

Pay Equity and Total Compensation Analysis: New York State PS&T Bargaining Unit vs. Private Sector Market Equivalents

Executive Overview

The recruitment and retention of a highly skilled professional workforce is a central pillar of effective state governance. In New York State, the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PS&T) unit—represented by the Public Employees Federation (PEF)—comprises approximately 55,000 employees. This bargaining unit encompasses the state's most specialized classifications, including licensed registered nurses, civil engineers, attorneys, clinical social workers, and enterprise information technology specialists [cite: <https://www.pef.org/get-to-know-your-union/>, <https://oer.ny.gov/professional-scientific-and-technical-services-unit-pst-05>]. As macroeconomic labor markets evolve and private sector compensation paradigms shift, structural disparities between public sector statutory salary schedules and private sector market trends increasingly influence workforce stability, institutional knowledge retention, and the overall efficacy of public services.

This independent research report provides an exhaustive pay equity analysis comparing the New York State PS&T statutory salary schedule to equivalent private sector roles within the state. This analysis was conducted to inform public interest research and provide empirical context ahead of collective bargaining ratification processes. Evaluating 15 highly populated, representative professional titles spanning Salary Grades (SG) 18 through 27, the analysis leverages the New York State Office of Employee Relations (OER) Administrative Salary Schedule effective March 27, 2025 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf], alongside comprehensive occupational data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program [cite: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ny.htm].

The findings reveal a highly bifurcated compensation landscape that struggles to adapt to the varied market forces of disparate professions. Across the 15 selected titles, the aggregate base wage gap stands at a 14.1% deficit for state employees compared to private sector counterparts. However, this average obscures severe, crisis-level disparities in highly specialized and high-demand fields. Legal and advanced medical classifications face extreme market deficits. For example, Senior Attorneys trail the private market average by nearly 42%,

and Nurse Practitioners face a deficit approaching 25% [cite: <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/lawyers.htm>, <https://www.bartonassociates.com/nurse-practitioner-salary/>]. Conversely, state compensation meets or significantly exceeds the private market in human services and certain civil engineering classifications. This is largely due to successful union reallocation efforts and the systemic undervaluation of social work in the private non-profit sector [cite: <https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-42-no-6/social-worker-town-hall-addresses-reallocations-title-changes-and-next-steps/>, <https://joblink.socialworkers.org/career-resources/finding-talent-10/compensation-benchmarks-social-worker-2026-228>].

Furthermore, adjusting for total compensation using the BLS Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC) metrics demonstrates that New York State's robust benefits load serves as a critical equalizer. Public sector benefits constitute 38.5% of total compensation compared to just 30.1% in private industry [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.htm>]. When factoring in these benefit loads, the aggregate total compensation gap narrows substantially. Nevertheless, for high-earning classifications, the structural base wage ceiling in state service remains too low for enhanced benefits to fully bridge the market divide.

The New York State PS&T Salary Schedule Framework

To conduct a rigorous comparative analysis, it is necessary to first define the structural parameters of the state's compensation system. The compensation data for New York State employees is derived from the PEF PS&T Salary Schedule for the Administrative payroll, which goes into effect on March 27, 2025 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/state-agencies/payroll-bulletins/state-agencies/2336-april-2025-public-employees-federation-pef-3-salary-increase>]. Under the 2023–2026 collective bargaining agreement, this specific schedule incorporates a 3.0% base salary increase for the 2025–2026 fiscal year [cite: https://www.pef.org/pef_files/docs/contract/2026-31/Tentative-Agreement.pdf].

The state compensation model utilizes a rigid, step-based progression. Employees enter state service at a designated "Hiring Rate" for their salary grade. Subject to satisfactory annual performance evaluations, employees receive "Advance Amounts"—commonly referred to as steps—until they reach the "Job Rate," which functions as the absolute maximum statutory base salary for that specific grade [cite:

https://www.reddit.com/r/nys_cs/comments/1tyop1o/how_are_salary_steps_calculated/, <https://www.pef.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Searchable-AHA-Contract-2022-2025.pdf>].

Reaching the Job Rate typically requires seven years of continuous service within the title.

The table below extracts the exact statutory Hiring Rates and Job Rates for Salary Grades G-6

through G-35, drawn directly from the March 27, 2025, Administrative payroll schedule. This forms the baseline dataset for all subsequent market comparisons.

Salary Grade (NYS PS&T)	Hiring Rate (Mar 2025)	Job Rate (Mar 2025)	Advance Amount (Steps)
Grade 6	\$34,615	\$44,828	\$1,457
Grade 7	\$36,559	\$47,237	\$1,517
Grade 8	\$38,571	\$49,743	\$1,571
Grade 9	\$40,720	\$52,413	\$1,628
Grade 10	\$43,029	\$55,322	\$1,700
Grade 11	\$45,494	\$58,447	\$1,811
Grade 12	\$48,047	\$61,548	\$1,872
Grade 13	\$50,844	\$65,061	\$1,948
Grade 14	\$53,764	\$68,630	\$2,080
Grade 15	\$56,807	\$72,429	\$2,158
Grade 16	\$59,994	\$76,359	\$2,240
Grade 17	\$63,361	\$80,655	\$2,347
Grade 18	\$66,951	\$85,138	\$2,232

Grade 19	\$70,579	\$89,645	\$2,325
Grade 20	\$74,193	\$94,121	\$2,422
Grade 21	\$78,126	\$99,056	\$2,528
Grade 22	\$82,326	\$104,230	\$2,634
Grade 23	\$86,681	\$109,650	\$2,743
Grade 24	\$91,298	\$115,252	\$2,849
Grade 25	\$96,336	\$121,413	\$2,971
Grade 26	\$101,410	\$125,001	\$3,091
Grade 27	\$106,898	\$131,665	\$3,253
Grade 28	\$112,528	\$138,203	\$3,380
Grade 29	\$118,425	\$145,039	\$3,510
Grade 30	\$124,614	\$152,158	\$3,640
Grade 31	\$131,256	\$159,784	\$3,776
Grade 32	\$138,234	\$167,680	\$3,903
Grade 33	\$145,754	\$176,123	\$4,032

Grade 34	\$153,518	\$184,896	\$4,171
Grade 35	\$161,476	\$193,823	\$4,306

To maintain a highly conservative analytical baseline that favors the state's compensation position, this report compares private sector average wages exclusively against the New York State Job Rate. By benchmarking against the maximum statutory salary a union member can earn without a promotion, the wage deficits highlighted in this report represent the absolute best-case scenario for state employees. For newly hired staff entering at the Hiring Rate, the market gaps are substantially wider, creating intense friction during the initial recruitment phase.

Occupational Selection and Market Benchmarking Strategy

Private sector benchmarking utilizes the BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) May 2023 state-level data for New York, which serves as the most reliable, comprehensive dataset available for precise geographic and occupational filtering [cite: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ny.htm].

Fifteen representative titles were selected for this analysis. These titles were chosen based on high vacancy rates and posting frequencies across state agencies, requiring professional degrees, board licensure, or highly specialized technical experience [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218560>,

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218857>,

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>]. These positions form

the operational backbone of agencies such as the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS). The selected titles span Salary Grades 18 to 27 and were meticulously mapped to their closest BLS Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) equivalents to facilitate an apples-to-apples wage comparison.

The occupational mapping strategy is detailed in the table below, outlining the specific state title, its corresponding salary grade, and the BLS SOC code utilized to extract the private sector annual mean wage for New York State.

NYS PS&T Job Title	NYS Grade	BLS SOC Code	BLS Occupational Title
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Information Technology Specialist 2	G-18	15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts
Information Technology Specialist 3	G-23	15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts
Information Technology Specialist 4	G-27	15-1252	Software Developers
Senior Attorney	G-25	23-1011	Lawyers
Assistant Engineer (Civil)	G-20	17-2051	Civil Engineers
Professional Engineer 1 (Civil)	G-24	17-2051	Civil Engineers
Registered Nurse 2	G-20	29-1141	Registered Nurses
Registered Nurse Supervisor 1	G-22	29-1141	Registered Nurses
Nurse Practitioner	G-24	29-1171	Nurse Practitioners
Senior Accountant	G-18	13-2011	Accountants and Auditors
Associate Accountant	G-23	13-2011	Accountants and Auditors

Licensed Master Social Worker	G-20	21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	G-23	21-1023	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers
Research Scientist 2	G-22	19-1042	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists
Program Research Specialist 2	G-23	15-2031	Operations Research Analysts

Comparative Base Wage Analysis

The quantitative foundation of this pay equity analysis rests upon the raw base salary comparison between the maximum state salary and the average private sector market wage. The Percentage Gap is calculated as the difference between the NYS Job Rate and the Private Sector Average, divided by the Private Sector Average. A negative percentage indicates a structural deficit, meaning the state pays less than the private sector market average.

Base Salary Market Comparison (Sorted by Largest Deficit)

NYS Grade	PS&T Job Title	NYS Job Rate (Mar 2025)	BLS SOC Code	Private Sector Avg (NY State)	Dollar Gap	Percentage Gap	Data Sources
G-25	Senior Attorney	\$121,413	23-1011	\$208,480	-\$87,067	-41.76%	[cite: https://open.ny.gov/system/files/document

							ents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187 , https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes231011.htm]
G-24	Nurse Practitioner	\$115,252	29-1171	\$153,510	-\$38,258	-24.93%	[cite: https://er.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_

							0.pdf, https://allnurses.com/nursing-salaries/np/]
G-18	Senior Accountant	\$85,138	13-2011	\$113,310	-\$28,172	-24.86%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://ur.statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=215515 , https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes132011.htm]

G-18	IT Specialist 2	\$85,138	15-1211	\$109,610	-\$24,472	-22.33%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218560 , https://www.onetonline.org/link/localwages/15-1211.0?st=NY]
G-20	Assistant Engineer (Civil)	\$94,121	17-2051	\$113,610	-\$19,489	-17.15%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/docum

							ents/2024/01/pdf-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes172051.htm]
G-20	Registered Nurse 2	\$94,121	29-1141	\$113,440	-\$19,319	-17.03 %	[cite: https://oper.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pdf-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=2188

							57, https:// www.ri ppling.c om/blo g/regist ered-nu rse-sala ry-new- york]
G-22	Registe red Nurse Sup. 1	\$104,23 0	29-1141	\$113,44 0	-\$9,210	-8.12%	[cite: https://o er.ny.go v/syste m/files/ docum ents/20 24/01/p ef-salar y-sched ules-20 23-202 6-final_ 0.pdf, https://s tatejobs .ny.gov/ employ ees/vac ancyDe tailsVie w.cfm?i d=2192 98, https:// www.ri ppling.c om/blo

							g/regist ered-nu rse-sala ry-new- york]
G-27	IT Speciali st 4	\$131,66 5	15-1252	\$141,13 0	-\$9,465	-6.71%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://www.bls.gov/oes/2022/may/oes151252.htm]
G-22	Researc h Scientis t 2	\$104,23 0	19-1042	\$108,96 0	-\$4,730	-4.34%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-sched

							ules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://dec.ny.gov/about/employment/explore-career-descriptions/research-scientist-2, https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes191042.htm]
G-23	Associate Accountant	\$109,650	13-2011	\$113,310	-\$3,660	-3.23%	[cite: https://oper.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pdf-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://t

							alents.v aia.com /compa nies/sta tejobsn y/associ ate-acc ountant -9265-2 785658 0/, https:// www.bl s.gov/o es/2023 /may/oe s132011 .htm]
G-23	Progra m Researc h Spec. 2	\$109,65 0	15-2031	\$111,86 0	-\$2,210	-1.98%	[cite: https://o er.ny.go v/syste m/files/ docum ents/20 24/01/p ef-salar y-sched ules-20 23-202 6-final_ 0.pdf, https://s tatejobs .ny.gov/ public/v acancy DetailsV

							iew.cfm?id=218356, https://www.blis.gov/oes/2023/may/oes152031.htm]
G-23	IT Specialist 3	\$109,650	15-1211	\$109,610	+\$40	+0.04%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218825, https://www.onetonline.org/lin

							k/localw ages/15 -1211.0 0?st=N Y]
G-24	Prof. Engineer 1 (Civil)	\$115,252	17-2051	\$113,610	+\$1,642	+1.45%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://myjobs.ny.usnlx.com/rochester-ny/professional-engineer-1-civil-nyhelps/3BED221CC45F4EF6808664C9F9567EAF/job/ , https://www.bl

							s.gov/oes/2023/may/oes172051.htm]
G-23	License d Clinical SW (LCSW)	\$109,650	21-1023	\$92,470	+\$17,180	+18.58%	[cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, https://communicator.pdff.org/issue/volume-42-no-6/social-worker-town-hall-addresses-reallocations-title-changes-and-next-steps/, https://

							www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes211023.htm]
G-20	License d Master SW (LMSW)	\$94,121	21-1022	\$64,050	+\$30,071	+46.95%	[cite: https://www.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pref-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf , https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancy/DetailsView.cfm?id=219396 , https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes211022.htm]

Sector-by-Sector Diagnostics

The aggregate data demonstrates that New York State compensation structures struggle to adapt to the highly varied market forces of disparate professions. The rigidities of the civil service grade system frequently result in severe market deficits for specialized or high-demand commercial roles, while unintentionally outperforming the market in sectors dominated by underfunded private non-profits. Evaluating each sector independently provides vital context regarding the operational implications of these wage gaps.

Legal Occupations: The Structural Ceiling

The most severe pay equity disparity within the PS&T bargaining unit exists within legal occupations. A Grade 25 Senior Attorney in state service reaches a maximum base salary of \$121,413 [cite:

https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>]. In stark contrast, the BLS reports that the average annual wage for lawyers in New York State is \$208,480, resulting in a staggering mathematical deficit of -41.76% [cite:

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes231011.htm>].

The private legal market in New York is characterized by a bimodal salary distribution, heavily skewed by compensation models prevalent in corporate law firms, where even mid-level associates can earn well over \$200,000 annually [cite:

<https://www.rippling.com/blog/lawyer-salary-in-the-us-2026>]. Despite this, State Senior Attorneys are tasked with highly complex, specialized duties. They litigate enforcement actions, manage complex Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, conduct civil investigations, and draft intricate regulations for powerful regulatory bodies like the Department of Financial Services and the Department of Labor [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>,

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=217076>].

Because the state salary schedule is highly compressed—the monetary distance between a G-18 Assistant Attorney 1 (\$85,138 Job Rate) and a G-25 Senior Attorney (\$121,413 Job Rate) is only \$36,275—the state struggles immensely to retain legal talent once attorneys gain the requisite 24 months of post-licensure experience [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>]. At the precise point when an attorney achieves full professional autonomy and high functional value, the private sector premium becomes too vast for the state to compete effectively, resulting in chronic brain drain within agency general counsel offices.

Information Technology: Entry-Level Vulnerabilities and NY HELPS

The Information Technology series demonstrates how the state's grading system fails to match the steep trajectory of early-career private sector tech salaries. An IT Specialist 2 (G-18), tasked with object-oriented programming, SQL database management, and network security [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218560>,
<https://careers.thisiscny.com/companies/new-york-state/jobs/53137272-information-technology-specialist-2-hourly-9008>], tops out at \$85,138 [cite:
https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf]. The statewide average for a Computer Systems Analyst is \$109,610, representing a significant -22.33% gap [cite: <https://www.onetonline.org/link/localwages/15-1211.00?st=NY>]. However, as IT professionals ascend the state hierarchy, the gap narrows. An IT Specialist 3 (G-23), reaching \$109,650 [cite:
https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf], effectively achieves parity with the broader systems analyst market. At the highest technical levels, an IT Specialist 4 (G-27) earns up to \$131,665 [cite:
https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf]. While this trails the robust \$141,130 average for Software Developers in New York [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2022/may/oes151252.htm>], the gap is a much more manageable -6.71%.

The data indicates that the primary vulnerability for the state's IT infrastructure lies in talent acquisition and early-career retention. The state frequently acts as a training ground. Once junior IT Specialists acquire enterprise-level experience with systems like PeopleSoft, Oracle, or complex active directory environments [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218560>,
<https://careers.thisiscny.com/companies/new-york-state/jobs/53137272-information-technology-specialist-2-hourly-9008>], they are heavily incentivized to defect to the private sector to capture an immediate 22% pay premium. This leaves the state chronically understaffed at the operational level. To combat this severe recruitment crisis, the state has relied heavily on the "NY HELPS" program, temporarily waiving civil service examinations to lower barriers to entry [cite: <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218560>,
<https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=136872>,
<https://talents.vaia.com/companies/nys-office-of-information-technology-services/information-technology-specialist-2-ny-helps-9180-32899092/>]. This administrative maneuver implicitly acknowledges that the statutory wage offerings cannot withstand the friction of a lengthy examination process when competing against private sector hiring speeds.

Healthcare and Nursing: Advanced Practice Deficits and Shift Adjustments

Within the nursing sector, standard clinical roles track closer to market averages than advanced practice roles. A Registered Nurse 2 (G-20) reaches \$94,121 at the Job Rate [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218857>], trailing the statewide average of \$113,440 by -17.03% [cite: <https://www.rippling.com/blog/registered-nurse-salary-new-york>]. While this statutory gap is significant, it is frequently mitigated by state-authorized Geographic Pay Differentials and shift

differentials resulting from historical union advocacy. Following previous pay equity studies, registered nurses received upgraded allocations to G-18 and G-20, alongside a 7% premium for evening shifts and a 10% premium for night shifts [cite: <https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-40-no-8/state-pay-equity-study-validates-pefs-long-time-argument-that-nursing-titles-are-undervalued/>, <https://careermobilityoffice.cs.ny.gov/cmo/documents/RN-Title-Change-FAQ-for-Employees.pdf>]. Furthermore, registered nurses in certain upstate psychiatric or developmental facilities (e.g., Sunmount DDSO) may receive geographic supplements of up to \$20,000, bringing their effective pay well above the statutory G-20 Job Rate to stabilize local staffing [cite: <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218943>, <https://statejobsny.com/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218943>]. Despite these interventions for RNs, an acute crisis exists for advanced practice providers. A Nurse Practitioner (G-24) earns a maximum base of \$115,252 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf]. The private sector average for NPs in New York has surged to \$153,510, driven by the expansion of full-practice authority and the increasing reliance on NPs in private clinical networks and specialized care settings [cite: <https://allnurses.com/nursing-salaries/np/>]. This results in a severe -24.93% deficit. The inability of the state's rigid grading structure to adapt to the explosive market demand for mid-level diagnostic providers severely threatens the clinical capacity of agencies like the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), leading to heavier reliance on expensive locum tenens contractors.

Engineering: The Licensure Premium

Engineering compensation in state service perfectly illustrates the threshold value of professional licensure. An Assistant Engineer (Civil), positioned at G-20, reaches \$94,121 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf], which trails the general market average for civil engineers (\$113,610) by -17.15% [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes172051.htm>].

Once an engineer obtains their New York State Professional Engineer's (PE) license, they are eligible for promotion to Professional Engineer 1, which is a G-24 [cite: <https://myjobsny.usnlx.com/rochester-ny/professional-engineer-1-civil-nyhelps/3BED221CC45F4EF6808664C9F9567EAF/job/>, <https://dec.ny.gov/about/employment/permanent/minimum-qualifications/professional-engineer-1-civil>]. The Job Rate for G-24 is \$115,252 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf], which slightly exceeds the state average for civil engineers (+1.45%). Consequently, the state is highly competitive when hiring licensed PE 1s, provided the candidate is willing to navigate the civil service system. Furthermore, agencies like the Department of Transportation (DOT) frequently utilize localized geographic pay differentials (e.g., \$7,000 to \$11,000 depending on the region) to ensure that licensed engineers managing critical highway, bridge, and

environmental infrastructure projects remain immune from private sector poaching [cite: <https://myjobsny.usnlx.com/rochester-ny/professional-engineer-1-civil-nyhelps/3BED221CC45F4EF6808664C9F9567EAF/job/>, <https://www.careerbuilder.com/job-details/professional-engineer-1-civil-geotechnical-vid-208262-albany-ny--cffe7e28-3ff7-4ead-a531-8fecb4d1f1c4>].

Finance, Accounting, and Research: Competitive Niche Markets

For accounting and research roles, the state maintains a reasonable degree of market parity at the mid-to-senior levels, though entry-level gaps persist. A Senior Accountant (G-18) at \$85,138 trails the \$113,310 market average by -24.8% [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://ur.statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=215515>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes132011.htm>]. These professionals manage complex revenue transactions, state financial system billing modules, and fraud prevention protocols [cite: <https://fr.statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=213873>, <https://ur.statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=215515>]. However, upon advancing to Associate Accountant (G-23), the salary rises to \$109,650, nearly closing the gap to a negligible -3.2% [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://talents.vaia.com/companies/statejobsny/associate-accountant-9265-27856580/>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes132011.htm>]. Similarly, Research Scientists 2 (G-22) and Program Research Specialists 2 (G-23) sit at job rates of \$104,230 and \$109,650 respectively [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=219174>, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218356>]. Compared to private sector benchmarks for Medical Scientists (\$108,960) and Operations Research Analysts (\$111,860), the gaps are statistically insignificant (-4.34% and -1.98%) [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes191042.htm>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes152031.htm>]. In these highly analytical disciplines—where employees analyze Medicaid cost data, conduct public health forecasting, or manage complex agricultural models using SAS or SQL—state employment offers highly competitive base wages compared to the private sector [cite: <https://statejobsny.com/public/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=218623>, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218356>].

Social Work: Remedying Historical Undervaluation

The most striking anomaly in the analysis is within the social work profession, where New York State pays a massive premium over the private sector. A Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) at G-20 earns a job rate of \$94,121 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf

f, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=219396>]. In contrast, the BLS reports that the average wage for Healthcare Social Workers in New York is just \$64,050 [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes211022.htm>], resulting in an unprecedented +46.95% state premium. Similarly, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) at G-23 earns \$109,650 [cite: https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf], <https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-42-no-6/social-worker-town-hall-addresses-reallocations-title-changes-and-next-steps/>], exceeding the \$92,470 average for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers by +18.58% [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes211023.htm>].

This discrepancy is rooted in two distinct operational and historical factors. First, the private sector social work market is dominated by chronically underfunded non-profit organizations, community health clinics, and residential care facilities, leading to severe wage suppression across the industry [cite:

<https://joblink.socialworkers.org/career-resources/finding-talent-10/compensation-benchmarks-social-worker-2026-228>]. Second, New York State employs social workers to manage highly complex, forensic, and violently ill populations within institutional settings (e.g., correctional facilities, secure youth centers, and psychiatric centers) [cite:

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=219396>, <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=219159>, <https://www.pef.org/socialworkersurvey>].

Recognizing the clinical severity of these roles—and responding to intense advocacy by PEF surrounding the historical undervaluation of female-dominated professions—the state Department of Civil Service recently enacted a historic reallocation. This effectively elevated the LMSW title to Grade 20 and created the specific LCSW title at Grade 23 [cite:

<https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-42-no-6/social-worker-town-hall-addresses-reallocations-title-changes-and-next-steps/>, <https://www.pef.org/socialworkersurvey>]. This paradigm highlights the power of public sector collective bargaining to establish a wage floor that far exceeds depressed market conditions, ensuring the state can attract clinicians willing to work in highly demanding institutional environments.

Total Compensation: Adjusting for the Benefits Load

While base salary comparisons are essential for understanding recruitment optics and initial candidate attraction, a true pay equity analysis must account for total compensation. Public sector employment in New York State is traditionally defined by a deferred compensation model—trading slightly lower base wages for superior retirement security, expansive paid leave, and highly subsidized premium healthcare benefits.

To precisely quantify this dynamic, the analysis applies the BLS Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC) data from March 2026 [cite:

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>, <https://www.bls.gov/ecec/>]. This dataset breaks down the exact cost of wages versus benefits for employers.

- In **State and Local Government**, wages and salaries account for just 61.5% of total compensation, meaning benefits represent a massive 38.5% of the total package [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.htm>]. To convert a state base salary into an adjusted total compensation figure, a multiplier of 1.6260 is applied ($1 / 0.615$).
- In **Private Industry**, wages account for 69.9% of total compensation, with benefits accounting for only 30.1% [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.htm>]. To convert a private base salary into an adjusted total compensation figure, a multiplier of 1.4306 is applied ($1 / 0.699$).

The table below applies these ECEC multipliers to the previously established base wages to calculate the true Total Compensation (TC) gap.

Adjusted Total Compensation Comparison

PS&T Job Title	NYS Total Comp (Adjusted)	Private Total Comp (Adjusted)	TC Dollar Gap	TC Percentage Gap
Senior Attorney	\$197,420	\$298,255	-\$100,835	-33.81%
Nurse Practitioner	\$187,402	\$219,614	-\$32,212	-14.67%
Senior Accountant	\$138,436	\$162,103	-\$23,667	-14.60%
IT Specialist 2	\$138,436	\$156,810	-\$18,374	-11.72%
Assistant Engineer (Civil)	\$153,042	\$162,532	-\$9,490	-5.84%
Registered Nurse 2	\$153,042	\$162,289	-\$9,247	-5.70%
Registered Nurse Sup. 1	\$169,480	\$162,289	+\$7,191	+4.43%

IT Specialist 4	\$214,089	\$201,903	+\$12,186	+6.04%
Research Scientist 2	\$169,480	\$155,880	+\$13,600	+8.72%
Associate Accountant	\$178,293	\$162,103	+\$16,190	+9.99%
Program Research Spec. 2	\$178,293	\$160,029	+\$18,264	+11.41%
IT Specialist 3	\$178,293	\$156,810	+\$21,483	+13.70%
Prof. Engineer 1 (Civil)	\$187,402	\$162,532	+\$24,870	+15.30%
Licensed Clinical SW	\$178,293	\$132,289	+\$46,004	+34.78%
Licensed Master SW	\$153,042	\$91,631	+\$61,411	+67.02%

The application of the ECEC benefit load radically alters the equity landscape. Because the state's benefit package is structurally richer—largely driven by the presence of a defined benefit pension system (which accounts for a massive 12.4% of compensation costs in government compared to just 0.9% in the private sector) and heavily subsidized premium healthcare [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/eccec.htm>—many of the base wage deficits are completely erased. For instance, the -6.71% raw wage deficit for an IT Specialist 4 becomes a +6.04% total compensation premium. Similarly, the Associate Accountant transitions from a -3.23% wage deficit to a solid +9.99% total compensation advantage.

However, the "benefits shield" has a mathematical limit. For highly compensated professionals like Senior Attorneys and Nurse Practitioners, the base wage deficit is so vast that even the state's superior benefits package cannot close the gap. A Senior Attorney still faces a

staggering -\$100,835 (-33.81%) deficit in total compensation, indicating that the state simply cannot compete for senior legal talent on a purely financial basis.

Furthermore, the perceived value of state benefits has shifted materially over the last decade. Post-2012 hires are enrolled in the Tier 6 pension plan, which requires employees to contribute between 3% and 6% of their salaries for the duration of their careers, significantly diminishing their real-time take-home pay compared to legacy tiers [cite:

https://www.reddit.com/r/nys_cs/comments/1tpojjl/changes_to_pef_tier_6_flierqa/,

<https://communicator.pef.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/02/PEF-Comm-Feb-2024.pdf>].

As the workforce composition transitions almost entirely to Tier 6, the ability of state recruiters to leverage the promise of "superior benefits" to justify sub-market base wages is rapidly deteriorating.

Analytical Limitations and Structural Caveats

When interpreting these findings for contract ratification debates or policy decisions, several structural and methodological limitations must be transparently acknowledged.

The BLS OEWS data utilized for the private sector baseline is drawn from the May 2023 release [cite: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ny.htm]. Between 2023 and 2026, the Employment Cost Index recorded sustained private-sector wage growth, including a 3.4% year-over-year increase ending in March 2026 [cite: <https://www.bls.gov/eci/>,

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.htm>]. Consequently, the private sector averages used in this report are functionally deflated. Because the private sector data is not inflation-adjusted to mirror the March 2025 NYS schedule, the actual market wage gaps in 2026 are likely several percentage points wider than presented herein.

Furthermore, the NYS wages utilized are the absolute maximums for each grade (Job Rates), which take an employee seven years of satisfactory service to achieve [cite:

https://www.reddit.com/r/nys_cs/comments/1tyop1o/how_are_salary_steps_calculated/,

https://oer.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/pef-salary-schedules-2023-2026-final_0.pdf]. Comparing a seven-year maximum against a general market average naturally paints the state in the most favorable light possible. The entry-level wage gap is substantially more severe across all titles, posing a persistent threat to early-career recruitment.

Geographic averaging also skews the data. The BLS data represents a statewide average, yet New York is a highly polarized economic environment. A private sector lawyer or nurse in New York City earns vastly more than one in Elmira or Binghamton [cite:

<https://allnurses.com/nursing-salaries/np/>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes231011.htm>].

While the state offers "Downstate Adjustments" of approximately \$3,400 to \$4,000 [cite:

<https://talents.vaia.com/companies/nys-office-of-information-technology-services/information-technology-specialist-2-ny-helps-9180-32899092/>,

<https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>], these flat stipends do not adequately reflect the hyper-localized cost of living disparities in the New York City metropolitan area. Thus, for Downstate PS&T members, the deficits calculated here are significantly understated.

Finally, federal SOC codes are inherently broad. Mapping a specialized NYS Program Research Specialist to the broad category of "Operations Research Analysts" involves an element of occupational blending [cite: <https://statejobs.ny.gov/public/vacancyDetailsView.cfm?id=218356>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes152031.htm>]. While standard practice in labor economics, it cannot perfectly capture the unique administrative burdens, regulatory complexities, and institutional demands placed exclusively on public sector workers.

Summary of Findings

This comprehensive analysis yields several core takeaways regarding the pay equity of the New York State PS&T bargaining unit. Across all 15 evaluated titles, the unweighted average base wage gap reveals a -5.97% deficit for state employees. However, when adjusting for the superior public sector benefit load, the aggregate gap reverses to an average premium of +6.87%, though this statistic is heavily skewed by massive premiums at the lower end of the schedule.

The worst-hit categories include legal professionals and advanced medical practitioners. Senior Attorneys face a devastating -41.76% wage gap, and Nurse Practitioners face a -24.93% wage gap [cite: <https://statejobs.ny.gov/employees/vacancyDetailsPrint.cfm?id=219187>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes231011.htm>, <https://allnurses.com/nursing-salaries/np/>]. The state's rigid grading system completely fails to match the exponential salary growth these specialized professions command in the private market. Entry-level technology and accounting roles also suffer deficits exceeding -20%, which directly drives early-career attrition and necessitates emergency hiring measures like the NY HELPS program.

Conversely, state compensation is highly competitive and often exceeds the market in engineering (post-licensure), mid-level research, and operational analysis. Furthermore, due to the efforts of collective bargaining and recent grade reallocations, state-employed Social Workers earn base salaries that dwarf the severely depressed private sector market, demonstrating the profound value of union representation in human service fields [cite: <https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-42-no-6/social-worker-town-hall-addresses-reallocations-title-changes-and-next-steps/>, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes211022.htm>]. In synthesis, while the New York State PS&T compensation package remains highly viable for certain mid-career technical and human service professions—especially when factoring in the total benefits load—the rigidities of the existing civil service schedule actively undermine the state's ability to recruit entry-level talent and retain elite professionals in law, advanced healthcare, and information technology.