



THE ANNUAL ROTORCRAFT PRO

U.S. PILOT SALARY & BENEFITS SURVEY 2019—2020

Rotorcraft Pro's annual U.S. Pilot Salary & Benefits Survey was initially launched six years ago 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. This year's survey had excellent participation and obtained 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 money do they make?
- What type of 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 money do helicopter pilots earn while plying their trade?
- Are helicopter pilots generally satisfied with their place in the industry?

The answer to the first question is 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.

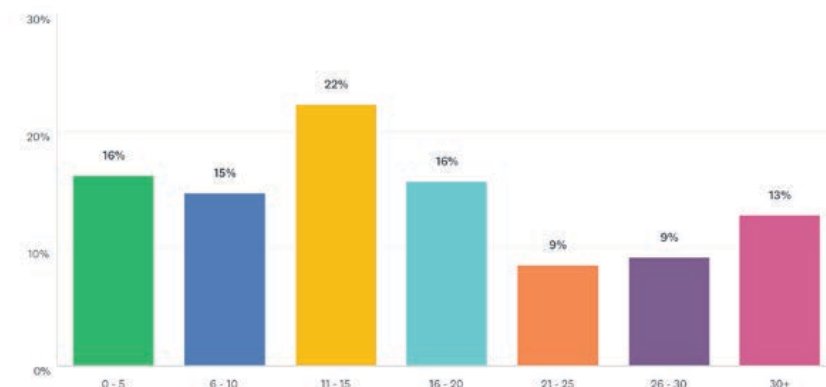
WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

Hundreds of pilots took our survey and they came from all sectors of the industry, including EMS, 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:

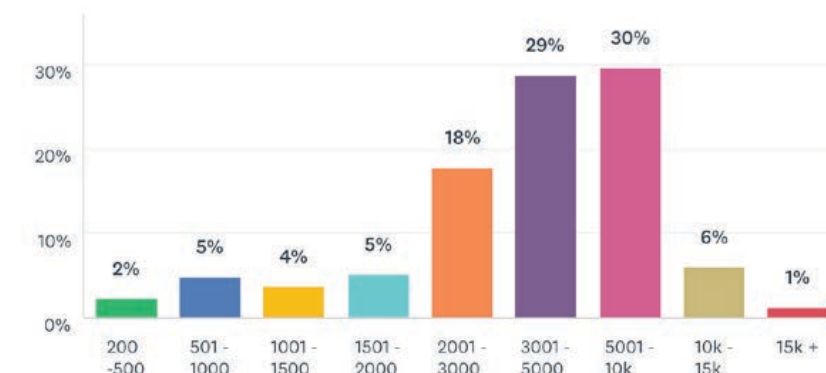
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Flight Instructor (at primary training school)	4%
Lead Pilot	13%
Line Pilot	67%
Owner/Operator Pilot	1%
Company Training Captain or Check Airman	3%
Chief Instructor Pilot	1%
Chief Pilot	3%
Director of Operations	2%

INSIGHT: 4% OF RESPONDENTS ARE U.S. PILOTS WORKING AS EXPATS IN OVERSEAS MARKETS

RESPONDENTS BY YEARS IN INDUSTRY:

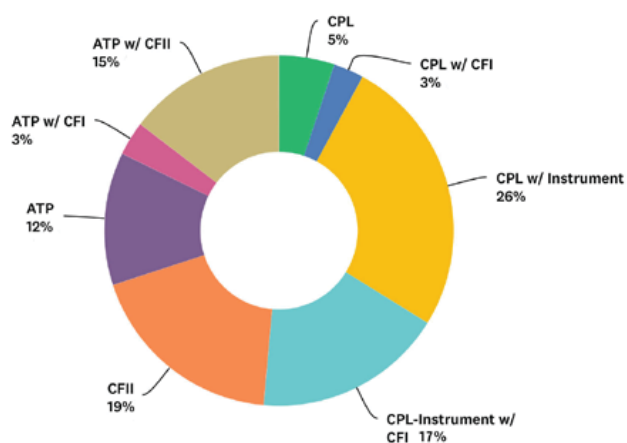


RESPONDENTS BY FLIGHT-HOURS EXPERIENCE:

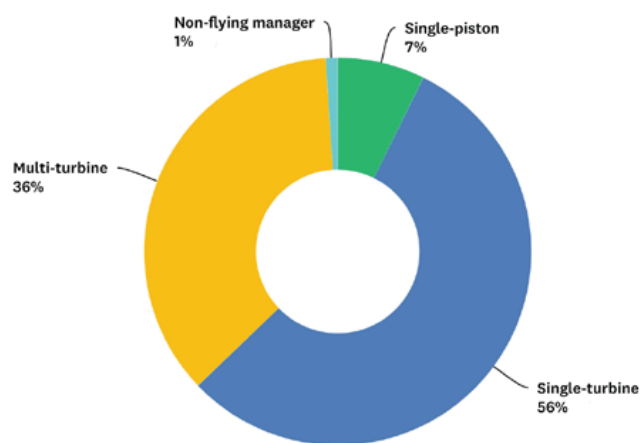




RESPONDENTS BY RATINGS HELD:



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 2019 data, which is the most recent full tax year.
- We implemented the survey in early 2020 during the time when pilots were filing tax returns for 2019.
- 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.



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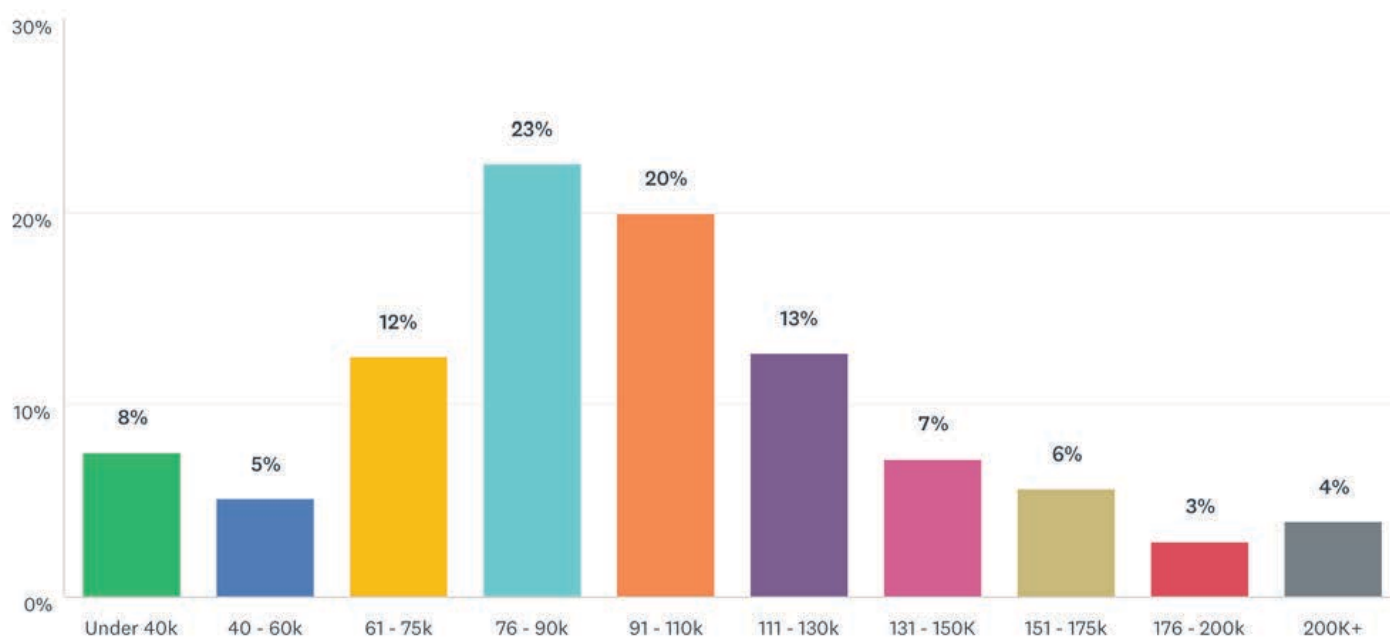

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THE SURVEY RESULTS



SALARY RANGES IN OVERALL INDUSTRY



INSIGHT: IN 2019, THE LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF PILOTS IN THE INDUSTRY GROSSED BETWEEN \$76,000 AND \$90,000 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

In 2019 we saw a very slight upward shift in median salaries for certain groups of helicopter pilots. This was the result of a continuation of a tightening labor market. Competition for supply coming from both the military (which was letting fewer pilots out) as well as the airlines successfully attracted experienced helicopter pilots from both civil and military ranks.

INSIGHT: SIMILAR TO 2018, FENDING OFF THE "PULL OF THE AIRLINES" POSED A SERIOUS CHALLENGE FOR THE HELICOPTER INDUSTRY ALL THE WAY THROUGH 2019 AND UP TO FEBRUARY 2020, AS EMPLOYERS LOST MANY MORE SEASONED PILOTS SEEKING BETTER PAY, BENEFITS, AND SCHEDULES.

Additionally, for several years now, there has been a deficit of new pilots entering the U.S. market as compared to those who are becoming inactive or retiring. If you want more proof of the shortage, look no further than the joint report titled Rotorcraft Pilot and Mechanic Supply Forecast produced by the University of North Dakota and the Helicopter Association International that was published in 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."

SALARIES HAVE RISEN

Beginning in 2015, the tightening pilot labor pool led to a "group rise" in salaries, but that seems to have hit a plateau. Although it appears that the majority group of line pilots remained in the \$76K to \$110K per year gross pay range from years 2017 to 2018, the trend of higher pay continued as the line pilot group in the next gross pay range of \$110k to \$130K grew to 13% in 2019, up from 6% in 2017.

- 2015: 47% of pilots made between \$40k to \$75K
- 2016: 33% of pilots made between \$60k to \$90K
- 2017: 40% of pilots made between \$76k to \$110K
- 2018: 40% of pilots made between \$76k to \$110K
- 2019: 43% of pilots made between \$76k to \$110K

SALARY RANGES BY POSITION

POSITION	LOW	MEDIAN	HIGH
INSTRUCTOR	<40K (65%)	76-90K (13%)	131-150K (4%)
LINE PILOTS	<40K (5%)	91-110K (21%)	>200K (3%)
LEAD PILOTS	<40K (4%)	111-130K (17%)	>200K (8%)
CHIEF PILOTS	40-60K (4%)	111-130K (20%)	>200K (16%)
TRAINING/CHECK AIRMAN	91-110K (35%)	131-150K (12%)	176-200K (12%)
DIRECTOR OF OPS	61-75K (8%)	131-150K (25%)	176-200K (17%)

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. 51%) 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.

EDITOR'S COMMENT ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS

Nearly 100% of this survey data was collected in the months just prior to the pandemic and the slowdown of the global economy. Anecdotally, the underlying demand for helicopter pilots still remains, but the shortage the industry was facing just two months ago has been temporarily satisfied. This is mainly due to the pilots who left the industry for the airlines over the last two years, were recently furloughed and are currently returning to the helicopter industry en masse.

Many operations in the industry such as utility, tours, and training have been paused as a result of travel restrictions. Additionally, these restrictions and stay-at-home orders meant that fewer people were moving about for work and recreation, which in turn reduced the call volumes of most air ambulance operators. That reduction in call volume equates to less hiring of pilots and less pressure to raise wages to be competitive.

In an April 2020 *Rotorcraft Pro* web and social media survey we asked pilots, “Has the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on your helicopter operations?” The response that it had a “devastating” impact was 44%, with another 39% indicating that there was a minor-to-moderate impact on their operations.

We view this current pause in both demand and rising pay for helicopter pilots as temporary. As people return to normal daily living, the need for helicopter services will return to normal in most sectors. The big question is: when? The answer to that question hinges on many factors beyond anyone's control. Factors include the rebound of the global economy, the result of the 2020 U.S. election, and whether or not there's a second wave of COVID-19.



SALARY RANGES BY SECTOR

LOW, MEDIAN, AND HIGH SALARY RANGES PER SECTOR

SECTOR	LOW	MEDIAN	HIGH
TRAINING	<40K (41%)	91-110K (18%)	176-200K (3%)
ENG	40-60K (20%)	76-90K (40%)	131-150K (10%)
TOURS	<40K (59%)	61-75K (7%)	111-130K (3%)
MULTI-TYPE FLYING	<40K (33%)	76-90K (17%)	>200K (8%)
AG/SPRAYING	61-75K (33%)	111-130K (17%)	176-200K (33%)
HELICOPTER AIR AMBULANCE	61-75K (15%)	91-110K (26%)	151-175K (5%)
LAW ENFORCEMENT	40-60K (4%)	91-110K (30%)	151-175K (4%)
FIREFIGHTING	40-60K (11%)	91-110K (11%)	>200K (11%)
UTILITY/LIFTING	40-60K (17%)	131-150K (11%)	>200K (9%)
OFFSHORE OIL SUPPORT	61-75K (26%)	111-130K (11%)	>200K (7%)
SAR	76-90K (14%)	111-130K (57%)	131-150K (14%)
CORPORATE	40-60K (3%)	111-130K (15%)	>200K (21%)

INSIGHT: IF YOU WANT THE BEST CHANCE OF REACHING A SALARY OF \$200K OR HIGHER AS A HELICOPTER PILOT, YOUR BEST OPPORTUNITIES ARE IN THE SECTORS OF OFFSHORE OIL SUPPORT, UTILITY/LIFTING, FIREFIGHTING, MULTI-TYPE FLYING AND CORPORATE.

EXPERIENCE

SALARY RANGES BY FLIGHT HOURS

TOTAL HOURS	LOW	MEDIAN	HIGH
200 - 500	<40K (64%)	75-90K (18%)	>150K (6%)
501 - 1000	<40K (54%)	60-75K (14%)	>150K (10%)
1001 - 1500	<40K (36%)	75-90K (11%)	110-130K (5%)
1501 - 2000	<40K (22%)	60-75K (26%)	110-130K (3%)
2001 - 3000	<40K (2%)	75-90K (23%)	130-150K (1%)
3001 - 5000	<40K (2%)	90-110K (25%)	>150K (5%)
5001 - 10000	40-60K (3%)	110-130K (18%)	>150K (17%)
10000+	76-90K (3%)	110-130K (18%)	>150K (27%)
15000+	76-90K (13%)	111-130K (38%)	>200K (13%)





EXPERIENCE

SALARY RANGES BY YEARS WORKING AS HELICOPTER PILOT

YEARS	LOW	MEDIAN	HIGH
0-5 YEARS	<40K (35%)	61-75K (24%)	111-130K (3%)
6-10 YEARS	<40K (7%)	91-110K (22%)	176-200K (2%)
11-15 YEARS	40-60K (2%)	111-130K (18%)	>200K (2%)
16-20 YEARS	40-60K (3%)	91-110K (18%)	176-200K (3%)
21-25 YEARS	40-60K (4%)	111-130K (13%)	>200K (6%)
26+ YEARS	<40K (2%)	91-110K (27%)	>200K (11%)

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 20% OF ALL SINGLE-ENGINE PILOTS REACHED THE TOP SALARY RANGES, COMPARED TO 54% OF THEIR MULTI-ENGINE PILOT COUNTERPARTS.

EXTRA PAY IS UP!

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 (70%) still received no pay raise or a pay raise less than 3% in 2019.

The main factor for earning extra pay is overtime. The largest majority of pilots (57%) are paid overtime at 1.5 times their normal rate, which is up from 35% in 2017. A full 19% either get no extra pay for working extra hours or do not work extra hours at all, whereas 7% get paid straight-time for extra hours worked. The remaining respondents' compensation for extra hours were based on a variety of formulas.



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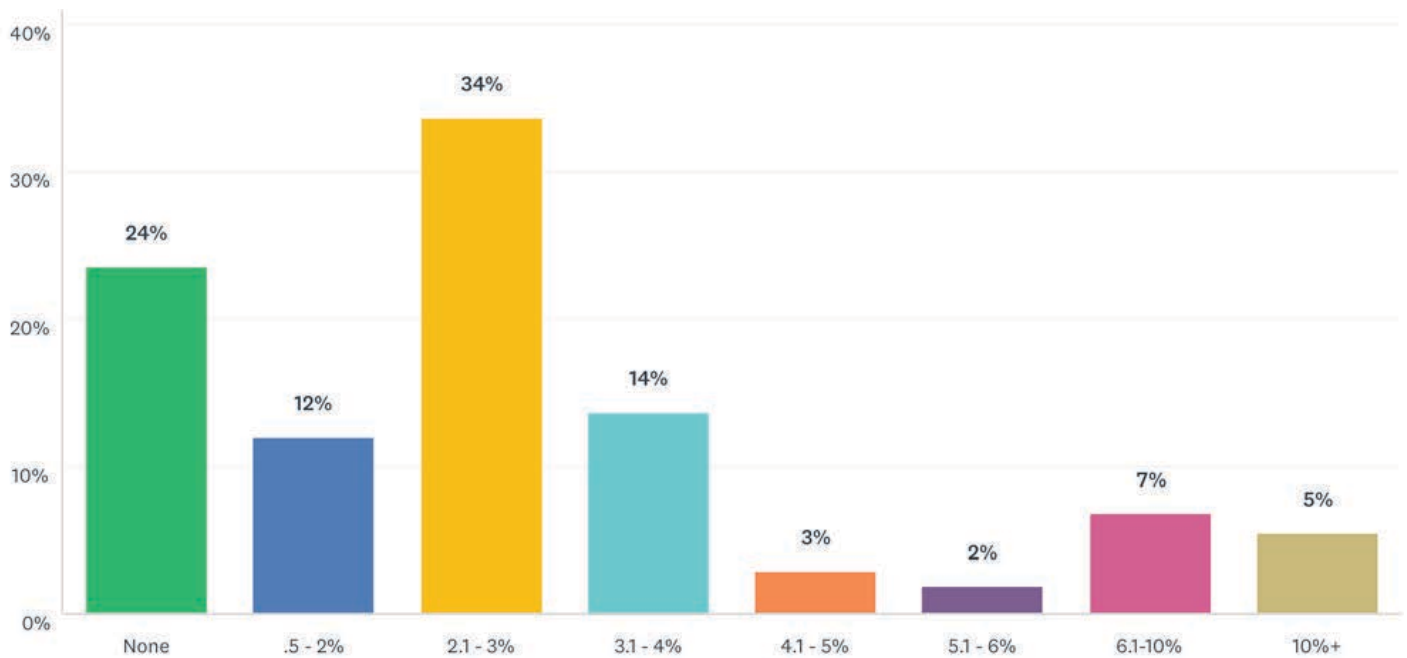
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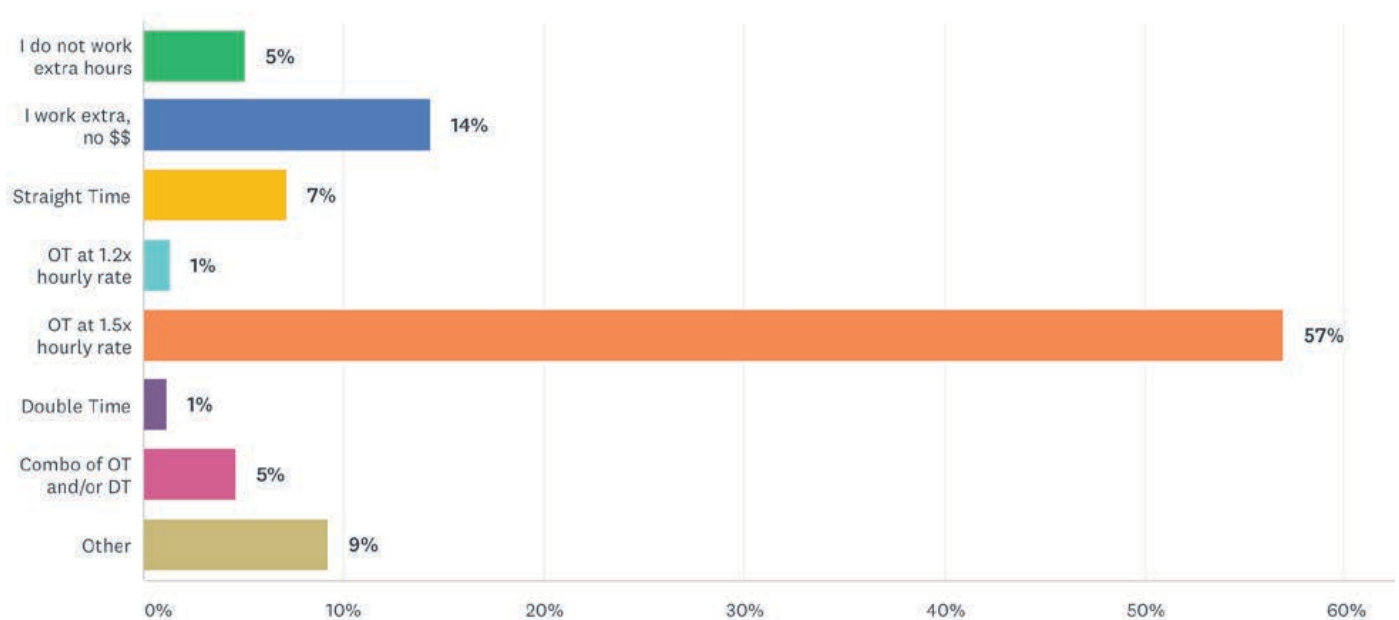
QUESTION:

WHAT PERCENT PAY RAISE
DID YOU RECEIVE IN 2019?



QUESTION:

HOW ARE YOU COMPENSATED WHEN
YOU WORK EXTRA HOURS OR SHIFTS?

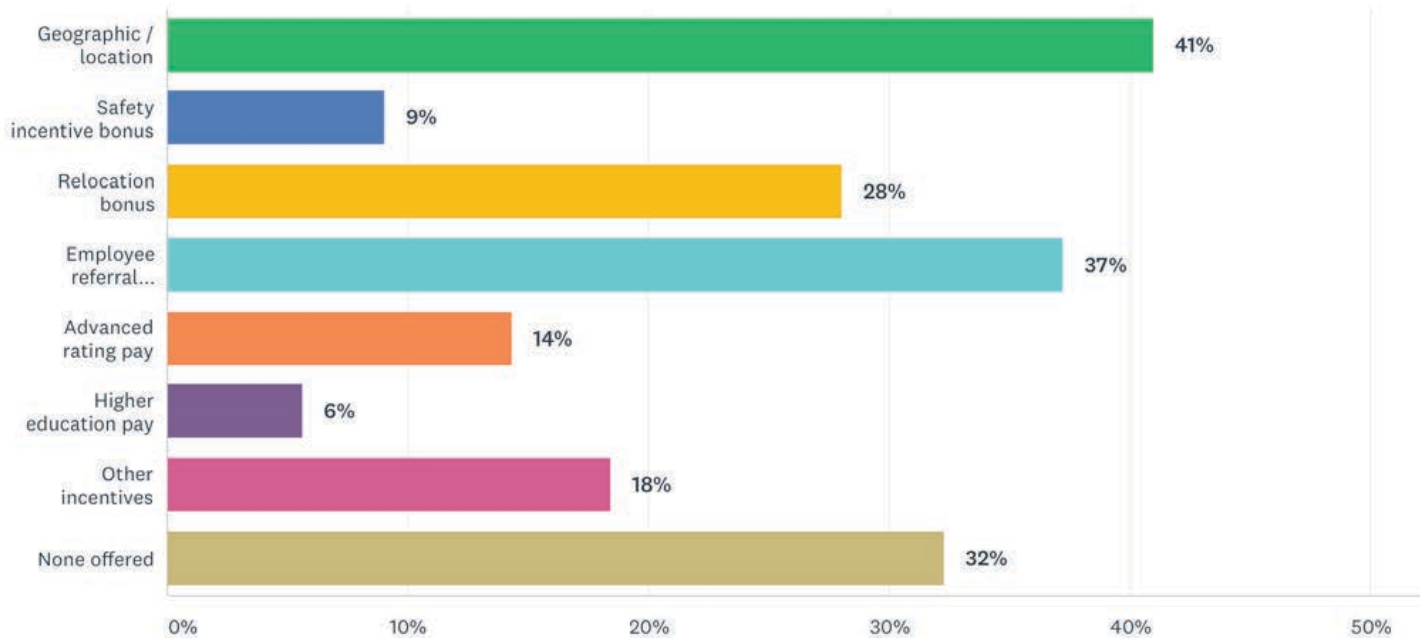


QUESTION:

WHAT TYPES OF INCENTIVES/BONUS
PAY DOES YOUR EMPLOYER OFFER?

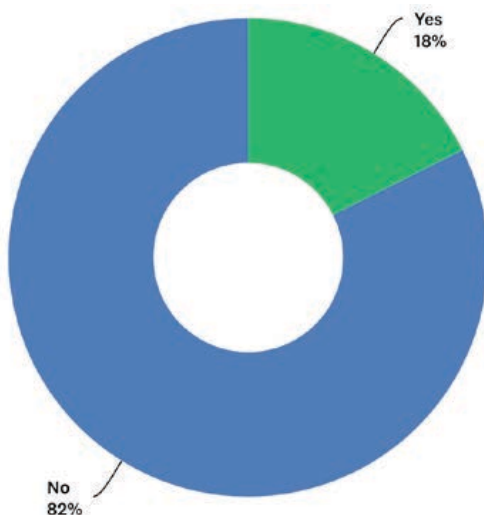
INSIGHT: VFR & IFR


- CAREER PILOTS WHO FLY ONLY VFR ARE MOST LIKELY RELEGATED TO PAY OF \$61,000 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 \$111,000 TO \$200,000.



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?"
- OF THOSE MOONLIGHTING PILOTS, THERE WAS A BROAD RANGE OF INCOME FROM \$5K (20% OF MOONLIGHTERS) TO OVER \$30K (9% OF MOONLIGHTERS.)





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RETIREMENT

Helicopter operators have come a long way in the last decade in the area of retirement. According to 82% of respondents, their employers offer some sort of retirement plan. Of those who offer plans, 75% of employers contribute to employee plans by either straight and/or matching contributions.

INSIGHT: THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS OFFERING MATCHING RETIREMENT FUNDS HAS INCREASED BY 7% SINCE LAST YEAR'S SURVEY.

QUESTION:

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR EMPLOYER
CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR RETIREMENT PLAN?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ None	18%
▼ 1 – 3% straight contribution	8%
▼ 4 – 6% straight contribution	8%
▼ 6%+ straight contribution	2%
▼ 1 – 3% matching contribution	9%
▼ 4 – 6% matching contribution	30%
▼ 6+% matching contribution	12%
▼ Combination of match and straight contributions	6%
▼ Other (please specify)	7%



HEALTH BENEFITS

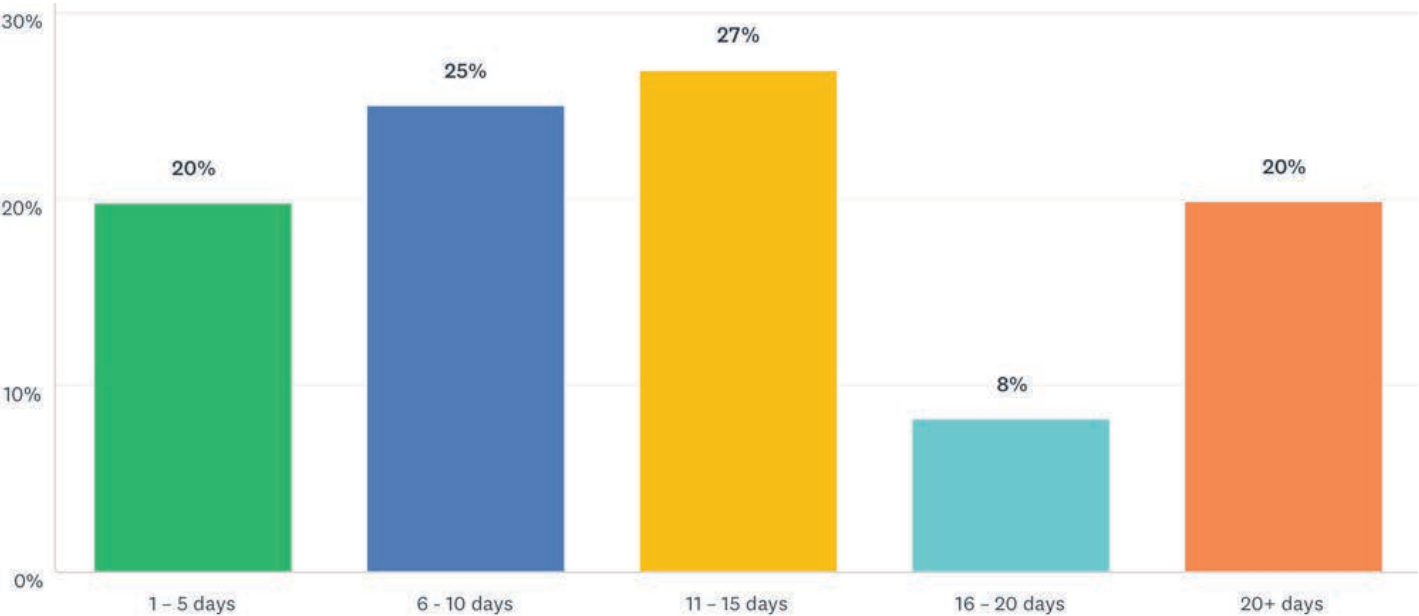


A full 88% of respondents are provided healthcare benefits. How the cost of benefits are divided up between the employer and the employee is a mixed variation, with the majority of respondents having some portion paid by the employer.

QUESTION:
HOW ARE YOU
AFFORDED HEALTH
BENEFITS?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Employer provided, no cost to me	10%
▼ Employer pays majority, I cover the rest	43%
▼ I pay majority, employer the rest	13%
▼ I pay 100% independently	4%
▼ Covered under spouse's plan	4%
▼ Military coverage or post-service plan	19%
▼ Federal government plan	2%
▼ I have no coverage at this time	5%

QUESTION:
HOW MANY PAID PERSONAL DAYS OFF (VACATION/
SICK) ARE YOU AFFORDED ANNUALLY?
(DO NOT INCLUDE HOLIDAYS.)



JOB SATISFACTION

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

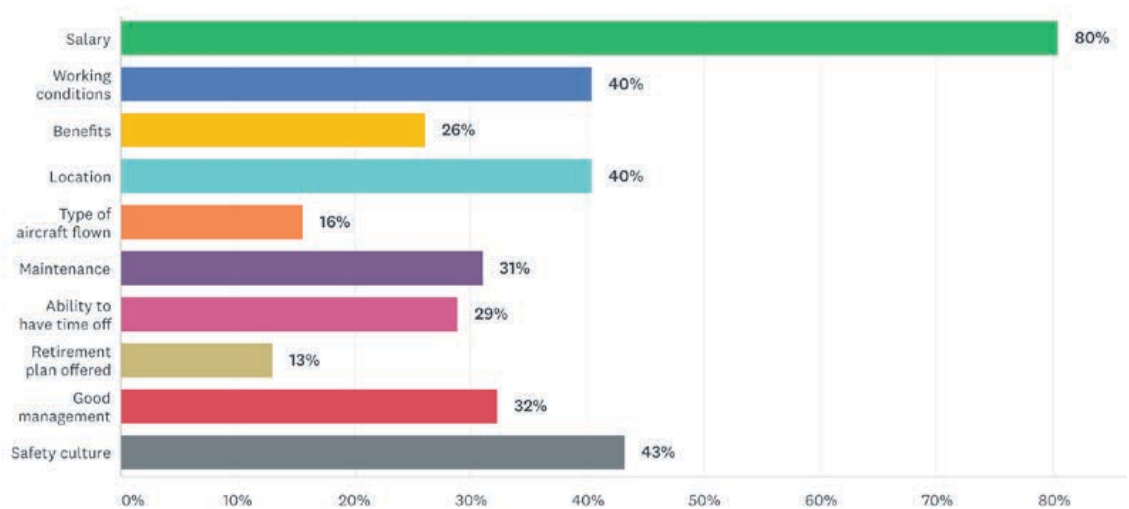
When it comes to job satisfaction, 79% of respondents are generally happy with their jobs. However, more than half of those respondents indicate that although they are happy, they are open to a better opportunity. The remainder indicate that they are happy but plan on staying put for at least three years.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

INSIGHT: WHAT PILOTS WANT, LOVE, AND HATE THE MOST ...

- **TOP 3 WANTS:** MONEY, BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, BETTER SAFETY CULTURE
- **TOP 3 LIKES:** LOCATION, SALARY, SAFETY CULTURE
- **TOP 3 DISLIKES:** SALARY, MANAGEMENT, LOCATION

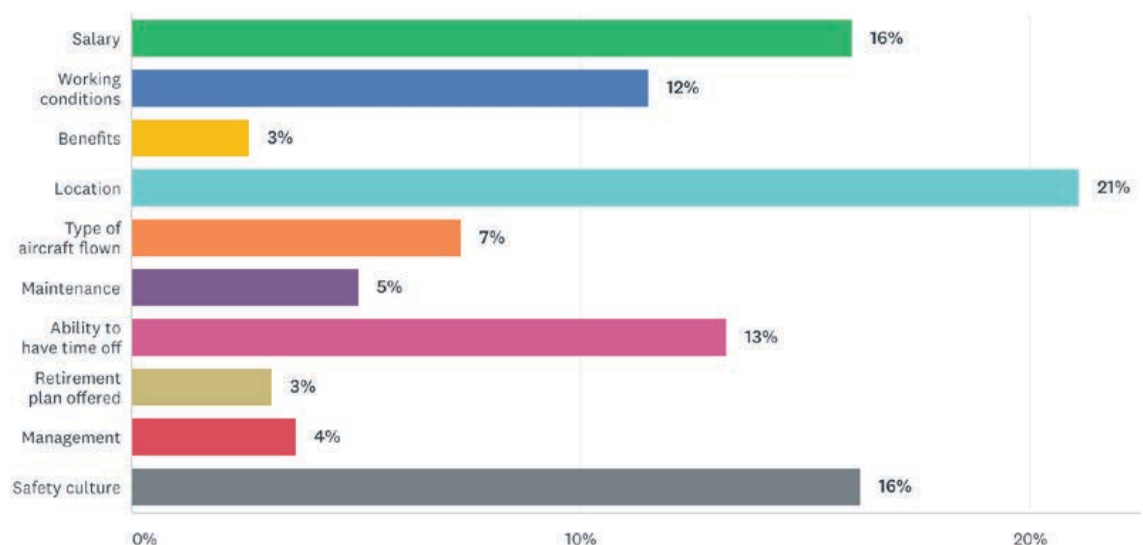
QUESTION:

AS AN EMPLOYEE OF A HELICOPTER OPERATOR, WHICH ATTRIBUTES OF THE JOB ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?
(CHOOSE 3)



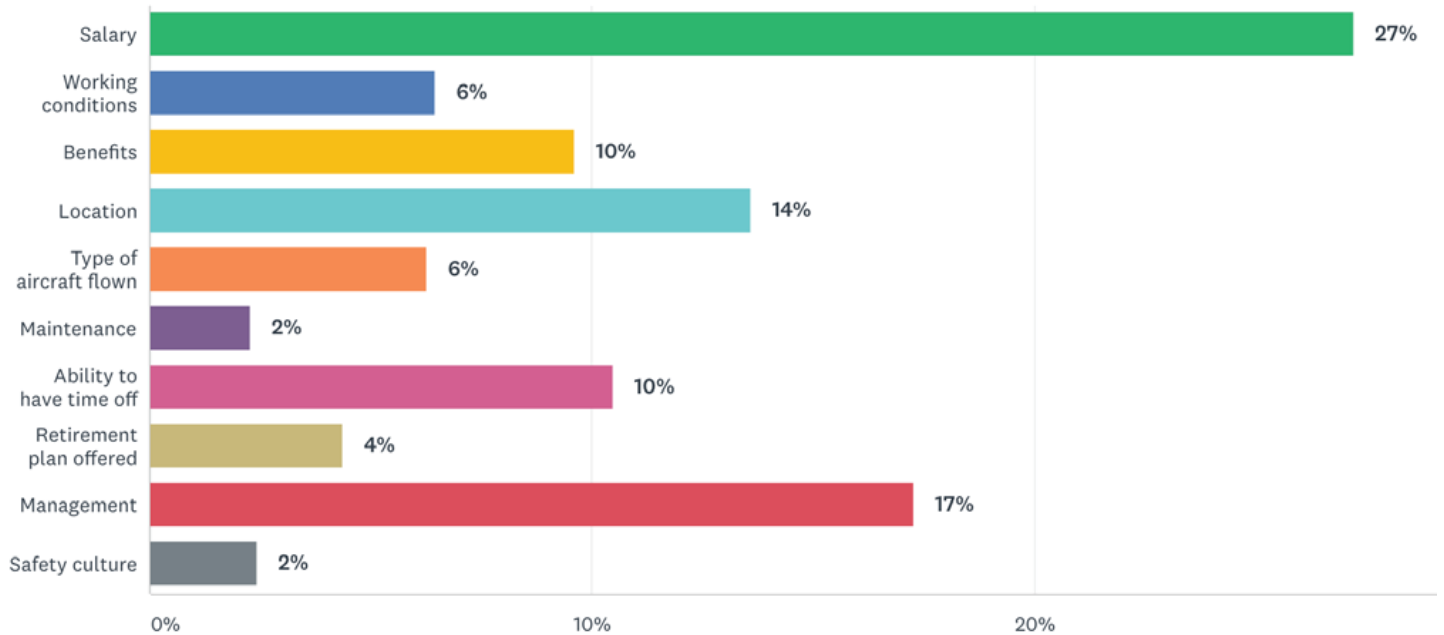
QUESTION:

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. Until next year, fly safe. Be safe.

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