UPPER

The Banking & Financial Services Talent Market in 2026.

How compliant, AI-accelerated sourcing wins regulated banking roles — a data-driven field guide for banks, wealth managers, and financial-services talent leaders.

EDITION	READING TIME	SOURCES	PUBLISHED BY
H2 2026	10 minutes	12 cited (2025–2026)	UPPER

KEY FINDINGS

44.7 days	average time-to-hire in financial services — the slowest of any major U.S. sector tracked.[5]
100,000	projected U.S. financial-advisor shortfall by 2034 — 30–37% of current headcount.[1]
57,000 vs 53,000	advisor exits outpaced entrants in 2025 — the fourth net-loss year in the last five.[2]
350,000	worker shortfall in digital and technology skills across U.S. banking as of 2025.[4]
46% · 26%	of wealth advisors are within 10 years of retirement, and over a quarter are already 65+.[10]

01 — The Demand

Why is banking talent so hard to hire in 2026?

> **Because demand is shifting toward niche, regulated skills — RegTech, AML/KYC, digital — that legacy banking talent pipelines were never built to supply.**

Banking's talent problem isn't headline headcount growth — it's an acute mismatch between the skills institutions have and the skills they now need. Financial Activities employment sat at **9,104,000 jobs** as of May 2026 after a period of modest growth followed by cooling, and within finance and insurance specifically, total industry job openings measured **243,000** in May 2026 alone, with roughly 127,000 hires and 134,000 separations in the same month — a sign of high churn even in a plateauing headcount environment.[67]

Layered on top is intensifying demand for regulated skills that barely existed a decade ago: RegTech, AML/KYC/sanctions expertise, data analytics, and cybersecurity.[4] AML is a case study in scarcity — the qualified pool is shrinking as enforcement risk rises.[8]

9.1M
Financial Activities jobs in the U.S. as of May 2026

243K
finance & insurance job openings in a single month (May 2026)

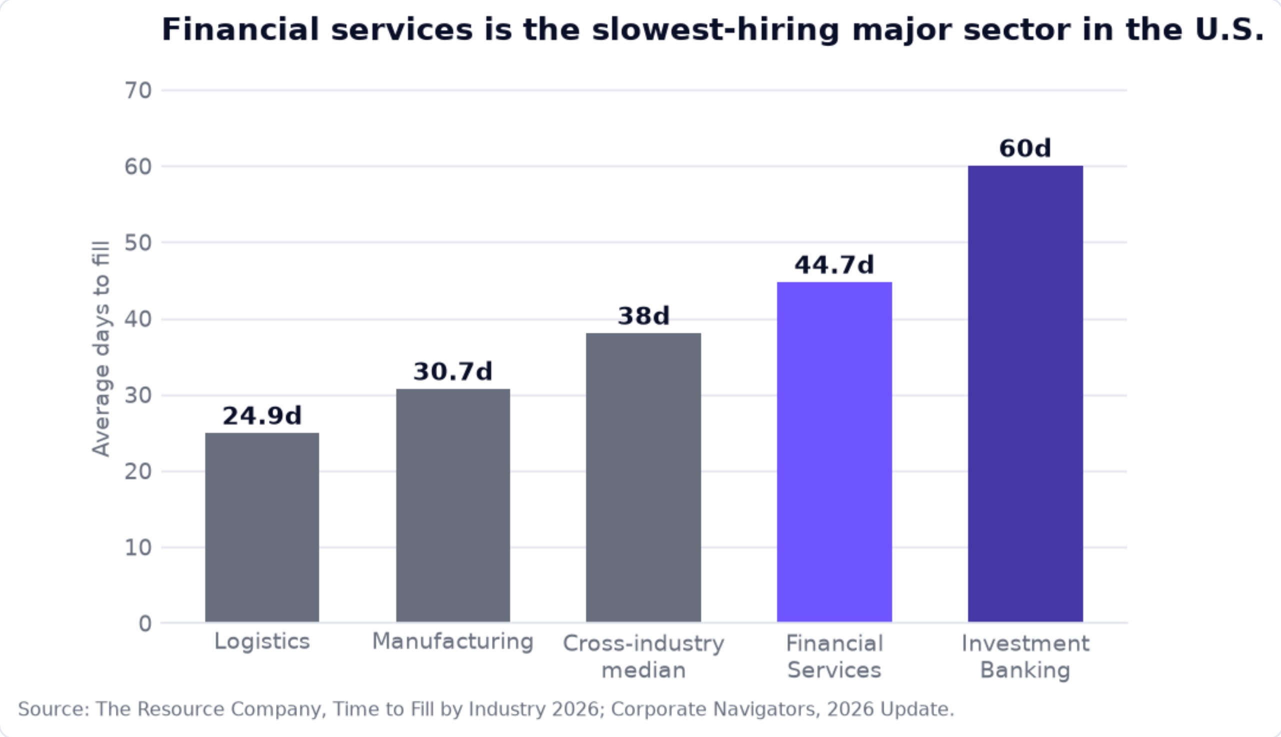
350K
worker shortfall in digital/technology skills across U.S. banking

02 — The Clock

How long does it really take to fill a banking role?

> **Financial services is the slowest-hiring major sector in the U.S. — and the reasons are structural, not incidental.**

Financial services consistently ranks as the **slowest-hiring major industry** in third-party benchmarking, averaging **44.7 days** — compared with 30.7 days for manufacturing and 24.9 days for logistics.[5] Investment banking specifically runs even longer, at an estimated **60 days**.[12] This elongated cycle stems from mandatory background investigations, credential/licensing verification (Series 7/63/65, FINRA registration), and multi-stakeholder compliance sign-off — frictions that don't exist in most other sectors, and that create real competitive exposure when fintech rivals move faster.



Sources: The Resource Company, Oct 2025 (Workable data); Corporate Navigators, 2026 Update.

The cost of this delay compounds: every extra day a regulated seat sits open is a day of coverage risk on compliance, risk, or client-facing functions that cannot simply go unstaffed.

03 — The Squeeze

Why are banks losing the talent race on two fronts at once?

> **Banks face regulatory hiring constraints AND fintech competition for the same digital talent — simultaneously.**

Every hire into a regulated role (trading, compliance, risk, AML, wealth advisory) must clear licensing, background screening, and often regulator-notification requirements — a fixed time cost that fintech challengers hiring for similar analytical skills do not bear to the same degree.[5] At the same time, banks are competing against fintechs and Big Tech for data scientists, cybersecurity engineers, and digital product talent — the same 350,000-worker shortfall — often while offering less flexible compensation and slower-moving pipelines than tech-native rivals.[4]

The pressure shows up unevenly across the industry. Citibank, Wells Fargo, and Bank of New York Mellon alone cut a combined **8,580 jobs** between Q2 and Q3 2025, while institutions below the $250 billion asset threshold grew employment **0.2%** in the same period — legacy institutions shedding headcount while smaller and newer players keep hiring.[3] Full-time employment across 4,432 U.S. commercial and savings banks fell a net **7,460 positions** year-over-year in Q3 2025, and banks have shed a cumulative **81,000 jobs** since headcount peaked in Q1 2023.[3]

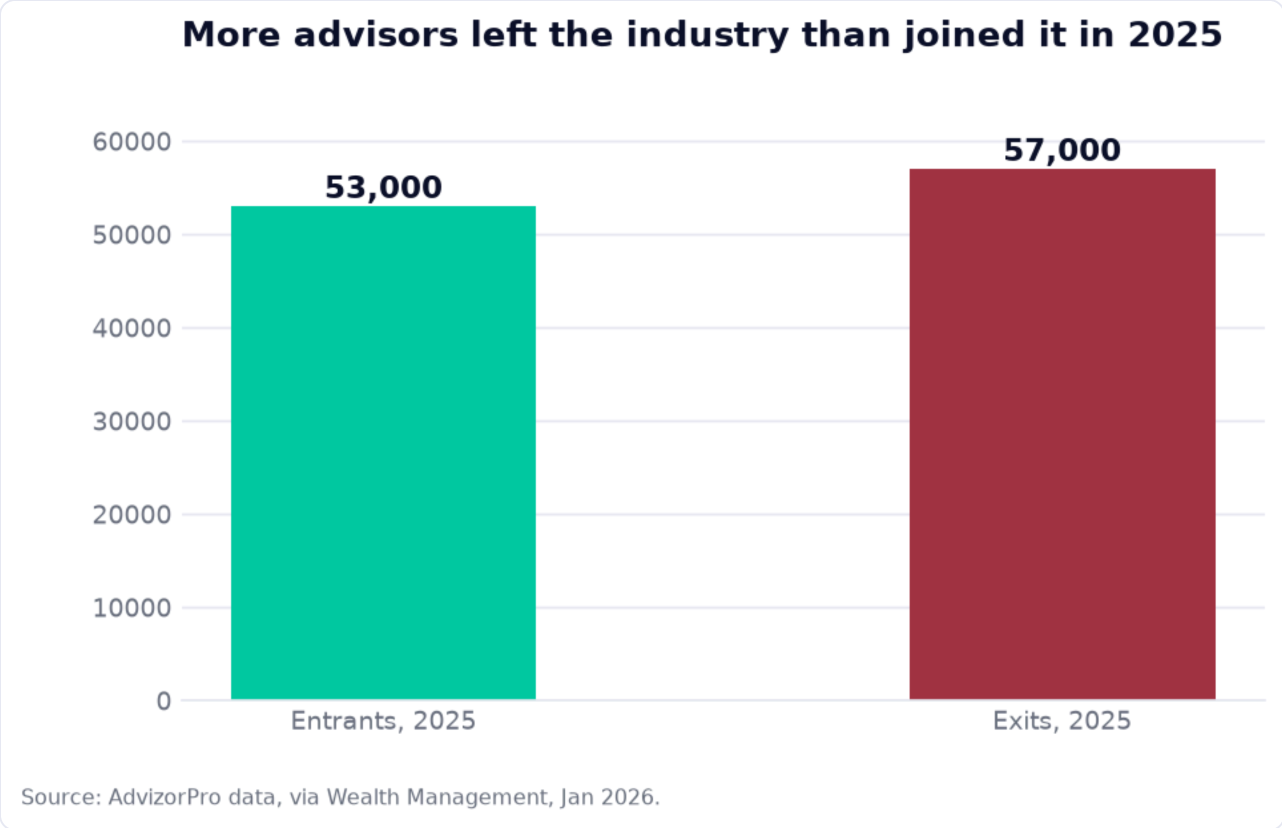
Source: Global Banking & Finance Review, April 2025 (Financier Worldwide data).

04 — The Succession Crisis

Why is the advisor shortage getting worse, not better?

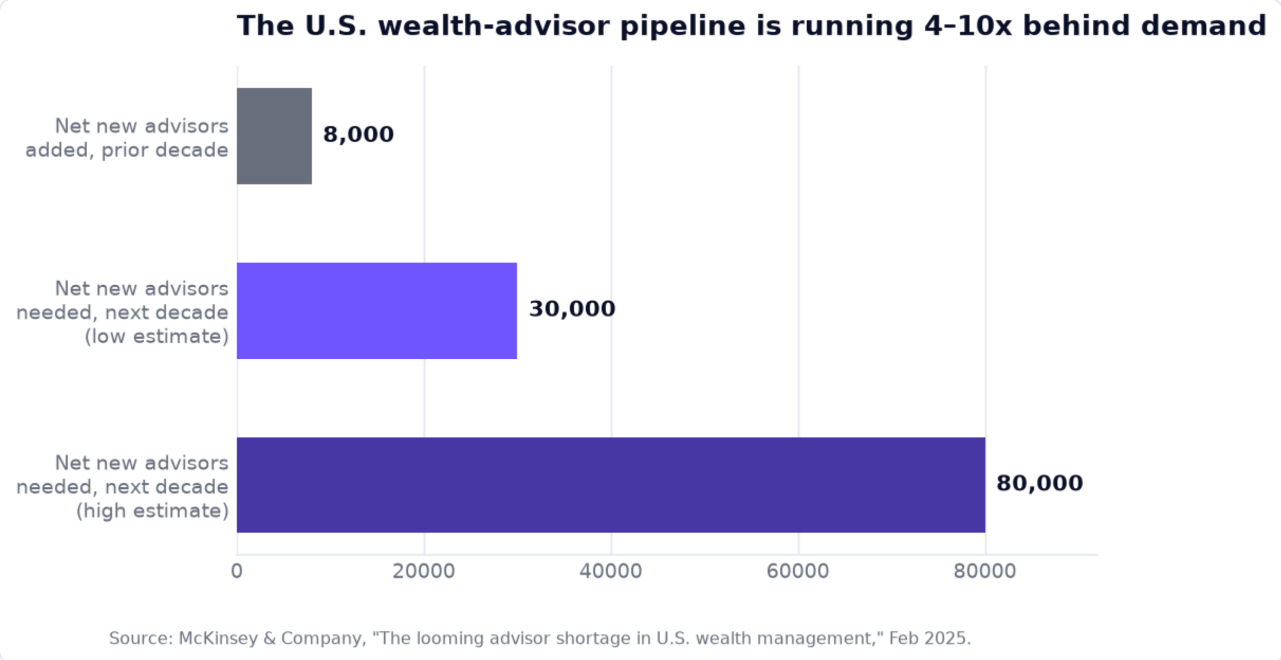
> **More advisors are leaving the profession than entering it — and the ones left are aging out fast.**

The U.S. wealth management industry faces a projected shortage of roughly **100,000 financial advisors by 2034** — 30–37% of current headcount — even as advised relationships are expected to grow 28–34%.[1] The typical financial advisor is **48 years old**, and more than **44% are over 50**; the industry needs 30,000–80,000 net new advisors over the next decade, compared with just 8,000 net new advisors added in the prior decade.[1] Making the pipeline problem worse, **72% of new advisors leave the industry within five years**.[9]



Source: AdvizorPro data, via Wealth Management, Jan 2026.

More advisors left the profession than joined it in 2025 — **57,000 exits versus 53,000 entrants** — the fourth net-loss year in the last five.[2] And the exits already underway aren't quiet retirements: more than **11,172 experienced advisors changed firms in 2025**, up 16% from 2024, as RIAs and independent channels pull talent away from traditional wirehouses.[11]



Source: McKinsey & Company, "The looming advisor shortage in U.S. wealth management," Feb 2025.

> **"46% of wealth advisors are within 10 years of retirement, and 26% are already 65 or older — this isn't a future problem. It's already here."**

05 — The Trust Line

Why can't banking hire the way tech companies do?

> **Banking roles carry fiduciary and systemic-risk stakes — sourcing has to verify credentials and compliance history at scale, without slowing to a crawl.**

Unlike most white-collar hiring, banking roles carry fiduciary, regulatory, and systemic-risk stakes: a bad compliance hire can expose an institution to enforcement action; a bad advisor hire can expose retail clients to real financial harm. This is why the industry's hardest-to-fill roles — compliance, risk, AML/KYC, and licensed wealth advisory — require both technical competence and demonstrable integrity and background clearance, not just skills-matching.[10] J.D. Power survey data underscore the urgency: **46% of wealth advisors are within 10 years of retirement**, and **26% are already 65 or older**.[10]

Any sourcing approach for these roles must verify credentials and compliance history at scale while still moving at competitive speed — the central tension legacy recruiting processes have not solved.

06 — The Playbook

What should a banking talent team do about it?

Five moves separate the institutions that will win the next 24 months of banking and financial-services hiring:

1. Pre-verify licensing and regulatory history at the sourcing stage. Build pipelines pre-screened against FINRA/state licensing databases and disclosure history before candidates reach a recruiter, cutting weeks out of the 44.7-day sector average.
2. Run parallel, compliant background workflows instead of sequential ones. Automate credential, sanctions-list, and reference-check steps that currently run serially and drive banking's longest-in-industry time-to-fill.
3. Build always-on specialist pipelines for AML/KYC/risk talent. Given how thin the qualified AML pool has become, continuously-refreshed sourcing is required to compete for scarce compliance professionals.
4. Target succession-risk roles proactively. With 44% of financial advisors over 50 and a 100,000-advisor shortfall projected by 2034, flag succession-critical books of business and start next-generation pipelines years ahead of retirement waves.
5. Compete on speed and reach against fintech, without compromising compliance. Widen the digital/technical sourcing aperture (data science, cybersecurity, RegTech) to match fintech hiring speed while still clearing every regulatory gate.

This is precisely the model UPPER was built to run: autonomous, compliant, multi-channel sourcing that pre-checks licensing and disclosure history and scores candidates against the requirement — so a lean banking talent team can move at competitive speed without cutting a single compliance corner.

Sources

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9. CUNY Journalism/Wealth Management — "America's wealth is growing. The number of financial advisors is not." (Jan 2026)

10. American Bankers Association Banking Journal — "Survey: Wealth management industry facing talent shortage" (July 2025)
11. Wealth Management/Diamond Consultants — "Advisor Movement Soared 16% in 2025" (March 2026)
12. Corporate Navigators — "Average Time To Fill (2026 Update)"

This report synthesizes third-party research current as of July 2026; figures are attributed to their original sources above. Some forward projections are inherently uncertain. UPPER edition H2 2026 — refreshed semiannually.