

Salary Survey Report

Social & Policy Research within UK Market Research Agencies

SOCIAL & POLICY RESEARCH SALARY SURVEY 2026

UK MARKET RESEARCH AGENCIES

MARKET OVERVIEW

Social & Policy Research remains a structurally lower-paying specialism than commercial consumer research, although the gap is narrowing at senior levels.

Highest demand for:

- ✓ Public-sector client experience
- ✓ Mixed-methods capability
- ✓ Evidence-of-impact expertise

£ All figures are base salary (GBP). Bonuses typically 5–10%.

GRADE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)	MIDPOINT
RESEARCH EXECUTIVE	£28k – £33k	£30,500
SENIOR RESEARCH EXECUTIVE	£33k – £40k	£36,500
RESEARCH MANAGER / SENIOR RESEARCH MANAGER	£38k – £53k	£45,500
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	£50k – £64k	£57,000
RESEARCH DIRECTOR	£60k – £85k	£72,500
ASSOCIATE PARTNER	UP TO £100k	N/A

KEY TAKEAWAY

The salary gap between social research and commercial insight continues to narrow at senior levels.



Bonuses in this sector are typically modest (5–10%).

MARKET CONTEXT

UK median full-time salary (2024):

£37,430

Research Managers and above are generally at or above this benchmark.

JUNE 2026

SOURCES: ENI CRM data, MrWeb live job postings, Glassdoor, Resources Group, Indeed, PayScale, Prospects.ac.uk, Government Social Research benchmarks

While salaries in social research have traditionally lagged behind commercial insight, the gap is narrowing, particularly at senior levels where demand remains strong for researchers with public-sector expertise, evaluation experience, stakeholder management skills, and mixed-methods capability.

Current salary benchmarks include:

Level	Salary Range
Research Executive	£28,000–£33,000
Senior Research Executive	£33,000–£40,000
Research Manager / Senior Research Manager	£38,000–£53,000
Associate Director	£50,000–£64,000
Research Director	£60,000–£85,000
Associate Partner	Up to £100,000

Key Hiring Trends for 2026

Public-sector expertise commands a premium

Researchers with experience working with government departments, regulators, and policy evaluations remain highly sought after.

Mixed-methods skills are increasingly valuable

Professionals who can confidently lead both qualitative and quantitative research programs continue to attract stronger salaries.

Commercial skills matter more than ever

Business development, proposal writing, and client retention are becoming important differentiators, even within purpose-led research environments.

Flexibility remains a key attraction tool

Hybrid working continues to influence hiring and retention decisions, often helping employers compete beyond salary alone.

Senior talent remains scarce

The supply of experienced Associate Directors, Research Directors, and future business leaders remains limited, placing upward pressure on senior salaries.

The sector continues to offer attractive career opportunities for researchers seeking meaningful, evidence-led work with real societal impact, alongside increasingly competitive remuneration and flexible working arrangements.

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