Scrum Master Salary Report 2023

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Introduction: Scrum Master Salary Report 2023

Now and then, the position of Scrum Master is revealed as one of the top-paying jobs in the United States. However, only some have ventured to investigate the state of this profession on a global scale.

In 2017 we endeavored to unravel the career paths leading to and the financial rewards of this lucrative profession globally by polling Scrum Masters and agile coaches around the world. Our questions addressed the practitioners' educational backgrounds, working experience, and the industries and organizational details of the respondents' companies.

Our objective was to identify common career patterns among successful Scrum Masters and link those patterns with their financial remuneration, thus providing aspiring Scrum Masters with an idea of how to plan for a career in the profession.

In Q4 of 2022, five years after our first Scrum Master Salary Report, we went out again to survey over 1,100 Scrum Masters and agile coaches from Australia to the European Union to the United States. And as you can imagine, the agile world is changing regarding working environments and financial remuneration.

In this conclusive report, you'll find facts and statistics not readily available anywhere else, including clarity on several issues likely to concern new entrants to the profession.

All figures are listed in US-$.

The previous reports are still available for download:

- **Download the 2022 edition here**: Scrum Master Trends Report 2022.
- **Download the 2019 edition here**: Scrum Master Trends Report 2019.
- **Download the 2017 edition here**: Scrum Master Salary Report 2017.

Please note that high-resolution graphics are included with the download, which is a ZIP file.

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Data Collection and Analysis

We collected the data for the 2023 edition from September 2022 to December 2022. Overall, 1,143 Scrum Masters and agile coaches participated in the survey. We employed an online questionnaire via Google Forms to gather the contributors' answers.

The main acquisition channel was the *Food for Agile Thought newsletter*. We also distributed the survey link via blog posts and social media postings.

We started the survey with standardized instructions, where we provided further information on data usage and anonymity. Then, if the participants proceeded with the survey, they agreed to include their data in the analysis.

There were no incentives for participating in our survey. After a standard data-cleaning procedure, we computed descriptive statistics for all 34 survey questions. In addition, we investigated the relationship between several variables and the study participants' salaries.

Sample Description

Socio-Demographics: Age, Gender, and Salary

The participants are 62.5% male and 35.8% female; another 1,7% are either diverse or did prefer not to reveal their gender. Most participants are between 30 and 39 years old (43.8%) or between 40 and 49 (29.0%.) Another 15.4% belong to the age group between 50 and 59 years.

The average salary of our participants is $80,995, with a standard deviation of roughly $53,700 – that is a lot of variances to explain in further analyses, see Figure 1. The median salary is $70,000.

Figure 1: Average Annual Salary [US-$]

Participants' Education and Agile Experience

The participant's educational levels and backgrounds haven't changed much compared to last year's results. Most of them either have a bachelor's degree (38.8%), a master's degree (33.7%), or a diploma (9.2%). In addition, our participants usually start their agile careers with technical/engineering backgrounds (45.1%) or business degrees (20.3%).

Our sample is comparatively small in the proportion of other educational backgrounds, such as natural sciences (5.6%), social sciences (3.9%), and communication sciences (3.5%).

As an agile coach or Scrum Master, it is most likely you have prior work experience as a project manager (32.5%), software engineer (20.0%), or business analyst (9.4%).

Most of the participants of the Scrum Master Salary Report 2023 either have practical experience of more than four years (53.5%) or at least two to four years (28.5%). In addition, they indicated significant transition experience (71.4%), and at least 52.0% of them experienced or initiated a transition kickoff.

Their experience usually goes along with at least one first-level or advanced-level agile certificate, see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Distribution of the Participants' Certificates

Organizational Perspective: Country, Sector, Size, Agility Level

The participants' organizations were located in various countries, see Figure 3, and from a broad set of corporate sectors, see Figure 4. A comparatively large proportion of the organizations is located either in the USA (19.9%), in Germany (17.7%), or in multiple countries (16.9%). In this year's sample, the most prominent sectors were companies from the finance and insurance sector (21.7%), software and internet companies (16.8%), as well as companies with a focus on engineering and technology (15.0%).

Figure 3: Countries of Participants' Organizations

Figure 4: Sectors of Participants' Organizations

A quarter of the companies had more than 10,000 employees (26.9%). On the other hand, 9.2% of the companies had 5,000 to 9,999 employees. Smaller companies with 1,000 to 4,999 employees, 250 to 999 employees, and 50 to 249 employees were evenly distributed with 18.5%, 19.6%, and 19.7%, respectively. A minor proportion were organizations with 1 to 50 employees (6.1%).

Overall, the participants reported a wide range of organizational agility levels. 3.4% indicated that their organization mainly employs traditional techniques, e.g., command & control and waterfall. 30.2% reported that their organization is starting to adopt agile practices. 31.1% stated that their company is making significant progress in adopting agile practices, and another 13.6% indicated that agile practices are already well established in their organization.

Also, there were 6.5% of the participants whose organizations somehow needed help implementing agile practices; therefore, the agile transition stalled, see Figure 5.

Figure 5: Levels of Organizational Agility

Agile Work Environments

Among our participants were 65.6% Scrum Masters and 34.4% agile coaches. 88.8% of them are employed directly at the respective organization. The participants` tenure level was more or less evenly distributed among the three categories “one to two years” (20.9%), “two to four years” (20.6%), and “more than four years” (22.8%). In this year’s sample, a comparatively large proportion indicated a tenure level of less than one year (35.7%). We expect a post-covid effect here, where participants postponed job transitions until the end of the pandemic.

Our participants usually work in environments with two to four Scrum Masters or agile coaches (27.3%) or five to ten Scrum Masters or agile coaches (23.1%). Also, a comparatively large proportion of participants have more than 20 colleagues in the same roles.

It is common for our participants to work on projects with different scales simultaneously, see Figure 6.

Figure 6: Type of Projects

Your Educational Level Barely Matters

The standard "get a master's degree" mantra implies that the more you invest in your education, the higher your income. But, there are countless exceptions to this rule, and for the role of Scrum Master, the exception could not be more accurate; see Figure 7.

Of course, there are some exceptional cases where the additional degree comes with a maximum salary of $500,000. But looking at both the salary distribution's median and mean values, there is no remuneration-induced need to invest more time and accomplish a master's degree. Instead, as you will see in the two subsequent sections, it is much more beneficial to invest in agile certificates and gain significant work experience.

Educational Level	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
High school	280,000	66,428	81,472	59,915	62
Bachelor degree	350,000	80,000	88,875	50,512	444
Master degree	500,000	61,000	70,227	53,131	382
Diploma	234,568	73,000	78,653	41,838	105
Post graduate	400,000	67,000	79,575	57,897	100
No degree	488,000	85,700	106,779	85,852	30

Figure 7: Annual Salary by Educational Level

Specialize!

Your salary increases with the number and sophistication of the certificates you obtain. The median difference between having no certification and having an advanced-level certification, for example, the PSM II, is as much as $5,000 annually. Additional qualifications, such as SCM, ICP-ACC, and PMI-ACP that fit your organization's needs add up to another $26,000 annually to your paycheck.

Certificate	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
No certificate	400,000	65,000	71,675	52,006	85
First level	350,000	60,600	69,467	45,098	369
Advanced level	395,200	70,000	81,368	46,047	349
Other certificates	488,000	96,522	97,881	64,115	219

Figure 8: Annual Salary by Certification Level

Experience Is Key

Unsurprisingly, the salary increases as Scrum Masters and agile Coaches gain experience and reach intermediate and senior levels. From our point of view, what is surprising is the median difference between junior-level income and senior-level income. A median difference of roughly $30,000 is a valid argument to cope with the troubles that may stress you in your day-to-day business.

We also highlight that the more senior you become, the higher the salary distribution spreads. Accordingly, we expect a broad set of other factors influencing the experience-related salary increase.

Experience Level	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
None	140,000	48,000	51,259	38,509	29
Junior (< 2yrs)	190,000	53,783	55,636	32,414	166
Intermediate (2-4yrs)	280,000	64,000	66,904	38,867	325
Senior (>4yrs)	500,000	83,500	95,274	56,981	610

Figure 9: Annual Salary by Experience Level

Your Previous Occupation Matters

There are significant differences in the annual salary, see Figure 10, depending on the previous job of our participants, with a difference of as much as $30,000 in median income between former product owners ($52,000) and business analysts ($82,000).

As there are high incomes in all categories, be optimistic regarding your career perspective!

Previous Job	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
Product Owner	142,500	52,000	64,895	39,669	11
(QA) Engineer	220,000	65,000	73,679	47,157	74
(Software) Engineer	350,000	70,000	78,793	48,540	228
Project Manager	500,000	70,000	83,210	60,079	370
Other	400,000	70,000	79,747	53,915	298
Product Manager	240,000	75,000	88,310	55,179	49
Business Analyst	220,000	82,000	85,840	44,113	108

Figure 10: Annual Salary by Professional Background

Relocate to the United States, Australia, or ~~Germany~~ Switzerland

Our 2022 report reported median salaries between $20,000 (India) and $110,000 (Australia). We generally see higher median wages in this year's report and a more extensive spread in the salary distributions; see Figure 11.

Despite the increase in median income, the relative position amongst the countries nearly stayed the same. The United States and Australia still form the top income group. However, Germany was replaced by Switzerland in the leading group, and several other countries, such as Canada, New Zealand, and the UK, also outpaced Germany. India, Brazil, and Poland are still in the bottom group. Also, we want to highlight that in this year's report, we can showcase data from nearly twice as many countries as in our last report.

The conclusion of our last reports still holds: If Scrum certifications worldwide are considered equal, a position as Scrum Master or agile coach in the United States is financially preferred, even considering the higher cost of living.

Country	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
Brazil	48,000	24,000	25,724	14,067	17
India	100,000	28,000	29,922	19,592	67
Poland	86,000	40,000	39,814	19,495	56
Italy	75,000	45,000	46,739	19,033	19
Other	500,000	45,540	55,593	52,821	193
Russia	94,000	47,000	43,617	26,179	17
South Africa	488,000	50,007	104,996	146,476	11
Spain	81,000	50,500	50,554	20,578	20
Sweden	150,000	54,000	63,328	27,918	15
France	85,000	62,000	58,569	15,091	21
Netherlands	111,000	67,531	64,175	21,156	51
Austria	110,000	68,000	67,726	20,115	18
Belgium	180,000	70,000	87,376	46,149	13
Germany	234,568	71,700	74,671	30,358	201
United Kingdom	250,000	75,500	85,961	42,551	86
Canada	200,000	92,000	99,576	34,572	50
New Zealand	142,500	94,245	100,527	26,342	13
Australia	350,000	115,000	126,360	51,385	25
Switzerland	220,000	120,788	119,305	36,903	20
United States	440,000	130,000	136,997	47,957	227

Figure 11: Annual Salary by Country

Carefully Choose Your Corporate Sector

Carefully consider which organization and which type of project suits you best. If you value a high salary, you should find a job in one of the top three corporate sectors: Education/higher education, retail, or the health industry. The median difference between the lowest-paying sector (Software/Internet) and Education/Higher Education is roughly $45,000.

Corporate Sector	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
Software/Internet	280000	54900	61568	39354	192
Agency	220000	60000	74787	51901	21
Engineering/Technology	488000	61594	71831	54143	170
Media/News	178000	70000	76953	46756	17
Transportation	200000	70000	74876	40742	49
Consulting	500000	71400	94328	79214	122
Telecommunication	180000	73679	69327	44858	35
Manufacturing	234568	75000	88851	51403	28
Energy Industry	172000	77000	89050	47088	29
Other	281000	78000	87137	48435	103
Finance/Insurance	400000	80000	89529	53483	248
Government	180000	80500	87404	38150	36
Retail	160000	85000	84641	40245	17
Health Industry	220000	100000	95144	53489	59
Ed/HigherEd	150000	101667	98095	35561	14

Consider Freelancing

Freelancers earn more, but only a few start as freelancers immediately. Usually, the freelancers in our sample have backgrounds in finance/business and consulting. In addition, most of them were either software engineers or project managers. And nearly all of them have significant agile experience of four or more years.

However, given the considerable spread in the annual income for freelancers, consider whether to start freelancing carefully.

Employment Status	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
Employee	488,000	70,000	78,148	50,599	1012
Freelancer	500,000	90,000	103,508	70,077	128

The Gender Pay Gap

In 2017 we reported only marginal income differences for male and female Scrum Masters, and we could replicate these results in last year's and this year's reports.

Last year, we were suspicious about why shouldn't there be a gender pay gap in the agile world when you find it in nearly every other industry sector. Therefore, we went a little bit further with our analyses. We found several interesting patterns by comparing gender-specific income based on variables such as business sector and previous job. Finally, we decided to use regression analysis to investigate the influence of the participants' gender on their salary, controlling for a broad set of other variables, such as business sector, location, previous position, etc. Thus, we found a statistically significant difference between male and female participants' income of roundabout $7,800 – which equaled roughly 10% of the median income of last year's sample.

We repeated this procedure with our new sample. Despite the gap getting a little bit smaller, our conclusion still holds: There is a small but statistically significant gender pay gap: As a female Scrum Master or agile coach, you earn $6,000 less than your male colleagues on average.

We recommend closely looking at your colleague's salary, especially if you are a female Scrum Master or agile coach.

Gender	Maximum	Median	Mean	SD	n
Female	488,000	68,251	76,400	51,847	408
Male	500,000	71,850	82,901	54,280	712
Diverse	205,000	82,000	117,000	59,989	7
Prefer not to say	289,000	90,000	101,491	63,885	13

Yes, we applied a statistical model:

Coefficient	Est.	SE	t	P(>|t|)
Intercept	80,593	18,060	4.42	<.001
Gender (Female)	**-5,951**	2,597	2.29	<.01
…	…	…	…	…

$Note$: $R^2_{adj.} = .53$, F(96, 1006) = 13.91, p < .001.

(We omitted all other rows to increase readability. If you want to learn more about the model, please reach out to Alexander.)

The Top Ten Earners

Of course, comparing oneself to the median scores in the respective category is much more realistic. However, who wouldn't have looked at the top income group to understand the upper limit?

We identified the top ten earners in our dataset and their characteristics. Their annual income is evenly distributed between $250,000 and $500,000:

- They represent the gender distribution of our general sample: six males, three females, and one person who preferred not to reveal their gender.
- They are typically in their 30ies or 40ies.
- They are evenly distributed amongst agile coaches and Scrum Masters.
- They work in the United States, the UK, Australia, and South Africa.
- They work in the finance and insurance sector or consulting.
- They work at small or large organizations that are on their way to becoming fully agile.
- Usually, they have a bachelor's degree. (The top ten represent the full range of degrees, though.)
- They have particular combinations of agile certificates.
- They have significant practical experience.
- They are responsible for more than ten projects of different scales.

Spotlight: Who Is Entering the Competition and what Do They Earn?

Overall, our sample contained 167 Scrum Masters and agile coaches with a professional experience of two or fewer years. We were interested in their backgrounds and annual salary, as the first steps in a new professional role are usually tough, and you have to watch your environment closely to ensure you are at the right spot.

Of the juniors in our sample, 52% are male and 47% female, which means significantly more female professionals enter the field than a couple of years ago. Only 20% of our junior sample was younger than 29 years, which we assume to have first entered the job market not long ago. Most of them are between 30 and 39 years, and 25% are older than 39. Hence, a comparatively large proportion acquires roles as Scrum Masters and agile coaches a little bit later in their careers.

40% of the junior sample worked at their company or institution for at least two years, and they have prior experience, e.g., as project managers, software engineers, or in other professional roles. Almost all of them come at least with an entry-level certificate. Like in the general sample, most have technical and engineering backgrounds or backgrounds in business, finance, and economics.

However, there is a significant proportion of junior Scrum Masters and agile coaches with backgrounds in Medicine and Psychology which may be a sign of an increasing influence of lean and agile principles in other fields. With a median income of $53,800, juniors still have a couple of steps to climb on the income ladder until they reach the general sample's income. However, compared to other professions, this median income is still a good argument to consider a career as agile coach or Scrum Master.

As the agile world is ever-changing, and we assume the competition will increase in the upcoming years, we will look closely at the entrants in future reports.

Figure 12: Juniors' Annual Salary

Appendix: Abbreviations

Maximum:	Maximum value within the sample
Median:	Median value within the sample
Mean:	Mean value within the sample
SD:	Standard distribution
n:	Sample size
SE:	Standard error
t:	t-value
P:	p-value

About the Authors

Stefan Wolpers

Stefan is a Professional Scrum Trainer with Scrum.org.

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He specializes in coaching agile practices for change, such as agile software development with Scrum, LeSS, Kanban, and Lean Startup, as well as product management.

He also is an XSCALE Alliance trainer and coaches organizations in business agility. Additionally, he is a licensed facilitator of the Agile Fluency™ Team Diagnostic.

He has served in senior leadership positions several times throughout his career. His agile coaching expertise focuses on scaling product delivery organizations of fast-growing, venture-capital funded startups and transitioning existing product teams in established enterprise organizations.

Stefan is also curating the popular 'Food for Agile Thought' newsletter for the global Agile community with 36,000-plus subscribers. He blogs about his experiences on Age-of-Product.com and hosts large global Slack community of agile practitioners with 12,000-plus members. Also, he hosts the Hands-on Agile Meetup community with 5,000-plus members.

His ebooks on agile topics have been downloaded more than 95,000-plus times. Lastly, Stefan is the organizer of the Agile Camp Berlin, a Barcamp for 200-plus agile practitioners.

Read more about Stefan at Scrum.org, and connect with him via LinkedIn, or Twitter, or privately via email.

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