



Retail Buying & Merchandising

2026 Salary Guide, Ireland

Retail Buying & Merchandising Market Overview

Beyond Pay: The Importance of Benefits & Employee Experience

As salary growth stabilises, benefits and employee experience have become key differentiators. Candidates now take a more holistic view of job offers beyond base pay, valuing security, wellbeing, development, and work-life balance. In response, employers are enhancing health and wellbeing support, private healthcare, mental health services, wellness initiatives and pension contributions, while offering structured learning opportunities for long-term growth. The most successful employers communicate their full value proposition clearly and early. Transparency around benefits, hybrid policies, and career development helps candidates make informed decisions and boosts offer acceptance rates. In a selective market, a transparent, compelling benefits package can be the deciding factor in securing top talent.

Candidate Behaviour: Reshaping Recruitment

Candidate behaviour has shifted notably. Across retail head office functions, candidates are more passive, settled in their roles and only engaging with opportunities that align with professional and personal priorities. Traditional advertising no longer delivers the same quality or volume of applicants, particularly for mid to senior-level buying and merchandising roles. Employers must adopt more proactive hiring strategies. Targeted headhunting, talent pooling, and relationship-building are now essential, supported by a strong employer brand, authentic messaging, and visible leadership. Candidates want to understand not just the role, but the organisation's values, culture, and ways of working. The recruitment process is also critical. Lengthy or unclear processes risk losing talent, while clear communication and timely feedback turn passive interest into genuine engagement. In a selective market, employers must position themselves not merely as offering roles, but as destinations for top talent.

The Rise In Demand For Remote Work

The tension between employers' expectations and candidates' preferences on working arrangements has become a defining feature of the current market. Many businesses are introducing structured hybrid policies, with defined anchor days and clear expectations around time spent in the office. This shift is driven by a desire to foster stronger team dynamics, enhance cultural cohesion, and improve collaboration on complex projects.

Candidates, however, continue to prioritise hybrid working and flexibility as fundamental elements of their decision-making process. For most professionals in buying, merchandising, and related functions, flexibility is not viewed as a perk but as an essential component of any role. It influences not only whether they engage with a role but also whether they accept an offer.

Employers that succeed in this environment provide clarity and consistency. Communicating hybrid expectations early, aligning policies across teams, and embedding flexibility into role design to build trust and avoid ambiguity. Conversely, organisations that adopt vague or shifting policies often struggle to engage candidates, particularly at mid to senior levels, where flexibility is seen as integral to productivity and retention.

Industry Outlook: A Market Defined by Focus & Quality

The retail head office market is continuing to shift. After several years of rapid hiring and organisational change, businesses are now approaching growth more strategically. Recruitment strategies are now targeting roles that drive commercial performance, strengthen operational teams, and support longer-term development. Demand for talent remains healthy across buying, merchandising, planning and supply chain functions, but the focus has moved towards quality over quantity.

A key trend is the renewed focus on structured collaboration. Employers are rethinking how their teams work together, placing more emphasis on being in the office for critical moments such as range sign-off, planning reviews and supplier negotiations. This isn't about reverting to the old way of working, but balancing commercial effectiveness with the flexibility that candidates now expect.

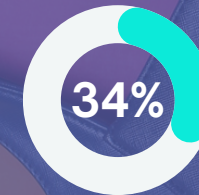
Recruitment approaches are evolving. Candidates are more passive, waiting to be approached with standout opportunities rather than actively applying. Clients must adapt accordingly. Relying on adverts alone is no longer enough. To attract top talent, recruitment needs clear messaging on hybrid work, benefits, and career growth, combined with an efficient hiring process.

Overall, the market is defined by both opportunity and complexity. Roles continue to arise at all levels, but competition for experienced professionals remains fierce. Employers who clearly articulate their strategy, working practices and culture, backed by a compelling offer will attract and retain the strongest candidates.

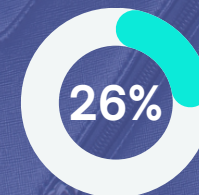
If you wish to discuss the findings of this guide or how we can assist with your recruitment needs, please feel free to contact us at www.excelrecruitment.com. Or, call us on **01 814 8747** or email Aoife at aoife.clarke@excelrecruitment.com.



of candidates now expect clear hybrid policies to be detailed in job ads.



of buying & merchandising professionals say flexibility is the top factor influencing job acceptance, ahead of salary.



of employers have introduced or increased office anchor days.

Buying Salary Guide	Salary 1 Years Exp +	Salary 3 Years Exp +	Salary 6 Years Exp +
Department Store			
Head of Buying	€120k	€150k	€180k
Buyer	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Buyer	€60k	€65k	€70k
Buying Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€45k	€50k
High Volume Lifestyle			
Head of Buying	€140k	€180k	€200k
Buyer	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Buyer	€60k	€65k	€70k
Trainee Buyer	€40k	€45k	€50k
Buying Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€40k	€45k
Lifestyle Retailer			
Head of Buying	€120k	€150k	€180k
Buyer	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Buyer	€60k	€65k	€70k
Buying Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€45k	€50k
Grocery Retailer			
Head of Buying	€150k	€180k	€250k
Buyer	€90k	€100k	€110k
Assistant Buyer	€60k	€65k	€70k
Buying Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€45k	€50k
Non-Food Retail			
Head of Buying	€120k	€150k	€180k
Buyer	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Buyer	€60k	€65k	€70k
Buying Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€45k	€50k

Merchandising Salary Guide	Salary 1 Years Exp +	Salary 3 Years Exp +	Salary 6 Years Exp +
Department Store			
Head of Merchandising	€120k	€150k	€180k
Merchandiser	€70k	€75k	€85k
Assistant Merchandiser	€50k	€55k	€65k
Merchandise Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€40k	€45k
High Volume Lifestyle			
Head of Merchandising	€140k	€180k	€200k
Merchandiser	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Merchandiser	€60k	€65k	€70k
Trainee Merchandiser	€40k	€45k	€50k
Merchandise Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€40k	€45k
Lifestyle Retailer			
Head of Merchandising	€120k	€150k	€180k
Merchandiser	€80k	€90k	€100k
Assistant Merchandiser	€60k	€65k	€70k
Merchandise Admin/ Assistant	€38k	€45k	€50k

Food Quality - NPD & Innovation Salary Guide	Salary 1 Years Exp +	Salary 3 Years Exp +	Salary 6 Years Exp +
Head of Quality	€100k	€120k	€140k
Quality Manager	€70k	€80k	€90k
Assistant Quality Manager	€50k	€55k	€60k
Quality Assistant	€35k	€40k	€45k
Food Technologist	€55k	€65k	€70k
Assistant Food Technologist	€50k	€55k	€60k
NPD Manager	€70k	€80k	€90k
Product Developer	€55k	€65k	€70k



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