

When it comes to salaries, Houston's got it made compared to rest of U.S.

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It pays to live in Houston.

The Bayou City is one of the top places in the U.S. in terms of jobs that pay people the best, according to a recent study by the Houston Business Journal and its parent company American City Business Journals. Houston joins other cities with a large number of high paying jobs including New York, San Jose and San Francisco.

If you're a chief executive, an economist, a chemical or civil engineer, you're making on average more in Houston than anywhere else in the U.S..

Still, pay at some jobs isn't as hot when compared to the rest of the nation. But that pay is offset generally by Houston's low cost of living.

Here's a few reasons why Houston's salaries are fairly high in some professions, but not so for others.

Top Dogs

Architectural and Engineering Managers

Houston: \$189,140
Nation: \$143,870
Difference: 31 percent

Why are their earnings better? Believe it or not, architectural and engineering managers are a top-five job in Houston in terms of average salary — up there with CEOs, surgeons, general practitioners and dentists. The past two years have been “banner years” for most Houston architectural firms, said **Rusty Bienvenue**, executive director at American Institute of Architects’ Houston chapter.

Paid job postings on his group’s website for hiring in Houston tripled year over year in 2016, he said. And those weren’t for entry-level jobs. Most of those positions were for people who had three to five years experience.

Part of the reason Houston’s architectural managers are earning so well compared with the U.S. is that the city rebounded from the economic downturn quicker, Bienvenue said. Other factors that bolstered demand included a plethora of health care projects, an expanding energy corridor and a \$2 billion Houston Independent School District bond program.

Also, bigger architectural firms from other markets have been trying to get a slice of Houston’s economic growth, which is pushing up salaries.

“Things are pretty good right now,” Bienvenue said. “A lot of firms are nervous about the price of oil but that’s rebounded some.”

Economists

Houston: \$148,730
Nation: \$112,860

Difference: 31 percent

Why are their earnings better? There are three things economists love: turmoil, growth and change.

That makes Houston, the energy capital of the world, an attractive market for the profession.

But one non-energy reason economists get paid better in Houston might be the fewer amount of government economists, said **Patrick Jankowski**, the senior vice president of research and regional economist at the Greater Houston Partnership. Since private sector economists make more than those in the public sector, that pulls up Houston's average.

“(Economists) are skewed more to the corporate side (in Houston),” Jankowski said.

Still, Houston's average pay for economists is surprising compared with major markets such as New York and Los Angeles, he said. L.A. economists on average make about \$143,680 and New York economists make on average about \$138,960.

Washington, D.C., economists make the fourth most at \$125,420 and Dallas rounds out the top five with average pay for economists at \$118,490.

Human resource managers

Houston: \$148,940

Nation: \$120,210

Difference: 23 percent

Why are their earnings better? Dealing with people isn't always easy, but Houston's average pay for human resource managers might make it a bit more bearable.

Houston pays these managers the fourth best in the U.S., behind San Jose, San Francisco-Oakland and New York.

That's because Houston's a big market, which means there are larger companies with better salaries for human resource managers, **Chris Crawford**, president of Houston-based Longnecker & Associates, said in an email. The consulting firm works with human resource managers.

"Houston is represented by more energy companies than other markets, and energy companies generally pay more than other industries," Crawford said.

Technology firms, such as those in San Jose and San Francisco, will also bump up human resource manager salaries, Crawford said. A market like New York is expensive and hosts massive companies, which means beefed up salaries.

"(But) in terms of pay per cost of living ... Houston would be (No.) 1," Crawford said.

Lower paid

Personal financial advisers

Houston: \$109,560

Nation: \$123,100

Difference: -11 percent

Why are their earnings worse? Financial services firms are going younger for the next generation financial adviser.

Newer entry-level workers tend to be paid less, which could explain why the salary of Houston's personal financial advisers fell below the national average, said **Nick Lyons**, a financial adviser at the Goff Financial Group and the secretary of the Financial Planning Association of Houston. These advisers are expected to take on an increased demand in the personal financial industry as

Baby Boomers retire.

Smaller, independent financial firms try to mitigate risk while hiring, so they'll offer a lower base salary with incentives, Lyons said. Salary data may not reflect the bonuses, incentives or commission for products advisers sell.

Lyons said he hasn't heard of Houston being a low-paying market for financial advisers because of the low cost of living in the Bayou City.

"Just because you're earning more doesn't mean you're making more," he said.

The oil downturn could also lower the demand for financial advisers, driving down salaries, Lyons said.

Chefs and head cooks

Houston: \$43,260

Nation: \$47,390

Difference: -8.7 percent

Houston's been building up its food scene in recent years, earning numerous awards and national praise.

But when it comes to paying chefs, Houston ranks 71st in the nation behind big food markets such as New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

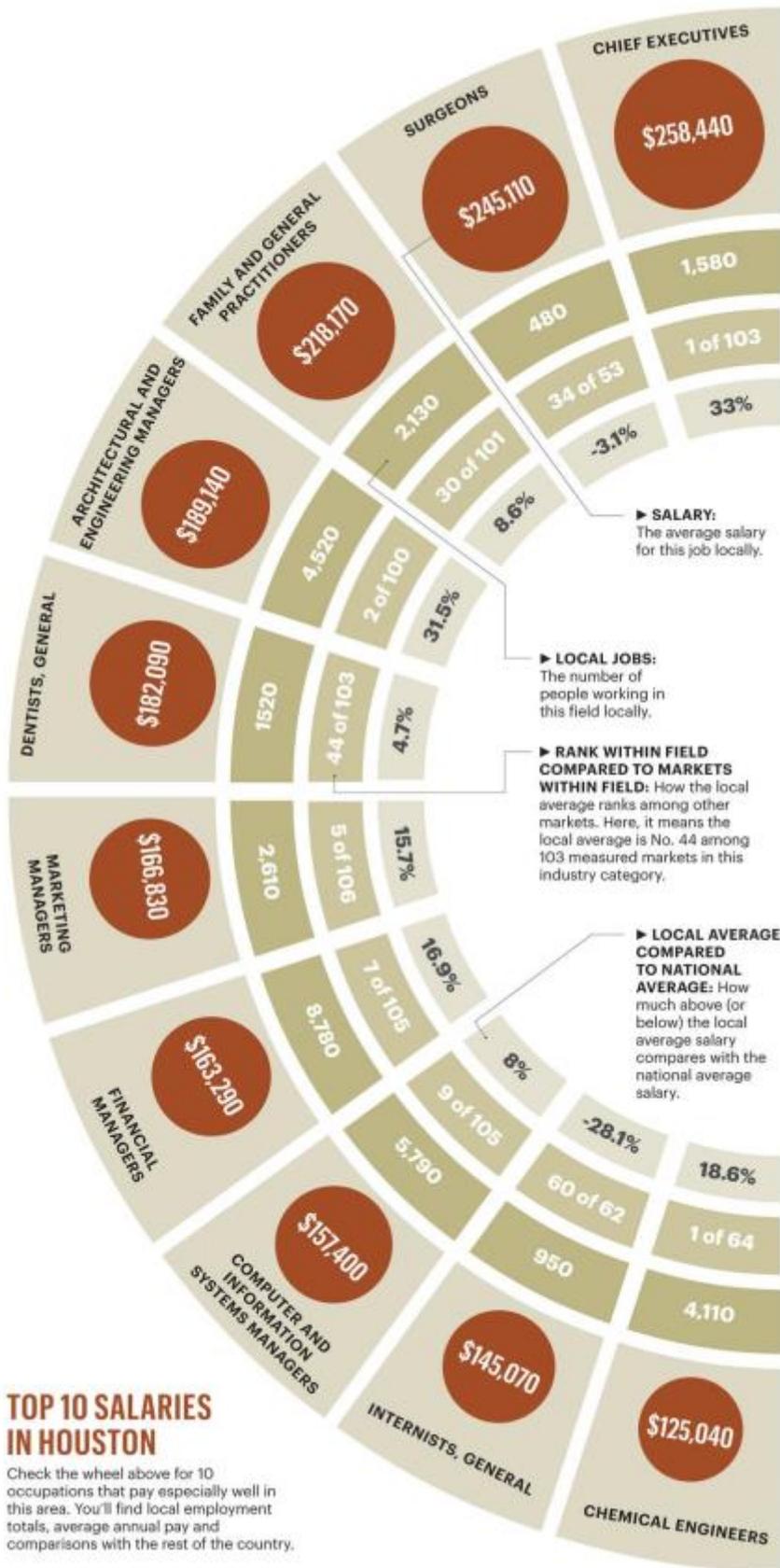
The wage discrepancy may have to do more with the Bayou City's low cost of living, said **Jonathan Horowitz**, president of the Greater Houston Restaurant Association.

"We see at least some small wage disparity in most industries, not just the hospitality industry, when the Houston labor numbers are compared against other markets," Horowitz said.

Other factors that could lower earnings include Houston's

large labor pool, which lumps many different wages together. A significant number of fast-food, fast-casual, and chain restaurants in the city could also pull down the average earnings because those restaurants tend to pay lower. Also, strong competition forces restaurants to keep wages low to preserve slim margins.

“However I don’t believe any of these three factor nearly as much into the equation as does the cost of living component,” Horowitz said.



► **SALARY:**
The average salary for this job locally.

► **LOCAL JOBS:**
The number of people working in this field locally.

► **RANK WITHIN FIELD COMPARED TO MARKETS WITHIN FIELD:** How the local average ranks among other markets. Here, it means the local average is No. 44 among 103 measured markets in this industry category.

► **LOCAL AVERAGE COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE:** How much above (or below) the local average salary compares with the national average salary.

TOP 10 SALARIES IN HOUSTON

Check the wheel above for 10 occupations that pay especially well in this area. You'll find local employment totals, average annual pay and comparisons with the rest of the country.