



Earnings of employees in certificated air carriers

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Earnings of airline captains and their flight crews vary substantially, according to a survey of certificated air carriers conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.¹ Gross monthly earnings of airline captains ranged from less than \$4,000 to over \$12,000 in June 1984, for an average of \$8,154. Individual earnings of first officers (copilots) ranged from less than \$2,500 to over \$8,000, while those of second officers/flight engineers ranged from under \$1,500 to at least \$7,000. Monthly averages for these occupations were \$5,327 and \$4,534. Flight attendants, the largest occupation in the survey with 57,000 employees, earned from \$1,000 to more than \$3,000 a month. Their average for June 1984 was \$2,038.

The relatively wide dispersion of earnings within each of the pilot categories reflects such factors as basic salaries (which vary by length of service), number of credited flight hours, hourly pay, mileage, and gross aircraft weight.² The importance to pilot pay of each of these factors varies widely by carrier revenue size class (major carriers, national carriers, and regional carriers) and, within each class, by individual airline. For flight attendants, basic rates and extra pay for credited flight hours above a specified number were the two major pay components. Pay scales for each factor differed among airlines by type of aircraft.

In addition, recent collective bargaining agreements may have contributed to pay variations recorded by the survey. Some of these settlements include wage rates for new hires that are substantially below those for employees with the company before a specified date. However, these "two-tier" wage provisions usually eliminate the earnings disparity over a specified period, such as 3 or 6 years.

More than nine-tenths of the pilots and flight engineers were in airlines with labor-management agreements covering a majority of such workers in June 1984. Among the other occupational groups, agreements applied to about four-

fifths each of the flight attendants and maintenance and related workers, and to one-third of the customer service and clerical employees. Individual carriers typically negotiate labor agreements nationwide with a number of unions, each representing a particular employee group. Consequently, many carriers have six or seven agreements with different durations and expiration dates.

Occupational earnings. Straight-time weekly earnings were developed for four occupational categories—aircraft control, customer services, electronic data processing, and office clerical. Among individual occupations, average pay levels ranged from \$248 for messengers to \$750.50 for dispatchers and \$757.50 for top level (III) computer systems analysts.

Averages among the four customer service occupations were \$448.50 for reservation sales agents, \$481.50 for passenger service agents, \$501 for air freight agents, and \$509.50 for ticket agents. In the last category, earnings were slightly higher for those who worked at the airport (\$510) than those who worked in city offices (\$506.50).

Pay levels for electronic data processing (EDP) jobs varied substantially among the different occupations and levels of responsibility. Entry level computer operators averaged \$320.50 a week—approximately 40 percent of the \$757.50 recorded for level III systems analysts, who work independently on complex problems involving all phases of systems analysis. The largest category in the EDP group, level II systems analysts, averaged \$649.50.

Averages among the clerical classifications studied ranged from \$248 a week for messengers to \$472 for top level secretaries (V). Averages for most of the clerical jobs, however, fell between \$275 and \$375 per week.

Average straight-time hourly earnings of maintenance and related personnel ranged from \$10.30 for janitors and \$11.28 for aircraft cleaners to \$17.27 for aircraft inspectors. Aircraft mechanics, the most populous of the maintenance and related occupations, averaged \$16.41 for line work and \$15.84 for work at major repair facilities (shop maintenance).

Earnings by type of carrier. Occupational earnings data also were tabulated separately for three air carrier size groups based on annual revenues as follows: "major" carriers, more than \$1 billion; "national" carriers, \$75 million to

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\$1 billion; and "regional" carriers, under \$75 million.³ Major air carriers employed slightly fewer than four-fifths of the survey's 342,000 workers. National carriers accounted for most of the remainder, with regionals employing about 8,000.

Employees of major air carriers nearly always averaged more than their counterparts in national or regional carriers. Among in-flight occupations, average earnings in the major airlines exceeded those in national carriers by at least 50 percent and those in regional carriers by at least 100 percent, even when comparisons were limited to employees with similar flight-hour credits. Among other occupations, where comparisons usually were possible only between major and national carriers, the pay disparity was less, with major carriers typically holding a 10- to 20-percent wage advantage over the nationals.

Fringe benefits. Nearly all carriers provided paid vacations (after qualifying periods of service) and various types of health, insurance, and retirement plans for all employee groups studied. Paid holidays—usually 10 days annually—were granted to virtually all ground personnel, to slightly more than one-third of the pilots and flight engineers, and to nearly one-half of the flight attendants.

A NATIONAL SUMMARY of survey findings was issued in May 1985, and is available from the Bureau or any of its regional offices.⁴ A comprehensive report on the study, *Industry Wage Survey: Certificated Air Carriers, June 1984*,

Bulletin 2241, may be purchased from the Bureau's Publication Sales Center, P.O. Box 2145, Chicago, IL 60690 or from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. □

—FOOTNOTES—

¹The survey included airlines employing 100 workers or more, holding certificates of public convenience and necessity, and operating over fixed routes on fixed schedules (part of industry 4511 as defined in the 1972 edition of the *Standard Industrial Classification Manual* (SIC) of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget). Intra-Alaska and intra-Hawaii carriers, foreign flag carriers, separate auxiliary units (such as central offices), and employees outside the continental United States were excluded from the survey.

The survey used two pay concepts. "Gross monthly earnings," applicable to in-flight personnel, refers to total earnings, which included base pay and all other pay directly related to duty, but excluded allowances such as those for room and board while away from the employee's home station. "Straight-time earnings," the concept used for all other survey occupations, includes incentive pay, cost-of-living adjustments, and line and license premiums for maintenance personnel, but excludes premium pay for overtime and for work on weekends, holidays, or late shifts.

²"Credited flight hours" refers to the combined total of actual flight hours and flight-hour equivalents for nonflying duties and deadheading time. The number of credited flight hours varied substantially in June 1984, but approximately three-fifths of the in-flight personnel had accumulated between 75 and 85 hours.

³In January 1981, the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) established four categories for scheduled carriers: majors, nationals, large regionals, and medium regionals. Data for large and medium regional carriers were combined for purposes of this study.

⁴For accounts of earlier surveys in this series, see *Industry Wage Survey: Scheduled Airlines, August–November 1975*, Bulletin 1951 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1977); and *Industry Wage Survey: Certificated Air Carriers, September 1980*, Bulletin 2129 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982).