



UK edition



**New
Scientist
Jobs**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
srg

2024

Global Talent Trends and Insights

CONTENTS

Page

2	Key statistics
3	Who took part in our survey
4	How much could you be earning?
5	How much could you be earning (continued)
6	The gender pay gap
7	Equality, diversity and inclusion
8	Employee expectations are changing
9	The skills that will futureproof your career
10	Will AI take my job?



KEY STATISTICS

This year's Salary Survey is set against a backdrop of dramatic change. During the covid-19 pandemic, the drive to develop vaccines and treatments led to huge investment in the life sciences sector and increased demand for skilled workers. That inevitably led to a reset when the virus was eventually curbed, but the data from this year's survey suggests a potential return to pre-pandemic levels of activity, says Andrew Turner, UK Managing Director of STEM recruitment specialists SRG. "It's only natural that in 2023, the market would readjust," he says.

2023 was also challenging for its economic conditions. According to the Office for National Statistics, inflation in the UK peaked at 11.1% in 2022 and in 2023 GDP grew by just 0.1%. That's why the rise in UK STEM salaries is unsurprising: in 2023, the average rose by 11.1% to £57,724, the highest ever recorded, but essentially a cost-of-living increase.

"Companies have clearly chosen to retain their staff through salary increases," says Turner.

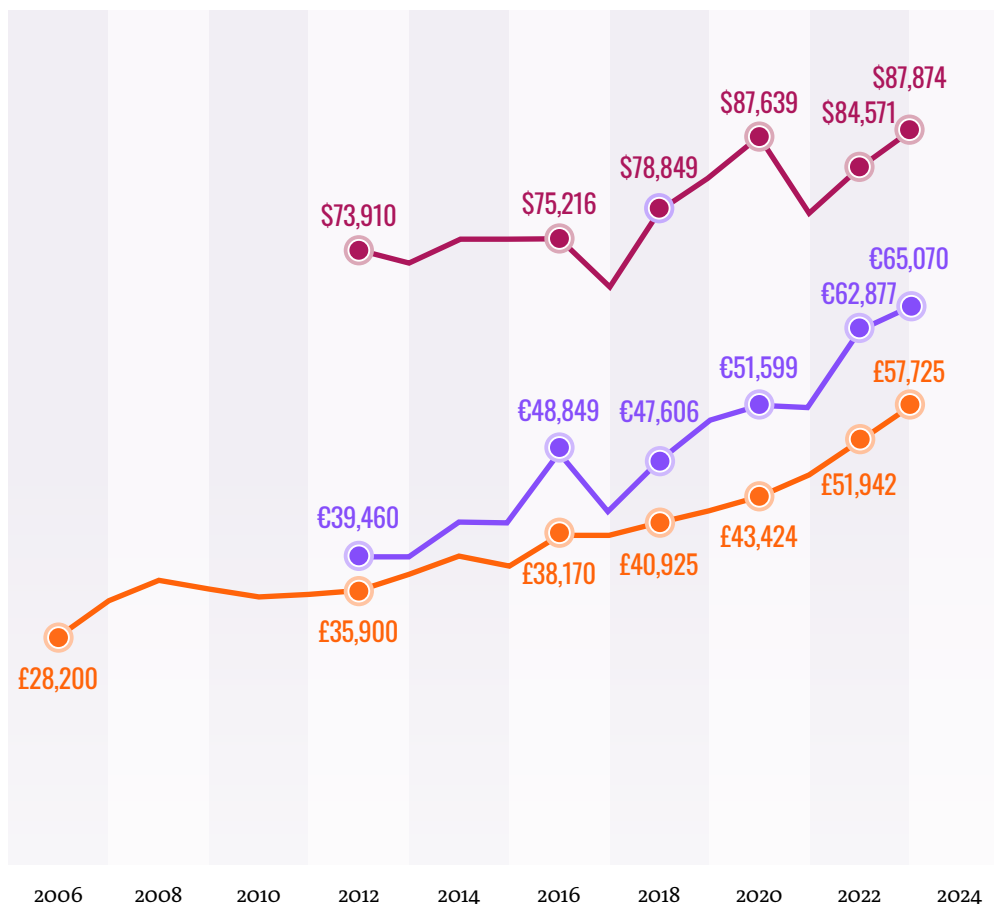
Men continue to earn more than women across all surveyed sectors and age groups. The difference is stark. On average, men earn £64,187 while women earn £52,098, a gap that is significantly larger than those of mainland Europe and North America (see page 6).

On the plus side, an industry focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is having effects, with 40% of respondents seeing their companies making visible efforts to increase diversity.

There are even grounds for cautious optimism. Forward-looking indicators are encouraging, with 32% of UK respondents expecting budget increases this year. And while 16% of respondents changed roles in 2023 – a reflection of the post-pandemic recalibration, according to Turner – more than 50% say they expect to, or will definitely change roles in 2024. That is also reflected in current market conditions. "We have seen more vacancies in January 2024 than in the whole third quarter of 2023," says Turner.

CHANGE IN AVERAGE SALARY OVER TIME

UK North America Europe



11.1%

Increase since 2022

£57,725

Average salary



3.9%

Increase since 2022

\$87,874

Average salary



3.4%

Increase since 2022

€65,070

Average salary

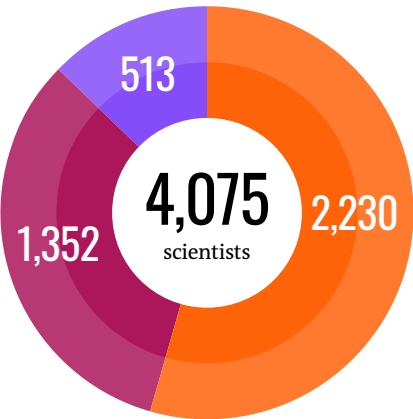
WHO TOOK PART IN OUR SURVEY

New Scientist has been tracking the salaries of professional scientists for more than 20 years. Our goal is to quantify earnings, work out how they are changing, and to study the differences by geography, demographics, and skills. We also look at trends related to the culture of work and the technologies in play. This survey took place online from December 2023 to February 2024, with respondents recruited by New Scientist and SRG.

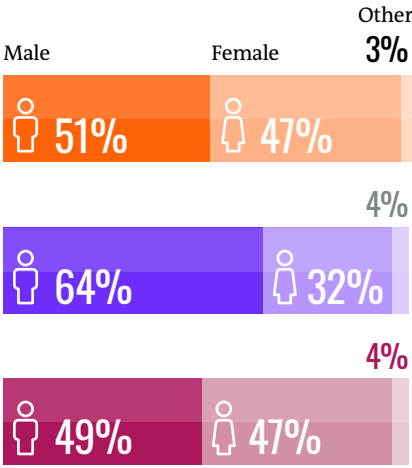
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

UK North America Europe

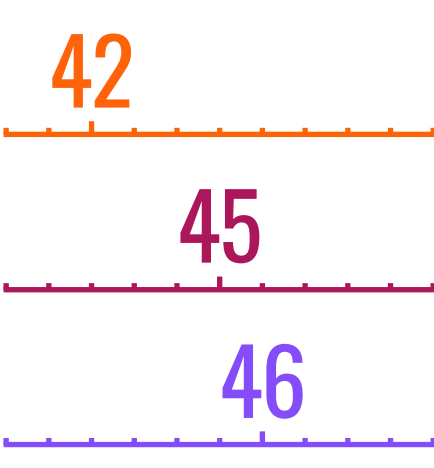
Scientists taking part in the online survey by region



by gender split

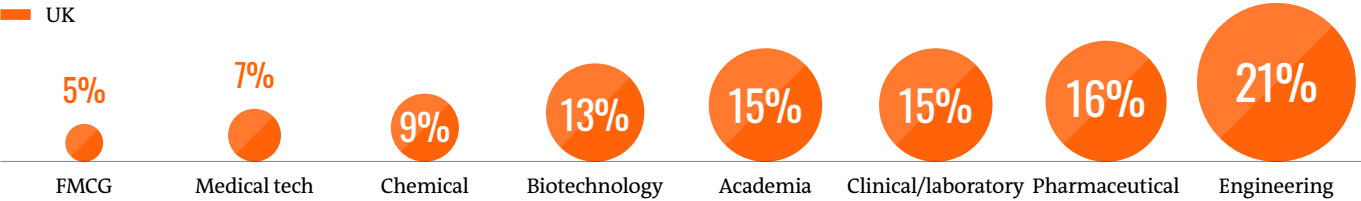


by average age

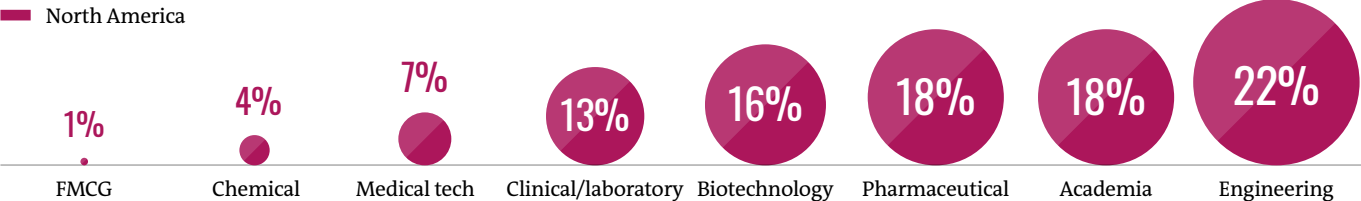


BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR

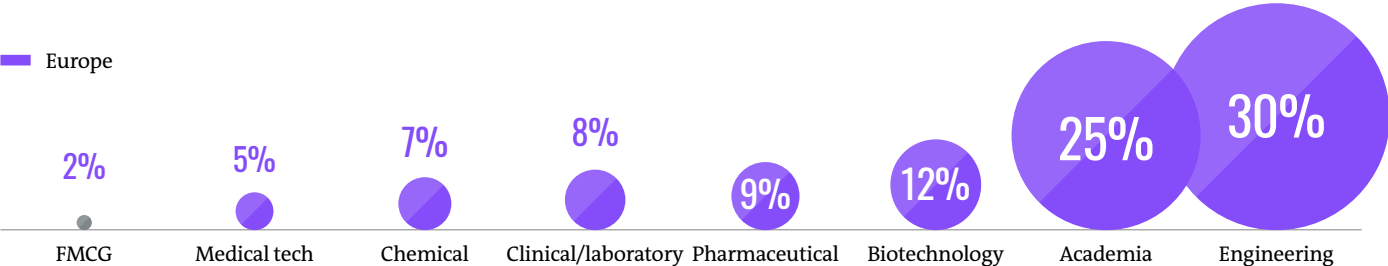
UK



North America



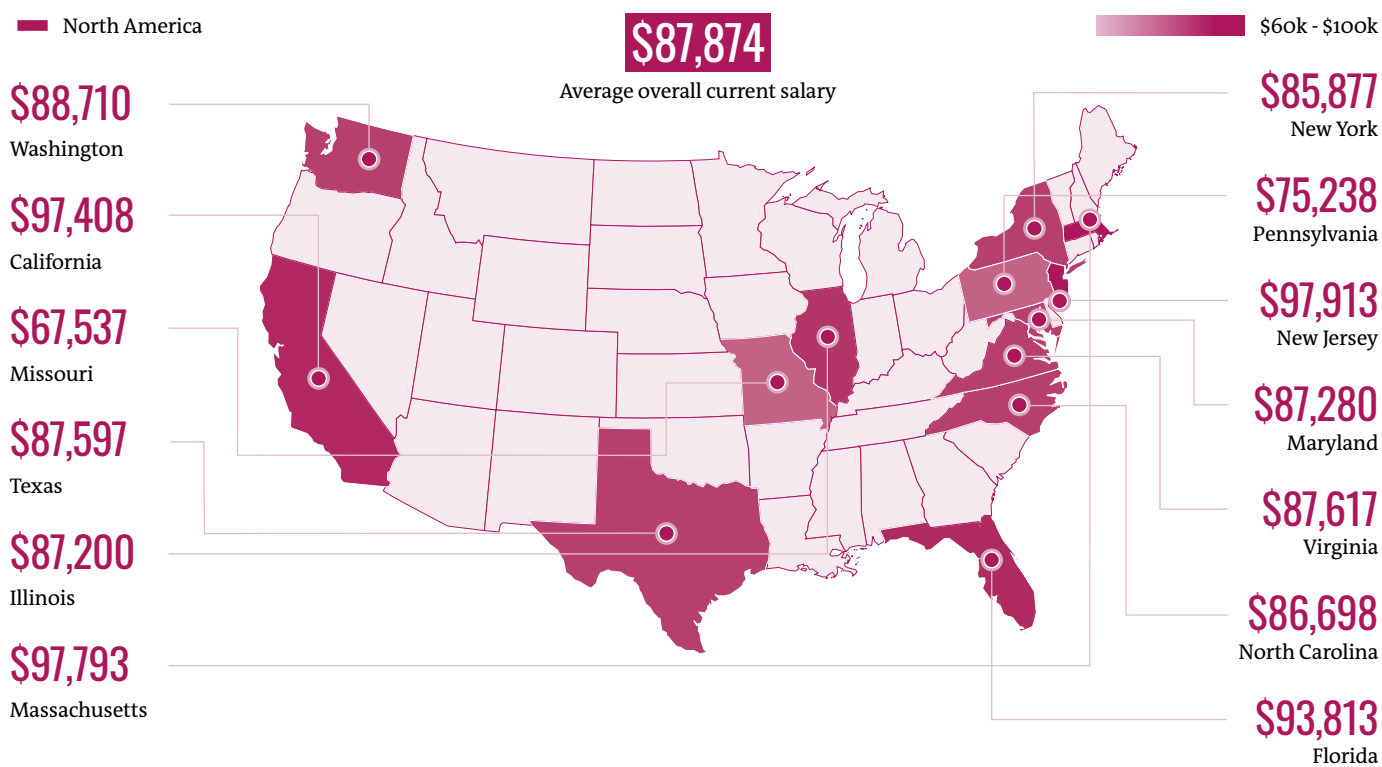
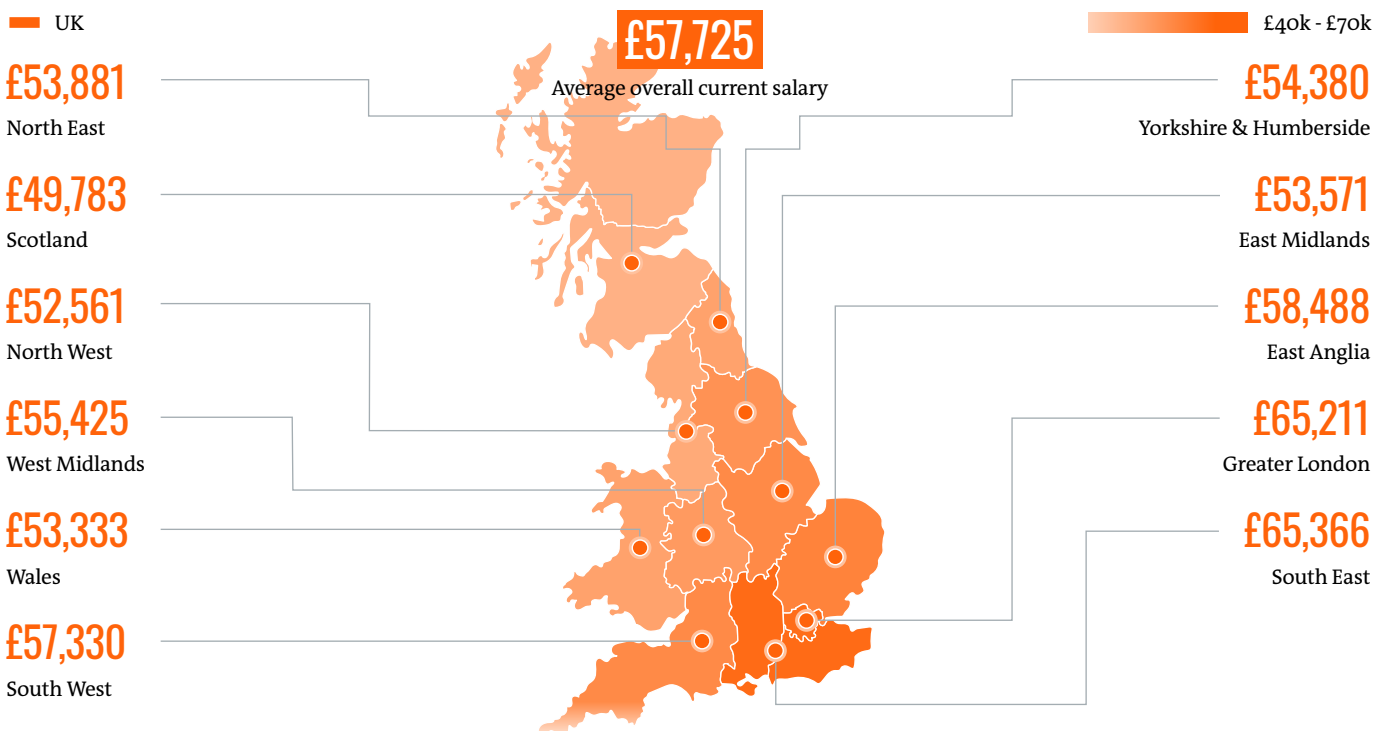
Europe



HOW MUCH COULD YOU BE EARNING?

Here we break down the average salary data by country, sector, and age. As any statistician will tell you, averages can hide variations, and this can sometimes mislead. For example, contractors tend to earn more than permanent workers (£64,517 versus £57,526 in the UK) and taking contractor earnings out of the calculation for engineers' salaries reduces the average from £68,177 to £56,882.

AVERAGE SALARY BY REGION

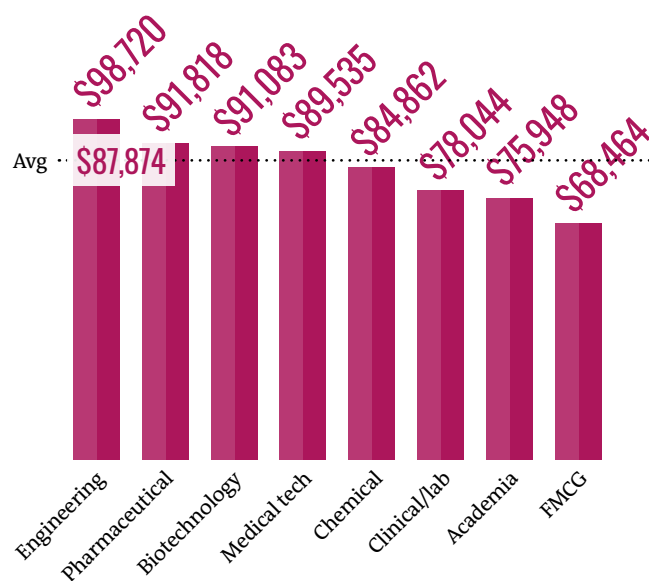
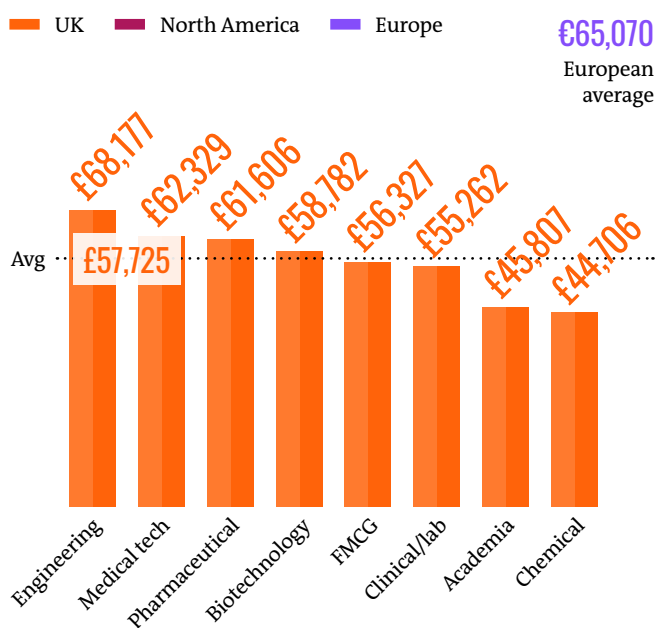


HOW MUCH COULD YOU BE EARNING? (CONTINUED)

Bear that in mind when comparing these figures against your own earnings. Remember also that permanent workers tend to have other benefits such as retirement plans, paid time off, job security and so on. "Contractors are generally responsible for their own benefits and take vacation on their own time. That's why they get the premium pay," says Tyler Rostad at SRG in the US.

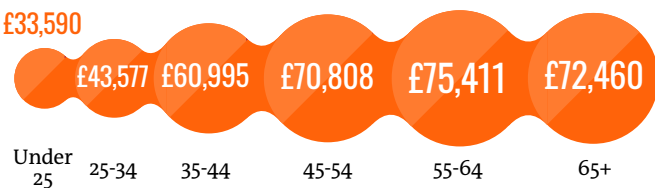
AVERAGE SALARY BY SECTOR

UK North America Europe

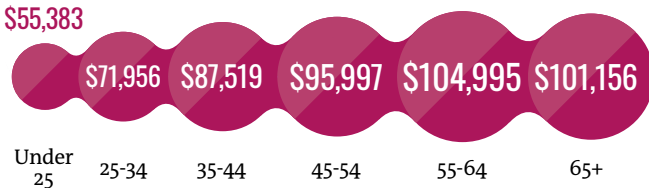


AVERAGE SALARY BY AGE

£33,590



\$55,383



THE GENDER PAY GAP

The SRG/*New Scientist* Salary Surveys have long revealed a big discrepancy between the earnings of men and women.

This year, women are earning 19% less than men – a wage gap of £12,000 – compared with the UK national average of 14%. By comparison, the STEM gender pay gap in Europe is 14%, which equates to €9286 (about £8000). In North America, the gender pay gap is smaller, at 8%, a difference of \$7745 (about £6100).

The lack of progress is plain. In all regions, though there has been greater variability in Europe and North America than in the UK, where the difference was also 19% in 2016.

A notable feature of the UK figures is that the salary gap closes to just 1% (£623) for the 35-44 age group. That's a significant improvement from 2022, when the gap was 9.2% (over £5,000).

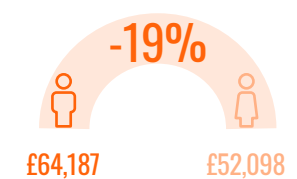
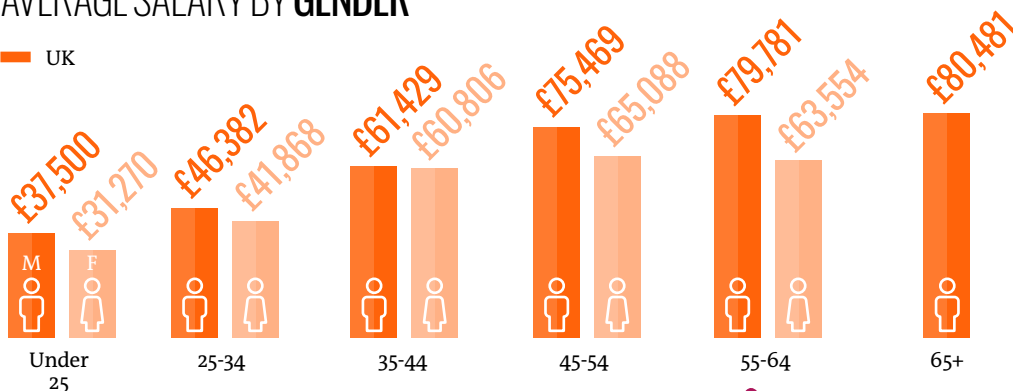
But the inequality remains for other age groups and leaps 20% for those aged 55-64. That may reflect the career break many women take to raise a family. If so, the return to work is clearly at a lower rate of pay than for male peers who never left the workforce.

"This inequality is not acceptable, particularly when we are trying so hard to attract women into STEM," says Emma Brown, Strategic Accounts Director at SRG in the UK. "It speaks volumes."

The US outlook is a little more positive, with the gap in single figures. "We're trending in the right direction but there's still a way to go," says Tyler Rostad at SRG in the US.

AVERAGE SALARY BY GENDER

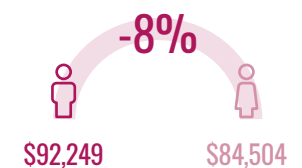
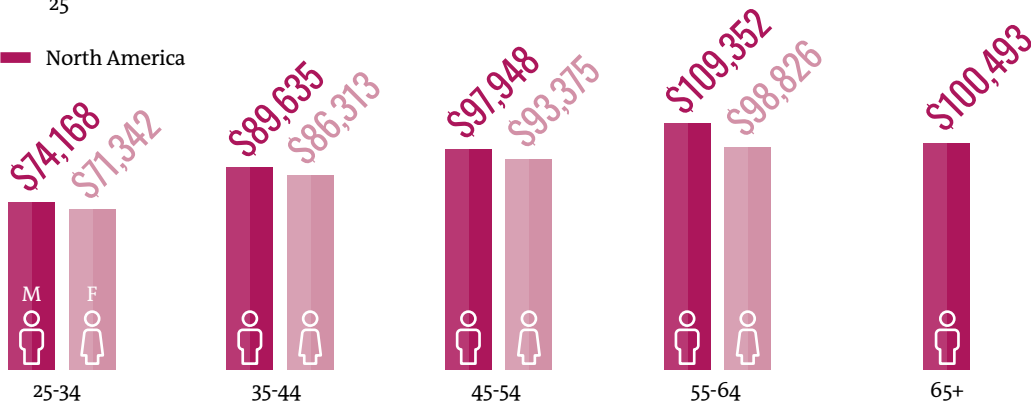
UK



£12,089

The difference between men's and women's average STEM salaries in the UK

North America

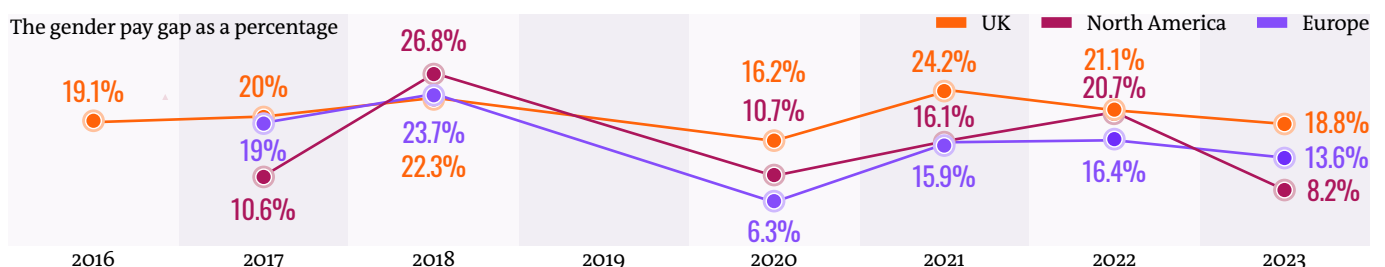


\$7,655

The difference between men and women's average STEM salaries in North America

THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE CHANGE IN THE GENDER PAY GAP OVER TIME

The gender pay gap as a percentage



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Companies are under increasing pressure to be more transparent about the composition of their workforce, their hiring practices and equality in the workplace. That's part of a transformational change in the corporate approach to Ethics, Governance and Sustainability.

The first step towards greater equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is gathering the data on which to make future decisions. That process is clearly underway, with respondents saying they are aware that the landscape is changing in this respect.

There are areas of concern, however. Not least of these is the significant difference in pay in the UK between white people and people of other ethnicities. For example, the salary difference between white people and people of Asian ethnicity is 14%, on

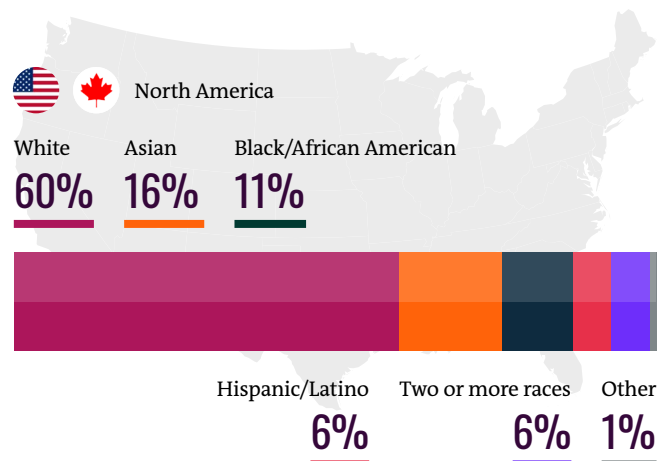
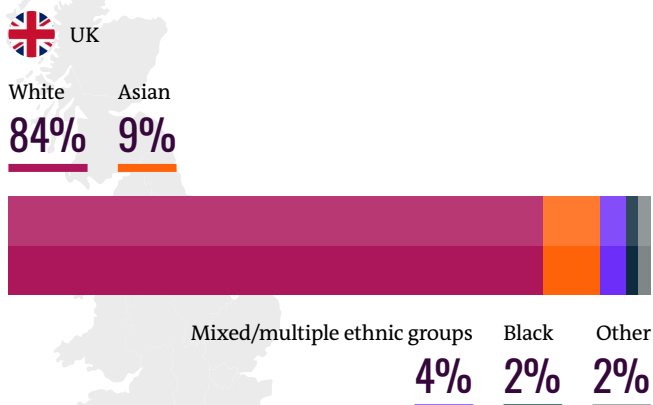
average. If the small sample size for black people is in any way representative of the bigger picture, that gap is even larger.

Andrew Turner of SRG in the UK says that greater transparency will reap significant rewards. "If you want to be a world leader, you need the best brains from all groups and individuals," he says. "Life sciences companies know this and are tuned in to EDI issues, but the data suggests there is more work to be done."

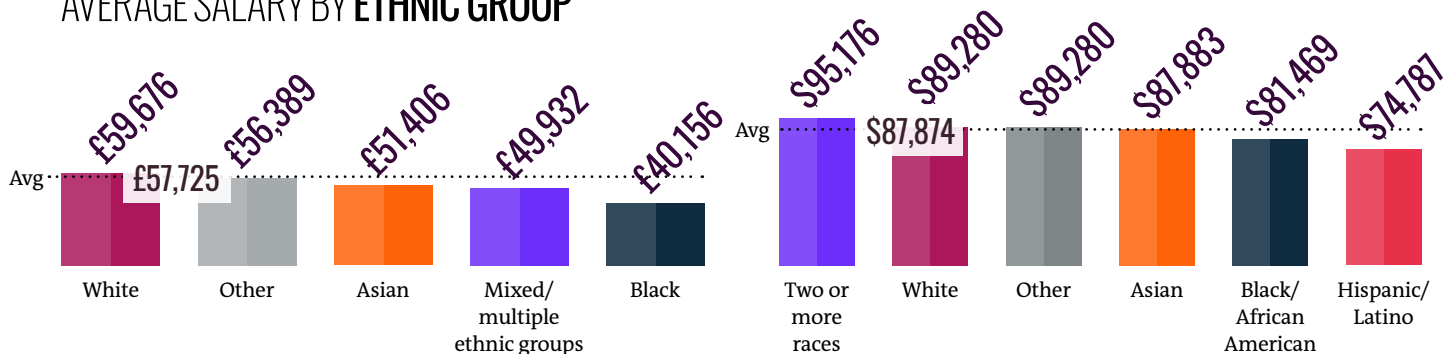
The ethnicity pay gap in North America also raises questions. "We must have equitable compensation for people from all groups," says Tracy Monsour at SVP of Marketing for Impellam Group, SRG's corporate entity. "If we are not being equitable, how do we ensure we have an inclusive culture?"

ETHNIC GROUP BREAKDOWN

Percentage of ethnic group (Average salary by group)



AVERAGE SALARY BY ETHNIC GROUP



HOW EDI HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

UK North America Europe

40%

of UK respondents who have seen visible efforts in their organisation to be more diverse

19%

of North American respondents who have seen hiring practices reviewed

14%

of respondents in Europe who have seen diversity data made available

EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS ARE CHANGING

More than two-thirds of people in the life sciences sector are satisfied with their role. That is in stark contrast to other industries, where job satisfaction is notoriously fickle. “A job in the life sciences industry is seen as an attractive opportunity because it is an interesting, innovative sector,” says Andrew Turner at SRG in the UK.

Nevertheless, significant numbers of our survey respondents expect to change roles in 2024. So, what kind of packages are they looking for? One clear trend is that changes in working patterns during the pandemic are increasingly built into workforce expectations. In the UK and Europe, about 40% have hybrid jobs featuring a mix of onsite and remote working. But more than two-thirds would prefer hybrid working. In North America, half of our respondents preferred a hybrid role, but only 30% had one.

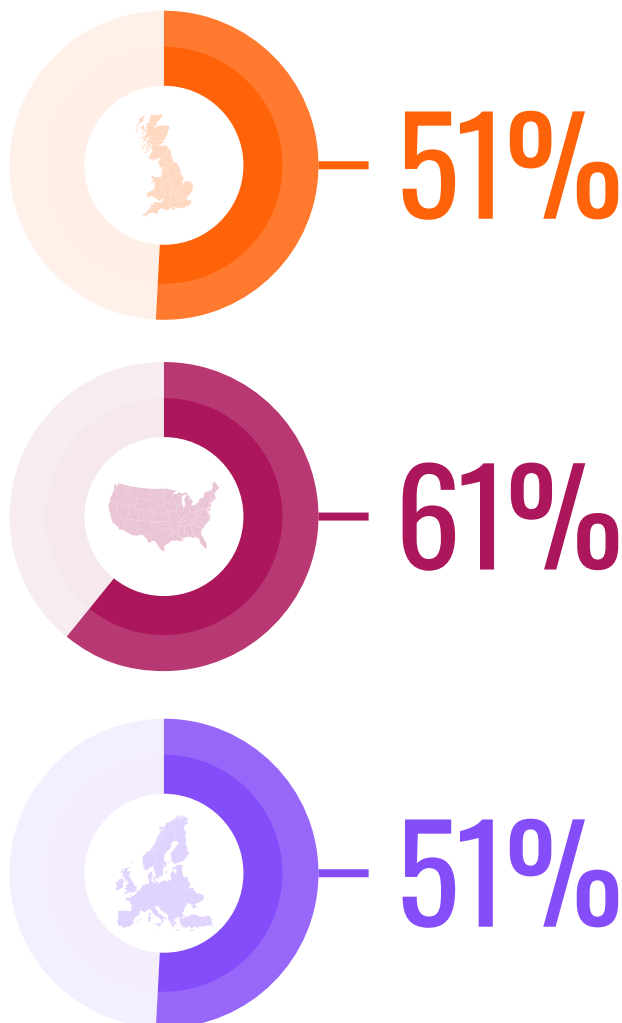
That feeds into a desire for change. Job mobility was relatively low as companies recalibrated after the pandemic – just 16% of respondents changed roles in 2023. But more than half of respondents (UK 51%, North America 61%) now expect to change roles in 2024. That rises to 90% for those working full-time onsite. “The pandemic changed people’s priorities and employers will have to take that on board,” says Tyler Rostad of SRG in the US.

Employees are also more attracted by other benefits. Flexible working hours, generous parental leave, and mental health support are all crucial for a significant part of the workforce. “That continues the mental health provision many companies offered during the pandemic,” says Turner. “For employees, it’s a kind of safety net that demonstrates an employer’s commitment.”

WHO EXPECTS TO CHANGE ROLES IN 2024?

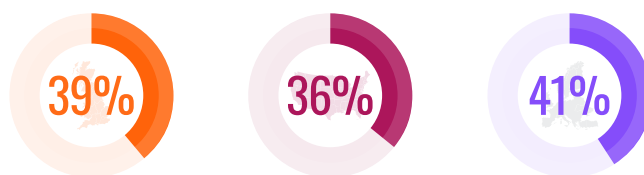
UK North America Europe

% expecting to or definitely changing jobs in 2024

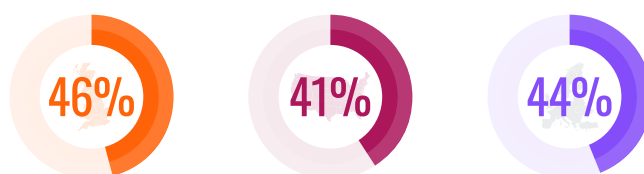


WHAT BENEFITS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES

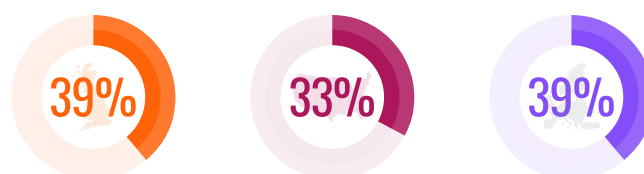
% choosing generous parental leave as of high or highest importance



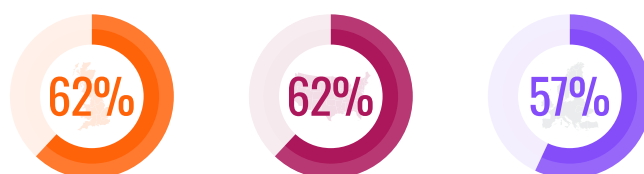
% choosing health and wellbeing benefits as of high or highest importance



% choosing mental health support as of high or highest importance



% labelling competitive salary and bonus packages as of low or least importance



THE SKILLS THAT WILL FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

The life sciences industry is based on innovation, and employees typically require specific knowledge and expertise. But the industry also needs workers who can respond to rapid and frequent change. This requires a wide range of problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and management capabilities, raising the important question of the skills employees need to future-proof their careers.

The choice of respondents is clear. More than half picked cognitive skills as most critical to their future. This includes skills like critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and adaptability. "It's unsurprising that cognitive skills come out on top," says Andrew Turner of SRG in the UK. "The ability to solve problems and to adapt are essential for bringing new drugs and therapies to life."

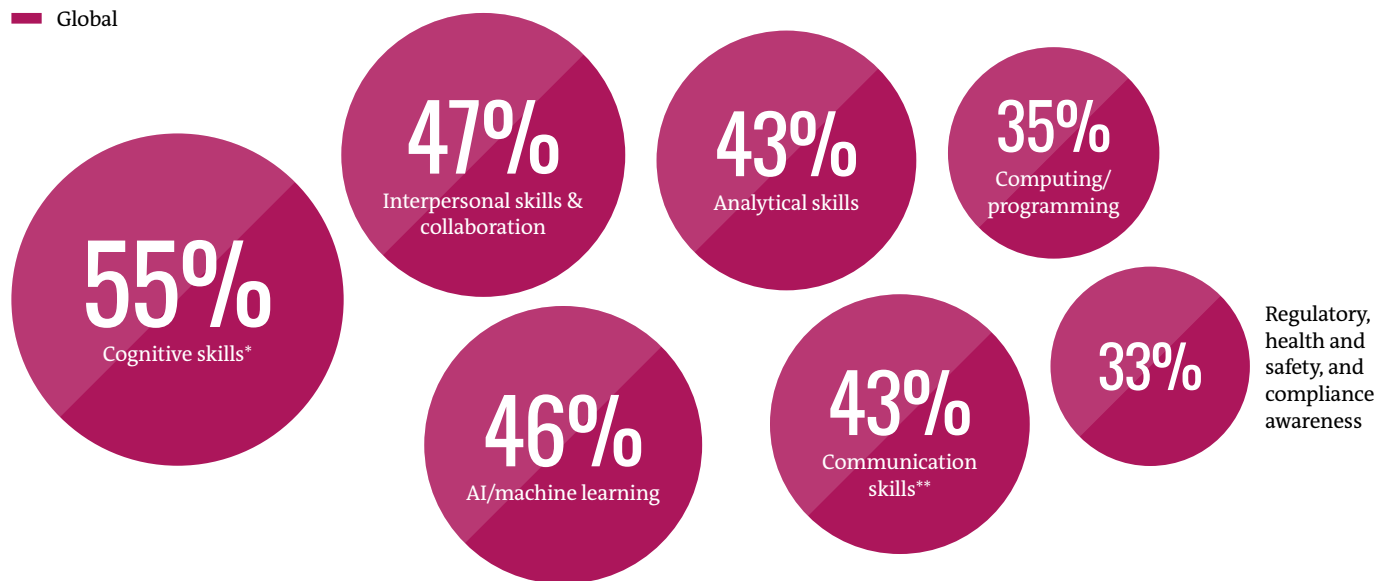
Interpersonal skills are also highlighted. "Innovation increasingly requires teamwork, sometimes on significant scales, so it's encouraging that interpersonal skills are thought of as crucial," says Turner.

"These choices are symptomatic of a workforce that is increasingly aware that skills need to be transferable," says Patrick Stedman, Senior Vice President at SRG in the US. "That's a generational shift. It's no longer possible to do the same job for 50 years, so skills that adapt to changing business environments trump everything."

KEY SKILLS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

The proportion of respondents who chose a skill to improve

■ Global



*critical thinking, inquiry skills, problem solving, creativity and adaptability

**presentation, writing and reporting

“Even younger employees have lived through two major global crises in recent years. They’re learning that jobs are not for life and that you have to be adaptable. These skill set choices reflect that.”

Tyler Rostad, SRG in the US

WILL AI TAKE MY JOB?

In the last two years, artificial intelligence (AI) has become part of the technological landscape of most industries. There is no shortage of hype around how it will transform working practices, revolutionise industries, and both create and eliminate some types of jobs. With AI already being used to accelerate the discovery of new drugs and treatments, the life sciences industry is among those likely to be impacted quickly. But exactly what that will mean for most employees is unclear. "The industry is embracing AI, but we don't yet know how it will evolve," says Andrew Turner of SRG in the UK.

Our survey suggests that AI is already impacting the workforce and that most people expect that to continue. Some 60% say AI is already making them more efficient, while 78% expect it will make them more efficient in future. These changes are so profound that over 50% believe AI will change the nature of their job entirely. "Greater efficiency allows people to focus on more strategic

thinking," says Tracy Monsour Sr. Vice President of Marketing, Impellam.

Nevertheless, the survey reveals huge contrasts in views. Significant numbers of respondents believe AI will have little or no impact on their jobs. "Most people don't understand what the impact will be in the near term, let alone the longer term," says Monsour.

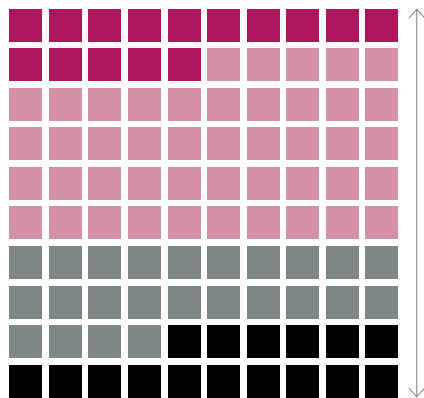
Most are positive about the impact of AI: more than three-quarters do not think that AI will make their roles redundant. But that leaves a quarter who fear that AI will ultimately replace them. In a curiously human twist, respondents believe it is more likely that AI will replace their colleagues rather than themselves.

IT'S MY COLLEAGUES I WORRY ABOUT

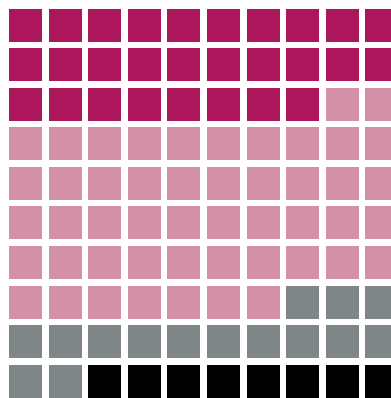
Percentage of all respondents across markets

Agree **strongly** Agree **slightly** Disagree **slightly** Disagree **strongly**

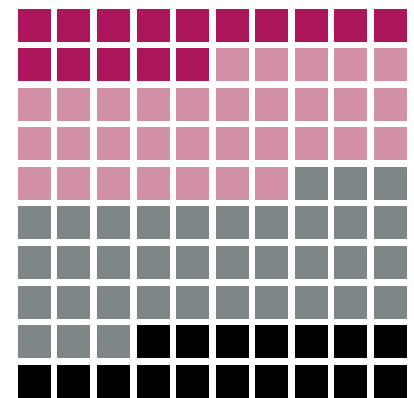
← 100% →



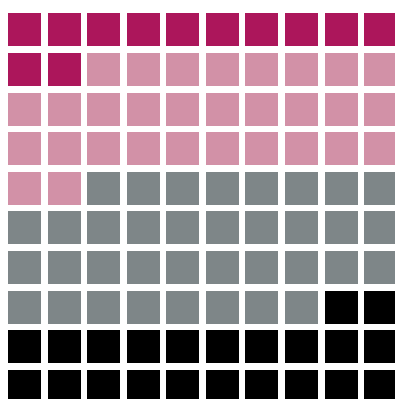
AI is making me more efficient at work



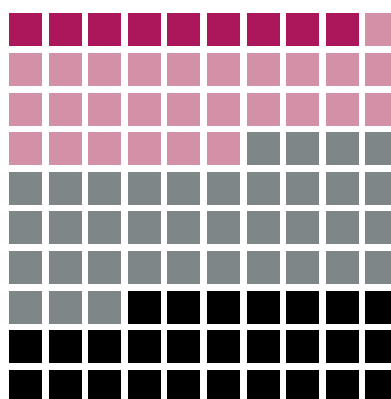
AI will make me more efficient in future



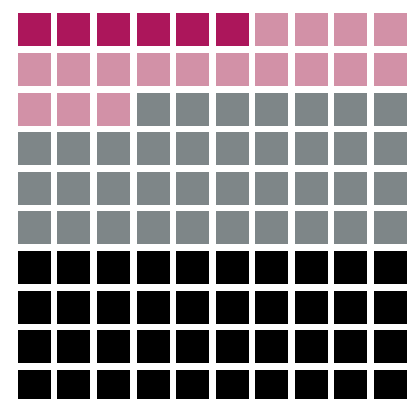
AI will have little or no impact on my job



I don't know enough about AI to comment



AI will make my colleagues' jobs redundant



AI will make my job redundant

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<https://www.srgtalent.com/>

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