

How Freelancers Work In Canada

FREELANCING STUDY 2026



Freelancing Study 2026

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EXPERTS AND STUDY OVERVIEW

Study Overview

As shifting economic landscapes and rapid digital transformation redefine the modern workforce, independent contracting has solidified its role as a cornerstone of the Canadian economy.

The latest study from freelance.ca, “*How Freelancers Work in Canada*”, based on a survey of 403 participants, provides an updated analysis of the sector’s evolution.

By examining freelance demographics, finances, project landscape, emerging trends and systemic challenges facing independent professionals today, we offer critical intelligence for businesses, freelancers, and regulators navigating this flexible frontier.

Experts



Simon Gravel
CEO freelance.ca

Simon Gravel is the CEO of freelance.ca, a growing platform connecting freelancers with project providers in Canada. With over 20 years of experience in the international freelance ecosystem, he brings a unique strategic perspective to the evolving needs of Canadian businesses and independent professionals.



William Garneau
President NordAI

William Garneau is president and co-founder of NordAI, a Quebec-based firm specializing in applied artificial intelligence. He assists over thirty companies, from SMEs to large organizations, in the practical integration of AI into their operations. He is also co-founder of Manni, a transcription platform optimized for Quebec French, and sits on the board of directors of the Greater Levis Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

DEMOGRAPHICS

FREELANCING STUDY 2026



DEMOGRAPHICS

Freelancers are primarily located in economic hubs.

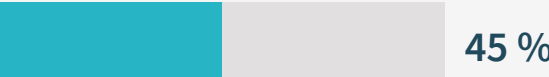
Gender

Gender distribution among freelancers

Male ♂



Female ♀



*Information for 'Other' is omitted due to insufficient number of cases.

Age

Age distribution among freelancers

Less than 20 years 0% 40 - 49 years 29%

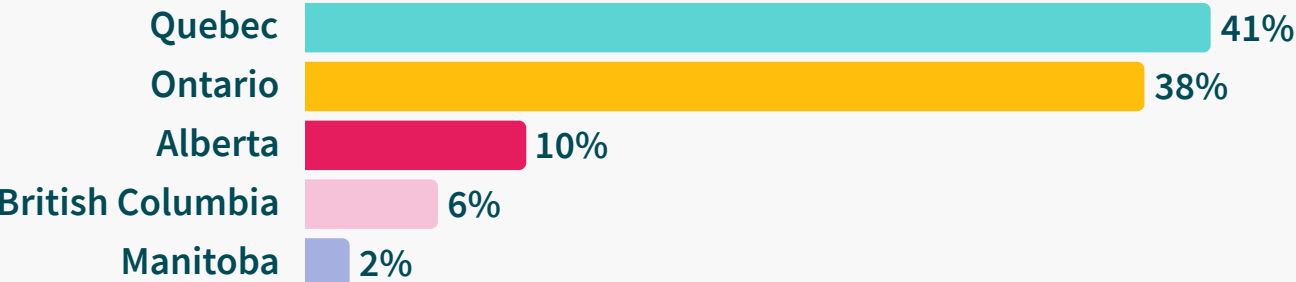
20 - 29 years 8% 50 - 59 years 25%

30 - 39 years 26% 60 years and more 12%

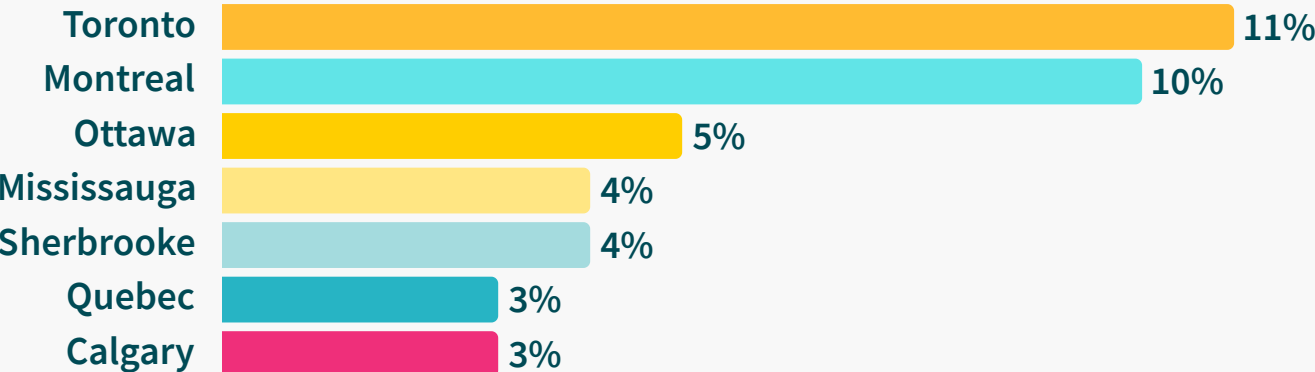
Location

Freelancers top location throughout Canada

Provinces



Cities

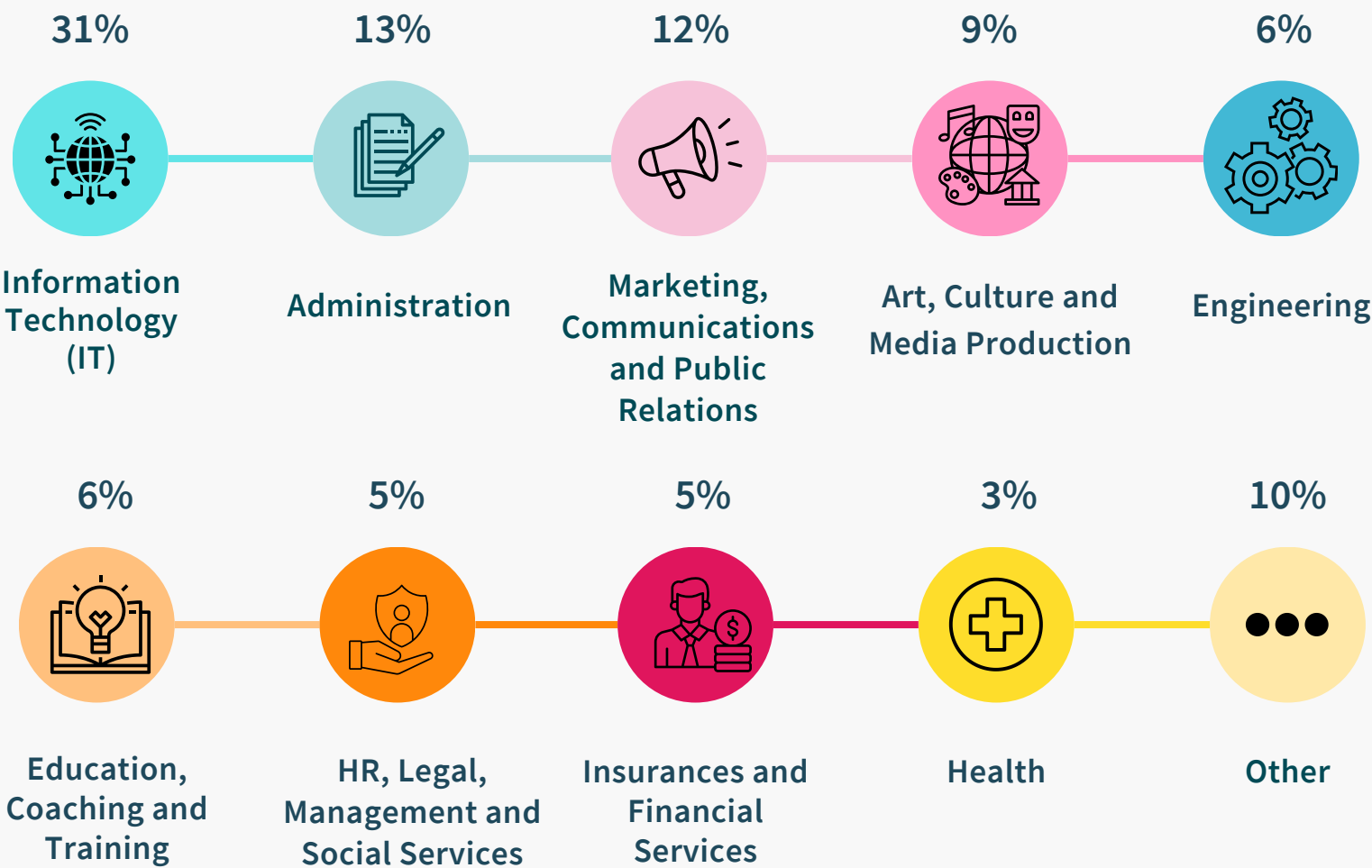


DEMOGRAPHICS

Women are predominant in creative and human centered fields, while men are more active in technical fields.

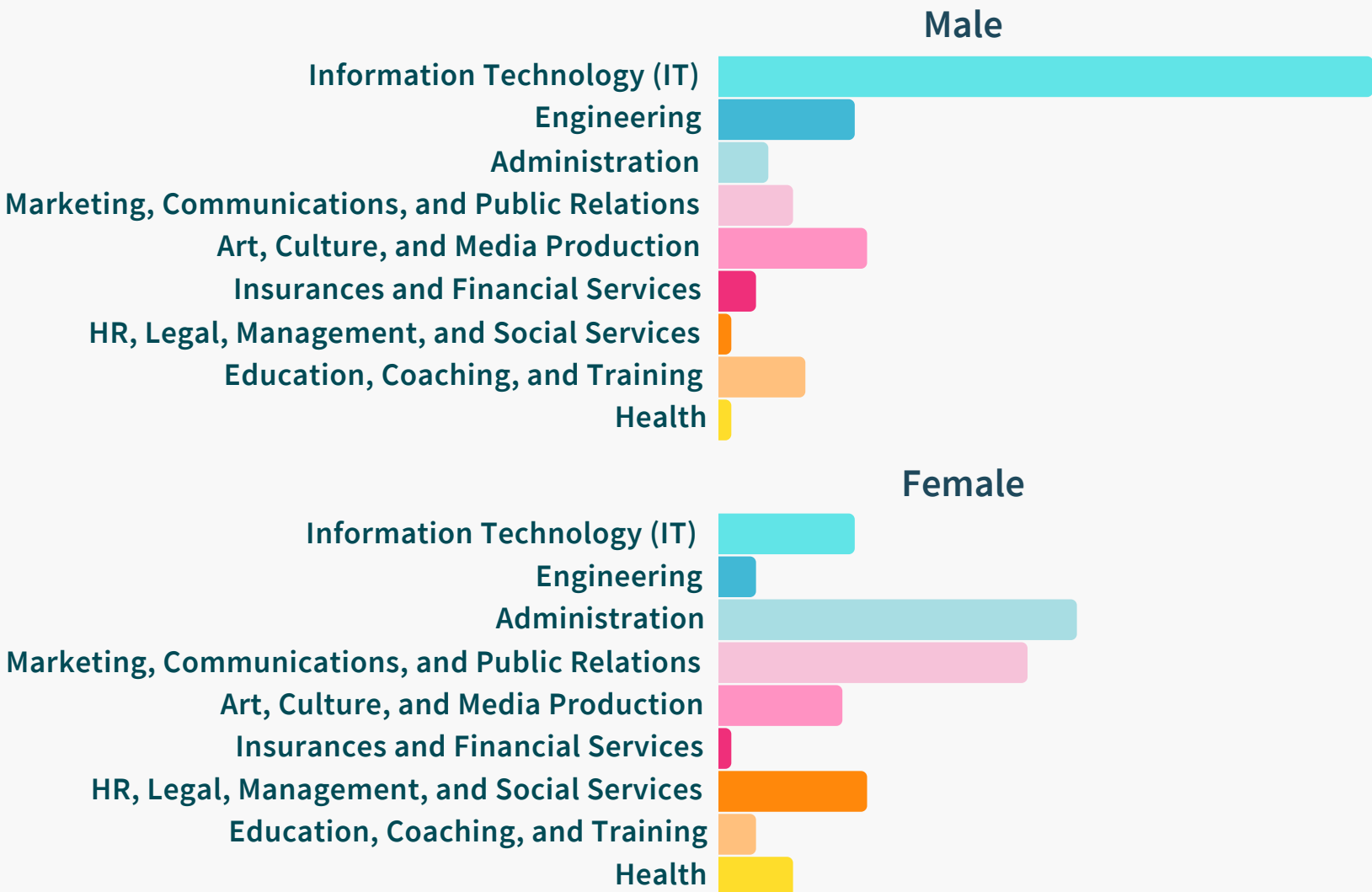
Expertise Field

Freelancers are mostly active in IT, followed by administration and marketing.



Industries by Gender

Industries distribution by gender

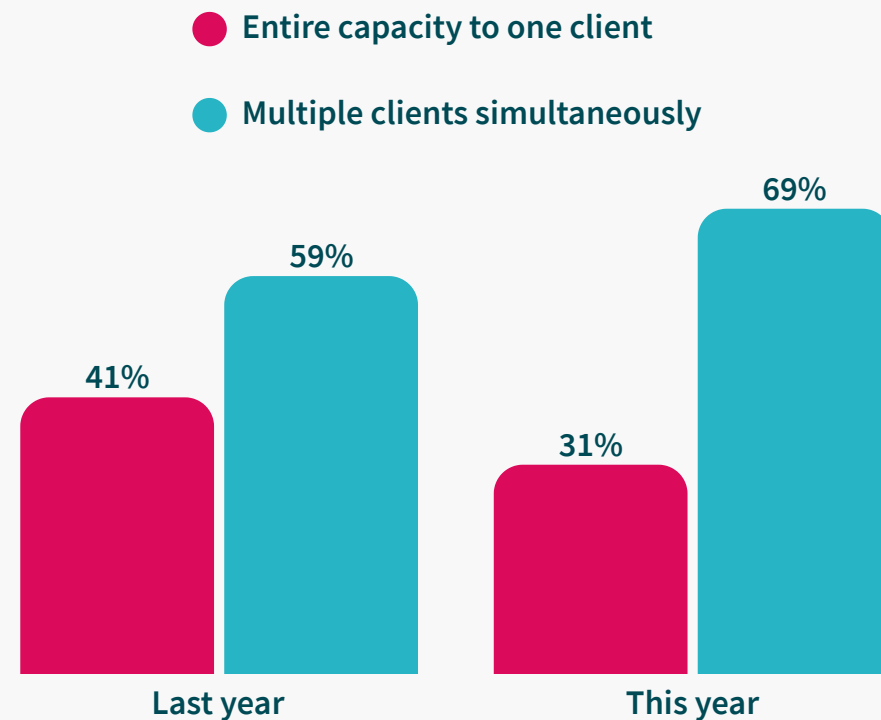


DEMOGRAPHICS

Even more freelancers than last year work with multiple clients simultaneously.

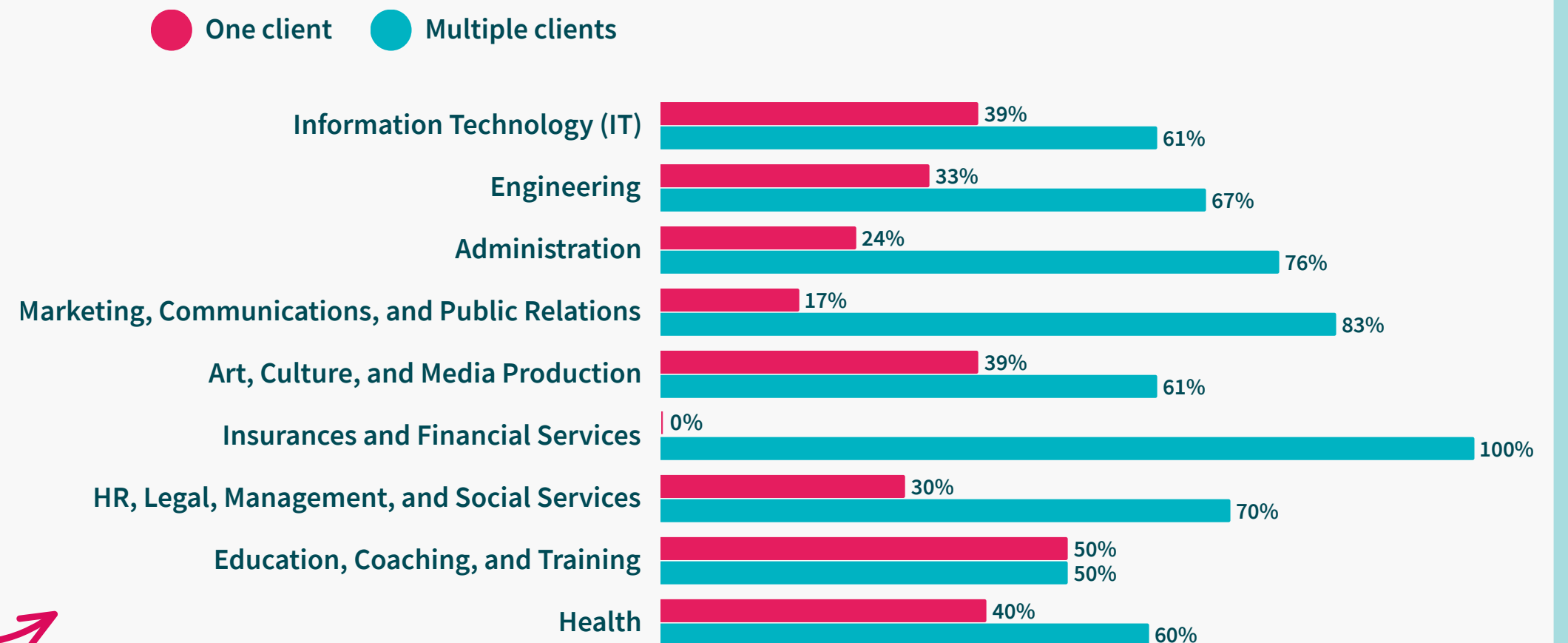
Clients Capacity

Freelancers client capacity



Preference by Industry

Preferences by industry regarding the number of clients simultaneously



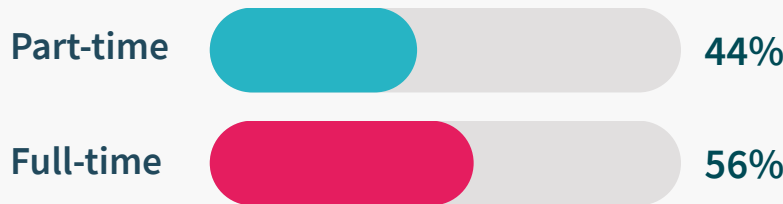
Compared to last year, freelancers tend to take on more clients at a time, particularly in administration and marketing. This suggests that freelancers are seeking greater diversity.

DEMOGRAPHICS

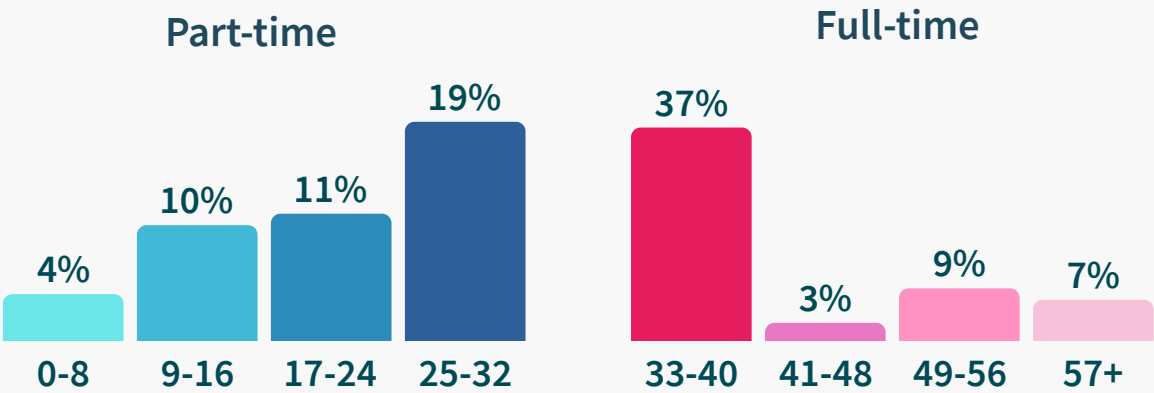
Canadian freelancers work an average of 33 hours per week.

Main and Secondary Employment

Time invested in freelance work



Average Freelance Hours per Week



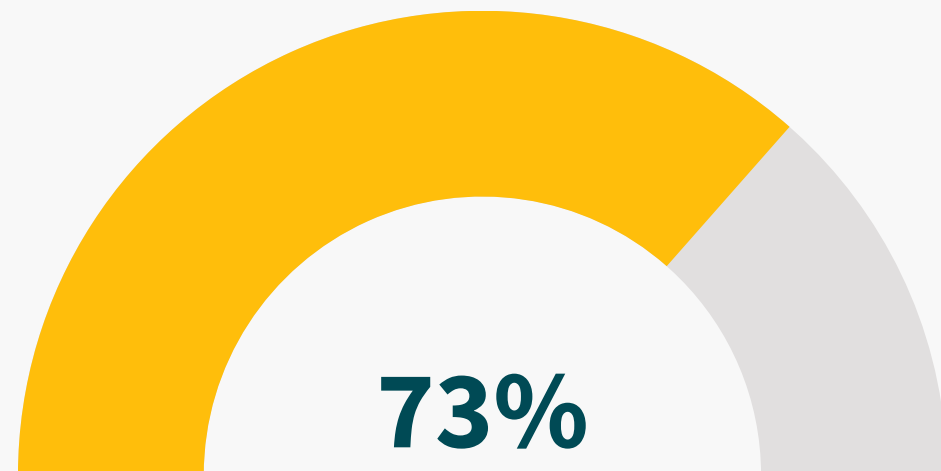
Average Weekly Working Hours

Industry	Part-Time	Full-Time	All
Information Technology (IT)	20h	44h	40h
Engineering	20h	41h	34h
Administration	25h	44h	32h
Marketing, Communications, and Public Relations	19h	45h	34h
Art, Culture, and Media Production	21h	47h	34h
Insurances and Financial Services	28h	45h	36h
HR, Legal, Management, and Social Services	23h	40h	26h
Education, Coaching, and Training	19h	40h	27h
Health	18h	47h	30h
All Freelancers	20h	43h	33h

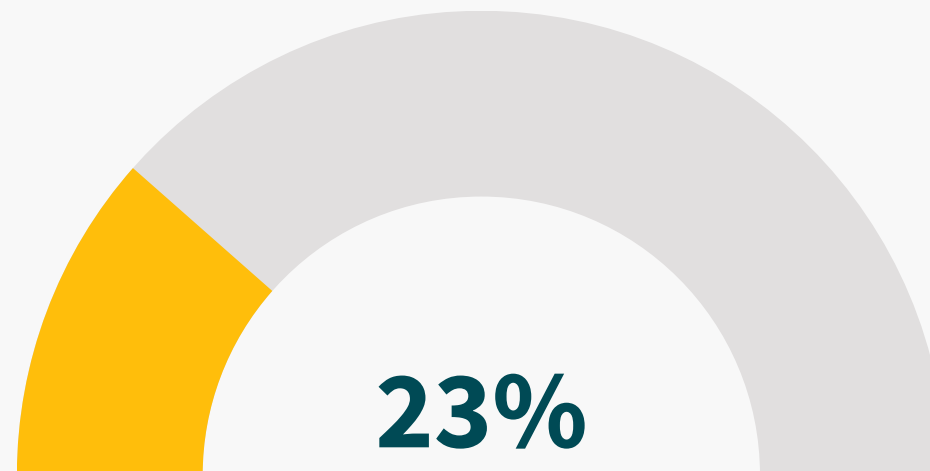
DEMOGRAPHICS

Freelancers show a strong preference for remote work.

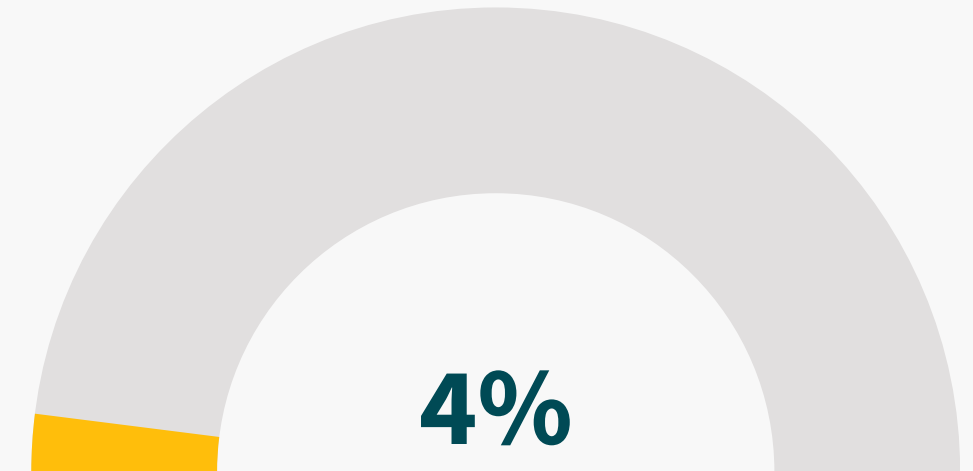
Remote



Hybrid



On Site

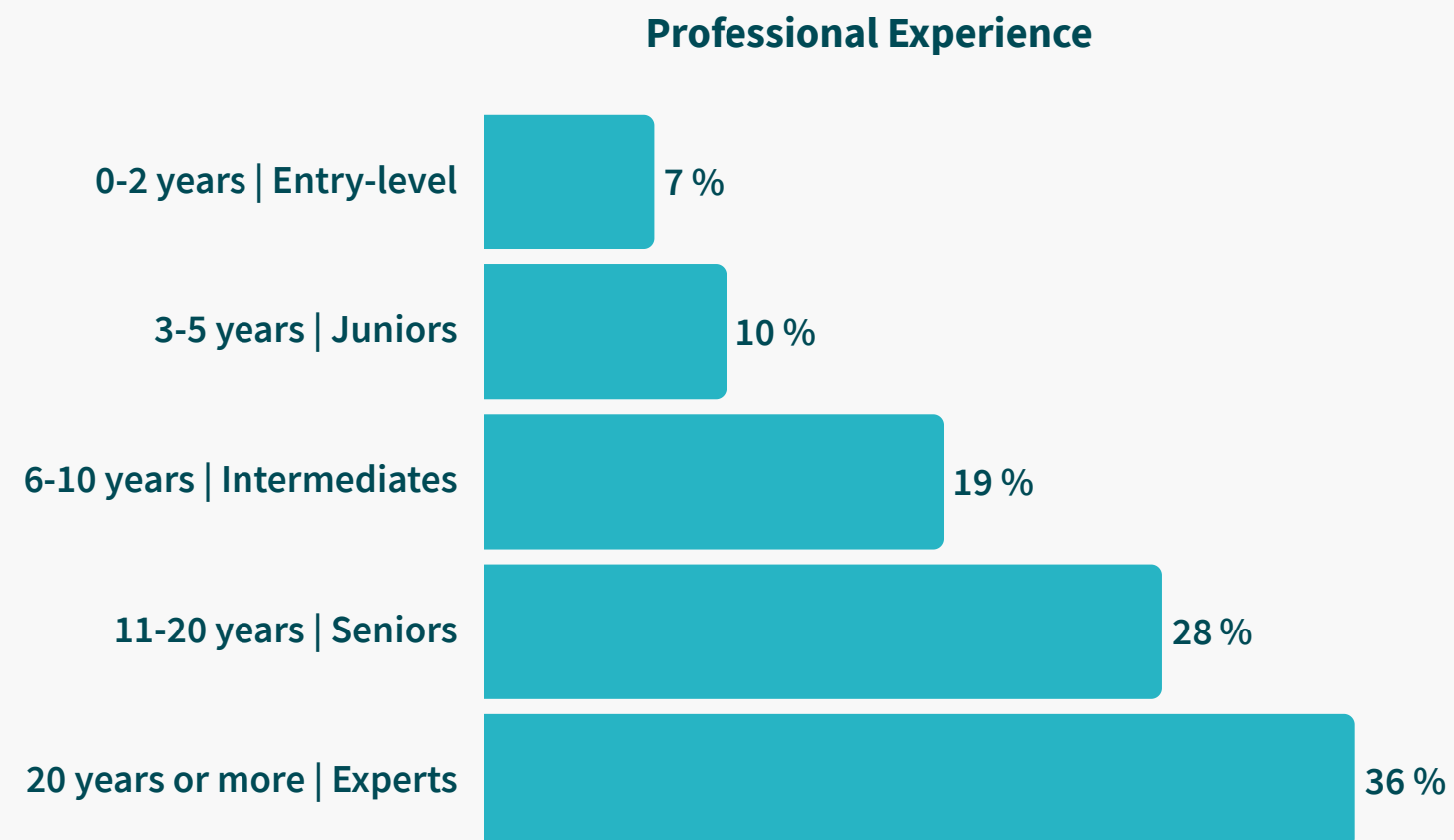


Compared to last year, the proportion of freelancers working remotely or hybrid increased while the proportion working on-site decreased (11% to 4%). This suggest that even more freelancers favor working from home than before.

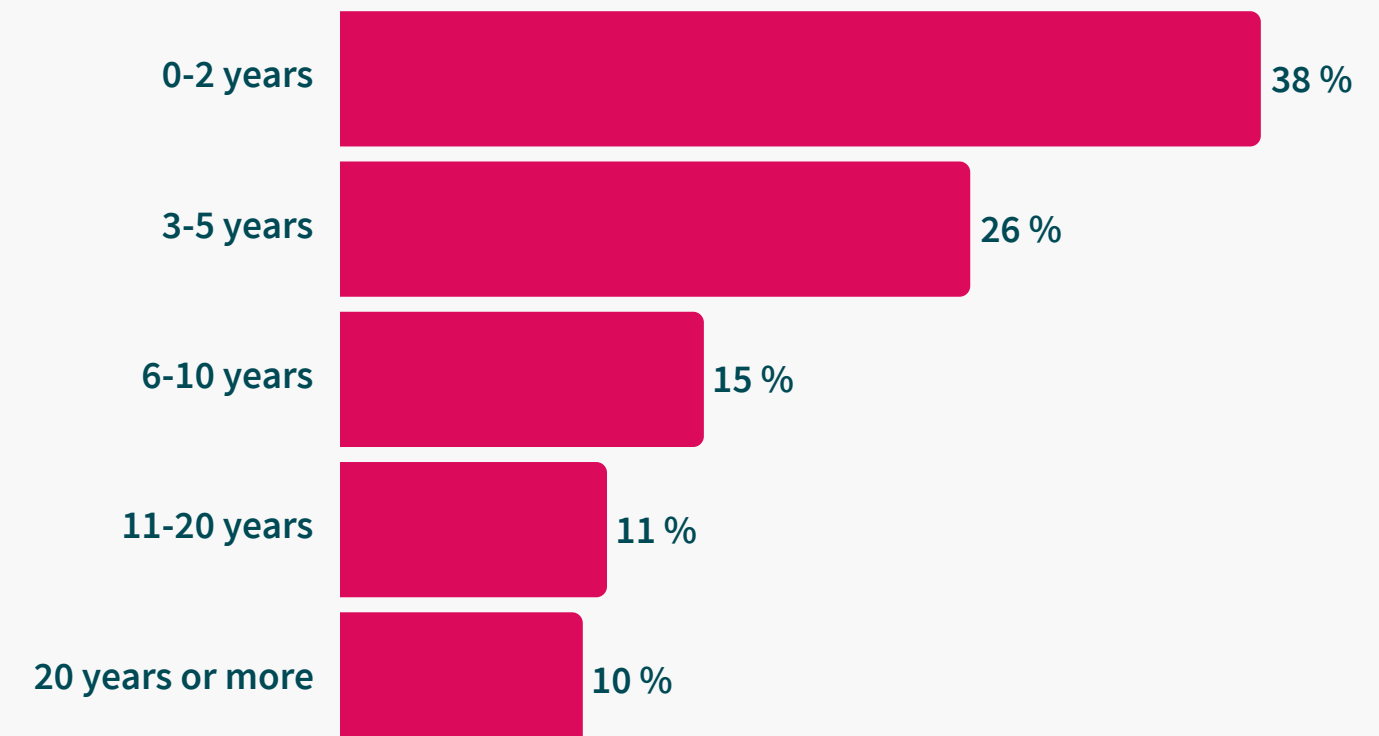
DEMOGRAPHICS

Freelancing usually begins after several years of professional experience. Only a few start directly as entry level.

Professional Experience



Freelancing Experience

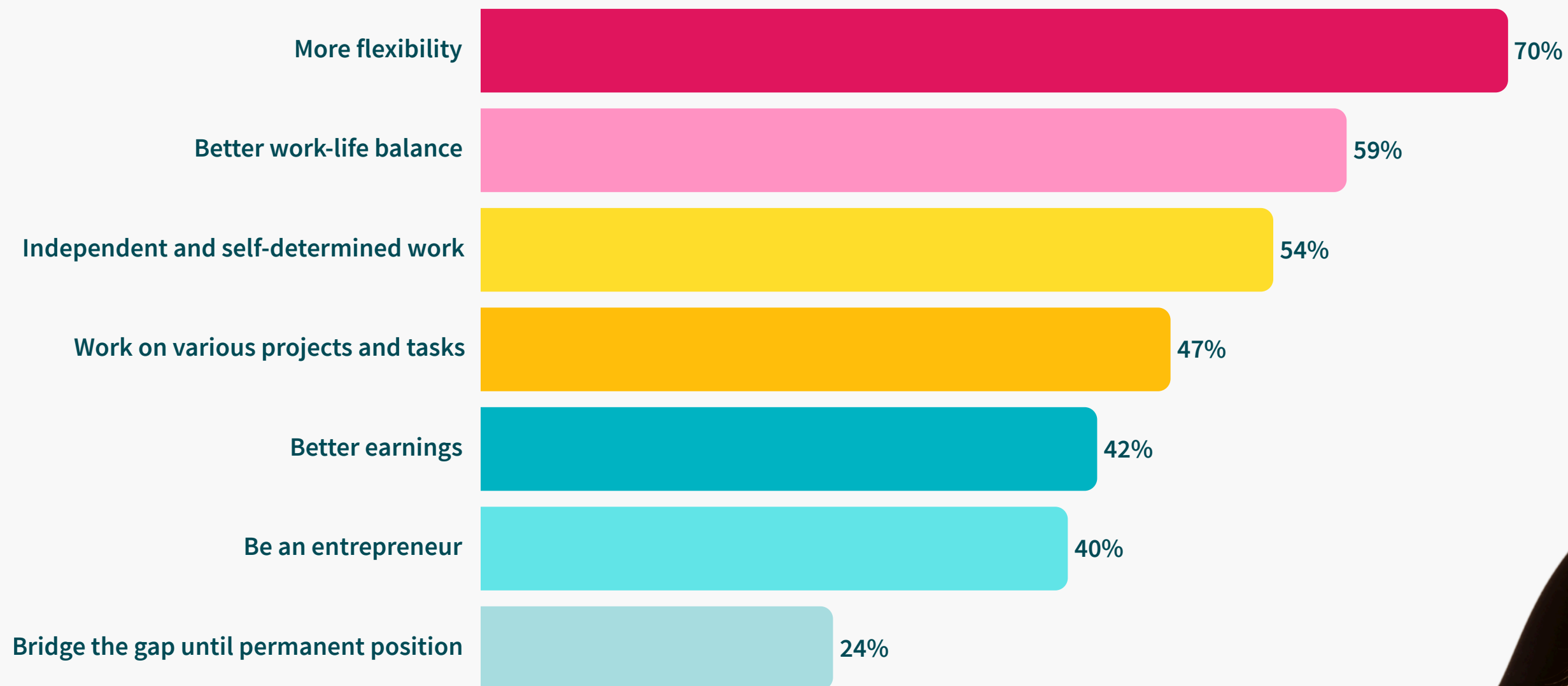


36% of the freelancers surveyed have 20 years of professional experience or more, but only 10% have been self-employed for that long.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The main reasons for self-employment are more flexibility, a better work-life balance and self-determined work.

Reasons to Become a Freelancer



DEMOGRAPHICS

FINANCES

PROJECT ACQUISITION

TRENDS & CHALLENGES

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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FINANCES

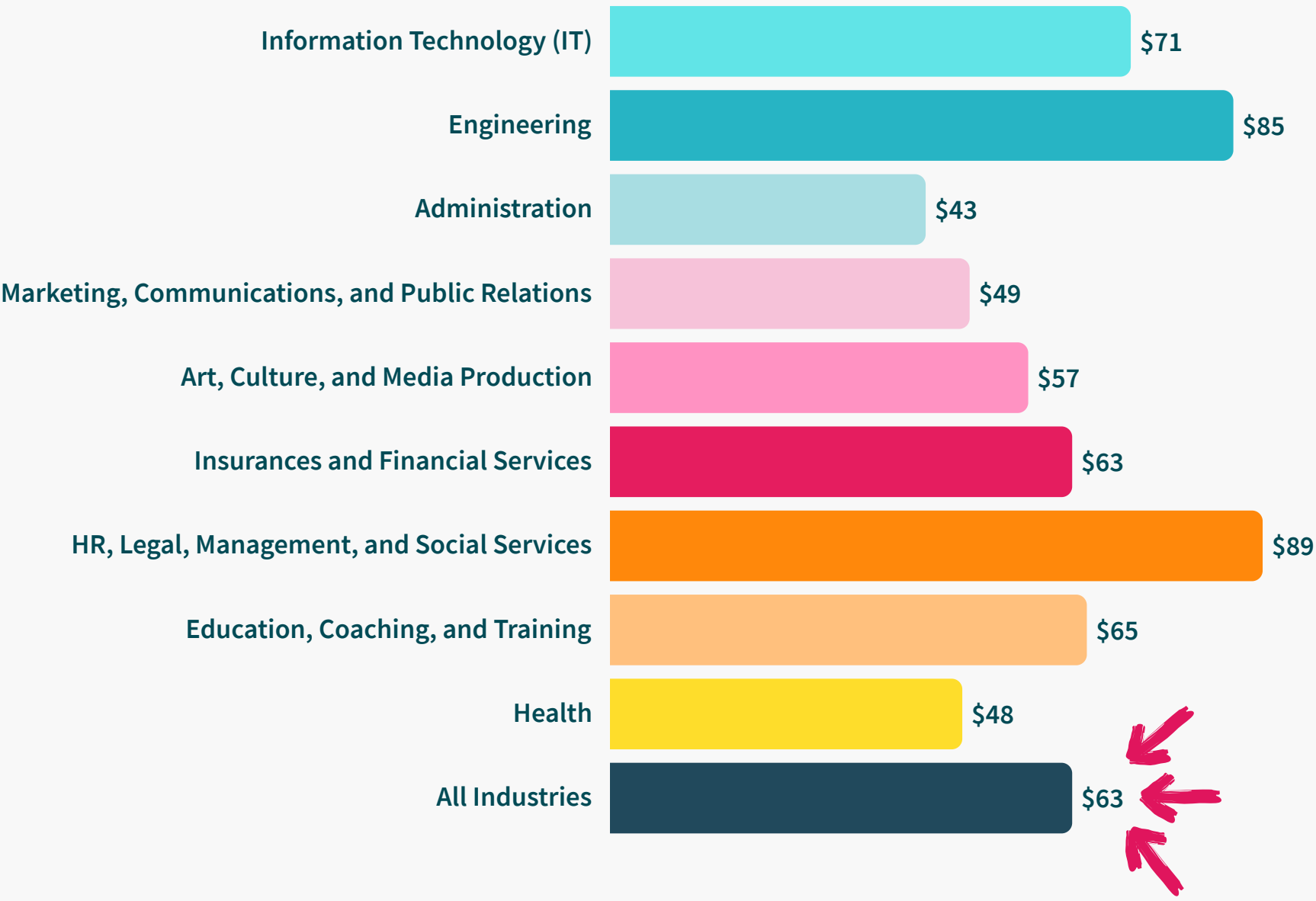
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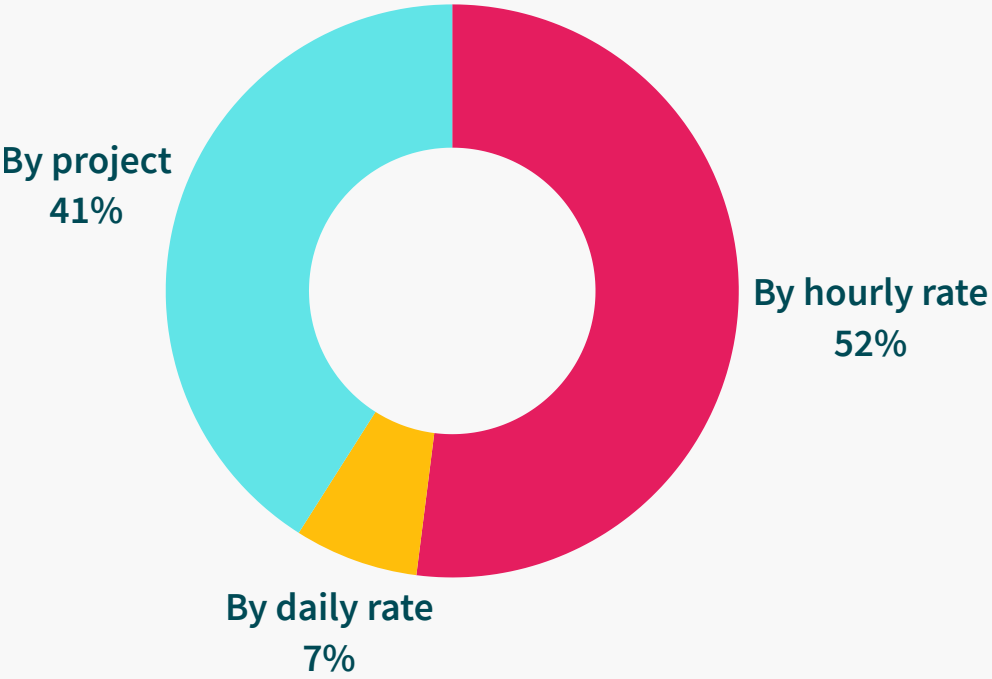
FINANCES

The average hourly rate across all industries is \$63.

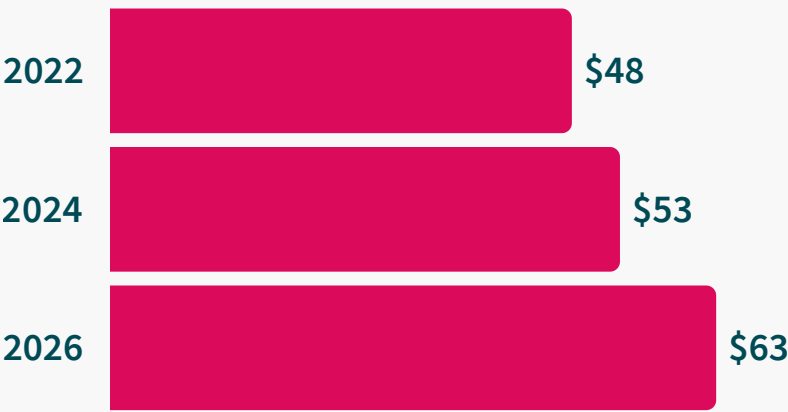
Hourly Rates by Industries



Billing Method



Rates Increase Over Years

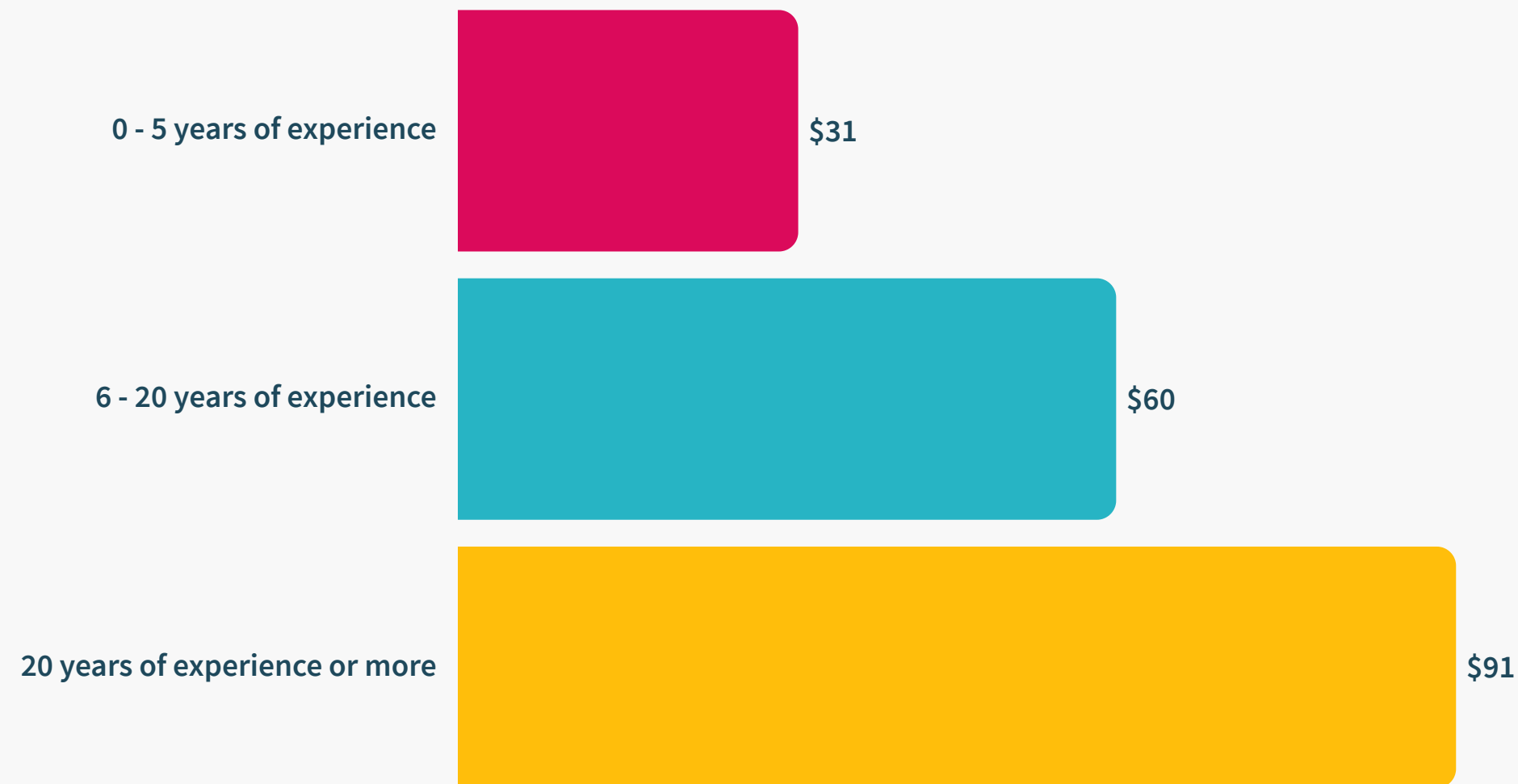


Over the last four years, hourly rates have increased by 31%. This represents an average increase of around 7% per year.

FINANCES

With increased professional experience also come an increased hourly rate.

Rates Based on Experience



Hourly Rates Highly Depends on Professional Experience

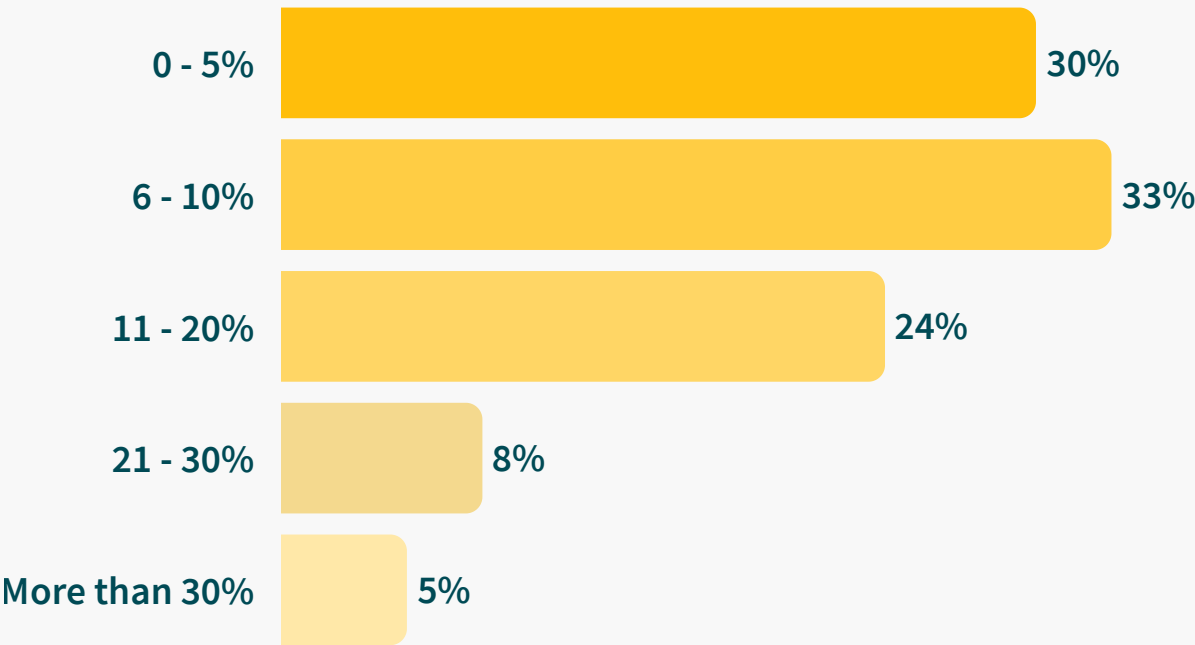
As professional experience grows, hourly rates also increase. Freelancers with less than 5 years of experience are paid an average of \$31 per hour, while expert freelancers are paid an average of \$91 per hour.

FINANCES

Most freelancers are not willing to negotiate more than 10% of their rate. The criteria with the most impact on negotiation are the tasks themselves and the contract length.

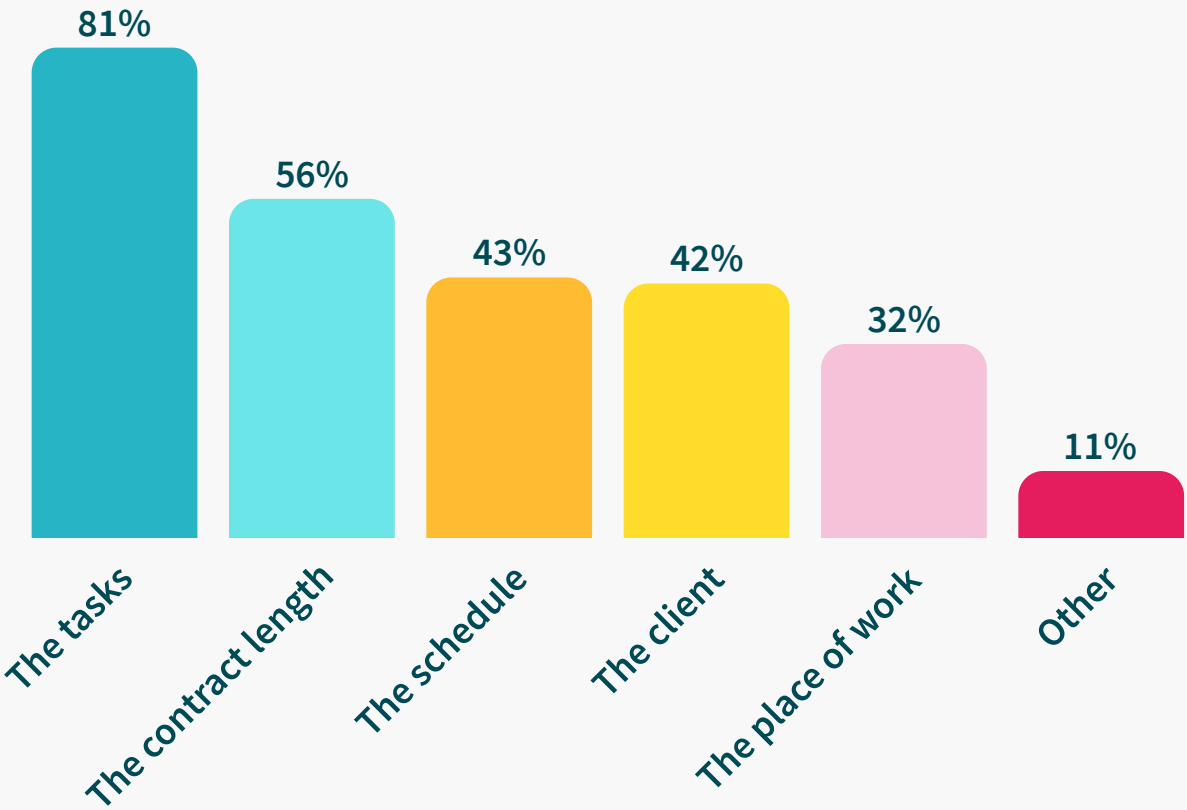
Rate Negotiation

Rates percentage willing to negotiate



Rates Variation

Criteria influencing a rate variation

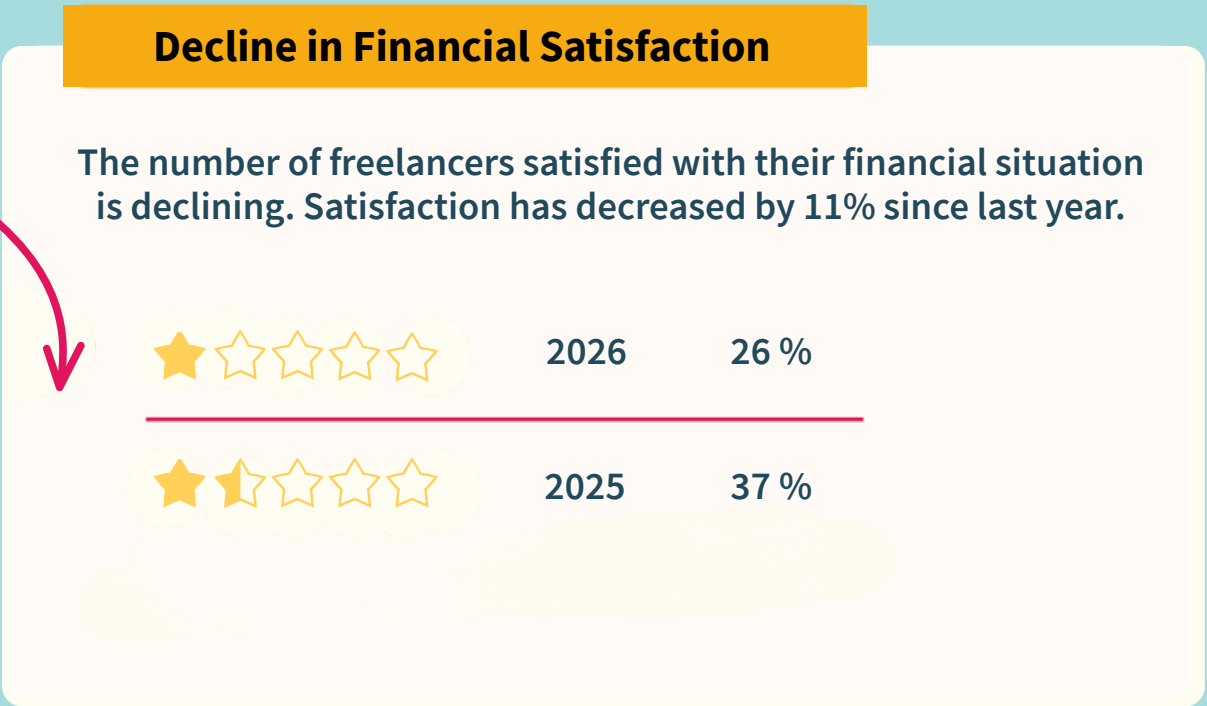
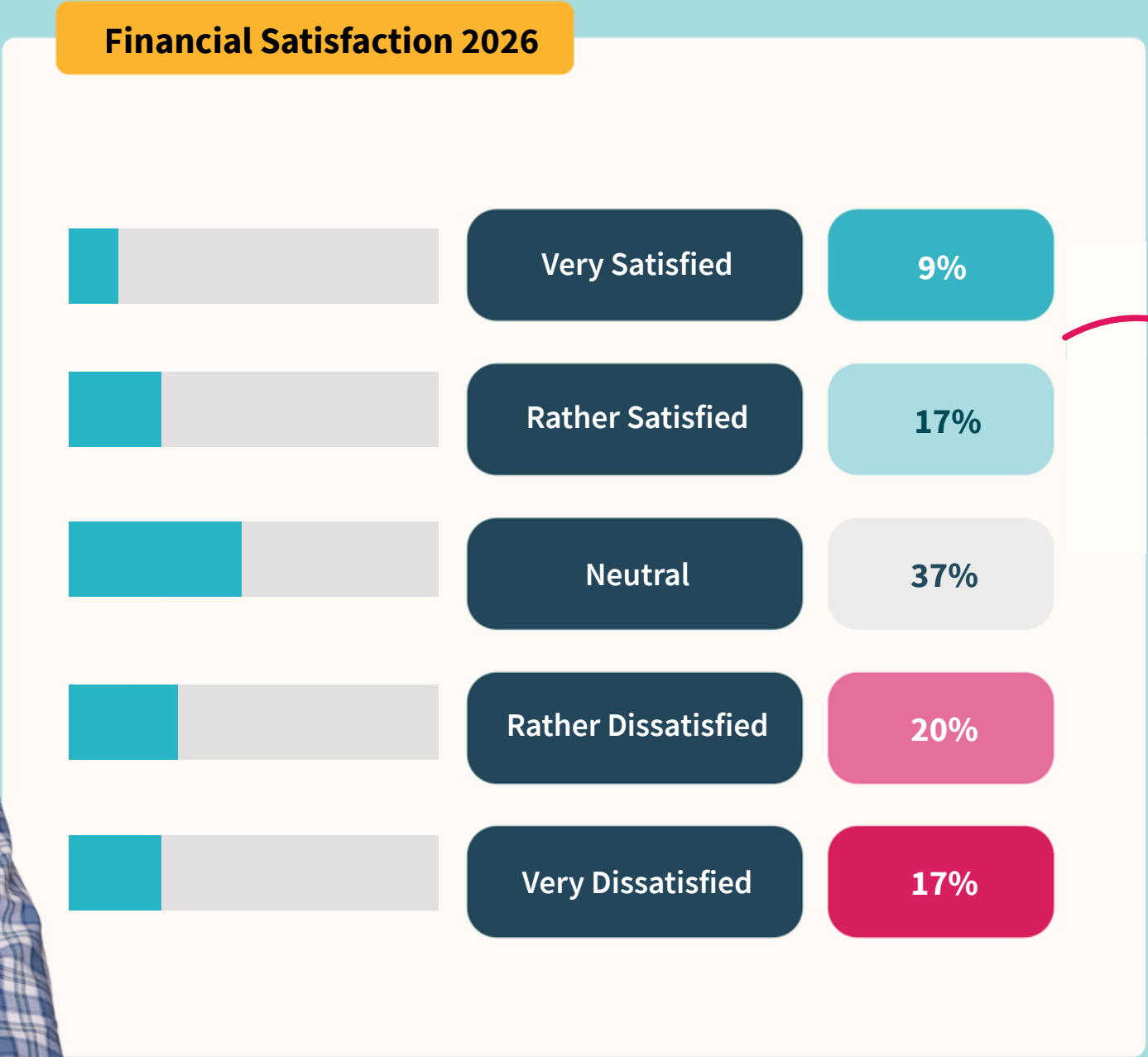


Economic Situation

The economic situation was cited multiple times in the other criteria influencing rate variation. This suggests that the current economic situation in Canada directly influences freelancers' revenue.

FINANCES

One in four respondents is satisfied with their financial situation as a freelancer. Part-time freelancers are particularly critical of their financial situation with only 24% being satisfied.



DEMOGRAPHICS

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PROJECT ACQUISITION

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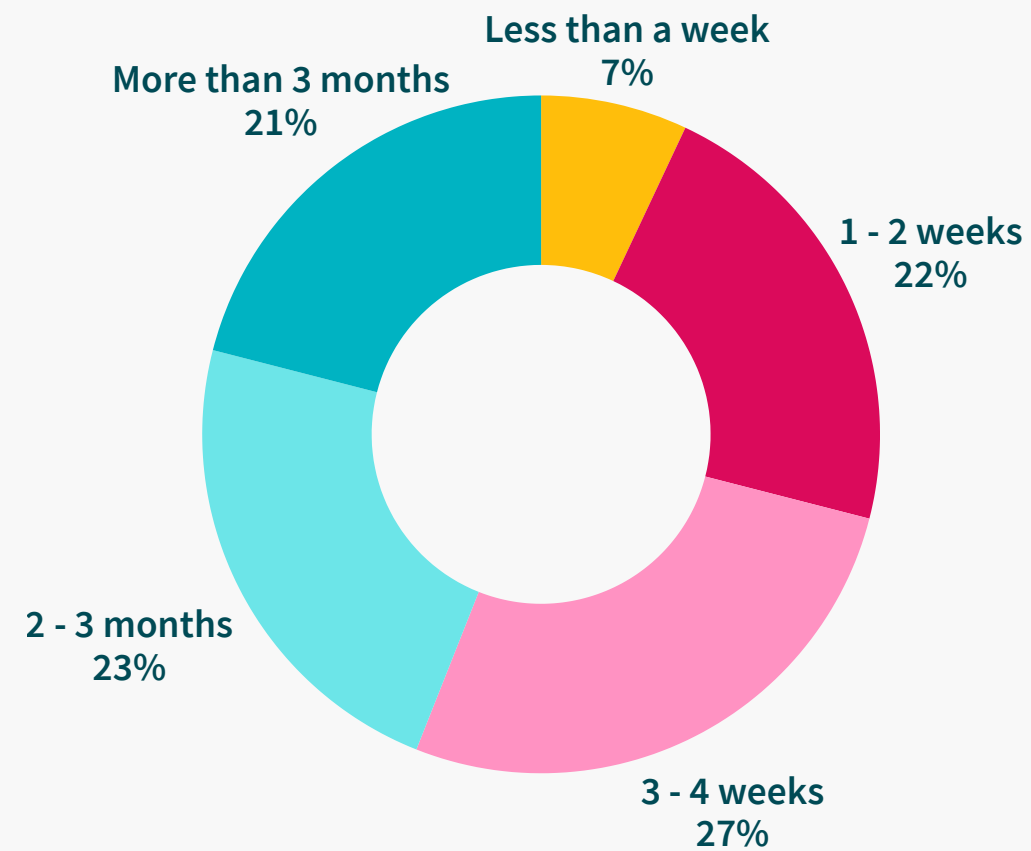


PROJECT ACQUISITION

56% of freelancers can find a project within a month.

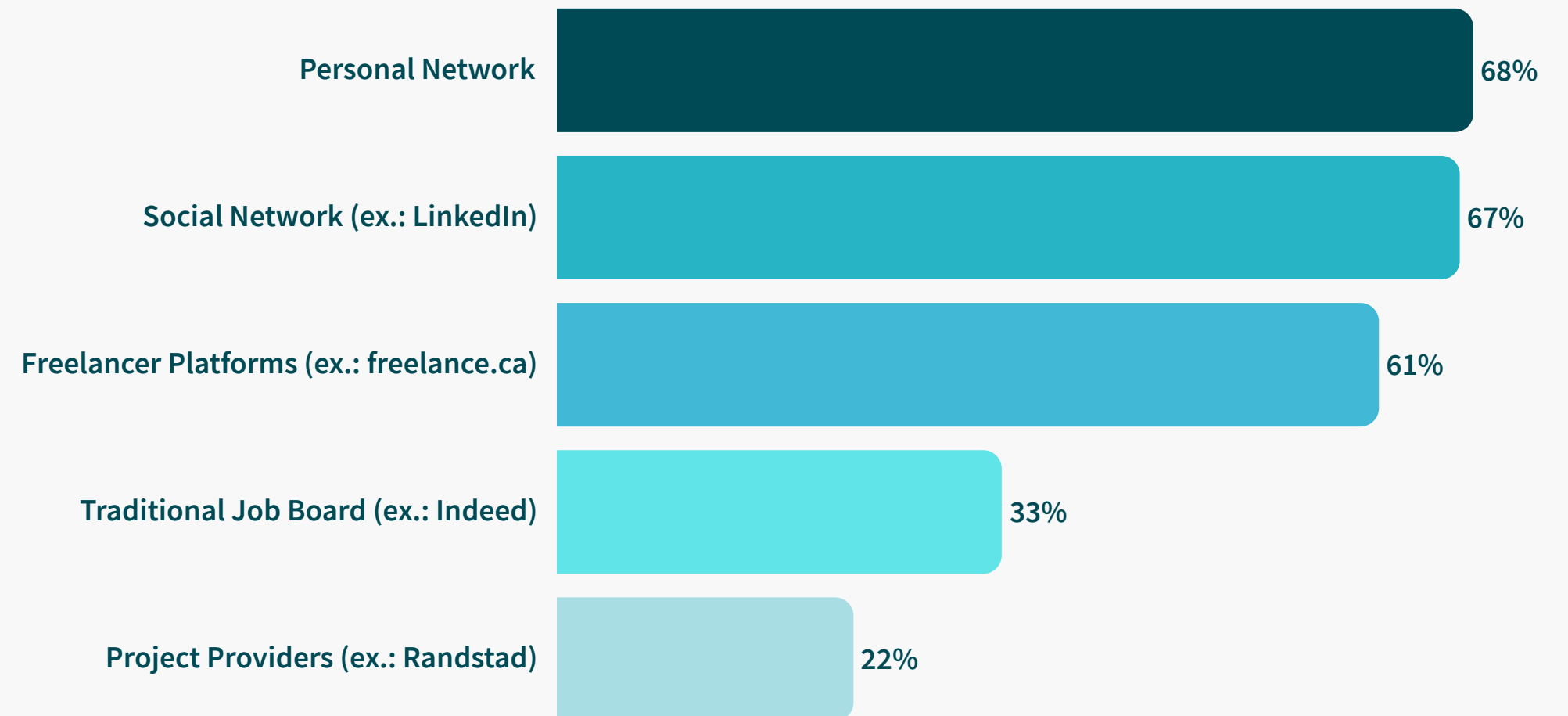
Time for Project Acquisition

Time needed to find a new project



Channels

Channels used for project acquisition

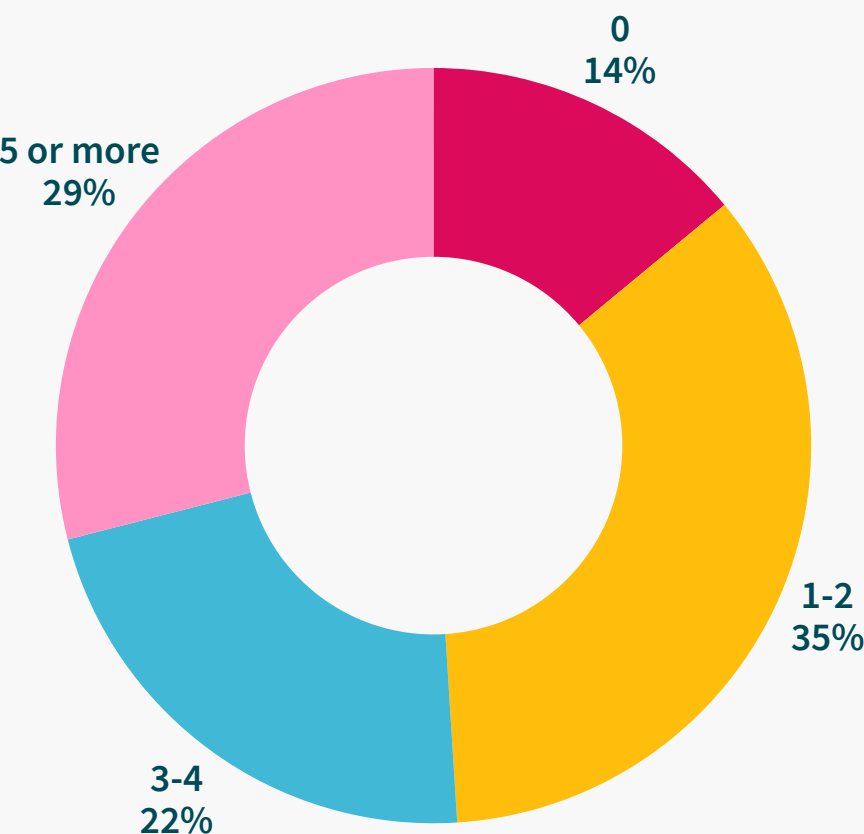


PROJECT ACQUISITION

A majority of freelancers (51%) worked on three projects or more in the last 12 months.

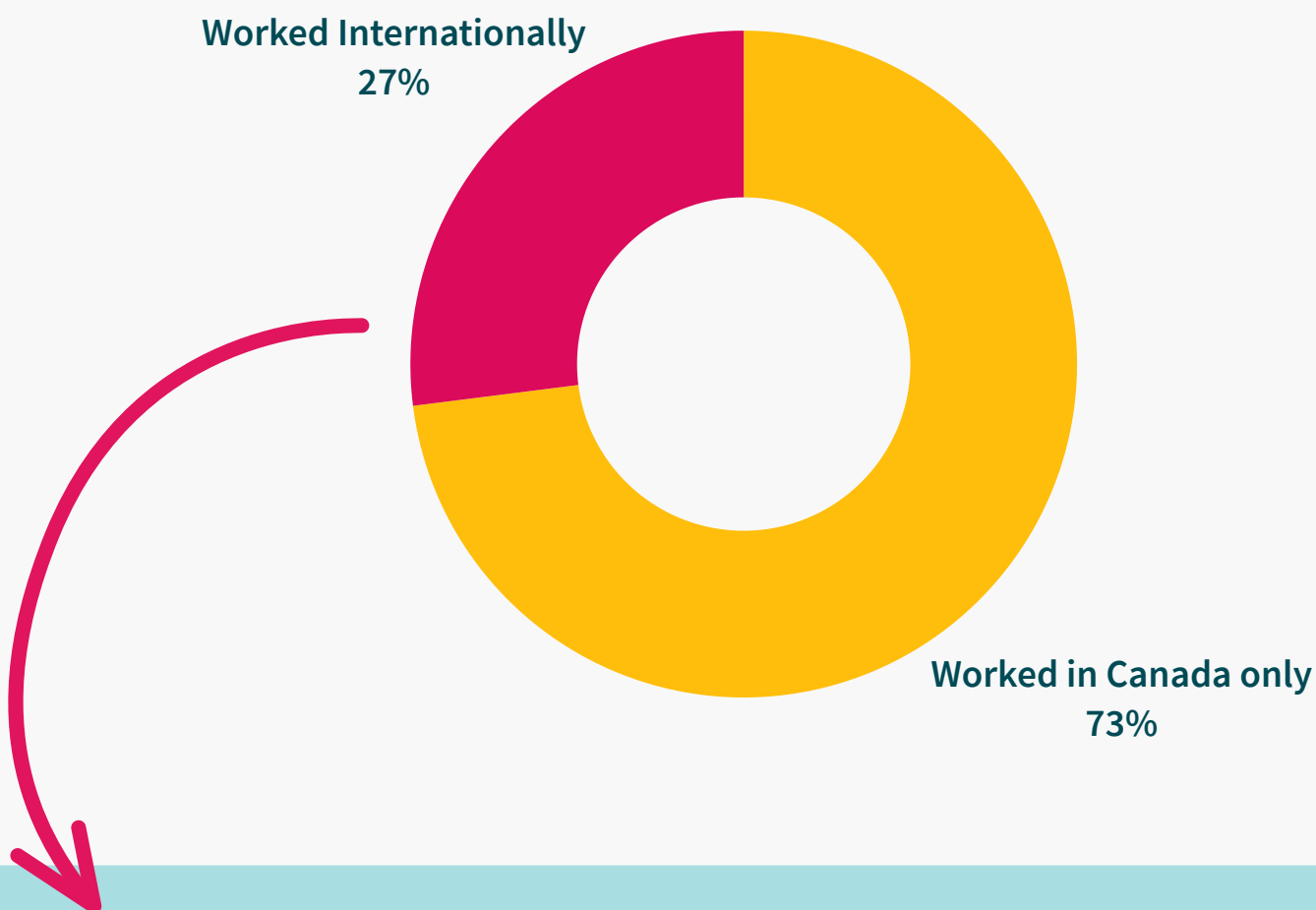
Number of Projects

Number of projects completed by freelancers in the last 12 months



International

Canadian freelancers worked mostly within Canada in the last 12 months



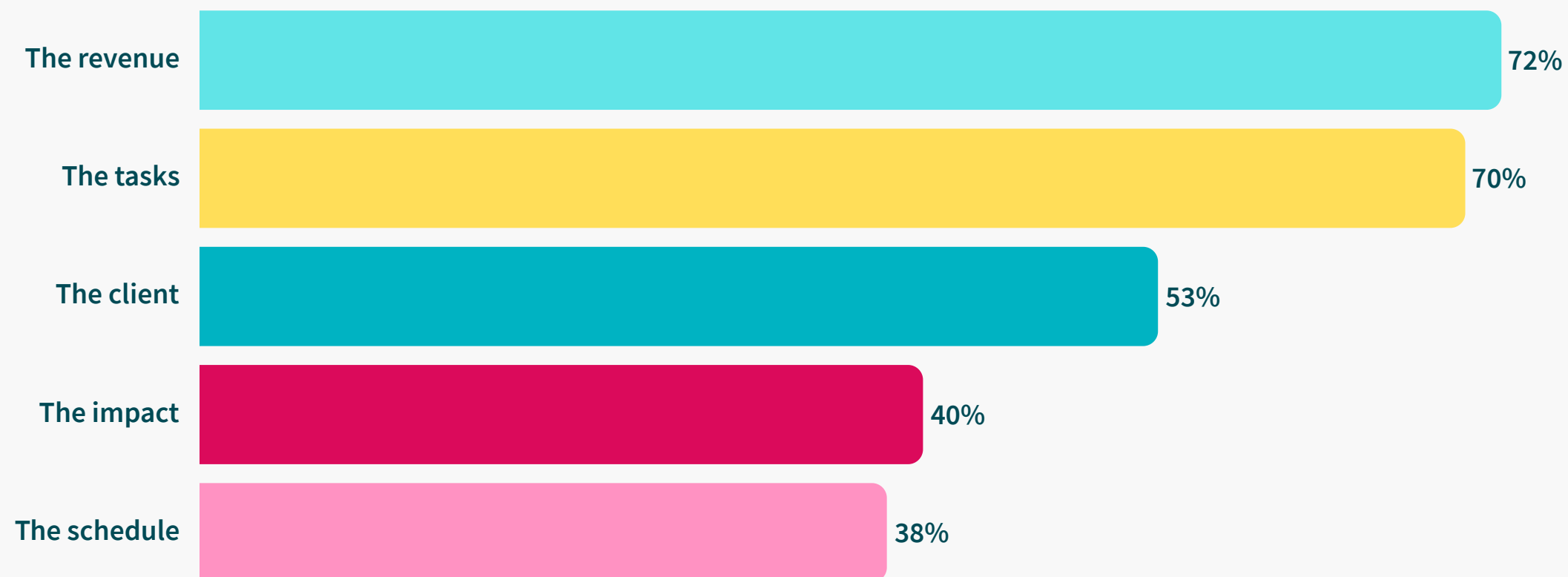
42% of Canadian freelancers working internationally worked in the United States.

PROJECT ACQUISITION

Revenue and tasks drive freelancers' project choices.

Motivation

Key motivators for accepting projects



Last Year Motivators

Revenue and impact are more important to freelancers this year than they were last year (66% and 33% respectively).

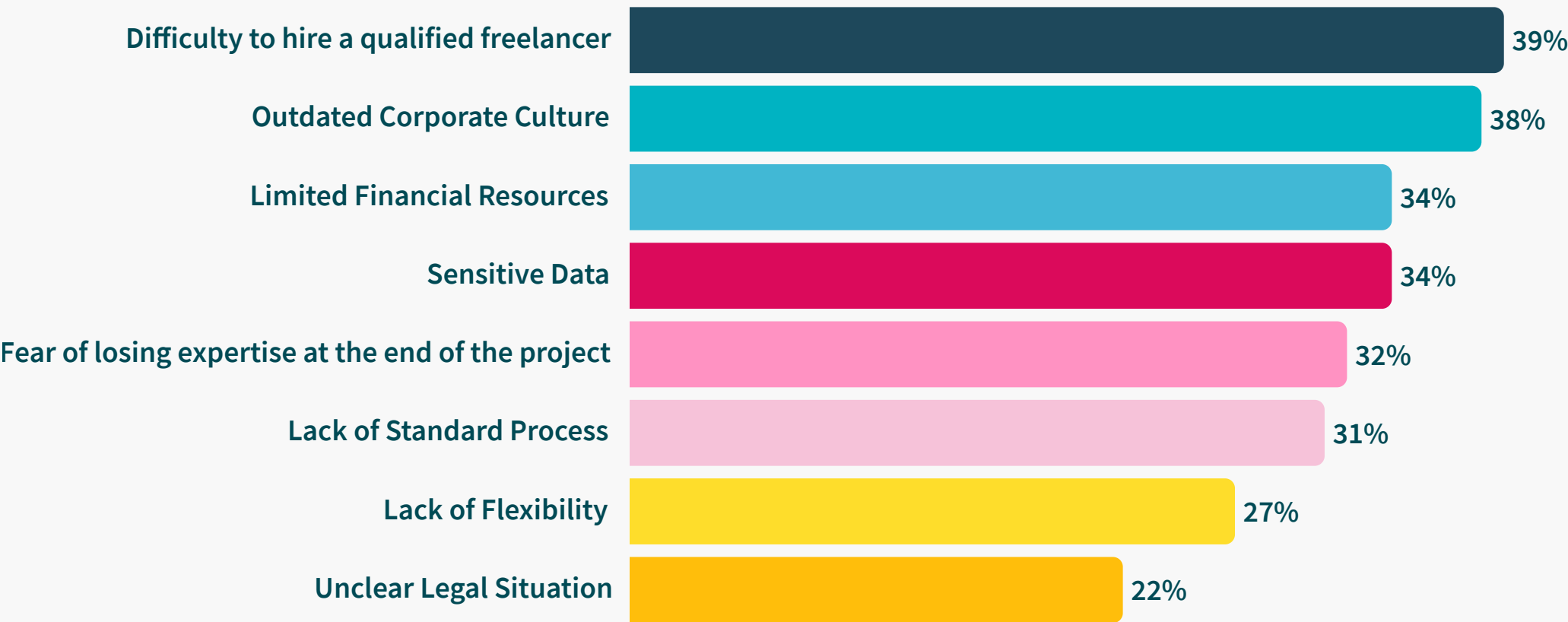


PROJECT ACQUISITION

Freelancers identify outdated corporate culture and difficulty hiring qualified freelancers as key barriers to collaboration.

Obstacles for Collaboration

Freelancers' opinion about barriers preventing companies from collaborating with them

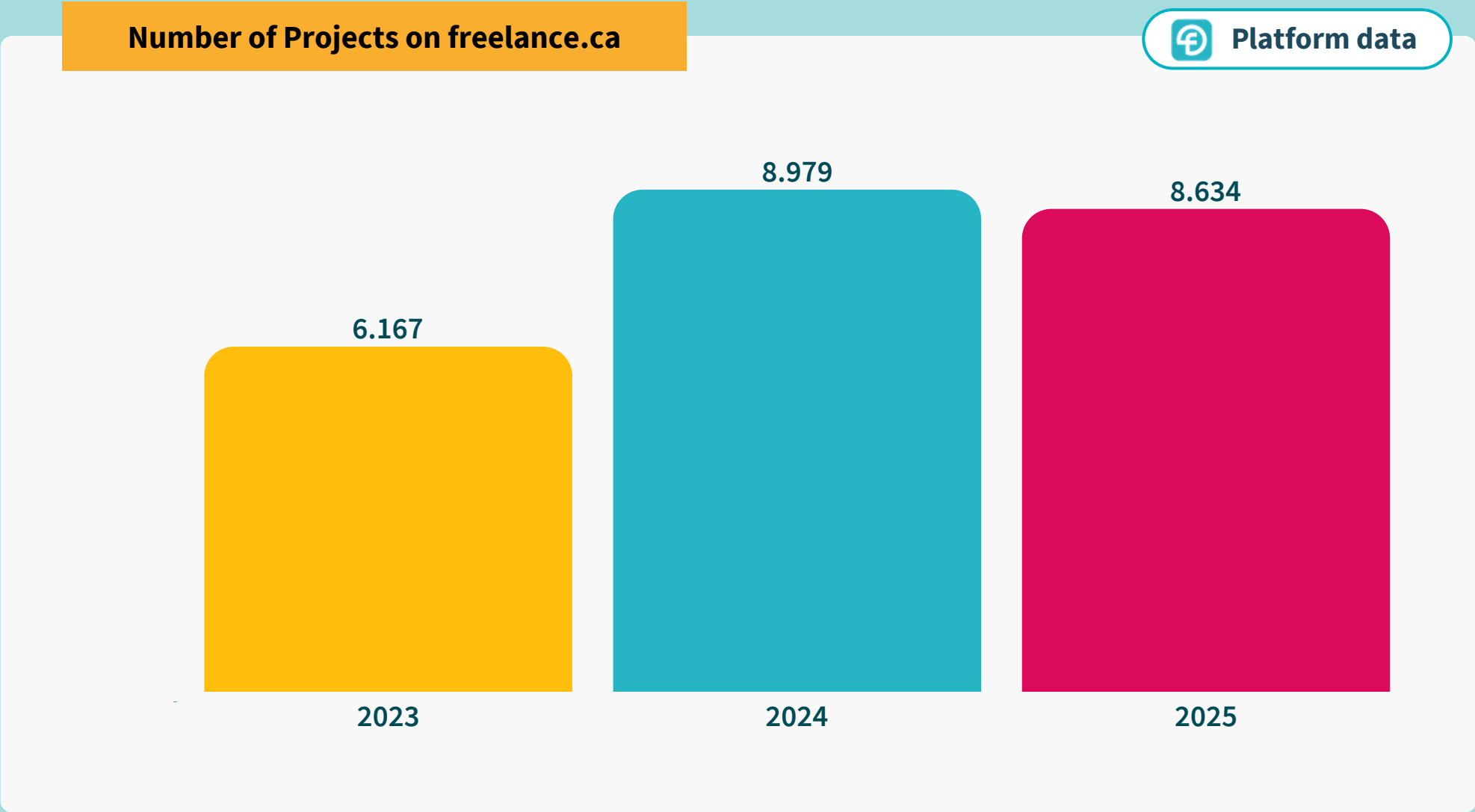


Sensitive Data

In the information technology industry, concerns over sensitive data are particularly prominent, cited by 46% as one of the reasons companies refrain from collaboration.

PROJECT ACQUISITION

Project growth is stagnating.



The Project Situation is Tense

After a strong growth in the number of projects from 2023 to 2024, this number declined in 2025. At the same time, many freelancers expect an increasingly difficult working environment in 2026.

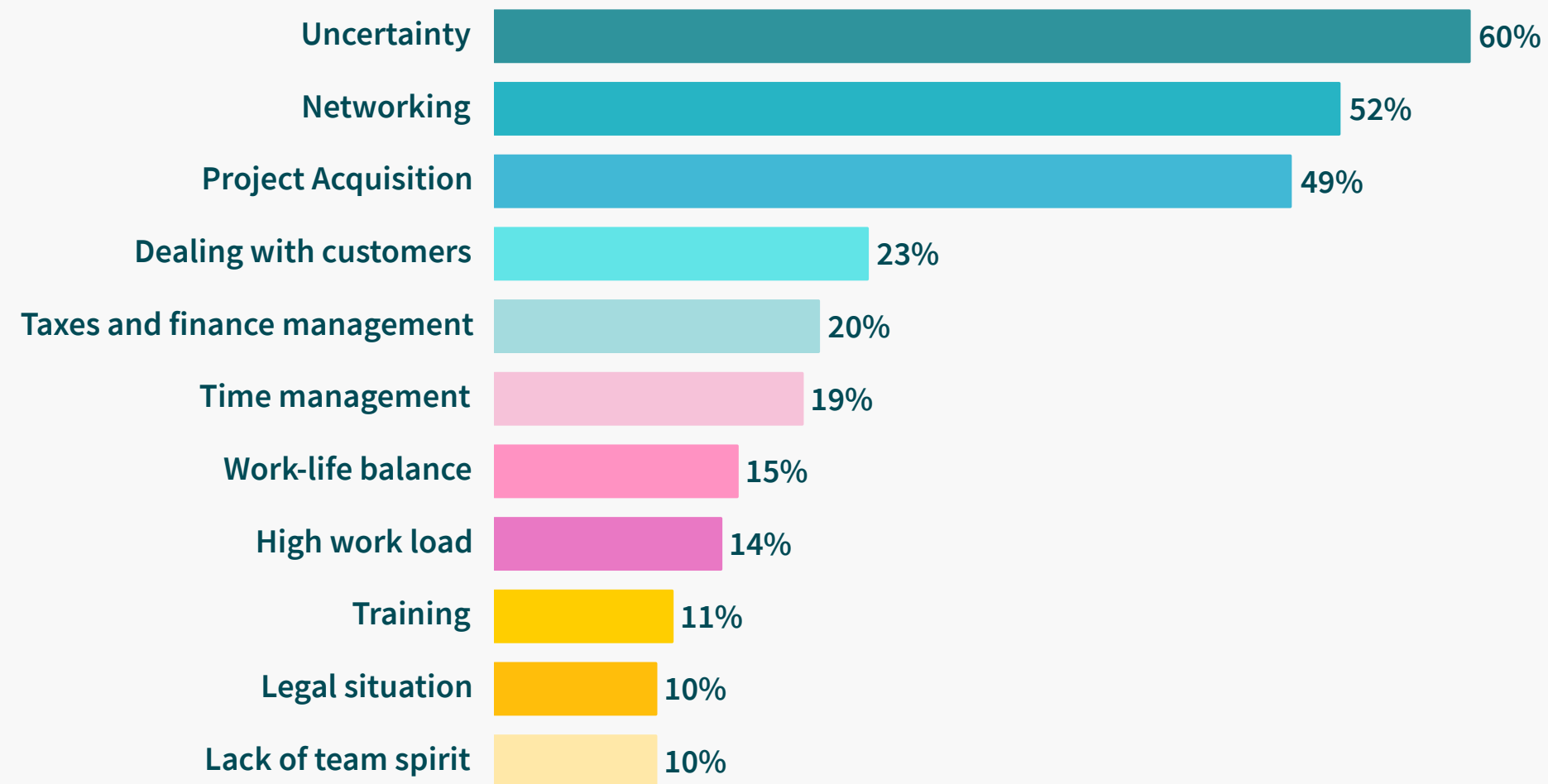
TRENDS & CHALLENGES

FREELANCING STUDY 2026

TRENDS & CHALLENGES

The main challenges for freelancers are uncertainty, networking, and project acquisition.

The Biggest Challenges for Freelancers



“The data is clear: the main obstacle to freelance work development is not a lack of talent, but a lack of infrastructure. When 60% of freelance professionals cite uncertainty as their main challenge, it is an undeniable sign that the market requires more robust structural frameworks to support self-employed workers”

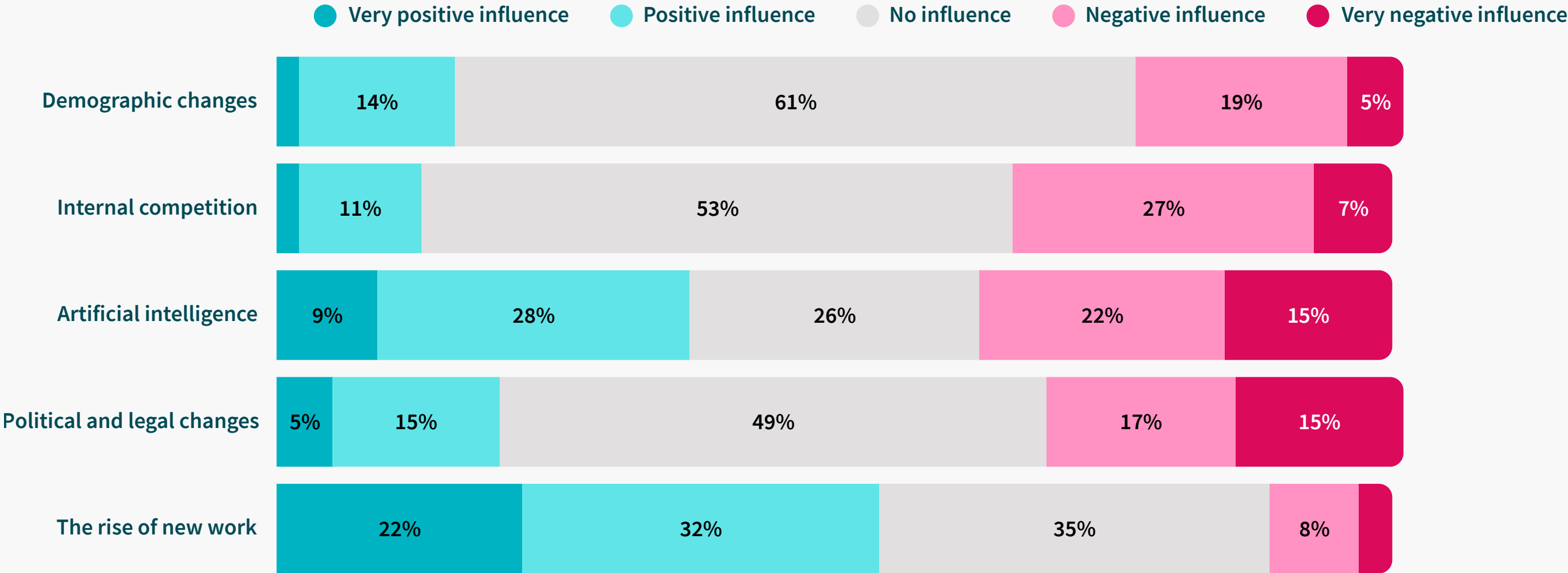


Simon Gravel
CEO freelance.ca

TRENDS & CHALLENGES

Freelancers perceive internal competition and political changes as distinctly negative trends. The rise of new work, on the other hand, is largely seen as an opportunity. As for artificial intelligence, freelancers have mixed views.

Impact of External Trends on Freelance Work

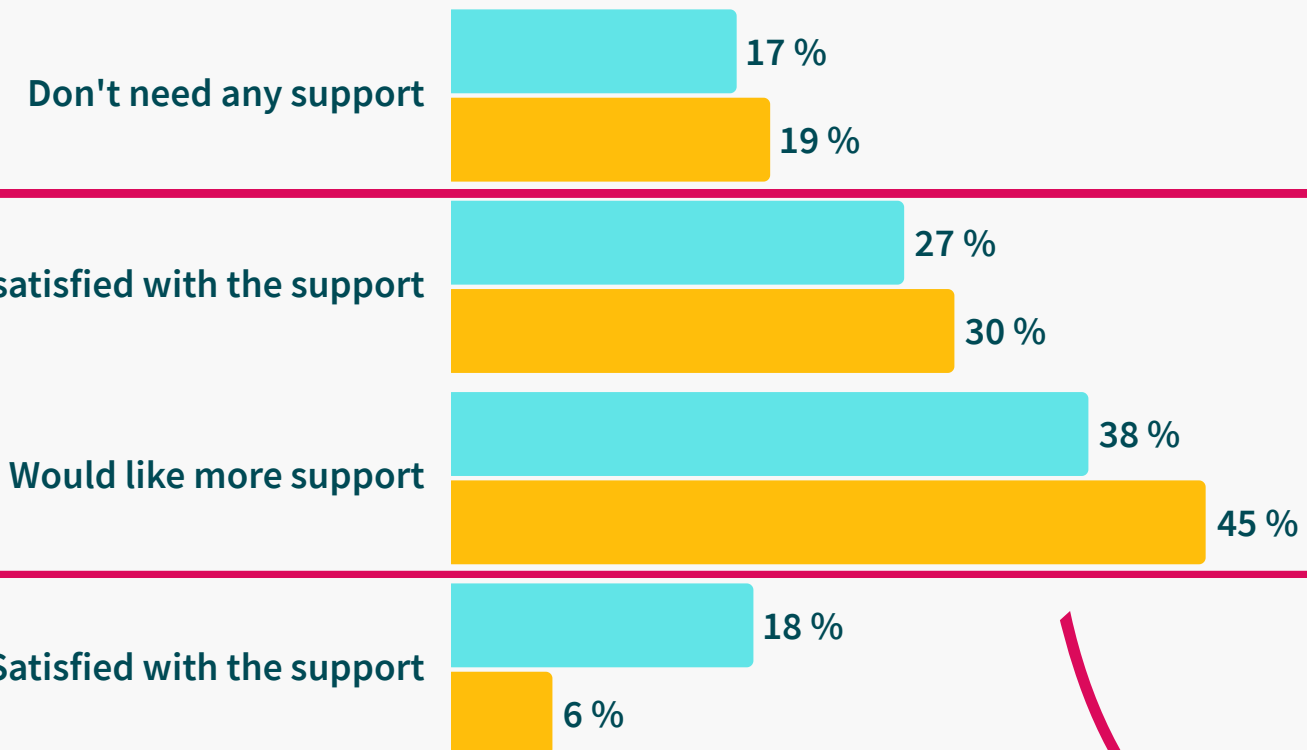


TRENDS & CHALLENGES

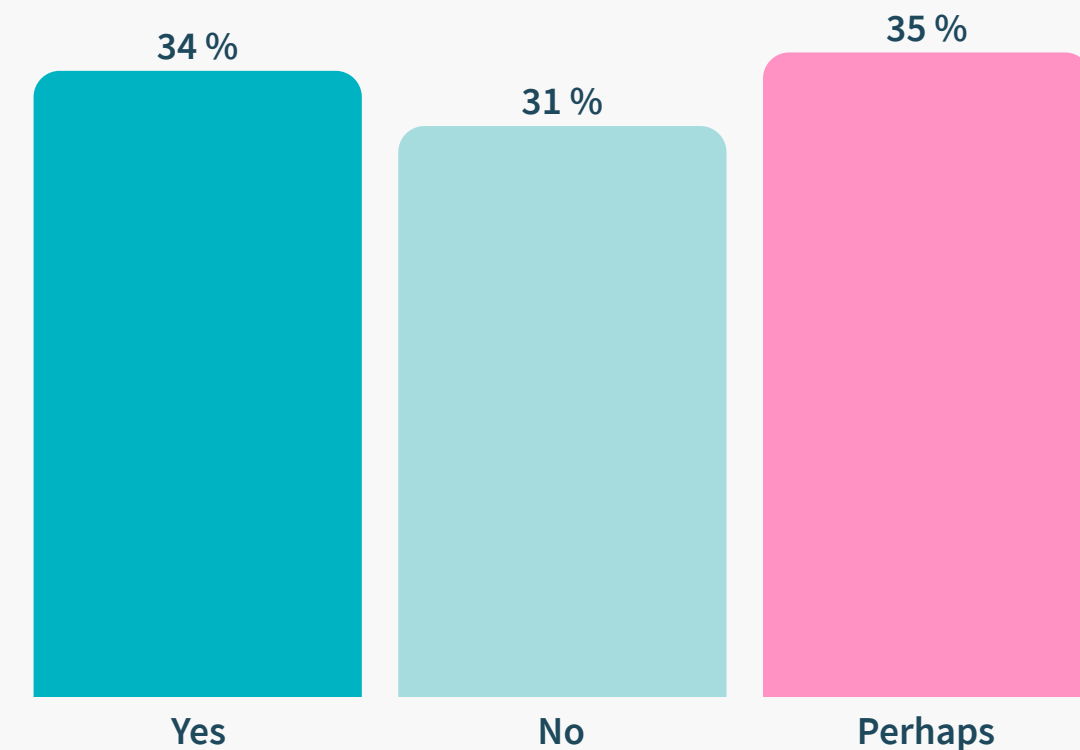
Political trust among freelancers is declining sharply: 75% are not satisfied with support from politicians, compared to 65% last year.

Freelancers Political Support View

● 2025 ● 2026



Willingness to Switch to a Salaried Position



Political Solutions?

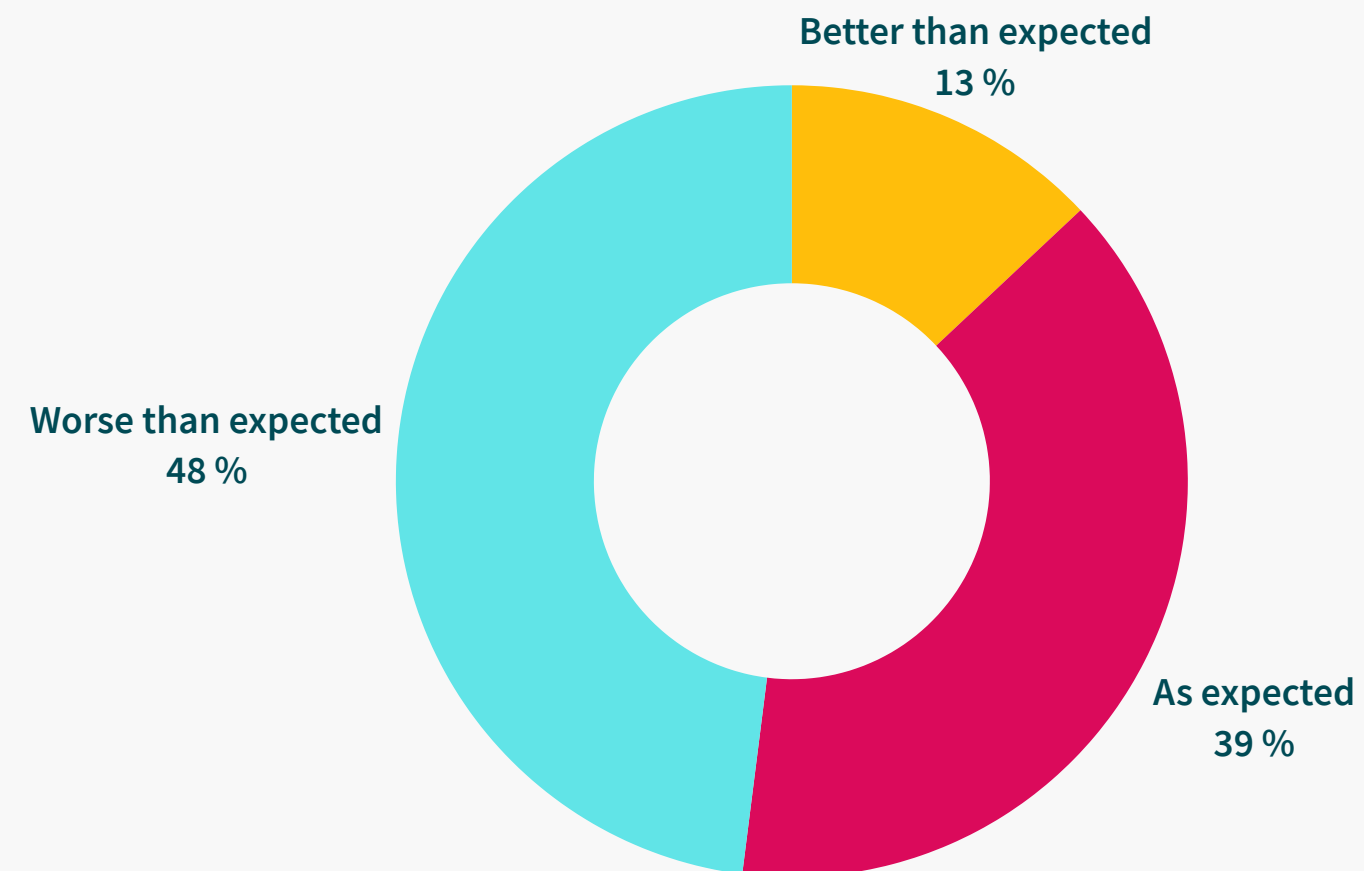


Many freelancers already have a salaried position in addition to their freelance career. To return to a fully salaried position, participants in this survey said they would need a better salary, remote work, and more flexibility.

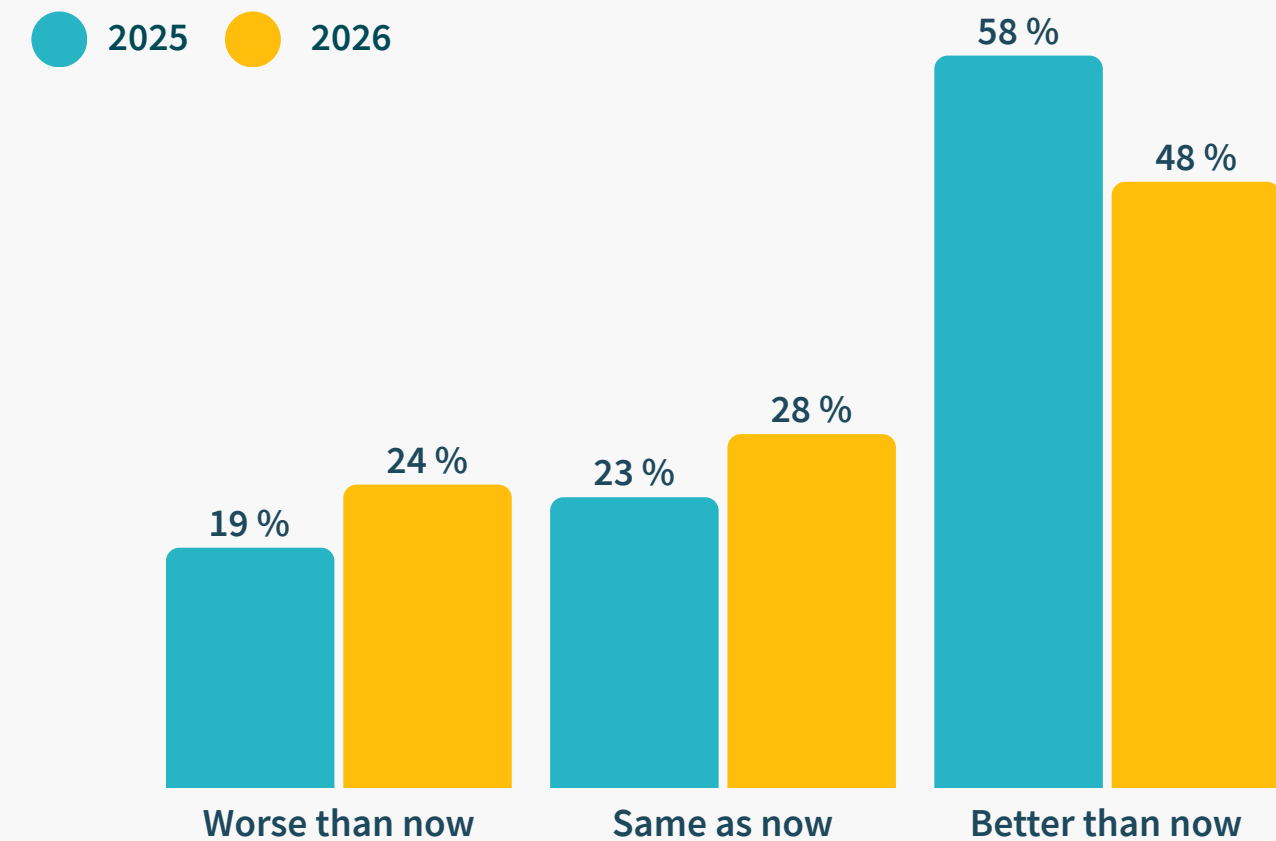
TRENDS & CHALLENGES

Like last year, a majority of freelancers said their freelance business performed worse than expected this year. This is reflected in their five year outlook, which is more pessimistic than last year.

Freelance Business this Year



Expectations for the Next 5 Years



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

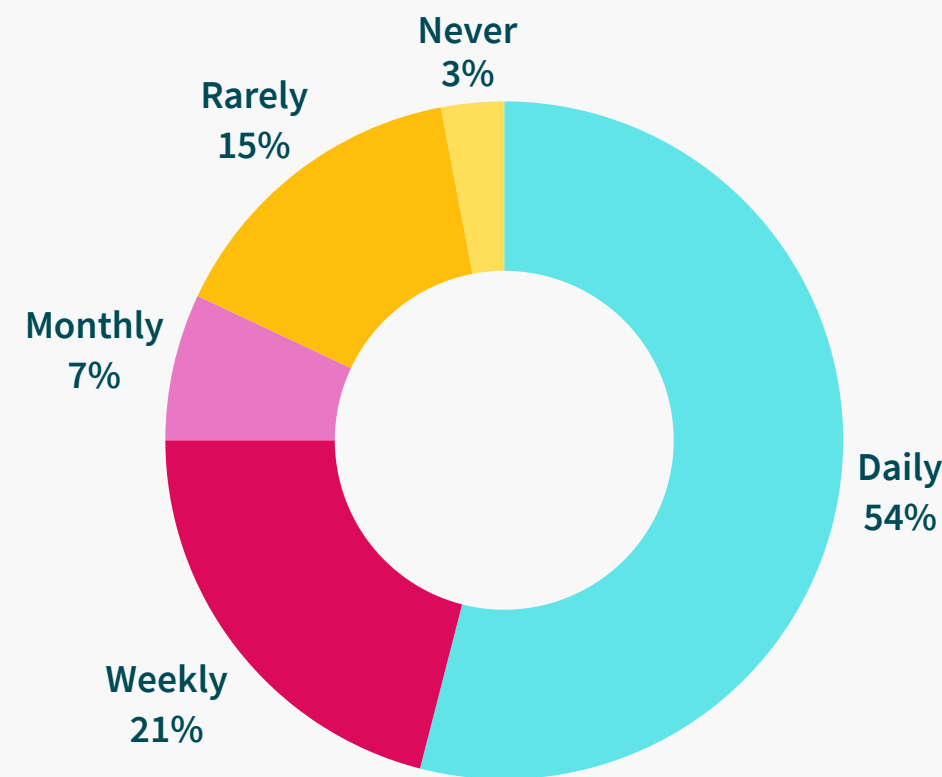
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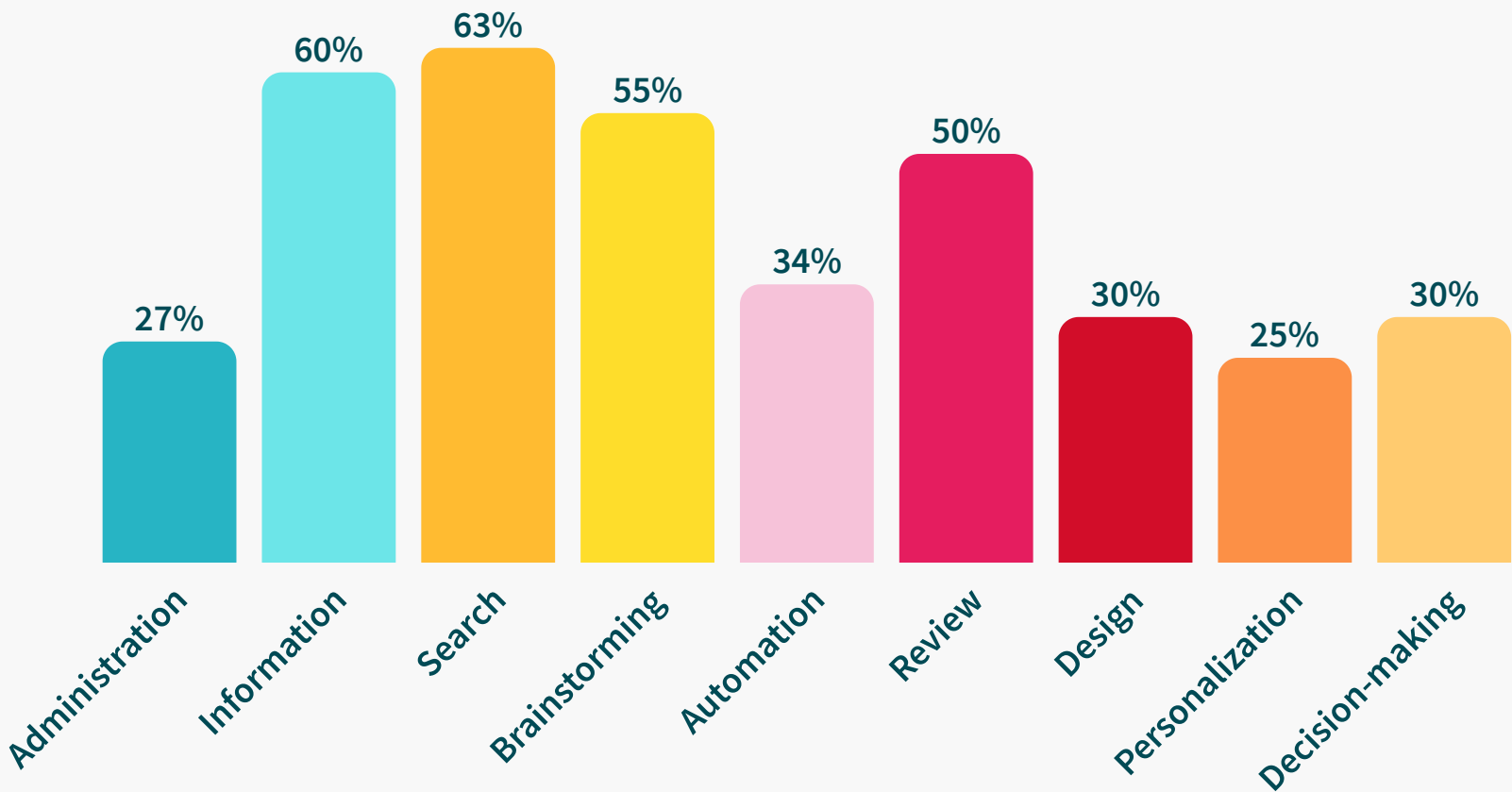
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence is used daily by most freelancers.
They mostly use it for information and search.

AI Usage Frequency



Purpose of AI usage

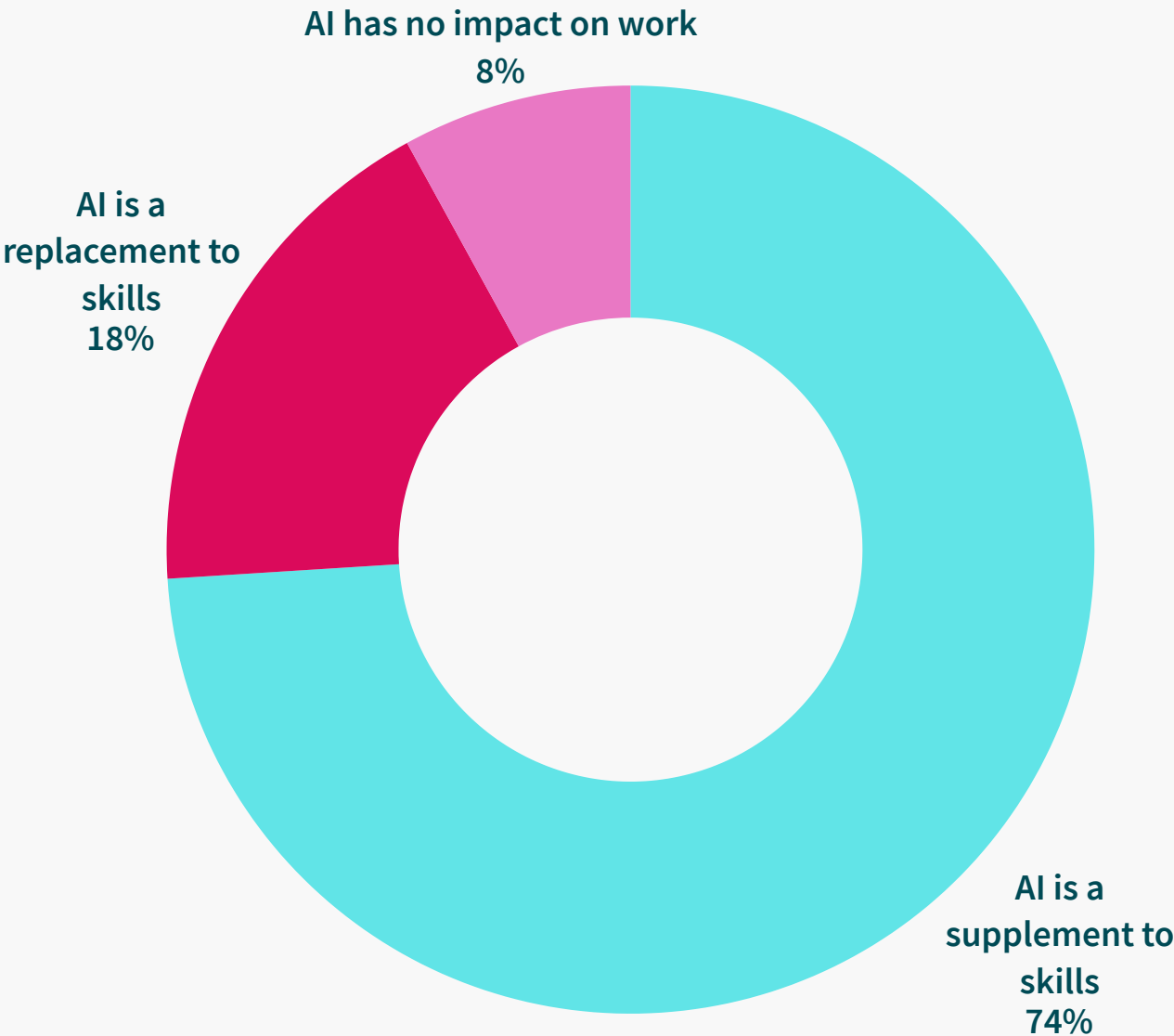


Freelancers use artificial intelligence more and more each year. The percentage using it daily increased from 39% last year to 54% this year, suggesting that AI is taking a larger role in freelance work.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Three quarters of surveyed freelancers cited AI as a supplement to their skills.

Impact of AI on Freelance Work



"Artificial intelligence is no longer just a competitive advantage for freelancers; it's a new skill set. Those who integrate it into their practice now not only work faster, they deliver better results and position themselves differently in the market. What's impressive is the speed of adoption: we're seeing freelancers in a wide range of fields (writing, design, accounting, development) using AI tools to automate repetitive tasks and dedicate more time to value-added work. The real challenge now is knowing what to delegate to the machine and what to keep human."



William Garneau
AI Expert

CONCLUSION

FREELANCING STUDY 2026

CONCLUSION



The 2026 Freelancing Study paints a nuanced picture of the current freelance situation in Canada. The results show a highly qualified and experienced group of self employed professionals who are simultaneously confronted with economic uncertainty and a tight project market.

Demographics

The study highlights a freelance community where 64% of professionals possess more than 10 years of experience, although 64% have been self employed for five years or less. Concentrated in the economic hubs of Quebec and Ontario, this workforce is primarily active in IT, administration, and marketing. A significant shift in working methods is also evident: most freelancers now work fully remotely, while on site work has declined sharply from 11% last year to just 4% this year. Freelancers work an average of 33 hours per week, and most manage multiple clients simultaneously to ensure diversity in their portfolios.

Finances

Financially, the average hourly rate across all industries has reached \$63, representing a 31% increase over the last four years. While rates scale significantly with experience, from \$31 for juniors to \$91 for experts, most freelancers remain firm on their pricing, with the majority unwilling to negotiate more than 10% of their rate. Negotiations are primarily influenced by the nature of the tasks and the length of the contract. Despite these figures, financial satisfaction is in sharp decline: only a quarter of respondents are satisfied with their situation, a significant drop compared to last year.

Project Acquisition

The project landscape for 2026 is characterized by both efficiency and increasing tension. Efficiency remains high, with a majority of freelancers able to secure a new project within just one month. In terms of workload management, a majority of Canadian freelancers worked on more than two projects over the past 12 months, reflecting a preference for a diversified client base. While most work remains domestic, international reach is notable, with 42% of freelancers working internationally engaging with clients in the United States. Project selection is now strongly influenced by specific motivators: revenue and the nature of the tasks are the primary drivers, with both revenue and the desire for professional impact becoming significantly more important to freelancers than they were just a year ago.



CONCLUSION



Trends & Challenges

Independent professionals in 2026 face significant structural hurdles, primarily centered on the difficulty of project acquisition, the inherent irregularity of workloads, and the continuous need for networking. A major finding of this study is the deep crisis of political confidence, with three quarters of freelancers expressing dissatisfaction with the support provided by Canadian policymakers. While many respondents reported that their business performance fell short of expectations this year, leading to a more cautious long-term outlook, they also identify clear opportunities. Specifically, the emergence of “New Work” is perceived as a strong positive driver for the sector’s evolution. Furthermore, while independence remains a deliberate choice, a significant portion of the workforce remains open to returning to salaried employment, provided it offers specific guarantees: higher salaries, permanent remote work options, and greater flexibility.

Artificial Intelligence

AI has transitioned from a trend to an essential professional tool, with daily usage rising from 39% to 54% in a single year. Freelancers primarily use AI for information gathering and search, and three quarters view the technology as a supplement to their existing skills rather than a threat. This rapid adoption allows freelancers to gain more productivity and give them the ability to monetize new technical expertise.

Overall, the study’s findings demonstrate that freelancers play a central role in the modern world of work, providing indispensable expertise across many industries. At the same time, they face a combination of economic pressures, uncertainty, and a tight project market. While technologies such as artificial intelligence offer new opportunities for increased efficiency and further development, stable framework conditions and a reliable economic outlook remain crucial for the future of the freelancing market.



ABOUT US

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ABOUT US

Our team



ABOUT US

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Study Methodology

- Evaluation of the current state of research based on existing studies, followed by the definition of research gaps.
- Workshop and brainstorming regarding new questions.
- Testing of the questionnaire with freelancers to assess its comprehensibility, length, and completeness.
- Modification of the questionnaire and finalization of the online questionnaire.
- The results are based on freelance.ca platform data and the survey responses of a total of 403 participants.

Disclaimer

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Survey Period

January 22 to March 1, 2026

Participant Acquisition

Invitation sent via email, application on the freelance.ca platform and reach on social media.