

Frequently Asked Questions About the AAPA Salary Report

One of AAPA's important responsibilities is to collect and analyze data to track growth and change in the PA profession. The 2018 AAPA Salary Report includes more detailed PA compensation and benefits information than ever before. We've compiled this list of questions PAs often ask us — and employers ask PAs — and the corresponding answers. Please contact us via email with more questions. We're here to help.

There are many salary surveys available. Why should I use the AAPA Salary Report?

AAPA Salary Report data is based on thousands of responses from full-time PAs. The AAPA Salary Report is the only resource that provides detailed information on salary, bonuses, and hourly wages, broken out by state, experience, specialty, setting, and employer type. These are all factors that will impact a PA's base salary or hourly wage. The report also provides in-depth national and state-level information on compensation for taking and being available for call, as well as for profit sharing and other kinds of compensation and benefits available to PAs. No other salary survey provides the breadth of information contained in the AAPA Salary Report.

I am trying to negotiate a higher salary, but the employer does not want to accept AAPA data, saying that it is not objective or accurate. Can you help me explain why it is a valid data source?

AAPA frequently hears that its data cannot be valid as it is self-reported. However, we collect our data at the same time PAs are receiving their W-2s and ask PAs to refer to this information when they respond to the survey to ensure that they are recalling their information accurately. More importantly, we benchmark our data against other available salary data and have found that we are consistently within a reasonable range of other salary sources, given the differences in what is considered "salary."

For example, the base salary in the 2018 AAPA Salary Report is equivalent to the NCCPA number, based on employee-reported data and within \$140 of the BLS number, based on employer-reported data. Other PAs reference the Medical Group Management Association

(MGMA) as a source of salary benchmarking.

However, MGMA data is based on salary data reported to MGMA by a small group of their member organizations, and the breakouts needed to accurately determine a PA's base compensation are limited due to the small sample sizes.

Do you collect salary and data in ranges like other salary surveys do?

The AAPA Salary Survey collects actual salary data rather than asking respondents to select a range in which their salary falls. Many salary surveys collect data in categories, such as \$90,000 to \$99,999, \$100,000 to \$109,999, etc. They then assume that the midpoints of the range are the salaries of every PA who selected the category. The advantage of this approach is that participants may feel more comfortable providing their information. The disadvantage is loss of accuracy. AAPA, on the other hand, asks the PA to report their actual salary to the nearest whole number, such as \$91,425 or \$113,750. AAPA data are also collected at the start of the year, when W-2s for the year in question have been released and PAs can refer to them for accuracy. While we may deter some from responding due to the sensitive nature of the information collected, the data we do collect is more accurate.

Do you average your salary data over time, like other salary surveys?

No, we report salary data for each calendar year. Other organizations report average salaries over the past three to four years.



Frequently Asked Questions About the AAPA Salary Report, continued

What is a percentile? When do I use them?

A percentile is the point at or below which a given percentage of respondents fall. For example, the 10th percentile is the value at or below which 10% of the respondents fall — a 10th percentile salary of \$80,000 means that 10% of all the respondents made \$80,000 or less. Conversely, the 90th percentile salary of \$120,000 means that 90% of the respondents made \$120,000 or less. You can use percentiles to approximate an appropriate value within any given table. For example, if you are a PA with 25 years’ experience and are looking at a table that lists only state and specialty, you may want to use the 90th percentile to determine your ideal salary to account for your experience. Conversely, if you have one year of experience, you may want to use the 10th percentile, while the 50th percentile may be more appropriate for those with 10 years’ experience.

Where is the average salary listed?

We find that the median is a better measure of the “middle salary” than the mean, as it is not affected by outliers — those responses that are on the far extremes of a normal response. We do not report the mean or “average” salary.

Why do you list salary and bonuses separately?
What is the total compensation I should expect?

When negotiating for a job, PAs need to know what salary or hourly wage is appropriate for their position, separate from whatever bonus might also be offered. Because salary is generally negotiable, along with some benefits, while bonus is typically not, we keep these separate to facilitate the negotiation process.

Do base salaries differ between people who have and who have not received a bonus?

The AAPA Salary Report provides information about bonuses, but base salaries are not reported based on whether a PA received a bonus or not. Some PAs wonder whether this matters when considering a fair salary offer.

We have analyzed the 2018 AAPA Salary Survey data extensively — beyond the tables included in the Salary Report — and mean base salaries are statistically equivalent for PAs who do and PAs who do not receive a bonus.

I am a PA in Montana working in a critical access hospital. I do not see my information in the Salary Report. Why not? And who has that information for me?

Salary information is presented by specialty, setting, experience, and other categories to provide the most detailed information possible for PAs. But to maintain the trust and anonymity of those who take our surveys, as well as the integrity of the percentiles we calculate, we do not show any data points based on fewer than five respondents. So, for PAs in states with relatively few PAs, or in uncommon settings or specialties, this detailed information is not made available by AAPA.

I am a PA in Scottsdale, Ariz., and I have been in a urology practice for two years. I do not see this information in the AAPA Salary Report. Is there any way I can use the AAPA Salary Report to understand whether I’m being paid appropriately?

In this example, we have information on PAs in urology with two to four years of experience, and PAs in Arizona in all surgical specialties combined. Using the percentiles available within the report, you can approximate a reasonable salary range to negotiate the best rate of pay. In Arizona, salaries are higher than in the U.S. overall. Where we would normally recommend that someone with fewer years of experience compare themselves to the 10th to 25th percentiles, with the higher salaries in Arizona, one might estimate a negotiating salary at closer to the 50th to 75th percentiles of any national tables, at the 25th of the Arizona tables as a whole, and at the 50th for PAs in Arizona with two to four years of experience.

STATE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	N	10TH PERCENTILE (\$)	25TH PERCENTILE (\$)	50TH PERCENTILE (\$)	75TH PERCENTILE (\$)	90TH PERCENTILE (\$)	
California	0 to 1 year	Base salary	339	95,000	110,000	125,000	145,000	165,000
		Bonus	272	800	2,000	5,000	11,500	24,000
	2 to 4 years	Base salary	24	90,000	95,000	112,500	129,000	141,381
		Bonus	13	1,200	4,000	5,000	8,000	16,800
	5 to 9 years	Base salary	79	92,000	102,000	111,000	132,000	150,000
		Bonus	74	500	1,500	5,000	12,000	30,000
	10 to 14 years	Base salary	87	100,000	110,000	126,880	140,000	151,000
		Bonus	66	700	1,500	5,000	10,000	20,000
	15 to 19 years	Base salary	45	107,253	122,000	136,500	155,000	170,400
		Bonus	40	1,000	2,000	5,810	11,000	22,500
Colorado	0 to 1 year	Base salary	45	99,000	117,000	135,000	155,000	180,000
		Bonus	25	700	1,500	6,000	15,000	36,000
	2 to 4 years	Base salary	56	100,000	120,000	135,069	155,000	194,000
		Bonus	48	1,200	2,000	5,500	14,500	60,000
	5 to 9 years	Base salary	48	82,000	91,000	101,000	112,320	125,000
		Bonus	189	500	2,000	4,750	10,000	20,000
	10 to 14 years	Base salary	128	70,600	72,000	83,000	88,000	90,000
		Bonus	6	-	-	-	-	-
	15 to 19 years	Base salary	<5	80,000	85,176	92,000	100,440	110,000
		Bonus	38	500	2,000	4,500	10,000	20,000
Montana	0 to 1 year	Base salary	19	82,000	92,900	100,112	110,000	118,560
		Bonus	63	1,000	1,833	5,500	10,850	23,500
	2 to 4 years	Base salary	50	90,000	97,600	105,000	115,000	121,000
		Bonus	31	2,000	3,000	6,000	10,000	18,000
	5 to 9 years	Base salary	22	84,000	92,500	106,974	115,000	127,000
		Bonus	27	800	2,000	3,000	7,500	18,000
	10 to 14 years	Base salary	19	105,000	121,000	126,000	135,500	146,000
		Bonus	19	400	1,000	2,000	4,000	8,000
	15 to 19 years	Base salary	19	105,000	121,000	126,000	135,500	146,000
		Bonus	19	400	1,000	2,000	4,000	8,000