



Remote Engineer **Salary** **Insights** Report

 Latin America

 Canada

 Europe



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Introduction

In 2026, innovation and AI are driving demand for hiring remote software engineers. Global tech hiring is up 9% year over year, and 74% of US employers cite challenges with filling tech roles. That sets the stage for growth in global hiring.

The 2026 Remote Software Engineer Salary Insights Report is a deep dive into global software engineer salary expectations. We will look at key regions - the US vs Canada, Latin America, and Europe - and cover compensation by level, role / specialty, and country.

This year, we're seeing uniformly higher salary expectations across Latin America and Canada, although some countries in Europe have seen a bit of a dip. Some trends are consistent with last year and continue to amplify. For example, with business leaders naming AI/ML as the top priority in 2026 (Robert Half Technology's 2026 IT salary report), it's no surprise that once again, **the highest-paid roles are related to artificial intelligence and data engineering.**

However, the overall landscape is shifting. For example, demand for junior engineers is waning. A Stanford Digital Economy Study shows that by July 2025, employment for engineers ages 22–25 had declined by almost 20% from late 2022. A Deloitte report also notes that team structures are likely to include fewer entry-level developers and a greater number of mid-level/specialized engineers, along with newer, AI-specialized roles. The report adds that “intangible skills,” like customer experience and cross-functional engineering, are expected to be in higher demand for mid/senior engineers.

Our data shows that mid-career and senior specialists are increasingly valued, with the greatest salary jump usually occurring between the mid (L3) and senior (L4) levels, followed by junior (L2) and mid (L3). The smallest change occurs between senior (L4) and staff/principal engineer (L5) levels. (For contractors, the largest jump is split between junior-mid and mid-senior levels.)



Regional Overview



Canada

Median Salary:

\$121,124

Salaries are **37% lower than the U.S.**

Median Contractor Rate:

\$11,631 / mo

Close in proximity and culture to the U.S., Canada's tech salaries are typically higher than those in Latin America and Europe, though significantly lower than the U.S.



Latin America

Median Salary:

\$103,075 - \$106,918

Salaries are **44-46% lower than the U.S.**

Median Contractor Rate:

**\$9,789 / mo (Chile) to
\$10,642 / mo (Costa Rica)**

A premier nearshore tech talent region, Latin America's salaries are comparable across countries, including Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico.



Europe

Median Salary:

\$77,646 - \$93,521

Salaries are **51-60% lower than the U.S.**

Median Contractor Rate:

**\$7,048 / mo (Romania) to
\$10,540 / mo (Poland)**

Europe shows the greatest variation in salaries, with the highest in Hungary, a long-established tech hub, and the lowest in Spain, an emerging player in tech talent.

What's New This Year?

In the 2nd edition of the Salary Insights Report, **we have added contractor rates alongside salary expectations for full-time engineers.**

Contractor rates are higher than full-time salaries, stemming from the tradeoff between shorter-term work vs. the added benefits, perks, and employment costs of full-time. While this is a more flexible model, there is still appeal in having full-time hires at your disposal. For instance, long-term hires may have greater culture alignment and are in a better position to own products and projects, while contractors can provide on-demand and niche skills.

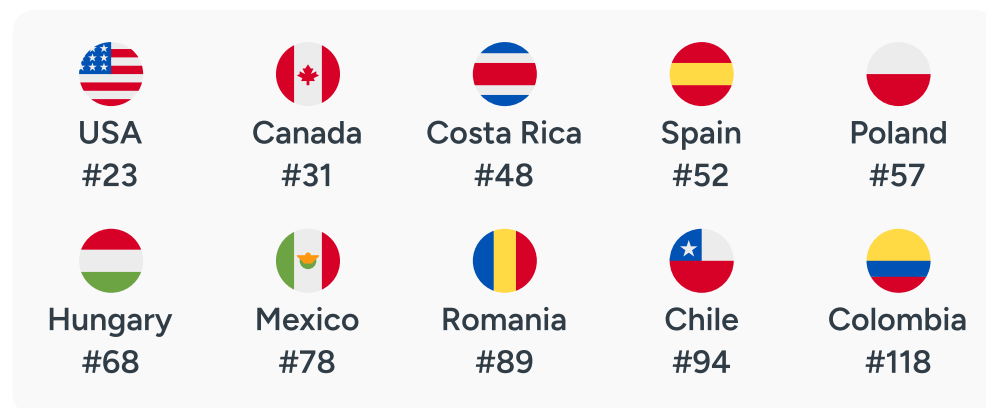
In some markets, the difference in salaries/rates is especially large. For example, in Poland, where contracting is very common in the tech industry, contractors expect to earn a median rate of \$10,540/month, while full-time engineers earn a median salary of \$89,183. If we compare these rates as an annual figure, the difference is more than \$37,000.

We've also added Hungary, a growing tech hub, to the countries benchmarked within the European region.



Global Salary Comparisons

In 2026, the overall salary rankings for the markets covered in our data are as follows:



There are several factors to consider when comparing global tech salaries.

- Salary expectations are typically lower for regions with a lower cost of living.
- Hiring internationally requires added employment costs for mandatory benefits and taxes, calculated as a percentage of base salary. These costs vary across markets. For example, these costs range from 9% in Chile to 40% in Costa Rica. Since employers should factor in these costs when considering overall costs, we've included those in the report.

Comparing Salaries Across Roles

As AI continues as a key driver of enterprise success, data-heavy roles are the highest-earning among all software engineering roles.

Globally, AI / machine learning engineers have the highest earning potential at \$108,526. Data scientists are next at \$105,873, and data engineers are third at \$99,841. This is a contrast to last year, when DevOps engineers were the third-ranking. AI engineers and data engineers are generally the **highest-paid contractor role, too, with monthly rates around \$10K in LatAm and Europe up to \$14 - 15K in Canada.**

Meanwhile, **less technical roles are lower-paying**, with designer, product manager, and scrum master all hovering around \$73,000+. Less specialized technical roles like engineering lead, frontend engineer, full-stack engineer, manual QA engineer, and mobile engineer offer mid-range earning potential. These roles still have high earning potential, but it's clear that the market is favoring more specialized roles.

How to Use the Second Annual Remote Software Engineer Salary Insights Report

This report is a tool for understanding the full-time salary and contracting rate expectations of international engineers who want to work for U.S.-based companies. (Note: This is not intended to review in-country salaries for employees working at domestic companies, in or outside the U.S.)

We will investigate salaries in three regions: Canada, Latin America (deep dives into Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico), and Europe (deep dives into Poland, Romania, Spain, and Hungary).

The data in this report can support employers in their recruitment of international engineers and candidates in mapping their employment, career growth, and salary expectations.

We'll explore:

- **Factors impacting the technology and engineering landscape in each region**
- **Skills and niches that are most in demand overall and region by region**
- **The most lucrative paths for engineers, including when to expect salary increases and why engineers are uniquely positioned to establish their own salary expectations***
- **Comparisons in rate or salary expectations for full-time and contractor engineers**
- **How to use this data to gauge fit for both candidates and employers**

* We will be referring to software engineer levels throughout this report. Please consult [our guide](#) to learn more about the responsibilities and expectations associated with each level.

For candidates:

- How can you use this data to upskill and prepare for the hiring process?
- Which skills and niches are most in demand? How does this vary by region/country?

For employers:

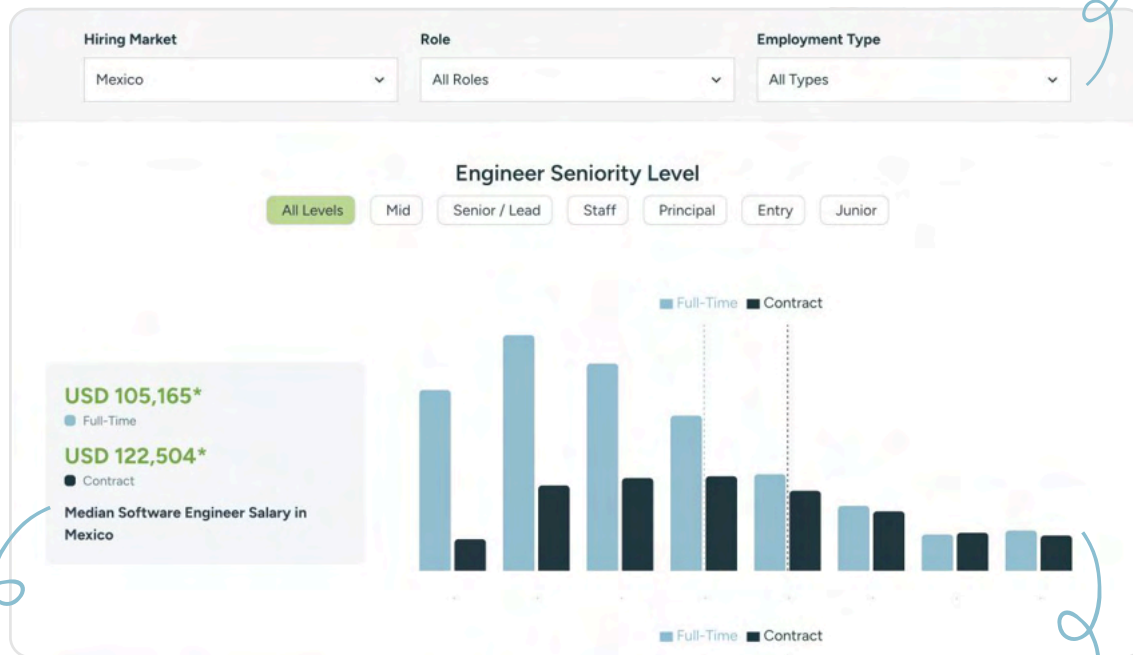
- How can you use this data to guide your hiring processes?
- How can you find cost-effectiveness and quality?
- How will you find the best fit for your needs?



After you finish the report, want to dig even deeper? Visit our Remote Engineer Salary Insights Center

Quickly Navigate Our 260K+ Salary Database

Quickly jump between salary insights for Canada, Latin America, and Europe, with detailed market deep dives for countries with significant data.



Salaries at a Glance

Quickly view regional and country median salaries for each role and level

Dynamic Charts

Learn how salaries are distributed for each geography, role and level

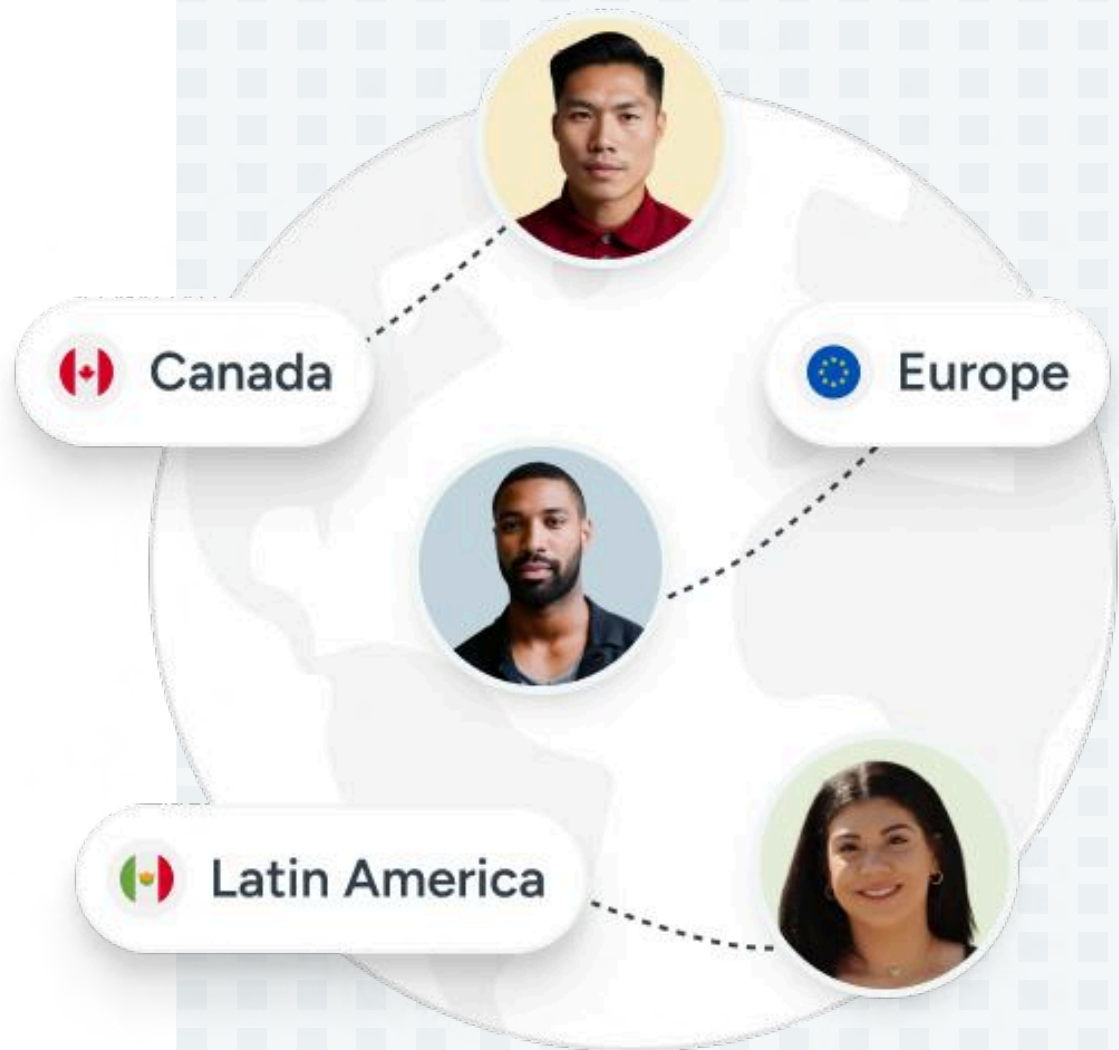
Keep exploring our database of 260K+ salaries! Analyze salaries by country, role and level of experience.

[Visit the Salary Center](#)



Regional Salary Analysis

Canada, Latin America, & Europe



Canada



Median Full-Time Salary is
37% lower than the U.S.

\$121,124

Software Engineer Median Salary

\$139,569 yr. / \$11,631 mo.

Contractor Median Salary

10%

Added Employment Cost

\$155,330

Highest-Paid Role: Data Engineer

Canada is home to the highest-paid engineers included in this report and is North America's fastest-growing tech hub. It's home to top CS schools like the University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, and the University of British Columbia, where 43% of grads have advanced degrees in CS or a related field.

Canada boasts a large tech community that promotes learning. There has been tremendous growth in VC investment, leading to numerous successful startups, such as Wealthsimple, Hopper, Shopify, TouchBistro, and ApplyBoard.

The largest salary bump occurs between levels 3 and 4, at 19.5%. This differs from last year, where the biggest boost took place between levels 1 and 2, underscoring the emphasis on mid-senior engineers.

Median Salary by Experience Level

L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
\$76,492	\$91,855	\$105,479	\$126,070	\$138,695	\$160,664



Canada's cost of living ranks #31, 10 places lower than last year. While salaries are higher in the region compared with others studied here, they are still lower than those in the US - specifically 37% lower and 31% lower with the added 10% employment cost.

This year, data-heavy and AI-oriented roles have higher earning potential than all other roles. While data scientist was the highest-paying role last year, data engineer comes in first at \$155,331, followed by AI/ML engineer (\$149,809) and DevOps engineer (\$148,887). It's clear that in an AI-forward world, hard, technical, and data-focused skills are the most critical in software engineering.

Contractor rates generally align with full-time engineer trends. **Overall, the median contractor rate is \$11,631 per month**, translating to \$139,569 per year.

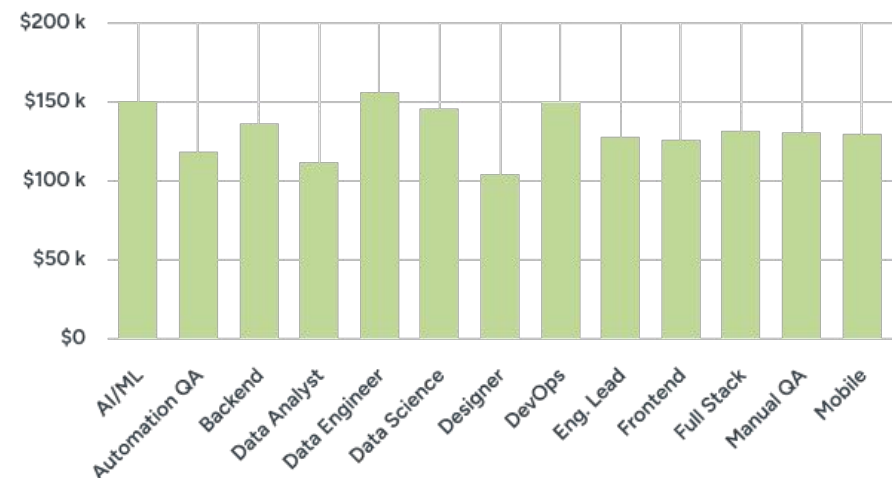


Want Even Deeper Insights?

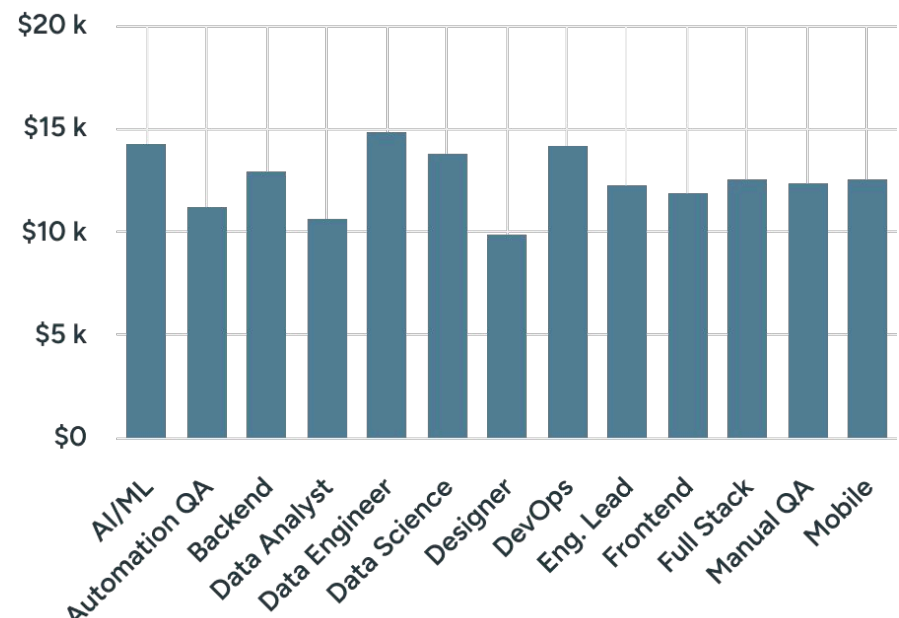
Explore all our Canada data, including dynamic breakdowns by role and experience level.

[Explore the Salary Center](#)

Full Time Median Salaries by Role



Contractor Median Monthly Rates by Role



Latin America



Median Full-Time Salary is
44 - 46% lower than the U.S.

\$106,918

Highest Median Salary (Costa Rica)

\$103,075

Lowest Median Salary (Colombia)

\$127,705 yr. / \$10,642 mo.

Highest Contractor Median Salary (Costa Rica)

\$117,467 yr. / \$9,789 mo.

Lowest Contractor Median Salary (Chile)

9% Chile & 40% Costa Rica
Added Employment Cost

\$109,023

Highest-Paid Role: Data Engineer

Despite lower-ranking costs of living compared to last year, Latin American salaries are higher overall. That's good news for Latin American engineers, who are seeing a greater cash flow, while their costs remain reasonable relative to the rest of the globe.

Costs of Living 2025 vs. 2026

	2025	2026
Chile	#46	#94
Colombia	#71	#118
Costa Rica	#39	#48
Mexico	#45	#78

Latin America still has largely comparable salaries between countries within the region, but the discrepancies are larger than they were last year, and Costa Rica has taken the lead. Previously, salaries ranged from \$99,389 (Chile) to \$99,450 (Mexico). This year, the ranges have shifted a bit: \$103,075 (Colombia) to \$106,918 (Costa Rica).



These changes can be partially explained by Costa Rica’s heavy investment in tech talent. For example, the Costa Rica Silicon Valley investment office opened in February 2026, a key part of the country’s effort to attract international projects and enhance its standing as a valuable global tech market.

As a whole, LatAm has prioritized tech talent for decades. For instance, nearly 20% of software engineers in Colombia have experience working for successful startups like Rappi, Platzi, and Twilio. The country is also home to engineering teams from top tech companies like HP, Oracle, and IBM.

While overall salaries are more disparate from country to country compared with last year, they are fairly consistent level by level. **The largest gaps occur at the very senior levels,** ranging from \$108,548 (Costa Rica) to \$110,412 (Mexico) at level 5 and \$124,756 (Costa Rica) to \$126,787 (Mexico) at level 6. Meanwhile, the largest increase is between levels 3 and 4 for all countries.

Employment costs are also variable, ranging from 9% in Chile to 40% in Costa Rica, and Mexico’s is 3% higher than last year, now 28%.



Chile

+ 9% added employment cost: 40% lower than in the US



Colombia

+ 27% added employment cost: 32% lower than the US



Costa Rica

+ 40% added employment cost: 22% lower than in the US



Mexico

+ 28% added employment cost: 30% lower than in the US

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
Chile		\$67,129	\$79,802	\$96,830	\$109,138	\$125,239
Colombia	\$60,135	\$67,129	\$80,173	\$96,753	\$109,748	\$125,891
Costa Rica		\$66,477	\$79,005	\$96,166	\$108,548	\$124,756
Mexico	\$59,985	\$67,494	\$80,146	\$97,349	\$110,412	\$126,787

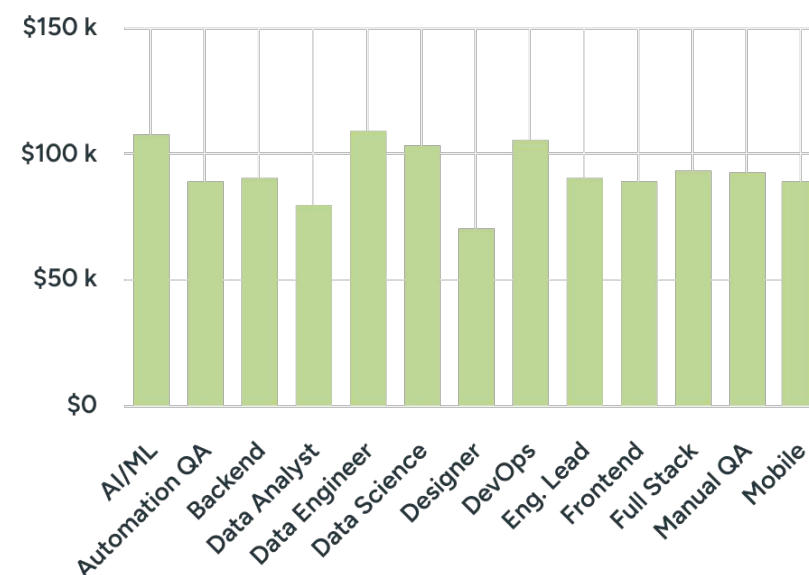
As is true of most regions, specialized, data-centric roles are the most lucrative in Latin America. Data engineer earns the highest median salary (\$109,023), followed by DevOps engineers (\$105,270). This is consistent across markets, except for Costa Rica, where AI/ML engineer ranks second. It's demonstrative of AI's growing focus and the need for an abundance of clean, accurate data in the region and beyond.

On the other hand, the lowest-paid roles are designer (\$70,201) and data analyst (\$79,724), consistently across markets.

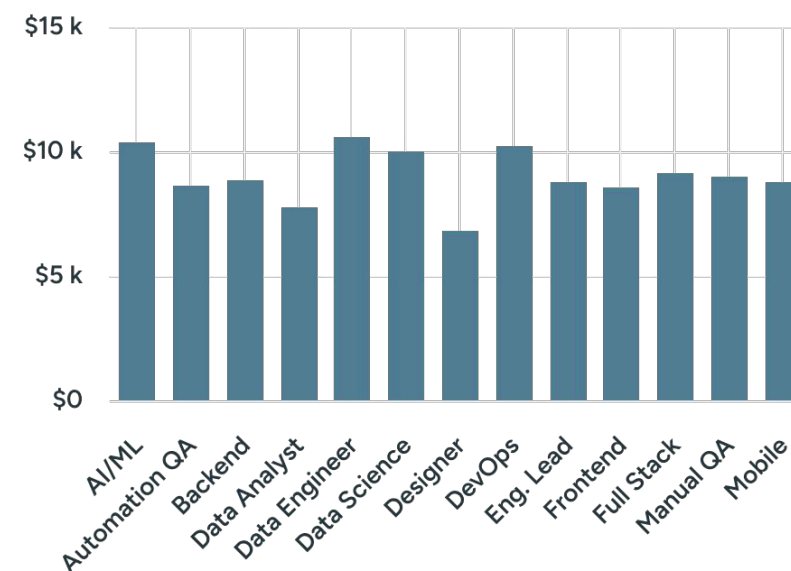
While contractor rate trends are relatively consistent with full-time salaries, there are some notable differences. For example, while Colombia's salaries are the lowest for full-timers in the region, they are the second-highest for contractors, suggesting that they are considered valuable. The largest increase level to level is also different for Colombia, where it occurs between levels 2 and 3, indicating that mid-level contractors are preferred. Elsewhere, the highest increase takes place between levels 3 and 4.

- Highest Median Contractor Salary: \$127,705/\$10,642 per month (Costa Rica)
- Lowest Median Contractor Salary: \$117,467/\$9,789 per month (Chile)

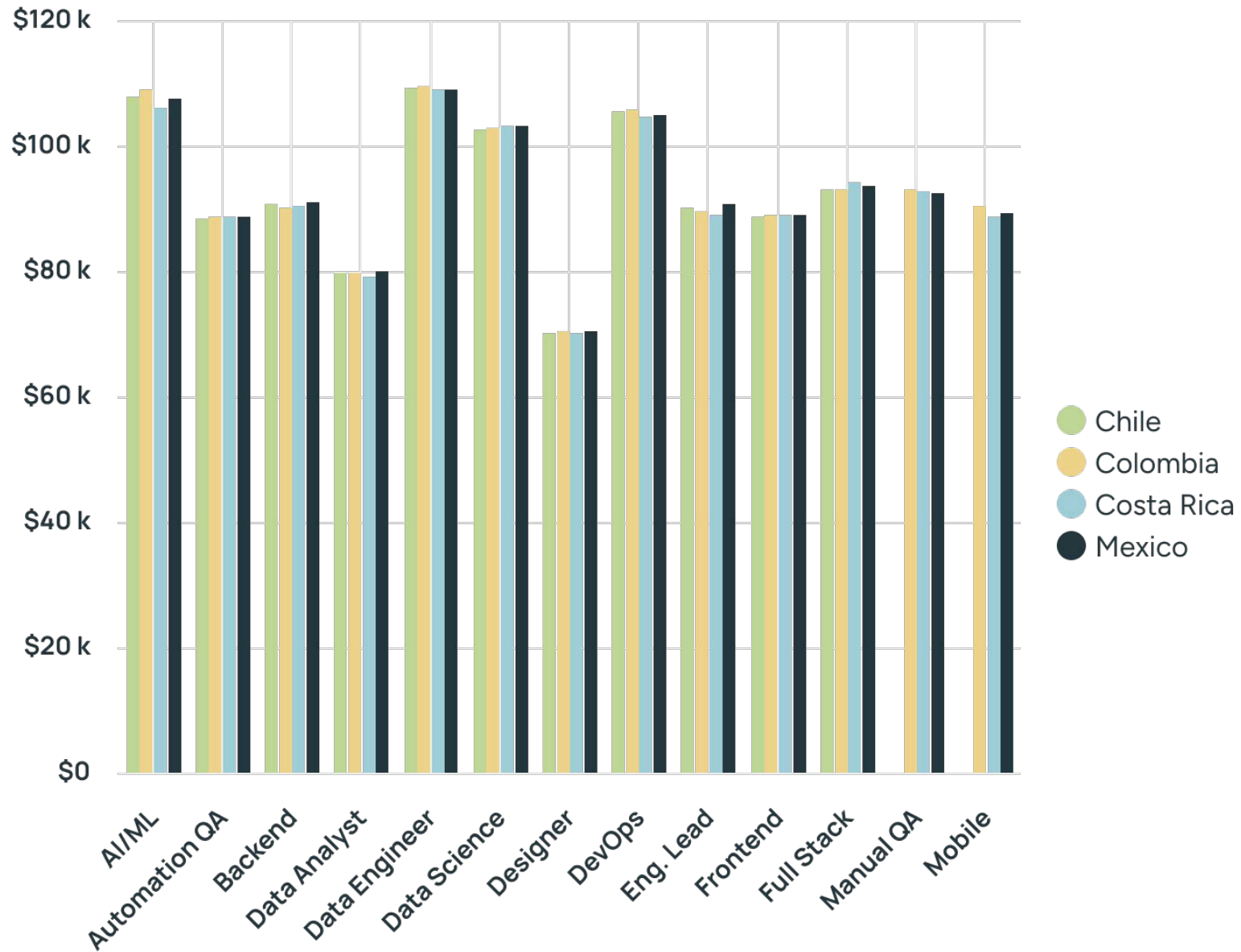
Full-time Median Salaries by Role



Contractor Median Monthly Rates by Role



Median Role Salary



Europe

Median Full-Time Salary is
51 - 60% lower than the U.S.



\$93,521

Highest Median Salary (Hungary)

\$77,646

Lowest Median Salary (Spain)

\$126,484 yr. / \$10,540 mo.

Highest Contractor Median Salary (Poland)

\$84,581 yr. / \$7,048 mo.

Lowest Contractor Median Salary (Romania)

22% Poland & 36% Spain

Added Employment Cost

Data Engineer

Highest-Paid Role

Of the regions in this report, Europe shows the largest salary differences among countries, although the gap between the lowest and highest median is smaller compared to last year. It is still fairly significant, with Spain's median salary at \$77,646 and Hungary's, a new addition to our report, at \$93,521 - a difference of \$15,875.

In contrast to other regions, **overall average salaries are generally lower this year.** This may partially be explained by lower costs of living:

- Poland #57
- Hungary: #68
- Spain: #52
- Romania: #89

Spain's average salary, however, is marginally higher: \$73,773 last year and \$77,646 this year. Spain continues to grow as a tech hub; between 2017 and 2018, it saw a tremendous growth rate for developers in the market. However, it is still an up-and-comer relative to its neighbors.

	Median
Hungary	\$93,521
Poland	\$89,183
Romania	\$83,329
Spain	\$77,646



Hungary

Salaries are 51% lower than in the US
 Salary + 15% added employment cost is 44% lower than in the U.S.



Poland

Salaries are 54% lower than in the U.S.
 Salary + 22% added employment cost is 43% lower than in the U.S.



Spain

Salaries are 60% lower than in the U.S.
 Salary + 36% added employment cost is 45% lower than in the U.S.



Romania

Salaries are 57% lower than in the U.S.
 Salary + 10% added employment cost is 52% lower than in the U.S.

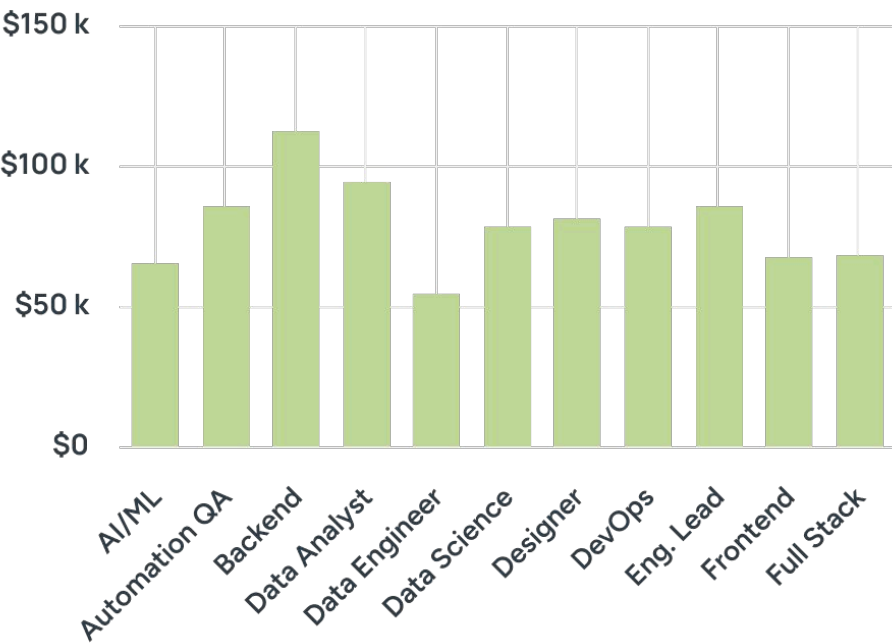
Europe's comparable talent shortage may also explain why mid-level engineers show larger salary increases between levels 2 and 3, contrasting other regions, where the largest gap occurs between levels 3 and 4. In Spain, the differences are comparable (13.1% between L2 and L3 and 13.2% between L3 and L4).

	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L2 → L3 Incr	L3 → L4 Incr	L4 → L5 Incr	L5 → L6 Incr
Hungary		\$90,786	\$105,000						
Poland	\$83,832	\$98,608	\$112,656	\$120,273	\$135,579	17%	14.9%	6.8%	12.7%
Romania	\$59,614	\$70,082	\$80,424	\$86,213	\$96,641	17.6%	14.8%	7.2%	12.1%
Spain	\$63,011	\$71,287	\$80,731	\$88,284	\$98,847	13.1%	13.2%	9.4%	12%

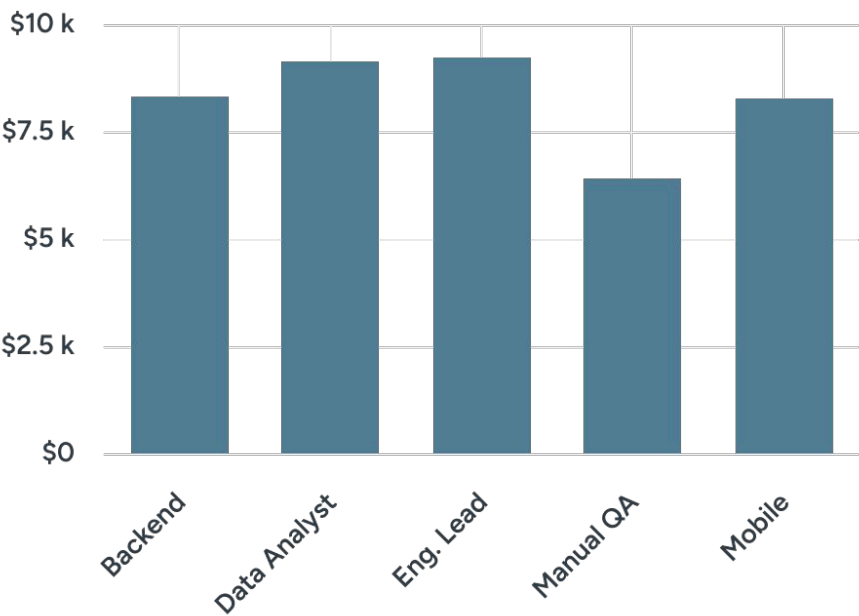
Less data is available for specialized roles in European countries. Overall, the highest-paid are data engineer, with a median salary of \$111,993, and data scientist (\$94,168), displaying similar trends with other regions. There is little data available for roles such as AI/ML engineer.

Contractor salaries show some different trends. The highest median contractor salary is \$126,484 annually/\$10,540 per month in Poland, while the lowest is \$84,581/\$7,048 per month in Romania. Notably, Poland ranks near the bottom of the list for full-time roles, above Spain and Romania, but near the top for contractors, after Canada and Costa Rica. Contractors are in high demand in Poland, which offers favorable tax laws and flexibility.

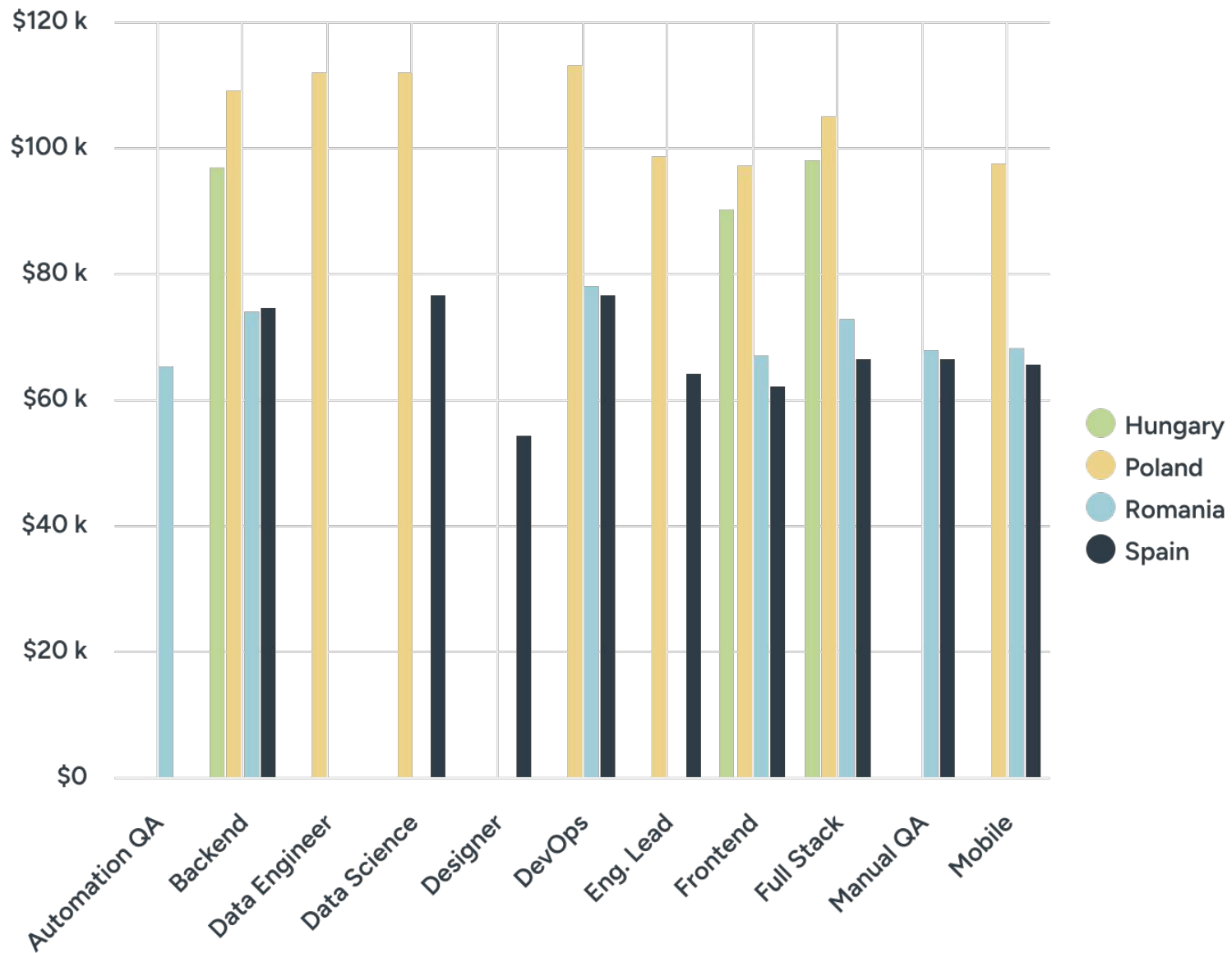
Full-time Median Salaries by Role



Contractor Median Monthly Rates by Role



Median Role Salary



Conclusion

What to Do Next?

The report will help employers and software engineers determine next steps.

- If you're looking for the absolute most affordable talent, Terminal recommends Europe or Latin America.
- If you want to explore the widest range of specialized tech talent, Terminal recommends Canada.
- If time-zone alignment is key, Terminal recommends Latin America or Canada.
- If you're looking to tap into emerging tech talent hubs, Terminal recommends Europe.

Key Considerations

This data can help you make better-informed decisions to fill open roles, identify gaps in your development strategy, and innovate at scale. When using this report, account for both skill level and special skills. For example, while Spain has the lowest overall median salary expectations, you will have a difficult time finding specialized roles like AI/ML and Data Engineers. Meanwhile, Canada's salaries are typically the highest, but the country has the most widely available specialized roles.

On a related note, bear in mind that **soft skills, English proficiency, and cultural similarities can greatly affect the success of your projects.** Canada is the most culturally similar to the United States and naturally has the highest level of English proficiency (English is one of two official languages, along with French). Average costs are higher—though still lower than those in the U.S.—but when you consider easier communication, time zone alignment, and work style similarities, costs may even out thanks to fewer collaboration and communication hiccups. Note: The English Proficiency Index (EPI) can help you gauge English proficiency in various countries.

Company fit is related to cultural fit, but the two factors are not identical. Employers should assess and interview candidates to ensure both. **Candidates should also ask questions to gauge fit**, remembering it's a two-way street. Marketplaces like Terminal allow employers to have face-to-face time with candidates without having to vet them themselves. This saves time and effort while still ensuring quality candidates and cultural and company fit.



International Hiring Considerations

The opportunity to find affordable top talent is a critical aspect when designing your team structure and strategy. However, international hiring is complex in some ways, given factors like employment costs and local employment laws and compliance.

There are clear benefits to hiring internationally, including lower costs and access to diverse, specialized talent, but navigating the global employment scene can be challenging. A trusted partner can help. Platforms like Terminal streamline the hiring process, handling vetting and assisting with employment concerns and requirements in hiring markets abroad.

Also, bear in mind that salaries and rates do not necessarily reflect availability. Terminal can help you find available talent based on your needs and preferences.

A Final Note to Candidates

Remember: **there's no definitive resource for how much you can make working internationally.** While this data is based on international salary expectations, candidates are in a unique position to establish their own value. Ultimately, this guide can serve as a resource to help you assess your qualifications and determine which opportunities to pursue and how to maximize your value and potential in your career and growth.



Explore All the Global Salary Data

Whether you're a candidate or employer, this data can support your journey. Gain key insights, assess role potential, and better evaluate professional fit. Explore salaries in-depth and compare earnings region to region with Terminal's Salary Insights.

[Explore the Salary Center](#)

