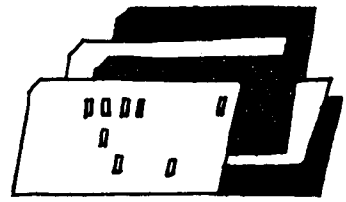
Research Summaries



Occupational salary levels for white-collar workers, 1985

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White-collar salaries increased moderately between March 1984 and March 1985, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 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 those in the March 1984 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 before starting to drop back in 1983. (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 5 years have been largest for the higher levels (45.4 percent)—5 to 6 percentage points more than for middle (40.8) and lower (39.4) groups. In 1984–85, pay increases for the highest skill group again set the pace, averaging 5.9 percent, compared with 4.2 percent for each of the other two groups.

A closer look at some individual job classifications reveals that the pay differential between entry-level professionals and their experienced coworkers widened during the first half of the 1980's, as the latter generally recorded substantially larger salary increases. The following tabulation illustrates this point for four 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]

	1980	*1985*
Accountant	173	183
Auditor	180	186
Chemist	171	174
Engineer	147	150

It is noteworthy that the journeyman to entry-level differential for engineers continues to be much smaller than for the other professions studied. To a great extent, this reflects the strong demand for engineers that has bolstered their starting salaries. For example, in 1985, 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).

In 1985, the survey's highest salary average was for top-level (VI) corporate attorneys at $91,690 a year; this was more than four times the average for most entry-level professional classifications studied. These extremes reflect the wide

Table 1. Percent increases in occupational pay levels, national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, March 1970 to March 1985

Occupation	Average annual percent increases					
	1970 to 1980[1]	1980 to 1981	1981 to 1982	1982 to 1983	1983 to 1984	1984 to 1985
Accountants	7.3	10.0	9.6	6.9	4.7	4.8
Chief accountants	7.9	9.5	11.4	4.2	5.7	6.2
Auditors	6.6	10.3	9.4	6.1	8.0	3.8
Public accountants	(1)	7.9	6.6	7.1	2.3	4.3
Job analysts	7.0	7.6	9.2	6.7	5.3	5.8
Directors of personnel	7.8	11.4	9.6	8.3	5.3	6.5
Attorneys	7.0	9.8	11.4	7.6	4.8	5.9
Buyers	7.0	9.8	9.4	6.2	5.3	3.8
Chemists	7.2	9.4	10.4	5.8	5.3	5.6
Engineers	7.0	10.9	10.2	7.1	5.2	4.9
Engineering technicians	7.2	10.2	9.4	5.9	4.9	3.7
Drafters	7.3	10.9	8.4	7.6	3.6	3.7
Computer operators	(1)	—	8.9	6.8	—	4.2
Photographers	(1)	—	9.7	8.1	6.9	2.3
Computer programmers	(1)	—	—	6.5	—	4.5
Systems analysts	—	—	—	—	—	4.0
Accounting clerks	6.7	9.6	8.9	8.1	3.8	4.8
File clerks	6.9	8.0	7.2	6.4	2.1	3.7
Key entry operators	7.3	8.2	9.4	7.3	3.4	3.6
Messengers	6.7	9.7	6.4	9.2	2.9	4.1
Personnel clerks/assistants	(1)	—	10.2	9.7	5.4	2.7
Purchasing assistants	(1)	—	—	9.3	6.8	5.1
Secretaries	(1)	—	9.2	7.1	5.0	4.7
Stenographers	8.4	12.1	13.8	8.6	5.5	4.9
Typists	7.1	10.2	10.1	6.8	2.0	5.9

[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.

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Table 2. Average salaries for selected occupations, national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, March 1985

Occupational level and Federal GS grade equivalent	Number of employees[1]	Average annual salaries[2]
Accountants and auditors		
Accountants I (GS-5)	12,465	$20,577
Accountants II (GS-7)	22,874	25,349
Accountants III (GS-9)	36,599	30,037
Accountants IV (GS-11)	21,232	37,607
Accountants V (GS-12)	7,841	46,879
Accountants VI (GS-13)	1,612	59,519
Chief accountants I (GS-11)	764	37,557
Chief accountants II (GS-12)	1,127	46,517
Chief accountants III (GS-13)	648	60,466
Chief accountants IV (GS-14)	224	74,735
Auditors I (GS-5)	1,855	21,128
Auditors II (GS-7)	3,627	25,854
Auditors III (GS-9)	5,185	31,246
Auditors IV (GS-11)	2,345	39,243
Public accountants I (GS-7)	10,596	19,657
Public accountants II (GS-9)	9,886	22,134
Public accountants III (GS-11)	8,221	25,891
Public accountants IV (GS-12)	3,877	31,416
Attorneys		
Attorneys I (GS-9)	1,184	29,886
Attorneys II (GS-11)	3,046	37,256
Attorneys III (GS-12)	4,556	47,742
Attorneys IV (GS-13)	3,466	59,087
Attorneys V (GS-14)	1,823	73,805
Attorneys VI (GS-15)	481	91,690
Buyers		
Buyers I (GS-5)	6,373	20,896
Buyers II (GS-7)	18,061	25,606
Buyers III (GS-9)	18,224	31,774
Buyers IV (GS-11)	5,545	39,306
Programmers and systems analysts		
Computer programmers I (GS-5)	14,201	20,318
Computer programmers II (GS-7)	34,235	23,690
Computer programmers III (GS-9)	44,128	28,367
Computer programmers IV (GS-11)	19,279	33,708
Computer programmers V (GS-12)	8,517	41,288
Systems analysts I (GS-9	20,649	28,197
Systems analysts II (GS-11)	42,666	33,465
Systems analysts III (GS-12)	34,202	39,663
Systems analysts IV (GS-13)	12,785	46,729
Systems analysts V (GS-14)	2,688	56,461
Systems analysts VI (GS-15)	179	68,809
Personnel management		
Job analysts I (GS-5)	157	20,774
Job analysts II (GS-7)	472	23,602
Job analysts III (GS-9)	670	29,905
Job analysts IV (GS-11)	590	36,983
Directors of personnel I (GS-11)	1,767	37,173
Directors of personnel II (GS-12)	2,079	45,764
Directors of personnel III (GS-13)	1,233	59,317
Directors of personnel IV (GS-14)	363	70,663
Chemists and engineers		
Chemists I (GS-5)	3,096	22,631
Chemists II (GS-7)	5,768	26,722
Chemists III (GS-9)	9,609	32,461
Chemists IV (GS-11)	10,101	39,418
Chemists V (GS-12)	8,843	47,706
Chemists and engineers—Continued		
Chemists VI (GS-13)	4,174	$58,210
Chemists VII (GS-14)	1,093	68,710
Engineers I (GS-5)	31,121	27,405
Engineers II (GS-7)	59,275	30,275
Engineers III (GS-9)	135,494	34,348
Engineers IV (GS-11)	148,785	40,991
Engineers V (GS-12)	106,966	48,366
Engineers VI (GS-13)	54,701	56,136
Engineers VII (GS-14)	13,958	65,641
Engineers VIII (GS-15)	2,490	76,205
Technical support		
Engineering technicians I (GS-3)	5,239	16,876
Engineering technicians II (GS-4)	18,697	19,339
Engineering technicians III (GS-5)	33,464	23,179
Engineering technicians IV (GS-7)	37,435	27,259
Engineering technicians V (GS-9)	19,717	31,386
Drafters I (GS-2)	2,135	13,208
Drafters II (GS-3)	8,190	16,488
Drafters III (GS-4)	19,336	20,006
Drafters IV (GS-5)	20,949	23,950
Drafters V (GS-7)	15,763	29,876
Computer operators I (GS-4)	9,305	13,670
Computer operators II (GS-5)	32,988	16,973
Computer operators III (GS-6)	23,039	20,664
Computer operators IV (GS-7)	8,573	24,016
Computer operators V (GS-8)	1,416	28,440
Photographers I (GS-4)	219	17,571
Photographers II (GS-5)	727	22,019
Photographers III (GS-7)	806	26,489
Photographers IV (GS-9)	365	30,210
Clerical		
Accounting clerks I (GS-2)	27,038	12,380
Accounting clerks II (GS-3)	76,029	14,728
Accounting clerks III (GS-4)	50,107	17,327
Accounting clerks IV (GS-5)	17,868	21,106
File clerks I (GS-1)	16,778	10,101
File clerks II (GS-2)	8,781	11,836
File clerks III (GS-3)	1,962	14,707
Key entry operators I (GS-2)	45,527	13,200
Key entry operators II (GS-3)	29,908	16,600
Messengers (GS-1)	9,356	11,685
Personnel clerks/Assistants I (GS-3)	1,787	14,023
Personnel clerks/Assistants II (GS-4)	3,120	16,375
Personnel clerks/Assistants III (GS-5)	2,545	18,870
Personnel clerks/Assistants IV (GS-6)	1,353	22,355
Purchasing assistants I (GS-4)	3,804	16,363
Purchasing assistants II (GS-5)	3,798	21,135
Purchasing assistants III (GS-6)	1,062	28,150
Secretaries I (GS-4)	53,266	15,869
Secretaries II (GS-5)	61,039	17,721
Secretaries III (GS-6)	111,029	19,988
Secretaries IV (GS-7)	47,854	22,520
Secretaries V (GS-8)	17,227	26,210
Stenographers I (GS-3)	9,093	18,391
Stenographers II (GS-4)	5,966	20,914
Typists I (GS-2)	19,976	12,621
Typists II (GS-3)	13,119	15,847

[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 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 accountant V; director of personnel V; chemist VIII; computer operator VI; personnel clerk/assistant V; and photographer V. The programmer/programmer analyst title has been shortened to "computer programmer" in 1985; the definition, however, is unchanged from 1984.

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 variations, although not as wide as for professionals. For example, annual pay averages for top-level secretaries (V) ($26,210) and purchasing assistants (III) ($28,150) were 2.5 times the average of clerks ($10,101) doing routine filing.

In contrast to these types of comparisons, the typical spread among job categories with equivalent levels of work, was relatively narrow. See, for example, accountants I and accounting clerks IV in table 2.

The Bureau's most recent additions to the survey were two computer science occupations—programmers in 1982 and systems analysts in 1984. Programmer trainees (level I) averaged $20,318 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 $28,197 a year. This level includes workers who are familiar with systems analysis procedures and are working independently on routine problems. Systems analysts VI averaged $68,809 a year. At this level, analysts are senior managers responsible for the development and maintenance of very 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 1985*, BLS Bulletin 2243, August 1985. 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 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, transportation, communications, and public utilities, 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] Except for engineers, this widening of differentials continues an earlier trend. For example, the journeyman to entry-level ratio in 1975 was 162 for accountants, 166 for auditors, and 163 for chemists. The engineer ratio was 151 in 1975.

A similar pattern was found for the 1980–85 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 158 in 1980 and 160 in 1985. (In 1975, the corresponding relative was 148.)

In the survey coding scheme, 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.