
THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CENSUS

**MAJOR
PLAYERS**
LONDON MIAMI AMSTERDAM BERLIN



2026

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CENSUS 2026

4,024

professionals completed our 2026 Census and AI survey*

266

brands and agencies also took part, representing over 100,000+ workers

393,690

data points collected and analysed*

£439m

in salaries and day rates captured across our tools and surveys

Our insights are drawn from our surveys, online salary benchmarking tool and the expertise of our senior talent partners. The salary and day rate tables represent an overview of job levels and averages in all listed disciplines and are correct at time of publication (April 2026).

We remain committed to collecting demographic data, now in its sixth year, to provide the industry's most up-to-date snapshot of diversity, equity and inclusion. We have classified gender, ethnicity, sexuality, identity, class, and disability and neurodivergence using the government's recommended grouping.

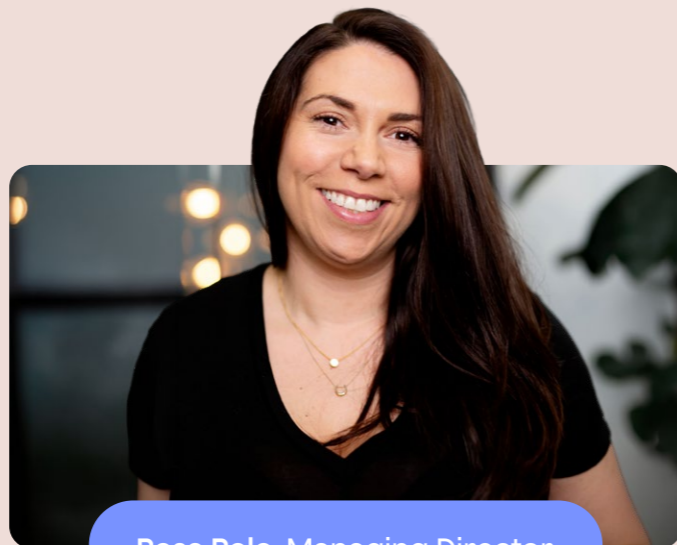
*Includes data from our AI in the Creative Industries Survey

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FOREWORD

Every so often, an industry reaches a turning point where the old rules stop working, and the new ones haven't been written yet. That's exactly where it feels like the Creative Industries are right now. The way we make work, hire talent, structure teams, and measure value is shifting beneath our feet – and the pace is only accelerating.



Rosa Rolo, Managing Director

None of this is happening in isolation. Geopolitical tension, economic uncertainty and rapid technological change are all putting pressure on businesses and shortening the window for every decision they make. Layer on top the UK Government's Make Work Pay agenda - the most significant shift in employment law in a generation - and the strain is real.

The holding companies and network agencies that have long defined this industry are restructuring at a pace we've genuinely never seen before - embedding AI, consolidating functions, and removing entire layers of resource in the process. At the same time, more brands are building in-house capability and moving toward flexible, project-based models.

What this means for the talent pipeline is significant. The entry-level and mid-weight roles that once gave people a route into and through this industry are disappearing - and the knock-on effects are only just beginning to show.

You can see it in hiring decisions too. Four in ten businesses have turned to international talent, not because domestic capability isn't there, but because cost pressures are forcing their hand. Yet the underlying challenges haven't changed: keeping pace with salary expectations, finding people with the right skills, and staying ahead of how quickly those skills are moving.

People are getting restless - we're calling it the Great Unrest, and our data backs it up. The proportion of professionals who changed jobs last year jumped from 23% to 34%. Over half are now actively looking to move, with a further 19% keeping their options open, and the reason is consistent: pay.

Salary growth in the Creative Industries is at its lowest since pre-Covid, and 58% of professionals say their pay no longer reflects what's being asked of them. But it's not just about the money. Workloads have grown, trust in leadership has taken a hit, and people are feeling burnt out. Businesses can no longer assume their people will stay because of economic security.

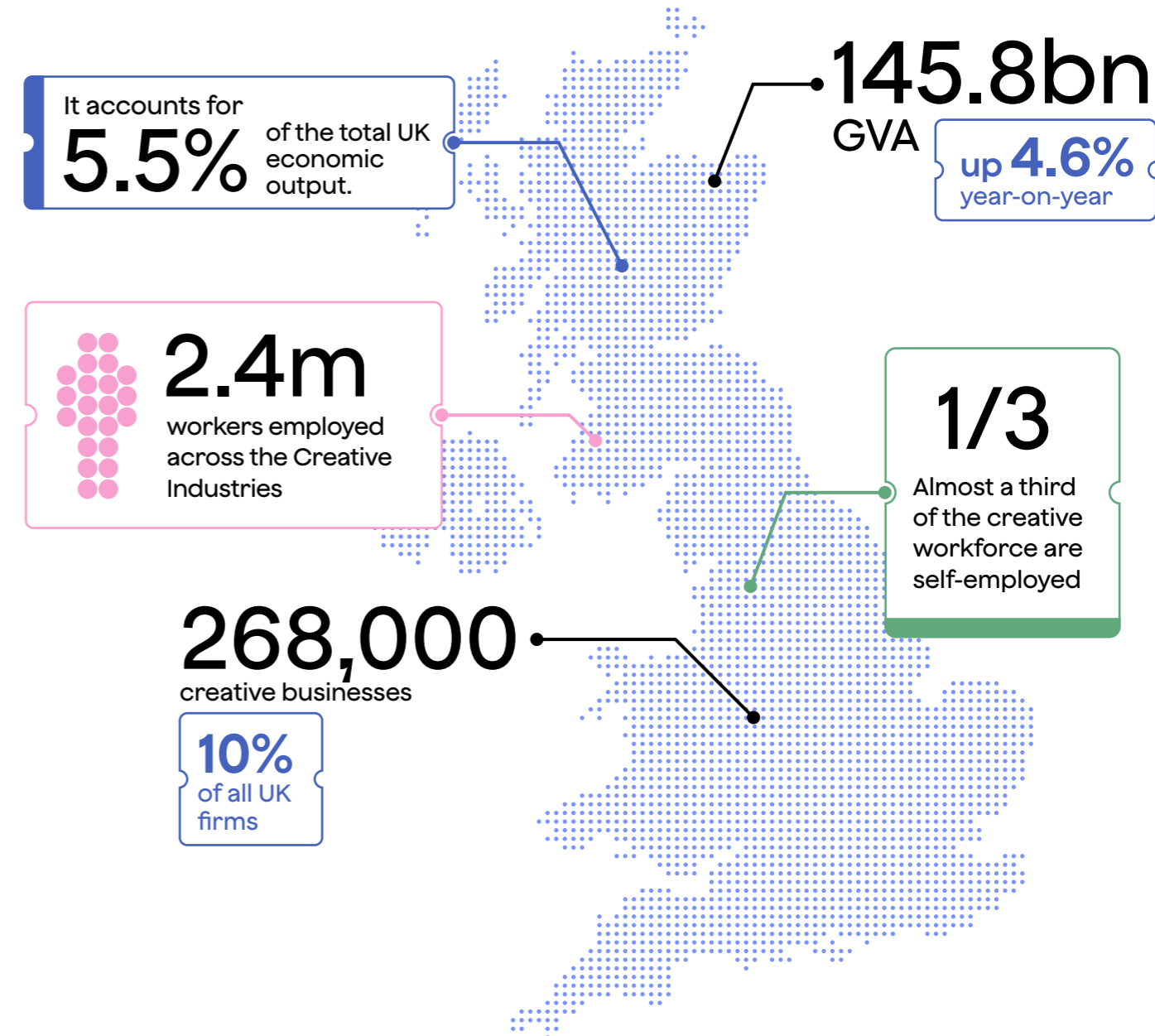
In a market moving this fast, the temptation is to look for tech solutions to human problems, but creativity, relationships and good judgement still matter - arguably more than ever. That's what we've built our network around, and it's what we're here to help you tap into.

The boldest decisions are the ones grounded in the best insight - and that's exactly why we continue to produce this report. Trusted by more than 150,000 professionals over the last decade, our Census is curated with real insights from employers, hiring managers and candidates. It's designed to help everyone make smarter, more confident decisions about what comes next.

THE STATE OF PLAY

The Creative Industries in 2026

The UK's Creative Industries remain one of the most significant forces in the country - shaping culture, driving economic growth, and sitting at the heart of the government's industrial ambitions.

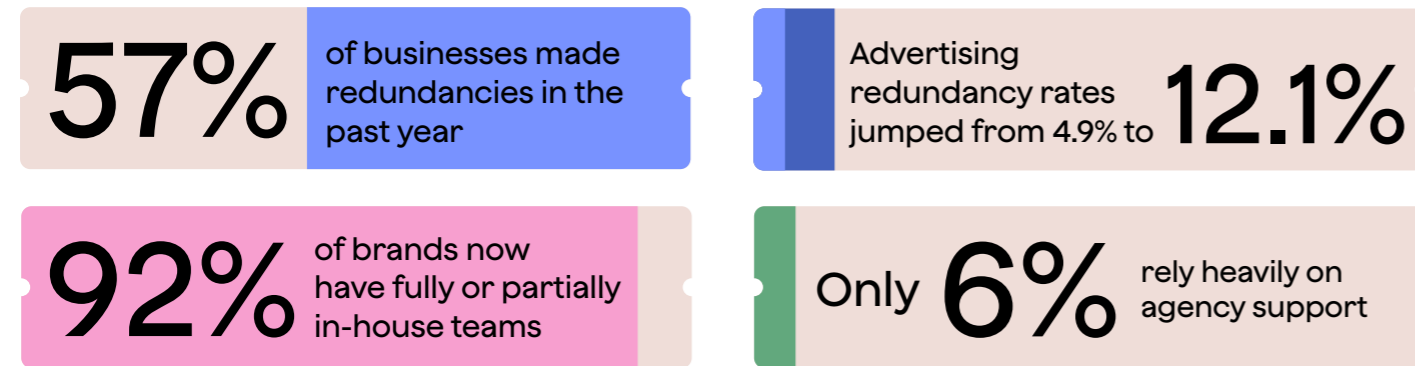


The Creative Industries Sector Plan, published in June 2025, sets a 10-year blueprint to position the UK as the world's leading destination for creative investment. It's backed by £500 million in funding and an ambition to double business investment to £31–35 billion annually by 2035.

Yet, while the growth figures are compelling, the reality for businesses and workforces tells a different story.

A Sector in Transition

The agency model is shifting; huge iconic names such as Ogilvy VML and AKQA are being consolidated and the Omnicom-IPG merger, completed in late 2025, created the world's largest holding company. Meanwhile, brands are bringing more capability in-house than ever before.



The financial picture reinforces the strain. AI, offshoring and consolidation are compressing margins from every direction - and agencies are under growing pressure to prove their value in a market rewriting the rules in real time.

of agencies describe their pipeline as unstable

43%

18%

expect to grow by hiring next year

have already outsourced talent internationally

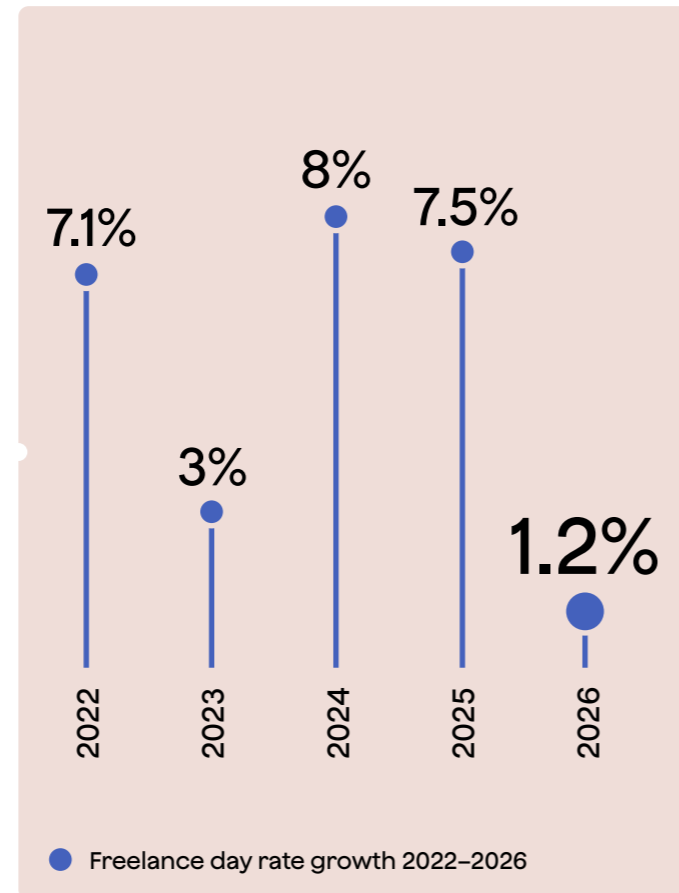
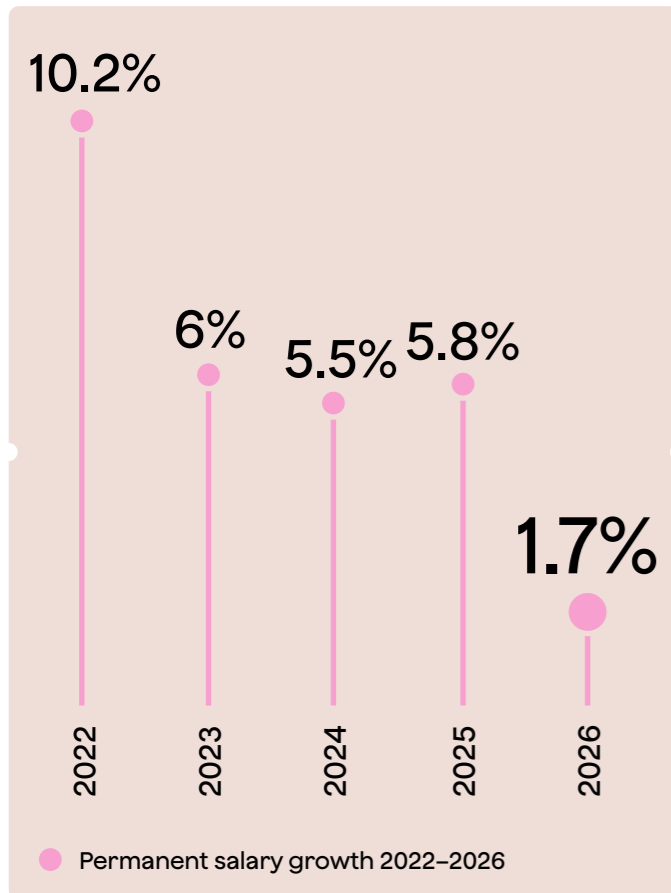
39%

50%+

of network agencies say global decisions are impacting day-to-day work

SALARIES & DAY RATES

Permanent salaries rose just 1.7% year-on-year in 2026, with freelance day rates increasing 1.2% - the slowest growth the Creative Industries has recorded since the pre-Covid era, and well below the ONS UK private sector average of 3.4%.



Several forces are driving the deceleration. Businesses have pulled back to essential hires only, and rising employer costs continue to squeeze pay review budgets.

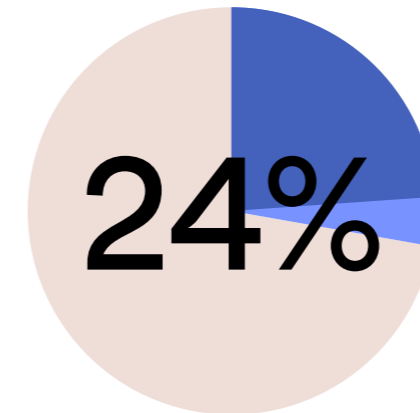
43% of businesses plan only small inflationary pay adjustments next year

19% planning no salary changes at all

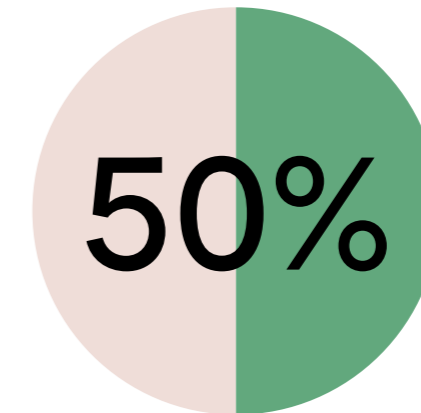
Down 4% The proportion of permanent employees earning over £85k has fallen within 12 months

Permanent Employees

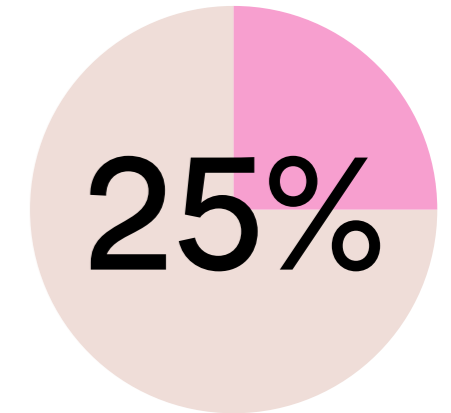
Stagnating salary growth is pushing employees to look elsewhere, take on additional work, or both.



Only 24% of permanent employees believe they are being paid what they're worth



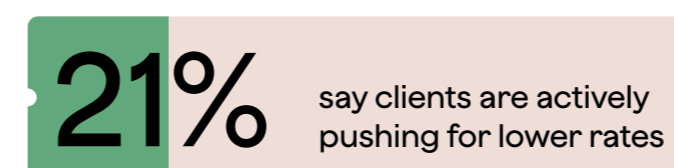
Half have actively looked for higher-paying roles as a result of the cost-of-living crisis



At least a quarter now have additional side hustles to make ends meet

Freelancers

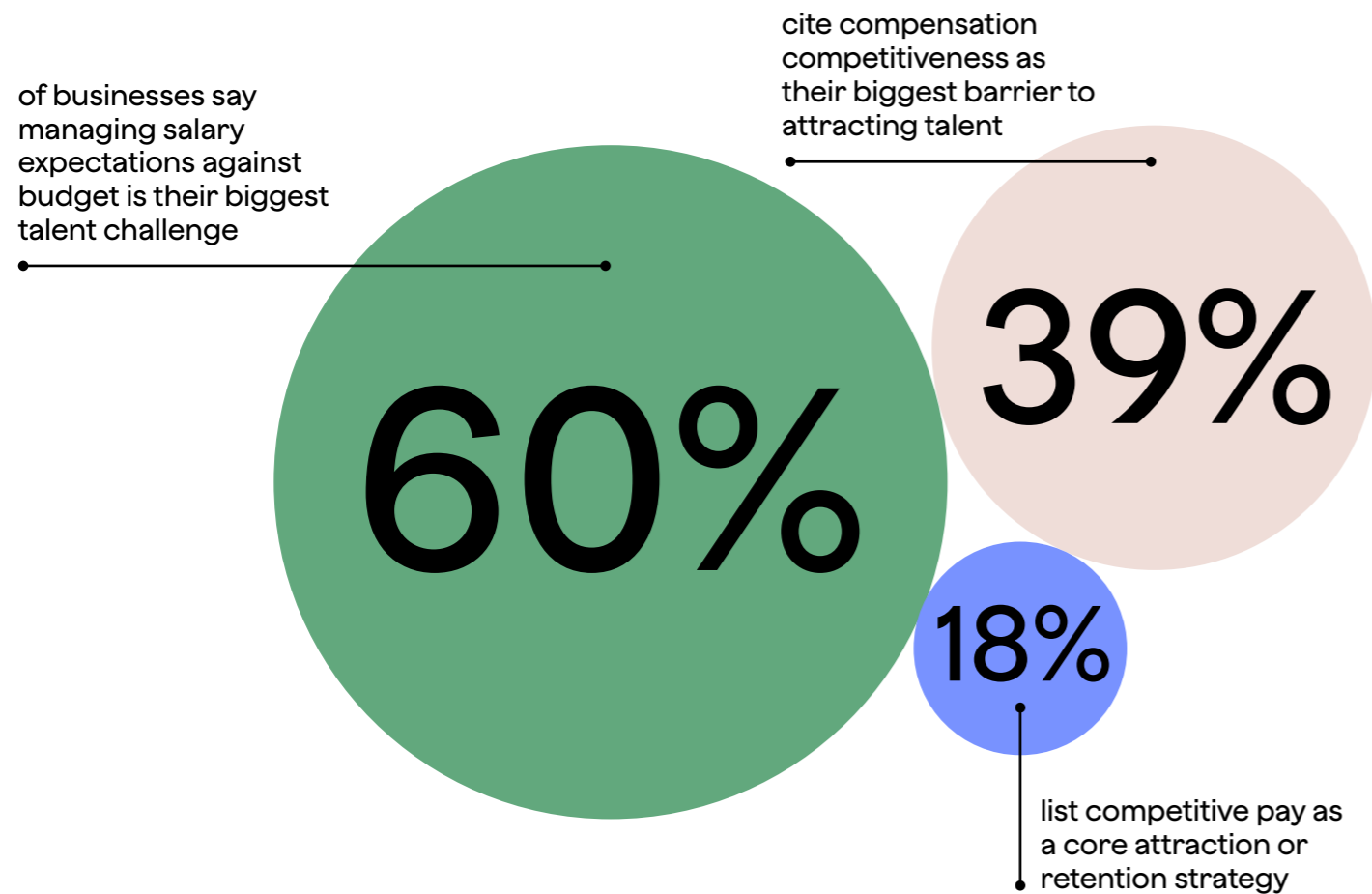
The impact is even more pronounced for freelancers, with stagnant day rates and shrinking budgets squeezing their earning potential.



Average day rate now sits at

£407

Those working brand-side now earn on average £2,600 more than their agency counterparts - with the gap reaching up to £9,200 in sectors such as SaaS and Tech. As in-house teams continue to grow, the salary differential is reinforcing that pull.



Salary still matters, but it is not the full picture. In a market where meaningful pay rises are off the table for many, the levers that sit alongside salary – career progression, development, manageable workloads and working culture – are carrying more weight than ever.

For businesses that cannot compete on pay alone, how they choose to invest in the people they already have may determine whether those people stay or not. But the reality is stark: with workloads growing and pay rises failing to keep pace with inflation, many people are effectively working for less.



George Poole – Growth Marketing & Insights Director, Major Players

THE GREAT UNREST

More than a third (34%) of professionals changed jobs last year, marking the end of a period defined by economic caution over career ambition. Although financial pressures haven't eased, restlessness has overtaken stability - with 55% now likely to leave their current role within the next 6-12 months.

An unsettled workforce

Redundancies, flat pay and limited progression have created a workforce that is stretched and looking for the opportunity to take control. With almost two-thirds of businesses making redundancies in the past twelve months, those who remained had to absorb the work and the pressure. 39% of the permanent workforce cite increased workload or understaffing as their organisation's biggest talent challenge.

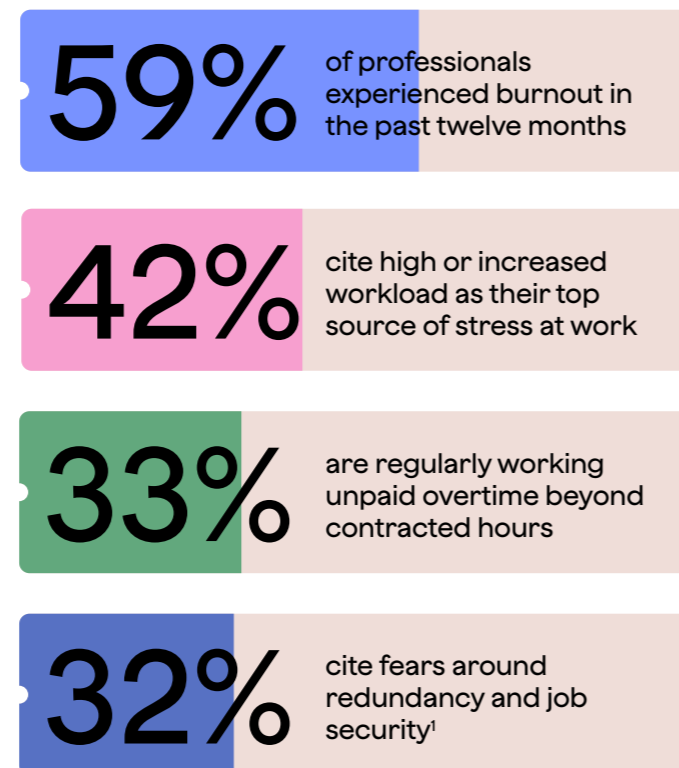
Top reasons professionals are looking to move roles:

- 52% salary and earning potential
- 42% work-life balance
- 41% interesting work
- 38% job security and flexibility

Among those who actually left, career progression and salary were tied as the joint top driver - but exciting projects, poor leadership and company culture all featured strongly. This is not a workforce simply chasing money, it is a workforce that feels stuck. Yet the very thing driving people out - a lack of career development - ranks fourth in what businesses currently offer, with only 26% planning to prioritise it in the year ahead.

Burnout is accelerating the movement.

Leaner teams, bigger workloads and stagnant pay are taking their toll.



A lack of adequate support is compounding the issue.

Employer well-being provision is falling short of what the workforce needs, and the consequences are beginning to show:

- Only 31% feel adequately supported by their employer
- 38% receive minimal support
- 13% receive no support at all
- 36% believe moving jobs would improve their mental health

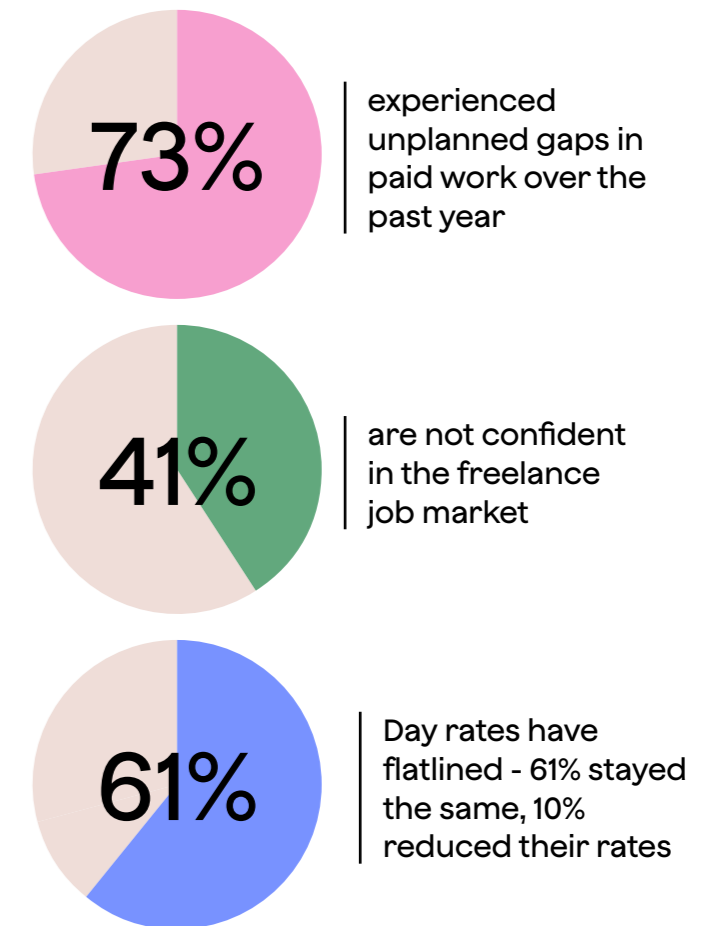
Trust in leadership is eroding in parallel.

Career paths are undefined, strategic clarity is poor, and transparency is low:

- Only 15% are very confident in their leadership team
- 5.5/10 Transparency score (average)
- 5.4/10 Clarity of strategic decisions (average)
- 65% of employees say their career path is unclear or undefined

Freelancers are feeling even more strain, adversely affecting their financial security.

Unplanned gaps in paid work have become commonplace, day rates have flatlined, and confidence in the market is low. 63% would now consider taking a permanent role - a significant shift from a workforce built on independence.



The danger is restlessness draining energy from the workforce. The CIPD Good Work Index² finds that although workers are satisfied, 26% of workers never feel energised at work, and a further 43% only sometimes do. Energy drives engagement, and engagement drives performance. When businesses fail to invest in their people - in development, recognition, and genuine support - the cost is twofold: the best leave for more exciting opportunities, and those who remain disengage. In a market where talent sentiment is waning, meaningful investment in people is no longer optional for building impactful teams.

THE SKILLS DISCONNECT


65% of hard-to-fill vacancies in the Creative Industries are already attributed to skills shortages.³ But the impact doesn't stop at hiring - skills gaps within existing workforces are equally damaging, limiting performance, constraining growth, and leaving businesses unable to capitalise on the tools and technologies they're investing in.

74% of permanent employees feel their skills match their current role

59% feel their skills are fit for the future of work

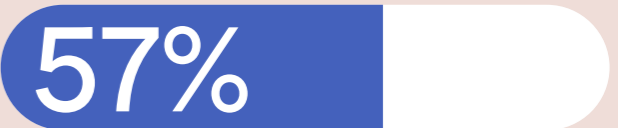
Only **11%** of permanent employees are very confident their role will exist in its current form by 2028, and just 9% of freelancers are

For freelancers, the uncertainty runs deeper, where the pace of change is being felt more directly. A third are unsure whether their specialism will survive the next two years in its current form, and nearly a quarter are not confident it will.

 **#1 Skill needed for the future of work - AI and technical proficiency**

The skills priority is consistent across the industry - AI and technical proficiency rank as the single most critical future skill across every group surveyed, yet investment is not matching it. When training does happen, most receive compliance training - the least demanded skill from the workforce. Career development, leadership and digital literacy are what people actually want, yet all are being delivered at a fraction of the scale needed.

40% of permanent employees and 57% of freelancers received no training whatsoever in the past 12 months.

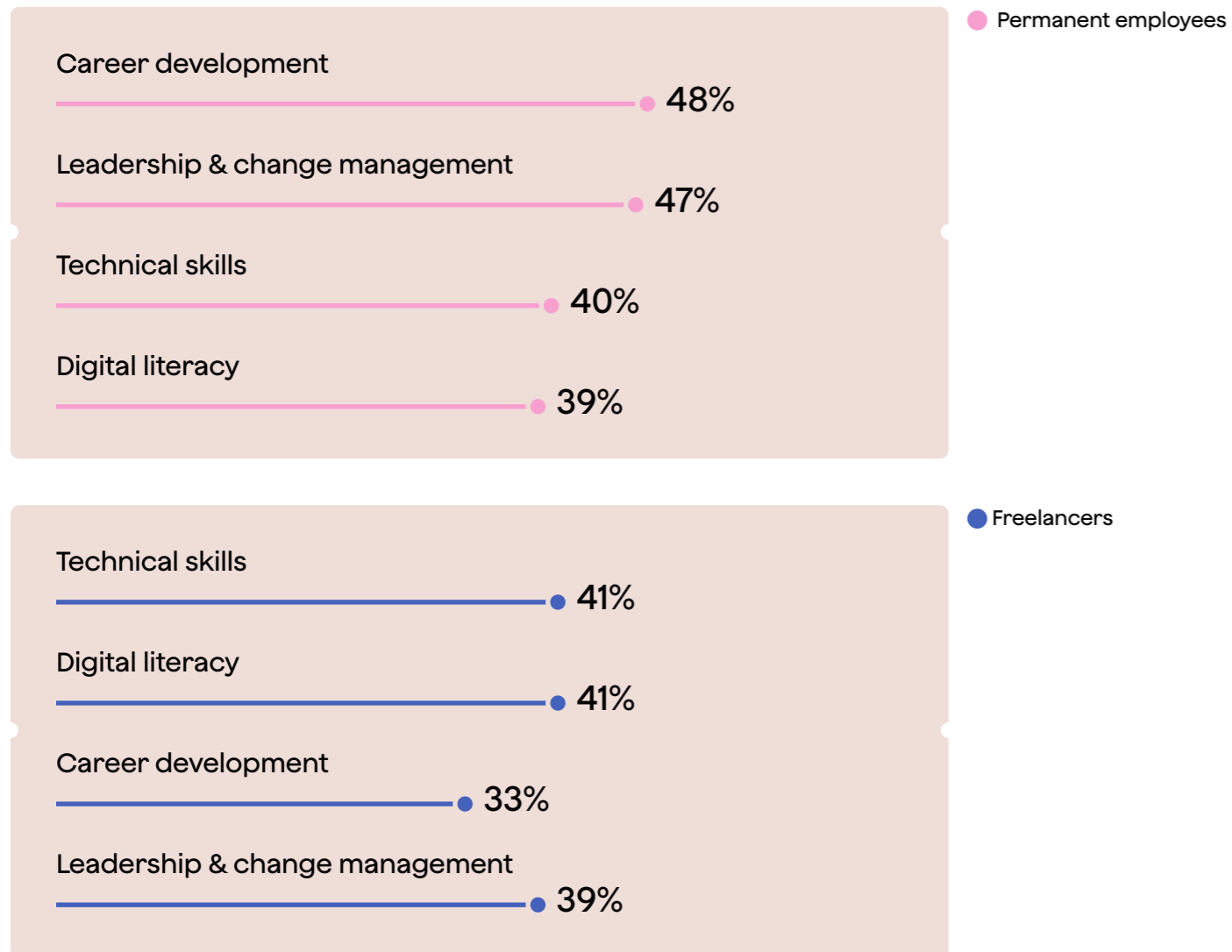


More than half of all freelancers received no training whatsoever, and those expected to use AI, have been required to learn on the job⁴



● Permanent employees ● Freelancers

What training the workforce wants



The gap between what talent wants and what businesses are offering is widening. Career progression and development was the joint top reason people left their last role. It ranks fourth in what businesses currently offer, and only 26% plan to prioritise it in the year ahead.

The soft skills picture adds another dimension. Creativity and innovation, critical thinking and emotional intelligence are the most cited critical soft skills across the workforce - with freelancers rating creativity highest of any group at 54%. In a market being reshaped by AI, these are the capabilities that most clearly differentiate human value from automated output. They are also the ones being invested in the least.

69% of businesses already expect their workforce will need to upgrade skills to keep pace with new technologies. The businesses that close this gap - investing in the development of both the people they're hiring and the teams they already have - will be better placed to perform, retain talent, and grow. But the consequences of inaction extend beyond capability. When talent feels overlooked, underdeveloped and unable to progress, the ripple effect moves beyond the skills gap - and into the workforce itself.



The distance between what we know and what we need is growing. As an individual you must own your growth. Carve out thirty minutes a day to use AI, the top skill needed for the years ahead and make time to play with these tools with your team. As leaders we have a responsibility to guard the budgets and the hours the teams need to learn. We can't afford to wait for a quiet moment to up skill when businesses say their teams must learn new ways to work just to keep up.

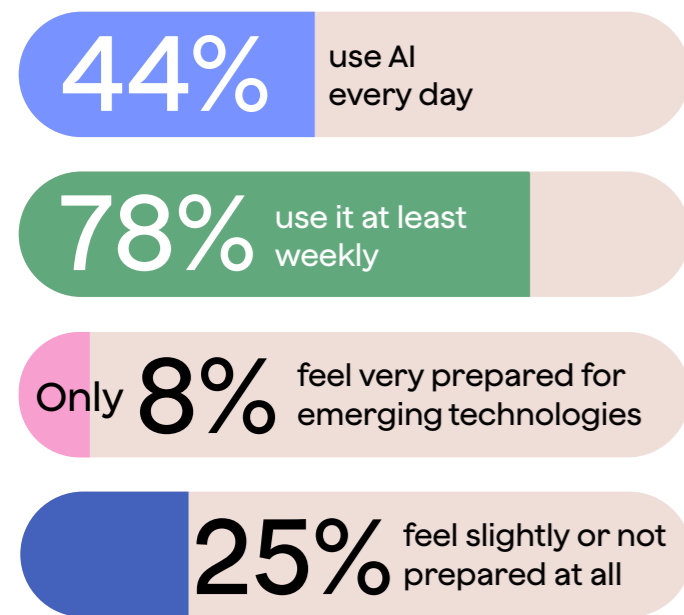


Carol Feeley – Head of Creative, Ocado Retail

THE AI PRODUCTIVITY PARADOX

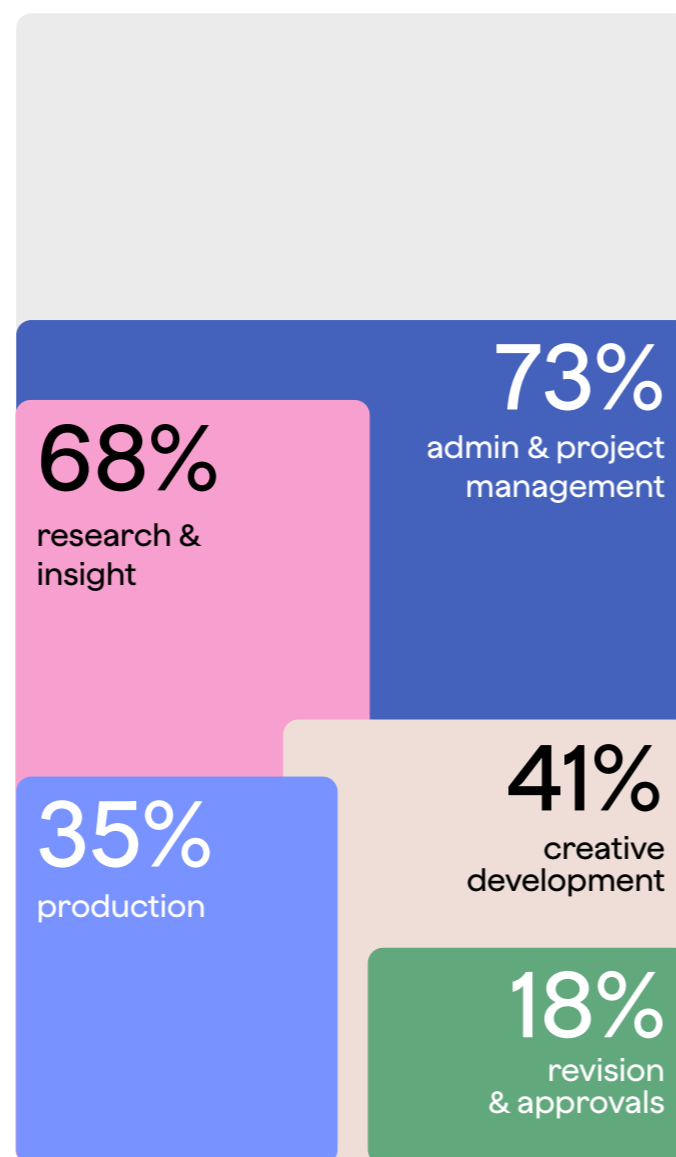
Across the Creative Industries, AI is embedded in day-to-day work at every level - the question is no longer about adoption, but about what the industry is getting back from it.

The data suggests a sector is in two minds. Usage is high, but confidence is low, with only 8% of the workforce feeling genuinely prepared for emerging technologies despite 44% using AI every single day. Expectations are running well ahead of reality, and the gap between how fast businesses have moved on adoption and how slowly they have moved on strategy, governance and skills is widening. AI has changed how work is produced - but it has not yet changed how well it performs, or for many, how much there is to do.



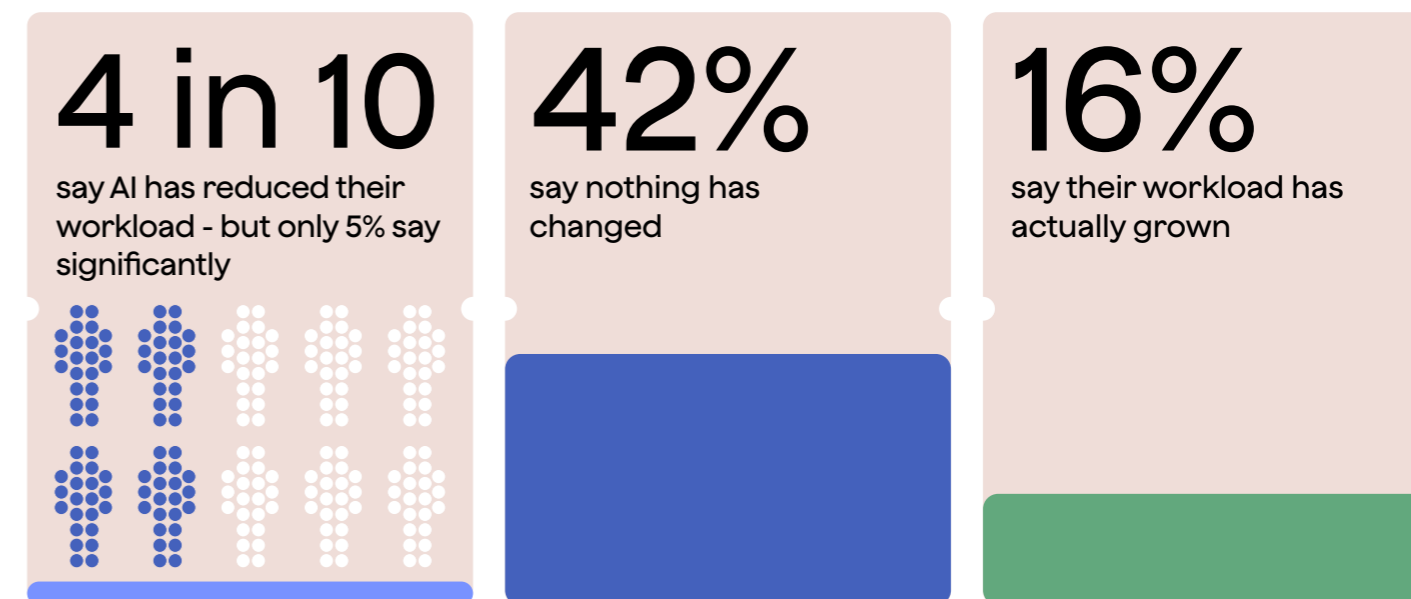
Operational functions are leading adoption, but creative application is growing.

Where businesses are applying AI



Even where AI is most embedded, the productivity dividend is proving elusive. Three-quarters of businesses expected AI to reduce workloads, yet for a significant portion of the workforce the promise of doing less has quietly become the reality of doing more.

The workload reality



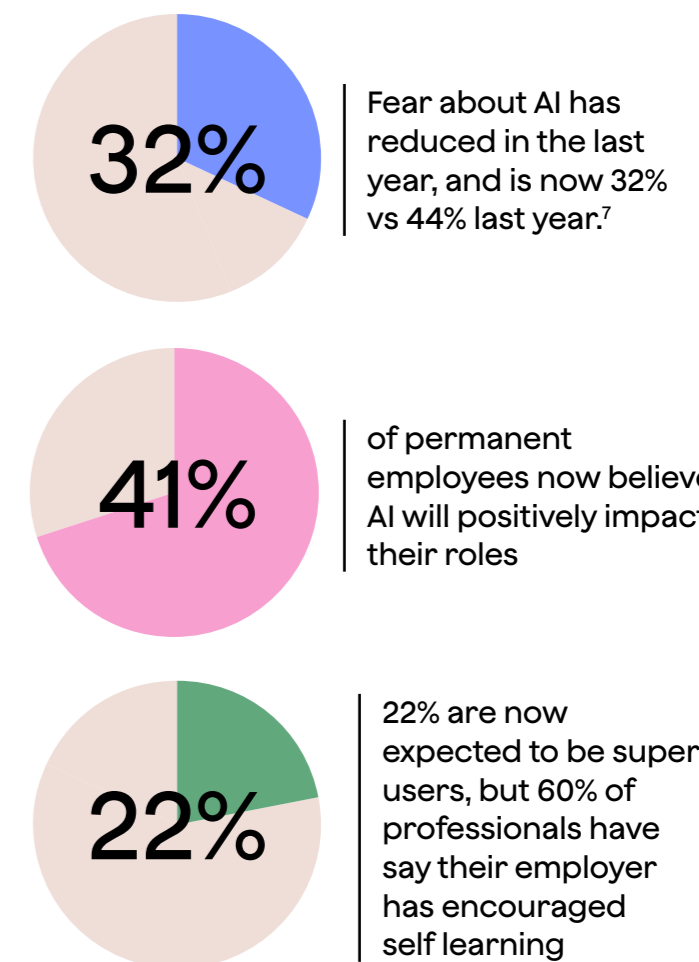
The measurement gap helps explain why. According to our AI in the Creative Industries report⁵, 48% of businesses don't measure AI's impact at all, and of those that do, 39% measure success through increased output. In an industry where attention is already hard to earn, more output doesn't equal more impact.

Research from MIT Media Lab⁶ reinforces this: 95% of gen AI investments have produced zero measurable return.

Sentiment is nonetheless moving in a more positive direction, and fear of replacement has fallen. A significant proportion of the workforce remains unsure about what AI means for their future - pointing back to a communication gap that businesses have yet to close.

Businesses have moved fast on AI, but the speed of implementation has outpaced the depth of preparation. Adoption is high, returns are low, and the gap sits squarely in how businesses are measuring, managing and developing AI capability. Recognising the skills gap and closing it are two very different things - less than 20% of employees received technical skills training last year, and until output is measured by impact rather than volume, AI will continue to reshape how

work is done without improving how well it performs. The workforce is ready to engage. What's missing is the investment in skills to make that engagement count.





The question has moved on from ‘are you using AI?’ to ‘what are you building from it?’ The agencies and brands pulling ahead aren’t the ones with the most tools or the most enthusiastic early adopters – they’re the ones turning scattered experimentation into shared capability. That’s where the real returns live.



Emma Wharton Love – Co Founder & CEO , Spark AI

THE TALENT GAP

Junior roles in the UK account for just 21.9% of all vacancies - a 6.8% decline in the past 12 months.⁸ The pipeline that has long fed the industry’s senior talent is narrowing - and only 2% of respondents to our survey are aged 18-24; half what it was just two years ago.

The entry points are closing

Hiring has contracted around immediate needs - 41% of businesses prioritised business-critical hiring only last year, while 37% reduced hiring overall. Businesses are prioritising experience and immediate capability over potential.

With four in ten businesses outsourcing to lower-cost global workforces, and AI adoption automating many of the tasks that entry-level roles were built around, the functions where younger talent would traditionally learn the craft are being displaced from both sides.

Functions most being outsourced to global teams:

64% Creative, Design, UI, UX

32% Production and Studio


23% Project Management and Creative Services

The freelance market offers no alternative route in.

Younger talent is increasingly turning to freelancing as an alternative route into the industry - but without a track record, breaking through is difficult. Nearly half of all freelancers have eight or more years of experience, and in a market where clients are prioritising proven capability, emerging talent faces the same barrier it does in permanent hiring: without experience, you can’t get the work - and without the work, you can’t get the experience.

For those who do get in, the path forward is undefined.

The progression structures that should develop junior talent into mid-level capability are largely missing.

 Up to 65 % of professionals report no defined or little progression framework

The desire to grow is there, but the infrastructure to support it is not. Career development training barely reaches anyone, and the industry isn’t just failing to bring talent in - it’s failing to develop the talent it already has.

957,000 young people aged 16 to 24 are not in education, employment or training.⁹ A generation of potential is being left untapped. The decisions businesses make today on hiring, development and investment in talent will determine whether the industry has the skills and experience it needs to thrive in the years ahead. This is not a short-term problem with a short-term fix. The businesses that think beyond the immediate and build the structures to bring new talent in, and develop it when it arrives, will be the ones best placed to close the gap between the expertise walking out and the experience coming through.



At 20/20 Levels, we've always believed that potential is universal, but opportunity is not. This generation is ready. They are skilled, ambitious, and adapting to a fast-changing world. The challenge is not capability, it's access. When businesses invest in underrepresented young talent, they don't just unlock individual potential. They build stronger teams and more resilient organisations.



Duro Oye – CEO, 20/20 Levels

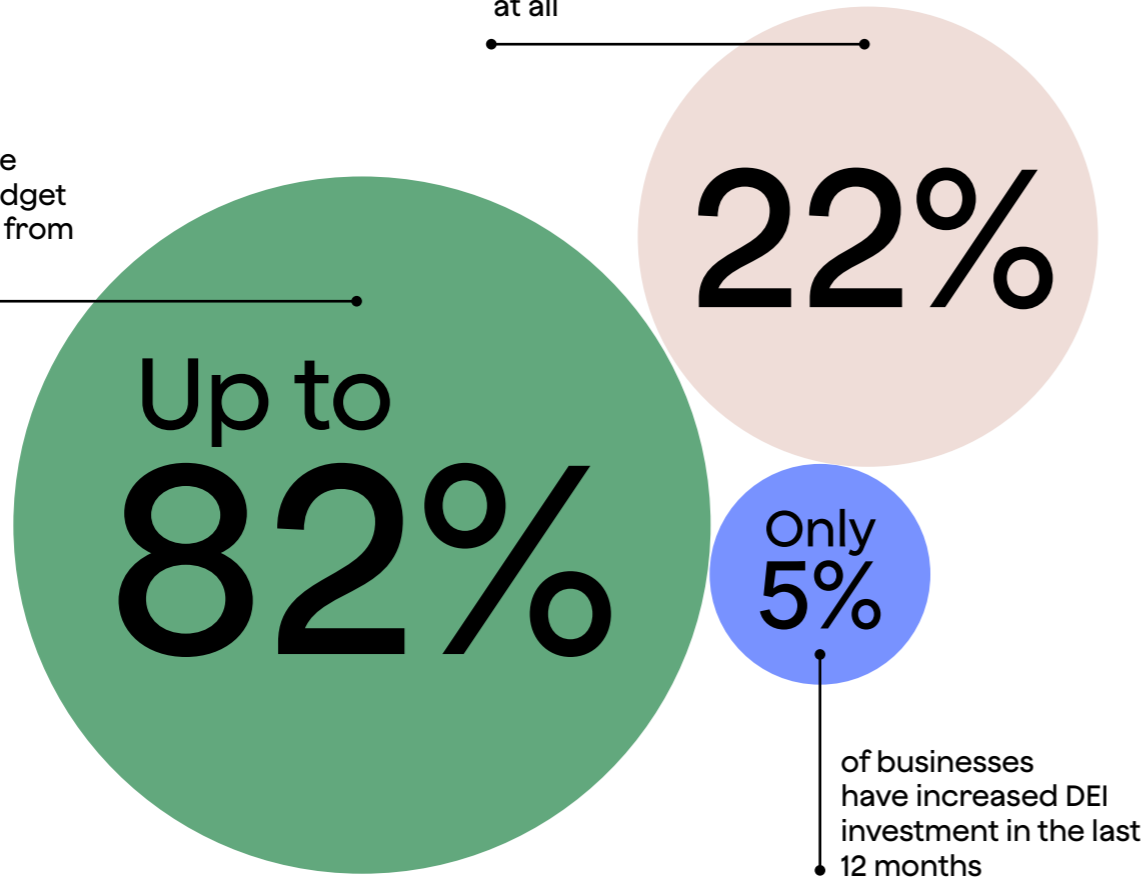
THE DE&I STALL

Those who create the work ultimately shape it. McKinsey's latest research shows companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity are 39% more likely to outperform financially - yet across the Creative Industries, representation is still low and significant pay gaps persist. Major Players continues to shine a light on where the industry stands, and through our partnerships and data, we offer practical support for those working to close the gap.

Progress on diversity, equity and inclusion has stalled - and in some areas, gone into reverse. As support structures are scaled back or dissolved, the gains made in fostering inclusive workplace cultures are increasingly at risk.

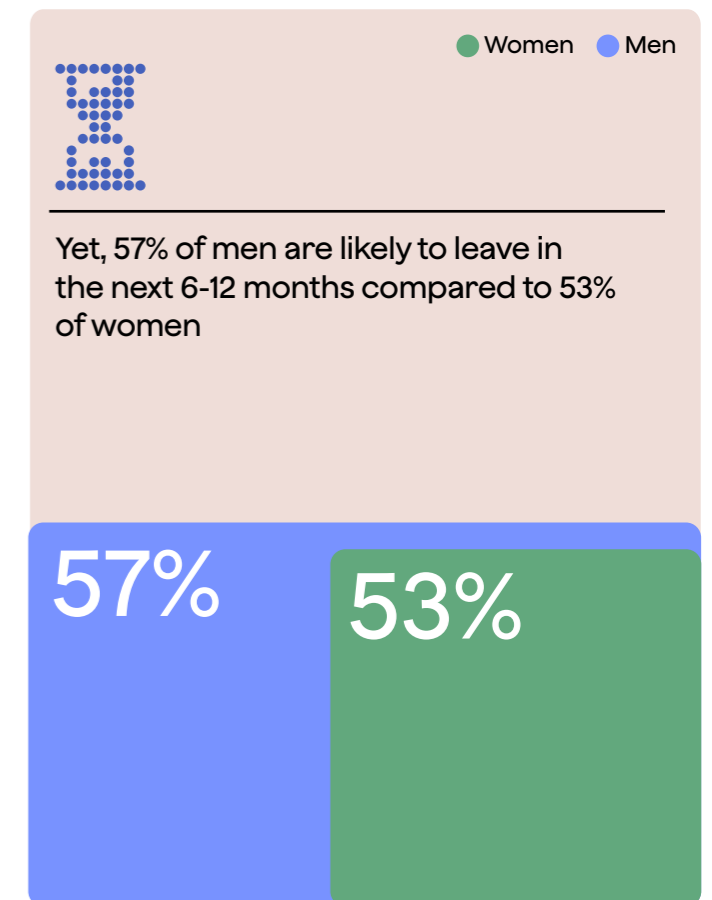
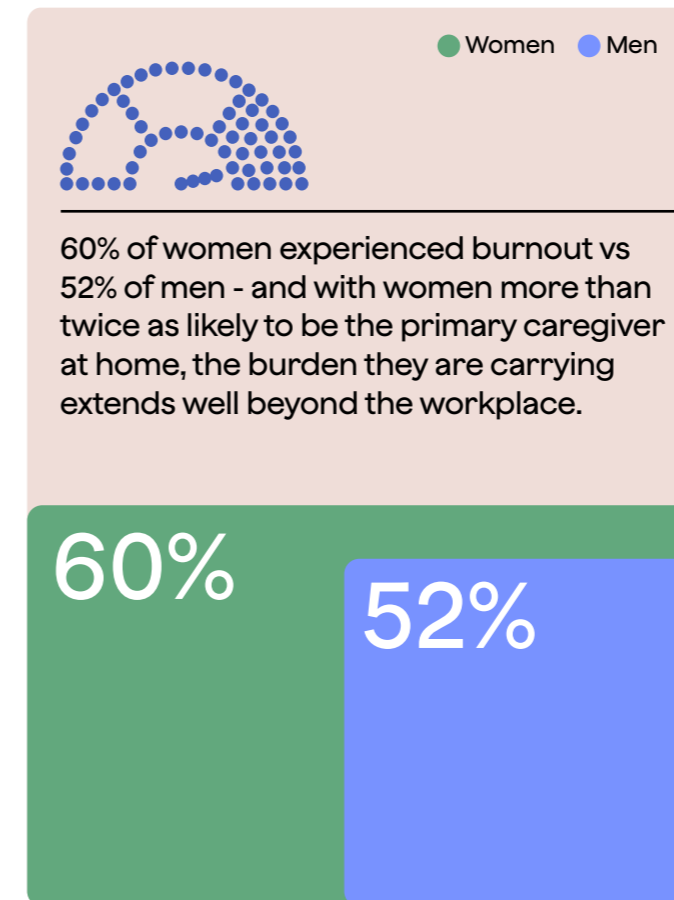
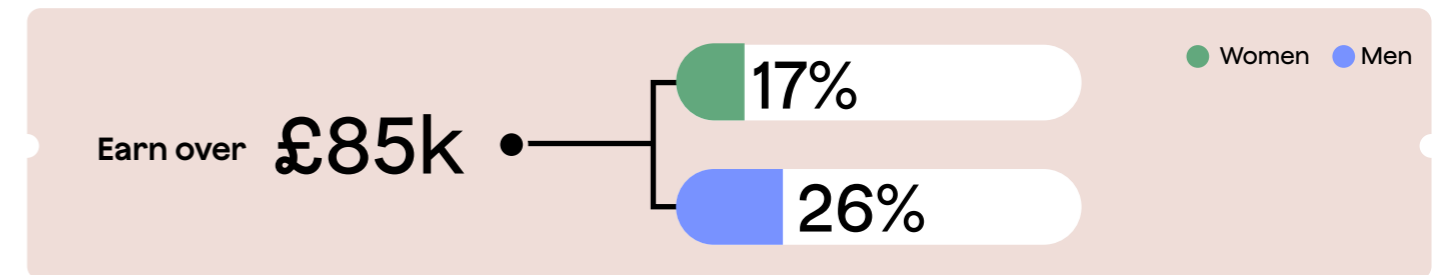
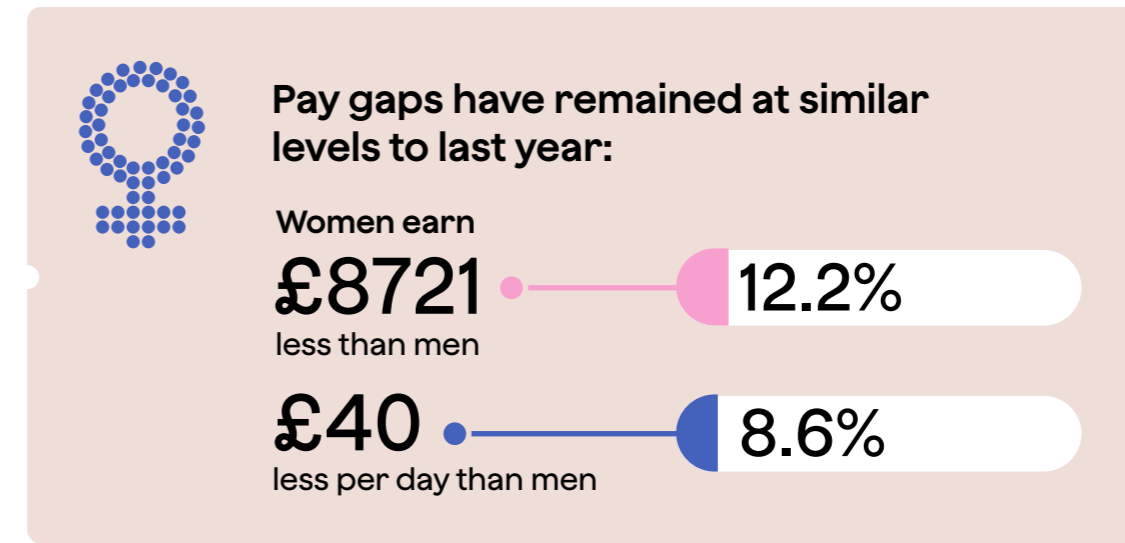
of businesses have no specific DEI budget - a slight increase from last year

say their organisation is making no progress at all



Gender & Identity

The proportion of women in the Creative Industries has increased slightly - but the data tells a more complicated story. Up to 50,000 men have left or been made redundant in the last year alone, suggesting the shift reflects loss rather than gain.

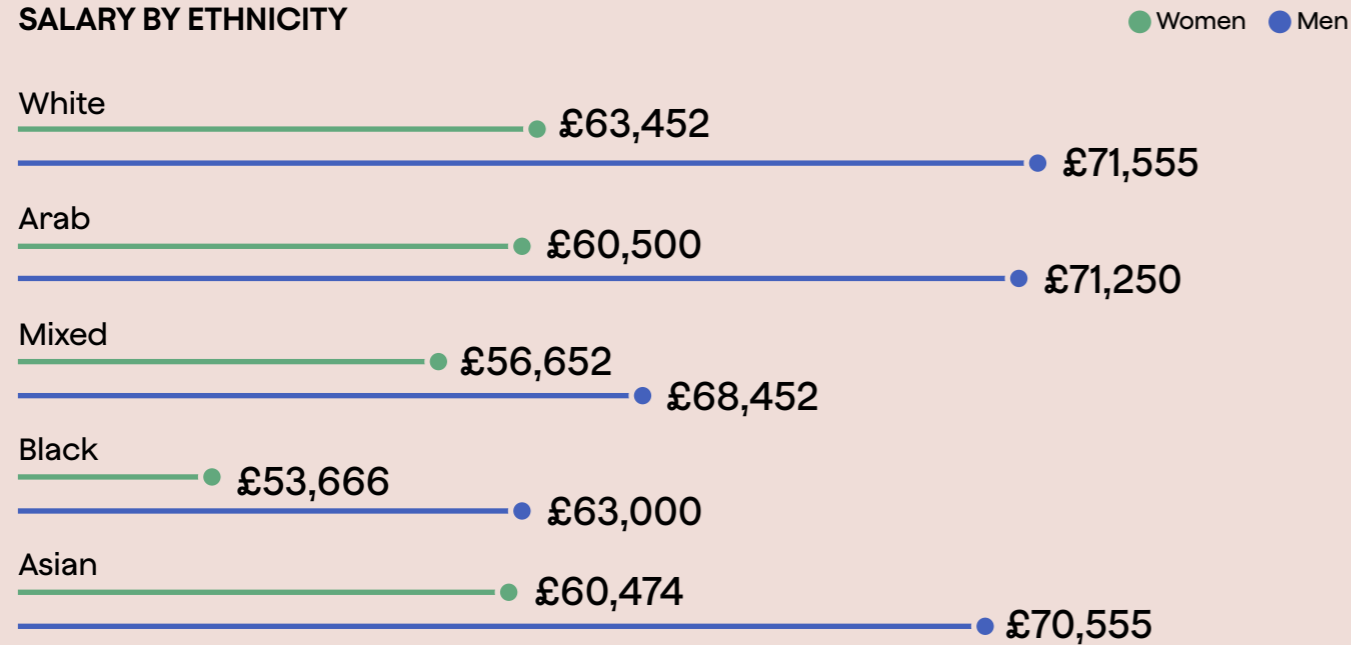


Ethnicity

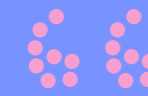
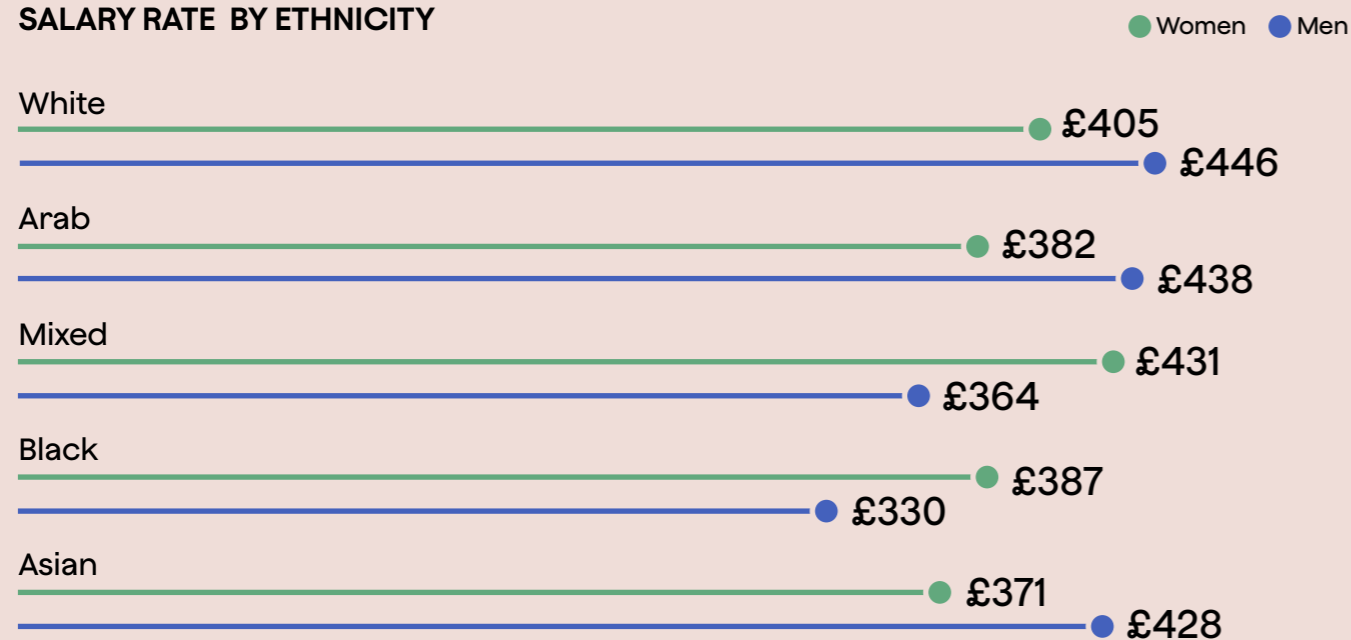
Representation has fallen with Black, Asian and Minority representation dropping from 16.3% to 14.5%, approximately 43,000 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic professionals have effectively left or been pushed out of the industry in the past 12 months. Against London's ethnic makeup of 39.9%, the gap between the city in which the industry operates and the people it employs remains stark.

- Black females earn up to £9,786 less than White females, while Black males earn up to £8,555 less than White males - the lowest earnings of any ethnic group across both genders.
- Black women earn 75p for every £1 a White man earns, equating to a 25% pay gap - which means they effectively work the entire final quarter of the year for nothing.
- In freelance, Mixed and Black female freelancers out-earn their male counterparts in a reverse trend

SALARY BY ETHNICITY



SALARY RATE BY ETHNICITY




We've finally started to move the dial fostering inclusive workplace cultures... and now we're seeing the brakes being slammed on. At Creative Equals, we've been saying for years: 'who makes the work, shapes the work'... and McKinsey proves it again: diverse teams are 39% more likely to outperform financially.

Cutting DE&I budgets isn't a 'strategic pivot', it's a total teardown of the progress we've fought for and a direct threat to the creative industry's future commercial growth. Make no mistake... it's the ones who stay the course and continue to champion inclusion who will be the real winners.




Emma Murphy – Community Director, Creative Equals

Disability & Neurodiversity

 27% of the workforce now identify as having a neurodiversity, disability or mental health condition - up 3% on last year.


- In permanent employment, having a mental health condition or neurodivergence carries a pay penalty of up to £8,600 a year
- In freelance rates, those with a disability, neurodivergence or mental health condition all earn more than those without, commanding day rates between 1.4% - 6.3% higher.
- 74% of those with a mental health condition experienced burnout - the highest of any group
- 65% of neurodivergent employees do not feel they are being paid their worth - significantly higher than the 57% average

Age

 The industry is maturing. Workers aged 45 and over now account for 19.6% of the workforce, while only 2% are aged 18-24 - a pipeline concern that runs directly through to The Talent Gap section of this report.

- Burnout seems to be more prevalent amongst younger workers - 78% of 18-24 year olds experienced burnout, falling to 47% among 55-64s. The youngest workers are burning out at almost double the rate of the oldest.
- AI preparedness is surprisingly consistent across age groups - no significant gap between younger and older workers, which challenges the assumption that younger workers are better equipped

Sexuality

 16% of the permanent workforce and 15% of freelancers identify as LGBTQIA+. In the freelance market, day rates are virtually identical to those of their heterosexual colleagues - a gap of just £2. In permanent employment, the gap is significantly wider, and the well-being picture is more concerning.

- LGBTQIA+ permanent employees earn an average of £7,877 less than heterosexual colleagues - an 11.7% pay gap
- 67% of LGBTQIA+ employees experienced burnout
- 65% are likely to leave in the next 6-12 months
- Only 23% feel they are being paid their worth

Our eco-system

As the UK's most trusted talent agency, we have a responsibility to positively impact diversity, equity, and inclusion within the industries we service, making a more equitable society for all. We continue to invest into our networks and partners, creating an eco-system of like-minded organisations to enable greater representation, and to challenge the status quo:



CREATIVE EQUALS

A global inclusive marketing organisation who partner with ambitious brands to drive inclusive strategies, creative excellence, build culture and unlock fresh growth.



WITH NOT FOR

A disability-led and founded talent and content agency that exclusively represents Disabled creatives.



BLOOM UK

A professional network for women in communications with a mission to ensure equal opportunities.



THE SPRING BACK GUIDE

A digital-based coaching solution that supports women returning back into the workplace after a career break.



SHE SAYS

A global creative network for woman to help advancement within the creative and tech industries; through events, meet-ups, campaigns & mentorships.



LOLLIPOP MENTORING

A dedicated mentoring community for Black women in the marketing and advertising industries: empowering, connecting, and uplifting through meaningful mentorship, networking, and shared guidance.



20/20 LEVELS

A multi-award-winning social enterprise leading the way to a more diverse and inclusive workforce in the UK.



AVENIR NETWORK

A future-of-work consultancy helping organisations adapt to change, embrace innovation, and lead with purpose. We partner with organisations of all sizes to create inclusive, sustainable, and future-ready workplaces that empower people and drive business success.



GOOD NUGGET

A non-profit organisation empowering underrepresented talent to take their first steps towards a career in the exciting world of branding, communications and marketing.



OUTVERTISING

A non-for-profit LGBTQIA+ advertising and marketing, advocacy group – promoting more, positive representation within the world of advertising.



In addition, we continue to pledge our support to organisations in creating long-term strategies, that enable businesses to attract, engage, and retain talent, including:

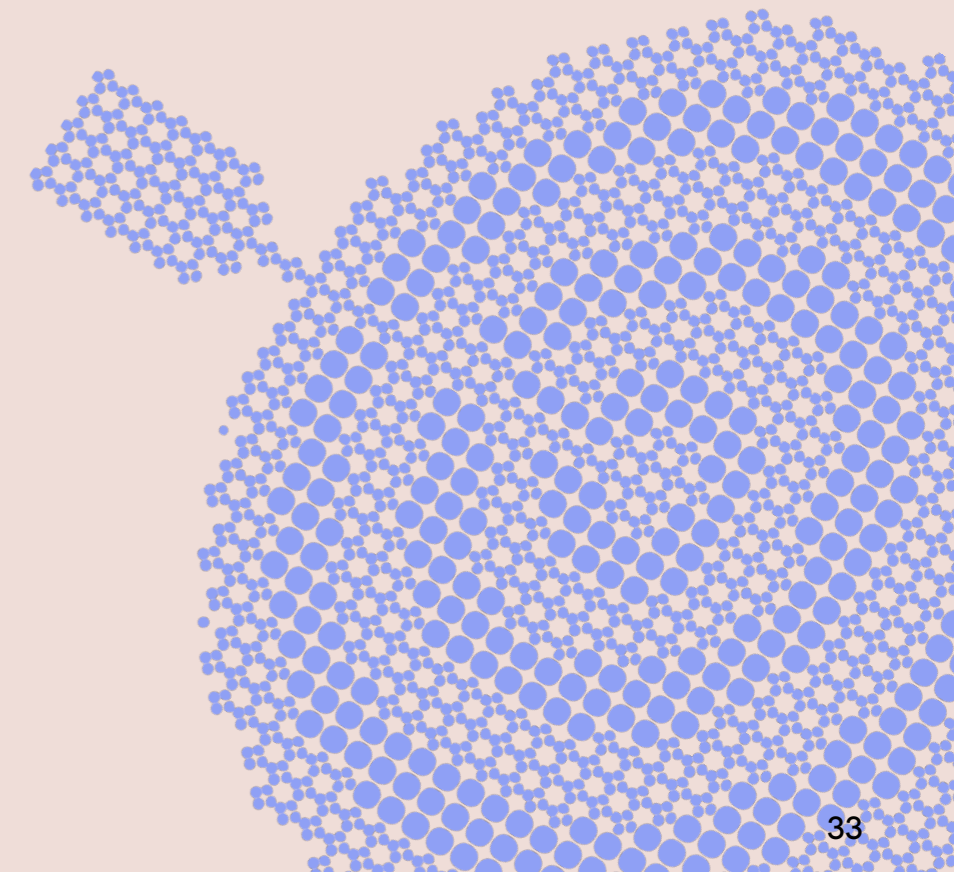
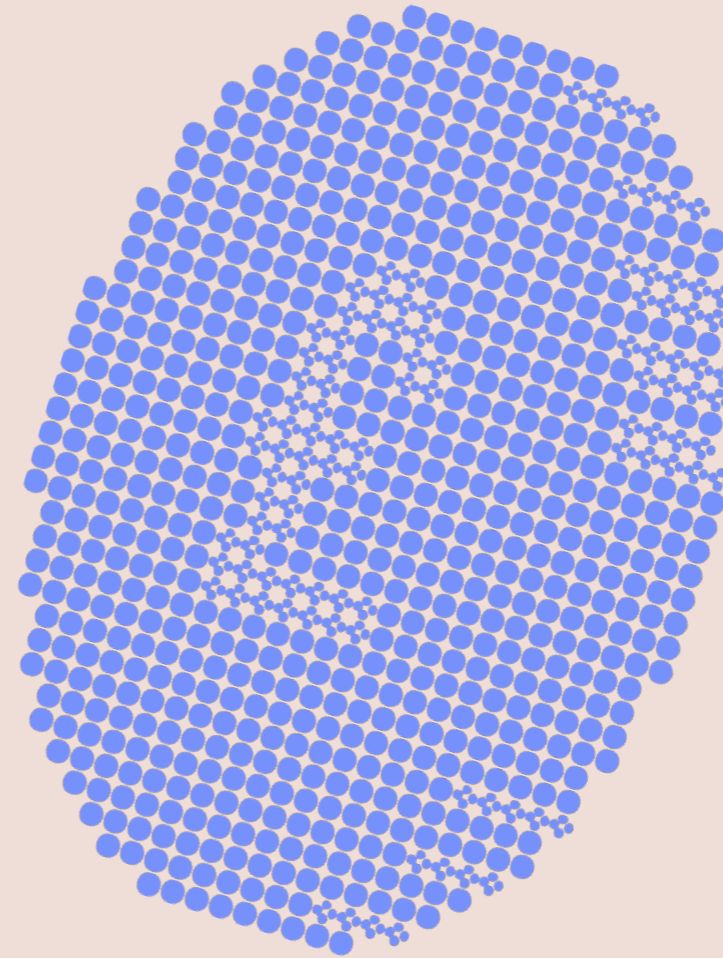
- Investing in and utilising our ecosystem of networks and partners
- Creating 'long-list' quotas
- Anonymous CVs
- Embracing Earn Your Worth
- Building diverse talent pools through our eco-system
- Collecting and analysing data
- L&D training
- Psychometric testing

Earn your worth - Fair pay for all

We believe that talent should be paid fairly based on their skills, experience, and ability to do the job; not on their perceived worth or ability to negotiate. At Major Players, we made a commitment to stop asking our candidates to divulge in their current or previous salaries, in a bid to cut pay gaps. There is clear evidence which indicates when making this simple, low-cost change to the hiring process, it can positively impact pay inequality. We are calling on all employers to sign up to our #EarnYourWorth pledge to make salary disclosure a thing of the past. We are also calling on individuals to sign our petition, in order for us to lobby the UK Government into making legislative change around salary history.



Find out more: www.majorplayers.co.uk/earn-your-worth



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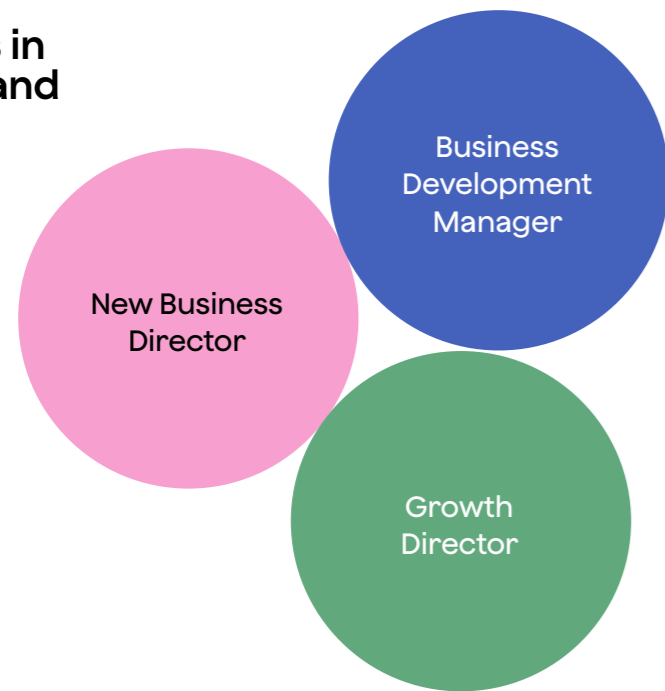
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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Demand for Business Development talent is rising, driven by the growth of project-based client work and the pressure on agencies to maintain a consistent pipeline. Shorter contracts and slower decision-making cycles mean a single pitch win is no longer enough, and agencies need a dedicated commercial resource that can win repeatedly.

The role itself has broadened. Business Development is no longer purely about outreach and acquisition. Senior hires are expected to own the full commercial journey - from pipeline and pitch strategy through to the longer-term relationships that generate retained revenue. Blended roles combining new business, growth strategy and marketing are increasingly common. Candidates who understand how to use AI-assisted outreach tools, without losing the human quality that builds trust, are standing out.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

Commercial pressure on agencies shows no sign of easing. Demand for Business Development talent will continue to grow, and the most valued profiles will be those who can operate across the full growth cycle.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Business Development Exec	£38,000	£35-45k
Business Development Manager	£60,000	£50-65k
Snr. Business Development Manager	£72,000	£65-80k
Business Development Director	£92,000	£80-105k
Head of Business Development	£125,000	£115-155k
Chief Growth Officer	£162,000	£145-185k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Business Development Exec	£230	£210-260
Business Development Manager	£310	£280-330
Snr. Business Development Manager	£360	£330-380
Business Development Officer	£425	£360-460
Head of Business Development	£475+	£475+

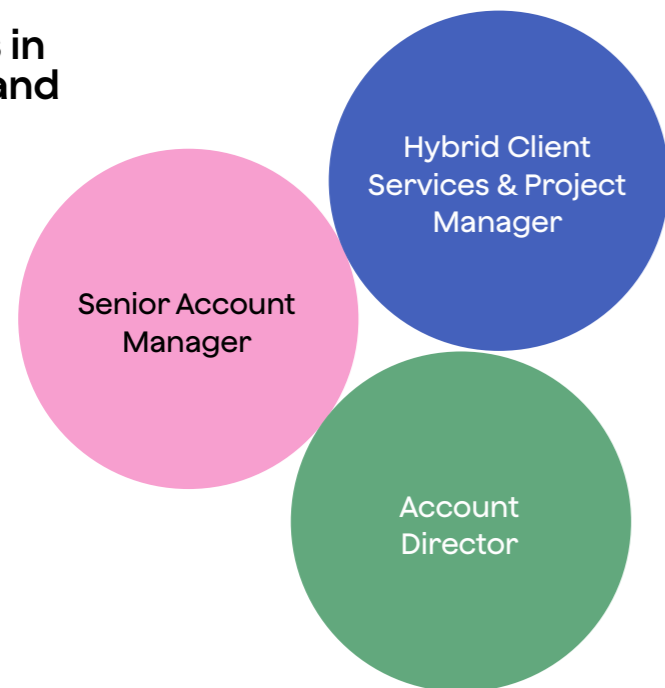
CLIENT SERVICES & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Hybrid profiles that combine client-facing and delivery capability remain the priority. This means the distinction between account management and project management is becoming less relevant than the ability to do both well, and organisations are hiring accordingly.

At senior level, the expectation has shifted from relationship management to revenue ownership. Account Directors are increasingly expected to drive commercial growth across their accounts while maintaining delivery standards. Strong pitching capability is now listed as a requirement at this level, reflecting how closely tied to new business senior Client Services roles have become.

Mid-weight freelance talent remains the hardest to source. Senior Account Managers and Project Managers at this level tend to be settled in permanent roles, pushing freelance demand upward. When bookings land, they run long to ensure continuity through campaign and delivery cycles.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand

- Commercial Acumen
- People Leadership
- Delivery Excellence

Market outlook

The hybrid profile will only become more embedded. Organisations that continue to hire these functions separately will find themselves at a structural disadvantage commercially and operationally.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Account Executive	£30,000	£30-35k
Senior Account Executive	£34,000	£30-40k
Account Manager	£41,000	£35-45k
Senior Account Manager	£48,000	£45-55k
Account Director	£66,000	£55-70k
Senior Account Director	£77,000	£65-80k
Business Director	£90,000	£85-105k
Head of Client Services	£107,500	£95-135k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Account Executive	£190	£160-210
Account Manager	£260	£210-260
Senior Account Manager	£320	£300-350
Account Director	£360	£350-410
Senior Account Director	£400	£360-460
Business Director	£460	£430-510

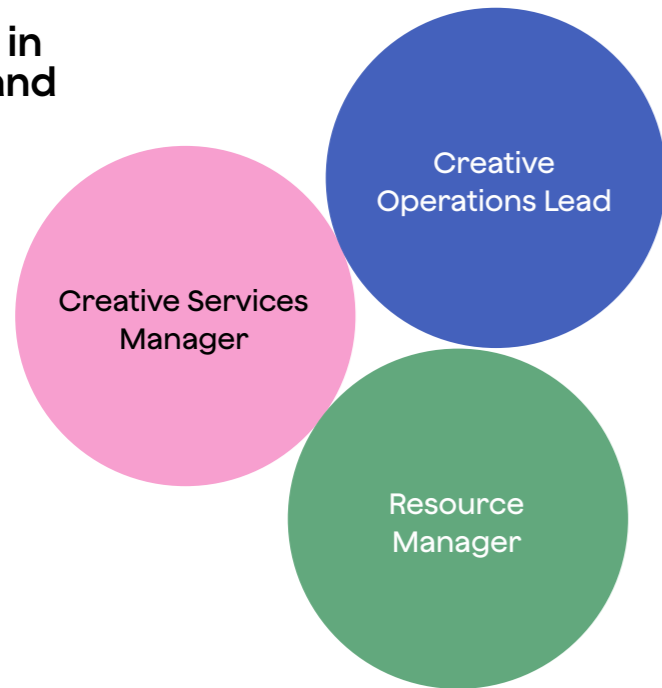
CREATIVE SERVICES

Studio, Resource, Traffic and Operations roles remain under pressure amid a high revenue focused market, particularly on the permanent side. Where these functions are being cut, responsibilities are redistributed across Project Management and wider operations rather than backfilled. Narrow specialism is less valued than operational breadth, and so the ability to coordinate resources, manage workflows and implement systems is what clients are actually hiring for.

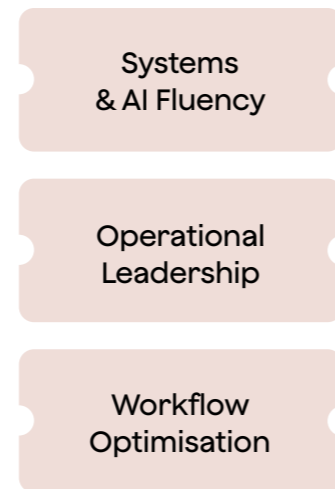
The most active investment in this space is in Operations roles that focus on building and embedding technology and AI solutions into creative workflows. Businesses want candidates who can own this practically and deliver it.

Junior headcount has contracted significantly and shows little sign of recovering.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

The shift from operational execution to operational leadership will accelerate. Candidates who can build AI-enabled workflows will become increasingly central to how creative businesses run.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Resource / Traffic Co-Ordinator	£36,000	£35-45k
Resource / Traffic Manager/ Studio Manager	£50,000	£45-55k
Creative Services Manager	£56,000	£50-60k
Head of Creative Services	£72,000	£70-80k
Creative Services Director	£90,000	£80-100k
Operations Manager	£68,000	£60-75k
Operations Director	£78,000	£75-85k
Head of Operations	£87,000	£85-95k
Project Coordinator	£30,000	£30-35k
Project Manager	£46,000	£40-55k
Senior Project Manager	£67,000	£55-75k
Digital Project Manager	£61,000	£55-70k
Senior Digital Project Manager	£77,000	£70-85k
Project Director	£87,000	£85-95k
Head of Project Management	£92,000	£90-105k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Resource / Traffic Co-Ordinator	£210	£210-260
Resource / Traffic Manager/ Studio Manager	£360	£310-460
Creative Services Manager	£375	£310-460
Creative Services Director	£410	£360-510
Operations Manager	£360	£360-460
Operations Director	£450	£410-510
Project Coordinator	£210	£190-230
Project Manager	£325	£260-360
Senior Project Manager	£380	£350-460
Digital Project Manager	£450	£360-510
Project Director	£460	£410-510
Programme Manager	£510	£460-610

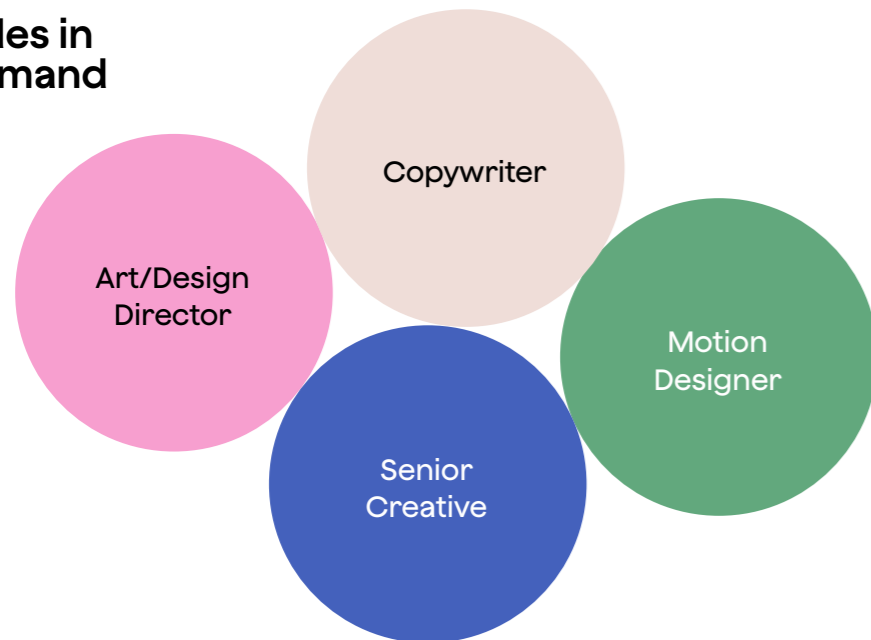
CREATIVE, DESIGN, UI DESIGN & UX

Hiring has strengthened, particularly within in-house brand teams, continuing to build content and campaign capability directly. Freelance demand is used to flex capacity during seasonal peaks, with a clear preference for candidates who can embed quickly and deliver without lengthy onboarding. This is why aligned sector/field experience is consistently prioritised.

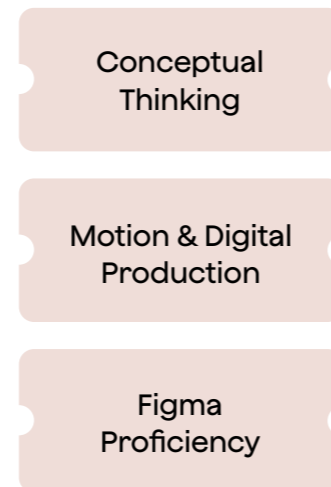
Social-first briefs are now the default, not a trend. Even large-scale brand and campaign work is conceived with platform behaviour and distribution front of mind for most clients. Motion and animation capability has moved from specialism to baseline expectation, and candidates who can work across static and motion are consistently preferred. AI fluency is similarly a standard requirement to augment creative ideas and output.

Another trend is that regional creative markets outside London (particularly Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast) are increasingly active.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

The bar for creative candidates will keep rising. Platform fluency, motion capability and AI integration are becoming table stakes. Those who can combine strong conceptual thinking with executional range across formats will be in the strongest position.

Salary information:

CREATIVE, BRANDING & DESIGN

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Junior Designer	£32,000	£30-35k
Designer	£38,000	£40-50k
Senior Designer	£52,000	£55-70k
Design Director / Head of Design	£68,000	£65-85k
Junior Creative	£34,000	£35-40k
Creative	£46,000	£45-55k
Senior Creative	£62,000	£60-70k
Junior Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£34,000	£35-40k
Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£43,000	£45-50k
Senior Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£67,000	£55-85k
Creative Lead/Head of Creative	£72,000	£70-85k
Associate Creative Director	£77,500	£75-90k
Creative Director	£95,000	£95-125k
Executive Creative Director	£155,000	£145-225k+
Junior Copywriter	£27,000	£30-30k
Copywriter	£34,000	£35-40k
Senior Copywriter	£46,000	£45-55k
Head of Copy	£67,000	£65-75k
Junior Videographer	£26,000	£30-30k
Senior Videographer	£41,000	£40-50k
Video Editor	£32,000	£30-40k
Senior Video Editor	£49,000	£45-55k
Motion Graphics Designer	£41,000	£40-50k
Senior Motion Graphics Designer	£56,000	£55-65k
3D Designer	£41,000	£40-50k
Senior 3D Designer	£59,000	£55-70k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Junior Designer	£210	£180-210
Designer	£250	£250-350
Senior Designer	£400	£350-450
Design Director / Head of Design	£450+	£450-600
Junior Creative	£210	£180-230
AI Designer / Artist	£450+	£450+
Creative	£350	£325-350
Senior Creative	£400	£330-410
Junior Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£210	£180-210
Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£350	£350-400pp
Senior Creative Team (AD/CW/Team)	£400+	£450-550pp
Creative Lead/Head of Creative	£500+	£500-600
Associate Creative Director	£500+	£500-600
Creative Director	£500+	£500-600
Executive Creative Director	£600+	£600-800
Junior Copywriter	£210	£180-210
Copywriter	£250	£250-350
Senior Copywriter	£400	£350-450
Head of Copy	£450+	£450-600
Creative Strategist	£350	£350-450
Senior Creative Strategist	£450	£450-600
Senior Videographer	£400	£400-500
Video Editor	£350	£300-380
Senior Video Editor	£400	£380-500
Motion Graphics Designer	£400	£350-400
Senior Motion Graphics Designer	£450	£400-500
3D Designer	£380	£350-380
Senior 3D Designer	£450	£380-500

Salary information:

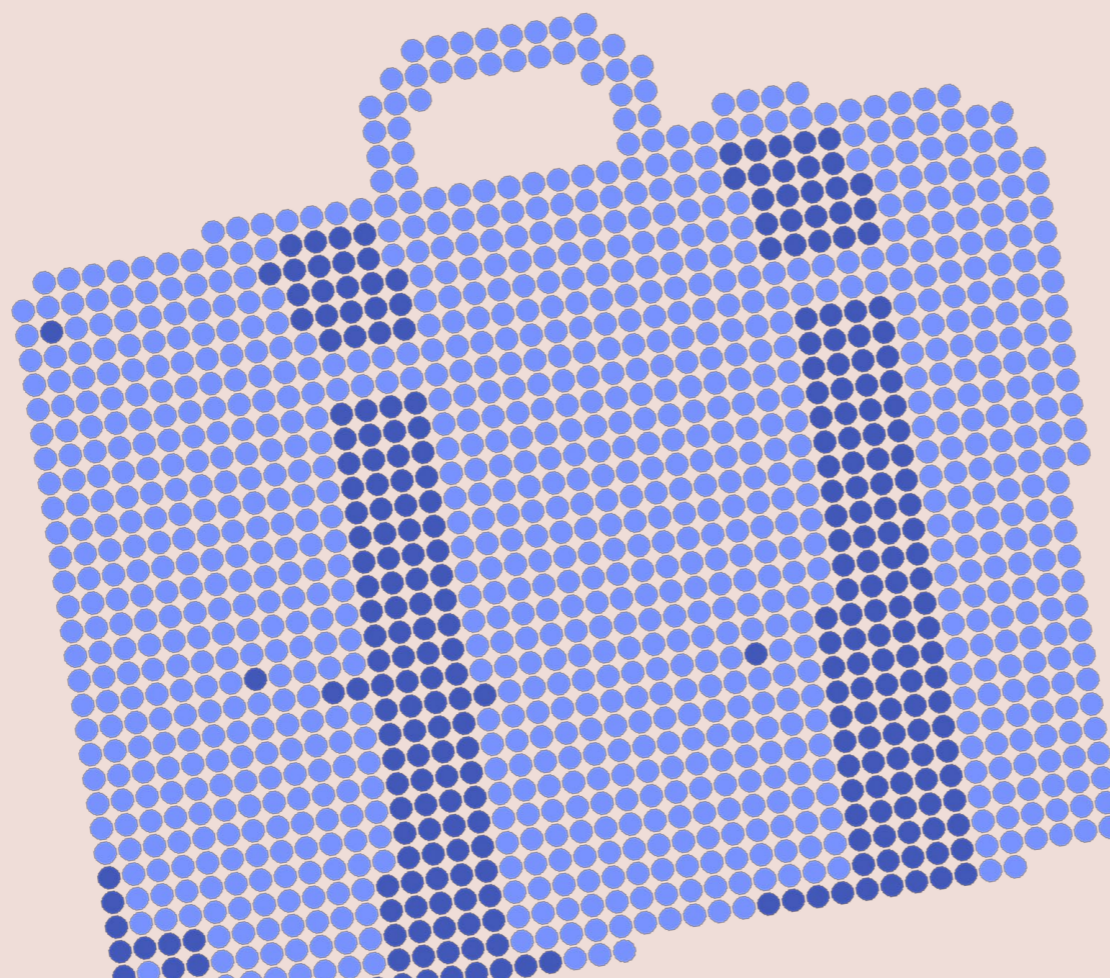
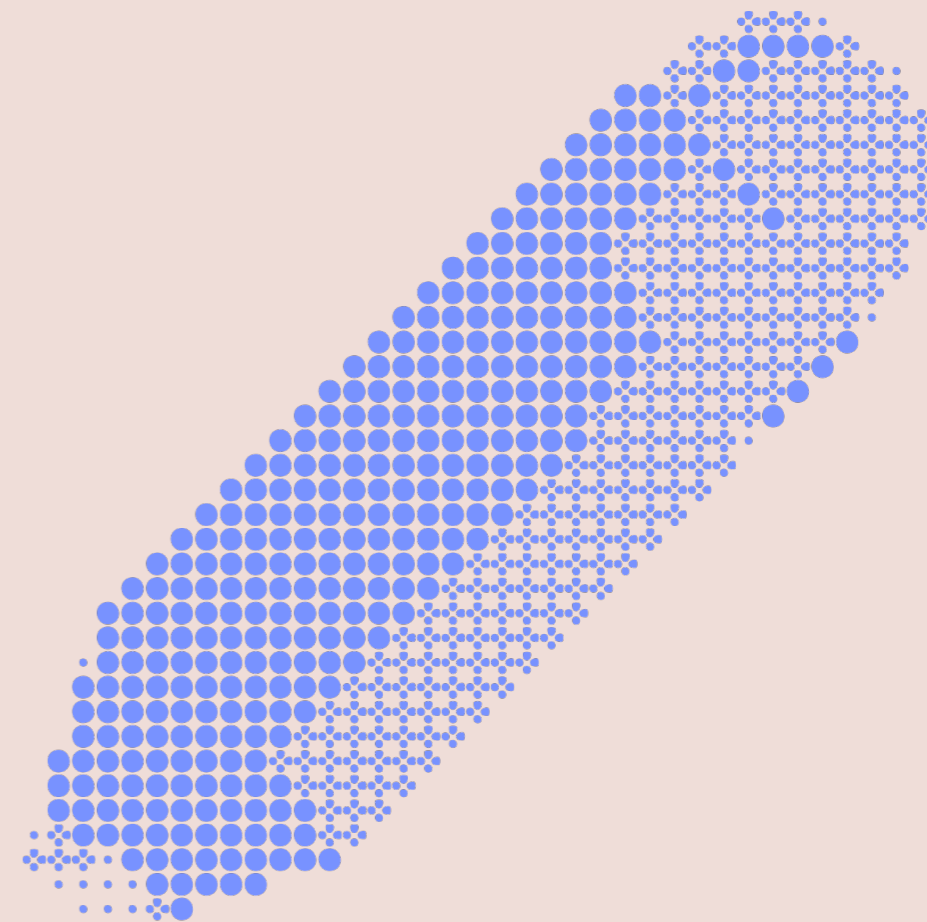
DIGITAL, UI & UX

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Junior Digital Designer	£33,000	£30-35k
Digital Designer	£38,000	£40-50k
Senior Digital Designer	£57,500	£55-70k
Digital Design Director	£80,000	£75-85k
UI Designer	£38,000	£40-50k
Senior UI Designer	£72,000	£70-80k
Junior UX Designer	£36,000	£35-45k
UX Designer	£46,000	£40-60k
Senior UX Designer	£67,000	£65-75k
UX Copywriter	£43,000	£40-50k
Product Designer	£46,000	£45-55k
Senior Product Designer	£62,000	£60-70k
Head of Product	£95,000	£85-105k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Junior Digital Designer	£200	£200-250
Digital Designer	£350	£300-350
Senior Digital Designer	£450	£380-450
Digital Design Director	£500	£500-700
UI Designer	£380	£350-400
Senior UI Designer	£450	£400-500
UX Designer	£380	£350-400
Senior UX Designer	£450	£400-500
UX Copywriter	£400	£400-500
Product Designer	£500	£450-550
Senior Product Designer	£600	£550-700
Head of Product Design	£700	£600-900



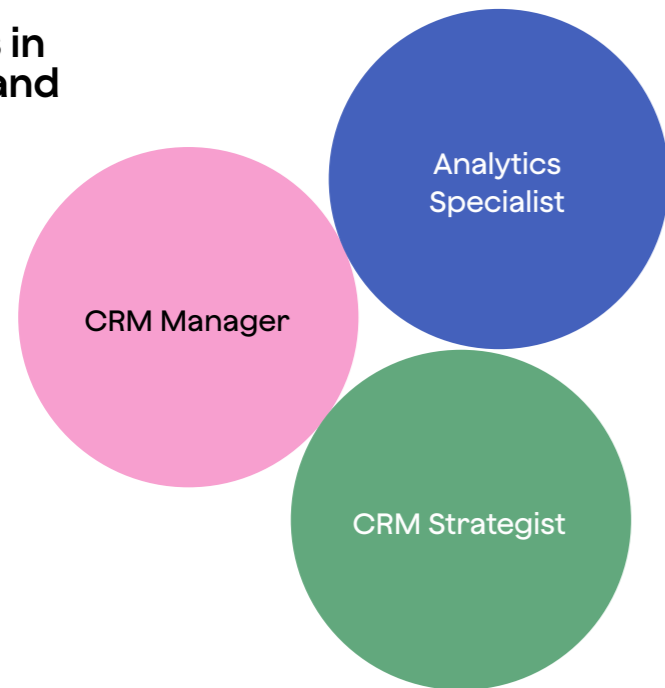
CRM, DATA & ANALYTICS

Demand remains consistent and is growing in several areas. The focus on lifecycle value, retention and customer engagement is keeping this market active, with mid-level CRM Managers among the most requested freelance profiles during peak trading periods.

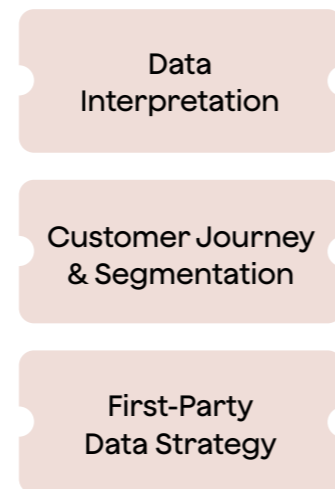
AI integration within CRM platforms is raising expectations on candidates. Clients are increasingly looking for the ability to critically assess and direct AI-generated insight, rather than simply operate the platform. Alongside this, first-party data has quietly become one of the most active brief areas in the discipline. Further, there is serious investment in owned data infrastructure and talent needs to work across the full picture of segmentation, journey design and touchpoint optimisation.

Clients are also notably specific about industry niche experience. That means generalist CRM profiles are being deprioritised in favour of candidates who already understand the relevant audience and commercial context.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

As AI becomes further embedded in CRM platforms, the value will shift toward candidates who can govern and direct its output strategically. First-party data fluency will become a baseline expectation rather than a differentiator.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
CRM Executive	£40,000	£40-50k
CRM Manager	£55,000	£45-60k
Senior CRM Manager	£56,000	£60-75k
CRM Director	£72,000	£95k-115k
Head of CRM	£97,500	£90-120
Head of Retention	£92,500	£85-100K
Web/Digital Analyst	£56,000	£55-65k
Insight Analyst	£52,000	£35-55k
Senior Web Analyst	£69,000	£65-85k
Social Analyst	£56,000	£55-65k
Research Analyst	£48,000	£45-55k
Data Analyst	£52,000	£45-65k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
CRM Executive	£210	£190-230
CRM Manager	£300	£275-325
Senior CRM Manager	£325	£300-350
CRM Director	£400	£350-450
Head of CRM	£460	£410-510
Retention Specialist	£410	£380-430
Web/Digital Analyst	£360	£310-410
Insight Analyst	£360	£310-410
Senior Web Analyst	£420	£380-430
Social Analyst	£420	£380-430
Research Analyst	£360	£310-410
Data Analyst	£425	£400-450
Data Scientist	£510+	£510+

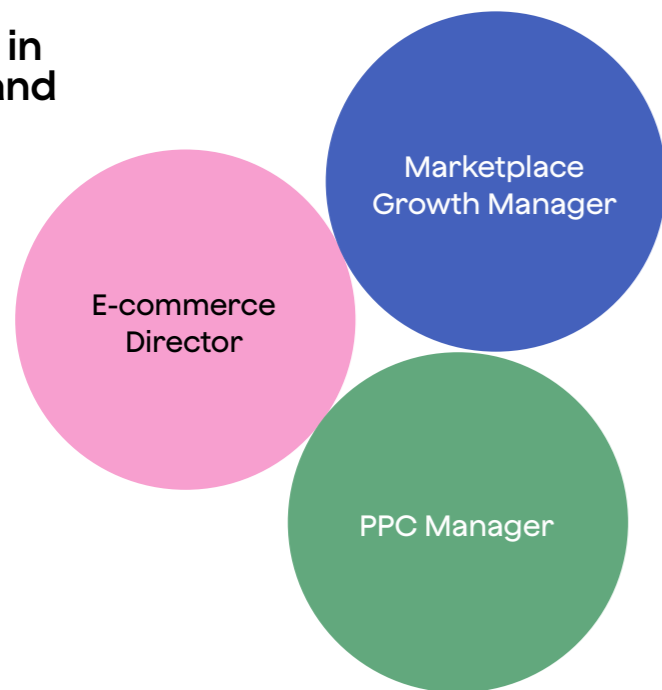
E-COMMERCE

Demand is strongest where it connects directly to revenue. Marketplace and performance-led specialists who can demonstrate tangible commercial impact are favoured across both freelance and permanent markets.

Amazon and TikTok Shop expertise has moved firmly into mainstream briefs. Clients want candidates who can navigate algorithmic ranking to amplify conversion on these platforms over just understanding them in general terms. Retail media is emerging as a distinct specialism. Subscription and retention models are shaping an increasing number of briefs, reflecting a shift toward maximising existing customer value alongside acquisition.

It is worth noting that the senior market currently has a higher-than-usual number of available candidates following a period of restructuring. For clients hiring at Head or Director level, this is a genuine opportunity to access experienced talent that would not ordinarily be on the market.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

Social commerce will continue to reshape E-commerce strategy. Candidates with deep platform specialism (particularly across Amazon and TikTok Shop) will remain in high demand, while generalist E-commerce profiles will find the market increasingly competitive.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
E-Commerce Executive	£32,000	£30-40k
Senior E-Commerce Executive	£40,000	£40-45k
E-Commerce Manager	£54,000	£45-65k
Senior E-Commerce Manager	£67,500	£60-80k
Head of Online / Digital	£82,000	£80-120k
Head of E-Commerce	£82,000	£80-120k
Director of Online / E-Commerce	£110,000	£120-180k
Online Trading Manager	£52,000	£50-70k
Marketplace Manager / Amazon Manager	£58,000	£50-70k
Marketplace Executive	£43,000	£40-50k

FREELANCE

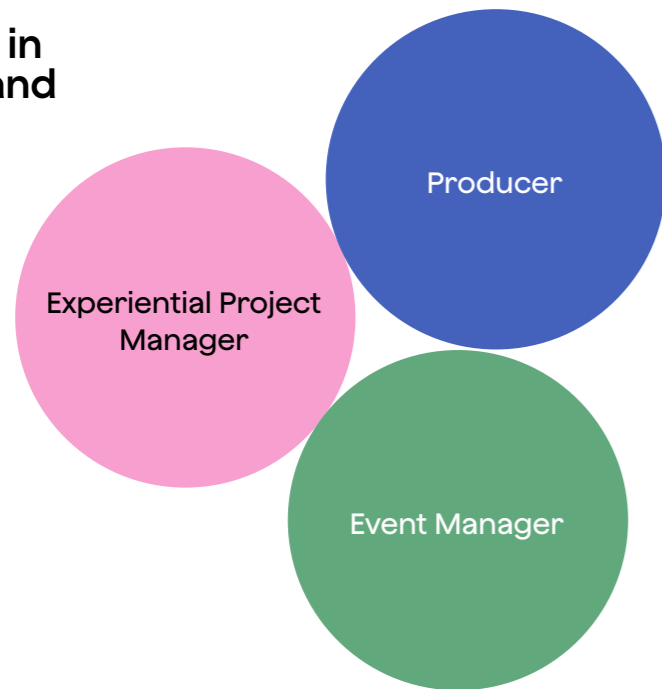
Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
E-Commerce Executive	£210	£190-230
Senior E-Commerce Executive	£230	£210-250
E-Commerce Manager	£310	£260-310
Head of Online / Digital	£460	£410-510
Head of E-Commerce	£510+	£510+
Director of Online / E-Commerce	£510+	£510+
Ecommerce Category Manager	£310	£260-310
Online Trading Manager	£310	£260-310
Marketplace Manager / Amazon Manager	£330	£310-360
Marketplace Executive	£210	£190-230

EXPERIENTIAL, EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

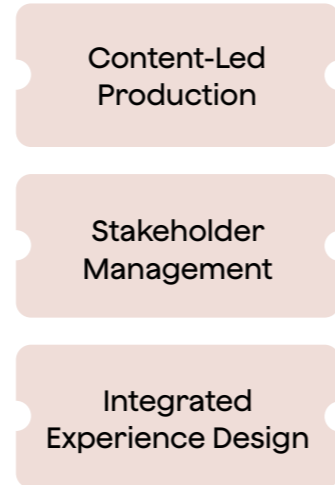
The sector is in a strong period of growth. Both brands and agencies are treating live experience as a strategic part of the marketing mix, and the increase in permanent hiring - following years of predominantly freelance-led recovery - signals genuine confidence in its long-term role.

The nature of experiential work is shifting. Events are increasingly designed as content engines, and physical experiences built to generate social, digital and editorial output that extends well beyond the event itself. This is raising the creative and production bar, and candidates who can approach a brief with both live execution and content output in mind are consistently preferred. Hybrid formats blending physical and digital touchpoints continue to grow. Mid-level Producers, Project Managers and Event Managers remain the most consistently requested freelance profiles.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

Experiential will continue to grow its share of marketing budgets. The shift toward content-led experience design will deepen, and candidates who can bridge production expertise with creative and digital thinking will be the most sought-after.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Account Manager	£40,000	£35-45k
Senior Account Manager	£50,000	£45-55k
Account Director	£60,000	£55-65k
Senior Account Director	£70,000	£65k-75k
Events Co-Ordinator / Assistant	£33,000	£30-40k
Events Manager	£40,000	£35-50k
Senior Events Manager	£56,000	£50-65k
Head of Events	£78,000	£70-90k
Event Director	£82,000	£75-90k
Project Coordinator / Assistant	£33,000	£30-40k
Project Manager	£46,000	£40-50k
Senior Project Manager	£60,000	£50-65k
Project Director	£77,000	£70-90k
Junior Producer	£39,000	£35-45k
Producer	£52,000	£45-55k
Senior Producer	£68,000	£55-75k
Executive Producer	£87,000	£80-95k
Production Coordinator	£34,000	£30-40k
Production Manager	£51,000	£45-60k
Senior Production Manager	£61,000	£60-70k
Production Director	£72,000	£65-80k
Partnerships Account Manager	£46,000	£35-55k
Partnerships Account Director	£66,000	£65-80k
Partnerships Director	£82,000	£75-105k

FREELANCE

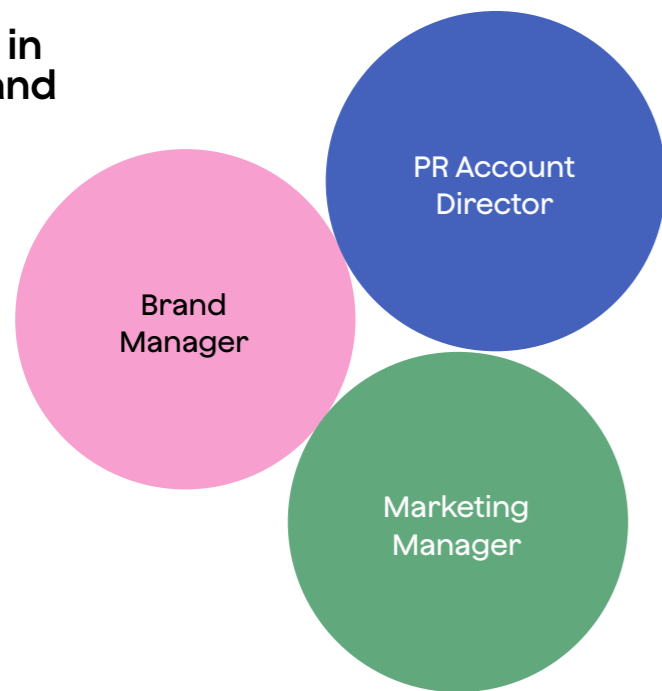
Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Account Manager	£275	£250-300
Senior Account Manager	£325	£300-350
Account Director	£375	£350-400
Senior Account Director	£410	£360-460
Events Co-Ordinator / Assistant	£200	£190-210
Events Manager	£275	£250-300
Head of Events	£400	£375-425
Senior Events Manager	£330	£310-360
Event Director	£400	£375-425
Project Coordinator / Assistant	£225	£200-250
Project Manager	£350	£325-375
Senior Project Manager	£380	£360-430
Project Director	£460	£410-510
Junior Producer	£230	£210-260
Producer	£350	£300-400
Senior Producer	£425	£400-450
Executive Producer	£510	£460-560+
Production Coordinator	£230	£210-260
Production Manager	£360	£330-380
Senior Production Manager	£380	£360-430
Production Director	£460	£410-510+
Partnerships Account Manager	£310	£280-330
Partnerships Account Director	£380	£360-410
Partnerships Director	£410	£360-460

MARKETING, BRAND, PR & COMMS

The market is currently weighted toward mid-level execution over senior strategy ownership. Budgets are being directed at candidates who can deliver measurable outcomes. Talent who combine hands-on implementation with strategic thinking rather than operating in a purely directional capacity are favoured.

Data literacy is now an entry requirement. Candidates who can analyse performance, interpret consumer behaviour and apply those insights to optimise activity are consistently outperforming those who lead with instinct alone. Integrated channel capability - connecting digital and traditional, paid and organic - is expected rather than exceptional. The growth of in-house PR functions is reshaping agency briefs, with brands handling communications directly and turning to agencies for specialist campaign support. Authentic brand storytelling remains a genuine differentiator as AI-generated content increases in volume and consumers grow more discerning.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

The premium on commercially minded, analytically fluent marketing talent will increase. As in-house functions continue to grow, agencies will need to sharpen their value proposition and the talent they hire needs to reflect that.

Salary information:

MARKETING

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Marketing Assistant	£34,000	£35-40k
Marketing Executive / Co-ordinator	£37,000	£35-40k
Senior Marketing Executive	£41,000	£40-50k
Marketing Manager	£65,000	£55-70k
Campaign Manager	£58,000	£50-65k
Senior Marketing Manager	£70,000	£65-80k
Head of Marketing	£105,000	£85-125k
Marketing Director	£152,000	£130k+
Chief Marketing Officer / VP	£142,000	£155k+
Brand Executive	£36,000	£35-40k
Brand Manager	£57,000	£50-70k
Head of Brand	£92,000	£85-125k
Head of Brand Marketing	£92,000	£85-125k
Global Brand Director	£125,000	£130k+
Chief Brand Officer	£153,000	£155k+

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Marketing Assistant	£200	£190-210
Marketing Executive / Co-ordinator	£230	£210-260
Senior Marketing Executive	£260	£230-280
Marketing Manager	£310	£280-360
Campaign Manager	£310	£280-330
Senior Marketing Manager	£380	£360-410
Head of Marketing	£410	£410-510
Marketing Director	£410	£410-510
Chief Marketing Officer / VP	£690	£660-710
Brand Executive	£230	£210-260
Brand Manager	£310	£260-360
Head of Brand	£410	£410+
Global Brand Director	£510+	£510+
Chief Brand Officer	£610+	£510+

Salary information:

PR & COMMS

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
PR/Comms Executive	£38,000	£35-40k
PR/Comms Manager	£57,500	£50-65k
Internal Comms Manager	£57,500	£55-65k
Senior PR/Comms Manager	£68,000	£65-80k
PR Assistant	£31,000	£30-35k
Press Officer	£34,000	£35-40k
Publicist	£34,000	£35-40k
Senior Publicist	£39,000	£40-45k
Head of PR / Head of Media Relations	£98,000	£80-130k
Group Head of Comms	£10,500	£90-130k
PR Director	£97,000	£90-130k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
PR/Comms Executive	£210	£190-230
PR/Comms Manager	£280	£260-310
Internal Comms Manager	£310	£280-330
Senior PR/Comms Manager	£310	£280-330
PR Assistant	£190	£170-210
Press Officer	£210	£190-230
PR Consultant	£410+	£410+
Senior PR/Comms Manager	£330	£310-360
Publicist	£280	£260-310
Senior Publicist	£310	£280-330
Head of PR / Head of Media Relations	£410	£360-460
Head of Internal Comms	£410	£350-460
Group Head of Comms	£460	£410-510
PR Director	£460	£410-510
Director of Communications	£460+	£460+

MEDIA

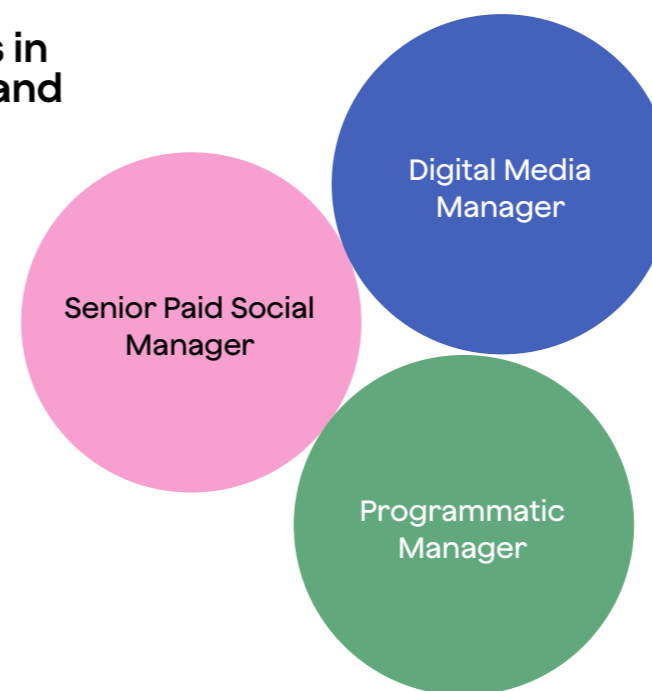
Media hiring remains firmly performance-led, with strong and sustained demand across paid social, search and programmatic. Independent agencies and in-house brand teams are the most active hirers, as brands continue to build direct digital media capability rather than rely entirely on agency partners.

The most consistent brief is for candidates who can do both: activate campaigns and think strategically about what those campaigns are achieving. Pure executors who can't contextualise performance in commercial terms are a harder sell than they used to be. Clients want people who can translate channel data into business outcomes and communicate that upward, not just optimise within a platform.

Programmatic continues to evolve in ways that are raising the bar for specialists in that space. Privacy-safe approaches - contextual targeting, clean room data, cookieless measurement - are becoming core requirements rather than emerging considerations. Connected TV and digital audio are also growing as active channel briefs, particularly for brands looking to extend reach beyond social and search.

The continued pull of talent toward in-house roles is being felt on the agency side. Agencies are competing harder to retain and attract media talent, and those that can't offer genuine breadth of client exposure or clear progression are losing ground.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand

- Platform Expertise
- Cross-Channel Planning
- Data-Led Optimisation

Market outlook

The market stays active but increasingly demanding. AI-driven optimisation is becoming structural across major platforms, and the hybrid planner-activator profile will remain the standard. Commercial fluency will only become more central to what clients expect.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Media Planner	£35,000	£30k - 40k
Senior Media Planner	£35,000	£32k - 40k
Media Buyer	£35,000	£30k - 40k
Senior Media Buyer	£35,000	£30k - 40k
Media Planning Manager	£45,000	£40k - 50k
Head of Media Planning	£80,000	£70k - 90k
Media Director	£75,000	£75k - 100k
Chief Media Officer	£120,000+	£120k - 150k
Paid Social Executive	£30,000	£30k - 40k
Paid Social Manager	£45,000	£40k - 50k
Senior Paid Social Manager	£50,000	£45k - 55k
Head of Paid Social	£75,000+	£75k - 90k
PPC Executive	£30,000	£30k - 35k
PPC Manager	£40,000	£40k - 50k
Senior PPC Manager	£50,000	£40k - 55k
Head of PPC	£75,000+	£75k - 90k
Programmatic Trader	£40,000	£30k - 45k
Programmatic Manager/Lead	£50,000	£40k - 75k
Senior Programmatic Manager	£55,000	£40k - 75k
Head of Programmatic	£75,000	£75k - 100k
Digital Media Executive	£30,000	£30k - 40k
Digital Media Manager	£40,000	£30k - 50k
Digital Campaign Manager	£40,000	£30k - 50k
Performance Marketing/Media Manager	£45,000	£40k - 55k
Performance Media Director	£50,000	£55k - 70k
Campaign Manager	£40,000	£35k - 45k
Ad Operations Specialists	£40,000	£35k - 45k
Ad Operations Manager	£45,000	£40k - 50k
Head of Ad Operations	£70,000+	£70k - 95k
Biddable Executive	£30,000	£30k - 35k
Biddable Manager	£42,000	£35k - 40k
Senior Biddable Manager	£50,000	£45k - 60k

FREELANCE

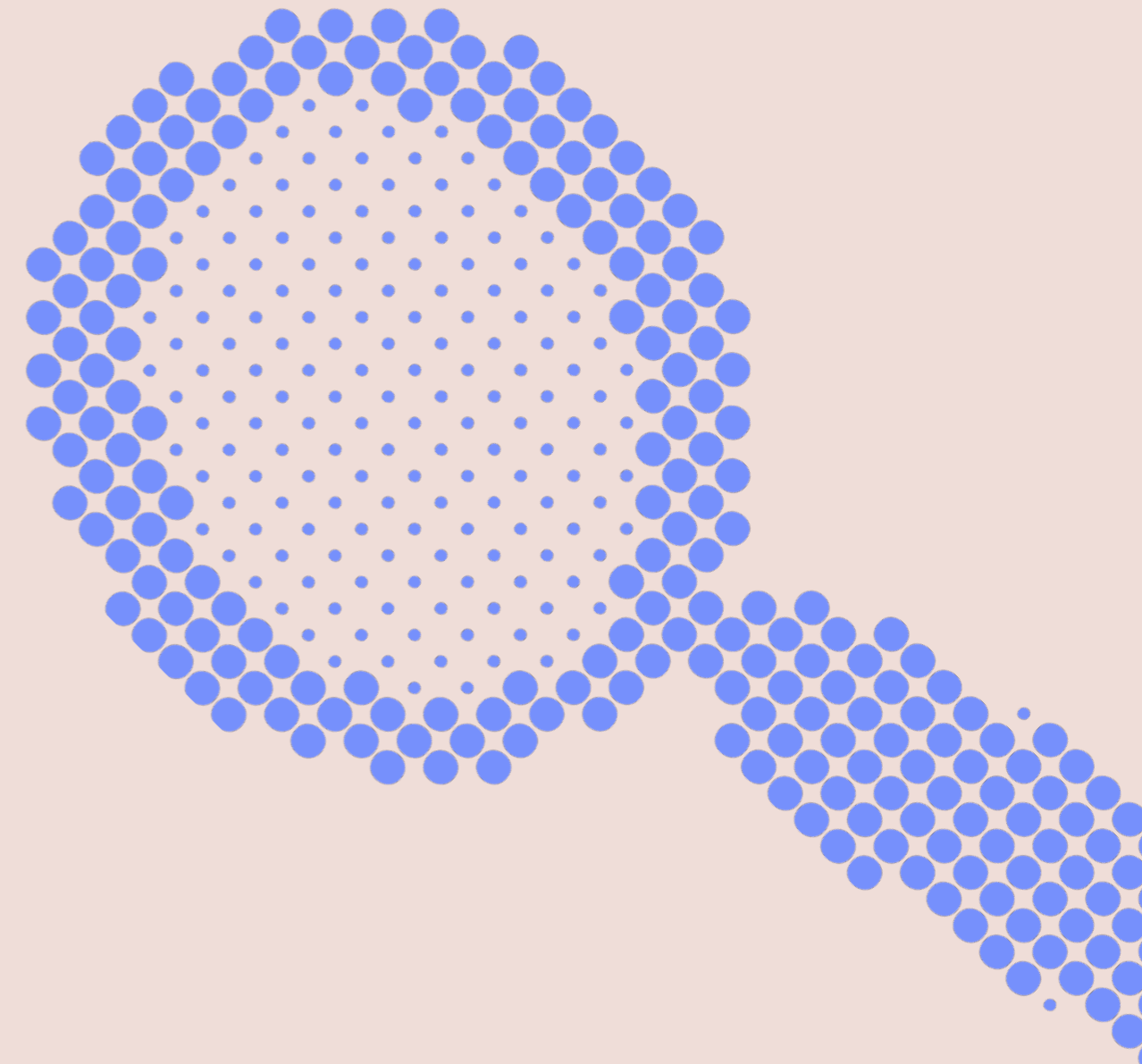
Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Media Planner	£300	£250 - 325
Senior Media Planner	£350	£300 - 400
Media Buyer	£300	£275 - 325
Senior Media Buyer	£350	£300 - 400
Media Planning Manager	£375	£350 - 400
Head of Media Planning	£450	£450+
Media Director	£500	£500 - 600+
Chief Media Officer	£700+	£700+
Paid Social Executive	£250	£200 - 275
Paid Social Manager	£300	£275 - 350
Senior Paid Social Manager	£350	£300 - 400
Head of Paid Social	£450+	£450+
PPC Executive	£250	£200 - 275
PPC Manager	£300	£275 - 350
Senior PPC Manager	£350	£300 - 400
Head of PPC	£450+	£450+
Programmatic Trader	£300	£275 - 350
Programmatic Manager/Lead	£375	£350 - 450
Senior Programmatic Manager	£400	£350 - 450
Head of Programmatic	£500 +	£500+
Digital Media Executive	£250	£200 - 275
Digital Media Manager	£300	£275 - 350
Digital Campaign Manager	£350	£300 - 400
Performance Marketing/Media Manager	£350	£300 - 400
Performance Media Director	£500+	£500+
Campaign Manager	£300	£250 - 350
Ad Operations Specialists	£300	£250 - 300
Ad Operations Manager	£350	£300 - 400
Head of Ad Operations	£450+	£450+
Biddable Executive	£250	£200 - 275
Biddable Manager	£300	£275 - 350
Senior Biddable Manager	£350	£300 - 400

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Biddable Account Director	£60,000	£60k - 80k
Head of Biddable	£80,000	£75k - 100k
Media Strategist	£70,000	£70k - 100k
Chief Strategy Officer	£120,000	£100k - 160k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Biddable Account Director	£375	£350 - 450
Head of Biddable	£450+	£450
Media Strategist	£500+	£500+
Chief Strategy Officer	£700+	£700+



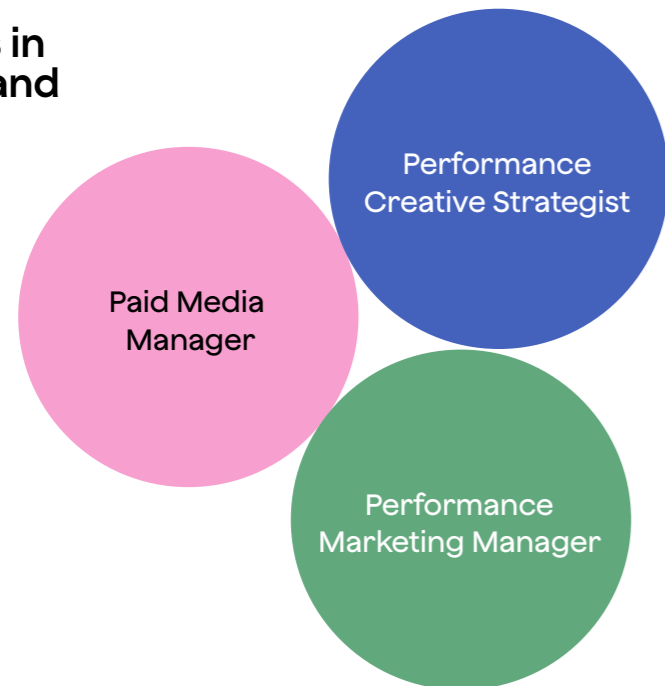
PERFORMANCE & DIGITAL MARKETING

One of the most active hiring markets across the board, with demand sustained across freelance and permanent. Paid Media Specialists continue to dominate freelance requests, particularly those who can operate across strategy and buying without a hard division between the two.

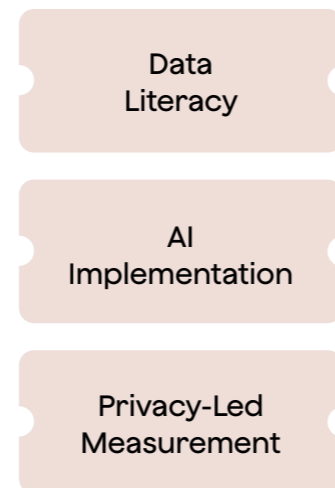
The in-housing of performance marketing continues to accelerate. Brands want direct control over channel management, optimisation and spend efficiency, and the talent requirements are becoming increasingly specific. Performance Creative Strategists - blending paid channel expertise with creative instinct - are one of the most consistent emerging briefs, particularly for in-house and D2C teams. AI implementation is a present requirement at senior level, not a future one. Privacy-led measurement is becoming a genuine differentiator as traditional attribution becomes less reliable.

The push from some clients for full-time office working is actively narrowing the talent pool and deterring strong candidates. This is a live issue that clients need to weigh carefully.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand



Market outlook

Demand will remain high, but increasingly specific. The generalist performance hire is under pressure since clients want candidates with demonstrable platform depth, creative range and the technical fluency to operate in an AI-augmented environment.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
SEO Executive	£42,000	£40-50k
SEO Manager	£62,000	£55-75k
Head of SEO	£87,000	£75-105k
PPC Executive	£46,000	£45-55k
PPC Manager	£67,000	£65-75k
Performance Marketing Manager	£70,000	£65-75k
Growth Marketing Manager	£70,000	£65-75k
Head of Performance	£90,000	£90k-130k
Head of Growth Marketing	£100,000	£85-120k
Creative Performance Strategist	£60,000	£60-80k
Performance Marketing Director	£130,000	£130k+
Growth Director	£120,000	£120k+
Chief Growth Officer	£160k+	£160k+

FREELANCE

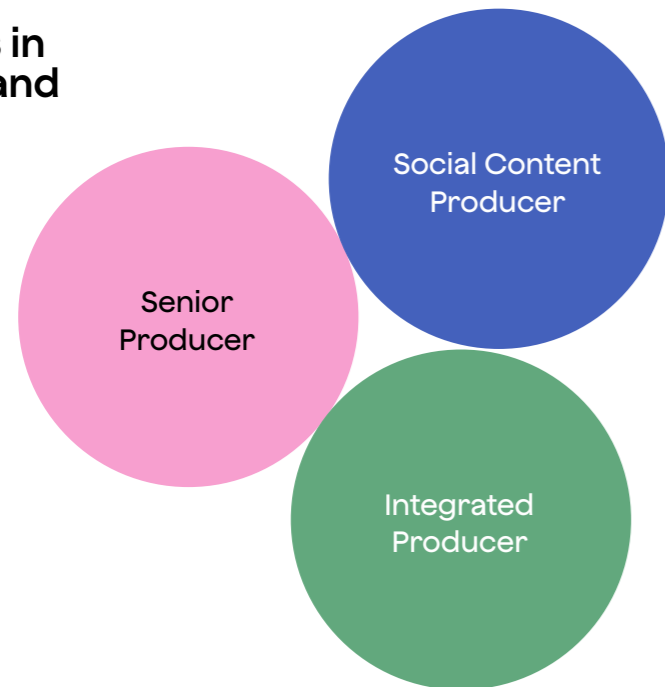
Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
SEO Executive	£260	£230-280
SEO Manager	£330	£310-360
Head of SEO	£410	£360-460
PPC Executive	£230	£210-260
PPC Manager	£310	£280-330
Paid Media / Biddable Account Director	£380	£360-410
Head of PPC Search / Biddable	£410	£380-430
Programmatic Manager	£330	£310-360
Performance Marketing Manager	£330	£310-360
Growth Marketing Manager	£330	£310-360
Head of Performance	£460+	£410-460+
Head of Growth Marketing	£460+	£410-460+
User Acquisition Specialist	£460+	£410-460+
Creative Performance Strategist	£425	£350-500pd

PRODUCTION & STUDIO

Demand has picked up, with integrated capability consistently preferred over niche specialism. Social Content Producers and Integrated Producers are the most active briefs; TV production and single-discipline roles continue to lose ground as production departments consolidate across formats.

AI is present in almost every production conversation, but the reality is nuanced. Candidates are largely self-taught, formal training is limited, and anticipated cost savings have not fully materialised. The genuine value is in candidates who can consult on AI's application - knowing where it adds value, where it doesn't, and maintaining the creative oversight that determines quality. Those with real AI production experience are commanding a premium. Permanent opportunities have grown compared to the previous year, a tentative signal of renewed confidence in long-term production capability.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand

- AI Production Literacy
- Integrated Delivery
- Creative Oversight

Market outlook

The integrated producer model will become standard. As AI tools mature and candidates develop genuine fluency, those who can combine production leadership with AI-enabled efficiency will define the next generation of this discipline.

Salary information:

INTEGRATED

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Junior Producer	£37,000	£30-45k
Producer	£56,000	£50-65k
Senior Producer	£77,000	£65-85k
Executive Producer	£92,000	£85-105k
Digital Producer	£72,000	£60k-80k
Production Assistant / Coordinator	£33,000	£30-40k
Production Manager	£46,000	£45-55k
Head of Production	£107,000	£95-125k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Junior Producer	£260	£230-280
Producer	£300	300-350
Senior Producer	£410	£360-460
Executive Producer	£460	£450-550
Production Assistant / Coordinator	£210	£190-230
Runner	£210	£190-230

STUDIO

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Artworker	£34,000	£30-40k
Senior Artworker	£42,000	£40-50k
Presentation Designer	£40,000	£40-50k
Illustrator	£46,000	£45-55k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Artworker	£300	£280-310
Senior Artworker	£350	£275-350
Retoucher	£340	£280-340
Senior Retoucher	£380	£350-400
3D Visualiser	£380	£350-420
Presentation Designer	£400	£350-420
Illustrator	£400	£350-450

SOCIAL, CONTENT & INFLUENCER

Short-form video continues to dominate platform behaviour and brief culture, shaping both what clients are hiring for and what they expect those hires to deliver. In-house content teams are growing as brands invest in building social capability directly, with increasing pressure on those teams to perform across organic engagement and paid performance simultaneously.

Demand is firmly for talent operating at the intersection of platform-native content and commercial performance. Paid Social Managers with strong creative instincts are consistently prioritised. AI is actively used to support paid content production, but organic social retains a strong preference for human voice and instinct. Additionally, influencer spend is also tied to measurable ROI and sector-specific audience knowledge, shifting the role closer to strategic channel ownership.

Community management is a genuine growth area; brands are investing in owned community as a long-term retention strategy, and dedicated Community Manager roles are appearing with increasing regularity.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand

- Meta & TikTok Optimisation
- Short-Form Video Creation
- Platform-Native Strategy

Market outlook

Platform diversification will become a more prominent consideration as brands grow more conscious of dependency risk. Candidates who can operate across multiple platforms, and adapt quickly as the landscape shifts, will be the most resilient and most in demand.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Content Manager	£50,000	£45-55k
Content Lead	£58,000	£55-65k
Content Strategist	£60,000	£55-65k
Content Writer	£50,000	£45-55k
Content Executive	£36,000	£40-45k
Content Creator	£51,000	£50-65k
Senior Content Creator	£65,000	£60-70K
Head of Content	£85,000	£65-85k
Influencer Executive	£36,000	£35-45k
Influencer Manager	£51,000	£50-60k
Influencer Director	£77,000	£65-85k
Influencer Strategist	£67,000	£65-75k
Social Media Editor	£45,000	£45-55k
Social Marketing Manager	£57,500	£50-65k
Social Account Manager	£42,000	£40-50k
Senior Social Account Manager	£51,000	£50-55k
Social Account Director	£60,000	£55-65k
Social Campaign Manager	£41,000	£40-50k
Social Creative	£51,000	£45-65k
Social Creative Manager	£62,000	£55-75k
Social Media Executive	£40,000	£35-45k
Senior Social Media Executive	£43,000	£40-50k
Social Media Manager	£55,000	£50-65k
Social Media Strategist	£61,000	£55-70k
Social Media Lead	£61,000	£60-70k
Paid Social Executive	£36,000	£35-45k
Paid Social Manager	£54,000	£50-60k
Paid Social Strategist	£61,000	£60-70k
Head of Social	£90,000	£75-95k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Content Manager	£310	£260-360
Content Lead	£360	£310-410
Content Strategist	£410	£360-460
Content Writer	£310	£260-360
Content Executive	£260	£210-310
Content Creator	£360	£310-460
Senior Content Creator	£450	£400-600
Head of Content	£450	£360-460
Influencer Executive	£260	£210-310
Influencer Manager	£360	£310-410
Influencer Director	£410	£360-460
Influencer Strategist	£460	£360-510
Social Content Strategist	£410	£360-460
Social Media Editor	£310	£260-360
Social Marketing Manager	£310	£280-360
Social Account Manager	£310	£260-330
Senior Social Account Manager	£350	£310-360
Social Account Director	£380	£360-460
Social Campaign Manager	£360	£310-380
Social Creative	£360	£310-410
Social Creative Manager	£410	£360-460
Social Media Executive	£260	£230-280
Senior Social Media Executive	£310	£280-330
Social Media Manager	£360	£310-410
Social Media Strategist	£450	£360-560
Social Media Lead	£410	£360-510
Paid Social Executive	£260	£210-310
Paid Social Manager	£310	£280-360
Paid Social Strategist	£360	£330-460
Head of Social	£460	£410-710

STRATEGY

Demand is steady and, at senior level, genuinely active. Strategy Directors continue to be hired across freelance and permanent - particularly within agencies - where strategic leadership is treated as a driver of creative and commercial output, not a support function.

Brand Strategists are in consistent freelance demand, and the pattern of repeat bookings reflects how this market works: clients want continuity of strategic thinking, not a fresh perspective each time. A strategist who understands a client’s brand, audience and competitive context becomes a recurring resource quickly. The most sought-after profiles are hybrid with pure brand strategy expertise valued, but candidates who can integrate that thinking with creative direction, digital understanding or performance logic are consistently preferred. Mid-level and junior strategy roles have contracted, and the market at those levels is more competitive. AI-assisted research and insight tools are beginning to influence how strategists work, and fluency in these tools is increasingly considered in senior hiring decisions.

Roles in demand



Skills in demand

- Brand & Cultural Intelligence
- Insight Synthesis
- Integrated Thinking

Market outlook

The hybrid strategist will become the norm. As AI tools take on more of the research and synthesis workload, the premium will shift toward candidates who bring genuine cultural intelligence, creative range and the ability to connect brand thinking to measurable outcomes.

Salary information:

PERMANENT

Job Title	Average Salary 2026	Salary Range 2026
Strategy/Planning Director	£97,000	£95-115k
Head of Strategy/Planning	£148,000	£135-175k
Junior Strategist/Planner	£42,000	£40-50k
Mid Strategist/Planner	£50,000	£45-60k
Senior Strategist/Planner	£77,000	£70-90k
Chief Strategy Officer	£184,000	£155-225k

FREELANCE

Job Title	Average Day Rate 2026	Day Rate Range 2026
Junior Strategist / Planner	£310	£310-410
Mid Strategist / Planner	£360	£360-460
Senior Strategist / Planner	£610	£410-810
Strategy / Planning Director	£760	£500 - 1000
Head of Strategy / Planning	£810	£750 - 1000 +

APPENDIX

1. The Burnout Report, Mental Health UK (2026)
2. CIPD Good Work Index 2025, The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2025)
3. Skills Mismatches in the UK's Creative Industries, Creative PEC (2025)
4. Future of Work - AI in the Creative Industries, Major Players (2025)
5. Future of Work - AI in the Creative Industries, Major Players (2025)
6. The GenAI Divide: State of AI in Business 2025, MIT Media Lab (2025)
7. UK Creative Industries Census, Major Players (2025)
8. Entry-level job postings fall to lowest level in five years, data finds, People Management (2025)
9. Nearly a million 16-24 year-olds not working or in education, BBC (2026)
10. Diversity Matters Even More, McKinsey & Company (2023)



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