



Society for Technical Communication  
Alberta Chapter  
2008 Salary Survey Results  
Part II: Consultants/Contractors  
and Part-time Employees  
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## Introduction

The Alberta Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) conducted an online salary survey of its members from September 15 through November 15, 2008. This document, *Part II*, reports the statistics for contractors/consultants and part-time employees. Details of the survey methodology and response rates are contained in *Part I*.

STC International conducted world-wide salary surveys for full-time employees until 2005 and full-time consultant/contractor(s) until 2003. Canadian statistics were reported on a country-wide basis, rather than by provincial region. STC Alberta originally launched its local survey to supplement these national statistics with regional data. In 2006 STC discontinued the international surveys altogether, replacing them with a single salary database containing only U.S.A. data.

The lack of Canadian statistics in the STC salary database imbues additional relevance to STC Alberta's salary survey. 2008 marks the third year of this standalone significance. Hourly rate statistics for all three years are summarized below in Table 1:

**Table 1. Consultant/Contractor hourly rate summary 2006-2008**

Year	Number of Respondents	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
2008	28	76	50	55	70	75	103
2007	24	64	40	52	63	71	80
2006	28	60	40	47	60	65	80

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## Results

Thirty-one contractor/consultants and six part-time employees responded to the survey. Of the contractor responses, three had to be excluded from final analysis due to inconclusive, incomplete or conflicting responses, leaving 28 valid responses. The median compensation reported for contractor/consultant(s) in Alberta in 2008 was \$70.00 per hour, while the mean (average) was \$76.00 per hour. These figures are higher than the median and mean reported in the 2007 STC Alberta survey (\$62.50 and \$64.50, respectively), and substantially higher than the Canadian rates reported in the 2003 STC International contractor/consultant survey (\$51 and \$45, respectively).

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## Income Survey Statistics for Contractors/Consultants

Table 2 outlines the definitions of the terms used in the salary survey. Table 3 summarizes the survey data.

**Table 2. Survey definitions**

<b>Base</b>	The total number of responses in a category.
<b>Mean</b>	The average of the tabulated values.
<b>10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 90%</b>	Percentile values. For example, in the 25% column, 25% of the responses were below this value; 75% were above this value.
<b>50%</b>	Also called the <i>median</i> because half the responses are above this value, and half are below this value.
<b>Insufficient Data</b>	Too few responses for statistical significance. Drawing conclusions would be speculative.

**Table 3. 2008 STC Alberta salary survey summary: Contractors/Consultants**

	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Mean	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
<b>All Consultants/Contractors</b>	28	100	76	50	55	70	75	103
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	11	39	82	55	60	70	75	100
Female	17	61	72	50	50	70	75	95
<b>Education*</b>								
None specified/other	1	4	Insufficient Data					
Certificate	7	25	60	50	50	60	68	72
Bachelor	14	50	73	50	55	68	75	100
Post-Graduate	6	21	103	70	71	80	96	158
<b>Technical Writing Experience (Years)</b>								
<2	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2-5	5	18	48	32	50	50	55	61
6-10	6	21	64	50	50	55	71	85
11-15	4	14	81	70	70	73	84	100
16-19	9	32	86	59	65	75	75	111
>20	4	14	99	70	70	70	99	152
<i>*Based on highest level of education achieved.</i>								

## Commentary

The influence of the current global economic situation on the Alberta market may be reflected in this year's survey data. While the median hourly rate increased by 11% from last year, fewer respondents are reporting supplementary benefits and the range of benefits offered has been slashed. The data also suggests that more consultants/contractors are working longer hours, but billing for fewer of those hours.

The median hour rate for both genders in 2008 was \$70, up from \$63 in 2007 (see Table 3). However, the mean rate charged by males (\$82), was 13% higher than the average rate charged by females (\$72). Three factors may influence this discrepancy:

- First, one male consultant/contractor reported a rate more than double the mean, which skewed the average upward.
- Second, 83% of the respondents reporting post-graduate degrees were male. Post-graduate degrees coupled with lengthy experience appeared to enable a consultant/contractor to charge higher rates (see Table 3 on page 2). Higher rates yield a higher average.
- Finally, 80% of the five respondents reporting less than 5 years of technical writing experience were female. Less experience equates to lower rates, and lower rates yield a lower average.

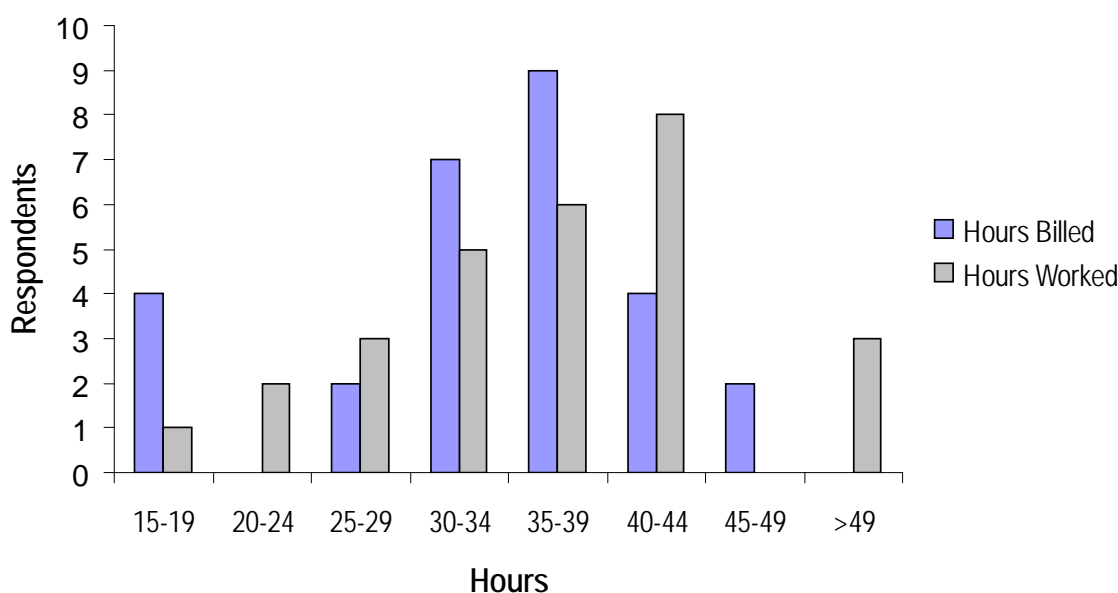
Of the 28 valid responses obtained in the survey, only two respondents earned their income in Edmonton, most were based in Calgary. Given that the Edmonton sample size was not statistically significant, meaningful comparisons between the two city markets could not be drawn.

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## Hours Billed

The chart in Figure 1 below illustrates that fewer consultants/contractors are billing for all hours worked. In 2007, 62% of respondents worked the same range of hours as they billed; this percentage dropped to 57% in 2008. For example, three respondents reported working more than 49 hours per week, but zero respondents reported billing for more than 49 hours per week. Instead, two respondents billed for 45-49 hours and one billed for 40-44 hours. Similarly, only one respondent worked 15-19 hours, yet four respondents billed for this category.

**Figure 1. Hours worked versus hours billed**



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## Education

The consultants/contractors responding to the survey reported seven certificates/diplomas, fourteen bachelor’s degrees, and six post-graduate degrees.

The data demonstrate a relationship between compensation and educational credential: the rates charged rose with education credential. Respondents with post-graduate degrees earned the highest rates. The reasons for this cannot be conclusively determined without further study.

The data was also analyzed to determine the correlation, if any, between experience in technical communication and educational credential earned (see Table 4 below). All respondents were experienced (none reported less than 2 years experience), but the years of experience rose with educational credential. While most of the contractors/consultants with less than 5 years experience were female (80%), the division between genders among the most experienced technical communicators was evenly divided. Of respondents with 16-19 years of experience, 44% were female and 56% were male. Those reporting more than 20 years experience were 50% female and 50% male.

The average billing rate for contractors/consultants with less than 5 years experience – regardless of gender – was \$48. One respondent in this group reported a rate of \$20 per hour. It may be difficult for technical communicators with less than 5 years of experience to market themselves as experienced consultants, in the context of experts. While some members of this group purposely seek the independence of consulting, it is possible some may be accepting contract work because companies offer fewer permanent, full-time positions in times of economic uncertainty.

Most of the contractors/consultants with less than 5 years experience were female (80%). This lack of experience may have lowered the average hourly rate for females because less experience generally equates to lower rates, and this group accounts for a quarter of the female responses.

**Table 4. Post-secondary education and experience**

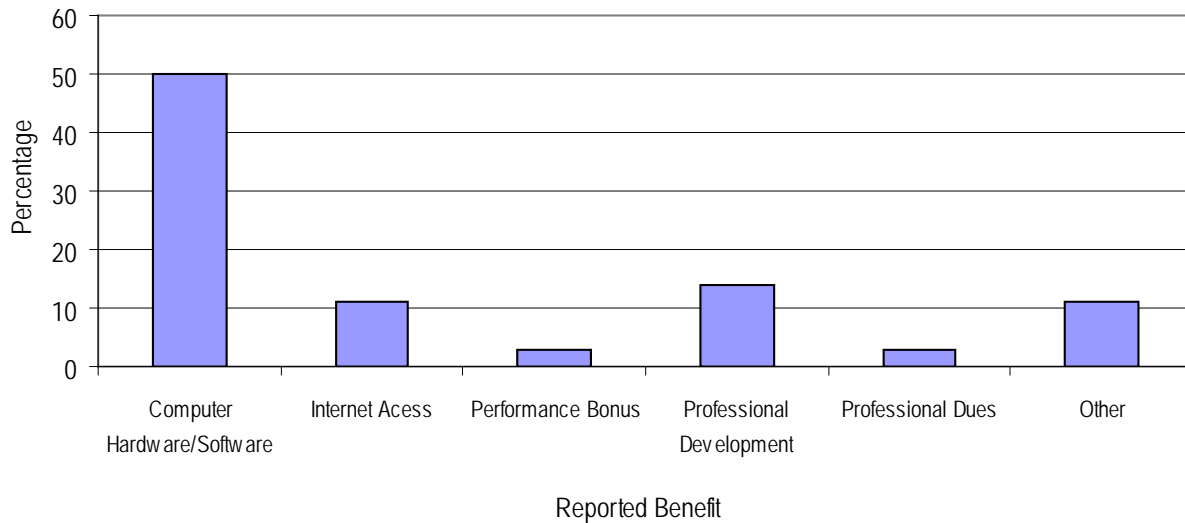
Post-secondary education level	% with more than <6 years experience in technical Communication
Certificate	71%
Bachelor/Applied Bachelor	80%
Post-graduate	100%

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## Benefits

The benefits reported by contractors/consultants in 2008 are summarized in Figure 2 (page 5). The list of benefits and the number of consultants/contractors receiving benefits has dropped significantly from other years. Only one contract/consultant reported training as a benefit this year, only one reported a performance bonus, and only half receive the computer hardware or software required to do their work. No one reported meals, overtime pay, office space, or full payment of invoices.

**Figure 2. Percentage of consultants/contractors reporting additional benefits**



### Summary of Results for Part-time Employees

Given the low response rate of six valid responses from part-time employees, the data is insufficient for rigorous analysis. A summary of the results is shown in Table 5. Note that the average salary per hour dropped \$2 from that reported in 2007.

**Table 5. Part-time employee summary**

Category	Reported result(s)	Number reporting
Average salary	\$34 per hour	6
Technical communication experience	2-5 years	1
	6-10 years	3
	11-15 years	1
	16-19 years	0
	20 or more	1
Hours worked per week	15-19	2
	20-24	1
	30-34	3
Employment level	Mid-level, non-supervisory	5
	Senior-level, non-supervisory	1
Benefits	Dental, disability insurance	6
	Annual bonus, life insurance	5
	Professional development	5
	Professional society dues	4
	Supplemental health insurance	6
	Tuition reimbursement	3
	Pension	1

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## **Conclusion**

*Part II* concludes the report *STC Alberta 2008 Salary Survey Results*. Thank you to all the STC Alberta members who took the time to participate in this survey. The high response rate for the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys indicates an ongoing and increasing interest in participating in the survey.