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Index

About Our Respondents	3
The Lowdown	3
Average Salaries	5
Is Your Pay Cheque in Check?	6
Work/Life Balance...	7
The Lure of the Middle East	8
Benefits and Motivators	9
Is the Grass Always Greener..?	10
Industry Comparisons	
Business Owner/CEO	11
Event Management and Design & Creative	12
Production Companies and Audio Visual	13
Event/Exhibition Services and Exhibitions	14
Corporate In-House, Not For Profit and Government	15
Commercial Conferences and Hotels & Venues	16
And Finally...	17

ESP International is delighted to bring you the 3rd annual Events Industry Salary Survey for the Middle East, which we have updated in line with our UK survey to become the 'Event Pay Check', Middle East. In conjunction with SourceMe, the questionnaire was sent out to nearly 4000 events professionals and the respondents represented a cross section of people from all sectors of the industry, throughout the GCC. Once again we have received fantastic support and impressive results from which to draw our conclusions.

Each year the survey evolves to consider variations in the market and individual requests, which shows how driven we are to offer a thorough, respected research project for our industry, providing invaluable information on salaries, influences and trends, straight from you, the beating heart of our industry.

This year sees a change once more in average salaries and what motivates people, in line with a slight weakness in economic confidence and shift in employment strategy.

The results presented in the tables, charts and accompanying statements are used and valued by employers and HR managers to benchmark against industry standards, and employees seeking affirmation that their salary is in line with their peers and industry levels.

The salary survey includes:

- Comprehensive salary comparisons across all levels of the events industry
- Detailed information about salary shifts across the sector
- Analysis on education, experience and earnings of expats and GCC nationals
- Compensation and benefits, and what motivates people in events
- Comparisons with the 2015 version of the survey
- Comparisons to UK salaries and trends

The information in this survey is taken from a cross-section of respondents from small, medium and large companies, and also freelancers, in different countries and cities within the GCC. We give significant consideration to these factors when analyzing and reviewing results.

Once again we'd like to thank all those who took the time to complete the confidential questionnaire; without whom we cannot conduct our research and provide the market with this comprehensive report.

About Our Respondents

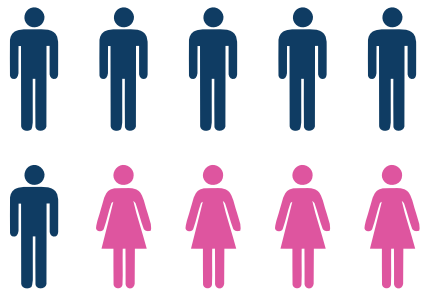
Business Owner	5%
Employed	87%
Freelance	7%
Unemployed	1%

The majority of respondents work within event/exhibition services.

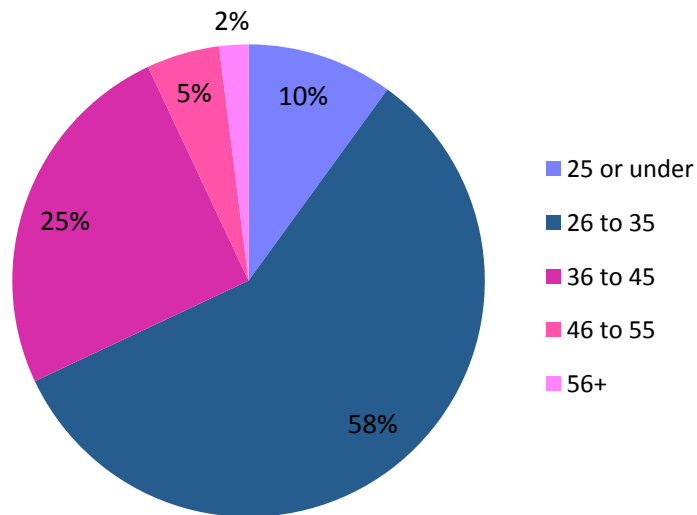
70% of respondents are manager/team leader level or above, hence the high average monthly income and whilst lower than last year, the figure is still high.

Unchanged from 2015, the average number of years in events is 8 years and 5 months - more experience leads to higher salaries

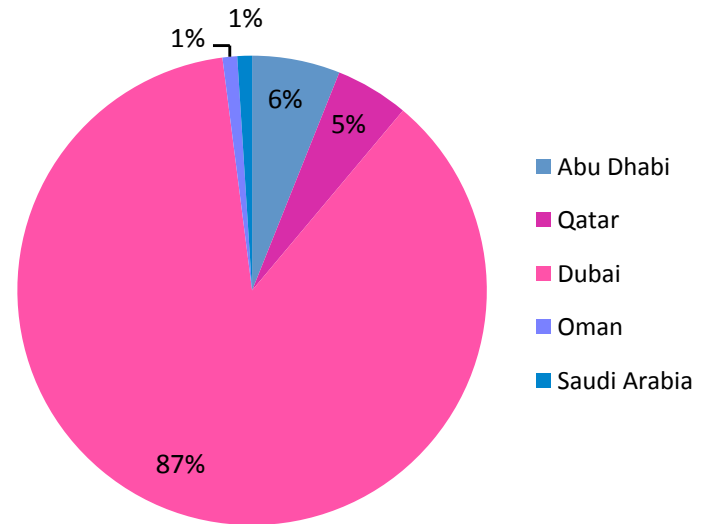
Male/female split



Age



Work location



The Lowdown

AVERAGE INCOME ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST EVENT INDUSTRY

AED 20,476

2016 has been a year of re-adjustment; the economy as a whole, not just events, has been squeezed and resulted in both positive and negative change. With redundancies in many organisations and recruitment of more senior people in others, average salaries have fluctuated. It is important to note that such shifts in both directions skew averages and lead to some anomalies within the figures. As reported last year, there was a need to offer more support to senior employees, and we feel that this may have become a reality as salary increases are clearly visible at mid to senior level.

AVERAGE PAY RISE

- 54% received NO pay rise over the last 12 months, an increase of 10% on last year
- 24% received between 1 and 6%
- 15% received 10% or higher
- The average pay rise across the events industry in the Middle East is 2.5%
- The average pay rise across the Middle East as a whole is 5%*

The 54% who received no pay rise are at the mid/lower levels but the 15% that received a 10% pay rise are at the mid/senior levels, on much higher salaries, which skews the average upwards. There may on the face of things appear to be discrepancies in how the figures read, but ultimately the market is in a state of flux as the results show.

*gulfnews.com

The Lowdown continued

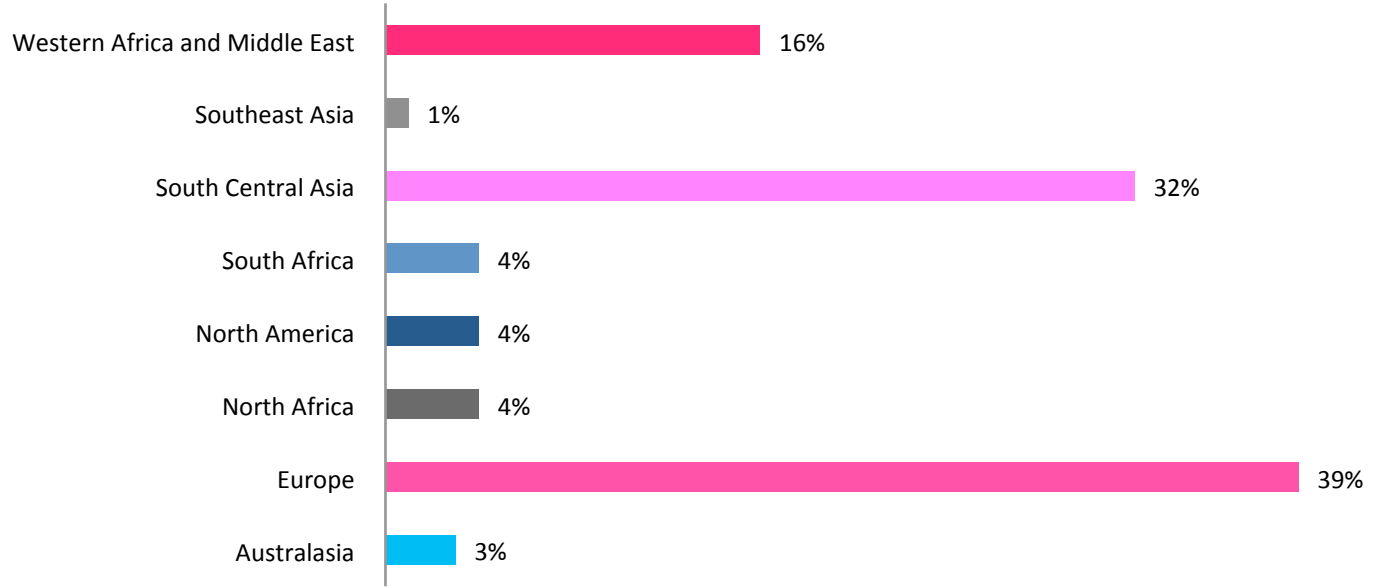
The industry in the Middle East is relatively young with 94% of our respondents being under 45

The majority of respondents were from Europe, closely followed by Asia

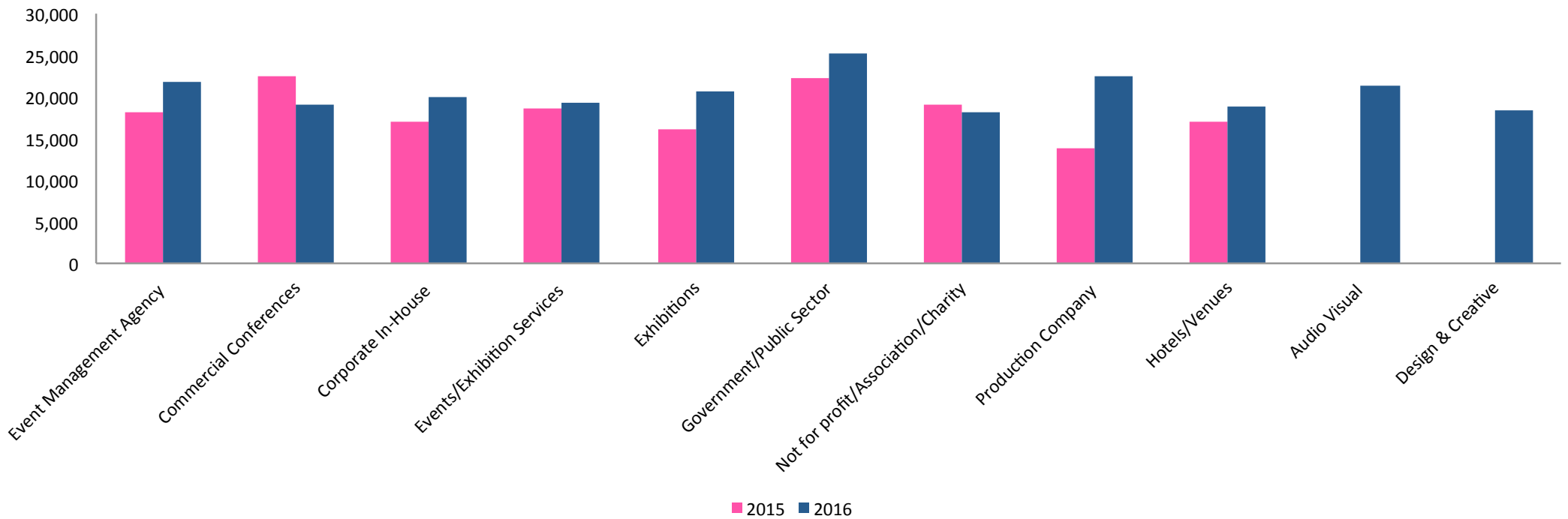
80% of respondents are based in Dubai, the hub of the Middle East events industry

Self employed respondents work nearly 10% longer hours than their employed counterparts

Where are you from?

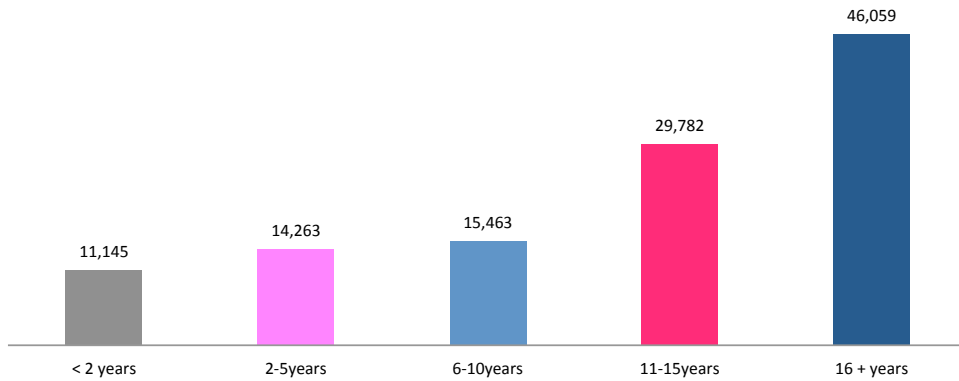


Average salary by sector (AED) year on year



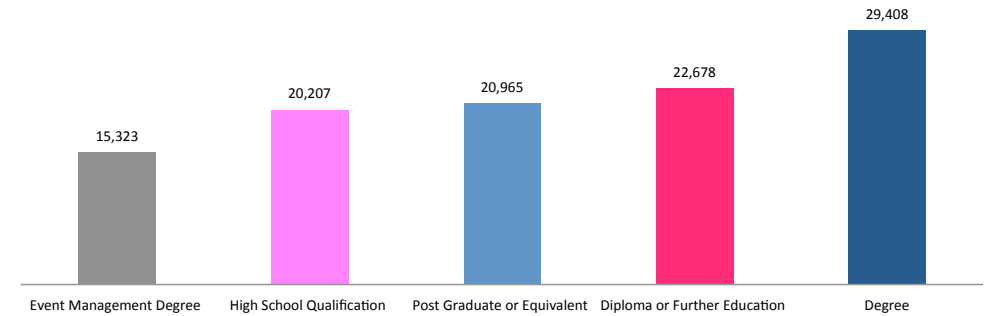
Average Salaries

Average salary vs experience



This shows a good steady upward correlation in salary based on greater experience. Please note that these are average salaries and that specific industry salary figures shown later in the report will give more accurate individual comparisons. Our salaries are still higher than UK salaries for the level of experience, despite some annual adjustments.

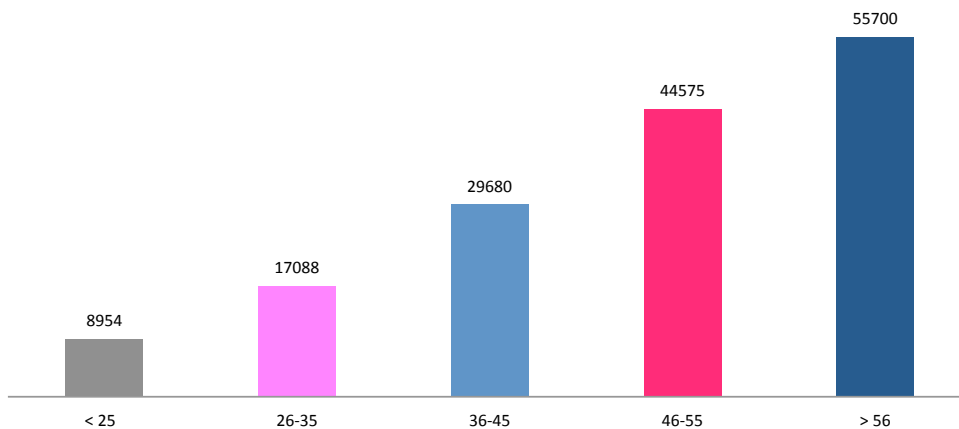
Average salary vs level of education



This years figures once again show a positive reading for the argument that higher education pays off, but a significant change in the average salary for those with an event management degree. This is likely to be down to the change in respondents but could also pertain to the fact that we do not yet offer specialist event degrees in the Middle East, but are crying out for it.

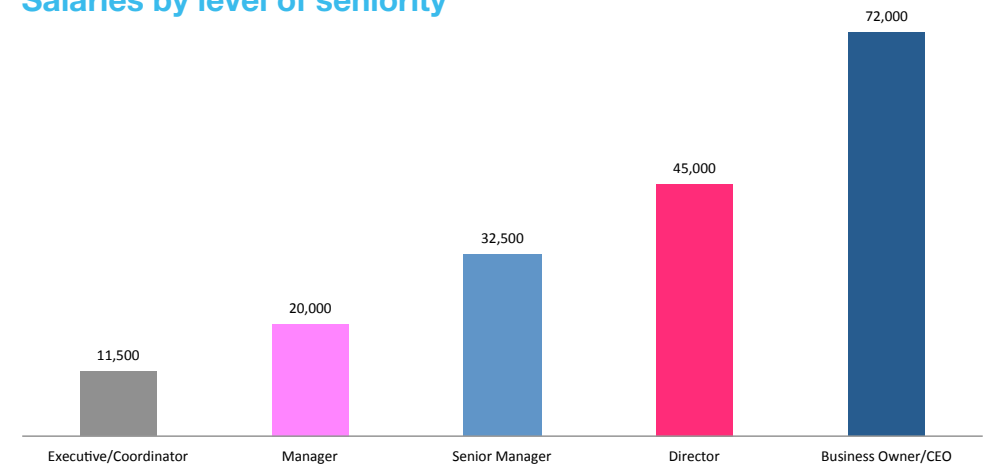
Whilst degrees are not necessarily a requirement within the events profession, in general those that have it can fast track through the career ranks at a slightly faster pace.

Average salary vs age



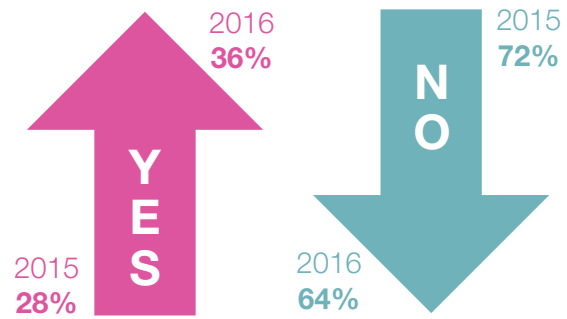
This is a 'model' chart that is indicative of a highly vocational industry such as events, where with age comes experience, and with experience comes greater financial reward.

Salaries by level of seniority



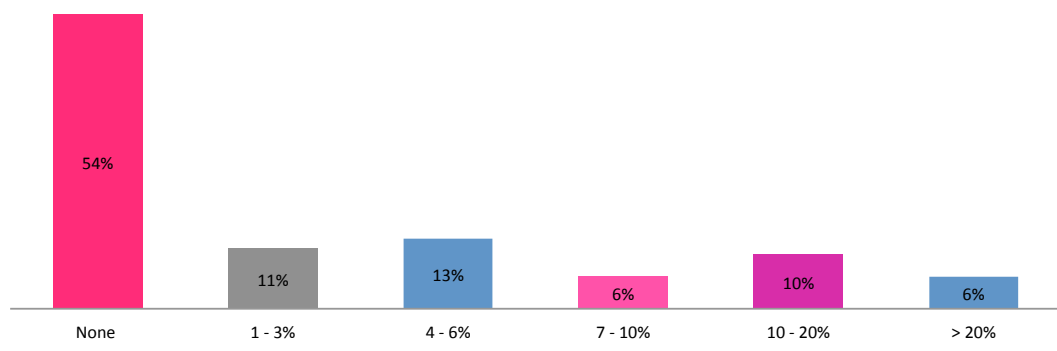
It is important to note that this is across all industry sectors so again it is worth cross-referencing against the salaries within your specific industry segment.

Is Your Pay Cheque In Check?



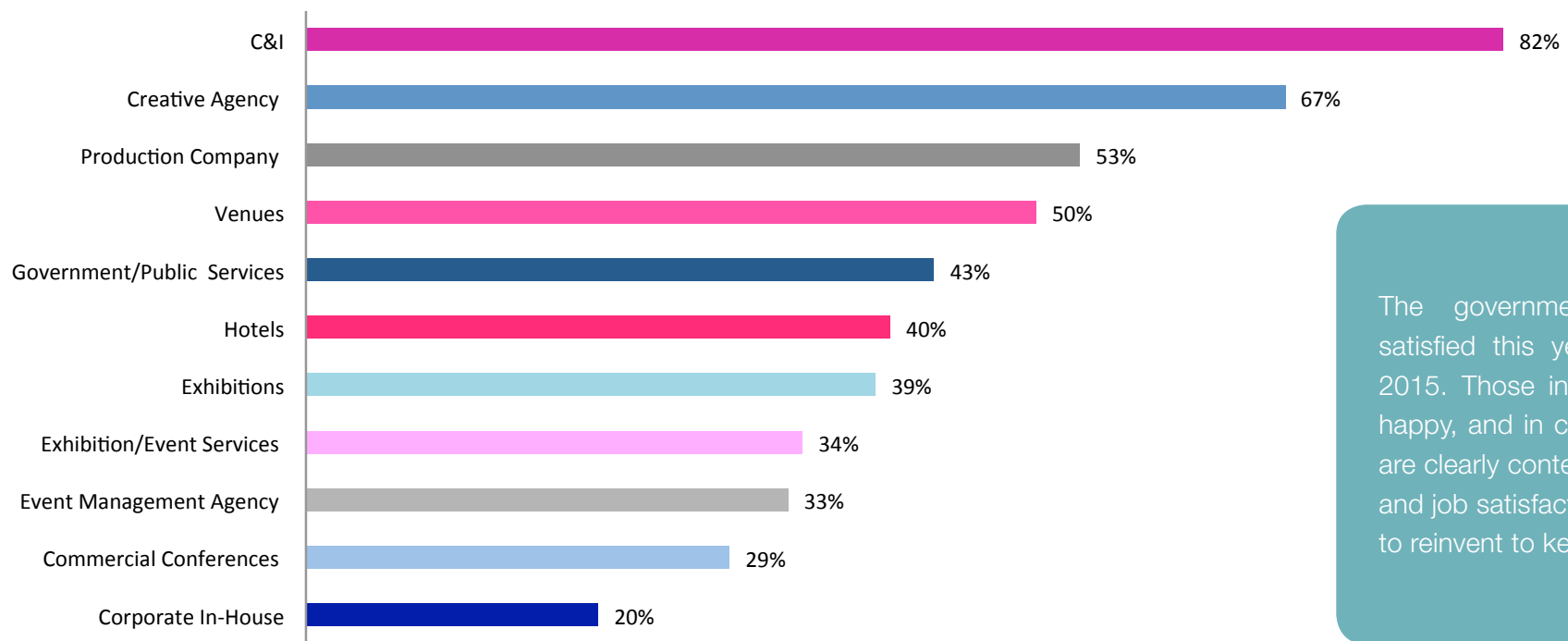
We're pleased to report that although still high, 8% less respondents felt they are not paid their worth, which reflects employees preference for stability over pay rises in a cautious business environment.

Salary increases across the industry within the last 12 months



Once again we have seen a significant rise in the number of people who did not receive a payrise, which is representative of the market, and ordinarily would lead to low levels of motivation, but as so many people are in the same boat and as the survey shows, stability is more important this year.

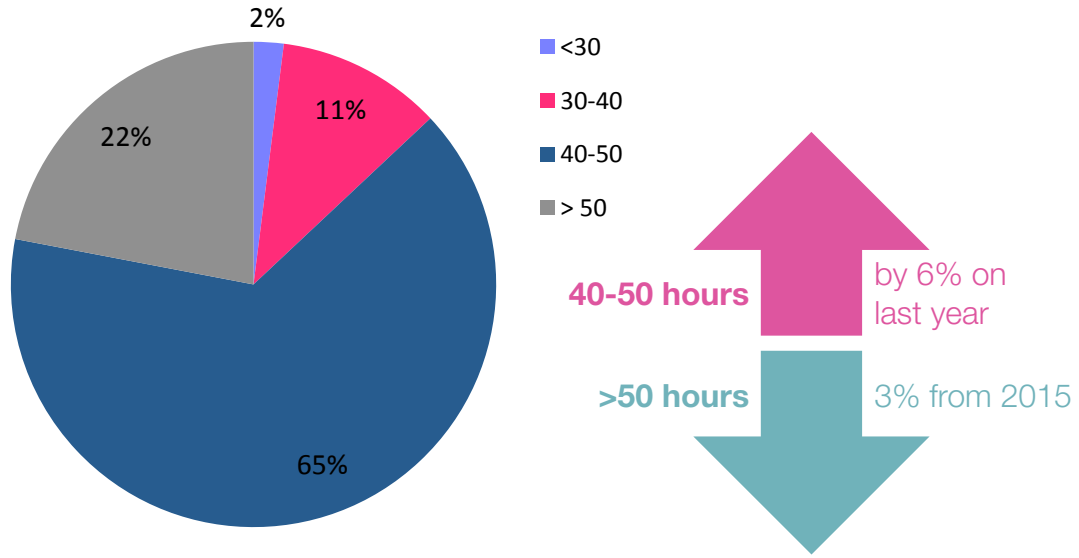
Which sectors are the most satisfied with their salaries?



The government sector seems more satisfied this year after a low ranking in 2015. Those in the C&I sector are most happy, and in creative agencies employees are clearly content, which is down to variety and job satisfaction as they constantly need to reinvent to keep clients happy.

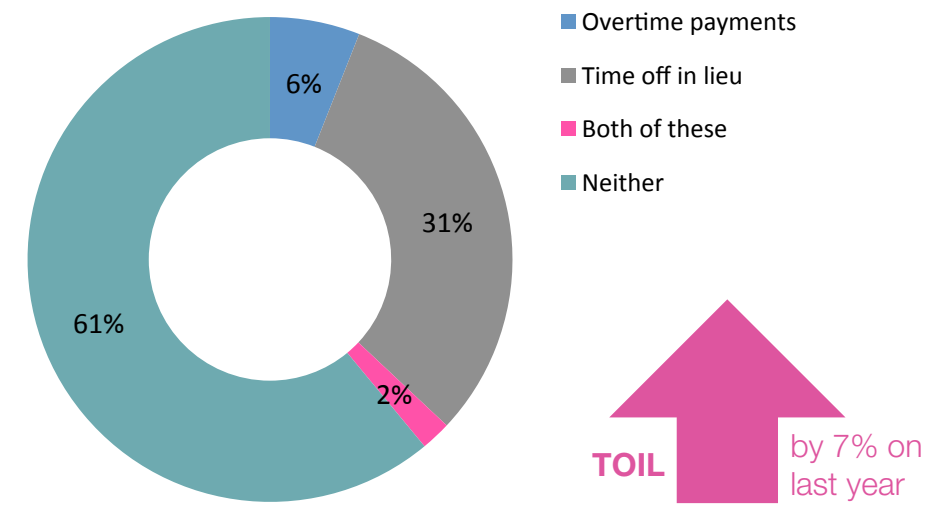
Work/Life Balance...

Average number of hours worked per week



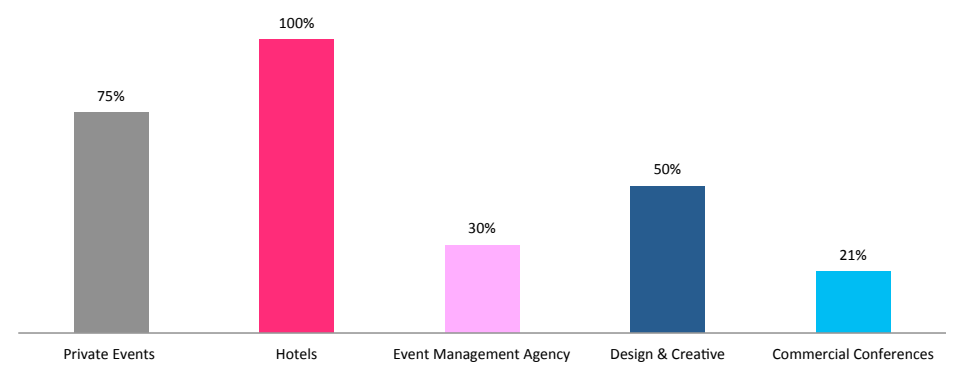
Despite a reduction in those working more than 50 hours, a whopping 87% still work well over 40 hours a week.

All work and no play..?

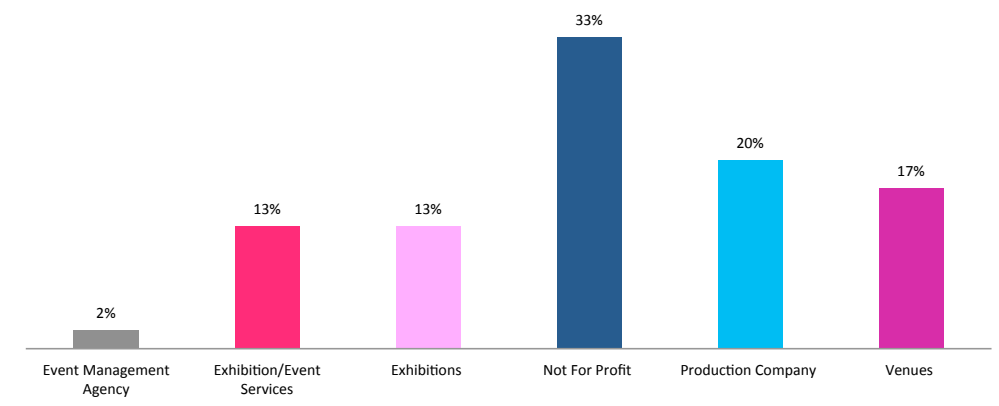


It's encouraging to see that more staff got time off in lieu in respect of the extra weekly hours they are putting in, a definite move forward for the events sector. Employers in the industry prefer to offer employees days off instead of paid over time.

Sectors working the longest hours - over 50/week

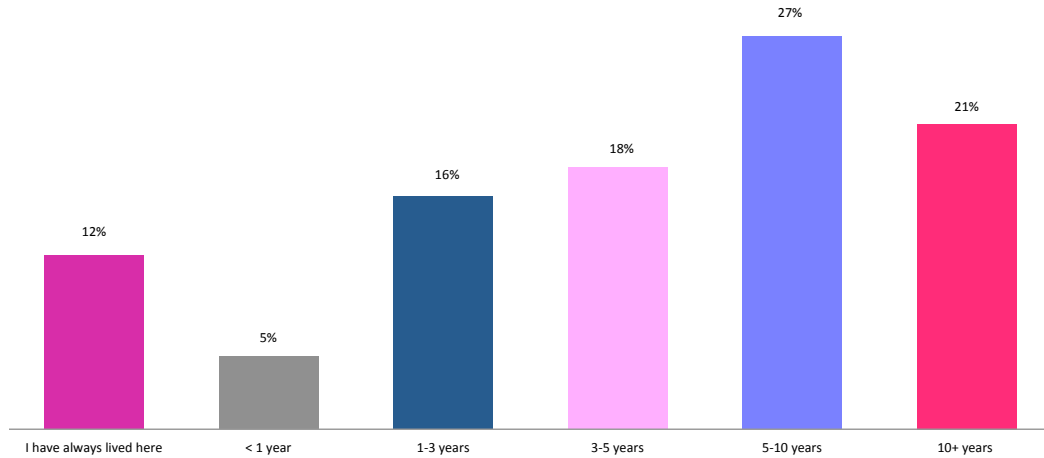


30-40 working hours



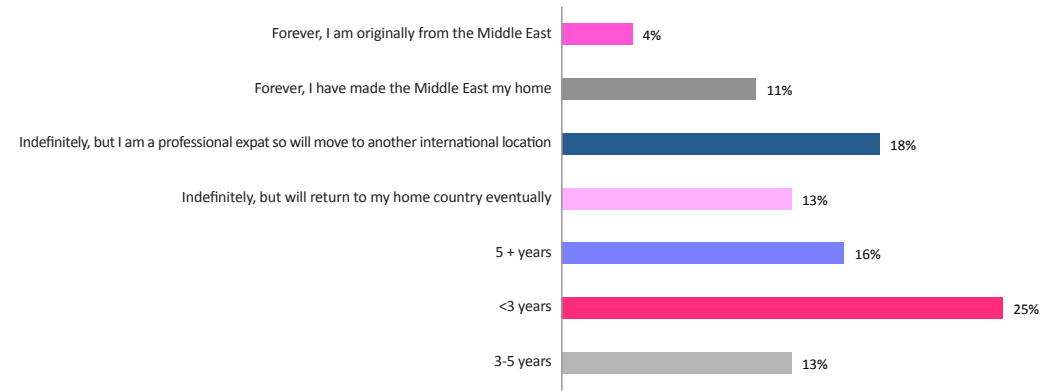
The Lure of the Middle East

How long have our respondents been in the Middle East?



These figures only show marginal fluctuations each year, and can be linked to factors such as business and economic environment, family life or just a change of heart!

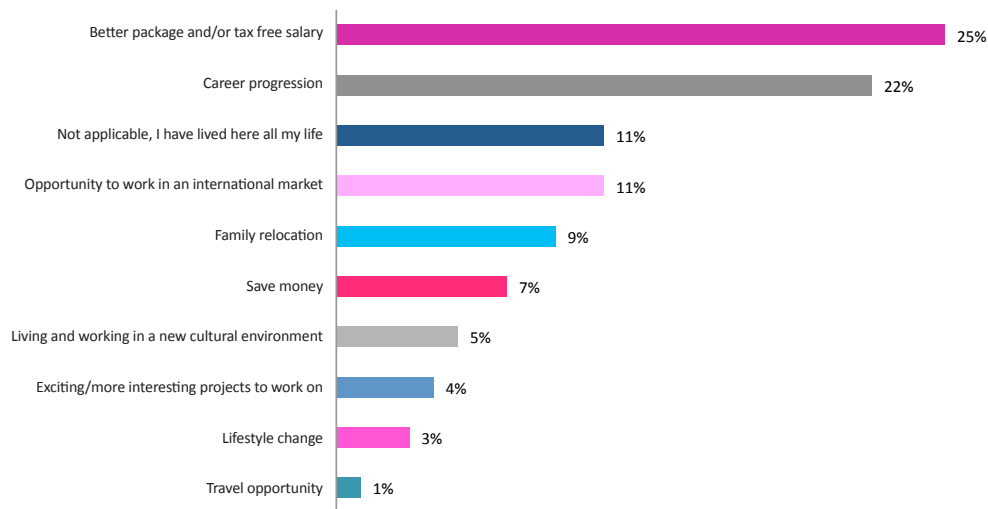
How long are people planning to stay?



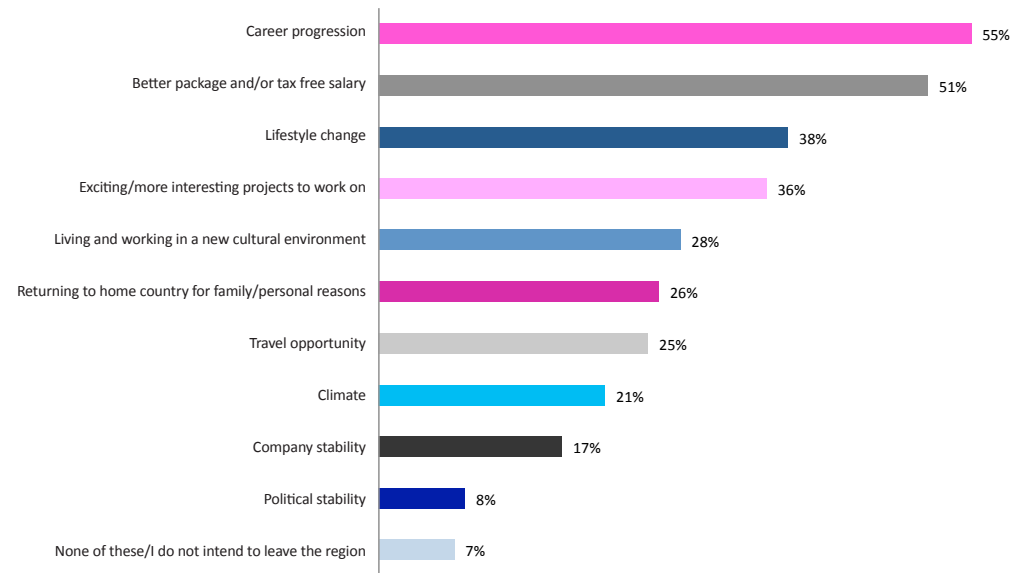
The majority of expat employees are career minded and give the same reasons for coming here and leaving.

This year career progression overtook money and tax savings as the key motivator for peoples' relocation.

Main motivations behind a move to the Middle East

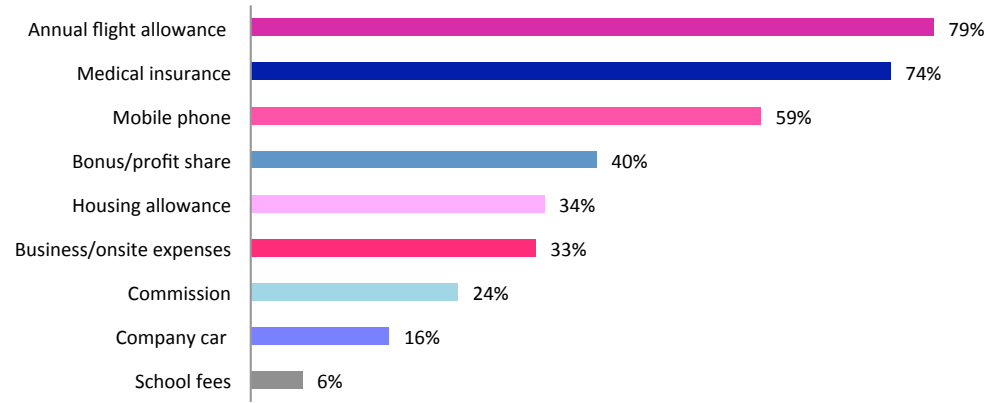


Why would people choose to leave the Middle East?



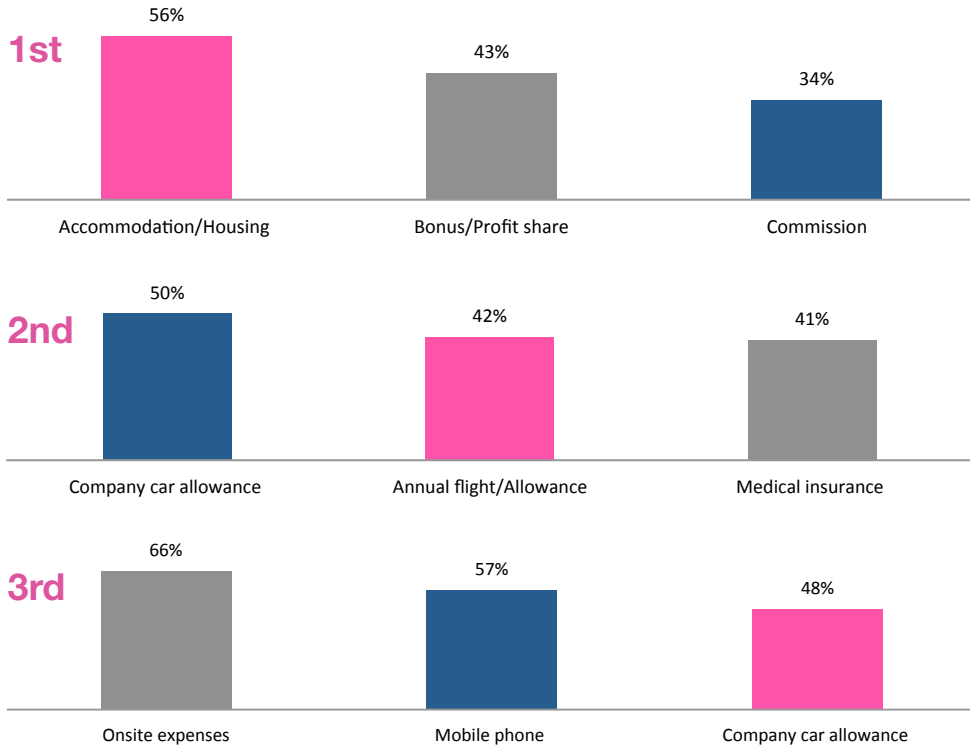
Benefits and Motivation

Benefits received



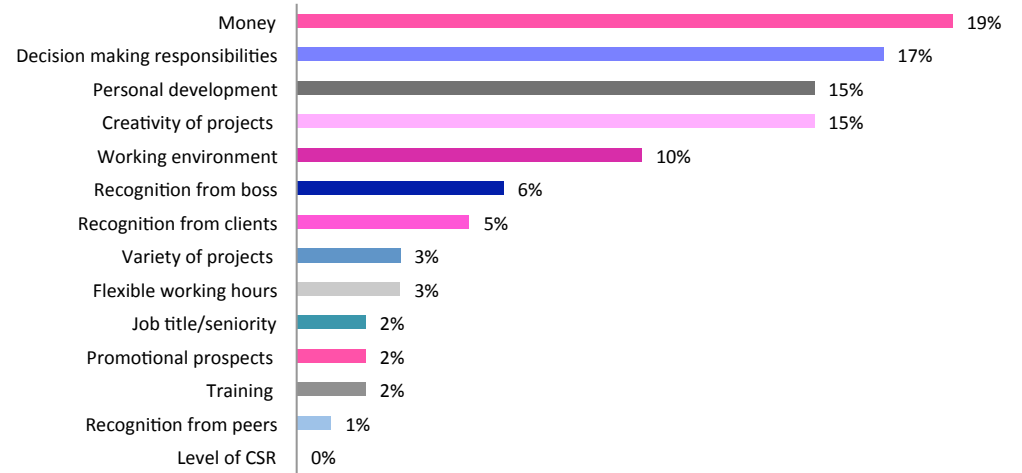
As anticipated, the level of employees receiving healthcare has risen again by 9% in the light of the compulsory healthcare regulation that came in on 30th June. Next year this figure should be 100%.

Most popular benefits

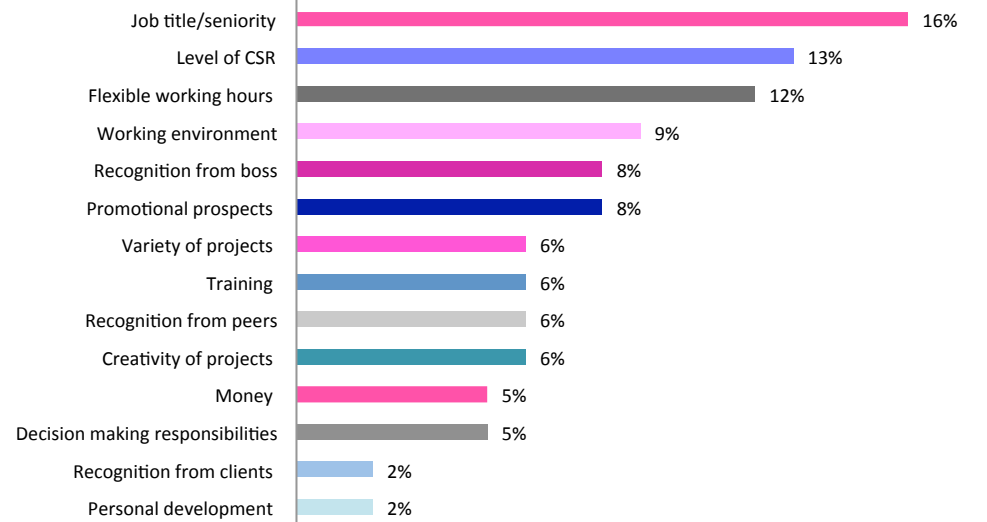


Key motivators

Most important



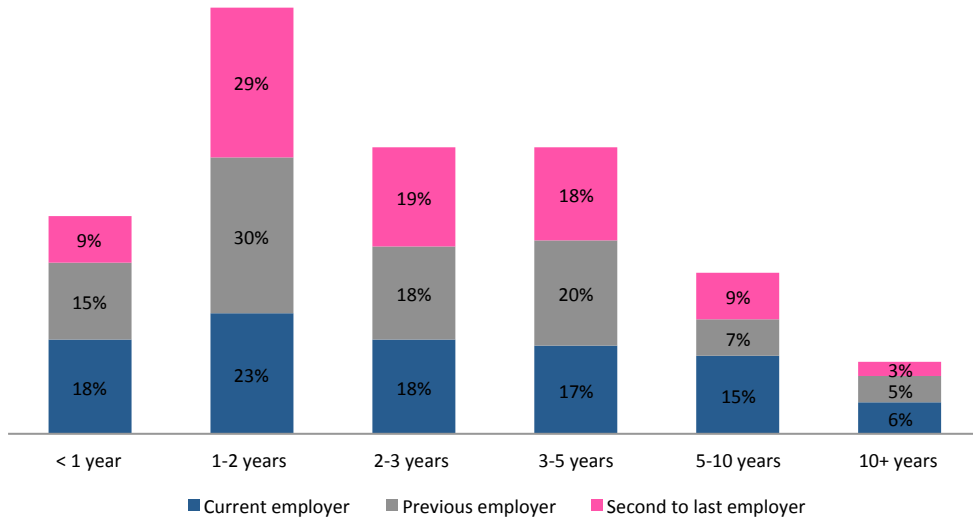
Least important



One of the most notable statistics this year is the 10% drop in the number of people citing money as the biggest motivator. This is certainly as a result of a more volatile market and people valuing stability and job security over big pay packets. Job title is now the least important thing for our people.

Is the Grass Always Greener..?

How long do people stay in their roles?

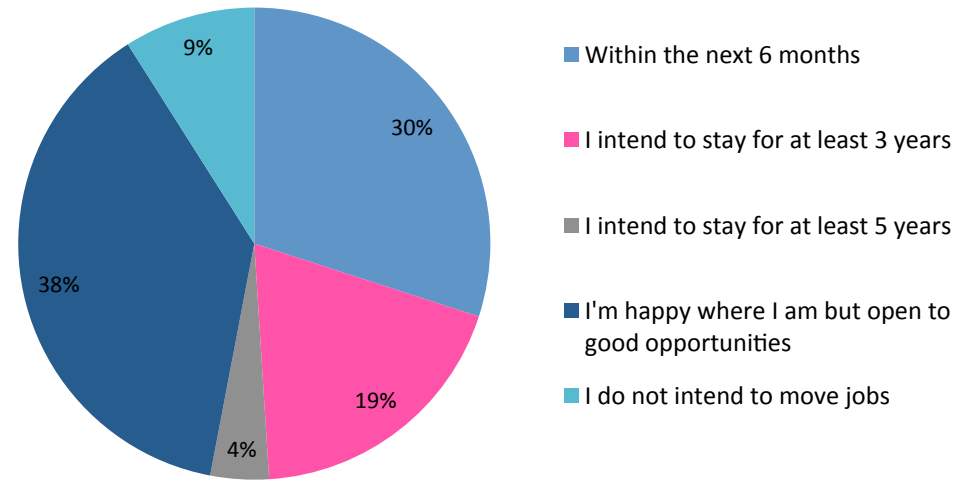


This years results show more movement in the job market and shorter time spent in roles, when compared to last year and 2014. There were once again redundancies throughout 2016 in part due to a knock-on effect from a hard hit oil & gas sector and general economic caution, which has impacted on these results.

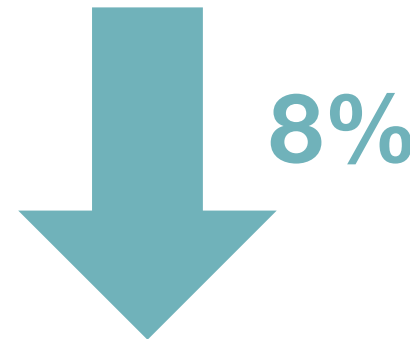
Top 5 reasons for leaving a role

1. Better package
2. Career change
3. Job dissatisfaction
4. Opportunity to work in an international market
5. No career prospects in current role

When do people intend to move jobs?



How many people want to leave their jobs in the next 6 months?



Our industry expert says...

The 'intangibles' are becoming more important than benefits; people are staying for stability'

Premila Braganza,
Head of HR, MEA, dmg events

The 8% drop in the number of people actively looking to move jobs in the immediate future is a further nod to the fact that people are happy that they have a job and really don't want to move on, better the devil you know...

Industry Comparisons

It is important to note that variations in salary portrayed throughout the report are attributed to 2 main factors:

1. A change in respondents from year to year which can skew the figures
2. Fluctuations in actual salaries over time. In a few cases where there is an extreme high/low salary, we use our expert knowledge and in-house data to recommend appropriate market levels for each salary.

INDUSTRY COMPARISONS: Business Owner/CEO
















Business Owner/CEO

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Business Owner/CEO	30,000	166,000	71,364	N/A

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

This year we have given business owners their own section as the salaries are vastly different to general managers and MD's and makes for interesting reading, as well as ensuring averages are realistic.

KEY

-  Accommodation
-  Bonus
-  Commission
-  Corporate social responsibility
-  Creativity of projects
-  Decision making abilities
-  Flexible hours
-  Flight
-  Medical
-  Money
-  Personal development
-  Recognition from boss
-  Recognition from clients
-  Variety of work
-  Working environment

Event Management Agency*

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Sales/Business Development Executive	6,100	10,000	8,000	▼
Sales/Business Development Manager	12,500	25,500	17,275	▼
Sales/Business Development Director	25,000	40,000	28,000	▼
Marketing Manager	16,000	30,000	24,000	▼
Event/Project Coordinator**	3,500	14,000	12,000	▼
Event/Operations Manager	10,000	30,000	23,500	=
Senior Project Manager	20,000	28,000	26,000	N/A
Event Director	25,000	30,000	27,500	▼
Account Executive	4,000	12,000	10,000	=
Account Manager	15,000	27,000	17,000	▲
Account Director	14,000	35,000	26,000	▲
Client Services Manager	15,000	30,000	20,500	▲
General Manager	35,000	50,000	45,000	▲

It's interesting to see that flexible hours features this year as a top benefit. If salaries stay static, then achieving a work/life balance becomes more important to many.

*
The average salary for this sector is highly dependant on the size of the company, whether they are local or international and the scale and value of the events they organise.

**
This is a big drop from last year, but is an appropriate market level.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS

MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS

Agency Creatives

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Graphic Designer	5,998	10,500	10,688	▼
Interior Designer	9,200	22,500	15,675	N/A
Exhibition/3D Designer	10,000	20,000	16,000	▲
Art Director	9,000	30,000	21,200	▲
Creative Director	20,000	40,000	28,000	▲

This year we have merged the event and creative agency sectors as the figures are so similar in each, and have added salaries in for interior design.

Salaries have risen slightly across all disciplines. A high proportion of creatives are also satisfied with their pay check, which is great news, especially when we continue to see ever-creative concepts emerging throughout the industry.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS

MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS

Production Company

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Business Development Coordinator	4,500	10,000	7,750	=
Business Development Manager	15,000	25,000	16,500	=
Project/Production Coordinator*	12,000	25,000	13,500	=
Project/Production Manager	12,000	40,000	25,000	▲
Head of Production/Events	27,500	50,000	35,000	=
Technical Production Manager	8,000	30,000	24,000	=
Technical Production Director	25,000	40,000	35,500	▼

*
The maximum here is an extreme high that is likely to relate to someone working on a very large, high profile or high value event.

Whilst money is important, and indeed featured in the top 3 motivators for the production sector, clearly the driver is personal development and creativity within these two sectors, in line with previous years and in keeping with the current trend that stability in the workplace is key.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Audio Visual

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Technician	3,000	18,000	9,450	=
Production Executive/Coordinator	14,000	25,000	19,500	N/A
Production Manager	8,000	55,097	24,519	▲
AV/Project Manager	12,000	22,000	17,000	▲
Technical Production Manager	8,000	30,000	21,000	▼
Technical Production Director	33,000	35,000	32,000	N/A
Head of Production	12,000	40,000	26,666	▲

It's good to see that salaries in the AV sector are up slightly, but not surprising in a fast evolving sector where the power of digital, video and live is so prominent. The main motivator remains creativity and variety, and AV people, who mainly work within production companies, are 3rd most satisfied with their salaries.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Event/Exhibition Services

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Sales/Account Executive*	1,836	13,000	10,263	▼
Sales/Account Manager	12,500	20,000	15,955	=
Sales Director	25,000	40,000	35,000	N/A
Marketing Executive	10,000	14,500	12,000	▲
Marketing Manager	15,000	28,000	18,500	=
Project Coordinator/Executive	7,100	15,000	11,500	▼
Project Manager	4,500	30,000	15,913	▼
Production Manager	12,500	30,000	18,833	▲
Operations Executive	9,500	15,000	11,500	=
Operations Manager	10,000	30,000	24,000	▼
General Manager	30,000	55,000	38,000	▲

The motivators across all sectors this year are extremely similar and reflect that whilst money is important, progression, responsibility and daily challenges drive people.

*
The extreme low salary here has skewed the figures down significantly from last year, and is not in our opinion an acceptable salary without accommodation, but the average listed here is in our opinion the right level.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Exhibitions**

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Sales Executive	6,000	12,000	10,725	=
Sales Manager	12,500	22,050	18,213	▲
Sponsorship Sales Manager	8,000	20,000	15,000	=
Marketing Executive	10,500	12,854	11,000	▲
Marketing Manager	7,000	23,000	16,700	▼
Marketing Director	12,000	60,000***	28,250	▲
Operations Executive	8,000	12,000	9,500	=
Operations Manager	7,000	28,000	17,667	▲
Senior Operations Manager/Head of Operations	16,000	36,400	28,000	▲
Exhibition/Project Manager	4,500	30,500	17,000	▼
Exhibition Director	28,000	43,000	30,000	▲
General Manager	20,000	55,000	44,500	▼

**
The average salary for this sector is highly dependant on the size of the show and company. The bigger international organisers pay significantly higher salaries and the smaller show organisers pay less.

This is an unusually high figure, potentially down to a group marketing director position, but the average is in line with market norms.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Corporate In-House

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Marketing Executive	6,000	13,000	9,333	▲
Marketing Manager	13,000	17,000	16,000	▲
Event Coordinator	5,000	22,000	15,000	▲
Event Manager	9,513	26,000	21,500	=
Event Director*	28,000	55,000	38,000	N/A

*

We've added a new job title for this year as it's a key role with new respondents and we wanted to ensure this key role is represented.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Interesting that the corporate sector have rated recognition from boss as a key motivator, probably down to the fact that as an internal resource they are less client facing than agency counterparts.

NFP/Charity/Association

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Marketing Manager	7,000	23,000	16,700	▼
Event/Project Coordinator	6,000	22,000	12,000	=
Event Manager	12,000	24,000	16,000	=
Head of Events	23,500	32,000	28,000	=

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Government/Public Sector

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Marketing Manager	18,000	28,000	23,000	=
Event Executive	11,500	26,000	13,400	=
Event Manager	24,000	30,000	26,000	=
Head of Events	34,000	45,000	38,500	=

It is noteworthy that salaries have remained static amongst public sector workers and a definite acknowledgement that stabilisation is required, and is not limited to the private sector.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Commercial Conferences

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Sales Executive	4,750	14,200	9,475	=
Sales Manager	12,500	22,050	15,000	▲
Sales Director	23,000	40,000	27,666	=
Marketing Executive	10,000	12,900	10,500	=
Marketing Manager	8,500	22,000	15,750	▲
Conference Producer/ Manager	8,000	21,000	14,000	▼
Conference Director	17,000	27,000	24,000	▼
General Manager	35,000	47,000	36,000	N/A

Salaries have remained fairly static in conferences but with a drop at senior level. This could be down to the fact that this sector is heavily reliant on commission brought in from sponsorship but with corporate budgets squeezed this may explain the buck in the trend here.

Unlike all other sectors commission remained the top benefit for commercial conference professionals, who are heavily incentivised in their roles.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Hotels and Venues

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Comparison Y on Y
Sales Executive	7,000	12,150	8,000	▲
Sales Manager	10,000	30,000	15,000	▲
Sales & Marketing Director	18,000	55,000	35,000	▲
Event Coordinator	5,750	11,000	9,000	=
Event Manager	7,000	23,000	18,000	=
Event Director	27,000	38,000	28,500	▼

As with many sectors, salaries within hospitality are dependant on venue size and hotel star ratings.

In general a venue employee will earn more than a hotel person in the same role, but will have fewer benefits.

TOP 3 MOTIVATORS			
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS			

Another increase in salaries this year is excellent news for this traditionally low paid sector and is attributed to the extreme competition within the fast moving world of hospitality where the need to attract the best staff to stay ahead of the competition is predominant.

With yet another set of good results we have put together this comprehensive report, charted vital figures, reported changes to salaries and made observations on trends within the event marketplace. The report is now a valued and relied upon tool for HR managers and business owners who eagerly await it's release and use the figures to benchmark and compare with, in order to set their own salaries and benefits packages.

With the current widespread caution in the local and world economies and a series of redundancies during the course of 2016 in which middle management were hardest hit, we have seen employment within the events industry contract.

This years results show generally static facts in terms of motivators and how benefits ranked among the different sectors. Working hours have risen, but so has the number of people getting time off in lieu, a positive development.

The key stand out observation has to be a that although the average salary across the board has risen 11%, this is purely reflective of increases in salaries at senior level giving us higher averages, but crucially 54% received no pay rise – the average pay rise is just 2.5%, lower than regional averages.

In line with this is the 8% rise in the number of respondents that feel they are paid their worth. This is almost certainly down to the fact that despite people working slightly longer hours and still not having had a pay rise, the theme throughout the report is that simply having a job is the key, people are not taking it for granted. There is an overwhelming sense in the market that if you have a job, you stick with it and this underpins the whole report. If you are in your ideal job you are very lucky; stability and a good work environment are paramount, a pay rise is secondary.

As a result of this sentiment employees are 'staying put' as job-seeking goes on hold, so although traditionally in a period of economic cut-backs, or period of 'normalisation' it becomes an 'employers market', actually with the best candidates safe in their roles within good companies, the pool has reduced when it comes to some key job functions. In a throwback to the post-recession trend of 2009, strength at the top, different skill sets among seniors and a truly commercial approach is essential among leaders.

Looking forward, there is still much to be positive about with the reported higher levels of senior recruitment; indeed we're in a phase where strong management and strategic planning is all-important and with this comes a rethink and in turn a restructure throughout the ranks – all good for future-proofing and strengthening for today's marketplace.



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