

2024 South Africa Report

State of the Software Developer Nation

OFFER ZEN



Contents



Introduction

2023 was another difficult year for the tech industry as it continued to weather a global economic downturn. Interest rates rose in response to high inflation numbers, VC funding decreased again. Overall, it ended up being one of the toughest years for funding in a decade.

While South African companies have avoided the brunt of the effects, some still had to do layoffs. We've also started seeing local companies passing on the pressure to their remaining employees.

All in all, the balance of power has shifted in favour of companies. They're starting to take back a lot of the control they gave up during the hottest-ever hiring market in 2021. We can see this playing out in this year's data:

- Salary band growth and annual increases have also slowed down as companies no longer need to compete for the best talent.
- Over the past 12 months, 17% of developers lost their fully remote status.
- This is despite over half of surveyed developers saying they'd leave if they were forced to return full time.

In this climate, it's likely that many companies will continue to downgrade easy perks and conveniences to save money.

Taking every opportunity to seize back control is not without its risks. Companies will need to watch out for attrition as the market recovers. In the long term, all too drastic moves may also undermine their employer brand.

For developers, it's important to realise that applications to tech jobs have tripled in the past year. It's now significantly harder to get interviews and the interviews are harder to pass.

However, there are signs that the market is starting to recover slowly: Tech layoffs are still down relative to their peak and the number of open tech jobs is recovering. I look forward to seeing how our community will leverage AI to make the next phase of growth even better than the one before.

I hope this report provides you with insights that will help you navigate the shifting tech landscape with more confidence.



Philip Joubert
OfferZen Co-founder



South African Tech Trends

Artificial Intelligence is the new co-pilot for South African developers

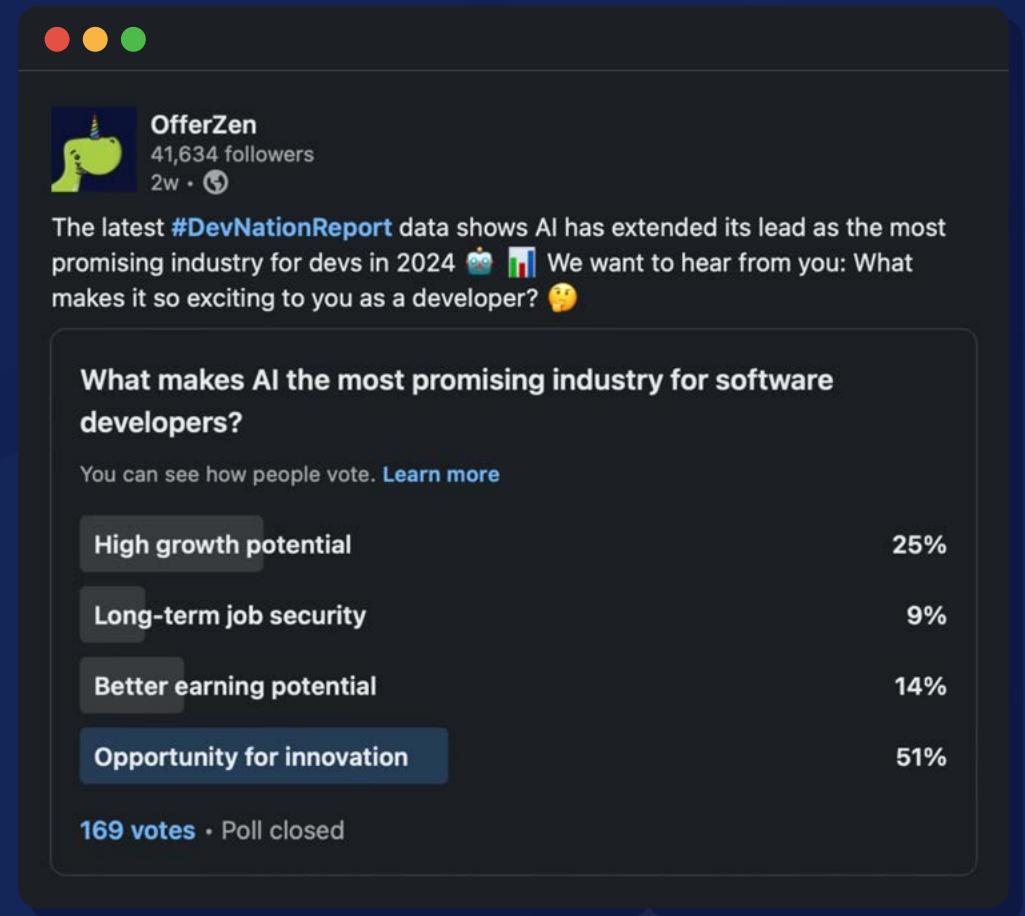
AI is taking ZA developers' hearts by storm

While many media companies predict the burst of the AI bubble, South African developers are still focussing on its potential.

In fact, the percentage of developers who see it as the most promising industry has grown massively, from 50% to 68%. With even more advances in AI tools over the past 12 months, it's easy to see why developers are betting on a bright future for AI: We've seen the release of ChatGPT-4 and open source AI models like Mistral make massive strides, reaching parity with GPT-3.5.

AI is starting to play a role in virtually all industries. There are AI integrations into virtually every app, from Microsoft Copilot, Miro and Photoshop to Notion. One could even ask the question: Given that it permeates every piece of technology and every industry, is it still accurate to consider AI an industry?

Either way, devs are excited about this capacity for innovation. That's why the majority of South African software developers rank it as their most promising industry.



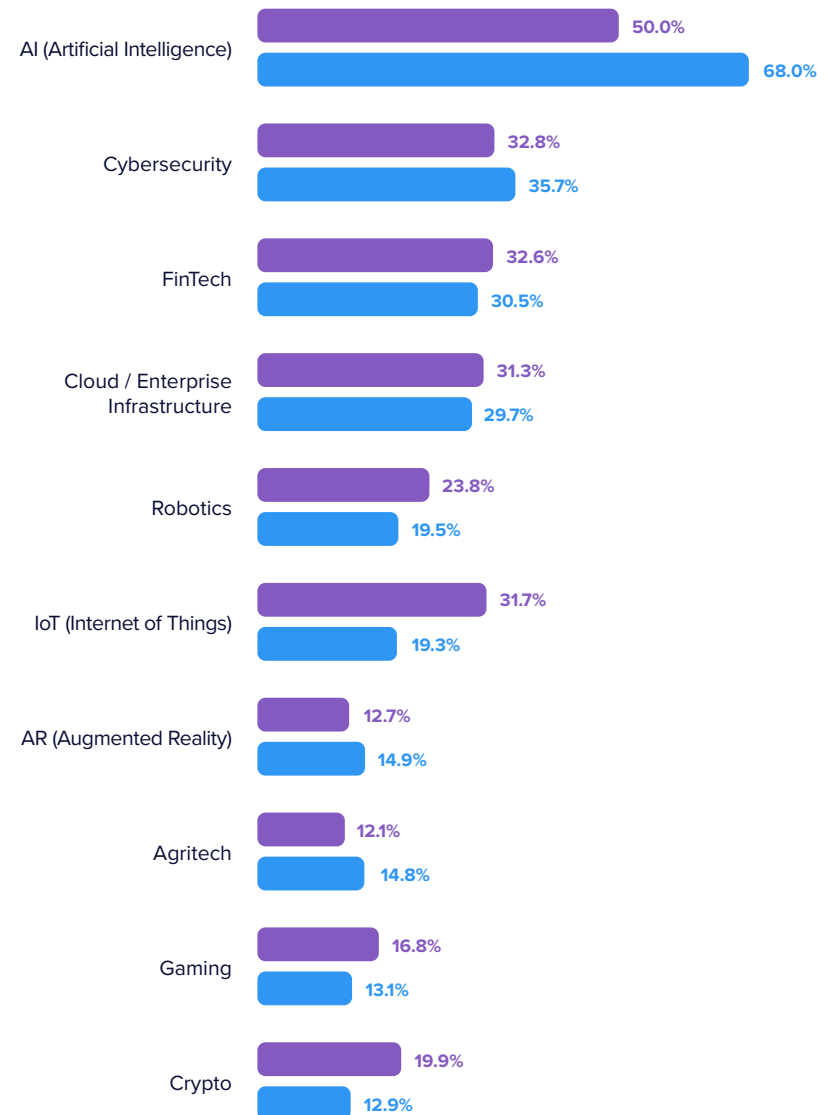
Crypto's fall continues

Things may be looking up for AI but Crypto's fall in popularity continues. The industry grew in importance and popularity each year from 2019 to 2022.

However, 2023 was the start of the Crypto winter: The value of Bitcoin crashed, X removed it's support for NFTs, and multiple exchanges go bust or sued by the US government. has sued

This downward trend looks set to continue going into 2024. Now, only 1 in 8 developers see it as a promising industry.

Could that 1 in 8 be on to something? Bitcoin's price has started recovering and is good news for developers who still hold onto coins. If that trend continues, we could be looking at renewed interest in the industry.



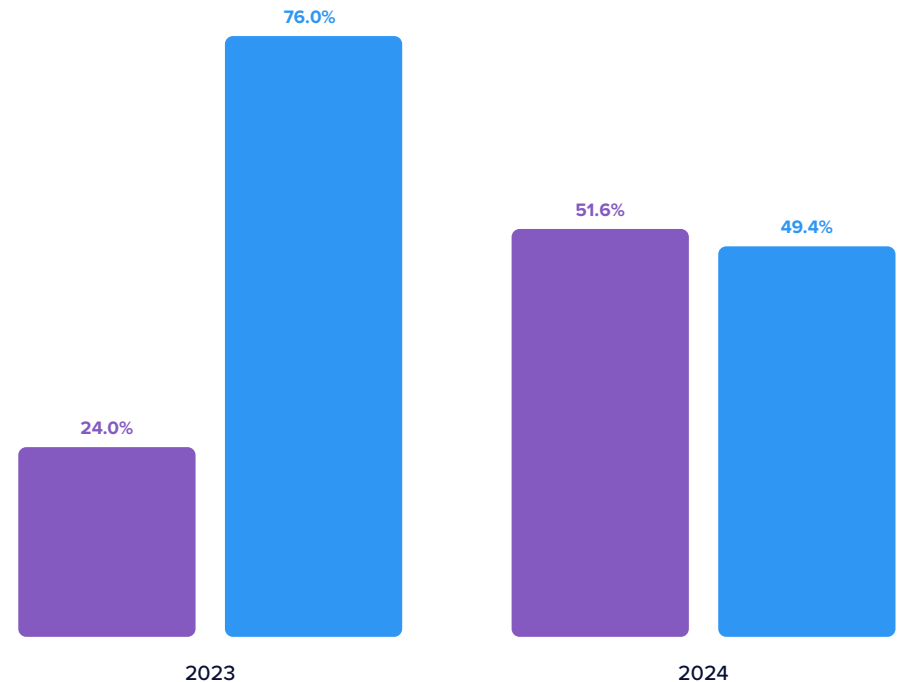
Developers' most-promising industry for 2024

2023 2024

AI is helping more developers do their work

While [AI adoption in South Africa was still pretty low last year](#), now over half of the software developers have worked with an AI API. The majority are also working with code-writing assistants in either their role or personal projects.

This shows that AI has a real impact on how developers do their work, [not taking over their work](#). At the same time, working with machine learning models remains a niche for South African developers: More than two thirds of devs haven't built or trained a machine learning model.



Are you using AI code-writing assistants?

Yes

No



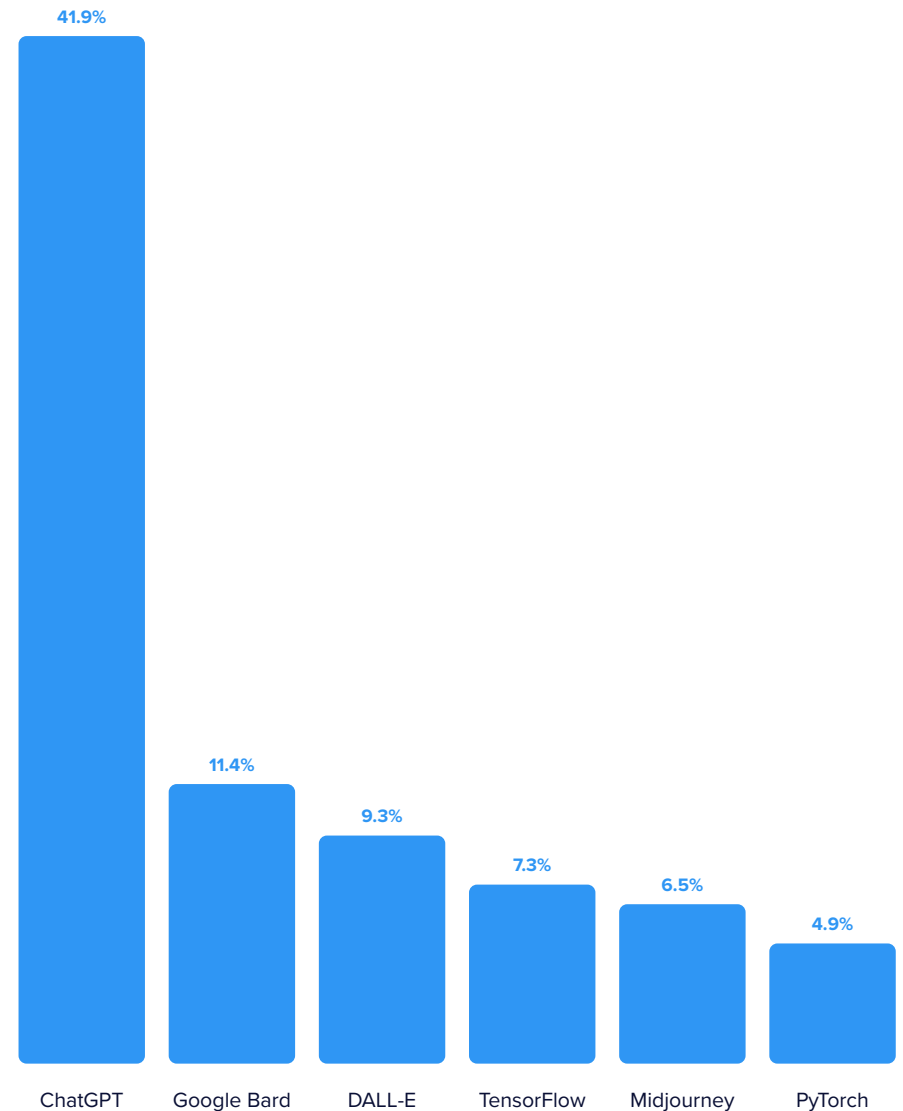
The majority of companies are aware of things like GPT4 and the obvious stuff like customer service chat bots. But they're still searching for their own killer use case with generative AI to create value for customers.

Dan Davey
recombinary

AI is freeing up capacity for high-impact work

Unsurprisingly, ChatGPT is the most widely used AI tool by developers, followed by Google's Bard and image generator DALL-E. But, taking a closer look at how they're using AI shows that South African developers are using AI to automate routine tasks and data analysis. This is freeing them up to focus on tasks that require creative thinking and problem solving.

It's no longer enough to know the basics of coding as AI can easily do this part of the development process. The ability to understand business problems and how to maximise impact with code is even more important.



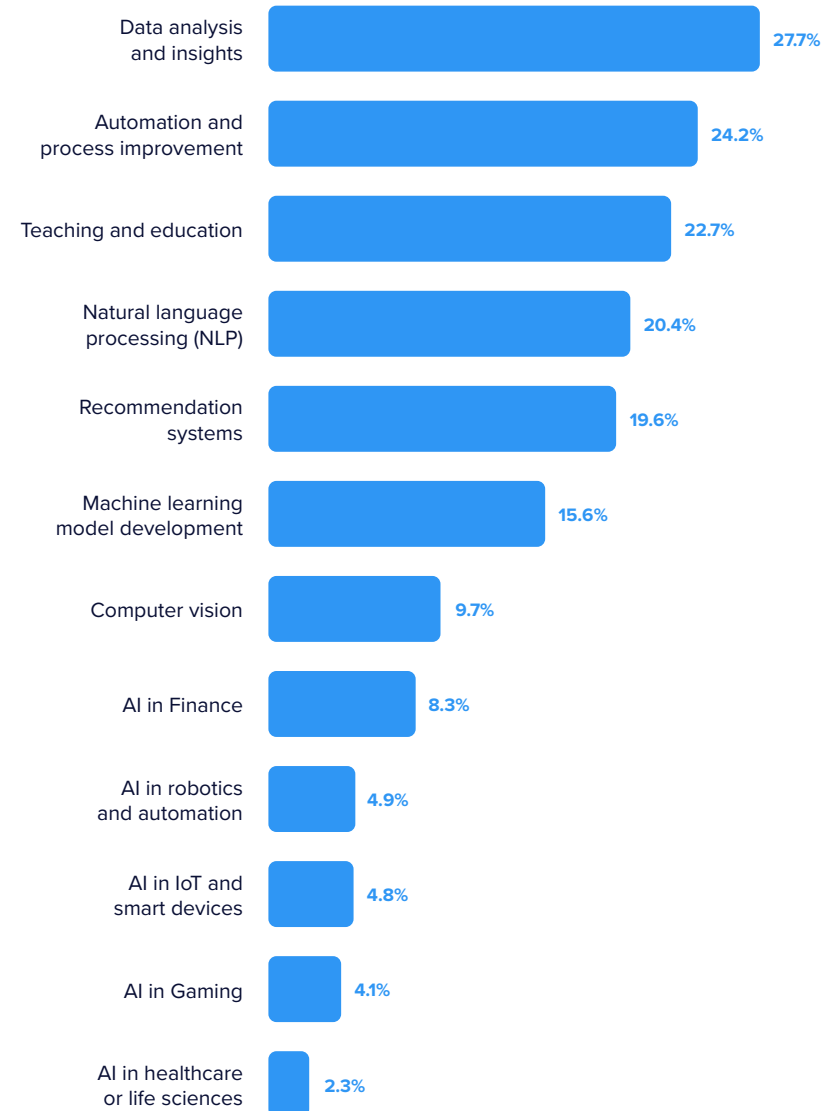
What AI tools have you used in the last 12 months?

2024

AI is playing an increasing important strategic role in companies

AI is also playing an increasingly important role in strategy by assisting with data-driven decision making through predictive analytics and competitor intelligence. In a tougher macroeconomic context, this can help companies mitigate risk and spot new business opportunities.

For companies, this might mean fewer juniors as AI can automate work typically done by devs at this level. At the same time, demand for seniors who understand the bigger picture of their code will stay strong as companies look for these skills to drive business impact in 2024.



How do you use AI tools?

2024

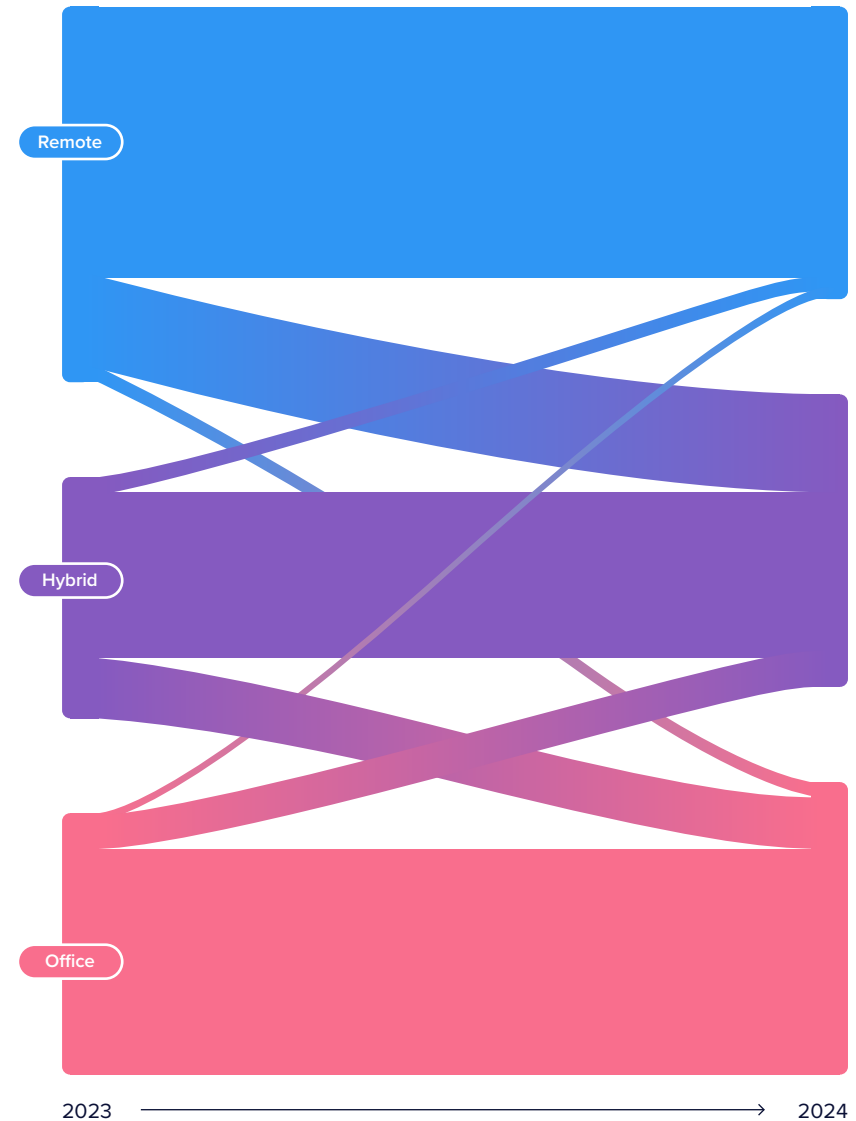
South African Tech Trends

RTO vs WFH: Are ZA companies trying to slowly move back to the office?

Changing tides: SA developers face remote policy changes

While ZA devs have largely avoided a mass return to the office, they are starting to see a change in their remote policies. Over the past 12 months, 17% of developers saw their policy change away from being fully remote.

30% of hybrid developers in 2024 used to be fully remote, while 15% of fully office based developers had a hybrid policy last year. Is this a sign that South African companies are slowly returning back to the office?



Has your remote policy changed over the last 12 months?

Remote

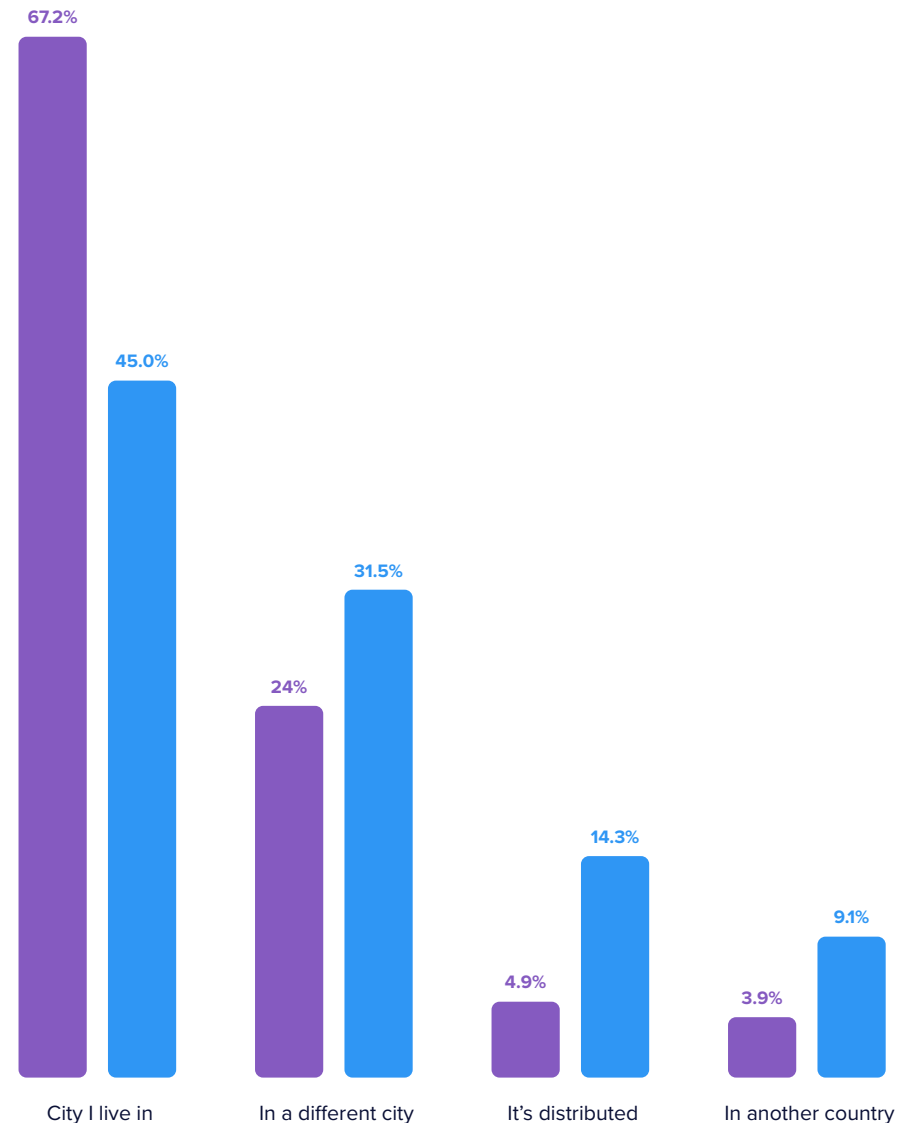
Hybrid

Office

Fully remote companies are doubling down on freedom of movement

While some developers face changing remote policies, companies who are staying remote are really embracing the benefits of remote work. For starters, the number of developers working remotely for international companies has more than doubled over the past 12 months. This suggests that more companies are seeing the value of [hiring local talent for international roles](#).

At the same time, more developers have the option to work from anywhere in the world. Almost half of fully remote developers can now work from anywhere in the world (up from 32.6% in 2023). For another 1 in 4, they only need to be based in the same country as their company.



Where remote devs companies are based

2023

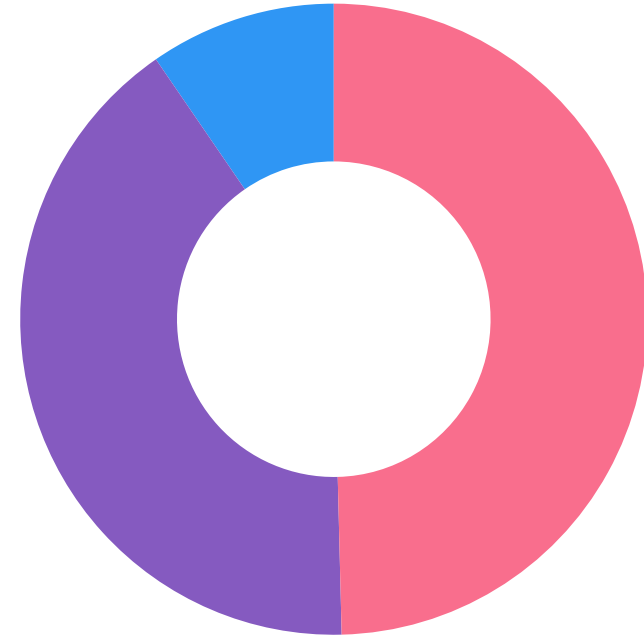
2024

Developers are missing fully remote perks as office returns

As more developers return to the office, they're starting to miss the benefits that fully remote work offered them. Remote is now the most desired policy among South African developers ahead of hybrid.

The data also suggests that more developers find themselves at companies who have their preferred remote policy. We can see this in the majority of hybrid devs preferring hybrid and the majority of remote devs preferring remote.

The exception here are fully office-based developers who tend to prefer hybrid setups.



What is your current remote setup?

Currently fully office based: 9.6%

Currently fully remote: 40.8%

Currently hybrid: 49.6%



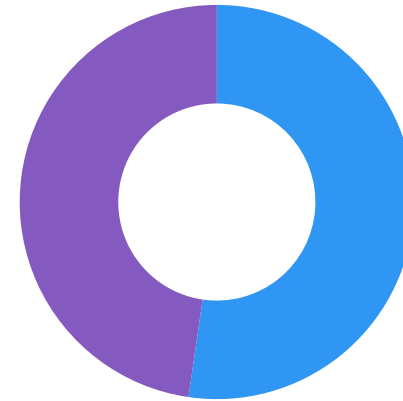
Need some help?

Want to know how to craft a remote policy that actually appeals to South African developers? Download our whitepaper to learn more.

Forcing a RTO could cost you half of your team members

Developers are showing a clear preference for remote work that's not just theoretical. In reality, the majority would leave a role if their company required them to return to the office full time.

But, taking a closer look at the data reveals that hybrid developers are less likely than fully remote ones to leave if they were required to come back full time. With more developers returning to the office at least some of the time, is this something companies are banking on?



Would you leave your job if your employer required you to return to the office?

Yes: 52.3%

No: 47.7%



OfferZen
41,634 followers
2w • Edited •

Last week 66% developers said that shifting from remote to hybrid made them rethink their job. Join the WFH vs RTO discussion 🗳️ How has an RTO policy caused you to rethink your job?

How has an RTO policy caused you to rethink your job?

You can see how people vote. [Learn more](#)

I'm looking for a new role	44%
I've moved on to a new role	14%
I'm staying but less invested	7%
I'm considering my options	35%

245 votes • Poll closed

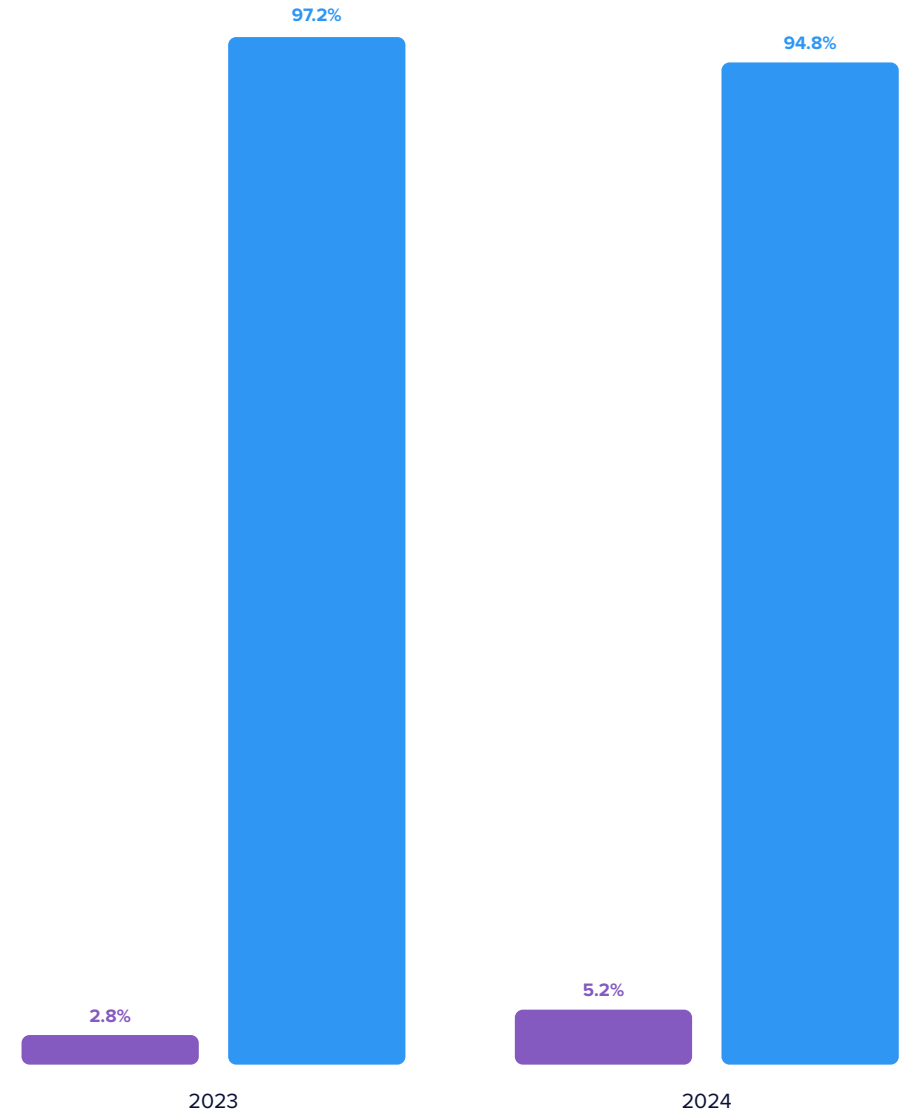
South African Tech Trends

**Compensation packages are shifting:
Lower increases, more bonuses and
fewer training budgets**

5% of South African devs were retrenched in the past 12 months

2023 was another tough year for the global tech industry. The funding cool down continued and large tech companies including Shopify, Google and Meta announced layoffs.

South Africa's tech industry has largely avoided the worst effects of these global trends. Yet 5.2% of developers report being retrenched, up from 2.9% the previous year. Why is South Africa more resilient? For starters, VC funding is less common in South Africa than it is in Europe or North America. As a result, South Africa has more bootstrapped businesses that tend to be more robust when funding is less easily available.



Have you been retrenched in the past 12 months?

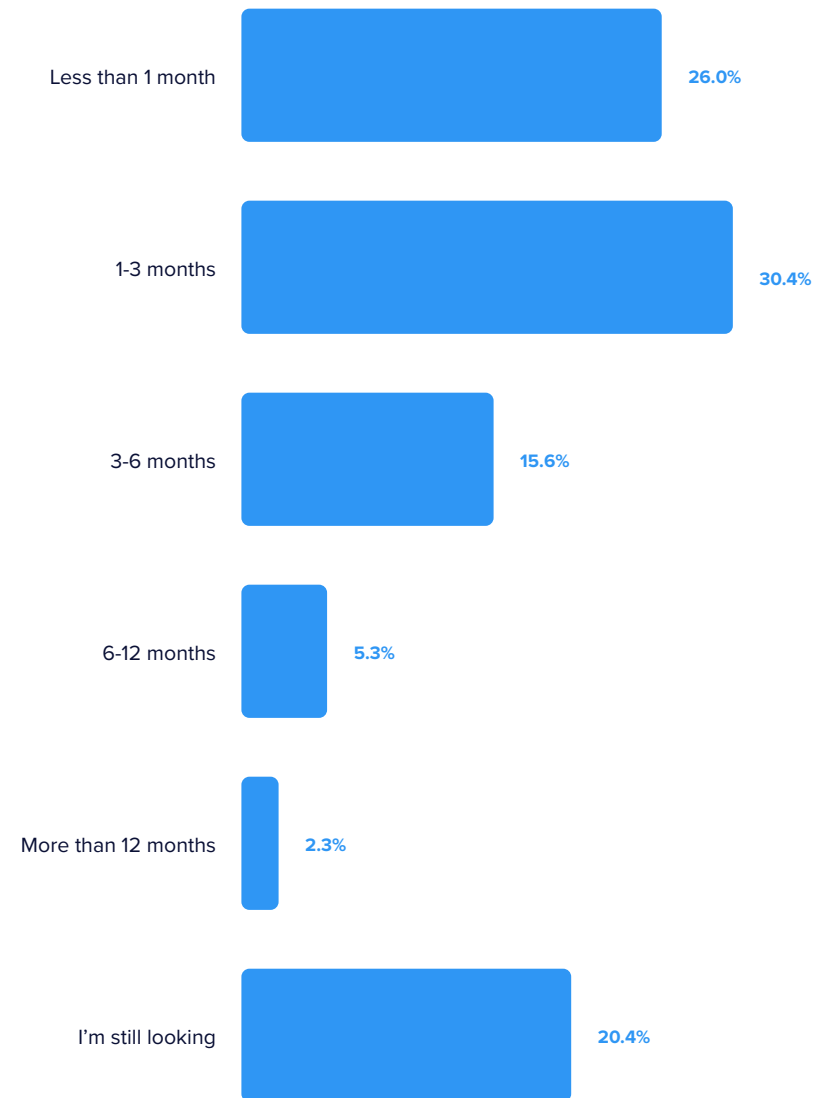
Yes

No

It's a tough job market for juniors right now

Starting with the good news: More than half of retrenched developers managed to find a new role within three months. This shows that there are still good opportunities for skilled developers. On average, senior developers took the shortest time to find a new role.

However, junior developers are experiencing the brunt of the tough job market: Over 40% took more than 6 months to find a new job after retrenchments and their salary growth reflects this too.



How long did it take you to find a new role after being retrenched? (All retrenched developers)

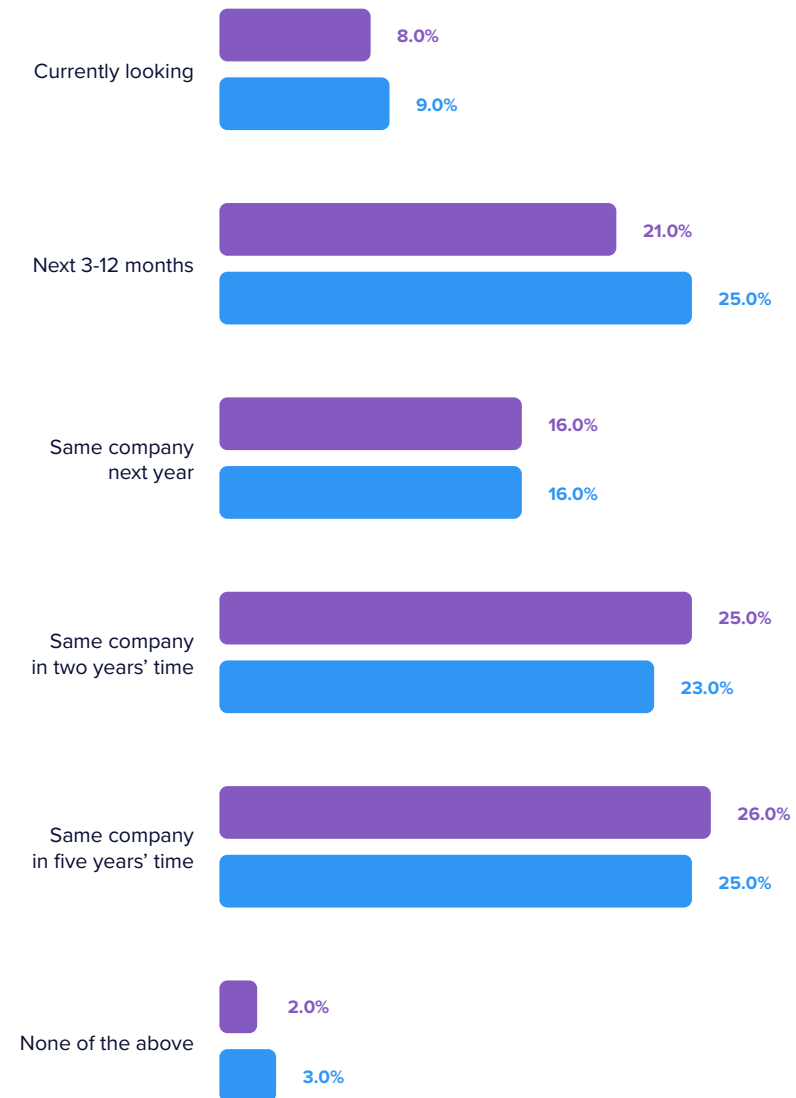
2024

Is the grass looking greener for a third of developers?

After another year in an economic downturn, it's tougher inside most companies. This has led many developers to rethink their current role.

30% say they'll be looking for new opportunities this year. So why are they planning on leaving? Is the grass just greener on the other side?

The data indicates that while salary growth and perks have shrunk, developers leave looking for companies that can still offer better salaries, management and growth opportunities.



Which of the following statements best describes your current perspective:

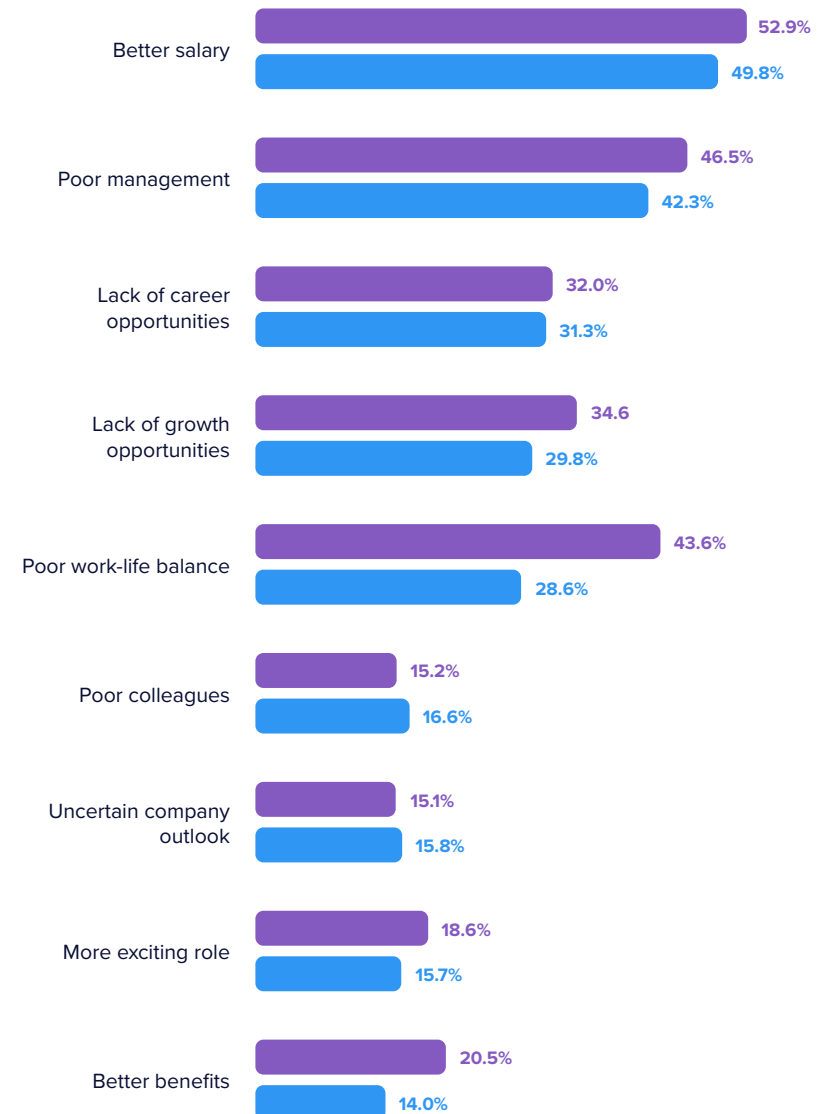
2023

2024

Developers are still leaving for better salaries, growth and management

As the cost of living continues to rise, it's no surprise that a better salary is still the number one reason why developers leave a role. Nearly half of South African developers list it as their top reason for leaving, down from 52.9% in 2023. At the same time, benefits have also decreased in importance when it comes to leaving a role. They have dropped from 20.5% to 14% in 2024.

But money is not the only factor that matters to developers looking to explore new opportunities. Poor management and a lack of growth opportunities are also still big push factors. Addressing the issue of poor management is especially important to retain tech leads.



What are the top reasons that have made you leave a job?

2023

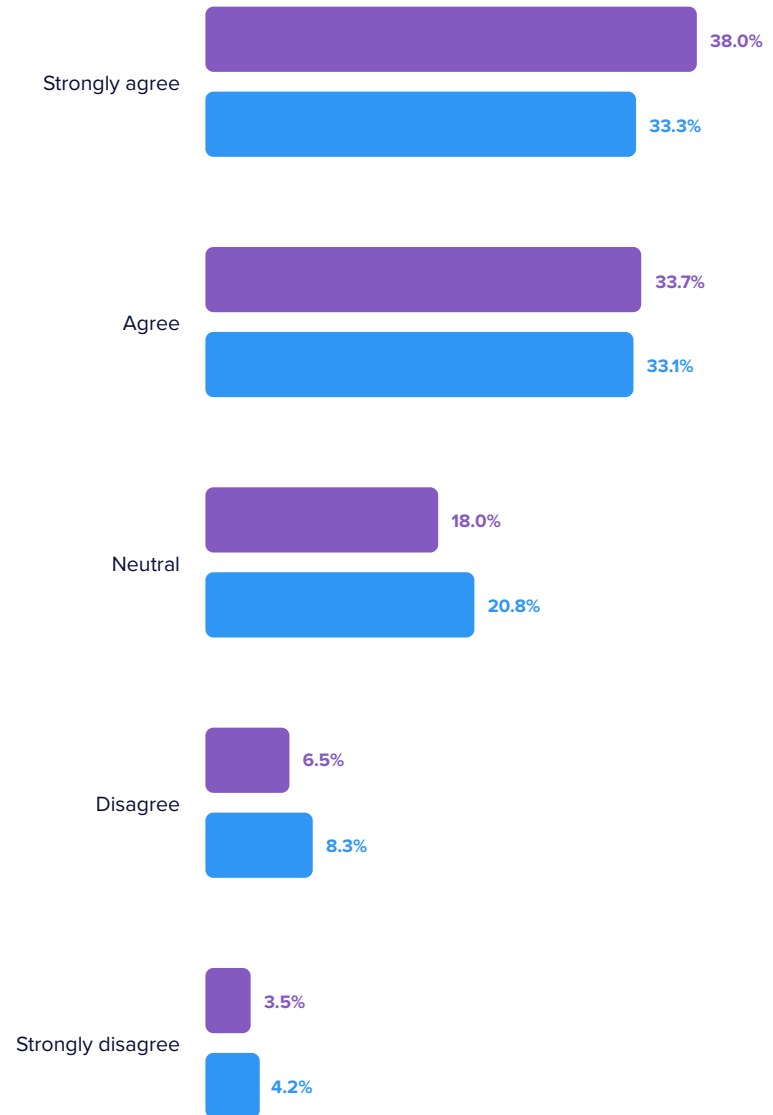
2024

Developers are less confident in their growth prospects

Earlier we found that a lack of growth opportunities is one of the main reasons why developers leave a role. The data suggests that more developers don't feel optimistic about their growth prospects at their current company: The share of developers who don't think their company can support their career development has increased from 10% to 12.5%.

At the same time, the share of devs who believe they can continue growing at their current company has dropped to the lowest percentage since 2021.

What's contributing to this decline? We asked developers why they're feeling less optimistic about their prospects for career growth. The number one factor? [Lacking trust in company leadership](#).



“I feel like I can develop my career at my current company”

2023

2024

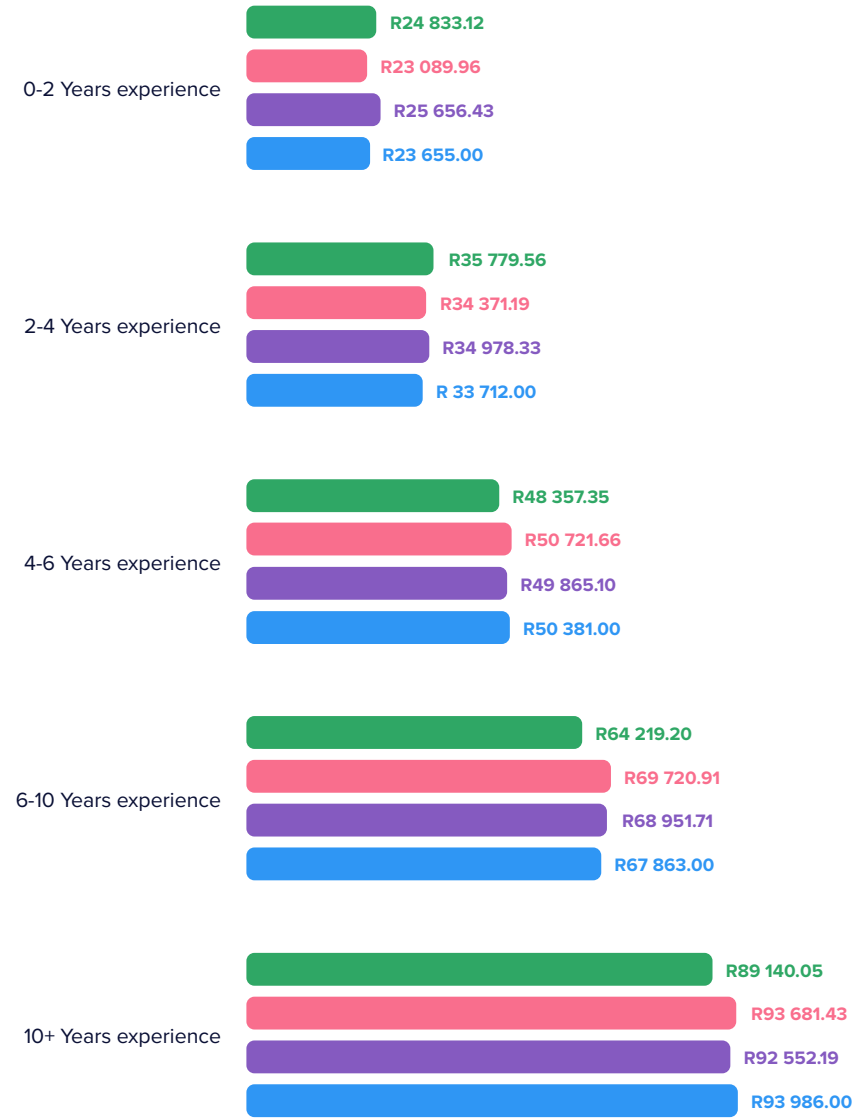
Software developer salaries

**Salaries have increased for seniors
but increases overall have slowed**

Salary band growth is slowing year on year

The tougher macroeconomic climate is also evident in developer salaries: Across the board, salary band growth for developers has slowed more and more in recent years. Entry-level and junior developers have seen their salaries decrease in 2023, while intermediates have only seen nominal increases.

When controlling for inflation, many developers essentially experienced a decrease in their buying power in the past two years.

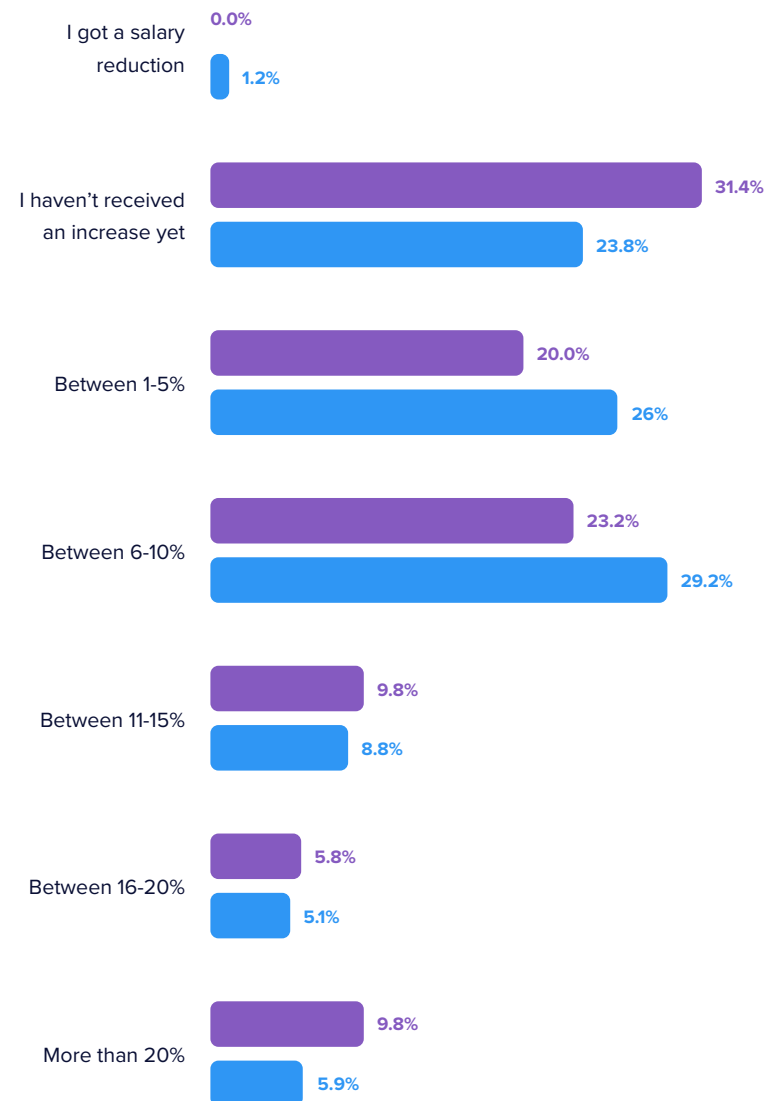


Average software engineer salary adjusted for inflation

2021 adjusted 2022 adjusted 2023 adjusted 2024

Annual salary increases have slowed over the past 12 months

Let's start with some good news: More than half of South African developers received a salary increase in the past year. Also, despite the challenging climate, fewer companies gave no increases.



In your current job, by what % did your annual salary increase?

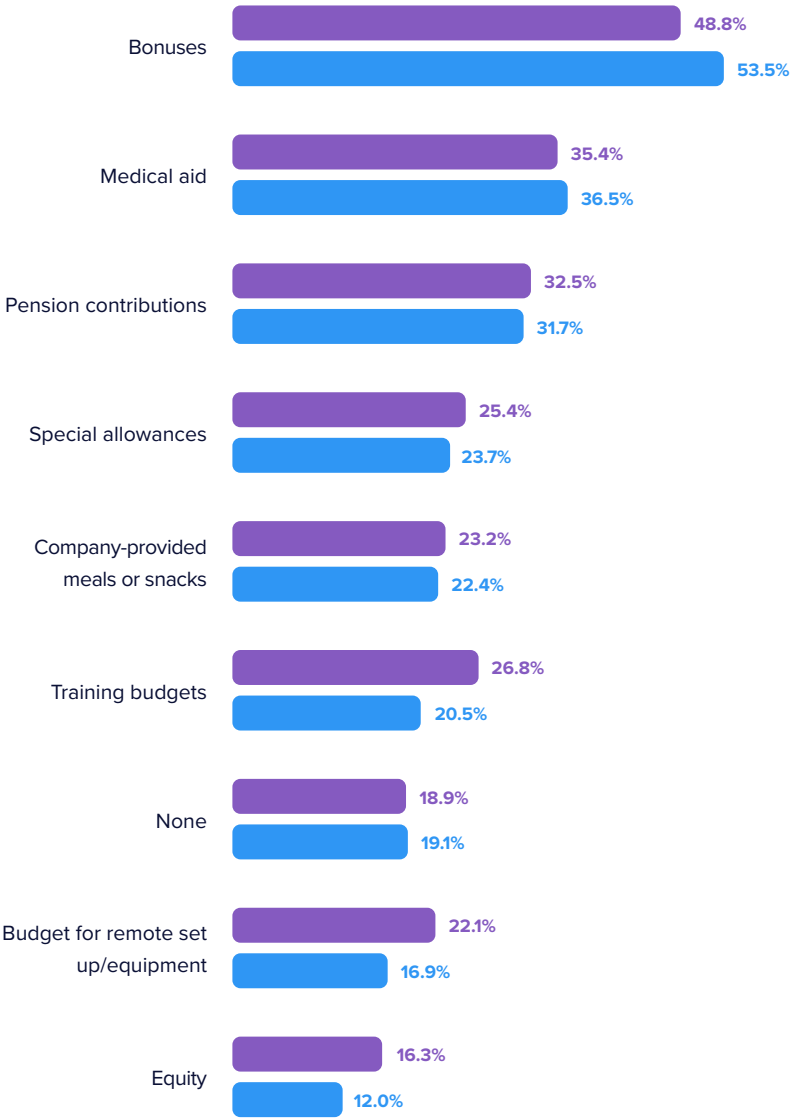
2023

2024

Companies are downgrading perks to save money

As companies work to extend their runway or hit profitability, many seem to be downgrading their perks, including training budgets. This might explain the falling confidence of developers who don't believe they can continue growing at their current companies.

We're seeing reductions of perks across the board with only a few exceptions, most notably bonuses. This points towards an attempt to still reward developers making a business impact.



Monetary benefits in curent role

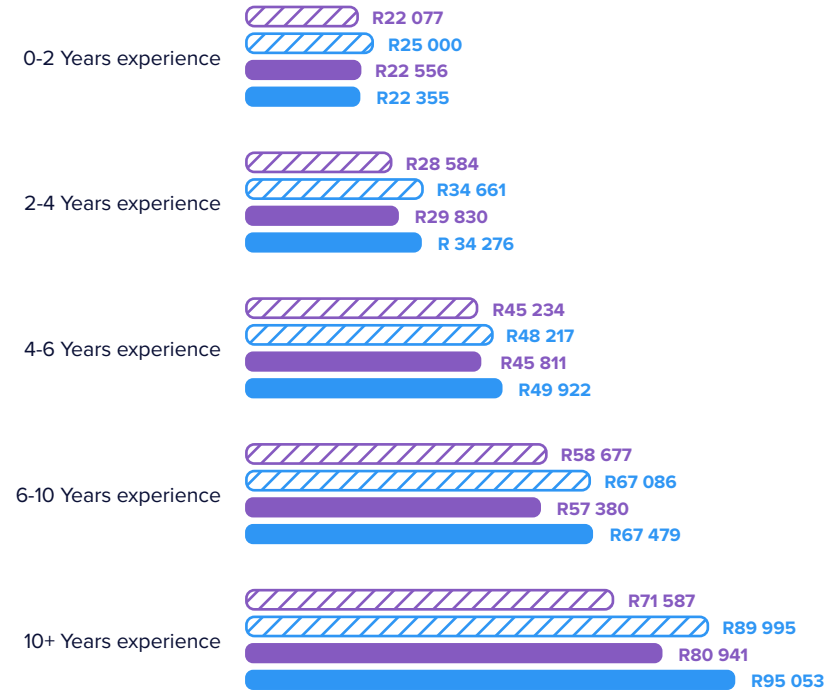
2023 2024

Tech's gender pay gap has narrowed in the last year

On average, the earning gap for female developers has narrowed by 17% percent over the past year and has decreased across all levels of experience.

Average salaries are practically identical for entry-level developers but a pay gap starts to emerge once they've got two years of experience under their belts. The gap is still widest between developers with more than 10 years of experience: Here, women earn 17.4% less than their male counterparts. This is despite female survey respondents being proportionately represented across industries, languages, and location.

We hope that, by providing salary transparency on our job platform and in reports like these, we will equip all developers with the knowledge and confidence they need to earn the salary they deserve. We're also planning to publish further insights on this topic in the future.



Average developer salary by gender

Women 2023 Men 2023 Women 2024 Men 2024



Want to see more in-depth data?

If you're curious for even more interactive salary data, head on over to the online report page. You'll find loads of insightful information there!

Software engineer skills

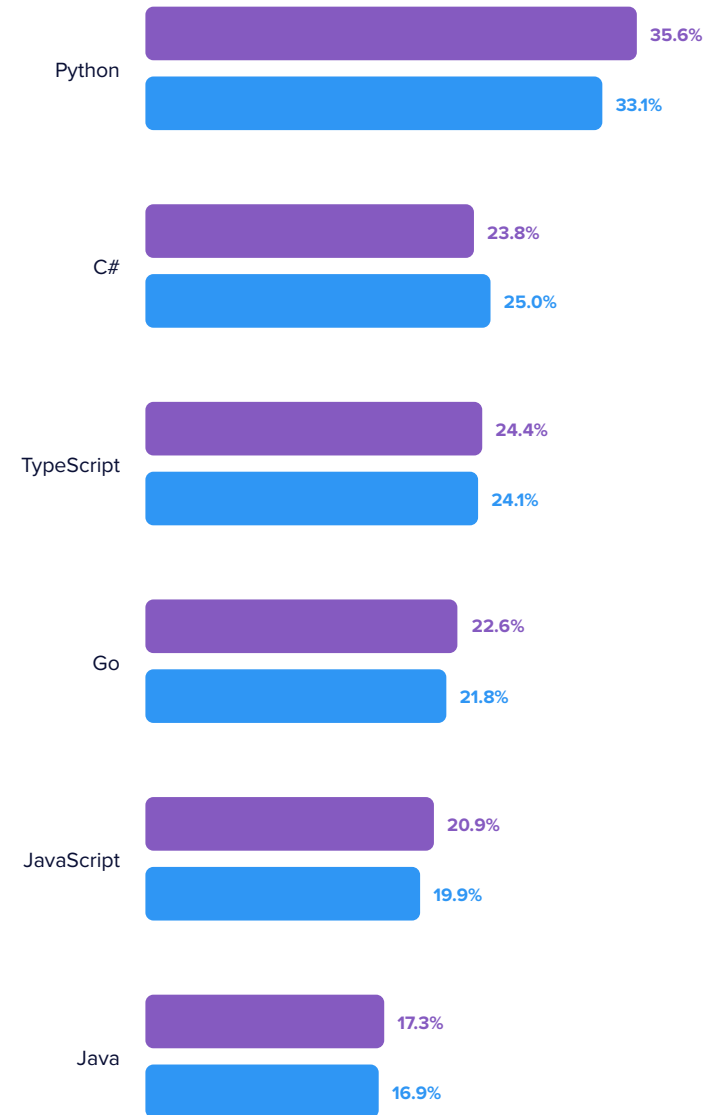
Microsoft-backed languages are on the rise this year

Is demand for optometrists going to rise as more developers want to C#?

C# is the only language in the top six most popular languages to see an increase over the past year. This makes C# one of the few big languages to see increases in both use and popularity.

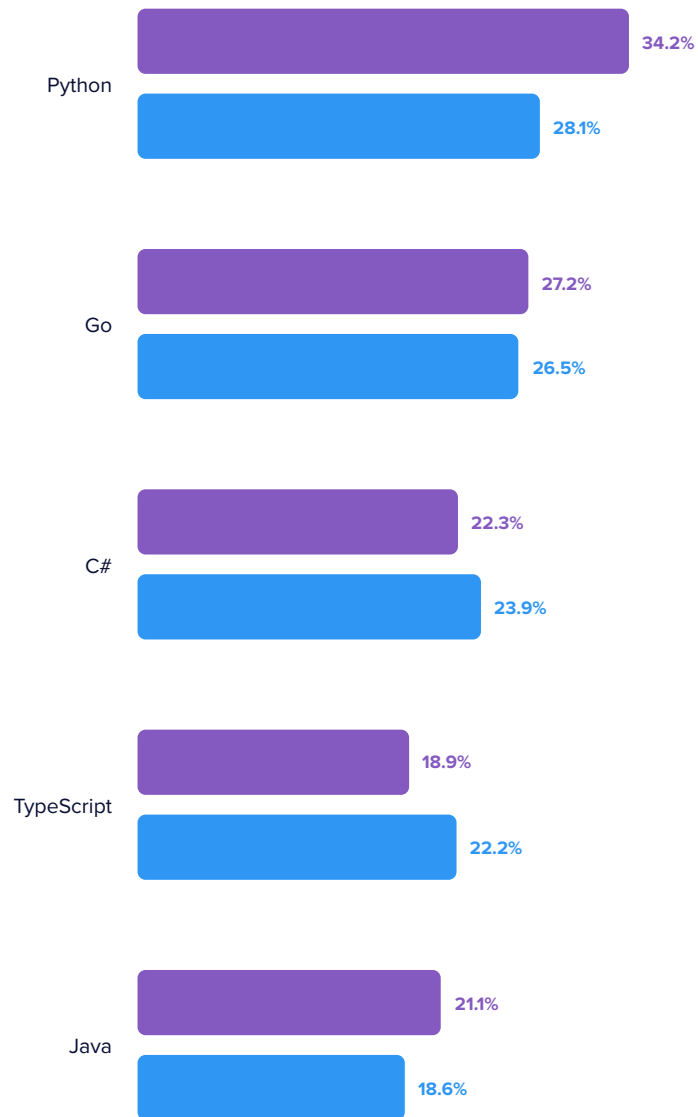
Overall, C#'s desirability increased across frontend, backend and full stack developers indicating its broad appeal to the local tech community. Nearly half of developers say that [career opportunities is the most important factor](#) they consider when choosing their next programming language.

That might explain C#'s appeal as it gives developers access to the broader Microsoft ecosystem and career opportunities at the thousands of companies who use this tech as part of their stack.



Developers' top 6 most wanted languages

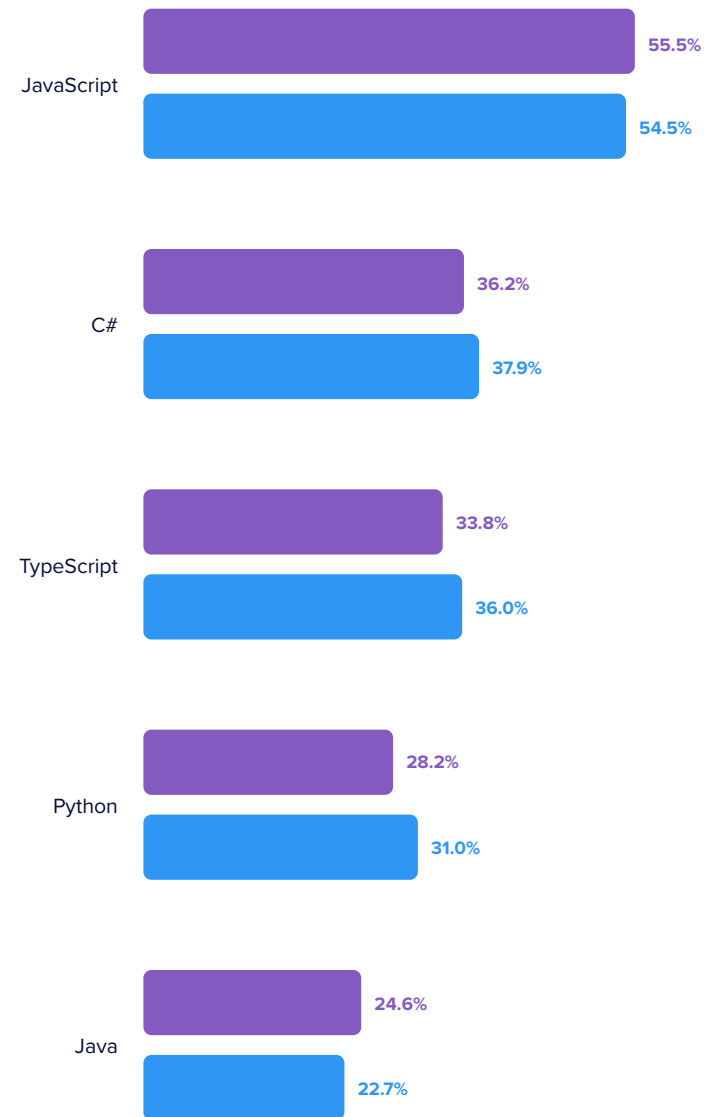
2023 2024



Backend developers' top five most wanted languages

2023

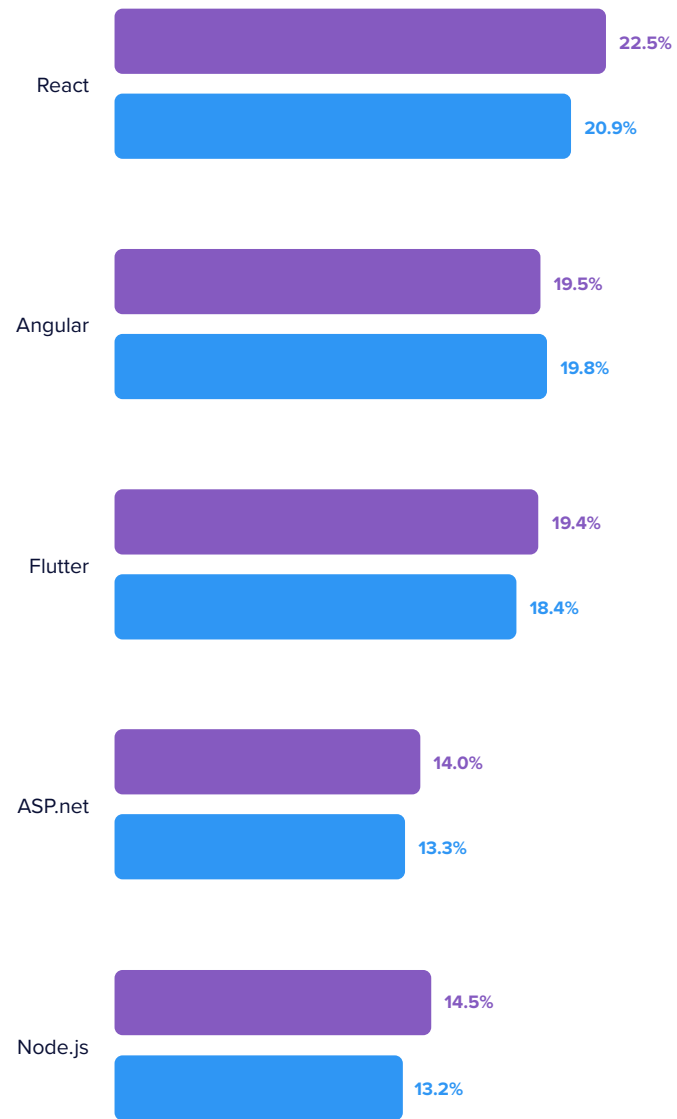
2024



Developers' top five most used languages

2023

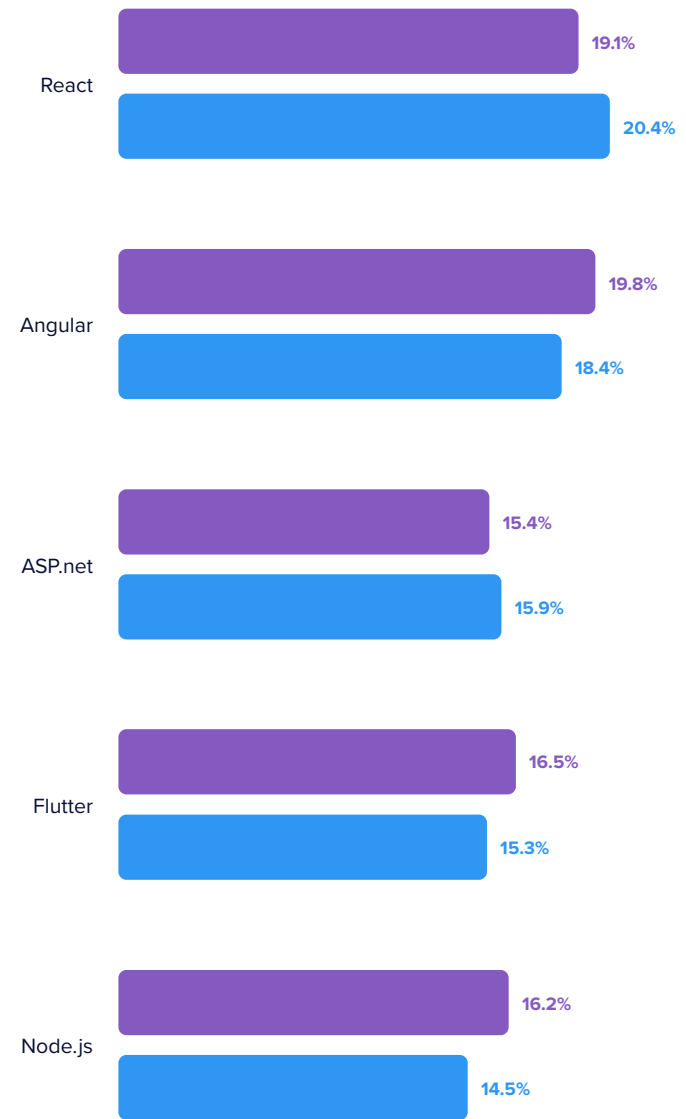
2024



Developers' top five **most wanted** frameworks

2023

2024



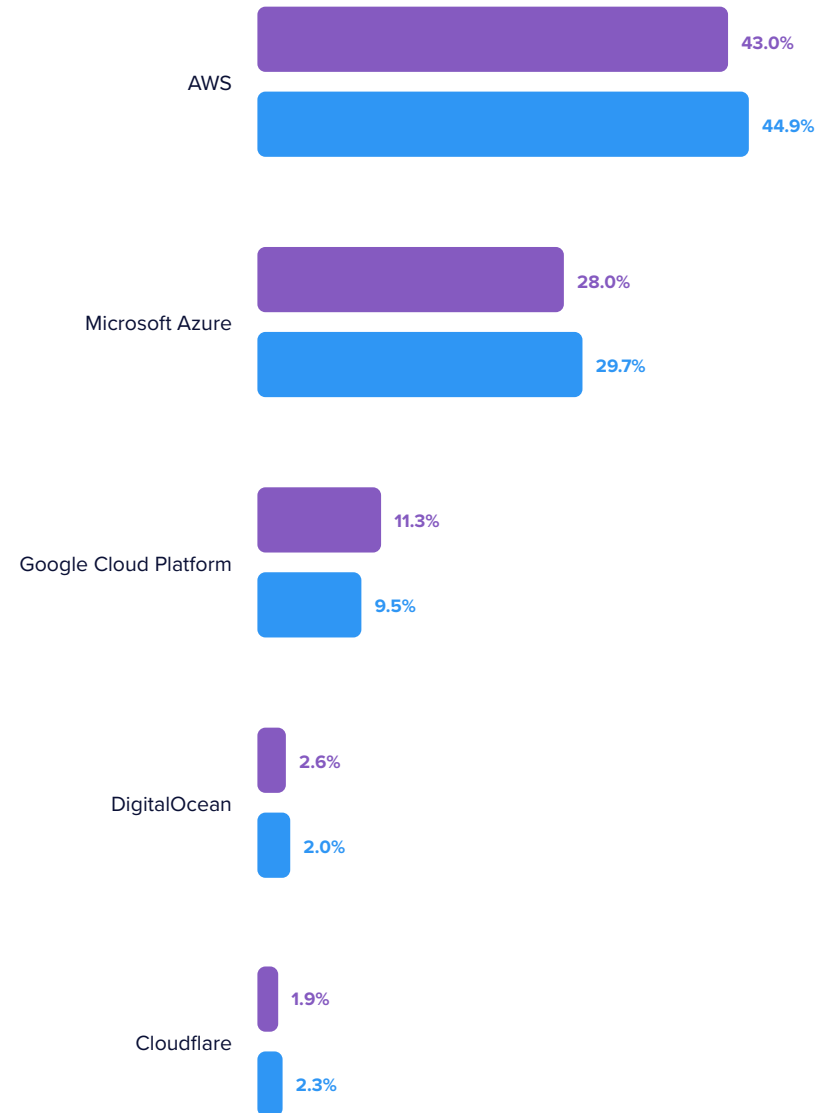
Developers' top five **most used** frameworks

2023

2024

Are AWS and Azure the only competition in South Africa's cloud wars?

When it comes to South Africa's cloud wars, it appears that AWS and Microsoft's Azure are cementing their duopoly as the most used cloud platforms. They are the only platforms to see their use rise over the past 12 months. And second-placed Azure has more users than the rest of the list combined. However, Google's Cloud Platform still holds an advantage among startups with fewer than 50 employees and companies working in web development and eCommerce.



Which of these cloud platforms do you use the most?

2023

2024

Methodology

OfferZen conducted a survey to find out more about skills, work experience and job search behaviour of developers. A total of 5402 people took the online survey between 3 October and 27 November 2023. Of these responses, 3935 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 40 000 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 job marketplace by developers for developers. Our platform matches job-seeking developers 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 six years, this has manifested in a multitude of ways from our core business of helping developers find awesome new jobs, to hosting local maker evenings and tech events, or helping developers share their experiences on our blog. We want to help build an inclusive, transparent, and thriving tech ecosystem.

