AMA resources

AMA Benchmarking Survey 2019
— member report

Foreword

The AMA's first benchmarking member survey has shown up some illuminating insights. In particular, the difference in sentiments between early stage career individuals and those further on in their career. In many organisations there is a disconnect between the view from the top and the experience on the ground.

That's not to take away from how tough it can be at the top. The work-life balance reported by many at senior level is also a cause for concern. We know that the sector is not well remunerated, so ensuring teams feel valued and that their views are heard is an important way of expressing appreciation.

While smaller organisations may struggle to demonstrate the growth that larger organisations seem to achieve, they do, in general terms, seem to be places where people feel more valued.

We hope that you find this report useful. Whether you want to check your email open rate, or compare how your team feels to others in similar organisations, we hope you're able to use and apply these findings to support your work, or make a case for change.

Cath Hume, CEO, AMA

1 in 3

early career level members have not had any role-specific training in the past year

75%

of senior career level members agree that their organisation is open to change

1 in 4

early career level members do not agree that they feel valued by their organisation

50%

of senior career level members strongly agree their role is compatible with a work-life balance

33%

of early career level members do not agree that their views are heard in their organisation

83%

of senior career level members agree that their views are heard in their organisation

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AMA Member Benchmarking Survey 2019

Over 500 AMA members took part in this, our first member benchmarking survey. The survey was created in response to member feedback, and we'd like to thank you all for sharing your views.

The responses were broadly representative of AMA membership, covering the whole of the UK, and over 10 arts, heritage and cultural areas of focus — referred to as art form.

As this is the first time we have run this survey, we've learned a lot during the process, which we will use to shape future activity. We thank our freelancer members in particular for highlighting aspects they would like to see addressed in future surveys.

Amy Firth
Head of Marketing — Membership
AMA

Methodology

We collected responses via SurveyMonkey, which was sent to all current AMA members in February 2019. Not all questions were relevant to all members, so total responses to some questions can vary.

The survey focused on understanding the profile of the respondents, the work they do, and benchmarks associated with impact and role satisfaction.

We aimed to identify benchmarks that members can use in their work, and to feed back to their organisations so they can identify steps that can be taken to improve or maintain effectiveness. Where possible we have also broken down this data against geographical location of the organisation, art form and career stage of respondents.

We have presented the findings of the survey into sections that look at how our membership breaks down in terms of career stage; organisation types and more; the scope of roles, including budgets and benchmarks; and employment trends, wellbeing and organisational progress.

If you want to see particular findings broken down against these factors that are not covered in this report, please contact membership@a-m-a.co.uk and one of our team will be happy to help.

A note on the data

Our sample was self-selecting and, while the total pool of responses is representative of the AMA membership as a whole, how the sample breaks down by geographic location, art form and career stage may not be as robust.

We therefore present the information as it stands from the survey but advise caution in interpreting the findings from smaller subsections.

About you — our members

— a diverse spread of locations, art forms, organisation size and career stages — but lots in common

AMA's membership is made up of people working in marketing and other roles involved in communicating with, engaging, and growing audiences with arts, cultural and heritage organisations and activities.

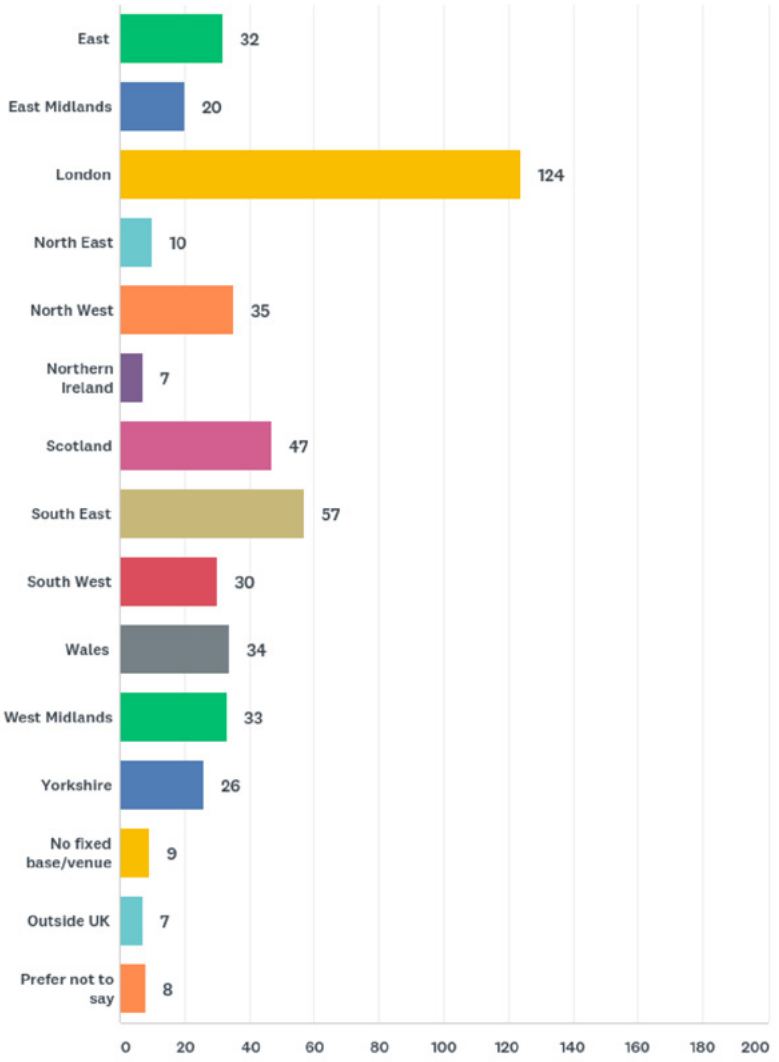
The survey shows that our membership covers all levels of experience, and shows that many AMA members have a long history of working in the sector.

We have looked at how the data splits by geographical area, art form, organisation size and career stage, and how our sample splits across these criteria can be shown in the following pages. In looking further into the data, it becomes apparent that, in general terms, there are more similarities than differences in what respondents report.

The geographical profile of respondents roughly maps onto the density of arts organisations across the UK[1]. Sample sizes from **Northern Ireland**, the **North East**, **Outside the UK** and **No fixed base** were particularly small.

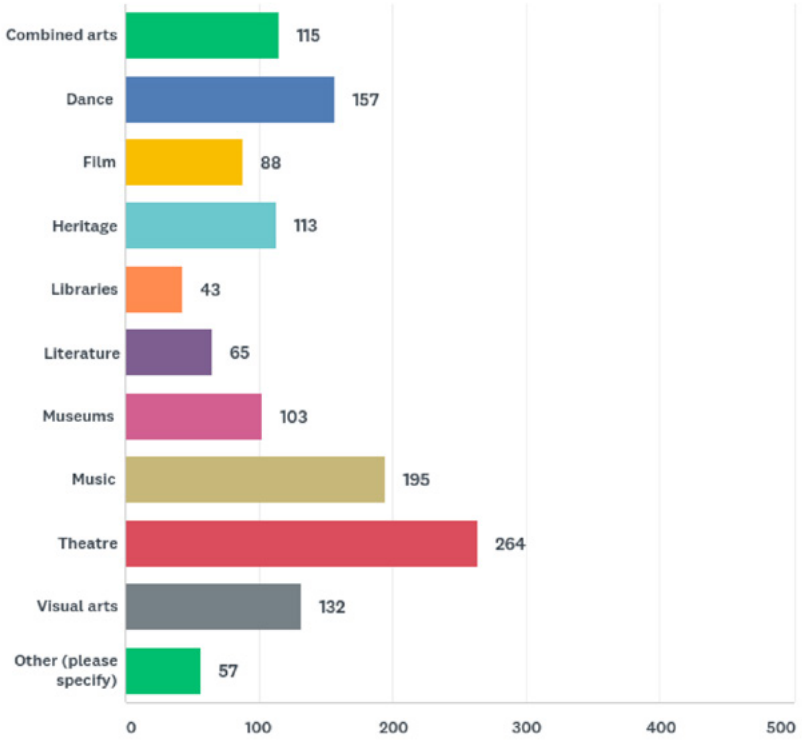
1. Nesta: https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/mapping-a-creative-nation/

Q9 What is the geographic location of your organisation?



We asked respondents to identify which art forms were most relevant to them. Multiple options could be selected, depending on what respondents felt were most relevant to their organisation, which is why the totals are greater than the number of respondents. We cross-referenced some of the subsequent answers based on single art forms, to give an indication of whether the art form correlated with particular trends.

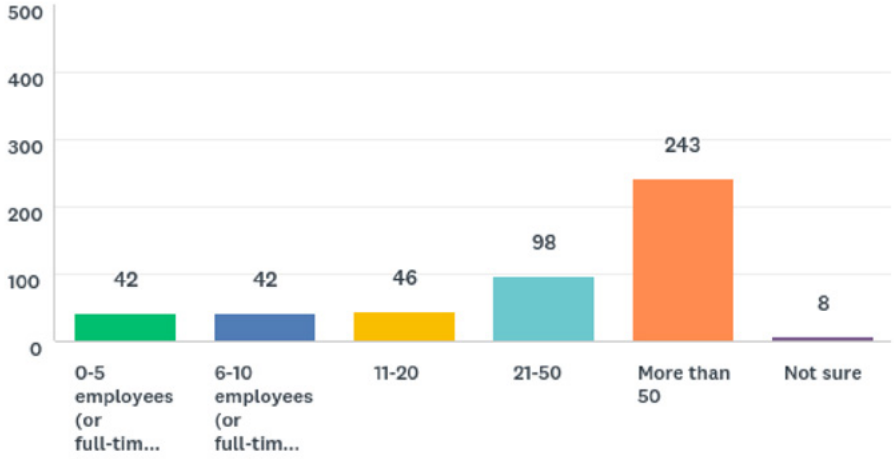
Q9 What are the main types of art form more relevant to your organisation?



We also looked at organisation size. Around half of all respondents work in organisations with more than 50 employees. This is not representative of organisations in the sector, but does reflect that larger organsiations have more employees and therefore it is likely that there are multiple individuals responding from within the same large organisations.

42 respondents (8%) work in organisations with five or fewer employees, and a further 42 respondents work in organisations with 6-10 employees.

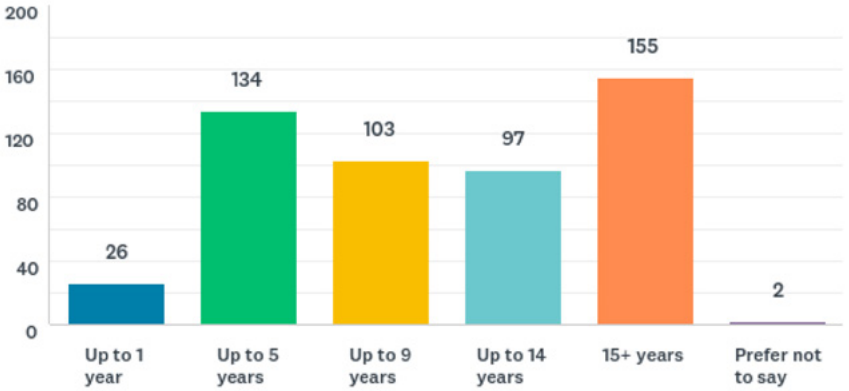
Q12 What size is your organisation?



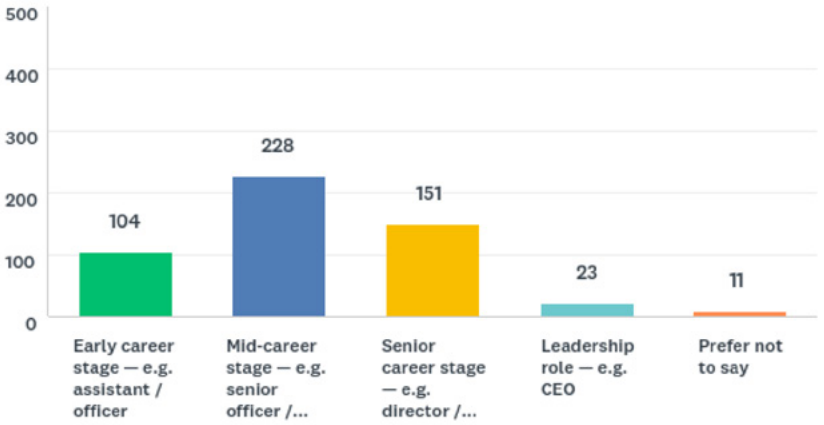
Does experience lead to seniority — or a glass ceiling?

Another factor we looked at was years of experience working in the sector, and seniority level. The total respondents for each category is shown below.

Q1 How long have you been working in the arts, culture and heritage sector?



Q3 Which of the following best describes your career stage?

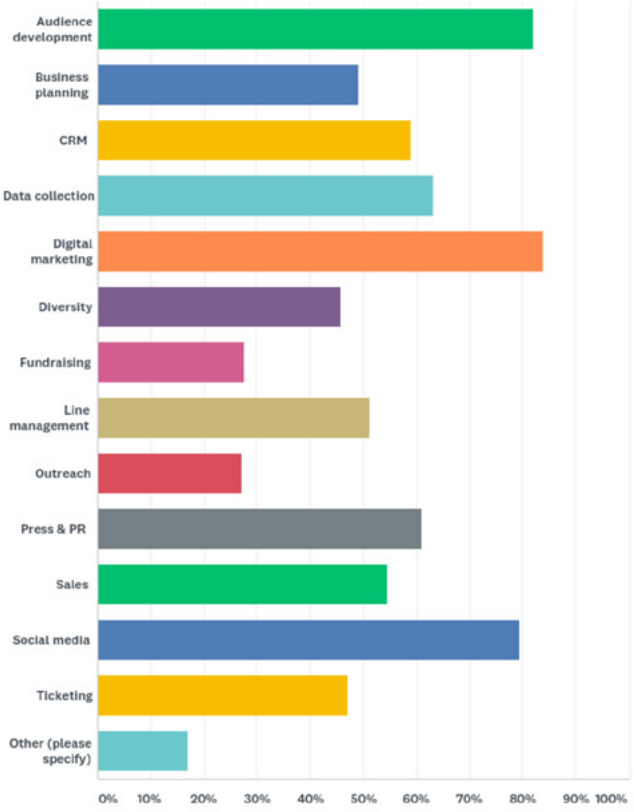


33% of respondents have more than 15 years of experience of working in the arts, culture and heritage sector. 12% of those respondents with more than 15 years' experience working in a leadership role — though almost all leaders have 15+ years' experience. A further 34% are in the first five years of working in the sector.

An increasing range of responsibilities

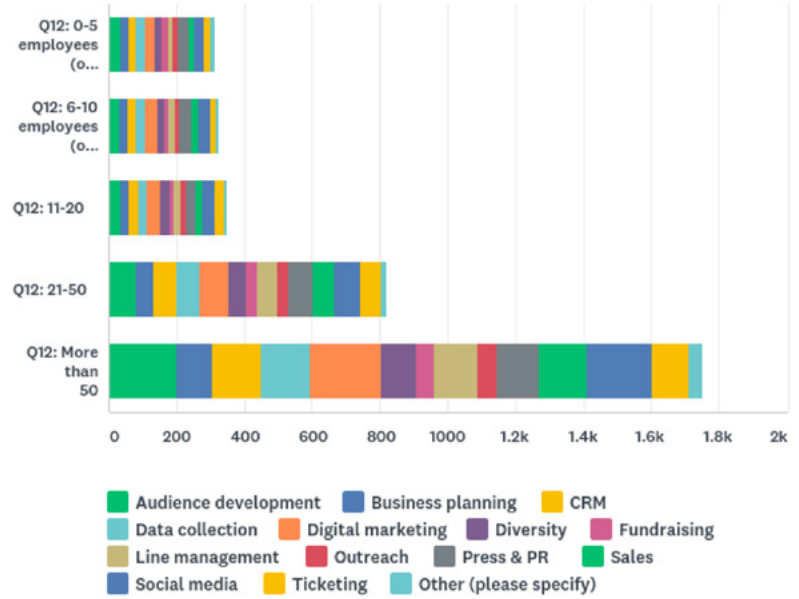
We asked respondents to indicate what their role included. We plan to track this and measure how the sector is shifting and responding to changing technologies and need, and how what is expected from our members adapts.

Q6 Which areas from the following list are included in the scope of your role?



Currently, we can see roles are particularly focused on **Digital Marketing** (84% have digital marketing included in their role), **Audience Development** (82% have audience development included in their role) and **Social Media** (79% have social Media included in their role).

The profile of elements included within respondents' roles is largely the same across artform, and organisation size. This indicates that although the core skillset of our membership is quite wide ranging, it is consistent across organisation types. There are however different profiles depending upon the career stage of respondents.



Leadership level are most likely to be involved in fundraising as part of their role, with this not being an aspect that enters roles until further into the career stage of most members. Likewise, diversity falls outside the scope of roles that are not Leadership focused.

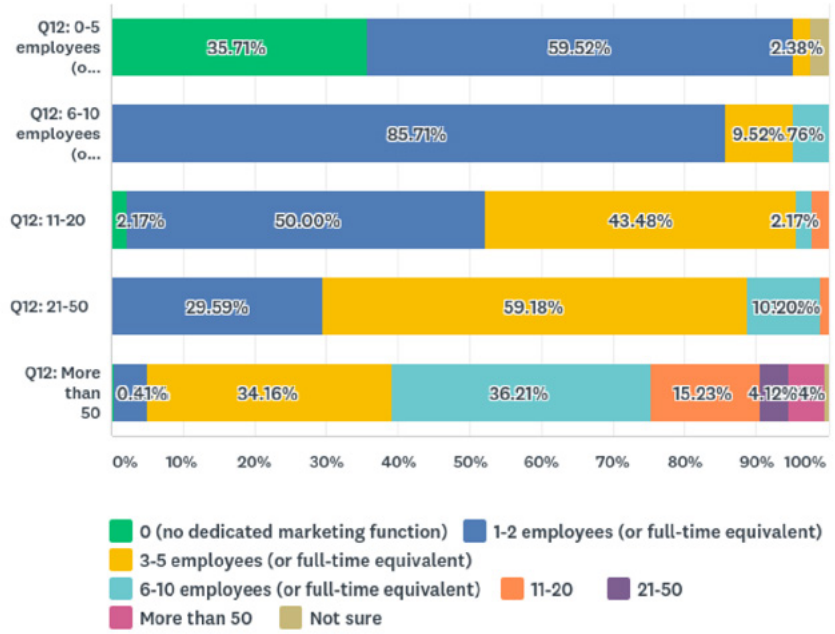
The magic 10% — typical marketing functions within arts and cultural organisations

We have seen that there are a wide range of skills required of our members. Naturally, those working in small organisations will be likely to cover a broader range of those skills, while in larger organisations with larger marketing functions, you would expect to find more specialist functions such as digital media manager.

We can see the average size of marketing functions as compared to the size of the organisation in the chart opposite. Even in organisations with 0-5 employees or full-time equivalent, we can see over 60% invest in a dedicated marketing function, and the number of people working in this function grows in line with the organisation size.

The marketing team tends to be approximately 10% of the total employees.

Q13 What size is the marketing function in your organisation? (i.e. roles responsible for communicating with external audiences)



How to read ‘boxplots’ — ‘box and whisker’ charts

Boxplots show **budget spend** as a **percentage**. Data is sorted into **quartiles** based on ordering the responses from least to greatest. A quartile represents **25% of all responses**.

The **box** represents **Quartiles 2 and 3**, with the **median** indicated by the line bisecting the box.

Quartile 1 is bounded by the **lower whisker** to the lower edge of the box, and **Quartile 4** is bounded by the **upper whisker** to the upper edge of the box.

Outliers are indicated by **dots**, and are excluded from the whiskers due to being significantly outside of the interquartile range of the upper and lower quartiles.

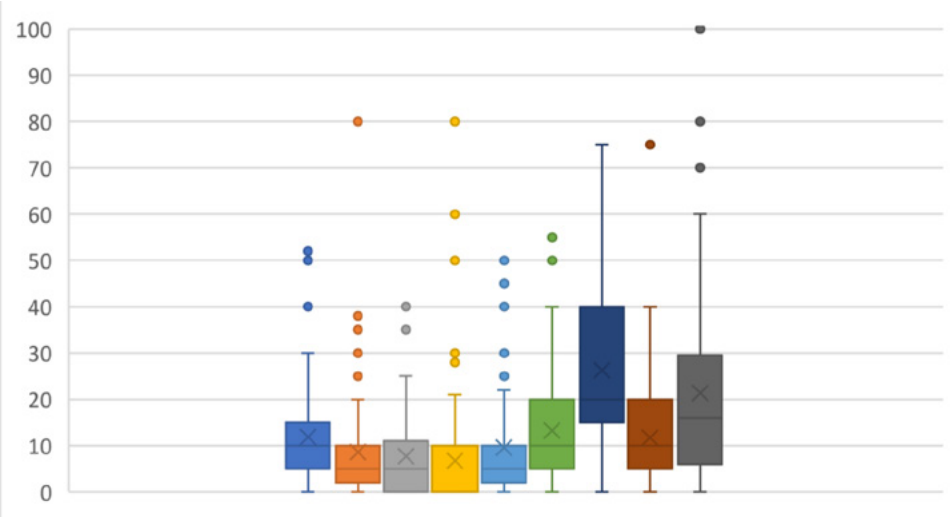
Budget breakdown key:

- Advertising in print publications
- Direct mail (email only)
- Direct mail (excluding email)
- External PR agency
- Online advertising (excluding social media)
- Poster or other ‘outdoor’ advertising
- Print (design, print, distribution)
- Social media advertising
- Other

Marketing budgets

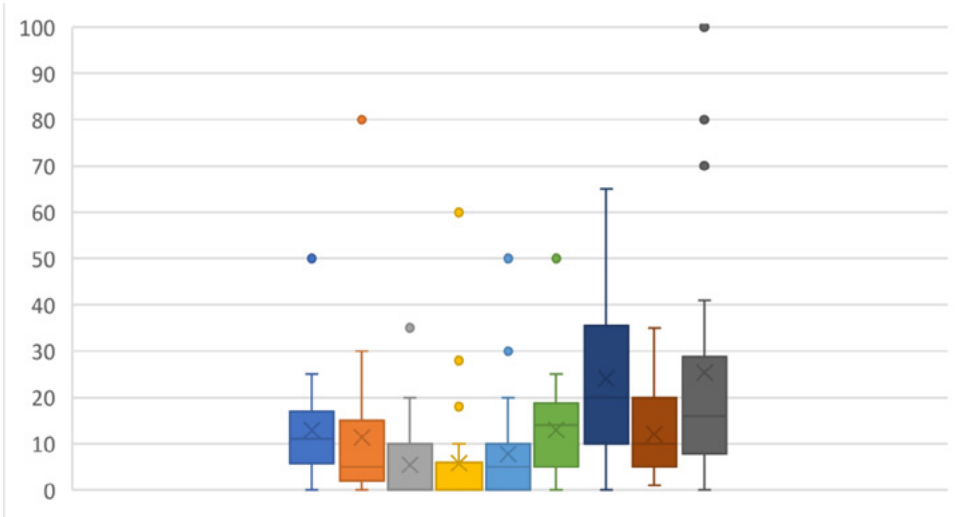
— one-size does not fit all

While the boxplot below shows typical distribution based on total responses, there is wide variance within and across art form categories, suggesting that there is no ‘one-size fits all’ budget strategy. Across the board **Print (design, print, distribution)** tends to take between a quarter to a third of all respondents’ budgets.

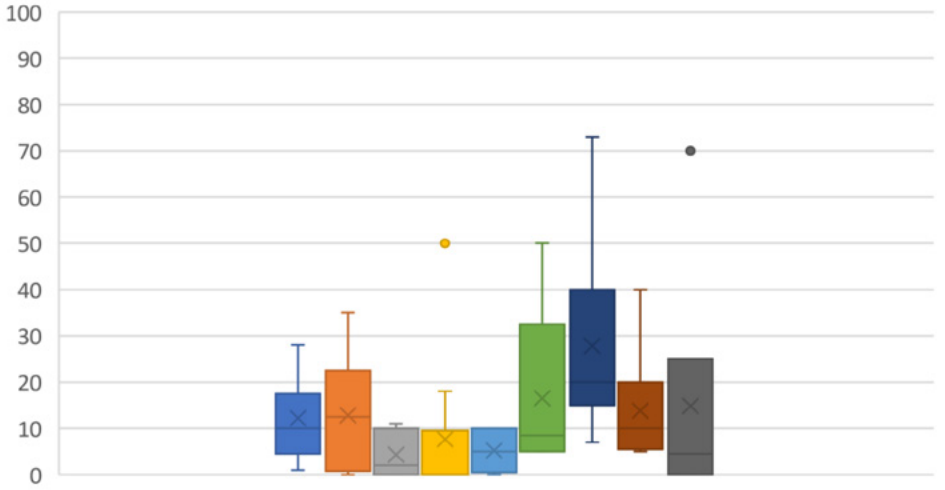


The following boxplots show budget breakdown by art form. We can see that the pattern remains similar regardless of art form, with more outliers in some areas than others.

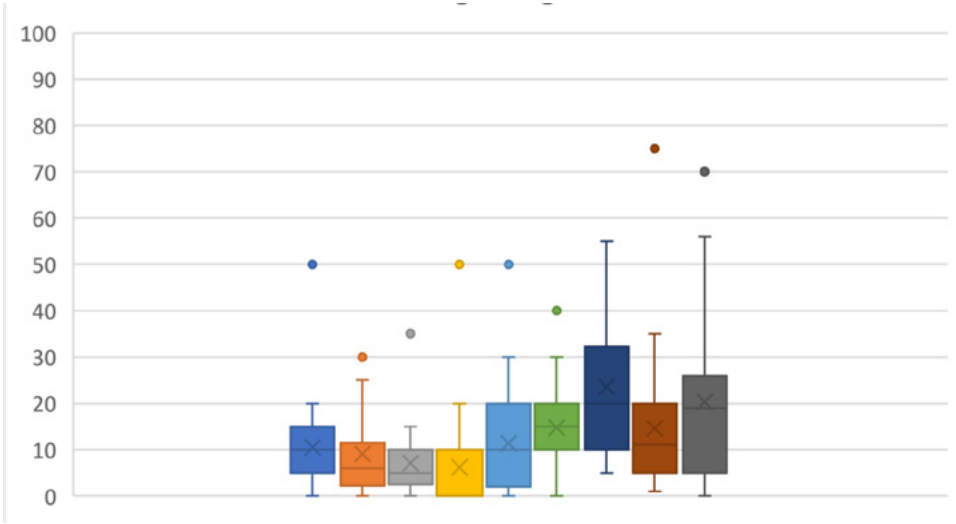
Marketing budget breakdown — Combined arts



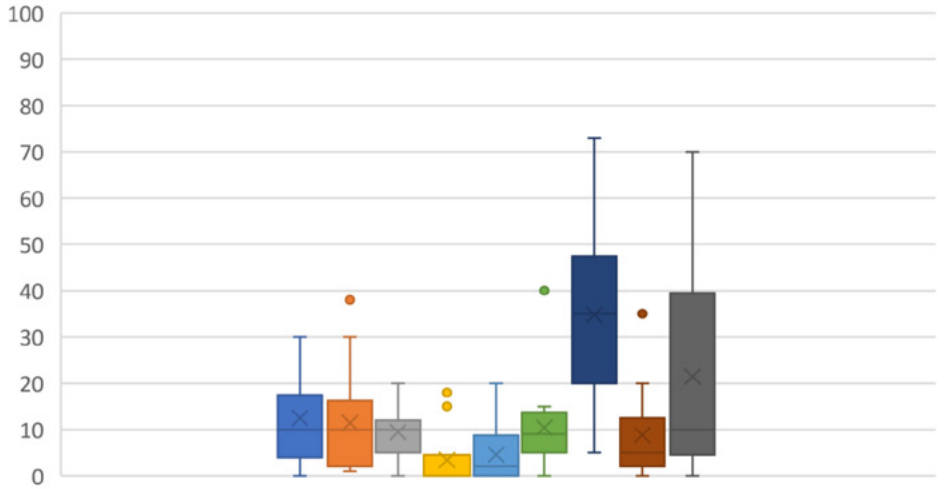
Marketing budget breakdown — Libraries



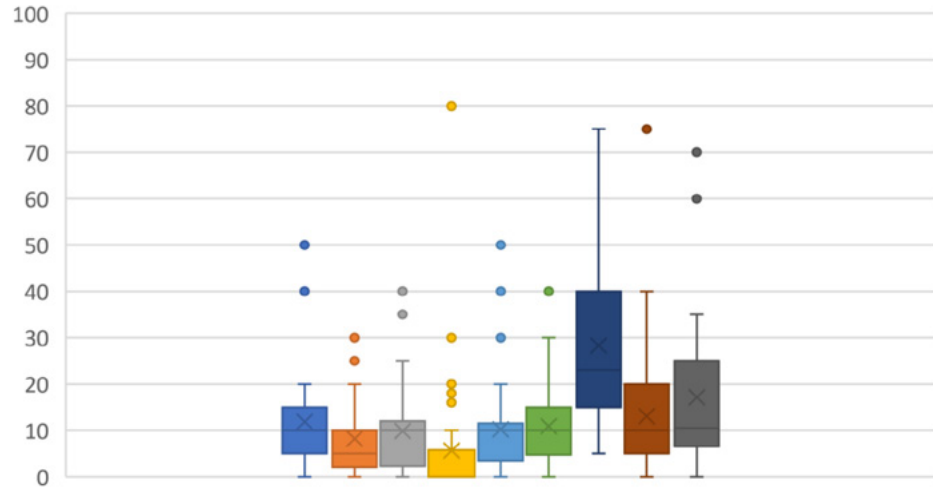
Marketing budget breakdown — Dance



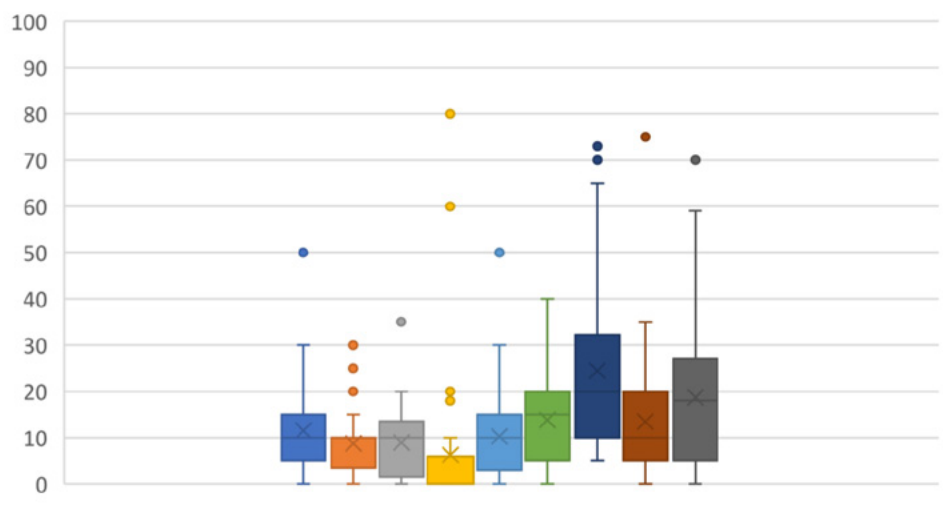
Marketing budget breakdown — Literature



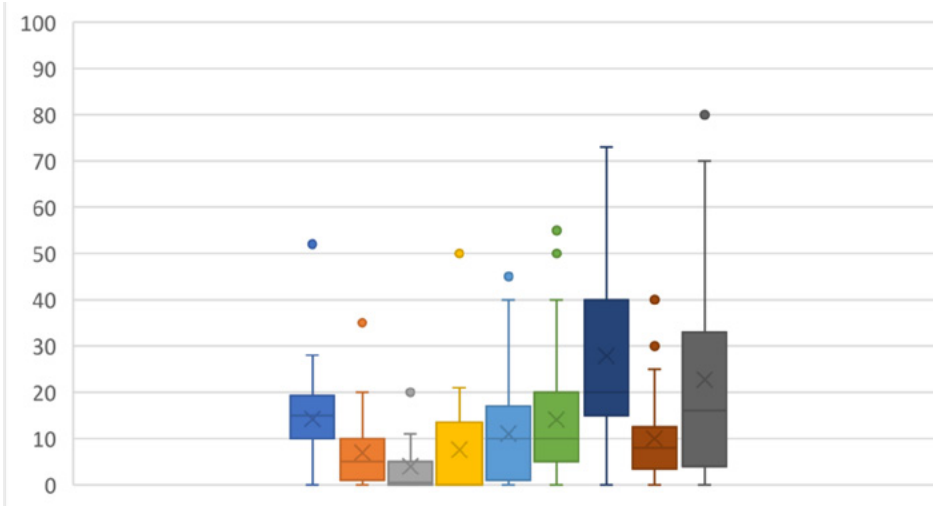
Marketing budget breakdown — Music



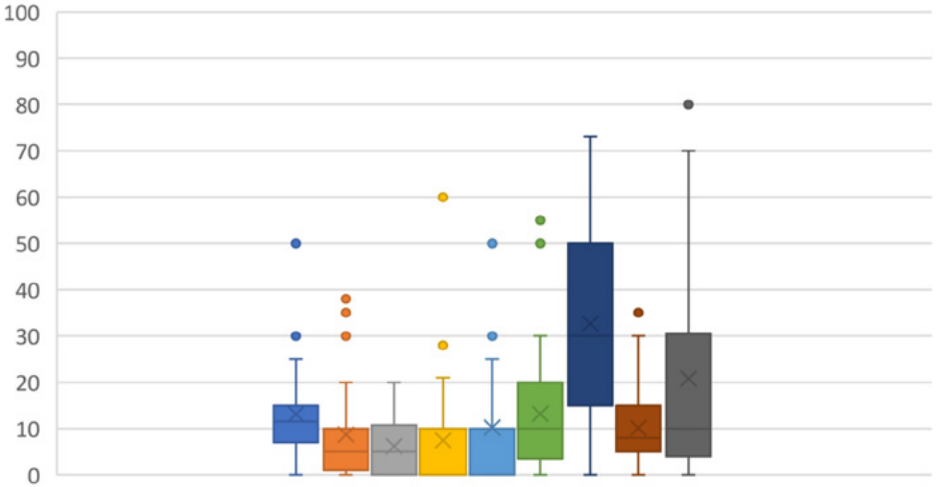
Marketing budget breakdown — Theatre



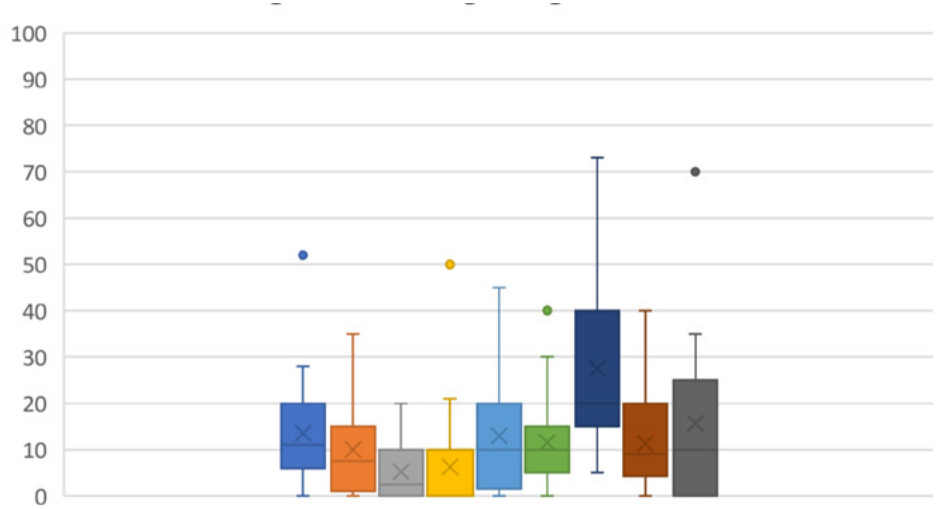
Marketing budget breakdown — Museums



Marketing budget breakdown — Visual arts



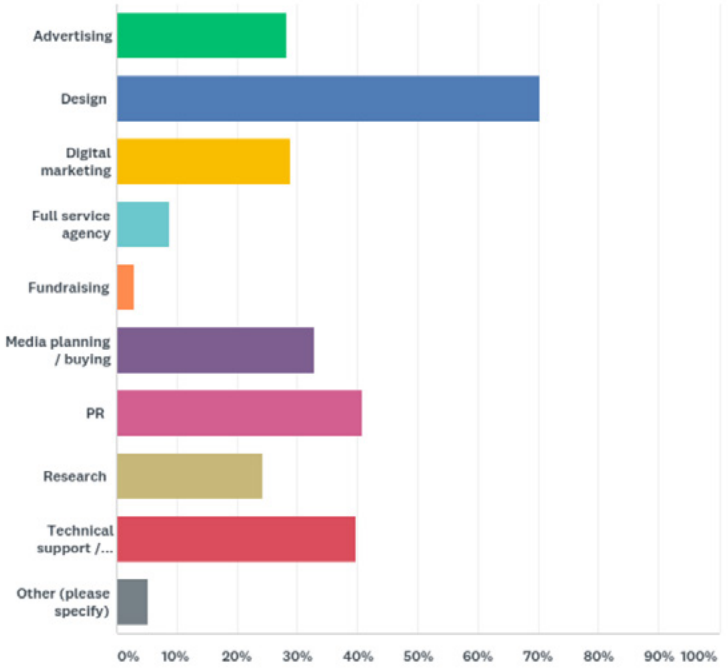
Marketing budget breakdown — Heritage



The importance of outsourcing and freelance support

80% of respondents outsource work to agencies, and 66% of respondents outsource work to freelancers. Design work is the most commonly outsourced activity for both agencies and freelancers.

Q28 If you have answered yes to question 27, what type of agencies do you use?



The word cloud below shows the range of freelance support sought by members, with the size of the word indicating the frequency with which it was mentioned by respondents.

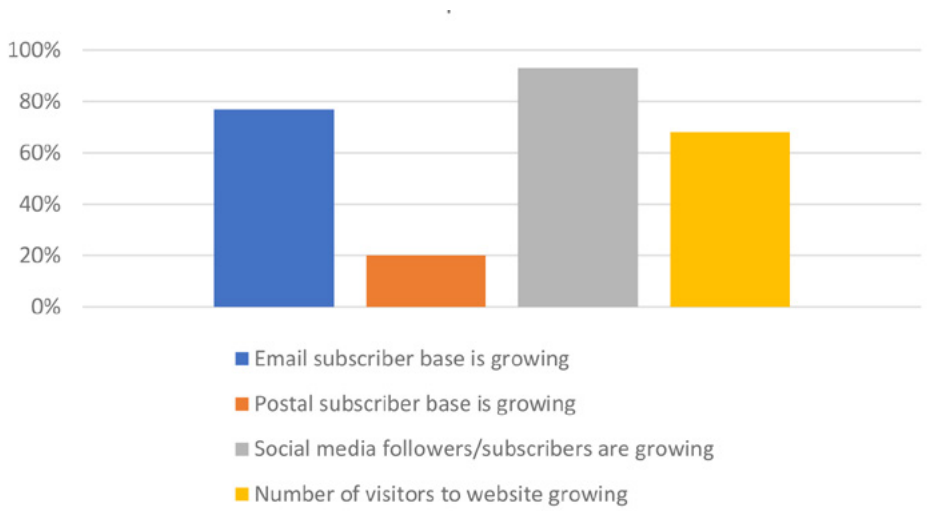
Segmentation

63% of respondents use a third-party audience segmentation system. Audience Finder from The Audience Agency is the segmentation tool used by around 56% of respondents, with Culture Segments and MOSAIC accounting for a further 20%. A number of respondents use more than one system.

Digital marketing

— social media followers grow strongly — email subscribers thrive post-GDPR

We asked respondents about whether their mailing lists for post and email were increasing, decreasing, or staying the same.

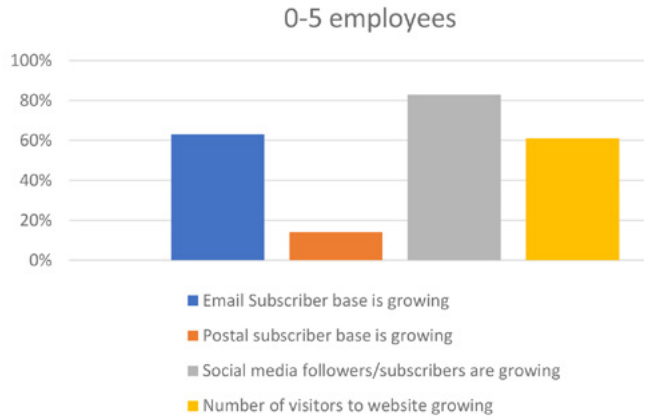


Most respondents indicate positive growth. 91% of respondents report that their social media followers are increasing, and 73% report that their email subscriber base is rising. Website traffic is increasing for 68% respondents.

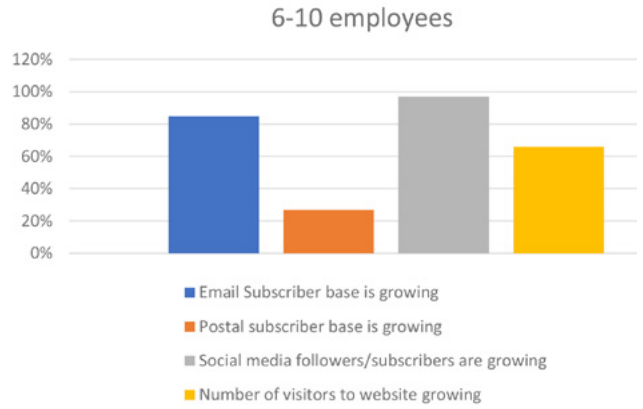
Growth among postal mailing list subscribers is reported in just 20% of cases, and 30% report that postal mailing lists are declining.

When broken down by size of organisation, fewer small organisations are reporting growth compared to larger organisations.

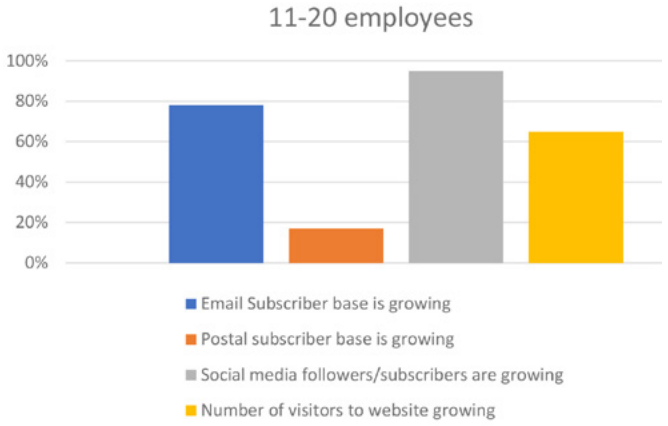
Sample of 35 respondents from organisations with 0-5 employees



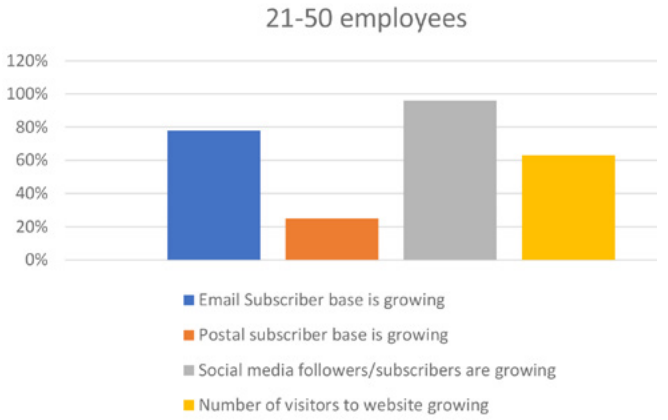
Sample of 36 respondents from organisations with 10 employees



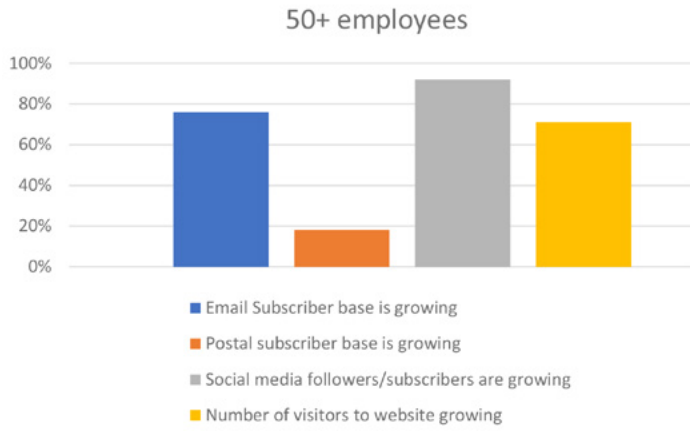
Sample of 38 respondents from organisations with 11-20 employees



Sample of 83 respondents from organisations with 21-50 employees

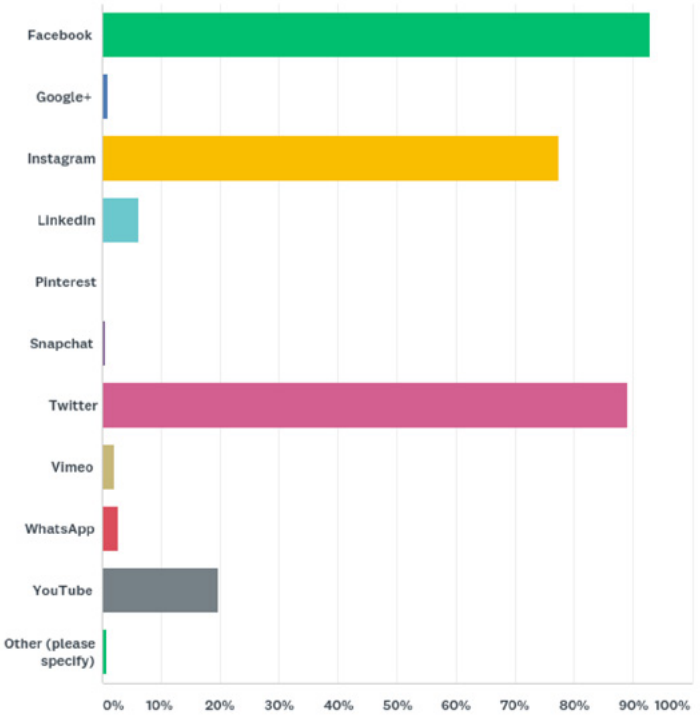


Sample of 202 respondents from organisations with more than 50 employees



Social media followers are growing across the board, and priority channels are the same across all art forms, with Facebook highlighted as the leading social media channel, followed by Twitter and Instagram.

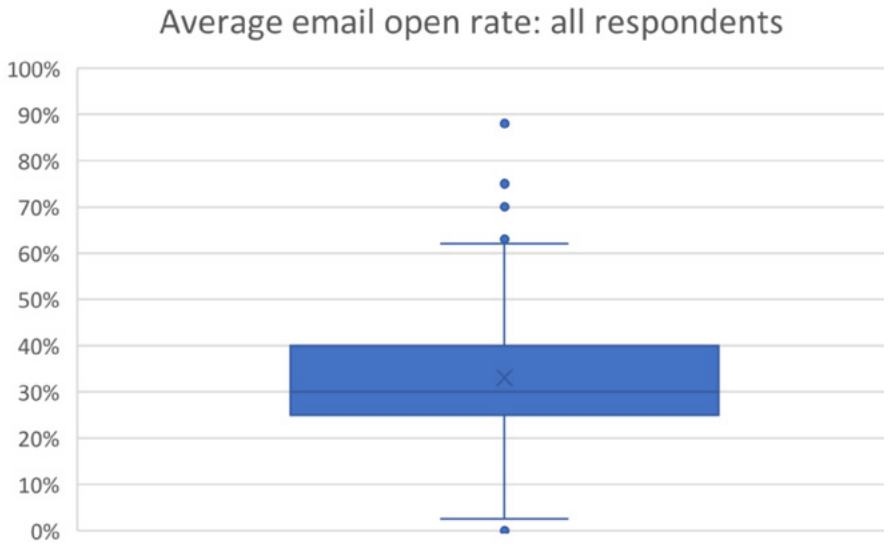
Q24 What are the top three social media channels in terms of importance to you in your role?

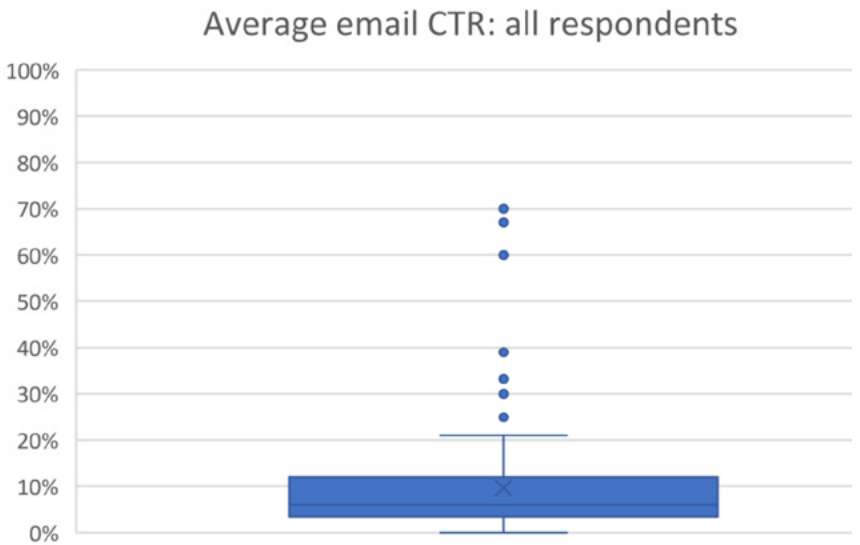


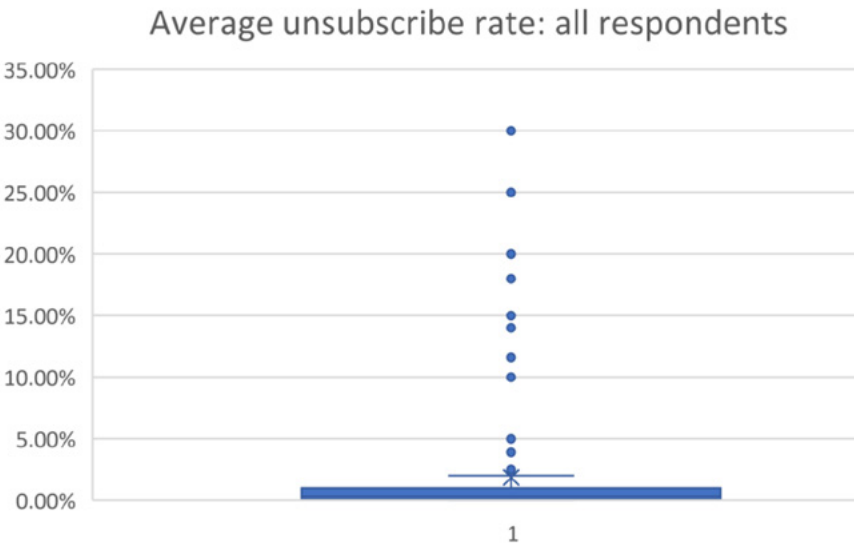
Email subscribers that stick

— unsubscribers and open rates

The boxplot shows that open rates and click through rates (CTR) are broadly consistent across the membership, with the **median open rate falling between 28%-40%**. Anecdotally, post-GDPR, open rates seem to have improved.







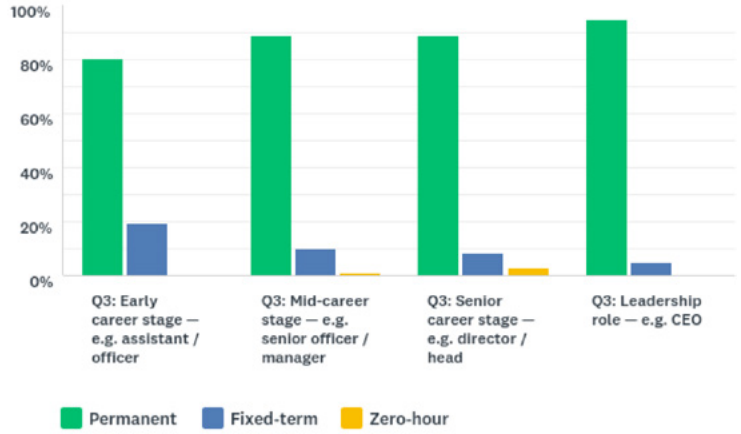
Contracts and job security

Across the membership, 82% are employed full-time, with 14% part-time and 4% freelance.

Only 1.3% of respondents are on zero-hour contracts, but all respondents who indicated that they work according to this type of contract come from organisations that have 0-5 employees (or full-time equivalent), and tend to be freelancers in mid to senior level roles.

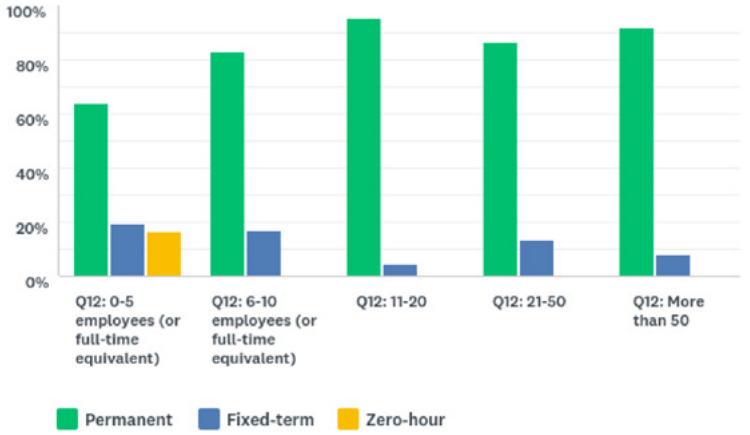
Fixed-term contracts account for 11% of all member roles, but are twice as common at early stages of careers. This suggests a certain lack of security for those starting out in the sector.

Q5 Is your contract?



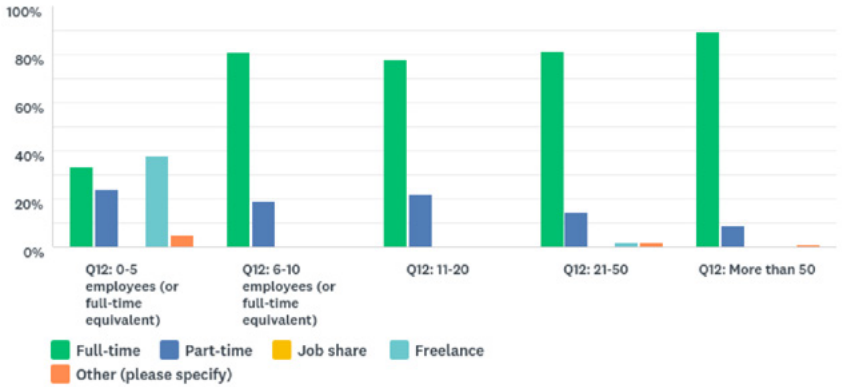
Only 63% of respondents from organisations with 0-5 employees are on permanent contracts. This may reflect the precarious nature of funding for smaller organisations, with roles being dependent on grants for specific projects over defined time periods.

Q5 Is your contract?



We can also see that organisations with five or fewer employees are much more reliant on part-time and freelance roles, compared to larger organisations. This may again be due to the reliance on short-term funding, and a less financially secure existence for smaller organisations.

Q4 Is your role?



Organisational progress

— the overall picture and view from different levels

We have seen that over 80% of members are responsible for **Audience Development** and unsurprisingly, when we ask our members which roles in their organisation are most important in building relationships with audiences, **Marketing** and **Digital** are most strongly agreed upon by all levels. However, there's strong agreement across all respondents that functions including **Front of House**, **CEO/Artistic Director**, **Fundraising**, and **Outreach/Education** are also important in building relationships with audiences.

Across all respondents, 'young audiences' is the most challenging audience to engage. The definition that organisations use to define young audience varies from secondary age children, to 18-25 years olds, through to 25-40 year olds.

In terms of how people feel about their role and organisation, their organisation size and career stage highlight different views, though please note that the Leadership sample responding to this question is 19 individuals, compared to 102 Early career stage, 225 Mid-career stage and 140 Senior career stage.

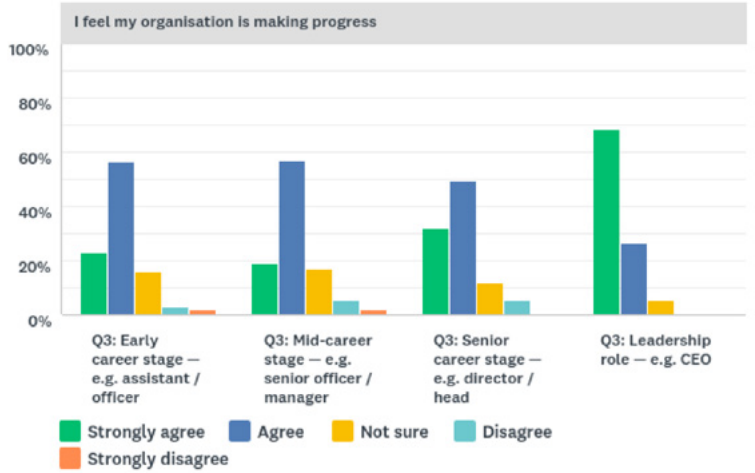
Most members feel valued by their organisation and positive about the progress it is making, but there are some clear areas of tension.

Findings across all respondents	Agree or Strongly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
I feel valued by my organisation	81%	9%
I feel my organisation invests in my future	62%	17%
I feel my organisation is open to change	66%	13%
I feel my views are heard in my organisation	73%	10%
I feel my organisation is making progress	79%	6%
I feel my organisation has reasonable expectations of me	68%	14%
My role at my organisation is compatible with a work/life balance	64%	20%
My role at my organisation is audience-focused	83%	6%
I feel my organisation is audience-focused	65%	15%

Only 66% of respondents agree that their organisation is open to change, yet 73% of respondents agree that they feel their views are heard in their organisation. This suggests that although there is a gap between 83% of respondents agreeing that their role is audience-focused and 65% agreeing that their organisation is audience-focused, the majority of respondents can potentially influence that, provided their views continue to be heard.

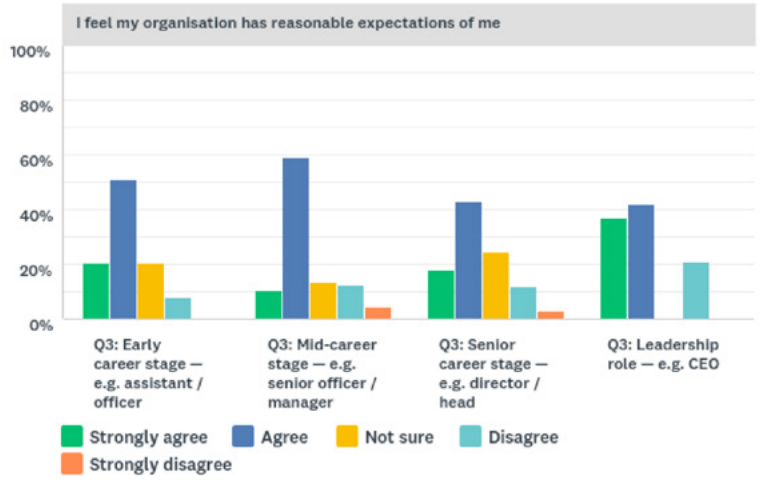
Does the view from the top match the view on the ground?

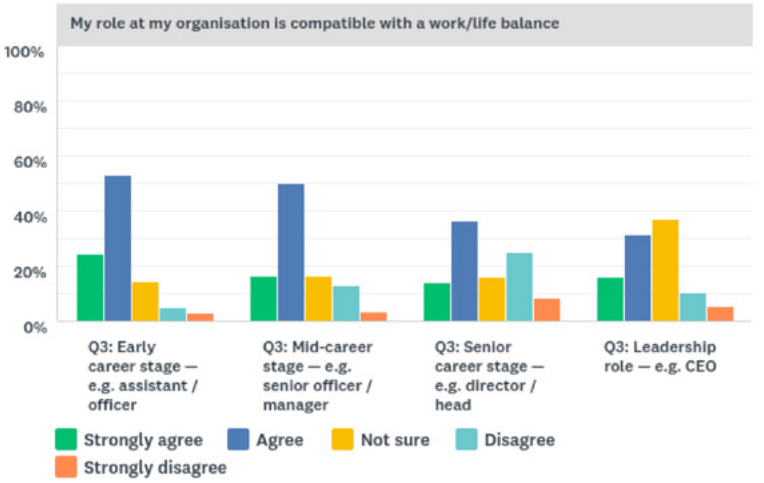
Broadly speaking, there is a consensus that the organisations that members work in are making progress. There is stronger agreement among senior and leader level that organisations are making progress, but across the board the view is fairly positive.



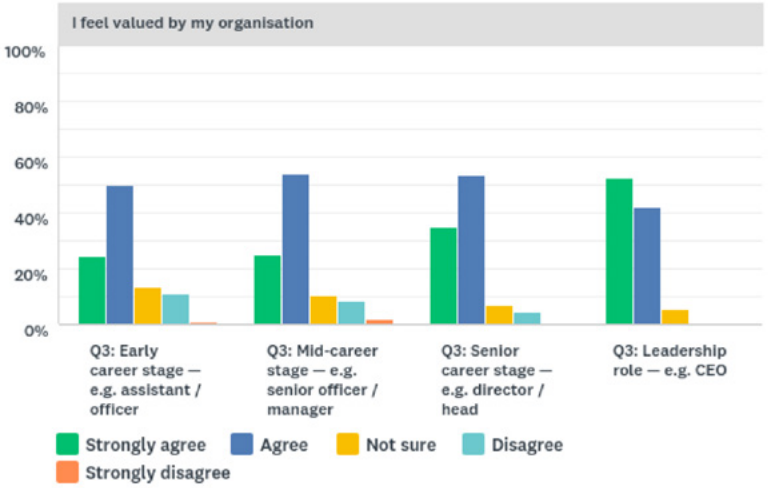
While the leadership sample is quite small, almost 80% feel that their organisation has reasonable

expectations of them, yet only 47% agree that their role is compatible with a work-life balance. In contrast, 77% early career stage members agree that their role is compatible with a work life balance.





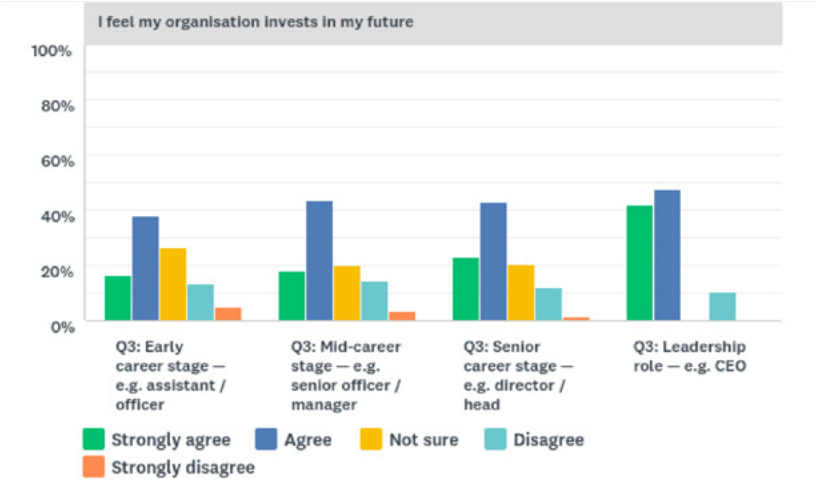
Rather than indicating a world of dissatisfied senior level professionals however, senior and leader level members are more likely to agree that they feel valued by their organisations than early stage career members.



In addition, the more senior the level, the more likely respondents are to agree that their organisation invests in their future.

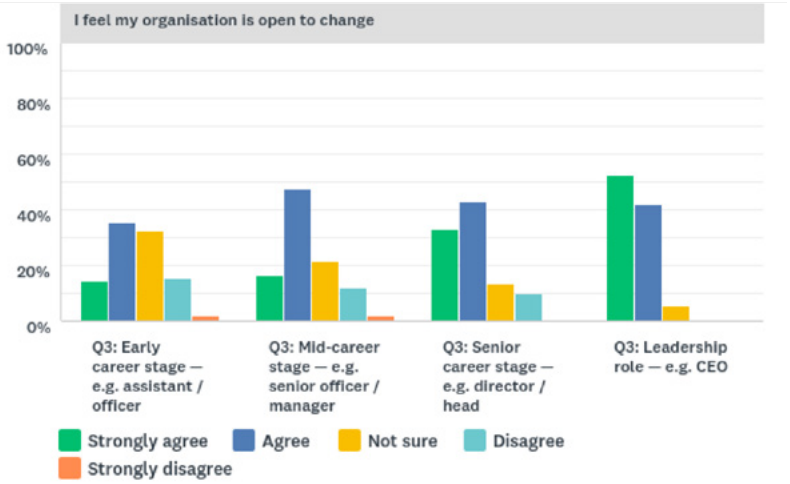
We also asked whether respondents had had any role-specific training in the past year. 69% of early and mid-career roles have had role specific training in the past year, compared to 52% of senior career stage members, and 82% of leadership level.

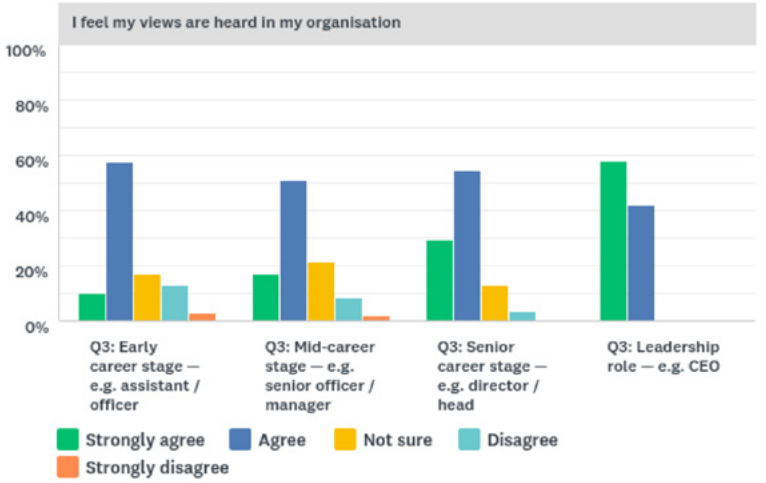
Combined with how valued early career members feel, this raises some questions about how organisations support those in less senior roles. Anecdotally, retention is felt by some members to be an issue for team members in the early career stages.



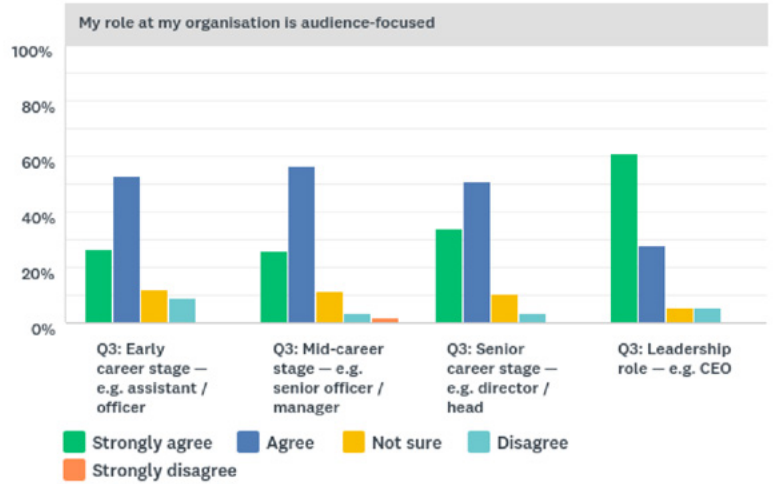
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the more senior the role, the more likely respondents are to agree that their views are heard in their organisations. The more advanced career stage that respondents are at, the more likely they are to agree that their organisation is open to change, and this is perhaps to do with their ability to influence change due to their seniority, and the opportunities available to them for their views being acted upon.

Only 50% of early career stage members agree that their organisation is open to change, compared to 88% of leadership level members.



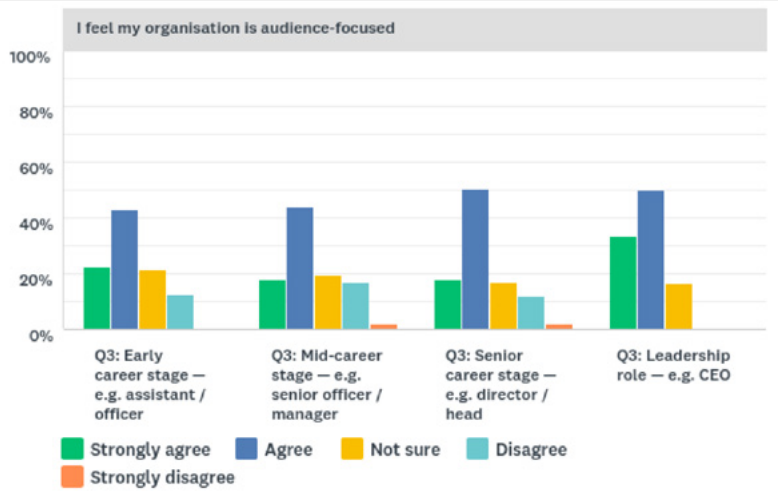


While all levels show agreement that their roles are audience-focused, there is less agreement that the organisations in which members work are audience-focused. The more senior the level, the more likely to say their organisations are audience-focused.



This is interesting to note, as the early stage career respondents are more likely to be engaging and interacting directly with audiences in their roles, e.g. through social media.

This indicates a certain disconnect between perceptions **on the ground** and **from the top**, which might have also contributed to the feeling of some early stage career members that their views are not heard.



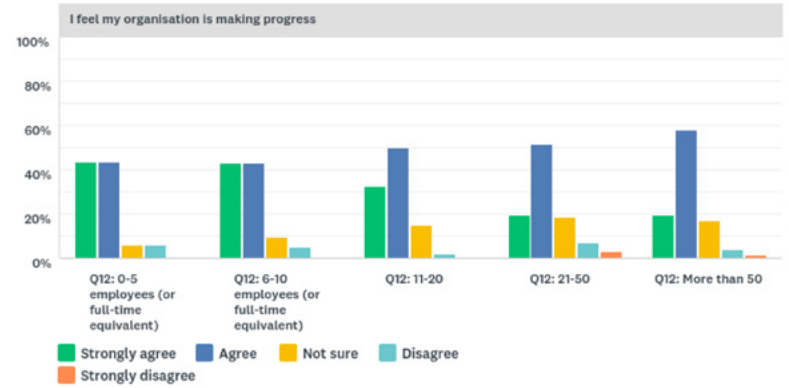
Organisational progress

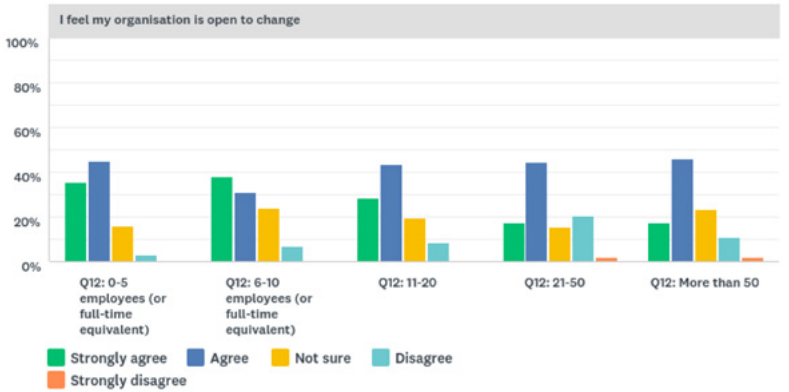
— the view from small to large organisations

In terms of how people feel about their role and organisation, most members feel valued by their organisation and positive about the progress it is making, but there are some clear areas of tension.

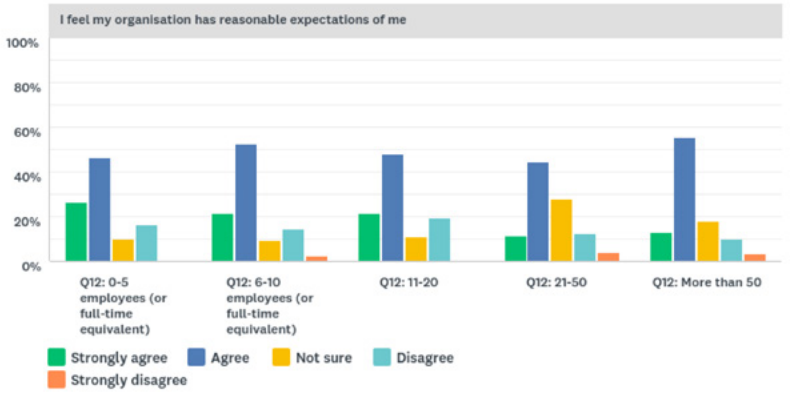
79% of respondents agree that their organisation is making progress, with smaller organisations agreeing most strongly.

Respondents from small organisations are also more likely to agree that their organisation is open to change.

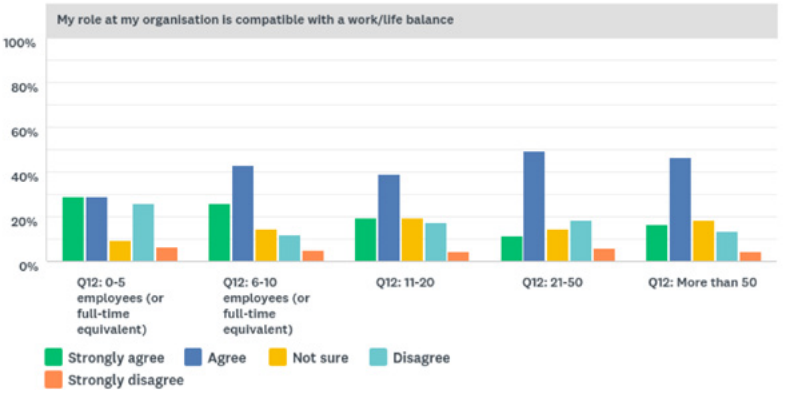




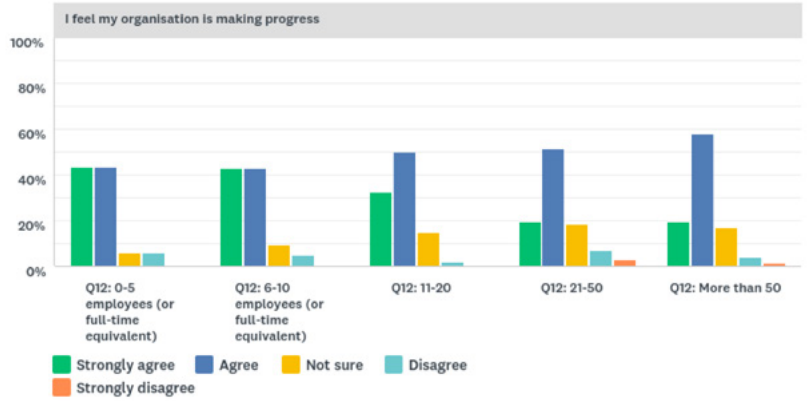
While respondents from smaller organisations are likely to agree that their organisation has reasonable expectations of them, they are also least likely to agree that their work is compatible with a work-life balance.



Only 55% of respondents from organisations sized between 21-50 employees agree that their organisation has reasonable expectations of them.



Respondents from small organisations are also more likely to strongly agree that their views are heard in their organisation. Similarly, they are also more likely to agree that they feel valued by their organisations.



Respondents from organisations with 0-5 employees (or full-time equivalent) are least likely to agree that their organisation invests in their future.

This is likely to be due to a combination of factors, such as the relatively low number of permanent roles held by respondents at this size of organisation, and that the larger the organisation, the more likely respondents are to have access to a training budget.

Only one in three respondents from organisations with between 0-5 employees have a regular appraisal. Some of this may be due to a higher likelihood of fixed term contracts.

Summary and conclusion

Overall, this research survey shows that a large portion of AMA's membership feel valued, agree that their organisation is making progress, and feel that what is expected of them in their roles is reasonable. Key differences seem to come from career stage or organisation size rather than across art forms, and we will continue to support our community of members through the shared challenges faced.

In particular, there is more to be done to make sure that early stage career professionals feel valued, invested in, and heard by their organisations. There is the risk attached to missing out on these views and the value, not just for staff retention, but also from missing out on the **digital native skills** and **new perspectives** they can bring.

We will continue to monitor benchmarks, and to consult with members on what benchmarks and indicators they will find useful in their roles, so that together we can help shape the development of a thriving sector and a happy, skilled and diverse workforce.

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