



# The definitive guide to salaries and benefits at small firms

## This report is based on responses from small firms:

- That are legally structured as a sole proprietorship, or
- Have fewer than three architectural staff employees.



The survey received responses from

**489 FIRMS,**  
REPORTING A TOTAL OF

**1,319** FULL-TIME STAFF.



REPORTED THAN IN  
**2021**

**14** new compensation tables included this year,  
for a total of **38**, including all nine census regions of the country.

## Pay practices

Employee salaries at small architecture firms increased across the board from **2021** to **2023**, as firms emerged from the pandemic-induced downturn of 2020 and 2021.



SALARIES INCREASED BY

**12%** for solo architects,

**8%** for staff architects

**10%** for emerging architectural professionals.

Nearly two thirds of small firms (65%) reported that they typically offered a salary increase to architecture staff when an unlicensed employee became registered in 2023.

Bonuses increased across the board at small firms in 2022 from the pandemic baseline in 2020.

**77%** of small firms with five or more employees offered discretionary annual bonuses

**46%** offered performance bonuses

## Quality of life benefits

More than half of firms with at least two employees reported offering employees licensure support, including:

**84%**  
of small firms

with

**5**  
or more employees

The share of firms with two employees offering employee support in many categories increased significantly from 2021, most notably in offering:

**transparent career path opportunities** increased from

**16%** to **36%**

**transparent promotion and compensation practices** increased from

**14%** to **27%**

and an **employee retention plan** increased from

**1%** to **9%**





Overall, nearly one quarter of small firms reported hiring architecture students for part-time work in 2022, an increase from 19% that reported the same in 2020.

This includes nearly half of small firms with five or more employees

**47%** up from 42% in 2020.

Small firms reported increased support for both college/university tuition and student loan repayment, although the share offering remains small overall:



**4%**

of small firms with three or four employees and

**5%**

with five or more employees offered college/university tuition support in 2022 (versus 0% and 2%, respectively, in 2020), and

**2%**

of small firms with five or more employees offered student loan repayment in 2022, versus 0% in 2020.

While just 3% of small firms overall reported offering Juneteenth as a paid holiday in 2020, 14% offered it in 2022.

## Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Small firms reported implementing a variety of tools to increase equity and enhance employee culture.

More than half of small firms

**51%**

reported hiring and **promoting employees with diverse backgrounds** in 2022.

In addition, nearly one in five small firms with five or more employees

**19%**

indicated that they **hired diverse candidates** across all leadership roles in 2022.



NEARLY

**1 IN 10**

small firms of all sizes indicated that they applied the AIA's Guides for Equitable Practice in 2022.

# Employee benefits

**Small firms continued to contribute to employee professional development in a variety of ways in 2022, with small firms with five or more employees generally offering the most **robust benefits**.**



At least half of small firms, regardless of size, reported contributing towards AIA membership dues and meetings, seminars, and workshops for their employees in 2022.

**While the overall share of small firms offering their employees any type of remote work was unchanged from 2020 at 80%, fewer small firms with three or more employees reported offering remote work in 2022.**

Overall, the average share of staff working remotely declined from **77%** IN 2020 TO **58%** IN 2022

While the share of small firms allowing staff to work remotely all/most days declined from 2020, there was an increase in the share of firms allowing employees to work remotely at least one day per week, a few days a month, and on an ad hoc basis.

