

A70 Salary, Wage Transparency, and Forensic Anthropology

Nicholas V. Passalacqua, PhD*, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723; Elaine Y. Chu, MA, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, NV 89557; Marin A. Pilloud, PhD, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, NV 89557-0096

Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the current distribution of salaries of forensic anthropologists in the United States as well as the primary factors that affect forensic anthropologists' salaries.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing information about the salaries of practicing forensic anthropologists in the United States within the context of the need for increased wage transparency and salary equity.

Forensic anthropology, like all forensic sciences, is a discipline meant to serve the public. As such, nearly all forensic anthropologists in the United States are employed as public servants, with individuals being employed by government-funded institutions either at the state or federal level. In the United States, the salaries of government employees are considered to be public information and because of this, these salaries are often freely available in publicly accessible databases or via requests for information using such avenues as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The reason salary information is important is because salary transparency narrows wage disparities, reduces favoritism and discrimination, increases the bargaining power of employees, and potentially causes employers to focus more on salary differentiation in terms of productivity and seniority; essentially wage transparency generates greater equity among employees.¹ Estlund states: "accurate information about other people's salaries in one's own and other organizations is crucial to decisions about seeking a better opportunity elsewhere, asking for a raise, or simply staying on the job and accepting the status quo."¹ Employers currently benefit from a lack of transparency in salaries through asymmetrical information, as there is no largely accessible data on salaries in forensic anthropology, within academia or applied institutions.

In order to examine the salaries of forensic anthropologists in the United States, salary information for current members of the anthropology section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) were searched for on freely accessible public internet databases. In addition to this data, the following information was also examined for each individual: sex, terminal degree, certification by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA), type of position (academic vs. applied), academic institution classification (using Carnegie Classifications), and rank of employee (e.g., assistant professor, director, etc.).

Results found that salary information was available for 120 individuals ($n=78$ females and $n=42$ males) from various academic ($n=82$) and applied ($n=38$) institutions within the United States. For academic individuals, most had traditional ranks ($n=15$ term positions, $n=27$ assistant professors, $n=15$ associate professors, and $n=21$ full professors), although a number had additional administrative duties ($n=16$). In order to standardize individual salaries, each salary was divided by the composite cost of living index for each state (from the Missouri Department of Economic Development), followed by the term length of each individual (creating a "Salary Index"). Salary Index was compared within variable groups using Kruskal-Wallis rank sum tests, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare Salary Index between groups. There was a statistically significant ($p<0.01$) difference between mean Salary Index of Academic and Applied forensic anthropologists, and two sub-groups using rank of employee were used for further analysis. Linear regression equations were created using available data as having independent and interactional effects to estimate Salary Index for Academic ($R^2=0.7268$) and Applied ($R^2=0.07486$) forensic anthropologists. Even with a strong R^2 value for the Academic sub-group, a high residual sum of square value demonstrate this model has limited ability for Salary Index estimation.

The results of this research demonstrate inconsistencies in pay for forensic anthropologists, especially for those working in the Applied sector. Variables such as basic classification of institution and rank of employee were statistically significant factors ($p<0.001$) that affected Salary Index of Academic forensic anthropologists. Additional information such as time in a position/at an institution may provide insightful information as to Salary Index for future research. Finally, wage transparency paired with increased standardization into the qualifications of forensic anthropologists may assist in future wage equity in the discipline.

Reference(s):

- ¹. Cynthia Estlund. *Extending the Case for Workplace Transparency to Information About Pay*. 4 U.C. Irvine L. Rev.781 (2014). Available at: <https://scholarship.law.uci.edu/ucilr/vol4/iss2/11>.

Salary, Wage Transparency, Professionalism