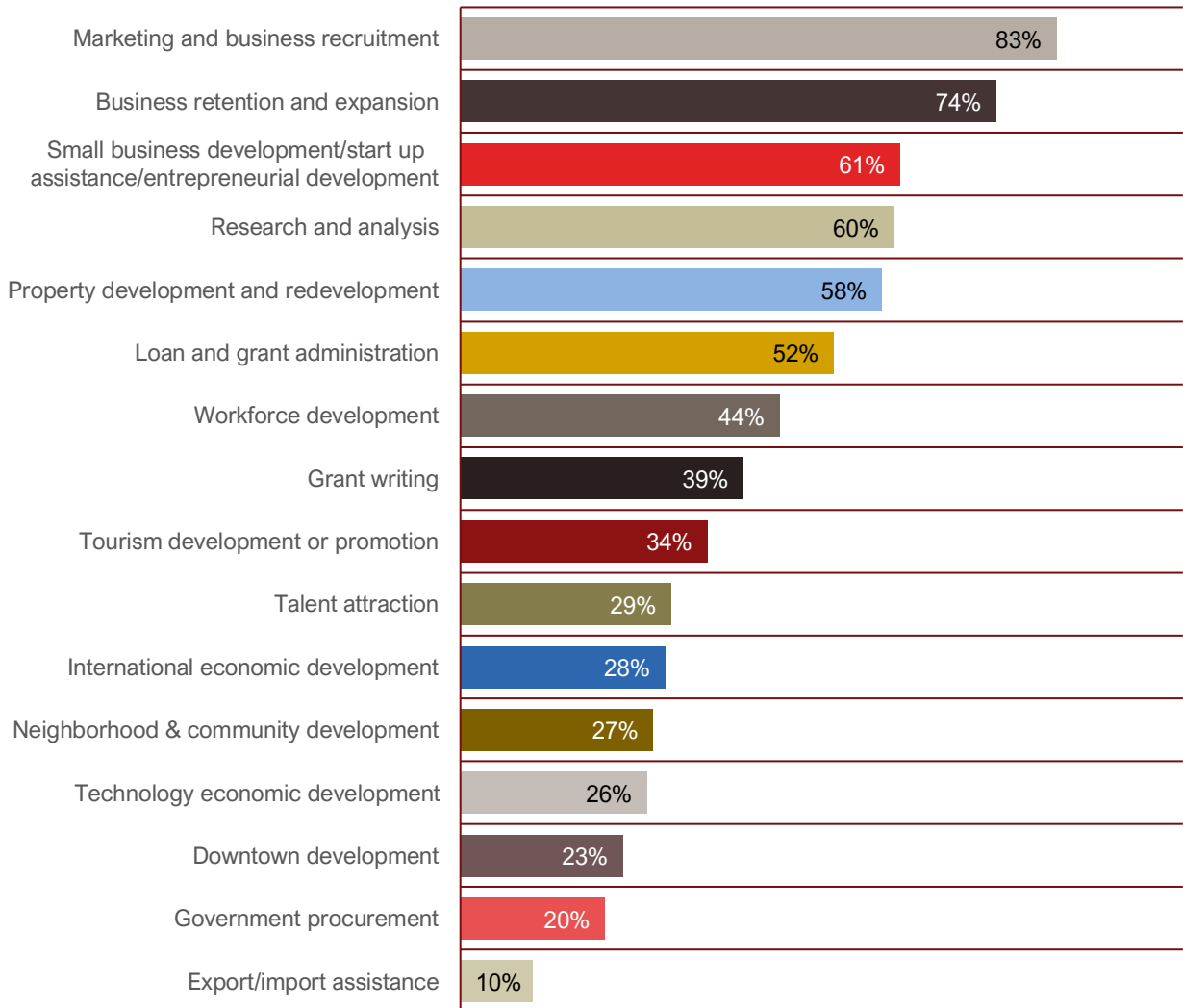
When asked to identify their title, 24% responded that they are the CEO or Executive of the organization, which aligns with the large percentage of relatively large organizations responding to the survey. The largest group (40%) are Vice Presidents or Division or Department Managers, and 32% are Program Managers. A smaller proportion are entry level or administrative. Nationally, 28% of respondents are the CEO/Director of the organization and 30% are Vice Presidents or Division Managers. This reflects the larger size and greater diversification of roles in agencies nationally than in the Virginia survey group.

What option best matches your current position/title within your organization?



The survey asks respondents to identify the economic development activities that they manage from a list provided. The most frequently cited activity is Marketing and Business Recruitment, with 83% indicating this is part of their portfolio. Next most common were Business Retention and Expansion, Small Business Development, and Research and Analysis. The relatively high percentages for each of these distinct areas of economic development illuminates the diverse skillset needed in economic development in Virginia.

Which of these economic development activities do you manage or perform?



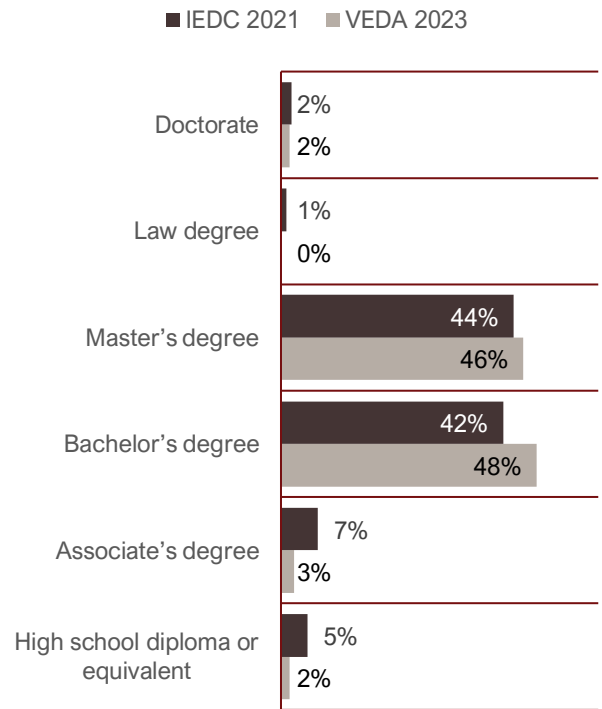
Education, Training, and Experience

Generally, practitioners in Virginia have more secondary education and training than the national average. Ninety-six percent of the professionals in the field have a four-year degree or higher, compared with 88% in the IEDC survey.

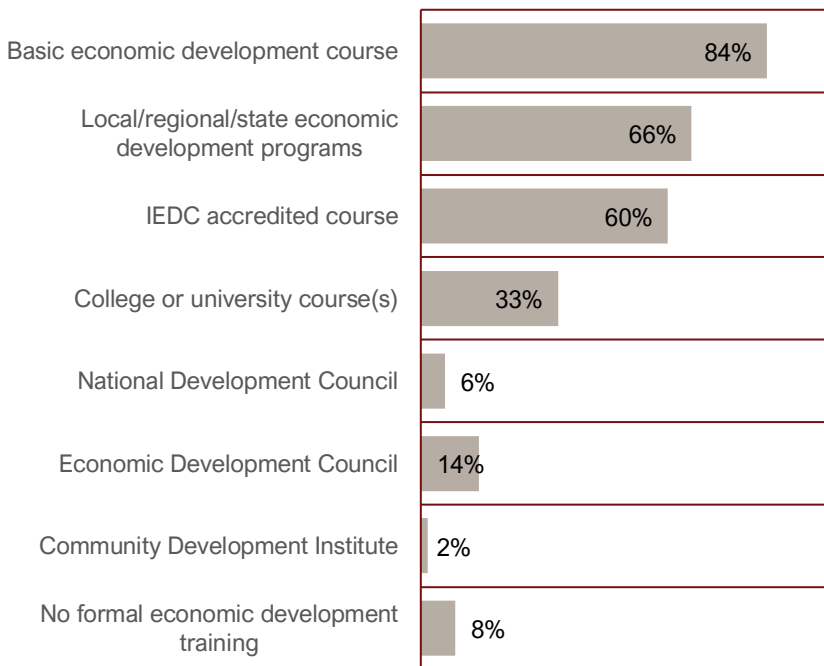
When asked to indicate the highest degree earned, 48% of Virginia’s respondents indicate they hold a Bachelor’s degree. Another 46% have earned Master’s degrees, and 2% hold doctorates. National data skews slightly higher toward Master’s degrees but lower in Bachelor’s degrees.

The economic development training most respondents in Virginia have participated in is a Basic Economic Development Course, at 84%. This is considerably higher than the national rate of 69% and could reflect the availability of Basic ED courses in nearby states. Another 66% have attended local, regional, or state economic development courses. Sixty percent have attended IEDC training courses, and 33% have attended college training courses. Only 6% of respondents have received no formal economic development training, indicating an emphasis on professionalism in the state considering the number of respondents with one or fewer years’ experience in the industry.

What is the highest degree you have earned?



What type(s) of formal economic development training have you had?



Nationally, formal training was less common, with only 69% attending the Basic Economic Development Course, 52% attending local/regional or state economic development courses, and 57% attending IEDC courses.

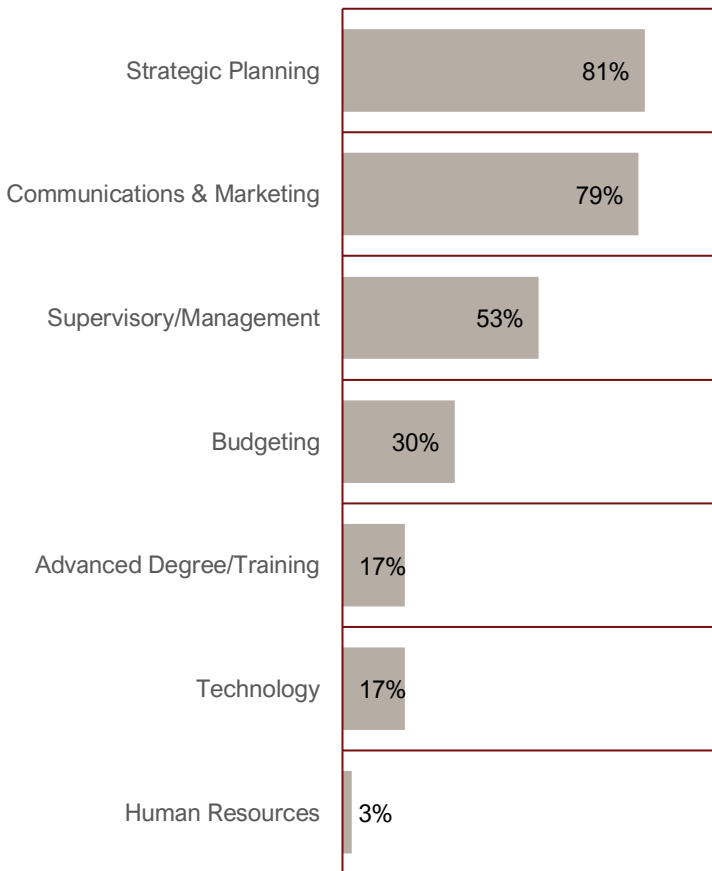


In order to understand potential training and development needs, we asked the respondents to indicate the three most important skills for their current position. The most-cited skill was Strategic Planning with 81% of respondents selecting this and Communications/Marketing was next at 79%. The third-most important skill is Supervisory/Management and then, Budgeting.

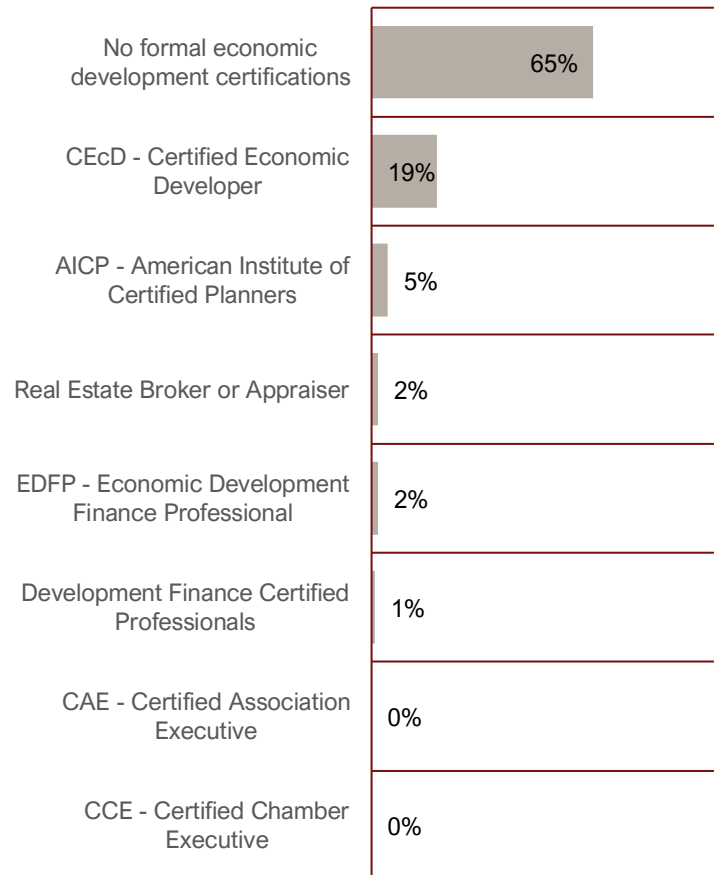
When asked about certifications, 19% of respondents in Virginia are Certified Economic Developers, the largest portion of respondents with a certification. Another 5% have the AICP planning certification. State CEcD certification figures are lower than those for the nation, where 26% of respondents are Certified Economic Developers. Overall, Virginia and national economic developers are committed to training, with only 8% and 6% respectively indicating they have had “no formal training.” These are likely new entrants to the field who have not yet begun professional development.

19%
are
CEcDs

Of the following skills or qualifications, which are the three most important for your current position?



What certifications do you hold? (check all that apply)



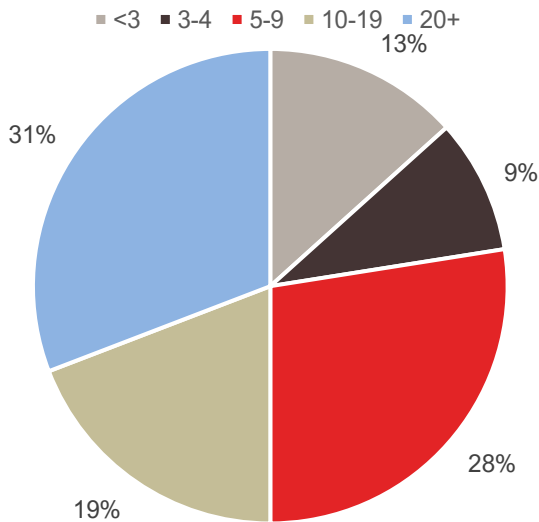
The average economic developer in Virginia has been working in the industry for 13 years. This is lower than the average of 14.4 years for respondents to the national IEDC survey. While 27% of IEDC survey respondents have more than 20 years of experience, 31% of Virginia respondents have more than 20 years' experience, with one respondent reporting 40 years in the industry. At the other end of the spectrum, only 7% of respondents had fewer than three years of experience in the national survey, compared to 13% in the Virginia survey.

When Virginia's economic development professionals were asked how long they have been in their present position, the average response was 5.2 years. Newer Virginia respondents had less tenure in their current positions, with 48% in their current position for less than three years, while the national figure was only 31%. At the other end of the experience spectrum, Virginia has 5% of respondents in their positions for more than 20 years, the same proportion as the national survey. There were no Virginia respondents with more than 30 years' experience, while the national survey had 3% of its respondents at that term.

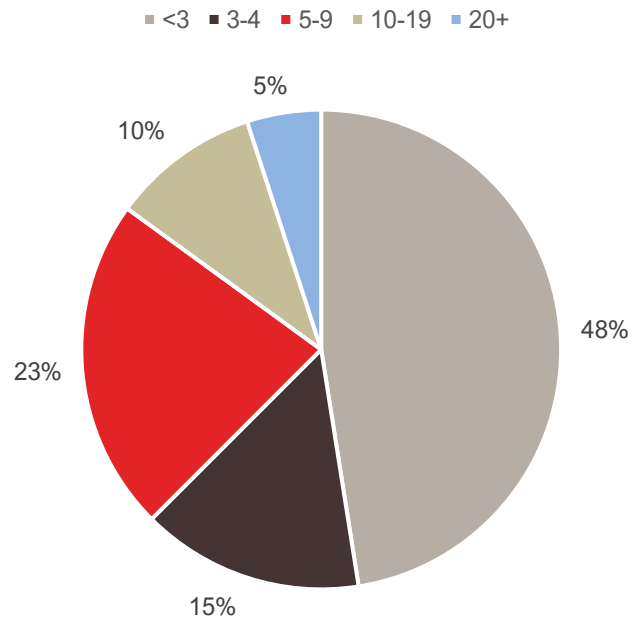
5.2 years
average in
current
position

The range of responses in Virginia was from a minimum of zero to a maximum of 25 years. Interestingly, the most frequent response was one year, with 34 respondents in their position for one year or less. This is another sign of career opportunity and movement in positions in the industry locally, as well as the effort made to collect surveys from a variety of economic development professionals.

How many years' experience do you have in economic development?



How many years have you been in your present position?



Compensation and Benefits

The 2023 Virginia Economic Development Survey respondents represent a wide range of annual salaries. The lowest base salary reported was \$18,400, which is an outlier in context of both the national and the Virginia surveys. The highest reported salary is \$270,000 and the overall average is \$104,177. The median is lower than the average, at \$95,000, meaning there are more respondents at the lower end, and reflecting the high proportion of newer entrants to their roles and the profession. Nationally, the 2021 average salary was \$102,500. This means that overall, Virginia salaries are slightly higher than the national averages, although there is a small time gap between the 2021 national survey and this one.

\$104,177
average salary

Based on the respondent title indicated, we derived averages for the following positions held in EDOs. Salaries for CEO/Executive/Head of Organization were predictably highest at \$134,008. The VP level and Program Manager positions were \$107,050. The detailed table below compares base salary by level of position for Virginia and the national survey.

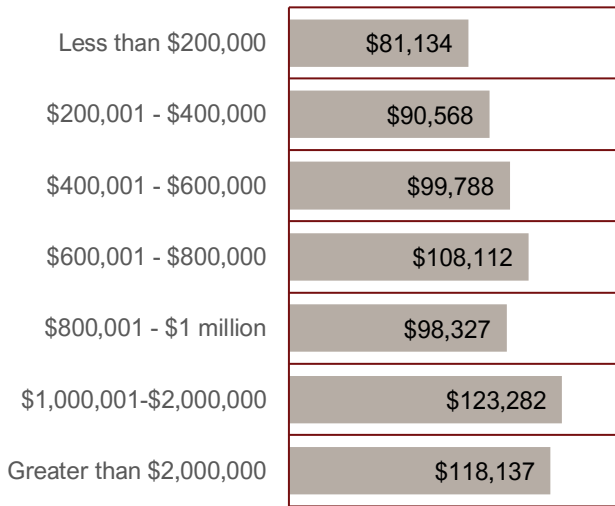
Virginia and National Salary Average by Respondent Title

Title	VA Average / Median 2023 Salary	National Average Salary 2021
CEO/Executive/Head of Organization	\$134,008 / \$124,000	\$121,000
VP/Division Manager/Department Head/Deputy/Assistant Director/CFO/Controller	\$107,050 / \$102,000	\$93,000
Program Manager Business Retention Mgr./Business Recruitment Mgr./Marketing Mgr./Research Director or Mgr. /Policy Government Affairs Mgr.	\$86,322 / \$89,000	\$83,000
Other Administrative/Support Staff/Consultant	\$61,750 / \$61,750	Not Reported
Entry Level ED Staff	\$49,425 / \$47,800	\$50,000

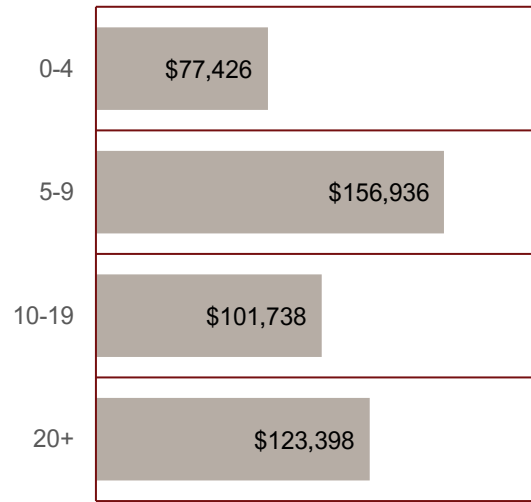
National Salary Source: International Economic Development Council, 2021 Salary Survey



Average Annual Salary by Organization Budget



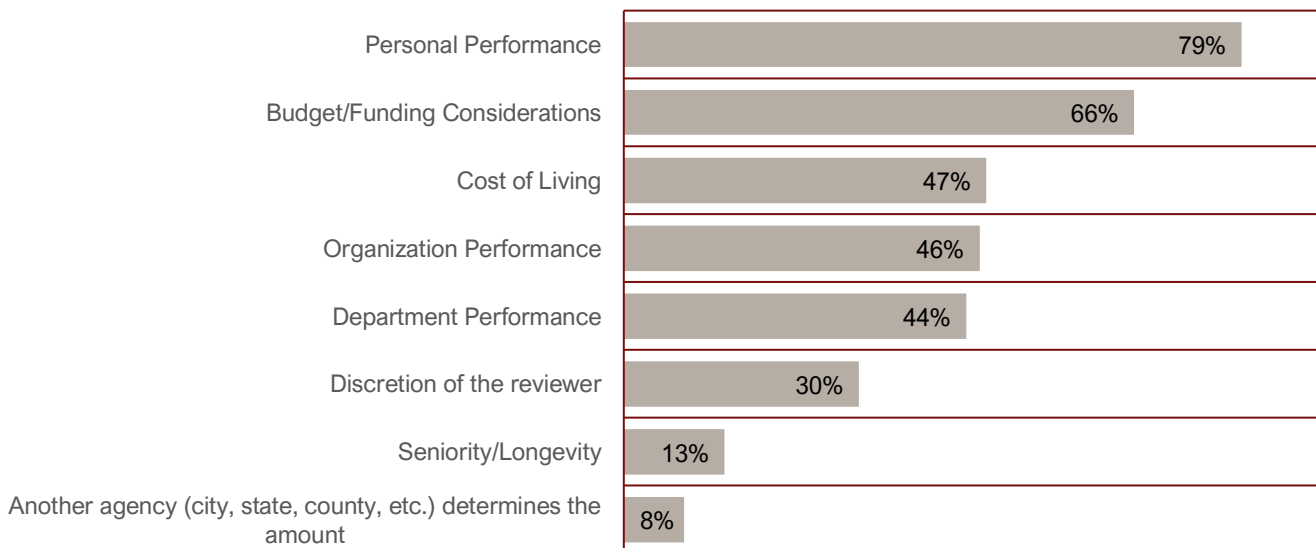
Average Annual Salary by Years of Experience



Note: The lower salary for organizations Greater than \$2,000,000 budget likely included more respondents in lower level positions.

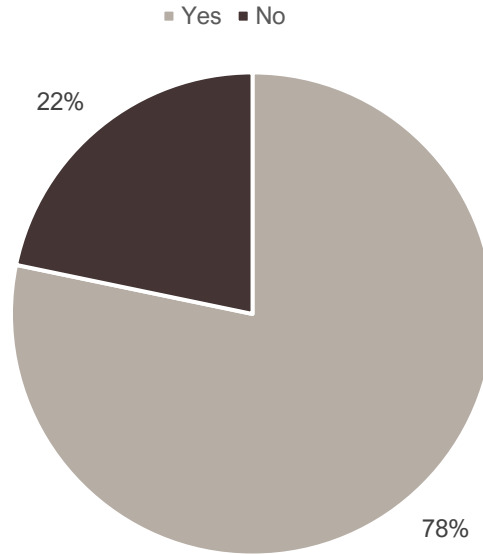
When asked to name the criteria which are considered during annual salary reviews, 79% indicated Personal Performance, which matches with our general knowledge of how EDOs in Virginia are structured and their focus on results. The next most-frequently cited criteria were Budget/Funding Considerations, Cost of Living, and Organizational Performance. In contrast, in the national survey, Cost of Living was the second-most-often cited salary review criterion after Personal Performance, with Organization Performance third.

When your salary is reviewed, what are the considerations for that review and potential adjustment? (check all that apply)

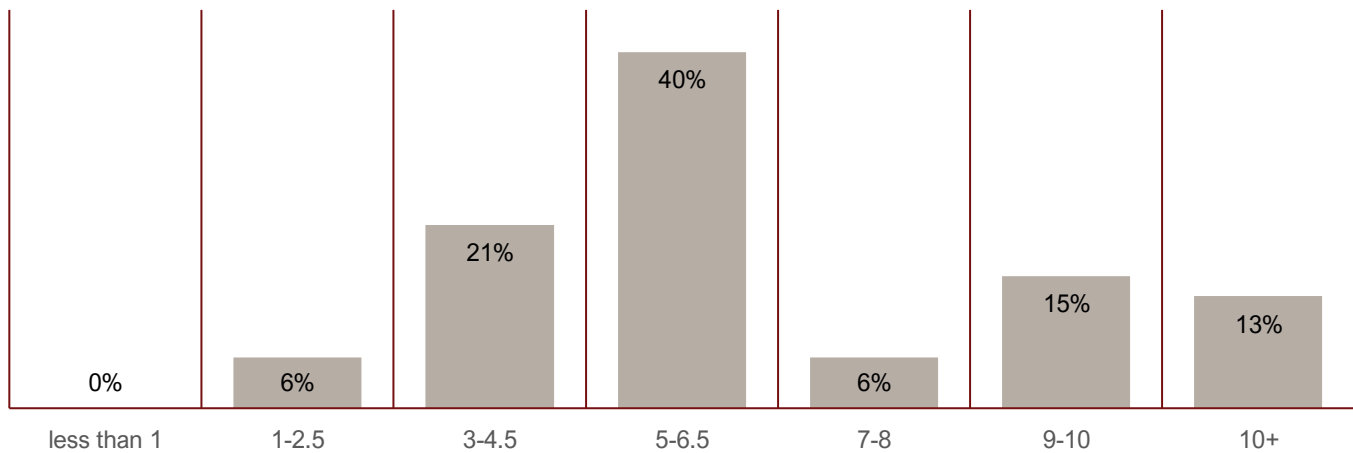


When asked if they had received an increase in base pay for the twelve months ending in January 2023, 78% of respondents indicated that they had. For those respondents who indicated they had received an increase in their base salary, the average increase was approximately 7.3%. The most frequent response was 5%. The range of response was from 1% to 30%.

In the twelve months ended January 1, 2023, did you receive an increase to your base salary?



If yes, what was the percentage increase in your base salary?

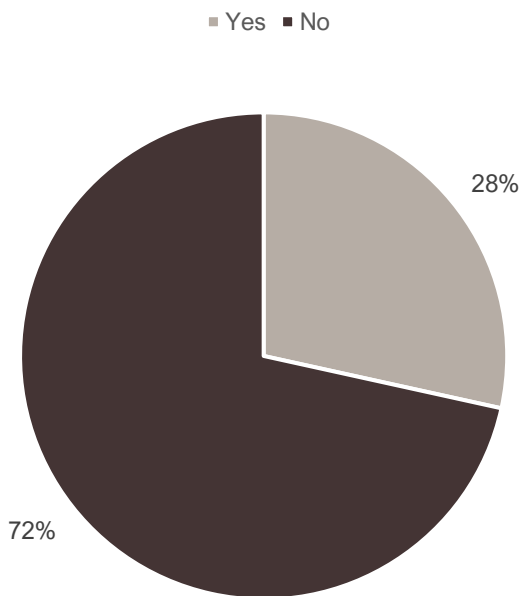


We are often asked by EDOs, primarily public-private nonprofits, about bonus systems. The majority of respondents indicated they are not eligible for a bonus - 72%. This reflects the dominance of public sector agencies where bonus systems are less prevalent.

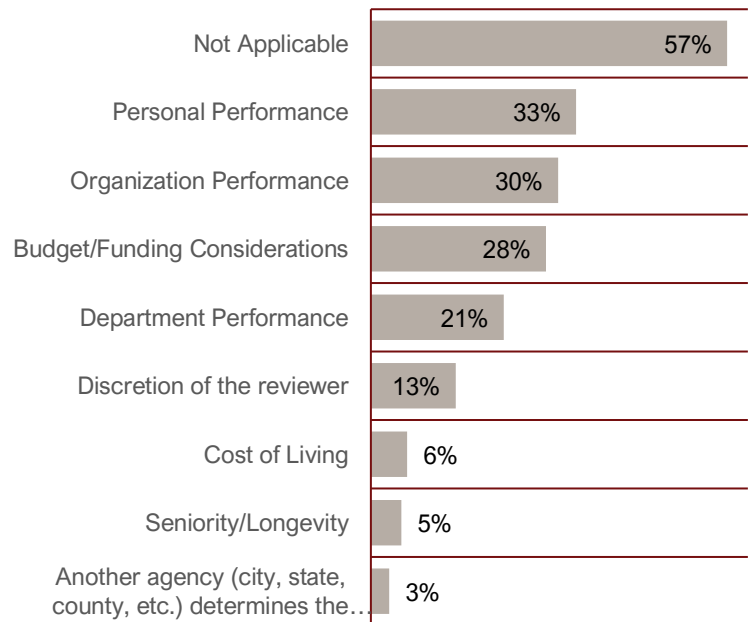
When asked to indicate which criteria are used in evaluating the awarding of additional cash compensation, 33% of Virginia respondents indicated that Personal Performance is considered. The next most-cited criterion is Organization Performance, at 30%.

Those who did receive additional cash compensation reported an average of \$4,755 in cash bonus. The median was lower at \$3,500, and the range was from a minimum of \$430 to a maximum of \$20,000.

Are you eligible for additional cash compensation other than your base salary?



When you are reviewed for additional cash compensation, what are the considerations for that potential reward?



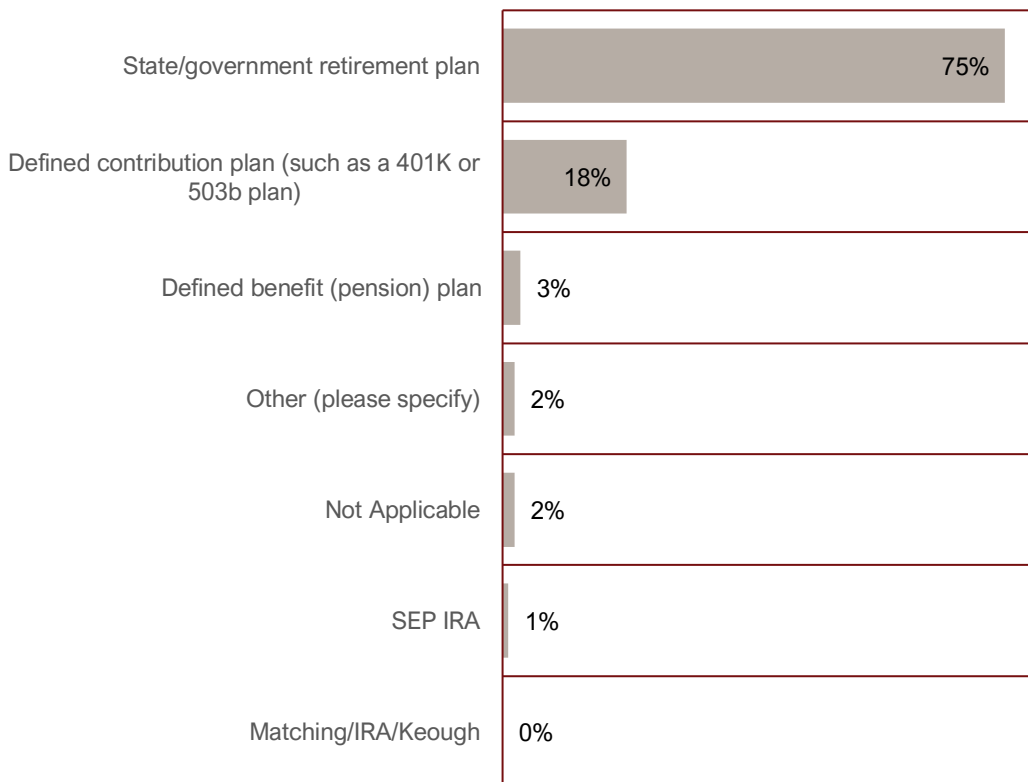
5% have employment contracts

A relatively small number of Virginia economic developers, five percent, have employment contracts in place. Nationally this number is higher, with 23% holding contracts. For those working with an employment contract, the average duration of the contract was three years. The most common duration was four years. Nationally, the majority of contracts are 3-5 years.

A dominant majority of respondents, 97%, have the option of medical insurance through their employment. A lower percentage, 75%, indicated eligibility for medical coverage in the national survey.

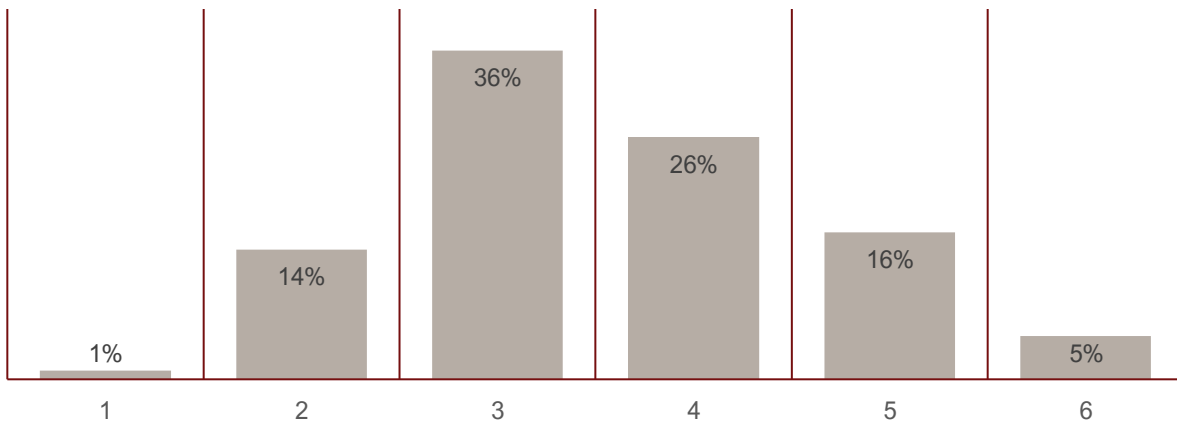
Nearly all the respondents, 97%, are offered a retirement plan at work, with only 3% not having this benefit. This is the same rate reported in the national survey. The dominant proportion of Virginia economic developers with a retirement plan have access to the state government plan - 75%. Another 18% have access to defined contribution plans. Nationally, state and government retirement plans were also the most common offering in public sector agencies, with defined Contribution Plans and Matching IRAs most common with nonprofit agencies, including chambers of commerce. For the Virginia respondents that indicated “other,” they have more than one of those instruments listed.

What kind of retirement plan is offered?



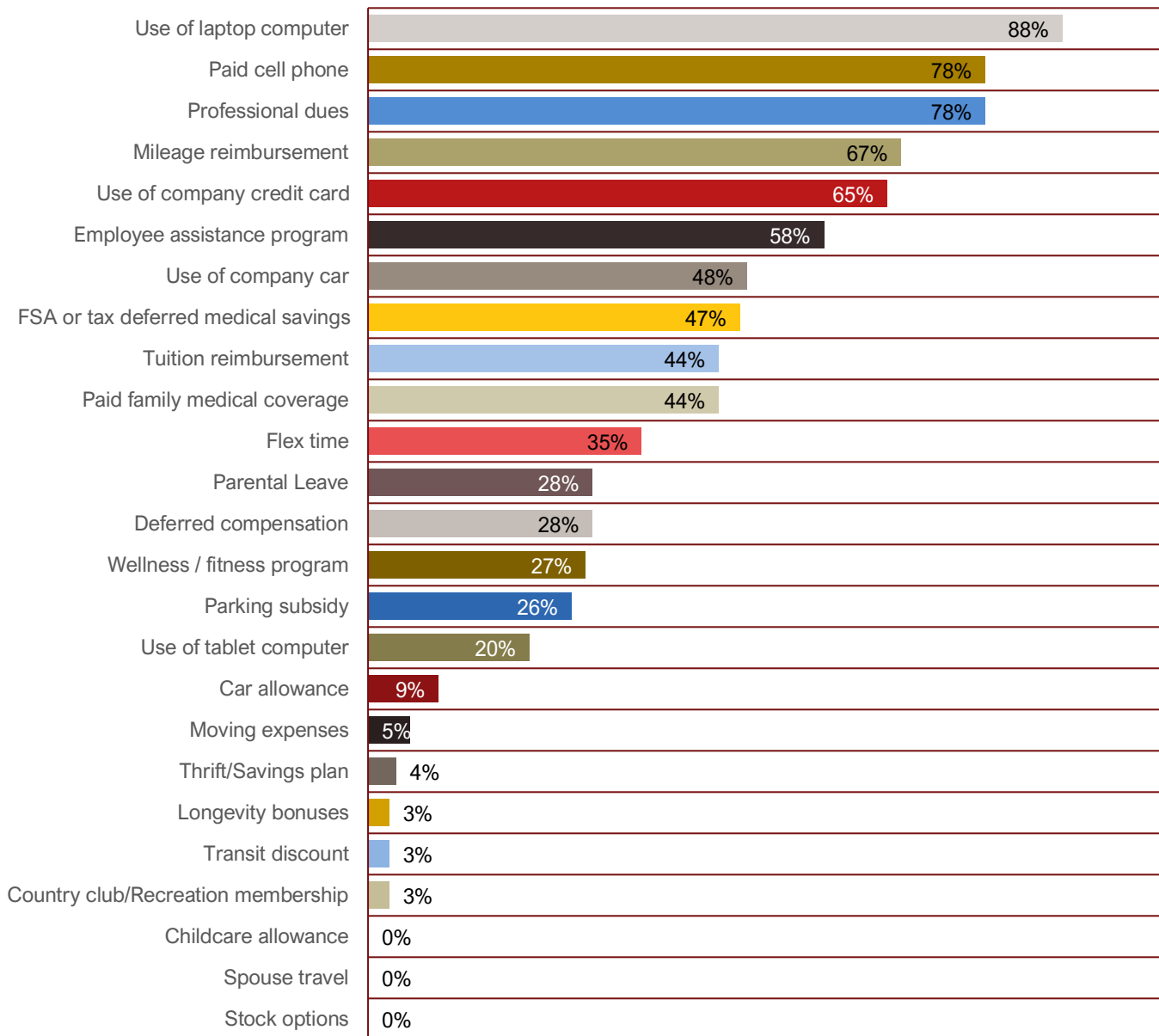
The survey found more than 97% of respondents are eligible for “paid time off.” Respondents who indicated they are eligible for “paid time off” reported a wide range of annual time off granted. The average was 3.7 weeks of paid time off, the median was three weeks. The minimum reported was one week and the maximum was 12 weeks. Nationally the amount of time off was higher, with an average of greater than four weeks across all but one organization type.

If yes – How many weeks of PTO do you receive each year?



When asked to identify eligibility of “non-cash benefits,” respondents cited more than 20 different benefits, including the responses to “other.” The most common were the use of a company laptop and cell phone. The next most common non-cash benefits were professional dues and mileage reimbursement for business travel. As the competition for talent heightens, these non-cash items will increase in importance to employees and employers.

What other non-cash benefits are you eligible for?



Conclusion

With a tight labor market across the commonwealth, especially evidenced in local government and economic development occupations, it is more important than ever to understand the compensation and pay practices across Virginia. Keeping in mind the combination of a relatively young demographic with nearly one-third of respondents planning to retire in less than ten years, there continues to be a need for identifying career pathways into economic development as well as providing mentoring and professional development for new entrants. Pay and other compensation practices are in line with national numbers and practices, meaning that it will be feasible to recruit into Virginia from other parts of the country to fill open economic development jobs. We hope the information in this salary survey will aid EDOs in the retention and recruitment of professionals. We recommend this salary survey be repeated every two or three years to coincide with the IEDC national survey.



Methodology and Sponsors

Methodology

In partnership with the Virginia Economic Developers Association, Creative Economic Development Consulting designed this salary survey to closely mirror the survey administered by the International Economic Development Council in order to draw comparisons between state and national data. Throughout this report, “national” data refers to the 2021 IEDC report. The IEDC report is available to members and nonmembers for a fee. The Virginia survey was reviewed by the Membership Committee of VEDA and distributed via email by VEDA and Creative EDC in January of 2023. The survey findings were presented at the 2023 VEDA Spring Conference and are available to members and nonmembers via VEDA and Creative EDC. We recommend the survey be repeated every two to three years to coincide with the IEDC national survey.

Virginia Economic Developers Association



The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) is a non-profit, non-partisan membership association for individuals with a professional interest in economic development across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VEDA serves as the voice of economic development in Virginia and was founded in 1982 to increase the effectiveness of individuals involved in the practice of economic development in Virginia by encouraging cooperation, exchange of information, and professional development activities.

www.goveda.org

Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC



Creative EDC provides innovative consulting approaches to the challenges communities face in economic development. The firm’s services include strategic planning, product development, organizational development, and economic impact analysis. An entrepreneurial firm, Creative EDC owns three proprietary programs: Certified Entrepreneurial Community®, CreativeSiteAssessment.com, and Creative

Back-Office Suite of Services. The company has a unique commitment to give back to the field of economic development. Sponsorship of the salary survey is just one example.

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