

PROFLIGHT BRIEF · FREE GUIDE

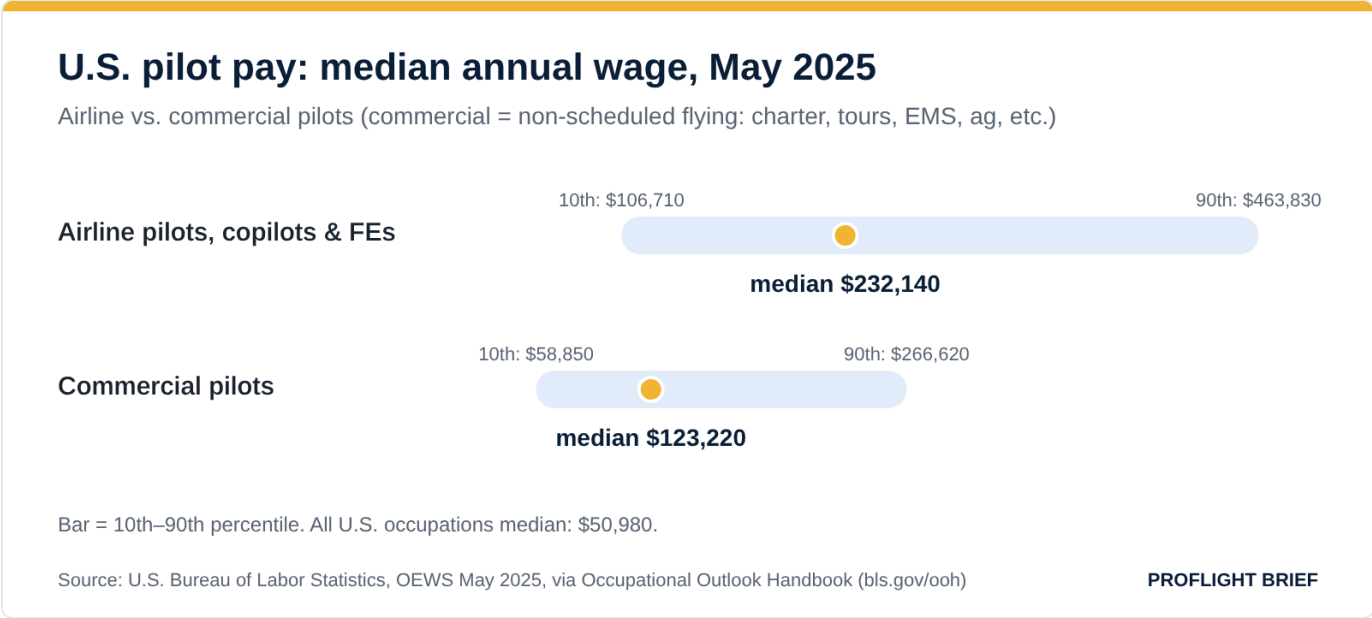
The 2026 Pilot Pay Guide

Airline · Regional · Commercial & charter · Helicopter EMS, public
safety & utility

Every number is sourced. Estimates are labeled.
Data checked October 2026 · proflightbrief.com

The national picture

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) splits pilots into two groups. **Airline pilots, copilots and flight engineers** earned a median of **\$232,140** in May 2025. **Commercial pilots** (non-scheduled flying: charter, corporate, tours, EMS, agricultural and most helicopter work) earned a median of **\$123,220**.



Occupation (May 2025)	10th pct	Median	90th pct
Airline pilots, copilots & FEs	\$106,710	\$232,140	\$463,830
Commercial pilots	\$58,850	\$123,220	\$266,620
All U.S. occupations	–	\$50,980	–

Source: BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook, Airline and Commercial Pilots (OEWS May 2025): bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/airline-and-commercial-pilots.htm

Major airlines

First-year first officer pay at the major airlines

Published 2026 hourly rate, year 1



Base hourly rate only. Excludes per diem, profit sharing, 401(k) contributions.

Sources: careers.united.com (United); AirlinePilotCentral 2026 pay tables via airgazette.com (Delta, American)

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Airline	Year-1 FO rate	12-yr widebody CA	Source
United	\$125.52/hr	\$483.74/hr	careers.united.com; AirlinePilotCentral
Delta	\$118.00/hr	\$465.13/hr	AirlinePilotCentral 2026 via airgazette.com
American	\$113.00/hr	\$465.13/hr	AirlinePilotCentral 2026 via airgazette.com

Delta's monthly guarantee is listed at 65 hours (AirlinePilotCentral). Base rates exclude per diem, profit sharing and 401(k) contributions; United lists an 18% direct 401(k) contribution in 2026.

Regional airlines

First-year regional airline first officer pay

Published hourly rate, year 1

Endeavor Air		\$106.66/hr	≈\$95,994/yr*
Envoy Air		\$99.00/hr	≈\$89,100/yr*
SkyWest Airlines		\$92.73/hr	≈\$83,457/yr*

*Estimate: hourly rate × 75-hr monthly guarantee × 12. Excludes per diem, bonuses, overtime & premiums.

Sources: endeavorair.com, envoyair.com, skywest.com pilot pay pages (checked Oct 2026)

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Airline	Year-1 FO	Est. annual base*	Notes
Endeavor Air	\$106.66/hr	≈\$95,994	75-hr guarantee; 3rd-yr CA \$170.66/hr
Envoy Air	\$99.00/hr	≈\$89,100	Year 2 FO \$161.25/hr
SkyWest	\$92.73/hr	≈\$83,457	75 hrs/mo after IOE

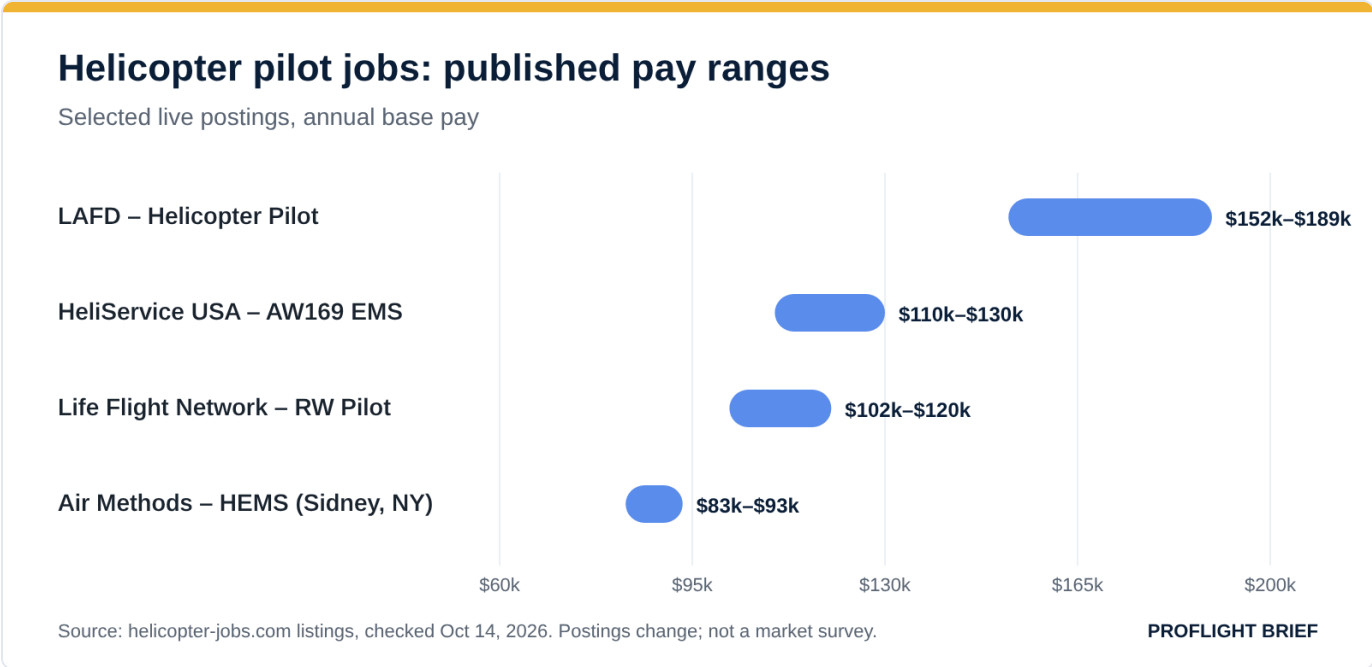
*Estimate = hourly rate × 75 × 12; excludes per diem, bonuses and premiums. Sources: endeavorair.com, envoyair.com, skywest.com pilot pay pages (Oct 2026).

Commercial, corporate & charter

BLS reports these pilots under **commercial pilots**: a median of \$123,220, with a range of \$58,850 (10th percentile) to \$266,620 (90th percentile). Pay varies widely by aircraft type, operator size and whether you fly Part 91 corporate or Part 135 charter. Corporate and charter employers rarely publish pay scales, so we haven't charted individual operators. We'll add verified postings in future editions.

Tip: when comparing offers, ask for the base salary, the per-diem structure, the schedule (days on/off), type-rating bonds and training commitments in writing.

Helicopter: EMS, public safety, utility



Posting (helicopter-jobs.com, Oct 14, 2026)	Published pay
Los Angeles Fire Department, Helicopter Pilot	\$152,444–\$189,402/yr
HeliService USA, AW169 EMS	\$110,000–\$130,000/yr
Life Flight Network, Rotor Wing Pilot	\$101,752–\$120,251/yr
Air Methods, HEMS (Sidney, NY)	\$82,900–\$93,251/yr
Mercy Flights, RW PIC (Medford, OR)	\$54.44–\$61.39/hr
North Memorial Health, Helicopter Pilot	\$46.76–\$70.14/hr

Firehawk Helicopters, Director of Training

\$115,000–\$165,000/yr

WingedPilot: of 69 verified helicopter openings, 26 disclosed pay, with a median of **\$82,900**. The median stated minimum was about 1,500 hours total time, and about 36% asked for a type rating. **Tour and offshore:** we didn't find enough U.S. postings with published pay to cite this edition.

Sources: helicopter-jobs.com/jobs; jobs.wingedpilot.com/helicopter-pilot-jobs. Postings change and aren't a market survey.

Requirements & outlook

Milestone	FAA minimum	Rule
Private, helicopter	40 hrs	14 CFR 61.109(c)
Commercial, helicopter	150 hrs	14 CFR 61.129(c)
ATP, helicopter	1,200 hrs	14 CFR 61.161
ATP, airplane	1,500 hrs (reduced for some)	14 CFR 61.159/61.160

Outlook

- BLS projects 7% growth for airline and commercial pilot jobs (2025–35), with about 16,400 openings a year; there were 154,900 jobs in 2025.
- Airbus (Oct 14, 2026) forecasts 660,000 new pilots needed worldwide over 20 years.

Get updates every Tuesday. ProFlight Brief is the free 7-minute weekly for working pilots: pay, FAA changes, tech and one NTSB lesson.

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