



**Melbury  
Wood**

# **SALARY & MARKET GUIDE 2024**

Recruitment and talent experts

<https://melburywood.com/>





# OUR 2024 MARKET GUIDE

Here is the Melbury Wood 2024 salary guide. We've pulled together an overview of UK salary averages in our specialisms, as well as provided updates on interesting developments and trends that we predict will shape this year.

## **WHO WE ARE**

We are communications and insights recruitment specialists. Our core areas of expertise are policy and public affairs, communications, market research, and digital.

With a history of building award-winning teams and driving commercial growth we unleash potential by bringing together great talent and exceptional businesses for a perfect fit.



Throughout 2023, the professional landscape has continued its dynamic transformation, marked by a sustained increase in salaries across various industries whilst stagnating in some - perhaps due to a knock on effect of the early 2023 wobble and uncertainty in the wider economy. Generally, the demand for skilled professionals has remained high, creating a persistent talent shortage. This trend has led to a convergence of pay bands, although significant variations persist from one business to another.

The aftermath of the COVID-19 impact in 2020, which resulted in a subdued job market and reduced investment in talent, has become increasingly evident. In 2022, the UK witnessed a record-breaking 1.25 million job vacancies, underscoring the consequences of the earlier slowdown. This has granted job seekers an unprecedented advantage, offering them strong negotiation power in both job searches and internal remuneration discussions.

Businesses, recognising the need to compete for top talent, have adopted innovative approaches to remuneration and benefits packages. Remote work opportunities, signing bonuses, and other creative incentives have become more prevalent. Counteroffers are now a common strategy as companies strive to retain their valuable personnel, intensifying the upward trend in pay bands.

Despite the ongoing talent-driven market, there are emerging signs of a potential rebalancing. Since mid-2022, there has been a slight reduction in the number of new roles entering the market, but the latter part of 2023 seems to suggest another uptick in the number of vacancies in the industry. Nevertheless, the job market remains, for now, more talent-centric than ever. Businesses are under pressure to secure skilled professionals in a highly competitive environment, maintaining the industry's historical pattern of talent scarcity.

**Amandeep Gill,  
Founding Partner**





## From our research team:

Attracting and retaining talent goes beyond a competitive salary and impressive clients. Work culture, career progression opportunities and family-friendly policies are important deciding factors when accepting a new position.

### Candidate checklist:

- **Leadership.** Many junior candidates appreciate exposure to the company's leadership. Not only does it serve as a motivational factor, contributing to an employee's professional growth and satisfaction, but creates a more inclusive and collaborative work environment. This can also lead to more open communication, developing a platform for employees to express their ideas, concerns and feedback. This makes their voices feel heard, bringing a sense of belonging and engagement among the company.
- **Professional development and growth opportunities.** This can include investing in training programmes, skill development discussions, and clear career advancement pathways - this will demonstrate a commitment to the employee's long term success at the company.
- **Healthy work-life balance.** This is crucial, and companies that prioritise employee well-being, whether it be through a host of benefits, flexible work arrangements, and support programmes, contribute to a positive workplace culture, and a good retention rate.
- **DE&I.** A company's strong commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion enhances trust in leadership and reinforces a sense of justice and belonging within the workplace. Candidates understand that a diverse workforce encourages diversity of thought, leading to improved innovation and a competitive edge within the industry.
- **Benefits.** Offering a good host of benefits is a strategic investment for any company. It not only attracts and retains top tier talent, but also contributes to employee satisfaction, motivation, and overall organisational success.
- **Regular reviews.** Regular, or even monthly reviews, offer a consistent and structured approach to performance management. Regular feedback ensures that employees are on the right track, aligned with company goals, and supported in their career growth.
- **Flexibility and family-friendly policies.** Enhanced parental, fertility, and adoptive leave, are crucial for employees starting families. Enhanced parental leave can range from 6 weeks to an impressive 5 months at full pay. A common offering is 12 weeks at full pay, followed by an additional 6-12 weeks at 50% pay. To further support working parents, childcare vouchers and flexible arrangements for school pick-ups are commonly provided.

Kiera Aslett,  
Public affairs and healthcare



Isobel Muzzell,  
PR and digital





# PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The trends from 2023 have continued to influence the industry into 2024. The initial surge in demand for candidates, especially at the mid-level, has mellowed slightly, perhaps indicating a correction in the job market. The increases in certain bandings have created a more competitive landscape for talent acquisition, particularly at the back end of 2023. The senior end of the market maintains its competitive nature, with modest increases in average salaries for positions at the Associate Director level and above. The impact of a potential economic recession and high inflation remains a concern. Despite the challenges, the industry seems to be adapting to the changing landscape. It will be interesting to see how businesses navigate these dynamics and whether the anticipated recalibration in late 2022-2023 will bring about a more balanced and sustainable equilibrium in the talent market.

	Generalist	Average	Property & Planning	Average	Health	Average
<b>Account Executive</b>	£24,000-£35,000	£28,000	£24,000 - £34,000	£27,000	£24,000 - £35,000	£28,000
<b>Account Manager</b>	£35,000-£55,000	£41,000	£33,000-£49,000	£40,000	£35,000-£55,000	£42,000
<b>Account Director</b>	£50,000-£70,000	£58,000	£50,000-£70,000	£55,000	£50,000-£72,000	£61,000
<b>Associate Director</b>	£68,000-£90,000	£80,000	£66,000-£85,000	£75,000	£70,000-£95,000	£85,000
<b>Director</b>	£85,000-£120,000	£98,000	£80,000-£110,000	£85,000	£85,000-£120,000	£104,000
<b>Managing Director</b>	£140,000-£250,000	£160,000-£180,000	£120,000-£150,000	£130,000	£140,000-£210,000	£150,000-£170,000



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# CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

A year of recalibrating? 2023 was naturally going to be a year for the market to level out as we still get used to the post-COVID swing in salaries. Where we saw a confidence in hiring through 2021 and 2022 we faced more hesitancy when it came to mid - senior hires in 2023. With a global economic downturn, rise in cost of living and inflation there was a lack of clarity on the next quarter and this instability made business planning more difficult when it came to talent.

In 2021 and 2022 we saw an aggressive change in salaries and salary expectations. This has been a year for the market to recalibrate on that front and we will likely see this continue as we enter 2024. Across the board, it's been a tough year for agencies; some verticals have remained stronger than others but the market seems to be moving in the right direction. Undeniably, we are still living in very uncertain economic times, and we are still working towards a fully buoyant market that brims with confidence, however, there has been a flurry of opportunities towards the end of this 2023 which suggests business planning is more stable as we look to 2024.

	Corporate Comms	Average	Financial Comms	Average
<b>Account Executive</b>	£25,000-£33,000	£30,000	£26,000-£36,000	£32,000
<b>Account Manager</b>	£35,000-£50,000	£40,000	£38,000-£55,000	£45,000
<b>Account Director</b>	£50,000-£65,000	£57,000	£55,000-£70,000	£62,000
<b>Associate Director</b>	£65,000-£85,000	£75,000	£70,000-£95,000	£80,000
<b>Director/Partner</b>	£85,000-£125,000	£105,000	£95,000-£140,000	£115,000
<b>Managing Director</b>	£125,000-£250,000	£150,000-£175,000	£150,000-£280,000	£175,000-£200,000



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# CONSUMER PR & COMMUNICATIONS

The market is still continuing to re-build, however this hasn't necessarily been consistent. The market has fluctuated dramatically when it comes to needing mid-level hires, with either lots of demand or very quiet periods. We've also seen the closure of well-recognised and respected agencies, citing problems with late payments and more. There is still a lack of movement on the senior end, with redundancies affecting those at Director and MD level, and less investment hires being made. There are roles here and there, but there is not the same demand as there was, leaving many candidates frustrated. The freelance market has also been fairly quiet, which is especially unusual. Consumer candidates are definitely being stretched and pushed harder than ever as agencies try to keep afloat and feel hesitant to take any risks with hiring.

However 2024 looks to be promising in some respects. Some of the most prominent retainers went back up for pitching at the end of 2023, and more project work was seen coming in. Hopefully this means that some more investment will be poured into consumer, and we can see stronger growth and hiring at all levels.

Level	Salary	Average
Account Executive	£24,000 - £30,000	£27,000
Senior Account Executive	£27,000 - £33,000	£30,000
Account Manager	£35,000 - £40,000	£37,000
Senior Account Manager	£42,000 - £48,000	£45,000
Account Director	£50,000 - £55,000	£52,500
Senior Account Director	£58,000 - £65,000	£61,500
Associate Director	£75,000 - £90,000	£82,500
Director	£90,000 - £120,000	£105,000
Managing Director	£120,000 - £180,000	£150,000



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# MARKET RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

2023 has been a tricky year for the Market Research industry. Consumer research in particular took a hit, as did anything media-related, which saw budgets slashed and quiet rounds of redundancies across the agency-landscape.

Where 2022 saw a host of growth hires, 2023 was far more cautious in the UK. H1 of 2023 was more optimistic and fast-paced than H2. Whilst hiring continued at a steady stream, processes took longer than usual. With businesses keen to mitigate any risks, strong conviction has been important in hiring decisions.

Junior hiring came to a virtual standstill, with people leaving their roles, but not being readily replaced. This led to a surplus of junior candidates in the market and swathes of competition for roles where there was hiring. Most junior recruitment was handled in-house and through networks. Senior hiring continued, with a focus on investment and growth hires within the Commercial space. Key investment areas were across Senior sales/commercial/client roles and the broader Public Sector/Social Research space in anticipation of the election and change in government. This trend will continue on through 2024.

Salaries have rebalanced to an extent, but there has been a tough ceiling for Senior leaders, who are broadly accepting salary cuts for the 'right role'.

	Salary Range	Salary Average
Research Executive	£27,000 - £37,000	£32,000
Research Manager	£40,000 - £52,000	£45,000 - £47,000
Associate Director	£55,000 - £67,000	£65,000
Director	£70,000 - £100,000	£85,000
Senior Director	£95,000 - £150,000	£120,000
Managing Director+	£150,000 - £300,000	£160,000 - £180,000

2024 hiring trends will focus on roles that can drive growth, diversify services and create proprietary tools and products.

Other investment areas include AI, Cultural Insights and anything digital – continuing the trends from 2023.

Agencies are also restructuring and rebranding to consolidate services and offerings into dedicated practices. Refining research services into dedicated practices helps agencies differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market.

H1 2024, agencies will be focussing on commercial and revenue growth, with businesses anticipating heavier recruitment drives later in the year



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# DIGITAL & SOCIAL

Very much the same as last year, digital and social remains an important market worth investing in. Digital and social media marketing continues to be an important tool to react quickly in times of need and go viral during big calendar moments, with all features working seamlessly to protect reputation and gain love.

Social media skills are still in constant demand, with greater demand for specialists across influencer and e-commerce as this market continues to build and gain momentum in the UK. However these markets are coming under more scrutiny as consumers begin to distrust brands who don't show authenticity or fail to connect with their audience.

From a digital perspective, candidates who can integrate digital within the wider comms landscape remain in high demand, and digital marketing seeks more specialists than ever across paid media, PPC, SEO and web (and usually people who can cover all these skills).

	Corporate	Consumer
<b>Executive</b>	£25,000-£33,000	£22,000-£32,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£29,000</b>	<b>£27,000</b>
<b>Manager</b>	£35,000-£50,000	£32,000-£42,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£45,000</b>	<b>£37,000</b>
<b>Account Director</b>	£45,000-£70,000	£45,000-£65,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£57,500</b>	<b>£55,000</b>
<b>Associate Director</b>	£65,000-£85,000	£65,000-£80,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£75,000</b>	<b>£70,000</b>
<b>Director/Head of</b>	£85,000-£110,000	£85,000-£95,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£97,500</b>	<b>£90,000</b>
<b>Managing Director</b>	£100,000-£130,000	£95,000-£110,000
<b>Average</b>	<b>£115,000</b>	<b>£102,500</b>



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