

AONL 2019 Salary Survey: Wide Ranging Compensation, Strong Satisfaction Trends Continue



American Organization
for Nursing Leadership

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The American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) conducted its third salary survey of nursing leaders. The findings largely echoed the results of the organization's 2 earlier surveys, released in 2013 and 2016. However, some changes are noted below.

An online survey was sent to nearly 17,000 e-mail addresses of both AONL members and non-members. In total, 2,145 respondents completed or partially completed the survey for a response rate of 13%. Respondents completed the survey in January and February of 2019, reporting data from calendar year 2018. The full report is available free of charge to members at aonl.org/salarystudy.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Of all respondents, 39% work at acute care hospitals (long-term or short-term), with another 27% in academic institutions. Only 5% of respondents work in a system/corporate office, and the remaining 29% work in other settings. The 2019 survey reflects more diversity among work settings compared with the previous surveys. In 2013, 67% of respondents worked at acute care hospitals compared with 42% in 2016 and 39% in 2019—a difference of 28 percentage points since 2013. The 3 job titles most represented in the results include director (35%), manager (21%), chief nursing officer (CNO)/chief nursing executive (CNE) (18%).

The majority of respondents (67%) have been working in nursing for more than 20 years, and 70% have been in their current position for 5 or fewer years. Respondents aged 35 years or younger make up only 7%. Eighty-six percent of respondents are Caucasian/white and 88% are female.

SALARY RESULTS

As shown in [Table 1](#), annual salaries from responding nurse leaders vary widely, with over half (57%) falling between \$90,000 and \$169,999. Ten percent of respondents earn less than \$90,000, and the remaining 33% earn \$170,000 or more, divided nearly evenly among those earning between \$170,000 and \$199,999, those

earning between \$200,000 and \$249,999, and those earning \$250,000 or more.

As expected, nurse leaders with senior-level titles earn higher incomes than other nurse leaders ([Table 2](#)). The majority of nonsystem CNOs/CNEs (81%), system CNOs/CNEs (91%), consultants (53%), presidents/vice presidents (91%), and respondents with other C-suite titles (75%) earn more than \$150,000 annually. Directors are most likely to earn between \$100,000 and \$169,999 annually, with 71% falling into this range. Managers are likely to earn less, with 72% noting an annual salary of \$80,000 to \$129,999.

SALARY BY EMPLOYER TYPE, GEOGRAPHIC REGION

The AONL survey found that nurse leader salaries are relatively similar across employer types ([Table 3](#)). With the exception of nurse leaders employed at consulting firms and at system/corporate offices, the majority earn less than \$150,000 per year: 69% of those from ambulatory care facilities earn less than \$150,000 per year, 70% for rural/critical access hospitals, 68% for those from academic institutions/universities/colleges, 55% for acute care hospitals, and 52% for academic medical centers/hospitals. Fifty-six percent of respondents from consulting firms and system/corporate offices earn \$170,000 or more per year.

Among the 9 AONL geographic regions, nurse leaders in Region 9 (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington) have the greatest percentage of respondents (69%) earning \$150,000 or more. This is followed by Regions 1 (52%), 2 (51%), and 3 (50%), with just over half of respondents from these regions earning \$150,000 or more per year. The lowest percentage of nurse leaders earning \$150,000 or more work in Region 6 (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

Table 1. Overall Salary Ranges (Annually)*

Salary Distribution	Total Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Under \$60,000</i>	1%	1%
<i>\$60,000 to \$69,999</i>	1%	2%
<i>\$70,000 to \$79,999</i>	3%	5%
<i>\$80,000 to \$89,999</i>	5%	10%
<i>\$90,000 to \$99,999</i>	6%	15%
<i>\$100,000 to \$109,999</i>	9%	24%
<i>\$110,000 to \$119,999</i>	8%	32%
<i>\$120,000 to \$129,999</i>	8%	41%
<i>\$130,000 to \$139,999</i>	8%	49%
<i>\$140,000 to \$149,999</i>	6%	55%
<i>\$150,000 to \$159,999</i>	6%	61%
<i>\$160,000 to \$169,999</i>	6%	67%
<i>\$170,000 to \$179,999</i>	4%	72%
<i>\$180,000 to \$189,999</i>	4%	76%
<i>\$190,000 to \$199,999</i>	3%	79%
<i>\$200,000 to \$209,999</i>	3%	82%
<i>\$210,000 to \$219,999</i>	2%	85%
<i>\$220,000 to \$229,999</i>	2%	86%
<i>\$230,000 to \$239,999</i>	2%	88%
<i>\$240,000 to \$249,999</i>	1%	89%
<i>\$250,000 to \$259,999</i>	2%	91%
<i>\$260,000 to \$269,999</i>	1%	92%
<i>\$270,000 to \$279,999</i>	1%	93%
<i>\$280,000 to \$289,999</i>	1%	94%
<i>\$290,000 to \$299,999</i>	1%	94%
<i>\$300,000 or more</i>	5%	100%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	0%	100%

Q: What is your current annual base salary (excluding additional income and bonus money)?

N = 2,018.

*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

BONUS AWARDS

The majority of respondents (70%) indicated they are currently eligible for an incentive or bonus award, including 52% who are eligible for a nondiscretionary bonus award. This percentage compares favorably to previous surveys. In the 2013 survey, only 58% were eligible for some type of bonus, and in the 2016 survey, 66% were eligible.

However, this year's survey followed the results from the past 2 surveys: Nurse leaders with higher salaries and greater management responsibilities are more likely to be eligible for some type of bonus. Over half of respondents (55%) who are not eligible for a bonus award earn less than \$130,000 per year. That said, some por-

tion of nurse leaders in each job title indicated they are eligible for a bonus. Those with more senior titles are more likely to receive bonuses. In the case of non-discretionary bonuses, nurse leaders with C-suite titles are most likely to be eligible, ranging from 53% to 64%, followed by directors (56%), managers (50%), consultants (31%), advanced practice nurses (APRN)/clinical staff (39%), specialist/coordinators (20%), and professors/deans (14%).

JOB SATISFACTION

Overall job satisfaction is high among nurse leaders (Figure 1), with 82% rating their satisfaction on a 5-point

Table 2. Salary Ranges by Job Title (Top 10 Job Titles Shown)*

	APRN/ Clinical Staff	CNO/CNE (Nonsystem)	CNO/CNE (System)	Consultant	Director	Manager	Other C-Suite	President/ VP	Professor/ Dean	Specialist/ Coordinator
Under \$60,000	8%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	2%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	9%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	6%	2%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	9%	0%	0%	3%	1%	5%	0%	0%	4%	16%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	9%	0%	0%	1%	2%	13%	0%	0%	9%	23%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	6%	1%	0%	4%	4%	14%	4%	0%	10%	14%
\$100,000 to \$109,999	8%	2%	0%	9%	9%	21%	3%	1%	10%	7%
\$110,000 to \$119,999	6%	4%	4%	10%	9%	13%	1%	1%	9%	9%
\$120,000 to \$129,999	7%	4%	1%	6%	11%	11%	3%	3%	3%	7%
\$130,000 to \$139,999	4%	5%	0%	3%	14%	8%	6%	1%	6%	5%
\$140,000 to \$149,999	6%	3%	1%	6%	10%	4%	4%	3%	0%	2%
\$150,000 to \$159,999	2%	6%	4%	8%	9%	3%	3%	11%	3%	5%
\$160,000 to \$169,999	6%	6%	4%	3%	9%	1%	6%	12%	5%	0%
\$170,000 to \$179,999	2%	6%	3%	10%	6%	1%	3%	4%	4%	2%
\$180,000 to \$189,999	6%	7%	3%	8%	4%	2%	10%	7%	6%	0%
\$190,000 to \$199,999	2%	5%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	0%	2%
\$200,000 to \$209,999	1%	7%	4%	6%	3%	0%	7%	7%	1%	2%
\$210,000 to \$219,999	2%	6%	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%	7%	0%	0%
\$220,000 to \$229,999	2%	5%	1%	3%	1%	0%	4%	4%	3%	0%

Q: What is your current annual base salary (excluding additional income and bonus money)?

*Respondents could choose more than 1 title.

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Table 2. Salary Ranges by Job Title (Top 10 Job Titles Shown) * (Continued)

	APRN/ Clinical Staff	CNO/CNE (Nonsystem)	CNO/CNE (System)	Consultant	Director	Manager	Other C-Suite	President/ VP	Professor/ Dean	Specialist/ Coordinator
\$230,000 to \$239,999	2%	4%	4%	3%	1%	0%	1%	7%	4%	0%
\$240,000 to \$249,999	1%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%
\$250,000 to \$259,999	0%	5%	5%	5%	1%	0%	3%	4%	0%	0%
\$260,000 to \$269,999	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
\$270,000 to \$279,999	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	1%	0%
\$280,000 to \$289,999	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	4%	4%	0%	0%
\$290,000 to \$299,999	0%	2%	3%	1%	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%
\$300,000 or more	2%	11%	50%	5%	0%	0%	21%	11%	6%	0%
Unsure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	2%
N	126	398	76	79	740	436	71	134	77	44

Q: What is your current annual base salary (excluding additional income and bonus money)?

* Respondents could choose more than 1 title.

Table 3. Salary Ranges by Employer (Top 8 Employers Shown)

	Acute Care Hospital (Long-Term or Short-Term)	Academic Medical Center/ Hospital	Academic Institution/ University/College	System/ Corporate Office	Ambulatory Care Facility	Consulting Firm Or Organization	Rural/Critical Access Hospital
Under \$60,000	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	3%	0%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	1%	4%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	3%	2%	3%	1%	5%	0%	3%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	4%	5%	7%	2%	6%	0%	13%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	5%	6%	10%	3%	9%	5%	3%
\$100,000 to \$109,999	8%	10%	10%	5%	12%	6%	13%
\$110,000 to \$119,999	10%	5%	9%	7%	13%	4%	13%
\$120,000 to \$129,999	9%	7%	9%	4%	9%	6%	7%
\$130,000 to \$139,999	9%	9%	7%	5%	8%	3%	10%
\$140,000 to \$149,999	5%	6%	5%	3%	8%	5%	6%
\$150,000 to \$159,999	6%	7%	4%	9%	4%	10%	6%
\$160,000 to \$169,999	6%	7%	5%	5%	13%	1%	3%
\$170,000 to \$179,999	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%	10%	4%
\$180,000 to \$189,999	5%	4%	4%	4%	1%	9%	6%
\$190,000 to \$199,999	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	1%	0%
\$200,000 to \$209,999	3%	3%	1%	5%	1%	9%	3%
\$210,000 to \$219,999	3%	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%
\$220,000 to \$229,999	3%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%
\$230,000 to \$239,999	2%	2%	2%	5%	0%	4%	1%

Q: What is your current annual base salary (excluding additional income and bonus money)?

Q: What is your primary work setting (ie, where you spend the majority of your working time)?

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Table 3. Salary Ranges by Employer (Top 8 Employers Shown) (Continued)

	Acute Care Hospital (Long- or Short-Term)	Academic Medical Center/ Hospital	Academic Institution/ University/College	System/ Corporate Office	Ambulatory Care Facility	Consulting Firm Or Organization	Rural/Critical Access Hospital
\$240,000 to \$249,999	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
\$250,000 to \$259,999	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	5%	1%
\$260,000 to \$269,999	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
\$270,000 to \$279,999	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
\$280,000 to \$289,999	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
\$290,000 to \$299,999	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%
\$300,000 or more	3%	6%	3%	27%	0%	11%	0%
Unsure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
N	805	558	149	105	78	79	71

Q: What is your current annual base salary (excluding additional income and bonus money)?

Q: What is your primary work setting (ie, where you spend the majority of your working time)?

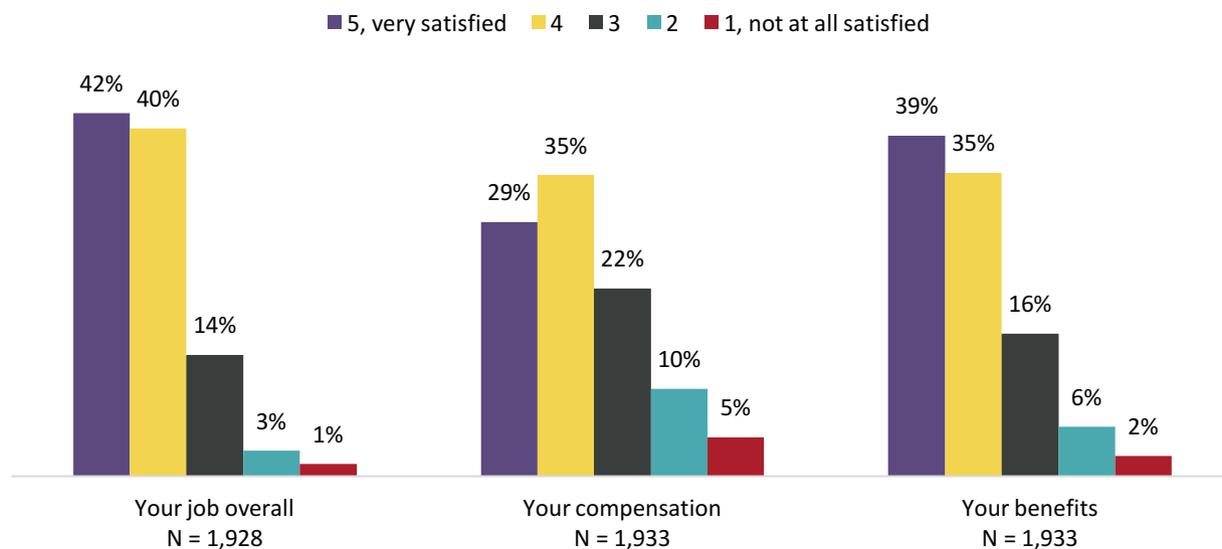


Figure 1. Satisfaction With Job and Compensation*

Q: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your job?

*Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

scale as either “5, very satisfied” (42%) or “4, somewhat satisfied” (40%).

However, respondents indicate they are less satisfied with their benefits and compensation than their job overall. Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicate they are satisfied with their benefits, including 39% who note they are very satisfied. For compensation, 64% note satisfaction, including only 29% who report they are very satisfied with their compensation. Fifty-five percent of respondents agree that their salary is comparable to others in equivalent positions at their organization. For those who don’t agree, 56% note that their salary is moderately lower than equivalent positions in other departments.

When the job satisfaction results are analyzed by title (*Table 4*), nurse leaders holding a C-suite title are more likely to indicate satisfaction with their job overall, rating their satisfaction as a 5 or a 4. In fact, 87% of system CNOs/CNEs and 87% of nonsystem CNOs/CNEs indicate high levels of satisfaction with their job overall. Respondents holding the title of nurse manager are least likely to be satisfied with their job (75%). Nurse managers also had the lowest percentage of satisfied respondents in the aspects of choosing to go into health care and receiving equal treatment with similar positions in non-nursing functions. Further, only slightly more than half (55%) of nurse managers are satisfied with their compensation, similar to APRNs/clinical staff (53%) and professors/deans (55%). C-suite respondents are most likely to be satisfied with their compensation.

Large percentages of respondents across all job titles noted high satisfaction in finding joy and meaning at work and relationships with coworkers.

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Table 4. Satisfaction With Aspects of Job by Title* (Percentage Satisfied or Very Satisfied)

	APRN/ Clinical Staff	CNO/CNE (Nonsystem)	Consultant	Director	Manager	Other C-Suite	President/ VP	Professor/ Dean	Specialist/ Coordinator	CNO/CNE (System)
<i>Amount of authority</i>	66%	86%	73%	79%	74%	84%	82%	70%	63%	83%
<i>Area(s) of responsibility</i>	74%	90%	81%	83%	78%	89%	90%	83%	79%	89%
<i>Benefits</i>	65%	79%	65%	75%	68%	71%	78%	80%	74%	80%
<i>Compensation</i>	53%	68%	70%	64%	55%	79%	77%	55%	64%	77%
<i>Decision to work in health care</i>	90%	94%	92%	92%	88%	96%	93%	97%	91%	97%
<i>Equal treatment with similar positions in other non-nursing functions</i>	57%	60%	56%	57%	53%	69%	63%	61%	56%	56%
<i>Job overall</i>	82%	87%	83%	83%	75%	89%	83%	79%	77%	87%
<i>Job security</i>	76%	77%	69%	75%	77%	67%	74%	83%	74%	80%
<i>Joy and meaning in job</i>	77%	87%	76%	80%	74%	87%	85%	79%	79%	85%
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	52%	62%	52%	61%	59%	56%	68%	51%	56%	59%
<i>Relationship with coworkers</i>	89%	89%	83%	90%	89%	90%	90%	89%	86%	92%
<i>Relationship with direct reports</i>	67%	95%	49%	90%	86%	94%	96%	64%	47%	94%
<i>Relationship with direct supervisor</i>	76%	81%	80%	77%	75%	74%	81%	74%	74%	76%
N	114	386	71	715	419	70	125	76	43	71

Q: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your job?

*Respondents could choose more than 1 job title.