



MYNDORE
EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Compensation Benchmarks and Trends for UK & EMEA in 2026

Compensation benchmarking involves comparing organisational pay structures against market standards to ensure competitiveness, equity, and alignment with economic conditions. For 2026, data from recent surveys and forecasts indicate stabilising salary growth amid economic uncertainty, softening labour markets, and regulatory pressures like the EU Pay Transparency Directive (effective June 2026), which mandates pay equity reporting across Europe. UK-specific trends show similar moderation, influenced by National Living Wage (NLW) hikes and inflation forecasts of 2-2.1%. Overall, expect 3-3.7% average pay increases, with variability by sector (e.g., higher in tech and healthcare, lower in retail). Equity and variable pay will dominate executive packages, while base salaries remain restrained.

These insights are drawn from 2025-2026 salary guides and economic forecasts, reflecting data up to Q3 2025. Projections are estimates and may shift with macroeconomic changes, such as GDP growth (forecast at 1.2% for UK in 2026).

Key Trends for 2026

- **Salary Growth Moderation:** UK pay awards are projected at 3-3.99% for most organisations, down from 2025 highs, with 52% of employers targeting this range. In broader EMEA, expect 3-5% for non-promotional roles, normalizing after post-pandemic spikes (e.g., 5-6.5% in 2024). Promotions could yield 21-28% jumps, highest in France.
- **Minimum Wage Impacts:** UK's NLW rises to £12.71/hour (4.1% increase), equating to ~£26,416 annually for a 40-hour week, pressuring low-wage sectors like retail (4% forecast rise) and hospitality (3.6%). This may compress entry-level gradients, with graduate starting salaries (~£25,000-£30,000 in finance/accounting) nearing NLW levels after taxes.

- **Executive Focus:** Equity (stock/options) will comprise 50%+ of total pay, with bonuses near target (90-109% payout) but under pressure from profitability metrics over growth. Base salary increases: 3.2-3.6% across Europe, stable into 2026. AI-savvy roles in EMEA tech may see premiums of 10-20%.
- **Regional & Sector Variability:** Pay remains location-sensitive; e.g., London commands 20-30% premiums over regional UK averages. In EMEA, Germany/Netherlands forecast ~3.1%, while healthcare/biotech sees €80,000-€150,000 for specialists.
- **Transparency & Equity:** 65% of UK job postings include salaries (highest in EMEA), but compliance with EU directives will drive benchmarking tools' adoption. Benefits like pensions (8% minimum in UK) and hybrid perks gain emphasis over cash.

Sample Salary Benchmarks for 2026 (Projected Starting Ranges)

Benchmarks below are aggregated from Robert Half's 2026 UK Salary Guide (covering 24 cities, based on 350,000+ vacancies) and Kienbaum/Ravio EMEA forecasts. These are medians for mid-level roles (3-5 years experience); adjust +20-50% for executives/seniors. Data is UK-focused with EMEA comparatives; tech/healthcare skew higher due to skills demand.

Key Trends for 2026

TECH / ENGINEERING / DATA

Role	Base Salary (UK, 2026)	Typical Bonus	Typical Equity/LTI	Approx. Total Comp (T)	Notes (UK & EMEA)
Software Engineer (Mid-level)	£55k–£90k	5–12%	£0–£10k	£58k–£110k	London adds +10–15%; EMEA ranges vary heavily (DACH higher, Southern E)
Senior Software Engineer	£80k–£120k	10–15%	£10k–£25k	£100k–£160k	Equity more common at larger tech firms / scaleups.
Data Scientist / ML Engineer	£70k–£115k	10–20%	£10k–£30k	£95k–£165k	AI/ML premium significant; EMEA tech hubs (Berlin, Amsterdam) comparabl
Cybersecurity Specialist	£70k–£120k	10–20%	£5k–£20k	£90k–£160k	One of the biggest pay-pressure categories.
Engineering Manager	£90k–£140k	12–20%	£15k–£40k	£120k–£200k	Equity commonplace in SaaS / fintech scaleups.

FINANCE / ACCOUNTING / RISK

Role	Base Salary (UK, 2026)	Bonus	Equity/LTI	Total Comp	Notes
FP&A Analyst / Senior Analyst	£50k–£75k	8–15%	£0–£5k	£55k–£88k	Higher in FS, lower in industry roles.
Finance Business Partner	£60k–£90k	10–20%	£5k–£20k	£72k–£125k	UK & NL similar; DACH region slightly higher.
Financial Controller	£75k–£120k	15–25%	£10k–£30k	£100k–£170k	Top quartile strong in London/FS.
Risk / Compliance Manager	£70k–£110k	10–20%	£5k–£20k	£85k–£145k	Strong premiums for regulatory, AML, data-privacy.
Internal Audit Manager	£70k–£100k	10–20%	Low equity	£80k–£120k	Banking pays the highest.

MARKETING / GROWTH / PRODUCT

Role	Base Salary	Bonus	Equity	Total Comp	Notes
Digital Marketing Manager	£40k–£60k	8–12%	£0–£5k	£43k–£68k	Analytics skills drive premiums.
Growth Marketing Lead	£55k–£85k	10–20%	£5k–£15k	£70k–£115k	Strong demand in SaaS, fintech.
Product Manager (Mid-level)	£65k–£95k	10–20%	£10k–£25k	£85k–£135k	Equity is common; EU tech hubs very competitive.
Senior Product Manager	£90k–£130k	15–25%	£20k–£50k	£130k–£210k	One of the strongest total-comp growth roles.

LEGAL / COMPLIANCE / REGULATORY

Role	Base Salary	Bonus	Equity/LTI	Total Comp	Notes
Legal Counsel (Mid-level)	£65k–£95k	10–15%	£5k–£15k	£80k–£125k	Data-protection specialists command premiums.
Senior Legal Counsel	£95k–£140k	15–25%	£10k–£40k	£130k–£200k	Tech & FS significantly higher.
Head of Compliance	£90k–£150k	20–40%	£20k–£60k	£140k–£250k	London FS is a comp hotspot.

HR / OPERATIONS / PEOPLE

Role	Base Salary	Bonus	Equity	Total Comp	Notes
HR Advisor / Generalist	£35k–£50k	5–10%	Low	£37k–£55k	Less equity; stable but moderate growth.
HR Business Partner	£55k–£75k	8–15%	£0–£10k	£60k–£90k	London +15% typical.
Head of People / People Lead	£75k–£110k	10–20%	£5k–£20k	£90k–£140k	Equity more likely in scaleups.

EMEA: Adjustments to UK Benchmarks

To use these UK benchmarks in wider EMEA markets:

Region	Adjustment vs UK	Notes
DACH (Germany, Switzerland, Austria)	+10% to +35%	CH much higher; DE competitive for tech.
Netherlands	Similar to UK (London minus ~1	Tech salaries strong; bonuses smaller.
Nordics	Similar / slightly higher	Equity more prevalent in tech.
France	–10% to –20%	Paris tech = near UK levels.
Southern Europe (Spain/Italy/Portugal)	–20% to –35%	Lower base, but strong demand for senior tec
CEE (Poland, Czechia, Hungary)	–20% to –40%	Highly variable; tech exceptions.

Macro Constraints for 2026 (important for interpreting comp)

- UK salary-increase budgets: **~3.6% forecast** (WTW 2025–26).
- EMEA tech salary inflation: **~5% median**, but spiking for AI/cyber/ML roles (Ravio, 2026).
- UK real-wage growth remains low (ECA International), meaning **nominal pay rises ≠ real increases**.
- Strong premiums for specialised skills: AI/ML, cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, data analytics.
- Equity becoming more common in tech, fintech, biotech; less so in traditional sectors.

Sources: Robert Half UK 2026 Guide (real placement data); Ravio 2026 Trends (European tech); Kienbaum Forecast (20+ countries). For localized reports, contact providers like Robert Walters or Brightmine (UK-focused, 1.5M data points).

Recommendations for Benchmarking

- **Tools:** Use real-time platforms like Pave (AI-driven, 8,000+ companies) or Ravio (UK/EMEA integration) for custom filters by role/location. Avoid free sources like Glassdoor for accuracy—replacement costs (£40,000 avg) outweigh tool investments (~£5,000/year).
- **Best Practices:** Annual reviews via HRIS; target 3% budget for increases; prioritize variable pay for retention. For executives, tie 50%+ to ESG/performance metrics amid scrutiny.
- **Caveats:** Forecasts assume 3% wage growth; inflation or recession could trim to 2.5%. Sector data (e.g., tech vs. manufacturing) varies 1-2%. For precise equity modeling, consult Mercer or ERI databases.