

Freelancing in 2022:

Trends, Skills & Opportunities

REPORT
MARCH 2023

Executive Summary

The freelance economy has continued to grow and evolve, driven by key advancements in technology, macroeconomic factors, and the rapid rise and fall of trends.

In 2022, the freelancing industry saw a significant surge in the number of jobs and projects for technology related skills, especially those for highly skilled, niche categories such as programming, coding, web development and software development. The trend was first observed in the middle of the year, as [mass tech layoffs were driving a growth in software development](#).

The macroeconomic environment, tech winter and nosebleed inflation had led to an almost daily string of announcements of layoffs. The most similar event was the Global Financial Crisis where we saw similar trends: businesses looking to cut costs and going online to hire freelancers and people looking for work online. This continued throughout 2022, with jobs in website development and programming growing in Q3 and Q4 of 2022.

2022 also witnessed the rise and fall in jobs relating to crypto currencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). At the beginning of the year, jobs for [NFTs were the highest growing job category on the Freelancer.com platform](#). However, this all came crumbling down.

In Q2 2022, the world entered crypto winter, a popular term used to describe an extended period of losses and declines of cryptocurrency. There are a series of economic factors which impacted the industry as a whole, beginning with the collapse of TerraUSD (UST) and its base currency, Luna.

This ripple effect has sent shockwaves through the crypto market. Bitcoin experienced a major crash, dropping below US\$20,000 for the first time since 2020. Ethereum also suffered similar losses, crashing from a high of US \$4,878 reached in November 2021 to US\$1,661 in June. A majority of other cryptocurrencies followed suit.

In 2023, the surge in tech and IT jobs on [Freelancer.com](#) is expected to continue as more companies layoff staff. Introduction of new generative AI tools is also expected to cause an increase in jobs in AI and machine learning jobs.

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2022 Job Trends

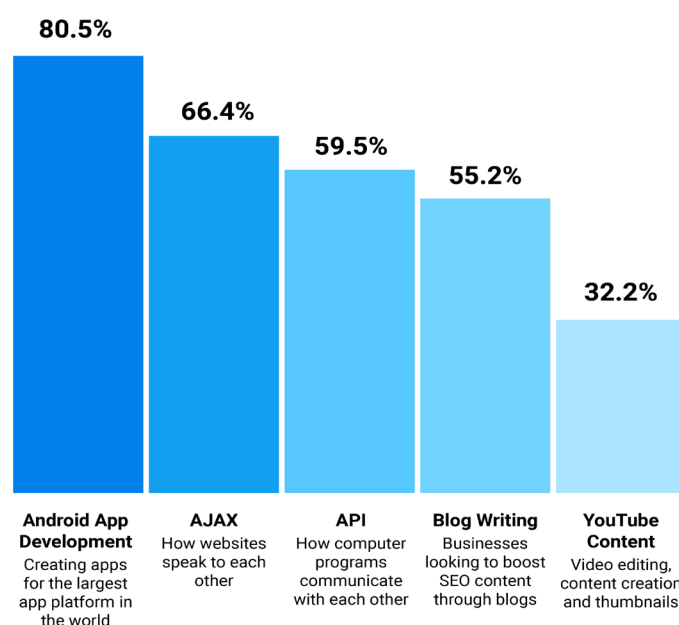
Tech Jobs Skyrocket

The biggest trend of 2022 was the surge in tech and IT related jobs as a direct result of mass tech layoffs.

Overvaluations and dropping stock prices caused mass hiring freezes and layoffs across the tech companies globally in 2022. According to online tracker [Layoffs.fyi](#), there were 159,846 layoffs in 2022. These layoffs, which accelerated in May 2022, contributed to increases in tech-related jobs across the platform.

While **Android App Development** dominated in 2022 and was ranked as the fastest growing job on [Freelancer.com](#), employers have been turning to the platform to support niche, highly specialized tech projects.

For example, **AJAX**, which is used to develop websites, and **API**, which allow software programs to communicate with each other, were the second and third fastest growing jobs, respectively. Niche skills in **AngularJS**, a toolset for building apps, and **Codeigniter**, a toolset for web development, equally rose by 22% in Q3. Similar growth was experienced by **Website development** and **Programming** skills in [Q4 2022](#).



Freelancer.com's Fast 50 Index for Q3

2022 Job Trends

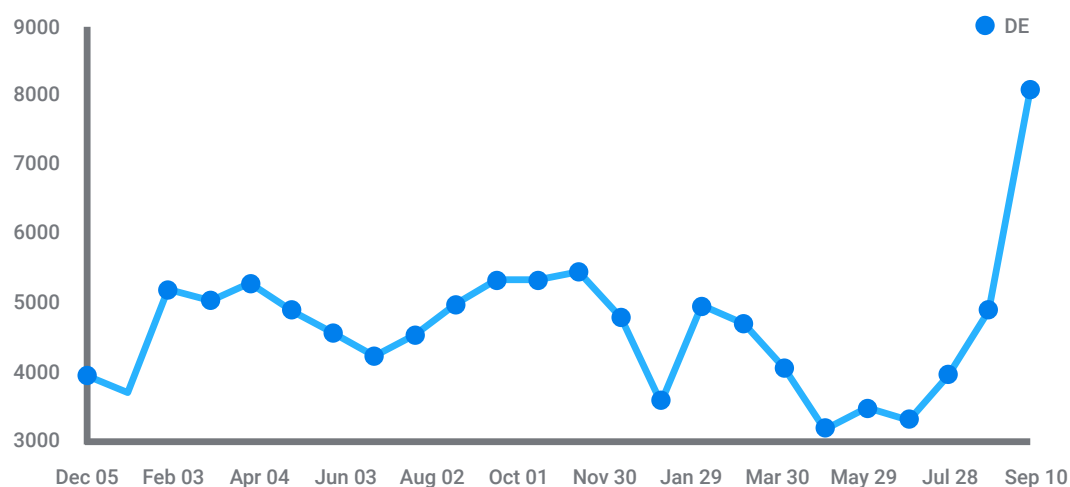
Impact of the rising cost of living in Europe

Countries across Europe endured a cost of living crisis in 2022, experiencing soaring inflation, the cost of housing rising across major cities, and the cost of basic necessities like food and energy increasing. This saw more and more people across Europe begin to turn to freelancing as a way to earn an additional income and make ends meet.

Simultaneously, both workers and businesses began seeking ways to reduce costs and increase their output amid the economic climate. This meant there was also an influx of new employers joining the platform to seek freelance support.

One of the countries which experienced the biggest increases of both employers and freelancers was Germany, where the number of new users tripled over several months - increasing by 256% from 3,164 new users in June to 8,117 new users per month in September.

In fact, the rush of new users in Europe surpassed the [COVID new user peak seen in 2020](#) as the world went into lockdown and implemented rules for social distancing.



New monthly users from Germany on Freelancer.com

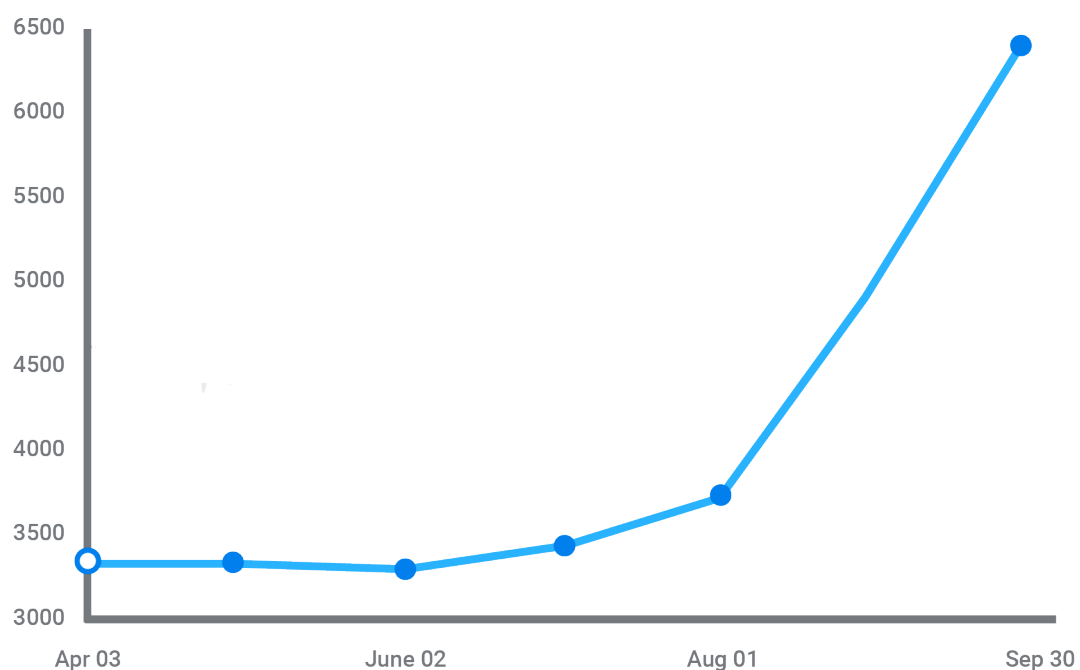
2022 Job Trends

Impact of the rising cost of living in Europe

The number of new users in the United Kingdom increased by more than half (57%) in the middle of 2022 - increasing from 7,289 new users per month in June to 11,513 new users in September.

A similar trend occurred in the Netherlands, with the number of new users more than doubling in the last five months - increasing from 1,631 new users in April to more than 5,495 new users per month in September.

One of the sharpest rises came from Spain, where the number of new users near tripled in one month - from 3,675 new users in August to 6,442 in September 2022.



New monthly users from Spain on Freelancer.com

2022 Job Trends

Traditional marketing revival while SEM crashes

[Job trends data](#) revealed shifting trends in marketing and advertising. Projects for **Search Engine Marketing (SEM)** fell by almost a third (30.4%) - from 2,300 jobs to 1,600 over a quarter as paid advertising is also the first expense most businesses cut in a downturn.

On the other hand, digital marketing, traditional marketing and YouTube jobs spiked in interest. Most commonly, employers looked for support with SEO ranking.

Blog Writing jobs, which are usually associated with businesses hiring freelancers to write SEO-friendly blog content, increased by 55%, from 1,058 to 1,642 projects. **Digital Marketing** also saw a 23.1% increase, jumping from 1,738 to 2,141 jobs.

These jobs range from hiring business consultants supporting social media strategies to SEO managers.

Notably, the platform also saw many employers turn to the platform to hire community managers, digital marketing campaign managers and social media managers.

Traditional advertising also saw an increase. **Flyer Design** projects increased by more than a quarter (27.5%) from 1,658 to 2,114 jobs, while a similar increase was also seen for projects relating to Covers and Packaging, which increased by 27.3% from 1,253 to 1,596 jobs.

2022 Job Trends

The NFT Rollercoaster

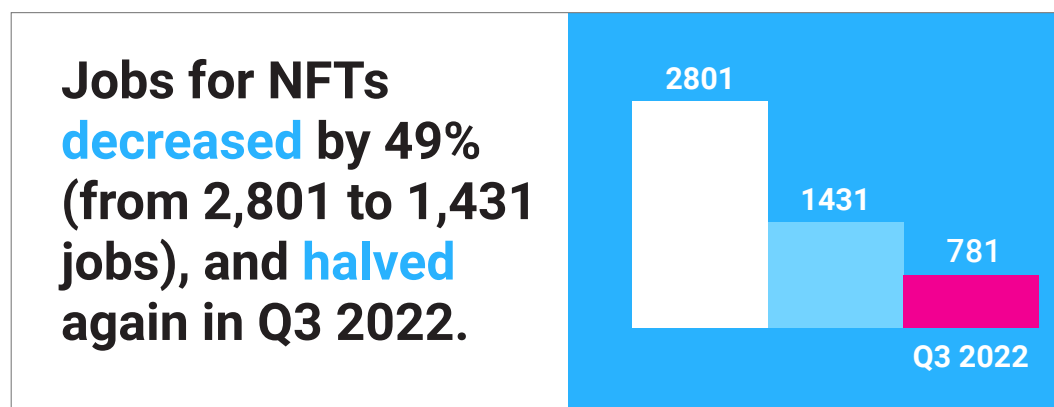
While NFTs started to gain attention at the beginning of 2021, popularity and demand for NFTs exploded in the second half of 2021. According to [data](#) published by NFT marketplace OpenSea, sales for NFTs on its platform boomed with over US \$3b in transactions in August alone.

Popular NFT collections, such as Bored Ape Yacht Club and CryptoPunks, propelled the hype and continued to make headlines for record breaking sales and mainstream celebrity involvement. The combination of demand, hype and opportunity in late-2021 continued to drive jobs on Freelancer well into Q1 2022.

Jobs for **NFTs** were the [leading growth category at the beginning of the year](#), seeing a 37% increase from 2,045 to 2,814 jobs in total.

Not only did NFT jobs spike but jobs associated with the creation of NFTs also increased: **Caricature & Cartoon** jobs grew by 19% (from 2,678 to 3,205 jobs), **Illustration** jobs increased by 10% (from 9,312 to 10,330 jobs) and **3D Design** jobs increased by 6% (from 6,929 to 7,347 jobs).

However, this [came crashing down in Q2 2022](#) when NFTs and crypto-related jobs saw the biggest overall percentage declines on the platform.



2022 Job Trends

The Crash of Crypto

A similar fate was met by cryptocurrencies. A majority of other cryptocurrencies plunged in the middle of 2022, resulting in the global market capitalization crashing to US\$969 billion from a high of US\$2.9 trillion back in November 2021.

Larger economic factors also had an impact, such as global equity markets down by more than 20%, US inflation reaching a 40-year high of 8.6% in May, and central banks all around the world increasing interest rates to curb inflation. Major cryptocurrency exchanges began laying off employees.

In June, popular crypto exchange Crypto.com laid off 260 employees, while Coinbase laid off 18% of its staff. As a result of the crypto market turmoil, freelance jobs relating to crypto were heavily impacted.

Over one year, jobs for **Bitcoin** dropped by 80% from 2,610 in Q2 2021 to only 542 in Q2 2022. **Ethereum** experienced a similar drop in interest, from 2,820 jobs in Q2 2021 to 1,176 jobs in Q2 2022.

Top 2023 Predictions

2023 will be a defining year for the freelancing economy, for both freelancers and employers.

Tech jobs will continue to increase following more layoffs

In 2022, the platform observed a ripple effect caused by mass tech layoffs globally. As layoffs were announced, it would only take a matter of weeks for highly skilled freelancers to join the platform.

After a few months, employers would then join the platform to hire for highly specialized, niche tech jobs. In turn, this grew the number of tech and IT jobs on the platform, with some growing as much as 60 and 80 per cent quarter-on-quarter.

The first wave of the trend began in Q2 2022 when the initial mass layoffs were announced and continued well throughout 2022. This trend is expected to only continue as more tech companies look to reduce headcounts and layoff employees in 2023.

Increase in the number of startups

The Global Financial Crisis and COVID-19 pandemic saw not only businesses looking to cut costs and hire online freelancers, but also people starting business to get through downturns. Whether it was side hustles or startups, downturns historically lead to a startup boom.

The same is predicted to happen in 2023, as looming a recession, continued inflation and increased interest rates affect billions of people around the world.

The first instance where this trend will be observed will be an increase in logo design and website design jobs, as this is usually the first step many entrepreneurs take to building a business.

Top 2023 Predictions

Generative AI jobs will grow exponentially

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Dall-E and Midjourney, are expected to affect all forms of human creativity moving forward. Since the introduction of powerful and freely available generative AI tools, anyone with access to the internet can compete with the world's most highly skilled designers and copywriters.

One line of text and you can now illustrate highly detailed images. One line of text and you can now become a copywriter. These tools are turbo charging freelancers and their outputs.

In 2023, we can expect to see not only freelancers using these tools to support their work, but employers turning to freelancers to help build, integrate or enhance these tools. There has already been a 268% increase in the number of these types of jobs in January 2023.



Image from a Freelancer.com AI art design contest

Key Stats



6,669,434

New users on
Freelancer.com in 2022



13.6%

Percentage Growth



2,316,814

Number of total jobs

Top 10 Most Registered Skills Worldwide

1. Data entry
2. Excel
3. Copywriting
4. Typing
5. Copy Typing
6. Article Writing
7. Content Writing
8. Logo Design
9. Microsoft Office
10. Translation

Top 10 Projects on Freelancer.com Worldwide

1. Graphic Design
2. PHP
3. HTML
4. Website Design
5. Photoshop
6. Logo Design
7. Illustrator
8. Article Writing
9. WordPress
10. JavaScript

Country Stats

 United States 604,869 New users in 2022 Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for US Freelancers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PHP2. JavaScript3. Graphic Design4. MySQL5. Article Writing Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by US Employers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Graphic Design2. Photoshop3. PHP4. HTML5. Website Design	 Canada 75,043 New users in 2022 Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for CA Freelancers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PHP2. HTML3. Article Writing4. Website Design5. Graphic Design Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by CA Employers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Graphic Design2. PHP3. HTML4. Website Design5. Photoshop
 Argentina 83,742 New users in 2022 Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for AR Freelancers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Graphic Design2. 3D Modeling3. 3D Rendering4. Photoshop5. Illustrator Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by AR Employers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PHP2. HTML3. Graphic Design4. Website Design5. JavaScript	 Brazil 232,731 New users in 2022 Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for BR Freelancers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Graphic Design2. Photoshop3. HTML4. PHP5. JavaScript Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by BR Employers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PHP2. HTML3. Graphic Design4. Website Design5. JavaScript

Country Stats



Australia

93,716 New users
in 2022

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for AU Freelancers:

1. Article Writing
2. Content Writing
3. Copywriting
4. Graphic Design
5. Research Writing

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by AU Employers:

1. Graphic Design
2. Photoshop
3. PHP
4. HTML
5. Website Design



India

1,229,137 New users
in 2022

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for IN Freelancers:

1. Graphic Design
2. PHP
3. HTML
4. Website Design
5. Photoshop

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by IN Employers:

1. Graphic Design
2. PHP
3. Website Design
4. HTML
5. Photoshop



United Kingdom

157,493 New users
in 2022

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for UK Freelancers:

1. Article Writing
2. Content Writing
3. Copywriting
4. Article Rewriting
5. Graphic Design

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by UK Employers:

1. Graphic Design
2. PHP
3. HTML
4. Website Design
5. Photoshop



Germany

86,039 New users
in 2022

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs for DE Freelancers:

1. German Translator
2. Translation
3. Python
4. English Translation
5. PHP

Top 5 Most Popular Jobs posted by DE Employers:

1. PHP
2. HTML
3. Graphic Design
4. Website Design
5. Wordpress

New Skills

There were a total of **144 new skills** and job categories added to the Freelancer.com platform in 2022, ranging from generative AI to local jobs to eSports. The most notable additions of the year include:

ChatGPT / GPT-3 / Open AI

All three skills were added towards the end of 2022 following the [launch of ChatGPT](#), an AI-powered chatbot developed by OpenAI, based on the GPT (Generative Pretrained Transformer) language model. In 2022 alone, there were more than 200 jobs on Freelancer related to these job categories.

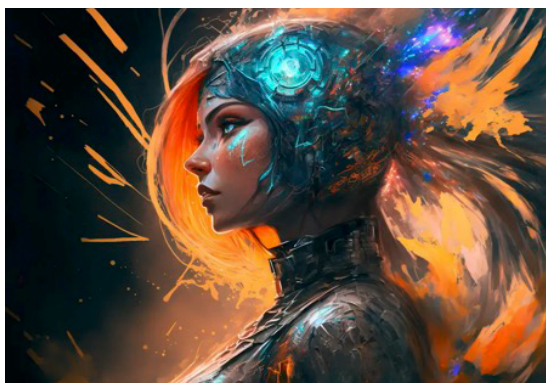


Image from a Freelancer.com AI art design contest

Stable Diffusion / Midjourney / Dall-E

AI image generation also gained popularity with the introduction of many different platforms which allow users to create images through text.

Twitter Spaces

While the audio conversation feature Twitter Spaces was introduced at the end of 2020, Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter in 2022 saw an uptick in the number of Twitter Spaces on the platform. In turn, this saw employers head to the platform to source freelance support in moderating and researching topic ideas for different Twitter Spaces sessions.

High Paying Projects

High-end Freelance Jobs paying over \$100k USD / year

When looking at high-end freelance jobs, there's an opportunity for freelancers to earn up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. The top categories include:

JOB	EARN PER MONTH	EARN PER YEAR
Design - UX Design, Website Design, Photoshop, Illustrator	\$6,315 - \$21,964	\$75,789 - \$263,571
Game Development - Game Design, Unity 3D	\$4,707 - \$21,541	\$56,493 - \$258,501
Coding - Java, HTML, CSS, PHP, Backend Development	\$8,437 - \$18,259	\$101,250 - \$219,108
Mobile App Development - iOS & Android App Development	\$4,707 - \$12,100	\$56,493 - \$145,200
Website Development - WordPress, PHP, MySQL, HTML	\$5,298 - \$11,826	\$63,586 - \$141,923

Data taken from high-value projects completed on Freelancer.com in 2022

According to our project data, the highest paying jobs per year on the platform are job relating to **Design**, particularly for UX Design projects. One high value design job paid a freelancer \$41,000 for 2 months of work to help design an eCommerce SaaS platform.

The second highest paying job type is **Game Development**, including skills in game design and Unity 3D. One freelancer earned over \$85,000 in 9 months over two game development projects on the platform. The most popular type of game design job is Android Game Development.

High Paying Projects

Coding comes in third, paying anywhere between \$8,437 - \$18,259 at the high-end of the platform. One coding job in 2022 paid a freelancer more than \$20,000 per month for an experienced Tailwind CSS developer to support a cloud-based holiday home rental company.

Mobile App Development, which requires skills in both iPhone and Android app development, pays anywhere from \$4,707 to \$12,100 per month when looking at the high paying jobs on the platform.

Finally, **Website Development**, which is also the most popular job on the [Freelancer.com](https://www.freelancer.com) platform, ranks as the fifth highest paying job. Freelancers are able to earn anywhere between \$5,298 to \$11,826 for Website Development jobs which require skills in mainly WordPress and PHP.

High Paying Side Hustles - Per Hour



Data taken from projects completed on Freelancer.com in 2022

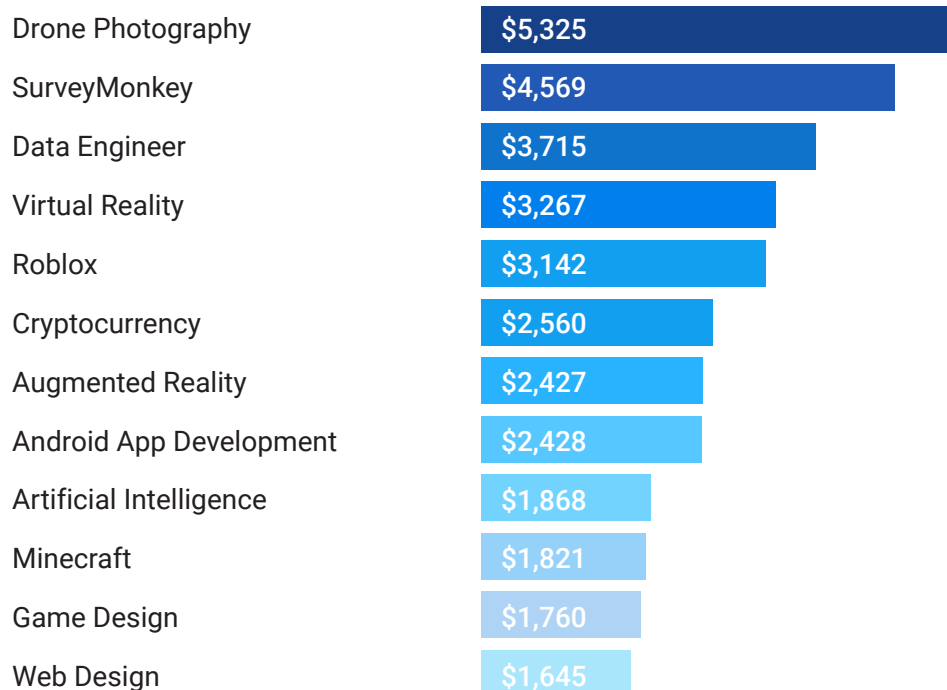
One of the highest paying jobs per hour on the platform is **Business Consulting**. This skill is sought out by all types of employers - from small businesses looking for business plan consulting all the way to multinational companies looking to hire consultants on an hourly basis. One national service provider paid a freelancer \$36,250 for a five month business consulting project. Similar jobs are available for **Online Coaches**.

Programming, we reported as the [fastest growing skills on the platform in Q4](#), can pay freelancers an average of \$58/hour.

High Paying Projects

Trending games, technologies and skills tend to also receive attention on [Freelancer.com](https://www.freelancer.com) as employers look to capitalize on the hype. In 2022, we saw many new trending technologies or topics featured in the list for some of the highest paying jobs per project. The list includes:

High Paying Trending Jobs on Freelancer.com



Average USD project value for skills with over 50 completed projects in 2022

High Paying Projects

For games such as **Roblox** and **Minecraft**, many employers turn to the platform to help them build things in or for the game. For example, in 2022 employers hired freelancers to building an entire adventure, fantasy game based on a children's book in Roblox. Other employers were looking for freelancers to create a paintball game, Roblox avatars and a skateboard tool that would let players skate around the game.

As for Minecraft, employers look to freelancers to help them with tasks such as building plugins, helping setup Minecraft multiplayer servers, and helping them complete the builds within servers.

The year also had quite a number of projects relating to the metaverse, seeing jobs for Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and game design offering some of the highest paying jobs on the platform.



Roblox (credit: parents.com)

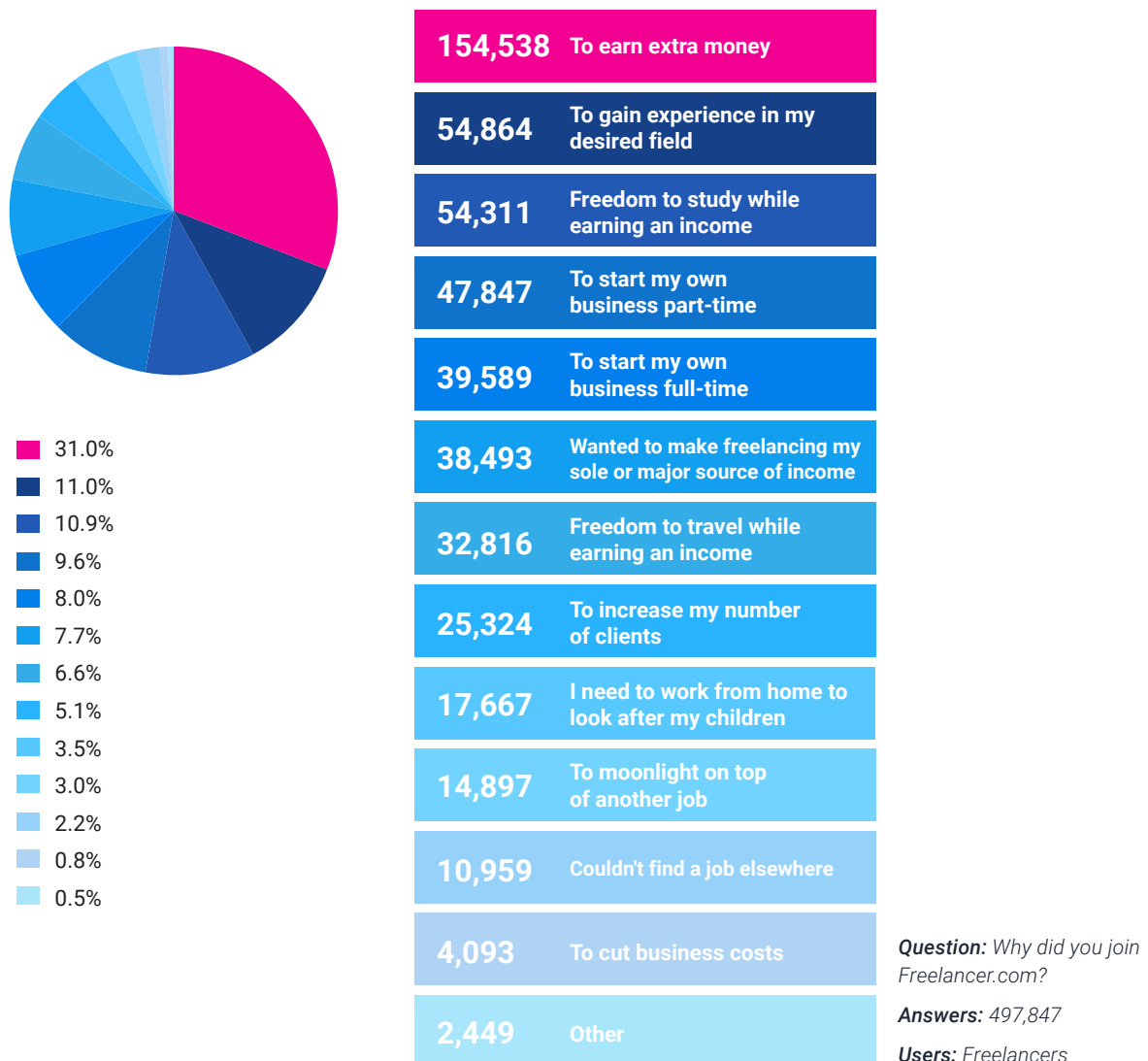


Minecraft (credit: familyzone.com)

Annual Survey Results

Why freelance? Almost half a million freelancers reveal their reason

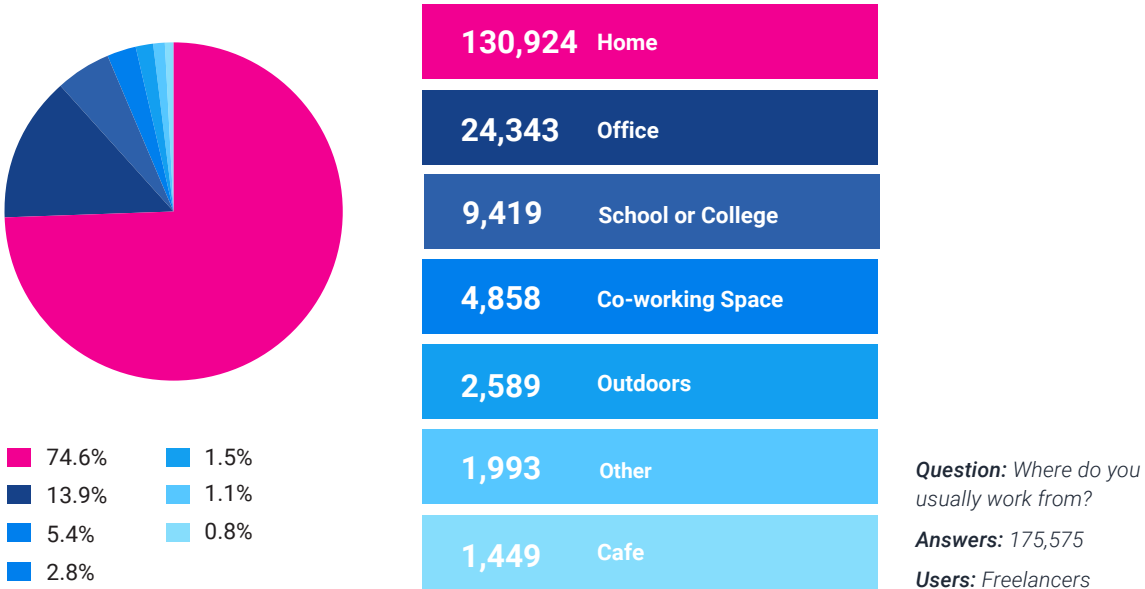
The main reason why freelancers decide to freelance is to earn money. One in ten freelancers join the platform to either gain experience or freelance while studying.



Annual Survey Results

Where are freelancers really working from?

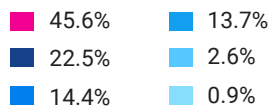
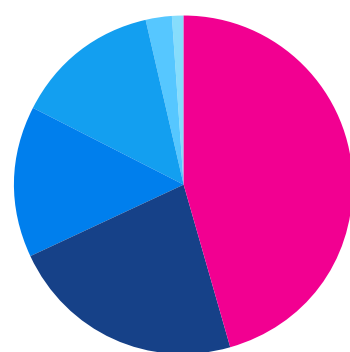
An overwhelming majority of freelancers continue to work from home. Despite the common misconception, working from the cafe and co-working spaces only makes up a very small percentage of where freelancers work from.



Annual Survey Results

How educated are freelancers?

When surveying more than 298,400 users on the platform, we found almost half currently hold a bachelor's degree.



136,342	Bachelor's Degree
67,207	High School
42,998	Master's Degree
41,037	Diploma Certificate
7,932	Other
2,896	Doctorate Degree (PhD)

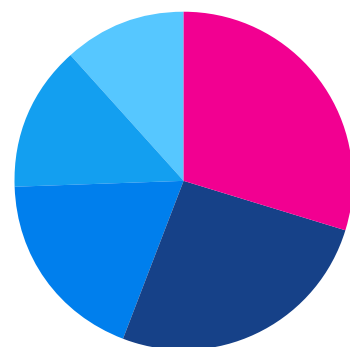
Question: What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

Answers: 298,412

Users: Freelancers, Employers

Who's freelancing?

As expected, freelancing professionals made up the highest percentage of freelancers on the platform, followed by students and those self employed. Interestingly, one in four of freelancers are either full-time or part-time employees.



70,351	Freelancer Professional
61,252	Student
43,953	Self employed
32,636	Full time Employee
27,374	Part time / Casual Employee

Question: What describes your employment status?

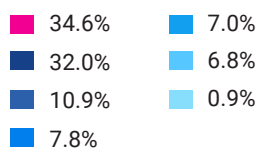
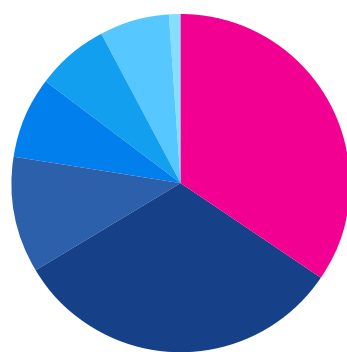
Answers: 235,566

Users: Freelancers

Annual Survey Results

What's holding entrepreneurs back from starting a new business?

One in three entrepreneurs aren't starting a business because they're either too comfortable or don't have enough money. This is the two main reasons revealed in a survey of more than 71,000 entrepreneurs on [Freelancer.com](https://www.freelancer.com). One in ten need more motivation to start, while others don't have a clear idea of what they're doing, don't have enough time or already their own business.



24,838	I'm too comfortable with what I'm doing
22,979	I don't have enough money
7,831	I need more motivation
5,560	I don't have a clear idea of what I want to do
4,991	I don't have enough time
4,869	I already run my own business
647	Other

Question: What is holding you back from starting a new business?

Answers: 71,715

Users: Freelancers, Employers

Annual Survey Results

What do business owners struggle with?

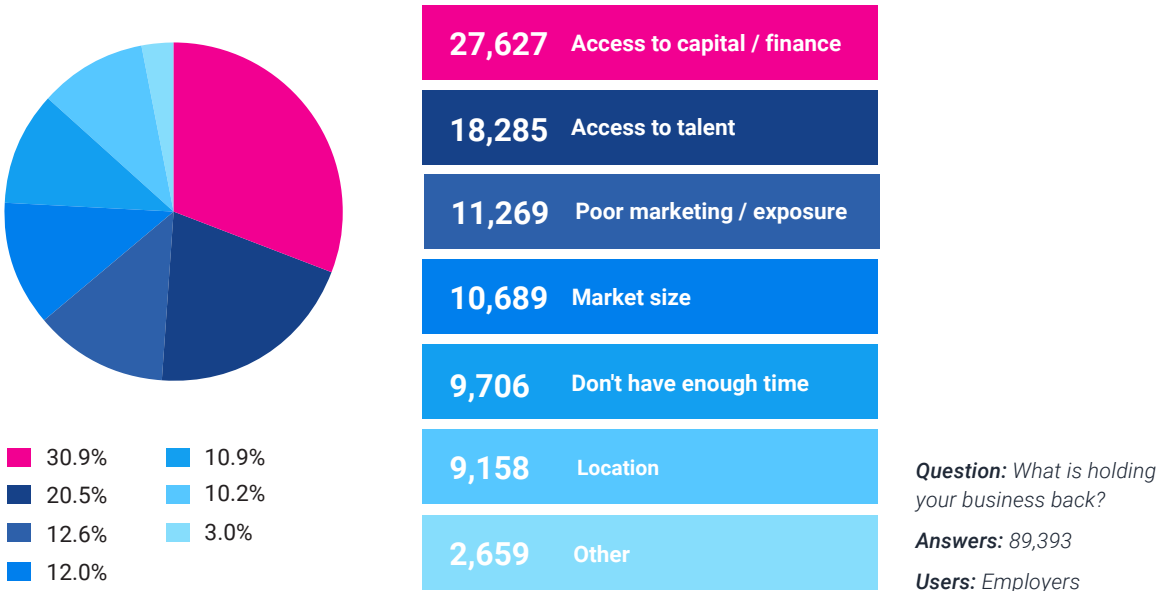
Almost one in three business owners struggle to create and stick to a long term business plan. Attracting or acquiring more customers is the second biggest thing business owners struggle with, following by hiring the right talent.



Annual Survey Results

What’s holding businesses back?

According to the survey of more than 89,000 employers, finance is the leading challenge for businesses. One in five businesses also suffer from access to talent, while more then one in eight are held back by poor marketing and exposure.



About Freelancer.com

Freelancer.com is the world's largest freelancing and crowdsourcing marketplace by total number of users and projects posted. More than 64 million registered users have posted over 22.3 million projects and contests to date in over 2,000 areas as diverse as website development, logo design, marketing, copywriting, astrophysics, aerospace engineering and manufacturing.

Freelancer owns Escrow.com, the leading provider of secure online payments and online transaction management for consumers and businesses on the Internet with over US\$5 billion in transactions secured.

Freelancer also owns Freightlancer & Loadshift, enterprise freight marketplaces with over 550 million kilometers of freight posted since inception. Freelancer Limited is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange under the ticker ASX:FLN and is quoted on OTCQX Best Market under the ticker FLNCF.

For more information, contact:

Press Inquiries

press@freelancer.com

Sebastián Siseles

Vice President, International

+1 415 801 2271

sebastian@freelancer.com

Marko Zitko

Communications Manager

+1 (650) 800-6863

+61 404 574 830

marko@freelancer.com