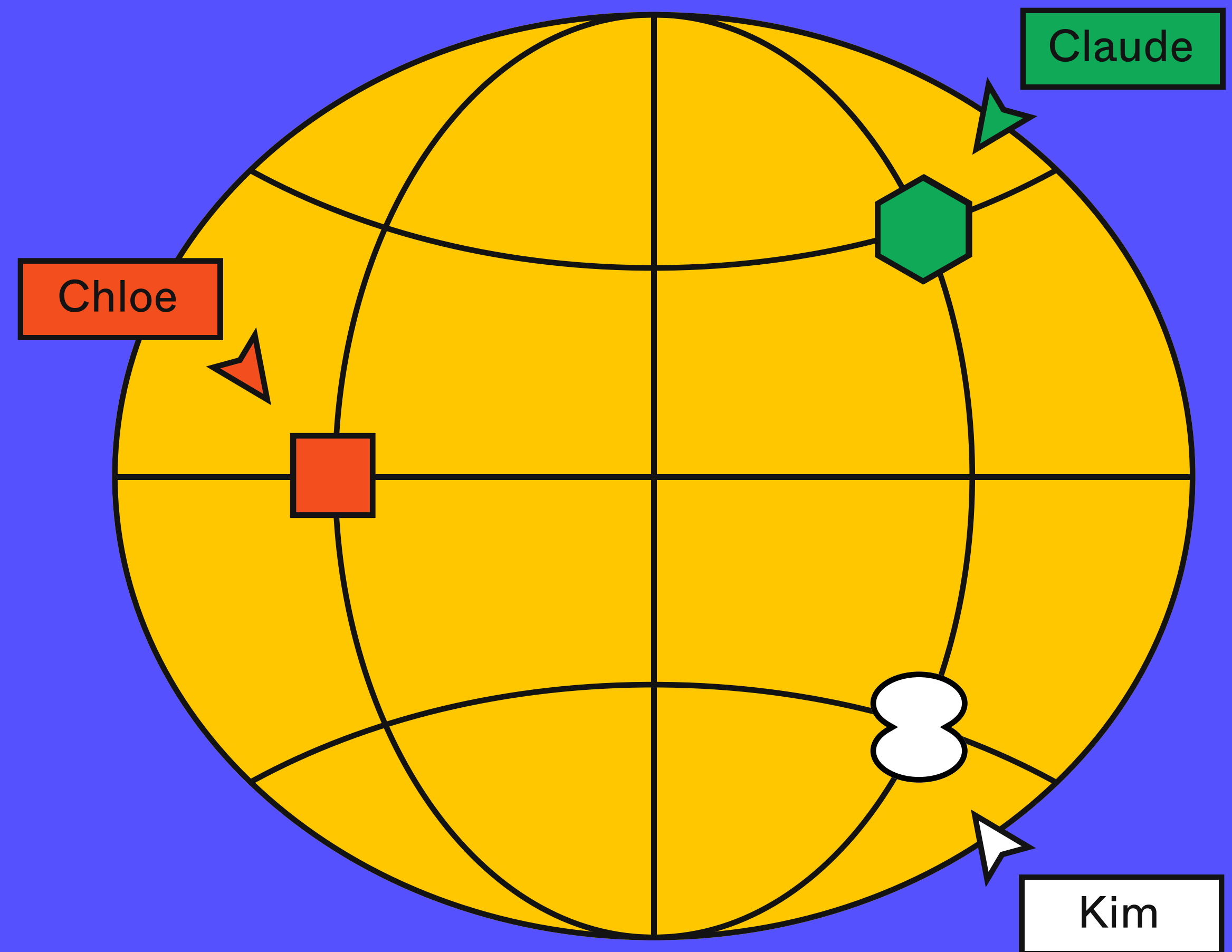


Figma

*An evolving work in progress*

# State of the Designer

A 2023 perspective on remote work, collaborative design, and the business value of design. Are product designers in a good place? Let's find out.



# The State of Design: a snapshot

Over the past three years, the landscape of product design has undergone a remarkable transformation. Product designers are no longer confined to the sidelines. Instead, they have stepped into pivotal roles within businesses.

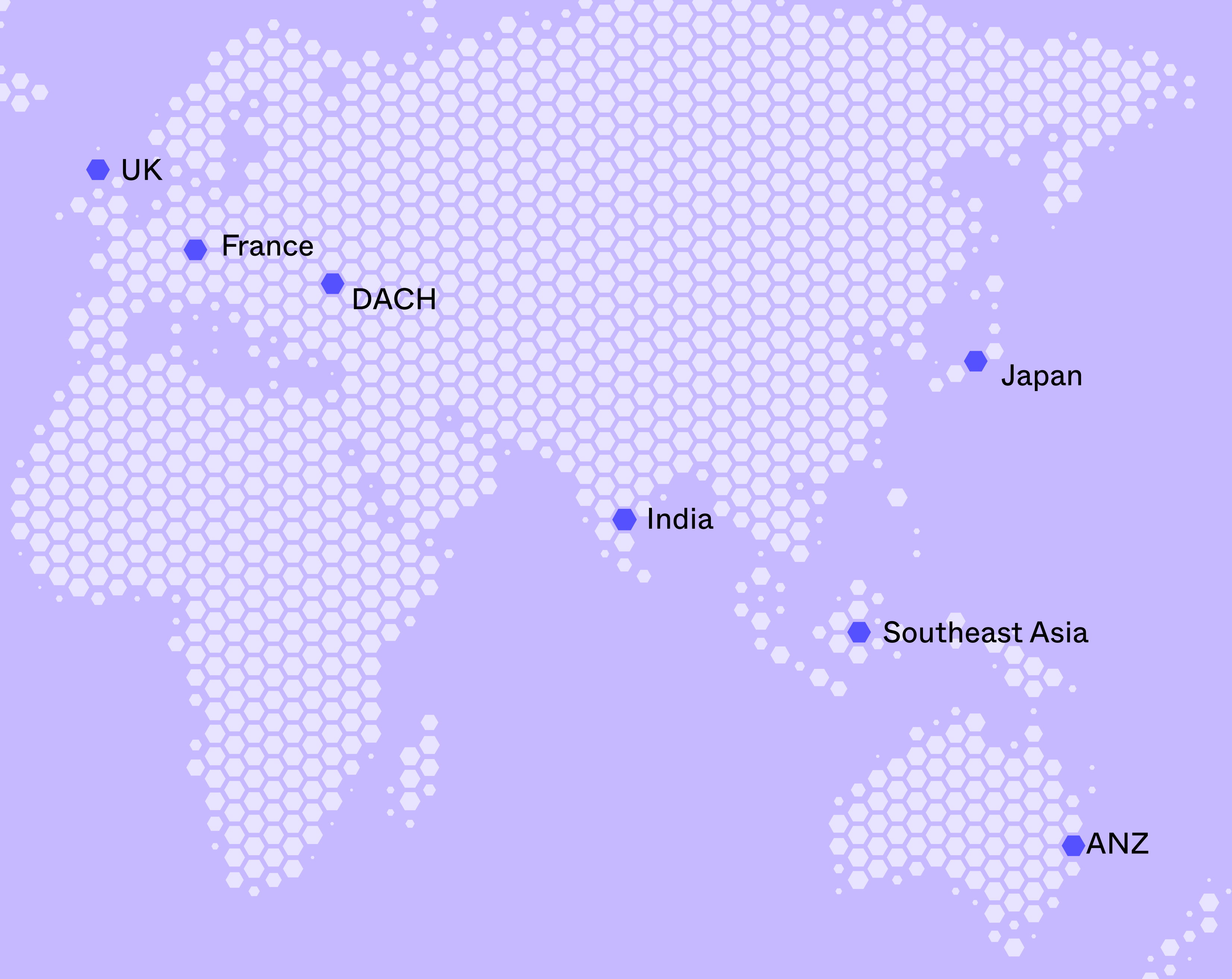
Their influence has grown exponentially and their impact is more visible. This transformation is a testament to the strides and triumphs in the product design industry.

The 2023 State of the Designer report dives into these transformations, focusing on the rise of remote work and collaboration, and the changing dynamics between product designers and their organisations.

## A global tapestry of insights

While we continuously seek insights from around the globe, this report specifically shines a spotlight on perspectives from the Europe and Asia Pacific regions, offering a unique panoramic view of the design landscape.

This report is enriched by the contributions from 470 design professionals from—the United Kingdom (100), France (100), Germany, Austria and Switzerland, collectively known as DACH (100), Japan (25), India (25), Southeast Asia (60), and Australia and New Zealand (60).



## Executive Summary

### Collaboration: a designer's driving force

A key finding of this report is the rising importance of collaborative product design. Despite the challenges of remote work, a new era of product design is emerging, one that thrives on collaboration.

The report reveals an exciting transformation: the once solitary designer is becoming a team player, embracing group sessions to design products collectively more than ever before.

But that's not all. Amidst the backdrop of remote work, designers are finding a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction. They are not just creating—they're building stronger, more collaborative relationships with their teammates. And guess what? They're happier for it.

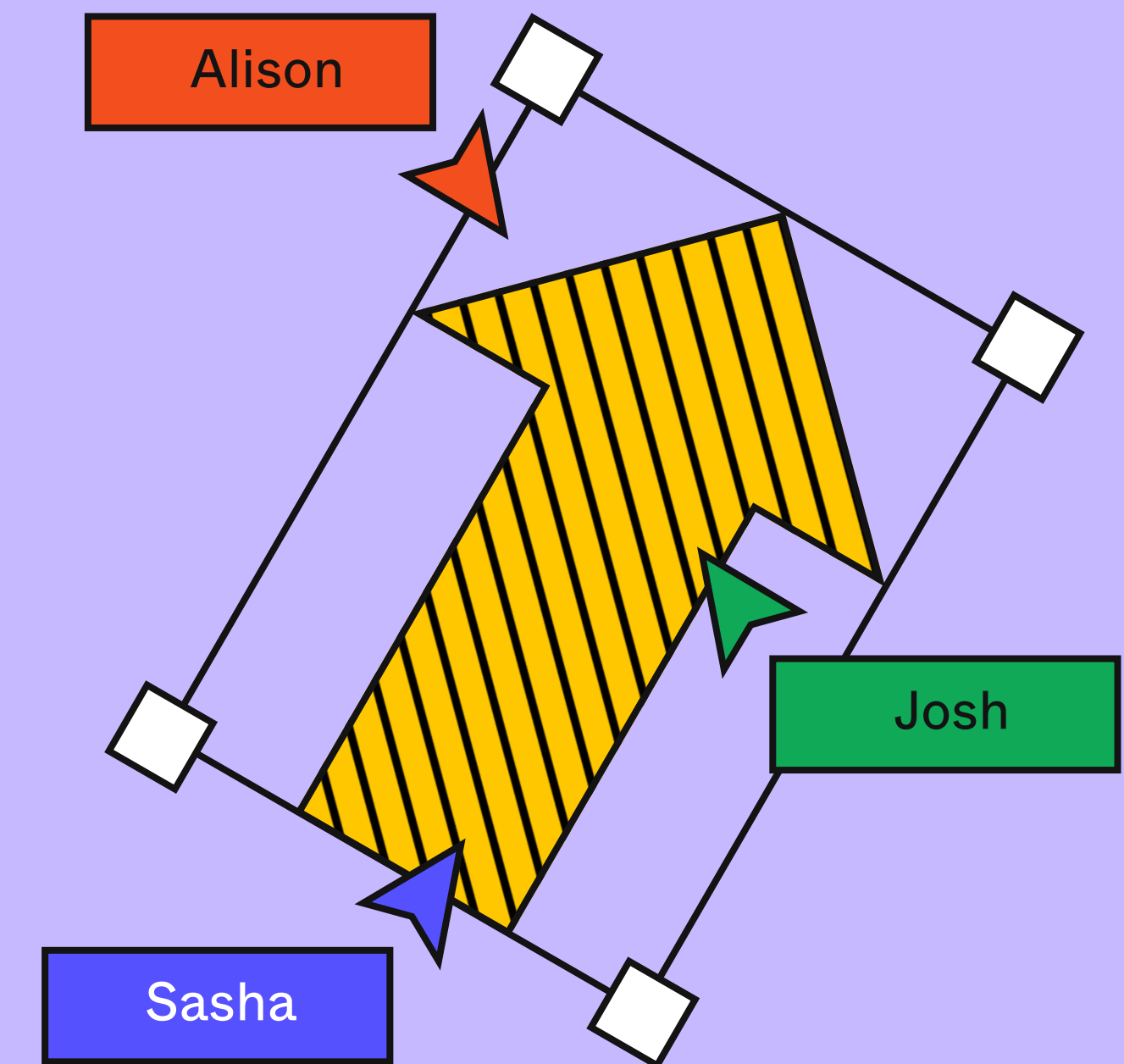
### Design + business: a powerful partnership

Designers who have a good grip on the business side of things often find their jobs more enjoyable. But let's be clear—it's a give and take.

Businesses should also appreciate the value of design, and create an environment where designers can confidently display their strategic prowess.

When this mutual respect exists, it creates a dynamic balance—designers feel acknowledged, listened to, and appreciated. However, without this synergy, even the most business-savvy designers may feel disconnected.

**By fostering an environment that encourages collaboration, values meaningful work, and appreciates the strategic contributions of design, businesses can ensure their design teams thrive and contribute to superior products.**



# Introduction

**In a world where digital experiences are pivotal, the role of product designer has never been more crucial. They're not just making impressive products—they're the guardians of the primary customer interface and creators of profound brand experiences.**

They're speeding up time-to-market, sparking innovation, and building a culture that encourages creativity from everyone.

But here's the thing—design is more than just creating great products.

Designers [crave a growth-oriented environment](#), surrounded by industry veterans and peers.

The rise of remote work, new tools, and workflows have given the design landscape a serious makeover.

Ninety-five percent of designers are working from home at least partially. A significant majority (75%) are working remotely more often than before.

Improved digital tools have led to increased use of video meetings (85%), digital whiteboarding (70%), and collaborative design tools (76%).

So, with all these changes, are product designers truly in a good place? Let's find out.



**of designers are working from home, at least partially**



# Remote work: a new chapter for designers

Here's a dilemma that has been stirring the professional world lately: employees and employers sometimes have contrasting views about where work should happen.

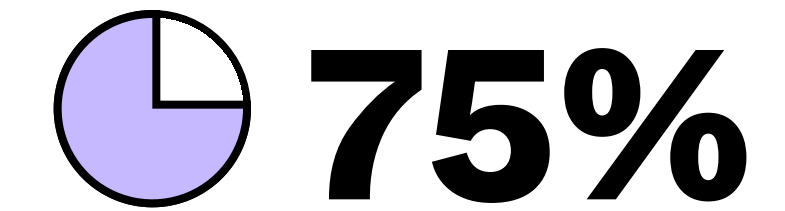
Yet, when we peel the layers back, we realise that what truly fuels a company's success isn't the location—it's about assembling the best possible team and nurturing collaborative relationships.

In the design world, a significant shift towards flexible, hybrid work styles is evident. A notable 75% of designers have been working remotely more often, with Europe leading—UK at 81%, France at 83%, and DACH at 75%.

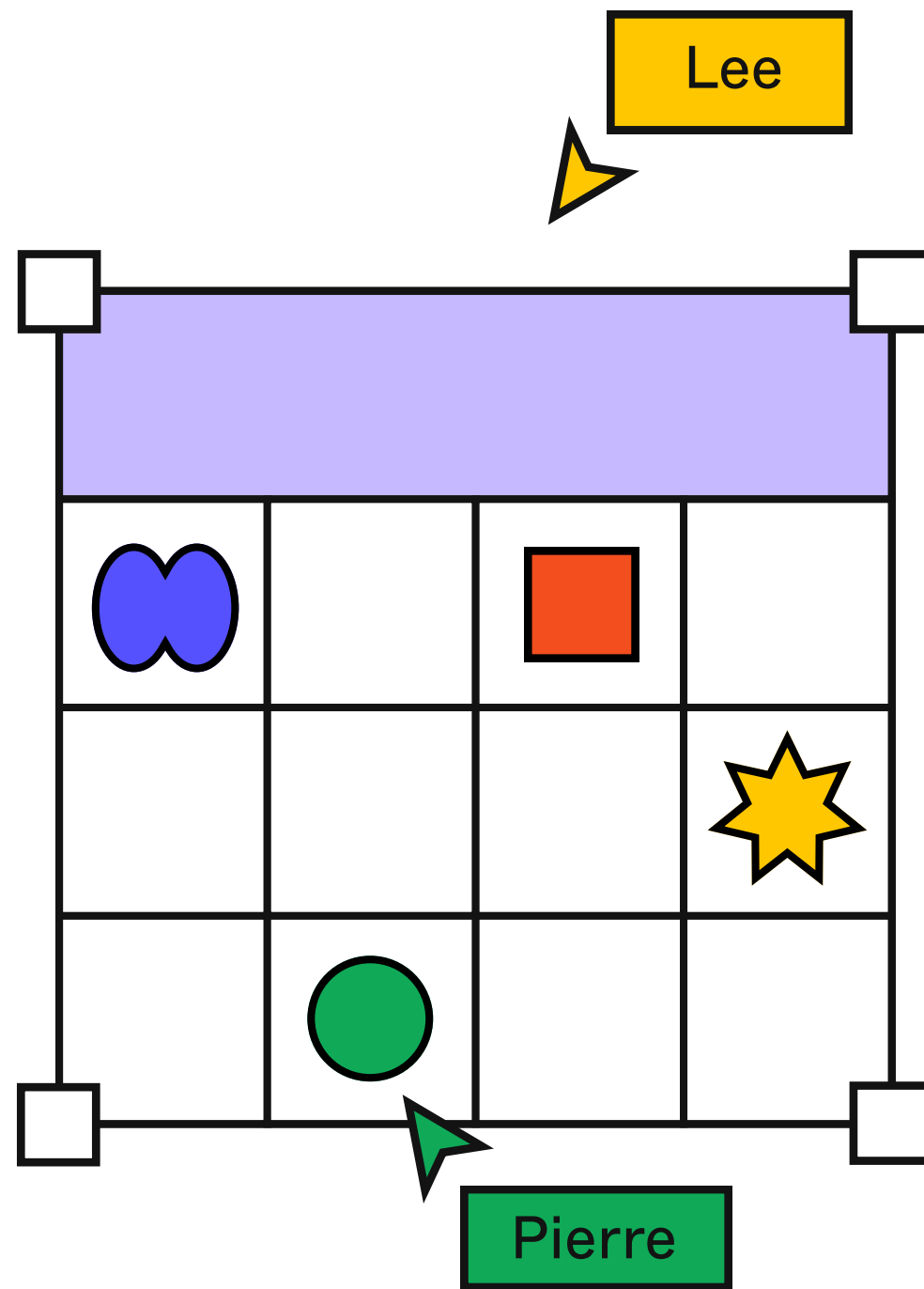
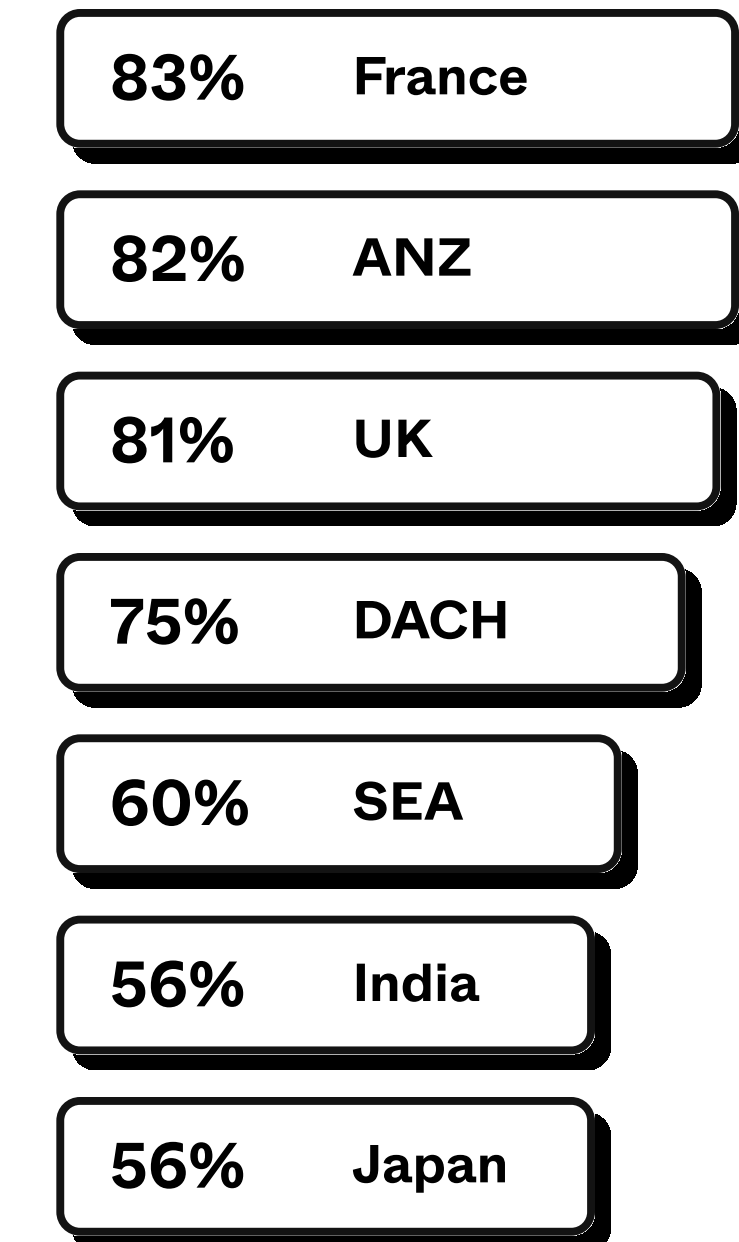
The trend extends to the Asia Pacific region as well, with ANZ reporting a high of 82% and SEA at 60%.

However, the shift isn't as noticeable in other parts of the world, with lower rates in India and Japan (56%). And while 51% of designers report that their employers encourage them to work where they feel most productive, a significant 36% are still encouraged to work more from the office.

Despite these differences, 73% feel they have more control over their work location than three years ago.



of designers have been working remotely more often



### So, what's the big takeaway?

Whether work is happening within the office walls or across digital platforms, the key lies in leveraging suitable tools, establishing productive rituals, and cultivating a culture that cherishes collaboration.

As Daniel Wert from Wert and Co. shared in our [2022 Design Hiring Report](#), “What people want most is to work with people they can learn from and grow with.”

Relationships form the core of great collaboration practices. The mushy, invisible work of rapport, alignment, reflection, and role clarity differentiates the most high-performing teams.

It's not necessarily about being physically present in an office. It's about finding ways to work effectively and collaboratively, regardless of location.

This notion has become even more relevant to a larger number of teams today. Most companies previously had distributed offices; now, the distribution has simply widened.

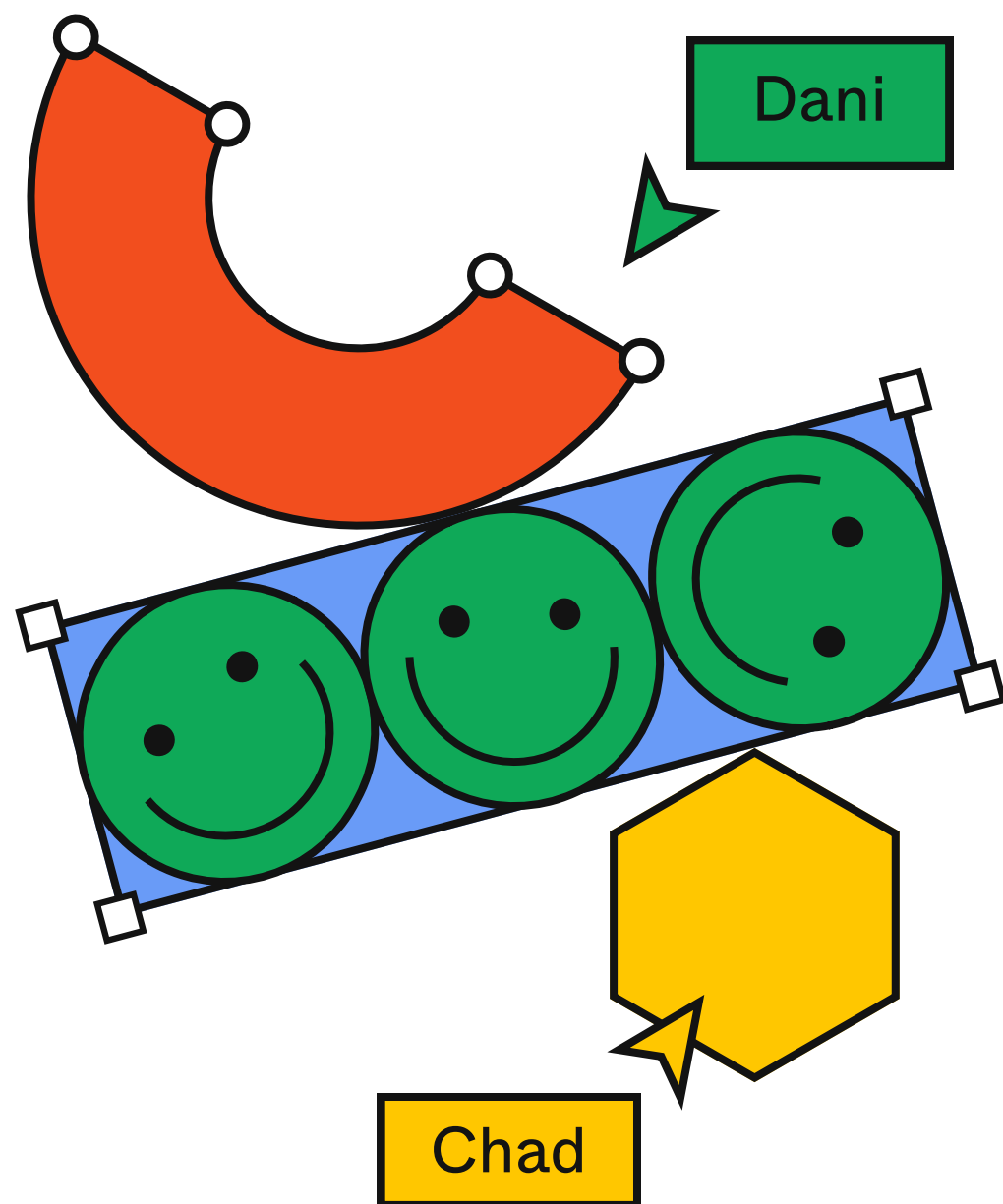
The challenge? Making this work effectively for everyone involved. Remote work ushers in a new era for the design profession, calling for adaptability, innovation, and resilience.

**The key is to leverage this new dynamic to foster productivity and collaboration. A senior UX design manager from a Figma-commissioned [Forrester study](#) noted, “Harnessing asynchronous or remote participation to gather things into one place has helped a lot.”**



of designers feel they have more control over their work location than three years ago

# Remote work and the rise of collaborative design



When the world made a massive shift to remote work, it was easy to assume that this physical separation would put a damper on collaboration between designers.

But our data tells a different story. In this new reality, designers are just as likely to band together, with 53% using group meetings to design together more often.

A Forrester study commissioned by Figma showed that the most successful teams consistently collaborate with teams outside of design.

## So, how has this cross-departmental collaboration been impacted by different work styles?

Designers who consider themselves more effective at collaborating aren't relying significantly more on in-person meetings or digital tools like video meetings, digital whiteboards, or collaborative design tools than the average designer or those who feel less effective at collaboration.



of designers are using group meetings to design together more often

In essence, effective collaboration isn't about the tools used or where the work is done. It's all about believing in the quality of the work.

**So, whether you're a team of one or a hundred, whether you're in the heart of the city or the comfort of your home, remember this: great design can happen anywhere, as long as collaborative magic enables teams to [create, make, and build together.](#)**

# The evolution of design tools: a catalyst for change?

The last three years have been marked by significant transformations in design tools, driven by a shift to hybrid work. And from this bustling bazaar of apps, a few champions have emerged—video meetings, collaborative design tools, and digital whiteboards.

Why? Because they enable the magic of live collaboration and connection, helping to prevent data loss and forgotten tasks.

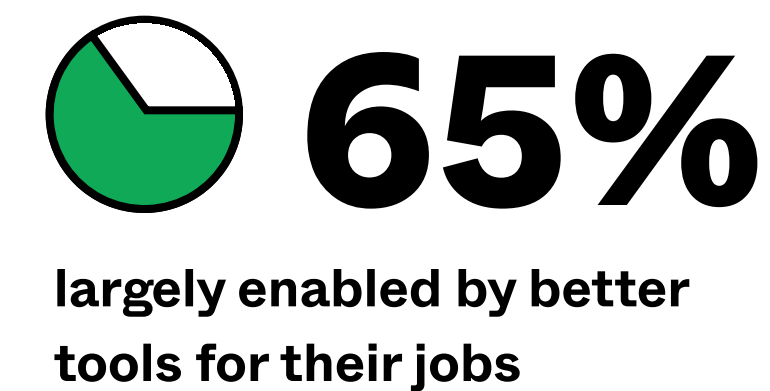
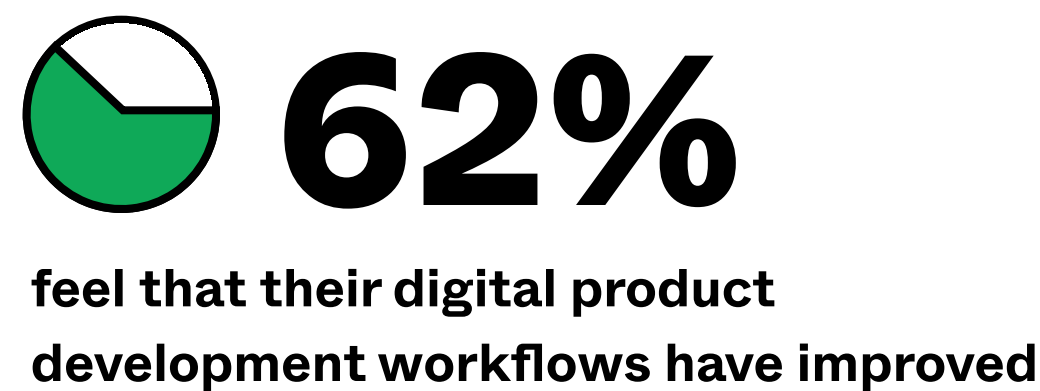
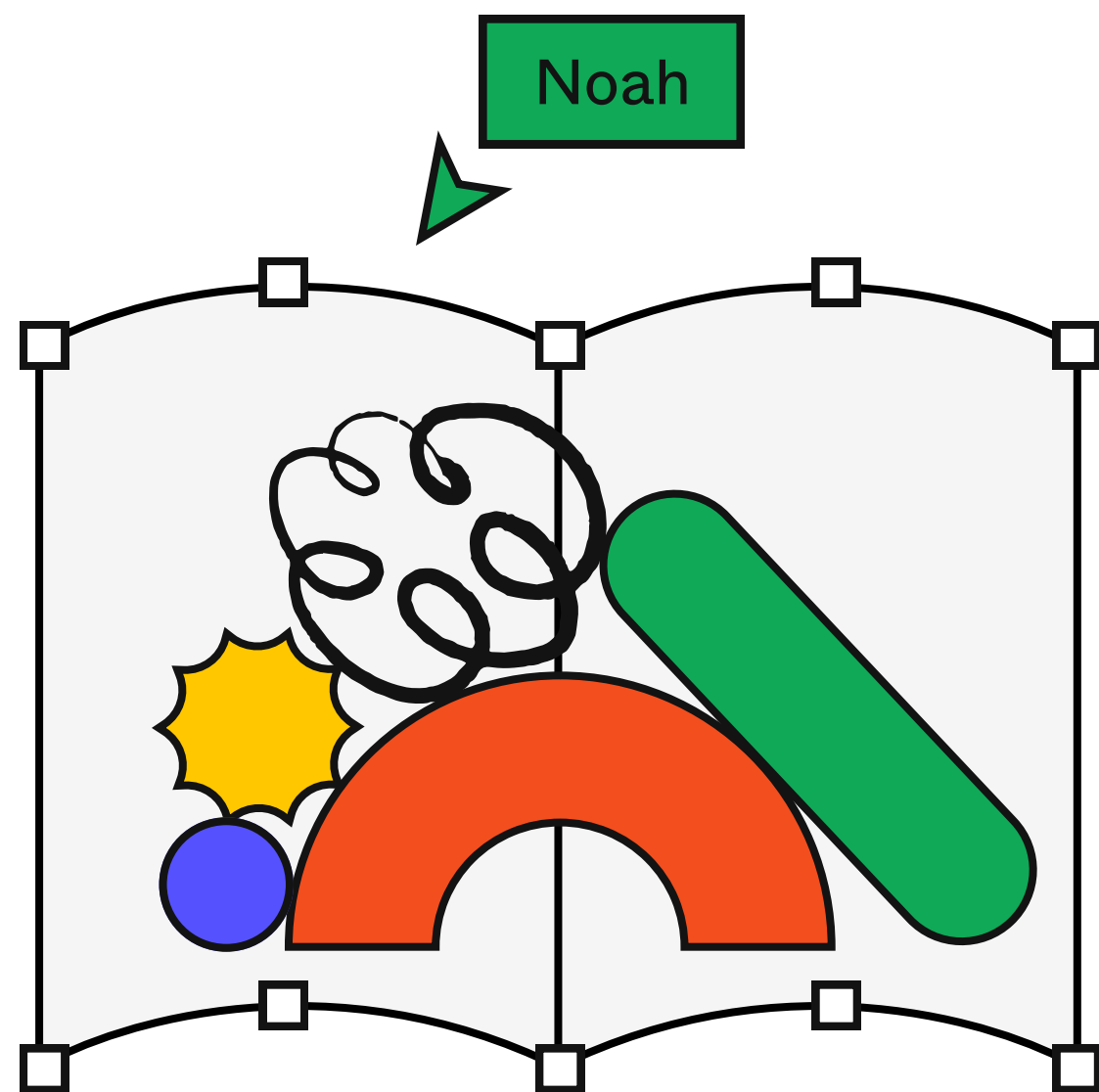
However, a Figma-commissioned study from [Forrester](#) points to a common hurdle: cross-team alignment. More often than not, teams find themselves juggling multiple, siloed systems, resulting in duplicated effort. And valuable customer insights can slip through the cracks.

So it's promising that 62% of designers feel that their digital product development workflows have improved, largely enabled by better tools for their jobs (65%).

But having the right tools isn't enough. Using them effectively is where the real magic happens.

For instance, while many designers are taking advantage of whiteboarding tools, using them effectively demands creativity, [strategic thinking, and careful execution](#).

**While the evolving landscape of design tools offers significant promise for enhancing workflows and productivity, these tools aren't a cure-all for design challenges. The key lies in thoughtful implementation, cross-team alignment, and continuous learning.**





# Powering up collaboration in design teams

In the era of hybrid work, one word stands out: collaboration. And we've discovered that a specific type of collaboration is the key.

Our data reveals that designers who frequently collaborate in group meetings are not only more productive, but also happier.

## The collaboration factor:

- Designers who collaborate effectively with their teams prioritise group meetings for design.
- Among these effective collaborators, 61% use group meetings more now than pre-pandemic.
- Usage of group design meetings also drove more effective collaboration with Product Management.  
41% of those who had more group meetings also found they were more effective in collaborating with their Product Management peers

## So, what's the takeaway from all this data?

It's simple—collaboration is crucial! Prioritising group meetings to understand problems and design solutions together can enhance effectiveness across teams and organisations.

This doesn't just lead to better work, it leads to happier designers too.



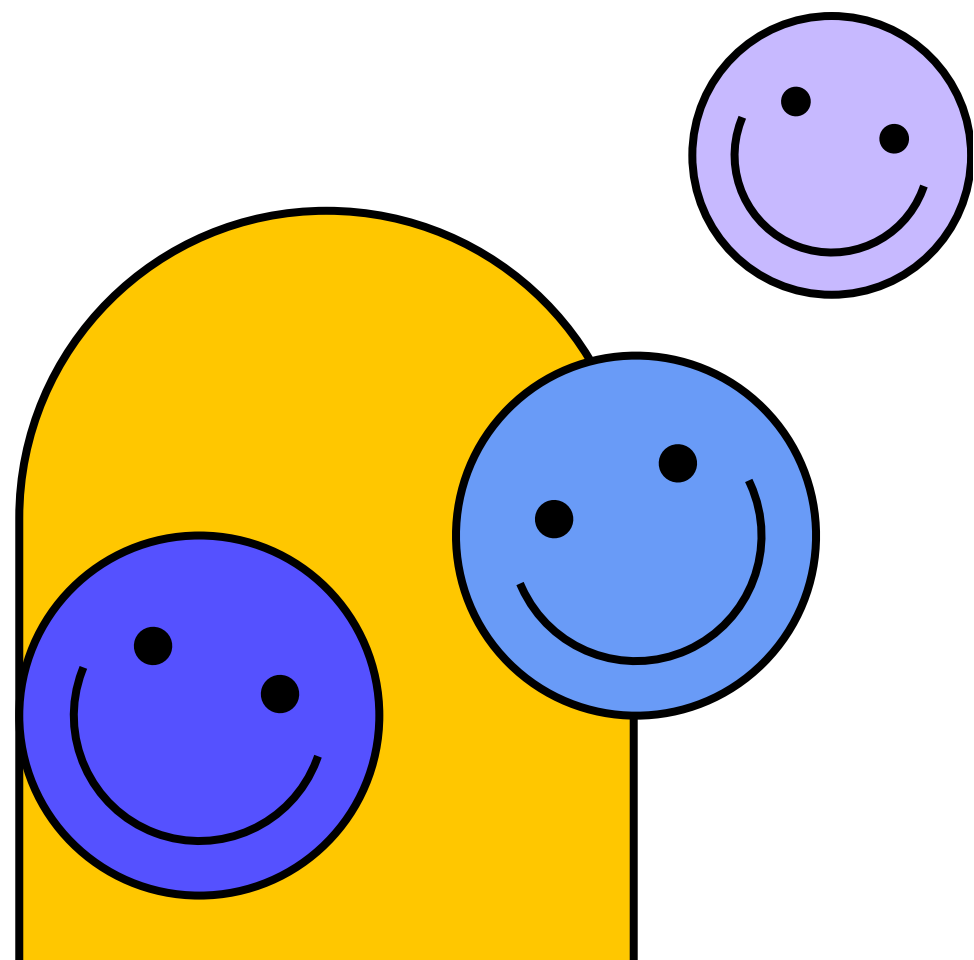
of effective collaborators use group meetings more than pre-pandemic



feel better about the design profession



feel worse



### The happiness quotient:

- An impressive 69% of designers report being more satisfied than they were pre-pandemic.
- This figure rises to 82% for individual contributors (ICs) and ranges from 61–68% for managers and above.
- Furthermore, 62% believe they now have improved employment options, and 51% feel better about the design profession, only 11% feel worse.

### However, alongside these promising statistics, there's a growing sense of distance.

Designers are more likely to feel more distant, rather than closer, to their co-workers.

Forty-five percent of those who feel more distant are having far fewer in-person meetings compared to pre-pandemic. They're also holding fewer group meetings to design together (26%).

Our findings highlight an essential truth: while remote work has brought about many positive changes, it has also introduced new challenges.

As one designer lamented, “I miss sitting down and discussing things with colleagues from other departments and getting some unexpected insights in the process.”

### So, how can we address this?

Building moments where work is secondary can foster stronger relationships between colleagues.

In essence, the goal is to replicate the casual, personal interactions of an in-office environment, such as shared laughs and compliments.

The reality is that remote work makes connecting harder. The old ways of connecting aren't available to many teams anymore, and it's unlikely that we'll fully revert back to the traditional in-office model.

### However, by acknowledging and addressing these challenges, we can strive to make remote work *work*—not just in terms of productivity but also in terms of happiness and fulfilment.



of designers who feel more distant are having fewer in-person meetings



are also having fewer group meetings to design together

# The power of collaboration in driving high-quality design

In the world of design, nothing compares to the magic that happens when ideas come to life and concepts coalesce into high-quality, effective products.

More than half of designers (53%) are now turning to group meetings to brainstorm and design together more often, showing a shift in the industry dynamics.

Fifty-one percent of designers who design together more often feel they are creating higher quality products, while 38% say they are achieving a quicker time to market.

However, we can't ignore the importance of other factors that contribute to product quality and efficiency. A decline in focus can negatively impact the quality of products and experiences.

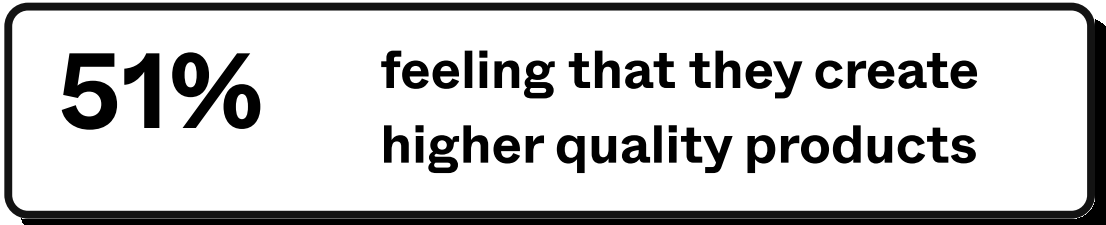
Designers who report a decrease in their ability to build high-quality products often also report worsening focus (53%) and poorer collaboration (63%).

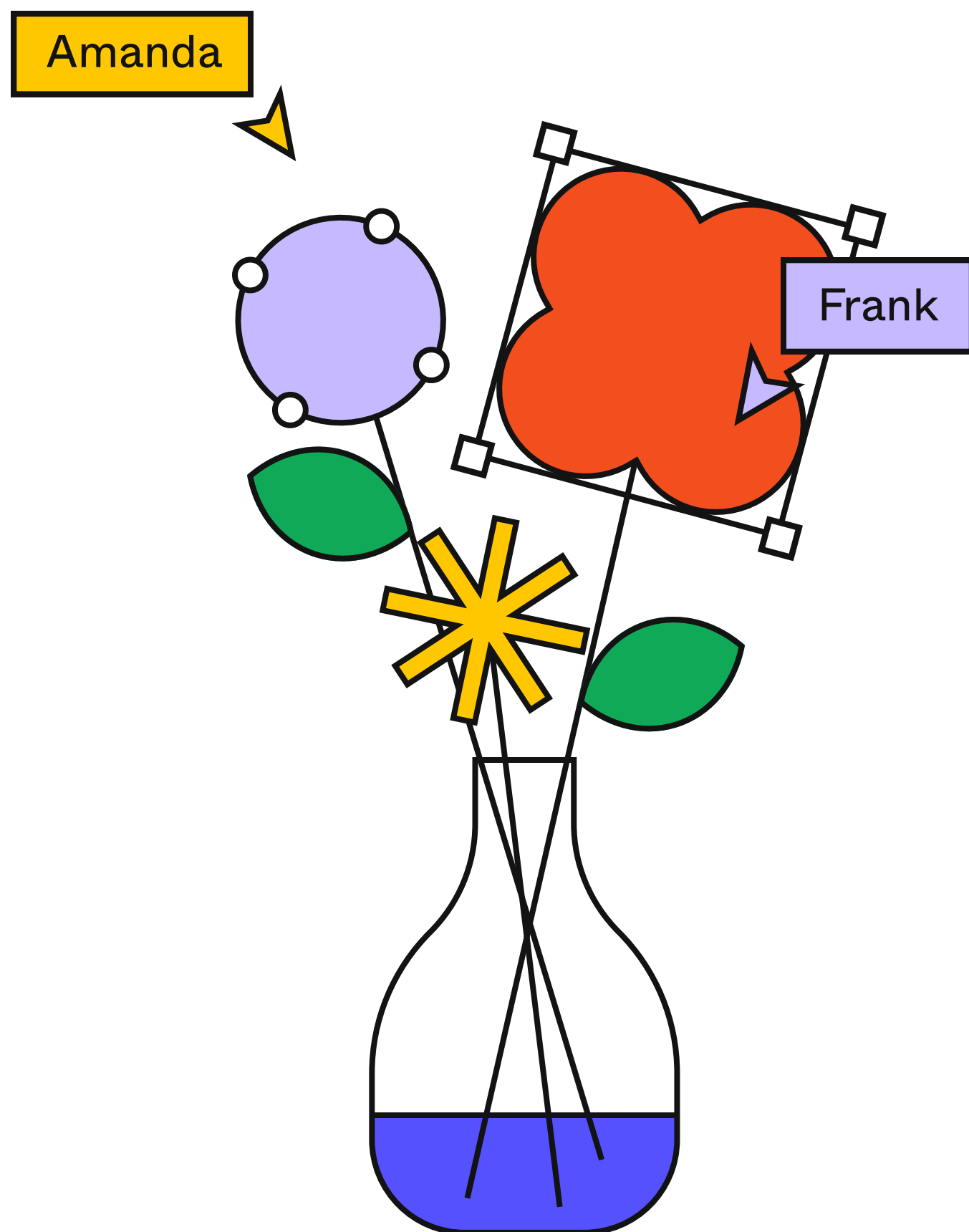
The repercussions extend to their relationships with their design team, Product Management, and other business representatives.



of designers are turning to group meetings to brainstorm and design together more often

Which led to:





## A designer's canvas: the evolving dynamics of creativity and collaboration

Yet, not all experiences are universal. What works for one designer might not work for another. Some designers thrive with constant communication, while others prefer upfront alignment and more independent work time.

This diversity shows the importance of flexible and adaptable work practices that cater to a designer's needs and preferences.

While the shift to remote work has brought about many changes, our understanding of its impacts on the design profession is still evolving.

What's clear, however, is that providing designers with platforms to connect and collaborate is essential. Not only does this foster high-quality work, but it also creates opportunities for the personal growth that designers seek.

As we continue to navigate this new landscape, it will be crucial to foster environments that support effective collaboration.

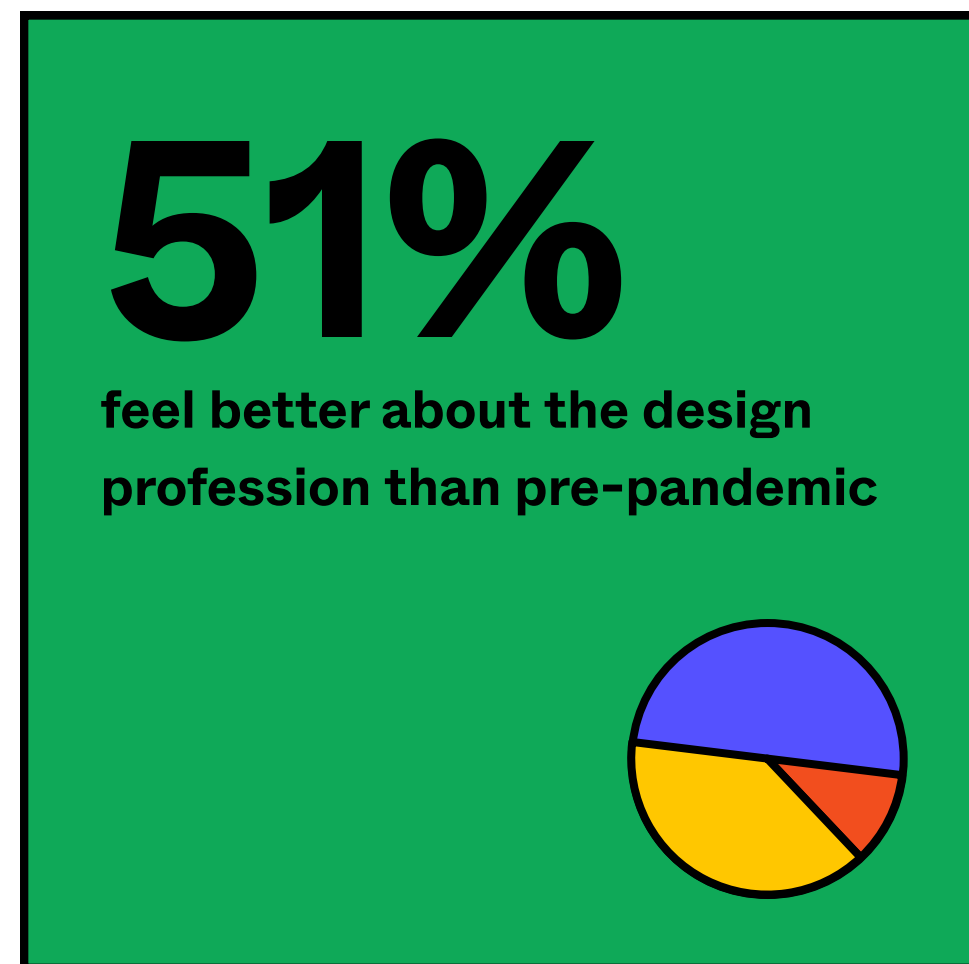
Ultimately, the state of the designer isn't a fixed entity but an evolving work in progress, continually shaped by the changing dynamics of our world.

**And as we forge ahead, one thing remains certain: the product design profession isn't just about creating beautiful, effective products. It's about building meaningful connections, fostering creativity, and making a lasting impact.**

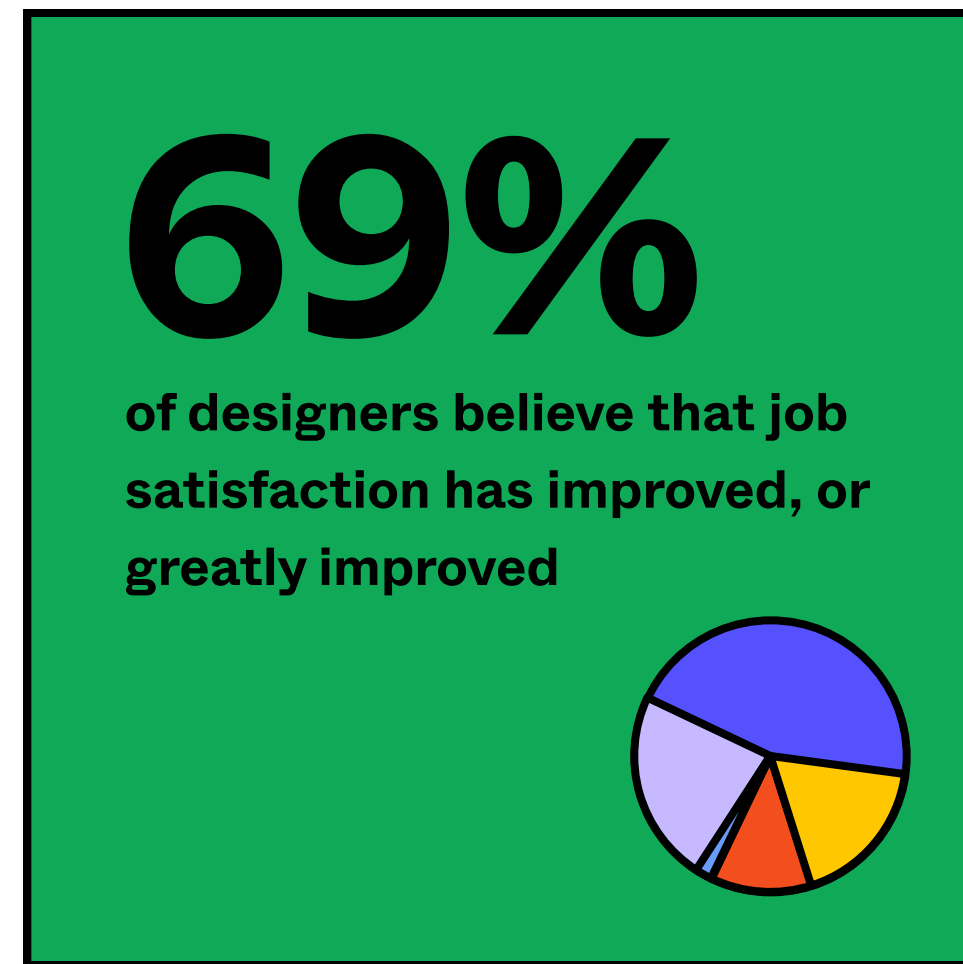
# Key takeaways, continued

## THE HAPPINESS QUOTENT

Designers are happier than before.



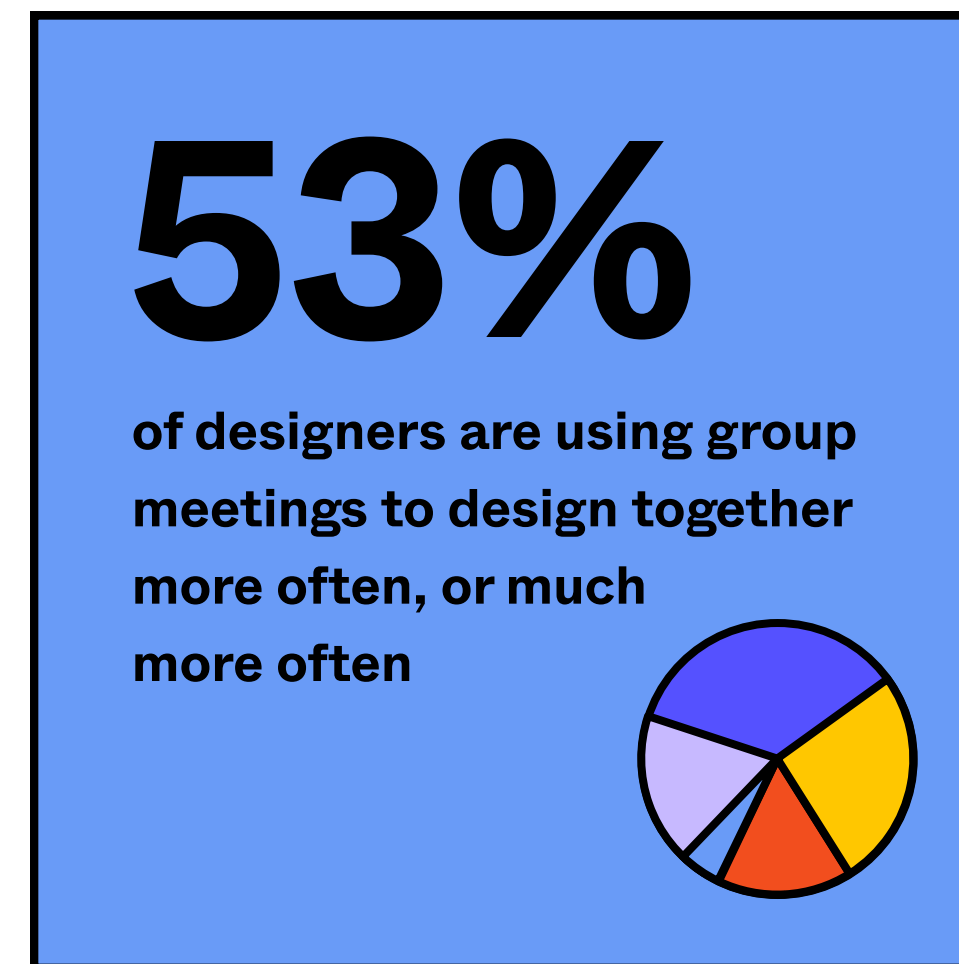
- **51%** feel better
- **39%** feel about the same
- **11%** feel worse



- **23%** greatly improved
- **46%** improved
- **18%** about the same
- **12%** declined
- **1%** greatly declined

## THE COLLABORATION FACTOR

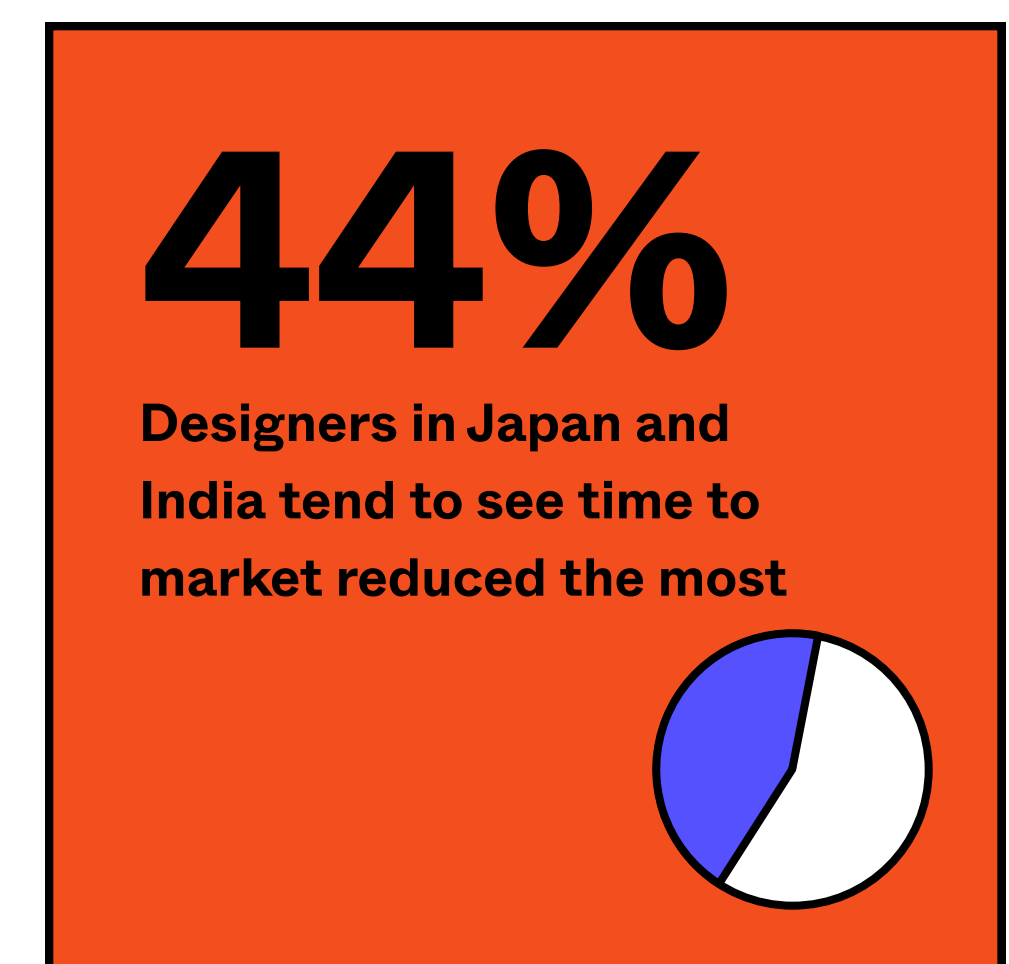
Designers are using group meetings to design together more often.



- **21%** much more often
- **32%** more often
- **26%** about the same
- **16%** less
- **5%** far less

## WORK PERFORMANCE

Designers deliver quality digital products more efficiently.



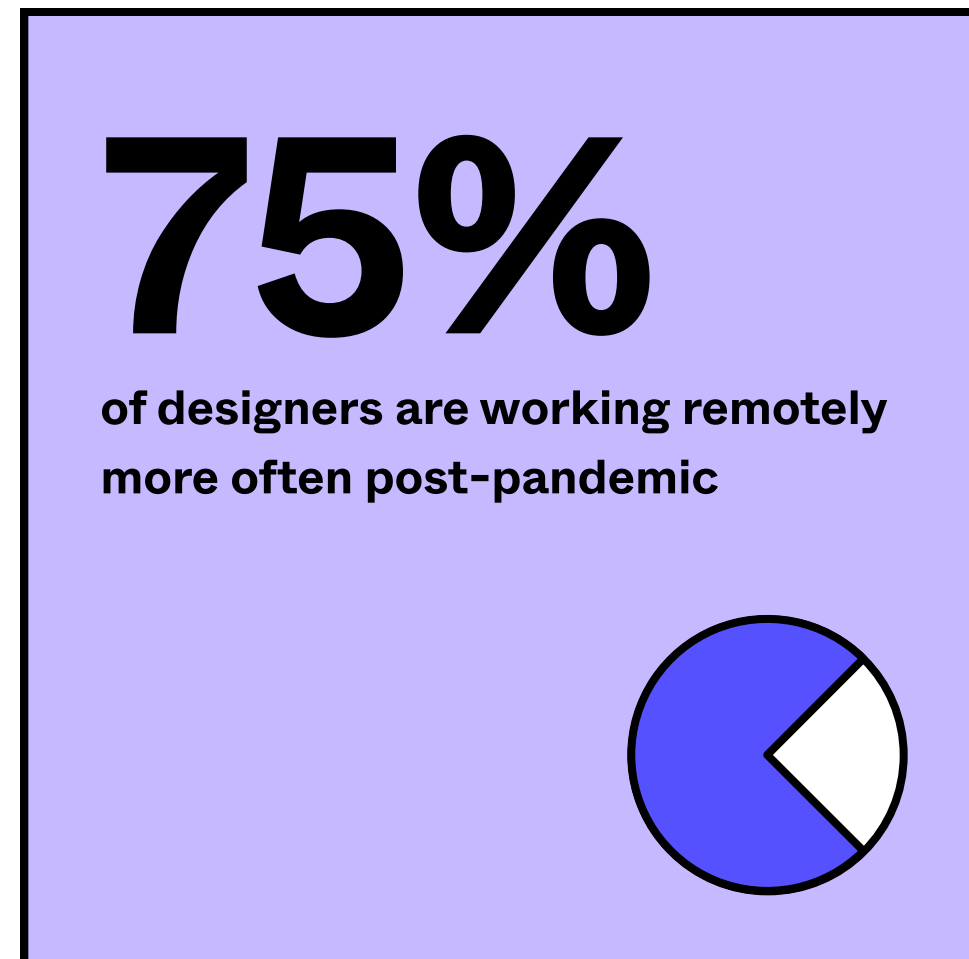
- **23%** Southeast Asian designers see it reduced the least



# Key takeaways

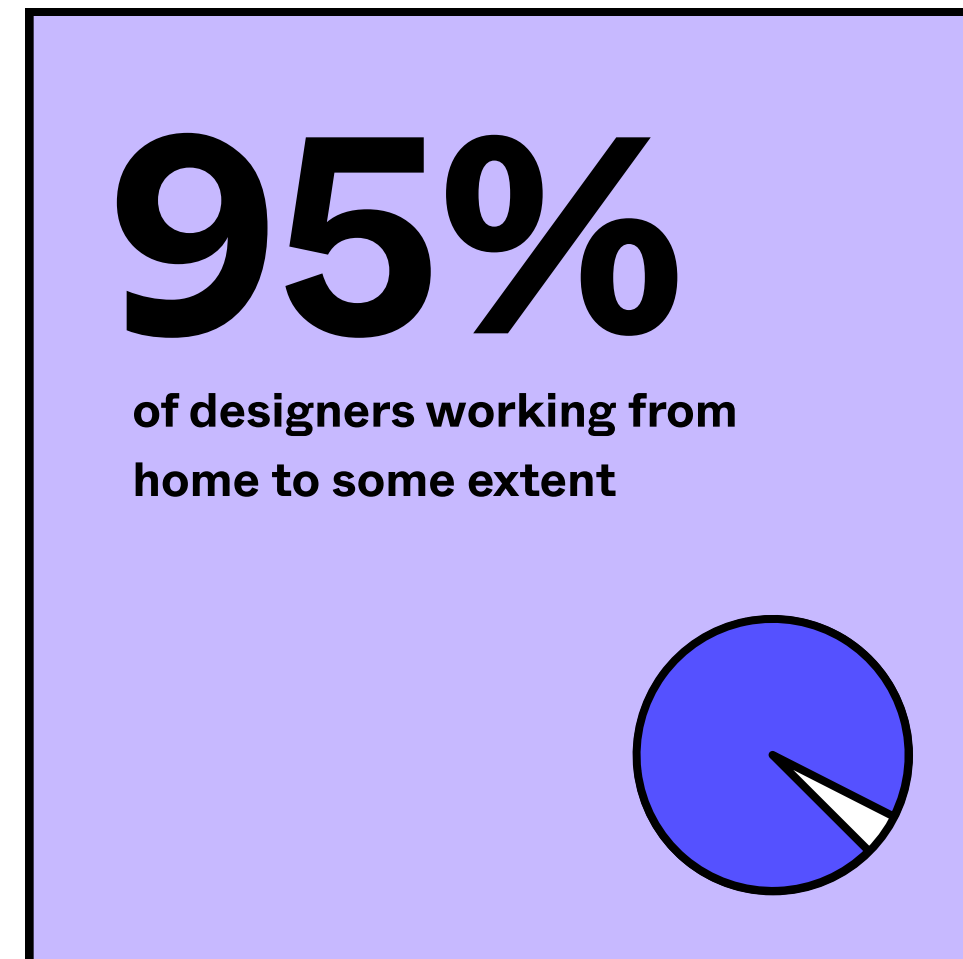
## PREVALENCE OF REMOTE WORK

Designers are working remotely more.



**80-82%**

Europe and ANZ designers are working remotely more often



**98-100%**

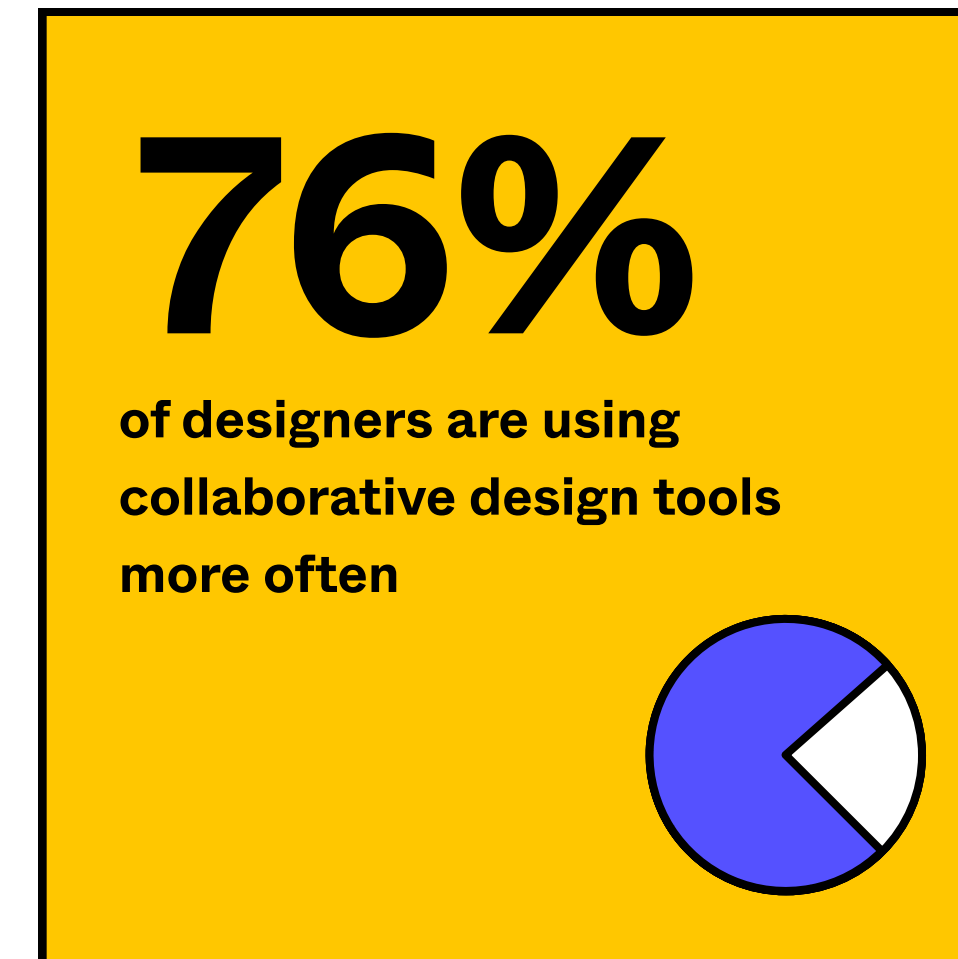
UK, Germany, and ANZ are working from home at least some of the time

**83%**

Southeast Asia are working from home the least

## ADOPTION OF DIGITAL TOOLS

Designers are using digital tools more.



**52%**

Southeast Asia had the least dramatic rise in video meeting adoption

**80%**

India (81%) and DACH (79%) had the most dramatic rise in whiteboarding adoption



Figma