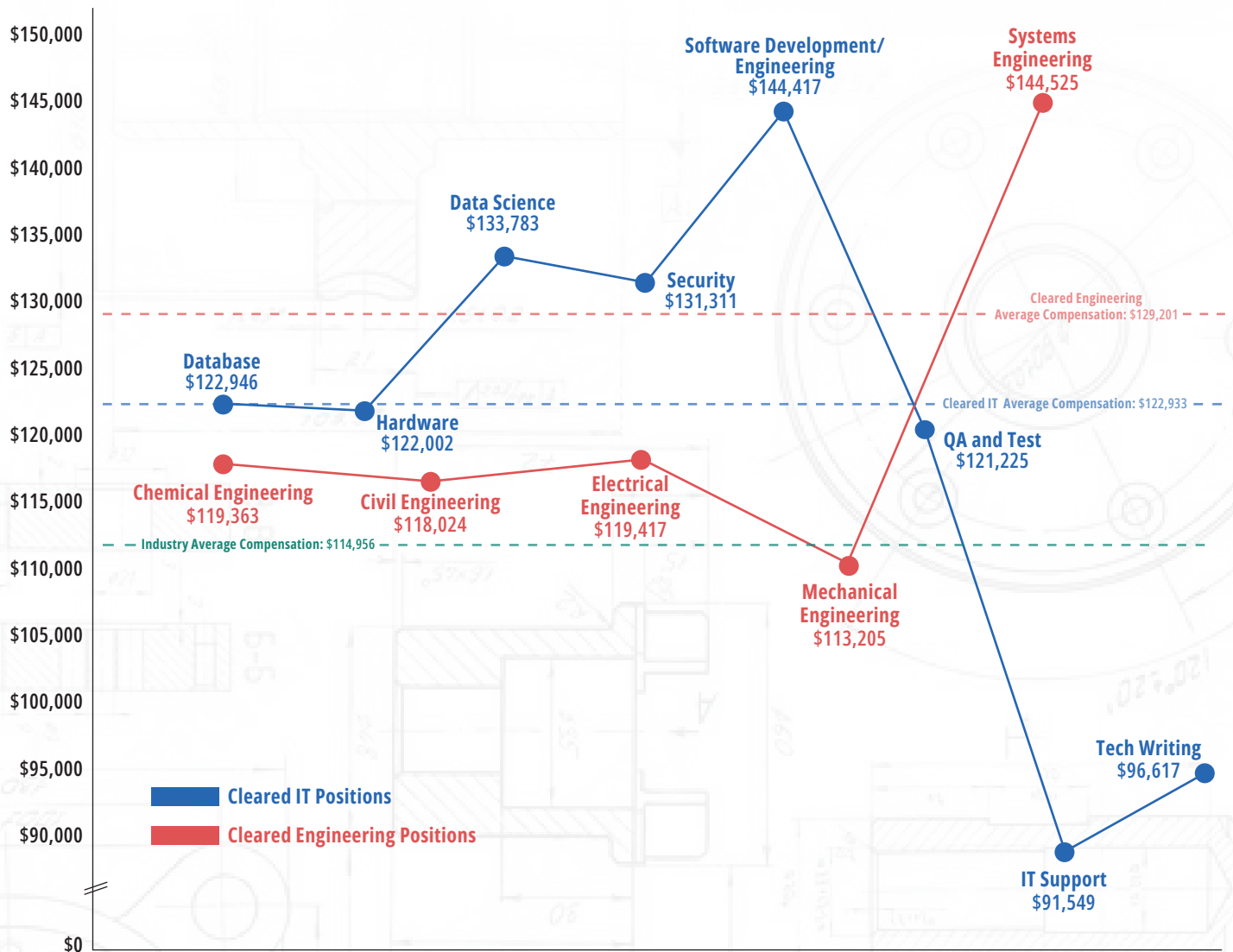# SPECIAL REPORT:

# CLEARED ENGINEERING

# AND IT COMPENSATION

## 2024 Cleared Engineering and IT Compensation Report

According to the 2024 ClearanceJobs Security Clearance Compensation Report, cleared respondents reported an average total compensation of $114,956. However, IT and engineering respondents report higher average total compensation numbers. Not every IT and engineering occupation sails past the overall averages, but many of them do - especially in engineering.

### Total Average Compensation for Cleared Engineering and IT



Software Development/
Engineering
$144,417

Systems
Engineering
$144,525

Data Science
$133,783

Security
$131,311

Cleared Engineering
Average Compensation: $129,201

Database
$122,946

Cleared IT  Average Compensation: $122,933

Hardware
$122,002

QA and Test
$121,225

Chemical Engineering
$119,363

Civil Engineering
$118,024

Electrical
Engineering
$119,417

Industry Average Compensation: $114,956

Mechanical
Engineering
$113,205

Tech Writing
$96,617

Cleared IT Positions

Cleared Engineering Positions

IT Support
$91,549

## SECURITY CLEARANCES AND POLYGRAPHS

The higher the clearance, the higher the compensation - especially for IT and engineering cleared professionals. A Top Secret/SCI can bring in a higher salary, with cleared respondents reporting just over $127,000 in average total compensation. But cleared engineers with a TS/SCI report over $147,000 in average total compensation and cleared IT workers with a TS/SCI report almost $132,000 in average total compensation. Cleared IT respondents tend to have higher clearances, with a higher percentage of respondents at the higher clearance levels or with an intelligence agency.

| CLEARED ENGINEERING | | | CLEARED IT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % OF RESPONDENTS | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS |
| >1% | N/A | Dept of Defense Confidential | N/A | >1% |
| 42% | $110,358 | Dept of Defense Secret | $102,434 | 31% |
| 15% | $134,904 | Dept of Defense Top Secret | $128,703 | 14% |
| 31% | $147,565 | Dept of Defense Top Secret/SCI | $131,820 | 38% |
| 5% | $134,477 | Dept of Energy (Q or L) | $118,101 | 2% |
| 4% | $172,363 | Intelligence Agency (CIA, FBI, NSA) | $173,973 | 6% |
| 1% | $115,437 | Dept of Homeland Security | $125,290 | 1% |
| 1% | $109,650 | Public Trust | $106,021 | 5% |
| 2% | $122,204 | Other Government Agency | $130,552 | 2% |

It's a little more challenging to find an engineer with a full scope polygraph, but not impossible. Cleared respondents with a full scope polygraph reported an average total compensation of $137,378, which is over $31,000 less than the cleared engineers with a full scope polygraph.

Cleared IT professionals report all polygraph numbers in line with the overall cleared respondents. However, cleared IT professionals with a full scope polygraph report an average total compensation almost $17,000 higher than the overall cleared population.

Both engineering and IT professionals with a full scope polygraph can garner higher salaries than other career paths. Add in experience or other factors, and salary soars. In fact, looking at both IT and engineering respondents together who have a full scope polygraph, 10 or more years of experience, a master's degree, and at least one certification, average total compensation grows to $180,707.

| CLEARED ENGINEERING AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS | POLYGRAPH | % OF RESPONDENTS | CLEARED IT AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $152,815 | 13% | COUNTERINTELLIGENCE POLYGRAPH | 16% | $142,303 |
| $168,622 | 6% | LIFESTYLE OR FULL SCOPE POLYGRAPH | 9% | $154,318 |
| $122,470 | 81% | I DON'T HAVE A CURRENT POLYGRAPH | 75% | $115,244 |

# CAREER LEVEL

Compensation rises steadily with experience and seniority for cleared engineers. Entry-level engineers command an average total compensation of $78,104, while mid-level engineers see a notable increase to approximately $110,005. Management roles, including managers and directors of staff, offer even higher compensation, averaging at $173,949.

Similarly, in the cleared IT profession, compensation follows a similar trajectory, increasing with experience and progression to higher career levels. Entry-level IT professionals earn an average total compensation of $73,795, while mid-level roles offer competitive compensation, with professionals earning approximately $110,016. Management positions, such as managers and directors of staff, also provide substantial compensation, averaging at $161,555.

| CLEARED ENGINEERING | | | CLEARED IT | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| % OF RESPONDENTS | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS |
| 5% | $78,104 | Entry Level (less than 2 yrs experience) | $73,795 | 5% |
| 10% | $95,852 | Early Career (2+ yrs experience) | $89,919 | 13% |
| 24% | $110,005 | Mid Level Career (5+ yrs experience) | $110,016 | 29% |
| 50% | $140,821 | Senior Level Career (10+ yrs experience) | $138,765 | 46% |
| 10% | $173,949 | Management (Manager/Director of Staff) | $161,555 | 6% |
| 1% | $179,500 | Executive (SVP, EVP, VP) | $211,650 | 1% |
| >1% | N/A | Senior Executive (President, CEO) | N/A | >1% |

# CURRENT EDUCATION STATUS FOR IT AND ENGINEERING

In the IT and engineering fields, education plays a crucial role in determining compensation. However, experience often outweighs academic qualifications in total compensation.

Cleared engineers and IT professionals with advanced degrees earn significantly more than those with only a bachelor's, particularly in national security roles. Of course, industry certifications and specialization further contribute to enhanced compensation packages.
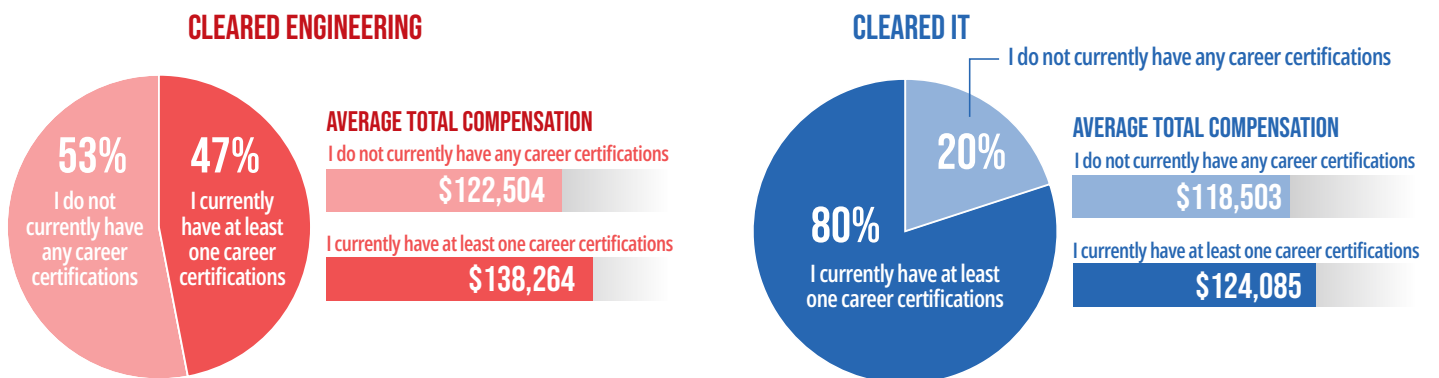
| | CLEARED ENGINEERING | | | CLEARED IT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % OF RESPONDENTS | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | | | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS |
| 3% | $92,536 | High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) | | $93,228 | 3% |
| 11% | $104,443 | Some college credit, no degree | | $106,265 | 15% |
| 6% | $108,811 | Trade/technical/vocational training | | $104,700 | 3% |
| 8% | $103,634 | Associate degree | | $103,100 | 10% |
| 39% | $124,931 | Bachelor's degree | | $123,909 | 41% |
| 26% | $153,703 | Master's degree | | $146,611 | 23% |
| 1% | $181,500 | Professional degree | | $140,150 | 0% |
| 4% | $180,200 | Doctorate degree | | $153,841 | 1% |
| 1% | $144,562 | I prefer not to answer | | $130,951 | 2% |

> Offering large tuition reimbursement amounts might increase internal overhead numbers, but it's also a key retention strategy. Employees will want to stick around longer because they know that their employer is willing to invest in their people. And if you want them to stay longer than the payoff period, increase their compensation in the year following their diploma. If you don't, another company will.

## Certifications

In the IT and engineering sectors, specific certifications are indispensable for providing support to the DoD. Yet, acquiring these certifications entails a significant commitment of time and financial resources. A certification may only increase earning potential by less than $10,000 for cleared IT professionals; however, it is the industry norm to have them if you want to stay employed in the field for long, with 80% reporting at least one certification - a major difference from engineering professionals.

### CLEARED ENGINEERING

53% I do not currently have any career certifications

47% I currently have at least one career certifications

AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION
I do not currently have any career certifications
$122,504

I currently have at least one career certifications
$138,264

### CLEARED IT

20% I do not currently have any career certifications

80% I currently have at least one career certifications

AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION
I do not currently have any career certifications
$118,503

I currently have at least one career certifications
$124,085

## The Earning Potential for the Triple Threat: Experience, Education and Certifications

In IT and engineering, the compensation numbers vary depending on role; however, experience, education, and certifications all factor into total compensation. It can be confusing to know whether it's worth it to go for more education or get a certification. Bottom line? Adding either one will increase compensation.

IT and engineering respondents with a bachelor's degree or less, no certifications, and under 10+ years of experience reported an average total compensation of $95,426. However, just adding experience, more education, or a certification dramatically changed the average total compensation. Shifting to 10+ years of experience alone bumped compensation by over $35,000. Add either a graduate degree or a certification, and average total compensation bumped up by a little under $10,000. But put all three together? Average total compensation is now over $160,000, jumping up over $60,000 in 10 years or less by adding experience, education, and at least on certification. In IT and engineering, compensation potential multiplies with adding in each factor.

**Triple Threat: $162,449**

**Double Threat: $140,128**
10+ years of experience + 1

**Starting Out: $95,426**
Less than 10+ years of experience

## Working for the federal government in IT and Engineering

For all cleared respondents, 16% reported working as a government employer, earning $110,071 in average total compensation. And 71% reported supporting a contractor, with an average total compensation of $118,729. Less than $8,000 separated reported compensation.
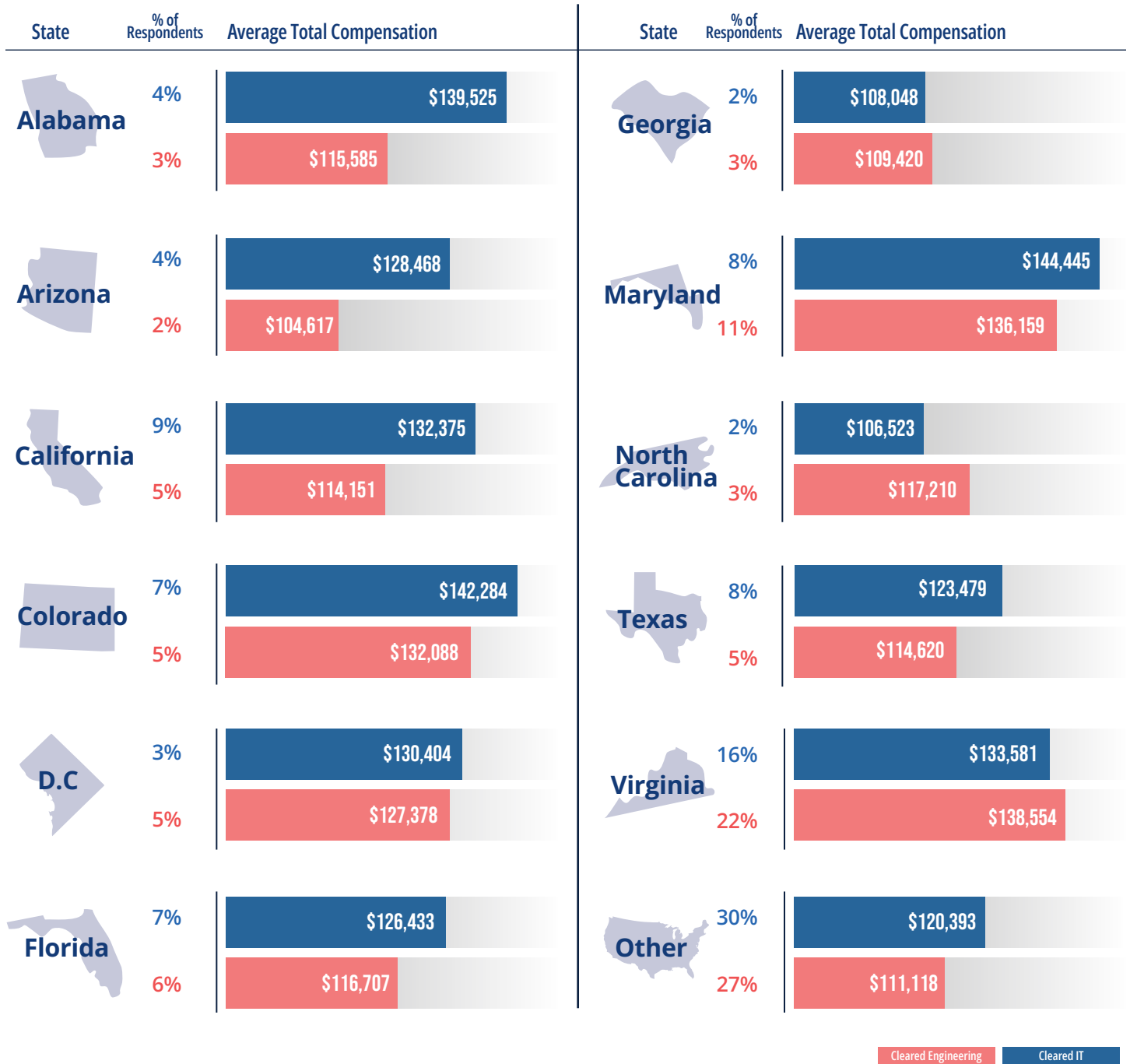
Despite the federal government's push for more cyber, more STEM, and more tech professionals, the majority of respondents in IT and engineering choose to support a government contractor, opposed to choosing the civilian life. Respondents working directly for the federal government report compensation only slightly above the rest of the federal workforce. However, respondents working for a contractor report compensation $10-20,000 higher than IT and engineering federal employees. While some agencies have battled back against pay structures in order to attract and retain tech talent, it takes time for changes to move throughout the federal government.

| CLEARED ENGINEERING | | | CLEARED IT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % OF RESPONDENTS | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS |
| 12% | $111,122 | Government Employee | $114,590 | 10% |
| 75% | $134,540 | Government Contractor | $125,233 | 80% |
| 3% | $169,583 | Independent Consultant | $148,035 | 2% |
| 1% | $114,800 | Private Business Owner (not a consultant) | $109,568 | 1% |

# Top States for Cleared IT and Engineering

Regional disparities in compensation paint an intriguing picture. Maryland emerges as a standout with engineers earning an impressive average total compensation of $144,445, closely followed by Colorado at $142,284. Meanwhile, in the IT domain, Virginia commands attention with an average total compensation of $138,554. While California boasts a robust tech scene, engineers earn $132,375 on average, slightly below other top-earning states.

These figures not only highlight the geographical nuances in compensation but also underscore the diverse opportunities and economic landscapes across different regions within the engineering and IT sectors. While IT professionals have higher concentrations in Maryland and Virginia, engineers are a little more spread out throughout the country.

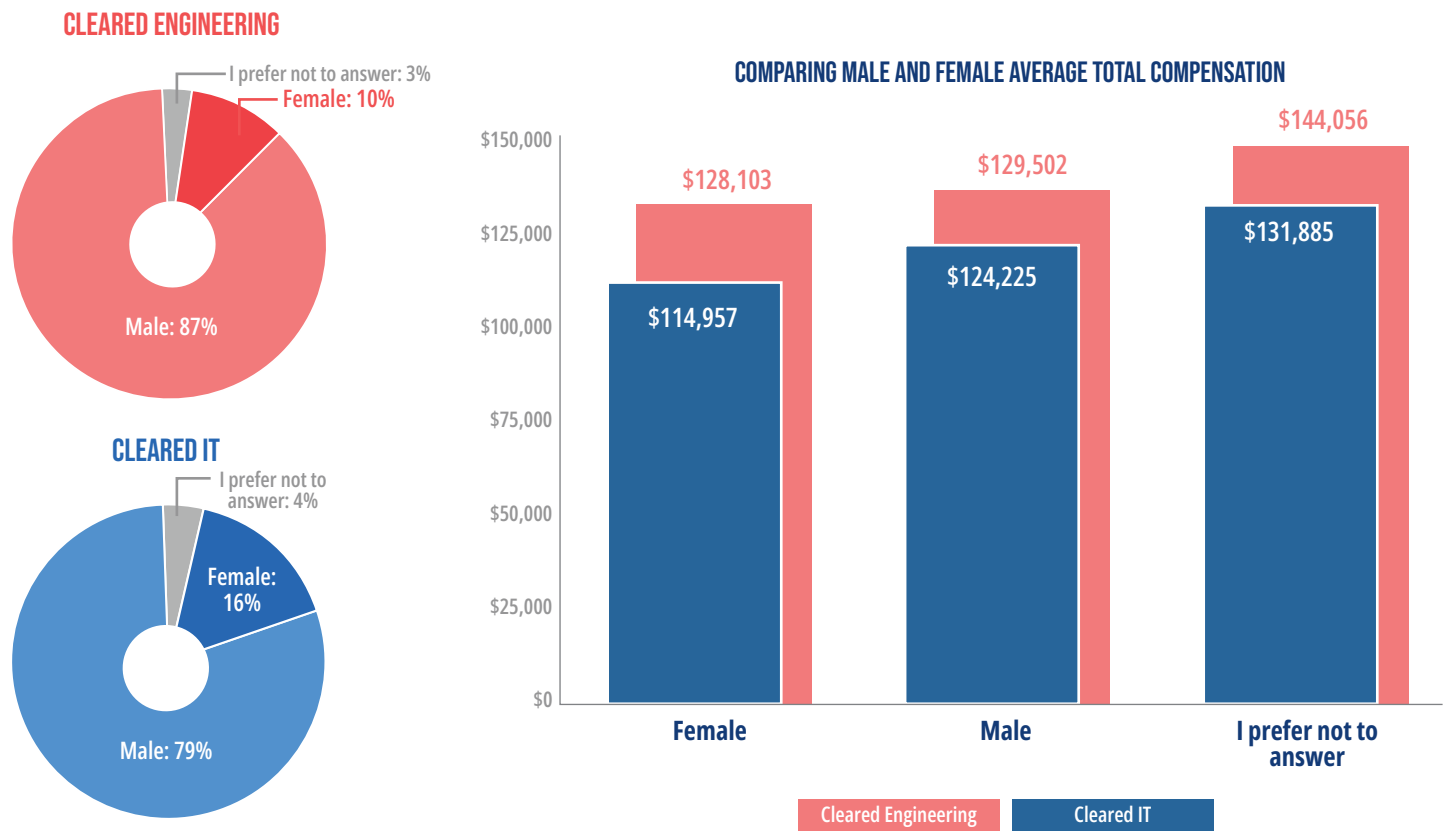| State | % of Respondents | Average Total Compensation | State | % of Respondents | Average Total Compensation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alabama** | 4% | $139,525 (Cleared IT) | **Georgia** | 2% | $108,048 (Cleared IT) |
| | 3% | $115,585 (Cleared Engineering) | | 3% | $109,420 (Cleared Engineering) |
| **Arizona** | 4% | $128,468 (Cleared IT) | **Maryland** | 8% | $144,445 (Cleared IT) |
| | 2% | $104,617 (Cleared Engineering) | | 11% | $136,159 (Cleared Engineering) |
| **California** | 9% | $132,375 (Cleared IT) | **North Carolina** | 2% | $106,523 (Cleared IT) |
| | 5% | $114,151 (Cleared Engineering) | | 3% | $117,210 (Cleared Engineering) |
| **Colorado** | 7% | $142,284 (Cleared IT) | **Texas** | 8% | $123,479 (Cleared IT) |
| | 5% | $132,088 (Cleared Engineering) | | 5% | $114,620 (Cleared Engineering) |
| **D.C** | 3% | $130,404 (Cleared IT) | **Virginia** | 16% | $133,581 (Cleared IT) |
| | 5% | $127,378 (Cleared Engineering) | | 22% | $138,554 (Cleared Engineering) |
| **Florida** | 7% | $126,433 (Cleared IT) | **Other** | 30% | $120,393 (Cleared IT) |
| | 6% | $116,707 (Cleared Engineering) | | 27% | $111,118 (Cleared Engineering) |

Cleared Engineering   Cleared IT

## Demographics

Age demographics are telling. While millennials dominate the cleared engineering landscape at 41% of respondents, Generation Z engineers make up a notable 11%, showcasing a higher trend of young talent. Despite their smaller share, Boomers stand out with the highest average total compensation at $158,293. Similarly, in the cleared IT domain, Millennials make up a significant 46% of respondents, but Generation Z also shows a notable presence at 9%. Despite this influx of younger talent, Generation X and Boomers continue to command competitive compensation.

| CLEARED ENGINEERING | | | CLEARED IT | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| % OF RESPONDENTS | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | | AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION | % OF RESPONDENTS |
| 11% | $90,199 | Generation Z (born 1997-2012) | $90,572 | 9% |
| 41% | $120,990 | Millennials (born 1981-96) | $115,208 | 46% |
| 30% | $139,309 | Generation X (born 1965-80) | $136,530 | 33% |
| 17% | $158,293 | Boomers (born 1946-64) | $137,229 | 11% |
| >1% | N/A | Silent (born 1945 or earlier) | N/A | >1% |

Cleared respondents were 23% female, 73% male, and the remaining 4% either provide their own definition or prefer not to answer. However, the demographics shift for both cleared engineering and IT professionals, with women making up even less of the population. Females make up 10% of engineering respondents and 16% of IT respondents.

### CLEARED ENGINEERING



I prefer not to answer: 3%
Female: 10%
Male: 87%

### CLEARED IT



I prefer not to answer: 4%
Female: 16%
Male: 79%

### COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION



Female: $128,103 (Cleared Engineering), $114,957 (Cleared IT)
Male: $129,502 (Cleared Engineering), $124,225 (Cleared IT)
I prefer not to answer: $144,056 (Cleared Engineering), $131,885 (Cleared IT)

Cleared Engineering — Cleared IT

## Cleared Tech Job Market

The tech job market in 2024 continues to face challenges despite a slowing pace of layoffs. With thousands of tech workers losing their jobs, the industry grapples with belt-tightening measures, even impacting tech giants. Additionally, smaller tech firms are under pressure to prioritize profitability amidst a tightening venture capital market. As the industry navigates these shifts, adaptability and skill development, especially in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, remain essential for job market resilience and success.

But there are glimmers of hope for tech job seekers - especially in national security. Both cleared engineers and IT professionals can find a variety of jobs that offer not only higher compensation but also job stability.

### About Us

For more than 20 years, ClearanceJobs has connected professionals with federal government security clearance and employers to fill the jobs that safeguard our nation. Our career community allows members to connect, engage, and explore opportunities to find a "best fit" match.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1,660,104**<br>Registered Candidates | **117,579**<br>Monthly Connections | **54,243**<br>Monthly Job Listings | **2,091**<br>Hiring Companies |
| **396,004**<br>Searchable Profiles | **17,059**<br>New Monthly Candidates | **9,465**<br>Active Recruiters | **95**<br>Networking Groups |

**Data Sources**

The 2024 Security Clearance Jobs Salary Survey was administered online by ClearanceJobs between August 16, 2023 and December 31, 2023. Security-cleared respondents were invited to participate in the survey through notifications on ClearanceJobs home page and various communications and links.

This report focuses on both the findings for the 2023 survey and the comparison of those results for a nearly identical survey conducted one year prior (2022 compensation information).

In 2023, there were 33,045 survey participants. After excluding survey respondents not having security clearance, those who were unemployed, active-duty military, students, those whose compensation was below $18,000 or above $350,000, and finally incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, there remained 14,251 usable responses in 2023 and 22,368 usable responses in 2022.

By definition, all respondents included in this analysis have an active or current security clearance issued by the U.S. federal government, are not active-duty military, are employed, and reported compensation figures between $18,000 and $350,000. Note that in reports completed prior to 2020, active-duty military were included in the analysis universe. Dollars are as reported in the survey year, and not adjusted for inflation. Also, prior to 2022, the high-end cap for compensation figures was $300,000. That was increased to $350,000 in 2022. This had a negligible impact on overall compensation figures for 2022 (no impact on median, increased mean total compensation by $546 and increased mean base pay by $131).

ClearanceJobs studied all engineering and IT respondents from the 2024 Security Clearance Jobs Salary Survey for this report. There were 1,231 usable responses from cleared engineers and 4,651 usable responses from cleared IT professionals.

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