People, Work and Engagement Survey Results

DESIGN

ADLIB Certified B Corporation

PEOPLE, WORK AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

In our recent People, Work and Engagement survey for the design sector, we asked a series of questions to better understand what's important to people across the industry.

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Context / Disclaimer: The findings are based on ADLIB internal data, a survey of a curated sample of 100+ designers (Dec 2023 - Feb 2024), online research and insight from conversations with Designers that we have day in, day out.

WORKING PATTERNS

[According to the ONS](#) before the pandemic only 12% (around 1 in 8) of adults reported working from home, in 2023 this figure peaked at around 40%. Today, many design teams are used to working remotely in some capacity and it's clear that the way people design and collaborate has changed for good since the pandemic.

In the survey, we asked people "**How many days do you work in the office on an average week?**". Just over half of respondents were working hybrid at 52% with the majority of those doing between 1 and 3 days in an average week. 40% of people were working fully remotely.

Of those asked, in-house designers were on average doing more fully remote work when compared to agency at 44% and 33% respectively.

5 days - 8%

4 days - 6%

3 days - 12%

2 days - 15%

1 day - 19%
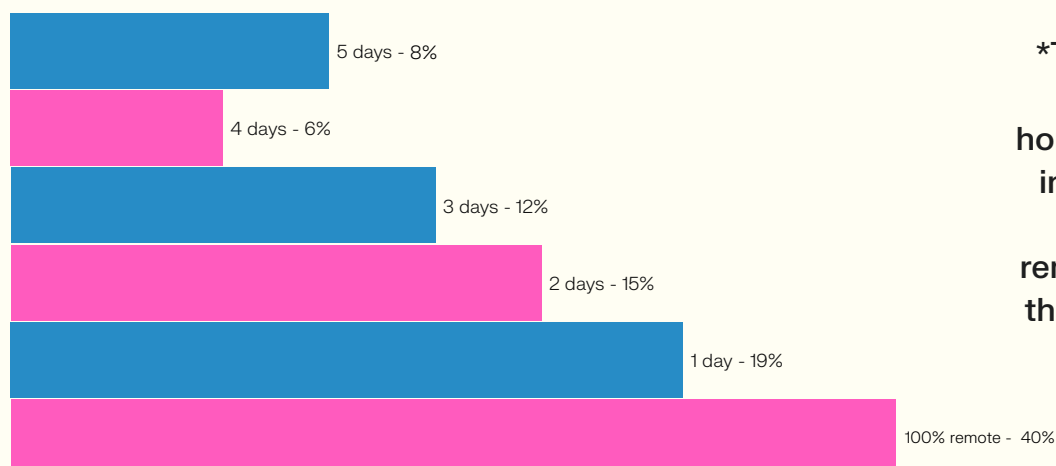
100% remote - 40%

*Throughout this piece we use 'working from home' and 'remote work' interchangeably. When we're referring to fully remote work, we refer to this as '100% remote' or 'fully remote' work.

Preferences

When asked how many days in the office people **wanted** to do, 56% of people surveyed wanted some days in an office per week with 2 days being the most popular choice. 30% chose fully remote.

I'm flexible - 14%

5 days - 0%

4 days - 4%

3 days - 12%

2 days - 23%

1 day - 17%

100% remote - 30%
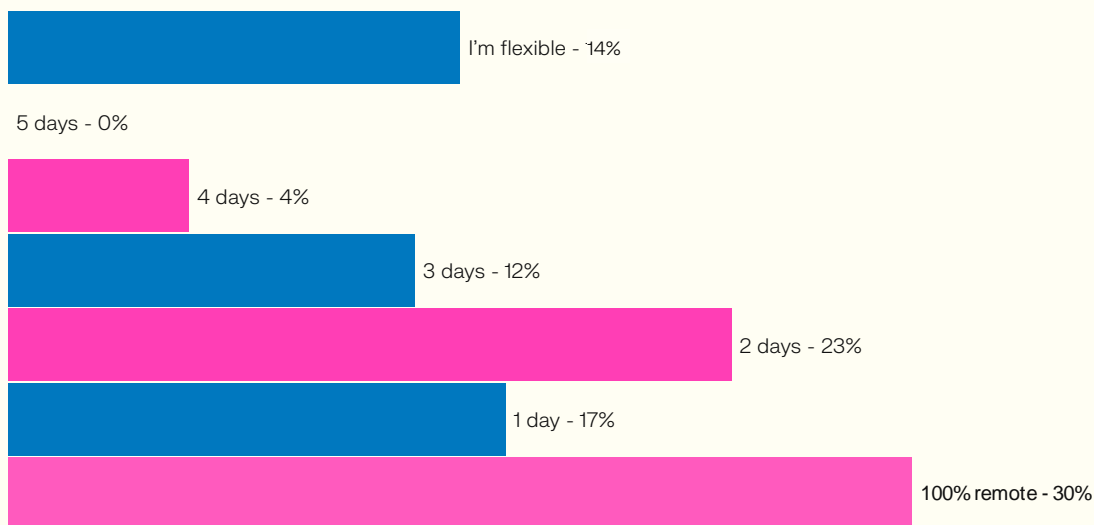
None of the designers we asked specifically wanted a 5-day week in the office but 15% did choose "I'm flexible / this isn't important to me" when asked.

Hybrid and remote employers

At ADLIB, we work with many clients that offer fully remote working but the majority of the design teams we recruited for in the last 12 months have offered hybrid working.

We work across a wide variety of sectors from start-ups to multi-nationals, in-house teams and agencies, not for profit and commercial businesses alike, so vacancies are from a range of industries;

2%

28%

70%

- Full-time office - 2%
- Remote - 28%
- Hybrid - 70%
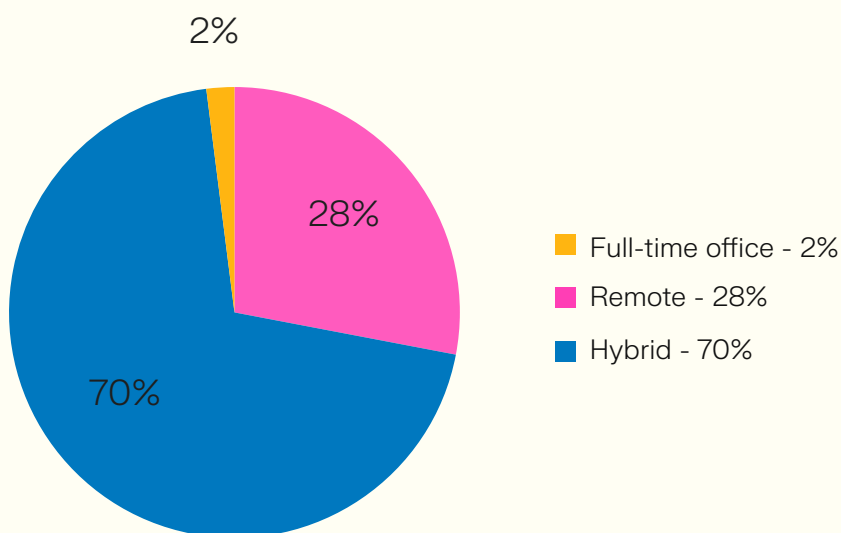
For employers, offering more flexibility is a great way to reach a more diverse pool of candidates, especially for those recruiting niche or hard to find skillsets and employers with office locations away from cities and talent hubs.

However, creating a fair and supportive environment for remote work takes consideration. To create an environment that's truly inclusive and sets people up for success, things like documentation, tools, processes and communication all need reviewing to fit the model. Companies have been trying, failing learning and adapting remote work for some years now but in 2024 we still speak to employers who aren't 100% on their long term policies.

There are now many great resources available on building successful remote teams and the considerations. Companies such as Gitlab (a fully distributed global tech company) [regularly share their guidance on doing so](#), including for [design](#) teams specifically.

Remote working preferences are very individual but the option to work remotely remains a top priority for many designers.

MARKET STABILITY AND GROWTH

As reported by the [Creative Industries Council in 2023](), the Creative industries saw huge growth after the pandemic – a 14.1% rise since 2019 which is well ahead of the average 0.6% increase across all UK jobs.

Following rapid growth in 2021/22, 2023 was a turbulent year for the economy and job market. In the last 12 months, we've seen this reflected in the design vacancies we registered at ADLIB too. Q1 and Q3 were our busiest on the team, registering almost double the vacancies of Q2 and Q4 which were markedly quieter.

These peaks and troughs were more pronounced in our user experience markets which overall appeared to suffer from more instability, contraction and redundancies across the year.

Team stability

Reviewing the survey data 43% of people said their team had grown in the last 12 months, 31% said the team they were on had shrunk and 29% didn't change. This means the majority of design teams surveyed either stayed the same size or grew.

- Unchanged - 28%
- Shrunk - 30%
- Grew - 42%
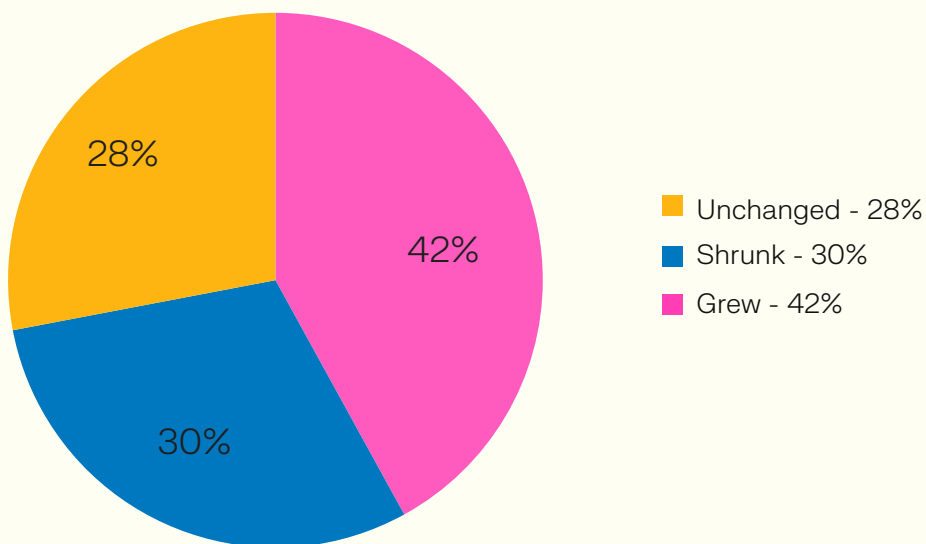
Salary growth

When asked whether they had received a pay rise, the majority of people answered yes. That's 67% in total and fairly even across agency and in-house at 65% and 64% respectively. Of the people that received pay rises, 65% received one without moving jobs. Whilst a pay rise in theory is of course a good thing, the real impact of a raise depends on many factors including the cost of living at the time, which has risen substantially since 2021.

Salary is a top priority for many designers when considering a new role and plays an important role in retention too. We hear this day to day in conversations with candidates and it's clear in the survey too.

The ONS wage calculator is a useful tool for checking wages against current inflation data and gives some idea of the real value of any pay rise.

The digital economy surged after the pandemic and UX teams grew across the industry, this in turn led to huge competition for design talent. In this time we saw major increases in UX salaries that continued into 2023. ItJobsWatch (a job advert aggregator) showed a 14.29% increase in median salaries for jobs mentioning UX in Q1 2022. For 2023, they rose a further 4.17%.

Hiring confidence

In the survey, we asked hiring managers if they expected to grow their teams in the first half of 2024. 29% said they were planning to hire but the majority (38%) of respondents said they weren't sure which reflects the uncertainty in the market. With economic conditions as they are, some businesses are taking a more conservative and risk averse approach to hiring this year so far.

Planning to hire - 29%
Don't expect to hire - 33%
Not sure 38%
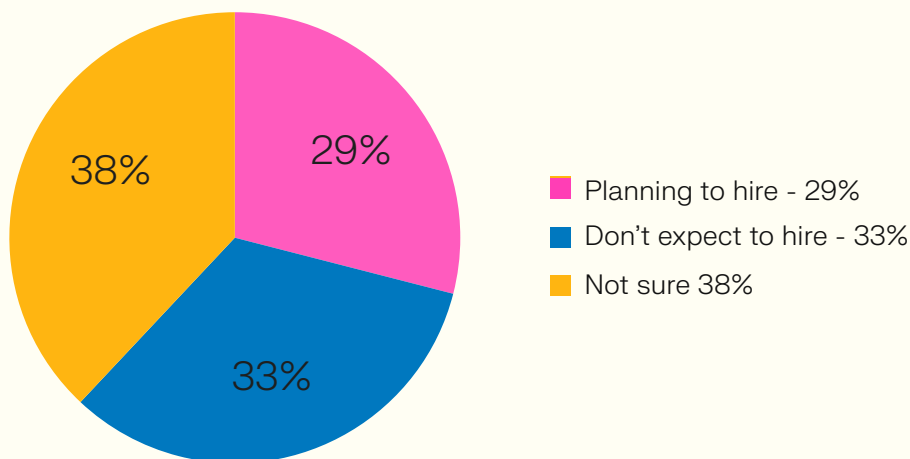
There are predictions of a more promising economic outlook in 2024 and beyond with inflation falling and potential tax and interest rate cuts creating more momentum in the economy. In turn, this should have a positive impact on business growth and confidence to recruit too.

Job seekers

When asked, almost half of survey respondents said they were actively looking or expect to be soon. 33% of respondents said they were actively looking for something new and 15% expect to be looking within the next 6 months.

Legend:
- Actively looking - 33%
- Not looking - 32%
- Expect to be looking in 6 months - 15%
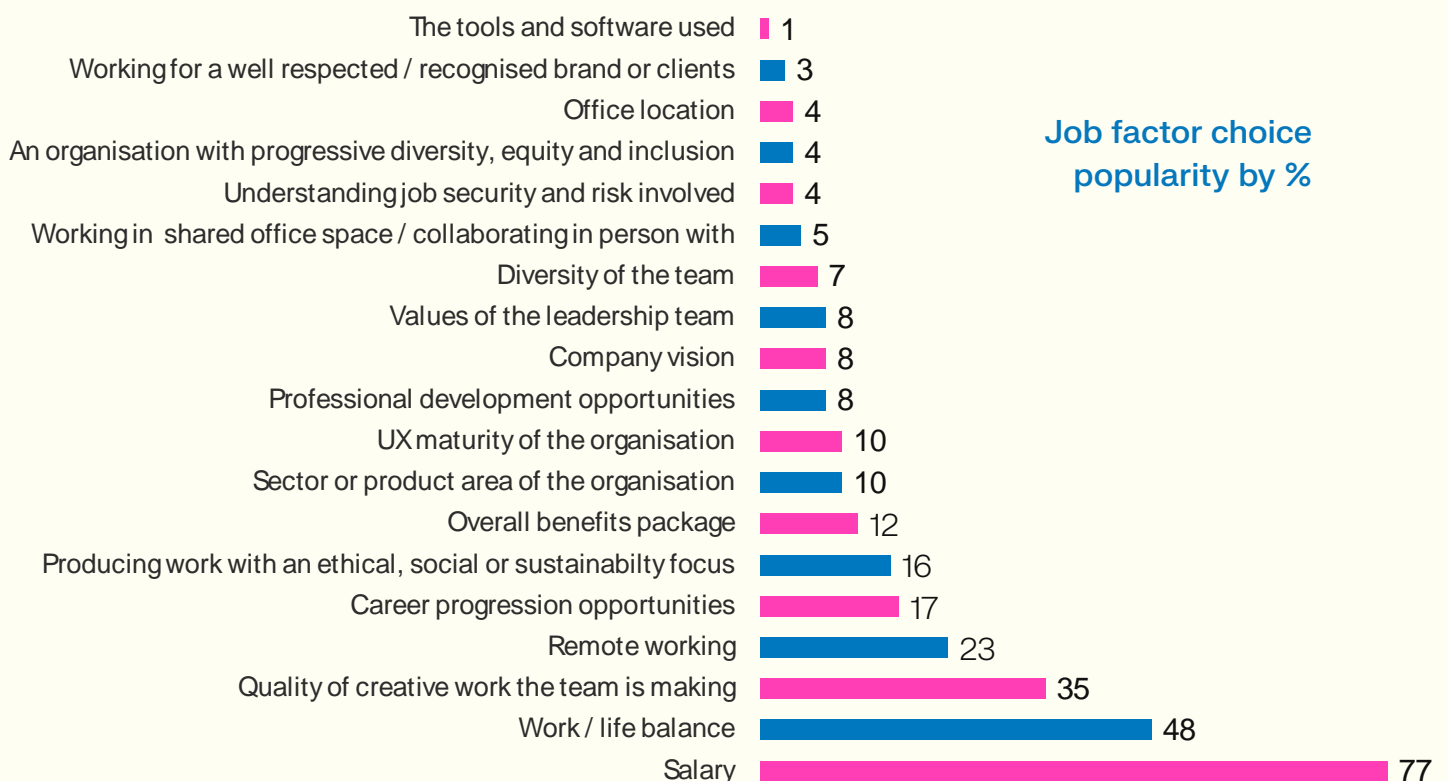- I don't know / rather not say - 20%
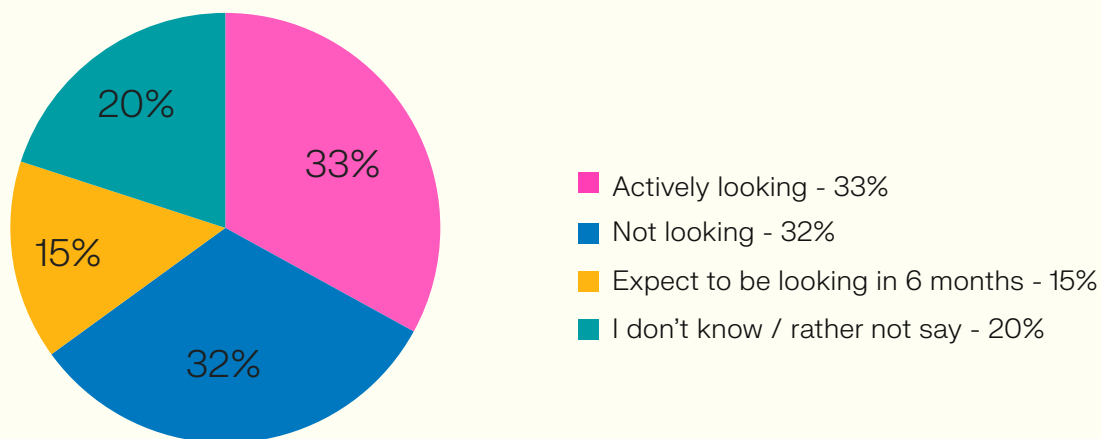
ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Turning to attraction and retention, we asked designers to choose the top 3 factors and benefits that were most important to them when deciding if a new role was right.

Factors included things like work / life balance, company vision, sector and product environment whilst benefits focus on the typical benefits offered as part of a package or on job specs and adverts. Upon reflection these categories could do with some tweaking for future surveys and a little more distinction.

However these still offer some great insight and the results mirror the conversations we have with designers each day and their priorities.

Here's the full list and the percentage of respondents that chose each.

Job factor choice popularity by %

Factor	%
The tools and software used	1
Working for a well respected / recognised brand or clients	3
Office location	4
An organisation with progressive diversity, equity and inclusion	4
Understanding job security and risk involved	4
Working in shared office space / collaborating in person with	5
Diversity of the team	7
Values of the leadership team	8
Company vision	8
Professional development opportunities	8
UX maturity of the organisation	10
Sector or product area of the organisation	10
Overall benefits package	12
Producing work with an ethical, social or sustainabilty focus	16
Career progression opportunities	17
Remote working	23
Quality of creative work the team is making	35
Work / life balance	48
Salary	77

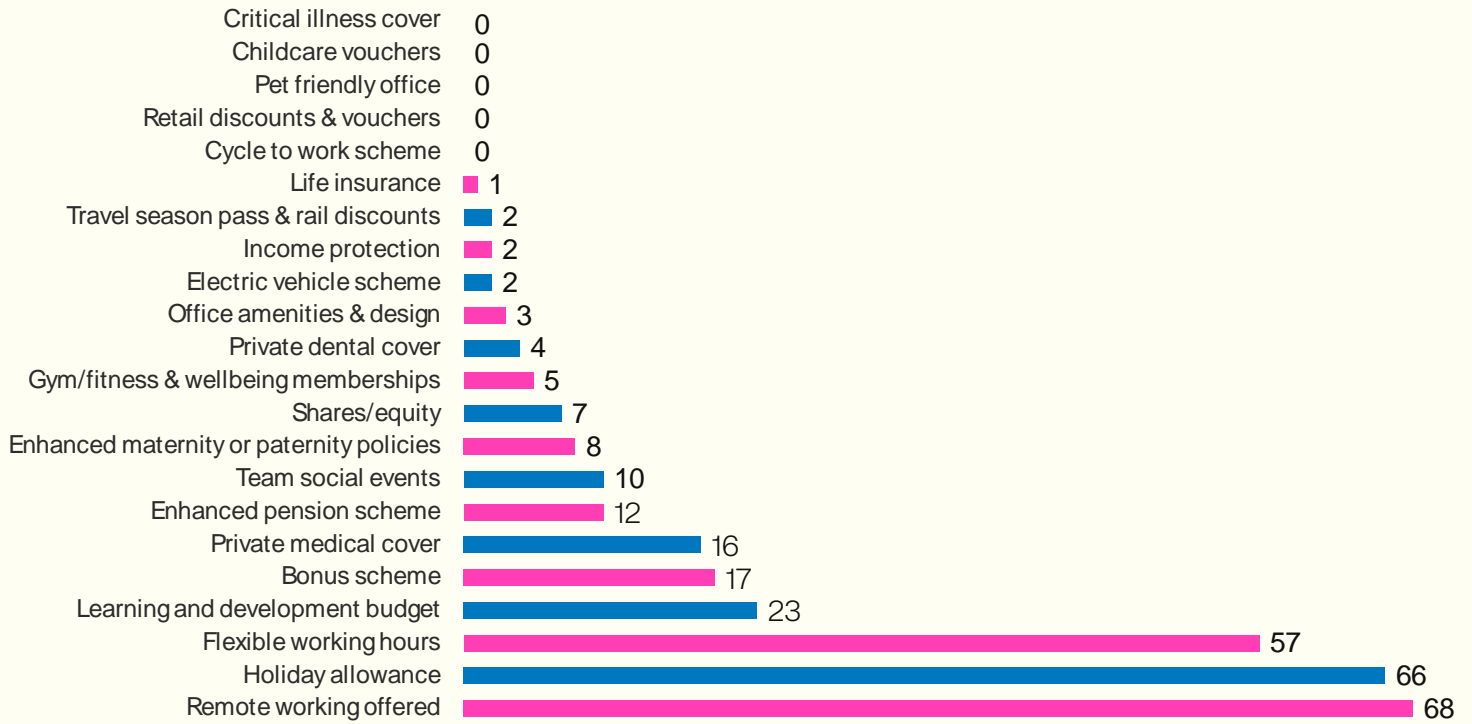It came as no great surprise that salary featured in most people's top 3 factors when deciding on a new role.

This is one of many reasons why listing salary range on a job advert can make a huge difference to the response. [Reed reported a 27% increase in the number of applications for jobs that disclosed salary](#) when compared to those that didn't. In a [2022 survey of nearly 1,200 people,](#) 91% of respondents said that listing a salary range on a job post would affect their decision to apply.

Not only can it increase the number of applications for tough to fill roles, the people that apply will be more relevant. It can save valuable time for hiring managers, ensuring the people they're reviewing are suitable. For candidates it means not spending time applying for and interviewing for roles that don't meet their needs.

From the survey work / life balance ranked 2nd place. Whilst work / life balance can mean different things to different people a common theme is flexibility which can have a big impact on wellbeing.

3rd place is the quality of creative work which often is a major deciding factor for creatives that register with ADLIB, particularly within agency. For teams looking to attract the best creative talent, updating their own portfolio of work or being able to showcase their best designs can make a big difference in who applies. For this reason a website refresh / case study update can be a well worthwhile investment but is often overlooked.

And here, benefit choices by popularity;

Benefit	Value
Critical illness cover	0
Childcare vouchers	0
Pet friendly office	0
Retail discounts & vouchers	0
Cycle to work scheme	0
Life insurance	1
Travel season pass & rail discounts	2
Income protection	2
Electric vehicle scheme	2
Office amenities & design	3
Private dental cover	4
Gym/fitness & wellbeing memberships	5
Shares/equity	7
Enhanced maternity or paternity policies	8
Team social events	10
Enhanced pension scheme	12
Private medical cover	16
Bonus scheme	17
Learning and development budget	23
Flexible working hours	57
Holiday allowance	66
Remote working offered	68

1st choice here was remote working. Closely behind was holiday allowance and in 3rd place flexible working hours. Flexible working hours is a low-cost benefit that can make a big difference to people from all walks of life.

More flexible working can help create more diverse teams too, by offering flexibility it opens up roles to more people. It can make a huge difference to care givers, people with medical conditions, disabilities and neurodivergence to name a few. Added flexibility encourages a wider pool of people to apply - a win for all.

If you're an employer reviewing the benefits you offer, get in touch with us for our free benefits guide.

Thank you

Thanks again to everyone that took part in our Design – People, Work and Engagement Survey. We plan to do this annually and report more regularly on market trends and feedback from the community. We learnt some valuable lessons from this survey which we'll implement next time.

If you'd like to hear from us about future surveys and more industry insights register your interest here.