

A stylized world map in shades of teal, serving as the background for the text.

karat[^]

Top cities for engineering talent

2026 edition

Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is transforming not only how software is built, but the value created by the engineers who build it.

[Karat's AI workforce transformation research](#) shows that AI disproportionately amplifies the productivity and impact of top-performing engineers. Elite talent leverages AI to accelerate development cycles, solve higher-order technical challenges, and drive innovation at scale. As a result, performance gaps between top-quartile engineers and the broader workforce are widening. This makes access to elite talent a strategic advantage.

This year's rankings identify where that talent is most concentrated globally.

Karat's top city rankings use a market-weighted methodology that adjusts interview performance data based on each city's employer mix. This ensures rankings reflect the true composition of local engineering markets as talent migrates and new tech hubs emerge. [Full methodology available here.](#)

Top Talent Markets in 2026

Seattle ranks #1 globally, with 38.2% of engineers estimated in the top quartile of global candidates. Seattle's leadership in engineering quality reflects the region's deep concentrations of cloud infrastructure expertise, AI platform development, and advanced product engineering, ushering in the human + AI era.

Other leading markets include:

- Amsterdam (#2)
- San Francisco Bay Area (#3)
- Tokyo (#4)
- Toronto (#5)

These ecosystems benefit from dense networks of experienced engineers, AI-first product strategies, and sustained investment in complex technical work.

Global Workforce Trends

AI is reinforcing elite talent hubs

While much has been made of the [tech talent exodus](#) from California and Washington state, Seattle and San Francisco have once again returned to the top of our talent quality list.

Cities with strong AI ecosystems and advanced product engineering communities continue to rise. As hiring slowed across consumer tech, AI product and infrastructure hiring increased. Many displaced big tech engineers were absorbed by startups or enterprise organizations eyeing AI modernization initiatives.

The result was the preservation of elite talent concentrations in tech hubs as AI maturity amplified the impact of already-elite talent pools rather than redistributing them.

Digital transformation is elevating enterprise markets and creating new AI ecosystems

Major business and financial hubs, including Toronto, Chicago, and London, climbed in this year's rankings. We expect this trend to continue as financial services, industrial firms, and enterprises expand AI-enabled modernization efforts, strengthening demand for high-skill engineers.

Similarly, strategic AI bets are accelerating commercial product development, creating new hotbeds of AI innovation. Pittsburgh, which is no stranger to Karat's [talent quality research](#), was this year's biggest riser, led by AI-first companies such as Duolingo, attracting premium engineering talent.

Workforce composition changes are impacting this year's rankings

Markets experiencing growth in contractor, consulting, and IT services roles, including Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Singapore, saw shifts in talent composition that modestly affected elite-concentration rankings.

As AI continues to elevate the ROI of top-performing teams, workforce strategy becomes inseparable from location strategy. Organizations that understand how employer mix, industry evolution, and regional AI investment shape local talent markets will be best positioned to hire effectively, allocate engineering resources wisely, and build a durable competitive advantage in the human + AI era.

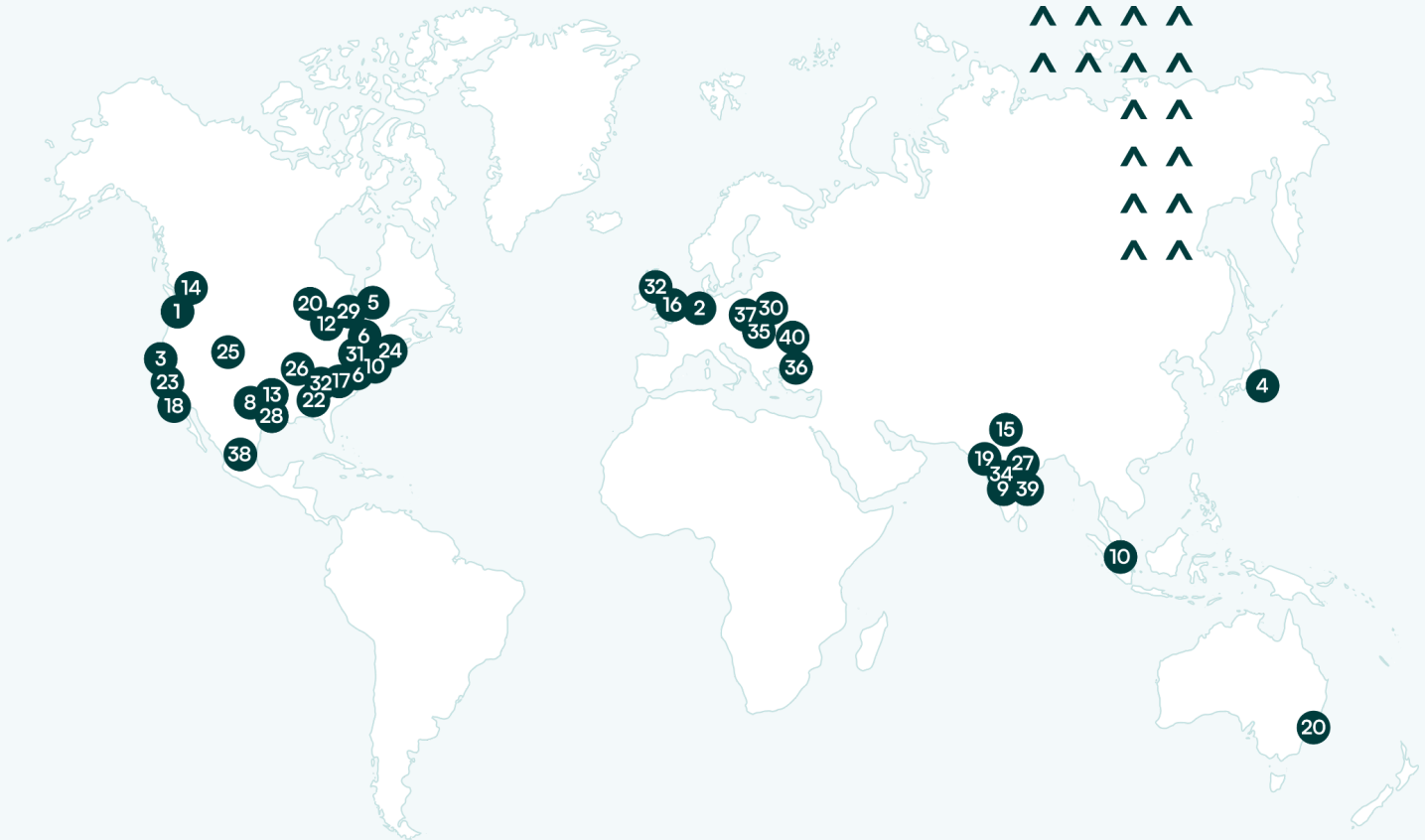
2026 Rankings

2026 Global Rank	2025 Rank	City	% of candidates in top quartile	
1	7	Seattle	38.2%	▲
2	1	Amsterdam	37.6%	▼
3	4	San Francisco	34.8%	▲
4	6	Tokyo	33.2%	▲
5	14	Toronto	29.2%	▲
6	3	Washington DC	27.8%	▼
6	18	Pittsburgh	27.8%	▲
8	8	Austin	27.5%	▬
9	4	Bangalore	27.3%	▼
10	2	Singapore	26.6%	▼
10	9	New York	26.6%	▼
12	33	Chicago	26.5%	▲
13	20	Dallas	26.4%	▲
14	9	Vancouver	26.2%	▼
15	20	Delhi NCR	26.1%	▲
16	30	London	25.9%	▲
17	24	Raleigh/Durham	25.6%	▲
18	31	San Diego	25.5%	▲
19	34	Mumbai	25%	▲
20	28	Minneapolis	24.8%	▲

20	13	Sydney	24.8%	▼
22	22	Atlanta	24.3%	▬
23	15	Los Angeles	24.2%	▼
24	20	Boston	23.6%	▼
25	15	Denver	23.3%	▼
26	25	Nashville	22.9%	▼
27	15	Hyderabad	22.8%	▼
28	25	Houston	20.9%	▲
29	25	Detroit-Ann Arbor	19.6%	▼
30	20	Warsaw	18.2%	▼
31	34	Philadelphia	17.6%	▲
32	NR	Charlotte	16.9%	▲
33	34	Dublin	16.9%	▲
34	34	Pune	16.2%	▬
35	NR	Krakow	16%	▲
36	NR	Istanbul	15%	▲
37	NR	Wroclaw	14.8%	▲
38	NR	Mexico City	13.9%	▲
39	40	Chennai	12.9%	▲
40	NR	Bucharest	12.4%	▲

About the Top Cities

These insights offer a glimpse into the diverse software engineering job markets across cities, highlighting major companies, median salaries, and areas of expertise that shape each region's technology landscape.



- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Seattle | 9. Bangalore | 17. Raleigh/Durham | 25. Denver | T-32. Dublin |
| 2. Amsterdam | T-10. Singapore | 18. San Diego | 26. Nashville | 34. Pune |
| 3. San Francisco | T-10. New York | 19. Mumbai | 27. Hyderabad | 35. Krakow |
| 4. Tokyo | 12. Chicago | T-20. Sydney | 28. Houston | 36. Istanbul |
| 5. Toronto | 13. Dallas | T-20. Minneapolis | 29. Detroit | 37. Wroclaw |
| T-6. Washington DC | 14. Vancouver | 22. Atlanta | 30. Warsaw | 38. Mexico City |
| T-6. Pittsburgh | 15. Delhi | 23. Los Angeles | 31. Philadelphia | 39. Chennai |
| 8. Austin | 16. London | 24. Boston | T-32. Charlotte | 40. Bucharest |

1. Seattle



- #1 for elite talent (#1 US)
- #2 most expensive
- #9 largest talent pool

Seattle remains one of the deepest engineering labor markets in the U.S., anchored by major R&D centers for Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Meta. [Recent layoffs](#) have modestly increased available talent, but that's been partially offset by an influx of AI companies. [OpenAI](#) and [xAI's](#) growing presence shows how the greater Seattle area is becoming a more concentrated AI corridor. The median salary is \$247,000.

2. Amsterdam



- #2 for elite talent (#1 EMEA)
- #24 most expensive
- #18 largest talent pool

Amsterdam's software engineering ecosystem has continued to mature, with AI and climate tech companies adding new depth to a market long anchored by global organizations and fintech. Healthtech is also booming, as [Philips](#) opened its new global headquarters in late 2025. The Netherlands has become one of the [fastest-growing tech ecosystems in Europe](#), and the Dutch government has played a significant role in this by implementing policies to drive tech growth, articulating a vision for generative AI, and investing in smart cities. The median salary is \$116,880.

3. San Francisco (Bay Area + Silicon Valley)



- #3 for elite talent (#2 US)
- #1 most expensive
- #7 largest talent pool

The San Francisco Bay Area remains the largest concentration of software engineers outside of India, with deep ecosystems around AI, infrastructure software, and startups. Major employers include Apple, Google, Meta, NVIDIA, and thousands of venture-backed startups. Layoffs across the tech sector have modestly increased talent supply. However, aggressive AI

hiring and startup formation continue to keep the market tight, with a median software engineering salary of \$272,229 – the highest in the world.

4. Tokyo



- #4 for elite talent (#1 APAC)
- #31 most expensive
- #14 largest talent pool

Tokyo is Asia’s most established enterprise technology center, with strong robotics, automotive software, gaming, and electronics sectors. Major employers include Sony, Rakuten, and NTT Data. Increasing investment in AI-driven automation and semiconductor design continues to elevate demand for advanced technical talent, resulting in a talent shortage and fierce competition for top engineers. This has led more [Japanese companies to turn to India](#) to attract top graduate students and engineers, who are enticed by a median salary of \$55,655 – more than double the median salary in several top Indian markets.

5. Toronto



- #5 for elite talent (#3 North America)
- #26 most expensive
- #18 largest talent pool

Toronto is North America’s fastest-growing engineering labor market, supported by strengths in AI research and financial technology modernization. Major employers include Shopify, Royal Bank of Canada, and engineering offices for Google. The city benefits from strong university research pipelines and expanding enterprise AI adoption across banking and healthcare sectors. The median salary is \$100,887.

T-6. Washington, D.C.



- T-6 for elite talent (T-3 US)
- #9 most expensive
- #13 largest talent pool

With a median salary of \$154,000, Washington, D.C. is looking less like a conventional government-adjacent tech market and more like a city where AI, cybersecurity, defense, and regulation now meet. Government cloud initiatives and rising cyber defense budgets sustain engineering demand despite fluctuations in commercial tech hiring. The federal government introduced the U.S. Tech Force, a recruiting initiative to attract engineers who can help modernize government systems and ensure the U.S. doesn't fall behind in the AI race.

T-6 Pittsburgh



- T-6 for elite talent (T-3 US)
- #14 most expensive
- #33 largest talent pool

Pittsburgh has evolved into a leading AI and robotics hub driven by research commercialization. Major employers include Duolingo, Aurora Innovation, and Google engineering offices. Strong ties between universities and industry continue to attract elite engineering talent, with Carnegie Mellon's [top-ranked AI program](#) and the University of Pittsburgh offering a steady talent pipeline. Pittsburgh's tech ecosystem reached a major milestone in 2025: three startups [reached unicorn status last year](#). The median salary is \$140,000.

8. Austin



- #8 for elite talent (#5 US)
- #5 most expensive
- #21 largest talent pool

While most cities across the U.S. have been impacted by the tech industry's string of layoffs, Austin, with a median salary of \$182,033, has been [one of the hardest hit](#). Yet, the city remained in the top-10 of our engineering quality rankings, and signs of a rebound include [Wise](#) expanding its office space, [York Space Systems Inc.](#) plans to grow its team of software engineers and AI-focused developers, and [Craft Ventures](#) opened an office at the end of 2025 to increase its role in Austin's startup ecosystem.

9. Bangalore



- #9 for elite talent (#1 India)
- #34 most expensive
- #1 largest talent pool

Bangalore is India's largest software talent hub, serving global product companies and IT services firms. Major employers include Infosys, Wipro, and engineering centers for Google and Microsoft. Rapid growth in Global Capability Centers (GCCs) and enterprise AI initiatives continues to reshape hiring demand. Bangalore is now home to [48% of all global mid-market engineering talent](#) and 50% of the country's AI/machine learning talent. The driving factors are Bangalore's deep engineering R&D capabilities and a dense concentration of AI and machine learning skills. The median salary is \$38,552.

T-10. Singapore



- T-10 for elite talent (#3 APAC)
- #27 most expensive
- #24 largest talent pool

Singapore is Southeast Asia's premier technology and fintech hub. Major employers include Grab, Sea Group, and regional headquarters for Meta and Google. Financial services modernization and regional cloud infrastructure investments continue to drive engineering demand. Singapore continues to face a shallow talent pool, with [56% of organizations](#) reporting moderate to extreme skills shortages over the past year. There's high demand for talented and experienced engineers, especially [those who can develop AI](#), which has driven the median cost of a software engineer to \$88,261, the highest in the region.

T-10. New York



- T-10 for elite talent (#6 US)
- #3 most expensive
- #10 largest talent pool

Over the last year, tech has become [NYC's biggest sector](#), and the city's AI ecosystem has expanded rapidly. Between Q3 2024 and Q2 2025, AI startups in [NYC received 11% of total funding](#). This is the second-highest amount after San Francisco. The biggest challenge in New York is high costs, as reflected in the city's \$190,000 median engineering salary.

12. Chicago



- #12 for elite talent (#7 US)
- #12 most expensive
- #26 largest talent pool

Over the past year, Chicago has strengthened its position as one of the Midwest's top cities for engineering talent. It climbed two spots to become the [fourth-hottest tech hub in the U.S.](#), as demand for tech workers grows amid financial services modernization and industrial digital transformation. Major employers include Discover Financial, JPMorgan Chase tech offices, and Salesforce. New training facilities like [Training Xchange](#) prepare residents for software and IT roles, creating more economic opportunities and broadening the talent pipeline beyond universities and coding bootcamps. The median salary is \$144,500.

13. Dallas



- #13 for elite talent (#8 US)
- #15 most expensive
- #15 largest talent pool

The Dallas-Fort Worth region ranks [13th in the U.S. for AI readiness](#). There are [530,550 graduates](#) in computer science, engineering, and mathematics, and about [20,000 AI engineers](#) across software, hardware, and systems. The University of Texas at Dallas, Southern Methodist University, and Texas A&M anchor the talent pipeline. Key employers include AT&T, Texas Instruments, and regional hubs for Capital One. Corporate relocations and fintech growth continue to drive demand for engineering talent. Within the country, Dallas-Fort Worth had the [highest average wage growth](#) in science, technology, engineering, and math jobs over the last five years. The median software engineer salary increased from \$130,000 in 2024 to \$132,500 in 2025.

14. Vancouver



- #14 for elite talent (#10 North America)
- #23 most expensive
- #31 largest talent pool

Vancouver is home to a mix of global enterprises and high-growth startups, with companies like Amazon, Microsoft, SAP, and Electronic Arts maintaining substantial engineering teams alongside a growing number of AI startups such as Quandri and Railtown Technologies Inc. [Augmented reality, AI, cleantech, crypto, and digital media](#) are the most prominent industries. The city was hit hard by the tech hiring slowdown, with job postings [down 43% in 2025](#). This has created a significant employer's market, with a median salary of \$119,860, compared to \$247,250 in nearby Seattle and \$272,500 in San Francisco.

15. Delhi National Capital Region



- #15 for elite talent (#2 India)
- #37 most expensive
- #3 largest talent pool

Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) is India's [second-largest hub for AI hiring](#) after Bangalore, and the third-largest overall talent pool after Hyderabad. Delhi NCR stands out for its diverse AI roles and industries, including consulting, fintech, healthcare, and public-sector initiatives. The city is also home to the [third-largest number of GCCs](#), including centers from Airbnb, Uber, American Express, Adobe, and AT&T. In particular, [Delhi NCR attracts](#) global banking, financial services, and insurance organizations, as well as [telecom giants](#) and professional services firms. The median salary is \$32,062.

16. London



- #16 for elite talent (#2 EMEA)
- #17 most expensive
- #8 largest talent pool

London remains Europe's largest engineering talent market, and ranks [second globally for tech and AI firms](#) after San Francisco. The city's engineering workforce is heavily concentrated in fintech, AI, and enterprise SaaS. While hiring slowed during the global tech downturn,

London continues to attract major investments in AI and financial technology. Last year, [Barclays](#) opened an innovation hub in London, citing the UK's innovation ecosystem as one of the best in the world. The UK has also seen a [surge in demand for AI professionals](#), with almost two-thirds (65%) of those roles in London. The median salary is \$131,273.

17. Raleigh/Durham



- #17 for elite talent (#9 US)
- #13 most expensive
- #22 largest talent pool

As part of the North Carolina Research Triangle, Raleigh and Durham combine universities, research institutes, and tech employers that sustain high demand and supply for software engineers. North Carolina's [top three universities](#) are all among the best schools for computer science, and they're currently adapting their programs to prepare students for AI. The Triangle also offers a high quality of life due to its [location and affordability](#), especially when compared to other major tech hubs in the U.S. This is also reflected in the area's median salary of \$141,000, which is much less compared to that of San Francisco, New York, and Seattle. Major employers include IBM, Cisco, and Red Hat.

18. San Diego



- #18 for elite talent (#10 US)
- #4 most expensive
- #20 largest talent pool

In 2025, San Diego was in transition, balancing strengths in biotech and healthcare with an uneven economy and layoffs across big tech offices, including software engineering reductions at [Amazon](#) and a wave of cuts across the biotech industry. Local universities are leaning heavily into AI to meet employer demand and adapt to the changing engineering landscape. UC San Diego [launched an AI major](#) within its computer science department. University leaders describe a mix of optimism and anxiety about AI. They see strong long-term demand for AI-skilled software engineers, even as they acknowledge near-term disruption and uncertainty for current students and recent graduates. The median salary is \$189,300.

19. Mumbai



- #19 for elite talent (#3 India)
- #40 most expensive
- #5 largest talent pool

Mumbai is rapidly evolving from a finance-first tech market into one of India's most ambitious AI and GCC hubs. Several large-scale projects by the Maharashtra government are underway, including the [world's first AI GCC hub](#) and a [300-acre Innovation City](#). Also, the [MATRIX program](#) aims to establish 200 incubation centers across the state, providing state-of-the-art infrastructure, mentorship, and financial assistance to startups in cutting-edge sectors. [JPMorgan](#) is planning to build Asia's largest GCC in Mumbai to take advantage of its proximity to key commercial districts, established infrastructure, and access to talent from nearby higher education institutions. Tata Consultancy Services has a significant presence in the city, providing access to contract engineers and creating one of the most economically attractive markets for software development, with a median salary of \$21,127.

T-20. Sydney



- T-20 for elite talent (#6 APAC)
- #25 most expensive
- #27 largest talent pool

Sydney anchors Australia's fintech and enterprise software markets. Major employers include Atlassian, Block, Canva, and Google's regional offices. The broader tech ecosystem continues to scale around its Tech Central precinct, which has Australia's [highest venture capital](#) density and the strongest concentration of tech businesses. The median salary is \$106,112.

T-20. Minneapolis-St. Paul



- T-20 for elite talent (#11 US)
- #19 most expensive
- #35 largest talent pool

It's becoming more difficult for employers in Minnesota to [find employees with the necessary skills](#). Among managers who don't feel fully resourced to deliver on their work, 58% pointed to a skills gap. That's up from 49% in 2024. [Employers report persistent shortages](#) in almost every tech-related job. Major employers include Target and UnitedHealth Group. Enterprise cloud transformation supports steady hiring. The median salary is \$127,581.

22. Atlanta



- #22 for elite talent (#12 US)
- #11 most expensive
- #17 largest talent pool

Atlanta is a [rising fintech hub](#) thanks to its rare combination of deep payments infrastructure, high-density corporate presence, and a steady pipeline of fintech-ready talent. In fact, [70% of debit, credit, and digital payments](#) are processed in the area, giving Atlanta the nickname "Transaction Alley." AI is reshaping the skills required in Atlanta's fintech market. It handles the work that new hires used to do, reducing traditional career on-ramps. Fintech companies are building an employer education pipeline that builds skills AI can't replace. At the same time, the Georgia Fintech Academy and TAG-Ed initiative have helped thousands of people prepare to enter the sector. Atlanta's engineering talent also comes from the Georgia Institute of Technology, which consistently ranks among the [top engineering programs in the U.S.](#) Emory University and a growing number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Atlanta area add further depth to the region's engineering graduate supply. [Atlanta Tech Week](#) and [RenderATI](#) are two major events where developers, founders, investors, and tech leaders gather around AI, culture, and innovation. The median salary is \$145,000.

23. Los Angeles



- #23 for elite talent (#13 US)
- #6 most expensive
- #16 largest talent pool

Los Angeles combines entertainment technology, aerospace systems, and e-commerce engineering. Two industries that have seen significant activity in 2025 are aerospace and defense tech. [Southern California's space economy](#) is being revitalized by startups that are pushing technological boundaries. Many of these companies are founded by former SpaceX

employees. Last year, defense tech companies received over [\\$4 billion in venture funding](#), more than double the 2024 total. Los Angeles is also one of the [most AI-ready metro areas in the U.S.](#) Healthcare companies, in particular, are rapidly adopting AI. The median salary is \$170,000.

24. Boston



- #24 for elite talent (#14 US)
- #7 most expensive
- #19 largest talent pool

[Boston's tech sector has been overshadowed](#) in recent years by the city's life sciences industry, making it more challenging to keep top [university talent at home](#). Just 40% of Massachusetts university graduates in AI-related fields between 2010 and 2023 stayed in the state, compared to 80% in California, New York, and Texas. As a result, Boston is lagging behind the San Francisco Bay Area in AI, and it's losing ground to newer rivals like New York and Los Angeles. To ensure that Massachusetts's talent pipeline has the skills required for the current digital economy, a new [statewide partnership, Grow with Google](#), now provides all residents access to AI and career certificate training programs at no cost. Although generative AI is the fastest-growing skill in Massachusetts, traditional technical skills are still important. There's growing [demand](#) for data infrastructure, data transformation, security, and encryption skills across the area, resulting in a talent shortage and pushing median salaries up to \$166,000.

25. Denver



- #25 for elite talent (#15 US)
- #8 most expensive
- #30 largest talent pool

Denver is increasingly tied to quantum computing and deep tech. Colorado was awarded a [\\$40.5 million quantum technology grant](#) from the federal government in 2024. Since then, the city has seen a flurry of activity to support building a quantum workforce. The median salary is \$160,000.

26. Nashville



- #26 for elite talent (#16 US)
- #10 most expensive
- #39 largest talent pool

Nashville is evolving from a healthcare capital into a cloud and enterprise tech hub, with Oracle’s new global headquarters playing an outsized role in shaping the local market. The company is increasing recruitment, with a [focus on cloud engineering roles](#). It also aims to [position Nashville as a hub of AI innovation](#). Yet, the city’s smaller technical workforce remains a near-term challenge for employers. The median salary is \$150,000.

27. Hyderabad



- #27 for elite talent (#4 India)
- #36 most expensive
- #2 largest talent pool

Last year, Hyderabad overtook Bangalore as India's leading destination for GCCs, [securing 35 out of 85](#) new centers established in the country. Today, Hyderabad is home to nearly one in five of India’s total GCCs. Major expansions have accelerated across financial services, retail technology, and enterprise software. [Microsoft](#) is expanding its operations to accommodate more R&D teams and technology units. [Vanguard](#) opened its first India GCC in Hyderabad. It will serve as a global hub for engineering excellence, cloud modernization, data analytics, AI and machine learning, and cybersecurity. The median salary is \$33,901.

28. Houston



- #28 for elite talent (#17 US)
- #16 most expensive
- #37 largest talent pool

Houston’s market is being shaped by the city’s energy and healthcare industries as they adopt AI. Rice University continues to be a key driver in the city’s growth as the lead tenant at the new research and technology facility, [The Arc](#). Additionally, Rice University launched a [Bachelor of Science in AI](#). Despite these offerings, Houston still has a [long way to go in](#)

[cultivating AI talent](#). Among the 10 largest metro areas in the U.S., Houston has the third-fewest job postings requiring AI skills relative to its working population size. The median salary is \$132,000.

29. Detroit



- #29 for elite talent (#18 US)
- #22 most expensive
- #29 largest talent pool

Detroit is in the midst of a revival, having recently [attracted foreign investment and startup activity](#). [Michigan Central](#), Newlab, and several startup-focused initiatives are at the center of Detroit's tech repositioning. The city launched the [Detroit Tech Founder Residency Fellowship](#) to offer monthly stipends that make Detroit more accessible and appealing to startup founders. It also launched its [first-ever municipal startup funding program](#). [Newlab](#), a business incubator in Michigan Central, has grown from 25 startups to nearly 100 over the last two years. The median software engineering salary in Detroit is \$120,000.

30. Warsaw



- #30 for elite talent (#3 EMEA)
- #28 most expensive
- #23 largest talent pool

Warsaw was recognized as the [third major European city of the future](#) due to the amount of foreign direct investment-related jobs it attracts, its economic growth, and its strength in software development. The city combines a strong academic pipeline from the University of Warsaw and the Warsaw University of Technology, one of the [top 100 engineering schools in Europe](#), with an increasingly international tech ecosystem. Warsaw is Central Europe's largest IT services and fintech engineering center. Major employers include ING Bank tech hubs and global software outsourcing firms. [Mastercard](#) is doubling its workforce at its Warsaw Professional Services Hub, and [Haptiq](#) opened a new office in Warsaw to support its global client base and conduct product research and development. [Google is investing billions](#) in Poland to train one million Poles in AI, underscoring the scale of national investment in building the next generation of engineering talent. The median salary is \$73,858.

31. Philadelphia



- #31 for elite talent (#19 US)
- #18 most expensive
- #36 largest talent pool

Philadelphia has recently jumped into the [top 10 VC markets](#). It was also recognized as the 13th [best place in the world to start a company](#). Startups like [Burro](#) point to the region’s university pipeline and sticky talent base as advantages of staying in Philadelphia. Local organizations are closing Philadelphia’s longstanding visibility and access gaps through initiatives like [Philadelphia’s Incline Fund](#), while workforce and training infrastructure is expanding through programs such as [Per Scholas](#) and [Hopeworks’ new AI Innovation Hub](#). The median salary is \$130,000.

T-32. Charlotte



- T-32 for elite talent (#20 US)
- #21 most expensive
- #38 largest talent pool

Charlotte is a major U.S. banking technology hub. Major employers include Bank of America and Wells Fargo’s technology divisions. The city’s favorable median engineering salary of \$121,350 makes it a prime destination for banks and financial service providers to expand digital transformation efforts and roll out AI modernization initiatives.

T-32. Dublin



- T-32 for elite talent (#4 EMEA)
- #20 most expensive
- #34 largest talent pool

Over the last year, several expansions have allowed Dublin to deepen its role as Europe’s hub for high-value, AI-related work. [Workday](#) announced a new AI Center of Excellence that will create 200 specialized AI roles. [PayPal](#) will establish an AI and anti-fraud data science center, creating 100 new positions across technical disciplines, including AI engineering, software development, and cybersecurity. [OpenAI and Anthropic](#) are also eyeing larger office space in Dublin for their European expansion. [Competitive corporate tax policies](#), access to the

European Union (EU) market, a highly skilled tech workforce, and its status as the only English-speaking country in the EU have strengthened Ireland's position in the tech landscape. The median salary is \$123,680.

34. Pune



- #34 for elite talent (#5 India)
- #38 most expensive
- #4 largest talent pool

Pune is one of [India's fastest-growing job markets](#), driven by sustained demand for software developers, AI specialists, and cybersecurity experts. [21% of India's GCCs](#) are in Pune. This momentum is attracting new Global Capability Centers and product hubs. [Zendesk](#) opened an Innovation Hub for Research and Development to expand access to new talent and enhance global collaboration. [Orbia](#) launched its Pune IT Hub while [Ciklum](#) plans to open an AI engineering hub. As more GCCs enter Pune, the city's growth risks outpacing its infrastructure. Poor Internet connectivity and the lack of an international airport can affect leadership visibility and make it harder to attract global talent. The median salary is \$21,753.

35. Kraków



- #35 for elite talent (#5 EMEA)
- #29 most expensive
- #28 largest talent pool

Kraków is one of Europe's most established technology delivery hubs, blending multinational R&D centers with a large IT services workforce. Engineering talent is concentrated in financial technology, gaming engines, enterprise platforms, and data infrastructure. Major employers include technology centers for HSBC, Cisco, and Motorola Solutions, as well as a growing video game development sector. The city benefits from a large English-speaking workforce, EU funding for innovation, and strong research universities. Continued growth in digital banking modernization and cloud migration programs sustains hiring demand. The median salary is \$69,411.

36. Istanbul



- #36 for elite talent (#6 EMEA)
- #35 most expensive
- #12 largest talent pool

Istanbul is Turkey’s largest technology and startup ecosystem, serving as a bridge between European and Middle Eastern markets. The engineering workforce supports e-commerce platforms, fintech infrastructure, telecommunications systems, and enterprise modernization initiatives. Major employers include Trendyol, Hepsiburada, leading private banks with large digital teams, and regional telecom providers. The city has seen rapid startup formation and venture investment, particularly in digital payments, logistics technology, and marketplace platforms. While macroeconomic volatility can affect hiring cycles, Istanbul’s large domestic market and a young technical workforce sustain long-term demand for engineering. The median salary is \$36,000.

37. Wroclaw



- #37 for elite talent (#7 EMEA)
- #30 most expensive
- #32 largest talent pool

Wroclaw has emerged as a major Central European engineering center known for high-skill technical talent and strong ties to Western European enterprises. The city specializes in enterprise software, embedded systems, fintech platforms, and IT services delivery. Major employers include engineering hubs for Google, Nokia, and IBM, as well as numerous global banks operating technology centers. Wroclaw’s mature outsourcing ecosystem and strong technical universities make it a strategic nearshoring destination for German, Nordic, and UK firms. Demand remains strong for cloud engineers, cybersecurity specialists, and AI/ML practitioners. With a median salary of \$59,267 and comparable engineering quality, Wroclaw is emerging as a cost-effective nearshoring alternative to Poland’s two other entrants on this year’s list, Warsaw and Kraków.

38. Mexico City



- #38 for elite talent (#1 LATAM)
- #32 most expensive
- #11 largest talent pool

Mexico City is home to Latin America’s largest technology workforce, with strengths in fintech modernization and enterprise platforms. Major employers include regional banking technology divisions and multinational IT services firms. With a median salary of \$49,81 and a favorable time zone for U.S. companies, Mexico City also serves as a primary destination for nearshore engineering projects.

39. Chennai



- #39 for elite talent (#6 India)
- #39 most expensive
- #6 largest talent pool

Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, has a median salary of \$21,425. It [hosts over 240 GCCs](#) and employs a little over 10% of India’s total GCC talent pool. Increasing investments, a skilled workforce, and strong government initiatives are driving Tamil Nadu to [emerge as a major hub for high-end job creation](#). Some companies that will be hiring software engineers in the future include [NETGEAR](#) and [Workday](#). The government of Tamil Nadu is further attracting investment and job creation by creating GCC policies that support facility growth, as well as fintech, R&D, startup, and semiconductor policies that offer attractive incentives to both established and emerging companies. While job opportunities are expected to grow significantly, only 47% of graduates in Tamil Nadu are considered employable in emerging tech roles, highlighting the need for industry-integrated skilling programs.

40. Bucharest



- #40 for elite talent (#8 EMEA)
- #33 most expensive
- #25 largest talent pool

Bucharest is one of Eastern Europe's fastest-growing engineering hubs, combining a strong university pipeline with deep multilingual talent. The city has become a preferred location for enterprise software development, cybersecurity operations, and fintech engineering. Major employers include UiPath, Adobe, Oracle, and regional delivery centers for global banks and telecom providers. Multinational firms are attracted by strong STEM education, EU market access, and labor costs significantly lower than those in Western Europe. Growth areas include robotic process automation, enterprise SaaS platforms, and information security services. The median salary is \$47,327.