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.
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.