

AMA resources

AMA Freelance Benchmarking
Survey 2020 — report





Freelancers have always been a vital cog in making the cultural industries thrive. They bring a rich vein of value to organisations that are often working beyond capacity, and a strategic eye that can cut through internal politics and baggage.

Covid-19 has turned our industry upside-down: closures, redundancies and even tighter budgets will all impact on future work. The future is unknown but the need for freelancers to up-skill, adapt and prove value is certain.

This survey shows that freelancers value the flexibility and freedom the role offers but that many lack the networked support, profile and business skills to help them thrive.

Since 2018 the AMA has been expanding its offer for the growing number of freelancers working in the arts, culture and heritage sector — from our Freelance Membership and Directory, to freelance specific rates for our events.

To help us produce resources on best practice and to develop support to help arts, culture and heritage freelancers in their roles we launched our first Freelance Benchmarking Survey in January 2020.

As the sector adapts to working in a Covid-19 landscape the findings of this survey will help the AMA pinpoint key ways to enhance our support for freelancers and develop a route map to a successful career.

Methodology

The data in this benchmark report was collected in January 2020. The sample of 126 survey responses was collected through an e-survey sent to all AMA freelance members and our wider networks of freelancers.

The survey included 32 questions divided into four sections:

- Life as a Freelancer
- Training and Personal Development
- Working with Organisations
- More about You

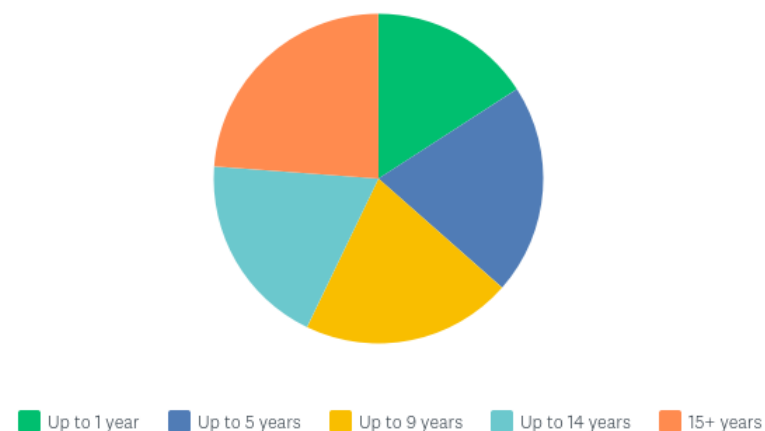
The aim of the survey was to help provide a bigger picture of freelance life within our sector, including rates of pay, training and personal development needs, and the working relationship between freelancers and client organisations.

Life as a Freelancer

This section was designed to give insight into the geographical spread, experience and range of freelancers working in the arts, cultural and heritage sector. The majority of those surveyed — 52% — work full-time with no other employed work.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full-time with no employed work	52.38%	66
Part-time with no employed work	19.84%	25
Part-time with employed work	20.63%	26
Part-time with studying	3.97%	5
Retired but freelancing with no employed work	1.59%	2
Other (please specify)	1.59%	2
TOTAL		126

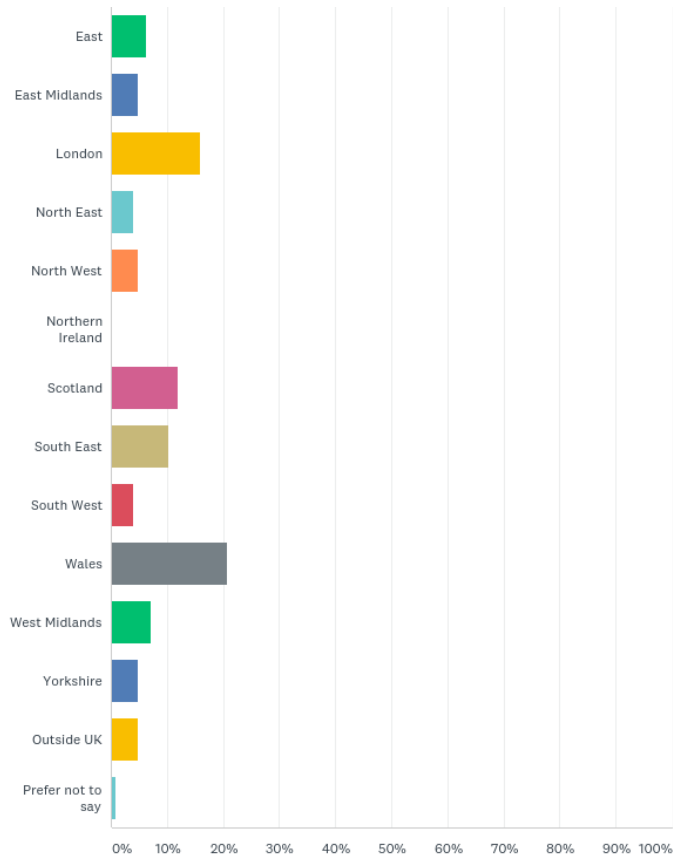
The amount of previous work experience in the arts, cultural and heritage sector before becoming a freelancer was evenly spread from one year through to 15+ years' experience.



Once the decision has been made to become a freelancer most — 73% — continue to work in this way and not start or resume a career as an employee.

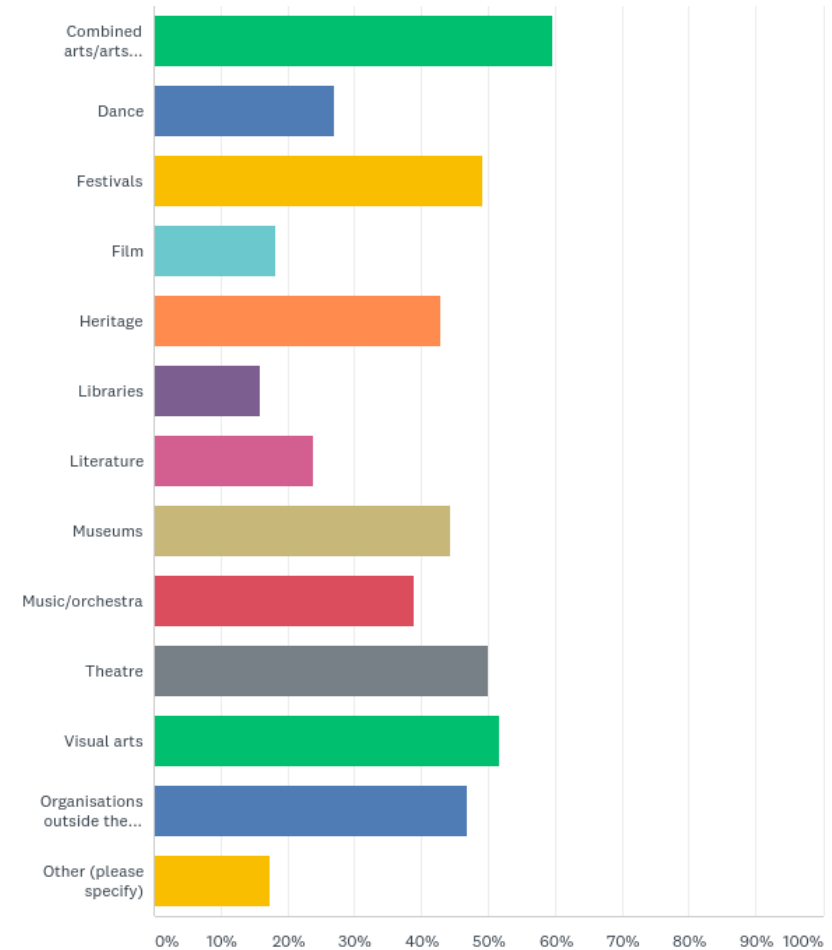
Location

In this sample, freelancers working in the arts and cultural sector are spread across the UK with 21% of those surveyed based in Wales compared to 16% based in London.



Organisation types and art forms

The freelancers surveyed work with a wide variety of organisations and art forms from orchestras, dance, theatre and the visual arts, through to art centres, festivals, museums, and heritage.



Significantly, almost 47% of the freelancers surveyed undertake work with organisations outside the arts and cultural sector. Under 'Other' respondents cited work with community-based organisations, as well as work within the education, health, voluntary and public sectors.

Areas of work

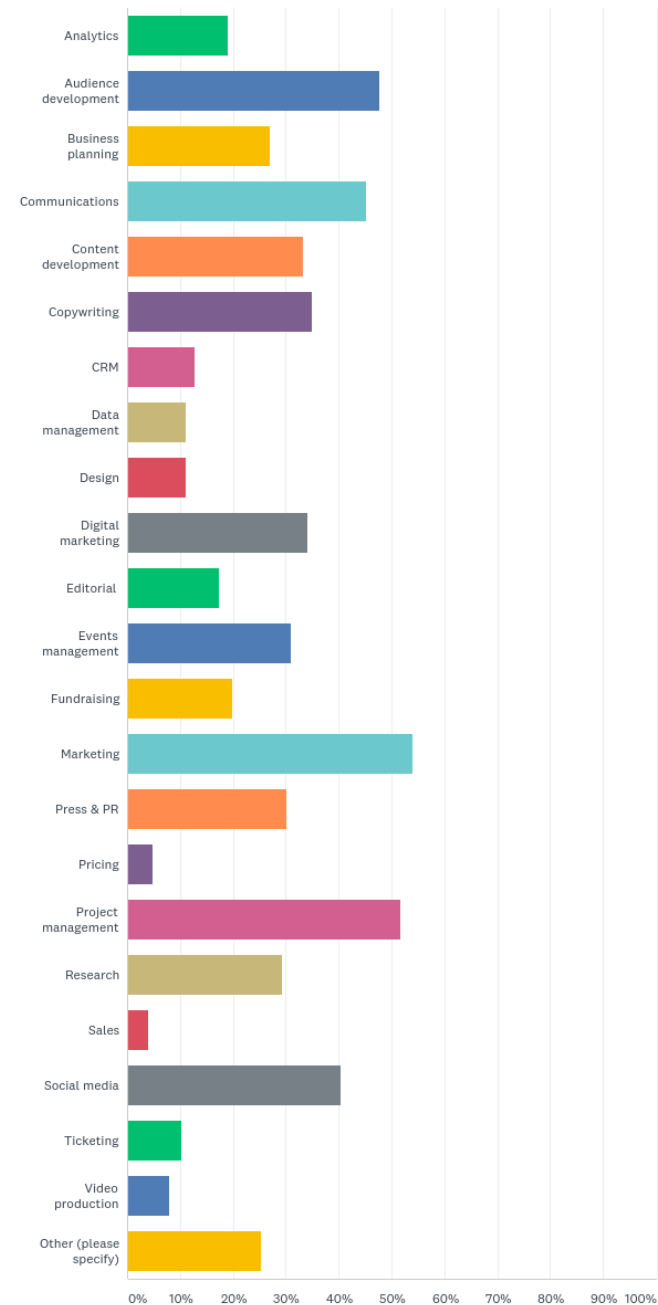
Marketing and communications rate highly in the main areas of work undertaken by those freelancers surveyed — marketing 54%, audience development 48% and communications 45%, with social media at 41% and digital marketing 34%. Project management at 52% was the second highest area of work after marketing.

The scope of work undertaken by respondents is broad and 'Other' areas of work cited included: artistic production, brand development and education, as well as training, coaching, facilitation and mentoring.

Future surveys will track any shifts in areas of work in the coming years, including any impact from Covid-19.

Which of the following organisation types (art forms) do you work with? Tick all that apply.

Answered: 126 Skipped: 0

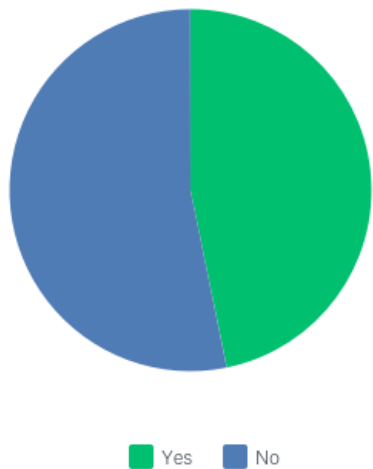


Training and Personal Development

The questions in this section were designed to assess the support freelancers currently receive and potential future training needs.

Most freelancers don't budget for their training and personal development. Although 53% of freelancers surveyed don't budget for their own training needs it is encouraging to see that 47% do.

Do you budget for your own training and personal development? Answered: 109 Skipped: 17



Training needs

Keeping up with the pace of change was identified by 80% of those who responded to the question as the main need for training; followed by 56% identifying the need for training on diversifying the service they offer.

What is the main reason for your training needs? Tick all that apply. Answered: 109 Skipped: 17

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
The pace of change — the need to keep up-to-date with latest thinking	80.73% 88
Qualification(s)	17.43% 19
To be able to justify charging higher rates	15.60% 17
Training to diversify the service(s) you offer	55.96% 61
Training specific to being a freelancer — e.g. responding to briefs	28.44% 31
Other (please specify)	14.68% 16
Total Respondents: 109	

'Other' training needs identified by respondents included networking and developing potential clients, continual professional development (CPD), and support with developing and expanding their own business offer. Specific training around digital and social media skills was cited both to improve their skillset for clients but also to aid the promotion of their own business.

Respondents were asked to select the different types of training that meet their personal development needs. Although self-guided research was identified by 83% of respondents to this question as the most popular type of ‘training’, the need for in-person support is clearly important. Conferences (60%), networking groups (59%), existing contacts (51%) and on location training courses (51%) suggests the importance of getting support and help from the wider network of people working in the sector.

Freelancers predominately work alone so the need to network and interact with others within the sector is important — to feel part of and gain support from the wider arts, culture and heritage community.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Self-guided internet research / free resources	82.57%	90
Networking groups	58.72%	64
Existing contacts	51.38%	56
Training courses (online)	46.79%	51
Training courses (on location)	50.46%	55
Conferences	59.63%	65
Other (please specify)	4.59%	5
Total Respondents: 109		

We asked an open question about the areas in which those surveyed felt they most needed training and support. Key areas of audience development such as latest thinking and trends within the sector, digital and social media marketing, diversity, data management, GDPR, crisis communications and CRM, were all identified. This reflects the same training needs as the wider sector and those working in arts, culture and heritage organisations.

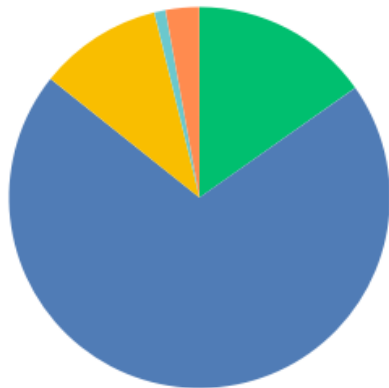
Many of the respondents also identified training needs specific to being a freelancer including:

- Contracts, rates and tenders
- Pitching and responding to briefs
- Negotiating (higher) fees
- Finding clients and developing new business
- Managing client expectations
- Self-marketing / building own ‘freelance’ brand
- Becoming a freelancer
 - finance, business and legal issues
- Presentation skills

Working with Organisations

In this section we wanted to find out more about the working relationships between freelancers and client organisations. The average number of clients that freelancers from this survey handle at any one time is four. Overall the feedback from this survey revealed a positive relationship between freelancer and client.

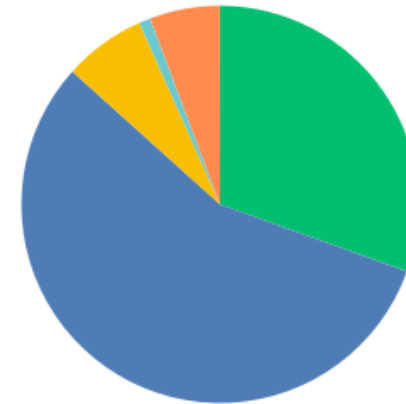
Do you feel your clients have reasonable expectations of you? Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



■ Yes ■ Mostly yes ■ Mostly no ■ No ■ Not sure

Almost 86% of respondents to this question felt (Yes and Mostly Yes) that clients 'mostly' have reasonable expectations of them. Only 11% said Mostly No or No.

Do you feel that clients recognise and value the work you do for them? Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



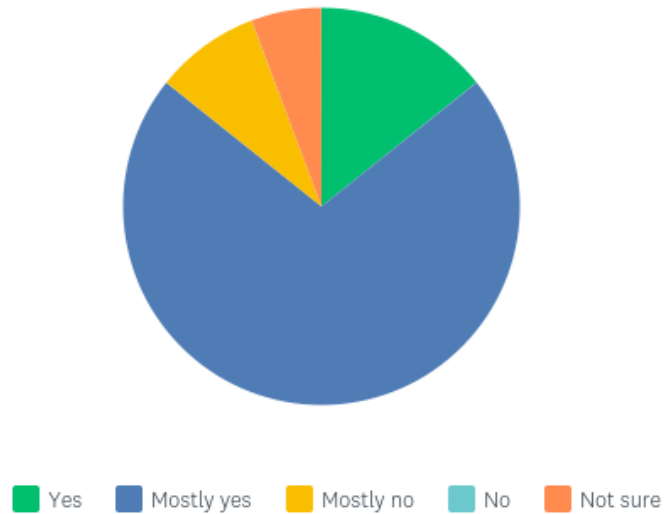
■ Yes ■ Mostly yes ■ Mostly no ■ No ■ Not sure

The same percentage of respondents agreed (Yes and Mostly Yes) that clients recognise and value the work that they do for them. However, the proportion of respondents who said 'Yes' rather than 'Mostly Yes' is higher than the previous question.

Do you agree that clients take on board / act on your recommendations / implementing your work?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 21

Reassuringly, almost 89% of respondents agree or mostly agree that clients act or implement the recommendations that they make.

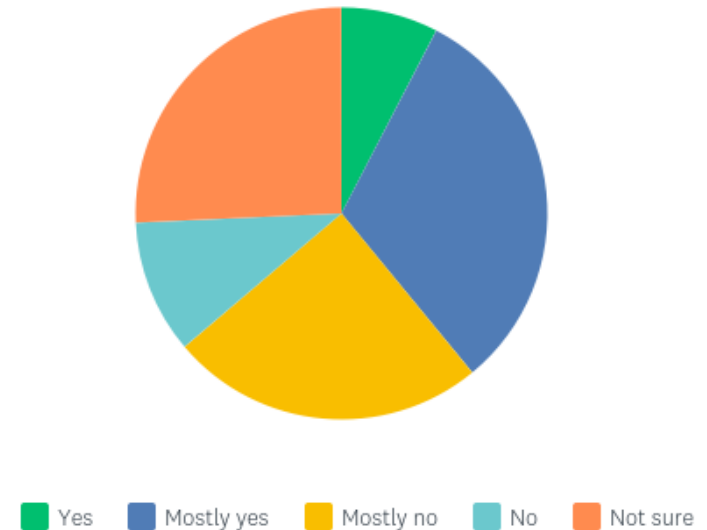


Following on from this question, we asked respondents to state what obstacles they think prevent clients from taking on board or acting on or implementing their recommendations. Approximately 40% of respondents to this question cited resource and budget limitations as being the main obstacle, with approximately 32% citing internal politics, lack

of internal buy-in and organisational structures. Also cited was the lack of commitment to the process of change, lack of engagement by the CEO and Board with strategic activity and a resistance to taking risks.

Do you think what organisations expect of you is reasonable when it comes to the tender process (i.e. are proportional to the work opportunity)?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



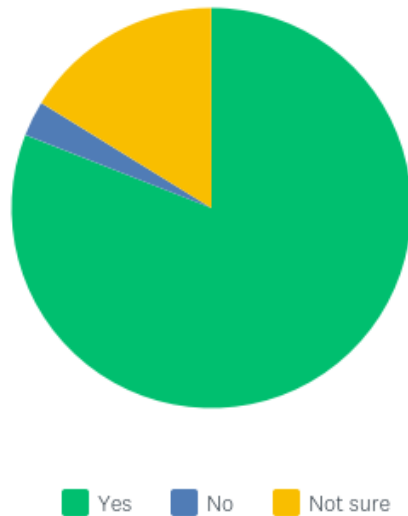
This question had a mixed response with an almost even split between Yes or Mostly Yes, No or Mostly No, and Not sure.

More About You

We wanted to learn more about freelancers in terms of their working conditions, why they became a freelancer and the challenges they face working freelance.

Do you plan on continuing to work as a freelancer?

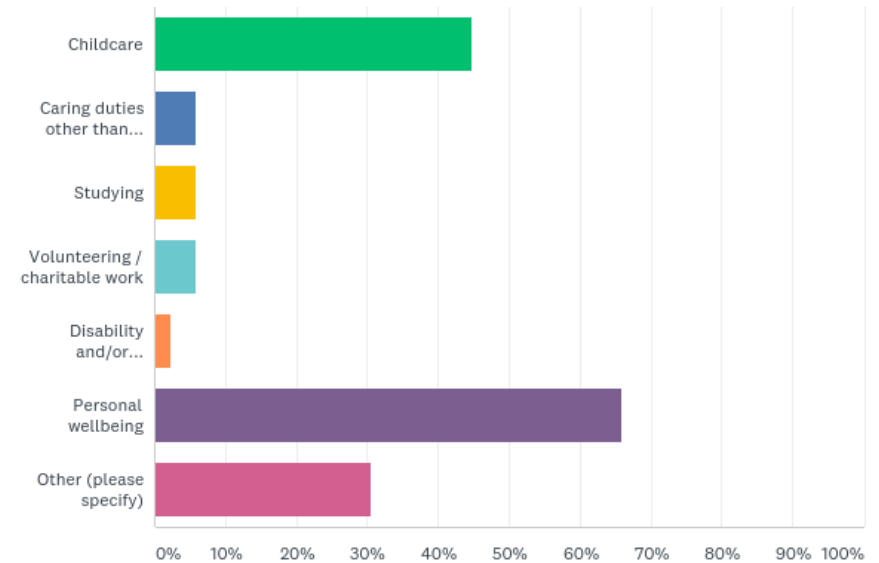
Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



81% of respondents plan to continue working as a freelancer with only 3% saying they don't and 16% not sure.

Did any of the following factors contribute to your decision to become a freelancer? Tick all that apply.

Answered: 85 Skipped: 41



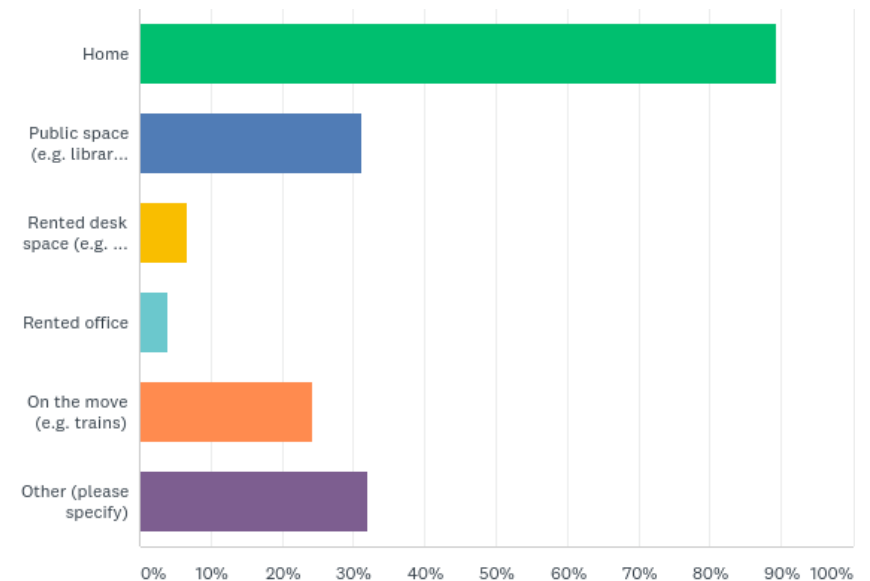
Not surprisingly childcare is a key factor for the decision to become a freelancer. However, it is interesting that 66% of respondents to this question cite 'Personal Wellbeing' as a deciding factor.

30% of respondents to this question identified other key factors for becoming a freelancer, these included:

- Lack of job opportunities within the sector particularly after relocating or when located in areas where jobs in the arts, culture and heritage sector are scarce.
- Opportunity to work from home and avoid or reduce time commuting.
- Creating own work opportunities following redundancy.
- Flexibility of working for oneself and not an organisation — being one's own boss.
- Creating a better life / work balance.
- A route into employment.
- The ability to make more of an impact across more than one organisation.

Where do you usually work? Tick all that apply.

Answered: 103 Skipped: 23



Almost 90% of respondents usually work from home with 30% also working in a public space such as a library or café; and 33% working at client offices or venue spaces.

Do you experience any difficulties arising from your choice of work location?

Answered: 102 Skipped: 24

43% of respondents to this question did experience difficulties arising from their choice of work location. Many cited practical difficulties such as WiFi and internet connection problems, and the cost of travelling distances to work with clients. Some respondents mentioned that being located outside London can be viewed as a disadvantage to potential clients.

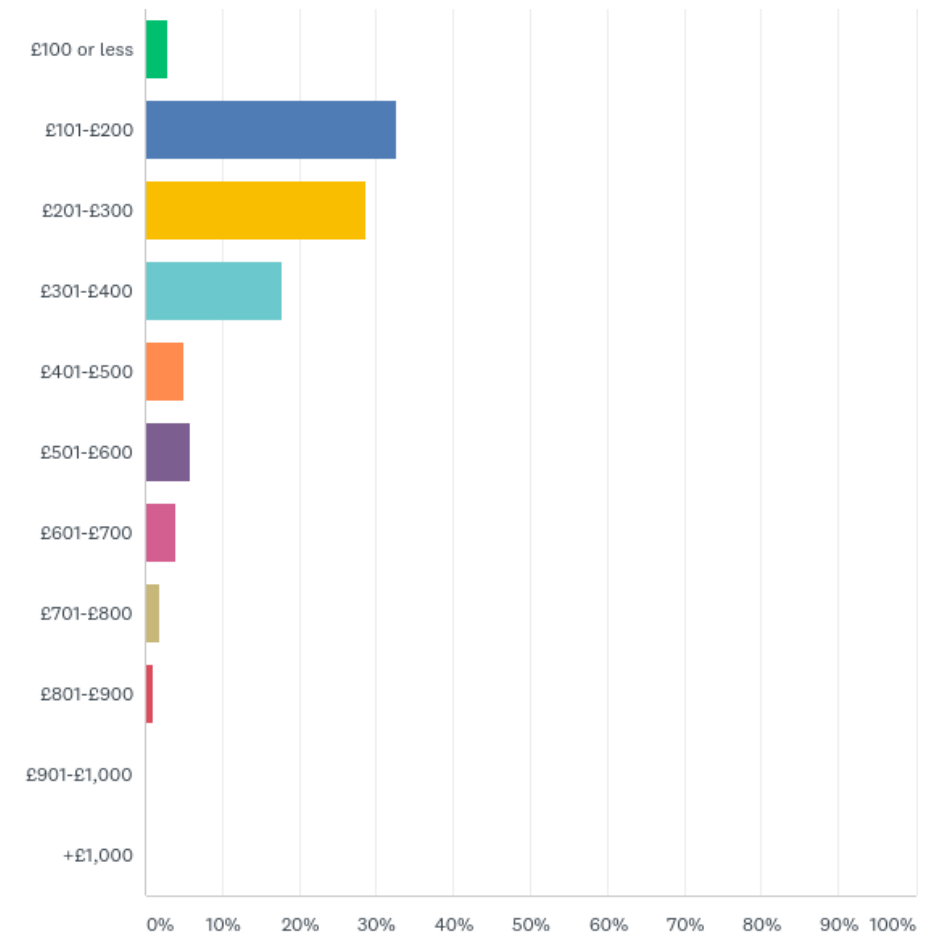
The majority cited loneliness, isolation and the lack of social interaction as a difficulty, as well as separating home and work life and the challenges of distractions and motivations when working from home. Childcare was also a key difficulty.

Rates of pay

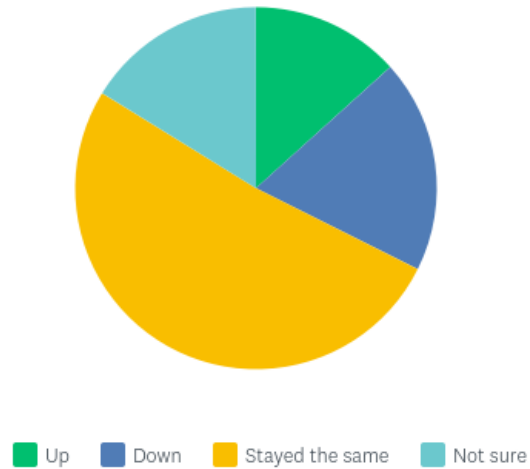
The majority of respondents charge between an average of £100 and £300 per day for the work they undertake, with 18% percent charging £301-£400.

What is the average day rate you charge for the main type of work you undertake?

Answered: 101 Skipped: 25

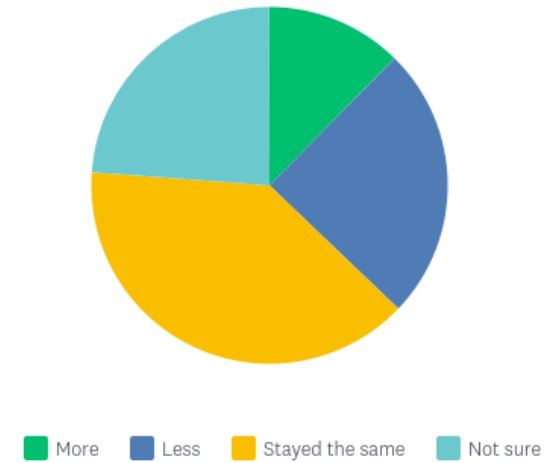


Do you feel that rates (of pay) have gone up, down or remained the same for you this year compared to last year? Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



The majority of respondents — 51% — feel that the rates of pay for this year (2019) have remained the same compared to the previous year, while 19% feel the rates of pay have gone down. Only 13% feel that the rates of pay have gone up and 16% were not sure.

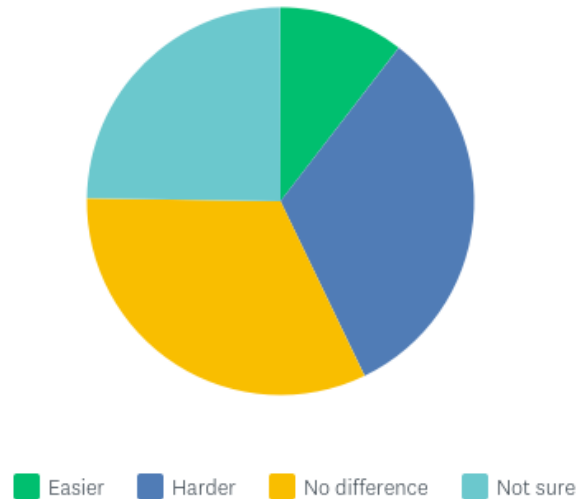
Do you feel there is more, less or about the same volume of work available this year than last year? Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



Although the majority (39%) of respondents felt that the volume of work in 2019 was the same as the previous year, 25% felt that there was less work available. Only 12% felt there was more work available and 24% weren't sure.

Do you feel it is easier, harder or no difference in terms of securing work this year than last year?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 21



There was a mixed response to this question — 32% of respondents felt there was no difference in terms of securing work this year while the same percentage, 32%, felt that it was harder. Only 11% thought it was easier to secure work with 25% not sure.

Support for Freelancers

We know freelancing places different demands on you than working as an employee, so we offer a freelancer member package including access to our Freelancer Directory and curated support guides and advice on our knowledge hub.

— Freelancer Membership

— a-m-a.co.uk/freelance-membership/

— Freelancer Directory

— a-m-a.co.uk/freelance-directory/

— CultureHive resources

— culturehive.co.uk

