

 ClearanceJobs®

Supporting Partner

 INSF

THE POWER OF EDUCATION ON CLEARED COMPENSATION

OCCUPATION, EXPERIENCE, AND EDUCATION ARE THE SECRET SAUCE TO HIGH COMPENSATION.

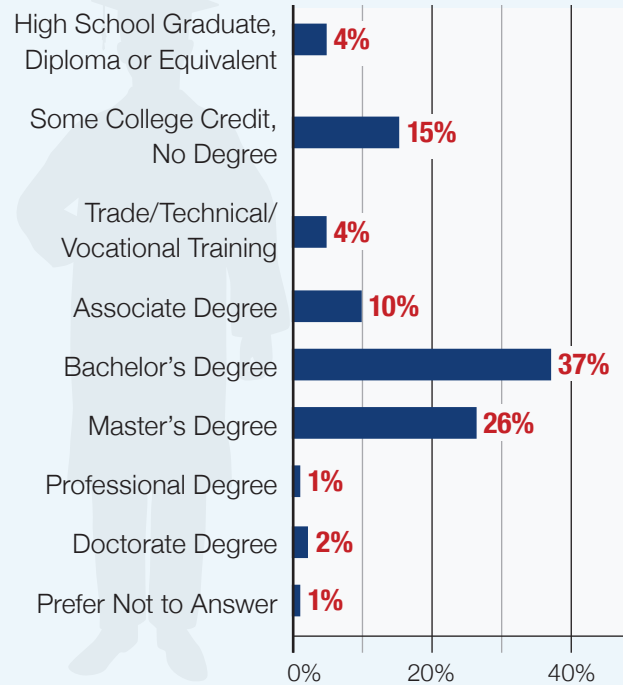
Combine the right skills and experience with a degree, and cleared professionals easily garner salaries well into the six figures. National security workers are an educated bunch, with higher percentages of higher education. But how much does it really pay to pursue a degree? And which fields pay the most for the extra effort? ClearanceJobs unpacks these questions and more using the results of our 2021 ClearanceJobs Compensation Report.

Overview

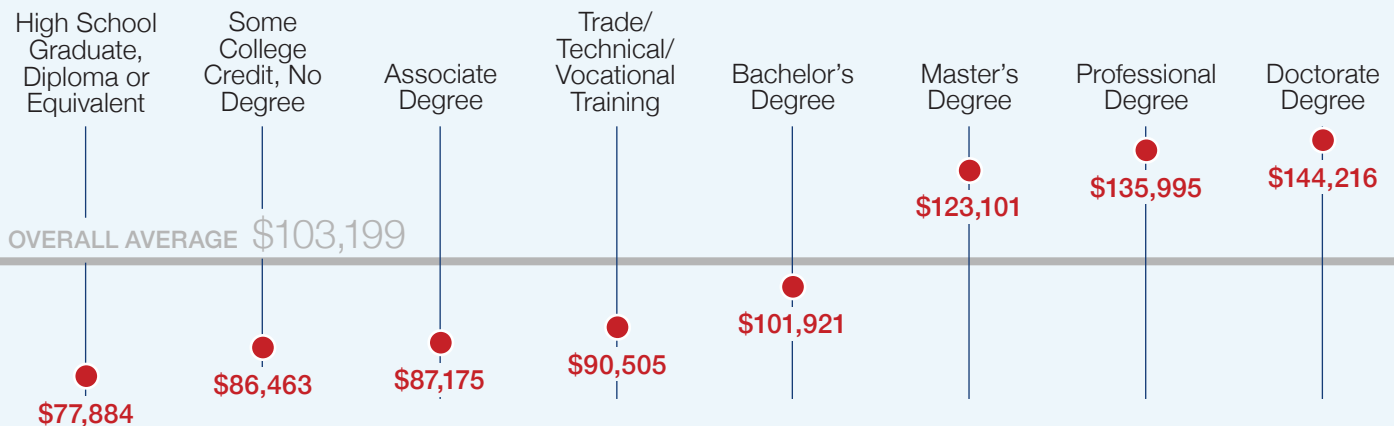
According to the 2021 Security Clearance Compensation Report, education is a major factor in compensation. But a lot goes into that salary number. For some, experience is the driving factor in total compensation. Not everything is taught in school—and sometimes military experience or those months spent as a black hat hacker are the skills a company needs and is willing to compensate. Working in a specialized field, or having the right industry certification can also be a compensation boost. But when it comes to national security work, education pays, and those with advanced degrees earn significantly more than those who stopped at a bachelor's.



Respondents by EDUCATION LEVEL



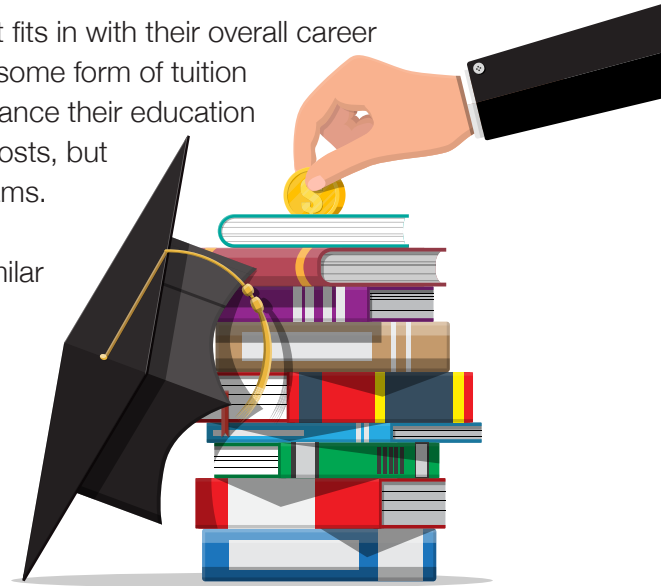
CLEARED COMPENSATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL



Cleared Candidates and Education

Those considering an advanced degree should also consider how it fits in with their overall career goals, or supports their current employer. Many employers provide some form of tuition reimbursement, and GI Bill benefits have been helping veterans advance their education since 1944. GI Bill benefits don't just cover undergraduate degree costs, but can be used to pursue a master's or other advanced degree programs.

The number of cleared professionals with a bachelor's degree is similar to the national average across other industries, with 37% of cleared professionals having a bachelor's degree, compared to 32% nationwide. Where national security workers stand out is in their pursuit of advanced degrees—29% of cleared professionals hold an advanced degree, compared to the 13% national average.



Going for a Master's Degree

Most fields don't require an advanced degree, but many government and contract positions do have bachelor's degree requirements. For many national security career tracks, a bachelor's degree is a baseline, and professionals looking to gain a deeper understanding of a subject move on to a master's degree program. Intel agencies are most likely to offer a compensation bump for a master's degree candidate, but across clearance levels and agencies, higher education means higher compensation.

What Clearance Level Pays More For a Master's?

Intelligence Agency (CIA, FBI, NSA)	\$142,156
DoD Top Secret/SCI	\$130,449
Dept of Energy (Q or L)	\$129,030
DoD Top Secret	\$125,314
Other Government Agency	\$120,898
DHS	\$114,712
DoD Secret	\$108,801
Public Trust	\$97,034
DoD Confidential	N/A*

*N/A – Less than 20 respondents

Which Agency Pays More For a Master's?

CIA	\$153,702
NSA	\$137,443
DOE	\$123,987
DoD	\$122,480
DHS	\$122,159
DOJ (FBI, ATF, DEA, BOP)	\$118,098
DOS	\$115,192



Building A Diverse National Security Workforce

Education isn't just good for salary potential, it's also been held out as a key means of social mobility for minorities. As the national security workforce continues to work to attract the most diverse candidates, increasing higher education options are a key means to do so.

“Diversity of perspectives, experiences, and ways of looking at a problem are vital to our national security. Yet at times our community has struggled to leverage diverse talent streams,” said Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA)/INSA Foundation President Suzanne Wilson Heckenberg.

“The INSA Foundation seeks to address this gap by expanding opportunities and access to vital career resources. Through undergrad and graduate scholarships for underrepresented communities, myriad mentoring opportunities, and programming focused on the future IC workforce, our Foundation helps a new generation of leaders find fulfilling mission-critical careers in the national security workforce.”

While COVID-19 has expanded interest in making more national security employment options available across the country, there's no getting around the reality that the D.C. Metro is king when it comes to security clearance careers. And that means colleges and universities in the area are keenly focused on how they can help students pursue national security careers and help employers—from Amazon and Microsoft to DHS and minority-owned small businesses—find talent.

“We're the largest producer of tech talent in the Commonwealth of Virginia, we're the most diverse university in the Commonwealth, and we're the 15th most diverse in the nation,” said Liza Wilson Durant, associate provost for strategic initiatives and community engagement at George Mason University, and director of the Northern Virginia CCI Node. “These companies want to hire a diversity of talent because they know diversity fuels innovation.” She noted that colleges and universities can help fuel a more diverse talent pool into industries, just another reason investing in college outreach is a critical part of creating a more diverse talent pool.

Making College Graduates Ready for National Security Careers

Many college students pursue a degree knowing they want to support national security work. But obtaining that initial security clearance isn't always easy—especially when applicants don't know what to expect. That's why a growing number of colleges and universities are offering training on the security clearance process. George Mason's Clearance Ready program has helped more than 1,000 students learn more about the federal security clearance process and connect with employers interested in recent graduates. The sooner students begin to prepare for the security clearance process, the better their chances of smooth sailing through the eAPP, personal subject interview, polygraph, or other potential steps toward obtaining a government or intelligence position.



The Battle of Education Versus Experience

Millennial and Generation X make up 76% of the cleared workforce, and they are represented equally at 38% each. Millennials and Generation X are almost parallel to each other in education choices, but Generation X is a little less likely to stop at the bachelor's, but instead, continue on with a master's or a doctorate degree.

While the education choices of the two generations may be similar, the compensation certainly isn't. At a minimum, Generation X garners \$10,000 more at every education level, proving that education alone isn't the deciding factor in compensation. Experience takes time to build, but it's a key component in compensation. Standing the test of time in any given field translates to proof of worth, making education simply one of the minimum requirements to get your resume to the final pile. Experience is what you need to get through the interview.

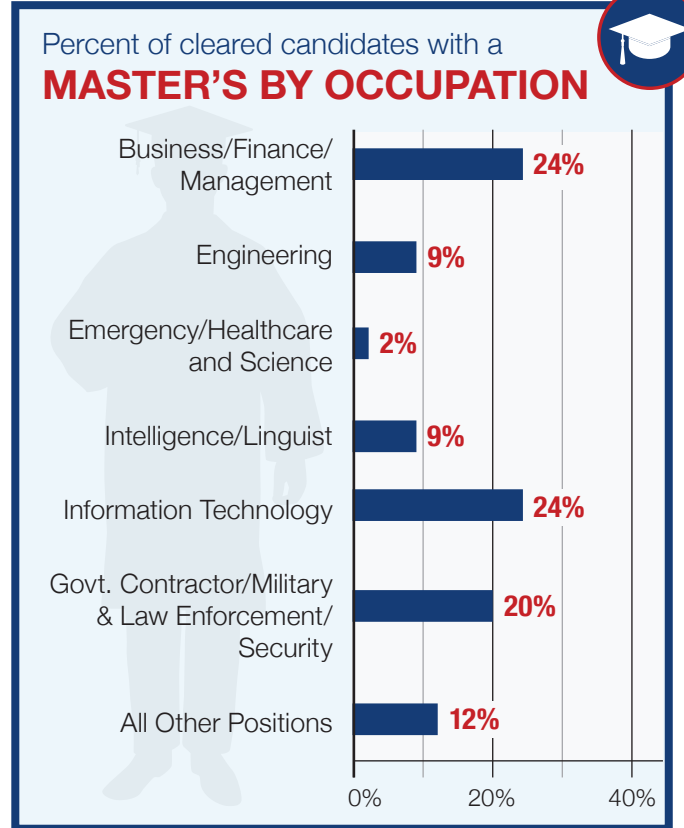
	MILLENNIAL	GENERATION X
High School Graduate/GED	5%	4%
Some College/No Degree	18%	12%
Tech/Trade Training	4%	5%
Associate Degree	10%	11%
Bachelor's Degree	41%	35%
Master's Degree	20%	30%
Professional	0%	1%
Doctorate Degree	1%	2%

	MILLENNIAL	GENERATION X	DIFFERENCE
High School Graduate/GED	\$74,275	\$85,578	\$11,303
Some College/No Degree	\$78,417	\$95,985	\$17,568
Tech/Trade Training	\$78,334	\$93,839	\$15,505
Associate Degree	\$79,809	\$91,521	\$11,712
Bachelor's Degree	\$89,175	\$109,711	\$20,536
Master's Degree	\$103,380	\$127,096	\$23,716
Professional	\$121,263	\$132,176	\$10,913
Doctorate Degree	\$124,374	\$146,932	\$22,558

Occupation is an Education Factor

Some careers are more likely to demand advanced education. Out of the respondents who have added a master's degree to their resume, 24% of the respondents were in IT and the business, finance, and management candidates, making up almost half of the talent pool with a master's degree. While going the extra mile and getting a master's is often a personal goal, it's always important to consider the return on investment for the hours and costs. And for organizations that have an eye on retention, supporting employees financially in their quest for higher education can be a game changer during proposal season. While not everyone needs to be in the master's club, additional degrees do add more credentials in the proposal process.

Most candidates are weighing the investment of time with the projected payoff. The challenge is that a salary increase doesn't always happen upon graduation. However, the reality is that the earning potential will climb progressively in the years that follow—regardless of occupation.



OCCUPATION	BACHELOR'S COMPENSATION	MASTER'S COMPENSATION	DIFFERENCE
Business/Finance/Management	\$100,225	\$125,934	\$25,709
Engineering	\$110,199	\$141,694	\$31,495
Emergency/Healthcare and Science	\$95,245	\$105,184	\$9,939
Intelligence/Linguist	\$98,759	\$114,045	\$15,286
Information Technology	\$108,381	\$126,828	\$18,447
Government Contractor/Military and Law Enforcement/Security	\$93,427	\$114,372	\$20,945
All Other Positions	\$99,425	\$121,347	\$21,922



Profile of Compensation for a Cleared Candidate with a High School Diploma

Even without any college, candidates who can get a clearance to go along with their high school diploma can still average \$77,884 total compensation. This talent pool makes up 4% of the cleared population. While more education can increase earning potential, there are still many jobs for cleared professionals regardless of degrees. Experience plays a major role with candidates holding a high school diploma or GED. Candidates with less than two years of experience earn \$56,623; however, those with ten or more years of experience earn at least \$88,680.

Although the majority of candidates with a high school diploma or GED work in government contracting and physical security (29%), average compensation for that occupation is well below the average at \$68,981. However, candidates supporting IT make up 23% of the category and bring in just under \$20,000 more at \$86,174.

When it comes to clearances, 43% of candidates who hold a high school diploma or GED have a Secret clearance, and 37% have a Top Secret or Top Secret/SCI. Average compensation for candidates with high school and a Secret clearance was \$69,470. However, at the Top Secret level, average compensation jumped to \$79,440, and at the Top Secret/SCI, it leaped to \$90,520, proving that niche jobs for trusted candidates compensate well.

Conclusion

Education isn't the only path to higher compensation—but it's one of the most universal. Regardless of industry or experience, more education means more money. And with

higher percentages of national security workers who have advanced degrees, your higher degree will find a good home in a national security workspace.



Important Information About Our Survey

The survey for the 2021 Security Clearance Compensation Report was administered online by ClearanceJobs from September 17, 2020 to December 31, 2020. In 2020, there were 45,748 survey participants, an increase of 14% over the 2019 survey. After excluding survey respondents without a security clearance, unemployed, active-duty military, students, those whose compensation was below \$18,000 or above \$300,000, and incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, there remained 20,548 usable responses in 2020. Survey results are compared to the 19,413 useable responses captured in 2019 that followed the same parameters.



ClearanceJobs

A modern marketplace for career opportunities
in national security



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

STRUGGLING TO HIRE? TRY SOURCING SERVICES



ClearanceJobs Sourcing Services matches you with a dedicated recruiting team that actively sources engaged cleared candidates, reviews their skills, and performs phone screens—all in a cost-efficient way, so you can make the best hires within your budget.

CLEARANCEJOBS CAREER EVENTS



Our career events are turnkey—scheduled, organized, and advertised to deliver prime cleared candidates for your in-person and virtual. Simply show up! With over 30 career fairs held each year throughout the country, ClearanceJobs Career Events is the leading producer of career fairs catering to security-cleared professionals.

Want to learn more?

Connect with a ClearanceJobs Recruiting
Specialist today at **1.866.302.7264**
or visit our website at www.clearancejobs.com