

handle
freelance solutions



the voice of the **FREELANCER** 2025

TO BE CREATIVE you must feel creative

Freelancers remain a vital part of the creative workforce, and for the most in-demand talent, choice is still very much on the table. So when multiple offers land at once, how do you make sure you're their first pick?

From last-minute cancellations and payment delays to clunky onboarding and a lack of recognition, the freelancer experience can vary widely. But getting it right makes all the difference, not just for the individual, but for your reputation.

Our latest research dives into how freelancers are feeling in 2025. While familiar challenges persist, from unpredictable income to instability outside their control, there's also a renewed sense of optimism.

METHODOLOGY

We asked 1,478 UK-based freelancers, temporary workers, and people that rely on freelance talent within the creative industries to complete our Voice of the Freelancer survey. All responses were anonymous, and we offered no incentive or reward for their participation.

are you optimistic about the next six months?



63%
of respondents agreed

COMMENTARY

63% of freelancers and temporary workers in the creative industries feel optimistic about the next six months, up from 57% in 2024.

Looking at the data over the past four years, we can see a story of resilience and cautious recovery. Since a low of 36% in 2021, optimism has steadily improved, peaking at 66% in 2022, then dipping slightly last year. The 2025 result suggests confidence is rebounding, with freelancers feeling more positive despite ongoing market uncertainty.

2024 **57%**

2023 **64%**

2022 **66%**

2021 **36%**

HOW ARE freelancers really feeling?

While rates are often the headline, there's much more to the freelance experience. Encouragingly, 71% of freelancers told us they feel they're paid fairly, a positive sign that many organisations are recognising the value of freelance talent.

Work-life balance also scores relatively well, with 64% of respondents saying they're happy. It's a reminder that while freelance life comes with pressure, it also offers autonomy and flexibility that many continue to prioritise.

Interestingly, only 38% said they would consider a permanent role. That means the majority remain committed to freelance life, suggesting that, for most, the benefits still outweigh any challenges.

And despite a challenging start to the year with fewer opportunities, our research points to a continued maturity. Expectations are clearer, value is better recognised, and long-term commitment to the freelancer experience is holding strong.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FREELANCER'?

For the purpose of this research, freelancer refers to anyone working on a temporary, contract, or project basis within the creative industries. The freelancers we support could be PAYE, Self-employed, or PSC/Limited companies.

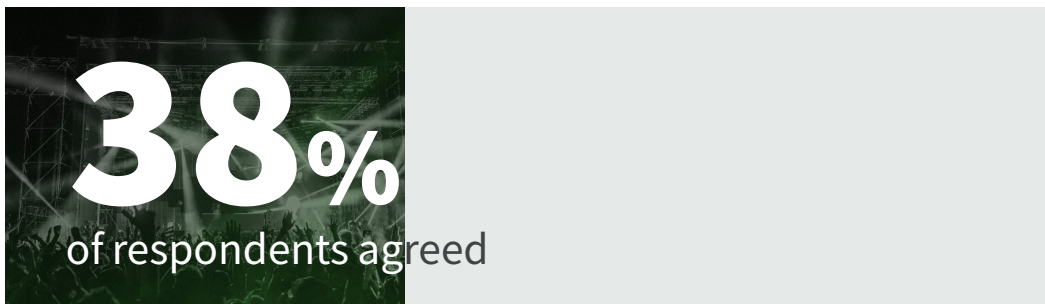
I am **paid fairly**



I am happy with my **work-life balance**



I would consider a **permanent job**



PRIORITIES

what could improve?

We asked freelancers what one thing they'd change about freelance life in 2025. Late payments topped the list, with 35% calling it their biggest frustration. It's a clear signal that, despite growing recognition of freelance value, many are still chasing invoices and dealing with payment delays.

Coming in next, 27% said they want it to be easier to find new roles, highlighting continued instability between assignments. Better pay held steady at 15%, showing that while it remains a key issue, other day-to-day challenges are increasingly taking priority.

The emerging theme this year was onboarding friction, 19% now see faster, simpler onboarding as their top need, a jump of 7% from 2024.

What is the one thing you would change about life as a freelancer?	
No more late payments	35%
Easier to find new roles	27%
Faster / easier onboarding	19%
Better pay	15%
Better support between assignments	4%

My skillset will be **in demand**



In 2024 only 66% agreed.

I find it easy to secure
new freelance assignments



53% of people that hire freelance talent said it is easy to find freelancers with the skills they need.

WHAT ABOUT

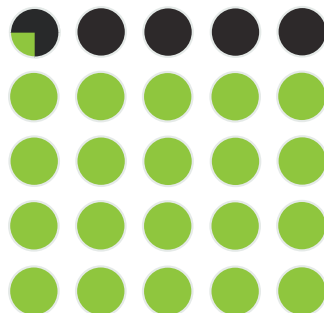
the people that rely on freelancers?

The use of freelancers continues to rise, with 81% of respondents expecting their reliance to increase this year. Freelancers continue to be seen as a vital resource, particularly for handling increased workloads, and filling specialist skill gaps.

However, working with freelancers isn't without its hurdles. The biggest challenge? Onboarding and admin, which suggests that internal systems still need to catch up with the pace of flexible hiring. Other common issues include budget constraints, as well as availability and reliability.

As demand grows, there's a clear opportunity to improve the freelancer experience, not just for the talent, but for the teams that rely on them.

Compared to last year, will your reliance on freelancers **increase in 2025.**



81%

of respondents said yes

What are the biggest challenges you face?

1 Onboarding and admin processes

2 Budget constraints

3 Availability and reliability

4 Communication and collaboration

5 Quality control

Why do you **typically** engage freelancers?

1 Increased workload / project-based needs

2 Specialist skills not available in-house

3 Cost-effectiveness

4 Fresh perspectives

OUR FOCUS

putting freelancers first

We have created a flexible outsourced payroll and compliance solution that is built for the creative industries and can be tailored to you.

HMRC and auto-enrolment compliant, we can support the people you recruit directly yourself, including self-employed, PAYE temps or individuals working through limited companies.

Taking on the compliance risk and removing the headache of payroll, invoice admin, and IR35, we provide:

- Exceptional account management that will deliver time and cost efficiencies
- Reporting that provides insight, and ensures that your talent is happy
- Accelerated onboarding and timesheet submissions through the Handle app
- Unwavering confidence that your freelancers are legally compliant.

About Handle

Headquartered in the UK, the Handle group was founded in 1978 and our heritage, passion, and specialisms are rooted within the media, sports, and entertainment industries.

www.handlefreelance.co.uk