



ClearanceJobs™

**THE 2025**

**SECURITY CLEARANCE**

**COMPENSATION REPORT**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>03</b>	Letter from the President
<b>04</b>	Overview: (Key Changes This Past Year)
<b>05</b>	Compensation by Clearance Level
<b>05</b>	Compensation by Polygraph Level
<b>06</b>	Compensation by Occupation
<b>07</b>	Compensation by Location
<b>08</b>	Taking your Clearance OCONUS
<b>09</b>	Climbing the Compensation Ladder in National Security
<b>10</b>	Education, Certifications, and the Cleared Paycheck
<b>11</b>	Compensation by Education
<b>12</b>	Veterans in National Security: Closing the Compensation Gap
<b>13</b>	Compensation by Role in National Security
<b>14</b>	Compensation by Government Agency
<b>15</b>	Compensation and Satisfaction
<b>16</b>	Job and Salary Satisfaction
<b>17</b>	What Would Increase Employee Happiness?
<b>18</b>	Likelihood of Changing Jobs
<b>19</b>	Likelihood of Leaving the Cleared Industry
<b>20</b>	Compensation and Demographics
<b>21</b>	Cleared Compensation in 2025: A Workforce in Flux
<b>22</b>	Appendix A
<b>23</b>	Appendix B

## A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT, ALEX SCHILDT

The national security workforce is at an inflection point. Compensation is rising, but so are challenges. Hiring freezes, shifting federal priorities, and increased job uncertainty mean both candidates and employers need to be more strategic than ever. Whether you're seeking your next cleared opportunity or looking to retain top talent, the decisions made in 2025 will shape the workforce for years to come.

For candidates, the message is clear: your clearance is your currency, and it's a career advantage to keep in an uncertain federal job market. The demand for skilled professionals remains high, with 68% of cleared workers receiving raises this year and nearly one in seven seeing salary increases of 10% or more. But pay isn't the only factor—career growth, flexibility, and stability are also important. Employers who recognize that and offer competitive salaries, career development opportunities, and work-life balance will be the ones who win the battle for the best talent.

For employers, retention is your biggest challenge—and opportunity. Over 13% of professionals switched employers this year for better pay, and we know that cleared candidates are constantly weighing their options. If you're not

offering competitive compensation and clear career pathways, someone else will. In 2025, recruiting and retention aren't just about filling roles—they're about investing in your workforce.

ClearanceJobs has long served as a trusted advisor to national security employers, providing market insights, hiring trends, and policy expertise to help organizations navigate today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. We don't just facilitate job searches—we help build long-term careers and stronger national security teams. Whether you're seeking your next cleared role or striving to retain the best and brightest, the 2025 Compensation Report once again offers a critical resource to help navigate an evolving national security community. Because in an industry where security and trust are everything, one thing remains certain: your clearance keeps you in demand, and ClearanceJobs keeps you ahead of the curve.



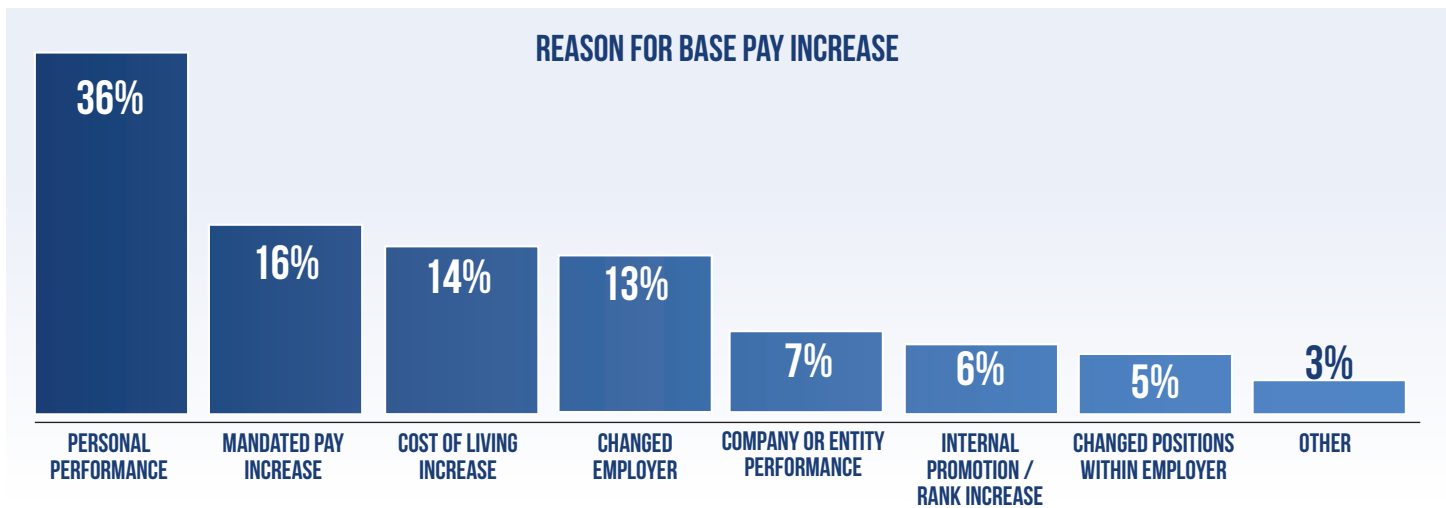
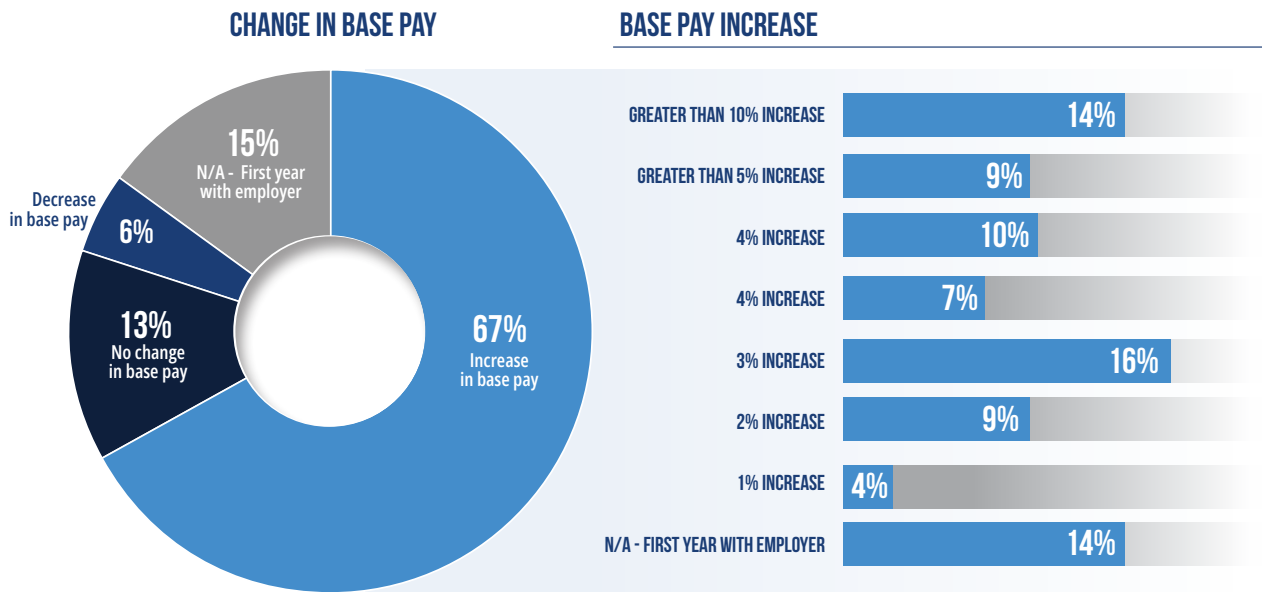
**Alex Schildt**  
*ClearanceJobs, President*



# OVERVIEW: KEY CHANGES THIS PAST YEAR

The national security landscape may be shifting, but one thing is holding steady: compensation for cleared professionals. Despite policy shake-ups and contract fluctuations, the demand for security-cleared talent isn't slowing down—and neither are the paychecks. With an average salary increase of over \$4,000, the cleared workforce is proving its value, and employers are stepping up to keep top talent. In a field where stability has been shaken up, one thing is clear: national security careers don't just offer mission-driven work—they deliver solid pay, even in uncertain times.

**Cleared candidates had an almost 4% boost in compensation in 2025, reaching a new high at \$119,131. Once again, over two-thirds of the cleared workforce got an increase in their base pay.**



While cost-of-living adjustments and mandated increases played a role, a notable 13% of professionals increased their earnings by switching employers—proof that in this competitive market, mobility pays. And for those who stayed put, promotions and internal movement still provided financial rewards. Top talent isn't just getting small raises – they're earning big ones, with 14% of cleared professionals seeing a pay bump of 10% or more. That's a strong signal for employers: if you want to keep your best people, keeping compensation competitive isn't just a perk—it's a necessity.

## COMPENSATION BY CLEARANCE LEVEL

Cleared compensation remains strong, but shifting federal workforce dynamics could shake up the job market in unexpected ways. This year’s data confirms the usual trend—higher clearance levels still bring bigger paychecks. Jumping from a Secret clearance to a Top Secret/SCI means nearly \$32,000 more in total compensation, while those with Intelligence Community (IC) clearances continue to command the highest pay, averaging \$161,878. But here’s the twist: with federal hiring freezes in play and agencies like the CIA offering buyouts to shrink their workforce, we may see an influx of high-level cleared professionals hitting the job market. That could create new opportunities for private-sector employers eager to scoop up top talent, but it also raises questions about long-term retention strategies. In a job market where security-cleared professionals are always in demand, the key for employers remains the same—pay up, or risk losing out.

CLEARANCE	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP. CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
Dept of Defense Confidential	\$90,834	8%	1%
Dept of Defense Secret	\$100,296	3%	34%
Dept of Defense Top Secret	\$124,084	2%	12%
Dept of Defense Top Secret/SCI	\$132,177	4%	33%
Dept of Energy (Q or L)	\$128,546	7%	2%
Intelligence Agency (CIA, FBI, NSA)	\$161,878	5%	6%
Dept of Homeland Security	\$115,984	2%	2%
Public Trust	\$98,531	6%	5%
Other Government Agency	\$118,070	7%	5%

## COMPENSATION BY POLYGRAPH LEVEL

A polygraph isn’t required for every security clearance, but those who obtain one tend to see a significant boost in compensation. Individuals with a Lifestyle or Full Scope polygraph report an average total compensation of \$141,299—nearly \$30,000 more than those without a current polygraph. Counterintelligence (CI) polygraph holders also see a pay premium, with an average compensation of \$139,279. Notably, the percentage of respondents with a CI polygraph increased by 1% this year, reflecting a steady demand for this level of vetting. Overall, compensation rose across the board, with CI polygraph holders seeing the highest year-over-year increase at 5%.

### Lifestyle or Full Scope Polygraph

10% of Respondents | 3% Compensation Change from 2023

**\$141,299**

### CI Polygraph

15% of Respondents | 5% Compensation Change from 2023

**\$139,279**

### Don't have a current Polygraph

75% of Respondents | 4% Compensation Change from 2023

**\$112,314**

## COMPENSATION BY OCCUPATION

Compensation matters—after all, you’re not just working for fun. While career enjoyment is important, the paycheck plays a huge role in job satisfaction. And as expected, some fields pay significantly more than others. Engineering and IT continue to lead the pack, with salaries outpacing all other job categories at every career stage.

For those just starting out, engineering offers the highest entry-level salaries at \$82,855, while IT professionals aren’t far behind at \$73,957. But the real payoff comes with experience—engineers at the management level rake in an impressive \$177,608, while IT leaders earn \$167,727.

Meanwhile, intelligence professionals see steady salary growth, with senior-level roles averaging \$129,474 and management positions hitting \$160,404.

Interestingly, even traditionally lower-paying sectors see a big jump at the top. Emergency, healthcare, and science roles start at a modest \$57,987, but senior professionals can earn over \$109,030, and management salaries soar past \$154,814. Whether you’re just beginning or aiming for the top, the numbers make one thing clear—experience and specialization pay off.

OCCUPATION	ENTRY LEVEL (less than 2 yrs experience)	EARLY CAREER (2+ yrs experience)	MID LEVEL CAREER (5+ yrs experience)	SENIOR LEVEL CAREER (10+ yrs experience)	MANAGEMENT (Manager/Director of Staff)
Business / Finance / Management	\$59,208	\$79,476	\$94,421	\$126,640	\$154,005
Engineering	\$82,855	\$94,545	\$114,160	\$146,579	\$177,608
Emergency / Healthcare and Science	\$57,987	\$73,989	\$86,743	\$109,030	\$154,814
Intelligence / Linguist	\$76,477	\$82,855	\$106,115	\$129,474	\$160,404
IT	\$73,957	\$89,312	\$112,951	\$143,613	\$167,727
Government Contractor / Military and Law Enforcement / Security	\$62,168	\$75,506	\$86,738	\$113,023	\$135,324
All Other Positions	\$66,353	\$78,201	\$90,474	\$113,999	\$139,127

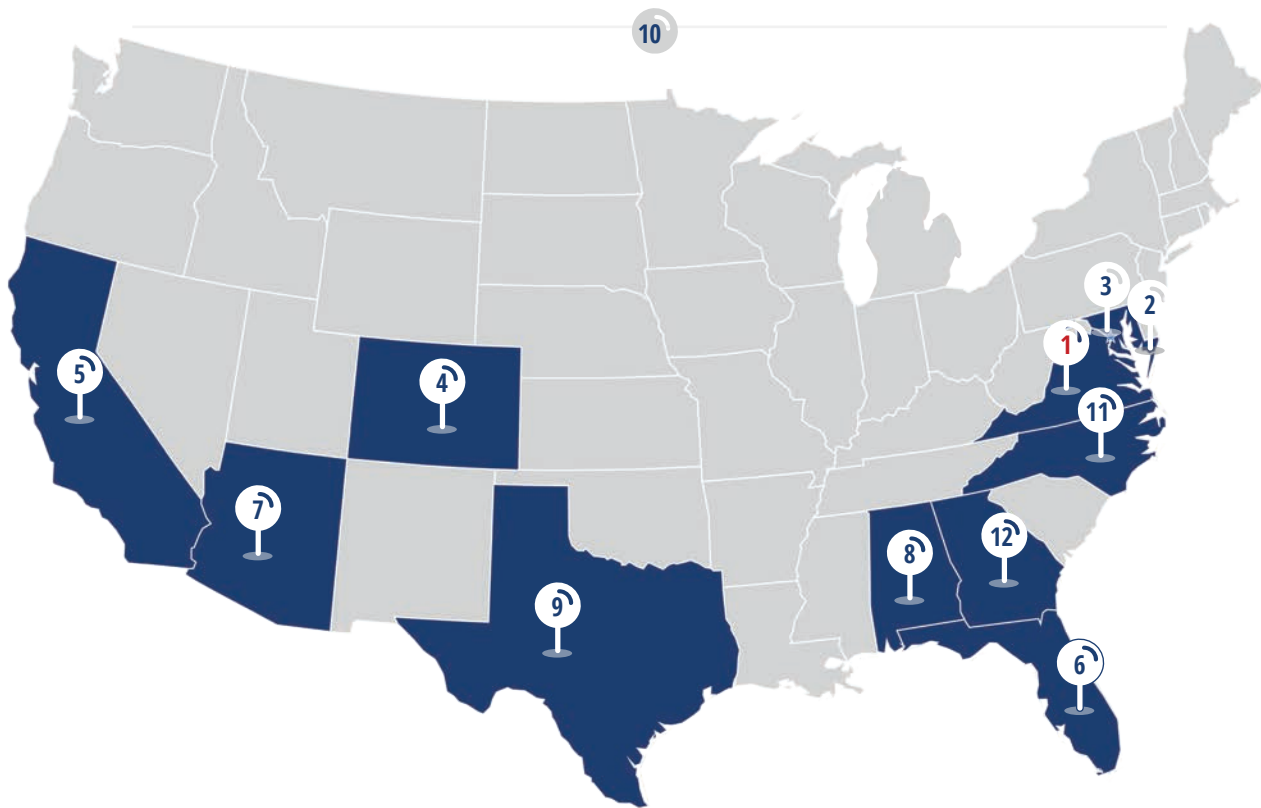
## COMPENSATION BY LOCATION

Some states continue to dominate when it comes to both presence and pay. Employers in high-demand regions are shelling out six-figure salaries to stay competitive, with Virginia once again leading the pack—holding onto its top-paying spot for the fifth consecutive year with an average total compensation of \$131,612.

While Virginia, Maryland (\$130,878), and Colorado (\$126,936) remain top-paying states, California also stands out with \$119,775 in average total compensation. Texas and Florida, both major defense hubs, offer strong salaries as well, hovering just above \$110K.

Notably, almost every state in the top 10 has an average total compensation above \$110,000, showing that cleared professionals are earning well no matter where they land. Georgia, which had previously lagged behind, now officially joins the six-figure club at \$101,840, reflecting its increasing role in the cleared job market. With salaries consistently strong across these regions, cleared candidates have more flexibility than ever when choosing where to live and work.

### TOP STATES FOR CLEARANCE HOLDERS



RANKING	STATE	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
1	Virginia	\$131,612	20%
2	Maryland	\$130,878	10%
3	D.C.	\$127,875	7%
4	Colorado	\$126,936	4%
5	California	\$119,775	7%
6	Florida	\$112,690	7%

RANKING	STATE	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
7	Arizona	\$111,253	2%
8	Alabama	\$110,361	3%
9	Texas	\$110,181	8%
10	Other	\$109,693	28%
11	North Carolina	\$102,876	2%
12	Georgia	\$101,840	3%

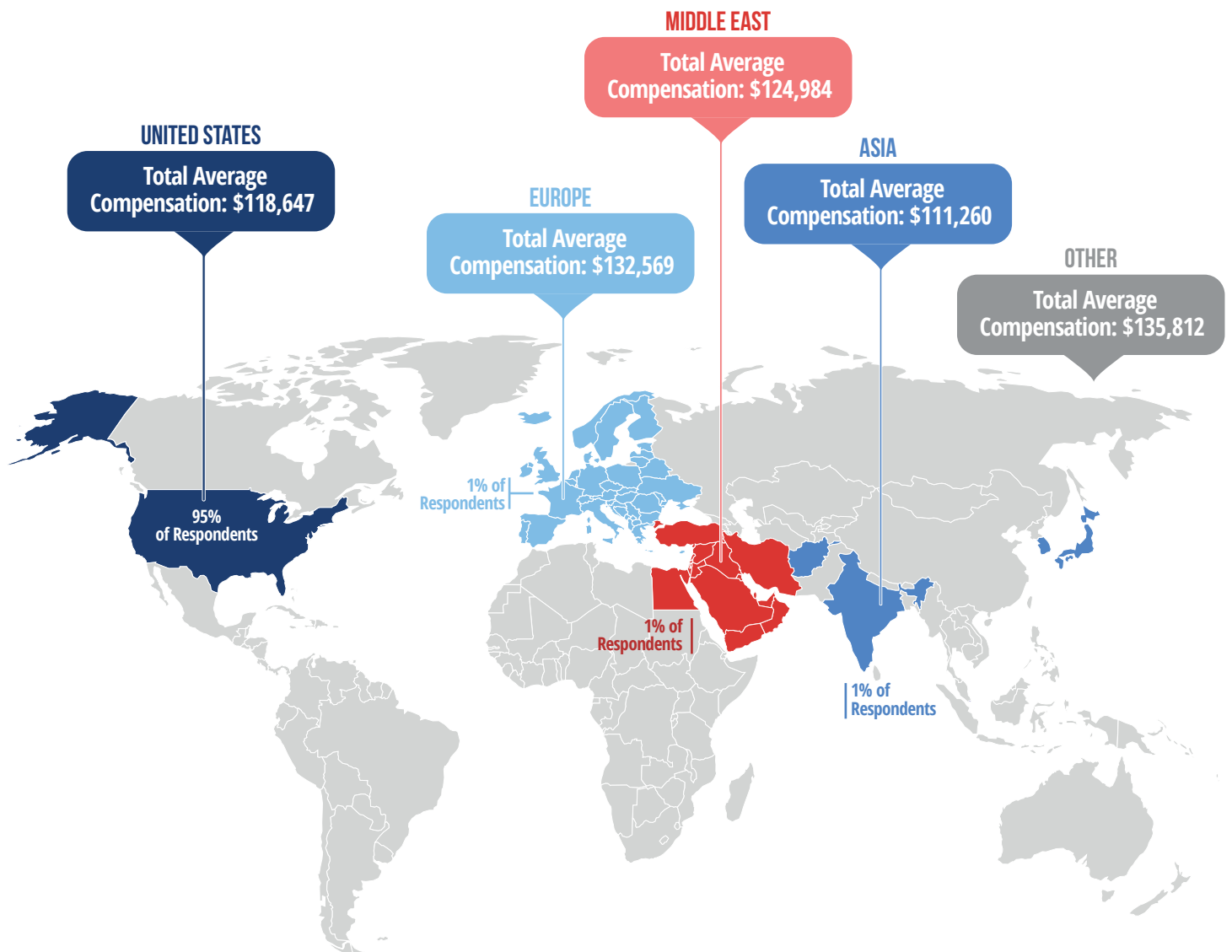
# TAKING YOUR CLEARANCE OCONUS

While stateside opportunities dominate the cleared job market, overseas positions still offer competitive pay—especially in strategic locations tied to national security. Though OCONUS opportunities aren't as abundant as they once were, military bases and defense operations continue to create demand for cleared professionals abroad.

Cleared workers in the U.S. make up the vast majority of the workforce, earning an average of \$118,647, but those willing to take their skills overseas often see a pay boost. Europe offers one of the highest average total compensations at \$132,569, while positions in the Middle East also remain lucrative at \$124,984. Interestingly, "Other" overseas locations—likely including specialized or high-risk assignments—top the charts at \$135,812, proving that unique deployments can come with big paychecks.

With just 5% of cleared respondents working outside the U.S., OCONUS roles may be more selective, but for those seeking adventure, international experience, and a salary bump, heading abroad could be well worth it.

## OCONUS TOTAL AVERAGE COMPENSATION





# CLIMBING THE COMPENSATION LADDER IN NATIONAL SECURITY

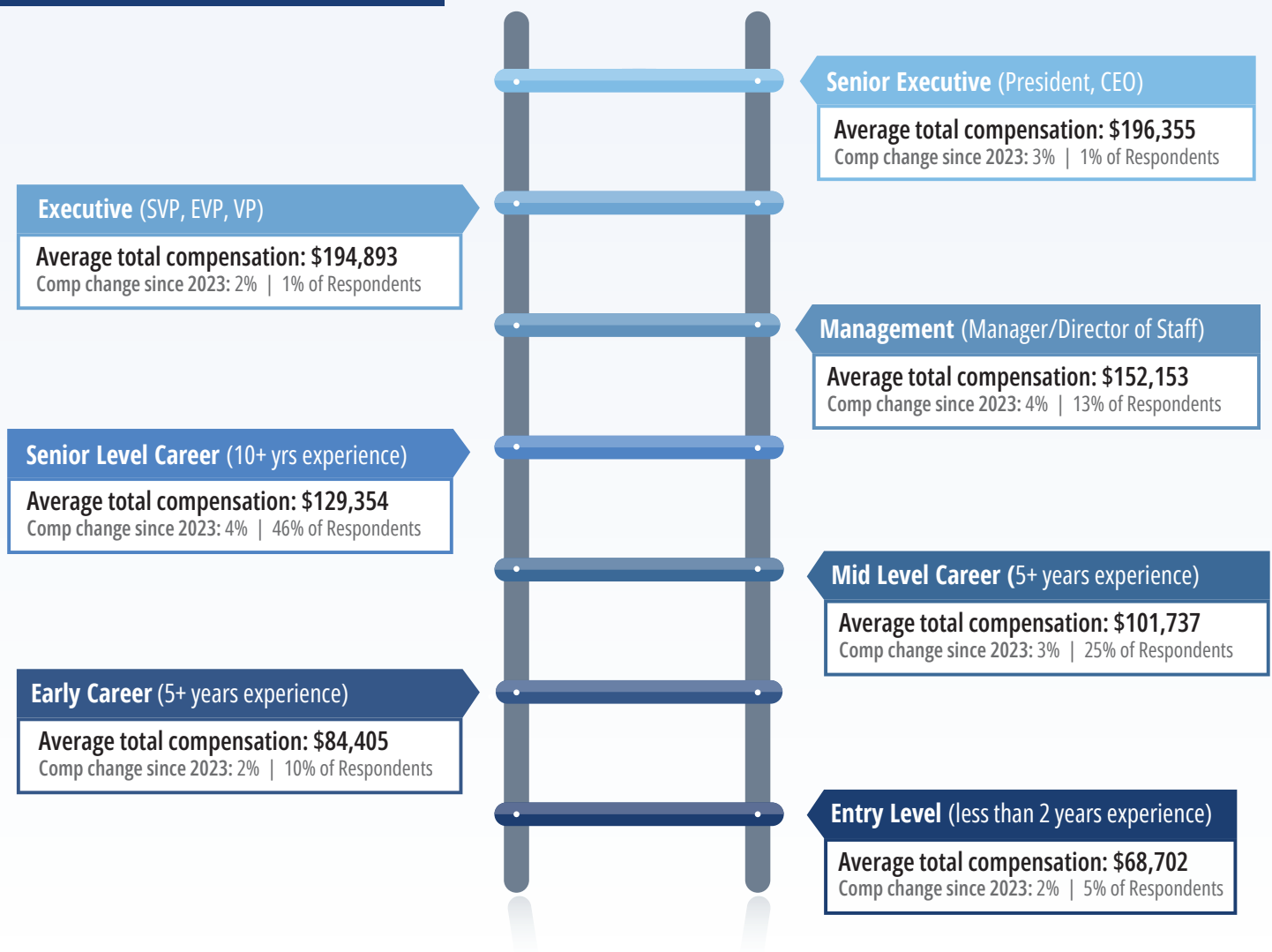
Retaining cleared talent is a constant challenge—especially for mid-career professionals, who often weigh the benefits of job hopping against the stability of staying in the cleared sector. But sticking with it pays off. Mid-career professionals (5+ years of experience) officially crossed the six-figure threshold this year, reporting an average total compensation of \$101,737—a 3% increase from last year.

The biggest salary jumps come with experience. Senior-level professionals (10+ years) earn an average of \$129,354, a \$25,000 boost over their mid-career counterparts. Meanwhile, management-level employees pull in \$152,153,

and executives see even bigger paychecks, with senior executives (CEOs and presidents) hitting nearly \$196,355—a 6% increase from 2023.

The numbers make it clear: patience pays off in national security careers. While compensation growth starts slow, it accelerates significantly in later career stages. Employers looking to retain top talent should consider investing in early-career salaries—or risk losing employees before they reach their peak earning potential.

## TOTAL COMPENSATION BY CAREER LEVEL





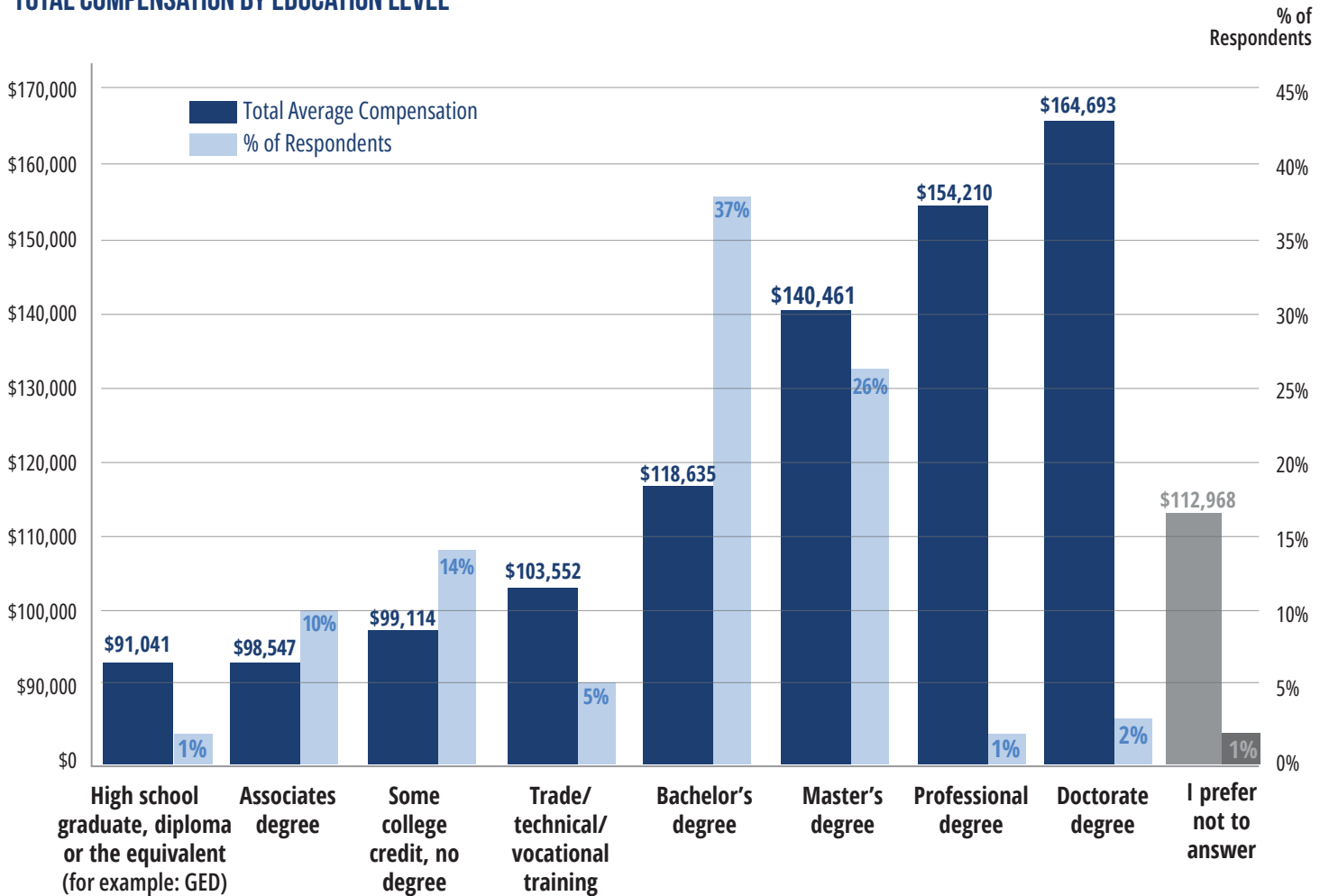
## EDUCATION, CERTIFICATIONS, AND THE CLEARED PAYCHECK

Degrees and certifications can certainly boost earning potential, but the cleared industry remains one of the few fields where professionals at all education levels can secure high-paying jobs. A college degree isn't the only pathway to six-figure salaries—those with vocational or technical training report an average total compensation of \$103,552, while high school graduates still pull in a solid \$91,041.

That said, more education does equate to bigger paychecks. Bachelor's degree holders average \$118,635 but adding a master's degree increases that by over \$20,000, bringing total compensation to \$140,461. For those who go even further, a doctorate can push salaries to \$164,693.

Certifications are another surefire way to earn more. Clearance holders with at least one professional certification report an average salary of \$125,371—a \$16,000 bump over those without certifications. As the federal government continues shifting toward a skills-based hiring model, certifications will only grow in importance. Regardless of educational background, cleared professionals have a variety of paths to high-paying, stable careers.

## TOTAL COMPENSATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL



## TOTAL COMPENSATION BY CERTIFICATE



### AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION BY RESPONDENTS





## VETERANS IN NATIONAL SECURITY: CLOSING THE COMPENSATION GAP

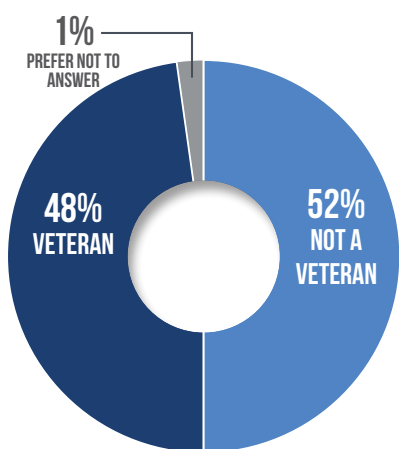
The presence of veterans in the cleared workforce is slowly shrinking. In 2023, just 47% of respondents reported military service—a 5% drop from previous years. While veterans have access to valuable resources for transitioning into national security roles, the path to landing a contract job isn't always easy.

One concerning trend is the growing pay gap between veterans and their civilian counterparts. In 2020, the difference was just \$2,000, but in 2023, non-veterans out-earned veterans by nearly \$8,000—with average total compensation at \$121,950 compared to \$115,980 for veterans. However, factors like location, degrees, certifications, and government agency affiliations can significantly impact earnings, helping to close the gap for those who strategically build their post-military careers.

Among the service branches, Coast Guard veterans reported the highest earnings at \$124,601, while Space Force veterans had an even higher average at \$129,286—though the sample size was too small for broader analysis. Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy veterans all reported salaries above \$115,000, while Army veterans averaged \$114,578. Meanwhile, National Guard members reported the lowest compensation at \$103,191.

For veterans making the transition, the key to maximizing compensation lies in leveraging education, certifications, and high-paying locations—factors that can help level the playing field in the competitive cleared job market.

### ARE YOU A MILITARY VETERAN?



### AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION



### IN WHICH BRANCH DID YOU SERVE?

MILITARY BRANCH	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
Air Force	\$119,564	25%
Army	\$114,578	37%
Coast Guard	\$124,601	1%
Marine Corps	\$118,064	11%
Navy	\$115,632	20%
National Guard	\$103,191	5%
Space Force	\$129,286	>1%

## COMPENSATION BY ROLE IN NATIONAL SECURITY: STABILITY NOW, BUT WHAT'S NEXT?

While the longstanding pay gap between government employees and contractors remains, it has narrowed to just under \$8,000. Government employees saw a notable 5% increase in compensation this past year, reaching an average salary of \$115,348, thanks in part to the mandated federal pay raise in early 2023. Contractors, who still make up the bulk of the cleared workforce (71%), experienced a 3% bump, bringing their average earnings to \$122,249.

Independent consultants continue to command the highest salaries, averaging \$141,702, though their compensation increase slowed to just 1% in 2023. Meanwhile, those who left the cleared community altogether saw their earnings dip, with non-cleared professionals averaging just \$91,794—a clear reminder that maintaining a security clearance can be a key factor in long-term earning potential.

Looking ahead, 2024 could be a year of disruption for the federal workforce. With a change in administration, potential shifts in government priorities, hiring freezes, and budget realignments could shake up the cleared job market. While national security jobs have remained relatively stable despite economic fluctuations, the coming year may bring new uncertainties for government employees and contractors alike. Whether agencies continue boosting salaries to stay competitive or if policy shifts cause turbulence, one thing is clear—compensation trends in national security could look very different this time next year.

EMPLOYER	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
Government Employee	\$115,348	5%	17%
Government Contractor	\$122,249	3%	71%
Independent Consultant	\$141,702	1%	3%
Private Business Owner (not a consultant)	\$111,159	3%	1%
I am employed, but no longer work in a cleared position	\$91,794	5%	8%










# COMPENSATION BY GOVERNMENT AGENCY

Every major government agency saw a compensation boost in 2023, but NSA and CIA led the pack with the biggest jumps. CIA salaries climbed to an average of \$159,350, while NSA employees earned \$142,089. Both agencies have ramped up recruitment and retention efforts in recent years.

However, 2025 could bring major disruptions to the CIA's workforce. A recent agency-wide buyout initiative has raised concerns about both national security and institutional knowledge loss. CIA employees at all levels have been offered buyouts equivalent to eight months' salary and benefits as part of a broader realignment under Director John Ratcliffe.

Meanwhile, the Department of Defense (DoD) remains the largest employer of cleared professionals, accounting for 59% of respondents. DoD salaries increased by 3%, bringing total compensation to \$118,752. While that's a solid jump, it's lower than the 7% increase seen in 2022—possibly a sign of shifting budget priorities. The Department of Justice (DOJ) saw an impressive 11% salary bump, averaging \$127,093, as agencies like the FBI, ATF, and DEA continue to compete for top talent.

With a new administration and shifting national security priorities, the stability of compensation trends in 2025 remains uncertain. The CIA's buyouts and hiring freezes may impact recruitment and retention, while broader federal budget shifts could lead to further disruptions across agencies. While 2023 was a strong year for cleared salaries, the next 12 months could reshape the landscape for national security professionals in ways we have yet to fully understand.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP. CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
 Dept of Defense and all Military Branches	\$118,752	3%	59%
 Dept of Homeland Security	\$117,304	3%	4%
 Dept of Energy	\$126,994	8%	2%
 Dept of State	\$118,647	4%	4%
 Dept of Justice (FBI, ATF, DEA, BOP)	\$127,093	11%	3%
 NSA	\$142,089	1%	3%
 CIA	\$159,350	3%	2%
 Other Government/Intelligence Agency	\$103,918	3%	12%
 N/A – Not Applicable	\$120,376	1%	10%

## COMPENSATION AND SATISFACTION

In the world of defense contracting, job-hopping is common—and sometimes, it pays off. Employees with less tenure at their current company saw smaller salary increases in 2023, while those who have remained for 15+ years saw the biggest compensation bumps. The trend highlights a reality in national security contracting: long-term employees may reap the largest rewards, while newer hires see more modest growth in pay.

Those with less than 1 year at their company reported an average total compensation of \$108,274, reflecting a 2% increase from last year. Employees in the 1 to 2-year range saw slightly higher earnings at \$114,372, with a 3% increase. Those with 3 to 5 years at their employer earned an average of \$122,113, also seeing a 3% increase in compensation. However, for employees in the 6 to 10-year range, pay remained flat, holding steady at \$125,360.

The biggest salary jumps came for long-tenured employees. Those with 11 to 15 years saw an 8% pay increase, earning an average of \$136,907. The 16 to 20-year group experienced the largest bump—a 11% increase—bringing their compensation to \$145,580. Employees who have been with their company for more than 20 years now earn the highest salaries at \$156,123, reflecting a 7% increase.

For defense companies, this data sends a clear message: investing in long-term employees pays off. While recruiting new talent remains a priority, retaining seasoned professionals through competitive raises, promotions, or bonuses is key to avoiding costly turnover. With 2025 poised to bring federal workforce shifts and potential budget realignments, companies should focus on keeping their most experienced employees engaged and well-compensated—before a competitor lures them away.

### TOTAL COMPENSATION BY YEARS WITH CURRENT EMPLOYER

**Less than 1 Year** | Comp change since 2023: 2% | 23% of Respondents

**\$108,274**

**1 to 2 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 3% | 35% of Respondents

**\$114,372**

**3 to 5 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 3% | 22% of Respondents

**\$122,113**

**6 to 10 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 0% | 11% of Respondents

**\$125,360**

**11 to 15 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 8% | 4% of Respondents

**\$136,907**

**16 to 20 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 11% | 3% of Respondents

**\$145,580**

**More than 20 Years** | Comp change since 2023: 7% | 4% of Respondents

**\$156,123**

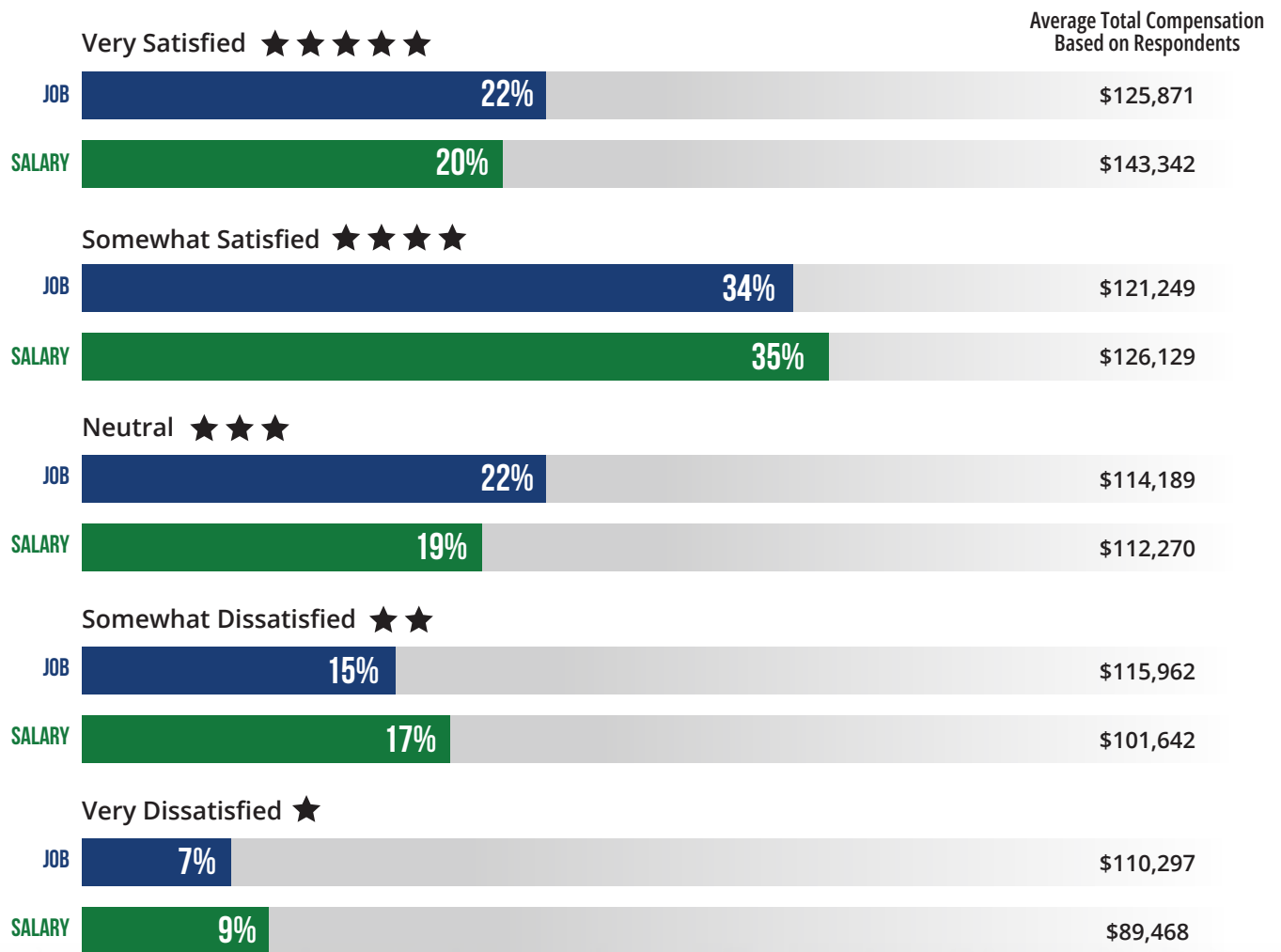
# JOB AND SALARY SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction saw a slight decline in 2024, though overall trends remained relatively stable. Most respondents continue to report neutral or varying levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Salary satisfaction also dipped slightly, with a 1% increase in those who are very dissatisfied and a corresponding 1% drop in the somewhat satisfied category.

Not surprisingly, compensation plays a key role in overall job contentment. Those who are very satisfied with their jobs earn an average of \$125,871, while those who are very dissatisfied make significantly less at \$110,297. A similar trend is evident in salary satisfaction, where those very satisfied with their pay report an average compensation of \$143,342, compared to just \$87,468 for the very dissatisfied.

There is a clear connection between earnings and satisfaction levels—employees earning near or above six figures tend to report higher job and salary satisfaction. In today’s economic climate, with inflation and housing costs continuing to rise, competitive pay remains a crucial factor in workplace contentment.

## LEVELS OF SATISFACTION





## WHAT WOULD INCREASE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS?

When asked what changes would make them happier at work, respondents overwhelmingly pointed to higher compensation, with 67% selecting it as a top factor. This aligns with broader workforce trends, where competitive pay remains a key driver of job satisfaction. Employees who identified higher pay as a priority reported an average total compensation of \$113,346, suggesting that even those earning six figures still seek financial growth.

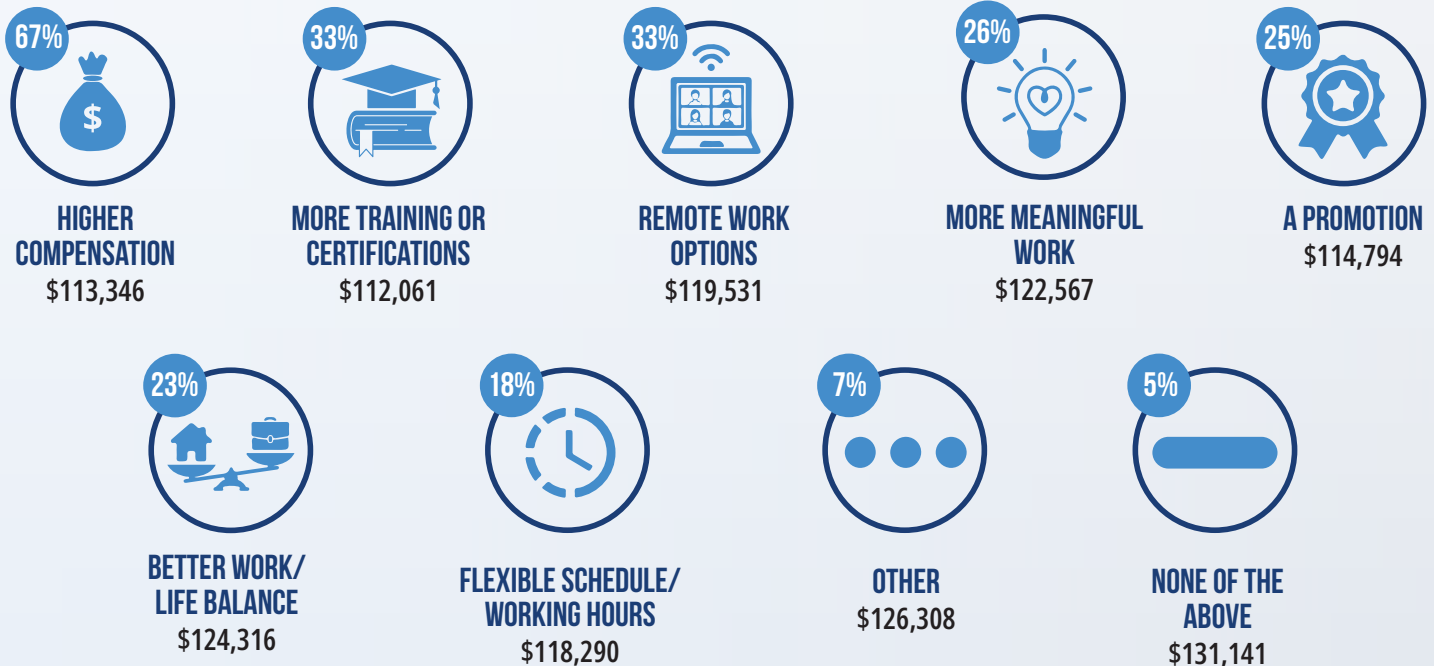
Beyond salary, professional development and workplace flexibility emerged as major themes. 33% of respondents want more training or certifications, while an equal percentage prefer remote work options, reflecting the growing demand for skills advancement and location flexibility. Employees prioritizing remote work earn an average of \$119,531, slightly above those seeking additional training (\$112,061).

Work-life balance and meaningful work also ranked high, with 23% of employees wanting a better work/life balance (earning an average of \$124,316) and 26% seeking more meaningful work (\$122,567). Meanwhile, 18% of respondents highlighted the need for a flexible schedule, reinforcing the shift toward adaptable work arrangements.

Interestingly, those who selected “None of the above” as a preference had the highest reported compensation at \$131,141, suggesting that increased pay and benefits may reduce the demand for additional workplace changes.

Ultimately, the data underscores a clear trend: higher pay, professional growth, and flexibility remain critical to employee happiness. Employers looking to retain top talent should prioritize competitive compensation and opportunities for career advancement while embracing flexible work models.

## WHAT WOULD INCREASE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS?



\*\*Average Total Compensation Based on Respondents

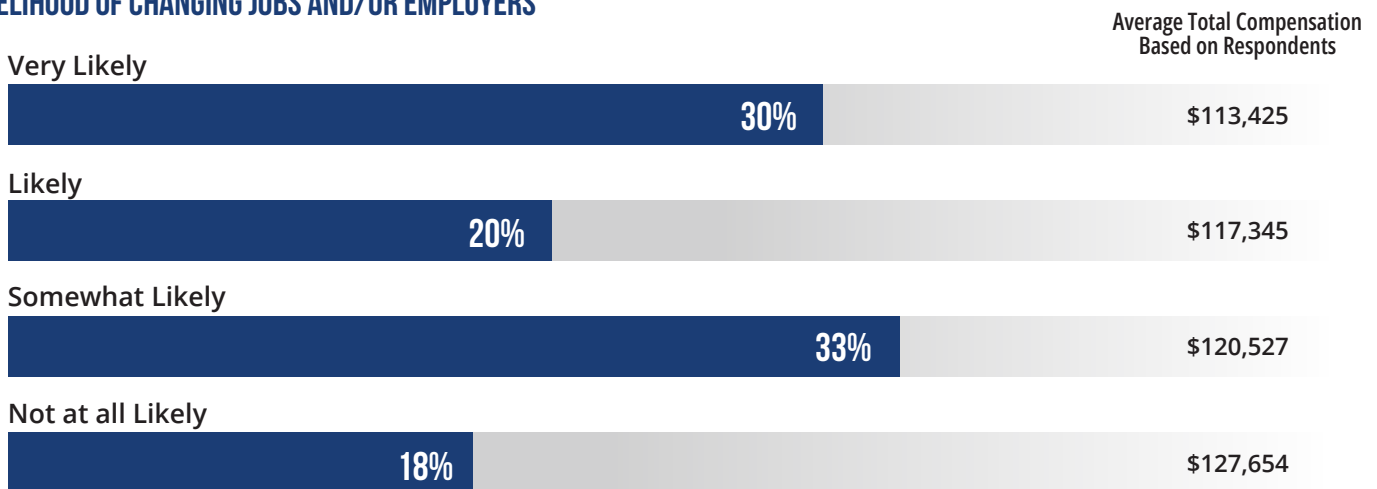
## LIKELIHOOD OF CHANGING JOBS

Despite economic uncertainty, most cleared professionals remain open to new opportunities. While 18% of respondents say they are not at all likely to change jobs in 2024, a significant 83% are at least somewhat likely to make a move. This presents a strong talent pool for employers looking to recruit cleared candidates.

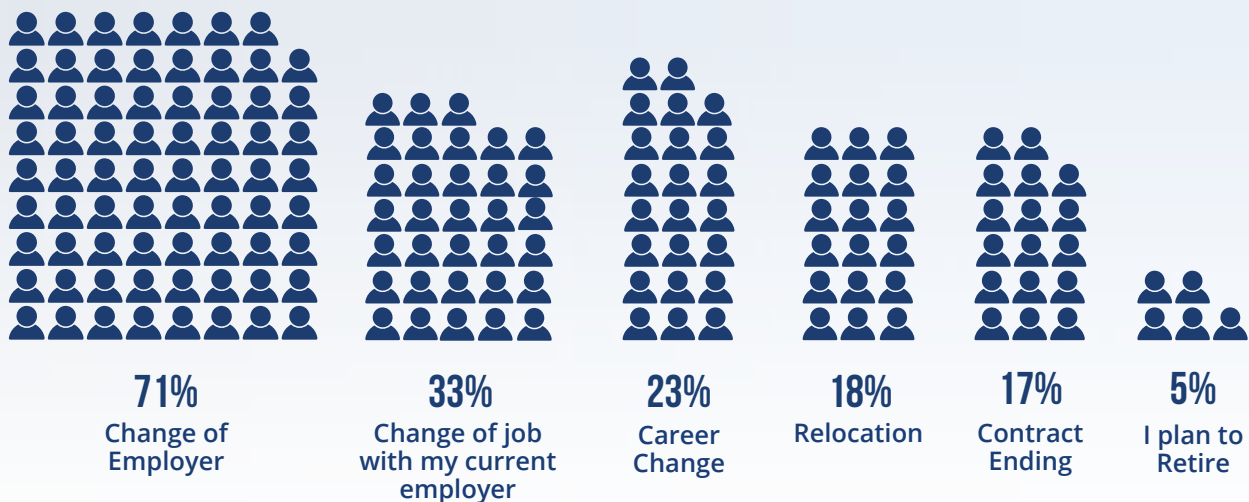
Employees who are very likely to switch jobs earn an average total compensation of \$113,425, while those who are somewhat likely report a higher average of \$120,527. Interestingly, those least likely to leave their current job (not at all likely) earn the most, with an average salary of \$127,654, reinforcing the strong link between compensation and job stability.

When it comes to the reasons for making a change, the top motivator is a change of employer, with 71% of respondents citing it as a reason for job movement. Others are considering a new role within their current company (33%), while 23% are looking for a complete career change. Additionally, 17% cite a contract ending as a reason for their job search, and 18% plan to relocate.

## LIKELIHOOD OF CHANGING JOBS AND/OR EMPLOYERS



## REASON FOR MAKING A CHANGE IN THE NEXT YEAR



## LIKELIHOOD OF LEAVING CLEARED INDUSTRY

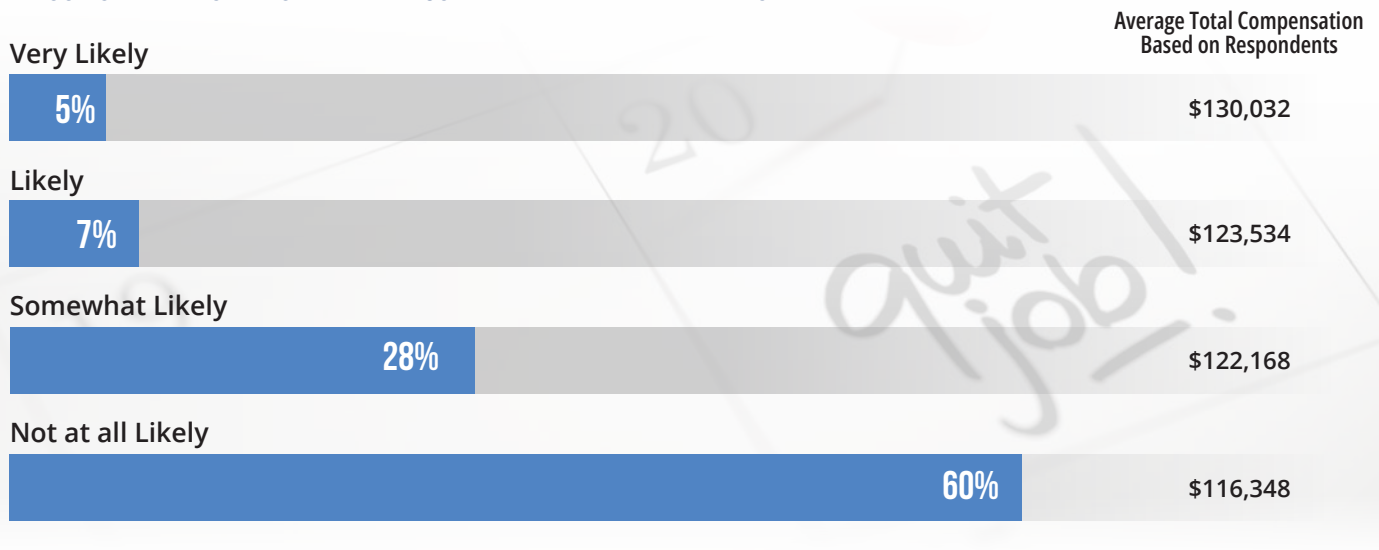
Looking beyond 2024, the majority of cleared professionals intend to stay in the industry, with 60% saying they are not at all likely to leave in the next five years. These individuals earn an average of \$116,348, a lower figure compared to those considering a departure.

However, 40% of respondents are at least somewhat likely to exit the cleared workforce. Those who are very likely to leave report the highest compensation at \$130,032, while those somewhat likely to leave earn an average of \$122,186. These figures suggest that even well-compensated professionals may seek opportunities outside the cleared space, possibly driven by factors such as work-life balance, career growth, or job security.

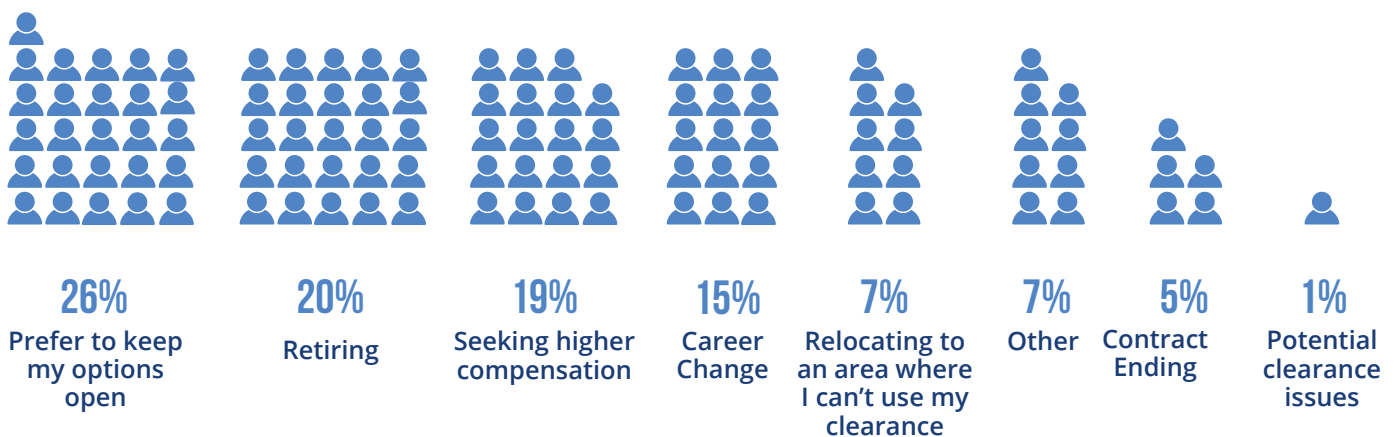
Among those considering leaving, the most common reason is keeping their options open (26%), reflecting a desire for career flexibility. 20% plan to leave due to retirement, while 19% cite higher compensation as a motivating factor. 15% are considering a career change, and 7% are relocating to areas where they cannot use their clearance. Only 1% of respondents identified potential clearance issues as their reason for leaving, suggesting that security concerns are not a major driver of industry attrition.

For employers, retention efforts should focus on competitive salaries, internal career mobility, and job stability to keep skilled talent engaged in the cleared industry. Addressing compensation concerns and offering career growth opportunities may help reduce the number of professionals seeking alternatives outside the cleared workforce.

### LIKELIHOOD OF LEAVING THE CLEARED INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



### REASON FOR MAKING A CHANGE IN THE NEXT YEAR



# COMPENSATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The face of national security may not change overnight, but small shifts tell a bigger story. Women now make up 24% of the workforce, holding steady in representation. Meanwhile, Generation Z is making waves, growing by 6% over the past five years—a sign that fresh talent is steadily entering the field.

## COMPENSATION BY GENDER: THE PAY GAP REALITY

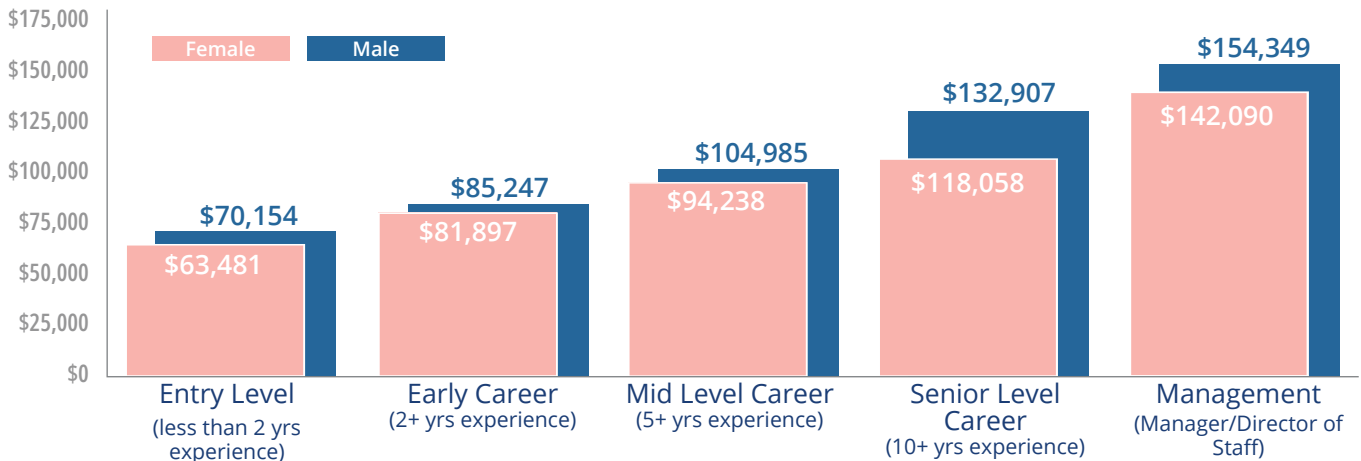
While a deep dive into the gender pay gap is a conversation for another day, the numbers don't lie—women's average total compensation (\$108,072) remains lower than their male counterparts (\$122,607). This trend has held steady for the past five years.

Breaking it down by career level, the gap is apparent at every stage. Entry-level women start at \$63,481, compared to \$70,154 for men. By the time they reach management, women average \$142,090, while their male counterparts bring in \$154,349.

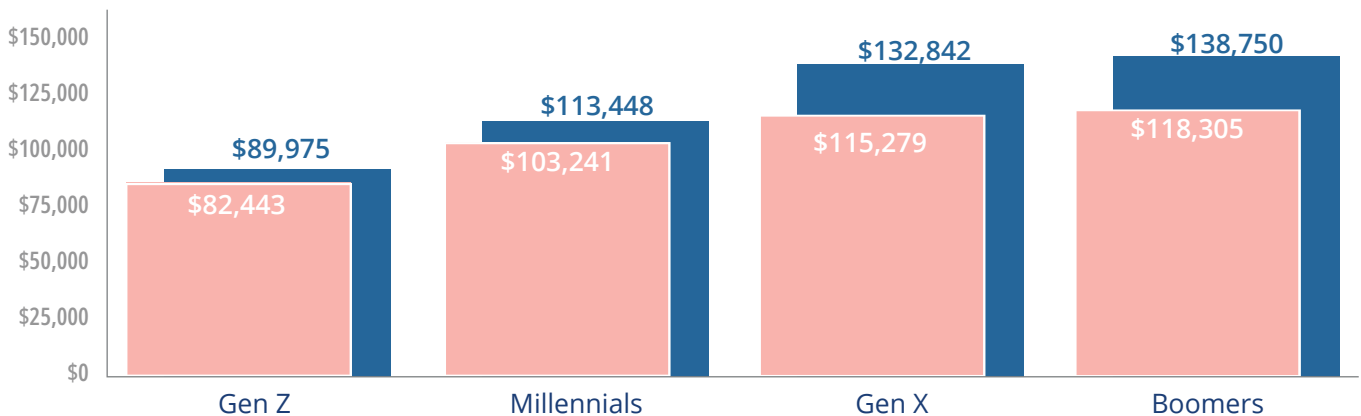
When looking at compensation by generation, the trend continues. Millennial women earn \$103,241, while men in the same age group make \$113,448. Among Gen Xers, women take home \$115,279, whereas men earn \$132,843.

GENDER CATEGORY	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP. CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
Female	\$108,072	3%	24%
Male	\$122,607	4%	72%
Provided Own Definition	\$114,317	N/A	<1%
Prefer Not to Answer	\$126,952	2%	2%

COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION BY CAREER LEVEL



COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION BY GENERATION



## COMPENSATION BY AGE

When it comes to pay raises, Generation Z is leading the pack, enjoying a 6% bump in compensation from last year. Millennials aren't far behind with a 5% increase, while Gen X and Boomers both saw a 3% raise. The biggest earners? Boomers, pulling in an average of \$134,061, followed closely by Gen X at \$128,935. Meanwhile, Millennials hold the largest share of the workforce at 39%, with an average salary of \$110,738. Though still a small slice of the pie, Gen Z's presence has tripled since 2020, growing from 3% to 9% of the national security workforce. While their average compensation sits at \$88,544, their upward trajectory suggests they'll keep climbing.

GENDER CATEGORY	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
Generation Z (born 1997-2012)	\$88,544	9%
Millennials (born 1981-96)	\$110,738	39%
Generation X (born 1965-80)	\$128,935	38%
Boomers (born 1946-64)	\$134,061	14%
Silent (born 1945 or earlier)	N/A*	<1%



## CLEARED COMPENSATION IN 2025: A WORKFORCE IN FLUX

The national security industry isn't slowing down, but 2025 is shaping up to be a year of transition. Compensation for cleared professionals hit a new high, with salaries averaging \$119,131, a nearly 4% increase over the past year. But while paychecks are climbing, so are workforce challenges—retention is getting harder, competition is fiercer, and economic uncertainty is adding new layers to the job market.

While national security remains one of the most stable industries, the real winners are those willing to negotiate, move, or upskill. Professionals who switch jobs, earn additional certifications, or take on more responsibility are seeing the biggest pay bumps. And with federal workforce uncertainty, private-sector employers have a golden opportunity to attract top-tier talent—if they're willing to pay for it.

At the end of the day, the cleared workforce in 2025 is about choices: stay put and grow within a company, jump ship for a bigger paycheck, or ride out the federal shake-ups and see where the chips fall. One thing is certain—security clearances remain one of the most valuable assets in the job market, and those who have them will continue to be in high demand.

# APPENDIX A

## TOTAL COMPENSATION BY STATE State with 100 or more respondents shown

STATE	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP. CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
Alabama	\$110,361	0%	3%
Alaska	\$105,208	*N/A	>1%
Arizona	\$111,253	7%	2%
Arkansas	\$86,967	*N/A	>1%
California	\$119,775	3%	6%
Colorado	\$126,936	1%	4%
Connecticut	\$101,088	*N/A	>1%
Delaware	\$103,950	*N/A	>1%
D.C.	\$127,875	6%	7%
Florida	\$112,690	6%	6%
Georgia	\$101,840	6%	3%
Hawaii	\$112,975	*N/A	1%
Idaho	\$97,022	*N/A	>1%
Illinois	\$108,259	*N/A	1%
Indiana	\$104,975	*N/A	1%
Iowa	\$102,831	*N/A	>1%
Kansas	\$101,664	*N/A	>1%
Kentucky	\$96,376	*N/A	1%
Louisiana	\$102,647	9%	1%
Maine	\$111,682	*N/A	>1%
Maryland	\$130,878	4%	9%
Massachusetts	\$137,559	*N/A	1%
Michigan	\$110,478	*N/A	1%
Minnesota	\$118,719	*N/A	>1%
Mississippi	\$86,428	*N/A	>1%
Missouri	\$109,815	9%	2%
Montana	\$82,000	*N/A	>1%
Nebraska	\$106,763	*N/A	>1%

STATE	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	COMP. CHANGE SINCE 2023	% OF RESPONDENTS
Nevada	\$109,894	*N/A	1%
New Hampshire	\$134,808	*N/A	>1%
New Jersey	\$121,576	*N/A	1%
New Mexico	\$118,217	7%	2%
New York	\$113,682	6%	1%
North Carolina	\$102,876	-1%	2%
North Dakota	\$81,150	*N/A	>1%
Ohio	\$112,025	1%	2%
Oklahoma	\$101,065	*N/A	1%
Oregon	\$117,359	*N/A	>1%
Pennsylvania	\$112,719	*N/A	1%
Puerto Rico	\$73,798	*N/A	>1%
Rhode Island	\$98,013	*N/A	>1%
South Carolina	\$98,052	-5%	2%
South Dakota	\$87,120	*N/A	>1%
Tennessee	\$106,773	*N/A	1%
Texas	\$110,181	6%	7%
Utah	\$111,313	*N/A	1%
Vermont	\$96,500	*N/A	>1%
Virginia	\$131,612	4%	19%
Washington	\$117,459	3%	2%
West Virginia	\$111,390	*N/A	>1%
Wisconsin	\$90,447	*N/A	>1%
Wyoming	\$107,383	*N/A	>1%
I don't work in the United States	\$128,556	N/A*	<1%

\*\* N/A due to low sample size

## APPENDIX B

### TOTAL COMP BY JOB CATEGORY

OCCUPATION	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
Aerospace and Aviation	\$118,770	6%
Business - HR	\$93,446	2%
Business - Legal	\$128,254	1%
Business - Sales	\$143,778	1%
Business - Support	\$91,452	3%
Construction/Facilities	\$111,154	2%
Emergency	\$115,745	1%
Engineering - Chemical	\$114,663	<1%
Engineering - Civil	\$123,716	1%
Engineering - Electrical	\$123,377	2%
Engineering - Mechanical	\$113,932	1%
Engineering - Systems	\$148,198	4%
Finance	\$116,297	2%
Government Contractor	\$104,572	8%
Healthcare and Science	\$103,194	1%
Intelligence	\$124,965	5%

OCCUPATION	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
IT - Database	\$128,700	2%
IT - Data Science	\$138,510	2%
IT - Hardware	\$122,339	4%
IT - Security	\$133,665	10%
IT - Software	\$148,448	7%
IT - Support	\$93,980	7%
IT - Tech Writing	\$102,741	1%
IT - QA and Test	\$126,592	1%
Linguist	\$104,228	1%
Logistics	\$91,550	4%
Management	\$142,351	9%
Military and Law Enforcement	\$123,242	3%
Security	\$95,028	7%
Trainer/Instructor	\$102,881	2%
Visual and Creative	\$108,562	1%

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Security Clearance Jobs Salary Survey is administered online by ClearanceJobs. The 2024 data presented here was collected between August 27 and December 31, 2024. 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 2024 survey and the comparison of those results for a nearly identical survey conducted one year prior (2023 compensation information).

In 2024, there were 31,001 survey participants, a decrease of -6% over the 2023 survey. 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 \$400,000, and finally incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, there remained 13,177 usable responses in 2024 and 14,251 usable responses in 2023.

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 \$400,000. 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 increased to \$350,000 in 2022 and then increased to \$400,000 in 2024. This had a negligible impact on overall compensation figures for 2024 (no impact on median, increased mean total compensation by \$453 and increased mean base pay by \$78).

# A COMMUNITY FOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN NATIONAL SECURITY

ClearanceJobs is your all-in-one recruiting solution. Much like a CRM, our unique system lets you target top candidate leads, converting cool passives to active candidates ready to make a move—to your company.

## END-TO-END CLEARED **HIRING SOLUTIONS**



### RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS [↗](#)

- Search, directly engage, and easily work cleared candidates through a pipeline.
- Convert passives to active potential hires.



### CAREER EVENTS [↗](#)

- Reduce your cost per hire with real-time conversations.
- Choose from in-person or virtual, public or private events.



### STAFFING SOLUTIONS [↗](#)

- Save time and free up bandwidth while we fill your pipeline.
- All that's left for you to do is interview and hire.



### EMPLOYER BRANDING [↗](#)

- Increase brand awareness to gain cleared candidate trust.
- Amplify your hiring messages using targeted messaging, site advertising and sponsored content.

---

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Connect with a ClearanceJobs Recruiting Specialist today at 1.866.302.7264  
or visit our website at [www.clearancejobs.com](http://www.clearancejobs.com)