

**Creativity through crisis: how freelancers have survived and thrived in 2020**

*New report from 99designs captures insights and shared experiences of over 11,000 freelance designers from around the world*

Melbourne Australia, October 27 2020: 99designs has today released [*“Design Without Borders: The Freelance Revolution”*](http://99designs.com/design-without-borders-2020)– the company’s second annual study of the global freelance design industry. From Sydney to Salzburg, 11,362 freelance creators across 147 countries have shared their insights and stories in the most wide-reaching survey of the sector to date.

In a year that has caused significant emotional and economic strain for millions of people around the world, one thing is clear: freelancers’ flexibility, drive and resilience has set them up for long term success,with almost two thirds (63%) extremely optimistic about their future in the design industry.

While a third (32%) of freelance designers considered taking on additional non-creative work as a result of hardships related to COVID-19 and many (26%) lost a salaried role, just 2% of freelancers are not confident of their future success. The vast majority of designers (81%) also learned new professional skills during lockdowns, and 49% of freelancers are on track to earn more this year than they did in 2019.

Amidst the pandemic and significant social upheaval of 2020, freelancing remains aspirational: just 6% of designers freelance because they can’t find work elsewhere. Flexibility and freedom remain the top motivations for freelancers around the world, and 98% are optimistic about where the design industry is headed in the next ten years.

99designs CEO Patrick Llewellyn comments, “The radical shift in how the world works together online will be the lasting legacy of 2020, and while freelancers themselves haven’t changed, the world around them has. As the global workforce adapts – and adopts many of the traits that freelancers have nurtured for years – it has become clear that out of the chaos of this year, significant opportunities have emerged for remote creative connections and the freelance design community at large.”

A few key findings from 2020’s [report](http://99designs.com/design-without-borders-2020) include:

**Personal and professional lives collided with some unexpected results – especially for parents:**

* During the pandemic, entire households found themselves working and learning from home, and 43% of freelancers said sharing their workspace had a positive impact on their creative process (compared to 21% who reported a negative impact).
* An incredible 48% of parents and primary caregivers also said that having the kids at home had a positive effect on them professionally (compared to 27% who reported a negative effect).
* Compared to last year, 42% of freelance designers have also established a better work life balance in 2020.

**Remote work went mainstream, promising profound long-term impacts on the industry:**

* As the global workforce got to grips with remote work, 30% of freelancers report that clients’ collaboration and communication skills have improved during the pandemic.
* More than three quarters (77%) of designers expect businesses to be more open to hiring remote talent as a result of working from home themselves during the pandemic.
* As a result of increased remote opportunities, 41% of freelance designers said they would consider moving to a smaller town or regional area if companies embrace remote work permanently: some good news for regional and rural communities around the world, and even better news for an industry seeking a more diverse talent pool.

**Freelancers’ natural aptitude for self-directed learning flourished:**

* While society at large embraced self-improvement during lockdowns, a massive 81% of freelance designers learned new professional skills during the pandemic – up from 60% in 2019.
* 72% of this group taught themselves using YouTube tutorials and another 36% upskilled through online courses.
* With only 1 in 5 designers believing that a formal education is crucial to succeed, the importance of continuous self-directed learning in the design industry is clear.

**The freelance future is bright:**

* While half of freelance designers expect to earn more in 2020 than they did in 2019, 24% expect a significant increase to their income this year.
* Only 2% of freelance designers aren’t optimistic about their future in the industry, while 63% are extremely confident of their personal success.
* 47% of freelance designers are ready to hit the road and embrace the digital nomad lifestyle once global travel restrictions are lifted after the pandemic, and an incredible 98% are optimistic about where the design industry is headed in the next ten years.

***To download the full report and infographic visit*** [***99designs.com/design-without-borders-2020***](http://99designs.com/design-without-borders-2020)

**About 99designs:**

99designs is the global creative platform that makes it easy for designers and clients to work together to create designs they love. Having paid out more than US $320m to freelancers all over the world, 99designs has grown from a small online forum into a worldwide community of talented creators that is now a go-to solution for businesses, agencies and individuals.

**Methodology:**

The research for this report was conducted by 99designs between July 20th and August 3rd 2020. The online survey was distributed via email, social media and industry-targeted ads on LinkedIn and had 11,362 qualified respondents from the following regions: Asia (6,058), Europe (2,663), North America (712), South America (728), Africa (618), Australia (74), Unknown (809).

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