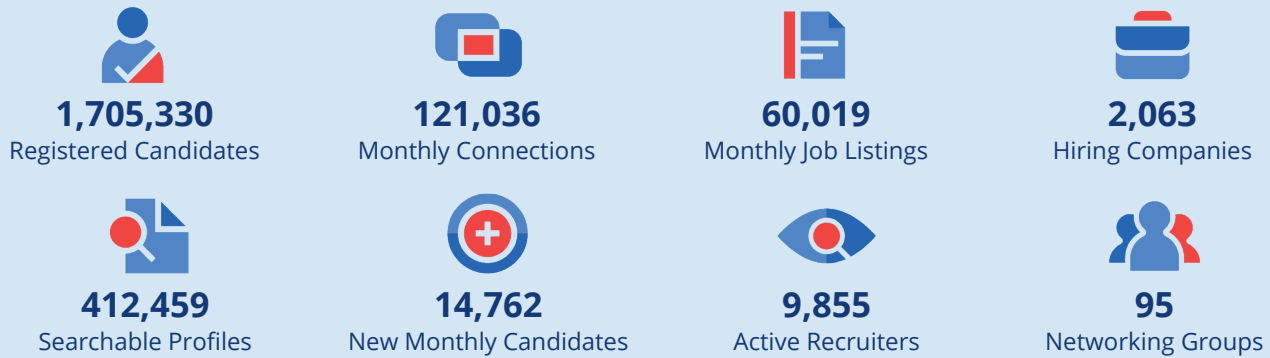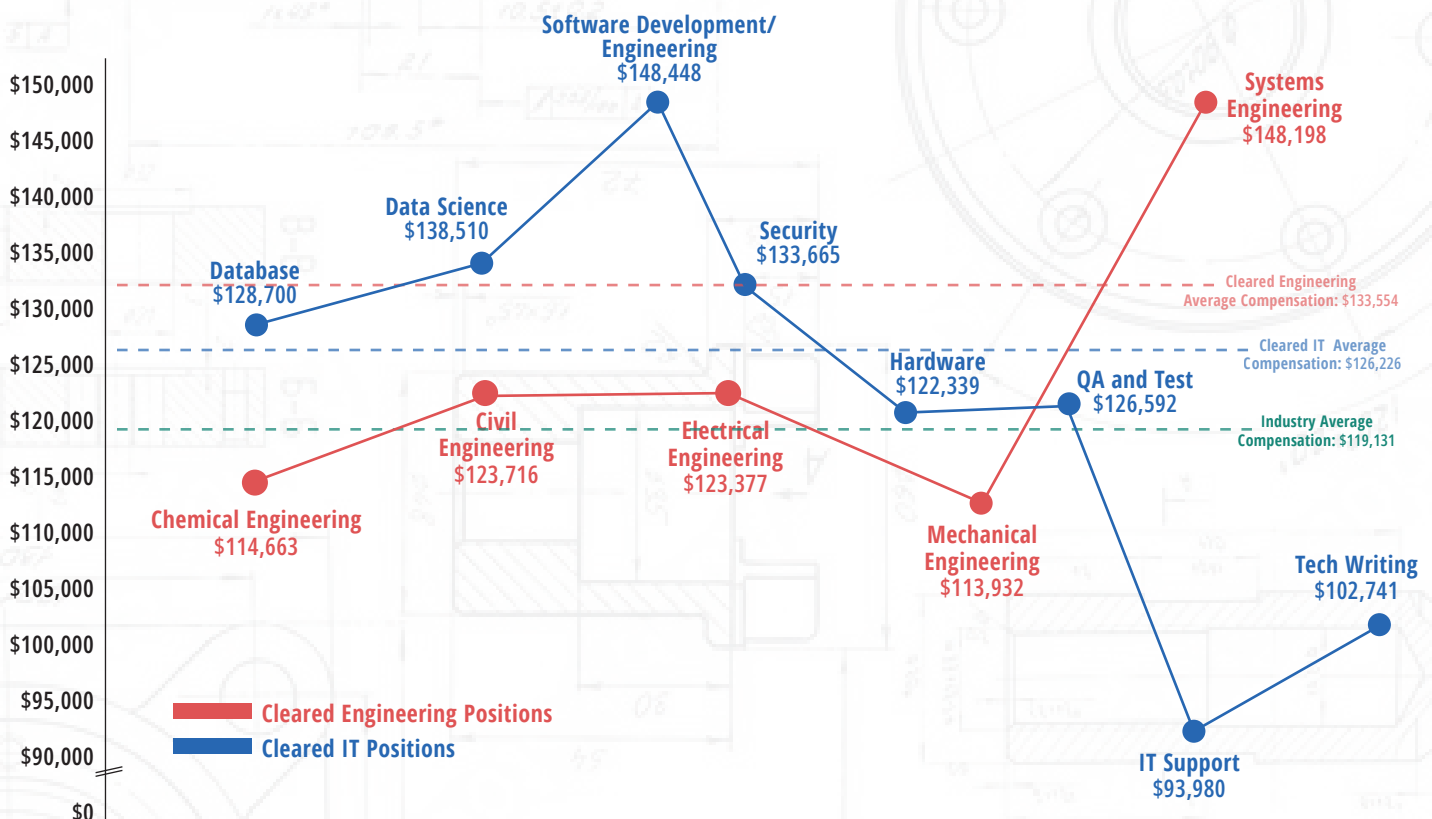# CLEARED ENGINEERING AND IT COMPENSATION

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

In the cleared world, tech and engineering professionals continue to raise the bar when it comes to compensation. According to the 2025 ClearanceJobs Security Clearance Compensation Report, the average total compensation across all respondents sits at $119,131. But zoom in on cleared IT and engineering roles, and that number climbs even higher—especially for engineers.

Not every tech or engineering job clears the industry average, but many do. Systems engineers and software developers are earning well into six figures, and even support and tech writing roles often nudge above national averages. If you're in a cleared technical role, odds are you're outpacing your peers across the broader cleared workforce—and in some cases, by a wide margin.

Total Average Compensation for Cleared Engineering and IT

Software Development/Engineering $148,448

Systems Engineering $148,198

Data Science $138,510

Security $133,665

Database $128,700

Cleared Engineering Average Compensation: $133,554

Cleared IT Average Compensation: $126,226

Hardware $122,339

QA and Test $126,592

Civil Engineering $123,716

Electrical Engineering $123,377

Industry Average Compensation: $119,131

Chemical Engineering $114,663

Mechanical Engineering $113,932

Tech Writing $102,741

IT Support $93,980

— Cleared Engineering Positions
— Cleared IT Positions

Security Clearances Levels and Polygraphs

When it comes to boosting your paycheck, a security clearance still reigns supreme. Cleared professionals with a TS/SCI clearance earn an average of $131,892—but engineers in that category average an impressive $154,731, while IT pros pull in $138,140. Higher-level clearances—and those associated with the Intelligence Community (IC)—often translate into higher salaries, and IT professionals dominate those high-clearance roles.

CLEARED ENGINEERING			CLEARED IT	
% OF RESPONDENTS	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION		AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
1%	$118,889	Dept of Defense Confidential	$110,960	<1%
44%	$112,403	Dept of Defense Secret	$105,715	32%
14%	$140,754	Dept of Defense Top Secret	$127,292	15%
29%	$154,731	Dept of Defense Top Secret/SCI	$138,140	36%
4%	$139,529	Dept of Energy (Q or L)	$128,681	1%
4%	$177,641	Intelligence Agency (CIA, FBI, NSA)	$179,847	6%
1%	$132,500	Dept of Homeland Security	$131,563	1%
1%	$128,455	Public Trust	$110,532	7%
2%	$136,973	Other Government Agency	$130,600	3%

It's still rare to find engineers with a full scope poly, but when you do, they're earning big. Cleared engineers with full scope polygraphs report an average compensation of $168,993—more than $30K higher than the cleared average. IT pros with full scopes aren't far behind, earning $150,963 on average.

CLEARED ENGINEERING AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS	POLYGRAPHY	% OF RESPONDENTS	CLEARED IT AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION
$162,735	15%	COUNTERINTELLIGENCE POLYGRAPH	15%	$126,445
$168,993	7%	LIFESTYLE OR FULL SCOPE POLYGRAPH	9%	$150,963
$125,038	79%	I DON'T HAVE A CURRENT POLYGRAPH	76%	$100,934

Career Level

Experience pays—literally. For engineers, total compensation grows steadily from just under $83K for newcomers to over $177K for managers. IT professionals follow a similar arc, starting around $74K and reaching beyond $167K in leadership roles. At the executive level, the earnings stretch even higher, with IT executives averaging nearly $240K.

The takeaway? Time in the industry pays off, but the leap to management or technical leadership is where you'll see the biggest jump.

Average Total
Compensation

% of
Respondents

Legend:
- ■ Cleared Engineering Positions (pink/red)
- ■ Cleared IT Positions (blue)

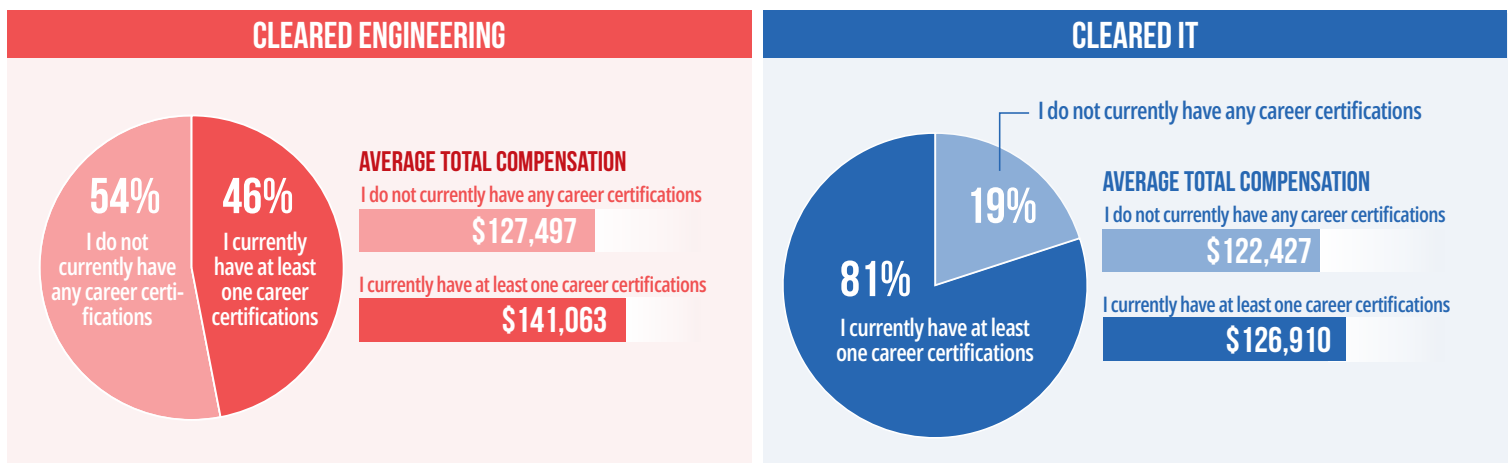| Career Level	Cleared Engineering Positions	% Resp (Eng)	Cleared IT Positions	% Resp (IT)
ENTRY LEVEL (less than 2 yrs experience)	$82,855	5%	$73,957	5%
EARLY CAREER (2+ yrs experience)	$94,545	11%	$89,312	13%
MID LEVEL CAREER (5+ yrs experience)	$114,160	23%	$112,951	29%
SENIOR LEVEL CAREER (10+ yrs experience)	$146,579	50%	$143,613	45%
MANAGEMENT (Manager/Director of Staff)	$177,608	9%	$167,727	6%
EXECUTIVE (SVP, EVP, VP)	$184,750	1%	$239,764	1%
SENIOR EXECUTIVE (President, CEO)	$229,667	1%	N/A*	<1%

* N/A due to low sample size

Education

A degree still matters in cleared IT and engineering, but it's not the only ticket to a six-figure salary. Most respondents hold a bachelor's or master's degree—and those with graduate degrees often see a sizable salary bump. But what really moves the needle is combining education with technical know-how, security clearance, and certifications.

A doctorate in engineering can net nearly $190K on average, and even those with trade or associate degrees are clearing six figures if they're in the right role.

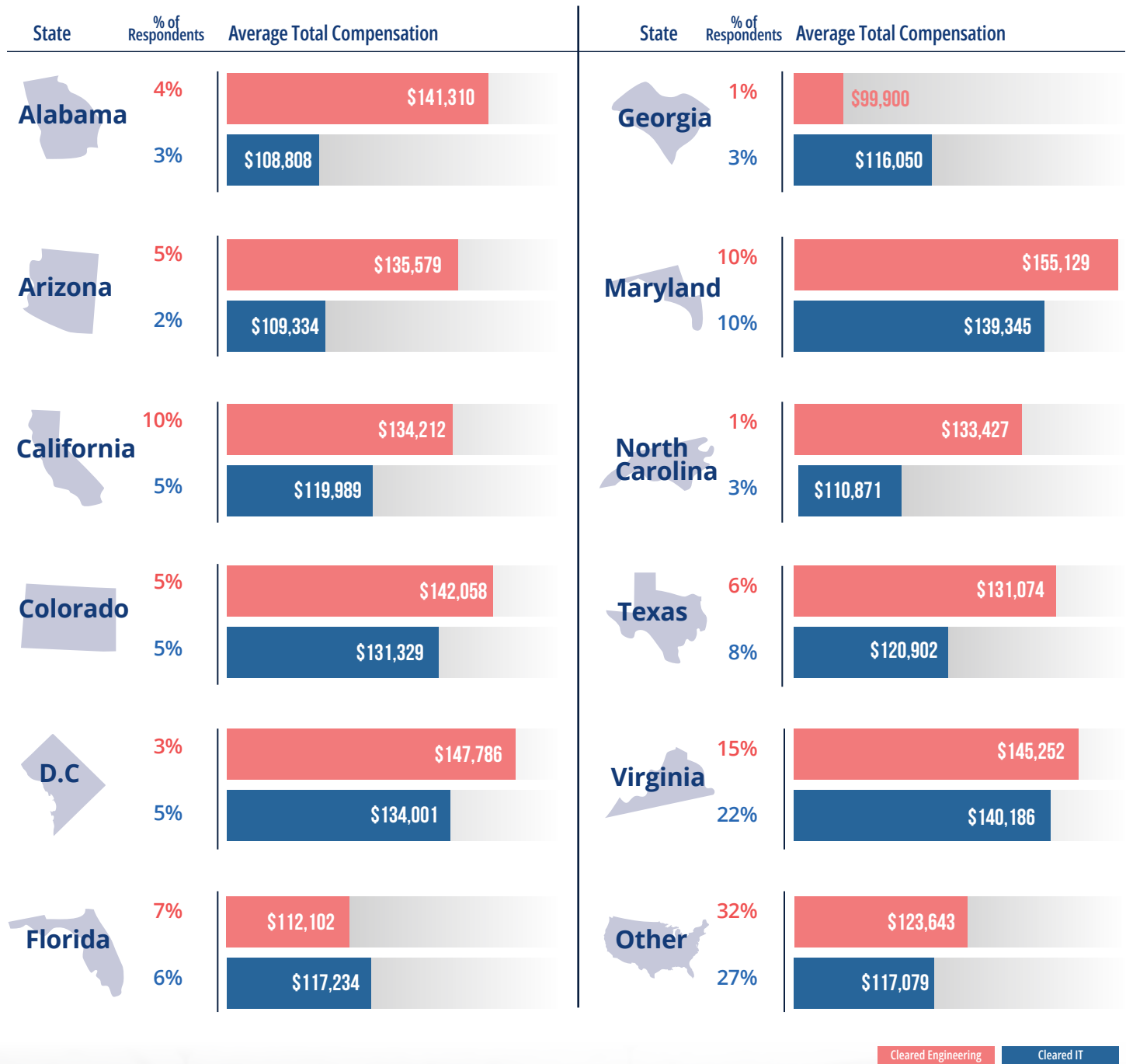| CLEARED ENGINEERING			CLEARED IT	
% OF RESPONDENTS	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION		AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
2%	$89,035	High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)	$111,156	3%
9%	$108,122	Some college credit, no degree	$108,702	15%
7%	$109,165	Trade/technical/vocational training	$106,639	3%
6%	$114,115	Associate degree	$102,704	10%
39%	$127,249	Bachelor's degree	$124,768	41%
30%	$154,303	Master's degree	$147,904	23%
1%	$162,000	Professional degree	$152,324	<1%
5%	$190,161	Doctorate degree	$166,311	1%
1%	$128,370	I prefer not to answer	$124,933	2%

Certifications

Certifications are the norm—especially in cleared IT. While fewer engineers carry certifications (46%), over 80% of IT professionals do. That number speaks to how essential these credentials are in day-to-day national security work. And while the compensation difference between having a certification and not may seem modest—just a few thousand dollars—it can be the key to staying employed and moving up in the industry.

CLEARED ENGINEERING

54% I do not currently have any career certifications

46% I currently have at least one career certifications

AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION
I do not currently have any career certifications
$127,497

I currently have at least one career certifications
$141,063

CLEARED IT

I do not currently have any career certifications
19%

81% I currently have at least one career certifications

AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION
I do not currently have any career certifications
$122,427

I currently have at least one career certifications
$126,910

Top States

Location still matters. Maryland leads the engineering salary race with an average of $155,129, while Virginia holds the top spot for IT at $140,186. Colorado and D.C. also stand out, offering strong compensation packages in both sectors.

While engineers are more geographically spread out, IT professionals tend to cluster in states with major federal hubs or defense contracting corridors. If you're chasing the money, a move might be worth it.

State	% of Respondents	Average Total Compensation	State	% of Respondents	Average Total Compensation
Alabama	4%	$141,310	Georgia	1%	$99,900
	3%	$108,808		3%	$116,050
Arizona	5%	$135,579	Maryland	10%	$155,129
	2%	$109,334		10%	$139,345
California	10%	$134,212	North Carolina	1%	$133,427
	5%	$119,989		3%	$110,871
Colorado	5%	$142,058	Texas	6%	$131,074
	5%	$131,329		8%	$120,902
D.C	3%	$147,786	Virginia	15%	$145,252
	5%	$134,001		22%	$140,186
Florida	7%	$112,102	Other	32%	$123,643
	6%	$117,234		27%	$117,079

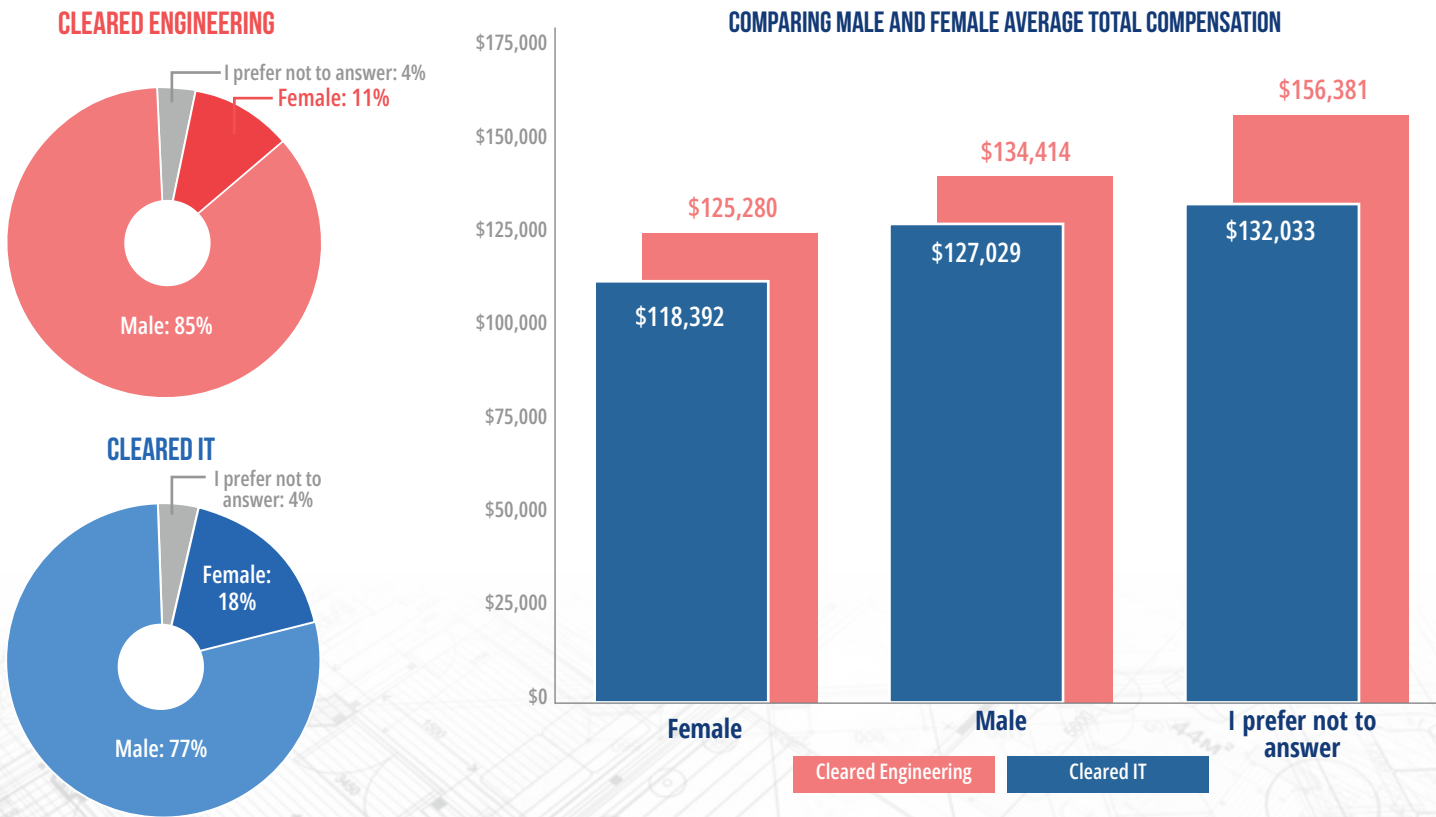Cleared Engineering   Cleared IT

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Demographics

Millennials continue to dominate the cleared IT and engineering workforce, making up 36% of engineers and 44% of IT professionals. Gen Z is showing up too—accounting for 14% of engineers and 12% of IT roles. While younger talent grows, it's Gen X and Boomers who continue to earn the highest salaries, with Boomers leading the pack in both fields.

CLEARED ENGINEERING			CLEARED IT	
% OF RESPONDENTS	AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION		AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
14%	$96,062	Generation Z (born 1997-2012)	$94,765	12%
36%	$125,407	Millennials (born 1981-96)	$118,171	44%
33%	$148,182	Generation X (born 1965-80)	$139,011	33%
17%	$153,787	Boomers (born 1946-64)	$144,116	11%
<1%	N/A	Silent (born 1945 or earlier)	N/A*	<1%

* N/A due to low sample size

In terms of gender, the cleared tech world remains male-dominated—just 11% of cleared engineers and 18% of cleared IT respondents identified as female. While the gap remains wide, compensation for women is only slightly below average, and in some cases on par with their male counterparts.

CLEARED ENGINEERING

I prefer not to answer: 4%
Female: 11%
Male: 85%

CLEARED IT

I prefer not to answer: 4%
Female: 18%
Male: 77%

COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE AVERAGE TOTAL COMPENSATION

Female: Cleared IT $118,392 / Cleared Engineering $125,280
Male: Cleared IT $127,029 / Cleared Engineering $134,414
I prefer not to answer: Cleared IT $132,033 / Cleared Engineering $156,381

Cleared Engineering   Cleared IT

Cleared Tech Job Market

The cleared tech job market in 2025 is still recovering from some serious turbulence. From federal hiring freezes to layoffs at commercial tech giants, there's been a bit of uncertainty. But within national security, the demand for cleared engineers and IT professionals remains strong.

Stability, mission-driven work, and competitive salaries continue to make this space an appealing career path. And for job seekers willing to level up their skills and security credentials, the opportunities are still there—just maybe not where they used to be.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Security Clearance Jobs Salary Survey is administered online by ClearanceJobs. The 2024 data presented here was collected between August 27 and December 31, 2024. Security-cleared respondents were invited to participate in the survey through notifications on ClearanceJobs home page and various communications and links. This report focuses on both the findings for the 2024 survey and the comparison of those results for a nearly identical survey conducted one year prior (2023 compensation information).

In 2024, there were 31,001 survey participants, a decrease of -6% over the 2023 survey. 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 $400,000, and finally incomplete or duplicate questionnaires, there remained 13,177 usable responses in 2024 and 14,251 usable responses in 2023.

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 $400,000. Note that in reports completed prior to 2020, active-duty military were included in the analysis universe.

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 increased to $350,000 in 2022 and then increased to $400,000 in 2024. This had a negligible impact on overall compensation figures for 2024 (no impact on median, increased mean total compensation by $453 and increased mean base pay by $78).

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