

**BARCLAY  
SIMPSON.**



**2026** Barclay Simpson  
Salary & Bonus Trends

**In-house Legal**

## Overview

After several years of relatively restrained pay increases, starting salaries for in-house legal jobs enjoyed a modest rebound in 2025, helped in part by the UK's deregulatory push to support economic growth.

While it may seem counterintuitive that in-house legal teams benefit from deregulation, they typically compete with compliance and risk for the same budgets. And when regulatory pressures ease, spending often falls in compliance in particular, freeing up resources for other functions such as legal.

"Starting salaries for in-house lawyers at the junior and mid-level have seen some improvement over the last year," says Tom Boulderstone, Head of Legal and Cossec at Barclay Simpson.

"However, it's still tricky at the top, made worse by the fact there are so few opportunities for senior lawyers to progress. There is now some frustration that senior-level salaries aren't growing at the same pace as the rest of the market."

There were no particular standouts in terms of sector, although the fintech space is now offering more competitive salaries after years of paying considerably below the market rate.

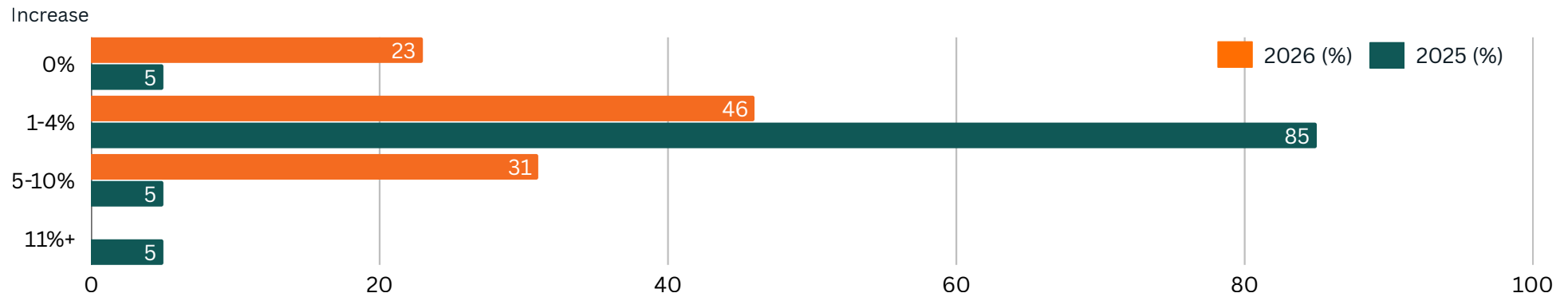
Elsewhere, private practice starting salaries for newly qualified (NQ) lawyers have put increasing pressure on in-house legal recruitment over the past decade—and they continued to rise in 2025.

That said, the average increase of nearly 5% was lower than in previous years, with the Magic Circle law firms maintaining starting NQ pay at £150,000 a year. While US firms continue to offer attractive private practice salary increases, there is growing consensus on both sides of the Atlantic that they appear to be reaching a peak.

Looking ahead, base salary uplifts for those who remain in their current role will be more polarised in 2026. Our annual Employer Survey revealed that 31% of organisations that hire in-house lawyers will be increasing salaries by more than 5% over the next 12 months.

This is up significantly from the 10% who said the same the previous year. But the proportion who do not plan to raise base salaries at all has also increased, jumping from 5% to 23%. Meanwhile, 85% of employers expect bonuses to either remain the same or fall this year.

## How much do you intend to increase base salaries for existing employees?



### Remuneration tops candidate priorities

Compensation is still king, but career progression and job security are quickly becoming more important to in-house lawyers, according to our latest annual Candidate Survey results.

Each year, we ask professionals to rank their priorities when considering a job move, and remuneration clinched the top spot again with 42% of lawyers citing it as their biggest motivator. However, this figure has dropped from 59% in [last year's survey](#).

At the same time, the proportion of candidates prioritising career progression has jumped from 15% to 26%. Broadly, we find that compensation is more important to junior lawyers, generally those with up to five or six years' PQE, whereas after this candidates tend to focus more on progression.

"We are seeing a growing number of people willing to move sideways on pay – or even take a cut – to gain experience and

new skills to put them in a better position to progress their career," says Mario Pafundi, Consultant at Barclay Simpson.

A growing percentage of candidates are also favouring job security as their top priority, albeit from a relatively small base. In the early post-pandemic years, just 2% of in-house lawyers chose it, but this has more than tripled to 7% today.

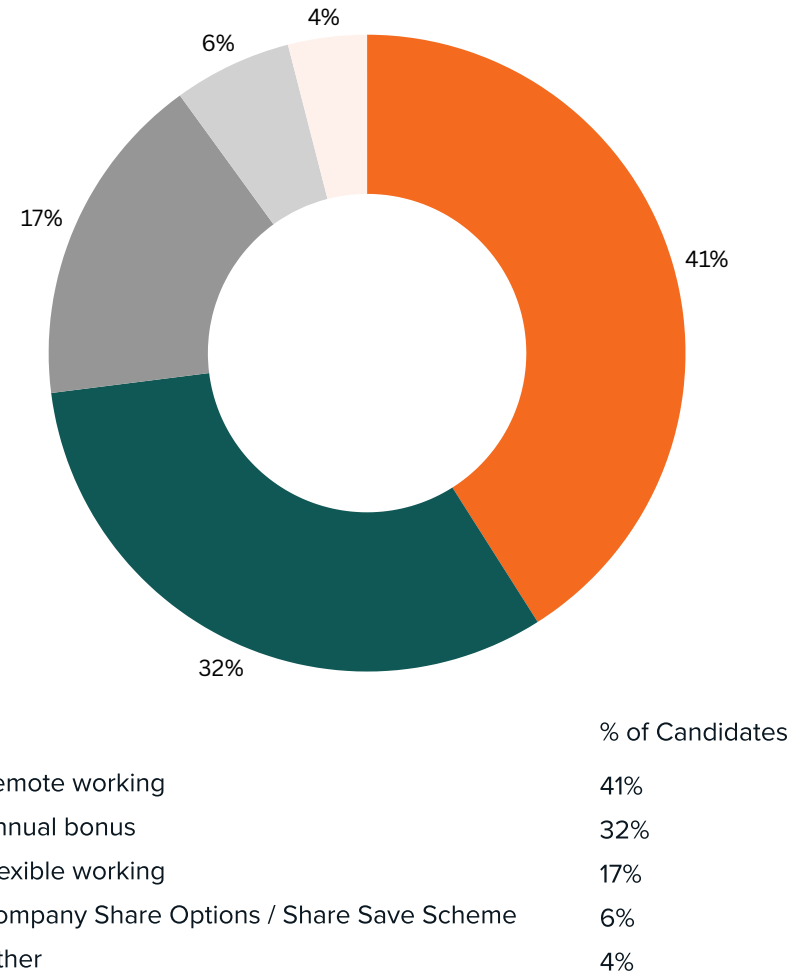
### What is your main priority when considering a new role?

	2025	2024
Remuneration	34%	54%
Career development	28%	15%
Work-life balance	17%	16%
Job security	7%	4%
Remote working	7%	6%
Better benefits	<1%	<1%

Despite teams becoming increasingly stretched and overburdened, a healthy work–life balance has risen only slightly in importance to candidates (18% of first choices versus 16% previously).

Nevertheless, remote working remains a valued job benefit for many in-house lawyers, with 41% claiming it is the biggest perk of their current role. An annual bonus was the second-most popular choice at 32%.

### Which job benefits do in-house lawyers value the most?



## In-house Legal Salaries

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

## Investment Banking Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£85k	£60k—£70k	£60k—£70k
AVP	£85k—£110k	£75k—£100k	£70k—£90k
VP	£110k—£125k	£105k—£110k	£90k—£105k
Director	£150k—£190k	£120k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Executive Director	£160k—£220k	£130k—£180k	£120k—£170k
Managing Director	£200k—£350k+	£160k—£350k	£150k—£300k

## Asset Management / Wealth Management Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£95k	£60k—£80k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£90k—£120k	£80k—£100k	£70k—£95k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£140k	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£170k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£180k—£250k	£140k—£180k	£120k—£150k
General Counsel	£200k—£500k+	£170k—£250k	£140k—£220k

## Hedge Funds / Private Equity Salaries

Area	London
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£95k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£90k—£120k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£140k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£150k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£170k
Head of Legal	£180k—£270k
General Counsel	£250k—£700k+

## Insurance Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£85k	£60k—£80k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£85k—£110k	£80k—£100k	£70k—£90k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£140k	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£160k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£160k—£250k	£140k—£180k	£120k—£150k
General Counsel	£200k—£450k	£170k—£250k	£140k—£220k

## Commerce FTSE 100 Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£95k	£60k—£80k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£90k—£120k	£80k—£90k	£70k—£85k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£140k	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£170k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£200k—£300k	£180k—£250k	£180k—£250k
General Counsel	£300k—£700k	£250k—£550k	£250k—£500k

## In-House Commerce Salaries—FTSE 250

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£70k—£85k	£60k—£75k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£80k—£110k	£80k—£90k	£70k—£95k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£110k—£140k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£130k—£170k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£160k—£250k	£140k—£180k	£120k—£150k
General Counsel	£200k—£350k	£170k—£250k	£140k—£220k

## FinTech (Payments / Retail) Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£60k—£85k	£60k—£80k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£90k—£110k	£80k—£100k	£70k—£95k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£140k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£160k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£160k—£200k	£140k—£180k	£120k—£150k
General Counsel	£200k—£300k+	£170k—£250k	£140k—£220k

## Crypto / Brokerage Salaries

Area	London	South East	Regional
Newly Qualified (0-1 year's exp)	£60k—£85k	£60k—£80k	£60k—£75k
Junior Lawyer (2-3 years' exp)	£90k—£110k	£80k—£100k	£70k—£95k
Lawyer (4-5 years' exp)	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k	£90k—£110k
Lawyer (6-7 years' exp)	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k	£100k—£120k
Senior Lawyer (8+ years' exp)	£140k—£170k	£125k—£150k	£110k—£130k
Head of Legal	£170k—£250k	£140k—£180k	£120k—£150k
General Counsel	£200k—£350k+	£170k—£250k	£140k—£220k



## Attract and retain the in-house legal professionals you need with Barclay Simpson

Barclay Simpson's legal division specialises in providing in-house legal recruitment solutions to a wide range of organisations, be they global institutions with large legal functions, or small privately owned businesses looking to recruit their first in-house legal advisor. We work with lawyers at all levels from newly qualified to general counsels and we have built an excellent reputation within in-house markets.

Our consultants are sector-specific, with some covering niche areas of financial services, while others recruit for some of the leading brands in commerce and industry. We can help you create a talent attraction strategy with competitive salary offerings or help you find a role that aligns with your skills and long-term career goals, as well as support you from interview through to salary negotiations.

Arrange a consultation today to see how Barclay Simpson can support you as you build a legal team that's future proof.

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