

Society of Professional Economists Salary Survey 2024

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Summary

This year's salary survey shows that the median increase in total compensation was 5% during 2023, unchanged from the previous survey. With CPI inflation beginning to fall sharply during 2023, the survey suggests that total cash compensation is growing again in real terms. Median basic salaries rose by 5% during 2023, a slight increase on the previous figure of 4.5%.

Average total cash compensation was highest among Financial Services sector respondents, at £223,000. Meanwhile, the average in Consulting stood at £122,000, £94,000 in Industry (Other Private Sector) and £77,000 in the Public Sector.

21% of survey respondents were women, similar to last year and compared with just 13% in 2016. Women respondents' median total pay was c.90% of men's, similar to the reported share in 2022&2023, but higher than in 2021 (79%). A much higher share of male respondents in Financial Services explains some of the difference, however the relatively small sample prevents us from drawing many conclusions about the state of gender pay inequality across the profession.

Inevitably all the results of our salary survey have to be treated with some caution. While the number of respondents was on a par with the previous sample, it remains a small sample size, at just over 100 people. We should be conscious of both the risk of selection bias in the respondents and the limited sample size when drawing any conclusions. Nevertheless, the survey represents a useful window on pay trends in the profession.

Salaries and Financial Compensation

Table 1 shows the distribution of salaries, including income from self-employment, and of total cash compensation (TCC), adding in salaries, bonuses and the value of any shares received, and compares these with last year’s results.

Table 1: Salaries and total compensation							
Salaries				Total cash compensation			
Range (£k)	Number of responses (unless otherwise stated)			Range (£k)	Number of responses (unless otherwise stated)		
	2024	2023	2022		2024	2023	2022
<=40	20	13	11	<=40	14	12	14
41-60	18	21	20	41-60	20	21	12
61-80	26	18	13	61-80	26	17	15
81-100	10	17	18	81-100	8	16	16
101-120	8	13	10	101-120	7	12	6
121-140	10	10	5	121-140	4	7	4
141-180	4	7	8	141-200	13	5	11
>180	9	9	8	201-300	6	9	8
				>300	9	10	9
Average (£k)	88	99	96		123	156	134
Median (£k)	69	81	80		75	98	90
Maximum (£k)	320	625	320		724	1600	750
Minimum (£k)	6	12	24		6	33	24
Total responses	105	108	99		107	109	99
Median Reported increase (%)	5	4.5	2		5	5	2

Average base salaries of respondents fell in the latest survey to £88,000, as did the median base salary. As noted in previous years, the survey sample size and composition is not constant year to year, so there is not necessarily agreement between the reported increase in salary and the difference in average salary year-on-year. The composition of the sample will have shifted.

The reported 5% median nominal growth in TCC was similar to 2023, however it was against a background of a fall in headline inflation. By comparison, average earnings growth across the whole labour market was a 7% (OBR estimate). Median basic salary growth among survey respondents also stood at 5%, a slight improvement on the previous year’s figure.

Earnings by Sector

In this latest survey, 32% of respondents were in the consulting sector, with 21% in financial services, 20% in the public sector, 17% in Other (Academic & Charity) and 10% in industry (other private sector). Last year, 29% of respondents were in financial services, the largest group. This may help explain the reported decline in average and median salaries for the survey sample as a whole.

Table 2: Earnings by sector					
(Money Values in £k)	Financial Services	Consulting	Other Private Sector	Public Sector	Other (inc Charity & Academic)
Respondents (%)					
2024	21	32	10	20	17
2023	29	26	14	18	16
2022	23	32	9	19	19
Average Salary £k					
2024	131	81	75	74	73
2023	147	79	72	69	92
2022	150	84	83	66	85
Maximum 2024	320	183	185	164	307
Minimum 2024	32.5	9	40	32	6
Median 2024	115	75	67	67	49

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Table 2: Earnings by sector (cont.)					
(Money Values in £k)	Financial Services	Consulting	Other Private Sector	Public Sector	Other (inc Charity & Academic)
Avg total cash compensation £k					
2024	223	122	94	77	76
2023	261	156	80	70	104
2022	240	114	115	70	89
Maximum 2024	724	640	295	164	307
Minimum 2024	36	33	44	33	6
Median 2024	157	92	68	69	55
No. Receiving Bonus	19	21	8	10	2
Average bonus % 2024	73	61	26	6	4
2023	72	52	13	6	6
No. Receiving Shares	6	0	3	N/A	N/A
Average Value 2024 (£k)	41	N/A	42	N/A	N/A
2023	46	758	3	N/A	N/A

Average salaries of respondents ranged from £131,000 for those in the financial sector, down on last year, to £73,000 in the Other (Academic & Charity) sector. In all cases, it is likely that compositional changes in the respondents could drive the year-on-year volatility in results.

Average TCC in the Financial Services sector fell to £223,000, lower than in the previous year. There was a similar decline in TCC in Consulting, to £122,000. Average TCC in the Public sector rose to £77,000, up from last year's figure of £70,000. There was a rise in TCC in Industry (Other Private Sector) to £94,000. Again, it is important to note that compositional changes

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in the respondents could be driving the volatility in results, making year to year comparison of levels problematic.

Bonus Payments

The average bonus reported was £53,000, down £1,000 on last year. With a handful of exceptionally large bonuses distorting the picture, the median bonus was much lower than the mean, at £10,000.

Share Schemes

For employees in the private sector, schemes offering employees shares in the enterprise are much less common than bonuses, with just 9 respondents reporting being in such a scheme, lower than in recent years.

Pensions and Other Benefits

Table 3 shows, for each of the five sectors identified, the number of respondents who participated in pension schemes and received other benefits. Once again, the great majority report having some kind of pension arrangements associated with their employer (and many of the rest reported having a personal pension). The proportion in a defined-benefit scheme stood at 27% this year down from 32% in the previous survey. Outside the public sector the number of respondents in a defined-benefit scheme was just 13, compared with 16 last year.

Table 3: Pensions and other benefits by sector					
Number in a scheme	Financial Services	Consulting	Other Private Sector	Public Sector	Other (inc Charity & Academic)
Pensions					
Number in a scheme	21	32	10	20	14
Percent of total	95	94	83	95	78
Defined Benefit schemes	2	4	1	13	6
Defined Contribution schemes	20	23	9	8	9
Other Benefits					
Medical Insurance	16	17	7	3	6
Company Car	1	1	2	1	0
Miscellaneous	6	9	0	4	6

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The table also shows the numbers reporting other benefits in kind last year. Around 46% of respondents reported receiving medical insurance from their employer, down from 54% last year. Medical insurance is particularly prevalent in financial services (70% of respondents), while 50% of consultants surveyed and just under half those in industry have it as part of their compensation package. Just 5 respondents reported having a company car in this year's survey.

Activity and Salary

Table 4 shows the numbers primarily engaged in each of the activities listed in the survey and the median salary received by those engaged in each activity. This year, the largest group of respondents (29%) recorded Forecasting and Modelling their primary activity. Public Policy Analysis was the next largest group (26%), following by General Management (21%).

Table 4: Salary and Activity						
Activity	Number of respondents			Median Salaries (£k)		
	2024	2023	2022	2024	2023	2022
Forecasting & Modelling	29	25	26	63	82	70
Business Planning	9	6	3	68	64	55
Market Trading & Fund Management	3	5	9	120	150	168
International Analysis	6	12	12	120	98	57
Public Policy Analysis	26	29	19	64	61	66
General Management	21	24	20	129	113	115
Other	13	11	29	44	65	80

The highest median reported salary was in General Management at £129,000, a rise on last year's figure. Market trading and fund management and International Analysis also reported relatively high salaries, although the

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small number of respondents in each of these categories suggests the need for caution in interpreting these comparisons. The year-to-year fluctuations likely reflect the changing composition of survey respondents each year, rather than big underlying shifts in the pay available in these sectors of the profession.

Demography and Salary

Table 5 shows how gender, age and length of service are reflected in the pay of professional economists.

Table 5: Salary and demography						
	Number of Respondents			Median Salaries (£k)		
	2024	2023	2022	2024	2023	2022
Men	81	86	75	70	88	83
Women	23	24	23	63	77	73
Other	3			120		
Age (yrs):						
Under 35	42	39	34	53	53	58
35-55	48	55	44	103	104	110
Over 55	16	15	20	88	109	89
Service (yrs):						
Under 10	75	82	63	67	72	71
10 to 20	22	21	26	84	101	94
Over 20	7	5	6	140	81	116

Respondents between 35 and 55 received salaries averaging almost twice the level of under-35s.

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