FAQs

What is the purpose of this tool?

This tool has two purposes: first, to gauge your market value. Knowing your market value will help you negotiate your salary with your current company and also what level of pay you might be able to expect if you decided to search for a new job.

The second purpose is to explore how you can change your market value. What is the value of adding a degree or a certification? What would happen if you moved to another region or country? This knowledge prepares you to make the best strategic career choices.

How do I use the tool?

We recommend starting by gauging your current market value. To do this, enter your traits into the dropdown boxes. The graph will then show the median, 25th percentile, and 75th percentile of total compensation for someone with your traits.

As you enter your data for each trait, consider how your personal qualities fit the general trait. Is your industry experience particularly relevant to your current job? Did your education build useful skills? Such details impact your market value, moving you up or down in the given range.

After gauging your current value, we recommend testing out other traits to see how you might improve your value. How does your compensation evolve if you add a degree or a certification? What if you work your way up from, for example, engineer to designer? Give special consideration to the most feasible changes, then make a plan for how to accomplish any promising goals.

Where do the numbers come from?

The measurement involves two parts: a massive survey and an economic model. The first step is our annual compensation survey. In 2021, we collected data from over 5000 AV professionals around the world, with about half in the U.S. and half outside the U.S. We defined AV professionals as people who either worked on AV equipment as their primary job responsibility or worked for an AV company in any role.

Our next step was to take all the data and run it through a standard economic model to estimate how different traits affect market value. The numbers you see are product of that model.

How do benefits fit in?

Other than bonuses, overtime, and other extra pay that is actually distributed in the year it is awarded (in other words, excluding retirement benefits), benefits are not explicitly included in our model. In effect, what the model is implicitly assuming is that benefits are at the industry standard. Benefit norms are part of the reason why we have separate U.S. and non-U.S. tabs. In the U.S., industry norms include paid time off, health, vision and dental care, including for dependents, and some retirement benefits as well. If your job does not include these benefits, you should expect to be paid more to compensate. If your job has truly exceptional benefits, you can expect to be paid a little less. In the rest of the world, PTO is common, but health, vision, and dental care are less common, in large part because provision often runs through the government. If your non-U.S. job excludes these insurance benefits, you should generally not expect significant additional pay to compensate.

You can see some effect from benefits by toggling between end user and provider. Our dataset shows that on average, end users pay slightly less but offer better benefits packages. Whether or not the tradeoff is worth it will depend on how much you value the given benefits.

I'm skeptical. Is this data really correct?

There's a famous quote in statistics: "All models are wrong, but some models are useful." Models simplify our reality to make it manageable for us to study. But when you simplify, you step away from the underlying, perfect truth. If you can't have the perfect truth, a decent approximation likely has significant value. Such is the case with AV salaries: our model isn't the perfect truth, but it is a helpful approximation. Given the wealth of data underlying it and the reliability of the modeling approach involved, we feel very strongly that our data is a useful piece of understanding a worker's fair market value. It will help you supercharge your professional development, better negotiate your pay, and know when it's time to hit the job market.

What is the meaning of the range?

Just as our categories in the dropdown boxes cannot fully capture your market value, one single number cannot communicate the appropriate pay for someone with the given traits. That's actually a strength of our model: it gives more than just the midpoint. In addition to the median salary, we also provide the 25th and 75th percentiles. Then, the yellow points show the full plausible range. As we note elsewhere, how you fit into each of the traits guides where you belong within the range. If you have a maximally valuable degree, have exceptionally useful experience, live in a particularly high paying area, and so on, your true market value could be up near the very top of range.

What is the difference between the U.S. and non-U.S. tabs?

Both tabs use the same approach of building a model from our survey data. There are two differences though: which datapoints are used to build the model, and which factors are included. For the U.S., thanks to the abundance of data, we were able to build our model with U.S. data only. Using U.S.-only data allows us to add a useful variable: region. Different regions have different pay rates, so its inclusion makes your market value estimate more precise.

For the non-U.S. tab, we use a global dataset. Specifically, we use all the non-U.S. datapoints, then randomly sample from the U.S. datapoints such that the U.S. datapoints account for 10% of the total dataset. We do not use all the U.S. datapoints because we don't want the U.S. to have outsize influence. We then run the same model as for the U.S., with two differences: first, we do not include region, since midwest, northeast, etc, do not exist outside the U.S, and second, we control for per capita GDP. This is an extremely important control, as country's pay rates are substantially impacted by the prevailing incomes.

How do you have estimates for all the countries?

This comes down to our data and our model. In the data there is a clear relationship between the pay observed in our survey and countries' per capita GDP. The best fit for this relationship was a [log-log relationship](). We then add together or model's estimate of the impact of per capita GDP with IMF data on each country's per capita GDP to create estimates for all countries.

Total Income? What does that mean?

Total income means every dollar you earn, including bonuses, profit-sharing, overtime, etc. It is more than just your base salary. Please note that it does not include any estimates of the present cash value of insurance or retirement benefits.

My company is paying me less than the median. What does that mean?

First, make sure you're including all bonuses, overtime, and other income in your comparison. Our numbers include all forms of pay, so make sure you do too! Second, remember that 50% of the workforce is making less than the median. If you're below the median, you're in good company! There are lots of reasons why a worker might be below the median value. For one, you might be on the less valuable side of one of the traits. For example, we measured a certain market value for a bachelor's degree, but a bachelor's degree can mean many things. Someone with a bachelor's in electrical engineering is probably gaining more AV market value than someone with a bachelor's in biology. Similar stories can be told for each category.

Is this data full time or part time?

In order to be able to give annual totals, we chose to show data for full-time employment. If you'd like to convert to part time, just multiply the total by the percentage of full time you plan to work. For example, if you plan to work 25 hours a week rather than a full 40-hour week (U.S. standard), multiply the total by 25/40 ($80,000 for full time * 25/40 = $50,000 for part time).

You can also convert to hourly. The quick and easy way is to divide the total by 2000—aka, divide in half, then remove three zeroes. For example, for a total income of $70,000, half is $35,000, and then remove three zeroes to get $35 an hour. Remember though: this is a total value. Your base hourly rate may be below this, with the gap made up by bonuses, overtime, and so on.

How do I use this to negotiate?

First, our tool can only provide useful starting information. Your true market value is whatever you can find on the open market. At the end of the day, if you're unsatisfied with your offer, your only true alternative may be to apply for more jobs and find a better offer.

Keeping that in mind, the first step with this tool is to use your traits to identify the appropriate range. As you do, carefully consider each of your traits to see if you belong on the high or low side of the range. Use this by-trait consideration to identify a point in the range that best fits your traits. Remember though, rather than provide you an absolute indicator of what you should be paid, the results offer a useful starting number for negotiations.

Part of the challenge in negotiations and searching is that you may provide different value to different companies. You might be the perfect missing piece at one company, while your skills are redundant or underused at another. Seeking out that perfect fit is important to maximizing your pay.

I don't see my question answered here.

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