

Salary survey offers view of lab industry

M*LO* recognizes the ongoing need for medical laboratory technologists and technicians. Estimates tell us that by 2012, 100,000 vacant MLT/MT positions will exist, but the need for laboratory testing is greater than it has ever been. While a relentless search for clinical laboratory professionals is ongoing, *MLO* readers might be interested the results from a total of 2,375 concerned *MLO* subscribers who responded to our annual salary survey.

No doubt some of the salary differences relate to competency level, business conditions, or personality factors, and it is not possible to evaluate these from responses to a questionnaire. Several easily defined factors, however, seem to contribute to different pay structures. These include education, geographic location, job function, and the length of time a person has been in the clinical laboratory profession.

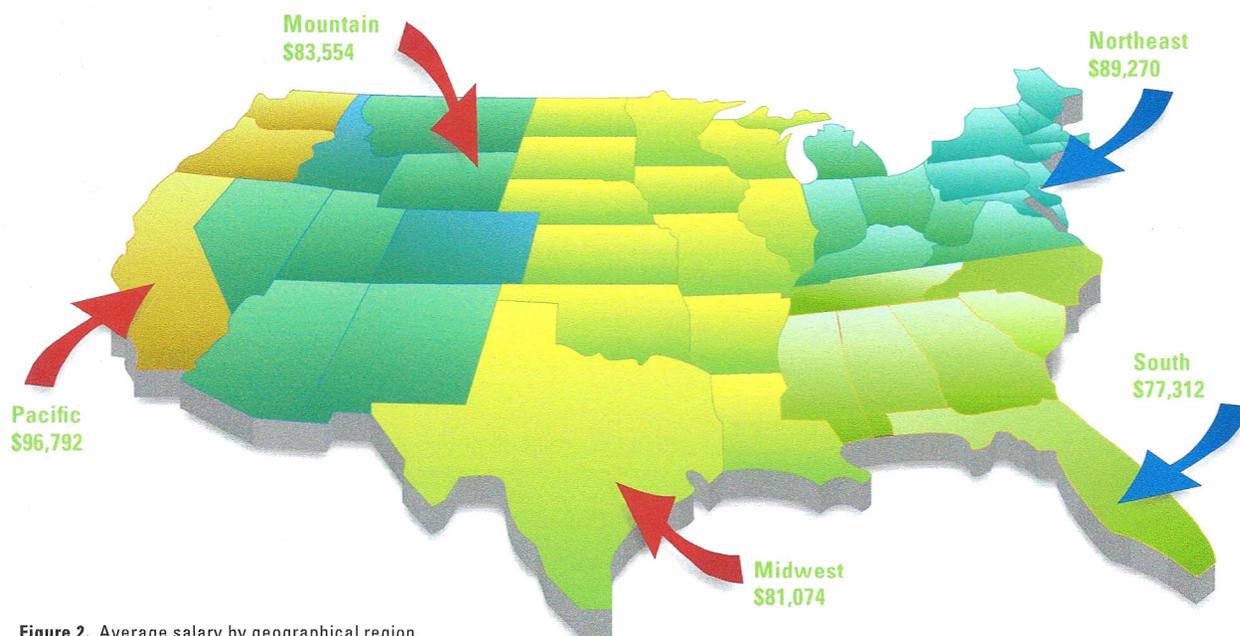


Figure 2. Average salary by geographical region.

According to *MLO*'s survey respondents, the representative lab professional is a female (72%), 50-59 years of age, working in an urban area (39%) in the Northeastern United States (34%). She has a supervisory position as a lab manager/administrator (23%) or a section manager/supervisor (19.9%) in a hospital lab (63%), and she generally works an eight-hour shift (68%). Her salary is between \$105,419 (lab director), and \$72,320 (section manager/supervisor) compared to the average yearly salary for a medical technologist at \$60,815.

Our representative clinical laboratory professional works for an organization with either one to 10 employees in her department (29%), where the annual test volume is more than 1,000,000 (30%). She holds a bachelor's degree from a college or university (59%) and is certified in her field (93%). She has taken more than 10 CE classes yearly (39%). She has worked in the clinical laboratory field for more than 20 years (75%) and has been with her current employer for more than 20 years (42%).

Variations exist among survey group

There are wide variations in salary among our survey respon-

"The normal work week is 40 hours, but I am on call 24/7 and frequently work 50 to 60+ hour weeks."

■ Education

Generally, education is a significant differentiator in the salary structure. The typical employee with a high school diploma makes about \$29,482 less than one with a post-graduate college degree (see Figure 1). Even the employee with a bachelor's degree is likely to experience a \$26,145 shortfall compared to her post-graduate counterpart. The range between a pathologist and a medical technologist was \$183,345.

■ Geographic area

Those in the Pacific and Northeast regions get the highest salaries (\$96,792 and \$89,270, respectively), while the ones in the Mountain (\$83,554), Midwest (\$81,074), and South (\$77,312) areas of the United States do not fluctuate much. (see Figure 2).

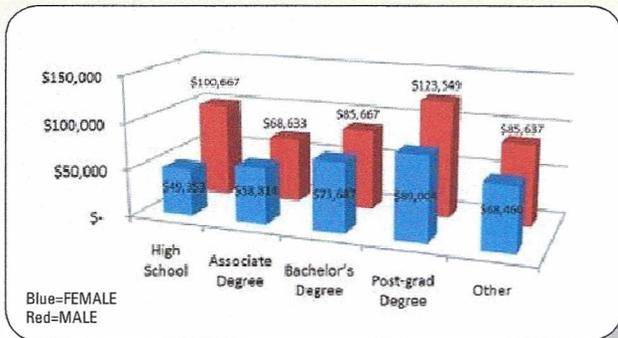


Figure 1. Education, gender, average salary. Salary for male high school graduates is artificially high due to limited data set in this category.

Job function

Understandably, a person's primary job function is a significant salary differentiator. As physicians, pathologists are the leading contenders, with an average salary of \$244,160 (see Table 1). They are followed by physicians and hospital administrators at average yearly salaries of \$221,500 and \$116,666, respectively. Medical technologists average \$60,815 annually.

Years in the industry

In general, our clinical laboratorian's salary increases the longer she stays in the professional field, although education and function, rather than length of employment, influence this outcome.

"I am on salary for a 40-hour work week, but I am at work until the 'last dog is hung.'"

Benefits and job satisfaction

Our average clinical laboratorian says her particular environment does offer some substantial benefits. As part of her contract, healthcare insurance (95%), dental coverage (89%), life insurance (84%), 401(k) (86%), disability insurance (76%), and bonuses (21%) were part of her 2010 annual compensation package. She expects a salary increase of 2% to 4% (42%) this year, and believes that her job — with which she is somewhat satisfied (44%) — is very secure (43%) or somewhat secure (41%).

Automation and outsourcing

Finally, the typical clinical laboratorian has experienced a moderate impact on her laboratory due to the shortage of medical personnel (35%), which has so far not made it necessary to outsource (86%). Her lab, however, did automate and/or further automate procedures last year (50%), and intends to continue automating in the coming year (54%).

Job well done

Accolades go to the healthcare specialists in labs throughout our country whose dedication to the medical laboratory profession brings a resounding "job well done" from patients and other medical professionals. *MLO* salutes you! □

MLO Salary Survey Findings

Age

In the 2010 *MLO* Salary Survey, which received 2,375 responses, the oldest respondent was 80 years old. The youngest respondent was 22 years old. The majority were 57 or 58 years old.

Satisfaction

Laboratorians overall are satisfied with their jobs; only 10% report being somewhat dissatisfied, and 3% are very dissatisfied. The rest are very satisfied (40%) or somewhat satisfied (44%).

Salary increases

In 2010, 42% percent of respondents say they expect to receive a raise of 2% to 4%. Slightly more than 20% expect to receive a raise of less than 2%. Approximately 24% expect to receive no raise. Some report that they receive bonuses instead of annual raises. In 2010, 28% of respondents reported receiving a bonus, typically based on a percentage of their salary. Some also receive non-monetary bonuses such as extra personal days in lieu of a salary increase.

Compare 2010 to 2008

- In 2010, the average salary for a pathologist was \$244,160 — up from \$188,281 in 2008.
- In 2010, the average salary for a lab director was \$105,419 — up from \$75,002 in 2008.
- In 2010, the average salary for a medical technologist was \$60,815 — up from \$53,781 in 2008.
- In 2010, the average salary for a section manager/supervisor was \$72,320 — \$67,057 in 2008.
- In 2010, phlebotomists reported an average annual salary of \$31,970. No 2008 data was reported.

2005 salaries

- In 2005, the average yearly salary for a pathologist was \$189,000.
- In 2005, the average yearly salary for a lab director was \$86,000.
- In 2005, the average yearly salary for a medical technologist was \$52,699.
- In 2005, the average yearly salary for a section manager/supervisor was \$68,699.

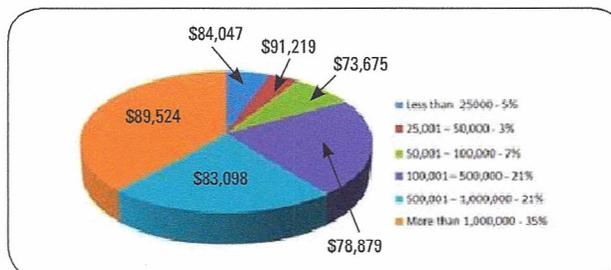


Figure 3. Number of tests run annually and average salary.

ANNUAL SALARY SURVEY

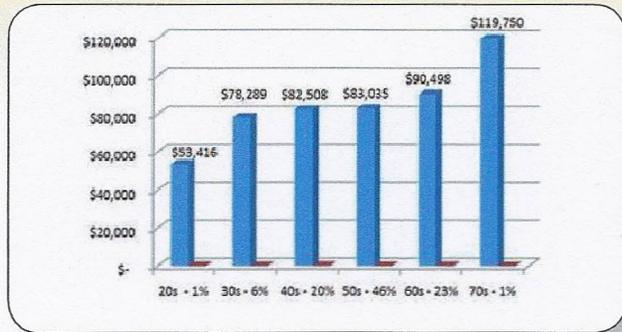


Figure 4. Age and average salary.

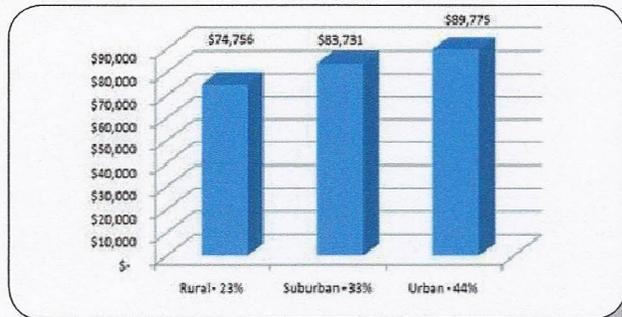


Figure 5. Laboratory location and average salary.

| Job Title | Average Salary |
|---|----------------|
| Medical Technologist | \$60,815.00 |
| Microbiologist | \$69,641.22 |
| Cytotechnologist | \$70,000.00 |
| Laboratory Info Systems Manager | \$70,235.61 |
| Physician Office Lab Director | \$70,500.00 |
| Section Manager/Supervisor | \$72,320.40 |
| Other | \$80,393.81 |
| Lab Manager/Administrator | \$81,165.19 |
| Chief Medical Technologist/Asst. Technologist | \$89,272.76 |
| Group Practice Manager/Administrator | \$104,500.00 |
| Lab Director | \$105,419.21 |
| Hospital Administrator | \$116,666.67 |
| Clinical Chemist | \$119,250.00 |
| Physician | \$221,500.00 |
| Pathologist | \$244,160.00 |

Table 1.