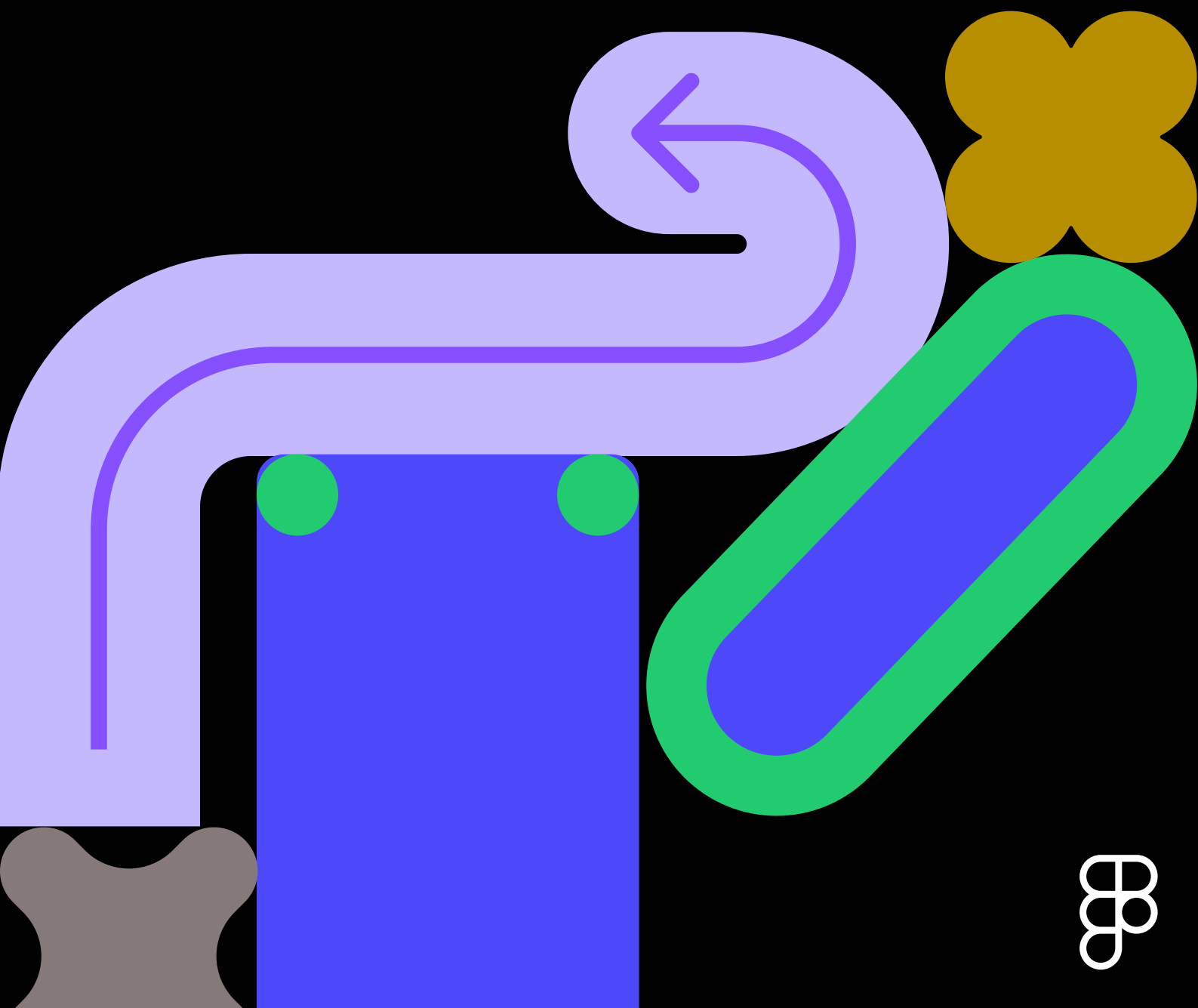


Designer and developer workplace, collaboration, and AI trends



Where people work, *and how*, is changing, but new tech brings reason for optimism

Product builders have experienced quite the transformation in how they work in the last few years. There’s more remote working and more collaboration, but the way designers and developers build products together is still evolving. So how are things settling in and shaking out?

- 01 Hybrid drives happiness
- 02 Collaboration, the surprising key to happiness
- 03 AI hype and hope
- 04 Ring in the changes, reap the rewards

Figma surveyed 493 product designers and 450 front-end developers from the US, Europe and APAC in Q3 2024

Australia: 92	France: 100	Norway: 7	Spain: 100
DACH: 100	Japan: 45	NZ: 8	Sweden: 22
Denmark: 8	India: 51	Singapore: 35	UK: 100
Finland: 13	Netherlands: 51	South Korea: 10	US: 201

Last year, in our first State of the Designer report, we focused solely on product designers when exploring how changes in work styles had affected both day-to-day lives and future outlooks since the pandemic, revealing how hybrid working had impacted relationships, productivity and job satisfaction.

One big takeaway was that product designers were in a good place—69% said they were happier than they were before the pandemic—driven by workplace flexibility and strong job prospects.

But to truly understand the state of the market, we can't think of creators as individuals working in siloed departments. How the people who build products together work... together is perhaps the most critical thing influencing job satisfaction, business performance and more.

And that's why this year we've expanded the remit of the report to include designers' digital product partners—developers. And, as you'll learn, it turns out how the two disciplines work together as a team—the way they create and experiment—is a key factor in how they feel about work, and, ultimately, is what impacts business performance.

This year we surveyed twice as many people (943), roughly split between designers and devs, across the US, APAC and Europe—in mostly in-house roles, with a small number of freelancers, at companies of different sizes and industries.

Here are the themes that emerged.

01

The way teams collaborate impacts happiness

and it's never been more critical to job satisfaction and outcomes. Where people work and how they collaborate is changing, whether they work predominantly in the office or connect remotely using digital tools.

02

The more designers and devs collaborate with each other, the happier they are

despite any challenges in getting there.

03

Collaboration doesn't have to be in-person to be effective and rewarding

evidenced by the number of designers and developers working remotely.

04

AI is having some impact

especially on how individuals get their work done—but it's also affecting how people feel about the future of their jobs, bringing both ambiguity and optimism.

05

There are some regional differences when it comes to designers and developers

APAC, for example, is slightly ahead when it comes to using AI. We'll delve into these differences, and more, later on.

1 Hybrid drives happiness

Satisfaction with work is on the rise. Last year, designers, the sole focus of our previous report, were enjoying a post-pandemic bounce, with 62% rating their job satisfaction higher than it was three years prior.

One year on, and the “new normal” is now even older news. So what’s changed in the past 12 months?

What's working?

The good news is that this year, 41% of both designers and developers say they're more satisfied at work than they were last year, compared to only 15% who are less satisfied. This suggests most are still feeling a positive impact from new working styles in the past few years.

One big thing people are in love with: lots of flexibility to work wherever they want, whether that's at home, in the office, or on the road. Although overall time working from home has decreased slightly from last year, 97% work remotely at least some of the time, and over half are fully or mostly remote.

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But there are differences across regions.

- **European designers** are particularly happy with their work environment. 58% are working from home most or all of the time, and 71% say they love the way things are when it comes to their remote/hybrid/in-person split.
- **For European developers**, it's a similar sentiment. 65% of European developers work from home most or all of the time, and 75% are happy with their current workplace arrangements.
- **Designers in APAC** work remotely significantly less than other regions. Just 35% are always or mostly working from home, but 70% are happy with things.
- **Developers in APAC** are also working from home at lower rates (54%), but 71% are happy with the arrangement.
- **Designers in the US** work from home the most often (62%) compared with other regions. And 62% of them love the way things are.
- And while only 53% of **US developers** work mostly from home, 77% of them are happy with the set up.

71%

of European designers say they love the way things are when it comes to their remote/hybrid/in-person split.

35%

of designers in APAC are always or mostly working from home.

What's not working?

There's been a big decrease in optimism about the job market, likely due to economic headwinds across the board, and it's impacting satisfaction, especially for designers.

Given well-documented job losses, particularly in the tech industry, it's unsurprising that people are feeling it. 45% of designers feel the job market has declined—three times more than those who felt that way in 2023, and 45% of developers feel the same.

However, only 16% say this drag on their job prospects negatively affected their job satisfaction. In fact, over half of designers feel more positive than last year.

3x

more designers feel the job market has declined this year, compared to last.

So, what's at play here?

Designers are moderately less satisfied with their remote/office split than developers, which might affect their perception of the job market. They're also more limited in their workplace location flexibility.

Developers who are more optimistic have more agency in choosing where to work, but still tend to work from the office more. 74% say they love their current remote/office split. They'll undoubtedly feel more positive about the state of the job market they're operating in.

What else is leading to positivity about the future of these two disciplines? Turns out it's AI.

As we covered in our recent report, Anticipation, Experimentation and AI, companies are working through the implications of generative AI, but many senior leaders see it as a huge strategic opportunity for their organization.

And while there's executive excitement around AI, it's likely the actual use cases will take shape at the individual level. That gives designers, engineers and other contributors a lot of power and a big opportunity to shape AI use right now, and perhaps that's showing through in their work satisfaction. According to this year's survey, over half of designers and developers say that AI makes them more optimistic about the future of product design and development (see page 15).

Effective collaboration—the key to happiness?

There's another factor that's having a big impact on happiness: effective collaboration.

69% of designers with high work satisfaction rate the collaboration between designers and developers as effective or very effective.

But actual tools are also doing some of the heavy lifting. Happy designers and developers alike are more likely to use digital whiteboarding and collaborative design tools.

These tools don't just bridge the gap when teams work remotely. They have an impact on how happy designers and developers are in their collaborations, no matter if they work at home or in the office.

And once again, there's another factor affecting satisfaction. **For devs, how deeply AI impacts their work** has a positive impact on satisfaction.

In fact, satisfied developers are more likely to have experienced a 'significant' or 'transformational' impact from AI on the way they work. 49% say AI has impacted their individual workflows or productivity (vs. 34% with low job satisfaction). Check out page 14 for further insights on how AI is impacting things.

Designers and developers with high job satisfaction use digital whiteboarding and collaborative design tools more.

58%

of satisfied **designers** use whiteboarding tools more often (vs. 44% among designers with lower satisfaction).

77%

of happy **designers** use collaborative design tools more often (vs. 57%).

61%

of very happy **developers** use digital whiteboarding tools more often (vs. 34% of developers whose job satisfaction has decreased).

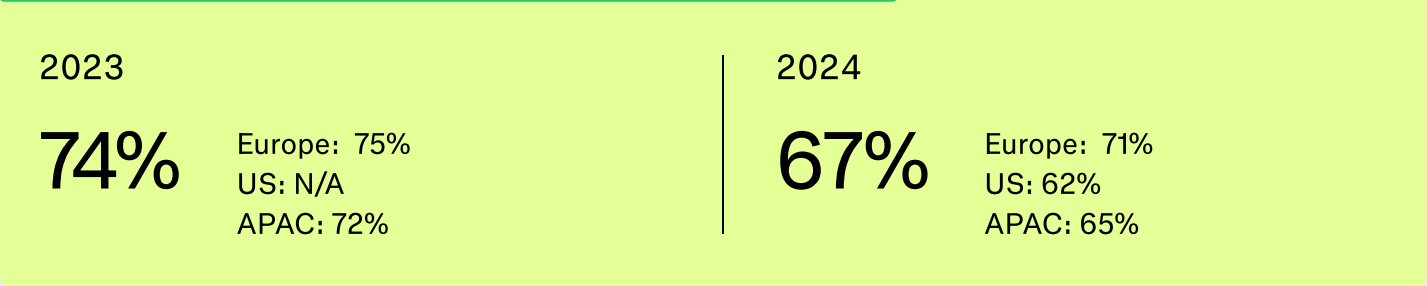
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of satisfied **developers** are using collaborative design tools more often (vs. 59%).

Designers vs developers

For some people, where work happens has become as important as what work happens. So how are designers and developers feeling about their workplace arrangements?

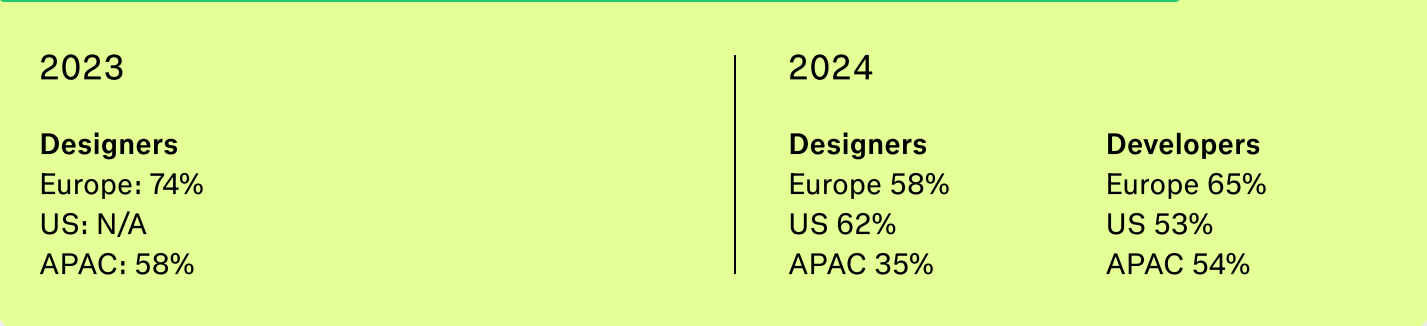
DESIGNERS WHO LOVE THEIR WORK LOCATION SPLIT



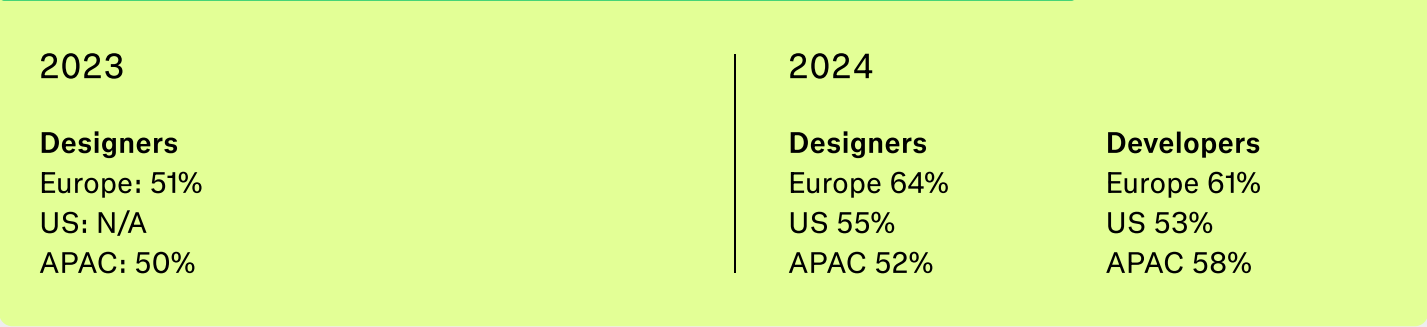
While some degree of freedom to work remotely has become the norm, some employers are backing away from offering this beloved perk. They're likely to see impacts on how satisfied their workforces are.

60% of developers and 52% of designers are working from home most or all of the time compared with 62% of designers last year.

DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS WORKING PREDOMINANTLY FROM HOME



DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS WHO SAID THEIR EMPLOYER ENCOURAGES THEM TO WORK FROM WHEREVER SUITS THEM BEST



France offers the most flexibility with remote working, while South East Asia is the region where employers most encourage office time.

2 Collaboration: The surprising key to happiness

(and not-so-surprising key to effective work)

It turns out that one of the keys to work happiness might just be collaboration. And the good news is, when it comes to designers and developers, it's on the up.

Most designers—84%—say they collaborate with developers at least weekly. Needless to say, this doesn't mean it's necessarily effective collaboration, but our research suggests that this actually is the case. 67% of devs and 63% of designers rate the collaboration as effective or very effective.

Over three-quarters of developers say they collaborate with designers at least weekly, and we can see a clear correlation between collaboration and contentment.

- **Devs with higher job satisfaction** collaborate more frequently with designers.
- 32% of devs report daily collaboration

They've also experienced a larger uptick in meetings with designers compared to one year ago (59% in 2024 vs. 34% in 2023)

Yep, you heard that right. Forget 'this could have been an email'. Meetings are on the rise—and **developers and designers are happier when there are more connected.**

As we covered in our report, [Decode the Developer](#), there's more to designer/developer alignment than just a relay race to get products over the line. Better collaboration doesn't just mean a faster time to market, but better quality products. It can also affect the entire culture of an organization, for the better.

DEVS WITH HIGHER JOB SATISFACTION COLLABORATE MORE FREQUENTLY WITH DESIGNERS

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report daily collaboration

59%

experienced a larger uptick in meetings with designers compared to one year ago

"Great collaboration isn't throwing designs over the wall. It's designers, developers, and the rest of the team collaborating together."



Diana Mounter
Head of Design,
GitHub

But what's not so peachy?

Everyone agrees there's lots of room for improvement in handoffs.

91% of developers and 92% of designers think there's room for improvement in the process. This is no surprise when it's such a critical part of the creation of digital products, and the overall success of their partnership. The process is also often done across different geographies and time zones.

In short: it's easy for things to get lost in translation, but designers communicating how they arrived at a solution and why, as well as their vision, goes a long way to fixing any issues.

We speculate one of the reasons designers and particularly developers are happy when they're using digital design and collaboration tools is they make handoffs clearer and easier. That can mean faster progress that's more in line with both teams' visions and constraints.

91%

developers think there's room for improvement in handoffs.

When there is misalignment, what's the cause?

Challenges developers cite when working with designers

52% Differences in assumptions

49% Differences in priorities and motivations

47% Lack of understanding of the development process

Challenges designers cite when working with developers

63% Differences in priorities and motivations

47% Differences in language / communications styles

45% Assumptions made about the design process

As Laurent Thiebault, Engineering Manager at Decathlon, told us recently, developers have tried and trusted workflows. "In my experience, design intentions and specific requirements are often lost in translation between designers and developers," he says. Decathlon has implemented collaborative sessions to tackle this, with designers and developers coming together at every stage of the project. "This fluid movement between ideation and development not only breaks down silos but also ensures that every team member's expertise is leveraged throughout the process," says Laurent.

So, what about AI? How is that changing the way designers and developers collaborate? According to our survey, we're starting to see it make an impact, but it's been far from a game-changer up to this point.

16% of designers and developers said AI is having a "significant" to "transformational" impact on the way they collaborate with others, but more (61%) said the impact had either been "slight" or non-existent.

Perhaps this reflects the enthusiasm with which people have embraced it. When it comes to AI, many designers and developers are still in the experimental phase, and even then that experimentation is coming at the individual level.

→ Read on to find out more about how AI is energizing both people and products.

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61%

said the impact had either been "slight" or non-existent.

3 AI hype and hope

As we discussed in our report, Anticipation, experimentation and AI, we know generative AI capabilities like text, video and image generation (and more) are going to change work in big ways—but many are still figuring out how.

In our recent webinar, Mia Blume, Founder of Designing with AI, said that wasn't altogether unusual. "Technology always comes first," she explained. "It shows us new opportunities. We're still figuring out what's possible — there's this experimentation and play and discovery and research that's happening, which means that the product and design part is coming a little bit later. Yes, design will come. That doesn't mean design shouldn't be happening now."

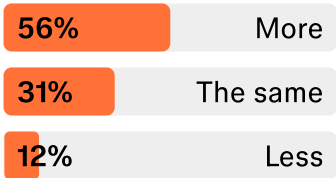
So what does our survey tell us about how designers and developers are feeling about it?

Change is coming, and it's speeding up.

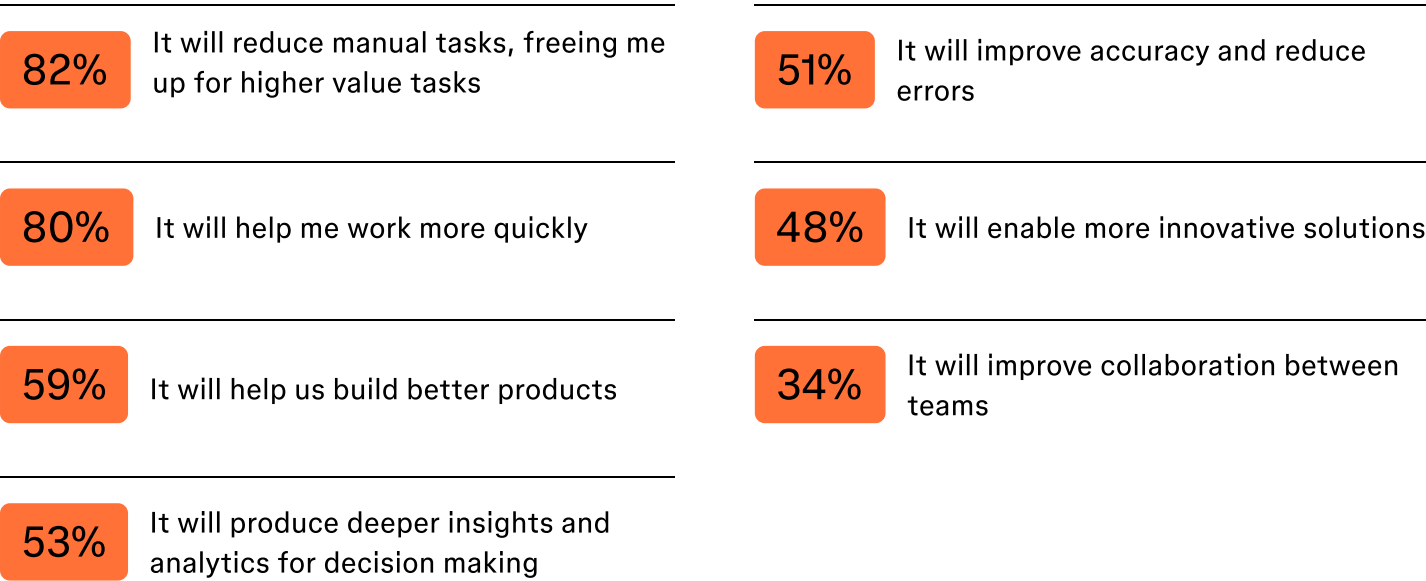
According to our research, designers and developers say change is already happening, and more is on the way.

- More than half say AI had impacted their organization's goals or priorities, and 27% say the impact has been significant.
- Nearly half said AI will have a significant impact on the tools they use for work over the next 12 months.
- 18% of developers say that AI or ML plays a significant role in their organization's customer-facing products and services today.
- 41% of developers use AI in some products, but say it's not essential, and 42% say AI plays a minor role or is not used at all.
- 26% of devs say AI has significantly impacted the capabilities of the products or features they work on. But it's growing: 40% expect a significant impact in 12 months.
- Only 15% say AI has significantly impacted the way they collaborate to date, but every region is using AI in at least some aspects of their work. APAC is leading the charge with 63% using AI, but the US and Europe are not far behind (56% and 57%).

Does AI make you more or less optimistic about the future of product design and development?



Why does AI make you feel more optimistic about the future of product design and development?



APAC developers are the most optimistic about AI

65%

of developers in APAC say that AI makes them more optimistic about the future of design and development

Compared with 53% in the US

And 45% in Europe

40%

say AI has significantly impacted their organization's goals or priorities in APAC

It's 21% in the US

And 24% in Europe

59%

expect a significant impact from AI on their individual workflows and productivity in the next 12 months

Compared with 39% in the US

And 51% in Europe

4 Ring in the changes, reap the rewards

When it comes to designers and developers, work has never been business as usual.

And this year, there's a lot of mostly positive change, and it seems that satisfaction has remained pretty steady overall since last year.

In large part, this is due to the fact that designers and developers are often working remotely but collaborating more—and more effectively thanks to digital tools.

They're happier when they're working together, getting plenty of face-time through meetings, talking through projects, and trying to make sure handoffs are a transparent, thought-through process.

AI has been a big factor in this year's flux, both on a personal level and across the organization. For designers and developers, it's mostly bringing positive thoughts. Looking to the next 12 months brings hope about how they'll work with tools, how they'll collaborate, and even with the design and development professions themselves.

So what's next for new technologies and creative work?

It's clear there are lots of opportunities for the future of collective creativity. The findings in our report, [GenAI's impact on multiplayer team collaboration](#), show that AI can play a role in transforming team collaboration and productivity, improving processes and velocity of ideas without taking away more creative elements from each individual's workflow.

But there's bigger potential for those that recognise that "collaboration" is not driven by technology, it's driven by a mindset. When the current and future happiness of product builders is heavily impacted by how various disciplines work together, it's clear that the state of the designer, and developer, will always be closely intertwined.

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