



First Global Study of Freelance Design Industry Spans 42 Countries

“Design Without Borders: The Future of Freelancing” report from 99designs highlights diverse and shared experiences and insights from more than 10,000 freelance designers

Oakland, Calif. & Melbourne, Australia - October 29, 2019 - 99designs today released the results of “Design Without Borders: The Future of Freelancing,” the most comprehensive survey of the global freelance design industry to date, featuring input from more than 10,000 freelance designers from 42 different countries.

The report reveals insights into the world’s freelance design community, mapping out key demographics, shared attitudes, common challenges, and a wide range of professional expertise both within and outside of the creative industries.

Findings show that, overall, the freelance design workforce is thriving. Creative freedom and personal flexibility are the primary motivation for most freelance designers, and just 5% said they freelance out of necessity.

One in four freelance designers identify as part of a minority group based on ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability. However, diversity was also flagged as one of the most significant challenges facing the industry as a whole, with one in five freelancers also having experienced discrimination based on their minority status in a professional situation.

“Our industry is made better by opening itself up to more voices and more diversity,” 99designs CEO Patrick Llewellyn explains. “We look forward to a world where creativity meets possibility and design is truly global.”

The full report can be accessed [here](#) but a few notable findings include:

Creative work is more accessible than ever before

- While creative industries have traditionally flourished in cities like New York, San Francisco and London, the majority of freelance designers (76%) now live outside urban hubs in smaller cities, towns, villages and rural areas.
- Technology is a key driver in democratizing access to creative work. Globally, online platforms are the number one source for new clients (57%), but social media (11%) is also a key channel for client acquisition.

Freelance designers are global citizens

- 85% of freelance designers work with clients outside of their own time zone.
- They are also exceptionally well-travelled: 43% of freelance designers have lived and worked abroad, and just over a quarter have lived and worked in 3+ countries.
- Digital nomadism is not a uniquely millennial phenomenon: between 6 and 7% of designers in every age bracket (including those over 50) have lived and worked in 10 or more countries.

Designers are driven to create their own success

- Upskilling is important to designers: 60% are currently teaching themselves new skills, particularly online (74% of freelance designers gain insights and skills using YouTube tutorials)
- A high proportion of freelance designers have formal design training (40% undergraduate, 9% postgraduate, 20% technical certificate) but just 15% feel this is crucial for industry success - suggesting it is continuous self-directed learning that really fuels a designer's creative career.

They have a complicated relationship with agencies

- The majority of designers under 30 (52%) are ditching their agency jobs after just two years, which is much earlier than previous generations.
- 40% of freelancers have agency experience, but only 13% see working full-time at an agency as part of their five-year plan. However, 44% of designers see setting up their own agency as a future goal.

About 99designs:

99designs is the global creative platform that makes it easy for designers and clients to work together to create designs they love. Founded in 2008, and with offices in Melbourne, Oakland and Berlin, 99designs has grown from a small online forum into a worldwide community of talented designers that is now a go-to solution for businesses, agencies and individuals. For more information visit www.99designs.com

Methodology:

This online survey was conducted by 99designs between in June 2019 and distributed via email, social media, and industry-targeted ads on Instagram. 11,204 designers responded from the following regions: APAC (3,364), Europe (2,390), North America (933), South America (552), Africa (437), Unknown (3,528).

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