



# 2018 Value of IT Certification

Explore our latest research to discover the impact of certification on the lives and careers of thousands of respondents across the globe.

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In the latest of four such annual surveys we've conducted since 2015, we identify the benefits of earning an industry-recognized certification from the credential holder's perspective and outline the various paths they followed to become certified. Dive into our findings from the 2018 Value of Certification (VoC) survey to learn about the current certification landscape.

## Who took the survey?

We sent the survey to candidates who took a certification exam at a Pearson VUE® Authorized Test Center (PVTTC) from calendar year Q4 2017 through Q3 2018. These certification holders were only contacted if the certification sponsor (e.g., Cisco or Microsoft) gave permission for us to survey their candidates. In all, 32 of these sponsors gave their explicit consent. 138 non-European countries are represented among the survey results in the 10,000+ responses we received.

We administered the survey online and contacted invitees via email with a link to the survey. We incentivized invitees to take the survey with an offer of receiving a \$10 Amazon gift card for the first 100 respondents to complete the survey within three global regions. The survey ran for four consecutive weeks during November and December 2018.

The survey targeted candidates who earned a certification from Q4 2017 through Q3 2018.

# 10,000+

responses from **138 countries**

# 32

**certification programs** participated:

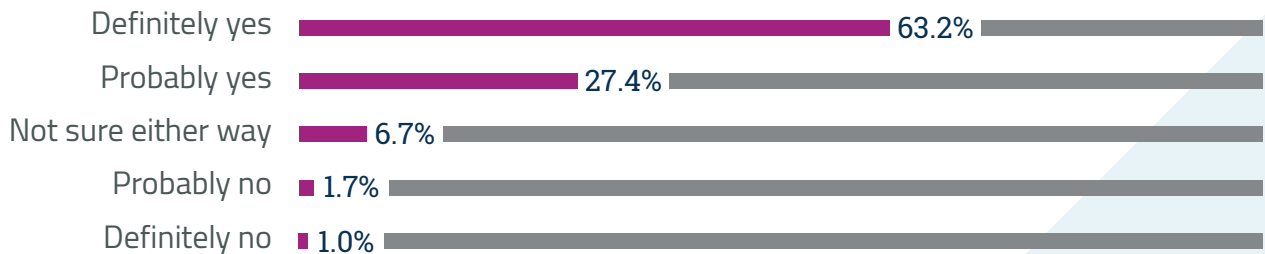
Arcitura Education	HPE
BCS	IBM
Check Point	(ISC) <sup>2</sup>
Cisco Systems	Kintone
Citrix Systems	Linux Professional Institute
CIW	Microsoft
CompTIA	NetApp
Dell EMC	Oracle
EC-Council	Palo Alto Networks
Ericsson	PCI Security Standards Council
ESRI	Pegasystems
ETEC	Qlik
F5	Software Certifications (QAI)
Facebook	Symantec
GIAC	Unity
Hitachi IT	VMware



# Key findings: Reasons for becoming certified

Would you recommend certification to a friend or colleague looking to begin or advance their career in a technology-related field?

N = 10,190



**90%** would recommend certification.

What was your driving force for earning a certification?



What were your specific personal reasons for becoming certified?



**74%** indicated that they 'completely' or 'mostly' accomplished their personal objectives for becoming certified.

## Why did they pursue certification?

Nearly 75% of respondents reported that they actively pursued certification on their own (internally driven), whereas the remaining respondents reported that certification was an indirect result of an academic program or course in which they were enrolled (externally driven).

Among those who were internally driven, 33% cited improving their professional profile or standing and 33% cited increasing their technical knowledge as the top reasons to become certified. 74% of respondents who cited any reason for becoming certified indicated that they 'completely' or 'mostly' accomplished their objectives by becoming certified.

**“Nearly three-fourths of respondents reported that they actively sought out certification on their own”**

## What benefits did they realize?

Respondents reported realizing three types of benefits from their certification(s): extrinsic (tangible), intrinsic (personal), and practical (on-the-job). The latter two types of benefits were reported most frequently.

The vast majority of respondents also indicated that the myriad benefits they obtained through the process of becoming certified — such as earning more professional credibility or retaining knowledge for longer — exceed the benefits they would've obtained if they'd gone through training without certification.



# 7 Key findings: Benefits from certification

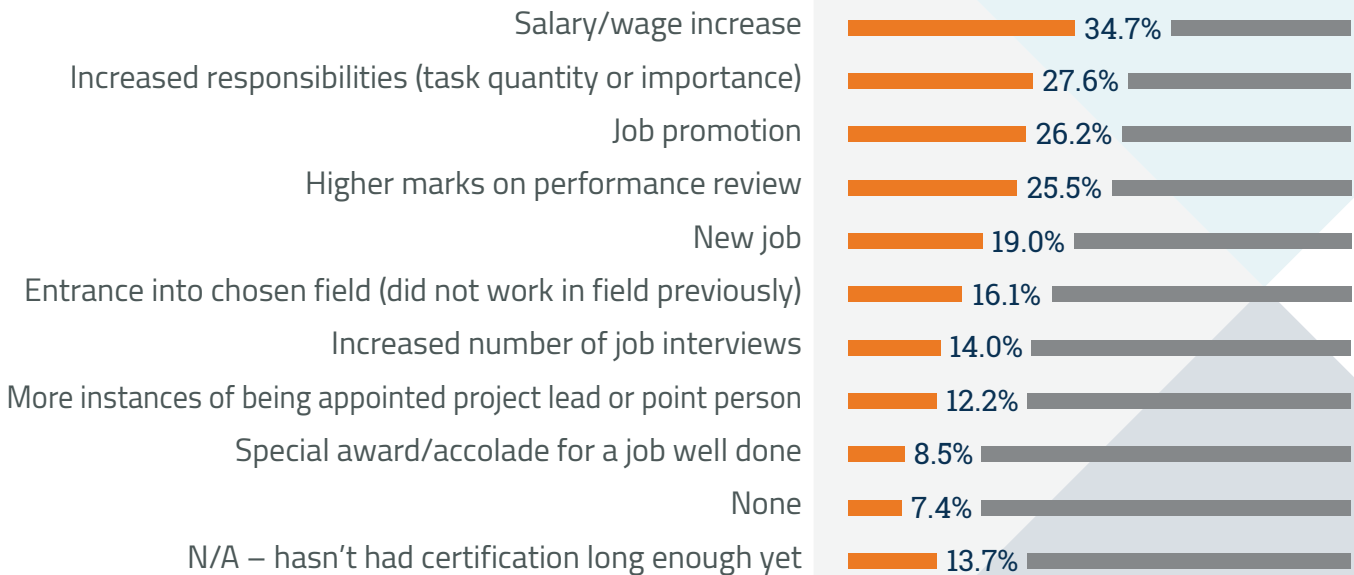
Candidates reported the following benefits from becoming certified:

N = 9,951



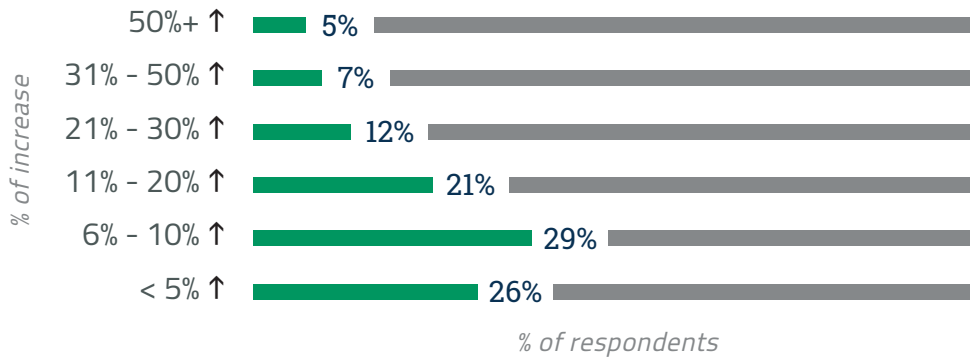
## Extrinsic (tangible) benefits

N = 9,951



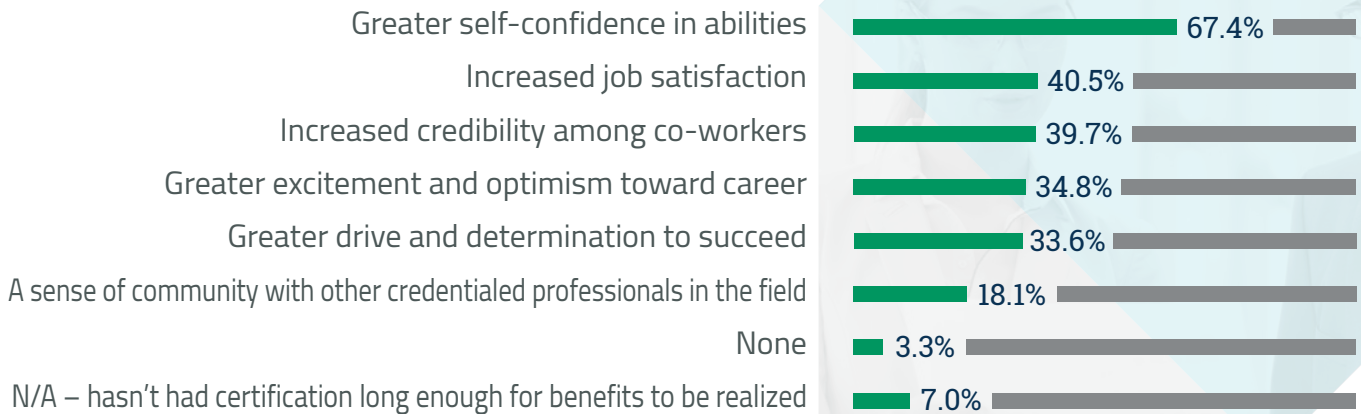
**65%** reported realizing the first benefit within 3-4 months!

### Salary/wage increase due to earning certification



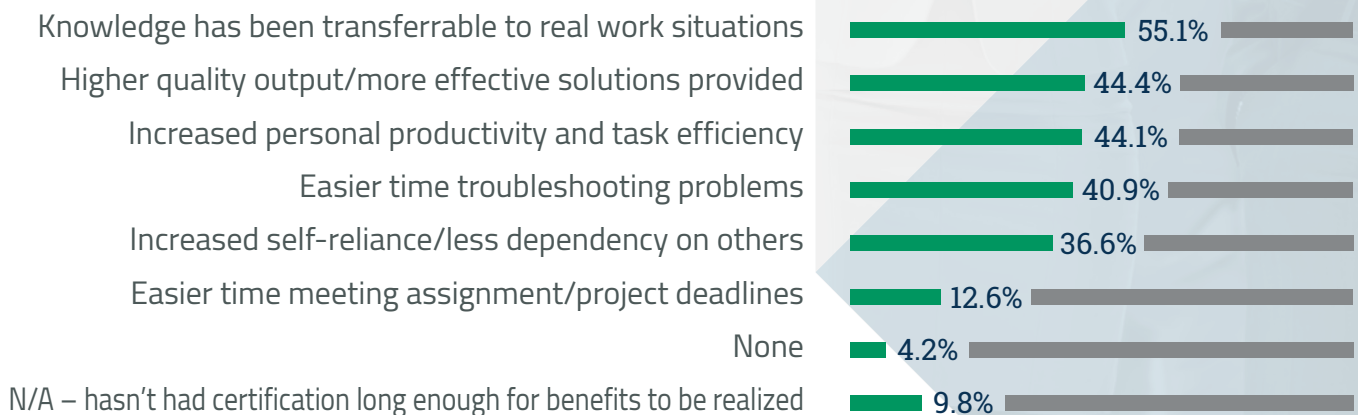
### Intrinsic (personal) benefits

N = 9,951



### Practical (on-the-job) benefits

N = 9,951





## Key findings: Certification and training



Respondents who agreed that certification is better than training alone stated that certification...

N = 10,190

**91%**

"Gives me more professional credibility with those I interact with on the job"

**90%**

"Is more effective at preventing or reducing gaps in my learning"

**89%**

"Makes me more valuable to my employer"

**88%**

"Provides greater motivation for me to keep my skills up to date"

**84%**

"Helps me retain acquired knowledge over a longer period"

**84%**

"Helps me better see how different concepts are connected within a larger subject domain"

# Key findings: Certification and training

## Comparing the top 20 enrichment activities (by technology association/provider)

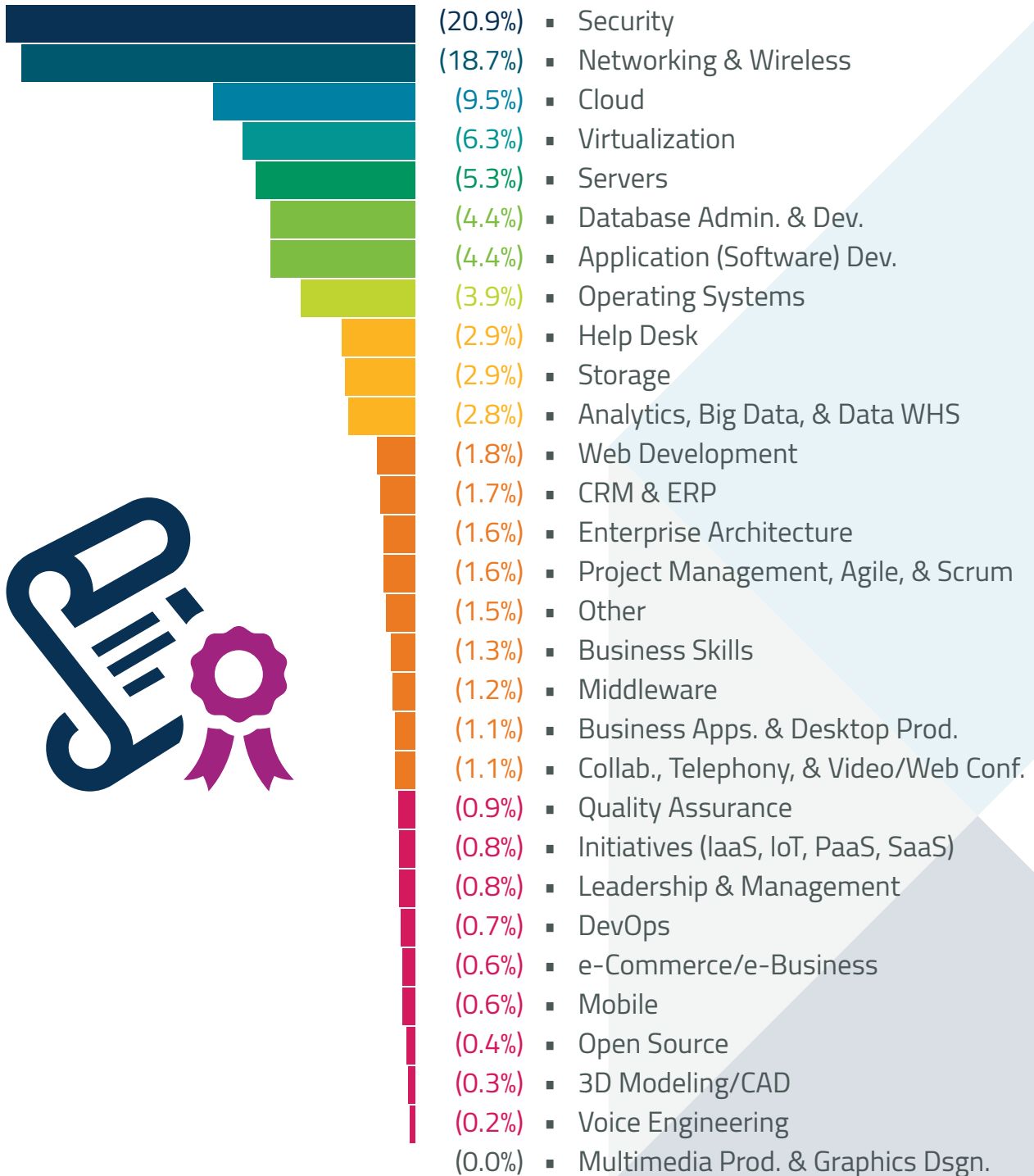
Technology association/provider	Certifications	Training	Self-study	Relative frequency
	% of respondents (rank)			
Cisco	32.8% (1)	27.4% (1)	29.5% (1)	
CompTIA	25.6% (2)	22.3% (3)	23.4% (3)	
Microsoft	25.6% (3)	20.6% (2)	19.3% (2)	
VMware	13.7% (4)	13.2% (4)	12.3% (4)	
Oracle	10.8% (5)	9.6% (5)	9.4% (5)	
(ISC) <sup>2</sup>	6.5% (6)	5.4% (7)	5.0% (7)	
AWS	6.1% (7)	5.6% (6)	6.4% (6)	
ITIL	5.8% (8)	5.1% (8)	2.9% (8)	
IBM	5.2% (9)	4.8% (9)	4.3% (9)	
LPI	4.9% (10)	4.1% (10)	4.4% (10)	
HPE	4.2% (11)	3.8% (12)	3.2% (12)	
EC-Council	3.8% (12)	3.4% (14)	2.6% (14)	
Dell EMC	3.8% (13)	3.7% (13)	3.1% (13)	
GIAC	3.5% (14)	2.8% (15)	1.6% (15)	
Citrix	2.9% (15)	2.8% (17)	2.6% (17)	
Juniper Networks	2.9% (16)	2.7% (18)	2.6% (18)	
F5 Networks	2.8% (17)	2.8% (16)	2.5% (16)	
Palo Alto Networks	2.6% (18)	2.5% (19)	2.5% (19)	
Fortinet	2.6% (19)	2.5% (21)	2.6% (21)	
Red Hat	2.5% (20)	2.5% (20)	2.3% (20)	
Summary statistics				5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%
Total respondents	100% (10,190)	83.9% (8,546)	99.9% (10,181)	
Average frequency	2.3	2.17	1.96	
Median frequency	1.0	2.0	1.0	



**84%** of respondents reported receiving instructor-led training.

# Key findings: Certification specialty areas

## Specialty area of most recent certification exam



**Note:** The rank order of specialty areas covered through the most recent instructor-led training and independent self-study reported by survey participants essentially mirrors the rank order shown here (r equals .996 and .990 respectively).

# Key findings: Certification purchase behaviors

## Who paid for your most recent certification exam?

N = 10,190

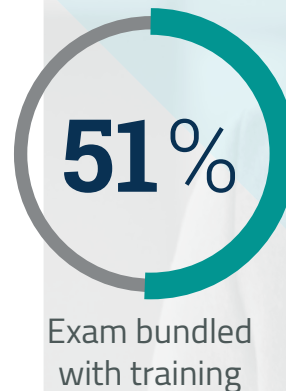
Employer	53.5%
Self (person taking test)	31.5%
School/college/university	5.0%
Government program	3.7%
No charge	2.8%
Other	1.8%
Declined to answer	1.4%
Did not know	.3%



## Did you purchase your exam separately or bundled with training?

N = 10,190

Exam and training bundled together	51.3%
Exam voucher sold separately	48.7%



## If you paid for your exam, where did you purchase the voucher?

N = 3,199

Website used to schedule exam	28.6%
Training course provider	26.6%
mindhub.com	15.1%
Other	11.3%
e-Commerce site of program sponsor	8.8%
Amazon	4.4%
Did not know	2.8%
Employer	2.2%



## Instructor-led training (ILT)

N = 8,546

### Who paid for your most recent instructor-led training (ILT) course?

Employer	57.7%
Self (person taking test)	25.3%
School/college/university	5.8%
Government program	4.3%
No charge	3.6%
Other	1.5%
Declined to answer	1.4%
Did not know	.4%



### If you paid for your ILT course, where did you purchase it?

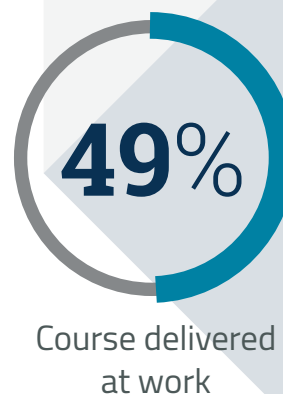
Training course provider	40.3%
Other	17.6%
Website used to schedule exam	13.2%
mindhub.com	8.4%
Amazon	6.7%
e-Commerce site of program sponsor	5.6%
Employer	4.6%
Did not know	3.6%



N = 2,159

### Where was your ILT course delivered?

Place of employment/work	48.5%
Commercial training center	31.4%
School/college/university	13.4%
Government-run facility	5.3%
Other	1.1%



N = 8,546

## Learning materials used during previous 12 months

N = 8,546

## Instructor-led training, used with...



1. Practice tests	46.6%
2. Instructor-developed text content	38.8%
3. Practice lab/work simulation tool	38.5%
4. Interactive media (online or software)	37.2%
5. Instructional videos	36.7%
6. Published textbook – digital format	34.9%
7. Published textbook – print format	28.2%
8. Work-based learning/cooperative education	18.3%
9. Other	1.2%

## Self-directed study, used with...

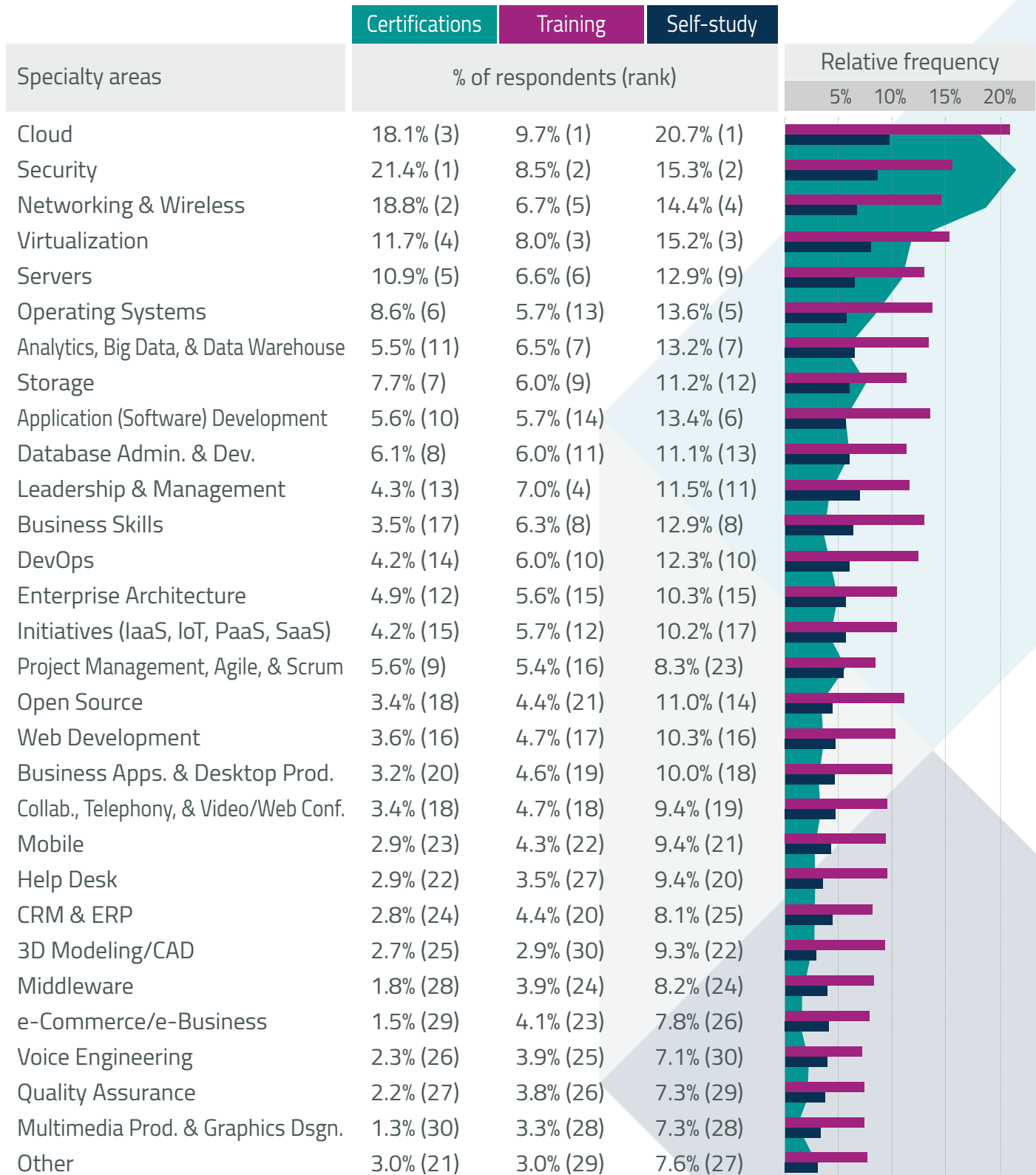
N = 10,191

1. Practice tests	43.9%
2. Published textbook – digital format	30.5%
3. Practice lab/work simulation tool	28.9%
4. Published textbook – print format	27.6%
5. Web content from technology provider (e.g., Microsoft, Cisco, CompTIA)	27.1%
6. Online videos	26.9%
7. Fee-based online learning portal (e.g., Lynda.com, Udemy, Pluralsight)	26.4%
8. Other website (third party)	15.5%
9. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)	8.0%
10. Other	1.5%



# Key findings: Future ambitions

## What enrichment activities will you focus on in the next 12 months?



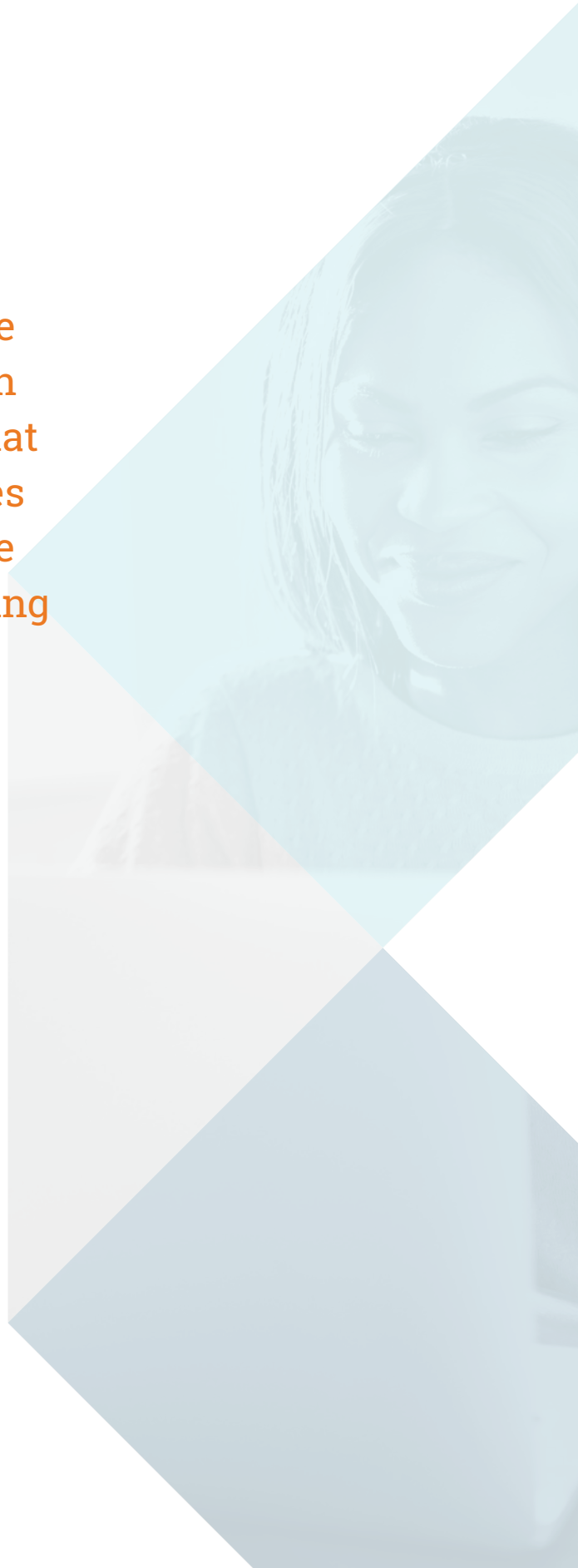
One thing is clear from our survey findings: certification holders attach great value to their certification achievements. Respondents from our survey reported receiving multiple benefits by becoming certified, and at multiple levels — extrinsic, intrinsic, and practical.

Certification helped open doors to greater professional opportunities for these individuals and empowered them in a variety of ways, including increasing their self-confidence and lending them more credibility in the workplace.

We also learned that the vast majority of respondents feel that certification is superior to training alone in several ways, including allowing certification holders to develop deeper technical skills, have stronger influence among their professional colleagues, and foster a greater sense of commitment to continued learning and skill development.

With the continued emphasis on skill development that we see in our latest research — especially in the IT space — we anticipate that the relevance and efficacy of certification will only continue to grow in the coming years.

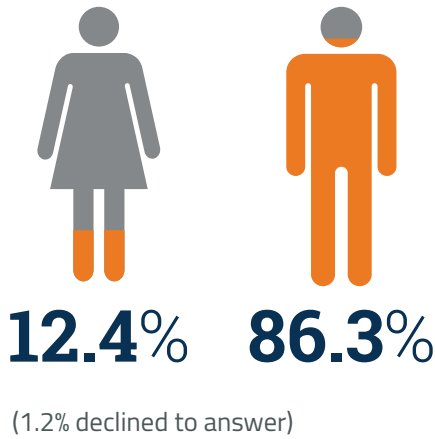
**“The findings from the Value of Certification survey show that there continues to be immense value in becoming certified.”**



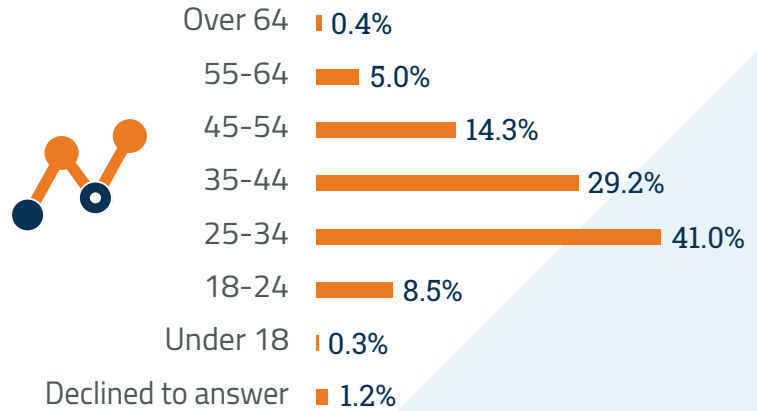


# Appendix: Demographics

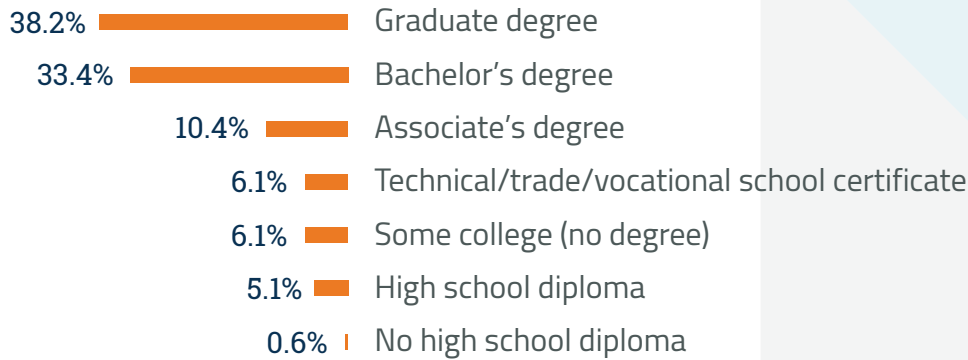
## Gender



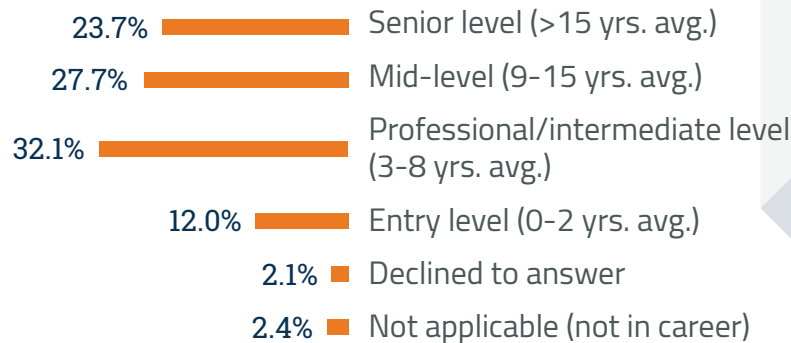
## Age



## Education level



## Career level



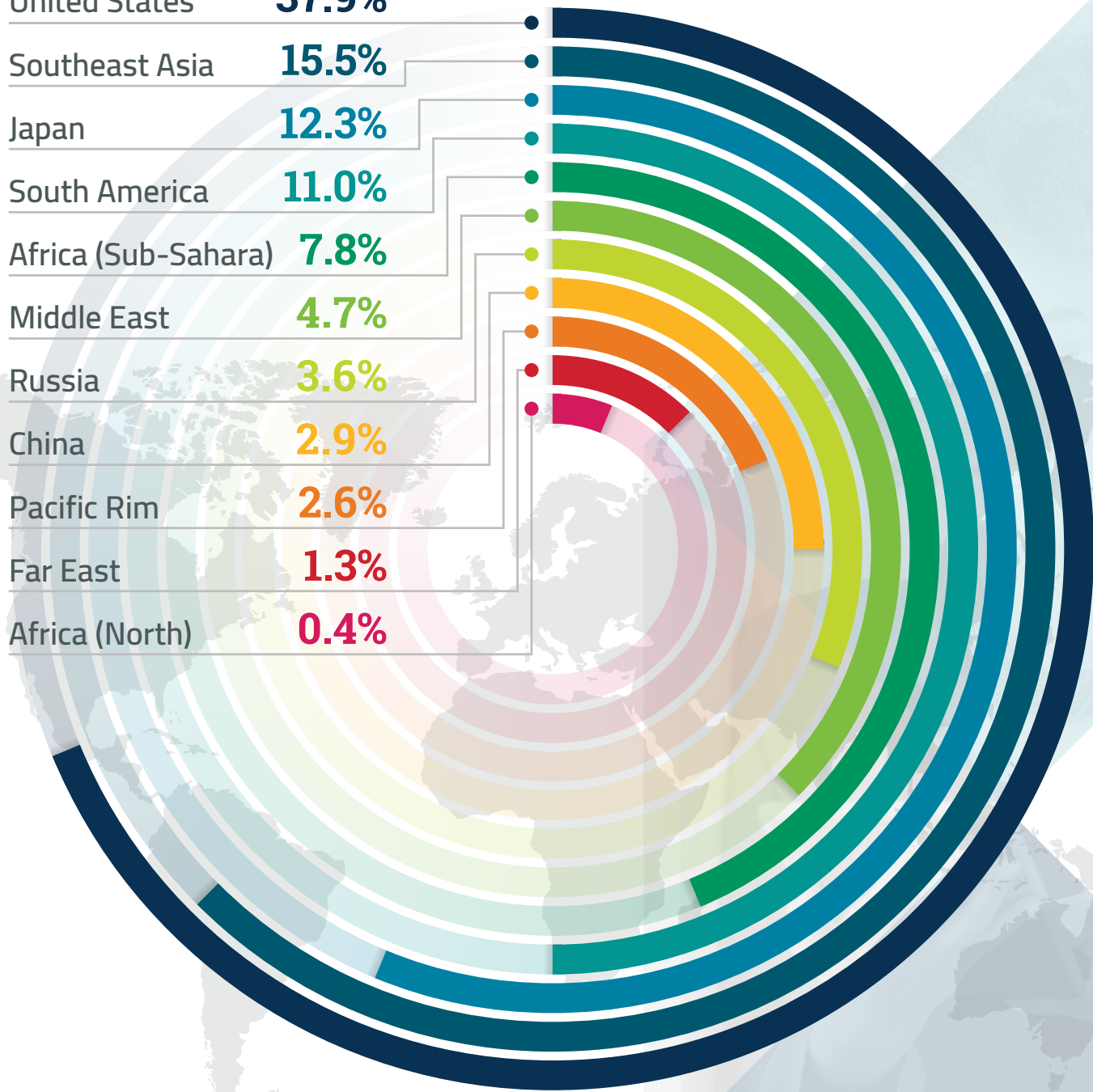
Median number of certifications earned (all time)



4-5

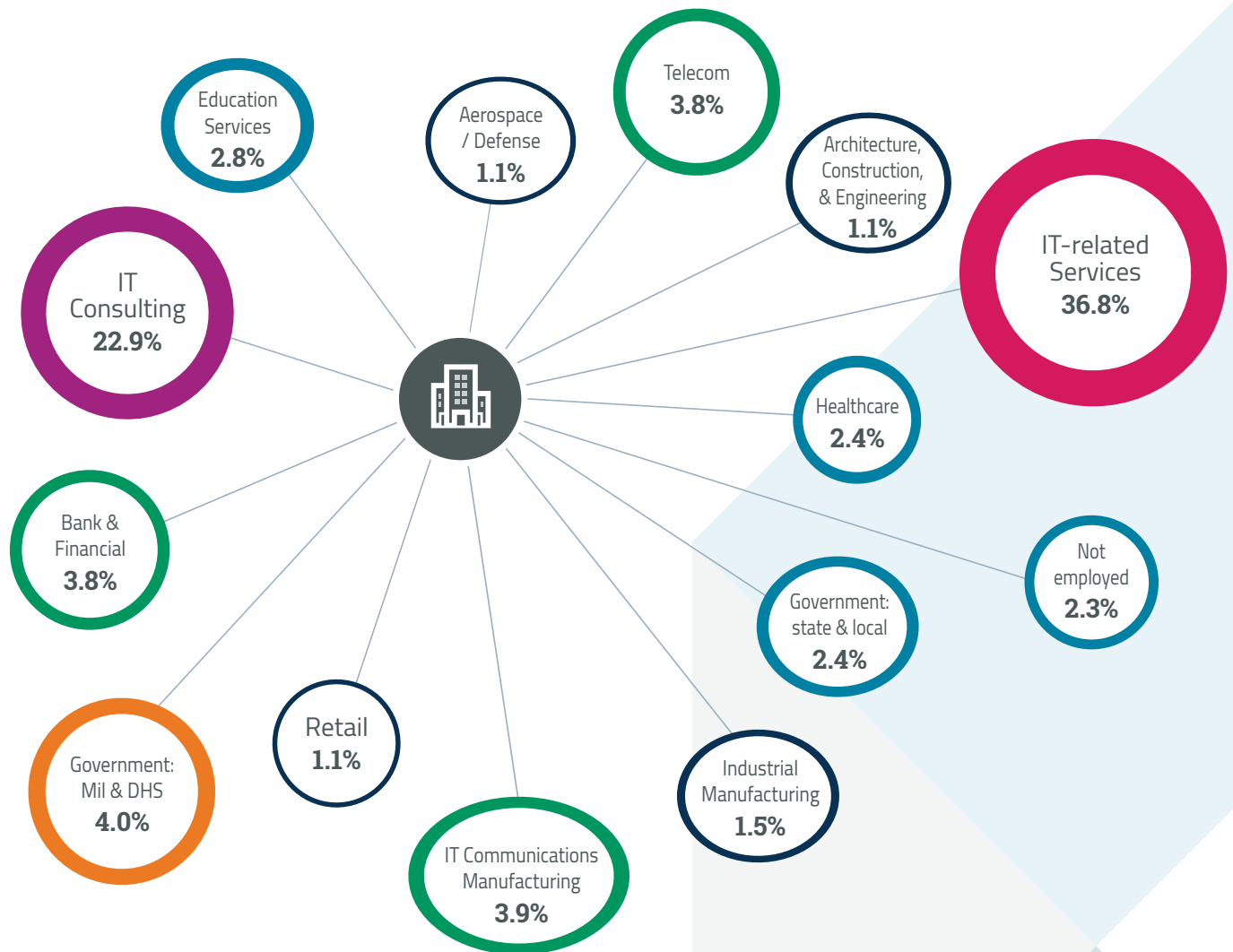
## World regions of respondents

N = 10,190

United States **37.9%**Southeast Asia **15.5%**Japan **12.3%**South America **11.0%**Africa (Sub-Saharan) **7.8%**Middle East **4.7%**Russia **3.6%**China **2.9%**Pacific Rim **2.6%**Far East **1.3%**Africa (North) **0.4%**

## Industries represented

N = 10,190



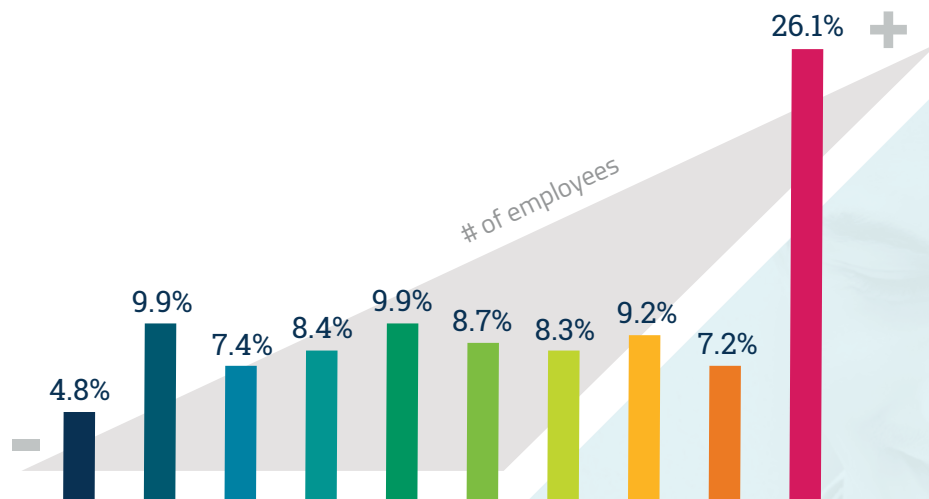
## Industries with &lt;1% representation:

Communications, Public Relations, Advertising	0.9%	Hospitality, Travel, and Recreation	0.5%
Professional Business Services	0.9%	Natural Resources: Mining, Oil, and Gas	0.4%
Transportation or Public Utilities	0.7%	Media, Film, Music	0.4%
IS and VAR Integration	0.7%	Wholesale	0.3%
Manufacturing: Consumer	0.5%	Pharmaceutical, Medical, Biotech	0.3%
Nonprofit	0.5%	Natural Resources: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	0.1%
Insurance, Real Estate, Legal	0.5%	Other	0.3%

## Employer size in terms of headcount

N = 10,190

- Less than 10
- 10-49
- 50-99
- 100-199
- 200-499
- 500-999
- 1,000-1,999
- 2,000-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,000 or more



## Leading the assessment industry

Pearson VUE has been a pioneer in the computer-based testing industry for decades, delivering more than 15 million certification and licensure exams annually in every industry from academia and admissions to IT and healthcare. We are the global leaders in developing and delivering high-stakes exams via the world's most comprehensive network of nearly 20,000 highly secure test centers in 180 countries. Our leadership in the assessment industry is a result of our collaborative partnerships with a broad range of clients, from leading technology firms to government and regulatory agencies. For more information, please visit [PearsonVUE.com](https://www.pearsonvue.com).