

Revenue integrity professional salaries up, benefits hold steady

Revenue integrity professionals are making a mark on their organizations, and more are being recognized with higher annual salaries this year, according to the results of NAHRI's 2019 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey.

Revenue integrity professionals are a diverse group, representing a variety of disciplines and program types, and salaries can vary greatly. But as the profession continues to gain visibility and become an indispensable revenue cycle function, revenue integrity professionals can expect to make gains in compensation. NAHRI dug into the data to help you learn how you stack up against your revenue integrity peers.

Name branding

Although most organizations assign staff to perform revenue integrity functions, not all have a dedicated revenue integrity team or job titles. The majority (63%) of respondents reported that their facility has dedicated revenue integrity staff members, and 53% indicated that their facility has a revenue integrity department. (Respondents were asked to select all options that applied to their

facility's revenue integrity program.) Other responses included:

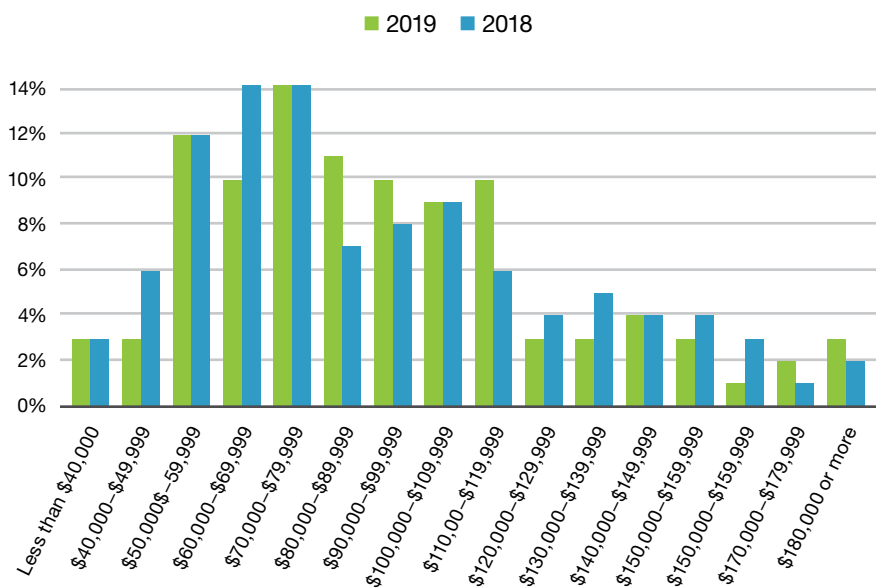
- We have a revenue integrity program (24%)
- We have a budget for revenue integrity education, etc. (24%)
- We have a revenue integrity committee (21%)

So although some individuals have dedicated revenue integrity job titles, others working in revenue integrity might have different job titles and be responsible for additional functions.

Survey respondents were asked to choose from a range of job titles based on the diverse functions that fall under the revenue integrity umbrella. Most (16%) selected "other," and of those, many listed CDI manager/specialist or coder. The following is a breakdown of the next top five responses:

- Revenue integrity director (14%; 13% in 2018)
- Revenue integrity manager (10%; 8% in 2018)
- Chargemaster coordinator or analyst (7%; 7% in 2018)

Figure 1. What is your current annual salary?



Source: NAHRI's 2019 and 2018 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey

- Revenue integrity analyst (7%; 10% in 2018)
- Revenue cycle director (5%; 6% in 2018)

As revenue integrity grows in importance and teams and job titles become more standardized, hospitals should ensure staff are recognized for taking on revenue integrity duties. Creating clear, unified roles and job descriptions can help staff, managers, and HR make better decisions regarding

compensation and allow core skills to be clearly defined.

“There are so many varying roles depending on the size of system, so would be hard to compare 1:1,” a respondent wrote in to say.

Earning power

Salaries for revenue integrity professionals are up, according to survey respondents. Most (14%) reported earning \$70,000–\$79,999 annually, up from last year

when most (14%) indicated that they earned \$60,000–\$69,999 annually. In addition, this year the majority (71%) reported earning more than \$69,999, up from 65% who reported earning more than \$69,999 in 2018. See the chart on p. 35 for a more information.

Salary can vary significantly by job title (see the sidebar on p. 37 for more information). At organizations where revenue integrity functions developed out of departments with a lower average annual pay, salaries could be lower. “The analytical experience needed for these positions require hospital clinical and/or business experience,” one respondent wrote in to say. “The depth of audits and compliance/net revenue protection should allow for higher salaries than patient financial service positions.”

Another respondent wrote in to describe challenges they faced trying to secure adequate compensation for their revenue integrity staff member’s expanded revenue integrity duties.

“My chargemaster coordinator makes about \$50,000 per year. I had to fight to get her that amount,” the respondent said. “She was making about \$35,000 as a systems analyst in patient accounts when she took on the chargemaster maintenance as well.”

The majority (78%) of respondents have received a raise in the last year, and most (35%) received a 2% raise, about the same as in

Figure 2. When did you receive your last raise?

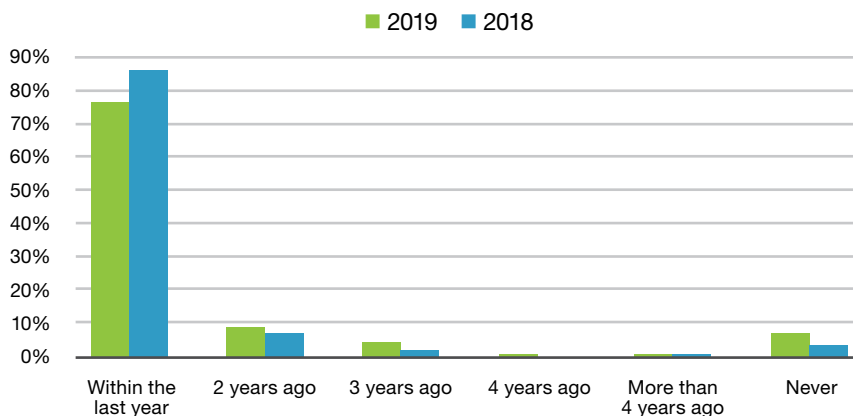
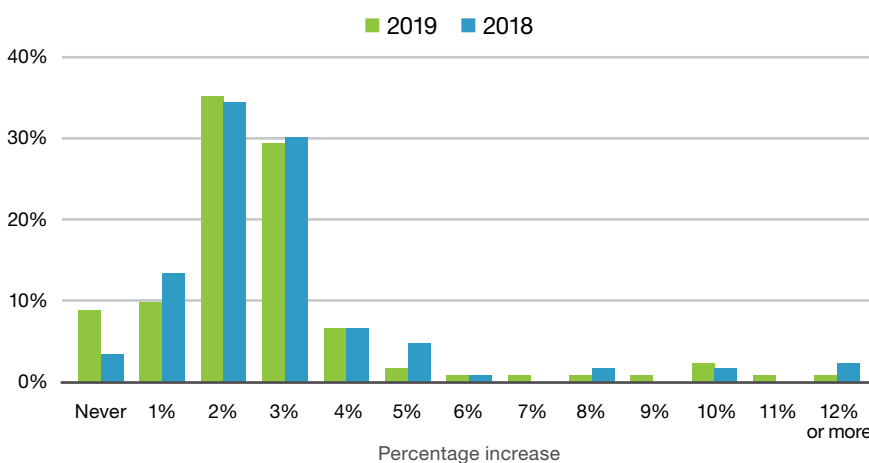


Figure 3. What was the percentage increase of your last raise?



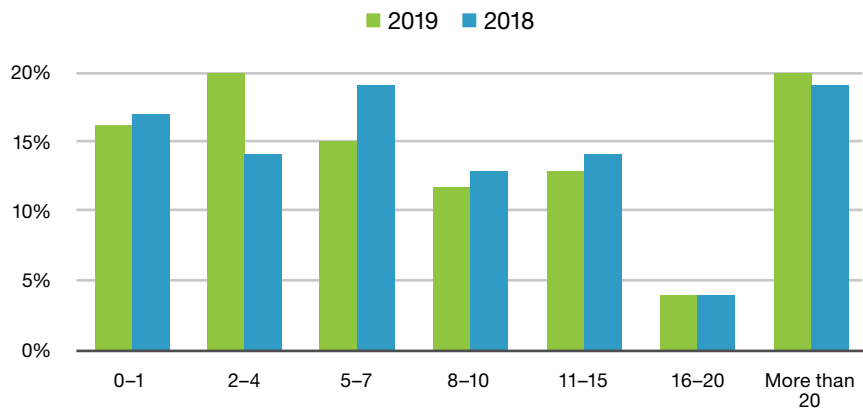
Source: NAHRI’s 2019 and 2018 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey

2018. That's a little behind the national average, which global professional services firm *Aon projected* as 3.1% for 2019. However, the average may differ for specific industries and geographic locations, *according to Investopedia*.

About half (51%) of respondents work 42–50 hours a week, and the majority (73%) aren't paid for overtime. That's typical for salaried positions, even when professionals find themselves working late or coming in early. Only 10% of respondents indicated that they never work overtime. Revenue integrity professionals can track the actual hours they work and use that data to make the case for a raise or for hiring additional staff.

That exercise may be particularly useful for directors or managers looking to establish a dedicated revenue integrity program

Figure 4. If you have a revenue integrity department or program, how many FTEs support it?



Source: NAHRI's 2019 and 2018 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey

or department. Most respondents (63%) indicated that their organization has dedicated revenue integrity staff. However, 54% reported that they have a revenue integrity department, and 24% indicated that they have a revenue integrity program. Among those who have a revenue integrity department

or program, most (21%) reported that it's supported by more than 20 full-time employees (FTE). But program or department size appears to vary widely: Coming in at a close second, 20% of respondents indicated that their revenue integrity program or department is supported by two to four FTEs.

REVENUE INTEGRITY BY JOB TITLE

Are job titles that recognize a dedicated revenue integrity role associated with higher salaries? NAHRI compared the data to find out in its *2019 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey*.

Among respondents who identified as a revenue integrity director or manager, average annual salary was above what NAHRI found was the average for most survey respondents. Nearly one-quarter (20%) of this group indicated that they earn \$110,000–\$119,999 annually.

However, those who identified as a revenue integrity analyst, revenue integrity specialist,

revenue integrity coordinator, or revenue integrity nurse were more likely to earn salaries below average. Of this group, more than one-quarter (26%) reported that they earn \$50,000–\$59,999 annually.

For comparison, of those respondents who identified as a revenue cycle director or manager, most (20%) earn \$140,000–\$149,999 annually. And of those who identified as a revenue cycle analyst or specialist or a chargemaster coordinator or analyst, 31% reported earning \$70,000–\$79,999 annually.

“I believe that there are still many health systems/revenue cycle senior leadership that do not realize the absolute necessity of having the right revenue integrity staff in place. They continue to hire inexperienced staff in order to keep their personnel budgets down, not realizing that it does not save them money in the long run,” one respondent wrote in to

say. “They also do not want to hire enough staff to do the job(s) adequately.”

Location

Almost half (45%) of respondents indicated that they work at acute care hospitals. Coming in second for most common setting, 31% reported working at a multifacility health system. That’s

about the same as in 2018. Does setting influence salary? NAHRI dug into the details to learn more.

Of those respondents who reported working at an acute care facility, more than one-quarter (28%) work at a facility with 500 or more beds, and more than one-third (38%) work in an urban location. The most common salary for respondents at an urban, acute care hospital with more than 55 beds is \$70,000–\$79,999, with 13% of these respondents reporting that amount.

Of those who said they work at a multifacility health system, more than half (55%) work at a facility with 500 or more beds, and 61% work in an urban location. The most common salary for this group is also \$70,000–\$79,999, with 18% of these respondents reporting that amount.

Overall, nearly half (46%) of respondents indicated that the facility or office where they work is in an urban area, while 30% work in a rural area and 24% work in a suburban area. Most (14%) of those who work in an urban area reported earning \$70,000–\$79,999, while most of those who work in a rural area indicated they earn \$60,000–\$69,999.

Counting time

Although revenue integrity as a defined field is still relatively new, its core functions have long been key parts of hospital revenue

Figure 5. Approximately how long have you held your current position?

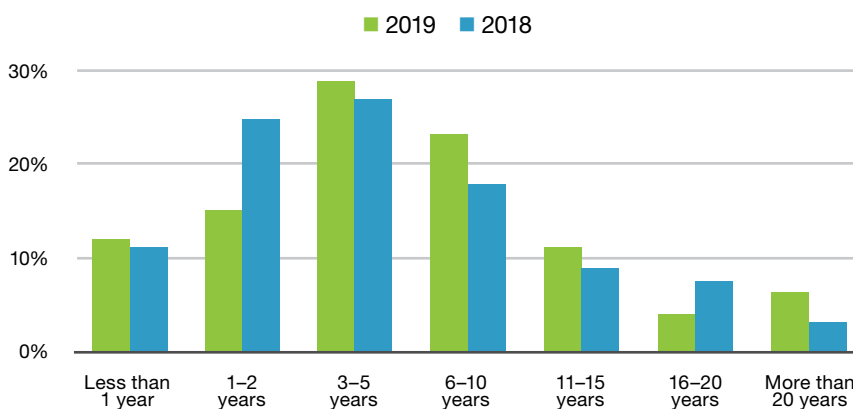
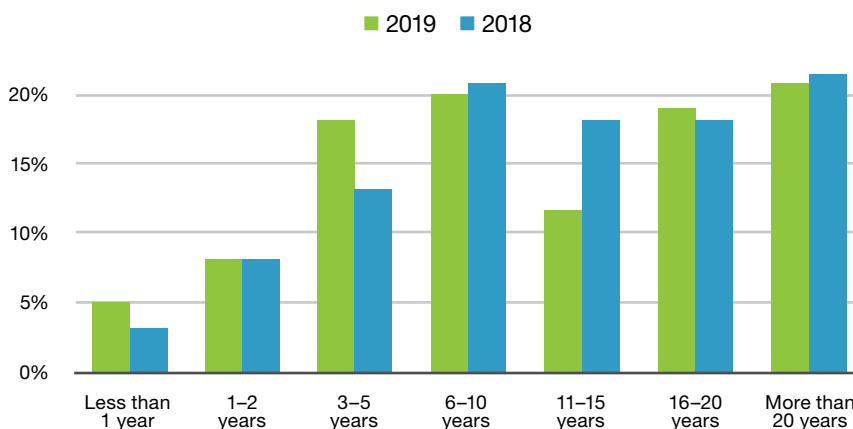


Figure 6. Approximately how many years of experience do you have as a revenue integrity professional?



Source: NAHRI’s 2019 and 2018 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey

cycles. That means that although a revenue integrity professional's title may be only a few years old, that professional could have years of experience in charge-master maintenance, denials management, or compliance.

More than one-quarter (29%) of respondents have held their current position for three to five years, about the same as in 2018, and most (21%) have 20 or more years of experience as a revenue integrity professional.

Respondents with 20 or more years of experience in the industry have significantly greater earning power: The plurality (18%) earn \$100,000–\$109,999 annually. Meanwhile, 38% of respondents with six to 10 years of experience earn \$60,000–\$79,999 annually.

Hitting the books

Holding some type of post-secondary degree is associated with higher earnings, *according* to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Last year, NAHRI compared its survey results and found that association held true for revenue integrity professionals. To see if it still does in 2019, we took a closer look at our most recent data.

More than a quarter (37%) of respondents hold a bachelor's degree, while 18% have a master's degree and 17% have an associate's degree. How does that affect salary?

MOST OF THOSE WHO WORK IN AN URBAN AREA REPORTED EARNING \$70,000–\$79,999, WHILE MOST OF THOSE WHO WORK IN A RURAL AREA INDICATED THEY EARN \$60,000–\$69,999.

Figure 7. How many years have you been employed at your current facility?

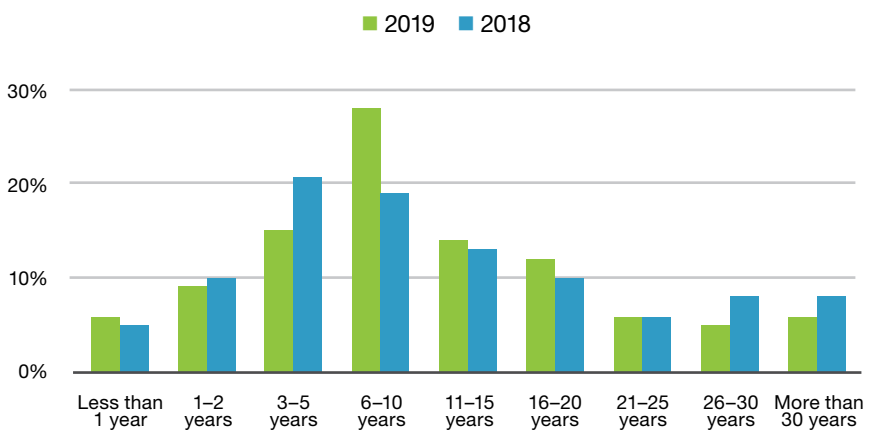
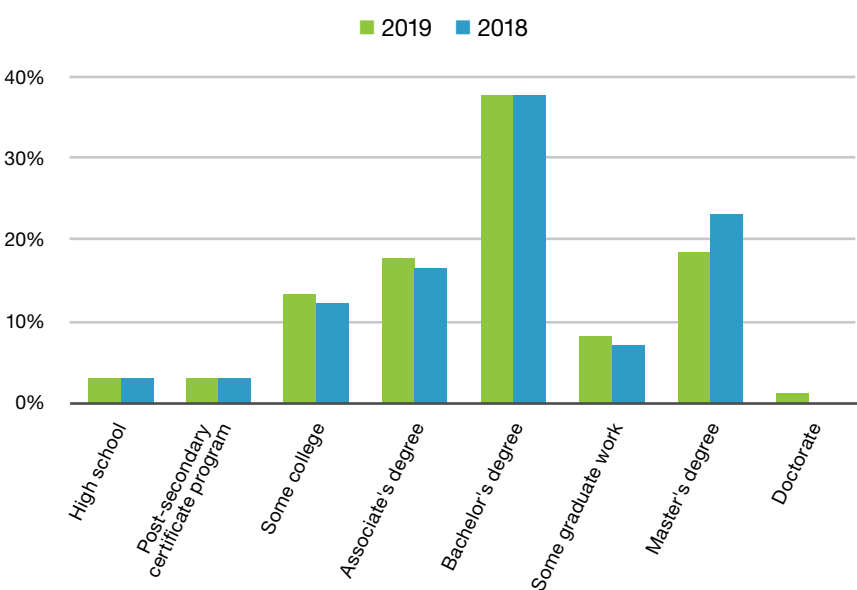


Figure 8. What is the highest level of education you've achieved?



Source: NAHRI's 2019 and 2018 Revenue Integrity Professional Salary Survey

Of those respondents who have completed a bachelor's degree, the plurality (19%) earn \$70,000–\$79,999 annually, while of those who have an associate's degree, most (19%) earn \$60,000–\$69,999 annually. Earning a master's degree is associated with higher-than-average salary: 15% of those respondents reported earning \$80,000–\$89,999 annually.

Revenue integrity professionals interested in growing their earning power with a degree can explore their employers' tuition reimbursement programs. If your employer doesn't offer such a program, it may still be worth

discussing your plans to pursue a degree with your manager or HR representatives; by framing it as bringing added value to the organization, revenue integrity professionals may be able to negotiate raises and open doors to other opportunities.

The big picture

Salary is just one of the factors that make up total compensation. For some professionals, a flexible work schedule or extra time off can add up to a work/life balance that makes a slightly lower salary worth it. On the other hand, a reduction in health benefits can

effectively cancel out any financial gain from a higher salary.

The good news is that most respondents reported little change to benefits other than salary, for which 71% reported an increase. Although 70% reported no change to their health coverage, 21% reported a reduction in that key benefit. As healthcare costs continue to rise, revenue integrity professionals should keep an eye on their own coverage. If this benefit is important to staff, directors and managers should ensure that they communicate any concerns to HR because shrinking health coverage could negatively impact staffing. **NJ**

