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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2021 Wage & Benefits Report for the Sign, Graphics and Visual Communications Industry

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# Introduction

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On behalf of the International Sign Association (ISA), thank you to all who participated in the 2021 Wage & Benefits Survey for the sign, graphics and visual communications industry. Your participation was invaluable to the success of this survey and I am pleased to present you the 2021 Wage & Benefits Report Executive Summary.

Knowing comparative compensation data is important for your company to stay competitive in the retention and acquisition of employees. And, at a time when retaining/finding skilled workers is an ever-growing issue in our industry, the data in this report can give you the leg up over your competitors.

The Wage & Benefits Survey, conducted by Association Research, Inc. (ARI), *an independent research firm that keeps all information collected from the survey completely confidential*, received data from 697 sign, graphics and visual communications companies. The results offer key insights you can use to benchmark your company to other companies of like scope, size and geographic area. The 2021 Wage & Benefits Report includes data on compensation, including salary and benefits, as well as average number of workers in each job position, commissions and bonuses, and more. The executive summary provides you with highlights of the data found in the full report.

Responding to a survey like this takes a lot of work. ISA is grateful for your effort and hopes that you find the results valuable in managing your business and in your employment efforts.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact ISA at 703-836-4012 or email [info@signs.org](mailto:info@signs.org).

Thank you again for participating and for your support of this important industry resource!

Best,

Lori Anderson  
President & CEO  
International Sign Association

## Methodology

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The **2021 Wage & Benefits Survey** for the sign, graphics and visual communications industry was conducted online by Association Research, Inc. (ARI), a survey research firm located in Ijamsville, Maryland. A total of 697 usable survey responses were received, constituting a 12.2% response rate.

To ensure confidentiality of the reported information, survey questionnaires, salaries, and pay rates were handled solely by ARI staff. ARI assures participants that all information has been handled in strict confidence and that no data identifiable with an individual company will be released or made public in any manner.

The **2021 Wage & Benefits Report** breaks down each job function's wage and benefits data by four U.S. Census regions plus Canada, 2020 annual sales volume, full-time equivalent employment size, unionization status, and primary business activity (manufacturing, installation/service).

Salary represents annual base salary effective January 1, 2021. This is the base compensation paid to a person reported for the position. It does not include incentive compensation, bonus/commission, or profit sharing.

Hourly wages, effective as of January 1, 2021, are reported as the top scale in the highest labor grade and top scale in the lowest labor grade

Bonus/commission is the amount of annual bonus and commission most recently received by the employee for work done in 2020, regardless of whether the bonus/commission was paid in 2020 or 2021.

Total compensation is the sum of base salary and bonus/commission only for those employees whose salary and bonus/commission were reported. Total compensation is shown for company executives only.

Entry-level starting salary is the entry-level starting base compensation paid and does not include incentive compensation, commission/bonus, or profit sharing.

The survey for 2021 was revised from the 2018 survey, including new response options for the question about company type, more detail was requested regarding the unions represented, and questions about companies' apprenticeship programs were added. Detail was collected about remote work, as well as data about the effects of COVID-19 on employment, benefits and pay. The question about hiring plans was expanded, while shift detail questions were also added as well as a number of new benefit offerings. Job descriptions were reviewed and updated by ISA staff and the secretary position title was revised to receptionist. A new position for digital social media marketing was added.

Please note that the survey results are subject to the limitations inherent in any survey questionnaire, and the reported results should be taken into account with those limitations in mind. Survey information is only one part of the information gathering process, and users of the survey results must ultimately make an independent decision as to how such survey data will or will not be used.

## Report Highlights

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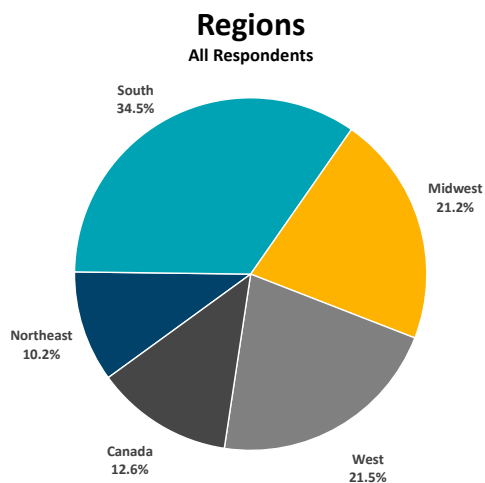
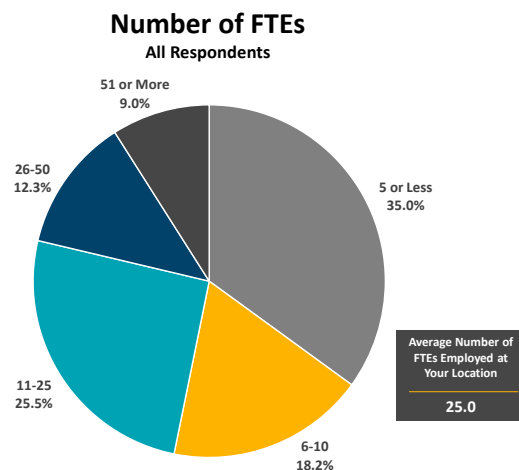
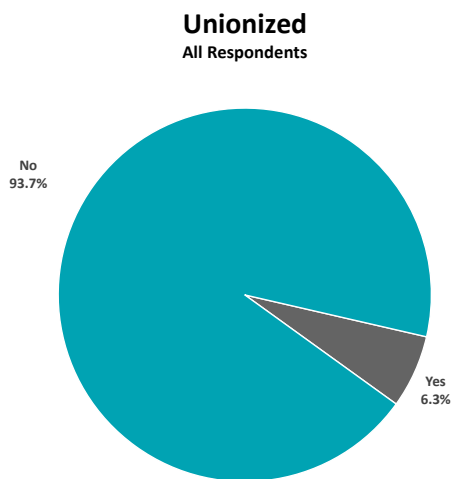
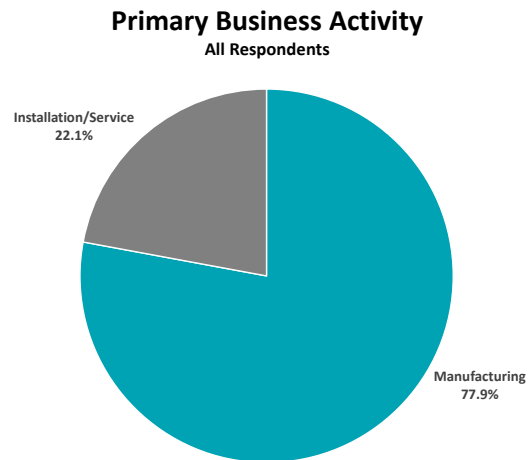
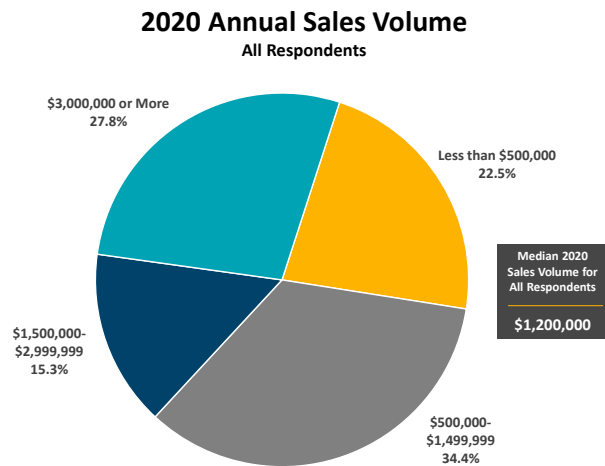
The following are highlights of the data found in this report:

- A total of 697 survey responses were received from sign companies, constituting a 12.2% response rate.
- More than one-third (34.4%) of respondents to the 2021 survey reported having annual sales in 2020 between \$500,000 and \$1,499,999 with the median for all respondents being \$1.2 million. This is lower than the median reported for 2017 (\$1.8 million).
- Respondents indicated manufacturing more often (77.9%) as their primary business activity compared to 22.1% for installation/service. These figures are identical to those reported in the 2018 survey.
- Nearly four in 10 responding companies reported furloughing or temporarily laying off staff due to COVID-19, although most companies (84.8%) did not eliminate any positions.
- The average percent change in pay for 2020 was 4.7% for salaried management employees, as well as for salaried administrative/operational employees, and 5.2% for hourly employees. The average expected change in pay for 2021 was higher than for 2020 for all employee types, with an average 6.5% increase for salaried management employees, 6.4% for salaried administrative/operational employees, and 7.3% hourly employees.
- More than one-third of respondents (38.5%) indicated that salaries and/or wages were impacted at some point by COVID-19.
- For those that said salaries and/or wages were impacted at some point by COVID-19, the average expected 2021 percent changes in pay, regardless of employee type, were all higher than the corresponding average percent changes overall as well as higher for those that said salaries and/or wages were not impacted by COVID-19.
- Almost six in 10 responding companies (58.5%) indicated that they plan to hire additional staff in the second half (July through December) of 2021, with an average of 2.7 additional hires intended. A somewhat larger percentage (66.2%) plans to do the same in the first half (January through June) of 2022, and the plan for the first half of 2022 is to hire an average of 2.5 additional people.
- The average typical work shift is 8.3 hours long.
- Responding companies reported that they normally operate an average of 2.8 8-hour shifts during a one-week period and paid an average of 1.5 times the hourly rate for the overtime differential.
- The responding companies' sales teams are most often compensated by salary plus commission (44.2%), followed by salary only (35.3%). These figures are fairly comparable to those reported in 2018, although the proportion paying on straight commission has fallen from 18.3% in 2018 to 11.0% presently.

- Of those that pay commission, the average commission rate is 7.8% per \$ of new sales and 6.7% per \$ of existing sales. These figures are fairly similar to those reported in 2018 (7.9% per \$ of new sales and 6.8% per \$ of existing sales).
- In most cases (60.1%), respondents indicate that the gross margin on a specific sale does not impact the rate of commission, and that quota does not need to be met before commission accrues (72.7%).
- In addition to 1,129 company executives whose compensation was reported to the survey, data was reported for 7,495 full-time employees and 620 part-time employees.
- In general, the median annual base salary of company executives increases with the size of the company (both in terms of annual sales volume and full-time equivalent employees).
- The median annual base salary (as of January 1, 2021) for a CEO/President is \$85,000 and the median total compensation is \$120,000. In comparison, the median annual base salary for a CEO/President was \$90,000 in 2018, while the median total compensation was unchanged from 2018.
- Total compensation is the sum of base salary and bonus/commission and was calculated separately and only for those company executives who received a salary and bonus/commission.
- The median annual base salary for the following company executives were higher in 2021 than in 2018: COO, CFO, VP/Director of Marketing, VP/Director of Operations, and General Manager/Owner/Partner.
- The most frequently provided benefits for executives/managers were: paid holidays (offered by 91.4% of responding companies), paid vacation (89.5%), and employee health insurance (72.0%).
- For other salaried employees, the most frequently provided benefits were: paid holidays (93.7%), paid vacation (93.1%), and casual dress code (74.8%).
- And, for hourly employees, the benefits provided most often were: paid vacation (94.3%), paid holidays (93.6%), and casual dress code (70.9%).
- The average number of paid holidays for executives/managers in 2021 was 7.5 days per year, down from 7.8 in 2018.
- Other salaried employees had an average of 7.6 paid holidays per year while the hourly employees had an average of 7.3 paid holidays.
- Executives/managers had an average of 20.2 paid vacation days after 20 years of tenure, while the other salaried employees had an average of 19.0. Hourly employees had an average of 18.4 days of paid vacation after 20 years on the job.

- The vast majority of respondents (93.7%) are not unionized. Most often, those who are unionized are members of IBEW (Electrical), with 69.2% of these respondents saying so.
- Most often, responding companies are structured as Corporations/LLCs (69.5%).
- Local sign companies account for just over half (53.8%) of the responding sample, and 10.8% offer an apprenticeship program (nearly two-thirds of which are business-sponsored).
- The proportion of responding companies with 10 or less FTEs is 53.2%, an increase from 2018 (44.4%). Simultaneously, there are proportionally fewer responding companies with 26 or more FTEs in 2021 (21.3%) than in 2018 (29.0%).
- Companies reported an average of 25.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and 2.9 temporary or contract employees in 2021. In comparison, companies participating in the 2018 survey employed an average of 29.2 FTEs and 3.0 temporary or contract employees.
- The average number of full-time employees who work only on location/in the office is 18.3, while the mean number who work only remotely is 5.6. On average, 13.5 work both on location and in the office.
- Similar to the geographic profiles reported in 2018, respondents are located in the South most often (33.9%) in 2021, followed by the West (21.1%). The Northeast accounts for the smallest proportion of respondents in 2021 (10.0%), followed by Canada (14.2%).
- As was the case in 2018, nearly all respondents (93.6%) indicated in 2021 that they are located at the headquarters location, while just 6.4% of responding companies indicated being at a branch facility.
- Just under seven in 10 (69.6%) of responding companies reported being members of ISA or an ISA Affiliated Association.

# Participant Profile







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