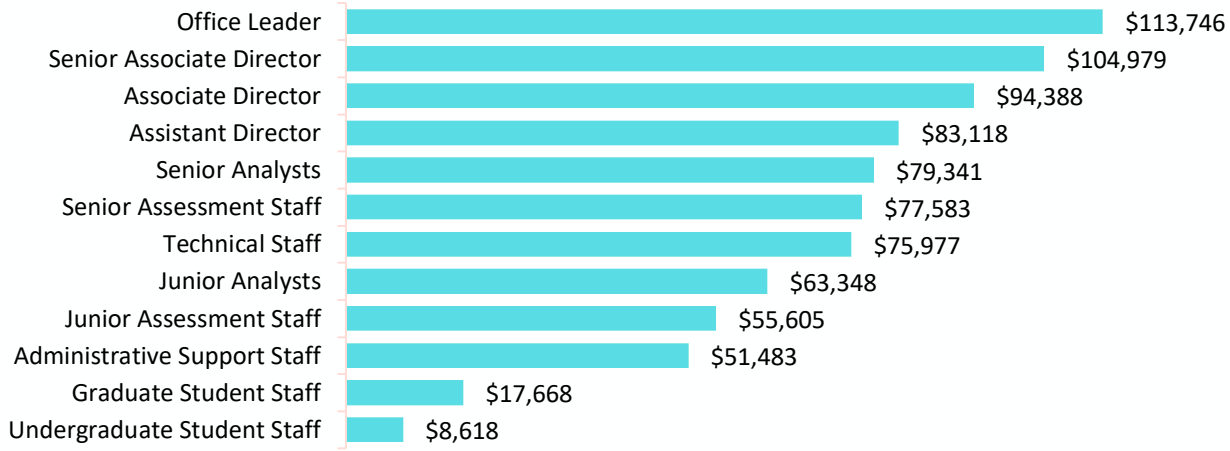
2024 AIR National Survey: IR/IE Office Staff Salaries

Transforming data into informed decisions requires not only technological infrastructure but also sustained investment in people, their knowledge, and skills, and capacity to manage and use data effectively. Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness (IR/IE) offices depend on professionals who bring analytical, technical, and strategic expertise, along with the communication and judgment needed to apply those skills in institutional contexts, making salary a key factor in recruitment, retention, and long-term capacity. The 2024 AIR National Survey examined salary levels for IR/IE roles, alongside institutional context, regional variation, and trends over time. This report analyzes salary data from over 500 U.S. institutions to help colleges and universities better understand the labor market for IR/IE professionals.

Annual Staff Salaries

IR/IE salaries differ markedly by role, reflecting differences in responsibility, experience, and seniority. Office leaders earn the highest average salaries, nearly $114,000, a pattern consistent with standard organizational hierarchies (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Average Salary of IR/IE Office Staff



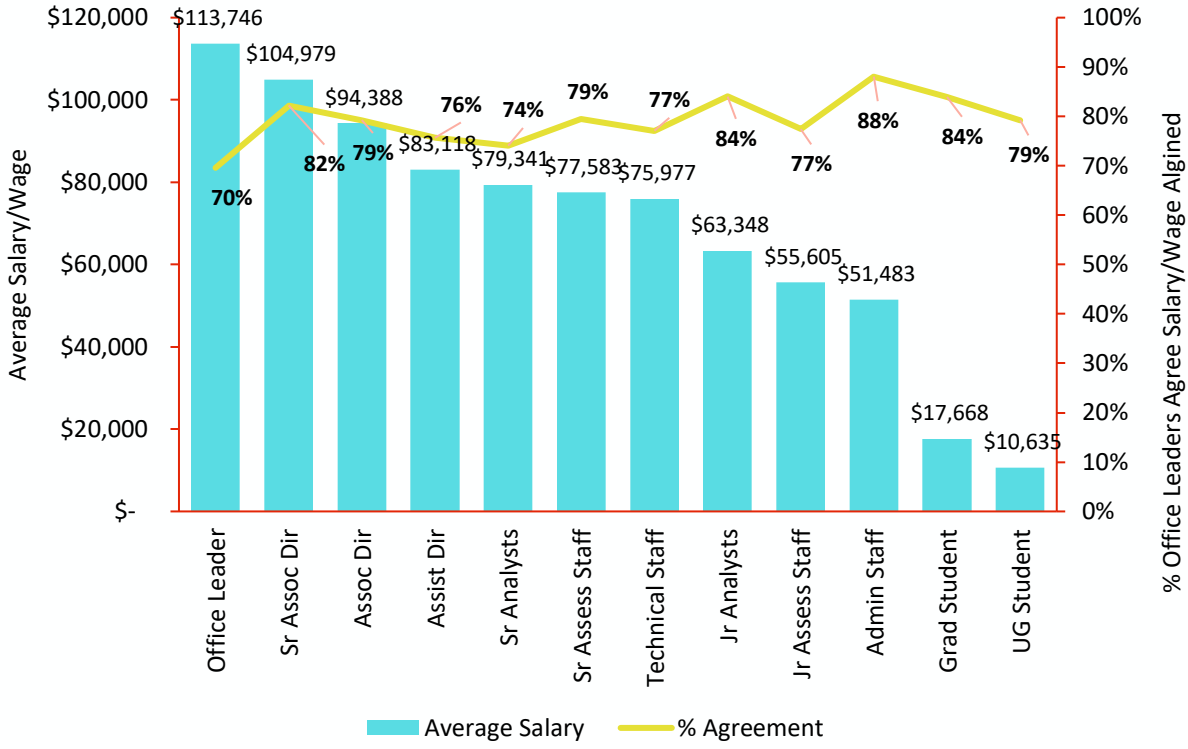
Sector-level differences are also notable. Public 4-year institutions pay the highest salaries for nearly every role (Table 1). Private not-for-profit institutions show more variation, with some roles earning relatively more than their public institution counterparts (e.g., junior assessment staff).

Table 1. Average IR/IE Salaries of Staff by Role and Sector

Staff Role	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Office Leader	$113,746	$132,587	$103,310	$104,764
Senior Associate Director	$104,979	$111,979	$96,000	$101,099
Associate Director	$94,388	$99,628	$75,077	$91,429
Assistant Director	$83,118	$88,437	$78,675	$77,495
Senior Analysts	$79,341	$80,158	$81,534	$76,637
Junior Analysts	$63,348	$63,093	$62,569	$64,204
Senior Assessment Staff	$77,583	$82,635	$70,590	$76,069
Junior Assessment Staff	$55,605	$54,444	$46,400	$62,664
Technical Staff	$75,977	$79,369	$61,482	$75,669
Administrative Support Staff	$51,483	$54,329	$48,584	$48,693
Graduate Student Staff	$17,668	$20,692	NA	$8,596
Undergraduate Student Staff	$8,618	$10,107	$10,000	$6,213

A new 2024 survey question asked office leaders whether salaries for each role reflected staff qualifications and workload. The results were largely positive: at least 70% of leaders agreed that salaries were appropriate across all roles (Chart 2). Agreement was highest for administrative support staff (88%), junior analysts (84%), and graduate assistants (84%), indicating broad satisfaction with entry- and mid-level pay. Views were somewhat more mixed for the office leader role, though 70% of respondents affirmed that their own salary was appropriate.

Chart 2. Comparing Average Salary to % of Office Leaders who Responded that Salary/Wage is Aligned with Experience, Education, Work Effort

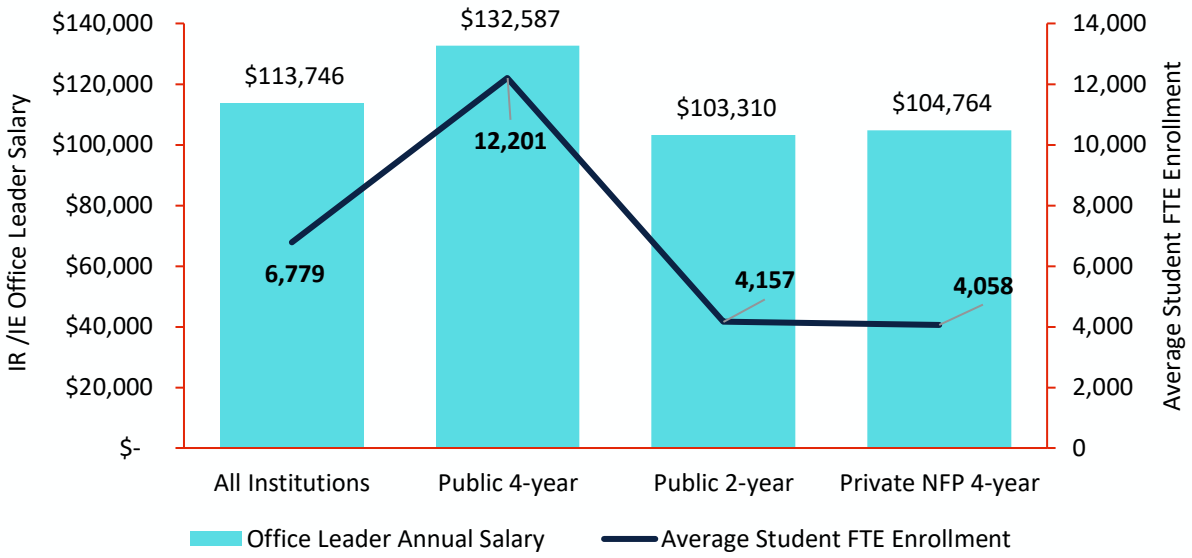


While most leaders view salaries as appropriate across roles, institutional characteristics, particularly size, also play a clear role in shaping salary patterns.

Salaries by Enrollment

Survey results show a strong positive correlation between office leader salaries and institutional size ($r = .635$, $p < .001$). Public 4-year institutions, with an average enrollment of over 12,000 students, offer the highest salaries. In contrast, public 2-year and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions, which enroll fewer students on average, report lower average pay (Chart 3). This pattern mirrors findings from the 2024 AIR National Survey report titled *IR/IE Office Staff* which showed that larger institutions tend to employ more staff.

Chart 3. Relationship between IR/IE Office Leader Salary



**Enrollment data reported from the 2023 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month enrollment survey, sum of undergraduate (FTEUG), graduate (FTEGD), and doctor's-professional practice (FTEDPP).*

A more detailed breakdown confirms the relationship: institutions with fewer than 3,000 FTE students report average office leader salaries of $95,174, compared with $161,199 at institutions enrolling 10,000 or more student FTE (Table 2).

Table 2. Office Leader Salary by Total Institutional Enrollment

Enrollment	All Institutions	Public 4-year	Public 2-year	Private NFP 4-year
Less than 3,000 student FTE	95,174	102,672	91,030	94,792
3,000 to 4,999 student FTE	105,961	99,534	114,000	104,441
5,000 to 9,999 student FTE	125,239	124,644	119,621	133,707
10,000+ student FTE	161,199	163,886	123,947	167,231

**Enrollment data reported from the 2023 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month enrollment survey, sum of undergraduate (FTEUG), graduate (FTEGD), and doctor's-professional practice (FTEDPP). Values in U.S. Dollars.*

Salary patterns also vary geographically, reflecting regional labor markets and cost-of-living differences.

Salaries by U.S. Census Region

Geographic location continues to play a notable role in salary. Salaries are highest in the Northeast and West and lowest in the South and Midwest (Table 3). Similar patterns emerge across other roles, including analysts, assessment staff, and technical positions. Regional cost of living likely influences these patterns, but the differences remain important for institutions seeking to remain competitive in recruitment.

Table 3. Average IR/IE Office Salaries by U.S. Census Region*

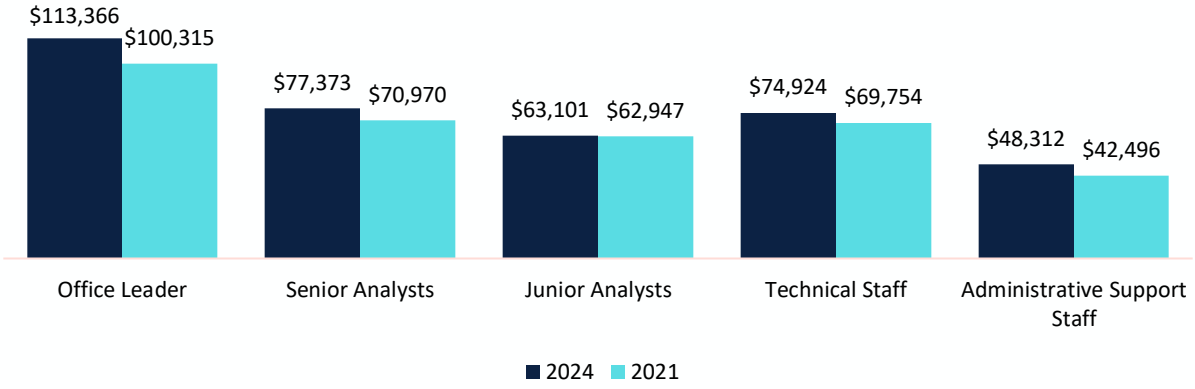
Role	All Institutions	Northeast (n = 126)	West (n = 102)	South (n = 161)	Midwest (n = 163)
Office Leader	113,746	123,672	119,841	117,443	100,481
Senior Associate Director	104,979	114,321	78,044	111,275	100,336
Associate Director	94,388	94,843	105,889	92,074	87,600
Assistant Director	83,118	82,889	77,408	85,144	83,948
Senior Analysts	79,341	84,714	84,811	75,876	74,641
Senior Assessment Staff	77,583	81,203	107,500	71,503	72,915
Technical Staff	75,977	87,396	69,885	75,295	72,188
Junior Analysts	63,348	66,913	67,408	62,661	57,797
Junior Assessment Staff	55,605	49,386	56,500	62,400	47,500
Administrative Support Staff	51,483	51,794	52,624	52,190	48,731
Graduate Student Staff	17,668	4,805	28,587	14,550	18,554
Undergraduate Student Staff	8,618	7,000	12,000	8,664	9,000

**U.S. Census Bureau regions https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf; Values in U.S. Dollars.*

Longitudinal Salary Changes: 2021 to 2024

Among IR/IE offices that responded in both 2021 and 2024 and provided salary data, salaries increased across all roles with office leaders experiencing the largest absolute gain (Chart 4).

Chart 4. Longitudinal Changes in Staff Salaries: 2021 and 2024



Note: Chart only shows roles common to the 2021 and 2024 surveys.

Table 4 presents salary differences by sector. Public 2-year office leaders saw the largest increase among the sectors, with salaries rising nearly $18,000. This growth narrowed the salary gap between public 2-year leaders and their 4-year counterparts, reflecting a potential shift toward more equitable compensation across sectors.

Table 4. Changes in Staff Salaries

Role	All Institutions		Public 4-year		Public 2-year		Private NFP 4-year	
	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021
Office Leader	113,366	100,315	132,587	119,794	103,310	85,336	104,764	93,303
Senior Analysts	77,373	70,970	80,158	73,161	81,534	74,158	76,637	65,773
Junior Analysts	63,101	62,947	63,093	71,421	62,569	57,264	64,204	54,489
Technical Staff	74,924	69,754	79,369	73,066	61,482	65,333	75,669	65,450
Administrative Support Staff	48,312	42,496	54,329	42,621	48,584	40,746	48,693	44,122

Note: Table only shows roles common to the 2021 and 2024 surveys. Values in U.S. dollars.

Between early 2021 and late 2024, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by approximately 18%. Using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator, we can estimate the salary growth needed across IR/IE roles to maintain purchasing power. For all roles, salary growth lagged behind inflation, indicating a decline in real earnings for much of the IR/IE workforce over this period (Table 5).

Table 5. Salary Growth Compared to Inflation: Projected 2024 Salaries vs. 2021 Averages

Role	Average 2024 Salary	Projected 2024 Salary*	Difference
Office Leader	113,366	118,276	**-4,910**
Senior Analysts	77,373	83,677	**-6,304**

Junior Analysts	63,101	74,217	**-11,116**
Technical Staff	74,924	82,243	**-7,319**
Administrative Support Staff	48,312	50,105	**-1,794**

**Reference: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm*

Longitudinal Salary Changes: 2018 to 2024

Among IR/IE offices that responded in 2018, 2021, and 2024 and provided salary data, sustained salary growth was observed across all roles (Chart 5). Office leader salaries increased by nearly $23,000 between 2018 and 2024, while pay for technical staff and administrative support also rose steadily.

Chart 5. Longitudinal Changes in Staff Salaries: 2018, 2021, and 2024

Note: Chart only shows roles common to the 2018, 2021, and 2024 surveys.

A more detailed view reveals that office leader salaries increased by approximately $20,000 across all sectors from 2018 to 2024 (Table 6).

Table 6. Longitudinal Changes in Staff Salaries: 2018, 2021, and 2024

	All Institutions			Public 4-year			Public 2-year			Private NFP 4-year		
	2024	2021	2018	2024	2021	2018	2024	2021	2018	2024	2021	2018
Office Leader	116,274	104,762	93,699	132,827	127,376	112,509	103,576	91,059	83,716	105,671	91,097	85,119
Technical Staff	71,572	69,717	67,574	70,038	78,510	68,939	N/A	61,500	60,105	74,420	51,900	67,713
Admin Support Staff	51,150	44,590	43,891	52,793	45,586	44,716	45,779	43,040	44,780	50,250	42,994	54,199

Note: Table only shows roles common to the 2018, 2021, and 2024 surveys. Values in U.S. dollars.

Table 7 compares actual 2024 salaries with inflation-adjusted salary projections, based on an approximate 25% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) between 2018 and 2024. Across all three roles, average salaries fell short of inflation-adjusted expectations. Office leaders came closest to keeping pace while technical staff experienced the largest gap. Overall, the findings suggest that while nominal salaries have increased since 2018, real earnings have not kept pace with inflation, particularly for technical and support positions.

Table 7. Salary Growth Compared to Inflation: Projected 2024 Salaries vs. 2018 Averages

	Actual 2024 Salary	Projected 2024 Salary*	Difference
Office Leader	116,274	116,588	**-314**
Technical Staff	71,572	84,081	**-12,509**
Administrative Support Staff	51,150	54,613	**-3,463**

**Reference: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm*

Summary

The 2024 AIR National Survey reveals steady salary growth across most IR/IE roles, with the highest pay levels concentrated at larger institutions and in higher-cost regions, particularly the Northeast and West. Leadership roles have experienced the greatest absolute gains. However, when adjusted for inflation, especially over the longer term from 2018 to 2024, the picture is more sobering: real earnings have not kept pace with rising costs.

Even so, IR/IE leaders express broad satisfaction with how salaries align with education, experience, and workload especially for mid-level and entry-level positions. As institutional demand for data governance, planning, assessment, and analytics continues to expand, maintaining competitive salaries will be crucial to recruiting and retaining highly skilled professionals. Sustained investment in salary structures, particularly technical and analytical roles, will help ensure that IR/IE offices can meet institutional priorities and advance a culture of data-informed decision making.

Methodology

The 2024 AIR National Survey targeted leaders of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IR/IE) offices at 1,676 U.S. postsecondary, degree-granting institutions across all sectors, control types, and sizes. A total of 633 institutions submitted responses. To ensure comparability and data quality, this report excludes incomplete responses as well as those from for-profit institutions, administrative units,

international institutions, private not-for-profit 2-year institutions, and institutions located in U.S. territories due to low response rates in these categories.

The findings presented in this report are based on 552 complete or semi-complete responses from U.S. degree-granting institutions, including:

- 183 public 4-year institutions
- 118 public 2-year institutions
- 251 private not-for-profit 4-year institutions

Where possible, longitudinal comparisons are included. These comparisons draw on data from:

- 253 institutions that responded to both the 2024 and 2021 AIR National Surveys
- 147 institutions that responded to the 2024, 2021, and 2018 AIR National Surveys

Suggested Citation

Jones, D. & Keller, C. (2024). *2024 AIR National Survey of IR Offices: Staff Salaries* [Report]. Association for Institutional Research. www.airweb.org/NationalSurvey.