

13 Ombudsman Salaries, 1989

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The Corporate Ombudsman Association Research Committee did a salary survey of about fifty ombudsmen in the spring of 1989, and included questions on salary, scope of work, years of experience, etc. Various other ombuds associations have done similar surveys.

Corporate ombudsmen primarily serve employees and managers, although some serve government contractors, franchisers, and others. University ombudsmen serve faculty, staff, students. Classic ombudsmen serve citizens and newspaper ombudsmen serve readers. Patient ombudsmen and nursing home ombudsmen typically serve only patients although some also serve employees. The employers range from high tech through defense contracting, health care, manufacturing, government, research, food distribution, insurance, educational institutions, newspapers, transportation, financial and other enterprises. Some practitioners work part-time; more work full-time in the function. They serve a wide variety of private and public enterprises, ranging in size from about 1000 people to over 150,000. The ombudsman profession is well integrated by gender, and there is an increasing number of minority practitioners. Ombudsmanry is also extremely well integrated by profession and previous education of practitioner; ombudsmen come from a very wide range of backgrounds. There are thousands of ombudsmen of all kinds in North America.

Salaries ranged widely in the group of fifty corporate ombudsmen studied. A quarter earned under \$45,000; thirty-seven percent earned over \$75,000; a fifth earned over \$100,000; there is no distinctive mode. Full-time university and college ombudsmen are paid in a similar, slightly lower range; about a tenth in a recent survey earned over \$70,000. Newspaper ombudsmen are in the range of university and college practitioners. Available data indicate that the range of salaries for patient representatives (patient ombudsmen) is about 50% lower than the range for corporate ombudsmen. Nursing home ombudsmen are also paid less; of more importance, a great many are part-time or volunteer.

The chief predictor of the salary of a corporate ombudsman appears to be the previous salary of the given practitioner; although we did not collect data exactly on this point, the inference is clear. Salaries in our group vary directly and strongly by years of service with the given company. Only about ten per cent of the practitioners in this group have been with their employer fewer than five years. Three-quarters had been with their employers for ten or more years, forty per cent for over twenty years. Clearly employers are most likely to choose trusted, long term employees as ombudsmen and then pay in direct relation to years of service.

We believe these data may be useful to ombudsmen, to know how their salaries compare with others. We hope these data may also assist employers who are analyzing equity within their own salary structures, and to employers setting up new programs, as they seek to define the costs of the ombudsman function. The reader may also be interested in early cost-effectiveness analysis of ombudsman offices now underway by the Corporate Ombudsman Association Research Committee and colleagues. These beginning studies suggest that ombudsman offices of various types recover their costs (salaries plus other expenses), at least one-fold and in some cases by a factor of three or four or more.