

An aerial photograph of a city, likely London, with a white wireframe overlay that highlights architectural structures and street patterns. A white rectangular box is centered at the top, containing the word 'FRAME' in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below the box, the website address 'www.frame-recruitment.com' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

FRAME

www.frame-recruitment.com

**ARCHITECTURE
& INTERIOR
DESIGN
EMPLOYMENT
AND INDUSTRY
REVIEW 2021**

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Welcome



FRAME is a recruitment specialist of people in the Architecture, Interior Design and Visualisation industry. We are part of the Faststream Recruitment Group, employing over 100 people and with a history beginning in 1999.

We are proud of the relationships we have made across the industry and have helped thousands of people find new roles as well as aided practices with their recruitment strategies. Our team recruit across all industry sectors including commercial, education, healthcare, hospitality, leisure, mixed-use, residential, retail and transport.

Architecture, Interior Design and Visualisation are a huge part of our lives. They have the power to impact our environment, our homes, our workplaces and even where we spend our leisure time. Being able to be part of this industry is a privilege and we enthusiastically immerse ourselves into the community that work so hard to improve our surroundings. We are passionate about people and getting to know every individual, whether they are a graduate job hunter or a Managing Director of a large practice. People are what we know, and people are our passion.

Our parent company, the Faststream Recruitment Group is a global people specialist in shipping, maritime, and offshore recruitment. We know what it is to be truly specialist in a generalist recruitment marketplace.

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MARTIN BENNELL

Martin Bennell is the Managing Director of FRAME Recruitment. He is a recruitment veteran, celebrating his 20th year in recruitment in 2020. He has spent the last three years leading FRAME Recruitment.

He has a wealth of knowledge and experience in recruiting in high-demand, skill short sectors globally. As a Fellow of the Recruitment and Employment Federation, he is a renowned thought leader in specialist recruitment. Martin's involvement as a speaker, panellist and writer provides a head hunters perspective into human factors in the workplace.

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This report has been produced internally by FRAME Recruitment. Data collected in November and December 2020. All salary data listed in GBP.

Please note, quotes from survey respondents represent their thoughts and views and not those of FRAME Recruitment.

Introduction

I am honoured in such difficult times, that so many people were willing to share their thoughts, feelings and stories to create the survey this year. As the Managing Director of FRAME Recruitment, managing a team amid a pandemic has tested my business leadership skills to the limit. I have seen the impact the crisis has had on people and so was determined that we should still provide our research and be at the forefront of the human factors that will influence the future of the industry.

Whilst in previous years we have focused our research heavily on pay and benefits, this year we have delved into the lives of those working in Architecture, Interior Design and Visualisation.

We are experiencing one of the biggest challenges of our time: the COVID-19 pandemic. Few sectors have been hit as hard as ours and we have never seen a period like it. The virus itself and the fragile economy has made its impact. With great trepidation, we have awaited announcements from the government, moved to remote working and unfortunately seen many casualties in the form of the illness, project delays and job losses.

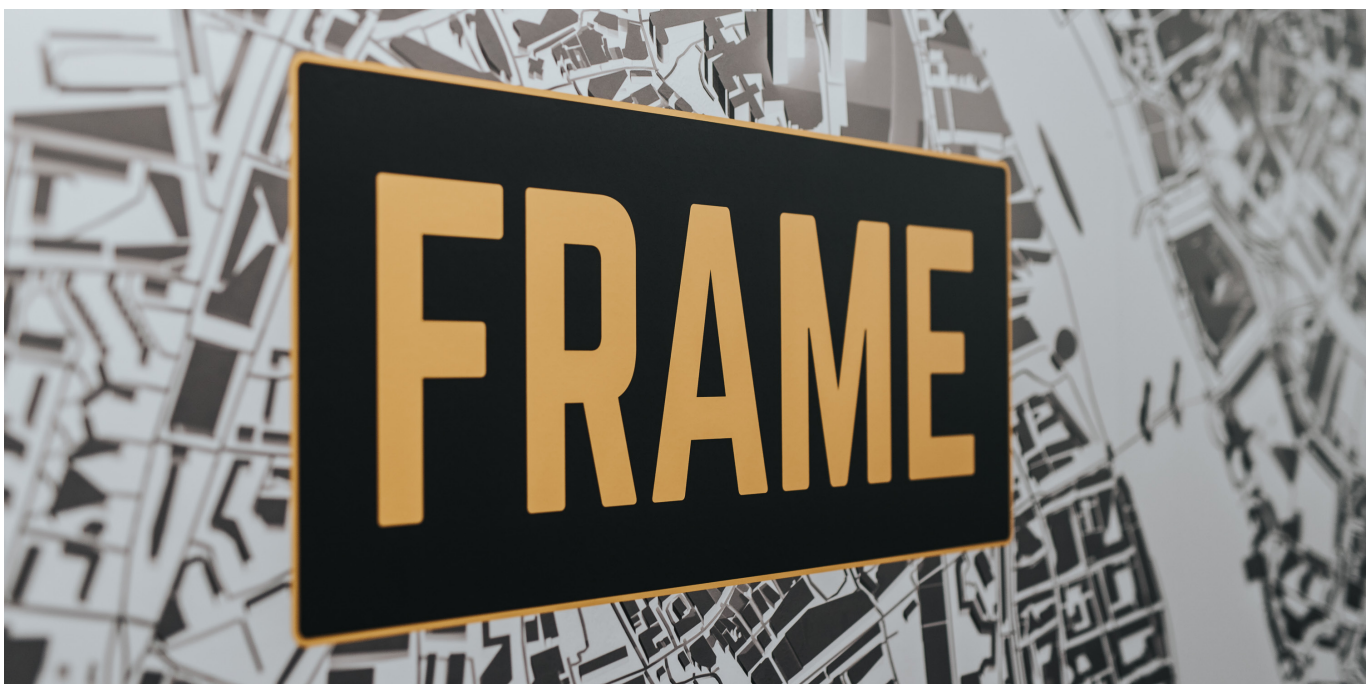
With significant changes to how practices can operate and grow, businesses have had to adapt to this period in not only the services they offer but also the people they need to attract and retain in their business for the future.

Whilst we're working through the toughest time in our business lives, I'd like to make a special mention to many of our clients and contacts who have been truly outstanding in this period, working tirelessly to protect their businesses and staff alike. We have seen great examples of brave and courageous leadership that is a testament to many business owners in this sector.

My team and I have created this unique survey to establish how the events of 2020 have impacted the UK's Architecture and Interior Design recruitment market. This report aims to highlight and establish trends in employment rates, job seeking and retention, employee engagement, working styles, mental health and pay.

We look to uncover the changes that we have seen since our last survey and expose the good and the bad of the industry. Looking at employment from an employee's perspective, discovering where the industry excels and where it falls short.

It covers areas such as: Who is unemployed? Have people had to take pay cuts? What working styles do people prefer? Do employees feel valued? Is management perceived to be making the right decisions? Who will be seeking new employment? Do people feel secure in their jobs? Has mental health been affected? These are just a few of the questions which are so unique to the industry and ones that only employees themselves will be able to answer.



Architecture & Interior Design employment market



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Architecture and Interior Design industry and its employees. With projects on hold and many new developments in decline, it has already forced some practices to close their doors. Some have ceased operations temporarily whilst others have recorded historic levels of reduction in work.

Throughout 2020 we have been at the forefront of the ongoing coverage of the Architecture and Interior Design downturn. We wanted to see the real impact this has had on the employment profile of those working in the industry across the UK.

A staggering 28% of Architecture and Interior Design professionals who completed the survey are now unemployed. In direct comparison, we have reported over the last five years that we have been working in a candidate-led recruitment market. Practices were struggling to attract and retain the number of employees required to meet the demand for work.

Notably, females who completed the survey were more likely than males to be unemployed, 35% and 23% respectively. Whilst we would not like to make any assumptions about why this has occurred, this has to be a blow to the industry that females are finding the employment market harder than their male equivalents.

Architecture and Interior Design employment market *continued*

34% of those with the least experience (up to two years) found themselves unemployed, as well as 32% of those who had ten years' plus experience. Architectural Assistants were most likely to have lost their employment (38%) with Architectural Technicians (37%) close behind.

TABLE – EMPLOYMENT PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	
Employed in the Architecture and Interior Design industry	65%
Employed in other industry	7%
Unemployed	28%

In total, 35% of qualified Architecture and Interior Design professionals who took part in the survey are no longer working in the industry. There have been many stories in the press of these people taking on jobs at supermarkets and online retailers like Amazon. This may seem like an extreme representation of the market, however, 7% have had to find alternative employment and are facing this reality.

“With over a third of professionals in Architecture and Interior Design no longer working in what they have trained for, it is simply a shocking reality of the state of the industry. Just as we saw back in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, people need to work and if their industry is not able to give them opportunities, they will seek them elsewhere, albeit perhaps on a more temporary basis.”

In addition, for those who were currently employed in the industry, 35% had been on furlough between April and October. We saw 77% of practices making use of the furlough scheme in our last employer survey with large practices (over 50 people) the most likely to utilise it. Females were more likely to be on furlough than males, at 38% and 34% respectively.

“The UK government’s furlough scheme has been a lifeline for some practices. Desperate not to lose the teams they have worked hard to attract and build, it has enabled them to retain some of their talent. For others, furlough just simply hasn’t been enough and practices have had to make tough decisions early on in the pandemic.”



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Unemployment

For those who were in the unfortunate position of being unemployed, we wanted to find out more information about their situation. We asked, “Are you currently unemployed due to the pandemic?”. 81% said yes. Many provided more detail with their answer:

- ◆ “I have been unemployed for six months now. The situation is very bleak with no suitable jobs or interviews coming my way. The available jobs are difficult to get as employers’ requirements are too specific. I have never experienced such a bad job market in my 25-year career.”
- ◆ “I was made redundant due to the pandemic. My employer fired over 50% of their staff.”
- ◆ “The furlough scheme extension was brought out too late as the practice wasn’t gaining enough projects and they had to resort to making employees redundant.”

There were a huge number of people who were made redundant along with their colleagues. Others had been victim to the delayed extension of the furlough scheme, that came out too late to save their employment. We also wanted to pick up on a comment from a female respondent:

- ◆ “It’s a harsh and ruthless market that has no regard for exceptionally talented mothers who wish to return to the career ladder.”

As we mentioned earlier, more females are facing unemployment than males. If this commentary is anything to go by, we ask is the industry turning their backs on females who need to juggle both their work and family life? Are career breaks to focus on motherhood detrimental to seeking employment? We make no assumptions that this is representative of the entire industry, but even at some level, are any of us okay with this?

Overall, the consequences of the virus have led to projects being put on hold and an increase in pressure to reduce



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the cost of bids. This has led to the deterioration of the financial stability of practices, both creating redundancies to produce the 28% unemployment level.

We continued by asking “What is your job seeking status?”. 72% were actively seeking new roles in Architecture and Interior Design, whilst only 10% were currently in the interview process for at least one job in the industry. This speaks volumes of the situation in the Architecture and Interior Design recruitment market. Those with the least experience (up to two years’) were the most likely to be in the interview process comprising of 21% of this group, while only 6% of those with three to five years’ experience were at interview stage.

If the recruitment market is bleak, what sacrifices will people make to secure a new role? We asked, “Would you take a pay cut for a new opportunity in Architecture and Interior Design?”. 63% agreed that they would. Those with under five years’ experience (up to two years’ 71% and three to five years’ 76%) were the most likely to agree to a pay cut.

Unemployment *continued*

Those with six to nine years' and 10 years' plus experience were the least likely to agree.

At first, we were surprised that this figure was not higher but there are many considerations to take on board when contemplating agreeing to a pay cut for a new role.

“Some people, particularly highly experienced professionals will be hesitant about taking a pay cut due to the concerns over devaluing the profession. The acceptance of a reduced salary at this point could lead to an industry-wide reduction in times to come. Some will fear this change and will remain firm in the value that their qualifications, experience and skills lend to the industry and may even disapprove of those that would be willing to take a pay cut. However, with so many unemployed, there is a risk that their desperation to secure a new role for financial stability will be too attractive and we could

be at risk of seeing remuneration packages decline over the next two years.”

We asked, “Is this the first time you have been unemployed during your career in Architecture and Interior Design?”. For 54% this had been their first time, with 46% already having experienced this in their career. The older survey participants were more likely to have been unemployed before. 62% of those who were aged 55 to 64 years old and 60% of 45 to 54 years olds had experienced it previously.

“This can be put down to the number of years they have worked in the industry as well as the devastating impact the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 had on employment. Whilst in that crisis we saw that predominantly junior staff were let go, this time we are seeing a range from juniors to seniors, right up to Principal and Associate Director level.”



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Unemployment *continued*

Breaking this down further into regional differences, for those who normally work outside of London, 53% had been unemployed before, whereas for those who work in London only 41% had this experience.

“London has traditionally been the central hub of Architecture and Interior Design. Jobs have been plentiful, and it has been easier to move from one job to another if things are not going well in the practice. Whilst other hubs in the country like Manchester have stayed buoyant, for those in other regions, the recruitment market can be narrow with few alternative options of employment to choose from.”

Architecture and Interior Design professionals who had been unemployed before shared their experiences with us:

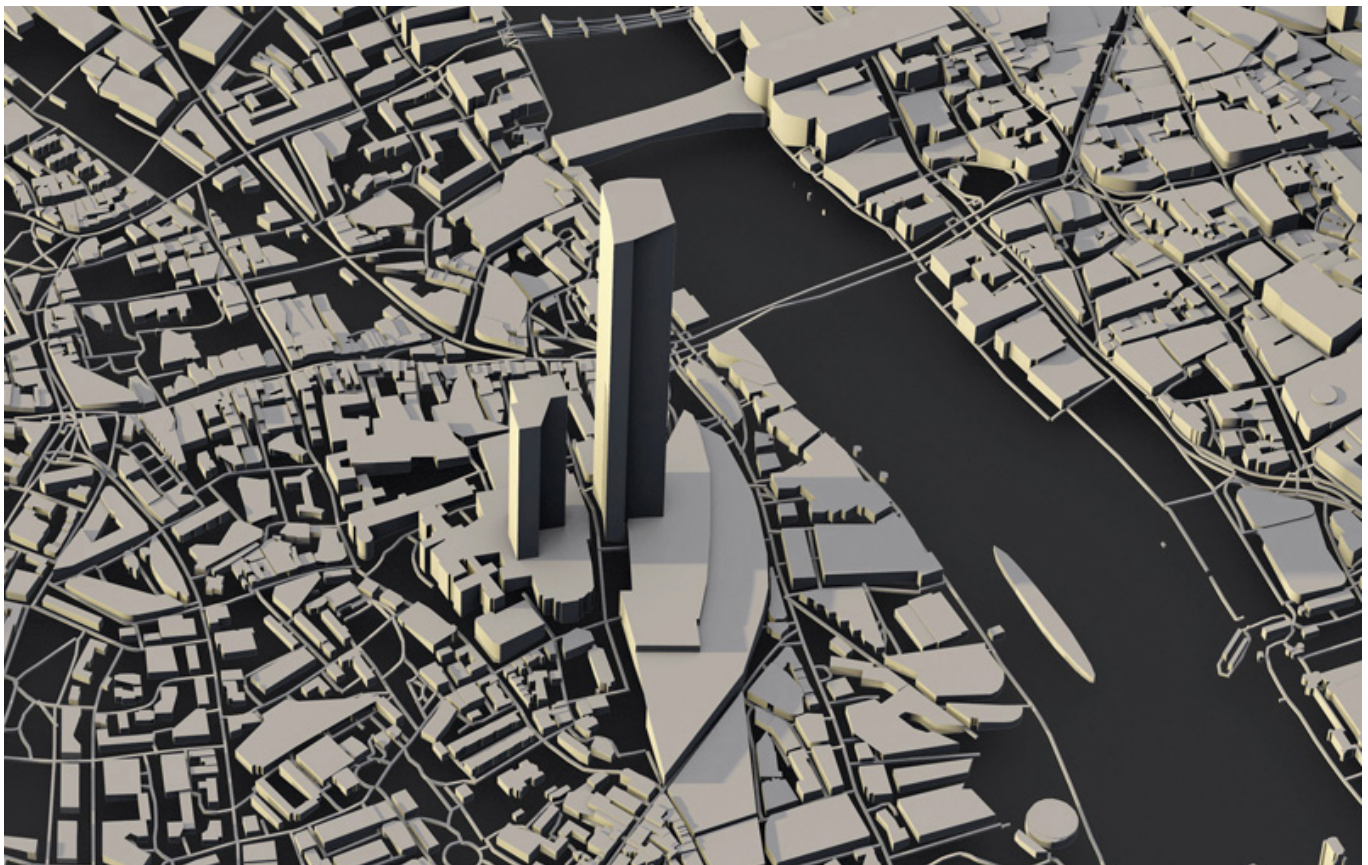
- ◆ “Architecture for me has been a very unstable and insecure profession. I have been affected in some way or another by every economic downturn since I left university in 1995.”
- ◆ “I have been mainly accepting contract roles over the

last two years with very brief periods of unemployment between them up until the pandemic started.”

- ◆ “I was unemployed in the early 90s recession of 1992-93.”
- ◆ “I was unemployed during the 2008 financial crisis.”

We also heard from those who were experiencing unemployment for the first time:

- ◆ “There are a lot of senior roles available. There do not seem to be many vacancies for people with less than five years’ experience. If they allow for fewer years’ experience, they still expect you to be very advanced in the job - which seems impossible to be with only a few years of experience.”
- ◆ “I have applied to more than 50 job opportunities. So far no positive feedback.”
- ◆ “I have never had a gap in between contract jobs before, this is the first time. The pandemic is making it harder to find a viable position.”



Job security

For the first time, we asked those who were currently employed if they were concerned about their job security. 63% said yes. With some practices ceasing operations and high-profile layoffs announced in the media, the impact on those in the industry and their feelings of insecurity in their roles has been immense.

We must consider that Architecture and Interior Design has been one of the hardest-hit industries during this time, along with hospitality and travel. We would predict that those employed in these industries would feel a similar way.

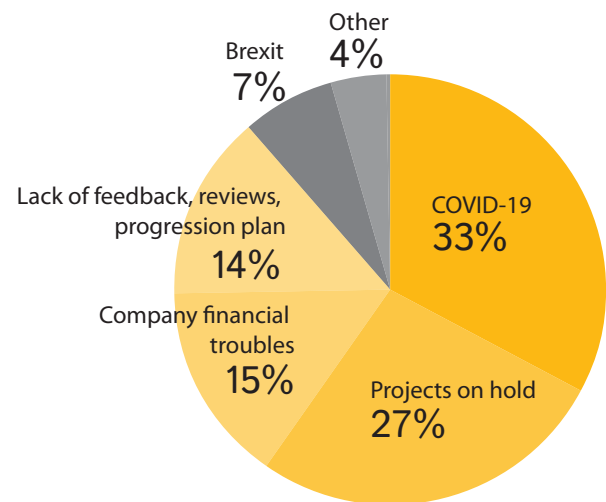
Those with extended experience were more concerned about their job security than their counterparts with less experience. 68% of people with six to nine years' experience were concerned, and 64% of those with over 10 years' experience were too. Older survey respondents were more concerned than their younger colleagues, with 83% of 55 to 64 year olds agreeing.

Furlough has not created a feeling of security amongst employees and if anything, it is increasing their concern for



“THE ‘LOCKDOWNS’ AND THE FURLOUGH SCHEME CAN ONLY GO ON FOR SO LONG. FURLOUGH IS DRAINING RESOURCES AND WE WILL HAVE TO SUFFER TO PAY FOR IT. IT IS GOING TO BE A BIG HIT WHEN THE CHANCELLOR HAS TO START TAXING EVERYONE TO GET THE PENNIES BACK.” SURVEY RESPONDENT

WHAT HAS MADE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR JOB SECURITY?



their future career. For those who had been on furlough in 2020, 72% were concerned about their job security.

There will be an impact on employees of not only seeing their colleagues and other professionals in the market lose their jobs but also the lack of projects to work throughout the pandemic. Job insecurity comes at a cost to employees and has been linked to several adverse health outcomes, including anxiety, stress and loss of self-esteem.

We continued by asking what exactly was making them feel concerned about their job security. It was no surprise was

Job security *continued*

that 33% were concerned because of COVID-19. We asked for more detail from respondents:

- ◆ “The ‘lockdowns` and the furlough scheme can only go on for so long. Furlough is draining resources and we will have to suffer to pay for it. It is going to be a big hit when the chancellor has to start taxing everyone to get the pennies back.”
- ◆ “A big recession is overdue. COVID-19, Brexit, stocks and shares are overvalued and the necessary correction will cause a recession, just like in 2007/8.”
- ◆ “If we were not in a global pandemic, I would not be worried about my job security. Although these are tough times, I believe the worst is behind us.”

14% of those surveyed were concerned about their job security because of the ‘lack of feedback, reviews and progression plans’. We noticed that the commentary was similar to some of those who were concerned because of COVID-19. Lack of communication was flagged multiple times.

“In a period where the COVID-19 crisis is breeding uncertainty and emotional disruption, leaders in practices need to communicate to create clarity, set expectations, build resilience and catalyse positive change. Employees become concerned about their job security when they are not receiving feedback. Although many leaders have learnt that their practice cannot survive without a knowledgeable, engaged and aware workforce, clearly many are still not hitting the mark.”

In the first few months of the pandemic, the topic of Brexit gained little traction. However, as the deal deadline has

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“BREXIT IS POTENTIALLY MORE DAMAGING TO THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE THAN COVID-19. THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST DAMAGING ACT OF SELF-HARM ANY COUNTRY HAS ENACTED.” SURVEY RESPONDENT

fast approached us, it has become a higher priority and 7% of those surveyed were most concerned about it in relation to their job security. They said:

- ◆ “Brexit is potentially more damaging to the country as a whole than COVID-19. This is the single most damaging act of self-harm any country has enacted.”
- ◆ “COVID-19 is only temporary and we will get over this, Brexit is a long-lasting issue.”
- ◆ “The company I work for is already struggling as a result of the pandemic, Brexit will put even more stress on the business.”



Retention

With levels of job insecurity high, what impact does this have on the Architecture and Interior Design recruitment market? We asked respondents in the next 12 months whether they would change jobs. A staggering 64% suggested that they would.

"We were initially surprised by this. We would have thought that those who were employed would not be active in a new job search and would see their employment as a safe port in a storm. However, when you combine this with current job insecurity levels, it perhaps is not quite so surprising that many may feel they need a backup plan, just in case."

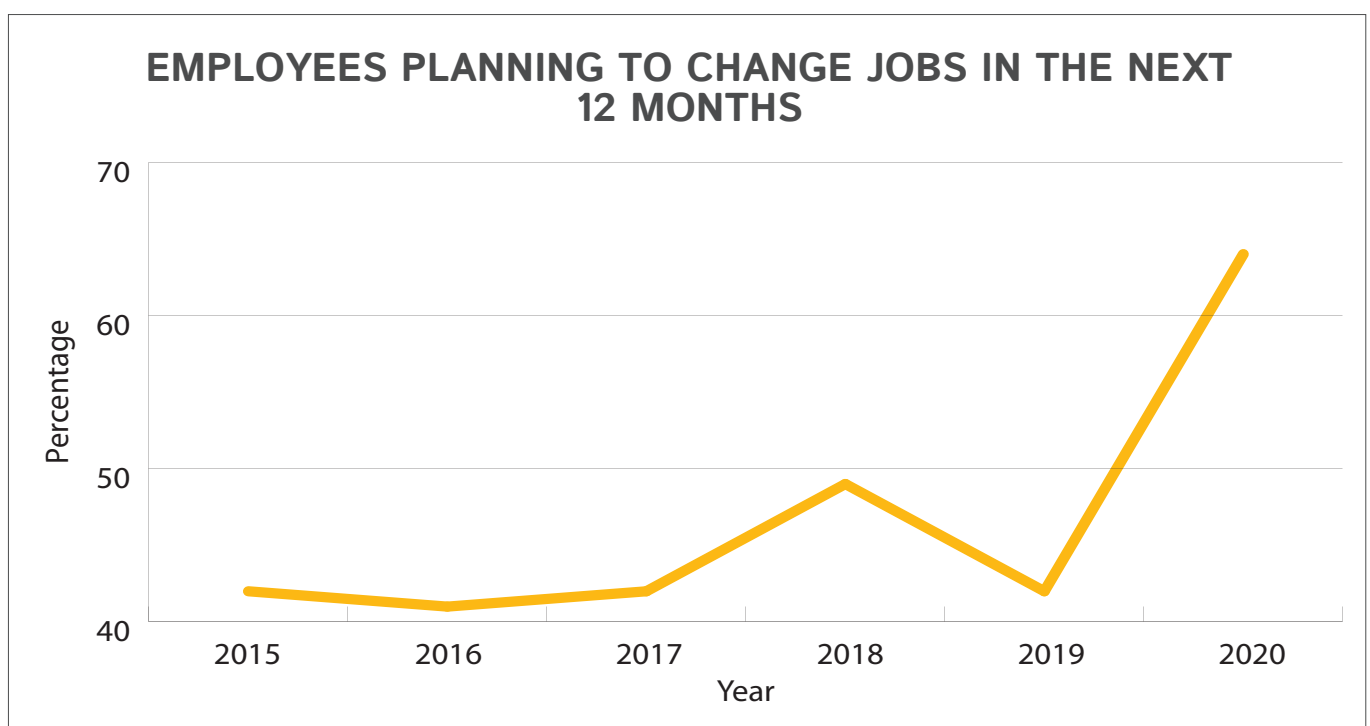
In a step-change from 2019, where we reported that retention had increased, 2021 is set to be a turbulent year. We have to highlight the potential loss of talent in the group of most experienced professionals. In 2019, only 29% of those with six to nine years' experience were considering a job move. 12 months later and 68% are planning on moving on.

On top of this, in last year's survey, we reported that only 36% of those with over ten years' experience were planning a job move, and this has increased exponentially to 64% in 2020.

"We have noted in years before that employees, particularly the most experienced were being "bear-hugged" by their employers. In one of the most difficult years the industry has faced, has it even been possible for practices to do this? When top projects and excellent benefits packages were influencing retention, what has the pandemic left practices to offer their most experienced staff?"

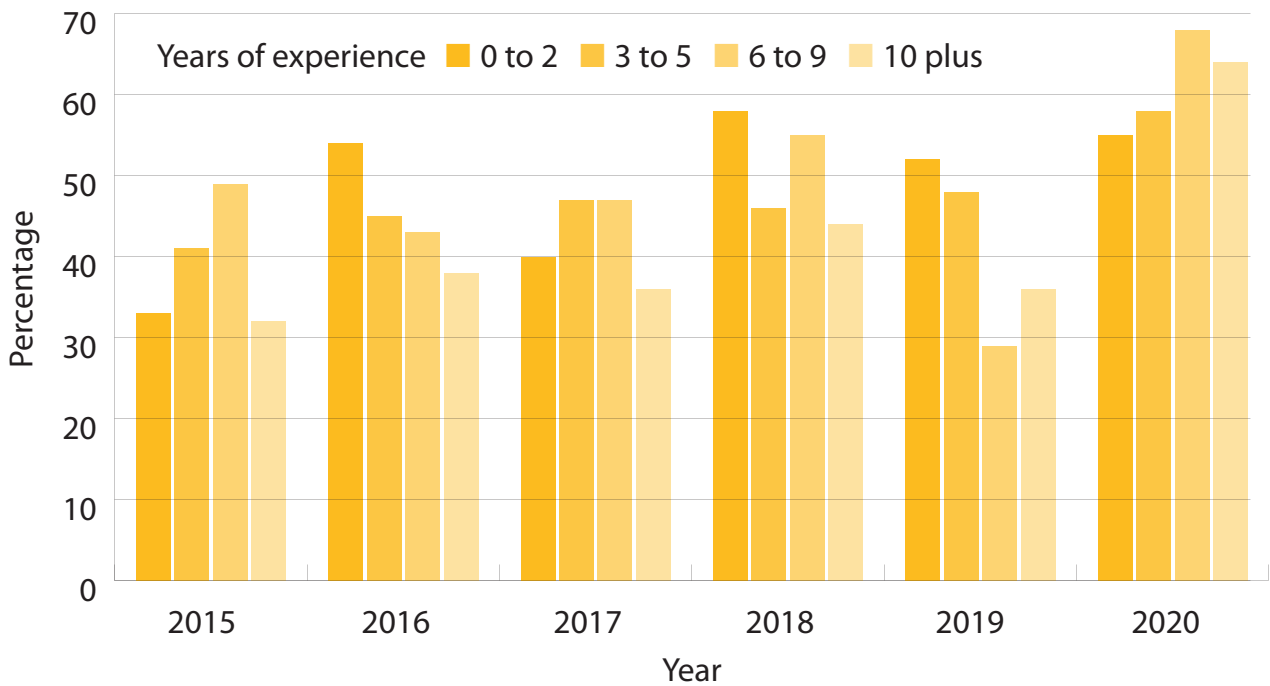
Those who had been furloughed between April and October were more likely to be planning a job move with 73% agreeing.

"I see two potential reasons for this in the furloughed group. Either they are so concerned about the longevity of their career with their practice, they feel it would be safer to seek employment elsewhere. Or, it has caused a greater detrimental effect. People can feel upset, rejected and dispensable. This can leave a bitter feeling towards not only their employer but their colleagues around them that have not had this experience. It is understandable to see how someone may feel less loyal



Retention *continued*

EMPLOYEES PLANNING TO LEAVE THEIR JOB IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS BY YEARS' EXPERIENCE



THE HARSH REALITY IS THAT THE MAJORITY OF PRACTICES HAVE HAD TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS WITH FURLOUGH AND REDUNDANCIES. ONLY 23% OF PRACTICES WE SURVEYED HAD NOT USED EITHER THE FURLOUGH SCHEME OR MADE ANY STAFF REDUNDANT.” MARTIN BENNELL

to their employer and believe they could be treated better somewhere else. The harsh reality is that the majority of practices have had to make difficult decisions with furlough and redundancies. Only 23% of practices we surveyed had not used either the furlough scheme or made any staff redundant.”

If more experienced candidates are available on the market, what will this mean for employers? We see this as shaking out 'hard to recruit' people that under normal circumstances practices would find it very difficult to recruit. Practices with a positive outlook and longer-term view of the world will be snapping up these 'unicorn' candidates.

Job losses in the UK have been an unfortunate consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has meant that the Architecture and Interior Design jobs market has already seen significant increases in the number of candidates actively seeking new roles. If on top of this, we also see employed candidates planning on looking for new roles, we could see the most saturated candidate market the industry has ever seen. It will not simply be an employer-driven market, it will be an employer-dominant market.

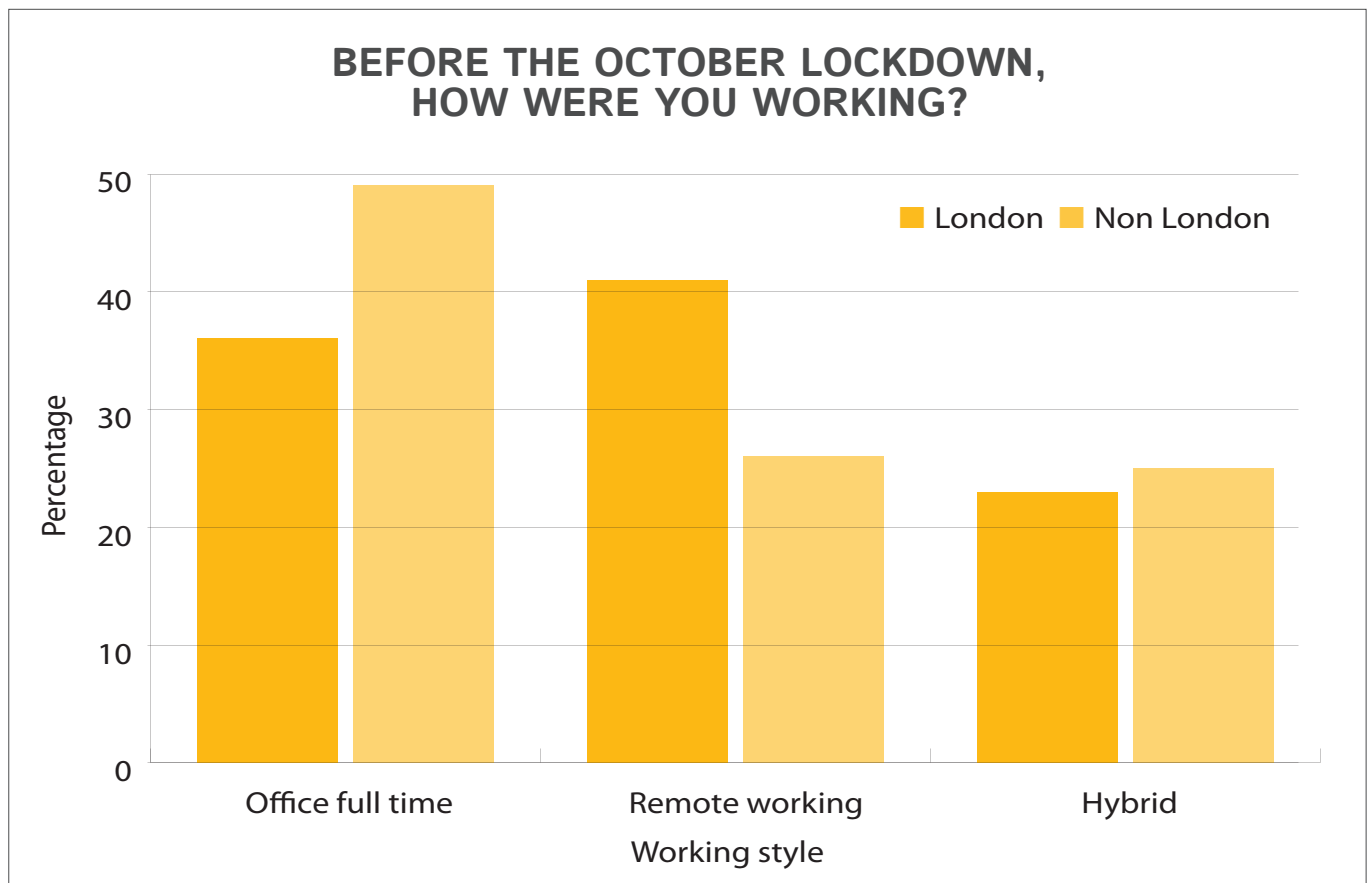
Working styles

Remote working continues to be a hot topic in Architecture and Interior Design. The pandemic has forced many teams to revert from traditional office-based working to a new remote working style. At the beginning of 2020, only 21% of practices were offering any sort of remote working to their employees, and this was predominantly part-time and offered to the most experienced and longest-serving. We wanted to see how the pandemic had changed this, what style people preferred and how this had impacted their work.

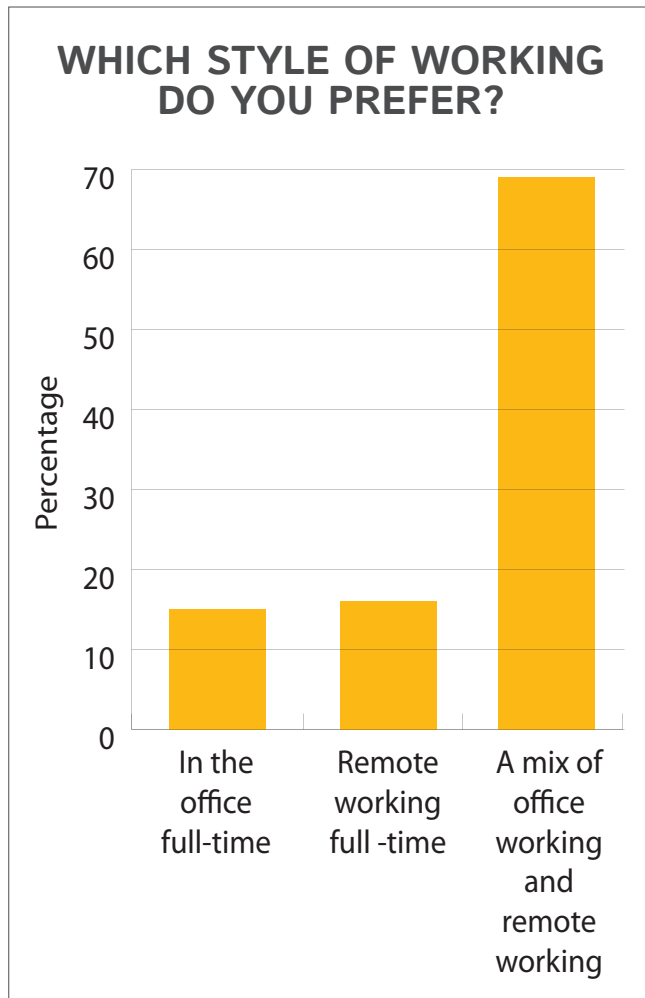
We asked respondents “before the national October lockdown, how were you working?” 41% were back in the office full-time, 35% were remote working full-time and 24% were working a hybrid between the office and remote. It proved interesting to look at the split between those working in London and outside of London. For those who work in the busy capital, public transport for many is the only option to get into the office. We spoke with employers and employees alike who were not keen to put either their team or themselves at this increased

risk of infection. This was evident in the results between the two.

We continued by asking which style they preferred with some noteworthy results. Overall, 69% preferred the flexibility of the hybrid style between office working and remote working. 16% preferred working remotely full time, whilst only 15% preferred traditional office-based working. What was the most interesting was how age and the experience in years of the person affected their answer.



Working styles *continued*



For those in the youngest age group of under 24, 60% preferred working in the office full-time. With no respondents preferring to work remotely. There were also no respondents who had less than two years' experience who wanted to work remotely full-time.

"I would put this down to a few reasons. In my experience, younger employees enjoy the social aspect of the office. They make friends and want the camaraderie it brings. Many will live in smaller homes alone or have little room in shared accommodation that can make remote working difficult. Those who have less experience will not only need the leadership and motivation from their seniors but will also get the best out of work by learning and developing from those around them. It could be very detrimental to their professional development to be out of the office."

In a separate online survey on LinkedIn, only 24% of employees in Architecture and Interior Design were being



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Working styles *continued*

offered e-learning whilst remote working. We have to think about the impact of what remote working could have on the future of these young and less experienced employees. If they work remotely and lose the training and development they get from an office environment but are not offered e-learning as a replacement, it could become very difficult for them to grow and prosper in the future.

If younger and less experienced candidates do not want to work remotely, how do their senior and older colleagues feel? The top age group of 55 – 64 years old were the ones who most wanted to work remotely full-time (33%). This was mirrored in those with over ten years' experience with 24% picking this as their preferred style too.

“In direct comparison to their younger and less experienced counterparts, these groups of employees may not value the social aspect of the office as much. They are in more senior positions, need less leadership and help in their day-to-day work. It is more likely that they are the ones who are inspiring and developing others.”

Almost across the board, more employees want the flexibility of a hybrid style of working. In all age groups apart from the under 24s', the majority would choose the hybrid style. When analysing by the number of years' experience, all groups voted the hybrid style as the most popular choice.

We considered from an employer's point of view how they would be able to manage the needs and wants of all of their employees. With most practices being made up of a range of age groups, as well as experience levels, it will be hard to make everyone happy. Plus, with the reliance on the more senior staff to be coaching their less experienced colleagues, the pressure to be in the office is going to be high. Some practices have implemented days in the office for collaboration projects, whilst others have simply split their team into two and asked them to share time working in the office and out. Until a vaccine is widespread through the population, for large practices it is going to be near impossible from a health and safety point of view to have everyone in the office at once.

Whilst employees may see a hybrid model as being the most favourable option, we continued by asking them to rate four statements as true or false concerning their views of remote working.

What we can see is some trends in the perception of remote working appearing. 73% believe remote working

makes them more likely to work increased hours. In 2019 we reported that 76% of employees were working unpaid overtime each week and the majority would have been working in the office full-time. With this figure already working unpaid overtime, we wonder how many extra hours this is accumulating today when remote working has been enforced for many? How many more hours can employees work before their work quality suffers and potentially lead to burnout?

73% also agreed that they see in-person collaboration always being superior to virtual meetings. Is this the reason why the majority see a hybrid working style as the most attractive? They may enjoy working remotely but feel that they miss out on the face-to-face collaboration.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON REMOTE WORKING?		
Statement	True	False
Collaboration suffers when workers do not share space	62%	38%
People are more likely to work increased hours	73%	27%
People are likely to be more productive	63%	37%
In-person collaboration is always going to be superior to virtual meetings	73%	27%

We asked for more developed thoughts on the statements we gave them:

- ◆ “When working remotely you are likely to have less distraction from calls, walk-ins, and people who waste time. You can control deliveries better and you can also work to convenient hours with a good work-life balance.”
- ◆ “Some people will be more productive and some people will be less productive when working from home, exactly like in the office: it depends on the individual, not the system.”
- ◆ “I think the question is whether efficiency should be valued over collaboration?”
- ◆ “Remote working is great and can save people time and money from their commute while also giving them the comforts of working from home. At the same time, interactions are key in our industry especially when resolving projects as a team or creating new designs. So a mix of the two would create a good balance.”

Remuneration

Whilst pay and benefits were not a big part of our research this year, we still wanted to provide an overview. In years to come, we may want to look back at the year of the pandemic and see the impact it has had on pay and benefits.

Based on the new roles we have been briefed on through the crisis, we have seen a decrease in salary offers of up to 20%. This has varied across skill sets as well as location and seniority.

We have also debated the impacts that remote working might have on pay. We see three potential strategies for remote working pay in the future:

- ◆ Pay based on employed location
- ◆ Pay based on employee location
- ◆ Pay based on the national median

Making a decision will take some time and consideration. There are pros and cons of implementing a different pay strategy for remote workers or hybrid workers. London based practices may decide to remove the London weighting from future remote roles, but others will want to remain as competitive as possible to secure the best talent.

The reality of our research was clear on remote working pay strategies; 70% of respondents would not take a pay cut for a role they could do remotely. The benefit of remote working appears to not outweigh the more competitive salary of an office-based role.

We reported in September that many practices had implemented pay freezes as cost-saving tactics. We also saw requests for employees to take pay reductions and decrease their hours. We asked respondents if they had to take a pay cut or reduce their hours.

DID YOU HAVE TO REDUCE YOUR HOURS OR PAY BETWEEN APRIL AND OCTOBER 2020	
Yes - reduction in hours	9%
Yes - reduction in pay	28%
Yes - reduction hours and pay	21%
No	42%

PAY 2020					
Role	Working in London	0 to 2	3 to 5	6 to 9	10+
3D Visualiser	Y	£28,250	£35,000	£42,000	£49,100
3D Visualiser	N	£25,000	£31,000	£35,000	£42,005
Architect	Y	£34,900	£37,820	£40,500	£49,250
Architect	N	£31,000	£36,750	£38,940	£50,500
Architectural Assistant	Y	£23,055	£31,375	£33,500	£37,850
Architectural Assistant	N	£19,500	£25,166	£28,500	£35,583
Architectural Technician*	Y	£26,000	£34,750	£35,250	£43,500
Architectural Technician*	N	£23,600	£27,666	£33,850	£41,890
Project Architect	Y	£36,500	£39,460	£44,250	£50,500
Project Architect	N	£32,400	£34,595	£36,500	£46,833
Interior Designer	Y	£24,500	£31,525	£38,975	£48,475
Interior Designer	N	£18,433	£29,833	£37,571	£46,500
Interior Technician	Y	£22,300	£30,000	£37,650	£45,000
Interior Technician	N	£19,500	£28,000	£37,100	£42,500

*Depending on software experience. For example, Revit can command higher salaries.

Remuneration *continued*

Those working in London were more likely than those outside of London to either reduce their hours, pay or do both. Respondents with under two years' experience were the least likely to reduce their pay or hours. We would put this down to the lower costs associated with this experience level. Whereas the more experienced and higher paid have seen their salaries and hours reduce over time.

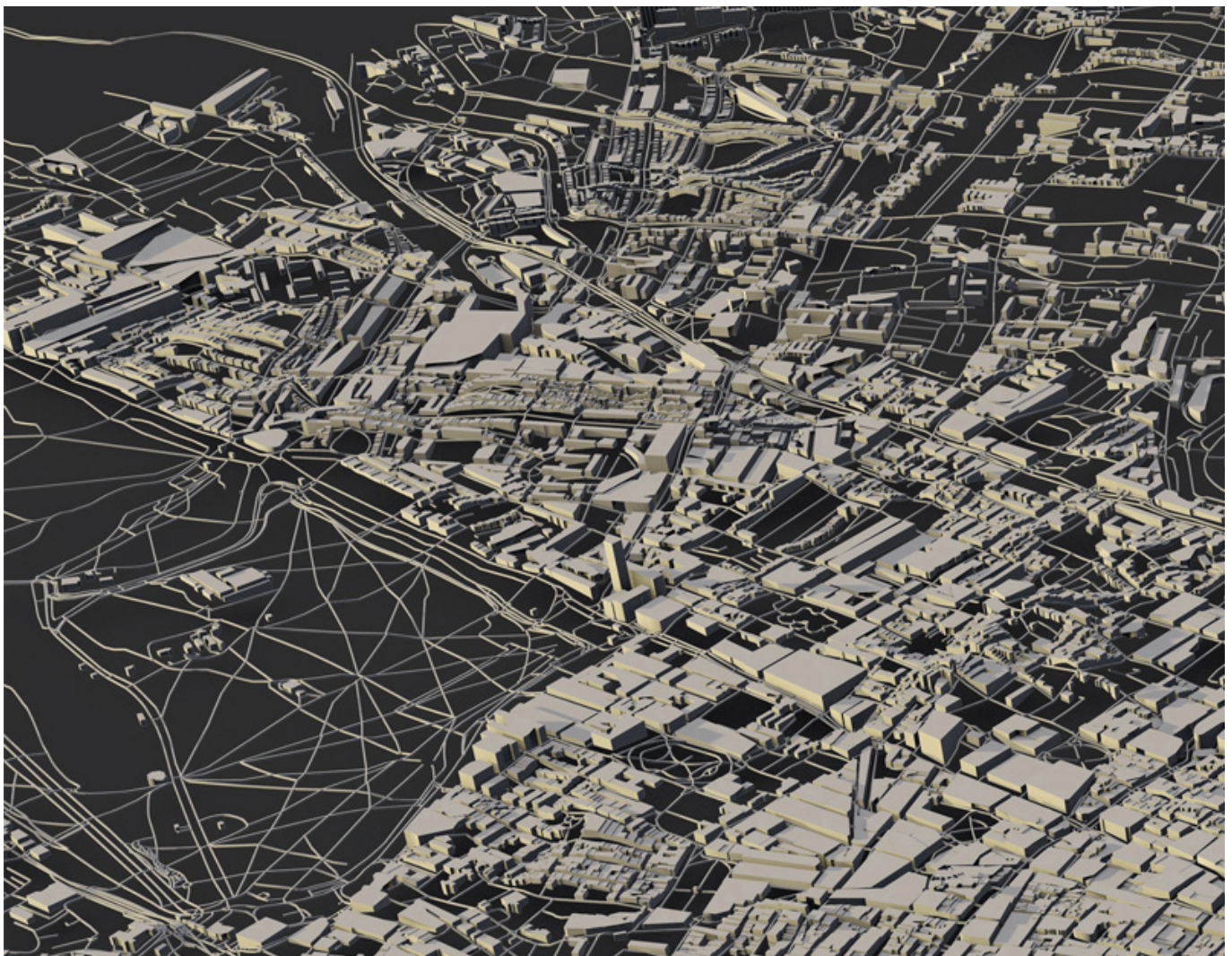
We must highlight that 28% of respondents had seen their pay reduced but their hours not decline to align with this. This must have felt unfair to continue to do the same amount of work with lower compensation for it. On top of that many benefits that would normally be available would have become obsolete with the hit of the pandemic.

What we have learnt this year and will be a key topic in 2021 is that there will be a re-prioritisation of employee

benefits. The change in working style to more remote working has created greater demand for more flexibility in the future. It has also impacted the desires from current and prospective employees in their requirements of extra benefits in their roles.

Many traditional benefits such as catered lunches, refreshments, company socials, gym memberships and other office amenities are becoming outdated. Remote workers cannot enjoy these benefits and their demands for other value-adding benefits is set to continue to change as working styles mature over time.

Keeping up to date with what current and prospective employees need in terms of benefits could be the difference between maintaining employment retention levels as well as having the opportunity to secure the best talent in the market.



Employee engagement

At the turn of 2020, the COVID-19 virus began rapidly disrupting lives, economies and workplaces. This global pandemic has forced practices to make drastic changes to their businesses and as a result, there is the potential for it to have disrupted employee engagement.

We asked our respondents how valued they felt by their employer. Overall, 22% felt less valued, with just 28% feeling more so. Whilst 50% felt as valued as they did before the pandemic, we have to question in times like these, should employers not be making their employees feel more valued than ever?

When an employee does not feel valued, it can have a devastating effect on them. People lose interest in their role and the practice they work for. On top of this, there is the risk that in a connected world, employees will be keen to share poor experiences of employee engagement with their networks. Whilst the Architecture and Interior Design industry is struggling now, we know that it will return to better times. Practices who may not be prioritising employee engagement and making their staff feel valued may have a tough time in future recruitment campaigns. One of the key goals of employee engagement is to create advocacy, not animosity.

Some respondents who felt less valued left us some commentary on their answer:

- ◆ "I have worked diligently through the pandemic and at the end of the day still feel replaceable."
- ◆ "I feel like I'm just a replaceable number and not cared about at all. I'm just there to do the main body of work that the big wigs can't do and yet still seen as worthless."
- ◆ "It made me feel totally disposable."

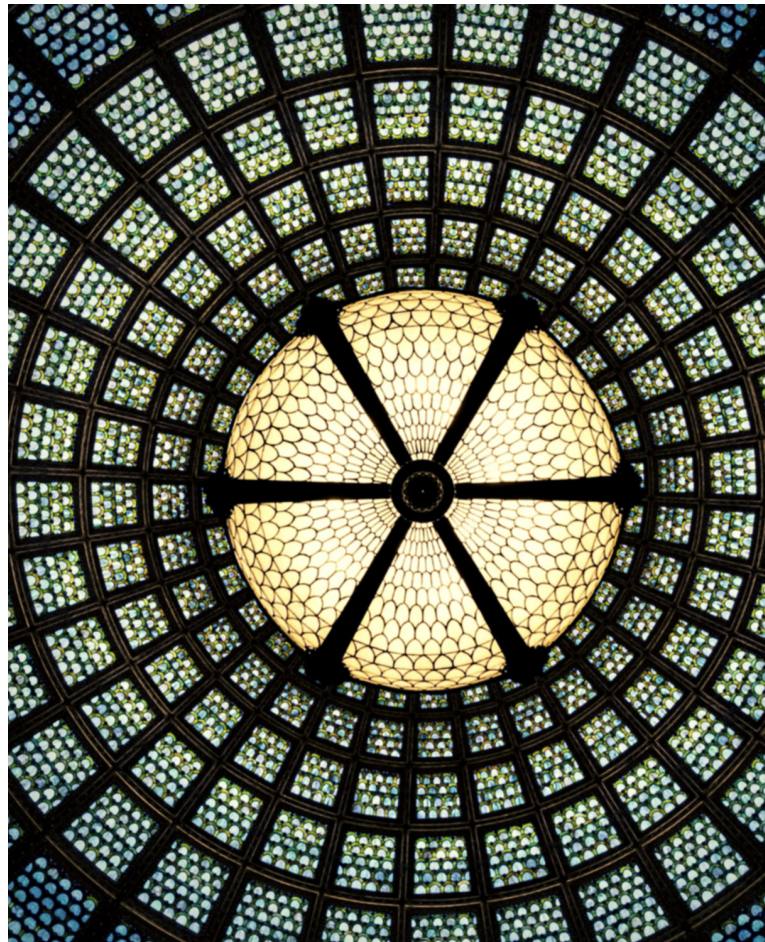
We were keen to see what the differences were between those who had been furloughed and those that had not. One-third of the respondents who were furloughed felt less valued than normal.

"We can see the impact that being furloughed has had on people. High numbers feel insecure about their jobs, they are seeking new roles, as well as or because of how undervalued they currently feel. This has got to be a distress-

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"I HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND AT THE END OF THE DAY STILL FEEL REPLACEABLE."

SURVEY RESPONDENT



Employee engagement *continued*

ing time for these people. It could be easy for employers to negate communication with employees and it might be difficult to deliver the right message when they simply don't know what the future will bring."

However, the pandemic has brought some benefit to people and we received some feedback from those who felt more valued than normal:

- ◆ "I am getting more responsibilities and closer working relationships with my director than I did before the pandemic."
- ◆ "Since we are now half of the team we once were, we are working harder than before and my boss appreciates that. Moreover, I have more chance to learn and grow in the company."
- ◆ "I've just moved jobs as I wasn't valued in a practice I had spent four years in. I changed jobs in the middle of the pandemic and now feel very secure and appreciated in a busy practice. Even a pandemic won't stop staff leaving if they're treated badly."

We next asked whether they felt their employer had shown empathy and communicated effectively during the pandemic. Both important parts of leadership in a crisis.

DO YOU THINK YOUR EMPLOYER HAS SHOWN EMPATHY AND COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY DURING THE PANDEMIC?	
They have shown empathy	22%
They have communicated effectively	22%
They have shown empathy and communicated effectively	33%
None of the above	23%

It could be interpreted as quite shocking that amid a global pandemic only one-third of employers have been able to show both empathy and communicate effectively.

"We have seen the impact that the pandemic has had on our employees. People have needed more support and reassurance than ever. Without clear and regular communications from the top, and an interest in an employee's wellness and career growth, employees can feel alone, despondent and not valued for what they are doing and or have done in the past."

Whilst this is perhaps not the feedback employers wanted to hear, on a positive note, two-thirds of respondents had faith in their employer to make the right decisions in the pandemic. We see this as encouraging feedback from employees and shows a great understanding of the difficult decisions employers have had to make.



"WE HAVE SEEN THE IMPACT THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD ON OUR EMPLOYEES. PEOPLE HAVE NEEDED MORE SUPPORT AND REASSURANCE THAN EVER. WITHOUT CLEAR AND REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOP, AND AN INTEREST IN AN EMPLOYEE'S WELLNESS AND CAREER GROWTH, EMPLOYEES CAN FEEL ALONE, DESPONDENT AND NOT VALUED FOR WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND OR HAVE DONE IN THE PAST." MARTIN BENNELL

Mental health and well-being

There has been much talk about the impact that the global pandemic has had on our mental health. We asked respondents if they had been affected and overall 60% agreed. Notably, those who were currently unemployed were more affected than those who were employed in Architecture and Interior Design.

"81% of those unemployed said it was due to the pandemic. Whether it is temporary or permanent, unemployment can lead to stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges. Uncertainty related to COVID-19 only adds to the angst. Loss of purpose and identity, being scared, jealous or angry, are all normal feelings when faced with unemployment. Of course, not everyone will have these feelings but even those coping well may experience some of these emotions from time to time."

What was also interesting was how the age of the respondent affected their answer. 77% of 25 – 34 year olds agreed their mental health had been affected, whereas only 22% of 55 – 64 year olds agreed.

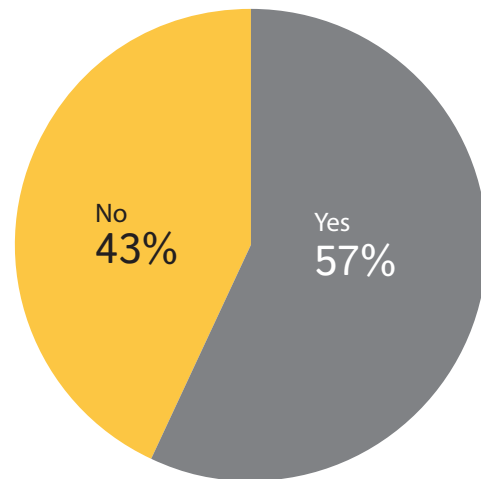
"Controversially we considered whether the younger respondents mental health had been more affected than their older counterparts or whether they are simply more comfortable talking about it in their generation. Are older people aware enough of what mental health is and are they happy to talk about it, or are they simply just more resilient than younger people? After all, this is not the first significant crisis in Architecture and Interior Design history they have had to go through."

We wanted to hear from the people themselves about how it had impacted them:

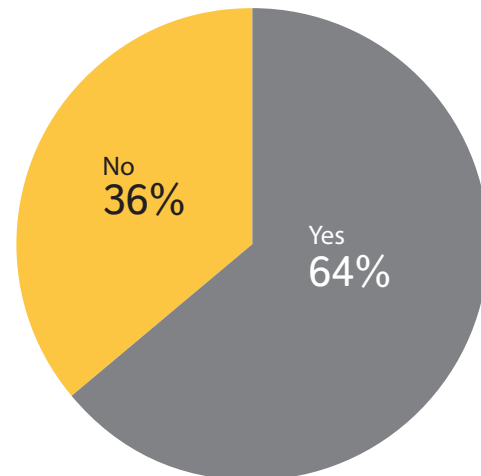
Unemployed and mental health has been affected

◆ "I truly believe that each person has experienced a change in their state of well-being. Most of us had more than one challenge during this time, one of which being

THOSE THAT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE PANDEMIC



Employed in Architecture or Interior Design



Unemployed

the lack of or fewer job opportunities, very long interviewing processes, less feedback or no feedback from hiring managers, as well as less active recruiters etc."

- ◆ "It has made me reluctant to return to the stressful lifestyle and excessive hours in Architecture."
- ◆ "The pandemic and other accelerants have made me realise what is important in life and focus my time and energy to pursue a different vision."

Mental health and well-being *continued*

Employed and mental health affected

- ◆ “It was very difficult to cope with full-time work and taking care of the children while the schools were closed. I had no support from my practice or my colleagues, no flexible hours and poor communication.”
- ◆ “I now suffer from anxiety and doubt myself more than I have ever done before.”
- ◆ “I have anxiety and I am lacking motivation.”

We continued in this line of research to allow respondents to pick the top three words or phrases that best capture their state of mind.

Understandably, the top answers were ‘stressed’ (39%) and ‘worried and anxious’ (38%). Concerns over COVID-19, job security and unemployment, make it natural that many would note this as a concern. This is backed up by the figures we highlighted that felt their mental health had been impacted.

What was positive is that 33% felt ‘productive’ and 31% felt ‘optimistic’. This shows a level of resilience across the industry. We predict that the news in November 2020 of the vaccine for COVID-19, will have certainly elevated the respondents’ sense of optimism.

“A situation like this can quite literally induce ‘fight or flight’. We were pleased to see so many feeling positive

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?	
Word or phrase	Percentage feeling like this
Stressed	39%
Worried and anxious	38%
Productive	33%
Optimistic	31%
Frustrated	29%
Restless	21%
Calm and collected	20%
Distracted	17%
Successful	13%
Happy	13%
Failing	5%



“I NOW SUFFER FROM ANXIETY AND DOUBT MYSELF MORE THAN I HAVE EVER DONE BEFORE.” SURVEY RESPONDENT

and productive in such a difficult time. That can’t be easy with all the uncertainty that we have seen.”

We continued in this line of enquiry by asking what impact the pandemic had on respondents overall. The top answer to this question was that 42% felt it had made them stronger and they felt more resilient. This was encouraging to see, particularly in the youngest age group of under 24 year olds who were the most likely to feel this way.

“Building resilience in young people helps them gain skills for life that will help them deal with, and manage, challenging situations and circumstances that are unfortunately unavoidable. These can include managing unexpected change, going through transitions, dealing with daily hassles or a range of other stressors. Whilst there have been many negatives from the pandemic, making young people more resilient has got to be seen as a positive out of this.”

For our final question in this section, we asked whether the pandemic had made them reconsider their career. Whilst 64% said they were happy to stay in Architecture and Interior Design, significantly a third were considering a career change. 46% of those who were unemployed felt this way. Those with three to five years’ experience were the most likely to be reconsidering their career, with 47% agreeing.

“Whilst a reduction in the number of candidates in Architecture and Interior Design right now may not have an immediate impact on the operations of practices, we predict that if this percentage of people were to change career, hiring managers are going to have a tough time ahead. Practices will potentially need to start planning for the future fallout now.”

Conclusion

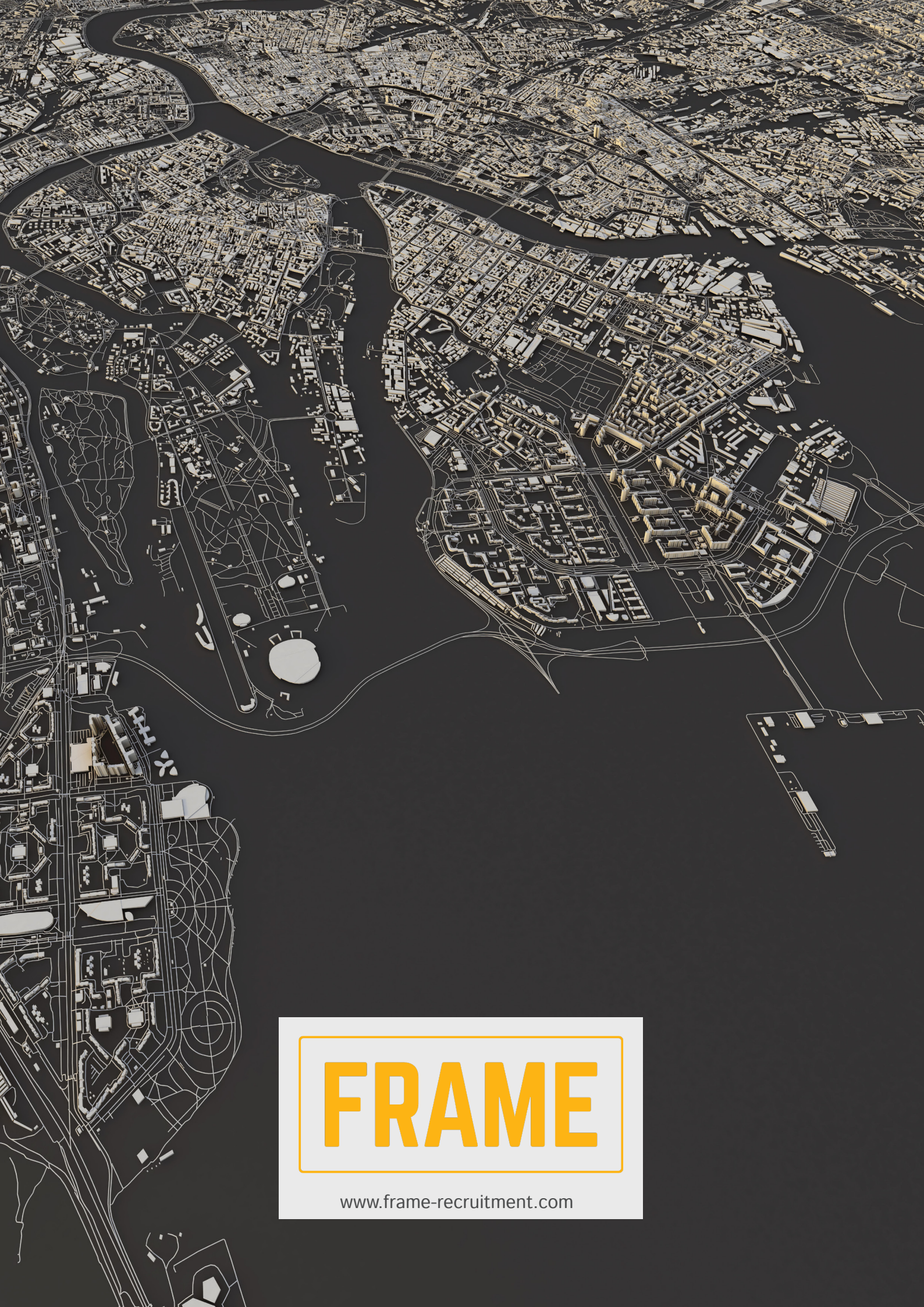
2020 has been a year of survival for Architecture and Interior Design and 2021 will start in the same vein. With the announcement of the COVID-19 vaccine, it has brought some optimism to the market and practices will already be planning on how they can start to recoup some of the huge losses they have experienced.

As a business operating in the Architecture and Interior Design industry, we eagerly anticipate what the impact of the vaccine will bring to help grow the industry back to its former glory. The pandemic has taught many of us new lessons in life and business, and we are sure to see the repercussions of it for some time still to come. We consider:

- ◆ How many professionals will leave the profession for good?
- ◆ How will pay be affected in the short and long term?
- ◆ When will people feel secure in their roles again?
- ◆ What impact will employee engagement have on future recruitment campaigns?
- ◆ Will we lose any more practices in the aftermath of the pandemic?
- ◆ Will remote working become the norm?
- ◆ When will we return to a candidate-led market?
- ◆ What impact will Brexit have?

It has been my privilege to share the thoughts and feelings of Architecture and Interior Design professionals from across the UK in this difficult time. I am pleased we have been able to create and share this with the Architecture and Interior Design community and I hope that the insights have been interesting and thought-provoking. *Martin*





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