

# 2010 SALARY SURVEY:

## Coding Still a Good Bet in Bumpy Seas

By Robison Wells, MBA and Brad Ericson, CPC, COSC

**Despite an unsettled economy, coding continues to float quite well.**

**W**hile coders aren't immune to the ups and downs of the bumpy economy, this year's salary survey indicates that being a credentialed coder has helped buffet the waves.

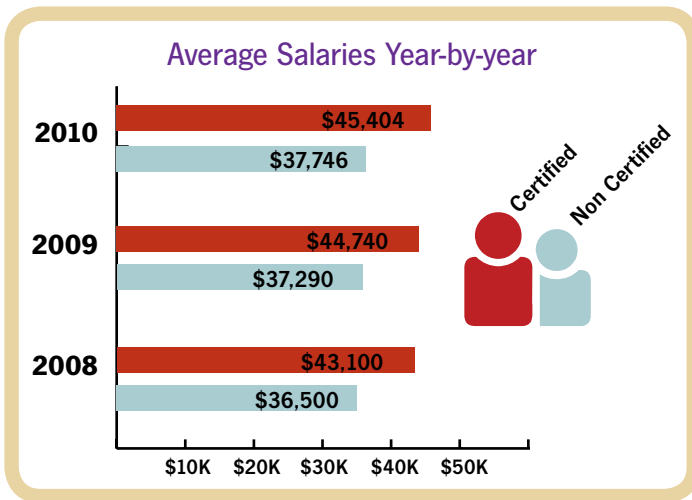
Salaries of both credentialed and noncredentialed coders increased from previous years, according to results compiled from the on-line survey of more than 10,000 coders this summer.

### How Much Are We Making?

Credentialed professionals saw a 1.5 percent increase in average salary to **\$45,404**. Non-credentialed professionals also saw a 1.2 percent increase to an average salary of **\$37,746**, maintaining a gap we have seen since it was first compared in 2000. Instructors with the CPC-I® enjoy the highest average salary at **\$69,207**; these professionals, because of their experience and knowledge, are often in senior positions or work as consultants in addition to teaching.

Years of experience obviously impact average salary and our findings this year show no exception.

## Overall Average Salaries



### Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Certified	Non-Certified
1	\$34,551	\$30,175
2	\$35,396	\$31,534
3	\$37,096	\$32,180
4	\$38,018	\$35,611
5	\$40,638	\$39,638
6	\$41,555	\$36,513
7	\$41,931	\$41,875
8	\$42,612	\$36,500
9	\$42,335	\$34,853
10	\$45,683	\$41,815
15	\$50,307	\$46,633
20	\$51,563	\$46,429
25+	\$53,669	\$47,805

### Average Salaries by Primary Credential

Credential	All	Job Title: Coder
CPC-A®	\$33,033	\$32,792
CPC®	\$45,347	\$39,953
CPC-H®	\$51,768	\$42,930
CPC-P®	\$56,031	\$45,750
CPC-I®	\$69,207	\$50,543
CASCC™	\$50,278	\$41,591
CANPC™	\$48,841	\$41,574
CCC™	\$54,667	\$40,250
CEDC™	\$58,485	\$50,000
CEMC™	\$56,888	\$45,000
CGSC™	\$50,698	\$42,500
CHONC™	\$40,962	\$35,357
COBGC™	\$48,246	\$43,690
COSC™	\$47,083	\$41,912
CIRCC®	\$55,119	\$45,595
CPMA™	\$52,105	\$42,937

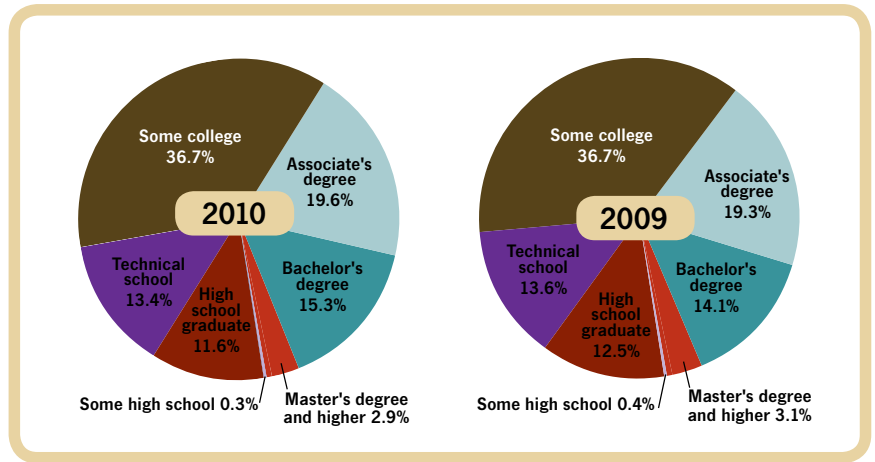
## Our Education Level

The more education one has, the better the pay, just as in other careers. Regardless of the level of education, holding coding certification still provides more pay. However, it appears that education level doesn't dramatically impact a coder's salary until that coder achieves a bachelor's degree. Note the \$10,000 difference between having a high school diploma and having a bachelor's degree. In addition, the number of respondents with an associates or bachelor's degree increased this year while the number of coders whose education ended with a high school diploma decreased.

### Salary by Last Education Achieved

	Certified	Non-Certified
Some High School	\$39,167	\$27,500
High School	\$41,272	\$36,764
Technical School	\$41,017	\$33,413
Some College	\$45,038	\$36,409
Associate's Degree	\$43,868	\$35,807
Bachelor's Degree	\$51,389	\$47,421
Master's Degree	\$64,807	\$50,929
Doctorate Degree	\$74,205	\$62,500

What is the highest level of education you have completed?



## Where We Work

As in previous years' surveys, payers, hospitals, and large facilities or practices pay certified coders more.

Average Salary by Job Definition

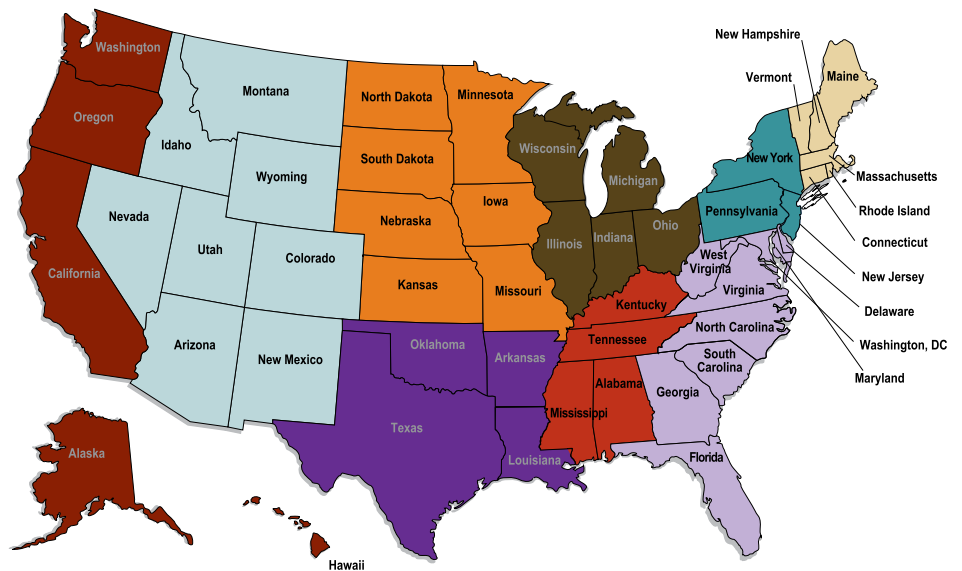
	Certified Avg Salary	Non-Certified Avg Salary
<b>Manager:</b>	\$53,707	\$46,408
<b>Office Staff</b>	\$39,103	\$32,944
<b>Educator</b>	\$53,733	\$40,395
<b>Auditor</b>	\$49,708	\$45,000
<b>Consulting</b>	\$78,026	\$58,636
<b>Product Development</b>	\$70,000	\$47,500
<b>Clinical</b>	\$60,321	\$44,833

Average Salary by Workplace

	All Certified	All Non-Certified
<b>Solo</b>	\$40,430	\$35,990
<b>Small</b>	\$42,043	\$37,910
<b>Medium</b>	\$41,985	\$33,780
<b>Large</b>	\$45,480	\$39,682
<b>Payer</b>	\$54,100	\$48,750
<b>ASC</b>	\$43,509	\$46,250
<b>Other Outpatient</b>	\$41,242	\$33,306
<b>Hospital (Outpatient)</b>	\$45,005	\$37,206
<b>Hospital (Inpatient)</b>	\$47,848	\$37,644
<b>Home Health</b>	\$37,965	\$24,167
<b>Long Term Care</b>	\$39,881	\$37,500

## Geographic Differences

How do you fare compared to the average reported salary in your state? We've broken the average down below using the United States government's Census Bureau's breakdown of four major regions with nine sub regions. The Pacific subregion—made up of Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, and California—continues to have the highest average salary while the East South Central subregion—made up of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama—has the lowest average salary. California, Maryland, New Jersey, and Massachusetts have the highest salaries.



This map key details the regions and their average salaries

- New England - \$46,574
- Mid Atlantic - \$46,690
- East North Central - \$41,431
- West North Central - \$40,897
- South Atlantic - \$42,565
- East South Central - \$39,626
- West South Central - \$42,078
- Mountain - \$44,617
- Pacific - \$51,428

Average Salary by State and Region

Northeast	
<b>Northeast</b>	\$46,643
<b>Maine</b>	\$39,953
<b>New Hampshire</b>	\$43,322
<b>Vermont</b>	\$44,123
<b>Massachusetts</b>	\$51,159
<b>Rhode Island</b>	\$47,353
<b>Connecticut</b>	\$48,506
<b>New York</b>	\$46,596
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	\$43,944
<b>New Jersey</b>	\$53,725

Midwest	
<b>Midwest</b>	\$41,235
<b>Wisconsin</b>	\$42,993
<b>Michigan</b>	\$40,347
<b>Illinois</b>	\$42,298
<b>Indiana</b>	\$40,845
<b>Ohio</b>	\$40,890
<b>Missouri</b>	\$40,637
<b>North Dakota</b>	\$40,240
<b>South Dakota</b>	\$39,136
<b>Nebraska</b>	\$41,775
<b>Kansas</b>	\$38,845
<b>Minnesota</b>	\$46,021
<b>Iowa</b>	\$38,316

South	
<b>South</b>	\$41,863
<b>Delaware</b>	\$48,269
<b>Maryland</b>	\$54,133
<b>DC</b>	\$50,625
<b>Virginia</b>	\$41,392
<b>West Virginia</b>	\$38,380
<b>North Carolina</b>	\$41,285
<b>South Carolina</b>	\$41,596
<b>Georgia</b>	\$42,906
<b>Florida</b>	\$41,483
<b>Kentucky</b>	\$37,430
<b>Tennessee</b>	\$41,598
<b>Mississippi</b>	\$37,576
<b>Alabama</b>	\$39,500
<b>Oklahoma</b>	\$39,485
<b>Texas</b>	\$44,319
<b>Arkansas</b>	\$36,856
<b>Louisiana</b>	\$41,080

West	
<b>West</b>	\$48,150
<b>Idaho</b>	\$41,675
<b>Montana</b>	\$38,500
<b>Wyoming</b>	\$37,870
<b>Nevada</b>	\$44,386
<b>Utah</b>	\$42,083
<b>Colorado</b>	\$48,333
<b>Arizona</b>	\$45,303
<b>New Mexico</b>	\$46,250
<b>Alaska</b>	\$51,447
<b>Washington</b>	\$48,941
<b>Oregon</b>	\$43,589
<b>California</b>	\$55,164
<b>Hawaii</b>	\$51,071

## Work and Working

In a year of continued choppy economic seas, credentialed coders continue to do well. At press time, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says 9.6 percent of the country's workforce is unemployed, higher than in previous salary survey periods, yet coders have a lower rate of unemployment. Here is a breakdown of survey respondents' experience in the last year.

When respondents who had started a new job in the last year were asked how they found their job, 38 percent said through networking.

Credentials	percent unemployed during the last 12 months	Average months unemployed	percent of total respondents
<b>CPC®</b>	6.8%	5.4	90%
<b>CPC-I®</b>	5.6%	4.5	7%

There are some things in our survey that indicate few changes from last year. Respondents who worked an average of 31-40 hours per week amounted to 58 percent, compared with 38 percent, who work 41 to 71 hours per week. More than 91 percent of you receive health insurance, 89 percent receive paid sick time, and 78 percent receive dental insurance as benefits, and over half of you find these benefits partially paid by your employer.

Respondents reported a majority have some part of the decision-making role in their workplaces. Eighteen percent are ultimately responsible for some or all business decisions and 37 percent have input but don't have decision making authority. The contribution of 55 percent of coders in decision-making underlines the contribution coders are making in our workplaces.

Sixty-eight percent say their practices conduct chart audits and 58 percent of those do them quarterly. Nearly a quarter of respondents are in workplaces that have already started to prepare for ICD-10 implementation in October 2013. [\[E\]](#)

Sample size was 10,306 and margin of error is plus or minus 1.2%. More information can be found on AAPC's website [www.aapc.com](http://www.aapc.com).

Robison Wells received his MBA from the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University. He has written articles for many newspapers, magazines, and webzines, and is senior marketing specialist at AAPC.

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