Early career salaries in optics and photonics

Early career professionals earn a worldwide mean salary of $66,569 working in optical engineering, electrical engineering, physics, and other light-focused fields.

**Where do early career professionals work?**
- 47% For-profit companies
  - Median Salary: $74,563
- 38% Academic Institutions
  - Median Salary: $47,967
- 15% Government/Military
  - Median Salary: $58,823

**What are the most popular engineering degrees for early career professionals?**
- 21% Optical
  - Average Salary: $74,563
- 20% Electrical
  - Average Salary: $63,937
- 13% Mechanical
  - Average Salary: $74,376
- 11% Engineering Physics
  - Average Salary: $52,179
- 9% Biomedical
  - Average Salary: $58,500
- 6% Materials
  - Average Salary: $61,781
- 6% Other
  - Average Salary: $55,433
- 5% Chemical
  - Average Salary: $37,160
- 3% Aerospace or Aeronautical
  - Average Salary: $43,825

**Half of early career professionals earn over $55,631 per year, with the top 25 percent earning more than $91,811.**

**How do early career salaries break down across countries, and how do early career professionals find their current jobs?**

**Median salaries by engineering degree**

- Optical: $74,563
- Electrical: $63,937
- Mechanical: $74,376
- Engineering Physics: $52,179
- Biomedical: $58,500
- Materials: $61,781
- Other: $55,433
- Chemical: $37,160
- Aerospace or Aeronautical: $43,825

**Median salaries by country**

- United States: $98,000
- Germany: $62,846
- Canada: $57,551
- United Kingdom: $45,956
- Japan: $41,613
- France: $40,477
- Spain: $36,003
- Taiwan: $35,869
- South Korea: $35,114
- Italy: $29,825
- People's Republic of China: $29,216
- Brazil: $16,412
- India: $8,502
- Turkey: $9,060

**How did early career professionals find their current jobs?**
- 31% Online job advertisement
- 30% Networking or referral through personal contact
- 14% They were recruited
- 9% They contacted the employer directly (no job was advertised)
- 5% University career office
- 2% In-person job fair
- 2% Professional association
- 2% Alumni network

**Average Early Career Professional Salary**

- **25th Percentile:** $33,067
- **Median:** $55,631
- **75th Percentile:** $91,811

**Source:** 2023 Optics and Photonics Salary Report

Full report and methodology: spie.org/2023salaryreport

Early career professionals are defined by SPIE as post-secondary graduates within five years of graduating with what they anticipate will be their highest degree.