Software creates jobs for a wide variety of professionals in today’s workplaces — everything from software developers and web designers to project coordinators, administrative assistants, and accountants. The number of jobs created directly by the software industry has increased 7.3 percent since 2016. This report, from Software.org: the BSA Foundation and conducted in 2019 by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), captures the growth of the software industry in the United States and the sweeping economic impact it is making at state and national levels.

Software is so much more than your desktop at work. Software is apps. Software is data. Software is cloud computing. It creates breakthroughs and drives growth in nearly every industry. Software empowers countless people and American businesses and improves our lives each day in ways big and small. Along with all this progress comes the dramatic, positive impact software has on our national economy each year.

Software: Growing US Jobs and the GDP

UNITED STATES

EMPLOYMENT

Total
14.4 million jobs
(includes indirect and induced impacts)

Direct
3.1 million jobs

WAGES

Average Annual Wage for Software Developers
$114,000

A software developer’s wage is more than twice the average annual wage for all US occupations, which was $51,960 in 2018.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

R&D Investment by Software Companies
$82.7 billion

22.1% of All Domestic Business R&D in United States

The EIU compiled these data and economic impact assessments using publicly available government data, maintaining full editorial control of the process and using industry standard approaches. Any views or opinions expressed in this document are not necessarily those of The Economist Intelligence Unit.
METHODOLOGY
In 2018 the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, made revisions to their methodology to calculate GDP across industries, through their 2018 Comprehensive Update9. The revisions, which are consistent with international standards, include a new way of recognizing economic value from own-account software. The revisions have resulted in increases in GDP across industries including the software industry. The EIU has incorporated the revised methodology into its analysis, including revisions to previous 2016 estimates to ensure comparability over time.

To estimate the total contributions of the software industry to the US economy, The EIU analyzed the direct contributions and estimated indirect and induced impacts using various economic multipliers:

(1) Direct contributions: the levels of output or employment of the industry in question;

(2) Indirect impacts: the inter-industry economic activity resulting from the direct contributions (e.g., purchases of inputs);

(3) Induced impacts: the additional economic activity supported by spending on goods and services by households whose income was affected by the direct contributions and indirect impacts.


7 National Science Foundation/ National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics and US Census Bureau, Business R&D and Innovation Survey. 2016 Industry breakdown. Where data is not available for 2016, the most recent year is used.

8 National Science Foundation/ National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics.