

Accounting & Finance Salary Guide 2026



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Executive Summary

Welcome to our 2026 Salary Guide. This report draws on insights from our expert consultants and internal data, offering a comprehensive look at the key salary trends across Accounting and Finance today.

As the market evolves, understanding these shifts is crucial for both employers and candidates. From the rise of cross-disciplinary skills to the increasing importance of flexible, performance-based compensation, we've compiled everything you need to navigate today's competitive talent landscape.

We hope this guide helps you make informed decisions around your hiring, and your career.



Matt Wadsworth

Matt Wadsworth
Managing Director

"Cross-disciplinary skills and flexible compensation are driving the talent market in 2026."

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director



Market Overview

Salary expectations across Accounting and Finance are being driven by a combination of economic pressures, talent scarcity in niche areas, and evolving operating models. Economic caution is widespread, as organisations grapple with macroeconomic uncertainty and rising operating costs. According to the ACCA and IMA Global Economic Conditions Survey (GECS), confidence remains low globally, with nearly two-thirds of accountants reporting increased operating costs in Q4 2025. Cost pressures are particularly acute in Western Europe and North America.

Amid this caution, organisations are strategically investing in high-impact areas, such as AI, automation, and business transformation. A recent McKinsey survey revealed that 65% of CFOs increased investment in GenAI in 2025. As a result, demand for skilled professionals continues to outpace supply, driving salary inflation, and pushing companies to prioritise roles that deliver direct business impact.

In Demand Roles

The market is seeing a clear divide between stabilising roles, including core finance positions like reporting and control, and transformational roles, such as change management, data, and automation. While traditional finance roles are experiencing moderate salary growth, the most significant increases are occurring in transformation, data, and efficiency, where companies are investing heavily to stay competitive and agile in the market.

The Move Toward Interim

Organisations are favouring flexible resource models in response to cost management needs and the desire for specialised expertise. This has meant a rise in day rates and overall earnings potential for high-quality interim professionals, particularly in transformation and change programs.

Across all sectors, interim professionals, especially those with Data, AI, and Transformation expertise, are seeing elevated day rates due to the immediate demand and limited supply of qualified talent. In contrast, permanent roles are experiencing measured growth, constrained by internal budget limitations.

The following roles are commanding the highest salary growth in 2026:



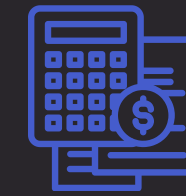
Finance Transformation & Automation

High demand as businesses prioritise efficiency, AI adoption, and scalable processes.



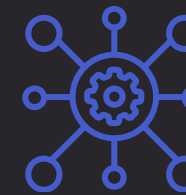
Data & AI

Continued salary inflation driven by acute talent shortages and strong investment in data capabilities.



Commercial Finance

Increased value placed on strategic insight and decision support.



ERP & Systems Specialists

Premiums driven by demand for implementation and optimization expertise.



Interim Transformation Talent

Elevated day rates reflecting urgency and scarcity of proven delivery experience.

The Impact of AI

AI-related skills are a significant driver of salary premiums and role evolution. Contrary to early fears AI would lead to job losses, firms are adapting to align with new technological realities. This is underscored by hiring trends. All the Big Four firms plan to hire at least 1,000 junior staff this year, with EY expecting to take on 1,600.

Candidates with practical experience in automation, data modelling, and GenAI tools command higher salaries, particularly when they can demonstrate measurable business impact. AI literacy, process optimisation, and data-driven decision-making are increasingly core requirements in traditional finance roles.

The strongest salary premiums are being offered to candidates with hybrid skill sets, as AI is no longer confined to specialist teams. It is embedded across functions, with companies raising the baseline expectation for digital and data proficiency. Organisations are prioritising hires who can leverage AI to reduce manual tasks, improve accuracy, and scale processes that directly linking AI capabilities to cost optimisation and productivity gains.

Premiums for AI and Transformation Roles

Data & AI positions command significantly higher pay than traditional finance roles at equivalent levels, reflecting acute talent shortages and the high business impact of data-driven capabilities. Compensation packages are also more varied, with potential equity, sign-on bonuses, and retention incentives offered, particularly in high-growth or private equity-backed environments.

Change & Transformation candidates, especially with experience in finance transformation, ERP implementations, or automation, also command premium salaries or day rates. There is a growing preference for interim hires in this space, with organisations willing to pay premiums for specialists who can deliver transformation projects quickly and efficiently.



**“Both domain expertise
and technical capability
are in demand.”**

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director

Benefits and Incentives

Organisations are shifting toward more flexible and performance-linked compensation structures. While base salaries are increasing, especially in high-demand and business critical areas, broad salary rises remain limited due to ongoing cost control pressures. Instead, companies are relying on variable compensation such as bonuses, sign-on incentives, and retention schemes to remain competitive without inflating fixed costs.

Equally important is the growing focus on total rewards. Benefits like flexibility, remote working, career development, and wellbeing have become central to attracting and retaining talent. Candidates are increasingly prioritising the full value proposition (bonuses, equity, and flexibility) rather than just base salary. Employers are responding by structuring more holistic, performance-linked packages that reflect this.

Salary Transparency

Salary transparency is on the rise, with growing expectations for upfront clarity on pay ranges. While some organisations embrace full transparency, others remain cautious due to concerns about internal equity and benchmarking. However, where transparency is implemented, it leads to better candidate engagement and more efficient hiring processes. Clear salary guidance reduces candidate drop-off and negotiation friction, improving offer acceptance rates. As transparency becomes more common, clients are placing greater emphasis on market data and internal alignment to confidently communicate salary ranges.

"Candidates demand transparency, employers are adjusting accordingly."

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director

Key Non-Financial Benefits

How Companies Are Competing Beyond Salary to Strengthen Their Value Proposition



Flexible and Hybrid Working

Flexibility remains one of the most influential factors in attracting and retaining talent, often on par with salary.



Career Development and Progression

Clear progression pathways, access to training, and exposure to transformation projects are key differentiators.



Work-Life Balance and Wellbeing

Enhanced wellbeing support, additional leave, and realistic workload expectations are becoming more prominent.



Purpose and Culture

Candidates are placing greater emphasis on company culture, leadership quality, and alignment to purpose and values.



Broader Lifestyle Benefits

Benefits such as enhanced parental leave, private healthcare, and tailored perks (e.g. sabbaticals, flexible benefits platforms) are increasingly used to personalise reward packages.

Accounting Salaries

Salary structures in core accounting roles remain relatively stable and benchmark-driven, with incremental increases aligned to market conditions. Compensation is typically weighted toward base salary with modest bonus structures. Tax remains a specialist niche with consistent demand, particularly for candidates with international, structuring, or advisory experience. Salaries can vary significantly depending on specialism, with advisory and planning roles generally commanding higher compensation than compliance-focused positions.

"Core salaries remain stable, but specialists with advisory expertise command premiums."

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director

Finance Salaries

Salary ranges within finance tend to exceed those in many general commercial roles, particularly in specialist areas such as risk, regulatory reporting, and technical accounting. Compensation structures often include meaningful bonus potential, with senior positions typically offering long-term incentives. Commercially focused roles, such as FP&A and Finance Business Partnering, can also command higher salaries where they directly influence strategic decision-making and business performance.

"Specialist finance roles often see higher salaries and stronger incentive structures, particularly where technical expertise or business impact is significant."

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director

Job Title	Permanent Salaries	Contract Day Rates
Group Reporting Manager	£75,000 - £95,000	£400 - £600
Financial Controller	£80,000 - £110,000	£400 - £750
Finance Manager	£60,000 - £85,000	£350 - £550
Financial Accountant	£55,000 - £70,000	£275 - £400
Management Accountant	£55,000 - £70,000	£275 - £400
Finance Business Partner	£55,000 - £70,000	£325 - £550
Project Accountant	£55,000 - £70,000	£350 - £550
Systems Accountant	£60,000 - £80,000	£350 - £550

Job Title	Permanent Salaries	Contract Day Rates
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	£150,000 - £200,000	£700 - £1,500
Finance Director	£115,000 - £150,000	£600 - £1,200
Finance Transformation Director	£100,000 - £140,000	£650 - £1,500
Group Financial Controller	£100,000 - £140,000	£600 - £1,000
Head of FP&A	£110,000 - £140,000	£600 - £1,100
Head of Commercial Finance	£100,000 - £140,000	£600 - £1,000
Head of Finance	£90,000 - £120,000	£450 - £800
FP&A Manager	£70,000 - £100,000	£400 - £600
Finance Transformation Manager	£80,000 - £110,000	£400 - £600
Head of Tax	£120,000 - £175,000	£600 - £1,100
Tax Manager	£75,000 - £110,000	£450 - £650

Winning the Talent Race

As the Accounting & Finance recruitment market evolves, organisations place greater emphasis on the value each hire brings rather than merely focusing on cost. The most in-demand candidates are those with cross-disciplinary skills, such as a combination of Finance and Data or Transformation and Systems. These hybrid profiles command premium salaries and are reshaping traditional job descriptions.

Interim hiring trends are also increasingly indicators of permanent changes to the talent landscape. Elevated day rates in transformation and AI-related roles are expected to exert sustained upward pressure on permanent salaries. With inflation prevalent in high-demand areas, businesses are recognising the need to invest in talent who can drive transformation.

Time-to-hire is a crucial advantage. Employers who act quickly, offering clear compensation packages from the outset, are more likely to secure the best candidates without the need for inflated offers. However, counteroffers remain common in key skill areas, forcing employers to reevaluate internal benchmarks and sometimes adjust compensation on the fly.

For both employers and candidates, adapting to these trends is crucial. Employers must remain flexible in their hiring practices and ensure their compensation structures reflect the market's evolving demands. Candidates should leverage cross-disciplinary expertise to command higher salaries in a rapidly transforming job market.

"Hiring the right people fast and with clear compensation drives success."

— Matt Wadsworth, Managing Director



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