

It's not all about the money:

What do early career professionals in the geospatial sector value from their employers?

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG



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Environmental Statement;

by producing this report in a digital only format, with additional detail online, we are aiming to minimise, our environmental impact.

Executive Summary

A survey of geospatial professionals was undertaken to understand the relative importance of organisational values and employee terms and conditions to early career professionals, and how these change as careers progress. The results revealed that:

- 1 Opportunities for learning and development are particularly important to those in their early and mid-career.
- 2 Employee wellbeing, job security and work life balance are important across all career stages.
- 3 There is a greater importance on office location for 'early career' respondents, this importance decreases as careers progress.
- 4 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted employee values and expectations across all career stages. The option to work from home is now a higher priority, with remote working opening up opportunities for job seekers and opportunities for improving work/life balance.

1. Introduction

There is wide debate, in both in the UK and internationally, about what employees want from an employer, how this varies by career stage, and any lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Deloitte's Global 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey found good work-life balance and development opportunities were the top reasons this cohort chose to work for their current organisation. While recent research from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and Onmi highlight the importance of remote and hybrid working across the board to attract and retain top talent.

To find out more about the values of early career professionals in the geospatial sector, the AGI's Early Careers Network, in collaboration with the Royal Geographical Society with IBG, co-designed a survey that was widely circulated in the autumn of 2022. Preliminary results were presented at AGI's GeoCom conference in October 2022. This report summarises the findings.

1.1 Survey Design

Multiple choice and free text questions ([linked here](#)) were asked, to garner information on the respondents circumstances (career stage, location, sector), on the relative importance of an organisation/employers' commitment to certain values (such as commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion) as well as employee terms and conditions (such as job security). Respondents were able to rank each factor from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Free text questions provided the opportunity to expand on responses and to identify other factors that are important.

Questions were also asked about whether respondents' perspectives on employer values and employee terms and conditions had changed over the Covid-19 pandemic and over the course of their career.



2. Results

2.1 Career Stages

A total of 169 responses were received, fairly balanced across the career stages (Table 1). The response rate for students and postgraduates was too low to analyse. In the analyses below results are presented by early, mid and further career stages.

Career stage	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Early career professional (0 -5 years' experience)	66	39%
Early to mid-career professional (5 -10 years' experience)	48	28%
Further on (10+ years experience)	46	27%
Students and post graduates	9	6%
Total	169	100%

Table 1: Survey responses by career stage

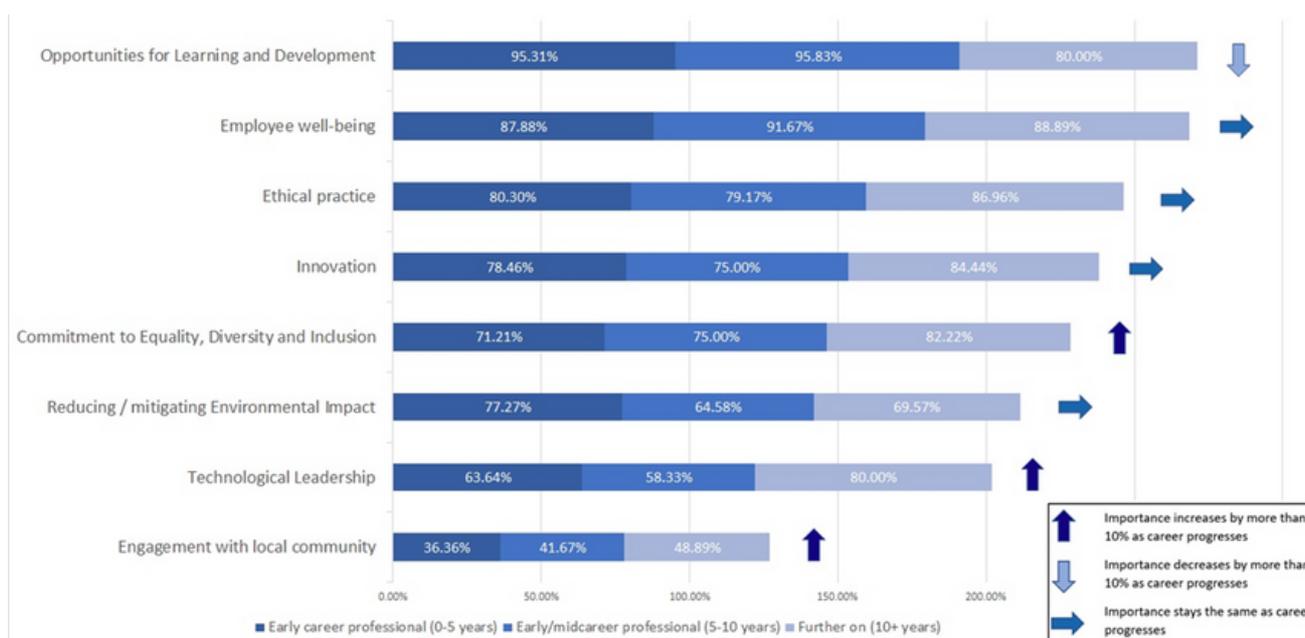


Figure 1: Organizational values considered important (rated as '4 - Important' or '5 - Very Important')



'Early career' respondents valued '**opportunities for learning & development**' (95%) most highly and '**engagement with the local community**' (36%) least;



Across the three career stages the greatest consensus was '**employee wellbeing**' (88% for 'early career', 92% for 'mid-career, 88% for 'further on'), while there was least consensus around '**technological leadership**' (80% for 'further on', 58% for 'mid-career, 64% for 'early career');



>75% of 'early career' respondents responded that '**reducing/mitigating environmental impact**', '**innovation**', '**ethical practices**', '**employee wellbeing**' and '**opportunities for learning and development**' were important or very important.

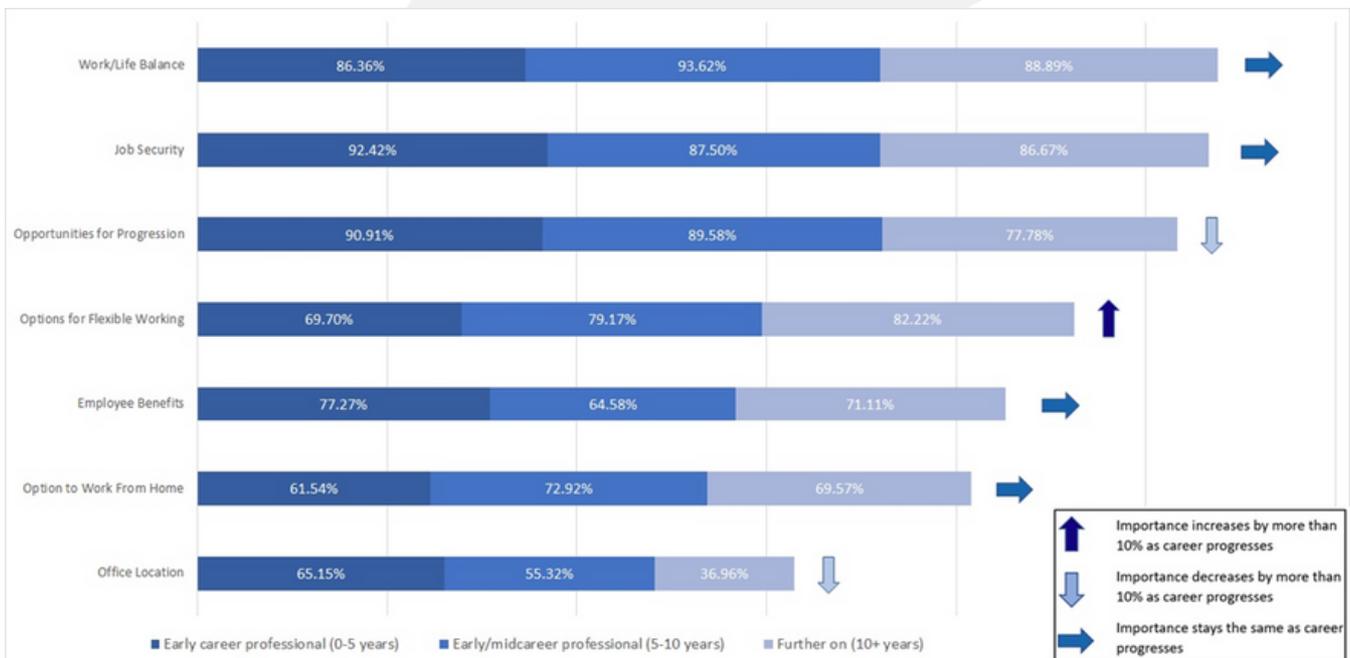


Figure 2: Terms and conditions of employment considered important (rated as '4 - Important' or '5 - Very Important')



For 'early career' respondents most important was **'job security'** (92%), least important was the **'option to work from home'** (62%);



The greatest consensus across career stages was **'job security'** (92% for 'early career', 88% for 'mid-career, 87% for 'further on') and also **'work/life balance'** (86% for 'early career', 94% for 'mid-career', 89% for 'further on');



There was least consensus around **'office location'** – its importance reduces as careers progress (65% for 'early career', 55% for 'mid-career', 37% for 'further on'). In contrast, the importance of **'flexible working'** increases as careers progress (70% for 'early career', 79% for 'mid-career', 82% for 'further on');



>75% of 'early career' respondents responded that **'employee benefits', 'opportunities for progression', 'job security', and 'work/life balance'** were important or very important.

Responses gave further insight into the considerations of those in the first 10 years of their career:



Working in a conducive, pleasant and productive environment where they are valued and supported – "We spend most of our time at work so I want to work in a conducive environment where I can learn and feel supported"

Projects which benefit society – "I want the work I do to be valuable and make a difference to the wider community"

A good workplace / company culture – "a company which cares about its employees and where a good work/life balance is important"

A thriving team atmosphere with social opportunities – "an effective and motivated work force, with a good social atmosphere outside of working hours"



Career development and progression opportunities were cited most frequently followed by freedom to innovate, opportunities to learn, employee wellbeing, feeling valued and supported, and being able to positively contribute to the success of an organisation. The word cloud (Figure 3) shows words frequently included in free text responses.



Figure 3: Frequently used words in free text responses
Source: <https://freewordcloudgenerator.com>

2.2 Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on career perspectives

In response to a question on how individual perspectives have changed following the Covid-19 pandemic, 66% reported that the pandemic had impacted on the values and factors of most importance to them. This was evident across all career stages, but particularly so in the 'early to mid-career' group (81%), this compares to 67% of the 'further on' group and 55% of the 'early career' group.

Reasons cited for these changes included:



A **'period of rebalancing'** in people's lives, with the shift to remote working improving work/life balance and hybrid working becoming the new 'normal'.



Individuals' **valuing time in the office for collaboration**, whilst working from home is more suited to **'focused time'** with fewer distractions.



2.3 Changes in perspective over working life

We asked respondents **"Has your perspective changed over your working life?"**

Key themes that emerged were:

- Increased value on **work/life balance**.
- **Technology** opening up options, with hybrid / remote working opening up opportunities to work further afield.
- Increased **awareness of the values** listed in the survey.
- The value of **professional development, job security and pensions**.

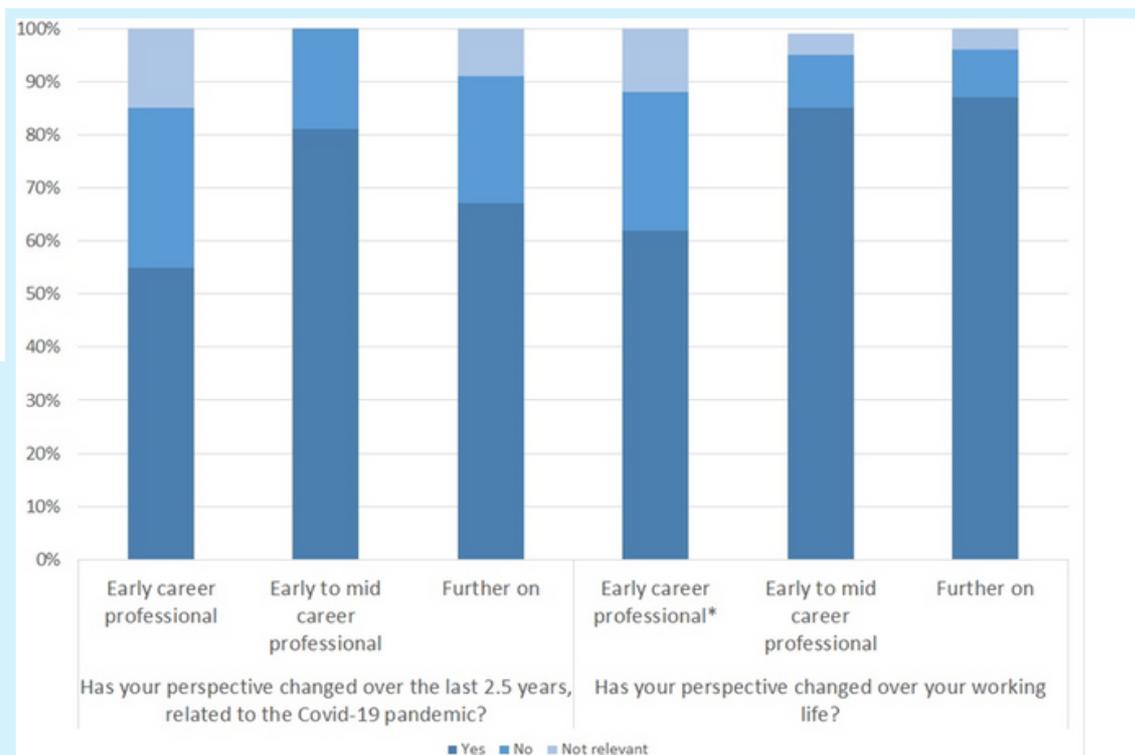


Figure 4: Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on career perspectives and changes in perspective over working life
*shorter working life if early career professional

3. Key Learning Points

- 1 Opportunities for learning and development are particularly important to those in their early and mid-career.
- 2 Employee wellbeing, job security and work life balance is important across all career stages.
- 3 There is a greater importance on office location for 'early career' respondents, this importance decreases as careers progress. Conversely options to work from home and flexible working increase in importance as careers progress.
- 4 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted employee values and expectations across all career stages. The option to work from home is now a higher priority, with remote working opening up opportunities for job seekers and opportunities for improving work/life balance.

About the AGI

The Association for Geographic Information (AGI) is the UK's geospatial membership organisation; leading, connecting and developing a community of members who use and benefit from geographic information. An independent and impartial organisation representing the UK geospatial sector, the AGI works with members and the wider community, to successfully influence government policy, deliver the highest quality of education and provide a lead for best practice across the industry.

Our mission is to nurture, create and support a thriving UK Geospatial Community, actively supporting a sustainable future and we aim to achieve this through the three pillars that govern our activities and intentions:

- Nurture and connect active GI communities
- Support career and skills development for GI Professionals
- Provide thought leadership to inspire future generations



About the Early Careers Network

The AGI Early Careers Network (ECN), a special interest group of the AGI, is a network of early career professionals, run by early career professionals. With a committee of volunteers, ECN's mission is to provide support, resources and development opportunities to early career professionals (those with less than ten years industry experience) and students within the geospatial sector. By regularly hosting online and in-person events, ECN provides a platform for its members to develop new connections, participate in discussions and showcase their work in a low-pressure environment.

The three key pillars of ECN:

- 1 Events and networking – hosting events tailored towards students and early career professionals, providing opportunities for networking.
- 2 Professional development – supporting our members with their continued professional development.
- 3 Education and outreach – forging links with schools, universities and other organisations to raise awareness of the geospatial sector and career opportunities.



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