

SECURITY CLEARANCE COMPENSATION REPORT WASHINGTON, D.C.



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



In Washington, D.C., average total compensation is \$107,808 compared to \$88,915 in the rest of the U.S. The state and federal government dominate D.C. when it comes to cleared employers. The Naval Research Lab, U.S. Department of Commerce, Department of Justice (including FBI, Secret Service, and U.S. Marshals), and GAO are all top employers in Washington, D.C. proper. Government employees lead in the Washington, D.C. employment pool, with 26% of respondents in

the ClearanceJobs compensation survey working directly for Uncle Sam, versus 13% in the rest of the country. When it comes to job categories, Washington, D.C. cleared professionals are also more likely to fall into the Government/Military and Business/Finance job categories than IT and Engineering. As for compensation, D.C. boasts high pay for a highly educated workforce. More than a quarter of D.C. workers have advanced degrees, compared to 13% in the rest of the country.

Washington, D.C. Total Compensation

Average total compensation in Washington, D.C. is \$107,808. That's a 3.47% increase from 2018, the last time ClearanceJobs administered a comprehensive compensation survey. While total compensation is well above the national average, so is the cost of living, at approximately 39% higher, and high home prices tip the scales significantly.

TOTAL COMPENSATION

	2018	2020	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Average Total Compensation	\$104,190	\$ 107,808	3.47%

Compensation by Clearance Level

Compensation for all clearance levels other than Secret and Public Trust topped six figures. Washington, D.C. had fewer respondents with a Secret clearance (21% versus 40% in the rest of the U.S.), but those respondents with a Secret clearance reported a significant drop in compensation from the 2018 survey. Job category may play a role in the dip, as D.C. has a higher percentage of Business/Finance and Intelligence respondents, versus IT and Engineering (which typically command higher salaries). Top Secret clearance salaries also saw a drop, but not as significant. Department of Energy security clearances continued a trend of increases, with a 15.47% increase from 2018.

TOTAL COMPENSATION BY CLEARANCE

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Confidential			
Secret	\$88,946	\$62,000	-30.29%
Top Secret	\$107,801	\$104,846	-2.74%
Top Secret/SCI	\$110,330	\$118,290	7.22%
DoE (Q or L)	\$108,697	\$125,517	15.47%
Intel	\$113,049	\$122,246	8.14%
DHS	\$116,433	\$112,228	-3.61%
Public Trust	\$93,513	\$89,230	-4.58%
Other Government Agency	\$101,834	\$106,094	4.18%

Gray box indicates <20 responses.

Compensation by Polygraph Level

Washington, D.C. workers are more likely to have a polygraph (22% with a CI polygraph, versus 13% in the rest of the country). A polygraph pays, with a bigger compensation difference between poly and no poly.

TOTAL COMPENSATION BY POLYGRAPH

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Counterintelligence Poly	\$107,017	\$119,481	11.65%
Lifestyle or Full Scope Poly	\$119,895	\$111,419	-7.07%
Don't have current polygraph	\$101,576	\$103,862	2.25%

The polygraph is more about getting scared people to admit what they would have otherwise omitted on their SF-86 than it is about actually digging up deception independently. Bearing that in mind, here is the reality: the scare tactic works subconsciously on many people.



Salaries by Year with Current Employer

Professionals who stuck with an employer for three to five years were able to see a significant bump in salary, with a 10.22% increase and total compensation of \$115,725. The decision to bump salaries at the three to five-year mark is backed up by the data—professionals typically get itchy around the three-year mark, and the Bureau of Labor reports that average tenure with a current employer was 4.2 years in 2018. And with 81% of all survey respondents in the ClearanceJobs Compensation Survey saying they're at least somewhat likely to change jobs in the coming year, it's worth noting when likely to move candidates may see a salary bump.

COMPENSATION BY YEAR WITH CURRENT EMPLOYER

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Less than 1 year	\$93,629	\$95,993	2.53%
1 to 2 years	\$101,151	\$102,323	1.16%
3 to 5 years	\$104,996	\$115,725	10.22%
6 to 10 years	\$115,211	\$118,277	2.66%
11 to 15 years	\$112,026	\$120,472	7.54%
16 to 20 years	\$126,414	\$128,371	1.55%
>20 years	\$141,702	\$139,474	-1.57%

Compensation by Career Level

Experience is where salary differentials get serious with the pay spread between an entry-level and senior executive in Washington, D.C. a full six figures. Entry, early, and mid-career professionals saw the highest growth between 2018 and 2020 compensation survey figures with each career level noting 7% growth. Increases in entry and early career-level salaries also emphasize the push—and competition—for talent in Washington, D.C., particularly among government employers. Higher entry-level salaries also reflect the higher-than-average education levels of Washington, D.C. employees. The average age in Washington, D.C. is 34, slightly younger than the national median age of 38. Candidates with advanced degrees can negotiate higher salaries within the general schedule, and also with contract employers.

The government has worked to improve its ability to attract talent in recent years, including shortening time to hire and increasing direct hiring authorities for critical positions. Reducing time to hire is one step toward attracting entry-level talent to government careers, a hurdle particularly difficult for cybersecurity firms who also compete with Silicon Valley.

COMPENSATION BY CAREER LEVEL

	2018 COMPENSATION	2020 COMPENSATION	% CHANGE FROM 2018
Entry Level (less than 2 years experience)	\$59,209	\$63,559	7.35%
Early Career (2+ yrs experience)	\$67,187	\$72,146	7.38%
Mid Level Career (5+ yrs experience)	\$83,380	\$89,713	7.60%
Senior Level Career (10+ yrs experience)	\$113,912	\$119,770	5.14%
Management (Manager/Director of Staff)	\$136,241	\$143,648	5.44%
Executive (SVP, EVP, VP)	\$174,224	\$171,985	-1.29%
Senior Executive (President, CEO)	\$212,489	\$168,358	-20.77%



A MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE

Millennials make up the core of the Washington, D.C. workforce.

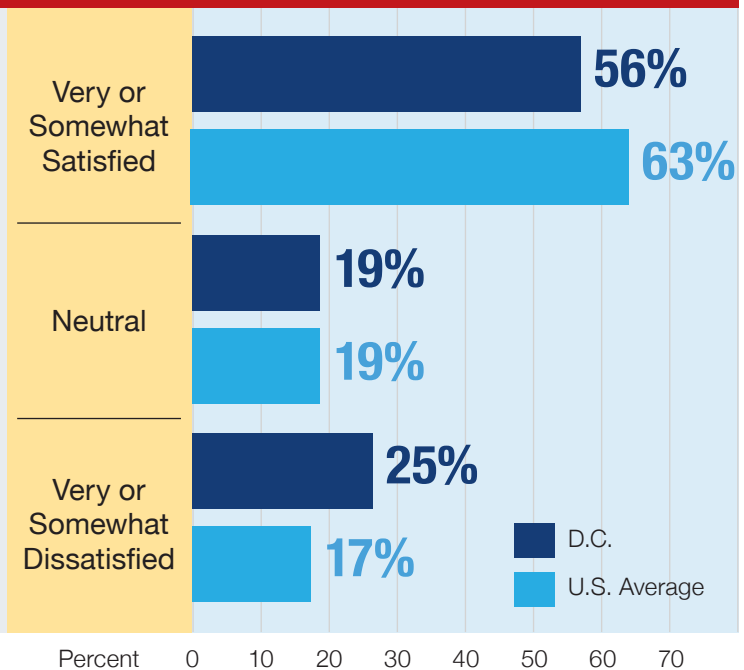
According to a Gallup study on *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*, having a purpose-driven workforce is key to attracting and retaining millennial workers. This demand is perhaps even more important in Washington, D.C., where many professionals are attracted by missions and organizations only offered in the nation's capital.



Satisfaction with Job

Fed Up in Washington

Washington, D.C. workers are slightly more dissatisfied with their jobs than the national average. Unfortunately, government workers are most in tune, and affected, by the political tides that cause continuing resolutions over passed budgets and government furloughs over congressional compromise. These satisfaction figures are slightly lower than the feedback federal workers provided in the 2019 *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey*, where 69% of respondents reported being satisfied with their jobs.

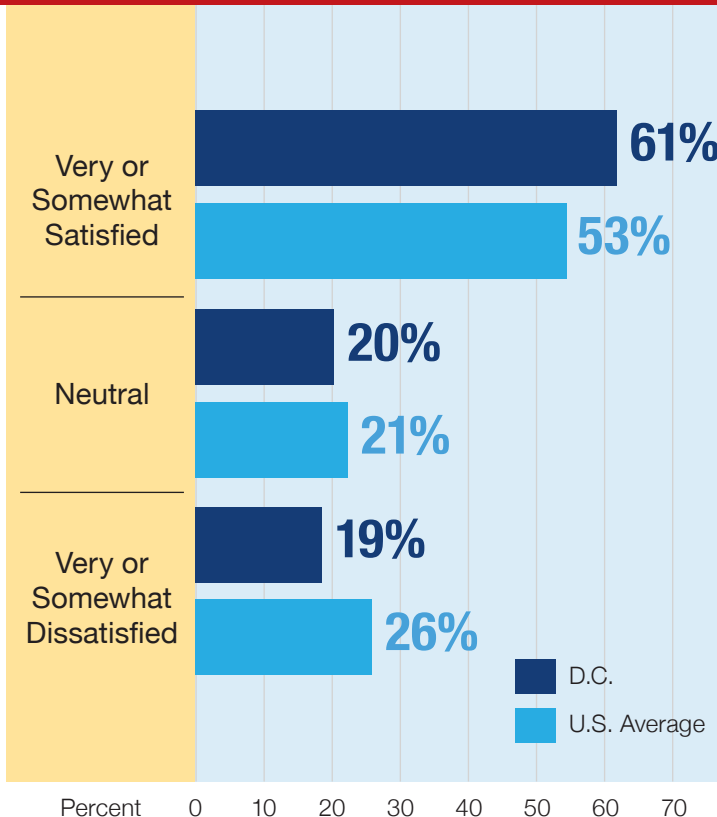


Satisfaction with Salary

But Satisfied with Salaries

Washington, D.C. workers are more satisfied with their salaries than the national average. Levels of compensation are high and career opportunities abound, so professionals in the Washington, D.C. metro who find themselves dissatisfied with either their pay or compensation have career opportunities to consider. It remains a candidate's market for cleared professionals with clearances in the Washington metro.

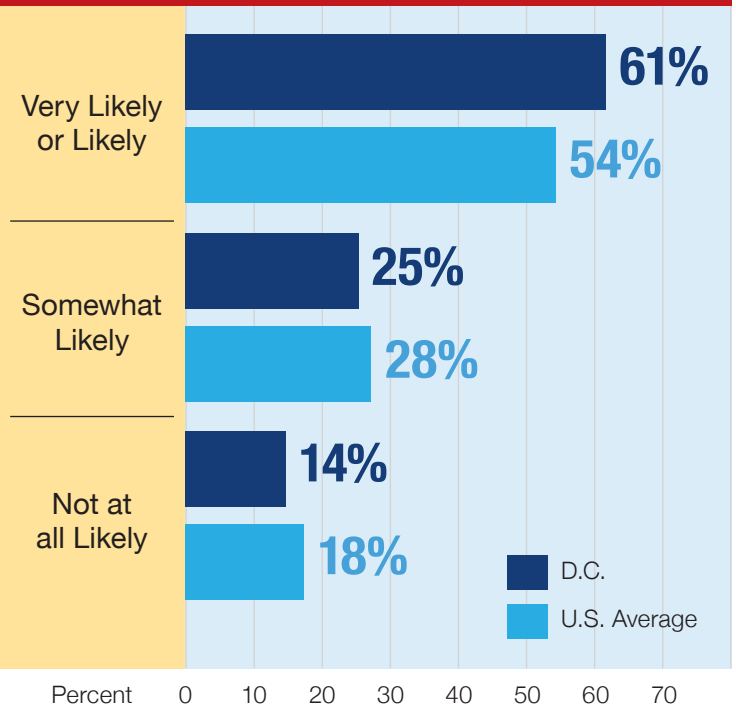
The results again mirror the *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey*, where 63% of respondents reported satisfaction with their salary. While federal workers report being satisfied with their compensation, only 28% of respondents in the Viewpoint survey said they believed increases were based on merit.



Likelihood of Changing Jobs or Employer in the Next Year

D.C. on the Move

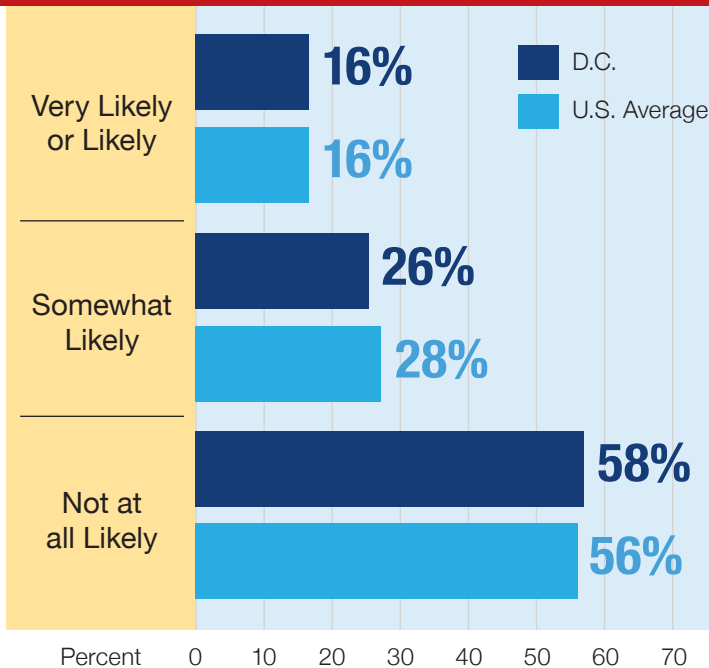
Washington, D.C. respondents were 5% more likely to say they were very likely or likely to change jobs in the coming year. It may be surprising to think of Washingtonians being career movers and shakers, given the traditional thought that once you started working for the federal government, you'd make a career of it. But in recent years, federal employers have made on and off ramping easier. And while security clearance reciprocity between agencies remains an issue, it's possible to take a contract position with the Department of Justice and then move onto a new opportunity with the Department of Homeland Security a few months later.



Leaving Cleared Industry in the Next Five Years

Cleared Pros in it for the Mission

Washington, D.C. workers are right on par with the rest of the country when it comes to their commitment to cleared work and staying in the national security workforce. There's likely good reason for that—when it comes to what gets cleared workers up in the morning, most report it's the mission over the money. National security careers offer the opportunity to do work they couldn't do in the private sector, and that's what keeps them in the industry.



Top 5 Highest Paid Jobs:



\$152,916

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY - SOFTWARE

Development, Web,
Engineering, Management



\$138,545

HEALTHCARE AND SCIENCE

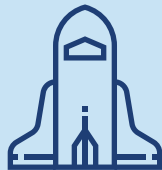
Medical, Research,
Laboratory



\$130,642

MILITARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

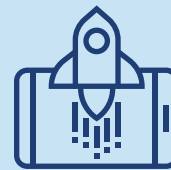
Training, Operations, SME,
Investigator, Management



\$130,307

AEROSPACE AND AVIATION

Flight Test, Manufacturing, Quality
Assurance, Maintenance, Machinist,
Communications, Satellite



\$130,250

SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

Aerospace, Avionics, Geospatial,
Modeling, Simulations, Management

Information Technology and Software tops the compensation ladder in Washington, D.C., but at least two of the top five high-paying careers are very D.C. specific. The second highest-paid professionals are in Healthcare and Science. The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory is located in Washington, D.C. and employs more than 7,000. That makes it one of the city's top employers. It has missions in nanoscience, ocean and atmospheric science, space technology, and more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also have a Washington, D.C. office with ongoing needs for cleared science professionals. Rounding out the top three is Military and Law Enforcement, which skates just ahead of Aerospace and Aviation and Systems Engineering salaries. While law enforcement may not typically seem like a top-paying career, Washington, D.C. is a different animal. Federal law enforcement officers with agencies such as the FBI, Secret Service, and U.S. Marshalls can easily command six-figure salaries.

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in national security



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