

Compensation & Incentive Study for MENA

October 2025

About Wa'ed Ventures & the VCPE Association



Wa'ed Ventures

Wa'ed Ventures is the \$500 million Kingdom-focused venture capital firm wholly owned by Aramco. Established in 2013, Wa'ed Ventures manages a portfolio of 90+ high-growth local and global startups across diverse sectors and tech verticals, such as spactech, healthtech, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, fintech, construction tech, and deep tech.

Through its post-investment support, Wa'ed Ventures supports Saudi founders in expanding beyond the local market while facilitating the localization of global pioneering startups in the Kingdom. To learn more please visit: www.waed.com

The Saudi Venture Capital and Private Equity Association

The Saudi Venture Capital and Private Equity Association (VCPEA) was established by a resolution issued by the Saudi Council of Ministers in 2019 to integrate expertise and professionalism in addressing the challenges faced by investment fund managers, angel investors, and start-ups.

By coordinating meetings with relevant stakeholders, reviewing and improving regulations in the sector, improving the legislative environment, and increasing awareness through quality training programs and discussion sessions that highlight its promising prospects and future directions; In addition, the association seeks to provide exclusive features that increase the attractiveness of attracting more innovative investments and stimulate taking a bold and sustainable step towards the venture capital and private equity sector.



Background

Why this study?

The rapid growth of the startup ecosystem in MENA has heightened the need for competitive and well-structured compensation models that can attract, motivate, and retain top talent. Unlike large corporates, startups operate under unique risk-reward dynamics where traditional salary structures alone are often insufficient. Long-term incentive plans (LTIPs), such as ESOPs and cash-based schemes, have become critical tools for aligning employees' interests with long-term value creation. However, until now, founders and boards in the region have lacked robust data and benchmarks to guide the design of these plans. This survey addresses that gap by providing a first-of-its-kind fact-based view of compensation and incentive design practices across early, mid, and late-stage startups in MENA. It benchmarks regional trends against global practices, highlights distinctive features such as ESOP pool sizes and vesting patterns, and offers insights tailored to the realities of the local market. The findings are intended to equip startup leaders, investors, and policymakers with practical guidance to build competitive, sustainable, and fair compensation structures that support long-term growth and ecosystem development.

Methodology

The survey was prepared by Willis Towers Watsons (WTW) and draws on data collected from companies across Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the wider MENA region, spanning early, mid, and late-stage startups. To ensure accuracy and confidentiality, results are presented only in aggregate when at least seven data points are available per category. The study analyzes multiple dimensions of compensation and incentives (including base salary, allowances, ESOP pool sizes, grant frequency, vesting schedules, and performance conditions) to allow for meaningful comparisons across company stages and against global benchmarks. This methodology ensures that the findings are both representative of regional practices and reliable for decision-making.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to the participating startups, investors, and ecosystem partners whose contributions and insights made this survey possible. Their openness and collaboration were essential in shaping a resource that benefits the entire MENA startup community.

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How to use the report

Case: An early-stage Company from Saudi Arabia is going to introduce a Long-Term Incentive Plan for its employees. How could this Report help?

1 | **What type of Long-Term Incentive Plan should be used?**
Employee Share Option Plan (ESOP) is a preferred design based on the market survey.
 Reference Page 12

5 | **When can the participants exercise the vested grant?**
Participants can exercise vested grants only at a liquidity event (IPO or a part-sale/acquisition).
 Reference Page 20

2 | **Who should participate in the scheme?**
Professionals, middle management, and above are most commonly eligible.
 Reference Page 16-17

6 | **What size is recommended for the Option Pool?**
Early-stage companies have the most common ESOP pool size of 15%. The mid-stage and late-stage companies typically allocate up to 10%.
 Reference Page 24

3 | **How often new ESOP grants should be provided?**
The typical grant schedule is to provide the grant at hire and provide new grants (top-up) ad hoc, typically at the fundraising events or if there was aggressive number of hires and the pool is already empty.
 Reference Page 15-16

7 | **How much equity should be allocated to the CEO and CEO-1 roles?**
CEO allocation is expected to be between 1% and 2.5%, CEO-1 average allocation per role typically would be from 1% to 1.25%.
 Reference Page 25

4 | **How often should those grants vest?**
Typically, a grant will start to vest after one-year waiting time (cliff) and will vest in small portions monthly (graded vesting), or in larger portions annually over 4 years.
 Reference Page 17-19

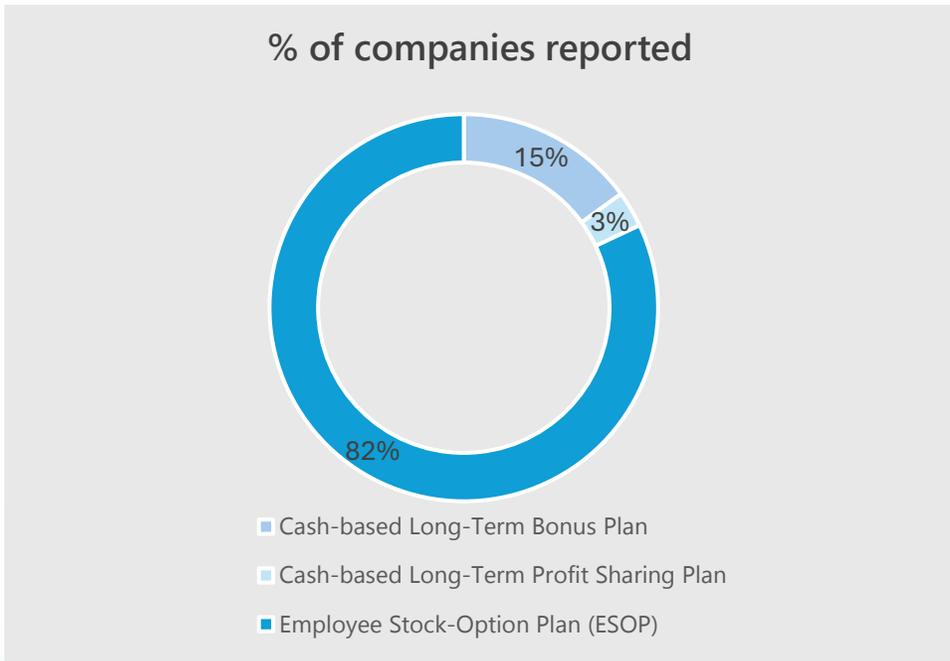
8 | **How much should be the CEO's cash compensation?**
Based on the 50th percentile, CEO's total annual remuneration varies with the stage of startups, ranging from \$162,000 for early-stage startups to \$294,000 for mid-stage startups.
 Reference Page 39-40

01

Executive Summary

Incentive Plan Types in MENA

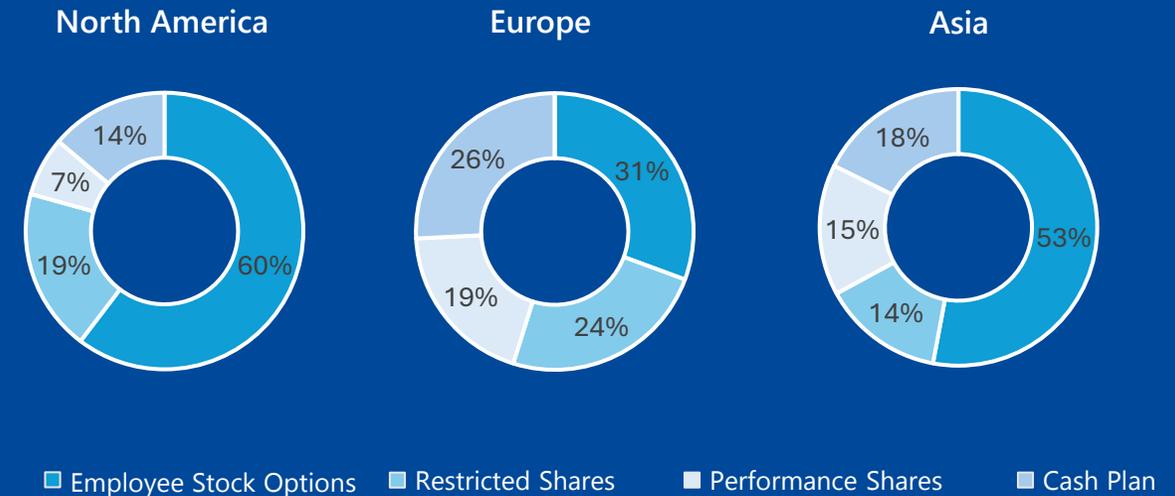
82% of the Surveyed Companies in MENA use ESOP as an incentive plan.



The design structure of the Incentive Plan in MENA is primarily influenced by the company's development stage (early, mid, late). Sector, country, valuation, and other factors have less impact.

Global Market Benchmark

- ESOPs are most common plan type across all regions, but their prevalence varies between sectors.
- The next typical plan type is the mix of performance shares and restricted shares, which is not present across MENA at the moment.

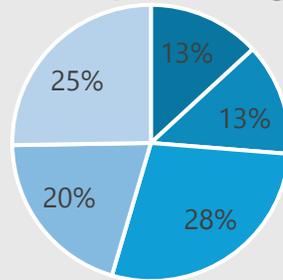


Plan Participation Eligibility

“Professionals, middle management, and up” are eligible

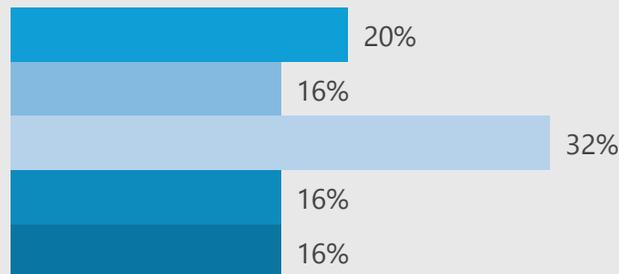
All Incentive Plans (Cash and ESOP) Participation Eligibility

- All employees (including contractors)
- All salaried employees
- Executives only
- Middle management and up
- Professional and middle management and up



ESOP Participation Eligibility

- Executives only
- Middle management and up
- Professionals, middle management and up
- All salaried employees
- All employees (including contractors)



MENA ESOP plans are most commonly granted at the time of hiring, with additional ad-hoc grants provided to offset dilution from subsequent funding rounds.

Global Market Benchmark

- Globally, plans typically cover professionals, middle management and up, which provides certain benefits to the startup and investors, while managing talent retention.

Impact of ESOP on Employee Retention:



VS



Median tenure at ESOP implementing companies

Median tenure at non-ESOP implementing companies

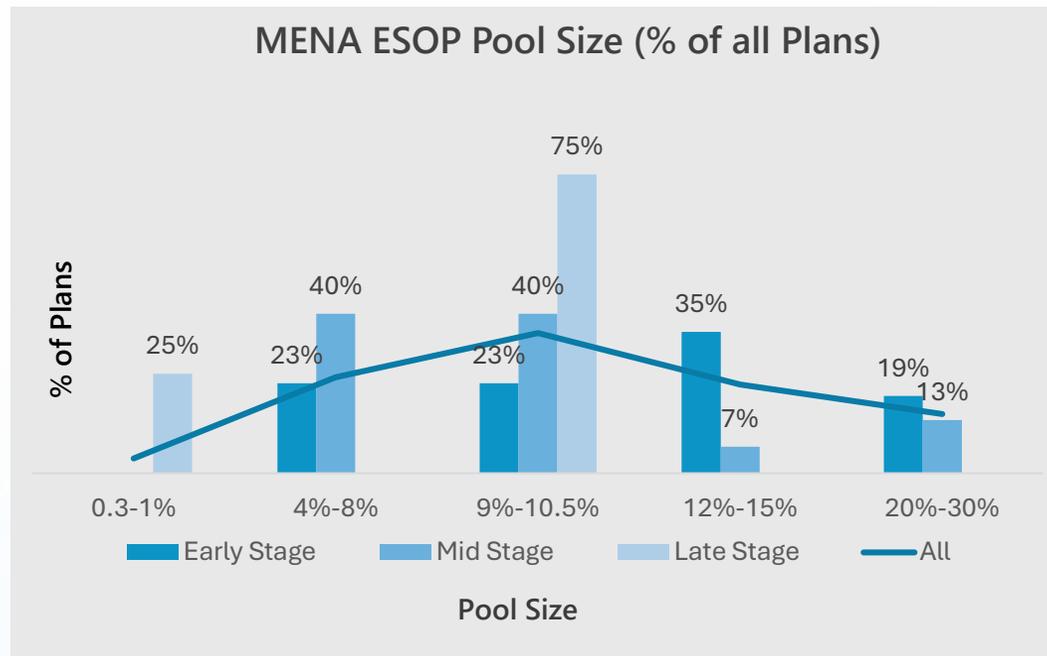
20-50%

less likely to seek new jobs when employees have ownership stakes, and nearly two-thirds prefer jobs offering stock ownership.

Size of ESOP pool

10-15% ESOP pool size is common in MENA

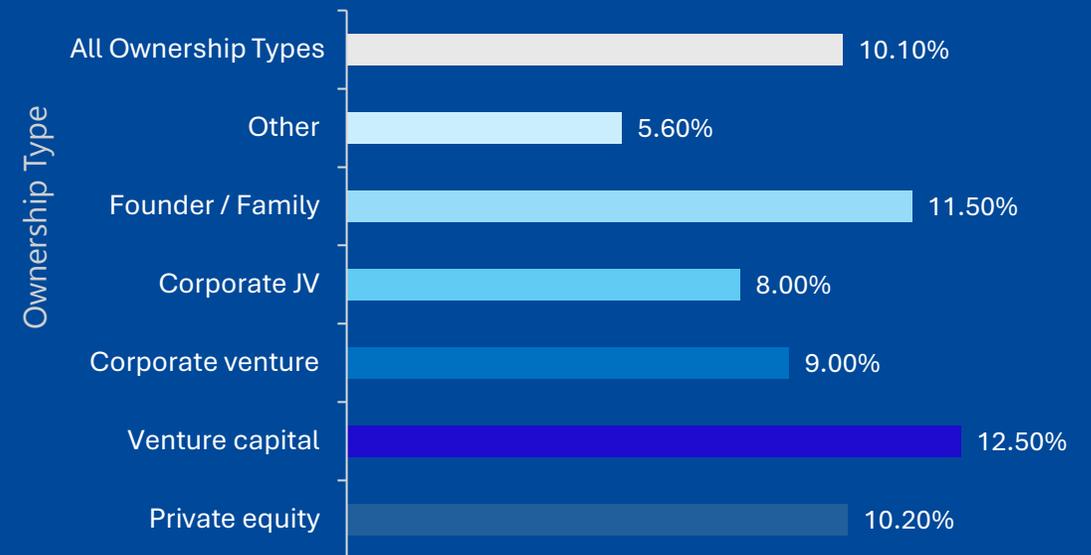
MENA early-stage companies have the most common ESOP pool size of 15%. The mid-stage and late-stage companies typically allocate up to 10% of equity to ESOP pools.



Global Market Benchmark

- Globally, Corporate-backed organizations, especially joint ventures, allocate a lower percentage of equity or profits for their plans, while venture capital-controlled companies (which tend to be smaller and riskier) allocate the most.

Global Average ESOP pool, equity %

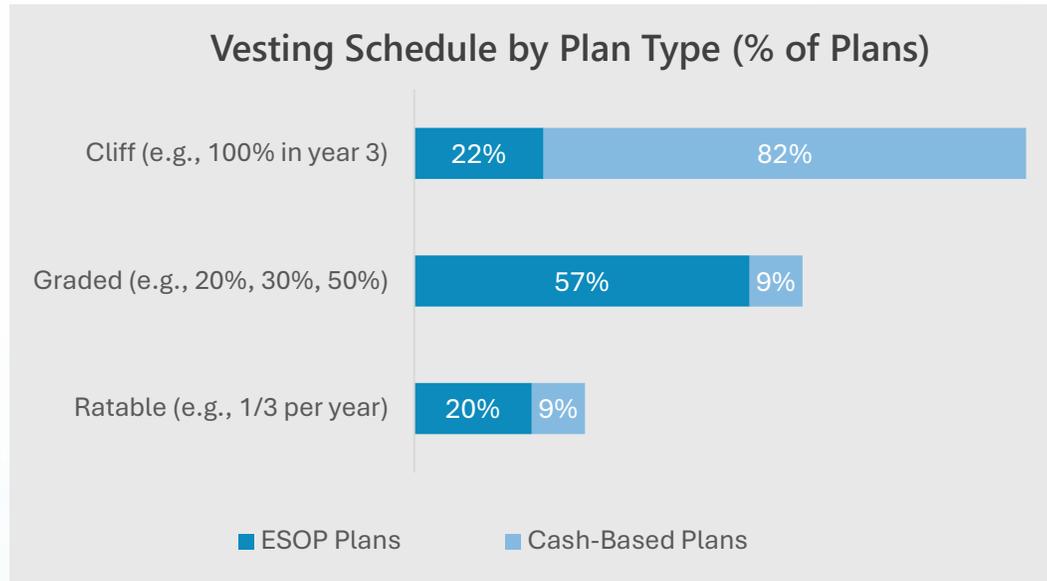


Grant and Vesting Schedules

80% of MENA plans are granted at hire or on an ad hoc basis

Only 20% of MENA plans are granted annually; the other 80% are various types of one-off grants (At hire / Ad hoc).

MENA ESOPs typically follow pro-rated vesting schedules, with most plans fully vesting in 3 to 5 years.



All cash-based plans have performance conditions, while only 40% of ESOP apply performance conditions to the vesting results. With Net Profit being most common measure.

Global Market Perspective

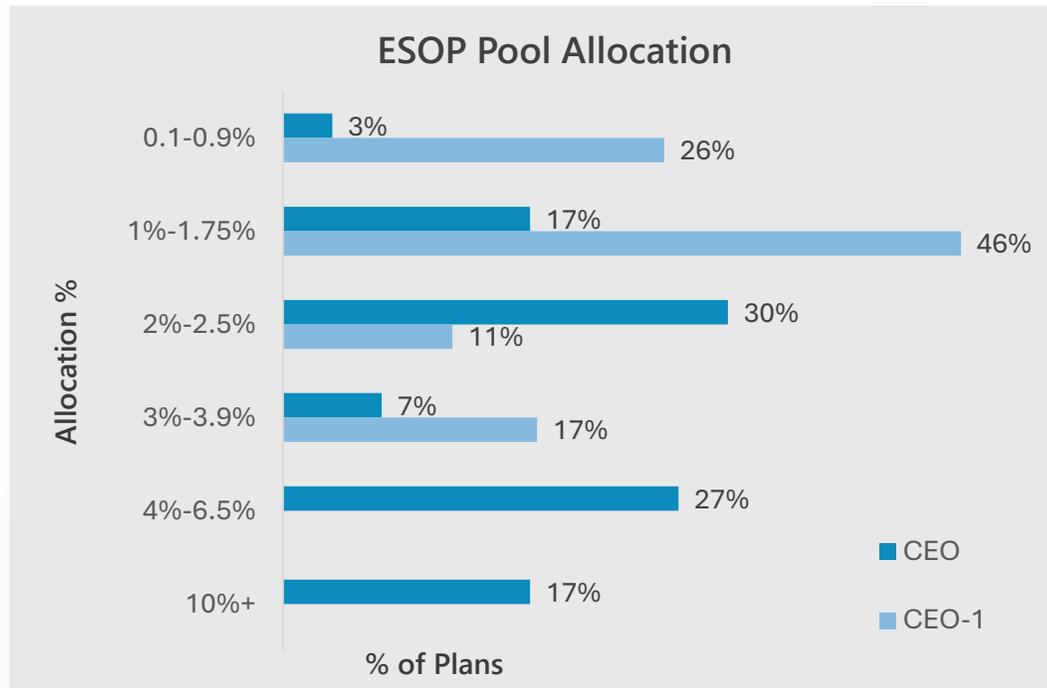
- Europe and APAC companies typically offer one-off grants (At hire / Ad hoc), while in the USA, annual grants are as popular as one-off grants.
- Similar to MENA, most of the global plans fully vest in 3-to 4-year time. 4-year time is more common for APAC.
- Pro-rated vesting is more common than cliff vesting across all regions.
- 66% of plans have performance conditions attached to vesting – the most common metric is shareholder return.
- Similarly to MENA, most ESOP plans require a significant liquidity event for the vested plan awards to be exercised.

ESOP Pool allocation - Executives

0.17-2.5% Non-Founder CEOs receive ESOP allocation

MENA companies report that non-Founder CEOs receive the ESOP allocation from 0.17% to 2.5%, while the Founder-CEOs receive the allocation up to 20%.

Average CEO-1 receives the allocation up to 3.8%. The most common allocation values are from 1% to 1.25%.



Global Market Perspective

- Globally, it is uncommon for companies to allocate equity to the founder-CEO from the ESOP pool.
- On average, companies allocate more equity to the CEO and less to an average CEO-1, compared to MENA companies.



Executive Remuneration (excl. Share Options): Chief Executive Officer / General Manager

Early-Stage Companies: Pay Values

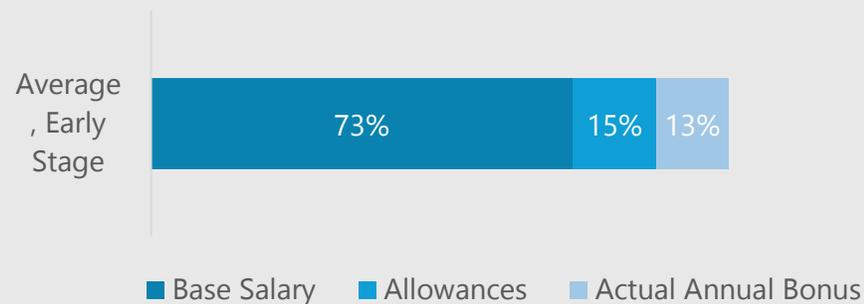
<i>USD, rounded to 100</i>	Annual Base Salary	Annual Guaranteed Compensation Including Allowance	Total Annual Compensation Including Bonus
10-percentile	9,100	9,100	11,500
25-percentile	55,000	66,700	68,700
50-percentile	120,000	161,000	162,000
75-percentile	147,900	169,000	248,500
90-percentile	183,200	260,900	306,100

Mid-Stage Companies

Mid-Stage Companies: Pay Values

<i>USD, rounded to 100</i>	Annual Base Salary	Annual Guaranteed Compensation Including Allowance	Total Annual Compensation Including Bonus
10-percentile	149,500	197,000	197,000
25-percentile	180,000	242,500	242,500
50-percentile	182,000	294,000	294,000
75-percentile	243,000	406,000	419,000
90-percentile	305,500	446,000	538,500

Early-Stage Companies: Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Mid-Stage Companies: Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Note: For compensation details of late-stage and further breakdown by position i.e. CTO, CFO, COO, and other executives, please refer to pages 36-45.

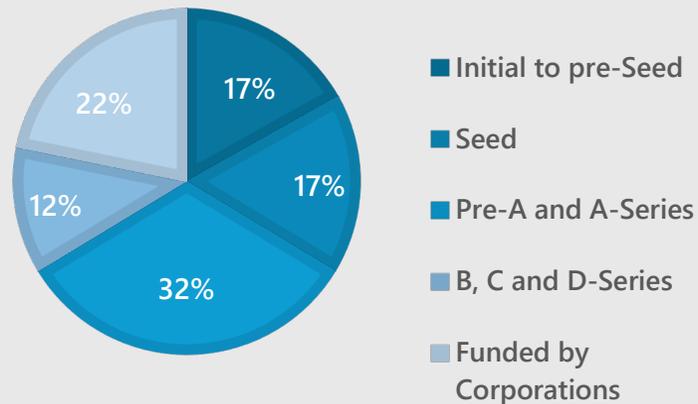
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MENA Start-Up Incentive Design

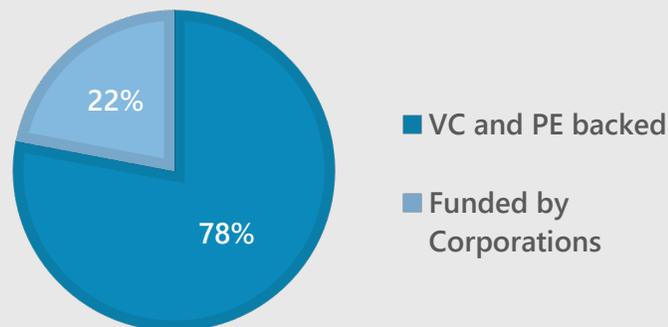
Participation Structure

Below represent the structure of the data set, based on the companies participated in the 2025 Survey

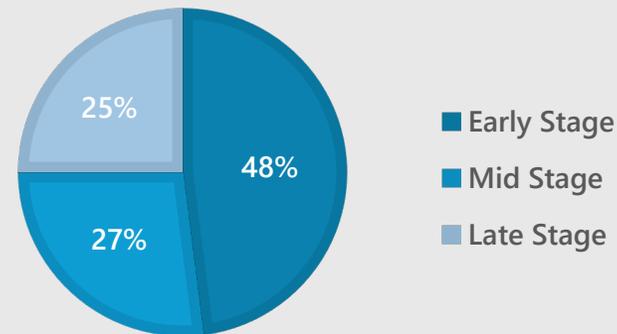
MOST RECENT FUNDING ROUND



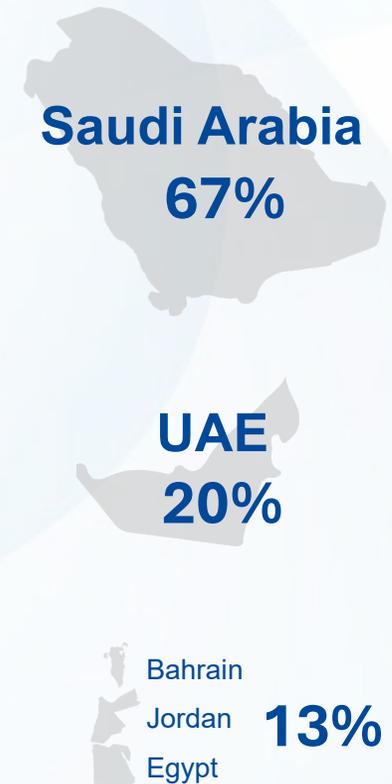
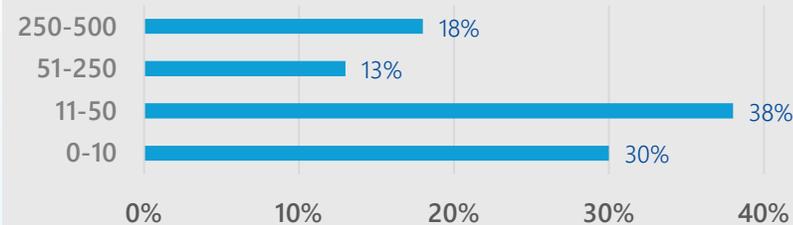
PRIMARY FUNDING



COMPANY DEVELOPMENT STAGE



ENTRY VALUATION AT THE MOMENT OF PLAN INTRODUCTION (MILLIONS OF US\$)



To maintain data protection standards, the information presented in this report is only shared in aggregate when at least seven data points are available. For instance, if fewer than seven companies from Egypt have submitted data, their information will not be reported separately but will instead be included in the 'Total MENA' category.

Plan Types

All participated companies reported that they have only one LTI Plan

There are three types of Long-Term Incentive Plans (LTIPs) implemented by the participating companies in this study:

Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP):

This plan grants employees the option to purchase company shares at a predetermined price after a specified vesting period. It is the most common LTIP among the MENA participating companies, as it aligns employee interests with long-term shareholder value and promotes retention.

Cash-Based Long-Term Incentive Scheme:

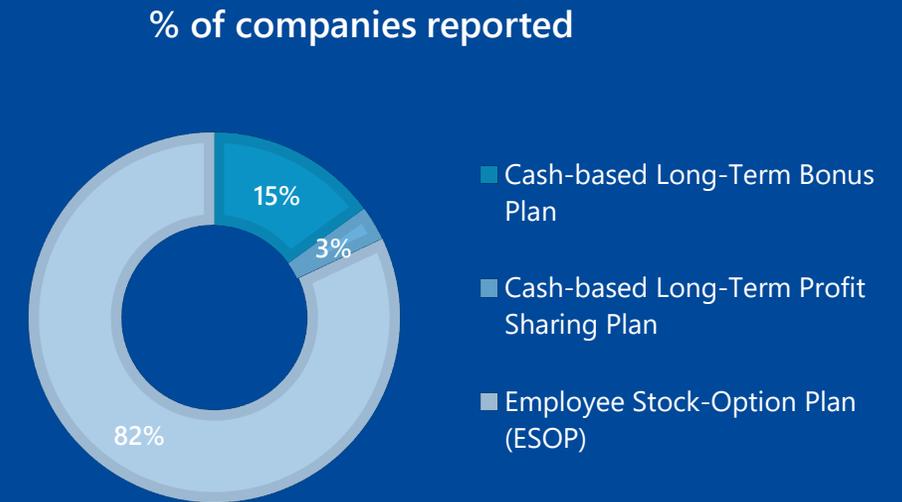
This scheme offers employees a cash bonus linked to the achievement of specific long-term goals, such as financial or operational targets. It is the second most common LTIP among the participating MENA companies and mostly preferred by companies fully funded with corporate structures investments for its simplicity and direct financial rewards with no involvement of equity share / dilution.

Cash-Based Long-Term Profit-Sharing Scheme:

This plan rewards employees based on the company's long-term profitability over a defined period. It is typically used by companies fully funded with corporate structures investments.

Long-Term Incentive Plans

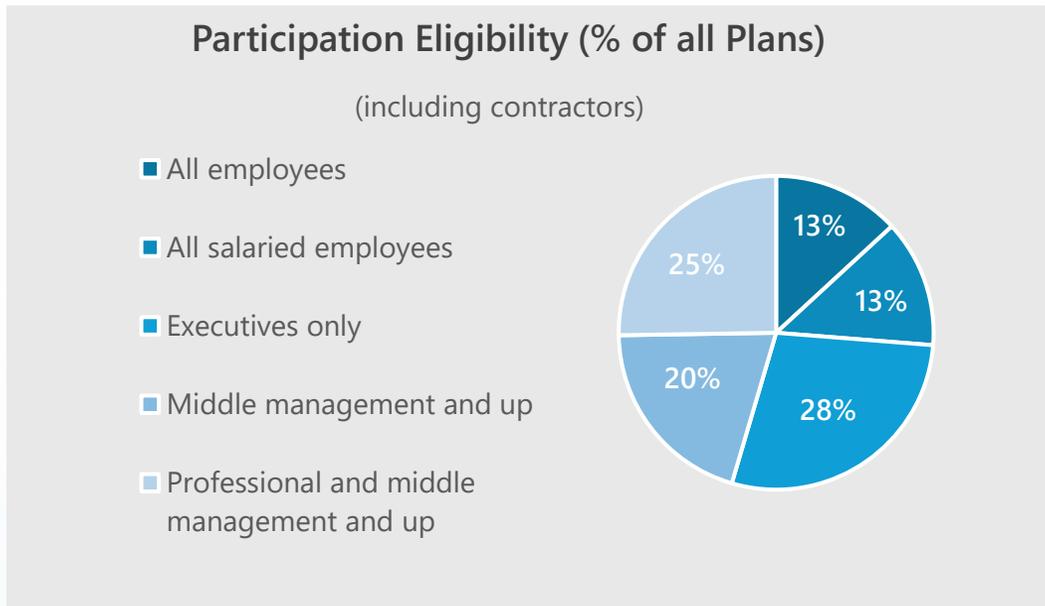
Types of LTI Plans Applied by Participating Companies



Plan Participation Eligibility

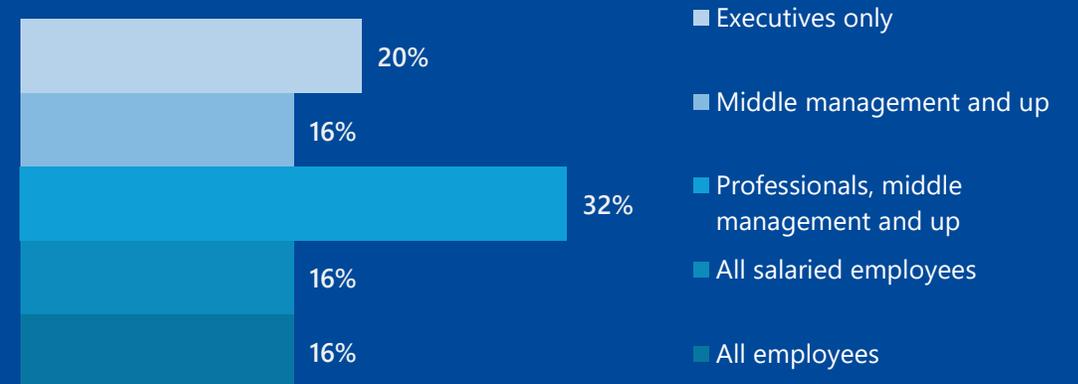
Participation eligibility in this study was categorized into five distinct groups. It is essential to highlight the difference between the 'all employees' and 'all salaried employees' categories: the former includes contractors, whereas the latter does not.

Companies commonly restrict grants under cash-based plans to management. In contrast, for ESOPs, a comparable number of companies provide equity grants to both the 'all employees' and 'all salaried employees' categories.

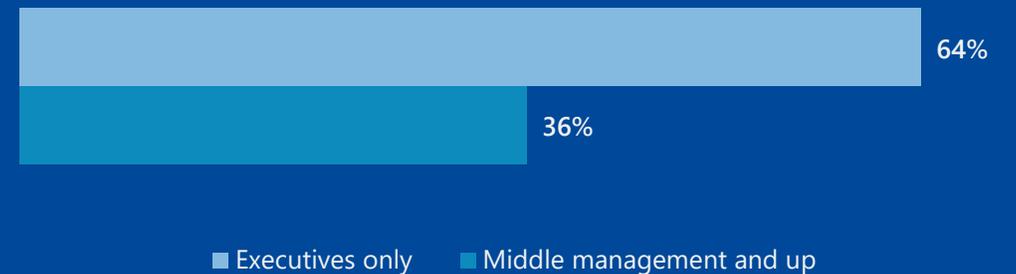


Long-Term Incentive Plans

ESOP Plans Type (Eligibility)



Cash-based Plans (Eligibility)

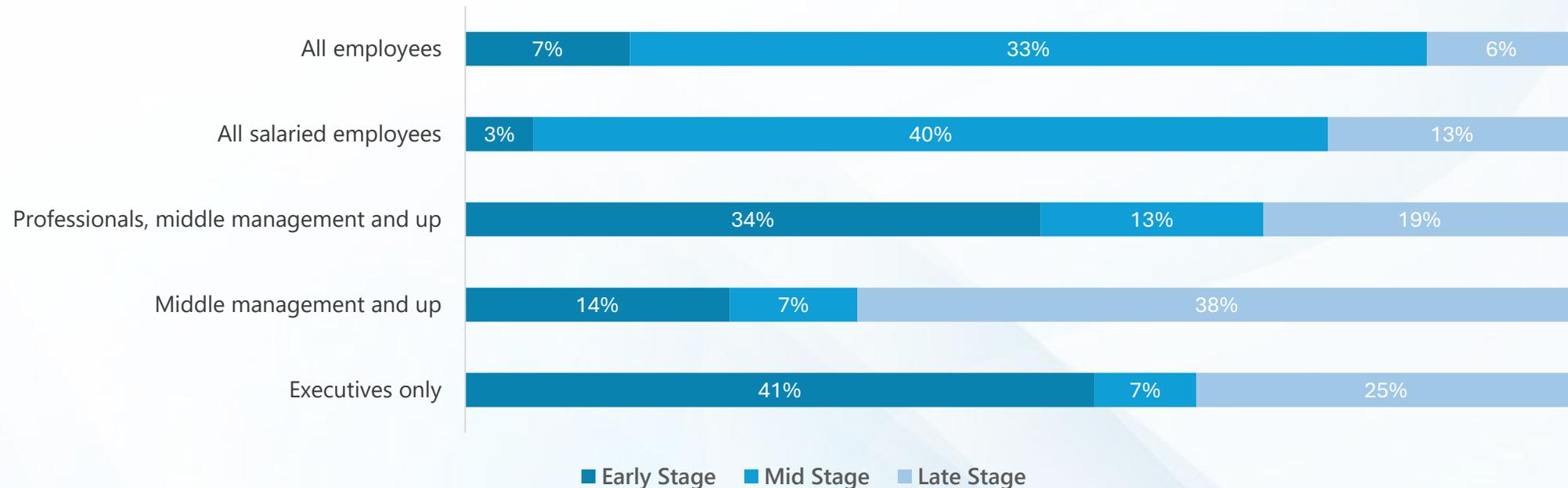


Plan Participation Eligibility by Company Stage

The participation eligibility is largely influenced by a company's stage of development, which aligns closely with its funding rounds. Mid-stage companies, typically associated with an entry valuation of \$11-50 million, tend to include all employees in their plans. In contrast, early-stage companies focus primarily on professionals or executives, while late-stage companies begin extending participation to middle management.

Notably, there is no direct correlation between plan participation and factors such as sector (aside from corporate structures that include middle management and executives), country, or other conditions.

Participation in all Plans by Company' Stage

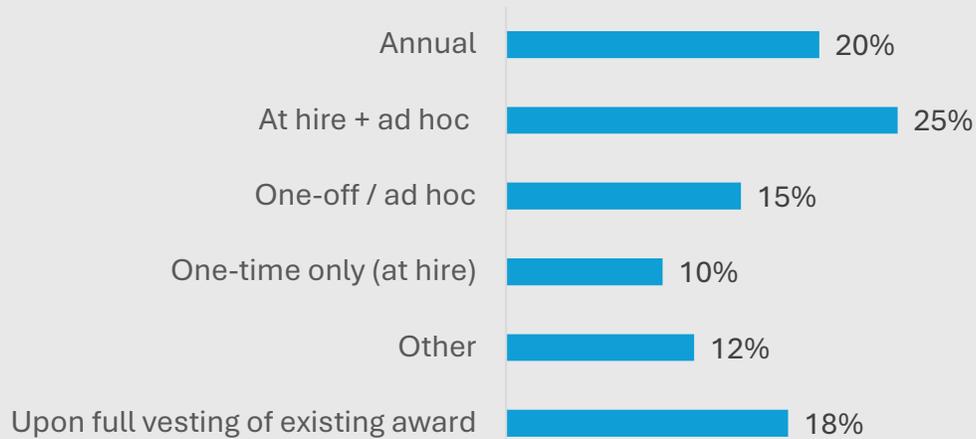


Plan Grant Frequency

The grant frequency of a Long-Term Incentive plan defines how often grants, such as stock options, are issued to eligible employees.

The graphs below illustrate that while companies report a wide range of grant schedules, ESOP plans are most commonly granted at hire, with additional ad-hoc grants provided to offset dilution from subsequent funding rounds. In contrast, cash-based plans are typically granted on an annual basis.

Plan Grant Frequency for all Plans

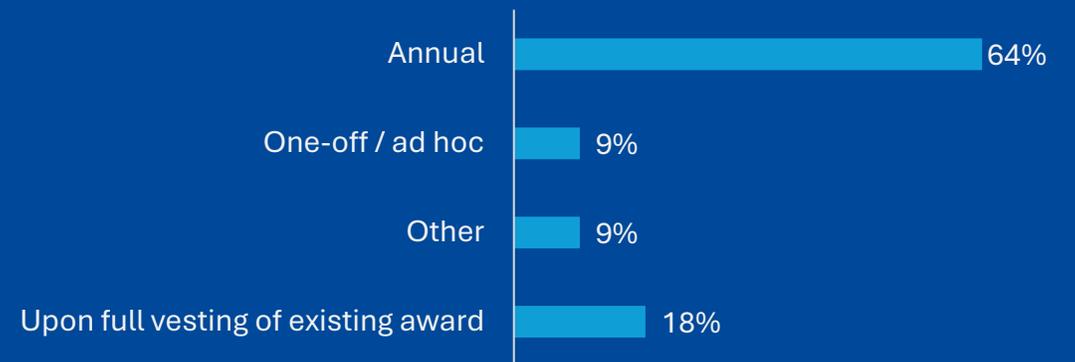


Long-Term Incentive Plans

ESOP Plans Grant Frequency



Cash-Based Plans Grant Frequency

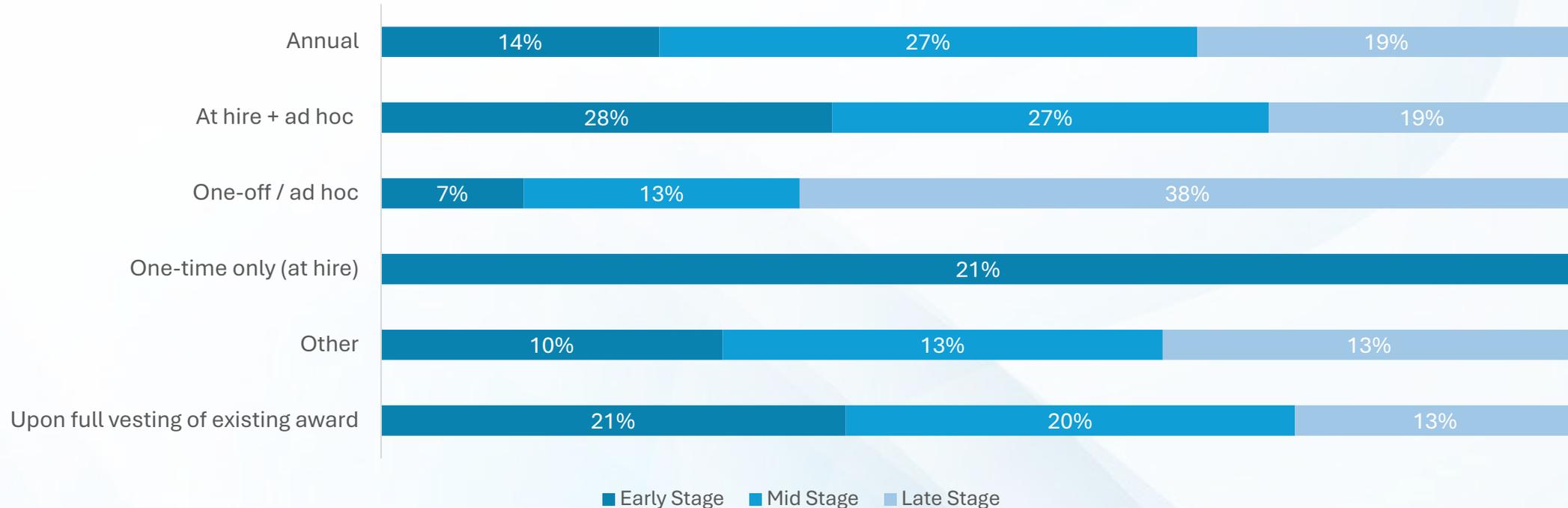


Plan Grant Frequency by Company' Stage

The graphs highlight that grant frequency is heavily influenced by a company's stage of development, which aligns with its funding rounds. Early-stage companies typically provide one-time grants, while mid- and late-stage companies may offer additional or annual grants, even at similar entry valuations (e.g., \$11–50M).

Additional correlation emerges between grant frequency and time to exit: pre-IPO companies often issue additional one-time grants, while those with a 4–7-year exit horizon primarily offer grants at hire, with potential ad-hoc add-ons.

Grant Frequency all plans by Company' Stage

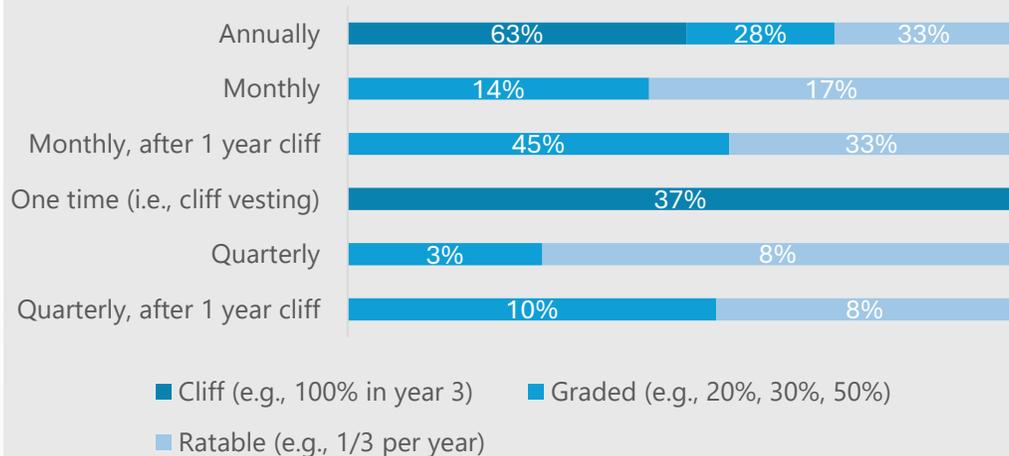


Vesting Schedule

The vesting schedule in a Long-Term Incentive plan specifies when participants gain ownership of their granted benefits, such as stock or cash, over a defined period.

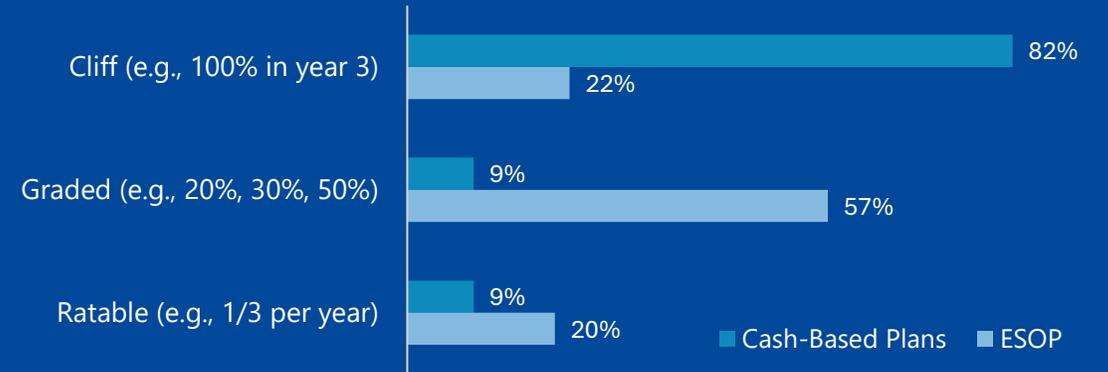
As shown earlier, ESOPs typically follow graded vesting schedules, while cash-based plans often use cliff vesting. The vesting schedule can also depend on the grant type. Annual grants usually have cliff vesting, whereas discretionary grants more commonly use graded vesting. Interestingly, early-stage companies often favor cliff vesting, which may result in a longer wait for the first vesting event to happen.

Vesting Schedule by Grant Schedule

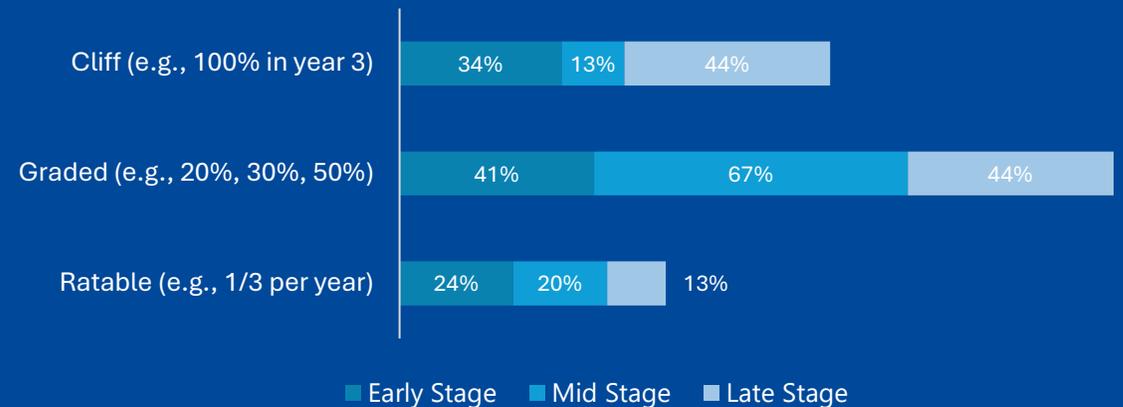


Long-Term Incentive Plans

Vesting Schedule by Plan Type



Vesting Schedule for All Plans by Company Stage

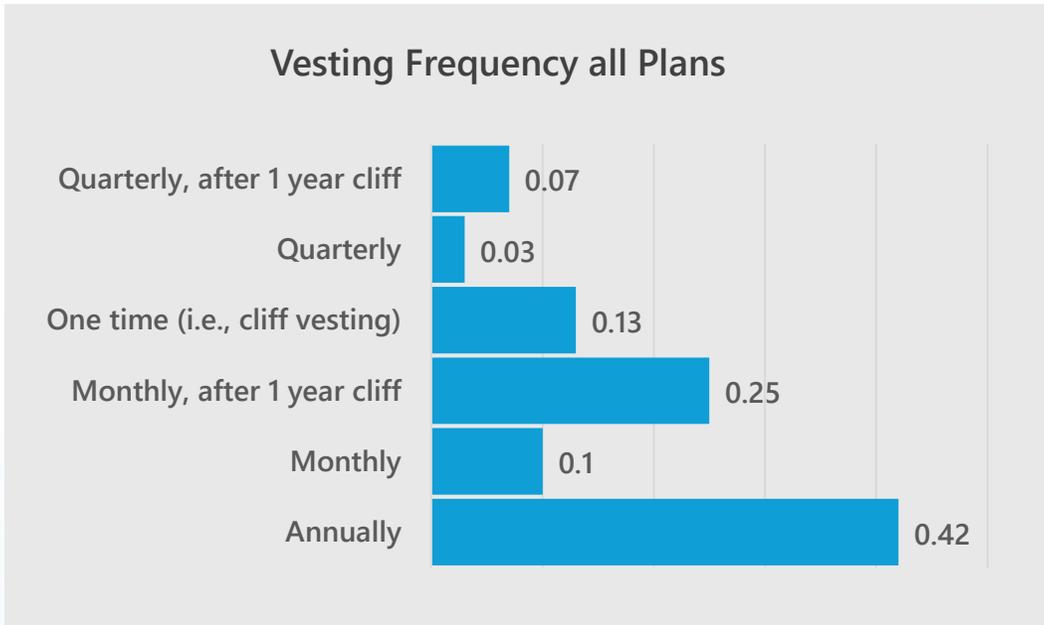


Vesting Event Frequency

The vesting frequency in a Long-Term Incentive plan defines how often portions of the grant vest. In this context, a cliff represents the waiting period before the first vesting event.

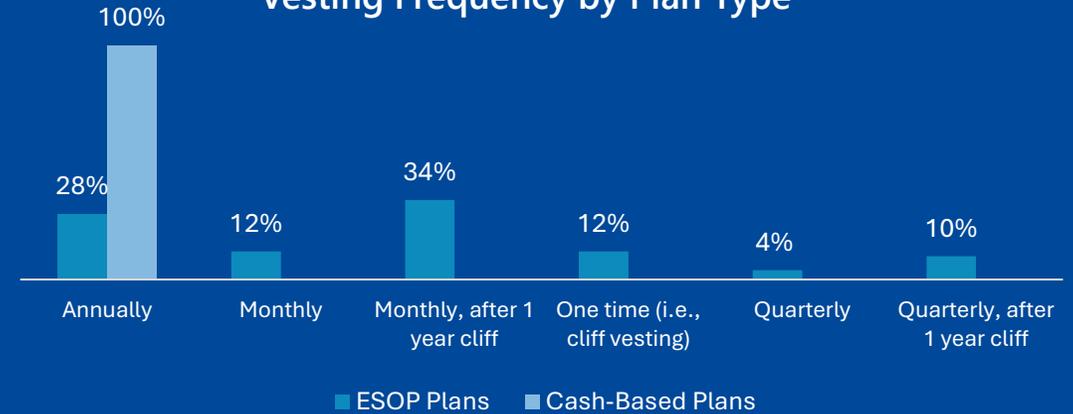
Most plans vest annually, while some use monthly vesting after a one-year cliff. All cash-based plans vest annually.

For the company stages, early-stage and late-stage companies generally adopt annual vesting, while mid-stage companies use monthly vesting with one-year cliff, which is a second choice for early-stage companies.

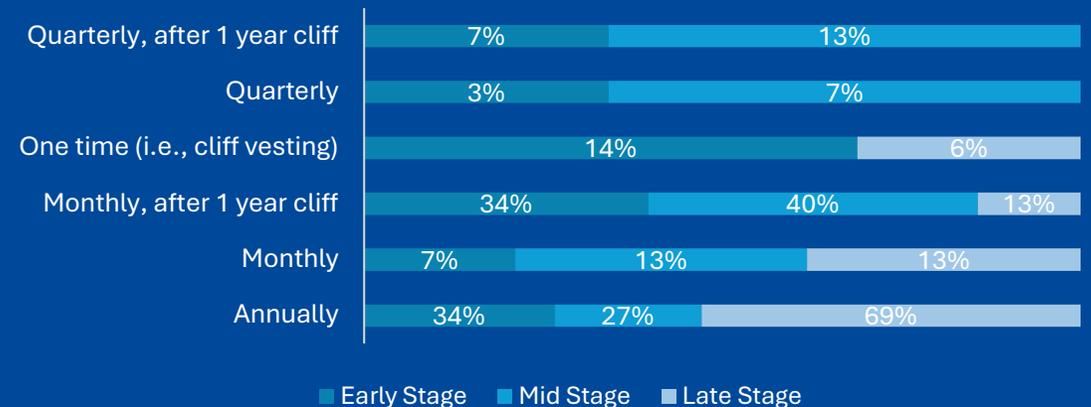


Long-Term Incentive Plans

Vesting Frequency by Plan Type



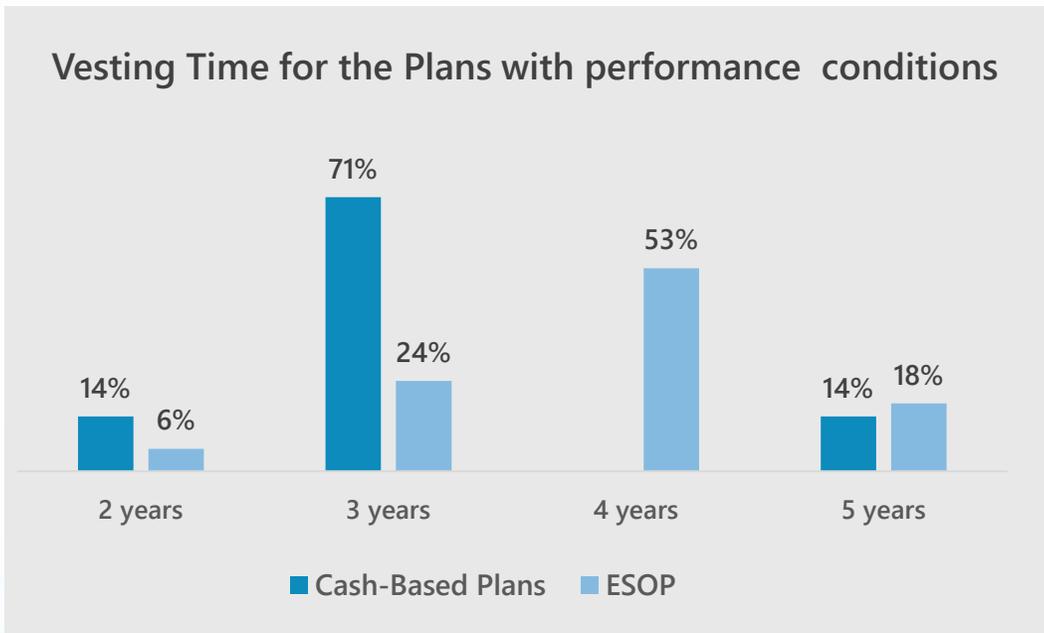
Vesting Frequency by Stage



Vesting Period

The vesting period in this section refers to the time before the grant **fully vests**. In performance-based plans, this period also includes the time over which performance results are measured.

Most of the plans will fully vest in 3-to-4-year time., while a 4-year time is the most common for ESOPs.



Long-Term Incentive Plans

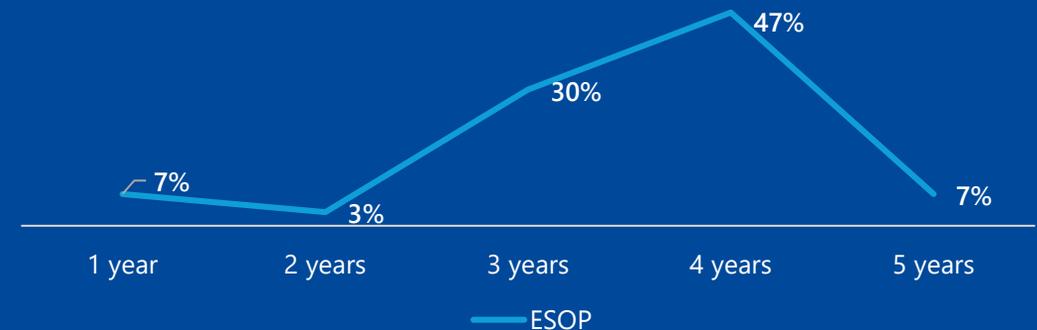
52%

of all plans have performance conditions that influence vesting results

40%

of ESOPs have performance conditions that influence vesting results

Vesting Time for the ESOP Plans with No Performance Conditions



Exercise Conditions

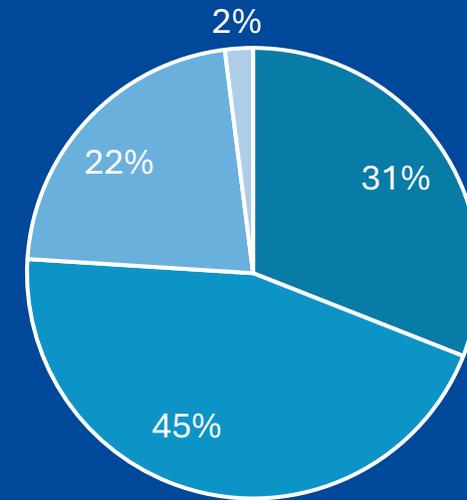
Exercise conditions are relevant only to equity-based plans and define the requirements for participants to exercise vested stock. In contrast, all observed cash-based plans provide immediate payouts once the grant has vested.

Most ESOP plans require a significant liquidity event, such as an IPO or a partial sale of the company, for participants to exercise their vested awards.

The “Not applicable” designation indicates that the company employs a unique exercise approach, which they have chosen not to disclose.

Long-Term Incentive Plans

ESOP Exercise Conditions

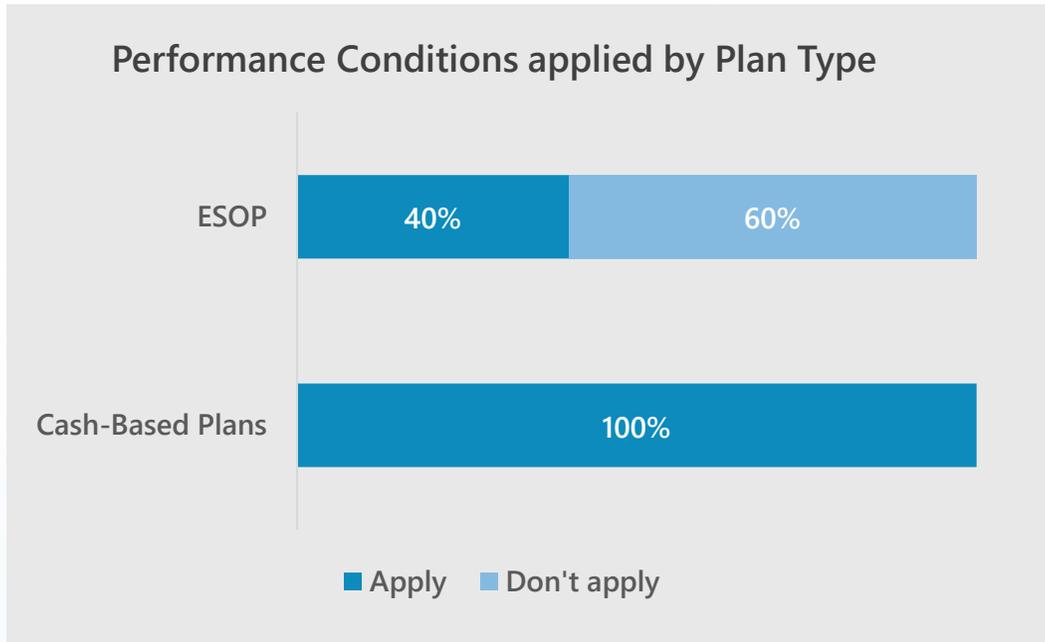


- IPO
- IPO or Part Sale
- Not applicable
- Unlimited company buyback at 20% discount

Vesting Performance Conditions

Performance conditions tied to the vesting of long-term incentive grants can determine both the timing of vesting and the value of the vested grant. Specifically, the grant's value is multiplied by the performance results at the vesting date.

All observed cash-based plans include performance conditions, while only 40% of ESOP plans apply them. The use of performance conditions is not influenced by the company's development stage. Moreover, corporations are more likely than VC or PE investors to set performance targets for the LTI plans.

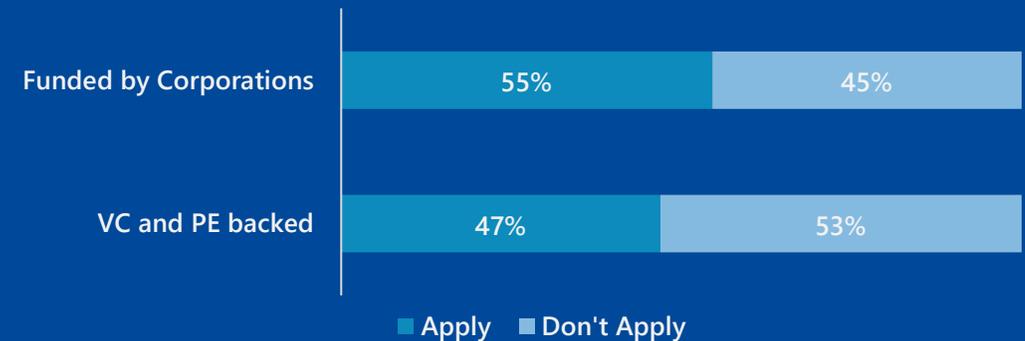


Long-Term Incentive Plans

Performance Conditions Applied by Stage



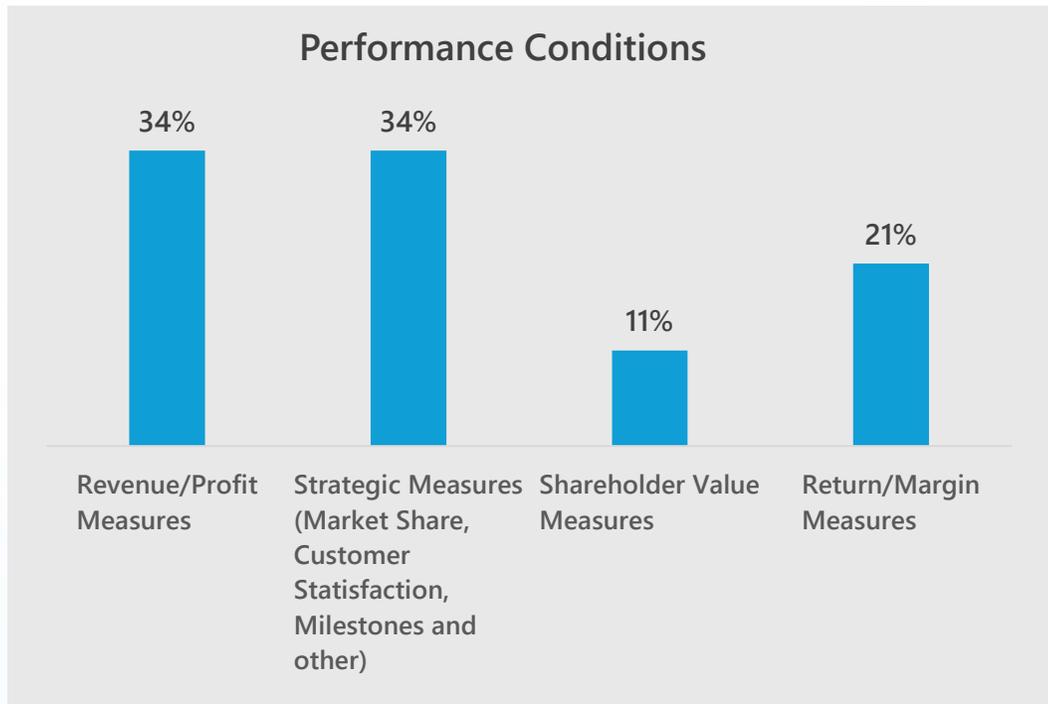
Performance Conditions Applied by Ownership



Performance Conditions

The performance conditions applied by the observed companies fall into four standard categories, as illustrated below.

Companies typically use 3–4 performance measures, assigning specific weights to each. These weights collectively add up to 100%, reflecting the importance of each target in determining the overall performance outcome.



Long-Term Incentive Plans

29%

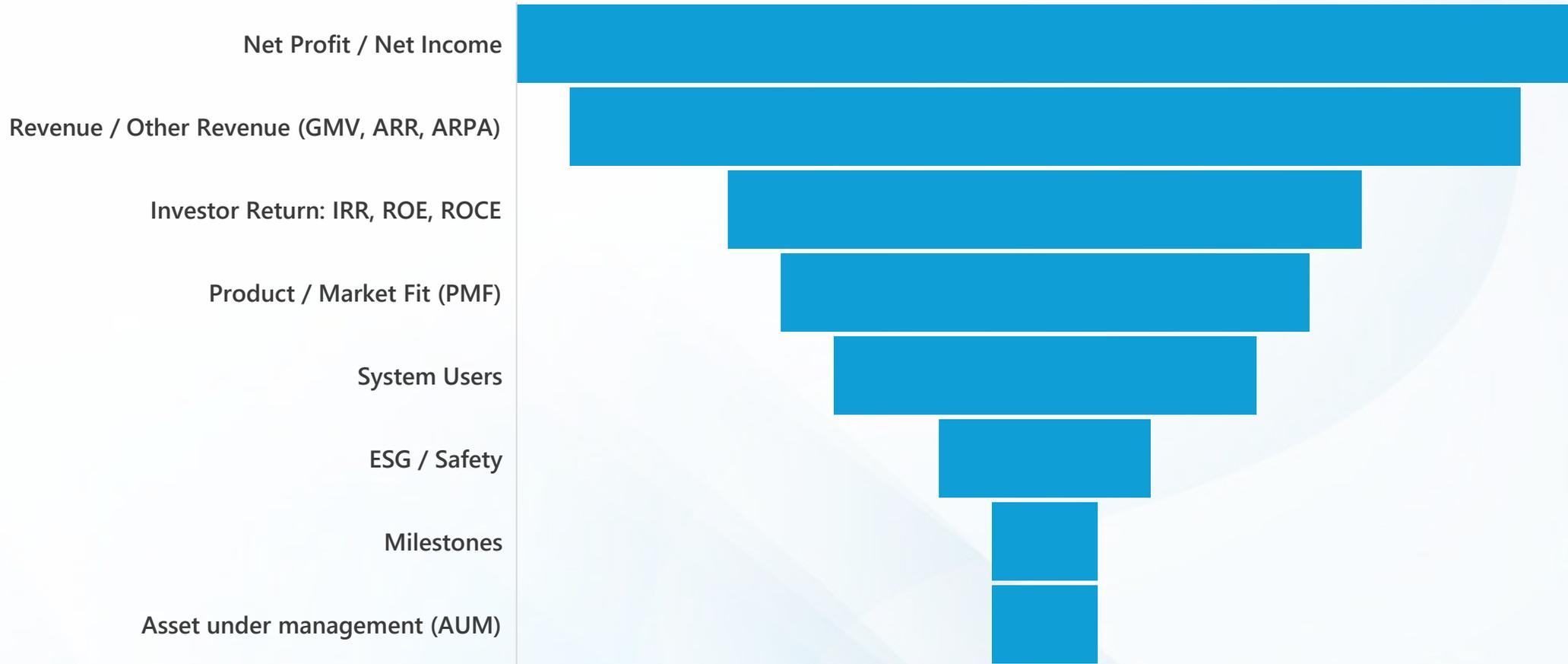
Of plans that have performance conditions use single performance measure

22%

of all plans have a Hurdle Rate / Performance Target for the exercise

<i>Single Measure and Exercise Targets</i>	<i>Target Value</i>	<i>% of Companies using Single Measure and Exercise Targets</i>
<i>Target % Revenue Growth</i>	<i>15% to 20%</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Target % Investor Return Rate</i>	<i>10% to 15%</i>	<i>8%</i>
<i>Target % Net Profit</i>	<i>0%+ to 16%</i>	<i>54%</i>
<i>Target \$ Valuation / % Growth</i>	<i>up to 100%</i>	<i>23%</i>

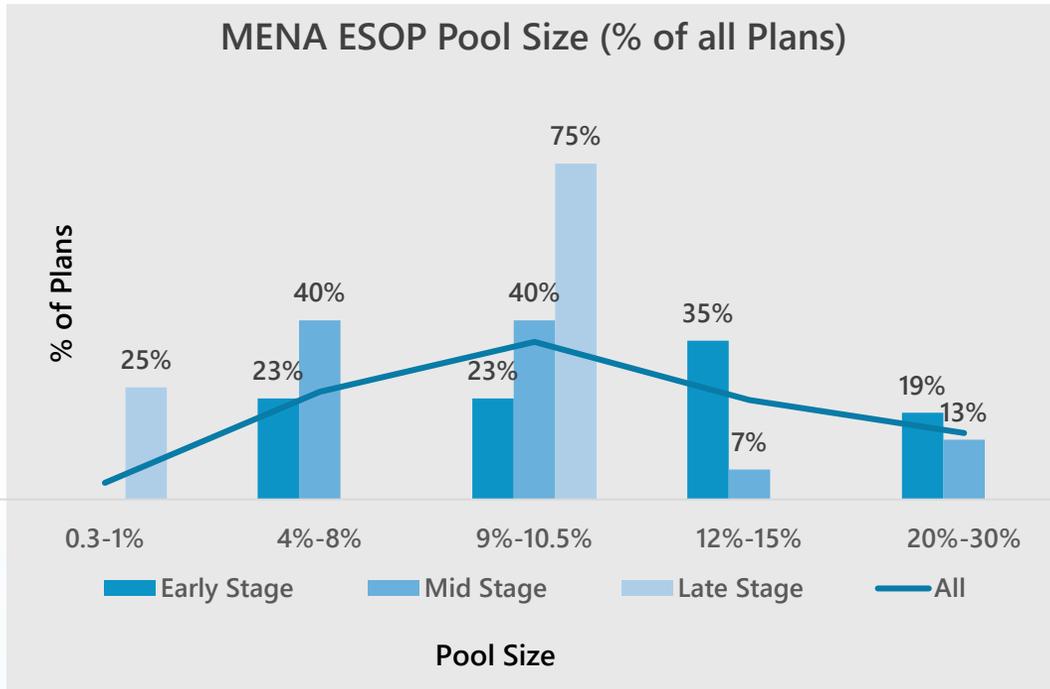
Typical KPIs used in descending order of how often they are applied



ESOP Pool

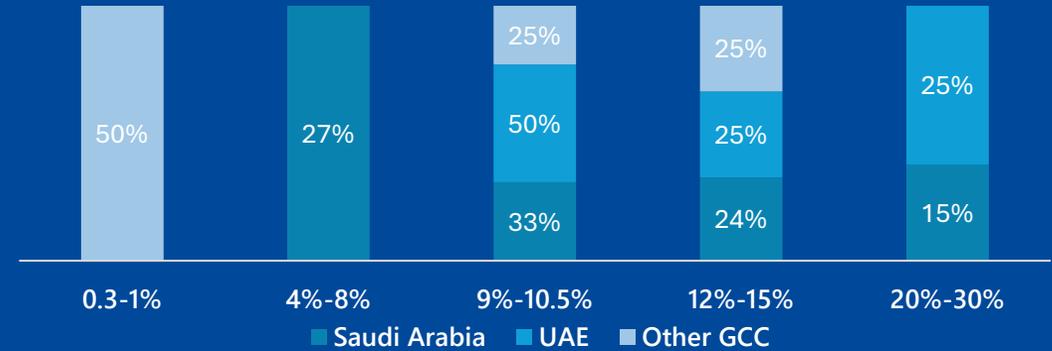
ESOP pool sizing applies exclusively to equity-based plans and represents the portion of the company's equity allocated to the employee ESOP pool.

For early-stage companies, the most common ESOP pool size is 15%, reflecting their need to attract and retain talent in the growth phase. In contrast, mid-stage and late-stage companies typically allocate 10% of equity to their ESOP pools, aligning with their more established structures.

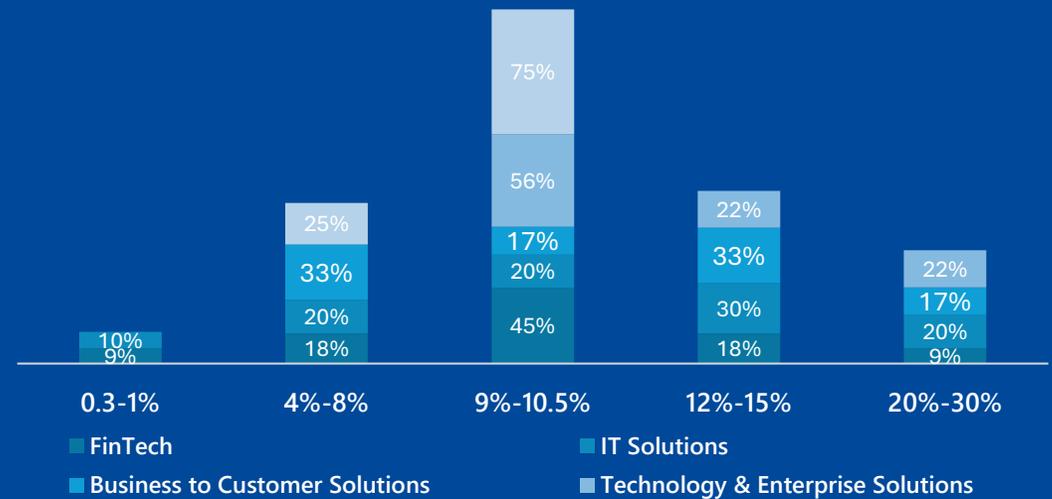


ESOP Plans

Pool Size by Country



Pool Size by Industry

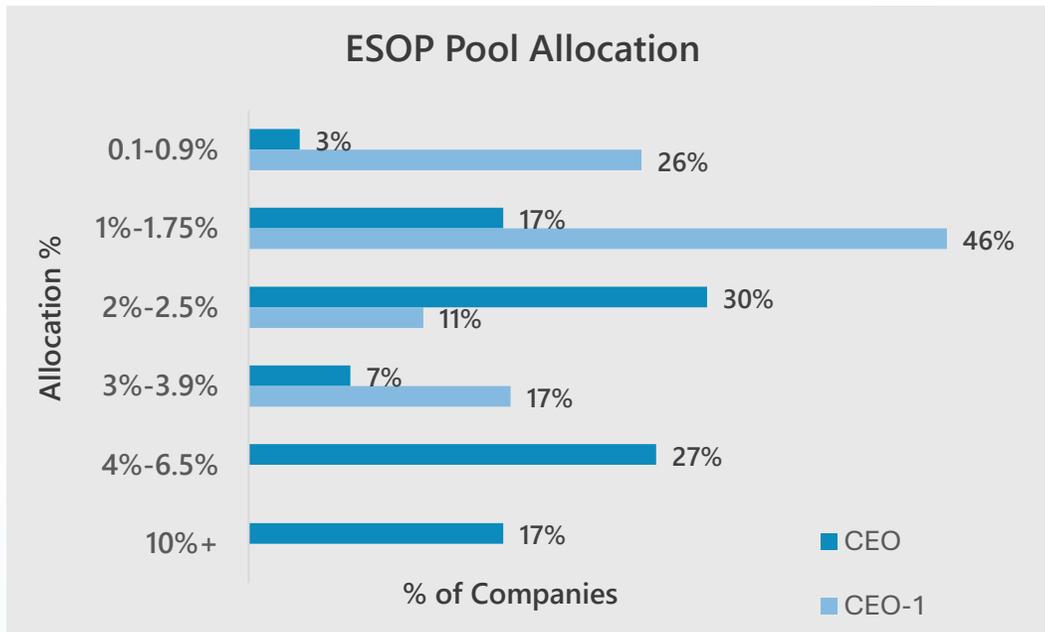


CEO, CEO-1 ESOP Pool Allocation

ESOP pool allocation applies exclusively to equity-based plans and represents the portion of the company's equity allocated to the CEO from the employee ESOP pool.

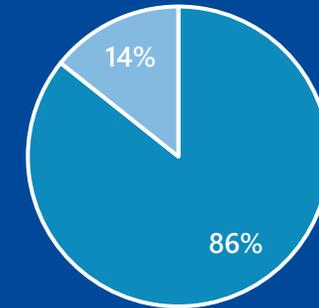
Companies report that non-Founder CEOs receive the allocation from 0.17% to 2.5%, while the Founder-CEOs receive the allocation between 1% and 20%.

Average CEO-1 receives the allocation between 0.025% and 3.8%. The most common allocation values are from 1% to 1.25%.



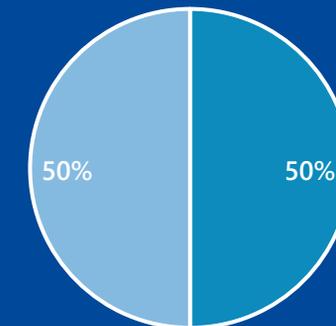
ESOP Plans

Is The CEO a Founder?



Legend: ■ CEO is a Founder ■ CEO is not a Founder

Will the Founder-CEO Receive Allocation from the ESOP Pool?



Legend: ■ There is an allocation ■ There is no allocation*

* 'Not reported' response is included into 'no allocation category'

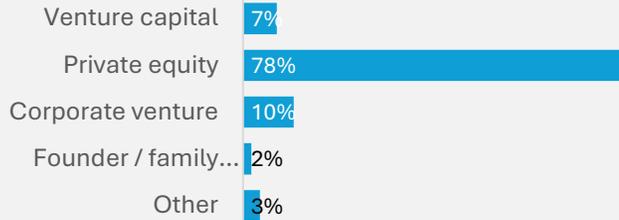
03

Global Start-Up Incentive Design Trends

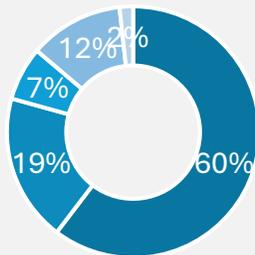
Global Perspective

Form of ownership varies significantly between Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America. Differences in ownership across regions impact our findings as the form of ownership and the lifecycle stage of the company appear to be the critical attributes determining plan design

North America



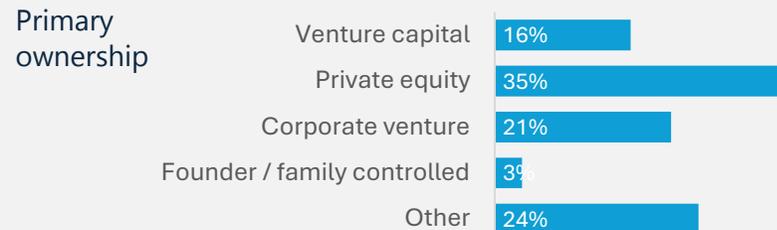
- One-off award: 39%
- Annual grants: 31%



33% Cliff | 67% Pro-rated

Median vesting period: 4 years

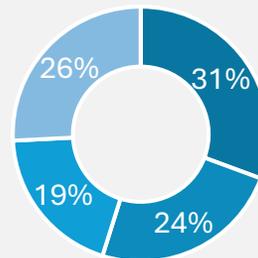
Europe



- Grant frequency
- One-off award: 76%
 - Annual grants: 15%

Award vehicle

- Stock options
- Restricted shares
- Performance shares
- Cash plan
- Carried interest

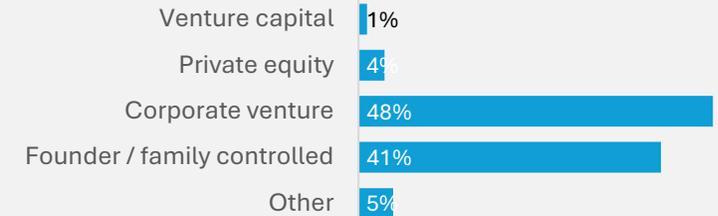


Vesting type / period

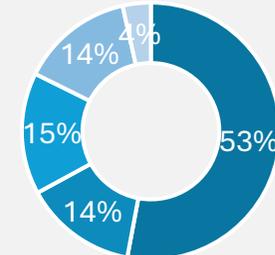
42% Cliff | 58% Pro-rated

Median vesting period: 3 years

Asia-Pacific



- One-off award: 82%
- Annual grants: 13%



35% Cliff | 65% Pro-rated

Median vesting period: 4 years

Performance metrics and standards

66% of plans have performance conditions attached to vesting – the most common metric is shareholder return, either the annual return to shareholders or Multiple of Money (MoM), these two metrics together are used in more than half of pre-IPO LTI plans (52%)

Median target level of performance is:

- Annual shareholder return: 11%
- Return on equity (ROE): 25%
- MoM: 2.0x



In addition to vesting conditions, 84% of these pre-IPO plans have a performance condition before the award can be exercised or paid out – most commonly, the condition is a liquidity event such as an IPO or a sale of the company

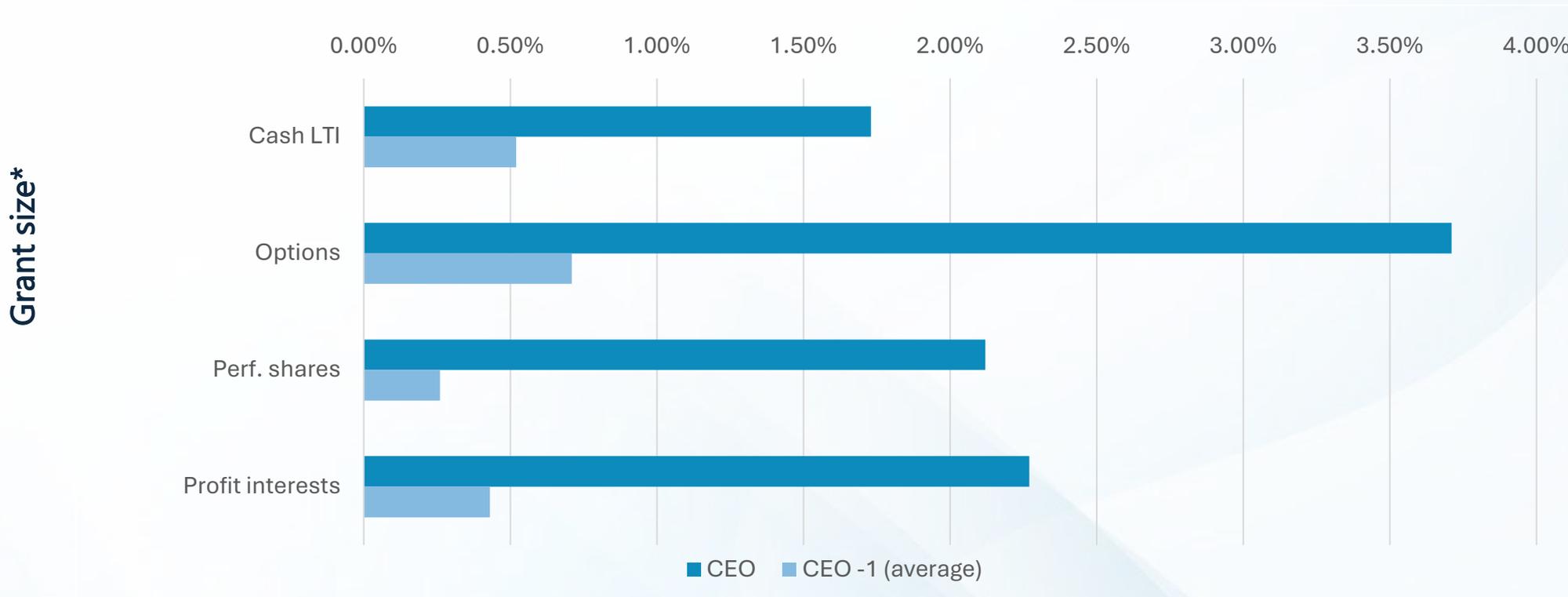
Grant size vary based on multiple variables

- The table below presents the size of the total award pool, as either a %age of shares (for equity-based devices)
- Corporate-backed organizations, especially joint ventures, set aside a lower percentage of equity or profits for their plans, while venture capital-controlled companies (which tend to be smaller and riskier) set aside the most
- Likewise, cash LTI plans along with awards denominated in full value shares – restricted shares and performance shares – had the lowest pool size

	Private equity	Venture capital	Corporate venture	Corporate JV	Founder / Family	Other
Cash LTI	3.3%	0.6%	8.2%	6.3%	-	10.0%
Options (ESOP)	10.2%	12.5%	9.0%	8.0%	11.5%	5.6%
Full value Performance shares	10.1%	-	5.9%	3.3%	6.3%	1.9%
Profit interests	14.0%	-	-	5.0%	-	10.0%

LTI grants to CEO are typically much larger than those made to CEO-1

The table below shows the size of the initial grant to the CEO and the CEO's direct reports (average grant shown for CEO -1)



* Grant size is computed as % of common shares outstanding (for option and share plans, carried interest) or as % of profit (for cash LTI, profit interests).

04

MENA Start-Up Compensation Survey

MENA Start-Up Executive Remuneration Structure

Executive remuneration in start-ups typically comprises three to four key components.

Most companies aim to simplify their pay structures. However, as businesses mature, both the value and volume of pay elements (e.g., allowances) tend to increase.

Base Salary



- Start-up executive **pay levels vary based on company size / growth stage** but are not influenced by industry, primary ownership, funding round, or other parameters.
- 20%-25% of the companies (Early-stage) pay nominal compensation to the CEO and COO roles if these are the founders (5,000 – 15,000 USD per year).

Allowances and Benefits



- Over 90% of companies offer some employee benefits, with medical insurance being the most common.
- Housing and education allowances are also provided by over 70% of companies.
- It is not common for early to mid stage start-ups to provide wide variety of benefits.

Annual Bonus or other Short-Term Incentives



- Annual Incentive Plans are offered by <50% of Early to mid-stage companies, some companies offer sales incentive instead of annual bonus.
- >60% of Late-Stage companies offer Annual Incentive Plans. The profit-sharing, discretionary bonuses, or other forms of incentives are not typical at this stage.

ESOP or other Long-Term Incentive

- *Covered in the Section One of the Report*

Terms and References

The following **Start-Up Top Management Roles** are covered by this study:

- Chief Executive Officer / General Manager
- Chief Operating Officer / Segment Head
- Chief Technology Officer
- Chief Product Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief People Officer

Geography: the following data is provided for UAE and Saudi Arabian companies only.

No notable differences in pay structure or quantum have been observed between start-ups in these two countries. Consequently, the data has been analysed in aggregate.

Currency: as 30% of the companies set their compensation in USD, the report values are expressed in USD currency to ensure consistent outcome.

The following **Remuneration Elements** are covered by this study:

- **Annual Base Salary:** base salary set for 12-months full-time contract
- **Annual Total Allowances:** any allowances and benefits paid in cash
- **Annual Guaranteed Compensation:** annual base salary + any allowances and benefits paid in cash
- **Target Annual Bonus:** target annual bonus as % of annual base salary
- **Actual Total Annual Compensation:** annual base salary + any allowances and benefits paid in cash + actual annual bonus

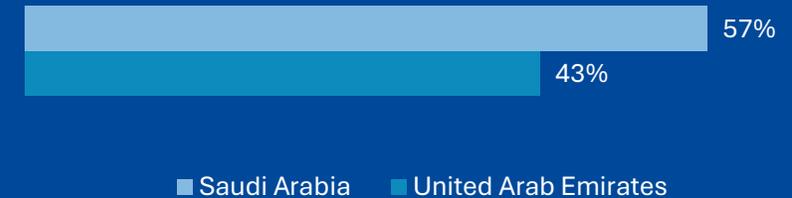
Chief Executive Officer/General Manager

Early-Stage Companies: Pay Values

USD, rounded to 100	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	9,100	-	9,100	11,500	0%
25-percentile	55,000	-	66,700	68,700	0%
50-percentile	120,000	-	161,000	162,000	0%
75-percentile	147,900	53,200	169,000	248,500	28%
90-percentile	183,200	116,400	260,900	306,100	58%

Early-Stage Companies

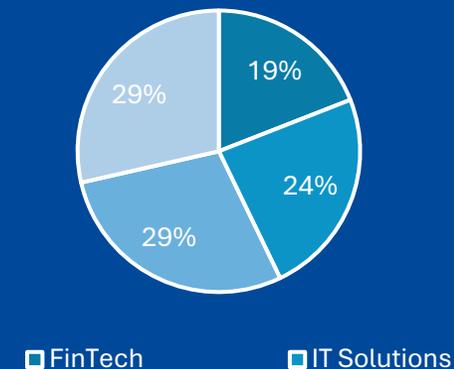
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Early-Stage Companies: Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



Chief Executive Officer/General Manager

Mid-Stage Companies: Pay Values

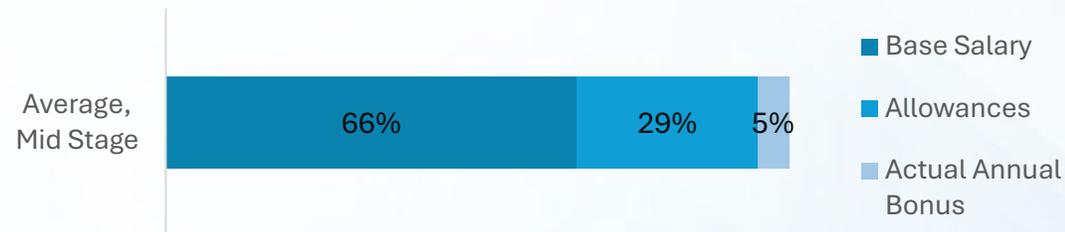
USD, rounded to 500	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	149,500	44,500	197,000	197,000	0%
25-percentile	180,000	59,000	242,500	242,500	0%
50-percentile	182,000	101,000	294,000	294,000	0%
75-percentile	243,000	126,000	406,000	419,000	0%
90-percentile	305,500	154,000	446,000	538,500	42%

Mid to Late-Stage Companies

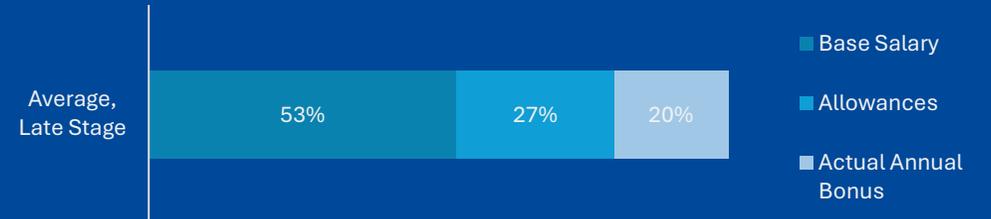
Late-Stage Companies: Pay Values

USD, rounded to 500	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	303,500	86,000	437,000	561,500	0%
25-percentile	329,000	160,000	526,000	608,000	0%
50-percentile	379,000	215,000	615,500	741,000	21%
75-percentile	486,000	300,500	754,000	1,026,000	60%
90-percentile	557,000	418,000	848,500	1,130,000	68%

Mid-Stage Companies: Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Late-Stage Companies: Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



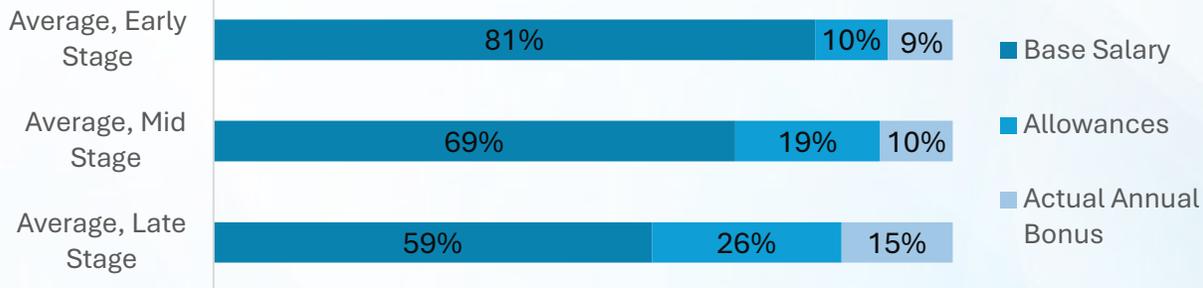
Chief Operating Officer

Early to Late-Stage Companies

<i>USD, rounded to 100</i>	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	111,100	4,000	147,500	148,200	0%
25-percentile	145,400	40,400	184,400	228,800	0%
50-percentile	186,000	66,500	252,600	268,700	25%
75-percentile	226,300	79,800	308,100	393,400	35%
90-percentile	244,500	126,000	373,300	451,000	40%

Early Stage: 50-percentile	107,400	-	144,000	144,000	0%
Mid Stage: 50-percentile	166,200	43,000	218,500	246,200	13%
Late Stage: 50-percentile	224,400	91,500	366,500	429,500	34%

Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Early to Late-Stage Companies

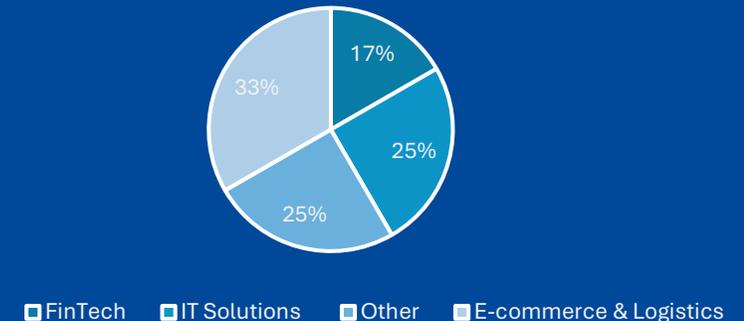
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Full Data Set: Data Points per Stage



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



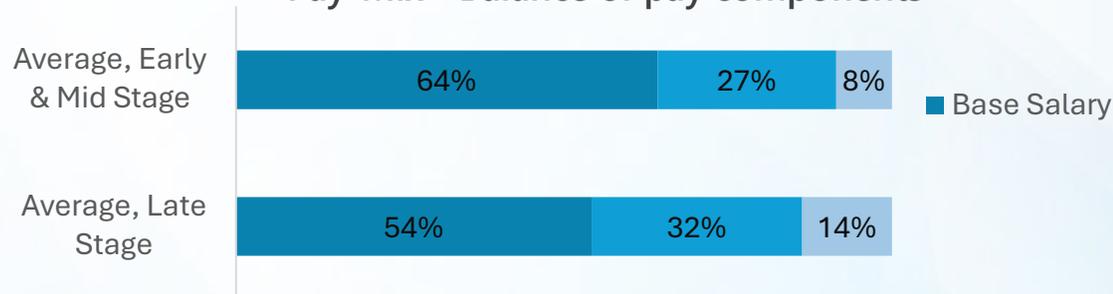
Chief Technical Officer

Most of the start-up companies hire an employee for the CTO role closer to/at the Mid-Stage.

Early to Late-Stage Companies

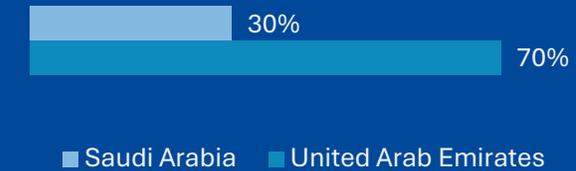
USD, rounded to 100	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	107,500	30,200	159,500	211,400	0%
25-percentile	121,500	53,800	191,200	230,800	0%
50-percentile	139,600	72,200	225,000	254,500	16%
75-percentile	161,700	86,300	250,500	290,900	37%
90-percentile	198,200	134,700	294,000	304,600	41%
Early Stage: 50-percentile	133,400	72,800	182,000	235,000	20%
Mid Stage: 50-percentile	163,000	52,000	222,000	222,000	0%
Late Stage: 50-percentile	144,000	85,000	240,000	296,000	33%

Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components

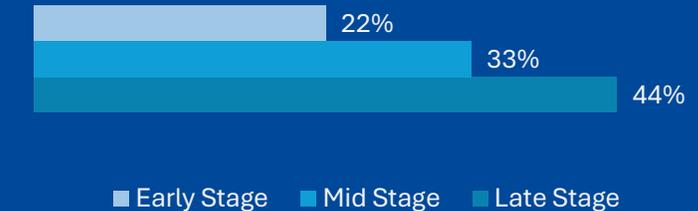


Early to Late-Stage Companies

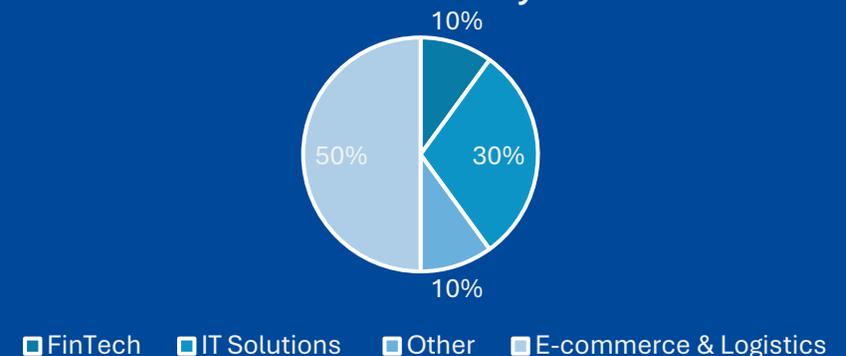
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Full Data Set: Data Points per Stage



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



Chief Product Officer

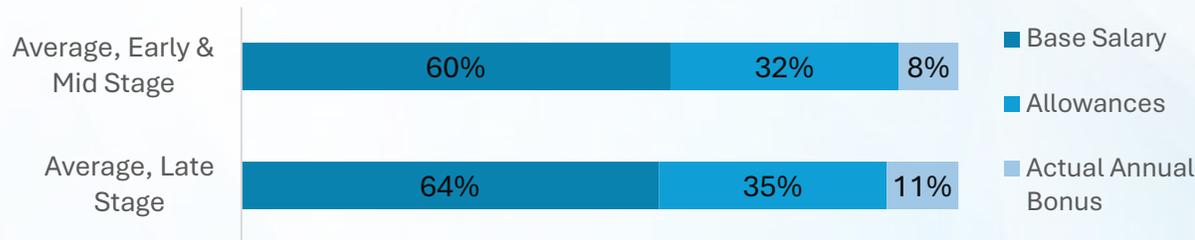
CPO roles are more common for the digital-driven B2C start-ups. CPO position could be one of the first executive roles that appear at the early-stage companies.

Early to Late-Stage Companies

USD, rounded to 100	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	101,000	55,500	172,400	214,000	0%
25-percentile	112,300	69,600	176,500	241,700	0%
50-percentile	145,800	89,000	243,500	259,200	0%
75-percentile	168,500	92,500	259,200	289,500	33%
90-percentile	190,000	131,000	270,400	299,400	43%

Early Stage: 50-percentile	117,000	79,400	175,500	214,000	20%
Mid Stage: 50-percentile	174,000	77,500	251,400	251,400	0%
Late Stage: 50-percentile	148,000	92,500	248,500	295,500	33%

Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components

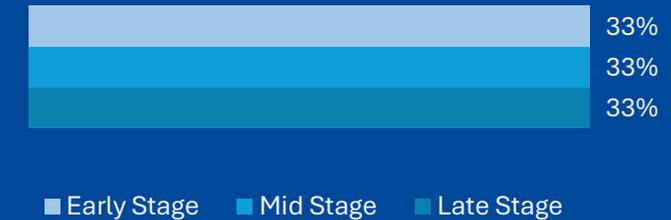


Early to Late-Stage Companies

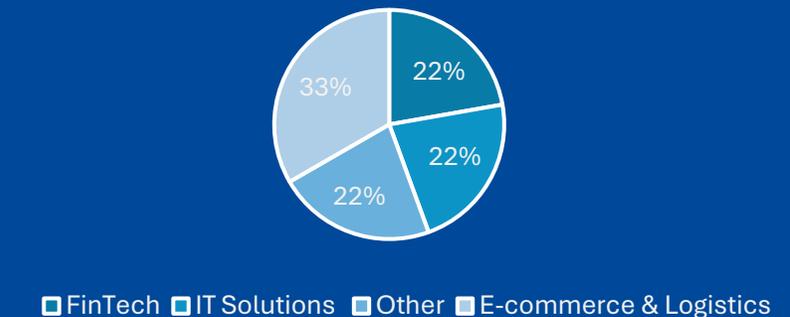
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Full Data Set: Data Points per Stage



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



Chief Financial Officer

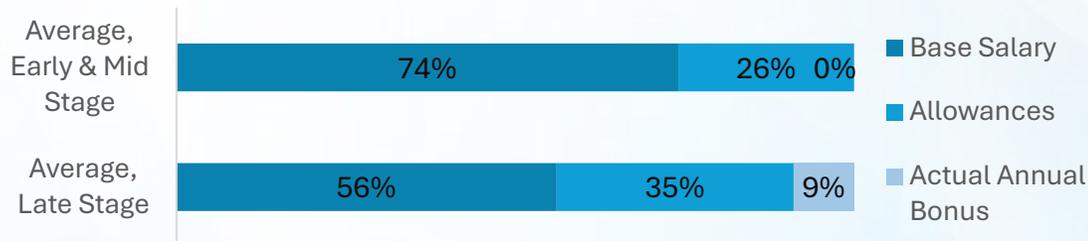
Most of the start-up companies hire an employee for the CFO role closer to / at the Mid-Stage.
 Additionally, in mid-stage organizations, the CFO typically assumes more of a Finance generalist function.

Early to Late-Stage Companies

USD, rounded to 100	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	83,400	27,900	111,300	111,300	0%
25-percentile	120,000	40,300	162,000	162,000	0%
50-percentile	155,500	110,500	300,000	312,000	0%
75-percentile	210,600	125,500	324,000	370,100	30%
90-percentile	252,200	147,300	401,200	431,000	33%

Early Stage: 50-percentile	82,500	25,700	108,100	108,100	0%
Mid Stage: 50-percentile	145,800	42,000	186,100	186,100	0%
Late Stage: 50-percentile	213,100	135,000	355,100	395,000	19%

Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components



Early to Late-Stage Companies

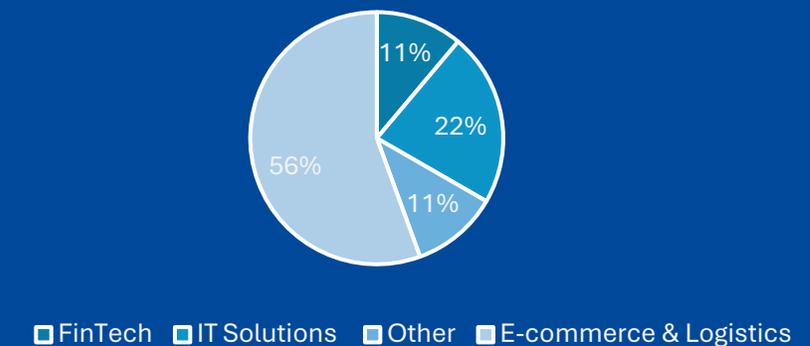
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Full Data Set: Data Points per Stage



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



Chief Human Resources Officer

The CHRO position is often one of the first executive roles to emerge in early-stage companies.

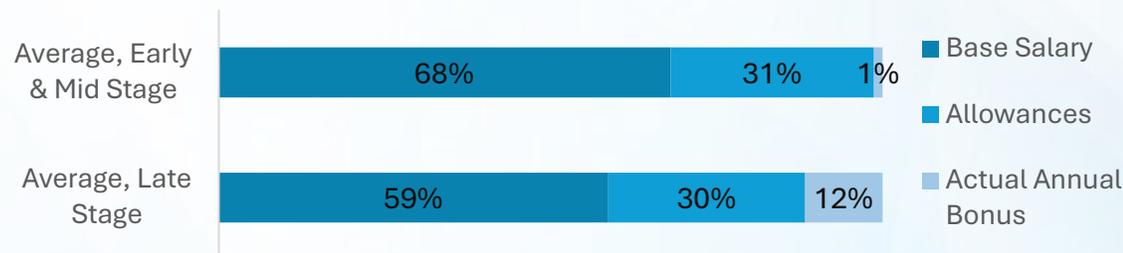
However, in early-stage organizations, the CHRO typically assumes more of an HR generalist function.

Early to Late-Stage Companies

<i>USD, rounded to 100</i>	Annual Base Salary	Annual Total Allowances	Annual Guaranteed Compensation	Actual Total Annual Compensation	Target Annual Bonus
10-percentile	52,200	19,400	71,000	76,400	0%
25-percentile	79,400	32,700	140,300	140,300	0%
50-percentile	129,800	59,700	208,000	223,700	0%
75-percentile	162,800	88,800	246,400	280,500	29%
90-percentile	198,200	99,400	264,800	300,000	34%

Early Stage: 50-percentile	52,400	19,500	71,100	77,000	0%
Mid Stage: 50-percentile	168,500	51,300	245,700	245,700	0%
Late Stage: 50-percentile	145,000	89,400	243,200	293,000	25%

Pay-Mix - Balance of pay components

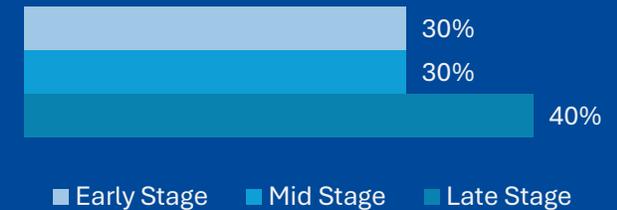


Early to Late-Stage Companies

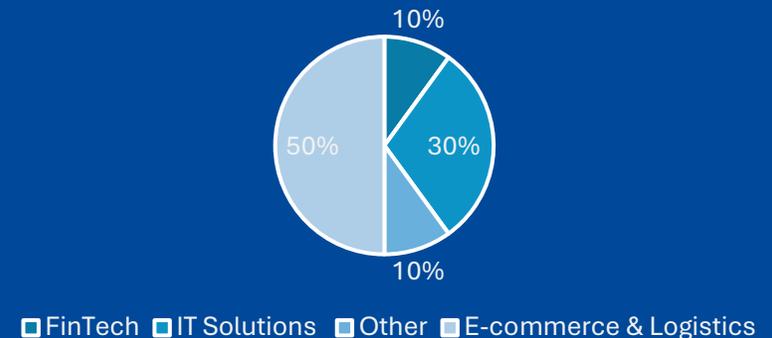
Full Data Set: Data Points By Country



Full Data Set: Data Points per Stage



Full Data Set: Data Points By Sector



05

Appendix I: Methodology

Participated Companies – Categories Definitions (1/3)

A total of 69 companies contributed data to this study in 2025.

Participant Category	Definition and inclusions
Industry	
1. FinTech	
2. IT Solutions	
3. EdTech	Additionally includes 'arts and creative services'
4. Gaming	
5. Real Estate Tech	Digital applications and platforms for facility and tenancy management, property platforms
6. Healthcare Tech	Digital health care applications and solutions, including devices
7. Sports & Fitness	
Aggregate Business to Customer Solutions	Includes industries from n.3 to n.7 to maintain the data protection
8. Cyber Security	
9. Aerospace & Defence	
10. Enterprise Solutions	Includes enterprise software, legal services, construction technology, trade-in services
Aggregate Technology & Enterprise Solutions	Includes industries from n.8 to n.10 to maintain the data protection

Disclaimers:

- 1) The classification of companies by industry type, primary funding, entry valuation, development stage, funding round, and country was based on information provided by participants and was only adjusted by the survey provider to correct technical errors.
- 2) To uphold data protection standards, the information in this report is shared in aggregate only when at least seven data points are available. For example, if fewer than seven companies from Egypt participated, their data is not reported separately but is instead included in the 'Total MENA' category.

Participated Companies – Categories Definitions (2/3)

Participant Category	Definition and inclusions
Industry	
11. E-commerce/Retail	additionally includes 'Food and Beverage'
12. Transport & Logistics	
Aggregate E-commerce & Logistics	Includes industries from n.11 to n.12 to maintain the data protection
13. Construction & Infrastructure / Real Estate Management	Includes physical/offline construction and real estate management
14. Manufacturing	Includes physical/offline manufacturing
Aggregate Corporate Structures	Most of the companies in the n.13 and n.14 sectors are <i>directly and fully</i> funded by the corporate structures
Country	As assigned by the participating company
Entry valuation at the Plan introduction	As assigned by the participating company, for the early- and mid- stage companies the assigned valuation has no direct correlation with the company development stage or funding round
Primary Funding	
VC and PE backed	Includes the companies with a share of VC and PE funding, as well as angel, family, partners or founder investments
Funded by Corporations	Includes companies that are fully funded by corporate structures, or sovereign wealth funds

Disclaimers:

- 1) The classification of companies by industry type, primary funding, entry valuation, development stage, funding round, and country was based on information provided by participants and was only adjusted by the survey provider to correct technical errors.
- 2) To uphold data protection standards, the information in this report is shared in aggregate only when at least seven data points are available. For example, if fewer than seven companies from Egypt participated, their data is not reported separately but is instead included in the 'Total MENA' category.

Participated Companies – Categories Definitions (3/3)

Participant Category	Definition and inclusions
Funding Round	As assigned by the participating company
Company Development Stage	To identify their development stage, companies categorized themselves based on their existence time and funding round. As development stage and funding round often overlap - in this report, the company development stage will be mostly used for analysis and should be referred to the funding rounds as follows:
Start-Up to Early-Stage	= Initial, pre-Seed, Seed and new Pre-A companies
Mid Stage	= long-time existent Pre-A, Series A and new Series B companies
Late Stage	= long-time existent Series B, C, D, pre-IPO companies

Disclaimers:

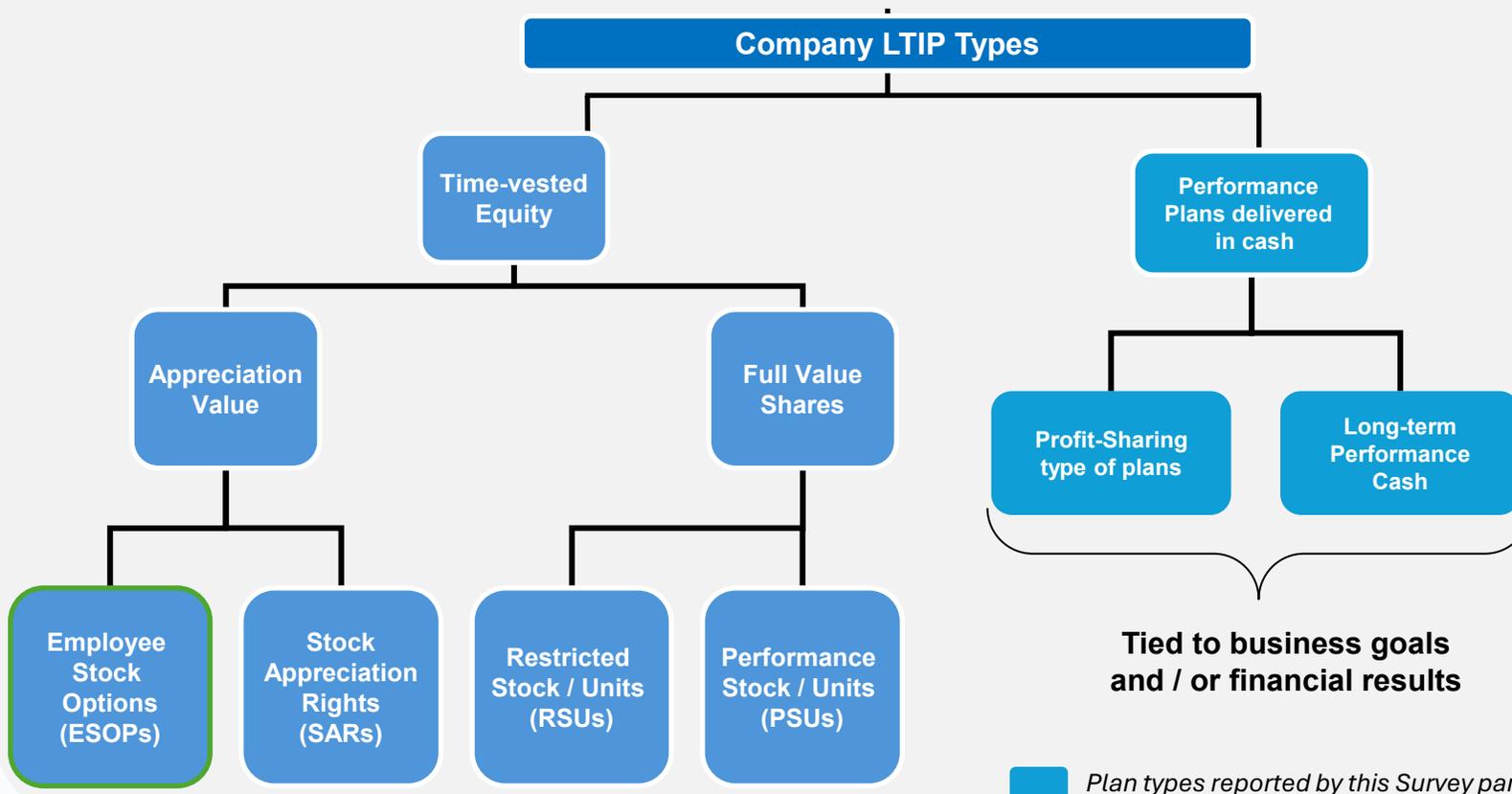
- 1) The classification of companies by industry type, primary funding, entry valuation, development stage, funding round, and country was based on information provided by participants and was only adjusted by the survey provider to correct technical errors.
- 2) To uphold data protection standards, the information in this report is shared in aggregate only when at least seven data points are available. For example, if fewer than seven companies from Egypt participated, their data is not reported separately but is instead included in the 'Total MENA' category.

06

Appendix II: Data Sets

Long-Term Incentive Plans Design

A **long-term incentive plan (LTIP)** is a type of reward program designed to motivate and retain employees by offering financial benefits based on the company's performance over several years. It often includes rewards like company full value shares, stock options, or cash bonuses, encouraging employees to focus on achieving long-term business goals and aligning their interests with the company's success.

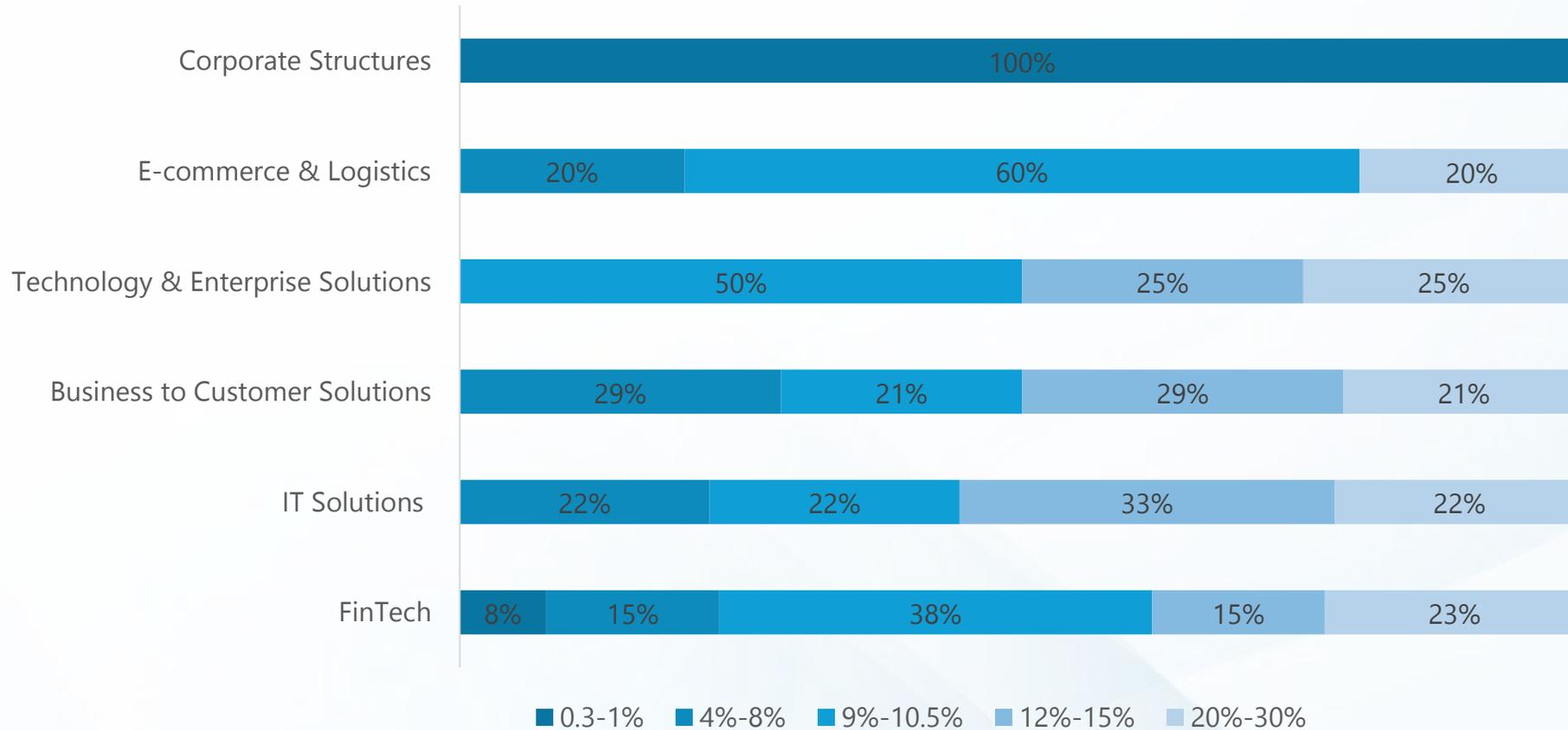


The main difference between appreciation value and full value LTI schemes is how employees realize value.

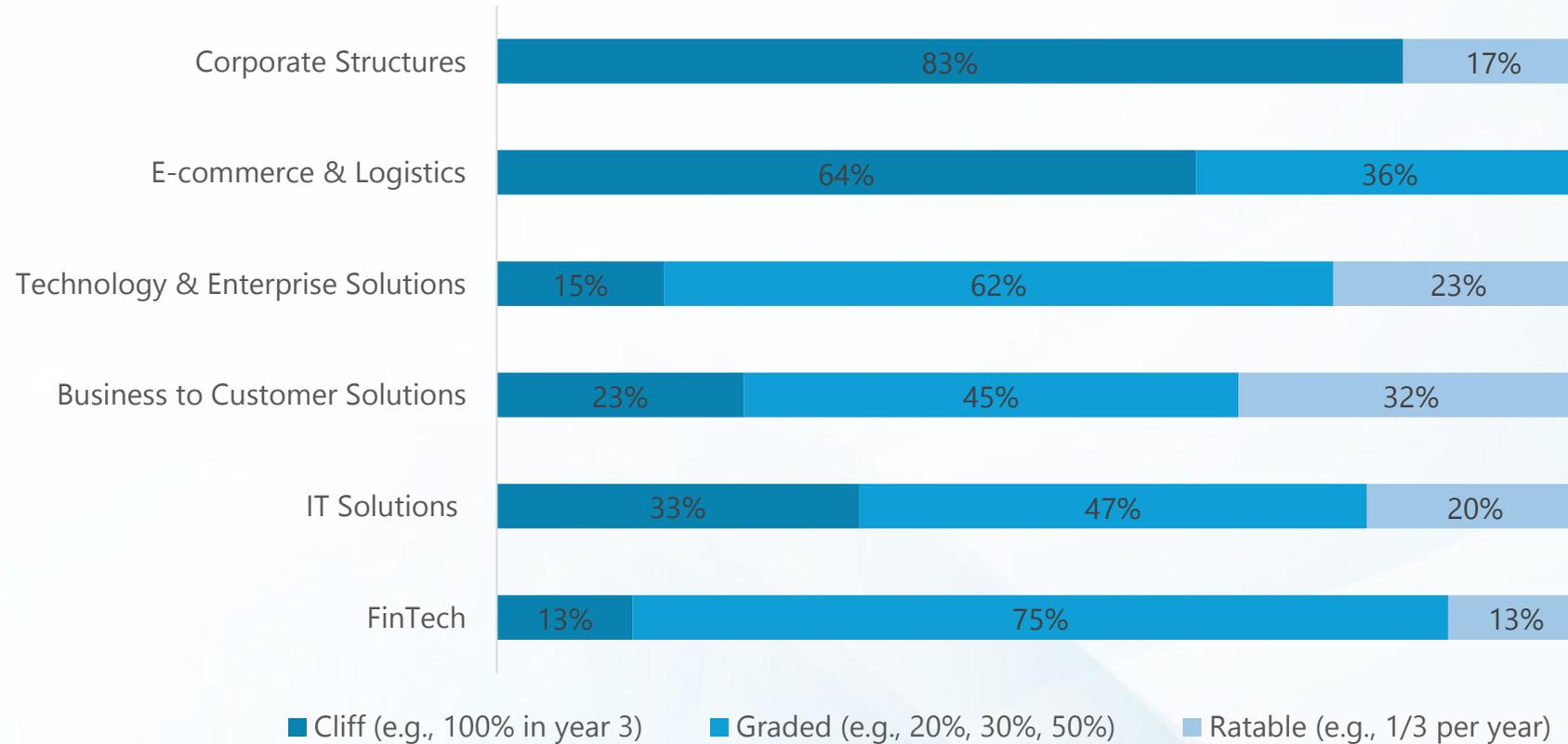
Appreciation value plans (e.g., stock options) reward employees only if the company's stock price increases, focusing on growth above a set threshold.

In contrast, **full value plans** (e.g., PSUs or RSUs) provide the entire value of the shares, often based on achieving performance goals or meeting vesting conditions, so participant receives benefit even if stock price remains the same or decreases.

ESOP Pool Size by Sector



Vesting Schedule by Sector

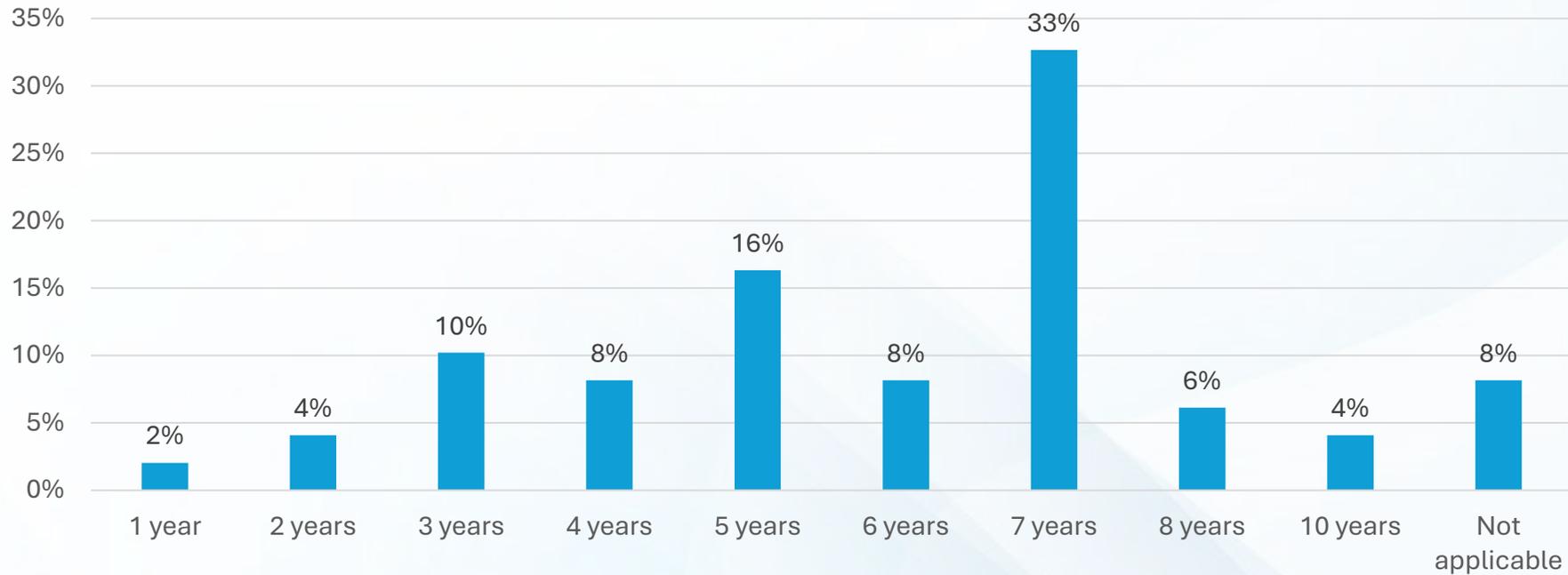


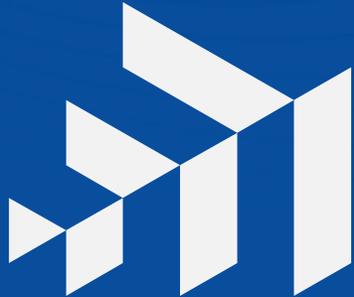
Time to Exit

Time to exit will be relevant only to equity-based plans and define approximate time required for participants to exercise vested stock. **None of the ESOP conditions correlates with the anticipated exit timeline.**

The “Not applicable” designation indicates that the company can not anticipate the exit horizon at this stage.

Anticipated Exit Horizon





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