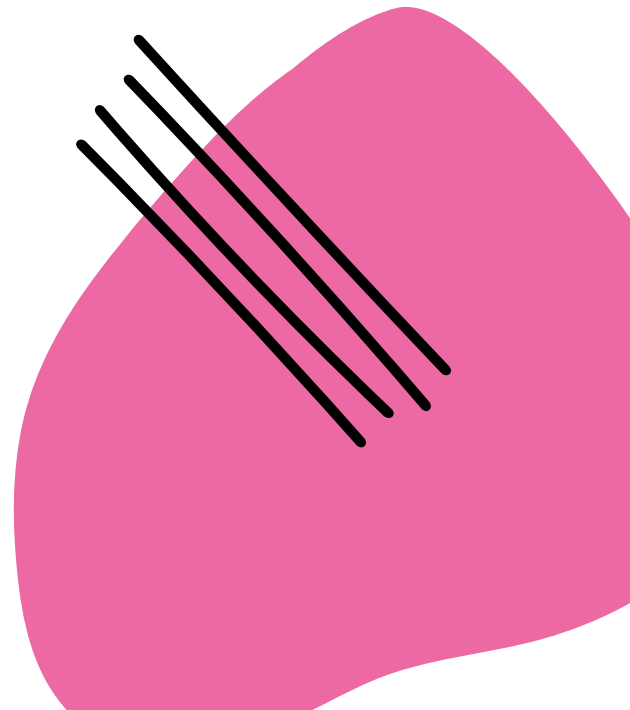
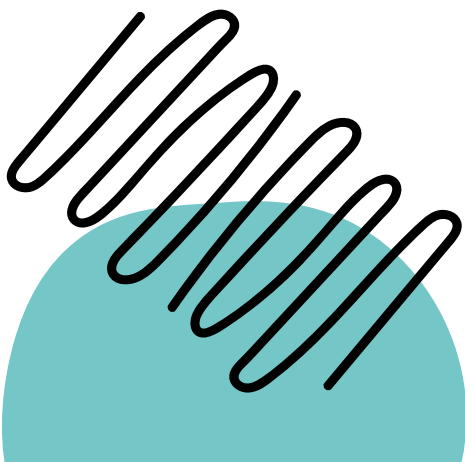


ProCopywriters Survey 2020

A comprehensive survey of
the copywriting profession



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Introduction

It's here – the long-awaited results of the 2020 ProCopywriters Survey. Thanks for reading and contributing.

The survey closed in January 2020, before we felt the mass effects of coronavirus and lockdown. This means the 640 responses reflect people's pre-Covid situation and outlook. However, there are interesting nuggets to glean, and an interesting point of comparison for our next survey.

From higher freelance day rates to more training and greater strategic input, the copywriting profession is in a strong position.

The final survey question was: "My copywriting career has improved thanks to..." There were clear trends around the importance of collaboration – with other copywriters, mentors, and other professionals. This spirit of collaboration will stand us in good stead in the coming months.

ProCopywriters had record growth this year. Our activities – from training to the copywriter directory to this survey – are funded by membership fees. Please consider joining, as an individual or a company, so we can continue expanding opportunities for you and your fellow copywriters.

Thank you for your continued support. Here's to another year of inspiration, creativity and collaboration.

Leif Kendall
Director, ProCopywriters

Key findings

There was a big increase in average earnings (11% full-time, 18% part-time)

The average day rate rose to £379 (from £349)

More people are specialising in copywriting disciplines (e.g. digital, SEO) but fewer people have sector niches

For the first time, more than 50% of people have had copywriting training

The gender pay gap has widened for in-house and agency copywriters, but there's been great progress for freelancers and agency founders

Respondents

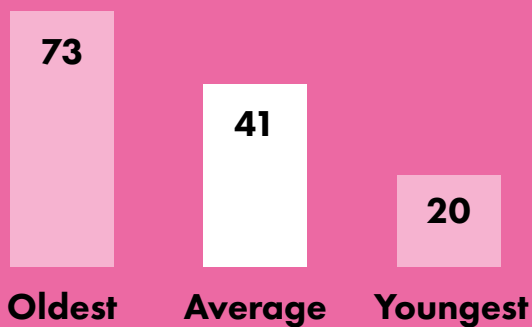
Number



We continued last year's upward trend, hitting a new record of 640 responses (a 13% boost on 2019). Much of this increase comes from international copywriters. We also achieved our aim of getting more in-house writers

involved. Thank you to all the copywriters who contributed for the first time. It's incredibly helpful in our aim of fully representing the copywriting industry, so we all have access to more useful data.

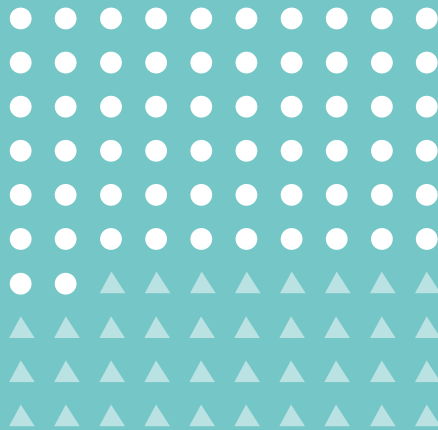
Age



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

	2019	2018
Oldest	67	70
Average	40	38
Youngest	20	21

Gender



● **Women (62%)**

▲ **Men (38%)**

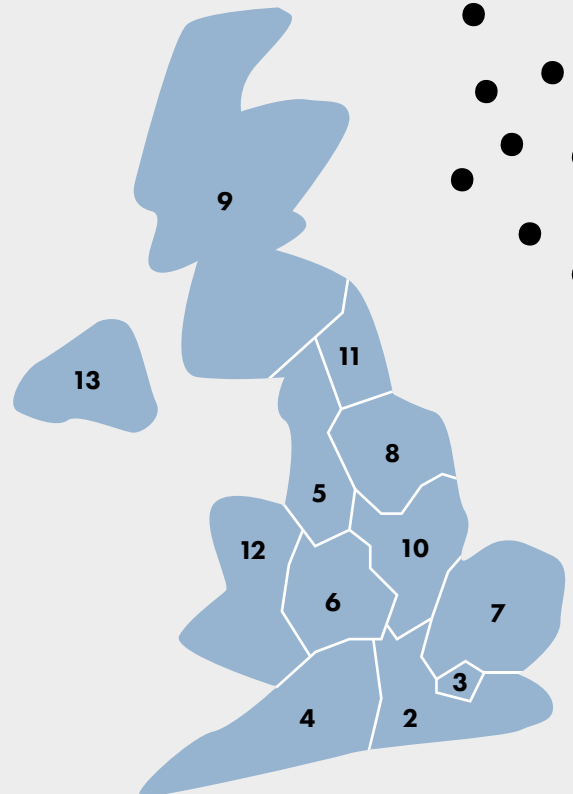
Women continue to outnumber men, but the divide shrank slightly compared with last year. For context, more women are ProCopywriters members than men, so we're not surprised at this respondent breakdown.

	2019	2018
Women	66%	65%
Men	34%	35%

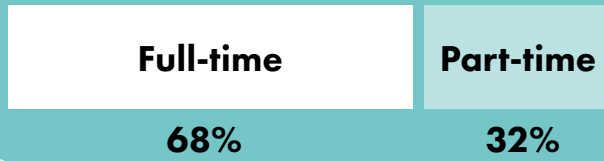
Location

	2020	2019	2018
1. International	21%	12%	7%
2. South East	16%	18%	19%
3. London	14%	17%	14%
4. South West	12%	13%	14%
5. North West	8%	10%	11%
6. West Midlands	7%	6%	6%
7. East Anglia	6%	4%	5%
8. Yorks & Humber	5%	8%	9%
9. Scotland	4%	4%	5%
10. East Midlands	3%	3%	3%
11. North East	2%	1%	0%
12. Wales	2%	2%	4%
13. N Ireland	0%	1%	1%

We had a 9% leap in the share of international respondents this year. For the first time, international copywriters were the biggest responders. Although there are slight year-on-year variations within UK responses, those results are broadly consistent from 2019.

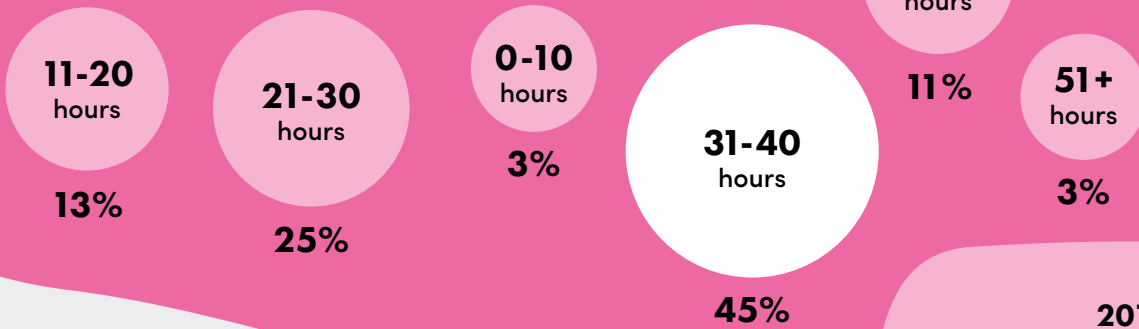


Working hours



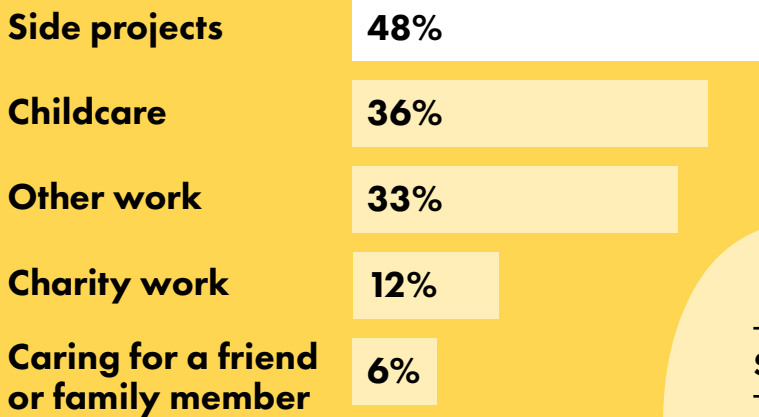
	2019	2018
Full-time	64%	70%
Part-time	36%	30%

Hours worked per week



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

Other responsibilities



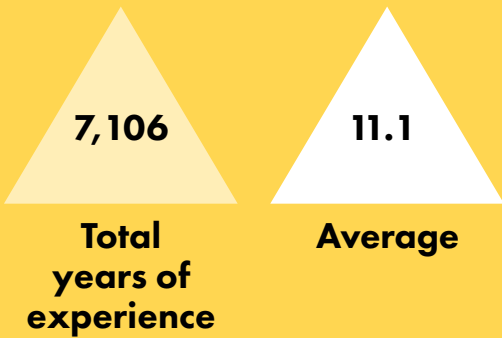
More copywriters took on other responsibilities in 2020, with increases across the board. The biggest was in side projects, with a 23% increase on last year. Childcare and other work also had double-digit increases.

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

	2019	2018
Side projects	25%	26%
Childcare	24%	23%
Other work	22%	21%
Charity work	3%	2%
Caring for friend or family member	3%	2%

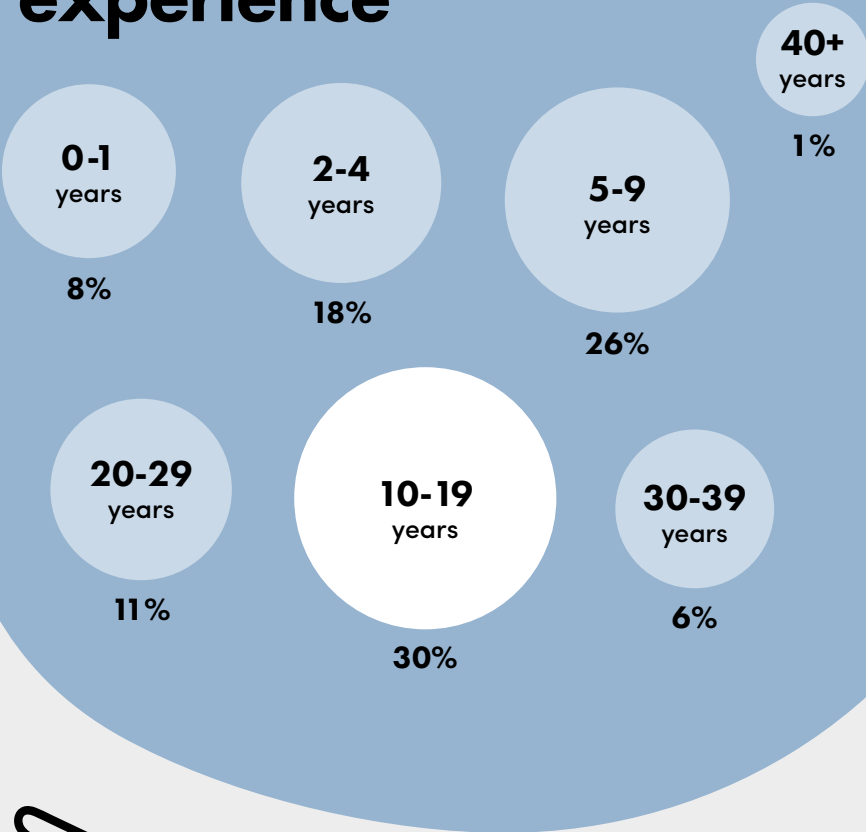
Level of experience

We had a record amount of experience in this year's survey. The 7,106 years' of combined experience is a 42% increase on 2019.



	2019	2018
Total combined	5003	3996
Average	9.7	9.5

Years of experience



	2019	2018
5-9	27%	?
10-19	26%	?
2-4	23%	?
20-29	10%	?
0-1	9%	?
30-39	5%	?
40+	0%	?

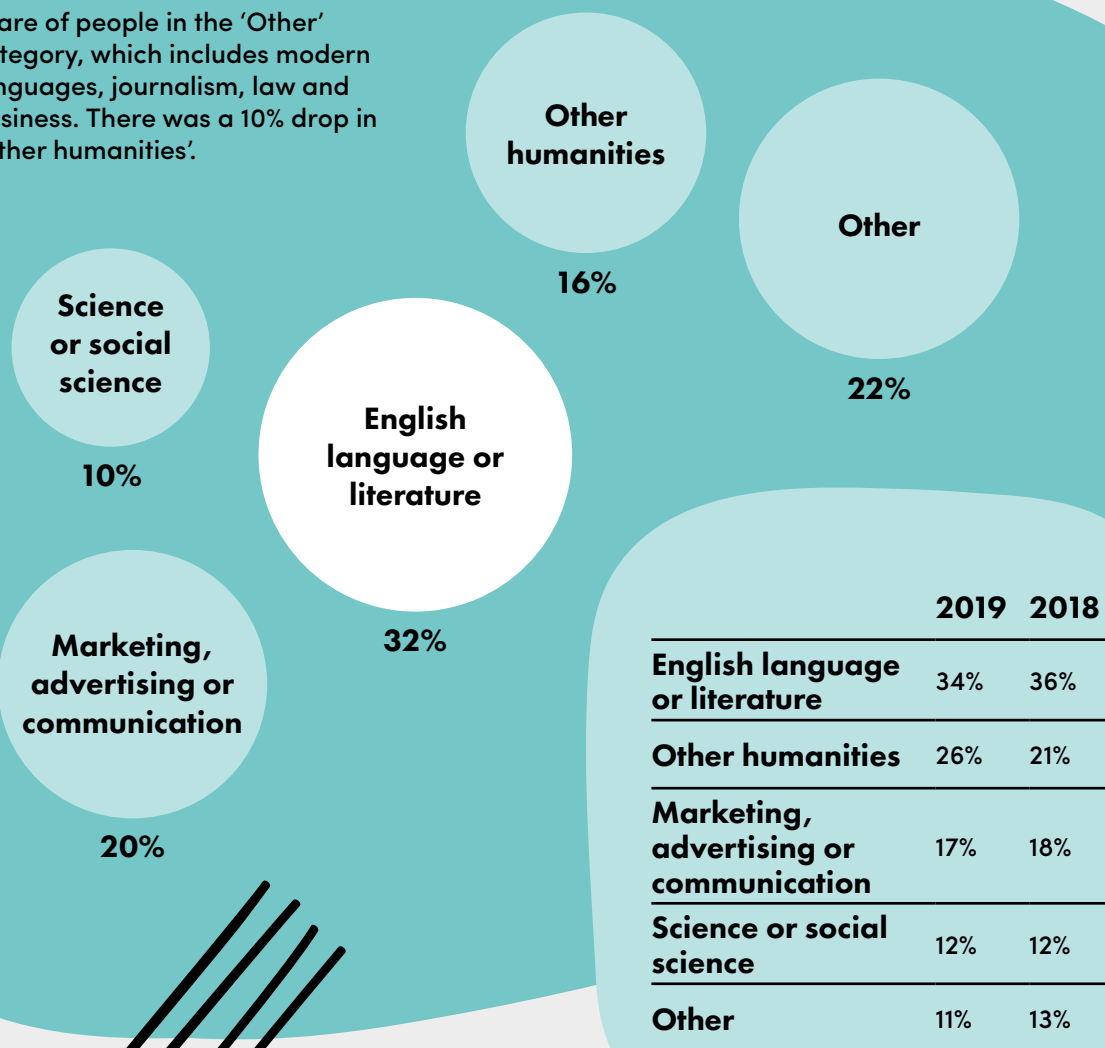
Education and training

Copywriters come from a range of academic backgrounds – which is great because we write for a range of companies, products and services. A 2020 milestone is the number of people getting copywriting-specific training. This is the first year that the majority of respondents said they completed training.

From webinars to the Copywriting Conference, ProCopywriters wants to continue leading in this area. We have ambitious plans to provide more online and face-to-face courses in future.

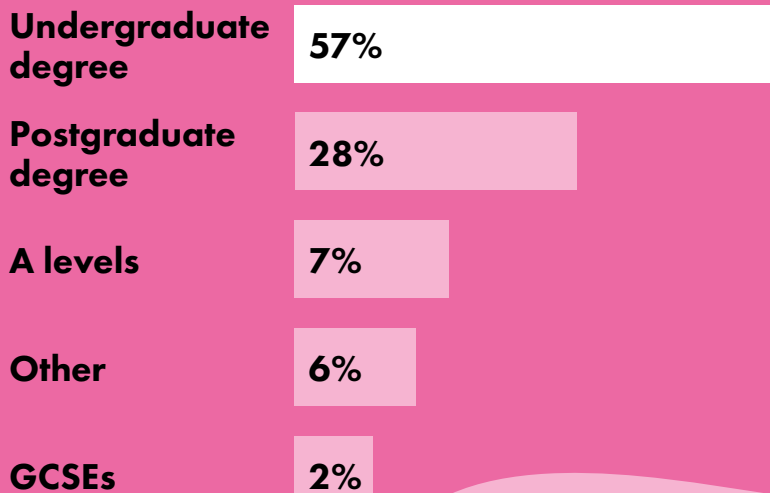
Areas of study

There was an 11% increase in the share of people in the 'Other' category, which includes modern languages, journalism, law and business. There was a 10% drop in 'Other humanities'.

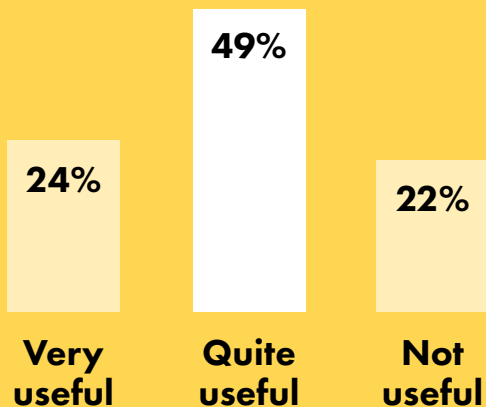


Highest level of qualification

This year we added an 'Other' category, which includes a wide variety of diplomas, professional qualifications and vocational training.



Has your degree been useful in developing your copywriting career?



This year we had an 'Other' category for the first time. The responses here included people who felt their degree had helped them *find* a job but was less useful when it came to *doing* the job.

	2019	2018
Quite useful	47%	51%
Very useful	31%	30%
Not useful	22%	19%

	2019	2018
Undergraduate degree	58%	57%
Postgraduate degree	32%	29%
A levels	6%	10%
GCSEs	4%	4%

Have you completed any copywriting training?

Yes: 51%

No: 49%

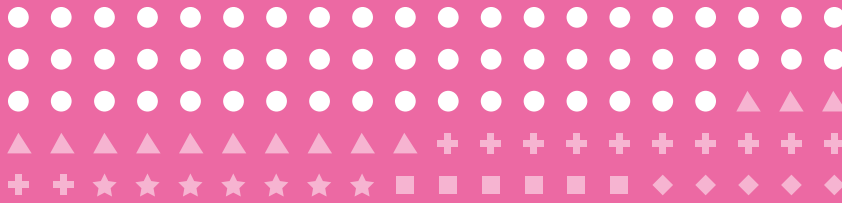
For the first time, more than 50% of people have completed copywriting-specific training. ProCopywriters has been leading the way here, with a webinar series covering topics ranging from headline writing to UX. The 2020 Copywriting Conference will be an expansive online festival, with a range of training days available.

	2019	2018
No	54%	53%
Yes	46%	47%

How copywriters work

(Note: Some of the following don't add up to 100% because more than one option has been applicable for some respondents.)

Employment model



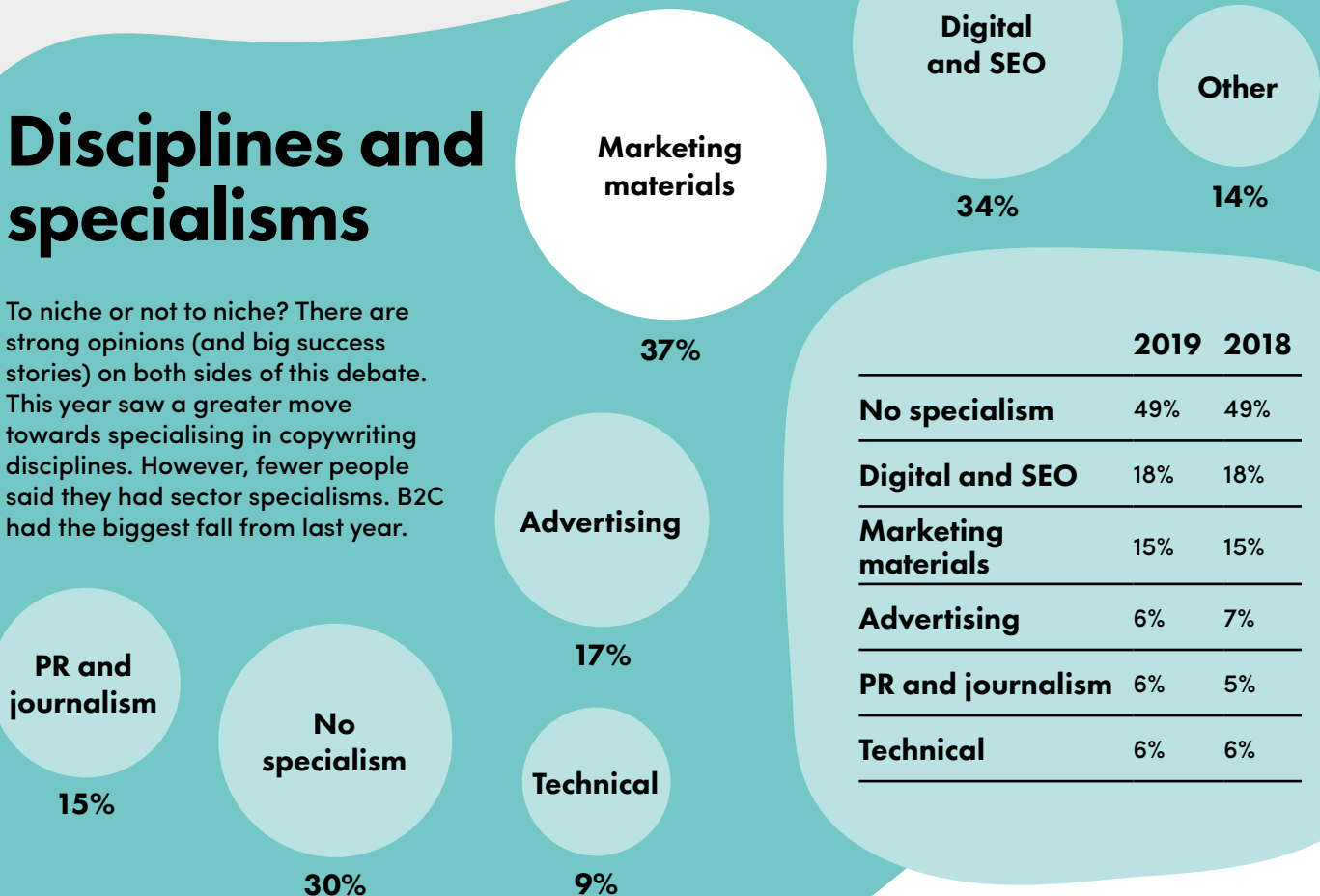
Although freelancers continue to dominate, their share fell 10% compared with last year. We achieved our goal of reaching more in-house (client-side) copywriters, thanks to our webinars and corporate memberships. We hope to extend this even more. Respondents who chose 'other' included professionals who do more than copywriting, such as branding, marketing, PR, and communications.

- **Freelance (57%)**
- ▲ **In-house, client-side (13%)**
- + **Agency (12%)**
- ★ **Other (7%)**
- **Agency founder (6%)**
- ◆ **Employed and freelancing (5%)**

	2019	2018
Freelance	67%	58%
Agency	12%	15%
In-house, client-side	9%	13%
Agency founder	6%	7%
Employed and freelancing	6%	7%
Other	n/a	n/a

Disciplines and specialisms

To niche or not to niche? There are strong opinions (and big success stories) on both sides of this debate. This year saw a greater move towards specialising in copywriting disciplines. However, fewer people said they had sector specialisms. B2C had the biggest fall from last year.



	2019	2018
No specialism	49%	49%
Digital and SEO	18%	18%
Marketing materials	15%	15%
Advertising	6%	7%
PR and journalism	6%	5%
Technical	6%	6%

Which particular sector do you specialise in?

B2B 57%

B2C 29%

Science and technology 27%

Business, finance and law 25%

Lifestyle 17%

Consumer goods 16%

Education 14%

Healthcare and pharmaceuticals 14%

Sport, travel and leisure 13%

Charities 13%

Property and interiors 10%

Public sector 9%

Beauty 9%

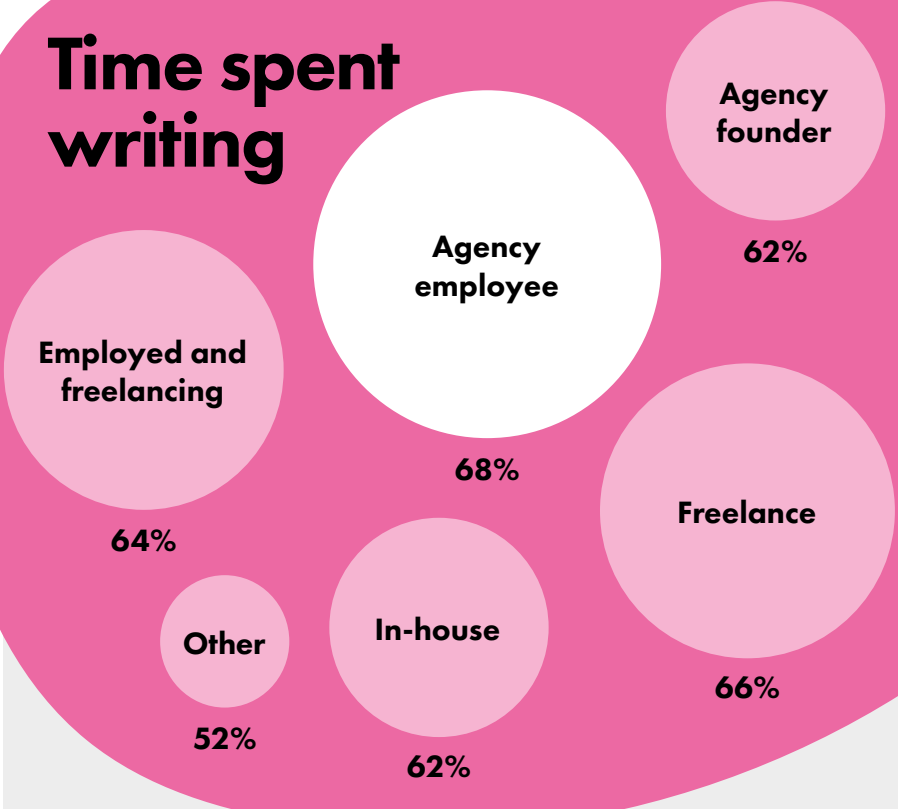
Fashion 6%

Family and childcare 3%

Politics and society 2%

	2019	2018
B2B	64%	41%
B2C	41%	30%
Business, finance and law	34%	21%
Science and technology	32%	19%
Lifestyle	26%	17%
Sport, travel and leisure	22%	17%
Healthcare and pharmaceuticals	17%	10%
Charities	17%	14%
Property and interiors	16%	10%
Consumer goods	16%	13%
Education	16%	11%
Public sector	14%	9%
Beauty	7%	5%
Fashion	6%	6%
Politics and society	6%	4%
Family and childcare	5%	5%

Time spent writing

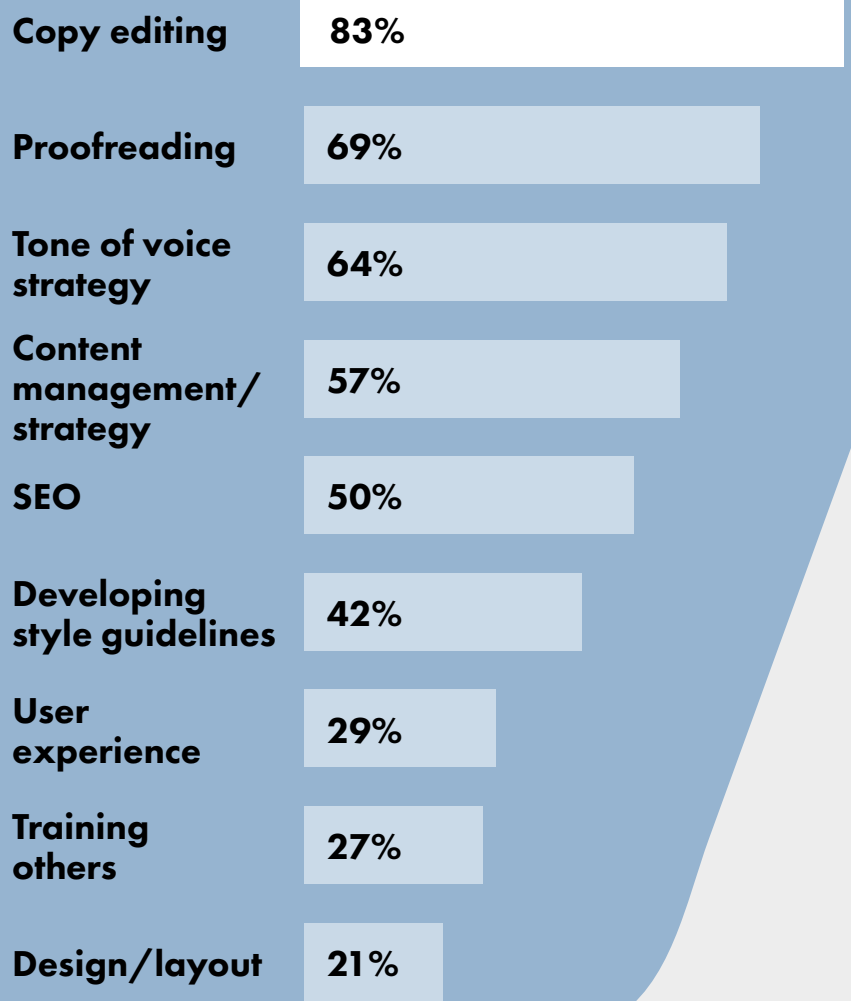


	2019	2018
Agency employee	68%	67%
Employed and freelancing	67%	67%
Freelance	64%	65%
In-house	60%	56%
Agency founder	60%	60%

Other tasks and roles

Copywriters continue to offer a range of services.

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



Have you ever done pro bono work for a charity?

I have in the past but don't do this anymore:

11%

No, but I am open to it

38%

Yes, I do this occasionally

30%

Yes, I do this regularly

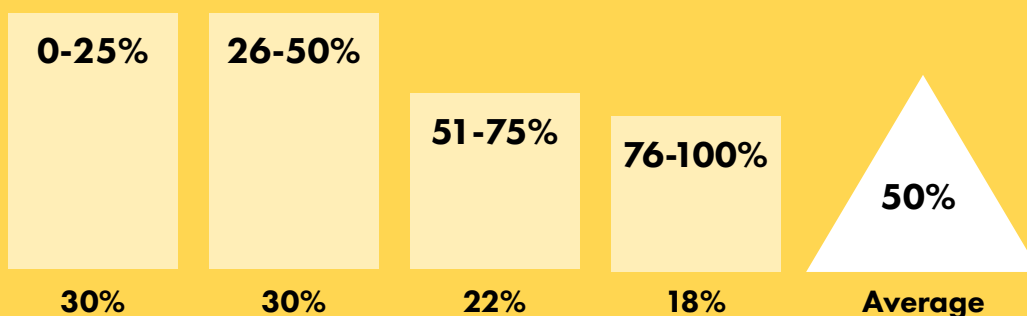
8%

No, and I wouldn't

13%

	2019	2018
No, but open to it	36%	43%
Yes, occasionally	28%	32%
No, wouldn't	19%	11%
In the past	11%	14%
Yes, regularly	6%	0%

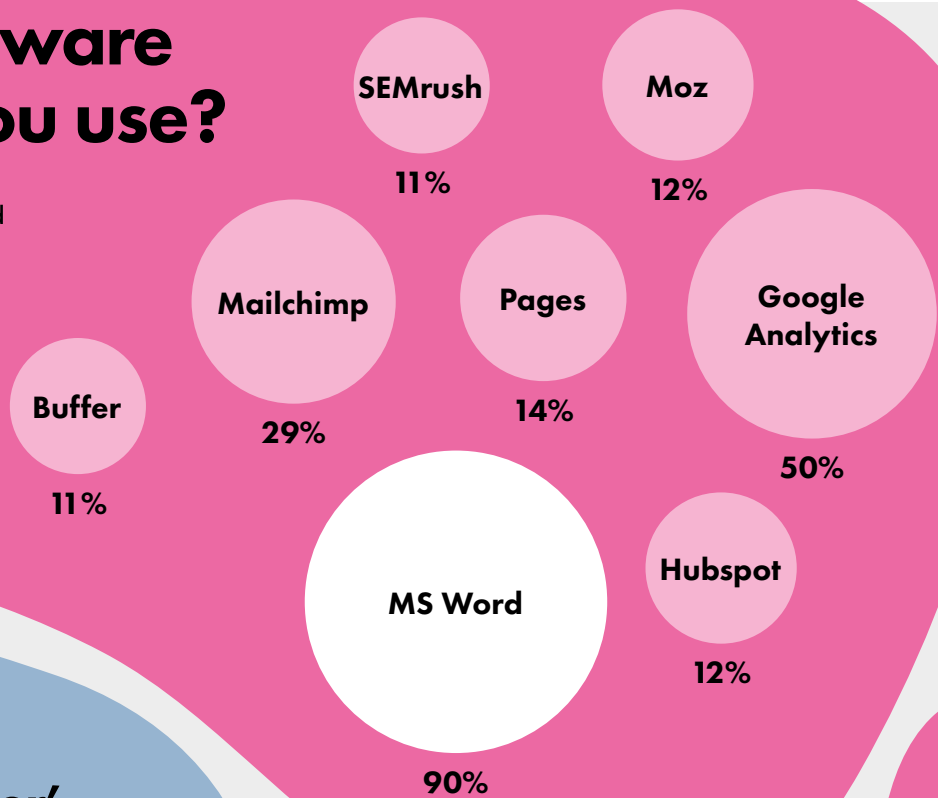
What percentage of your work is regular or retained - or completed on a retained basis?



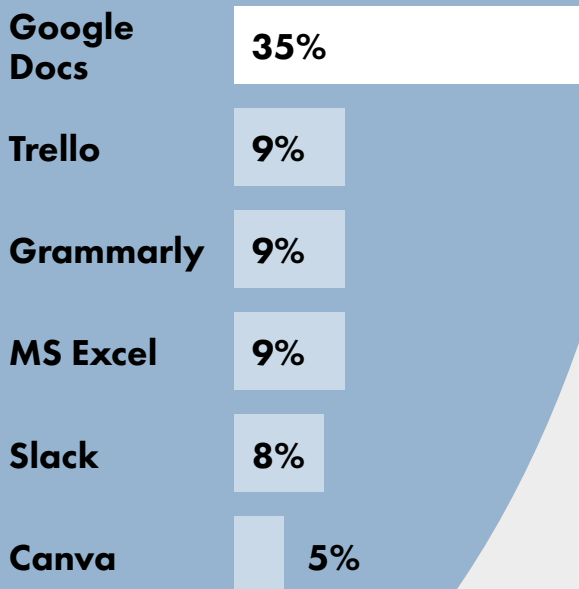
This is a new question for 2020. The average showed an even split between retained and project work.

Which software tools do you use?

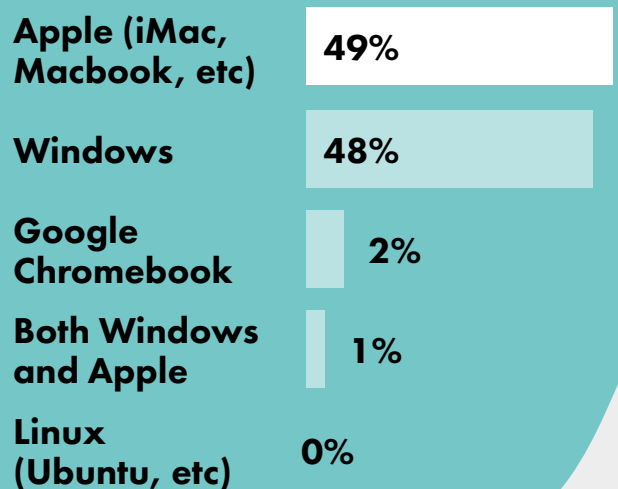
This is the first year we asked this question. Responses reflect a range of skills and services – from SEO to email marketing.



Other software identified as 'other' by 148 respondents included

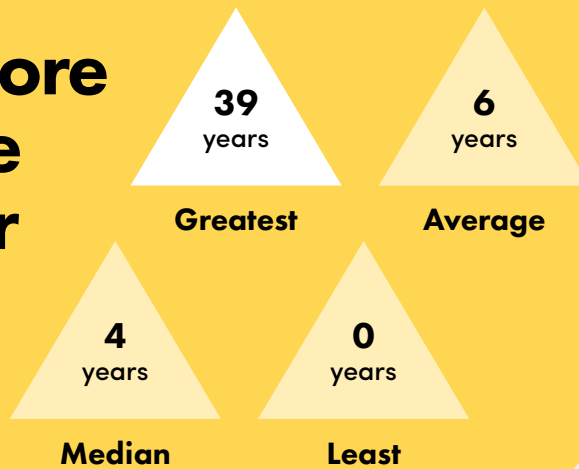


What kind of computer do you use?



Freelance copywriters

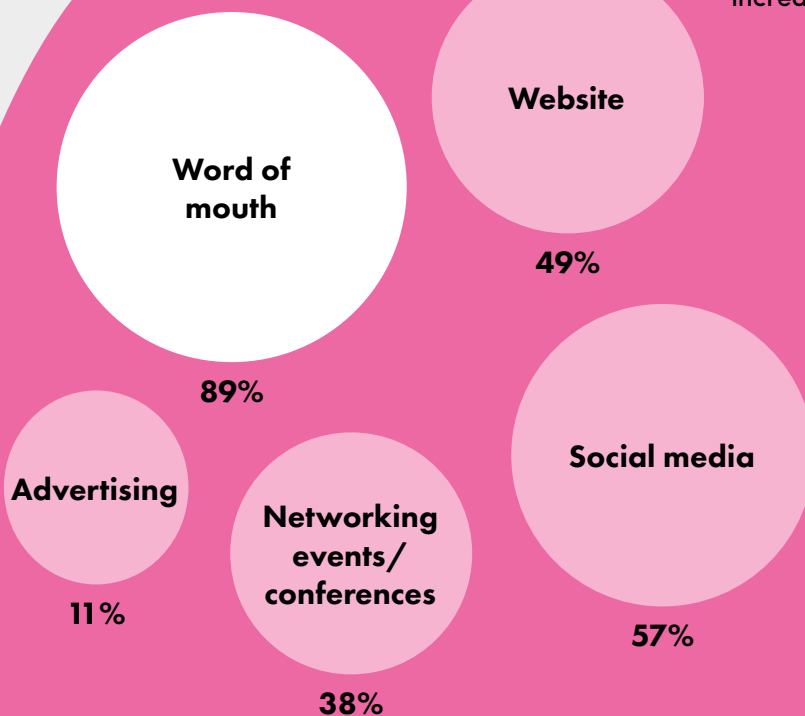
Experience before going freelance or starting your own agency



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

Finding new clients

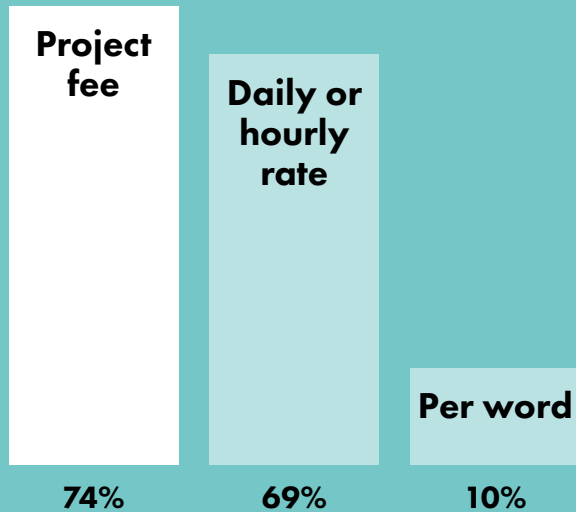
Word-of-mouth recommendations remain key to business development. But social media, networking and advertising are increasingly important.



	2019	2018
Word of mouth	90%	64%
Website	50%	36%
Social media	50%	38%
Networking events/ conferences	35%	26%
Advertising	10%	9%

Freelance rates

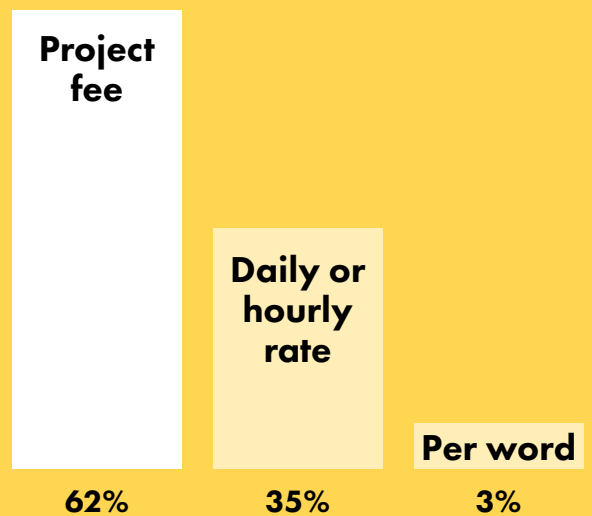
How freelancers charge



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

	2019	2018
Project fee	70%	50%
Daily or hourly rate	66%	47%
Per word	9%	6%

Preferred charging model



Project fees are increasingly popular, although there was also a small rise in charging per word.

Average day rate

2019 £349

2018 £342

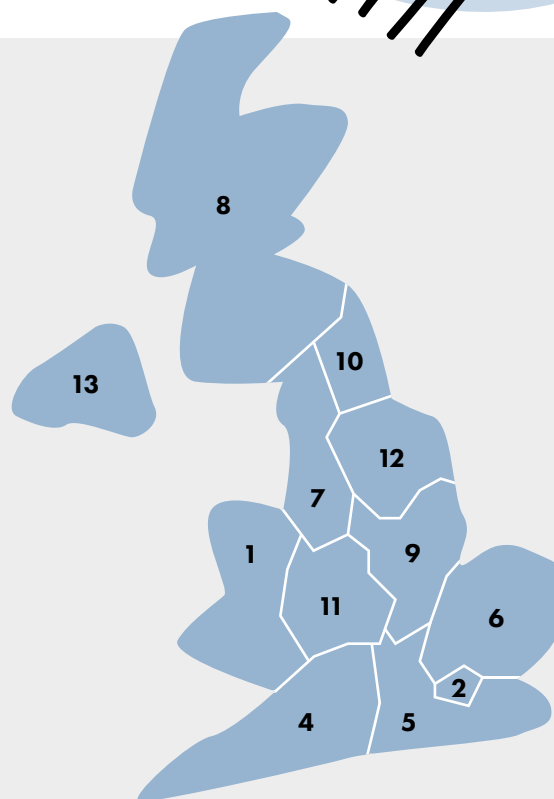
£379

	2019	2018
Project fee	59%	63%
Daily or hourly rate	40%	36%
Per word	1%	1%

Average rates by location

	2020	2019	2018
1. Wales	£447	£328	£297
2. London	£446	£361	£405
3. International	£431	£414	£496
4. South West	£391	£355	£336
5. South East	£375	£322	£317
6. East Anglia	£373	£436	£419
7. North West	£346	£329	£297
8. Scotland	£328	£342	£284
9. East Midlands	£308	£281	£385
10. North East	£308	£381	£343
11. West Midlands	£303	£309	£326
12. Yorks & Humber	£278	£282	£249

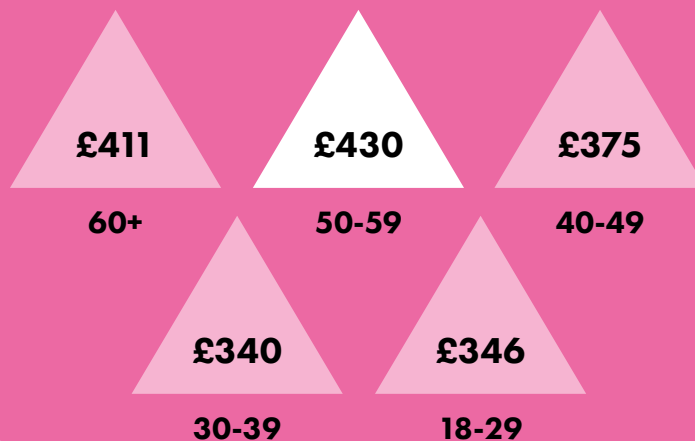
Wales and London had the biggest increases. East Anglia and the North East had the biggest decreases. However, the sample sizes for some regions are very small this year, so this affects the averages.



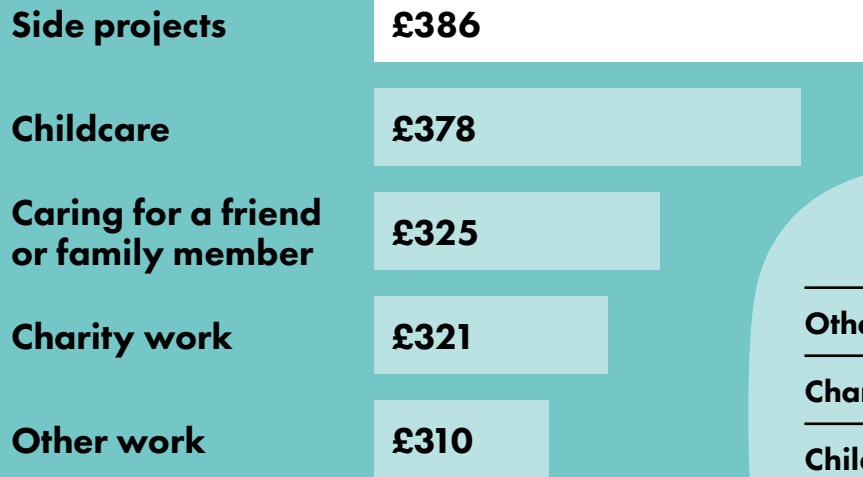
Average rates and age

Rates increased across the board. In previous years, they tended to increase until age 60, when (on average) they started to fall. This trend still holds true, but this year saw 18-29 year olds catch up with 30-39 year olds.

	2019	2018
60+	£327	£298
50-59	£388	£381
40-49	£366	£375
30-39	£317	£329
18-29	£272	£286



Average day rates compared with other responsibilities



We calculated the average day rates of copywriters with other responsibilities. Overall, the average across all responsibilities rose 6% to £344, compared with £323 last year. It still lags behind the overall average rate of £379, but it's great to see the gap closing.

	2019	2018
Other work	£331	£343
Charity work	£329	£346
Childcare	£325	£308
Caring for friend or family member	£316	£307
Side projects	£315	£371

Rate aspirations



There was a 10% increase in actual rates – a positive development when it comes to recognising the value copywriters add. Aspirations broadly rose in line with this.

	2019	2018
Aspiration	£471	£428
Actual	£331	£322

Earnings

Average earnings across all employment types

There was a big increase in average earnings. The highest reported income was £250,000. It's worth noting that these figures are all self-reported.

£250,000

Maximum income reported

£48,043

Full-time

£31,851

Part-time

	2019	2018
Maximum income reported	£300,000	£250,000
Full-time	£43,092	£43,940
Part-time	£26,968	£24,621

Income by employment type

(Full-time only)

Agency founder

£51,659

Freelance

£42,792

Employed and freelance

£42,694

In-house

£40,991

Agency employee

£39,624

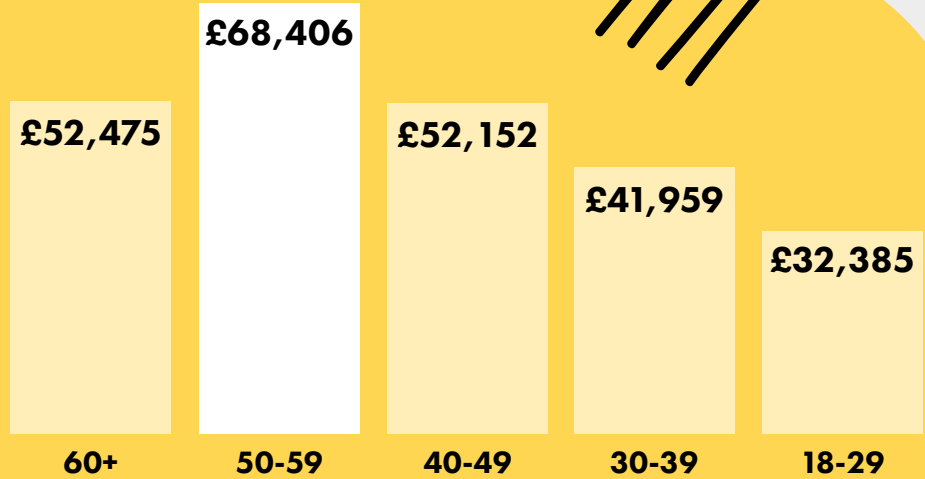
Agency founders earn the most but saw a slight dip from last year. Employed copywriters (agency, in-house and employed/freelance) had the biggest increases.

	2019	2018
Agency founder	£52,948	£60,463
Freelance	£37,585	£45,757
Employed and freelance	£35,550	£40,468
In-house	£34,119	£39,874
Agency employee	£32,865	£37,673

Income and age

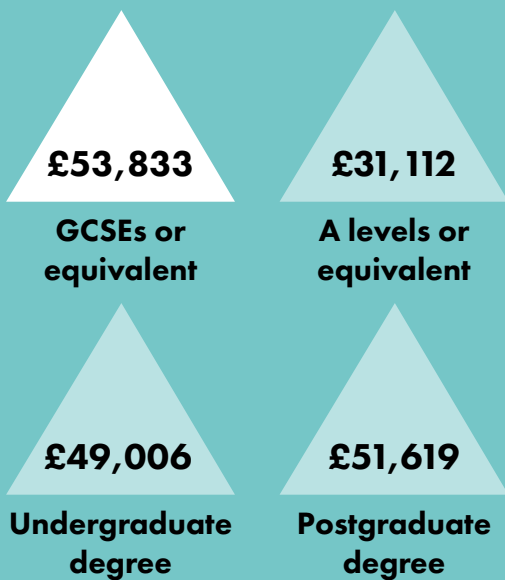
(Full-time only)

Income rebounded this year after a dip in 2019.



Income and education

(Full-time only)



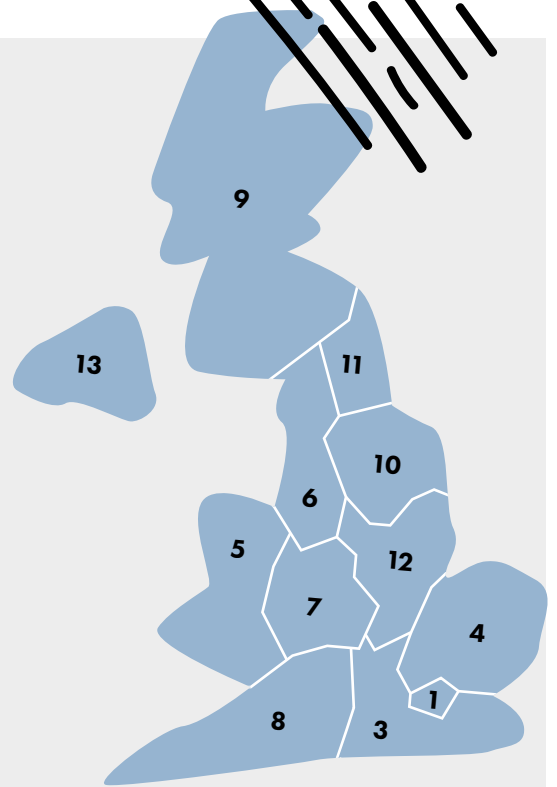
Average income for copywriters with degrees rose compared with 2019 and 2018. It fell for those with A levels and GCSEs, although those with GCSEs continue to have the highest incomes, on average.

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

	2019	2018
GCSEs	£56,873	£61,720
A levels	£43,152	£49,854
Undergraduate degree	£37,360	£41,598
Postgraduate degree	£34,650	£37,259

Income and location

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



Perceptions: Does gender have an impact on pay?

This year's results support our previous findings: women are more acutely aware of the role that gender plays in determining pay.

2019 Yes No Not sure

Women 43% 20% 36%

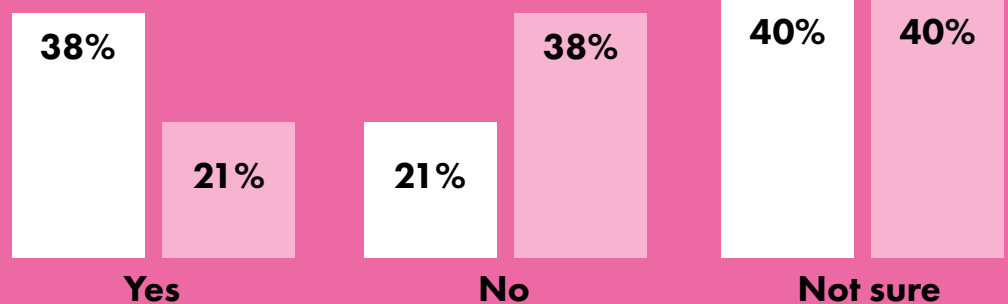
Men 17% 40% 43%

2018 Yes No Not sure

Women 44% 19% 37%

Men 26% 37% 38%

Women
Men



Income and gender

The pay gap has widened substantially for in-house and agency copywriters. However, there's been great progress towards equality among freelancers and agency founders.

- Men
- Women

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

Employed and freelance

27% gap

£52,375

£38,139

Agency

29% gap

£46,517

£32,944

Freelance

4% gap

£44,081

£42,265

In-house

10% gap

£43,660

£39,095

Agency founder

9% gap

£55,200

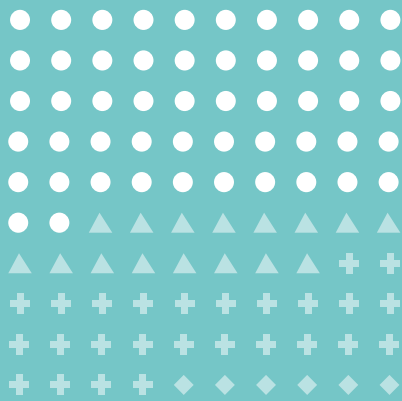
£50,260

Outlook

The survey closed in January before coronavirus had a global impact. These pre-COVID 19 results are broadly in line with previous years. Slightly more

people said last year was good and that they were optimistic about the year ahead. Slightly more people were worried about the effects of Brexit.

In purely financial terms, how was your year?



- Previous year was good (52%)
- ▲ Previous year was difficult (16%)
- + Much the same as previous years (26%)
- ◆ Not sure (6%)

	2019	2018
Good	50%	51%
Same	26%	22%
Difficult	14%	15%
Not sure	10%	12%

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

Yes, I feel optimistic

63%

I'm unsure about what the year will bring

34%

No, I feel pessimistic

3%

	2019	2018
Yes	59%	67%
Unsure	37%	32%
No	4%	1%

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

Neutral - I'm not sure if Brexit will affect my work as a copywriter

76%

Positive - I believe Brexit will have a positive impact on my career

4%

Negative - I think Brexit may harm my career or my business

20%

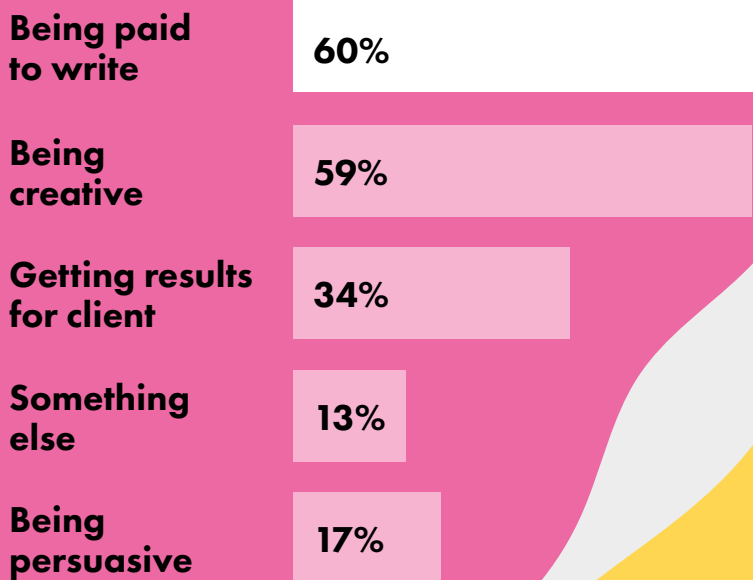
	2019	2018
Neutral	71%	74%
Negative	25%	22%
Positive	4%	4%

Motivation and aspirations

Copywriters are getting more ambitious. This year's results reflect copywriters' enduring love of writing and creativity. But there's also more focus on results and financial

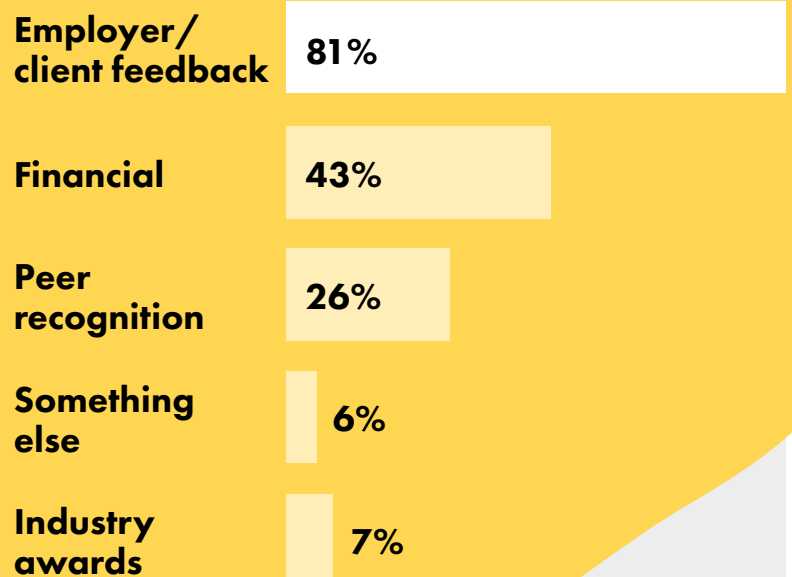
rewards. It's great to see copywriters championing the value of their work and looking to become more strategic. Together, we're helping get copywriters the recognition they deserve.

What do you enjoy most about being a copywriter?



	2019	2018
Being paid to write	45%	42%
Being creative	29%	34%
Getting results	15%	11%
Something else	7%	9%
Being persuasive	4%	4%

What type of recognition do you most value?



	2019	2018
Employer/client feedback	69%	69%
Financial	19%	16%
Peer recognition	8%	10%
Something else	3%	3%
Industry awards	1%	2%

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

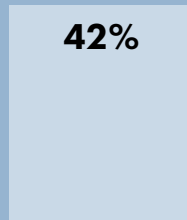


	2019	2018
Earn more money	46%	45%
Do more creative writing	15%	18%
Do more strategic/consultancy work	15%	14%
Something else	15%	11%
Go freelance	4%	6%
Change careers	3%	2%
Start my own agency	2%	4%

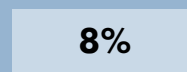
The client's side of the story

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

	2019	2018
Some	49%	44%
Most	41%	47%
Few	10%	9%



Some are comfortable judging my copy



Few are comfortable judging my copy



Most are comfortable judging my copy

What are the most common problems with briefs you receive?

Lacking basic information

54%

Little information on target audience

51%

Insufficient guidance on tone and voice

39%

Limited access to subject experts

33%

No information about intended outcome

32%

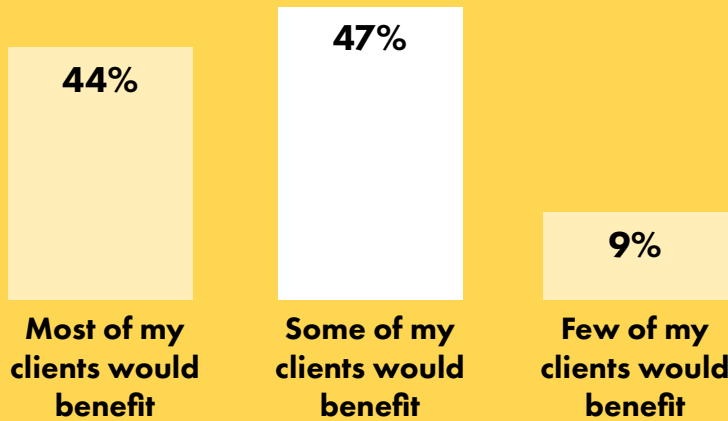
Few details about eventual use

24%

2019 2018

Lacking basic information	56%	41%
Little information on target audience	48%	39%
Insufficient guidance on tone and voice	38%	29%
Limited access to subject experts	31%	24%
No information about intended outcome	31%	25%
Few details about eventual use	24%	18%

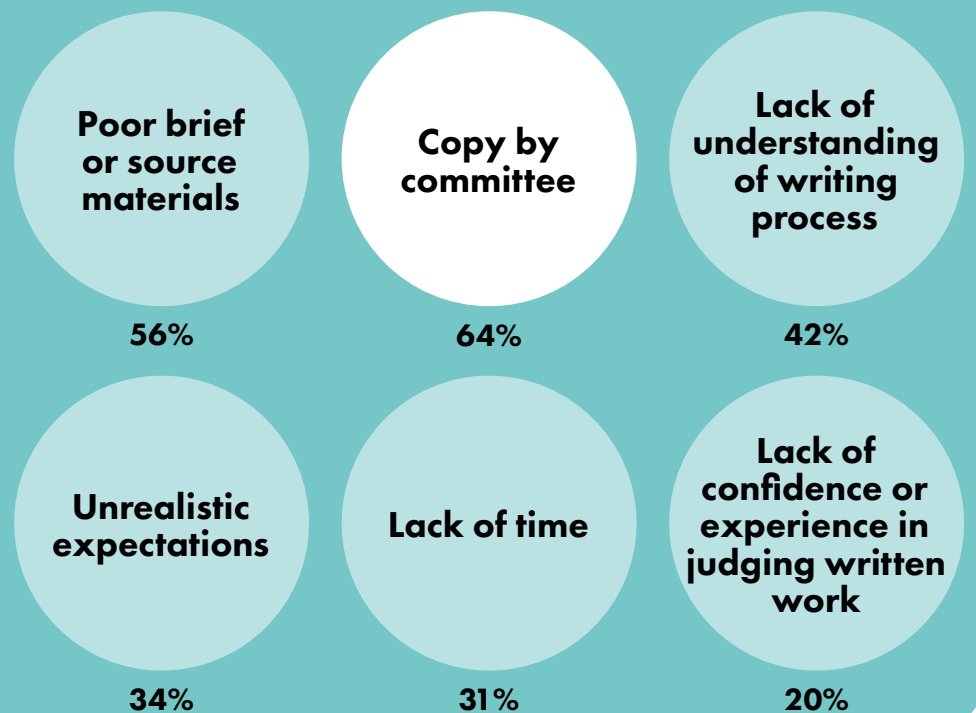
How many of your clients would benefit from advice on commissioning copy?



	2019	2018
Most	47%	47%
Some	45%	44%
Few	8%	8%

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

	2019	2018
Poor brief or source materials	55%	38%
Copy by committee	53%	48%
Lack of understanding of writing process	37%	25%
Unrealistic expectations	29%	22%
Lack of time	27%	23%
Lack of confidence or experience in judging written work	19%	15%



My copywriting career has improved thanks to...

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

Training
Reading
Mentoring and coaching
Writing
Feedback
Failing

"Focusing on what I do best and doing it well"

"Knowing my worth"

"Staying true to myself"

"Never selling myself short"

"Being in the ProCopywriters directory – it's brought me far more paying work than any other channel."

"Realising that sometimes I have to say no"

Networking
Other copywriters
Social media
Self-belief
Confidence

"Using an accountant – a godsend!"

"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 Anna Gunning using data processed by Jo Robertson. Design is by Anna Patience.

Data collection and publicity

The survey was publicly available on SurveyMonkey from the end of 2019 to January 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

640 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.



Published by ProCopywriters – the Alliance of Commercial Writers

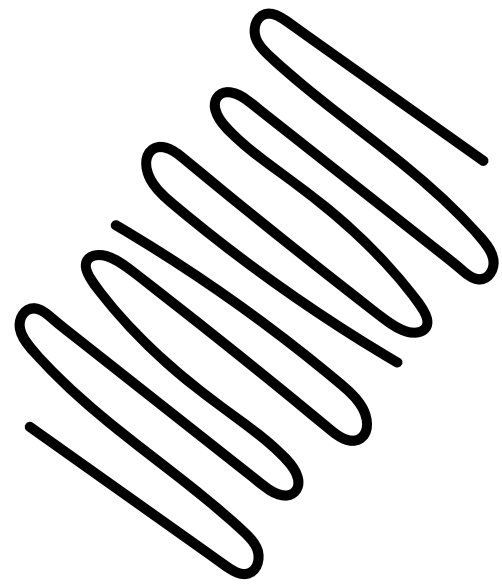
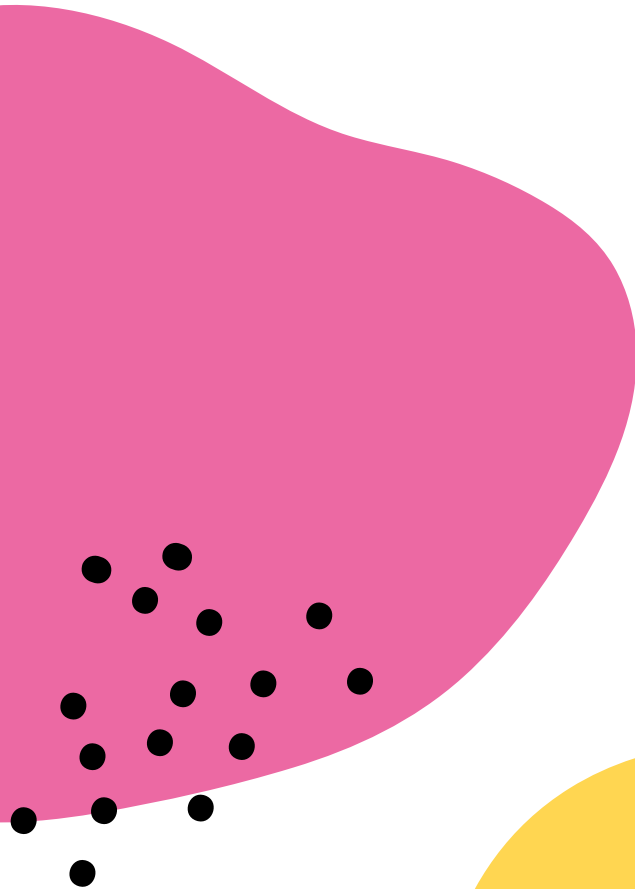
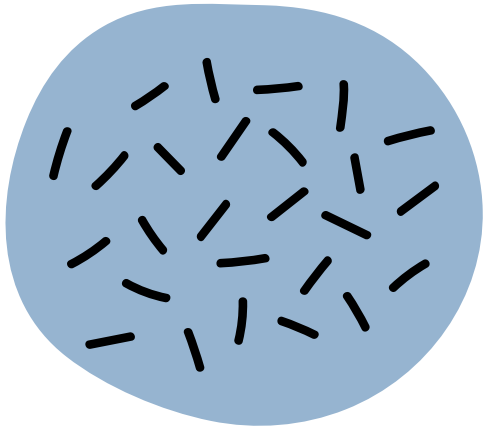
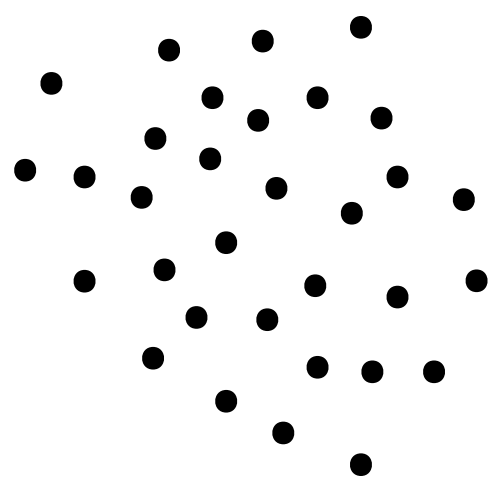


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