

## What is charity freelancing really like?

*We asked 152 Blumers about their experience of freelancing and their top insights show a mixed but positive picture.*

### The Positives:

What has been most positive about your experience as a freelancer so far?

86% Flexibility	40% Autonomy	11% Work	10% Other	5% Money
-----------------	--------------	----------	-----------	----------

Generally, Blumers love being freelance, they report that the flexibility, autonomy, and variety of work are the most positive parts of the experience. Many of them also highlight the opportunities for personal development, work that is interesting, being innovative, meeting new people and maximising their personal impact.

*“I love freelancing as I get to work with people and charities I can genuinely help and support them to solve a problem that helps make things better. It’s not easy but it is immensely satisfying”*

*“Freelancing turbocharged the experience I gained in the charity sector.”*

*“I like being a problem solver which you can do as an outsider in a way that you can’t do as an employee”*

*By focusing my skills on the impact, I can help create with many charities I have felt truly rewarded”*

*“I have more impact and learn more than I expected to”*

*“I’ve met some great people and expanded my knowledge in interesting areas.”*

*“Being able to choose work, choose colleagues, choose my working hours, choose my focus and Continuous Professional Development has been priceless”*

*“Really enjoyed helping organisations and working with senior execs that really appreciate my help and advice. Great variety of projects.”*

*“It’s more flexible and I have total control of my hours (I mean, I probably work harder but can choose when to take time out for other important things)”*

66% of Blumers said that they would not return to employment, and a further 8% said although it was possible it was unlikely.

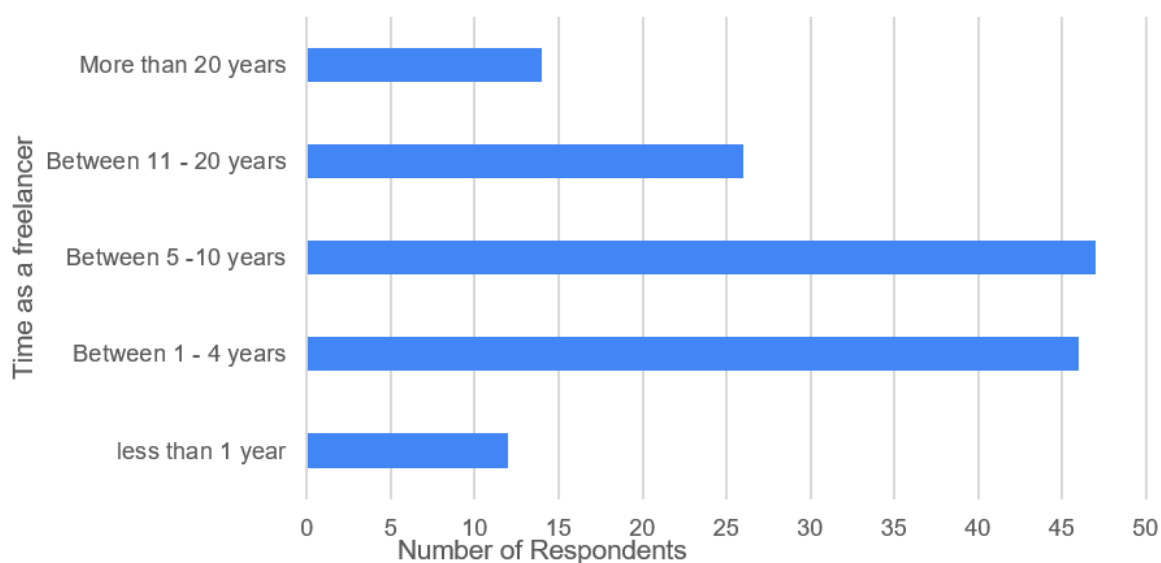
### The Duration:

When did you become a freelancer?

Less than 1 year 8%	Between 1 – 4 years 30%	Between 5 – 10 years 31%	Between 11 – 20 years 17%	More than 20 years 9%
---------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------

The Blumers were asked how long they had been freelancing, and a huge variety of responses were recorded. The shortest anyone had been freelancing was one month, the longest 36 years. For two Blumers, they had enjoyed periods of freelancing, and in-between been employed or founded businesses. For two others, freelancing is done alongside a part time employment role.

### How Long Have you been Freelancing?



### The Finances:

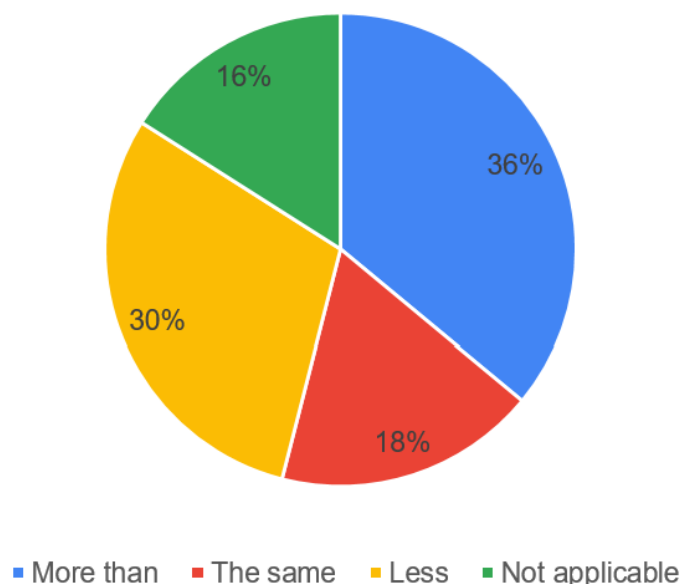
As a freelancer, do you earn less/the same/ more than when you were working for a charity?

More than 36%	The same 18%	Less than 30%	Not applicable 16%
---------------	--------------	---------------	--------------------

***“It is not about the money for me”***

It isn't just the money talking, as reported income shows a mixed picture, with 48% earning the same or less than if they were in employment. Many Blumers reported working reduced hours and some mentioned the lack of part time roles at their skill level, meaning that freelancing offers opportunities for them to maintain a skilled income level.

As a Freelancer, do you earn less/the same/more than when you were working for a charity?



### The Reasons:

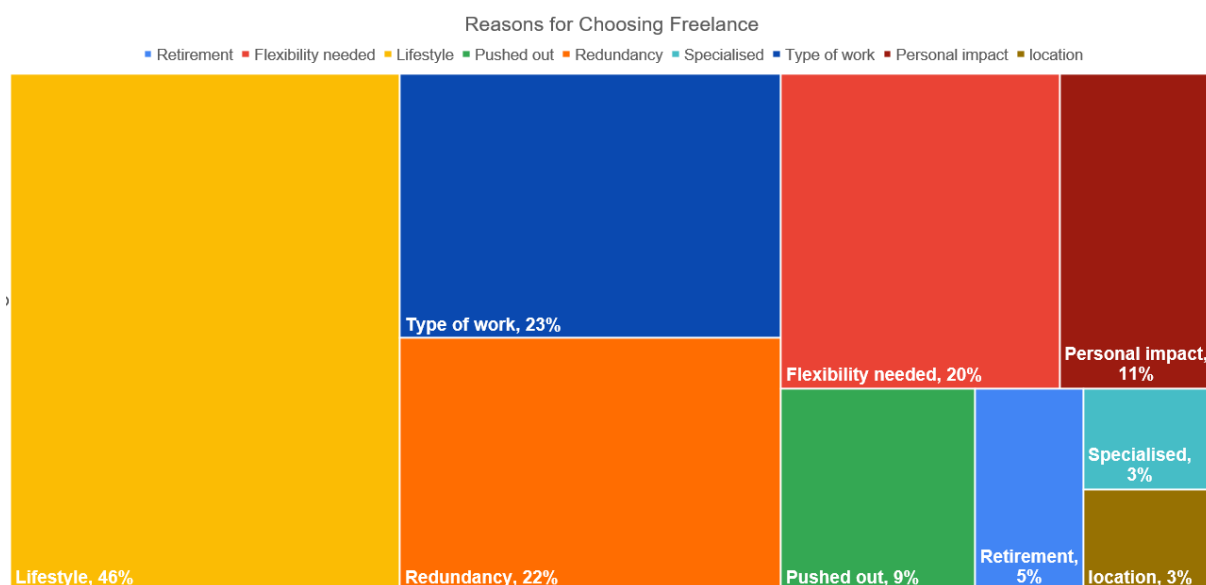
What prompted you to become a freelancer?

Lifestyle 46%	Type of work 23%	Redundancy 22%	Flexibility needed 20%	Personal Impact 11%
Pushed out 9%	Retirement 5%	Specialised 3%	Location 3%	Top-up employment 1%

People become freelancers for a variety of reasons, but by far the most common reason mentioned was for the lifestyle and flexibility which encompasses improved work/life balance and juggling other responsibilities. Two Blumers mentioned working as employees part time and freelance in addition.

Redundancy was mentioned as a trigger for 22% of Blumers, but most of these added notes to say that it was something they had wanted to do or considered for a while and that the redundancy merely facilitated the transition.

These results also give an insight into the world of work with 20% of Blumers choosing freelancing as they felt it was the only option which allowed them the flexibility to work around other commitments and circumstances, including parenting, poor health and caring responsibilities. Although not given as a primary reason 8% of Blumers reported feeling pushed out of employment by difficult situations at work, burn-out or their domestic caring responsibilities/disabilities. This suggests that improving the support and flexibility in the workplace could enable more people to stay in employment.



5% of Blumers cited freelancing as a way of closing their careers, gaining part-retirement and having the opportunities to maintain professional relationships, personal skills and keep mentally active. Only 3% Blumers mentioned location as a reason for freelancing, either because they had moved or because they wanted to live/travel abroad and over half 55% chose freelancing to choose their type of work, to maximise their personal impact, or to specialise.

## The Negatives:

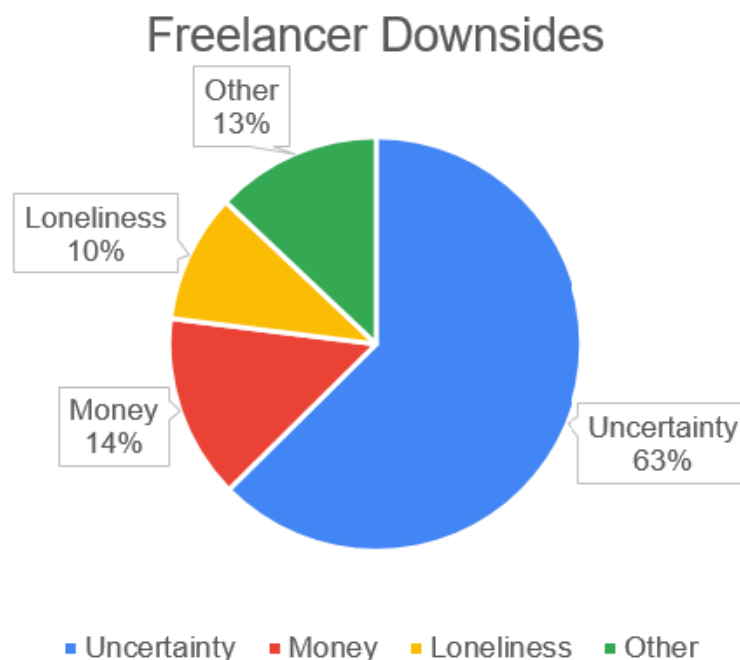
What has been least positive about your experience so far?

Uncertainty 63%	Money 14%	Other 13%	Loneliness 10%
-----------------	-----------	-----------	----------------

The downsides to working as a freelancer are universal, with the uncertainty of work being the most challenging to deal with. Several Blumers reported that, it was difficult juggling different projects, and that often there were periods with no work.

*“The lack of consistency with my work flow I find hardest. When I have a slow period, you don't know how long that's going to last for - which makes it hard to plan.”*

*“Overload on work, saying yes as things can stop at any point”*



The downsides given included as 'other' included working with difficult clients, a lack of sick pay, homeworking, juggling too much work, freelance administration and lack of structure.

### Further comments:

*"But I'm 100% happier"*

*"I've lucked out with a couple of big projects this year"*

*"It is worth it to be living a life I love"*

*"Working in charity sector isn't financially secure with many going through restructures and impacted by funding cuts"*

*"I enjoy the feeling of freedom too much!"*

*"I have never earned even half of what I need"*

*"I've found it really hard and I'm going back to part time in the charity sector so I can get best of both worlds"*

*"I've encountered some really weird stereotyping of freelancers as money grabbing, or creating work for ourselves - it makes me sad, and I don't enjoy having my integrity questioned. No doubt there are some basins out there but in my experience it's rare (I've been on both sides of the equation, so I have some perspective)"*

*"It's been wonderful to meet so many people from different charities and understand their needs. Every job is a bit different and brings challenge and opportunities to be creative and work on new projects."*

*"Freelancing is the freedom to expose yourself to different environments and experiences. It's wonderful!"*

## Summary:

The results show a mixed picture, with both positives and negatives to the lifestyle and some freelancers earning more and others less than previous employed roles. The data shows that freelancing can be a financially viable and legitimate long-term career path, providing huge scope for freedom, autonomy and interesting and varied work. It can also be successfully combined with caring responsibilities, employment and other personal situations in a way that paid employment often doesn't offer. For freelancers, it is of value to know how universal the experience of managing the uncertainty about work is.

## Suggestions for further investigation:

From this research it would be of interest to know how these experiences of freelancing compare to those in other sectors and interesting to see how freelancing has changed over-time. Two Blumers commented on this...

***"I used to earn a lot more for the same work when I first started, now the economy has tanked and I'm working twice as hard for half the money."***

***"The consultancy world is being flooded, and day rates are being pushed down. Many people who don't have the skills or temperament for freelance work are coming into consultancy and sometimes I've found myself having to pick up the pieces. The sector needs to sort its employment challenges to get people who should be in permanent jobs back there, so those of us specialising in interim and freelance work can do what we do best."***

---

This survey was shared via the Blume charity freelancer platform, with their approximately 700 registered freelancers. The data collection window was between 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept -27 Sept 2025 and 152 freelancers took part. The data was analysed and this report written by Jennifer Raschbauer, Charity Freelancer.