Compensation Index

Technology / IT - June 2026

recruise

What's Inside

COMPENSATION INDEX · IT 2026

How to pay for India tech talent in 2026. Bands by role and level, the GCC premium, the skill premiums that move an offer, and where Recruise placement data sharpens the public picture.

The Big Picture

"A BFSI offer is not won on the base any more. It is won on whether you read the premium right. The same title can sit two bands apart once you price the risk, quant, or cyber skill underneath it. This index makes that gap visible before you make the offer."

Sachith Kumar Rai

Managing Director & Founder,
Recruise Global

- **Three numbers move every tech offer in 2026.** The base band for the role and level, the GCC premium if you compete with a capability centre, and the skill premium if the role needs AI, cloud or cyber depth.
- **Public bands set the floor. Placement data sets the price.** Aon, Mercer, levels.fyi and AmbitionBox give you the market range. Where you land inside that range, and what an offer actually closes at, is what Recruise tracks placement by placement.
- **The hike has cooled to roughly 9%.** A 9 to 9.1% average increase for 2026 means counter-offers and lateral pay decide retention more than the annual cycle does.
- **Pay for scarcity ahead of tenure.** GenAI, MLOps, cloud and security skills carry a 25 to 50% premium over generalist profiles at the same level.

Pay at a Glance · 2026

THE NUMBERS THAT FRAME THE YEAR

India tech pay in 2026 sits on a cooled annual hike, a wide GCC-versus-services gap, and steep premiums for scarce skills. The averages hide the spread that actually decides an offer.

AVG SALARY HIKE 2026

9.1%

IT SERVICES HIKE (LOWEST SECTOR)

6.8%

GCC PREMIUM VS SERVICES

25–40%

AI / CLOUD / CYBER SKILL PREMIUM

25–50%

TOP-PERFORMER PAYOUT MULTIPLE

1.5–1.8x

HOW TO READ THE SPREAD

One headline hike number tells you almost nothing about a specific hire. Three forces pull a real offer away from the average.

Employer type

GCC vs product vs services. A GCC pays 25 to 40% over an equivalent IT-services role at mid-senior level, because the mandate is global ownership not client delivery.

Skill scarcity

Generalist vs specialist. GenAI, MLOps and security profiles command 25 to 50% over generalists at the same experience. Commoditised roles see 6 to 8% hikes; niche skills pull 15 to 25%.

City

Bengaluru sets the ceiling. Bengaluru runs 15 to 30% above the national average; Hyderabad and Pune trail by 10 to 15% with better cost-of-living ratios.

Source: Aon, Mercer, NASSCOM, levels.fyi, AmbitionBox, Recruise Intelligence..

The Market Read

The GCC premium is the first number in any tech offer

The same role carries three different price tags depending on who is hiring. Across every level, IT services sit at the bottom, GCCs in the middle, and product and startup firms at the top, and the spread is large. A senior engineer runs roughly 20 to 32 lakhs in services, 30 to 48 in a GCC and 38 to 60 in a product firm; a director or VP of engineering ranges from 70 to 120 in services to 150 to 250 and beyond in product, where equity widens the gap further. On our estimate the GCC premium over services runs at the midpoint of a 25 to 40% range by level, because GCCs are paying for global ownership of the work rather than delivery of it. That premium is the first number to get right, not the last. If you are competing with a capability centre for a candidate, the services-firm band is your floor, not your benchmark, and an offer built off it will read low by a quarter or more.

What hiring leaders should act on:

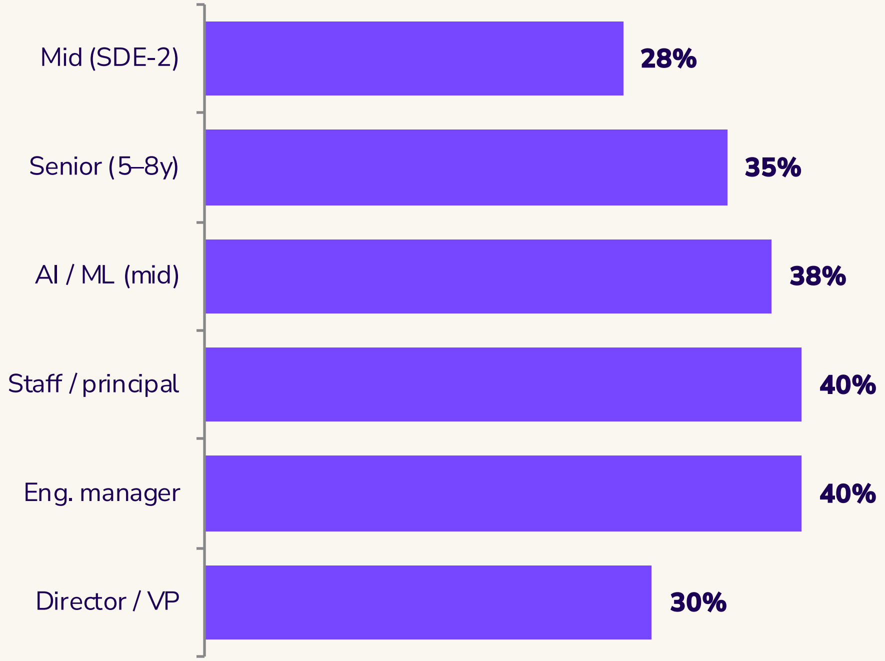
Identify early whether a capability centre is in the race for your hire, and if it is, benchmark against the GCC band from the start.

GCC vs Services vs Product Pay

— THE SAME ROLE, THREE PRICE TAGS

Role / level	IT services	GCC	Product / startup
SDE-2 / Mid Engineer	12–20	18–30	22–38
Senior Engineer (5–8y)	20–32	30–48	38–60
Staff / Principal	32–55	50–85	70–120
ML / AI Engineer (mid)	18–30	28–45	35–60
Engineering Manager	35–60	55–90	75–130
Director / VP Engineer	70–120	100–180	150–250+

— GCC PREMIUM OVER SERVICES



Midpoint of the 25–40% range by level. GCCs pay for global ownership of the work (NASSCOM, EY GCC Pulse Survey (Nov 2025)). Recruise estimate

Source: Aon, Mercer, NASSCOM, levels.fyi, AmbitionBox (public, Recruise Intelligence.

Skill premiums decide the offer ahead of tenure

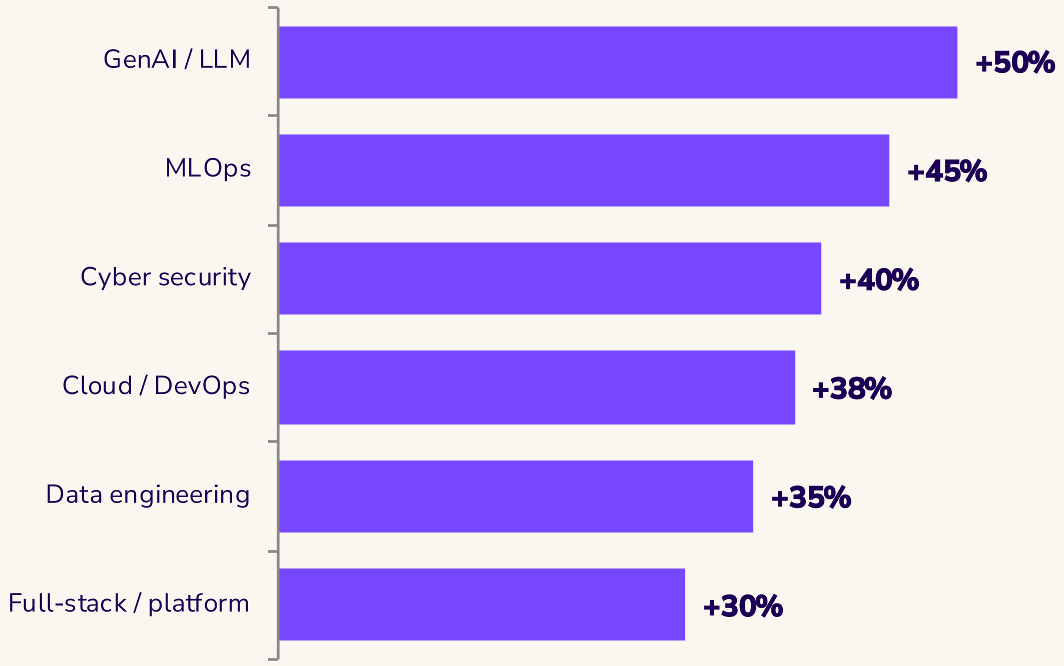
In tech hiring, the scarce skill now outweighs the years on the CV. A GenAI or security specialist at five years can command more than a capable generalist at eight, because the premium attaches to the capability, not the tenure. GenAI and LLM engineering and MLOps top the range, while commoditised roles are seeing only 6 to 8% hikes. The specialist bands show it plainly: a senior GenAI or LLM engineer runs 45 to 60 lakhs in a product firm or GCC, an ML engineer in Bengaluru sits around 45, a senior cloud architect or SRE between 18 and 40, and a security architect at eight years and up from 18 to 35, rising into a 50 to 150 CISO tier. Public guides give you those bands, but they stop where the hiring decision starts.

What hiring leaders should act on:

Price the scarce skill first and the level second, brief the band by the capability the role genuinely needs, and be ready to pay 25 to 50% over a generalist for the skills you cannot find. A generalist band aimed at a specialist role will not close.

Skill Premiums and Specialist Bands

WHAT SCARCITY COSTS



Premium over a generalist at the same level. GenAI/LLM and MLOps top the range; commoditised roles see only 6–8% hikes.

SPECIALIST BANDS · MID-SENIOR

GENAI / LLM ENGINEER (SENIOR)

45–60

INR LPA · product / GCC

ML ENGINEER MEDIAN (BENGALURU)

~45

CLOUD ARCHITECT / SRE

18–40

INR LPA · senior

SECURITY ARCHITECT (8Y+)

18–35

INR LPA · CISO tier 50–150

The specialist-over-generalist gap

Public guides give the band. What they cannot tell you is how often a specialist offer gets countered, how long the band sits open, and the percentile a client must hit to close. Recruise tracks all three by skill and level. These are the numbers that turn a market range into a hiring decision.

Source: Aon, Mercer, NASSCOM, levels.fyi, AmbitionBox (public), Recruise Intelligence.

The annual hike has cooled, so *lateral pay* decides retention

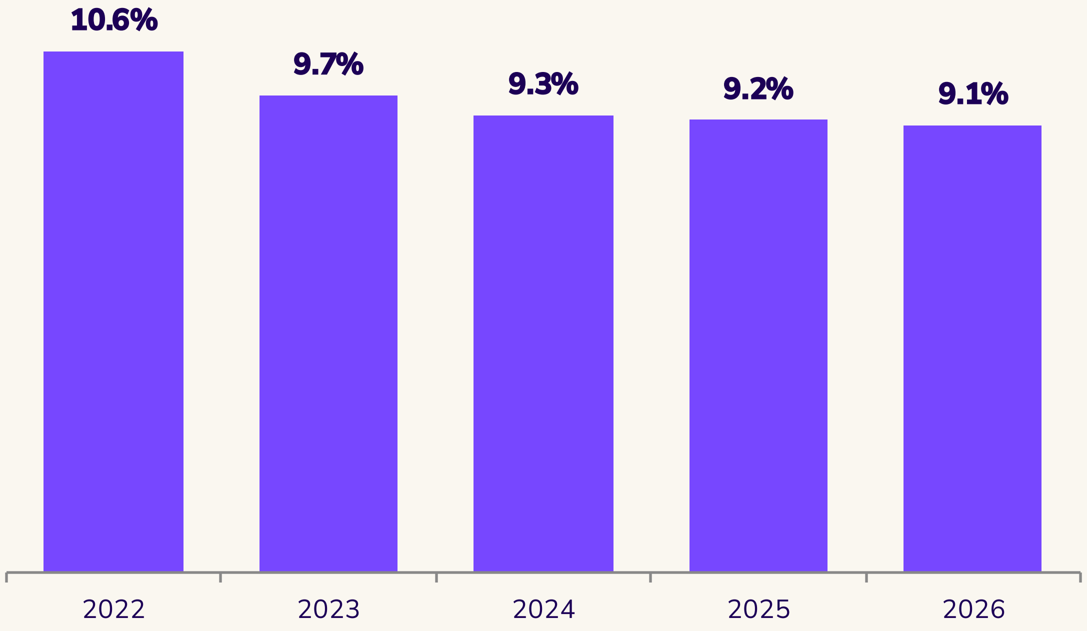
The annual increment has been cooling for five years, and the 2026 number reads as a market that has stabilised rather than one still accelerating. At an average of around 9%, the yearly review no longer does much to hold people. What holds them now is the lateral market, and that market is uneven. The gap between the highest and lowest-paying tech segments has widened to about 4.1 points, the widest in recent years, and top performers still take 1.5 to 1.8 times the average payout. A 9% cycle will not hold your scarce people when the market outside is moving faster for their skills.

What hiring leaders should act on:

Plan deliberate off-cycle corrections for your AI, cloud and security people, and benchmark any lateral or retention offer against the live market rather than last year's internal band, which by now almost certainly reads low.

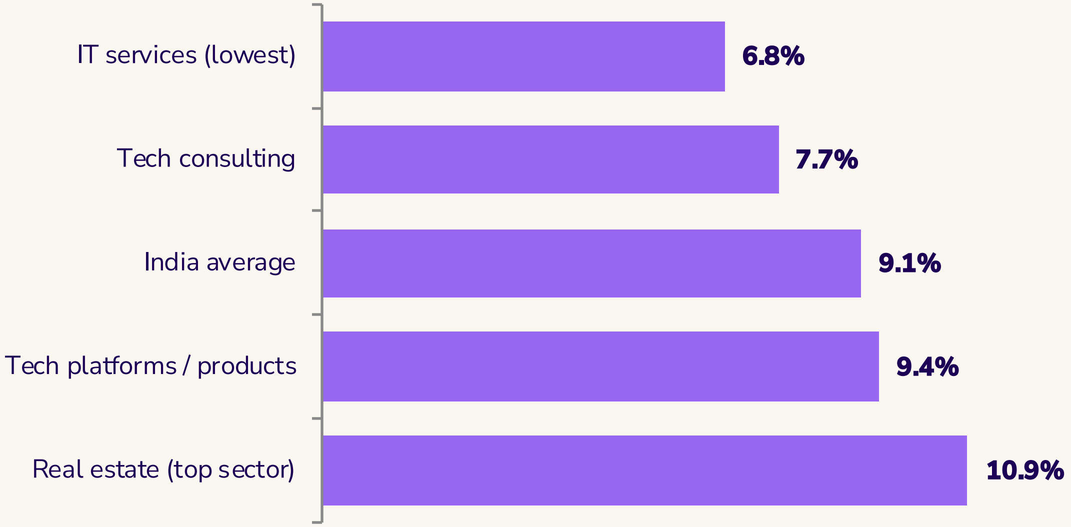
Hike Trend and Sector Spread

FIVE YEARS OF COOLING



India average salary increase, all sectors. The 2026 number reads as a stabilised market that has stopped accelerating.

2026 HIKE BY TECH SEGMENT



What the spread means for retention

A 4.1 point gap between the top and bottom sectors is the widest in recent years Top performers still take 1.5 to 1.8x the average payout. Segment mid-values (platforms 9.4% / consulting 7.7%): Recruise data.

Source: Statista, Aon, Mercer 2026, NASSCOM, AmbitionBox, Recruise Intelligence..

The Benchmarks

Role bands by level

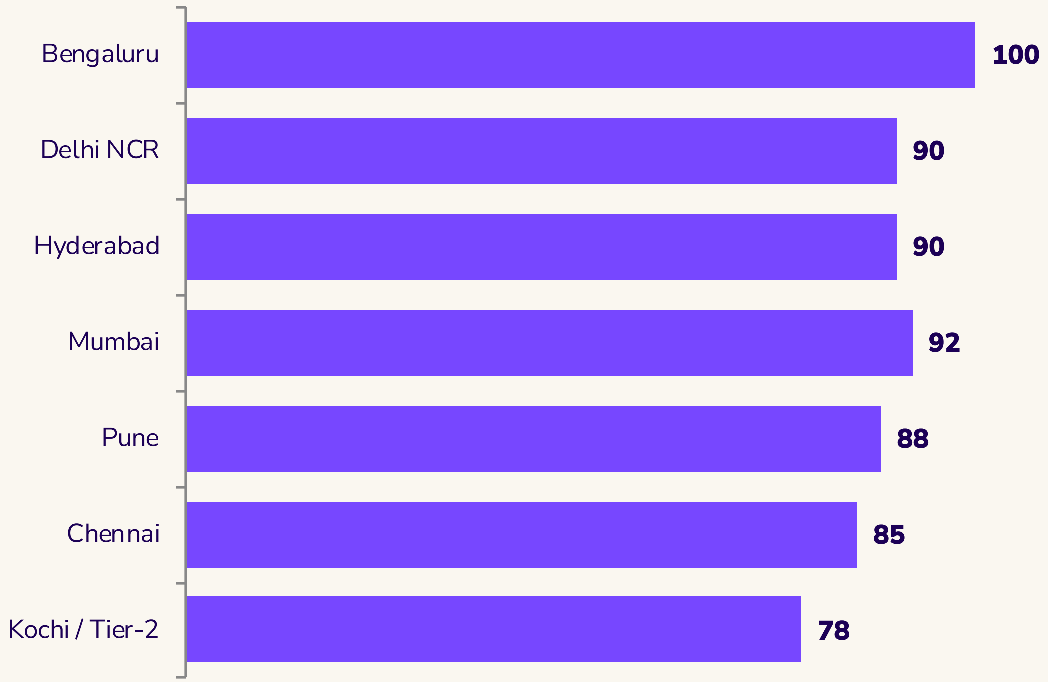
— TOTAL FIXED CASH, INR LPA · PUBLIC MARKET RANGES

Role	Junior (0–3y)	Mid (3–6y)	Senior (6–10y)	Lead / staff (10y+)
Software engineer	5–15	12–20	20–35	35–91
Full-stack developer	6–14	12–22	22–38	38–60
Data scientist	6–10	12–22	25–40	40–65
Data engineer	6–12	12–24	24–42	42–70
ML / AI engineer	8–16	18–35	37–60	55–90
DevOps / SRE	4–9	7–18	18–40	30–70
Cyber security	4–8	8–18	18–35	35–150
Engineering manager	—	35–60	55–90	90–130

Public ranges (levels.fyi, AmbitionBox, Naukri, kaam.work 2026), Recruise Intelligence. Product and GCC roles sit at the top of each band; equity adds materially at staff+ in product firms.

City differentials

WHERE THE SAME ROLE PAYS MORE



Pay index, Bengaluru = 100. Bengaluru runs 15–30% above the national average; Hyderabad and Pune offer better cost-of-living ratios.

READING THE MAP

Bengaluru sets the ceiling

Highest concentration of GCC and product roles, deepest AI/ML market, and the widest senior bands. Expect to pay the top of the range for scarce skills here.

Hyderabad / Pune close the gap

Trail by 10–15% on headline pay but win on purchasing power. A ₹40L Hyderabad offer can beat ₹45L in Bengaluru on take-home.

Tier-2 is a real lever

Kochi, Coimbatore, Jaipur and Indore run 15–25% below Tier-1 with rising GCC delivery presence. Strong for volume and cost-led mandates.

Cost-of-living arbitrage

Where a client should actually anchor by city.

Source: Aon, Mercer, NASSCOM-Deloitte, levels.fyi, AmbitionBox, Naukri (public, 2026 guides), Recruise Intelligence.

Winning the Hire

CLOSING THE OFFER

Winning a tech hire in 2026 comes down to reading three numbers and moving before the market does.

Start with the base band for the role and level, add the GCC premium wherever a capability centre is in the race, and the skill premium wherever the role needs real AI, cloud or security depth. Miss one and the offer gets countered; get all three right and it closes.

The public benchmarks give you the range, but where an offer actually lands inside it is a judgement, not a lookup. That is the gap we close, placement by placement, so you price against what is closing in the live market rather than last year's survey. Two shifts make this urgent: the annual increment has cooled to around 9%, so the yearly review no longer holds your scarce people, and the value has moved up the band and out to the cities, so a single national number over- or under-pays by role and location.

Price the role you actually need, benchmark it against the GCC, and layer the scarce-skill and city premiums on top. Bring us the brief and we will tell you what it takes to close.

Recruise Global

Want to hire talent that makes a real difference to your organisation?
Cut through the hype to get to what really matters.

About Us

Recruise is a global intelligence-led talent partner for enterprises, with offices in Bengaluru and Austin. For two decades, we have been a trusted partner to Fortune 2000 companies, scaling mid-market global capability centres, and the senior professionals who lead them — across Technology, Pharma, Life Sciences, and BFSI.

We combine deep sector expertise and proprietary hiring intelligence to deliver measurable impact across talent acquisition, executive search, and GCC transformation. Our work is reinforced by industry-leading research, deep market insights, and thought leadership across a wide range of sectors including Digital Services and ER&D, Enterprise Software, Internet of Things, Healthcare, Pharma, Lifesciences, Retail, Automotive, BFSI and Media & Telecom.

From scaling innovation to navigating disruption, global leaders turn to us to build, buy, and grow technology-led businesses that are ready for what's next.

Executive Search

Experienced Talent

Contract Staffing

Get in touch: sachith@recruiseglobal.com