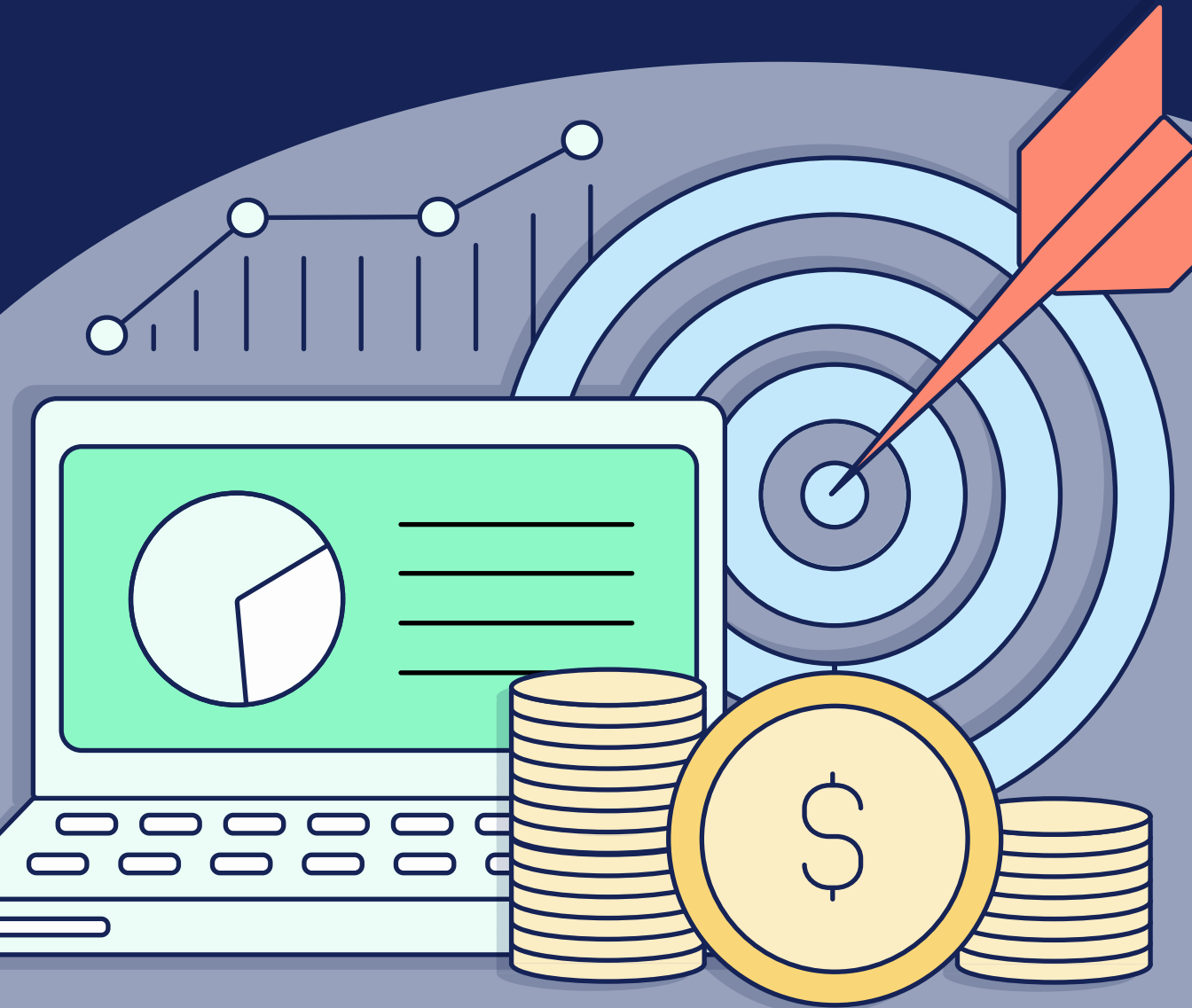




HireArt's 2026 AI Trainer Compensation Report



Framing the Market + Why It Matters

Understanding competitive compensation in the increasingly competitive AI training space can be very challenging. But why?

The AI industry is evolving faster than most labor markets can adapt. Each new model release brings new data types, new labeling standards, and new levels of complexity.

What was once considered simple “data labeling” has become a highly specialized form of cognitive work. This work currently involves nuanced reasoning, deep subject-matter knowledge, and, increasingly, multilingual fluency.

To shed light on this topic, we’ve compiled compensation data from over 150 sources, including a survey of active workers, public job postings, and internal data.

What’s In This Guide

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AI Trainer Pay Rates Around the World

Below is an overview of the hourly pay rates of contract generalists around the world.

Unsurprisingly, there is a significant difference in pay rates between low-cost countries like Mexico, India, and Kenya, and high-cost countries like the United Kingdom and Canada.

Country	Entry-Level AI Trainer Pay rate per hour in USD	Experienced AI Trainer Pay rate per hour in USD
United Kingdom	\$16.40 to \$26.10	\$32.20 to over \$48.40
Canada	\$13.00 to \$20.50	\$20.50 to over \$30.00
Spain	\$12.60 to \$18.50	\$26.50 to over \$37.90
USA	\$12.50 to \$15.50	\$16.00 to over \$20.00
Korea	\$6.00 to \$18.00	\$20.00 to over \$40.00
Türkiye	\$6.00 to \$15.00	\$15.00 to over \$30.00
Vietnam	\$4.30 to \$6.15	\$6.15 to over \$9.00
Argentina	\$4.00 to \$8.00	\$10.00 to over \$14.00
Poland	\$3.70 to \$4.20	\$4.75 to over \$5.25
Egypt	\$2.50 to \$6.00	\$10.00 to over \$18.00
Ukraine	\$2.50 to \$3.15	\$4.40 to over \$7.50
Philippines	\$2.30 to \$3.10	\$3.10 to over \$4.00
Colombia	\$2.00 to \$3.80	\$3.30 to over \$6.00
Kenya	\$1.50 to \$4.00	\$6.00 to over \$10.00
India	\$1.30 to \$2.40	\$6.75 to over \$7.20
Mexico	\$1.00 to \$4.00	\$4.00 to over \$6.00

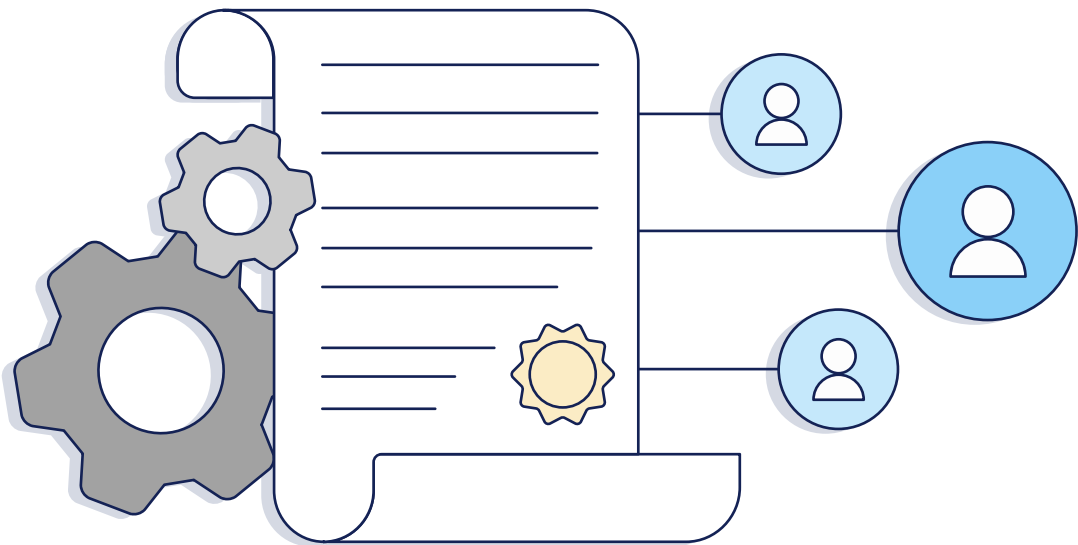
Compensation for Contract Employees Versus Independent Contractors

There is a growing trend of companies preferring to employ contract employees instead of independent contractors.

There are different considerations when employing rather than engaging as ICs, including:

- **Compliance:** Avoiding contractor misclassification
- **Worker retention:** Recognizing and rewarding the top performers
- **Needing more control:** Protecting IP, non-solicitation, training workers, etc

These different employment types also impact the hourly costs.



Below is an overview of the mid-range hourly pay rates for generalist trainers per country and the hourly rate including the statutory employer burden (i.e., employer taxes, social contributions, insurances, and statutory benefits).

Country	Mid-Range Pay Rates <i>Per hour in USD</i>	Cost + Employer Burden <i>Per hour in USD</i>
United Kingdom	\$21.25	\$25.40
Canada	\$16.75	\$19.51
Spain	\$15.55	\$21.50
USA	\$14.00	\$15.70
Korea	\$12.00	\$14.77
Türkiye	\$10.50	\$13.34
Argentina	\$6.00	\$7.80
Vietnam	\$5.23	\$6.67
Egypt	\$4.25	\$4.75
Poland	\$3.95	\$4.94
Colombia	\$2.90	\$4.64
Ukraine	\$2.83	\$3.79
Kenya	\$2.75	\$3.10
Philippines	\$2.70	\$3.14
Mexico	\$2.50	\$3.97
India	\$1.85	\$1.93

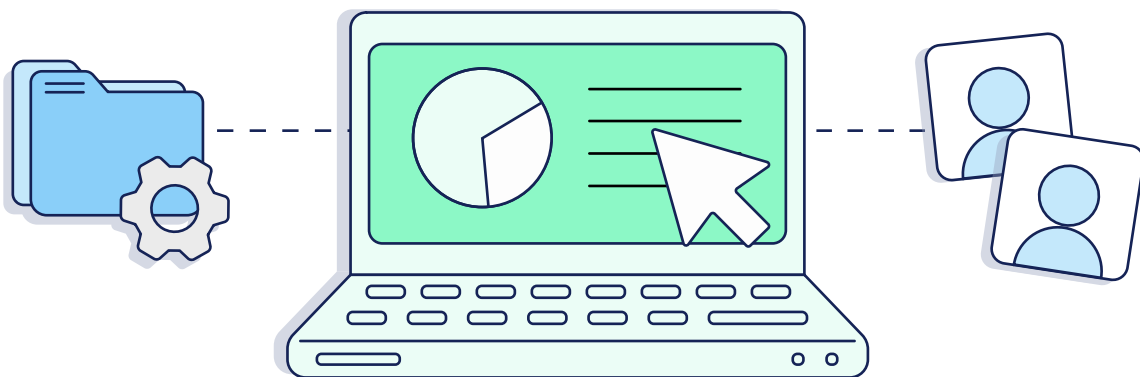
*Although we carefully calculated the employer burdens for each country for the specific hourly rates, this data is provided solely for informational use and should not be considered tax or legal advice.

Remote Versus On-Site AI Trainers

Whether contract AI trainers are remote or on-site also impacts cost. On-site generalists tend to be paid more than their remote counterparts.

	Entry-level AI Trainers <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>	Experienced AI Trainers <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>
USA Remote	\$12.50 to \$15.50	\$16.00 to over \$20.00
USA Onsite	\$14.00 to \$17.00	\$19.00 to over \$25.00

As AI models continue to evolve, the data needs evolve in line with it. This same evolution has created a growing need for specialist data annotators.



Subject Matter Expert (SME) AI Trainer

Unlike generalists, who can theoretically be hired globally, subject matter experts (SMEs) are more difficult to find.

The hourly pay rate of SME data annotators is also substantially higher.

Below is an overview of the pay rate for SME data annotators (domain specialists) in the USA. The pay rate ranges are very broad, as they vary significantly depending on factors like skill set, education level, and experience.

For example, a PhD domain specialist with 10 years of experience is paid much more than a domain specialist with a Bachelor's degree and no experience.

Domain Specialist	Expert AI Trainers in the USA <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>	Highly Skilled Expert AI Trainers in the USA <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>
Legal	\$50.00 to \$70.00	\$80.00 to over \$150.00
Economics	\$50.00 to \$65.00	\$65.00 to over \$100.00
Gaming	\$45.00 to \$65.00	\$65.00 to over \$100.00
Physics	\$40.00 to \$70.00	\$60.00 to over \$80.00
Engineering	\$40.00 to \$70.00	\$80.00 to over \$150.00
Finance	\$35.00 to \$65.00	\$70.00 to over \$130.00
Computer Science	\$35.00 to \$60.00	\$70.00 to over \$110.00
Medical	\$35.00 to \$50.00	\$60.00 to over \$180.00
Mathematics	\$30.00 to \$50.00	\$50.00 to over \$60.00
History	\$30.00 to \$50.00	\$50.00 to over \$60.00
Writing	\$17.00 to \$47.00	\$35.00 to over \$65.00

Other Roles in Human Data Operations

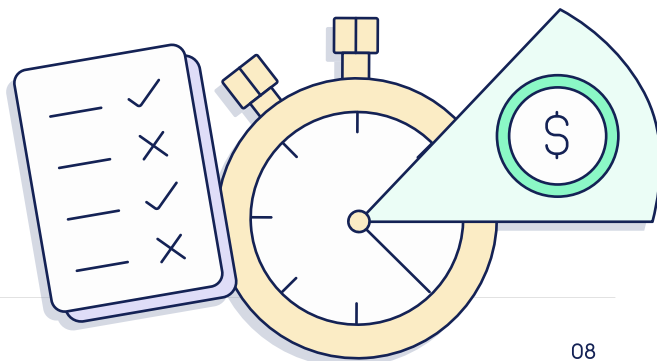
While data annotators are a vital, there are other workers who support human data operations.

Below are pay ranges for some other jobs in the United States that are integral to data operations.

USA	Expert <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>	Senior/Manager <i>Pay rate per hour in USD</i>
AI Red Teamer	\$54.00 to \$68.00	\$70.00 to over \$82.00
Data Annotation Project Manager	\$47.00 to \$60.00	\$70.00 to over \$91.00
Prompt Engineer	\$43.00 to \$63.00	\$72.00 to over \$130.00
Data Annotation Team Lead	\$38.00 to \$55.00	\$79.00 to over \$91.00
AI Data QA Expert	\$32.00 to \$40.00	\$38.00 to over \$60.00

What We Learned From the 2025 Compensation Report

The increasing need for data annotators with domain expertise and language skills continues to change the dynamic of the AI trainer workforce. That has a profound impact on pay rates.



SMEs are Replacing Crowdsourced Gig Workers

Where past data labeling projects could be staffed with crowdsourced workforces of generalist data labelers in low-labor cost countries, complex data annotation projects require subject matter experts (SMEs). These individuals earn a substantially higher hourly rate.

An Increased Focus on Worker Experience

As these SME data annotators are more challenging to find and to retain, we are seeing a trend towards more focus on improving the worker experience.

Contractors Increasingly Resemble Full-Time Employees

Workers are no longer anonymous people hidden behind a platform. Workers are less likely to be hired to perform simple tasks. Instead, workers are employed as contract employees with benefits and competitive pay rates.

The quality of today's AI trainers' work determines the intelligence, safety, and trustworthiness of tomorrow's AI models. As with any paid role, compensation and benefits are central to an employee's experience.