



# 2026 GLOBAL HIRING GUIDE: IN-HOUSE LEGAL

Salary data and hiring considerations, country by country



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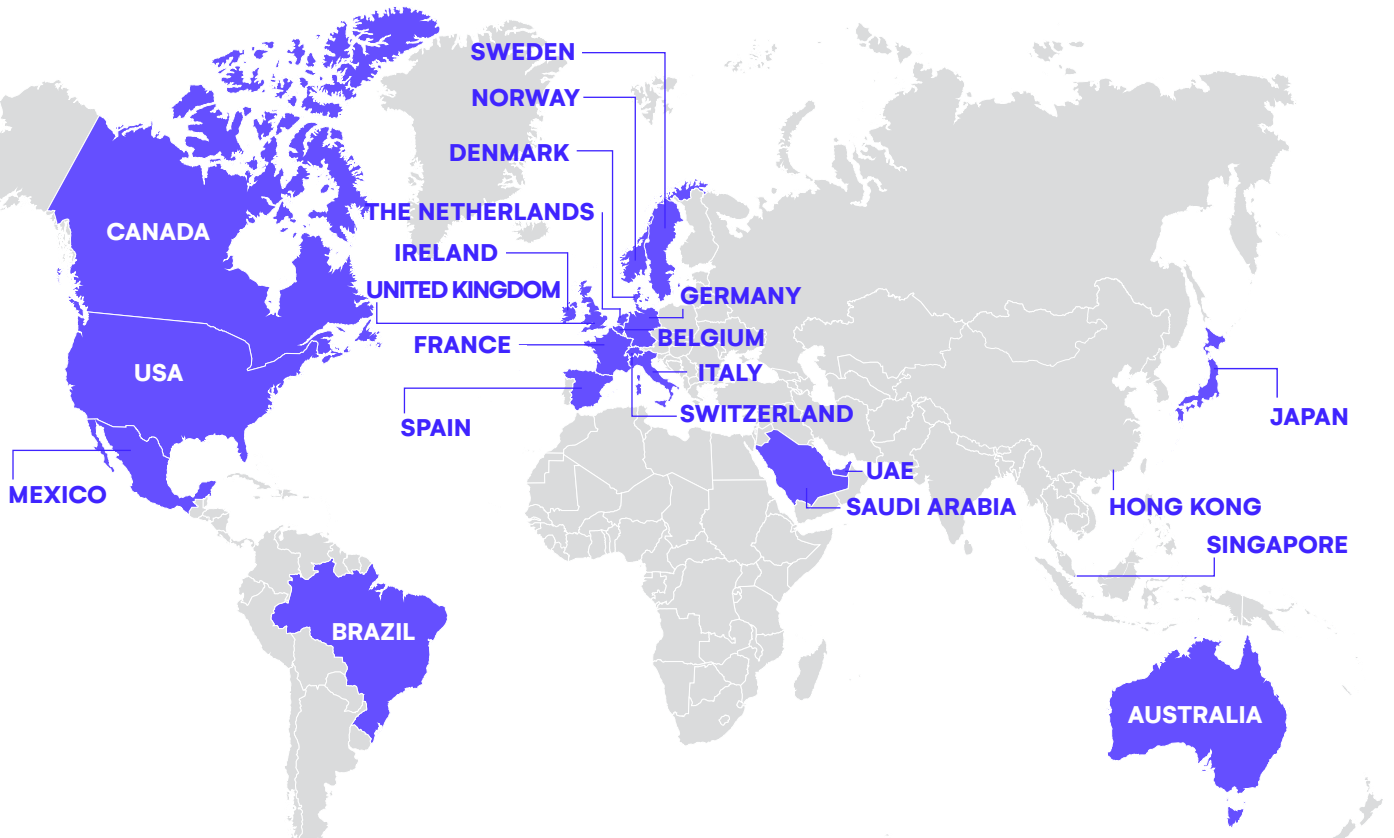
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# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Leonid's Global Hiring Guide for in-house legal roles.

As we step into 2026, in-house legal teams continue to evolve in response to a rapidly shifting global business landscape. In this guide, we begin by examining the key macro trends shaping how legal functions operate today, before moving into a country by country overview designed to support organisations hiring internationally. For each jurisdiction, we provide current salary ranges, plus cultural and practical hiring considerations that are essential for attracting the right legal talent.

**\*As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges). For bespoke advice on salary bandings, please get in contact with Phil Redhead, Head of Legal at Leonid Group, directly.**

### Team building (or re-building)

After several years of cautious hiring and structural recalibration – particularly among large legal departments – 2026 is bringing renewed momentum. Many enterprise teams with 40+ lawyers have now completed their post pandemic restructures, creating space for smaller and mid sized legal teams to rebuild. Demand is rising for mid senior talent who can operate broadly across commercial, regulatory and risk oriented matters.

### A return to first hires/Sole Counsel roles

Growth stage companies that previously deprioritised legal hiring are now re evaluating the importance of early in house capability. As funding stabilises and organisations scale internationally, first in house and Sole Counsel roles are returning to the market, often with higher PQE expectations than in past years. Businesses are increasingly willing to invest in more senior legal hires to build solid



foundations for governance, compliance and contract management.

### **Complex regulatory environments**

Regulatory frameworks have expanded significantly across all sectors. This trend shows no sign of slowing. The upside is that complexity is helping elevate the strategic importance of the legal function, creating more specialised opportunities and greater influence at Board level.

We're also seeing notable growth in markets that historically had smaller in house footprints. Demand for legal talent is increasing across South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, reflecting the globalisation of regulatory expectations and supply chain due diligence requirements.

### **Talent Management, Recruitment and Retention**

One of the biggest hiring challenges persists: private practice salary inflation. Law firm remuneration continues to climb, especially at the junior and mid levels, pulling market expectations upward and applying pressure to in house salary structures.

In response, many organisations are focusing

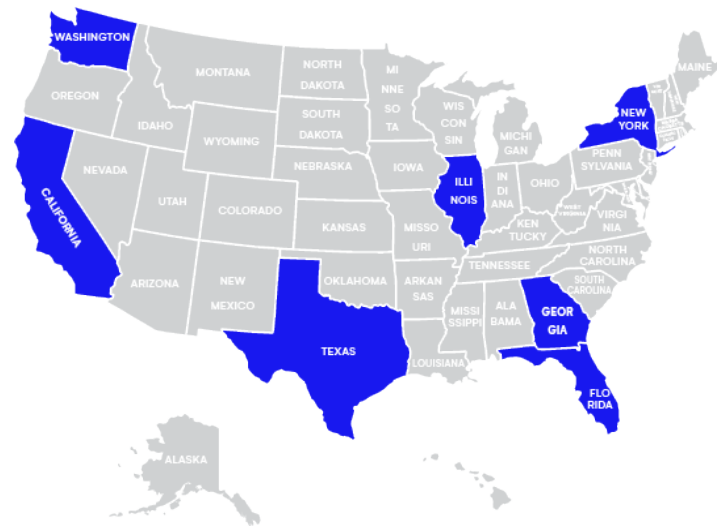
on their broader value proposition, offering hybrid working arrangements, more structured progression pathways, performance linked bonuses, and earlier access to long term incentive plans. These elements have become essential for attracting and retaining high performing in-house lawyers, particularly in markets where competition for specialist talent is acute.

Demand remains especially strong for lawyers with expertise in ESG regulation, AI/technology governance, data and cyber, investigations, and regulatory compliance. Simultaneously, the push for improved diversity, equity and inclusion continues to shape hiring priorities globally.

At Leonid, we support this through a proactive headhunt model and our [LeonidLive](#) video shortlisting platform, designed to widen candidate reach, reduce bias, and save an average of 10 hours per hire for busy General Counsels and Legal Directors — a meaningful advantage at a time when legal leaders are already stretched.

**Please note that the salary guides contained within the following country-specific pages are based on placements we have made over the past twelve months and other local benchmarking data. As with all salary guides, it's important to understand the factors that impact where on the range a particular role should sit; this includes things like sector pay differentials, scope of role and seniority within a job title (which may sometimes include an understanding of PQE ranges).**





# USA

With a GDP of more than USD\$23 trillion, the United States is a leader in several key industries, including technology, oil and gas and renewable energy. The country has one of the largest tech markets in the world, with four cities ranking in the top 10 for global fintech, including Silicon Valley (#1) and Boston (#7).

The United States workforce serves as the backbone of its economy. Employment rates have been steadily rising, with the notable exception of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the phenomenon coined as the “Great Resignation,” prompting workers to contemplate the trajectory of their lives.

We are now seeing a re-stabilisation of the employment market, and the Corporate Governance world is no exception.

The US is an exciting place to work and to do business with, but in terms of hiring, it does bring a degree of complexity due to a number of stringent labour laws.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 6*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Washington
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English
<b>POPULATION</b>	335 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Varies; usually weekly or bi-weekly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	US Dollars (USD)
<b>VAT</b>	Nil



## Hiring Considerations

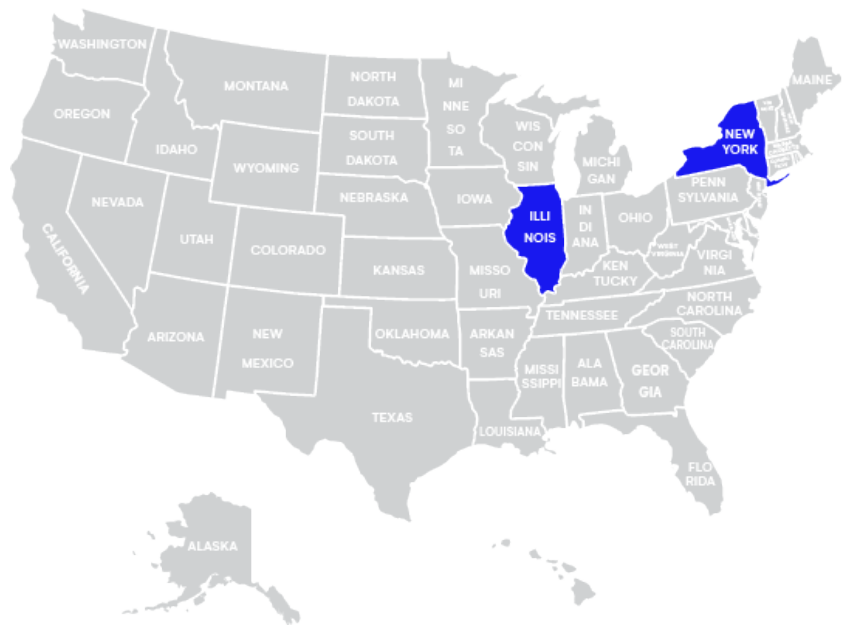
- Most companies in the U.S. operate on an ‘at-will’ basis. This means that employees can leave their jobs at any time, for any reason. Companies can terminate their employees’ service – with a few exceptions – without giving notice or providing redundancy pay.
- Many companies do give notice as a courtesy, but the law does not require it. Some companies also negotiate severance pay, especially for higher-level executives.
- The practice of at-will employment means signing formal employment contracts is not a common practice in the U.S. Some companies use them, especially for key executives or other important members of a firm. However, contracts are not standard.
- The standard workweek in the U.S. consists of 40 hours — eight hours per day, five days per week. However, variations on this schedule are common.
- There is no legal requirement to give paid holidays; however, on average, US workers will take 10 vacation days per year.

## Cultural Considerations

- In the US, business culture places a strong emphasis on equality and non-discrimination. This is reinforced by numerous laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin in any aspect of employment.
- The ‘hustle mentality’ is a prominent aspect of the work culture in the United States. It encompasses a mindset that emphasises relentless effort, ambition, and a constant drive for success. It is deeply ingrained in the American work ethic, with many professionals adopting a “work hard, play hard” approach to their careers.

**“The US remains one of the most significant and influential markets for our in-house legal division in 2026. Over the past year, we’ve continued to support major searches across both coasts, while also delivering highly specialised mandates in niche or geographically challenging locations. Demand across the country remains exceptionally strong, with companies seeking lawyers who can balance deep subject-matter expertise with agility and commercial impact.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group



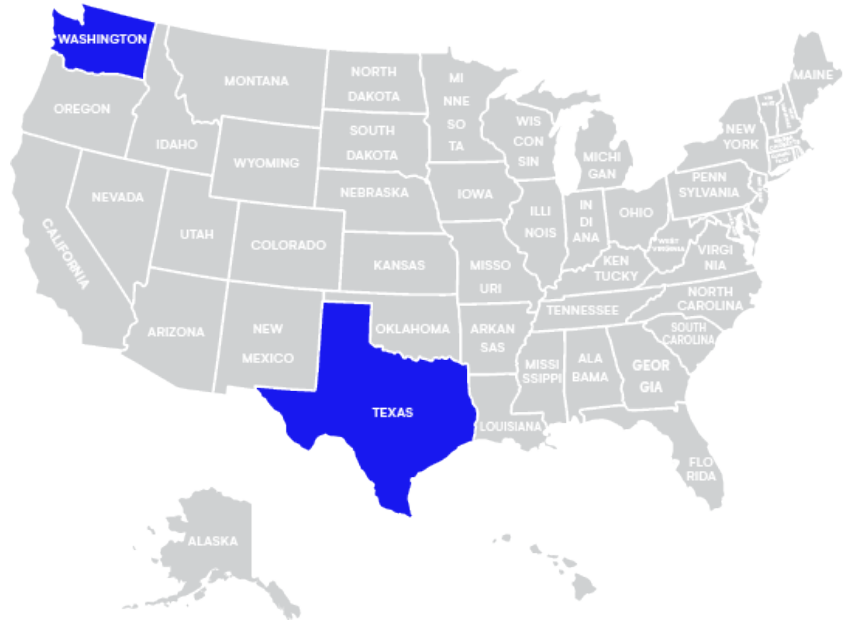
## NEW YORK (NEW YORK CITY)

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$130,000 – \$185,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$145,000 – \$240,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$215,000 – \$350,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$250,000 – \$425,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$300,000 – \$650,000+

## ILLINOIS (CHICAGO)

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$115,000 – \$165,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$135,000 – \$225,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$195,000 – \$275,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$200,000 – \$295,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$275,000 – \$450,000+





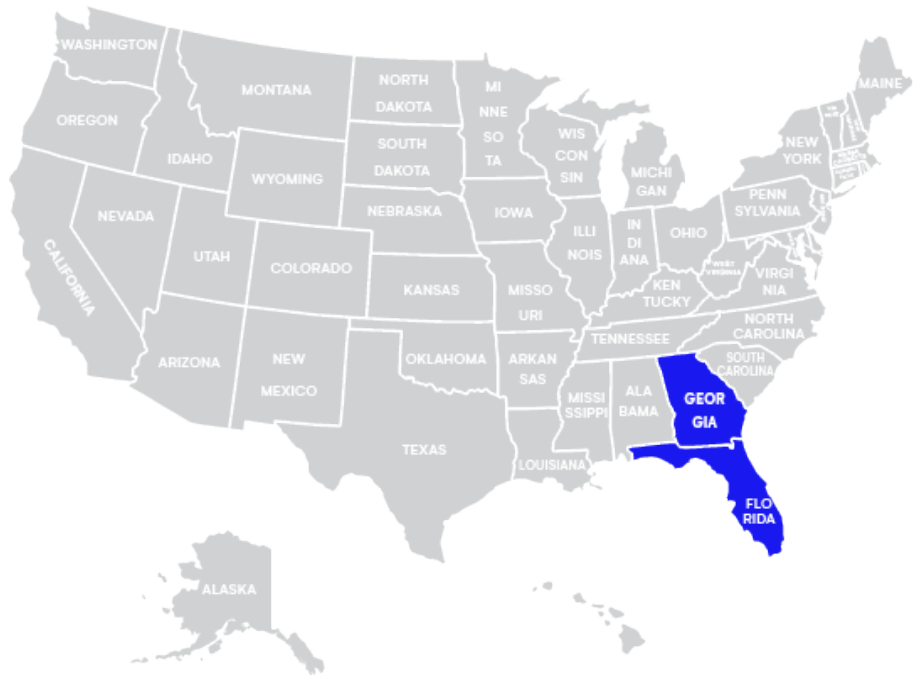
## WASHINGTON DC

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$125,000 - \$175,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$145,000 - \$230,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$210,000 - \$300,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$250,000 - \$325,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$300,000 - \$500,000+

## TEXAS (HOUSTON, DALLAS, FORT WORTH)

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$110,000 - \$155,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$125,000 - \$190,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$180,000 - \$260,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$200,000 - \$285,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$250,000 - \$400,000+





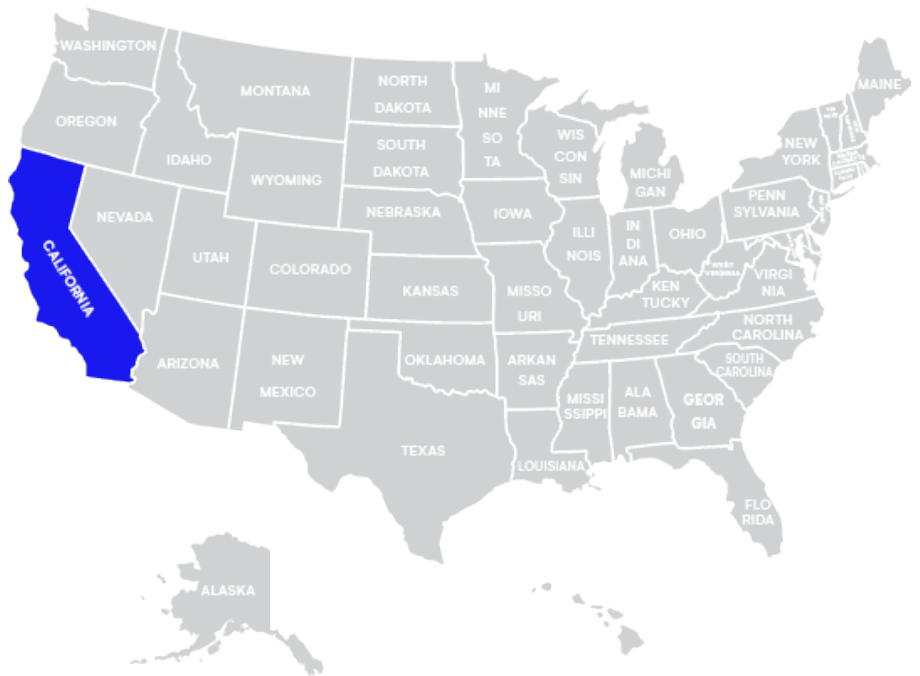
### FLORIDA (MIAMI, TAMPA)

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$95,000 – \$155,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$120,000 – \$190,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$170,000 – \$235,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$175,000 – \$265,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$220,000 – \$385,000+

### GEORGIA (ATLANTA)

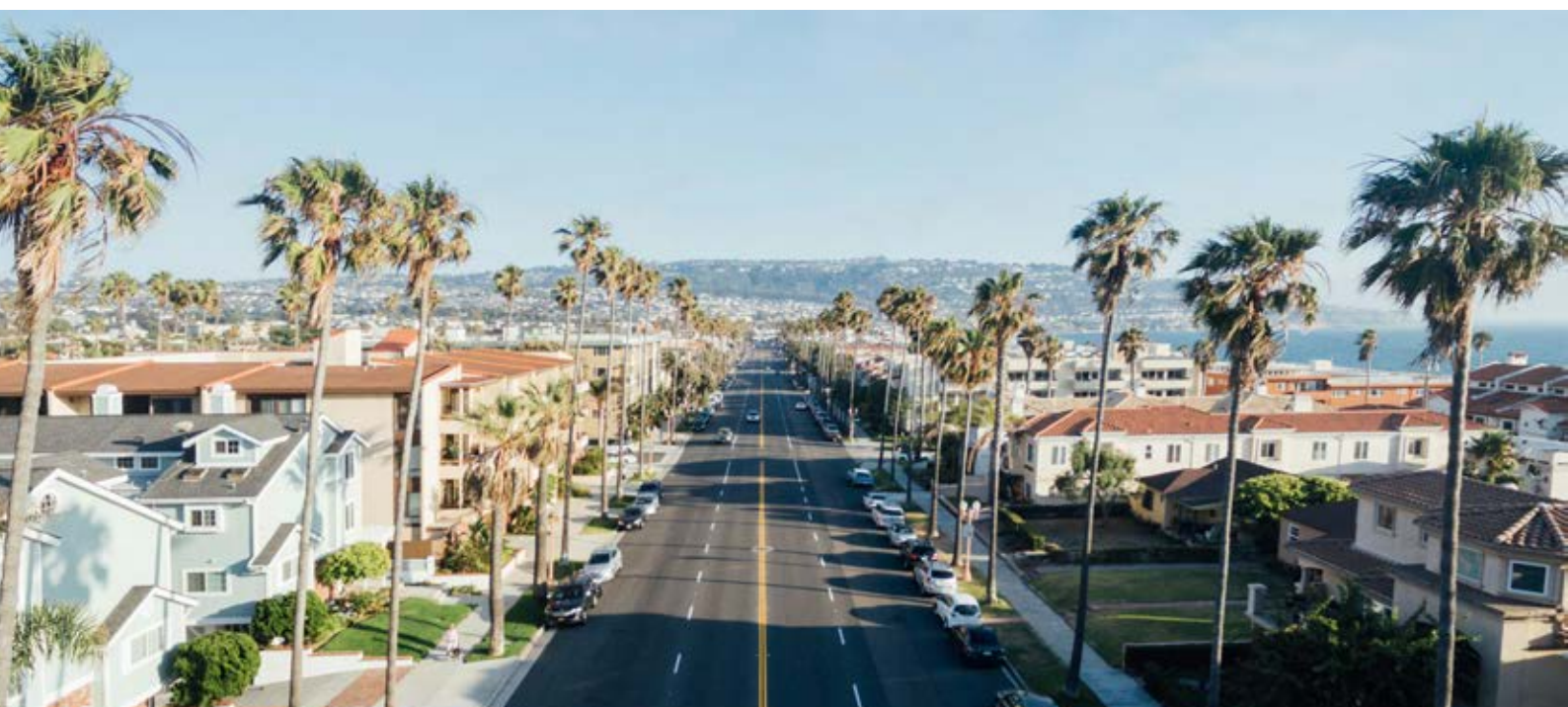
TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$100,000 – \$165,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$115,000 – \$195,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$170,000 – \$245,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$180,000 – \$275,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$240,000 – \$395,000+





## CALIFORNIA (SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES)

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$125,000 – \$180,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$140,000 – \$240,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$205,000 – \$325,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$220,000 – \$340,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$290,000 – \$550,000+



# CANADA

Canada has a robust economic base, low taxes, abundant natural resources, and a stable political climate. These factors create an environment for international businesses to flourish. When it comes to ease of payment for small to medium-sized businesses, Canada has one of the lowest tax burdens among the G7 countries.

Canada's economy is also one of the most resilient in the world, with a GDP of \$1.98 trillion in 2023.

Hiring in Canada has become increasingly popular among foreign companies as the country offers a diverse and highly skilled labour force.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 23*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Ottawa
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English, French
<b>POPULATION</b>	40.1 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Bi - weekly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Canadian Dollars (CAD)
<b>VAT</b>	5%



## Hiring Considerations

- Canada is officially a bilingual country, home to both English and French speakers. Fluency in English will be enough to navigate around the vast majority of Canadian cities and provinces.
- Each province in Canada has its own employment standards legislation that outlines minimum requirements for employment relationships. These standards cover areas such as hours of work, overtime pay, vacation entitlement, public holidays and termination notice.

## Cultural Considerations

- Canadian workplaces are typically friendly and non-hierarchical compared with other nations, and there is a strong emphasis on harmonious and social environments. Therefore, friendly chatter — or small talk — is very much the norm when meeting Canadian workers.
- Punctuality and good manners are both expected and highly valued.

*“Canada remains a consistently strong and steadily expanding market for in-house legal recruitment in 2026. While not as high-volume as the US, it continues to offer one of the most stable and well-developed in-house legal ecosystems globally. Toronto remains the dominant hub — particularly for financial services, fintech, and large corporates — but we’re also seeing increasing demand across Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary as organisations grow their legal capability outside of Ontario.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE CANADA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$90,000 – \$148,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$128,000 – \$200,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$158,000 – \$225,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$190,000 – \$300,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$250,000 – \$585,000

# BRAZIL

As the largest and most populous country in South America and the eighth-largest economy in the world, Brazil is an attractive place for companies looking to expand globally. Brazil does however present some challenges for international companies, with strong employment laws in place that favour local employees.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 124*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Brasília
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Portuguese
<b>POPULATION</b>	216.4 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Brazilian Real (R\$)
<b>VAT</b>	VAT on Sales and Services are PIS/COFINS — at 9.25%, & Municipal Service Tax (ISS) with rates varying from 2 to 5% depending on the Municipality in which the company is located.



## Hiring Considerations

- In addition to regular pay, employees in Brazil are entitled to a 13th-month salary paid in 2 instalments each year; usually split across November and December. The 13th-month payment is a legal benefit and is not part of the base salary.
- Unions and collective bargaining agreements are common in Brazil.
- The working week is 44 hours, which can be divided across the five weekdays or can be eight hours Monday through Friday with a half-day on Saturdays. When employees work overtime, they should receive 1.5 times their usual hourly wages or double their usual pay if it is a holiday or Sunday.
- Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America, and Spanish — the prevailing language throughout the rest of the continent — is not a very common second language for Brazilians. It is expected that employees in Brazil will speak a good level of Portuguese.

## Cultural Considerations

- Despite the friendly atmosphere among teams, there are strict hierarchies that are routinely followed when it comes to decision-making. Typically, only the most senior leaders will make the important decisions, and often without consulting more junior colleagues.
- Brazilians often prefer working with either people they know, or, with someone who has been recommended — which means it can take time for an unknown outsider to gain trust.
- Brazilians are notoriously ‘time fluid’, so it’s not unusual for meetings to start late or for deadlines to be extended.

**“Brazil continues to be one of the most interesting and fast-developing in-house legal markets in 2026. While we still haven’t seen the dramatic junior-level salary inflation experienced in the US or parts of Western Europe, the competitive landscape is unquestionably tightening. Demand is rising for lawyers with broad commercial capability and multi-jurisdictional experience, particularly those able to navigate Brazil’s complex regulatory environment while also supporting regional oversight across LATAM.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE BRAZIL

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (R\$)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	R\$ 138,000 – R\$ 212,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	R\$ 195,000 – R\$ 280,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	R\$ 270,000 – R\$ 408,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	R\$ 330,000 – R\$ 453,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	R\$ 395,000 – R\$ 635,000

# MEXICO

Mexico is an increasingly attractive prospect for international businesses who want to move their operations closer to the U.S market, while retaining a competitive cost-base; a practice known as ‘nearshoring’. This has led to a marked increase in recruitment activity in Mexico.

Mexico has also recently implemented new legislation which makes employers responsible for higher ethical standards, especially with respect to supply chain due diligence

*Ease of doing business ranking = 60*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Mexico City
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Spanish
<b>POPULATION</b>	128.5 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly or Bi-Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Mexican Peso (MXN)
<b>VAT</b>	Standard VAT of 16% / 8% reduced at Southern and Northern borders / 0% exports, medicine, milk, wheat, meat and corn and a few agriculture services



## Hiring Considerations

- The standard workweek is 48 hours, with an eight-hour workday
- Overtime: Employees receive 200% of their regular wage for the first nine hours of overtime per week and 300% for any additional hours.
- Bonuses: Employees are entitled to an annual Christmas bonus ('aguinaldo') in mid-December worth 15 days of their salary, though many employers pay four weeks' worth.
- Employers must pay all wages and statutory payments in pesos to a government-designated in-country bank account. If hiring from overseas, it is important to be aware of this as it can cause delays when setting up payroll in Mexico.
- Under Mexican federal labor law, termination and resignation notices are not mandatory. Once your employee has worked for your company for a month, they become an indefinite employee and, except in cases of gross misconduct, are entitled to three months' severance pay.

## Cultural Considerations

- The work culture in Mexico places a significant emphasis on hierarchy and respect for authority; addressing superiors with proper titles and using formal language is expected.
- Mexicans tend to value politeness and diplomacy in their communication styles. Direct criticism or disagreement may be perceived as rude or confrontational, leading to strained relationships.
- The concept of "mañana" (tomorrow) is deeply ingrained in Mexican culture and has implications for punctuality. While punctuality is valued in professional settings, it is not uncommon for appointments and meetings to start a little later than scheduled and for deadlines to have a degree of flexibility.

**“Competition for strong in-house lawyers is rising, especially for those with bi-jurisdictional or multi-market experience across the U.S., LATAM and Europe. As a result, we are beginning to see steady upward pressure on salaries, as employers look to attract and retain talent with the versatility and cultural fluency required to operate in an increasingly international environment. Mexico remains a vibrant, relationship-driven market.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE MEXICO

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (MXN)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	440,000 MXN – 695,000 MXN
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	590,000 MXN – 720,000 MXN
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	600,000 MXN – 1,050,000 MXN
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	1,350,000 MXN – 1,850,000 MXN
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	2,000,000 MXN – 3,000,000 MXN

# UNITED KINGDOM

According to The Global City, the United Kingdom is a ‘global centre of academic excellence.’ 58.5% of the UK’s workforce are educated to at least a degree level, making it one of the most skilled workforces in the world.

It’s been a turbulent few years for the UK politically and economically, following its departure from the European Union. Many talented workers from neighbouring European countries were forced to move away. However, the employment market remains robust, and wages are relatively competitive versus many of its European counterparts.

The UK workforce has seen a notable shift towards remote and hybrid work arrangements due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a high emphasis on employee wellbeing. Environmental sustainability is also growing in importance for both employers and employees.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 8*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	London
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English
<b>POPULATION</b>	68.35 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Pound Sterling (GBP)
<b>VAT</b>	20%



## Hiring Considerations

- The average working week is between 37 and 40 hours.
- Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly popular in recent years and many employees prefer to split their time between an office and working from home.
- Employers are required to offer British workers at least 5.6 weeks of paid leave. This may include public and bank holidays, of which there are eight in the UK. For someone who works full-time, this will equate to 28 days of paid holiday.
- British workers between the ages of 22 and state pension age who earn £10,000 or more per year and usually work in the UK are legally entitled to a pension scheme, provided by their employer.

## Cultural Considerations

- Handshakes are expected when you meet someone for the first time
- Businesses place high importance on good etiquette when it comes to phone and email communication; blunt messages can be interpreted as rudeness
- Workplaces are friendly and dress codes range from casual to formal, depending on the industry and the company's individual culture.

*“We’re pleased to see that the long-anticipated uplift in senior-level hiring within the UK legal market is now firmly materialising in 2026. After a challenging couple of years — where General Counsel and senior legal leaders faced a particularly tight and slow-moving market — the landscape has finally begun to open up. Momentum that started to build in early 2025 has carried forward, and we’re now seeing a far more typical level of senior-level movement across the country.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE UNITED KINGDOM

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	£72,000 – £95,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10PQE)	£90,000 – £155,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	£125,000 – £180,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	£120,000 – £185,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	£140,000 – £275,000+

# IRELAND

With a population of 4.9 million people, Ireland offers a talented, well educated and diverse workforce, with low unemployment rates. This, combined with its modern and flexible employment law framework, creates an alluring business climate for both local and international companies. The top industries here are technology, financial services and pharmaceuticals. However, these sectors often experience skill shortages, so there is a growing trend towards employing more remote and freelance workers.

Many of the world's leading tech companies have set up a base in Ireland, including Facebook, Google and Apple.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 24*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Dublin
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English, Irish
<b>POPULATION</b>	5.1 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly/Weekly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro (N.B — Republic of Ireland only; Northern Ireland is pound sterling)
<b>VAT</b>	23%



## Hiring Considerations

- Ireland boasts a comprehensive legal framework governing employment, ensuring fair treatment and protection for both employers and employees. Key legislation includes the Employment Equality Acts, the Unfair Dismissals Acts, and the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts. These laws collectively address issues such as discrimination, termination procedures, and basic employment terms. It is crucial for employers to familiarize themselves with these statutes to ensure compliance and foster a harmonious work environment.
- Employers are responsible for making several mandatory contributions as part of the payroll process. These include Employer PRSI (Pay-Related Social Insurance) contribution. This contribution is a percentage of the employee's gross earnings and funds the country's social insurance program. The rate varies depending on the employment type and the employer's size.
- The probationary period for employees in Ireland can range from six months to two years, depending on the terms of their employment contract. During this period, the employer can assess the employee's suitability for the role and terminate the employment without providing a reason.
- The legal minimum annual leave is four weeks per year, but the majority of employers offer five.

- Ireland has truly embraced the trend for remote work. Since the Covid pandemic, around 60% of employees now work either fully or partly from home and a significant proportion work remotely. The Irish government has introduced legislation with grants employees the right to request reasonable adjustments to their working hours and place of work, after six months of employment.

## Cultural Considerations

- Irish workplaces are typically relaxed, friendly and informal.
- Family, the traffic and weather are common conversation-starters! (Much like the UK, the Irish love to talk about the weather).
- The Irish are known for their good sense of humour.
- Business meetings often take place at social venues, such as bars and golf courses.

*“Junior options remain relatively plentiful in the Irish market, thanks notably to significant corporate headquarters with sizeable legal teams. The senior market is still relatively slow but, if Ireland follows the trends for the rest of western Europe, we should see a bit more activity in the senior job market.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE IRELAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€70,000 – €93,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€87,500 – €135,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€110,000 – €165,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€125,000 – €195,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€160,000 – €250,000

# FRANCE

France is the third-largest economy in Europe, and the sixth largest in the world in terms of GDP. It is an advanced and industrialised country and is home to a sophisticated financial market. This, coupled with France's highly educated workforce, makes it an attractive place for business growth.

Several industries contribute to the French economy, namely energy, transport, manufacturing, technology, tourism and agriculture.

In the face of global economic challenges, France has maintained a relatively stable job market — as of December 2023, the national unemployment rate stands at 7.2%, outperforming the average rate in the European Union.

One of the key contributors to France's employment landscape is its thriving tech industry and a steadily growing financial services sector.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 32*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Paris
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	French
<b>POPULATION</b>	68.17 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro
<b>VAT</b>	20%



## Hiring Considerations

- Probation periods are not mandatory in French employment contracts, but they typically last between two to four months.
- Notice periods: this depends on how long the employee has worked for the company. Employees will usually need to provide one month's notice if they've been employed for six months to two years.
- Employees who have been employed for more than two years usually must provide two months' notice, and those in executive positions may need to provide a three-month notice.

## Cultural Considerations

- French business etiquette is rather formal, and it's always better to err on the side of formality than to be seen as disrespectful.
- It's customary to address people by their formal title, such as Monsieur or Madame, until invited to use their first name.

- Handshakes are the norm in business situations, and it's considered polite to greet everyone individually when entering a room.
- The French place a high value on work-life balance. You may find that work hours are shorter than in some other countries, with 35 hours per week on average.
- French people tend to be direct in their communication

*“We’re seeing large corporates return to more predictable, hiring patterns after several years of caution, and there has been a noticeable resurgence in ‘first-hire’ / Sole Counsel roles, particularly among scale-ups and mid-cap companies looking to professionalise governance. However, despite the increased volume of work, the senior end of the market continues to face downward salary pressure. Candidates moving from multinational environments may find that compensation levels do not always align with the breadth or complexity of responsibilities on offer. This remains one of the biggest challenges for employers.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE FRANCE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€58,000 – €80,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€62,500 – €145,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€95,000 – €135,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€115,000 – €165,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€140,000 – €255,000

# GERMANY

Germany has a diverse population of over 84 million people, with a highly skilled talent pool. The country places a high emphasis on education, with a literacy rate of 99% and an extensive system of universities and vocational schools.

The business climate is favourable, with a strong focus on innovation and a range of government incentives for business growth.

Germany's top industries include automotive manufacturing, chemical production, engineering, and healthcare. The country is the world's leading exporter of cars, with major companies such as Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz headquartered in Germany.

German employees value a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Studies have found that they prioritise work-life balance, job security and professional development opportunities.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 22*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Berlin
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	German, plus some regional dialects
<b>POPULATION</b>	84.5 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro
<b>VAT</b>	19%



## Hiring Considerations

- The standard working week in Germany is 40 hours, with an average of 8 hours per day.
- Employers are obligated to provide health insurance, pension insurance, accident insurance and unemployment insurance to all employees.
- Bundesurlaubsgesetz — the Federal Holiday Act — dictates that employees get 20 days of leave or 24 days if they work six days a week instead of five. However, most employers offer more than this statutory minimum.
- Notice periods are typically stipulated in the employment contract and vary based on the length of service. For example, a standard notice period is four weeks but can be longer for employees with several years of service.

## Cultural Considerations

- Germans value punctuality, professionalism, and a thorough approach to business. Be prepared for structured and detail-oriented interactions with German professionals.
- While many Germans are proficient in English, especially in business settings, a basic understanding of the German language can be highly beneficial.

*“Germany remains a key market for us at Leonid, and we anticipate another busy year here in 2026. While several major industries — most notably automotive and certain parts of heavy manufacturing — have experienced slower in-house legal team expansion over the past couple of years, the broader market continues to generate steady demand. For senior candidates, hiring activity may still feel somewhat constrained, particularly in sectors undergoing restructuring or grappling with margin pressures.*

*However, opportunities for junior and early mid-level in-house lawyers remain consistently strong.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE GERMANY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€75,000 – €110,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€90,000 – €155,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€140,000 – €185,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€155,000 – €200,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€155,000 – €295,000

# SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is widely recognised as a ‘safe haven’ within Europe and a land of opportunity for both individuals and businesses to live and work. Given its relatively small size and a highly liberal economic structure, it can quickly adapt to internal and external challenges. Switzerland is renowned for its stable and reliable business environment, which is supported by its well-developed legal system and robust regulations.

Around two thirds of Switzerland’s working population originate from EU countries, predominantly Italy, Germany, Portugal, France and Kosovo.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 36*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Bern
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	German, French
<b>POPULATION</b>	8.85 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Swiss Franc (CHF)
<b>VAT</b>	8.1%



## Hiring Considerations

- The working week in Switzerland is 40 to 42 hours. Workers are generally entitled to 4 weeks' holiday.
- Notice periods are variable, typically ranging from one to six months.

## Cultural Considerations

- Swiss work culture is rooted in formality. Formal business attire is generally expected and it is usual to address someone by their last name and title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Dr) until they indicate otherwise.
- There are three main languages spoken in Swiss workplaces: German, French, English — it is widely expected that job candidates would have fluency in at least two of these three.
- The Swiss value punctuality and direct communication, so when interviewing Swiss candidates, it is important that the interview is well-structured.

*“Swiss salary levels have continued to increase comfortably at the junior end of the market but this is now starting to present a compression in salary levels for legal functions from the bottom to the top. A significant challenge for GCs looking to recruit at the 0–7 PQE level in Switzerland will be securing enough budget to keep up with the market (whilst also ensuring they can still negotiate their own packages!)”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE SWITZERLAND

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	CHF 125,000 – CHF 165,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	CHF 145,000 – CHF 195,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	CHF 175,000 – CHF 240,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	CHF 175,000 – CHF 240,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	CHF 200,000 – CHF 350,000

# BELGIUM

Belgium is home to an open market with strong connections to the world's major economies. It is also the location of many European Union institutions — including the European Commission and Council of the European Union - making it an attractive market for business owners.

Belgium has a talented, multi-lingual workforce and a strong economy which appeals to investors across a range of industry sectors.

Major Belgian exports include chemicals (65.6%), machinery and equipment (9.7%), and transport equipment (4.5%).

According to data from the OECD, 64% of Belgian citizens are currently employed, and the nation has a high ranking among the happiest workforces in the world.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 46*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Brussels
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Dutch, French, German
<b>POPULATION</b>	11.82 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro
<b>VAT</b>	21%



## Hiring Considerations

- Employers must pay two additional 13th and 14th month salaries per year, as well as an Eco voucher (of EUR 250) according to Belgian employment law.
- Employees in Belgium must work continuously for a full year before receiving any holiday entitlement. Full-time employees are entitled to 20 paid holidays per year if they are working a 38-hour week or 21 days of paid leave for those who work 40-hour weeks
- After the birth of a child, fathers or co-parents are entitled to 20 paid days of paternity leave. The state also offers a comprehensive maternity leave package.
- Probation periods can last for a maximum of two months for permanent employees. Fixed-term contracts permit a maximum of one month's probation.

## Cultural Considerations

- The Northern half of Belgium is Dutch-speaking and the Southern half is French-speaking. However, most business people

speak both and additionally have a proficient level of English.

- Personal connections are important in Belgium's business world, so it's not unusual for someone to socialise with you before they start working with you!
- Decision-making tends to be slower and more considered than in neighbouring countries such as The Netherlands and Germany. This is to ensure that decisions are always agreeable to everyone involved in the process.

*“The in-house legal market in Belgium, although still small compared to some of its immediate neighbours, has seen some strong growth, especially amongst SMEs and smaller multinationals where Sole Counsels have been hiring their first support lawyers. Some significant corporations (notably French-headquartered) have also restructured their legal functions preferring hiring in Belgium over other locations.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE BELGIUM

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€47,500 – €70,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€62,500 – €95,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€95,000 – €155,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€105,000 – €185,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€130,000 – €220,000

# THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is a forward-thinking nation, well connected to the other major economies of Europe and with a favourable fiscal climate, making it a prime country for sourcing multilingual and highly-skilled workers. The Dutch typically have excellent English language skills and many also speak German.

It is a small but mighty country, having the fifth-largest economy in the EU in 2023. The key industries here are aerospace, chemicals, energy, financial services, life sciences, IT and logistics.

The country has a strong focus on work-life balance, and family-friendly benefits are commonplace.

Dutch employment law is extensive, and regulations must be followed by any company that employs workers in the Netherlands, even if the organisation is registered in a different country.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 42*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Amsterdam
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Dutch, English
<b>POPULATION</b>	17.9 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro (EUR)
<b>VAT</b>	21%



## Hiring Considerations

- The Netherlands has an extensive social security system which covers employees for health, death, old age, long-term disability, certain medical expenses and childcare and unemployment.
- National insurance is compulsory for anyone permanently working in the Netherlands. Social security premiums (also referred to as employee insurance) must be paid entirely by the employer.
- Many people work part-time in the Netherlands and requests for part-time work can only be turned down if there is a strong, objective reason not to permit it.
- Probation periods can last for a maximum of two months for permanent employees. Fixed-term contracts permit a maximum of one month's probation.

## Cultural Considerations

- The Dutch are known for their direct manner and honesty. It's not a case of being harsh; they simply value pragmatism and clear communication.
- Decision-making is very much done by consensus, with multiple stakeholders involved.
- Efficiency and punctuality are highly valued.
- Workplace hierarchies tend to be flat, with everyone encouraged to voice their views and senior management are typically open to challenge, so long as it is done respectfully.

**“Despite some outliers, the Netherlands is becoming increasingly expensive (by European standards) to hire junior and mid-level talent which is a notable sign on competition for candidates and general activity levels. Senior lawyers will still need to spend, on average, 3–6 months looking for their next ideal (permanent) role if undertaking an active search.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE NETHERLANDS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€48,000 – €75,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€70,000 – €120,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€100,000 – €150,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€121,000 – €175,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€125,000 – €225,000

# SPAIN

Spain is one of the largest countries in Europe and home to a highly educated, diverse and international workforce.

Spain's economy is the fifth-largest in the European Union by GDP. The country's major industries include technology, tourism, textiles, automotive manufacturing and construction.

Compared with other EU countries, labour costs in Spain are relatively high, owing in part to high social security contributions and taxes. Nonetheless, the country remains a desirable destination for foreign workers, since the cost of living is generally lower — and there are the additional draws of a vibrant culture, great cuisine and a balmy climate.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 30*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Madrid
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Spanish
<b>POPULATION</b>	48.37 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro (EUR)
<b>VAT</b>	21%



## Hiring Considerations

- The standard working week is 40 hours. Some consumer-facing businesses do stop between 14:00 and 16:00 for ‘siesta’ and continue working until 8pm, but this is no longer usual practice in corporate environments.
- It is mandatory for employees to receive a thirteenth and fourteenth month’s salary payment. The annual salary is usually split into 14 instalments, which includes the double salary payment made by the employer in July and December.
- Internationals who want to work in Spain must meet stringent requirements for work permits. EU citizens are exempt, but do need a certificate of residence if they plan to stay for over three months, while non-EU citizens need both a work and residency permit along with a firm job offer. Highly skilled foreign workers can apply for a Blue Card or a Highly Qualified Visa — options which allow them to work and live locally for up to four years if they meet specific requirements.

## Cultural Considerations

- Just like in social settings, Spaniards are relaxed and friendly at work. You’ll be surrounded by approachable, humorous people who love to smile.

- Relationship-building is important here, and business talks or negotiations rarely take place without getting to know the other person first. So don’t be alarmed at the slow pace of business meetings – or the personal questions.
- Overall, as Spaniards get more comfortable, they tend to be quite tactile, with hugs or a pat on the back or arm fairly common practice. You’ll also notice that when they are comfortable, they may become quite animated and even interrupt someone. This is to be taken as a sign that someone is interested in what the other person is saying, rather than being rude.
- Working late into the evening is not uncommon; Spaniards typically eat their dinner late, at around 9pm.

**“Spain continues to gain momentum as an increasingly attractive location for in-house legal hires, and this trend has only strengthened going into 2026. We’re seeing more UK-, US- and Germany-headquartered organisations choosing Spain as the base for new or expanding legal teams; driven not only by favourable cost comparisons, but also by the depth of high-quality domestic talent and a growing influx of lawyers relocating from elsewhere in Europe.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE SPAIN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	€32,000 – €60,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	€50,000 – €95,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€80,000 – €145,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€98,000 – €160,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€120,000 – €215,000

# ITALY

Italy is the third-largest economy in the European Union and the eighth-largest in the world. Its geographical position is beneficial for trade with Northern Europe, Southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, making Italy a great place for businesses to expand internationally. Tourism is the top income generator, followed by manufacturing.

Around 10% of Italy's workforce is made up of international employees and foreign-owned business accounts for approximately 19% of the country's turnover.

Italy's science, technology and engineering sector is growing rapidly and projected demand for employees in these sectors is expected to rise dramatically in the coming years, which presents excellent opportunities for well qualified individuals in this space.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 58*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Rome
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Italian
<b>POPULATION</b>	58.76 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Euro (EUR)
<b>VAT</b>	22%



## Hiring Considerations

- Individual income taxes in Italy fall into different bands (23%, 35%, 43%) depending on the employee's income.
- Both employers and employees are obliged to make social security contributions. The total rate is around 40% of the employee's gross compensation, of which 30% is paid by the employer.
- Italy has unique parental leave legislation. Pregnant Italian employees don't work from two months before the birth date and for three months afterwards, during which they receive at least 80% of their pay. There are also five days of compulsory paternity leave, after the birth.
- Standard working hours are between 9:30 and 18:30, Monday to Friday. Lunch breaks can be up to two hours long.
- Employees are entitled to a minimum of 22 days' annual leave, along with 12 public holiday days.

## Cultural Considerations

- Flexibility is generally more valued than punctuality in Italian business culture. It's not uncommon for people to turn up late for meetings or for these to overrun — especially if it's a lunch meeting! However, it is always expected that candidates will be on time for a job interview.

- Freedom to express opinions is very much the 'modus operandi' of Italian businesses.
- Interpersonal relationships are highly valued in the workplace, so for international workers, learning a few words of Italian can really help when getting to know colleagues.
- First meetings will rarely result in an immediate agreement between the participating parties. They are viewed as the opportunity to develop a sense of mutual trust and respect.

*"Italy remains a steady and somewhat cautious in-house legal market, but 2026 is showing signs of gradual momentum. We saw modest salary increases in 2025 at the junior end, particularly within the highly competitive 2-4 PQE 'sweet spot', where demand continues to outstrip supply. These roles have become noticeably harder to fill as businesses look for lawyers who can balance strong commercial grounding with the ability to cover a wide remit within leaner legal teams. At the senior level, there are early indications of improvement, but the market has not yet shifted enough to trigger meaningful increases in compensation for Head of Legal and General Counsel positions."*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE ITALY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Legal Counsel (0-3 PQE)	€33,000 - €58,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4-10 PQE)	€50,000 - €87,500
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	€85,000 - €130,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	€110,000 - €140,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	€145,000 - €250,000

# SWEDEN

Sweden is renowned for its high quality of life, social welfare system and progressive attitudes.

The country is highly educated, with a literacy rate of 100% and a high percentage of the population holding advanced degrees. Employment laws in Sweden prioritise workers' rights, with significant protections for job security, parental leave and workplace safety. The business world here has a keen focus on innovation, sustainability and equal opportunities.

Sweden is an excellent country to set up or expand a business in, owing to its political stability, strong public finances, well-performing economy and reliable banking system. It also provides some of the EU's lowest corporate tax rates.

The key industries here are manufacturing, forestry and technology.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 10*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Stockholm
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Swedish
<b>POPULATION</b>	10.5 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Swedish Krona (SEK)
<b>VAT</b>	25%



## Hiring Considerations

- While the Swedish personal income tax is among the highest in the world, their social security benefits greatly offset the amount of taxes paid.
  - Employers are required to pay Swedish employment social security contributions on compensation for employees covered by the system. These cover a range of events, including retirement pension, health insurance, labour fees and parental benefits.
  - Work-life balance and wellbeing are vitally important in Sweden and many employers are now offering flexible working, additional annual leave and even unlimited annual leave.
  - Gender equality is actively supported as well and it is expected that both mothers and fathers will share the 480 days leave which they are entitled to. Parents can take it at the same time or separately, all in one go or spread over time.
- Decision-making is driven by consensus from all stakeholders, so the process can take a little longer than in other cultures.
  - Work-life balance is an absolute priority and there's a strong emphasis on putting family first. This attitude has no doubt contributed to the country's very low staff turnover rate.
  - "Fika" is a Swedish tradition of taking a break to enjoy a hot drink and sweet treat with colleagues. It is viewed as an opportunity to bond, and discuss non-work topics, helping to cultivate an amiable atmosphere.

## Cultural Considerations

- Swedish people are very straightforward and humble. They value substance over showiness.
- Hierarchies in the workplace are typically flat, with everyone encouraged to contribute to ideas and discussions, regardless of seniority.

**“Sweden remains an important destination for multinational organisations looking to anchor their Northern European legal capability, and hiring activity in 2026 reflects this steady demand. Salary levels have not shifted dramatically year-on-year, but the market continues to attract both strong domestic talent and internationally mobile lawyers seeking high-quality work in a stable, progressive jurisdiction.**

**For senior lawyers – particularly GCs and Heads of Legal – the challenge is often one of market size rather than opportunity. Sweden’s in-house legal community is comparatively compact, meaning leadership-level roles do not arise frequently.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE SWEDEN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SEK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	SEK 390,000 – SEK 730,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	SEK 665,000 – SEK 1,100,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	SEK 900,000 – SEK 1,450,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	SEK 1,300,000 – SEK 2,150,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	SEK 1,820,000 – SEK 2,600,000

# NORWAY

Norway is the best country to live in according to the United Nations, thanks to its impressive healthcare system and work-life balance.

Norway is home to one of the strongest economies in the world, and the country places a high priority on technology, knowledge development and sustainable business.

Norway is a world leader in energy, oil and gas and maritime sectors and is seeing huge developments in other areas, such as fintech, medtech and edtech. It is also rich in natural resources and is a leading European producer of renewable energy: 98% of the country's electricity production is based on renewables.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 9*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Oslo
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Norwegian
<b>POPULATION</b>	5.4 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Norwegian Krone (NOK)
<b>VAT</b>	25%



## Hiring Considerations

- Working hours in Norway are typically nine hours per day within a 24-hour period, or 40 hours per week within a seven-day work week.
- Employees (even those who are not residents) receiving remuneration for work performed in Norway are eligible for social security and pension contributions.
- Norway offers a generous maternity and paternity leave package. This is either 80% compensation rate of the average salary for 59 weeks or 100% of the average salary for 49 weeks. Parents also have the option to take a leave of absence for an additional year without compensation.
- Probation periods can be up to six months long.

## Cultural Considerations

- Continuous development is important – Norway has the second highest participation rate in job-related continued education and training, in all of Europe.
- Norwegians are focused on high quality output and efficiency. They are honest and direct in their communication, but typically warm and friendly, too.
- Workplaces are generally quite informal in terms of business dress.
- Work-life balance and ‘family time’ are highly valued.

*“Our instructions in Norway always present an exciting challenge when trying to match up niche skillsets, diverse locations and often limited talent pools. It’s specifically why our in-depth search methodology is so crucial in this market.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE NORWAY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	NOK 885,000 – NOK 1,150,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	NOK 985,000 – NOK 1,350,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	NOK 1,150,000 – NOK 1,575,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	NOK 1,400,000 – NOK 2,000,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	NOK 1,740,000 – NOK 2,850,000

# DENMARK

This small but perfectly formed Nordic country is renowned for its high standard of living, advanced welfare state and innovative business climate.

The country has a highly educated talent pool, with over 80% of the population having completed some form of post-secondary education. Denmark has strong employment laws which protect workers, such as a minimum wage, a maximum workweek of 37 hours and generous parental leave.

The Danish business culture is also attractive, with a low corporate tax rate, easy access to capital and a high degree of government support for entrepreneurship. The top industries in Denmark include information technology, life sciences, renewable energy, and food and agriculture.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 4*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Copenhagen
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Danish
<b>POPULATION</b>	5.8 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Danish Krone (DKK)
<b>VAT</b>	0-25%



## Hiring Considerations

- Employers must contribute to social security and other government initiatives on behalf of their employees. These contributions are typically calculated as a percentage of salary and are paid monthly.
- Income tax rates range from 0% to 55.8% depending on the employee's income level.
- Probationary periods can be up to three months long and no notice of termination is required by either party, during this time.
- English is very widely spoken by Danes, and with high levels of proficiency.

## Cultural Considerations

- Danish workplaces are typically informal, with a flat hierarchy. People are trusted to manage their own workloads and time, with minimal supervision.

- It's usual for groups of co-workers to take their lunch together, but socialising with colleagues outside of work hours is rare.
- Work-life balance is highly prioritised. Denmark ranks 3rd on OECD's scale of countries with the best balance. This is partly down to flexible working hours and outstanding social and welfare support.

**“The in-house legal market in Denmark, although smaller than some counterparts across Europe, will still often present some interesting senior opportunities. Salary levels are competitive when taking a pan-European view and working conditions remain some of the most favourable in Europe.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE DENMARK

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (DKK)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	DKK 720,000 – DKK 841,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	DKK 850,000 – DKK 1,150,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	DKK 960,000 – DKK 1,350,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	DKK 1,000,000 – DKK 1,400,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	DKK 1,320,000 – DKK 1,780,000

# SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia's economy is a rapidly-developing major player on the global stage and the world's biggest exporter and producer of oil.

In spite of what may appear to be a low 'ease of doing business' ranking, the country rose 30 places since the previous report and has implemented some significant reforms in recent years, including enforcing contracts by publishing court performance measurement reports, tripling the VAT rate from 5% to 15%, implementing Transfer Pricing guidelines and Real Estate Transaction Tax, abolishing the sponsorship system and introducing E-Invoicing regulations.

In terms of non-oil exports, more than 90% comprises electrical appliances, petrochemicals, construction materials, plastics and metal goods.

Saudi Arabia's unique location – central to Asia, Europe and Africa – makes it a natural

channel for worldwide trade routes, as well as a popular location for international business expansion. It's a major member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and enables easy access to other Gulf markets.

Ease of doing business ranking = 62

**“Saudi Arabia's in-house legal market has now truly come into its own. While we have been firmly established in the UAE for many years, the pace of growth in Saudi over the past two to three years has been extraordinary – and 2026 shows no signs of slowing. Vision 2030 is continuing to transform the corporate environment at remarkable speed, driving unprecedented investment across infrastructure, energy, financial services, tourism and giga-projects. As a result, demand for high-calibre in-house legal talent has surged.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Riyadh
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Arabic
<b>POPULATION</b>	35.34 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly/Weekly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Saudi Riyal
<b>VAT</b>	15%



## Hiring Considerations

- The work week in Saudi Arabia is usually six days, with Friday as a rest day. Working days are typically eight actual hours, but during Ramadan, this is reduced to six hours.
- As per the labour law, at least 75% of the workforce in any organisation must consist of Saudi nationals. However, the Government has the authority to temporarily reduce this percentage in certain cases, such as when there is a lack of technically or academically qualified workers, or when a vacancy cannot be filled by a Saudi national.
- In reality, Saudi nationals only comprise approximately one-fifth of the private sector workforce. To increase this proportion, the Government follows a policy called “Saudization,” which includes the Nitaqat scheme. The Nitaqat scheme applies to private sector companies with six or more employees and sets quotas for the employment of Saudi nationals based on the company’s size and sector.
- Certain designated jobs can only be filled by Saudi nationals, including various clerical and supervisory roles, as well as positions in hospitality, tourism, retail, private security, healthcare, and HR.
- Foreign nationals working in Saudi Arabia must have sponsorship from an employer, typically a domestic or multinational company in the country.
- Employers of foreign nationals are responsible for all recruitment costs,

including work visas, residence permits, their renewal, and return tickets to the employee’s home country upon employment termination. Employers face higher “expat fees” if they employ more foreign nationals than Saudi citizens.

## Cultural Considerations

- It is not uncommon for key employees to be family members.
- Some Saudis may view things as being willed by God. This is reflected in the common saying “Inshallah” (If God wills it).
- Although it remains a conservative business environment, cultural change is happening. Saudi Arabia is adapting in line with Saudi Vision 2030; of which one aim is to establish a “vibrant” society. One aspect which is particularly noticeable is the growing prominence of women in senior management and business founder roles.
- A divisive culture can prevail between locals and expats in some companies, and discrimination does, sadly, exist. The government’s Saudization policy – where citizens are fast-tracked into jobs, training, and promotion at the expense of expats – can create tension.
- Most Saudi businesspeople speak very good English, but a few words of Arabic are always very well received.
- In terms of clothing, offices and meetings demand formal attire. This means suits for expats, and national dress (white thobe, red/ white checked ghutra) for locals.

## SALARY GUIDE SAUDI ARABIA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SAR)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	SAR 190,000 – SAR 300,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	SAR 295,000 – SAR 575,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	SAR 500,000 – SAR 1,000,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	SAR 575,000 – SAR 950,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	SAR 685,000 – SAR 1,250,000

# UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (or UAE) is an economic powerhouse of the Middle East and is widely known as a business-friendly country in the region that welcomes foreign workers and investments. And since around 89% of the population originates from outside the UAE, it's also a great place to look for remote talent as it's one of a growing number of countries now offering digital nomad visas.

The UAE's economy is the 5th largest in the Middle East, with a gross domestic product of US\$501 billion (AED 1.84 trillion) in 2022.

The economy in the UAE relies on revenue from the natural gas and petroleum industries. One of its bigger non-oil revenue sources is tourism, and the UAE's thriving services sector is contributing to the diversification of the economy. Across the nation, there is currently \$350 billion worth of active construction in process.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 16*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Abu Dhabi
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Arabic, English
<b>POPULATION</b>	9.89 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly or Bi-Weekly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	United Arab Emirates Dirham (AED)
<b>VAT</b>	5%

**“While Dubai and Abu Dhabi remain highly attractive hubs for multinationals, the rapid rise of Riyadh as a competing centre of gravity has intensified the race for candidates across the Gulf. For 2026, the challenge for employers is that salary levels in the Gulf remain highly variable and difficult to benchmark; packages can differ widely based on sector, nationality mix, expat allowances and the urgency of the hire. What we can say with confidence is that upward pressure is evident at every level, from junior counsel through to GC roles, as companies compete for a limited pool of experienced legal professionals with GCC exposure.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group



## Hiring Considerations

- The UAE does not have any enforced federal income tax legislation for general business. Each Emirate has enacted an income tax decree, but enforcement is restricted to oil companies and foreign banks.
- According to the terms of the UAE Labour Law, introduced in February 2022, companies operating in the private sector are required to employ individuals on fixed-term contracts. However, the fixed-term aspect of the agreement is, in practice, insignificant. For instance, even if a five-year term is agreed upon, it essentially functions as a permanent employment contract and can be terminated with notice by either party.
- The working week used to be Sunday to Thursday, but it has recently changed to Monday to Friday.
- Usual business hours are from 8am to 1pm, resuming at 4pm (once temperatures have reduced) and continuing until 7pm.
- It is compulsory to register employees with the national government pension programme and contribute to it regularly.
- Compensation packages are structured differently; instead of the usual base salary + bonus, firms typically offer base salary + housing allowance + transportation allowance (and schooling allowance, if the employee has children).

## Cultural Considerations

- Islam is the cornerstone of UAE culture and profoundly influences its business practices. Most Emiratis are Muslim, so expats would do well to familiarise themselves with the principles of Islam to help cultivate relationships, and avoid inadvertently offending anyone.
- Islamic principles, such as honesty, integrity, and fairness, underscore all aspects of business dealings. Upholding one's word and delivering on promises are highly valued traits that contribute to building trust and lasting partnerships in the UAE.
- Religious holidays have a significant impact on business operations in the UAE. For instance, during Ramadan — a month of fasting from dawn to sunset — working hours are reduced, and the pace of business may slow down. Many companies operate with shorter business hours to allow employees to break their fasts and engage in prayers.
- Traditional hierarchical structures are prevalent in organisations, with clear lines of authority. Decision-making processes often involve higher-level management, and their input carries significant weight in final outcomes.

## SALARY GUIDE UAE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AED)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	90,000 AED – 400,000 AED
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	470,000 AED – 800,000 AED
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	640,000 AED – 1,000,000 AED
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	750,000 AED – 1,100,000 AED
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	900,000 AED – 1,500,000 AED

# SINGAPORE

Singapore has a successful free-market economy and consistently ranks among the least corrupt nations in the world. Unemployment is low, and its port is one of the busiest in the world.

Singapore's workforce is highly multicultural, comprising Chinese, Malay, and Indian workers, as well as expatriates from around the globe. While the government has taken steps to reduce the country's reliance on foreign labour, particularly in unskilled roles, Singapore remains an open and diverse society.

Ease of doing business ranking = 2

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Singapore
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin & Tamil
<b>POPULATION</b>	5.91 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Singapore Dollar (SGD)
<b>VAT</b>	9%



## Hiring Considerations

- The Employment Act specifies that all employees are entitled to one rest day out of the week. Typically, this is Sunday, but employers can choose a different rest day as long as they inform their employees.
- Employers typically provide a 13th-month bonus to their employees. 13th-month bonus is also known as Annual Wage Supplement (AWS). It is a single annual payment on top of an employee's total annual wage. AWS is not compulsory. Employers are encouraged to give their employees AWS to reward them for contributing to the company's performance.

## Cultural Considerations

- Singapore places importance on proper business etiquette and protocol. Handshakes are common as a form of greeting, and it is polite to address individuals using their titles and surnames, especially in formal settings.

- It is also customary to exchange business cards during introductions, with proper attention given to receiving and presenting them with both hands.
- Teamwork and collaboration are highly valued in Singapore's work culture. Employees are expected to work well in teams and contribute to collective goals. Communication tends to be polite, indirect and harmonious, with an emphasis on maintaining positive relationships.

*“Alongside Japan, Singapore remains one of our key APAC markets where we continue to recruit for many multinationals across a number of sectors. Although there is a good candidate pool for talent, competition for the best candidates remains fierce and finding any type of niche technical experience is extremely difficult to do without specialist support.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE SINGAPORE

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (SGD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	S\$75,000 – S\$165,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	S\$150,000 – S\$245,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	S\$195,000 – S\$295,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	S\$230,000 – S\$315,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	S\$230,000 – S\$400,000

# JAPAN

Japan is smaller than the U.S. state of California, and yet it boasts the world's third-largest economy, after the United States and China. It is home to 62 of the Fortune 500 companies and excels in the IT, automotive and healthcare sectors.

Japan is a stable place to do business and a sensible stepping stone into other Asian territories.

It is, however, one of the more challenging environments in which to attract job candidates. An aging population and declining birth rates has led to a serious labour shortage in the country. This means employees are used to excellent job security and, when they are looking for a job, receiving job offers from multiple companies.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 29*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Tokyo
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Japanese
<b>POPULATION</b>	124.5 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Japanese Yen (JPY)
<b>VAT</b>	10%

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**“We always enjoy working on searches in Japan. Whilst still maintaining a 100% success rate in the country, we employ many different techniques to ensure a good coverage of the entire market where candidate response rates and engagement is relatively low compared to other major markets.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

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## Hiring Considerations

- Employees in managerial positions are generally expected to work unpaid overtime.
- Termination of employment can be difficult in Japan and employers will generally seek to obtain the employee's resignation before handing out a termination notice. In some cases, financial incentives can be offered to encourage employees to resign.
- The notice period for resigning employees can range from two weeks to a month. In the case of dismissals, the employer must provide 30 days' notice or payment in lieu of the notice period.
- There is no payment for sick leave in Japan. For short-term cases, employees use their paid vacation to take leaves of absence.
- Employers are required to grant annual paid leave of at least 10 days upon completion of 6 months' employment. The entitlement increases by 1 day per year for the following 2 years and by 2 days per year thereafter, up to a maximum of 20 days per year.

## Cultural Considerations

- Japanese employers expect unwavering dedication from their teams. And while there have been notable improvements in Japanese work conditions in recent years, Japan still carries its reputation of being a hard working country.
- Japanese 'nomikai' are company after-work drinking parties, which are often compulsory to attend. It is seen as disrespectful to refuse such an invitation from a senior employee.
- Career progression is rooted system that rewards behaviour demonstrating identification with the team effort for example, by singing the company song, not taking all of one's vacation days, and sharing credit for accomplishments with the team.
- Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions and body language, is heavily relied upon in Japanese workplaces.

## SALARY GUIDE JAPAN

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (JPY)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	¥8,500,000 – ¥13,100,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	¥11,200,000 – ¥17,200,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	¥15,100,000 – ¥23,100,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	¥17,000,000 – ¥26,500,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	¥22,000,000 – ¥36,500,000

# HONG KONG

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China, located just off the Southeastern coast.

For a territory of less than eight million, Hong Kong boasts a vibrant economy with strengths in financial services, tourism and professional services. It acts as an excellent gateway to the Asia-Pacific market.

Combined with its 4th place ranking on the human development index and a GDP that is several times the size of comparative nations, Hong Kong offers an attractive option for companies looking to build a presence in Asia with strong global connections.

Hong Kong is uniquely positioned as a bilingual and multicultural society, with English and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) being widely spoken. This linguistic diversity is a valuable asset for businesses looking to engage with both local and international stakeholders.

<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	Chinese, English
<b>POPULATION</b>	7.5 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Hong Kong Dollar (HKD)
<b>VAT</b>	n/a

**“Hong Kong’s in-house legal recruitment market has experienced a challenging two years, with macro-economic conditions, geopolitical uncertainty and shifting regional investment patterns all contributing to a stop-start hiring environment. While the market remains more cautious than many other APAC hubs, 2026 is showing early signs of stabilisation.”**

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group



## Hiring Considerations

- Hong Kong operates on a territorial tax system, meaning that only income generated within the city is subject to taxation. Income earned abroad, even if remitted to Hong Kong, is generally exempt from taxation.
- Income tax rates are progressive, and capped at 17%.
- Hong Kong does not have a comprehensive social security system. Instead, social welfare is largely provided through a mix of means-tested assistance programs, non-contributory benefits and voluntary savings schemes.
- The standard working week is 44 hours, across 5 days.
- Employees are entitled to 7 annual leave days; this can rise to 14 days depending on an individual's tenure with their employer.
- Bonus culture is deeply ingrained, particularly within the finance and professional services sectors, where year-end bonuses can significantly boost overall compensation packages.
- Many companies in Hong Kong provide employee stock options as part of their compensation packages, which prove successful in retaining talent.

## Cultural Considerations

- Hong Kong's business culture is influenced by a mix of Eastern and Western practices. Hierarchy and respect for authority are very much adhered to.
- It is not uncommon for employees to work long hours, especially in the run up to a project deadline.
- Workplaces are typically quite formal and focused on efficiency and punctuality.
- Formal business attire is expected in most offices, although there is a growing trend towards a slightly more relaxed approach in smaller firms and start-ups.
- Being consistently late or missing deadlines is considered disrespectful.
- English is the main business language, although knowing some Mandarin, Cantonese or Japanese is very helpful.

## SALARY GUIDE HONG KONG

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (HKD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	HK\$ 725,000 – HK\$ 1,300,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	HK\$ 1,200,000 – HK\$ 1,750,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	HK\$ 1,600,000 – HK\$ 2,000,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	HK\$ 1,750,000 – HK\$ 2,300,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	HK\$ 1,950,000 – HK\$ 3,000,000

# AUSTRALIA

**Australia has a highly educated, skilled and English-speaking population and an open economy that ranks 12th in the world by GDP, with strong trade links. It is also strategically placed in its proximity to the Asia Pacific region. It attracts strong foreign investment and many ex-patriate workers.**

Australia experienced an unprecedented job boom in the aftermath of the pandemic, most notably within the healthcare & social assistance sector. This demand is driven by Australia's ageing population, which will continue underpin job creation for the foreseeable future. Other major growth areas are professional services and construction and mining continues to be one of the biggest industries.

Australia offers a high quality of life, but the cost of living is relatively steep and at the

time of writing, the country is experiencing one of the toughest 'cost of living crises' in the Western world

Australia has also recently expanded its skilled migration policy as there are skill shortages in a number of areas, particularly within IT disciplines.

*Ease of doing business ranking = 16*

<b>CAPITAL</b>	Canberra
<b>LANGUAGES SPOKEN</b>	English
<b>POPULATION</b>	27.1 million
<b>PAYROLL</b>	Monthly or Bi-Monthly
<b>CURRENCY</b>	Australian Dollar (AUD)
<b>VAT</b>	10%



## Hiring Considerations

- The amount of income tax paid by employees depends on earnings. The first AUD\$18,200 is exempt from tax.
- Medicare is a national insurance scheme that provides free or subsidised healthcare for Australians. The Medicare levy consists of 2% of an Australian resident's taxable income and must be paid in addition to their personal income tax.
- There are eight states in Australia and there are some variations in the terms of local employment laws.
- Superannuation, also referred to as 'Super', is a retirement pension benefits fund which is mandatory for all employees in Australia. As of 2025, employers contribute 12% of an employee's ordinary time earnings.

## Cultural Considerations

- Work-life balance is highly valued and so most workplaces offer flexible working patterns to fit around family and other commitments
- Workplace dress is usually smart casual or fully casual, depending on the industry/size of the business.

- Equality, inclusion and diversity underscore working life in Australia, so workplace hierarchies are typically very flat.
- Australian working life is friendly and sociable.

*“The Australian in-house legal market has experienced similar highs and lows to much of the western world, relatively stable activity at the junior and mid-level has had some upwards pressure on salary levels; whilst senior appointments often are very competitive for candidates in a tight market. It may follow that more stable international markets will present more opportunity here and Australia remains a significant hub for APAC teams of larger multinationals.”*

**Phil Redhead**  
Leonid Group

## SALARY GUIDE AUSTRALIA

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Legal Counsel (0–3 PQE)	\$ 95,000 – \$ 145,000
Senior Legal Counsel (4–10 PQE)	\$ 140,000 – \$ 225,000
Head of Legal (10+ PQE)	\$ 210,000 – \$ 350,000
Deputy General Counsel (10+ PQE)	\$ 235,000 – \$ 375,000
General Counsel / Chief Legal Officer (12+ PQE)	\$ 230,000 – \$ 425,000

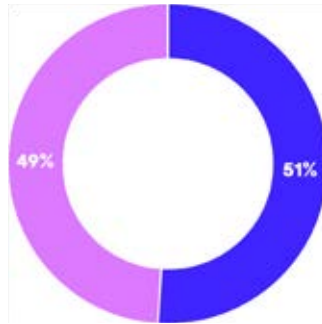
# 03.

## TALENT INTELLIGENCE DATA

In addition to recruitment, Leonid also offers ‘Talent Intelligence’ — data-driven insights to guide our clients’ decisions around hiring, retention, and workforce planning. Here’s a snapshot of what our data is telling us about the current in-house legal global hiring market.



**Hiring demand in In-House Legal Globally is High**



**Gender Diversity Split**  
49% Female 51% Male

**2.5 YEARS**

**Median Tenure of Candidates globally**

**9.9%**

**% of professionals who moved jobs in the last year**

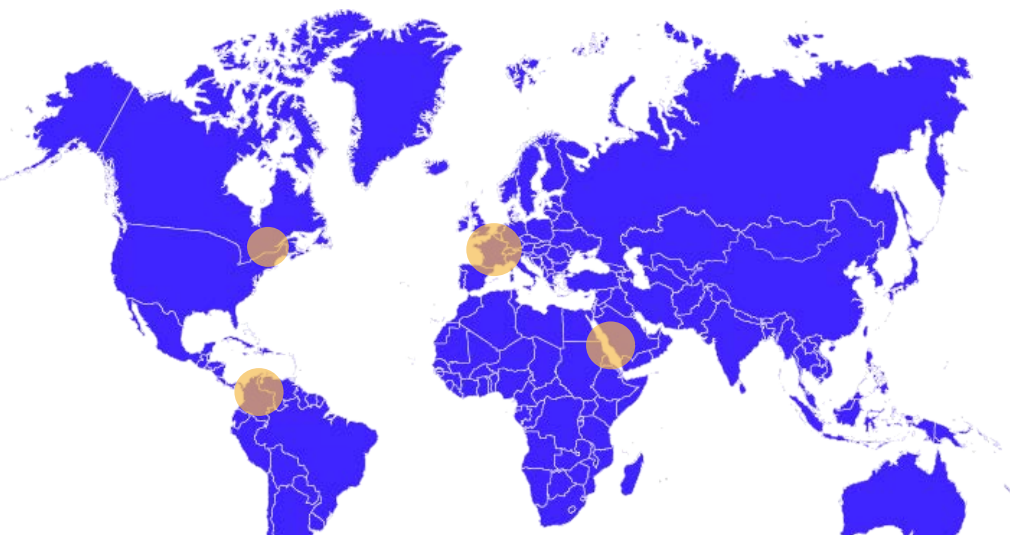
### What matters most to in-house legal candidates globally

Value proposition	Top Priority
1. Compensation & Benefits	66%
2. Flexible work arrangements	50%
3. Work-life balance	49%
4. Challenging & impactful work	38%
5. Job Security	33%

### Top 3 industries employing this talent

1. Financial Services
2. Software Development
3. Hospitals and Health Care

### Hiring Hotspots



### What are the top locations for this talent? (highest number of professionals)

1. London Area, United Kingdom
2. New York City Metropolitan
3. Colombia
4. Greater Paris Metropolitan
5. Washington DC-Baltimore
6. United Arab Emirates
7. Saudi Arabia



## 04.

# CONCLUSION

*In 2026, in-house legal teams are being pulled in more directions than ever before. Local nuances still matter, but the global picture is becoming impossible to ignore: legal leaders everywhere are grappling with the same set of high-stakes priorities.*

### **AI and legal-tech governance now sits at the centre of the agenda.**

From AI-generated contracts to automated decision-making, legal teams are being asked to assess risks that didn't exist five years ago and to do so while regulation races to catch up. In-house counsel are increasingly expected to be the adults in the room when it comes to AI.

### **Regulatory and compliance complexity shows no signs of easing.**

Global privacy reforms, ESG disclosure standards, supply-chain due-diligence laws and new AI frameworks are reshaping how legal teams operate. Cross-border work has become more politically charged, forcing companies to reassess how they manage risk in markets affected by geopolitical tension.

### **Workload pressure is rising but budgets aren't keeping pace.**

Legal teams are being asked to do more with less: provide strategic insight, manage regulatory change, act as risk stewards and still deliver BAU support. Demonstrating ROI to the C-suite is now part of the role, not an optional extra.

### **The talent market remains tight, and the skills shortage is widening.**

Demand continues to outstrip supply for in-house lawyers with expertise in cybersecurity, data analytics, ESG reporting, AI regulation and cross-border compliance. Retaining strong lawyers is becoming just as challenging as hiring them, prompting many organisations to invest more heavily in development, upskilling and internal mobility.

And in a market where the best candidates are rarely on the open market, partnering with an experienced in-house legal search firm has never been more important. At Leonid, we work globally and our consultants only handle a maximum of three roles at any time, to ensure we maximise our time in reaching out to our network and screening potential candidates.

Unlike other search firms, we pledge to fill all open roles within 30 days of instruction, using our '[Magic Month](#)' methodology as well as saving you significant time in the process by utilising our unique [LeonidLive](#) shortlist platform.

To find out more about our methodology or for bespoke salary benchmarking, please get in touch with [Phil Redhead](#).





# leonid

## CONTACT

**Leonid is a leading, international recruiter in in-house legal and data privacy – and all areas of corporate governance.**

If you are looking to bolster your team, we can proactively seek out the best candidates and have them ready to join you within 30 days of instruction.

To find out more about Leonid's service, please visit our website:

[www.leonid-group.com](http://www.leonid-group.com)

Or, to request a meeting with our Head of Legal, Phil Redhead, please email him directly:

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