

2013 Salary Survey: Coder Employment on the Rise



Steady pace has coders leading the pack in the healthcare arena.

AAPC's 2013 AAPC Healthcare Salary Survey reflects an expanding job market for coders, billers, practice managers, auditors, and educators being hired to help implement sweeping changes to the industry.

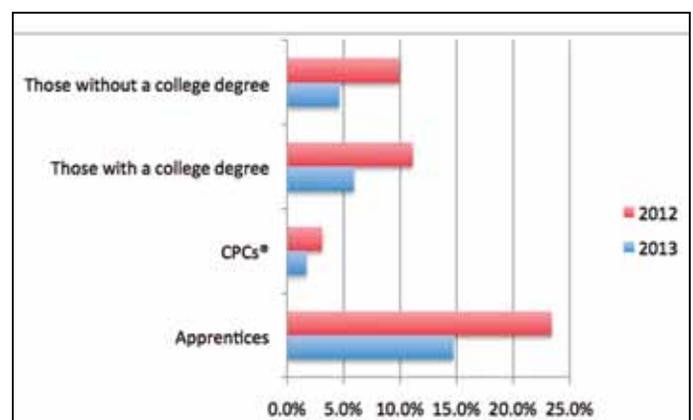
Unemployment percentages are nearly half of what they were last year. For instance, those holding a Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) credential are enjoying a 1.7 percent unemployment rate, compared to the latest numbers of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (www.bls.gov/) national average of 7.4 percent, as shown in the **Unemployment** chart.

This dramatic increase in employment across the board means a number of the 15,000 members who responded to our survey were only recently hired and are at, or near, starting salary levels. As a result, the survey shows a slight decrease in the overall average salary: \$46,847 (compared to last year's \$47,870). The survey also shows, however, that the average salary jumps up to \$48,925 for those who have more than two years of experience in their field. In other words, the average salary continues to climb steadily for those who have been in the healthcare workforce for a few years.

Experience Impacts Salary

As experience increases substantially, so does the average salary, with those who have more than 15 years of experience making an average of \$56,667 annually (as shown in the **Salary by Experience** graph). It's interesting, however, to note that the most substantial salary increases take place in the first 20 years of experience. Beyond that, the increases are marginal at best, with a little less than a 5 percent salary increase for every five years of experience.

Unemployment



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More Credentials and Education = More Money

When broken down by credential, the salary averages continue to illustrate that those holding more specialized credentials are likely to make more money. For instance, according to this year's data, those holding any of AAPC's specialty credentials (www.aapc.com/certification/specialty-credentials.aspx) make an average annual salary of \$53,489.

- Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) – \$48,593
- Certified Professional Coder-Hospital Outpatient (CPC-H®) – \$56,284
- Certified Professional Coder-Payer (CPC-P®) – \$57,995
- Certified Professional Practice Manager (CPPM®) – \$59,619
- Certified Professional Medical Auditor (CPMA®) – \$61,115
- Certified Professional Biller (CPB™) – \$61,667
- Certified Professional Compliance Officer (CPCO™) – \$69,138

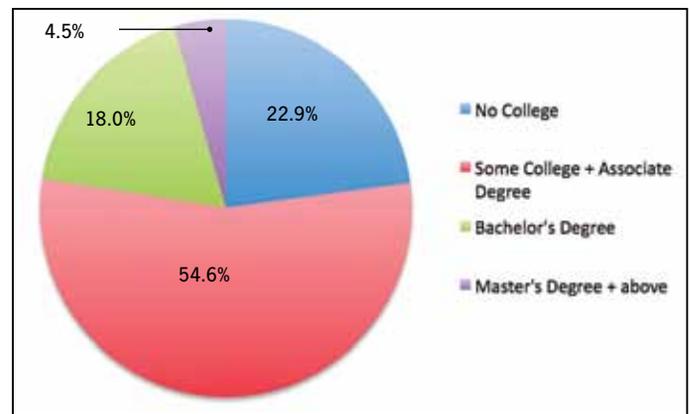
AAPC members continue to be a well-educated group. The numbers (see the **Education** chart and the **Salary by Education** graph) are only marginally improved over last year, but demonstrate an increase in those who have some college experience, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree. Of course, those with higher education levels make a higher average salary, but that average isn't quite what

it was last year. With workplaces hiring more employees, the assumption is that there is less money available to compensate those with bachelor's degrees or higher.

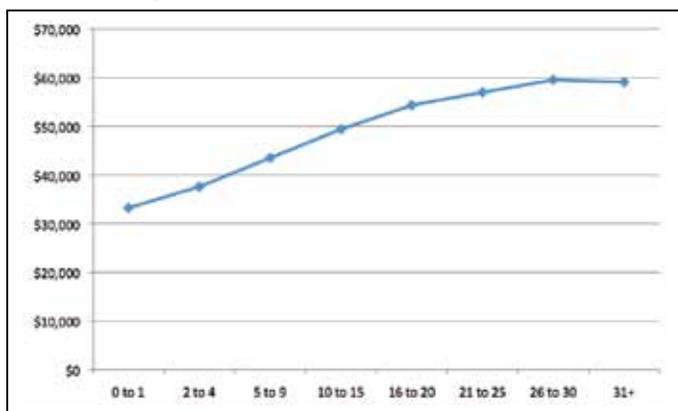
No Time for Slacking

Our salary survey respondents prove they are diligent employees (as shown in the **Hours Worked per Week** chart), with almost 75 percent acknowledging that they work 40+ hours per week. Almost 12 percent of the respondents work more than 45 hours weekly.

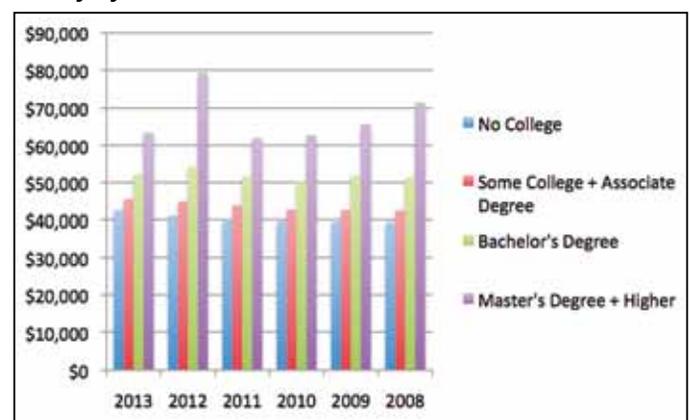
Education



Salary by Experience - 2013



Salary by Education



Work Environment Evolves

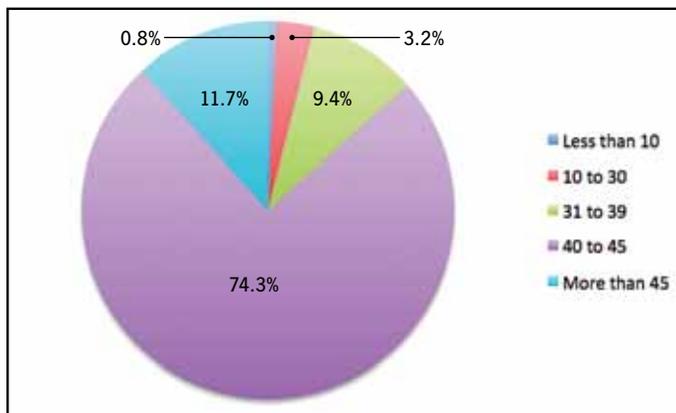
The healthcare workplace is evolving. In past years, we observed a slow decline in the amount of professionals working at solo, small group (two-10 providers), and medium group practices (11-49 providers). These professionals seemed to be picked up primarily by larger health systems, since the numbers of employees at the large group practices (50+ providers) did not fluctuate much. While this year's survey data (see **Workplace** charts) continued to show decreases in those working at smaller practices, there was a surprising drop in those working at large group practices, as well. This is a clear indication that more and more providers are selling their practices to larger facilities.

While the healthcare workplaces may be shifting, the average salaries within those organizations are surprisingly close. When comparing the average salaries of those working in different settings, there is only about a \$6,500 range, with solo and small group practices on the lower end at \$42,202 and health systems on the higher end at \$48,789, as shown in the **Salary by Workplace** graph.

Branching Out Proves Fruitful

The average salaries for different job responsibilities haven't changed much since 2012. One thing is certain, though: Coders and billers who branch out into other healthcare positions make about \$15,000 more per year (see **Salary by Job Responsibility** chart for results), regardless of whether those other positions are in auditing, practice management, coding/billing management, or education. This is especially interesting considering last year's report: Almost half the respondents stated that coding/billing was their long-term career goal.

Hours Worked Per Week



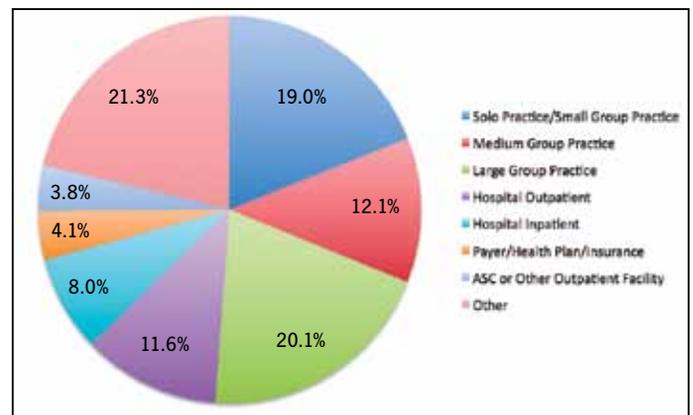
More Jobs Created and Filled Is a Win

In analyzing the average salaries by region (see **Salaries by Region** map), there is an average decrease in salary by about 1 percent less from last year's report. It should be noted, however, that 2012 was an exceptionally good year for our average salaries—so good that it proved almost impossible to beat. The East South Central region (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee) was the only area this year to see an increase in the average salary, by roughly 3 percent.

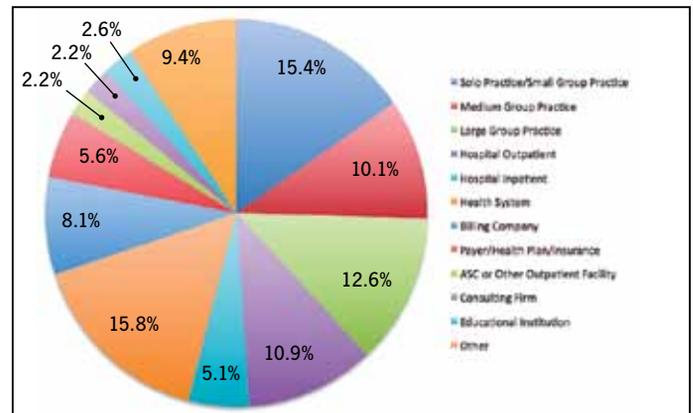
The healthcare industry's average salaries may not have increased substantially across the board, but more jobs have been created and filled nationwide. That means growth, progression, and a winning outcome—slow, but steady.

David Blackmer is marketing and public relations specialist at AAPC, and a member of the Salt Lake City, Utah, local chapter.

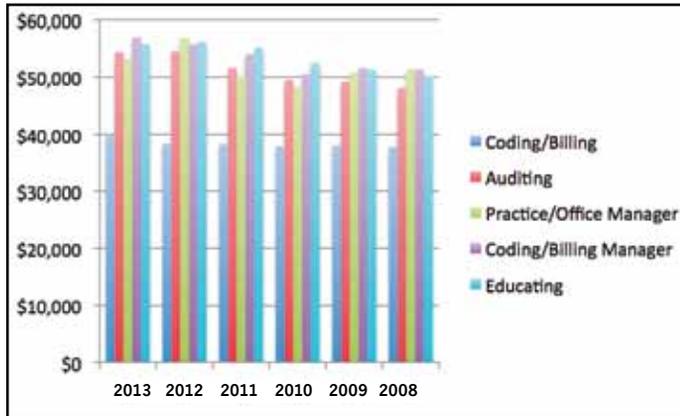
Workplace 2012



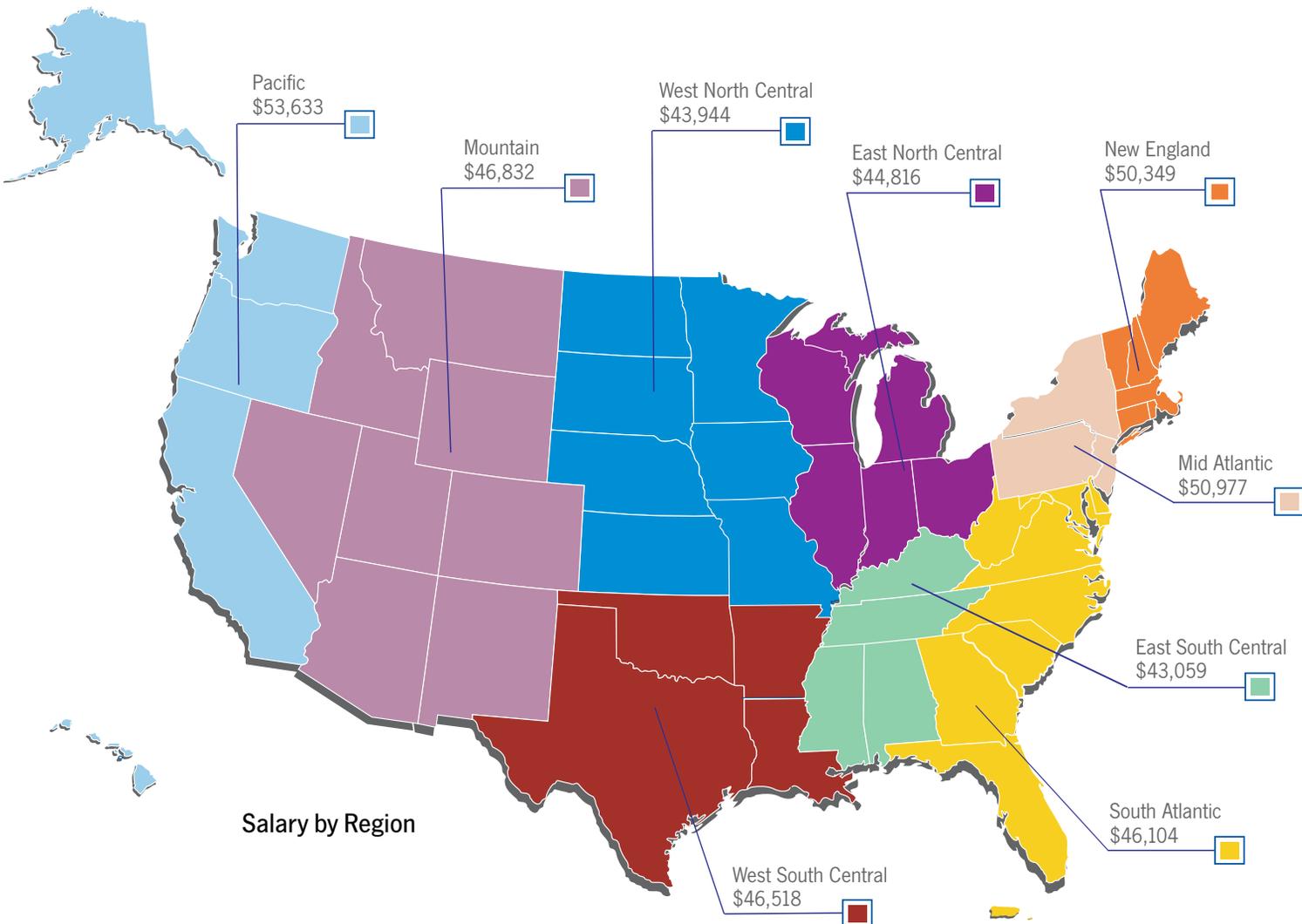
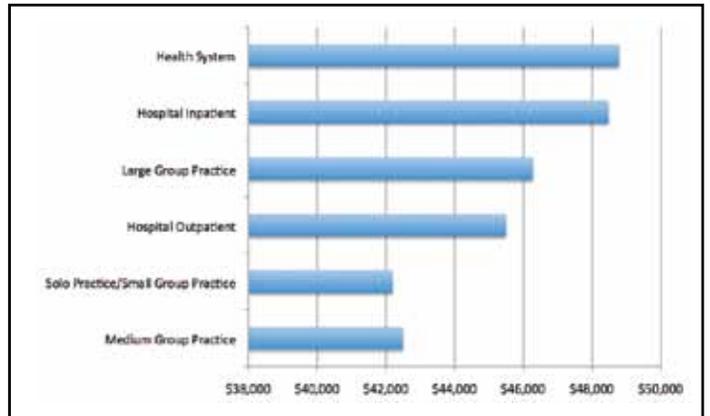
Workplace 2013



Salary by Job Responsibility



Salary by Workplace - 2013



Salary by Region