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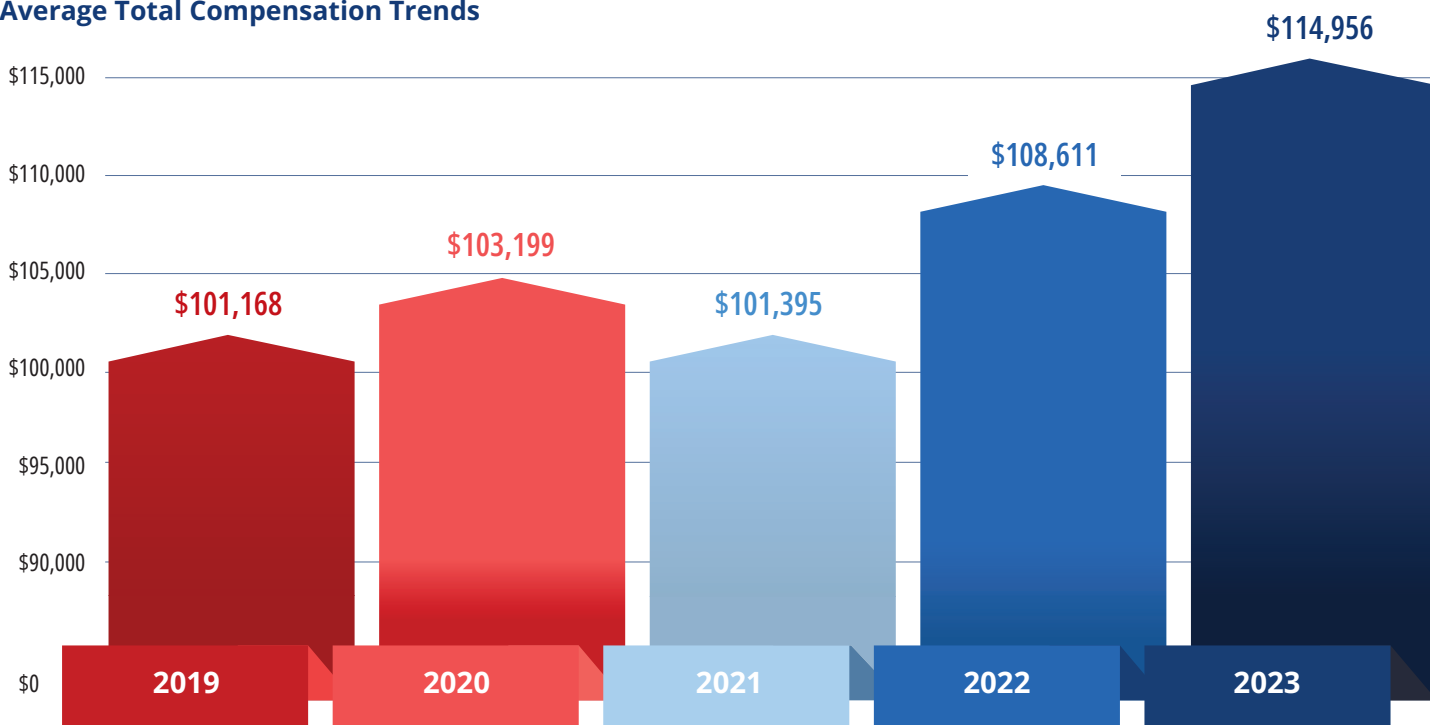
SECURITY CLEARANCE COMPENSATION TRENDS FOR THE PAST 5 YEARS



Over the past five years, the compensation for security clearance holders has shown notable year-over-year changes, particularly with a significant rise from 2021 to 2023. After a slight dip in 2021 to \$101,395, the average annual compensation surged to \$108,611 in 2022 and further to \$114,956 in 2023. Heightened demand for security professionals, competitive pressures in the job market, and broader economic trends such as inflation and cost-of-living adjustments all play a role in compensation changes. Companies respond to the escalating need for cleared, skilled talent by offering more lucrative compensation packages to attract and retain top-tier professionals.

Overall, the upward trend in compensation highlights a positive outlook for security clearance holders. From 2019 to 2023, the average annual compensation grew by approximately 13.6%. The consistent rise in compensation indicates robust industry growth and a favorable job market for individuals with security clearances. As the demand for cleared expertise continues to rise, so will the rewards for those qualified to meet these critical needs.

Average Total Compensation Trends



Compensation Trends by Clearance Level

Compensation for security clearance holders has surged, especially for those with Top Secret clearances and roles in the Intelligence Community. For Department of Defense (DoD) Top Secret clearances, salaries jumped from \$105,772 in 2019 to \$121,290 in 2023, with Top Secret/SCI clearances following a similar trajectory, climbing from \$111,421 to \$127,050. Intelligence agency roles, including those in the CIA, FBI, and NSA, saw the most dramatic increases, with compensation soaring from \$128,747 in 2019 to an impressive \$154,161 in 2023.

The upward trend underscores the immense value and indispensability of these roles in national security. The significant salary hikes, particularly for top-level clearances, highlight the essential expertise and heightened responsibilities these positions require.

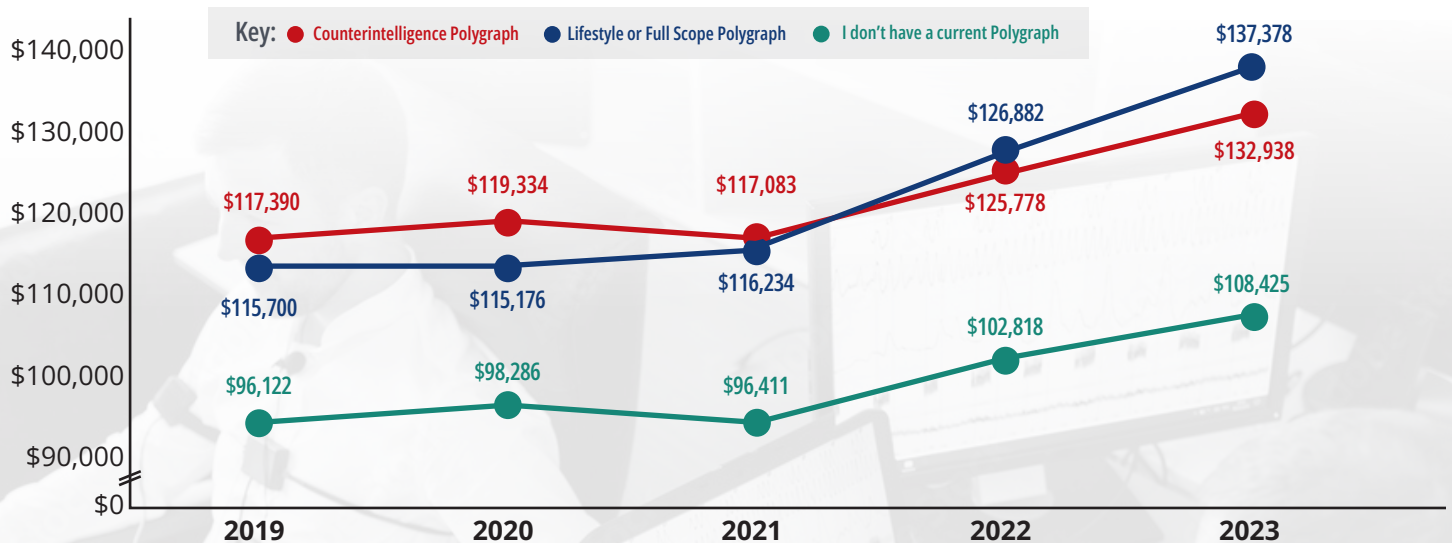
Average Total Compensation by Clearance Level

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dept of Defense Confidential	\$76,298	\$82,707	\$83,041	\$81,714	\$84,044
Dept of Defense Secret	\$87,696	\$89,452	\$86,671	\$92,156	\$97,070
Dept of Defense Top Secret	\$105,772	\$107,872	\$107,148	\$116,009	\$121,290
Dept of Defense Top Secret/SCI	\$111,421	\$112,173	\$110,796	\$119,112	\$127,050
Dept of Energy (Q or L)	\$110,156	\$111,567	\$107,754	\$113,313	\$119,808
Intelligence Agency (CIA, FBI, NSA)	\$128,747	\$129,131	\$130,432	\$139,970	\$154,161
Dept of Homeland Security	\$93,222	\$100,907	\$103,483	\$108,621	\$114,159
Public Trust	\$80,924	\$81,235	\$86,416	\$91,335	\$93,307
Other Government Agency	\$99,343	\$105,599	\$99,965	\$106,131	\$109,951

Compensation Trends by Polygraph

Compensation for security clearance holders with polygraphs has shown a remarkable upward trend. Those with a Counterintelligence Polygraph saw their mean total compensation rise from \$117,390 in 2019 to \$132,938 in 2023. Even more impressive Lifestyle or Full Scope Polygraph experienced a significant increase from \$115,700 to \$137,378. Individuals without a current polygraph still benefited from salary growth, with compensation rising from \$96,122 in 2019 to \$108,425 in 2023. It pays to have a poly.

Average Total Compensation by Polygraph



Compensation Trends by Occupation

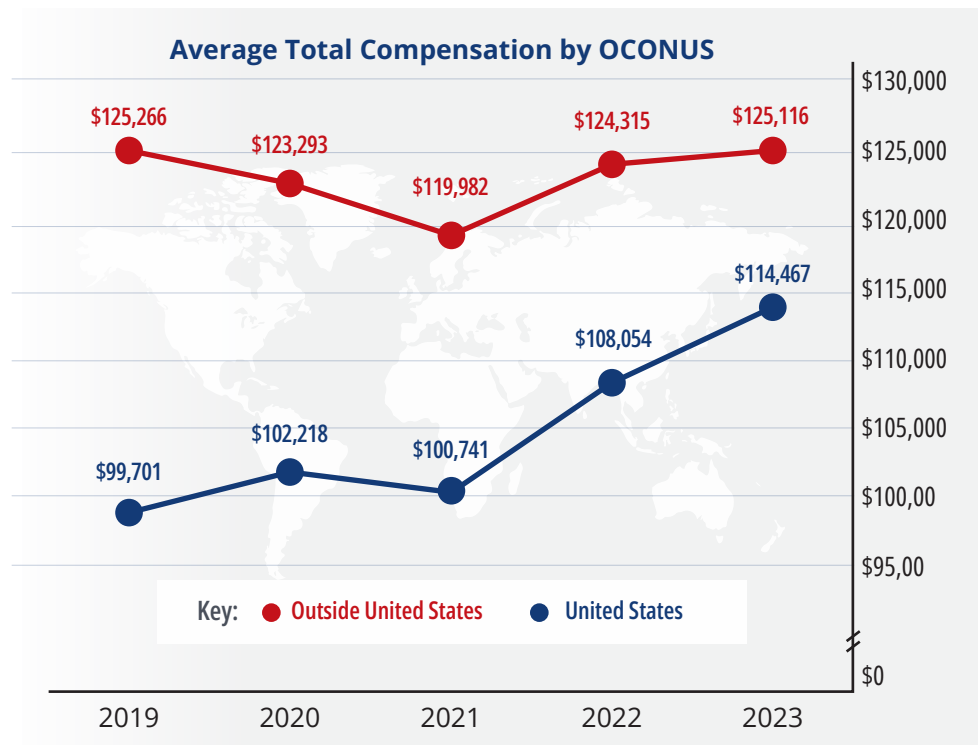
Over the past five years, the IT sector has seen a remarkable rise among security clearance holders, with its population growing from 26% in 2019 to 33% in 2023, reflecting the booming demand for cybersecurity and technology experts in an increasingly digital world. Meanwhile, the compensation for IT professionals has also soared, climbing from \$106,871 in 2019 to \$122,933 in 2023. Similarly, engineering roles have remained consistently valued, with salaries jumping from \$117,428 to \$129,201. Technical expertise in national security continues to demand a premium.

In contrast, while the proportion of those in Government Contractor/Military and Law Enforcement/Security roles has slightly declined from 23% to 18%, their compensation has seen a healthy rise, reaching \$101,757 in 2023. Business/Finance/Management professionals also enjoyed a steady increase in earnings, from \$104,925 in 2019 to \$119,046 in 2023.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Business / Finance / Management	\$104,925	\$107,177	\$107,527	\$114,695	\$119,046
Engineering	\$117,428	\$116,469	\$114,225	\$121,362	\$129,201
Emergency / Healthcare and Science	\$93,179	\$96,863	\$93,757	\$95,955	\$97,068
Intelligence / Linguist	\$101,400	\$103,842	\$102,159	\$110,009	\$116,276
IT	\$106,871	\$106,967	\$105,273	\$115,611	\$122,933
Government Contractor / Military and Law Enforcement / Security	\$91,727	\$94,070	\$91,458	\$94,686	\$101,757
All Other Positions	\$93,340	\$98,135	\$93,586	\$98,844	\$102,635

Compensation Trends for OCONUS Clearance Holders

Security clearance holders within the United States have seen a substantial rise in compensation, from \$99,701 in 2019 to \$114,467 in 2023. In contrast, compensation for those outside the U.S. has remained relatively stable, starting at \$125,266 in 2019 and hovering around \$125,116 in 2023. The steady high compensation for international roles underscores the premium placed on overseas assignments, often due to additional responsibilities and the complexities of working in diverse geopolitical environments.

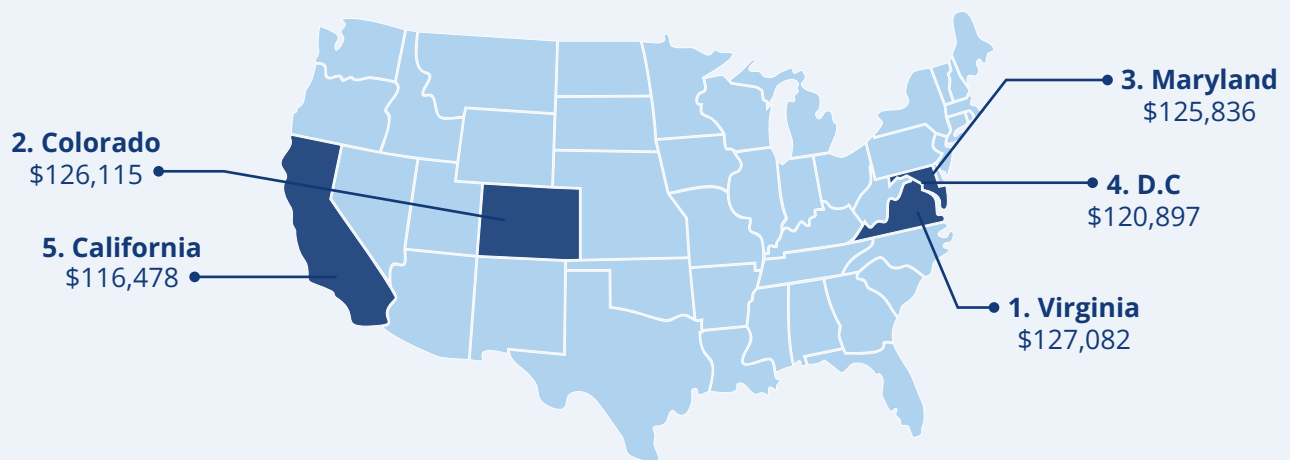


Compensation Trends by State

Compensation for security clearance holders has surged across various states, with significant fluctuations in percentage shifts indicating changing population dynamics. Notably, Virginia, Maryland, and Colorado have consistently ranked among the top states for compensation. Virginia's average salary grew from \$110,524 in 2019 to \$127,082 in 2023, driven by its dense concentration of defense contractors and government agencies. Maryland followed closely, with salaries increasing from \$108,135 to \$125,836, reflecting its proximity to major intelligence agencies and military installations. Colorado saw a remarkable rise from \$104,517 to \$126,115, bolstered by its thriving aerospace and cybersecurity industries.

In addition to these top earners, California and D.C. also demonstrated substantial growth. California, with its robust tech sector and defense industry, saw compensation rise from \$106,603 in 2019 to \$116,478 in 2023. D.C., the epicenter of federal government operations, experienced an increase from \$107,704 to \$120,897.

Top 5 Highest Average Compensation in 2023



Average Total Compensation by State

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alabama	\$98,931	\$97,075	\$95,626	\$103,554	\$110,416
Arizona	\$90,735	\$92,616	\$90,525	\$103,017	\$103,649
California	\$106,603	\$106,641	\$103,322	\$109,840	\$116,478
Colorado	\$104,517	\$107,374	\$105,174	\$115,647	\$126,115
D.C.	\$107,704	\$108,284	\$109,163	\$117,600	\$120,897
Florida	\$91,032	\$93,523	\$95,105	\$99,622	\$106,304
Georgia	\$79,876	\$88,309	\$86,900	\$97,348	\$95,955
Maryland	\$108,135	\$109,685	\$106,876	\$117,820	\$125,836
North Carolina	\$88,277	\$91,173	\$89,928	\$94,472	\$103,974
Texas	\$92,113	\$94,467	\$93,285	\$98,597	\$103,769
Virginia	\$110,524	\$111,502	\$110,096	\$118,169	\$127,082
Other	\$91,030	\$94,555	\$94,157	\$100,834	\$105,638

Compensation Trends by Career Level

Entry-level professionals (less than 2 years of experience) saw their average salaries grow from \$60,198 in 2019 to \$67,609 in 2023, reflecting the rising demand for new talent in the industry. Early career professionals (2+ years of experience) experienced a notable increase from \$70,335 to \$82,643.

One of the most striking trends is the substantial increase in compensation for mid-level and senior-level professionals, which underscores a significant investment in experienced talent. Mid-level professionals (5+ years of experience) saw their average salaries soar from \$84,119 in 2019 to \$99,027 in 2023, nearly reaching the six-figure mark and an impressive 17.7% increase. Senior-level professionals (10+ years of experience) experienced a similar surge, with their compensation rising from \$109,795 to \$124,760, a notable 13.6% jump.

Management roles (Manager/Director of Staff) had a steady rise from \$131,214 in 2019 to \$146,714 in 2023.

Average Total Compensation by Career Level

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Entry Level (less than 2 yrs experience)	\$60,198	\$60,387	\$61,404	\$66,061	\$67,609
Early Career (2+ yrs experience)	\$70,335	\$70,815	\$71,973	\$77,110	\$82,643
Mid Level Career (5+ yrs experience)	\$84,119	\$85,791	\$86,353	\$92,095	\$99,027
Senior Level Career (10+ yrs experience)	\$109,795	\$112,508	\$111,875	\$117,357	\$124,760
Management (Manager/Director of Staff)	\$131,214	\$135,909	\$135,030	\$141,968	\$146,714
Executive (SVP, EVP, VP)	\$171,358	\$176,288	\$174,147	\$187,334	\$190,145
Senior Executive (President, CEO)	\$159,667	\$162,114	\$166,770	\$179,235	\$185,371

Compensation Trends by Government Agency

Intelligence work is high stakes, and the CIA leads the pack with a significant increase in compensation from \$135,349 in 2019 to \$154,730 in 2023. The NSA also showed a notable jump from \$115,669 to \$140,371.

The Department of Defense had steady salary growth, with salaries climbing from \$101,507 to \$115,538. Likewise, the Department of Homeland Security's compensation increased from \$98,124 to \$113,473. The Department of Energy, Department of State, and Department of Justice also experienced substantial increases, emphasizing the broad demand for security expertise across federal agencies.

Average Total Compensation by Government Agency

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dept of Defense and all Military Branches	\$101,507	\$103,216	\$101,138	\$108,233	\$115,538
Dept of Homeland Security	\$98,124	\$104,542	\$104,560	\$107,662	\$113,473
Dept of Energy	\$112,421	\$110,804	\$107,328	\$116,005	\$117,853
Dept of State	\$103,517	\$105,092	\$104,394	\$110,460	\$113,841
Dept of Justice (FBI, ATF, DEA, BOP)	\$103,847	\$103,430	\$103,775	\$112,362	\$114,667
NSA	\$115,669	\$114,280	\$114,123	\$126,225	\$140,371
CIA	\$135,349	\$130,395	\$134,013	\$140,472	\$154,730
N/A – Not Applicable	\$85,166	\$92,322	\$88,337	\$97,228	\$100,503
Other Government / Intelligence Agency	\$103,623	\$106,078	\$105,367	\$112,603	\$118,661

Job and Salary Satisfaction Trends

Job satisfaction among security clearance holders shifts over the past five years, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. The percentage of those who are “Very Satisfied” with their jobs dropped from 26% in 2019 to 21% in 2021, before stabilizing at 22% in 2022 and 2023. Similarly, those “Somewhat Satisfied” saw a decline from 38% in 2019 to 33% in 2020 and 2021, recovering slightly to 35% in 2022 and 2023. This dip in satisfaction levels could be attributed to the increased stress and challenges brought about by the pandemic, including remote work dynamics, heightened security threats, and the pressures of adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. Meanwhile, the proportion of respondents feeling “Neutral” or “Somewhat Dissatisfied” increased, peaking in 2021, indicating growing ambivalence or dissatisfaction during these turbulent times.

Average Job Satisfaction

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissagree	Disagree
2019	26%	38%	19%	11%	6%
2020	22%	33%	22%	14%	7%
2021	21%	33%	23%	16%	8%
2022	22%	35%	22%	14%	6%
2023	22%	35%	22%	14%	6%

Salary satisfaction among security clearance holders has shown some intriguing fluctuations. The percentage of those “Very Satisfied” with their salaries held steady at 20% in 2019 and 2020, dipped to 18% in 2021, and then rebounded to 20% by 2023. Meanwhile, “Somewhat Satisfied” respondents experienced a slight decline from 35% in 2019 to 33% in 2021, before climbing to 36% in 2023. Factors like the economic uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, inflation, and evolving job market dynamics influence the different shifts - even in a stable job market. Despite these challenges, the overall stability in the “Very Dissatisfied” category at 8% suggests that most security clearance holders remain relatively content with their compensation.

Average Salary Satisfaction

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissagree	Disagree
2019	20%	35%	20%	17%	8%
2020	20%	34%	21%	17%	8%
2021	18%	33%	21%	19%	9%
2022	19%	35%	19%	18%	8%
2023	20%	36%	18%	18%	8%

Likelihood of Changing Jobs Trends

The likelihood of security clearance holders considering a job change has shifted. The percentage of those “Very Likely” to switch jobs peaked at 32% in 2021 but returned to 28% in 2023, while those “Likely” to change decreased from 22% to 17%, indicating growing job satisfaction or stability. Meanwhile, the “Somewhat Likely” category rose steadily to 33%, suggesting a cautious interest in new opportunities. Notably, the “Not At All Likely” group rebounded to 21% in 2023, highlighting increased contentment or stability in their current roles post-pandemic. While clearance holders are open to new opportunities, fluctuating levels of certainty and satisfaction with their current employment situations are driving some of the shifts.

	Very Likely	Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not at all Likely
2019	28%	22%	30%	19%
2020	31%	23%	31%	15%
2021	32%	21%	32%	15%
2022	29%	21%	33%	17%
2023	28%	17%	33%	21%



Future Compensation Trends for Security Clearance Holders

As we move forward, compensation for security clearance holders is poised for continued growth. Based on the impressive salary increases observed across various sectors—from IT and engineering to intelligence roles—this upward trajectory is expected to persist. With mid-level professionals’ earnings nearing the six-figure mark and senior-level experts surpassing \$120,000 annually, companies will continue to recognize and reward the critical expertise these roles bring. As demand for cybersecurity and national security intensifies, expect even higher premiums for specialized skills, especially in tech-driven fields.

In response to economic pressures and the need to attract top talent, employers may enhance their benefits packages, moving beyond mere salary hikes. Expect to see a rise in comprehensive programs, including flexible working conditions, robust parental leave, and financial wellness support. These initiatives will not only help mitigate rising living costs but also cater to the diverse needs of the workforce. It’s all about keeping compensation packages competitive and appealing, in order to increase job satisfaction in an evolving landscape.

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.



1,705,330

Registered Candidates



121,036

Monthly Connections



60,019

Monthly Job Listings



2,063

Hiring Companies



412,459

Searchable Profiles



14,762

New Monthly Candidates



9,855

Active Recruiters



95

Networking Groups



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SURVEY

This report focuses on the findings for the 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 ClearanceJobs annual compensation surveys.

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, these are the respondent numbers for each of the five years:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
19,413	20,548	24,089	22,368	14,251

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. 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.



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END-TO-END CLEARED HIRING SOLUTIONS



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- 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.



SOURCING SERVICES [↗](#)

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



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- Amplify your hiring messages using targeted messaging, site advertising and sponsored content.

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