



## France Chapter Salary Survey 1999

### Summary

There were 50 respondents to the survey. The France Chapter currently has 175 members. For the first time the survey was sent to the other European STC chapters although the response rate was low. Eighty per cent of respondents were from France, where Paris was the most important centre (77% of respondents work there).

Most of us are employed (68%) rather than independent (26%). Telecommuting and part-time work remain unusual. The most common job title is Technical Writer or Author (or the French equivalent). Nearly all of us have university degrees although only 26% have a diploma in technical communication.

The most frequent main activities are writing computer documentation, writing/editing and documentation management. Writing online documentation is the most frequent secondary activity. The number of people writing online documentation has considerably increased since the last survey in 1996.

Most respondents occupy midlevel non-management positions. The profession is actively expanding as around 10% of respondents were in entry-level positions and a quarter had less than 2 years experience. A fifth of respondents had 8 or more years of experience. The trend seems to be for technical communicators to work in small communication groups of five or less people (a quarter of respondents work alone) or to work in large groups of between 11 and 25 people. The average age of respondents was 37 years which when taken with the number of years of experience suggests that many come to technical communication as a second career.

There is a strong demand for technical communicators as salaries have significantly increased since the last survey. The average salary of respondents was 250,000 FF/year (37,884 Euro/year), which is an 11% increase since 1996. Entry level positions averaged 196,000 FF/year (29,882 Euro/year) (12% increase since 1996) and mid level non-management 245,000 FF/year (37,350 Euro/year) (9% increase). The largest pay rises were for midlevel management positions, where the average salary is now 309,000 FF/year (47,110 Euro/year), a 13% increase. There are few opportunities for upper level positions in our profession.

The rates for independents have also increased significantly since the last survey. The average was 308 FF/hour (39.18 Euro/hour), which is a 20% increase. For the first time there was a question about annual income: it averaged 315,000 FF/year (48,025 Euro/year).

There are three main sectors of employment: computing, telecommunication and financial. Over 70% of respondents work in one of these sectors. For the first time we asked if respondents had recently changed field. Only 16% had done so, evenly divided between those leaving technical writing to move to another field and entering technical writing from another field.

The following sections follow the sequence of the questions asked in the survey.

## 1. Employment

Most of us are employed full-time although around a quarter of us work freelance. Since the survey began in 1992 the proportion of independent to employed has remained fairly stable, around 70:30 employed and independent respectively.

For the first time we asked if people telecommuted. Only one respondent did. Part-time work is also uncommon. Even rarer is unemployment!

	1999	1996	1992
Employed full-time	34 (68%)	33 (72%)	18 (72%)
Independent	13 (26%)	12 (26%)*	7 (28%)
Employed part-time	2 (4%)	-	-
Telecommuter	1 (2%)	Not asked	Not asked
Unemployed	-	1 (2%)	-
	(n=50)	(n=46)	(n=25)

\* the 3 people who were part-time/independent and full-time independent in 1996 have been reclassified as independent here

## 2. Job title

There were 20 job titles in two languages. The most frequent job title was technical writer or author: between the English and French titles nearly half of us have this job title. In 1996 there were 28 job titles and just over half of respondents then also were called technical writer/author (or the French equivalent). In this study fewer people are translators compared to 1996.

Although nearly two thirds of us have one of the four most common job titles, most job titles are unique: only one respondent had it. This was the same in 1996. Our profession has many fronts.

Technical writer or technical author	16	32%
Rédacteur technique or concepteur technique	7	14%
Senior technical writer	5	10%
Documentation manager or technical documentation manager	4	8%
Documentation consultant	2	
Rédacteur/traducteur technique	2	
Technical communicator	1	
Technical editor	1	
Technical writer/multimedia author	1	
Translator	1	
Technical publications & translations manager	1	
Documentation engineer	1	
Co-ordinator/editor international article development	1	
Web marketing consultant	1	
Online help designer	1	
Trainer	1	
Software localizer	1	
Documentation team leader	1	
Product executive	1	
Technical consultant	1	

## 3. Education level

Nearly all of us have degrees from higher education colleges, most having either a BA/BSc (or equivalent) or a Masters (or equivalent). Nearly a third of degrees are in fields related to languages. When we look at the degree level against the field of study we notice that the higher the degree level the more likely that the degree is in a technical, scientific or computing field.

	1999	1996	1992
High school/lycée	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	-
Deug	4 (8%)	4 (9%)	1 (2%)
BS/BA/license	20 (40%)	23 (50%)	6 (24%)
Master's/maitrise/DEA/DESS	20 (40%)	16 (35%)	10 (40%)
Doctorate	3 (6%)	5 (12%)	1 (4%)
Level not stated	-	1 (2%)	-
	(n=50)	(n=46)	(n=25)

Field of study: (more than one answer is possible as some respondents had more than one degree at the same level)

n=53

Language	16	30%
Humanities	13	24%
Science/engineering/computing	13	24%
Business	8	15%
Technical communication	3	6%

Field of study by education level:

Degree level	Field of study	1999	1996
None		3 (5%)	3 (6%)
Deug	• Languages	1 (2%)	2 (4%)
	• Humanities	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
	• Science/engineering/computing	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
BS/BA/license	• Languages	10 (19%)	10 (21%)
	• Humanities	6 (11%)	4 (8%)
	• Science/engineering/computing	3 (5%)	4 (8%)
	• Technical communication	1 (1%)	3 (6%)
	• Business	3 (5%)	2 (4%)
Masters	• Languages	5 (10%)	4 (8%)
	• Humanities	6 (11%)	4 (8%)
	• Science/engineering/computing	6 (11%)	4 (8%)
	• Technical communication	2 (4%)	3 (6%)
	• Business	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
Doctorate	• Languages	-	3 (6%)
	• Humanities	-	2 (4%)
	• Science/engineering/computing	3	-
	• Technical communication	-	-
	• Business	-	-
		n= 53	n= 48

#### 4. Diploma in technical communication

This is a new question. Most of us have not received training in technical communication : only a quarter of respondents have a diploma in the field.

Yes	13	26%
No	37	74%

#### 5. Main and secondary activities

As in earlier surveys, most of us write computer documentation, write/edit and manage documentation as our main activities. Writing online documentation is the most common secondary activity. The most frequent pairing of main and secondary activities was doing computer documentation and online documentation respectively. Indeed the number of people doing online documentation has considerably increased since the last study.

More than one answer is possible.

	Main		Secondary	
Computer documentation	27	(35%)	5	(10%)
Writer/editing	25	(32%)	6	(12%)
Publication management	8	(10%)	2	(4%)
Online documentation	5	(6%)	21	(43%)
Market research	2	(3%)	-	
Visual communication	1	(1%)	4	(8%)
PR	1	(1%)	-	
Web/intranet design	1	(1%)	7	(14%)
Technical support	1	(1%)	-	
User interface	1	(1%)	-	
SQA testing	1	(1%)	-	
Quality assurance validation documentation	1	(1%)	-	
Software development	1	(1%)	-	
Doc. Audit & design	1	(1%)	-	
Translation	1	(1%)	1	(2%)
Training	1	(1%)	3	(6%)
	n=78		n=49	

	1999		1996	
	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary
Computer documentation	36%	10%	32%	10%
Writer/editing	33%	12%	26%	19%
Publication management	11%	4%	17%	9%
Online documentation	7%	47%	5%	28%
Market research	3%	-	-	2%
Visual communication	1%	8%	-	7%
PR	1%	-	-	3%
Web/intranet design	1%	14%	1%	8%
Technical support	1%	-		
User interface	1%	-		
SQA testing	1%	-		
Quality assurance validation documentation	1%	-		
Software development	1%	-		
Doc. Audit & design	1%	-		
Translation	1%	2%	3%	5%
Training	1%	6%	8%	-
Multimedia	-	-	3%	2%
Telecommunications documentation			1%	-
Document database management			1%	-
Public speaking			1%	-
Marketing communication			1%	-
DTP			-	2%
	n=75	n=51	n=66	n=58

Activity not included in year's list

## 6. Employment level in company

Most of us occupy midlevel non-management positions. However, the industry continues to actively recruit as can be seen in that just over one in ten of us are new to the profession, occupying an entry level position.

The proportion of us in midlevel and entry level positions has remained constant since the last survey. There are fewer opportunities for achieving upper management positions. The number of specialist/consultants probably reflects the number of people who work independently.

	1999	1996	1992
Entry level	6 (12%)	5 (11%)	-
Midlevel non-management	22 (44%)	21 (46%)	8 (40%)
Midlevel management	11 (22%)	12 (26%)	8 (40%)
Upper management	-	4 (11%)	4 (20%)
Specialist/consultant	10 (20%)		
Upper non-management	1 (2%)		
	(n=50)	(n=43)	(n=20)

## 7. Years of experience at this level

The profession is rapidly expanding: a quarter of us have less than 2 years experience in the profession. This proportion has increased since the last survey indicating that many have been recruited in the last couple of years. A fifth of us have 8 or more years of experience.

Years of experience	1999	1996	1992
Less than 2	13 (26%)	7 (15%)	2 (9%)
2 to 5	18 (36%)	17 (40%)	6 (27%)
5 to 8	8 (16%)	6 (14%)	6 (27%)
8 to 10	3 (6%)	7 (16%)	2 (9%)
More than 10	8 (16%)	6 (14%)	2 (9%)
	n=50	n=46	n=22

## 8. Number of communication staff at place of work

The result of the survey suggests that the trend is towards our working in small communication groups, five people or less, or in large groups of over 25 people. Just over 40% of us work where there are 5 or less people in the communication group. Indeed a quarter of us work alone. There has been a significant increase since the last survey in the number of companies that have communication groups of more than 10 people: nearly half of us work in such groups.

No. of people in documentation group	1999	1996	1992
Less than 2	11 (23%)	9 (24%)	4 (25%)
3 to 5	9 (19%)	10 (26%)	9 (56%)
6 to 10	3 (6%)	9 (24%)	1 (6%)
11 to 25	23 (49%)	9 (24%)	2 (13%)
More than 25	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	-
	n=47	n=38	n=16

## 9. Gross annual salaries known by respondent

The average salary known by respondents is 220,000 FF/year (33,540 Euro/year) or 18,300 FF/month (2,790 Euro/month), which is a 5% increase since 1996. As with the earlier survey, this average is less than that of the respondent's average salary. This is probably because although many respondents may know the salaries of colleagues at a lower level, fewer know the salaries of those at the same or higher level.

Annual gross salary (KFF/yr)	1999	1996	1992
Up to 156	2 (3%)	16 (18%)	20 (34%)
168-204	48 (61%)	34 (37%)	11 (19%)
216-260	16 (20%)	23 (25%)	20 (34%)
264-300	6 (7%)	11 (12%)	4 (7%)
310-450	7 (9%)	7 (8%)	2 (3%)
Average	220	210	196
	n=79	n=91	n=58

## 10. Gross annual salary of respondent:

The average gross salary of respondents is 250,000 FF/year (37,884 Euro/year) or 20,830 FF/month (3,175 Euro/month), which is an 11% increase since the last survey. This is higher than the rate of compound interest for this period, which is around 7-8%. This suggests that there is strong demand for technical communicators that is pushing the salaries up. We are sought after! The range of salaries has also narrowed since 1996: 50% of us now earn between 216,000 and 260,000 FF/year compared to 25% in 1996.

When we look at the respondents' salaries by employment level, we see that it ranges from 196,000 FF/year (29,882 Euro/year) or 16,330 FF/month (2,489 Euro/month) for entry level to 309,000 FF/year (47,110 Euro/year) or 25,750 FF/month (3,925 Euro/month) for midlevel management positions. Midlevel non-management averaged 245,000 FF/year (37,350 Euro/year) or 20,400 FF/month (3,110 Euro/month).

Entry level salaries have increased by 12%, midlevel non-management by 9% and mid-level management by 13% since 1996.

Annual gross salary (KFF/yr)	1999	1996	1992
Up to 156	-	2 (18%)	1 (6%)
168-204	7 (19%)	13 (37%)	2 (11%)
216-260	19 (51%)	12 (25%)	11 (61%)
264-300	8 (21%)	5 (12%)	2 (11%)
310-450	3 (8%)	4 (8%)	2 (11%)
Average	250	225	?
	n=37	n=36	n=18

Breakdown of respondents' salaries by employment level:

Salary range (FF/yr)	Entry level	Midlevel non-management	Midlevel management	Upper level non-management	Specialist
< 168	1		-	-	-
168 – 204	4	3	-	-	-
216 – 260	1	12	2	1	-
264 – 300	-	7	2	-	2
310 – 400	-	-	3	-	-
	n=6	n=21	n=7	n=1	n=2

Average gross salary by employment level (KFF/year):

Employment level	Average annual gross salary		
	1999	1996	1992
Entry level	196	160	-
Mid-level non-management	245	218	230
Mid-level management	309	273	263
Upper-level non-management	240	n/a	n/a
Upper-level management	-	281	-
Specialist	290	n/a	n/a
	n=37	n=36	n=18

n/a= not asked

## 11. Independent rates

The hourly rate has increased since the last survey, increasing on average from 257 FF/hour (39.18 Euro/hour) to 308 FF/hour (46.95 Euro/hour). This is a 20% increase, which is higher than the rate of inflation over this period (compound interest rate over this period is around 7-8%).

For the first time we asked about annual income. There were fewer replies but the average was 315,000 FF/year (48,025 Euro/year). Yearly income ranged from 200,000 FF/year to 440,000 FF/year. The complete list of responses is given in the appendix.

Hourly rate (FF/hr)	1999	1996
< 200	-	1
200-249	1	1
250-299	4	4
300-349	3	4
350-399	1	-
> 400	1	-
Not stated	3	-
	n=13*	n=10**

\* Respondent who earned 250-360 FF/hr was averaged as 300 FF/hr

\*\* Respondent who earned 210 FF/page was not included

Yearly earnings (KFF/year)	1999	
< 200	-	
200-249	3	(25%)
250-299	-	(12.5%)
300-349	1	
350-399	2	(25%)
> 400	2	(25%)
	n=8	

The income 192-216 KFF/year of a respondent was averaged at 204 KFF/year

## 12. Sex

There are more women than men in the profession. The ratio was 60:40 women to men respectively.

Sex of respondents	1999	1996	1992
Male	18 (37%)	18 (41%)	10 (32%)
Female	31 (63%)	26 (59%)	17 (68%)
	n=49	n=44	n=25

## 13. Age of respondents

The average age of respondents was 37 years compared to 39 in the 1996 survey. As many of the respondents have university degrees, such as Masters, we would not expect many members to be 25 years old or younger (6%). The age pattern suggests that many come to technical communication as a second career having first gained experience in another field. There has been a large increase in those who are less than 30 years old.

Age (years)	1999	1996	1992
< 30	11 (22%)	3 (6%)	3 (12%)
30-34	12 (24%)	9 (20%)	8 (32%)
35-39	7 (16%)	13 (28%)	3 (12%)
40-44	11 (20%)	9 (20%)	7 (28%)
45-49	5 (10%)	4 (9%)	4 (16%)
>50	4 (8%)	8 (17%)	-
Mean age	37	39	37
	n=50	n=46	n=25

## 14. Region in France and country

We had responses from nine countries. For the first time questionnaires were sent to the other STC European chapters, though the response rate was low. Unsurprisingly most respondents were from France (80%). It was not possible to compare countries.

Paris has a strong dominance amongst our members. Around three-quarters of French respondents work in Paris and its surrounding suburbs (77%), which is a large increase since the last survey (51%). There was a wider spread of respondents across the country in 1996.

Countries:

Country of respondent	1999	1996	1992
France	40 (80%)	34 (74%)	11 (92%)
UK	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	-
Luxembourg	2 (4%)	-	-
Belgium	1 (2%)	5 (11%)	-
The Netherlands	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	-
Germany	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	-
Italy	1 (2%)	-	-
Austria	-	1 (2%)	-
Switzerland	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (8%)
	n=50	n=46	n=12

France:

French postal code	1999	1996
Paris and suburbs (75, 92, 93, 94)	31 (77%)	34 (51%)
78	3 (6%)	5 (15%)
91	2 (5%)	
82	-	2 (6%)
77	-	2 (6%)
76	-	3 (11%)
38	-	1 (3%)
31	2 (4%)	1 (3%)
22	1 (2%)	5 (11%)
67	1 (2%)	-
	n=40	n=34

## 15. Sector

As with the last survey, we work in a wide range of sectors but three dominate: computing, telecommunications and financial. Over 70% of us work in these sectors. Some large French sectors are not well represented in the survey, such as defence and pharmaceuticals. In the case of the defence sector this could be because many of our members are foreigners. We did not ask members their nationality or in which language they work but many of us in the chapter are foreign and work in English. A lot of software done in France and aimed at the international market is written in English and consequently the documentation is also initially written in English and then translated.



## Appendix

### Contractor hourly salary: (n=11)

FF/hour	
233	1
250	1
260	1
275	1
290	1
300	3
310	1
400	1
475	1

### Contractor annual salary: (n=8)

KFF/year		
200	1	
204	1	(average result of 192-216 KFF/year given by respondent)
240	1	
305	1	
350	1	
355	1	
430	1	
440	1	

### Gross annual salaries know by respondent : n=75

FF/year	
156	2
168	4
180	20
192	10
204	14
216	3
228	4
240	4
252	5
264	3
276	-
288	2
300	1
312	1
324	1
336	-
348	-
370	2
372-450	3

### Gross annual salaries of respondent: n=37

FF/year (full time unless stated)

165	1
180 for 33 hr week	1

181	1
190	2
200	2
210	1
216	1
225 for 4/5 time	1
228	1
230	4
240	3
250	3
252	1
265	1
265	1
280	2
282	1
300	4
303	1
320	1
370	1
380	1
not stated	2