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SALARY GUIDE 2026 · FOR JOB SEEKERS

Hiring Military Talent

What we're seeing from 671 veterans who applied with us since January 2024.

$80K
Typical pay ask
based on 211 people

94%
Have led people
based on 369 people

241
Listed a security clearance
of 671 veterans

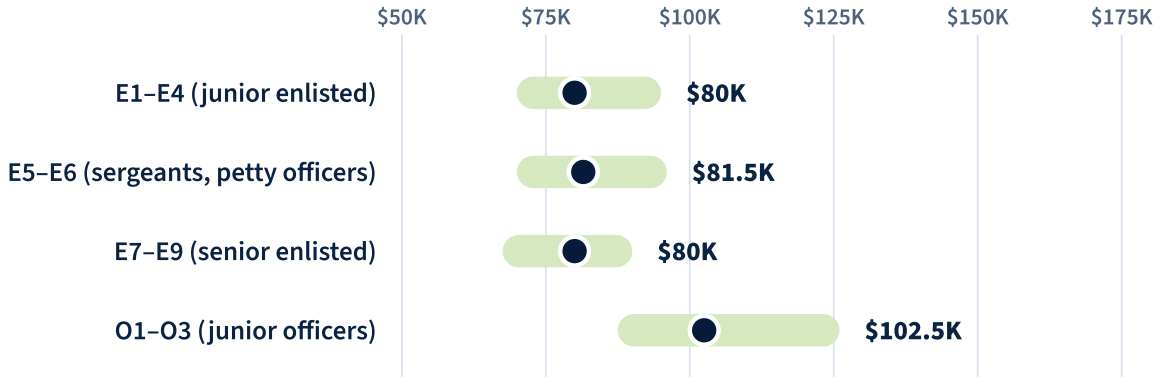
$81.5K
Typical ask, E5–E6
based on 68 people

Built from 671 job applications and questionnaires people filled out with Hire Military Talent and NorthPoint Search Group (January 2024 – March 2026). This is what our own applicants told us. It is not a survey of the whole job market.

PAY

What they're asking to be paid

Desired base salary by rank, based on 164 people who told us what they want in their next job. The bar is the middle half of answers. The dot is the typical ask (the median).



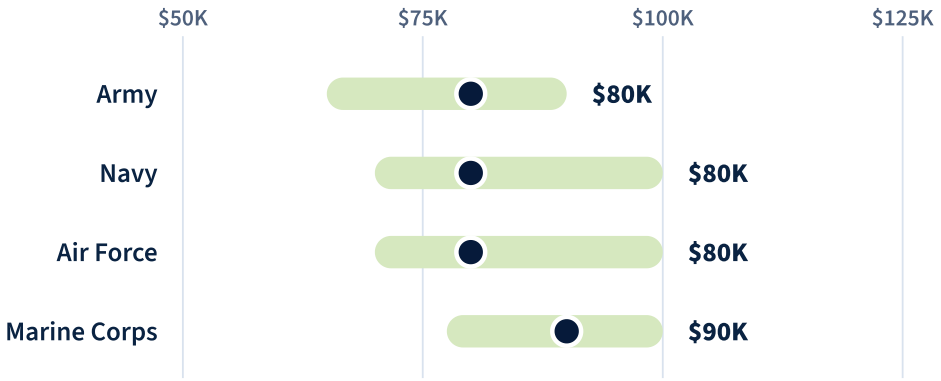
Across everyone who answered, the typical ask is $80K, and the middle half asks for $70K to $100K (based on 211 people).

Each row is one rank group. "People" is how many answered. Groups with fewer than 5 people aren't shown.

RANK	PEOPLE	MIDDLE HALF	TYPICAL ASK	LOWEST THEY'D TAKE
E1–E4 (junior enlisted)	65	$70K – $95K	**$80K**	$70K
E5–E6 (sergeants, petty officers)	68	$70K – $96K	**$81.5K**	$75K
E7–E9 (senior enlisted)	23	$67.5K – $90K	**$80K**	$80K
O1–O3 (junior officers)	8	$87.5K – $126K	**$102.5K**	$96.5K

Pay asks by branch

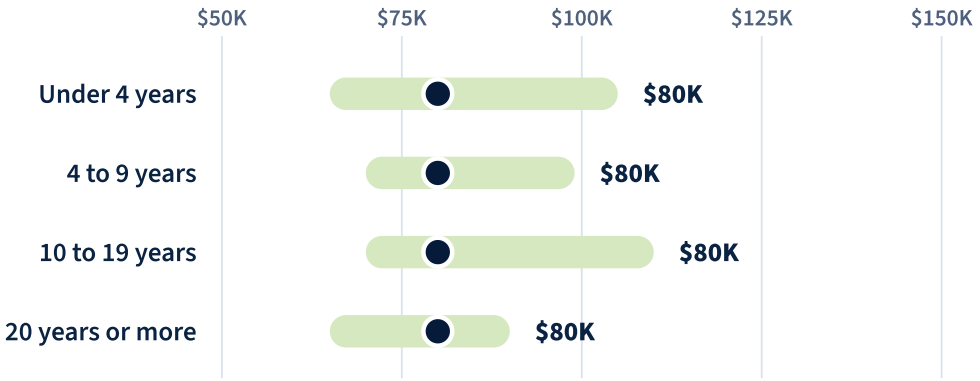
Desired base salary, based on 186 people.



BRANCH	PEOPLE	MIDDLE HALF	TYPICAL ASK	LOWEST THEY'D TAKE
Army	63	$65K – $90K	**$80K**	$70K
Navy	67	$70K – $100K	**$80K**	$75K
Air Force	29	$70K – $100K	**$80K**	$80K
Marine Corps	27	$77.5K – $100K	**$90K**	$75K

Pay asks by years in the military

Desired base salary, based on 194 people.

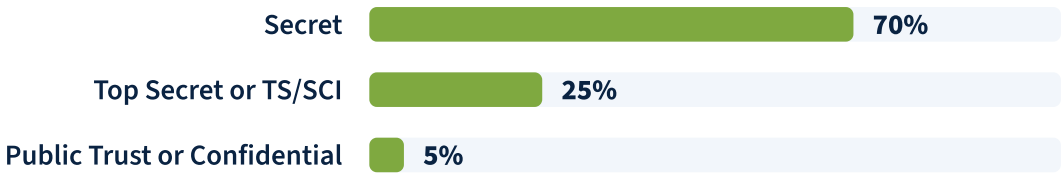


YEARS IN THE MILITARY	PEOPLE	MIDDLE HALF	TYPICAL ASK	LOWEST THEY'D TAKE
Under 4 years	29	$65K – $105K	**$80K**	$70K
4 to 9 years	106	$70K – $99K	**$80K**	$75K
10 to 19 years	33	$70K – $110K	**$80K**	$78.5K
20 years or more	26	$65K – $90K	**$80K**	$72.5K

CLEARANCE

Security clearances

Based on 241 people who answered.

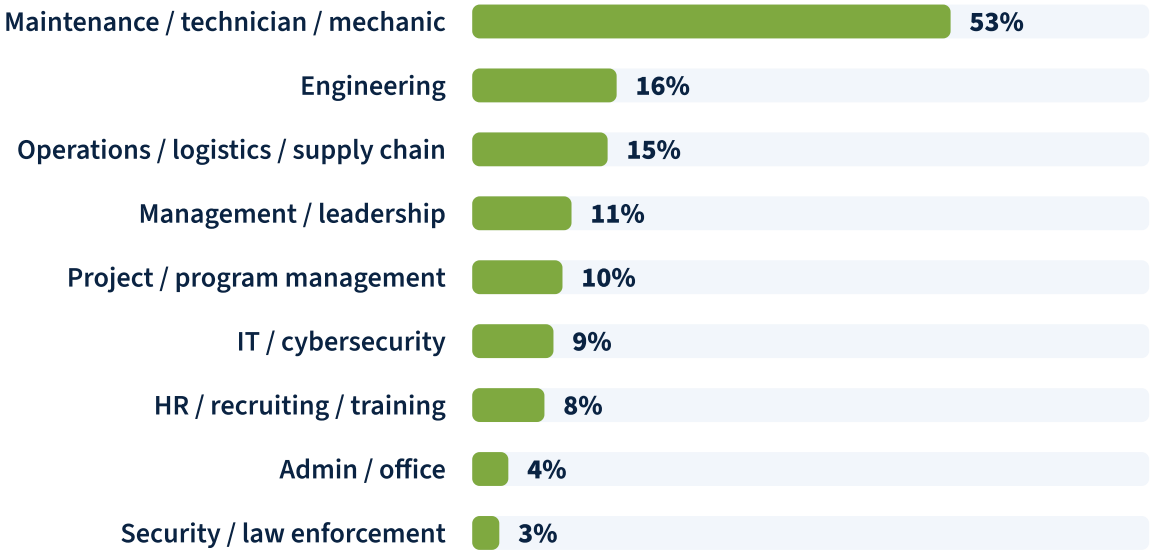


241 of the 671 veterans in this guide listed a security clearance. The question was optional, so these shares are of the people who listed one.

WHAT THEY WANT TO DO NEXT

The jobs they want next

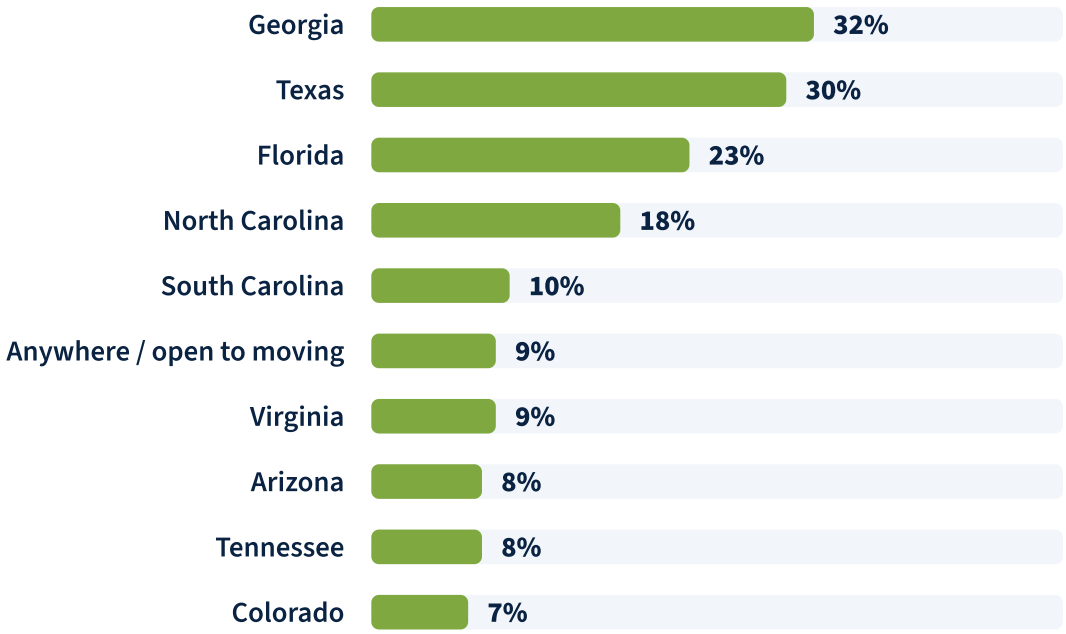
Based on 363 people who answered. Many picked more than one, so the bars add up to more than 100%.



WHERE THEY WANT TO LIVE AND WORK

Where they want to work

Based on 429 people who answered. Many picked more than one, so the bars add up to more than 100%.



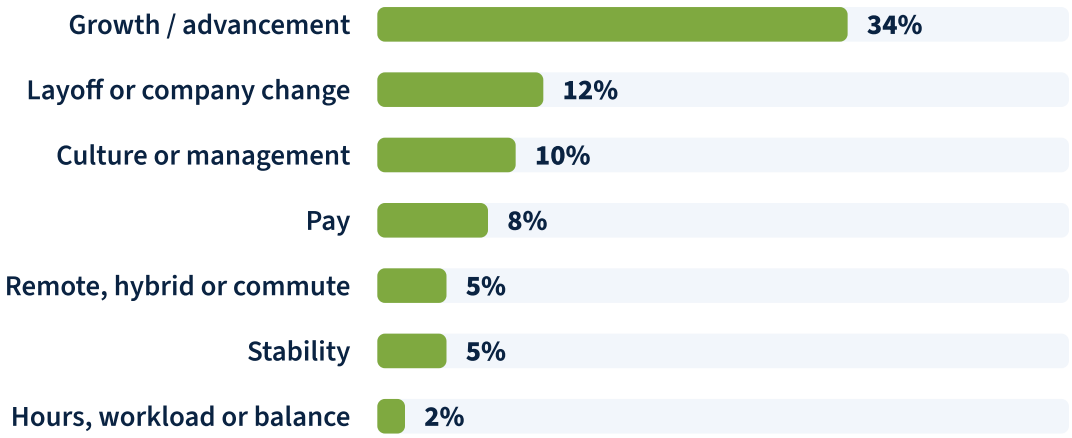
Yes or no questions

Have led people	**94%**	based on 369 people
Have a military move available	**13%**	based on 242 people

WHY THEY MOVE

Why they're looking

In their own words, based on 496 people. Many gave more than one reason.



WHAT TO DO

Ways to get paid what you're worth

1. **Know your number.**
   Find your rank in the pay table. For E5–E6 (sergeants, petty officers), the middle half of asks is $70K to $96K (based on 68 people). Decide the lowest number you'd take before the first call.

2. **Translate your service.**
   Say what you ran, fixed or led, in civilian words. Put your MOS, rating or AFSC next to the plain-English job it matches.

3. **Lead with your clearance.**
   If you have one, put it in the first line of your résumé. 241 of the 671 veterans in this guide listed one, most often Secret.

4. **Count the people you led.**
   94% have led people (based on 369 people). Say how many, and what you were responsible for.

5. **Go to the hiring manager.**
   When you apply online, your résumé goes to HR first. Find the person you'd work for and send a short note with a 30-second video intro.

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Don’t just apply. Connect.

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Record your video intro → myzipapply.com

METHOD AND SOURCES

Everything on these pages comes from job applications and screening questionnaires that people filled out for Hire Military Talent and NorthPoint Search Group between January 1, 2024 and March 10, 2026: 671 people, one form per person (their newest). Pay is the desired base salary each person gave us; the middle half is the 25th to 75th percentile, rounded to $500. Every number says how many people it rests on. Groups with fewer than 5 people are left out, and no one's individual answer is shown.

Rank comes from what each veteran typed (for example E-5, SSG or Petty Officer First Class). Answers we couldn't read as a rank are left out of the rank table but still count everywhere else. The clearance question was optional, and people without a clearance usually left it blank, so the clearance shares are of the people who listed one. We don't compare these asks to government pay numbers, because veterans move into every kind of job. Most of these applications (664 of 671) came in during 2024.

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