Finatal

Remuneration, Equity & Outlook Report 2025

A report on CFOs in private equity-backed businesses

Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce Finatal's eighth annual Remuneration, Equity & Outlook Report for CFOs in private equity-backed businesses.

This year marks an exciting step forward: for the first time, the survey extended beyond the UK to include CFOs based across Europe, giving us a richer view of the market and a broader understanding of how private equity finance leaders are navigating today's challenges.

Over the past year, CFOs have faced a fast-changing landscape: persistent inflation, evolving deal dynamics and lengthened hold periods have all required greater agility, resilience and commercial clarity. Our 2025 findings capture this evolution. Salaries, bonuses and equity participation have all risen, showing continued demand for exceptional finance leaders who can deliver value creation through uncertainty and highlighting retention uplifts that are on offer.

We're also seeing investors approach portfolio management with a longer time horizon in mind, with greater emphasis on strengthening the teams already in place and supporting value creation within existing portfolios. CFOs report deeper engagement and more tangible support from their investors, whether through hands-on involvement, mentoring or access to specialist expertise. This reflects a growing recognition that sustainable performance comes from closer partnership and clearer alignment, not just capital deployment or deal activity.

I'd like to thank all the CFOs who took the time to participate in this year's survey. Your insights and perspective continue to make this report a valuable resource for the private equity community.

Paul Blant

Group Managing Director

November 2025

About this report

Thank you for your interest in Finatal's 2025 report on remuneration, equity and outlook, focused on CFOs working in private equity-backed businesses.

This is the eighth consecutive year this report has been published, covering the remuneration packages offered to CFOs in the UK and across Europe, shedding light on the factors that influence their compensation. It analyses a wide range of data, including salary benchmarks, bonus structures, equity participation and the impact of industry, country and business size on earnings. It also looks at the attitudes of finance leaders towards business challenges faced and experiences of navigating these.

As we continue to develop this survey each year, we have valuable insight into the evolution of trends across the industry, and this report sheds light on how sentiment is changing over time.

The objective of the report is to provide a clear, current view of opportunities and challenges faced by CFOs working in portfolio businesses. In a time of rapid economic change and increasing competition for the best finance talent, this report aims to provide insight for businesses, leaders and funds to make informed decisions, helping individuals and organisations to build success.

The data in this report was gathered in October 2025 from a sample of 423 UK and Europe-based CFOs who are currently working in a private equity-backed business or who have done so in the last 12 months.

UK: Total compensation

CFOs in UK private equity-backed companies have seen a sustained uptick in remuneration over recent years, signifying growing competition among investors for top-tier financial talent. Base salaries for CFOs typically range from £160,000 to £280,000, with the 2025 median at £216,380, reflecting the increasing complexity and investor expectations in the mid-market. Average bonuses of those surveyed have risen significantly, up to £84,803, further incentivising performance, while equity packages usually amount to about 1.85%, underscoring their importance as a retention lever. The emphasis on performance-linked rewards, clear value alignment and exit-based upside ensures CFOs are tightly integrated into investor objectives, driving strategic growth and operational excellence.

Europe: Total compensation

This year marks the first time we have collected full compensation data for CFOs in Europe, providing an important baseline for future comparison. While we cannot yet compare year-on-year trends, the 2025 findings offer a clear view of the expectations and dynamics shaping European financial leadership. The findings show an average salary of €218,868, an average bonus of €99,563 and an average equity allocation of 1.88% for European CFOs in private equity-backed companies. Compared to the UK's 2025 averages (£216,380 salary and £84,803 bonus), the European figures sit broadly in line on fixed pay but skew higher on bonus, suggesting that variable compensation plays a larger role in total reward structures across the continent. The 1.88% equity average is also close to levels seen in the UK, indicating similar expectations around long-term alignment and participation in value creation. These comparisons point to a relatively consistent compensation philosophy across both regions, with local market differences likely driven by deal size, fund structure and sector composition. As further years of data are added, these benchmarks will provide a clearer picture of how European compensation dynamics evolve relative to the UK.

Average salary

€218,868

Bonus

€99,563

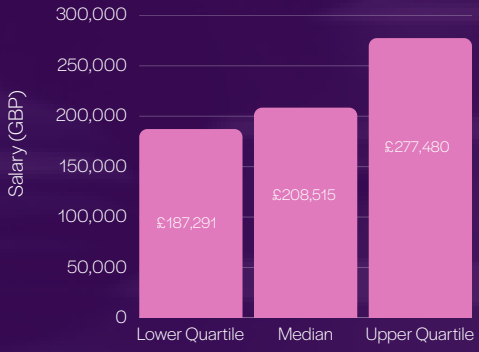
Equity

1.88%

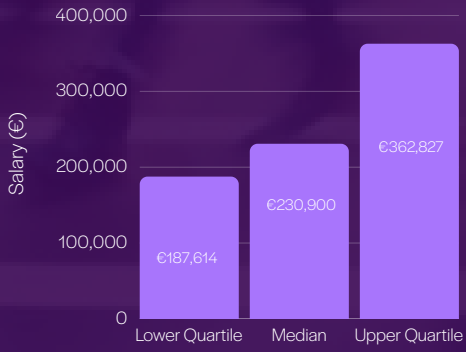
UK & Europe: Base salary

UK CFO salary quartiles for PE-backed businesses show an increase on prior years, reflecting both rising expectations and the continued premium attached to proven financial leadership. In 2025, salaries range from a lower quartile of £187,291, to a median of £208,515, and an upper quartile of £277,480, with the highest reported base salary reaching £600,000. This sits in line with the UK mean of £216,380, indicating a broadly balanced distribution but with significant upside potential for CFOs in complex, growth-stage or exit-driven mandates. Across Europe, the spread is wider: from a lower quartile of €187,614, to a median of €230,900, and an upper quartile of €362,827, against a mean of €218,868. This dispersion reflects varying deal sizes, ownership structures and the maturity of private equity ecosystems across markets such as France, Germany and the Nordics. The data underscores how investors continue to reward CFOs who can combine operational precision with strategic foresight. Bonuses and equity participation remain key differentiators, often tied to liquidity events and value creation milestones. Our data points to a compensation curve that steepens for those CFOs capable of driving transformation and guiding portfolio companies through volatile and extended investment cycles.

UK salary by quartile

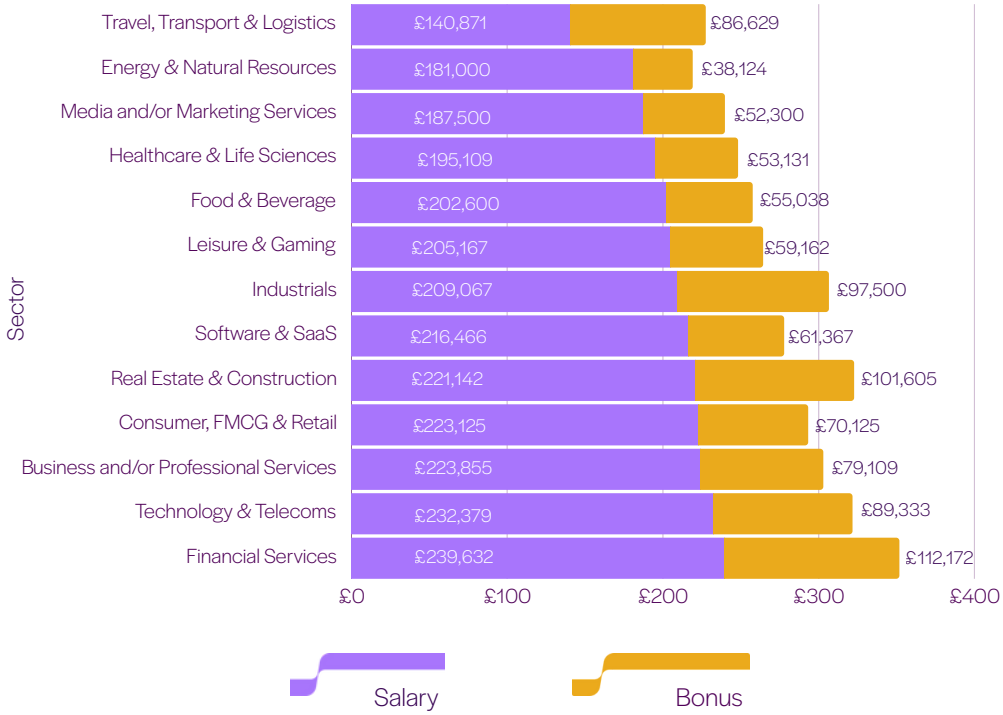


Europe salary by quartile



UK average salary by sector

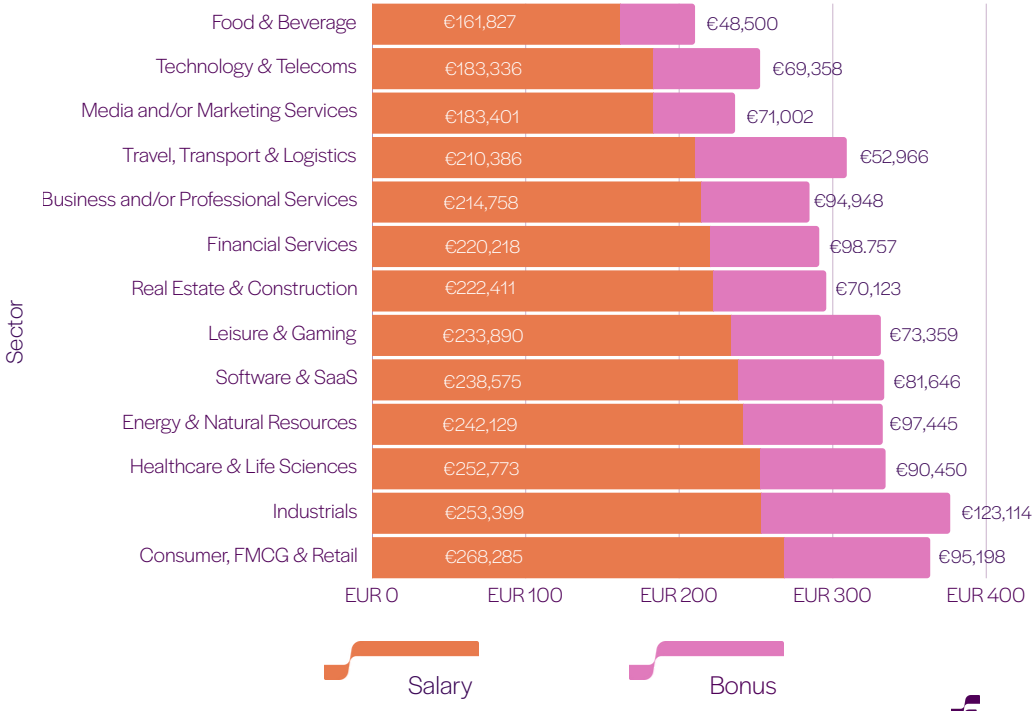
Across UK private equity-backed companies, salary disparities for CFOs are pronounced and closely tied to sector dynamics. Financial Services stands out as the leading sector, where CFOs earn an average base salary of £239,632, reflecting high asset values and regulatory demands. Technology and Professional Services sectors follow, with average salaries of £232,379 and £223,855 respectively, shaped by market volatility, supply chain complexity and operational scale. Sectors such as Real Estate, Healthcare and Software/SaaS also provide strong compensation, typically ranging from circa £180,000 to £221,000, driven by technological adoption and compliance pressures. These differences highlight how the degree of business risk, M&A activity and industry regulation directly influence CFO pay. For private equity investors, understanding these sector benchmarks enables competitive offers and sharper retention strategies in their portfolio firms.



Europe: Average salary by sector

In Europe, sectoral salary disparities among CFOs are similarly marked but nuanced by country-specific factors and the diversity of PE market maturity. Consumer & FMCG leads, with average CFO salaries reaching €268,285, pointing to the enduring value of hard assets and regional investment flows. Industrials and Healthcare sectors also report significant averages, with compensation typically above €250,000, supported by high capital requirements, rapid innovation and cross-border regulatory frameworks.

Sectors such as Energy & Natural Resources , Healthcare and Professional Services exhibit considerable variation, generally offering compensation between €210,000 and €240,000. These differences are shaped by each country's business culture and transaction activity. For mid-market private equity investors across Europe, benchmarking sector compensation is essential to attracting finance leaders capable of navigating complex operational challenges while driving consistent growth and successful exits.



UK & Europe: Compensation by location

Compensation for CFOs in PE-backed businesses varies sharply across Europe, and the 2025 data reveals a clear hierarchy that aligns closely with regional deal characteristics, operational complexity and the depth of mid-market private equity ecosystems.

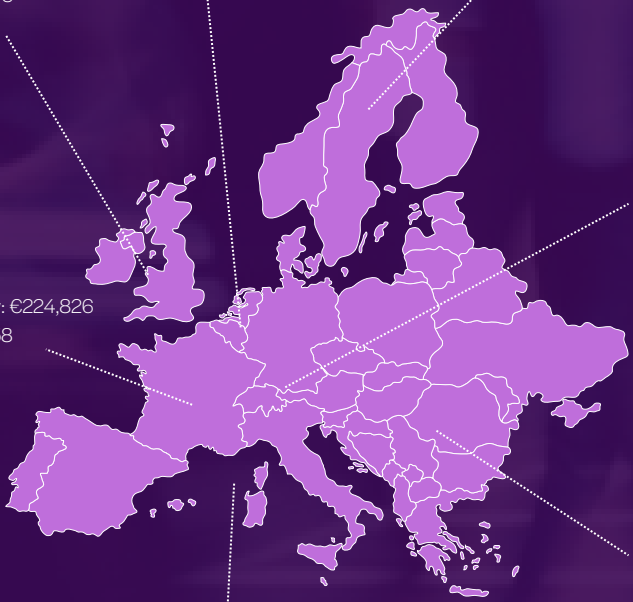
The UK & Ireland, with a combined average salary of £201,380 and bonuses of £67,673, remain competitive but relatively contained compared with mainland Europe. This reflects a deep talent bench, more standardised governance expectations and a market where experienced CFOs compete for the best roles, but still command strong packages for transformation and exit-readiness mandates.

In contrast, compensation rises meaningfully in regions where mid-market deals are more internationally oriented or operationally complex. The DACH region leads with €245,194 in salary and €106,630 in bonus: consistent with larger fund sizes, higher enterprise values and the premium placed on CFOs capable of navigating multilayered regulatory and labour environments. The Nordics (€240,564 / €92,287) and France (€224,826 / €87,758) follow closely, characterised by sophisticated international portfolio strategies and an acute need for CFOs with strong digital, sustainability and operational value creation capabilities.

Benelux (€219,891 / €79,082) sits near the European mean: stable, competitive, and reflective of a mature mid-market where bilingual financial leadership remains in high demand. The largest gap appears in CEE (€158,413 / €57,242) and Southern Europe (€134,722 / €37,209), where compensation reflects smaller deal sizes, less leverage in structures and more varied levels of PE penetration. For investors, these regions often provide stronger relative value, while securing experienced CFOs with PE fluency may require more tailored incentive design.

Overall, compensation scales with the complexity of value creation agendas. When structuring packages, understanding these regional dynamics is critical to setting competitive, sustainable standards that attract CFOs capable of delivering performance across diverse European operating environments.

UK & Europe: Compensation by location



Benelux
Average salary: €219,891
Bonus: €79,082

Nordics
Average salary: €240,564
Bonus: €92,287

UK and Ireland
Average salary: £201,380
Bonus: £67,673

DACH
Average salary: €245,194
Bonus: €106,630

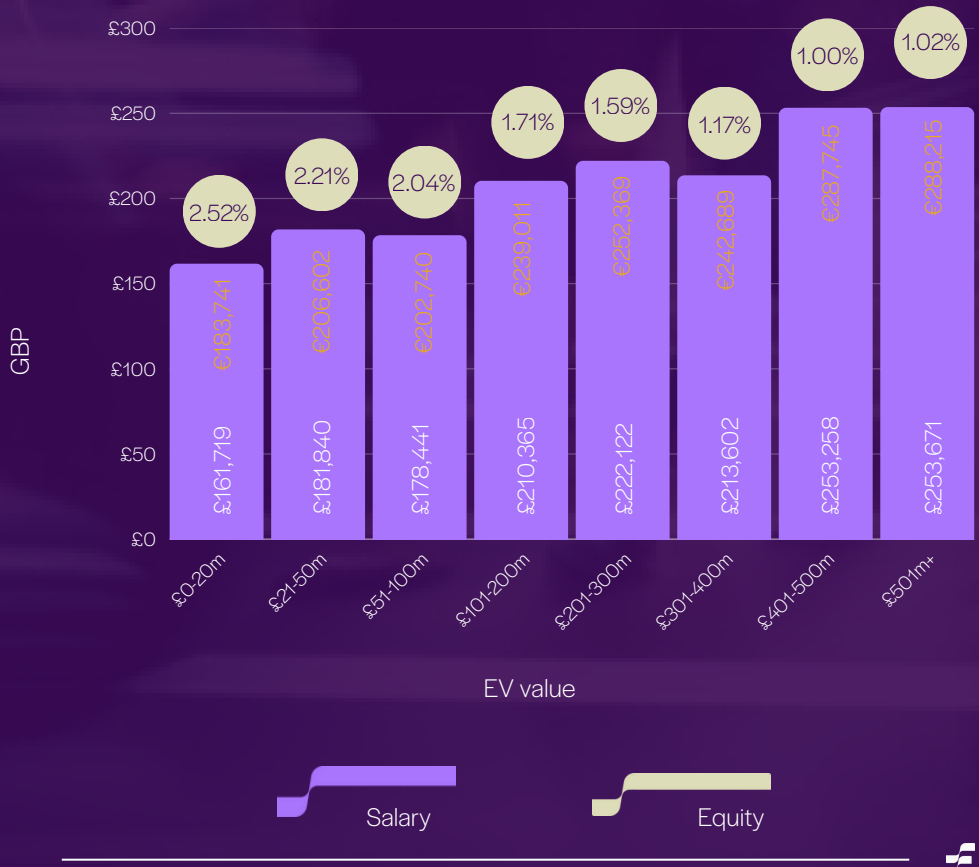
France
Average salary: €224,826
Bonus: €87,758

CEE
Average salary: €158,413
Bonus: €57,242

Southern Europe
Average salary: €134,722
Bonus: €37,209

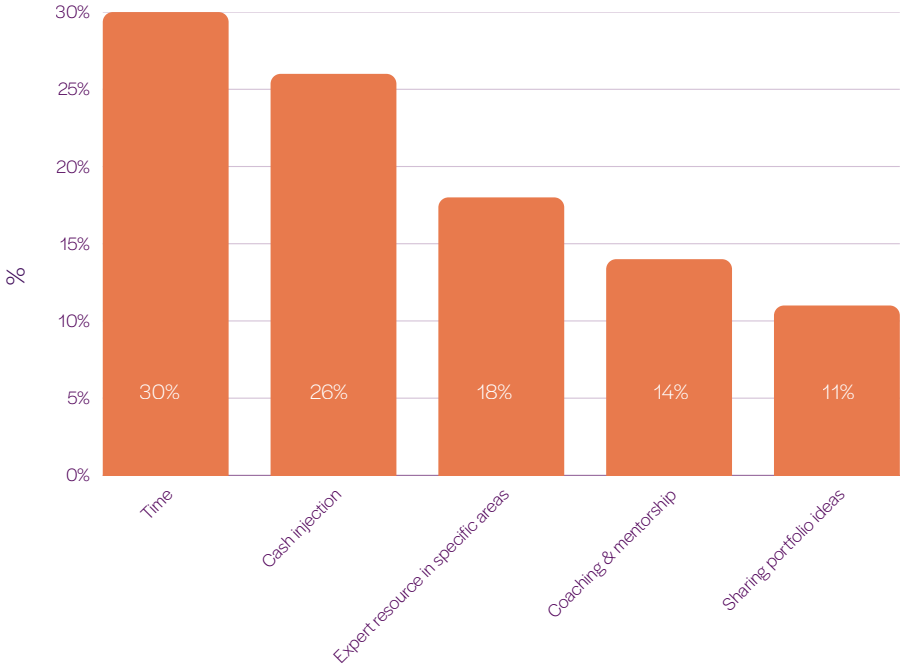
Average salary & equity by EV: UK & Europe

Remuneration for CFOs broadly scales with company valuations. The average base salary rises from £161,719 / €183,741 at companies with £0-20m EV, reaching £253,671 / €288,215 at the £501m+ EV range. Similarly, while the percentage values decrease, equity awards grow incrementally in absolute terms with EV, incentivising CFOs to drive transformative growth. European benchmarks show parallel patterns, with compensation and equity tied directly to company scale and transaction complexity. Equity percentages remain relatively stable, but total cash compensation can increase sharply in high EV scenarios. This trend encourages investors to align leadership motivation with portfolio value creation and rigorous performance standards.



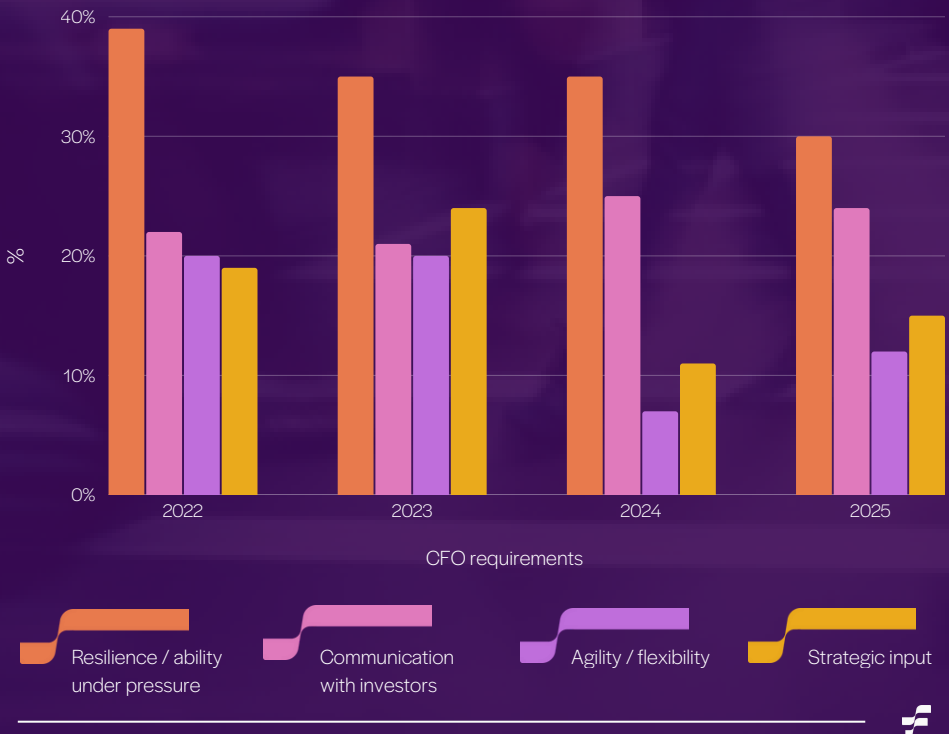
Investor support

In 2025, data suggests that investor support for CFOs is becoming more targeted and strategic, reflecting a shift from crisis management to partnership-led value creation. Time investment remains the most common form of support at 30%, underscoring investors' continued preference for hands-on engagement and direct collaboration with management teams. Cash injections follow at 26%, signalling sustained financial backing but with a more selective approach. Notably, expert resources in specific areas have risen to 18%, and coaching and mentorship now account for 14%, highlighting growing recognition of the need to strengthen CFO capability beyond capital deployment. However, sharing portfolio ideas remains relatively low at 11%, suggesting that cross-portfolio collaboration remains an untapped lever for value creation. For investors, these trends point to an evolving dynamic: one where the most effective partnerships are built on strategic alignment, skills and professional development and operational insight, not purely capital access.



CFO requirements

In 2025, CFO traits for success continue to evolve in response to shifting market dynamics and investor expectations. Resilience under pressure remains the most valued attribute, cited by 30% of respondents, though this marks a steady decline from previous years as the post-crisis environment stabilises. Meanwhile, communication with investors holds firm at 24%, reinforcing the importance of transparent, proactive dialogue in maintaining confidence through longer hold periods and more complex capital structures. Notably, agility and flexibility have rebounded sharply to 12%, suggesting that adaptability is once again a prized trait as CFOs navigate ongoing technological change, evolving deal structures and cross-border growth challenges. This shift signals a broader recalibration for UK and Europe-based CFOs in what defines effective financial leadership: a balance between resilience and responsiveness, with CFOs expected to combine strategic clarity and operational dexterity to sustain value creation in a more nuanced, less predictable market.



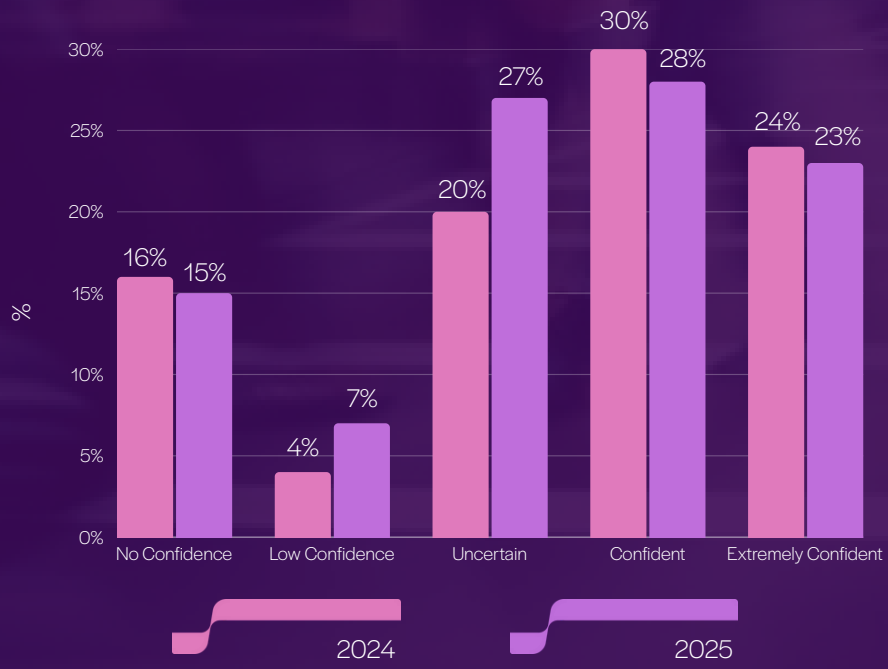
Business challenges

CFOs in 2025 continue to face a challenging operating environment, with several issues intensifying compared with last year. The macroeconomic environment remains the dominant concern: 45% of those surveyed now view it as a critical issue, up from 38% across our sample in 2024, reflecting heightened sensitivity to rate uncertainty, valuation pressure and slower deal cycles. Hiring challenges persist, though the proportion calling it "critical" has eased (24% vs. 31%), indicating slight improvement but ongoing constraints on scaling and transformation plans. Access to high-quality M&A opportunities shows little change in terms of levels of concern, with 25% of CFOs still viewing it as a critical barrier, consistent with subdued mid-market deal flow. Regulatory pressures have also edged upward, with more CFOs citing government or legislative changes as having material impact. Conversely, concerns around taxation changes have eased considerably (5% critical vs. 15% in 2024), suggesting this is less of a pervasive issue for CFOs across Europe. Overall, the 2025 data points to a market outlook still defined by caution with early signs of stabilising.

	Critical issue	Issue with some impact	Not an issue
Macroeconomic environment	45%	48%	7%
Good quality M&A options	25%	38%	36%
Hiring	24%	56%	20%
Changes to National Legislation	19%	43%	38%
Changes to Government	15%	45%	40%
Inflationary environment	14%	55%	31%
Lack of fundraising	7%	46%	48%

Confidence

CFO confidence levels in 2025 reveal a cautiously pragmatic outlook shaped by prolonged market uncertainty. While 23% of CFOs describe themselves as “extremely confident” in remaining in post at their company’s next exit event - down slightly from 24% in 2024 - the proportion expressing uncertainty has climbed sharply from 20% to 27%. This growing hesitation underscores how lengthening hold periods, valuation recalibrations and evolving investor priorities are testing leadership resilience. Confidence has softened across the board, with a small rise in those reporting low confidence (7%) and a dip in those feeling confident (28%). Combined with 57% of CFOs (see next page) being unsure or unlikely to remain through revised exit projections, the data suggests heightened turnover risk and a need for investors to prioritise leadership stability, transparent communication and aligned incentive structures to sustain momentum through longer investment cycles.



Exit timelines

The 2025 results suggest a stabilisation of exit expectations across the mid-market. This year, 43% of CFOs reported that their company's exit timeline has been extended - down from 53% in 2024 - signalling a modest return of confidence and greater alignment between management teams and investors. However, the same proportion (43%) indicated they are likely or very likely to commit to these revised timelines, a slight dip from last year's 45%. This suggests that while sentiment has improved, CFOs remain cautious amid ongoing macroeconomic uncertainty and evolving deal dynamics. For investors, this reflects a market where value creation plans are lengthening, but engagement at the leadership level remains steady. Maintaining CFO commitment through elongated hold periods will require greater clarity around equity incentives, succession planning and the strategic narrative of each asset. As fundraising pressures persist, aligning incentives early will be key to preserving momentum and investor confidence.

43%

The proportion of CFOs surveyed who said their company's timeline to exit has been extended, compared to 53% in 2024

43%

The proportion of CFOs who responded who are likely or very likely to commit to their company's revised exit timelines

Conclusion

The 2025 data points to a clear reacceleration in CFO compensation across both the UK and Europe, reflecting renewed confidence in the private equity market and a greater emphasis on rewarding value creation. In the UK, average base salaries climbed to £216,380, with bonuses surging to £84,803: a 44% uplift year-on-year. Across Europe, the trend mirrors this momentum, with CFOs earning an average €218,868 base salary and €99,563 in bonuses. This step-change in total compensation marks a departure from the cautious tone of 2024 and suggests that funds are once again willing to invest aggressively in top-tier financial leadership.

The increase in variable pay, in particular, reflects a renewed focus on aligning CFO incentives with long-term performance, liquidity outcomes and operational transformation. As exit windows shorten and investors double down on value creation through the hold period, the role of the CFO continues to evolve - from financial steward to strategic architect and deal enabler. For investors, this data underscores a defining trend: in an environment where capital is costlier and returns are harder won, securing and retaining the right CFO talent remains one of the most direct levers for driving value and achieving successful outcomes at exit.

Who we are

Finatal is the search partner for private capital investors and their portfolio companies. We recruit world-class talent across international markets. We partner with businesses at all stages of the investment cycle to build successful talented teams, offering exceptional service at an unrivalled pace.

Perfectly placed to work on permanent and interim assignments, we fuse our extensive expertise and broad network to match the strong candidates with the businesses that complement their ambitions.

To find out more about how Finatal can help you or your business to build success, please get in touch.

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