

COLORIST SALARY SURVEY

RESULTS 2019



WHY A SURVEY?

Help us make salaries more open and transparent within our discipline. We believe in order to strengthen our community it is important to get an idea about the economic situation of colorists in different parts of the world and different employment situations.

The goal for the following survey was and still is for the years to come, to collect anonymous information about salaries (daily rates and wages) and field of work.

With this survey we ask about employment situation, experience, working hours, other professions people follow and we most of all ask about income from grading jobs and how it is charged (per hour, day, project), whether people get a contract, are represented by an agency or member of a union or professional society. Note that this is a self-reporting online survey.

The results are published on the grade.community website and hopefully used by all of us to evaluate our current situation including equal pay among gender, racial identity and experience levels and guide starting colorists in questions about rates and wages.

On the following pages the results of this survey were analysed to show relations between various aspects, like age and gender, country and field of work with the income.

As this is a communal initiative, we would like to encourage you to send us feedback, and in particular to ask us the right questions. If we know for what answers you are looking for in this survey, we are more likely able to give you the answers. So do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Thank you!

grade.community

Berlin, December 2020

WELCOME TO YEAR ONE!

We wanted to take a moment and thank everyone who filled out the survey, promoted it online and made sure we got as many replies as we did.

Without everyone's help, this survey wouldn't exist right now and we are happy to show you the results of its first year.

Thank you!



THE NUMBERS

We received **308** responses from 53 countries.

In order to keep the data anonymous every contribution with less than four entries in a category related to location (i.e. country of origin, city) will not be analysed. Therefore conclusions on individual identities are strictly prevented. As a result we will focus individual analysis mainly on the first seven countries where the majorities of contribution came from. For better readability the other entries will be shown in a single category, like “other countries”.

Top 6 countries that contributed:

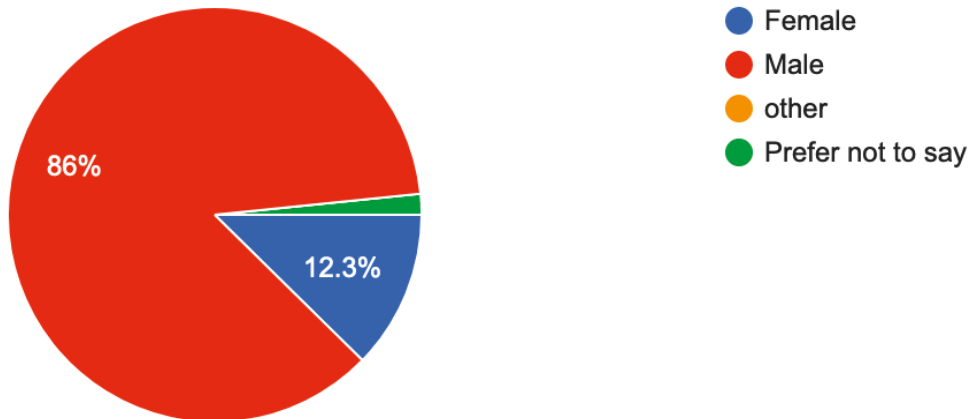
Germany:	70	UK:	23
USA:	68	Brazil:	15
Spain:	23	Netherlands:	10

Gender distribution:

Female: 38

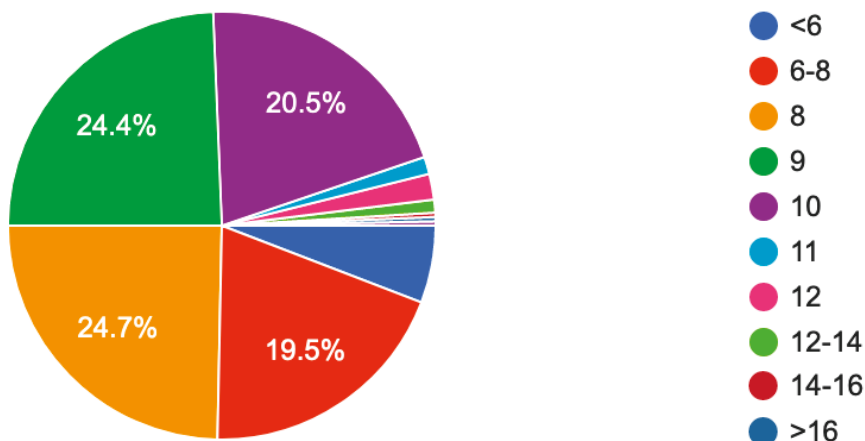
Male: 265

Prefer not to say: 5



Working hours:

Out of 308 responses 154 people (50 %) stated that their average working day is generally longer than 8 hours (including breaks).

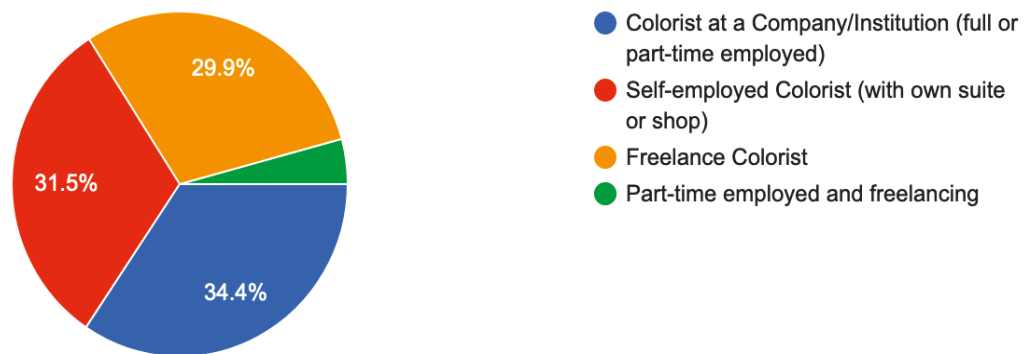


Employment situation:

Out of 308 responses these graphs show in what employment situation people work, what their primary positions and experience levels are or if they follow other paid jobs.

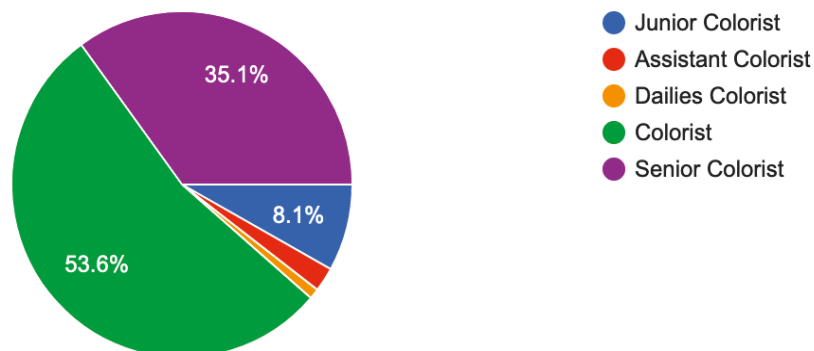
What is your employment situation?

308 responses



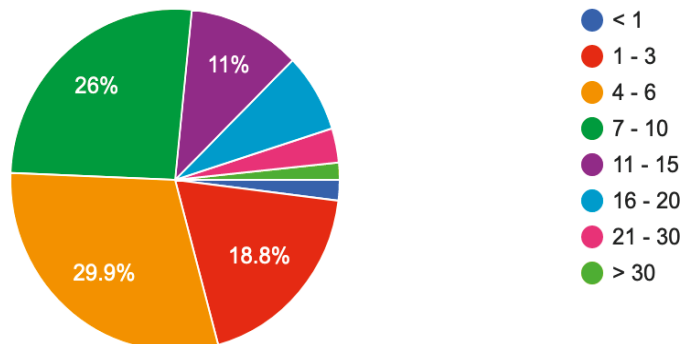
What is your primary position?

308 responses



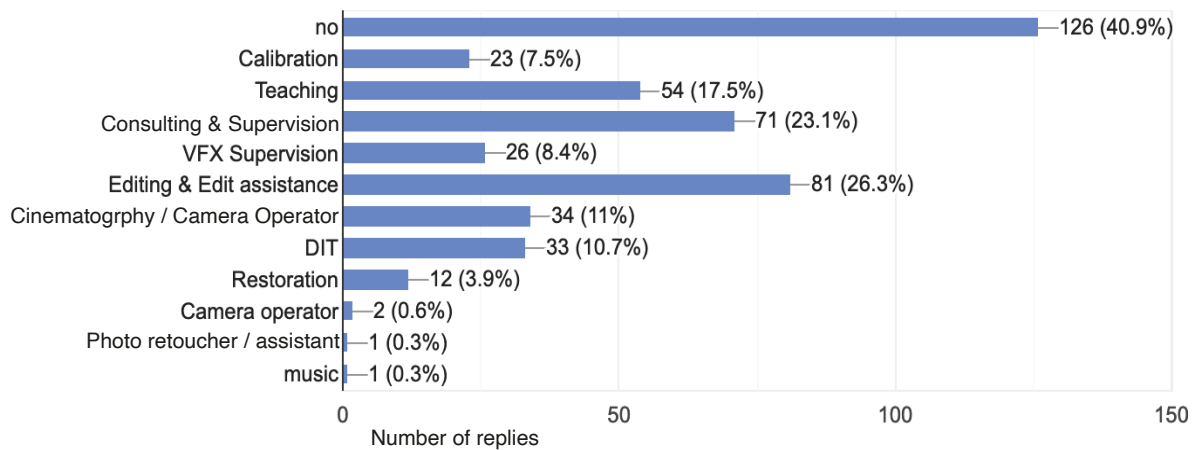
How many years of experience do you have, working as colorist?

308 responses



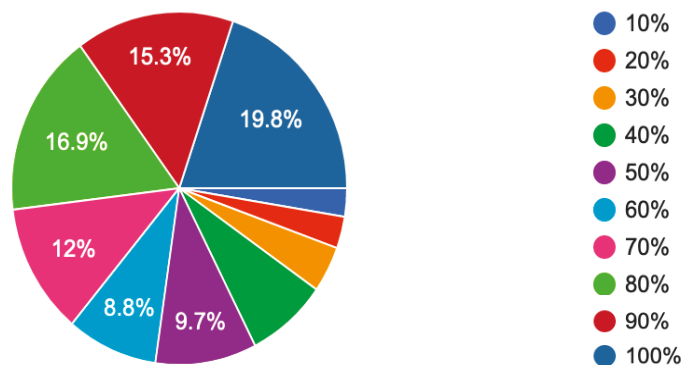
Do you follow other paid work? (multiple options allowed)

308 responses



How much of your working time is grading in percentage of all your paid work?

308 responses



Top 8 cities where colorists work:

Berlin:	49	Madrid:	14
Los Angeles:	24	Sao Paulo:	8
London:	19	Amsterdam:	7
New York City:	19	Paris:	6

Out of 308 responses 14 people stated that they mostly traveled internationally for grading jobs in 2019.

Agencies and professional societies

While 22 people (8%) stated, that they are working with an agency to find projects and deal with formalities, like contracts, 41 people (15 %) have a positive experience and would recommend it.

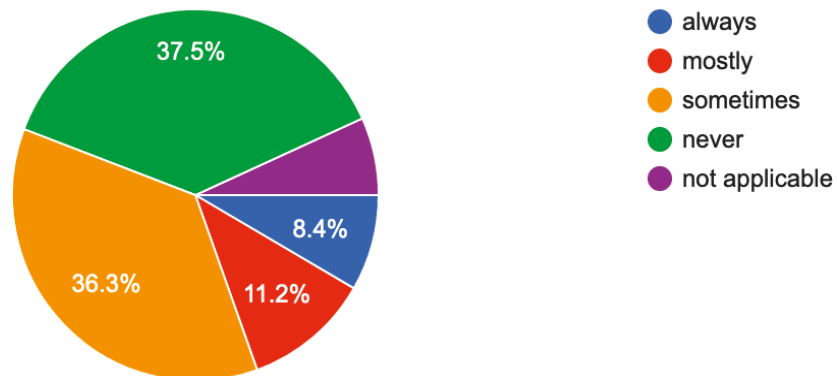
46 people stated that they are a member of a union or professional society, naming the following:

CSI (26), ICG (4), ABC (2), Gildia postprodukcji (1), Editors Union (1), Editors Guild (1), ADF(1), AQTIS (1), FSF (1), NATAS (1), VRFF (1), SAE (1), SSFV (1), South African Guild of Editors (1), Post New York Alliance (1), DRT (1), WGAW (1).

Written contract vs. oral agreement

As a freelancer do you get or request a written contract before you start working?

251 responses



Out of 251 responses more than 1/3 stated, never having a written contract before starting a job, while another third works on a contract base sometimes, and just 8.4 % of the respondents always agree on a contract with their clients before starting a project.

SALARY RANGES

Out of 308 responses the variety of different wages people receive for color grading jobs span from a yearly salary of about 10.000€ - 250.000 €.

The following graphs will differentiate these numbers based on different aspects, like field of work , country or grading system and shall help you to answer questions like the following.

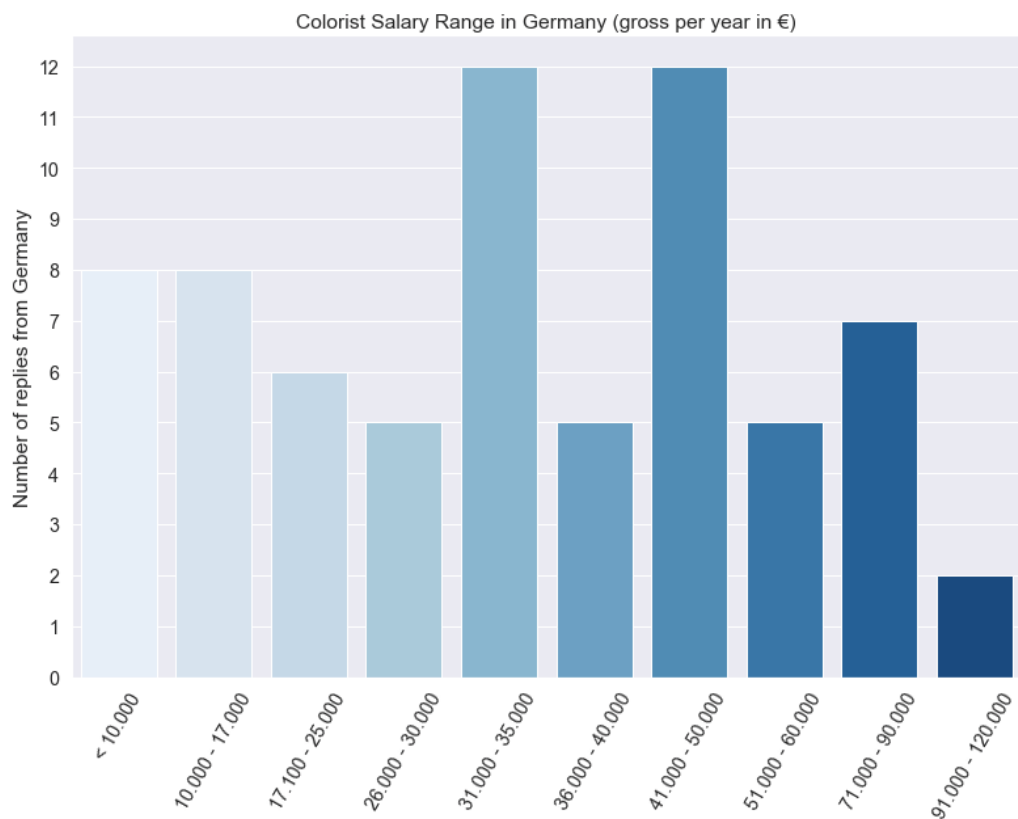
QUESTION:

How much is the gross daily rate for a freelance colorist with 6 years of experience in Germany working on feature films/documentaries?
This would exclude jobs from e.g. commercials & advertisement.

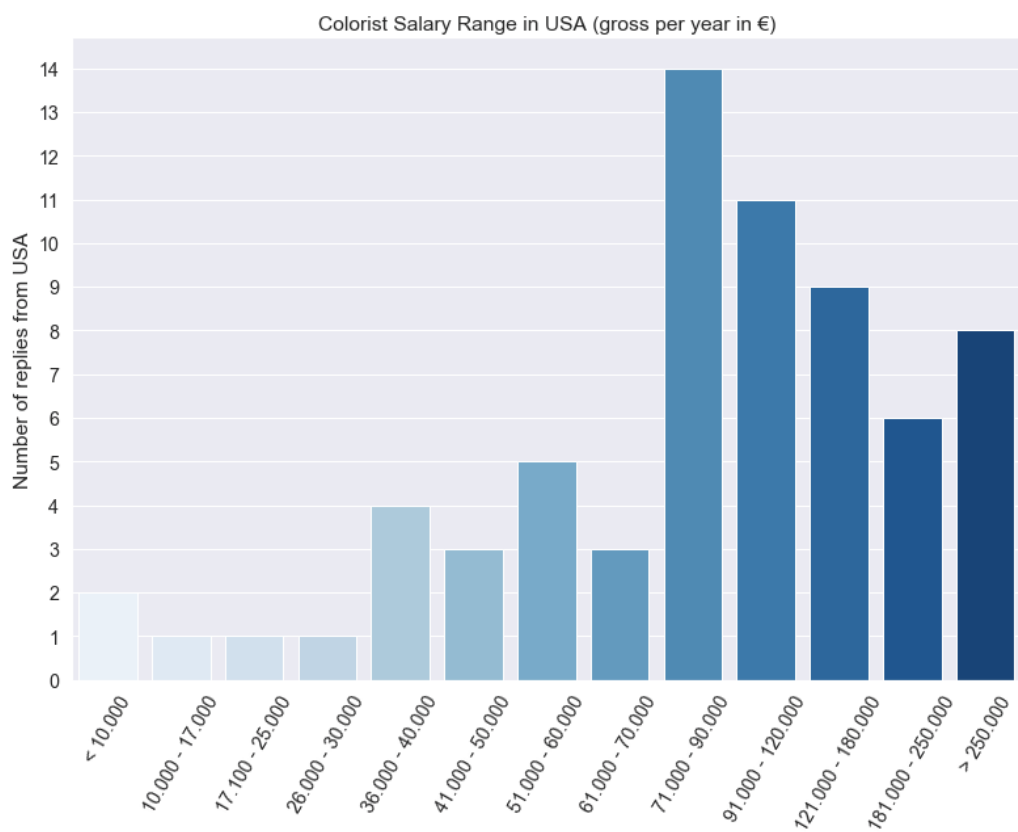
ANSWER: 500,-€

Concider this as a baseline for a salary range in this field of work, as there is always more granularity to an ideal answer. Different real life factors have to be considered, but this may give you a suggestion from the pool of replies.

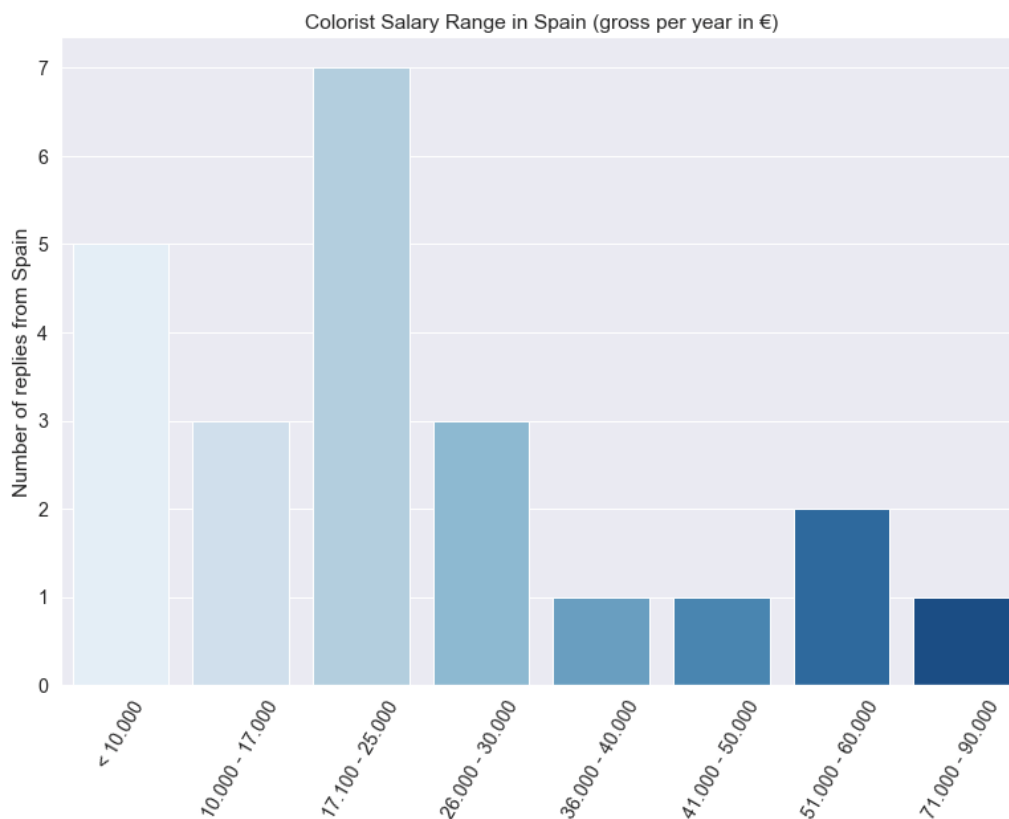
Salary Range by Country: Germany



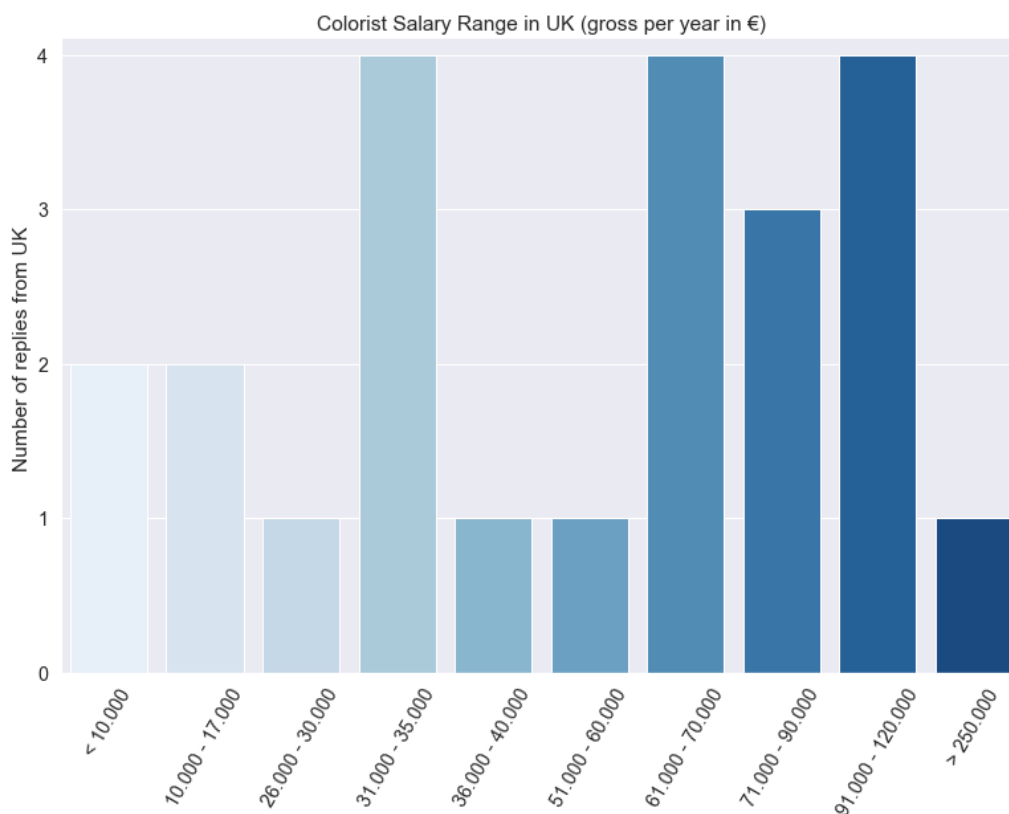
Salary Range by Country: USA



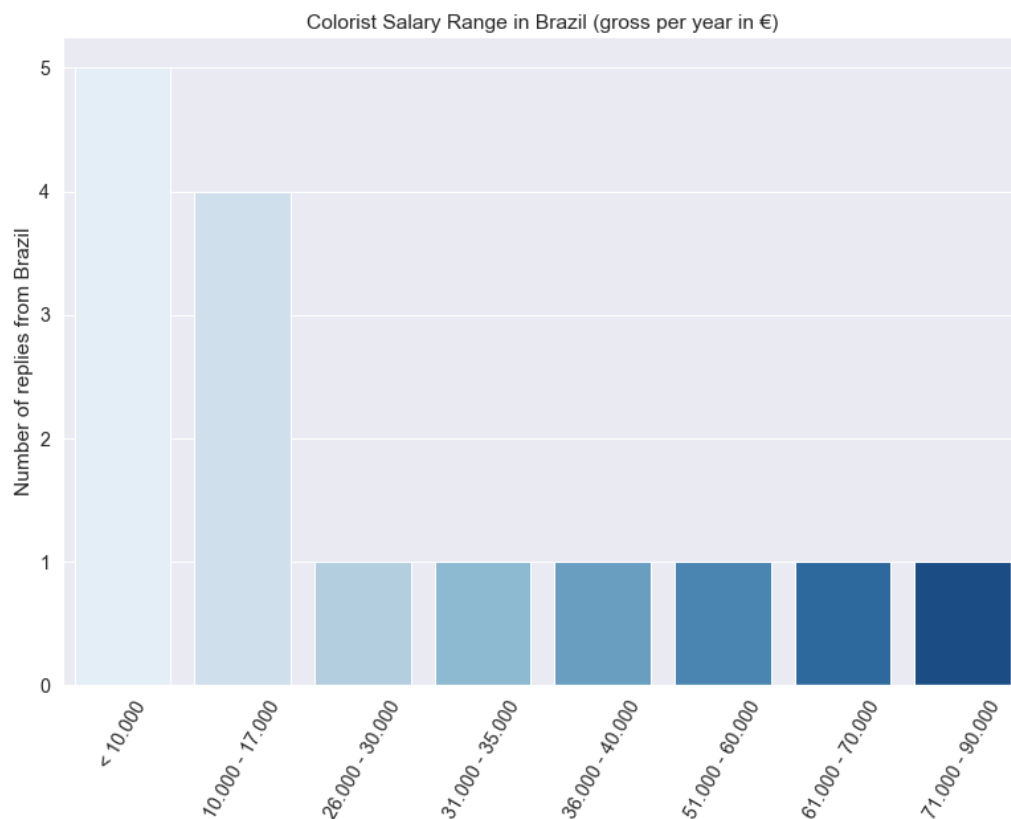
Salary Range by Country: Spain



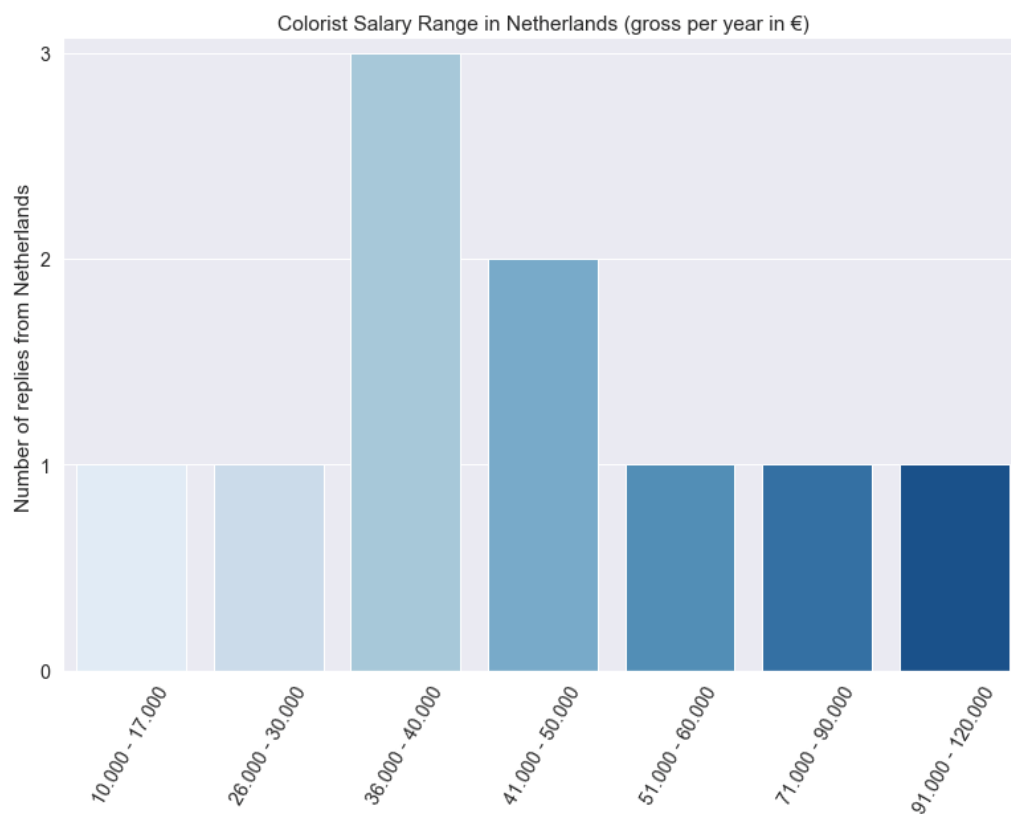
Salary Range by Country: UK



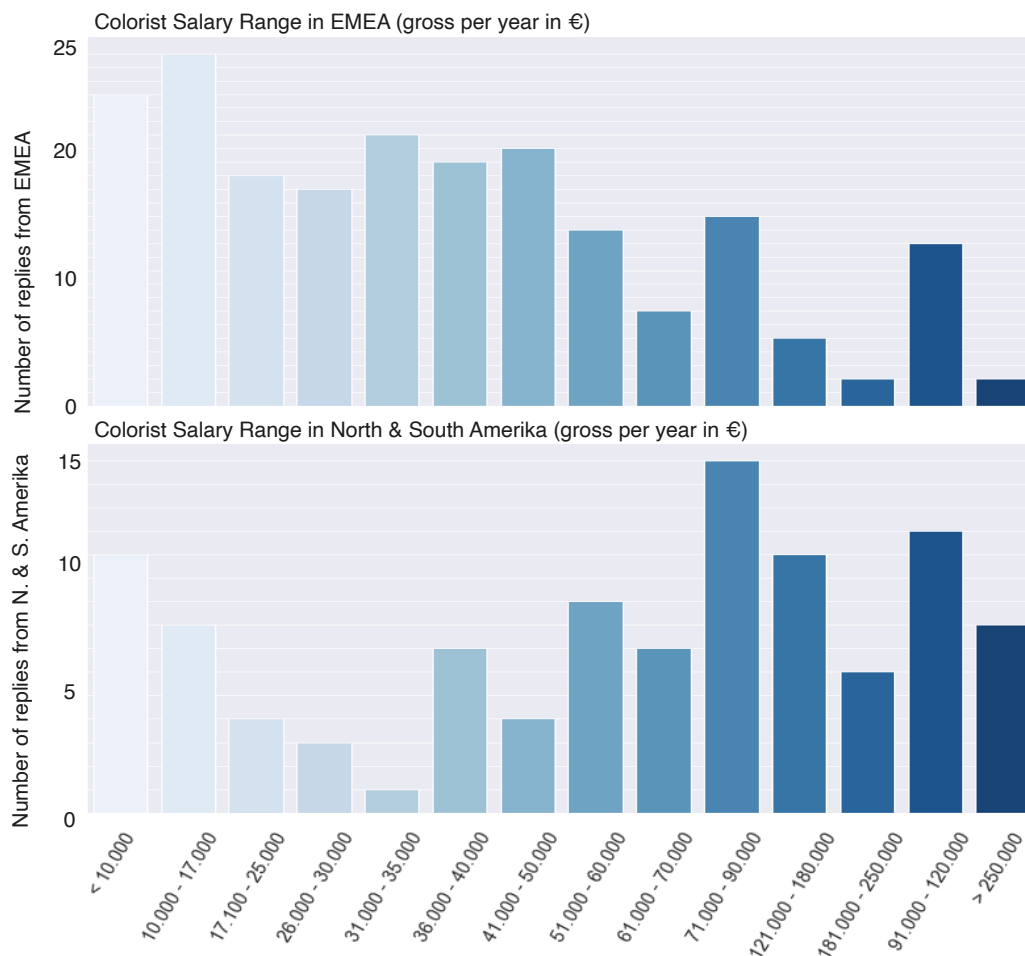
Salary Range by Country: Brazil



Salary Range by Country: Netherlands



Salary Range by Region

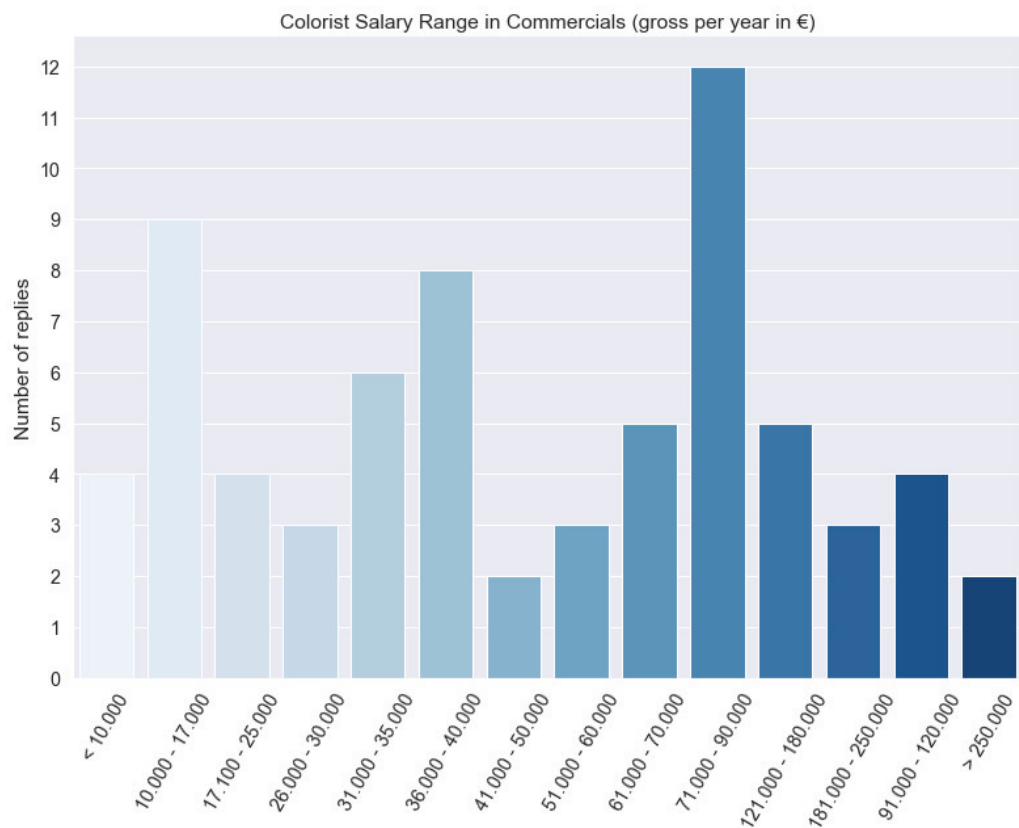


Summary: Salary Range by Region

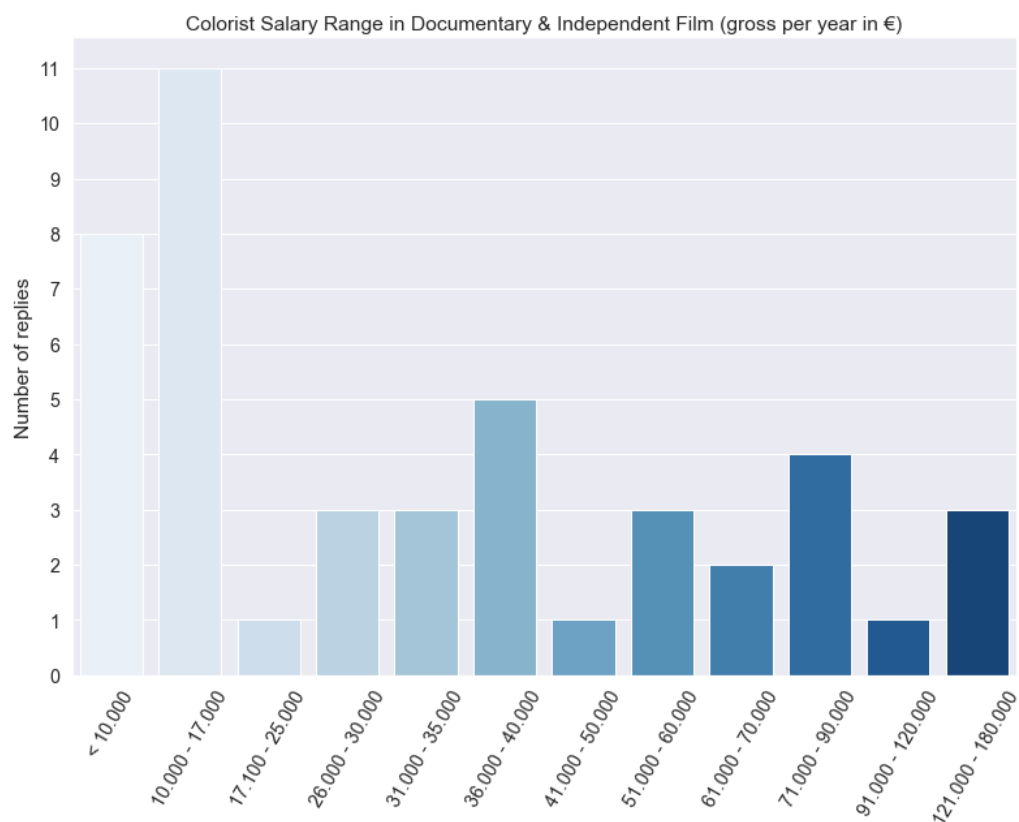
Even though the number of replies for each country differ a lot and make it difficult to draw valid conclusions, it can be said that the salary in Europe is generally lower than in the US.

Although results from the UK, with London as a center for high budget and international productions, raises Europe's numbers, Europe does not reach the higher salary range paid in the US.

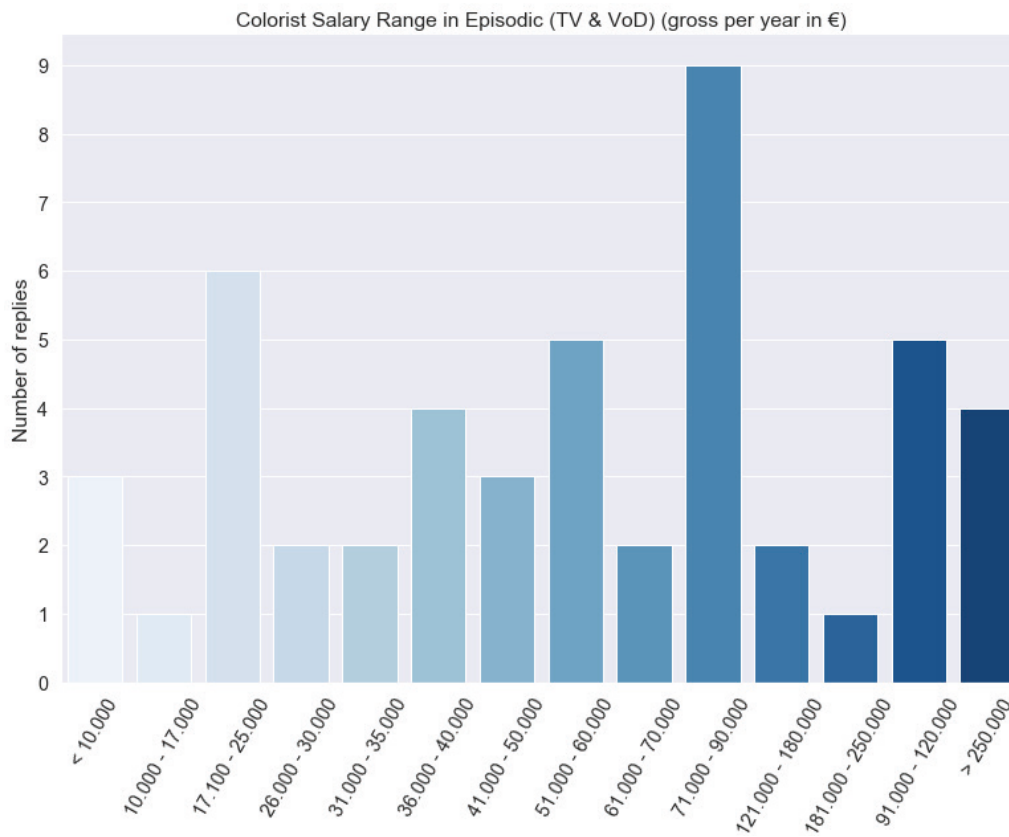
Salary Range by Field of Work: Commercials



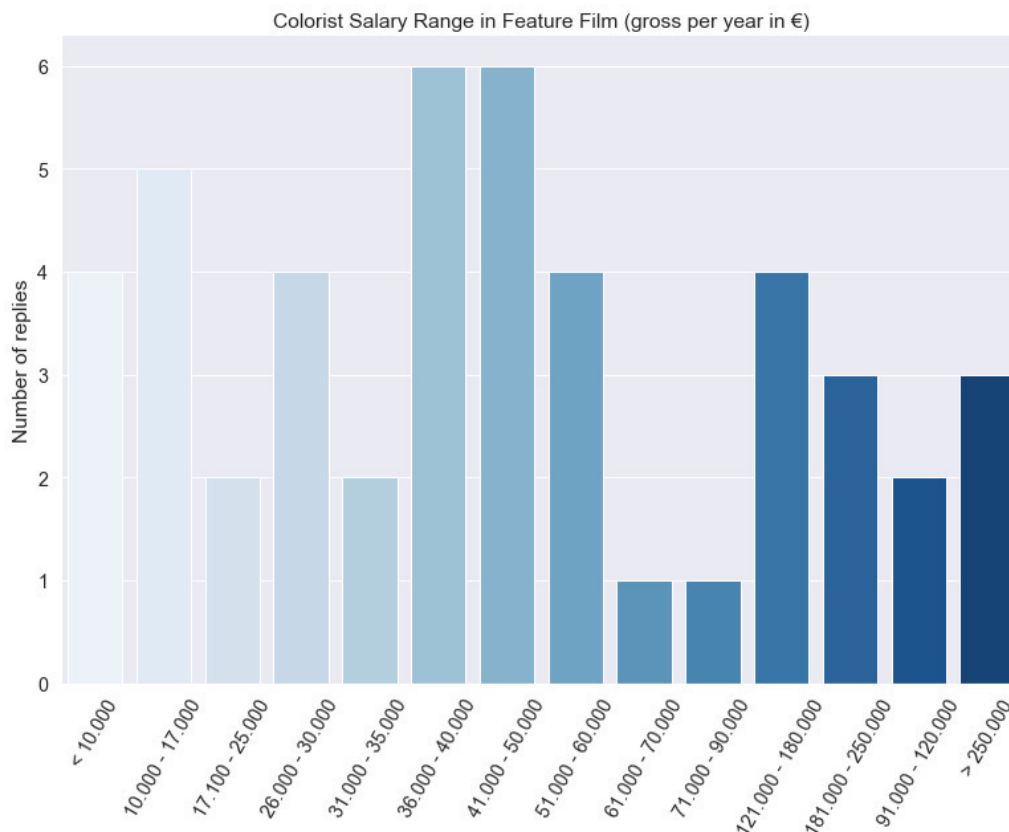
Field of Work: Docu & Independent Film



Field of Work: Episodic (TV & VoD)



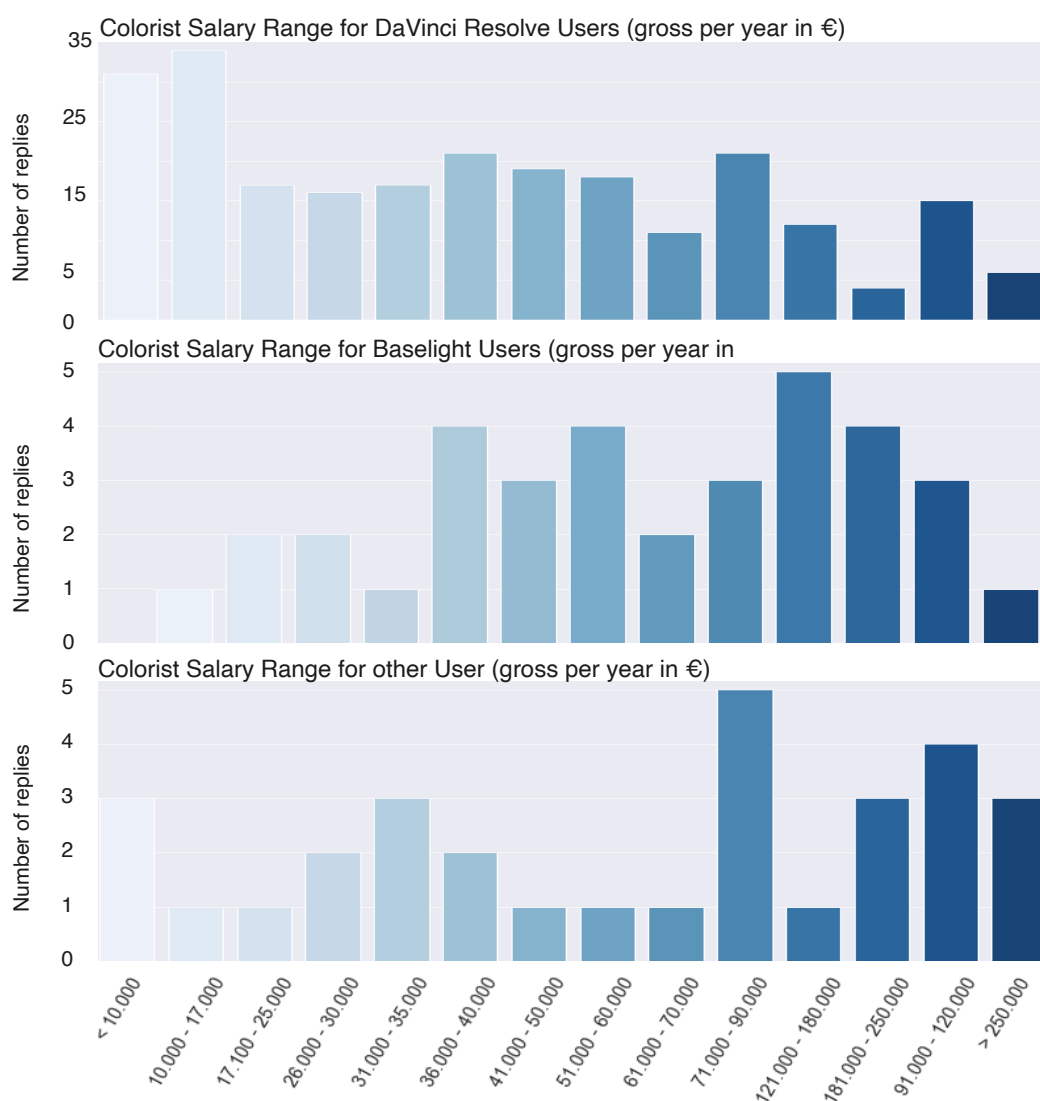
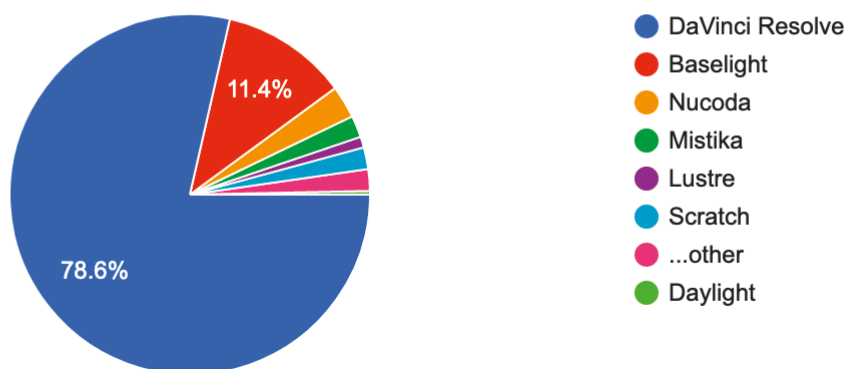
Field of Work: Feature Film



Salary range by grading system:

What grading system are you using primarily?

308 responses

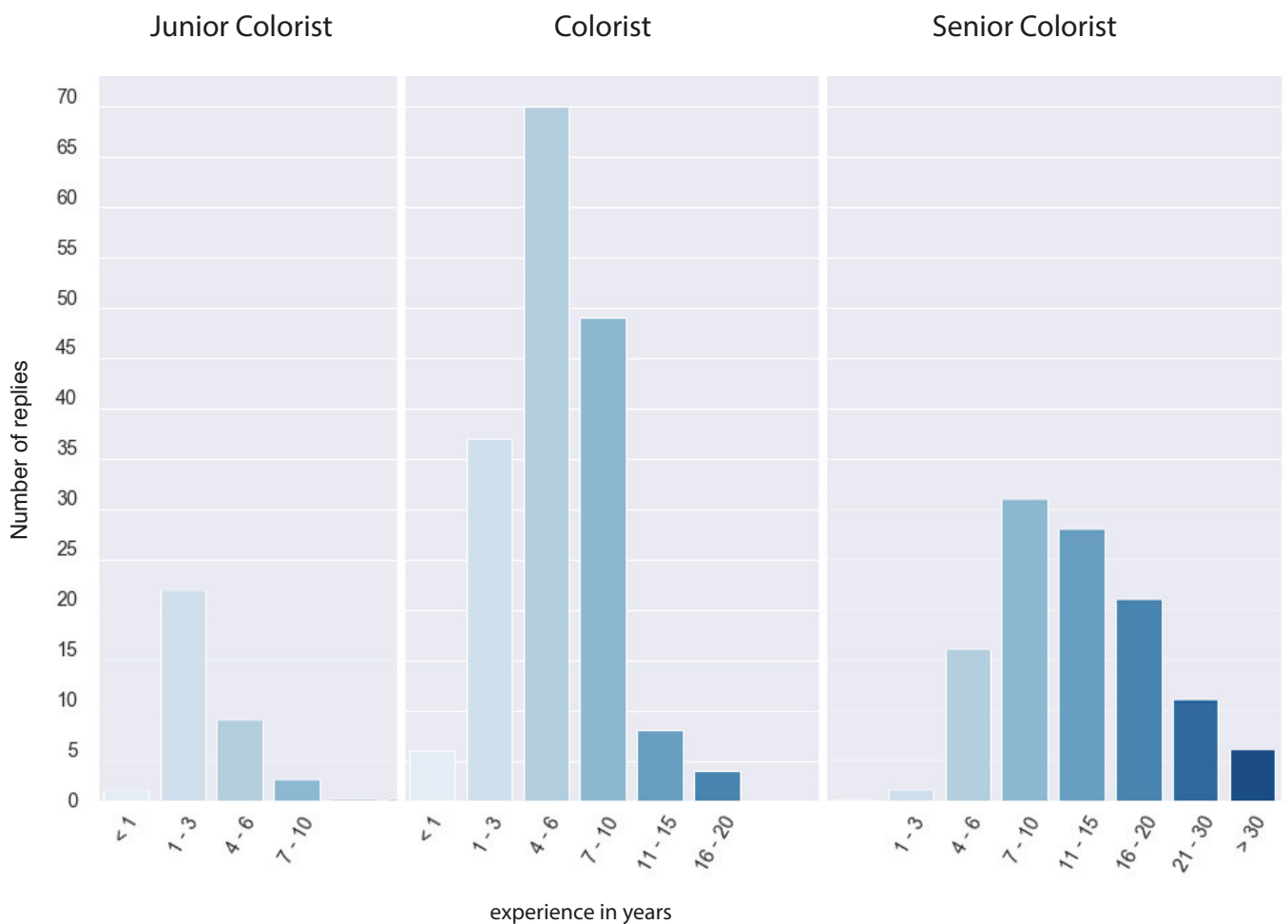


CAREER LEVEL

The following charts show how many years of experience people have working as a colorist, while having reached a certain career level.

We differentiate between three career levels:

- Junior Colorist
- (mid-level) Colorist
- Senior Colorist



PERSONAL NOTE

The Quality Check Question

by Dirk Meier

As a last question for the survey we had the idea to include a technical topic that would ideally serve to tell if the respondent actually is a colorist. We quickly figured out that this is impossible, at least with only one question. But we kept this last question, also because I was personally interested in this particularly topic.

When it comes to “display gamma” many opinions are out there, and I have heard strange stories about this in the past 15 years. Which makes sense when you consider that from 1990 when Recommendation ITU-R BT.709 was ratified till 2011 when Rec. ITU-R BT.1886 was ratified we lived in an “undefined space” regarding display gamma. Well, in 1990 it was simply defined by the “natural” behavior of cathode ray tubes (CRT), back then the only existing type of

professional displays. With the demise of CRTs the new display technologies (mostly types of LCD - Liquid Crystal Display) had to mimic the behavior of CRTs. But their behavior hadn’t been officially standardized until 2011 and so many manufacturers looked at the existing papers and came to different conclusions. Hence a variety of display gammas had been implemented in many products over the years and that stimulated the confusion even in the professional world of image post-production.

So the variety of answers in our survey is interesting, and as a strictly personal comment, also a bit sad.

Let’s give you the correct answer: 2.4

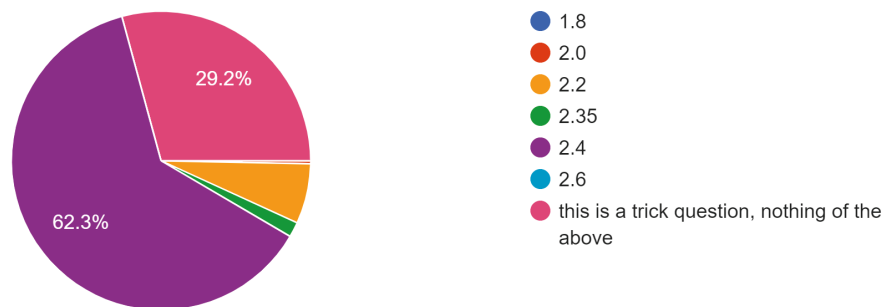
And there is no other option.

We checked this, including the phrasing of the question and whether it would leave any doubt or option for ambiguity, with Mr. “1080” and

... hm, and then, just to make sure you're really a colorist and not just here to distort the results ;) ...

What is the correct exponent in the EOTF of a Rec. 709/1886 display?

308 responses



“square pixels for HD” Dr. Charles Poynton on the occasion of a talk in Berlin. His only concern was, that even the use of Rec. 709 in regard to displays is somewhat wrong. You should only use Rec. 1886 then.

But my feeling is that Rec. 1886 is still unknown to many colleagues, so we kept both in our question: Rec. 1886, which provides the gamma and Rec. 709, which provides the gamut (roughly speaking).

The results support my feeling that Rec. 1886 is still unknown to many in our business. While almost 2/3 of the replies were correct, it also means that 116 out of 308 respondents didn't know the right answer.

The question asks for the exponent in the EOTF, and when you don't know what it is and what it is about, you can start reading the published [Rec. 1886 paper](#), available online, free of charge (as well as the Rec. 709).

It sounds complicated, but isn't the display your most important device to work with as a colorist.

It is also interesting to note, that “wrong” answers came from respondents of all experience levels, income ranges and locations.

So at least for those reading through the results, there might be an immediate take-away from the survey.

CLOSING REMARKS

More information about demographic data and a more in-depth analysis about salary ranges in relation to certain aspects will be included in the next survey. We see this as a good starting point and hope to receive more responses in the next round to provide more information on the topic.

Therefore we would like to encourage you again to spread the word and send us feedback, in particular on what answers you are most of all looking for in this survey. So do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Thank you!

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Berlin, December 2020