

Salary Budget Survey 2025–2026

Participation Open: **Mar. 3–Apr. 15**

US QUESTIONNAIRE

IMPORTANT NOTE: You CANNOT submit this PDF as your Salary Budget Survey submission. Only responses submitted in our online platform are considered complete and will entitle you to the benefits of participation.

The deadline to submit this survey is April 15, 2025.

Please note the following items:

- You can save a copy of your entries at any time by clicking the "View Responses" button in the upper right corner and saving and/or printing your transcript.
- If you want to return to your responses at any time prior to the close of the survey, April 15, 2025, even after you have submitted this survey, you may do so by following the link in your email and rejoining your session.
- You can use the back button to return to other sections of the survey if you wish to make a change.
- If you are a consultant completing this survey on behalf of a client, make sure to answer on behalf of your client and their organization only and not your own organization.
- Depending on your responses in this online questionnaire, you may not be asked to complete all items that appear in the PDFs.
- For items asking you to enter a percent, please enter a numeric value with no more than one decimal place. Round if necessary and do not enter any symbols. For instance, 3, 3.0 and 3.5 would all be valid responses, but 3.26 and 3% are both invalid.

If you need disability accommodations or other assistance completing the questionnaire, please contact the Research Team at surveypanel@worldatwork.org

Please answer these questions for your U.S. operations. If your organization operates in multiple industries within the U.S., or if pay practices differ across divisions, U.S. regions, business units or subsidiaries, please contact us at surveypanel@worldatwork.org to get additional links allowing you to complete the survey multiple times for the U.S.

1. The **U.S.** organizational unit that I am reporting data for in this questionnaire is:
 - Headquarters
 - Subsidiary/group/division
 - Regional headquarters
 - Plant/branch
 - Independent consultant
 - Consulting firm
 - Educational

2. Please complete the table below for U.S. operations.

Please enter a whole number; do not include symbols or text.

	How many months between base pay increases THIS year (in 2025)?	How many months are projected between base pay increases NEXT year (in 2026)?
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		
Nonexempt salaried		
Exempt salaried		
Officers/executives		

3. In the past 12 months, has your organization implemented an additional or off-cycle base pay increase in the U.S.?

	Yes	No, and we didn't consider it	No, but we considered it before deciding not to
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Which employee groups will receive a base pay increase in the U.S. **THIS year (2025)**?

2025	Yes	No; this group usually does, but this year we budgeted \$0.	No, we don't budget for pay increases for this group.
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. What is your budget for base pay increases in the U.S. **THIS year (2025)?**

Answer Format: Please provide your answer as a percentage (e.g., if the budget is a 3% increase, simply enter "3")

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage planned, e.g. 0.5
- If your organization typically budgets for pay increases *but has chosen not to this year*, enter "0".
- If your organization does not have a increase type, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.
- Most responses in the U.S. fall between 0% - 6%.

2025	General increase/COLA	Merit increase	Other increase	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion				%
Nonexempt salaried				%
Exempt salaried				%
Officers/executives				%

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED Other increase:

5b. What is the reason for the "Other increase" included in your U.S. base pay budget for 2025? (Select all that apply.)

Regulatory Compliance Adjustments

- Adjustment related to state or local minimum wage increase

Compensation Structure Adjustments

- Salary range adjustment
- Accelerated increase cycle to move employee closer to midpoint (salary progression)
- Compression
- Step rate

Talent Management and Retention Adjustments

- Market adjustment/competitive adjustment
- Retention/critical skill adjustment
- Internal equity

Transparency and Performance-based Adjustments

- Pay transparency
- Skill-based pay increase
- Other increase, please describe):

6. Which employee groups do you expect will receive a base pay increase the U.S. **NEXT year (2026)**?

2026	Yes	No; this group usually does, but this year we budgeted \$0.	No, we don't budget for pay increases for this group.
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What is your budget for base pay increases in the U.S. **NEXT year (2026)**?

Answer Format: Please provide your answer as a percentage (e.g., if the budget is a 3% increase, simply enter "3")

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage planned, e.g. 0.5
- If your organization typically budgets for pay increases *but has chosen not to this year*, enter "0".
- If your organization does not have a increase type, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.
- Most responses in the U.S. fall between 0% - 6%.

2025	General increase/COLA	Merit increase	Other increase	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion				%
Nonexempt salaried				%
Exempt salaried				%
Officers/executives				%

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED Other increase:

7b. What is the reason for the "Other increase" included in your U.S. base pay budget for 2026? (Select all that apply.)

Regulatory Compliance Adjustments

- Adjustment related to state or local minimum wage increase

Compensation Structure Adjustments

- Salary range adjustment
- Accelerated increase cycle to move employee closer to midpoint (salary progression)
- Compression
- Step rate

Talent Management and Retention Adjustments

- Market adjustment/competitive adjustment
- Retention/critical skill adjustment
- Internal equity

Transparency and Performance-based Adjustments

- Pay transparency
- Skill-based pay increase
- Other increase, please describe) :

8. How certain is your organization about the projected 2026 budget for base pay increases in the U.S. that you reported?

- Not at all certain
- Slightly certain
- Moderately certain
- Very certain
- Extremely certain

9. For those employees receiving a base salary increase, what changes occurred in the U.S. **THIS year (2025)** compared to **LAST year (2024)**?

	2025 percentage is larger than 2024	2025 percentage is similar to 2024	2025 percentage is smaller than 2024
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. What percentage of your U.S. workforce was rated in each performance category **LAST year (2024)**?

Total must add up to **100%**. You must enter a value in each box; enter 0 if you have no employees with performance in a category. Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text.

	2024	
High Performance (exceeds expectations)		%
Middle Performance (generally meets expectations)		%
Low Performance (does not meet expectations)		%

11. Please complete based only on those employees **awarded** a merit increase **in the U.S in 2024**.

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage, e.g. 0.5
- If your organization typically budgets for increases *but chose not to do so in 2024*, enter "0".
- If your organization does not typically provide merit increases, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.
- Most responses fall between 0% - 8%.

What is the average merit increase awarded for this performance category **LAST year (2024)**?

	Average merit increase for 2024	
High Performance (exceeds expectations)		%
Middle Performance (generally meets expectations)		%
Low Performance (does not meet expectations)		%

12. What percentage of your U.S. workforce do you estimate will be rated in each performance category **THIS year (2025)**?

Total must add up to **100%**. You must enter a value in each box; enter 0 if you have no employees with performance in a category. Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text.

	2025	
High Performance (exceeds expectations)		%
Middle Performance (generally meets expectations)		%
Low Performance (does not meet expectations)		%

13. Please complete based only on those employees **to be awarded** a merit increase **in the U.S in 2025**.

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage, e.g. 0.5
- If your organization typically budgets for increases *but chose not to do so in 2024*, enter "0".
- If your organization does not typically provide merit increases, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.
- Most responses fall between 0% - 8%.

What is the average merit increase awarded for this performance category **THIS year (2025)**?

	Average merit increase for 2025
High Performance (exceeds expectations)	%
Middle Performance (generally meets expectations)	%
Low Performance (does not meet expectations)	%

14. Where does your organization target its base pay levels for U.S. workers in comparison to the market?

	10th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile (median)	60th percentile	75th percentile	90th percentile	Other percentile	No formal compensation strategy
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED Other Percentile:

14b. In the last question, you said that your organization targets the market in the U.S. at a percentile different than the provided options. What is your organization's target?

15. In the past 12 months, has your organization changed the targets for its base pay levels in the U.S.?

	Increased	Stayed about the same	Decreased
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. How do adjustments made to address pay equity issues affect your U.S. salary budget for the current year **(2025)**?
- We budgeted extra for pay equity adjustments, separate from our regular salary increase funds.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "merit" budget.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "general increase/COLA" budget.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "other increase" budget.
 - We expect to make adjustments to remediate pay equity issues in 2025, but we did not budget for them.
 - Our organization is not anticipating pay adjustments to remediate pay equity issues in 2025.

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED "We did not budget for them"

16b. Since your organization hasn't budgeted for pay equity adjustments in the U.S., how do you plan to finance or fund these adjustments? Please select all that apply.

- Out of the merit budget, even though the merit budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- Out of the general increase/COLA budget, even though the general increase/COLA budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- Out of the other increase budget, even though the other increase budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- With savings (e.g., savings realized from vacant positions, hiring at a lower rate than the previous incumbent, downsizing).
- Other, please describe :

17. How do adjustments made to address pay equity issues affect your U.S. salary budget for **NEXT** year **(2026)**?
- We budgeted extra for pay equity adjustments, separate from our regular salary increase funds.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "merit" budget.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "general increase/COLA" budget.
 - We budgeted an additional amount for these equity adjustments as part of our "other increase" budget.
 - We expect to make adjustments to remediate pay equity issues in 2025, but we did not budget for them.
 - Our organization is not anticipating pay adjustments to remediate pay equity issues in 2025.

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED “We did not budget for them”

17b. Since your organization hasn't budgeted for pay equity adjustments in the U.S., how do you plan to finance or fund these adjustments? Please select all that apply.

- Out of the merit budget, even though the merit budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- Out of the general increase/COLA budget, even though the general increase/COLA budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- Out of the other increase budget, even though the other increase budget is not inflated to cover these equity adjustments.
- With savings (e.g., savings realized from vacant positions, hiring at a lower rate than the previous incumbent, downsizing).
- Other, please describe :

18. If your organization budgets for compensation structure increases, what is the actual percent structure increase in the U.S. for **THIS year (the 2025 plan year)**?

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage planned for structure increases.
- If your organization typically budgets for structure increases but has chosen not to this year, enter "0".
- If your organization does not budget for structure increases, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.

	Actual 2025 Structure Increase	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		%
Nonexempt salaried		%
Exempt salaried		%
Officers/executives		%

19. If your organization budgets for compensation structure increases, what is your projected percent STRUCTURE increase for **NEXT year in the U.S. (the 2026 plan year)**?

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage planned for structure increases.
- If your organization typically budgets for structure increases but has chosen not to this year, enter "0".
- If your organization does not budget for structure increases, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.

	Projected 2026 Structure Increase	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		%
Nonexempt salaried		%
Exempt salaried		%
Officers/executives		%

20. Please indicate your organization’s level of certainty of the projected U.S. 2026 percentage increase for compensation/salary structure(s) you reported in the previous question.
- Not at all certain
 - Slightly certain
 - Moderately certain
 - Very certain
 - Extremely certain

21. If no compensation structure (salary structure) increase was made in the U.S. in 2025, how many months has it been since the last structure increase?

Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text.

	Months since structure increase
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	
Nonexempt salaried	
Exempt salaried	
Officers/executives	

22. Does your organization give lump sum awards to these groups of employees in the U.S.?

	Yes	No
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. What percentage of U.S. employees in each category received a lump sum award **LAST year (2024)?**

Please Note:

- Even if the percentage is less than 1%, provide the specific percent of employees who received a lump sum award in 2024, e.g., 0.5
- If no employees in a category received a lump sum award in 2024, enter "0"
- Enter numeric values (between 0 and 100) only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.

	% of employees receiving lump sum in 2024
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	
Nonexempt salaried	
Exempt salaried	
Officers/executives	

%
%
%
%

24. Is the percentage of U.S. employees expected to receive a lump sum award in 2025 larger, similar, or smaller compared to the percentage in 2024?

	Percentage of employees is anticipated to be larger than 2024	Percentage of employees is anticipated to be similar to 2024	Percentage of employees is anticipated to be smaller than 2024
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED Larger or Smaller

24a. Why do you anticipate this change in the percentage of U.S. employees receiving lump sum awards?

25. For the purposes of this survey, variable pay is defined as short-term cash awards that are contingent upon performance, discretion or results achieved. Variable pay types include:

- Profit-sharing
- Performance sharing (e.g., gain-sharing or goal-sharing)
- Individual incentives
- Bonuses

The following pay types should **NOT** be included:

- Sales commission plans
- Long-term incentives, such as stock plans or multiyear cash performance plans
- Noncash-based awards such as merchandise, trips, plaques or trophies
- Plans that require cash awards to be placed in accounts that are not readily accessible to employees (e.g., 401(k) accounts, pension plans, deferred compensation plans)
- Cash awards for recognition?

Does your organization currently use variable pay as defined above in the U.S.?

- Yes
- No

QUESTIONS 26-33 ARE ONLY ASKED OF THOSE WHO ANSWER YES TO VARIABLE PAY

26. Which of the following variable pay plan types does your organization use in the U.S.? (Check all that apply.)
- Organization-wide awards: Based solely on the success of the entire organization (e.g., cash profit-sharing)
 - Unit/strategic business unit awards: Based solely on the success of the unit/strategic business unit (e.g., department incentive programs, manufacturing goal sharing, call-center incentives)
 - Individual incentive awards: Based on employees' performance in designated jobs (other than sales)
 - Combination awards based on both organization-wide/unit/strategic business unit success and individual performance.
27. Which U.S. employee categories were eligible for variable pay for LAST year (the 2024 plan year)? (Select all that apply.)
- Nonexempt hourly nonunion
 - Nonexempt salaried
 - Exempt salaried
 - Officers/executives
28. **What percent of U.S. employees were eligible for variable pay for LAST year (the 2024 plan year)?**

Please Note:

- Even if the increase is less than 1%, provide the specific percentage planned for pay increases e.g. 0.5
- If your organization typically budgets for variable pay but has chosen not to this year, enter "0".
- If your organization does not have a variable pay program or if it's not relevant, please leave the answer field blank.
- Enter numeric values (between 0 and 100) only. Do not include any symbols: For example, (%), letters, or other characters.

	Percentage of employees eligible for variable pay for 2024	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		%
Nonexempt salaried		%
Exempt salaried		%
Officers/executives		%

29. What percentage of eligible U.S. employees were actually paid variable pay for LAST year (the 2024 plan year)?

	Percentage of eligible employees actually paid variable pay for 2024	
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		%
Nonexempt salaried		%
Exempt salaried		%
Officers/executives		%

30. For which U.S. employee categories does your organization have a formal budget process for variable pay? (Select all that apply.)

- Nonexempt hourly nonunion
- Nonexempt salaried
- Exempt salaried
- Officers/executives

31. Please indicate the average percentage of base pay **BUDGETED** for variable pay in each employee category in the U.S.?

Fill in "0" (zero) only if your organization typically budgets for variable pay for that employee group, but has not budgeted or will not budget for the program in the respective plan year.

Please report as an actual percentage of base pay; we are not looking for "target" percent. For example, if your organization budgeted 8% of base pay for variable pay for your nonexempt employees, you would have budgeted \$3,200 in variable pay for an employee making \$40,000 per year.

The average range for Nonexempt hourly nonunion and Nonexempt salaried is around Most responses fall between 0% - 10%.

Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text.

	Average % BUDGETED for variable pay LAST year (2024 plan year)	Average % BUDGETED for variable pay THIS year (2025 plan year)	Projected average % to be BUDGETED for variable pay NEXT year (2026 plan year)
Nonexempt hourly nonunion			
Nonexempt salaried			
Exempt salaried			
Officers/executives			

32. Please indicate the average percentage of base pay your variable pay plans **ACTUALLY PAID** in each employee category in the U.S.?

Fill in “0” (zero) only if your organization typically budgets for variable pay for that employee group but has not budgeted or will not budget for the program in the respective plan year.

Please report as an actual percentage of base pay; we are not looking for “target” percent. For example, if your organization paid out 8% of base pay for variable pay for your nonexempt employees, an employee making \$40,000 per year was paid \$3,200 in variable pay.

The average range for Nonexempt hourly nonunion and Nonexempt salaried is around 0% - 10%.

Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text.

	Average % PAID in variable pay LAST year (2024 plan year)	Projected % PAID to be paid in variable pay THIS year (2025 plan year)
Nonexempt hourly nonunion		
Nonexempt salaried		
Exempt salaried		
Officers/executives		

33. What impact does your variable pay program have on base salary budget recommendations in the U.S.?

	No impact	Some impact	Significant impact
Nonexempt hourly nonunion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nonexempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exempt salaried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Officers/executives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

34. What is the impact of promotional increases on your organization’s U.S. salary budget?

- We budget an additional amount for promotional increases as part of our budget but separate from other pay increase budgets.
- We budget an additional amount for promotional increases as part of our merit budget.
- We budget an additional amount for promotional increases as part of our general increase/COLA budget.
- We budget an additional amount for promotional increases as part of our other increase budget.
- We do not budget for promotional increases.

FOR THOSE WHO SELECTED “We do not budget for promotional increases.”

34a. If your organization does not budget for promotional increases in the U.S., how are they paid for/funded? (Select all that apply.)

- Out of the merit budget, even though the merit budget is not inflated to cover promotional increases.
- Out of the general increase/COLA budget, even though the general increase/COLA budget is not inflated to cover promotional increases.
- Out of the other increase budget, even though the other increase budget is not inflated to cover promotional increases.
- With savings (e.g., savings realized from vacant positions, hiring at a lower rate than the previous incumbent, downsizing).
- Other, please describe

35. What percentage of total U.S. base salaries does your organization intend to spend on promotions in 2025?

Please enter a numeric value and limit your answer to one decimal; do not include symbols or text. (For instance, 3 or 3.4 are both valid responses.)

36. For your organization, how do the planned promotional salary increases in the U.S. for **this year (2025)** compare with the amounts spent **last year (2024)**?

- 2025 is more than 2024
- 2025 is similar to 2024
- 2025 is less than 2024

37. For your organization, how do the planned promotional salary increases in the U.S. for **next year (2026)** compare with planned spending for **this year (2025)**?

- 2026 will be more than 2025
- 2026 will be similar to 2025
- 2026 will be less than 2025

38. **Last year (2024)**, what percentage of **all U.S. employees** received a raise due to promotion? Please enter only a numeric value.

Please enter a numeric value; do not include symbols or text. If no employees received a promotional increase, enter 0.

 % of employees

39. Last year (2024), what was the average percentage **increase in base salary** for employees in the U.S. who received a promotion? Please provide a numeric value only, without any symbols or text.

 % of base salary