

The benchmark: what collecting payment costs a UK business, and what collects.io costs instead

Customer paper · v4 · 5 October 2026

Sources

Document	Date	Used for
Collects standard 2026 AR benchmark — policy note v2, §3a added 7 Sep	2 Sep 2026	Loaded cost of a credit controller, financial controller and finance director; productive hours
Collects time cost calculations workbook	3 Jun 2026	Salary sources behind the policy note
London Economics for DBT / OSBC, Late Payments Research, Table 14	31 Jul 2025	Hours a year spent collecting payment, by business size
Collects machine vs human action ratio analysis, v5	11 Sep 2026	29 : 1 on a live book; published market comparators
Collects pricing one-pager v9	1 Oct 2026	Collect prices

The answer

- **One credit controller costs £58,500 a year, fully loaded**, fixed from the first day whether or not cash comes in, before recruitment, notice and absence cover.
- **Collect costs 3% of that at 300 invoices a year, 8.6% at 1,000, 18.7% at 2,000 and 32.1% at 3,670**, and its per-invoice part is charged only on invoices we collect.
- **On our first live customer's book, 29 of every 30 actions were done without a person** (1,174 of 1,215 in 30 days). The published best-in-class for an AI agent is 49 : 1; finance operations today run nearer 1 : 1.

1. What people cost

Role	Base salary (London, 2026)	On-cost	Loaded cost a year	Productive hours	£ an hour	Salary sources
Credit controller	£45,000	× 1.30	£58,500	1,750	£33.43	Indeed London senior credit controller ~£43.5k (Mar 2026); Robert Walters London £35–45k; BKL survey £30–60k
Financial controller	£90,000	× 1.30	£117,000	1,750	£66.86	Glassdoor London median £78k; Morgan McKinley £80–120k; Robert Half £85.75–125.75k
Finance director	£130,000	× 1.30	£169,000	1,750	£96.57	Glassdoor London median ~£130k; Robert Half £122–187.75k

On-cost of 1.30 covers employer National Insurance, pension and overhead. Hours are productive hours, not calendar hours.

2. The time a business spends collecting payment

Business size	Hours a year (London Economics, Table 14)	At £33.43 an hour
Micro (1–9 staff)	75	£2,507
Small (10–49)	138	£4,613
Medium (50–249)	324	£10,831
Large (250+)	1,084	£36,237

3. Collect against one new credit controller

Invoices a year	Collect a year	One credit controller a year	Collect as a share of one hire
300	£1,743	£58,500	3.0%
1,000	£5,033	£58,500	8.6%
2,000	£10,913	£58,500	18.7%
3,670	£18,755.50	£58,500	32.1%

Collect is shown as if we collected every invoice, so it is the most Collect can cost at each volume. Above 10,000 invoices a year, pricing is agreed with us.

A new credit controller	collects.io Collect
£58,500 a year, fixed from the first day, whether or not cash comes in	Two weeks free, on your own ledger
Recruitment before they start	Platform fee set by your invoice volume, from £9 a month
Notice periods, holidays and absence to cover	Per-invoice fee only on invoices we collect
One person: 1,750 productive hours a year	No minimum fee, no recruitment, no notice to serve
	29 of 30 actions done without a person; your team keeps the exceptions

4. How much of the work needs a person

Who	Figure, as published	Machine : human
collects.io — first live customer*, 30 days to 2 Sep 2026	1,174 engine actions, 41 human actions (96.6% without a person)	29 : 1
Salesforce Agentforce — SEC filing, 26 Feb 2025	84% resolution, only 2% of requests escalated to a human, 380,000 conversations	49 : 1
Intercom Fin — 12 Mar 2026	76% average resolution rate, 12,000+ teams	about 3 : 1
Klarna AI assistant — 27 Feb 2024	two-thirds of customer service chats, 2.3 million conversations	2 : 1
Vic.ai (accounts payable) — 17 Jan 2025	78% of invoices processed with no human input	about 3.5 : 1
Ardent Partners, State of ePayables 2025 (204 AP leaders)	straight-through processing 51.0% best-in-class, 29.0% all others	about 1 : 1

*Our first live customer, Say Digital Ltd (MOHARA), is also our build partner. The ratio counts state changes — a reminder sent, a payment matched, a dispute opened — not background scans, so it does not rise if we scan more often.

5. Time returned on that book

138 hours a year (the small-business figure in section 2) × 96.6% done without a person = 133.3 hours a year. At £33.43 an hour that is £4,456 a year, 7.6% of one credit controller. The remaining 3.4% stays with the customer's own team — the exceptions.

Sum checks

Check	Working	Result
Credit controller loaded cost	$£45,000 \times 1.30 = £58,500; \div 1,750 = £33.43$	PASS
Financial controller	$£90,000 \times 1.30 = £117,000; \div 1,750 = £66.86$	PASS
Finance director	$£130,000 \times 1.30 = £169,000; \div 1,750 = £96.57$	PASS
Hours × rate	$75 \times 33.43 = 2,507 \cdot 138 \times 33.43 = 4,613 \cdot 324 \times 33.43 = 10,831 \cdot 1,084 \times 33.43 = 36,237$	PASS
Collect 300	$£768 + 300 \times £3.25 = £1,743; \div 58,500 = 2.98\%$	PASS
Collect 1,000	$£1,908 + (500 \times £3.25 + 500 \times £3.00 = £3,125) = £5,033; \div 58,500 = 8.60\%$	PASS
Collect 2,000	$£4,788 + (1,625 + 1,500 \times £3.00 = £6,125) = £10,913; \div 58,500 = 18.65\%$	PASS

Check	Working	Result
Collect 3,670	$\pounds 7,788 + (1,625 + 7,500 + 670 \times \pounds 2.75 = \pounds 10,967.50) = \pounds 18,755.50; \div 58,500 = 32.06\%$	PASS
Ratio	$1,174 \div 41 = 28.6; 1,174 \div 1,215 = 96.6\%$	PASS
Time returned	$138 \times 0.966 = 133.3 \text{ h} \times \pounds 33.43 = \pounds 4,456; \div 58,500 = 7.6\%$	PASS (the v5 note shows $\pounds 4,458$ — $\pounds 2$ rounding)
Comparators	2% escalation $\rightarrow 98 \div 2 = 49 : 1 \cdot 76 \div 24 = 3.2 \cdot$ two-thirds $\rightarrow 2 : 1 \cdot 78 \div 22 = 3.5 \cdot 51 \div 49 = 1.04$	PASS

What this does and does not claim

- The credit controller cost is a London benchmark. Outside London salaries are usually lower; enter your own cost and the comparison changes with it.
- We do not promise a headcount cut. Run collects.io alongside your team for a quarter and decide when you have seen the numbers.
- The 29 : 1 is measured on one live book over 30 days. Autonomy is by count; by time the human share is larger, because the exceptions are the hard cases.