



U.S. Pilot Salary & Benefits Survey 2017-2018

In its third year, *Rotorcraft Pro's* annual U.S. Pilot Salary & Benefits Survey was initially launched in an effort to monitor and report trends on the salaries of pilots in the industry. Traditionally, surveys were sent directly to employers via snail mail in ballot form, then collected and tabulated. This old method did provide interesting results, but because employers are reluctant to reveal the exact salaries and benefits they provide, the sampling could be rather small and probably wasn't always representative of the larger whole.

Online technologies have given us the ability to survey actual pilots and their employers, thus generating more participation throughout the industry. As in previous years, this year's survey

had excellent participation and we have obtained some of the latest information on helicopter pilots:

- ⊙ What are their qualifications?
- ⊙ What do they fly?
- ⊙ In what sector do they fly?
- ⊙ What ratings do they have?
- ⊙ How much do they make?
- ⊙ What type benefits do they receive?

We think you'll find the answers to these questions revealing. The goal was for *Rotorcraft Pro* to interact with our readers in the industry by focusing on two main questions:

- ⊙ How much do helicopter pilots make within the industry?
- ⊙ How much are *you* worth?

The answers to the first question are fairly easy to gather; all it requires is collecting and analyzing data. However, the second question is more personal. In addition to comparative analysis, that answer also requires introspection. Both employers and pilots want to know where they stand in relation to their peers in the industry. We hope our results will help you find answers for your specific situation.

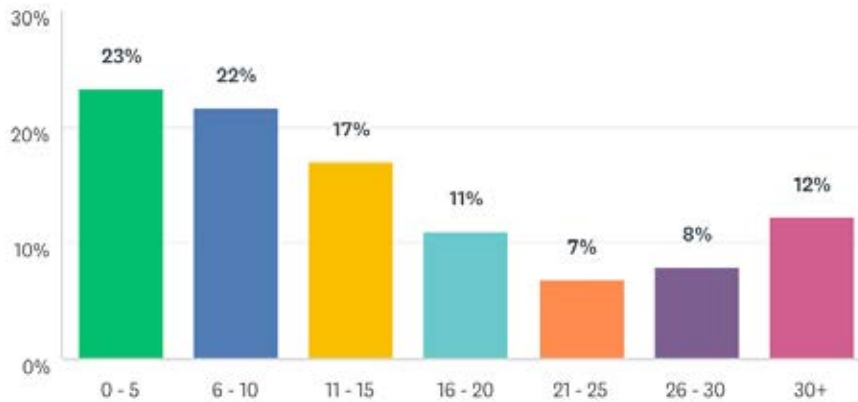
Who Took the Survey?

Hundreds of pilots took our survey and they came from all sectors of the industry, including HAA, offshore oil support, tours, electronic news gathering, utility/lifting, law enforcement, firefighting, SAR, ag/spraying, corporate (business & private owner), training, and multi-type flying. Here's the breakdown:

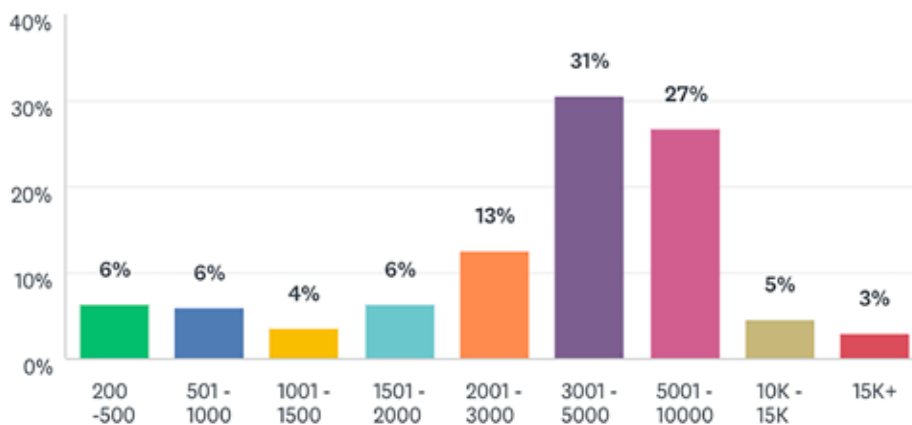
INSIGHT: 5% of respondents are U.S. pilots working as expats in overseas markets

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Flight Instructor (at primary training school)	7%
▼ Lead Pilot	14%
▼ Line Pilot	60%
▼ Owner/Operator Pilot	1%
▼ Company Training Captain or Check Airman	3%
▼ Chief Instructor Pilot	1%
▼ Chief Pilot	5%
▼ Director of Operations	3%
▼ Other (please specify)	5%

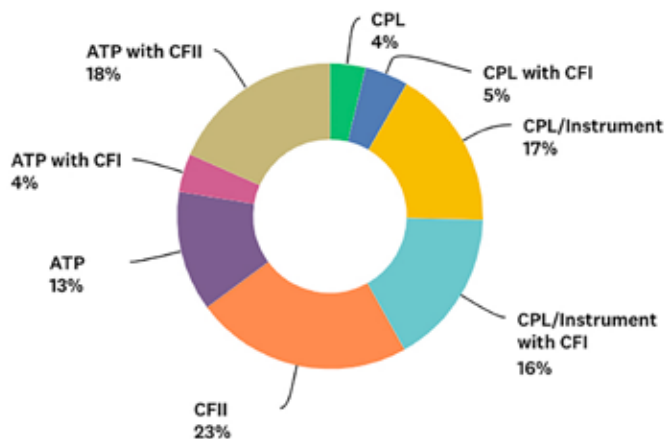
Respondents by years in industry



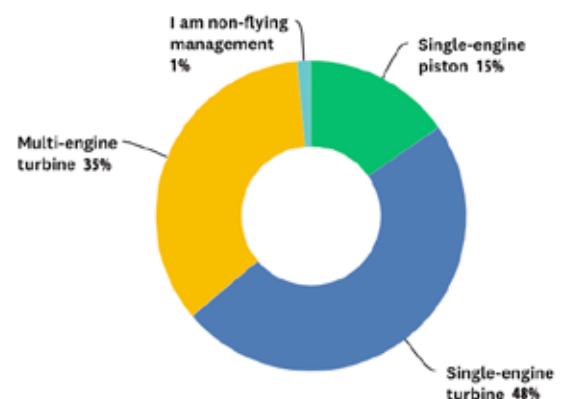
Respondents by flight-hours experience



Respondents by ratings held



Respondents by type aircraft flown





Methodology

This survey was distributed widely through use of email, social media, websites, and our magazine. All pilots were encouraged to participate. An online third-party survey company was used as the medium for survey completion, data collection, and analytics. Although personal data was collected from respondents as a qualifier, that information remains anonymous and only the data is analyzed.

As in any survey, there will be certain considerations and assumptions that must be made when analyzing and tabulating data. Some of our considerations and assumptions were:

- ⦿ This survey is designed to report 2017 data, which is the most recent full tax year.
- ⦿ We implemented the survey in early 2018 during the time when pilots were filing tax returns for 2017.
- ⦿ We assume that respondents are aware of their own compensation and benefits in enough detail to answer the survey questions accurately.



How to Read the Numbers

For any category of data, we try to consistently present three pieces of information:

1. Salary Ranges: **L** = Low / **M** = Median / **H** = High
2. The numerical value range is in annual USD. Example: 60 — 75K = \$60,001 to \$75,000 per year
3. The percent (%) of respondents in a category that make up the L, M, or H ranges

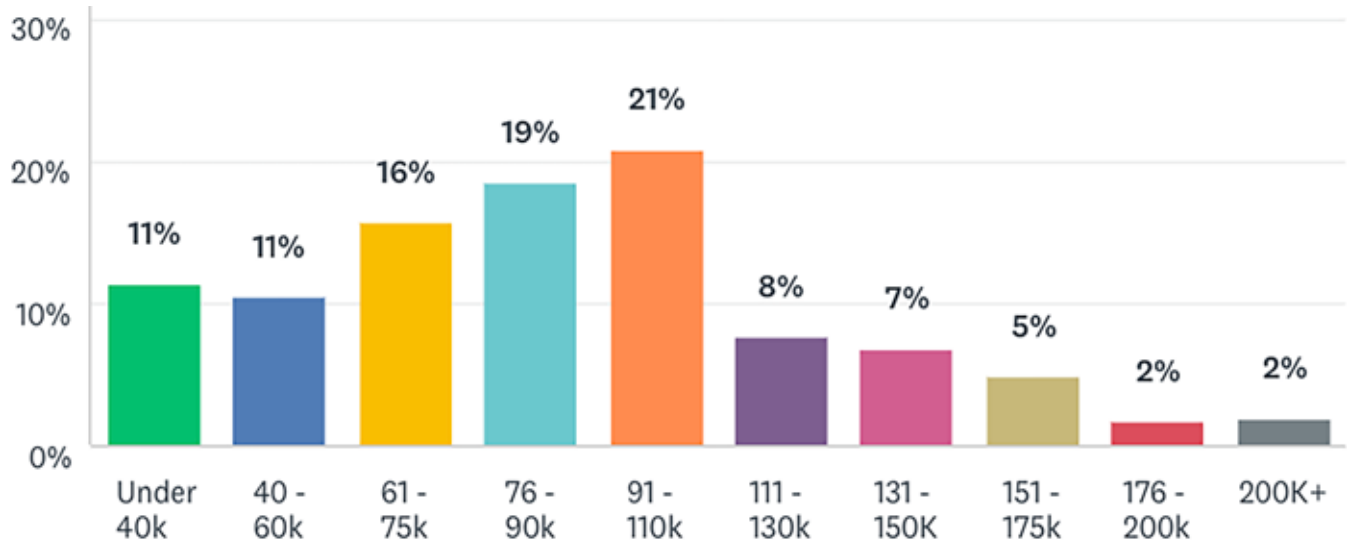
EXAMPLE

L 60-75K (10%) = Low salary range in category is \$60,001 to \$75,000 and 10% of respondents make up the low range in that category.



The Survey Results

Salary ranges in overall industry



INSIGHT: In 2017, the largest percentage of pilots in the industry grossed between **\$91,000 to \$110,000** per year.

INSIGHT: Median salaries have risen in the industry. The median salary for all pilots responding to the survey was **\$100,000** per year which represents a **\$25,000 increase** since 2014.

Key Drivers

For the third year in a row, we have seen an upward shift in median salaries for helicopter pilots. This is most likely the result of a tightening labor market. Competition for supply is coming from both the military, which is now letting fewer pilots out, as well as the airlines poaching experienced helicopter pilots from our ranks. China is not fully in the mix yet, but will become a factor moving forward as that country's growing helicopter market will try to attract pilots from the global pilot pool.

INSIGHT: Fending off the “pull of the airlines” has been a challenge for the helicopter industry, as employers have lost many seasoned pilots seeking better pay, benefits, and schedules. In a separate independent *Rotorcraft Pro* survey, we posed the question, “In your opinion, what will it take to keep helicopter pilots from jumping ship to the airlines?” Of the 481 respondents, 68% chose “Better pay & benefits” as the response.

Additionally, for several years now, there has been a deficit of new pilots entering the U.S. market compared to those who are becoming inactive or retiring. If you want more proof the shortage is here, look no further than the UND-HAI Rotorcraft Pilot and Mechanic Supply Forecast published in March 2018. In the executive summary it states:

“Regarding helicopter pilots, this forecast indicates there will be a likely cumulative shortage of 7,649 pilots between 2018 and 2036 in the United States alone. While difficult to quantify, this effect will likely extend worldwide. In collected survey data of over 200 helicopter companies and operators, over 50% of respondents are already reporting it has become harder to find qualified helicopter pilots in the most recent year. Over 63% believe it will become increasingly difficult to find qualified helicopter pilots over the next five years; and, over 53% believe their inability to find qualified pilots will likely result in curtailing any growth plans their company may have had.”

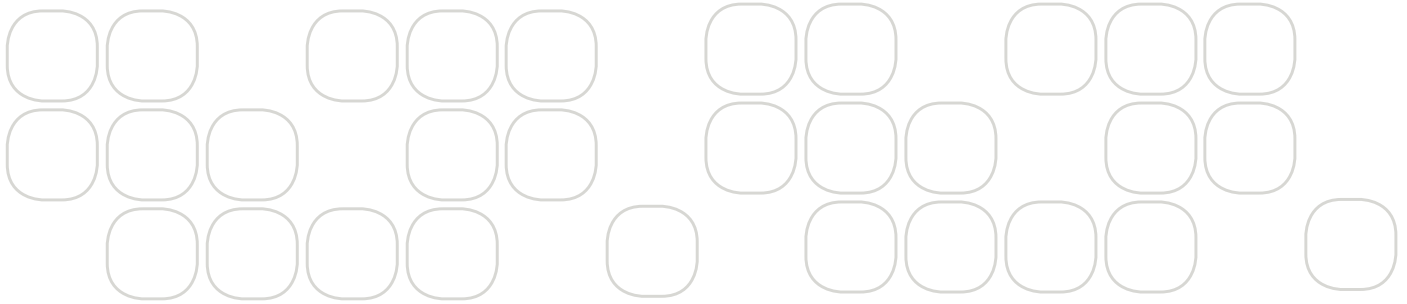
Source: rotor.org/portals/1/eblast/Executive_Summary.pdf





Salary ranges by position

Position	Low	Median	High
Instructor	<40K (70%)	40-60K (13%)	>150K (4%)
Line Pilots	<40K (9%)	90-110K (21%)	>150K (7%)
Lead Pilots	<40K (6%)	90-110K (22%)	>150K (6%)
Chief Pilots	40-60K (9%)	90-110K (30%)	>150K (9%)
Training/Check Airman	61-75K (9%)	90-110K (45%)	>150K (9%)
Director of Ops	40-60K (8%)	110-130K (8%)	>150K (42%)

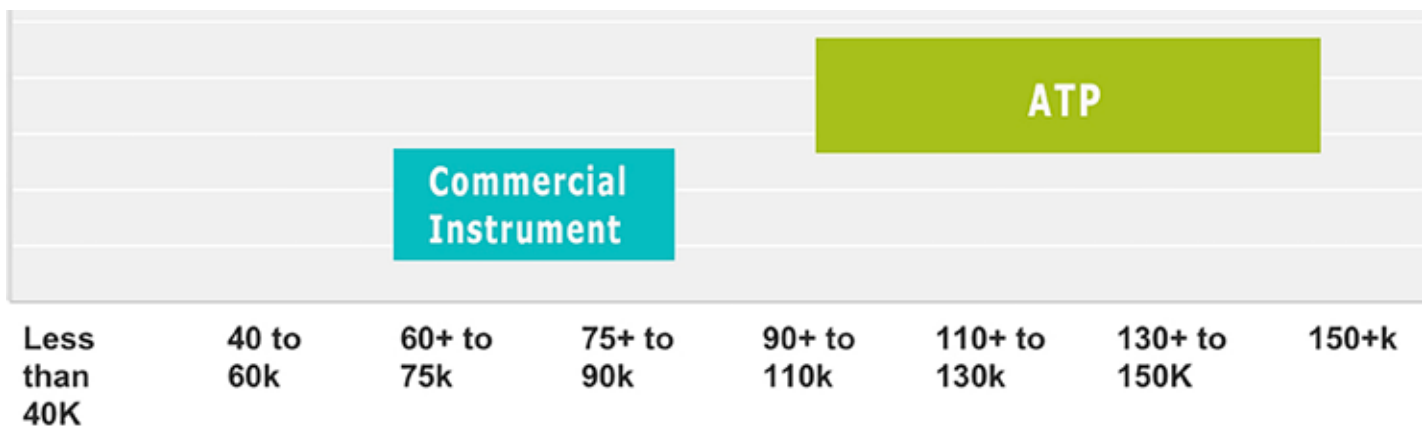


Salary ranges by certificate/ratings

Pilots who hold an ATP not only have a \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year higher median salary than those who do not, but a larger percentage of them make up the higher income brackets. Three factors may influence the higher earnings for ATP certificate holders:

1. Many employers pay an ATP bonus.
2. Higher paying jobs generally require an ATP as a prerequisite to being hired.
3. Pilots may have more tenure as a working pilot prior to obtaining the ATP.

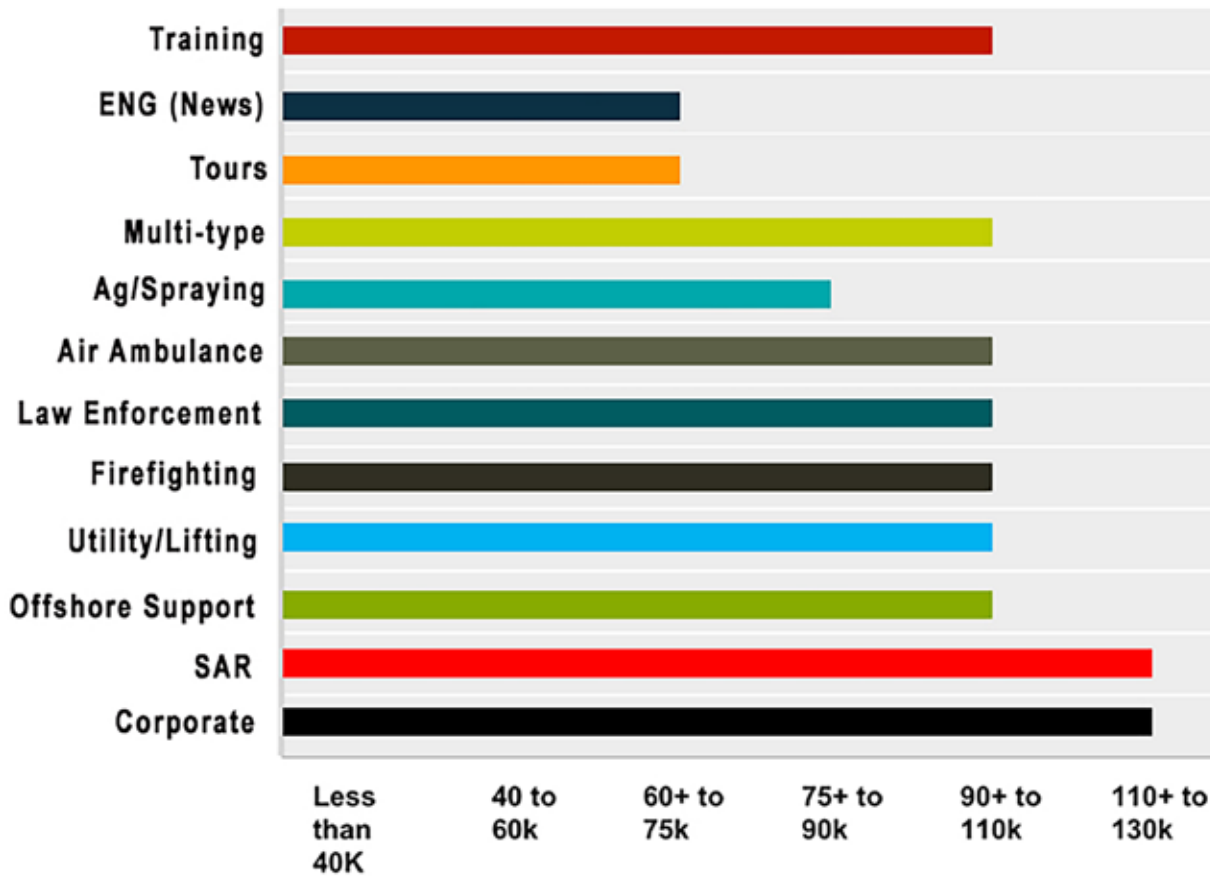
INSIGHT: The ATP rating could well be worth it! The illustration below shows a majority concentration of ATP holders (approx 50%) reside in the upper income brackets when compared to a similar concentration of CPL-Instrument certificate holders who continue to remain in the middle income brackets.



Salary ranges by sector



Median salary range per sector



Low, Median, and High Salary Ranges Per Sector

Sector	Low	Median	High
Training	<40K (46%)	90-110K (11%)	>150K (3%)
ENG	40-60K (50%)	60-75K (25%)	75-90K (25%)
Tours	<40K (44%)	60-75K (8%)	110-130K (8%)
Multi-type flying	<40K (13%)	90-110K (13%)	>150K (13%)
Ag/spraying	<40K (10%)	75-90K (20%)	>150K (10%)
Helicopter air ambulance	60-75K (23%)	90-110K (25%)	>150K (4%)
Law enforcement	40-60K (29%)	90-110K (7%)	>150K (7%)
Firefighting	40-60K (12%)	90-110K (35%)	>150K (18%)
Utility/lifting	<40K (8%)	90-110K (36%)	>150K (6%)
Offshore oil support	40-60K (9%)	90-110K (18%)	>150K (19%)
SAR	60-75K (20%)	90-110K (40%)	>150K (20%)
Corporate	40-60K (4%)	110-130K (8%)	>150K (34%)

INSIGHT: If you want the best chance of reaching a salary of **\$150K or higher** as a helicopter pilot, your best opportunities are in the sectors of offshore oil support, firefighting, and corporate.

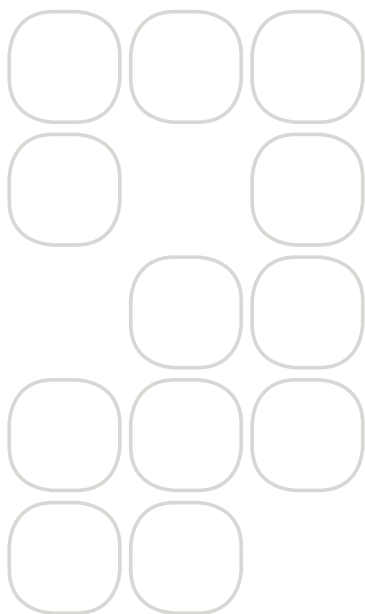
Experience - Salary ranges by flight hours

Total Hours	Low	Median	High
200 - 500	<40K (50%)	40-60K (18%)	75-90K (14%)
501 - 1000	<40K (70%)	40-60K (20%)	90-110K (10%)
1001 - 1500	<40K (38%)	40-60K (38%)	110-130K (8%)
1501 - 2000	<40K (26%)	60-75K (9%)	90-110K (9%)
2001 - 3000	<40K (5%)	75-90K (26%)	>150K (5%)
3001 - 5000	40-60K (5%)	90-110K (23%)	>150K (6%)
5001 - 10000	40-60K (2%)	90-110K (34%)	>150K (14%)
10000+	60-75K (4%)	110-130K (21%)	>150K (33%)

Experience - Salary ranges by years working as helicopter pilot

Position	Low	Median	High
0 - 5 Years	<40K (44%)	60-75K (9%)	90-110K (4%)
6 - 10 Years	40-60K (9%)	90-110K (29%)	>150K (2%)
11 - 15 Years	<40K (5%)	90-110K (22%)	>150K (11%)
16 - 20 Years	<40K (3%)	90-110K (38%)	>150K (8%)
21 - 25 Years	60-75K (15%)	90-110K (31%)	>150K (19%)
26+ Years	40-60K (4%)	90-110K (17%)	>150K (20%)

INSIGHT: When it comes to **single- vs. multi-engine helicopters**, the sooner you can get into multi-engines, the sooner you'll make more money. Only **4%** of all single-engine pilots reached the top salary ranges, compared to **15%** of their multi-engine pilot counterparts.



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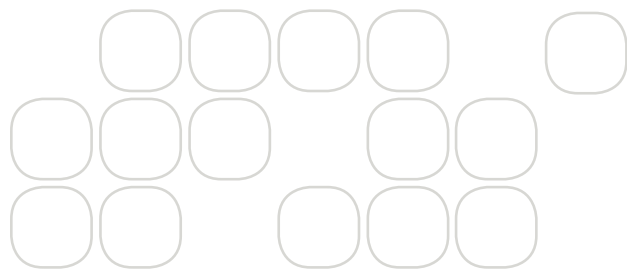
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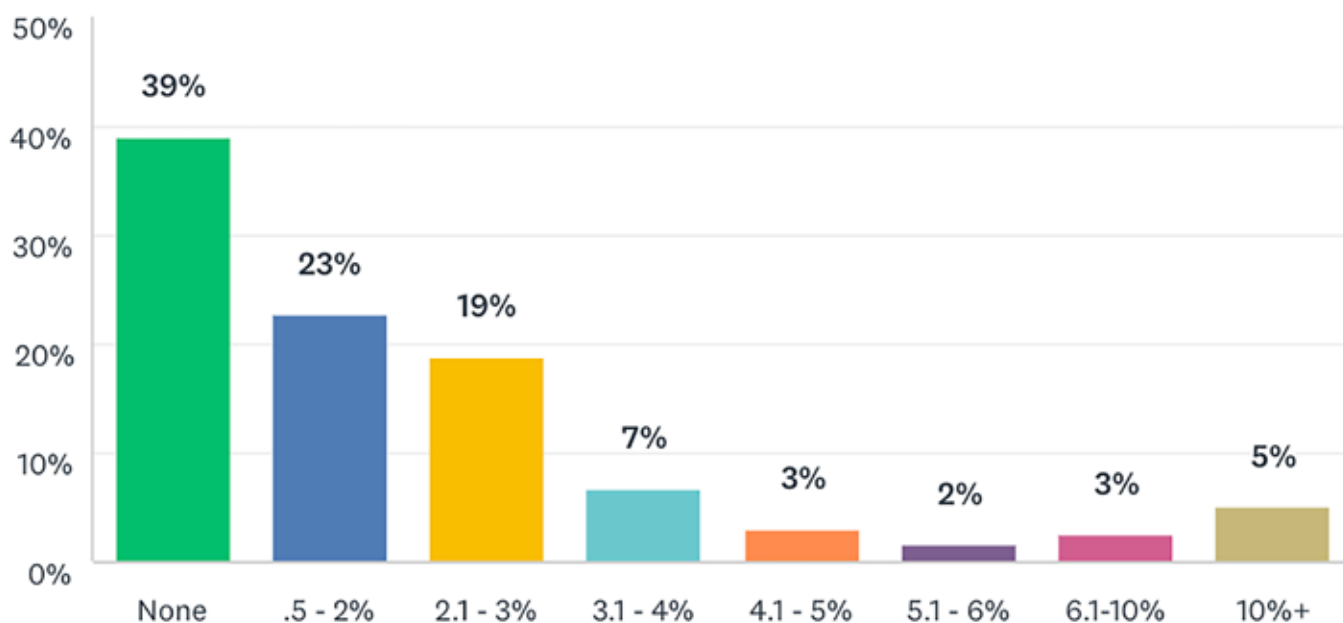
Extra Pay

It's a mixed bag when it comes to pay raises, bonus/incentive pay, and compensation for extra work hours. The majority of our industry (81%) received no pay raise, or a pay raise less than 3%!

The main commonality for earning extra pay is overtime. The largest majority of pilots (35%) are paid overtime at 1.5 times their normal rate. A full 22% either get no extra pay for working extra hours or do not work extra hours at all, whereas 12% get paid straight-time for extra hours worked. The remaining respondents' compensations for extra hours were based on a variety of formulas.

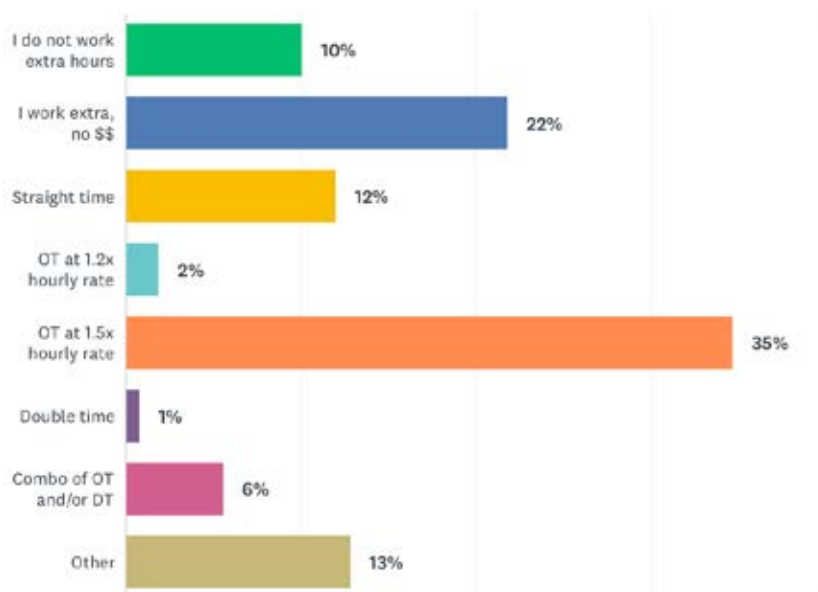


Question: What percent pay raise did you receive in 2017?





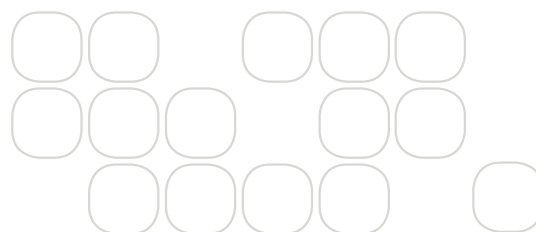
Question: How are you compensated when you work extra hours or shifts?



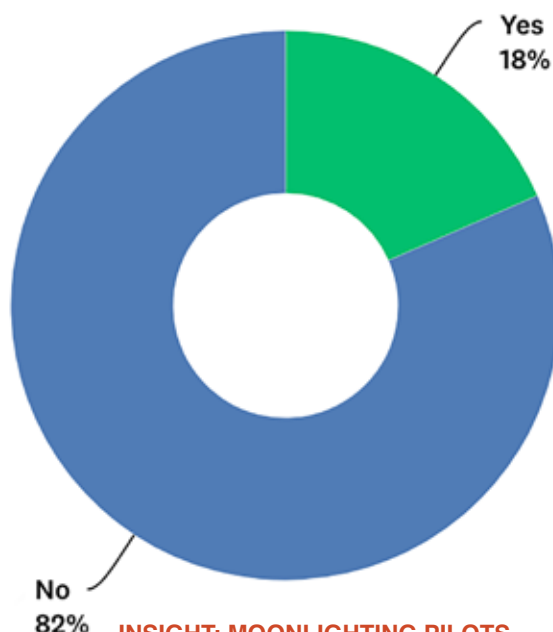
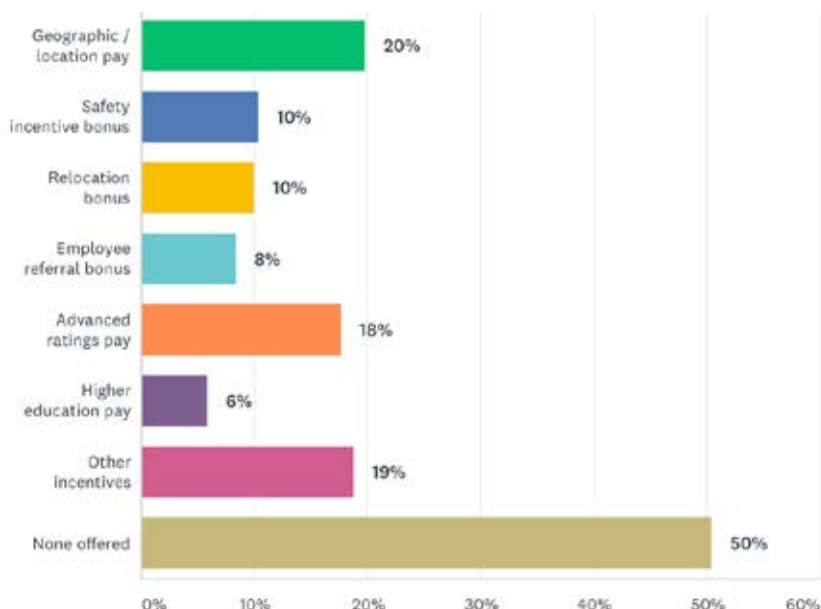
INSIGHT: VFR & IFR

Career pilots who fly **only VFR** are most likely relegated to pay of **\$60,000 to \$110,000** per year.

Career pilots who fly **both VFR and IFR** will be compensated much more. The pay for the largest group of these pilots fell in the range of **\$90,000 to \$175,000**.



Question: What types of incentive-bonus pay does your employer offer?



INSIGHT: MOONLIGHTING PILOTS

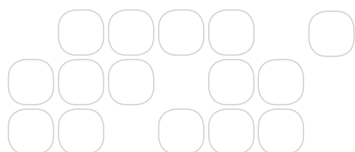
18% of pilots responded yes to the question, "Do you fly part-time (or as a contract pilot) to earn extra income outside of your full-time flying job?"



Retirement



Helicopter operators have come a long way in the last decade in the area of retirement. According to 75% of respondents, their employers offer some sort of retirement plan. Of those who offer plans, 68% of employers contribute to employee plans by either straight and/or matching contributions.



INSIGHT: The number of employers offering matching retirement funds **decreased by 13%** since the 2014 survey.



Question: How much does your employer contribute to your retirement plan?

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES
▼ None	25%
▼ 1 – 3% straight contribution	10%
▼ 4 – 6% straight contribution	8%
▼ 6%+ straight contribution	3%
▼ 1 – 3% matching contribution	10%
▼ 4 – 6% matching contribution	22%
▼ 6+% matching contribution	9%
▼ Combination of match and straight contributions	6%
▼ Other (please specify)	7%



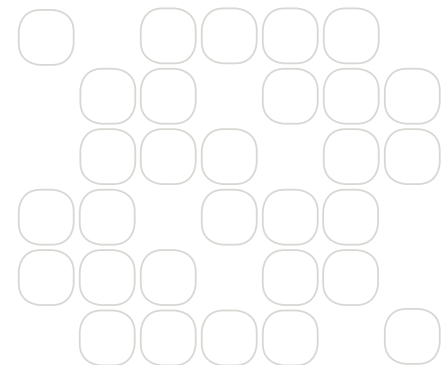
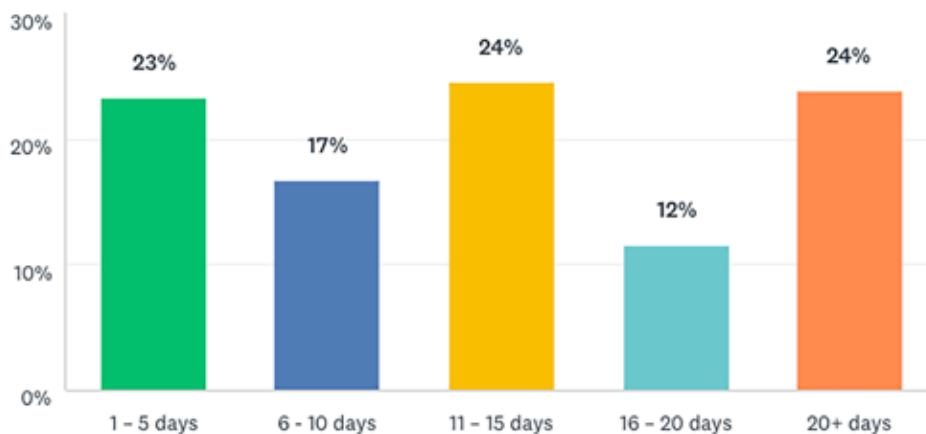
Health Benefits

A full 93% of respondents are provided healthcare benefits. How the cost of benefits are divided up between the employer and the employee is a mixed variation, with the majority of respondents having some portion paid by the employer.

Question: How are you afforded health benefits?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Employer provided, no cost to me	16%
▼ Employer pays majority, I cover the rest	41%
▼ I pay majority, employer the rest	7%
▼ I pay 100% independently	7%
▼ Covered under spouse's plan	5%
▼ Military coverage or post-service plan	15%
▼ Federal government plan	2%
▼ I have no coverage at this time	7%

Question: How many paid personal days off (vacation/sick) are you afforded annually? Do not include holidays.



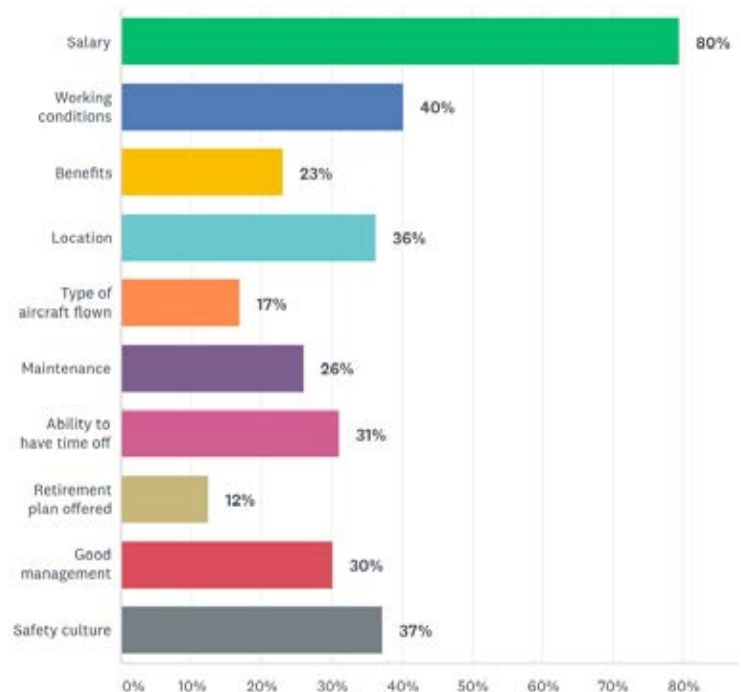


Job satisfaction – What matters most?

When it comes to job satisfaction, 79% of respondents are generally happy with their jobs. However, more than half of those respondents indicate that although they are happy, they are open to a better opportunity. The remainder indicate that they are happy but plan to stay put for at least three years. The other 21% indicate that they are unhappy in their current job.

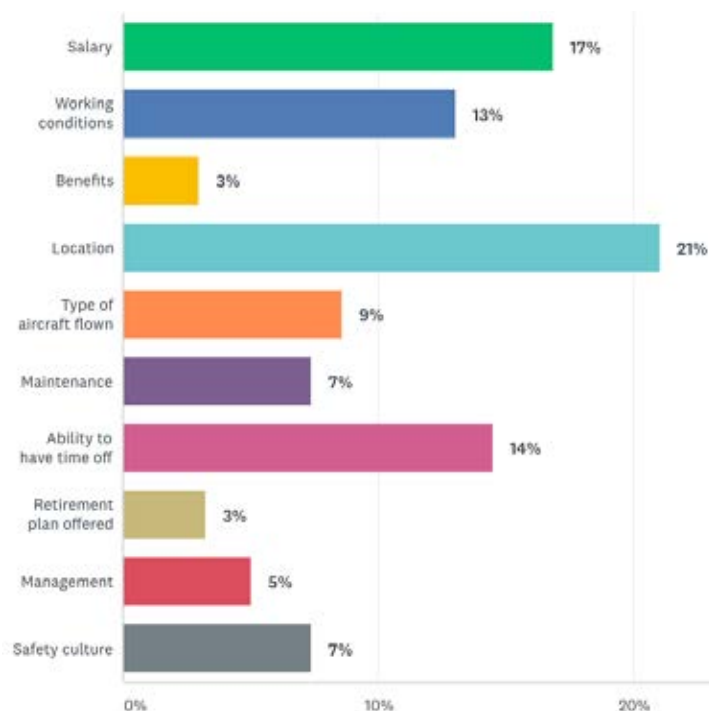
INSIGHT: What pilots want, love, and hate the most . . .
Top 3 **WANTS:** Money, working conditions, safety culture
Top 3 **LIKES:** Location, salary, ability to have time off
Top 3 **DISLIKES:** Salary, management, location

Question: As an employee of a helicopter operator, which attributes of the job are MOST IMPORTANT to you? (choose 3)

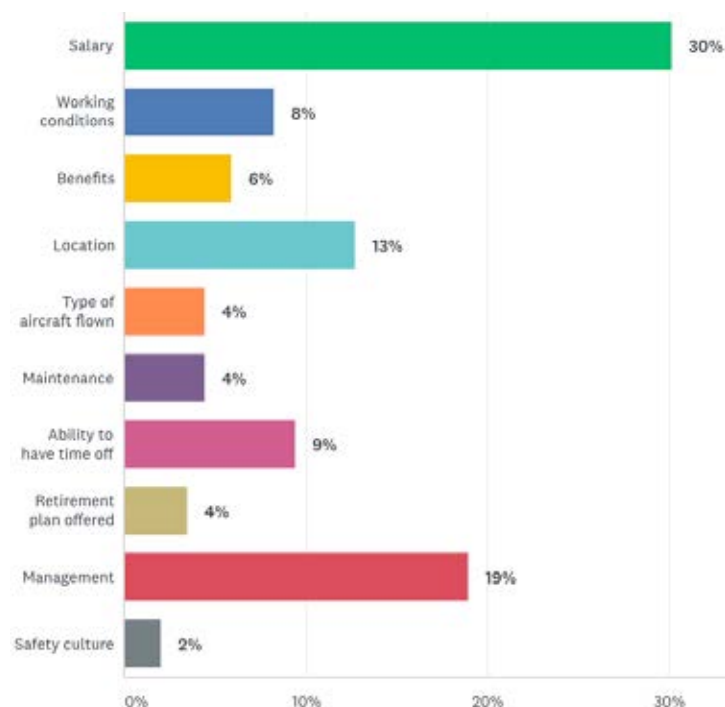




Question: At your current job with a helicopter operator, with which attribute are you MOST SATISFIED?



Question: At your current job with a helicopter operator, with which attribute are you LEAST SATISFIED?



So there you have it,

Rotorcraft Pro's Annual U.S. Pilot Salary & Benefits Survey. Now, we welcome your feedback. Please let us know what you think. Do you find any surprises? Were there any results that had you saying, "Yes, that goes for me too!" Keep the dialogue going by heading to our social media sites and adding your voice.