

20i[®]



Web Designer Survey

From finding work to getting paid;
insights into the life of a web designer

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About This Survey

After the events of 2020-21, when working life was completely turned on its head, each and every industry is taking a step back to consider...where are we now?

And the web design world is no different. From career prospects to client expectations, tech professionals across the board are wondering how has the sector changed? What challenges lay ahead? What opportunities?

To answer these questions and shed light on the marketplace, 20i's Web Design Survey canvassed 500 designers on their businesses, work preferences and more. In this report, we have distilled those insights to give you a state of the field overview, to understand how things stand now and what the future may hold.

But before we dive into the specifics, let's get started with a bit of background on today's UK web design industry.

Despite the detrimental impact of the pandemic on numerous spheres, web design is largely going from strength to strength. Which makes perfect sense, with lockdowns driving more businesses to build their online presence and thus placing digital services very much in demand.

In fact, the industry's CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) is predicted to advance 0.8% over the next five years to £560.9 million, and 2021 alone is forecasted to see a 3.5% rise¹. While close to a million UK workers lost their jobs since 2020², the number of UK web design positions is likely to grow by 5.9% over the 2021-27 period³, demonstrating a level of buoyancy and security unmatched by many other sectors.

Great news, right?

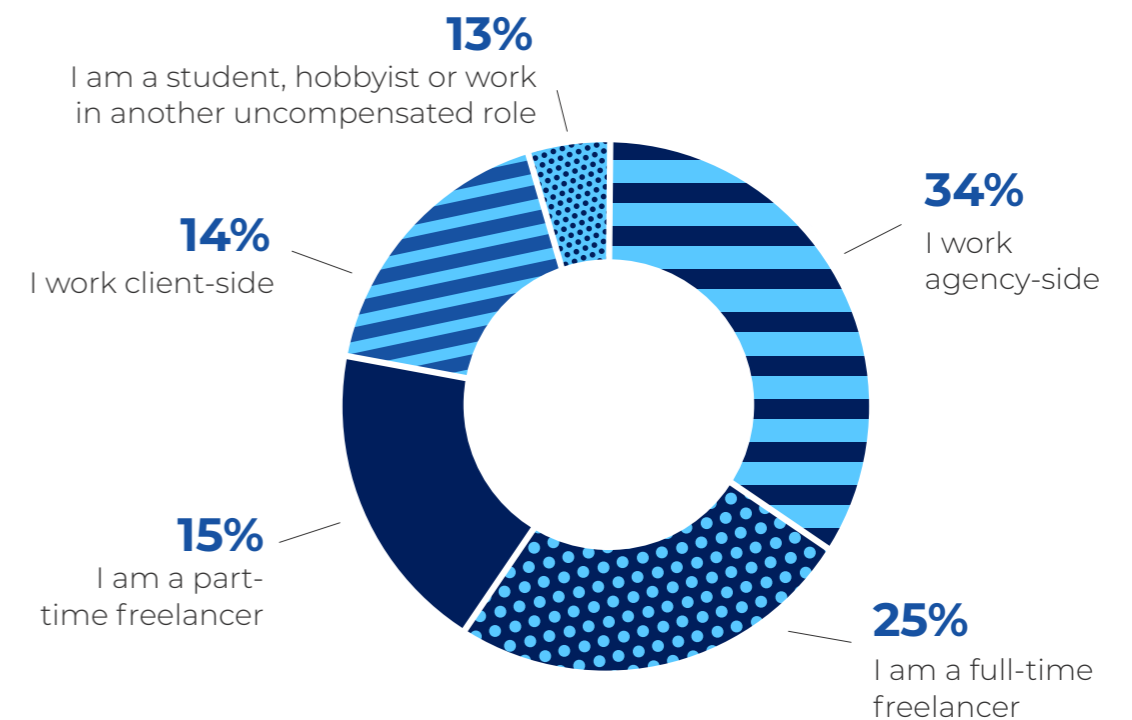
Well, that's not the whole story. Behind the wider market picture lies a range of experiences and perspectives, showing everyday realities, problems and aspirations. Read on to discover the full scoop unearthed by the survey.

About You

First up, we wanted to find out about the respondents' web design career and the type of tasks they're involved in.

The idea was to understand what it looks like to operate in this industry: if the traditional office 9-5 still reigns supreme, how many colleagues they work alongside, and if they share their expertise by creating original content.

Which of the following best describes you?



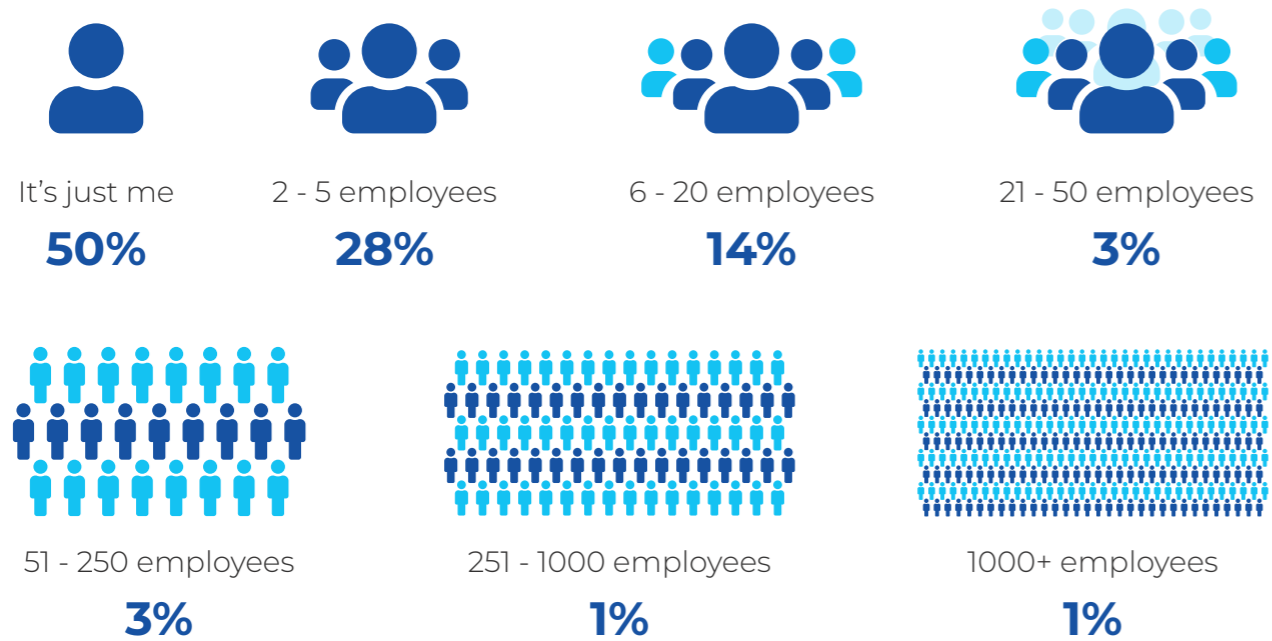
The majority of respondents were employed in a non-freelance capacity, i.e. a permanent role. Of these, twice as many worked for an agency - rather than client-side - representing the greater proliferation of agency-side web design positions.

Taking the pandemic into account, however, the ratio could also speak to how the growing appetite for digital services is benefitting agencies, while other sectors (comprised of client-side organisations) have faced financial challenges and thus implemented staff cutbacks.

Another key finding here is that 44% of respondents are freelancing, suggesting that a significant number of professionals are opting out of traditional salaried positions and taking matters into their own hands.

This could point to ongoing uncertainties around job security in the present climate. This is supported by the fact that almost a fifth of respondents are freelancing part-time alongside a permanent role, whether to 'hedge one's bets' or supplement income.

How many people work in your organisation?

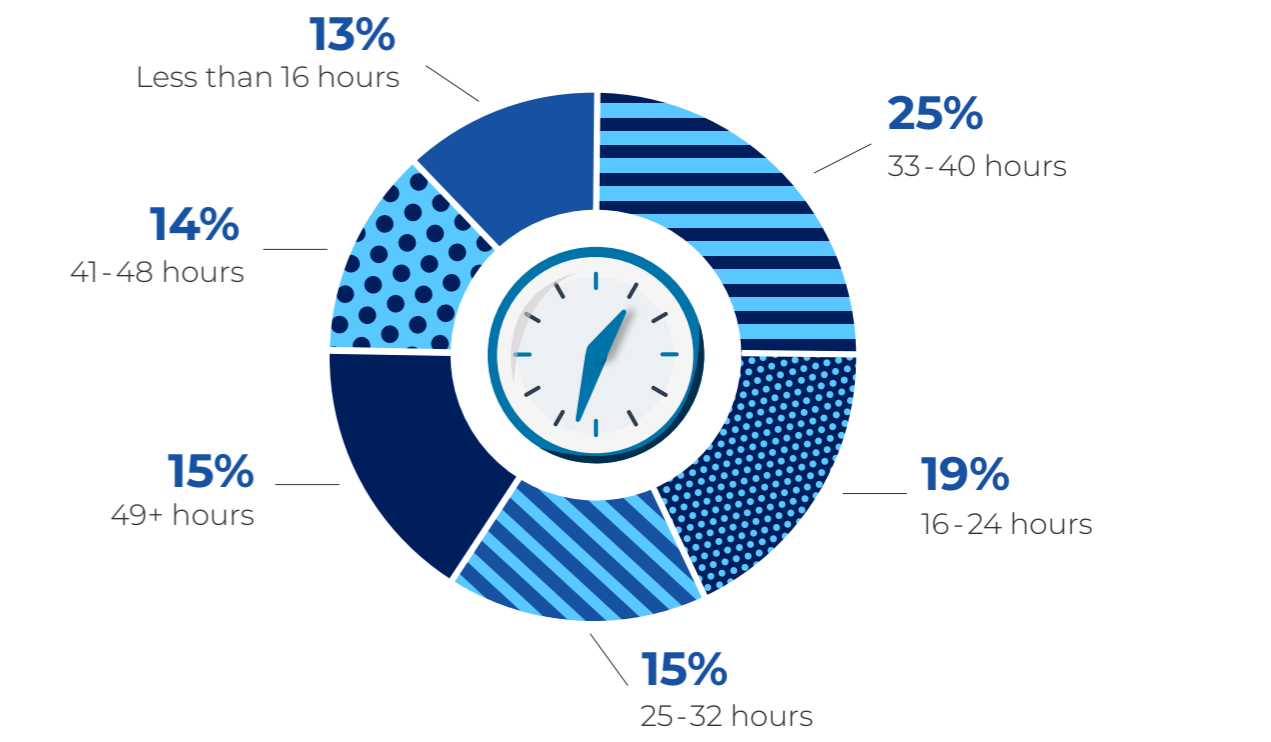


Lone wolves, mavericks, Han Solos...whatever you call it, most web designers work alone, either freelance or as part of a wider organisation. And of those who do operate alongside others, only 8% do so in businesses with more than 20 employees.

With so many functioning as solo operators or in very small teams, it's clear that this continues to be a popular career, spawning large numbers of startups and enterprises dedicated to creative and/or digital work.

This explains some of the difficulties facing web designers when it comes to pitching accurate prices...but more of that to come later!

How many hours per week do you typically work on web design projects?



54% of respondents worked full-time (33 hours+), with a sizable 15% portion putting in more than 49 hours per week, indicating that web designers are in high demand!

This is even more apparent when we note that these hours do not include other outputs such as admin tasks, demonstrating how sought-after is the field's skill set.



Do you personally have your own web design-focused...?

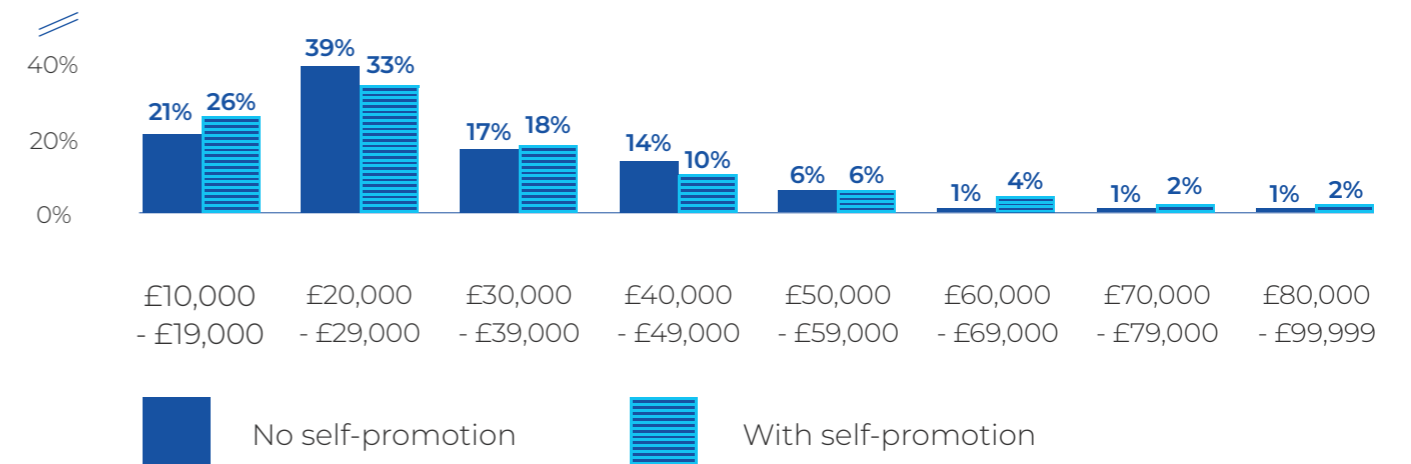
Here we asked if respondents used any platforms to create original content and share their ideas.

Interestingly, a huge 43% of web designers are producing web design-focused content, with the top publishing platforms being:



This shows that professional self-promotion is now a priority for the sector, whether for networking or business development purposes. Blogging is by far the favoured platform, possibly thanks to its associated SEO benefits, or its usefulness for displaying a range of expertise.

Unfortunately however, the data does not reveal any marked trends as to whether those who produce and share original content make more money.



Those in the lowest income bracket are more often than not promoting their own content, signifying efforts to move to a higher wage, whereas the opposite is true of the next lowest earners. Few deductions can therefore be made about if the effort actually pays off financially.

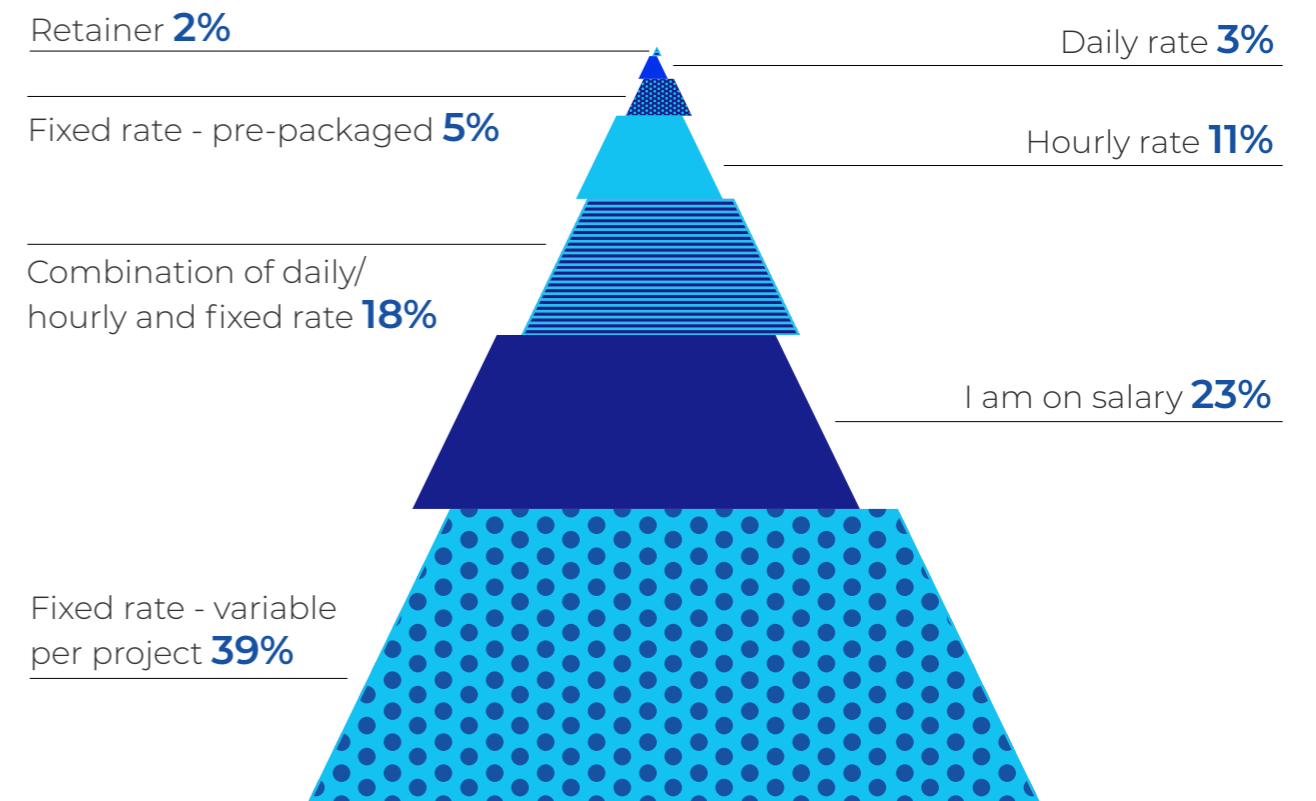
And talking of money...

Getting Paid

In this section we asked respondents about how much they are earning and how hard they are having to work for it.

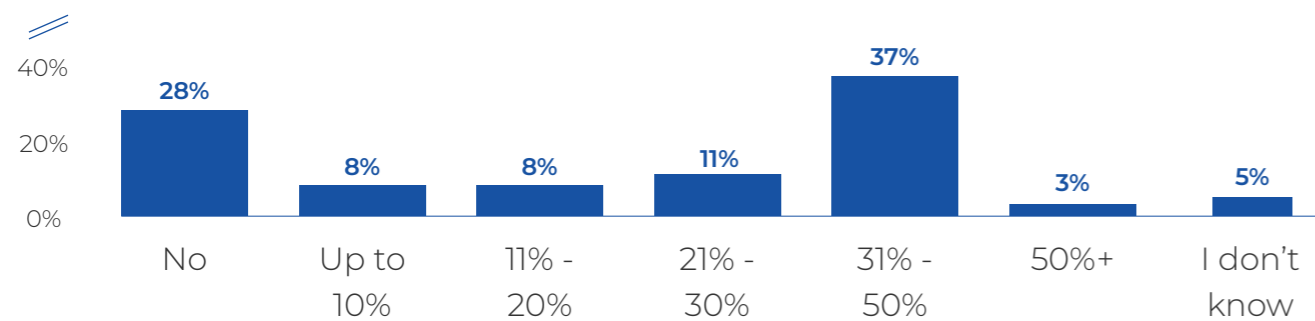
The answers will help benchmark the industry and build a picture of the commercial opportunities and obstacles facing web designers.

How do you typically get paid for your work?



Of the non-salaried web designers, the commonest pricing models are fixed rate per project and a combination of fixed rate + daily/hourly rate to cover any additional tasks.

Do you or your organisations ask for a deposit before you start work?

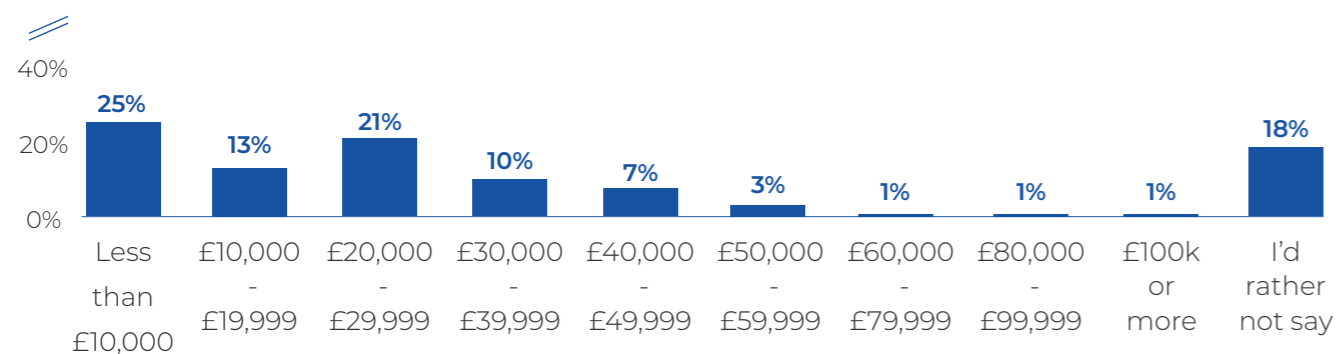


This is a tale of two extremes. On one hand, almost a third do not ask for a deposit, but of those who do, 40% ask for over 30% payment upfront.

The fact that many aren't asking for a deposit could suggest market confidence, with web designers sure that clients need their work enough to pay for it in full.

Conversely, the prevalence of hefty deposits may also imply a sense of insecurity, in which organisations are exercising caution to safeguard cashflow.

How much do you get paid/earn per year from your web design role?



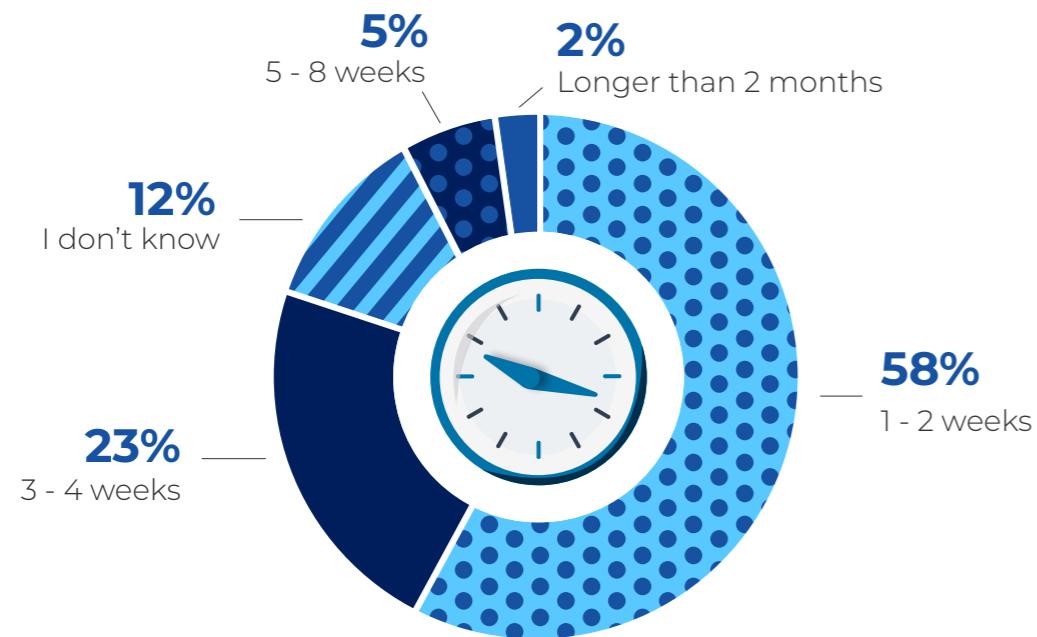
Taking the average number of hours spent on web design projects (35 hours) and our respondents' average annual income (£23,000/\$32,350), we get a rate of £12.64/\$17.40 per hour.

If we then compare full-time workers across client-side, agency-side and freelance, we can see that web designers tend to make higher wages through agency employment, due to a combination of more hours and better hourly rates:

	Hours worked/week	Annual income	Hourly rate
Full-time freelance	36	£23,100/ \$31,787	£12.34/ \$16.98
Full-time agency-side	37	£27,000/ \$37,154	£14.00/ \$19.26
Full-time client-side	38	£25,000/ \$34,399	£12.60/ \$12.34

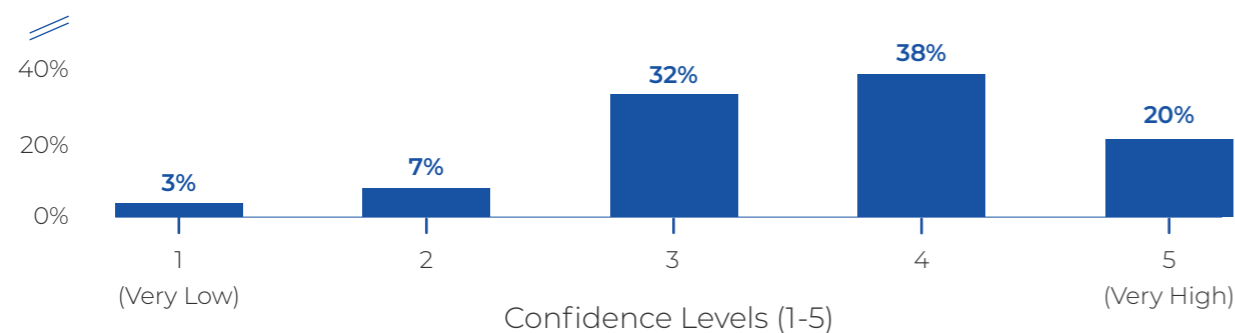


If you work with clients, how quickly are you typically paid after a job is completed?



The good news is that most of you aren't having to chase clients for payment very often, with over 81% getting paid within a month of completing the job.

If you are involved in the quoting to clients, typically how confident are you that you've pitched the price right?

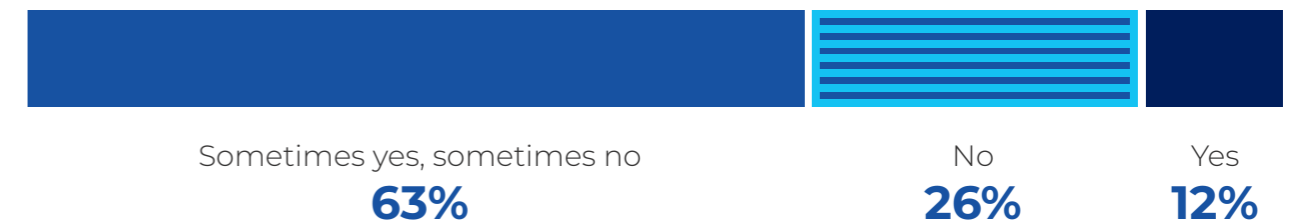


The less positive news is that nearly half of web designers don't feel confident when pitching their fees, meaning they could be missing out on a lot of money through imprecise pricing. And given how rapidly the commercial landscape is changing at the moment, that's not really surprising.

Lots of web designers are going freelance, so will be encountering the difficulty of knowing the worth of their work. The impressive size of the industry also means more competition, so fledgling or struggling enterprises might be tempted to lowball themselves in order to win clients.

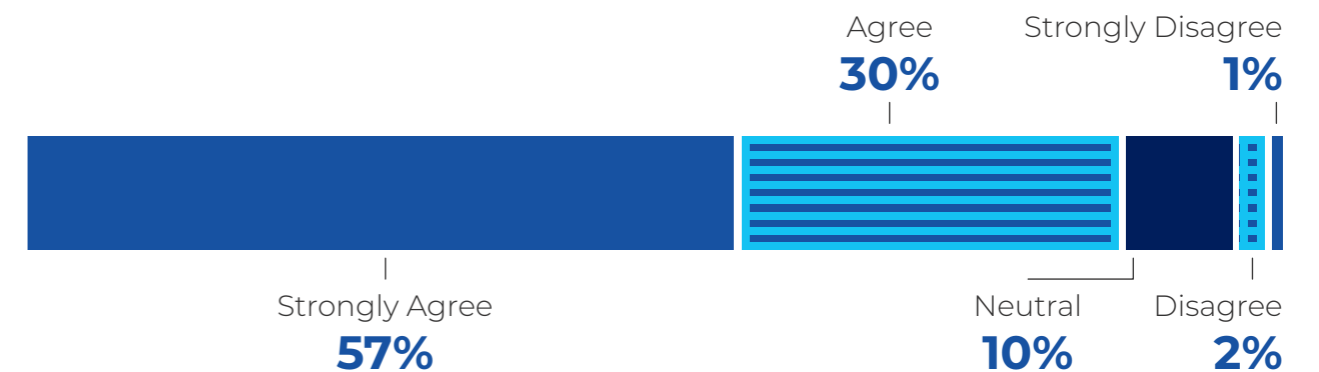
This is closely tied to our next question...

Do you feel you charge enough for your web design work?



Only 12% of web designers feel they consistently charge enough for their services. Again, this may be in part symptomatic of strong competition or obscurity around the value of web design work, both from professionals and their clients.

Accordingly, we then asked whether "clients often underestimate the cost of web design" and 87% either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.



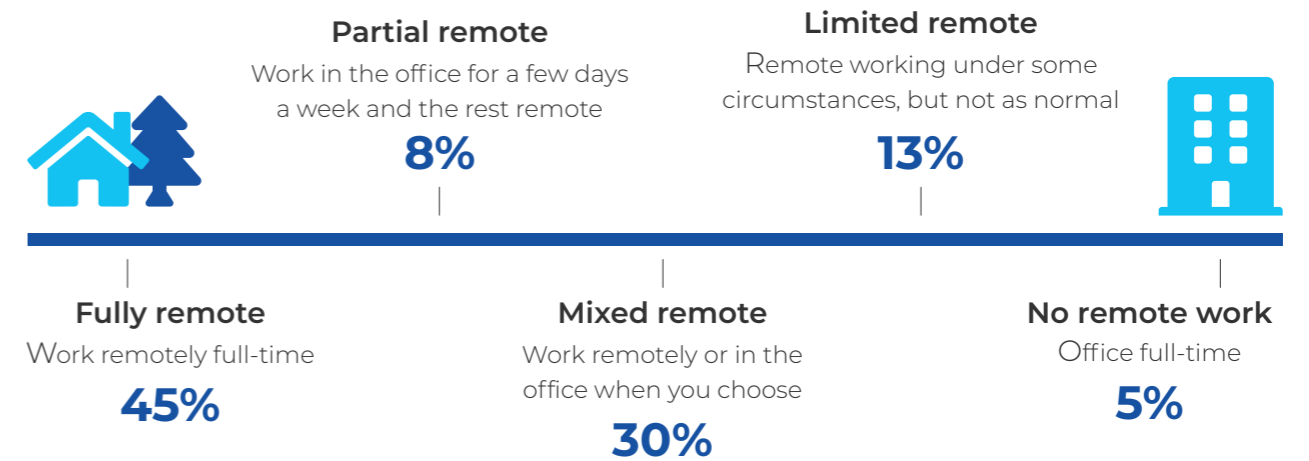
This is a buyer's market, in which the vast majority of professionals aren't fulfilling their earning potential.

Though the popularity of web design careers is great for the industry, the significant competition very much puts the client in the driving seat.

Productivity and Skills

Whatever the industry, recent events have had an unprecedented impact on the way we work, with a huge portion of the population experiencing home working for the first time. Here we look closer at how web designers feel about remote operating policies and the skills needed to succeed in today's arena.

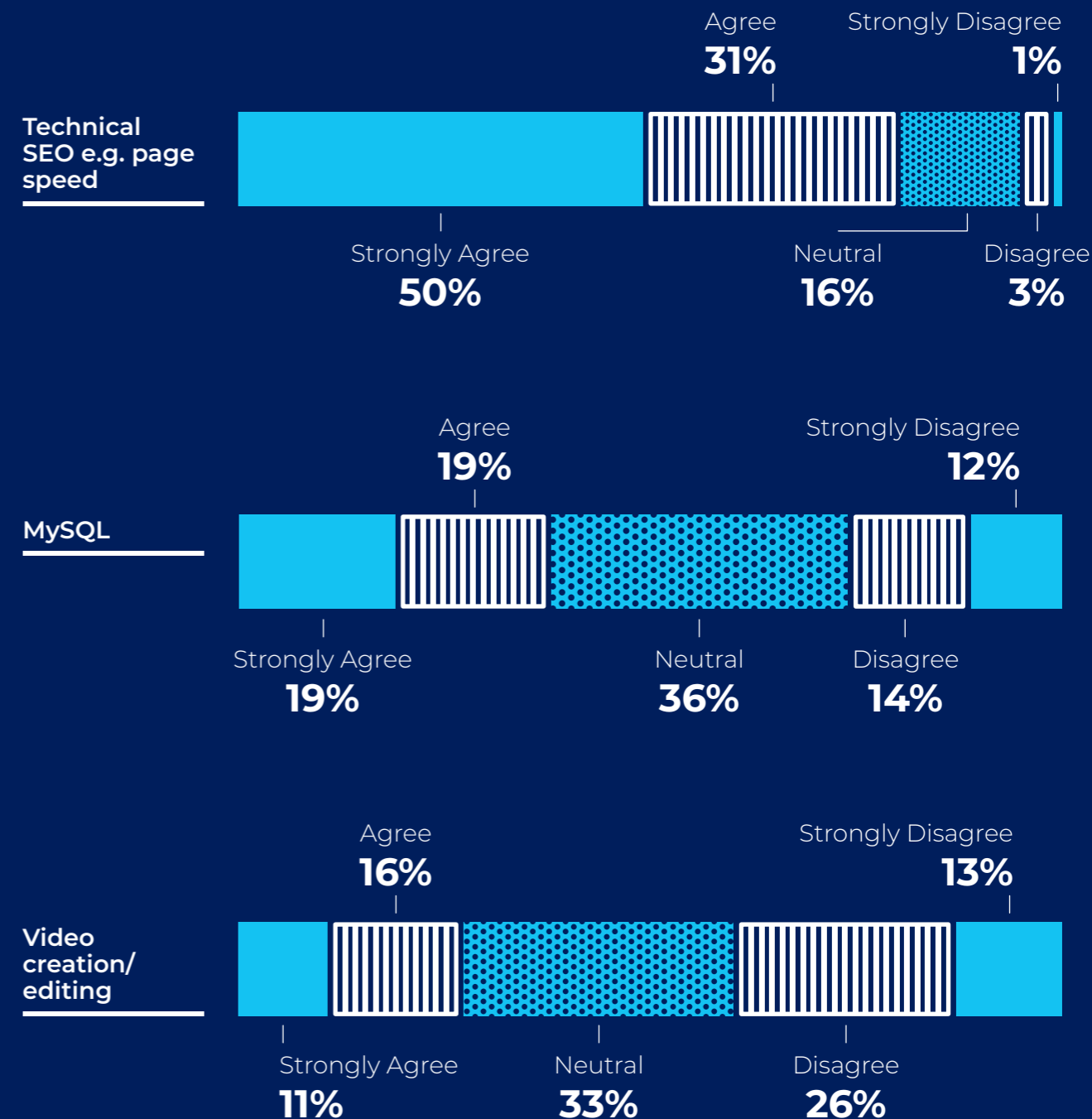
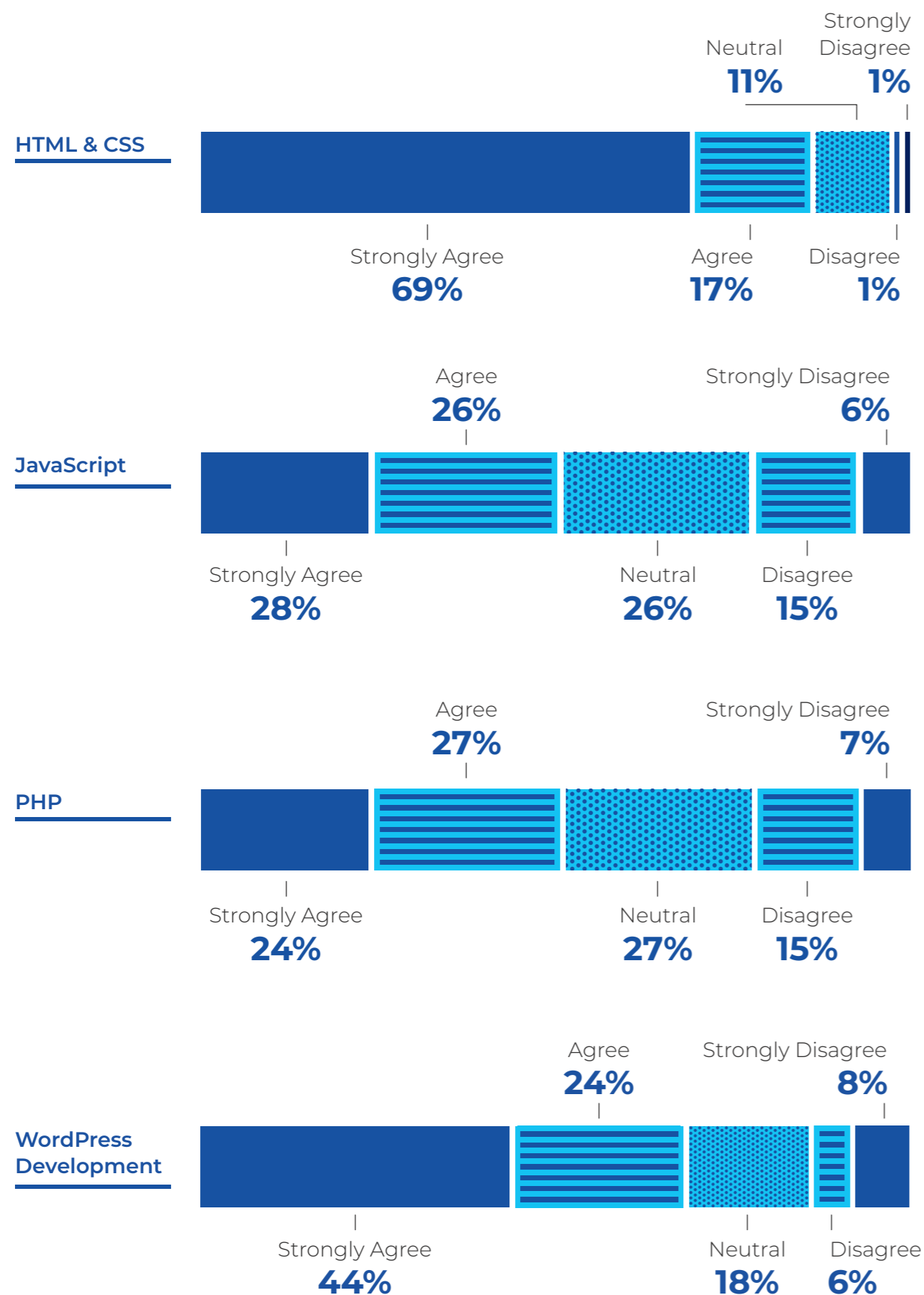
What would be your preferred remote work policy?



Only 5% would choose to only work from the office. This demonstrates the fundamental shift wrought by the pandemic in the way people operate: individuals now expect control over where they should work.



As a web designer, how important do you think it is to have working knowledge of the following areas?



It is becoming increasingly rare to meet web designers without a working knowledge of HTML/CSS, illustrated by the 86% of respondents who agreed that this is an important area, while around half also believe JavaScript and PHP skills to be valuable.

According to our respondents (80.5%), the second most crucial skill for web designers is a working knowledge of technical SEO. As more organisations come to understand the necessity of a solid technical SEO base for SERP ranking and driving traffic, it appears that web designers are delivering these functions.

WordPress' dominance as the increasingly de facto platform for building websites - currently used by 65.2% of websites with a CMS and 43% of all websites* - is apparent from our results, where 67% agree or strongly agree that WordPress development skills are essential. More on WordPress later.

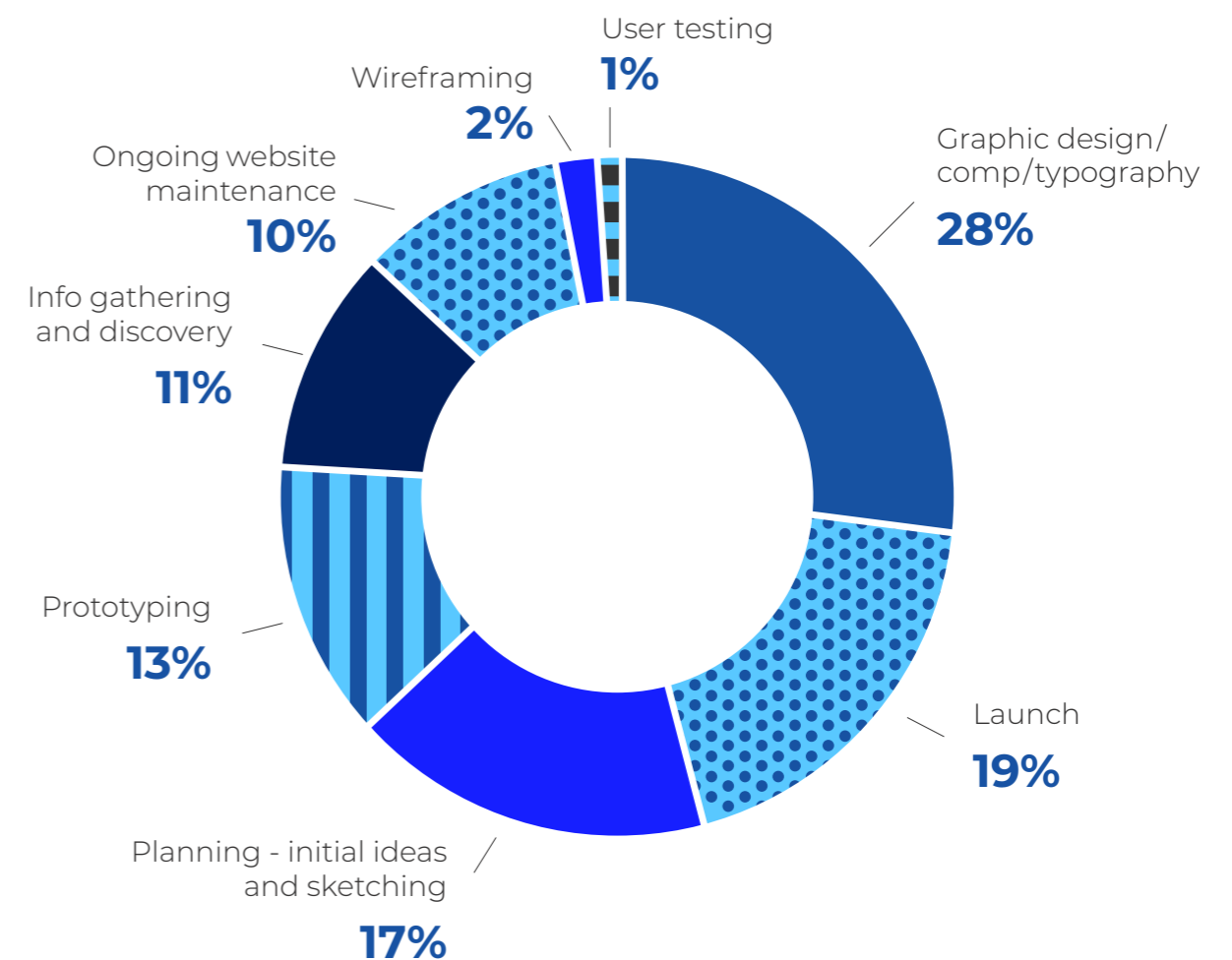
* W3Techs.com

Your Work

Now to the nitty-gritty of the type of work our respondents take on and how much they typically charge for it.

Aside from the purely pragmatic, we wanted to learn what aspects of web design they actually enjoy the most - the spark that keeps this industry so vibrant and dynamic - and how they find their clients.

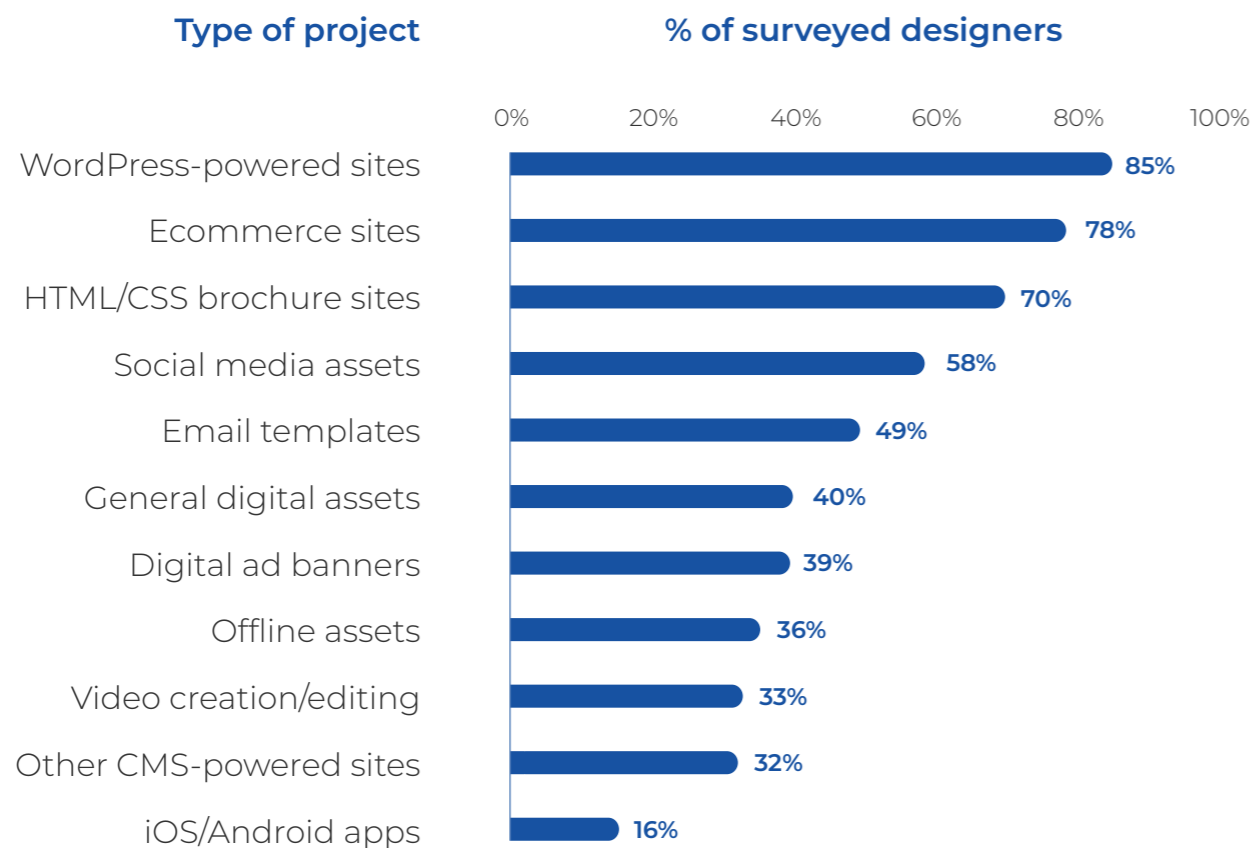
What do you enjoy most about the web design process?



No real shocker here... the preferred part of the web design process is, well, the designing part. 28% of respondents put it at the top of their list, favouring the stage when ideas start pulling together and coming to life.

The next most enjoyed parts of the process were its beginning and end – launch (19%) and planning (17%). We can see that our respondents are drawn to the exciting moments, when all the initial project ideas are bubbling around, waiting to be shaped and sketched into early concepts. Then, the mixed flurry and relief as it's sent out into the world, and they sit back satisfied with a job well done.

What type of projects do you work on?

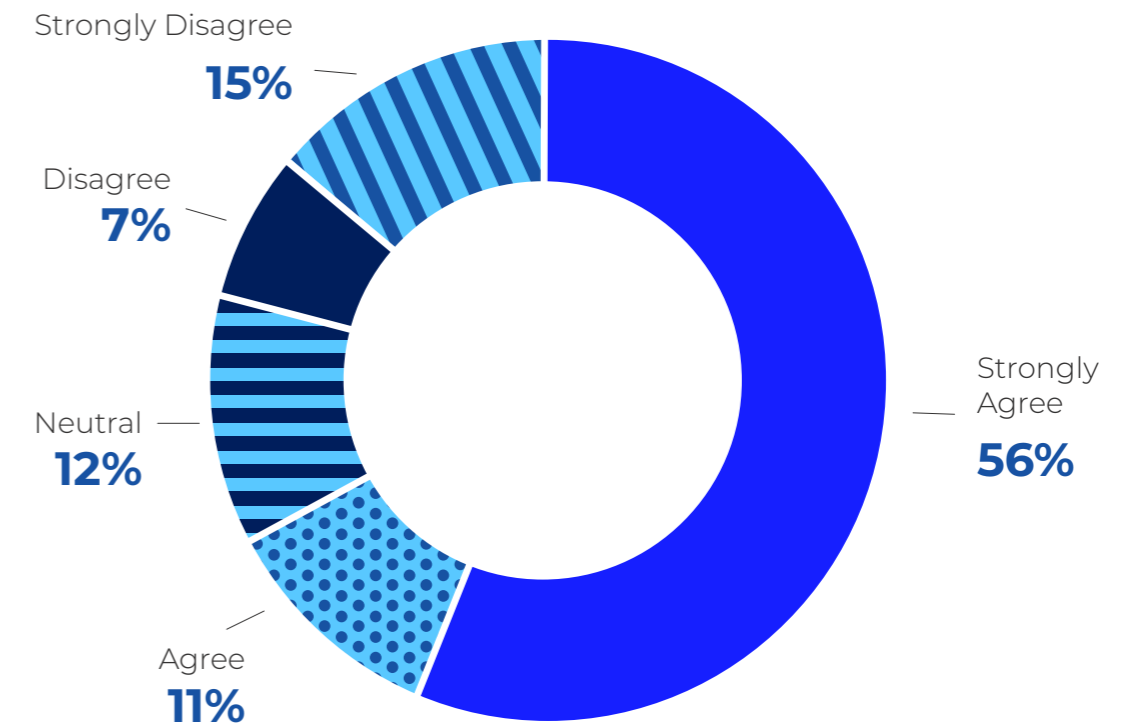


Web designers clearly need to be multi-disciplinary, with 60% of respondents working on at least 5 different types of projects as part of their role.

The most common jobs are now WordPress-powered sites, even outranking the good old fashioned HTML brochure site, backing up how most respondents deemed WordPress development skills important.

Digging deeper, we also asked whether “WordPress is my preferred platform for building websites” and found that over two thirds of web designers agree or strongly agree that it is their preferred platform.

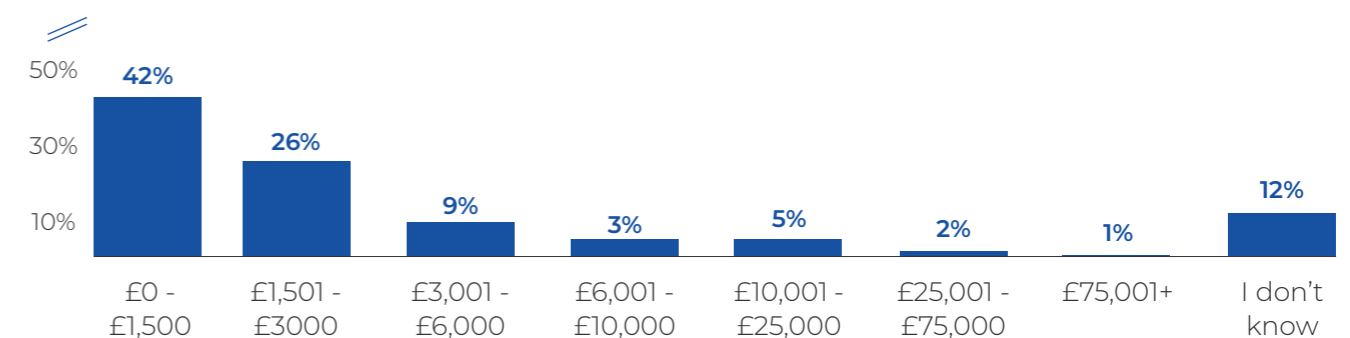
‘WordPress is my preferred platform for building websites.’



With WordPress claiming a 43%* market share of the technology behind websites, it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise that most people are using it.

But just because you have to work on something, it doesn't mean you like it...and luckily for our respondents, in this instance they do.

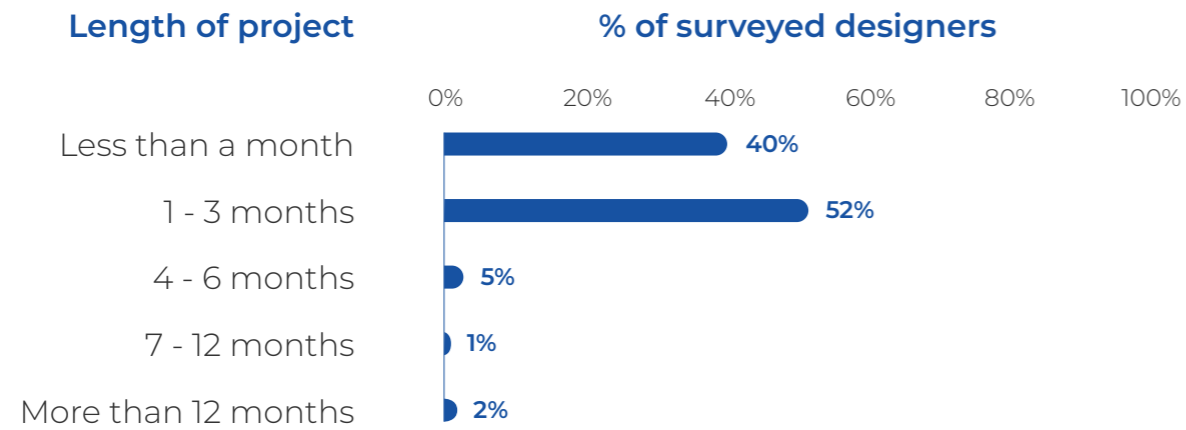
What is the average value of projects you work on?



In an industry with a strong freelance population, and considering the challenges facing the wider economy, it's encouraging that 20% of projects are being billed at over £3,000 – showing meaty contracts are available out there.

The majority (68%) of are coming in at £3,000 or less, tallying with our finding that most gigs take less than a month to complete and few are of more than 3 months' duration (see below).

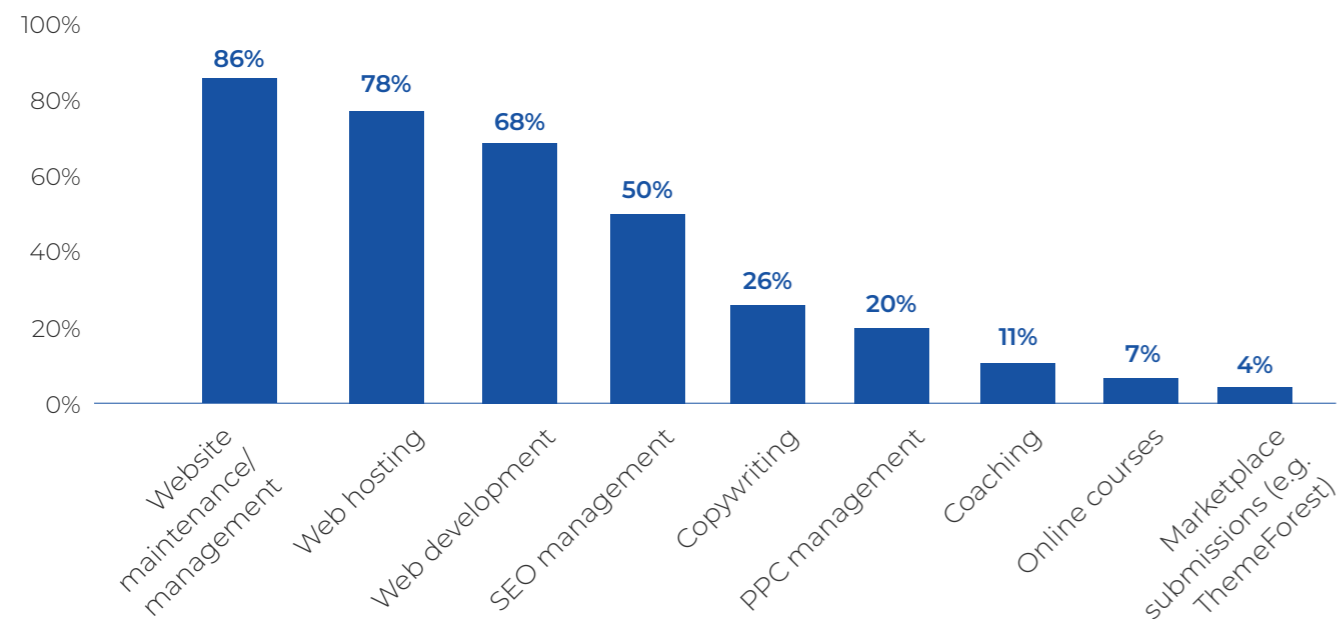
What is the average amount of time you spent working on a project?



Web design undertakings tend to be short-term, with 40% taking no longer than a month and 92% taking less than 3 months to complete. Coupled with the project value data however, short-term doesn't necessarily mean cheap.



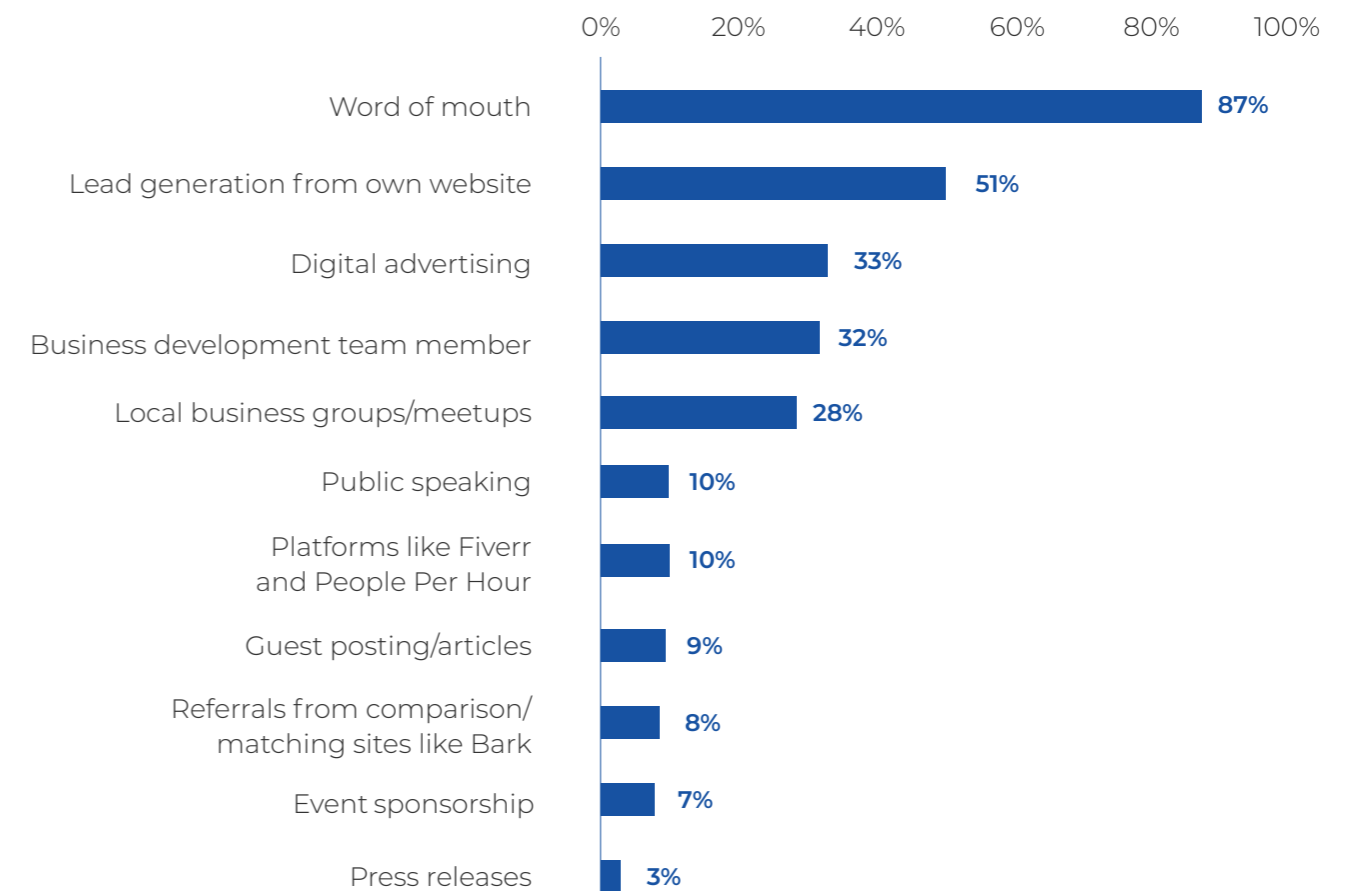
Do you or your organisation generate revenue through any of the following sources?



Ongoing website maintenance and hosting are prudent offerings, ensuring a reliable stream of recurring revenue, so it's great to see the bulk of respondents already providing these. It is useful though to bear in mind that, as this survey was conducted by a web host and reseller hosting company, the web hosting figures may be somewhat skewed.

Half of respondents' organisations offer some ongoing SEO management services, corresponding with our finding that 80.5% stated technical SEO an important skill and signalling the importance of this area.

How do you get new clients?



With a huge 87% of respondents gaining new business via word-of-mouth referrals, it's apparent that superb results and client service are the key to commercial success.

On the other hand, though it's good news that the sector's professionals are providing positive experiences, such a heavy reliance on passive business development is concerning.

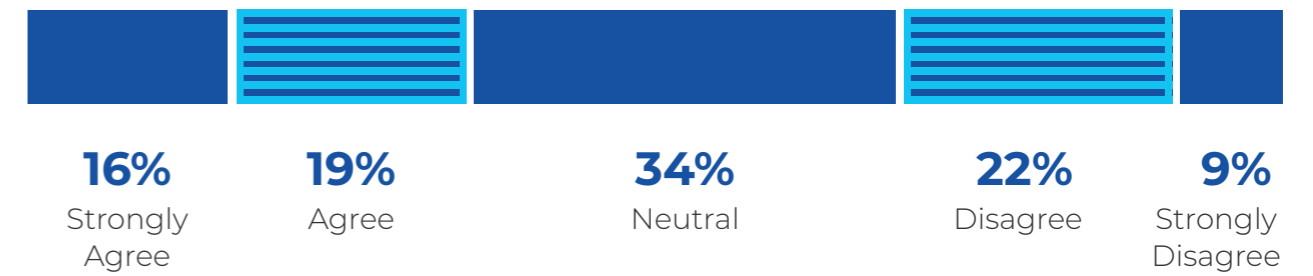
It's important to diversify your organisation's marketing streams beyond just referrals so that, should leads dry up, you have the tools to gain more*.

Yet surprisingly, only half of our respondents have their own website to generate new leads, showcase services and target relevant local searches, which substantially limits opportunities and hampers any future-proofing efforts.

Trends

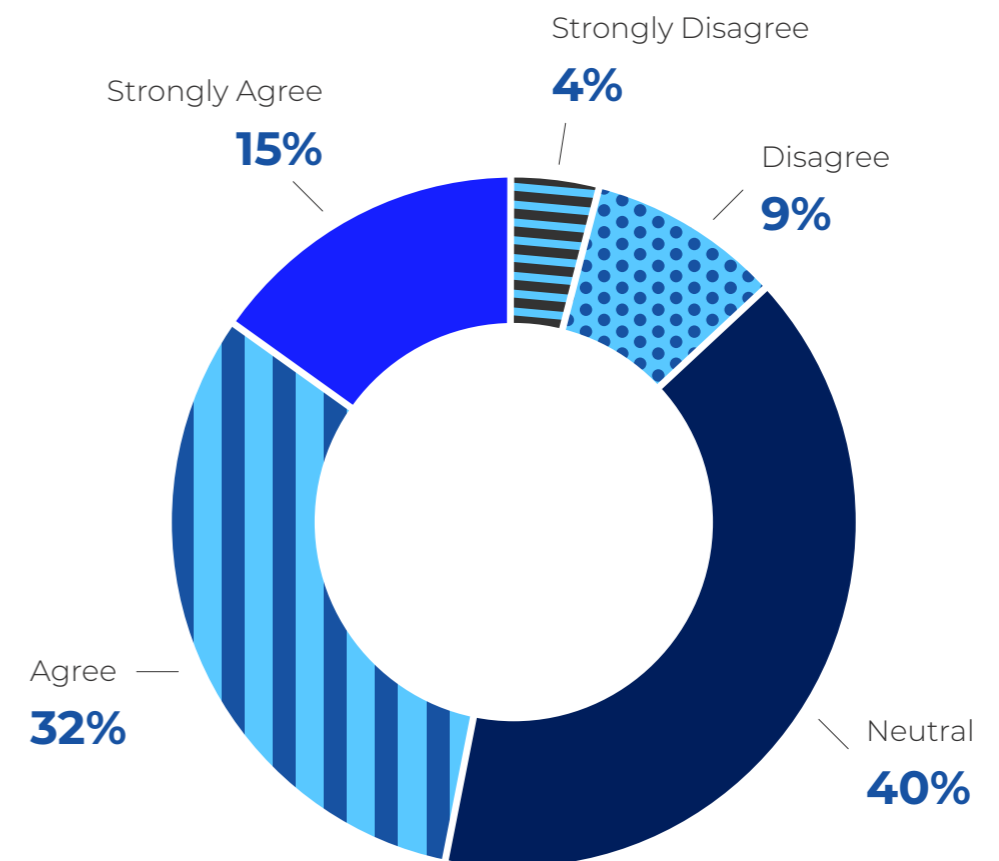
Lastly, we gauged the atmosphere, looking into levels of optimism around work availability and security, how enthusiastic web designers are feeling, and what the future might hold.

Work is harder to come by than it was 12 months ago



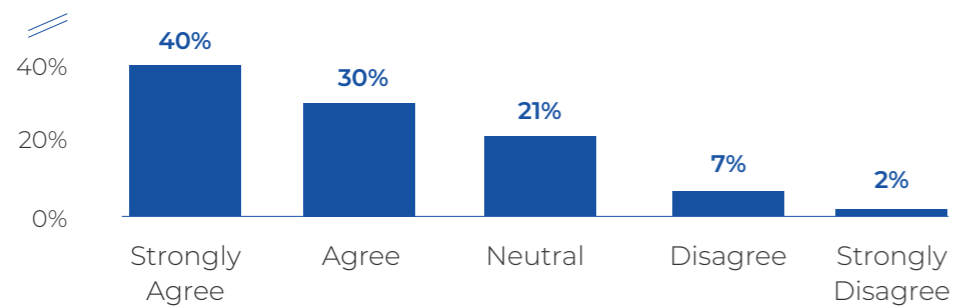
65% of web designers are not finding work harder to come by compared to this time last year, which is great news.

I expect work to be easier to come by in the next 12 months



Our respondents are hopeful about the near future, with 47% of web designers expecting work to be easier to come by in the next 12 months. This implies that digital experiences are predicted to continue dominating the marketplace, as the shift to online retailing and events maintains its foothold, correlating with wider industry forecasts of steady financial growth.

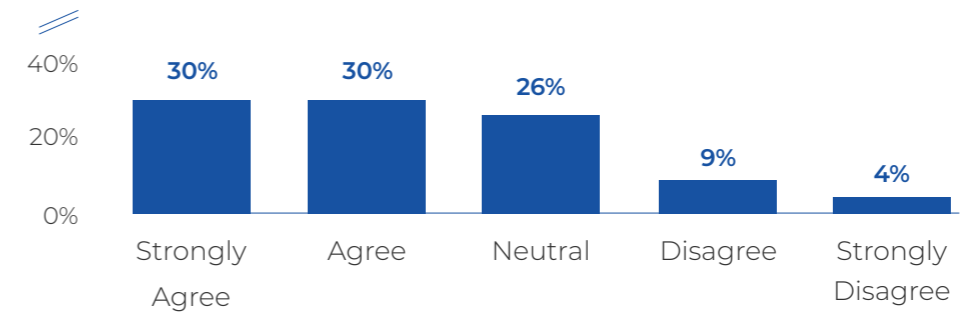
I am as excited about being a web designer as I was 12 months ago



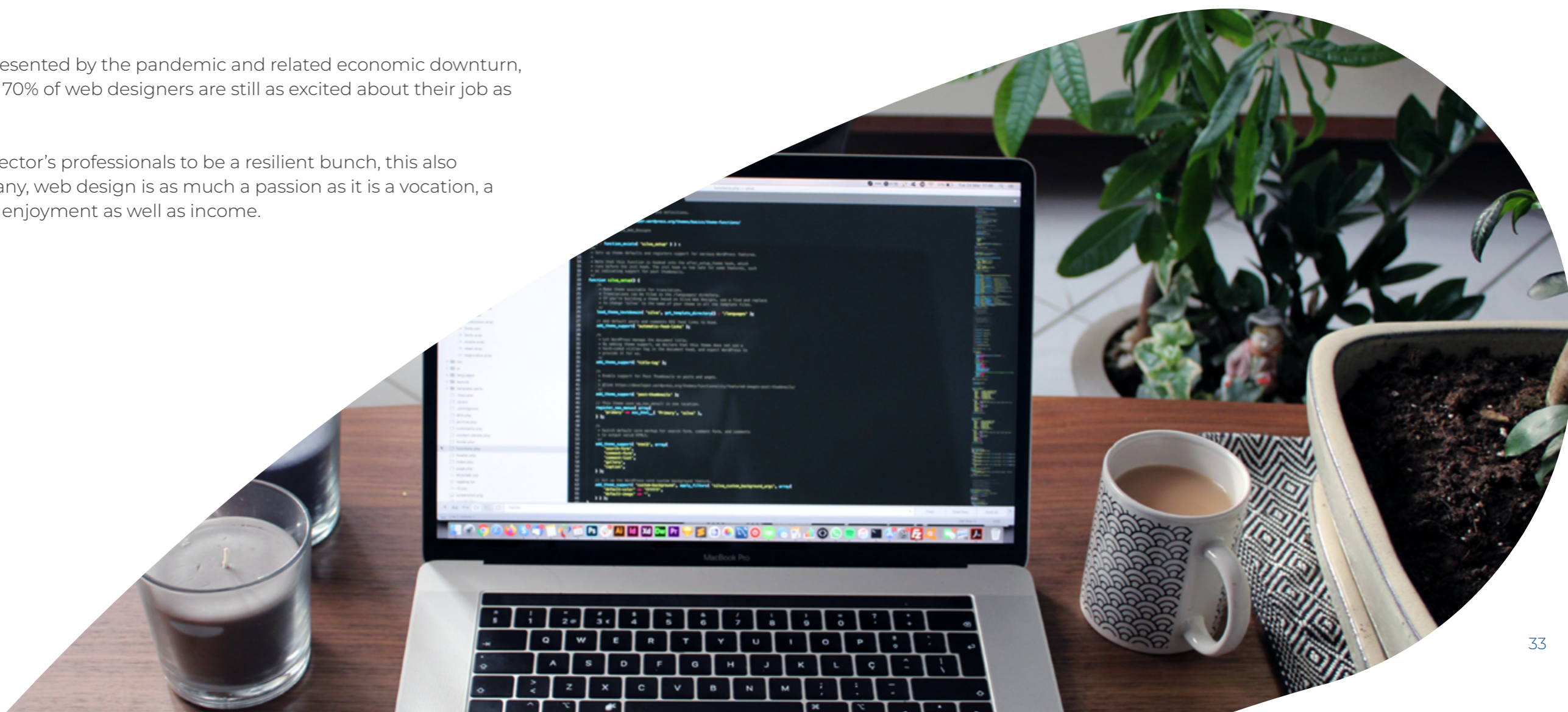
Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic and related economic downturn, it is reassuring to see that 70% of web designers are still as excited about their job as they were 12 months ago.

Aside from showing the sector's professionals to be a resilient bunch, this also demonstrates how, for many, web design is as much a passion as it is a vocation, a source of satisfaction and enjoyment as well as income.

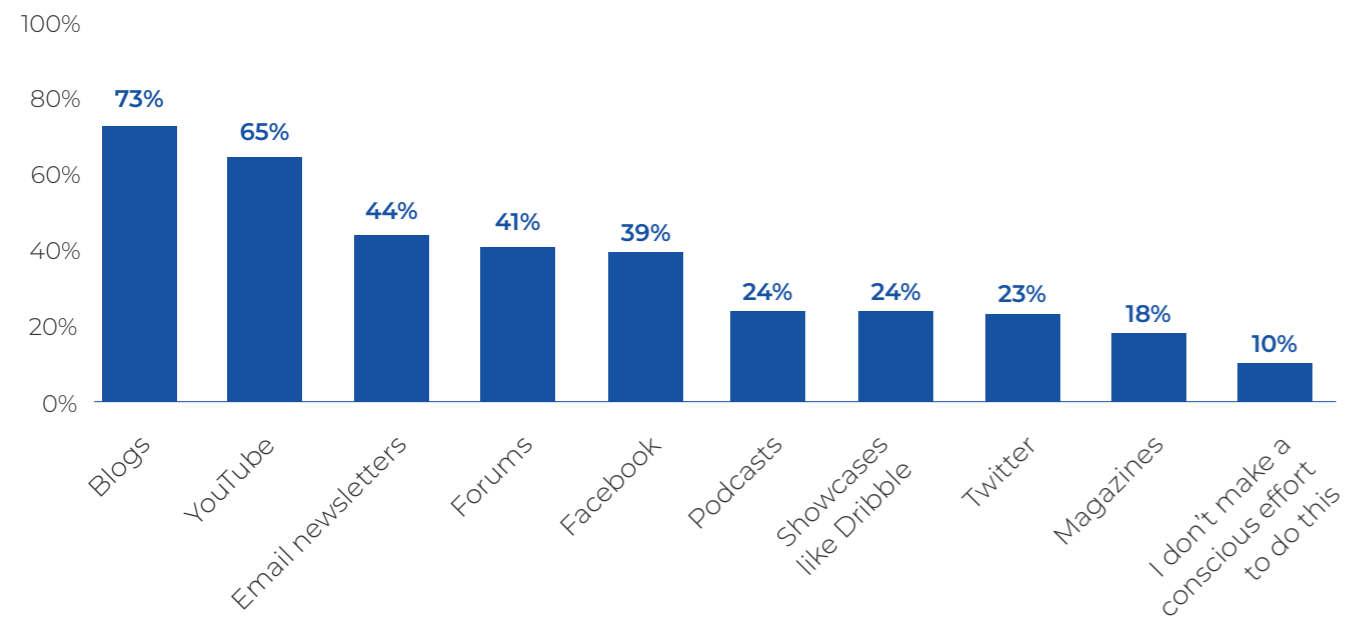
I am confident in my job security as I was 12 months ago



In another piece of good news, 60% are as confident in their job security as they were 12 months ago. Considering the vast swathes of workers who have lost their livelihoods post-COVID, it is encouraging to see web designers regaining their (professional) peace of mind.



How do you keep up to date with the latest web design trends/tech?



And finally, we asked how web designers stay up to date with the latest trends, advances and technology. With the extensive traffic drawn in by popular web design blogs, it's no surprise to see these are the source of most respondents' industry news, followed by YouTube at 65%.

However, the responses also tell us that one in ten web designers make no conscious effort to stay up to date with industry developments. This means a substantial portion of the sector's workforce risks of falling behind their colleagues, and in a rapidly advancing field with rising competition, now is the time to be swotting up!



Final Thoughts

20i's Web Designer Survey set out to learn what working life is like for the sector, how designers on the ground have been affected by the upheavals of the past couple of years and how they feel about the future. The survey has uncovered conspicuous trends in professional sentiment, suggesting resilience and shifting priorities.

First of all, what really shows through the results is that web design continues to be a leading career choice, and that – despite the wider economy's struggles – the industry remains buoyant.

The large demand can be seen in the hours responders are putting in, with most working full-time and 15% even dedicating more than 49 hours a week. And though the bulk of gigs are short-term and charged at £3,000 or less, there are a promising number of higher-value projects available.

While these reports are encouraging, we have also unearthed tricky aspects to the popularity of web design as a vocation. The field appears to be experiencing intense market competition and saturation, with many not fulfilling their earning potential and reported incomes falling below national averages.

Those employed agency-side tend to make the highest wages, but for a variety of reasons, most respondents believe they aren't charging enough for their efforts.

This could explain the survey's discovery that nurturing and promoting one's skills is now a major priority for web designers. 90% make a conscious effort to stay up to date with industry news and developments, and a huge 43% are producing their own content, largely through blogging. Though the survey results were inconclusive as to whether this leads to better earnings, it's obvious that workers feel the need to maintain a winning edge.



The abundant market competition highlights our finding that professional standards and expertise are particularly stringent in the sector. We can see that web designers must be multi-skilled and multidisciplinary, with most organisations providing web maintenance, hosting and development, as well as SEO.

Most respondents balance at least 5 different types of projects as part of their job, the most common of which are WordPress-related, and the majority agree that knowledge of HTML/CSS is necessary for success.

Despite these challenges, the survey also revealed that 87% of new business is derived from word-of-mouth referrals, showing the work is completed well and with excellent service. Moreover, it's easy to see widespread optimism and enthusiasm among web designers, with 70% still as excited about their career as they were 12 months ago. They're feeling confident in their job security and that work will become easier to acquire soon.

In fact, the survey shows that web designers have greater expectations, especially when it comes to freedom over ways of working. Most respondents are in permanent roles, and most prefer to operate remotely, but the freelance population now stands at a significant 41%, indicating a shift toward more personal choice in professional life.

In conclusion, the survey outlines a thriving industry in real demand, but also in which competition is fierce. The standards and requirements are likewise high, and effort is being exerted on skills development and self-promotion. But at the end of the day, web designers are feeling empowered to have a say over how they work and are hopeful about their careers.



Methodology and Data

The respondents to this survey are self-described web designers with whom we invited to take part in via a number of different channels including email and social media.

- Data was captured using a Google Forms survey with 33 questions
- Responses were gathered between April and August 2021
- The data set is populated with our Reseller Hosting customers which naturally skews towards hosting their own clients.



About 20i

Our Reseller Hosting is the perfect choice for agencies, web designers and developers. Help your clients fall in love with you, with super-fast and ultra-reliable hosting

We deliver premium hosting experiences you can build your reputation on:

- ✓ Host clients on lightning-fast & ultra-reliable cloud hosting
- ✓ One price & host unlimited websites - no 'per site' fees
- ✓ Unlimited one-click migrations from any host, any time
- ✓ Quick & easy bulk management of all your hosting and domains
- ✓ Completely white-label & 100% your brand

We're a proudly-independent UK hosting company with a world-beating support team (number one on TrustPilot!).

Our expert UK Support Team are web hosting enthusiasts with rave reviews. Get help from real people who love what they do, not canned responses.

Expect more from your hosting and ensure your websites are super-fast, have bullet-proof security and looked-after by experts.

Check out our site to find out more: <https://www.20i.com>



