

# 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 2019 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, and you may have read many of these in previous salary reports. Please contact us via email with more questions ([research@aapa.org](mailto:research@aapa.org)). 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 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, profession-wide compensation in the AAPA salary report is very close to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is employer-reported based on annualized hourly wage. 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.

## 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

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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 of 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, but the median is a good number to think of as a “typical” PA within that category.

### Why do you list salary and bonuses separately? What total compensation should I 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. You will notice in our report that bonuses are included in the salary tables rather than in hourly tables. While this may seem as though we only report annual bonuses for salaried workers, these numbers reflect bonuses of all PAs, regardless of base compensation type.

### 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 2019 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.

Table 8 cont. Base Salary and Bonus From Primary Employer by State and Years of Experience

STATE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	N	10TH PERCENTILE (\$)	25TH PERCENTILE (\$)	50TH PERCENTILE (\$)	75TH PERCENTILE (\$)	90TH PERCENTILE (\$)
District of Columbia	Base salary	46	94,600	1,400	108,800	125,000	152,490
	Bonus	17	1,000	95,200	96,960	100,700	101,500
0 to 1 year	Base salary	5	*	*	*	113,000	115,000
	Bonus	<5	*	*	*	*	*
2 to 4 years	Base salary	13	91,000	98,085	102,000	114,000	128,000
	Bonus	<5	*	*	*	*	*
5 to 9 years	Base salary	13	100,000	102,500	103,000	114,000	128,000
	Bonus	<5	*	*	*	*	*
10 to 14 years	Base salary	<5	*	*	*	*	*
	Bonus	<5	*	*	*	*	*
15 to 19 years	Base salary	<5	*	*	*	*	*
	Bonus	<5	*	*	*	*	*
20 or more years	Base salary	11	120,000	125,000	150,000	181,000	182,000
	Bonus	6	1,000	1,400	5,500	10,000	16,000
Florida	Base salary	453	85,000	93,000	105,000	120,000	137,000
	Bonus	298	1,000	2,500	6,200	16,000	31,000
0 to 1 year	Base salary	36	80,000	85,000	93,500	97,880	115,000
	Bonus	12	1,000	1,700	2,750	5,000	5,000
2 to 4 years	Base salary	121	83,000	90,000	95,100	105,000	120,000
	Bonus	84	1,000	2,500	7,000	15,000	31,000
5 to 9 years	Base salary	84	88,000	96,000	105,000	120,000	130,000
	Bonus	121	1,500	3,000	8,000	20,000	30,000
10 to 14 years	Base salary	87	90,250	100,000	115,000	125,000	150,500
	Bonus	60	1,200	3,000	6,700	16,000	42,000
15 to 19 years	Base salary	34	86,000	95,000	112,000	125,000	144,000
	Bonus	39	500	2,250	5,000	19,000	35,000
20 or more years	Base salary	32	104,000	104,000	120,000	135,000	155,000
	Bonus	32	1,000	1,000	2,000	21,000	35,000