# Highest Paying IT Jobs in India 2026-2031 PDF

In self-reported PayScale data from 2026, Solutions Architect (about Rs 28.9 lakh average base) and Software Product Manager (about Rs 22.2 lakh) sit at the top, followed by Machine Learning Engineer, Data Scientist, DevOps Engineer and Data Engineer at around Rs 10 lakh. These are averages across all experience levels, so freshers start lower and the big numbers come after 5 or more years of real work.

## Key takeaways

- Solutions Architect and Software Product Manager have the highest average base pay in PayScale's self-reported India data (2026), but both are usually reached after years of hands-on work.
- Machine Learning Engineer, Data Scientist, DevOps Engineer and Data Engineer all average close to Rs 10 lakh a year, and PayScale shows mid-career ML engineers earning about double the role average.
- WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2025 lists AI and machine learning specialists, big data specialists and software developers among the fastest-growing jobs by percentage.
- Naukri JobSpeak for October 2026 reported AI/ML hiring up 32% year on year, while general software and QA hiring grew only about 1%.
- High pay follows skills you can prove: projects, cloud and data skills, and the ability to use AI tools well, not just a degree name.

## What this report covers

This report looks at the IT roles that pay the most in India and how a college student or fresher can move toward them between 2026 and 2031. Every salary number here comes from PayScale's India pages, which are built from salaries that people report themselves. Treat them as a rough guide, not a promise. Your own offer will depend on your skills, your city, the company and how well you do in interviews.

Two points matter before you read the table:

- **Averages mix all experience levels.** A role with a Rs 28 lakh average does not mean a fresher gets Rs 28 lakh.
- **Some top-paying roles are not entry roles.** Architects and product managers are usually people who first worked as developers, data people or analysts for several years.

## Highest paying IT roles in India: the numbers

The table below uses PayScale India pages that were last updated between July and October 2026. "Entry" means less than 1 year of experience and is average total pay (base plus bonus), as PayScale shows it.

| Role | Average base pay (per year) | Typical range (10th to 90th percentile) | Entry level (under 1 year) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Solutions Architect | Rs 28.9 lakh | Rs 10 lakh to Rs 40 lakh | Rs 5.5 lakh (31 salaries) |
| Product Manager, Software | Rs 22.2 lakh | Rs 6.4 lakh to Rs 40 lakh | Rs 8 lakh (11 salaries) |
| Machine Learning Engineer | Rs 10.2 lakh | Rs 3.6 lakh to Rs 30 lakh | Rs 5.96 lakh |
| Data Scientist | Rs 10.1 lakh | Rs 3.1 lakh to Rs 20 lakh | Rs 5.95 lakh |
| DevOps Engineer | Rs 10.0 lakh | Rs 4 lakh to Rs 30 lakh | Rs 4.5 lakh |
| Data Engineer | Rs 9.9 lakh | Rs 4.2 lakh to Rs 20 lakh | Rs 5.2 lakh |
| Software Engineer | Rs 8.2 lakh | Rs 3.5 lakh to Rs 20 lakh | Rs 5.4 lakh |
| Full Stack Developer | Rs 6.7 lakh | Rs 3 lakh to Rs 20 lakh | Rs 4 lakh |
| Cyber Security Analyst | Rs 5.8 lakh | Rs 2 lakh to Rs 20 lakh | Rs 4.7 lakh |
| Data Analyst | Rs 5.8 lakh | Rs 2.9 lakh to Rs 10 lakh | Rs 4.1 lakh |

Growth with experience is where the gap opens. PayScale says mid-career Machine Learning Engineers earn about 102% more than the role average, and late-career ones about 184% more. For Data Scientists, mid-career pay is about 83% above the average. For Software Engineers, mid-career is about 77% above.

## Why these roles pay more

High pay in IT usually comes from three things: the work is hard to replace, it touches money or risk for the business, and there are fewer skilled people than open jobs.

- **Architects and product managers** decide what gets built and how. A wrong decision costs a lot, so companies pay for judgement.
- **ML engineers and data scientists** build systems that predict, recommend or automate. Demand for these skills is growing fast. The India Skills Report 2026 (as reported by Careers360) says AI/ML engineers and data scientists are in the highest demand, with job postings growing over 600%.
- **DevOps and data engineers** keep systems running and data flowing. If they fail, the whole product stops.

Demand data supports this. WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2025, as summarised by People Matters, lists AI and machine learning specialists, fintech engineers, big data specialists and software

developers among the fastest-growing jobs by percentage. LinkedIn's Jobs on the Rise 2026 list for India, as reported by HR Katha, ranks Prompt Engineer first, AI Engineer second and Software Engineer third.

## How AI changes the pay picture

AI is not only creating new roles. It is changing what every IT job asks for.

- Naukri's World AI Day Report 2026 (via Telangana Today) found AI skills in **15.4% of tech job descriptions in 2026, up from 0.9% in 2020**.
- The same report says demand has risen most in the Rs 40-49 lakh and Rs 50 lakh plus salary brackets, and that people with AI skills earn higher median salaries than peers without them.
- Naukri JobSpeak for October 2026 (via CareerIndia) showed **AI/ML hiring up 32%** year on year, while general software and QA hiring grew about 1%.

The message for students is simple. Plain coding alone is becoming common. Coding plus data, cloud and AI skills is what separates higher offers. NASSCOM estimates India's tech industry reached about $315 billion in FY26 with AI revenues of $10-12 billion (as reported by Angel One), so AI work is already a real business line in Indian IT.

## Common mistakes when chasing high pay

Many students look at the top of a salary table and plan their whole career around that one number. A few mistakes come up again and again:

- **Skipping the basics.** Students jump straight to deep learning or LLM courses without solid Python, SQL and statistics. Interviews for ML and data roles still test these basics first.
- **Collecting certificates instead of projects.** A long list of short online certificates says less than one project that solves a real problem and is explained well.
- **Ignoring the first job.** Roles like Solutions Architect or Product Manager are rarely given to freshers. The first 2 to 3 years in a developer, analyst or DevOps role are what make those jobs possible later.
- **Choosing a role you do not enjoy.** Pay grows with experience, and experience grows faster when you like the work. A Data Analyst who enjoys the job and keeps learning can overtake an unhappy ML engineer in a few years.
- **Trusting one salary number.** Different sites show different averages because they collect different samples. Look at ranges, sample sizes and dates, as we do in this report.

A better approach is to choose a track that matches your interest, build strong basics, and then move toward the higher-paying roles step by step. LinkedIn data (via HR Katha) shows a median experience of about 2 years for AI Engineers and about 6 years for AI Managers in India, which gives you a sense of how long that climb usually takes.

## Year by year: what to learn and expect

**2026**

Build your base. Learn Python and SQL properly, plus Excel and one BI tool. Do 2 small data projects with real public datasets. If you are in college, aim for one internship. LinkedIn's Grad's Guide 2026 (via People Matters) found that a larger share of entry-level hires in 2023-2025 had done internships than in 2020-2022.

**2027**

Pick a track: data science and ML, data engineering, cloud and DevOps, or software development. Learn statistics and machine learning basics for the data track, or Linux, Docker and one cloud platform for the DevOps track. Put all work on GitHub.

**2028**

Go deeper. Learn to deploy a model or an app end to end. Learn how large language models are used in products: prompting, retrieval augmented generation (RAG) and evaluation. LinkedIn lists LLMs, RAG and MLOps as key skills for AI managers in India.

**2029**

By now many freshers from 2026 will have 2 to 3 years of work. Move from doing tasks to owning small modules. Learn system design, cost control on cloud and data privacy basics.

**2030**

WEF's report looks ahead to 2030 and says 39% of workers' existing skills will be transformed or become outdated by then. Expect to relearn tools. Senior roles like architect, ML lead or product manager start to open for people with 4 to 5 years of solid work.

**2031**

No major source has published job or salary forecasts for 2031, so do not trust anyone who gives you exact numbers. What is safe to say: people who can combine domain knowledge, data skills and AI tools, and who can explain decisions to business teams, will stay in demand.

## A 5-step plan for a student

1. **Fix your fundamentals in 3 months.** Python, SQL and basic statistics. Practise daily on small problems.
2. **Build 3 real projects.** One data analysis, one machine learning model, one deployed app or dashboard. Write a short README for each.
3. **Add one cloud and one AI skill.** For example, deploy a project on a cloud free tier and build a simple RAG chatbot on your own notes.
4. **Get real experience.** An internship, a freelance task or an open source contribution. Even small work shows you can deliver.
5. **Apply smartly and keep learning.** Start with data analyst, junior data scientist, software engineer or DevOps trainee roles. Higher-paying roles like ML engineer or architect usually come after you prove yourself at the first job.

Uncodemy's Data Science course covers Python, statistics, machine learning and project work, which maps to steps 1 to 3.

## Frequently asked questions

### Which IT job pays the highest in India?

In PayScale's self-reported India data (2026), Solutions Architect has the highest average base pay at about Rs 28.9 lakh a year, followed by Software Product Manager at about Rs 22.2 lakh. Both are usually senior roles.

### Can a fresher get a high-paying IT job?

Some can, mainly through strong skills, top campus drives or product companies. PayScale shows entry-level averages of roughly Rs 4 lakh to Rs 6 lakh for most technical roles, so plan for growth after the first job.

### Is data science still a high-paying career?

Yes. PayScale shows Data Scientists averaging about Rs 10.1 lakh base pay, with mid-career pay about 83% above the average. Naukri reported AI/ML hiring up 32% in October 2026.

### Will AI reduce IT salaries?

No source has published a salary forecast like that. Naukri's 2026 data says people with AI skills earn higher median salaries, so learning to use AI well is the safer path.

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## Sources and further reading


- PayScale: Solutions Architect salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Product Manager, Software salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Machine Learning Engineer salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Data Scientist salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: DevOps Engineer salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Data Engineer salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Software Engineer salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Full Stack Software Developer salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Cyber Security Analyst salary in India (self-reported)
- PayScale: Data Analyst salary in India (self-reported)
- People Matters: 170 million jobs to emerge by 2030 but 92 million at risk, WEF warns (Future of Jobs Report 2025)
- HR Katha: Top 10 fast-growing jobs in India (LinkedIn Jobs on the Rise 2026)
- People Matters: Entry-level hiring climbs 168% as AI roles and internships gain ground (LinkedIn Grad's Guide 2026)
- Telangana Today: AI skills feature in 15.4% of tech job descriptions (Naukri World AI Day Report 2026)

- CareerIndia: Naukri JobSpeak October 2026, AI and ML roles jump 32%
- Careers360: India Skills Report 2026, CS and IT engineers most employable
- Angel One News: India tech industry projected to reach $315 billion in FY26 with AI revenues of $10-12 billion (NASSCOM)

## About this PDF

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