2026 Middle East Technology Officers Compensation Report

As demand for technology leaders grows in the Middle East, compensation remains competitive, but organizations may need more flexible reward structures to attract scarce global talent.



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A message from the authors

Welcome to Heidrick & Struggles' second Middle East Technology Officers Compensation Survey, which examines both organizational structure and compensation for this increasingly critical role.

For this report, Heidrick & Struggles compiled organizational and compensation data from a survey fielded in September 2026 of 70 technology leaders based in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain. In the coming years, we expect to be able to report further on additional countries with an expanded sample size. The majority of respondents held the title of chief technology & digital officer or chief information officer, while others included chief technology officers, chief digital officers, and other senior digital executives.

We hope you enjoy reading the report, which is the only one of its kind covering organizational structure and compensation data. As always, suggestions are welcome, so please feel free to contact us with questions and comments.

With warmest regards,

Methodology

In an online survey, we asked participants to provide information on their role structure and industry, alongside data on compensation including current base salary and bonus for the most recent fiscal year. All data collected was self-reported by the respondents and has been aggregated.

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On confidentiality

The *Middle East Technology Officers Compensation Report*, 2026, has been conducted on an anonymous basis. All data is reported anonymously and in aggregate.

Market context

The Middle East's technology market continues to mature rapidly, increasingly resembling more established global markets in both technology development and deployment. Investment is accelerating across data infrastructure, next-generation connectivity, autonomous vehicles, robotics, and AI, keeping the region's technology leadership landscape highly active.

Despite the political and economic challenges experienced across the region this year, demand for senior technology talent has remained strong and even surpassed hiring figures from 2025. AI has been a particularly important catalyst as organizations look for leaders who can translate emerging technologies into large-scale, commercially-relevant applications by building the required capabilities and deploying new technologies across their organizations.

At the same time, these recent disruptions have reinforced the importance of infrastructure resilience, cybersecurity, business continuity, and the protection of critical technology environments. While these priorities are not new, real-world turbulence has tested existing protocols and exposed areas where further investment may be needed. Increasingly, technology leaders will be expected to balance the pace of innovation with security, resilience, and operational continuity.

Despite the expansion of technology leadership responsibilities, compensation has not risen uniformly. Instead, the market has become more compressed, with increases concentrated at the lower end of the compensation range and moderation at the high end. The region's favorable tax environment has helped it remain competitive with other major markets without requiring broad-based increases in overall pay. That position may become harder to maintain as competition intensifies for areas such as AI and robotics, where expertise remains scarce.

To recruit the most sought-after executives—particularly those with multiple international options—organizations may need to rethink traditional reward structures. Many government entities have yet to introduce long-term incentive plans; among those that have, they remain less developed than in more established technology markets. Sign-on bonuses are used more frequently but do not provide the same retention benefits as longer-term incentives. Share swaps and equity buyouts remain uncommon, which can create barriers to recruiting executives from markets such as the United States, Canada, and western Europe.

One area where organizations across the Middle East remain competitive is in the use of education allowances. These benefits are becoming increasingly common across the GCC, even among early-stage and PE- or VC-backed companies. Given the significant cost of education across the region, they can be a meaningful differentiator, particularly for executives relocating with their families. As competition for the region's most sought-after technology leaders increases, organizations will need to continue to think more broadly about the full executive value proposition.

Demographics

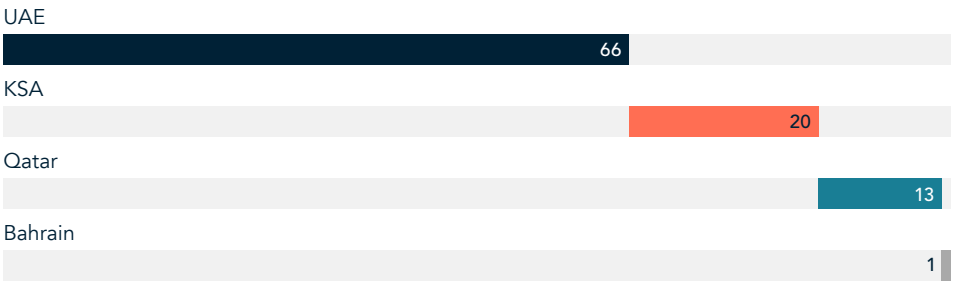
Individual level

Respondents spanned a range of positions, but all had C-level titles or were the most senior digital executive at their organization. They were concentrated in the UAE, with additional clusters in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain.

Role (%)

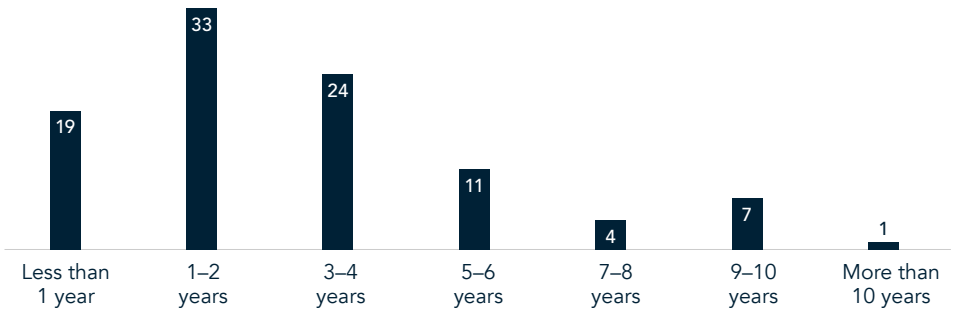


Country where personally based (%)

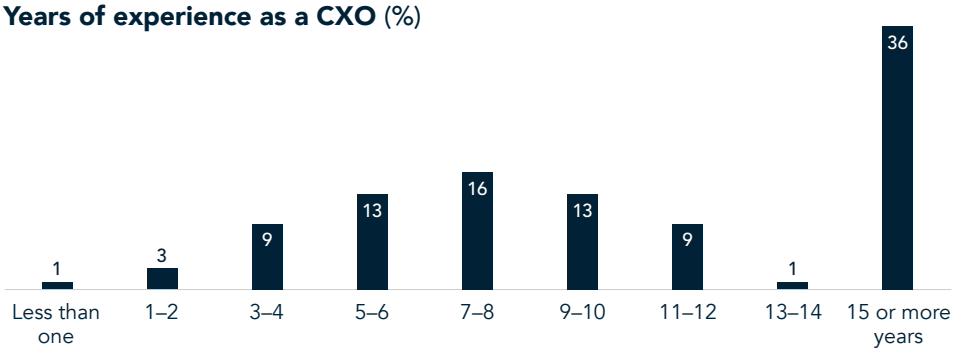


More than one-third reported 15 or more years of CXO experience, but about three-quarters have been in their current role for less than five years.

Years in current role (%)



Years of experience as a CXO (%)



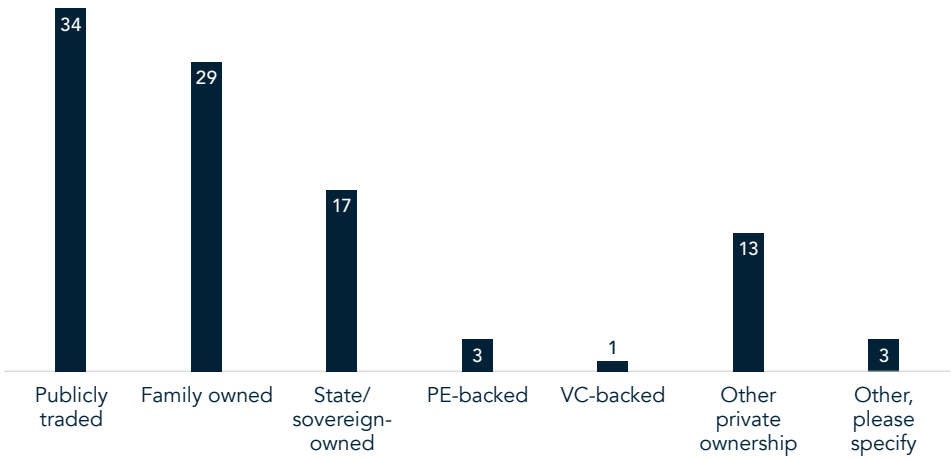
Firm level

A strong majority (87%) of respondents' firms are headquartered in the Middle East, with companies across a wide revenue range. The sample also spans a broad range of organizational contexts. Publicly traded companies were the most common type of ownership, followed closely by family-owned companies, while financial services was the most common industry.

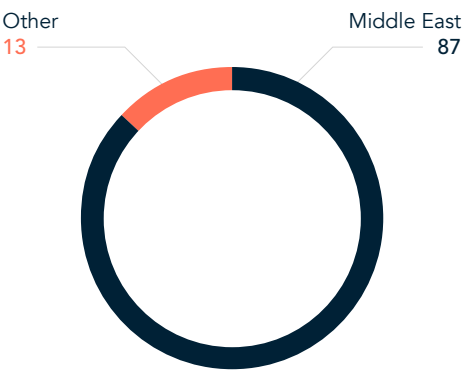
Company size (annual revenue USD) (%)



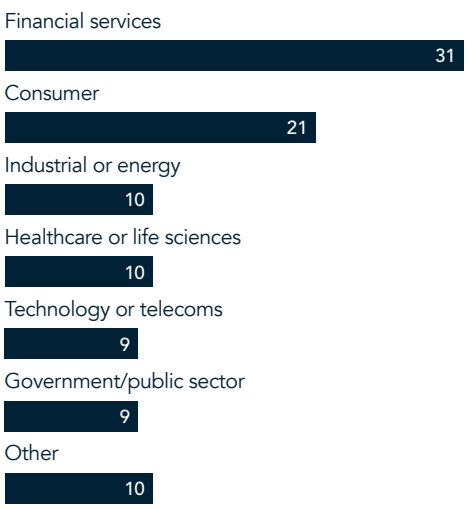
Company ownership (%)



Headquarters region (%)



Industry (%)



Compensation overview

For further compensation analysis, including tables with breakouts by demographic categories, see our 2026 Middle East Technology Officers compensation report.

Technology officer compensation across the Middle East remains predominantly cash-based, with cash base and bonus nearly universal components of executive pay and long-term incentives used more selectively. Median total cash compensation was $601,000 across the region, although levels varied meaningfully by market, from $551,000 in the UAE and $701,000 in KSA to $926,000 in Qatar. Beyond geography, the findings point to meaningful differences based on organizational scale, tenure in role, and access to equity.

Technology officers have seen an increase in total cash compensation since 2023.[1] Median total cash compensation rose from $528,000 in 2023 to $601,000 in 2026, with nearly all of the increase coming through cash bonuses while median cash base salary remained static. The increase was concentrated toward the lower end of the market, raising the floor for technology leadership compensation in the region.

Company scale appears to be a considerably stronger compensation differentiator than accumulated CXO experience. Median total cash compensation rises from $488,000 at companies with less than $1 billion in revenue to $751,000 at companies with more than $5 billion—a 54% premium. By comparison, executives with more than 10 years of CXO experience report median total cash compensation of $651,000, just 13% higher than the $576,000 reported by those with 10 years or less. While other differences across these groups may contribute, the comparison suggests that organizational scale and complexity may matter more for compensation than the length of an executive's prior C-suite experience.

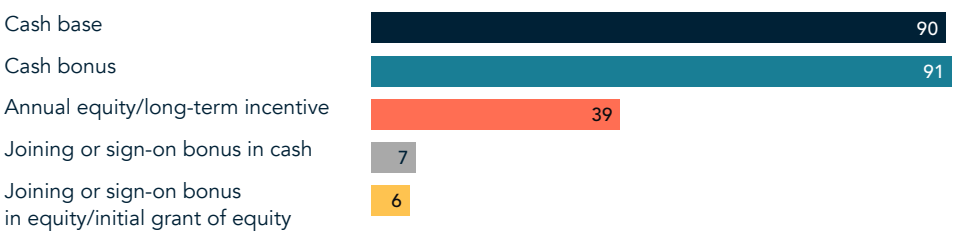
Long-term incentives are less common but can create substantial wealth-creation opportunities for those who receive them. Among equity recipients, the median annual award was $300,000, while the average reached $1.041 million, indicating that a smaller number of executives received particularly large awards. As Middle Eastern organizations compete for technology leaders from markets such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, the competitiveness of an offer may therefore depend not only on cash compensation, but also on the opportunity for longer-term wealth creation.

Recently appointed technology officers report higher cash compensation than longer-tenured incumbents. This may reflect the premium required to attract technology leadership talent in the current market, although differences in company size, role scope, and respondent mix may also contribute.

Types of compensation received

The survey found cash base and cash bonus were nearly universal components of technology executive compensation, while equity was less common. Joining or sign-on awards were reported by only a small minority of respondents.

Types of compensation received (%)



N=70

1 Tom Clarke, "2023 Middle East Technology Officers Compensation Survey," Heidrick & Struggles, heidrick.com.

Cash compensation: base, bonus and total

The cash compensation chart provides distributions for cash base, cash bonus, and total cash compensation across the overall sample and by country, role, tenure, CXO experience, industry, company size, and ownership.

Across the overall sample, median total cash compensation was $601,000, with a 25th percentile of $479,000 and a 75th percentile of $745,000.

Cash compensation breakdown: base, bonus, and total (USD thousands)

		n	Cash base				Cash bonus				Total cash compensation			
			25th percentile	Median	Average	75th percentile	25th percentile	Median	Average	75th percentile	25th percentile	Median	Average	75th percentile
Overall		70	313	388	397	488	150	201	262	323	479	601	614	745
Country	UAE	46	313	363	378	463	150	188	227	276	426	551	557	676
	KSA	14	338	413	393	513	150	188	240	207	488	701	614	713
	Qatar	10	438	488	491	513	238	388	432	563	751	926	874	988
Role	Chief information officer	22	313	313	359	463	150	188	208	238	426	551	539	676
	Chief tech officer	10	238	363	341	463	229	351	390	388	401	658	618	901
	Chief tech & information officer	6	388	413	401	438	188	238	326	563	576	651	726	1001
	Chief digital officer/most senior digital exec	9	323	463	427	488	153	220	257	398	463	626	608	814
	Chief digital & technology officer	23	338	413	444	513	150	188	246	276	488	563	651	751
Current role tenure	Less than 1 year	13	363	463	433	488	153	220	258	363	563	626	671	926
	1–2 years	23	338	463	400	513	163	201	250	276	513	676	605	726
	3–4 years	17	313	363	372	413	150	226	243	238	469	564	592	651
	5+ years	17	276	338	386	463	150	188	303	363	398	551	603	770
CXO experience	10 or less years	38	313	363	385	463	163	213	242	238	463	576	570	676
	11 or more years	32	313	413	412	488	150	188	282	388	513	651	667	901
Industry	Financial services	22	338	463	434	513	238	238	340	438	626	713	755	901
	Industrial or energy	7	388	501	455	513	188	188	196	188	576	701	651	701
	Technology or telecoms	6	344	438	413	457	150	338	353	563	150	557	569	1001
	Healthcare or life sciences	7	150	238	215	238	150	150	178	163	150	388	311	426
	Consumer	15	363	413	420	463	150	163	192	188	551	563	612	626
	Government/public sector	6	276	313	359	463	150	213	248	363	426	570	566	676
	Other	7	313	313	358	363	163	176	217	276	401	551	516	676
Company size	Under $1billion	25	276	338	348	463	150	163	239	276	426	488	540	701
	$1.01bn–$3bn	16	388	413	428	463	150	188	196	213	563	626	624	676
	$3.01bn–$5bn	10	313	413	371	488	238	276	333	438	551	713	667	814
	More than $5bn	15	363	438	478	613	188	257	318	363	401	751	711	976
Ownership	Publicly traded	24	338	463	417	488	163	238	316	438	551	676	683	801
	State/sovereign-owned	12	276	313	377	513	153	201	285	363	426	676	630	720
	Other private ownership	14	276	413	389	513	188	238	238	276	463	639	572	701
	Family owned	20	338	363	394	413	150	150	199	207	463	551	553	576

Annual equity

The annual equity chart provides information about equity only for those in the sample who received it. Distributions are available for equity across the overall sample as well as by country, role, tenure, CXO experience, industry, company size, and ownership.

The median award was $300,000, but the average of $1.041 million is substantially higher, indicating that a small number of large awards substantially affected the mean.

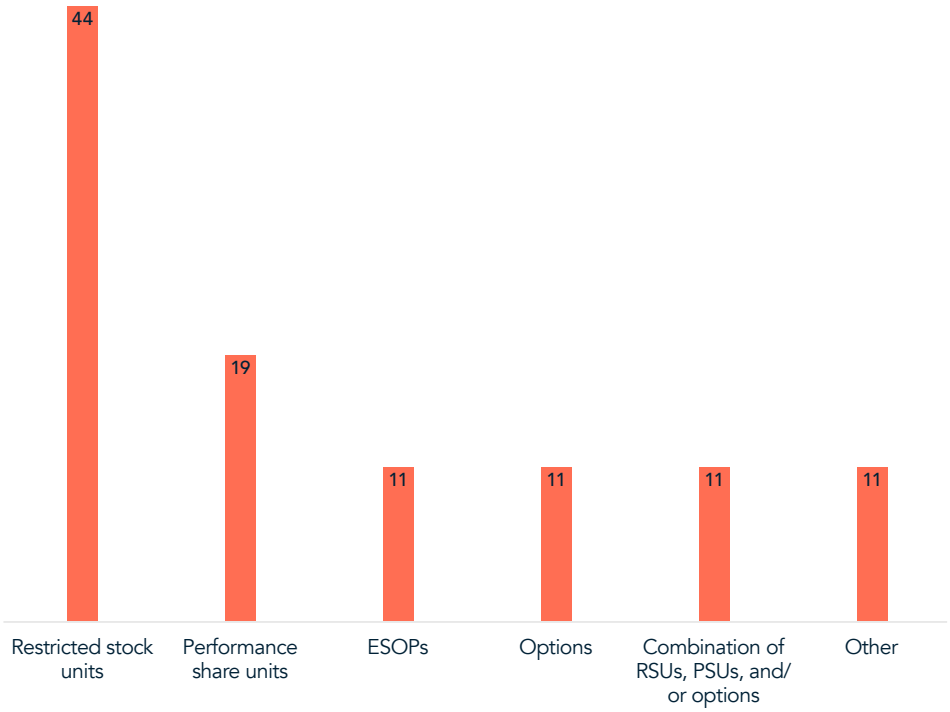
Compensation breakdown: annual equity (USD thousands)

		n	Annual equity			
			25th percentile	Median	Average	75th percentile
Overall		27	130	300	1041	640
Country	UAE	17	200	300	1399	500
	KSA	5	130	1000	630	1000
	Qatar	5	130	250	236	300
Role	Chief information officer	8	160	350	436	723
	Chief tech officer	4	223	4750	4908	9750
	Chief tech & information officer	5	300	300	300	400
	Chief digital officer/most senior digital exec	5	120	200	180	230
	Chief digital & technology officer	5	200	300	520	1000
Current role tenure	Less than 1 year	6	120	215	200	250
	1–2 years	9	500	750	2560	1000
	3–4 years	8	300	350	413	400
	5+ years	4	100	115	145	220
CXO experience	10 or less years	12	208	300	408	605
	11 or more years	15	100	300	1549	1000
Industry	Financial services	14	250	400	1746	1000
	Industrial or energy	1	20	20	20	20
	Technology or telecoms	3	130	300	277	400
	Healthcare or life sciences	2	250	375	375	500
	Consumer	5	120	200	190	230
	Other	2	130	565	565	1000
Company size	Under $1billion	5	130	500	3946	9000
	$1.01bn–$3bn	8	123	265	324	580
	$3.01bn–$5bn	8	125	275	419	850
	More than $5bn	5	250	300	290	300
Ownership	Publicly traded	13	200	250	413	640
	State/sovereign-owned	2	300	350	350	400
	Other private ownership	8	108	350	1556	875
	Family owned	4	125	250	2400	6825

Format of annual equity

Among respondents receiving annual equity, restricted stock units were the most common structure, representing 44% of awards. Respondents also reported performance share units, ESOPs, options, combinations of RSUs/PSUs/options, as well as other formats.

Format of annual equity (%)



About the author

Tom Clarke
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AI & Technology Officers Practice

Technology leadership that turns AI ambition into enterprise performance

Heidrick's global AI & Technology Officers Practice works with boards, CEOs, and technology leaders to define the leadership their strategy requires, from the executive mandate to the technical expertise and teams needed to execute. Across AI, technology, product, data, and analytics, we help clients make critical appointments and build the capability to turn technology investment into business performance.

For more than a decade, we have helped shape the market for technology leadership. That experience has taught us that the strongest track record is not always the right fit for what comes next. We draw on our research and client work to help clients rethink what a role requires, judge who can deliver, and recognize when one appointment is not enough. Through executive search, interim leadership, and consulting, we help clients appoint critical leaders, build leadership and technical teams, and strengthen the alignment and performance culture needed to deliver.

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