

# 2026 Tech Talent Salary Benchmark Report

## Comprehensive Compensation Data for 25+ Tech Roles

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### About This Report

This comprehensive salary benchmark report provides compensation data for 25 key technology roles across five major U.S. markets: Texas, California, Florida, New York, and North Carolina.

#### Data Sources:

- 2,500+ iFlow Global placements (2024-2025)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) - Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics\*
- Glassdoor Salary Database (2025-2026)\*
- Built In Tech Salary Reports (2025)\*
- Levels.fyi crowdsourced compensation data\*
- Robert Half Technology Salary Guide 2026\*
- Dice Tech Salary Report 2025\*

**Methodology:** Data represents base salaries for full-time permanent positions and hourly rates for contract positions. All figures are for mid-sized to large companies (50+ employees). Equity, bonuses, and benefits are excluded.

#### Experience Levels:

- **Junior (25th Percentile):** 0-3 years experience
  - **Mid-Level (50th Percentile):** 3-7 years experience
  - **Senior (75th Percentile):** 7+ years experience
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### Executive Summary

#### Key Findings 2026

##### Fastest Growing Roles (YoY Salary Growth):

- AI/ML Engineer: +18% average increase
- DevOps/SRE Engineer: +14% average increase

- Security Engineer: +12% average increase
- Data Engineer: +11% average increase

### Market Insights:

- California leads in absolute compensation (avg 25% higher than national)
- Texas offers best cost-of-living adjusted value (18% above national avg, 35% lower COL than CA)
- Remote work has compressed geographic differentials by 8-12%
- Contract rates 30-40% higher than permanent equivalent (no benefits)

### Top 5 Highest Paying Roles (Senior Level, National Average):

1. Chief Technology Officer: \$245K
2. VP of Engineering: \$225K
3. AI/ML Engineer: \$195K
4. Solutions Architect: \$185K
5. DevOps/SRE Engineer: \$175K

## Section 1: Engineering Roles

### 1. Frontend Developer

#### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$75K	\$95K	\$72K	\$88K	\$70K	\$80K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$105K	\$135K	\$98K	\$125K	\$95K	\$112K
Senior (75th)	\$140K	\$180K	\$130K	\$165K	\$125K	\$148K

#### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent*
Junior	\$42-50/hr	\$87K-104K
Mid-Level	\$60-75/hr	\$125K-156K
Senior	\$85-110/hr	\$177K-229K

\*Based on 2,080 hours/year

## Key Skills Commanding Premium (15-25% higher):

- React/Next.js expertise
  - TypeScript proficiency
  - Micro-frontend architecture experience
  - WebAssembly/performance optimization
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## 2. Backend Developer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$78K	\$98K	\$75K	\$92K	\$73K	\$83K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$110K	\$140K	\$105K	\$132K	\$102K	\$118K
Senior (75th)	\$150K	\$195K	\$142K	\$180K	\$138K	\$161K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$45-55/hr	\$94K-114K
Mid-Level	\$65-80/hr	\$135K-166K
Senior	\$90-120/hr	\$187K-250K

### Key Skills Commanding Premium:

- Go/Rust expertise (20-30% premium)
  - Microservices architecture at scale
  - Event-driven systems experience
  - Database optimization expertise
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## 3. Full-Stack Developer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$80K	\$102K	\$77K	\$95K	\$75K	\$86K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$115K	\$148K	\$110K	\$140K	\$108K	\$124K
Senior (75th)	\$155K	\$200K	\$148K	\$188K	\$145K	\$167K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$48-58/hr	\$100K-121K
Mid-Level	\$68-85/hr	\$141K-177K
Senior	\$95-125/hr	\$198K-260K

**Market Note:** Full-stack developers with strong frontend AND backend depth (not just breadth) command 15-20% premium over single-stack specialists.

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## 4. Mobile Developer (iOS/Android)

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$76K	\$96K	\$73K	\$90K	\$71K	\$81K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$108K	\$138K	\$103K	\$128K	\$100K	\$115K
Senior (75th)	\$145K	\$188K	\$138K	\$172K	\$135K	\$156K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$43-52/hr	\$89K-108K
Mid-Level	\$62-78/hr	\$129K-162K
Senior	\$88-115/hr	\$183K-239K

### Key Skills Commanding Premium:

- Flutter/React Native cross-platform (15% premium)
  - SwiftUI mastery (iOS)
  - Jetpack Compose mastery (Android)
  - Mobile DevOps/CI-CD pipeline expertise
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## 5. DevOps/SRE Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$85K	\$108K	\$82K	\$100K	\$80K	\$91K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$125K	\$160K	\$118K	\$148K	\$115K	\$133K
Senior (75th)	\$175K	\$225K	\$165K	\$208K	\$160K	\$187K

**Contract Hourly Rate:**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$52-62/hr	\$108K-129K
Mid-Level	\$75-92/hr	\$156K-191K
Senior	\$105-140/hr	\$218K-291K

**High Demand Skills:**

- Kubernetes/container orchestration (20% premium)
- Terraform/infrastructure-as-code
- Multi-cloud expertise (AWS + Azure + GCP)
- Observability platforms (Datadog, New Relic)

**Market Note:** DevOps/SRE is among the fastest-growing salary categories (+14% YoY) due to cloud migration acceleration.

**6. Data Engineer**

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$82K	\$105K	\$79K	\$97K	\$77K	\$88K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$120K	\$155K	\$115K	\$143K	\$112K	\$129K
Senior (75th)	\$165K	\$215K	\$158K	\$195K	\$153K	\$177K

**Contract Hourly Rate:**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$50-60/hr	\$104K-125K
Mid-Level	\$72-88/hr	\$150K-183K
Senior	\$100-130/hr	\$208K-270K

**Key Skills Commanding Premium:**

- Real-time streaming (Kafka, Flink) - 18% premium
- Modern data stack (dbt, Fivetran, Snowflake)
- Data mesh architecture experience
- ML pipeline engineering

## 7. AI/Machine Learning Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$95K	\$122K	\$92K	\$112K	\$90K	\$102K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$140K	\$180K	\$135K	\$168K	\$132K	\$151K
Senior (75th)	\$195K	\$255K	\$188K	\$235K	\$182K	\$211K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$58-68/hr	\$121K-141K
Mid-Level	\$85-105/hr	\$177K-218K
Senior	\$120-160/hr	\$250K-333K

**Market Note:** Highest YoY growth (+18%). Specializations in LLMs, computer vision, or NLP command additional 20-30% premiums. PhD credentials add 15-25% to base.

## 8. QA/Test Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$65K	\$82K	\$62K	\$76K	\$60K	\$69K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$92K	\$118K	\$88K	\$108K	\$85K	\$98K
Senior (75th)	\$125K	\$162K	\$120K	\$148K	\$115K	\$134K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$38-45/hr	\$79K-94K
Mid-Level	\$55-68/hr	\$114K-141K
Senior	\$75-98/hr	\$156K-204K

**Key Skills Commanding Premium:**

- Test automation frameworks (Selenium, Cypress)
- Performance/load testing expertise
- Security testing (SAST/DAST)
- Shift-left testing methodology

**9. Security Engineer/Cybersecurity Specialist**

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$88K	\$112K	\$85K	\$103K	\$83K	\$94K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$128K	\$165K	\$122K	\$152K	\$118K	\$137K
Senior (75th)	\$172K	\$225K	\$165K	\$205K	\$160K	\$185K

**Contract Hourly Rate:**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$54-64/hr	\$112K-133K
Mid-Level	\$78-95/hr	\$162K-198K
Senior	\$105-138/hr	\$218K-287K

**High-Demand Specializations:**

- Cloud security (AWS/Azure/GCP) - 20% premium
- Zero-trust architecture
- Incident response/forensics
- Compliance (SOC2, ISO 27001, HIPAA)

**10. Cloud Architect/Engineer**

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$90K	\$115K	\$87K	\$105K	\$85K	\$96K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$132K	\$170K	\$126K	\$155K	\$122K	\$141K
Senior (75th)	\$180K	\$235K	\$172K	\$215K	\$168K	\$194K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$55-65/hr	\$114K-135K
Mid-Level	\$80-98/hr	\$166K-204K
Senior	\$110-145/hr	\$229K-302K

### Certification Impact:

- AWS Certified Solutions Architect (Professional): +12% premium
- Multi-cloud certifications (AWS + Azure): +18% premium
- Kubernetes certifications (CKA/CKAD): +10% premium

## Section 2: Specialized Roles

### 11. Solutions Architect

#### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level (50th)	\$135K	\$175K	\$128K	\$160K	\$125K	\$145K
Senior (75th)	\$185K	\$240K	\$178K	\$220K	\$172K	\$199K

#### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Mid-Level	\$82-100/hr	\$171K-208K
Senior	\$112-148/hr	\$233K-308K

**Note:** Junior-level Solutions Architect positions are rare. Most require 5+ years prior development/architecture experience.

### 12. Database Administrator (DBA)

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$72K	\$92K	\$69K	\$84K	\$67K	\$77K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$105K	\$135K	\$100K	\$122K	\$98K	\$112K
Senior (75th)	\$142K	\$185K	\$135K	\$168K	\$132K	\$152K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$42-50/hr	\$87K-104K
Mid-Level	\$62-78/hr	\$129K-162K
Senior	\$85-112/hr	\$177K-233K

### High-Value Specializations:

- PostgreSQL expertise
- Oracle Enterprise DBA
- Database performance tuning
- Disaster recovery/high availability

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## 13. UI/UX Designer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$68K	\$86K	\$65K	\$79K	\$63K	\$72K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$98K	\$125K	\$93K	\$115K	\$90K	\$104K
Senior (75th)	\$135K	\$175K	\$128K	\$160K	\$125K	\$145K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$40-48/hr	\$83K-100K
Mid-Level	\$58-72/hr	\$121K-150K
Senior	\$82-108/hr	\$171K-225K

### Premium Skills:

- Product design for B2B SaaS
- Design systems architecture
- User research/testing methodology
- Figma/Adobe XD mastery

## 14. Product Manager (Technical)

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$95K	\$122K	\$92K	\$112K	\$90K	\$102K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$135K	\$175K	\$128K	\$160K	\$125K	\$145K
Senior (75th)	\$180K	\$235K	\$172K	\$215K	\$168K	\$194K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$58-68/hr	\$121K-141K
Mid-Level	\$82-100/hr	\$171K-208K
Senior	\$110-145/hr	\$229K-302K

**Note:** Technical PMs with engineering background command 15-20% premium over non-technical PMs.

## 15. Scrum Master/Agile Coach

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$75K	\$95K	\$72K	\$88K	\$70K	\$80K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$105K	\$135K	\$100K	\$122K	\$98K	\$112K
Senior (75th)	\$140K	\$182K	\$135K	\$165K	\$132K	\$151K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$45-54/hr	\$94K-112K
Mid-Level	\$62-78/hr	\$129K-162K
Senior	\$85-110/hr	\$177K-229K

**Certification Impact:**

- CSM (Certified Scrum Master): Standard expectation
- CSP (Certified Scrum Professional): +8% premium
- SAFe certifications: +12% premium for enterprise roles

**Section 3: Leadership & Management**

**16. Engineering Manager**

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level (50th)	\$145K	\$188K	\$138K	\$170K	\$135K	\$155K
Senior (75th)	\$185K	\$242K	\$178K	\$220K	\$172K	\$199K

**Contract Hourly Rate:**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Mid-Level	\$88-108/hr	\$183K-225K
Senior	\$112-148/hr	\$233K-308K

**Note:** Manages 5-15 engineers. Requires prior IC (Individual Contributor) experience as senior engineer.

**17. Director of Engineering**

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level (50th)	\$175K	\$228K	\$168K	\$205K	\$162K	\$188K
Senior (75th)	\$215K	\$280K	\$205K	\$255K	\$198K	\$231K

**Contract Hourly Rate:**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Mid-Level	\$106-130/hr	\$220K-270K
Senior	\$130-170/hr	\$270K-354K

**Note:** Manages multiple teams (20-50 engineers). P&L responsibility. Strategic role.

## 18. VP of Engineering

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level (50th)	\$200K	\$260K	\$192K	\$235K	\$188K	\$215K
Senior (75th)	\$225K	\$295K	\$218K	\$268K	\$212K	\$244K

**Contract Hourly Rate (Fractional VP/Interim):**

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Mid-Level	\$125-155/hr	\$260K-322K
Senior	\$145-185/hr	\$302K-385K

**Note:** Manages entire engineering organization (50-200+ engineers). Reports to CEO/CTO.  
Equity typically 0.5-2%.

## 19. Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

**Permanent Annual Salary:**

Experience	Company Size	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level	\$10-50M revenue	\$210K	\$275K	\$202K	\$248K	\$198K	\$227K
Senior	\$50M+ revenue	\$245K	\$320K	\$235K	\$295K	\$228K	\$265K

**Fractional CTO Hourly Rate:**

Company Stage	Hourly Rate	Monthly (20 hrs/wk)
Startup/Early	\$200-275/hr	\$16K-22K
Growth Stage	\$250-350/hr	\$20K-28K

**Note:** Cash compensation only. Equity for full-time CTOs typically 2-5% at startups, 0.5-1.5% at growth stage.

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## 20. Technical Lead/Staff Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Mid-Level (50th)	\$148K	\$192K	\$142K	\$175K	\$138K	\$159K
Senior (75th)	\$178K	\$232K	\$170K	\$212K	\$165K	\$191K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Mid-Level	\$90-110/hr	\$187K-229K
Senior	\$108-140/hr	\$225K-291K

**Note:** IC track alternative to management. Deep technical expertise, architectural decisions, mentorship.

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## Section 4: Emerging & Niche Roles

### 21. Blockchain Developer

#### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$92K	\$118K	\$88K	\$108K	\$86K	\$98K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$135K	\$175K	\$128K	\$160K	\$125K	\$145K
Senior (75th)	\$182K	\$238K	\$175K	\$218K	\$170K	\$197K

#### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$56-66/hr	\$116K-137K
Mid-Level	\$82-100/hr	\$171K-208K
Senior	\$110-145/hr	\$229K-302K

#### High-Demand Skills:

- Solidity/Smart contract development
- DeFi protocol experience
- Web3 integration
- Security auditing

## 22. Game Developer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$70K	\$88K	\$67K	\$82K	\$65K	\$74K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$102K	\$130K	\$98K	\$118K	\$95K	\$109K
Senior (75th)	\$138K	\$178K	\$132K	\$162K	\$128K	\$148K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$42-50/hr	\$87K-104K
Mid-Level	\$60-75/hr	\$125K-156K
Senior	\$82-108/hr	\$171K-225K

### Key Skills:

- Unity/Unreal Engine expertise
- Graphics programming (shaders, rendering)
- Multiplayer/networking
- Mobile game optimization

## 23. Embedded Systems Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$78K	\$98K	\$75K	\$92K	\$73K	\$83K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$112K	\$142K	\$108K	\$130K	\$105K	\$119K
Senior (75th)	\$148K	\$192K	\$142K	\$175K	\$138K	\$159K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$46-56/hr	\$96K-116K
Mid-Level	\$66-82/hr	\$137K-171K
Senior	\$90-116/hr	\$187K-241K

### High-Demand Industries:

- IoT/connected devices
- Automotive (EVs, autonomous vehicles)
- Medical devices
- Industrial automation

## 24. Site Reliability Engineer (SRE)

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$88K	\$112K	\$85K	\$103K	\$83K	\$94K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$128K	\$165K	\$122K	\$150K	\$118K	\$137K
Senior (75th)	\$178K	\$232K	\$170K	\$212K	\$165K	\$191K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$54-64/hr	\$112K-133K
Mid-Level	\$78-95/hr	\$162K-198K
Senior	\$108-140/hr	\$225K-291K

**Note:** Often grouped with DevOps but distinct focus on reliability, monitoring, incident response. Google-originated role.

## 25. Platform Engineer

### Permanent Annual Salary:

Experience	Texas	California	Florida	New York	North Carolina	National Avg
Junior (25th)	\$82K	\$105K	\$79K	\$97K	\$77K	\$88K
Mid-Level (50th)	\$122K	\$158K	\$118K	\$145K	\$115K	\$132K
Senior (75th)	\$168K	\$218K	\$162K	\$198K	\$158K	\$181K

### Contract Hourly Rate:

Experience	Hourly Rate	Annual Equivalent
Junior	\$50-60/hr	\$104K-125K
Mid-Level	\$74-90/hr	\$154K-187K
Senior	\$102-132/hr	\$212K-275K

### Focus Areas:

- Internal developer platforms
- Developer experience (DevEx)
- Self-service infrastructure
- Platform-as-a-product mindset

## Section 5: Geographic Deep Dive

### Texas Market Analysis

#### Why Texas is Hot for Tech Talent:

- No state income tax (9-13% effective salary increase vs CA/NY)
- Cost of living 30-40% lower than San Francisco
- Major tech hubs: Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio
- Corporate relocations (Oracle, Tesla, HP Enterprise)

#### City-Level Breakdown (Senior Developer, Mid-Level):

City	Avg Salary	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Value
Austin	\$128K	119 (vs US avg 100)	\$108K equivalent
Dallas	\$118K	101	\$117K equivalent
Houston	\$115K	94	\$122K equivalent
San Antonio	\$108K	87	\$124K equivalent

## Texas Specializations:

- Oil & gas tech (Houston): +15% premium for energy sector
  - Defense/aerospace (Dallas/Fort Worth): Security clearance adds 20-25%
  - Healthcare IT (Houston, Dallas): HIPAA expertise valued
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## California Market Analysis

### Still Highest Absolute Compensation:

- Bay Area leads nation in tech salaries
- LA/San Diego 15-20% below Bay Area but growing
- Remote work has created compression

### City-Level Breakdown (Senior Developer, Mid-Level):

City	Avg Salary	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Value
San Francisco	\$165K	164	\$101K equivalent
San Jose	\$168K	157	\$107K equivalent
Los Angeles	\$142K	137	\$104K equivalent
San Diego	\$138K	146	\$95K equivalent

### California Trends:

- 30% of tech workers now remote (vs 12% pre-pandemic)
  - Salaries decreasing 8-12% for fully remote roles
  - Startup equity packages larger to offset cost of living
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## Florida Market Analysis

### Fastest Growing Tech Market:

- No state income tax
- Miami emerging as "Silicon Beach"
- Tampa Bay growing tech scene
- Orlando (simulation/gaming hub)

### City-Level Breakdown (Senior Developer, Mid-Level):

City	Avg Salary	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Value
Miami	\$125K	117	\$107K equivalent
Tampa	\$108K	94	\$115K equivalent
Orlando	\$105K	97	\$108K equivalent
Jacksonville	\$102K	88	\$116K equivalent

### Florida Specializations:

- FinTech (Miami): Growing crypto/blockchain hub
- HealthTech (Tampa): Medical device corridor
- Tourism/Hospitality tech (Orlando): Theme park tech

## New York Market Analysis

### Financial Services Dominance:

- Wall Street still pays premium salaries
- FinTech explosion (Stripe, Plaid, Brex expansion)
- Second only to California in absolute compensation
- High cost of living offsets salary advantages

### City-Level Breakdown (Senior Developer, Mid-Level):

City	Avg Salary	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Value
New York City	\$145K	172	\$84K equivalent
Buffalo	\$95K	81	\$117K equivalent
Rochester	\$92K	83	\$111K equivalent
Albany	\$90K	85	\$106K equivalent

### New York Specializations:

- Financial services tech: +20-30% premium
- AdTech (Madison Avenue digital): Strong demand
- Media/Entertainment tech: Growing sector
- HealthTech: Major hospital systems investing

### Remote Work Impact:

- 40% of NYC tech workers now remote/hybrid

- Many moved to NJ, CT, PA while keeping NYC salaries
- Companies reducing compensation 10-15% for full remote

## North Carolina Market Analysis

### Research Triangle Powerhouse:

- Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill tech corridor
- Strong university talent pipeline (Duke, UNC, NC State)
- Charlotte banking/financial tech hub
- Best cost-of-living adjusted value in Southeast

### City-Level Breakdown (Senior Developer, Mid-Level):

City	Avg Salary	Cost of Living Index	Adjusted Value
Raleigh	\$118K	101	\$117K equivalent
Charlotte	\$115K	97	\$119K equivalent
Durham	\$116K	99	\$117K equivalent
Greensboro	\$98K	86	\$114K equivalent

### North Carolina Specializations:

- Pharmaceutical/BioTech (Research Triangle): +12% premium
- Banking tech (Charlotte): Wells Fargo, Bank of America
- Enterprise software: Red Hat, SAS headquarters
- Academic/Research tech: University partnerships

## Section 6: Contract vs Permanent Detailed Analysis

### Why Contract Rates Are 30-40% Higher

#### Benefits Differential:

- Health insurance: \$8K-12K/year (employer cost)
- 401(k) match: 3-6% of salary
- Paid time off: 15-25 days = 6-10% salary equivalent
- Payroll taxes: 7.65% (employer portion)

- Workers comp, unemployment insurance: 2-3%

**Total Benefits Package:** 30-35% of base salary

**Risk Premium:**

- No job security (can end anytime)
- Gaps between contracts
- Self-employment taxes (additional 7.65%)
- No career development/training
- No equity upside

**When Contract Makes Sense for Companies:**

- ✓ **Project-based work** (3-12 month duration)
- ✓ **Specialized expertise** needed short-term
- ✓ **Surge capacity** for product launch
- ✓ **Trial period** before permanent hire (contract-to-hire)
- ✓ **Budget constraints** (OpEx vs CapEx)

**When Permanent Makes Sense:**

- ✓ **Ongoing role** (2+ years)
  - ✓ **Core team function** (not project-based)
  - ✓ **Institutional knowledge** needed
  - ✓ **Team cohesion** priority
  - ✓ **Equity alignment** desired
- 

**Contract-to-Hire Conversion Rates**

**Typical Conversion Terms:**

- 3-6 month trial period as contractor
- Pre-negotiated permanent salary (usually 15-25% below contract equivalent)
- Immediate benefits eligibility upon conversion
- Equity grant at conversion

**Conversion Success Rates (iFlow Data):**

- 68% of contract-to-hire convert to permanent
- 22% end contract mutually (project complete or poor fit)

- 10% extend contract or convert to long-term contractor

### **Salary Conversion Formula:**

- Contract rate: \$100/hr (\$208K annual equivalent)
  - Permanent conversion: \$155K-165K salary + benefits + equity
  - Effective compensation: Similar total value, different structure
- 

## **Section 7: Skills That Command Premium Pay**

### **Programming Languages (Premium vs Baseline)**

#### **Baseline Languages:** (Set industry standard)

- JavaScript/TypeScript
- Python
- Java

#### **Premium Languages:** (15-30% above baseline)

- **Go:** +18% average premium
- **Rust:** +25% average premium
- **Scala:** +20% average premium
- **Kotlin:** +15% average premium

#### **Declining/Lower Value:**

- PHP: -10% below baseline
  - Ruby: -8% below baseline
  - Perl: -15% below baseline
- 

### **Cloud Platforms (Certification Impact)**

#### **Single Cloud Certification:**

- AWS Certified Solutions Architect: +10-12%
- Azure Solutions Architect: +8-10%
- GCP Professional Cloud Architect: +8-10%

#### **Multi-Cloud Expertise:**

- AWS + Azure: +18-22%
- All three clouds: +25-30%

### **Advanced/Specialty Certifications:**

- AWS Certified Security: +15%
  - Kubernetes CKA/CKAD: +12%
  - Terraform Associate: +8%
- 

## **Emerging Tech Skills (Highest Growth)**

### **AI/ML Specializations:**

- Large Language Models (LLMs): +30-40%
- Computer Vision: +25-35%
- NLP/Speech Recognition: +25-30%
- Reinforcement Learning: +30-35%

### **DevOps/Infrastructure:**

- GitOps (ArgoCD, Flux): +15%
- Service Mesh (Istio, Linkerd): +18%
- eBPF/Advanced networking: +20%
- Chaos Engineering: +15%

### **Data Engineering:**

- Real-time streaming (Kafka, Flink): +18%
  - Data mesh architecture: +20%
  - Modern data stack (dbt, Fivetran): +15%
  - ML pipelines (MLOps): +25%
- 

## **Soft Skills Premium**

### **Technical Leadership:**

- Architecture decision-making: +15-20%
- Mentorship/coaching: +10-15%

- Technical writing/documentation: +8-12%
- Public speaking/conference talks: +10-15%

### **Domain Expertise:**

- Financial services knowledge: +15-25%
  - Healthcare/HIPAA: +12-18%
  - Security/compliance: +15-20%
  - Regulatory (SOC2, GDPR): +12-15%
- 

## **Section 8: 2025→2026 Trends & 2027 Predictions**

### **What Changed in 2025-2026**

#### **Salary Trends:**

- Overall tech salaries: +6.5% average increase
- AI/ML roles: +18% (highest growth)
- DevOps/SRE: +14%
- Traditional web development: +4% (slower)
- QA/Testing: +3% (slowest)

#### **Market Dynamics:**

- Remote work stabilized at ~35% of tech workforce
- Geographic salary compression continued (8-12% narrowing)
- Contract work grew to 38% of tech placements (up from 32% in 2024)
- Contract-to-hire model adoption: +43%

#### **Hiring Timeline Changes:**

- Average time-to-hire decreased: 42 days → 28 days
- Top talent time-to-decision: Remains 7-10 days
- Companies with 48-72 hour processes: 2x higher offer acceptance

#### **Tech Layoffs Impact:**

- 85,000+ tech layoffs in 2024-2025
- Senior talent more available, but selective

- Salary expectations remained high (no major correction)
  - Candidates prioritizing stability over cutting-edge
- 

## **2027 Predictions**

### **Salary Forecasts:**

- AI/ML Engineers: +12-15% growth (continued demand)
- Security Roles: +10-12% (cybersecurity threats increasing)
- Data Engineers: +8-10% (data-driven decision making)
- Traditional Development: +5-6% (baseline inflation adjustment)

### **Market Shifts:**

- Remote work to plateau at 40% of tech roles
- Geographic differentials to compress another 5-8%
- Contract work to reach 45% of placements
- Four-day work week pilots to affect 10-15% of tech companies

### **Emerging Roles (High Demand 2027):**

- AI Safety Engineers (new role category)
- Quantum Computing Developers (niche but growing)
- Web3/Decentralized Systems Architects
- Climate Tech Engineers (ESG investment driving demand)
- Ethical AI Specialists/Auditors

### **Skills to Invest In:**

- Prompt engineering/AI integration (every role)
  - Multi-cloud architecture (industry standard)
  - Edge computing/IoT (5G expansion)
  - Privacy-preserving ML (regulation-driven)
  - Platform engineering (DevEx focus)
-

## Section 9: Negotiation Strategies Using This Data

### For Job Seekers

#### Research Your Market Value:

1. Find your role in this report
2. Adjust for experience level (Junior/Mid/Senior)
3. Apply geographic multiplier
4. Add skill premiums (certifications, niche expertise)
5. Result: Your competitive market range

#### Example Calculation:

- Role: Senior DevOps Engineer
- Base (National Avg): \$187K
- Location: Austin, TX = -8% (\$172K)
- Skills: Kubernetes + AWS Certified = +22% (\$210K)
- **Target Range: \$195K-220K**

#### Negotiation Tactics:

- Anchor high (75th percentile or above with justification)
- Use contract equivalent to justify permanent ask
- Cite specific market data (this report)
- Negotiate total comp (salary + equity + bonus)
- Consider remote flexibility as compensation

#### Red Flags (Lowball Offers):

- **|** 20% below 25th percentile for your level
  - "We pay below market but great culture" (culture doesn't pay rent)
  - Unwillingness to share salary range upfront
  - Equity-heavy, cash-light (especially at late-stage startups)
- 

### For Hiring Managers

#### Setting Competitive Ranges:

1. Identify role and level needed
2. Use 50th percentile as midpoint
3. Set range: 25th-75th percentile
4. Adjust for location, urgency, specialization
5. Budget 10-15% above 75th for exceptional candidates

### **Budget Planning Formula:**

- Base salary: Market rate from this report
- Benefits: +30-35% of base
- Recruiting: +20% of base (one-time)
- Year 1 all-in:  $\text{Base} \times 1.5-1.6$

### **Competitive Positioning:**

- Top 10% candidates: Offer 75th+ percentile
- Strong candidates: Offer 50th-75th percentile
- Acceptable candidates: Offer 25th-50th percentile
- Below 25th: Expect high rejection rates

### **Contract vs Permanent Decision:**

- If budget-constrained: Consider contract (30% cheaper Year 1)
  - If role uncertain: Contract-to-hire (trial period)
  - If core team role: Permanent (investment in continuity)
  - If specialized/temporary: Contract (flexibility)
- 

## **For Founders/CEOs**

### **Startup Salary Guidelines:**

#### **Pre-Seed/Seed Stage:**

- Pay 70-80% of market rate
- Heavy equity compensation (0.1-1.5%)
- Emphasize upside, mission, early-stage impact
- Hire contractors for specialized needs

### **Series A:**

- Pay 80-90% of market rate
- Moderate equity (0.05-0.5%)
- Mix of permanent (core) and contract (specialized)
- Benefits package becoming necessary

### **Series B+:**

- Pay 90-100% of market rate
- Standard equity (0.01-0.2%)
- Primarily permanent hires
- Competitive benefits required

### **Equity Benchmarks:**

- Senior Engineer: 0.05-0.25%
  - Engineering Manager: 0.1-0.4%
  - Director of Engineering: 0.2-0.6%
  - VP of Engineering: 0.5-1.5%
  - CTO (employee #1-10): 2-5%
  - CTO (joining at Series A+): 0.5-2%
- 

## **Section 10: Benefits & Total Compensation**

### **Standard Benefits Packages by Company Size**

#### **Startup (<50 employees):**

- Health insurance: 70-80% employer-paid
- 401(k): Offered, 0-3% match
- PTO: 15-20 days
- Equity: Standard (see above)
- Perks: Minimal (snacks, remote work)

#### **Mid-Size (50-500 employees):**

- Health insurance: 80-90% employer-paid

- 401(k): 3-4% match
- PTO: 20-25 days
- Equity: Available but smaller grants
- Perks: Learning budget, home office stipend

### **Enterprise (500+ employees):**

- Health insurance: 90-100% employer-paid
  - 401(k): 4-6% match
  - PTO: 25-30 days (or unlimited)
  - Equity: RSUs (not options)
  - Perks: Full package (gym, meals, education)
- 

## **Cash vs Equity Trade-Offs**

### **When to Prioritize Cash:**

- Early career (building financial foundation)
- Risk-averse (need guaranteed income)
- Short financial runway (debt, dependents)
- Joining late-stage or public company (equity upside limited)

### **When to Prioritize Equity:**

- Later career (established financially)
- High-risk tolerance (can absorb downside)
- Early-stage company (significant upside potential)
- Strong belief in company/product

### **Equity Valuation Framework:**

- Seed stage: Discount 90% (10% likely value)
- Series A: Discount 70% (30% likely value)
- Series B+: Discount 40-50% (50-60% likely value)
- Public company RSUs: Value at 80-90% (liquid but volatile)

### **Example:**

- Offer A: \$150K salary + 0.2% equity (seed stage)
- Offer B: \$180K salary + 0.05% equity (Series B)

**Analysis:**

- Offer A equity:  $0.2\% \times \$10M \text{ valuation} \times 10\% \text{ discount} = \$200K \text{ potential}$
- Offer B equity:  $0.05\% \times \$200M \text{ valuation} \times 50\% \text{ discount} = \$500K \text{ potential}$
- But Offer B has \$30K more cash (\$120K over 4 years)

**Decision:** Depends on risk tolerance and financial needs.

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## **Remote Work Compensation Adjustments**

### **Company Policies (2026 Reality):**

#### **Approach 1: Location-Based Pay (60% of companies)**

- Salary adjusted to employee's location
- SF-based role: \$180K
- Same role, Austin-based: \$155K (15% reduction)
- Same role, Tampa-based: \$145K (20% reduction)

#### **Approach 2: National/Universal Pay (30% of companies)**

- Same salary regardless of location
- Attracts talent from high-COL areas
- Higher total comp costs

#### **Approach 3: Geographic Tiers (10% of companies)**

- Tier 1 (SF, NYC, Seattle): 100% of range
- Tier 2 (Austin, Denver, Boston): 85-90%
- Tier 3 (Most other cities): 75-85%

### **Negotiation Leverage:**

- Remote work is worth 10-15% to many employees
- Use competing offers from different locations
- Propose trial period in higher-COL tier, relocate later
- Highlight cost savings to company (no office space)

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## Section 11: Career Path & Salary Progression

### Typical Salary Growth Trajectories

#### Individual Contributor (IC) Track:

Years Experience	Level	Avg Salary Range	Growth Rate
0-2 years	Junior Developer	\$70K-85K	Entry
3-5 years	Mid-Level Developer	\$100K-125K	+40-45%
6-9 years	Senior Developer	\$140K-170K	+30-35%
10-15 years	Staff Engineer	\$170K-200K	+15-20%
15+ years	Principal/Distinguished	\$200K-250K+	+10-15%

#### Management Track:

Years Experience	Level	Avg Salary Range	Growth Rate
5-8 years	Tech Lead	\$150K-175K	Lateral from Senior
8-12 years	Engineering Manager	\$160K-195K	+10-15%
12-18 years	Director of Engineering	\$190K-235K	+20-25%
18-25 years	VP of Engineering	\$220K-270K	+15-20%
25+ years	CTO	\$240K-350K+	+10-15%

#### Key Inflection Points:

- Junior → Mid: Biggest percentage jump (+40-45%)
- Senior → Staff: Slows down (+15-20%)
- Manager → Director: Leadership premium kicks in (+20-25%)
- VP → CTO: Equity becomes primary compensation

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### Time to Promotion Benchmarks

#### Typical Timeline (Healthy Companies):

- Junior → Mid-Level: 2-3 years
- Mid-Level → Senior: 3-4 years
- Senior → Staff: 4-6 years
- Senior → Manager: 3-5 years (lateral transition)

## Red Flags:

- Stuck at same level >5 years without promotion
- Company has no defined career progression
- Title inflation without comp increase
- "You're not ready" without specific feedback

## Acceleration Strategies:

- High-impact projects (+1 year faster)
- Mentorship/leadership visibility (+1 year faster)
- Company hypergrowth (promotions open up)
- Switch companies (often fastest path)

## Job Hopping Economics:

- Stay at company: 3-5% annual raise
  - Switch companies: 15-30% salary jump
  - Optimal: Switch every 2-4 years early career
  - Diminishes: After senior level, lateral moves
- 

## Section 12: Key Takeaways & Action Items

### For Job Seekers

#### Immediate Actions:

1.  Calculate your market value using this report
2.  Identify skill gaps that command premium pay
3.  Update LinkedIn/resume with high-value keywords
4.  Research target companies' locations and comp ranges
5.  Practice salary negotiation using data from this report

#### 3-Month Goals:

- Obtain 1-2 certifications (AWS, Kubernetes, etc.)
- Build portfolio projects showcasing premium skills
- Network with engineers at target companies

- Apply to roles at 75th percentile of current comp

### **12-Month Goals:**

- Increase comp 15-25% via promotion or job switch
  - Build expertise in emerging tech (AI, cloud, security)
  - Establish personal brand (blog, talks, open source)
- 

## **For Hiring Managers**

### **Immediate Actions:**

1.  Audit current team salaries against market data
2.  Identify flight risks (>15% below market)
3.  Budget for retention adjustments
4.  Update job postings with competitive salary ranges
5.  Revise interview process to reduce time-to-hire

### **3-Month Goals:**

- Implement competitive salary bands
- Address retention risks with adjustments
- Build relationships with staffing partners
- Create contract/permanent flexible models

### **12-Month Goals:**

- Reduce time-to-hire to <21 days
  - Improve offer acceptance rate to 75%+
  - Build internal talent pipeline
  - Develop employer brand in target markets
- 

## **For Company Leadership**

### **Strategic Imperatives:**

1. **Compensation Philosophy:** Define where you pay (50th? 75th percentile?)
2. **Geographic Strategy:** Remote-first? Location-based pay?

3. **Flexible Models:** Mix permanent + contract for agility

4. **Retention Focus:** Cheaper to retain than replace

5. **Data-Driven:** Regular market benchmarking

### **Budget Planning 2027:**

- Assume 6-8% salary inflation for tech roles
  - Budget 15-20% of headcount for retention adjustments
  - Plan for 38-45% contract/fractional mix
  - Allocate equity refresh pools (10-15% of grants annually)
- 

## **Data Sources & Methodology**

This report aggregates compensation data from the following sources:

### **Primary Data Sources:**

1. **iFlow Global Placement Data\*** - 2,500+ placements (2024-2025) across staffing, technology, and marketing services. Internal proprietary data.
2. **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)\*** - Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2024 data release. Public domain. [www.bls.gov/oes](http://www.bls.gov/oes)
3. **Glassdoor Salary Database\*** - Crowdsourced salary reports from 2025-2026. Accessed December 2025. [www.glassdoor.com/salaries](http://www.glassdoor.com/salaries)
4. **Built In Technology Salary Surveys\*** - 2025 Tech Salary Reports for Austin, Dallas, NYC, SF, and other markets. [www.builtin.com/salaries](http://www.builtin.com/salaries)
5. **Levels.fyi\*** - Crowdsourced compensation data for tech roles, accessed January 2026. [www.levels.fyi](http://www.levels.fyi)
6. **Robert Half Technology Salary Guide 2026\*** - Annual salary guide published October 2025. [www.roberthalf.com/salary-guide](http://www.roberthalf.com/salary-guide)
7. **Dice Tech Salary Report 2025\*** - Annual technology salary survey. Published December 2025. [www.dice.com/salary-survey](http://www.dice.com/salary-survey)

### **Supplementary Sources:**

8. **Hired State of Tech Salaries 2025\*** - Annual report on tech hiring trends. [www.hired.com/state-of-salaries](http://www.hired.com/state-of-salaries)
9. **Stack Overflow Developer Survey 2025\*** - Annual survey of 90,000+ developers. [insights.stackoverflow.com/survey](https://insights.stackoverflow.com/survey)

10. **LinkedIn Salary Insights\*** - Aggregated data from LinkedIn member profiles and job postings. Accessed Q4 2025.

11. **AngelList Talent Salary Data\*** - Startup compensation data. Accessed 2025.  
[www.angellist.com/salaries](http://www.angellist.com/salaries)

12. **Payscale Compensation Data\*** - Real-time salary reports. Accessed January 2026.  
[www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com)

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## **Methodology:**

### **Data Collection:**

- Timeframe: July 2024 - December 2025 (18 months)
- Sample size: 45,000+ data points across sources
- Geographic coverage: All 50 states, focused on TX, CA, FL, NY, NC
- Role coverage: 25 most common technology roles

### **Statistical Analysis:**

- Percentiles calculated using trimmed means (excluded top/bottom 2% outliers)
- Experience levels defined by years in role + total career experience
- Contract rates converted to annual equivalent using standard 2,080 hours
- Geographic adjustments based on BLS metropolitan statistical area data

### **Data Validation:**

- Cross-referenced minimum 3 sources per data point
- Outliers reviewed and verified or excluded
- iFlow internal data validated against external sources
- Senior practitioners reviewed for accuracy

### **Limitations:**

- Data reflects large company (50+ employees) compensation primarily
- Startup equity values are estimates (high uncertainty)
- Benefits packages vary widely; standardized to common structure
- Remote work policies still evolving; data reflects 2025-2026 snapshot
- Geographic data state-level; city variations exist within states

**Updates:** This report will be updated annually each January. Next edition: January 2027.

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## About iFlow Global






iFlow Global provides comprehensive talent solutions across three service pillars:

**Staffing & Talent Solutions:** Pre-vetted technology professionals delivered in 48-72 hours. Contract, permanent, and contract-to-hire models. 2,500+ successful placements since 2020.

**Technology Services:** Offshore development teams, staff augmentation, and dedicated engineering resources. Build products faster with global talent.

**Marketing Services:** Fractional marketing leadership, full-service execution, and strategic consulting for B2B companies \$1M-15M revenue.


### Why Companies Choose iFlow:

-  48-72 hour delivery for most roles
  -  95% retention rate after 12 months
  -  Pre-vetted talent pools (no sourcing delays)
  -  Flexible models (contract, permanent, fractional)
  -  One partner for staffing, technology, and marketing
- 

## Get Your Custom Salary Analysis

**Need personalized compensation benchmarking?**

Schedule a free consultation with our talent team:

 **Email:** [talent@iflowglobal.com](mailto:talent@iflowglobal.com)

 **Phone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

 **Web:** [www.iflowglobal.com/salary-consultation](http://www.iflowglobal.com/salary-consultation)

### We'll provide:

- Custom salary analysis for your specific roles
- Competitive market positioning assessment
- Retention risk evaluation
- Compensation strategy recommendations

**Or download more resources:**

- [Fast-Track Guide to Scaling Tech Teams \(free PDF\)](#)
  - [Fractional Marketing ROI Calculator](#)
  - [Contract vs Permanent Decision Framework](#)
- 

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**END OF REPORT**

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