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The Power of Communication

PR and Communications Census 2024 | UK

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FOREWORD

Ray Eglington FPRCA
Chair, PRCA

Group managing director,
Four Agency Worldwide

"At a time of global mis- and dis-information, ethical PR and communications professionals are needed more than ever before."

We last conducted our industry-wide census 3.5 years ago, when PR was first bouncing back from the challenges of Covid-19.

Our last census had no need to mention artificial intelligence. Now, digital and artificial intelligence (AI) are the two tasks that have increased significantly for agency, in-house and freelance practitioners alike. In the main, the industry is cautiously optimistic even as it embraces new technologies: just 19% of our sample consider that AI is a threat to the industry.

We have seen considerable efforts to open the industry to talent that had previously been unrepresented. Our census suggests that a growing proportion of early career professionals are Black and Brown. The rise in the Ethnicity Pay Gap can partly be explained by their shorter service in the industry. However, organisations will need to be vigilant that the gap is now eradicated, and I commend the resources produced by the PRCA's Race and Ethnicity Equity Board which support those who are serious about tackling this issue. On the other hand, there has not been the same level of progress at encouraging non-academic routes – such as apprenticeships – into PR, and more will need to be done in the coming months.

In this census, we have broadened our analysis of issues relating to protected characteristics, at the request of PRCA's Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board. They will use this information to set their agenda for the coming year.

So much has changed, and yet the basic principles of our industry remain the same: building and defending reputations, understanding and influencing key audiences, and devising and executing communications strategies.

At a time of global mis- and dis-information, ethical PR and communications professionals are needed more than ever before.

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1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

108,700[1]
Practitioners in PR and Communications

74,300
PR professionals

+

34,400
PR and Communications Directors

1 Source: Nomis/ONS Annual Population Survey, July 2023–June 2024. Data combines occupational categories 1133: Public Relations and Communications Directors and 2493: Public Relations Professionals.

The 2024 PR and Communications Census highlights a dynamic yet challenging landscape for the industry. While strides have been made in areas such as ethnic diversity, especially in in-house roles, with 32% of professionals identifying as Non-White, up from 13% in 2021, disparities persist in pay, seniority, and workplace experiences. The Ethnicity Pay Gap has widened to 25.6%, with significant underrepresentation of Non-White professionals in senior roles, underscoring systemic barriers.

The Gender Pay Gap remains substantial at 11.8%, showing minimal progress in addressing equity in a female-dominated sector. Meanwhile, overall salary growth has been modest, with the average salary increasing by only 1.17% annually over three years to £52,440, reflecting stagnation for many. Agency roles, however, have seen stronger growth, with a 5.3% annual increase, in contrast to declining freelance earnings.

Workplace diversity and inclusion efforts appear to have regressed, with only 50% of practitioners rating their organisations as "good" or "very good" in this area, down from 67% in 2021. Furthermore, 49% of respondents reported experiencing workplace discrimination, emphasising the urgency for more proactive measures to foster equitable environments.

AI integration poses both opportunities and challenges, with 62% expressing concern about potential risks, though 40% believe it could revolutionise the industry. Retention remains an issue, as respondents anticipate staying in the industry for an average of 6.3 years, with many planning to exit within the next five years.

The findings point to critical areas requiring attention, including pay equity, leadership diversity, and robust support for evolving workplace challenges such as AI adoption and caregiving responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

The 2024 Census was based on an online survey completed by 500 respondents between 3rd and 30th October 2024.

The sample included 333 panel respondents, drawn from 3Gem's in-house 'double opt-in' database, and 167 'client respondents', sourced through a combination of the PRCA database and outreach efforts, including social media.

Panel respondents represent a broad cross-section of PR professionals, while client respondents are more likely to be directly connected to the industry through PRCA membership or broader outreach initiatives. The survey, conducted by 3Gem Research and Insights, adhered to the Market Research Society's code of conduct, ensuring ethical and high-quality data collection. This dual-sample approach provides a holistic and diverse perspective on the industry.

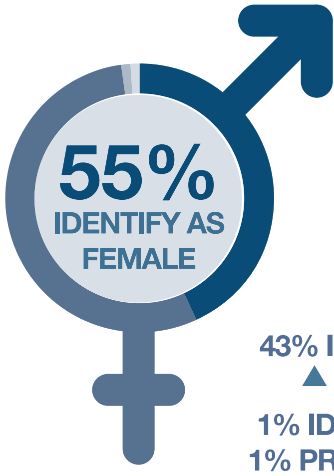
2

INDUSTRY DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER

The PR and communications industry in 2024 remains predominantly female, with 55% of professionals identifying as female and 43% as male.

This represents a slight shift from 2021, when the gender split was 67% female and 33% male, suggesting a gradual increase in male representation within the industry.



43% IDENTIFY AS MALE
▲ 10% increase since 2021

1% IDENTIFY AS OTHER
1% PREFER NOT TO SAY

AGE

In 2024, the median age of PR and communications professionals is 36, slightly younger than the 38 reported in 2021. This decrease suggests that **the industry continues to attract younger talent**, likely driven by evolving career opportunities and the increasing appeal of the sector among early-career professionals.

Despite this trend, the presence of experienced practitioners remains vital, ensuring a balance of fresh perspectives and seasoned expertise within the workforce.

36
AVERAGE AGE

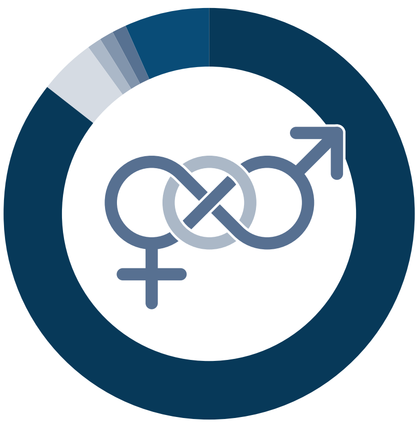
▼ Average age in 2021: 38

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In 2024, 78% identify as heterosexual, down from 84% in 2021, reflecting growing diversity. Four percent identify as gay or lesbian (unchanged), six percent as bisexual (up from 4%), and smaller proportions as pansexual, asexual, or queer (1% each).

Six percent preferred not to disclose, consistent with 2021.

The data highlights progress in representation, though continued efforts are needed to support LGBTQIA+ inclusion.



78%	HETEROSEXUAL ▼ 6% decrease since 2021
4%	GAY OR LESBIAN
6%	BISEXUAL
1%	PANSEXUAL
1%	ASEXUAL
1%	QUEER
6%	PREFER NOT TO SAY

ETHNIC ORIGIN

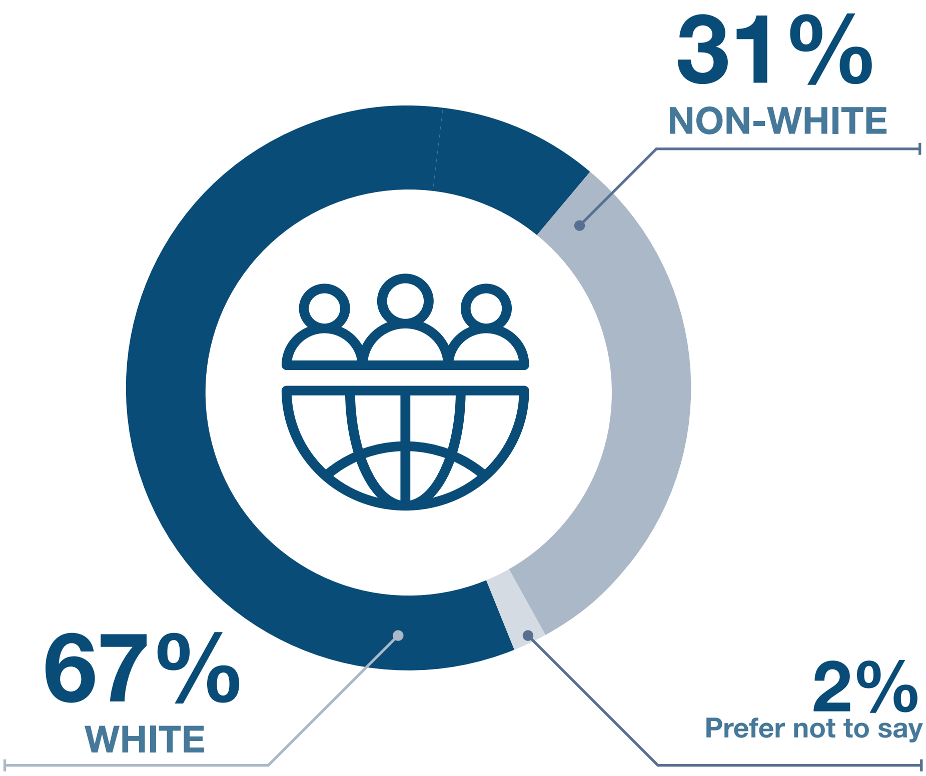
In 2024, the PR and communications industry shows **continued progress towards greater ethnic diversity**, with 31% of professionals identifying as Non-White.

This represents a significant increase from the 13% Non-White representation reported in 2021, **indicating that the industry has taken substantial steps towards improving inclusivity over the last three years**.

Breaking down the data, 58% of the workforce identifies as White British, a notable decrease from the 74% reported in 2021. Meanwhile, 9% identify as Other White, consistent with previous findings, bringing the total White representation to 67%.

It's noteworthy that **76% of agency practitioners identify as White,** contrasting with **in-house colleagues (62%)** and **freelancers/independent consultants (64%).** This indicates **inconsistent approaches to inclusivity** across the industry**.**

Among Non-White groups, the largest representation comes from Black African or Caribbean professionals (8%) and Pakistani professionals (6%), with other notable contributions from Black British (5%), Indian (4%), and Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (4%). Smaller proportions are seen among Bangladeshi (1%), Chinese (1%), and Any other Asian background (2%) professionals. These figures underscore the diversity within the Non-White category and highlight areas for further inclusion efforts.



67%
PRACTITIONERS CLASSIFY AS WHITE

58%	White British
9%	Other White

31%
NON-WHITE

8%	Black African, Caribbean
6%	Pakistani
5%	Black British
4%	Indian
4%	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
2%	Any other Asian
1%	Bangladeshi
1%	Chinese

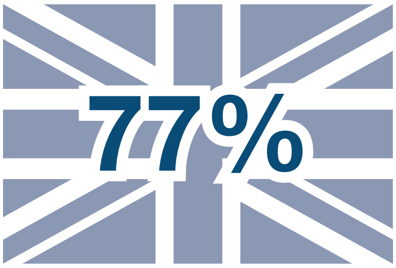
NATIONALITY

In 2024, 77% of professionals identify as British nationals, a decrease from 84% in 2021, reflecting growing diversity in the workforce.

EU nationals now represent 10%, up from 6.5% in 2021, while eight percent come from non-EU countries, consistent with previous findings.

Four percent hold dual or multiple nationalities, unchanged since 2021.

BRITISH NATIONALS



▼ 7% decrease since 2021

8%
OTHER COUNTRY

10%
EU NATIONALS
▲ 3.5% increase since 2021

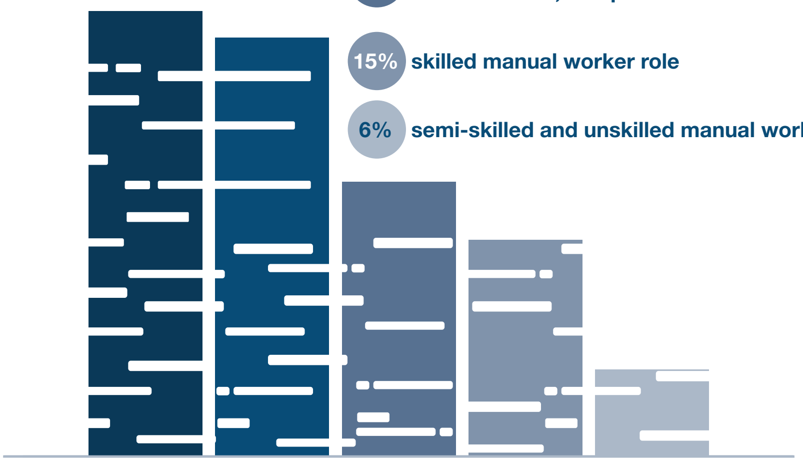
4%
DUAL OR MULTIPLE NATIONALITIES

SOCIAL MOBILITY

In 2024, 32% of PR practitioners reported that the main income earner in their household during childhood held a higher managerial, administrative, or professional role, a decrease from 40% in 2021. Those from households where the main income earner held an intermediate managerial role increased to 29%, up from 25%. Additionally, 19% grew up in families where the main income earner held supervisory, clerical, or junior managerial roles, and 15% reported skilled manual workers as the primary income earner. Six percent came from households where the main income earner held semi-skilled or unskilled manual roles, with no respondents reporting reliance on state benefits, compared to two percent in 2021. These figures indicate a modest increase in socioeconomic diversity within the industry.

MAIN INCOME EARNER IN HOUSEHOLD DURING CHILDHOOD

30% intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional role
29% higher managerial, administrative, and professional background
19% supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative, and professional role
15% skilled manual worker role
6% semi-skilled and unskilled manual work



EDUCATION

In 2024, 64% of PR practitioners attended state-run or state-funded schools - an increase from 48% in 2021. 41% of these respondents reported attending non-selective schools and 23% reported attending selective schools.

The proportion of those who attended independent or fee-paying schools has risen marginally to 21%, compared to 20% in 2021, while 13% were educated abroad, a notable increase from eight percent in 2021.

Additionally, 41% of practitioners received free school meals, reflecting a **growing representation of individuals from lower-income households.**

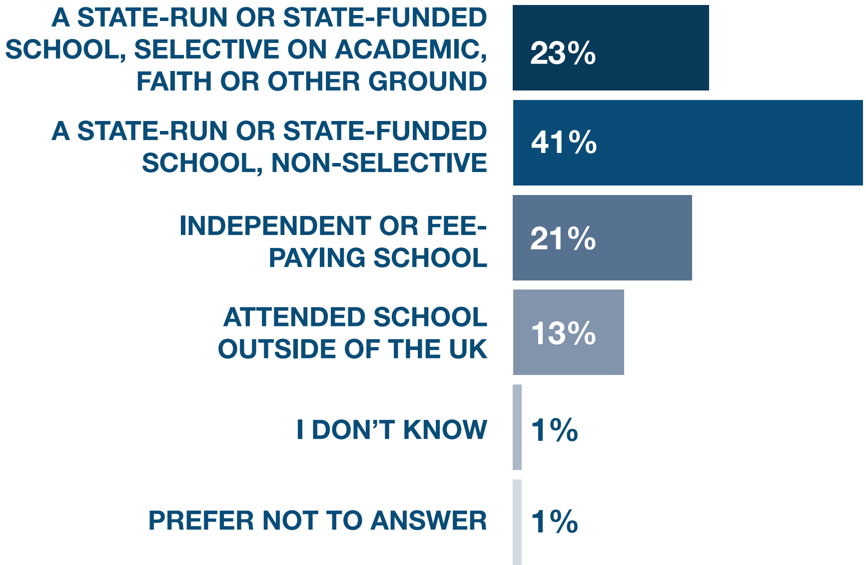
In terms of highest educational attainment, 62% of practitioners hold an undergraduate degree, down from 74% in 2021.

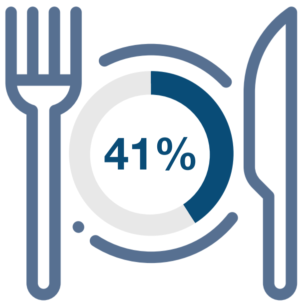
Practitioners working **in-house are less likely than those in agencies to have an undergraduate, master's or doctorate degree** (59% against 66%).

Smaller proportions have attained a doctorate (2%), **apprenticeship** (2%), or **other professional qualifications** (3%).

Meanwhile, 14% of respondents state that the highest academic qualification they hold are GCSE-level qualifications, and nine percent report achieving 5+ GCSEs, one A-level, or equivalent, indicating some entry into the profession from non-graduate pathways.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND





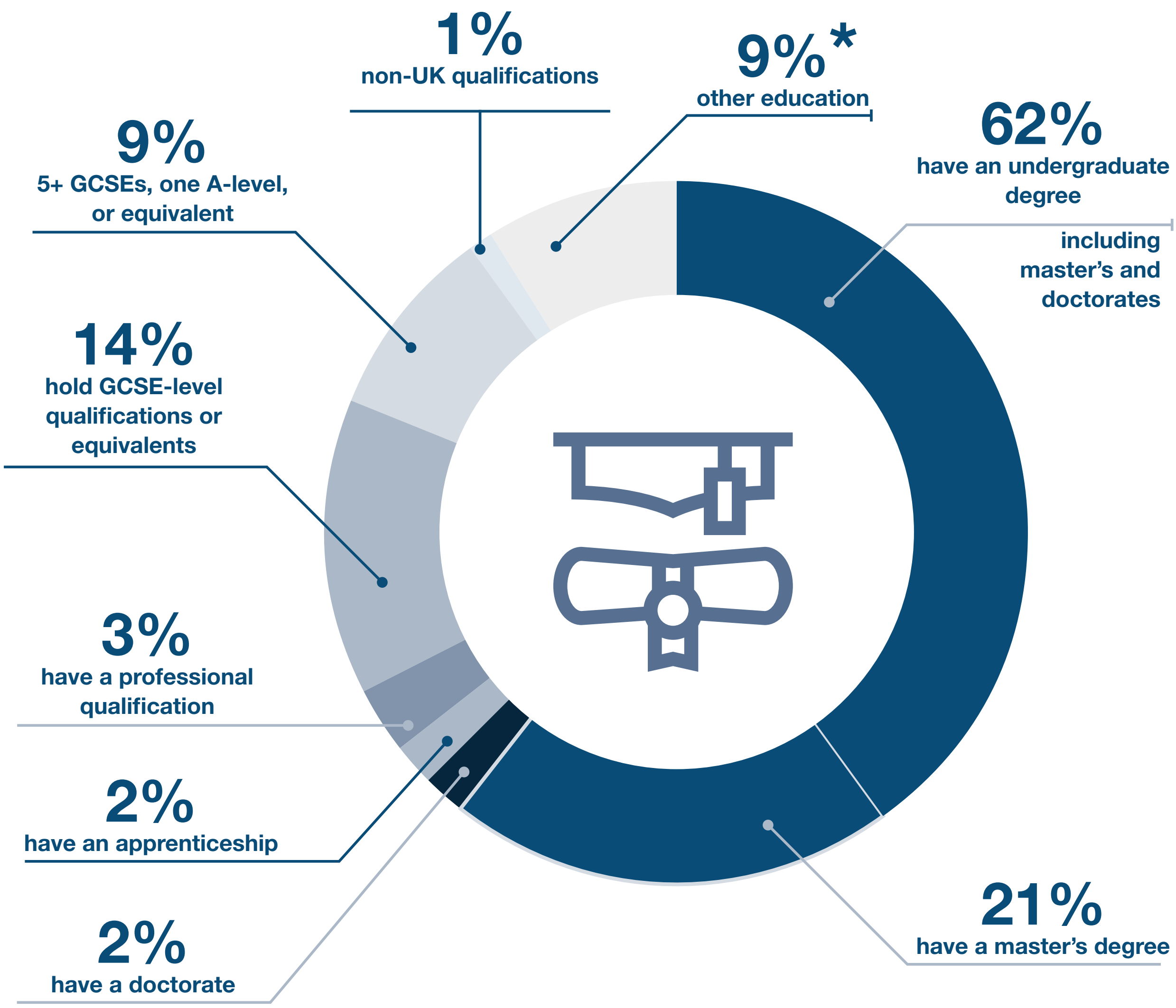
PRACTITIONERS RECEIVED FREE SCHOOL MEALS DURING THEIR PRIMARY AND/OR SECONDARY SCHOOL

One percent hold non-UK qualifications, similar to 2021 levels. 29% of Non-White professionals hold a master's degree, significantly higher than the 18% of white professionals. This trend is particularly pronounced among Black African and Caribbean practitioners, with 38% attaining postgraduate qualifications, compared to 16% of White British practitioners.

These findings highlight the **high levels of academic attainment within certain groups**, underscoring the importance of **addressing systemic barriers** that may still limit their access to senior industry roles despite their advanced qualifications.

These trends **highlight the industry's continued focus on higher education** while also reflecting gradual **diversification in educational backgrounds and greater accessibility** for individuals from lower-income households.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION THE RESPONDENTS HAVE OBTAINED



*

9% other education

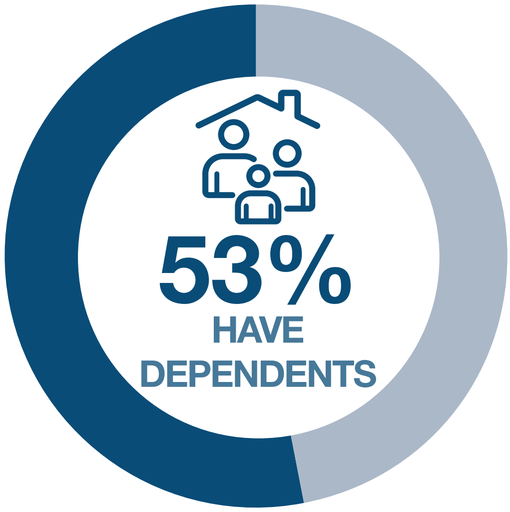
3%	NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National RSA Advanced Diploma
3%	NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic Skills
2%	NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level
1%	Other vocational/work-related qualifications

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

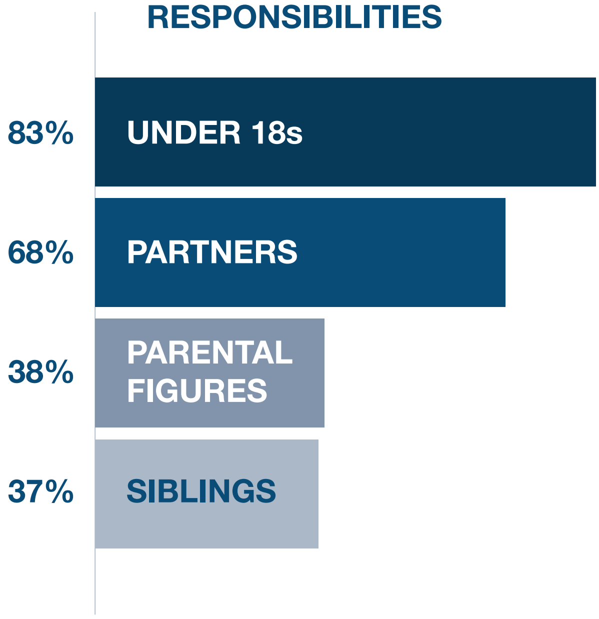
In 2024, 53% of PR professionals report having dependents, with the majority caring for children under 18 (83%), followed by spouses/ partners (68%), elderly parents or relatives (38%), and siblings (37%). The average number of dependents per respondent is 2.6, with 31% supporting two individuals.

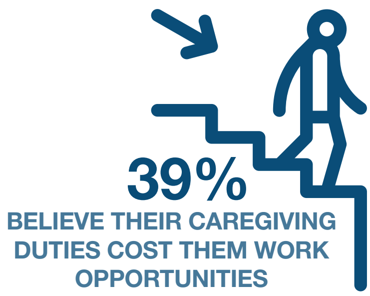
Balancing caring responsibilities continues to impact professionals, with 37% likely to take a career break within the next 1-5 years. Moreover, 39% believe their caregiving duties have caused them to miss out on opportunities such as promotions or prestige projects, while 49% do not share this view, and 12% remain uncertain.

These findings underscore the need for employers to provide flexible working arrangements and robust support to ensure carers can balance their responsibilities without compromising their career progression.



SUBJECTS OF CARING RESPONSIBILITIES





ANTICIPATED TIME IN THE INDUSTRY

Anticipated tenure in the PR and Communications industry varies significantly across age groups, reflecting different career stages and outlooks.

Practitioners aged 65+ report the shortest expected tenure, averaging just 3.2 years, likely due to retirement plans. Younger professionals, particularly those aged 18-24 and 25-34, also expect relatively brief careers, with average tenures of 5.4 and 5.3 years, respectively.

Notably, a significant proportion of these groups—57% of 18-24-year-olds and 50% of 25-34-year-olds—anticipate leaving the industry in less than 8 years.

By contrast, mid-career practitioners aged 35-44 report the longest anticipated tenure, averaging 8.2 years, followed by those aged 45-54 at 7.5 years. These findings underline the importance of targeted retention strategies to foster long-term engagement among younger professionals while sustaining commitment across all career stages.

6.3
YEARS
(average) time respondents intend to stay

PREDICTION OF RESPONDENTS' CAREER LONGEVITY IN THE INDUSTRY

3

STATE OF THE SECTOR

MAIN FUNCTIONS

Many PR and communications professionals have roles that cross into other disciplines, the most common of which is Branding and Marketing (15%). The most common classic PR roles are Communications Strategy Development (13%), and Corporate Public Relations (12%). Digital and Social Media functions also account for 11% of roles, reflecting the increasing importance of online engagement in the industry. Other specialised roles such as Graphic Design/ Animation (3%), Reputation Management (3%), and Public Affairs/Lobbying (4%) demonstrate the breadth of skills present in the sector.

MAIN ROLES OF PR AND COMMS PROFESSIONALS

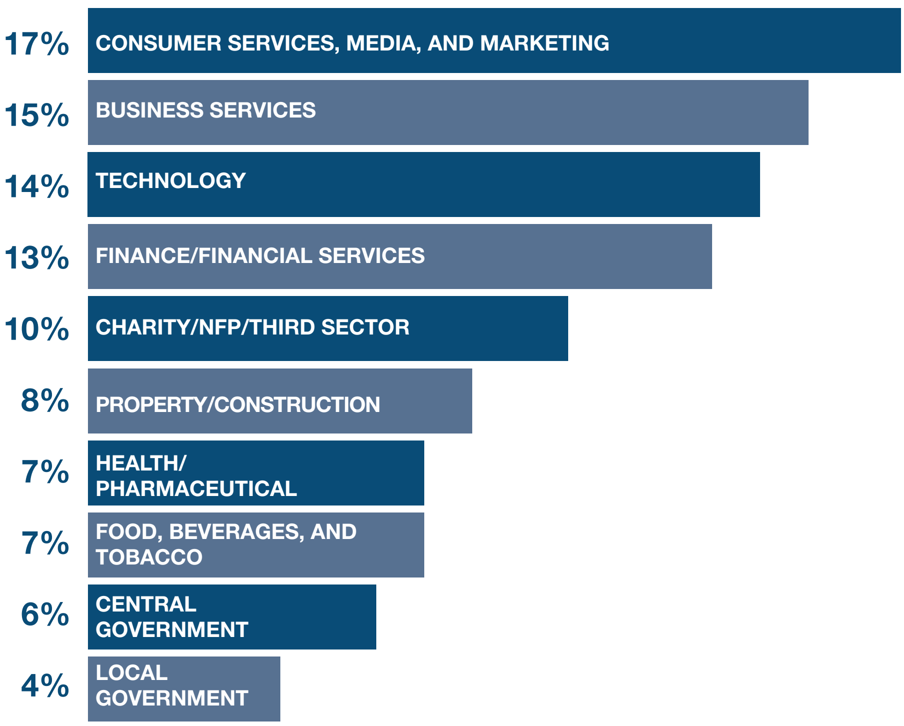
INDUSTRY SECTORS

The industry serves a wide range of sectors.

Consumer Services, Media, and Marketing (17%) is the most represented, followed by Business Services (15%), Technology (14%), and Finance/Financial Services (13%). Notably, the Charity/ NFP/Third Sector (10%) is also well represented, indicating the industry's contribution to societal good.

Traditional sectors such as Property/Construction (8%), Health/Pharmaceutical (7%), and Food, Beverages, and Tobacco (7%) remain integral, alongside public sectors like Central Government (6%) and Local Government (4%).

MAIN ROLES OF PR AND COMMS PROFESSIONALS



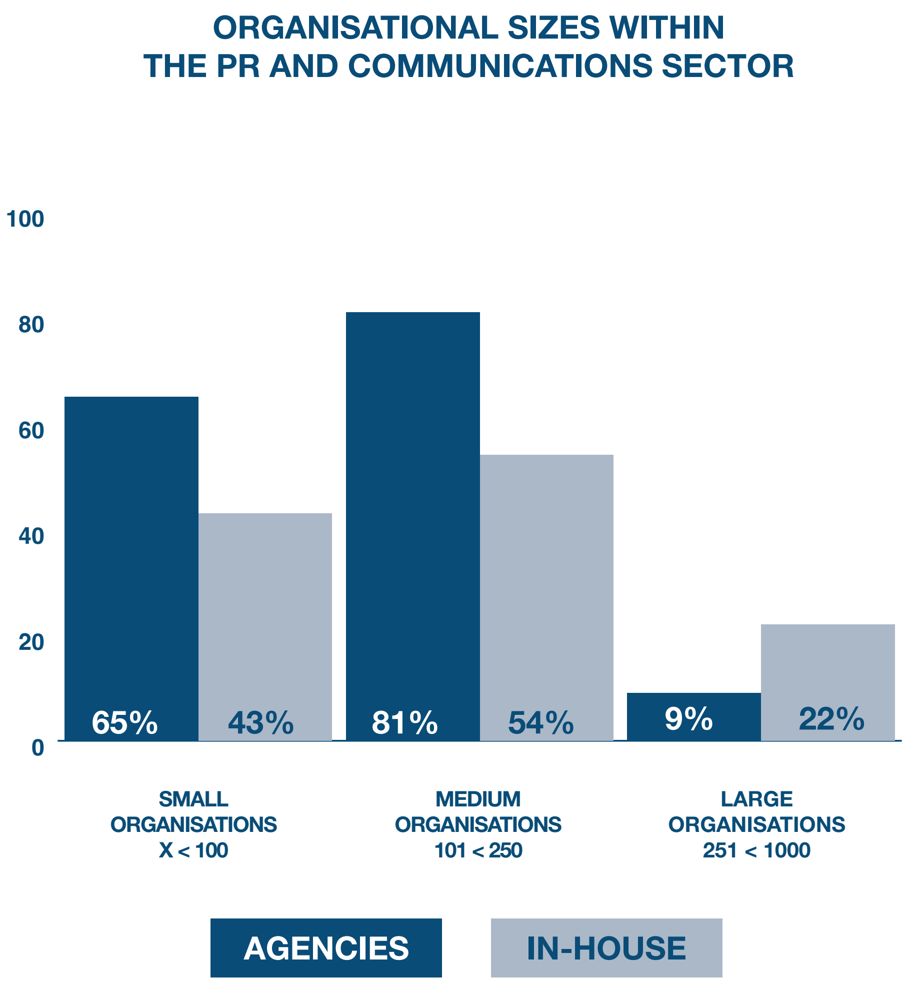
ORGANISATIONAL SIZE

The survey reveals a diverse range of organisational sizes within the PR and Communications sector.

Smaller organisations remain a cornerstone of the industry: 65% of respondents working in agencies are in firms of fewer than 100 people, 81% in firms smaller than 250.

Those working in-house are more likely to be working in larger organisations, but even so, 43% of respondents said their firm employed 100 or fewer, 54% said 250 or fewer.

Following recent consolidation in the industry, 9% of respondents work in agencies with more than 1,000 staff, while 22% of in-house respondents work in organisations of similar size.

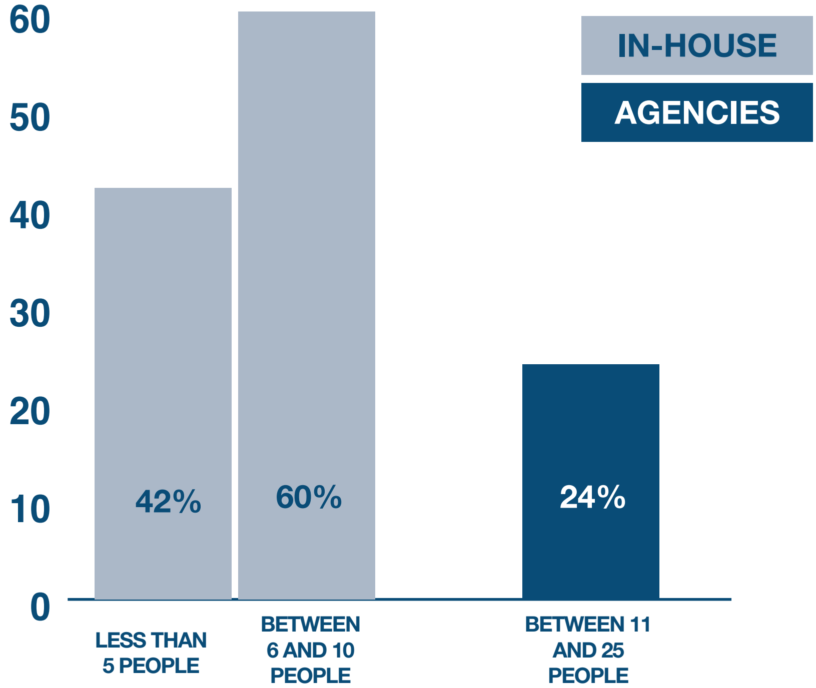


PR-SPECIFIC TEAMS

When examining team sizes specifically within PR roles, smaller teams are even more prominent.

Over two fifths (42%) of in-house practitioners say that their organisation has fewer than five people working full-time in PR, and this rises to 60% if we include all PR teams of 10 and under.

In agencies, once professionals working in other disciplines have been excluded, the mode response (24%) fell within the team size 11-25.



INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ROLES

Over the past two years, certain roles within PR and communications have seen a significant rise in importance, reflecting shifts in industry priorities.

'Digital communications' leads this change, with 22% of respondents citing it as a critical area of growth, followed closely by 'artificial intelligence' at 20%.

'Branding and marketing' (14%) and 'reputation management' (12%) have also gained prominence, alongside 'emerging focuses on sustainability communications' and 'Search Engine Optimisation' (both at 11%).

Additionally, 'diversity, equity, and inclusion communications' (10%) and 'communications strategy development' (9%) underline the increasing need for strategic and inclusive approaches in PR.

These changes **highlight a sector adapting to technological advancements, societal shifts, and the demand for transparent, value-driven narratives**.

DECLINING IMPORTANCE OF ROLES

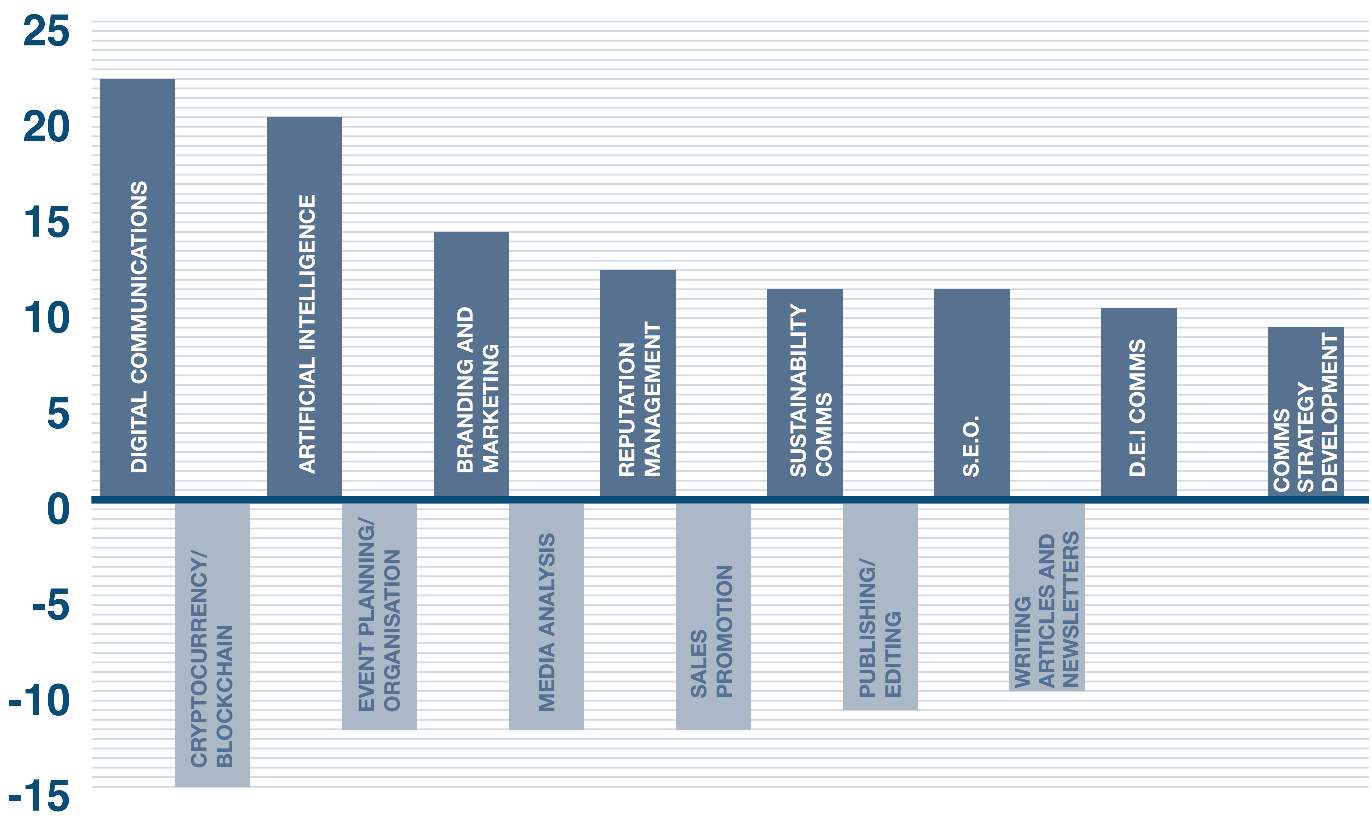
Conversely, some roles are perceived to have decreased in importance.

'Cryptocurrency/blockchain' is the most notable, with 15% citing its reduced relevance.

Traditional tasks like 'event planning/organisation', 'media analysis', and 'sales promotion' have also seen a decline (each at 12%), alongside 'publishing/editing' (11%) and 'writing articles and newsletters' (10%).

These findings suggest a **shift away from manual, traditional methods** towards digital transformation and innovation-driven practices.

LATEST TRENDS IN PR AND COMMUNICATIONS — EMERGING AND DECLINING ROLES



IMMEDIATE THREATS TO THE INDUSTRY

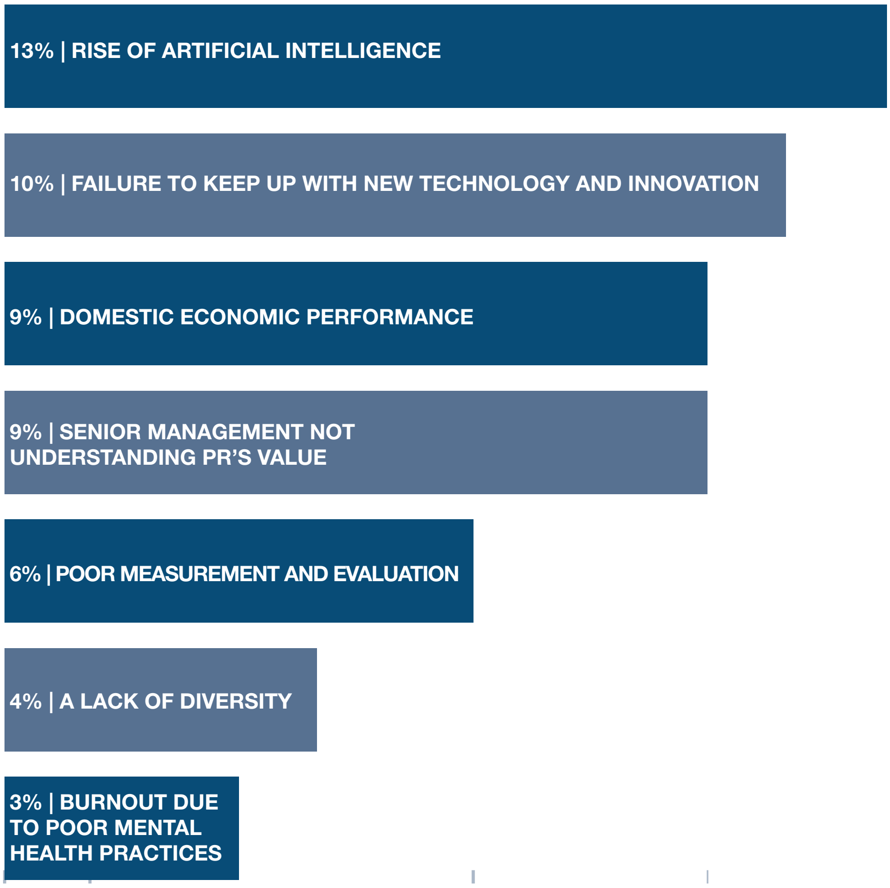
Respondents identify ‘reduced budgets’ as the greatest threat to the PR industry, with 19% highlighting this concern. The ‘rise of artificial intelligence’ (13%) and the ‘failure to keep up with new technology and innovation’ (10%) reflect anxieties about the sector’s ability to adapt to rapid technological changes. Challenges like ‘senior management not understanding PR’s value’ (9%) and ‘domestic economic performance’ (9%) further underscore vulnerabilities in perception and market stability.

Interestingly, issues such as ‘poor measurement and evaluation’ (6%), ‘a lack of diversity’ (4%), and ‘burnout due to poor mental health practices’ (3%) show that internal challenges also remain pressing concerns.

19%

RESPONDENTS IDENTIFY ‘REDUCED BUDGETS’ AS THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE PR INDUSTRY

OTHER REASONS AND THREATS



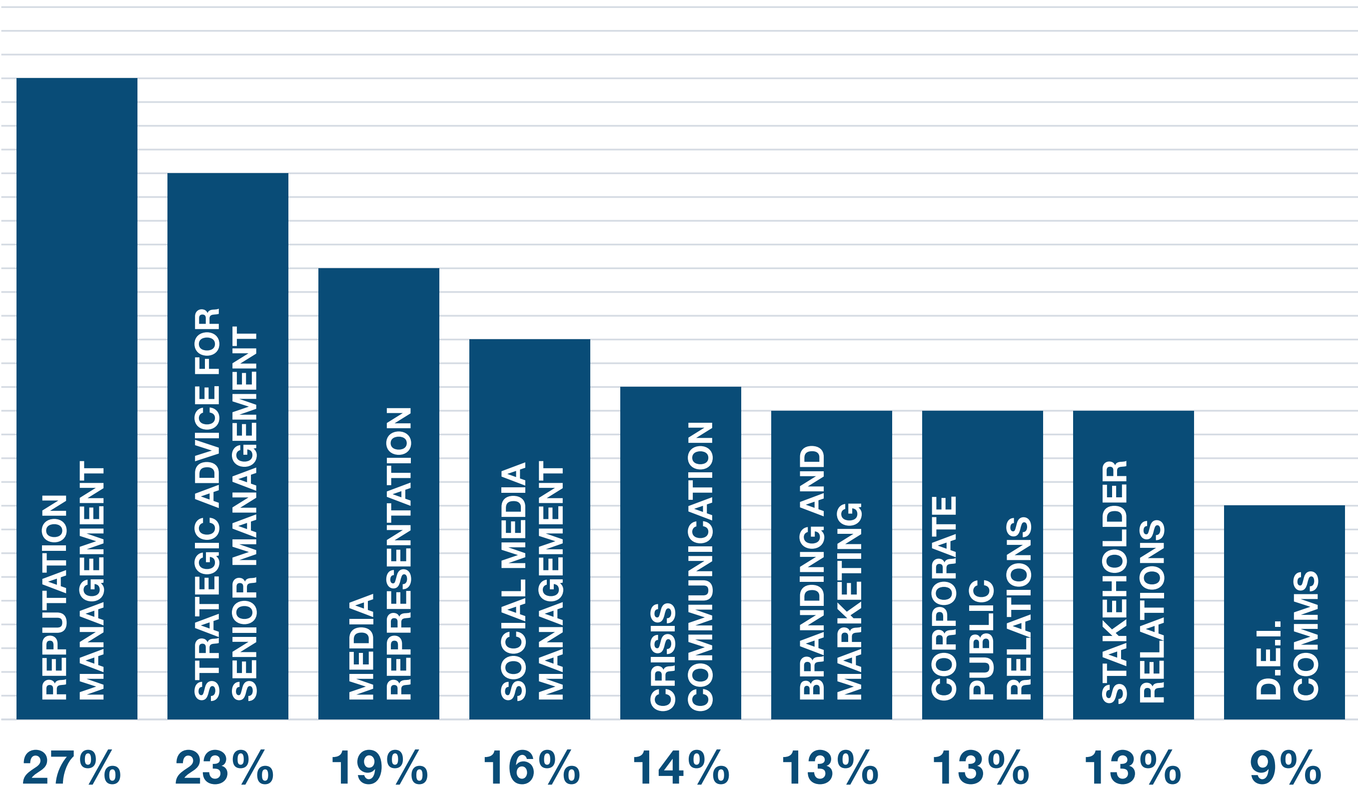
CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PR AND COMMUNICATIONS

At its heart, the PR and communications industry continues to focus on 'reputation management' as its primary responsibility, identified by 27% of respondents.

Other significant aspects include 'strategic advice for senior management' (23%) and 'media representation' (19%), showcasing the industry's dual focus on external messaging and internal influence.

Emerging roles like 'social media management' (16%) and 'crisis communication' (14%) highlight the evolving landscape of PR, while traditional responsibilities such as 'branding and marketing', 'corporate public relations', and 'stakeholder relations' (all at 13%) remain vital.

Meanwhile, 'diversity, equity, and inclusion communications' (9%) reflect a commitment to inclusivity and representation within campaigns.

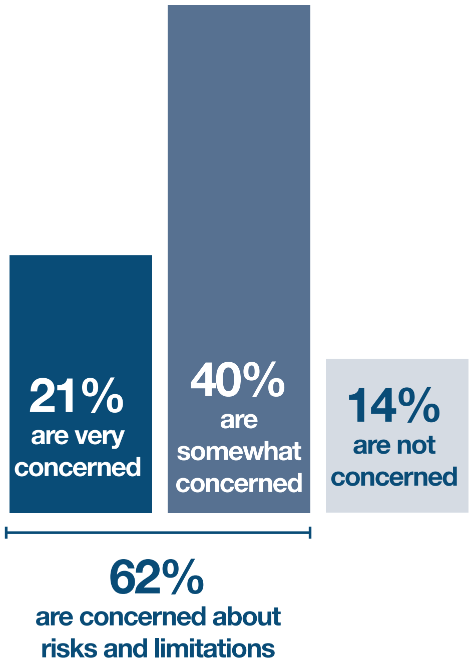


AI IN PR AND COMMUNICATIONS

The integration of AI technologies in PR and communications is met with mixed sentiment. 62% of respondents express concern about the potential risks and limitations, with 21% being very concerned and 40% somewhat concerned. Conversely, 14% are not concerned, indicating that **while AI poses challenges, not all view it negatively**.

When envisioning AI's future role, 40% believe AI could revolutionise the industry and transform traditional practices, while 35% think it will augment existing practices without fully replacing human involvement. However, 19% perceive AI as a threat, fearing it could take jobs away from PR professionals. Only 6% anticipate minimal impact, reflecting the widespread expectation that AI will play a significant role in shaping the industry's future.

These findings highlight the need for **organisations to address concerns, balancing the benefits of AI adoption with strategies to mitigate potential risks**, ensuring AI complements human expertise rather than displacing it.



WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT AI'S FUTURE ROLE?

4

DISABILITIES

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

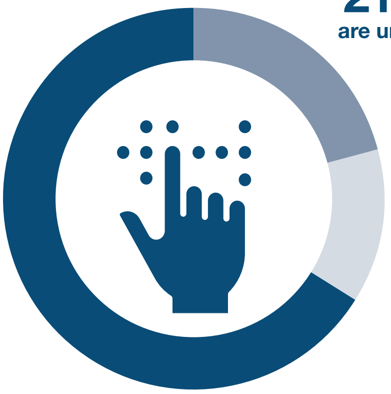
In 2024, 16% of PR and communications professionals identify as having a physical disability, while 82% do not, and two percent preferred not to say.

Among professionals with physical disabilities, 66% report a significant impact at work, with 33% describing it as very significant and 34% as quite significant.

Conversely, 13% report minimal or no impact, while 21% are unsure. These results highlight the importance of **effective workplace adjustments** to mitigate the challenges faced by employees with physical disabilities.

16%
practitioners have a physical disability

▲ 4% increase since 2021



NEURODIVERGENCE

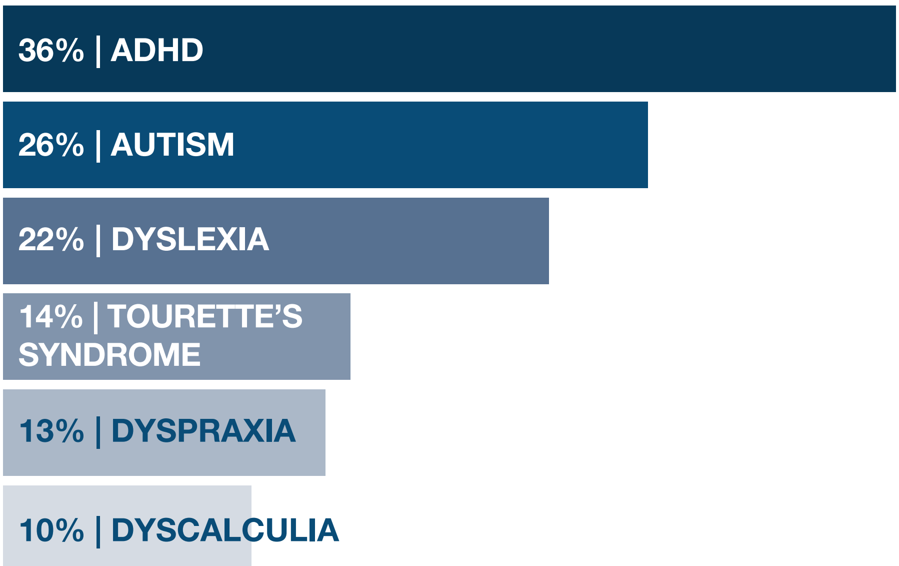
20% of PR and communications professionals in 2024 identify as neurodivergent, with 77% stating they do not, and three percent preferring not to say.

Among those identifying as neurodivergent, the most common conditions reported are ADHD (36%), followed by autism (26%), dyslexia (22%), Tourette's syndrome (14%), dyspraxia (13%), and dyscalculia (10%).

Among neurodivergent professionals, 65% report a negative impact at work, with 51% describing it as generally negative and 14% as significantly negative. Conversely, 20% note a positive impact, with 18% indicating it is generally positive and 2%

20%
PR professionals are neurodivergent

65%
of neurodiverse practitioners report a negative impact at work

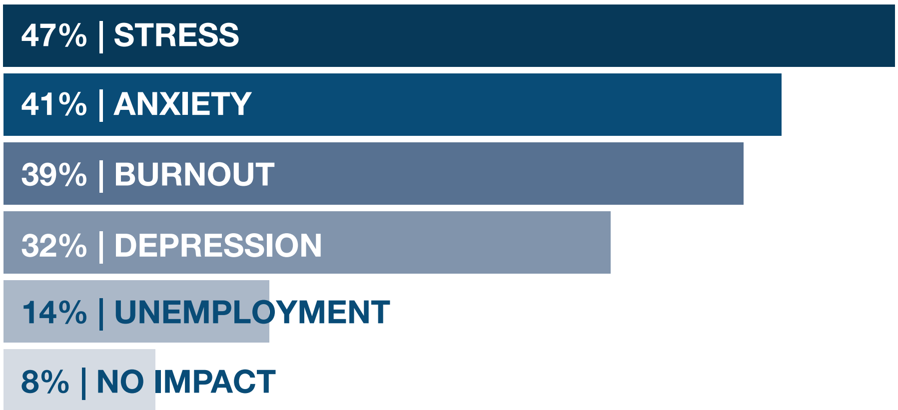


significantly positive. 15% are unsure about its impact.

Unmet support needs remain a significant issue, with 47% of neurodivergent professionals reporting stress, 41% anxiety, and 39% burnout as a result of insufficient workplace accommodations. Additionally, 32% experienced depression, and 14% faced unemployment due to these challenges. Only eight percent of respondents reported no negative impacts.

These findings underline the importance of **developing tailored policies and robust support systems to address the specific needs of neurodivergent professionals, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable working environment** in the PR and communications industry.

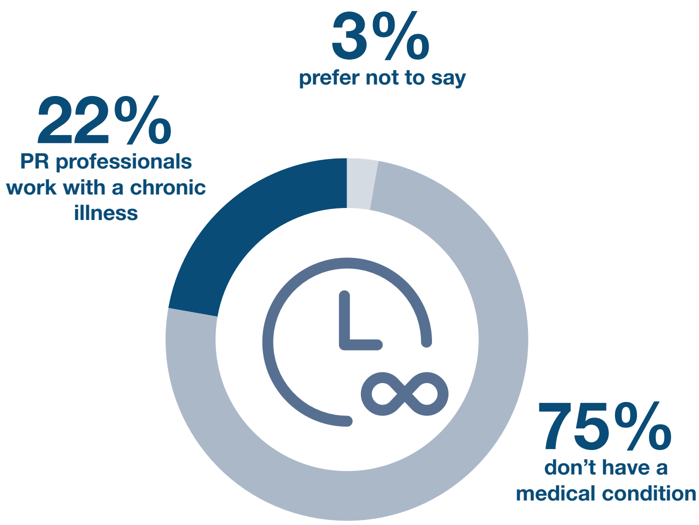
UNMET SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE



CHRONIC ILLNESS

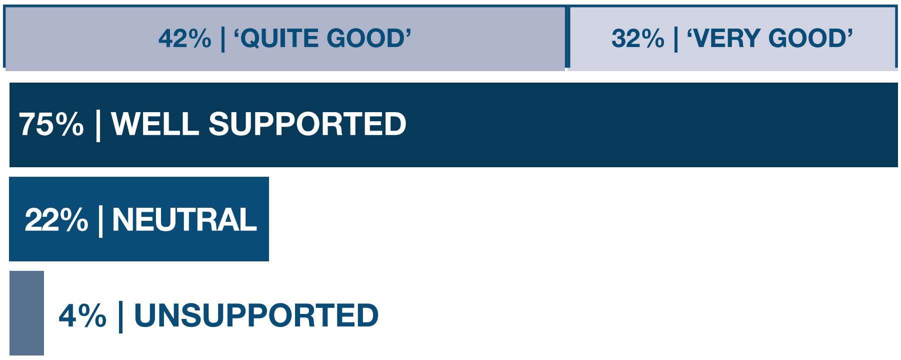
In 2024, 22% of PR and communications professionals report working with a chronic illness or medical condition, while 75% do not, and three percent prefer not to say.

Among those with chronic illnesses, 75% feel their organisation supports them well, with 32% rating the support as very good and 42% as quite good. However, 22% perceive the support as neutral, and four percent feel unsupported.



These findings suggest that **while most organisations provide effective support for employees managing chronic conditions, there is room for improvement to ensure consistency** across the industry.

LEVEL OF WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH CHRONIC ILLNESSES



WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

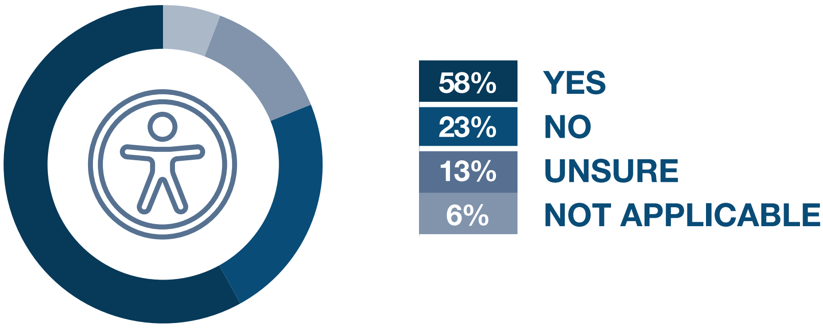
In 2024, 58% of PR and communications professionals feel their organisation makes reasonable adjustments to support them in the workplace. However, 23% believe their organisation does not, while 13% are unsure, and six percent consider this question not applicable to their circumstances.

These results suggest that while a majority of organisations are making efforts to provide accommodations for employees with disabilities, **a significant proportion still feel unsupported**.

This highlights **the need for organisations to prioritise accessibility and ensure clear communication regarding available support mechanisms** to better meet the needs of their workforce.

Among the 23% of professionals who feel their

WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS FOR PR AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS



REASONS REPORTED FOR FEELING LIKE OWN ORGANISATION DOES NOT IMPLEMENT REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

42%
of respondents with a disability experience discomfort in disclosing it to their employer

32%
of respondents believe employer pays lip service

19%
of respondents with a disability state their employers don't understand their needs

6%
of respondents believe employers are not implementing sufficient adjustments

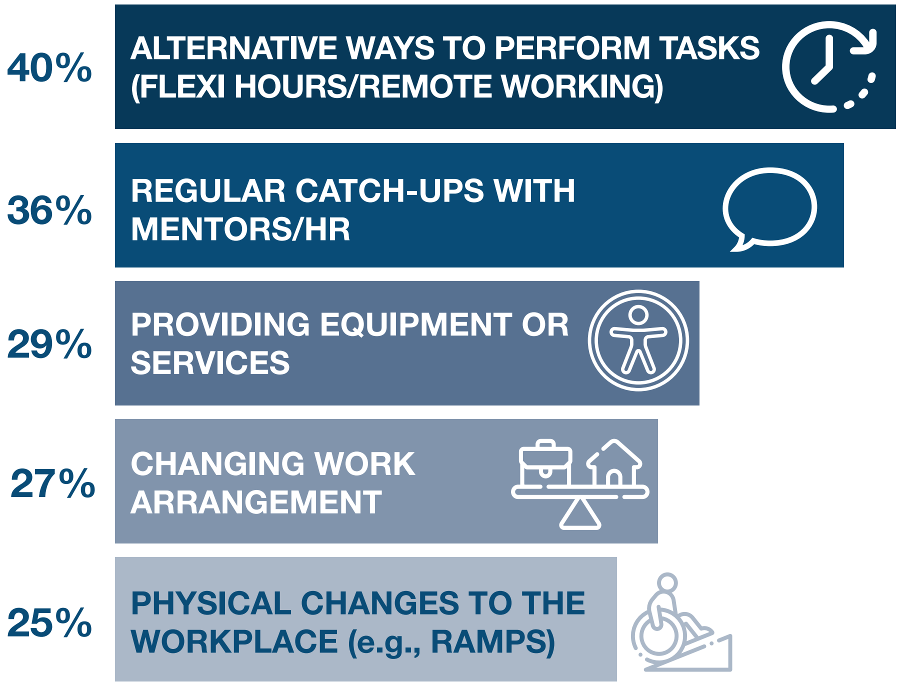
organisation does not make reasonable adjustments, the most common reason cited is discomfort in disclosing disability needs to their employer (42%). Other reasons include perceptions that their employer only pays lip service to supporting staff (32%), a lack of understanding of their needs (19%), and insufficient adjustments (6%). For the 58% who feel their organisation makes reasonable adjustments, common accommodations include finding alternative ways to perform tasks (40%), such as offering flexible hours or individual workspaces, and providing regular contact points with HR or mentors (36%).Additional measures include providing equipment or services (29%), changing work arrangements (27%), and making physical changes to the workplace (25%), such as installing ramps.

These insights highlight the importance of **fostering open communication and ensuring that adjustments are both meaningful and tailored to individual needs**.

An important observation is the **variation in perceived support among professionals managing chronic illnesses, neurodivergence, and physical disabilities**.

While 75% of individuals with chronic illnesses feel well-supported in their workplaces, support for neurodivergent professionals and those with physical disabilities appears more varied, with **unmet needs remaining a significant issue**.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS THAT ORGANISATIONS ARE MAKING



75% of individuals with chronic illnesses feel well-supported in their workplaces, while support for neurodivergent professionals and those with physical disabilities appears more varied, with unmet needs remaining a significant issue.

These figures stem from different measures of support and workplace impact, suggesting an area worth exploring further to better understand and address potential disparities.

By delving deeper into these differences, organisations can ensure more equitable support systems across all types of disabilities, fostering a truly inclusive environment for all employees.

5

DIVERSITY

WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In 2024, 50% of practitioners rated their organisation's approach to diversity and inclusion as 'good' or 'very good', down from 67% in 2021, indicating a decline in positive perceptions. 35% described their organisation's performance as 'average', an increase from 24% in 2021, while 15% rated their organisation as 'poor' or 'very poor', compared to just 9% in 2021. These findings suggest that **progress in promoting diversity and inclusion may have stalled or even regressed**, with more employees feeling that their organisations could do better. The data highlights the importance of reinvigorating diversity and inclusion efforts, ensuring policies are meaningful and effectively address employee concerns.

While the industry had shown progress in 2021, **this year's data serves as a reminder that continuous effort and commitment are essential to fostering truly inclusive workplaces.**

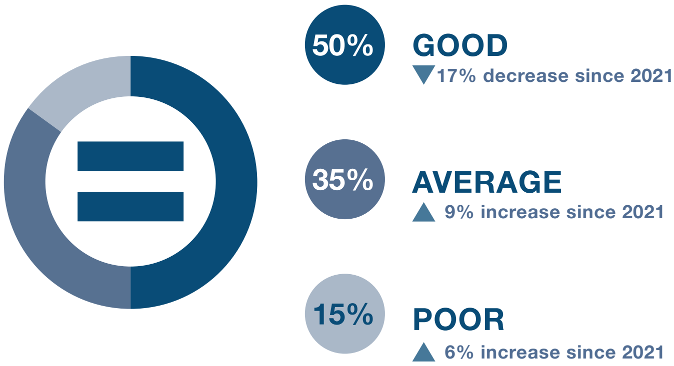
Organisations must remain proactive, listen to their employees, and adapt their diversity strategies to meet evolving expectations.

Following on from this, **49% of practitioners in 2024 reported experiencing some form of workplace discrimination or prejudice in the past 12 months**, while 51% reported none.

The most common factors cited were age (19%), gender (18%), and race/ethnicity (12%), followed by sexual orientation (7%), disability (5%), and religion or belief (4%).

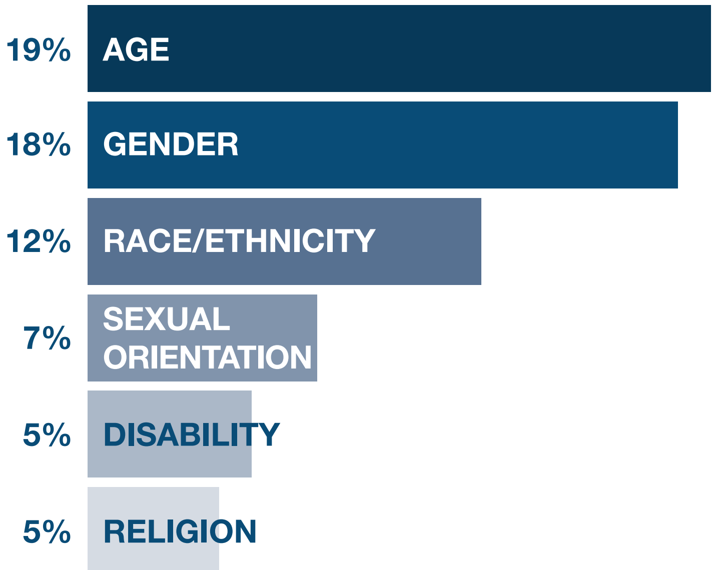
Any level of discrimination is concerning, but the fact that almost half the respondents report feeling discriminated against at some point is a stark reminder of the significant **work still required to foster genuinely inclusive and equitable workplaces**.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR ORGANISATION'S APPROACH IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE?



49% **of practitioners in 2024 reported experiencing some form of workplace discrimination or prejudice in the past 12 months.**

MOST COMMON FACTORS OF DISCRIMINATION



GENDER PAY GAP

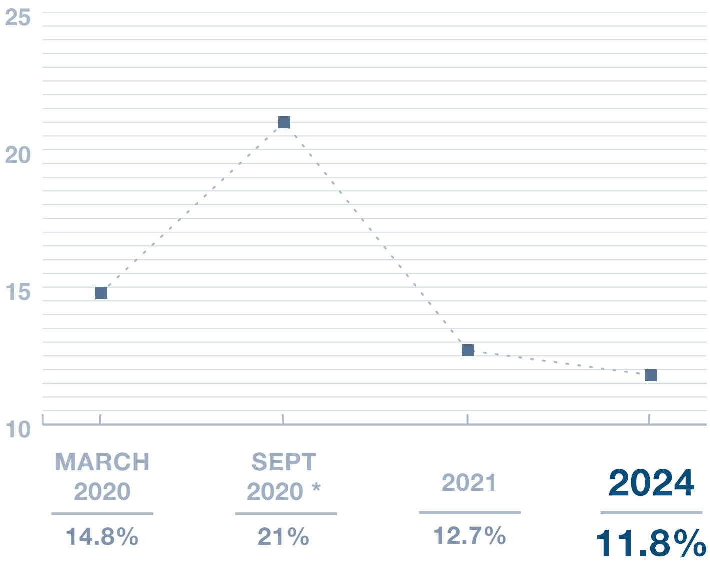
The Gender Pay Gap in 2024 stands at 11.8%, with men earning an average of £56,018 compared to women's £49,395. While this is slightly narrower than the 12.7% gap reported in 2021, the disparity remains substantial, highlighting that the industry still has a significant way to go to achieve true pay equity, particularly in a female-dominated sector.

When asked whether organisations are doing enough to address the gap, 55% of respondents agreed, down from 70% in 2021, while 28% felt insufficient efforts are being made, and 16% were unsure. The decline in positive perceptions reflects increasing awareness and dissatisfaction with the lack of meaningful progress.

To reduce the gap, practitioners identified creating roles with more flexibility (55%) as the most impactful measure, followed by greater equity in maternity/paternity benefits (30%), and tougher government legislation (28%). Additional suggestions included publicly calling out the worst offenders (23%), redesigning senior roles to ensure accessibility (22%), and implementing family-friendly and caring policies (21%).

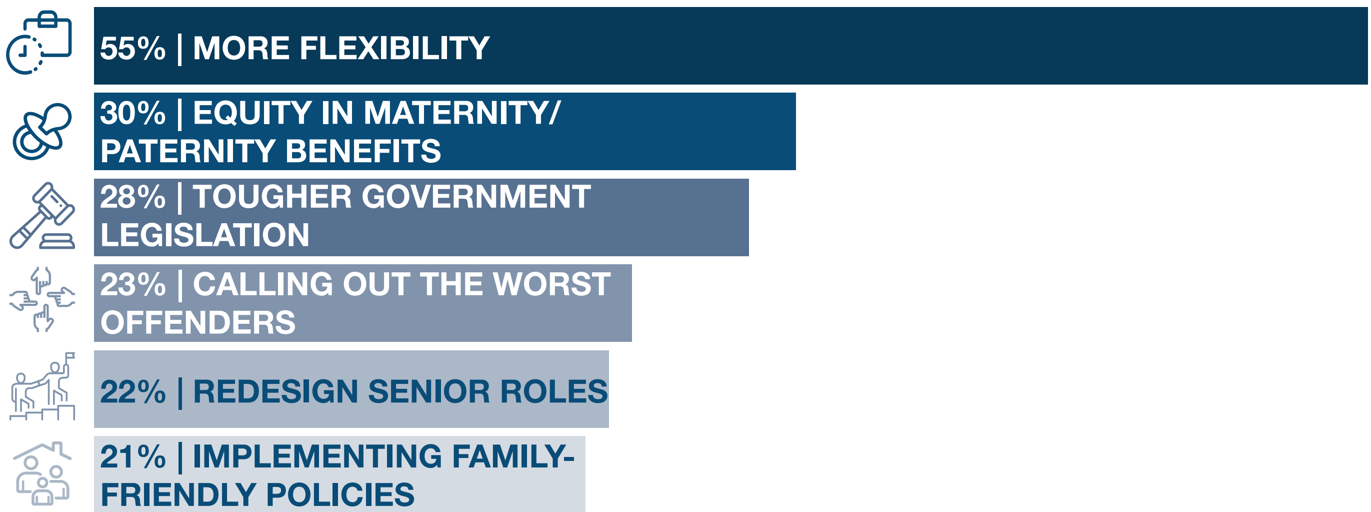
The **persistence of the Gender Pay Gap underscores the urgent need for structural changes**. Organisations must prioritise implementing these suggested measures to address systemic inequalities and ensure pay equity becomes a reality rather than a distant goal.

CURRENT GENDER PAY GAP IN THE PR AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY



* This research was conducted in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and is an illustration of the impact of economic shocks on the workplace.

PRACTITIONERS IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO TACKLE THE GENDER PAY GAP



ETHNICITY PAY GAP

The Ethnicity Pay Gap in 2024 is £14,638, with White professionals earning an average salary of £57,153 compared to £42,515 for Non-White professionals. This represents a 25.6% gap, significantly higher than the 16% gap reported in 2021, underscoring the continued disparity in pay based on ethnicity. This is partly a function of the changing demographics of the industry.

Among our White respondents, 24% have been in the PR industry for 16 years or longer, with 36% serving for less than five years. For Non-White respondents the figures are 6% and 66% respectively. So Non-White professionals are more likely to hold junior roles.

The Ethnicity Pay Gap can, in part, be attributed to the underrepresentation of Non-White professionals in senior roles within agencies. The data reveals that 22% of White professionals in agencies hold top-tier positions such as Chair, Chief Executive, or Managing Director, compared to just nine percent of Non-White professionals.

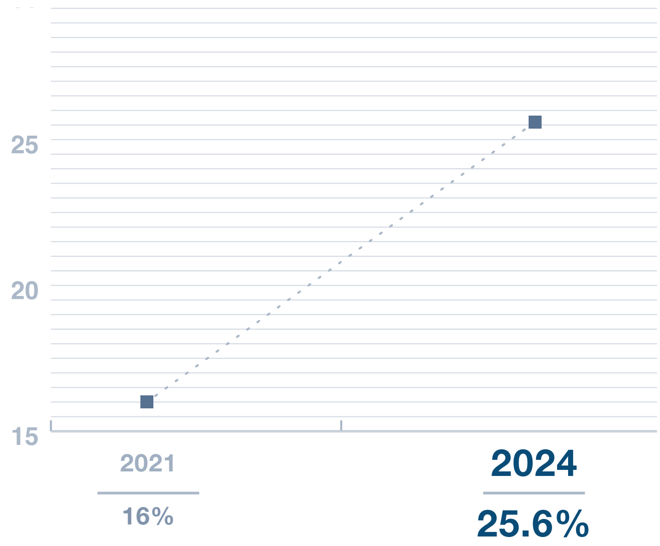
Non-White professionals are also more likely to occupy creative and administrative roles, such as Graphic Designer (8%) and Support/Admin (5%), further limiting their pathways to leadership within agencies.

The lack of Non-White professionals in senior roles is also evident within in-house organisations. Among White professionals, 28% hold Senior Manager roles, compared to only 14% of Non-White professionals. Similarly, 15% of White professionals occupy Director positions, whereas only 11% of Non-White professionals hold equivalent roles.

Additionally, disparities extend beyond pay to workplace experiences, with a stark difference in perceptions of diversity and inclusion. 21% of Non-White professionals rate their organisation's efforts as "poor" or "very poor," compared to just 12% of White professionals. Finally, breaking down 'workplace discrimination' data by ethnicity reveals stark differences. In the past 12 months, 24% of Non-White professionals reported experiencing prejudice based on race or ethnicity, compared to just six percent of White professionals.

ETHNICITY PAY GAP IN THE PR AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

▲ 9.6% increase since 2021



DISPARITIES IN SENIORITY IN AGENCIES ROLES LIKE CEO, CHAIR, OR MD

DISPARITIES IN SENIORITY IN IN-HOUSE ROLES LIKE CEO, CHAIR, OR MD

Gender-based discrimination was also more prevalent among Non-White professionals (21%) than their White counterparts (16%). Additionally, seven percent of Non-White respondents reported discrimination based on religion or belief, compared to three percent of White respondents.

These findings underscore the **compounded challenges faced by Non-White professionals, reinforcing the urgency for organisations to address inequities in both pay and workplace experiences**.

JOB NOT DONE

While the industry shows signs of increasing diversity, it's important to contextualise these figures.

Non-White practitioners, on average, are younger (32.7 years compared to 37.8 years for White practitioners) and have spent less time in the industry (5.3 years compared to 9.2 years for White practitioners). These factors contribute to their higher representation in junior roles, which in turn impacts the Ethnicity Pay Gap. However, this does not fully account for the 25.6% gap, highlighting the need for targeted action to address pay disparities.

There is a disconnect between in-house teams and agencies, in which 76% of practitioners identify as White and where progress in achieving greater inclusivity and career advancement for Non-White professionals has been slower.

21% of Non-White professionals rate their organisation's efforts as "poor" or "very poor," compared to just 12% of White professionals.

GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IS MORE PREVALENT AMONG PROFESSIONALS FROM THE GLOBAL MAJORITY

21% | WHITE PROFESSIONALS

16% | NON-WHITE PROFESSIONALS

For a deeper understanding of addressing pay disparities, we encourage you to explore our latest **Guide to Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting in the Communications Sector**.

This resource, developed by the PRCA Race and Ethnicity Equity Board (REEB), offers practical insights and recommendations to help organisations tackle pay inequities and foster a more inclusive industry.

6

SALARIES

AVERAGE SALARIES

The average salary for PR and communications professionals in 2024 is £52,440, representing a modest 3.5% increase over the three years since 2021, or an average annual growth of approximately 1.17%. This minimal rise suggests that salary levels in the industry have remained relatively stagnant and below inflation, although 21% of our respondents received a pay rise of over 10% in the past 12 months.

£52,440

average salary in the industry in 2024

£50,681

AVERAGE SALARY IN THE INDUSTRY IN 2021

Agency

The average annual salary for agency professionals is now £60,863, reflecting a 16% increase from the £52,474 reported in 2021, which equates to an average annual growth of approximately 5.3%. This rise suggests ongoing growth in agency remuneration, potentially driven by the demand for specialised skills and the continued elevation of senior roles within the industry.

£60,863

average agency salary in 2024

£52,474

AVERAGE SALARY FOR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS IN 2021

In-house

The average salary for in-house professionals is £46,704, showing minimal change from the £46,974 reported in 2021.

This stability suggests that in-house roles continue to maintain steady pay levels, contrasting with the more significant increases seen in agency salaries.

£46,704

current average salary for in-house professionals in 2024

£46,974

AVERAGE IN-HOUSE SALARY IN THE INDUSTRY IN 2021

Freelance

Freelancers in the PR and communications industry report an average income of £48,235 in 2024, representing a 14.8% decrease from the £56,638 recorded in 2021, which equates to an average annual decline of approximately 5%. This drop underscores the inherent variability in freelance earnings, which are more influenced by market conditions and demand fluctuations compared to agency and in-house roles.

£48,235

average annual freelance income in 2024

£56,638

AVERAGE ANNUAL FREELANCE INCOME IN 2021

AVERAGE SALARIES BY JOB TITLE

This graphic highlights the average salaries across various job titles in the PR and communications industry.

A noteworthy discrepancy in the data shows Senior Account Managers (SAMs) earning higher average salaries than Account Directors (ADs) and Senior Account Directors (SADs).

This anomaly can partly be attributed to sample size differences, with SAMs being more represented in higher salary bands compared to ADs, who have fewer respondents in the upper salary brackets.

This skew inflates the SAM average while limiting the AD average. However, other factors such as variations in bonuses or role-specific benefits may also contribute to this difference.

Despite such anomalies, the overall dataset provides a reliable representation of salary trends across the industry, as it reflects a comprehensive and diverse sample of respondents.

CHAIR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE/ MANAGING DIRECTOR OR EQUIVALENT	£95,288
BOARD DIRECTOR/PARTNER	£59,886
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/ DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR	£79,722
SENIOR ACCOUNT DIRECTOR	£49,886
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR OR EQUIVALENT	£42,222
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER OR EQUIVALENT	£54,921
ACCOUNT MANAGER OR EQUIVALENT	£40,735
SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	£32,291
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE OR EQUIVALENT	£29,772
TRAINEE ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE/ RESEARCHER	£28,437
SUPPORT/ADMIN	£32,250
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	£33,571
WEB DEVELOPER	£46,388
INTERN	£36,250
APPRENTICE	£30,833
OTHER	£45,714

PAY RISE

85% of PR and communications professionals reported receiving a pay rise in the past 12 months, while 14% experienced a decrease in their earnings. The average increase across the industry is 5.1%, slightly down from the 6.6% reported in 2021.

Agency professionals saw the largest average pay rise at 6.1%, followed by in-house professionals at 4.8%, and freelancers at 3.2%, marking a significant decline for freelancers compared to the 7.8% increase in 2021.

These figures highlight a positive trend for the majority of professionals, though the lower increases and reports of decreases for some indicate challenges in achieving consistent pay progression across the industry.

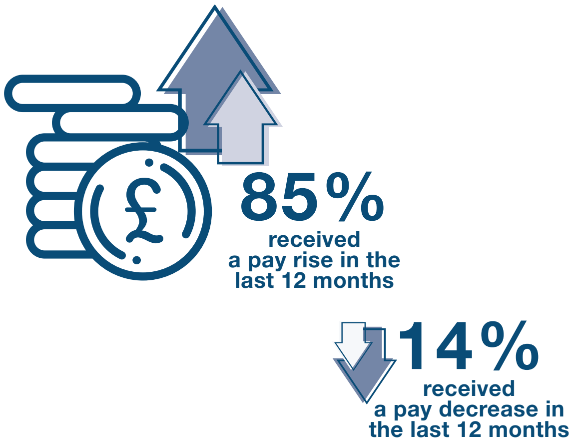
Pay increases across job roles reveal notable trends. Senior leadership positions experienced some of the highest rises, with Board Directors/ Partners reporting an average 8% increase and Associate Directors/Divisional Directors seeing a rise of 7.4%. Similarly, Senior Account Executives experienced a standout increase of 8.6%, reflecting strong demand for talent at this level.

Among mid-level roles, Senior Account Managers and Account Managers reported average increases of 7.7% and 7.6% respectively, indicating steady growth in these positions. Interestingly, Graphic Designers also saw an average increase of 7.6%, suggesting growing demand for creative contributions within the industry.

However, not all roles experienced positive trends. Those in the 'Other' category saw a significant 6.5% decrease on average, underscoring disparities in pay for less traditional job titles. Account Executives, a key entry-level role, reported a much smaller rise of just 0.8%, highlighting challenges in early-career remuneration.

These figures illustrate a mixed picture, with strong growth in senior and specialist roles, but slower or negative trends for junior and non-traditional positions.

This emphasises high competition among candidates for entry-level roles.



AVERAGE PAY RISE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

ACROSS THE INDUSTRY	5.1%
AGENCY	6.1%
IN-HOUSE	4.8%
FREELANCE	3.2%

AVERAGE PAY RISE BY JOB TITLE

BOARD DIRECTOR/ PARTNER	8%
ASSOCIATE/DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR	7.4%
SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	8.6%
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER	7.7%
ACCOUNT MANAGER	7.7%
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	0.8%
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS	7.6%
OTHER	-6.5%

SECTOR PAY

The highest paying sectors are Health and Pharmaceutical, closely followed by Utilities/Energy. The sector with the lowest pay is Charity and Not-For-Profit with an average salary under £50,000.

Here is the average pay by sector in the industry

BUSINESS SERVICES	£52,240
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	£59,354
CHARITY / NFP / THIRD SECTOR	£45,104
CONSUMER SERVICES, MEDIA AND MARKETING	£53,674
FINANCE / FINANCIAL SERVICES	£61,031
FOOD, BEVERAGES AND TOBACCO	£51,323
HEALTH/PHARMACEUTICAL	£75,608
PROPERTY / CONSTRUCTION	£60,304
TECHNOLOGY	£60,785
UTILITIES / ENERGY	£75,234
OTHER	£57,083

HIGHEST PAYING SECTOR (OVER £70K)

LOWEST PAYING SECTOR (UNDER £50K)

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SALARIES

In 2024, average salaries across regions reveal shifts in pay distribution compared to 2021. London continues to lead with the highest salaries, now at £60,350, reflecting an 11.6% increase over three years, or an average annual growth of approximately 3.7%, from £54,078. The North West has seen even stronger growth, rising to £52,800, a 17.3% increase, equating to an average annual growth of 5.4%, from £45,023. Salaries in Yorkshire and The Humber have climbed to £48,372, marking a significant 31.2% increase, or an average annual growth of 10.4%, from £36,884 in 2021. The East Midlands recorded an average salary of £45,238, slightly below the £45,644 reported in the East and West Midlands combined in 2021. Meanwhile, the West Midlands has dropped to £39,928, reflecting a 12.5% decrease, or an average annual decline of 4.2%, compared to 2021. The East of England shows strong growth, with an average salary of £52,583, up 7.9%, or 2.6% annually, from £48,736. However, salaries in the South East have decreased slightly to £51,397, representing a 5.9% decline, or an average annual drop of 2%, from £54,641. Scotland's average salary has risen to £47,062, reflecting a 6.7% increase, or an average annual growth of 2.2%, from £44,114 in 2021.

In Northern Ireland, South West England and Wales, there were not enough responses to draw statistically sound averages.

These trends indicate a general increase in salaries in most regions, particularly in London, the North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber, highlighting ongoing economic shifts and potential efforts to retain talent in these areas. However, the decline in the West Midlands and South East suggests uneven growth across the country.

OVER £50,000

UP TO £49,999

CONCLUSION

The 2024 Census reveals a PR and communications industry that is changing but still grappling with deeply rooted challenges. While there have been some encouraging strides in improving the diversity of our industry from a people perspective, including on ethnic representation, the **persistence of Gender and Ethnicity pay gaps highlights systemic inequalities that demand immediate attention.**

Declines in satisfaction with diversity efforts and rising reports of discrimination further emphasise the need for proactive, inclusive strategies.

Economic pressures, as reflected in stagnant salaries for some groups and regional disparities, underline the importance of fair remuneration to attract and retain talent.

Additionally, the integration of AI offers both opportunities and uncertainties, requiring thoughtful implementation to complement rather than displace human expertise.

To build a thriving, inclusive industry, **organisations must prioritise equitable pay structures, support diverse talent to consider a career in communications and foster adaptable workplaces that meet evolving demands and encourage longevity for all.**

The path forward requires commitment, collaboration, and a willingness to address longstanding barriers, ensuring the PR and communications sector remains dynamic, innovative, and equitable.

ABOUT PRCA

The Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) is the trade association for the public relations, public a airs and communications industry.

We provide the space in which our members, from all corners of the world, come together to forge a dynamic, forward-thinking, and influential community. We are committed to advancing the field of PR and championing the vital role it plays in our rapidly evolving world

We are the heartbeat of an industry that shapes perceptions, drives narratives, and fuels communication on a global scale.

PRCA

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