RIPPLEMATCH

2025-2026 EDITION

THE EARLY CAREER INDEX REPORT

Salary Benchmarking for Entry-Level Jobs & Internships

Navigating Competitive Compensation: The Early Career Index Salary Benchmarking Report

In today's talent landscape, offering a competitive salary is essential for attracting and retaining the next generation. RippleMatch data finds that 'competitive compensation' consistently ranks as the No. 1 priority for Gen Z job seekers who are considering a full-time job offer. Candidates are also more likely to renege on a job offer for a role that offers higher compensation or better long-term career growth.

But determining where to accurately set your compensation bands for early career talent isn't easy.

To help inform the appropriate compensation bands, RippleMatch is excited to publish the 2025 edition of our Salary Index Report. This report is based on 2,400 roles spanning a little over 20 business functions. Collected from active job & internship listings posted by employers between August 1, 2024 - April 1st, 2025, this data provides up-to-date information on how companies with competitive early career programs are planning to compensate their interns and entry-level hires.

The roles detailed in this report span business functions and come from a wide range of industries. The roles analyzed in this report include the following:

- **Finance**
- **Tax & Accounting**
- **Insurance**
    - **Underwriting**
    - **Actuary**
- **Consulting**
- **Supply Chain**
- **Management & Leadership**
- **Legal**
- **Software Engineering**
- **Product Management**
- **Data Science**
- **UX & Product Design**
- **IT**
- **Cybersecurity**
- **Manufacturing Engineering**
- **Electrical Engineering**
- **Mechanical Engineering**
- **Research & Development**
- **HR & Recruiting**
- **Customer Success & Support**
- **Sales**
- **Graphic design**
- **Marketing & Advertising**

Throughout the report, we'll take a closer look at these roles and the nuances of their compensation. **Read on for this comprehensive report on early career compensation to guide and benchmark your own pay for the years ahead.**

About RippleMatch

RippleMatch connects recruiters with the right candidates while delivering the seamless, personalized experience Gen Z expects—and prefers—when exploring career opportunities. Learn more at RippleMatch.com/employers.

Understanding the Data

In this Salary Benchmarking report, we will share the pay ranges set by recruiters hiring for internship and entry-level roles.

The Dataset

The data analyzed in this report includes pay ranges for the areas listed on the right, based on 2,400 roles with pay information provided by RippleMatch customers. Pay data was collected from active job & internship listings posted between August 1, 2024 - April 1st, 2025. It does not include bonuses, benefits packages, or additional compensation. Employers include a pay range listing on their job or internship posting which calls for maximum pay and minimum pay, creating a range. RippleMatch customers have dedicated internship and entry-level programs and look to attract top early career talent into their organizations. As a result, many organizations included may offer highly competitive pay for their listed roles.

Methodology

To create an accurate analysis, RippleMatch calculated the pay percentiles and mean for each maximum and minimum pay provided by employers for their roles in each function category. On each page, you will see the percentiles for the maximum pay and minimum pay.

Roles are categorized into relevant functions when created in the RippleMatch platform, and each role was manually reviewed and audited by the RippleMatch editorial team to ensure each role included in the analysis bucket fits into the related function. Roles were discarded from the dataset if they did not fit clearly into one of the analyzed buckets.

This report focuses exclusively on entry-level jobs & internships, so roles with a mention of MBA, Masters, or PhDs were excluded from the dataset. Each role page includes a sample size of the roles analyzed for full transparency of the dataset used. To provide additional context, each page may include references to role titles and industries represented in the analysis.

Tips for Usage

Use the percentiles to understand how your compensation compares to the broader market. A maximum wage at the 90th percentile means only 10% of roles offer higher top-end pay—indicating highly competitive compensation. The 50th percentile (median) is a helpful benchmark for staying aligned with typical market rates. Roles falling near the 10th percentile can offer insight into the lower end of the pay spectrum, helping you identify where your compensation stands relative to others in the market. Use these insights as you explore each role category in the report to better understand pay trends across functions and industries.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Early Career Compensation Trends
Page 4

Compensation & Location
Page 9

Business & Finance Roles
Page 13

STEM Roles
Page 29

STEM: Master's Degree and PhD
Page 47

People Facing Roles & Creative Roles
Page 48

Conclusion
Page 58

SECTION 1

Early Career Compensation Trends

INCLUDES

– % of companies that list pay
– Gen Z's attitude toward compensation
– Average salary of roles in this report

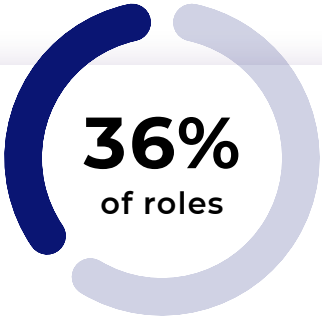
Compensation and Gen Z: What To Know

Before we dive into the compensation data for specific functions, let's take a high level look at the current compensation trends. First, let's address the share of roles that have compensation information attached.

There are currently 14 states with pay transparency laws, as outlined in this comprehensive article published in March 2025. While another 10 states have laws in the works, there are 36 states without any laws around pay transparency. There is also no federal requirement for companies to paste their compensation information on job postings.

Within the RippleMatch platform, we saw the share of roles with pay transparency remain stagnant. While only 21% of the roles between Aug 1, 2022 - April 1, 2023, had compensation information included, one year later (between Aug 1, 2023 - April 1, 2024), 38% of roles on the platform had compensation listed.

Comparing the 2023-2024 season to the 2024-2024 season, there was no increase to the share of roles that displayed compensation, suggesting that the initial bump from legislation has taken effect. Today, it's an employer-driven market, and employers may not be eager to display their compensation ranges unless required to do so by legislation or pressure from applicants.



DISPLAY COMPENSATION

42.1%
of internships

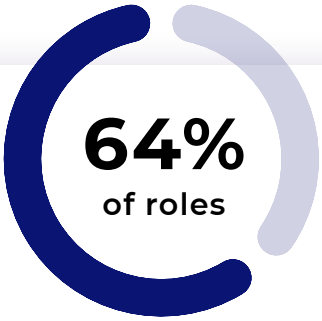
22.2%
of full-time jobs

38% Aug 2023 -Apr 2024
of roles displayed compensation

57.9%
of internships

77.8%
of full-time jobs

62% Aug 2023 -Apr 2024
of roles did not display compensation



DO NOT DISPLAY COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION TRENDS

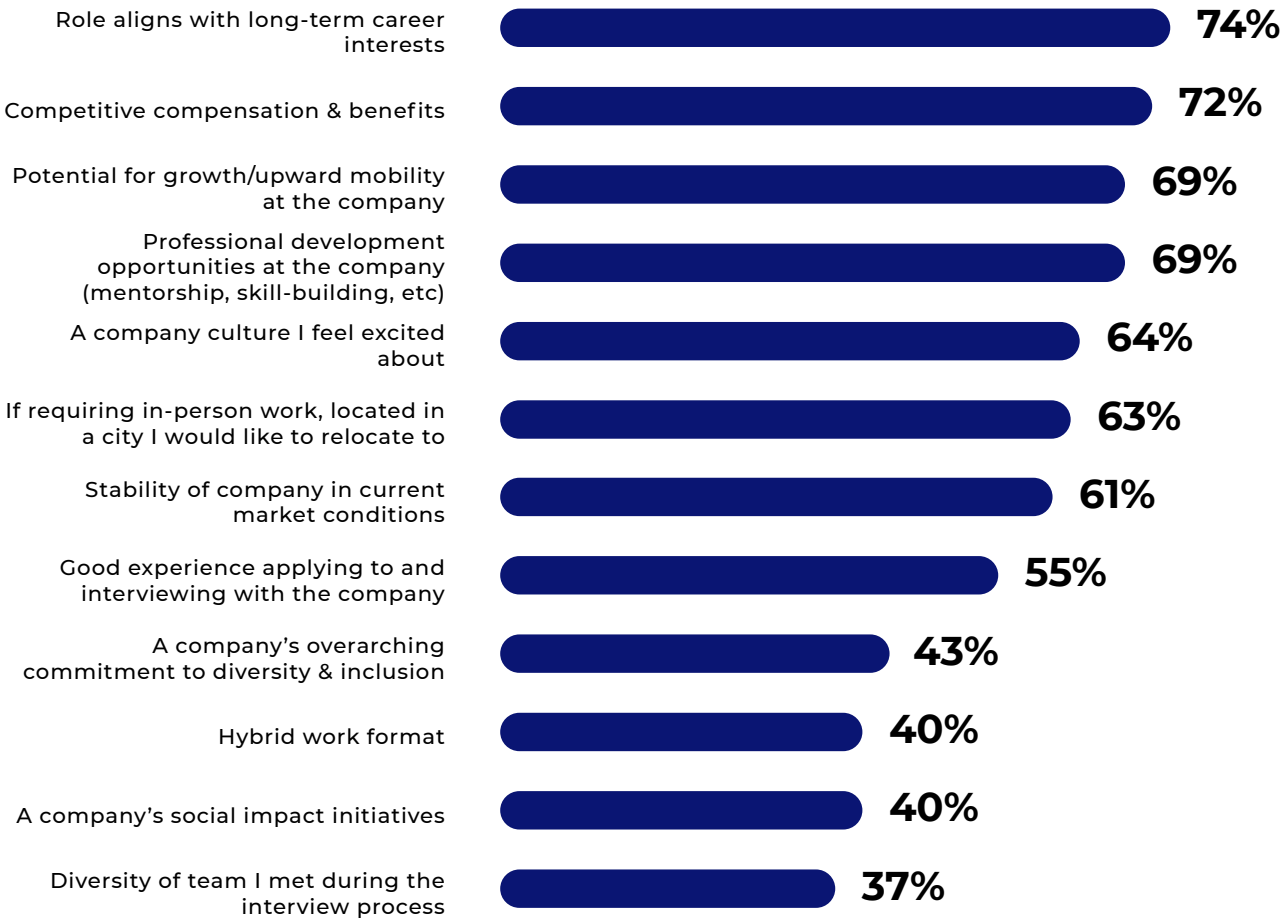
Despite the hesitation to list pay ranges, RippleMatch surveys have found that it would be too employers' benefit to do so. A December 2024 survey found that 53% of college students are less likely to apply for a role if it doesn't have a compensation range, and 72% of respondents say that 'competitive compensation' is very important when accepting a full time job offer.

With this in mind, companies that don't reveal their pay ranges until candidates are deeper into the application or interview process risk frustration and the potential for candidates to renege on offers if they receive them.

53%
of students

are less likely to apply if the company did not have a salary/ pay range displayed because they don't want to waste their time if the salary/pay is not in their ideal range

In a RippleMatch survey of candidates, we asked: 'Which of the following are most important factors that influenced you to accept a full time job offer or would influence you?' The graph below represented the share of candidates that selected 'very important.'



COMPENSATION TRENDS

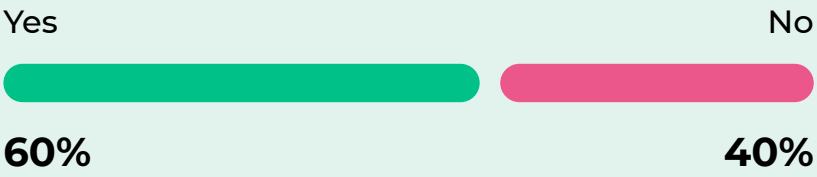
For several years now, RippleMatch has also been surveying Gen Z candidates about their willingness to renege on a job or internship offer. Through the years, willingness to renege on an offer or continue to search passively for another role has remained between 60-75%. Our most recent survey, conducted in December, found that 60% of candidates say they would continue to passively search for opportunities after an accepting an offer in case a better one comes along.

What constitutes a 'better' offer? For 65% of candidates, it's an opportunity that better aligns with their long-term career goals.

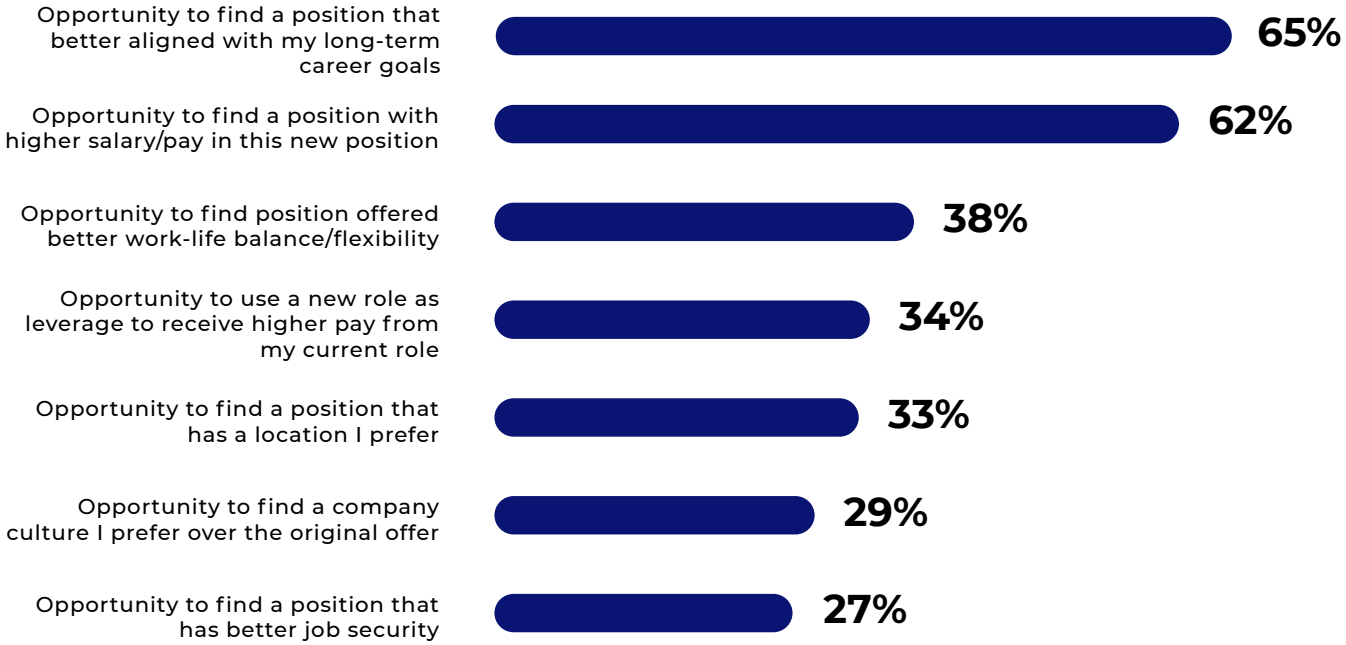
This is closely followed by finding a position that offers higher pay. Notably, while most candidates would want find a new role with better pay, only 34% would use the new role as a way to leverage for higher pay at the original company. Additionally, most candidates aren't searching for a position with better company culture, stability, location or flexibility. While that is a factor, most consider compensation and career advancement as the No. 1 influence on accepting or reneging on an offer.

This makes pay transparency from the beginning a competitive advantage – as long as your pay is competitive.

We asked: 'If you accept a job or internship offer, do you plan to continue to passively search for opportunities in case a better one comes along?'



We asked: 'What would be the reasons you would continue to passively search for another role?'



COMPENSATION TRENDS

To figure out if you're offering competitive compensation for your early career roles, we've put together this report to share some of the pay scales for commonly occurring entry-level roles and internships.

These benchmarks can be used to adjust your own compensation, or to understand where and when to highlight what you offer beyond the base number. For example – maybe you have a lower salary or hourly pay, but you have robust benefits that equal a higher dollar amount. Market those benefits in order to capture strong talent without needing to make large adjustments to compensation.

Below, we've shared an overview of the compensation across the three main areas we'll be covering in this report. Each lists the average 'minimum' salary provided by employers on our platform for each role type. When putting their roles into the RippleMatch platform, employers can put a range that includes the minimum for the role and the maximum. By looking at the average minimum, you can get a benchmark of the most common pay 'floor' for each role. All roles are strictly internships and entry-level roles – all Masters, MBA, and PhD roles have been excluded.

To dive deeper into compensation benchmarking, navigate through the report to view the pay percentiles for each role mentioned. This will help you pinpoint if you are in the 75th percentile and offering competitive pay, or if you're in the lower percentiles and may not be keeping up with your industry peers when it comes to salary. Keep in mind these numbers are benchmarks and a representation of employers that leverage the RippleMatch platform – we recommend using additional pay benchmarking resources to get the full picture for your organization.

Business

Avg. Minimum Salary

Business Analyst
Avg. Low: $70,000

Finance Avg. Low: $66,200

Leadership Development Programs Avg. Low: $65,900

Supply Chain Avg. Low: $63,600

Tax & Accounting
Avg. Low: $60,000

Insurance underwriting
Avg. Low: $50,500

Avg. Minimum Wage

Consulting Avg. Low: $34/hour

Legal Avg. Low: $30/hour

Tax & Accounting
Avg. Low: $27/hour

Finance Avg. Low: $25/hour

Actuary Avg. Low: $23/hour

Business Analyst
Avg. Low: $23/hour

Underwriting Avg. Low: $21/h

Supply Chain Avg. Low: $20/h

Management Avg. Low: $20/h

STEM

Avg. Minimum Salary

Data Science Avg. Low: $123,100

Software Eng. Avg. Low: $90,000

Product Management
Avg. Low: $86,800

R&D Avg. Low: $77,400

Electrical Eng. Avg. Low: $76,000

IT Avg. Low: $70,300

Manufacturing Eng.
Avg. Low: $66,500

Avg. Minimum Wage

Software Eng. Avg. Low: $35/hour

UX & Product Design Avg. Low: $31/h

Data Science Avg. Low: $29/hour

Cybersecurity Avg. Low: $29/hour

Product Management Avg. Low: $27/h

Manufacturing Eng. Avg. Low: $25/h

Mechanical Eng. Avg. Low: $25/hour

R&D Avg. Low: $25/hour

IT Avg. Low: $24/hour

Electrical Eng. Avg. Low: $24/hour

People-Facing

Avg. Minimum Salary

HR & Recruiting
Avg. Low: $56,400

Customer Success & Support
Avg. Low: $55,800

Sales Avg. Low: $52,000

Marketing & Advertising
Avg. Low: $50,000

Avg. Minimum Wage

HR & Recruiting
Avg. Low: $24/hour

Customer Success & Support
Avg. Low: $24/hour

Marketing & Advertising
Avg. Low: $23/hour

Sales Avg. Low: $22/hour

Graphic Design
Avg. Low: $20/hour

SECTION 2

Compensation & Location

INCLUDES

– Student motivators for relocation

– Cost of living index by state

– Recommendations for considering location in compensation benchmarking

Compensation & Location: What Gen Z Cares About Most

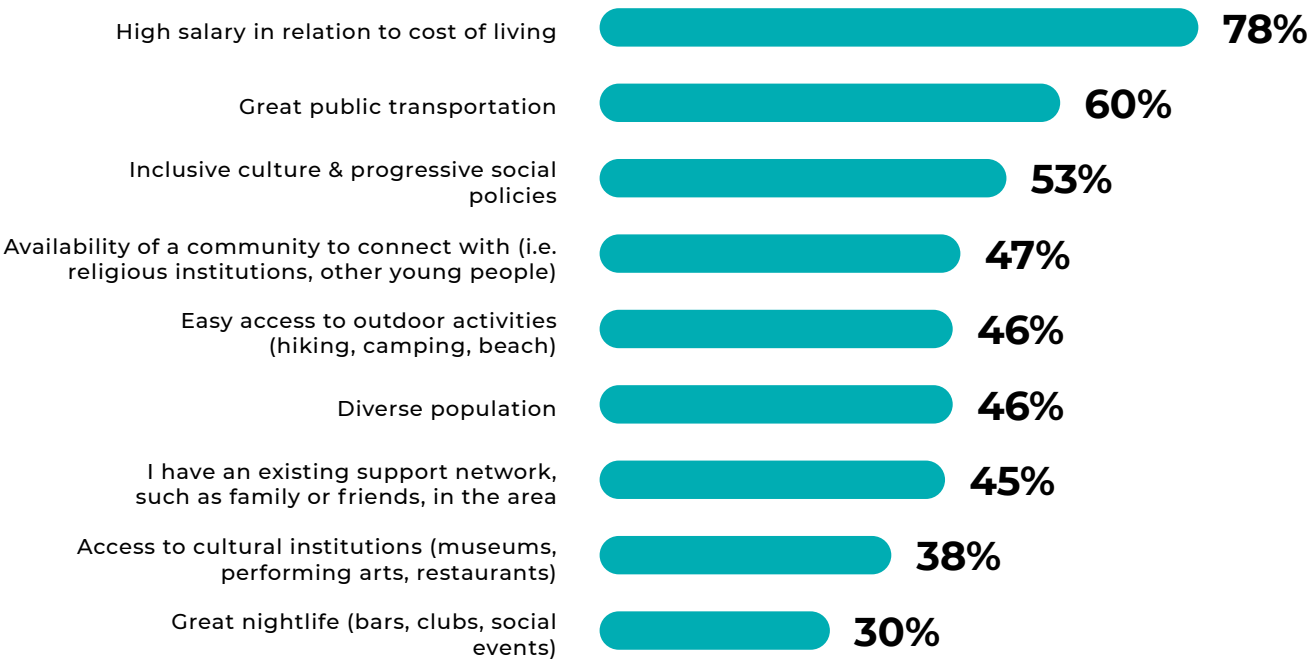
It's clear from our earlier data shared that Gen Z candidates are motivated by compensation. In today's landscape, this is no surprise. A recent study from Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Research found that the share of people living in the US who are rent burdened is at an all time high.

In a 2024 survey, we asked candidates what would convince them to relocate. It's clear the cost of living, and particularly the cost of housing, would be a particular concern for young professionals moving to a new city and finding their own housing. Candidates want to feel confident that if they are taking the leap to move to a new city, they won't feel financially burdened on top of living in an unfamiliar place.

In addition to having a high salary in relation to cost of living, candidates care about good public transportation – suggesting a preference for cities – inclusive communities, an existing support system, and access to the outdoors. Money is the biggest motivator, but feeling included in their community is a draw.

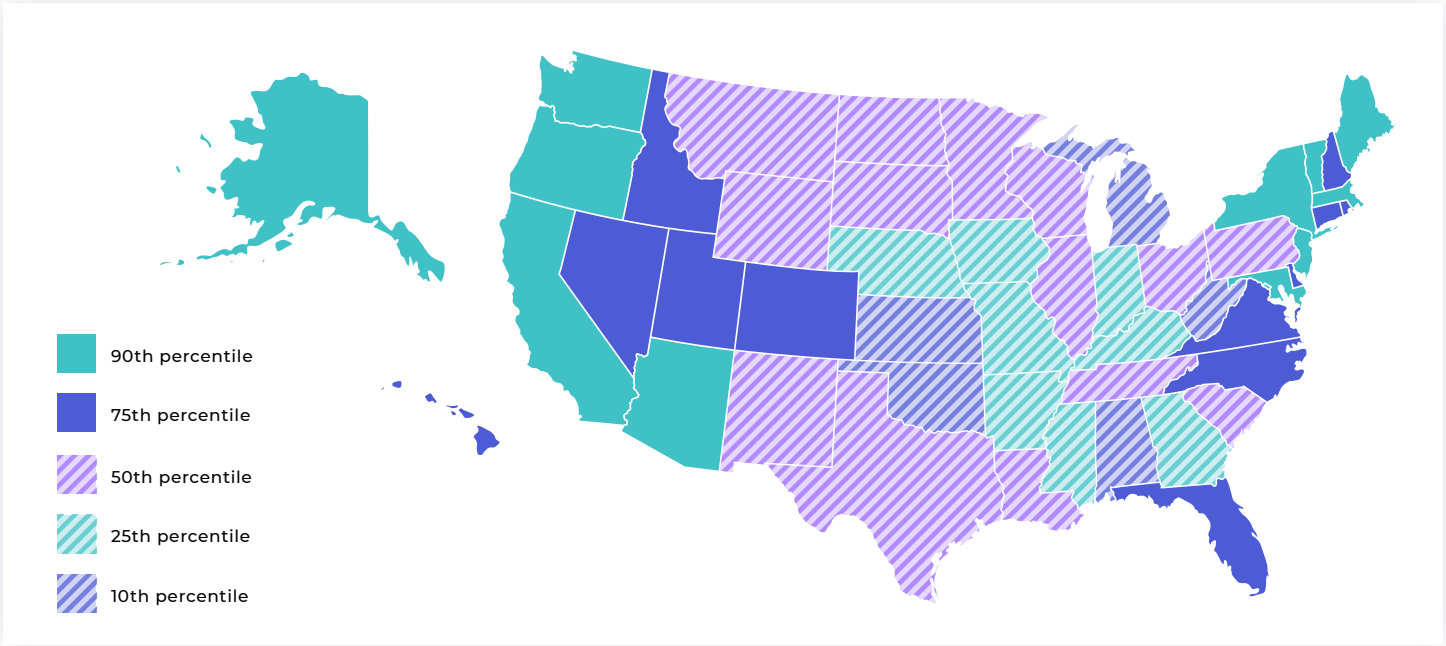
WHY GEN Z WOULD RELOCATE?

We asked: "How important are the following factors when deciding whether or not to move to a location for a full-time job opportunity?"



How Location Could Impact Compensation

The compensation data in the following sections includes roles throughout the country. As they are not separated by locations (many simply listed all the locations they are hiring for, alongside a range), we recommend you navigate the report with the context below. The chart* below represents a cost-of-living index focused on housing costs in each state. This reflects the locations that have a median cost of living, and those that are above or below the median. When considering how to make your compensation competitive, we recommend looking in the matching percentile tier of the cost of living. For example: New York is in the 90th percentile for cost of living; to offer competitive comp, consider salary ranges in the 90th percentile of our data. Another example: Indiana is the 25th percentile for cost of living. You may only need to offer in the 25th percentile for to be competitive for your area.



90th percentile	
State	Percentile
Hawaii	98%
District of Columbia	96%
Massachusetts	94%
California	93%
New York	91%
New Jersey	89%
Maryland	87%
Oregon	85%
Arizona	83%
Vermont	81%
Maine	80%
Washington	78%
Alaska	76%

75th percentile	
State	Percentile
New Hampshire	74%
Connecticut	72%
Utah	70%
Rhode Island	69%
Florida	67%
Nevada	63%
Colorado	63%
Virginia	61%
Puerto Rico	59%
Idaho	57%
Delaware	54%
North Carolina	52%

50th percentile	
State	Percentile
Wisconsin	50%
Wyoming	48%
South Dakota	46%
New Mexico	44%
South Carolina	43%
Montana	41%
Ohio	39%
Pennsylvania	37%
Louisiana	35%
Illinois	33%
Tennessee	31%
Texas	30%
Minnesota	28%
North Dakota	26%

25th percentile	
State	Percentile
Nebraska	24%
Georgia	22%
Kentucky	20%
Missouri	19%
Indiana	17%
Arkansas	13%
Iowa	13%
Mississippi	11%

10th percentile	
State	Percentile
Michigan	9%
Kansas	7%
Alabama	6%
Oklahoma	4%
West Virginia	2%

*This data comes from the Missouri Center for Economic Research and the Council for Community and Economic Research

Making Compensation Competitive: Turning Location Insights Into Action

Understanding the relationship between cost of living and compensation is only part of the equation—it's what you do with that insight that matters. The data in the previous pages showed just how much location impacts both candidate decision-making and your own approach to compensation. From housing and transportation to cultural fit and community, Gen Z evaluates potential locations through a holistic lens—but pay remains the most powerful lever.

To help attract and retain early talent, especially in a market where candidates are balancing financial independence with career exploration, it's critical to not only adjust compensation by geography but to do so with consistency and intention.

Translating Location Data Into Pay Strategy

Here are a few practical ways to use the cost-of-living and relocation data effectively:

Use percentile alignment to calibrate pay: If you're hiring in a high-cost area like New York or California (90th percentile for cost of living), consider offering compensation in the higher percentiles of the salary ranges in this report. Conversely, roles based in lower-cost states like Indiana or Mississippi (25th or 10th percentile) may only need to fall in the 25th–50th percentile to remain competitive.

Anchor to the highest-cost location if roles are remote: If your early career roles are remote or hybrid but tethered to a corporate HQ in a high-cost city, candidates will likely benchmark compensation to that location. In these cases, paying based on company HQ or "anchor city" cost of living can help maintain equity and consistency.

Factor in relocation incentives for less desirable areas: If you're hiring for roles in locations with lower Gen Z appeal (due to lack of public transportation, cultural fit, or support networks), you may need to compensate above local norms to encourage relocation. Even a modest bump can make a difference in persuading candidates to consider unfamiliar cities.

Pair pay with messaging: If your compensation aligns well with local cost of living but appears lower compared to national averages, use that as an opportunity to educate candidates. Transparency around the total value—especially when combined with lower housing costs, strong benefits, or growth opportunity—can go a long way.

A Final Note Before Diving Into Role-Specific Data

While location is foundational, it's not the final word. Once you've accounted for geographic variation, it's time to focus on the roles themselves. Different functions demand different levels of pay—based not just on skill requirements, but on supply, demand, and long-term hiring outcomes.

In the following sections, you'll find compensation benchmarks for internship and full-time entry-level roles across a wide range of job types. This data will help you fine-tune your approach and ensure that, regardless of location, your offers are compelling, equitable, and aligned with the expectations of today's early career candidates.

SECTION 3

Business & Finance

INCLUDES

- Finance
- Tax & Accounting
- Insurance
  - Underwriting
  - Actuary
- Consulting
- Supply Chain
- Management & Leadership
- Legal

Finance

This dataset encompasses roles with finance, financial, or investment in the title, or whose job description includes financial responsibilities if the title does not explicitly include finance. This grouping excludes accountants or tax roles, as those will be analyzed in the following pages.

Full Time Roles

The compensation for roles in finance varies depending on role title and responsibilities. At the 90th percentile of the payscale, investment banking roles command the highest salary.
The median percentile tends to be financial analyst roles or rotational programs. And at the bottom percentile, 'associate' tends to be present in the job title.

average maximum
$82K

average minimum
$66K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$110K	$101K
75th percentile	$90K	$70K
50th percentile	$80K	$60K
25th percentile	$68K	$50K
10th percentile	$60K	$50K

Role sample size: 24

Finance

This dataset encompasses internships with finance, financial, or investment in the title, or whose job description includes financial responsibilities if the title does not explicitly include finance. This grouping excludes accountants or tax roles, as those will be analyzed in the following pages.

Internships

The upper percentile of internship pay in finance comes from positions regarding investing and capital markets, and come from well-known financial or investment firms. The middle to low tier of pay includes more general titles such as 'finance intern,' from a range of companies that are not exclusive to finance.

average maximum
$32/h

average minimum
$25/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$44/h	$34/h
75th percentile	$35/h	$30/h
50th percentile	$30/h	$24/h
25th percentile	$26/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$24/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 56



Tax & Accounting

This dataset encompasses roles related to accounting or tax audit. Each role in this grouping has tax, accounting, or audit in their role titles, and are from a mix of accounting firms and companies with their own internal accounting roles.

Full Time Roles

Full-time roles commanding the highest salary belong to well-known accounting firms. Roles with the median pay are more likely to be a mix of accounting firms and companies with internal roles. Roles in the 10th percentile have the word 'associate' in their job title.

average maximum
$99K

average minimum
$60K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$130K	$70K
75th percentile	$123K	$70K
50th percentile	$90K	$60K
25th percentile	$80K	$50K
10th percentile	$70K	$50K

Role sample size: 18

Tax & Accounting

This dataset encompasses roles related to accounting or tax audit. Each role in this grouping has tax, accounting, or audit in their role titles, and are from a mix of accounting firms and companies with their own internal accounting roles.

Internships

Well-known accounting firms offer the highest pay for their tax & accounting internships. The median pay tends to be offered by financial institutions or technology companies, while the lowest pay has companies in industries such as retail, manufacturing, or insurance.

average maximum
$34/h

average minimum
$27/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$45/h	$31/h
75th percentile	$41/h	$31/h
50th percentile	$33/h	$28/h
25th percentile	$26/h	$23/h
10th percentile	$25/h	$21/h

Role sample size: 39

Insurance

Underwriting

This dataset encompasses roles that explicitly mention underwriting in their job title. Since this is a specific role title, we have broken this out into its own section to provide visibility on the pay for underwriting positions.

Full Time Roles

There isn't a large amount of variance in underwriting salaries, but the top percentile of pay is associated with a specialty area, while the lowest percentile of salary for an underwriter has the word 'associate' in its job title, following a similar trend we are seeing across roles.

average maximum
$77K

average minimum
$51K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$86K	$70K
75th percentile	$80K	$63K
50th percentile	$80K	$40K
25th percentile	$70K	$40K
10th percentile	$70K	$40K

Role sample size: 8

Insurance

Underwriting

This dataset encompasses internships that explicitly mention underwriting in their job title. Since this is a specific role title, we have broken this out into its own section to provide visibility on the pay for underwriting positions.

Internships

This small sample of underwriting internships demonstrates that underwriting pay can vary even when the role title is similar. The top percentile of pay is offered by an insurance company, while the median and low pay includes financial and retail companies.

average maximum
$31/h

average minimum
$21/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$39/h	$23/h
75th percentile	$36/h	$22/h
50th percentile	$31/h	$21/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$24/h	$20/h

Role sample size: 4

Insurance

Actuary

Given the nuances in insurance roles, it's useful to reference commonly occurring titles. This dataset encompasses internships that explicitly mention 'actuary' in their title to provide guidance on the wage range.

Internships

This small sample of actuary internships demonstrates that pay can vary even when the role title is similar. Both the top percentile and bottom percentile pay is offered by insurance companies – however, the bottom percentile internship is located in a city with a lower cost of living than the top percentile.

average maximum
$32/h

average minimum
$23/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$37/h	$28/h
75th percentile	$33/h	$24/h
50th percentile	$30/h	$21/h
25th percentile	$30/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$29/h	$20/h

Role sample size: 4



Business Analyst

This dataset encompasses roles described as analyst or business analyst positions. It's important to note that these are distinct from data-science roles, which have their own section in the 'STEM roles' portion of this report.

Full Time Roles

Business analyst roles are offered by a range of companies, from financial institutions to technology companies to logistics firms, as well as insurance and media. The top percentile of pay is offered by financial and technology companies, while the lower percentile includes media, logistics, and roles with 'associate' in the title.

average maximum
$86K

average minimum
$70K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$120K	$98K
75th percentile	$100K	$90K
50th percentile	$80K	$70K
25th percentile	$70K	$50K
10th percentile	$62K	$42K

Role sample size: 13



Business Analyst

This dataset encompasses roles described as analyst or business analyst positions. It's important to note that these are distinct from data-science roles, which have their own section in the 'STEM roles' portion of this report.

Internships

Business analyst internships are offered by a range of companies, including insurance, financial firms, technology, logistics, and manufacturing. The top percentile of pay is offered by financial and technology companies, while the lower percentile includes logistics, retail, and manufacturing.

average maximum
$30/h
average minimum
$23/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$37/h	$30/h
75th percentile	$35/h	$26/h
50th percentile	$30/h	$23/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$22/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 42

Consulting

This dataset encompasses internships that are specifically labeled as 'consulting,' and are therefore distinct from other general business positions analyzed in this salary report.

Internships

The internships listed here come from distinct companies in consulting, manufacturing, and technology. Despite the variance across industries, their pay is fairly similar; this may demonstrate a generally accepted rate for internships with 'consulting' in their internship title.

average maximum
$38/h

average minimum
$34/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$45/h	$36/h
75th percentile	$40/h	$35/h
50th percentile	$35/h	$35/h
25th percentile	$35/h	$31/h
10th percentile	$34/h	$30/h

Role sample size: 5

Supply chain

This dataset encompasses roles with Supply Chain in their title and description. These roles belong to companies that are heavy in distribution, including CPG, pharmaceuticals, packaging, and manufacturing.

Full Time Roles

While all of these roles have supply chain in their title, they belong to companies in different industries. The highest paying supply chain roles are in pharmaceuticals and healthcare, the mid-tier is CPG and the lowest paying are in logistics and packaging.

average maximum
$73K

average minimum
$64K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$84K	$70K
75th percentile	$80K	$70K
50th percentile	$70K	$60K
25th percentile	$70K	$60K
10th percentile	$60K	$58K

Role sample size: 9

Supply chain

This dataset encompasses roles with Supply Chain in their title and description. These roles belong to companies that are heavy in distribution, including CPG, packaging, shipping, and manufacturing.

Internships

In Supply Chain, internship wage varies with a maximum of $35 an hour to a minimum of $18 an hour. Unlike full-time roles, internships in Supply Chain don't have clear trends on which industries pay the most, and the industries mentioned above are present throughout the percentiles.

average maximum
$28/h

average minimum
$20/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$35/h	$25/h
75th percentile	$32/h	$21/h
50th percentile	$25/h	$20/h
25th percentile	$24/h	$18/h
10th percentile	$23/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 36



Leadership Development Programs

This dataset encompasses roles that are specifically labeled as leadership or management development/trainee programs. These roles are unique in that they are often provide as rotational programs, exposing new grads to a variety of business functions before placing them in a specific role.

Full Time Roles

These leadership development positions in this dataset are offered in a variety of different industries, including financial institutions, logistics, manufacturing, and policy. These roles are offered in a variety of different locations, but primarily in the Midwest and the South.

average maximum
$84K

average minimum
$66K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$99K	$92K
75th percentile	$83K	$73K
50th percentile	$80K	$70K
25th percentile	$80K	$55K
10th percentile	$77K	$40K

Role sample size: 8

Management Internships

The internships in this dataset differ slightly than the previous page, in that many of the internships listed are 'on the ground' management internships in warehouses, stores, and distribution centers.

Internships

The wage ranges listed below primarily relate to roles that would require an intern to be on the ground in warehouses, manufacturing centers, storefronts, or distribution centers, rather than primarily corporate office spaces.

average maximum
$23/h

average minimum
$20/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$28/h	$25/h
75th percentile	$26/h	$23/h
50th percentile	$22/h	$19/h
25th percentile	$19/h	$18/h
10th percentile	$18/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 10

Legal

This dataset encompasses internships that mention the word legal, and the roles are primarily contributed by companies in the financial, marketing, energy, or technology space.

Internships

Technology companies are more likely to offer wages in the 75th and 90th percentile, while the median comes from financial companies. The lower percentile wages come from energy companies and marketing companies.

average maximum
$34/h

average minimum
$30/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$44/h	$40/h
75th percentile	$40/h	$37/h
50th percentile	$30/h	$26/h
25th percentile	$29/h	$22/h
10th percentile	$26/h	$22/h

Role sample size: 14

SECTION 4

STEM

INCLUDES

– Software Engineering
– Product Management
– Data Science
– UX & Product Design
– IT
– Cybersecurity
– Manufacturing Engineering
– Electrical Engineering
– Mechanical Engineering
– Research & Development
– How pay might vary for advanced degrees

Software Engineering

This dataset encompasses roles in software engineering, identified by job title or job description. While many of the companies that hire software engineers are specifically in the technology sector, there are several other industries represented including logistics, finance, and insurance.

Full Time Roles

Not surprisingly, the top percentile salaries come from software companies. The median salary for software engineers is contributed by companies in the financial sector, logistics, and insurance. The lowest percentile come from positions with the word 'associate' in the title, spanning across several industries.

average maximum
$129K

average minimum
$90K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$166K	$126K
75th percentile	$160K	$90K
50th percentile	$130K	$90K
25th percentile	$100K	$80K
10th percentile	$90K	$64K

Role sample size: 45

Software Engineering

This dataset encompasses internships in software engineering, identified by job title or job description. While many of the companies that hire software engineering interns are specifically in the technology sector, there are several other industries represented including logistics, education, manufacturing, retail, finance, and insurance.

Internships

The top wage percentile comes from software companies. The median salary stems from companies in the financial sector, some tech companies, and insurance. The lowest percentile of wages comes from companies in manufacturing, retail, and education.

average maximum
$44/h

average minimum
$35/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	**$63/h**	**$51/h**
75th percentile	**$59/h**	**$44/h**
50th percentile	**$45/h**	**$33/h**
25th percentile	**$31/h**	**$25/h**
10th percentile	**$24/h**	**$20/h**

Role sample size: 103

Product Management

This dataset encompasses product management roles. The majority of these roles come from the technology and finance sector.

Full Time Roles

The upper percentiles of product management salaries come from technology companies, while the median percentile includes some companies in the financial sector. In the bottom percentile, there are product management roles offered by a company in the logistics space.

average maximum
$111K

average minimum
$87K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$154K	$128K
75th percentile	$140K	$100K
50th percentile	$110K	$80K
25th percentile	$90K	$70K
10th percentile	$60K	$56K

Role sample size: 17

Product Management

This dataset encompasses product management internships. These product management internships span industries including technology, finance, insurance, manufacturing, and defense.

Internships

The upper percentiles of product management wages come from technology companies, while the median percentile includes some companies in the financial sector and technology. In the bottom percentile, product management internships are often defense & manufacturing.

average maximum
$34/h

average minimum
$27/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	**$52/h**	**$40/h**
75th percentile	**$36/h**	**$29/h**
50th percentile	**$30/h**	**$23/h**
25th percentile	**$26/h**	**$20/h**
10th percentile	**$25/h**	**$23/h**

Role sample size: 46



Data Science

This dataset encompasses roles specifically identified as data scientist or data engineering positions.

Full Time Roles

These roles come from two industries: The technology sector and the financial sector. While a data scientist role may pay differently outside of these two sectors, the average pay of an entry-level data scientist is between $123,000 - $125,000.

average maximum
$125K

average minimum
$123K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$140K	$140K
75th percentile	$140K	$140K
50th percentile	$125K	$125K
25th percentile	$110K	$108K
10th percentile	$110K	$103K

Role sample size: 4

Data Science

This dataset encompasses roles specifically identified as data scientist or data engineering positions. These roles span industries including technology, manufacturing, insurance, finance, and marketing.

Internships

The data science roles in the upper percentile belong to technology companies, while the middle tier pay is primarily from companies in insurance, manufacturing, and finance. At the bottom tier, data science roles stem from the marketing & consumer industry.

average maximum
$36/h

average minimum
$29/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	**$57/h**	**$49/h**
75th percentile	**$38/h**	**$31/h**
50th percentile	**$31/h**	**$25/h**
25th percentile	**$30/h**	**$23/h**
10th percentile	**$25/h**	**$20/h**

Role sample size: 48



UX & Product Design

This dataset encompasses roles that include UX, UI, or product design in the title. This dataset does not include traditional graphic design, which can be found in the following section.

Internships

The majority of this data comes from technology companies, and these internships make up the upper and median wage percentiles. The lower percentiles include wages from manufacturing, shipping, and marketing companies.

average maximum
$36/h

average minimum
$31/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$50/h	$46/h
75th percentile	$44/h	$41/h
50th percentile	$34/h	$27/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$22/h
10th percentile	$25/h	$20/h

Role sample size: 16



Information Technology

This dataset includes roles labeled as Information Technology (IT) roles or technical support engineering. To ensure proper categorization, we have verified that these roles have similar job descriptions and functions.

Full Time Roles

The highest percentile comes from an IT consulting company, while the median percentile includes financial organizations. The bottom wage percentile comes from companies in the insurance sector.

average maximum
$103K

average minimum
$70K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$160K	$84K
75th percentile	$120K	$78K
50th percentile	$90K	$70K
25th percentile	$73K	$60K
10th percentile	$70K	$60K

Role sample size: 10



Information Technology

This dataset includes internships labeled as Information Technology (IT) roles or technical support engineering. To ensure proper categorization, we have verified that these roles have similar job descriptions and functions.

Internships

Unlike the full-time role sample, these IT internships span industries including technology, manufacturing, insurance, pharmaceuticals, finance, and retail. Each percentile includes representation from these industries, with no specific industry dominating the bottom percentile.

average maximum
$30/h

average minimum
$24/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$34/h	$41/h
75th percentile	$26/h	$34/h
50th percentile	$23/h	$30/h
25th percentile	$20/h	$25/h
10th percentile	$19/h	$22/h

Role sample size: 55

Cybersecurity

While Cybersecurity is sometimes grouped as a function of IT, there is a significant number of roles labeled as 'cybersecurity,' warranting its own section for clearer wage benchmarking.

Internships

The upper wage percentiles are from companies in the financial and technology sectors, while the median wage comes from insurance, technology, and financial firms. The bottom wage includes a logistics firm and a few technology companies.

average maximum
$35/h
average minimum
$29/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	**$47/h**	**$40/h**
75th percentile	**$35/h**	**$33/h**
50th percentile	**$33/h**	**$27/h**
25th percentile	**$31/h**	**$23/h**
10th percentile	**$29/h**	**$20/h**

Role sample size: 18



Manufacturing Engineering

Each role included in this dataset is titled as manufacturing engineering, and come from companies focused on manufacturing.

Full Time Roles

Compared to other roles, the salary for manufacturing engineering roles have less variables. The top and bottom percentiles are both manufacturing engineering roles, while the median includes several manufacturing leadership development programs.

average maximum
$80K

average minimum
$67K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$91K	$80K
75th percentile	$80K	$70K
50th percentile	$80K	$70K
25th percentile	$80K	$63K
10th percentile	$70K	$50K

Role sample size: 10



Manufacturing Engineering

Each role included in this dataset is titled as manufacturing engineering, and come from companies focused on manufacturing or CPG.

Internships

Internship pay has a bit more variance than salary when it comes to manufacturing internships. At the high level, the highest pay comes from a tech-driven manufacturing firm, while the median and low wage percentile comes from more traditional manufacturing companies.

average maximum
$34/h

average minimum
$25/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$48/h	$34/h
75th percentile	$38/h	$29/h
50th percentile	$31/h	$22/h
25th percentile	$27/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$25/h	$19/h

Role sample size: 16

Electrical Engineering

This dataset encompasses roles that include electrical engineering in their title, but stem from a variety of different companies. Some companies produce software and hardware, while others are in the manufacturing space.

Full Time Roles

Roles in the upper salary percentile come from companies that produce their own tech hardware. The lower salary percentiles sit within the manufacturing space.

average maximum
$104K

average minimum
$76K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$140K	$85K
75th percentile	$125K	$80K
50th percentile	$95K	$75K
25th percentile	$80K	$70K
10th percentile	$80K	$70K

Role sample size: 6

Electrical Engineering

This dataset encompasses internships that include electrical engineering in their title, but stem from a variety of different companies in the defense, manufacturing, and technology space.

Internships

Similar to full-time positions, the upper wage percentile stems from a technology company that produces hardware. The median includes defense companies, while the lowest wage percentile includes companies in the manufacturing space.

average maximum
$34/h

average minimum
$24/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$48/h	$30/h
75th percentile	$44/h	$28/h
50th percentile	$27/h	$24/h
25th percentile	$26/h	$21/h
10th percentile	$24/h	$19/h

Role sample size: 11

Mechanical Engineering

This dataset encompasses internships that include mechanical engineering in their title, but stem from a variety of different companies in the defense, manufacturing, and energy sector.

Internships

Companies in the automotive and hardware space offer the highest internship wages, followed by the defense space. Typically, manufacturing companies offer the lowest wages comparatively for mechanical engineering internships.

average maximum
$33/h

average minimum
$25/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$46/h	$30/h
75th percentile	$42/h	$30/h
50th percentile	$29/h	$24/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$21/h
10th percentile	$24/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 17

Research & Development

The roles included in this dataset have R&D listed in their job title. They belong to companies in the manufacturing and CPG space, and are largely focused on product discovery and package design.

Full Time Roles

These roles come from 3 distinct companies and do not have much variance in their pay scale. While the sample size is small, this can be a helpful benchmark to understand what an R&D position in the manufacturing and CPG could be compensated at.

average maximum
$83K

average minimum
$77K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$88K	$80K
75th percentile	$85K	$80K
50th percentile	$80K	$80K
25th percentile	$80K	$75K
10th percentile	$80K	$72K

Role sample size: 3

Research & Development

The internships included in this dataset all have R&D in their title, but have more variance in the type of development. Internships encompass development of product, packaging, and food & nutritional products.

Internships

This dataset primarily includes CPG (food & beverage consumer products) and companies that manufacture goods and hardware. The upper wage percentile includes companies that manufacture hardware, while the middle and lower tier include a mix of companies that manufacture consumer goods.

average maximum
$30/h
average minimum
$25/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	**$39/h**	**$35/h**
75th percentile	**$34/h**	**$28/h**
50th percentile	**$28h**	**$25/h**
25th percentile	**$26/h**	**$19/h**
10th percentile	**$24/h**	**$17/h**

Role sample size: 19

How pay varies for advanced degrees

While all the roles shared in this previous section are for undergraduate students, we have a few STEM-focused roles for PhD and Master's Degree students. These internships center on machine learning, AI, data science, and product management.

Internships

The upper pay percentiles come from AI & machine-learning roles at tech companies, largely for PhD students. The median percentile also includes machine learning roles, and also includes product-focused roles for master's students. The lower pay percentiles are for data science and product management master's degree students.

average maximum
$56/h

average minimum
$43/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$68/h	$57/h
75th percentile	$61/h	$52/h
50th percentile	$55/h	$46/h
25th percentile	$51/h	$34/h
10th percentile	$44/h	$26/h

Role sample size: 20

SECTION 5

People Facing Roles & Creative

INCLUDES

– HR & Recruiting
– Customer Success & Support
– Sales
– Graphic design
– Marketing & Advertising

HR & Recruiting

This dataset encompasses roles related to recruitment, talent acquisition, HR, benefits, or payroll. The industries represented in this dataset include technology, manufacturing, logistics, and finance.

Full Time Roles

The top salary percentile comes from manufacturing companies with human resources rotational programs, while the median pay comes from technology and finance companies and are recruiter titles. The lowest pay percentile is for a recruiter role in logistics.

average maximum
$72K

average minimum
$56K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$83K	$70K
75th percentile	$80K	$70K
50th percentile	$80K	$65K
25th percentile	$60K	$40K
10th percentile	$57K	$37K

Role sample size: 8

HR & Recruiting

This dataset encompasses internships related to recruitment, talent acquisition, HR, benefits, or payroll. The industries represented in this dataset include technology, insurance, manufacturing, logistics, and finance.

Internships

The upper percentile of internship wages come from companies in technology and manufacturing. The median wage tier includes internship pay from companies in insurance and finance. The bottom wage tier includes a different set of technology and manufacturing companies.

average maximum
$31/h
average minimum
$24/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$42/h	$31/h
75th percentile	$36/h	$26/h
50th percentile	$30/h	$22/h
25th percentile	$24/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$22/h	$19/h

Role sample size: 31



Customer Success & Support

The roles included in this dataset include positions that reference customer interactions and support. While many of these roles have different job titles and span across industries, their role function is similar.

Full Time Roles

The top salary percentile is offered by companies in the financial services sector, while the median pay is offered by companies in manufactured goods and live events. The lowest tier is offered by a company in the insurance sector.

average maximum
$63K

average minimum
$56K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$79K	$69K
75th percentile	$70K	$60K
50th percentile	$60K	$50K
25th percentile	$58K	$50K
10th percentile	$50K	$50K

Role sample size: 12



Customer Success & Support

The roles included in this dataset include internships that reference customer interactions and support. While many of these roles have different job titles and span across industries, their role function is similar.

Internships

Unlike full-time roles, internship pay is more evenly distributed across industries. There are technology, insurance, finance, and manufacturing companies spread throughout the 90th, 75th, 50th, and 25th percentiles.

average maximum
$33/h

average minimum
$24/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$40/h	$34/h
75th percentile	$35/h	$26/h
50th percentile	$32/h	$20/h
25th percentile	$30/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$28/h	$20/h

Role sample size: 12

Sales

This dataset encompasses roles that are labeled as sales or business development roles. It's important to note that this compensation range did not specify if it includes bonuses or OTE, so can be assumed to be base-level compensation.

Full Time Roles

The top paying sales roles are specified to be technical sales, or is listed as a sales role for a tech company. Sales 'development' programs are also in the top percentile of pay. The 75th percentile for sales roles includes CPG, manufacturing, and some financial services companies. The bottom tier includes consumer-facing tech companies and logistics companies.

average maximum
$62K

average minimum
$52K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$80K	$70K
75th percentile	$70K	$60K
50th percentile	$60K	$50K
25th percentile	$50K	$40K
10th percentile	$50K	$40K

Role sample size: 41

Sales

This dataset encompasses internships that are labeled as sales or business development roles. It's important to note that this compensation range did not specify if it includes bonuses or OTE, so can be assumed to be base-level compensation.

Internships

The top paying sales roles are specified to be sales or business development roles for tech companies. The median wage tier for sales roles includes CPG, manufacturing, and some financial services companies. The bottom tier includes consumer-facing tech companies as well as some manufacturing companies.

average maximum
$29/h
average minimum
$22/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$40/h	$30/h
75th percentile	$32/h	$25/h
50th percentile	$27/h	$21/h
25th percentile	$24/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$22/h	$17/h

Role sample size: 47

Graphic Design

This dataset encompasses graphic design internships. These were not labeled as product design, UX, UI, and are more traditionally rooted in creative design than product-centric design.

Internships

Included in this dataset are companies in technology, manufacturing, and packaging. There is not much variance among this pay, suggesting a common wage for graphic design interns.

average maximum
$27/h
average minimum
$20/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$33/h	$21/h
75th percentile	$27/h	$20/h
50th percentile	$25/h	$20/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$19/h
10th percentile	$24/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 6



Marketing & Advertising

This dataset encompasses roles that are rooted in marketing, content creation, communications, or advertising. While the role titles vary, the student profile and skillsets across these roles are similar.

Full Time Roles

The top salary percentile comes from technology companies hiring for marketing and ad associate roles, while the mid to lower tiers come from manufacturing company and a media agency.

average maximum
$62K

average minimum
$50K

	Salary Maximum	Salary Minimum
90th percentile	$70K	$87K
75th percentile	$60K	$68K
50th percentile	$40K	$55K
25th percentile	$40K	50K
10th percentile	$40K	$50K

Role sample size: 14

Marketing & Advertising

This dataset encompasses internships that are rooted in marketing, content creation, communications, or advertising. While the role titles vary, the student profile and skillsets across these roles are similar.

Internships

The top wage percentile comes from technology companies hiring for marketing and ad associate roles. The median wage also has a number of financial services and technology companies represented. Nearing the bottom, the lower wages are offered by media companies, live events, and manufacturing.

average maximum
$30/h

average minimum
$23/h

	Wage Maximum	Wage Minimum
90th percentile	$45/h	$29/h
75th percentile	$34/h	$26/h
50th percentile	$28/h	$24/h
25th percentile	$25/h	$20/h
10th percentile	$20/h	$18/h

Role sample size: 62

SECTION 6

Conclusion

Conclusion

As we close out this year's salary and internship benchmarking report, one thing is clear: compensation is no longer a background detail—it's a front-and-center factor shaping where early career talent applies, accepts, and stays.

This report has explored not just the numbers, but the context—how pay expectations shift based on geography, how they differ by role, and how Gen Z candidates are approaching their job search with both financial realism and high standards. Across industries like tech, finance, manufacturing, CPG, energy, and beyond, we've seen how entry-level pay varies widely—and how important it is for employers to stay grounded in real-time market data.

In an environment where talent can come from anywhere, but expectations are increasingly shaped by the most competitive employers, compensation is a key differentiator. Here's how to turn that insight into action:

1. Start with data, not assumptions

It's easy to assume that your current pay is "about right"—especially if you've historically had success. But the bar is moving. Roles that once felt niche, like product management or AI-focused software engineering, are now standard across industries. Staying up-to-date with real-world salary ranges, broken down by function and location, ensures you're not basing decisions on outdated intel.

2. Think nationally, act locally

While remote and hybrid work have blurred geographic boundaries, location still matters—both in how candidates evaluate offers and how far a paycheck actually goes. The location-based cost-of-living data in this report can help you adjust for fairness and competitiveness, whether you're hiring in a high-cost market or trying to encourage relocation to a lower-cost region. The most successful employers often anchor compensation in a blend of national benchmarks and localized strategy.

3. Use compensation as a tool for storytelling

If your pay is competitive, don't keep it a secret. Compensation should be part of your employer brand—something you share proactively with candidates, career centers, and even internal stakeholders. Make sure hiring managers understand how your compensation stacks up, and equip them with talking points that highlight how your organization invests in early career talent. If your salary falls slightly below top-tier competitors, emphasize other strengths: accelerated career growth, mission-driven work, mentorship, or flexibility.

4. Plan ahead for where the market is going

Finally, compensation strategy shouldn't be reactive. The best hiring leaders use data to anticipate—not just respond to—shifting trends. If you plan to grow your intern program, expand into new functions, or recruit from a broader set of campuses, having a flexible and forward-looking compensation framework will save time, improve ROI, and strengthen candidate pipelines.

Using This Report Moving Forward

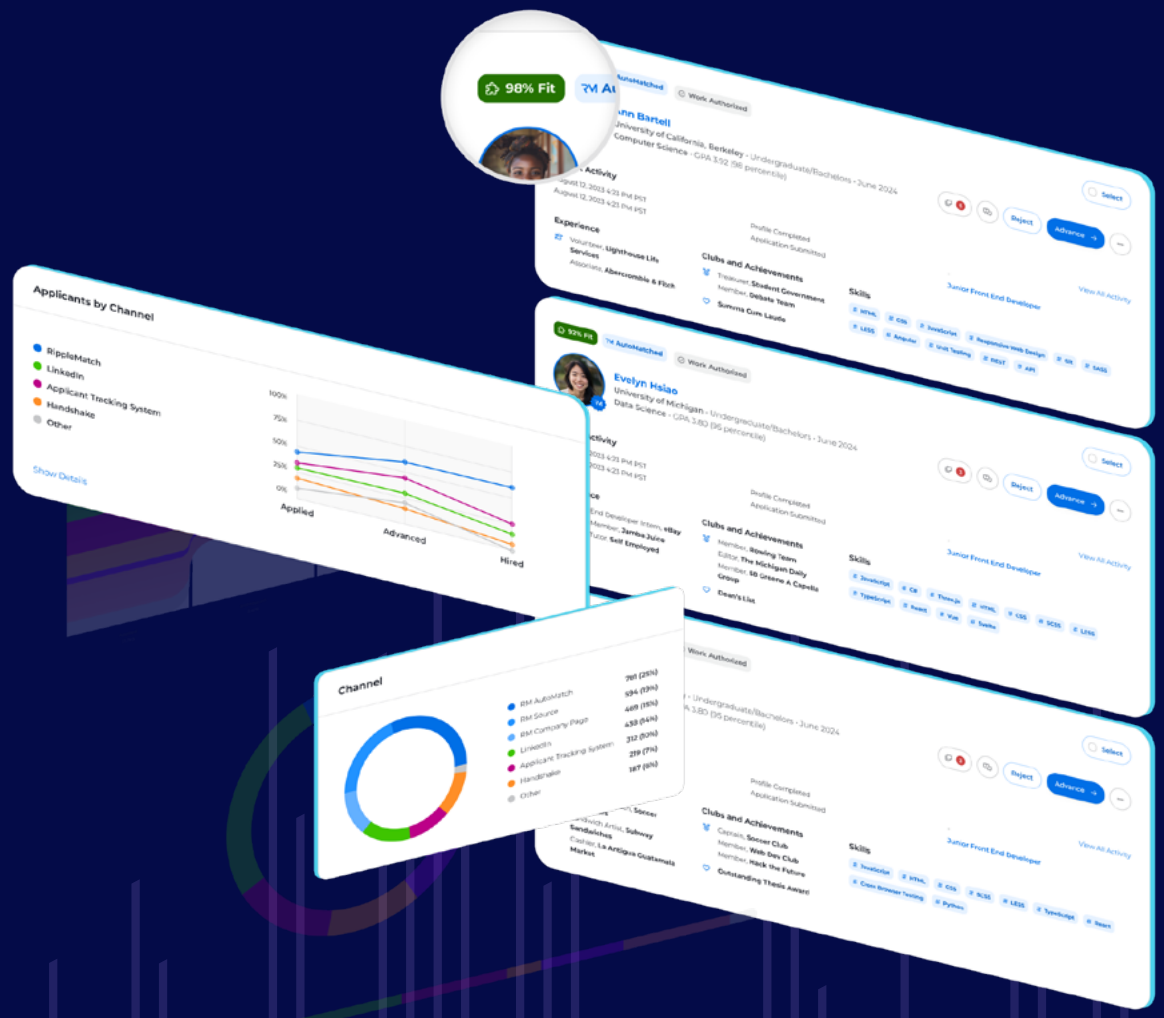
The compensation benchmarks provided in this report are designed to give you more than just numbers—they offer a framework for decision-making. Each percentile range allows you to assess where you currently stand, where you may want to shift, and how that aligns with your goals. The granularity across roles—from data analytics to HR to UX design—offers a valuable roadmap for organizations across every sector.

Ultimately, compensation is not just a cost—it's an investment. When thoughtfully designed and clearly communicated, it becomes a tool for attracting talent, driving performance, and setting the foundation for long-term success. Stay proactive, stay informed, and use this data as a stepping stone toward building a more competitive compensation roadmap for the future.

Next-Gen Talent, Curated For You

RippleMatch bridges the gap between employers and Gen Z talent by delivering a curated, AI-driven job & internship search experience that aligns with Gen Z's preferences for personalized experiences and guides them towards the roles best suited for their skills. Unlike high-volume job boards, RippleMatch delivers intentional, curated matches to recruiters – reducing time spent on resume review and entirely eliminating cold messaging.

Learn more at RippleMatch.com/employers



RIPPLEMATCH