



ProCopywriters Survey 2023

A comprehensive survey of the
copywriting profession

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Introduction

Welcome back to the ProCopywriters survey. We're delighted to be back after a year off, and eager to see what has changed since 2021.

Thank you to the sponsors who have helped to fund this survey. Radix Communications, our headline sponsor, as well as 23 micro sponsors, have made it possible for us to produce and prepare this report.

One story that emerges from this report is the incredible variety of experiences that exist under the 'copywriting' umbrella. The work of a copywriter can take so many different shapes. Copywriters can be writing blog posts for local businesses, naming global brands, defining the structure of digital experiences, preparing bids for major projects, or writing scripts for television ads. Copywriters use many different job titles to describe their work, offer many different services, and serve a huge breadth of industries. Our uniting factor is that we all use words to make a difference – and in most cases that difference is financial.

In an effort to make the survey more user-friendly, we transposed the questions to a new survey platform. Unfortunately this means that some comparisons with previous years are not possible – hence their exclusion.

I'm pleased to see an increasing number of responses from in-house and agency copywriters. As ProCopywriters welcomes more and more corporate and agency members, these numbers should continue to rise.

The gender pay gap has narrowed for all categories of copywriter, apart from in-house copywriters. However, the relatively small sample size does diminish the significance of these results. Perceptions around the existence of the gender pay gap have also changed. In 2021, only 34% of male respondents believed that gender made an impact on pay. In 2023, the number fell to 28%.

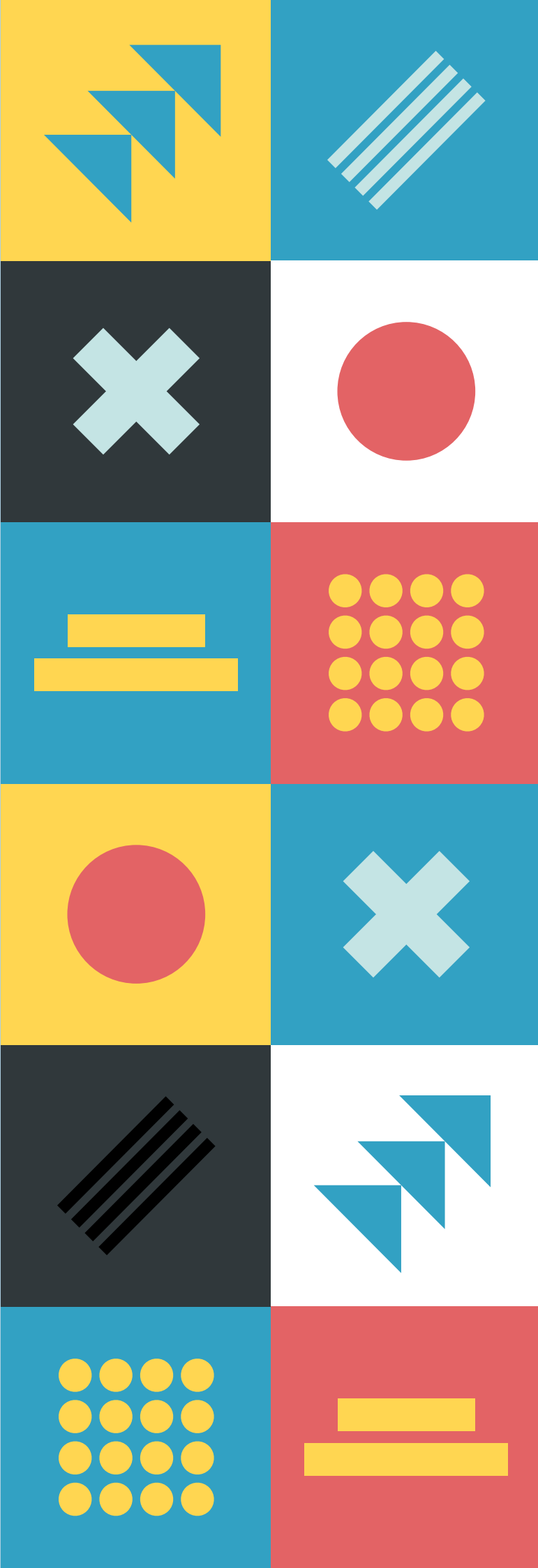
And finally I want to thank all of the 520 copywriters who gave up their time to complete this survey. We're immensely grateful for your time and attention.

Leif Kendall

Organiser, ProCopywriters and CopyCon

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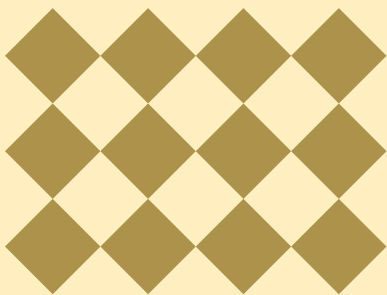
Emma Page
procopywriters.co.uk/copywriters/emma-page

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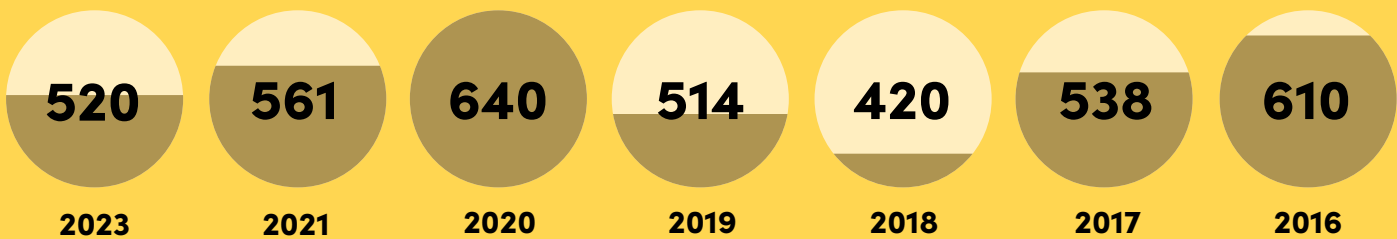
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Demographics

Who completed the survey?



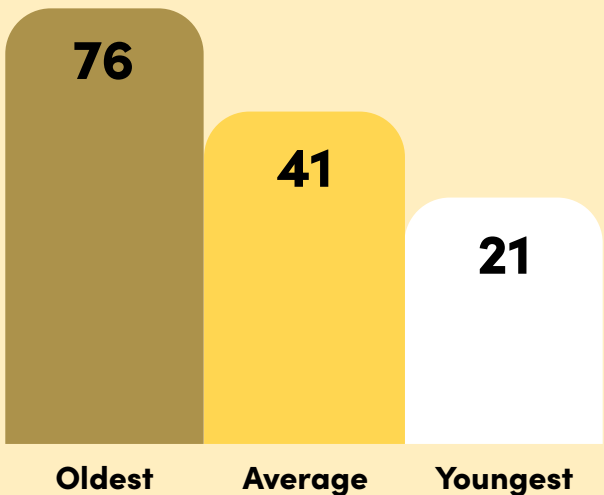
Number of respondents



Once again we’ve received positive support from the copywriting community, although we clearly need to reverse the gradual decline in respondent numbers. We will continue to look for ways to reach more people so we can get a broader profile of the copywriting profession.

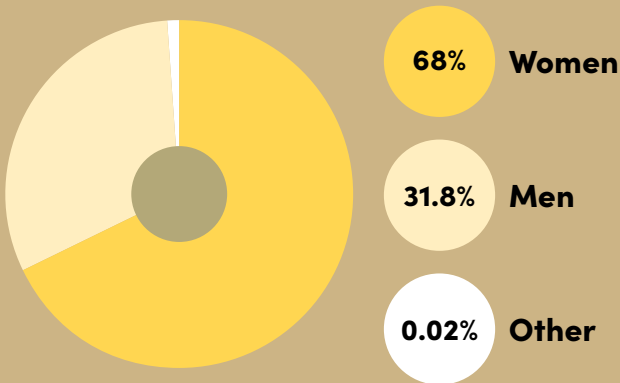
ProCopywriters currently has 875 members, a sum that includes freelance copywriters and in-house writers at a number of companies and agencies. Because the survey is anonymous, we do not know how many of our members completed the survey.

Age



	2021	2020	2019
Oldest	75	73	67
Average	42	41	40
Youngest	21	20	20

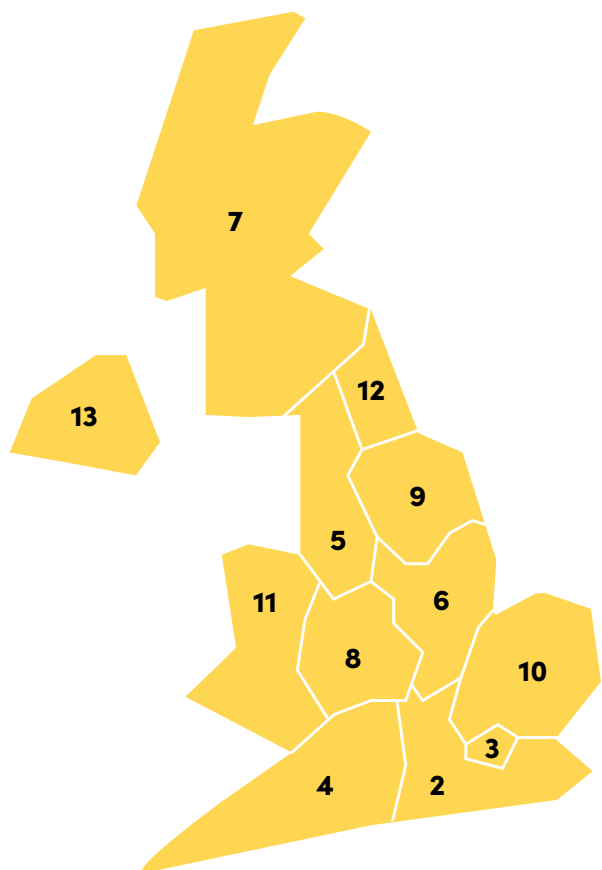
Gender



In recognition of the ongoing cultural conversations around gender and identity, we will use a more inclusive way to ask about gender in future surveys.

	2021	2020	2019
Women	66%	62%	66%
Men	32%	38%	34%
Other	2%	–	–

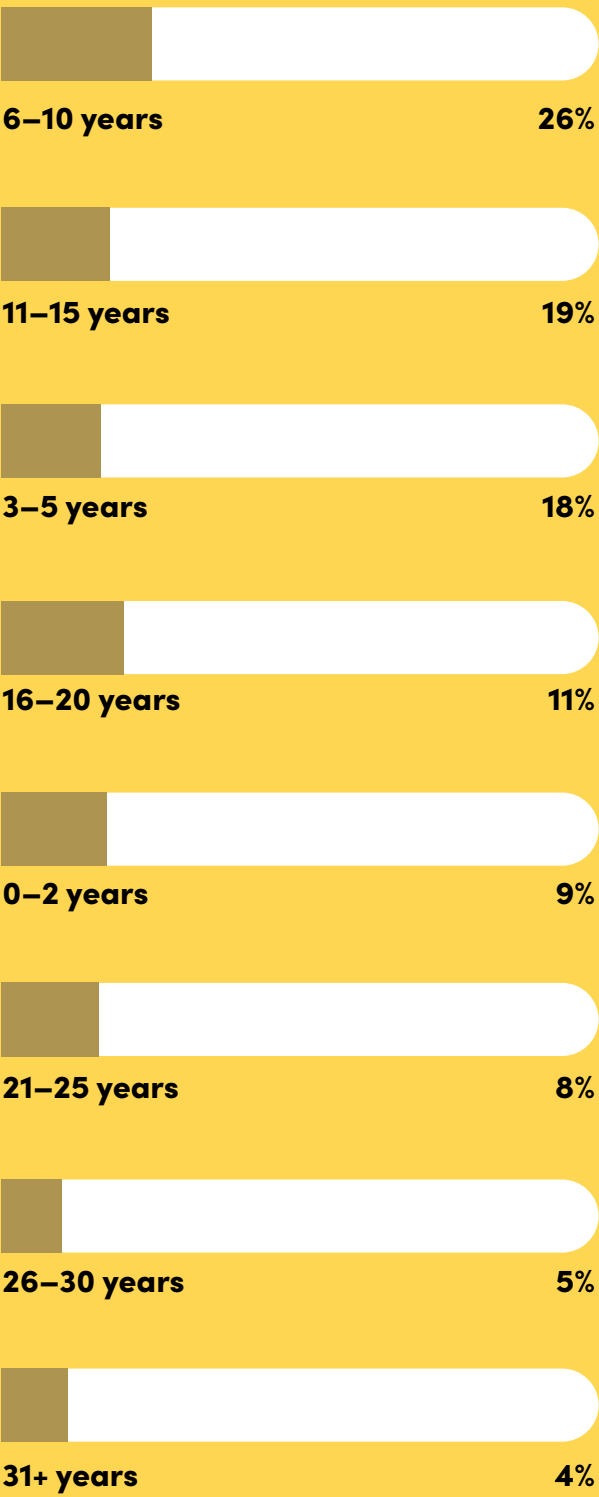
Location



	2023	2021	2020	2019
1 International	20%	12%	21%	12%
2 South East	18%	21%	16%	18%
3 London	14%	17%	14%	17%
4 South West	12%	12%	12%	13%
5 North West	7%	7%	8%	10%
6 East Midlands	5%	7%	3%	3%
7 Scotland	5%	3%	4%	4%
8 West Midlands	5%	5%	7%	6%
9 Yorks & Humber	5%	5%	5%	8%
10 East Anglia	4%	5%	6%	4%
11 Wales	2%	2%	2%	2%
12 North East	1%	3%	2%	1%
13 Northern Ireland	1%	0.5%	0%	1%

Experience

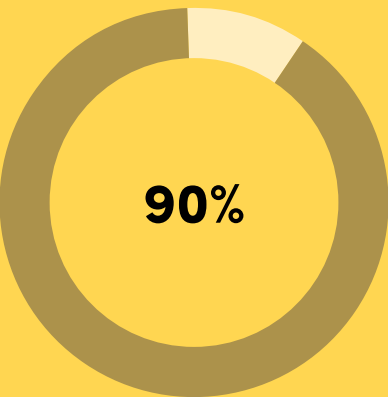
How many years of professional copywriting experience do you have?



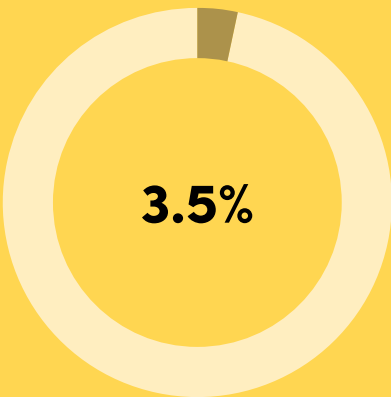
Our respondents have years of copywriting experience. This suggests that their responses are informed by a solid foundation of on-the-job experience.

Race

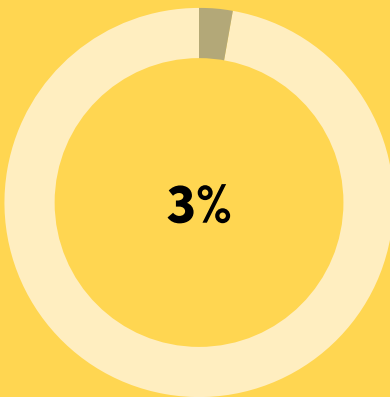
Our respondents are somewhat less diverse than the UK population as a whole; according to the 2021 Census, 81.7% of the UK population are 'White', whereas 90% of our respondents fit into this category.



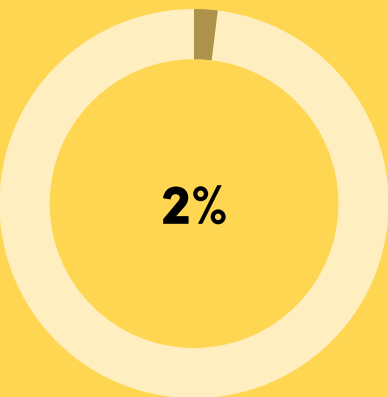
White
(including English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Irish, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Cornish and others)



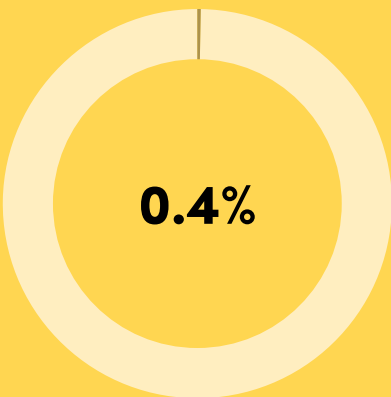
Asian/Asian British
(including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)



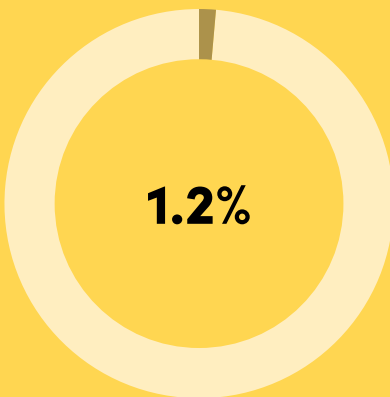
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups



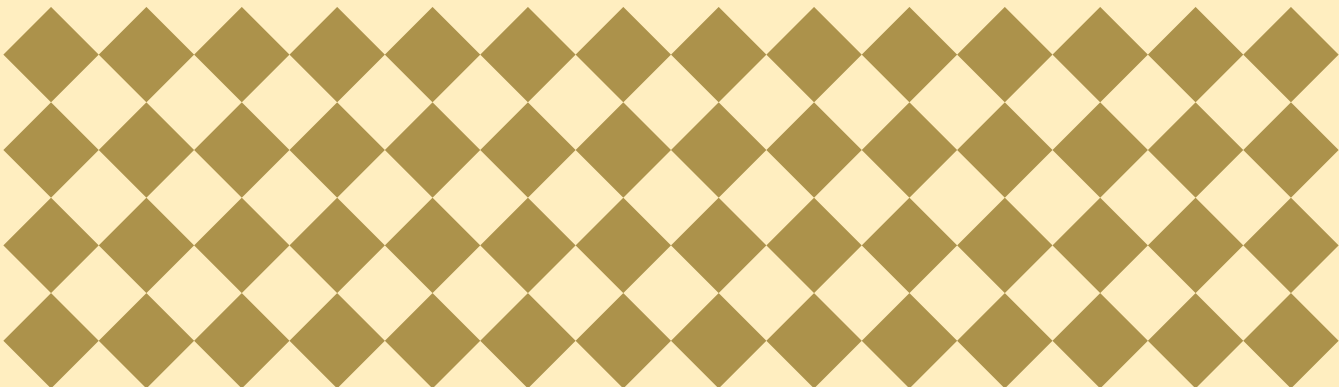
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British



Arab



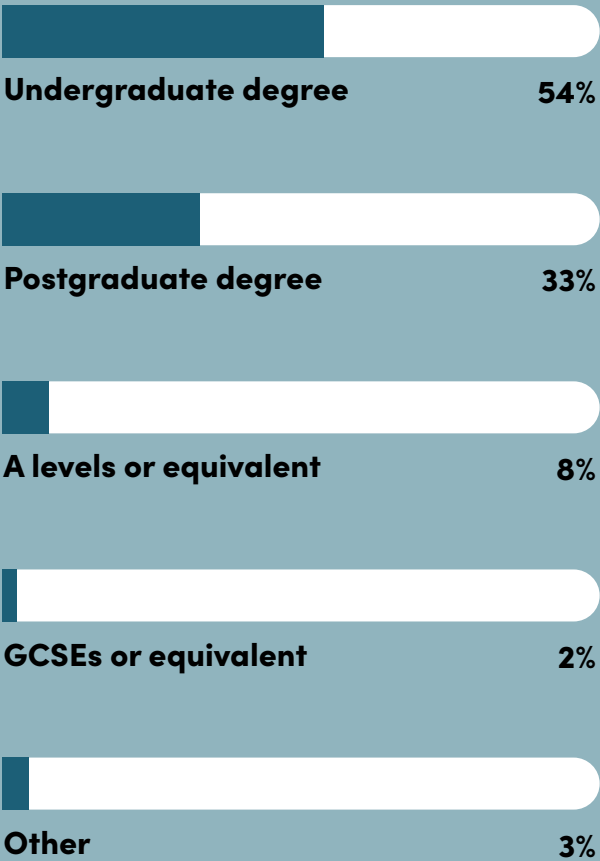
Other



Education, Training and Development

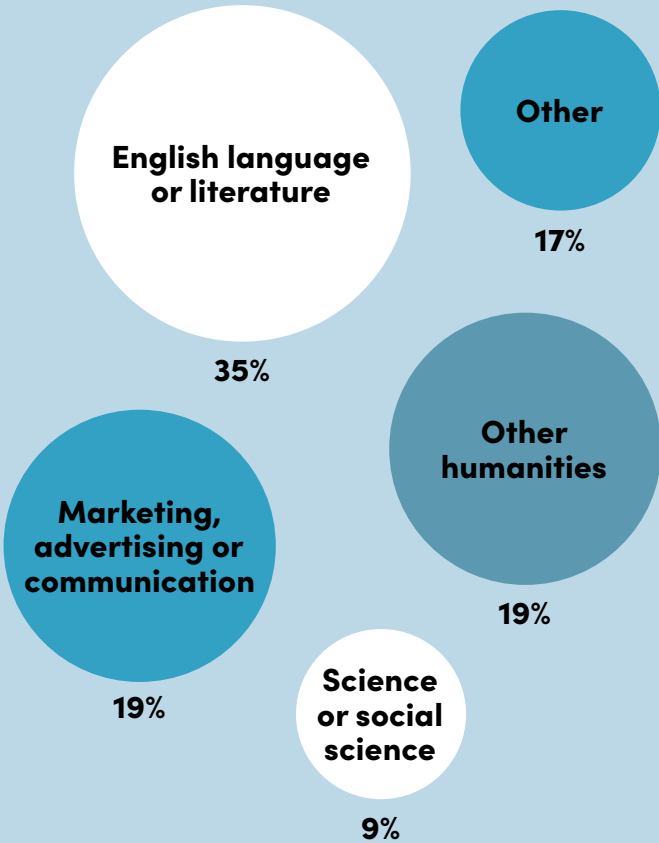
In addition to our usual questions about education, we included new questions about continuing professional development (CPD).

Highest level of qualification



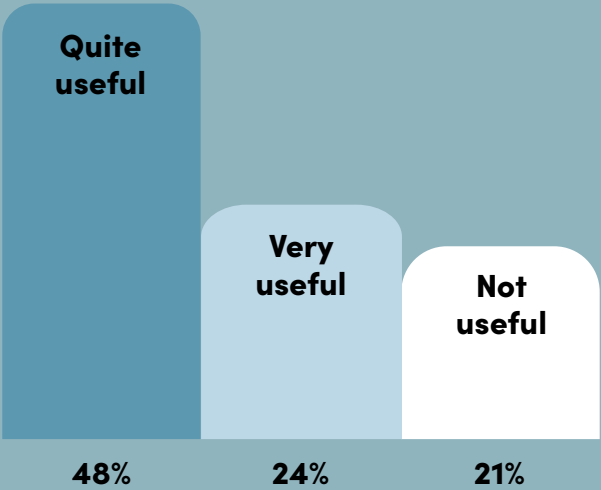
	2021	2020
Undergraduate degree	53%	57%
Postgraduate degree	32%	28%
A levels or equivalent	8%	7%
GCSEs or equivalent	3%	2%
Other	4%	6%

What was the main focus of your degree?



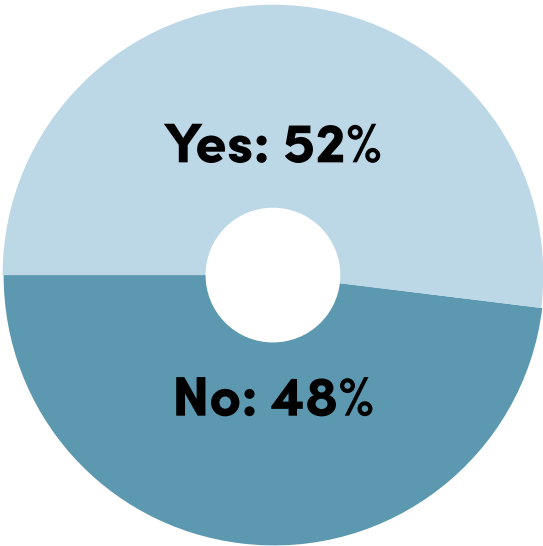
	2021	2020
English language or literature	36%	32%
Other	22%	22%
Marketing, advertising or communication	20%	20%
Other humanities	16%	16%
Science or social science	10%	10%

Has your degree been useful in developing your copywriting career?



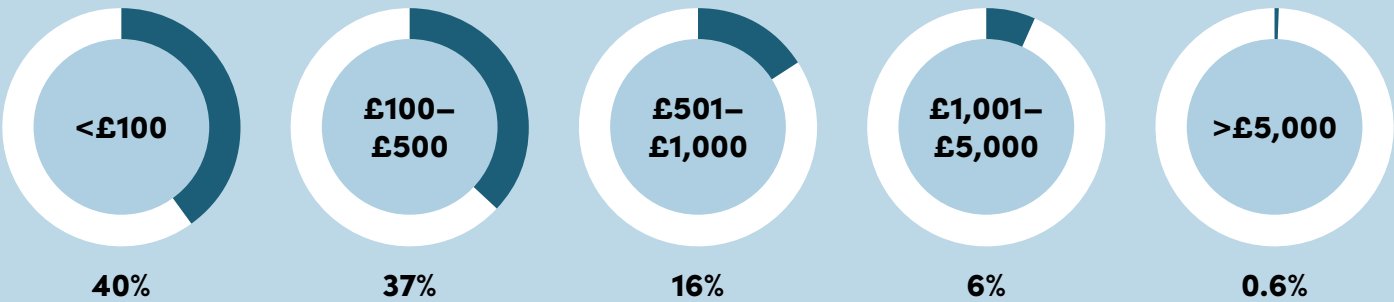
	2021	2020
Quite useful	49%	49%
Very useful	26%	24%
Not useful	23%	23%

Have you completed any copywriting training during your career?



	2021	2020
Yes	57%	51%
No	43%	49%

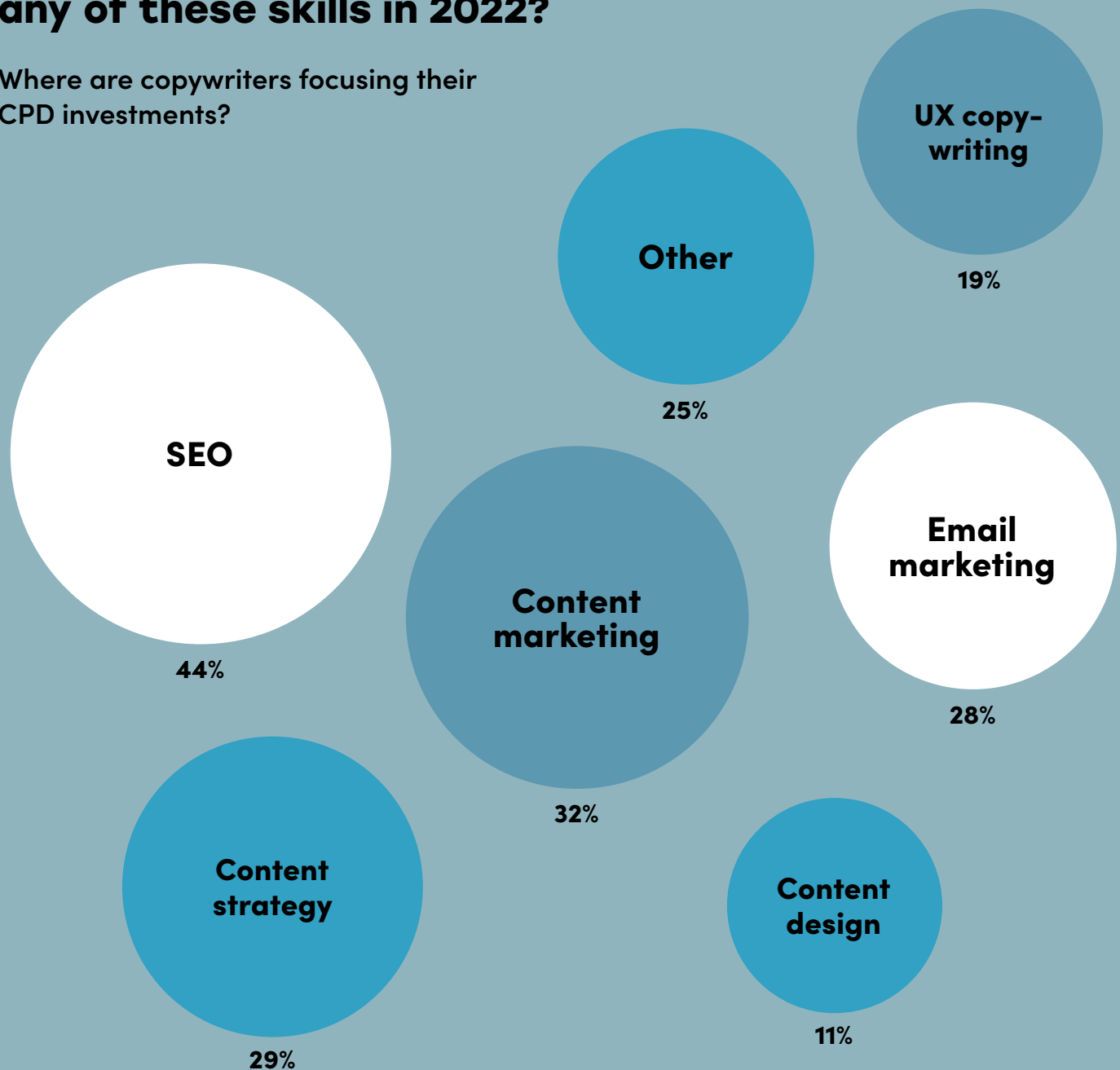
How much do you (or your employer) spend on your training and development each year?



For the first time we asked how much copywriters spend on continuing professional development (CPD). 59% of respondents spent more than £100 on CPD in the previous year.

Did you invest in learning any of these skills in 2022?

Where are copywriters focusing their CPD investments?



Other responses included:

Social media

Business management

Mini MBA in Marketing

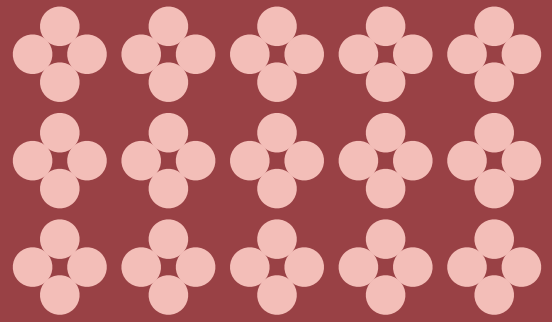
Brand

Creative thinking

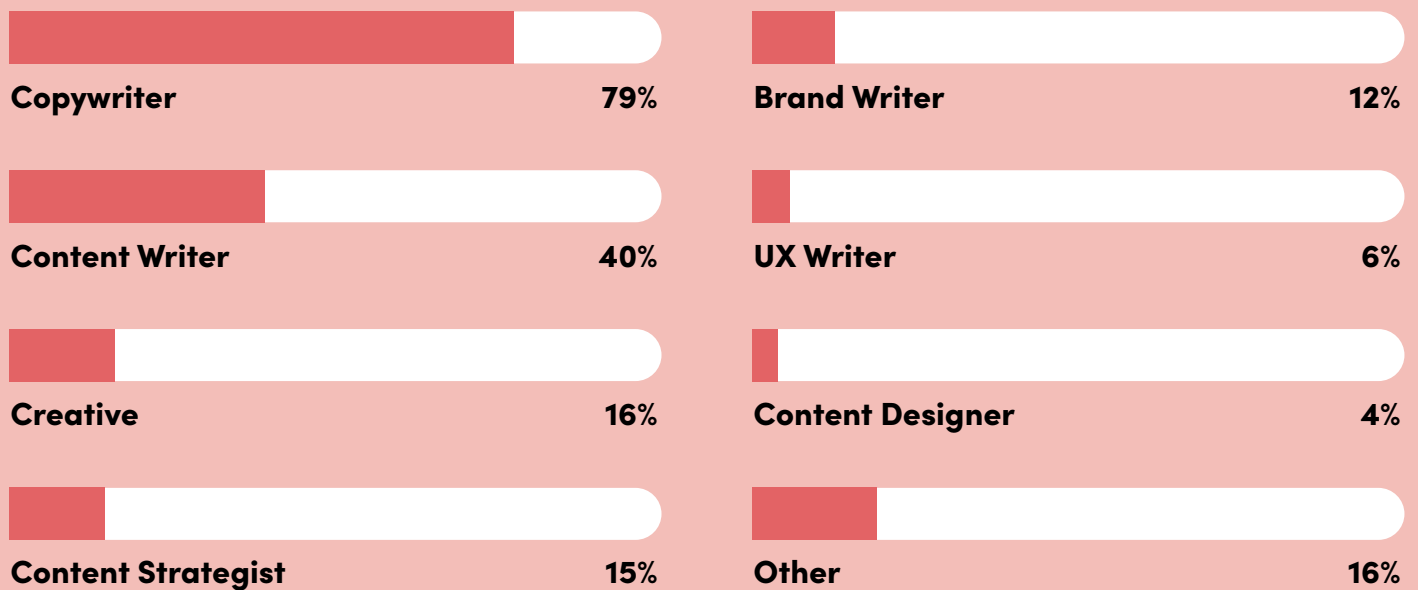
AI for copywriting

Landing pages

Working Practices



How do you describe yourself?

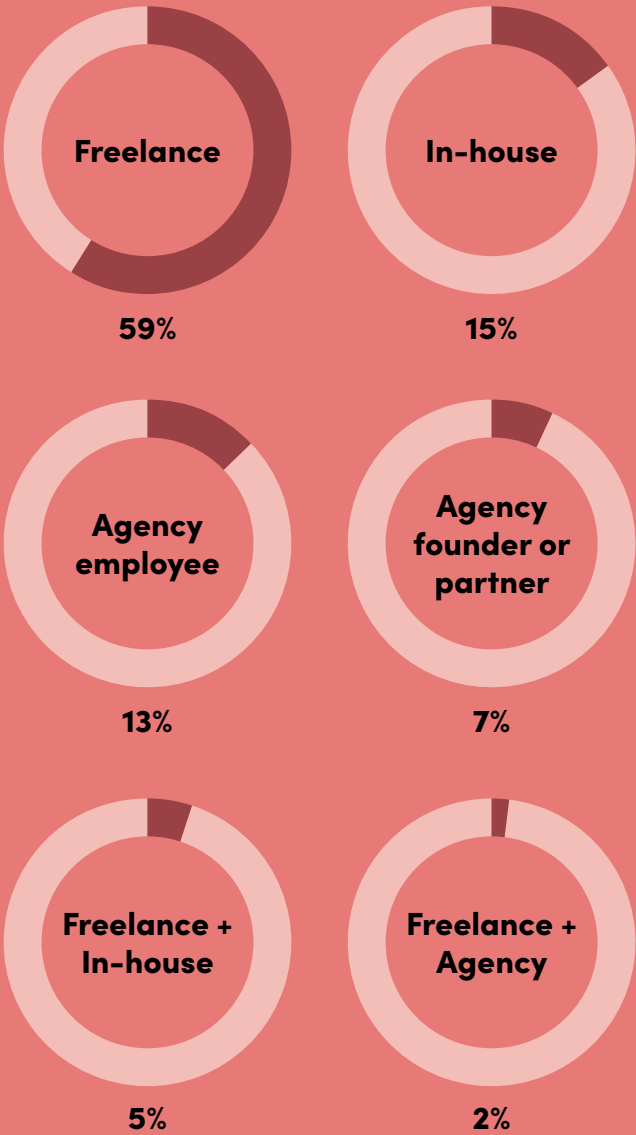


Commercial writers take many forms and work under a variety of job titles. Here's how our respondents identify themselves. Some respondents use more than one descriptor – so the percentages do not tally 100.

Other responses included:



Employment model

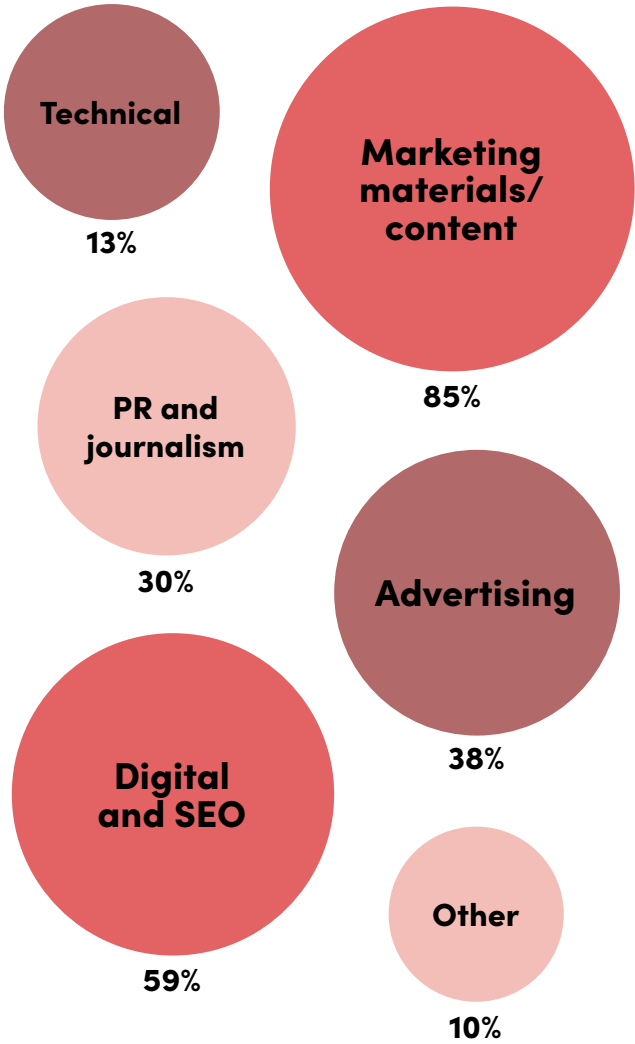


More responses from agency and in-house copywriters suggest that we’re slowly reaching a wider audience.

	2021	2020
Freelance	67%	57%
In-house	8%	13%
Agency employee	10%	12%
Agency founder or partner	6%	6%
Freelance + In-house	NA	NA
Freelance + Agency	NA	NA

What kind of copywriting do you do?

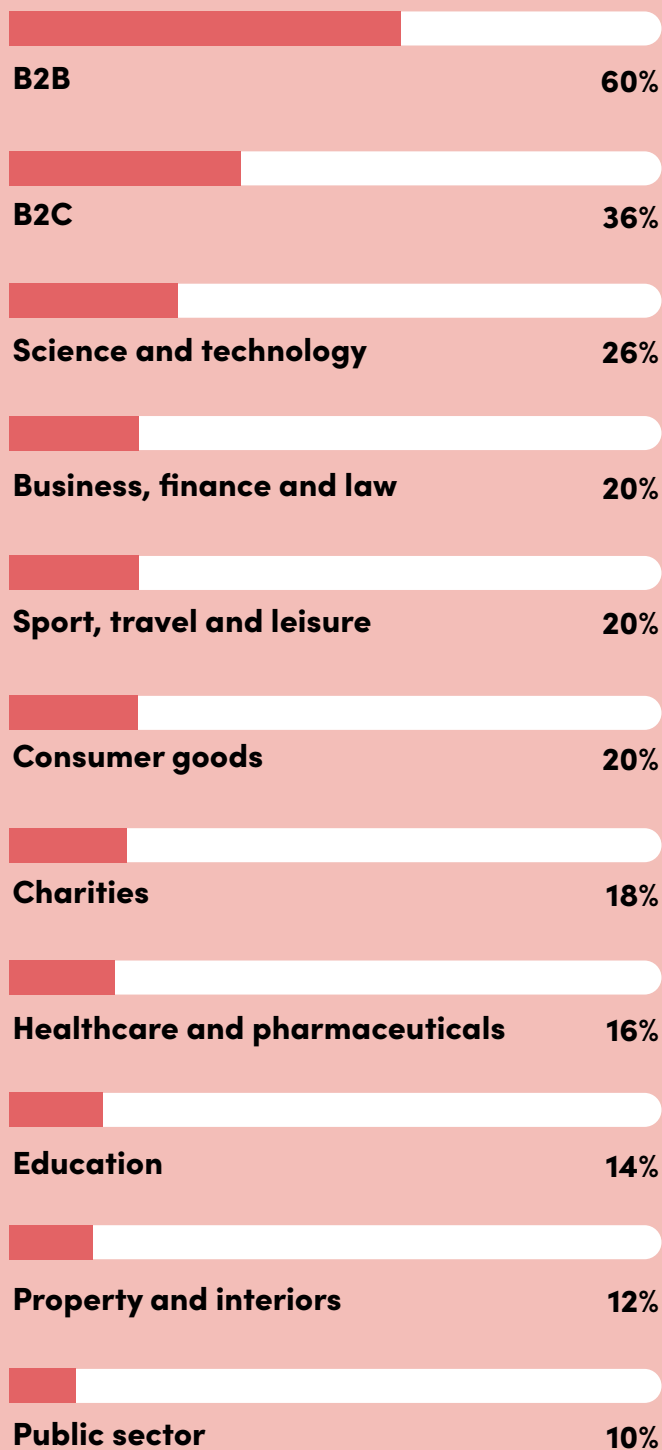
Our respondents are engaged in the following types of work.



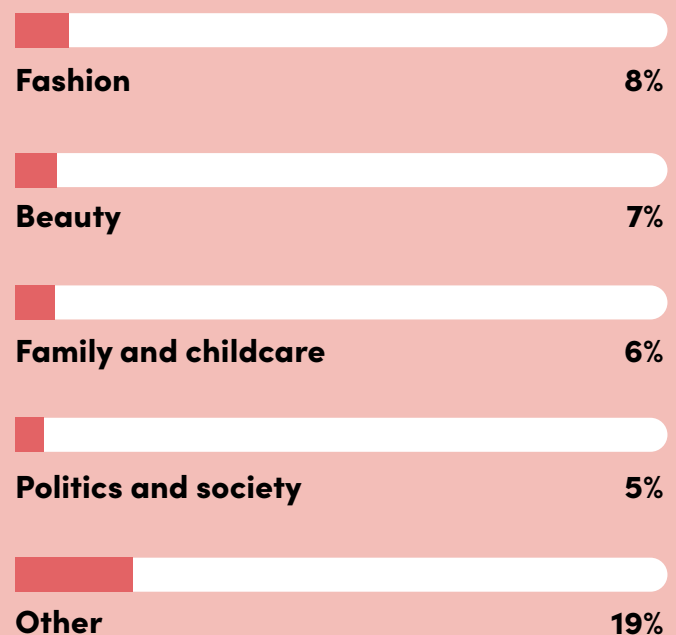
Other responses included:



Which sector do you specialise in?



	2021	2020
B2B	63%	57%
B2C	25%	29%
Science and technology	29%	27%
Business, finance and law	21%	25%
Sport, travel and leisure	15%	13%
Consumer goods	12%	16%
Charities	14%	13%
Healthcare and pharmaceuticals	16%	14%
Education	16%	14%
Property and interiors	11%	10%
Public sector	7%	9%
Fashion	7%	6%
Beauty	9%	9%
Family and childcare	2%	3%
Politics and society	3%	2%
Other	NA	NA



Other responses included:

Automotive

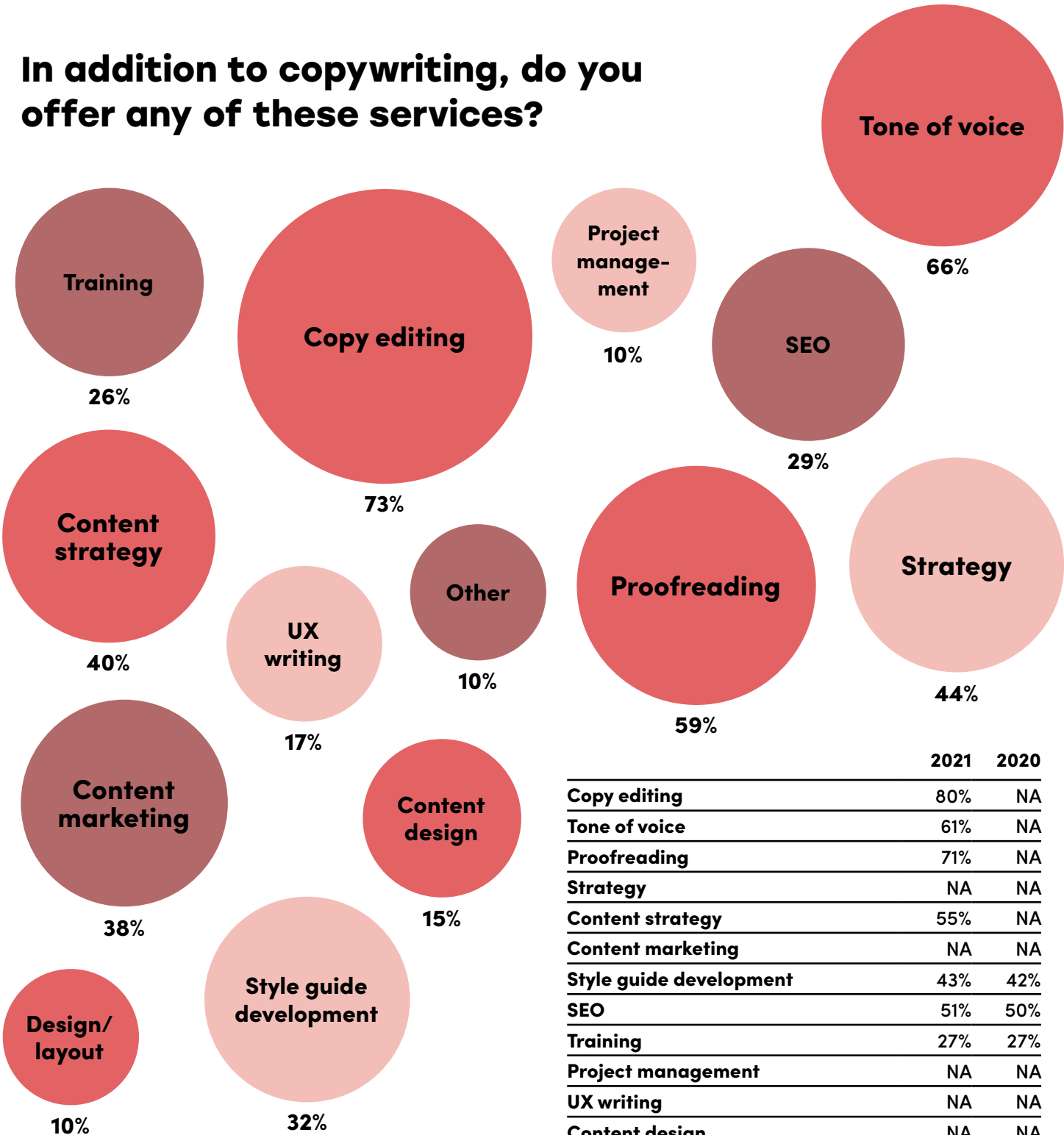
Recruitment

Ecommerce

Logistics

Gaming

In addition to copywriting, do you offer any of these services?



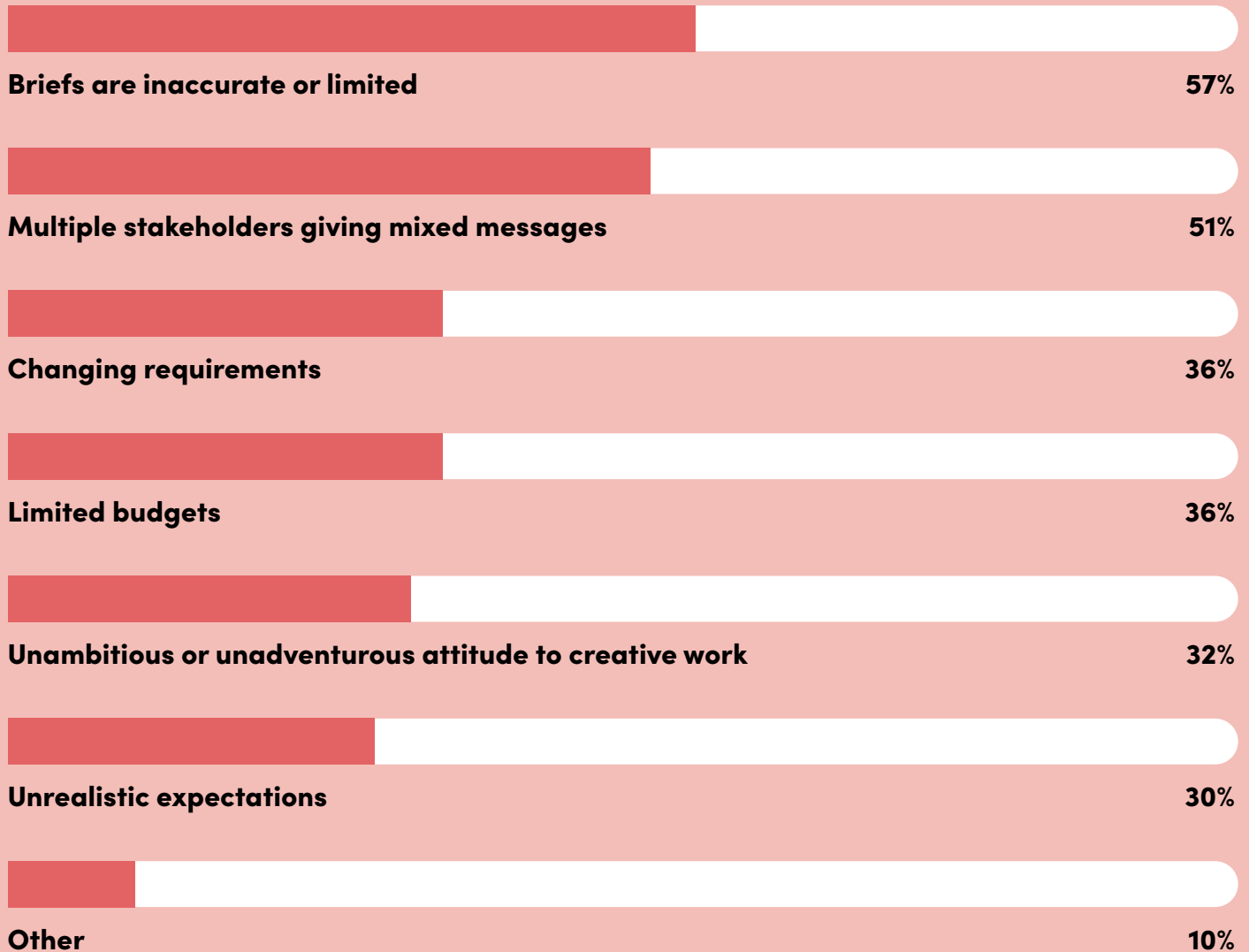
The inclusion of new options this year mean that we do not have comparison data for every service.

	2021	2020
Copy editing	80%	NA
Tone of voice	61%	NA
Proofreading	71%	NA
Strategy	NA	NA
Content strategy	55%	NA
Content marketing	NA	NA
Style guide development	43%	42%
SEO	51%	50%
Training	27%	27%
Project management	NA	NA
UX writing	NA	NA
Content design	NA	NA
Design/layout	22%	21%
Other	NA	NA
Politics and society	3%	2%
Other	NA	NA

Other responses included:

- Scriptwriting
- PR
- Naming
- Workshops
- Podcasting

What's the hardest part about working with clients?



Being creative, original, inspired and persuasive is just half the battle of being a copywriter. The hardest part can be managing your clients and colleagues.

Other responses included:

Ghosting

Shifting deadlines

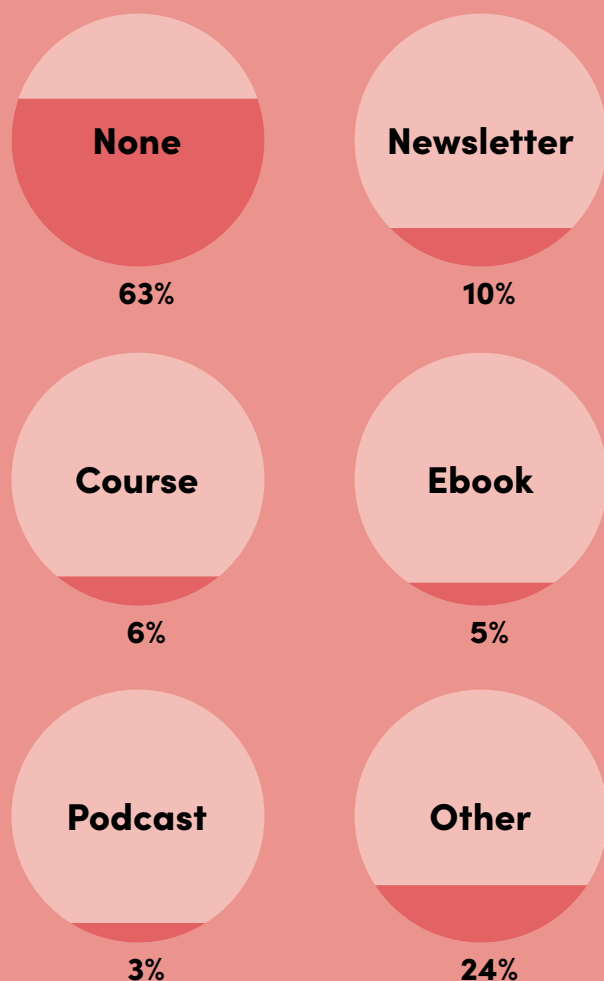
Confusing feedback

Lack of understanding of copywriting as a skill (and the value it brings)

Late payments

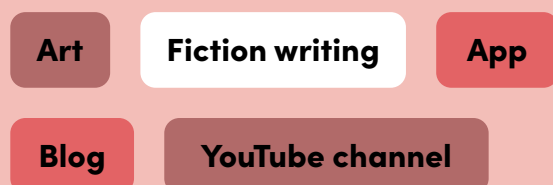
Outdated writing tastes and expectations

Do you have a side project?

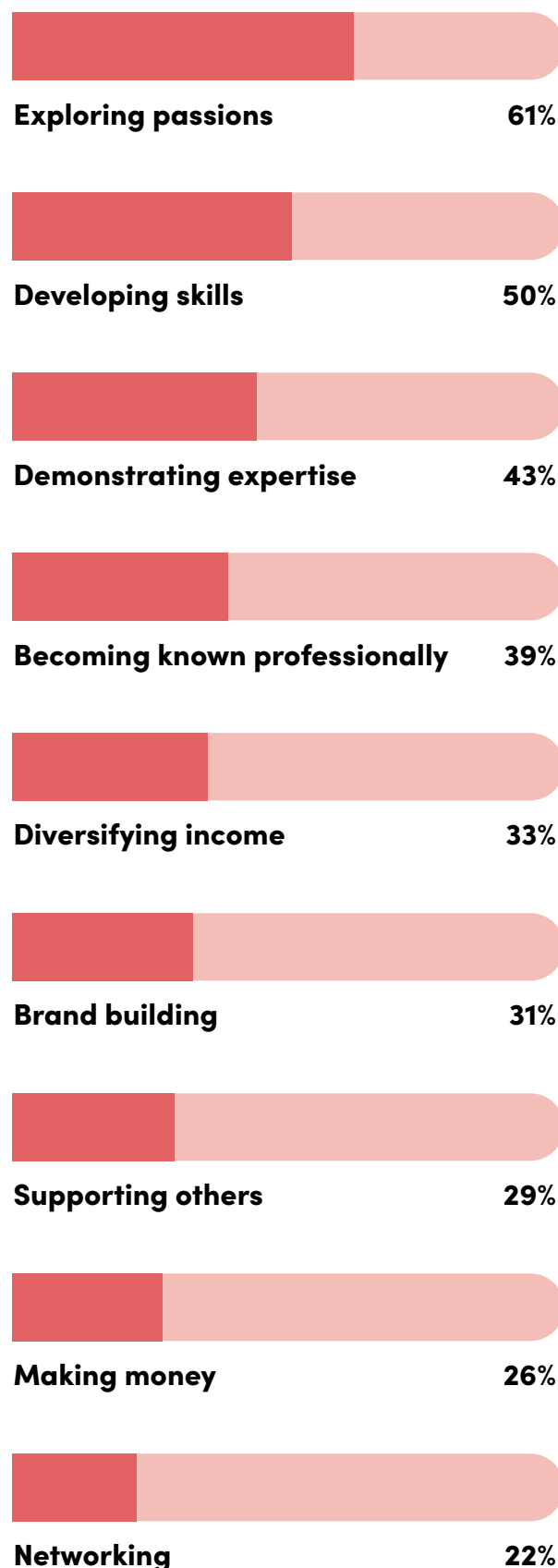


With so much talk online about side-hustles, we added a question to learn more about the prevalence and purpose of these ventures.

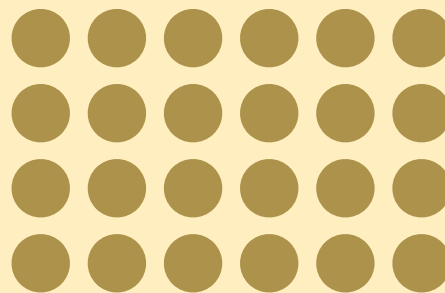
Other responses included:



What are the benefits of your side project?

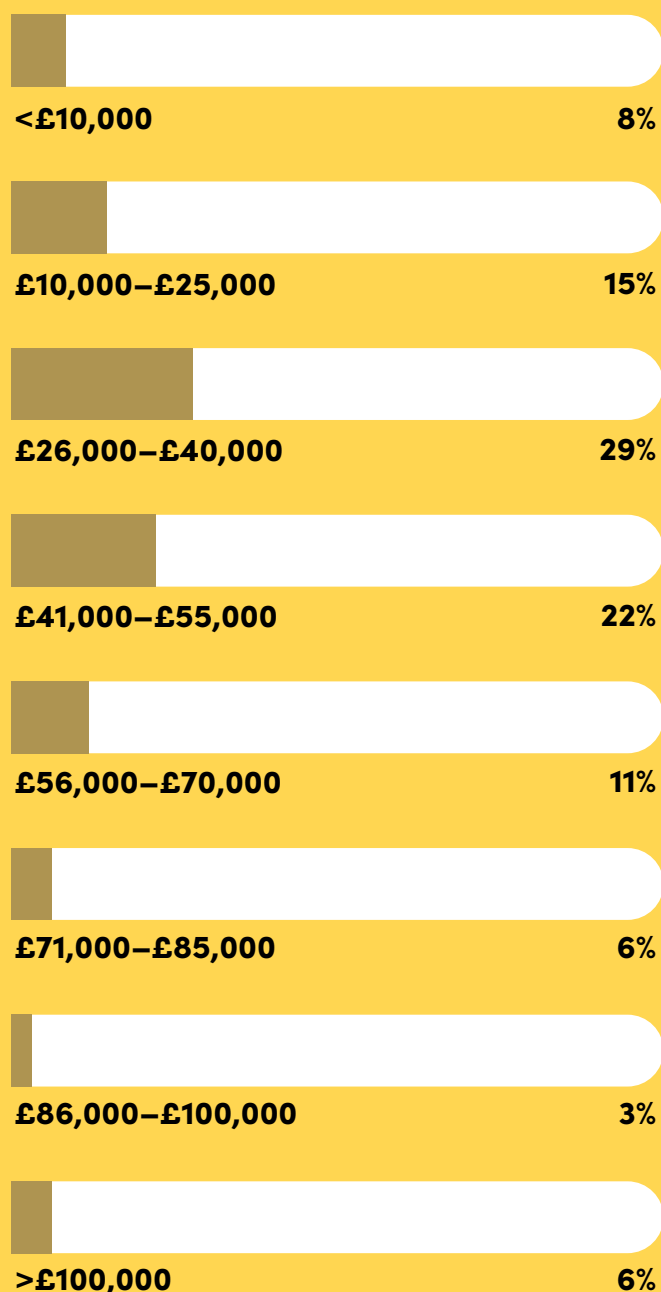


Income and Benefits

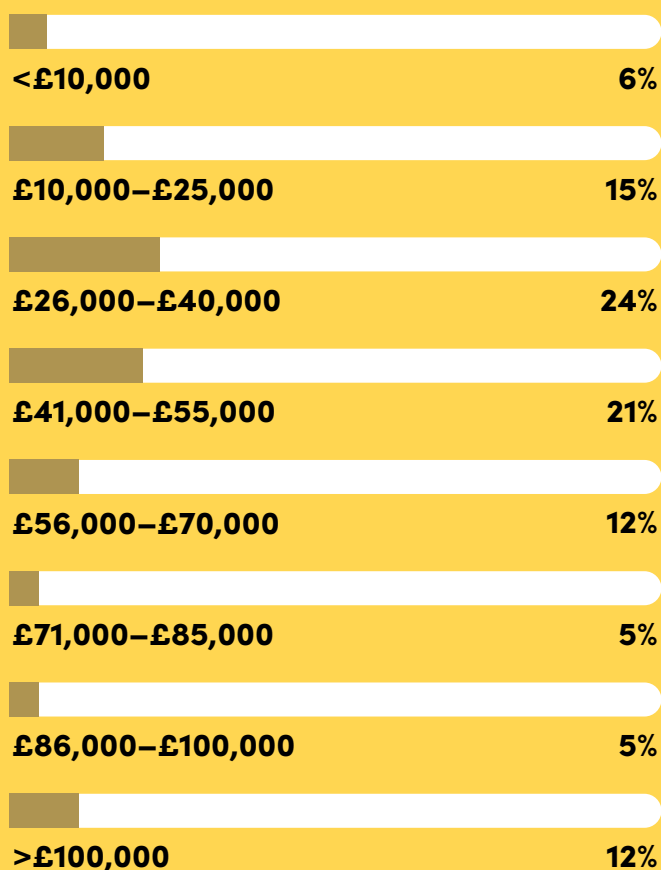


What was your gross income from copywriting in 2022?

Overall

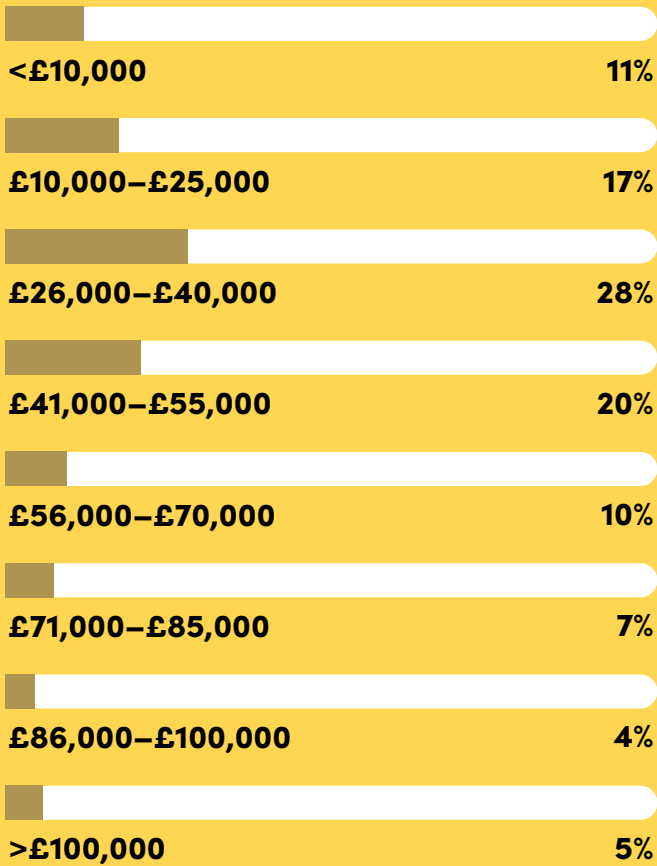


Employed and freelance

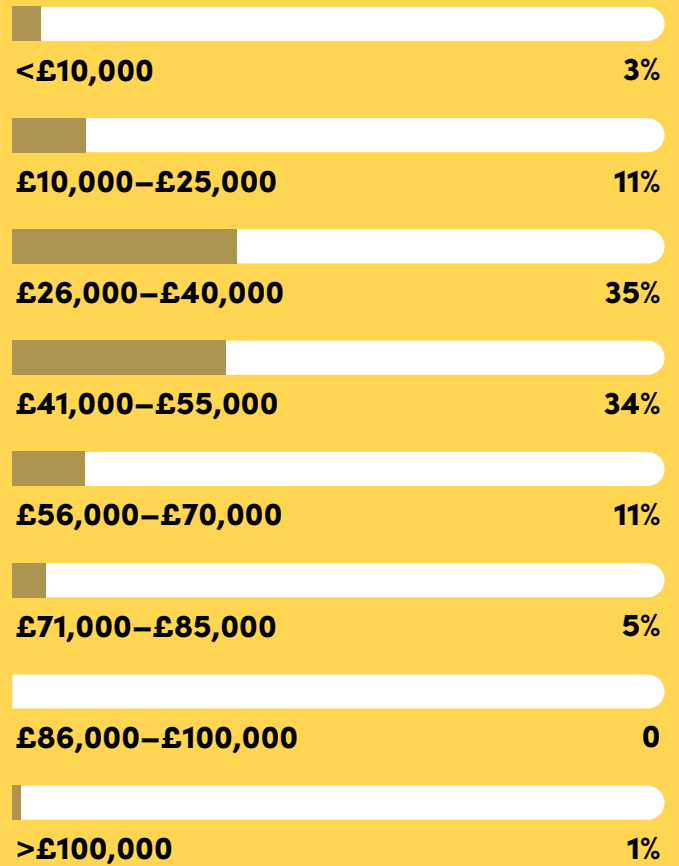


You can see the overall distribution of incomes by bracket – as well as how they vary by employment mode. One thing that stands out here is that freelancers have a broader spread of incomes. So while freelance copywriters have greater upwards earning potential, there is also less guarantee of a fair basic wage, something that is guaranteed from employment. Agency founders stand out with 24% earning £100,000+.

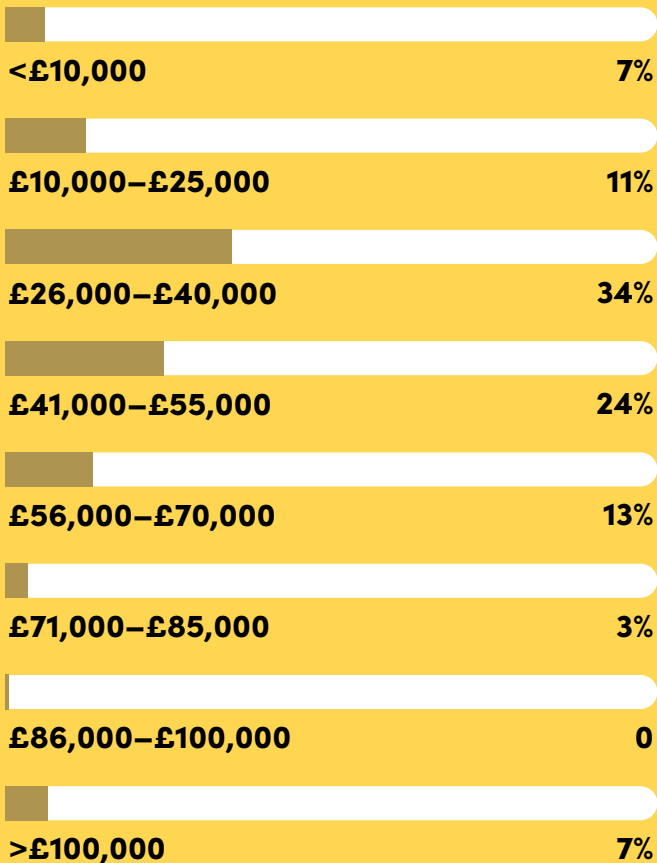
Freelance



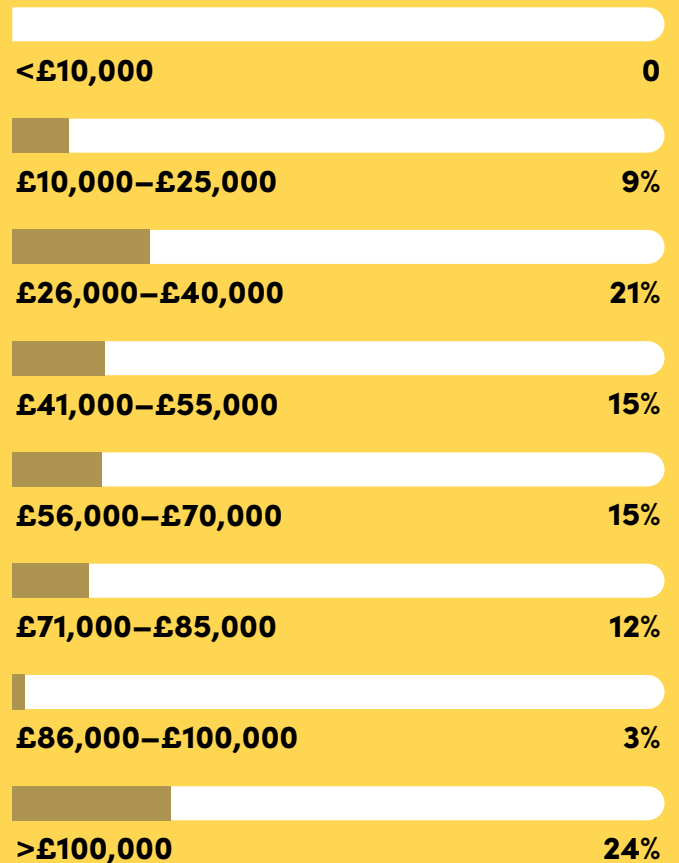
Agency



In-house

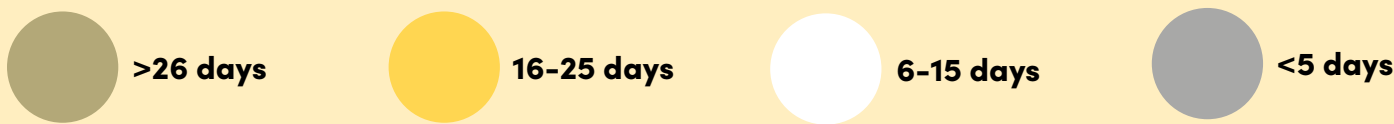


Agency founder



How many days off did you take in 2022?

Overall



Employed and freelance



Freelance



Agency



Agency founder



In-house

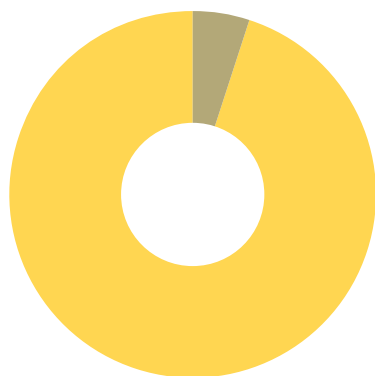
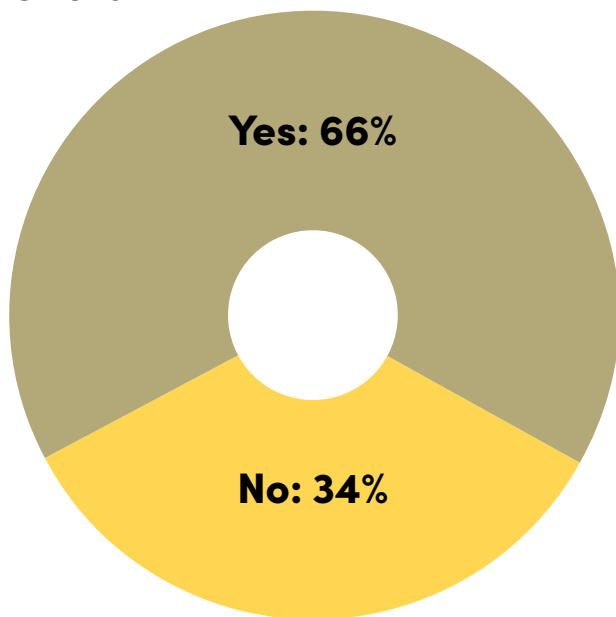


Are copywriters overworked? It looks like most copywriters are making space for rest and relaxation. Agency founders appear to have the least equitable work-life balance, and are the most likely

to have fewer than 5 days off in a year. Freelancers appear to be maximising their freedom, with 39% taking more than 26 days off last year.

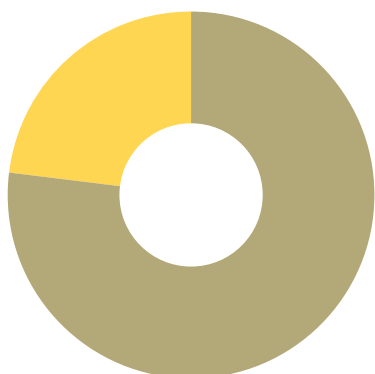
Do you get sick pay?

Overall



Freelance

Yes: 5%
No: 95%



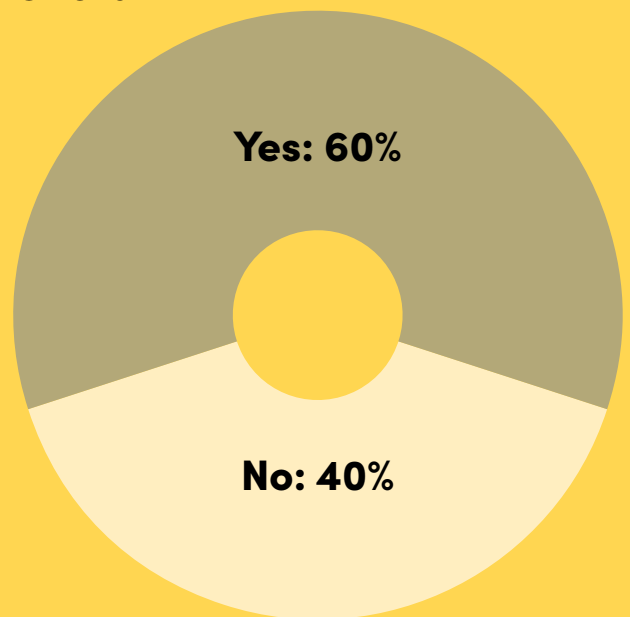
Employed

Yes: 77%
No: 23%

Unsurprisingly, the majority of freelancers do not get paid when they're too sick to work. Self-employed people are not eligible for statutory sick pay. However, there are companies that provide sickness cover for the self-employed.

Do you regularly pay into a pension fund?

Overall



Freelance

Yes: 48%
No: 52%



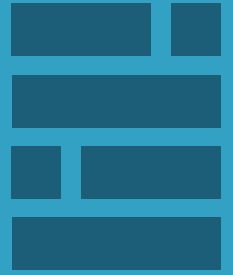
Employed

Yes: 77%
No: 23%

With the popularity of workplace pension schemes, it's not surprising that self-employed workers can easily fall into a pension gap. Only 48% of freelance copywriters are regularly contributing to a pension – compared to 77% of employed copywriters.

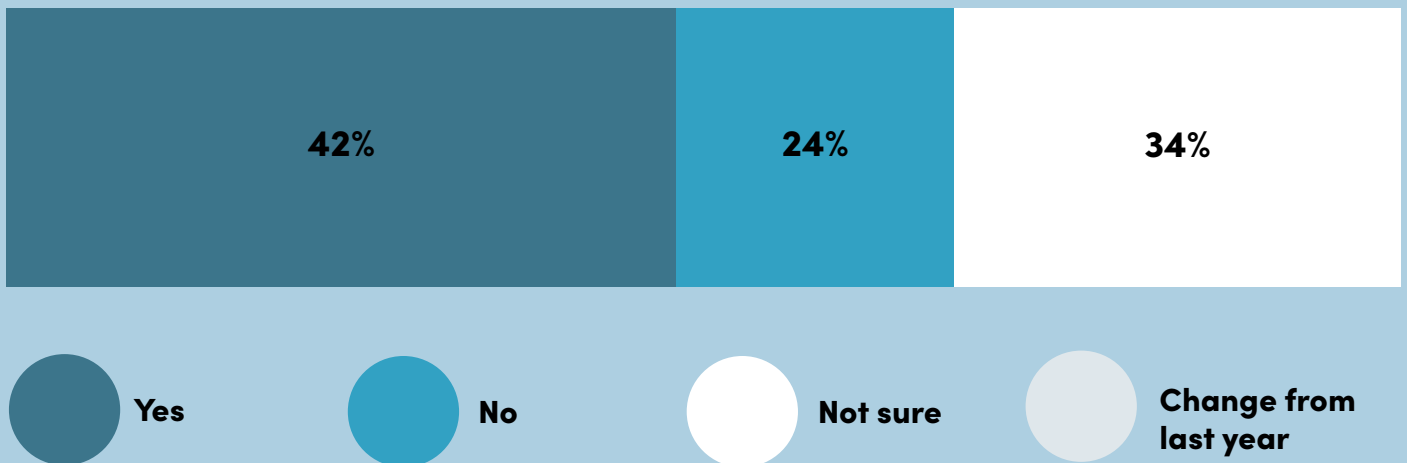
Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference in incomes between men and women.



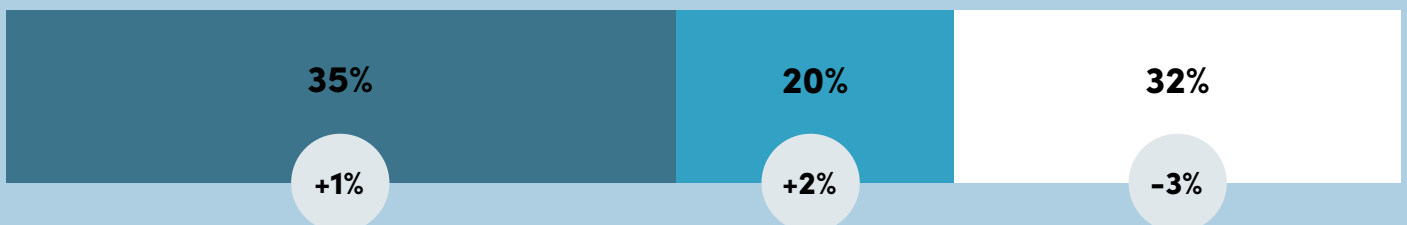
Do you think a copywriter's gender affects how much they get paid?

Overall

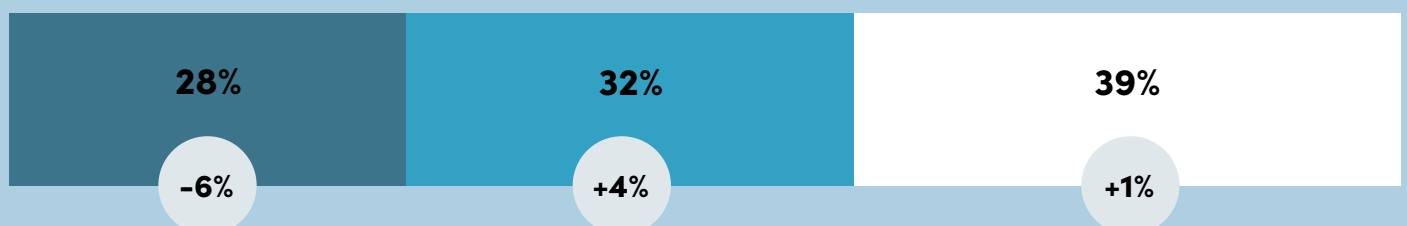


Perceptions by gender

Women



Men



Gender pay comparison



Overall



Employed and freelance



Freelance



Agency



Agency founder



In-house



2021	Overall	Freelance	Employed and freelance	Agency	Agency founder	In-house
Gap	n/a	40%	35%	30%	29%	6%

This Survey Tells Many Stories



There's the monstrous gender pay gap, still refusing to disintegrate despite being repeatedly dragged into the light. There's the legion of professionals treading water instead of developing their muscles, even as they're circled by an artificially intelligent shark.

But from where I'm sitting – beside a peaceful river, in a converted warehouse full of charming copywriters and account managers – one narrative rises above the rest. The story of the agency copywriter, who earns a decent wage, takes plenty of holiday, and is supported by expert colleagues.

Agency copywriters are doing better than you might think

Freelancing used to be seen as the most lucrative career option for copywriters. But that's beginning to change. More than half (51%) of agency copywriters earn at least £41,000 a year, while just 46% of freelancers do the same.

“...one narrative rises above the rest. The story of the agency copywriter, who earns a decent wage, takes plenty of holiday, and is supported by expert colleagues.”

It's likely some freelancers have other income streams and don't need to bring in as much as their agency peers. Even so, many freelancers are earning less in real terms – and they may feel incapable of upping their prices from one year to the next.

They can get away, get well – and even get old

There are, of course, other benefits to being on a payroll. Most (86%) agency copywriters have at least 16 days off a year, compared to just 71% of freelancers.

As you'd expect, hardly any freelancers get paid while they're sick. And less than half are putting away money for their twilight years, let alone having those pension contributions matched by an employer.

The moral of the story?

This year's results highlight the many benefits of copywriters teaming up. There are the basic perks, like pension contributions and paid holidays. But there are also the intangible rewards you only get from working in a team of expert copywriters and supportive account managers.

In uncertain times, it can pay to be part of a team. So who knows? Maybe agency life should be the next chapter in your story.

Matt Godfrey – Head of Copy

Radix Communications –
B2B Technology Copywriters



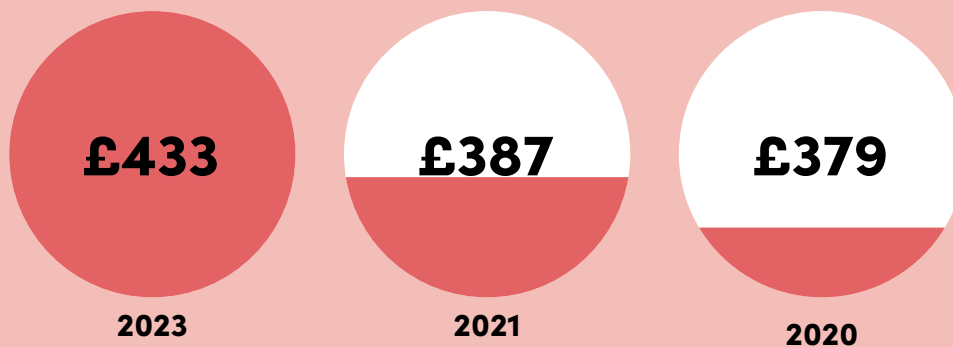
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B2B technology copywriters

Freelance Copywriters

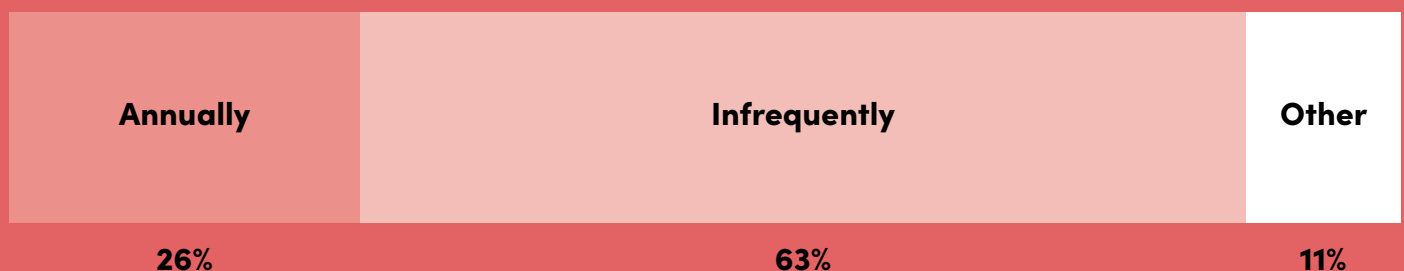


Day rates



This year sees a big leap in day rates – an increase of £46. This is the biggest single increase we've ever recorded. This increase may be partly accounted for by the fact that we did not run the survey in 2022, so this figure represents a 2-year change.

How often do you increase your rates?



Other responses included:

As demand increases

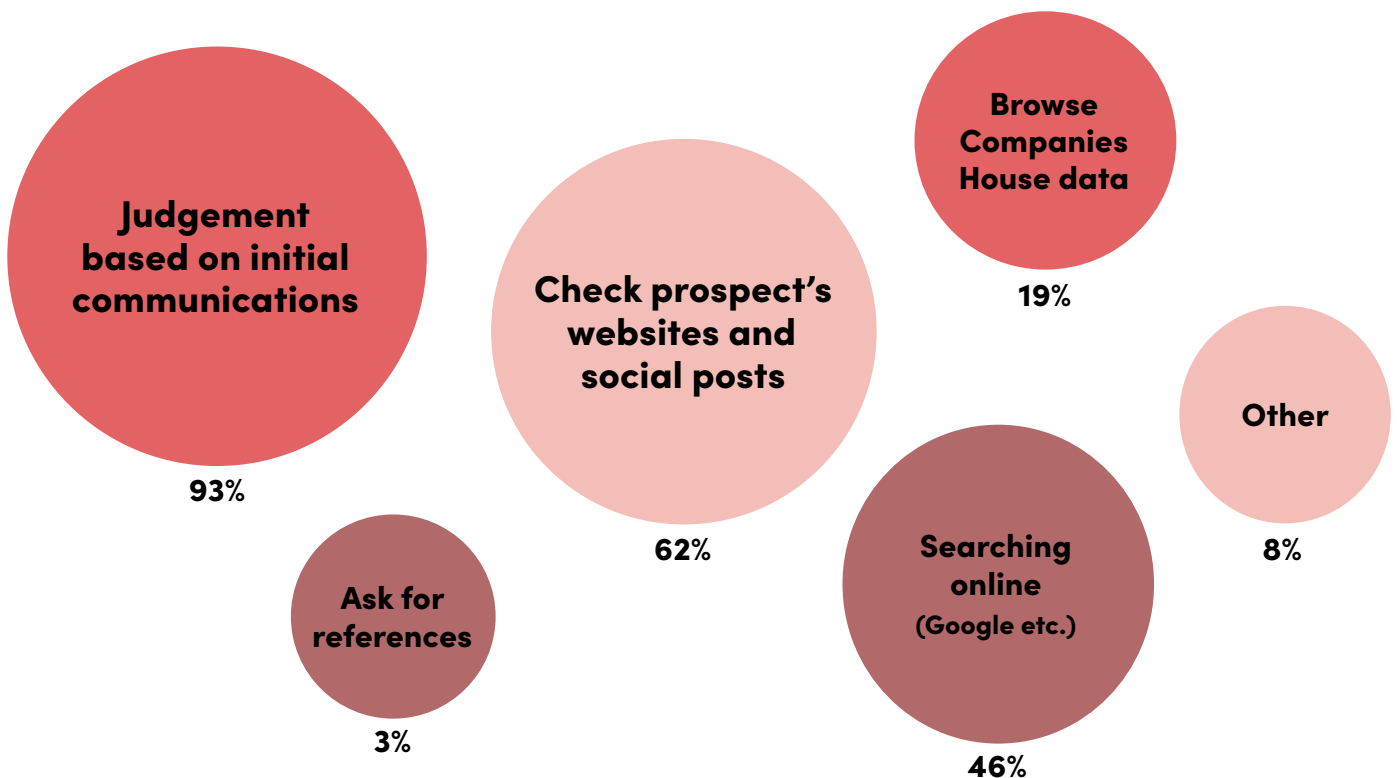
Bi-annually

As project complexity increases

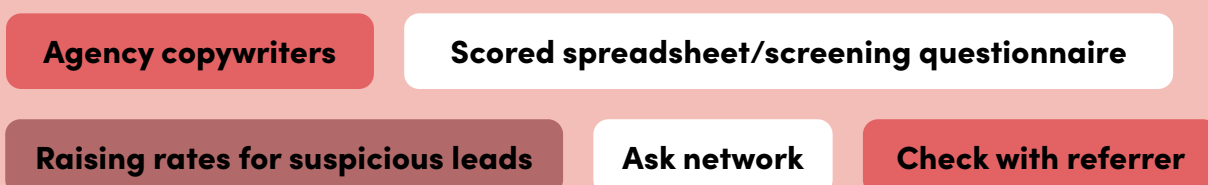
How do you charge for your work?



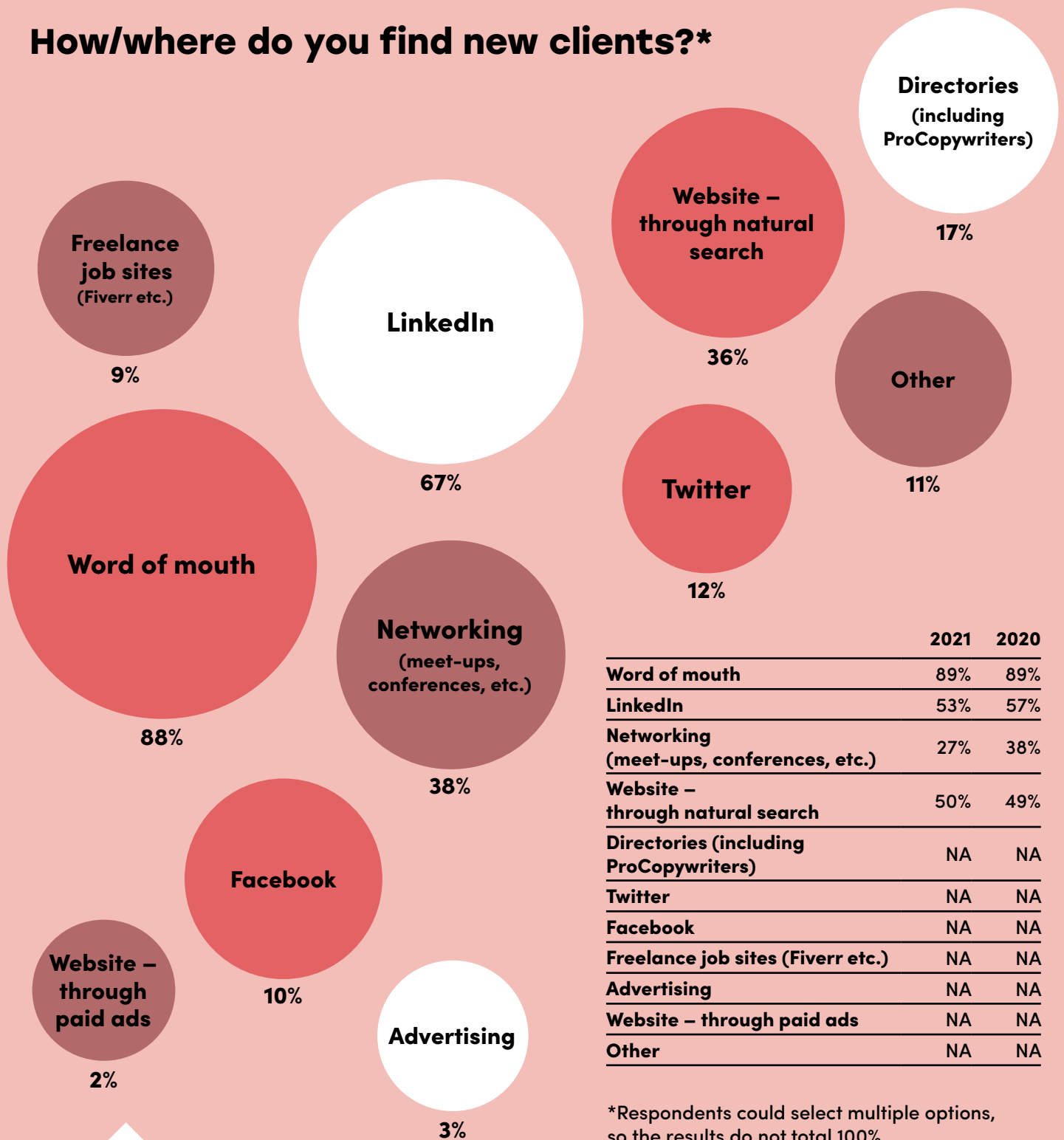
How do you qualify leads?



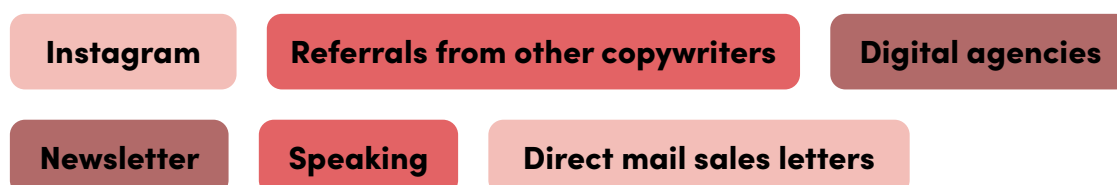
Other responses included:



How/where do you find new clients?*

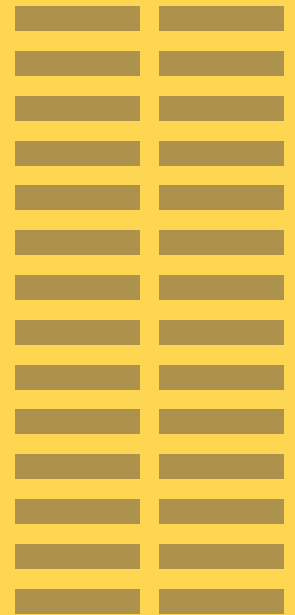


Other responses included:

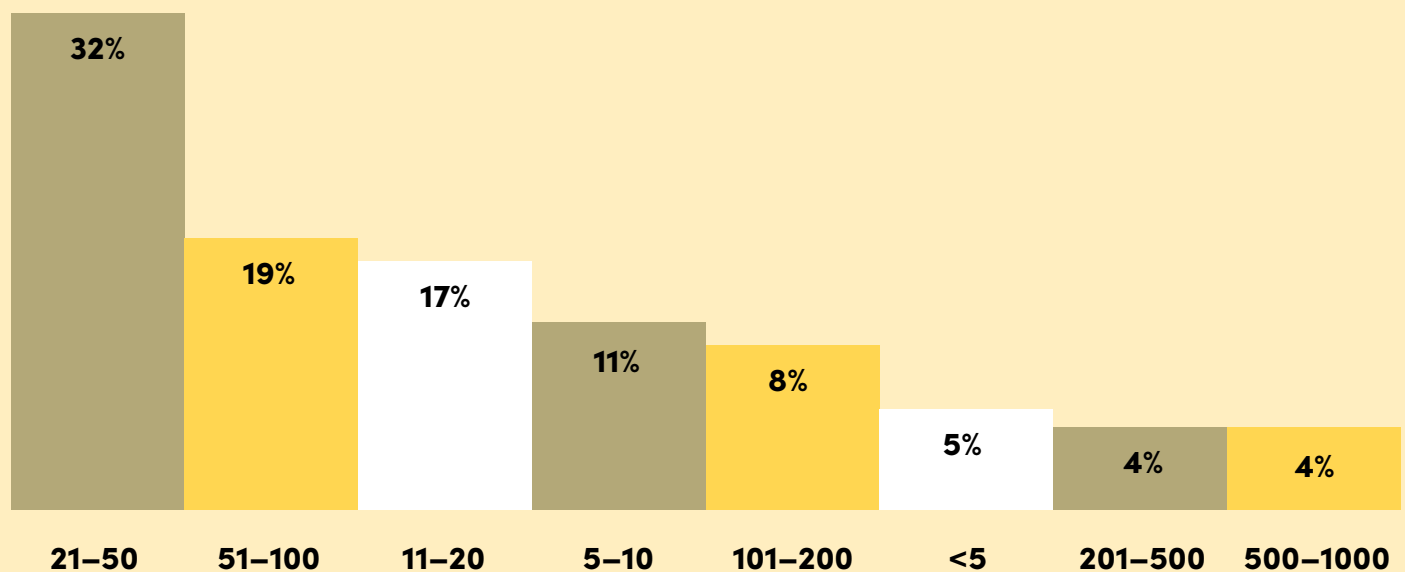


Agency Copywriters

For the first time we have separated the responses from copywriters in different forms of employment. This helps us track the experiences of all copywriters, and also understand the challenges and opportunities that face our peers across the industry. Seventy-five of our respondents identified themselves as working for an agency of some kind.



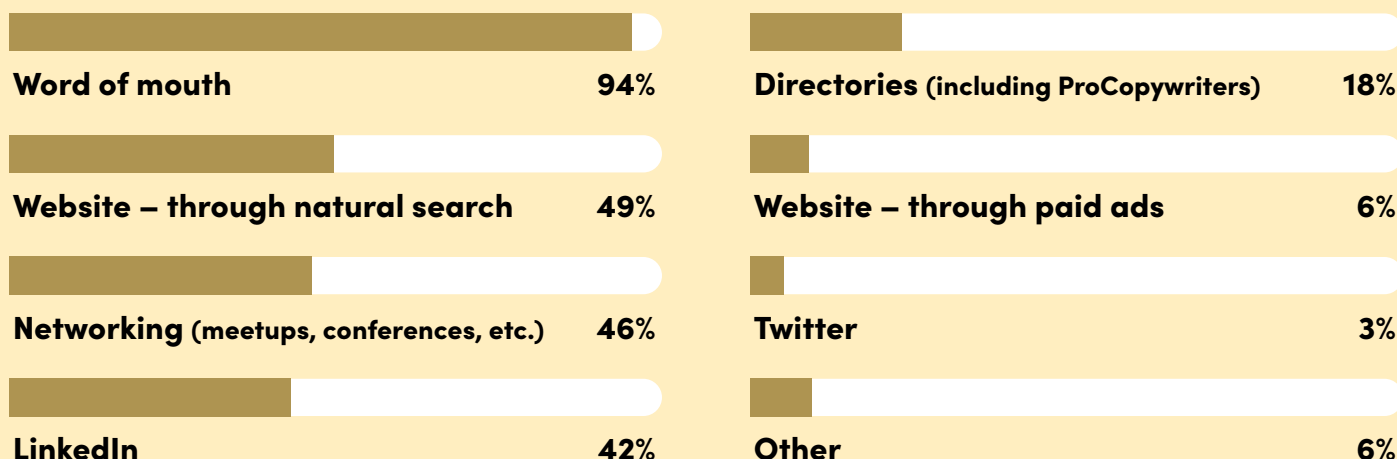
How many employees does your agency have?



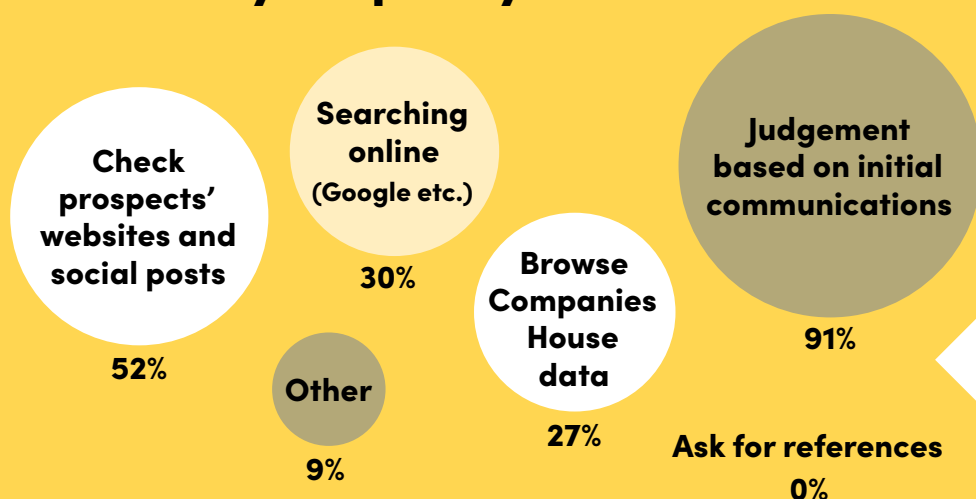
How many copywriters work in your agency?



How/where does your agency find new clients?



How do you qualify leads?

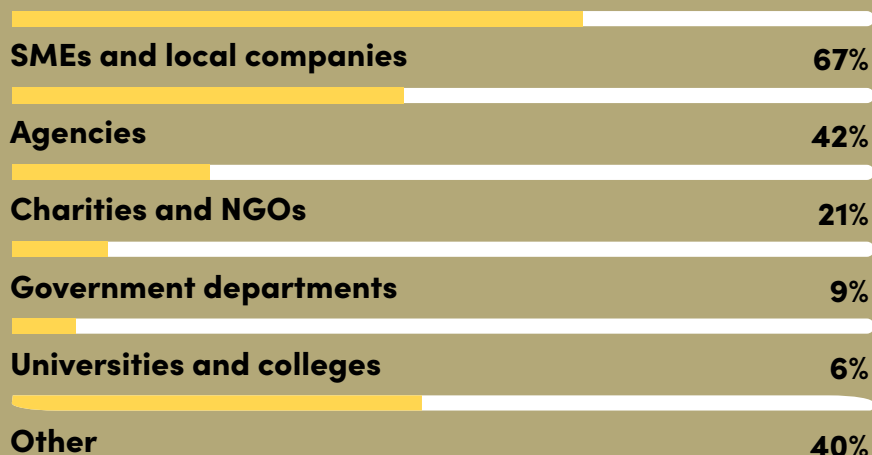


Other responses included:

Custom sales process

Watching for red flags

Which types of clients do you predominantly work for?



Other responses included:

Corporations

Startups

Membership organisations

In-house Copywriters

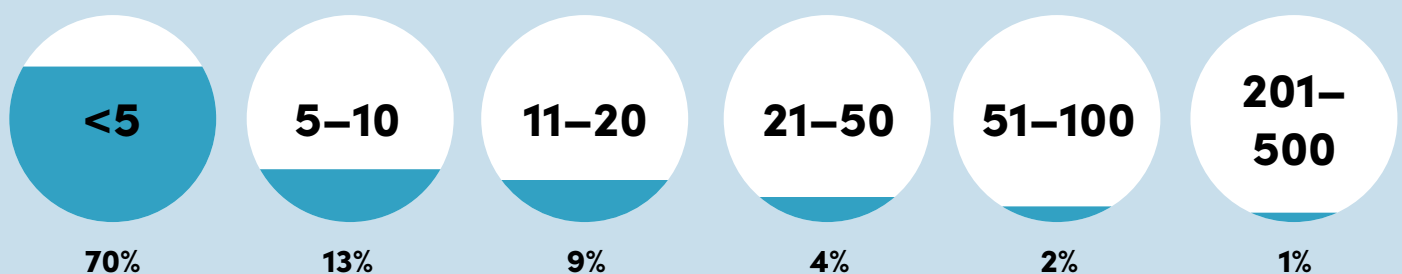
Forty-eight of our respondents are employed by a business in some form of copywriting role.



How many employees does your company have?



How many copywriters work in your company?



Outlook and Aspirations



Are you hoping to make any changes to your role in 2023?

No change – I'm happy where I am



Promotion



Sideways move to a new role



Change teams or locations



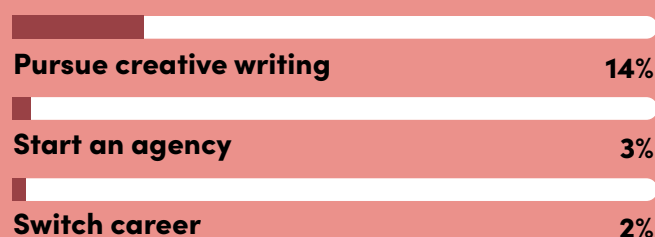
Go freelance



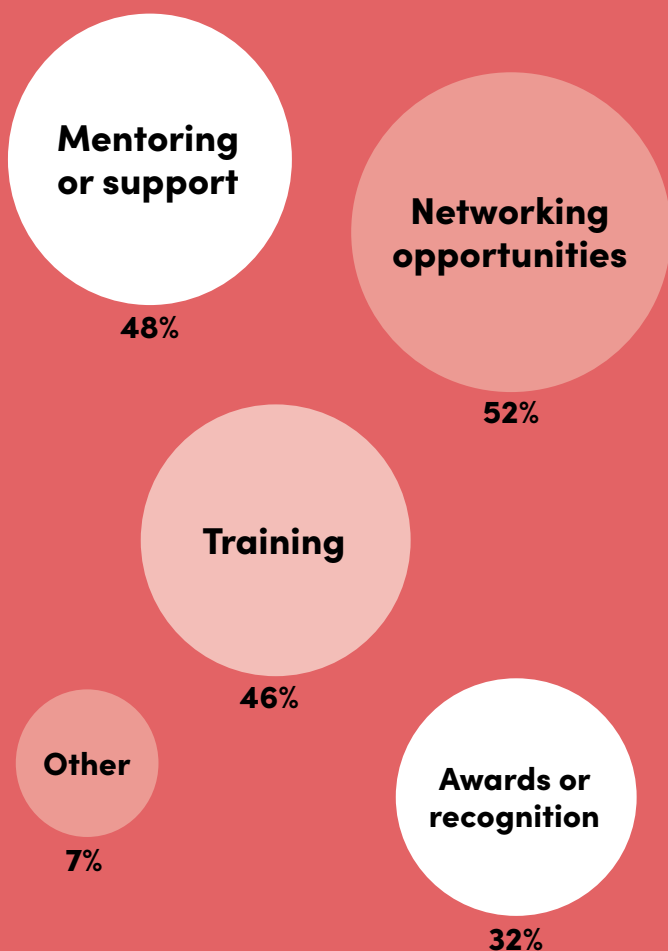
New for 2023, these results suggest that most employed copywriters are content in their current role, or looking to level-up with the same employer. One

notable difference is that 24% of agency writers are looking for some kind of lateral move, compared to just 8% of in-house copywriters.

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



What would help you develop your copywriting career or business?



Other responses included:

Being more active on social media

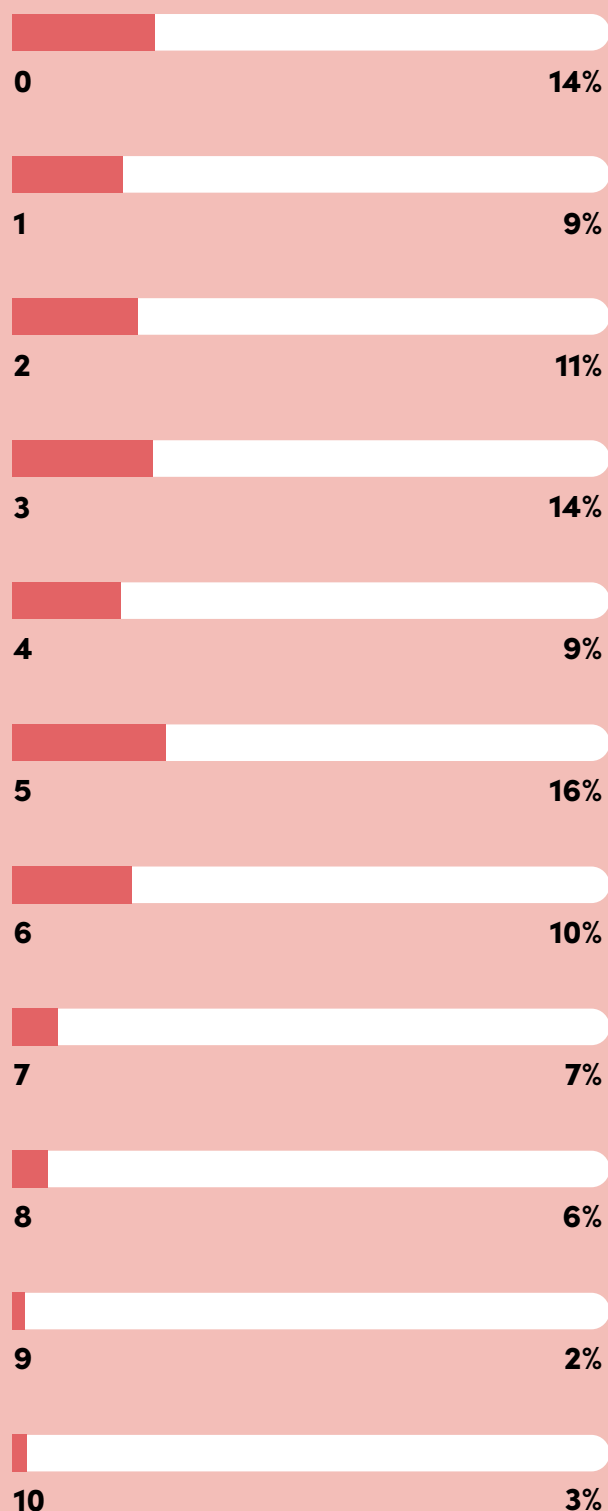
Greater self-confidence

Avoiding problematic clients

Are you concerned about competition from AI-powered writing software?

0 = Not at all concerned

10 = Very concerned



What's the Best Thing About Being a Copywriter?

Being able to do something creative every day

That euphoric feeling when a client says "you get us"

Getting to use my talent for words, complex thinking and creativity combined

The opportunity to help small businesses to thrive and the ability to work flexibly around my family

Being creative. And crafting words to connect with target audiences.

Telling the stories people want to hear

Freedom to work with who I choose

Working with a variety of people and businesses to help them in an area they're not confident in

The satisfaction when you coin the perfect phrase. And the flexibility of working freelance – it means I can prioritise my daughter when I need to

The rewarding feeling from transforming a mess of information into clear, concise copy

Problem-solving! I love helping people figure out how to say what they want to say.

Every day's a school day

Using the power of words to inform and influence

Learning about new products and industries, meeting business leaders, and growing your skills

Getting results for my clients and helping them to reach their goals

Playing with words for a living!

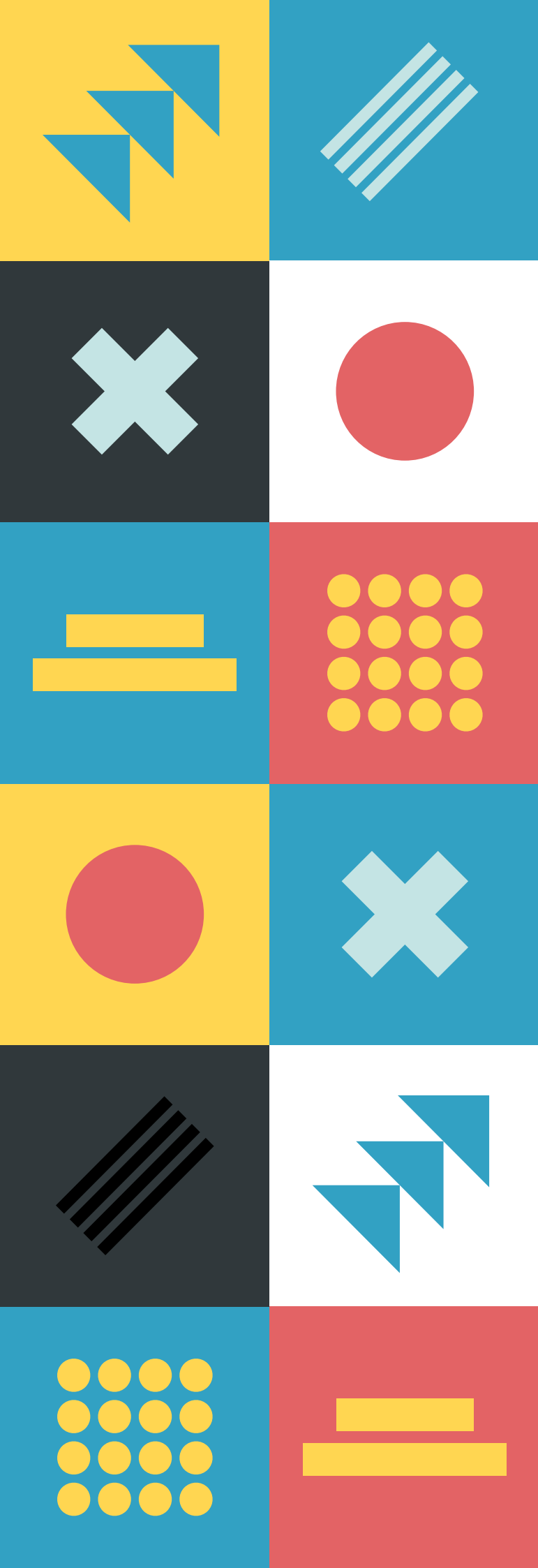
You eventually hit a point where a lot of it is instinctive. Doubt falls away, you have to prep less for calls and you just know how to approach most challenges. It's a great place to be because it leaves room for thinking about the creative stuff.

The privilege to be the voice for a company or brand, to have conversations that add meaning to people's lives. Copywriting puts you in a position to critically understand human interaction and translate that into words that make an impact.

We get paid to write. How lush is that? And the flexibility to work when Lady Muse sees fit.

Enabling people to communicate and advance their mission

Different clients and being creative



About this survey

This survey is operated and published by ProCopywriters, a UK-based alliance of commercial writers. Since its beginning in 2016, the survey has provided a window into the working lives of copywriters who serve the UK market.

ProCopywriters exists to bring copywriters together in a supportive, collaborative environment. The survey, alongside our online workshops, annual conference and popular website, are some of the ways we achieve this.

Format and data collection

The survey was built on Typeform by Leif Kendall, based on the original survey created by Joanna Tidball, with many new and adapted questions – some of which were proposed by our community.

The survey was open to the public during February 2023. Respondents were sought via social media posts, emails to our list, and on our blog.

We do not record respondents' personal information, or vet the responses in any way.

Design and production

The survey data was processed and the report written by Leif Kendall. The design and layout was provided by Anna Patience (annapatience.com) and the final report was proofread by Chris Walkley (walkleywords.com).

You are welcome to quote or reproduce any content in this report. We simply ask that you identify ProCopywriters as the source.

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.

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.

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