

Income & Insight 2021 Report

A cross-industry survey of
digital professionals
across Belgium

Ariad

Through the maze of change.



A new
insight

Welcome to the **4th edition of the Belgian digital market salary survey**, providing reliable insights into hiring and salary trends in digital--as well as **current attitudes toward compensation trends**, motivators, and more.

A digital evolution

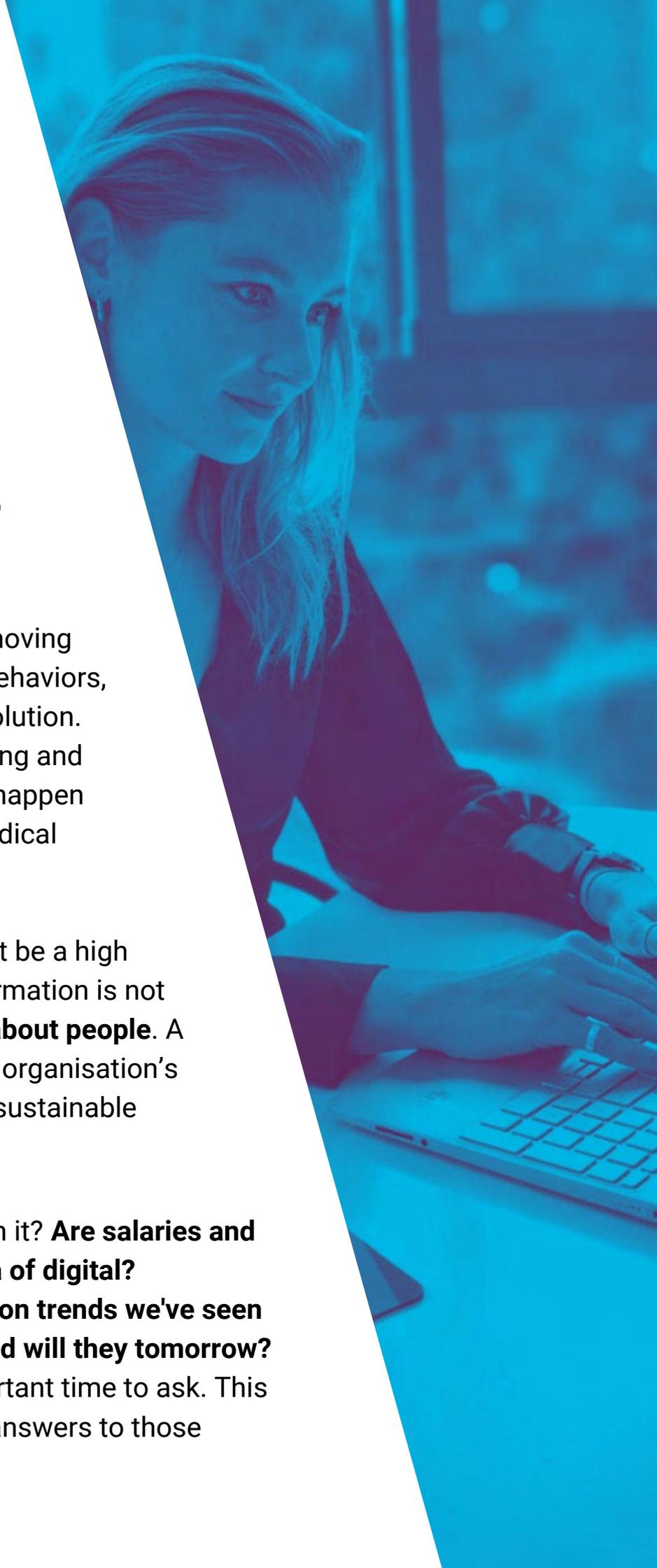
Digital brings speed. It's a fast moving ecosystem, where technology, behaviors, and priorities are in constant evolution. Digital brings new ways of thinking and working--and this evolution can happen nearly overnight in the face of radical change and events.

Digital is happening now. It must be a high priority at all costs. Real transformation is not about technology anymore, **it's about people.** A human-centered approach to an organisation's digital transformation will bring sustainable change.

But do companies really invest in it? **Are salaries and rates really adequate in the area of digital?**

Furthermore, **do the compensation trends we've seen recently still motivate today--and will they tomorrow?**

There's never been a more important time to ask. This survey provides some valuable answers to those questions.



Together,
we make digital
changes happen
faster.



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Jeroen Van Ermen
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About Ariad

Ariad offers consultancy and staffing in digital customer experience (CX), operating in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain. We're active in the top brands across industries, counting with 100+ active consultants working on in-house projects at clients, as well as staffing of digital specialties and executive roles.



Consultancy



Project & Temporary
staffing



Direct &
Executive search

With a goal of growing and optimizing business through empowering teams and professionals together, we work with the top digital experts who can make real impact. But just as important as expertise, we highly value culture fit and never forget to focus on the human side of change management.

A key moment in the digital market

There is a fierce war for talent when it comes to digital profiles – more so if you are looking for those rare talents who are at the peak of the digital profession. But despite all the hype, **companies are struggling to build a truly digital enterprise**. This challenge has only become more complicated since 2020 introduced new customer behaviours and needs nearly overnight. **Talent is key** in constructing and implementing successful strategy that puts the customer first, and stays ahead of digital transformation.

While salary is only one component, it is absolutely critical in optimizing your talent resources. We can always advise our clients on salary ranges based on the current market to help keep them competitive. Of course, we see more and more that **competitive salary or benefits might not be enough** to hire the best talent—and it definitely isn't enough to keep them. Actually, it's not uncommon for us to help fill a role that has seen a lot of turnover in the past. This is why we always further **match cultures and goals**—the invisible factors that make all the difference. Still, the right salary can often be a good way to open the door.

Having this salary benchmark, as well as in the latest knowledge in our **Insight 2021 Report** on the factors which motivate your team to join, stay, and thrive can help you build a highly-skilled, future-ready digital marketing team that never ceases to amaze.

Jeroen Van Ermen
Ariad CEO and founding partner



Income & Insight Survey 2021

Methodology

In April and May of 2021 Ariad conducted a salary survey amongst their community of **digital marketing experts & leaders** in Belgium.

524 **respondents** answered a set of questions with some differences depending on they were working in permanent positions, temporary or freelance.

- Part 1 : General Questions about job and industry
- Part 2: Income permanent/freelance
- Part 3: Motivational questions and work insights
- Part 4: Demographic Questions

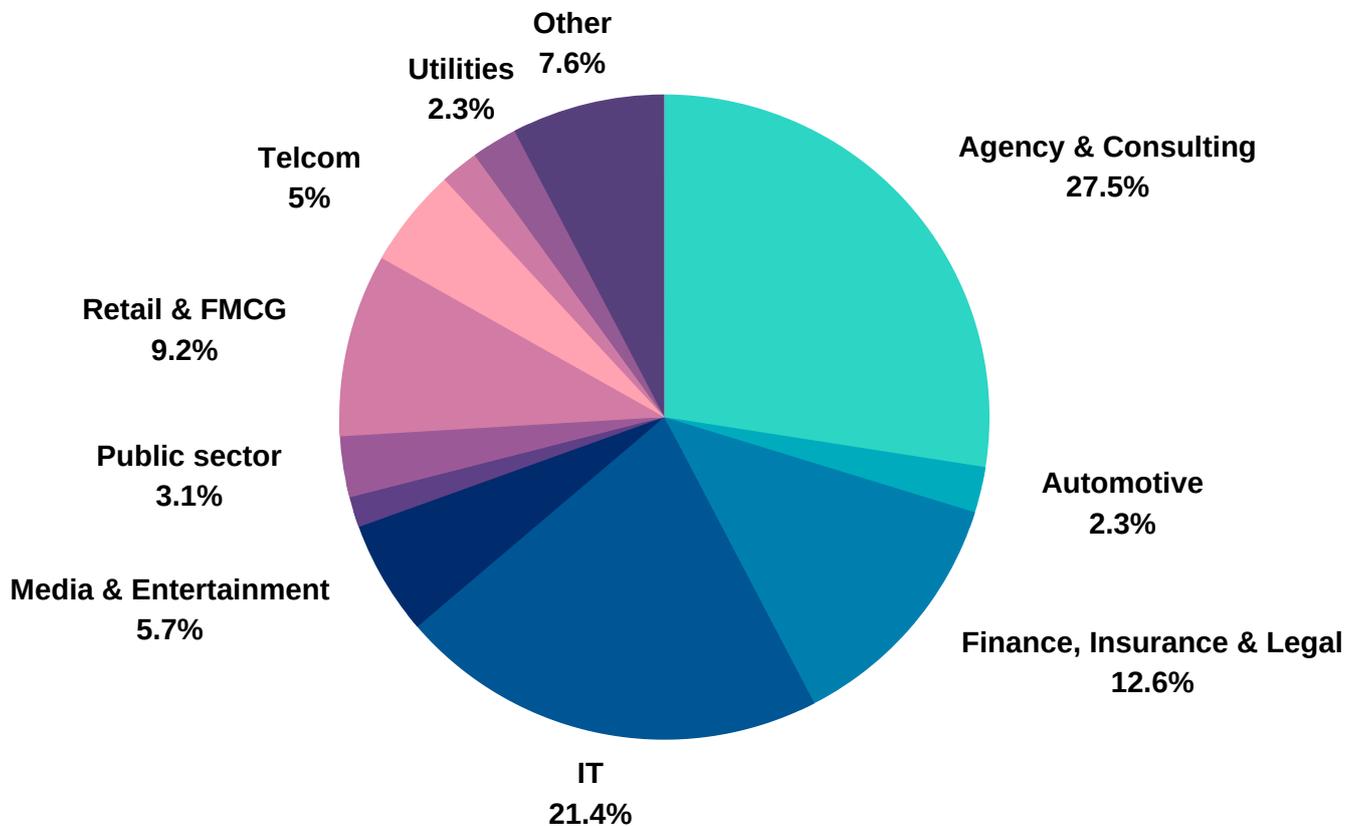
All responses in this report are representative of all respondents (employment type, job categories, industry, etc) unless otherwise specified.

Job Categories researched:

- **Digital Managers:** E-commerce Manager, Head of Digital, Online Marketing Manager, etc. Digital managers have people management or coordination responsibility.
- **E-marketing / E-commerce Experts:** Digital Marketing Expert, Search Marketing Expert, Online Sales Expert, Online Traffic Expert, Online advertising expert...
- **E-communication / CRM / Marketing Automation Experts:** Online Communication Coordinator, Email Marketing Expert, CRM Marketing Manager...
- **Content Marketer / Social Media Experts:** Content Strategist, Community Manager, Social Media Manager, Digital copywriter...
- **Digital Project Manager / Product Owners:** Web Project Manager, Digital Product Owner, Mobile Product Owner ...
- **Growth Marketing / CRO Experts:** Performance Marketer, Growth Marketing Specialist, Conversion Rate Optimization Specialist...
- **Web / Data Analysts:** Web Analyst, Digital Analyst, Customer Intelligence Expert, Data Analyst ...
- **UX / Web & Mobile Designers:** UX/UI Designer, User Interface Designer, UX Researcher, Information Architect...
- **Others:** e.g. Account Manager, IT, Developer, Product Manager, Business Manager...

Global responses

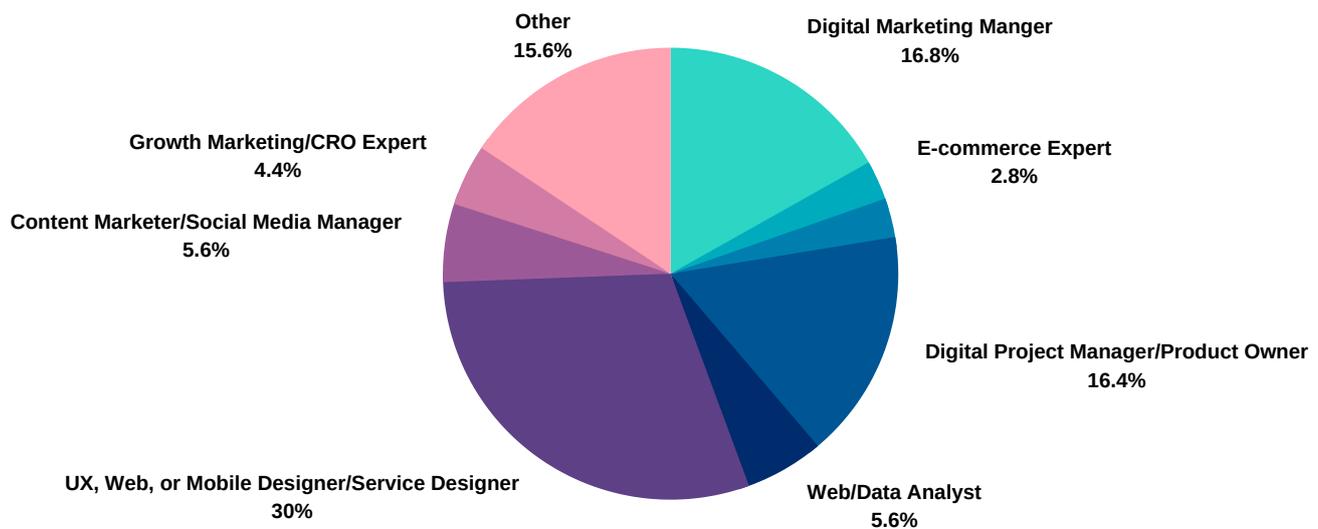
Industries investigated



From the 524 respondents of the salary survey, the following industries were represented:

- **Agency & Consulting** 27.48% of respondents.
- **IT** 21.37% of respondents.
- **Retail & FMCG** 9.16% of respondents.
- **Finance, Insurance & Legal** 12.60% of respondents.
- **Other:** mainly freelancers working in several industries. 7.63% of respondents.
- **Public sector** 3.05% of respondents.
- **Telcom** 4.96% of respondents.
- **Transport & Travel** 1.91% of respondents.
- **Automotive** 2.29% of respondents.
- **Utilities** 2.29% of respondents.
- **Media & Entertainment** 5.37% of respondents.
- **Pharma** 1.53% of respondents.

Professional profiles investigated

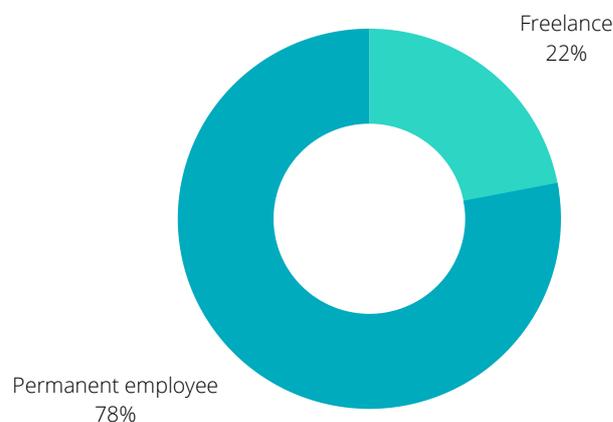


The professional categories we represented in the following proportions:

- **Digital Manager category: 16.8%** of respondents
- **E-commerce Expert category: 2.8%** of respondents
- **E-communication/CRM/Automation Expert category: 7.3%** of respondents
- **Digital Project Manager / Product Owner category: 16.4%** of respondents
- **Web / Data Analyst category: 5.6%** of respondents
- **UX / Web & Mobile Designer category: 30%** of respondents
- **Growth Marketing/CRO Experts: 4.4%** of respondents
- **Other: 15.6%** of respondents

The most common profiles who responded "other" were listed as product managers, business development or sales professional, and strategists.

Are you currently working as a permanent employee or as a contractor?



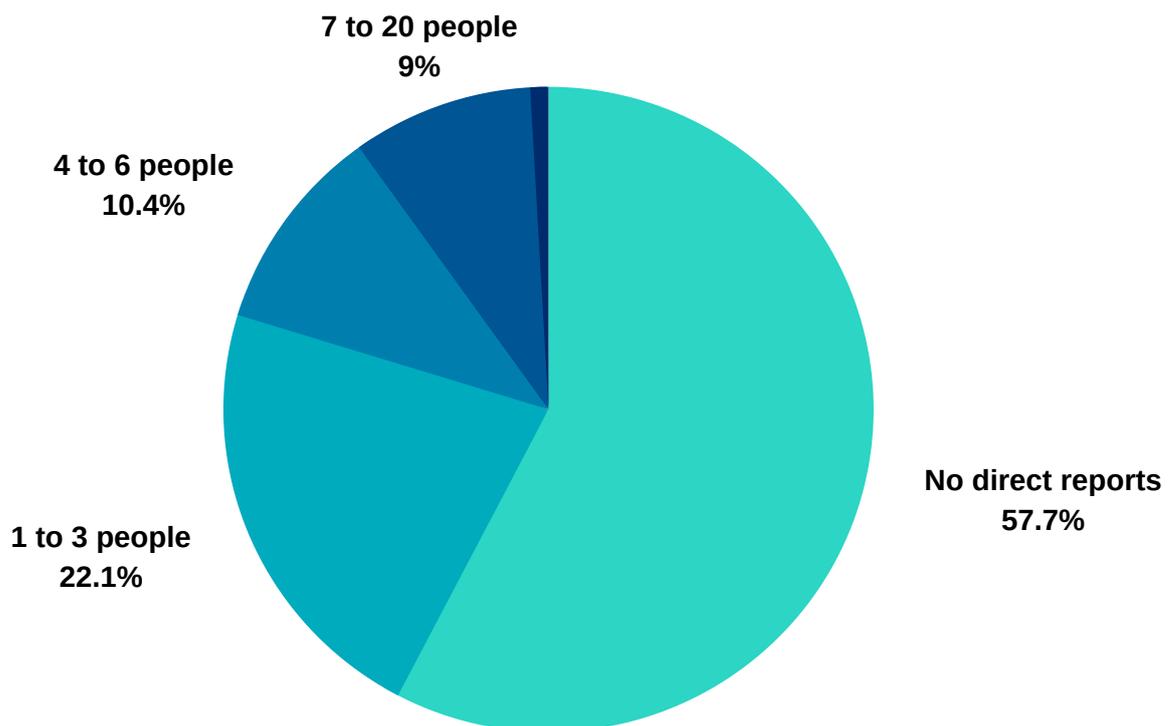
The majority of respondents are working as permanent employees, with 42% working as consultants. We compare these groups uniquely later in this report.

Company sizes and reports

How many employees does your company have in Belgium?

- **34%** of respondents work at companies with **up to 50 employees**.
- **23%** of the respondents work at a company with between **51 and 200 employees**.
- **18%** of respondents work at a company with between **201 and 1000 employees**.
- **25%** of respondents work at a company with **more than 1000 employees**.

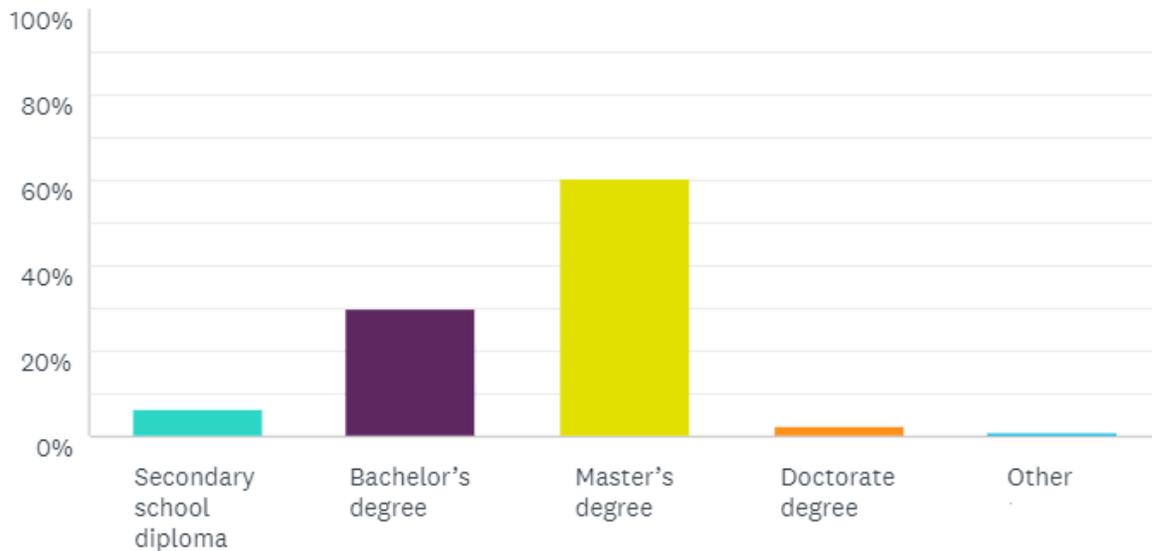
How many people report directly to you?



We observe almost 65% of our respondents work for either small companies of up to 50 employees, or large companies with more than 1000 employees. The majority of respondents do not have direct reports (57%). Of those who do have direct report, about half of those respondents oversee between 1-3 people.

Education

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?



What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- **Just over 60% of the respondents have obtained a Master's degree**, with the second most common response being respondents having obtained a **Bachelor's degree (30%)**.

How many languages do you master well enough to give a presentation in?

- **90%** of the respondents speak **2 or 3 languages** fluently enough to give a presentation.
- **4.5%** speak 4 languages, and **1%** speak more than 4 languages.
- **3.5%** of respondents only speak 1 language.

Summary: The average respondent has earned a Master's degree, and speaks two or three languages well enough to give a presentation in those languages. They have no direct reports or between 1-3, and are most likely to work in a very small or very large company.

Salary, daily rate and satisfaction

What is your average monthly gross salary?

Permanent employees working in digital:

- Average monthly gross income **4.195€**

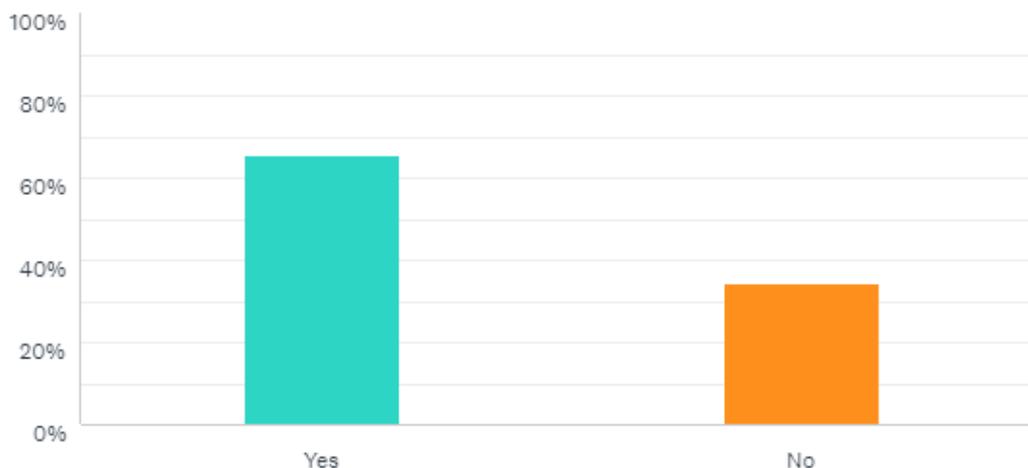
Freelancer daily rates:

- Average daily rate **612€**

Compared to data from 2019, we see a **slight rise in the salaries of permanent employees**. The average monthly gross income reflects an increase of 159€ (from 4.036€ in 2019). Comparing this to the previous 2 year period, we see about a 50% slower growth rate, given that the increase from 2019 to 2017 was 320€ (from 3.715€ in 2017).

We also see an **increase in freelance daily rates**. The 2021 data reflects a 37€ average increase, up from 575€ in 2019. Comparing this to the previous 2 year period, we see about a 50% higher growth rate, given that the increase from 2019 to 2017 was 23€ (from 552€ in 2017).

Are you satisfied with your current salary or average income?



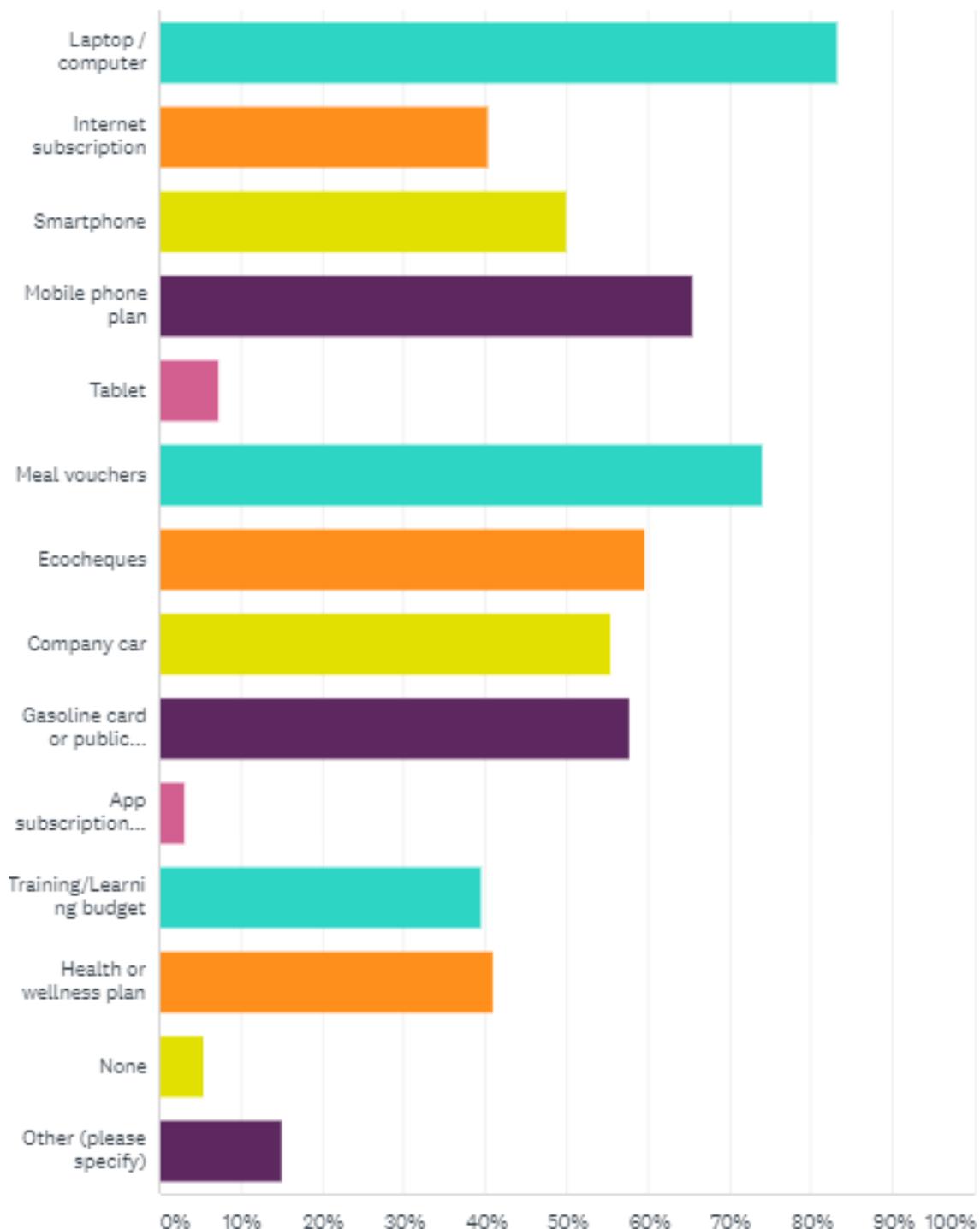
When observing salary satisfaction as a general trend, the majority (66%) report being **satisfied with their current salary**. This figure is similar to, but slightly higher than the reported satisfaction rate in 2019. Categorically, **freelance workers report higher satisfaction** with their earnings when compared to permanent employees (76% vs 63%).

Other benefits

Which employee benefits do you have?

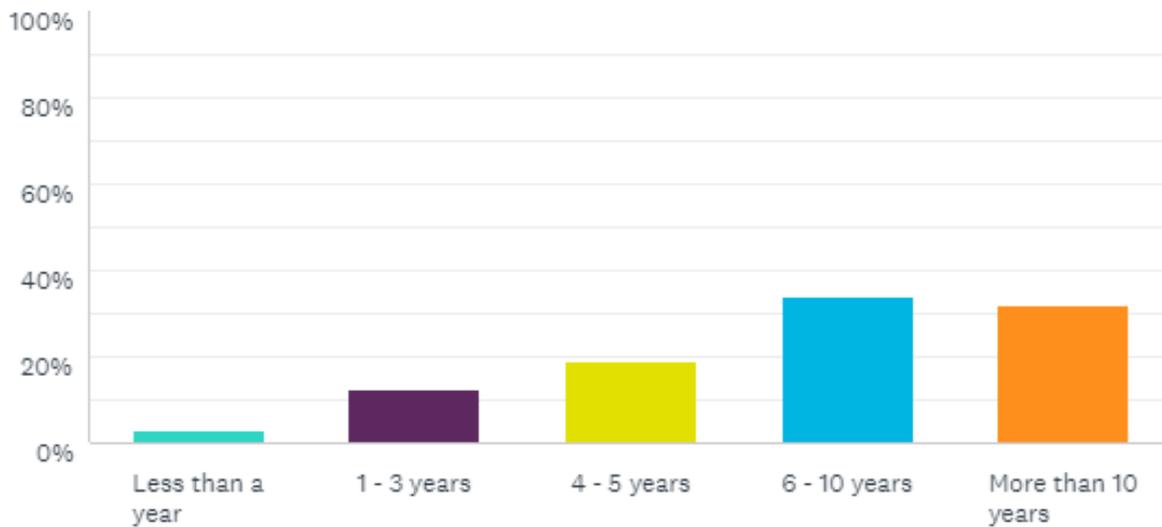
The most common reported benefits reported were a **laptop or computer, meal vouchers and mobile phone subscription**, in that order. Other benefits commonly mentioned were pension plans, additional holidays, retail discounts or stock options. The variety and frequency of these benefits is similar to benefits reported in 2019.

Further data of benefits per employment type are discussed in the following sections.



Findings on digital experience

How many years experience in digital do you have?



We can further break down these numbers by type of employment:

Freelance consultants

less than a year experience in digital 0%

1-3 years experience in digital 2%

4-5 years experience 7%

6-10 years experience 34%

10+ years experience 57%

Permanent employees

less than a year experience in digital 2%

1-3 years experience in digital 14%

4-5 years experience 23%

6-10 years experience 35%

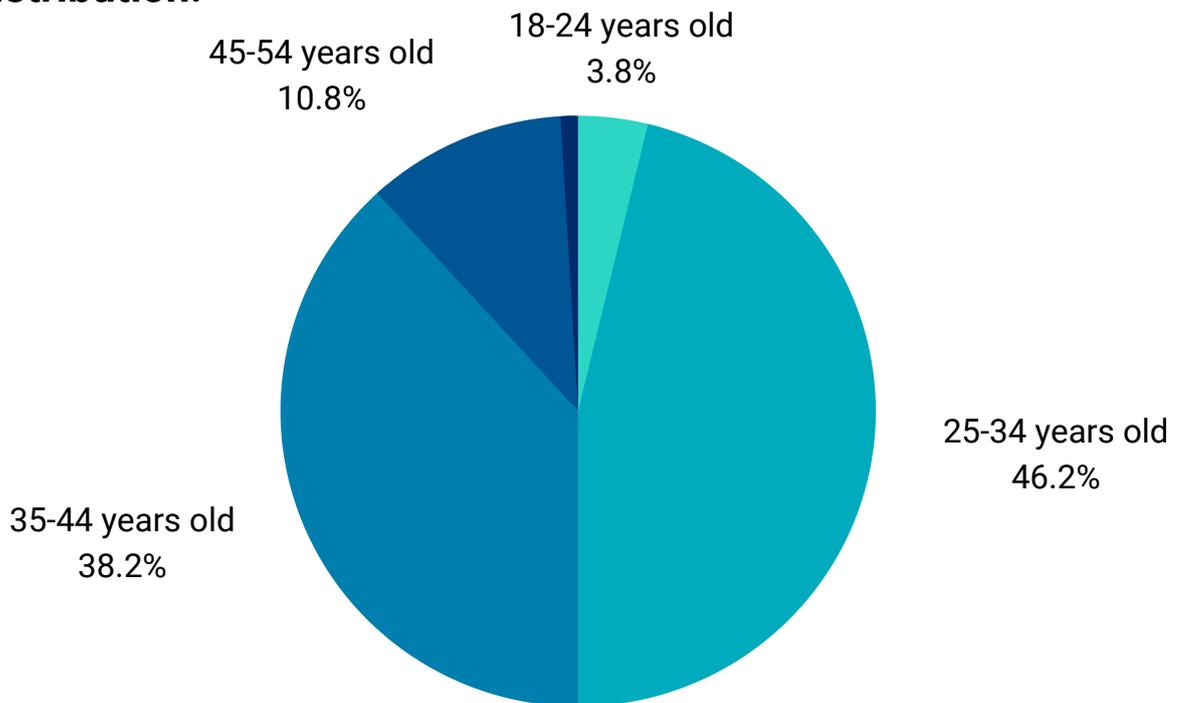
10+ years experience in digital 26%

As can be expected, respondents who reported most of their income coming from **freelance work also report having significantly more years of experience in digital** than those who reported working as permanent employees. This is within expectation given the **skill demands** of most freelance positions within digital marketing.

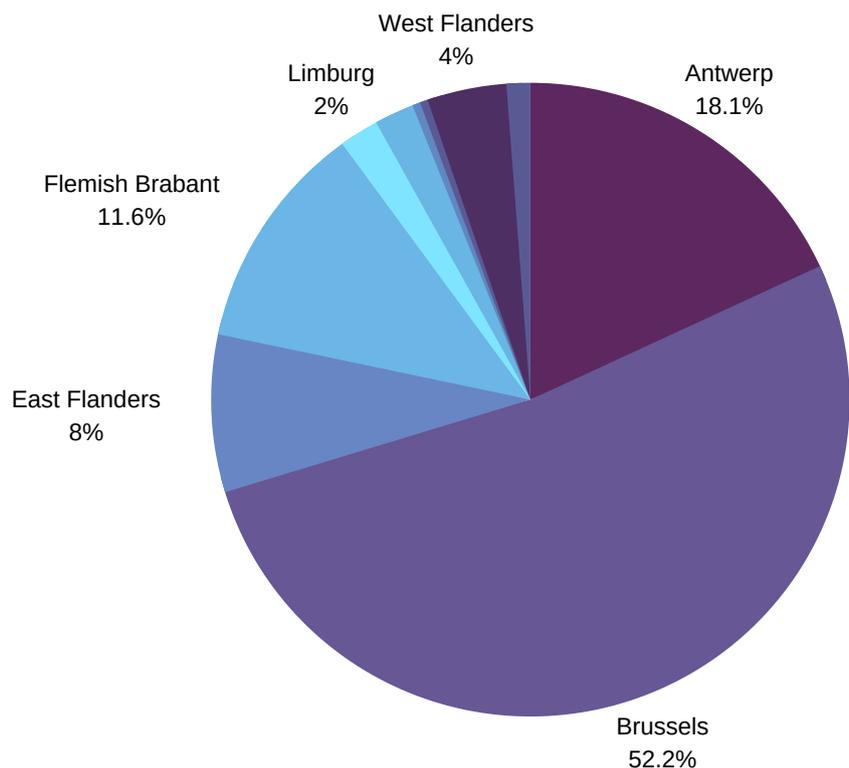
Demographics

From the 524 respondents, **38%** are **female** and **61% male**.

Age distribution:



Work location:



Freelance consultant responses

Freelance Consultants

The following results have been reported from respondents working in freelance. These figures are compared to permanent employees in the following section.

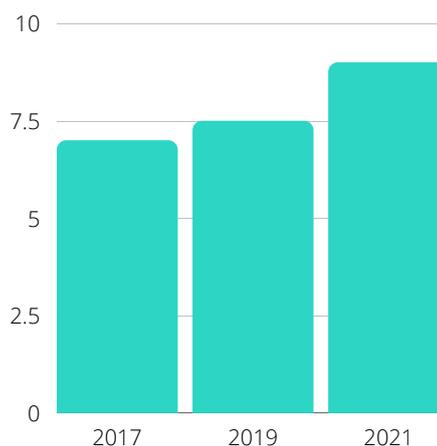
What is your average daily fee?

The **average daily fee of a freelance consultant is 612€/day**. This is a 6% increase when comparing the average daily fee from 2019 respondents (575€), which reflected a previous increase from the findings in 2017 (552€).

However, the **most commonly reported daily fees ranged between 550-600€**, with 25% of freelance respondents reporting within this range.

How long have you been working as a freelance consultant?

The average experience as freelance consultants of the respondents is just over **6 years** (6.2). This reflects about 1 more year of experience than when studied in 2017 (4.7 years), which could potentially correlate to the slightly higher daily rate.

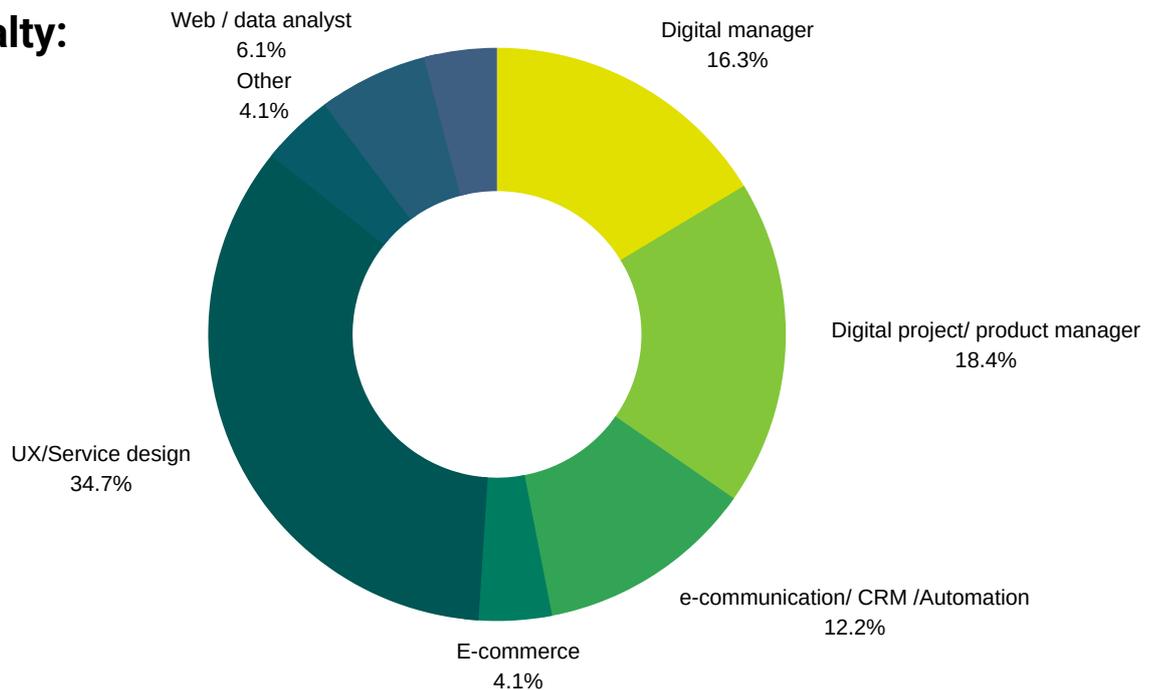


How long is the initial contract duration of an average mission?

The average initial contract duration for freelancers is **9 months**. This is longer than when studied in 2019, when average contract duration was reported at 7.5 months, and in 2017 at 7 months.

Freelance Consultants

Specialty:



Others specialities include mainly copywriters, content marketers or webmaster, among others.

Daily rate by job speciality

The average daily rate changes according to speciality or job category in digital. For job category descriptions, see above.

Speciality	Average daily fee
Digital manager	627€
Project manager	746€
E-communication/CRM	617€
E-commerce	550€
UX/Web / Service design	595€
Growth Marketing / CRO	405€
Web / Data analyst	608€
Others	325€

Looking for a new opportunity in digital marketing?

[View open roles](#)

As seen in the previous chart, the freelance digital experts with the **highest daily rates are the speciality of Digital project managers/Product owners/Agile coaches**. The specialties include jobs such as: Web Project Manager, Digital Product Owner, Mobile Product Owner, Scrum Master or Technical Project Manager. This rate is a significant increase from the 2019 results, where this category of specialists reported earning an average of 627€.

This average rate is followed closely by categories of **Digital marketing managers and E-communication/CRM/Marketing automation experts**.

Daily rate by industry

The average daily rate also varies by industry in which the respondents work. The highest earning industry is **Telecom, Pharma and Retail & FMCG**. The lowest earning industries are Automotive and Public Sector.

Industry	Average daily fee
Agency & Consulting	594€
Automotive	500€
Finance, Insurance & Legal	621€
IT	552€
Public sector	520€
Retail & FMCG	632€
Telcom	1.500€
Pharma	750€
Utilities	550€

Daily rate by location

The average daily rate also varies by location in which the respondents work. The highest earning location is **Liège**, followed by **East Flanders** and **West Flanders**. The lowest earning location for freelancers is **Walloon Brabant**.

Region	Average daily fee
Antwerp	578€
Brussels	581€
East Flanders	845€
Flemish Brabant	598€
Liège	850€
Walloon Brabant	538€
West Flanders	692€

Freelance Consultants

Daily rate by age

In examining daily rate by age, we see a mostly steady **increase with age** through the mid 50's. There were no respondents working as freelance consultants under the age of 25.

Age ranges	Average daily fee
25-34	541€
35-44	589€
45-54	644€
+55	500€

Daily rate by years experience in digital

If we focus on the years of experience in digital rather than age, we continue to note a correlation of **increased daily rate with more years of experience**. This correlation is stronger than with increase in age alone.

Years experience in digital	Average daily fee
1 - 3 years	250€
4 - 5 years	420€
6 - 10 years	593€
> 10 years	624€

Daily rate by level of education

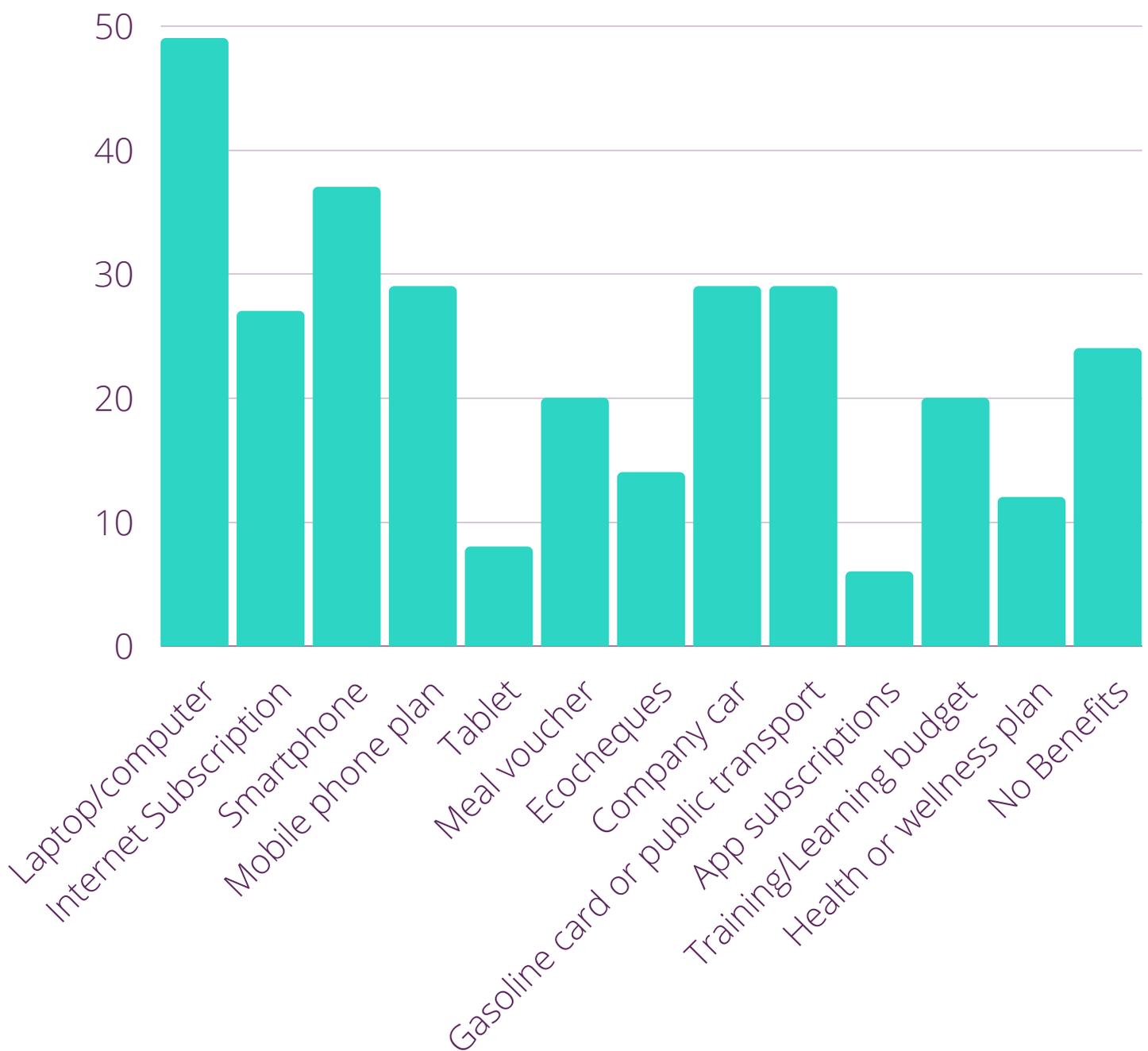
We observe a steady increase of earnings reported with an increase of education level, with respondents with **Master's degrees** being the highest earners. This was the highest level of educated reported by freelancers.

Education level	Average daily fee
Secondary school	525€
Bachelor's	586€
Masters	630€

Freelance Consultants

Benefits

In examining the benefits received by freelancers, the most common benefit is a **laptop or computer** (49%). It is also highly reported to have a **mobile phone plan**, and are equally as likely to have a **company car and fuel or transport budget** (28.6% for all). Only 20% of respondents earn a training or learning budget, which is less than half the reported rate for permanent employees. 24.5% of freelance workers do not receive any benefits.



Freelance Consultants

Satisfaction with employment type

Additionally in this survey, respondents were asked if they are happy working as freelancers or would prefer to change to internal full-time employment. The majority (78%) reported being **happy with freelance status**, with 22% reporting that they would prefer to change to internal/permanent employment.

Summary

The **highest paid freelance digital consultants** have a **higher education** level, with **many years experience in digital**. The areas in which the best paid freelance consultants live are in: **Liège**, East Flanders, and West Flanders. The global average daily rate for freelancers in digital marketing in Belgium is **612€**.

The highest paid job categories are: **Digital project managers**, Digital marketing managers and E-communication/CRM/Automation experts. By industries, freelancers make an higher daily fee in **Telecom, Pharma and Retail & FMCG**.

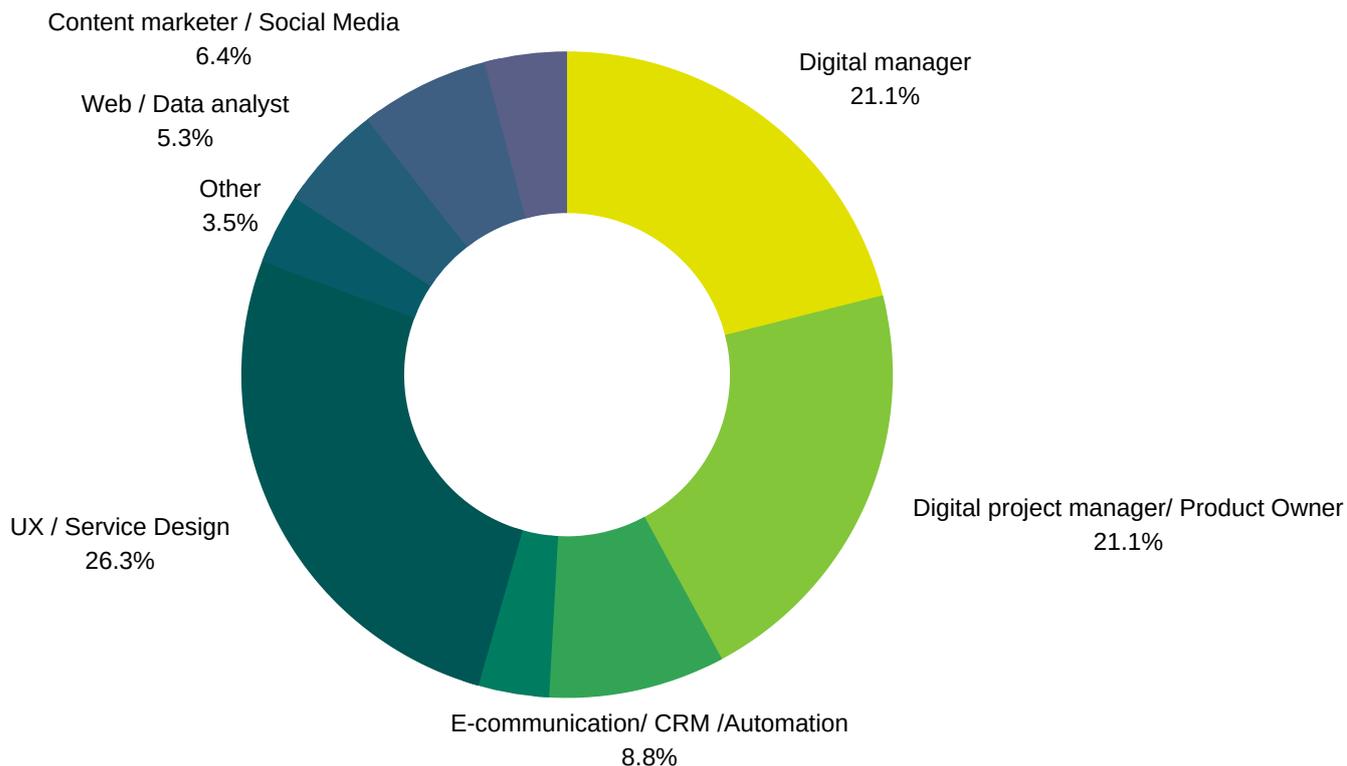
Furthermore, it is most common for freelancers to receive **benefits of a laptop or computer**, about half do. Slightly over 1 in 4 also receive a **company car or gasoline/transportation allowance**, however it is just as likely that a freelancer receives **no extra-legal benefits** at all.

Permanent employee responses

Permanent employees

Representation of Specialities

The following job categories were represented. For description of the categories, refer to the primary introduction. Other jobs represented include digital channel manager, digital transformation manager or solution architect, among others.



Monthly income by job category

The following average monthly incomes were reported in different job categories.

Job Category	Average monthly income
Digital manager	4.565€
Project manager	4.401€
E-communication / CRM	4.039€
E-commerce	4.608€
UX/web mobile design	3.865€
Web/data analyst	4.453€
Content marketer / Social Media	3.400€
Growth marketer / CRO	3.845€

Permanent employees

As seen on the previous page, the **highest monthly income** for permanent employees are for those working as **E-commerce Experts**. E-commerce jobs include specialities such as: Digital Marketing Expert, Search Marketing Expert, Online Sales Expert, Online Traffic Expert, Online advertising expert. This differs from freelance workers, who earn the most in the Project Management category.

The next highest paid category for permanent employees is **Web/Data Analysts**.

Monthly income / industry:

In comparing the industries in which permanent employees work, the following was reported.

Industry	Average monthly income
Agency & Consulting	3.931€
Automotive	4.870€
Finance, Insurance & Legal	4.491€
IT	3.899€
Media & Entertainment	4.060€
Pharma	4.225€
Public sector	4.233€
Retail & FMCG	4.113€
Telcom	4.400€
Transport & Travel	4.260€
Utilities	4.050€

The **highest paid industry** reported for permanent employees is the **automotive industry**, followed by **finance, insurance & legal** and **telecom industry**. This shows some difference from freelancers, who earn the most in the telecom and pharma industry. Permanent employees earn the least in the IT industry, follow by agency & consulting.

Looking for a new opportunity in digital marketing?

[View open roles](#)

Permanent employees

Monthly income by level of education completed

Level education	Average monthly income
Secondary school	4.199€
Bachelor's	3.896€
Masters	4.338€
Doctorate	4.642€

Higher education levels among permanent employees generally report higher earnings, with those with **Doctorate degrees** earning the most comparatively. This is the same as the results reported for freelancers.

Monthly income by years experience in digital

Years experience in digital	Average monthly income
less than 1 year	4.163€
1 - 3 years	3.084€
4 - 5 years	3.656€
6 - 10 years	4.261€
> 10 years	5.157€

Monthly income by age

Age ranges	Average monthly income
18-24	2.701€
25-34	4.982€
35-44	5.176€
45-54	6.200€

We can observe a general correlation between **more experience in digital and higher earnings**. There is a notable jump in the earnings of those respondents who have **more than ten years of experience**. There is also clear correlation between age and higher earnings for permanent employees, with those **over 25** earning on average nearly twice what those under 25 report earning monthly. This is similar but slightly different to the results of freelance workers, who reported a greater influence of years in digital on increased earnings rather than age alone.

Permanent employees

Monthly income by region

Years experience in digital	Average monthly income
Antwerp	4.192€
Brussels	4.351€
East Flanders	3.889€
Flemish Brabant	4.311€
Liège	4.063€
Limburg	2.803€
Luxembourg	3.500€
Namur	2.900€
Walloon Brabant	3.250€

The average monthly income also varies by location in which the respondents work. The highest earning location for permanent employees is **Brussels**, followed closely by **Flemish Brabant**, and **Liège**. Permanent employees in Limburg reported the lowest earnings.

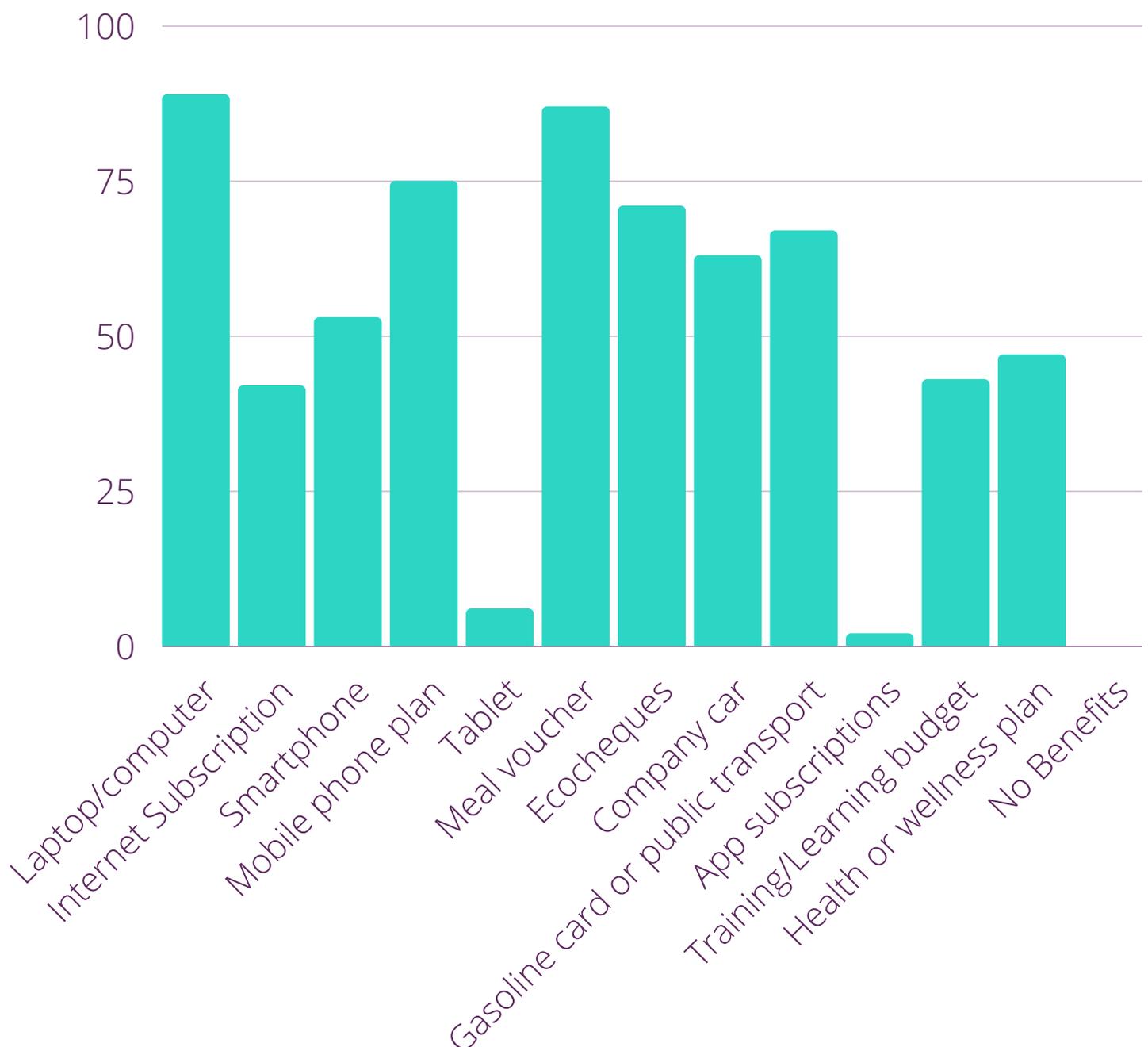
Looking to hire a digital marketing specialist?

Get in touch

Permanent employees

Benefits

Every permanent employee reported earning at least one benefit. In examining the benefits received by permanent employees, the most common benefit is a **laptop or computer** (89%). It is also nearly as common to receive **meal vouchers**, with 87% of respondents earning them. 43% of respondents earn a training or learning budget, which is more than twice the reported rate for freelance employees. Furthermore, across the benefits list, permanent employees are approximately twice as likely to receive each benefit when compared to freelancers.



Looking for a new opportunity in digital marketing?

[View open roles](#)

Permanent employees

Satisfaction with employment type

Additionally in this survey, respondents were asked if they are happy working as internal/permanent employees or would prefer to change to the majority of their income coming from freelance work. The majority (74%) reported being **happy with internal employment status**, with 26% reporting that they would prefer to change to freelance employment. This number shows a slightly higher interest in changing when compared to current freelance workers, who report a 78% intention to remain in freelancer work.

Summary

The **highest paid internal employees** have a **higher education** level, with **many years experience in digital**. The areas in which the best paid freelance consultants live are in: **Brussels** and Flemish Brabant. The global average monthly salary for internal employees in digital marketing in Belgium is **4.195€**.

The highest paid job categories are: **E-commerce experts, Digital project managers**, and Web/Data analysts. By industries, internal employees make an higher salary in **Automotive and Finance, Insurance & Legal**.

Furthermore, it is very common for internal employees to receive **benefits of a laptop or computer**, nearly 90% do. Almost as many also receive **meal vouchers**. The majority also receive a **phone and mobile plan, company car, and gas or transport allowance**.

Insights Report

New in 2021

This report goes beyond earnings and demographics to discuss the **current work atmosphere** for freelance and permanent employees in the digital marketing sphere in Belgium today. Main topics covered include retention, motivators for choosing employers or changing jobs, and shifts in priorities.

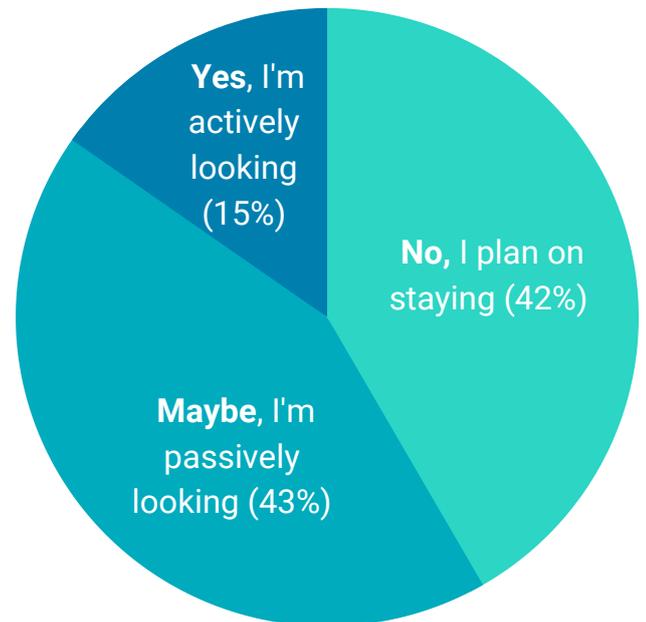
Retention and intention

Are you considering changing jobs in the next 6 months?

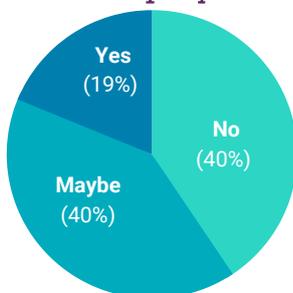
The most common response to this question is **"maybe, I'm passively looking" at 43%**, just slightly higher than those who responded that they are not considering changing jobs soon. Those responding "maybe" combined with those who responded "yes, I am actively looking" for a new job represent **58% of the active**

workforce who may not remain in their current company by the end of the year. This is an important figure for employers to keep in mind in their retention goals, hiring strategies, engagement plans, and recruiting models.

Global responses

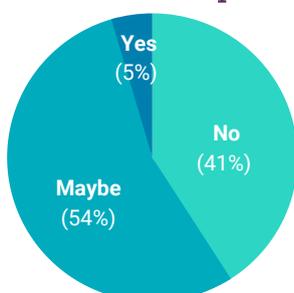


Permanent employee responses



In investigating these **responses per worker type**, we see slightly less intention to remain from permanent employees. Nearly **1 in 5 permanent employees are actively looking for another job** and intend to leave within 6 months, with an additional 40% passively looking.

Freelance responses



This indicates a **significant need for employee engagement efforts** in the short term and **skilled recruiting and hiring strategies** in the long term in order to avoid the financial and productivity costs of high turnover.

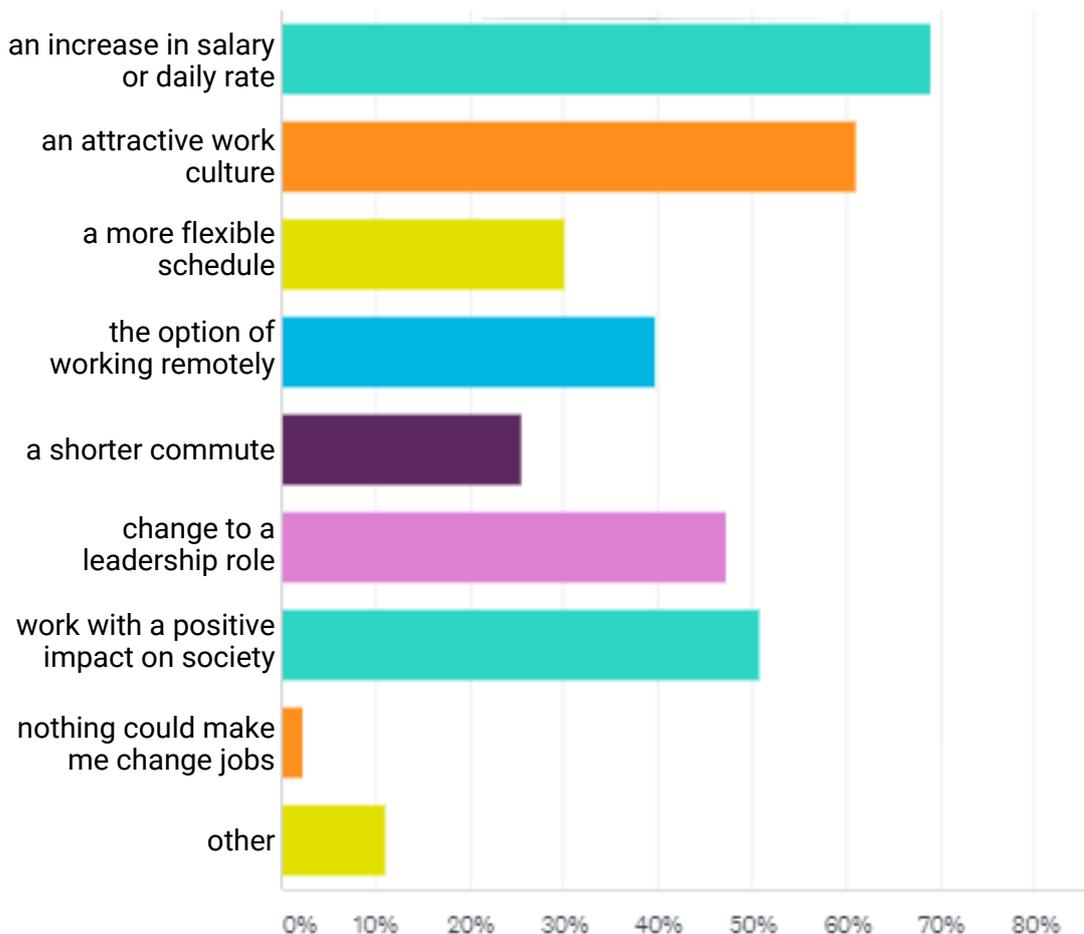
Insights Report

Motivators to change jobs

Which factors could individually motivate you to change jobs?

The most common response was that an **increase in salary** or daily rate could convince a worker to change jobs (65% overall). This motivator is even stronger for permanent employees, at 70%. Nearly as attractive globally is an **attractive work culture**, with 57% of workers overall willing to change jobs for this. We see this strongest again with permanent employees, with 61% willing to change jobs for a more attractive culture.

When separating by employment type, beyond the above mentioned, **permanent employees** are most motivated to change jobs to work somewhere with a **positive impact on society** (49%) as well as to **gain more leadership roles** (48%). Freelancers are equally motivated to move somewhere with a positive impact on society as they are to increase their daily rate (49% for both). They are also significantly motivated by the option to **work remotely** (47%).



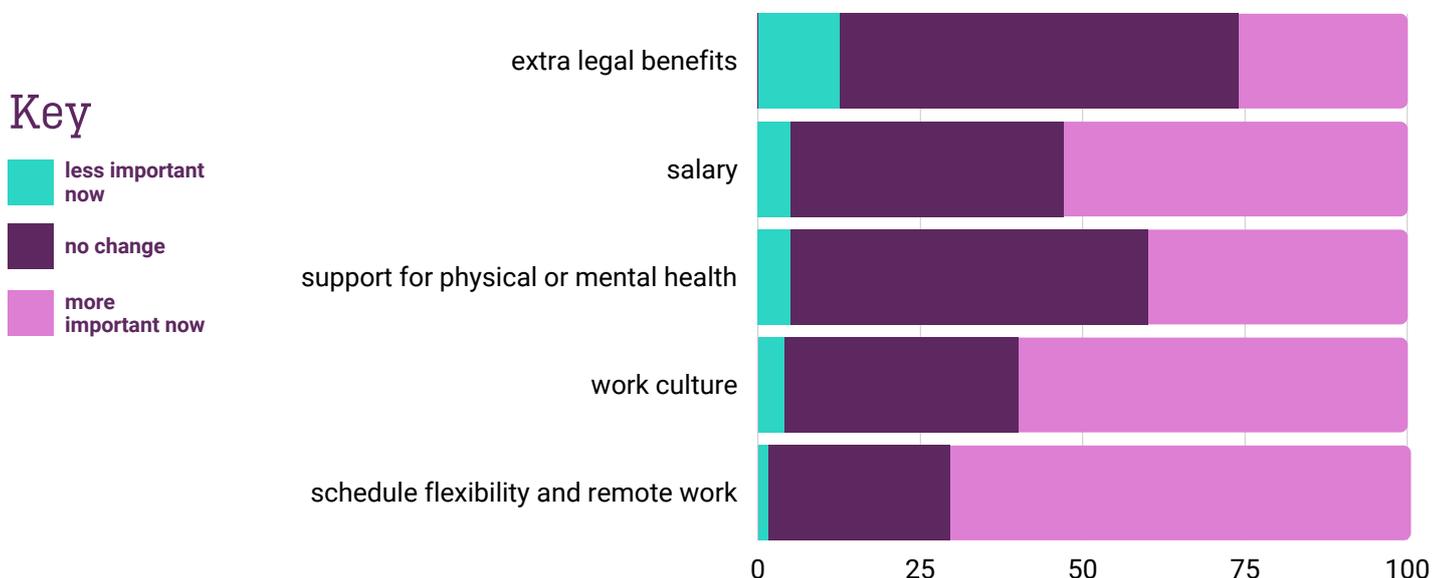
Insights Report

Changes in priorities

Over the past year, have any of these work factors become more or less important to you now?

Given the impact of COVID-19 on the world and work environment from April 2020 to April 2021, this question explores whether respondents recognize a change in their priorities over this time. Most interesting to note are which categories became collectively "less important now" and which are "more important now".

The factor which **decreased** in importance the most were **extra legal benefits**, with 13% reporting that benefits are less important now than they previously were. The factor which **increased** in importance the most was **schedule flexibility or remote work**. 71% of respondents reported this factor being more important to them now than it was one year ago. This is followed closely by **work culture**, which 60% of respondents find more important now. This indicates which factors could continue to motivate employee retention positively or negatively through the near future. The increase in importance of these factors, in combination with the benefits discussed, suggest that the **work culture of an employer will likely continue to grow in importance** to all types of employees.



Thank you for reading the 2021 Income & Insight Report!

Want to learn more details, get a benchmark for a specific role or trend, discuss your team's digital needs or find a new job in digital marketing?

Get in touch!

Contact us

www.ariadgroup.com



Ariad

Through the maze of change.