



Market Monitor - 1 January 2026

Emerging Conditions Which Indicate Potential Volatility

Birches Group conducts salary surveys and monitors labor market conditions in more than 150 countries. The salary survey program updates and publishes changes in employer compensation three times per year (April, July and October).

On a continuing basis, Birches Group monitors economic indicators that highlight potential volatility. These indicators are largely based on examination of exchange rate movement against the US Dollar.

Birches Group publishes the Market Monitor to keep our clients and collaborators informed about emerging conditions which may require closer monitoring. The Market Monitor is published twice a month and is available at no cost. [Sign up](#) to continue receiving updates.

Each organization needs to determine for itself the appropriate triggers within labor market conditions which will warrant a change/update of salaries and benefits and how these changes will be applied to individual staff. In the vast majority of locations a planned annual review of labor market movement is sufficient to sustain dynamic compensation.

Where economies begin to experience volatility, organizations should have policies and measures in place to respond to these conditions to sustain dynamic pay systems and provide for business/operational continuity to the extent possible. How aggressive these measures can and should be is dependent upon the volatility which is occurring. For the most part exchange rate movement/inflation which remains under ten percent per year will normally be captured in standard labor market movement. Where these indicators begin to exceed ten percent movement over a period of six months or less, additional monitoring becomes prudent with anticipation of the need for more rapid adjustment.



Why Exchange Rates?

Many clients are wondering why we are tracking exchange rates to monitor markets instead of inflation. Here's why:

Employers set salaries using cost of labor – how much other employers in the market pay for the same or similar roles. During normal economic times, cost of labor is the only indicator you need to ensure your compensation program is competitive. When volatility in the market occurs, currency devaluation and inflation increase. While we have found that devaluation, inflation and labor market movement are not correlated – i.e., they often move independently from one another – during periods of high volatility, employers often use devaluation or inflation as one of the considerations in reacting to the volatility in the labor market.

Exchange rates are a leading indicator of volatility. Rates are widely available and anchored in fact, not estimates. On the other hand, inflation is a lagging indicator of volatility. Accurate inflation rate data is difficult to obtain and is often estimated. For example, the latest global inflation data published by the OECD, effective April 2022, includes inflation rates for 156 countries around the world. 45% of the data is estimated after 2020. In other words, 70 of the 156 countries did not report actual inflation data for any period in 2021 or 2022! OECD data is useful, and is probably the best data that is publicly available, but the data is based on estimates and projections, not facts! In addition, inflation impacts employees differently depending on their standard of living and individual circumstances.

Birches Group uses currency exchange rates as the most reliable measure of volatility. Inflation often follows devaluation in the market, so devaluation is a decent indicator of the inflation impact. Employers who monitor devaluation and apply consistent and proactive actions in response will emerge as the leaders in the market and will be well equipped to maintain a competitive market position despite challenging economic conditions.



Having examined the impact of exchange rate movement on salaries, it has been observed that the impact can be profound but not entirely correlated to the full movement. Following the current data on volatility, a table of six levels of volatility is presented. These six levels provide guidance to organizations as to the degree of volatility and indicate that heightened levels of attention are required to plan for any additional measures to sustain competitiveness of the local pay system.

In this update, two countries are now at Level One, while seven countries stay at Level Five. Libya, Suriname, and Türkiye remain excluded from our volatility levels as their exchange rate movements remain below ten percent.

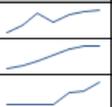
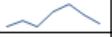
For those organizations subscribing to Birches Group labor market data, updated market data for October 2025 is available where organizations can possibly examine movement.

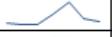


Early January 2026 Conditions

For Market Monitor Report Vol. 5, No. 1 examination of exchange rate movement over the prior six months now identifies twelve countries which warrant heightened monitoring. The table of exchange rate movement for these twelve is presented below. An additional table tracking exchange rate movement against the US Dollar for the Euro, British Pound, CFA Franc, and Japanese Yen is also available (exchange rate values are in USD):

Birches Group Exchange rate alert, 1 January 2026

Country	Currency	ISO Code	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26		6 mo movement
Argentina	Argentine Peso	ARS	1254.985	1322	1423.515	1347.648	1411.492	1437.493	1456		16.0%
Ethiopia	Birr	ETB	135.935	138.587	141.951	146.42	151.924	153.767	154.443		13.6%
Iran	Iranian Rial	IRR	689286	692816	693013	696640	891656	914902.7	1054754		53.0%
Lebanon	Lebanese Pound	LBP	89500	89500	89500	89500	89500	89500	89500		0.0%
Libya	Libyan Dinar	LYD	5.395	5.407	5.396	5.425	5.443	5.42	5.401		0.1%
South Sudan, Republic of	South Sudanese Pounds	SSP	4531.433	4540.354	4561.183	4592.54	4583.584	4555.528	4542.62		0.2%
Sudan	Sudanese Pound	SDG	2140	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400	2400		12.1%
Suriname	Surinamese Dollar	SRD	37.49	37.76	39.455	39.063	38.814	38.538	38.262		2.1%
Syrian Arab Republic	Syrian Pound	SYP	11110	10680	11050	11055	11055	11055	11055		-0.5%
Türkiye	Türkiye Lira	TRY	40.171	40.745	41.285	41.8	42.241	42.615	42.932		6.9%
Venezuela	Bolivar Digital	VES	113.75	131.124	154.982	191.366	231.046	257.928	291.352		156.1%
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Gold	ZIG	26.891	26.76	26.729	26.648	26.392	25.46	25.361		-5.7%

Euro	EUR	0.856	0.855	0.853	0.865	0.865	0.852	0.85		-0.7%
U.K. Pound	GBP	0.74	0.737	0.738	0.75	0.764	0.745	0.741		0.1%
CFA Franc	XOF	561.175	560.551	559.308	567.241	567.241	558.594	557.597		-0.6%
Yen	JPY	147.05	147.24	147.45	152.32	154.99	155.09	156.02		6.1%

Legend

- Movement greater than 10% in 6 months
- Movement greater than 20% in 6 months
- Movement greater than 30% in 6 months
- Movement greater than 40% in 6 months
- Movement greater than 50% in 6 months

Based upon UN official exchange rates

Early January 2026 Conditions

Based on the above data, the recommended monitoring and response level is as follows:

Level One	Level Five
Argentina Ethiopia	Iran Lebanon South Sudan Sudan Syria Venezuela Zimbabwe

Argentina moves from Level Two to Level One, joining Ethiopia. Iran, Lebanon, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe remain at Level Five. Employers surveyed at Level Five countries predominantly pay salaries in US dollars or euros. We will continue to monitor these exceptional situations closely.

Libya, Suriname, and Türkiye continue to exhibit exchange rate movements below ten percent and thus remains excluded from our volatility levels.

Where organizations decide to proceed with a response to economic developments beyond Level One where standard pay management policies still typically remain in place, consideration should be given to close monitoring and a determination as to when the organization will revert pay management to Level One.

Birches Group has developed a range of response scenarios which organizations may consider to address the conditions found for each level of volatility. We are happy to work with individual organizations to examine the context of current pay approaches to help design an appropriate response.

Birches Group presents this information for the sole purpose of providing data on emerging conditions. The decision to proceed with any response to changing conditions is entirely within the purview of each organization. Having policies in place that identify possible volatile conditions, define possible “triggers” for supplemental action and provide guidance as to the steps an organization will pursue to sustain stability to a partial extent brings a great degree of transparency to compensation management.

The analysis and response level anticipates compensation established in local currency. Denomination of compensation in currencies other than the national currency should be highly exceptional. The conditions warranting the possible consideration of this response are detailed in Response Level Five.

Levels of Volatility

To guide an organization on appropriate measures against timeframes for managing the updating of salary scales, the table below has been prepared aligning the measure against the market condition.

Level of Volatility	Market Condition
Level One	Standard Market Conditions 0 to 20% exchange rate movement in six months
Level Two	Dynamic Market Conditions 20+% exchange rate movement in six months
Level Three	Rapid Evolving Market Conditions 40+% exchange rate movement in six months Multiple reviews and revisions typical amongst comparators
Level Four	Sudden, Unexpected Social/Economic Event Currency devaluation of 50% or more in six months or less Disjointed and unclear comparator response
Level Five	National currency aligned Dollars/Euros Wide prevailing practice to denominate national salaries in Dollars or Euros Legal for staff to have Dollar/Euro bank accounts
Level Six	Labor market collapse Departure of most comparators from the market Absence of reliable data on currency and inflation



Responding to Volatility

This table of categories of volatility should be discussed and agreed as a basis to develop aligned responses. Measures organizations choose to develop to sustain market competitiveness and business continuity in response to economic and social volatility should be widely disseminated so everyone in the organization knows the basis beyond the founding principles upon which pay will be reviewed and revised. Provisions need to be made in advance to ensure arrangements are in place to support the needed action as conditions evolve. There needs to be close coordination with the data provider. Again, Birches Group is prepared to work with organizations to develop responses and help communicate these policies with staff and management.

With appropriate organization and planning, the creation of a flexible framework for sustaining compensation during periods of volatility is quite possible. Most importantly, having a policy framework in place guided by market information ensures sustaining the goal and integrity of the salary system while remaining in the context of local market conditions.

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Is Your HR System Really Working?

Misaligned roles, unclear policies, and outdated tools in your HR system could be signs of deeper problems—ones that cost your organization time, trust, and resources.

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- Flags risks that need attention
- Highlights what's working well
- Offers a roadmap for improvement

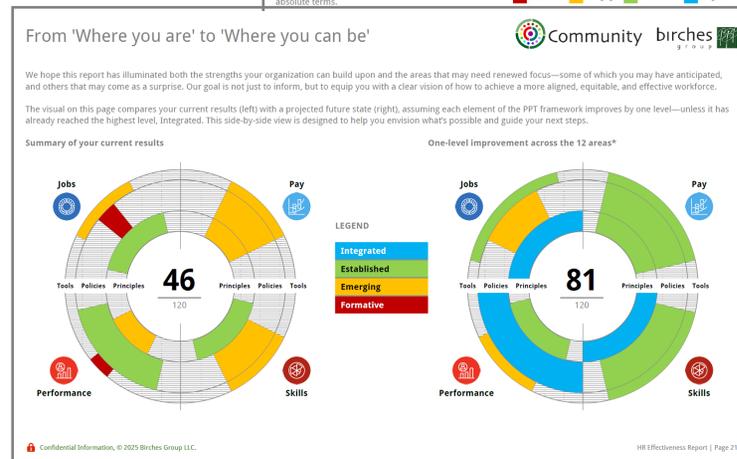
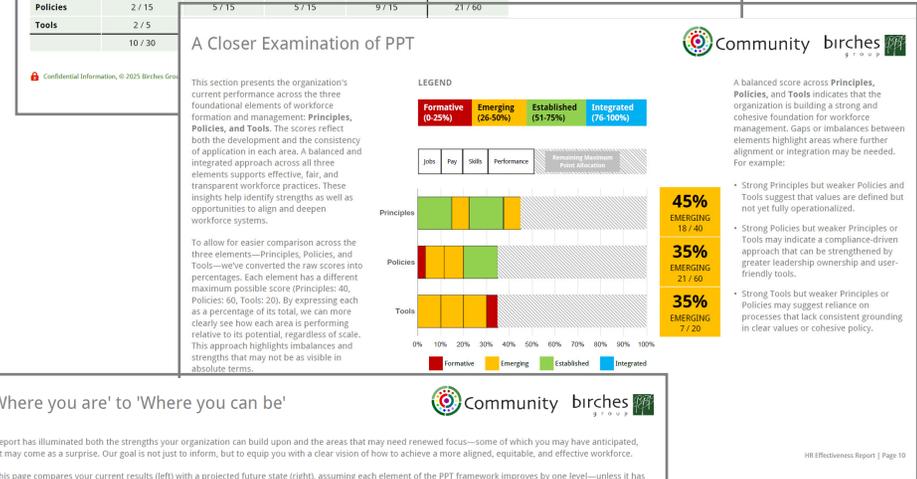
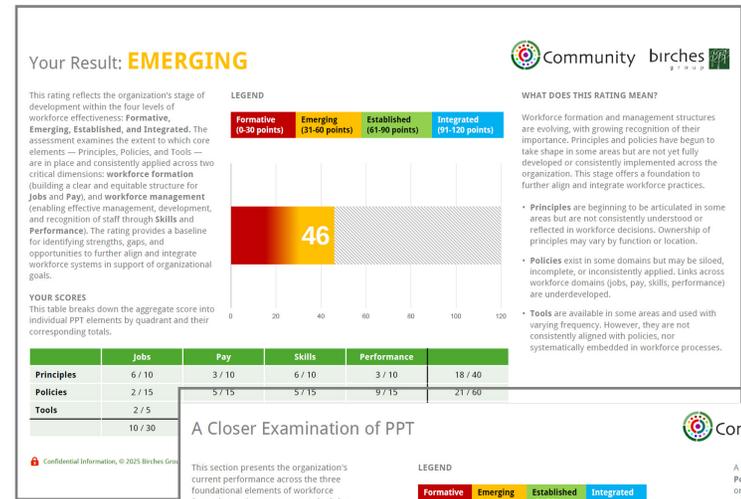
WHY IT MATTERS

A strong HR system builds:

- Trust with staff and leadership
- Confidence with stakeholders and funders
- A foundation for fairness, consistency, and impact

But weak systems? They create risk, waste, and abuse.

Our HR Effectiveness Framework reveals where your HR practices are aligned—and where they need work. It's a simple, powerful way to benchmark your progress and plan for what's next.



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Community: Birches Group's Publication on Issues of Workforce Management

Equity Starts Here: Insights, News, and Actions for Workforce Management

Birches Group has released its newest publication, **Community: Birches Group's Publication on Issues of Workforce Management**, a space dedicated to bringing you news, insights, and strategies on equity in workforce management within international development.

In our inaugural edition, we're excited to deliver the latest updates, practical strategies, and thought leadership designed to foster equitable workplaces. Don't miss our exclusive interviews with management experts, who share unique perspectives and actionable steps for advancing equity and fairness in HR within organizations around the world.

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We're here to help you integrate your workforce management



COMMUNITY™ INTEGRATED WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

At Birches Group, we believe in a holistic approach to managing your workforce, from the initial structure to the capacity of your people, through skills development and performance. The Community™ platform is Birches Group's methodology that integrates critical areas of human resources: job design and evaluation, compensation management, skills measurement, and performance management. Community™ uses a simple, clear, and consistent approach across all areas of HR, all built on the foundation of **Jobs**.



SIMPLE AND CONSISTENT JOB EVALUATION

Birches Group Community™ Jobs is a simple and transparent job evaluation approach easily understood by HR, managers and even staff. We believe that job evaluation forms the fundamental underpinning of everything HR does – from compensation and recruitment to development and performance. Every area of HR is impacted by job evaluation and job levels.



DESIGNING AND MAINTAINING YOUR SCALE

Our Scale Design Specialists have extensive experience in creating and maintaining salary scales for different types of organizations, as well as providing updated labor market data to help sustain your desired market position.



MANAGING INDIVIDUAL PAY USING COMMUNITY™ SKILLS

At Birches Group, we believe that pay movement should reflect one's experience. As an employee gains more experience in their job, they develop a deeper understanding of their role and accumulate the necessary skills that enable them to be more effective and produce higher quality results. Birches Group Community™ Skills provides a framework for measuring experience. Companies can link their compensation administration to the progression of Skills in any number of ways, and provide increases based on employee growth in their jobs rather than performance.



REWARDING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY™ PERFORMANCE

Birches Group believes that performance should be used for one-time recognition, not salary increases. Birches Group's Community™ approach to performance management centers the expectations on performance to the actual definition of the job level and celebration of the good. Using an approach that measures achievement by linking it back to the job evaluation factors, purpose, engagement, and delivery, Community™ provides organizations with a performance management system that is standardized, simplified, and can easily align with objectives across different grade levels and teams.

READY TO DEVELOP YOUR SPECIAL MEASURES POLICY?

[Contact us](#) to learn how Birches Group services can help your organization take the next steps toward developing your own special measures policy. You can also learn more about Community™ and how it can further align the foundations of your organization.