

PROCOPYWRITERS SURVEY 2021

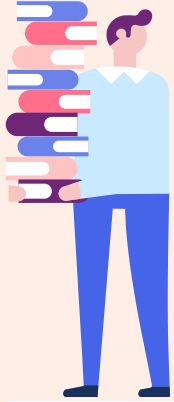


THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS...



LORNA SMART
WORDCRAFTER





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Introduction

What a year. During an extraordinary period in history, we've managed to gather responses from hundreds of copywriters, to provide you with a snapshot of the copywriting profession that we hope you'll find illuminating.

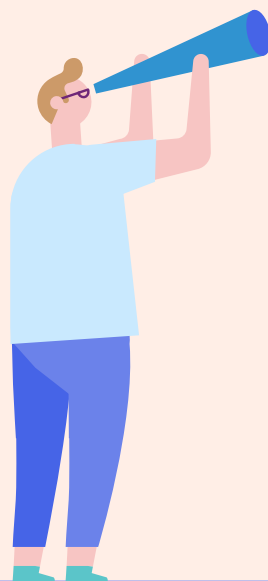
We collected this data over the summer, while COVID restrictions lifted and society was reopening across most of the UK. It's been interesting to see the level of optimism from respondents about the year ahead, though this may be relative to the challenges and upheaval that most of us faced over the previous year.

All things considered, the copywriting profession is still thriving. Once again, the average income and day rate for copywriters have increased, as has the number of copywriters who have copywriting-specific training. However, the gender pay gap has increased too, leaving us considering what we can do to help address this.

If you're not already a member of ProCopywriters, please consider joining us, as an individual or a company, so we can keep expanding the opportunities and support we offer to you and to the whole copywriting profession.

Thank you for your continued support. We really appreciate it. Here's to more inspiration, creativity and collaboration in the year ahead.

Leif Kendall
Director, ProCopywriters



KEY FINDINGS

The gender pay gap has widened, particularly for freelance copywriters, agency founders and those who are both employed and freelance. The progress made in 2020 has been undone, probably as a result of the burden of caring responsibilities falling primarily on women during the pandemic.

Despite some detrimental effects of the global pandemic on our mental health, copywriters have reported feeling **primarily optimistic** about the year ahead.

While London and the South East continue to be the top regions in England for income, there has been **significant growth in annual income for the Midlands and the North of England**.

For the first time in the history of the ProCopywriters survey, **the 60+ age group has the highest average day rate**. In previous years, the average day rate tended to increase until age 60, when (on average) it started to fall.

This year saw a significant **reduction in average day rate for copywriters aged 18-29, but an increase in earnings** in the same age group. Does this mean that people in this age group are doing more work for less money?

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS...

Becky WordSmith Joanna Tidball



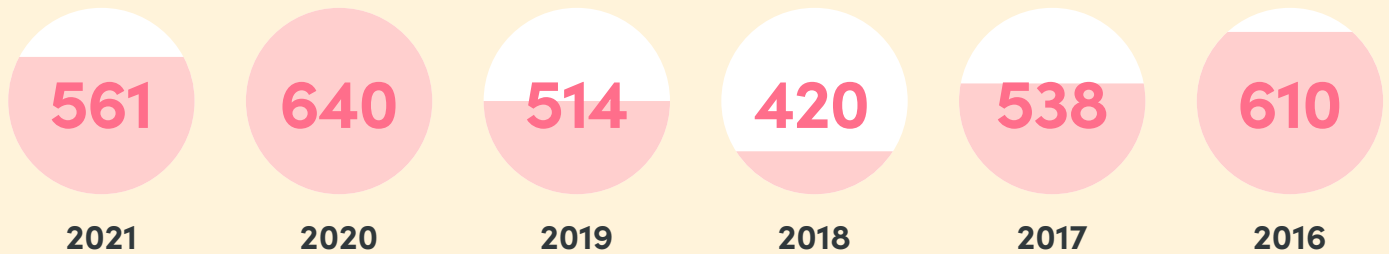
14 October 2022
Komedia, Brighton

**CREATIVITY,
INSPIRATION,
PERSUASION**



Respondents

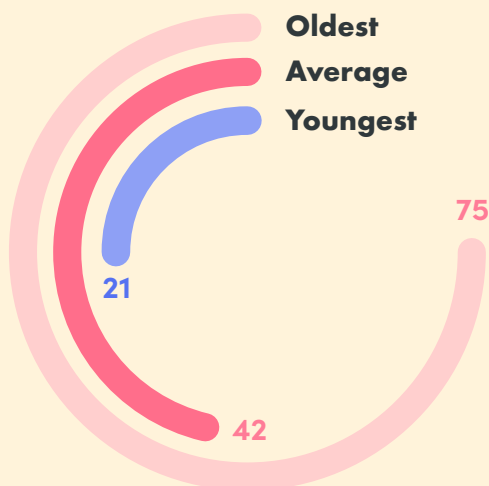
NUMBER



There was a slight dip in the number of responses this year. This may be due to data being collected over the summer, just as COVID restrictions were being lifted across most of the UK.

However, the number of responses is still higher than the three years leading up to 2020. Thank you to all the copywriters who contributed, providing us with valuable data and supporting our aim of fully representing the copywriting industry.

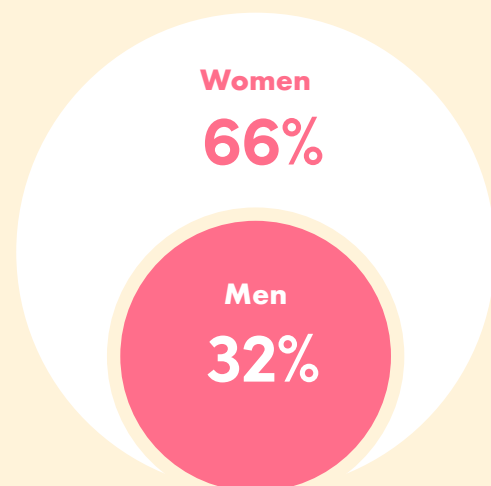
AGE



The age range remains fairly steady year on year. Copywriting is still a rewarding career for people at all stages of life.

	2020	2019	2018
Oldest	73	67	70
Average	41	40	38
Youngest	20	20	21

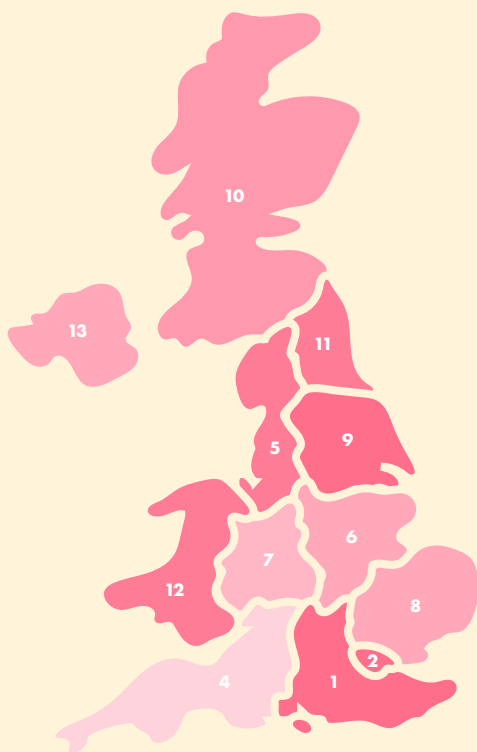
GENDER



Women continue to outnumber men, with the divide growing slightly compared to last year. This year, 2% of respondents chose not to indicate a male/female gender, suggesting that people would welcome other ways to identify here.

	2020	2019	2018
Women	62%	66%	65%
Men	38%	34%	35%

LOCATION



	2021	2020	2019
1. South East	21%	16%	18%
2. London	17%	14%	17%
3. International	12%	21%	12%
4. South West	12%	12%	13%
5. North West	7%	8%	10%
6. East Midlands	7%	3%	3%
7. West Midlands	5%	7%	6%
8. East Anglia	5%	6%	4%
9. Yorks and Humber	5%	5%	8%
10. Scotland	3.5%	4%	4%
11. North East	3%	2%	1%
12. Wales	2%	2%	2%
13. Northern Ireland	0.5%	0%	1%

There was a 16% increase in respondents from the South East compared with last year, and a drop in the number of international respondents. Otherwise the results are broadly consistent with 2020.



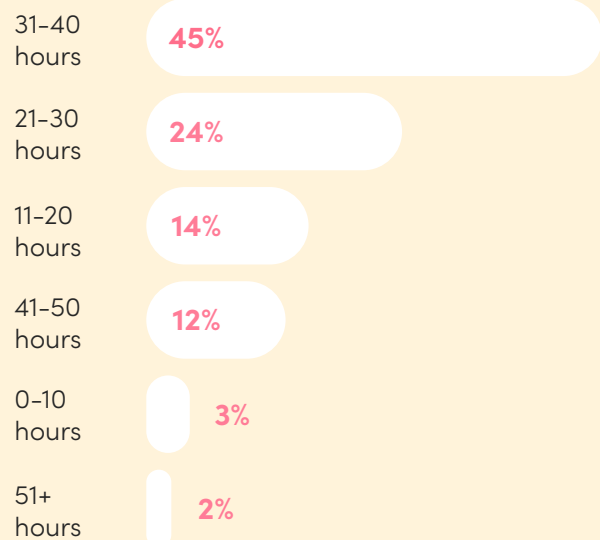
WORKING HOURS



● **Full-time** 70% ● **Part-time** 30%

	2020	2019	2018
Full-time	68%	64%	70%
Part-time	32%	36%	30%

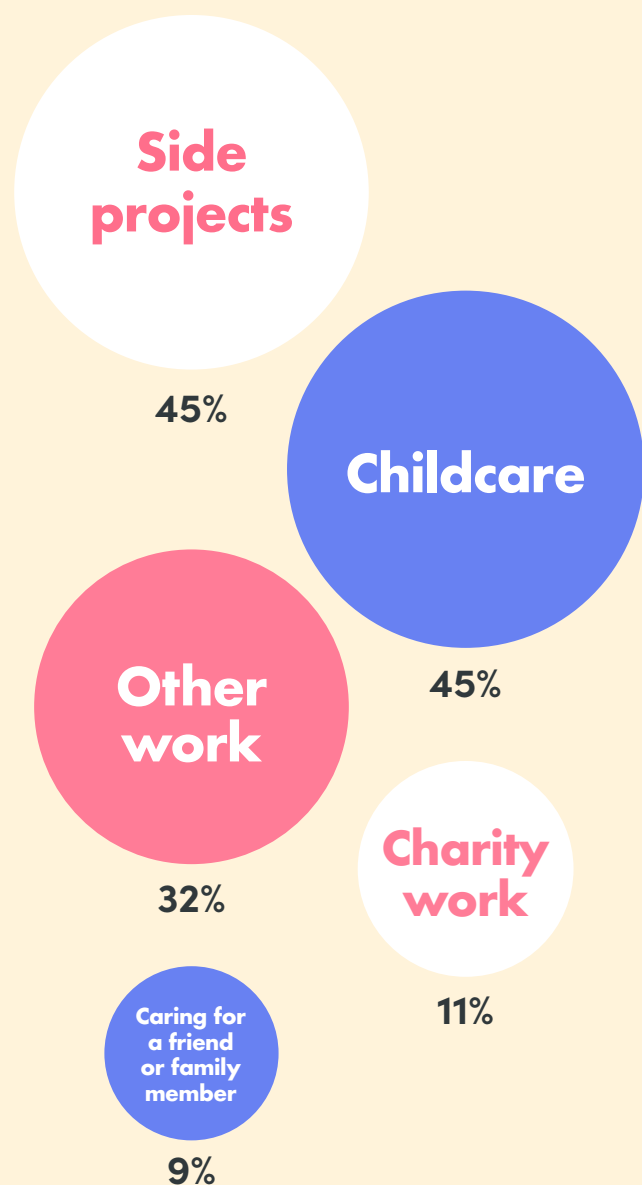
HOURS WORKED PER WEEK



	2020	2019	2018
31-40 hours	45%	45%	18%
21-30 hours	25%	20%	20%
11-20 hours	13%	15%	13%
41-50 hours	11%	12%	13%
0-10 hours	3%	4%	4%
51+ hours	3%	3%	5%

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The most notable change this year was in childcare, with a 7% increase on 2020. This is unsurprising given the lockdowns and resulting school and nursery closures.

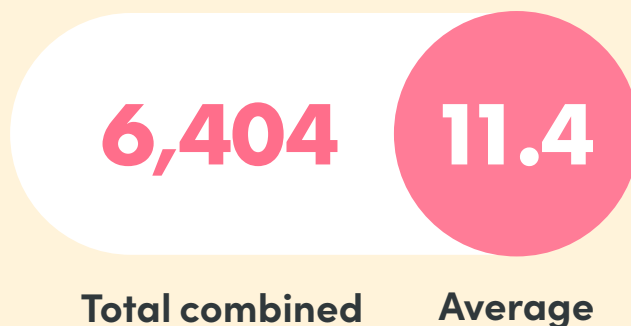


Note: These don't add up to 100% because some respondents had more than one additional responsibility.

	2020	2019	2018
Side-projects	48%	25%	26%
Childcare	36%	24%	23%
Other work	33%	22%	21%
Charity work	12%	3%	2%
Caring for a friend or family member	6%	3%	2%

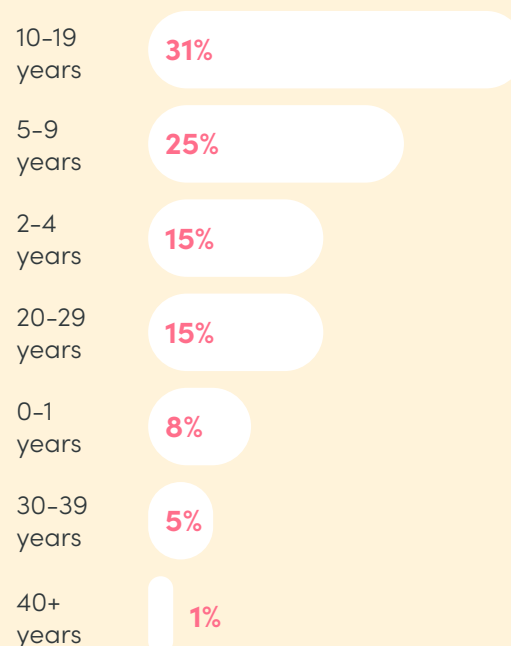
LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

The total years of experience is lower this year, as we had fewer respondents. However the average remains fairly consistent with previous years.



	2020	2019	2018
Total combined	7,106	5,003	3,996
Average	11.1	9.7	9.5

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

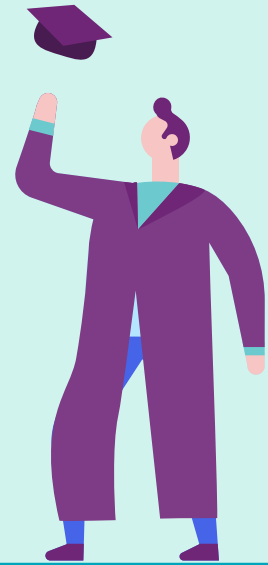


	2020	2019
10-19 years	30%	26%
5-9 years	26%	27%
2-4 years	18%	23%
20-29 years	11%	10%
0-1 years	8%	9%
30-39 years	6%	5%
40+ years	1%	0%

Note: This was a new question in 2019, hence there isn't any data for 2018

Education and training

This year, the most interesting development is an increase in the number of respondents who have completed copywriting training.



HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION

Undergraduate degree



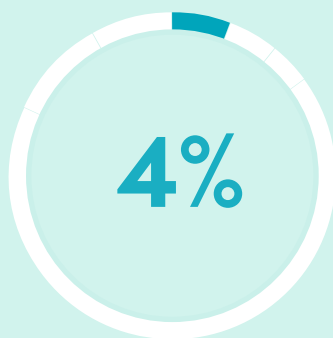
Postgraduate degree



A levels



Other

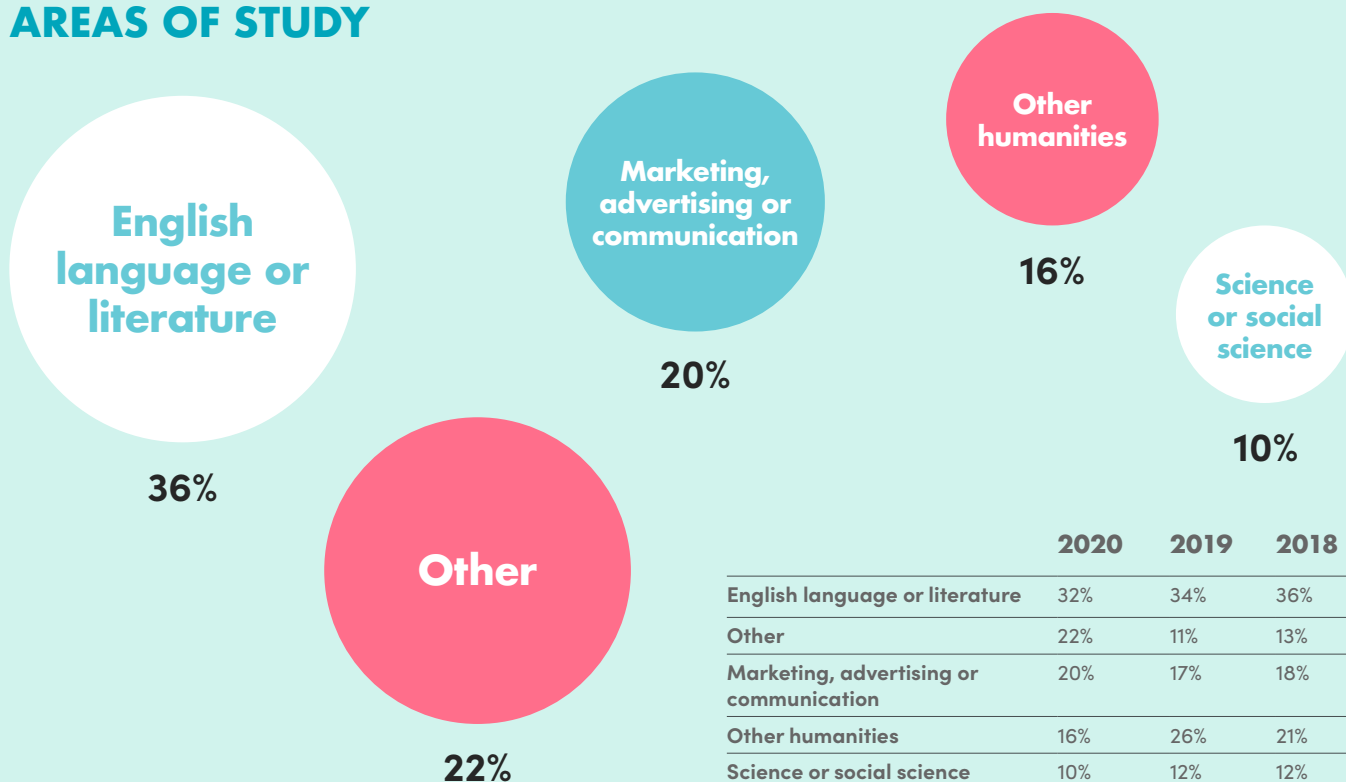


GCSEs

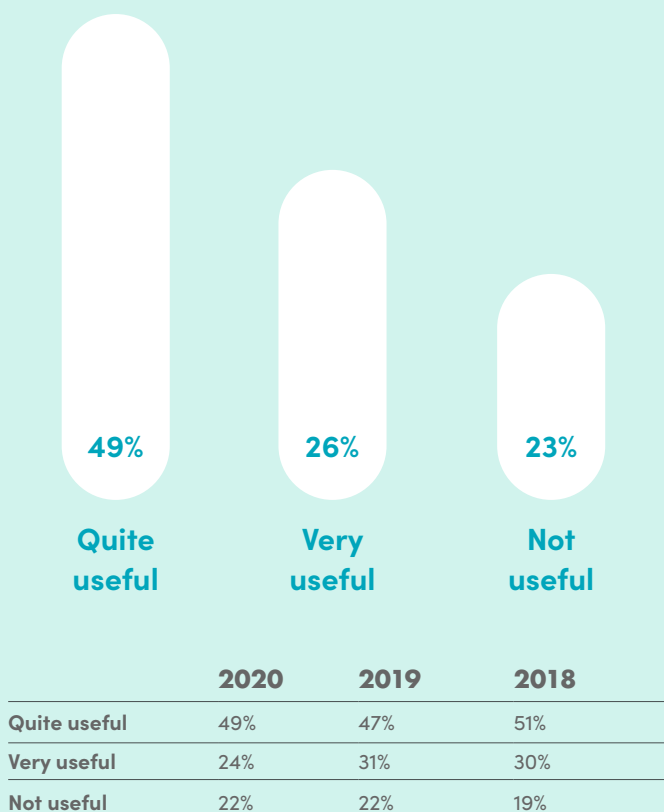


	2020	2019	2018
Undergraduate degree	57%	58%	57%
Postgraduate degree	28%	32%	29%
A levels	7%	6%	10%
Other	6%	n/a	n/a
GCSEs	2%	4%	4%

AREAS OF STUDY

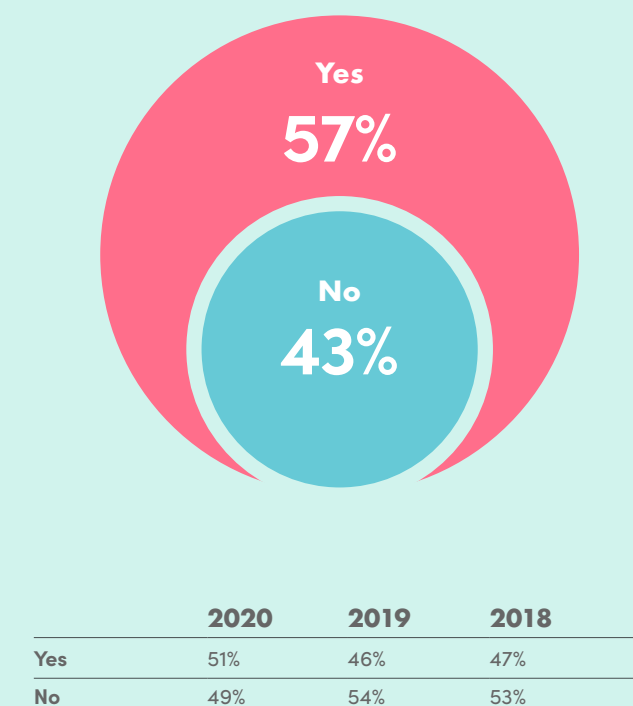


HAS YOUR DEGREE BEEN USEFUL IN DEVELOPING YOUR COPYWRITING CAREER?



HAVE YOU COMPLETED ANY COPYWRITING TRAINING?

The percentage of people who have completed copywriting-specific training rose by 6% this year.



How copywriters work

Freelancers continue to dominate our survey, their share rising by 10% compared with last year. This increase could be a result of redundancies during the pandemic. B2B remains the biggest sector specialism, while there has been a drop in respondents specialising in advertising.

EMPLOYMENT MODEL

Freelance

67%



Agency

10%



In-house (client-side)

8%



Agency founder

6%



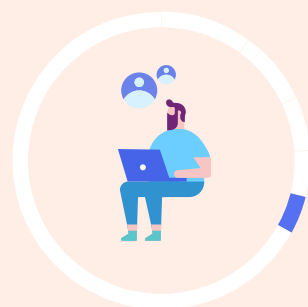
Employed and freelancing

5%



Other*

4%



	2020	2019	2018
Freelance	57%	67%	58%
Agency	12%	12%	15%
In-house (client-side)	13%	9%	13%
Agency founder	6%	6%	7%
Employed and freelancing	5%	6%	7%
Other*	7%	n/a	n/a

*Respondents who chose 'other' included professionals who do more than copywriting – branding, marketing, PR, and communications.

DISCIPLINES AND SPECIALISMS

The biggest drop was in the advertising specialism, with a 44% reduction compared with 2020. Slightly more respondents reported no specialism this year.



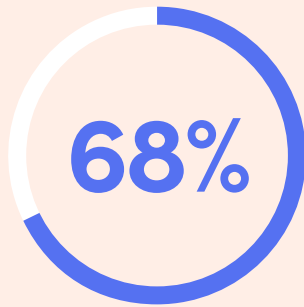
WHICH PARTICULAR SECTOR DO YOU SPECIALISE IN?

B2B remains the biggest sector specialism, growing by 6%. Science and technology has just overtaken B2C as the next biggest sector specialism.

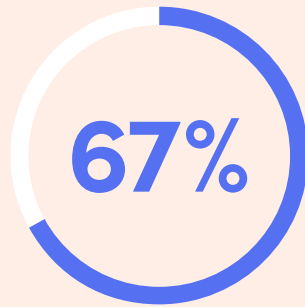


TIME SPENT WRITING

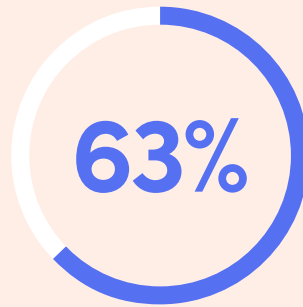
Agency employee



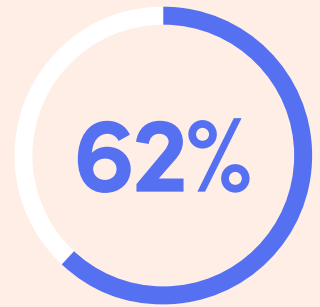
Freelance



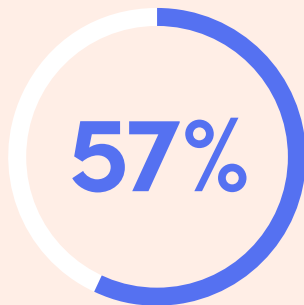
Employed and
freelancing



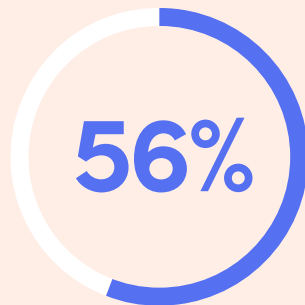
Other



In-house



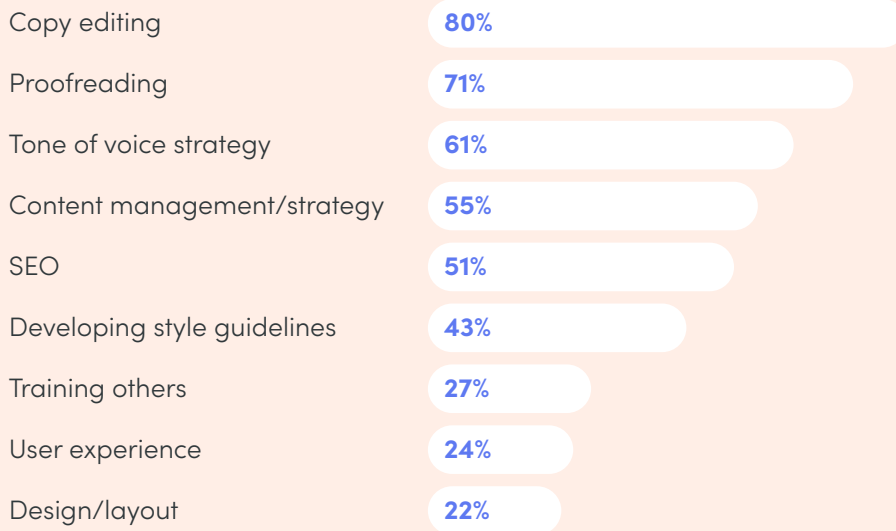
Agency founder



	2020	2019	2018
Agency employee	68%	68%	67%
Freelance	66%	64%	65%
Employed and freelancing	64%	67%	67%
Other	52%	n/a	n/a
In-house	62%	60%	56%
Agency founder	62%	60%	60%

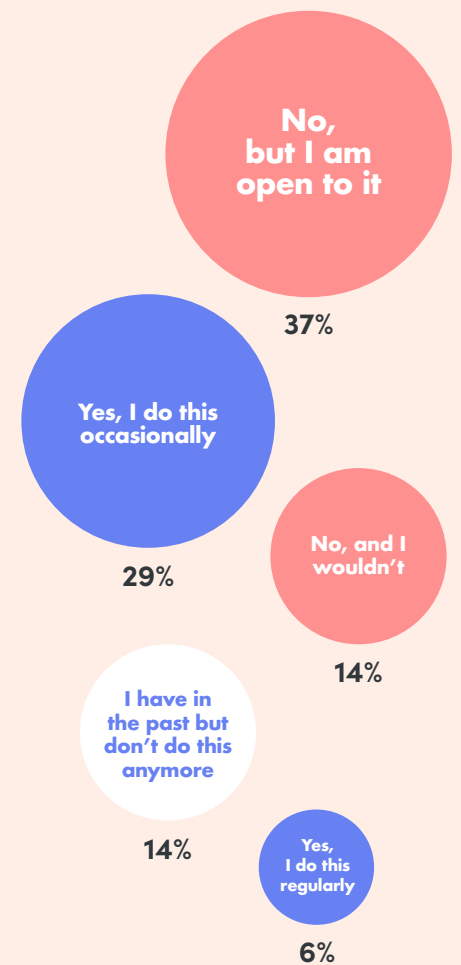
OTHER TASKS AND ROLES

Copywriters continue to offer a broad range of services.



	2020	2019	2018
Copy editing	83%	81%	81%
Proofreading	69%	73%	73%
Tone of voice strategy	64%	61%	63%
Content management/strategy	57%	55%	53%
SEO	50%	47%	45%
Developing style guidelines	42%	40%	44%
Training others	27%	27%	33%
User experience	29%	26%	27%
Design/layout	21%	20%	24%

HAVE YOU EVER DONE PRO BONO WORK FOR A CHARITY?

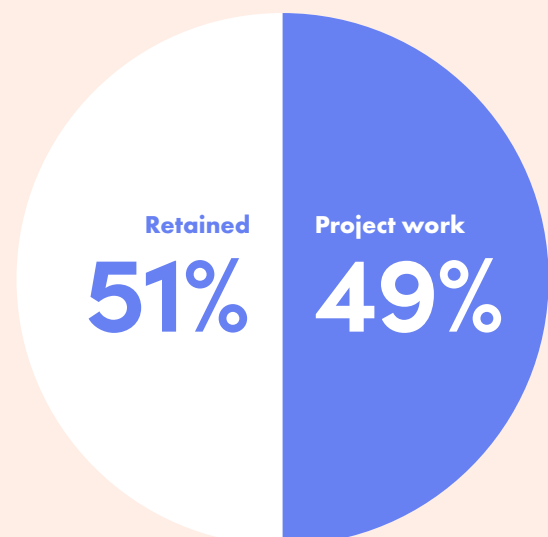


WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR WORK IS REGULAR OR RETAINED – OR COMPLETED ON A RETAINED BASIS?

This was a new question in 2020.

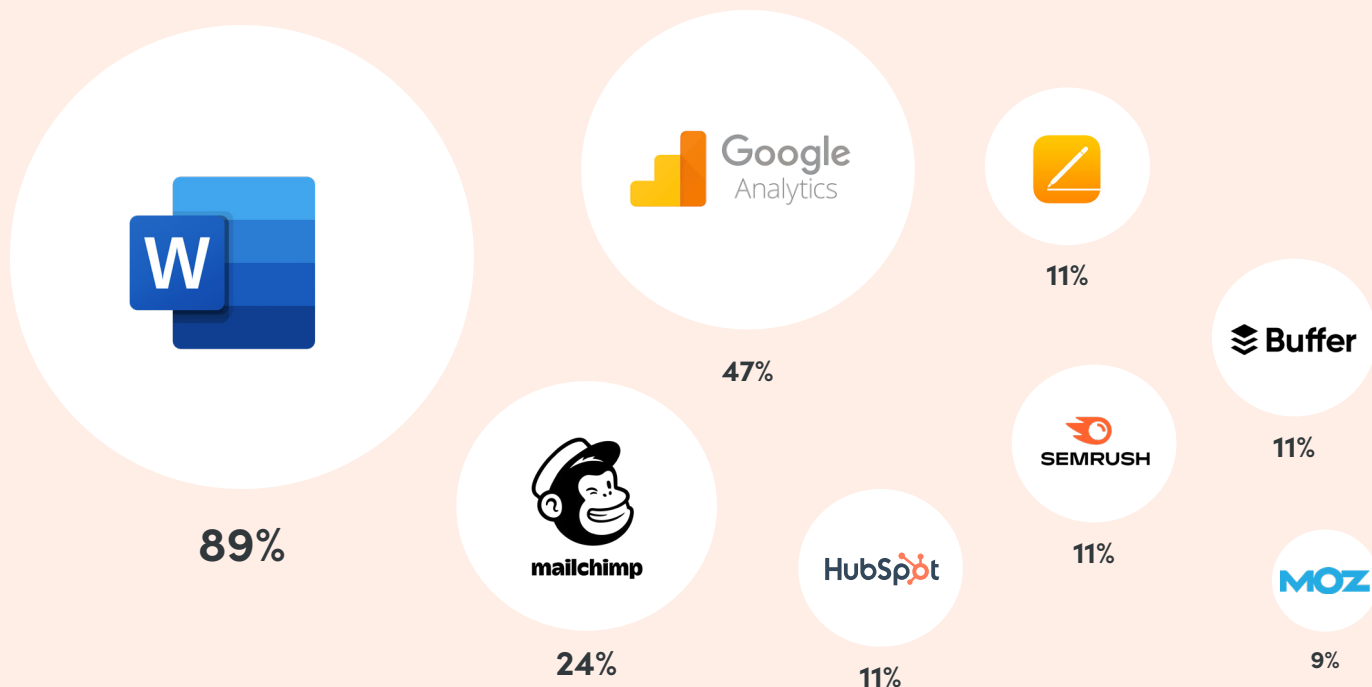
The average continues to show an even split between retained and project work.

	2020
Average retained work	50%
Average project work	50%



WHICH SOFTWARE TOOLS DO YOU USE?

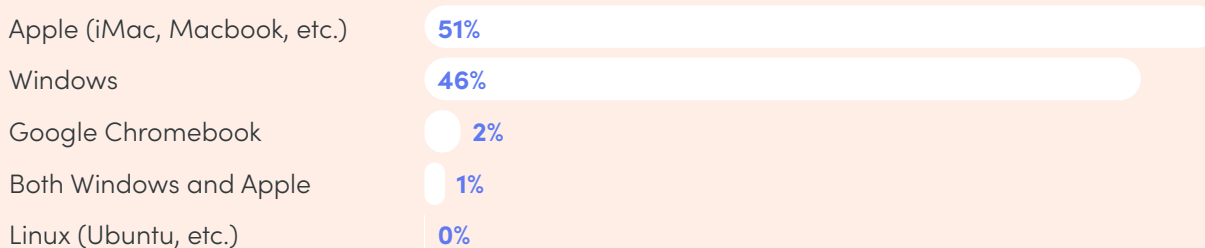
Responses continue to reflect a range of skills and services – from SEO to email marketing. Two notable additions to ‘other’ tools were Zoom and Google Workspace, reflecting the impact of the pandemic on our ways of working.



Other software used in 2021

Google Docs	34%
Google Workspace	8%
Slack	8%
Trello	8%
MS Excel	8%
Grammarly	7%
Zoom	7%
Canva	7%

WHAT KIND OF COMPUTER DO YOU USE?



Freelance copywriters

Apart from a drop in business development through networking events, and a new question added about who we're working with, this year's results have stayed fairly consistent with what we saw in 2020.

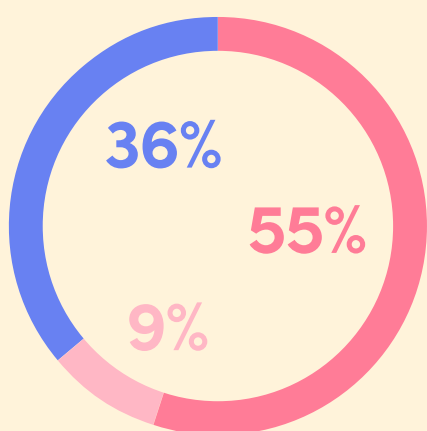
EXPERIENCE BEFORE GOING FREELANCE OR STARTING YOUR OWN AGENCY

The average number of years' experience before going freelance remained consistent with last year.

	2020	2019	2018
Greatest	39	32	30
Average	6	5	6
Median	4	4	4
Least	0	0	0



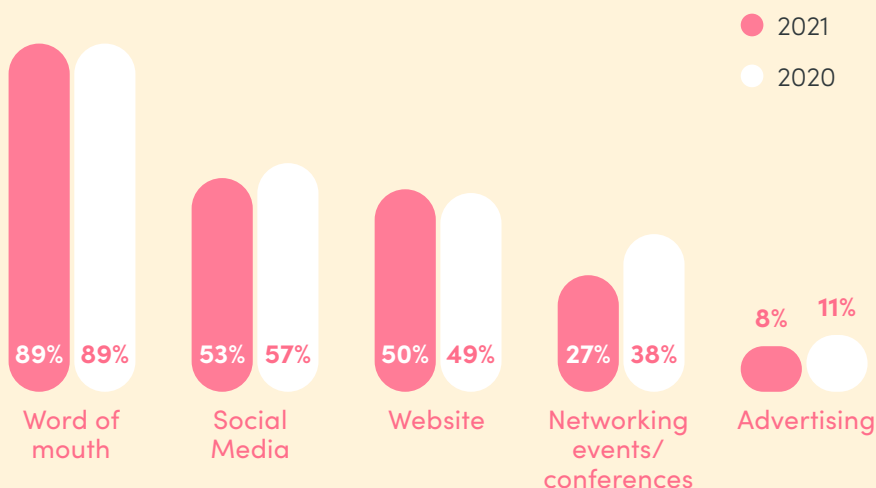
WHO YOU WORK WITH



- Directly with clients 55%
- Agencies 9%
- Fairly equal mix of the two 36%

FINDING NEW CLIENTS

Word of mouth recommendation continues to be the most popular way to find new clients. There was a drop in the percentage of business development done through networking events and conferences as a result of the pandemic, with social media and websites remaining important sources of work.



Freelance rates

This year's results saw some interesting movement in freelance rates, both geographically and across age ranges, while the average day rate continues to rise.



HOW FREELANCERS CHARGE

This year, there was a 2% increase in the percentage of copywriters charging a project fee, and a decrease of 4% in those charging per word.

Freelancers charge in different ways for different projects, so these don't add up to 100%.

Project fee

76%

Preferred

70%

Daily or hourly rate

68%

Preferred

29%

Per word

6%

Preferred

1%

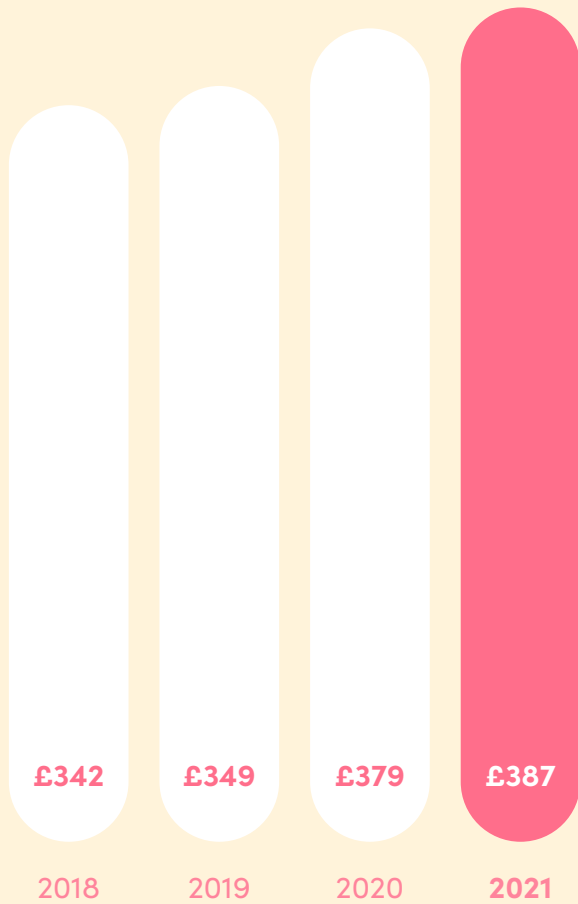
How freelancers charge	2020	2019	2018
Project fee	74%	70%	50%
Daily or hourly rate	69%	66%	47%
Per word	10%	9%	6%

Preferred charging model	2020	2019	2018
Project fee	62%	59%	63%
Daily or hourly rate	35%	40%	36%
Per word	3%	1%	1%

Project fees continue to rise in popularity, while the number of copywriters who prefer to charge per word has fallen.

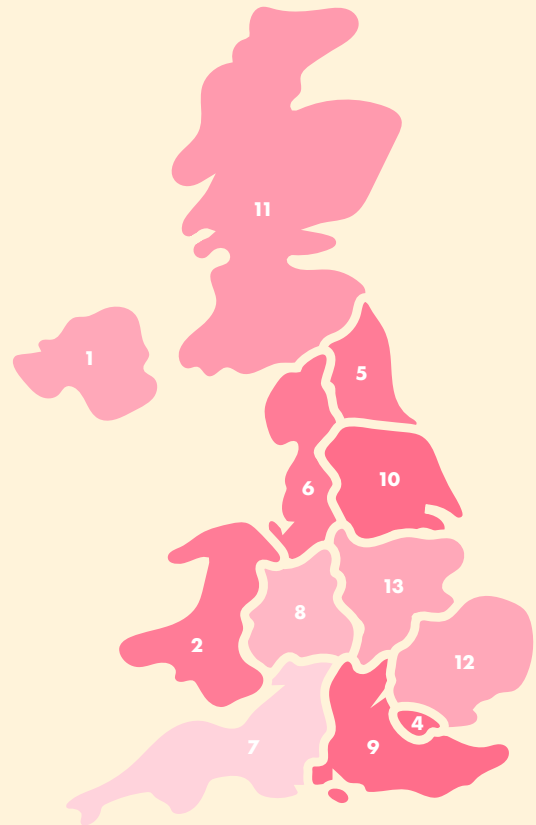
AVERAGE DAY RATE

The data reflects a healthy growth of 8% in the average day rate this year.



AVERAGE RATES BY LOCATION

The North East and the West Midlands had the biggest increases, while average rates were lower in East Anglia, the East Midlands and London. We had a very small sample size from Northern Ireland this year, affecting the average rate.



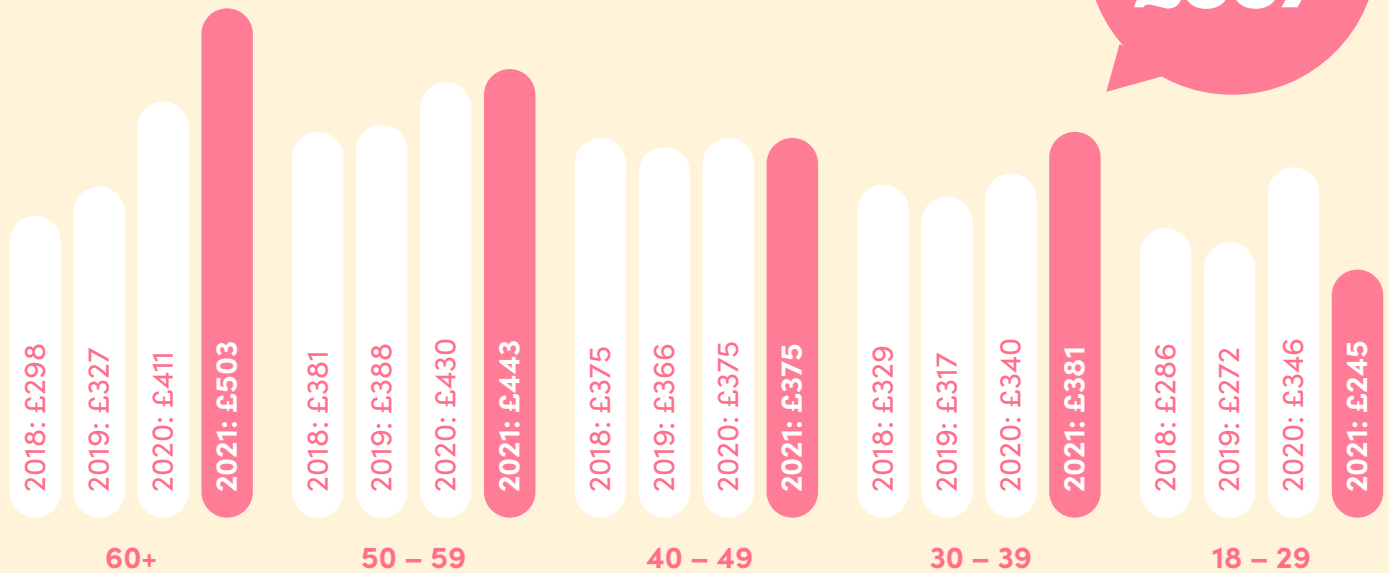
	2021	2020	2019	2018
1. Northern Ireland	£600	n/a	n/a	n/a
2. Wales	£485	£447	£328	£297
3. International	£482	£431	£414	£496
4. London	£436	£446	£361	£405
5. North East	£408	£308	£381	£343
6. North West	£381	£346	£329	£297
7. South West	£379	£391	£355	£336
8. West Midlands	£378	£303	£309	£326
9. South East	£370	£375	£322	£317
10. Yorks and Humber	£365	£278	£282	£249
11. Scotland	£360	£328	£342	£284
12. East Anglia	£320	£373	£436	£419
13. East Midlands	£289	£308	£281	£385

AVERAGE RATES AND AGE

This year sees an interesting increase for the 60+ age group, making it the age group with the highest average day rate for the first time in the history of our survey. In previous years, the average rate tended to increase until age 60, when (on average) it started to fall. This year also saw a significant reduction in average day rate for those aged 18-29, down from £346 to £245.

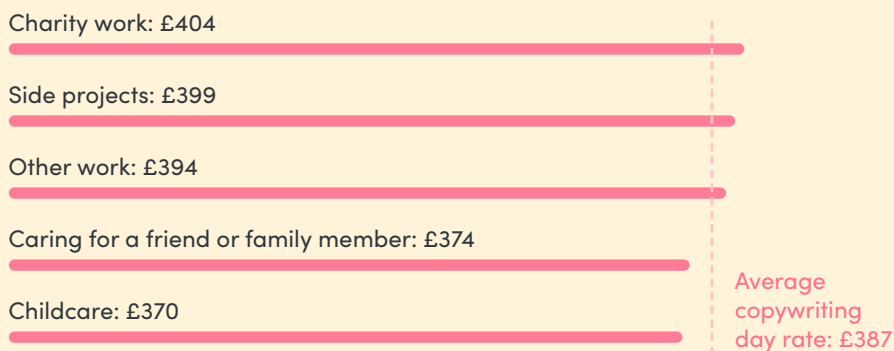
2021 overall average day rate:

£387



AVERAGE DAY RATES COMPARED WITH OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

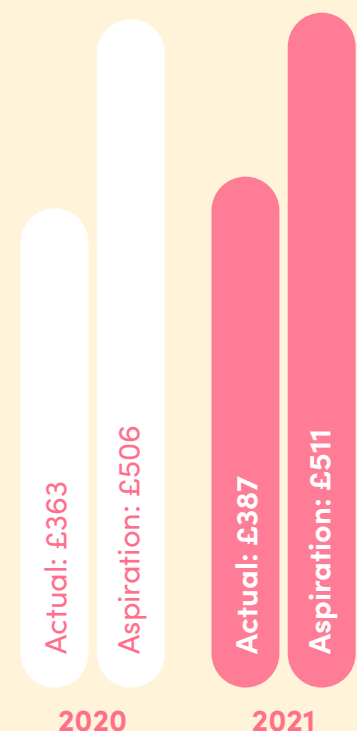
We calculated the average day rates of copywriters with other responsibilities. The average across all responsibilities has risen again to £387, compared with £344 last year, and is now level with the overall average day rate of £387.



	2020	2019	2018
Charity work	£321	£329	£346
Side projects	£386	£315	£371
Other work	£310	£331	£343
Caring for a friend or family member	£325	£316	£307
Childcare	£378	£325	£308
Average	£344	£323	£335

RATE ASPIRATIONS

This year saw a rise of only 1% in our rate aspiration compared with 2020.



Earnings

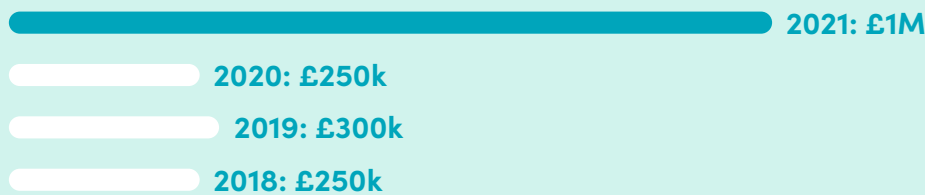


This year we've seen promising increases in copywriters' earnings. Where some age groups have increased their earnings and other age groups have lost out, it's interesting to consider the impact of the pandemic on the income of those copywriters with more caring responsibilities.

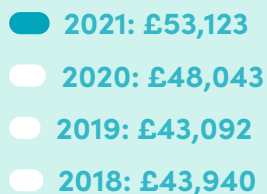
AVERAGE EARNINGS ACROSS ALL EMPLOYMENT TYPES

There was another big increase in average full-time earnings, and a slight increase in part-time earnings too. The highest reported income was £1M. It's worth noting that these figures are all self-reported.

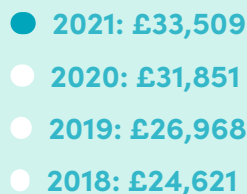
Maximum income reported



Full-time

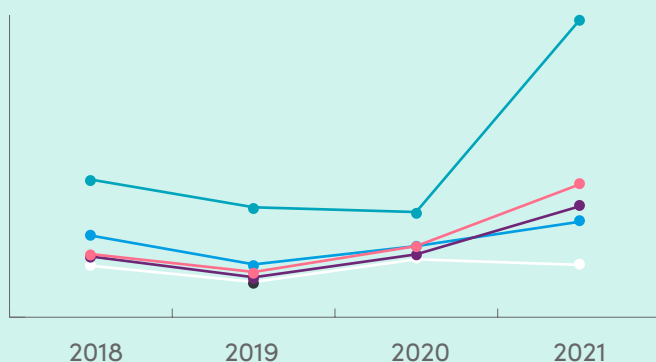


Part-time



INCOME BY EMPLOYMENT TYPE

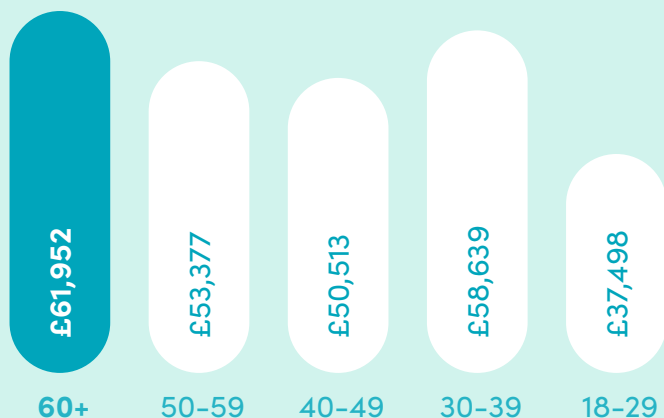
Agency founders continue to earn the most, earning double what they reported last year. The next biggest income increases this year were for employed copywriters (in-house and employed/freelance).



	2018	2019	2020	2021
Agency founder	£60,463	£52,948	£51,659	£103,548
Employed and freelance	£40,468	£35,550	£42,694	£59,631
In-house	£39,874	£34,119	£40,491	£53,769
Freelance	£45,757	£37,585	£42,792	£49,675
Agency employee	£37,673	£32,865	£39,624	£37,978

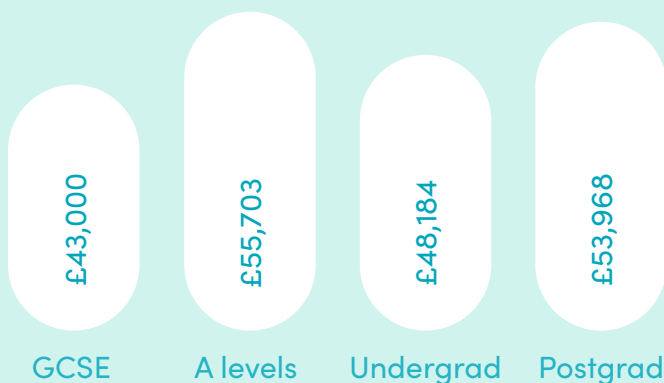
INCOME AND AGE

This year we saw some interesting movement, with a 40% increase in income for those aged 30-39, an 18% increase for those aged 60+ and a 16% increase for those aged 18-29. On the other hand, there was a 22% decrease in income for those aged 50-59, and a decrease of 3% for those aged 40-49.



	2020	2019	2018
60+	£52,475	£38,553	£62,166
50 - 59	£68,406	£46,100	£52,013
40 - 49	£52,152	£41,185	£52,442
30 - 39	£41,959	£34,332	£40,746
18 - 29	£32,385	£31,241	£33,641

INCOME AND EDUCATION



	2020	2019	2018
GCSEs or equivalent	£53,833	£56,873	£61,720
A levels or equivalent	£31,112	£56,873	£61,720
Undergraduate degree	£49,006	£37,360	£41,598
Postgraduate degree	£51,619	£34,650	£37,259

AVERAGE RATES BY LOCATION

London and the South East continue to be the top regions in England for income and are continuing to grow. There has been significant growth in annual income for the Midlands and the North of England this year.

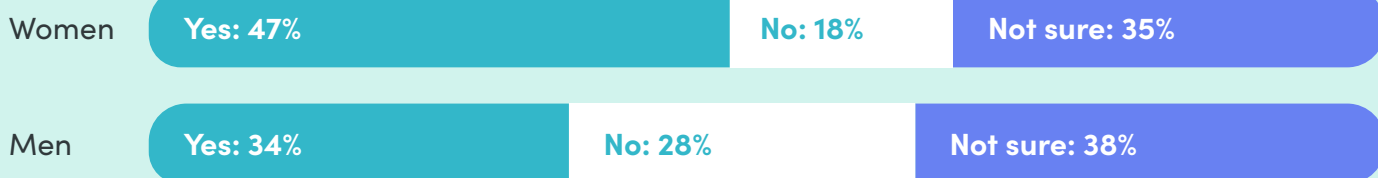


	2021	2020	2019	2018
1. London	£90,940	£60,248	£47,904	£52,904
2. Northern Ireland	£68,500	n/a	n/a	n/a
3. International	£52,854	£46,215	£41,833	£62,919
4. South East	£52,529	£45,343	£36,082	£42,906
5. Scotland	£44,406	£33,397	£38,479	£36,333
6. Yorks & Humber	£42,229	£33,282	£27,316	£28,769
7. West Midlands	£41,814	£36,830	£29,648	£37,691
8. East Midlands	£40,859	£27,297	£25,500	£45,250
9. South West	£40,670	£36,799	£34,151	£38,887
10. East Anglia	£38,756	£41,846	£63,026	£60,416
11. North East	£37,554	£29,375	£37,800	£40,750
12. North West	£36,789	£37,078	£34,563	£32,396
13. Wales	£34,800	£38,692	£22,227	£31,375

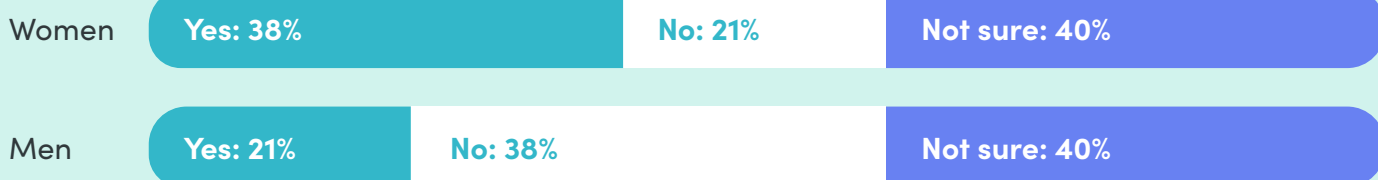
PERCEPTIONS: DOES GENDER HAVE AN IMPACT ON PAY?

This year's results reinforce our previous findings: women are more acutely aware of the role that gender plays in determining pay. However, this year also sees an increase in the number of men who believe there is a gender pay gap.

2021



2020



2019	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	43%	20%	36%
Men	17%	40%	43%

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

INCOME AND GENDER

A particularly stark finding of this year's survey is that the gender pay gap has widened substantially for freelancers, agency founders, and those who are employed and freelance. This follows some great progress towards equality in 2020. We're conscious of the caring responsibilities that have fallen on women, particularly during the pandemic, and presume that these have a considerable part to play.

● Women

● Men

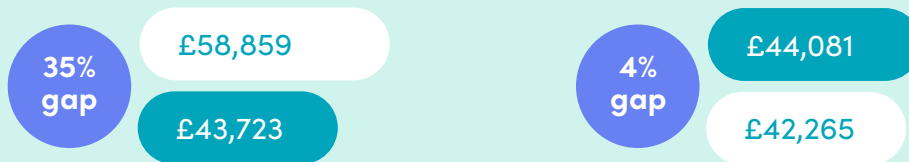
2021

2020

Employed and Freelance



Freelance



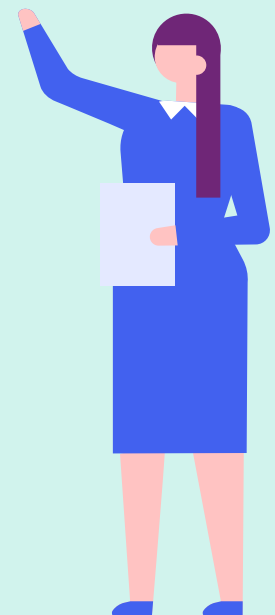
Agency



Agency Founder



In-house



What can ProCopywriters do to support our membership and our profession, both of which consist of a majority of women?

While we consider this, we welcome your feedback, views and suggestions.

	2019 Gap	2018 Gap
Employed and freelance	32%	43%
Freelance	30%	21%
Agency	-5%	26%
Agency Founder	28%	21%
In-house	-9%	15%

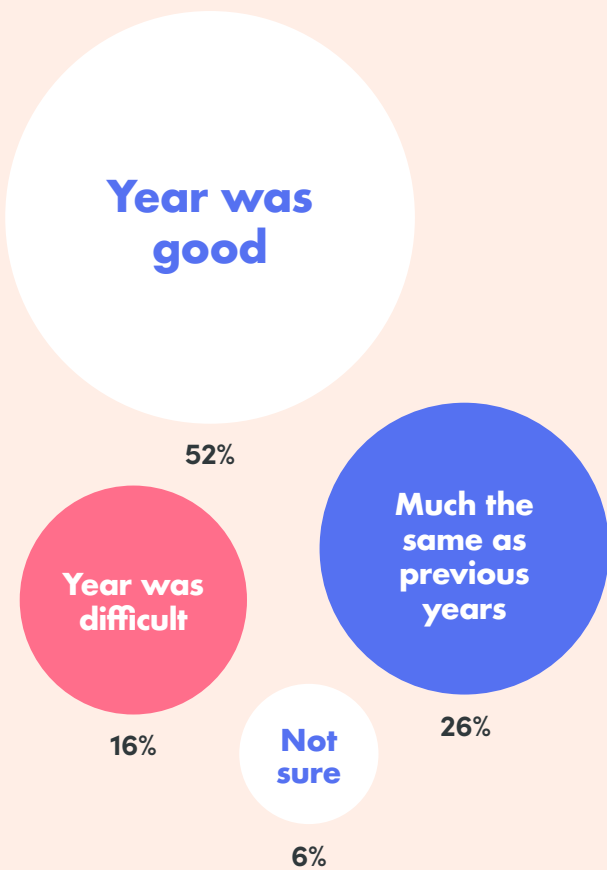
Outlook

The survey data was collected in summer 2021, when COVID restrictions were being lifted across much of the UK.

This year respondents said they were more optimistic and less uncertain about the year ahead, compared with the responses we saw pre-pandemic. This shows an interesting increase in positivity, which may be relative, given the challenges people had faced in the previous year.

Most of our respondents said their work had not been affected by Brexit.

IN PURELY FINANCIAL TERMS, HOW WAS YOUR YEAR?



	2020	2019	2018
Year was good	52%	50%	51%
Much the same as previous years	26%	26%	22%
Year was difficult	16%	14%	15%
Not sure	6%	10%	12%

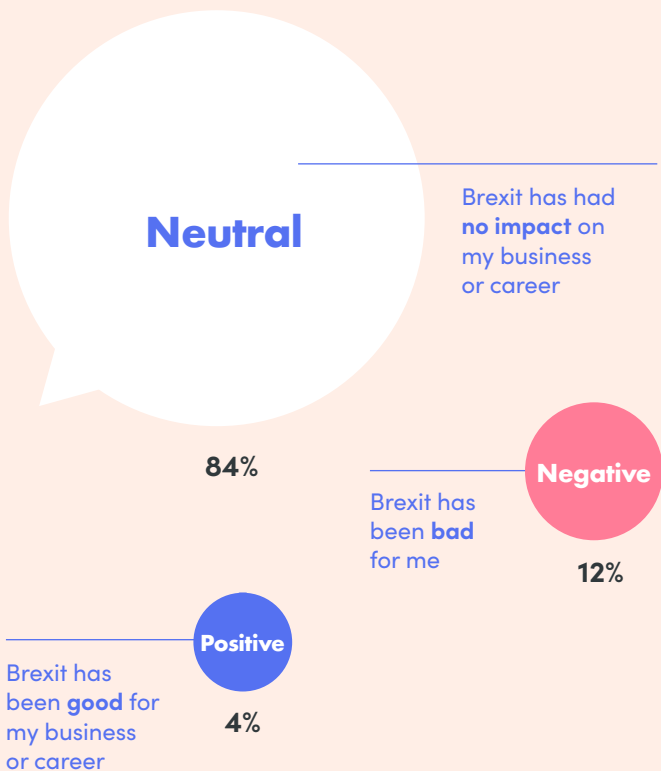
IN TERMS OF YOUR CAREER, ARE YOU OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?



	2020	2019	2018
Yes, I feel optimistic	63%	59%	67%
I'm unsure about what the year will bring	34%	37%	32%
No, I feel pessimistic	3%	4%	1%



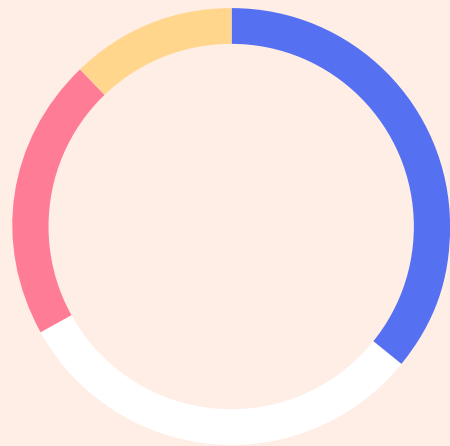
BREXIT HAS HAPPENED. WHAT KIND OF IMPACT HAS BREXIT HAD ON YOUR PROSPECTS OR YOUR CAREER?



	2020	2019	2018
Neutral I'm not sure if Brexit will affect my work as a copywriter	76%	71%	74%
Negative I think Brexit may harm my career or my business	20%	25%	22%
Positive I believe Brexit will have a positive impact on my career	4%	4%	4%

HOW MUCH DID THE PANDEMIC IMPACT YOUR WORK OR BUSINESS?

Those respondents who indicated 'other' gave details of a primarily positive impact, e.g. seeing an increase in work or feeling glad that redundancy had led to a move to freelancing.

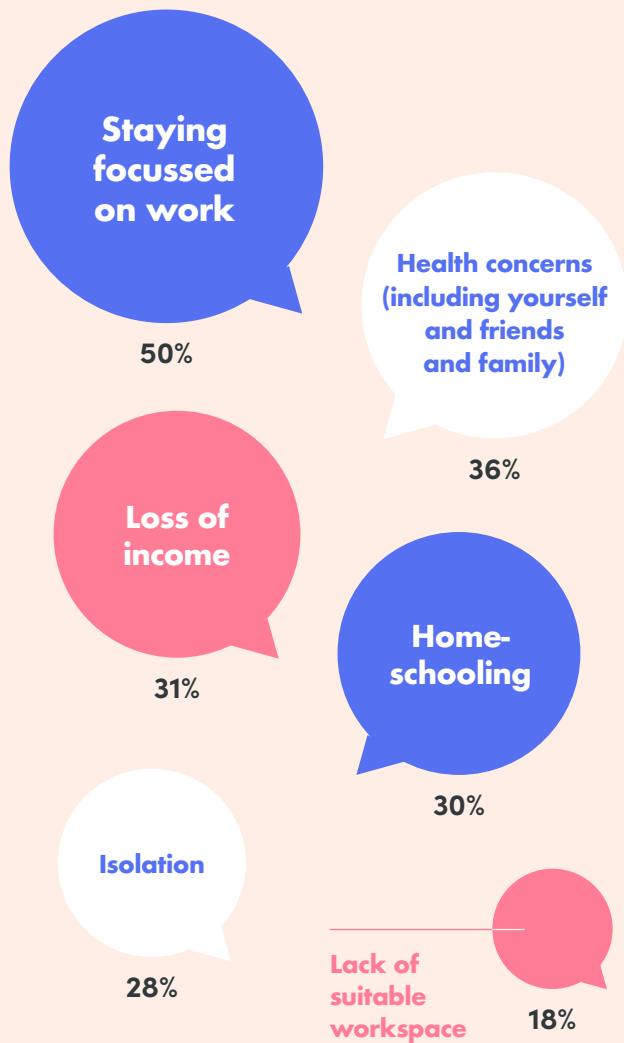


- Little change** 36%
(e.g. some disruption to work, projects, and practices)
- Some significant changes** 31%
(e.g. loss of work, change of work environment)
- Major changes** 21%
(e.g. complete change to workload, clients, job role etc.)
- Other** 12%



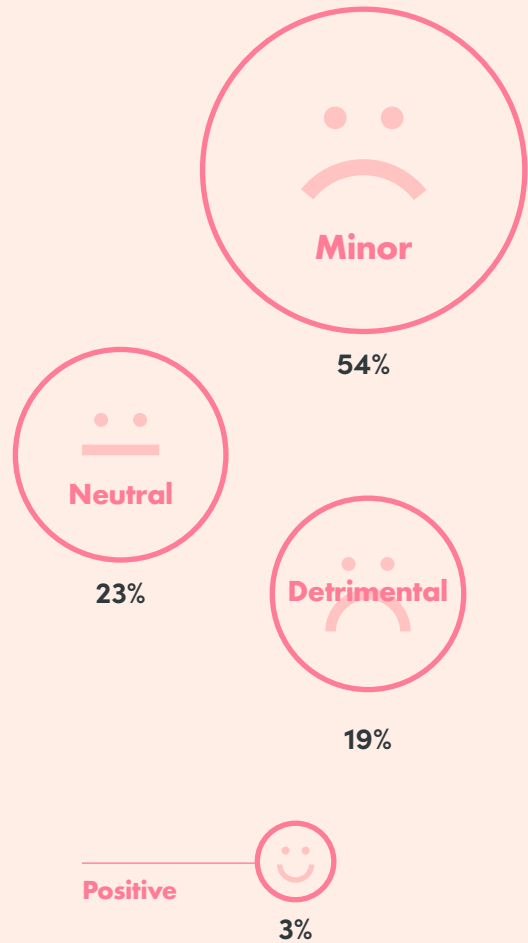


WHAT DID YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT THE PANDEMIC?



HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Unsurprisingly, 73% of respondents indicated that the global pandemic had at least some negative impact on their mental health, either minor or detrimental.



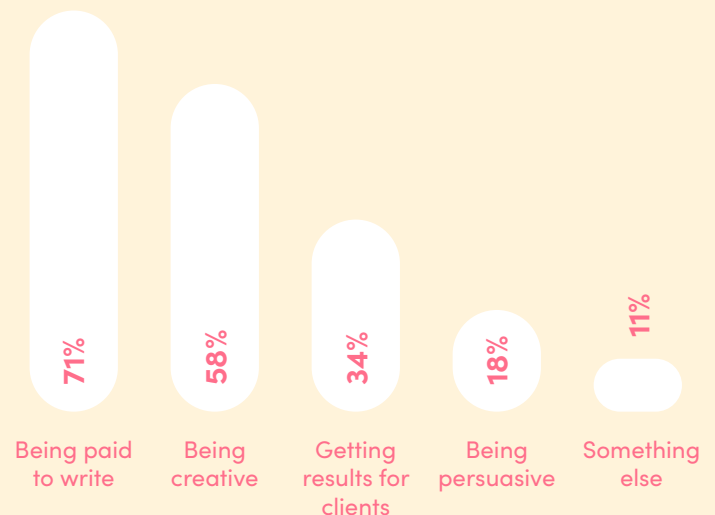
Motivation and aspirations

This year there's an increased focus on the financial rewards of copywriting, perhaps because the pandemic has brought our most basic needs into sharper focus. However, creativity is still prominent, as is our love of creative writing and the importance of positive feedback from our clients and our peers.

We added several brand-new questions to this section for 2021

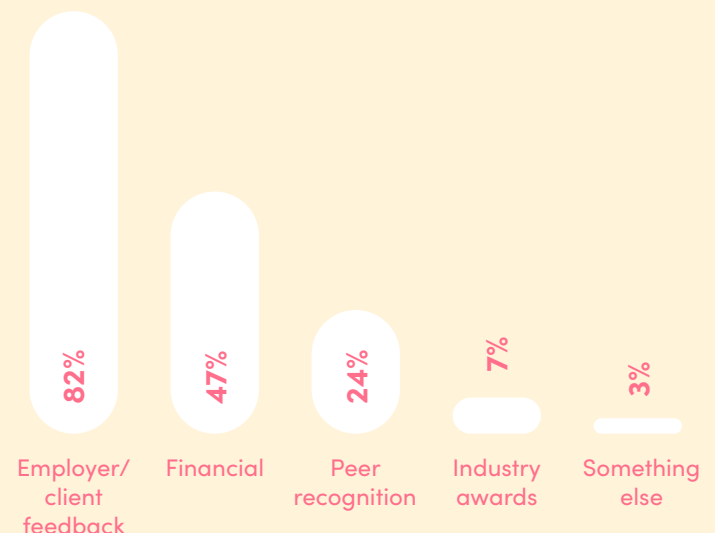
WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT BEING A COPYWRITER?

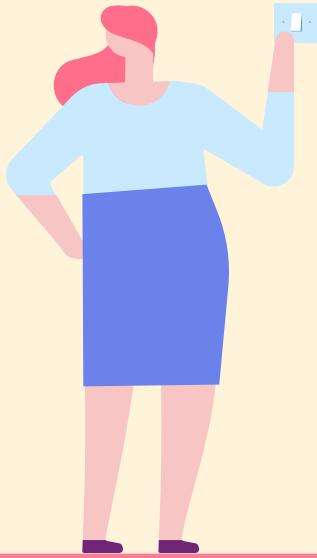
	2020	2019	2018
Being paid to write	60%	45%	42%
Being creative	59%	29%	34%
Getting results for clients	34%	15%	11%
Being persuasive	17%	4%	4%
Something else	13%	7%	9%



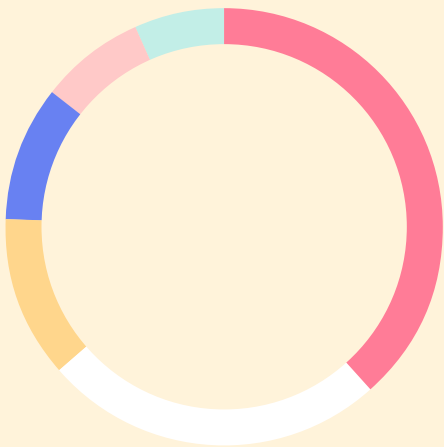
WHAT TYPE OF RECOGNITION DO YOU MOST VALUE?

	2020	2019	2018
Employer/client feedback	81%	69%	69%
Financial	43%	19%	16%
Peer recognition	26%	8%	10%
Industry awards	7%	1%	2%
Something else	6%	3%	3%





YOU GET TO FLICK A SWITCH AND CHANGE ONE OF THESE THINGS TO MAKE YOUR JOB BETTER. WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE?



- More money 35%
- More respect for the craft of copywriting 23%
- More interesting subject matter 11%
- More realistic deadlines 9%
- Higher profile clients 7%
- More creative freedom 6%

9% of respondents wouldn't flick the switch!

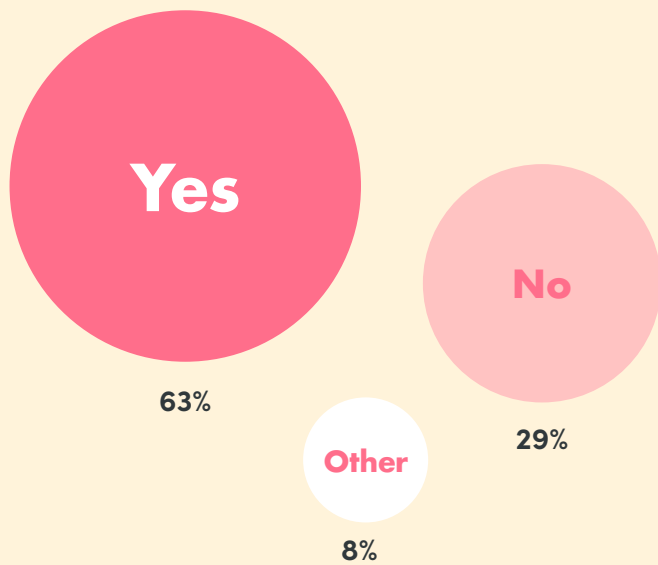
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CAREER TO DEVELOP OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS?



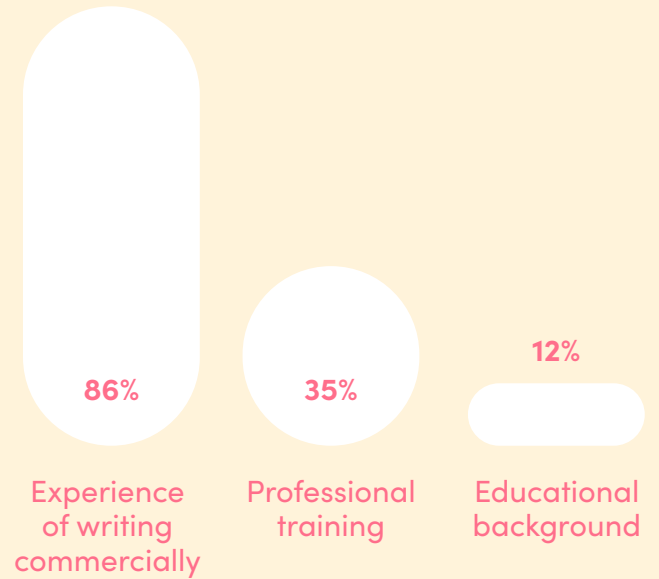
WHAT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO YOU IN DEVELOPING YOUR COPYWRITING CAREER?



WOULD YOU BENEFIT FROM A COPYWRITER ACCREDITATION SCHEME?



AN ACCREDITATION SCHEME FOR COPYWRITERS SHOULD ATTEST TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S?



WORD CLOUD OF 'OTHER' RESPONSES (13%):



My copywriting career has improved thanks to...

NETWORKING

ZOOM

COPYWRITER
COMMUNITY

WORKING IN
AN AGENCY

"ProCopywriters networking and training – it keeps me feeling clued in while doing what can be a pretty solitary job."

READING

MENTORING
AND COACHING

"ProCopywriters – two of my biggest clients found me via the directory."

"Working at a big company with marketers and sales units. It's an essential experience."

"Push aside ego and leave your biases at the door. Assume that you know nothing."

"Relationships. Your network is the most important part of your business."

"ProCopywriters training and conference sessions."

LINKEDIN

SELF-BELIEF

CONFIDENCE

TRAINING

"Joining ProCopywriters!"

"An open mind, a drive to learn, and a healthy dose of curiosity."

"Experience of people and life – being curious and interested in people."

PRACTICE

FEEDBACK

SPECIALISING

THE PANDEMIC/
REDUNDANCY

"Treating copywriting as a business, not seeing it 'just' as writing."

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 Sophie de Albuquerque using data processed by **Jo Robertson**. Design is by **Make Good Design**.

Data collection and publicity

The survey was publicly available on SurveyMonkey during the summer of 2021. 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

561 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

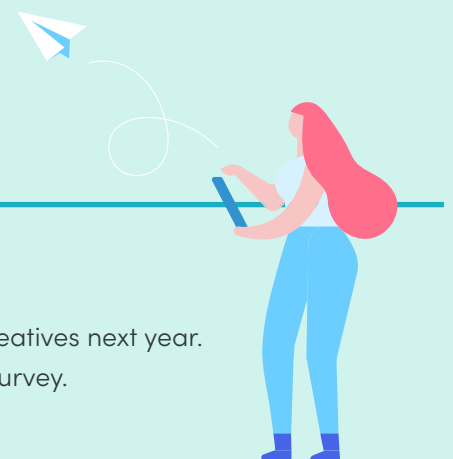
Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete this survey. Your responses provide a fascinating insight into the world of commercial writers.

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 sponsoring this survey.

