ClearanceJobs®

# CLEARED CANDIDATES: FLIGHT RISK

## SALARY AND JOB SATISFACTION OF CLEARED PROFESSIONALS



# ClearanceJobs Survey Finds Candidates Satisfied with Salary

*... But Still Likely to Change Jobs*



Cleared candidates are willing to make a move. They're fielding numerous job offers, and a significant number are open to considering a position outside of the cleared industry. That's the message of the 2019 ClearanceJobs Salary and Job Satisfaction Survey. ClearanceJobs surveyed candidates with an active federal security clearance to see how they felt about their pay, and how likely they were to make a career move.

Job and salary satisfaction are both relatively high—52% of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with both their salary and job. This is slightly above the national average of 51% reported in 2016, which was the highest job satisfaction rate since 2005.* Despite being satisfied with their work and pay, a whopping 84% of respondents said they were at least somewhat likely to accept a new job in the coming year, meaning job hopping is alive and well.

And while 46% of respondents indicated they were not at all likely to leave the cleared industry, a significant number—54%—reported they were at least somewhat likely to leave the cleared industry in the next five years.

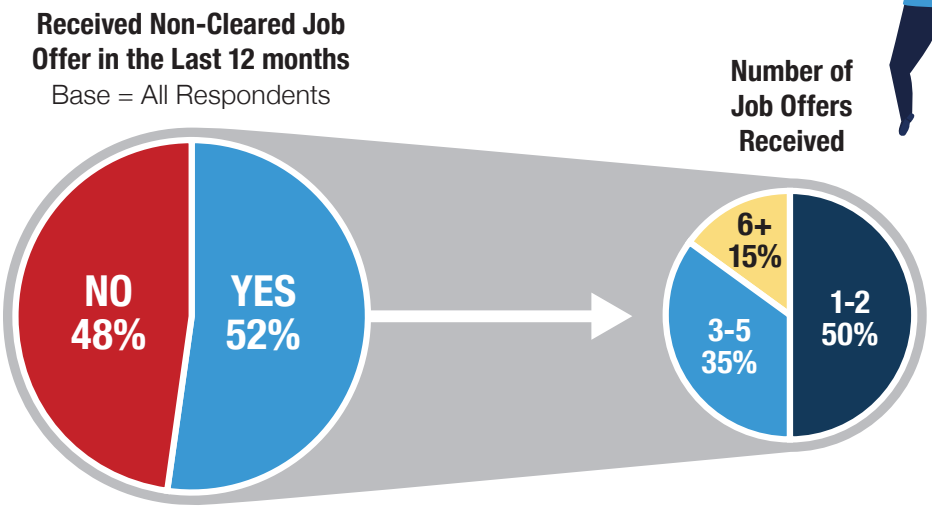
"The survey findings really confirm what we already know about cleared professionals—they're facing significant outward pressure, and that creates incredibly high candidate confidence," said Evan Lesser, President and Founder of ClearanceJobs. "When you're fielding multiple contacts from recruiters on a daily or weekly basis, that creates a dynamic where frequent job moves aren't the anomaly, they're the norm."

**84% of respondents said they were at least somewhat likely to accept a new job in the coming year.**

Survey respondents were asked if they had received any non-cleared job offers in the past year. 52% of respondents had received a non-cleared job offer, and of those, 50% had received 3 or more offers. 34% of those job offers were at a higher salary.

**U.S. Job Satisfaction Hits Its Highest Level Since 2005*



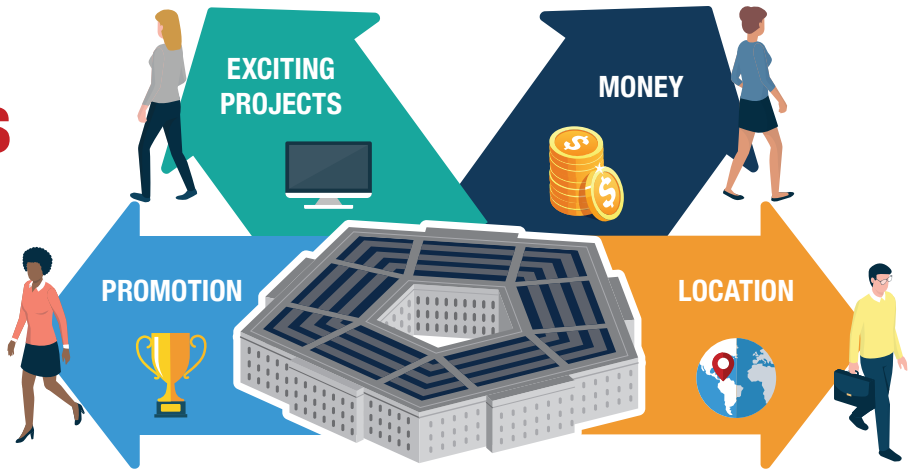



Though the higher salary may lure employees initially, will that be enough to keep them? Cleared professionals who enjoy the thrill of working closely with big-name agencies like NASA or the FBI on mission-critical work may not be able to stay away for long.

Because a security clearance will remain 'current' for two years, many candidates may be jumping into the private sector for a pay bump—but then back into the clearance industry before their clearance expires. Cleared employers should keep this in mind if they hope to regain current talent—or lure it back. Employers should be ready to meet—or at least discuss—counter-offers their employees receive. Likewise, cleared employers need to foster a culture that emphasizes the importance of the mission they serve. Along with more salary flexibility, it could be key to keeping their cleared employees satisfied.

**"I see non-cleared, private companies trying to 'lure' away cleared personnel a lot in this market," said Gary Goss, recruiting manager and facility security officer at ProSol. "They use salary and other incentives and some do make the jump. But I would be interested in seeing how many stay, and for how long."**

# What Motivates a Move?

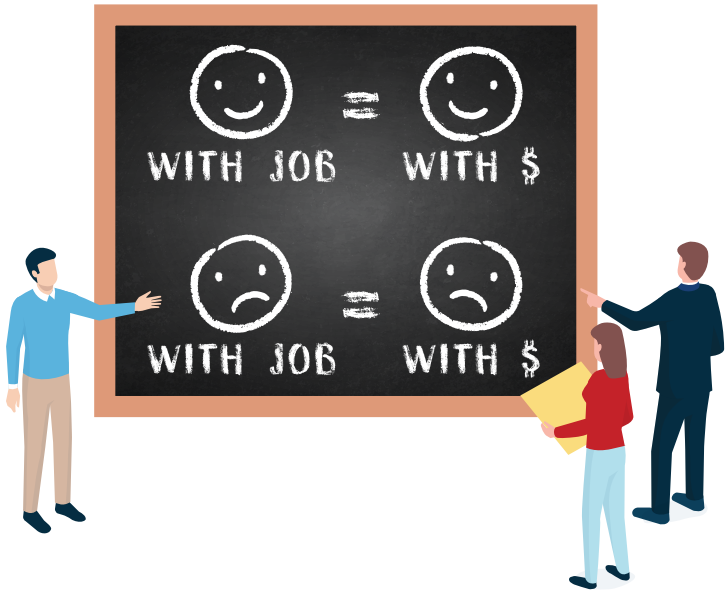



Salary is the strongest motivator for leaving the cleared industry, with 49% of respondents citing higher pay as their main motivator for leaving the cleared industry. Next is more advancement opportunities, followed by opportunity to work on more exciting projects, and then location—the desire to move to an area where they can't put their clearance to work. Washington, D.C., Colorado, California, Florida, and New York are some of the most fertile grounds for finding cleared work—but they also have very high costs of living. Sometimes keeping employees at specific, secured locations is essential to the work being done. However, cleared employers should explore all possible opportunities for remote work or flexible scheduling in order to attract and retain the most cleared talent possible.

## Reasons for Potentially Leaving Cleared Industry



# Who's Happy?

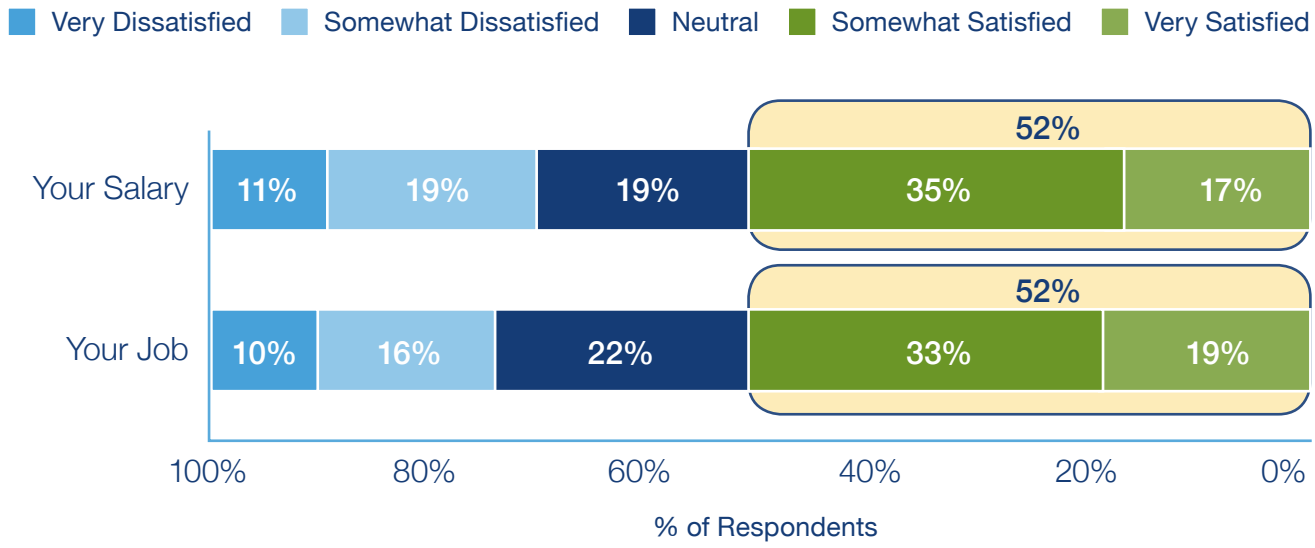



Job satisfaction was not related to years at current job. Salary satisfaction is, however; those with more than 10 years with their current employer were the most satisfied with their salary (56.8%) vs. 50.2% who had been there for 1 year or less.

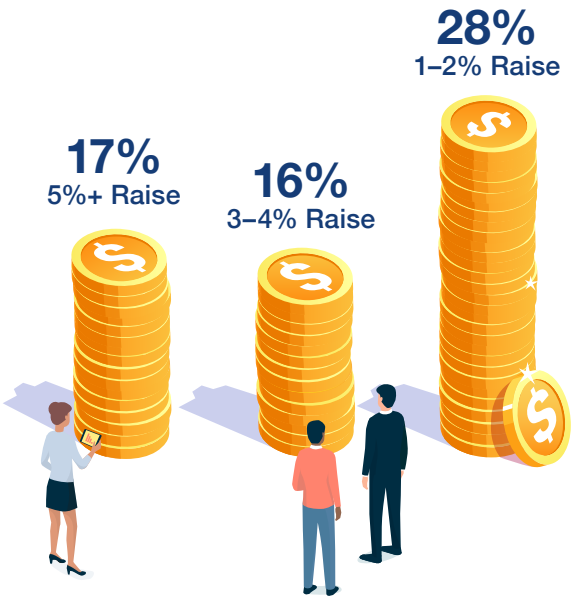
Job satisfaction is very related to satisfaction with salary. Among those who reported being very dissatisfied with their salary, 40.2% are also very dissatisfied with their job. Almost two-thirds (63%) of those somewhat dissatisfied with their salary are also either somewhat dissatisfied or neutral in terms of their job satisfaction. Yet, over half (51.8%) of those very satisfied with their salary are also very satisfied with their job.

Based on the data, we can't clearly say which comes first—dissatisfaction with salary, or dissatisfaction with the job. But what we can say is, if you have employees who are unhappy with their work, they're likely also unhappy about their compensation—and vice versa.

## How Satisfied Are You With...



# Cleared Salaries vs. the National Average




Cleared professionals are largely experiencing pay raises in line with the national averages: 17% reported pay increases of 5% or higher, 16% indicated a 3-4% increase, and 28% indicated a 1-2% increase.

Why would those getting pay increases above the national average still be unhappy with their compensation? It's another phenomenon born out of today's tight candidate pool—job dysphoria. The job you liked today becomes less attractive when you're met with a more lucrative offer.

The feeling is also born out of a fact of the industry: unless your company is quick to promote (and many aren't), a cleared candidate's best opportunity for a pay increase is by moving out to go up.

"Most candidates feel they will gain a better salary by obtaining a new role with a new company," said Revecca Padiotis, senior recruiter for defense and intelligence at Leidos. "The days of being concerned with job hopping on a resume are behind us."

That was clearly borne out in the ClearanceJobs Salary and Job Satisfaction survey where 57% of respondents had been in their role for 2 years or less.



## Job Dysphoria

**"If people are recruiting and they are promising more than you may be receiving in your current situation… you might only moments ago have been very satisfied with your pay and benefits. But then when you find out someone else has it better, or that you could have it better, you can flip in an instant from being happy with your pay and benefits, to being dissatisfied."**

**Dr. Richard Flicker,** Industrial-Organizational Psychologist

# What Does All This Mean for National Security?



The high level of candidate mobility is bad news for mission readiness on cleared contracts. Every cleared professional who leaves one role to pursue another leaves behind a mission critical function that still needs to be filled. And while the government is finally making inroads in reducing the backlog of pending security clearance investigations, the average initial Top Secret security clearance investigation for industry is 421 days. That means DoD/industry still faces significant pressure in trying to hire candidates. To meet hiring demands, employers rely on poaching from competitors, rather than depending on an uncertain clearance investigation process.

"The government is doing little to acknowledge the supply vs demand issue," said Todd Keys, program manager at Cantada. "In this environment, highly-skilled, highly-cleared individuals are getting a dozen phone calls and emails per week. If they leave, then the programs they are on will suffer. If they don't leave, then the new program with an important mission will suffer due to lack of personnel to work it."

As a result, the high demand for cleared professionals isn't just a problem for the defense industry—it's a problem for the whole country. Losing a cleared employee—whether it's to another cleared position or outside the cleared space—has negative impact far beyond that company or agency. Until clearance processing times improve, American national security depends on companies finding ways to find and retain its supply of cleared talent.

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