

RESEARCH · UK FINANCE PAY

Which Sectors Pay Finance Best?

The honest answer from 426 Finance Pay Index salaries: for most finance people, moving sector does not move pay. Two sectors are the clear exception, and the things that do move pay are somewhere else.

What this is built on

Finance Pay Index salaries to 14 October 2026: 426 permanent roles from Accounts Assistant to CFO, counted once per person. A sector full of CFOs would look well paid just because of who answered, so every salary is compared with the median for its own job title, and each sector is then compared with all the others combined. A difference only counts as real when it holds when the data is resampled, and still holds with PE backed responses removed, because PE ownership pays more in every sector. Sectors with fewer than eight responses are left out.

Sector by sector

SECTOR	RESPONSES	AGAINST THE GOING RATE FOR THE LEVEL	VERDICT
Banking	11	plus 43%	Not proven at this sample size
Insurance	12	plus 25%	Not proven at this sample size
Private equity and venture capital firms	14	plus 18%	Pays more
Fintech	16	plus 12%	Not proven at this sample size
Construction and property	30	plus 5%	Not proven at this sample size
Energy and utilities	19	plus 3%	No clear difference
Transport and logistics	13	plus 3%	No clear difference
Hospitality, leisure and travel	32	plus 2%	No clear difference
Retail and e-commerce	38	plus 2%	No clear difference
Consumer goods and FMCG	21	0%	No clear difference
Professional services	54	0%	No clear difference
Asset and wealth management	16	minus 1%	No clear difference
Manufacturing and industrial	32	minus 1%	No clear difference
Technology and SaaS	30	minus 1%	No clear difference
Media and entertainment	28	minus 3%	No clear difference
Healthcare, pharma and life sciences	26	minus 7%	Not proven at this sample size
Education	8	minus 9%	Not proven at this sample size
Charity and non-profit	12	minus 18%	Pays less

Finance Pay Index, data to 14 October 2026, 412 responses. Sectors with fewer than 8 responses left out. A sector is only called higher or lower when the bootstrap 90% interval on its gap to all other sectors excludes zero, with and without PE backed responses.

Ten of the eighteen sectors sit within 4% of the going rate for the level, and none of those small differences holds up. A Financial Controller in retail and one in media are, as far as this data can tell, paid the same for the same level. Another six show bigger gaps on paper, but on samples too small to stand behind, so they are marked not proven. That includes the fintech premium people talk about: plus 12% on 16 responses, not proven yet.

The two clear exceptions, and the ones to watch

- **Private equity and venture capital firms, plus 18%.** This is the finance team inside an investment firm, not a business it has invested in. All fourteen responses are in London. The gap holds with PE backed responses removed.
- **Charity and non-profit, minus 18%.** The clear gap below the going rate, and it holds with PE backed responses removed. Finance roles in the charity sector pay about four fifths of the going rate for the level. Many people take that trade knowingly. It is worth knowing the size of it before you do.
- **Banking (plus 43%), insurance (plus 25%) and fintech (plus 12%).** The largest gaps on paper, but on 11, 12 and 16 responses, and the intervals reach down to zero or below. Insurance is also about half PE backed, and PE ownership pays more in every sector. Treat them as worth watching rather than proven.

What moves pay instead

Our pay guide measured the same data by the type of business rather than its sector. For Financial Controllers and above, two of these hold up clearly:

MOVE	DIFFERENCE AGAINST THE GOING RATE FOR THE LEVEL	AT THIS SAMPLE SIZE
From a business under 200 staff to one over 1,000	25 points	Holds
From outside London to London	12 points	Holds
From privately owned to PE backed	9 points	Not proven at this sample size

Finance Pay Index, data to 14 October 2026, 270 responses. Financial Controller and above, each salary against the median for its own job title.

Either of the moves that hold is worth more than moving between almost any two sectors. If the aim of a move is pay, the size and location of the next business matter far more than what it sells.

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A move from a 100 person business to a 2,000 person one in the same sector will usually pay more than a move to a new sector at the same size.

HARPER MAY

And sector is harder to change than it looks

From our side of the desk: employers hiring a senior finance person look first for someone who has done the job in a business like theirs. That usually means a similar business model, a subscription business, a manufacturer, a multi site operator, more than a matching sector label. Moving sector is entirely possible, but it is easiest between businesses that make money the same way, and it rarely comes with a pay rise on its own. Move sector because you want to work in it, not for the money.

Source: Finance Pay Index, data to 14 October 2026, 426 responses. Each salary compared with the median for its job title; each sector compared with all others; gaps called real only where the bootstrap 90% interval excludes zero. Size, location and ownership figures from our guide Am I Paid Fairly?. The view on changing sector is ours.

If you are thinking about a change of sector

CHECK YOUR OWN NUMBER

See where your salary sits for your level, sector and size of business, free at financepayindex.com.

ASK HOW YOU WOULD BE READ

Send us your CV and tell us where you want to go. We will tell you honestly which sectors would see you as a fit.

SENIOR FINANCE ONLY

We place CFOs, Finance Directors, Heads of Finance and Financial Controllers, and nothing else, mostly in London.