



# State and Local APN Salary Data: The Best Evidence for Negotiations

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## ABSTRACT

Compensation commensurate with responsibilities is an element of overall job satisfaction and influences satisfaction with and commitment to work. State and local salary data can be useful when negotiating compensation. This Washington State survey of advanced practice nurses (APNs) found salary differences according to factors such as geographic locations, gender, years of practice, education, and practice setting. Men earned almost \$6000 a year more than women, and advanced practice nurses in the hospitalist role earned the highest average salary. Nearly a quarter of APNs were dissatisfied with their salary and 5% were very dissatisfied.

**Keywords:** advanced practice nurses, job satisfaction, nurse practitioners, salary

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Financial compensation reflects society's value of workers' roles. Organizations communicate the relative importance of health professionals and their contributions in part by the salary individuals are paid. A critical review of studies analyzing behaviors in response to interventions to increase motivation reveals that salary is the most effective incentive. Ironically, when employees are asked directly about the importance of pay, data indicate they rank salary around fifth, thereby under-reporting its real significance.<sup>1</sup>

Compensation commensurate with one's responsibilities is an element of overall job satisfaction<sup>2</sup> and influences satisfaction with and commitment to work.<sup>1,3</sup> Inadequate compensation has been identified as one of the strongest factors leading to dissatisfaction among advanced practice nurses (APNs).<sup>4,5</sup> Job dissatisfaction often leads to high rates of turnover and nurses changing careers.<sup>6</sup> If people are uncomfortable discussing their salary or feel that it is private information, a survey could provide an opportunity to share salary information in a protected manner.

APN salary information is available from a variety of sources that include surveys conducted by journals, professional associations, internet web sites, and academic researchers. The surveys are national, state, regional, or local in scope. Each type offers valuable information that can be used in different ways. A state survey offers the opportunity to generate specific APN salary information that can be analyzed not just at the state level but also by select geographic areas. The 2006 Washington State APN survey included a question about APN-related income to determine state, regional, and local average salaries and the factors that influence them. This article details the results from the Washington State survey and their importance.

#### OVERVIEW OF RECENT APN SALARY DATA

Few state and local APN salary surveys were located, although practice surveys often include questions about salary and other types of compensation. Several national surveys that focus on salary have been conducted over

the years. Highlights of the results of several representative surveys are summarized below to provide a basis for understanding the contributions of each.

The St. Louis (Missouri) Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (PNPs) conducts a biennial survey of PNPs within a 100-mile radius of the city.<sup>7</sup> The 2005 survey included questions about salary and had a response rate of 60% (n = 120). Salary was reported by increments of \$5000, with the adjusted mean salary of \$72,788 for PNPs practicing full time. There was no significant difference in salary based on type of practice (primary or specialty care) or practice location (eg, office, hospital, clinic), however, there was a significant rise in salary as years of experience increased.

The Northeast Tennessee Nurse Practitioner Association conducted a 2005 regional survey of nurse practitioners (NPs) within a 250-mile area of northeast Tennessee and western Virginia. The survey yielded a

response rate of 41% (n = 441).<sup>8</sup> The average full-time NP salary was \$69,316. This amount was lower than the statewide average of \$71,068 and the national average of \$74,812.

A 2005 state survey of certified nurse midwives (CNMs) conducted in Connecticut had a 60% response rate (n = 129). The mean salary of

CNMs practicing full time in Connecticut was \$79,554. The mean income for part-time/per diem respondents was \$50,557.<sup>9</sup>

National salary data serve as a benchmark for the profession. National data assess APN income differences using various factors such as geographic region, size of the community, gender, education, years of practice, type of employer, and practice setting.<sup>10-12</sup> Major sources of national APN salary data include surveys conducted by *Advance for Nurse Practitioners* and *The Nurse Practitioner* and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).<sup>11-13</sup>

The most recent survey was conducted by *Advance for Nurse Practitioners*.<sup>12</sup> The questionnaire was published in the journal with responses submitted by fax or mail and was also available online. A total of 6162 NPs participated. The 2007 average national salary for full-time NPs (35 or more

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