

GrowTal

The State of Freelancing



Key findings

September 29, 2021

Methodology

Opinium surveyed 234 skilled service freelancers between Friday, September 3 and Thursday, September 23 on behalf of GrowTal, Inc. Skilled service freelance pertains to services that require a certain set of skills, additional training, or education to be able to offer proficiently. This definition excludes freelance work such as food delivery (e.g., DoorDash), dog-watching (e.g., Rover), etc. The study was conducted between September 3 and September 23, 2021.

Freelancers who offered the following services were classified as marketing freelancers: branding, public relations, paid social media advertising, social media management, search engine optimization, conversion rate optimization, strategy/ interim chief marketing officer, programmatic marketing, product marketing, e-commerce retention, and strategy, Amazon presence management, email marketing, direct mail marketing, native ad marketing, writing/content marketing, web development, graphic design, ad creative, US design, and data analytics.

Who we spoke to

We spoke to 234 skilled service freelancers in the United States. These freelancers were gender-balanced (43% male and 57% female), spread out across the United States, and covered a range of ages, with 37% aged 18-34, 41% aged 35-54, and 22% aged 55+.

The freelancers we spoke to specialized in a range of services. Overall, 68% offered marketing-related freelancing services in some capacity, and 56% fell into the skilled service freelancer bucket, providing services such as such as research, translation, and accounting. The largest percentage of freelancers surveyed provided writing, copywriting, and content marketing services (17%); followed by graphic design (15%); social media management (12%); and e-commerce strategy offerings (12%).



The majority of those we spoke to either worked freelance full-time (40%) or part-time (36%). Close to 1 in 5 respondents (17%) said they work freelance in addition to their full-time job.

We also distinguished respondents by when they began freelance work. Exactly three-quarters (75%) of freelancers surveyed reported having started their freelance careers prior to the pandemic, with the remaining quarter (25%) having started once the pandemic was already in full swing.

The allure of freelance work

Freelance offers flexibility, independence, and opportunity to pursue your passion

Independence and autonomy over your professional career are some of the most attractive qualities when it comes to working freelance. Two thirds (65%) of freelancers were motivated to pursue freelance because it provides flexibility to manage their own time, making this the number one motivator. This is followed by the ability to make decisions for yourself, rather than at the discretion of an employer (48%), and the opportunity to pursue your passion (37%).

Which of the following motivated you to pursue freelance? Please select your top three.



Freelancers were ahead of the curve when it comes to the “office exodus” that has recently taken the corporate world by storm. A quarter (26%) of freelancers selected not wanting to go into an office among their top three reasons for pursuing freelancing. It’s worth noting that

freelancers aren't motivated by better compensation or an inability to land a traditional job – underscoring how working freelance is a choice that doesn't revolve around monetary factors

Over eight in ten believe freelancing will become more and more common in the future

There is reason to believe the freelancing world will continue to grow. Over eight in ten (85%) of freelancers believe it will become more and more common in the future. This is a trend which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with eight in ten (81%) agreeing that the pandemic has caused a shift towards freelance work.

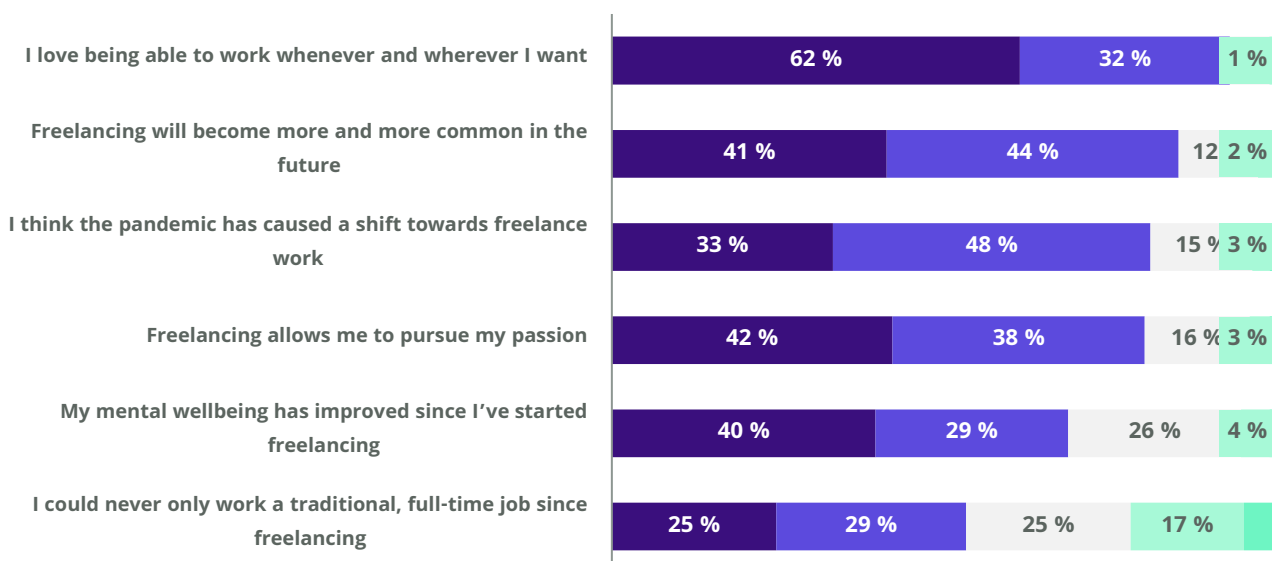
This is understandable as freelancing seems to lead to several personal and professional benefits. Just over three in five (62%) strongly agree that they love how, with freelancing, they can work whenever and wherever they want. Eight in ten (80%) agree that freelancing has allowed them to pursue their passion, and seven in ten (69%) agree that their mental wellbeing has improved since freelancing.

7 in 10 say their mental wellbeing has improved since freelancing

More women freelancers have witnessed improved mental wellbeing (72%) than men (64%), with over two in five women (44%) strongly agreeing that their mental wellbeing has improved since freelancing, compared to around one third (35%) of men.

Thinking about your experience freelancing, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither agree or disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



Marketing freelancers have found work more easily during the pandemic

Two in five (45%) freelancers agree that finding new work opportunities has been easy during the pandemic, compared to only a quarter (25%) who disagree with this. Moreover, freelancers have found work more easily during the pandemic than before. Two in five (43%) agree that finding freelance work has been easier during the pandemic compared to before, while one third (32%) disagree.

Marketing freelancers especially have had an easier time finding new work, with over half (51%) agreeing that finding new opportunities has been easy during the pandemic, compared to two fifths (37%) of skilled service freelancers who would say the same. This may be a nod to brands and businesses prioritizing staying connected with their audience and maintaining a strong digital presence as the world transitioned to a new virtual reality.

The Great Resignation?

Nearly all (97%) freelancers have experience in the traditional workforce, either having worked a full or part-time job. And the choice to pursue freelance is often deliberate and self-directed, with half (50%) of freelancers voluntarily quitting their traditional job to pursue freelance. The question becomes: once they leave the traditional workforce, will freelancers ever want to go back?

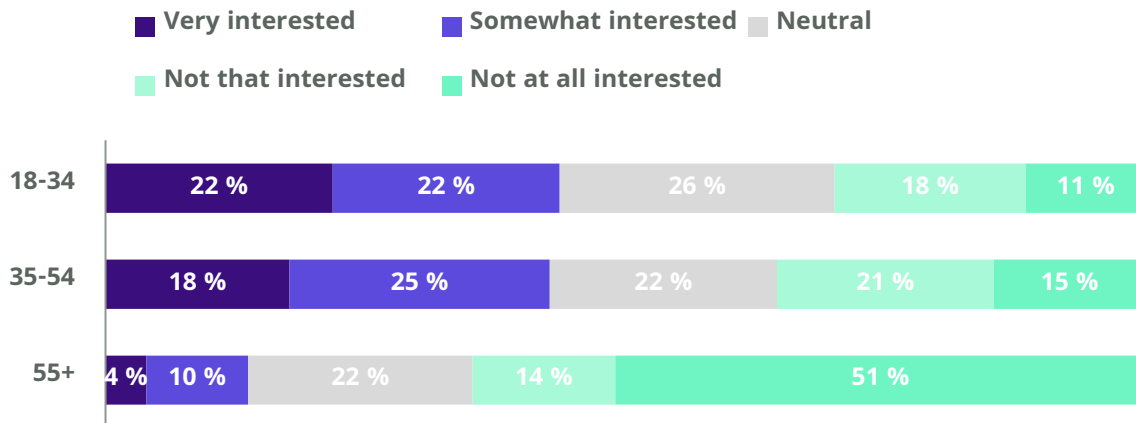
Freelancers are split on being interested in a full-time job

Having experienced both the traditional and freelance worlds, freelancers are nearly split on interest in leaving their freelance work to fully focus on a traditional, full-time job – 37% are interested in doing this, while 40% are not. Younger freelancers tend to be more interested in traditional work – two fourths (44%) of those aged 18-34 are interested in this, while just over one in ten (14%) of those aged 55+ are interested in traditional work. With most of their

careers ahead of them, it makes sense younger age groups are contemplating traditional jobs.

To what extent are you **interested** or **uninterested** in leaving freelance work to fully focus on a traditional full-time job?

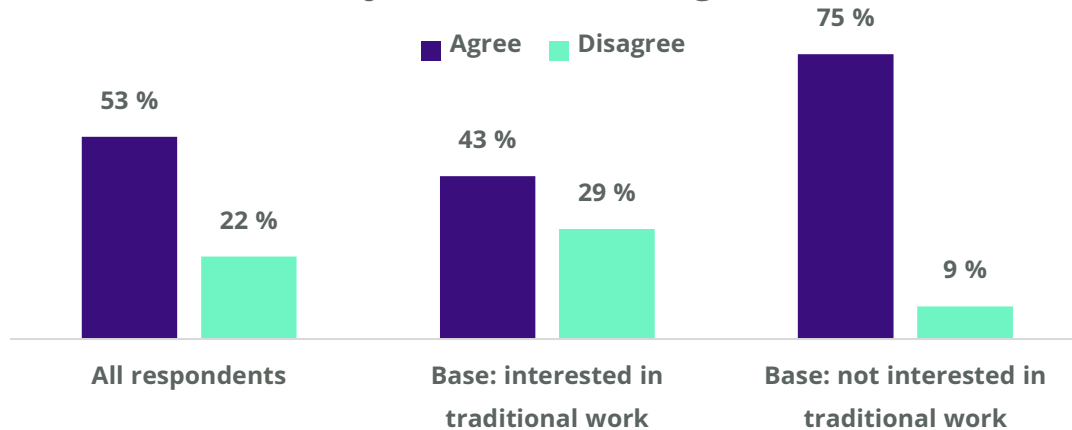
By age



However, over half they could never only work a traditional job since freelancing

When it comes down to it, only one fifth (22%) feel they could leave freelance and only work a traditional, full-time job. Among those interested in traditional work, two fifths (43%) don't feel they could leave freelance forever, while three in ten (29%) feel they could.

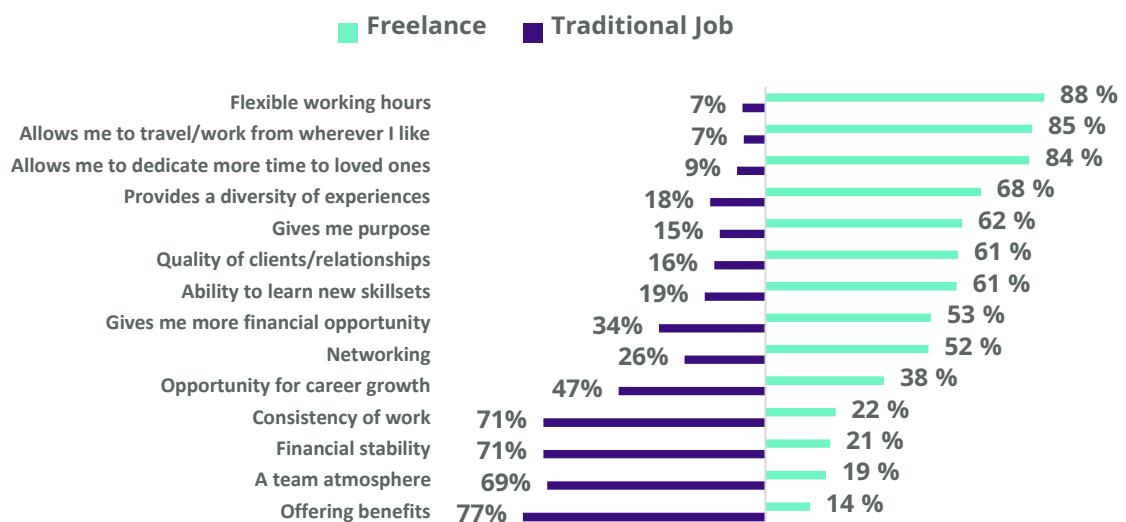
"I could never only work a traditional, full-time job since freelancing"



While freelance is better for flexibility and purpose, traditional jobs offer better benefits and financial stability

When it comes to flexibility, freelance significantly outperforms traditional jobs – over eight in ten say freelancing is better for flexible working hours (88%), working/traveling from wherever you like (85%), and dedicating more time to loved ones (84%). Since you're your own boss as a freelancer, you get to fit your work around your life - not fit life around work as is often the case with a traditional job. Moreover, three in five freelancers (62%) say it does a better job at giving them purpose than a traditional job, which is arguably one of the most important and sought-after aspects of a career.

Do you think working **freelance** or a **traditional job** does a better job at offering the following...?



Although there are several benefits to working freelance, there are some trade-offs. While you gain flexibility, purpose, and get to indulge your curiosity more as a freelancer, you often give up the stability and consistency of a traditional job. Seven in ten (71%) feel that a traditional job does a better job at offering consistency of work and financial stability and over three quarters (77%) say it does a better job at offering benefits. The stability and security that comes with a traditional job may be a key motivator for freelancers considering re-joining the traditional workforce.

Finding work and attitudes towards benefits

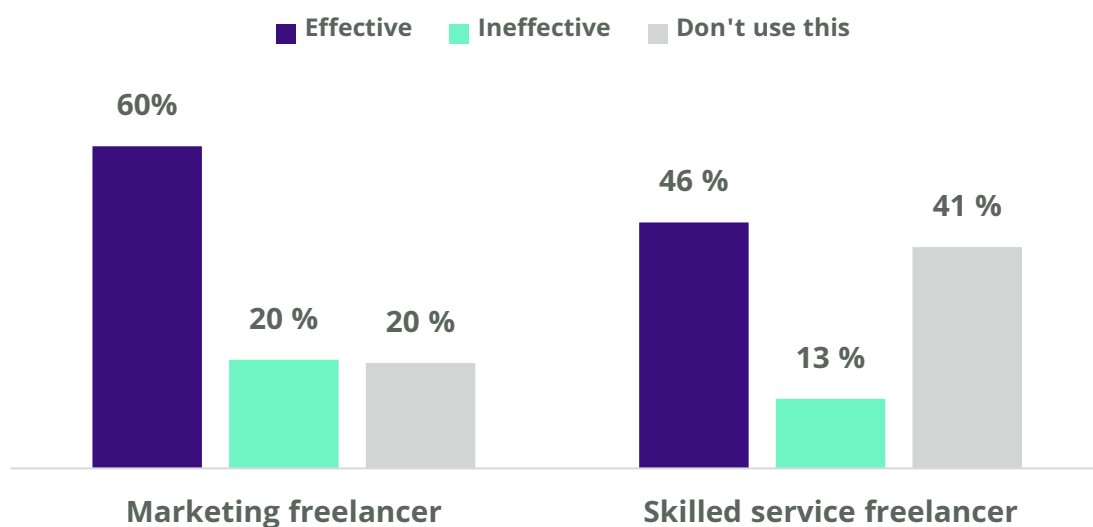
Referrals from professional network and social media are most effective ways to find work

Two thirds (66%) of freelancers find referrals from their professional network to be effective in landing new work. Among marketing freelancers this rises to over seven in ten (72%) and dips among skilled service freelancers (62%). Social media is the second-most effective resource for finding new freelance work, with a similar proportion finding this effective (65%).

Marketing freelancers have more success with platforms, such as Upwork, Fiverr and GrowTal

Overall, half (53%) of freelancers find marketplace platforms, such as Upwork, Fiverr, and GrowTal to be effective in finding freelance work – with only one in five (16%) finding them ineffective. However, marketing freelancers tend to have more success with these platforms, with three in five (60%) finding them effective. One fifth (20%) of marketing freelancers are not on these platforms, which could help alleviate some of the uncertainty and instability that are making some freelancers consider traditional work. It's notable that two in five freelancers who work freelance part-time (42%) are not on these platforms, presenting an opportunity to reach this demographic.

How effective are freelance marketplace platforms (Fiverr, Upwork, GrowTal) in finding work?



Majority of freelancers want the security and consistency of benefits

Certain states are considering laws that reclassify freelancers as employees covered by certain benefits, such as minimum wage, overtime, workers compensation, etc. There is one aspect of these laws that freelancers support: the benefits and stability that could come with them. Over two fifths (45%) support these laws for this reason, while one in five (21%) don't and one third (34%) neither agree nor disagree.

However, they don't necessarily want this to be mandated for them

Although freelancers are in favor of benefits, they don't necessarily want this to be from the result of a government mandate. Over three in five (62%) agree that freelance was a personal decision, and the government shouldn't be able to classify them as an employee. The same proportion (62%) are worried these laws will discourage companies from working with freelancers, and half (47%) feel these types of laws are an infringement on their autonomy, while one in five (18%) don't feel this way.

About GrowTal

GrowTal is the go-to talent marketplace for hiring remote top marketing experts in the most simplified way. GrowTal connects companies with top marketing talent without costly recruiting efforts or the risk and commitment that comes with traditional hiring practices. The GrowTal platform finds, evaluates, and connects independent contractors who provide marketing and other professional services with clients and organizations seeking their expertise.

Founded in 2019, GrowTal is led by its founder Bryan Karas, a former Facebook executive and current CEO of digital marketing agency Playbook Media. GrowTal is headquartered in San Francisco and is backed by private investors.

For more information, visit GrowTal.com or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think, feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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