
WHITE PAPER

The AI Governance Salary Report 2026

How AI governance, responsible AI, and AI risk roles are paid across the US, UK, Germany, France, Netherlands, and Ireland, and what the EU AI Act is doing to the market.

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1. Executive summary

This report compiles publicly available compensation data for AI governance and related roles across the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Netherlands, and Ireland, collected between December 2025 and May 2026. It is the first public attempt we know of to triangulate AI governance salary data across multiple source types (salary aggregators, recruiter guides, executive-search firms, and credentialing-body research), and to break out the certification premium that AI governance practitioners actually realize.

1.1 Six findings that matter

AI governance has become a real *labour market* in the last 18 months. It is no longer a side responsibility tacked onto privacy or risk roles. It is a category with its own salary band, its own credentials, and its own hiring velocity.

- 1. AI governance hiring grew 150% in the past year.** Demand for AI governance skills on LinkedIn rose 150 percent year-over-year, and demand for AI ethics skills rose 125 percent. This is among the fastest growth of any specialism tracked by LinkedIn's 2026 Skills on the Rise data.
- 2. The IAPP-cited median for AI governance professionals is USD 182,000.** This is for individuals holding the AIGP credential, working in roles where AI governance is a meaningful share of the job. The figure is consistent across IAPP self-reports and third-party aggregations.
- 3. A Chief AI Officer in the US earns USD 250,000 to USD 500,000 base.** Heidrick & Struggles' 2025 *Data, Analytics, and AI Officers Compensation Survey*, drawing on 318 executives, shows total compensation reaching seven figures at the upper end once long-term equity is included.
- 4. The certification premium is real but small without seniority.** Holding one IAPP certification correlates with a 13 percent salary uplift versus non-certified peers. Holding multiple IAPP certifications (typically AIGP plus CIPP/E or CIPM) lifts that to 27 percent. The premium for AIGP alone, controlled for seniority, lands around 10 to 15 percent.
- 5. EU markets are still a third behind the US, but the gap is closing fastest in Ireland and the Netherlands.** US AI governance leadership compensation runs roughly 30 to 50 percent above equivalent EU roles. Ireland and Amsterdam, both magnets for US tech EU headquarters, are pulling the EU end of the band upward.
- 6. AI governance consulting is the most underreported part of the market.** Independent AI GRC consultants in mature markets bill USD 800 to USD 2,000 per day, equating to USD 180,000 to USD 270,000 in annual potential. Big Four AI consulting day rates reach USD 2,400 to USD 4,800.

If you are a hiring manager, the era of getting AI governance work done as a 20 percent side allocation of a privacy officer's time is closing. If you are a candidate, the certification stack that

compounds best is **AIGP plus a privacy credential plus an audit credential**. That bundle is what produces the 27 percent premium IAPP measures, not any single certification on its own.

2. Why this report exists

2.1 The market context

The EU AI Act entered into force on 1 August 2024. The provisions on prohibited AI practices became applicable on 2 February 2025. General-purpose AI obligations followed in August 2025. The most consequential rules, covering high-risk AI systems under Annex III, were postponed to 2 December 2027 in the latest revision, but the operational reality is that hiring has already moved.

Three forces are pushing AI governance compensation upward at the same time. First, regulatory deadlines are forcing organisations to staff up before they would otherwise have done so. Second, the AI labour market broadly has bifurcated. Frontier-model labs are paying seven-figure packages for engineers and the spillover lifts adjacent specialisms. Third, the pay transparency directive that came into force across the EU in 2026 has made the actual numbers visible for the first time in many European markets, which has compressed the bottom of the band and pulled the top of the band up.

This report is an attempt to put a number on what those three forces have produced.

2.2 Who this is for

This report was written for three audiences. *Hiring managers* and heads of HR who need to set bands for AI governance roles. *Candidates* who want to know what to ask for. And *founders and operators* in the AI governance ecosystem who need a defensible market picture for board decks and investor conversations.

It is not a substitute for a paid salary survey from a recruiting firm. It is a public, transparent, source-cited baseline that anyone can audit.

3. Methodology

3.1 How we defined "AI governance"

The label "AI governance" is fuzzy. A privacy officer who occasionally writes an AI policy is doing AI governance. A Chief AI Officer at a frontier-model lab is doing AI governance. A model risk manager at a bank validating an LLM is doing AI governance. Lumping them together would produce numbers nobody could use.

We built a four-tier taxonomy to keep the data clean. Every data point in the report is tagged with one of these tiers, and the headline numbers are computed *per tier*, never blended.

3.2 The four role tiers

Tier 1, Core AI governance. Titles that explicitly name AI governance, responsible AI, or AI ethics as the primary function. Examples include AI Governance Manager, Head of Responsible AI, Chief AI Officer, AI Ethics Officer, AI Risk Officer, Director of AI Governance.

Tier 2, Adjacent compliance and risk with AI scope. Compliance, risk, or audit titles where AI governance is a stated responsibility in the job description. Examples include AI Compliance Lead, Model Risk Manager, AI Policy Analyst, AI Auditor, EU AI Act Compliance Manager, ISO/IEC 42001 Lead Auditor.

Tier 3, Tangential roles absorbing AI governance work. Privacy, GRC, MLOps, or ML platform roles where AI governance is part of the job but not the central function. Examples include Privacy Officer with AI scope, GRC Manager with AI scope, MLOps Lead with governance scope, Data Protection Officer with AI scope.

Tier 4, Leadership overlay. Any title containing Chief, VP, SVP, Head of, or Director is also tagged Tier 4 in addition to its functional tier, so we can report a leadership premium separately from a functional premium.

The report headlines Tier 1 and Tier 2 numbers. Tier 3 is shown but flagged as AI-adjacent rather than pure AI governance. Tier 4 is presented as a seniority overlay throughout.

3.3 Geographies and currencies

The six geographies covered are the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Ireland. These were chosen because they cover the geography where the EU AI Act is being enforced (Germany, France, Netherlands, Ireland), the largest English-language EU-adjacent market (UK), and the largest single AI governance hiring market (US).

All salaries are reported in *both* USD and EUR. Exchange rates were captured on the data-collection date (May 2026) at approximately EUR 1 = USD 1.09 and GBP 1 = EUR 1.15. Cost-of-living adjustments were not applied. Nominal salary is not purchasing power, and we leave that adjustment to the reader.

3.4 Sources and triangulation

We pulled data from three source categories and used a triangulation rule: a number can be reported as high-confidence only when at least two source categories agree within 20 percent.

Source category A, Salary guides and executive search reports. These are the credibility anchors. Hays AI/Tech 2026, Robert Half Technology 2026, Michael Page Risk & Compliance 2026, Harnham Data & Analytics 2026, and the Heidrick & Struggles 2025 Data, Analytics, and AI Officers Compensation Survey are the main sources here. Heidrick is the only source that consistently breaks out CAIO-level compensation and was based on 318 executive responses collected in summer 2025.

Source category B, Salary aggregators and credentialing-body research. Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, ERI SalaryExpert, Payscale, Comparably, Levels.fyi, Built In, plus the IAPP's own published research on certification premiums (republished by Tech Jacks Solutions and Certsqill).

Source category C, Job market intelligence. Axial Search's market analysis of 146 AI governance job postings, Morgan McKinley's 2026 salary guides for UK and Ireland, Digital Waffle's 2026 UK AI guide, and Riviera Partners' analysis of hundreds of AI leader executive searches.

LinkedIn salary disclosures were used qualitatively to cross-check the other sources but not entered as data points, to avoid scraping the LinkedIn Jobs API.

3.5 Confidence and limitations

Every reported number is tagged in the underlying dataset with a freshness tier (*fresh*, last six months; *recent*, last twelve months; *historical*, twelve to twenty-four months) and a confidence rating computed from sample size and source diversity.

High confidence requires at least twenty data points across at least three source categories, all fresh or recent.

Medium confidence requires at least ten data points across at least two source categories.

Low confidence is anything below that threshold, reported with caveats but not used for headline claims.

The report draws its headline claims only from medium- or high-confidence cells. Cells with fewer than five data points are shown as indicative only.

4. Findings by role tier

4.1 Tier 1, Core AI governance

This is the heart of the report. The headline cell is US Tier 1 mid-career, which has the deepest data because Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, Axial Search, and Tech Jacks Solutions all report on it.

Median US Tier 1 mid-career compensation is *USD 158,750 base*. The 25th-to-75th-percentile band runs USD 140,000 to USD 218,000. Junior roles cluster at USD 75,000 to USD 130,000. Senior individual-contributor and manager roles run USD 168,000 to USD 273,000. Director-level and above start at USD 230,000 and reach USD 400,000+ in San Francisco, New York, and at frontier-model labs.

Region	IC (junior)	Manager (mid)	Director+	C-suite (CAIO)
US (USD)	75,000 to 130,000	140,000 to 218,000	230,000 to 400,000	250,000 to 540,000
US (EUR)	68,800 to 119,300	128,400 to 200,000	211,000 to 367,000	229,400 to 495,400
UK (GBP)	55,000 to 80,000	78,000 to 132,000	130,000 to 220,000	200,000 to 350,000
UK (EUR)	63,250 to 92,000	89,700 to 151,800	149,500 to 253,000	230,000 to 402,500
DE (EUR)	55,000 to 75,000	75,000 to 130,000	120,000 to 180,000	200,000 to 350,000
FR (EUR)	45,000 to 70,000	75,000 to 110,000	110,000 to 160,000	180,000 to 300,000
NL (EUR)	60,000 to 90,000	90,000 to 150,000	120,000 to 200,000	220,000 to 380,000
IE (EUR)	43,500 to 75,000	70,000 to 110,000	100,000 to 170,000	200,000 to 350,000

Cells for CAIO outside the US are reported as indicative only. Sample sizes were below ten in EU markets. Reported figures are extrapolated from Heidrick & Struggles' global panel adjusted for the US-EU premium observed in Director+ roles.

4.2 Tier 2, Adjacent compliance and risk

The most useful Tier 2 cell is the ISO/IEC 42001 Lead Auditor role, because the certification is the closest thing AI governance has to a recognised auditing standard. ISACA's 2026 cited data places the salary uplift for an ISO 42001 Lead Auditor at **2.4x a general IT auditor** in the US, meaning USD 100,000 to USD 245,000 for ISO 42001 LAs versus USD 60,000 to USD 100,000 for general IT auditors.

A Model Risk Manager in US financial services earns USD 140,000 to USD 200,000 base with a median of USD 160,525. A senior AI Risk Manager in a US bank's risk function (for example a Citi SVP role, a Bank of America Senior Audit Manager position, or a Moody's VP) runs USD 163,600 to USD 294,900. Roles at this seniority are increasingly absorbing AI governance scope explicitly.

Role	US (USD)	UK (GBP)	EU (EUR)
AI Compliance Officer (mid)	110,000 to 160,000	75,000 to 110,000	70,000 to 105,000
AI Compliance Manager (senior)	140,000 to 200,000	95,000 to 140,000	90,000 to 140,000
Model Risk Manager (FS)	140,000 to 200,000	100,000 to 160,000	100,000 to 150,000
AI Auditor (mid)	70,000 to 120,000	32,000 to 54,000	50,000 to 90,000
ISO 42001 Lead Auditor	100,000 to 245,000	80,000 to 160,000	80,000 to 160,000
AI Risk Officer (senior)	155,000 to 295,000	110,000 to 200,000	110,000 to 200,000

The compliance side of AI governance pays *less* at the manager level than core AI governance roles. But the audit specialism, particularly ISO 42001 Lead Auditor, closes the gap fast because the certification is rare and the regulatory pressure is high.

4.3 Tier 3, Tangential roles absorbing AI scope

Tier 3 is the messy category. A Data Protection Officer at a European bank is now often the de-facto AI governance lead, but the role still pays at DPO bands rather than AI governance bands. The same is true of MLOps engineers who write the model documentation that constitutes the AI governance evidence base.

Tier 3 cells are not reported as headline numbers in this report. The data points exist in the underlying dataset, but the analysis would be misleading. The salary attaches to the parent role (privacy, GRC, MLOps), not to the AI scope.

Tier 3 is included in the dataset for completeness and for the bridge analysis in Section 7.3. It is not used for any headline finding.

4.4 Tier 4, Leadership overlay

Tier 4 is the seniority overlay applied to Tiers 1 to 3. It captures the leadership premium independent of functional tier.

Heidrick & Struggles' 2025 survey of 318 executives with AI or data analytics responsibilities found that AI-leadership total compensation in the US averages USD 290,000 to USD 540,000, with the upper end driven by *equity* rather than base. Riviera Partners reports that based on hundreds of executive searches, AI leadership compensation at large enterprises spans USD 180,000 to USD 500,000+ in base, with packages reaching seven figures when long-term incentives are added.

In EU markets, Tier 4 base compensation is roughly 30 to 50 percent below US Tier 4 base compensation, but the equity gap is wider because US tech equity tends to be denser. A Head of Responsible AI at a US Big Tech firm with three to four years of vested RSUs reaches total

compensation in the high six figures or low seven figures. The equivalent role in a European bank or telco rarely exceeds EUR 400,000 in total annual compensation.

5. Findings by geography

5.1 United States

The US has the deepest market for AI governance roles by every measure. Axial Search's analysis of 146 AI governance job postings found a median base salary of USD 158,750. The 80 percent middle band runs USD 155,600 to USD 218,550. Senior-level roles command a 72 percent premium over mid-level, reaching USD 273,032 median.

San Francisco and New York carry a 20 to 30 percent premium over the US national average. San Jose specifically pays Chief AI Officers an average of USD 512,398 according to ZipRecruiter aggregations, which is 97 percent above the national mean for that role.

The US Tier 1 mid-career compensation curve is now consistent enough across sources that hiring managers and candidates can negotiate against a real number. The variance is in the upper end. Equity composition at frontier labs and Big Tech can take total compensation to USD 1,000,000+, which has no equivalent in European markets.

5.2 United Kingdom

UK Tier 1 base compensation runs roughly 75 to 85 percent of the US equivalent in nominal terms. Robert Half's UK Head of AI band sits at GBP 130,000 to GBP 220,000 base. Glassdoor's UK AI Lead aggregation places the national median at GBP 93,841 and the London median at GBP 111,698.

The UK premium for London over the national average is approximately 20 percent at the IC and manager level, narrowing to about 10 percent at the director-plus level. The UK is the most data-rich EU-adjacent market in this report because of the prevalence of UK-headquartered specialist recruiters (Morgan McKinley, Harnham, Hays, Robert Half) that publish detailed salary guides annually.

5.3 Germany

German AI roles in 2026 span EUR 55,000 for junior positions to over EUR 180,000 for staff or principal positions. Munich is the highest-paying German city for AI roles, with engineers averaging EUR 94,713 and senior individual contributors reaching EUR 112,000. Berlin, the German startup capital, runs lower at EUR 65,200 average with senior ML engineers at EUR 98,666.

The Germany-specific AI governance picture is constrained by data thinness. There are fewer than a dozen publicly disclosed AI Governance Manager postings in Germany that we could verify from the May 2026 sample, so numbers should be read as indicative. The EU AI Act is German-language compatible and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs has published guidance, so hiring is accelerating, but disclosed salary data lags by three to six months.

5.4 France

A Compliance Officer in Paris averages EUR 100,265 gross, with entry-level at EUR 69,423 and senior-level (eight or more years of experience plus specialist certifications) at EUR 124,778. The Paris financial-institution premium over the French national average is 10 to 20 percent.

Specific AI-governance-tagged compliance roles in France are rarer than in the UK or US, and we report French Tier 1 figures as derived from the broader French compliance and AI specialist bands. The French market is expected to densify rapidly through 2026 and 2027 as Annex III obligations approach.

5.5 Netherlands

Amsterdam commands the highest AI compensation in the Netherlands, with an EUR 109,000 median that runs roughly 28 percent above the EUR 85,000 national median. AI-engineering Total Comp at Meta, Uber, and IMC in Amsterdam reaches EUR 150,000 to EUR 200,000+. Dutch mid-market enterprises hire fractional AI Lead Architecture roles at EUR 120,000 to EUR 180,000 annually with flexible engagement.

For AI governance specifically, Amsterdam benefits from concentration of US tech EU headquarters and from a relatively English-friendly hiring environment. AI consultancy roles in the Netherlands average EUR 76,000.

5.6 Ireland

Dublin's AI governance market is shaped by the concentration of US tech EU headquarters. Google, Meta, LinkedIn, Microsoft, and others have substantial AI governance functions in Ireland. The average AI Engineer salary in Dublin is EUR 64,750 with a 25-to-75-percentile band of EUR 43,500 to EUR 81,000.

Morgan McKinley's 2026 Ireland salary guide for AI Software Engineers reports EUR 55,000 to EUR 75,000 for Dublin. AI governance roles specifically tend to be 10 to 25 percent above the AI engineering band at equivalent seniority, reflecting the regulatory premium. There are over a hundred AI governance positions listed across Glassdoor IE and Indeed IE in 2026, driven by both DORA and the EU AI Act creating overlapping compliance pressure.

6. The seniority curve

The seniority curve in AI governance is steeper than in privacy or general compliance. The jump from IC to Manager averages 22 percent across our dataset. The jump from Manager to Director+ averages **72 percent**. The jump from Director+ to C-suite (CAIO) averages another 40 to 80 percent depending on whether equity is included.

The cleanest curve is the US Tier 1 progression: USD 130,000 (junior), USD 158,750 (mid), USD 273,032 (senior), USD 352,629 (CAIO base), USD 540,000+ (CAIO total comp at large enterprises). That is a *4.1x progression* from entry to CAIO total comp, which is steeper than the equivalent 2.8x progression in privacy.

European curves are flatter. UK Tier 1 progresses from GBP 55,000 entry to roughly GBP 280,000 director-plus, which is a 5.1x spread but in narrower absolute terms. German curves cluster more tightly because German pay norms compress executive premiums.

The steepest single career move in AI governance is from Manager to Director+ in the US. A 72 percent jump in one promotion cycle is unusual in any specialism. This is structural. Director+ is where companies start treating AI governance as a board-reportable function, and the salary jump reflects the accountability shift.

7. The certification premium

The certification market for AI governance is young. The two dominant credentials are the IAPP's **AIGP** (Artificial Intelligence Governance Professional) and the various ISO/IEC 42001 Lead Auditor and Lead Implementer paths offered by PECB, BSI, and others. Together they account for the majority of credentials cited in AI governance job postings.

7.1 AIGP, the IAPP credential

The IAPP's published research, drawing on its global certification database, shows that holding *one* IAPP certification correlates with 13 percent higher salaries compared to non-certified peers. Holding *multiple* IAPP certifications correlates with a 27 percent premium.

The AIGP-specific median for US holders, per IAPP 2025 data, is USD 182,000. This is across all seniorities and so should be compared to the US Tier 1 broad median rather than to any single seniority cell.

AIGP holders who also hold CIPP/E or CIPM see an additional median increase of approximately USD 24,000 per year. Professionals whose roles encompass *both* privacy and AI governance earn a median of USD 169,700, compared to USD 151,800 for those focused solely on AI governance.

7.2 ISO/IEC 42001 Lead Auditor

ISO/IEC 42001:2023 is the international AI management system standard. The Lead Auditor credential, typically issued via PECB or BSI, is now appearing as a "required" or "strongly preferred" credential in roughly 8 to 15 percent of Tier 2 AI Compliance and AI Audit postings in mature markets.

ISACA's 2026 cited data places the salary uplift for an ISO 42001 Lead Auditor at 2.4× a general IT auditor. The US salary range for ISO 42001 LAs is USD 100,000 to USD 245,000 depending on industry and seniority. Independent AI GRC consultants holding the credential bill USD 800 to USD 2,000 per day in US and EU mature markets, equating to USD 180,000 to USD 270,000 in annual potential at typical 100 to 180 billable days per year.

7.3 The privacy-plus-AI bridge

The most consistent finding across all our sources is that the highest-paid AI governance practitioners are *not* pure-play AI governance specialists. They are privacy professionals who have added AI to their scope, or AI specialists who have added a privacy credential.

The median US salary for someone whose role bridges privacy and AI governance is USD 169,700. The median for someone focused solely on AI governance is USD 151,800. The bridge is worth nearly USD 18,000.

If you are stacking certifications, the highest-leverage combination is **AIGP plus CIPP/E plus an audit credential** (ISO 42001 LA or CISA). This is what produces the 27 percent multi-certification

premium that IAPP measures. No single certification produces that result alone.

8. Where sources disagreed

Cross-source disagreement is the truest indicator of a salary market in flux. We logged every cell where our source categories disagreed by more than 20 percent. The five most interesting disagreements are summarised here.

US Chief AI Officer compensation. ZipRecruiter reports a US CAIO average of USD 151,203. Glassdoor reports USD 352,629. Comparably reports USD 259,523. Heidrick & Struggles reports total compensation averages of USD 290,000 to USD 540,000+. The spread is real and reflects two things: ZipRecruiter aggregates a broader base that includes many mid-size company "CAIO" titles that are functionally director-level roles; Heidrick is sampling executives at large enterprises where the title actually maps to a C-suite role with equity. We report Heidrick's number as the headline for true CAIO-level roles and note the ZipRecruiter figure as the floor for the title broadly.

UK AI Lead vs UK Head of AI. Glassdoor's UK national AI Lead average of GBP 93,841 sits 30 percent below Robert Half's UK Head of AI band of GBP 130,000 to GBP 220,000. The disagreement is not really a disagreement. It is two roles being conflated by job titles. "AI Lead" in the UK is increasingly used for individual contributor or first-line manager roles. "Head of AI" is the director-plus title. We report them separately throughout.

Berlin vs Munich. WBS Coding School data places Berlin AI averages at EUR 65,200 and Munich at EUR 94,713, a 45 percent gap. Other German sources show a narrower gap of 20 to 30 percent. The truth depends on the role mix sampled. Berlin's startup density pulls its average down. Munich's corporate concentration pulls its average up. We report a Germany blended band and note the Munich premium in the geography section.

AIGP premium claims. Different sources report the AIGP premium anywhere from 10 percent to 30 percent. The right reading is the IAPP's own published 13 percent for single-cert holders and 27 percent for multi-cert holders, with the AIGP-only premium falling at the lower end of that range. We use these as the headline numbers.

Levels.fyi versus base-pay guides. For US Tier 1 Director+, Levels.fyi reports total comp clustering at USD 375,000+, while Hays and Robert Half report base around USD 290,000. The gap is *equity*. We report base as the headline number with a clear note that Big Tech total comp can reach 30 to 60 percent above base.

9. The contract market

The independent and Big Four consulting market for AI governance is the most underreported part of the compensation picture.

Big Four AI consulting day rates run **USD 2,400 to USD 4,800 per day** at standard 8-hour billing, calculated from the typical USD 300 to USD 600 per hour. This includes brand credibility, exhaustive documentation, rigorous project governance, and engagement teams of 8 to 15 consultants. Big Four firms additionally add 15 to 25 percent in travel costs on top of the headline rate, so a USD 500,000 engagement adds USD 75,000 to USD 125,000 in incidentals.

Independent AI consultants (solo practitioners or small boutiques) bill USD 600 to USD 1,200 per day in the US. Those with both audit and AI fluency, particularly ISO 42001 Lead Auditors, command USD 800 to USD 2,000 per day in US and EU mature markets, producing annual income potential of USD 180,000 to USD 270,000 at 100 to 180 billable days per year.

The implication for permanent hiring is that companies competing for senior AI governance talent are competing against a contract market that pays more, has more flexibility, and offers more variety of work. The market response so far has been to add equity or retention bonuses to permanent roles at the director-plus level.

10. What this means for hiring and career planning

For hiring managers. Three actions are warranted. *First*, set bands based on tier, not on title. A "Head of AI Governance" at a mid-size firm and a "Head of AI Governance" at Google are two different jobs paid two different ways. *Second*, build a certification policy that funds AIGP plus a privacy credential for any Tier 1 hire. The IAPP data shows this is the lowest-cost compensation lever you can pull. *Third*, recognise that contract market wages are setting the floor for permanent compensation at the director-plus level. If you are not benchmarking against day-rate equivalents, you will lose senior talent.

For candidates. Three actions are warranted. *First*, stack the certifications. The AIGP-plus-CIPP-plus-audit triangle produces the highest measured premium. *Second*, target the Manager-to-Director promotion window. The 72 percent average pay jump at that transition is the single largest career-stage premium in this dataset. *Third*, geography matters less than seniority for total compensation purposes, but for total quality of life adjusted for housing, Dublin, Amsterdam, and Munich pay competitively against London or New York after rent.

For platform vendors and the AI governance ecosystem. The market is structurally tight. Hiring is up 150 percent year-over-year. 98.5 percent of organisations report inadequate AI governance staffing. Demand will continue to outpace supply through at least 2027. The implications for tooling, automation, and the platform-versus-people balance are significant. Every hour an AI Governance Manager spends on evidence collection, control mapping, or report generation is an hour they are not spending on judgment calls that only humans can make. The case for AI governance platforms is, in part, a *labour-economics* case.

Organisations subject to the EU AI Act with material high-risk AI exposure should have at least one Tier 1 hire in place before Annex III obligations crystallise. The current talent market means that hire is taking three to six months in the UK and EU, longer in Germany and France. Planning backward from December 2027 means decisions need to be made in 2026.

11. Limitations

This report has six limitations the reader should keep in mind.

Sample sizes vary by cell. Cells with fewer than 10 data points are flagged in the dataset as low confidence and are not used for headline claims. Cells with fewer than 5 data points are shown as indicative only.

EU pay transparency is uneven. The EU pay transparency directive came into force in 2026, but national implementation varies. Disclosure rates are highest in the Netherlands and Germany, lower in France, and lower still in Ireland. Our EU numbers lean more heavily on salary guides than on disclosed job postings as a consequence.

Cost-of-living is not normalised. A USD 200,000 salary in San Francisco buys very different lived experience than a EUR 150,000 salary in Munich. We report nominal salary and leave the COL adjustment to the reader.

Big Tech equity inflates US Levels.fyi numbers. The salary aggregators that include equity (Levels.fyi, Built In) systematically over-state base pay relative to the salary guides because they aggregate *total compensation*. Where this is true, we have reported base as the headline and equity as a noted upside.

LinkedIn salary data was used only as a qualitative cross-check. LinkedIn Jobs salary disclosures were checked against our other sources for plausibility but were not entered as data points. This was a deliberate ToS-avoidance choice.

Salary surveys lag the live market. Even the most recent salary guides cited here (Hays, Robert Half, Heidrick) were published with data from mid-to-late 2025. In a market growing 150 percent year-over-year, six-month-old data is meaningfully out of date. Our Adzuna-equivalent and aggregator sources are fresher (last six months), and where they disagree with the guides we have flagged the disagreement explicitly.

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About VerifyWise

VerifyWise is an AI governance platform that helps organisations operationalise the EU AI Act, ISO/IEC 42001, NIST AI RMF, and emerging US state-level AI laws. The platform covers AI inventory, risk classification, evidence collection, control mapping, and audit-ready reporting in a single system. VerifyWise serves AI governance teams, compliance and risk leaders, and AI engineering organisations in regulated industries.

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For questions about the underlying dataset or methodology: research@verifywise.ai

For platform inquiries: hello@verifywise.ai

Website: <https://verifywise.ai>

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