



THE CHARTERED BODY FOR THE PROJECT PROFESSION

SALARY AND MARKET TRENDS SURVEY

2021

APM RESEARCH REPORT



In partnership with

YouGov[®]

CONTENTS



Quick links: get to the information you want faster by clicking on the section headings

Foreword	3
About the survey	4
SALARY	5
Average base salary of project professionals	6
Salary by role	7
Salary by region	8
Salary by age	9
Salary by gender	10
Salary by sector	11
Impact of APM membership	12
WORKING LIFE AND JOB SATISFACTION	14
Employment status	15
Job satisfaction	17
Pay and benefits package	18
Supply of jobs	19
Organisational growth	21
Change of employer	22
Job hunting criteria	23
Encouraging talent into the profession	24
Economic confidence	25
The future of the profession	26
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	28
Make-up of the profession by ethnicity	29
Impact of ethnicity on career development	30
Project professionals with a disability	31
How diverse and inclusive is the profession?	32
Social mobility	33
Ways to make the profession more diverse and inclusive	34
FUTURE TRENDS	36
Key concerns for the future	37
Future skills	38
Climate change and net zero/decarbonisation strategy	39
Tackling climate change	40
The project profession's impact on society	41
RESPONDENTS	43
Sector	44
Organisation size	45
Project size	46
Experience	47
Education	48

FOREWORD

Welcome to the 2021 Association for Project Management (APM) Salary and Market Trends Survey research report.

This survey has grown to be essential, not only for benchmarking the profession's salary changes, confidence levels and satisfaction with respondents' work, but also for testing what forces will shape the project management landscape in the coming years.

Last year's findings launched just as the full impact of coronavirus began to hit. This survey probed respondents' perceptions of the impact the pandemic has had on our profession, as well as other vital topics from diversity and inclusion to climate change. It has uncovered some fascinating findings. The pandemic has predictably been felt across the profession, but possibly not on the scale we might have expected. For example, there has been a marked drop in the optimism of project professionals towards their own economic prospects over the next 12 months – 55 per cent rated it as excellent or good, down from 65 per cent last year. There has also been a significant drop in confidence for the economic prospects of their organisations and the economy as a whole, with the majority identifying the coronavirus pandemic as the main contributor.

However, we do have a resilient profession which is able, in the main, to adapt to circumstances and hold a positive outlook about the future – albeit with obvious sectoral differences. In our key tracker question on

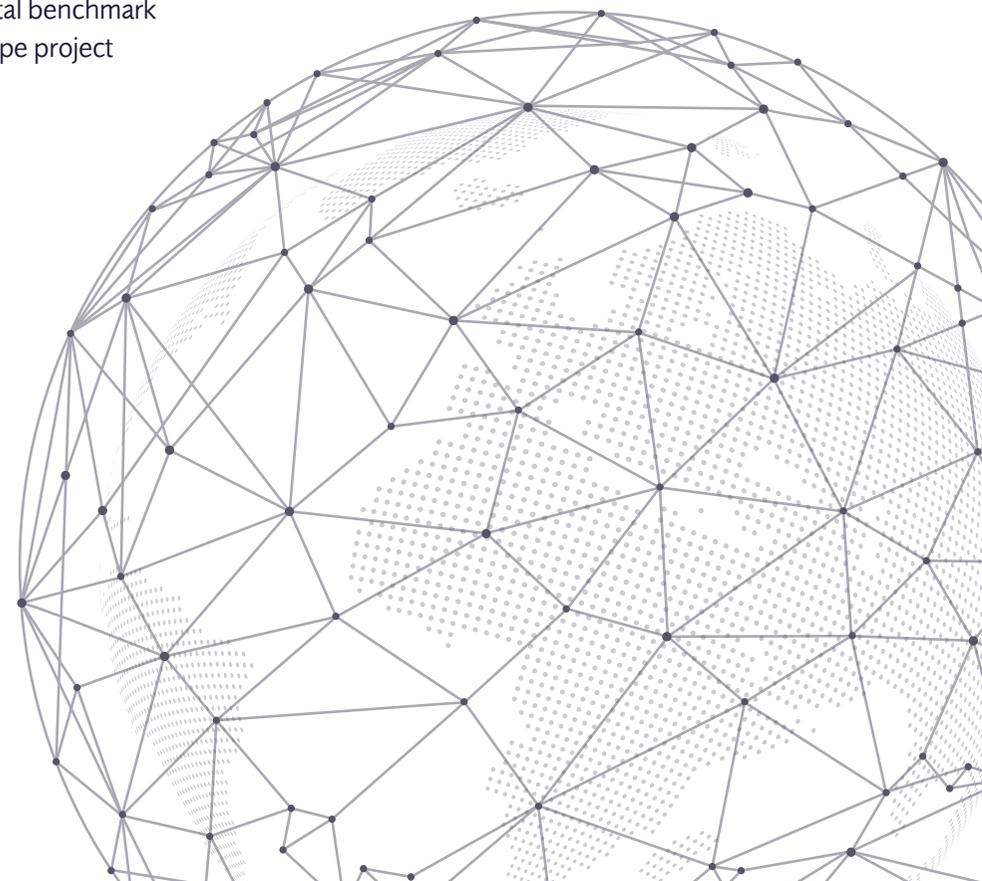
whether our profession will be enhanced over the next five years, the proportion of people thinking it will prosper remains high, at 66 per cent. Even though this is down three percentage points from last year, it is still marginally higher than the 2019 figure.

As with last year's report, we welcome your thoughts on the findings. Once you have explored the results please join the discussion across our LinkedIn and Twitter channels to have your say using #APMsalarysurvey. We believe this survey once again offers a vital benchmark into the attitudes and trends that will shape project management for years to come.

Thanks again to all who took part.

D. J. Lewis

Debbie Lewis
Chair, APM



In partnership with



ABOUT THE SURVEY

Our seventh annual *Salary and Market Trends Survey* took place between 2 and 30 November 2020 against a backdrop that few could have predicted 12 months before. Working once again with YouGov, we designed the survey to capture not only the facts and figures shaping the project profession – from salary levels and age profile to project size and location – but also to create a snapshot of a profession dealing with the impact of a global pandemic.

Thanks to the 2,626 individuals who took part, we are able to better understand how the longer-term trends of a younger, more diverse profession were combining with the short-term shock brought about by coronavirus. We included a series of questions specifically designed to gauge the impact of the pandemic, not only from a financial viewpoint, but also on individuals' and organisations' optimism and belief in their own strategies.

The result, we feel, is a useful picture of a profession holding steady in the face of some serious adversity. We learnt that for most the impact has not been as bad as some may have feared and that the profession as a whole remains optimistic about its ability to navigate a difficult time. And while expectations for growth may have been tempered, a strong sense of resilience and steadfastness shines through the responses.

Please note, whole numbers are used for the report, so some figures may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding. The median has been used as the average for salaries, unless stated.



ABOUT APM

In our changing world, project professionals are at the forefront of delivering change and the environment for delivery is becoming ever more complex. The project profession needs to be better understood, to have consistent standards and to set the highest bar.

We're Association for Project Management – APM. We're the only chartered membership organisation representing the project profession in the world, building the profile and respect the profession warrants and setting the most exacting standards.

We're a registered charity, delivering education and developing qualifications, conducting research and providing resources. We run events, share best practice and give the project management community – individuals and businesses – the opportunity to connect and debate.

We know that better project delivery is about achieving your desired outcome. We believe it's about more than process alone. When doing so will make a difference, we challenge the status quo and champion the new. So, in a complex and shifting world, we help the project profession deliver better.

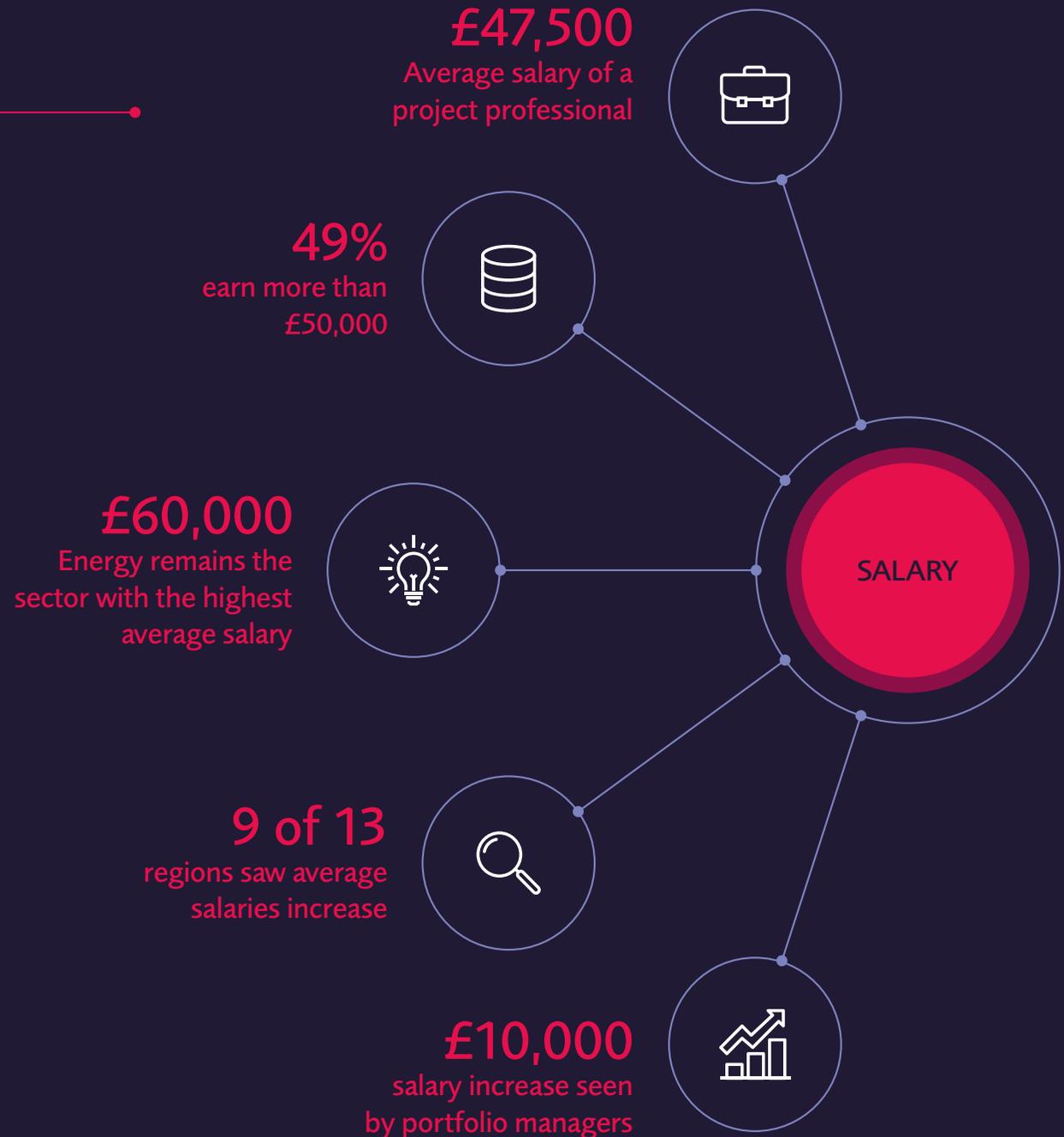
SALARY

In these challenging times, project professionals have responded in precisely the way we would expect: with hard work, resilience and optimism. Their commitment to using a varied skillset to deliver time-critical projects under tremendous stress is reflected in the rewarding salaries that remain on offer.

With the twin challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit throwing many plans and projects into doubt, it has been a difficult year. But it's a testament to the enduring strength and broad appeal of project work that the profession still offers a competitive salary across a range of working arrangements, sectors and levels of seniority.

Certainly, taking into account the challenges we've all faced, the salary data illustrates quite why project management remains an attractive career. Starting salaries for those entering the profession remain strong, while those in a variety of sectors can point to increased pay levels even in a year as tough as this one. Ultimately the picture is one of a profession that can maintain healthy salary levels across the board despite the disruption.

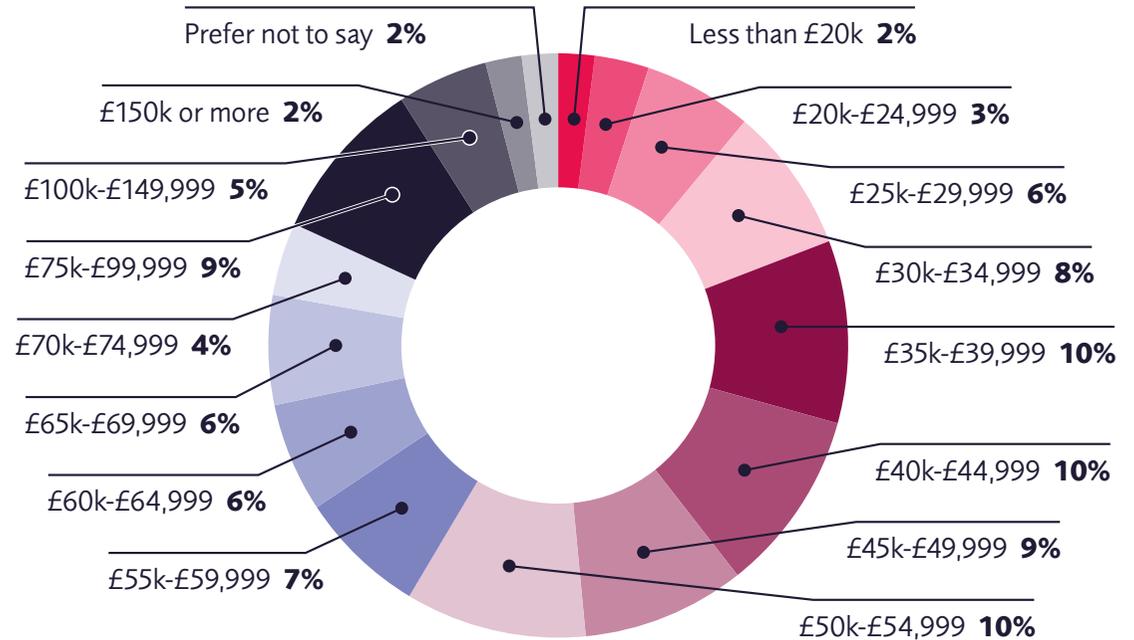
It's also encouraging to see that the gender pay gap has shrunk back to how it was in 2019. We are committed to understanding the drivers behind that, and while progress is happening in some areas, the continued existence of a gap is also a reminder that everyone involved in project delivery still has work to do.



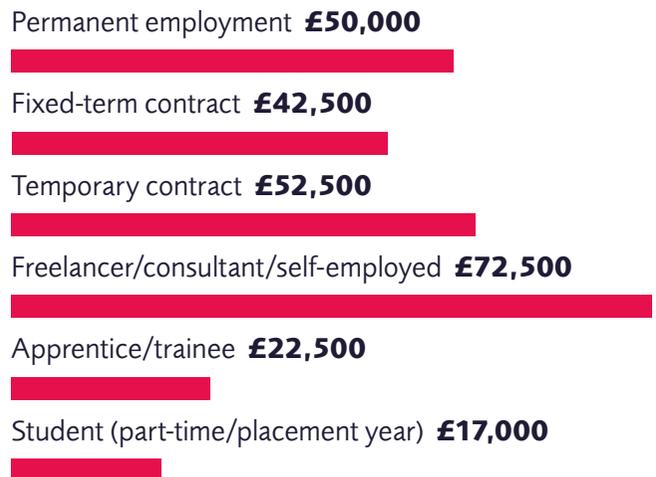
Average base salary of project professionals

The average salary for a project professional has not changed since 2017, and salaries remain highest in London and outside the UK. For the fourth year in a row the average salary remains at £47,500, a remarkable stat considering the double impact of a global pandemic and Brexit. And while it's still early days, the stability of salaries in the profession does suggest it remains an attractive career for those either starting out or looking to switch.

That's demonstrated by the fact that almost half (49 per cent) of professionals now earn more than £50,000, up from 42 per cent in 2020. Further up the scale, 20 per cent now earn more than £70,000, up from 16 per cent last year. The impact of different work arrangements is also visible in the salary data, with freelancers, consultants and the self-employed commanding an average salary of £72,500, with 61 per cent of that cohort earning more than £50,000.



Average salary by working arrangement



Salary by role

Even during a challenging 12 months, we have seen average salaries go up and down for certain roles. The average salary for portfolio managers has increased from £57,500 to £67,500. Meanwhile, programme managers are clearly seeing their value increase, with average salary levels rising from £57,500 to £62,500 and project planners seeing an uplift of £10,000 in their average salaries, reaching £47,500.

Consultants continue to enjoy an average salary of £57,500, while heads of projects/programmes (£72,500), assistant project managers (£32,500), senior project managers (£57,500) and project engineers (£42,500) saw no change in their salary levels at all.

Academic or trainer **£40,000**

Assistant project manager **£32,500**

Business or systems analyst **£40,000**

Change manager **£47,500**

Company director or board member **£125,000**

Consultant **£57,500**

Contracts manager **£52,500**

Head of projects/programmes **£72,500**

Large projects manager **£82,500**

PMO administrator **£30,000**

PMO director **£82,500**

PMO manager **£55,000**

PMO officer **£32,500**

Portfolio manager **£67,500**

Programme director **£82,500**

Programme manager **£62,500**

Programme office support **£32,500**

Programme planner **£52,500**

Project administrator **£27,500**

Project controls manager **£57,500**

Project coordinator **£27,500**

Project delivery manager **£52,500**

Project director **£82,500**

Project engineer **£42,500**

Project lead **£42,500**

Project manager **£42,500**

Project office support **£27,500**

Project planner **£47,500**

Senior project manager **£57,500**

Student (full/part-time) **£19,750**

Other **£47,500**

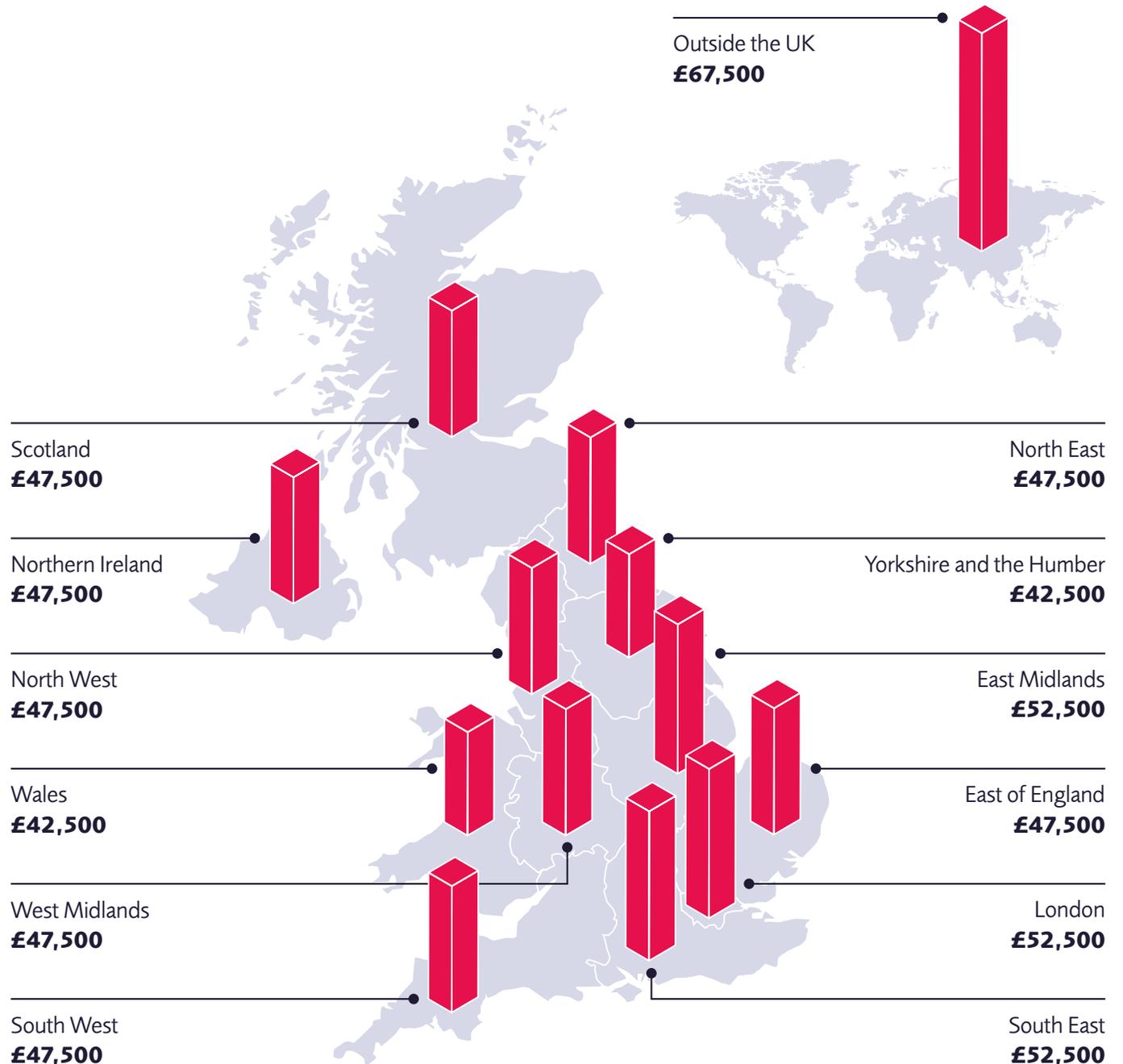
Salary by region

With a few exceptions, regional salary levels increased across the board, with a number recording significant jumps. From the East Midlands and the East of England to the North East and Wales, average salaries all increased by at least £5,000 per year, while Northern Ireland¹ and the West Midlands increased by £2,500.

Meanwhile, salaries in London remained unchanged, a trend mirrored in Scotland, Yorkshire and the North West. There were some other notable changes in the higher earning brackets: while the overall figures showed that 20 per cent of project professionals now earn more than £70,000, the East Midlands, the North East and the South West all saw increases in their proportion of higher earners.

In fact, the general increase in salary levels across much of the UK may go some way towards explaining why the gap between London and the regions has narrowed, with the average salary in the capital holding steady at £52,500.

For those working outside the UK, salaries continue to grow strongly. Professionals working overseas saw their average salaries jump from £57,500 to £67,500, with more than four in ten (43 per cent) now earning salaries of more than £70,000.



¹ Based on a sample of 20 respondents.

Salary by age

Despite the widespread disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, salaries for those in the early stages of their career have remained strong, with the average salary in the 25-to-34-year-old bracket rising from £37,500 to £42,500. For those in the younger age group, 18-to-24-years-old, the average salary remains £27,500.

This underpins the notion of the project profession's attractiveness to younger graduates compared with other sectors. While there is no definitive figure for the average starting salary for graduates in the UK, most estimates put the mean between £25,000 and £30,000, which suggests that a career in project management remains a rewarding and attractive one.

Looking at those further into their careers, there has been no change to average salary levels, which perhaps reflects the reluctance of many professionals to change jobs during a time of such significant uncertainty.



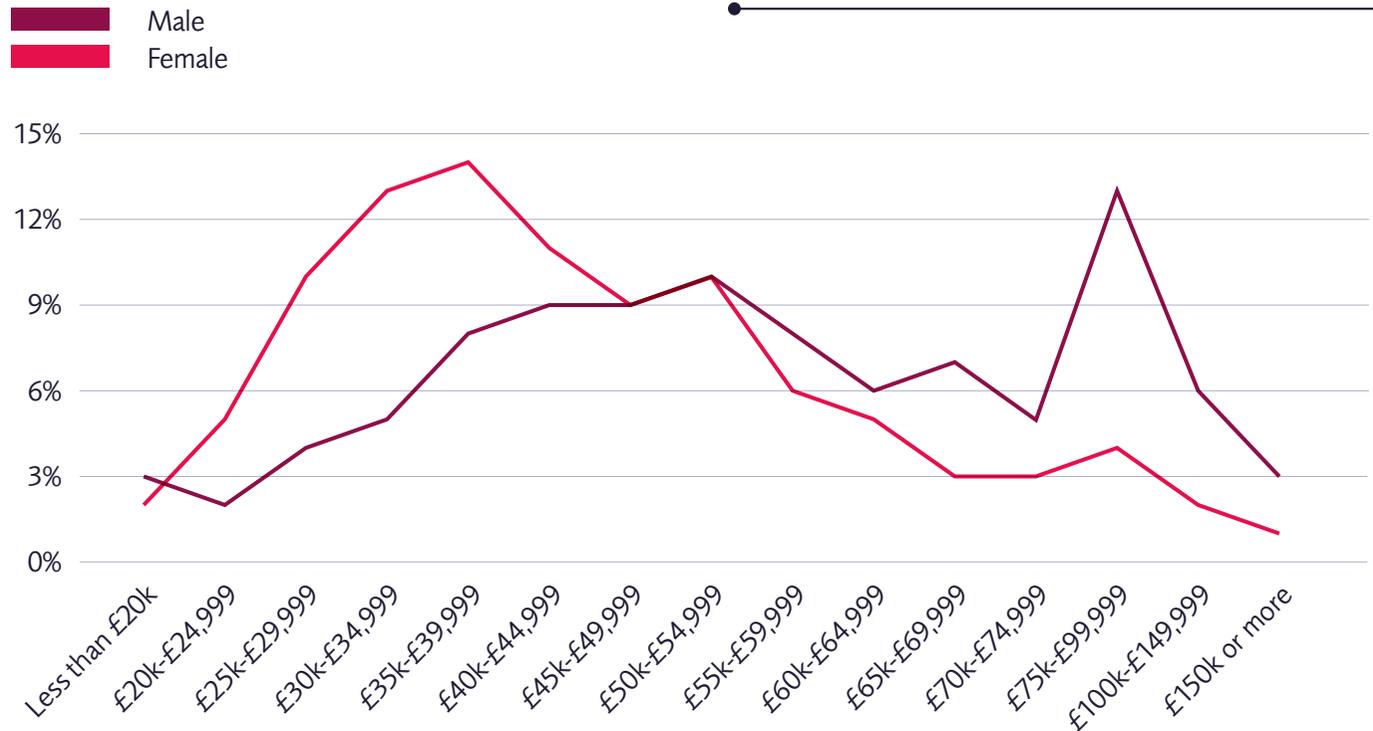
Salary by gender

A look at the salary figures for men and women reveals that the gender pay gap has returned to the 2019 level of 24 per cent. This year the average salary for men remains unchanged at £52,500, while the average salary for women has bounced back up to £42,500.

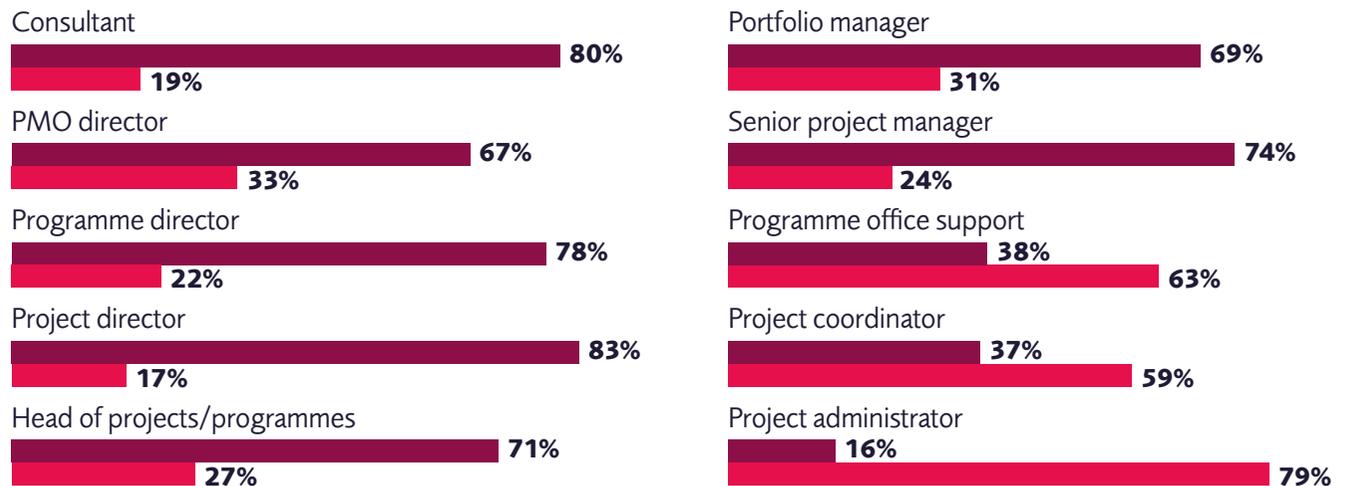
Understanding the structural issues behind the gender pay gap is not easy, and it defies simple solutions. However, the more data we have the more likely we are to improve the profession's performance in this important metric.

There has been some positive change, however: women make up a growing proportion of those earning between £50,000 and £69,999 – up from 20 per cent last year to 24 per cent this year.

But women are still over-represented in roles and arrangements where lower salaries are the norm: they account for four out of five project administrators (79 per cent), and represent 57 per cent of part-time workers. By contrast, only 22 per cent of consultants, who enjoy higher average salaries, are women.



Gender split in selected job roles



Salary by sector

Most sectors continue to offer attractive salaries to project professionals. In keeping with last year's findings, energy remains the sector with the highest average salary, increasing from a profession-leading £52,500 to £60,000, with 64 per cent of those working in the sector now earning more than £50,000, up from 51 per cent the previous year.

Other sectors that have seen a significant increase in the average salary offered include both financial services and consultancy (both up from £47,500 to £57,500), while salaries in business and professional services have also increased, along with local government, telecoms and the health sector.

Aerospace matched the energy sector for high earners, with 64 per cent earning more than £50,000, while financial services has the third highest proportion, with 62 per cent.

Aerospace **£52,500**



Agriculture, forestry and fishing **£35,000**



Arts/entertainment and heritage **£42,500**



Business and professional services **£52,500**



Central government **£47,500**



Construction and the built environment **£52,500**



Consultancy **£57,500**



Defence **£47,500**



Education (incl. higher education institutions) **£42,500**



Energy and utilities **£60,000**



Financial services **£57,500**



Health **£47,500**



Hospitality **£47,500**



IT **£47,500**



Legal **£42,500**



Life sciences **£47,500**



Local government **£42,500**



Manufacturing **£52,500**



Retail and wholesale **£52,500**



Space industry **£57,500**



Telecoms **£52,500**



Transport and logistics **£47,500**



Voluntary sector **£42,500**



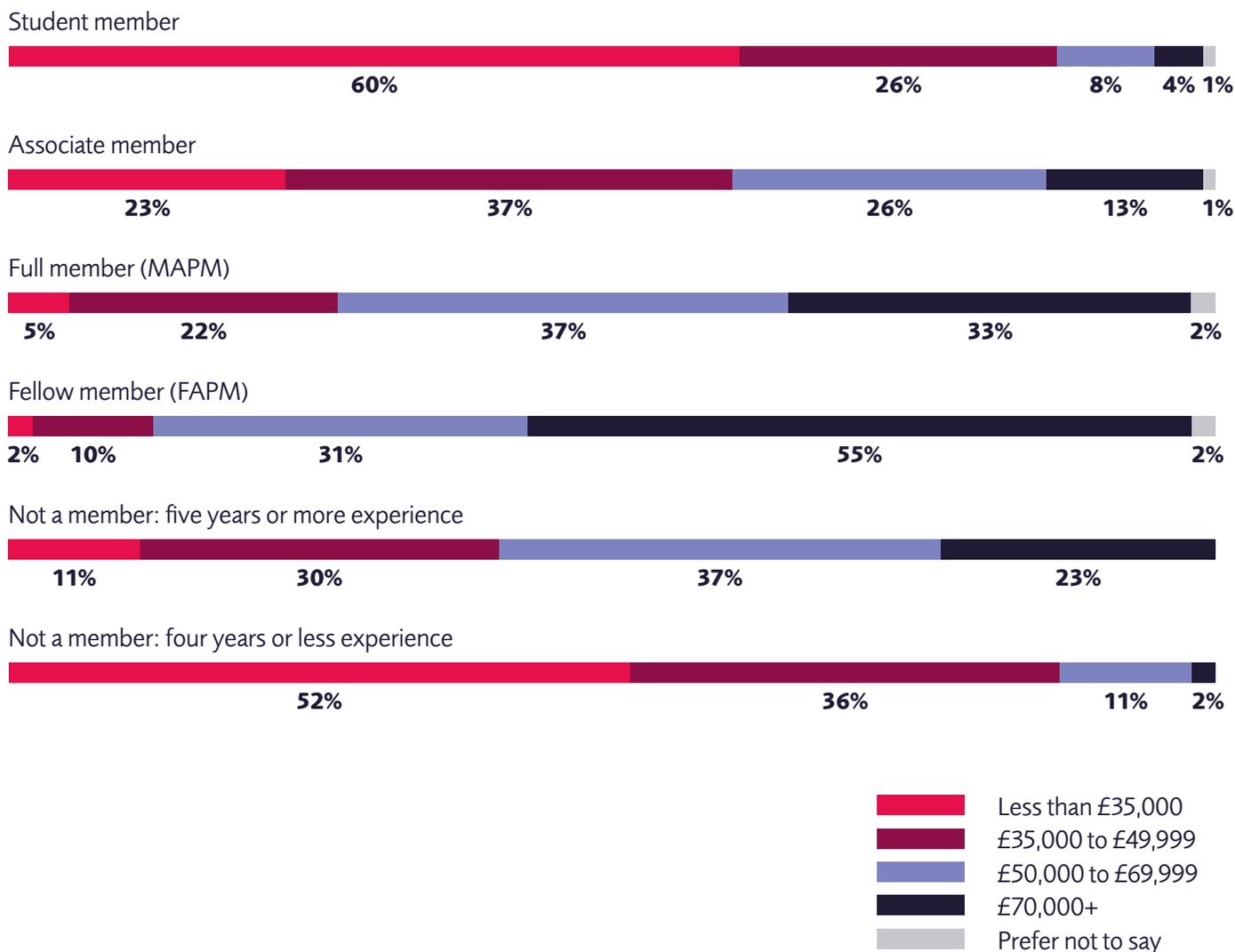
Other **£52,500**



Impact of APM membership

Being one of our members clearly has its benefits. The research shows that the average salary for **APM members** has increased from £47,500 last year to above the profession's average of £52,500, while those without membership earn £47,500. Meanwhile, **Full members (MAPM)** earn £62,500, whereas non-members with five years' experience earn £52,500.

It is also worth noting that 70 per cent of Full members earn more than £50,000, while just 60 per cent of non-members with a similar level of experience earn more than £50,000.



IN SUMMARY: A year of resilience and growth

Viewed through the prism of salary data, it's fair to say the project profession has weathered the storm of the past 12 months well. Salaries have increased across many regions and sectors, and where they haven't increased we have at least seen them holding steady.

With almost half of all professionals now earning £50,000 or more, the rewards of a career in project management are now more obvious than ever. And from an APM perspective, we're delighted to see the value of membership validated by the salary data. While we feel there is far more to a rewarding career than simply monetary gain, seeing our members well compensated for their hard work and professionalism is gratifying.

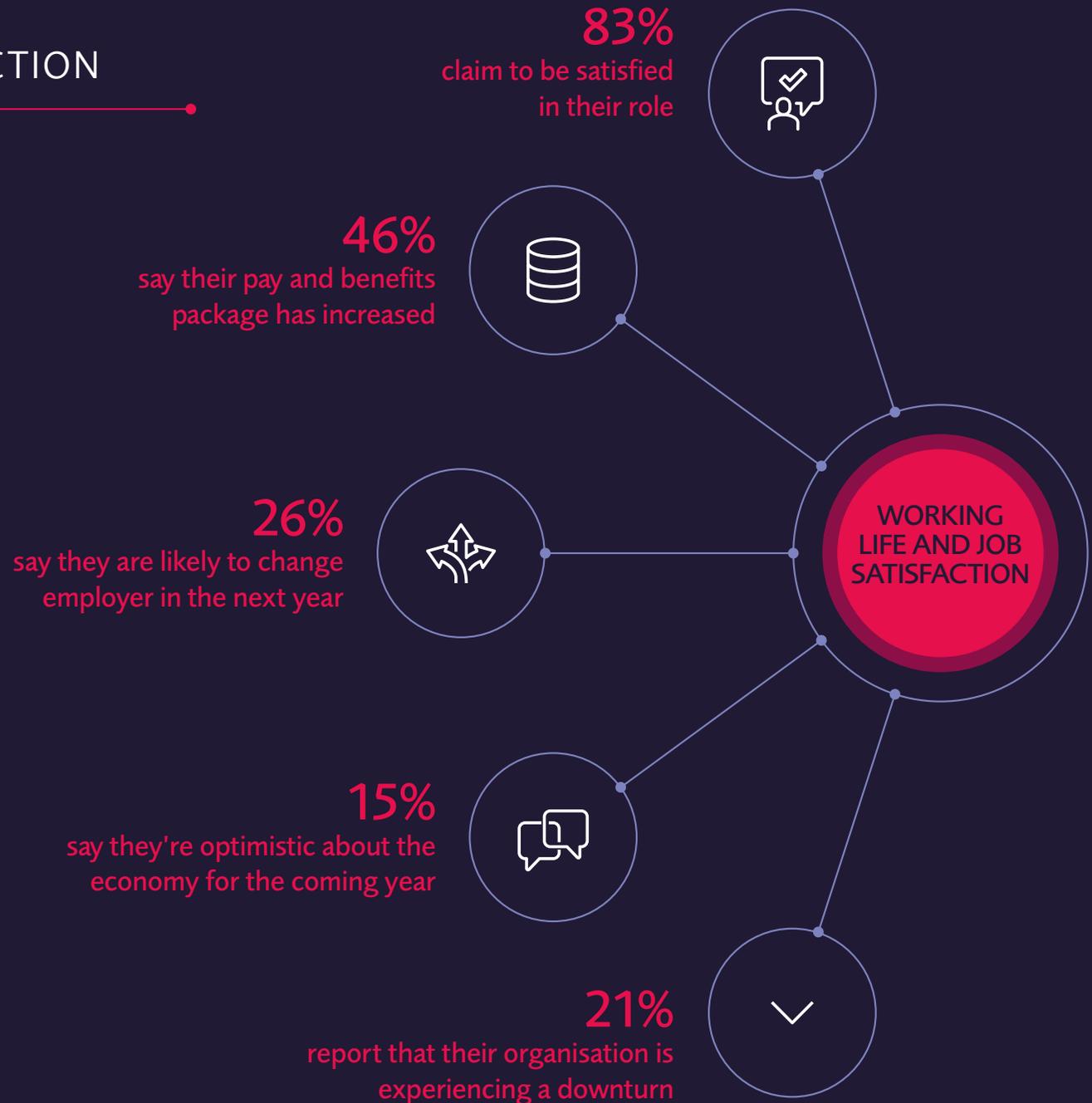


WORKING LIFE AND JOB SATISFACTION

Despite the enormous upheaval and insecurity faced by some during the pandemic, for many actively employed project professionals working life has remained unchanged.

However, it's clear that coronavirus has impacted many – both in financial terms (volume and security of work) and in how they view the future prospects for themselves and their organisations. General optimism levels – in terms of the supply of jobs, organisation growth and personal prospects – have all been hit during a turbulent 12 months.

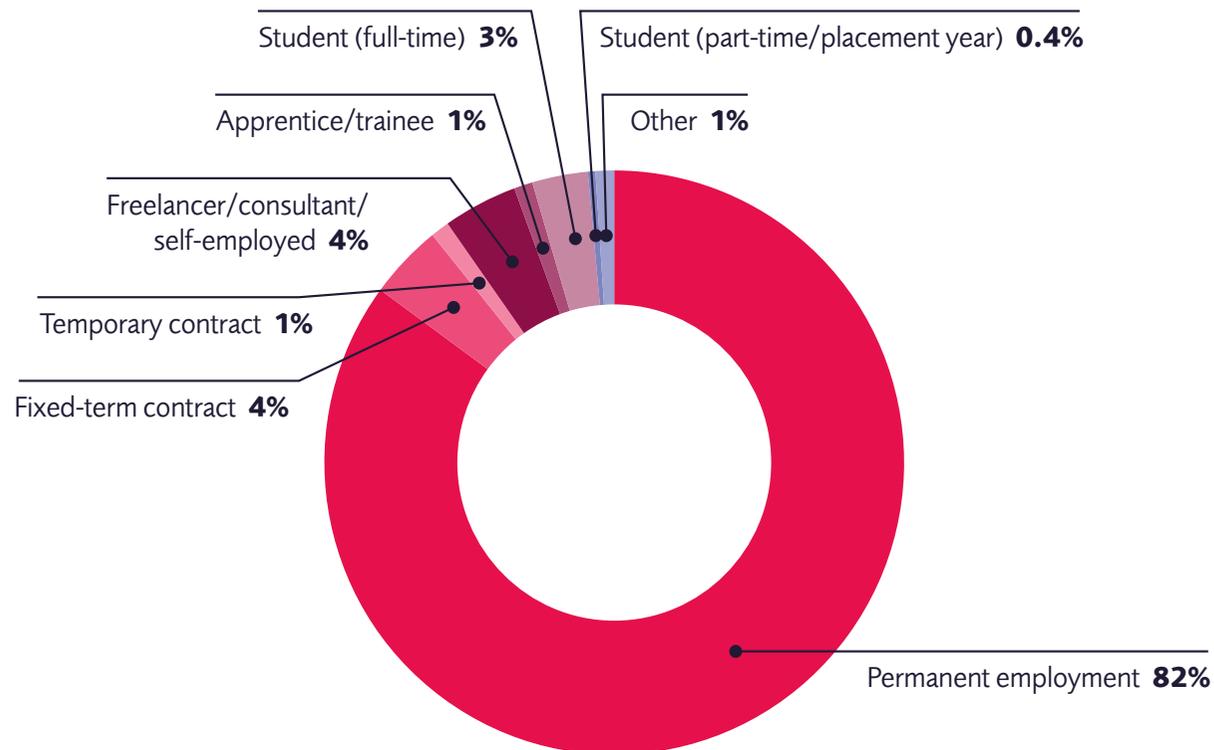
For those directly affected by the pandemic, the fallout has been significant. Seventy per cent of those who found themselves unemployed after the start of the pandemic say the virus was either to some extent or completely responsible. And while future research will give us a better sense of how deep and wide this trend truly goes, it's fair to say that as the pandemic enters its second year the impact on confidence across the board has been severe.



Employment status

Although flexible and remote working has come to the fore over the past 12 months, there has been little change to the overall picture of employment status: 82 per cent of those questioned say they are in permanent employment. Overall, 85 per cent say their status remained unchanged even as the pandemic struck (see next page); six per cent reported going on furlough before returning to normal hours, while two per cent worked reduced hours. This compares favourably with the overall national picture, which shows that 37 per cent of employers had staff furloughed at 30 November 2020 under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and 13 per cent of employments were furloughed.²

The picture changes somewhat when looking at those working on a contract basis and particularly the self-employed. While 70 per cent of contractors report no change, 10 per cent saw a change to their contracted terms, with a further nine per cent having contracts cancelled before finding other work. As for the self-employed, more than a third (35 per cent) reported a drop in the volume of work since March 2020.



² HMRC, [official statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\)](#), 28 January 2021

Impact of coronavirus on employment status – permanent employment

Employment status has not changed **85%**

Placed on furlough and then returned to normal working hours **6%**

Worked reduced hours **2%**

Made redundant, but found another job **2%**

Placed on furlough and then returned to reduced working hours **1%**

I pursued permanent employment from a previous working arrangement **1%**

Currently on furlough **0.4%**

Placed on unpaid leave and then returned to normal working hours **0.1%**

Placed on unpaid leave and then returned to reduced working hours **0.1%**

Moved from full-time to part-time employment **0.1%**

Other **4%**

Impact of coronavirus on employment status – contract

My contract has continued as normal **70%**

My contract was altered with the organisation I work for **10%**

My contract was cancelled but I have since secured further employment **9%**

I pursued a fixed term contract from a previous working arrangement **2%**

I pursued a temporary contract from a previous working arrangement **2%**

Placed on furlough and then returned to work with my contract continuing as normal **1%**

Placed on furlough and then returned to work but my contract was altered **1%**

Other **9%**

Impact of coronavirus on employment status – freelancer/consultant/self-employed

My number of clients/volume of work has decreased **35%**

My number of clients/volume of work has remained more or less the same **31%**

I have since become a freelancer/consultant/self-employed from a previous working arrangement **18%**

My number of clients/volume of work has increased **12%**

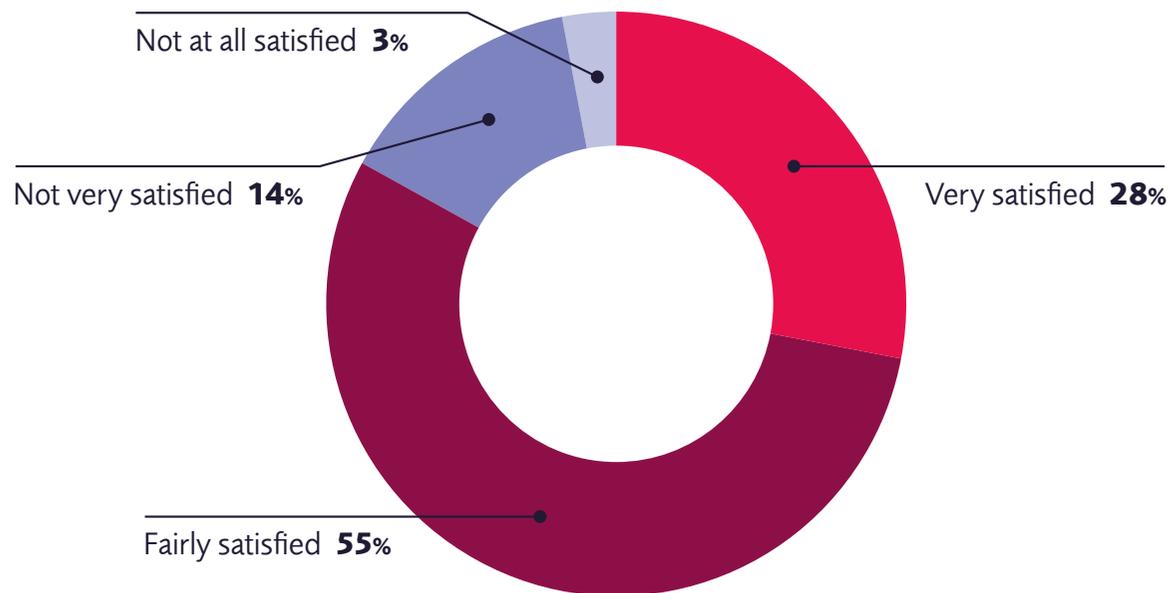
Other **3%**

Job satisfaction

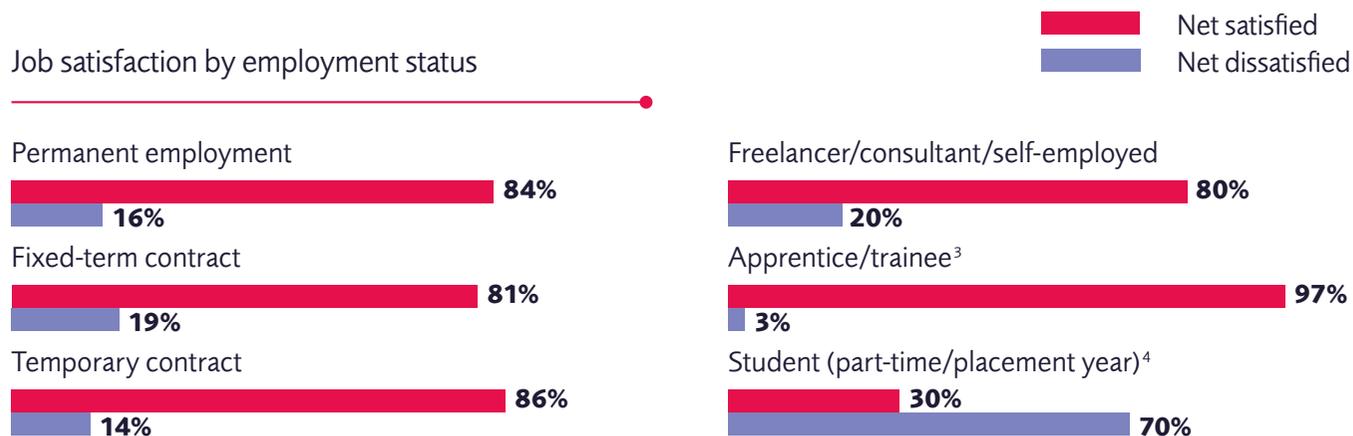
Measuring the overall levels of satisfaction gives us a snapshot of how those in the profession are feeling about their chosen career. Remarkably, given the enormous challenges that the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit have presented, professionals remain broadly satisfied: 83 per cent of project professionals report feeling satisfied with their role, compared with 82 per cent the previous year. Indeed, the proportion of those feeling very satisfied rose from 24 per cent to 28 per cent.

A closer look shows that the levels of satisfaction remain exceptionally high among those in permanent employment, at 84 per cent, perhaps reflecting the value many are placing on security and stability in uncertain times. Conversely, flexibility and variety are now less valued. Last year freelancers and the self-employed reported the highest levels of satisfaction, at 86 per cent. They are now the least satisfied, with a net satisfaction score of 80 per cent.

Unsurprisingly, those who have had their working lives disrupted, either through temporary leave or furlough, or by changing working arrangements, report lower levels of satisfaction. Younger professionals lead the way in satisfaction levels: 89 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds say they're happy. That drops to 82 per cent for those in the 55-to-64-year-old bracket.



Job satisfaction by employment status



³ Based on a sample of 29 respondents.

⁴ Based on a sample of 10 respondents.

Pay and benefits package

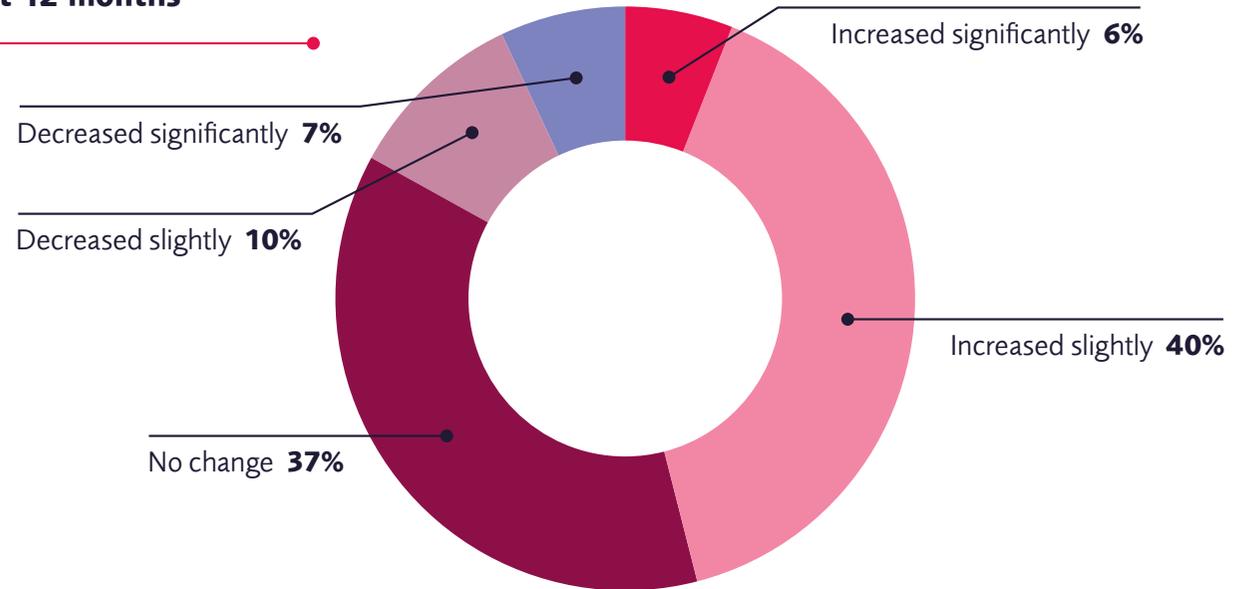
The past year has been tough: less than half (46 per cent) of those surveyed say their pay and benefits have increased during that time, with 17 per cent reporting a decrease. Of those who have suffered a decline in benefits, the overwhelming majority (84 per cent) believe the cause was directly attributable to the coronavirus pandemic, which provides some encouragement for next year when disruption may have eased off.

That tough climate has clearly lowered expectations for the future. Last year, 72 per cent expected their pay package to increase in the coming year, but only 48 per cent said the same 12 months on. Clearly the pandemic is playing on many people's minds: 64 per cent named it as a significant challenge facing the profession, and that is reflected in the proportion of those expecting further changes to their pay packages.

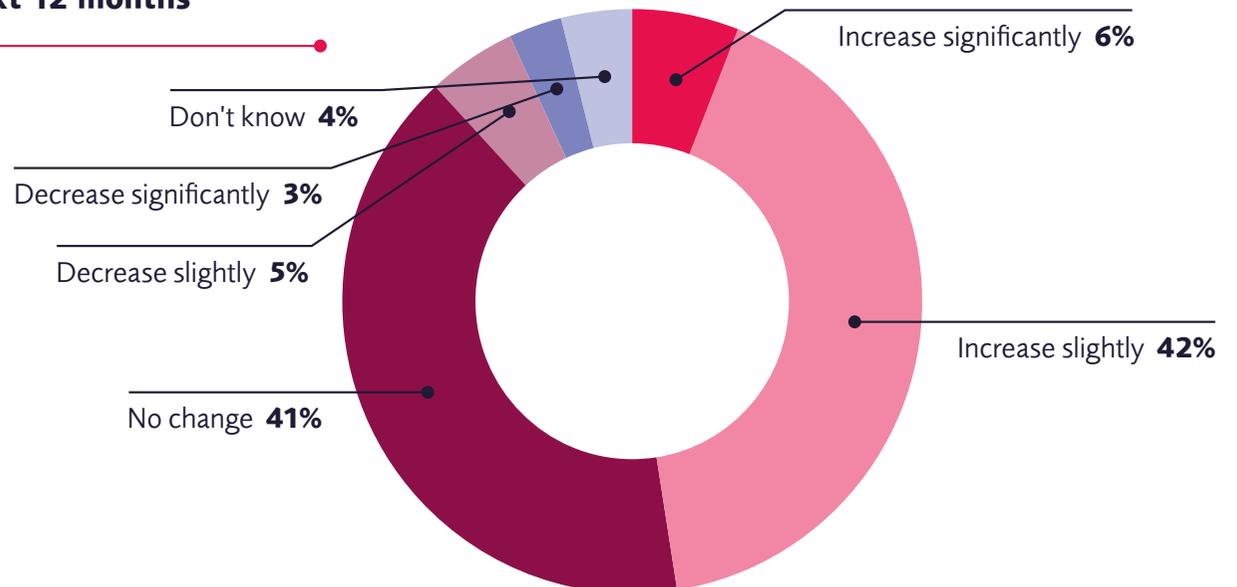
Optimism follows some clear sectoral and demographic trends too. While a clear majority of project professionals in consulting (54 per cent) and defence (60 per cent) all expect to see an increase in their packages, less than half of those working in retail and wholesale (46 per cent) anticipate an increase in the coming year as the pandemic continues to interrupt the pipeline of work.

Age also has a bearing on the level of optimism about the year ahead: around 51 per cent of those under 44 expect to receive a boost to their pay, but that figure drops to 43 per cent among those in the older age groups.

Pay and benefits package –
past 12 months



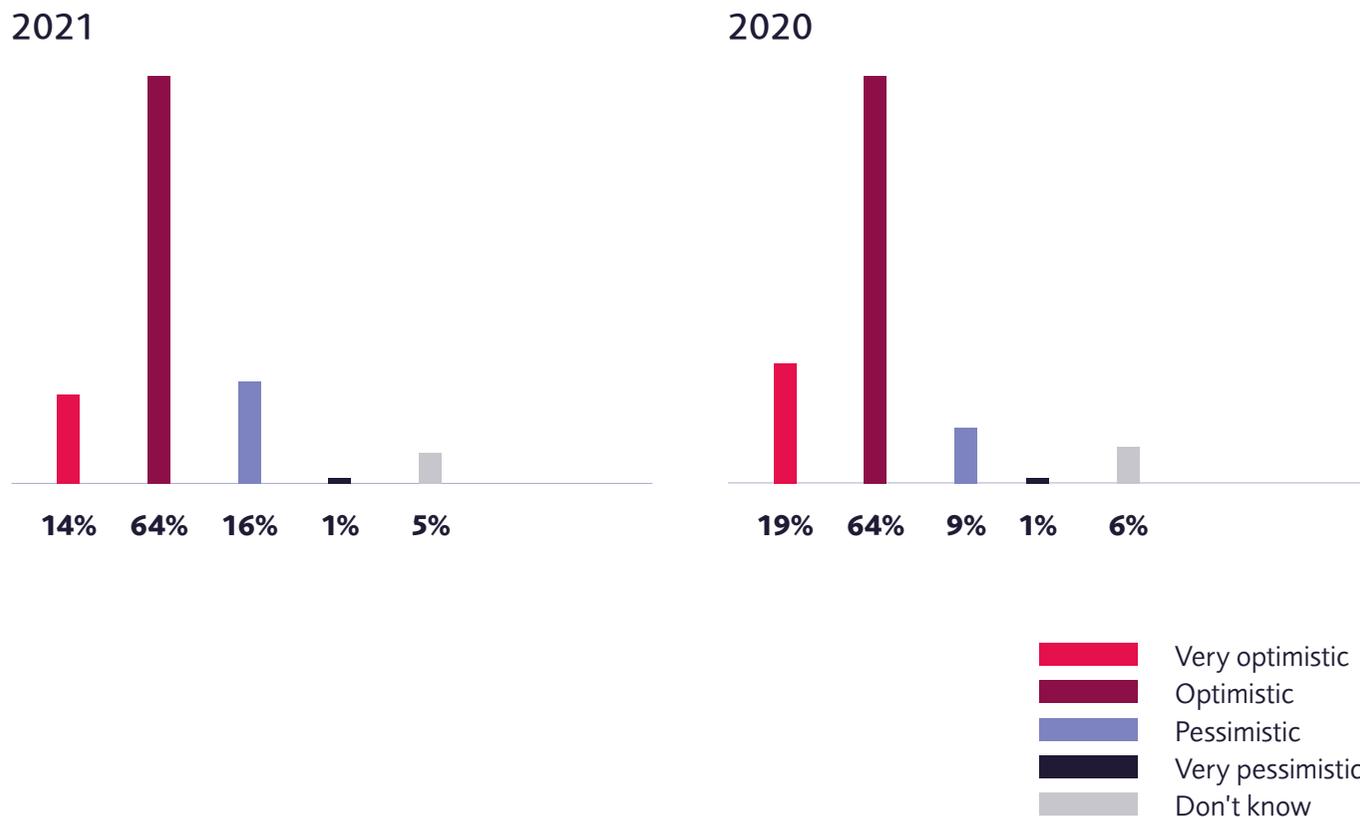
Pay and benefits package –
next 12 months



Supply of jobs

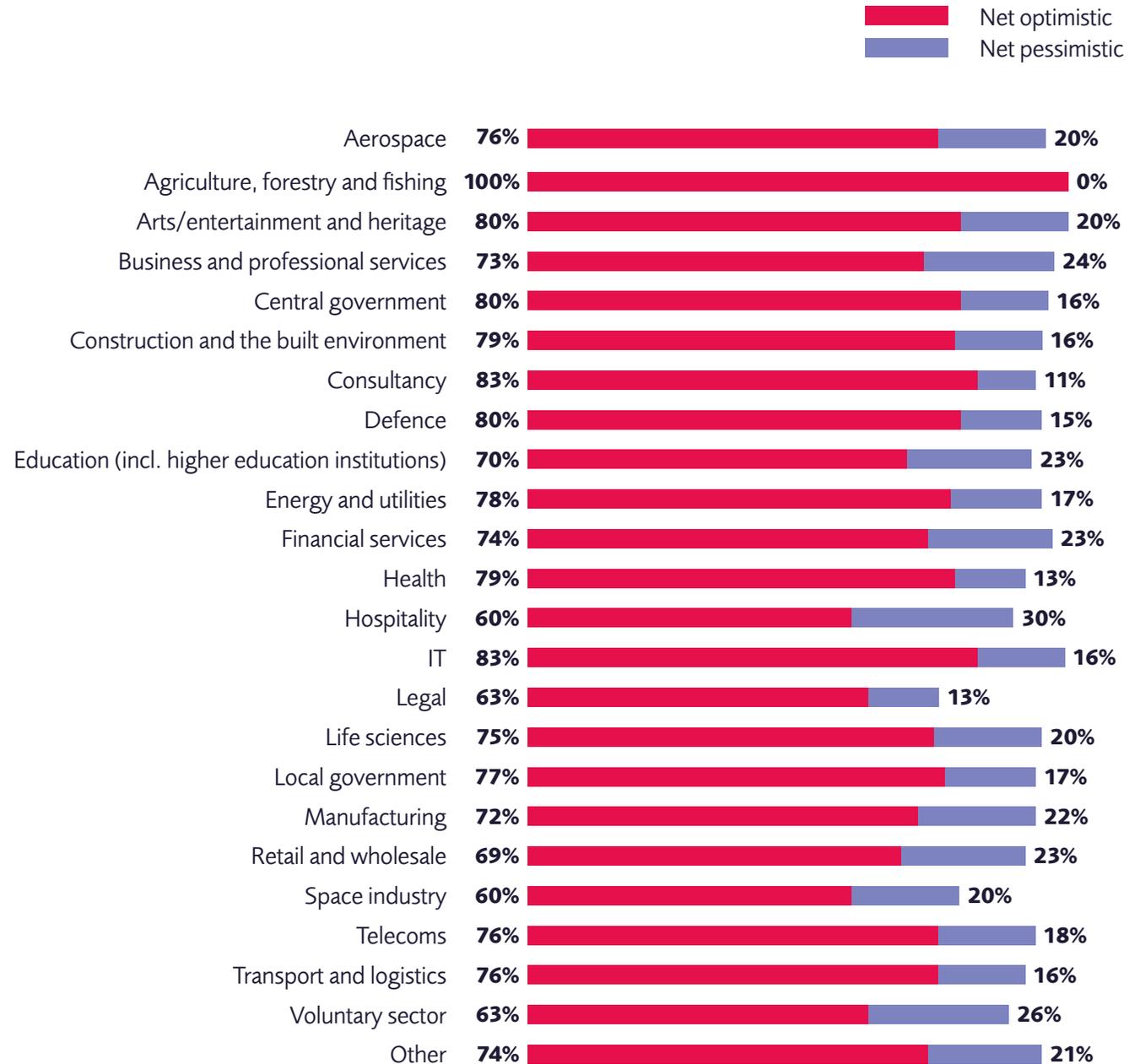
Quite how the next 12 months will play out is still unclear, and that uncertainty is reflected in a variety of ways, not least in expectations around the supply of jobs in the coming years. The proportion of those expecting that supply to continue unchanged dropped to 78 per cent from 83 per cent last year, with optimism levels especially dented among the newest entrants to the profession (78 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds now say they expect the supply to be buoyant, versus 88 per cent last year). But it should be noted that despite coronavirus and Brexit, more than three-quarters remain positive about the near-term prospects.

But there are clearly causes for concern, not least the uncertainty and aftermath of the pandemic. Four-fifths (81 per cent) of those who said they were pessimistic about the supply of jobs believe the coronavirus pandemic is at least partly to blame.



Supply of jobs by sector⁵

There are some sectoral splits too: those working in professional services and the education sector are expecting there to be an issue with the supply of rewarding roles (both 24 per cent), while those in retail are similarly cautious. In fact, across the board, optimism levels have dipped, and only remained steady among IT professionals and those working in central and local government.



⁵ Agriculture, forestry and fishing; arts/entertainment and heritage; hospitality; legal; life sciences; space industry; and voluntary sectors each had a sample of less than 30 respondents.

Organisational growth

The overall economic picture for project professionals has worsened over the past 12 months. After two years of positive results, fewer respondents now say their employer is planning to grow while more report that their organisation is experiencing a downturn.

The proportion reporting that their organisation is looking to recruit has decreased significantly from 51 per cent last year to 41 per cent. This is due to significantly more reporting that their organisation is experiencing a downturn and making redundancies (increasing from nine per cent last year to 17 per cent). Of those whose said their employer is making redundancies, the majority claim it is as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (91 per cent).

The regional picture gives more details: plans to grow through recruitment have dropped significantly in Wales (53 per cent last year; 38 per cent this year) and Scotland (54 per cent last year; 36 per cent this year).

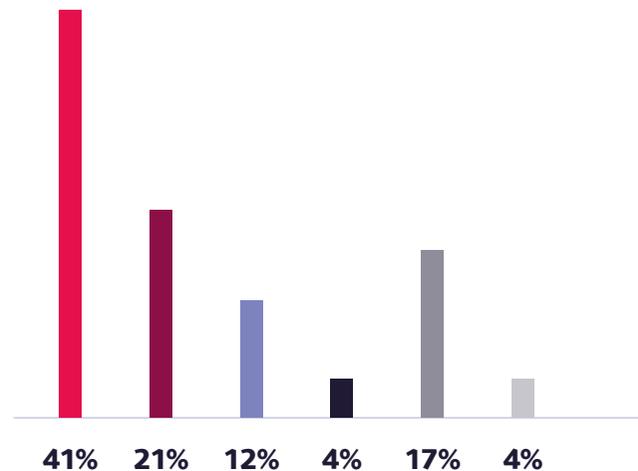
However, while they may not be planning to recruit, a sizeable majority (66 per cent) of Scottish professionals remain positive about their organisation's future growth overall, a sentiment shared by those in the South West (72 per cent) and the North East (67 per cent).

As for the sectoral split, respondents working in aerospace (19 per cent last year; 52 per cent this year) and energy and utilities (11 per cent last year; 26 per

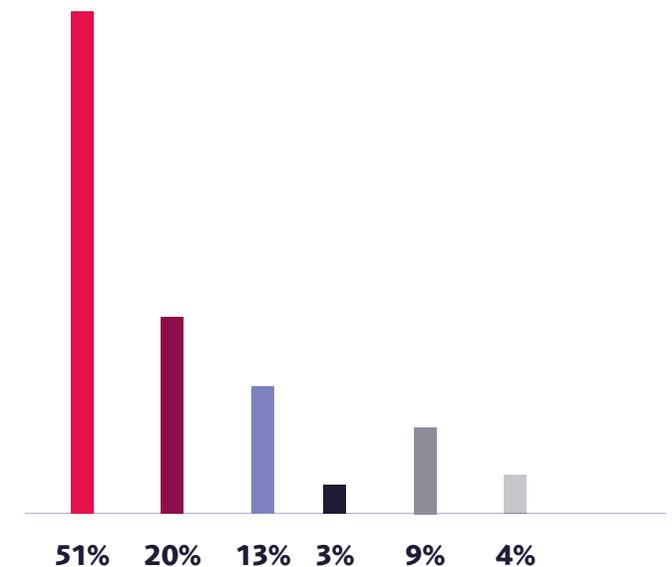
cent this year) reported a downturn in activity as well as their organisations having to make redundancies. Central government, on the other hand, saw higher levels of optimism, with 62 per cent expecting to see increased growth and recruitment – perhaps reflective of government's role in the post outbreak rebuild.

- Growing and looking to recruit additional staff
- Growing, but not recruiting
- Not anticipating any change
- Experiencing a downturn, but no redundancies
- Experiencing a downturn and making redundancies
- Don't know

2021



2020



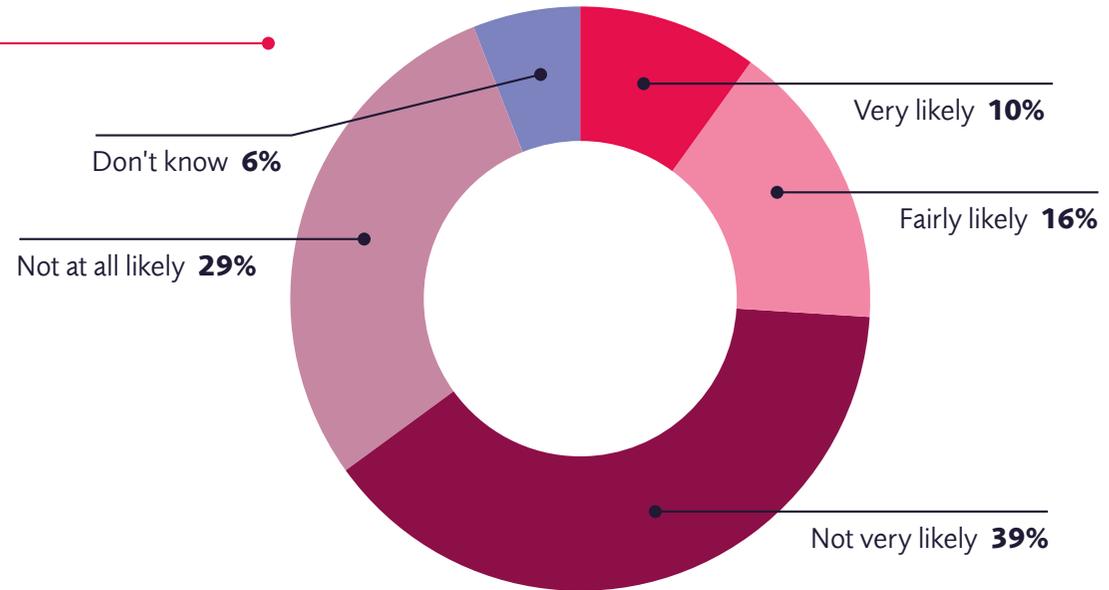
Change of employer

Given the extraordinary disruption brought about by coronavirus, it's not surprising that the number one priority among project professionals is security. The survey shows that far fewer project professionals are likely to change jobs in the next 12 months – falling from 34 per cent last year to 26 per cent this year.

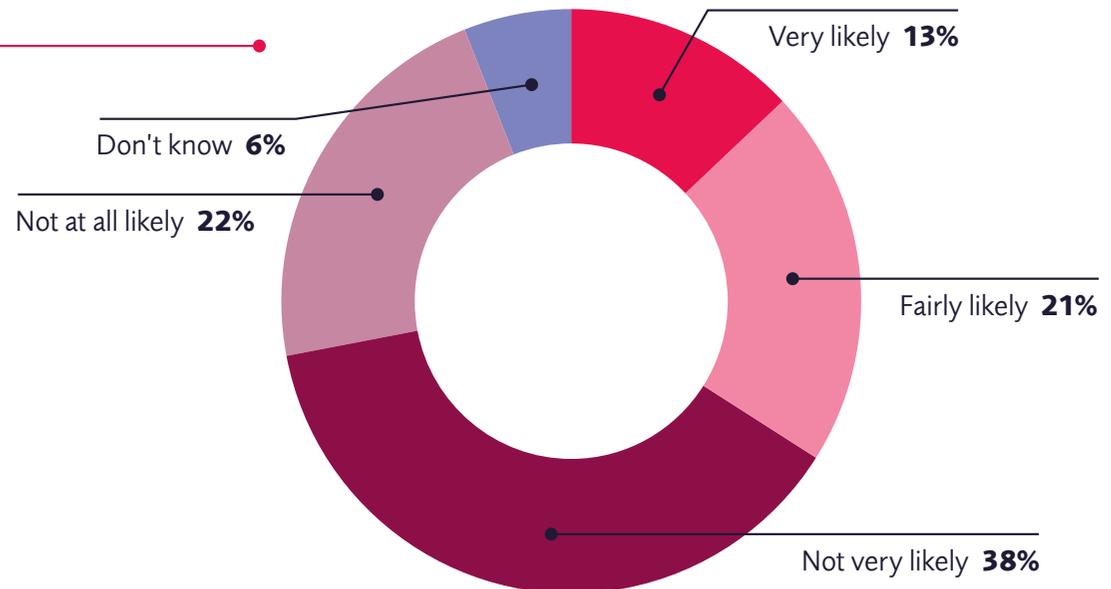
Looking at the figures in detail, those in the younger age brackets are now more likely to stick with their current employment, with a significant proportion of those aged 18-to-24-years-old not looking to change jobs over the next 12 months (down from 35 per cent last year to 23 per cent).

Tellingly, insecurity is affecting everyone: 71 per cent of consultants – perhaps the most likely to change jobs in a typical year – are staying put because they say now is too risky a time to change employers due to the pandemic and the resulting economic downturn. The relatively high rate of job satisfaction is also a factor, with 88 per cent of consultants saying they were happy with their current role and 12 per cent unsatisfied.

2021



2020

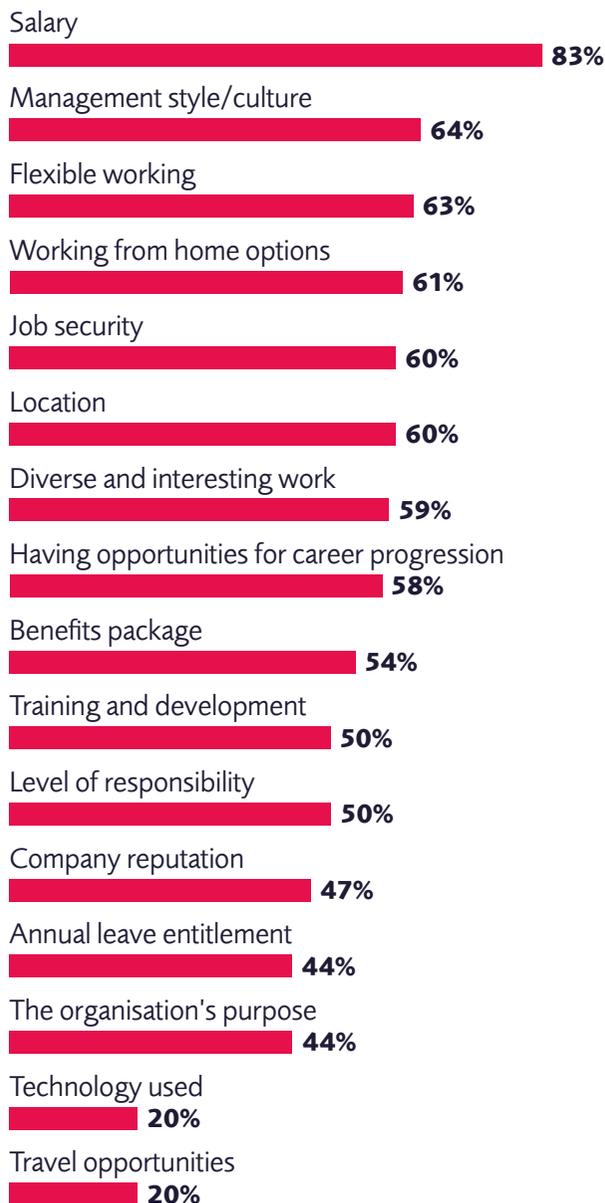


Job hunting criteria

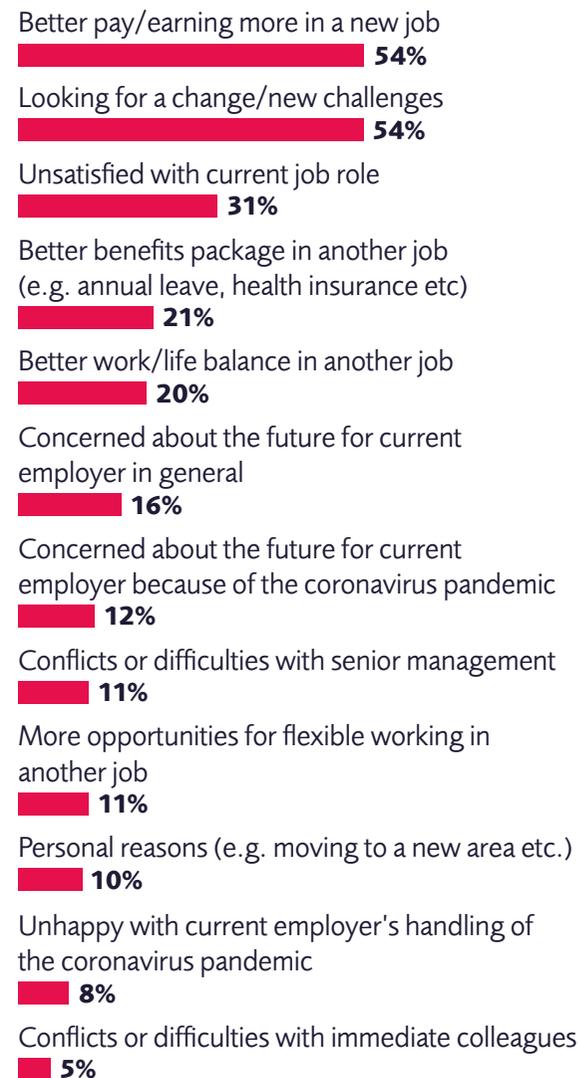
Despite the understandable reluctance of many in the profession to consider moving jobs in the current climate, for some the temptation to change is too great. For those anticipating a move, the two main motives are simple: desire for a better salary and the desire for a new challenge, both selected by 54 per cent of respondents.

There has been a significant drop in the proportion rating location as an important factor when looking for a new job (down from 69 per cent last year to 60 per cent), possibly due to the pandemic. Instead, job security (51 per cent last year; 60 per cent this year) and working from home options (52 per cent last year; 61 per cent this year) have increased in importance as workers make the shift to remote working.

Job hunting criteria – all respondents



Reasons to change employer in next 12 months – those likely to move



Encouraging talent into the profession

Last year saw a marked increase in the levels of new entrants to the project profession, reflecting the effective work done by employers, training providers and others in positioning project management as an attractive and rewarding career.

Unsurprisingly, that spike has been followed by a decrease in the numbers of new project professionals in the survey sample this time around. While one-fifth (20 per cent) had two years or less experience last year, only 14 per cent report the same this year. Instead, there has been an increase in those with 16 or more years' experience, rising from 22 per cent to 30 per cent this year.

Of course, no profession can hope to remain vital and healthy without a strong pipeline of new talent. And a growing majority of those surveyed believe that work must begin early to continue that. More than half (54 per cent) say that increasing the profession's visibility in schools, colleges and universities is the best way to attract new talent, a slight increase from 52 per cent last year. There is also a growing belief that the financial rewards from a career in project management are an effective recruitment tool, identified by 18 per cent of respondents.



Economic confidence

The coronavirus pandemic has created economic anxiety across the world, in all sectors and professions. Project professionals are no exception. Unsurprisingly, optimism among professionals regarding the economic prospects for themselves over the next 12 months is sharply down: 56 per cent rate it as excellent or good, down from 65 per cent the previous year.

And that has hit those newest to the profession the hardest. The number of those in the 18-to-24-year-old bracket who rated their own prospects as excellent has dropped from 81 per cent to 72 per cent this year, the biggest single drop. However, despite that, they remain more optimistic than their older counterparts.

Naturally, many of the same sentiments extend to the prospects for organisations and the general state of the economy in which they operate. By both of these measures, optimism has dropped: only 51 per cent say their organisation's economic prospects are good or excellent (down from 58 per cent last year), while just 15 per cent count themselves hopeful over the economy in the coming year, with 60 per cent being pessimistic. Indeed, only those outside the UK are maintaining broadly similar levels of optimism about the general economic picture as last year.

The cause? Almost overwhelmingly, those who consider the economic prospects to be poor for themselves, their organisation and the economy highlight the coronavirus pandemic as the cause.



Individual



Organisation



Economy as a whole



Extent to which poor economic prospects are a result of the coronavirus pandemic



Individual



Organisation



Economy as a whole

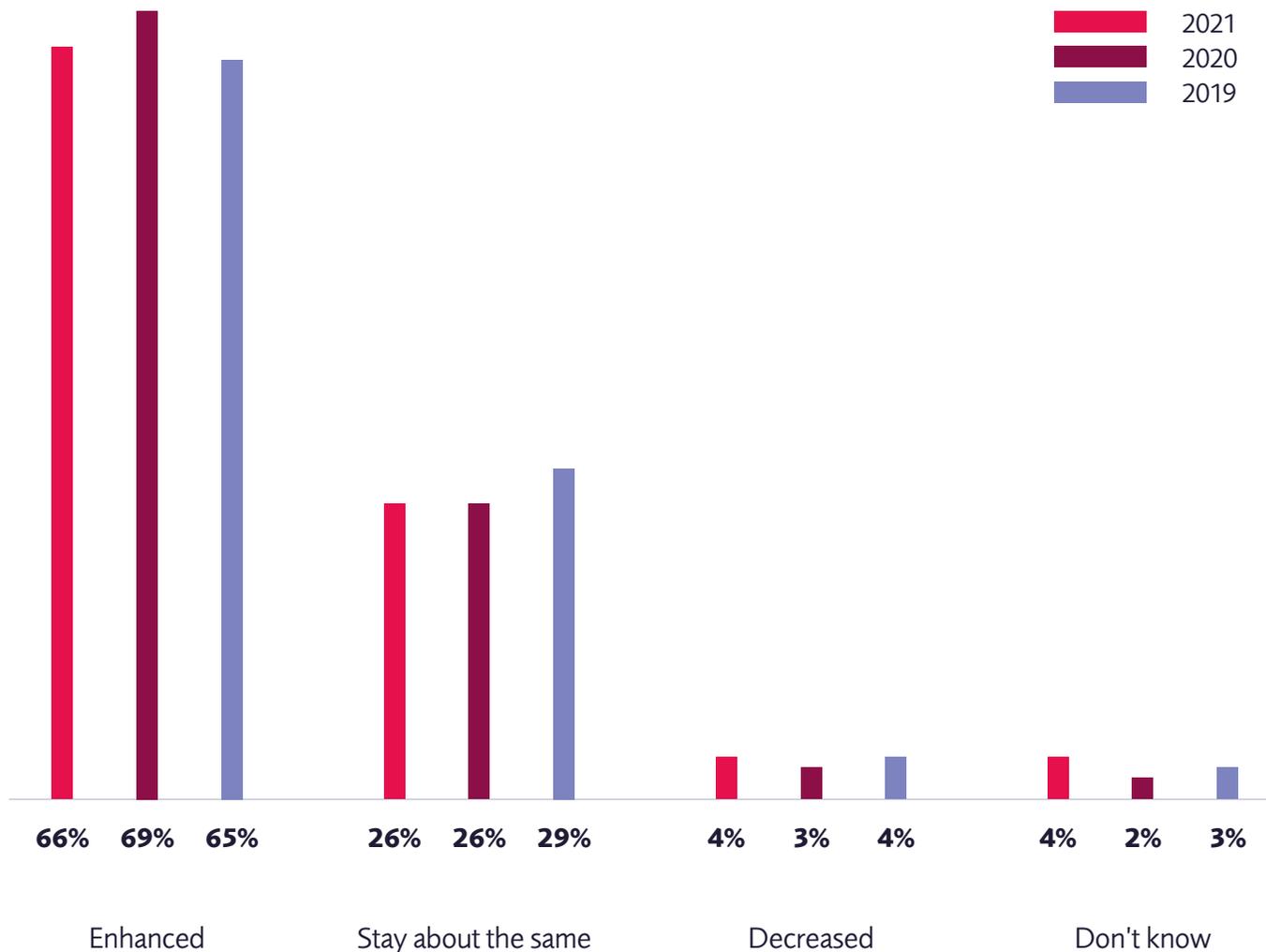


The future of the profession

Given the backdrop against which the survey was conducted – a global pandemic affecting the entire world, with uncertainty still rife – it isn't surprising that confidence levels in the profession have taken a knock.

But despite that, the figures show that most (66 per cent) agree that the project profession will be enhanced over the next five years. Clearly, this represents a drop from the previous year's figure, but the fact that it remains the majority view is encouraging and demonstrates not only the relative stability of ongoing projects, but also the optimism of those delivering them. Indeed, the headline optimism figure of 66 per cent represents a return to just above pre-pandemic levels of two years ago (65 per cent).

The fact that the proportion of those saying they believe the profession will be diminished in the next five years has only increased from three to four per cent does give a clear sense of the resilience among project professionals. That resilience is further underpinned by almost half citing coronavirus – something we can reasonably expect to recover from in the coming years – as the main factor.



IN SUMMARY: Short-term pain, long-term faith

There's no escaping the serious impact of coronavirus; confidence levels have understandably been shaken. With so much uncertainty over current and future work prospects, it's not surprising that some believe the impact will play out in the coming years. When only 15 per cent say they're confident about the economy in general, it tells us a lot. Unsurprisingly, given that, most are opting to stick and not twist. Very few professionals are planning on moving jobs any time soon and are focusing on holding what they have.

And yet, faith in the profession's ability to weather the storm remains strong – a clear majority still expect to see an enhanced profession and expect to see a good supply of jobs continue. We can say the same about their satisfaction levels too, with more than eight out of ten declaring themselves satisfied. That tells us that satisfaction among project professionals is built on a firm bedrock that not even the most seismic shock can shake.



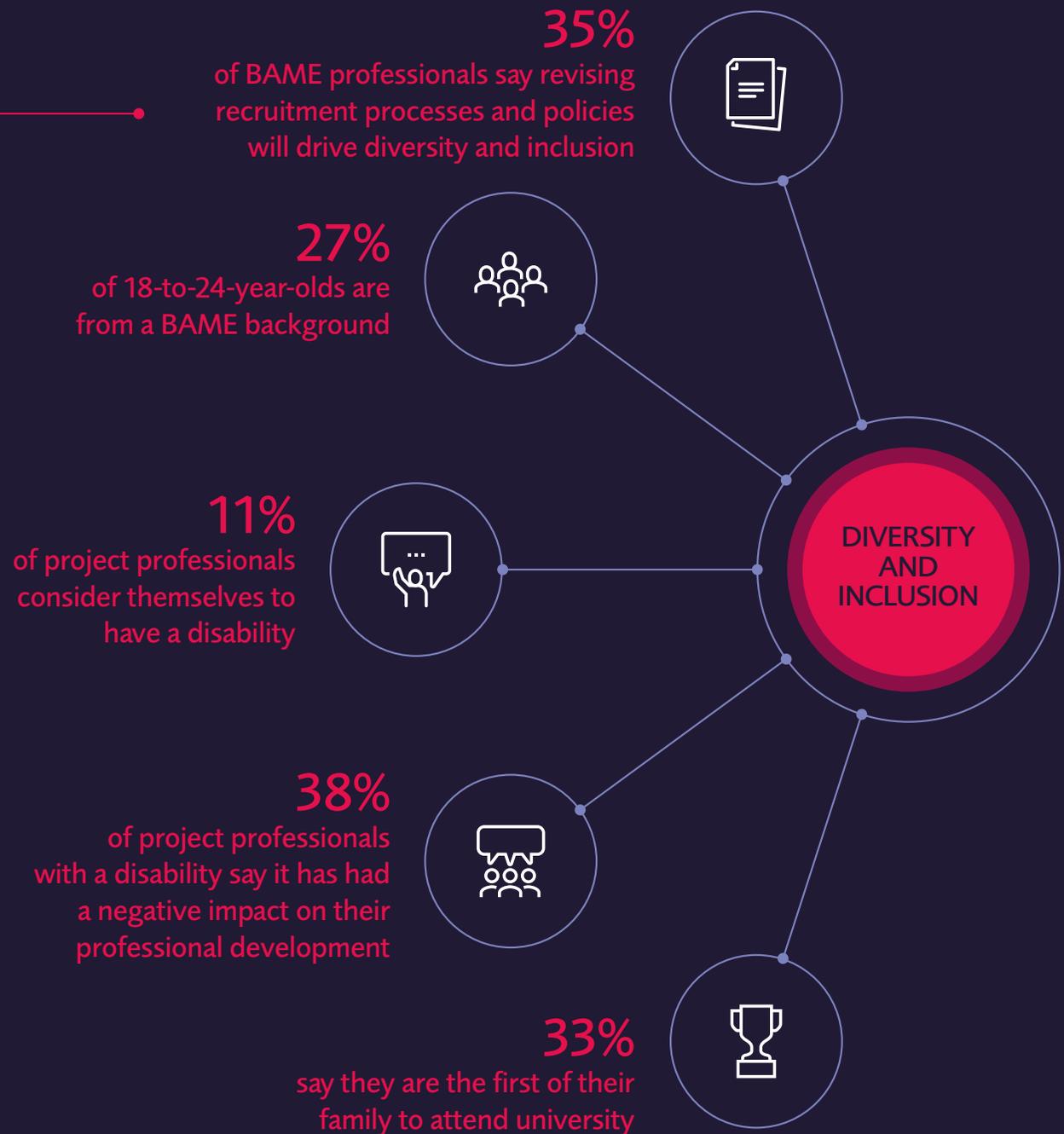
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In order to thrive and grow, the project profession must reflect the society in which it operates. Creating a more diverse and inclusive profession is tough, but by collecting meaningful data, analysing it smartly and devising better approaches, significant progress is within our reach.

Following the progress made last year, this year's results show that although there remain challenges to face, the project profession is beginning to open up to a wider section of society. It now takes in different ethnicities, genders and social backgrounds, all of which have been seen as barriers to entry in the past.

At APM we have made diversity and inclusion one of the central parts of our work. And that takes in a whole range of groups that are sometimes overlooked. So this year, for the first time, we have included questions about social mobility and disability.

While the results don't add up to a definitive picture, they do show that the profession has some way to go to escape the perception that it is the preserve of white middle-class men. Added to that, the fact that a significant number of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and disabled professionals still believe they are held back by their background or physical or mental health must concern us.



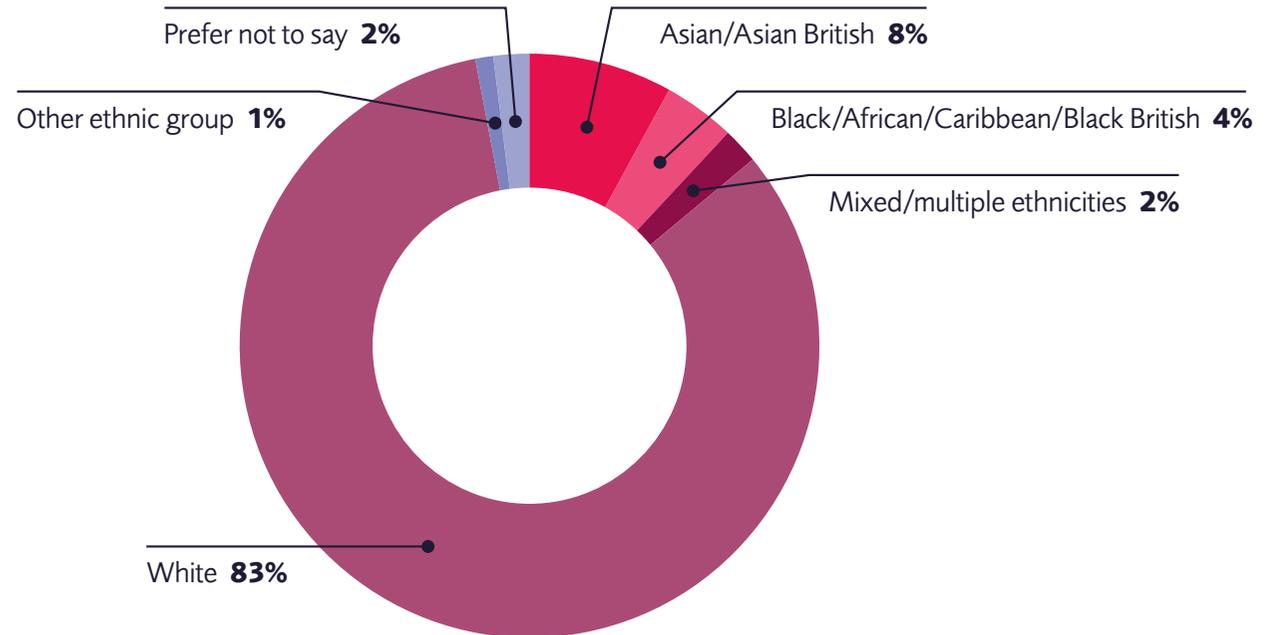
Make-up of the profession by ethnicity

Tracking the changing make-up of the profession is an important task, and it reveals that change tends to come about slowly. But clearly the trend lines are moving in the right direction. Last year, the survey revealed that BAME professionals made up 12 per cent of the workforce, with 86 per cent identifying as white. That figure has now shifted to 15 per cent identifying as BAME.

Looking more closely at the BAME figures shows that little of the overall demographic has changed in any marked way. Asian/Asian British representation has increased slightly from five per cent to eight per cent, while those identifying as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British have slightly increased from three per cent to four per cent.

And while BAME professionals are increasing in number, their average salary level is slightly lower than the overall average (£45,000 vs £47,500) and falls below the average for white professionals by a larger margin (£45,000 vs £52,500).

Certain figures reveal some positive trends, such as an encouraging level of new entrants from BAME groups. More than one in five (23 per cent) of project professionals from a BAME background are new to the profession (against an overall average of 14 per cent), and 27 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds are from a BAME background. BAME professionals are more likely to work in either central or local government, tracking above average in both sectors.

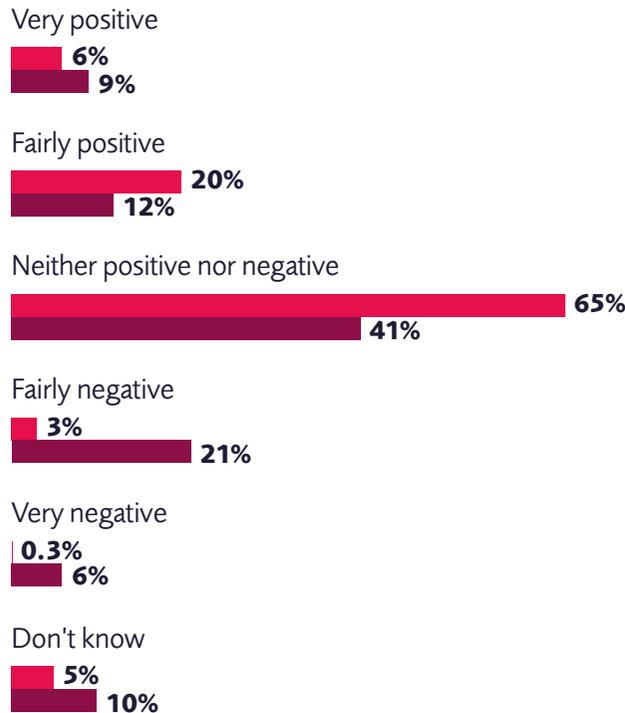


Impact of ethnicity on career development

The results show no significant change in the key perceptions since last year, as it remains the case that BAME project professionals are more likely to agree that their ethnicity has had a negative impact on their professional development than their white colleagues (27 per cent vs 3 per cent).

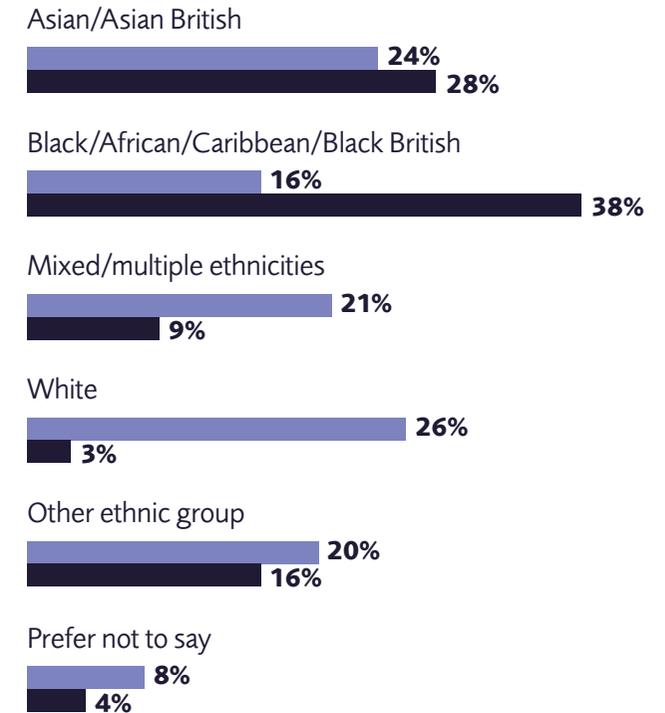
Drilling into the numbers further reveals some interesting variations. For instance, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British are the BAME group that still feel that their ethnicity has had the most negative impact on their career (38 per cent) compared with other BAME groups. While this is the same level as last year, it suggests more concrete progress is needed to change this perception.

Impact of ethnicity on career development



White
BAME

Impact of ethnicity on career development by ethnic group

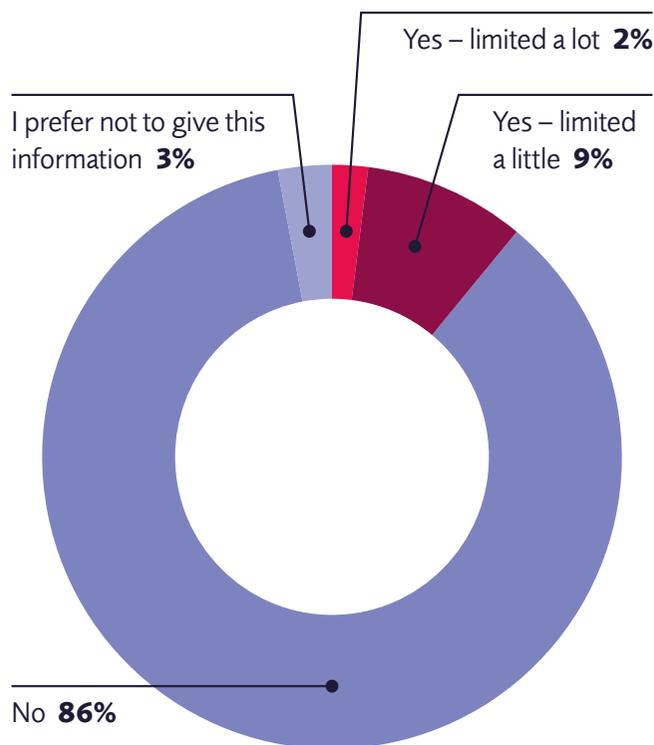


Net positive
Net negative

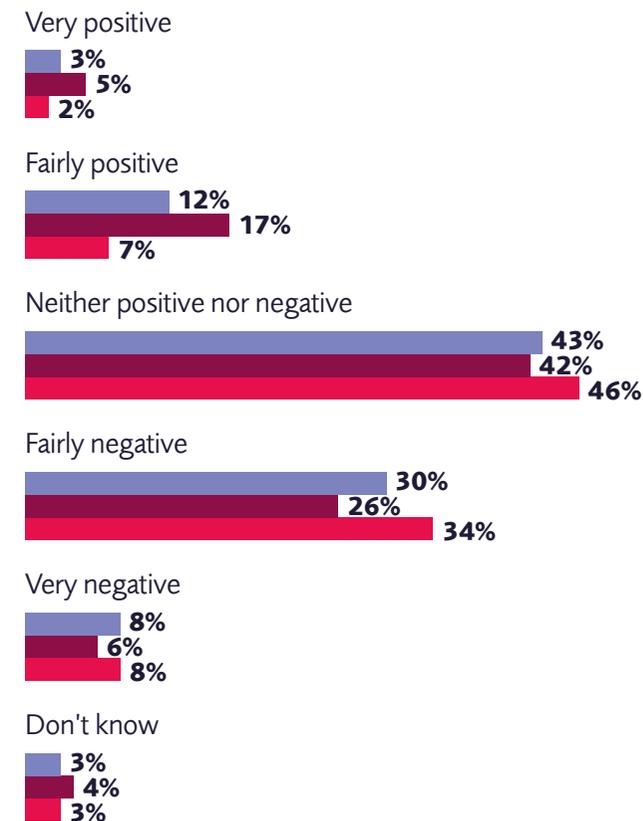
Project professionals with a disability

This is the first time we have measured disability as a determinant of career progress. We have used the definition provided in the Equality Act 2010, which describes a disabled person as: "Anyone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities". The results showed that one in 10 (11 per cent) of those surveyed consider themselves to have a disability or longstanding physical or mental health impairment.

So, how does disability affect the professional development of those in project management? It is concerning that 38 per cent feel their disability has had a negative effect on their professional development, with just 15 per cent considering it to be positive. Men are more likely to believe the impact has been positive than women (22 per cent vs 9 per cent).



Impact of disability on career development



How diverse and inclusive is the profession?

As the other findings in this chapter show, changing perceptions can be difficult. Last year's research showed that BAME project professionals were significantly less likely to consider the project profession to be diverse than their white colleagues.

That remains the case, with the net score unchanged. Concerns around the inclusivity of the profession were highest among those who identified as BAME, with a significantly higher proportion (12 per cent) taking a negative view than their white counterparts (five per cent).

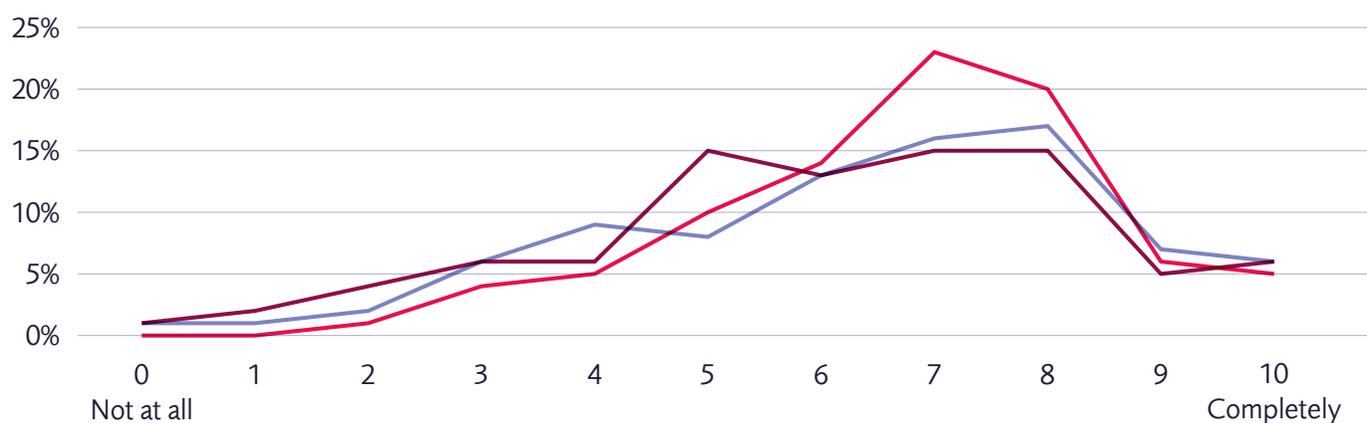
It is, however, worth pointing out that views are becoming more polarised, which may reflect the greater attention being paid to these issues both in the profession and the wider world: the proportion in the middle – those not feeling strongly about diversity and inclusion either way – is dropping each year, and across both BAME and white cohorts.

It is also encouraging that just under half of disabled people feel that the profession has its doors open to all. Forty-six per cent of that cohort rated the profession as inclusive, which shows that while more work is needed, there is genuine reason for optimism around efforts to include a broad range of entrants.

Diverse



Inclusive



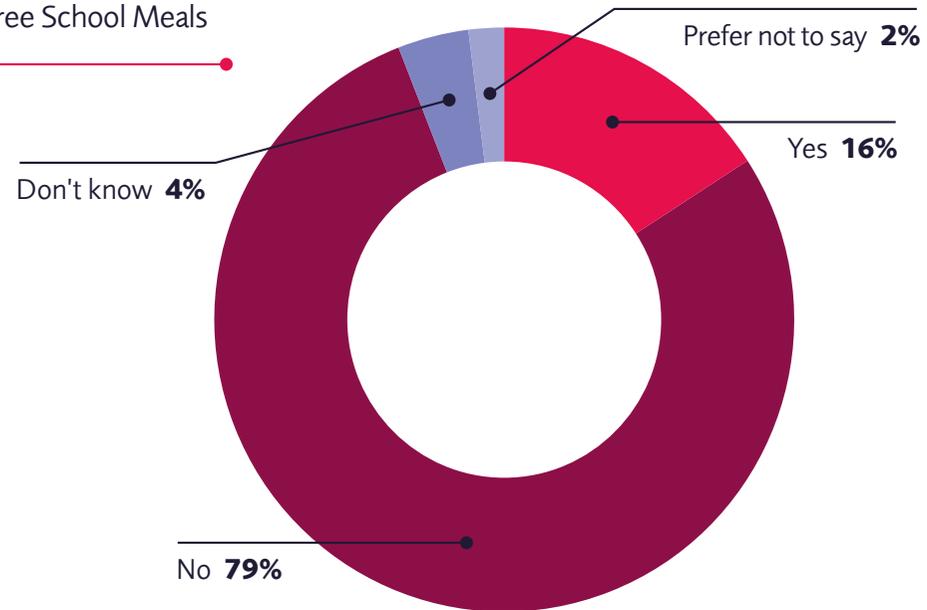
Social mobility

All professions have barriers to entry: some may be more obvious than others, but they still exist. While the data on BAME professionals' attitudes to diversity and inclusion is growing into a useful body of evidence, details on how those who have come from more challenging social circumstances remain scarce.

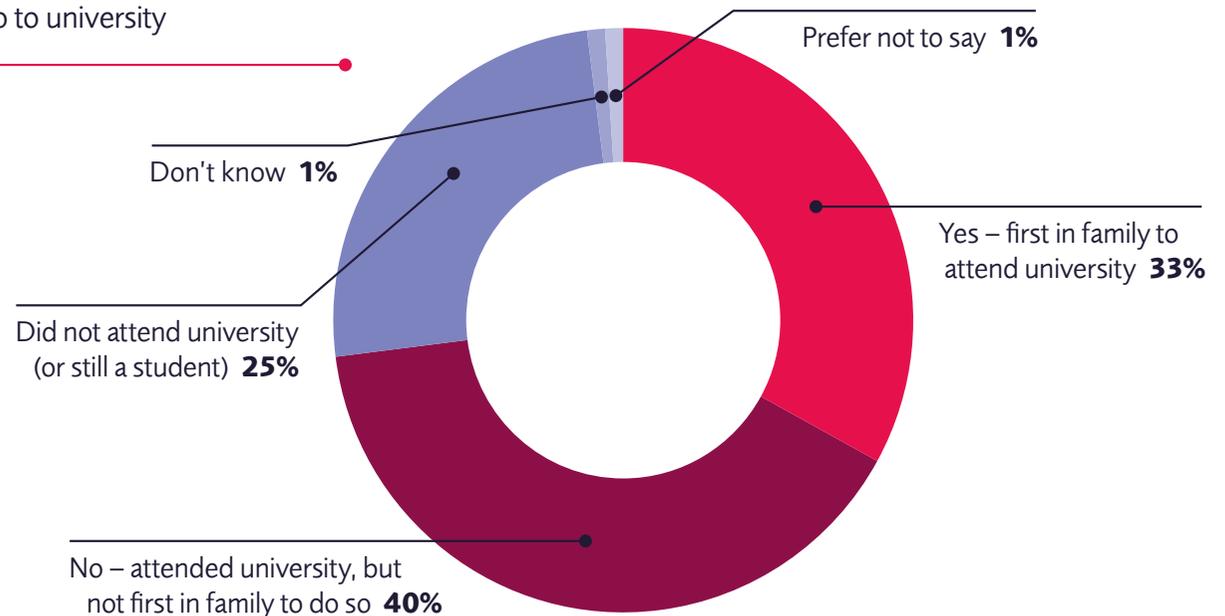
In order to address that, this year we wanted to broaden our understanding of where our professionals come from, and what obstacles they may have had to overcome to enter the profession. Assessing that is far from an exact science, but this year for the first time we have included two questions that we felt give some indication of social background: were you ever the recipient of Free School Meals and were you the first member of your family to go to university?

The survey shows that 16 per cent answered yes to the first question, which broadly reflects the wider distribution within society as a whole. As for those representing their family at university for the first time, that proportion was higher, at 33 per cent, which does suggest that the profession is welcoming to many people who have experienced a relatively recent change in their social status.

Recipient of Free School Meals



First member of family to go to university



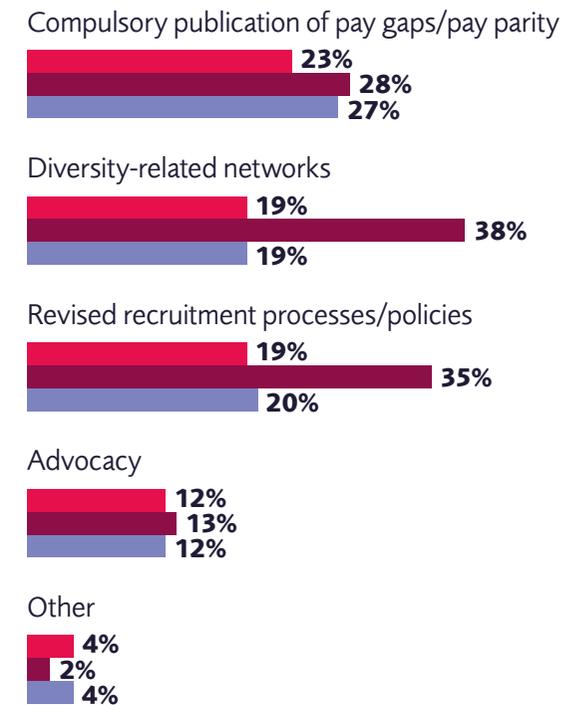
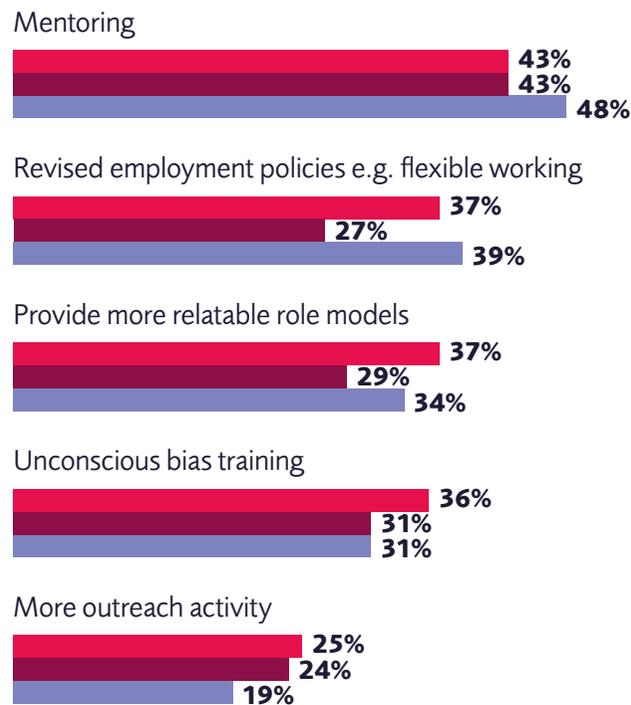
Ways to make the profession more diverse and inclusive

A closer look at the figures shows that 70 per cent of BAME respondents say they feel positive about the prospects for the profession, compared with 65 per cent of white respondents. Disabled people were less optimistic, with 61 per cent believing that the profession will be enhanced over the next five years.

Mentoring remains the most commonly mentioned way of making the project profession more diverse and inclusive, which remains the same as last year (43 per cent), with disabled people rating it even higher (48 per cent). Clearly, the more visible that professionals from diverse backgrounds become, the more likely they are to both inspire from afar and to help on the ground by mentoring the next generation.

However, the demand from BAME respondents for concerted, public action is growing: last year 28 per cent felt that recruitment policies and processes needed to change to drive diversity and inclusion. That figure now stands at 35 per cent, and support for the compulsory publication of pay gap data has grown from 25 per cent to 28 per cent. The belief that this measure would help has also increased among white respondents.

Faith in less 'direct' actions, such as unconscious bias training or the promotion of relatable role models, has markedly softened among those identifying as BAME.



IN SUMMARY: Progress continues but hard work remains

Following on from the work begun in recent years, we continue to act as a force for change in the diversity and inclusion space. Many of the initiatives that have launched over the past two years are now gathering pace and adding more participants from across all sectors, organisations and backgrounds.

From LinkedIn groups to bringing together different professionals in order to better understand how to build a more diverse and inclusive profession, we are committed to understanding the barriers that can and do exist. And that goes beyond ethnicity: social background and disability are both often-ignored factors in creating barriers to entry. By extending our research to include this, we are doubling down on our commitment to a fully diverse and inclusive profession.

We are also in the process of evaluating the success of our mentoring pilot scheme, an initiative we expect to expand later in 2021.

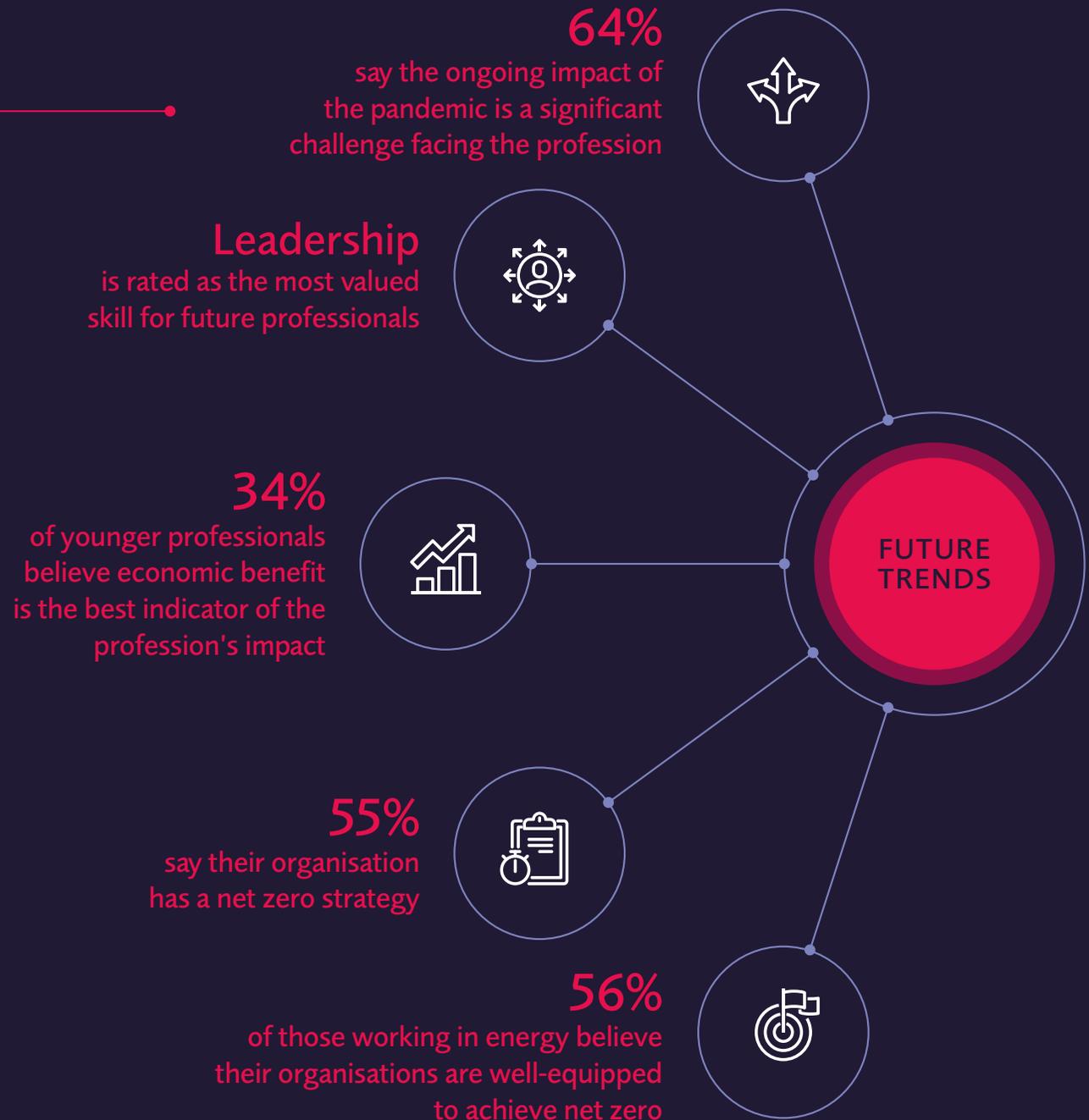


FUTURE TRENDS

Although project professionals are motivated by their own advancement and that of their organisations, they do not operate in a vacuum. Understanding the underlying forces that will shape the future, and their place in it, is vital. 2021 is something of a perfect storm, with a global pandemic and political upheaval playing out against a backdrop of an urgent climate crisis.

In order to help us understand how the profession is facing up to these forces, we have looked in more detail at the issue of climate change: how it affects the work project professionals do, what mitigation measures they are pursuing and where they feel they need help. It's early days but this research offers a vital window onto the progress so far and where we can do better.

There is much to be positive about here: organisations across almost all sectors are grasping the nettle of climate change and making real, substantive efforts to become part of the solution. Whether that's through direct investment, improved education both within the organisation and outside or by rewarding better practice, it's clear the commitment is there.



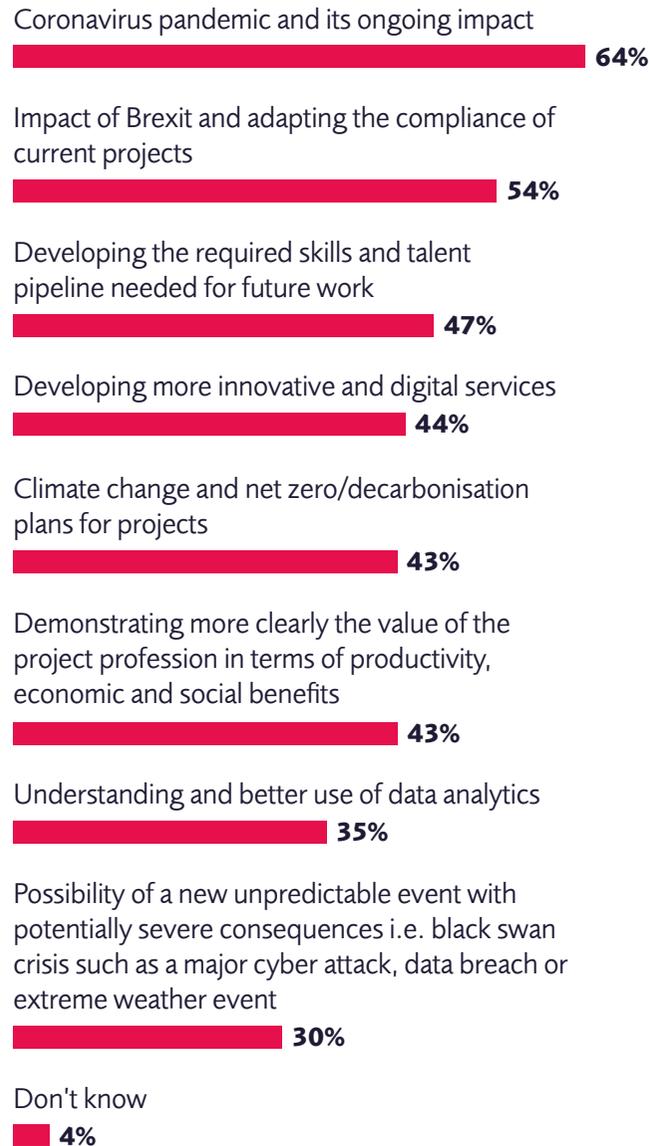
Key concerns for the future

No section of the economy has been left untouched by the pandemic, and there's no question many in the profession fear its long-term impact. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) recognise it as a challenge – and for just over one-fifth it is the most significant challenge (22 per cent). Concern is higher among younger respondents than older: 72 per cent of those aged 18-to-24-years-old see it as a significant challenge compared with 55 per cent of those aged 55-to-64-years-old.

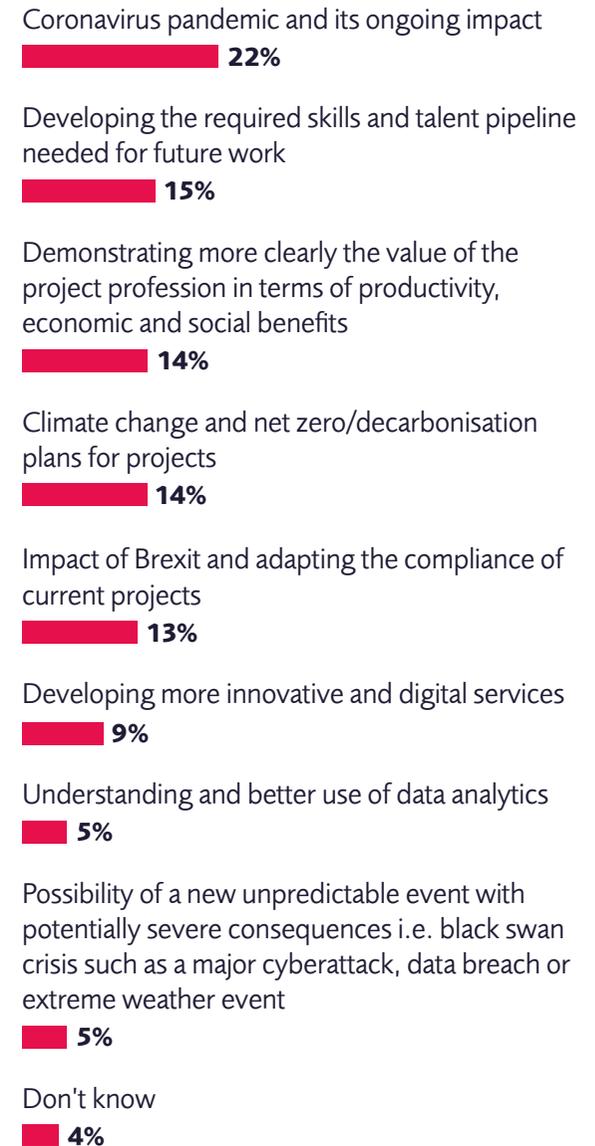
Unsurprisingly, the concerns are most keenly felt in the sectors hit hardest so far, with project professionals in education, retail and transport all tracking above the average levels of concern. Beyond the pandemic, many fear that the upheaval caused by Brexit will present a significant challenge, with more than half (54 per cent) pinpointing its impact and those in manufacturing especially concerned (21 per cent believe it's the number one challenge).

Naturally, the issue of climate change is also front of mind, but after several years of environmental issues climbing to the top of the agenda, the pandemic has grabbed much of the attention this year, with the numbers citing climate change as both a challenge and the most significant concern dropping (50 per cent to 43 per cent; 25 per cent to 14 per cent). However, this trend is likely to reverse, as 2021 will see a big push on this in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November.

Significant challenges facing the project profession in the next five years



Single most significant challenge facing the project profession in the next five years

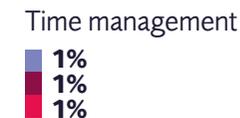


Future skills

Addressing these challenges will require a broad and varied skill set. Chief among these will be leadership – the ability to marshal resources to deliver on expectations in an environment where budgets are tight and uncertainty remains a constant. Fittingly, 29 per cent ranked it first, followed by people management and stakeholder engagement (26 per cent) and communication skills (16 per cent).

Men are more likely than women to rank project leadership first (33 per cent vs 24 per cent), while women are more likely to rank people management (30 per cent vs 24 per cent) or communication skills (18 per cent vs 14 per cent) as the most important.

It's also worth noting that people management, while still critical, has seen its value diminish over the past year. While 37 per cent named it as the most valuable skill last year, that figure dropped to 26 per cent this time around.



Climate change and net zero/ decarbonisation strategy

The coronavirus pandemic will, hopefully, soon begin to recede in importance, albeit with lingering after-effects. But the need to address our relationship with the planet will remain urgent. Thankfully, there is growing evidence that project professionals are prepared to get involved in devising and delivering solutions.

More than half (55 per cent) say their organisation has a net zero strategy, and 36 per cent say that they consider themselves well equipped to tackle net zero challenges in their projects, which echoes general public polling.

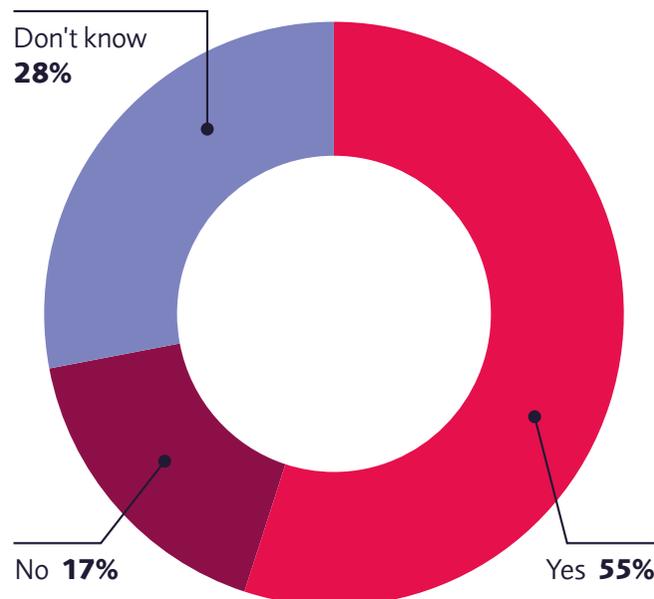
There are definite signs that some sectors are leading the way in tackling climate change or are achieving direct impact already. There is of course a sectoral split, perhaps reflecting this differing pace of impact. The sector most likely to have a net zero strategy is energy and utilities (76 per cent), where 56 per cent say they are well equipped to tackle net zero challenges.

Similarly, 72 per cent of those working in transport and logistics have a net zero strategy, with 43 per cent well placed to tackle these challenges. Meanwhile, 71 per cent of respondents in local government say they have a net zero strategy, with 42 per cent confident of its effectiveness.

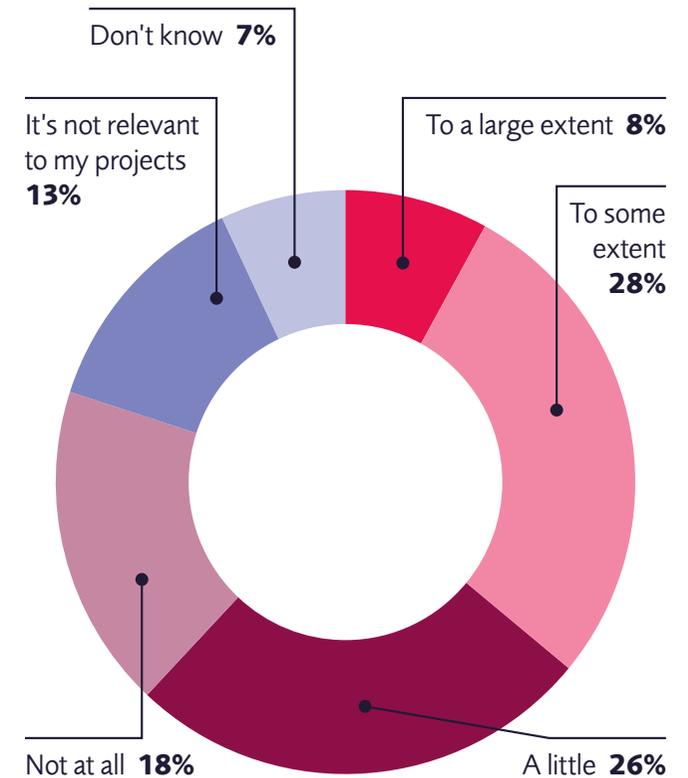
Encouragingly, while there remains a wide range of knowledge and preparedness, only 13 per cent say they think climate change is not relevant to their project.

But of course, even the most committed and engaged project professional has barriers to overcome when embedding sustainability into their work and across the organisation. The results show where the profession feels the biggest challenges exist, with 36 per cent identifying competition from other priorities, 33 per cent pointing to finance or investment restrictions and 27 per cent saying a lack of knowledge and awareness is holding back their efforts.

Climate change and net zero/decarbonisation strategy



Equipped to tackle net zero challenges



Tackling climate change

For those who are already on the journey, there are some clear trends emerging in terms of actions taken to minimise an organisation or project's impact on the environment. Top of the list of measures is a focus on reducing resource waste (identified by 76 per cent of respondents), followed by measures to reduce resource use (75 per cent) and collaboration to reduce waste during project delivery (71 per cent).

What is perhaps most encouraging is the high scores across the board when it comes to the various mitigating measures that project professionals can use to address this urgent issue. Virtually every sector is either pursuing or pushing for more progress against climate change while all measures – from careful resource management to sharing knowledge and rewarding best practice – are seeing widespread adoption.

Naturally, education is central to capturing and driving improvement. And that is reflected in the appetite for a range of educational and knowledge sharing tools to improve the understanding of climate change. The most popular learning tools are webinars, events and/or peer-to-peer knowledge sharing (identified by 54 per cent as helpful) and 'bite-sized learning' packages such as APM Learning (highlighted by 52 per cent).

It is also worth pointing out that while men are more likely than women to find specialist qualifications (24 per cent vs 20 per cent) and project accreditation (28 per cent vs 21 per cent) most useful, women are more likely to find 'bite-sized learning' (58 per cent vs 50 per cent) and webinars useful (62 per cent vs 49 per cent).

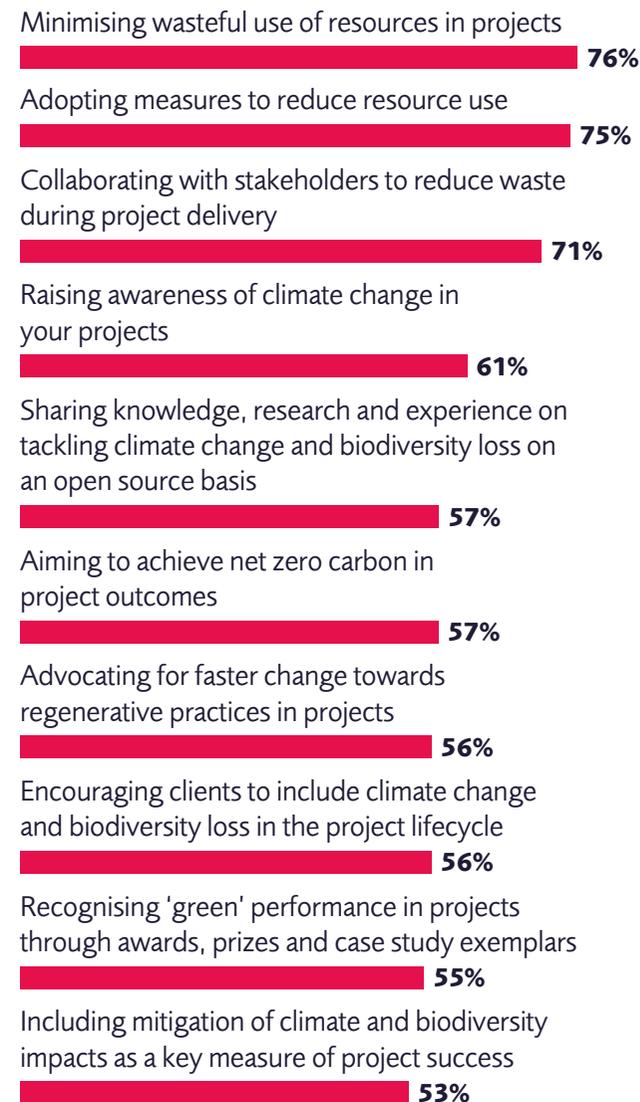
In order to build on these findings, we are evaluating all learning resources to ensure we identify support and content in all areas.

Finally, there is a broad recognition that while educating professionals is useful, educating on climate issues should begin sooner, with almost nine in 10 (88 per cent) of those surveyed believing climate change and sustainability education should be mandatory for the school curriculum and only seven per cent opposed.

Ways to develop climate change knowledge and understanding



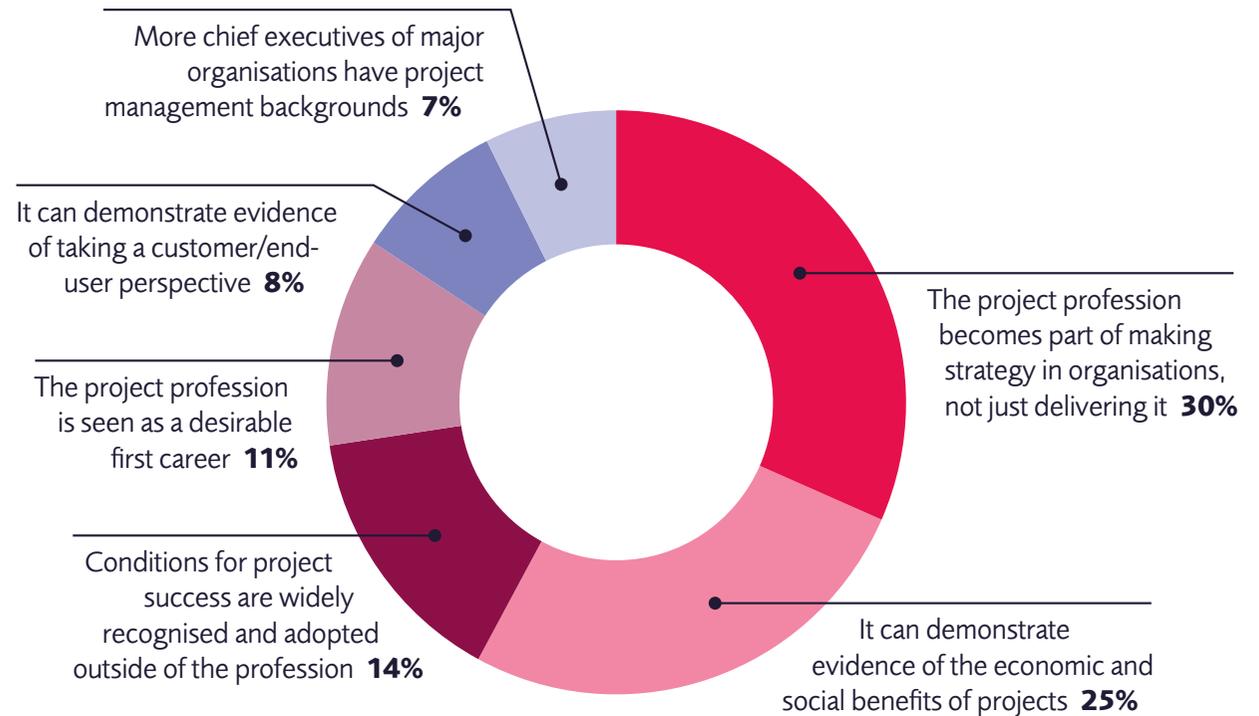
Tackling climate change



The project profession's impact on society

When assessing the project profession's impact on society, once again the results show that project professionals most value having a voice at the table when it comes to defining strategy. Thirty per cent believe that is the most important validation of the profession's work, with 25 per cent stating that demonstrating evidence of the economic and social benefits of projects is also a good indicator of impact.

Looking beyond that, the important indicators that the project profession is having a positive impact on society remain in line with last year, although there do appear to be some splits down age lines. Influencing strategy is less important to younger professionals, who see economic benefits as more important (34 per cent vs 22 per cent).



IN SUMMARY: Rising to the challenge

For many in the profession, the past 12 months have represented the most challenging of their careers: work put on hold, uncertainty over employment prospects at current and future employers and concern over what comes next in the broader economy as the impact of the pandemic and Brexit are fully felt.

And certainly there is no sense that the profession is failing to engage with the pressing issues facing it. From economic uncertainty to changing working patterns, the drive to deliver more from less and the need to embed sustainability into every facet of their work, there's no shortage of challenges.

But despite these, there is a clear sense that the profession as a whole will rise to them. A majority of respondents feel short-term difficulties will be overcome by a combination of long-term planning, investment in innovation and the application of core skills. Most also feel that the profession is well positioned to make a positive impact in the future by demonstrating leadership – both within projects and beyond.

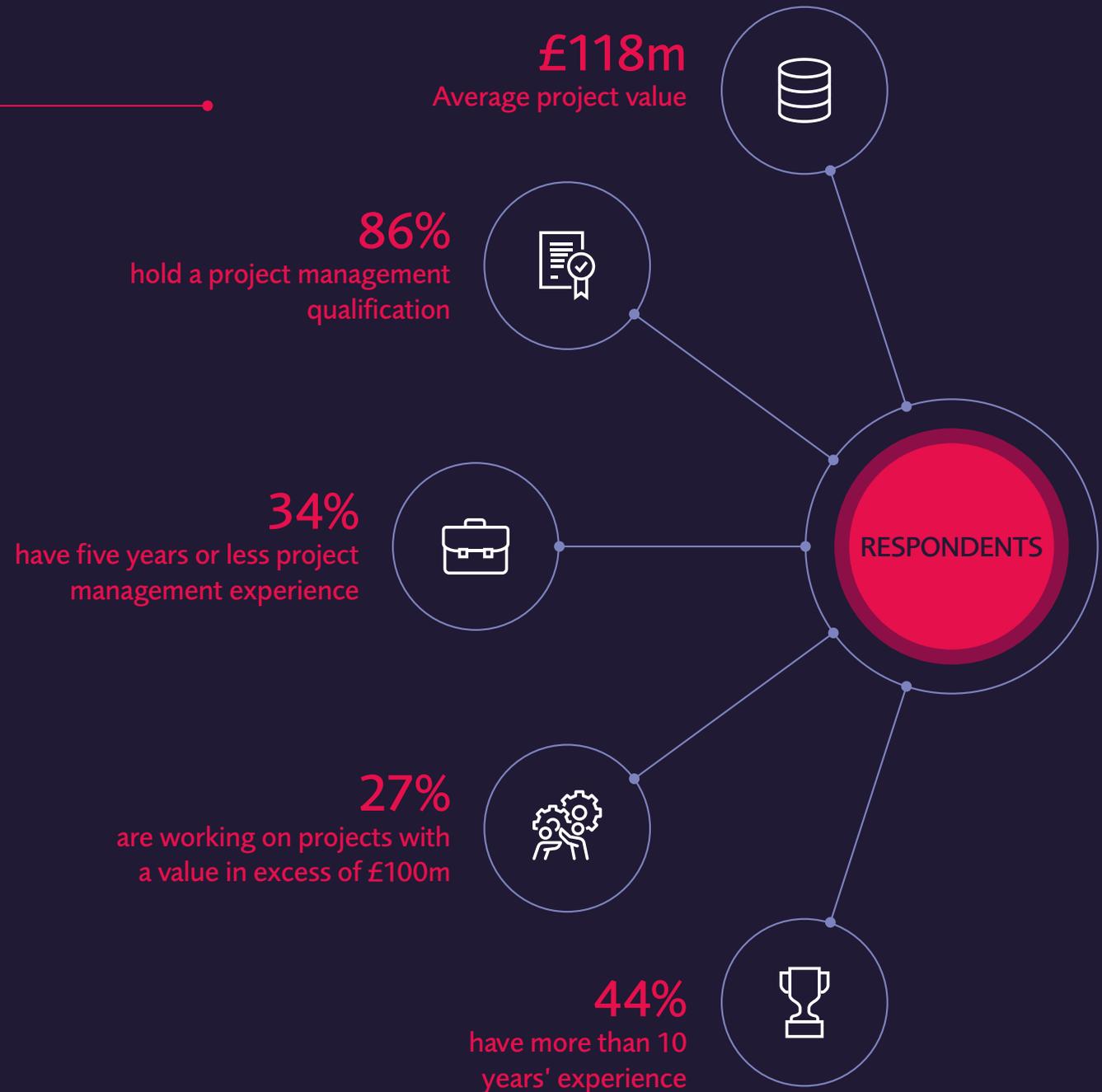


RESPONDENTS

Once again our *Salary and Market Trends Survey* offers a fascinating snapshot into a profession that is continuously changing. Last year's survey showed that project work was increasingly attractive to young people, with 44 per cent of those questioned having five years or less project management experience. That spike in new entrants has now flattened somewhat, to stand at 34 per cent, which suggests that the newer cohort are staying in the profession, gaining experience and moving up the ladder.

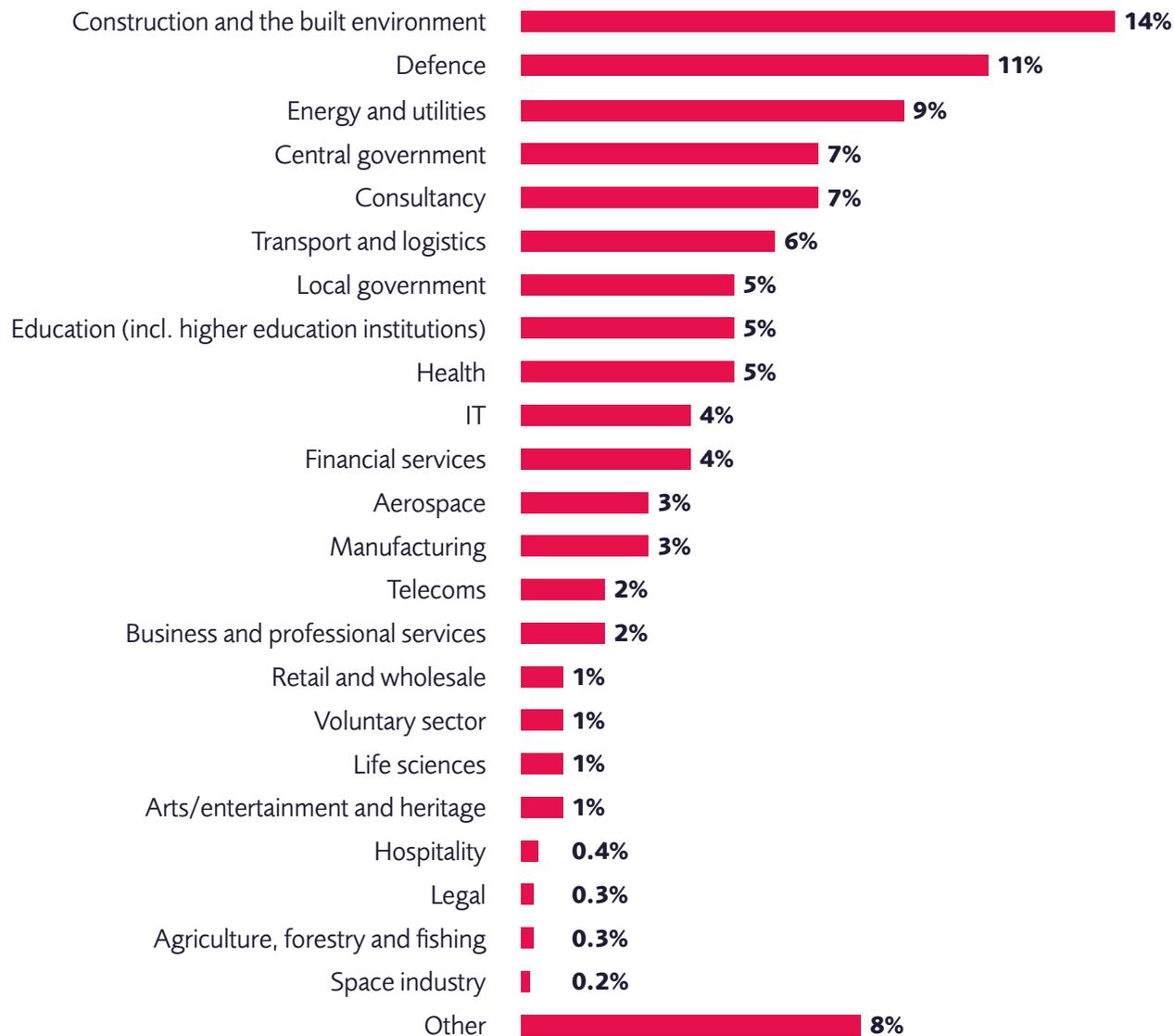
This year's research also shows the enduring strength of some core industries, from construction and defence to energy and transport. Project professionals continue to work in organisations of all sizes, but the average project size has grown by £11m, to a mean level of £118m.

Significantly, it may be that the pandemic has emphasised the value of professional qualifications: the research shows that interest in project management remains strong, with 86 per cent of those questioned holding at least one project management qualification, an increase on the previous year.



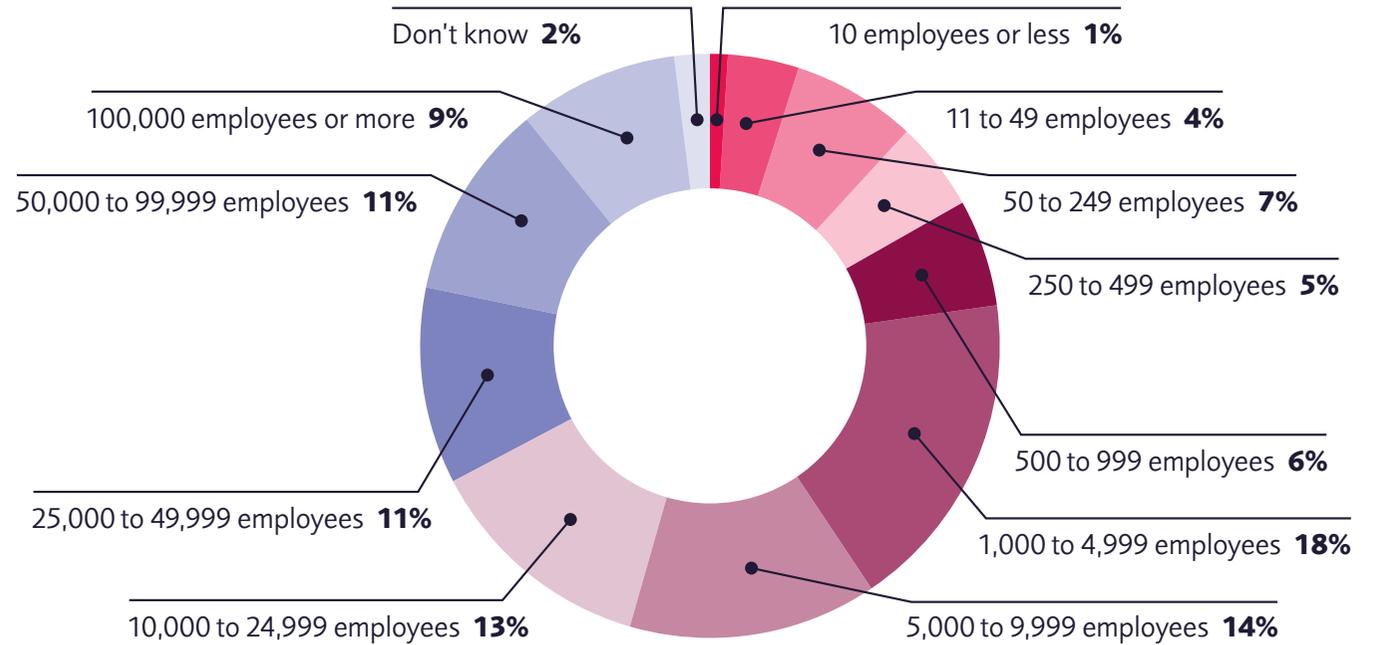
Sector

As the findings broadly illustrate, movement between roles and sectors in the past 12 months has declined markedly, in no small part due to coronavirus. As a result, it's not surprising that the same sectors remain the most popular. As with last year, construction, defence and energy make up the top three most popular sectors. It's perhaps not surprising that all three track at either average or above on some key metrics, including proportion in permanent employment, job satisfaction and base salary. Further down the list, there have been small increases in the health and IT sectors.



Organisation size

Again, the marked decline in movement is reflected in the size profile of the employers represented. Indeed, the split shows virtually no change from the previous year, with a bulge in the middle as organisations employing between 1,000 and 4,999 staff make up the single largest group (18 per cent). Meanwhile, the proportion of those employed at the largest organisations – those with 25,000 staff or more – has grown from 29 per cent to 31 per cent.

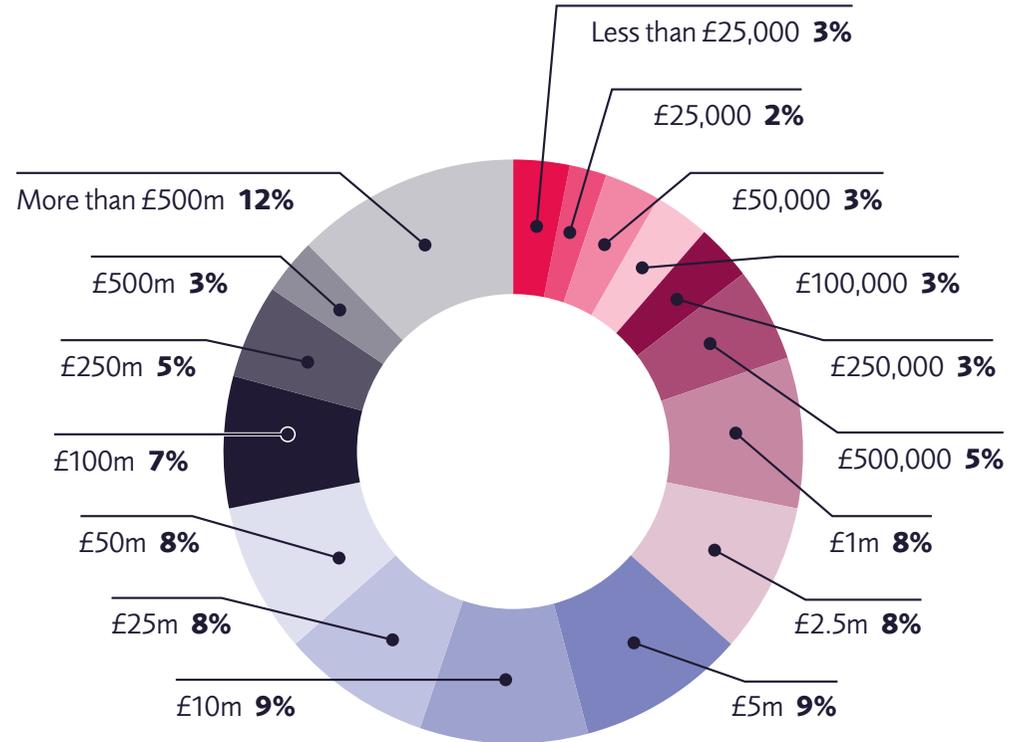


Project size

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the mean value of the largest projects worked on by project professionals over the past 12 months has increased by £11.6m since last year.

The average project value has hit a mean level of £118.2m, up from £106.6m. Regionally, the average value of a project in the North West (£140,833,453) has now overtaken London (£137,842,580) for the first time, but projects outside the UK remain the most valuable (£160,673,641).

It is also worth noting that those who have achieved **Chartered Project Professional (ChPP)** status are being trusted with the largest projects. The research shows that they tend to work on projects with a mean value of £233.7m – far above the average value.

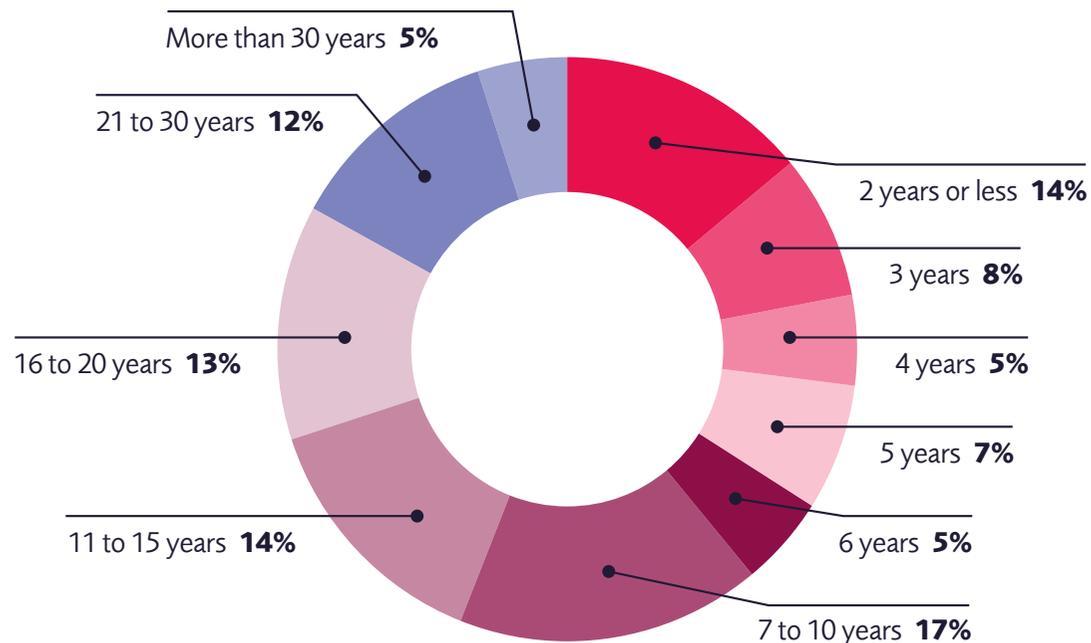


Experience

Last year the results highlighted a significant increase in the number of younger people joining the profession. That pipeline of talent is now moving further up the value chain and taking on more senior roles as they build on their skills and experience.

That trend has dipped slightly in this year's results, with the proportion of those with less than two years' experience in the profession dropping from 20 per cent to 14 per cent, and those with less than five years' experience has declined from 44 per cent to 34 per cent.

That can be partly explained by last year's cohort gaining more experience and reporting broad levels of satisfaction, as well as a shift in the profile of survey respondents towards the older age brackets. However, it's worth noting that one in five women in the survey are new to the profession, with less than two years' experience.



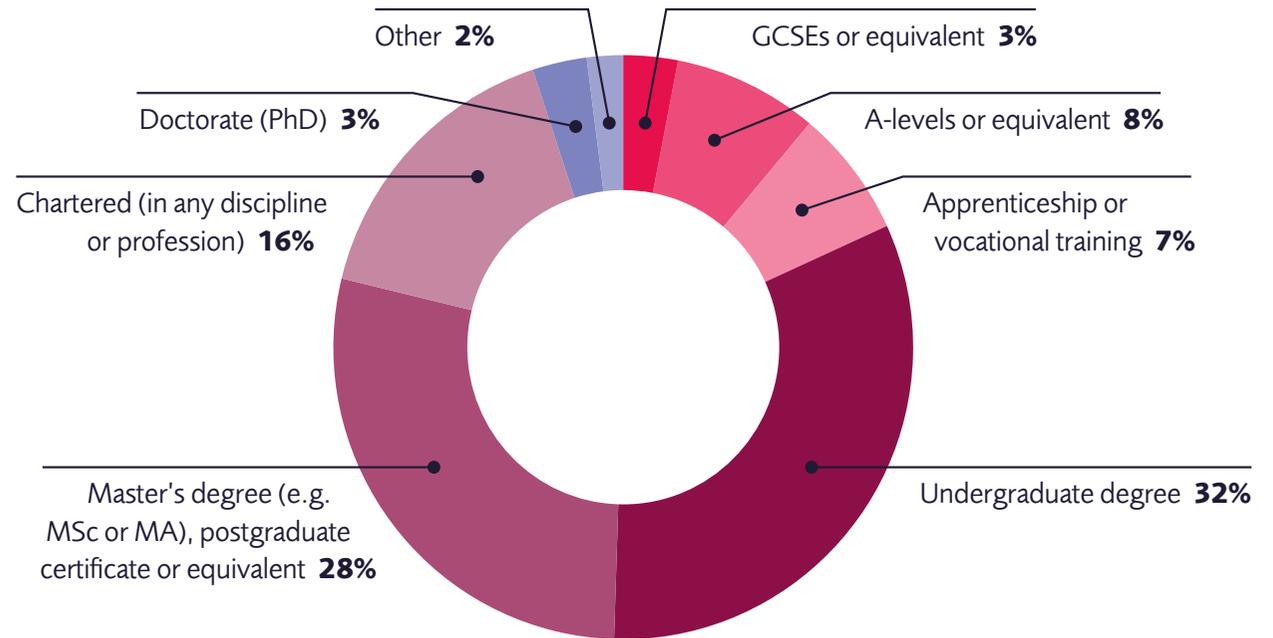
Education

It is encouraging to report a significant increase in the number who hold a project management qualification, rising from 83 per cent to 86 per cent over the past year.

Once again it would appear that new entrants continue to see a project management qualification as a good way to build a career. Interest in the **APM Project Fundamentals Qualification** remains steady at 20 per cent this year. It is especially popular among 25-to-34-year-olds, with 27 per cent of respondents in that age bracket pursuing the qualification. However, the **APM qualification** of choice continues to be the **APM Project Management Qualification** with 42 per cent of respondents having successfully passed the exam.

Beyond that, the educational profile of the project profession remains stable. The majority have been educated to university level or above (79 per cent). This year's survey reveals little change elsewhere, with the proportion of those who are Chartered increasing slightly from 14 per cent to 16 per cent. Those with postgraduate degrees is also largely unchanged.

Interestingly, of those who say they were the first in their family to attend university, more than a third went on to qualify at master's level, indicating the commitment displayed by those for whom higher education was not a given. Energy was the sector with the highest proportion of **Chartered Project Professionals (ChPP)**, at 11 per cent.



Thank you for reading our *Salary and Market Trends Survey* research report. Remember to join in the discussion on our LinkedIn and Twitter channels using **#APMsalariesurvey**

Association for Project Management

Ibis House, Regent Park
Summerleys Road
Princes Risborough
Buckinghamshire HP27 9LE

Tel (UK) 0845 458 1944
Tel (Int) +44 1844 271 640
Email info@apm.org.uk
Web apm.org.uk

