



Netting Your Worth in Business Aviation  
**2026–2027 CABIN CREW**  
Daily Rates Benchmark – USA

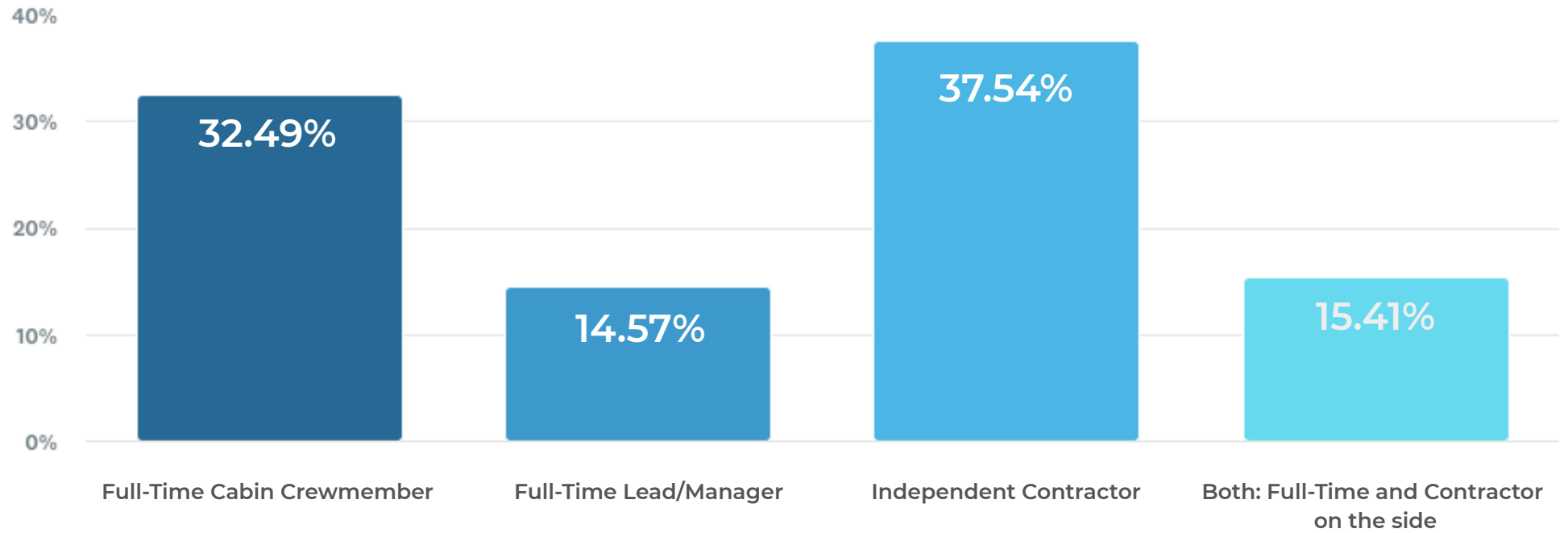
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# Daily Rates Benchmark Survey 2026-2027 - USA

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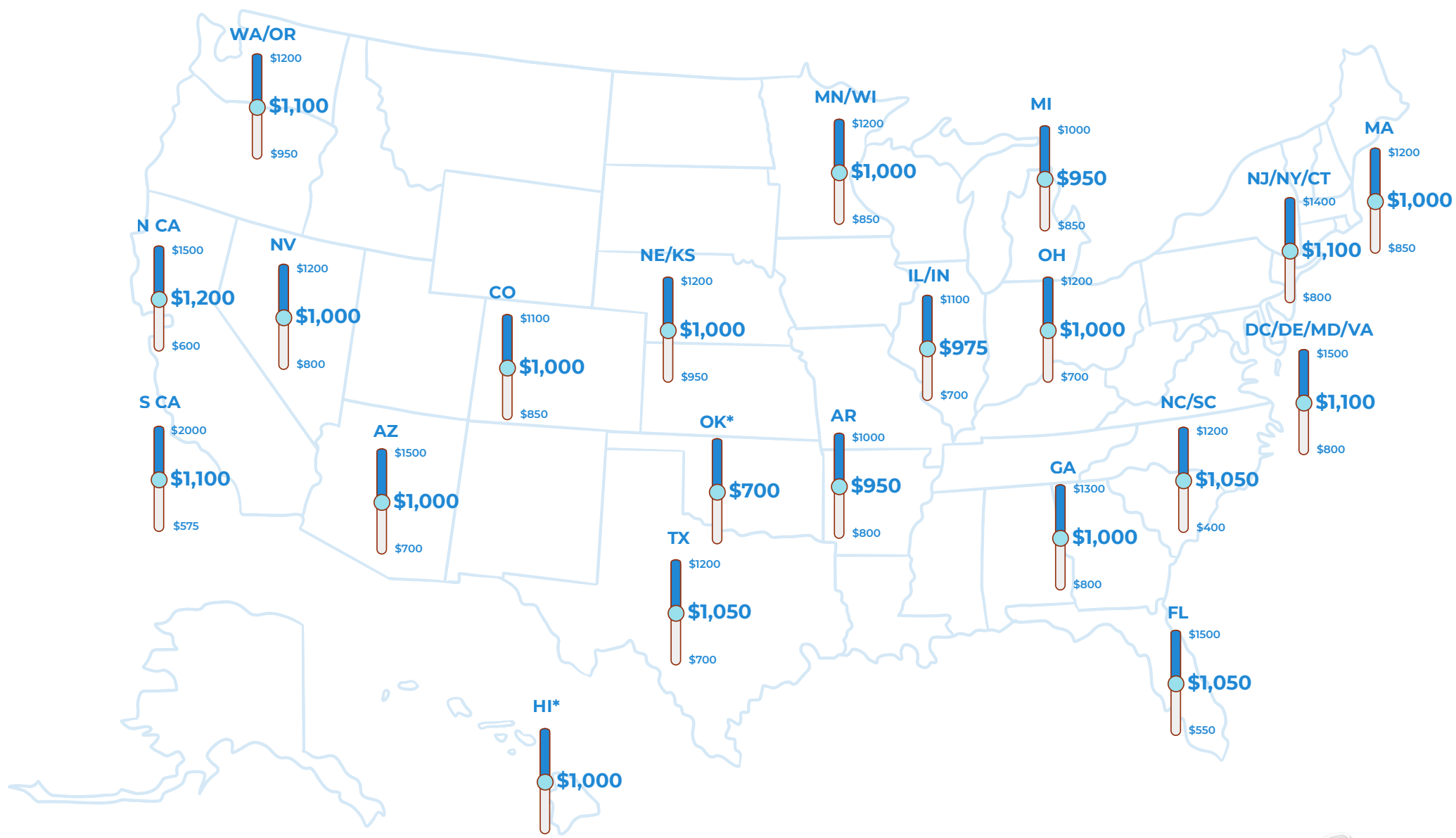
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## Total Survey Participant Classifications



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# USA Benchmark Daily Rates > Domestic



\*- State with limited responses therefore, unable to cacluate conclusive range.



# Key Market Insights

## **\$1,000 USA/Day has emerged as the USA benchmark domestic contract rate for 2026.**

International flying increasingly commands a premium - most often about + \$100/day more, accompanied by enhanced per diem or reimbursement policies.

Sājet Solutions first published the USA benchmark daily rate in 2019 = \$500/day. In 2024 = \$775/day. ***It has doubled in the last seven years!***

### **Market Rate: \$1,000 USD/day**

### **Competitive Market Range: \$850-\$1,200 USD/day**

Approximately half of all respondents fall within this range, making it an excellent benchmark for negotiations.

### **Premium Market: \$1,200+USD/day**

These rates generally represent experienced cabin crew, specialized aircraft qualifications, premium service expectations, international operations, or complex itineraries.

### **USA Independent Cabin Crew Daily Rate Snapshot**

- Median Daily Rate: \$1,000 USD
- Average Daily Rate: \$981 USD
- Most Common Rate: \$1,000 USD
- Typical Market Range: \$850–\$1,200 USD/day
- Reported Range: \$400–\$2,000 USD/day

### **Additional Stats:**

- Lowest Reported: \$400 USD
- 25th Percentile: \$850 USD
- Median (50th Percentile): \$1,000 USD
- Average (Mean): \$981 USD
- 75th Percentile: \$1,100–\$1,200 USD
- Highest Reported: \$2,000 USD



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# Reimbursable Expenses / Per Diem

## Compensation Stats

43.0% - Reimbursed with no limits  
33.7% - Reimbursed with limits  
23.3% - Provided a per diem

## Overview

While reimbursement policies vary considerably between operators and management companies, several consistent trends emerged.

### There is no industry standard.

The most common comment was that reimbursement policies depend on the company, account, or client. Many contract cabin crew work for multiple operators, each with different expense policies.

"It all depends who I'm contracting for."

### Unlimited reimbursement is generally based on responsible spending.

Many respondents who reported having "no limits" noted that there is still an expectation of reasonable, professional spending rather than unrestricted purchasing.

Comments included:

- *"Respectful spending without limits."*
- *"No limits but there is an expectation to have responsible spending."*
- *"Have to be smart about catering costs."*

## Domestic vs. International

Domestic per diem commonly falls between \$85-\$125 per day.

Although amounts varied, most domestic per diem allowances clustered around:

- \$85/day
- \$95/day
- \$100/day
- \$120/day
- \$125/day



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**Some operators calculate per diem hourly rather than daily.**

International per diem is typically higher.

International allowances generally ranged from:

- \$120/day
- \$135/day
- \$150/day
- \$175/day
- Up to \$180/day in some cases.

Several respondents noted that international rates vary based on destination and local cost of living.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

**Alcohol is frequently excluded.**

A recurring policy across multiple operators was that:

- Alcoholic beverages purchased during crew meals are not reimbursable.

**Government per diem rates influence some operators.**

Several respondents - particularly those operating under Part 135 - reported that meal allowances are based on:

- Federal (GSA) city-specific per diem rates
- Destination/location-based allowances

**Some operators no longer provide a per diem.**

- Several respondents noted a shift toward direct reimbursement rather than fixed daily allowances.



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## Summary

Expense reimbursement practices remain highly variable across the U.S. business aviation industry. While 43% of respondents reported unlimited expense reimbursement, spending is generally expected to remain reasonable and professional.

For operators providing a per diem, domestic allowances most commonly range from \$85–\$125 per day, while international allowances typically range from \$120–\$175 per day.

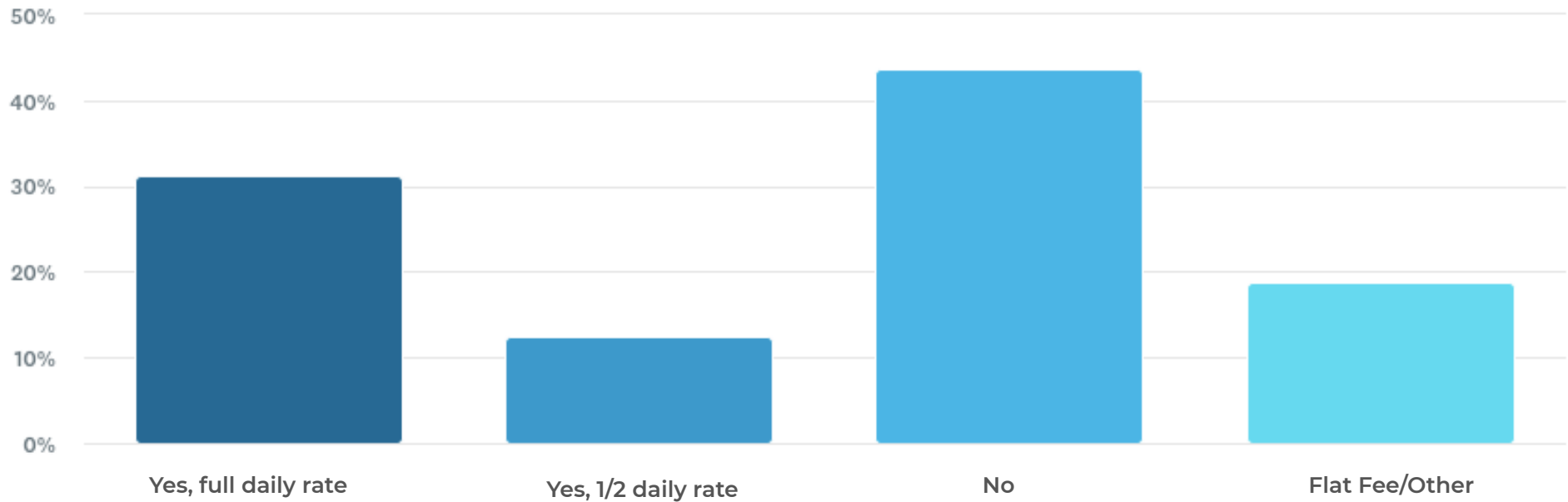
Transportation, hotels, catering, and cabin supplies are commonly reimbursed, whereas alcoholic beverages are frequently excluded.

Overall, reimbursement policies are largely determined by the individual operator, flight department, or management company rather than by a standardized industry practice.



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# Trip Preparation Compensation



## Trip Prep Compensation Insights

Among respondents who are compensated for trip preparation days, the majority receive their full daily rate, while just over one-third receive half of their standard daily rate. Survey comments revealed that compensation for trip preparation days varies considerably depending on the operator, account, workload, and type of trip.

Many contractors work with multiple operators, each maintaining different expectations and compensation policies. Several respondents noted they receive:

- Full day rate on some accounts
- Half day rate on others
- No compensation from certain client

## International trips are much more likely to include prep-day compensation.

Many respondents indicated they only charge for preparation days when supporting international trips due to the increased complexity.

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**Additional tasks often include:**

- International catering coordination
- Customs and destination requirements
- Passenger documentation
- Extended provisioning
- Additional planning and logistics

**Several respondents stated:**

- International = full day
- Domestic = half day or none

**Many contractors negotiate prep days individually.**

A recurring theme was that experienced contractors negotiate preparation time before accepting an assignment.

**Some contractors increase their daily rate instead.**

Rather than billing separately for preparation time, several respondents reported incorporating expected preparation work into a higher daily rate.

One respondent summarized it well: "If they don't pay for prep, my daily rate goes up."

**Flat-rate models also exist.**

Although less common, several contractors reported alternative compensation methods, including:

- \$200-\$800 flat prep fee
- Guaranteed daily retainer covering flying, preparation, repositioning, and standby
- Preparation included within an overall contract rate

**Positioning and provisioning are viewed differently.**

Several respondents distinguished between:

- Dedicated trip planning (compensated)
- Picking up standard stock on the way to the aircraft (generally not billed)
- Positioning days (often compensated at the full daily rate)



## Summary

Trip preparation compensation remains one of the least standardized aspects of independent cabin crew contracting. While most respondents who are compensated receive either a full or half daily rate, qualitative feedback shows that payment is frequently determined by the individual operator, account, trip complexity, and negotiated terms. International trips are significantly more likely to include dedicated preparation compensation, reflecting the increased planning, provisioning, and logistical coordination they require.

Many experienced contractors negotiate preparation expectations in advance or incorporate uncompensated preparation into a higher daily rate, reinforcing the importance of clearly defining prep-day compensation before accepting an assignment.

## Key Takeaways

- 62% receive a full daily rate for trip preparation
- 38% receive a half daily rate
- No universal standard exists - policies vary widely by operator and account
- International trips are far more likely to warrant dedicated prep-day compensation
- Many contractors negotiate compensation based on workload rather than a fixed policy
- Some contractors use flat fees, retainers, or higher daily rates in place of separate prep-day charges



# International Daily Rate Compensation

## Insights

The majority of respondents indicated they receive some form of additional compensation for international assignments, although how that compensation is structured varies widely by operator, management company, and client.

Additional compensation typically comes in one (or more) of three forms:

- Higher daily rate
- Increased per diem
- Both higher daily rate and increased per diem

Several respondents noted that all expenses continue to be reimbursed regardless of destination.

## Compensation Trends

The most common international premium is +\$100/day.

The overwhelming trend was an increase of approximately:

- +\$50/day
- +\$100/day (most common)
- +\$200/day

## International daily rates commonly range between \$1,100–\$1,300/day.

While domestic contract rates centered around \$1,000/day, international assignments most frequently clustered between:

- \$1,100/day
- \$1,200/day
- \$1,300/day

Premium operators reported:

- \$1,400/day
- \$1,500/day
- \$2,000/day (rare)



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**Increased per diem is nearly as common as increased day rates.**

Many respondents reported keeping the same day rate while increasing the per diem.

Typical international per diem ranged between:

- \$120/day
- \$125/day
- \$135/day
- \$150/day
- \$175/day
- \$180/day
- Up to \$220/day for certain accounts.

Several operators base international per diem on destination or government rates. Some operators provide both.

Many respondents receive:

- Higher day rate
- Higher per diem
- Full expense reimbursement

This appears to be the most competitive compensation structure, example:

Domestic:

- \$1,000/day
- \$100 per diem

International:

- \$1,100/day
- \$200 per diem

**Many operators do not differentiate domestic and international.**

A sizeable number of respondents indicated:

- Same daily rate
- Same compensation regardless of destination

These respondents generally rely on expense reimbursement rather than higher pay.



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Several respondents noted reimbursement for expenses unique to international travel - including:

- International phone plans
- Data roaming
- Currency exchange fees
- Higher meal costs
- Higher hotel costs
- Destination-specific expenses

**Compensation varies greatly by account.**

The most repeated observation was, "It depends on the company."

Many contractors fly for multiple operators and receive different compensation packages for each account.

Several respondents specifically mentioned:

- Part 91 versus Part 135 differences
- Management company policies
- Client expectations
- Negotiated rates



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## Summary

International compensation practices vary considerably across the U.S. business aviation industry, with no universally accepted standard.

However, most respondents reported receiving some form of additional compensation for international assignments. The most common premium is approximately \$100 USD above the domestic daily rate, resulting in typical international rates of \$1,100–\$1,300 per day.

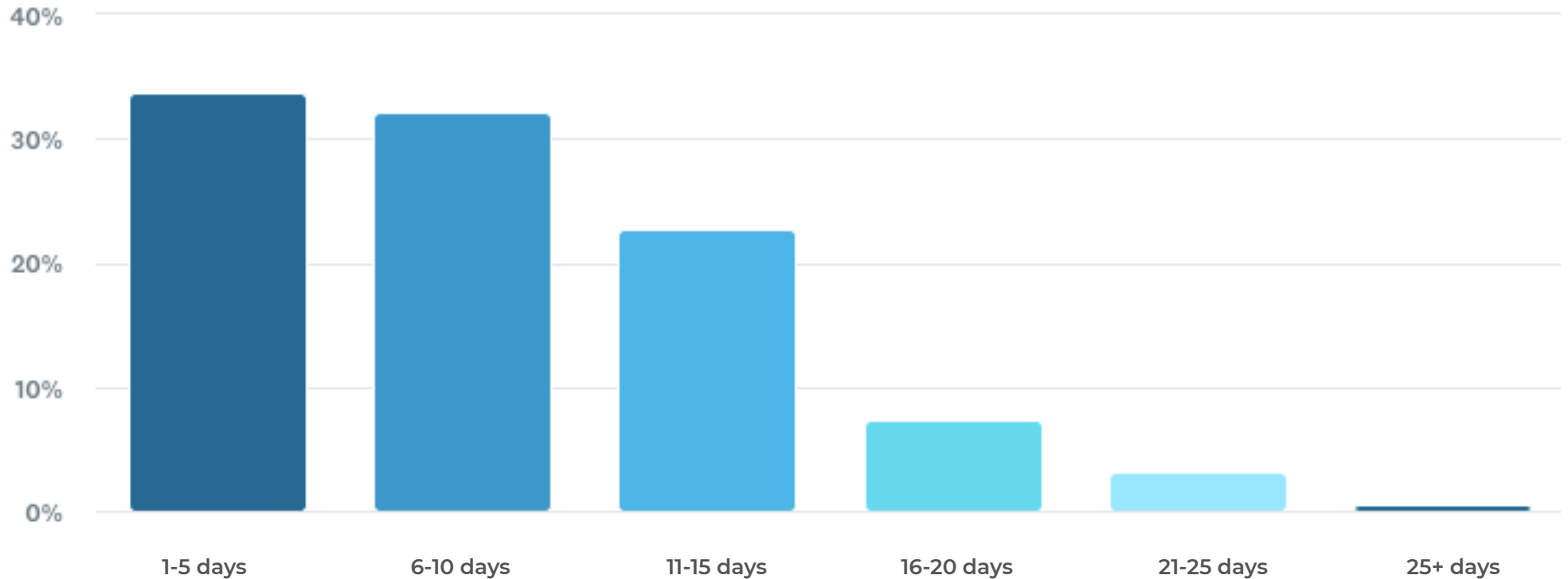
Increased international per diem - generally ranging from \$120–\$180 per day - is also common, and many operators provide both a higher daily rate and higher per diem.

A significant number of operators, however, maintain the same daily rate regardless of destination while reimbursing actual international travel expenses.

Overall, compensation is highly dependent on the individual operator, management company, and client account.



## Average Number of Days Flown (Per Month)

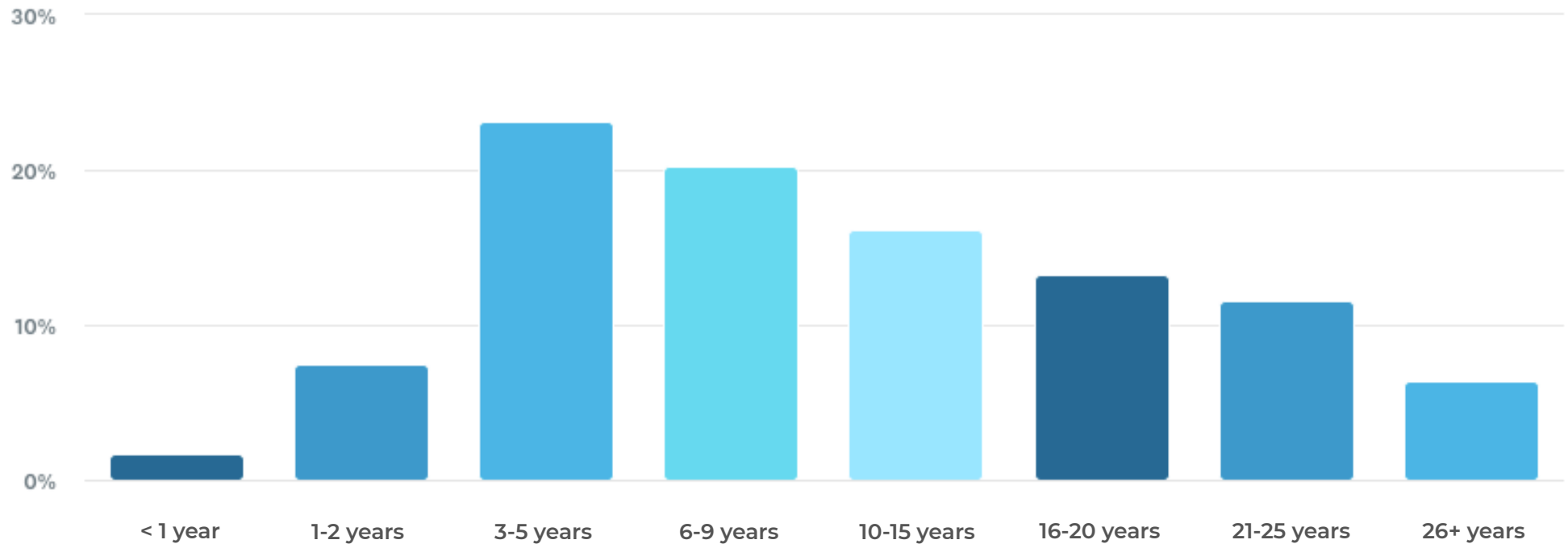


The majority of USA independent cabin crew report flying between 1 and 10 days per month, with an overall average of approximately 10 days monthly.

The data reflects a predominantly flexible, on-demand workforce structure rather than full-time utilization, with only a small percentage flying more than 15 days per month. The median experience falls within the 6–10 day range, reinforcing the part-time and multi-client nature of contract-based business aviation staffing.

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## Participants Years of Experience



The USA independent cabin crew market is primarily composed of mid-career professionals, with over half of respondents reporting between 3 and 9 years of experience. However, nearly 40% of participants bring 10 or more years of experience, indicating a strong presence of highly seasoned crew within the contract sector.

Entry-level participation (<2 years) remains relatively limited, suggesting that most professionals enter the independent market after gaining initial experience in structured or full-time aviation roles.

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# Calculating a Monthly Retainer

Retainers may be structured on a month-to-month basis or extend across multiple months. When multiple months are involved, each monthly guarantee should be treated independently. In other words, tracking resets at the beginning of each month for purposes of day allocation and reconciliation.

Under a retainer agreement, independent contractors are typically engaged under an exclusive arrangement for the defined period. This ensures availability for the client throughout the term of the retainer, which is both a reasonable expectation and a standard practice in many business aviation contracts.

## Key Retainer Questions to Clarify

When evaluating or negotiating a retainer, consider confirming the following:

### 1. Are “hard days off” included in the agreement?

For example, are you allocated several consecutive days each month for personal scheduling, appointments, or rest periods? Some operators accommodate this structure, while others may not due to operational demands.

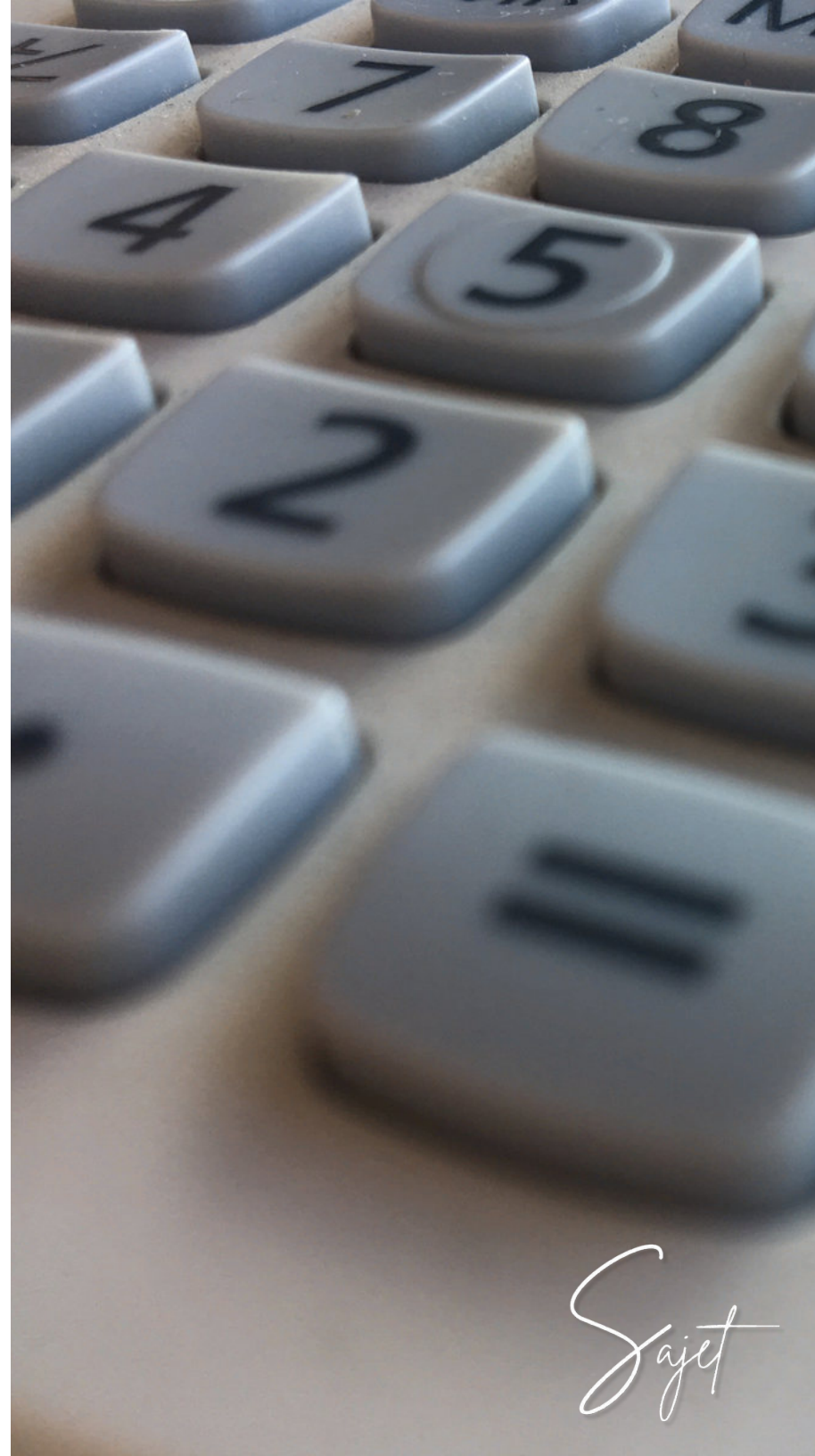
### 2. What happens once the guaranteed number of days is reached?

Once the monthly contracted days are fulfilled, are you released from exclusivity and free to accept additional work, or does exclusivity continue through the remainder of the retainer period?

### 3. How are additional days compensated?

If you are requested to fly beyond the guaranteed monthly days, are those additional days paid at your standard daily rate (or a premium rate)?

This should be clearly defined in the agreement.



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### Important Consideration

If fewer days are flown than the guaranteed minimum - for example, a 10-day monthly retainer resulting in only 8 days flown - the financial structure typically still favors the contractor's availability commitment and exclusivity to the client. In most professional agreements, the retainer is designed to secure access to the contractor's time, not strictly match utilization.

That said, well-structured retainers should be mutually beneficial, providing income stability for the contractor while ensuring priority access for the client.

### Example Calculations

Using the data averages collected -

Average 6-10 days per month > Median is 8 days  $\times$  \$1,000/day = \$8,000 per month

#### AVERAGE 6-10 DAYS PER MONTH



Average 11-15 days per month > Median is 13 days  $\times$  \$850/day = \$11,050 per month

#### AVERAGE 11-15 DAYS PER MONTH



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## 2026-2027 Global Daily Rates & Related Data

This valued resource data is provided complimentary and can be sourced on the following websites:



[sajetsolutions.com](https://sajetsolutions.com)

RESOURCES  
2026 Global Daily Rates



[thecfaconnection.com](https://thecfaconnection.com)

RESOURCES/SUPPORT  
Positions and Salaries

