

2009

Security Clearance Jobs Salary Survey Results

A comprehensive salary survey of 5,023 security-cleared job seekers registered on ClearanceJobs.com between February 21, 2008 and April 26, 2009



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Top 10 Highest Salaries by Geography

Key Points:

- **Nationwide average salary for security-cleared professionals increased two percent to \$73,961**
- **For the fifth survey in a row, Washington, D.C. continued its reign as the highest paid location for security-cleared professionals**
- **Texas and North Carolina claimed the largest salary increases of seven percent**

Despite the deepest recession in generations, professionals holding active government security clearances are enjoying a nationwide average pay increase of nearly two percent to \$73,961 in 2009. This increase is on top of the six percent salary advance garnered in last year's results.

For the fifth consecutive survey, respondents in Washington D.C. chalked the highest annual compensation at \$82,874, a gain of three percent from 2008. The sheer number of federal agencies and contractors in and around the district means a revolving door of vacancies requiring clearance. The Department of Labor estimates that 60 percent of the federal workforce will be eligible for retirement in the next ten years, creating a solid long-term outlook for both job availability and compensation in the nation's capital.

Nipping on D.C.'s heels, Virginia-based professionals earned on average \$80,135, a three percent increase versus a year ago and Maryland based professionals' salaries increased one percent to \$73,471. In Maryland, fluctuations in the workforce from the military's Base Realignment and Closure initiative may be having an impact on average compensation as cleared professionals move from other lower-cost geographies to take advantage of the new positions in Maryland.

Salaries in both Texas and North Carolina increased sharply, nearly seven percent in both states to \$64,207

State	2009	2008	% Inc/Dec
DC	\$ 82,874	\$ 80,380	3.1%
VA	\$ 80,135	\$ 78,043	2.7%
CO	\$ 74,000	\$ 74,448	-0.6%
MD	\$ 73,471	\$ 72,844	0.9%
CA	\$ 73,636	\$ 70,874	3.9%
AZ	\$ 68,000	\$ 67,020	1.5%
FL	\$ 65,962	\$ 66,128	-0.3%
TX	\$ 64,207	\$ 60,252	6.6%
GA	\$ 61,022	\$ 59,150	3.2%
NC	\$ 58,506	\$ 54,788	6.8%

and \$58,506, respectively. While the salaries in these two states are less than a number of other regions, the cost of living is substantially lower — an offsetting factor for cleared workers.

In Texas, an area rife with military installations, security clearance jobs are brimming with high tech firms and those in the business of defense. Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics all have operations in the state. Additionally, San Antonio's Lackland Air Force Base was recently selected as the headquarters for that branch's Cyber Command drawing on the region's deep expertise in technology.

The military facilities of North Carolina were originally located in remote areas, however, "defense cities" have sprung up. ClearanceJobs has seen a 12 percent increase in jobs posted in North Carolina in the last year. In fact, Fayetteville is expecting thousands of new residents to region when the Army's Forces Command headquarters at Fort Bragg is opened in 2011.



Clearance Level

Key Points:

- **Salaries rise as clearance level increases**
- **After strong gains, average salaries for professionals with Confidential clearance slip**

Since the level of classification denotes the degree of protection required for information and the amount of damage that unauthorized disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause national security, it is no surprise that professionals holding higher security clearance receive higher compensation.

In 2009, NSA or CIA cleared professionals averaged nearly \$96,000 in compensation, substantially more than the lowest Confidential clearance at almost \$62,000. After several years of strong gains, professionals holding the Confidential clearance average salaries fell four percent. Economic factors are likely playing a role as companies have been reporting slight pressure on salaries of new hires.

The Department of Defense estimated spending at least \$300 million in Fiscal 2008 on personnel security clearance investigations. The trend of increasing salaries at higher levels of clearance is intact, because stricter requirements reduce the pool of potential cleared candidates for hire.

Clearance Level	2009	2008	% Inc/Dec
NSA or CIA issued	\$ 95,988	\$ 94,667	1.4%
DoD Top Secret	\$ 77,979	\$ 76,414	2.0%
DoD Secret	\$ 67,001	\$ 65,425	2.4%
DoD Confidential	\$ 61,892	\$ 64,375	-3.9%

Polygraph Level

Key Points:

- **Earnings potential increases along with level of polygraph**
- **Salaries increase at least 10% with the most commonly used polygraph**

The purpose of a polygraph exam is to assist in determining whether or not an applicant can be trusted with sensitive information. For screening purposes, two types of polygraph exams exist, and either may be administered.

A Counterintelligence Polygraph is the most commonly used. This type of polygraph asks the candidate questions to determine whether the examinee ever had any involvement with or knowledge of espionage/sabotage against the United States, unauthorized contact with representatives of a foreign government, or disclosure of classified material.

A Lifestyle Polygraph asks questions that concern the subject's personal life and past and present conduct. A Lifestyle Polygraph attempts to look for issues in a person's private life for which he or she might be susceptible to blackmail or coercion.

A Full Scope Polygraph is a combination of both the Counterintelligence and Lifestyle polygraphs.

Survey results indicate security-cleared professionals with polygraphs earned at least 10% more than their non-polygraphed counterparts. Many workers with polygraphs polled as working for the National Security Agency, noted on ClearanceJobs.com as the highest paying Federal agency.

Polygraph Level	2009	2008
Lifestyle or Fullscope Polygraph	\$ 90,024	\$ 87,836
Counter Intelligence Polygraph	\$ 80,968	\$ 80,162
No Polygraph	\$ 72,315	\$ 71,110

Satisfaction

Key Points:

- **70% of survey respondents are satisfied with their present careers, an increase from last year's 67% satisfaction rate**
- **Salary satisfaction essentially steady at 60%**

Despite an average salary gain that was a third of the increase security-cleared professionals received in 2008, 70 percent of respondents noted they are satisfied with their current job, an increase from 67 percent satisfaction last year.

There has been much empirical research that states job satisfaction doesn't solely come from salaries. However with other industries suffering more from the turbulent economy than the defense or homeland security sectors, the gain in satisfaction may simply be security-cleared professionals recognizing the coveted stability their status affords them, in conjunction with continued solid demand for their services.

Likewise, the majority or 60 percent of survey respondents are satisfied with their current salaries. However, 22 percent of respondents are dissatisfied with their current compensation which is steady with last year.

Job Satisfaction	2009	2008
Very satisfied	37%	35%
Somewhat satisfied	33%	32%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15%	16%
Somewhat dissatisfied	11%	12%
Very dissatisfied	4%	5%

Salary Satisfaction	2009	2008
Very satisfied	24%	24%
Somewhat satisfied	36%	35%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18%	19%
Somewhat dissatisfied	16%	16%
Very dissatisfied	6%	6%

Employer Type

Key Points:

- **Salary gap widens between security-cleared government contractors and cleared civil servants**

The salary gap between government employees (\$62,615) and government contractors (\$83,212) widened in 2009 with contractors earning roughly \$20,000 more than civil servants.

The slight decline in civil servants salary from 2008 is most likely a difference in the mix of respondents. In December of 2008, President George W. Bush signed an executive order implementing an annual increase in federal employee pay which would average 3.9% across-the-board. The pay increase was implemented in January of 2009.

Salary is not the only determining factor when choosing between government or contractor positions. The decisions are complex and security-cleared professionals typically weigh excellent healthcare and retirement benefits, as well as meaningful work and a structured promotion ladder.

Employer Type	2009	2008	% Inc/Dec
Government Contractor	\$ 83,212	\$ 80,688	3.1%
Government Employee	\$ 62,615	\$ 63,153	-0.9%

War Zone

- **Salaries for cleared workers in Afghanistan surged by seven percent to \$106,321**

Salaries for cleared workers in Afghanistan surged by seven percent to \$106,321, while salaries of their counterparts in Iraq increased slightly to \$106,839. The closing of the pay gap between the two war zones echoes the elevation of the United States' focus in Afghanistan.

In fact, the number of job postings on ClearanceJobs with work located in Afghanistan surged 170 percent over the past year, while openings in Iraq grew 58 percent over the same time frame.

War Zone	2009	2008	% Inc/Dec
Iraq	\$ 106,839	\$ 106,086	0.7%
Afghanistan	\$ 106,321	\$ 99,735	6.6%

Top 20 Highest Salaries by Job Category

- **Top five roles earn on average more than \$100,000 per year**
- **Double-digit gains in salaries for Engineering – Military Hardware & Software, Network Design, Software Development and Linguists**

Information technology roles dominate the highest salaries earned by security-cleared professionals. Five of the top ten paid positions now earn more than \$100,000 per year, up from three job categories a year ago. New to the list: Software Development and Java/J2EE.

The unemployment rate for technology professionals has been significantly under the national average and many skill sets are still considered hard to find. Couple that with the need for professionals with active security clearance and capabilities shortfalls are likely to put upward pressure on salaries.

The recent White House budget proposes converting 33,000 defense contract jobs into federal jobs by 2015, including 20,000 acquisition-related workers. Positions are expected to include 2,500 program management, systems engineers logistical and business management professionals which the department expects to come from contractor conversions.

While this potential insourcing of talent could occur, the overall supply/demand balance is unlikely to shift given the long-term demographic trends facing the country and in particular the technology community.

Job Title	2009	2008
IT Management-Executive	\$ 119,914	\$ 116,935
Database Admin-Oracle	\$ 104,559	\$ 101,905
Software Development	\$ 101,875	\$ 91,273
IT Software-Java/J2EE	\$ 100,333	\$ 93,036
IT Management-Project Manager	\$ 100,252	\$ 100,089
Project/Program Management	\$ 99,378	\$ 94,231
Engineering-Military Hardware	\$ 97,308	\$ 80,625
Network/LAN/WAN Design	\$ 97,105	\$ 84,545
Engineering-Aerospace / Aviation	\$ 95,921	\$ 92,923
Engineering-Military Software	\$ 92,135	\$ 82,821
Systems Engineer	\$ 91,348	\$ 93,202
IT Software-Prog	\$ 90,691	\$ 83,125
Security-Network Management	\$ 90,000	\$ 83,309
Engineering-Telecommunications	\$ 80,857	\$ 76,293
Contract Admin	\$ 80,500	\$ 78,600
IT Hardware-Unix	\$ 80,294	\$ 82,708
Linguist, Translator or Interpreter	\$ 78,160	\$ 70,952
Security-Intrusion Detection	\$ 77,606	\$ 83,158
Engineering-Electrical	\$ 72,394	\$ 80,392
Engineering-RF	\$ 68,750	\$ 80,500