



Survey 2019

A snapshot of
our profession

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Introduction

Key findings:

£349 is the average day rate (up from £342)

Fewer copywriters feel optimistic about the year ahead

More copywriters are concerned about the impact of Brexit (25%)

30% is the gender pay gap for freelance copywriters

Although the pay gap has shrunk overall

Thanks for picking this up.

I hope you find something interesting inside, and perhaps some information that provides reassurance or inspiration to help with your own copywriting career.

This survey and our report are funded by our membership fees. Without your support, we wouldn't have the opportunity to shine a light on the reality of copywriting in 2019.

Please consider joining, either as an individual or as a company, so you can support our mission and enjoy the full benefits of membership. These include chances to learn from your peers, networking opportunities and marketing tools.

We were thrilled to get such a huge response to this survey, with 514 copywriters taking the time to respond. This is a big improvement on last year's tally of 420.

Thanks for all your support. We'll be back for more next year.

Leif Kendall

Director, ProCopywriters



**COPYWRITING
CONFERENCE**

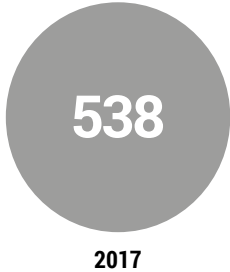
**11.10.2019
LONDON**

COPYWRITINGCONFERENCE.COM

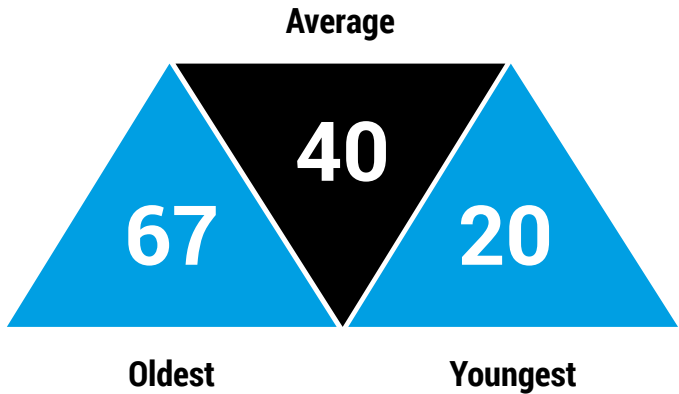
Respondents

Number

Thanks to a concerted effort (and lots of reminder emails) we managed to reverse our declining trend and get 514 responses – a big improvement on 2018. Our goal for next year is to involve more in-house and agency writers, which may be supported through our corporate memberships.



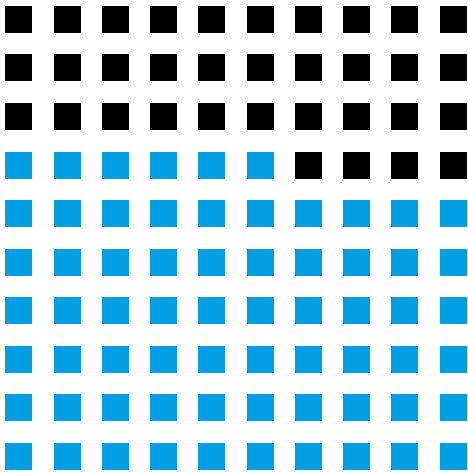
Age



	2018	2017
Oldest	70yrs	75yrs
Average	38yrs	41yrs
Youngest	21yrs	20yrs

Gender

Once again, women outnumber men, by a slightly increased margin. It's not surprising that more women respond than men, because this reflects the makeup of our membership.



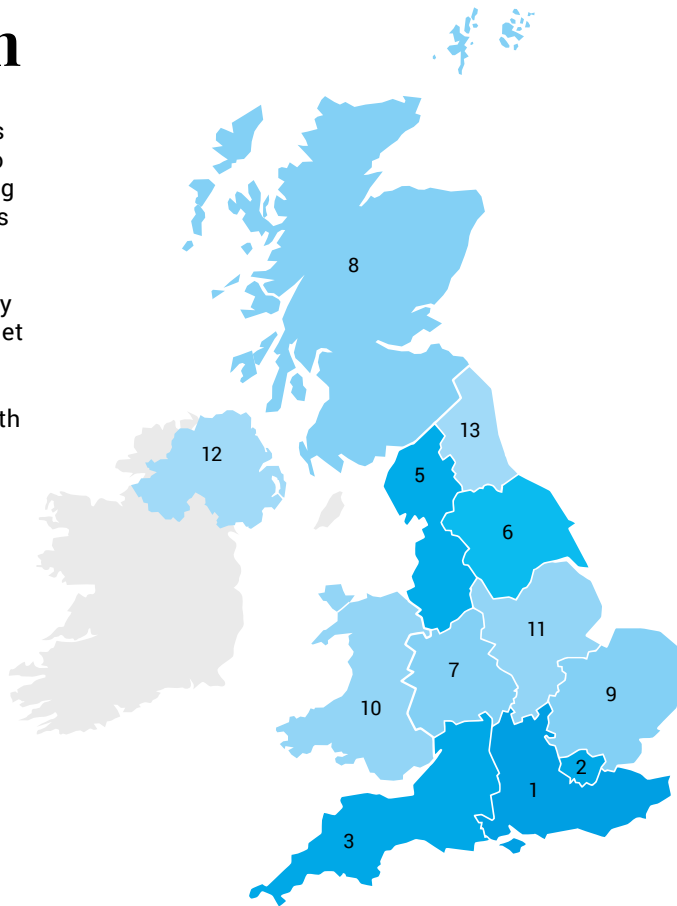
Men

Women

	2018	2017	
Men	34%	35%	41%
Women	66%	65%	58%

Location

The consistency of our results suggests that our approach to promoting, managing and reporting on this survey are broadly consistent each year. One noteworthy statistic is that we get more international respondents than writers from the north of England.



	2018	2017
1. South East	18%	18%
2. London	17%	18%
3. South West	13%	11%
4. International	12% ▲	9%
5. North West	10% ▼	9%
6. Yorkshire & Humber	8% ▼	6%
7. West Midlands	6%	5%
8. Scotland	4%	5%
9. East Anglia	4%	9%
10. Wales	2%	3%
11. East Midlands	3%	4%
12. N. Ireland	1%	0%
13. North East	1%	1%

Arrows indicate position change from last year

Working hours

Full-time

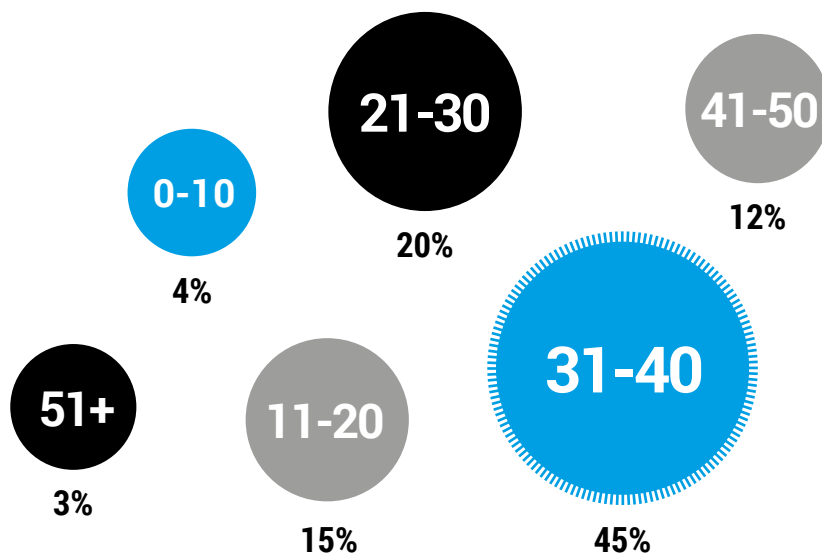
64%

36%

Part-time

	2018	2017
Full-time	70%	71%
Part-time	30%	29%

Hours worked per week

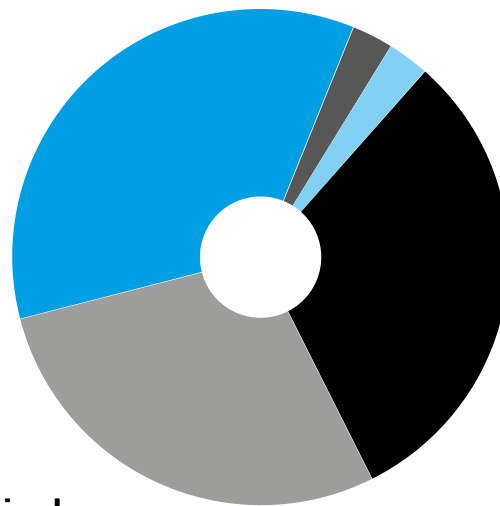


	2018
0-10	4%
11-20	13%
21-30	20%
31-40	45%
41-50	13%
51+	5%

(no data for 2017)

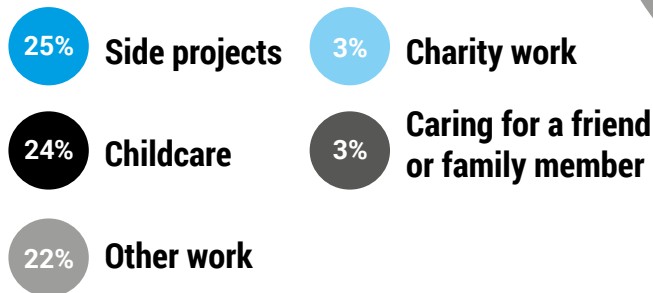
Other responsibilities

These results are broadly consistent with last year, with a slight increase in the number of copywriters who are also responsible for childcare, charity work or caring.



2018	
Side projects	26%
Childcare	23%
Other work	21%
Charity work	2%
Caring for a friend or family member	2%

(no data for 2017)



Level of experience



Total years' experience combined

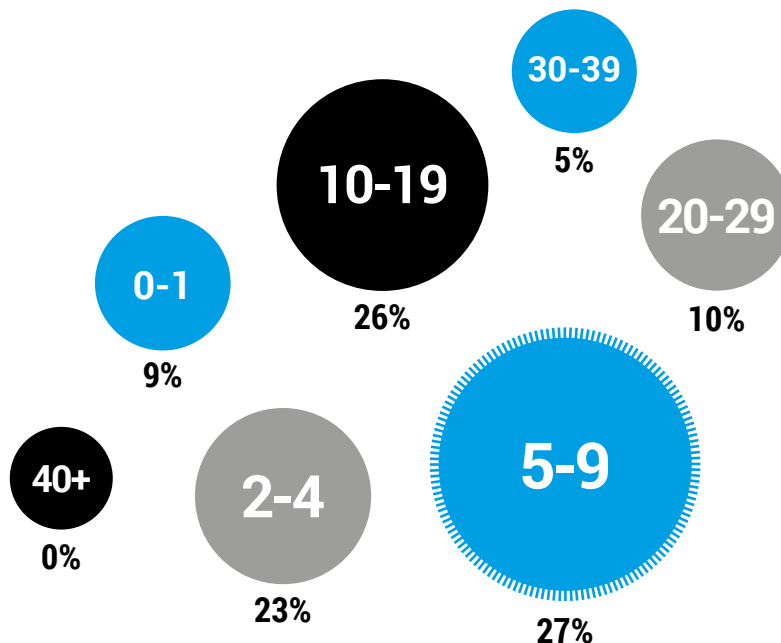


Average

	2018	2017
Total combined	3996yrs	5938yrs
Average	9.5yrs	11yrs

Years of experience

How long have our respondents been copywriting? We changed the way we display these results because the previous ranges were too large and obscured the major difference between someone with 1 year of experience and someone with 5 years under their belt.



2018	
0-5	41%
6-10	28%
11-20	22%
21-30	6%
31-40	3%

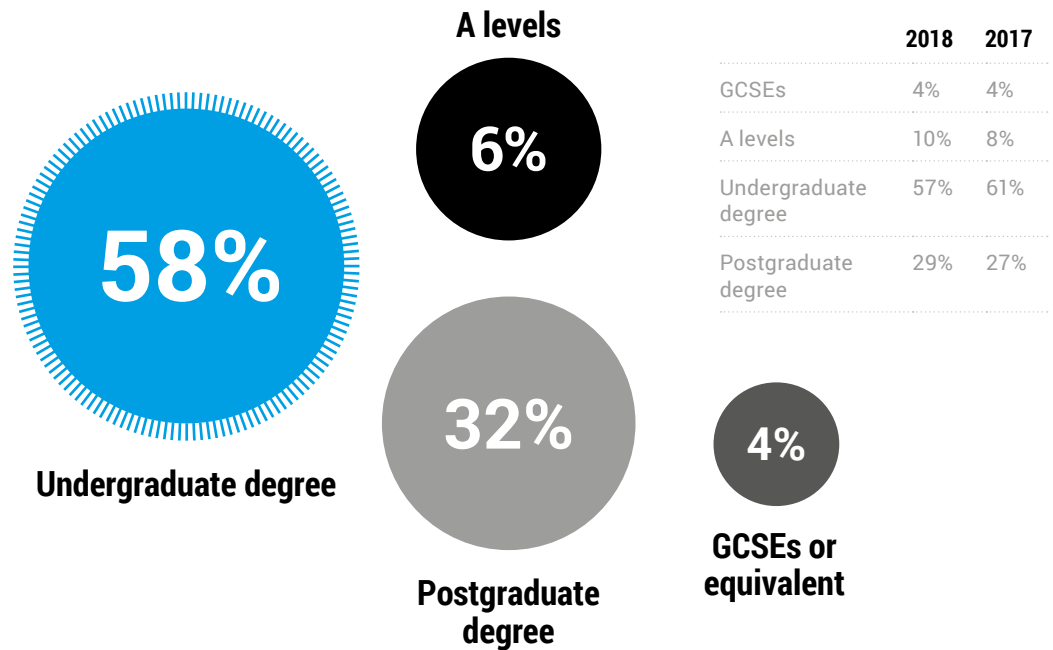
(no data for 2017)

Education and training

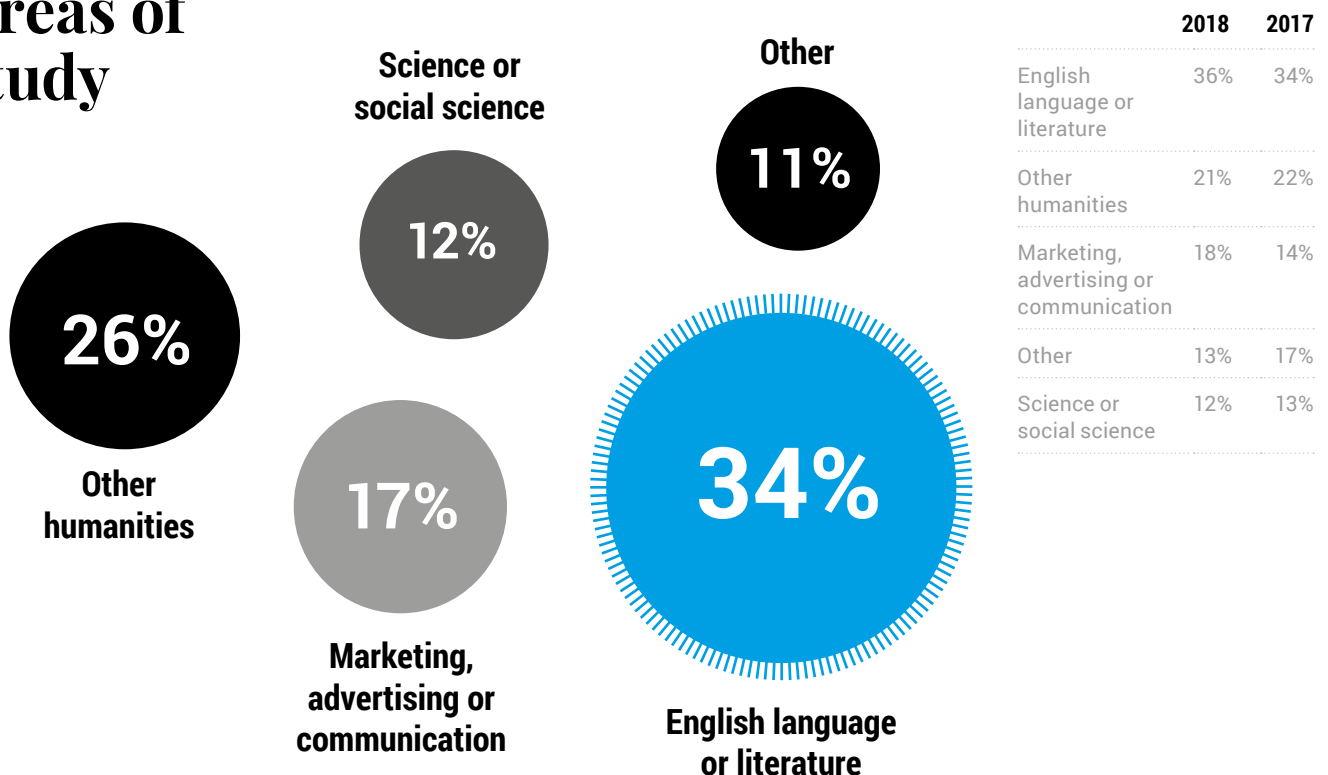
These statistics bear out the anecdotal evidence familiar to many copywriters. Ours is a profession that many people stumble into after falling out of something else, such as IT, law, medicine and finance.

The ProCopywriters webinar series is our first attempt to provide accessible learning and development to commercial writers. We plan to provide more online and face-to face courses in future.

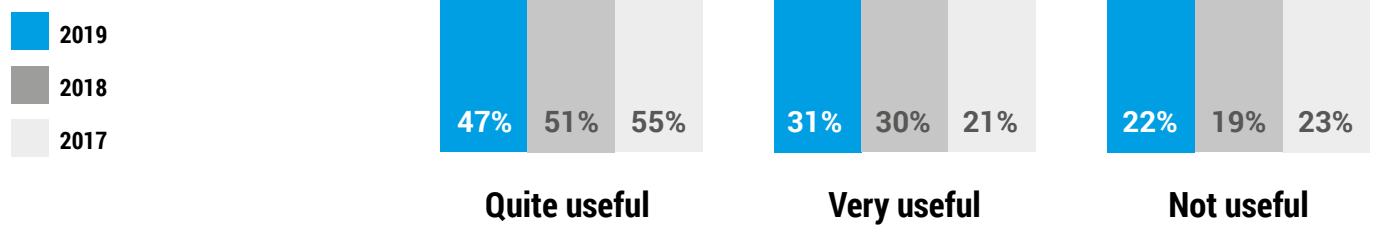
Highest education level attained



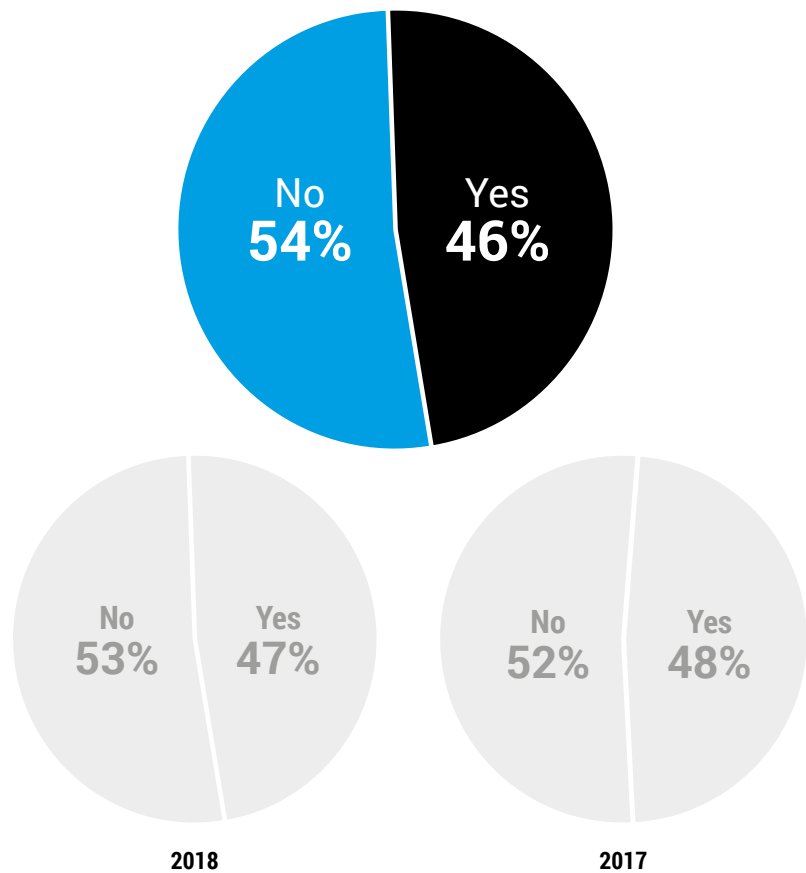
Areas of study



How useful do you feel your degree has been for your copywriting career?



Have you completed any copywriting training?

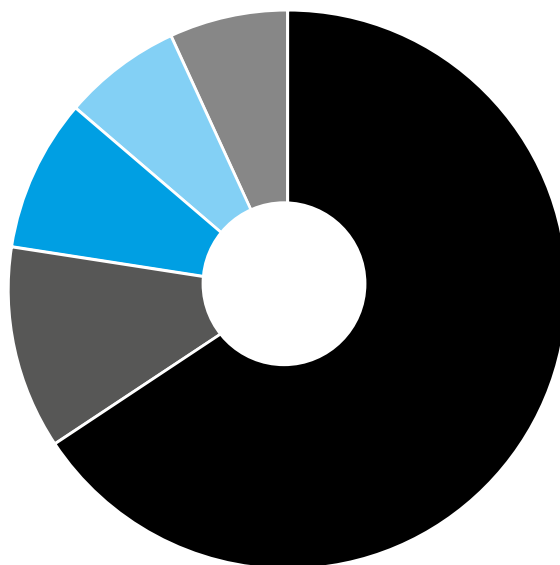


How copywriters work

Employment model

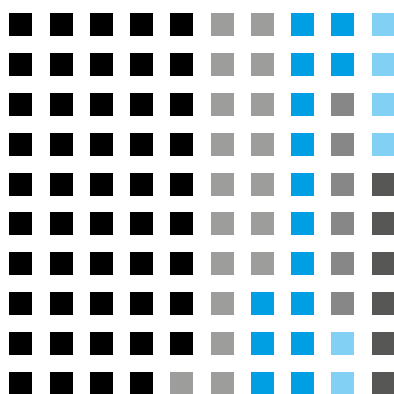
Freelancers dominate our results even more this year. As noted in the previous section, we hope to reach more in-house and agency writers through our webinars and corporate memberships.

	2018	2017
Freelance	58%	68%
Agency-side	15%	11%
Client-side	13%	9%
Agency founder	7%	6%
Employed/freelance	7%	6%



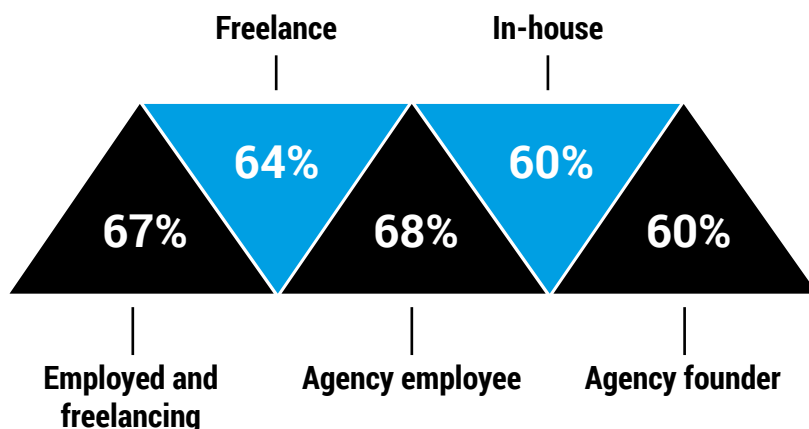
- 67% Freelance
- 12% Agency-side
- 9% Client-side
- 6% Agency founder
- 6% Employed and freelancing

Disciplines and specialisms



	2018	2017
No specialism	49%	54%
Digital & SEO	18%	15%
Marketing materials	15%	15%
Advertising	6%	6%
Technical	6%	6%
PR & journalism	6%	4%

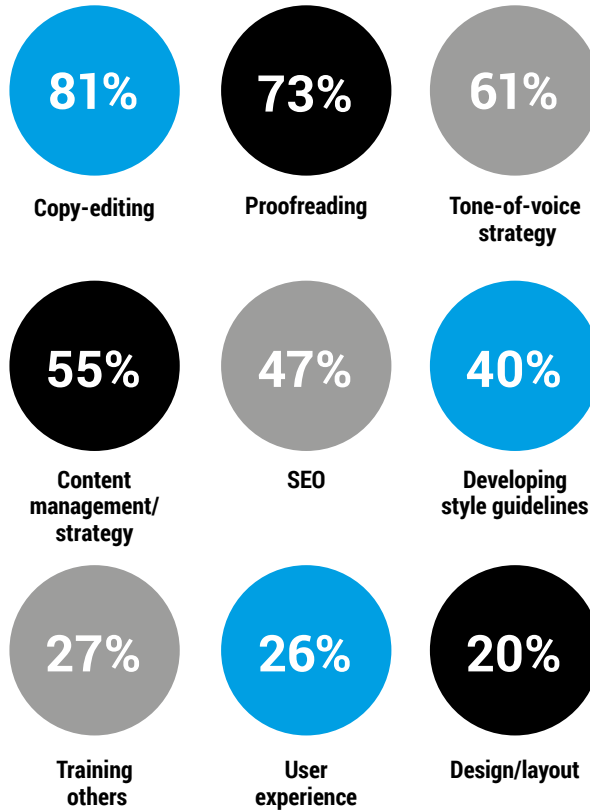
Time spent writing



	2018	2017
Employed and freelancing	67%	67%
Freelance	65%	66%
Agency employee	67%	63%
In-house	56%	61%
Agency founder	60%	55%

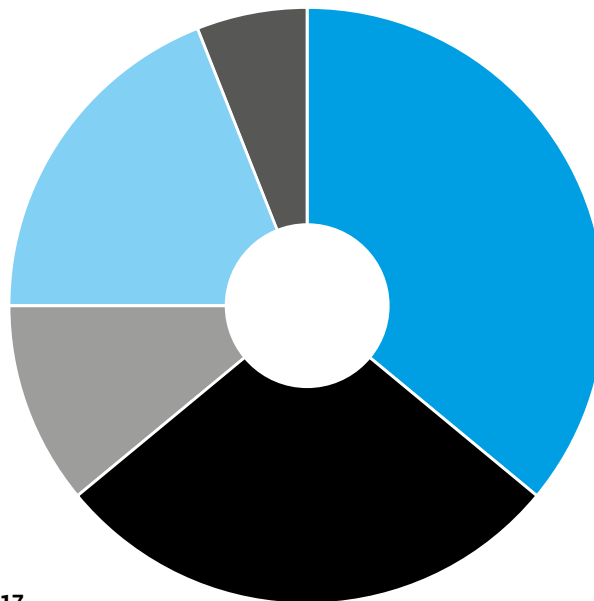
Other tasks and roles

What other skills and services do copywriters offer?



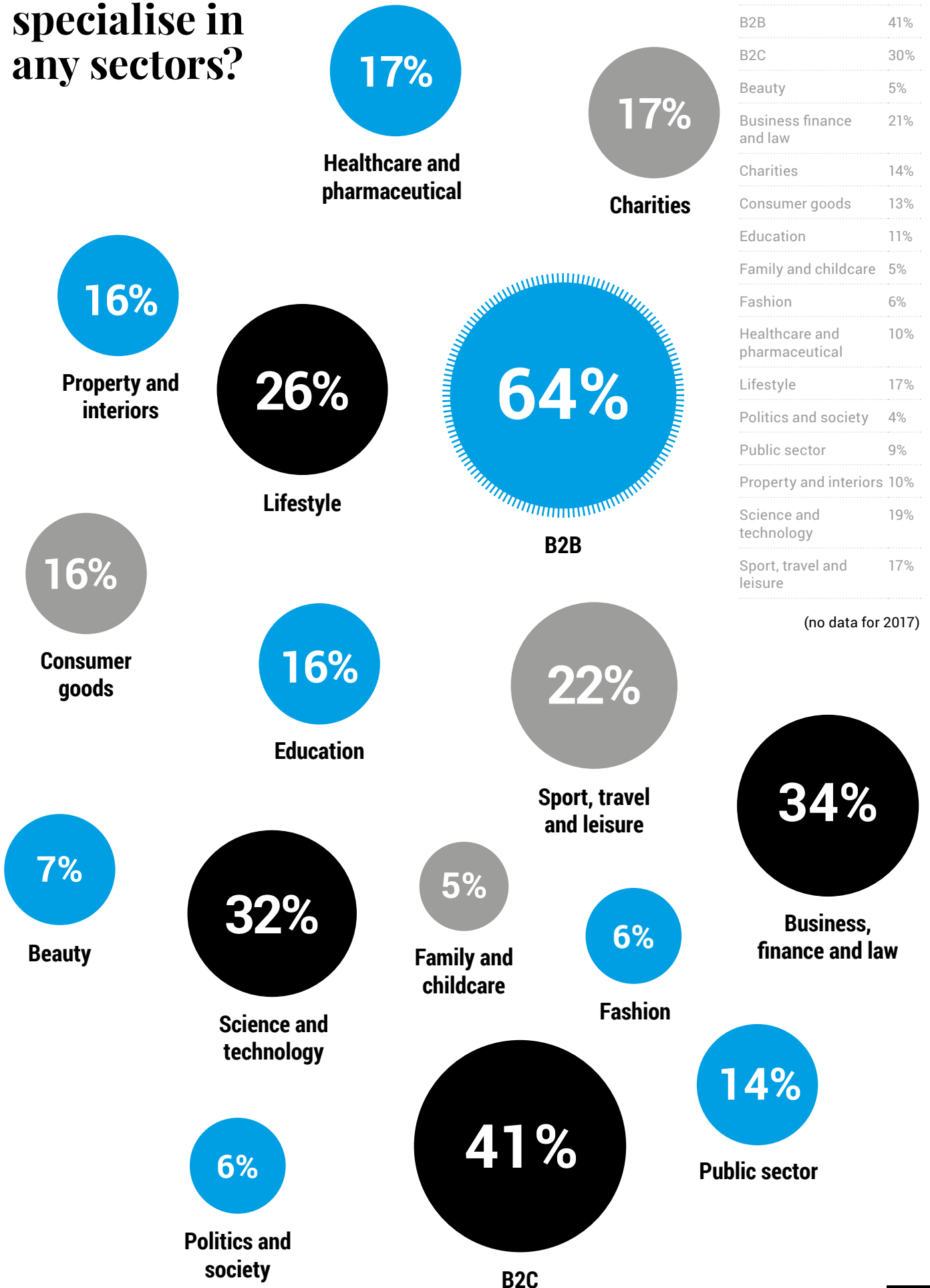
	2018	2017
Copy-editing	81%	80%
Proofreading	73%	69%
Tone-of-voice strategy	63%	60%
Content management /strategy	53%	51%
SEO	45%	45%
Developing style guidelines	44%	45%
Training others	33%	29%
User experience	27%	23%
Design/layout	24%	24%

Have you ever done pro bono (unpaid) work for a charity?



	2018	2017
No, but I am open to it	43%	31%
Yes, I do this occasionally	32%	23%
I have in the past but don't do this any more	14%	9%
No, and I wouldn't	11%	8%
Yes, I do this regularly	0%	7%

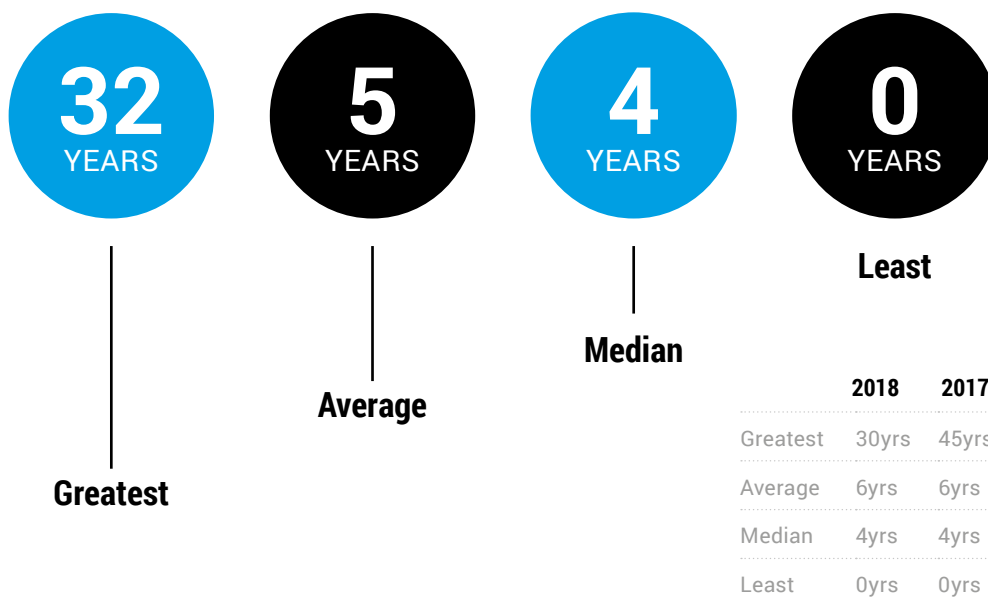
Do you specialise in any sectors?



Freelance copywriters

Experience before going freelance

We've also changed how we group these responses, in order to highlight the subtle differences between copywriters with 1 and 5 years of experience. This helps to show just how many copywriters go freelance with very little prior experience.



Finding new clients

Word-of-mouth recommendations are a key source of work, while both social media and websites have seen an increase in popularity. These results tend to fluctuate each year.



Word of mouth



Website



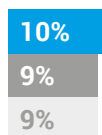
Social media



Networking events/conference

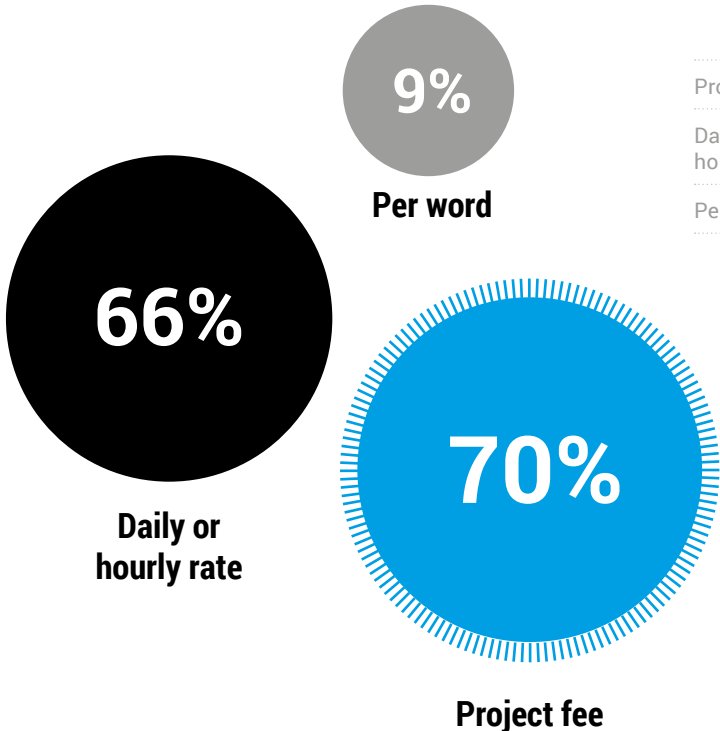


Advertising



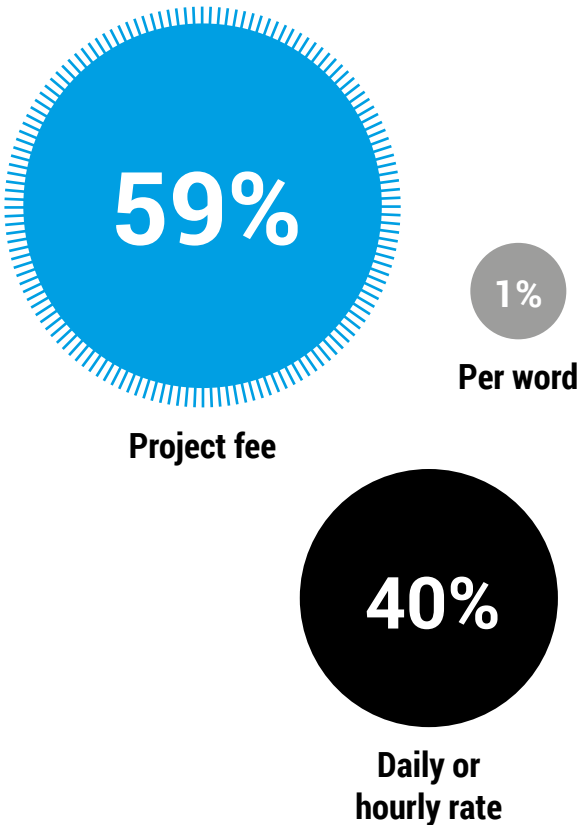
Freelance rates

How freelancers charge



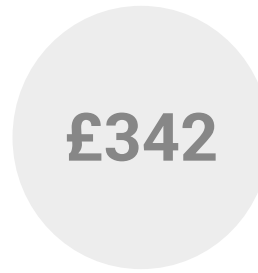
	2018	2017
Project fee	50%	72%
Daily or hourly rate	47%	68%
Per word	6%	7%

Preferred charging model

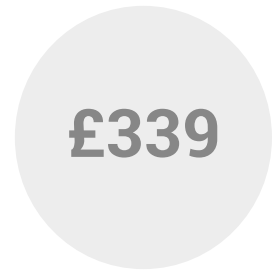


	2018	2017
Project fee	63%	58%
Daily or hourly rate	36%	41%
Per word	1%	1%

Average day rates

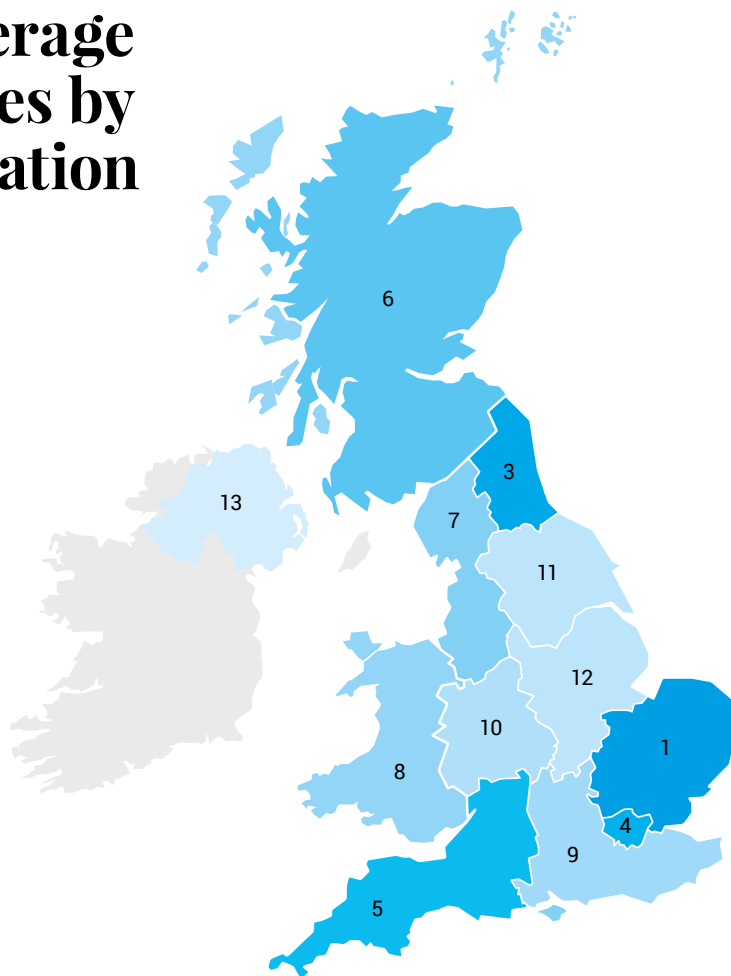


2018



2017

Average rates by location

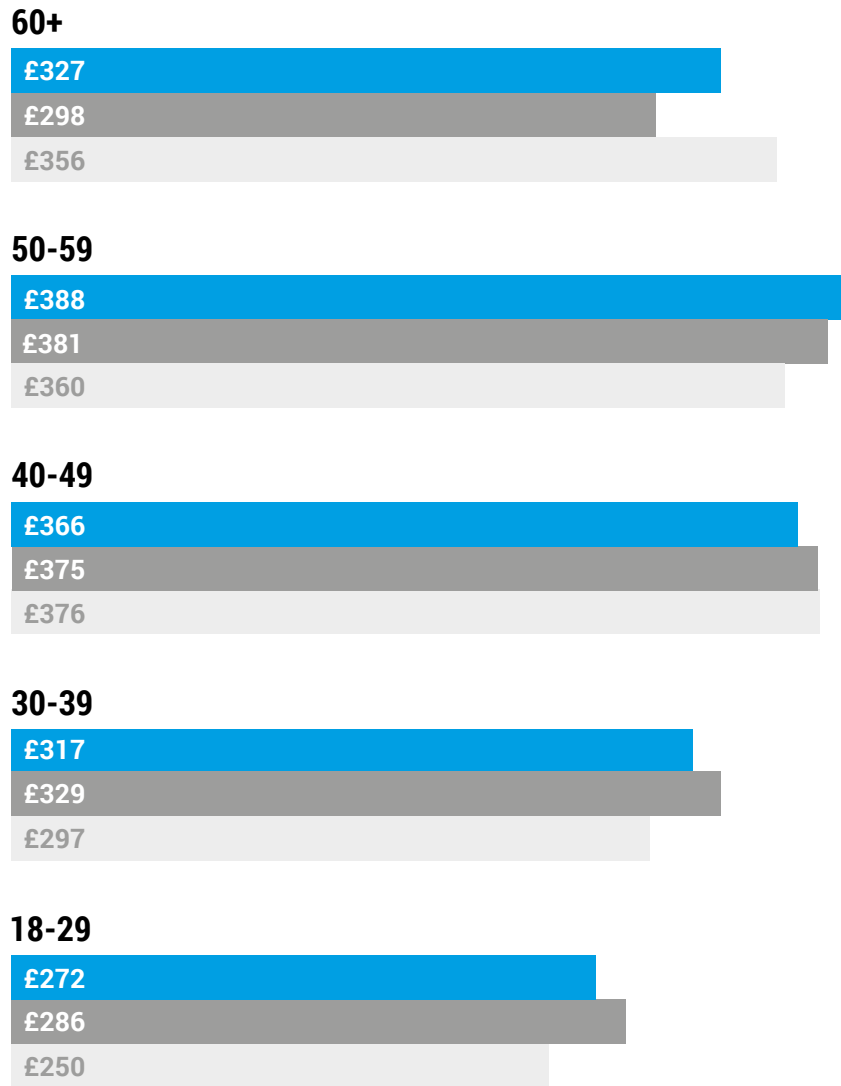


		2018	2017
1. East Anglia	↑ £436	£419	£357
2. International	↓ £414	£496	£433
3. North East	↑ £381	£343	£350
4. London	↓ £361	£405	£392
5. South West	↑ £355	£336	£316
6. Scotland	↑ £342	£284	£262
7. North West	↑ £329	£297	£277
8. Wales	↑ £328	£297	£400
9. South East	£322	£317	£350
10. West Midlands	↓ £309	£326	£286
11. Yorkshire & Humber	↑ £282	£249	£269
12. East Midlands	↓ £281	£385	£281
13. N. Ireland	↓ £213	£323	£236

Arrows indicate position change from last year

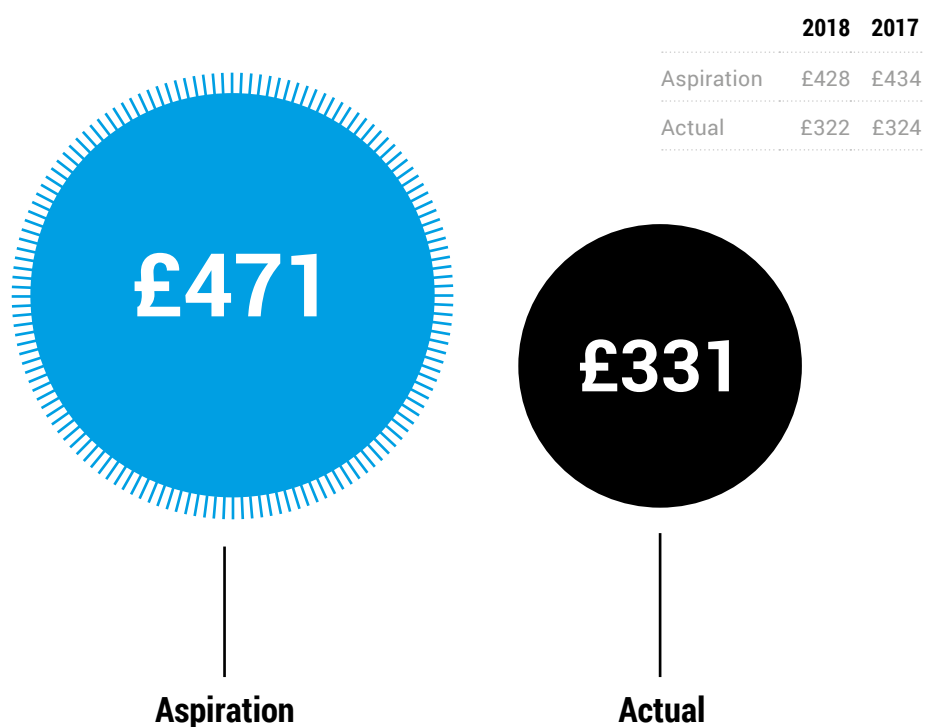
Average rates and age

These results follow the usual trend: copywriter rates increase until age 60, when they tend to decrease (on average).



Rate aspirations

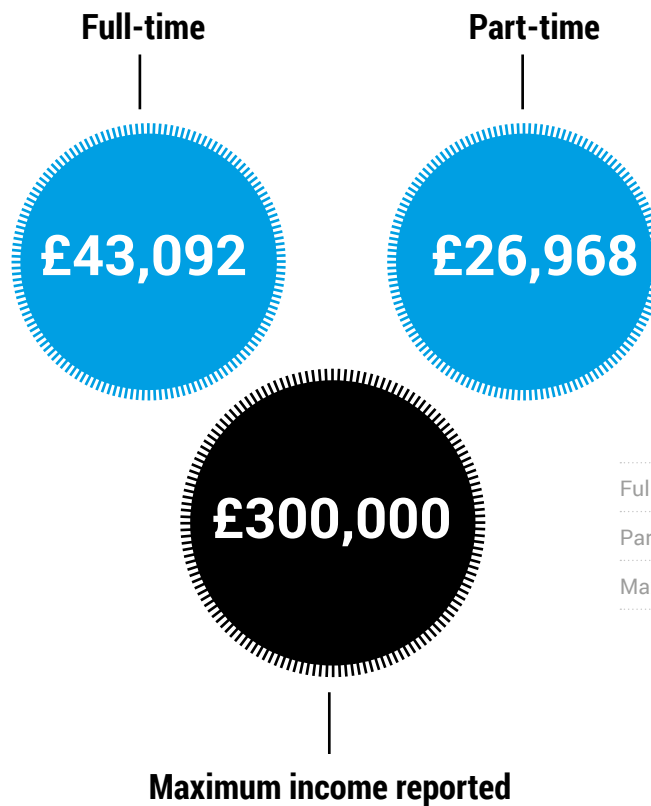
A significant increase here, both in the gap between actual rates and aspirations, and in the average rate that copywriters aspire to (from £428 per day to £471).



Earnings

Average earnings across all employment types

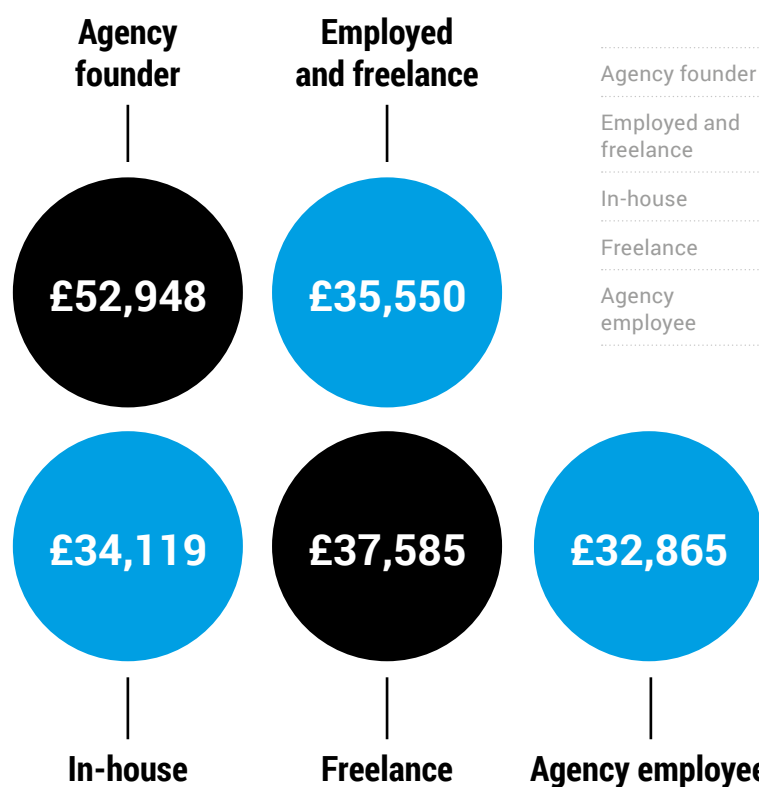
A slight dip in average full-time earnings is contrasted with an increase in average pay for part-time copywriters.



	2018	2017
Full-time	£43,940	£41,666
Part-time	£24,621	£26,522
Maximum	£250,000	£285,000

Income by employment type

(full-time only)



	2018	2017
Agency founder	£60,463	£50,465
Employed and freelance	£40,468	£47,664
In-house	£39,874	£38,369
Freelance	£45,757	£36,012
Agency employee	£37,673	£34,329

Income and age

(full-time only)



60+



50-59



40-49



30-39

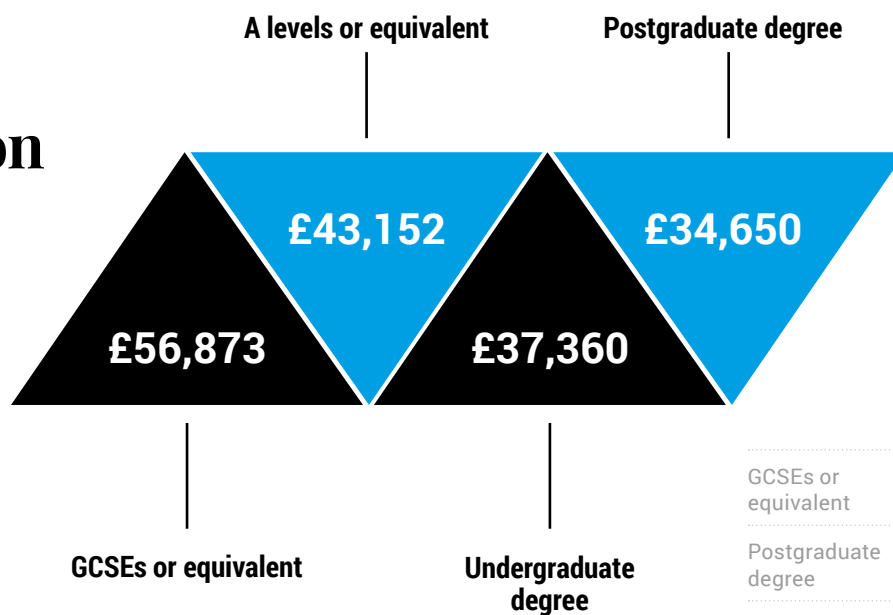


18-29



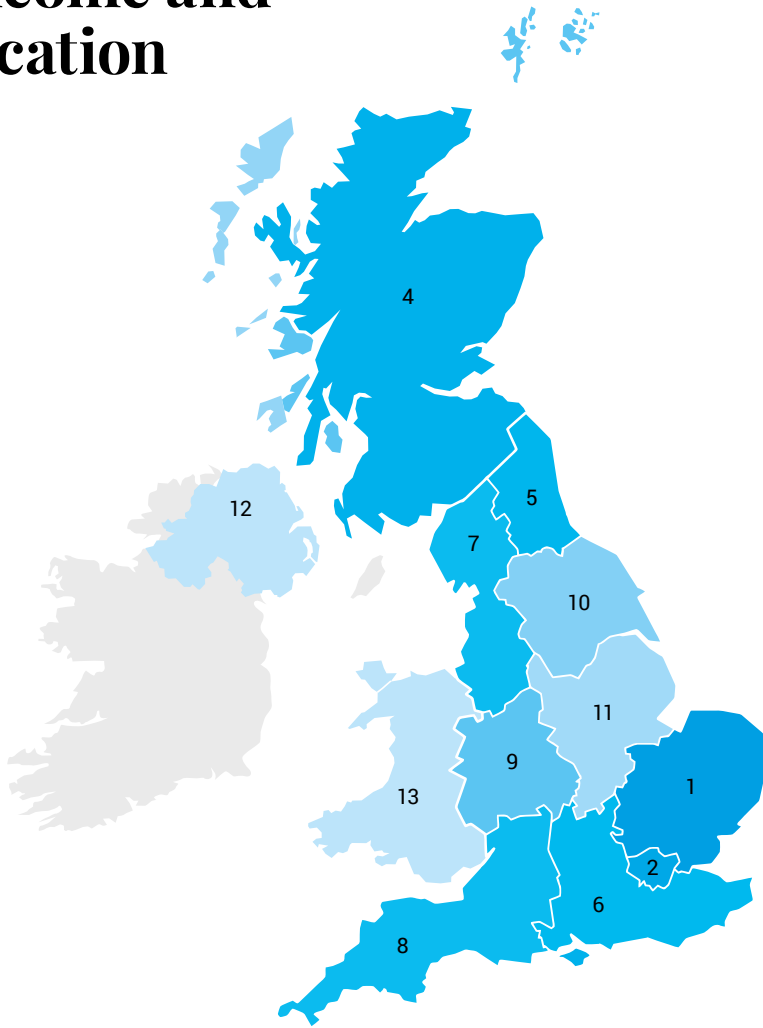
Income and education

(full-time only)



	2018	2017
GCSEs or equivalent	£61,720	£58,705
Postgraduate degree	£41,543	£37,259
Undergraduate degree	£41,598	£36,940
A levels or equivalent	£49,854	£33,494

Income and location



	2018	2017
1. East Anglia	↑ £63,026	£60,416 £44,081
2. London	↑ £47,904	£52,904 £55,340
3. International	↓ £41,833	£62,919 £43,309
4. Scotland	↑ £38,479	£36,333 £25,754
5. North East	↑ £37,800	£40,750 £20,019
6. South East	↓ £36,082	£42,906 £38,602
7. North West	↑ £34,563	£32,396 £30,449
8. South West	↓ £34,151	£38,887 £30,456
9. West Midlands	↓ £29,648	£37,691 £28,740
10. Yorkshire & Humber	↑ £27,316	£28,769 £23,793
11. East Midlands	↓ £25,500	£45,250 £28,950
12. N Ireland	↑ £22,300	n/a £20,000
13. Wales	↓ £22,227	£31,375 £32,656

Arrows indicate position change from last year

Perceptions: Does gender have an impact on pay?

The difference between attitudes to the gender pay gap is striking. 43% of women believe gender does affect their pay, but only 17% of our male respondents see the problem.



2018	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	44%	19%	37%
Men	26%	37%	38%

2017	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	31%	28%	41%
Men	16%	42%	42%

Income and gender

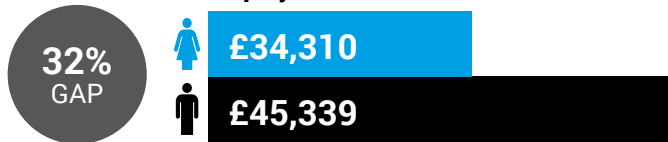
After several years of lamenting the gender pay gap, it is encouraging to see a shift in the usual patterns. However, the picture is less positive than it may seem at first glance; the reversal in two categories (agency employees and in-house copywriters) may be influenced by our small number of respondents (60 and 48 respectively).

While these numbers are interesting, and may suggest a shift in attitudes, our largest group of respondents continues to experience a huge gender pay gap: female freelance copywriters earn 30% less than their male counterparts, on average.

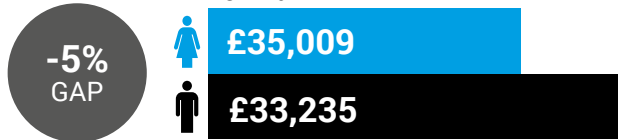
How can we close the gap?

	2018	2017
Employed and freelance	43%	46%
Agency employee	26%	37%
Freelance	21%	28%
Agency founder	21%	18%
In-house	15%	17%

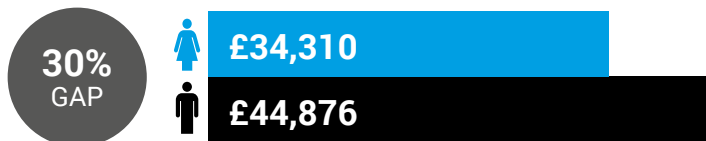
Employed and freelance



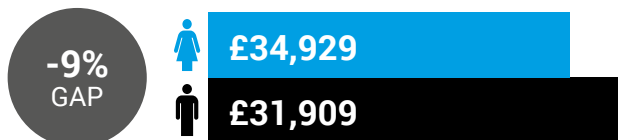
Agency



Freelance



In-house



Agency founder



Average day rates compared with other responsibilities

We calculated the average rates of those copywriters who have other responsibilities.



Other work

	2018
Side projects	£371
Charity work	£346
Other work	£343
Childcare	£308
Caring for a friend or family member	£307

(no data for 2017)



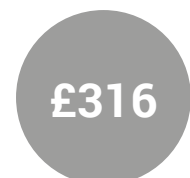
Childcare



Charity work



Side projects



Caring for a friend or family member

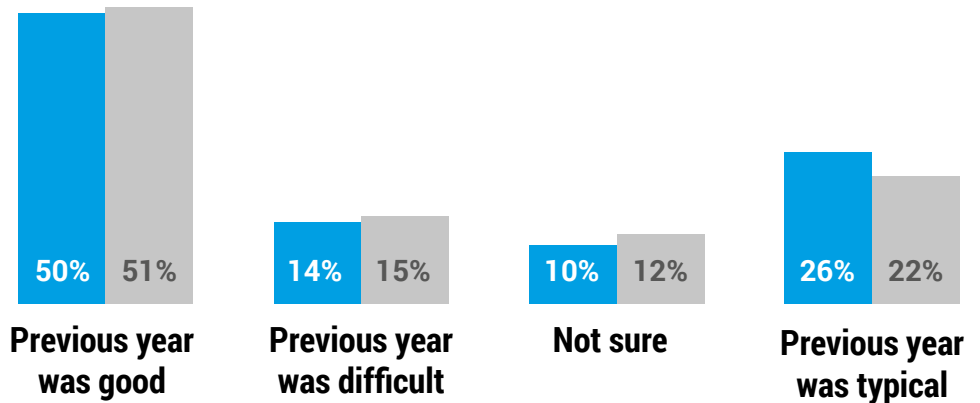
Outlook

Anecdotally, we've noticed more copywriters talking about clients delaying projects because of Brexit fears, but our survey only picked up a slight increase in the number of copywriters who think Brexit will harm their business.

Fewer copywriters feel optimistic about the year ahead, and this may reflect the uncertainty surrounding our withdrawal from the EU.

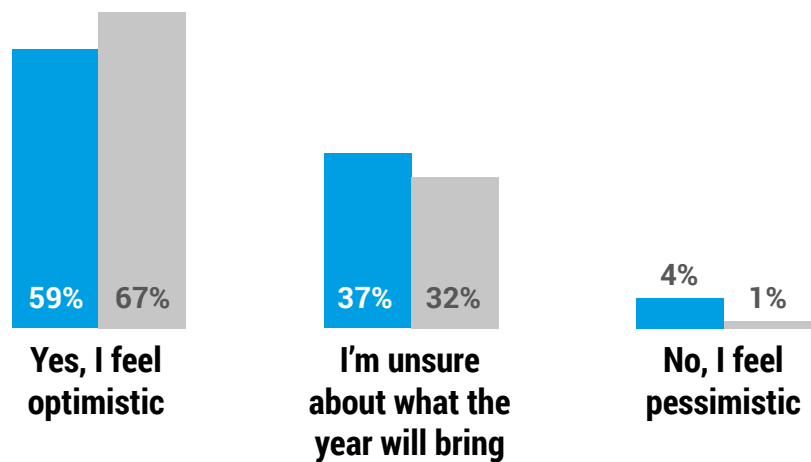
In purely financial terms, how was your year?

2019 2018

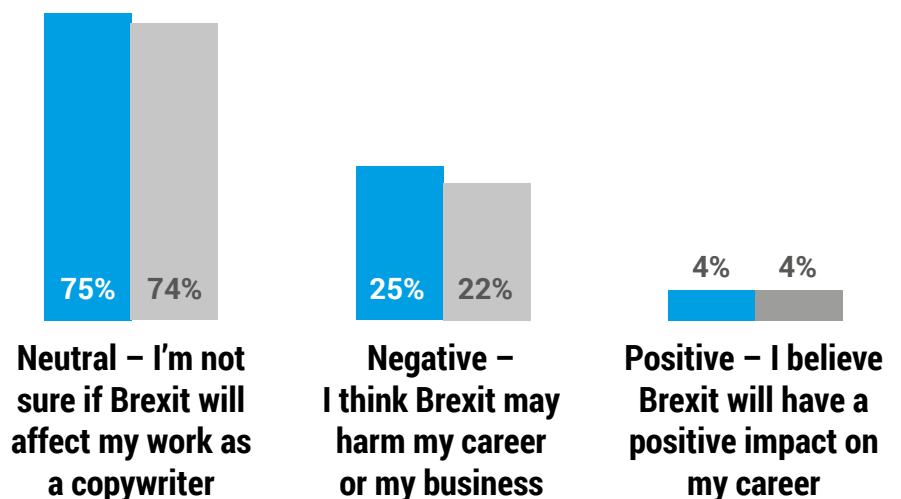


In terms of your career, are you optimistic about the year ahead?

2019 2018



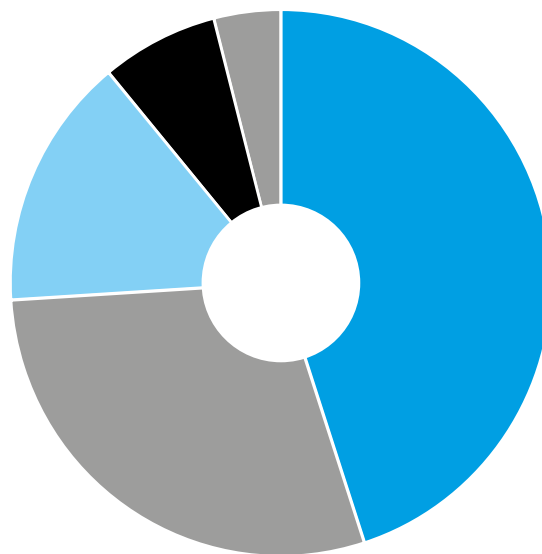
What kind of impact do you think Brexit will have on your career?



Motivation and aspirations

These results are broadly in line with our three previous surveys. We see a slight increase in the number of copywriters who want to change careers, but this still suggests that copywriters largely love their work – they just want better pay.

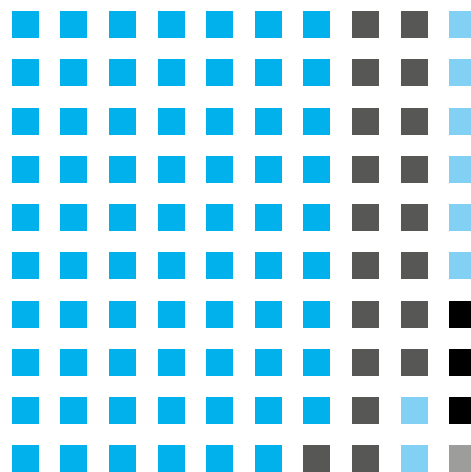
What do you enjoy most about being a copywriter?



	2018	2017
Being paid to write	42%	39%
Being creative	34%	28%
Getting results for the client	11%	12%
Something else	9%	11%
Being persuasive	4%	3%

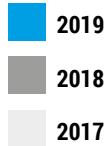
- 45% Being paid to write
- 29% Being creative
- 15% Getting results for the client
- 7% Something else
- 4% Being persuasive

What type of recognition do you most value?



		2018	2017
Employer/client feedback	69%	69%	68%
Financial	19%	16%	16%
Peer recognition	8%	10%	6%
Something else	3%	3%	2%
Industry awards	1%	2%	1%

How would you like your career to develop over the next two years?



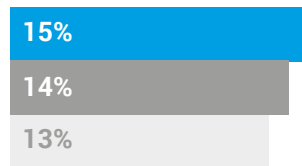
Earn more money



Do more creative writing



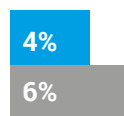
Do more strategic/consultancy work



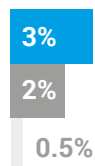
Something else



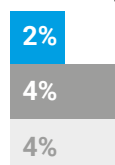
Go freelance



Change careers

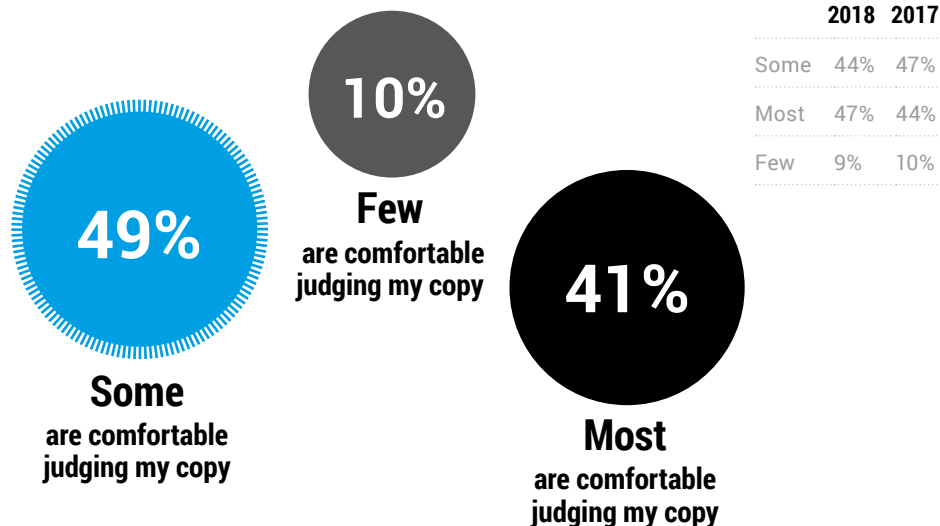


Start my own agency

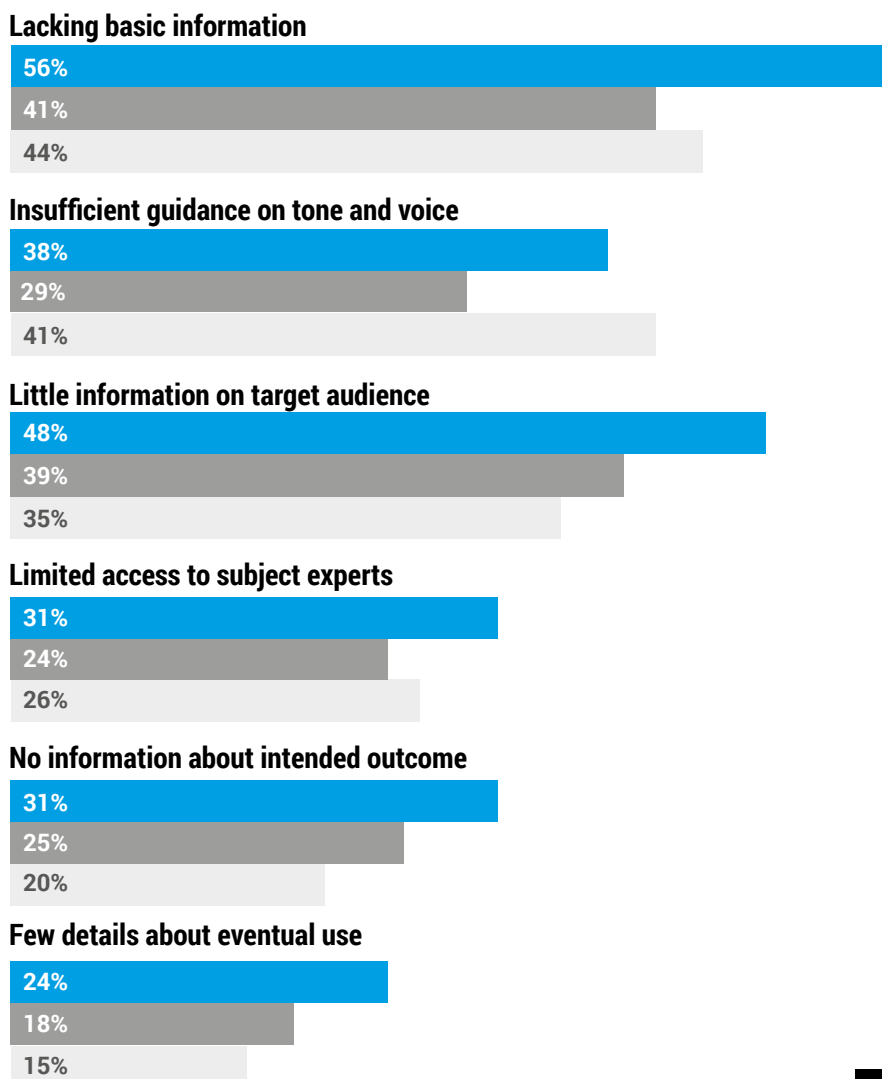
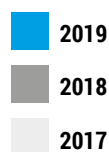


The client's side of the story

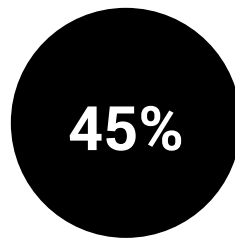
How many of your clients are comfortable judging your copywriting work?



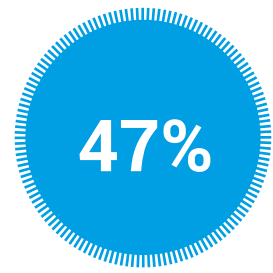
What are the most common problems with briefs you receive?



How many of your clients would benefit from advice on commissioning copy?



Some of my clients would benefit



Most of my clients would benefit



Few of my clients would benefit

	2018	2017
Some	44%	47%
Most	47%	44%
Few	8%	10%

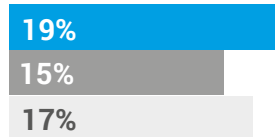
What are the biggest challenges you face when working with clients?



Copy by committee



Lack of confidence or experience in judging written work



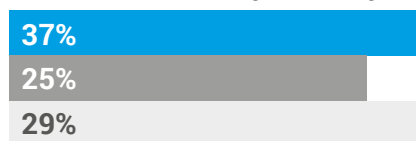
Lack of time



Unrealistic expectations



Lack of understanding of writing process



Poor brief or source materials



Copywriting is...

A skill, a job, an art, a science. / Compelling words that influence behaviour and drive someone into action. / Copywriting is winning through words. Winning sales, winning hearts, winning attention... / Creative, targeted writing. / Expressing ideas and info in a voice that fits your audience – not exclusively through words. / Freedom. Enjoyment. Creativity. Passion. Incomplete briefings. Uncertain clients. / Giving anything and everything meaning through well-written words. / It's like Lego. If you're afforded creative freedom and trust, you can build castles or spacecrafts! / Literate, provocative, informative words that prompt engagement. / Mastery to send the right message. / Persuasion by the pen. / Selling with words. / The art and science of persuasion. / Using language to persuade, inform, influence attitudes and provoke action. / Word wizardry. / Words. In their best order. / Writing that inspires a reaction. / Writing to inform or persuade. And hopefully entertain. / Writing to sell. / Written persuasion.

About this survey

Aim

Our goal is to develop a better understanding of the copywriting profession, and share this knowledge with our peers and fellow professionals.

Questions

Each year we build on the 2016 survey composed by Joanna Tidball with support from Tom Albrighton.

Analysis and reporting

We take the data from SurveyMonkey and analyse it using Excel. This report was written by Leif Kendall – with support from Margaret Hunter and design by Anna Patience.

Data collection and publicity

The survey was publicly available on SurveyMonkey from the end of 2019 to February 2020. The survey was shared via email, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Respondents

We invited all copywriters who serve the UK market to respond (this means overseas copywriters can respond, as long as they work with UK clients).

Anonymity

The survey responses were collected anonymously. This was a deliberate choice to encourage honest reporting of earnings and experiences.

Dataset

514 copywriters responded. In analysing the data, only valid responses are included.

You can use our data

Use this report in any way you like. It's licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. You can use any element of this report, as long as you credit ProCopywriters as the source, and also share your work in the same way.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete this survey. Your responses provide a fascinating insight into the world of commercial writers.

Limitations and disclaimers

This was an open survey, conducted in good faith. We haven't vetted respondents so we cannot rule out distortions or inaccuracies resulting from errors, misinformation or malice.

SurveyMonkey restricts multiple responses from the same IP address, but this can be circumvented.

Our reach is limited to our network and friends of friends – so of course we can't claim to represent the complete copywriter experience. This survey is provided for information only – please don't make any wild decisions based on this report.

Sponsor this survey

We'd love to talk to more copywriters, more freelancers and more in-house creatives next year. Contact info@procopywriters.co.uk for more information on sponsorship.



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