

# SALARY GUIDE

2023



# WELCOME BACK TO THE GUIDE



**This is the third Design Truth salary guide, so hopefully by now you know your way around.**

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved in Design Truth – whether that be clients, sponsors, those that turn up and travel to our events – all of your engagement and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated.

The main goal for 2022 was to invest in the brand and begin to scope out new services as part of the wider Design Truth vision. Surviving also an added bonus.

It is great to see the work from branding agency Pretty Clever who worked tirelessly on the rebrand, and the immediate success of delivering the first Design Truth training with Liam Martin.

2023 creates a unique challenge for us all. As a business, we must balance community enthusiasm with commercial fundamentals.

The shape of the economy creates genuine concern for parts of the community, but we

hope this guide can continue to be a platform for you to achieve what you deserve in your next salary review.

Thank you to the hundreds of industrial designers that have filled out the Salary Survey. Your input and insight are what makes this guide an industry essential.

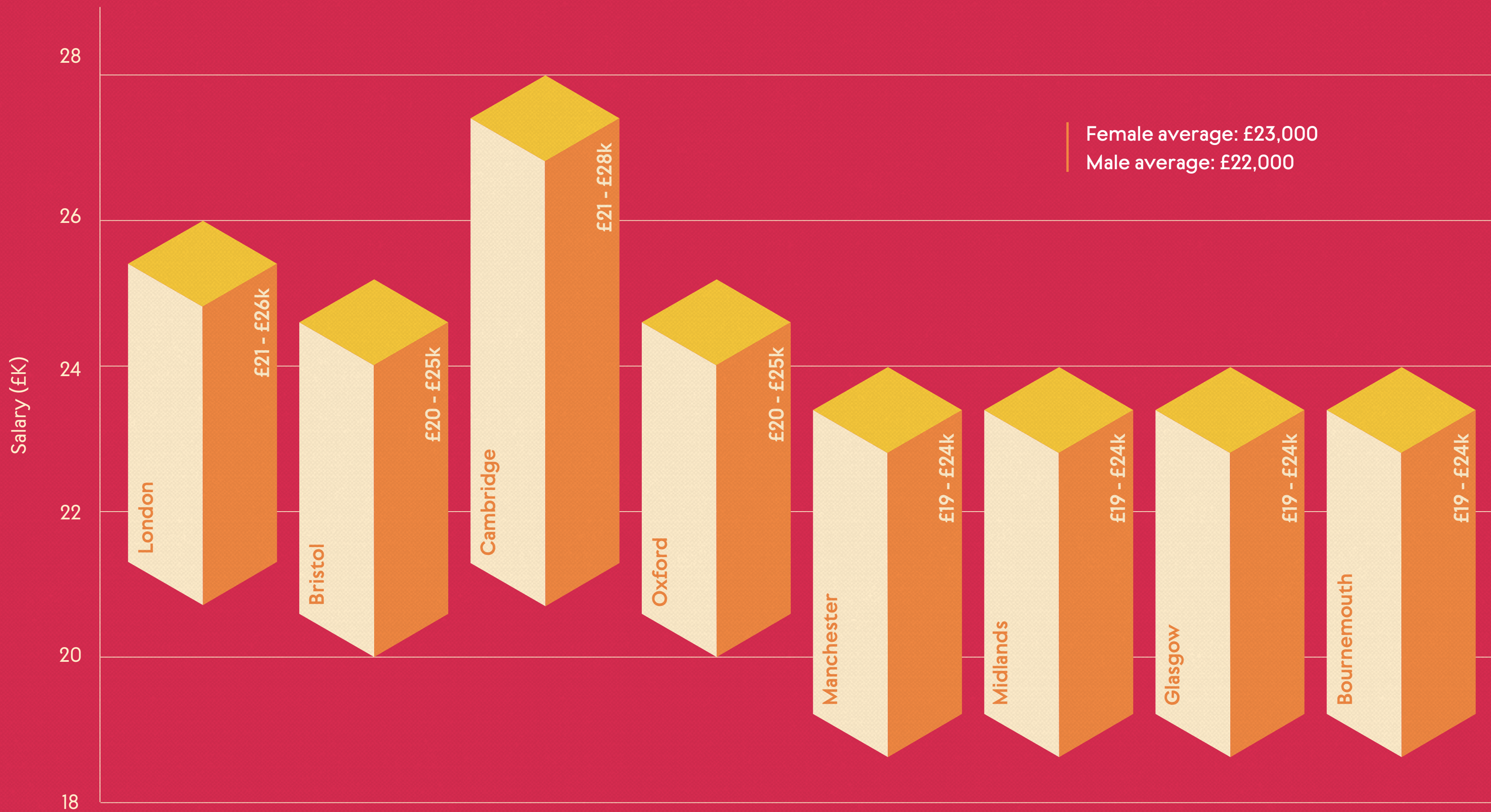
Numbers provided on the guide are a combination of those that filled out the survey as well as the Design Truth internal recruitment database.

A theme for 2023 is exploring a gender pay gap, and we have worked with Hayley Maynard and Georgia Thomas from Blended to provide some data and context which we hope is the start of integrating this into future editions.

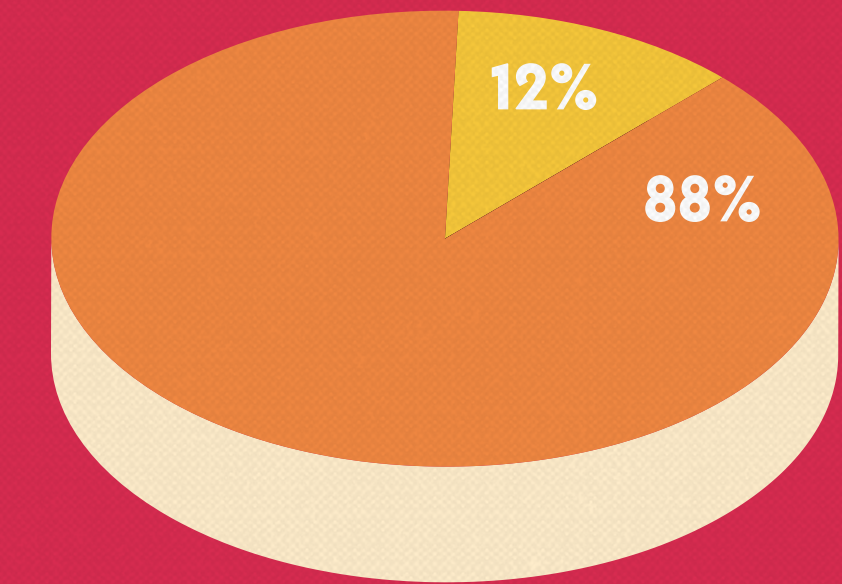
Let's make 2023 a year to remember.

→ **Brad Harper** | [@designtruth](#)

# YOUR FIRST JOB



We found it is more likely that a male is on the lower end of the averages, but this is proportionate to an industry that is 88% male in the UK.



Average in London & Cambridge is £24,000.  
Outside of London is £22,000.

Freelance rate:  
£150 per day



# UNIVERSITY DAYS ARE BEHIND YOU

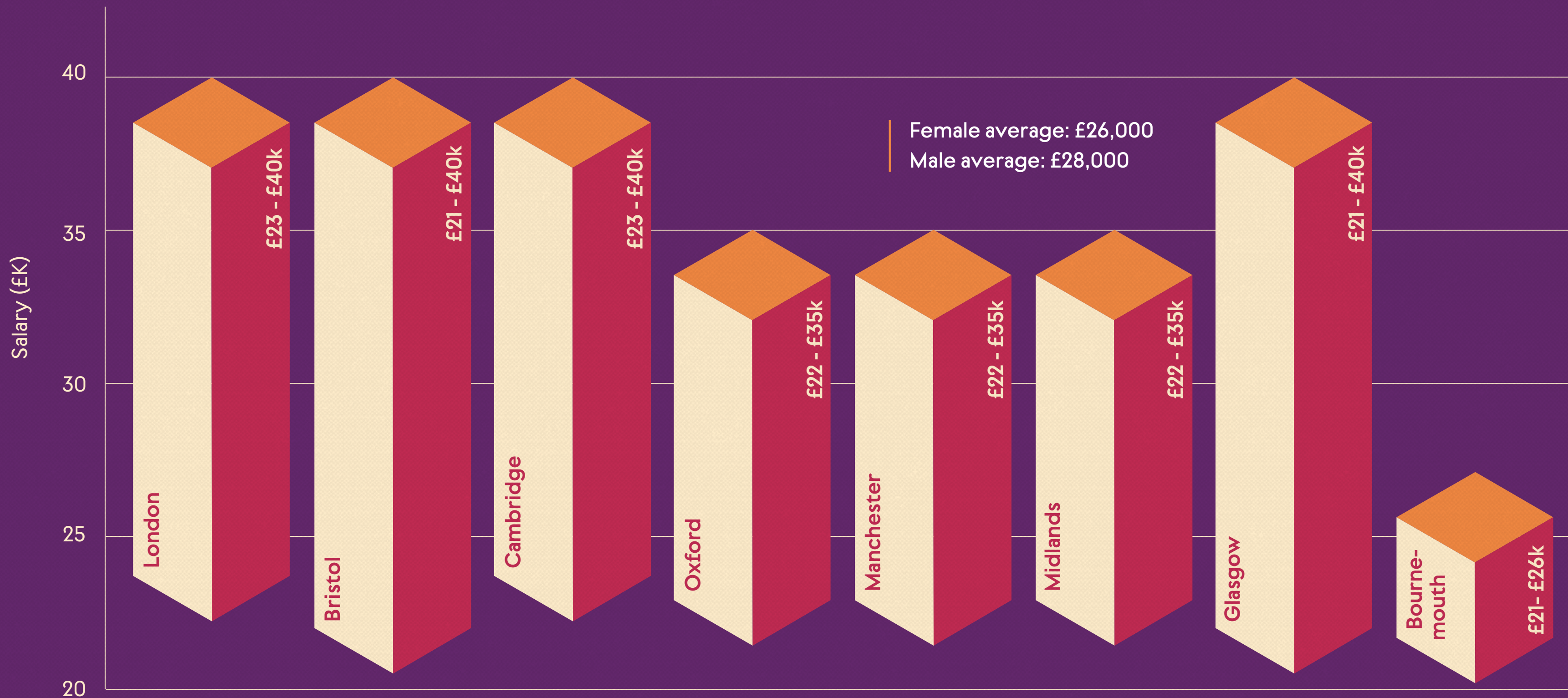
1-2 Years of Experience

Businesses  
outside of London  
compete with  
London salaries.

Retention of staff is  
more important than the  
attraction of new talent,  
so businesses are doubling  
down on keeping their  
best performers.

72% of male designers had  
a pay rise, 65% of female  
designers had a pay rise.  
The average pay rise for a  
female designer was 20%,  
a male designer was 13%.

What we are seeing is  
significant difference in the  
higher ends, with pay rises  
exceeding inflation.  
Some to the tune of 30-35%.



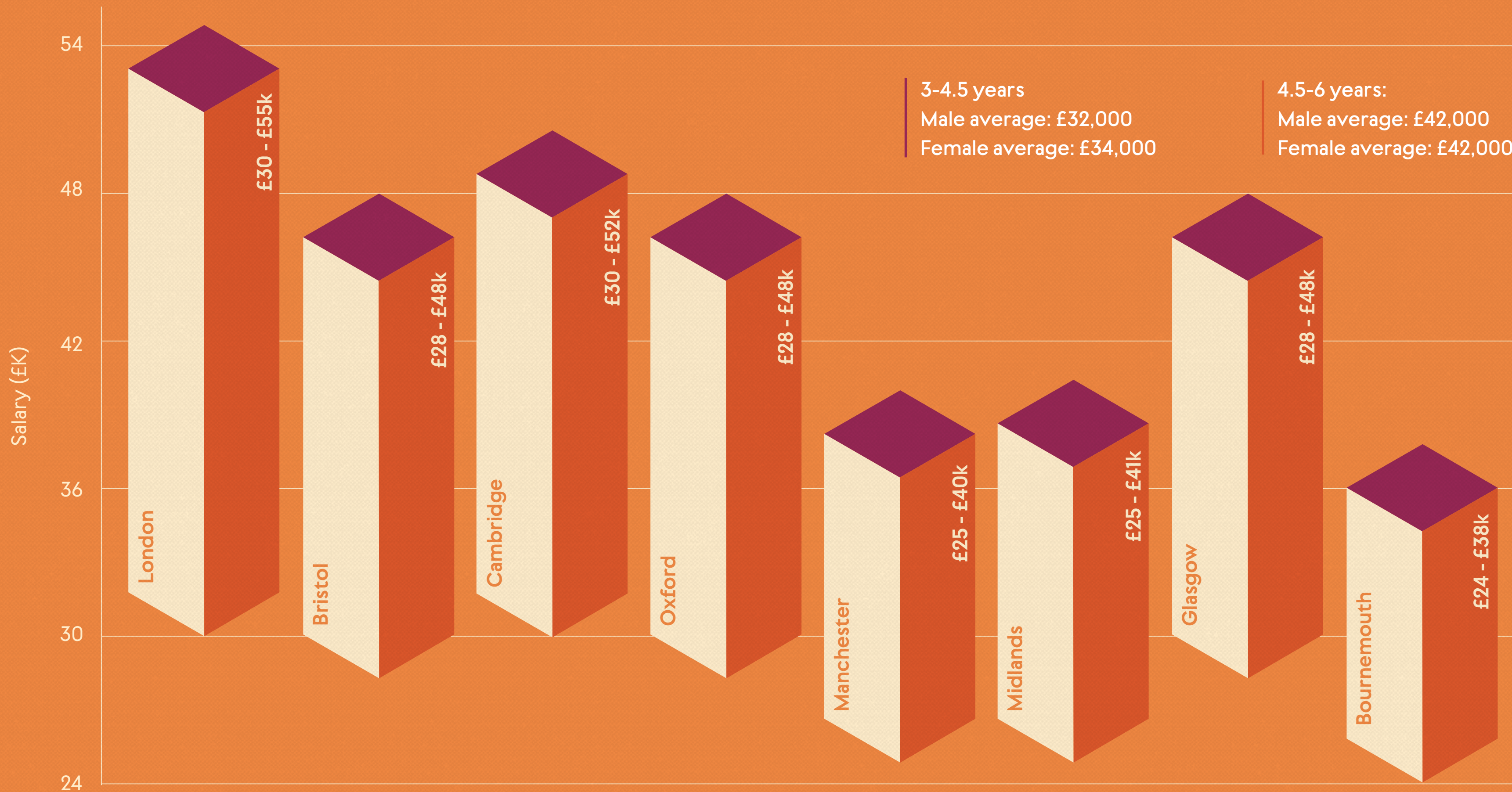
Average in London, Bristol  
& Cambridge is £27,000.  
Outside is £24,000.

Freelance rate:  
£150-£200 per day



# THE CAREER MOVE

3-6 Years of experience



# 100%

of the top  
20% of earners  
were all male.

The pool of female design talent in the UK starts to significantly decrease at this point.

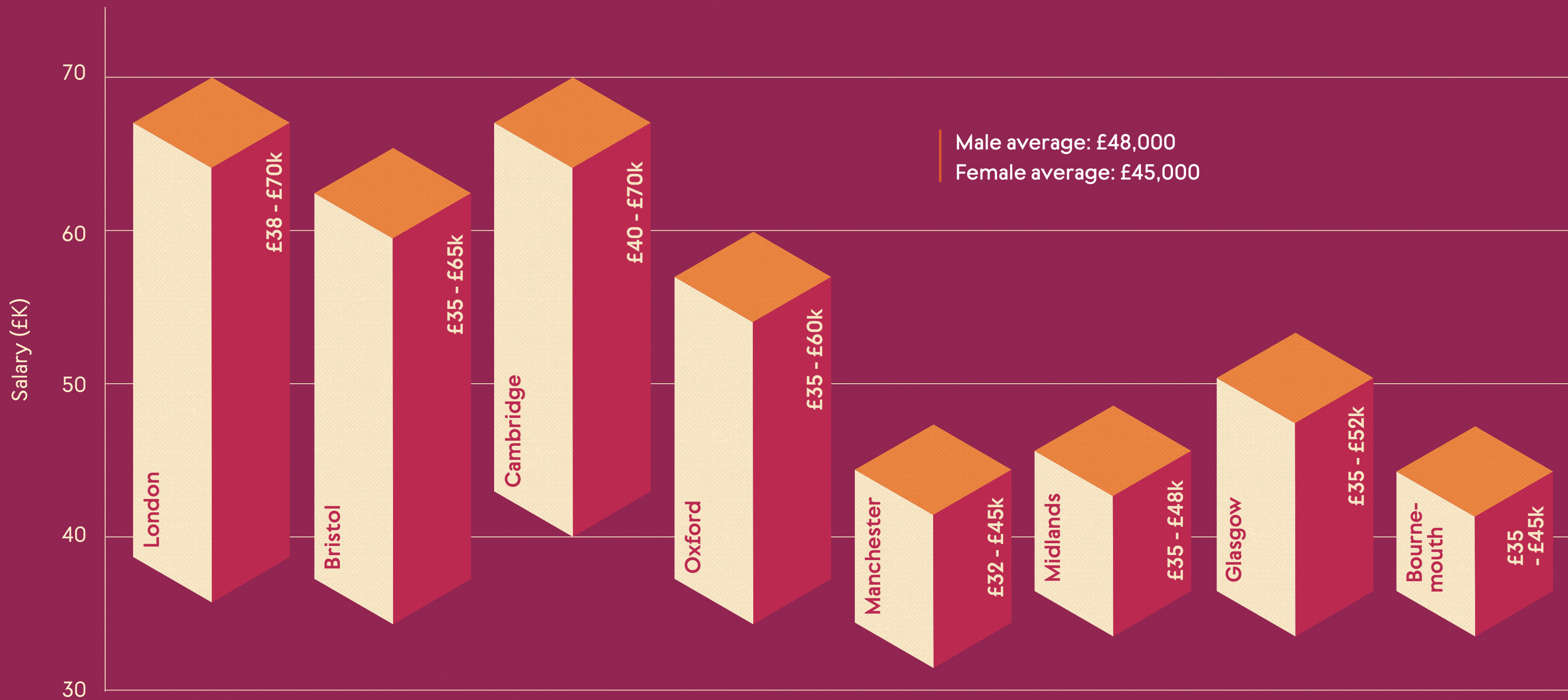
3-4.5 Years  
Average in London, Bristol & Cambridge is £36,500. Outside of London is £28,000.

4.5-6 Years  
Average in London, Bristol & Cambridge is £42,000. Outside of London is £35,000.



# THE FANCIER JOB TITLE

6-10 Years of experience  
(Excludes management)



**Average pay rise has significantly decreased from this point – with many achieving a raise well below inflation.**

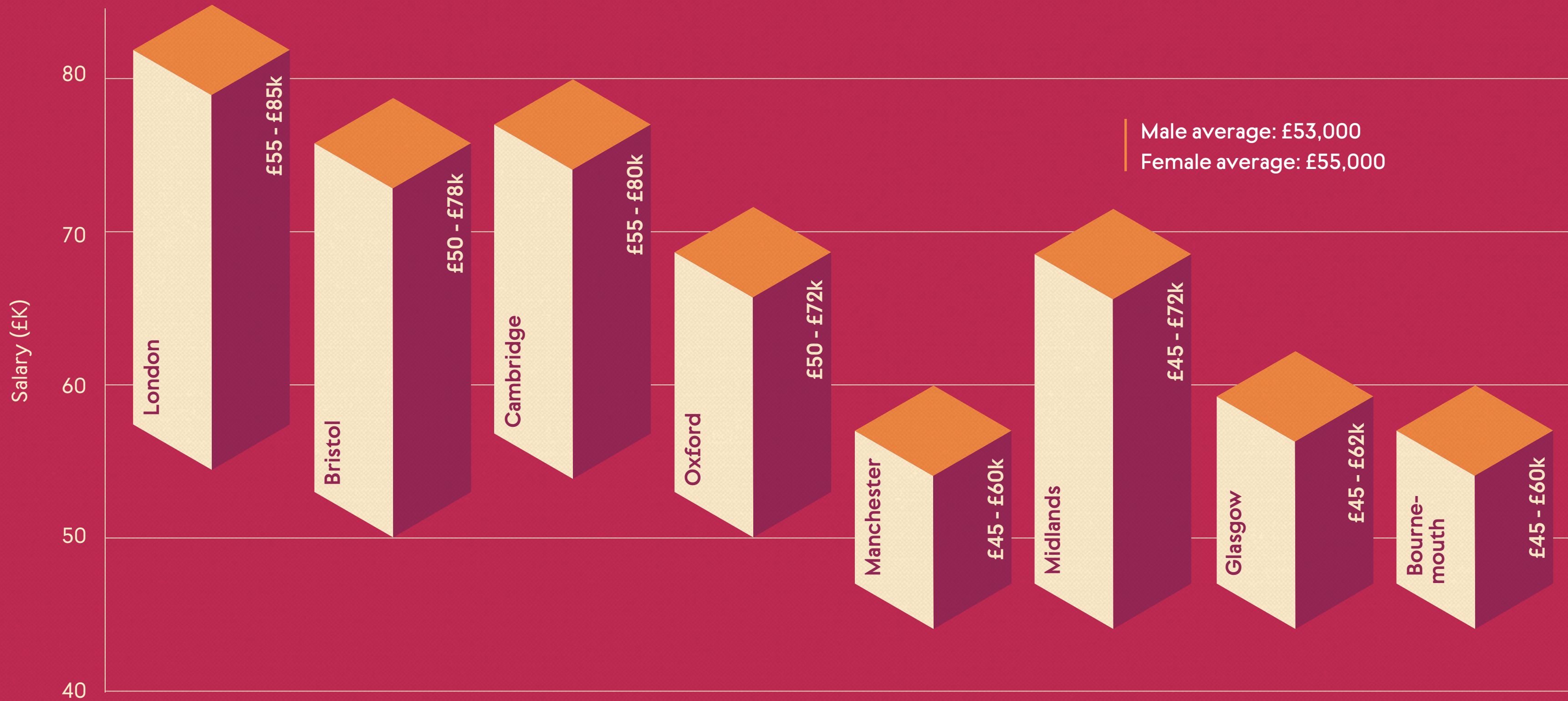
Average in London, Bristol & Cambridge is £48,000. Outside is £41,000.

Freelance rate:  
£275-£400 per day

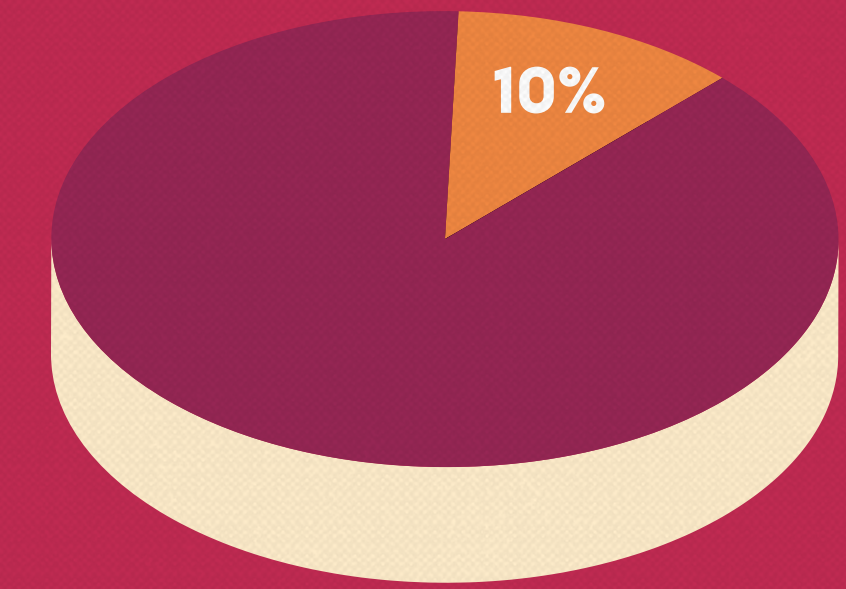


# THE SEASONED PRO

10+ Years of experience  
(Excludes management)



Top 10% of  
higher earners  
were all male.



The female average  
is higher as the  
talent pool is 1-3%

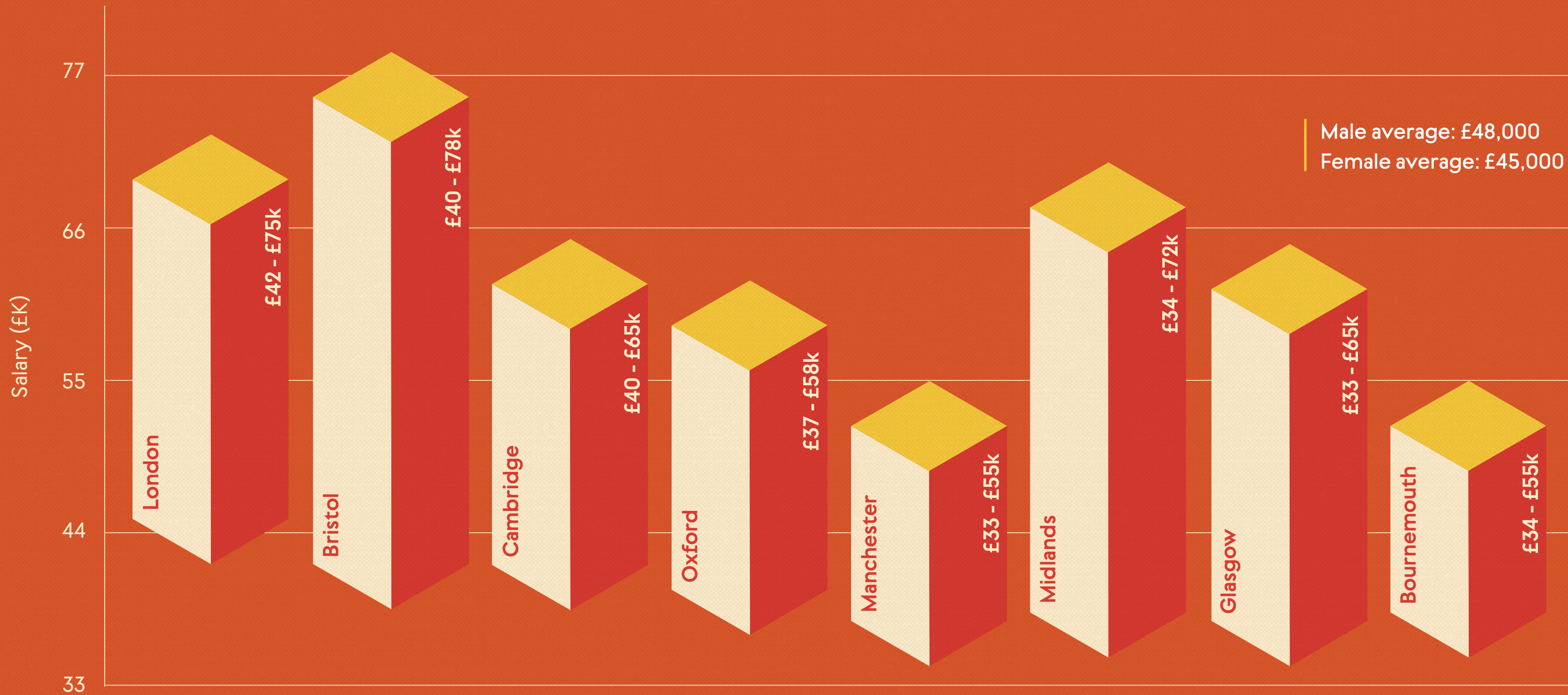
Average in London, Bristol  
& Cambridge is £62,000.  
Outside is £48,000.

Freelance rate:  
£300-£650 per day



# MANAGEMENT

Management (Design Manager)



Average in London, Bristol & Cambridge is £52,000.  
Outside is £45,000.

Freelance rate:  
£350-£650 per day



# LEADERSHIP

(Head of Design, VP of Design, Design Director etc)

There were no female design leaders earning £100,000+.

Male average: £78,000+  
Female average: £72,000+



Salaries are topping out around £140,000.

This does not include any bonuses or equity which are naturally on offer in these types of positions.

Average in London, Bristol & Cambridge is £75,000.  
Outside is £65,000.

Freelance rate: £550+ per day



# HOW TO TALK ABOUT PAY

By Anson Cheung

In my industrial design career, I've been on both the employee and the employer side of the compensation discussion. I started my career as an intern at what would become one of the top design studios in Silicon Valley. I eventually became a partner, and helped grow the business and the design team over six years before stepping away to become an independent designer in 2022. I thought I'd share some thoughts as to how to talk productively about pay as a designer. If you prepare well (and you've done well in your job), you make it easy for your employer to give you the raise you want.

Most designers make the mistake of approaching compensation discussions from the inside out; they ask for a raise based on their own internal wants and needs. They may point to their growing years of experience, tenure at the company, or cost of living increases. While all these things may be valid, they simply aren't that convincing to a manager or business owner. What's more

convincing is to approach the discussion from the outside in and see it for what it is: a business decision.

**Your compensation is a measure of the value you provide to the company.**

If you are a high-value employee, the company should be highly incentivized to keep you happy, as turnover is expensive. So when discussing compensation, it's in your best interest to point to as many external markers of the value you contribute as you can: projects completed on time and on budget, happy clients, new employees trained, and so on. Track these wins throughout the year and write them down as you go. These data points are what will make a convincing case for your raise.

Once you have a strong case for your value, have your numbers ready. It's impossible to discuss compensation in the abstract, and frustrating for employers when employees say they want more but can't say how much. Know what you're aiming for and do your research to make sure it's reasonable for your industry and company size. There are many ways to gather data points: anecdotally (from friends and colleagues), salary websites, and of course, this very salary guide.

When actually having the conversation, first see if the company will proactively offer you a raise. If you are performing well and part of a successful company that values its employees, you might be pleasantly surprised by the company's offer. Otherwise, make your ask clearly and back it up with your research and achievements. Depending on your relationship with your manager, these conversations can be uncomfortable, but if you approach it from with right mindset, focus on the value you bring and have

compelling data, you've set up the best conditions for yourself to get rewarded.

→ Anson Cheung | [anson.design](https://anson.design)



# DOES GENDER PLAY A ROLE IN PAY, FAIRNESS & JOB SECURITY ACROSS THE DESIGN INDUSTRY ACROSS THE UK?

Our aim was to explore far more than just if there was a pay gap in industrial design, we set out to explore how gender may play a role in pay, fairness and job security across the industry.

This is the first time that we've been able to split this kind of data by gender and although there is still some progress to make, we are prominently delighted by the results!

We will let the data tell you the story...

→ [Blended](#) | [@blendeduk](#)

## Shared similar experiences

We wanted to get an understanding of how people feel about pay, fairness and job security. Although these figures show that at the industry level, we have some work to do, we were thrilled to see that gender does not appear to play a role in this.

For example, over 70% of men and women feel secure in their job in 2023.

## Gender Split across Roles

This gender split becomes increasingly uneven as we look at more senior roles, with 35% of midweight and just 20% of seniors identifying as female. With only one year of data, we cannot yet determine whether females are leaving roles, or if there is a time lag for this new wave of juniors to progress through their careers. We were unable to assess the director level, simply because there were not enough females in the data pool.

## New Wave of 50/50 Gender Split!

Another exciting discovery is that we currently have a 50/50 gender split among junior designers across the UK!



## The Gender Pay Gap

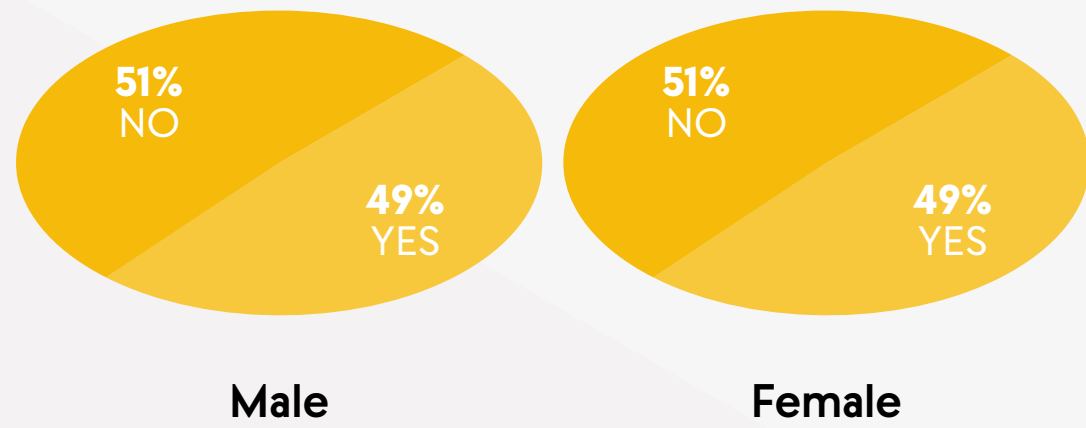
In more positive news, there does not appear to be a pay gap at junior and senior levels!

However, as a mid-weight, males are getting paid 5-12.5% more than females depending on which part of the country they work in.

## Shared similar experiences

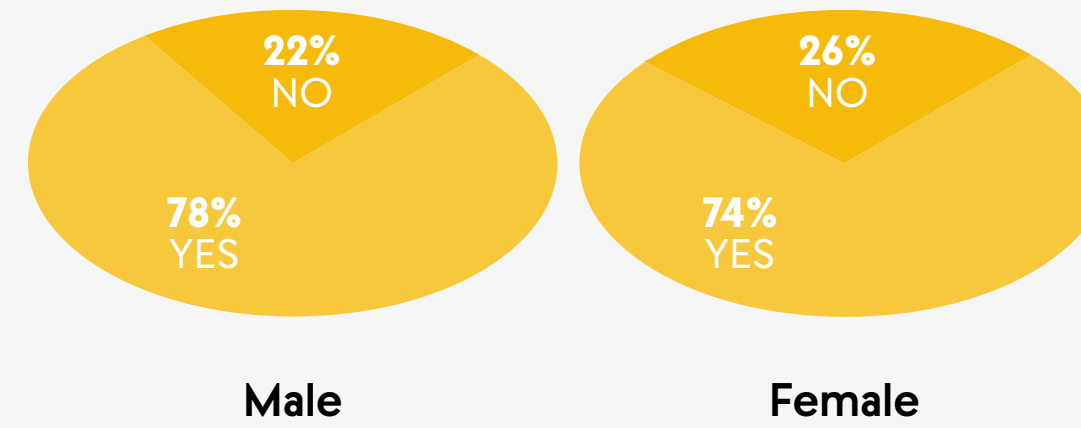
Looking purely at the data, we were surprised and delighted to find that there is very little difference between men and women when it comes to how they feel about pay, job security and overall fairness.

Are you considering leaving your current role or the industry?



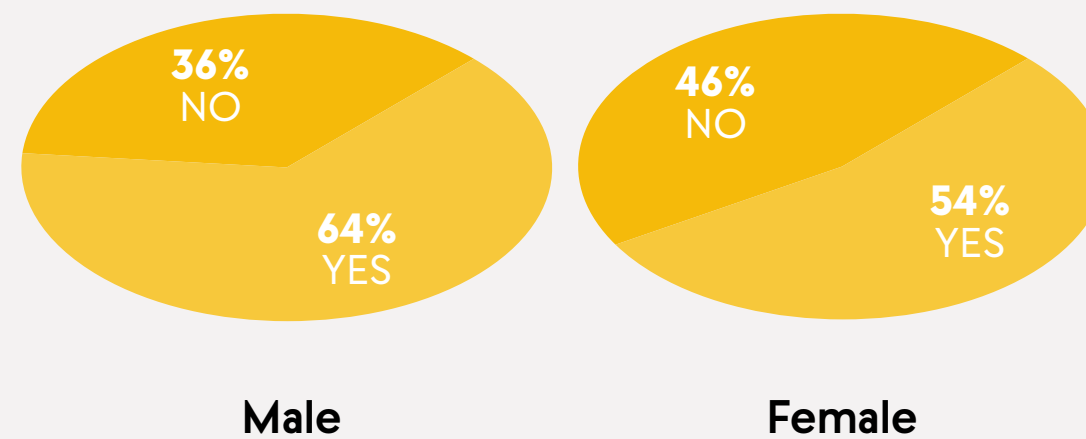
With identical figures between men and women, 49% of people in the industry are currently considering leaving their current role.

Do you feel secure in your job in 2023?



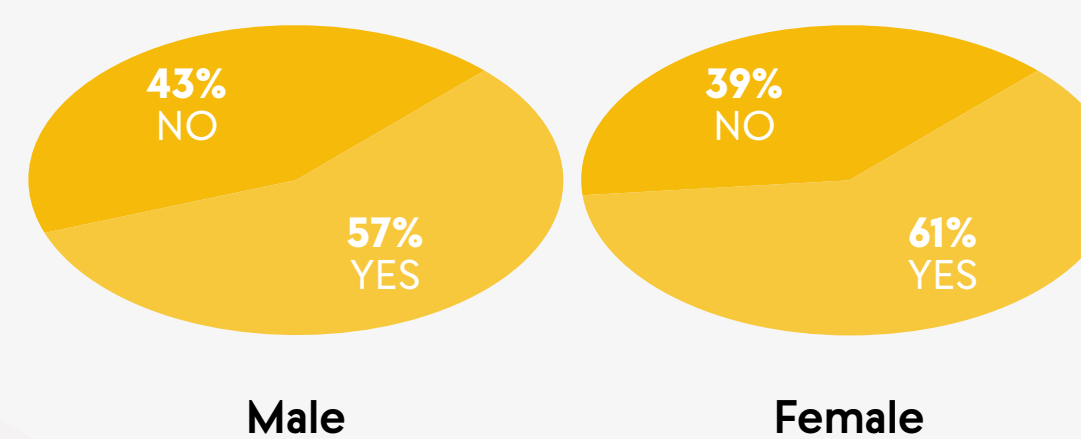
Over 75% of people currently feel secure in their jobs - a brilliant result considering the economic climate we're in.

Do you believe you are paid the same as colleagues at the same level and experience?



Over 36% of people believe that they are not being paid the same as colleagues with the same level and experience as them - this is inflated for women at 46%.

Do you feel you are being underpaid?



Over half of the design industry feels as though they are being underpaid, with 57% of men and 61% of women answering that they feel this way.

# The Gender Pay Gap

## Our Approach

To discover if there is indeed a gender pay gap within the industrial design industry, we started by comparing male and female salaries in London as well as male and female salaries across the rest of the UK. These were compared across junior, mid-level and senior positions. At each position, we compared the mean average salary, the salary bracket and the number of individuals in these positions.

## There are limits to what we could analyse:

- We were unable to compare salaries above senior level e.g. director/head of design, as there simply wasn't a large enough data pool of women.
- We weren't able to break down the data by region, as there simply weren't enough women at all seniority levels.

	Location	Identifies as	No of respondents	Gender Split (m/f)	Salary bracket	Mean Average salary (rounded to the nearest penny)
Junior Designer	London	Male	13	~50/50	£21,580 - £36,000	£29,352.31
		Female	12		£24,000 - £35,525	£29,043.75
	Rest of UK	Male	11	~50/50	£20,000 - £30,000	£25,936.36
		Female	10		£22,000 - £30,000	£26,291.50
Mid-level Designer	London	Male	13	65/35	£27,000 - £50,000	£38,676.92
		Female	7		£31,000 - £40,000	£34,371.43
	Rest of UK	Male	28	80/20	£22,500 - £60,000	£37,335.71
		Female	7		£28,000 - £42,000	£35,585.71
Senior Designer	London	Male	12	80/20	£32,000 - £60,000	£44,115.38
		Female	3		£36,000 - £55,400	£44,466.67
	Rest of UK	Male	21	84/16	£34,000 - £90,000	£48,930.95
		Female	4		£38,000 - £55,000	£46,625.00

**Junior**

We were delighted to discover junior positions in London and across the UK have a 50/50 gender divide. There is also no sign of a gender pay gap. This is a hugely positive story in terms of gender diversity and equal pay for our industry.

**Mid-Level**

The mid-level data tells a different story. Here we begin to see the gender split becoming more uneven at 35% female to 65% male.

A gender pay gap was revealed, with designers who identified as female being paid 11.13% less than their male counterparts in London and 4.68% less in the rest of the UK.

The top-end earning potential also reveals a gap. The top end of the salary bracket for designers who identify as female is £10,000 less in London and £18,000 less in the rest of the UK than the top end of their male counterparts' salary bracket.

**Senior**

The senior designer data shows a lack of gender diversity at senior levels and beyond.

**Here we begin to see the gender split becoming even more uneven at 16% female to 84% male across the UK.**

It is worth noting that the data pool of senior women was smaller than is ideal to draw accurate conclusions from, but it does reflect the reality of women in our industry.

In more positive news, there did not appear to be a statistically significant gender pay gap. The top-end salary bracket for men appears higher across the rest of the UK but this has been skewed by a small number of higher salaries, rather than a broader trend.



Image: Studio Wood

**As this is the first year that the salary data has been broken down by gender, this data reflects one point in time. We hope to analyse the data each year to discover how it is trending.**

**For example, there may be a lack of senior designers who identify as female in 2023, but this data doesn't yet show us if this is because they are leaving the industry or if fewer entered as junior designers at the beginning of their careers.**

→ Blended | @blendeduk

# A SECURE FUTURE

Left: WMP Design  
Right: Beta Design

Another 12-months has passed. Maybe a 6-week break in Australia speeds things along.

A theme of previous Design Truth guides – which started in the height of the pandemic – was the challenge that lay ahead. In 2023, for many a corner has turned.

**74% of industrial designers feel secure in their current jobs.**

At the heart of healthy employment and professional development is security. From lecturing at multiple universities, travelling up and down the country for DT events, meeting various industry associations, at the very core of our community is a sense of positivity and new opportunity. We still face challenges. 93% of industrial designers felt Brexit has had a negative impact, as many feel we are beginning to experience the visceral impact of that vote from 2016.

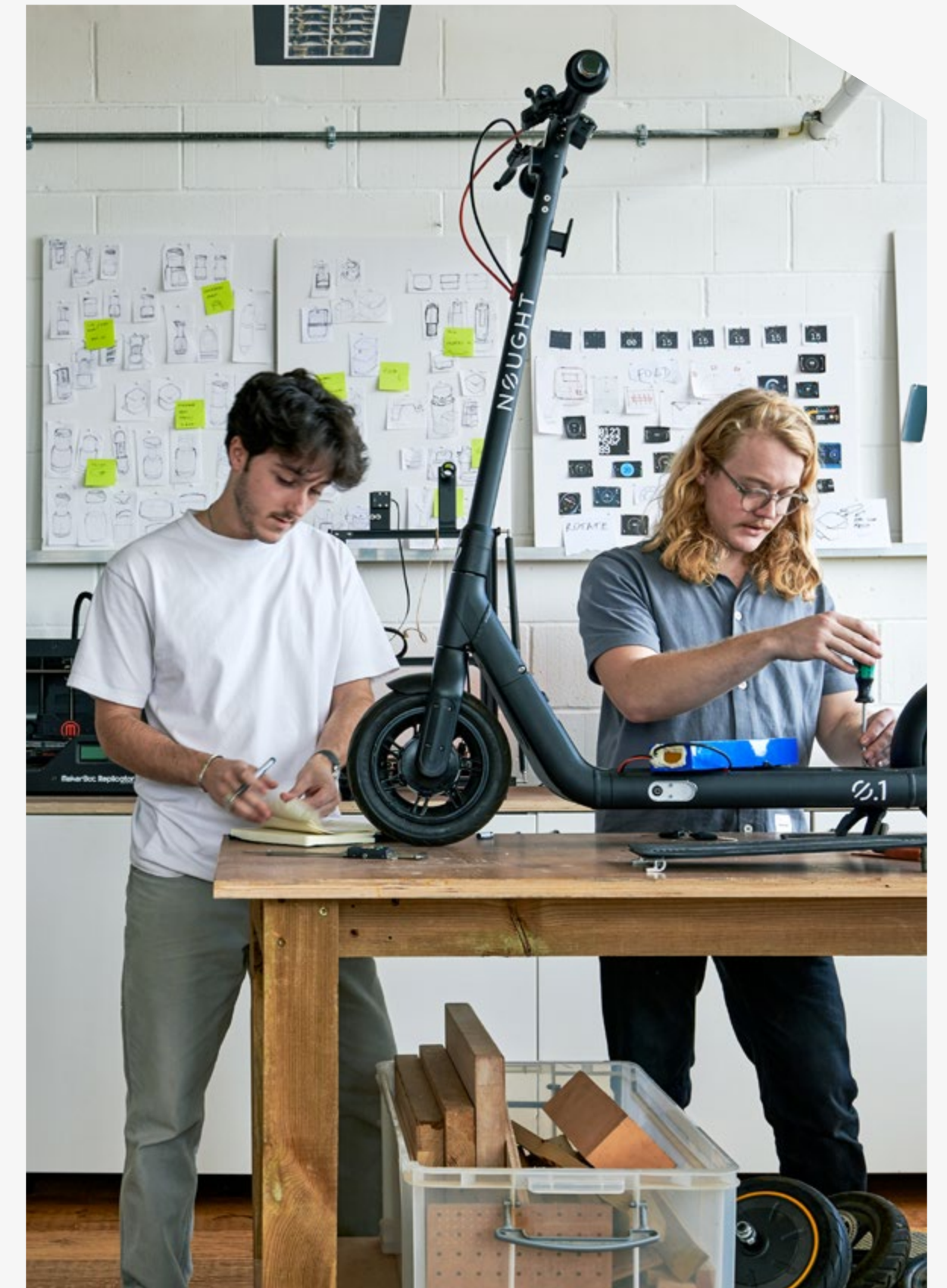


With security, a hope for 2023 is that materialises into further movement. Only 28% of industrial designers moved positions, with 23% taking internal promotion. Naturally in the economic unease, a risk adverse mentality takes centre stage. Many come to the Design Truth salary guide to assess the numbers – am I earning what I should be earning? The only person who is in control of your earnings is you. You have to be the one that makes it happen.

**A secure future is a diverse one.**

We wanted to begin the process of exploring a gender pay gap within the industry, providing some nuance and clarity to a topic that parts of our community feel very strongly about. This is something that will take iterations. 45% of female designers feel they are not paid to the same level as colleagues. That is a significant number.

*(Continued on next page)*





A feeling and fact are two different things, but what is clear is the continual lack of Female industrial designers that enter into management and leadership. It is almost as if the industry violently shuts its doors on them.

**We have an amazing, ambitious cohort of Female designers entering the industry.**

The cultures we create at university that bleed into industry are still significant driving forces in why many decide to leave the profession. Let's maintain this concerted effort to make industrial design accessible and available for all.

2023 will be a positive year. It will be lead by humans, and not totally by artificial intelligence.

We look forward to seeing you all at any upcoming Design Truth events or training, and if you have any questions around this guide do get in touch.

Now get back to work.





hello@designtruth.co.uk

**designtruth.co.uk**

COMPANY NUMBER 13386243