WORK IN THE WORLD OF AI IN IT & TECH

Scandinavian Salary Trends & Preferences Report 2026

Responsibility, complexity and life-fit in the candidate market.

Based on our data on senior professionals in IT & Tech, in Sweden & Norway.

worko

Foreword

Let's face it — there is no shortage of reports about AI and the future of work.

Most say some version of the same thing: AI will change how we work, some roles will disappear, new skills will matter, and organizations need to adapt.

The topic is not unique. But our perspective is.

This report is a data-driven reality check on the senior Scandinavian IT & Tech market — based on what professionals in Sweden and Norway are earning, what skills create salary leverage, and what candidates are prioritizing in their careers.

AI is not only changing how work gets done, but also what the market rewards — and what candidates want in return.

WHAT THE MARKET SAYS VS. WHAT THE DATA CAN PROVE

We started where most market shifts start: with the conversation.

In our daily work, we speak with candidates, employers, and hiring teams across IT & Tech. Over the past year, the same ideas have surfaced across candidate conversations, hiring discussions, and broader debates around AI.

Repeated often enough, market talk starts to harden into assumptions.

But assumptions are not insights. And since we sit close to both candidates and employers — connecting market salary and skills data with our own candidate preference insights — we took a closer look.

We turned the conversation into hypotheses and tested them against the data. Some held up, some were only partly true, and some did not survive contact with the numbers.

WHERE HUMAN VALUE IS MOVING

This report compares the market story with the evidence — showing where the data confirms, challenges, or sharpens the assumptions shaping the Nordic IT talent market.

Because when everyone is talking about AI, the most interesting question is no longer whether AI will change work. It already is.

The more important question is about how "good" is being redefined — where does human value move when AI changes the cost of execution?

> **We turned the conversation into hypotheses and tested them against the data.**

Executive Summary

KEY FINDINGS

1. AI pays when it becomes identity — not when it is only a tool.

AI-native professionals and model-level AI profiles show salary premiums. But Python and AI-adjacent skill stacking do not create the same effect.

2. Execution-heavy skills still matter — but they do not always differentiate.

Backend, SQL, cloud, and DevOps-type skills remain important. But the data suggests some are now closer to baseline expectations than salary accelerants.

3. Responsibility pays — when it is visible.

Leadership and delivery ownership show clearer salary value than broad strategy or architecture labels. The market rewards people who can carry outcomes, not just people who sound strategic.

4. Salary still matters — but it is no longer enough.

Candidates are broadening how they evaluate compensation, placing more weight on ownership, wellbeing, bonus models, and long-term value.

5. Flexibility is becoming more specific.

Hybrid is close to baseline. Full remote, location, decision influence, and practical life-fit are becoming more important parts of how candidates judge opportunities.

6. Stability is showing up through environment.

Candidates may not always call it security, but their preferences suggest a stronger interest in environments that protect future value: in-house roles, competence growth, ownership, and long-term employability.

THE CORE SHIFT

As AI makes execution easier to scale, the market is placing more value on what is harder to replace: ownership, responsibility, judgment, specialization, and human priorities beyond work.

WHAT THIS MEANS

AI is not flattening the IT market — rather, it's making value more selective. The data in this report does not show that every AI skill creates a salary premium, or that every senior-sounding role label pays more. More specifically, it shows that salary leverage is strongest where the market can clearly recognize future value.

That means AI-native identity, model-level AI work, scarce specialization, delivery ownership, and responsibility connected to outcomes.

At the same time, candidates are not only asking what pays — they are asking what work gives back. Salary still matters. But senior IT professionals are increasingly evaluating salary alongside autonomy, flexibility, wellbeing, competence growth, security, and long-term employability.

Right now, the shift points toward clearer ownership, stronger responsibility, sharper specialization — and work that creates quality of life beyond the monthly paycheck.

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PART 1:

SALARY & SKILLS

WHAT THE MARKET REWARDS

The market conversation around AI is loud in 2026.

AI, Python and data skills should pay, and every AI-adjacent profile should gain leverage. Some of that is true — but the salary data tells a more selective story.

1. AI pays when it becomes identity — not when it is only a tool.
2. Execution-heavy skills still matter — but they do not always differentiate
3. Responsibility pays — when it is visible

In this section, we look at **which skills, roles, and responsibility signals create salary leverage** — and which assumptions become more complicated once they meet the data.

MARKET INSIGHT 01:

AI Pays When It Becomes Identity — Not When It Is Only a Tool

AI does create salary leverage — but only when it is specific, credible, and visible as part of the candidate's professional identity.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 01

AI Skills vs. AI-Native Identity Pay

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED	WHAT THE DATA SHOWS
Add AI tools & skills + Python, to your profile and you automatically command a higher salary.	AI-native professionals earn more — not AI-adjacent skills.

TESTED MARKET ASSUMPTIONS	VERDICT	INTERPRETATION
AI-native professionals earn more beyond individual AI skills	CONFIRMED	AI identity pays beyond individual AI skills
AI/ML skills pay a Scandinavian premium	CONFIRMED	Model-level AI skills show one of the strongest salary signals
New AI-native roles already carry a premium	CONFIRMED	Emerging AI-native roles already carry market value
AI/ML salaries sit above broader tech	CONFIRMED	AI/ML professionals sit above the broader tech salary average
Python is a gateway skill into AI salaries	NOT SUPPORTED	Python alone does not unlock an AI salary premium
Combining Python with AI skills creates an additive salary bonus	NOT SUPPORTED	Stacking Python with AI does not create an extra salary bonus

THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

Do not treat AI as a keyword, but as positioning.

FOR CANDIDATES, the lesson is not simply to "add AI" to a profile. The stronger move is to make AI relevance specific, credible, and visible.

FOR COMPANIES, the same distinction matters. There is a difference between someone who uses AI tools and someone whose work, responsibility, and market identity are genuinely AI-native. The salary premium sits much closer to the second group.

MARKET INSIGHT 01

Simply AI Tool Use Does Not Count For a Salary Premium

SWEDEN & NORWAY

We tested whether AI-related salary premiums show up across different levels of AI competence and positioning.

The market assumption was partly right: AI does create salary leverage, but not with every candidate who uses AI tools, adds AI-adjacent keywords, or lists Python alongside a broader technical stack.

The stronger signal appears when AI is part of the candidate's market identity — not only "AI-aware" or "AI-adjacent", but clearly connected to AI practice: model-level AI skills, AI/ML work, emerging AI-native roles, or responsibility tied directly to AI systems and outcomes.

Python is the clearest example of this distinction — it may be useful and necessary in many AI-related environments, but useful is not the same as premium. In the salary data, Python appears across too many types of roles to function as a clean AI salary signal on its own.

In other words, Python may help someone do AI-related work, but it does not make the market read them as AI-native.

MARKET INSIGHT 01

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

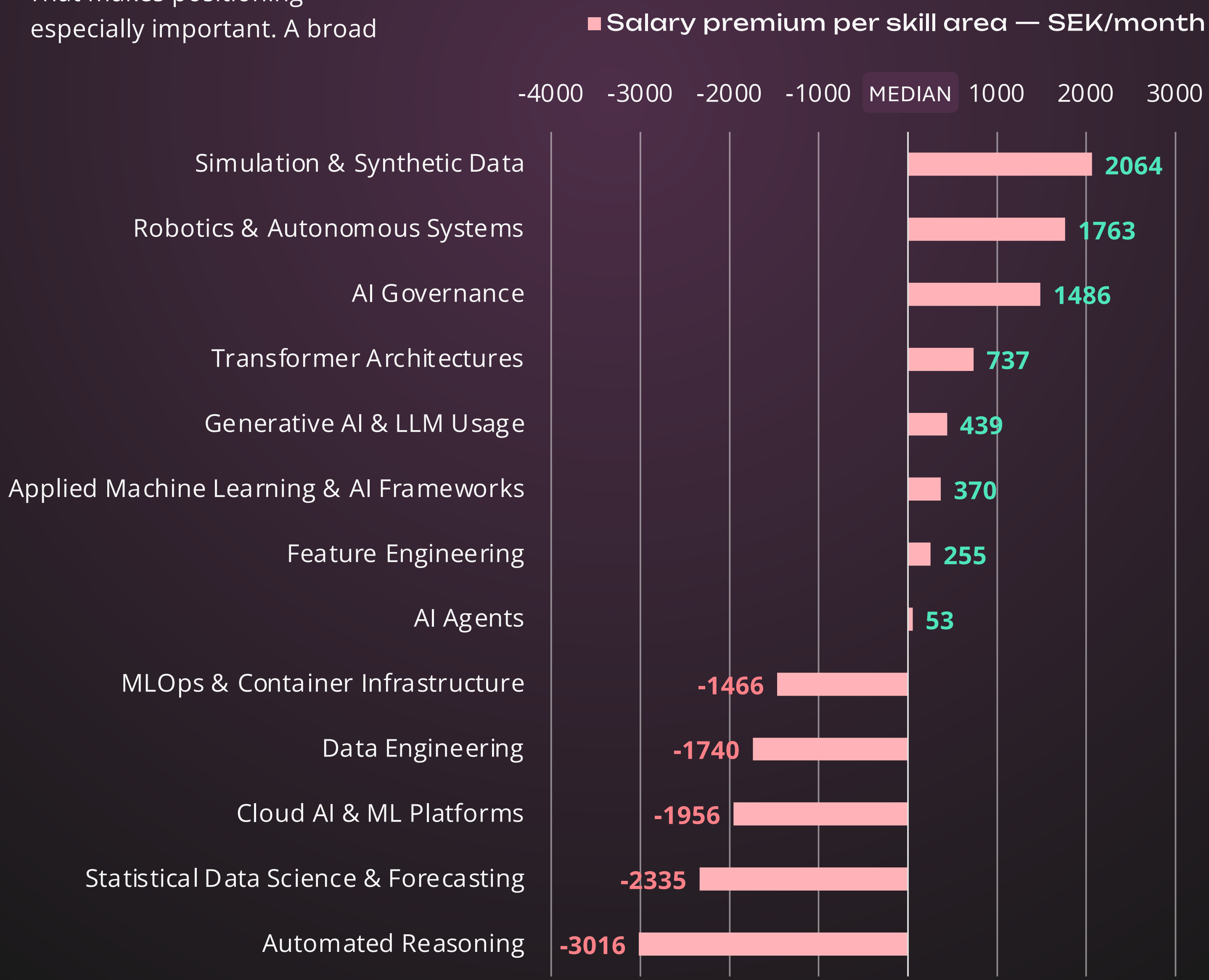
Sweden shows a clear AI salary signal, but it is highly selective.

The strongest positive effects appear around Simulation & Synthetic Data, Robotics & Autonomous Systems, AI Governance, Transformer Architectures, and Generative AI & LLM Usage. That suggests the Swedish market is not rewarding broad AI exposure equally, but places more value on specific AI-native or model-adjacent competence.

That makes positioning especially important. A broad technical profile with some AI exposure may not be enough to capture the premium, since there may now be a bigger supply of data/generic AI profiles than there is demand.

SWEDISH CANDIDATES with genuine AI/ML experience need to make that relevance visible: what kind of AI work they do, what methods or models they work with, and how closely AI is tied to their actual role.

FOR SWEDISH EMPLOYERS, the same finding creates a sharper talent challenge. If the salary premium is already strong, competition for clearly AI-native professionals is likely to be higher. Companies may need to distinguish earlier between candidates who use AI as a productivity tool and candidates whose core contribution sits inside AI/ML development, application, governance, or delivery.



MARKET INSIGHT 01

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

Norway also rewards AI/ML skills, but the signal is selective.

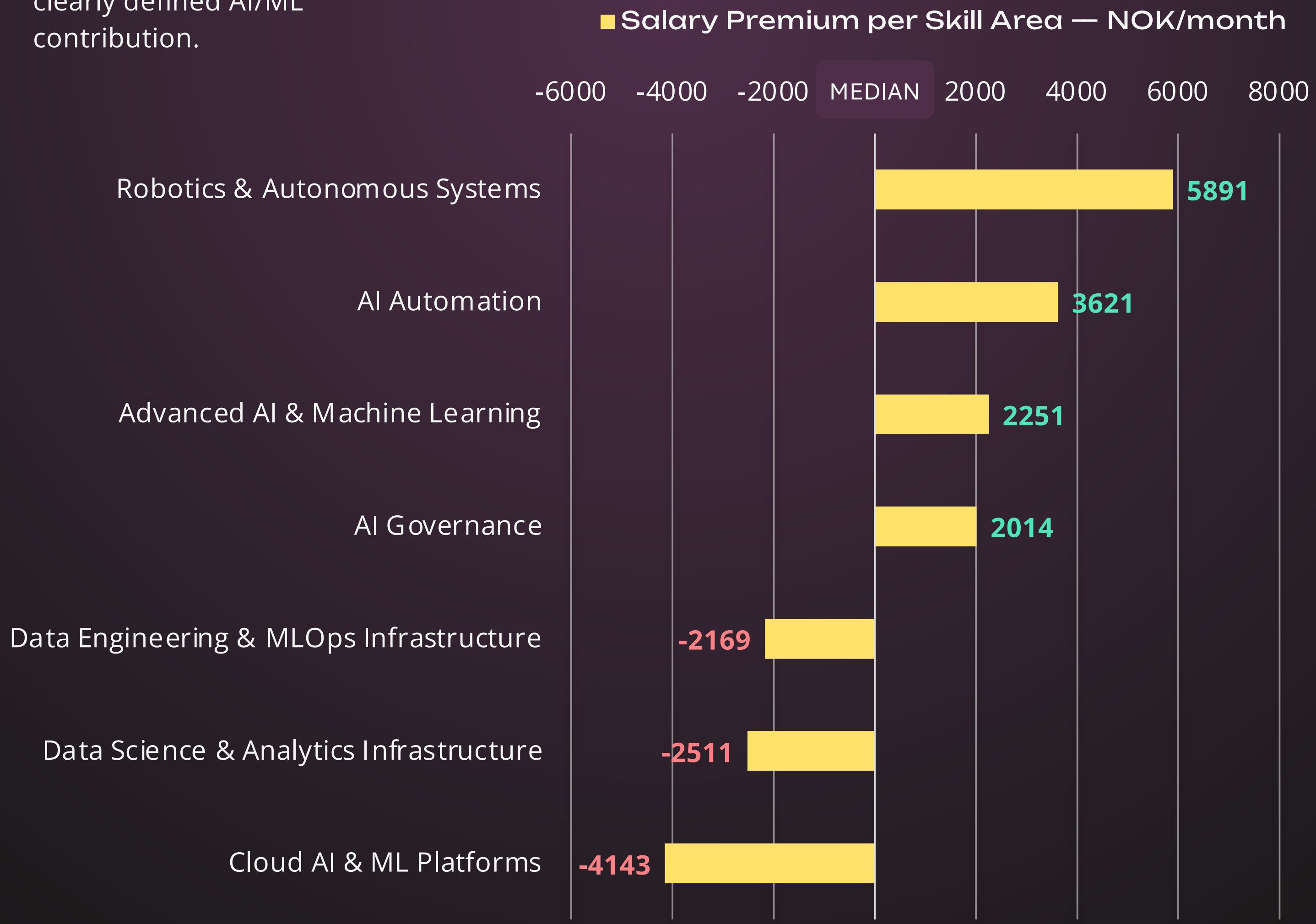
The strongest positive effects appear around Robotics & Autonomous Systems, AI Automation, Advanced AI & Machine Learning, and AI Governance.

At the same time, several broader data and platform-oriented skill areas show negative effects, suggesting that the Norwegian market may be pricing AI value more narrowly — around specific roles, scarce competence, or clearly defined AI/ML contribution.

Generic cloud/AI tooling may now be viewed as a baseline expectation, not a differentiator, and the premium sits with AI-native roles and identity, not with using AI tools or their Environment.

NORWEGIAN CANDIDATES may find that broad AI language is unlikely to be enough. The value needs to be connected to concrete AI responsibility, model-level competence, or work that clearly places the candidate inside the AI-native part of the market.

FOR EMPLOYERS, the risk is assuming that all AI-capable candidates are interchangeable. The data suggests they are not. The premium sits where AI is central enough to the person's role that the market can recognize and price it.



MARKET INSIGHT 01

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The market is rewarding professionals whose profile makes AI central, credible, and commercially understandable — not everyone who touches AI.

Not all AI exposure is salary leverage. Not all AI-adjacent skills are premium. Not all AI language strengthens a candidate profile.

The premium appears when AI becomes part of the candidate's role identity — something the market can see, understand, and price.

"AI SKILLS" AS A CONCEPT IS BECOMING TOO BROAD TO BE USEFUL

The IT market is entering a phase where AI language is everywhere. Candidates add AI to their profiles. Companies add AI to job descriptions. Tools add AI features. Teams experiment with AI workflows.

In that environment, the phrase "AI skills" can quickly lose precision. If everyone starts using AI, then using AI is no longer enough to create salary leverage.

The market needs a clearer reason to pay more. And the data suggests that reason is AI-native identity.

This means the market is starting to distinguish between three different groups:

- professionals who use AI tools to support their existing work
- professionals with AI-adjacent technical skills
- professionals whose core role, competence, or responsibility is genuinely AI-native.

The salary premium sits closest to the third group.

FOR CANDIDATES, this means vague AI positioning may not be enough. The profile needs to make the AI connection obvious: what kind of AI work the candidate has done, what systems they work with, what methods they use, and where AI is central to their responsibility.

FOR EMPLOYERS, this creates a sharper hiring challenge. The most valuable AI profiles are not necessarily the candidates with the longest list of AI-adjacent tools. They are the candidates whose experience shows that AI is central to their role, responsibility, and contribution.

The market is not rewarding everyone who uses AI — but those who can be recognized as AI-native.

MARKET INSIGHT 02:

Execution-Heavy Skills Still Matter — But They Do Not Always Differentiate

If AI-native identity is one side of the salary premium, the next question is what happens to execution-heavy skills when they become easier to compare.

Execution-heavy skills still matter — but the market appears to reward them differently once they become widely expected.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 02

Baseline Skills vs. Salary Leverage — Execution Needs Differentiation

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED

Common execution skills don't create salary leverage on their own.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Common execution skills still matter, but they do not automatically create salary leverage once the market treats them as baseline.

TESTED MARKET ASSUMPTION	VERDICT	INTERPRETATION
Cybersecurity skills command a scarcity premium	**CONFIRMED**	Cybersecurity shows a clearer premium where scarce, business-critical competence is visible
Agile and SAFe have become too common to pay	**CONFIRMED**	Delivery-oriented coordination skills carry premium value in Norway
Having more skills is linked to higher salary	**CONFIRMED**	Broader skill accumulation pays — but only up to a point
SQL & backend-alone skills are now expected rather than rewarded	**WEAKER LEVERAGE**	Expected technical foundation, but not a strong salary differentiator on its own
Azure and general cloud skills command a salary premium	**WEAKER LEVERAGE**	Cloud familiarity matters, but general tooling does not command a scarcity premium
DevOps is still a premium skill at senior level	**WEAKER LEVERAGE**	Useful and relevant, but not supported as a standout premium signal in Norway
Frontend salaries have declined over time	**NOT SUPPORTED**	The data does not support a clear frontend salary decline
A hiring freeze caused salary compression across IT	**NOT SUPPORTED**	The data does not confirm a broad hiring-freeze compression effect

THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

FOR CANDIDATES, the lesson is not to keep adding skills without direction. The stronger move is to build a profile that is specific enough for the market to price.

FOR COMPANIES, understanding that some technical skills are baseline is important. Others still signal scarcity, responsibility, or market demand. Treating all technical profiles as interchangeable risks missing where the real talent pressure sits.

MARKET INSIGHT 02

A Skill Can Be Necessary Without Being a Salary Driver

SWEDEN & NORWAY

We tested several assumptions about technical skills, salary pressure, and skill value.

The data shows that SQL, backend, cloud, DevOps, CI/CD, Azure, and general cloud skills are all useful parts of senior IT work. But it also suggests that some of these skills are now common enough to act more like basic requirements than salary accelerants.

That does not make them unimportant — instead, they may need stronger context to explain higher pay.

In both countries, broader skill accumulation is linked to higher salary, but only up to a point. After around 15 skills, the return starts to flatten. This suggests that having more skills helps — but simply adding more skills does not keep increasing salary forever.

The clearest pattern is that salary leverage appears when a skill is harder to find, harder to replace, or connected to responsibility.

So, the main finding is simple: some skills help candidates qualify for a role, while other skills help explain why they should earn more.

Technical skills still matter, but not all technical skills explain higher salary.

MARKET INSIGHT 02

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

In Sweden, the data is more careful than dramatic.

The data does not support a clear frontend salary decline. It also does not support broad claims that cloud tooling, DevOps, or common execution-heavy skills automatically create salary premiums.

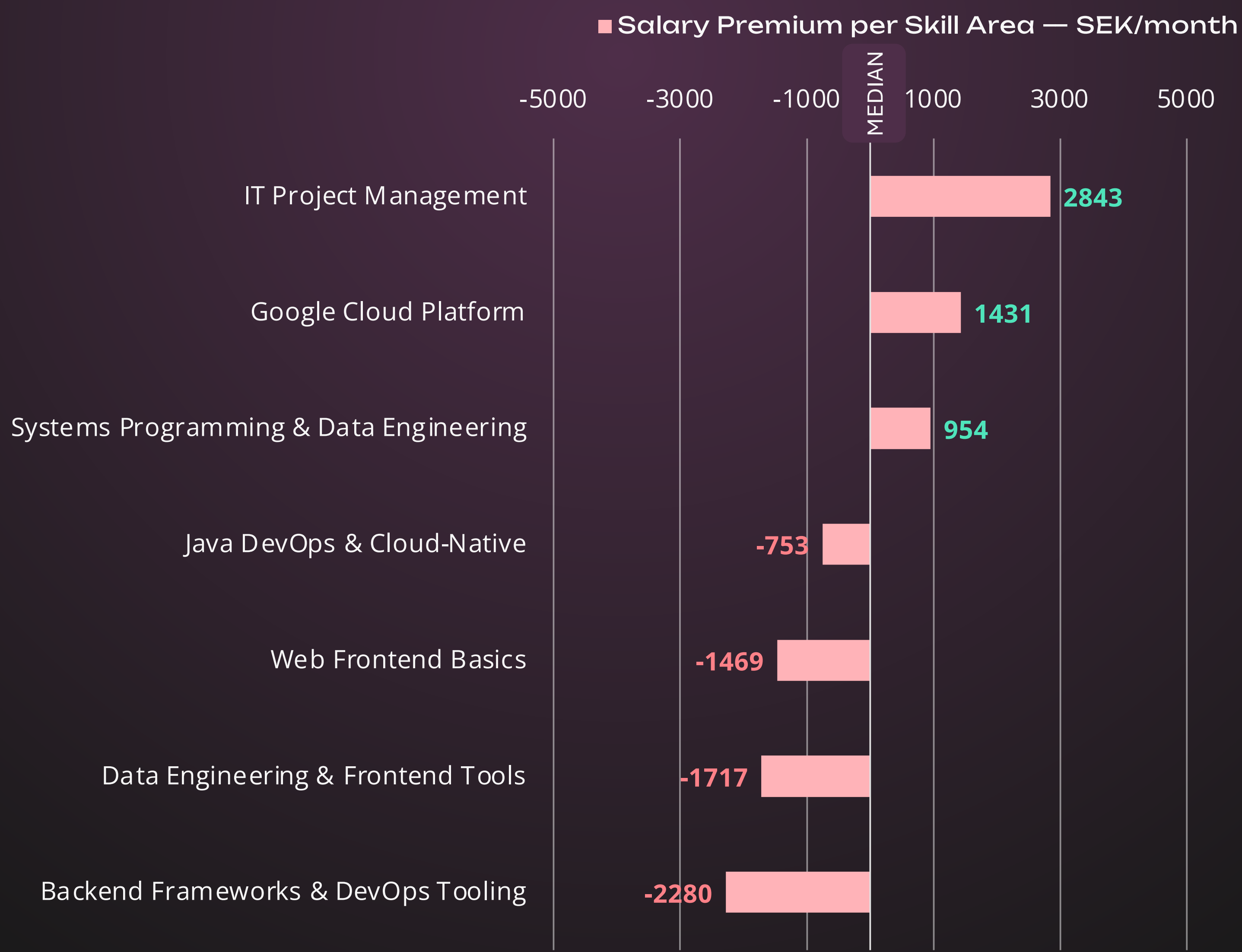
This does not mean Swedish IT professionals with these skills are weak in the market. It means the salary story needs more context.

FOR SWEDISH CANDIDATES, a familiar technical stack may still be valuable, but it needs a clearer explanation.

What do those skills allow you to own, improve, protect, or deliver? What decisions do you influence? What complexity do you handle? What depends on your technical judgment?

A backend or cloud profile becomes stronger when it is connected to system ownership, architecture decisions, business-critical platforms, product responsibility, security, or delivery impact.

FOR SWEDISH EMPLOYERS, the data is a reminder that required skills and premium skills are not always the same thing. A role may need cloud or backend competence, but not every required skill should be treated as a salary driver.



MARKET INSIGHT 02

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

Norway shows the clearest premium signals in this insight.

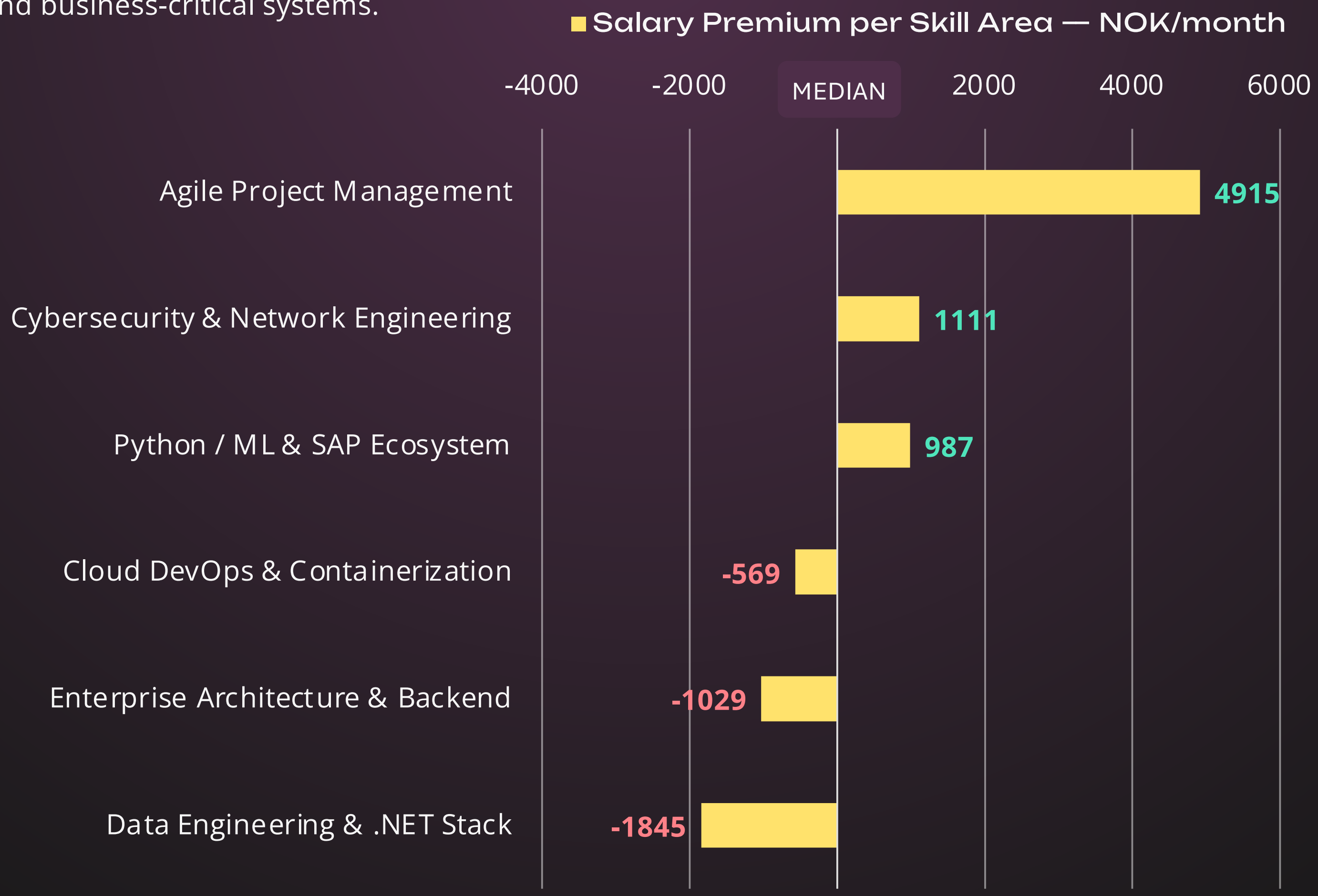
Agile project management carries a positive salary effect. The premium does not seem to come only from Agile terminology. The premium seems to come from delivery ownership rather than methodology alone: product ownership, prioritization, coordination, and accountability.

Cybersecurity carries a premium, suggesting that the Norwegian market is willing to pay more for skills connected to security, risk, protection, and business-critical systems.

At the same time, DevOps / CI-CD does not show the expected senior-level premium, which suggests it may have become more baseline in that market.

FOR NORWEGIAN CANDIDATES, it is not enough to claim: "I know Agile," "I work with DevOps," or "I have backend experience." The stronger salary story is to show what those skills help you carry: security risk, delivery ownership, product responsibility, or coordination across teams.

FOR NORWEGIAN EMPLOYERS, skill screening needs to go beyond terminology. A candidate who lists Agile is not necessarily the same as a candidate who can lead delivery across teams. The premium appears when the skill is connected to responsibility.



MARKET INSIGHT 02

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

NOT EVERY TECHNICAL SKILL RAISES SALARY — BUT SKILLS THAT REDUCE RISK CAN

Technical skills still matter. But the clearest salary advantage appears when a skill protects something important.

Required does not always mean differentiating. Common does not always mean low value. More skills do not always mean more leverage.

A technical skill becomes more valuable when it does something important for the business. That can mean reducing risk, protecting critical systems, owning delivery, coordinating work across teams, solving problems that are hard to replace, or combining several useful skills in a way that makes the candidate more flexible.

The question for senior professionals is not only what skills they have, but further: what risks do my skills reduce?

FOR CANDIDATES, a senior profile should not only list tools and methods. It should show the business consequence of those skills: what risk they reduce, what systems they protect, what delivery they support, what outcomes they enable, and where they carry responsibility beyond the task itself.

FOR EMPLOYERS, this means skill requirements should be connected to business consequence. Some skills are needed to do the job. Others reduce risk in a way that can justify higher pay.

THE MAIN TAKEAWAY

Technical skills still matter. But the clearest salary advantage appears when a skill protects something important.

The IT market is becoming easier to compare at the execution layer. More candidates list similar tools. More teams use similar cloud platforms. More roles include backend, SQL, DevOps, CI/CD, Agile, or delivery terminology. AI may also make parts of technical work faster to produce.

This does not make technical work less important. But it does make it more important to explain what the skill actually protects, prevents, or makes possible.

Technical competence still matters. But expected skills are not the same as rewarded skills.

MARKET INSIGHT 03:

Responsibility Pays — When It Is Visible

When technical skills become common, the premium moves to the person trusted to carry the outcome.

The salary advantage goes to delivery ownership — not just senior-sounding titles or broad skill labels.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 03

Data Favors Visible Responsibility Over Title Language

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED

Deciding beats doing when AI takes over execution. Real money moves to those who sit above the work, planning strategy and direction.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Premiums follow delivery ownership, not sounding strategic. Roles tied to coordination & delivery show clear gains — titles & labels alone don't.

TESTED MARKET ASSUMPTIONS	VERDICT	INTERPRETATION
IT Project Management increases salary	CONFIRMED	Leadership connected to delivery creates salary leverage
Agile Project Management + Product Ownership + SAFe pays more in Norway	CONFIRMED	Delivery ownership is one of the strongest responsibility signals
Years of seniority add salary	CONFIRMED	Experience, trust, and responsibility build value over time
Some specialist skills still pay	CONFIRMED	Mobile, cybersecurity, GCP, and industrial automation show clear positive signals
Responsibility matters, but not every strategic label pays	MORE SPECIFIC THAN EXPECTED	The premium appears when responsibility is visible in delivery
IT Governance, Strategy, ITIL, and ITSM pay more on their own	NOT SUPPORTED	These labels show a negative effect in the combined model
Solution Architecture and SAP clearly pay more on their own	NOT SUPPORTED	These labels do not show a clear salary premium
Common and broader execution-heavy stacks automatically create salary leverage	NOT SUPPORTED	Several broad technical stacks show weaker or negative effects

THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

FOR CANDIDATES, the lesson is not to keep adding skills without direction. The stronger move is to build a profile that is specific enough for the market to price.

FOR COMPANIES, understanding that some technical skills are baseline is important. Others still signal scarcity, responsibility, or market demand. Treating all technical profiles as interchangeable risks missing where the real talent pressure sits.

MARKET INSIGHT 03

Leadership Is the Clearest Responsibility Signal

SWEDEN & NORWAY

We tested several assumptions about leadership, seniority, strategy, architecture, and ownership. The market is right that responsibility matters — but the data makes the story more specific.

The strongest salary signals do not appear around every skill or title that sounds senior, but instead where responsibility is connected to delivery, coordination, and outcomes.

In Sweden, IT Project Management adds **+2 843 SEK/month**, making it one of the clearest leadership-related salary signals in the dataset.

In Norway, the Agile Project Management adds **+4 915 NOK/month**. This is the strongest responsibility signal in the Norwegian data.

At the same time, a supporting pattern appears in broader technical stacks. In Sweden, Backend Frameworks & DevOps Tooling show a **−2 280 SEK/month** effect, and Web Frontend Basics show a **−1 469 SEK/month** effect.

In Norway, Cloud DevOps & Containerization shows a **−569 NOK/month** effect, while Enterprise Architecture & Backend shows **−1 029 NOK/month**.

The data suggests that responsibility does not automatically pay more. It pays when the market can see what someone owns, coordinates, delivers, or is trusted to carry. Coordinating teams, reducing risk, keeping work moving, and making sure technical work leads to real outcomes.

MARKET INSIGHT 03

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

In Sweden, the data shows a clear leadership signal: IT Project Management appears as one of the strongest responsibility-related findings in the Swedish data.

There are also a few specialist signals that stand out. Mobile & Wireless Connectivity and GCP add premiums, as well as Systems Programming & Data Engineering. This suggests that Sweden still rewards technical skills — but not every technical stack equally.

Some broader execution-heavy stacks show weaker salary leverage. Backend Frameworks & DevOps Tooling show a negative effect, together with Web Frontend Basics and Microsoft Analytics Cloud.

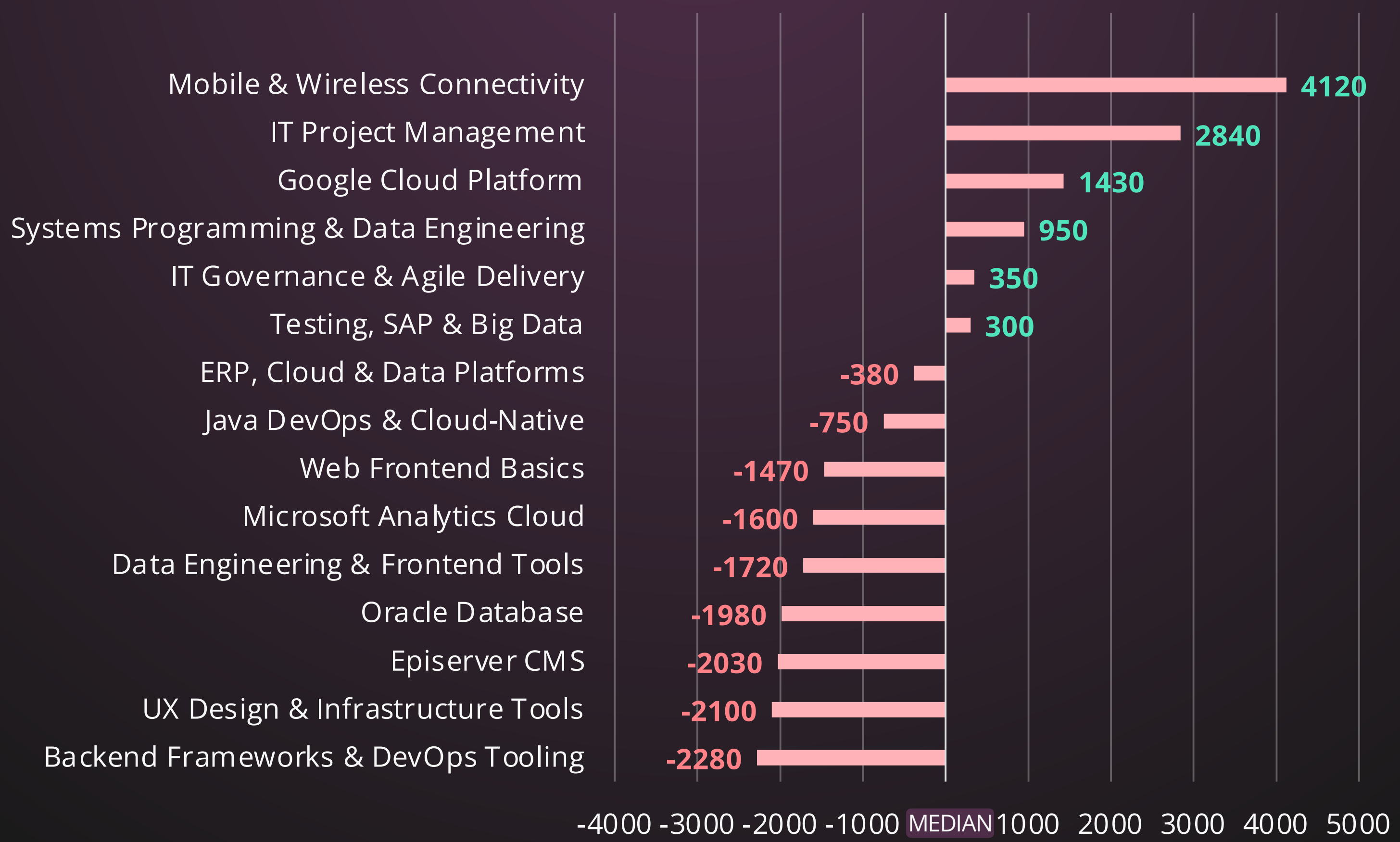
This does not mean these skills are unimportant —but they may be too common, too broad, or too difficult to separate from baseline expectations.

FOR SWEDISH CANDIDATES, the strongest message is to **make responsibility visible.**

A strong profile may need to say more than "senior," "architecture," "DevOps," or "strategy." Further, it may need to explain what the candidate owns, what decisions they influence, what systems they improve, and what outcomes depend on their work.

FOR SWEDISH EMPLOYERS, the finding is a reminder to look at where responsibility actually sits. When expectations around decision-making, delivery ownership, and cross-team coordination are clear, it becomes easier to identify which profiles truly drive outcomes.

SWEDEN — Salary Effects per Skill Area — SEK/month



MARKET INSIGHT 03

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

Norway shows the strongest responsibility signal in this insight.

Agile PM is one of the clearest examples of delivery ownership creating salary leverage, which builds on the previous insight: Agile knowledge alone is common. Many IT professionals have worked in Agile teams or know Agile frameworks.

But the higher salary does not appear to come from knowing the process. It's more likely connected to the responsibility that often comes with these roles: setting priorities, coordinating teams, removing blockers, and making sure the work actually gets delivered.

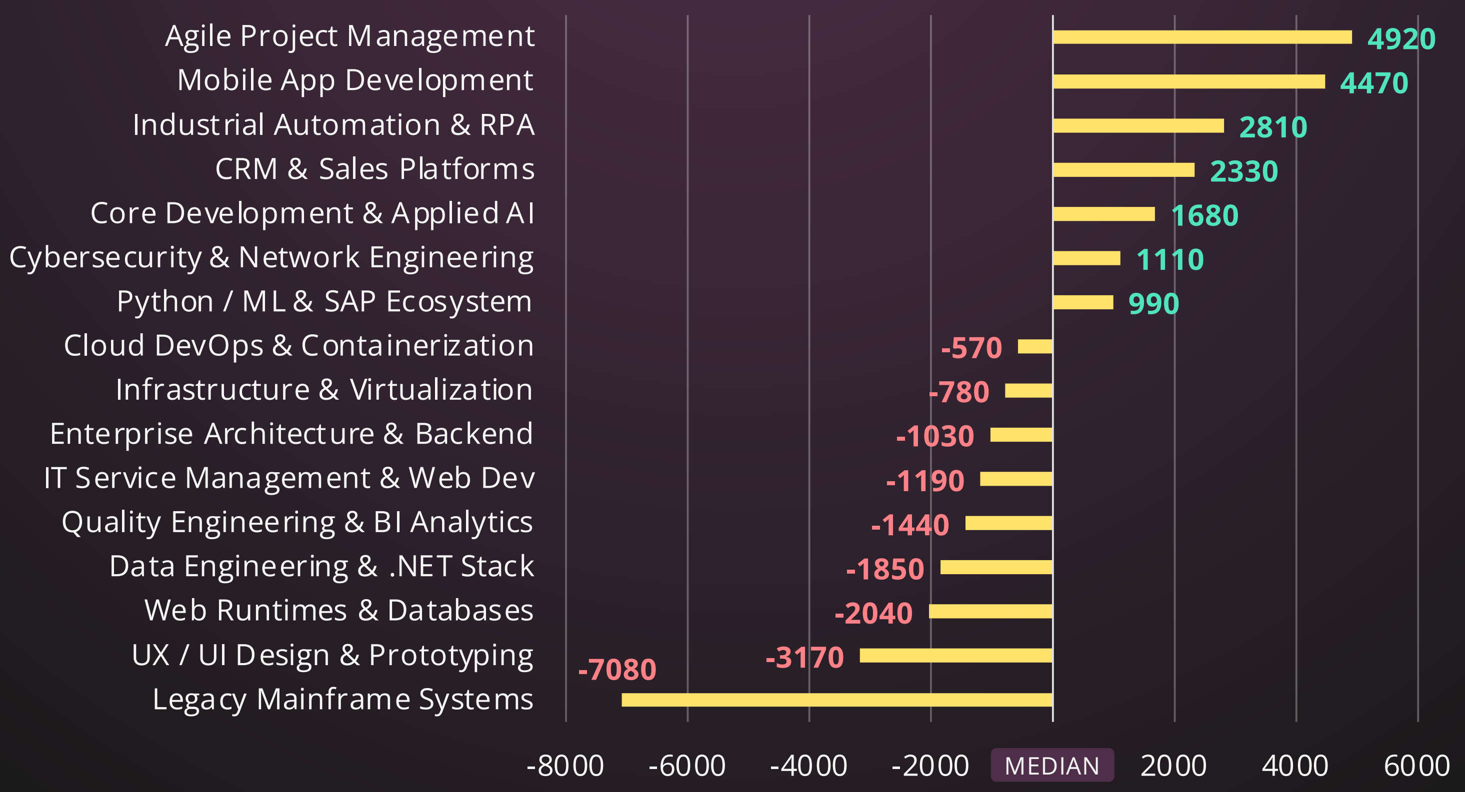
Norway also shows positive signals for specialist skills. Mobile App Development, Industrial Automation & RPA, Cybersecurity & Network Engineering all add a premium.

At the same time, several broad or execution-heavy stacks, like Cloud DevOps & Containerization, Enterprise Architecture & Backend, IT Service Management & Web Dev, show negative effects. This suggests that the Norwegian market is not simply paying more for every senior or technical label, but rather when the skill is connected to ownership, specialization, or business-critical delivery.

FOR NORWEGIAN CANDIDATES, the strongest salary story is not just listing familiar tools or frameworks, but showing what that experience allowed them to carry: product direction, delivery ownership, security risk, team coordination, or accountability for outcomes.

FOR NORWEGIAN EMPLOYERS, the finding is a reminder that skill labels can hide very different levels of responsibility. A candidate who has worked in Agile is not the same as a candidate who can lead delivery across teams. The premium seems to appear when the skill is connected to ownership.

NORWAY — Salary Effects per Skill Area — NOK/month



MARKET INSIGHT 03

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

NOT EVERY SENIOR-SOUNDING LABEL PAYS — BUT DELIVERY OWNERSHIP DOES

As AI changes execution work, it is tempting to say that strategic roles automatically become more valuable.

But the data hints at a distinction: a senior-sounding title is not the same as visible responsibility.

That matters because the IT market is becoming easier to compare at the skill level. More professionals list similar tools, methods, platforms, and frameworks. More roles use similar language around strategy, architecture, Agile, DevOps, and delivery.

In that kind of market, the question becomes less about what someone can list — and more about what they can carry.

That is the difference between describing a role and proving responsibility. This is where candidates and companies need to be more precise.

Strategic does not always mean higher value. Senior-sounding does not always mean higher pay. Technical does not always mean differentiating.

FOR CANDIDATES, the strongest salary story is not simply to sound more senior — titles, tools, and strategy language can all make a profile sound senior. You may need to show what that seniority actually means in practice. Show where you carry responsibility the market can recognize: priorities, coordination, ownership, delivery, and outcomes.

FOR COMPANIES, this means the highest-value profiles may not always be the ones with the most impressive title language. They are the people trusted to connect technical work to delivery and business-critical outcomes.

Two people can have similar titles and similar technical language on paper, but carry very different levels of responsibility in practice. One may advise, support, or participate. Another may own priorities, align teams, remove blockers, and make sure work moves from decision to result.

Those are not the same profiles. The previous pages suggest that the market is better at rewarding the second type of responsibility.

> **The clearest salary advantage appears when responsibility shows up in delivery — when someone is trusted to move work from decision to result.**

PART 2:

PREFERENCES

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT IN RETURN

If salary and skills show how the market prices talent, preference data shows how candidates define value.

This section looks at what senior IT professionals in Sweden and Norway prioritize when they evaluate real opportunities — beyond salary alone.

4. Salary still matters — but it is no longer enough
5. Flexibility is becoming more specific
6. Stability is showing up through environment

The pattern is not that salary stopped mattering. It is that salary is increasingly weighed against the conditions that shape career durability, autonomy, wellbeing, and life beyond work.

MARKET INSIGHT 04:

Salary Still Matters — But It Is No Longer Enough

The market asks candidates to keep adapting, they also become more selective about what makes an opportunity worth taking.

The next insight looks at compensation — and how salary is increasingly weighed against long-term value, security, ownership, and life quality.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 04

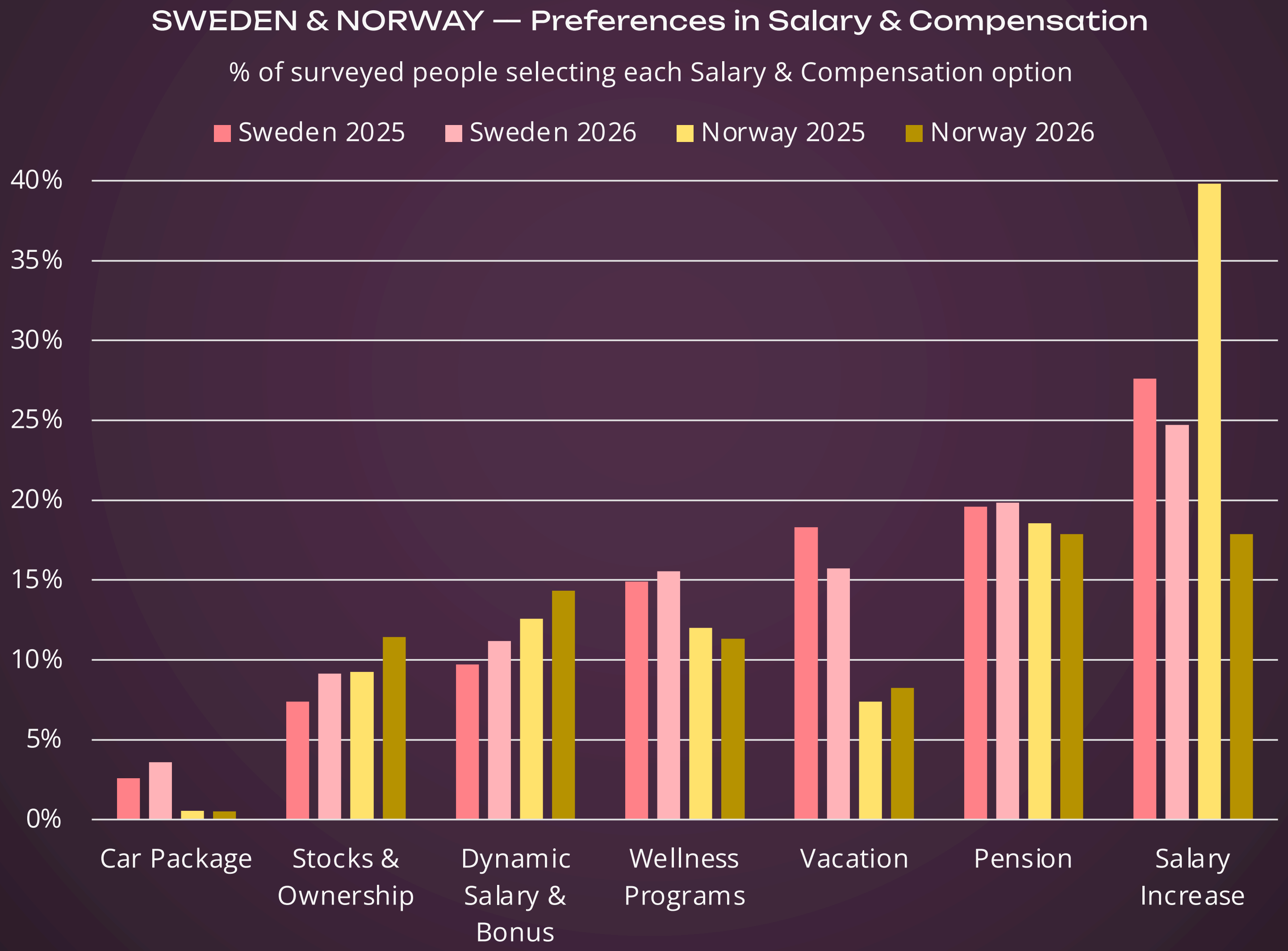
Salary Still Matters, But It Is No Longer Enough

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED

A higher salary is the main reason why people change jobs.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Yes, salary increase matters — but it has weakened since last year, while other compensation preferences rise.



THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

FOR CANDIDATES, the question is no longer only what salary they can get — but what kind of value does this opportunity create over time. That includes salary, but also ownership, bonus models, pension, stability, wellbeing, and the future relevance of the role.

FOR COMPANIES, salary still needs to be competitive, but the strongest offers will not rely on salary alone. They will explain the full value equation clearly: what the candidate earns now, what they can gain over time, and how the role supports the life and career they are trying to build.

MARKET INSIGHT 04

Salary Still Leads — But It's Not The Whole Story

SALARY & COMPENSATION

There's no denying that the trooper still stands — salary increase is the largest compensation preference in both Sweden and Norway. That has not changed, and it's not hard to imagine it remaining on top.

But when comparing the data to last year, salary increase is losing some of its dominance. At the same time, preferences connected to ownership, bonus models, pension, and long-term value are either increasing or holding steady.

This suggests that candidates are less likely to evaluate compensation only as a bigger monthly paycheck, but increasingly looking at the broader package.

What's interesting here is the new trend we see emerging: with the rise of AI, many simpler, repetitive tasks are being replaced with automation.

As work continues to be automated, and AI makes work a little easier, people seem to place higher value on more human factors that can help improve life quality.

But AI is not only a relief — there's also a level of fear of the unknown, and how it will affect the market in the future. As reflected in the data, more people now ask for more long-term sustainable income in terms of stocks & ownership and dynamic salary, suggesting a larger focus on future-proofing our source of income.

Senior IT candidates may not be less financially ambitious, but rather more careful. Companies should not read this as a sign that salary is suddenly unimportant, but should prepare to meet this trend wave in compensation.

SINCE LAST YEAR'S REPORT, there is also a slight turn in the opposite direction — not dramatically, but enough to indicate a new trend emerging. While salary increase goes down, other forms of value move up at the same time. A higher base salary is still attractive, but for some candidates, a strong offer may also need to include ownership, long-term security, and a compensation model that feels connected to future value.

In Sweden, the top compensation preferences from the year before has either dropped or remained the same, while the bottom preferences have increased in popularity.

In Norway, we are seeing similar results. While salary increase will likely always remain the most important form of compensation, this shift marks a new wave of compensation prioritization that may well have to do with the rise of AI — relieving us of our burdens, in good and bad. Only time will tell in which direction we will go next.

While salary increase will likely always remain the most important form of compensation, this shift marks a new wave of compensation prioritization that may well have to do with the rise of AI — relieving us of our burdens, in good and bad. Only time will tell in which direction we will go next.

MARKET INSIGHT 04

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

Swedish IT candidates are spreading value across more parts of the offer.

Their idea of a well-rounded compensation model seems to focus on building the future, while having enough time to enjoy life right now — with Salary Increase, Pension and Vacation in the top 3.

Sweden shows the more balanced compensation profile. Salary increase is still the largest compensation preference, but it declines from around 28% to 25%.

Pension remains close behind at around 20%, while vacation and wellness still take up meaningful space. Compared with last year, the movement is subtle but important.

Stocks & ownership increase, as well as Dynamic salary & bonus. Pension and Wellness programs remain stable. Vacation decreases but remains a larger preference in Sweden than in Norway.

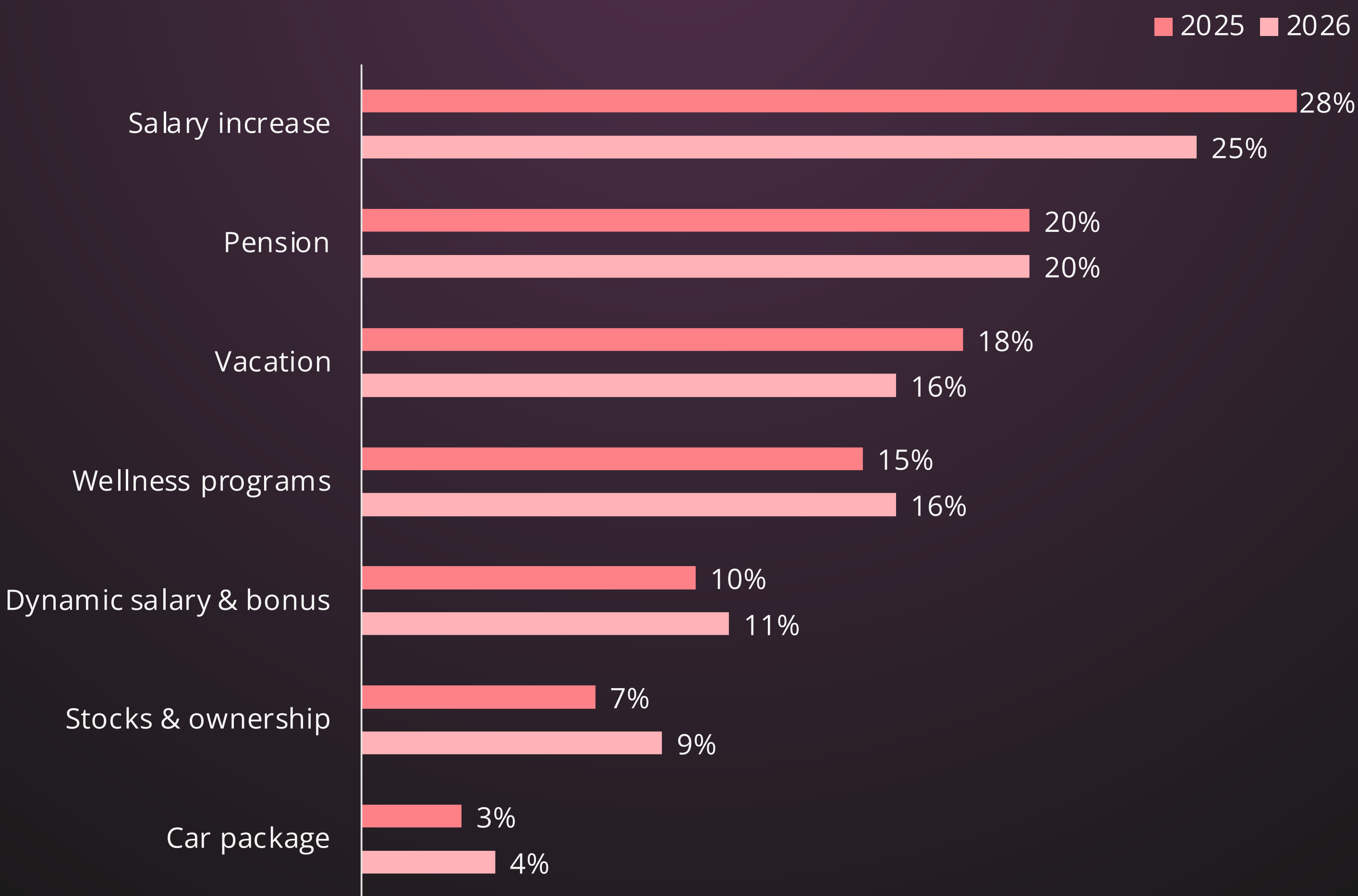
Swedish IT candidates appear to be distributing value across multiple parts of the offer.

They obviously still care about salary increase, but the offer may feel stronger if it also shows how the company supports long-term value, recovery, financial stability, and future upside.

This pattern shows that it's less about replacing salary, and more about adding more layers to the compensation decision.

SWEDEN — Preferences in Salary & Compensation

% of surveyed people selecting each Salary & Compensation option



MARKET INSIGHT 04

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

The Norwegian way of life seems to focus slightly more on money coming in, placing Dynamic Salary & Bonus in third place after Salary Increase and Pension. The long-term perspective is important here as well, but the part about enjoying life here and now seems to manifest in terms of cashflow rather than time.

Salary increase is still by far the largest compensation preference, even after declining from 40% to 36%. This suggests that direct financial gain still plays a very strong role in the Norwegian IT market, but the shift is still visible.

People are not moving away from financial ambition — if anything, they may be expanding it.

Similar to Sweden, Stocks & ownership increase and Dynamic salary & bonus increases, while Pension remains stable. But the Norwegian compensation story appears to be less about life-quality benefits and more about total financial opportunity.

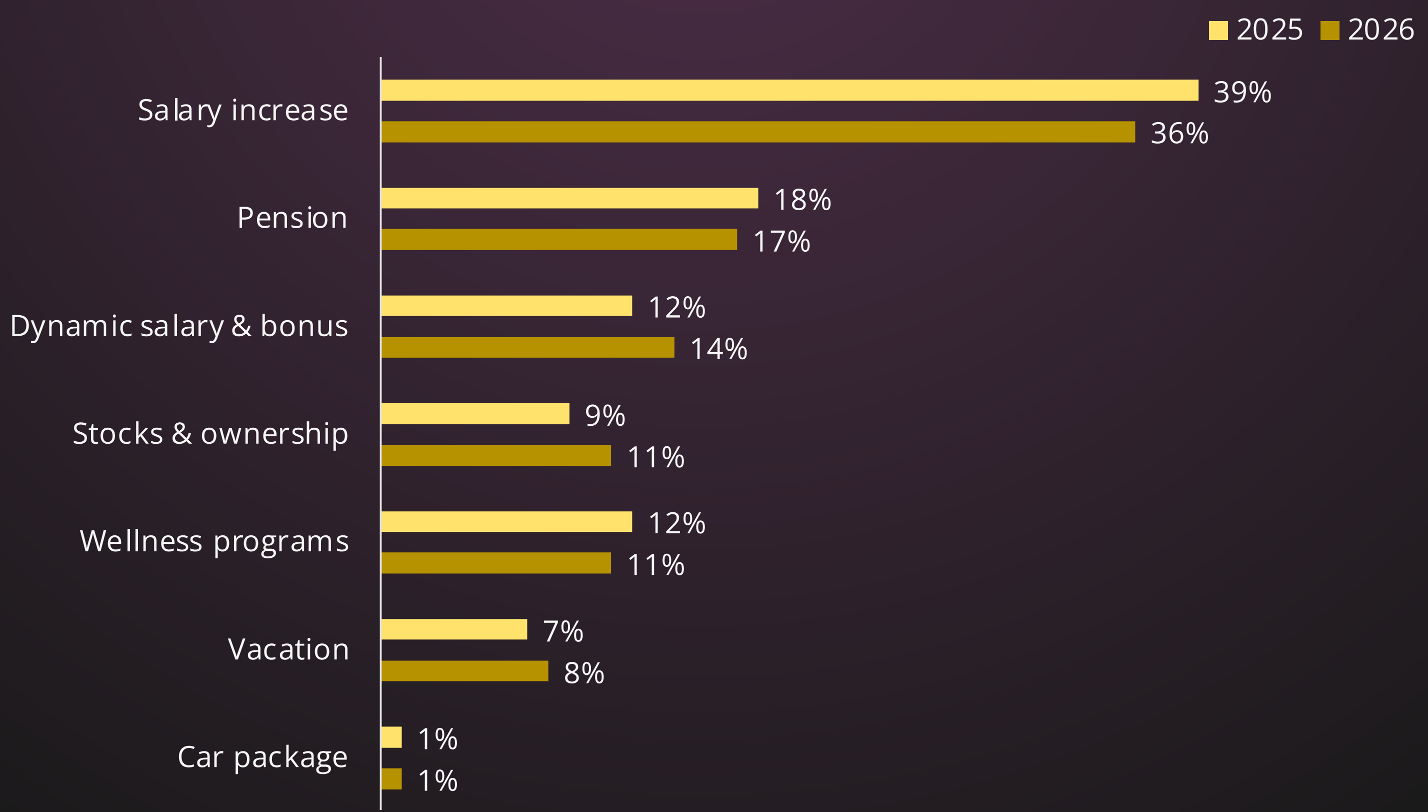
The strongest movement appears around financial upside and performance-linked value: salary, bonuses, and stock ownership.

Norwegian candidates may still start with the questions about what the salary is, but increasingly, they may ask what their new potential role can become in the future.

That is an important shift for companies: a Norwegian offer that includes bonus, ownership, or long-term growth potential needs to make those parts concrete. Senior candidates may be less convinced by vague promises, and instead want to understand how it works, how realistic it is, and what it could mean over time.

NORWAY — Preferences in Salary & Compensation

% of surveyed people selecting each Salary & Compensation option



MARKET INSIGHT 04

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Salary is not only money. For candidates, salary can represent progress, security, recognition, freedom, and proof that their work is valued. But as work changes, the meaning of value changes too.

AI is making some parts of execution faster. The market is becoming more selective about which skills and responsibilities it rewards. Senior candidates are becoming more careful about when a job change is worth the risk.

In that context, compensation becomes more than a number. Does this role make life better, protect the future, or it make you more valuable in the next market cycle?

This is why the decline in salary increase is not a sign of lower ambition, but perhaps a sign of more mature ambition. Candidates are not only chasing the next raise — they are asking whether the whole offer makes sense. The best offer is not always the highest number

FOR CANDIDATES, this insight creates a more strategic way to evaluate opportunities. A higher salary can absolutely be the right reason to move, but it may not be the only factor. A role with a strong salary increase may still be a weaker long-term choice if it offers limited growth, poor leadership, weak pension, high stress, or little relevance to where the market is moving.

A role with a slightly lower salary increase may still be a stronger total offer if it includes better management, stronger learning, a healthier work setup, credible bonus potential, or future career relevance.

FOR COMPANIES, this insight is a warning against building offers around yesterday's logic. Salary still matters, and it needs to be competitive — if the salary is too low, the rest of the offer may never get a fair chance. But salary alone may not be enough to convince senior IT candidates, especially not if the candidate is passive, comfortable, and not actively looking for a new role.

A passive candidate does not only need a reason to accept — they need a reason to disrupt something that is already working, and that is a much higher bar.

Companies may need to explain the full value of the opportunity more clearly: how the role creates value now, how it can grow over time, and how it supports stability, wellbeing, and long-term career relevance. The offer needs to feel like a complete package. A strong salary may get attention, but a strong total value builds trust.

> **Candidates are not replacing salary with softer values. They are adding more conditions to what good compensation means.**

MARKET INSIGHT 05:

Flexibility Is Becoming More Specific

Once compensation becomes part of a broader value equation, the next question is how candidates define the work conditions that make an offer worth considering.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 05

The Workplace Must Fit Into Real Life

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED

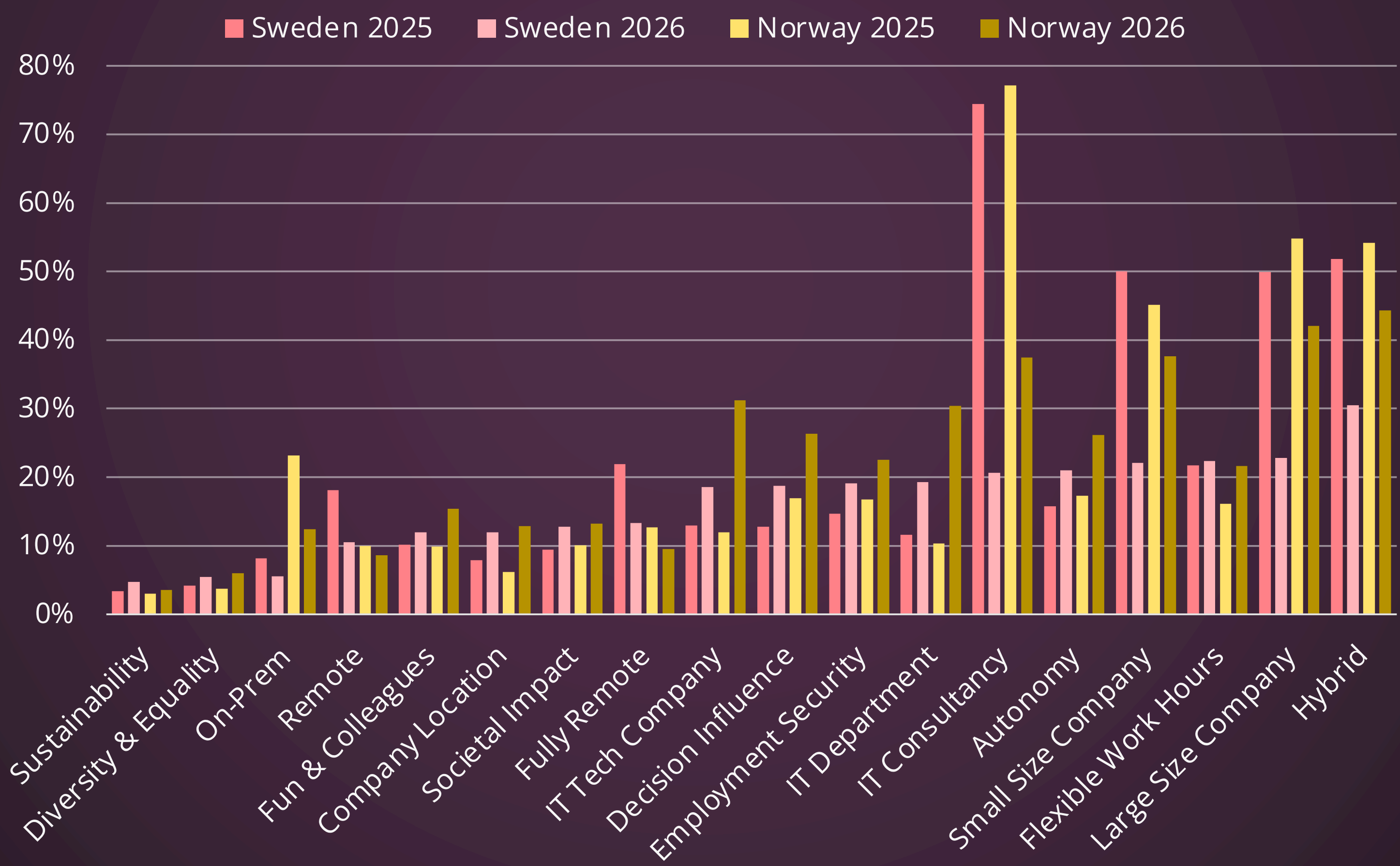
IT candidates want flexibility and remote options.

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

IT candidates are placing more value how work actually feels day-to-day — remote-options are becoming baseline.

SWEDEN & NORWAY — Overall Preferences in Workplace Environment

% of surveyed people selecting each Workplace Environment option



THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

FOR CANDIDATES, workplace environment may be evaluated as part of the total value of a role. The question is not only whether the job is hybrid, remote, consultancy, in-house, large or small. It is whether the setup gives enough autonomy, influence, stability, connection, and practical fit to support both performance and life outside work.

FOR COMPANIES, this means workplace environment should be counted as part of the offer. Senior IT candidates may want to understand how a typical workday looks, how decisions are made, how much autonomy people have, how flexible the schedule is, where the office is located, how secure the role feels, and whether the culture supports sustainable performance.

MARKET INSIGHT 05

Candidates Are Pricing the Daily Experience of Work

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

In this insight, we look at data in the workplace environment category, and here falls remote options as well as company type too.

Flexibility has been one of the clearest candidate preferences in IT. Hybrid work, remote options, and flexible hours became part of the standard language of recruitment.

Companies learned to say “we offer flexibility,” and candidates learned to ask for it. But this year’s data suggests that the conversation has taken a step forward.

Flexibility is still important — but it seems to go beyond location and which hours we are working. The bigger question now seems to be whether the work environment actually supports the life and performance of the candidate.

Remote-option preferences decline across both Sweden and Norway. Hybrid is still the largest remote-option preference, especially in Norway, but it has lost share compared with last year. Fully remote, remote work with office access, and on-prem is down too.

At the same time, preferences in softer values are moving up, suggesting that candidates may be less focused on choosing a fixed work model and more focused on whether the whole setup makes daily life better — counting flexibility as baseline.

MARKET INSIGHT 05

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

THE DAILY EXPERIENCE OF WORK IS GAINING VALUE

Looking at candidate preferences in the workplace environment category, we see an increase in most areas compared to 2025's report. Last year, we saw the same three preferences in the top as we do now.

In fact, all preferences have become more important since last year — an interesting find, considering the point made in the previous chapter, where salary increase saw a decrease, to the benefit of more life value preferences. This supports the idea that humans are becoming more human in the age of AI — and soft values become worth more.

In both Sweden and Norway, candidates are placing more value on the factors that shape everyday work: autonomy, decision influence, employment security, company location, flexible hours, and social connection. This matters because these preferences are not just "nice to have" culture signals — they affect the practical reality of work.

Autonomy affects how much control someone has over their tasks, time, and way of working.

Decision influence affects whether the candidate feels trusted, heard, and able to shape the work they are responsible for.

Employment security affects how safe the role feels in a market shaped by uncertainty, automation, and changing skill demands.

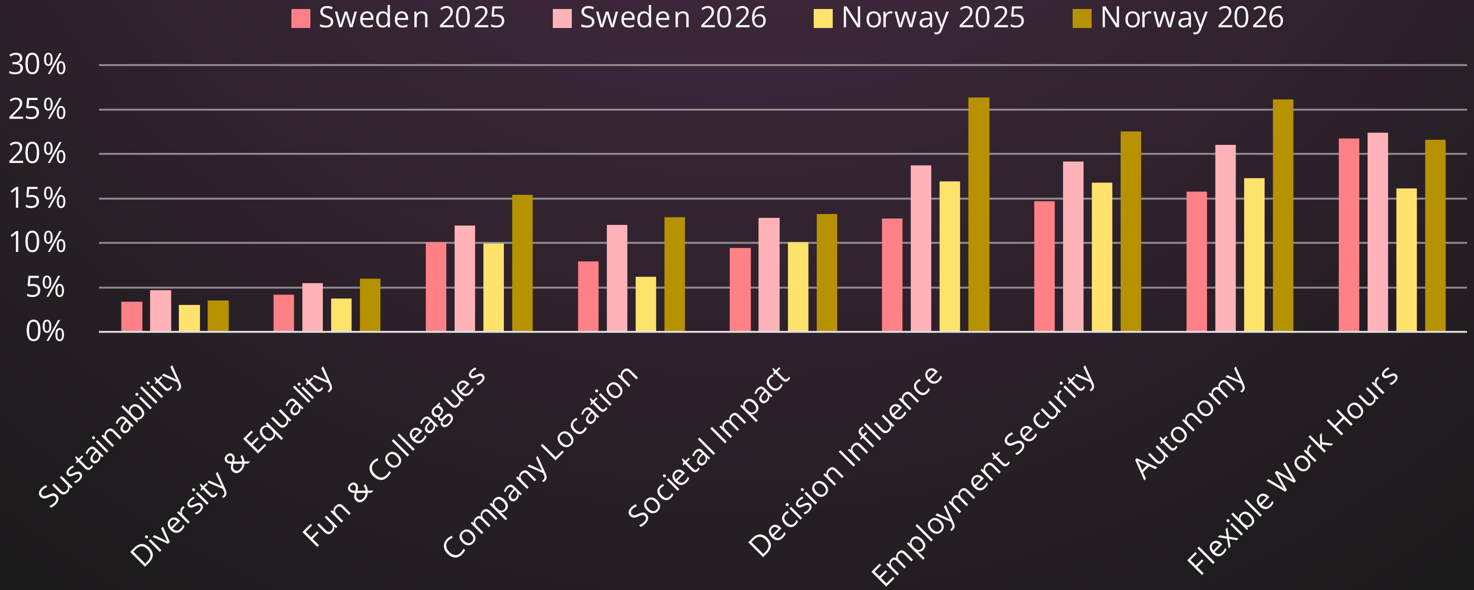
Company location affects commute, energy, time, and the quality of everyday life.

Fun & colleagues affects whether the workplace feels worth being part of, especially in a market where people can often do much of the technical work from anywhere.

Rather than wanting freedom from the office, the real desire seems to fall to a work environment that gives candidates more control, influence, stability, and a better daily experience.

SWEDEN & NORWAY —
Preferences in the Workplace Environment

% of surveyed people selecting each Workplace Environment option



MARKET INSIGHT 05

REMOTE OPTIONS

This is the surprising part of the insight: in both Sweden and Norway, all remote-option categories decline. That means the shift is not from office to remote — if candidates were wanting to move back toward the office, we would expect on-prem preferences to rise. They do not.

Instead, the decline across all remote-option categories may suggest that candidates are becoming less attached to the label itself. They may no longer think of flexibility as one fixed answer, but looking at the practical setup behind the label.

A role can be hybrid on paper and still feel rigid in practice.

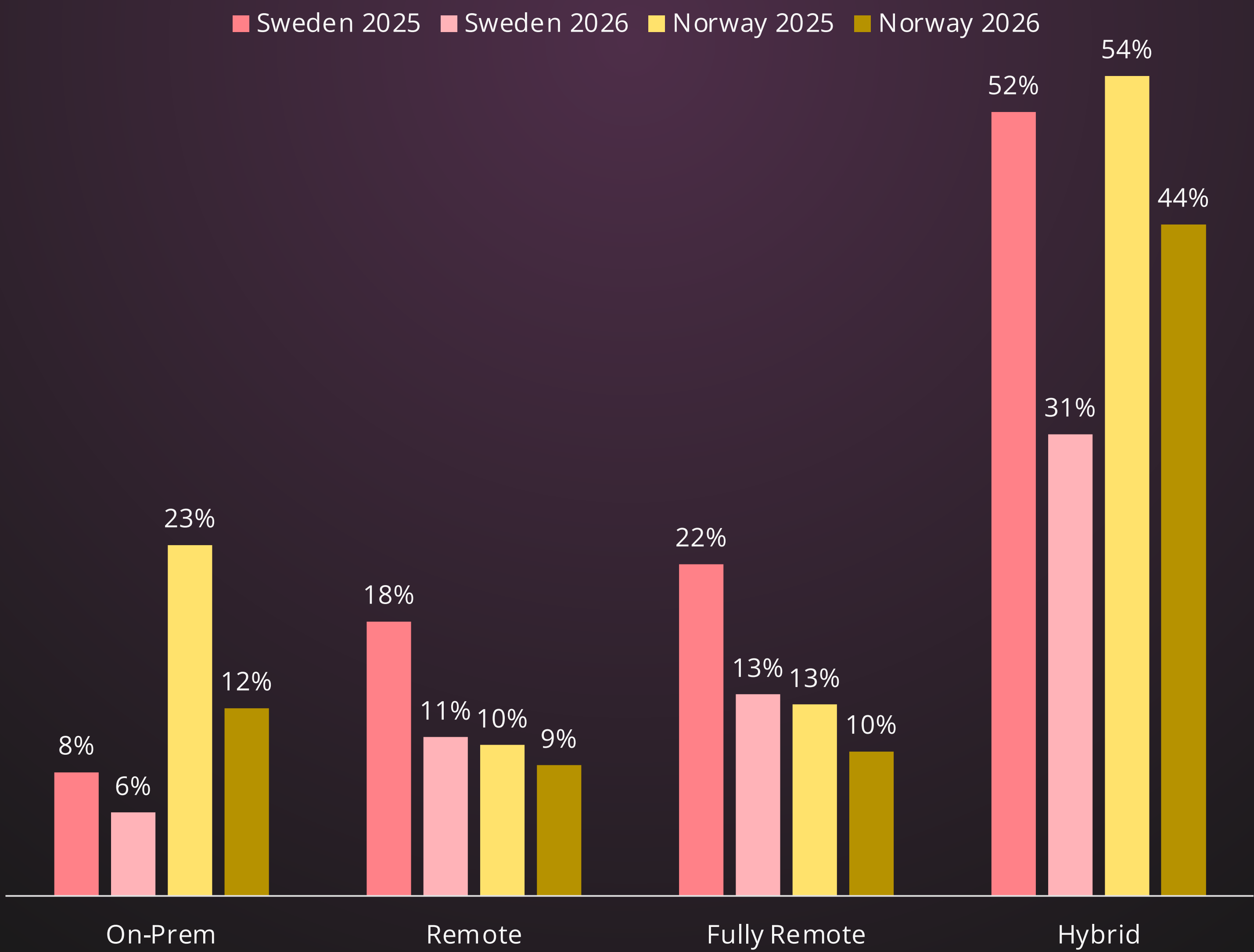
A role can be remote and still create stress, isolation, poor communication, or constant availability.

A role can include office time and feel valuable, if the location makes sense and the time together has a clear purpose.

This is why the remote-option data should not be read as a rejection of flexibility, but maybe more as a sign that flexibility has matured.

SWEDEN & NORWAY — Preferences in Remote Options

% of surveyed people selecting each Remote Options



MARKET INSIGHT 05

EMPLOYER TYPE & COMPANY SIZE

The third movement is about company type and company size. The data suggests that IT candidates may be less attracted to consultancy as preferred employer type than they were last year, while IT departments and IT tech companies increase.

This shift could point toward a stronger interest in environments where candidates can be closer to product, operations, ownership, and longer-term development — but the data does not prove exactly why consultancy preference has declined.

At the same time, both large and small organization-size preferences also decline. This further hints at the idea that the structures of the actual company matter less, and softer values matter more for our daily experience.

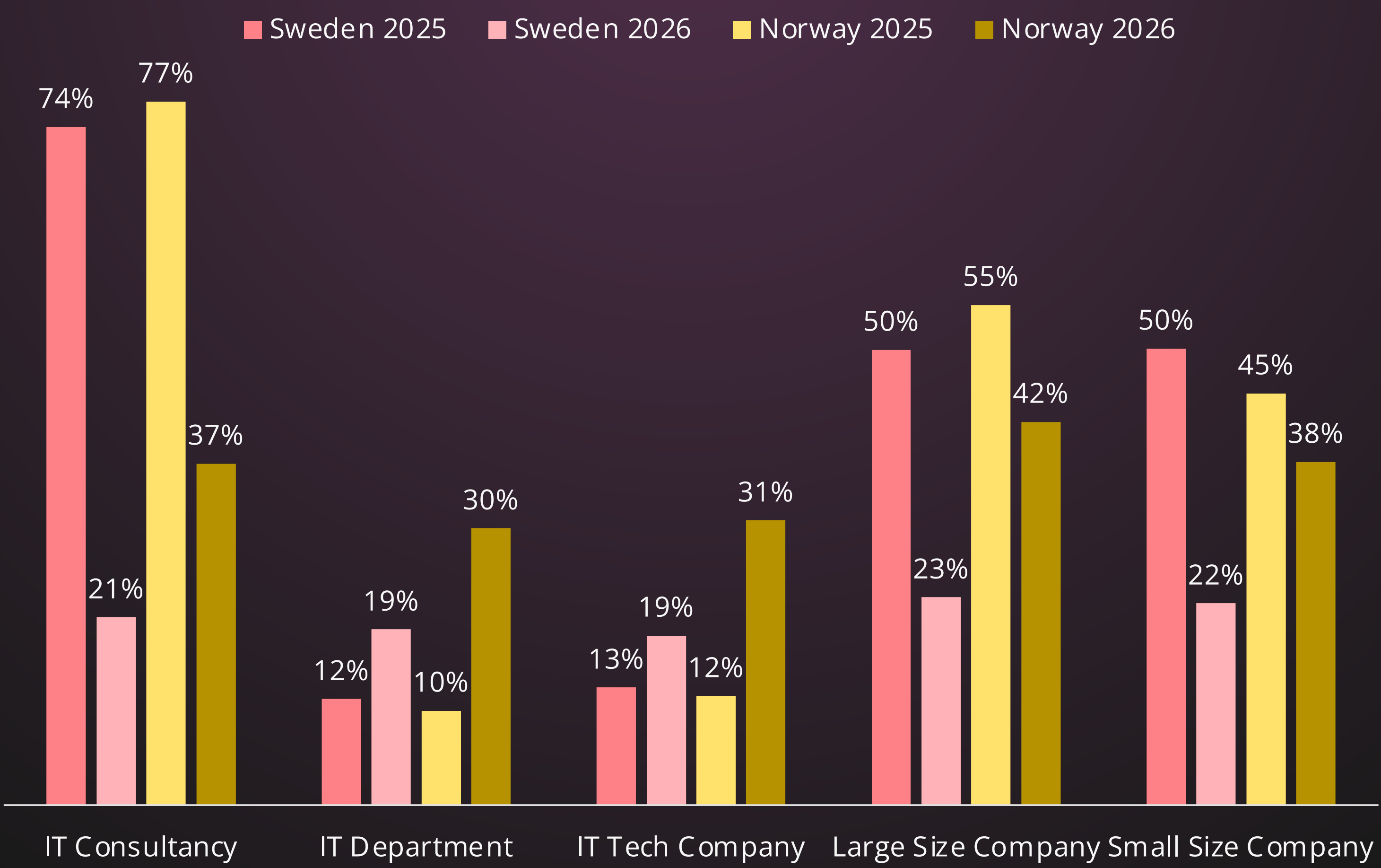
Candidates may care less about whether a company is large or small, and more about what the role actually offers:

- What will I own?
- Who will I work with?
- How much influence will I have?
- Can this environment support the life and career I want?

That makes employer type and size less of a headline, and the actual work environment more important.

SWEDEN & NORWAY —
Preferences in Employer Type & Company Size

% of surveyed people selecting each Employer Type & Company Size option



MARKET INSIGHT 05

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

Sweden shows the strongest decline in several of the traditional preference labels. The remote-option data is especially clear. At first, this may look like flexibility is losing importance. But Sweden may not be moving away from flexibility as a concept, as much as a label.

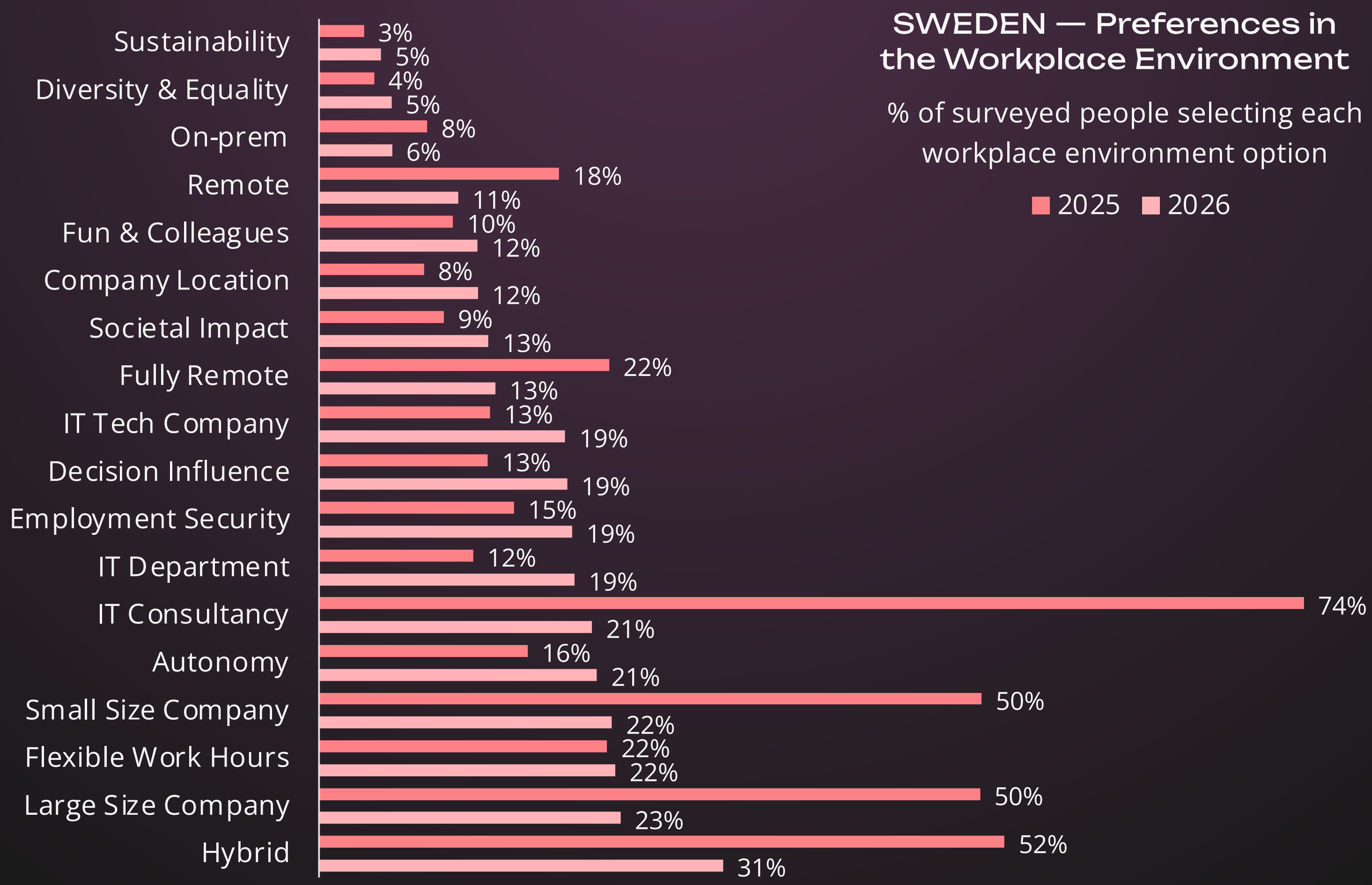
The office location matters more than before, suggesting that when office time is part of the setup, the location needs to make sense. A bad commute can make even a flexible role feel difficult. A good location can make hybrid work easier, more social, and less draining.

Decision influence also matters more than before, suggesting that candidates are not only asking for freedom in where they work, but also more influence in how work is shaped.

The employer-type data shows an even bigger shift. IT consultancy drops, but at the same time, IT departments and IT tech companies both gain share. This could suggest that Swedish IT candidates are becoming more interested in environments with clearer ownership, closer connection to product or business, and more stable long-term context.

The organization size data is also striking, hinting even further at the fact candidates may be less moved by employer labels, and more moved by the lived reality of the work.

FOR SWEDISH COMPANIES, this means that a strong employer message cannot rely only on being hybrid, being a consultancy, being a tech company, being large, or being small. The offer needs to explain the environment: what the candidate gets to influence, how much autonomy the role includes, how does the setup works in practice — and what kind of responsibility, culture, and life-fit does the company actually provides. That is where the Swedish preference shift seems to be moving.



MARKET INSIGHT 05

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

Hybrid remains strong even after declining, meaning it is still the largest remote-option preference in the Norwegian IT market. But Norway also shows a major decline in on-prem preference — when they previously had a much stronger on-prem preference than Sweden.

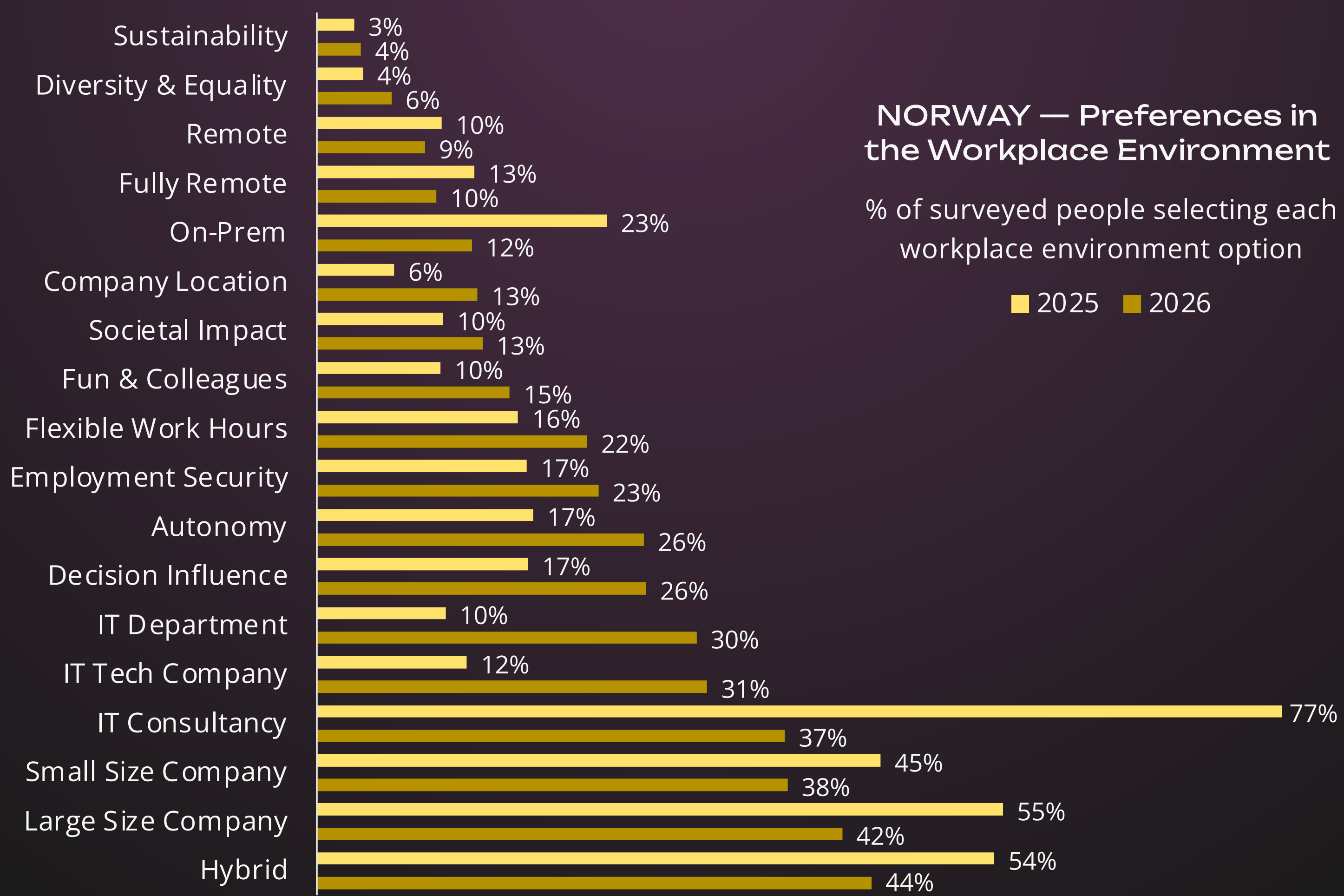
The drop suggests that Norwegian candidates may still value connection and structure, but fewer now appear to prefer a traditional full-time office model as their ideal setup. At the same time, workplace environment preferences rise sharply — one of the clearest signals in the Norwegian preference data.

Norwegian IT candidates are placing much more value on control, influence, stability, and the practical conditions of work. They may not be asking for full independence from the office. But they do seem to want more influence over how work is done.

The employer-type data also shows a strong shift, suggesting that Norwegian IT candidates may be increasingly drawn toward environments where they can work closer to the business, the product, or the long-term development of the organization.

In Norway, the organization-size decline is less dramatic than in Sweden, but still visible. This suggests that size may still matter more in Norway than in Sweden, but it is becoming less dominant as a filter.

FOR COMPANIES, the message is clear: hybrid still matters, but it is not enough on its own. The strongest employer proposition may need to combine structure with real autonomy. That means clear expectations, useful collaboration, meaningful influence, flexible hours, and enough stability for candidates to trust the move.



NORWAY — Preferences in the Workplace Environment

% of surveyed people selecting each workplace environment option

2025 2026

MARKET INSIGHT 05

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The workplace is no longer just where work happens.

The previous pages show a clear shift: candidates are placing more value on the conditions around work. This matters because work is changing quickly.

AI and automation can make parts of execution faster. But faster work does not automatically create a better work life. In some cases, it can create more pressure, more output expectations, more meetings, more context switching, and a stronger need to protect focus.

That may be why workplace environment preferences are becoming more important. More than flexibility on paper, candidates seem to be asking for work that gives them enough control to perform well and live well.

Autonomy matters because people want space to do good work.

Decision influence matters because senior professionals want to shape the work they are responsible for.

Employment security matters because the market feels more uncertain.

Company location matters because daily friction has real value.

Fun & colleagues matter because work is still a human environment, not only a technical output system.

And **employer type matters** because candidates may be asking where they can have the right kind of ownership, connection, and long-term relevance.

FOR CANDIDATES, this insight creates a more practical way to evaluate a role. Do not only ask whether the role is hybrid or remote, but how the work environment actually functions.

Who makes decisions? How much autonomy does the role include? How useful is office time? How much energy does the commute take? How does the team work together? Does the setup support the life you want outside work?

FOR COMPANIES, this insight is a warning against treating workplace environment as a soft benefit. It should be part of the offer. Senior IT candidates are not only comparing salary, title, and skill match. They are comparing the daily reality of the role against the life and work setup they already have.

The strongest employer messages will show how work works — and why it makes everyday life better.

> **Flexibility is no longer only about where work happens. It is about whether the whole workplace fits the life around it.**

MARKET INSIGHT 06:

Stability Is Showing Up Through Environment

Candidates may not always call it security, but their preferences suggest a stronger interest in environments that protect future value: in-house roles, competence growth, ownership, and long-term employability.

Life-fit is not only about where or when work happens. It is also about whether the environment protects long-term value.

Order of Content:

- Key finding
- Country breakdown
- Why this matters now

MARKET INSIGHT 06

Candidates are Protecting Not Just Their Jobs — But Their Relevance

WHAT THE MARKET ASSUMED

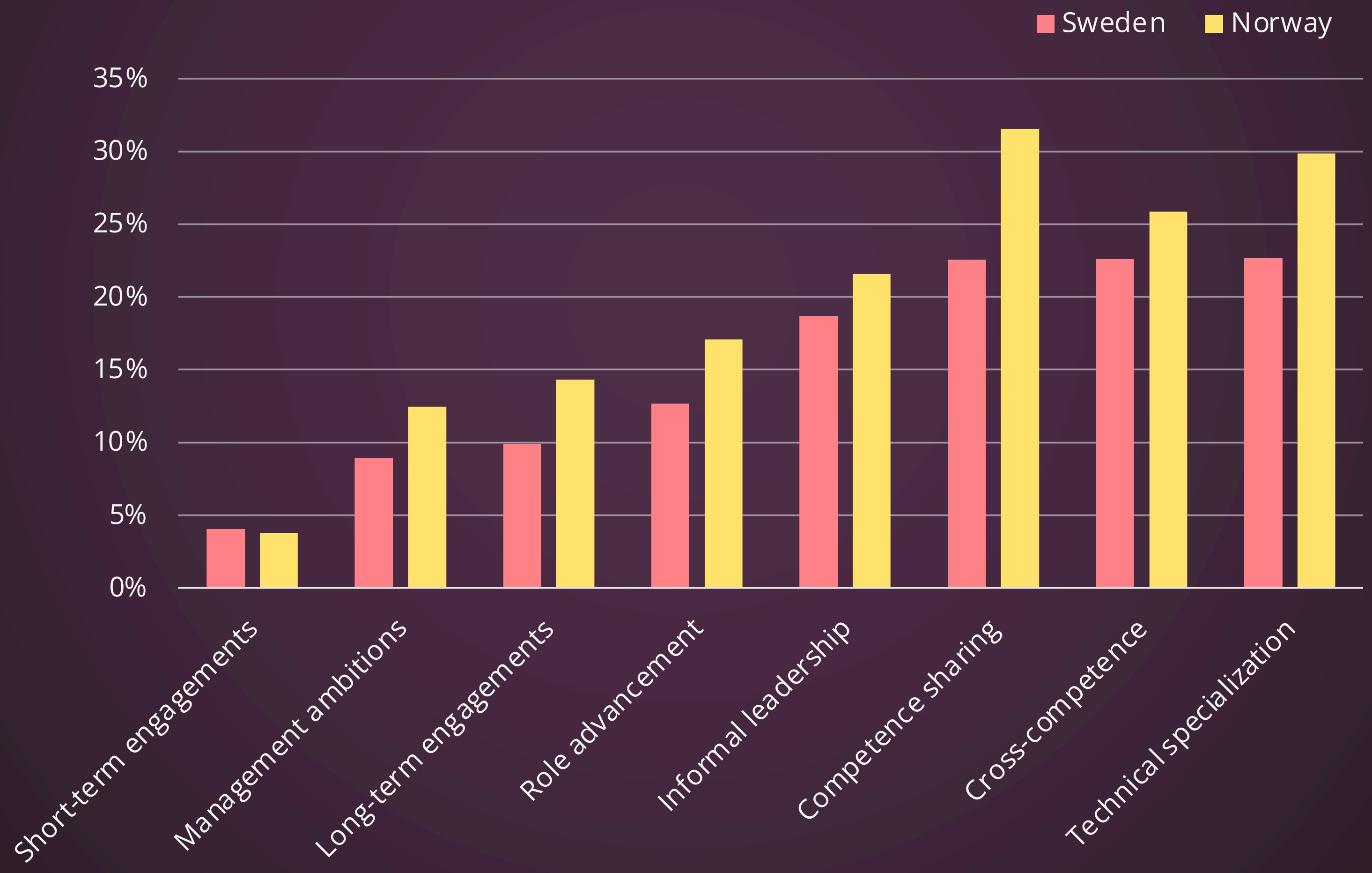
In a more uncertain IT market, candidates want security.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Security may not only mean job safety — but staying valuable for tomorrow's market.

SWEDEN & NORWAY — Preferences in Personal Development

% of surveyed people selecting each Personal Development option



THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

FOR CANDIDATES, future security should not only mean choosing the safest role. It should mean choosing an environment that keeps them relevant. Look for roles where you can deepen your expertise, share competence, build cross-functional understanding, influence others, and keep developing in a direction the market continues to reward.

FOR COMPANIES, personal development is crucial. Senior IT candidates may respond strongly to environments where learning is built into the work, where competence is shared across teams, and where the role clearly supports long-term employability.

MARKET INSIGHT 06

Knowledge Goes Deep — and Broad

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The market often talks about security as if it only means job stability. But in IT, security is becoming more complex.

AI is changing execution work. Technical skills are shifting faster. Some skills become baseline, while others lose salary power. New role identities appear. Responsibility moves closer to ownership, coordination, and business-critical outcomes.

In that kind of market, the safest career is not always the one that simply feels stable today, but one that also keeps the candidate relevant tomorrow — and that is what makes personal development so important.

Across both Sweden and Norway, almost every personal development preference is moving upward. This is not only about wanting a course, a certification, or a promotion — it is a future-proofing mindset. Candidates want to hold on to their current value, and to build the next version of it.

FROM CAREER DEVELOPMENT TO CAREER INSURANCE

In the graphs, there isn't one isolated preference increasing — but a full category shift.

In Norway, the changes are especially strong. Sweden moves in the same direction, but more moderately. Candidates seem to be placing more value on development that keeps them useful.

When the market changes quickly, standing still becomes more dangerous. If AI makes some execution work easier to scale, candidates need to protect what makes them hard to replace: judgment, specialization, context, leadership, adaptability, and the ability to learn with others.

That is why competence sharing and cross-competence is such an interesting signal. Candidates are longing for environments where knowledge moves between people.

The data suggests there is a desire for stronger teams, better learning cultures, and workplaces where competence does not sit in silos. IT candidates may not want to be locked into one narrow lane, but to build understanding across tools, teams, domains, and business problems.

Technical specialization also rises, which may seem like the opposite of cross-competence — but together, they make sense.

The future-proof candidate does not only go broad or deep, but both. They seem to want enough depth to stay valuable, and enough range to adapt when the market changes.

MARKET INSIGHT 06

A CLOSER LOOK AT SWEDEN

Sweden shows a steady move toward broader career value, a more moderate but consistent shift in personal development preferences.

Technical specialization, competence sharing, cross-competence, informal leadership, role advancement, and management ambitions all increase.

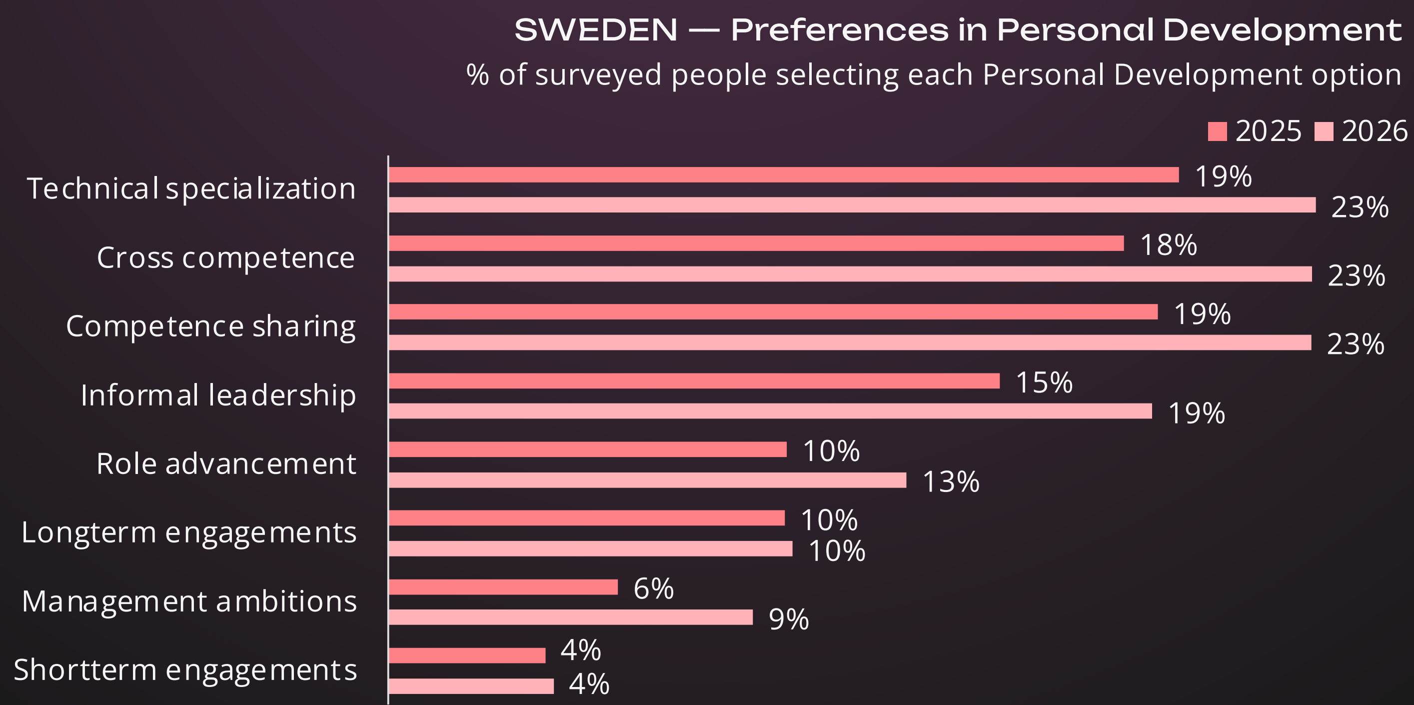
The movement is not dramatic, but it is consistent across the category, suggesting that Swedish IT candidates are placing more value on development that keeps them relevant. Swedish IT candidates seem to want to deepen their technical expertise, broaden their understanding across areas, and learn through stronger knowledge-sharing environments.

Informal leadership, role advancement, and management ambitions also rise, suggesting a gradual move toward influence and responsibility — but not necessarily through formal management alone. Swedish candidates may be interested in growing through expertise, collaboration, and informal leadership before moving into traditional management tracks.

Both long-term and short-term engagements remain stable, hinting at the idea that it's more important now what the role helps the candidate become, than a particular trending interest in longer or shorter assignments.

FOR SWEDISH CANDIDATES, the practical question seems to be: *does this role help me stay relevant over time?* The strongest career move in today's market may be the one that combines specialization with range: a role that builds deeper expertise, exposes them to adjacent areas, and gives them space to influence others without necessarily forcing them into formal management.

FOR SWEDISH COMPANIES, this means personal development should be concrete. It is not enough to say "we offer growth", because candidates seem to want to understand how competence is shared, how technical depth is supported, how cross-functional work happens, and what informal leadership can look like in practice.



MARKET INSIGHT 06

A CLOSER LOOK AT NORWAY

Norway shows the same future-proofing shift — only stronger. They are moving in the same direction as Sweden, but with much larger increases — the strongest personal development movement in this insight.

Norwegian IT candidates appear to be placing much more weight on environments where they can keep learning, deepen expertise, exchange knowledge, and build range across teams or domains, suggesting that future-proofing may become a more urgent preference signal in Norway.

NORWEGIAN CANDIDATES seem to ask the same question as in Sweden, but sharper: *Does this role keep me developing fast enough?*

This may be especially important in a market where AI, automation, and shifting skill demands make career paths feel less predictable.

FOR EMPLOYERS IN NORWAY, this creates a clear opportunity. If an offer can show strong learning culture, knowledge sharing, technical depth, and credible progression, it may speak directly to what senior IT candidates are now prioritizing.

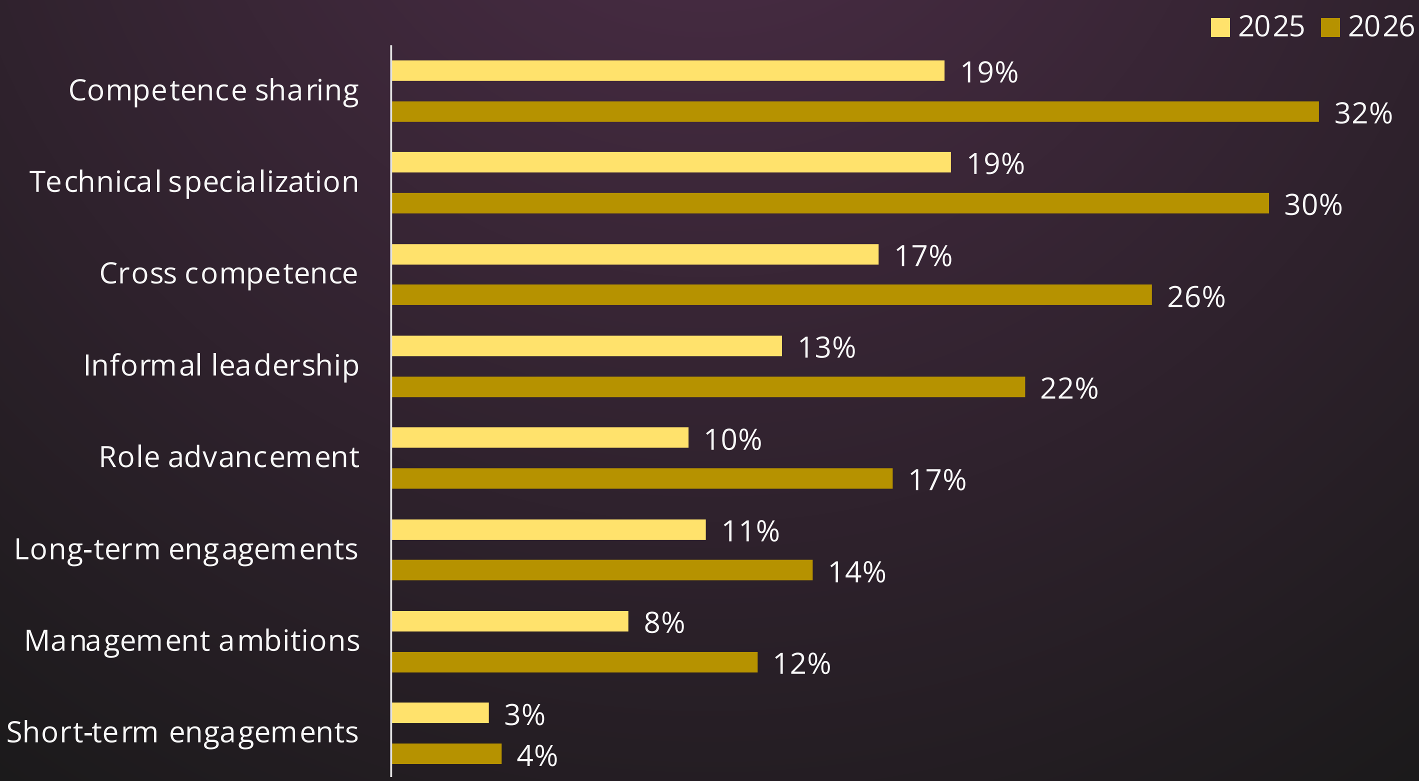
But "good development opportunities" is too vague. Senior candidates may want to know:

- Who will I learn from?
- What kind of problems will I solve?
- How is knowledge shared?
- Can I grow into more influence over time?

The companies that can answer those questions clearly may have a stronger position.

NORWAY — Preferences in Personal Development

% of surveyed people selecting each Personal Development option



MARKET INSIGHT 06

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The strongest career move is the one that keeps you valuable. The previous insights showed a more selective IT market.

- Not every AI skill pays.
- Not every technical stack creates salary leverage.
- Not every senior-sounding title is enough.
- Not every compensation offer can rely on salary alone.
- Not every workplace label creates real life-fit.

This final insight brings those signals together.

If the market is becoming more selective, then candidates need to become more intentional.

Personal development is not only about growth for growth's sake. It is about staying relevant in a market where relevance can change quickly.

Because at that senior level, experience alone may not be enough if the market moves faster than the candidate's skill set, role context, or leadership range.

The safest career path may not be the one with the least change, but the one that keeps building future value. That means choosing roles where learning is not separate from the work — where technical depth grows, competence is shared, and candidates can build range across teams, systems, or business problems.

And where informal leadership and influence become part of the next step.

FOR CANDIDATES, the practical question becomes:

Will this role make me more valuable three years from now?

That question may be more useful than asking only whether the role is safe today.

FOR COMPANIES, this insight matters because senior candidates may judge development promises more carefully than before. A passive candidate is not looking for a new job. They are asking whether the move is worth the risk.

A strong salary can help, as well as a good work environment. But a role that clearly protects future relevance may be even more powerful. Companies should show how the role helps candidates build competence, influence, and long-term employability.

Future security is not only about employment — it is about employability. Development is career insurance.

Conclusions

The salary and skills data shows where the market is placing value. The preference data shows what candidates want that value to feel like in real life.

Together, they point to the same shift: work is being evaluated less as a standalone transaction and more as part of a broader life and career equation.

This report started with a simple question:

Where does human value move when AI changes the cost of execution?

The answer is not one thing — it moves in the market, in the offer, and in how candidates define a good career decision.

Across the six insights, one pattern becomes clear: the IT market is becoming more selective about what it rewards, while candidates are becoming more selective about what they accept in return.

Market value moves toward AI-native identity, scarce specialization, and visible responsibility. And for candidates, value moves toward autonomy, security, wellbeing, competence growth, and work that supports life beyond the monthly paycheck.

AI is changing how work gets done. But the deeper change is how value is recognized, rewarded, and protected.

For both candidates and companies, the challenge is now the same:

Understand value before the market forces a reaction.

AI is changing how work gets done — but the deeper shift is about value.

The market is learning to separate tool use from true AI-native identity, to separate expected skills from differentiating skills, to separate senior-sounding labels from visible responsibility.

Candidates are making their own distinctions. They are not only asking what work pays, but what work protects and enables, and what kind of future it helps them build. That is the shift toward ownership and life value.

The future of work will not be defined only by the technologies people use, but by how clearly human value can be recognized, rewarded, and protected in a market where execution keeps getting easier to scale.

- Salary still matters — but it is no longer enough on its own.
- Skills still matter — but not all skills create leverage.
- Work still matters — but it is no longer the center of value.

The strongest careers, and the strongest offers, will be built around a wider question:

What kind of value does this create over time?

About Worko

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Through our own data & platform, we create pipelines of talent who are ready when you are. We track change-readiness as a key data point, enabling you to hire more & better candidates over time.

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For clients: worko.com

Methodology & Data Notes

DATA SOURCE

OLS regression (ElasticNet feature selection, 80/20 holdout, nested 5-fold CV) on 2025 Worko dataset, n = 170,611.

VARIABLES

Annual base salary (SEK/month, PPP-adjusted) as dependent variable; independent variables: 22 skill-cluster representatives, tenure, country, city size, employer size, CEO flag.

MODEL FIT

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.26$ (26.12%). Sweden 0.20, Norway 0.16.

CONFIDENCE

Figures shown are point estimates; significance tested via p-values ($p<0.05$), HC3 robust SE, Bootstrap 95% CI (100 resamples).

CURRENCIES

1 NOK = 0.93 SEK. All figures normalized.

OFFICIAL BASELINES

SEK 42,900 average base salary (SCB) / NOK 62,070 (SSB).