



2024 Salary Guide

Cyber Defense - USA

Trident Search

Having set the new industry standard for recruitment, Trident Search specializes in finding the best cyber security and sales professionals for clients around the world. Working in 24 countries, we are a trusted partner to some of the fastest-growing and most influential global cyber companies, and play an essential role in helping them to build high-performing teams to protect business-critical assets.

Since launching in 2020, the company has become an industry leader and is the go-to provider across the USA and EMEA cyber security markets. We're on a mission to fight cybercrime by connecting our clients with top talent faster than anyone else in the industry, and to equip and challenge our people to redefine what good looks like in this sector.

As a data-driven hub of cyber security recruitment, we ensure we are always aware of the latest frameworks, methodologies, products, threat actors and tools; in such a fast-paced industry, staying at the forefront of change is vital if we are to offer genuine career advice.



How will this report help you?

Clients

We have two key aims when supporting our clients: attracting and retaining talent. The purpose of this report is to highlight key trends around compensation, including salaries, benefits, bonuses and retention, and how your business compares to others across the industry. Our previous guides have gone a long way in aiding clients to build industry-leading teams and implement policies to withstand market challenges.

Candidates

If you are a candidate looking for a role within defensive cyber security, this report will help you understand the true state of the market and how your salary compares to competitors in the industry. This knowledge will help to map out your career trajectory and allow you to make an informed decision on your next move.



Overview

2023 was a challenging time in the cyber hiring market, with many companies pressing pause on personnel decisions amidst a period of economic and geopolitical turmoil. We saw mass layoffs in tech and IT which impinged into cyber security and rocked the stability the sector had previously enjoyed. Budget cuts saw the streamlining of both sales and defensive teams at a time when we were seeing an increase in threat activity.

In the wider industry, the last 12 months presented a series of significant shifts, shaped by evolving threats, new technologies and high-profile breaches, raising concerns about the security of essential systems and emphasizing the need for robust defenses. In line with the National Cybersecurity Strategy, there's now a much greater focus on the importance of security across both the public and private sectors. With the market projected to grow to \$78.31bn in 2024, key sectors like e-commerce, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Operational Technology (OT) and cloud security will come to the fore and the need for

professionals with the most in-demand skills is expected to explode.

With many companies being conservative with spending in 2023, the pressure is now on to hire this year. There certainly seems to be a better level of understanding and buy-in, meaning it is much easier for CISOs to execute their roadmaps and secure increased budgets. With the SEC regulations brought in in 2023, there is also more pressure on business leaders and the Board to support CISOs to best safeguard the business.

In recent months, there has also been a noticeable uptick in job opportunities, particularly within specific areas like consulting. Companies are focusing on digital transformation and improved customer experience, driving a heightened demand for skilled talent across product development, IT infrastructure, software engineering, product development, security engineering, customer success and solution architecture.

As demand for talent rises, so too do salaries. Many employers are bolstering their compensation and benefits packages in a bid to attract and retain the best professionals. US cyber security professionals earn on average \$120k per year, significantly higher than in other industries, and companies are having to up their game when it comes to securing the best professionals through competitive remuneration and benefits packages.

We're therefore on a mission to remove some of the confusion around cyber security pay, educate organizations on the best hiring strategies and ensure people know their true worth. We would like to thank all 500+ respondents who took part in our salary survey this year.

Whether you are an employee looking to see if you are paid fairly or an employer wanting to ensure you compensate your teams at market rate, this report is for you.

"This year we're seeing a definite mentality shift in security hiring strategies, with increased importance given to flexibility and the provision of training and development. It's crucial to have a realistic expectation of what talent is available on the market, as finding the right balance between technical requirements and on-the-job training is vital. For candidates, there's also been a seismic change as more people are wanting to get into the industry yet employers are still looking for the top 10% of applicants. To stand out, you need to take a more proactive approach to upskilling and taking on training opportunities outside of your normal work to further your career."

CHARLEE RYMAN, DIRECTOR, TRIDENT SEARCH

Salaries

As with all variables, there are nuances to each of these categories, and the salary you can command for a role can depend on a number of factors including your previous technical experience, the compensation package offered alongside base salary, and the market position of the organization you are joining. In fact, we've seen salaries for the most experienced cyber leaders going up to \$600k base depending on size of the business and its security maturity.

A Recruitment Consultant can help you to understand these nuances and explain how your salary band might be affected by them.

Job Title	Years of Experience	Salary
CTI Analyst	1-3	\$70k-\$90k
	3-5	\$90k-\$120k
	8+	\$120k-\$140k
Incident Responder	1-3	\$90k-\$120k
	3-5	\$120k-\$160k
	5-8	\$160k-\$200k
	8+	\$200k+
Security Engineer	0-1	\$100k-\$130k
	1-3	\$130k-\$180k
	5-8	\$180k-\$220k
	8+	\$220k-\$250k
Security Operations Analyst	1-3	\$70k-\$100k
	3-5	\$100k-\$130k
	8+	\$130k-\$150k
Security Leadership (Head, Director, VP, CISO)	1-3	\$170-\$190k
	3-5	\$210-\$250k
	5-8	\$250-\$300k
	8+	\$300k+



OTE and Bonuses

Bonuses have long been a key element of the compensation package, but as budgets are squeezed, many businesses are diversifying their compensation offers with elements like flexi-work and enhanced annual leave which aren't strictly financial.

The overwhelming majority, 47%, of professionals in more technical roles received a bonus of just 0-5% of their salary. However, MSSPs and Consultancies frequently offer shift work, overtime or on-call allowances in lieu of bonus payments.

Yet for those in leadership positions there are still big payouts up for grabs, with 25% of leaders receiving over 30% of their annual salary as a lump sum.

When it comes to achieving your bonus, 61% state this is decided by individual performance. We've seen the proliferation of individual new business contributor roles, and with the economic uncertainty of the last 12 months, more and more companies are leaning towards rewarding high performers and making mass redundancies across underachieving teams.

“Given the highly specific skill set of security professionals, the length of time it takes to acquire or train those skills and the increasing importance of having qualified security talent in your organization, compensation is a critical aspect to get right and keep up to date. If you are unsure if your offer is competitive, seek feedback from talent agencies or conduct your own market research to ensure you're attracting the right people.”

LEE VORTHMAN, VP - CHIEF SECURITY OFFICER, ORACLE



Pay rises

The sector is facing the squeeze due to global economic pressures. US salary growth for cyber security professionals has failed to keep up with the sustained post-Covid inflation, resulting in a 4.1% loss in real salary relative to January 2019. This aligns with our analysis, as the figure for those who received no pay rise hit 40% this year. In total, 69% of survey participants received 5% or less of an increase in their salary, along with a decline in high-value bonus payouts.

At the top of the industry, we would have expected to see salary inflation. Given increased APT and breach activity, there's an increased need for cyber security leadership and executives who understand the technology and can devise effective product development strategies.

Yet due to sector wide budget cuts and layoffs, the supply of skilled executives on the market is exceeding current demand. Even though more is being asked of leaders in terms of skills and knowledge, this situation means we aren't seeing salaries being pushed up to the same extent as in Europe.

Instead, security leaders are now having to become more flexible with their requests. In place of asking for a raise, many are opting for equity options to compensate for expected incremental increases in pay.

60%

cite a salary increase as their main motivation for looking for a new role, 8% fewer than for equivalent roles in EMEA.



Benefits

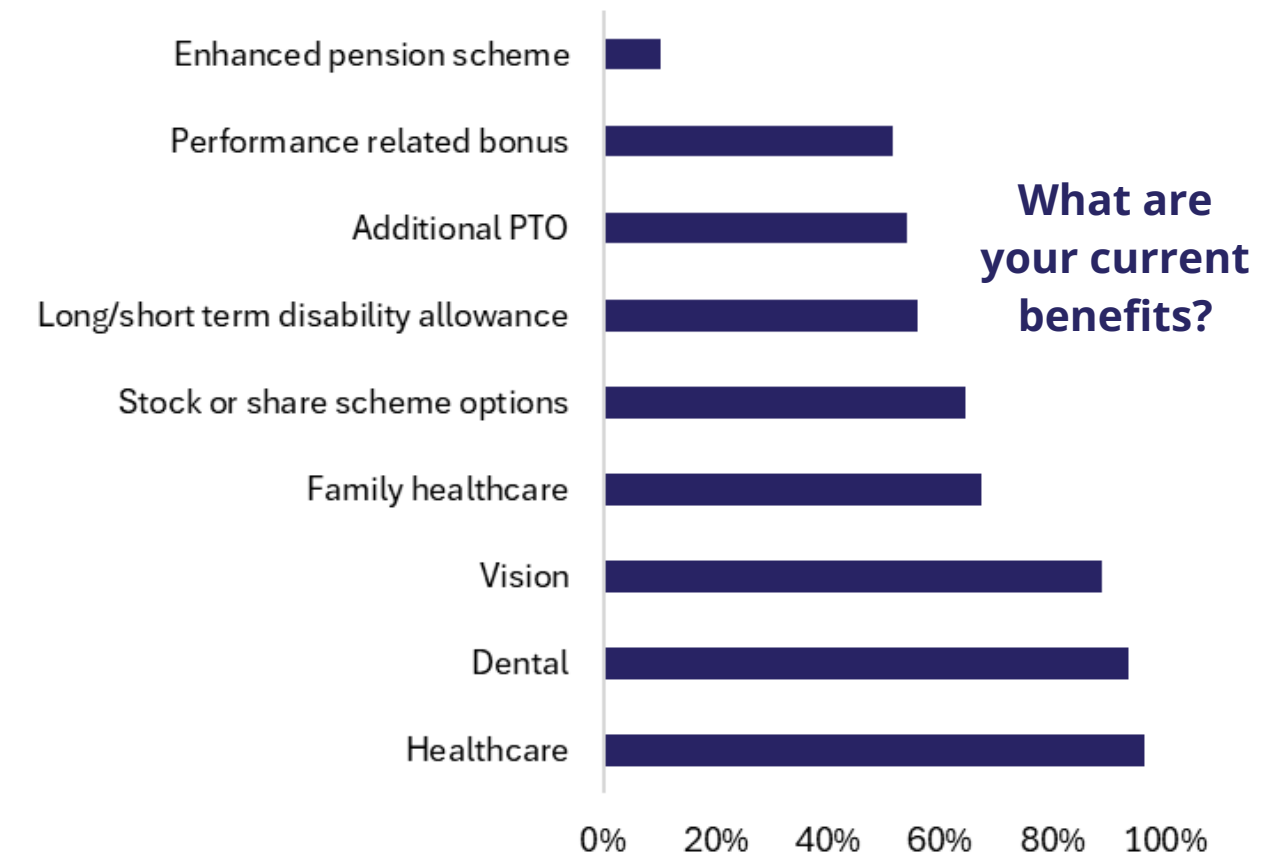
Employee benefits are essential for enhancing well-being and fostering desired behaviors, achievements, values and skills. Beyond just financial compensation, benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, flexible work arrangements and 401(K) matching contribute significantly to employee morale.

Stocks and Shares

64% of respondents reported stock and share options as forming part of their benefits offer. For start-ups and SMEs, it's a good way for businesses to stay competitive, offering potentially high future returns as a counter to the higher base salaries at more established companies. Yet larger businesses are also now having to offer more equity options to stand out, a trend we haven't seen in previous years.

Holiday

54% of respondents reported having additional PTO on top of the standard 10-day allowance. With the younger generation placing a high value on annual leave, employers are now adding programs such as sabbaticals or tenure-based PTO benefits. There's evidence that the US is moving to a more liberal approach when it comes to paid time off to tackle high burnout rates and align more with European models.



96%

of people receive personal healthcare, compared to 70% in EMEA. With soaring costs in the US, private health insurance is essentially non-negotiable.

Retention

In this market, retention is arguably more important than hiring, and something too many companies fall down on. Recent industry-wide studies have shown that job satisfaction is currently sitting at just 70%, with disgruntled employees affected by cutbacks, layoffs and overstretched workloads creating a situation of distrust and poor workplace culture.

In fact, 65% of respondents are planning to move roles in the next 12 months. The concern really centers around retaining security leaders; once you lose top talent, either to competitors or out of the industry for good, it will be incredibly hard to get them back into your business. Given the industry-wide skills gap and workforce shortage, replacing skilled leaders is a key challenge.

When it comes to retention, it's important to remember that money isn't everything; when we speak to candidates many are equally as interested in the culture and the team they will be working alongside. 44% of respondents would move for a better environment, and for many, having a supportive team, managers who value individual contributions and opportunities for growth and development are crucial.

On occasion, we will also see professionals settling for a lower salary to work in a purposeful organization that aligns with their values – this is especially important in defensive roles with the capacity to make a genuine societal impact or work with cutting-edge technology.



Job satisfaction

Research shows that 28% of CISOs are already considering leaving their jobs due to high rates of burnout, yet in our experience around 80% of leaders are at least open to conversations about moving. The SEC regulations that came into effect last year have also contributed to CISOs leaving roles where they don't have Board buy-in, as the risks of personal and professional liability is too great.

Given the increased volume of attacks we're experiencing, if CISOs don't feel they have the support or investment required to effectively secure the company or do the job they were brought in to do, the likelihood of them moving on is high, meaning we're at risk of losing experienced leaders with key skillsets from the industry.

In addition, 66% of security professionals report feeling stressed at work. Indeed, in our survey, just 36% of respondents stated that their team is fully staffed with an appropriate number of people. Maintaining industry stability is therefore going to be a big challenge this year.

Yet despite the challenges there is still cause to be hopeful. As of January 2024, demand for cyber security professionals has remained largely resilient, rising to 20% higher than pre-pandemic levels. With the increased visibility of critical cyber-attacks on major corporations, there is a growing understanding of the role of skilled professionals in safeguarding organizations against evolving threats.

65%

of professionals are planning to move job in the next year. That's over 10% more than their peers in EMEA.

64%

of respondents think their salary compares fairly to the market rate.

would move roles for a better work-life balance.

26%



With the busyness of modern life, the ability to outsource the stress of finding a role to a qualified agency partner is often necessary. We're finding that many candidates are looking to us as a long-term recruitment partner to support them through the challenges of locating the right opportunity and supporting them throughout their career. On the client side, many of the companies we work with use us to leverage the skills and experience we bring to deliver a fully developed hiring strategy and connect with the best talent on the market.

Whether you are a candidate or employer, get in touch for more information on anything covered in this report, as well as additional insights into the other markets we recruit for.

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