2022 Data Report

Software Engineering Hiring Trends in South Africa

OFFER ZEN

Contents

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About this report

Over the past two years, software has proven to be a formidable force. Even when entire industries had to fold, the African software engineering industry experienced unprecedented growth in 2021.

As South Africa's largest developer job marketplace, we interact with hundreds of software developers and companies hiring software developers every day. In the past year, we've seen record numbers of companies hiring software developers on OfferZen, rising salaries, and developers in more demand than ever.

In fact, the tech job market is on fire across the globe. At the same time as demand for software developers is surging to record highs, the trend of the "great resignation" is making the rounds.

Developers with a few years of experience under their belt have their pick of the best opportunities. So how can you hire top talent in a highly competitive market ever *and* retain them?

We sent out a survey to the South African developer community to shed some light on what we've seen play out on OfferZen's marketplace over the past year.

Over 3 200 South African developers responded and shared:

- When they're looking for their next opportunity
- What makes them leave a role
- Why they would stay in a role

We hope that this data will enable you and your hiring teams to set yourself apart in an increasingly competitive hiring environment.

Executive summary

Three key insights you should know to attract and hire top developers:

One third of South African software developers are looking to leave their current roles in the next 12 months.

A better salary is the #1 reason developers leave a role

- #1 A better salary
- #2 Poor management
- #3 Poor work-life balance

Developers stay for work-life balance and growth

- **56.4%** Good work-life balance
- **51%** Growth opportunities
- **45.2%** Company culture

Get access to 100+ job seeking developers ready to interview today 💬

Sign up to chat to one of our experts on how we can help you hire top developers.

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Why you should fight hard to retain software developers on your team

The majority of developers have been in their current jobs for less than two years and a third are planning to leave theirs in the coming year. Here's what's making developers go.

Why you should fight hard to retain software developers on your team

A third of all developers are looking to change jobs this year

32% of South African developers have been in their job for less than a year

Developers' time in their current job

<1 year
32.2%

1 year
25.8%

2 years
15.9%

3 years
7.6%

4 years
4.9%

5+ years
13.6%
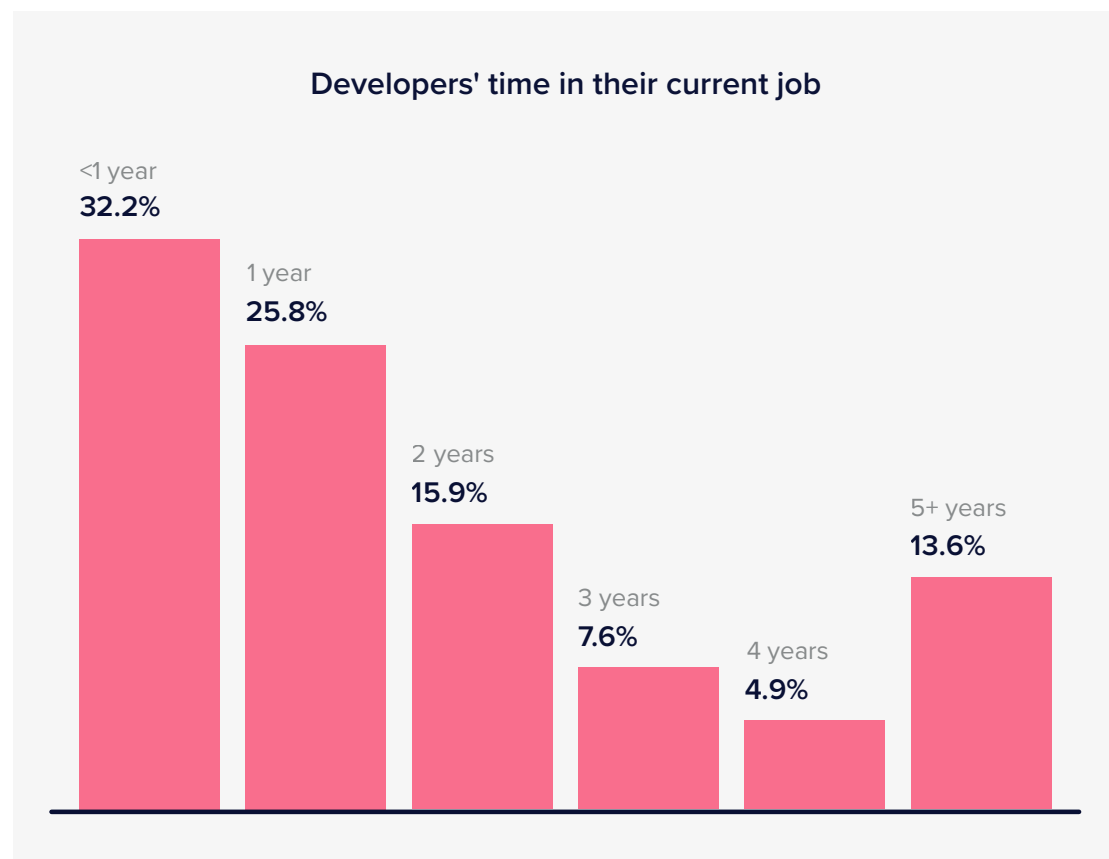
We're currently experiencing the most heated tech hiring market in history. This shows in the length of time that software developers have been in their current jobs.

32% of developers have been in their current job for less than a year and a further 26% for less than two years.

The data clearly shows that the "great resignation" has also been underway in South Africa: 58% of South African developers have changed jobs since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020.

Over 30% of South African developers are looking to move jobs in the next 12 months

Developers' job search timelines

● 2022 ● 2021

Currently looking for work
8.1%
9.7%

Looking to move in the next 3-12 months
23.5%
25.5%

Same company this time next year
15.2%
16.9%

Same company in 2 years' time
25.8%
23.6%

Same company in 5 years' time
27.3%
24.3%

See split by time in current job on the next page >
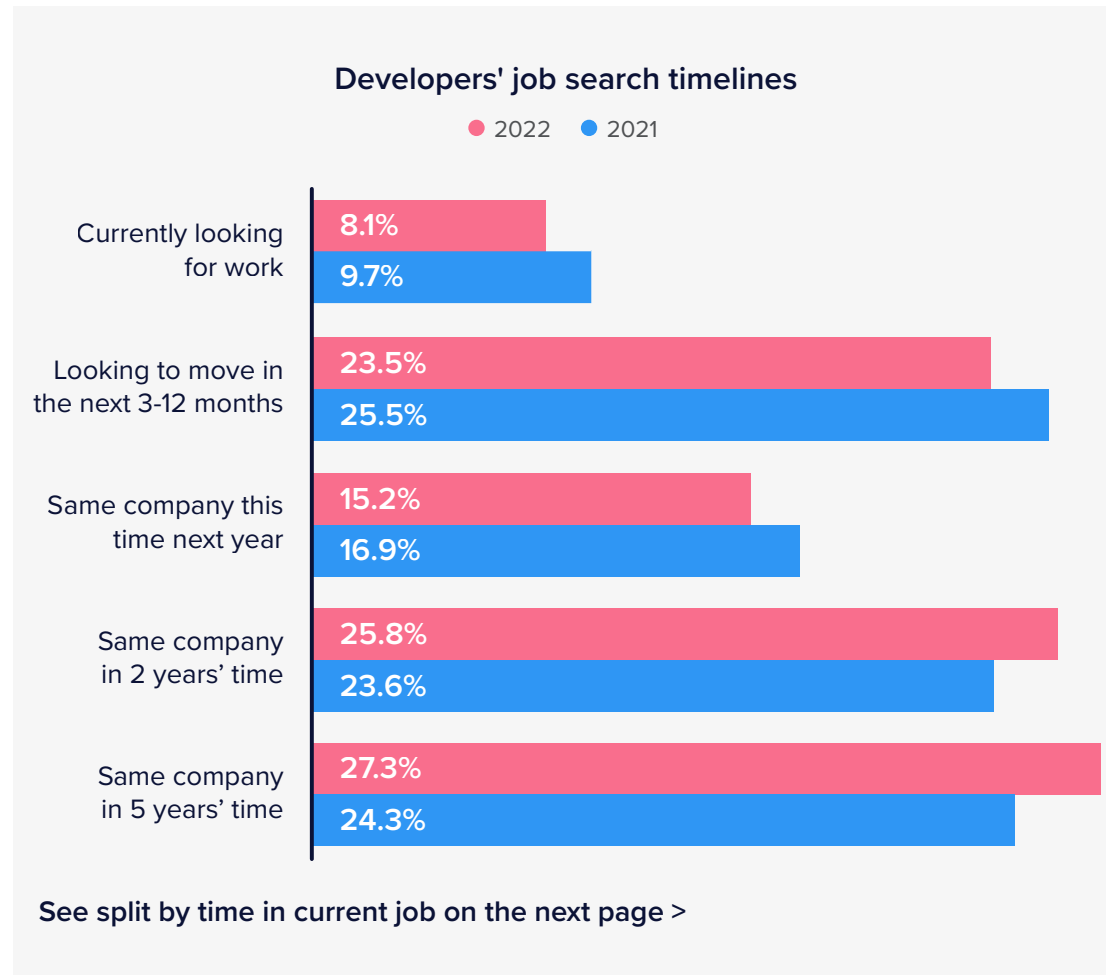
Another sign of a competitive hiring market? Job search timelines. Over 30% of South African developers are looking to move jobs in the coming year.

In fact, developers who have been in their current role for two or more years are the most likely to be on the lookout for new opportunities so it would be a good idea to check in on their current career satisfaction.

On the flip side, more than half of South Africa developers plan to stay in their current role for at least two more years and slightly less people are considering moving compared to previous years. This makes sense given the high number of developers who moved roles in the past two years.

Access the developers who are job searching right now 🔒

Every Monday, 100+ new developers are added to OfferZen. Each developer is guaranteed to be actively job-searching right now.

Start hiring developers

Developers who have been in their job for 2+ years are the most likely to be job searching in the next 3-12 months

Developers' job search timelines by time in current job

- ● Currently looking for work
- ● Looking to move in the next 3-12 months
- ● Same company this time next year
- ● Same company in 2 years' time
- ● Same company in 5 years' time

<1 year
- 6.1%
- 15.9%
- 15.3%
- 29.9%
- 29.7%

1 year
- 8.1%
- 23.3%
- 15.1%
- 25.6%
- 23.8%

2 years
- 9.2%
- 28.2%
- 14.1%
- 21.9%
- 24.3%

3 years
- 7.5%
- 31.8%
- 15.1%
- 18.4%
- 24.7%
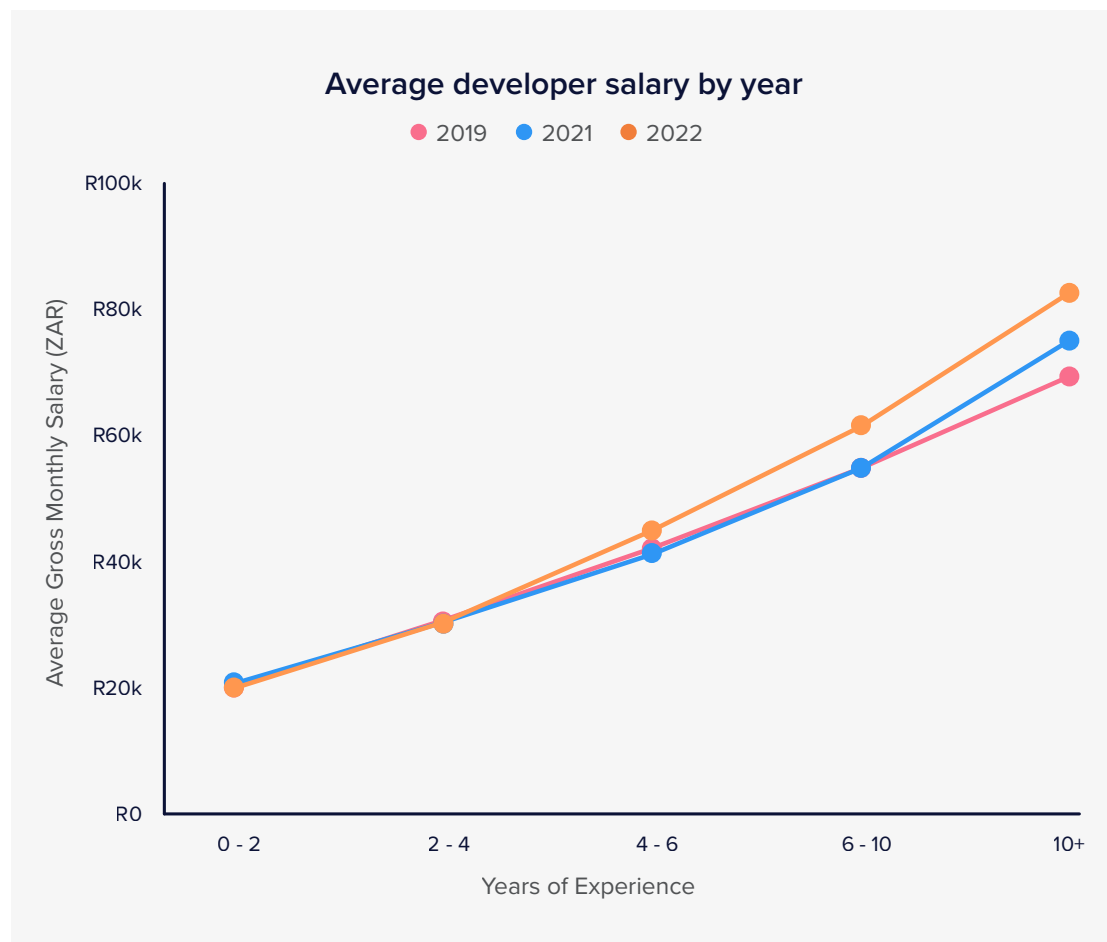
4 years
- 9.7%
- 22.7%
- 13%
- 21.4%
- 27.3%
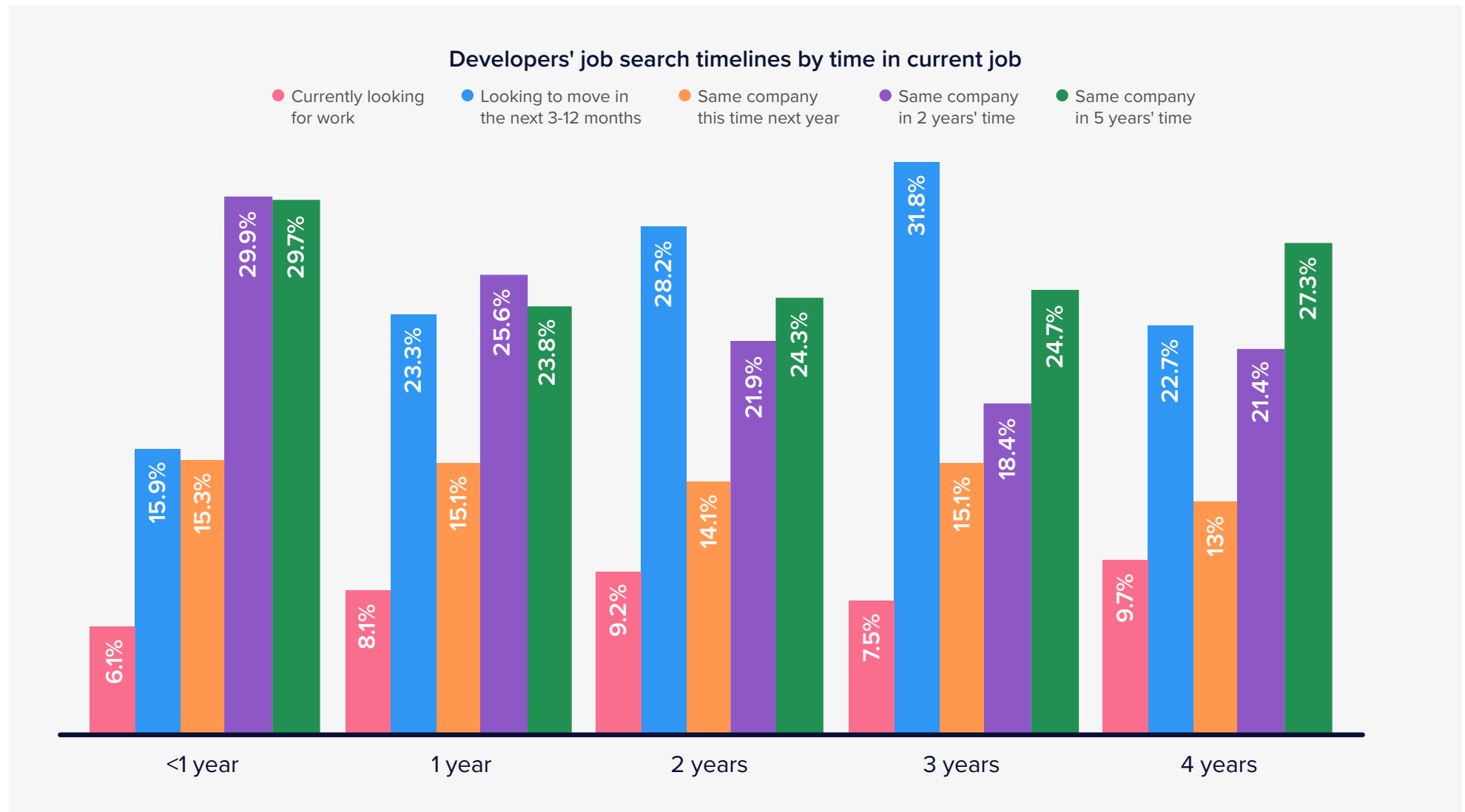
Why you should fight hard to retain software developers

Poor salaries, bad management & work-life balance make developers leave

Salaries for South African developers have increased since 2019

Average developer salary by year

● 2019   ● 2021   ● 2022

Average Gross Monthly Salary (ZAR)

R100k
R80k
R60k
R40k
R20k
R0

0 - 2   2 - 4   4 - 6   6 - 10   10+

Years of Experience

Skilled developers have their pick when it comes to choosing their next opportunity. We've seen that salary is a top factor when it comes to leaving a role, so it's important to ensure that your offer is benchmarked against the wider tech industry.
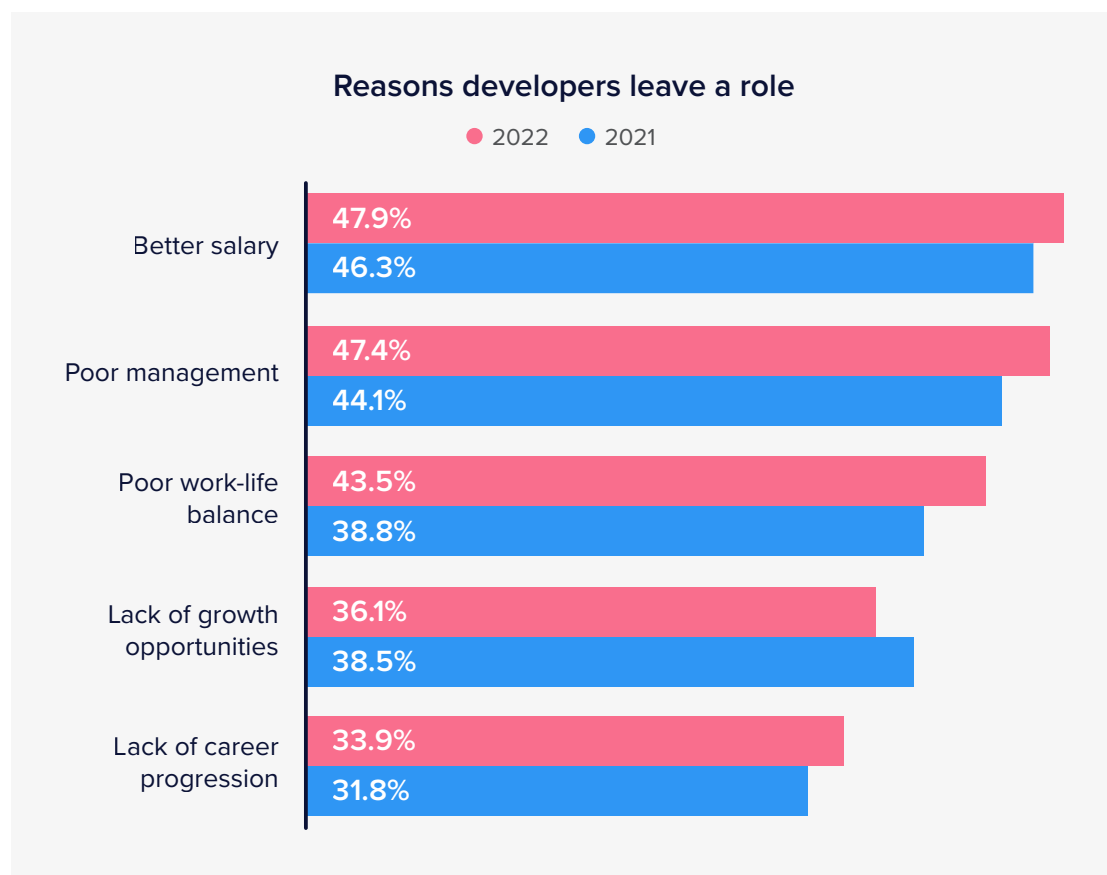
Here's what developers have been earning:
Developer salaries have, on average, increased by 7.4% since 2019.

Developers with more than 10 years of experience saw the biggest increase: At an average monthly salary of R82 552, they are now earning a whopping 19% more than in 2019. Seniors are in high demand in this hiring climate and we expect this global trend to continue.

Junior developers are earning R20 182 per month on average, a 4% decrease since 2021. Developers with 2-4 years of experience have average monthly salaries of R30 373, a 1.2% decrease since 2019.

A better salary is the number one reason South African developers leave a role

Reasons developers leave a role

● 2022   ● 2021

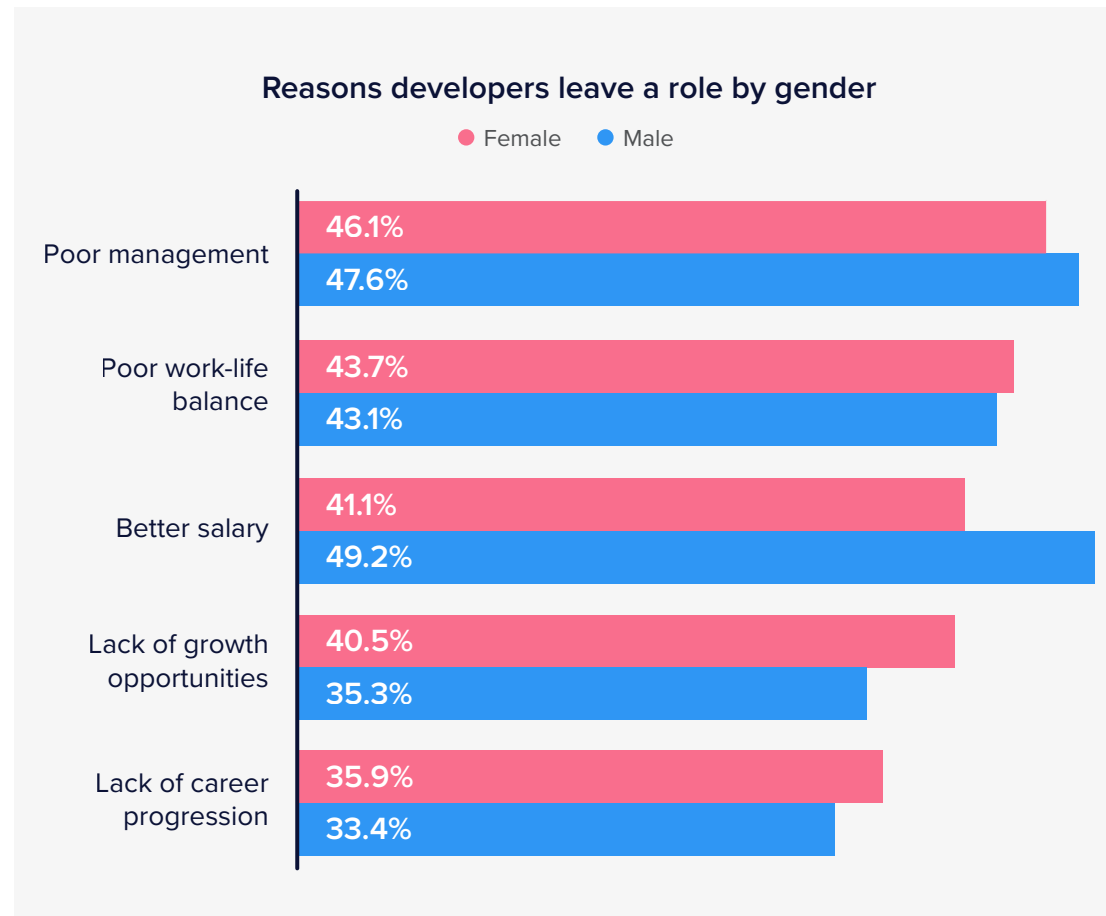| Reason	2022	2021
Better salary	47.9%	46.3%
Poor management	47.4%	44.1%
Poor work-life balance	43.5%	38.8%
Lack of growth opportunities	36.1%	38.5%
Lack of career progression	33.9%	31.8%

A better salary is also still the number one reason South African developers would leave a role in general.

That's not to say that salary is the only thing that pushes developers to search for new opportunities.

Company culture also matters and the factors rounding out the top 5 reflect this: Poor management, a poor work-life balance, a lack of growth opportunities and a lack of career progression opportunities.

Given that most developers are now working remotely and that most companies were not used to this, it's fair to assume that a lot of management is ill equipped to deal well with remote work. This might explain why poor management has gained importance since our last report as a reason for leaving.

Poor management is the most common reason female developers resign

Reasons developers leave a role by gender

● Female ● Male

Poor management
46.1%
47.6%

Poor work-life balance
43.7%
43.1%

Better salary
41.1%
49.2%

Lack of growth opportunities
40.5%
35.3%

Lack of career progression
35.9%
33.4%

The reasons for leaving a role differs between genders:

Men, on average, place greater importance on a better salary and poor management when deciding to leave a job.

Women are more likely to leave a company with poor management and poor work-life balance.

Your most senior developers are most likely to leave a role due to poor management

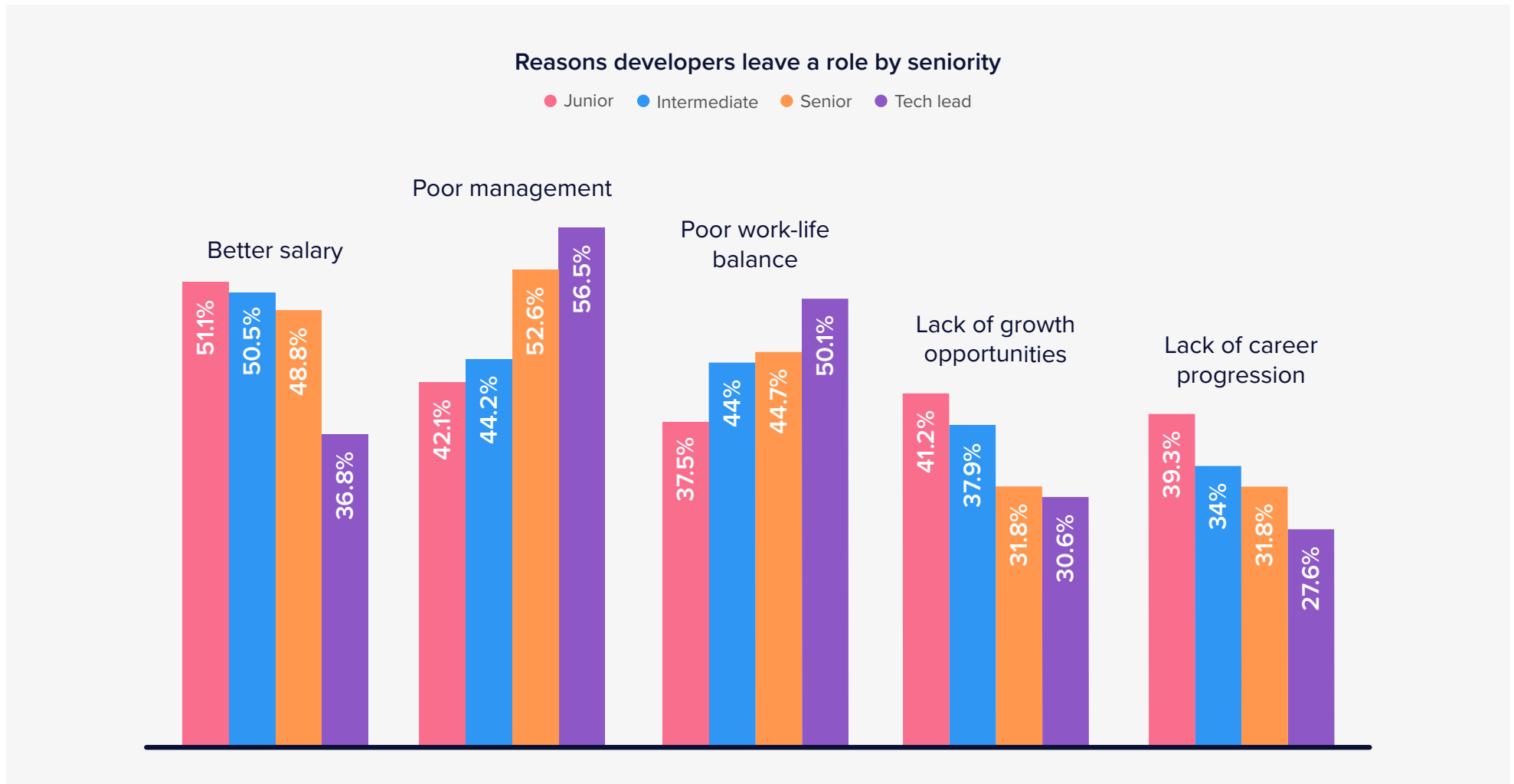Another factor affecting the reasons for leaving is a developer's seniority:

Tech leads and senior developers are most likely to leave a role because of poor management.

Junior developers, however, are looking to grow as coders. They are more likely to leave a role that doesn't offer them good enough opportunities for career growth.
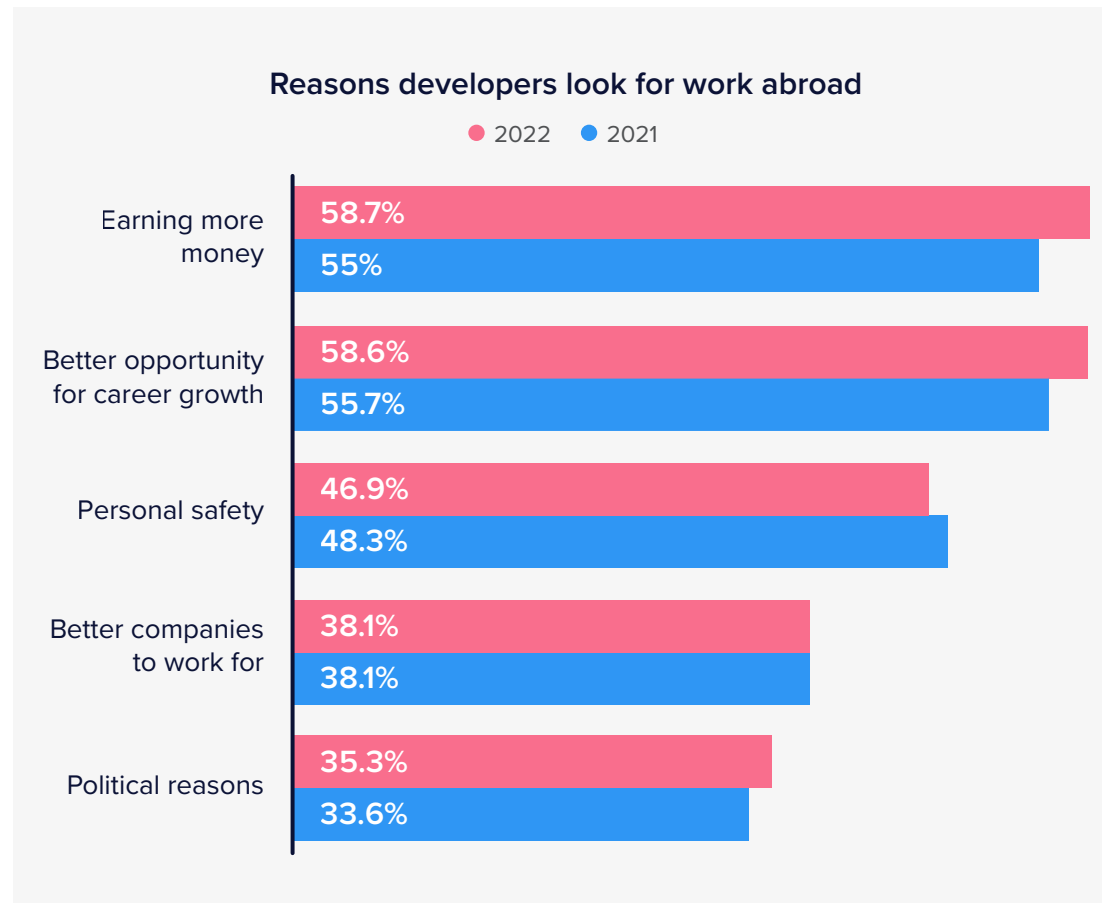
Now that you know what makes people leave, how do you go about attracting and retaining your developer talent? Read on to learn the steps you can take to make your role attractive to potential and existing team members.

See graph on the next page >

Your most senior developers are most likely to leave a role due to poor management

Reasons developers leave a role by seniority

● Junior ● Intermediate ● Senior ● Tech lead

Better salary
- 51.1%
- 50.5%
- 48.8%
- 36.8%

Poor management
- 42.1%
- 44.2%
- 52.6%
- 56.5%

Poor work-life balance
- 37.5%
- 44%
- 44.7%
- 50.1%

Lack of growth opportunities
- 41.2%
- 37.9%
- 31.8%
- 30.6%

Lack of career progression
- 39.3%
- 34%
- 31.8%
- 27.6%

Salary and growth are the most common reasons South Africa developers look for work abroad

Reasons developers look for work abroad

● 2022 ● 2021

Earning more money
58.7%
55%

Better opportunity for career growth
58.6%
55.7%

Personal safety
46.9%
48.3%

Better companies to work for
38.1%
38.1%

Political reasons
35.3%
33.6%

In addition to all these factors, developers are also leaving to go overseas to seek out better opportunities. The search for top tech talent has gone global and the world's biggest tech companies with funding know that there are good developers in South Africa.

1 in 5 South African developers are already actively exploring opportunities overseas, so it's crucial for companies to create environments that foster growth and offer fair salaries.

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What makes developers stay in a role?

Developers stay for growth and work-life balance. Here's what this means to them and how you can ensure that they stay.
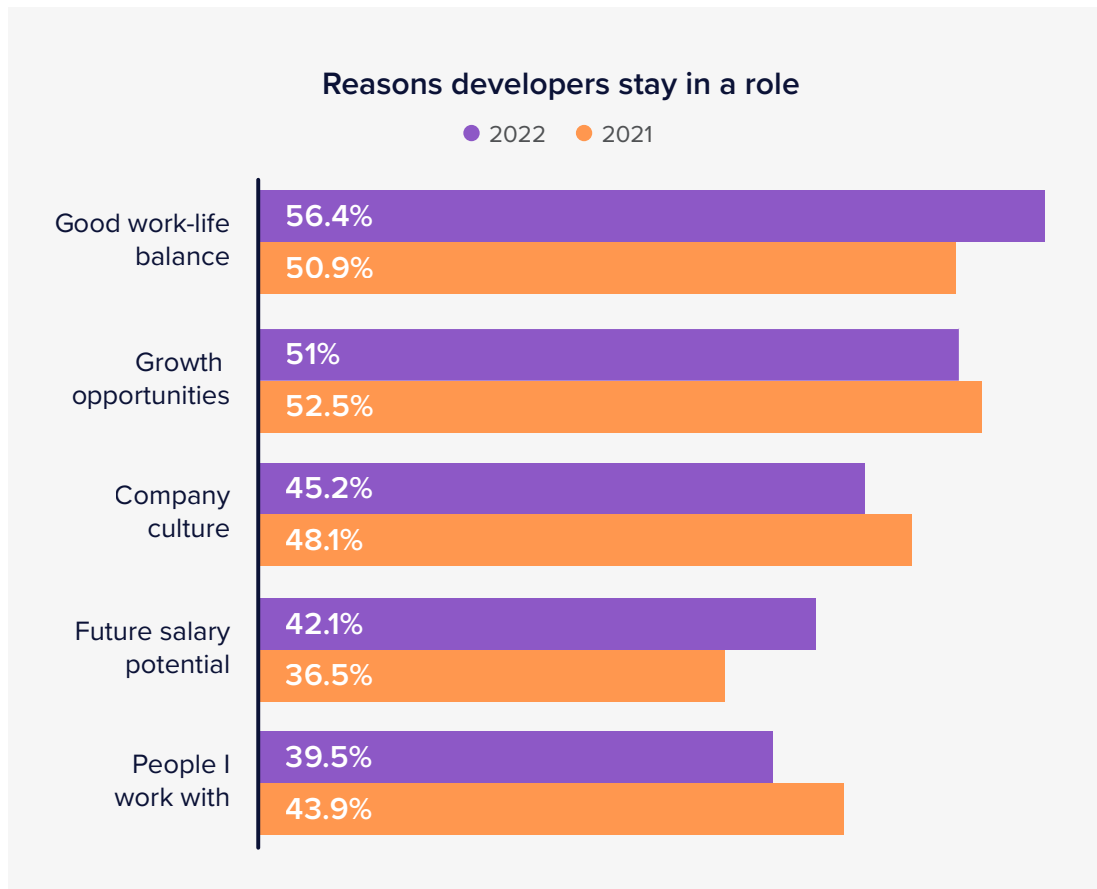
What makes developers stay in a role?

Developers stay for work-life balance and growth

Good work-life balance is the number one reason South African developers stay in a role

Reasons developers stay in a role

● 2022 ● 2021

Good work-life balance
- 56.4% (2022)
- 50.9% (2021)

Growth opportunities
- 51% (2022)
- 52.5% (2021)

Company culture
- 45.2% (2022)
- 48.1% (2021)

Future salary potential
- 42.1% (2022)
- 36.5% (2021)

People I work with
- 39.5% (2022)
- 43.9% (2021)

Unsurprisingly, developers' reasons for staying in a role overlap with their reasons for leaving. Resolving these issues is one way to make sure that your best people stay with your company.

While software developers might leave their current job to join you for a better salary, the way to keep them long-term is through a strong, holistic company culture: Now that the majority of developers have the option to work from home, work-life balance has become easier in some ways and, as especially parents will confirm, harder in others. The policies and support you put in place for your team members matter.

Overall, a good-work-life balance has overtaken growth opportunities as the number reason for staying in a role. In fact, the top three reasons to stay in a job are all related to a company's culture and potential growth opportunities.

Retain junior developers by offering growth opportunities

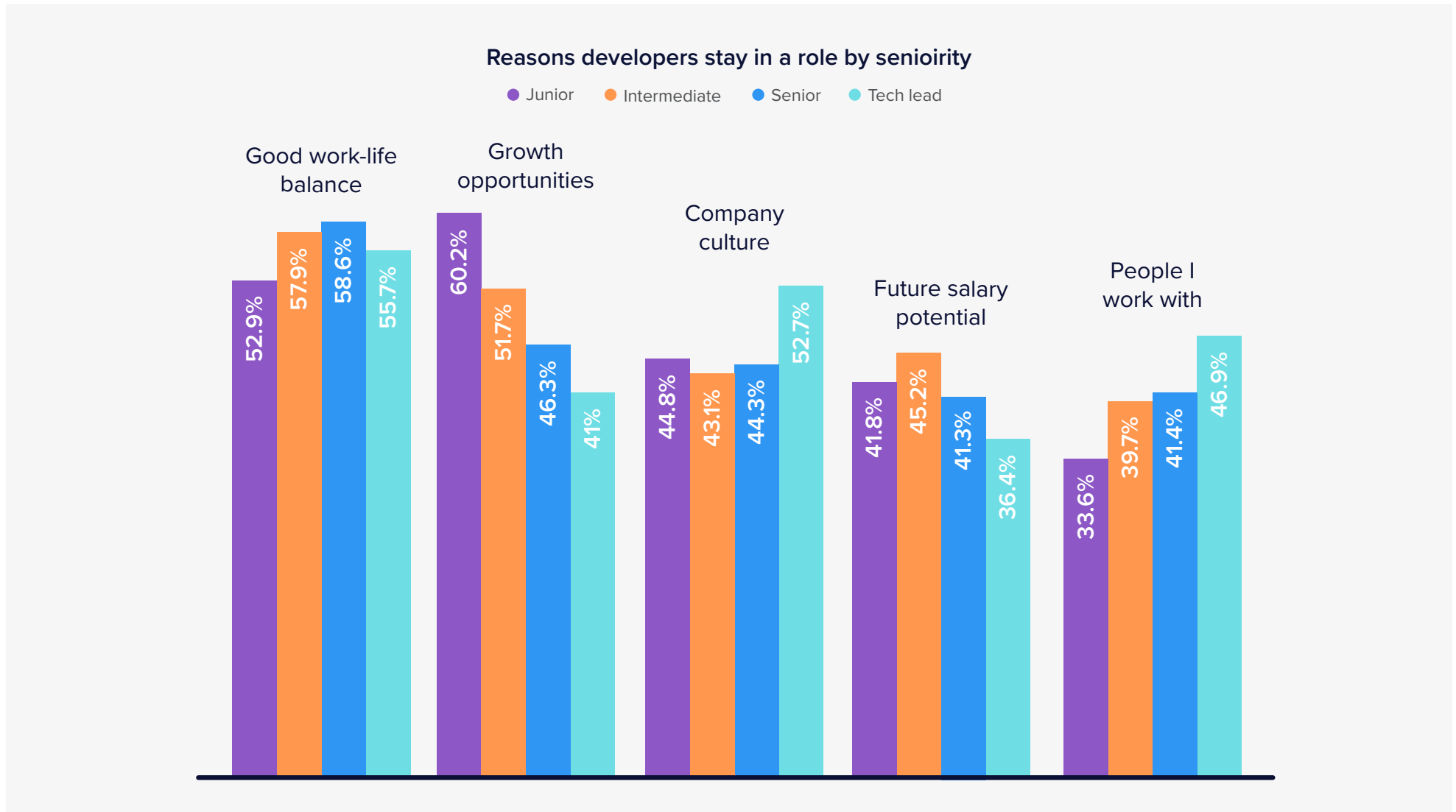It's important to note that one size doesn't fit all.
How you think about ensuring your top talent stays with
your company should change depending on their seniority:

As we've shown before, junior developers want to develop
their coding skills and so naturally stay in roles that give
opportunities to grow their skills and careers.

Senior developers and tech leads, however, especially
value work-life balance.

See graph on the next page >

Retain junior developers by offering growth opportunities

Reasons developers stay in a role by senioirity

● Junior   ● Intermediate   ● Senior   ● Tech lead

Good work-life balance
- 52.9%
- 57.9%
- 58.6%
- 55.7%

Growth opportunities
- 60.2%
- 51.7%
- 46.3%
- 41%

Company culture
- 44.8%
- 43.1%
- 44.3%
- 52.7%

Future salary potential
- 41.8%
- 45.2%
- 41.3%
- 36.4%

People I work with
- 33.6%
- 39.7%
- 41.4%
- 46.9%

Earning potential is the most important career growth factor for South African developers

Developers' factors for career growth

46.5% Earning potential

46.3% Challenging projects

38.5% Mentorship/coaching

37.5% New languages or frameworks

32% Company growth projections

29.8% Training availability

26.8% Well-defined career path

14.4% Option to switch career paths

Developers are clearly serious about growth, but what exactly does growth mean to them?

46.5% say that earning potential is the top factor they use to determine if they'll grow in a role, but salary shouldn't be viewed in isolation.

Working on challenging projects is another key growth factor for South African developers, followed by mentorship or coaching, and the opportunity to work on new languages.
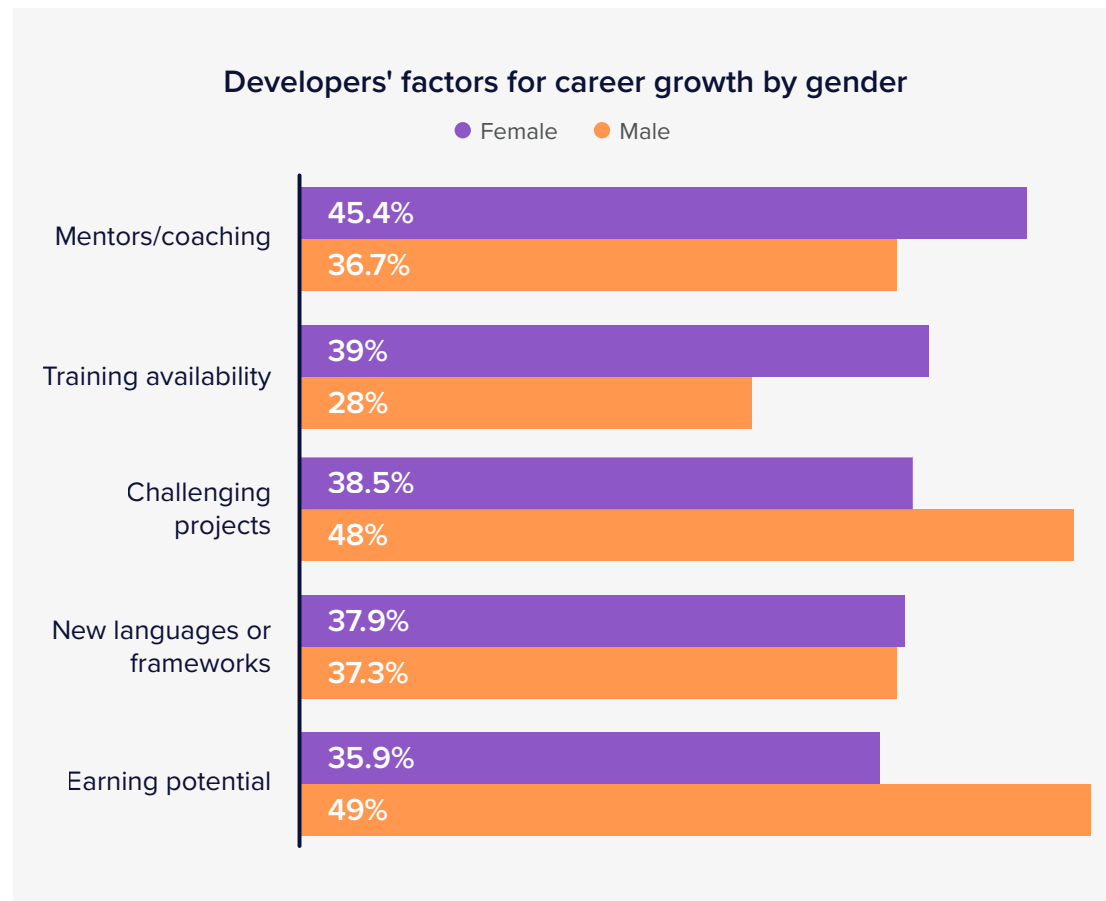
Hire developers excited to join your company's mission 🤩

On OfferZen, in-depth candidate profiles ensure that you get insight into a developer's career goals and preferences before you reach out.

Start hiring developers

Female developers prioritise mentorship over salary when assessing growth opportunities

Developers' factors for career growth by gender

● Female   ● Male

Factor	Female	Male
Mentors/coaching	45.4%	36.7%
Training availability	39%	28%
Challenging projects	38.5%	48%
New languages or frameworks	37.9%	37.3%
Earning potential	35.9%	49%

However, growth can mean different things to different people. On average, men give greater weight to salary potential and working on challenging projects as factors for career growth.

Women are more likely to prioritise the availability of mentorship for their career development.
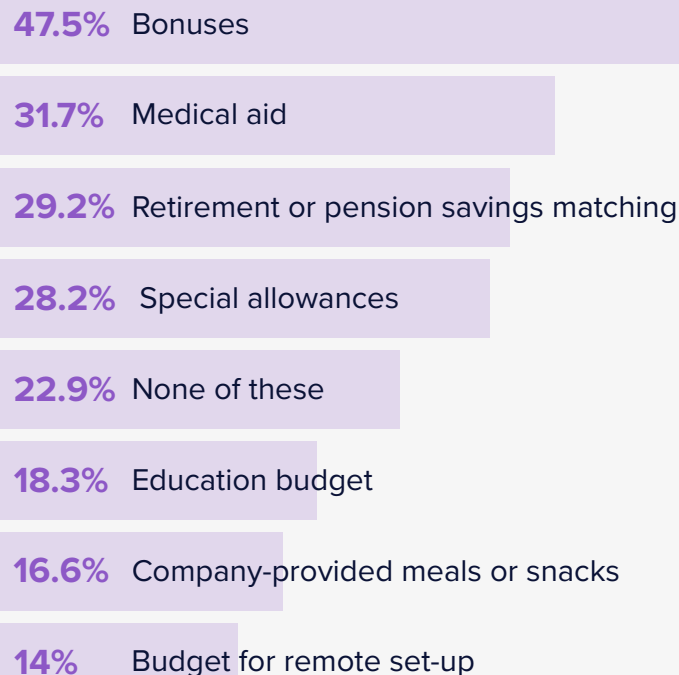
What makes developers stay in a role?

Medical aid, pension schemes, and shares matter

— —

23% of South African developers do not receive any common monetary benefits

Top 8 monetary benefits developers receive in their current jobs

47.5% Bonuses

31.7% Medical aid

29.2% Retirement or pension savings matching

28.2% Special allowances

22.9% None of these

18.3% Education budget

16.6% Company-provided meals or snacks

14% Budget for remote set-up

Monetary benefits are another component of an attractive salary. The top three most common benefits South African developers receive in their current roles are: Bonuses, medical aid and retirement or pension savings matching.

While 92% of developers now work remotely **(see main report)**, 14% receive a budget for their remote set-up. A further 22.9% do not receive any common monetary benefits in their current roles.

Companies need to be cognizant that an unattractive job package will mean losing developers to other more enticing opportunities given the competitive tech hiring market.

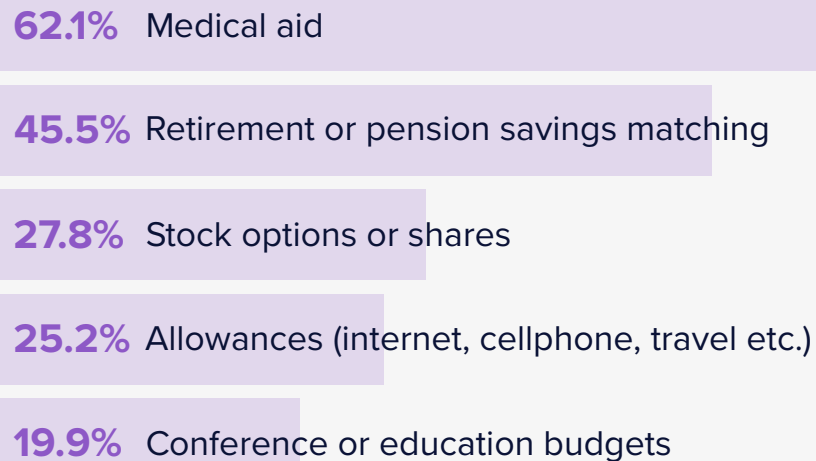### Attract great developers with the ultimate company profile 🧲

Your OfferZen company profile shares your benefits, tech stack, and more so developers are engaged when you reach out.

Start hiring developers

Medical aid is the most desired monetary benefit among South African developers

Developers' most desired monetary benefits

62.1% Medical aid

45.5% Retirement or pension savings matching

27.8% Stock options or shares

25.2% Allowances (internet, cellphone, travel etc.)

19.9% Conference or education budgets

After a good salary and bonuses, medical aid is the most desired monetary benefit among South African developers.

Monetary benefits can also help you provide your team with their desired growth opportunities: 1 in 5 South African developers would like a budget to attend conferences and further their education and training.

1 in 4 South African developers receive more than 21 days of paid leave

Developers' number of paid leave days

- 15 — 35%
- 16 - 20 — 31%
- 21 - 25 — 25%
- 26 - 30 — 4%
- Unlimited — 5%
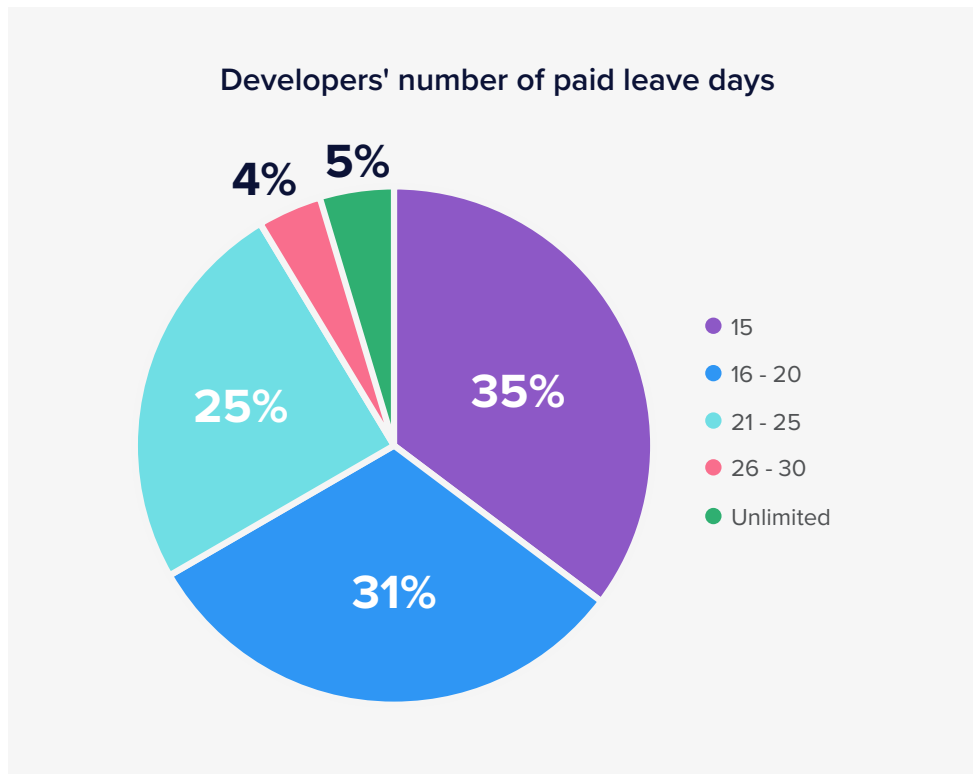
If you're looking for an additional way to make your role even more attractive, consider increasing the number of leave days that you offer.

More than half of South African developers receive more than the legal minimum of 15 days of leave per year.

To attract new talent, you need to step up your hiring process

A competitive hiring market means you are now competing against global competitors for talent. If you want to attract and hire the best developers, you have to level up your candidate experience.

To attract new talent, you need to step up your hiring process

More developers are having bad interviewing experiences

Candidate experience has become more important to South African developers, but it's gotten worse

"Have you discontinued an interview process due to a negative experience?"

● 2022   ● 2021

Yes
55.8%
55%

No
25.1%
24.5%

I've never had a negative experience
19%
20.5%

Given the competitive hiring climate, companies need to do everything they can to attract the best talent. The onus is on the employer to convince people to join the team.

Last year, we found that more than half of developers discontinued a hiring process after a negative experience. This year, the share of people who had a bad interview experience increased.

While these increases are small, it's important to remember that demand for skilled developers is at an all-time high. These small margins can make the difference between growing your team and losing out on your strongest candidates.

As you will see, many developers evaluate companies based on how they are treated in the interview process. If you're not ensuring that candidates are having a great experience then you're losing out on over 50% of possible talent.

Transparency about the interview process is the most important feature of a positive candidate experience

What developers appreciate in a hiring process

58.4% Role and process transparency

52% Salary transparency

40.4% Being briefed about the interview process

38.7% Useful feedback

37% Enjoyable interactions with hiring managers

First and foremost, it's imperative that you give developers accurate information about your interviewing process and what work the role involves.

This means that your candidates are clear on what they should expect and they know how much commitment is expected from them. There are easy things you can do that have a big impact: A well written and accurate job spec allows both sides to avoid wasting time if the role is not a match. An overview over your process allows your candidates to allocate appropriate time to your process – remember, they're likely juggling several interview processes at once!

Transparency around salary ranges is another way to create a better candidate experience. Remember that salary matters to developers, so being upfront about pay goes a long way.

45% of South African developers use an interview process to assess a company's culture

How developers assess company culture

51.9% Speaking to employees

45.3% The interview process

33.2% Word of mouth

26.3% Time at the office

21.4% Company website

45% of developers use a company's interview process to assess its culture. Every candidate, even those you don't hire, might affect your chances of attracting talent because they'll share their experience with other developers.

Your interview process is a window to your culture. It shows potential candidates how you treat your employees. That's why it's important to ensure that every candidate has a positive experience during your process, even those who you don't end up hiring!

Speaking to past and current employees is the most common way South African developers assess a company's culture, so making sure your existing team is happy is a great way to attract new talent.

Keep in mind that developers won't just talk to your existing developers, who might be enthusiastic ambassadors, but also to other peers in the industry. In fact, one third of developers assess a culture based on word of mouth.

South African developers' biggest interview turnoff is still being low-balled on salary

Developers' biggest interview process pain points

36.3% Being lowballed on salary

34% Not receiving feedback

28.6% Too many steps in the process

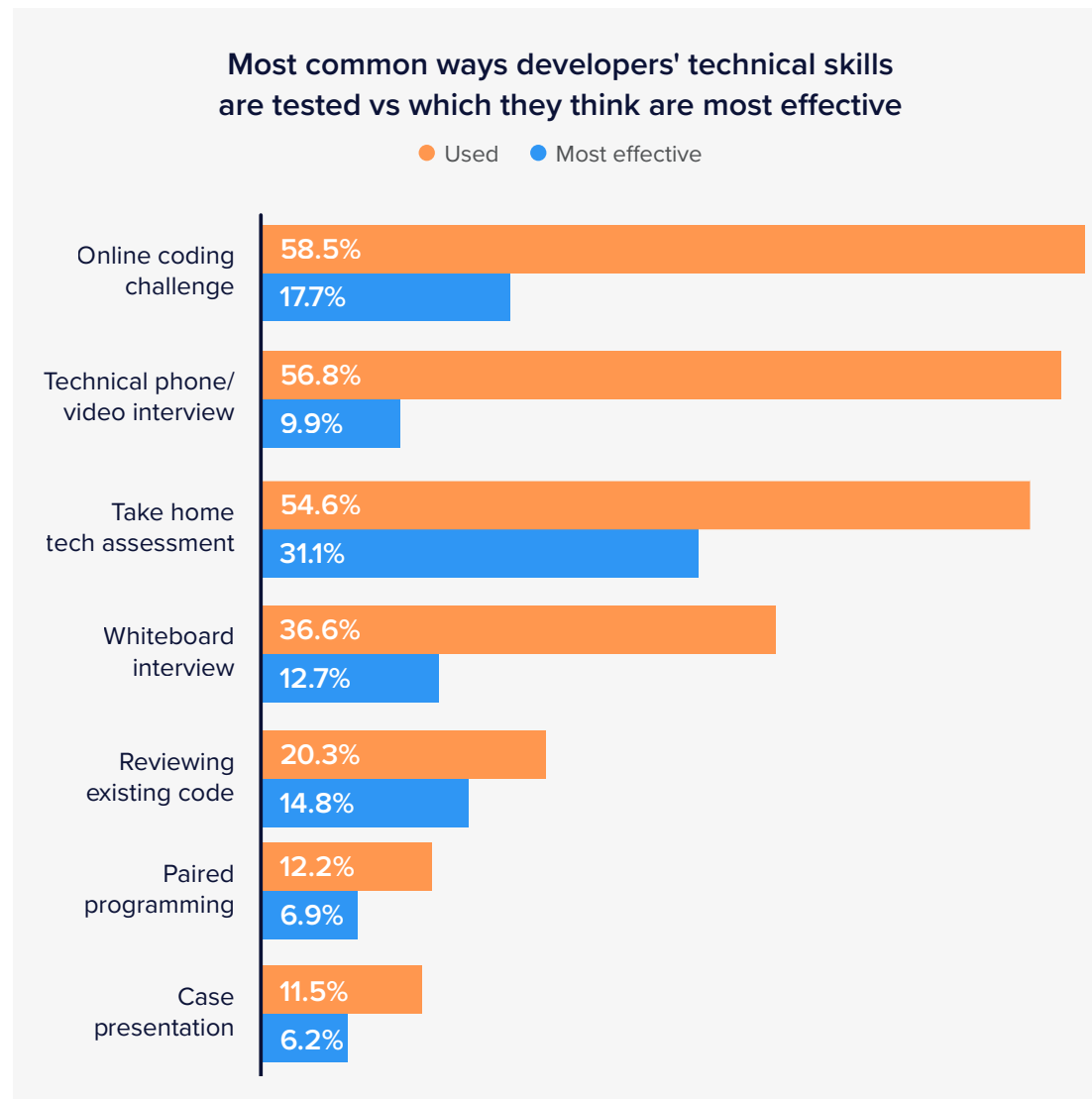**28.4%** Irrelevant technical questions

26.5% Being pushed to reveal my salary

The number one cause of a bad interview experience for developers? Being low-balled on their salary. This is also likely why developers dislike being pushed to reveal their salary: They have been lowballed in the past or think they will be.

Not receiving post-interview feedback is their second biggest pain point. It's hard to overstate this: Not getting feedback after having invested time and effort into your process is a big reason why developers and others they know won't consider a company again. Skipping it might save you time, but it will cost you many potential new hires later down the line.

1 in 3 South African developers say a take home assignment is the best way to test their technical ability

Most common ways developers' technical skills are tested vs which they think are most effective

● Used ● Most effective

Online coding challenge
58.5%
17.7%

Technical phone/ video interview
56.8%
9.9%

Take home tech assessment
54.6%
31.1%

Whiteboard interview
36.6%
12.7%

Reviewing existing code
20.3%
14.8%

Paired programming
12.2%
6.9%

Case presentation
11.5%
6.2%

Assessing a developer's technical skills is an important part of any hiring process, but how you do this matters.

The majority of companies test developers' skills using a combination of online coding challenges, a technical interview and a take home assignment.

However, South African developers believe that take home technical assignments are a better way to test their skills: 1 in 3 developers say that it's the best way to assess their technical abilities.

Further reading on the OfferZen blog

On reaching out to tech candidates:

- **Tech Hiring 101: Preparing to Reach Out to a Candidate**
  — Robyn Luyt, OfferZen

- **Tech Hiring 101: Writing the First Message to a Candidate**
  — Robyn Luyt, OfferZen

- **3 Tips for Writing an Effective Job Spec** — Lara Bower, OfferZen

- **How to Use Collaboration to Engage With Devs More Meaningfully** — Mark Deubel, Elastic

On negotiating salary or job offers:

- **How to Negotiate a Job Offer that's More than Just Money**
  — Adriaan Venter, OfferZen

- **How to Align with Candidate Motivations and Expectations**
  — Oliver Short, SEEKR

- **A Developer's Learnings: There's More to a Good Job Than Money** — René Chunilall

On improving candidate experience:

- **Hiring Developers: Why the Candidate Experience Matters**
  — Brett Jones, OfferZen

On improving candidate experience (cont.):

- **3 Tips to Get Your Remote Candidate Experience Right**
  — Dominik Grzegorzewski and Monica Ciovică, Recruitee

- **Levelling Up Tech Hiring: Advice from Developers**
  — Brendan Jansen op de Haar, OfferZen

- **4 Hiring Strategies Luno Uses to Set Realistic Candidate Expectations**
  — Neil Kelly, Luno

On hiring remotely:

- **4 Tips to Maintain Human Connection in Remote Hiring**
  — Leonard Mahlangu, Investec

- **Panel discussion: Why Showcasing Your Remote Work Culture Through Hiring Matters** — Rachel Whitehead, Codility and Stephen van der Heijden, OfferZen

- **Online Meetup: How to Humanise Your Employer Brand Through Storytelling** — Emily Firth, Recruitee and Bailey Kropman, OfferZen

- **FAQs: How to Win at Onboarding Candidates Remotely**
  — Marcelle van Niekerk, OfferZen

- **FAQs: How to Win at Interviewing Candidates Remotely**
  — Marcelle van Niekerk, OfferZen

Get involved to win at growing your tech team

Accelerate your developer hiring

OfferZen is a specialised developer job marketplace where 1000+ tech companies get access to 100+ new developers every week who are ready to interview.

Help me hire developers

Explore our 2021 South African Developer report

Catch up on last year's data report into developer salaries, skills, tech and more.

Read report

Methodology

OfferZen conducted a survey to find out more about the skills, work experience and job search behaviour of developers. A total of 4527 people took the online survey between 18 October and 12 November 2021. Of these responses, 3294 were counted as valid because they were from developers, or developers who manage other developers, and are currently living in South Africa.

We hosted the survey itself on Typeform and recruited respondents via emails sent to more than 30 000 software makers in the OfferZen community and social media posts to the public.

Data was anonymised in accordance with GDPR guidelines and is housed separate to any and all of OfferZen's platform data. Percentages may not always add to 100% due to rounding.

Salary in this report refers to gross salary before tax and excludes benefits. Statistical analysis was conducted to verify insights regarding salaries and we have only included claims where we have at least 95% confidence.

About OfferZen

OfferZen is a developer talent marketplace by developers for developers. Our platform matches top software talent with exciting opportunities at companies, but this effort actually encompasses a much wider mission: To help developers and their teams thrive in the tech ecosystem.

Over the last five years, this mission has manifested in a multitude of ways from our core business of helping software makers find awesome new jobs, to hosting local maker evenings and tech events or helping makers share their experiences on our blog. We want to help build an inclusive, transparent, and thriving tech ecosystem.

Sign up to OfferZen to [Hire tech talent] **or** [Find a tech job]

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