



## Background

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) conducts two salary surveys that include STC Alberta members. First, STC International conducts a worldwide salary survey each year that reports data for each country with significant membership. Secondly, STC Alberta, along with many STC chapters, supplements this information by conducting its own salary surveys. Table 1 shows a side-by-side comparison of the features of the two surveys.

Table 1. Summary of STC salary surveys

	STC International Salary Survey	STC Alberta Salary Survey
Frequency	Annual	Sporadic; last conducted in 2002
Participation	By invitation only; invitations sent to 10,000 of STC's 16,000 members	Voluntary; open to all STC Alberta members
Participants	Salaried employees only; separate survey for contractors/consultants	2006 survey reported income of salaried employees separate from contractors/consultants* 2002 survey reported income of these two groups together
Participant response rate	2005: 23%	2006: 39% 2002: 20%
Statistics reported	Percentile data for various categories for Canada as a whole, median income for Alberta	Percentile data for various categories for Alberta STC members earning the majority of their income in Alberta
URL	<a href="http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/salarySurvey01.asp">www.stc.org/stcmembers/salarySurvey01.asp</a>	<a href="http://www.stc-alberta.org/Publications/publications.php">www.stc-alberta.org/Publications/publications.php</a>
* 2006 survey results for contractors/consultants will be published separately.		

## Survey Methodology

In 2006, STC Alberta conducted a salary survey hosted at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The Alberta survey, modelled after the STC International survey, was announced in the May edition of the STC Alberta newsletter *SuperScript*. An invitation with the survey link was emailed to the 256 registered STC Alberta members (as of April and May, 2006).

The survey was available online from May 10 through June 10, 2006. To participate, members opened the emailed link and responded to the questions. No identifying information, such as member number and name, was requested. The SurveyMonkey site used cookies to ensure that each participant completed only one questionnaire.

Depending on the employment type specified by respondents (e.g., full-time employee, part-time employee, or contractor/consultant), they were asked a subset of questions regarding such items as employee benefits, annual salary, and hourly rate.

The author then exported the survey results to a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet and prepared the analysis. Ken Schatzke, STC Alberta Past President, reviewed the data and analysis.

Because members may belong to more than one geographical community (chapter), the survey included questions about the province of residence and income source. Since the focus of the survey was intended to be Alberta, responses from members who lived outside Alberta or obtained the majority of their income from outside Alberta were excluded.

Regarding student members, the STC defines such members as full-time students in a post-secondary program leading to a career in technical communications. Because the work term is considered a component of the education program, work term salaries are typically below market value. Therefore, to accurately reflect market value, the four student responses were excluded from the analysis.

Also excluded from the analysis were responses that included conflicting or incomplete data.

**Note:** All dollar amounts are in Canadian dollars and have not been adjusted for inflation.

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## Response Rate

A total of 100 responses was received. This corresponds to a 39 percent response rate—considerably higher than the response rate of the 2005 STC International survey (23 percent) and the 2002 STC Alberta survey (20 percent). Table 2 shows a breakdown by response categories.

Table 2. Response summary

<b>Excluded responses</b>	
Students	4
Conflicting/incomplete data	3
Out-of-province residents	2
<b>Total responses excluded</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Included responses</b>	
Salaried full-time employees	60
Salaried part-time employees	4
Contractors/consultants	28
<b>Total number of valid responses</b>	<b>91</b>

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## Results

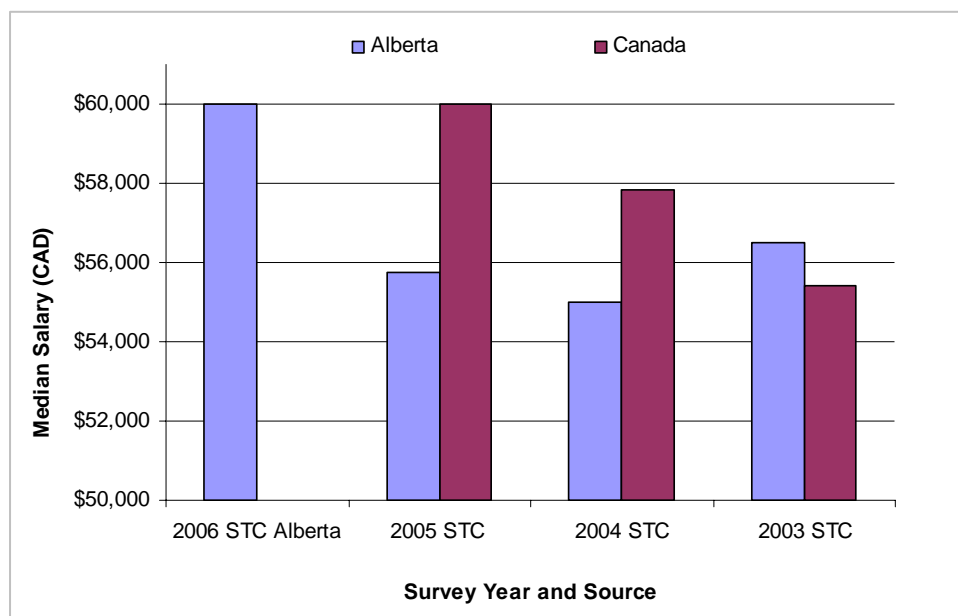
This report summarizes the survey results for full-time employees. The results for part-time employees and contractors/consultants will be reported separately.

The median salary reported for full-time employees was \$60,000. This figure is somewhat higher than the median Alberta salary reported by the 2005 STC International survey (\$55,750). The average (or mean) salary reported was \$60,075— lower than the average income in the 2002 STC Alberta survey (\$60,654).

**Note:** The 2002 STC Alberta survey included the annual compensation of both employees and contractors/consultants. The 2006 STC Alberta survey separately reports the income of these two employment types. This may account for the small difference in average income between the 2002 and 2006 STC Alberta surveys.

Figure 1 summarizes the median salary for Alberta and Canada over the past three years. The 2006 STC International survey results will be released in the fall.

Figure 1. Median salary by year (Alberta and Canada)



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## Salary Survey Statistics

The percentiles used to analyze the data correspond to those of the STC International salary survey. Table 3 outlines the definitions of the terms used in the salary survey. Table 4 summarizes the survey data.

**Table 3. 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 percent column, 25 percent of the responses were below this value; 75 percent 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.

**Table 4. 2006 STC Alberta salary survey summary: Full-time employees**

	<b>Base</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>90%</b>
All full-time employees	60		60,075	46,950	51,125	60,000	67,250	75,000
<b>Employment Level</b>								
Entry	5	8%	38,800	35,600	38,000	38,000	42,000	42,000
Mid-level, non supervisory	20	33%	56,114	47,950	50,000	53,000	60,000	73,100
Mid-level, supervisory	5	8%	52,140	49,520	50,000	50,000	51,500	56,600
Senior level, non-supervisory	21	35%	66,286	60,000	60,000	65,500	72,000	75,000
Senior level, supervisory	9	15%	70,611	51,200	56,000	64,500	77,000	93,600
Other	0	0%	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Post-Secondary Education Level</b>								
None specified/other	5	8%	61,540	53,520	60,000	60,000	60,000	66,000
Certificate	6	10%	59,833	50,750	53,125	59,000	59,000	64,125
Bachelor's/Applied Bachelor's	45	75%	58,984	42,000	50,000	56,000	56,000	67,000
Postgraduate	4	7%	70,875	62,750	63,875	68,250	68,250	75,250
<b>Sex</b>								
Female	45	75%	58,963	42,000	50,000	60,000	65,000	74,300
Male	15	25%	63,408	48,800	51,750	66,000	72,500	76,200
<b>Technical Writing Experience (Years)</b>								
<2	6	10%	42,250	36,000	38,000	40,000	48,000	50,750
2-5	15	25%	52,743	44,200	49,450	51,750	55,000	60,000
6-10	21	35%	62,244	52,000	56,000	60,000	68,000	73,000
11-15	13	22%	65,285	52,000	60,000	65,000	70,000	76,600
16-19	1	2%	72,500	—	—	—	—	—
>20	4	7%	82,875	68,550	72,375	74,750	85,250	103,700

## Commentary

The gender gap reported in the 2002 STC Alberta survey persists in 2006, with the mean salary for men (\$63,408) higher than that for women (\$58,963). However, there is also a strong relationship between salary and years of technical writing experience. In fact, 80 percent of the male participants had over five years' experience, compared to 60 percent of the female participants.

Participants who had no specified post-secondary education reported higher salaries than participants with certificates, Bachelor degrees or Applied Bachelor degrees. Again, this may be explained by the greater number of years of experience reported by participants with no specified post-secondary education (Table 5).

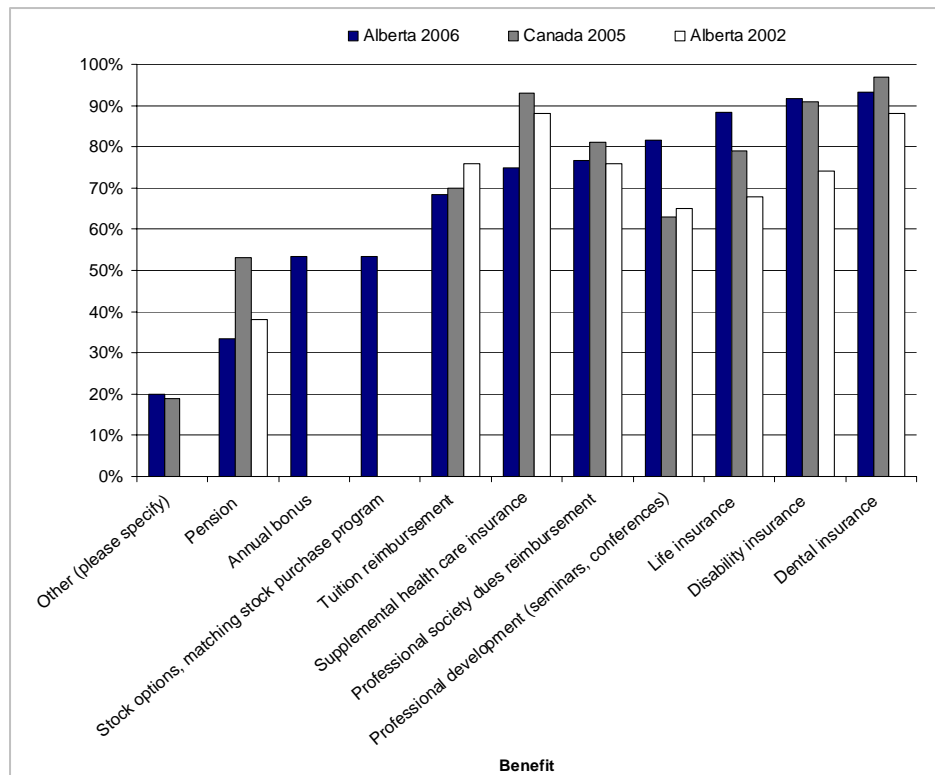
Table 5. Post-secondary education and experience

Post-secondary education level	Percentage with more than 10 years' experience
None specified/other	80%
Certificate	17%
Bachelor/Applied Bachelor degree	27%

## Employee Benefits

In general, the benefits received by Alberta members, with the exception of pension and supplemental health insurance, compared favourably with those of their Canadian counterparts (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Benefits provided by employers



The 2005 STC International survey and the 2002 STC Alberta survey did not include the categories of annual bonus and stock options/stock purchase programs, and did not allow participants to specify other benefits received, so no comparisons can be made. The other benefits listed by the respondents included the following:

- Matching RRSP contributions to \$4,000 maximum
- Deferred profit sharing
- Compressed work week
- Parking subsidy
- Free banking
- Personal growth and wellness account (\$1,000 per year)
- 12 flex days a year
- Fitness club membership reimbursement
- Interest-free computer-purchase loan
- Reimbursement for half of personal computing purchases (up to \$600)

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## Conclusion

The median salary of the STC members who participated in this Alberta survey was about 8 percent higher than the median Alberta income reported by the 2005 STC International survey (Figure 1). However, this increase may be due to the differences in methodology and timing between the two surveys (Table 1).

Thank you to all the STC Alberta members who took the time to participate in this survey. The high response rate indicates that the membership is comfortable participating in a survey hosted by an external site. This high response rate also enables more detailed and meaningful calculations, such as percentiles and cross-tabulations.

The author would also like to thank Ian Hawkins, former STC Alberta Executive member and technology adviser-at-large for recommending SurveyMonkey. It was not only economical, but greatly simplified the survey design, delivery, and analysis. In addition, the author is especially grateful to Ken Schatzke, STC Alberta Past President, for reviewing the analysis with his characteristic meticulous attention to detail and rapid turnaround time. Finally, *SuperScript* Editor Kate Christie generously expanded her duties to edit this report.

It is the author's hope that the Alberta survey will become an annual event. However, this survey, like all local STC offerings, is only made possible through the contributions of time and effort by member volunteers. If you are interested in seeing the results of the 2007 Alberta survey, and have an aptitude for statistics, we encourage you to consider volunteering as the 2007 survey coordinator.