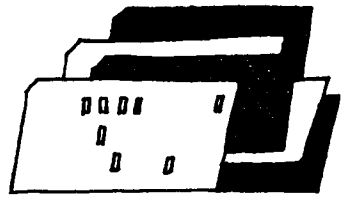
Research Summaries



Occupational salary levels for white-collar workers, 1984

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Average salaries increased at the lowest rates in more than 10 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' March 1984 survey of pay for professional, administrative, technical, and clerical occupations in medium and large firms. Salary levels rose between 3 and 6 percent for most of the 25 occupations compared with the March 1983 survey. In contrast, occupational salary increases averaged about 7 percent yearly during the 1970's and rose to more than 9 percent in 1981 and 1982. (See table 1.) The annual survey is used in the pay comparability process for Federal white-collar employees.[1]

Although the survey focuses on individual occupations and work levels, it also permits a look at salary trends by skill level. In this connection, occupational work levels were grouped into three broad categories of skill levels comparable to grades 1 to 4, 5 to 9, and 11 to 15, respectively, of the Federal Government's General Schedule (GS). (See table 2 for identification of the survey job classifications by GS grade.) Cumulative percentage increases over the past 10 years have been largest for the higher levels (120.1 percent), and 8 to 9 percentage points more than for lower (111.1) and middle groups (112.1). In 1983–84, pay increases for the highest skill group also set the pace, averaging 5.3 percent, compared with 5.0 percent for the middle group and 3.6 percent for the lowest group.

A closer look at some individual job classifications reveals that the pay differential between many entry-level professionals and their experienced coworkers widened during the decade, as the latter generally recorded substantially larger salary increases. The following tabulation illustrates this point for 3 of 4 professional occupations. It shows average salaries for journeyman classifications (GS–11 equivalents) as a percent of the average paid to their corresponding entry levels (GS–5).[2]

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Table 1. Percent increases in occupational pay levels, national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, March 1970 to March 1984

Occupation	Average annual percent increases				
	1970 to 1980[1]	1980 to 1981	1981 to 1982	1982 to 1983	1983 to 1984
Accountants	7.3	10.0	9.6	6.9	4.7
Chief accountants	7.9	9.5	11.4	4.2	5.7
Auditors	6.6	10.3	9.4	6.1	8.0
Public accountants	(1)	7.9	6.6	7.1	2.3
Job analysts	7.0	7.6	9.2	6.7	5.3
Directors of personnel	7.8	11.4	9.6	8.3	5.3
Attorneys	7.0	9.8	11.4	7.6	4.8
Buyers	7.0	9.8	9.4	6.2	5.3
Chemists	7.2	9.4	10.4	5.8	5.3
Engineers	7.0	10.9	10.2	7.1	5.2
Engineering technicians	7.2	10.2	9.4	5.9	4.9
Drafters	7.3	10.9	8.4	7.6	3.6
Computer operators	(1)	—	8.9	6.8	—
Photographers	(1)	—	9.7	8.1	6.9
Programmers/programmer analysts	(1)	—	—	6.5	—
Systems analysts	—	—	—	—	—
Accounting clerks	6.7	9.6	8.9	8.1	3.8
File clerks	6.9	8.0	7.2	6.4	2.1
Key entry operators	7.3	8.2	9.4	7.3	3.4
Messengers	6.7	9.7	6.4	9.2	2.9
Personnel clerks/assistants	(1)	—	10.2	9.7	5.4
Purchasing assistants	(1)	—	—	9.3	6.8
Secretaries	(1)	—	9.2	7.1	5.0
Stenographers	8.4	12.1	13.8	8.6	5.5
Typists	7.1	10.2	10.1	6.8	2.0

[1]Average was not computed when data were available for fewer than 8 years.

NOTE: Dashes indicate that data were not available for one or more years because the survey occupation was newly added or the definition was revised.

	1974	*1984*
Accountant	165	180
Auditor	169	190
Chemist	162	174
Engineer	151	149

It is noteworthy, however, that the pay relationship for engineers was essentially unchanged since 1974 because the strong demand for engineers had bolstered their starting salaries. This practice becomes evident when engineering salaries are compared with those of another technical profession—chemist. In 1984, the average salary for entry-level engineers was 21 percent higher than that for starting chemists, while at the journeyman level the difference was 4 percent (table 2). Ten years earlier, engineers I held a 12-percent pay advantage over chemists I, while the differential was 4 percent at the journeyman level.

Table 2. Average salaries for selected occupations, national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, March 1984

Occupational level and Federal GS grade equivalent	Number of employees[1]	Average annual salaries[2]
Accountants and auditors		
Accountants I (GS-5)	13,183	$19,843
Accountants II (GS-7)	23,559	24,325
Accountants III (GS-9)	38,763	28,721
Accountants IV (GS-11)	22,717	35,715
Accountants V (GS-12)	8,114	44,466
Accountants VI (GS-13)	1,836	55,618
Chief accountants I (GS-11)	650	35,199
Chief accountants II (GS-12)	1,383	44,128
Chief accountants III (GS-13)	899	56,816
Chief accountants IV (GS-14)	176	69,838
Auditors I (GS-5)	1,362	19,671
Auditors II (GS-7)	3,625	25,391
Auditors III (GS-9)	4,607	30,209
Auditors IV (GS-11)	2,421	37,378
Public accountants I (GS-7)	9,264	19,142
Public accountants II (GS-9)	9,335	21,164
Public accountants III (GS-11)	7,067	24,702
Public accountants IV (GS-12)	4,345	29,663
Attorneys		
Attorneys I (GS-9)	1,186	28,918
Attorneys II (GS-11)	2,965	35,238
Attorneys III (GS-12)	3,938	44,743
Attorneys IV (GS-13)	3,340	55,462
Attorneys V (GS-14)	1,827	70,478
Attorneys VI (GS-15)	541	87,568
Buyers		
Buyers I (GS-5)	6,234	20,225
Buyers II (GS-7)	17,840	24,675
Buyers III (GS-9)	18,285	30,610
Buyers IV (GS-11)	5,941	37,843
Programmers and systems analysts		
Programmers/Programmer analysts I (GS-5)	13,339	19,801
Programmers/Programmer analysts II (GS-7)	33,626	22,815
Programmers/Programmer analysts III (GS-9)	42,777	27,158
Programmers/Programmer analysts IV (GS-11)	16,546	31,929
Programmers/Programmer analysts V (GS-12)	7,296	38,868
Systems analysts I (GS-9)	16,127	27,084
Systems analysts II (GS-10)	34,702	32,324
Systems analysts III (GS-12)	28,321	38,057
Systems analysts IV (GS-13)	10,375	44,748
Systems analysts V (GS-14)	2,140	53,917
Personnel management		
Job analysts II (GS-7)	474	22,845
Job analysts III (GS-9)	832	27,987
Job analysts IV (GS-11)	610	34,880
Directors of personnel I (GS-11)	1,674	35,444
Directors of personnel II (GS-12)	2,288	42,620
Directors of personnel III (GS-13)	1,231	55,717
Directors of personnel IV (GS-14)	452	65,874
Chemists and engineers		
Chemists I (GS-5)	2,395	21,609
Chemists II (GS-7)	5,891	25,481
Chemists III (GS-9)	9,777	30,441
Chemists IV (GS-11)	9,996	37,643
Chemists V (GS-12)	7,815	45,614
Chemists VI (GS-13)	3,290	$54,163
Chemists VII (GS-14)	1,122	63,072
Engineers I (GS-5)	27,872	26,163
Engineers II (GS-7)	67,872	28,899
Engineers III (GS-9)	135,792	32,761
Engineers IV (GS-11)	145,728	39,005
Engineers V (GS-12)	100,411	46,349
Engineers VI (GS-13)	49,013	53,749
Engineers VII (GS-14)	13,435	61,166
Engineers VIII (GS-15)	2,590	70,788
Technical support		
Engineering technicians I (GS-3)	4,626	16,169
Engineering technicians II (GS-4)	19,229	18,733
Engineering technicians III (GS-5)	31,920	22,351
Engineering technicians IV (GS-7)	39,016	26,362
Engineering technicians V (GS-9)	22,702	30,084
Drafters I (GS-2)	1,961	12,596
Drafters II (GS-3)	10,126	16,120
Drafters III (GS-4)	19,886	19,098
Drafters IV (GS-5)	22,584	23,067
Drafters V (GS-7)	17,358	29,057
Computer operators I (GS-4)	8,955	13,068
Computer operators II (GS-5)	30,855	16,337
Computer operators III (GS-6)	24,370	19,743
Computer operators IV (GS-7)	8,816	23,107
Computer operators V (GS-8)	1,479	27,223
Photographers I (GS-4)	144	17,348
Photographers II (GS-5)	720	21,738
Photographers III (GS-7)	724	25,974
Photographers IV (GS-9)	364	28,749
Clerical		
Accounting clerks I (GS-2)	27,873	11,704
Accounting clerks II (GS-3)	79,368	14,060
Accounting clerks III (GS-4)	58,863	16,527
Accounting clerks IV (GS-5)	17,286	20,244
File clerks I (GS-1)	16,026	9,869
File clerks II (GS-2)	9,102	11,331
File clerks III (GS-3)	2,746	13,576
Key entry operators I (GS-2)	50,685	12,811
Key entry operators II (GS-3)	32,473	15,898
Messengers (GS-1)	10,647	11,230
Personnel clerks/Assistants I (GS-3)	2,024	13,379
Personnel clerks/Assistants II (GS-4)	3,388	16,160
Personnel clerks/Assistants III (GS-5)	2,896	18,268
Personnel clerks/Assistants IV (GS-6)	1,222	21,830
Purchasing assistants I (GS-4)	4,426	15,629
Purchasing assistants II (GS-5)	4,162	20,001
Purchasing assistants III (GS-6)	1,080	26,916
Secretaries I (GS-4)	58,242	15,296
Secretaries II (GS-5)	55,132	16,920
Secretaries III (GS-6)	114,459	19,053
Secretaries IV (GS-7)	47,241	21,525
Secretaries V (GS-8)	18,627	24,700
Stenographers I (GS-3)	10,012	17,241
Stenographers II (GS-4)	6,831	20,376
Typists I (GS-2)	24,405	11,793
Typists II (GS-3)	13,951	15,150

[1]Occupational employment estimates relate to the total in all establishments within scope of the survey and not to the number actually surveyed.

[2]Salaries reported relate to the standard salaries that were paid for standard work schedules, that is, the straight-time salary corresponding to employee's normal work schedule excluding overtime hours. Nonproduction bonuses are excluded, but cost-of-living adjustments and incentive earnings are included.

NOTE: The following occupational levels were surveyed but insufficient data were obtained to warrant publication: chief accountants V, directors of personnel V, job analysts I, chemists VIII, computer operators VI, systems analysts VI, personnel clerks/assistants V, and photographers V.

In 1984, the survey's highest salary average was for top-level (VI) corporate attorneys at $87,568 a year; this was more than four times the average for most entry-level professional classifications studied. These extremes reflect the wide range of duties and responsibilities represented by all professional categories covered by the survey. In the clerical area, differing functions and skill levels also produce wide pay variations, although not as wide as for professionals. For example, annual pay averages for top-level secretaries (V) ($24,700) and purchasing assistants (III) ($26,916) were 2.5 times the average of clerks ($9,869) doing routine filing. In contrast, the typical spread among job categories with equivalent levels of work, for example, accountants I and accounting clerks IV, was relatively narrow. (See table 2.)

The Bureau recently added two computer science occupations to the survey—programmers in 1982 and systems analysts in 1984. Programmer/programmer analyst trainees (level I) averaged $19,801 a year; this was approximately half the average of level V workers who plan and direct large computer programming projects or solve unusually complex programming problems. Computer systems analysts I averaged $27,084 a year. This level includes workers who are familiar with systems analysis procedures and are working independently on routine problems. Systems analysts V, the highest level for which data could be presented, averaged $53,917 a year. At this level, analysts work as top technical specialists on extremely complex systems or are senior managers responsible for the development and maintenance of large and complex systems.

A DETAILED ANALYSIS of white-collar salaries and complete results of this year's survey are contained in the *National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay, March 1984*, BLS Bulletin 2208, September 1984. It includes salary distributions by occupational work level, and relative employment and salary levels by industry division for the 25 occupations studied. □

FOOTNOTES

[1] The National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay (PATC) is conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but survey occupations and coverage such as establishment size and the private sector industries to be included are determined by the President's Pay Agent—the Secretary of Labor and the Directors of the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management. The Agent has designated the industrial coverage and minimum size establishment as follows: manufacturing, 100 or 250 employees; mining and construction, 250 employees; wholesale trade, 100 employees; retail trade, 250 employees; finance, insurance, and real estate, 100 employees; and selected services, 50 or 100 employees. The pay-setting role of the PATC survey is described in George L. Stelluto's "Federal pay comparability: facts to temper the debate," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1979, pp. 18–28.

[2] A similar pattern was found for the 1974–84 period in the salary relationship of recent law school graduates with bar membership (attorneys I, GS–9 equivalents) and attorneys with experience handling legal work with few precedents (attorneys III, GS–12 equivalents). The salary relatives were 148 in 1974 and 155 in 1984.

In the survey coding structure, the level designations among various occupations are not synonymous: For example, the first level of attorneys equates to the third levels of accountants, chemists, and most other professional and administrative occupations. Classification of employees in the occupations and work levels surveyed is based on factors detailed in definitions which are available upon request.