

PR and Communications Census 2025 | UK





FOREWORD

**Sarah Waddington CBE, CEO,
PRCA**

It's only been a year since our previous Census (the one prior to that was in 2021) but our industry needs up-to-date research because change is happening thick and fast. AI adoption continues apace, reshaping ways of working. Truth and integrity matter more than ever amid a wave of fake news and misinformation.

The PR, public affairs and communications industry must balance creativity, expertise and technology to deliver measurable and effective outcomes. Strategies are required to achieve impact and meaningful change and it's heartening to see a drive towards enhanced strategic capabilities.

Our 2025 Census identifies strategy and planning as the number one area PR professionals believe has become more important over the past two years. When we break down the participant base to concentrate on those who are PRCA members, we find that 79% belong to an organisation whose PR, public affairs and communications clients ask for strategic or management advice either constantly or frequently.

Strategy is increasingly the name of the game. This underlines that the PRCA's goal of futureproofing our industry through a move away from commoditised services to strategic consultancy is well placed. We'll be working on a roadmap of what this looks like over the coming months. Our training offer is already

geared towards the workforce of the future and this is important because organisations need to build the capacity and capability for change - but also this report clearly demonstrates that those who are better qualified are better paid.

Despite the growing use of AI and other technologies, PR, public affairs and communications remains fundamentally a people and relationship business. Our Census provides telling insights into the nature of the industry's workforce. The move toward gender parity in terms of headcount continues. This year the workforce split is 53% female versus 47% male. In 2024, 55% of professionals identified as women.

But when the numbers relate to remuneration, a gender pay gap is all too evident. The problem is especially acute at higher levels. This year we find that the average male salary is 17% higher than that of the average for female workers. An equally concerning ethnicity pay gap is also apparent.

Some employers in the sector take an exemplary approach to equality of opportunity, yet others clearly still lag behind. Improvements must be made in the interest of fairness, and to motivate and retain precious talent.

Overall, I'm optimistic. The PR, public affairs and communications industry is reaching new levels across all areas of business.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOTES ON THE 2025 CENSUS



**Louise Care, Director of
Research Operations, OnePoll**

108,700¹
**Practitioners in PR
and Communications**

74,300
PR professionals

+

34,400
**PR and Communications
Directors**

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

It's a privilege to support PRCA in capturing the pulse of an industry that continues to evolve with energy and ambition. This year's Census draws from nearly 500 voices across agencies, in-house teams and freelancers. Our sample base is spread through the regions, although by far the greatest concentration (39%) is in London.

Robust research illuminates. My hope is that this year's Census will shine a light on the state of the industry and the challenges it faces in a way that informs action. Data provides

evidence, and evidence provides firm foundations for building strategies and a fairer future.

In the so-called 'post-truth' era awash with misinformation, facts have never been more important. They go hand-in-hand with ethics.

METHODOLOGY

The 2025 PRCA Census was conducted by OnePoll in accordance with the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. A total of 478 professionals participated between 1 September and 22 October 2025. The sample included 300 panel respondents and 178 sourced via PRCA and 72Point outreach. OnePoll are MRS Company Partners, adhere to the Global Data Quality Pledge, and hold corporate membership with ESOMAR and the British Polling Council.

The 2025 PR, Public Affairs and Communications Census highlights the sector's growing strategic firepower. Strategy & planning (59%) now represents work for clients to almost the same extent as media relations (62%). Moreover, it is identified as the area that has most increased in importance over the past two years.

Insights & measurement ranks second, indicating the necessity of demonstrating effectiveness in a turbulent, fast-evolving landscape. Media fragmentation continues as new technologies such as GEO come to the fore. Much maligned Advertising Value Equivalents are still widely used but the industry is embracing more sophisticated evaluation metrics such as the Integrated Evaluation Framework, Barcelona Principles 3.0 and PESO.

Only a quarter (25%) of comms professionals are confident that their organisation is completely equipped to deal with changes to the industry, although a further 45% score their organisation's readiness for change a four out of five. But 30% have a lower level of confidence. AI and automation in communications is the number one issue members want the PRCA to speak out about more.

The industry's workforce is becoming better educated. 35% have a postgraduate master's degree, and 8% hold a PhD/doctorate. Our data shows a clear correlation between academic attainment and remuneration.

On the subject of money, our 2024 Census condemned the

persistence of the gender pay gap and pointed to an "urgent need" for structural changes. Unfortunately, although many employers strive to embed equality and inclusion, this year's gender and ethnicity pay gap data is damning. More must be done to level the playing field.

But there is a bright note regarding social mobility. 57% of practitioners have parents who did not attend university.

“Unfortunately, although many employers strive to embed equality and inclusion, this year’s gender and ethnicity pay gap data is damning. More must be done to level the playing field.”

ROLES AND SALARIES



SECTORS

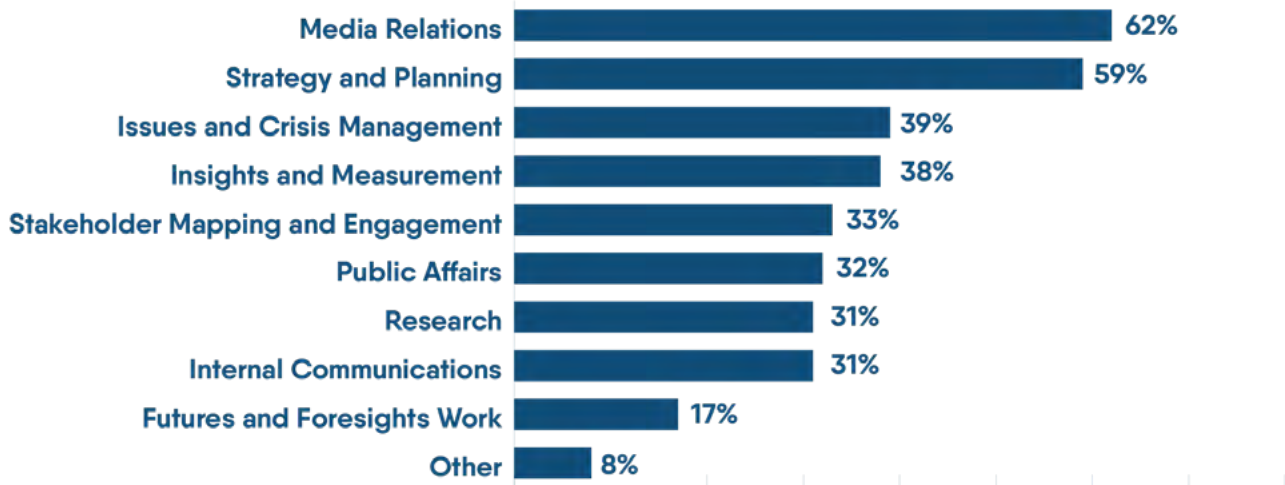
Although media relations does not dominate the PR landscape as it once did, for 62% of comms professionals it still represents part of their organisation's work for clients. Strategy and planning work (59%) is almost as widespread. There is then a 20 percentage-point gap to a cluster of seven specialist areas of work: crisis and issues management (39%), insights and measurement (38%), stakeholder mapping and engagement (33%), public affairs (32%), research (31%), and internal communications (31%).

A quarter (25%) of our base describe Consumer Services, Media & Marketing as a main area of business for their organisation. Technology/IT & Communications (20%), Professional & Technical Services (14%), Business Services (13%) and Financial Services (11%) also feature high on a 25-choice list.

Over three-quarters (78%) of the base work for

organisations that employ fewer than 1,000 people in the UK, with 25% employed by organisations with a UK headcount of 51-250 people. This is to be expected because over half work for agencies; either PR/communications agencies (35%) or digital/social media agencies (16%). A further 9% work in a freelance or independent consultancy capacity.

Private sector (26%) leads the way for in-house roles, followed by the charity/not-for-profit (8%). Local government and Other account for 3% each.



SALARIES

The average industry salary is £81,224. The largest number of people (14%) are in the £40,000-49,999 salary band. But the second most prevalent (12%) is the considerably higher £100,000-124,999 range.

At the bottom end of the scale, 3% report earning less than £20,000 and 6% earn between £20,000-29,999. As one would expect, a significant proportion of those on lower salaries are younger professionals. 38% of those earning £20,000-29,999 are in the 18-24 age bracket. Meanwhile, 4% earned £200,000 or more

Sadly, our data reveals an ongoing gender pay gap problem at higher levels of the industry. The average male salary of £88,257 is 17% higher than the female average of £75,141. Women outnumber men in each of the five pay brackets between £20,000-79,999. But in each of the six pay brackets from £80,000 upwards, men outnumber women.

There is a clear correlation between academic attainment and remuneration. While the average salary for someone with an undergraduate degree is £78,566, that rises to £89,557 for individuals with master's degree and £103,076 for those with a doctorate/PhD. 45% of the industry workforce hold an undergraduate degree, 35% a postgraduate/master's and 8% a doctorate.

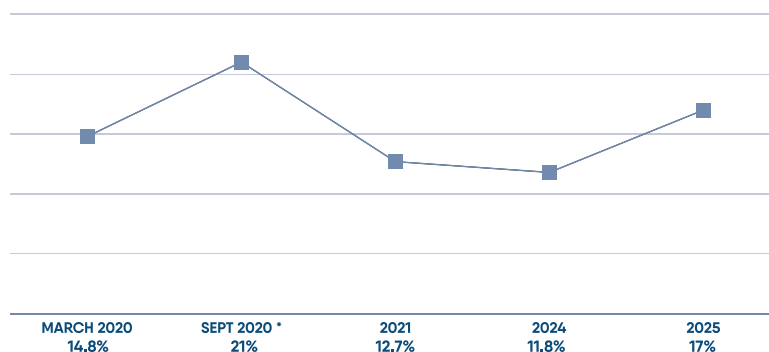
SALARIES AVERAGE IN THE UK REGIONS

Up to £60k
» Channel Islands – £34,999
» Yorkshire & The Humber – £56,363
» South West – £59,895
£61k-£80k
» West Midlands – £68,680
» Scotland – £69,814
» South East – £71,634
» Wales – £79,999
£81k and upwards
» North West – £83,288
» East Midlands – £83,815
» Northern Ireland – £87,499
» East of England – £88,374
» London – £88,708
» North East – £90,832



THE GENDER PAY GAP IN 2025 IS

17%



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

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES



HOW IS THE INDUSTRY EVOLVING?

We asked PR professionals to pick up to three areas they believe have become more important over the past two years. Strategy & planning (43%) comes top, ahead of insights & measurement (35%), media relations (33%) and issues and crisis management (32%).

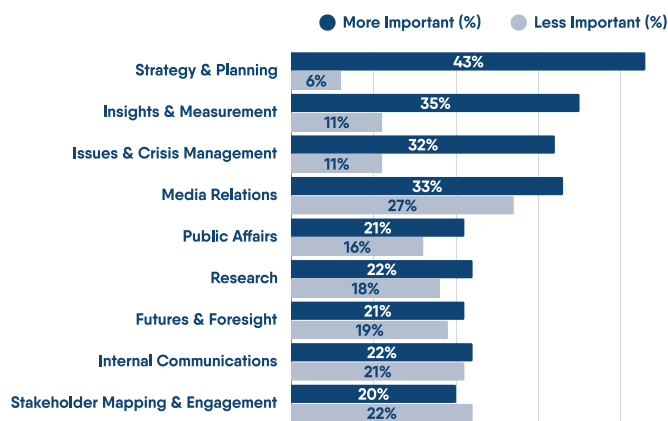
Conversely, when we asked which areas have become less important our base put media relations (27%) at the head of the list, reflecting the declining influence of traditional media. Stakeholder mapping & engagement (22%) and internal communications (21%) are the only other areas above 20%.

Only a quarter (25%) of comms professionals are confident that their organisation is completely equipped to deal with changes to the industry, although a further 45% score their organisation's readiness for change a four out of five. That leaves 30% who have a lower level of confidence.

In this era of rapid change, it is vital to stay informed about trends and developments. PRWeek, PRmoment and PROvoke Media are the most popular industry publications/websites. Gratifyingly, the PRCA blog ranks fourth, browsed at least once a fortnight by 31% of PR pros.

Given that insights and measurement is identified as growing in importance, it's telling to see to see which evaluation metrics are most popular. Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs), though much disparaged, come in second place, used by 37%. But more sophisticated methods are widespread, including the Integrated Evaluation Framework (38%), Barcelona Principles 3.0 (24%) and PESO (23%).

“Only a quarter of comms professionals are confident that their organisation is completely equipped to deal with changes to the industry”



INDUSTRY DEMOGRAPHICS AND DEI

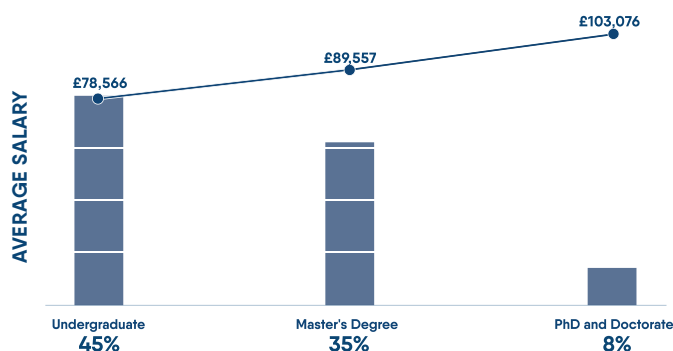


SOME HEADLINE NUMBERS

According to our data, the gender split within the industry is 53% female versus 47% male. One person in our base identified as non-binary.

More than one-third (39%) of comms professionals are age 25-34, with a further 29% age 35-44. Under one in 10 (9%) are 55+. Ethnic split is 77% white, 22% non-white.

London (39%) is far and away the leading location for employer headquarters. The North West (15%) is the only other region to achieve double figures.



REDUCING PAY GAPS

Earlier, we highlighted a significant gender pay gap. It is a thorny and persistent problem. Last year's Census reported an 11.8% pay gap (and, at 17%, it is worse this year). We asked several questions about closing this gap.

11% of PR professionals do not believe their organisation is doing enough to combat this disparity. Among women, that figure rises to 18%.

But what would help to reduce the gap? The top three selected solutions are: create roles with more flexibility; greater equity of maternity/paternity benefits; redesign senior roles so they are open to all.

The ethnicity pay gap is even greater. This year it is reported as 18%. Again, we asked people if they believe their organisation is doing enough to help combat this. And again, 11% do not think so. But there is a distinct gender divide to this opinion. 17% of women hold this view versus only 4% of men.

USING DATA TO DRIVE FAIRNESS

Robust data is required to fully understand DEI issues and drive greater fairness. Many employers are still not doing enough in this area.

We asked which diversity data employers collect, for example through staff surveys. More than a fifth (21%) do not collect any data on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background and neurodiversity.

However, in organisations that do collect such data, the main ways it is used is to improve recruitment practices (54%), improve talent development (53%) and improve day-to-day people practices (52%). 20% of employers also publish this data externally.

Social mobility is an important dimension of DEI. While the profession attracts many people from privileged backgrounds, 57% of our base sample this year have parents who did not go to university.

This year's Census finds that 44% of organisations believe they are proactive in considering socio-economic background or improving social mobility when recruiting or promoting. Another 28% consider it but concede there is "limited action." Evidently, there is a way to go.

Overall, 74% of practitioners rate their organisation's approach to diversity and inclusion as good or very good. This drops to 68% among women but rises to 82% among men. A difference that tells a story.



...We asked people if they believe their organisation is doing enough to help combat this [i.e. decrease the EPG]. And again, 11% do not think so. But there is a distinct gender divide to this opinion. 17% of women hold this view versus only 4% of men.





WORKING PATTERNS AND WELLBEING

REMOTE REMAINS A MAINSTAY

Despite the recent imposition of return to office mandates by several prominent businesses (notably in tech and financial services), remote working remains a mainstay within our industry. Hybrid working (split between home and office) is the primary working pattern for 42%. Another 25% are either mostly remote (17%) or work from home all the time (8%).

That is less common for those working in-house in the private sector, where only 8% are mostly remote and 3% fully remote. Only about a third of the PR workforce either work mostly from the office but with some remote days (26%) or are fully office based (8%).

The picture has changed little over the past 12 months, and the great majority (83%) are satisfied with current working arrangements. If professionals could choose their ideal working arrangement, there would be an uptick in each of the remote-heavy categories. Nearly twice as many women as men (38% versus 20%) would choose a largely or totally remote arrangement. One could speculate that childcare and other caring responsibilities are a factor. Our 2024 Census found that 53% of PR professionals report having dependents, with the majority caring for children under 18.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

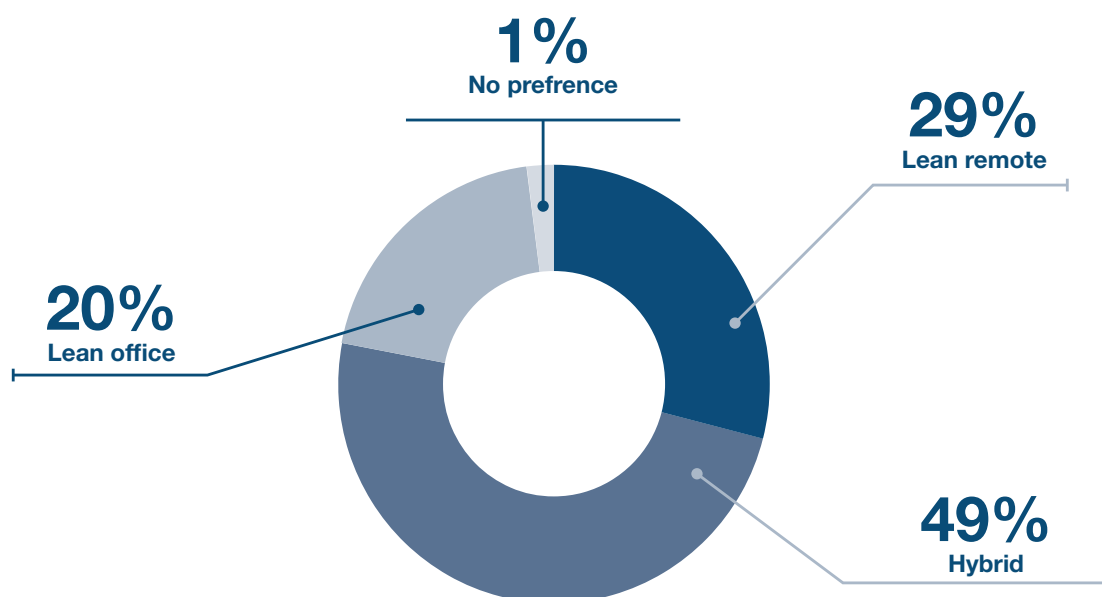
Wellbeing has been a hot topic in the industry since the pandemic. Our data shows it remains an ongoing matter of concern. While 69% rate their mental wellbeing at work over the past year as good or very good, for 8% it is either poor or very poor.

Correspondingly, 8% feel their organisation falls short in providing mental health support for employees. On the other hand, 71% think their organisation does this either well or very well.

There is a noticeable disparity between the way women and men feel about their mental health. While 80% of men judge their mental health at work as either good or very good, this is true for only 58% of women.

Our 2024 Census found that 22% of PR and communications professionals work with a chronic illness or medical condition. This year we asked how well those with chronic conditions are supported. 74% believe their organisation is good or very good in this respect. But 5% feel their organisation is not good, and 14% take a neutral stance.

IDEAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS





PERCEPTIONS OF THE INDUSTRY

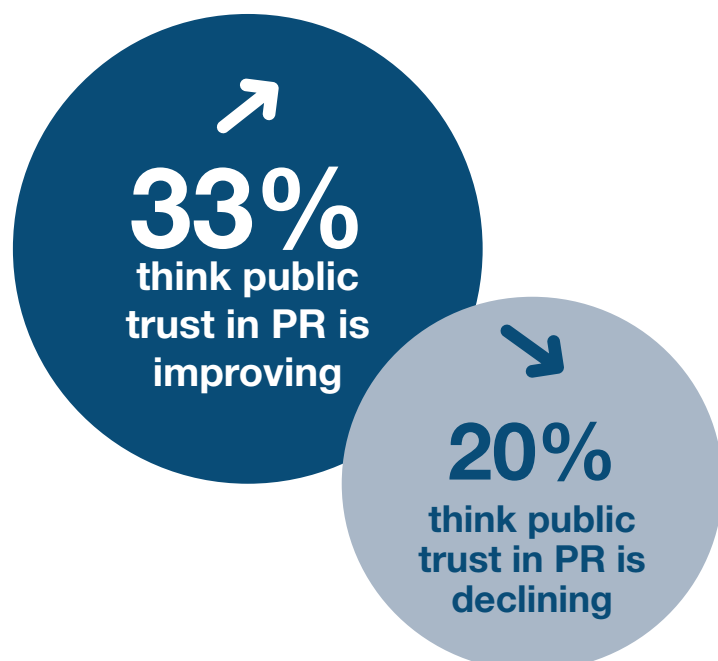
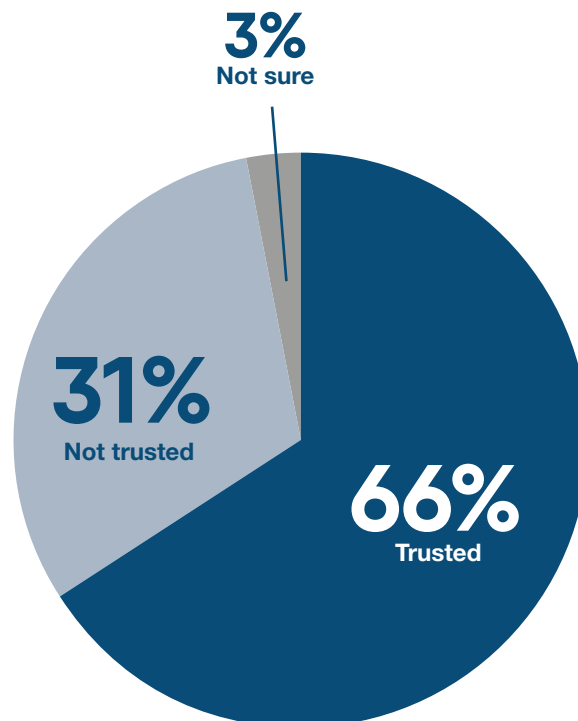
Building trust is intrinsic to the work of many professional communicators, but the industry itself must navigate trust issues.

Some members of the general public may associate PR with 'spin'. Yet within the PR and communications industry, a majority of practitioners think it is seen as trustworthy.

Two-thirds (66%) feel the industry is trusted versus almost one-third (31%) who think it is not. But there are some demographic differences. Practitioners who are younger, or male, or non-white have greater belief that the industry is seen as trusted.

More practitioners think public trust in PR is improving (33%) than declining (20%). Good news for everyone championing our industry.

PERCIEVED TRUST IN THE PR AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY BY GENERAL PUBLIC



TRAINING AND CAREER PROGRESSION



We asked practitioners whether they have completed any PRCA training in the past 12 months. 44% have done so personally. A further 22% have not, but they know of colleagues who have. Only 9% were unaware of PRCA training opportunities.

PRCA offers short, specialist diplomas that can be studied in six months to a year. Which topics do people want to see included in a new course? Leadership communication is the top choice, ahead of team management and strategic communication (i.e. planning, measurement).

Career advancement is important for personal growth and professional development. A healthy majority (72%) of comms pros believe that their current role supports career progression. Yet 11% think they are not well supported, and 16% feel ambivalent.

Some employers and managers in our industry must do more to support career progression. Failure to do so may damage morale and undermine talent retention.

DIPLOMAS PR AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS WOULD LIKE SEE OFFERED



50%
of 18-24 year olds
would like to see
team management
courses
▲ 20% higher than those
aged 55+_

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**WHAT MEMBERS
WANT FROM PRCA**

Just over half (51%) of Census participants are PRCA members. This breaks down as 58% agency, 29% in-house and 13% freelancer. We asked these members a series of questions about their work, how they interact with and perceive us, and how we can raise our game.

First, some context. Providing strategic advice is central to the work of many PRCA members. 79% belong to an organisation whose PR and communications clients ask for strategic or management advice either constantly or frequently. A further 19% are asked occasionally.

More than four in 10 (41%) believe their organisation is well-equipped to provide strategic or management advice to clients. But a slightly higher number (44%) still see room for improvement, awarding themselves a 'being equipped' score of four out of five.

There was less confidence regarding the provision of strategic or management advice to internal stakeholders. Only 32% feel their PR and communications team is completely equipped (please note that this finding comes from a comparatively small base of 71 respondents).

Six out of 10 PRCA members are not only aware of our Pitch Forward campaign for a better pitching process for the comms industry but try to adhere to it. Another 13% are aware but don't try to adhere and a little over a quarter (27%) are unfamiliar with our

work in this area. Clearly, we need to keep banging the drum to ensure a more transparent, fair and efficient process for both clients and agencies.

Training and development opportunities was the highest ranking priority in the PRCA's offer. Three others followed close behind: sharing knowledge and insights to aid futureproofing; promoting the highest ethical standards and best practice; providing networking opportunities.

“Amid the ongoing adoption of and debate around AI, it comes as no surprise that AI and automation in communications is the number one issue members want the PRCA to speak out about more”

But which additional services or resources would members like us to offer? Top of the list is greater networking and mentoring support. Followed by: more advanced training and CPD opportunities; toolkits/templates for day-to-day practice; and enhanced research and insight reports.

Amid the ongoing adoption of and debate around AI,

it comes as no surprise that AI and automation in communications is the number one issue members want the PRCA to speak out about more (62% of respondents in our 2024 Census expressed concern about the potential risks and limitations of AI). Misinformation/disinformation is close behind, followed by ethical communications and transparency.

There is no room for complacency around ethics. While 57% of members are very familiar with the PRCA codes of conduct they are expected to follow, that still leaves over 40% who are only somewhat aware (36%) or even less informed than that.

Over a third (36%) of members believe we are a very effective advocate for the industry's societal contribution. But answers to this question are a mixed bag. 26% give us either a two or three out of five, and 11% don't know.

Opinions about PRCA's leadership and governance are a little more favourable. More than two-thirds (68%) are either completely satisfied or give us a score of four out of five. Higher still, 71% of members feel their views are fully or somewhat represented in PRCA's decision making. We cannot, however, rest on our laurels as only 29% indicated full satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The PR, public affairs and communications industry is adapting fast to embrace societal and technological changes. AI is driving enormous opportunities but for many it is also a cause for concern. The good news is we will shortly publish a Green Paper to guide member decision making and will continue to provide leadership in this area.

Undoubtedly, PR has become more strategic and this manifests itself in various ways, from a presence at the boardroom table to higher level positioning, message development and campaign planning. Organisations and individuals cannot afford to get left behind in the race to develop strategic knowhow.

Last year's Census concluded with a call for organisations to

prioritise equitable pay structures, support diverse talent to consider a career in communications and foster adaptable workplaces that meet evolving demands and encourage longevity for all. Insufficient progress has been made in these areas and we must reiterate that call from 2024 here. While pay gaps often grab the headlines, we should be mindful of other disparities too. For instance, only 58% of women judge their mental health at work as either good or very good compared to 80% of men.

Delivering brilliant comms work is only one side of the coin. For our industry to be truly inclusive and carry on thriving, we need to watch out for each other. Take this as a commitment from the PRCA that we will develop new ways to help this sector do just that.

ABOUT PRCA

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

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

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

PRCA

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