MOTION RECRUITMENT
A Kelly® Company

Tech Salary Guide

2026

Insights for the Tech Workforce

UNITED STATES



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Introduction

The technology industry continues to redefine what is possible, bringing both new opportunities for growth and fresh challenges for employers and professionals alike. With many IT roles remaining among the most in-demand nationwide, renewed investment and innovation are fueling transformation across every sector.

Artificial intelligence continues to shape the next era of work, from agentic AI to the rapid expansion of data centers powering digital infrastructure. Organizations are reimagining how they build and scale their teams, while tech professionals are using emerging tools to enhance productivity and accelerate impact.

At Motion Recruitment, we see firsthand how the pace of change in technology impacts both talent and business strategy. This guide goes beyond compensation data to explore the economics driving today's market: what is influencing demand, where opportunities are growing, and how leaders and professionals can turn insight into action.

Our goal is to help you understand not just where the market stands, but what is shaping its future. Whether you are navigating workforce planning, skill development, or emerging technology adoption, this report is designed to connect the dots between data, trends, and real-world solutions for 2026 and beyond.



James Vallone
President,
Motion Recruitment

The State of Tech Employment



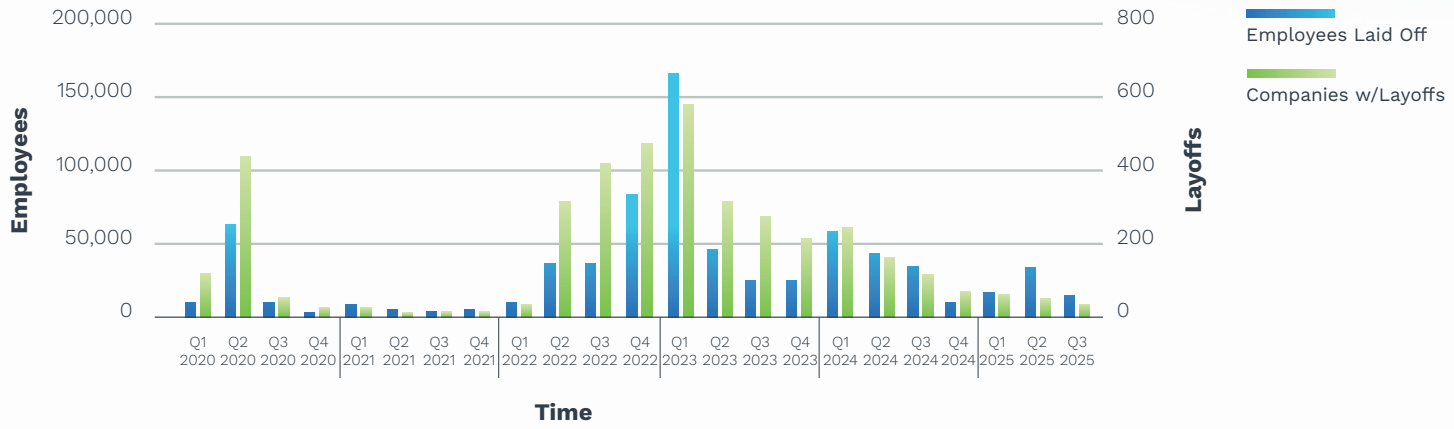
After years of volatility marked by the Great Resignation, rapid expansion, subsequent layoffs, and now rising interest rates, the tech industry in 2025 is in a bit of a holding pattern. Hiring has stabilized on average, with most companies holding headcounts steady rather than aggressively growing or cutting back.

From 2021 through 2023, the IT industry experienced dramatic swings. The Great Resignation saw record turnover as tech professionals rapidly changed jobs in a job-seeker-friendly market. By late 2022, rising interest rates reversed that momentum, triggering layoffs that affected more than 150,000 tech workers in the first quarter of 2023 alone. Job cuts continued into 2024, though at a slower pace, totaling just over 150,000 for the year. In 2025, workforce reductions declined further.

These shifts were initially driven by a variety of factors, including over-hiring during the pandemic, declining venture capital funding, and the rapid integration of AI tools that automated certain functions. As seen in the following chart, by mid-2025, companies had moved toward a more balanced, deliberate approach to workforce planning and headcount growth (or reduction).

Tech Layoffs Since 2020

Source: http://layoffs.fyi

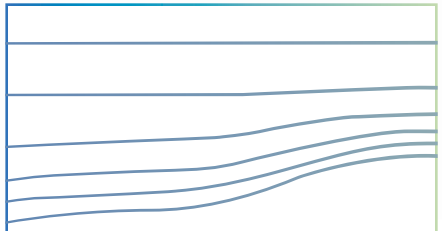


Overall, tech salaries remained largely flat year-over-year, with IT workers seeing a modest 0.8% increase in base compensation in 2025. However, this average masks significant variation across roles. Shifting priorities and emerging technologies have driven sharp pay increases in certain areas, while others plateau. Mid-level AI engineers saw a 9.2% year-over-year rise, and senior data warehouse developers experienced a 5.8% increase.

On the other end, mid-level SQL developer salaries fell by more than 7%, and senior software developers saw a nearly 10% drop in base compensation year-over-year.

Tech leaders have mixed feelings about the job market. Persistent talent shortages and pressure to meet project deadlines make many organizations hesitant to part with skilled workers. Yet ongoing economic uncertainty and cost pressures continue to limit new hiring.

Some areas of tech are exceptions, with AI skills leading the way in demand and investment. This growth is balanced by cuts in generalized IT jobs as companies move towards investing in specialists and streamlining more generalized roles.



0.8%

Base IT Salaries grew by .8%

9.2%

Mid-level AI Engineer salaries grew by 9.2%

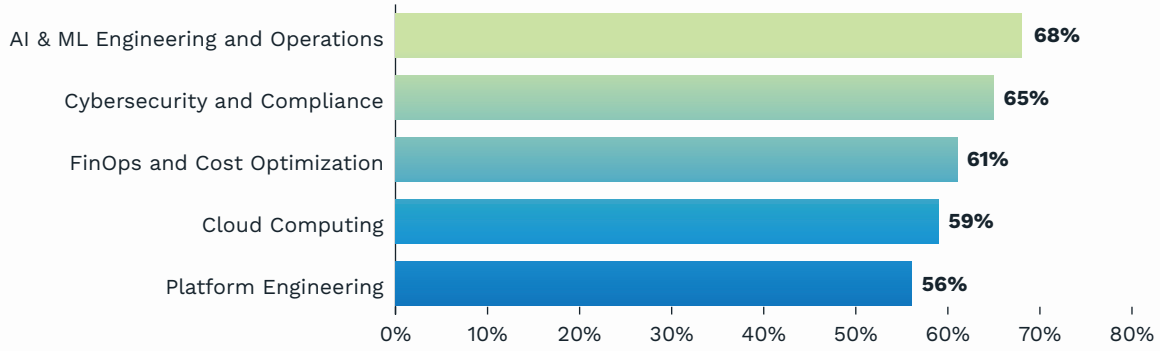
As companies refocus on specialized and emerging technologies, tech professionals are rethinking how to position their skills for the future.

The evolving market is rewarding those who can adapt, whether by deepening expertise in high-demand areas such as AI, cloud infrastructure, or data analytics, or by finding new ways to apply existing skills through upskilling, certification, and continuous learning.

While advice to “switch career paths” can sound overly simplistic, there is truth behind it in today’s tech landscape. Roles and required skills shift quickly, but many are transferable across functions and industries. In fact, about 70% of tech professionals say their current skill set can be applied to new roles within or even beyond the tech sector.

Percentage of Organizations Understaffed in Key Technological Areas

Source: Linux Foundation, State of Tech Talent 2025



70%

of tech professionals believe “My current skills are transferable to other roles within my industry.”

67%

of tech professionals believe “My current skills are transferable to other industries.”

Source: LHH, The Great Potential Global Workforce of the Future

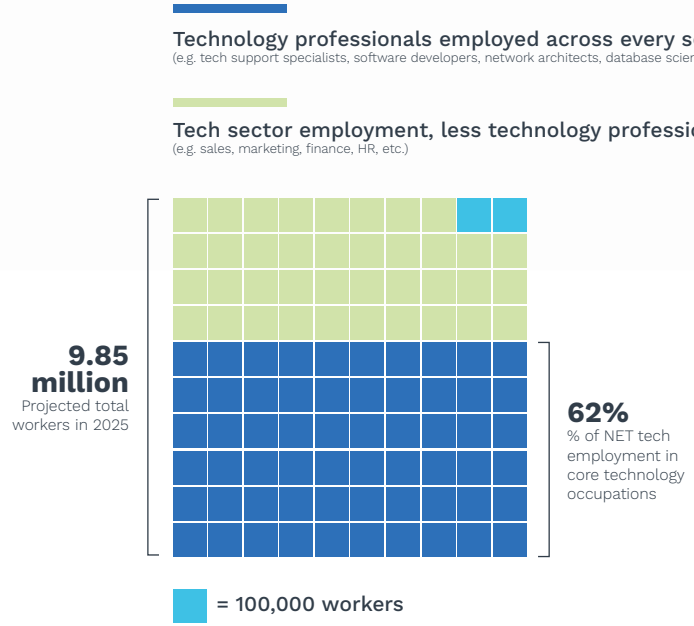
The distinction between tech sector employment and overall tech occupations is essential to understanding today's workforce dynamics. While tech occupations grew by nearly 250,000 last year by August 2025, employment within the tech sector declined during the same period – and **only 40% of tech workers are employed directly within the tech sector.**

With ~10 million in the overall tech industry workforce, the titles and demands of roles continue to evolve. For example, while there are roughly 300,000 computer programmers in the workforce, many now hold titles such as software developer or application engineer, performing similar functions. Job seekers can focus on identifying opportunities by skill set rather than job title to better align with how the market is changing.



Tech Sector Employment vs. Total Tech Employment

Source: CompTIA, State of the Tech Workforce 2025



Understanding the Real Tech Workforce

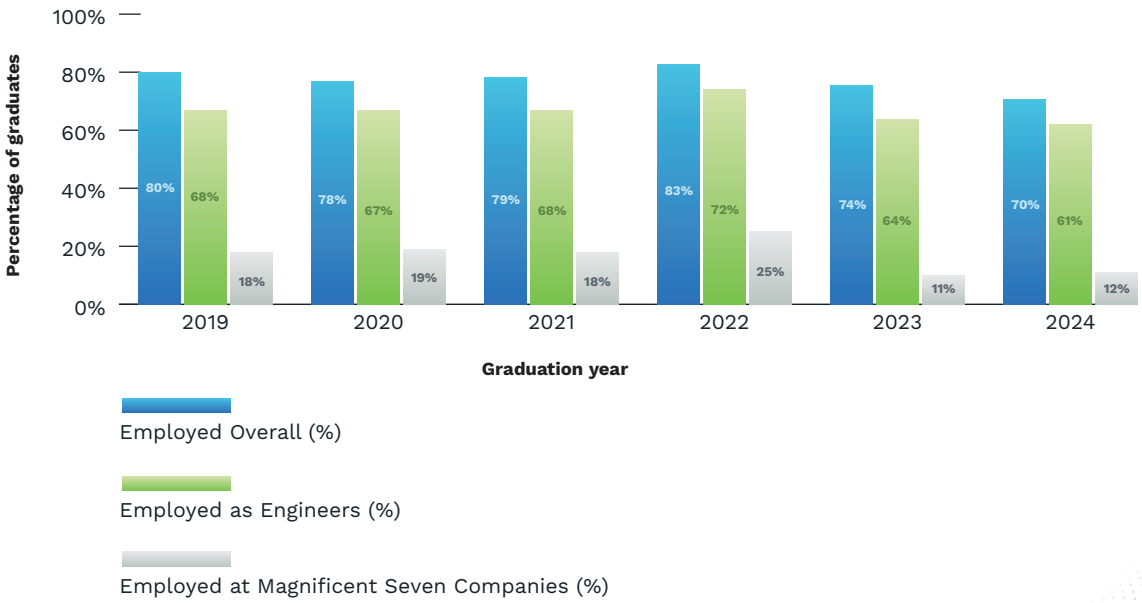
The tech sector refers to organizations whose primary business is technology: sectors such as software and services, IT consulting, hardware manufacturing, telecommunications infrastructure, and cloud or data services. In contrast, tech occupations include roles such as software developers, network engineers, and data scientists that exist across every sector of the economy.

While the overall market remains steady, viewpoints of the state of the industry can vary by role and experience level. Demand is high for specialized positions in AI, cybersecurity, and in areas like fintech. Employers are willing to hire and invest in roles that can drive innovation or safeguard critical systems.

For entry-level positions, the situation is more challenging. The SignalFire State of Tech Talent Report notes that new graduate hiring has dropped 10% compared to pre-pandemic levels. In Big Tech, new grads now account for just 12% of hires, down 25% from 2022.

Share of Graduates of Top CS Programs Employed 6 Months After Graduation

Source: SignalFire, State of Tech Talent Report 2025



Top Industry Sectors Driving Tech Hiring

Source: CompTIA, State of the Tech Workforce 2025

#1	**Tech Sector**	2,608,006
#2	**Professional, Scientific, Technical Services Sector**	695,854
#3	**Finance and Insurance Sector**	537,426
#4	**Management and Holding Companies Sector**	533,306

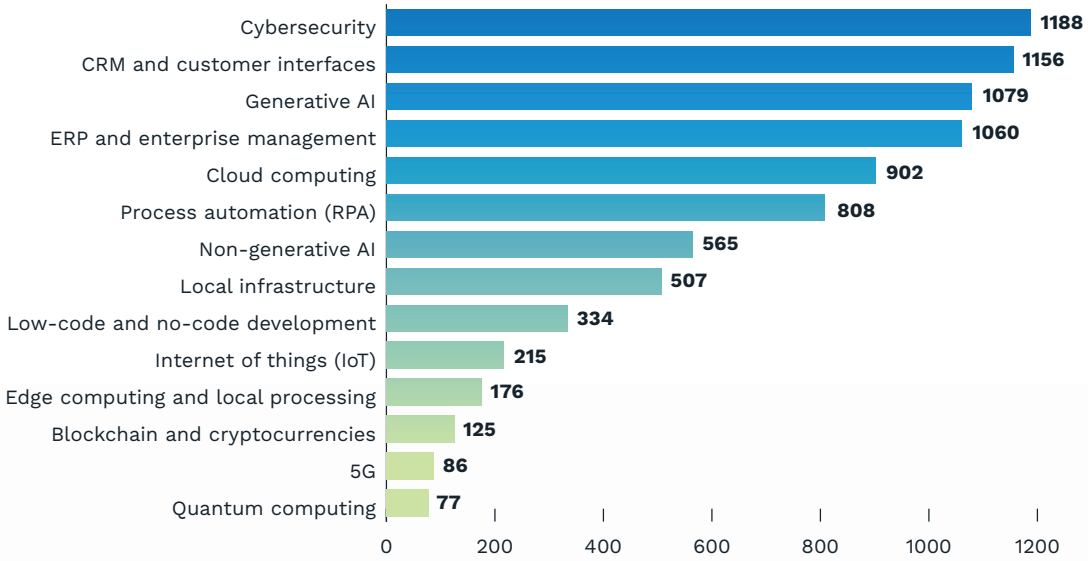
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The Truth About Job Reports and How Those in Tech Should Actually Use Them

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Top 5 Technologies Organizations Are Investing in This Year

Source: Grant Thornton, Shift Your Tech Strategy June 2025 Report

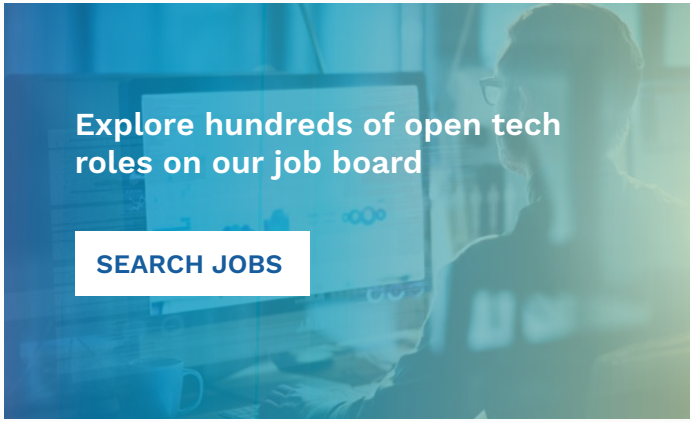


← Top technology investments among North American CFOs, weighted by priority based on their ranked choices.

Even as the market is well below the peaks of early 2022, the tech industry continues to outperform much of the U.S. economy. According to CompTIA's State of the Tech Workforce 2025 report, tech unemployment rates consistently sit below the national level, and tech occupation employment is projected to grow at roughly twice the rate of the overall U.S. workforce over the next decade.

Several factors contribute to the current "no-hire, no-fire" state: economic uncertainty, high interest rates, inflation, and tariff policies prompting cautious corporate spending and hiring freezes. At the same time, AI-driven productivity gains are reducing the need for certain roles, while cost-control measures discourage both layoffs and large-scale hiring.

If macroeconomic conditions stabilize and interest rates ease, hiring momentum could resume in late 2025 or early 2026. Until then, the tech labor market will likely remain in its cautious, balanced state, neither growing rapidly nor suffering dramatic job losses.



Fraud Persists for Both Candidates and Company Leaders

A consistent challenge for the tech industry in the digital age has been fraudulent behavior on both the job seeker and company sides. For those looking for work, sifting through jobs that don't exist or are not remotely what they claim has been an ongoing issue. For businesses looking to hire, lying on resumes or being entirely unqualified for a role has been a dangerous trend for decades, now amplified by candidate scams using virtual tech.

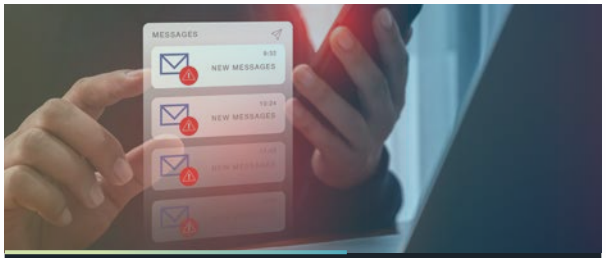
Now with AI tools available to everyone, these scams have exploded in popularity, becoming more frequent and more challenging to catch. For those looking for work, an already stressful time can be compounded by having to navigate fake recruiters flooding inboxes and the sheer amount of counterfeit jobs posted on social media.

Over the past five years, job scam losses have climbed from $90 million to over $500 million, with a median dollar loss of over $1,500.

While there are ways to mitigate your risk, the only true way is constant vigilance during a job search. Adding things like an "open to work" status on LinkedIn can trigger bots to spam your profile, so any opportunity must be thoroughly researched. If using a recruiting firm like Kelly Services or Motion Recruitment, make sure the person you're talking to is actually with the company.

Job scam losses have climbed from $90 million to over $500 million, with a median dollar loss of over $1,500 over the past 5 years.

Source: Moody's Analytics



MOTION BLOG

How to Protect Yourself from Tech Hiring Scams

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Social media sites like LinkedIn are implementing recruiter verification systems to protect job seekers, but contacting the firm directly is always a good option. Working with a staffing agency like Motion, job seekers do not pay for their placement services, so any person claiming to be a recruiter while asking for money is a giant red flag.

For company leaders and those looking to hire tech workers, use of AI tools increases challenges in finding the right candidate for the role. Roles posted on job boards get flooded with hundreds of applications within the first hour, with scripts auto-applying to any role on a site with specific keywords.

These resumes might be AI-generated or assisted, and many have similar formatting and language. According to our recruiters in the field, some company leaders and hiring managers are eliminating resumes that appear to be enhanced by AI, so job seekers might want to be cautious when using programs to help with resume construction.

Beyond the genuine candidates using AI tools to enhance their job search, candidate fraud is also on the rise. A survey by checkr said that 59% of managers say they've suspected a candidate of using AI to misrepresent themselves during the hiring process. From getting a job just to gain credentials and gather an organization's sensitive data, to not being remotely qualified for a role and finding a way to collect multiple paychecks before a company finds out, these scams are becoming more common. Gartner predicts that one out of every four candidates applying for a role will be fake by 2028.

This trend carries serious financial risk. 23% of hiring managers surveyed reported losses exceeding $50,000 in the past year due to hiring or identity fraud, and 10% reported losses over $100,000.

While these developments have made tech hiring more complex, they have also reinforced the value of authenticity. Authentic human connections are now a valuable currency in the IT job market, whether through trusted networks, professional communities, or previous employers who already know a candidate's strengths and character.

1 in 4

By 2028, one in four job applicants will be fake.

Source: Gartner



Workforce Trends in the Tech Industry



From Perks to Priorities: How Tech Workplaces Have Evolved

In years past, the tech industry set a standard for working environments in the U.S. The belief was that when compensation was comparable across employers, smaller perks like free, high-quality snacks and meals, fun office settings and a collaborative growth culture would set a company apart.

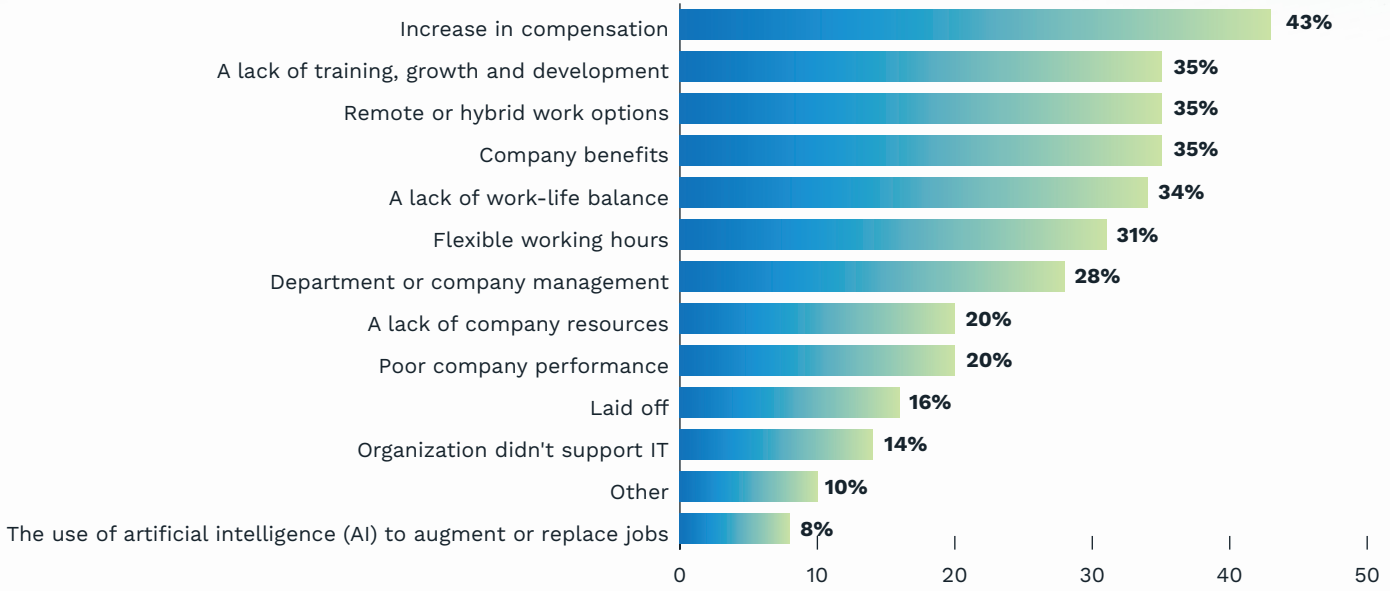
When the pandemic hit in 2020, tech companies were ahead of the curve in remote work, with higher work-from-home adoption than any other economic sector. In the hiring boom of 2021 and 2022, rising salaries were paired with strong work-life balance, remote work options, and reimbursement for professional development and networking.

Beginning in 2023, many of those benefits were scaled back. Companies facing cost pressures and productivity concerns began encouraging employees to return to the office. While many IT professionals remain skeptical of the shift, their priorities have evolved. Instead of seeking growth and creature comforts, security and stability have become increasingly important.

Salary: One Factor That Has Not Changed.
Salary remains the top reason professionals consider a new role. Survey data shows that in 2024, only 41% of tech professionals were very or somewhat satisfied with their compensation, pushing some to seek a new role that aligns with their own salary expectations.

What Led You to Change Employers?

Source: Skillsoft, 2024-2025 IT Skills and Salary Report



Security and Stability Over Perks. One in every three American workers reports anxiety about being laid off, with tech workers more concerned about potential job losses than those working in any other sector in the U.S.

The Return-to-Office Divide. There is a focus on security and compensation, but tech workers still care about their work environment, as return-to-office mandates increase. Of those concerned about being laid off, only 17% of remote workers would return to the office full-time to keep their jobs.

Another survey shows that if workers lost their hybrid work privileges, 41% would look for a new role with better workplace flexibility, and 6% would quit on the spot. In comparison, only 14% would stay and be less happy.

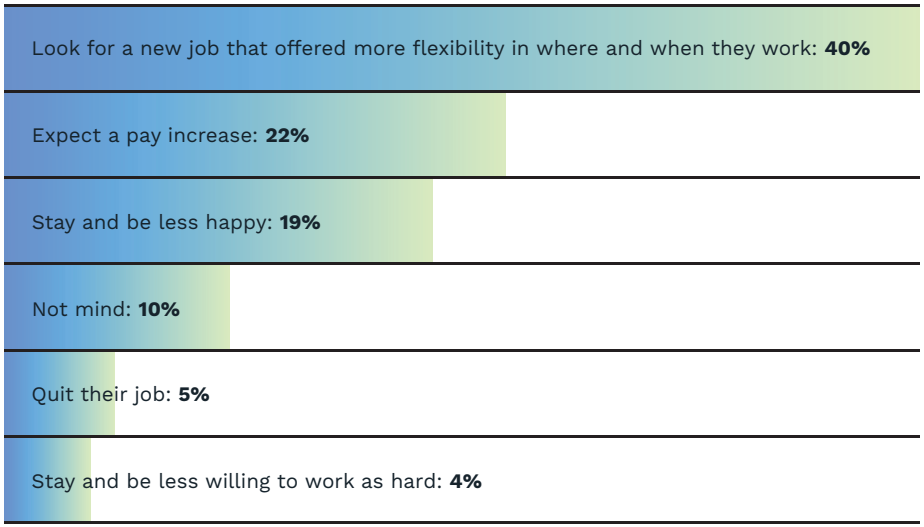
17%

of remote workers would return to the office full time to keep their job.

Source: Clarify Capital Blog

If Employees Lost Their Hybrid Work Privileges, They Would...

Source: Owl Labs, State of Hybrid Work 2025



For some businesses that over-hired at the start of the decade, this might be a feature, not a bug. Some inside the tech industry have hypothesized that these RTO mandates are a potential way to reduce headcounts without severance costs.

But for those tech companies that truly want their workers to come back to the office, one of the best ways to do so is through better compensation. When asked what would bring employees back into the office, the number one answer, by far, was higher pay, followed by a shorter commute, free food/drink and reimbursement for commuting costs.

While 78% of employers say that face-to-face collaboration is the primary driver for RTO policies, only 17% of workers think the opportunity to see friendly coworkers is a compelling reason to return to the office.

What Will Lure Employees Back to the Office?

Source: JLL Technologies, How Companies Can Earn the Commute

41%	Greater overall compensation
28%	Shorter Commute
26%	Free or Subsidized Food/Beverage
26%	Reimbursement for Commuting Costs
23%	More Privacy at the Office
23%	No Dress Code
18%	Better Meeting Room Technology
17%	Chances to See their Work Friends
16%	Onsite Social Events
16%	Control of the Cooling/Heating
16%	Onsite Fitness Facilities
14%	More Meeting Rooms

Exploring New Work Models. Other ways to make heading to the office more palatable for the tech workforce include embracing the hybrid model or exploring a four-day workweek. Only 14% of businesses have currently adopted the four-day workweek, but interest is growing, as 19% are exploring its feasibility and 38% are considering it for the future. There are benefits for both companies and workers, as recent studies have shown that this model can reduce turnover, boost productivity, and lower sick leave.

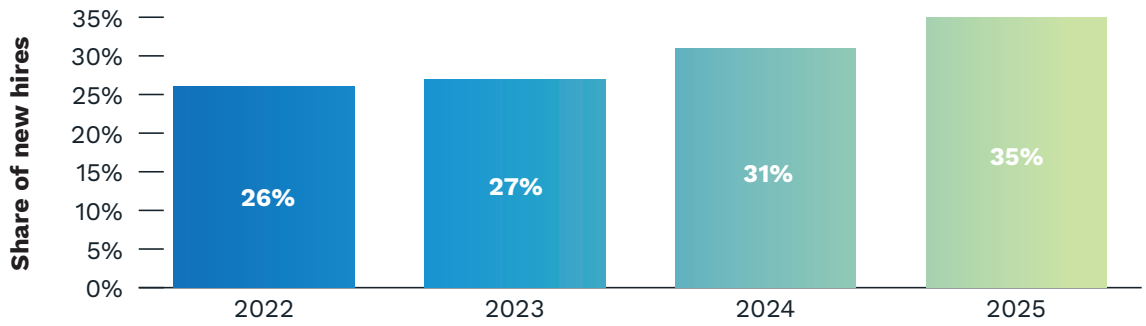
Boomerang Hires on the Rise. Another workforce trend is the increase in "boomerang" hiring, the practice of rehiring former employees. While only 2% of all active employees fall into this category, a growing share of new hires are returning talent. In fact, 35% of all new hires this year are considered boomerang hires, with this number rising to over 65% within the information sector at one point in March 2025.

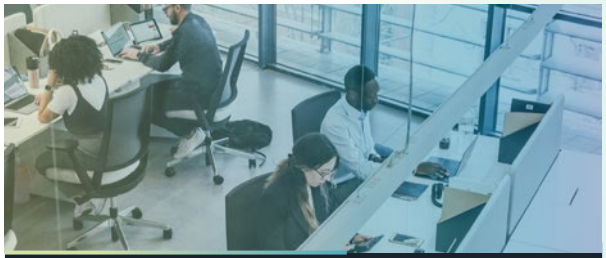
Several factors are driving this trend. Tech professionals with specialized or hard-to-replace skills are in high demand, and returning employees offer faster onboarding, cultural alignment, and proven performance. For employers, they represent a lower-risk investment during uncertain times. On the other hand, many tech professionals who left during recent market turbulence are finding that returning to a familiar company offers greater stability, clearer expectations, and renewed trust.

38% of businesses are considering a four-day workweek for the future.

Boomerang Hires Are on the Rise

Source: ADP Research, Boomerang Hiring Makes a Comeback





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Return to Office vs. Remote: What Tech Workers Actually Prefer

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The Growing AI Skills Gap. Perhaps the most urgent issue in tech workplace is the mismatch between worker demand for AI training and employer readiness to provide it.

60% of leaders expect employees to update their skills, roles, and responsibilities to adjust to the impact of AI. Yet, over one-third of businesses surveyed said they lack policies for AI at work and instead have employees figure it out on their own. Only 23% plan to use technology advancements to support the professional development of employees.

At the same time, there is strong interest in upskilling. According to Microsoft's Work Trend Index, nearly half of leaders are prioritizing AI-specific training for their existing workforce, or leveraging AI as a form of digital labor.

Despite growing awareness of AI's impact, over half of workers are doing limited or no up-skilling in generative AI, and only 25% of workers are completing their AI training at work.

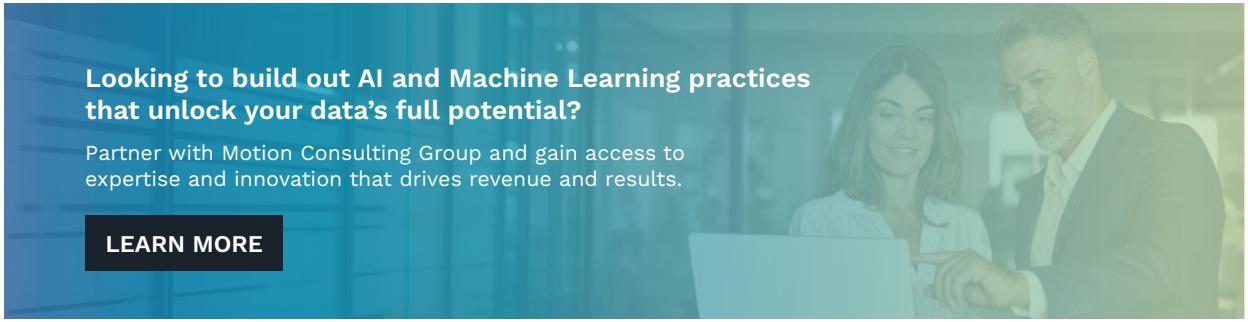
The gap between expectations and enablement remains a critical challenge. Some organizations lack the budget, infrastructure, or expertise to deliver meaningful AI education, while others are still determining where AI fits within their business models. As stated at a recent Tech in Motion event, AI That Delivers: Real Use Cases for Tech Leaders, there is currently no universal AI curriculum. Team members and leaders need to experiment to find how to best leverage AI tools in their specific workflows.

AI upskilling is not optional; it is a competitive necessity. Companies and tech workers that fail to invest in training risk falling behind, but success will require flexibility: understanding how AI can enhance existing work rather than replace it.

47%

of leaders are prioritizing AI-specific skills training for their existing workforce.





Emerging Tech



Artificial Intelligence Remains Top of Mind for Tech Leaders

Given the frequent mentions of artificial intelligence even in this guide, it's no surprise that AI remains the dominant topic shaping the tech landscape. Today's conversation around AI has split into two distinct but interconnected tracks: how to advance and scale AI technology itself, and how to effectively implement it across industries.

Significant investment is flowing into the infrastructure that powers AI innovation. In 2025, U.S. data center spending surged—driven largely by the needs of hyperscale providers such as Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Meta. In just the first half of the year, data center investments exceeded $40 billion, marking a 30% year-over-year increase.

Data centers are popping up across the country, with recent announcements of a second center being built in Wisconsin (with Microsoft planning to spend $4 billion to bring it online), and Oracle and OpenAI are planning to build a data center campus in Texas.

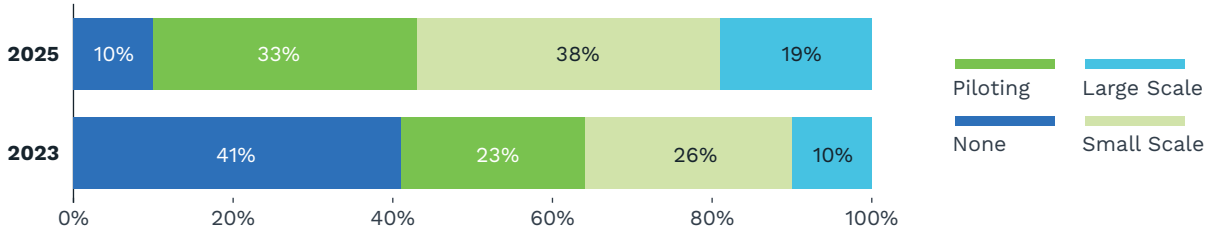
These data centers are creating tech jobs, from planning and construction to data center operations. Data center architects are in high demand, sometimes switching between companies and earning seven-figure salaries. Motion Recruitment Executive Director Andrew Slepitza likened it to free agency in sports, where talent is heavily recruited and can start a bidding war for their services.

$40 billion

Data center spending reached $40 billion in the first half of 2025.

How Would You Characterize Your Investment in AI/Machine Learning?

Source: Nash Squared, Digital Leadership Report 2025



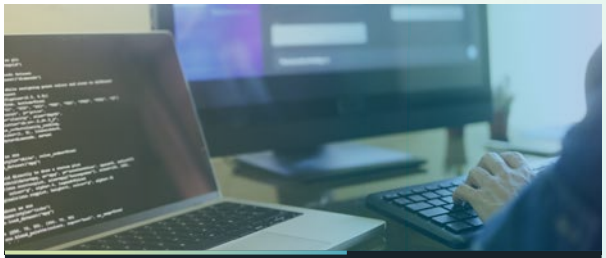
Once new facilities come online, the employment mix shifts toward long-term operational roles. Data center technicians, network engineers, cloud infrastructure specialists and AI systems administrators are in high demand to keep hyperscale campuses running smoothly. As AI workloads are more resource-intensive than older data centers, energy systems engineers and sustainability managers are also increasingly important, tasked with optimizing efficiency and integrating renewable energy sources.

These facilities are also more sophisticated and secure than their predecessors. Beyond core tech positions, physical security and facilities management have become key considerations in long-term workforce planning.

While several planned projects were paused early in 2025, most notably AWS suspending leases for multiple sites amid initial tariff uncertainty, industry leaders maintain that long-term investment remains strong. Amazon and other major hyperscale providers have reiterated that their overall data center strategies are unchanged.

With McKinsey predicting data center demand to rise by 33% by 2030, job seekers should look to see where their skills align with these massive projects.

The surge in data center construction is being driven by the immense computational power required for the next evolution of artificial intelligence, agentic AI. If implemented correctly, these new systems can act with autonomy and multi-step reasoning, compared to generative AI, which can only respond to specific prompts.



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Understanding Agentic AI and It's Impact on Tech Jobs

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Ideally, these new programs are designed as “agents,” completing tasks with minimal human oversight. Successful agentic AI implementation would lead to a massive jump in productivity, but concerns remain about the accuracy and dependability of these tools.

Demand is there, as the previously mentioned Microsoft Work Trend Index shows that while 80% of the global workforce say they’re lacking time or energy to do all their work, 53% of leaders say that productivity needs to increase. That’s why a vast majority of leaders say they expect to use agents to meet the demand for more workforce capacity.

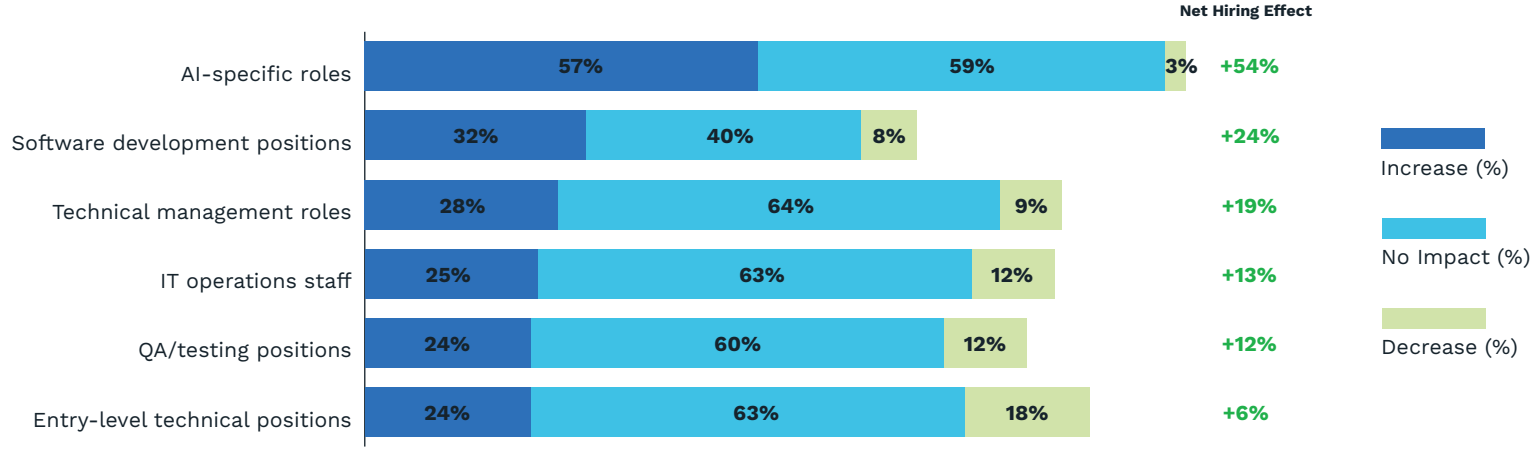
Much like the introduction of generative AI, the rise of agentic AI tech has sparked concerns about potential job displacement. Despite significant corporate spending and investment in AI infrastructure, 2025 employment data shows that spending has not led to a significant increase in jobs inside the tech industry, outside of AI-specific roles.

80%

of the global workforce say they’re lacking enough time or energy to do all their work

How Has AI Impacted Your Technical Workforce in the Following Areas?

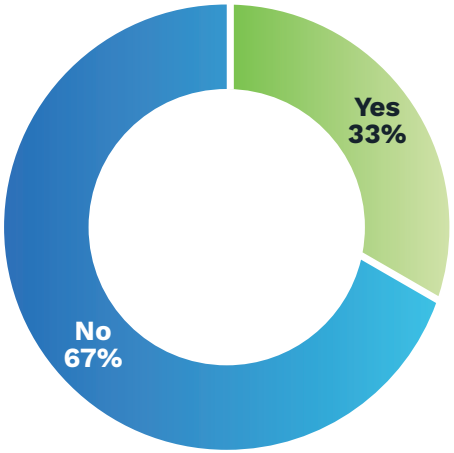
Source: Linux Foundation, State of Tech Talent Report 2025





Have You Seen a Specific Project Using AI/GenAI Where There Has Been a Demonstrable ROI Beyond Initial Piloting?

Source: Nash Squared, Digital Leadership Report 2025



← % of 2,015 senior tech leaders (Dec 2024–Mar 2025, 62 countries) answering “yes” or “no.”

If agentic AI delivers on its promise of greater productivity, some fear another wave of layoffs like 2023. However, a more likely outcome is a shift rather than a reduction, where new types of roles emerge to meet the demands of this evolving technological landscape.

In the near-term, it’s clear that many AI systems still require close human oversight. Issues like inaccuracies, hallucinations, and fabricated outputs can create critical errors if left unsupervised, so workforce reductions based on fully replacing workers remains unrealistic for now.

At the same time, AI’s influence is expanding beyond software. Once dominated by industrial automation in manufacturing, robotics in the U.S. now spans logistics, healthcare, defense, agriculture and consumer applications, with AI serving as the common driver of innovation.

AI is enabling robots to move beyond repetitive, pre-programmed tasks toward adaptive, autonomous decision-making. Computer vision and machine learning allow robots to navigate complex environments like warehouses and hospitals, while reinforcement learning accelerates training cycles in simulation before deployment.

Large language models are also improving human-robot interaction, making it possible for robots to follow natural language instructions and collaborate more seamlessly with people. These advances are expanding the commercial viability of robotics across industries that previously relied heavily on human labor.

Wearables and Blockchain Return to the Conversation

Wearable tech has seen a resurgence in press and investments in 2025, with advancements in AI technology allowing for a more useful and seamless experience for end-users. Smart glasses are projected to evolve, as major companies like Meta and Apple are planning to, or have already released, products into the marketplace.

While smart glasses technology has advanced significantly since the failure of Google Glass more than a decade ago, skepticism remains about their long-term value. Projected revenue for smart glasses continues to lag behind other wearables such as smartwatches and earwear, and ongoing privacy and security concerns, particularly around discreet camera features, persist.

Even so, there are promising signs of progress. Despite several glitches during Meta's September launch event, innovations in battery performance and the blending of augmented reality with real-world vision have the potential to reinvigorate the wearables market.

With cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin hitting all-time highs in 2025 and the executive branch signaling its support for the industry, blockchain is once again a rising topic in tech. In fact, 99% of North American CFOs envision using business functions involving non-stablecoin cryptocurrencies, including supply chain tracking, capital raising, and payroll.

While enthusiasm is returning, venture capital activity remains well below the record highs of 2021 and 2022. The first half of 2025 saw a year-over-year decline in deal volume, though the majority of those investments occurred within the United States. As blockchain becomes further embedded in the U.S. economy, certain sectors are leaning into its long-term potential, while others are taking a more measured approach, balancing innovation with caution around regulation, volatility, and ROI.

Stay ahead of what's next in tech: Follow our monthly Newsletter on LinkedIn

See What's in Motion



99%

of North American CFOs envision using business functions involving non-stablecoin cryptocurrencies.

Advice from the Experts

For Company Leaders

Stay Fast, Nimble and Forward Thinking. To succeed in today's tech industry, leaders need strategies that balance innovation with agility. Growth planning should be comprehensive, building AI-enabled processes that enhance rather than replace employee productivity, and grounded in clear metrics that measure performance across teams.

Leaders are also being asked to deliver innovation with leaner teams and tighter budgets. Leveraging consulting or statement-of-work (SOW) budgets can reduce resource costs while keeping critical projects on track, whether they involve AI initiatives or other technology priorities. Modernizing legacy systems, addressing technical debt, and preparing infrastructure for AI and cloud readiness should be top priorities. Leaders who continually refine their programs to drive efficiency and revenue, and who adapt quickly to new technologies and shifting market conditions, are best positioned for long-term success.

Prioritize Speed & Simplicity. For companies competing for top tech talent, especially in high-demand areas like cybersecurity and AI, speed matters. Skilled professionals often receive interview requests, and even job offers, within days of entering the market. A compelling mission or product helps, but a slow or cumbersome hiring process can cost a company its best candidates.

Due diligence is essential, but hiring should be efficient and respectful of everyone's time. Consider AI tools or staffing partners to speed up the process. Streamlined interviews that focus on assessing both technical expertise and cultural fit demonstrate a company's professionalism and urgency. In a market defined by competition and caution, clarity and speed can make the difference between landing or losing top talent.

Invest in People, Not Just Technology. As AI and automation continue to evolve, human connection and team culture remain differentiators. Many companies are doing more with less, but neglecting to invest in your workforce can erode morale and productivity. Prioritizing upskilling, transparent communication, and meaningful recognition builds trust and stability, both critical to long-term success.



MCG BLOG

AI Use Cases That Actually Deliver Value... And Three That Don't

READ NOW

For Job Seekers

Network Building is Key. Simply clicking “Easy Apply” on a job posting won’t be enough in 2026. In a market where hiring has slowed across many parts of the tech industry, your professional network can make all the difference. Reaching out to former colleagues, industry peers, and mentors for referrals or advice can significantly increase your chances of landing an interview: 40% of referred applicants make it to the interview stage, and 16% receive an offer.

Networking opportunities are everywhere. Build your connections online by engaging in meaningful discussions on social and tech forums, or join webinars and local meetups centered on emerging trends in technology.

Stay Adaptable in a Shifting Market. Many organizations are scaling back large transformation projects in favor of smaller, incremental modernization efforts. Being open to project-based work, consulting roles, or statement-of-work (SOW) engagements can help you stay active in the market while expanding your skills and connections. These opportunities often evolve into long-term roles once business confidence returns.

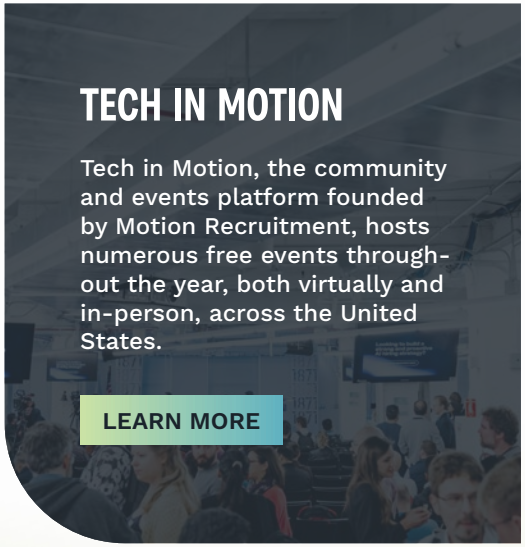
40%

of referred applicants make it to the interview stage, and 16% get an offer.

For Both Company Leaders and Job Seekers

Accept the Promise and Limitations of AI. Having a clear plan for AI adoption and progress is now essential across the tech industry. For companies, success depends on designing programs that use AI to complement human productivity and data infrastructure that can allow for implementation. Organizations that invest in structured AI training, build policies for responsible use, and align tools to real business outcomes are best positioned to maximize ROI.

Job seekers need to be proactive in understanding how AI is used in their field. Candidates who can demonstrate familiarity with AI tools – or show how they’ve applied them to improve efficiency, analysis, or innovation – stand out in a competitive market. Simply saying you’re “interested in learning AI” is no longer enough.



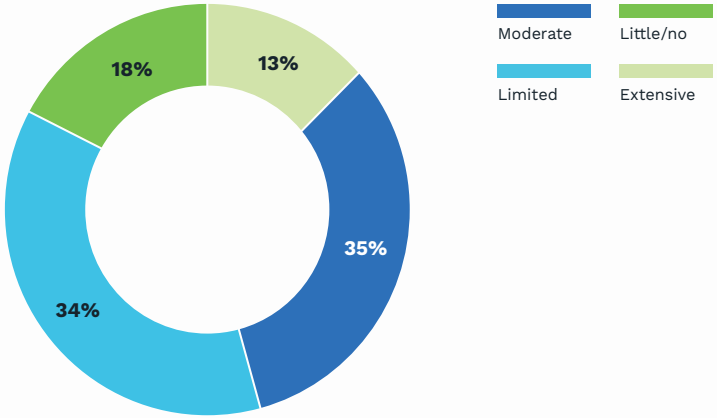


While some companies have made headlines for reducing their workforce due to AI, it's hard to prove bottom-line impact. In several cases, businesses later rehired employees after encountering the limits of AI tools or facing public backlash. The reality is that AI's success still depends heavily on human oversight, strategy, and creativity.

Organizations that invest in training programs and equip their teams to use AI effectively are better positioned to maximize its potential today and shape its responsible use in the future.

Workers Upskilling in Generative AI

Source: Nash Squared, Digital Leadership Report 2025



Be AI-Ready, Not AI-Dependent. In the current state, AI should serve as an enhancer, not a replacement. For both leaders and professionals, the goal is to leverage these tools to improve decision-making, productivity, and creativity, while maintaining the human insight that drives innovation. Those who can balance technical fluency with critical thinking, communication, and adaptability will remain indispensable in the next wave of technological change.

The future of tech work won't be defined by automation alone, but by how humans and AI collaborate. The organizations and professionals that approach AI as a tool for empowerment, combining innovation with adaptability, will be the ones leading the industry forward.

Put Your 2026 in Motion

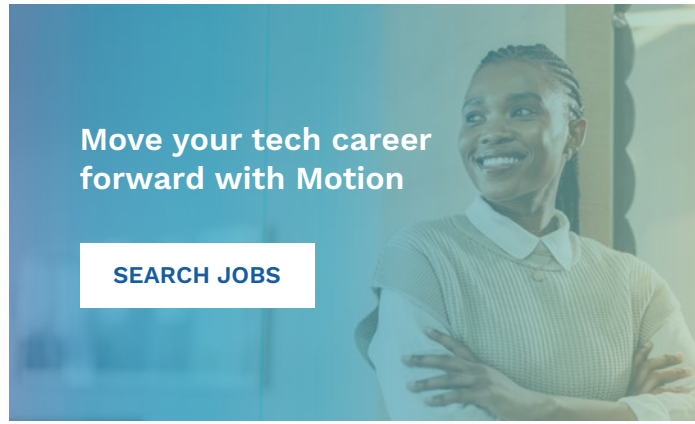
There's a renewed sense of optimism in the tech industry for 2026. Emerging technologies are fueling innovation, and businesses across sectors are positioning themselves for growth. For both employers and professionals, success in the year ahead will depend on staying informed, adaptable, and connected.

To make the right decisions for your career or company, having accurate industry data and trusted expertise by your side is essential. At **Motion**, we combine real-time market insight with hands-on experience, tracking how businesses and IT professionals are adapting, and empowering the strategies that drive the industry forward.

Through **Motion Consulting Group (MCG)**, we help organizations strengthen their digital foundations or complete critical projects through consulting, SOW solutions, and specialized resources. For **Motion Recruitment's** tech-specialized staffing teams, who live and breathe the IT job market, our focus remains the same: understanding the landscape so we can help others navigate it confidently.

We hope the insights and data in this guide provide valuable perspective on where the tech industry is headed and what opportunities lie ahead, and we're here to help you make smarter, data-informed decisions for 2026 and beyond. If this report sparks questions, ideas, or next steps, we invite you to reach out and continue the conversation.

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Build stronger teams with trusted tech expertise. Consult with a recruiter.

HIRE TALENT

Tech Salary Ranges

This section outlines the average starting salary ranges in the US and Canada by role in major technology sectors.

Leverage the city-specific variances per tech sector on the following page for regional salary ranges per tech job.

Mid: 2-5 Years of Experience/Abilities
Senior: 5+ Years of Experience/Abilities

Some of the following roles, particularly architects, start at the senior level and do not have mid level salaries available.

Tech Salary Ranges

27 Calculate Salaries By Top Cities

28 Management/Executive

28 Software Development

30 Product + UX, QA and Mobile

31 Data, ML and AI

32 Infrastructure and Agile

33 Cybersecurity, Embedded + Robotics

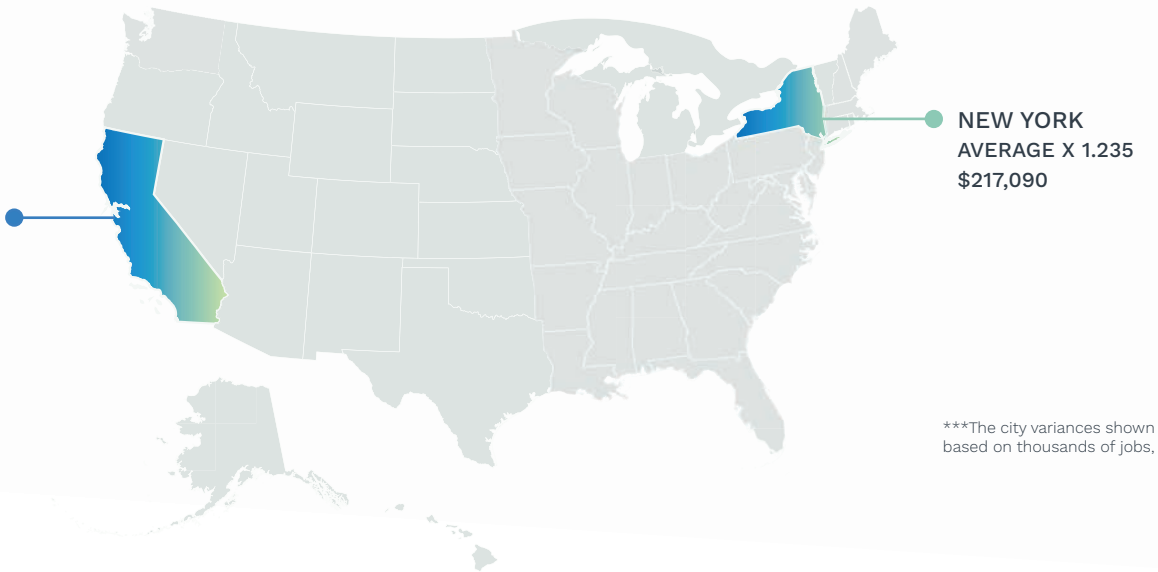
34 Salary Data Methodology

Local Variances
Calculate Salaries for Top Tech Cities

	Arlington	Atlanta	Boston	Charlotte	Chicago	Dallas	Los Angeles	Minneapolis	New York	Philly	Phoenix	San Francisco	Seattle	Silicon Valley	Toronto
Software	1.116	0.914	1.033	0.808	0.945	0.818	1.127	0.969	1.131	0.909	0.936	1.257	1.080	1.150	0.961
Security	1.164	0.954	1.078	0.843	0.986	0.854	1.176	1.012	1.180	0.949	0.977	1.311	1.127	1.200	1.003
Product & UX	1.155	0.946	1.069	0.837	0.979	0.847	1.166	1.004	1.170	0.941	0.969	1.301	1.118	1.190	0.995
Mobile	1.257	1.030	1.164	0.911	1.066	0.922	1.270	1.093	1.275	1.025	1.055	1.417	1.218	1.296	1.084
Infrastructure	0.982	0.804	0.909	0.711	0.832	0.720	0.991	0.853	0.995	0.800	0.824	1.106	0.951	1.012	0.846
Functional	0.956	0.783	0.885	0.693	0.810	0.701	0.966	0.831	0.969	0.779	0.802	1.077	0.926	0.985	0.824
Data	1.218	0.998	1.128	0.883	1.032	0.894	1.230	1.059	1.235	0.993	1.022	1.372	1.180	1.256	1.050
AVERAGES	**1.1069**	**0.9072**	**1.0249**	**0.8022**	**0.9381**	**0.8121**	**1.1181**	**0.9620**	**1.1221**	**0.9016**	**0.9295**	**1.2465**	**1.0716**	**1.1408**	**0.9536**

Senior Data Scientist

Low Range: $157,083
High Range: $194,480
Average: $175,782



SAN FRANCISCO
AVERAGE X 1.372
$241,172

NEW YORK
AVERAGE X 1.235
$217,090

***The city variances shown here are derived fully from analyzing internal company data based on thousands of jobs, which is copyrighted and intended for personal use only.

Management & Executive

As described on page 26, salary averages in the pages following represent low ranges and high ranges of the two levels.

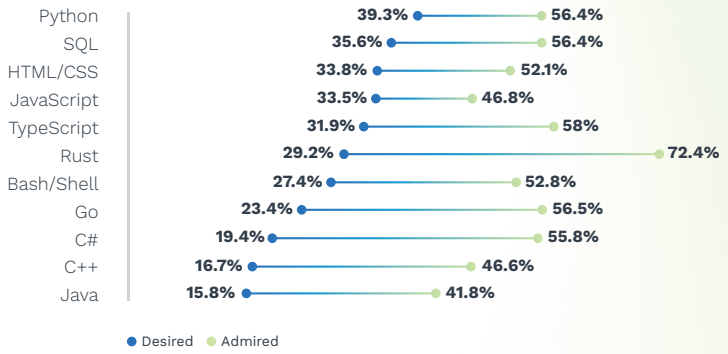
Management	MIN	MAX
Chief Security Officer	$266,731	$400,890
VP of Engineering	$218,968	$252,749
Chief Technology Officer	$206,534	$253,600
Creative Director	$154,499	$194,776
Director of Engineering	$162,790	$216,835
Engineering Manager	$154,243	$190,296
Founding Engineer	$161,800	$192,300

Software Development

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Software	**$106,594**	**$137,295**	**$130,476**	**$162,655**
Back End	**$116,637**	**$150,494**	**$142,401**	**$176,755**
.Net Architect			$147,743	$205,600
.Net Developer	$103,812	$130,893	$119,778	$150,747
Application Developer	$89,875	$124,916	$127,500	$147,500
Back End Developer	$128,382	$166,029	$150,320	$193,762
C++ Developer	$110,588	$159,110	$140,625	$178,467
Golang Developer	$132,052	$171,370	$144,117	$183,976
Java Architect			$144,417	$188,690
Java Developer	$113,924	$141,344	$140,607	$169,766
Microservices Engineer			$140,000	$166,250
Node.js Developer	$119,107	$146,607	$142,240	$177,750
PHP Developer	$90,476	$112,238	$121,360	$137,450
Platform Architect			$172,219	$191,317
Platform Engineer	$145,900	$180,500	$157,920	$192,960
Python Developer	$118,000	$153,712	$142,285	$180,909
Ruby on Rails Developer	$128,181	$159,565	$144,888	$186,176

Most Desired and Admired Languages

Source: Stack Overflow, Developer Survey 2025

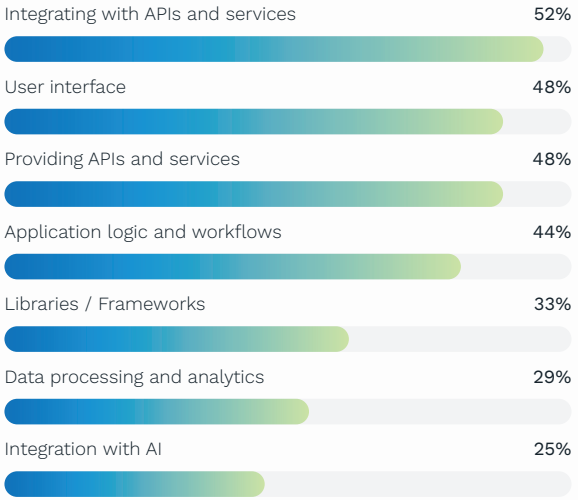


Software Development (cont.)

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Front End	**$111,006**	**$140,456**	**$125,931**	**$161,922**
Angular Developer	$94,736	$123,684	$119,310	$159,137
Javascript Developer	$112,750	$139,750	$117,320	$153,400
React Developer	$125,533	$157,933	$141,162	$173,230
General	**$103,852**	**$134,124**	**$134,337**	**$162,345**
Full Stack Software Developer	$125,622	$158,420	$140,744	$174,665
Gaming Engineer	$87,306	$120,608	$131,462	$152,412
Sales Engineer	$108,285	$136,774	$132,857	$159,083
Salesforce Developer	$100,833	$130,500	$122,500	$155,833
Solutions Architect			$141,290	$177,419
Software Architect			$164,736	$198,684
Software Developer	$107,500	$144,050	$124,340	$148,363
SAP Developer	$98,750	$122,500	$129,574	$146,190
Technical Writer	$98,666	$126,017	$121,530	$148,453

Top 7 Developer-Implemented Features by Frequency

Source: JetBrains, Developer Ecosystem 2025



Product + UX, QA, Mobile

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Product & UX	**$112,186**	**$139,094**	**$131,783**	**$163,998**
Product Designer	$117,128	$156,365	$144,285	$178,650
Product Manager	$124,350	$151,150	$137,727	$173,272
UI/UX Designer	$99,375	$126,562	$115,320	$144,200
UX Researcher	$107,890	$122,300	$129,800	$159,870
QA	**$94,693**	**$120,113**	**$117,993**	**$144,874**
QA Analyst	$85,363	$103,381	$107,800	$120,890
QA Automation Engineer	$99,375	$128,750	$129,263	$155,854
QA Engineer	$87,351	$114,230	$113,570	$140,250
SDET	$106,683	$134,090	$121,340	$162,500
Mobile	**$127,958**	**$155,994**	**$142,314**	**$179,290**
Android Developer	$123,571	$156,785	$133,450	$178,900
iOS Developer	$127,103	$149,397	$150,993	$183,969
React Native Developer	$133,200	$161,800	$142,500	$175,000
Functional	**$100,445**	**$118,916**	**$111,445**	**$136,653**
Business Intelligence Analyst	$92,440	$116,100	$105,500	$139,175
Business Analyst	$89,700	$109,800	$89,540	$113,900
Product Owner	$108,863	$136,818	$123,900	$155,400
Project Manager	$106,161	$133,008	$114,122	$144,308
Program Manager	$119,763	$128,419	$140,819	$159,399
Project Coordinator	$85,741	$89,353	$94,788	$107,737



Top 6 Product Development Manager Certifications

Source: Zippia

1. Project Management Professional (PMP)
2. Certified Scrum Master (CSM)
3. Certified Manager Certification (CM)
4. Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO)
5. Certified Product Manager (CPM)
6. Master Project Manager (MPM)

Data

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Data	**$125,600**	**$152,365**	**$145,830**	**$180,829**
AI Engineer	$149,923	$192,884	$155,862	$203,103
Business Intelligence Developer	$96,000	$122,000	$133,200	$146,700
Computer Vision Engineer	$147,265	$167,122	$175,469	$220,890
Data Architect			$146,538	$175,769
Data Analyst	$95,714	$117,577	$119,166	$149,166
Data Engineer	$118,936	$149,468	$147,195	$179,024
Data Modeler	$94,318	$125,014	$126,780	$150,134
Data Scientist	$138,054	$174,890	$157,083	$194,480
Database Engineer	$126,250	$151,875	$125,588	$176,800
Machine Learning Engineer	$149,136	$192,044	$168,076	$220,560
Data warehouse developers and SQL developers saw up to a **9%** increase in salary on average year over year.				
SQL Developer	$98,375	$113,125	$116,136	$149,722
Data Warehouse Analyst	$136,642	$149,513	$153,400	$182,658
Data Warehouse Developer	$132,400	$154,891	$145,700	$185,690
Database Administrator	$124,119	$139,890	$144,476	$161,099
LLM Developer	$143,571	$174,287	$162,826	$209,130
GenAI Developer	$133,300	$160,900	$155,780	$188,333

Where Tech Leaders Are Reporting a Skills Shortage

Source: Nash Squared, Digital Leadership Report 2025

51% **Artificial Intelligence**

38% **Big Data, Analytics, Data Engineering**

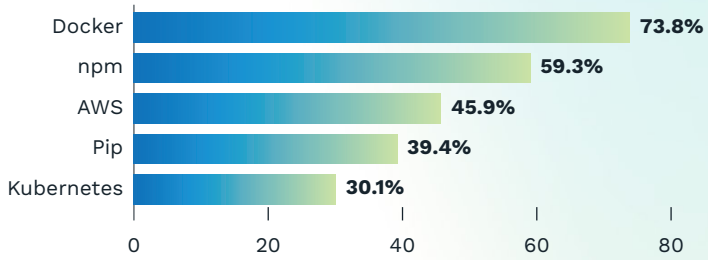
33% **Cybersecurity**

Infrastructure

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Infrastructure	**$93,631**	**$113,244**	**$123,000**	**$144,311**
Cloud Architect			$151,304	$174,130
Cloud Engineer	$118,448	$147,586	$138,900	$182,560
DevOps Engineer	$128,829	$159,260	$141,716	$168,283
Technical Support Analyst	$68,100	$81,242	$81,661	$92,760
Helpdesk Support	$58,700	$71,100	$70,800	$89,170
Infrastructure and Security Architect			$157,298	$178,214
Systems Administrator	$85,263	$105,368	$114,230	$123,076
Linux Administrator	$91,719	$105,055	$112,800	$135,400
Network Architect			$146,354	$174,624
Network Administrator	$81,200	$95,500	$110,230	$117,809
Network Engineer	$110,626	$119,402	$120,674	$144,139
Site Reliability Engineer	$128,470	$155,352	$155,700	$184,500
Support Engineer	$70,100	$89,600	$87,100	$113,560
Systems Architect			$161,600	$171,640
Systems Analyst	$80,714	$105,714	$102,500	$118,500
Systems Engineer	$101,406	$123,750	$115,136	$140,618

Top Five Cloud Development Platforms/Tools for Professional Developers

Source: Stack Overflow, Developer Survey 2025



Agile

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Agile	**$126,889**	**$138,662**	**$147,854**	**$167,086**
Agile Coach (Enterprise)	$109,524	$124,445	$130,020	$148,279
RTE/Release Train Engineer	$153,959	$164,850	$176,022	$203,360
Scrum Master	$117,183	$126,692	$137,521	$149,620

75%

of North American tech leaders plan to increase their 2026 spending on cloud, data centers, and security.

Source: Forrester



Cybersecurity

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Security	**$116,418**	**$140,135**	**$135,951**	**$168,943**
Cybersecurity Architect			$135,860	$170,500
(Cyber)security Engineer	$128,700	$148,157	$137,058	$161,443
Application Security Engineer	$120,302	$153,235	$144,300	$174,670
DevSecOps Engineer	$149,736	$182,894	$160,900	$198,700
Information Security Analyst	$106,029	$114,259	$111,147	$141,377
Information Security Engineer	$114,688	$149,800	$139,606	$164,085
Network Security Engineer	$108,636	$125,667	$140,200	$172,500
Security Architect			$146,500	$177,150
SOC Security Analyst	$86,750	$101,066	$107,800	$135,400
Pen Tester	$116,500	$146,000	$115,400	$165,300
Detection Engineer			$156,600	$198,800

Detection engineers saw up to a **6%** increase in salary on average year over year.

Embedded + Robotics

	MID LEVEL		SENIOR LEVEL	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Embedded + Robotics	**$106,783**	**$141,290**	**$131,716**	**$167,379**
Control Systems Engineer	$102,560	$113,145	$131,280	$140,890
Robotics Engineer	$111,550	$178,333	$134,583	$186,666
Embedded Engineer	$109,687	$140,906	$131,500	$170,461
Firmware Engineer	$103,333	$132,777	$129,500	$171,500

Salary Data Methodology

The tech salary data in Motion Recruitment's 2026 Salary Guide is derived from a comprehensive analysis of thousands of job listings collected over the past year. This includes Motion's proprietary job order data, combined with LaborIQ's extensive database, which covers more than 18 trillion data points and 5 million verified jobs, including pay stub records.

To ensure accuracy, findings were validated against trusted external sources and reviewed by regional market experts and tech-specific subject matter experts (SMEs).

The salary ranges in this guide reflect real market data from major cities across North America. Base compensation figures are divided into Mid-level (2–5 years) and Senior-level (5+ years) experience tiers. Ranges may vary depending on company size, industry, and organizational structure, and exclude bonuses, equity, and benefits.

All data is proprietary to Motion Recruitment, validated through multiple external sources and verified wage data. This information is protected by copyright and subject to infringement protections.

Contact Motion Recruitment for more detailed information based on your specific needs.

About Motion Recruitment + Motion Consulting Group

Motion Recruitment, a Kelly Company, provides IT Staffing & Consulting solutions across North America to meet demand for tech contract, direct hire, and project deliverable needs. Continuing the Kelly tradition of empowering businesses and individuals to access limitless opportunities, Motion Recruitment specializes in staffing solutions for the most challenging tech sectors, including Software, AI, Cybersecurity, and many others, and is the creator of Tech in Motion, a technology networking event and awards program that connects over 350,000 tech enthusiasts. Motion Consulting Group provides consulting solutions for true digital transformation in Agile, DevOps, Cybersecurity & Product Modernization.