



VCU BRANDCENTER

ALUMNI SALARY SURVEY RESULTS

FALL 2019

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(working on the AGENCY-side in strategic planning, account management, hybrid planning/management roles, and/or brand consultancy)

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Alums,

Following, please find the most recent VCU Brandcenter Alumni Salary Survey Report. We conduct this survey every other year.

I want to start by saying a HUGE thanks to:

- **Stacy Thomas Elsbury** (ST, 2001), **Noel Van Aartrijk** (ST, 20016) and **Sara Falzone** of **Good Run Research & Recreation** for helping me improve the survey questions and logic as well as analyze the results. If your agency or company is looking for a kick-ass research partner, you should check them out! They also have an amazing event space here in RVA. Contact: noel@goodrunresearch.com
- **Diana Tung Ojibway** (AD, 2002) for turning my boring Word document and tables into beautiful infographics.
- All of our alums who contributed to this report. I am so grateful to you all for everything you do to give back to our program, including taking our survey.

Purpose: To help our alumni understand average salaries for their disciplines and level, and prepare them for annual reviews, salary negotiations, career shifts, etc.

We also took a look at factors beyond salary - such as how happy our alumni are at their current job, how many hours they work each week, and what companies/agencies they want to work for next.

2019 Notes: This year we made a few updates to the survey design - most notably, a closer look at actual roles for XDs and more questions related to freelancing full time.

Methodology: Online survey, 23 questions, fielded between September 2019 - October 2019

Response rate: 725 alumni completed the survey.

Response rate by areas of study:

- 27% Strategy/Communication Strategy
- 25% Copywriting
- 20% Art Direction
- 17% Creative Brand Management
- 11% Experience Design/Creative Technology

Note: CBM and XD are newer tracks. The CBM track was not offered until 2005 and Experience Design until 2008.

Response rate by graduating class:

- 10% 1998 - 2004
- 19% 2005 - 2009
- 30% 2010 - 2014
- 41% 2015-2019

Note: Earlier graduating classes were much smaller in class size than more recent graduating classes. For example, the Class of 1998 had 48 graduates. The Class of 2019 had 101 graduates.

Questions/Comments:

Please let me know if you have questions, comments or suggestions about this survey or future ones.

Best,

Ashley Sommardahl

Sr. Director of Academics and Student Affairs

asommardahl@vcu.edu

FIVE AREAS OF STUDY



SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING CBM/ST ALUMS

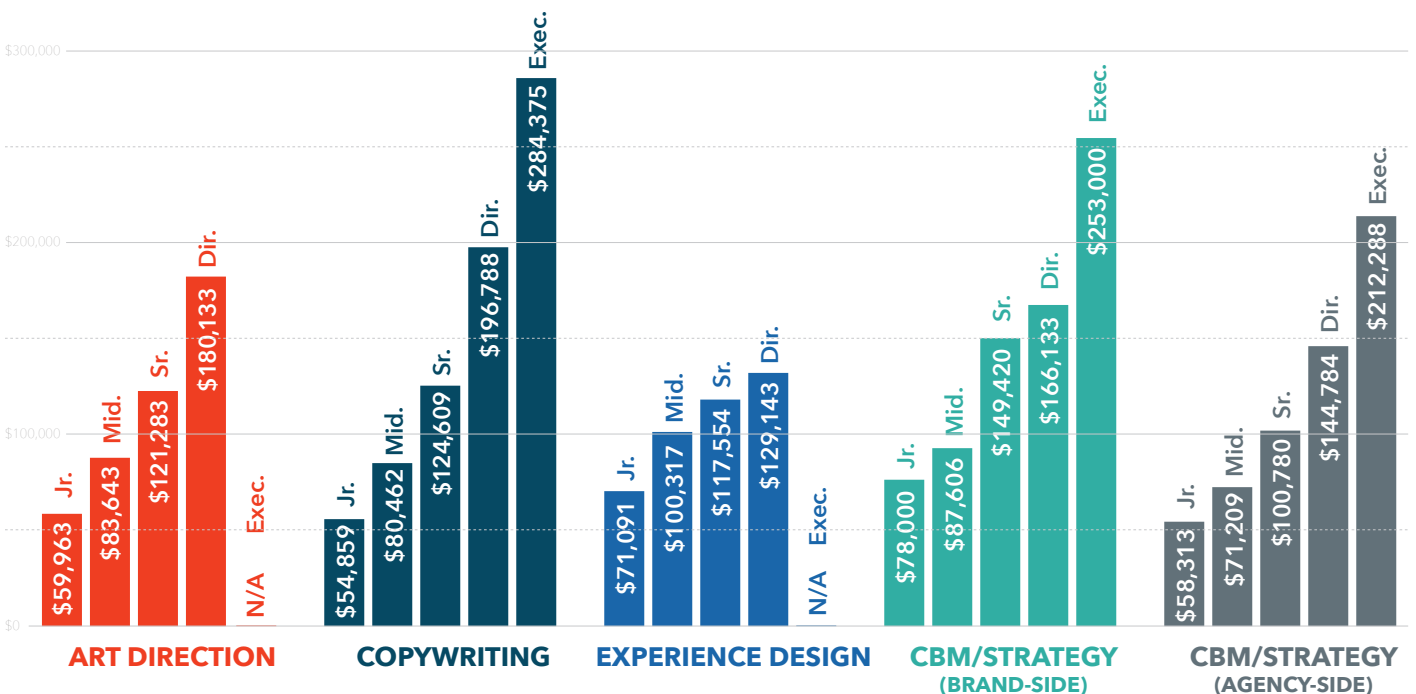
The information in this report is generally broken out by track/discipline. As you may know there is a great deal of "crossover" among the CBM and ST alums in terms of the jobs they hold and the places they work. For this reason, we segmented them in the following way:

- CBM/ST working on the **BRAND**-side in brand strategy, brand management, or marketing for companies - e.g. Facebook, Nike, Apple
- CBM/ST working on the **AGENCY**-side in strategic planning, account management, hybrid strategy/management roles, and/or brand consultancy.

AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARIES

Q: What is your current annual salary? (open-ended)

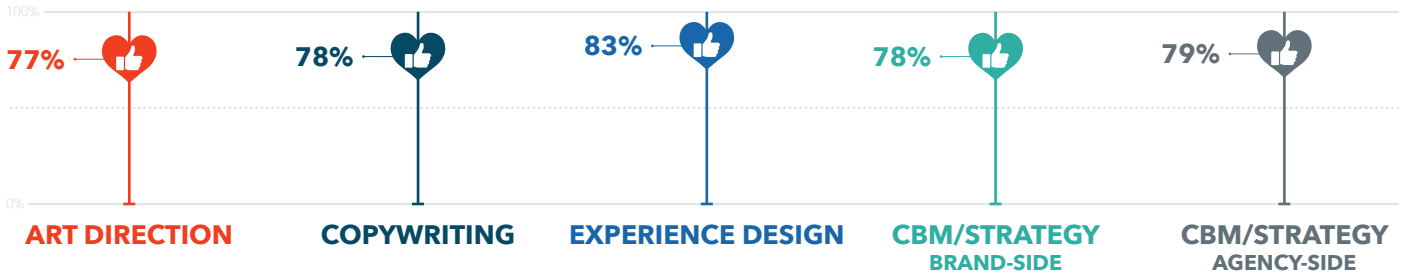
Note: Because titles and hierarchy vary greatly by individual agency/company, we asked alums to define their current level.



Note: This analysis does not include freelance salaries, You can check out freelance info on page 20 to 21.

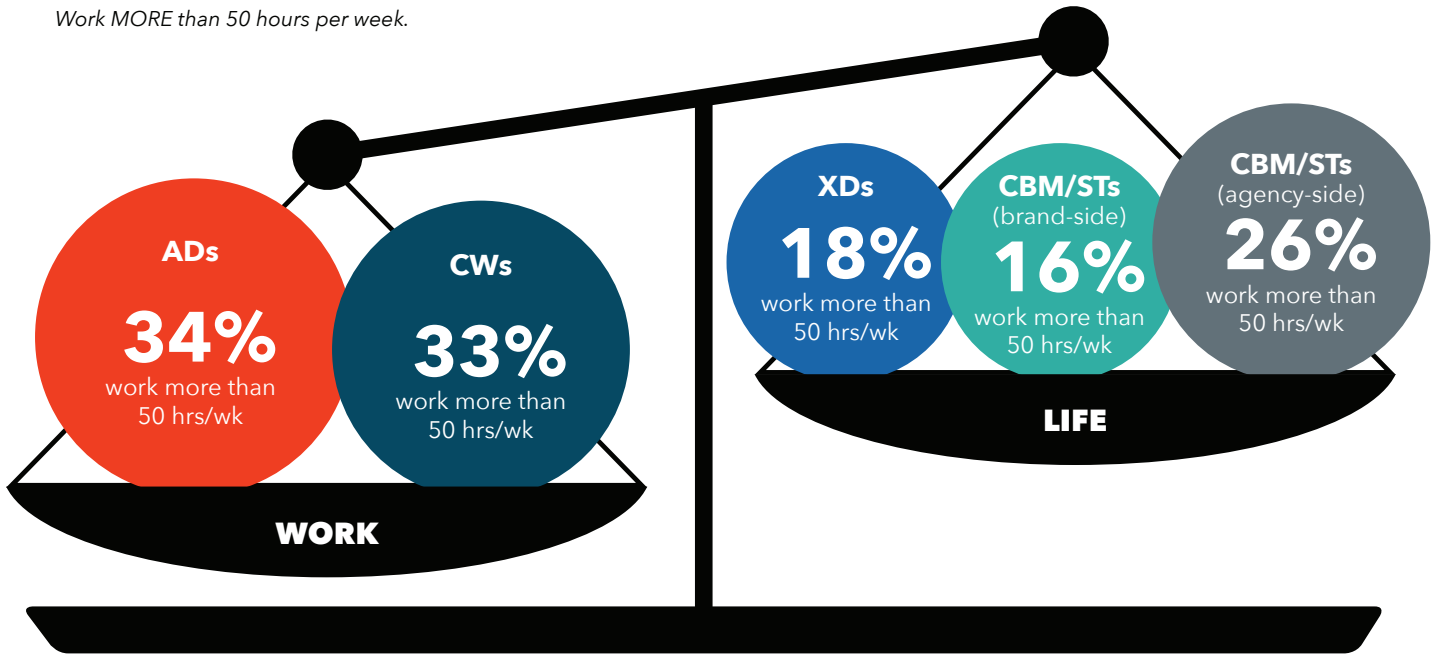
JOB HAPPINESS

Q: How would you describe the way you feel about your current job? (multiple choice)
 Answered they "LIKE" or "LOVE" their job.



WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Q: In this industry, we understand that workload varies depending on things like current projects, production, new business, etc.
 ON AVERAGE, How many hours per week do you work? (multiple choice)
 Work MORE than 50 hours per week.



JOB ATTRIBUTES

Q: Thinking of where you are in your career right now, rank your top THREE most important job attributes.
 (#1 being your most important attribute)

OVERALL RESPONDENTS
 (top 3 most important attributes)

RESPONDENTS AT THE JUNIOR LEVEL
 (top 3 most important attributes)

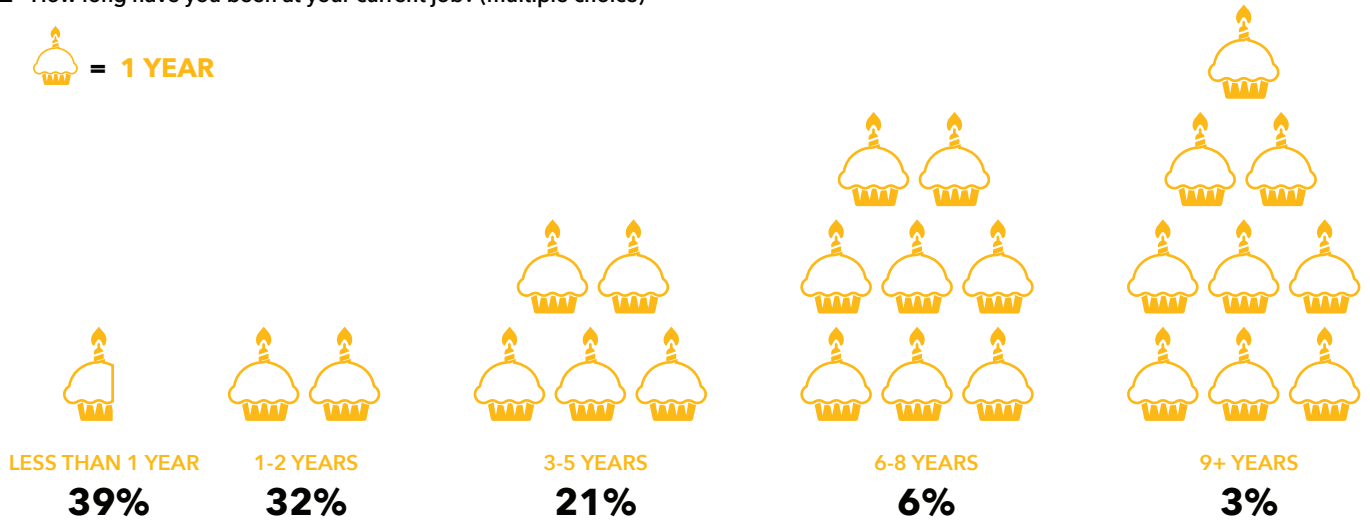
- 
 1- Work/Life Balance
- 
 2- Salary
- 
 3 - Growth Potential

- 
 1- Growth Potential
- 
 2 - Cultural Fit
- 
 3 - Mentorship

JOB TENURE

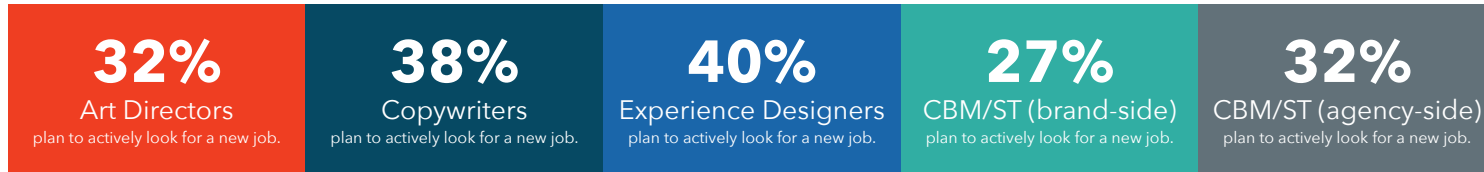
Q: How long have you been at your current job? (multiple choice)

 = 1 YEAR



JOB HUNT

Q: Do you plan to actively look for a new job this year? (yes or no)



Q: What are the reasons you are looking for a new job? (Check all that apply) (across all respondents)

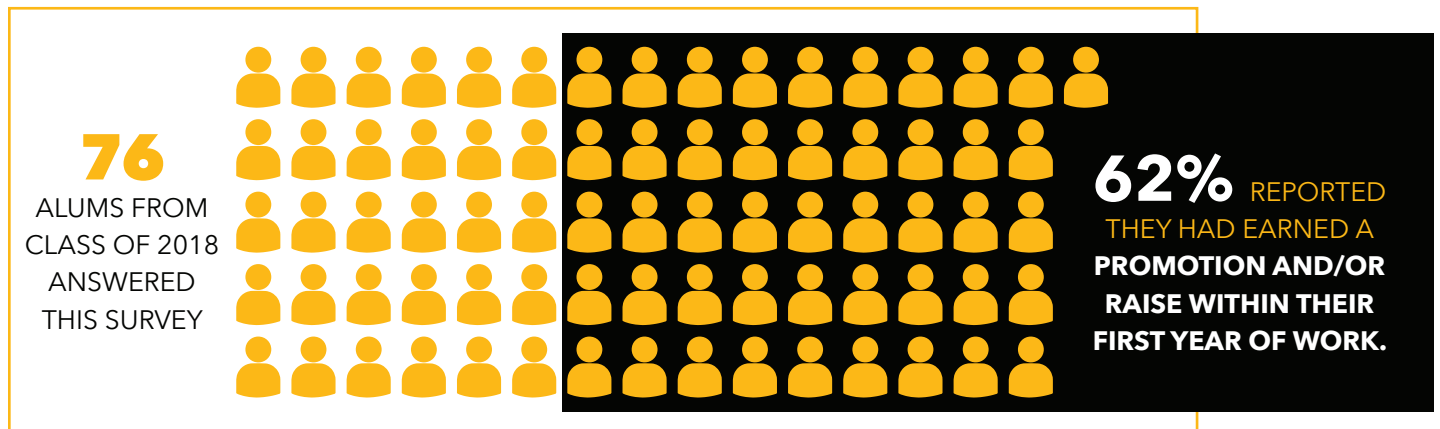
TOP 3 REASONS FOR PLANNING TO LOOK FOR A NEW JOB

- I want a **HIGHER SALARY**.
- I want to **TRY A NEW AGENCY/COMPANY**.
- I want to **FEEL MORE CHALLENGED**.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Q: For 2018 GRADS ONLY - If you graduated in 2018, have you received a promotion and/or raise since you graduated? (yes or no)

The Class of 2018 had 100 graduating students total.



JOB OFFERS BY GRADUATION

(FOR 2018 AND 2019 GRADS ONLY)

Q: How many official job offers did you receive upon graduation? Official means the agency/company made a formal offer verbally or in writing including title, salary, etc. (multiple choice)



FOR CLASS OF 2018

(# of official job offers at graduation)

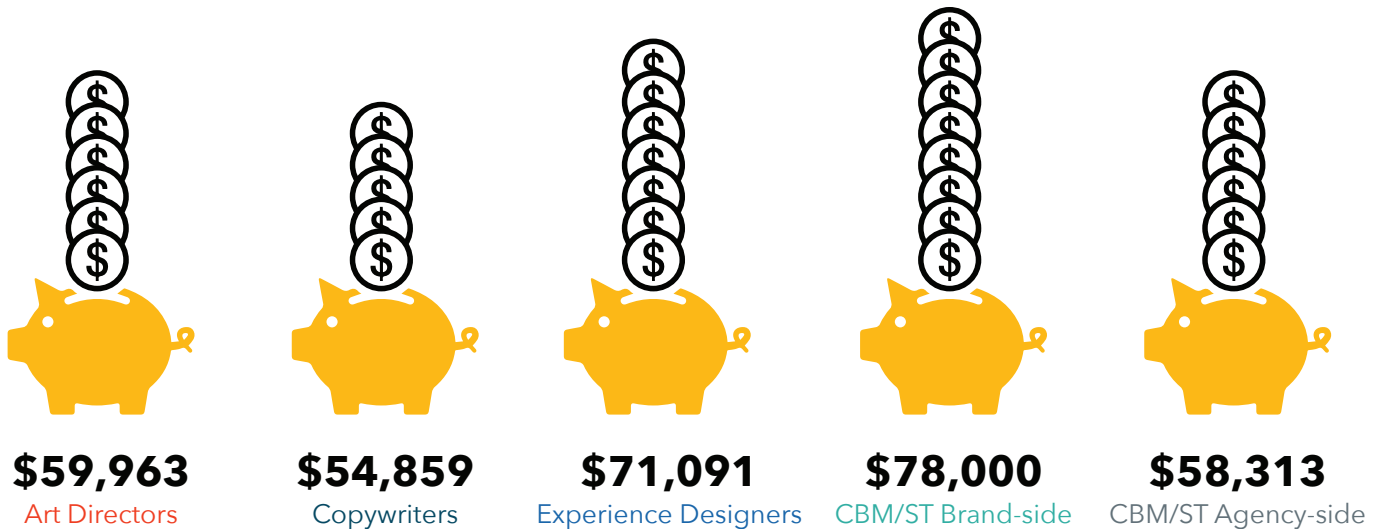


FOR CLASS OF 2019

(# of official job offers at graduation)

AVERAGE STARTING SALARIES

(FOR CLASS OF 2019)

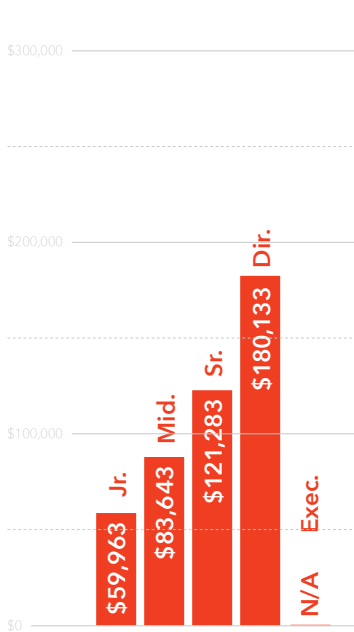


EMPLOYER TYPE

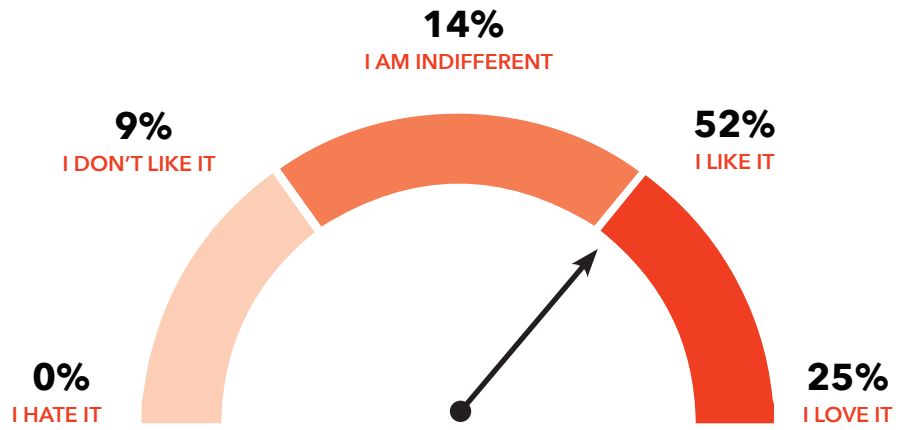
- Advertising agency: **63%**
- Brand-side (Nike, Target etc.): **13%**
- Freelance: **16%**
- Other: **8%**

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY

* not including freelancers

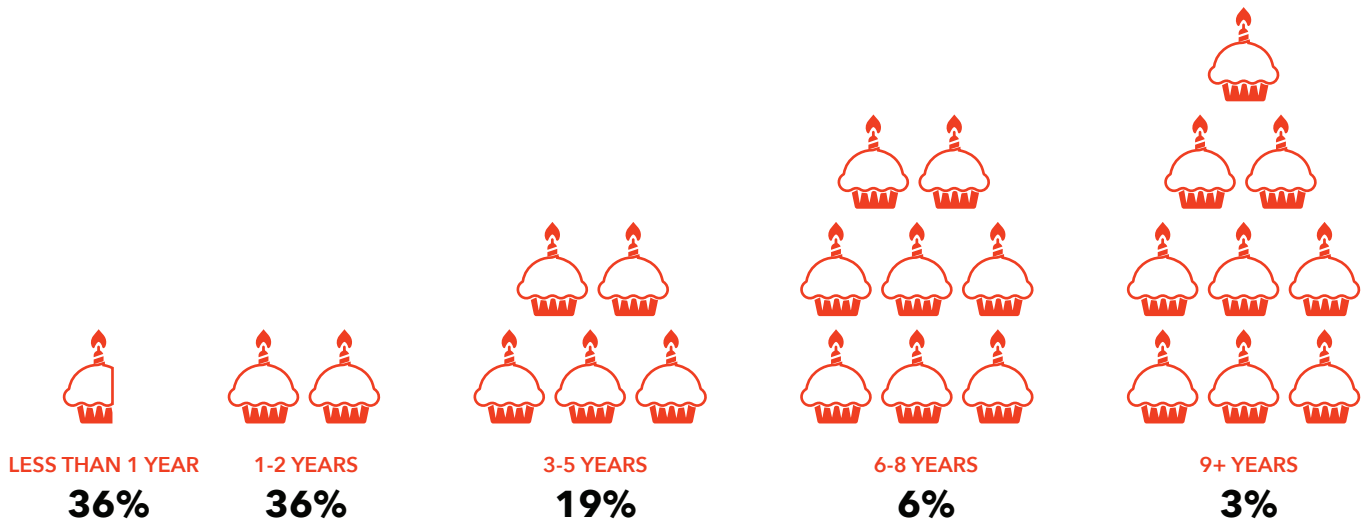


JOB SATISFACTION

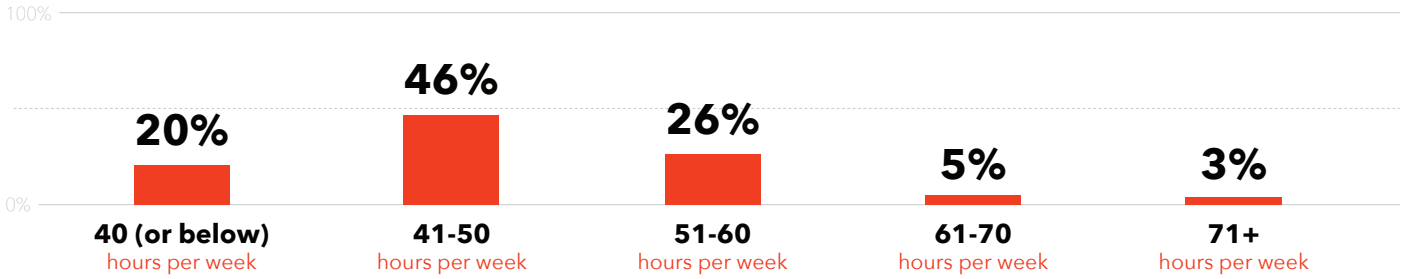


YEARS AT CURRENT JOB

= 1 YEAR



WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



JOB SEARCHING



32% PLAN TO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A NEW JOB NEXT YEAR.

GENDER



56%
FEMALE



43%
MALE



1%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

WHERE THEY WORK



- 1 New York City **27%**
- 2 Los Angeles **16%**
- 3 San Francisco **13%**
- 4 Richmond **13%**
- 5 Austin **3%**
- 6 Portland **3%**
- 7 Chicago **2%**
- Other **23%**

EMPLOYER TYPE

Advertising agency: **65%**

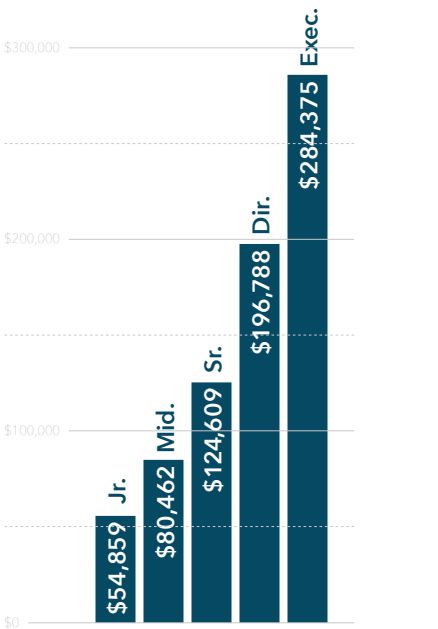
Brand-side (Nike, Target etc.): **10%**

Freelance: **17%**

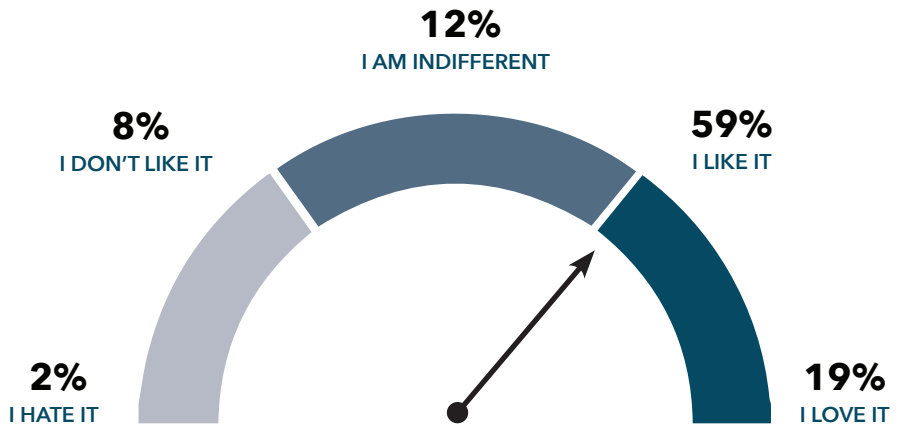
Other: **8%**

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY

* not including freelancers

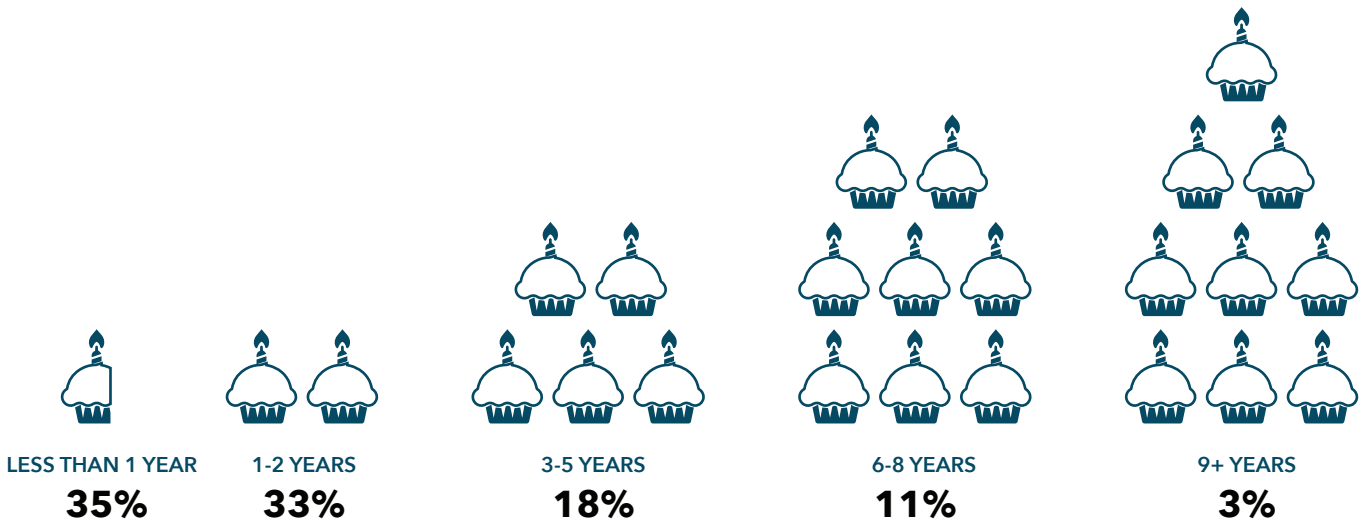


JOB SATISFACTION

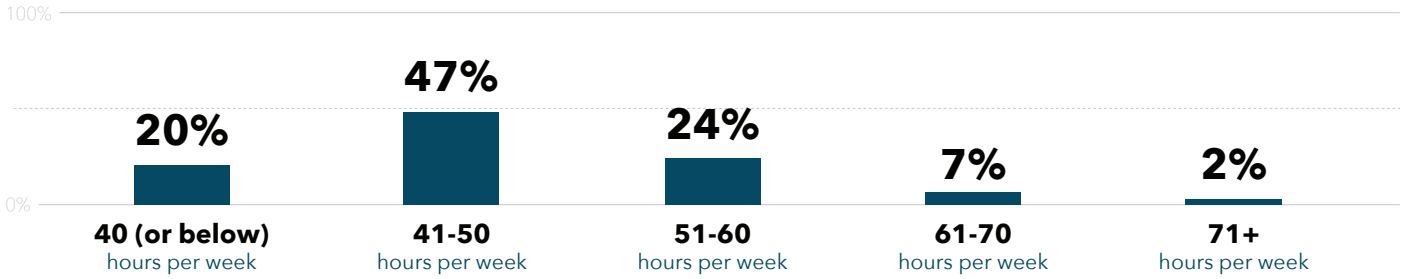


YEARS AT CURRENT JOB

= 1 YEAR



WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



JOB SEARCHING



38% PLAN TO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A NEW JOB NEXT YEAR.

GENDER



30%
FEMALE

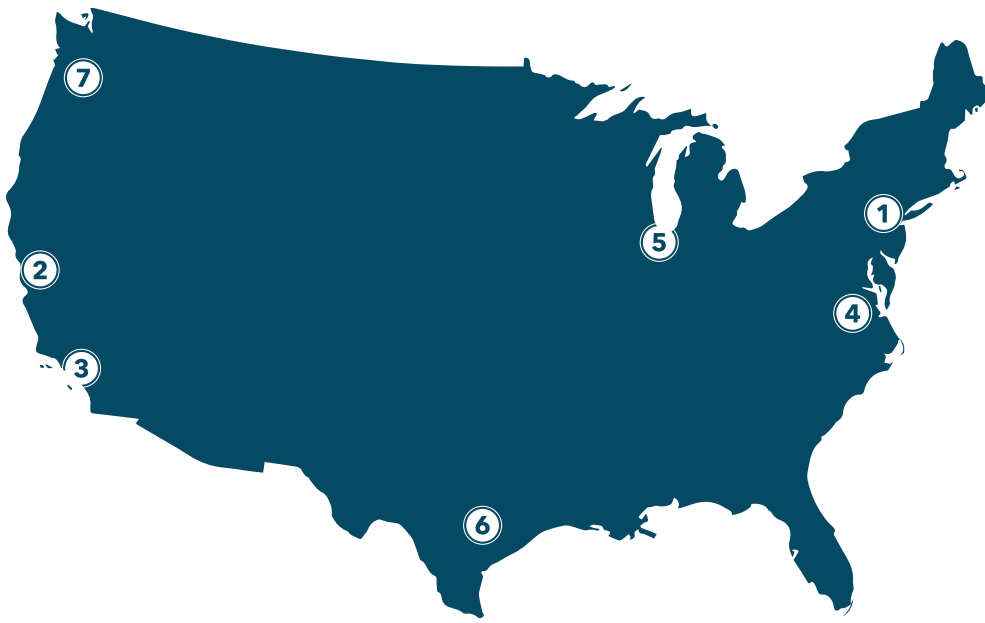


69%
MALE



1%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

WHERE THEY WORK



- 1 New York City **27%**
- 2 San Francisco **13%**
- 3 Los Angeles **13%**
- 4 Richmond **8%**
- 5 Chicago **6%**
- 6 Austin **4%**
- 7 Portland **3%**
- Other **26%**

EMPLOYER TYPE

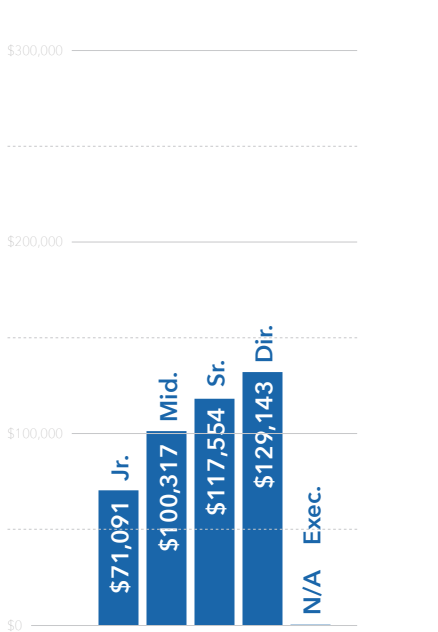
Full-service advertising agency:	24%
Digital advertising agency:	11%
Brand-side (Nike, Target etc.):	15%
Freelance:	9%
Brand/strategy/innovation consultancy:	15%
Start-up:	6%
Other:	20%

ROLES/TITLES

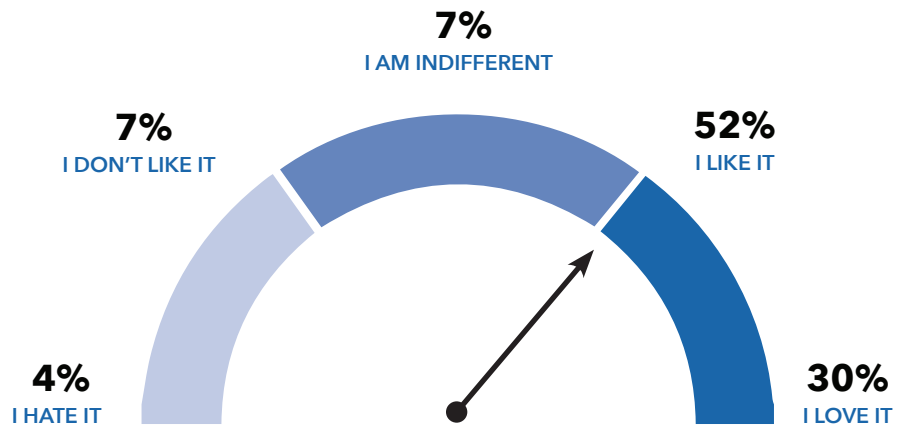
30%	UX Strategist/Designer
18%	Experience Designer
18%	Product Designer
11%	Art Director
6%	Creative Technologist
17%	Other

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY

* not including freelancers

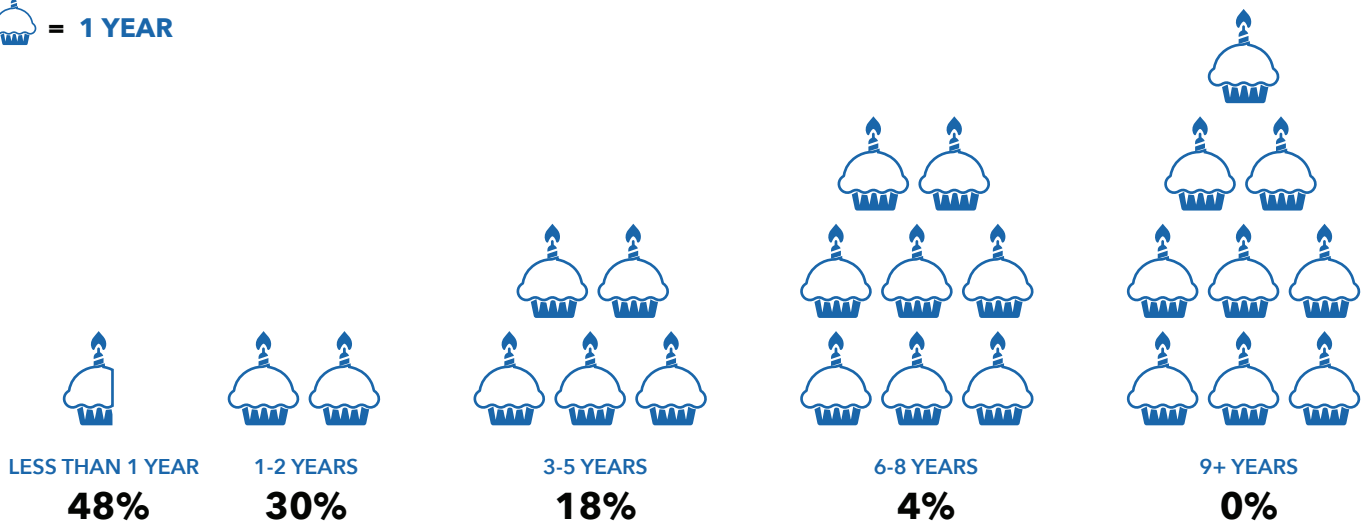


JOB SATISFACTION

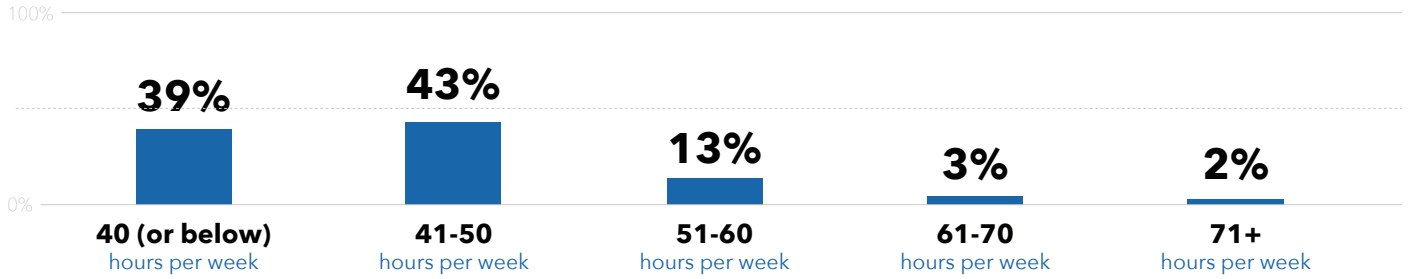


YEARS AT CURRENT JOB

= 1 YEAR



WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



JOB SEARCHING



40% PLAN TO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A NEW JOB NEXT YEAR.

GENDER



48%
FEMALE

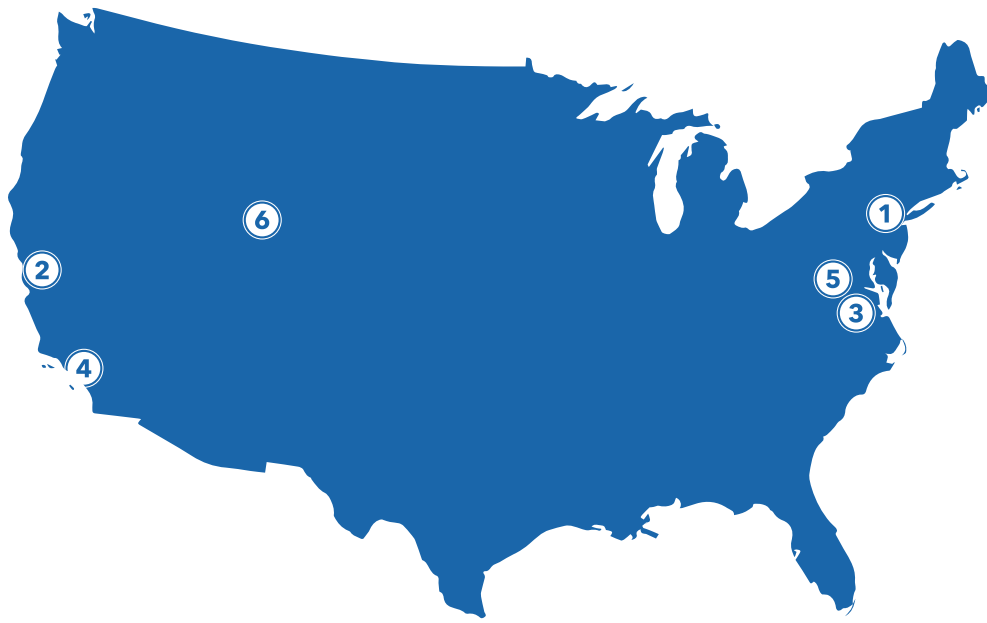


52%
MALE



0%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

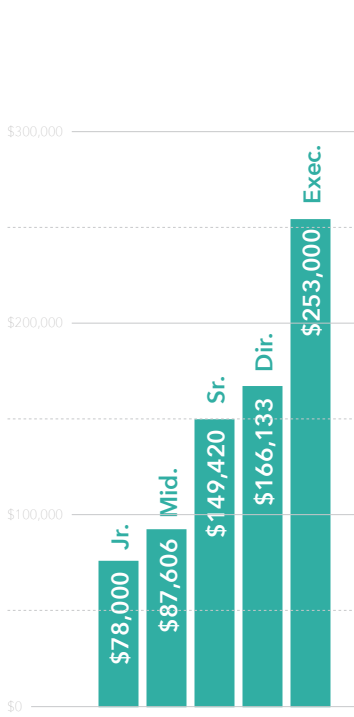
WHERE THEY WORK



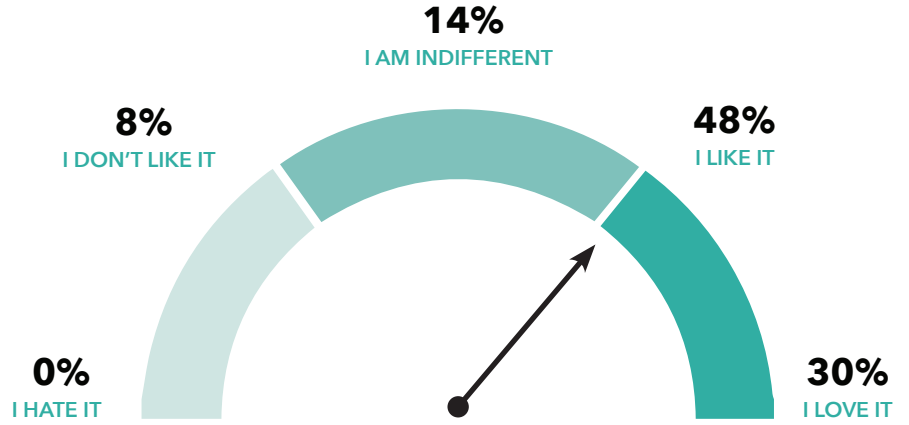
- 1 New York City **23%**
- 2 San Francisco **18%**
- 3 Richmond **15%**
- 4 Los Angeles **11%**
- 5 DC/NOVA **5%**
- 6 Boulder/Denver **4%**
- Other **24%**

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY

* not including freelancers



JOB SATISFACTION

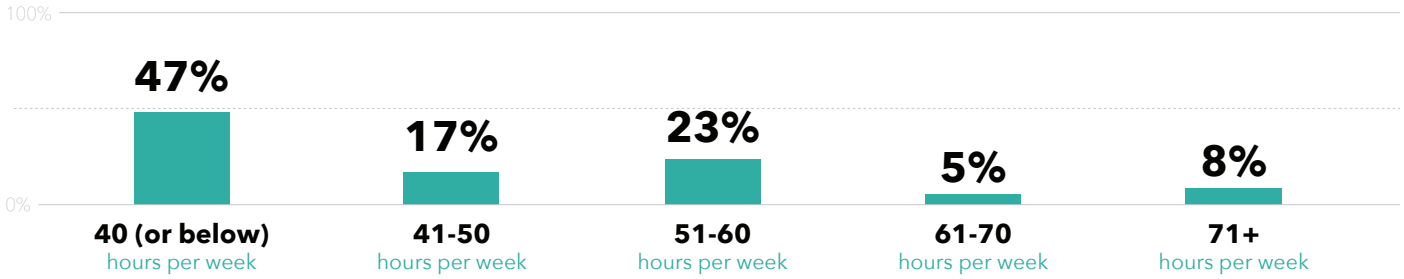


YEARS AT CURRENT JOB

= 1 YEAR



WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



JOB SEARCHING



27% PLAN TO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A NEW JOB NEXT YEAR.

GENDER



59%
FEMALE



41%
MALE



0%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

WHERE THEY WORK



- 1 Richmond **27%**
- 2 San Francisco **14%**
- 3 Austin **9%**
- 4 New York City **7%**
- 5 Los Angeles **6%**
- 6 DC/NOVA **4%**
- 7 Portland **4%**
- 8 Boulder/Denver **3%**
- Other **26%**

EMPLOYER TYPE

Advertising agency: **58%**

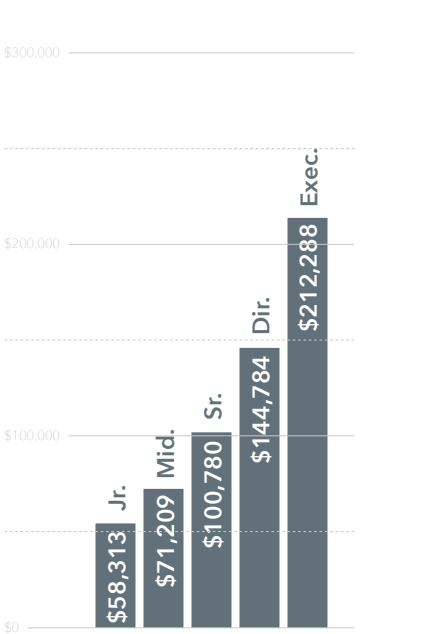
Brand/strategy/innovation consultancy: **15%**

Freelance: **7%**

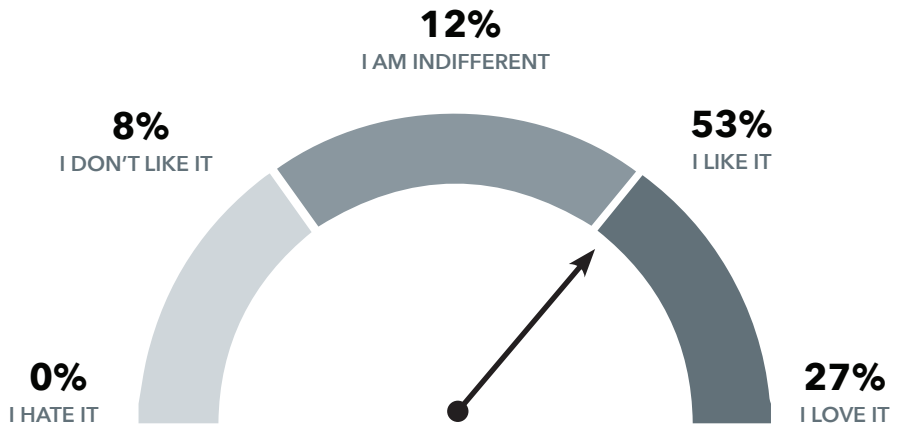
Other: **20%**

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY

* not including freelancers

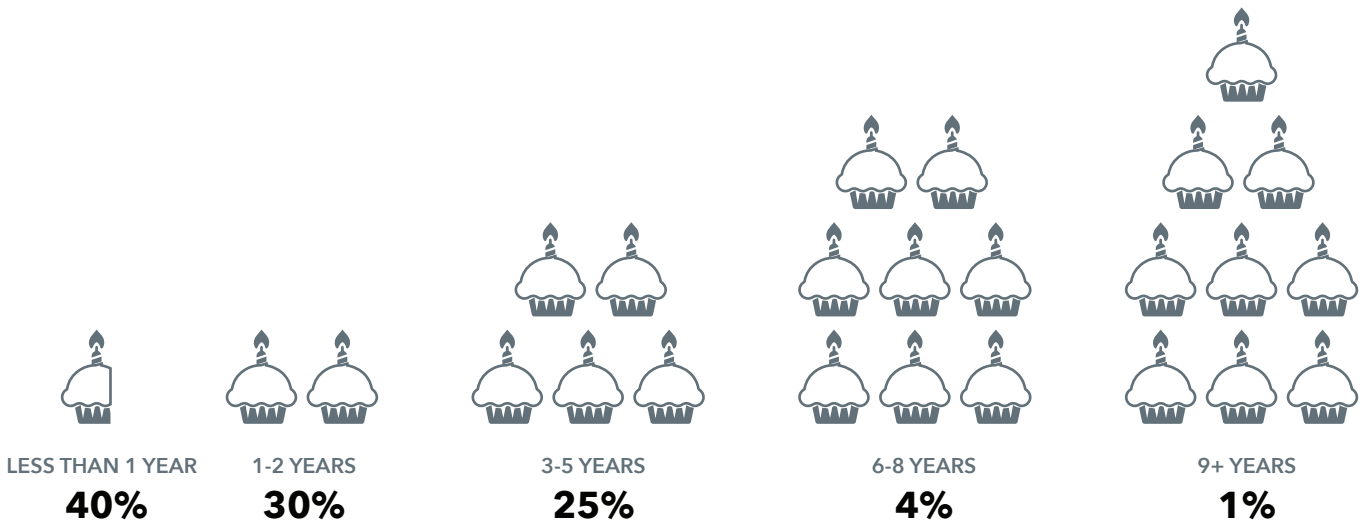


JOB SATISFACTION

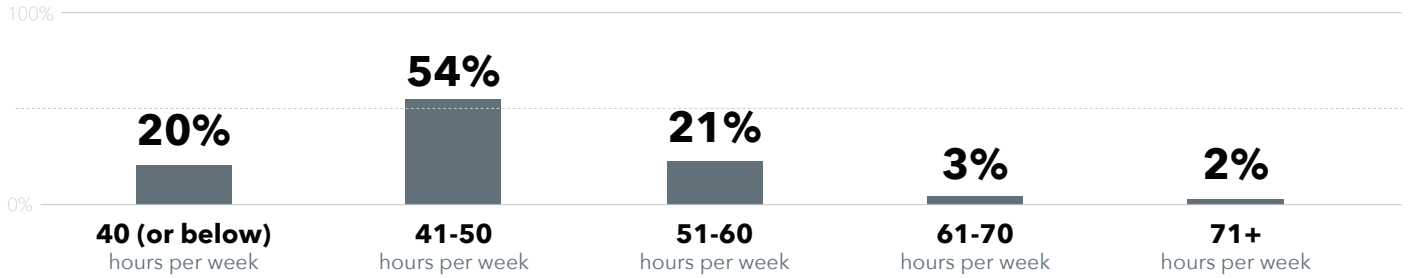


YEARS AT CURRENT JOB

= 1 YEAR



WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



JOB SEARCHING



32% PLAN TO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A NEW JOB NEXT YEAR.

GENDER



60%
FEMALE

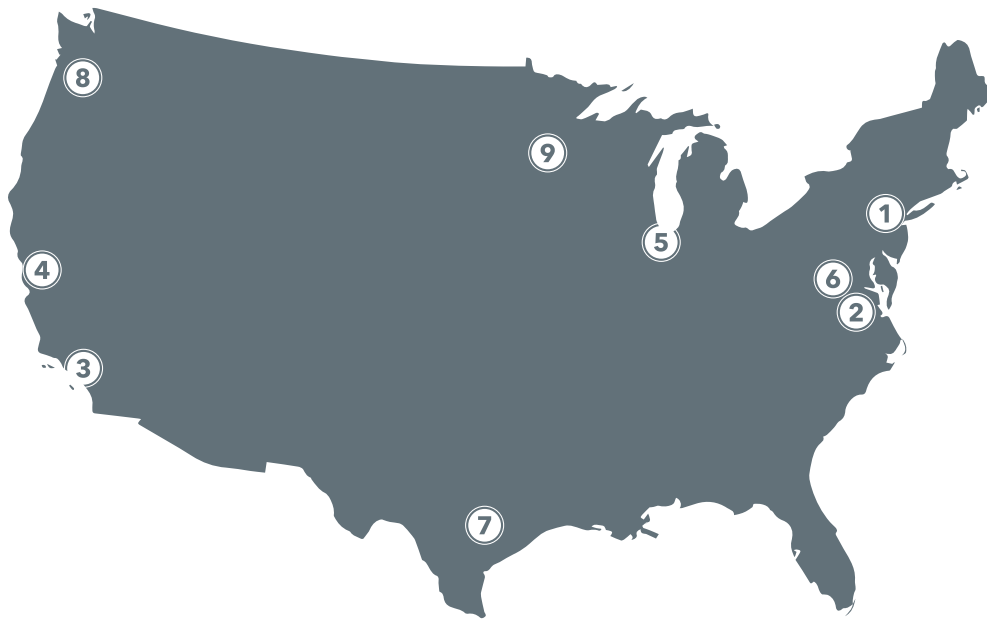


39%
MALE



1%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

WHERE THEY WORK



- 1 New York City **26%**
- 2 Richmond **13%**
- 3 Los Angeles **11%**
- 4 San Francisco **7%**
- 5 Chicago **6%**
- 6 DC/NOVA **4%**
- 7 Austin **3%**
- 8 Portland **3%**
- 9 Minneapolis **2%**
- Other **25%**

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Q: Have you ever considered becoming an entrepreneur?



* Note: 8% of those who responded "yes" already consider themselves to be an entrepreneur.

Answered "YES" (by gender)

- 48% Female
- 51% Male
- 1% Prefer to Self-Identify

Answered "YES" (by area of study)

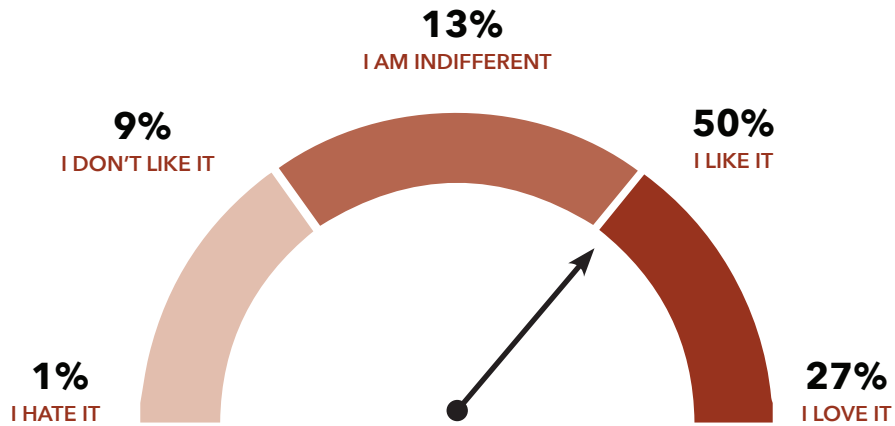
- 69% AD
- 61% CW
- 70% XD
- 81% CBM/ST (brand-side)
- 69% CBM/ST (agency-side)

Answered "YES" (by current job level)

- 9% Junior
- 24% Mid
- 33% Senior
- 25% Director
- 9% Executive

JOB SATISFACTION

For those considering entrepreneurship, their self-described happiness at their current job:



NOTE: I assumed that alums who were considering starting their own businesses were unhappy in their current jobs. That's not the case at all. In fact, most like or love their current jobs. Maybe they just feel that they can like what they're doing even more by working for themselves/building their own company/agency.

CAREER ATTRIBUTES

Q: For those considering entrepreneurship, what is MOST and LEAST IMPORTANT in terms of career attributes?

(Respondents could select multiple answers)

MOST IMPORTANT

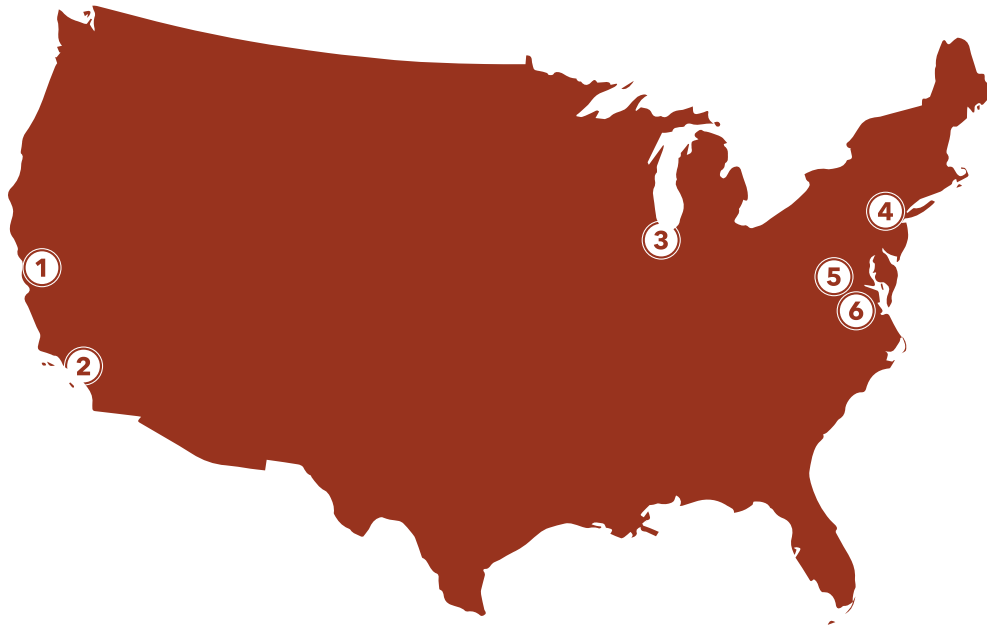
1. Work/Life Balance
2. Growth Potential
3. Clients/Categories I want to work with

LEAST IMPORTANT

1. Title
2. Networking potential/connections
3. Salary

START-UP LOCATIONS

Alums in these cities are most interested in starting their own businesses.



- 1 San Francisco
- 2 Los Angeles
- 3 Chicago
- 4 New York
- 5 Washington D.C.
- 6 Richmond

CAREER ATTRIBUTES

Q: What is holding you back from entrepreneurship? (select all that apply)

FINANCIAL SECURITY: I need to save more, find external funding, etc.



CAREER/EXPERIENCE: I want to get more experience, I still have more to learn, etc.



RISK: There are too many unknowns, I have a fear of failure, etc.



NETWORK: I want to build my network more, develop more relationships, etc.



SOMETHING ELSE



FREELANCERS

11% of respondents reported they are freelancers.



49%
FEMALE

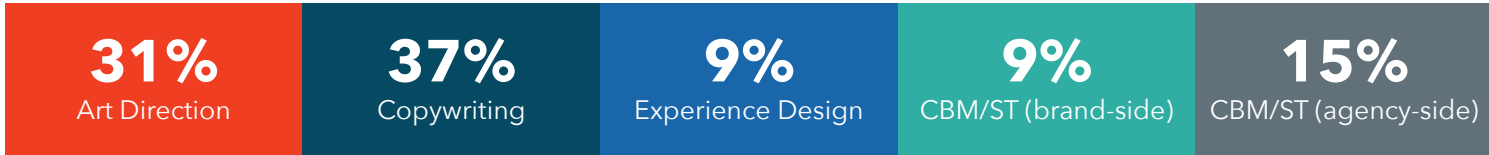


49%
MALE



2%
PREFER TO
SELF-IDENTIFY

ADs and CWs are most likely to freelance full-time, making up for **68%** of respondents.



- Most of the alums who are freelancing full-time are **experienced and working at senior or director levels**.
- **87%** of freelance respondents had **5+ years of work experience**, working at senior or director levels. This is likely due to the fact that it takes time to establish credibility and garner contacts/professional network.

TOP FREELANCING MARKETS



- | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|
| 1 | New York City | 38% |
| 2 | San Francisco | 14% |
| 3 | Los Angeles | 11% |
| 4 | Richmond | 10% |
| 5 | Portland | 5% |
| 6 | Chicago | 5% |

YEARS FREELANCING

About 3/4 of our alums are relatively new to freelancing full-time.



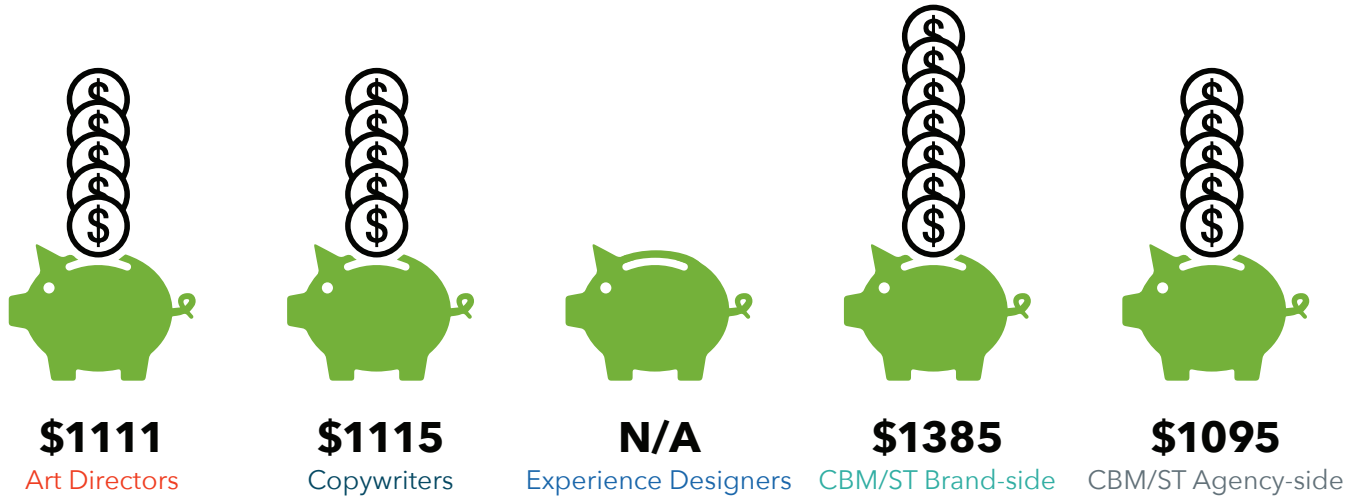
0-3 YEARS
71%



4+ YEARS
29%

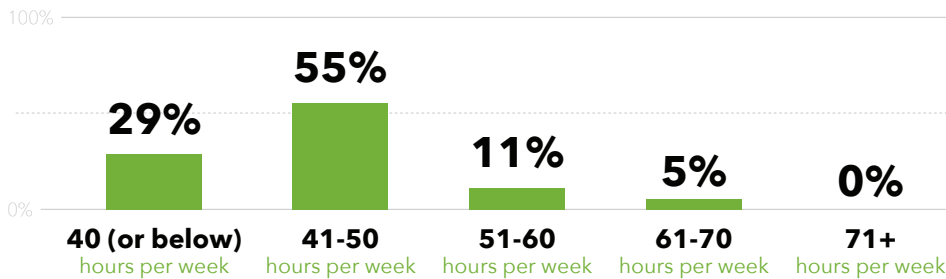
AVERAGE DAY RATE

Because **87%** of the respondents were at the senior/director level, we only included day rates for that level.

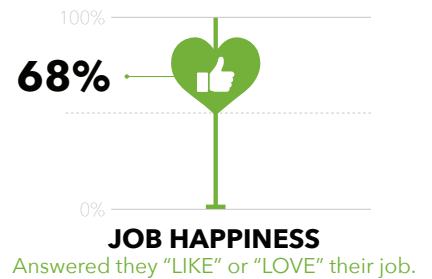


WEEKLY HOURS WORKED

They have an enviable work/life balance.



Q: How would you describe the way you feel about freelancing? (multiple choice)



NUMBER OF JOBS

Q: How many jobs do you generally work on at one time? (multiple choice)



RESOURCES

Q: The Brandcenter is looking to build out resources for our growing freelance network - Please share your go-to sites/sources you look to for freelancing? These could be for getting new clients/work, but could also be for other faces of freelancing (tax support, insurance resources, etc.)

- www.workingnotworking.com
- LinkedIn
- Personal Networking/Contacts
- Facebook (Groups)
- Freelancers Union
- Brandcenter Facebook Group
- Brandcenter Connections
- www.siftly.com
- EVA Marketplace
- Creative Mornings
- Toggl.com
- Glassdoor.com

WHERE OUR ALUMS WANT TO WORK NOW

Q: What agency/company would you LOVE to work for? (open-ended)

Note: This was a super diverse list! Over 250 companies and agencies were listed. Here are the top responses:



THE
MARTIN
AGENCY



NETFLIX



Wieden
Kennedy⁺



(I want to work for)
MYSELF

ROI

Q: Your Adcenter/Brandcenter experience was an investment. In looking back on your decision to attend, do you consider it worth the investment?

81%

Yes, it was absolutely worth the investment.

15%

It's too early/
I don't know yet.

4%

No, it was not worth the investment.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q: Have you ever considered becoming an entrepreneur?

1. What year did you graduate? (multiple choice)

- 1998
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018 (if selected go to 1b, then 1c)
- 2019 (if selected go to 1b)

1b. How many official job offers did you receive upon graduation? (Official means the agency/company made a formal offer verbally or in writing including title, salary, benefits.) (multiple choice) (2019 respondents go to Q2; 2018 respondents go to 1c)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

1c. Have you received a promotion and/or raise since you graduated? (multiple choice) (go to Q2)

- Yes
- No

2. What track were you in at the Adcenter/Brandcenter? (multiple choice)

- Art Direction
- Copywriting
- Strategy/Communications Strategy
- Creative Brand Management
- Experience Design/Creative Technology

3. Which of the following best describes the type of role you're currently in/your discipline?

We know there are a many-a-titles so please choose the one that aligns most with your current position.

(drop-down menu)

- Art Director
- Copywriter
- Creative Director
- Graphic Designer
- Strategist (Brand, Communications, Digital, etc.)
- Strategy Director
- Research (Design, Consumer, Market, etc.)
- Media Specialist
- UX Strategist
- UX Designer
- Creative Technologist
- Experience Designer
- Product Designer
- Brand Manager/Director/Supervisor/Executive
- Account Manager/Director/Supervisor/Executive
- Project Manager
- Resource Manager
- Marketing Manager
- New Business/Business Development
- Recruiter
- Producer

4. All agencies/companies define titles in different ways and have their own ways of explaining hierarchies. How would you define your current level? (multiple choice)

- Junior level
- Mid-level
- Senior level
- Director level
- Executive level

5. What city do you currently work in? (multiple choice)

- Atlanta
- Austin
- Boston
- Boulder/Denver
- Chicago
- Los Angeles
- Minneapolis
- New York City
- Portland
- Raleigh/Durham
- Richmond
- San Francisco
- Seattle
- Washington DC/Northern Virginia
- Other (Please specify)

6. What type of company do you currently work for? (multiple choice)

- Freelance (If selected, go to 6a-e series)
- Full-service advertising agency
- Digital advertising agency
- Brand/strategy/innovation consultancy
- Brand-side (Nike, Target, Casper, etc.)
- Non-profit
- Start-up
- Research or trend reporting company
- Other (Please specify)

6a. How long have you been freelancing? (multiple choice) (go to 6b)

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months - 1 year
- 1 - 3 years
- 3 - 5 years
- Over 5 years

6b. What is your average day rate? Please enter in \$XX format. (multiple choice) (go to 6c)

6c. How many jobs do you generally work on at one time? (multiple choice) (go to 6d)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

6d. The Brandcenter is looking to build out resources for our growing freelance network - Please share your go-to sites/sources you look to for freelancing? These could be for getting new clients/work, but could also be for other faces of freelancing (tax support, insurance resources, etc.) (open-ended) (go to 6e)

6e. If you're comfortable sharing, what is your freelance website URL? We hope to create a database of all Brandcenter alum freelancers to help you find each other and to share as a resource with our industry contacts. (open-ended) (go to 7)

7. Have you ever considered starting your own thing and becoming an entrepreneur?

(multiple choice) (if yes, go to 7a, if no, go to 8)

- Yes
- No

7a. What is holding you back from entrepreneurship? (check all that apply) (go to 8)

Career/Experience: I want to get more experience, I still have more to learn, etc.

Financial Security: I need to save more, find external funding, etc.

Risk: There are too many unknowns, I have a fear of failure, etc.

Network: I want to build my network more, develop more relationships, etc.

Something else: _____

8. What is your current annual salary? Please enter your salary in \$XXX,XXX format. If you are working abroad, please estimate the amount in US dollars.

(open-ended, in a format that can track numbers in Qualtrics)

9. How would you describe the way you feel about your current job? (multiple choice)

I hate it.

I don't like it.

I am indifferent.

I like it.

I love it.

10. Thinking of where you are in your career right now, rank your top THREE most important job attributes (#1 being your most important attribute.) (Ranking question, top three, 1 being most important. Randomize)

Salary

Mentorship

Cultural fit

Work/life balance

Company/agency's notoriety

Networking potential/connections

Growth potential

Clients I want to work with/category work

Global/cultural impact

Cause-related work

Autonomy

Fast-paced

Title

11. In this industry, we understand that workload varies depending on things like current projects, production, new business, etc. ON AVERAGE, how many hours per week do you work? (multiple choice)

40 (or below 40)

41-50

51-60

61-70

71+

12. How long have you been at your current job? (multiple choice)

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9+ years

13. Do you plan to actively look for a new job this year? (multiple choice)

- Yes (go to 13a)
- No

13a. What are the reasons you are looking for a new job? (Check all that apply)

- I want a higher salary.
- I want a higher title.
- I want to move to a new city.
- I want to try a new agency/company.
- I want to do something else in marketing/advertising/branding industry.
- I want to leave marketing/advertising/branding and do something else.
- I want to feel more challenged.
- I want more job stability.
- Other (Please specify)

14. Your Adcenter/Brandcenter experience was an investment - in time, money, energy (and likely more...). We want to know: in looking back on your decision to attend, do you consider it worth that investment?

- Yes, it was absolutely worth the investment.
- No, it was not worth the investment.
- I don't know.

15. How do you identify? (multiple choice)

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-identify: _____

16. Last question - thanks for hanging. What agency/company/brand would you LOVE to work for?

(open-ended)
