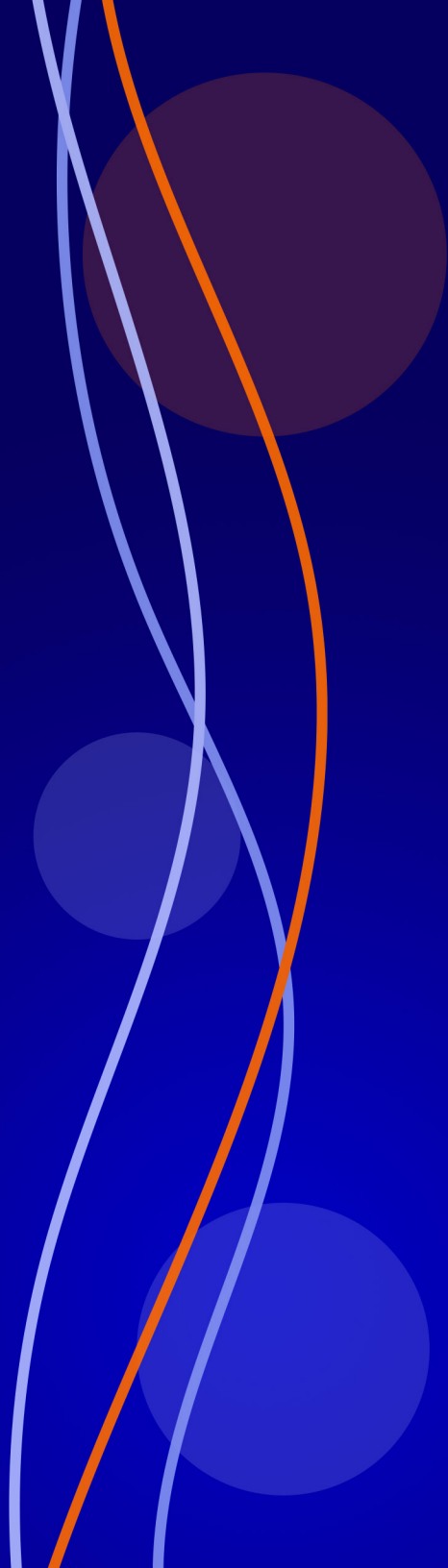
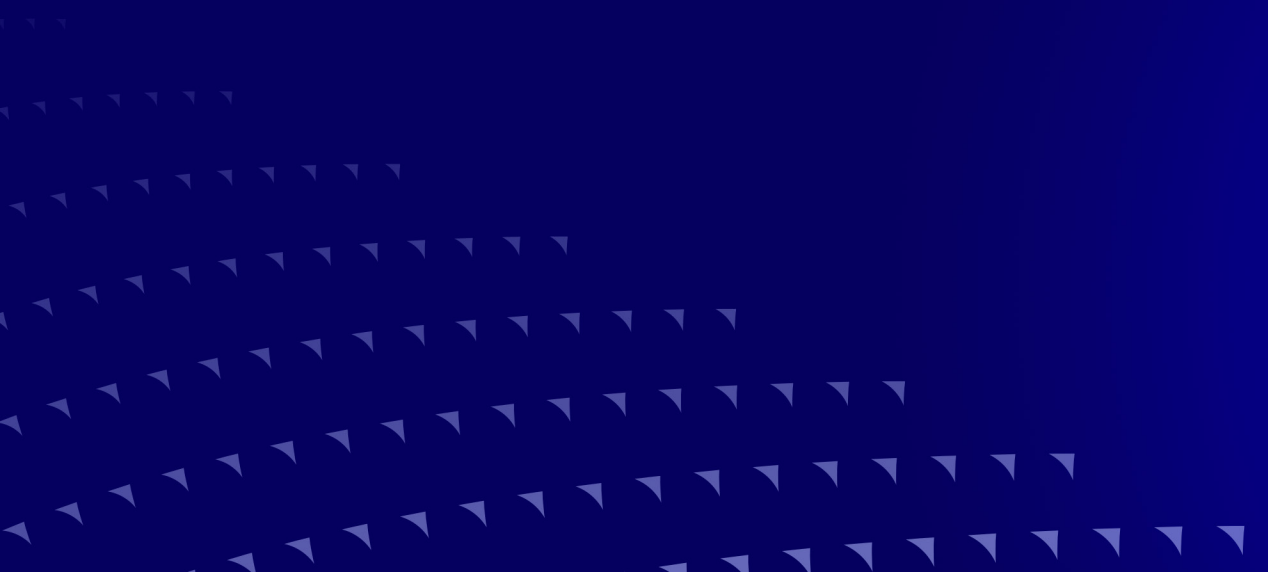




CISO Compensation

2025 Benchmark Snapshot Report



Executive Summary

At the macro-level, many companies experienced a pullback in investment and hiring over the past 12 months, with wage growth slowing in response to increased cost discipline and softer labor demand.

The logical question to ask is whether CISO compensation is shielded from these effects. Given the high priority companies place on cybersecurity, the expanding and increasingly sophisticated threat landscape, and the new risks AI brings, CISOs often remain protected from broader wage growth slowdowns and hiring freezes.

To obtain a detailed view into the latest CISO compensation status in the U.S. and Canada, IANS and Artico Search conducted their sixth annual CISO Compensation and Budget Research Study. Data collection for this research took place from April to October 2025. To date, we have gathered data on compensation from 566 CISOs based in these countries.

Key takeaways from the research

CISO compensation rose by 6.7%, outpacing security budget growth

In 2025, overall compensation for CISOs increased by an average of 6.7%,—a healthy increase but continuing a multi-year downward trend. Meanwhile, security budget growth slowed to 4% in 2025, the lowest in five years. This trend shows CISO compensation is not fully shielded from these budget constraints. Additionally, the composition of pay shifted slightly, with equity-based compensation growing faster than cash compensation.

CISO mobility ticked up four points, year-over-year

Fifteen percent of CISOs changed employers in the past year, up from 11% last year. However, only half of those who switched received a pay increase. The other half changed companies for reasons unrelated to a compensation increase. The average overall compensation increase for CISOs who switched jobs was 5%, about two percentage points lower than those who stayed with their employer. Staying at their current job was often accompanied by taking on greater scope and consequently, in most cases, higher compensation packages. This subgroup—CISOs who stayed and assumed more responsibilities—had the highest average compensation increase of 8.1%.

CISO compensation levels span a 20x range

Total annual compensation for the top 1% of CISOs starts at \$3.2 million, roughly ten times the median and 20 times the bottom 10%. Given this variability, highly seasoned CISOs who lead large security organizations at Fortune 100 companies often don't see their pay reflected in reported averages, as their earnings can be up to ten times higher. Similarly, CISOs earlier in their careers often feel the opposite—that the reported averages seem inflated compared with their own earnings and those of CISOs with whom they network.

Key drivers of CISO pay are equity, industry, scale and experience

Seventy percent of CISOs work at organizations that offer equity and receive it as part of their compensation. Among top earners, equity can account for up to 50% of total compensation. However, equity-based compensation varies greatly by industry. While it is nearly universal among tech CISOs, about 70% of CISOs in financial services, retail and healthcare receive equity vs. only one in five in the education sector. Tech and financial services continue to lead in total compensation for CISOs with equity-based compensation packages, with average total compensation reaching \$844,000 and \$744,000, respectively.

Other influential drivers of pay include the size of organizational footprint and the experience level of the CISO. CISOs overseeing teams of 100+ staff and budgets over \$50 million typically earn in the top quartile. CISOs with at least eight years of role experience, especially when diversified across multiple companies or industries, often earn 100% more than peers with shorter tenure and less varied backgrounds.

71% of CISOs receive executive perks

More than 50% of CISOs are covered by Directors & Officers (D&O) insurance—up from 40% last year—reflecting heightened legal and reputational risk in the role. Financial benefits such as deferred compensation plans and executive life insurance & health coverage are becoming mainstream. Non-financial perks such as access to external counsel, external executive coaching and severance agreements are available to one in five CISOs.

The complete 2025 CISO Compensation Benchmark Report is a comprehensive, 36-page breakdown that provides high-level insights and offers a more detailed set of CISO compensation data and is available to IANS clients through the IANS Portal or to non-clients upon request.

To receive a copy of the full report contact us at info@iansresearch.com.

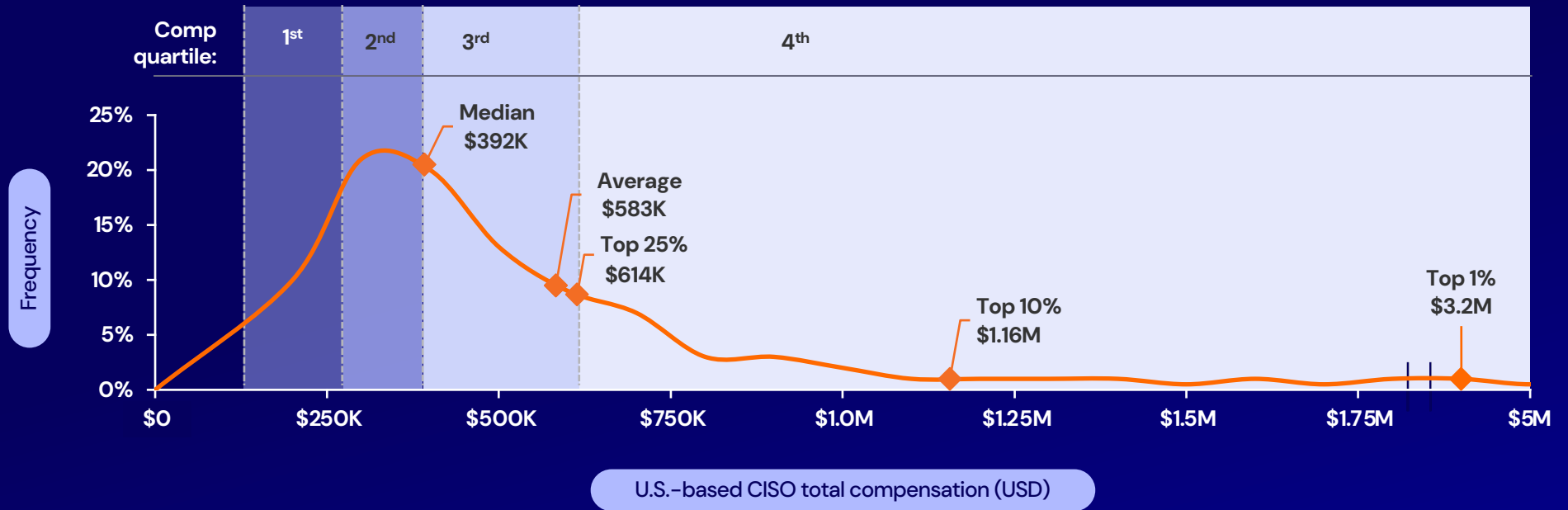
Key Drivers of Compensation Differences

FIGURE 6

Source: IANS & Artico Search

The Wide Distribution of U.S. CISOs' Total Annual Compensation

Total annual compensation (base salary, target bonus and equity) for U.S.-based CISOs



What CISOs Will Find in The Full Report

The data and insights in the full CISO Compensation Benchmark Report provide CISOs with the latest compensation trends and enable them to benchmark their pay package against peers—empowering them to negotiate competitive terms for both current roles and future opportunities.

The full 2025 CISO Compensation Benchmark Report includes:



Trends in compensation changes

The report presents multiyear trends and detailed data on annual salary raises and total compensation changes that come straight from more than 550 CISOs based in the U.S. or Canada, yielding reliable trending data.



Key drivers of compensation

The report describes the factors that influence pay levels the most, including equity, industry, scale and experience—with compensation averages for each driver. Additionally, it details a broader set of market-based pay influences including geography, work arrangements and gender.



Executive perks eligibility

Including a range of financial and non-financial executive benefits and the share of CISOs who receive them.



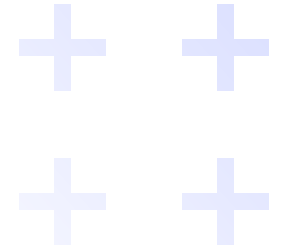
Insights and anecdotes

Executives at Artico Search, in particular Steve Martano, IANS Faculty member and partner in Artico Search's cyber practice, and Matt Comyns, Artico Search's co-founder and president, offer their insights.



Objective and vendor-free research

To ensure findings are solely based on independent data analysis and industry trends, without influence from commercial interests or sponsorships.



About Us

This publication is created in partnership between IANS and Artico Search.

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For the security practitioner caught between rapidly evolving threats and demanding executives, IANS is a trusted resource to help CISOs and their teams make decisions and articulate risk. IANS provides experience-based insights from a network of seasoned practitioners through Ask-an-Expert inquiries, a peer community, deployment-focused reports, tools and templates, and executive development and consulting.



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Founded in 2021, Artico Search's team of executive recruiters focuses on a "grow and protect" model, recruiting senior go-to-market and security executives in growth venture, private equity and public companies. Artico's dedicated security practice delivers CISOs and other senior-level information security professionals for a diverse set of clients.

