

SECURITY CLEARANCE COMPENSATION REPORT COLORADO

ClearanceJobs takes a deep dive into compensation, job and salary satisfaction, and the likelihood of changing jobs for cleared professionals in Colorado.



Colorado is a popular state for military professionals, with six major military installations and a long history of supporting defense and aerospace missions. While military missions may attract many to the state, its quality of life prompts them to stay. The state is a top destination for transitioning veterans, and 8.7% of the state's residents are veterans. Compensation is higher than the national average in Colorado, \$98,478. That makes Colorado the fifth highest-paying state for cleared professionals, behind D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and California. Unfortunately, the cost of living is also higher than the national average. Home prices have increased in recent years as new businesses have

flocked to support the region's new legal marijuana industry.

Marijuana isn't the original high for the region, however. In addition to the Rocky Mountains, Colorado has long been a leader in space exploration and aerospace. Colorado has the second largest space economy in the nation. The region boasts more than 400 defense industry employers, ranging from start-ups and veteran-owned small businesses to defense industry giants. The majority of cleared work is focused in Denver and Colorado Springs. Within those two cities alone, however, cleared workers have a diversity of opportunity, both in career options and lifestyle.

Colorado Total Compensation

Average total compensation in Colorado got a 4% lift since 2018, the last time ClearanceJobs administered a comprehensive compensation survey. The average compensation for cleared workers in Colorado is \$98,479. Colorado's average total compensation is almost \$10,000 above the national average. Cleared salaries in Colorado are both above the national average for cleared workers, and higher than the overall national average for cleared and non-cleared workers, which was \$71,953 in 2018.

TOTAL COMPENSATION

	2018	2020	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Average Total Compensation	\$94,875	\$98,479	4%



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Compensation by Clearance Level

A little over half of respondents have a Top Secret/SCI, and the data points to cleared employers compensating for this clearance level. Respondents at the Top Secret/SCI level received a 4% increase. Top Secret/SCI clearance holders reign in Colorado, with 52% of respondents having a TS/SCI, versus 36% in the rest of the U.S. Intel clearances also pay, with those who support work with the CIA, FBI, or NSA receiving a 10% increase. Intel clearances also offer the highest overall compensation, \$132,097, versus \$81,553 for a Secret security clearance.

TOTAL COMPENSATION BY CLEARANCE

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Confidential			
Secret	\$77,855	\$81,553	5%
Top Secret	\$106,812	\$99,511	-7%
Top Secret/SCI	\$100,708	\$104,473	4%
DoE (Q or L)			
Intel	\$120,154	\$132,097	10%
DHS			
Public Trust			
Other Government Agency	\$83,846	\$108,037	29%

Gray box indicates <20 responses.

Compensation by Polygraph Level

A polygraph pays, with professionals with polygraph earning at least \$20,000 more than those without. Colorado professionals are also more likely to have a polygraph than the rest of the country—31% of Colorado respondents had a polygraph, versus 13% in the rest of the country. The 24% of the respondents who had a CI poly saw a 1% increase, and the 7% of respondents with a Lifestyle or Full Scope poly saw a 6% increase.

TOTAL COMPENSATION BY POLYGRAPH

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Counterintelligence Poly	\$111,497	\$112,201	1%
Lifestyle or Full Scope Poly	\$108,427	\$115,287	6%
Don't have current polygraph	\$88,171	\$92,023	4%



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Salaries by Year with Current Employer

With competition for cleared talent high, job hopping has become the norm, and cleared professionals typically see their biggest pay bump from moving employers. Respondents who had been with their current employer for less than a year reported a 10% jump, and average compensation of \$94,855. Job hopping wasn't the only way to garner a major pay increase however. Likely in an effort to prevent their best employees from jumping ship, professionals with three-to-five years with their current employer received the highest pay increases, 16%. With 31% of Colorado's respondents in the IT field and numerous employers to choose from, the benefit of switching jobs to move the compensation dial is high. Increases after the five-year mark were stagnant until the 15-year mark was passed.

COMPENSATION BY YEAR WITH CURRENT EMPLOYER

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Less than 1 year	\$86,140	\$94,855	10%
1 to 2 years	\$101,007	\$97,420	-4%
3 to 5 years	\$79,310	\$91,976	16%
6 to 10 years	\$95,647	\$95,259	0%
11 to 15 years	\$116,637	\$111,346	-5%
16 to 20 years	\$105,145	\$111,460	6%
>20 years		\$114,905	n/a

Gray box indicates <20 responses.

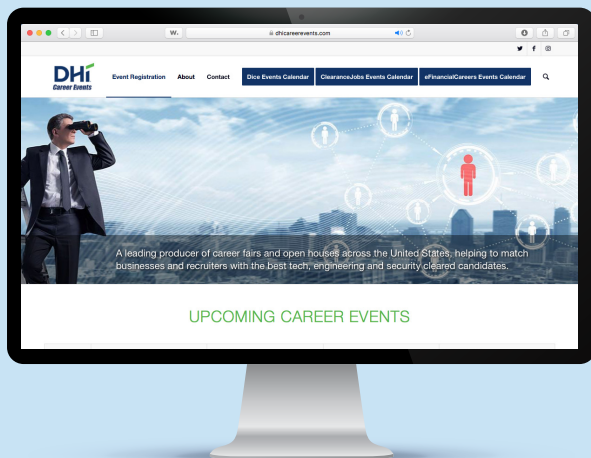
Compensation by Career Level

Entry and early level career professionals in Colorado saw significant bumps in compensation, likely driven by increases in Colorado’s cost of living and the need to attract new professionals into the defense industry. Respondents with two years of experience received a 26% compensation increase, the largest in the group. While employers are paying more money up front to attract talent, salaries are also increasing based on years of experience. Respondents with 10 years of experience or more received average compensation of \$108,689—that’s \$50,000 more than cleared entry-level professionals in Colorado get paid.

COMPENSATION BY CAREER LEVEL

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Entry Level (less than 2 years experience)	\$49,054	\$56,334	15%
Early Career (2+ yrs experience)	\$52,714	\$66,346	26%
Mid Level Career (5+ yrs experience)	\$72,191	\$82,027	14%
Senior Level Career (10+ yrs experience)	\$103,456	\$108,689	5%
Management (Manager/Director of Staff)	\$122,875	\$132,572	8%
Executive (SVP, EVP, VP)			
Senior Executive (President, CEO)			

Gray box indicates <20 responses.



FIND YOUR NEXT HIRE OR TAKE YOUR CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

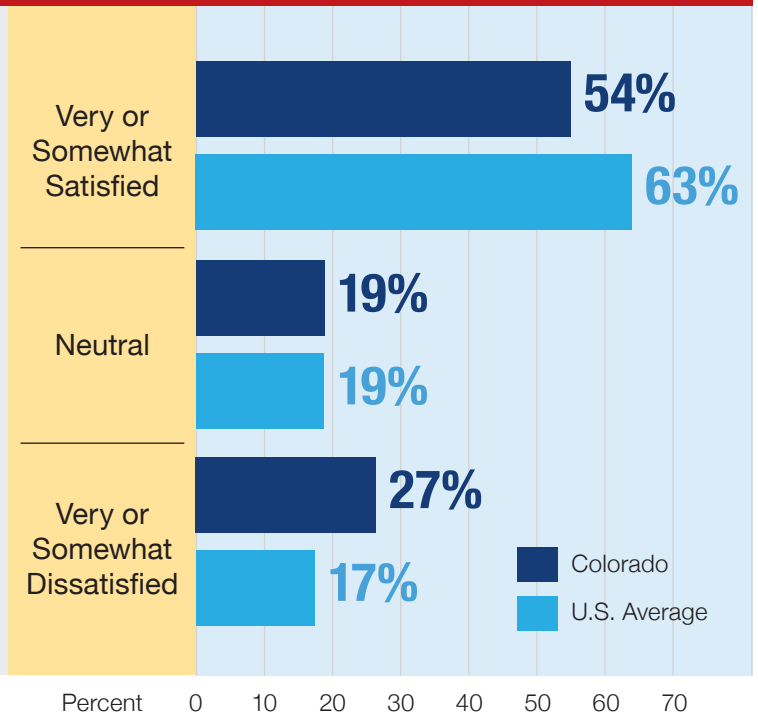
Virtual Career Fairs connect top technology, engineering and security cleared professionals in a virtual, online environment, without the cost, time, and effort of travel.



Satisfaction with Job

Can't Take Colorado

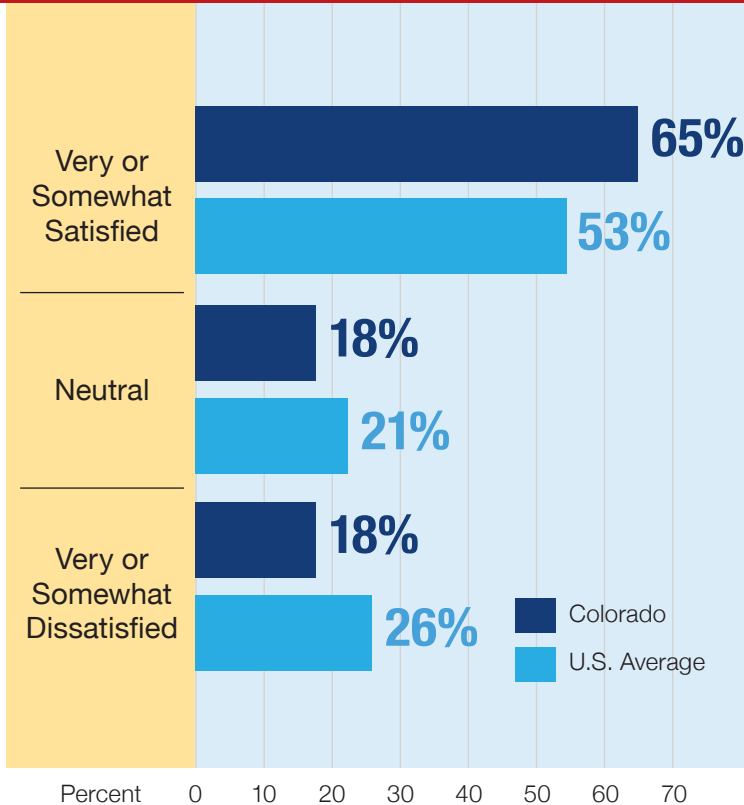
Colorado respondents were 10% more likely to be very or somewhat dissatisfied with their jobs. It could be a case of the grass—literally—looking greener, as Colorado's defense industry competes with a booming legal marijuana economy and an influx of professionals from outside of the state. Cleared employers continually note that current marijuana restrictions are unnecessarily weeding out applicants. Professionals within the state also note that new residents are contributing to increased traffic and higher home prices. Those quality of life shifts may have some experiencing dissatisfaction with their current work life.



Satisfaction with Salary

High Salary Satisfaction

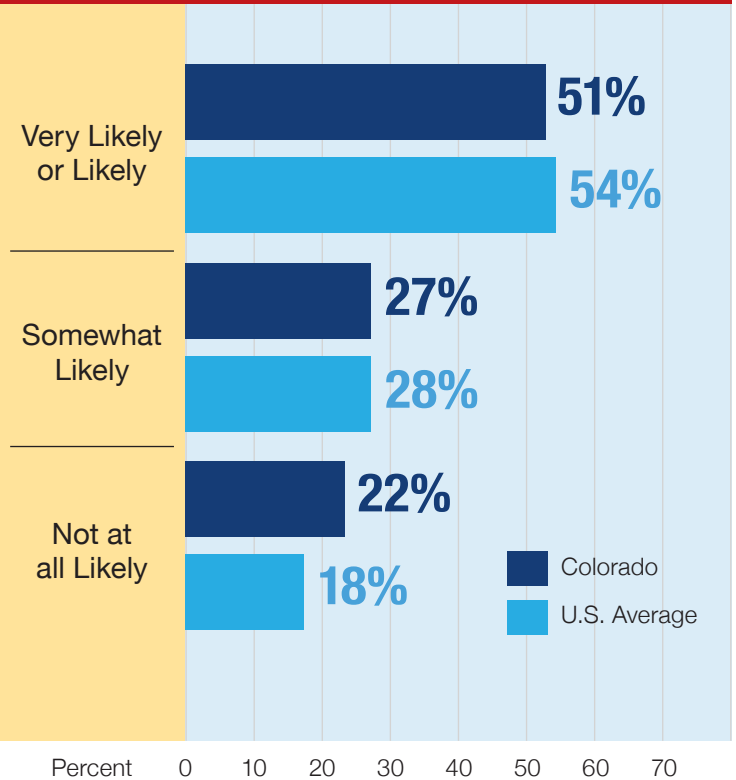
While job satisfaction is lower than the rest of the country, Colorado's respondents are happier with their salaries. 65% of respondents in Colorado are very or somewhat satisfied with their salary, which is 12% higher than the U.S. average. Only 18% expressed dissatisfaction, compared to the 26% U.S. average. While cost of living has increased in the state, it's clear professionals continue to be happy with their compensation. The high percentage of veterans in the state also likely contributes to overall salary satisfaction. Veterans retiring frequently cite mission over compensation that drives job search, as military retirement pay combines with their salary to create the opportunity for a higher quality of life.



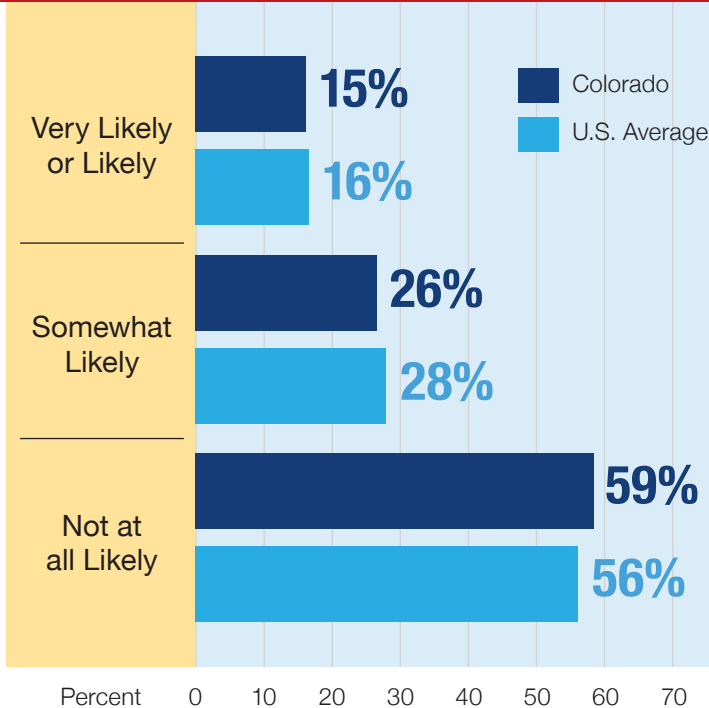
Likelihood of Changing Jobs or Employer in the Next Year

Can't Quit Colorado

Colorado respondents are slightly less likely to change employers in the coming year—78% versus 82% in the rest of the country. Colorado has a lot to offer its cleared workforce. For an industry where mission matters, Colorado is churning out cutting-edge technology in space, radar, and cybersecurity. A commitment to the mission and a higher-than-average percentage of veterans likely contributes to Colorado's slightly higher likelihood to stay put. While most skills transfer, some jobs don't. Even with a variety of defense employers to choose from, if you find yourself in a niche mission you love, you're likely to stay.



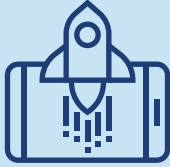
Leaving Cleared Industry in the Next Five Years



Cleared Pros in it for the Mission

While 15% consider life on the other side of the cleared door a better fit, the remaining 85% are either only mildly considering the switch or not even considering it. The numbers show that despite a strong commercial sector and emerging industries, cleared professionals remain committed to the unique missions only a cleared career can offer.

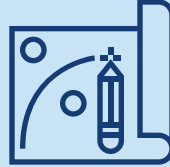
Top 5 Highest Paid Jobs:



\$136,663

ENGINEERING - SYSTEMS

Aerospace, Avionics, Geospatial, Modeling, Simulations, Management



\$134,778

IT - DATA SCIENCE

Analyst, Statistics, Math, Mining, Predictive Modeling



\$127,553

MANAGEMENT

Team Lead, Project Manager, Program Manager, Supervisor



\$125,375

BUSINESS - SALES

Business Development, Account Management



\$123,055

IT - SOFTWARE

Development, Web, Engineering, Management

Colorado's top paying cleared jobs come as no surprise, and offer a compensation level starting at \$120,000 and working their way upward from there. With a strong aerospace and IT presence, the state compensates what it demands. Systems Engineers are first on the list, with an average salary of \$136,663. IT roles in data science are second at \$134,778. Management roles offer an average salary of \$127,553. Every project or program needs a manager. For employees with technical skills who have leadership skills, this career path is one that pays. Hand in hand with professionals in the Management field, there is high compensation for Business-Sales professionals, the fourth highest paying job in Colorado. Business-Sales professionals frequently profit from new contract awards. In Colorado Springs alone there is a \$7 billion economic impact from the defense and aerospace industry. Rounding out the top five most well-compensated jobs in Colorado is IT-Software, with average compensation at \$123,055.

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