

SALARY GUIDE

ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS



Salary & Insights Report
2025-2026

#BuildingTrust

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Introduction

Architecture & Interiors is a sector driven by design precision, tight deadlines, and the need for continuous innovation. However, behind the scenes, professionals face mounting pressures around pay, progression, and flexibility. Our 2025–26 Salary Guide, based on responses from a national survey with over 1,600 professionals, explores not just salary trends but also satisfaction, work styles, and the motivations behind career decisions in the sector.

The findings paint a picture of a workforce that is mainly open to change, especially when salary, culture, and flexibility are lacking. With most professionals working on-site, and over 75% feeling underpaid or unsure about their pay, now is the time for firms to address both attraction and retention strategies.

The Architecture & Interiors sector in Australia comprises highly educated, design-driven professionals working across a range of firms that vary widely in size, structure, and support. With over **86%** of survey respondents open to new opportunities and only a small portion feeling paid at market rate, the industry faces critical challenges around retention, engagement, and reward.

Beyond the survey, our data is backed up by our consultants' analysis, which considers factors such as job roles and industry sectors, incorporating averages from the positions we recruit for.

Our focus on quality assurance ensures the accuracy and reliability of our findings. While the Salary Guide serves as a general reference, please remember that individual factors and market dynamics may influence compensation. For personalised consultations, please contact our expert team.



Demographics & Education

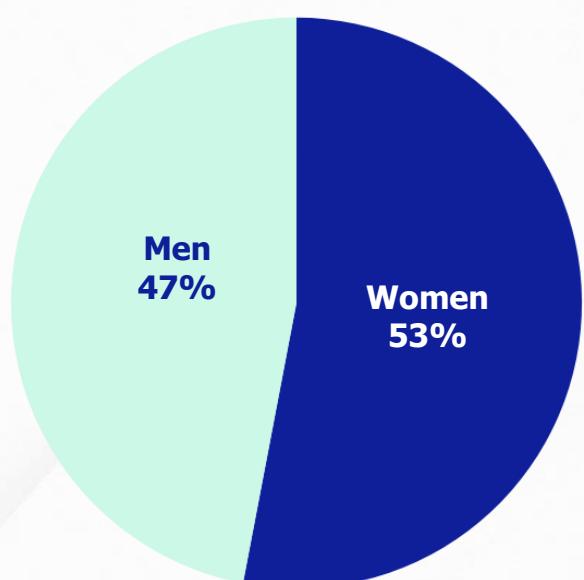
- The bulk of respondents (**79%**) are between 25 and 44 years of age, a prime career-building period where development and mobility are key.
- A striking **41%** hold a Master's degree, making it one of the highest postgrad shares of the sectors surveyed.
- Another **38%** hold either a Bachelor's degree or Diploma, and only 4% listed Certification as their highest credential.

This reflects an industry that values formal training and academic depth. Employers should consider how this affects expectations regarding professional development, accreditation pathways, and leadership development. Candidates are likely to be analytical and design-literate, and they expect structured mentorship or CPD programs as a baseline offering.

Gender & Inclusion

The Architecture & Interiors sector is **one of the few in our survey with a higher proportion of women (53%) than men (47%)** represented in the workforce.

This presents a great opportunity for the industry to lead in promoting gender diversity. However, employers should ensure that gender equity carries through to **pay, leadership, and flexible work policies**, especially given architecture's traditional bias toward long hours and site-based work. The sector could set the tone for what inclusive leadership looks like in design fields.

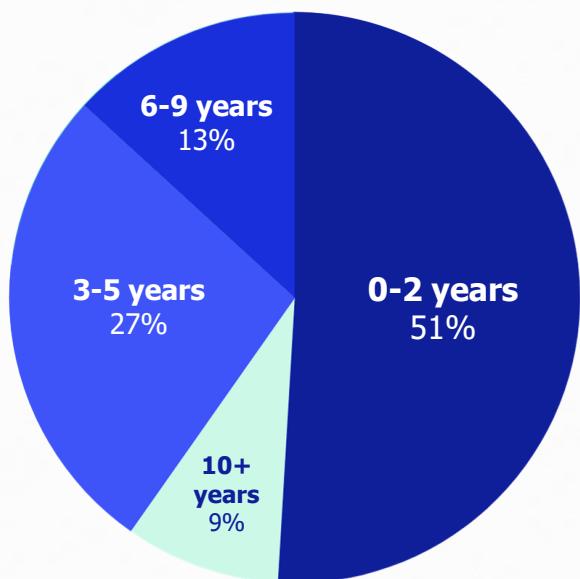


Employment Structure & Tenure

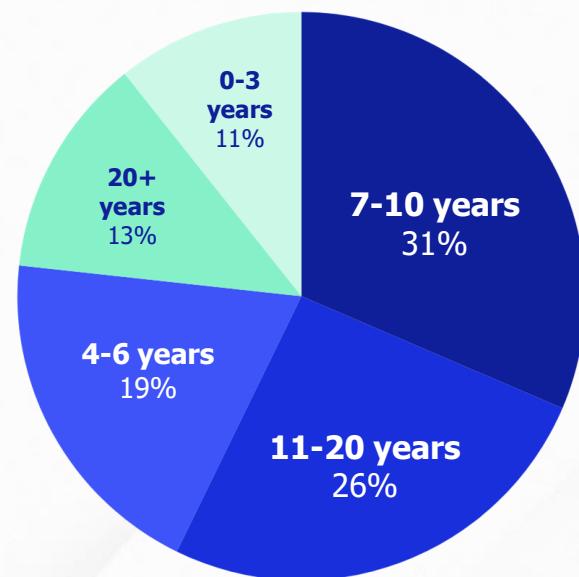
- **89%** are employed on a **permanent full-time** basis.
- **51%** have been with their current employer for **less than 2 years**, and only **9%** have stayed **10+ years**.
- Yet, **70%** report **7+ years of total industry experience**, suggesting frequent employer change but deep sector knowledge.

There is a clear disconnect between long-term industry commitment and short-term organisational loyalty. Employers face a retention challenge — not from juniors cycling out, but from **mid-career professionals seeking progression elsewhere**. Internal mobility, clear promotion pathways, and performance-linked bonuses could help slow this churn.

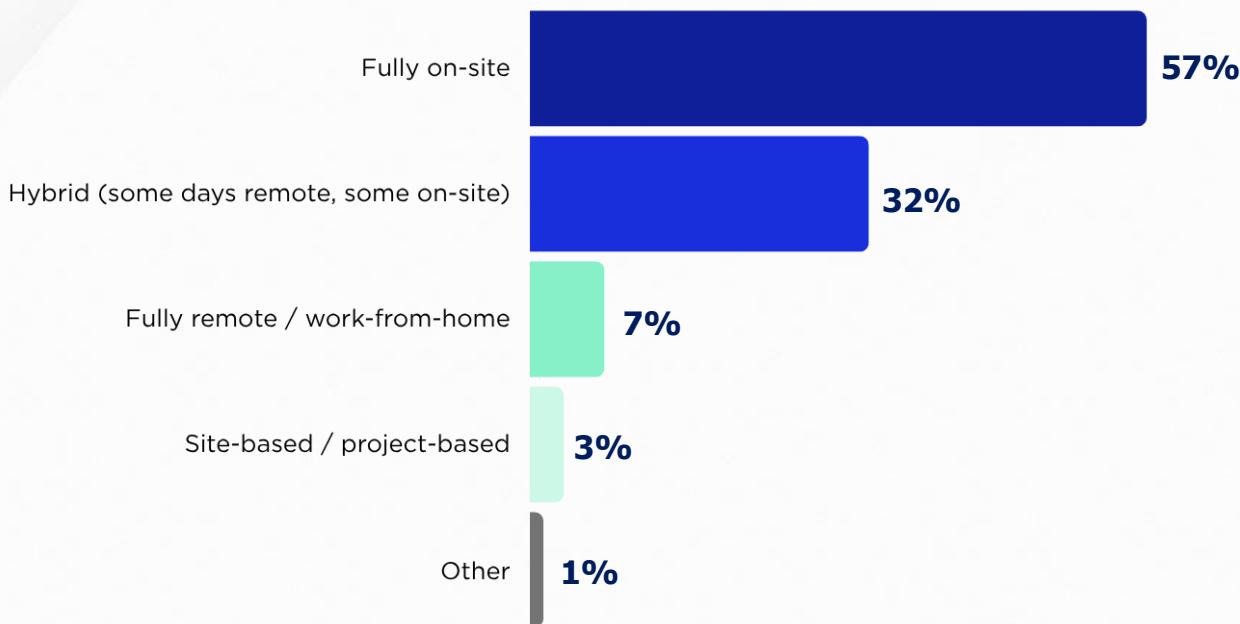
Time at current company



Career Experience



Work Arrangements



Compared to broader professional services, Architecture & Interiors has been slower to adopt widespread hybrid work models, with **57%** of professionals still working fully on-site. Yet, with **31%** now in hybrid roles and **19%** citing flexible work as a key motivator for changing jobs, there is growing interest in more adaptable arrangements.

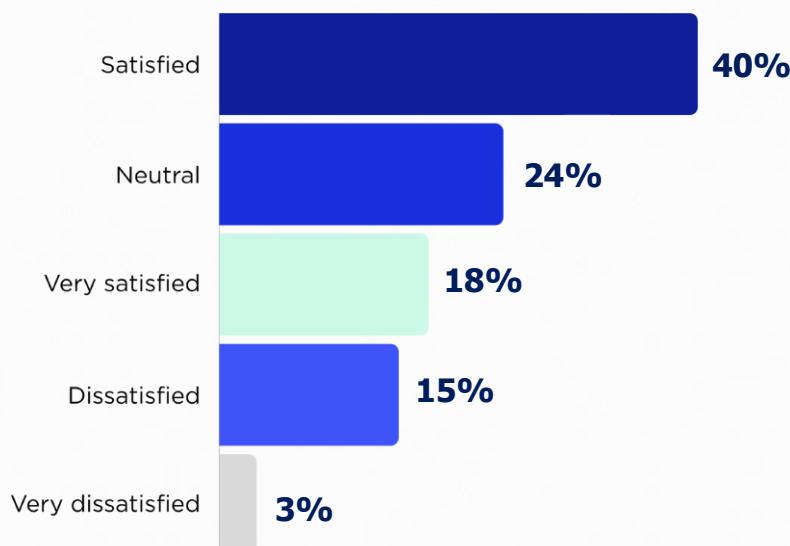
While current work-life satisfaction is relatively positive — with **58%** feeling satisfied or very satisfied — employers still have an opportunity to enhance their value proposition by offering greater flexibility. Hybrid arrangements, particularly for documentation, design development, and client liaison tasks, could further enhance retention and attract professionals who seek autonomy without sacrificing collaboration.



Satisfaction & Work-Life Balance

Overall satisfaction with their current role among Architecture & Interiors professionals averages **5.7** based on a 1–10 scale, a middling result that suggests room for improvement in both daily experience and long-term fulfilment.

How happy are you with your current work-life balance?



While over half of the workforce is broadly satisfied, the presence of significant neutrality, alongside dissatisfaction in nearly 1 in 5, signals underlying friction. In a sector known for tight deadlines, long hours, and on-site presence, these scores reflect a workforce that may be stretched thin, especially in smaller firms where resources are limited.

For employers: Now is the time to explore interventions that genuinely improve employee experience — not just perks, but **workload planning, realistic deadlines, and supportive leadership**. Firms that foster a sustainable working rhythm and acknowledge the pressure points of the industry will be better placed to retain their best talent.

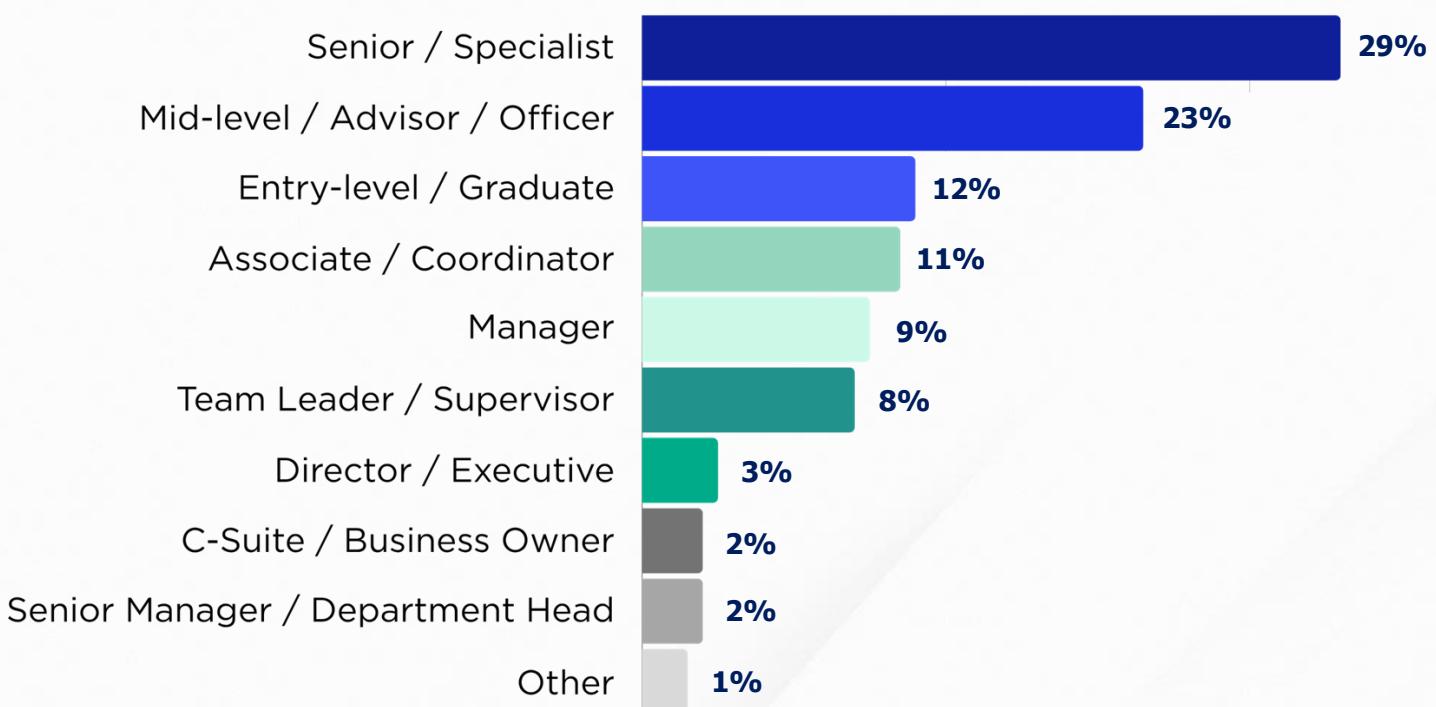
For candidates: If satisfaction feels out of reach, consider whether the issue lies in the type of work, your team structure, or the firm's culture. With many employers beginning to prioritise wellbeing, you don't necessarily need to sacrifice impact for balance, but it may take a strategic move to find both.

Job Level & Progression

- The largest group (**29%**) are Senior/Specialist professionals.
- Just **17%** have received a promotion in the past year, while **67%** have not been promoted at their current company.

There is a heavy concentration in delivery-focused senior roles, but limited movement upward into leadership. This creates frustration for experienced staff who may feel capped in both title and recognition, especially when paired with low bonus access and moderate pay satisfaction.

Employers can introduce more structured advancement pathways (e.g. Senior > Associate > Director) and **reward lateral development**, not just vertical progression. Transparency around what it takes to reach seniority can prevent mid-career disengagement.



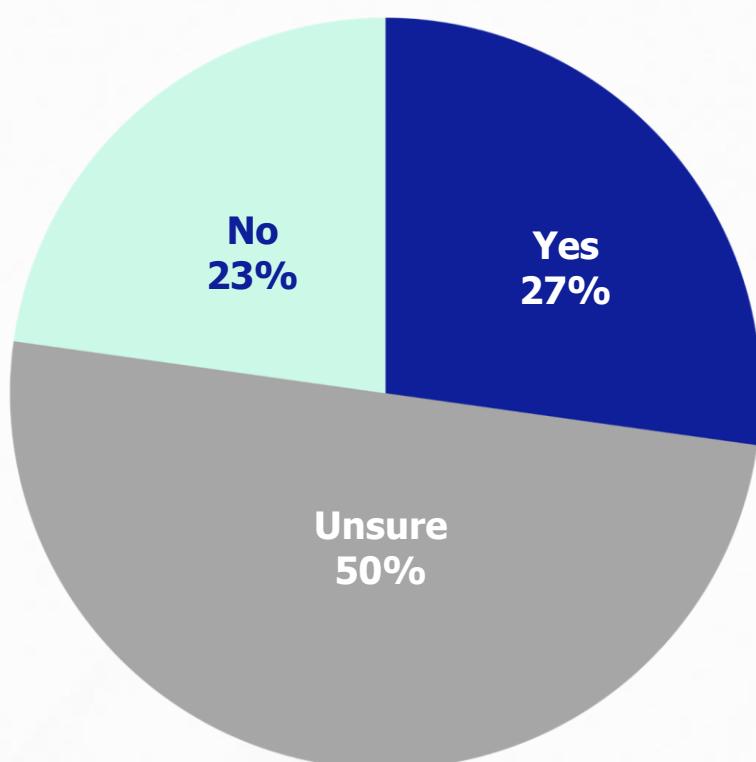
Compensation & Pay Satisfaction

- Only **23%** feel they are paid at market rate. **38%** say no, and another **38%** are unsure.
- 38%** received a pay rise in the last year, and **41%** did not receive one at their current company.
- Just **24%** have access to a bonus scheme, with the majority (**76%**) excluded entirely.

This is among the least financially satisfied professionals across all sectors surveyed. Even among senior roles, **bonus schemes remain rare**, and the lack of clarity around market rates leaves many professionals uncertain about their value.

Compensation conversations can no longer be held annually in silence. Employers need to adopt **salary benchmarking, open progression frameworks, and performance-linked bonuses** to avoid losing high-performing employees to competitors.

Are you expecting a pay rise this year?

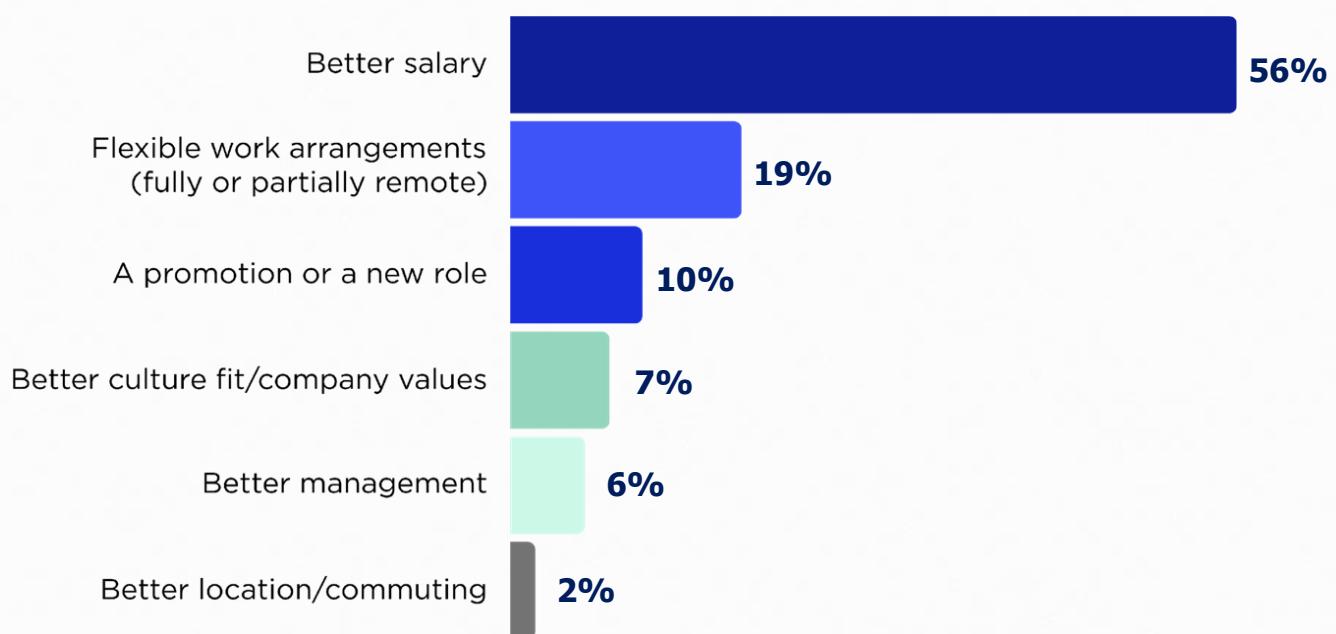


Motivations to Move

86% are open to new roles:

- **30%** actively looking
- **56%** passively open
- **14%** are not open to new offers

What would make you consider a new offer?



Architecture professionals are not moving for novelty; they are moving for **value, agency, and alignment**. Salary remains the largest gap between perceived and actual recognition, while flexibility is the fastest-rising priority.

For candidates who are passively open to a move, now is the time to clarify your non-negotiables and ensure your CV reflects both technical ability and business impact.

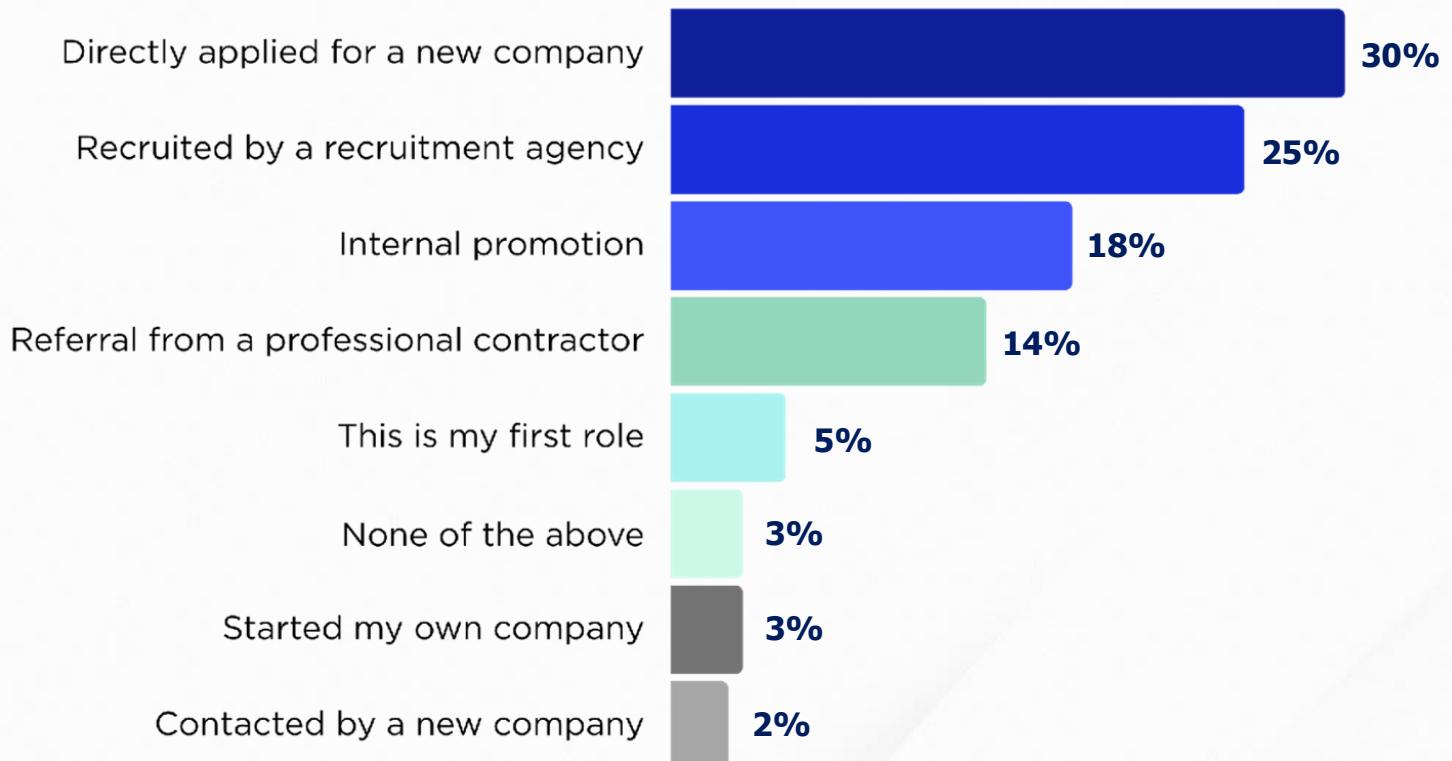
For employers, in a market where more than 8 in 10 professionals are open to change, retaining top talent requires more than competitive pay. It means building a compelling employer value proposition that includes career development, hybrid work options, and genuine recognition of contribution.

Pathways into roles

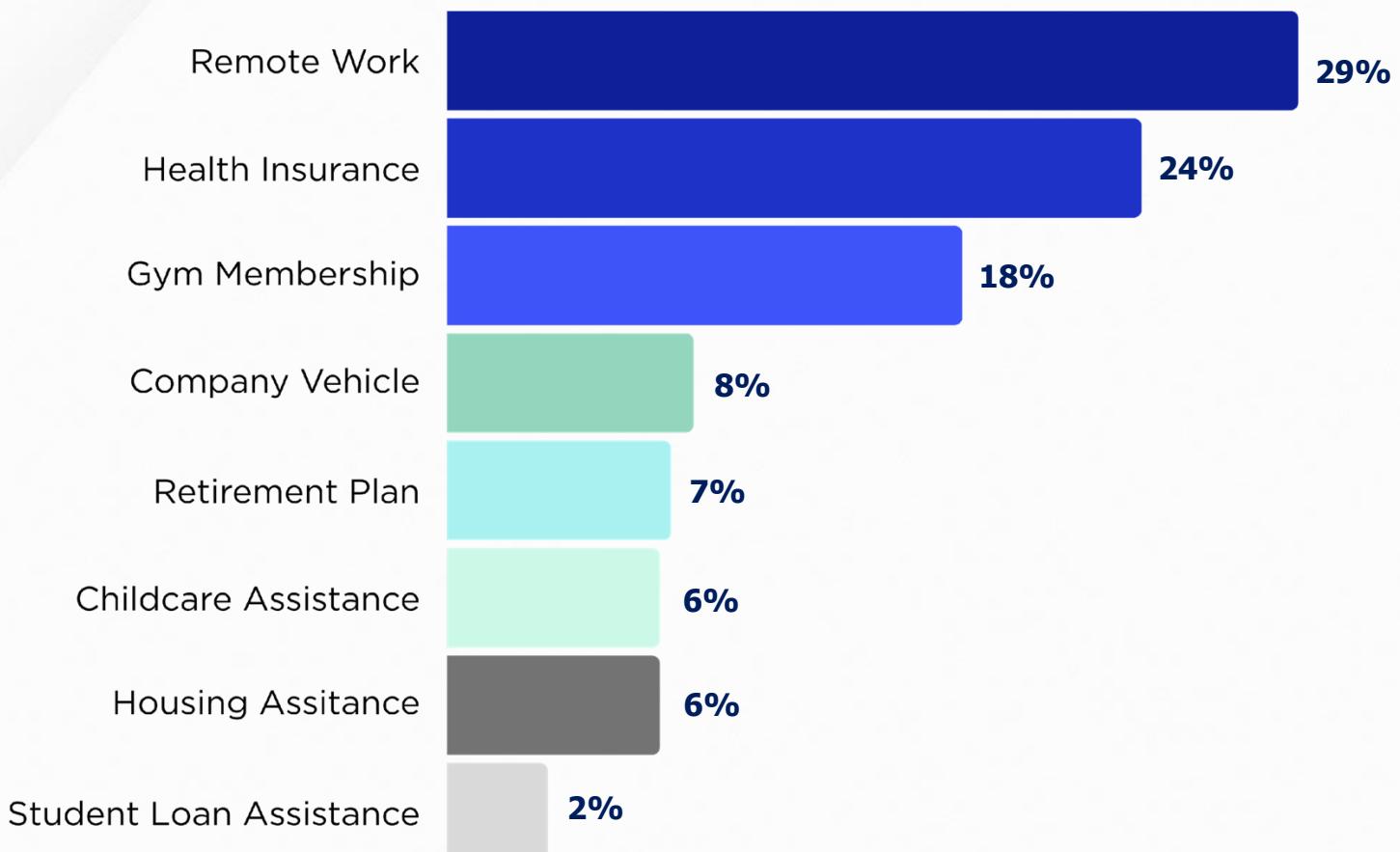
Employer branding and recruiter partnerships remain critical. Candidates are most likely to engage with roles through **direct channels or warm referrals**, which puts pressure on firms to clearly communicate value and maintain a strong reputation in the market.

Organisations should invest in their company's online presence, social proof, and recruiter relationships. Candidates need to see why you're worth approaching and staying with.

How did you get your current role?



Desired Benefits



There's clear demand for a **more modern benefits ecosystem**. The appetite for flexibility, health, and financial support indicates that professionals are seeking more than just salary; they want employers to invest in their overall well-being.

Few companies are offering these benefits at scale — those who do will have a powerful EVP in a sector increasingly defined by mobility and unmet expectations.

Conclusion

The Architecture & Interiors sector is defined by passion, creativity, and expertise, but behind the design output lies a workforce that feels **under-recognised and ready for change**.

While the sector boasts high educational attainment and deep industry experience, professionals are rapidly cycling through employers, driven by dissatisfaction with pay, limited pathways for advancement, and a lack of flexible work arrangements. With over **86% open to new roles**, retention has become a key vulnerability for employers.

Yet this also presents a powerful opportunity.

Firms that take proactive steps — introducing **pay transparency**, embracing **hybrid work models**, offering **meaningful benefits**, and fostering **career mobility** — will stand out in an increasingly competitive market. These are no longer “nice to haves,” but baseline expectations for a highly skilled and mobile talent pool.



For employers, the message is clear: those who invest in their people will attract — and retain — the best of the industry. For candidates, this guide serves as a reminder that your expectations are valid, and there are firms out there aligning pay, purpose, and progression.

As the built environment continues to evolve, so too must the workplaces shaping it. Now is the time to raise the standard. For all our Salary Guides or personalised consultations with our team, visit our website:

designandbuild.com.au



SALARY GUIDE

Architecture

AVERAGE BASE SALARY

 FOR 12
MONTHS

AUD

EXCLUDING SUPERANNUATION

Graduate Architect

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$75,000 - \$110,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$70,000 - \$100,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$75,000 - \$110,000
WA - Perth	\$70,000 - \$100,000

Registered Architect

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$90,000 - \$130,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$80,000 - \$115,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$90,000 - \$130,000
WA - Perth	\$80,000 - \$115,000

Project Architect

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$100,000 - \$140,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$90,000 - \$125,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$100,000 - \$140,000
WA - Perth	\$90,000 - \$125,000

SALARY GUIDE

Design

AVERAGE BASE SALARY

 FOR 12
MONTHS

AUD

EXCLUDING SUPERANNUATION

Design Manager

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$130,000 - \$160,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$115,000 - \$145,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$130,000 - \$160,000
WA - Perth	\$115,000 - \$145,000

Senior Interior Designer

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$100,000 - \$130,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$90,000 - \$115,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$100,000 - \$130,000
WA - Perth	\$90,000 - \$115,000

Interior Designer

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$70,000 - \$100,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$65,000 - \$90,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$70,000 - \$100,000
WA - Perth	\$65,000 - \$90,000

SALARY GUIDE

Draftsperson/Documenter

AVERAGE BASE SALARY

FOR 12
MONTHS

AUD

EXCLUDING SUPERANNUATION

Draftsperson/Drafter

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$70,000 - \$100,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$65,000 – \$90,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$70,000 - \$100,000
WA - Perth	\$65,000 – \$90,000

Documenter

Location	Salary Range
NSW - Sydney	\$70,000 - \$100,000
QLD - Brisbane	\$65,000 – \$90,000
VIC - Melbourne	\$70,000 - \$100,000
WA - Perth	\$65,000 – \$90,000