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2026 Barclay Simpson
Salary & Bonus Trends

Data Privacy & AI Governance

Overview

The growth of AI governance in 2025 contrasted with the broader data privacy job market, in which the salary plateau that began in 2023 continued.

In parallel with the emergence of dedicated AI risk management and governance roles, data privacy professionals often received a salary boost when AI was added to their remit.

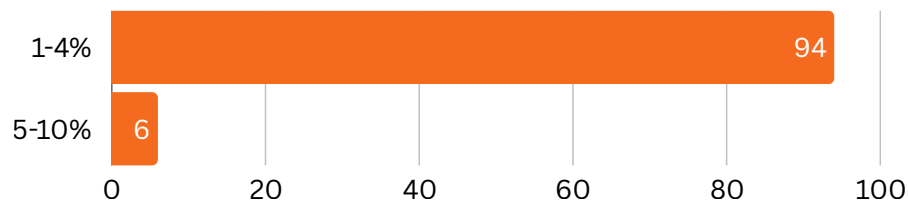
“With no headline regulatory or legislative change such as GDPR to stimulate demand, data privacy work ran on a ‘business as usual’ basis,” says Sophie Spencer, Senior Director at Barclay Simpson.

But while many employers made restrained salary offers, others found enough budget for new data privacy roles, often following a high-profile data breach.

Despite the salary plateau, all employers surveyed this year planned a base salary increase, with 6% foreseeing rises of 5–10% for their data privacy and AI governance employees.

Planned increases in base salaries

Planned data privacy and AI governance base salary increases for existing employees in the next 12 months (%)



AI governance bonuses outpace data privacy

Planned bonuses reflected much the same picture as salary increases, with 39% of employers surveyed planning to give the same or higher bonuses in 2026, compared to 2025. Overall, though, AI governance professionals received slightly higher bonuses than their data privacy counterparts.

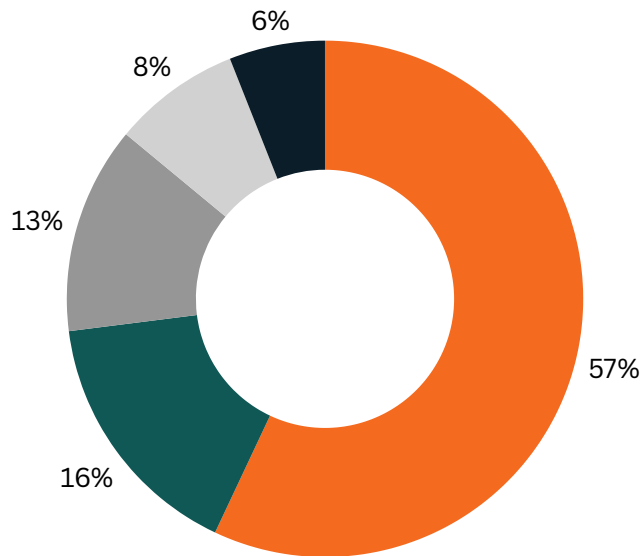
Most recent bonuses as a percentage of salary

Bonus as % of salary	% of data privacy professionals	% of AI governance professionals
0%	21%	
1–10%	25%	14%
11–20%	33%	43%
21–30%	14%	14%
31–40%	4%	29%
Prefer not to say	3%	0%

Remote working remains top-ranking benefit

By some distance, remote working remained the most valued employment benefit for data privacy and AI governance professionals. In our survey, 57% of candidates ranked it as their most important benefit. And 80% ranked it as one of their top three benefits.

The most valued employment benefits



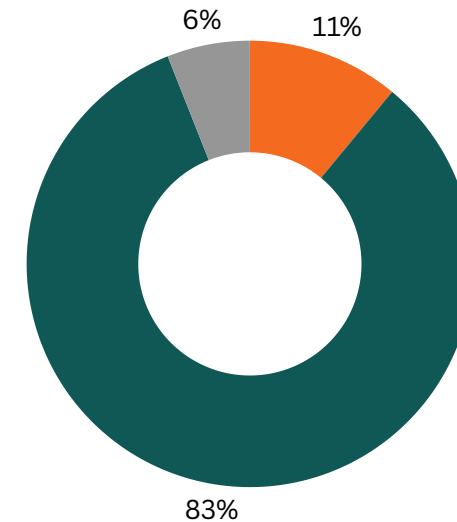
Benefit	% of candidates ranking it as most valued
Remote working	57%
Flexible working	16%
Annual bonus	13%
Company share options/sharesave scheme	8%
Private healthcare	6%

Misaligned expectations of employers and candidates

Employers currently feel that candidates' salary expectations align closely with their organisational budgets. Only 6% of employers in our survey felt that candidate expectations were out of line with what they were able to offer.

However, the reality among data privacy professionals is that 25% cite 'low advertised salaries or day rates' as their biggest challenge to securing a new role.

Alignment of salary expectations with company budgets



How aligned are candidates' salary expectations with your company's budget?	% of employers
Very aligned	11%
Somewhat aligned	83%
Not at all aligned	6%

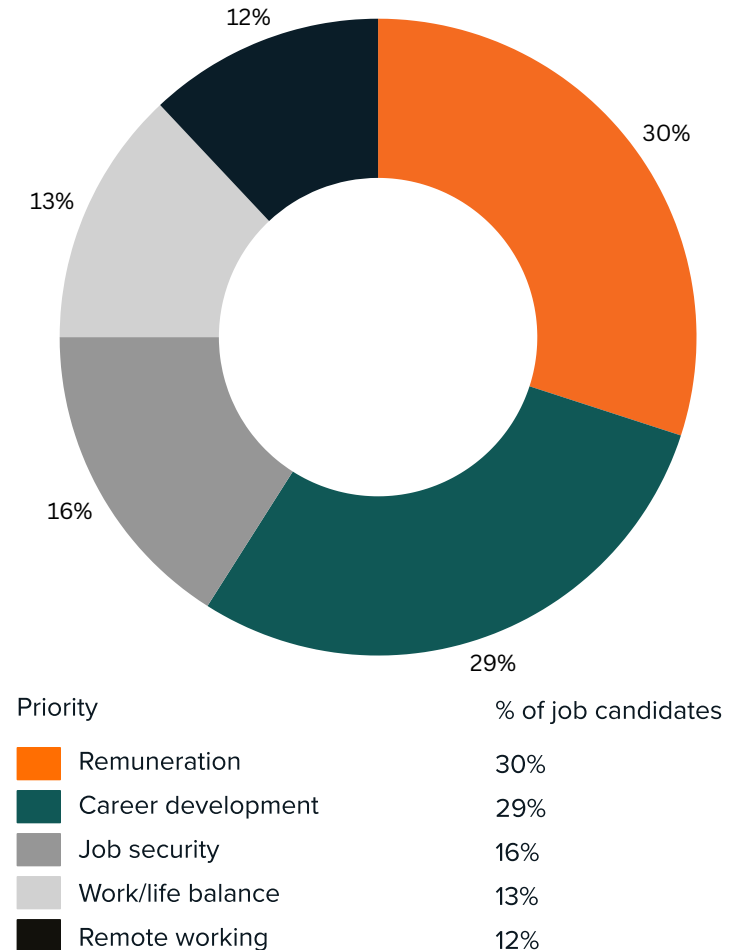
Remuneration remained a highly significant driver of job changes. In our survey, 30% of data privacy and AI governance professionals ranked salary as their top reason for moving. And 74% ranked it in their top three.

Interestingly, candidates ranked career development almost as highly as remuneration as a reason to change jobs.

“Candidates are looking for career development and the opportunity to specialise,” says Matt Smyth, Principal Consultant at Barclay Simpson.

“They might want to focus on AI governance in a business offering interesting development projects. Or move to a smaller organisation where they can make a real difference.”

What is your main priority when considering a new role?



Data Privacy and AI Governance Salaries

The following tables provide an overview of current salary benchmarks for key roles across data privacy. Figures reflect average base salaries and day rates for professionals across the UK, as well as those working remotely

Data Privacy Salaries

Area	Central London	UK-Wide	Fully Remote	Contract Day Rate
Analyst	£50k—£65k	£45k—£65k	£45k—£65k	£400—£500
Senior Analyst	£65k—£80k	£55k—£75k	£55k—£75k	£450—£500
Manager	£80k—£120k	£60k—£85k	£60k—£85k	£450—£550
Lead	£90k—£130k	£75k—£100k	£75k—£100k	£500—£750
Privacy Counsel	£100k—£150k	£85k—£120k	£85k—£120k	£700—£900
Group / Global Head of	£100k—£150k	£90k—£140k	£90k—£140k	£900—£1,200
Chief Privacy Officer / Director	£150k—£250k	£120k—£160k	£120k—£160k	£1,000—£1,500

AI Governance Salaries

Area	Central London	UK-Wide	Fully Remote	Contract Day Rate
Analyst	£60—£70k	£55—£65k	£55—£65k	£450—£500
Senior Analyst	£70—£100k	£60—£90k	£60—£90k	£450—£500
Manager	£100—£130k	£90—£120k	£90—£120k	£450—£550
Lead / Head of	£130—£150k	£125—£145k	£125—£145k	£500—£750
AI Counsel	£100k—£150k	£75k—£120k	£75k—£120k	£700—£900
Group / Global Head of	£120k—£160k	£110—£150k	£110—£150k	£900—£1,200
Chief AI Officer / Director	£150k—£250k	£150k—£250k	£140k—£200k	£1,000—£1,500



Attract and retain the data privacy and AI governance professionals you need with Barclay Simpson

Barclay Simpson has specialised in recruiting data privacy professionals since 2001. Our practice covers data privacy and protection, privacy counsel, and the emerging area of AI governance.

Data privacy was traditionally a small niche area of the overall information risk market, but developments in technology and regulation have increased the scale and significance of the profession beyond recognition.

Our expert team has extensive experience recruiting for permanent and contract roles, both full-time and part-time, for positions across financial services, commerce and professional services.

We can help you create a talent attraction strategy with competitive salary offerings and support you in building a future-proof data privacy team. Alternatively, we can help you find a role that aligns with your long-term career goals. Arrange a consultation today.

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