HireBench

The 2026 Salary and Hiring Guide

Real US pay benchmarks and hiring data for people who want to hire well and get paid what they are worth.

2026 EDITION

Salary ranges by role

Pay by city

Hiring benchmarks

Negotiation tips

START HERE

Whether you are hiring or job hunting, this guide is for you.

Pay moved a lot over the last two years, and both sides of the table are working with out of date numbers. Employers guess at what a role should cost and lose good candidates to a low offer. Candidates accept the first number they hear because they have nothing to compare it to. This guide fixes both problems with real, sourced data you can act on today.

44 days
Average time to fill a role in the US

74%
Of employers say they have made a bad hire

66%
Of candidates who negotiate get what they ask for

What is inside

- **Salary benchmarks** for 24 roles across tech, finance, healthcare, marketing, design, and operations.
- **Pay by city** for San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Austin, Boston, and Seattle.
- **Hiring benchmarks** every employer should know: time to hire, cost per hire, and the real cost of a bad hire.
- **Salary negotiation tips** for candidates, each backed by a number.
- **How a recruiter changes the math** on both speed and quality.

How to read the salary numbers. Ranges come from the Robert Half 2026 Salary Guide (a recruiter view of low to high pay) and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (median wages, May 2024 release). They measure slightly different groups, so treat them as two honest reference points rather than one exact figure. Actual pay always depends on company size, industry, and location.

What roles pay in 2026

US base salary, before bonus or equity. Robert Half rows show a low, midpoint, and high figure by experience. BLS rows show a single median wage.

Technology

Role	Low	Midpoint	High	Source
Software Engineer	$109,250	$142,000	$175,500	Robert Half 2026
Data Analyst	$96,250	$117,250	$138,500	Robert Half 2026
Product Manager	$92,750	$119,250	$139,250	Robert Half 2026

Cross-check: BLS median for Software Developers is $133,080 and for Data Scientists $112,590 (May 2024). Senior and lead engineers sit at the top of the range and above once equity is included.

Finance and accounting

Role	Low	Midpoint	High	Source
Financial Analyst	$65,250	$80,000	$92,250	Robert Half 2026
Accountant	—	$81,680	—	BLS median 2024
Finance Manager	—	$161,700	—	BLS median 2024

Controllers fall under the BLS Financial Managers group and commonly run $120,000 to $220,000 by company size. Investment-side analysts earn more than generalist financial analysts (BLS median $101,350).

Healthcare

Role	Low	Median	High	Source
Registered Nurse	—	$93,600	—	BLS median 2024
Nurse Practitioner	—	$129,210	—	BLS median 2024
Healthcare Administrator	—	$117,960	—	BLS median 2024
Medical Assistant	—	$44,200	—	BLS median 2024

Healthcare wages are strongest in the BLS data, so we show median only. Nursing pay in particular swings widely by state and shift.

Marketing

Role	Low	Midpoint	High	Source
Marketing Manager	$90,250	$108,000	$127,500	Robert Half 2026
Digital Marketing Manager	$80,750	$100,750	$115,250	Robert Half 2026
Content Manager	$72,500	$92,750	$113,500	Robert Half 2026
SEO Specialist	$55,000	$70,000	$85,000	Market estimate

SEO Specialist is a market estimate and varies widely with seniority and industry. Senior marketing leaders sit well above the manager ranges shown (BLS marketing manager median $161,030).

Design and creative

Role	Low	Midpoint	High	Source
UX / UI Designer	$96,500	$119,000	$142,250	Robert Half 2026
Product Designer	$98,250	$128,000	$158,500	Robert Half 2026
Design Lead / Creative Director	$102,000	$133,250	$162,500	Robert Half 2026
Graphic Designer	$52,000	$67,250	$79,500	Robert Half 2026

Operations

Role	Low	Mid / Median	High	Source
Operations Manager	—	$102,950	—	BLS median 2024
Operations Analyst	—	$91,290	—	BLS median 2024
Supply Chain Manager	$100,000	$120,000	$140,000	Market estimate
Office Manager	$55,250	$60,500	$66,750	Robert Half 2026

The BLS Logisticians median is $80,880, which understates a full supply chain manager role, so we show the typical manager band instead.

Using these ranges. If you are hiring, budget to the midpoint to stay competitive and keep the high figure in reserve for standout candidates. If you are job hunting, the midpoint is your anchor and the high figure is where strong experience and a good negotiation can take you.

Where the role sits changes the number

The same job pays differently across the country, mostly tracking the local cost of living. Below is the cost of living index for six major hiring markets, where the US average equals 100.

City	Cost of living index	Versus US average
New York (Manhattan)	161.2	About 61% above average
San Francisco	143.8	About 44% above average
Boston	129.5	About 30% above average
Seattle	119.3	About 19% above average
Chicago	117.0	About 17% above average
Austin	102.4	About 2% above average

Source: ERI Economic Research Institute, Cost of Living Index by City, January 2025.

Important. Cost of living gaps are bigger than actual pay gaps. Employers rarely raise pay by the full difference. As a rule of thumb, real base pay premiums for these metros run about half to two thirds of the cost of living gap. So a San Francisco role tends to pay roughly 15% to 30% more than the national figure for the same job, not 44% more. Use this index to understand direction and scale, not as an exact pay multiplier.

2x

Remote roles let you hire national talent at a rate between local and coastal pay

Austin

Near the national average on cost, a big reason it keeps drawing companies and talent

NYC

The widest gap between cost of living and what most roles actually add in pay

The real cost and speed of hiring

Before you post a role, it helps to know what good looks like. These are the benchmarks that decide whether a hire helps or hurts your bottom line.

44 days
Average time to fill a role, an all time high (AMS and Josh Bersin, 2023)

$4,700
Average cost per hire (SHRM, 2022)

30%+
A bad hire costs at least 30% of that person's first year pay (US Dept of Labor)

Time to hire by field

Field	Typical days to hire
Technology	33 days
Finance	45 days
Healthcare	49 days

Source: DHI Hiring Indicators, historical benchmark. Treat as directional, since hiring speed has slowed further since.

What a bad hire really costs

- **At least 30% of first year earnings** per bad hire, the figure most often cited by the US Department of Labor.
- **50% to 75% of salary** to replace an entry level employee, rising past **200%** for an executive (SHRM).
- **About $17,000** is the average reported loss from one bad hire, and **$240,000 or more** for a senior leader (CareerBuilder).
- **74% of employers** say they have hired the wrong person at least once (CareerBuilder).

> **Why so many hires miss.** A study of more than 20,000 hires found **46% of new hires fail within 18 months**, and only 11% of those failures were about skills. The other 89% came down to attitude and fit (Leadership IQ). Screening for the right person, not just the right resume, is where most of the cost is saved.

FOR EMPLOYERS

How a recruiter changes the math

Put the numbers together and the case for help is simple. The average role takes 44 days to fill, costs about $4,700 to hire for, and carries a real risk of a bad hire that costs at least a third of first year pay. A recruiter works against every one of those numbers at once.

- **Faster.** A pre-vetted talent pool and parallel sourcing cut the weeks a role sits open, which is weeks of lost output and manager time.
- **Better matched.** Screening for attitude and fit, not just skills on paper, targets the exact thing behind most failed hires.
- **Lower risk.** The cost and effort of the early search shifts off your desk, and a replacement guarantee protects you if a placement does not work out.
- **Market aware.** A recruiter knows the live rate for a role and stops you losing a strong candidate to an offer that was never going to land.

> **One more number worth knowing.** About **55% of employees accept a counteroffer** when they try to resign (Achievers). If you are relying on counteroffers to keep people, you are managing retention too late. Hiring right the first time is cheaper than buying people back.

Hiring soon?

HireBench sources, screens, and shortlists the right people so your team can hire faster and with less risk. Tell us the role and we will do the search.

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Six ways to negotiate a better offer

The gap between what you accept and what the role was willing to pay is often thousands of dollars. Each tip below is paired with a real number.

1. **Always ask, because most people do not**
   Around 55% of candidates never negotiate. Of those who do, **66% get what they asked for**. Asking is the single biggest lever, and it is free (Pew Research).

2. **Anchor with market data**
   Walk in with a role specific range from this guide. Candidates who anchor to researched figures secured an **average increase of about 18.8%** over the first offer.

3. **Use posted pay ranges**
   Where salary ranges are public, aim for the top of the band. Pay transparency laws have measurably lifted posted pay, by **about 3.6%** in one state study.

4. **Negotiate total compensation**
   When base salary is capped, trade for a signing bonus, equity, extra time off, or an early review. Flexibility often lives outside the base number.

5. **Do not count yourself out**
   The old idea that some people just do not negotiate is fading. In recent graduate data **54% of women negotiated versus 44% of men**. The only real mistake is not asking.

6. **Negotiate before you accept, and get it in writing**
   Your leverage peaks between the offer and your yes. Once you have verbally accepted, the room to move disappears. Confirm the final package in writing.

Looking for your next role?

HireBench recruits for real companies across tech, finance, healthcare, marketing, design, and operations. Browse open roles and apply in minutes.

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REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this guide is drawn from the sources below. Salary figures are indicative benchmarks and vary by employer, experience, and location.

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Hire pre-vetted talent without the hiring headache, or find your next role with a recruiter in your corner.

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