

# Employee Think Tank Survey 2022



For the third year we have conducted our survey of think tank employees to gather a sense of current working patterns, salary rates and other issues in the sector. Each year we ask the same questions while adding new questions that reflect the current situation. Last year we were interested in whether people were being asked to return to the office after the pandemic; this year we are following up to see where flexible working patterns have settled.

The overall good news for the sector is that while those who would recommend working for their think tank has dropped slightly on last year's 89%, 86% would still recommend it!

This short briefing provides a summary of our findings and perhaps some understanding as to how the sector has reached that 86%.



# Salary

When looking at a new job salary was, unsurprisingly, the number one item people looked at when assessing a new job. Current pay levels have remained broadly stable over the previous year and the average across all functions and seniority level is now £39k.

Across the different levels of seniority the analysis shows that while the top salaries have dropped from £59k to £52k those at lower levels have seen a slight increase. For researchers/officers and managers there is an increase of £2k in the average salary on last year, whereas for those with 'senior' in their job title the average salary has gone up by £1k.

## Average salary across job title



Research remains the highest paid function with an average salary of £42k. Second is communications with an average salary of £37k. At the researcher/officer level, research is also slightly better paid than communications, with an average salary of £33k compared to £31k.

In our survey the starting salary for those straight out of university was under £25,000 however those with 1 – 3 years since graduation had all moved into the higher salary bracket of £25,001 – £35,000. Graduate researchers can expect to start on at least £25,000.

## Average salary across think tank function



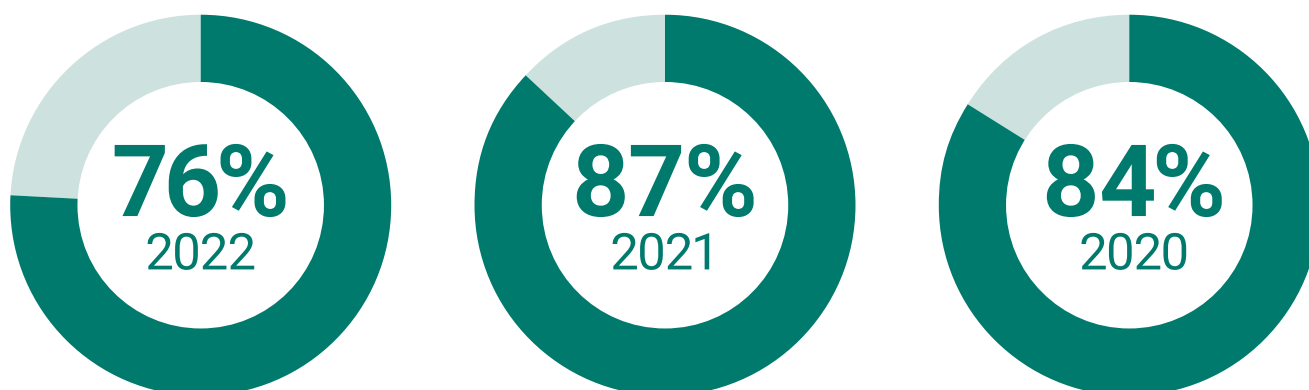
# Job security

When we look at job security the key marker we use is what type of contract the employee is on. There has been an overall decrease since last year in those who are on a permanent contract, from 87% last year and 84% in 2020 to 76% this year.

75% of researchers were on a permanent contract compared to 79% of communications staff. In 2021 90% of research staff were on a permanent contract so this is a significant drop over one year. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was more job stability in the core office functions of events, fundraising and operations.

If not on a permanent contract then the vast majority were on a fixed term contract rather than a rolling contract.

## Think tankers on permanent contracts



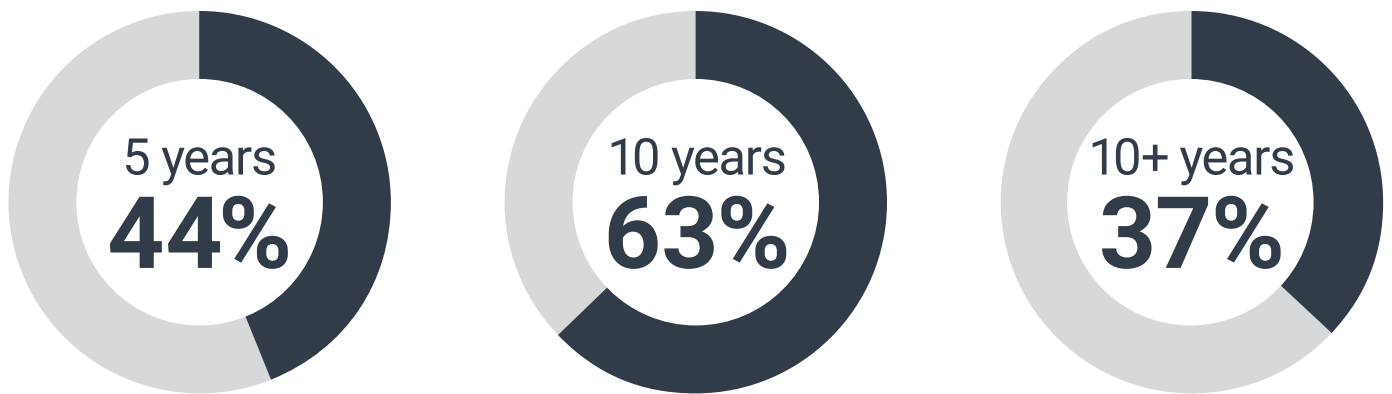
The number who feel that they have good job security in their role are also significantly down on last year. In 2021 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they have 'good job security in my current role' whereas this year only 74% felt the same. This could be a reflection on the decrease in permanent contracts but also the wider economic and political situation making people uncertain. Although it could also be argued that 2021 was an aberration given that a similar question in 2020 elicited only 79% agreeing that they felt secure in their current post.

# The Think Tankers

Who are the people working in think tanks? The think tank sector is often perceived as being a young sector and our survey would appear to bear that out.

44% of those surveyed had graduated in the last 5 years, the same as when we asked this question in 2020. 63% had graduated in the last 10 years with 37% graduating over 10 years ago. The majority of research staff surveyed were 1 to 3 years from graduation whereas those working in operations typically had over 10 years experience.

## Years since graduating



Career progression in think tanks has also often been less structured than in other professions, especially in smaller organisations that have less room to promote staff. Our survey would appear to support this assumption. 79% of those surveyed were not sure what their next career step would be and only 36% thought that it would be in the think tank they were currently working in.

## Next steps



# Formal structures at work

88% of those surveyed had a formal appraisal process in place at their think tank, a decrease of 8% from last year but still an improvement on those surveyed in 2020 (83%).

Further good news was that 79% are now being offered professional development opportunities, although interestingly, you are more likely to be offered these opportunities if you work in events, operations and fundraising.

We once again asked the think tankers whether they had experienced or witnessed bullying in their workplace. The number who had was dramatically down on last year's result. 17% had experienced or witnessed bullying compared to 32% last year. 71% thought that they would be comfortable reporting such incidents to HR or senior management, indicating that many think tanks have good structures in place.



**17%**  
have experienced or  
witnessed bullying  
in their workplace

▼ 15% from 2021



**71%**  
would be comfortable  
reporting an HR  
issue to senior  
management/HR

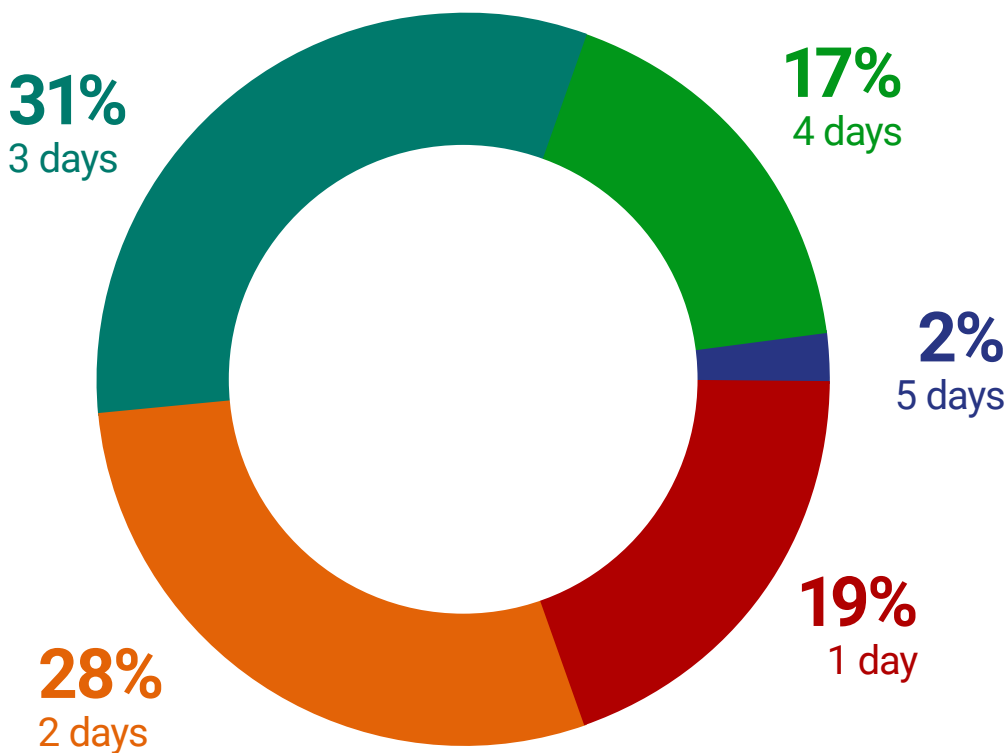


# Other job benefits

The big question we asked in this year's survey was what think tankers' flexible work arrangements were. Last year 63% of those surveyed were back in the office by September 2021 but 19% had still not had a decision about whether or when they would return.

This year we shifted the emphasis of the question to how, or if, flexible working had been incorporating into their workplace. 95% of respondents now work a mixture of in the office and from home. Most come into the office for 3 days a week but there is significant variety across the think tanks.

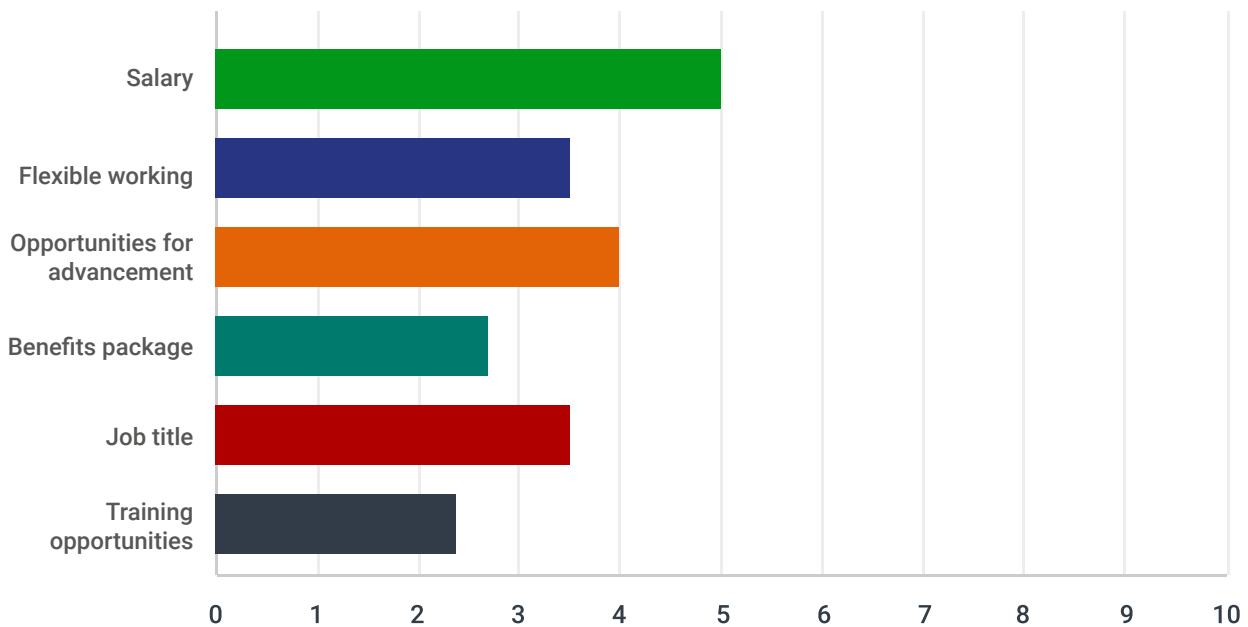
## Number of days in the office



**95%**  
are offered  
flexible working  
by their think  
tank

Flexible working was still important in what people look for when looking for a new job. The order in which people ranked the different elements listed below stayed the same from last year although salary was ranked as slightly more important. Those looking to recruit don't just need to look at salary however. In a tightening job market opportunities for advancement, flexible working and job titles are also important.

## When looking for a job what do you look at most? Ranked answers



We also asked those surveyed to tell us what other aspects attracted them to a new job. The answers ranged from creative autonomy to purpose and impact to culture and attitudes of senior management. The answers illustrate that many of the reasons for working in a think tank relate to the sectors' ability to have a positive impact as well as being an interesting place to work.

## What else would attract you to a new job?





# Why work for a think tank?

When so many would recommend their workplace to a friend we drilled down into individual reasons for working for a think tank. Across all these surveys the intellectual rigour and variety that a career in think tanks offers has always been a prominent reason but there are others and collectively they indicate a robust sector!



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