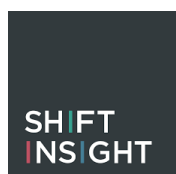


The 2025 Independent Publishing Report

Workforces and challenges



Welcome to this edition of the 2025 Independent Publishing Report

It summarises the findings of our survey of workforce issues at independent publishers, including the size, gender and diversity of teams, working patterns, recruitment and training. It also looks at some of publishing's most significant challenges, including around AI, diversity and sustainability.

Our survey was conducted in association with independent research agency **Shift Insight** (www.shift-insight.co.uk).

Year-on-year comparisons in this report are based on a similar survey in 2024. Thank you to the **115 IPG members** who completed the survey and provided a detailed picture of workforce issues and challenges in our sector.

We are also very grateful for support for the Independent Publishing Report from **Publiship** (www.publiship.com).

Key numbers

66%

of members' teams are women



25%

work part-time



11%

are from non-white ethnicities

5%

require accommodations for physical or mental differences



42%

work fully from home



42%

have a hybrid working pattern



16%

work fully in an office



10%

of members have hard-to-fill vacancies

45%

have a budget for training



34%

have a formal AI policy



23%

think their organisation is ready for the challenges and opportunities of AI



35%

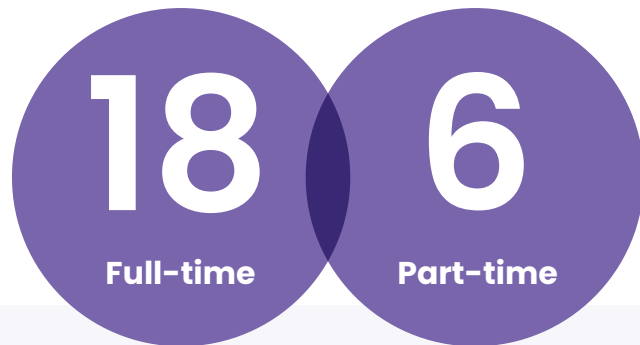
have a formal sustainability policy and 45% have some guidelines

1. Staff

1.1 Staff numbers

IPG members employ an average of **18** full-time and **6** part-time staff in the UK. This means **75%** of staff work full-time—a **7** percentage point increase from the 2024 survey. Government data indicates that **76%** of Britain's workforce work full-time, so publishing's numbers are in line with the national average.

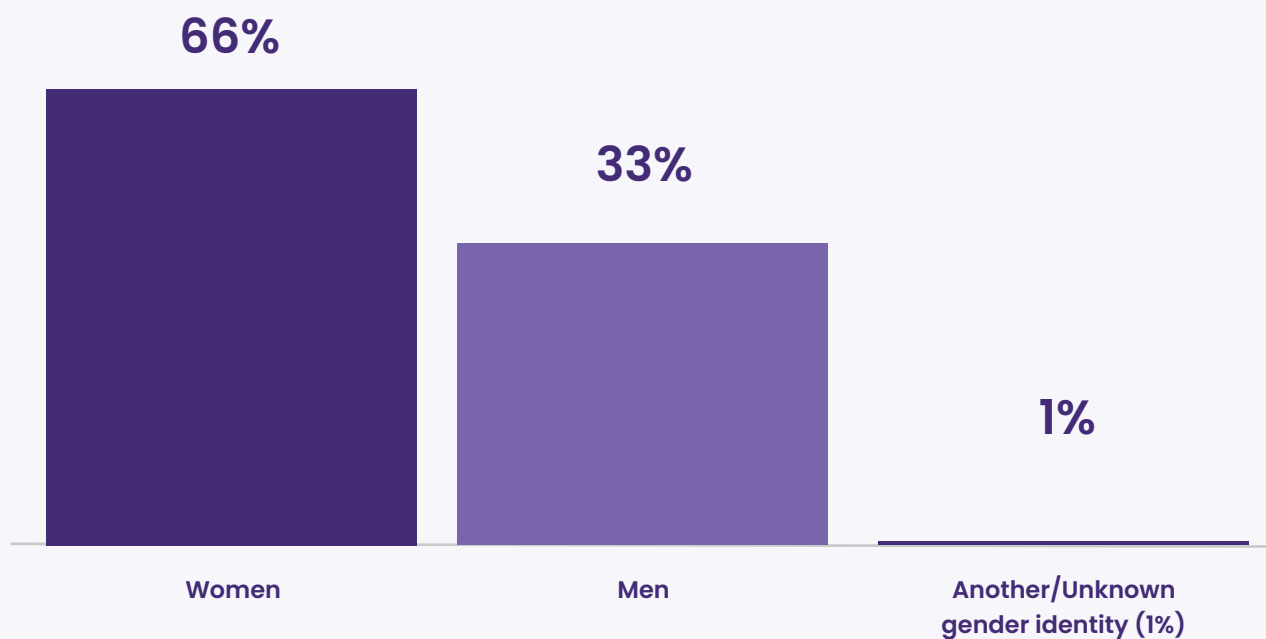
How many current full-time and part-time members of staff does your organisation directly employ in the UK? (Average)



1.2 Gender

Two thirds (**66%**) of IPG members' staff are women. This is up slightly from **64%** in 2024. It is significantly higher than the average of **51%** among the Britain's employed national population.

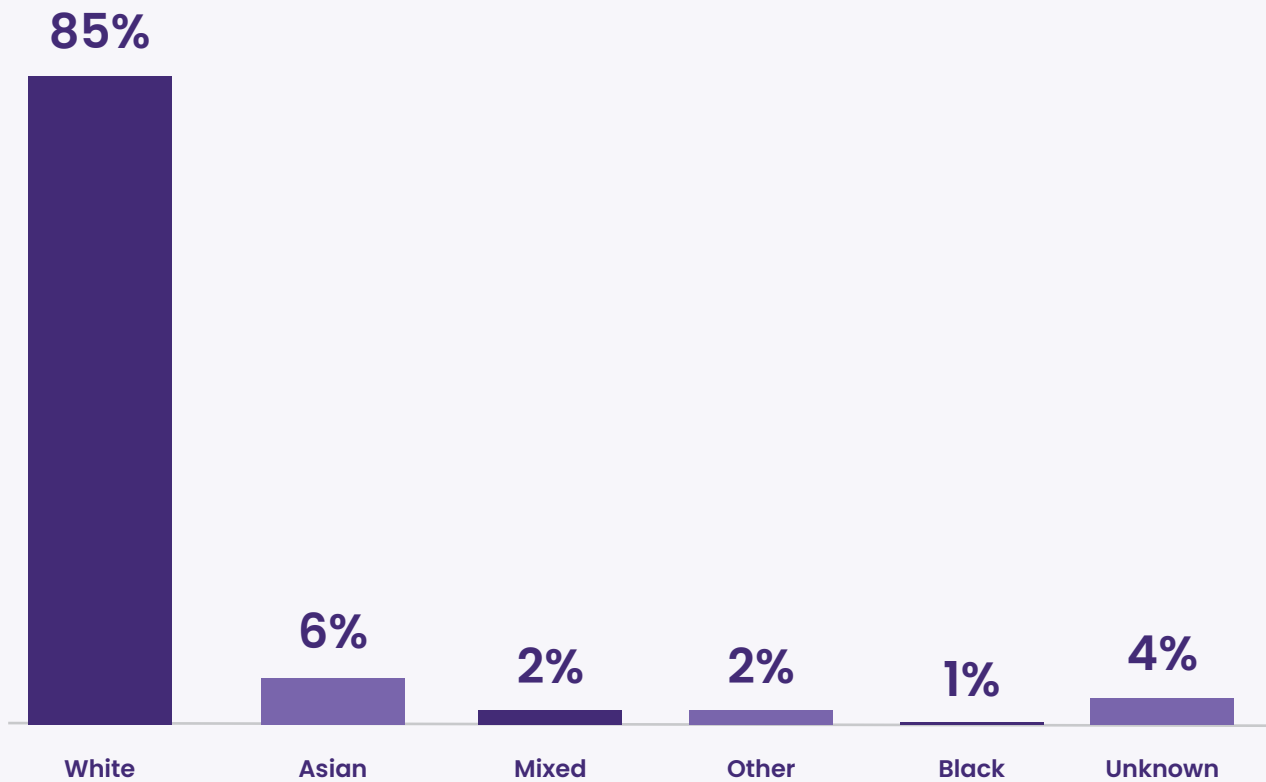
Approximately what proportion of your current staff are...? (Average)



1.3 Ethnicity

An average of **85%** of members' staff are from white ethnicities, while **11%** are from all other known ethnic groups combined. This is in line with 2024's figures, indicating no significant year-on-year shift in ethnic make-up. [government data](#) shows an average of **15%** of employed individuals in Britain are from ethnic minorities, so members are slightly less ethnically diverse than the national employed population.

Approximately what proportion of your current staff are...? (Average)



1.4 Disabilities

Members have an average of **5%** of staff requiring accommodations for physical or mental differences. This is up slightly from **4%** year-on-year. While these figures are not directly comparable to national statistics, it is worth noting that [government data](#) indicates **18%** of employed individuals in the UK met the core definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010.

2. Workforce issues

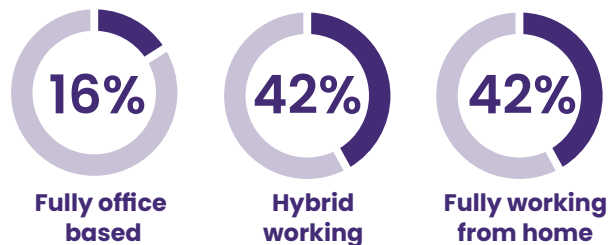
2.1 Home, office and hybrid working

While nearly all staff at IPG members work from home at least some of the time, patterns are shifting. Just over two in five (**42%**) fully work from home, and the same proportion (**42%**) have hybrid working arrangements. The remaining **16%** of staff are fully office-based, but this is a notable increase from **13%** in 2024.

This suggests that some publishers are encouraging staff to return to offices after long periods of working from home during Covid-19 lockdowns and their aftermath. Well over half (**58%**) of members now have a minimum number of in-office days for full-time staff—**4** percentage points more than in 2024.

Nevertheless, the **84%** of staff who work partly or fully from home is nearly twice the national average of **44%**.

Approximately what proportion of your current staff are...? (Average)



2.2 Work-life balance

The majority of members are happy with the work-life balance of staff at their organisation. One in five (**20%**) agrees that the promotion of work-life balance could be improved—virtually unchanged year-on-year.

2.3 Diversity: leadership and recruitment

Nearly three quarters (**74%**) of survey respondents agree that leaders in their organisation are well prepared to manage a diverse workforce. Nearly half (**48%**) say their organisation has taken active steps to attract a diverse candidate pool during recruitment—an increase of **2** percentage points from 2024. Nevertheless, levels of diversity in publishing remain below the average across the country's workforce (see page 2).

2.4 Vacancies

While the majority of members do not have difficulty in recruiting staff, **10%** of respondents say they have had hard-to-fill vacancies. This figure is line with results from last year's survey.

3 Training

3.1 Training budgets

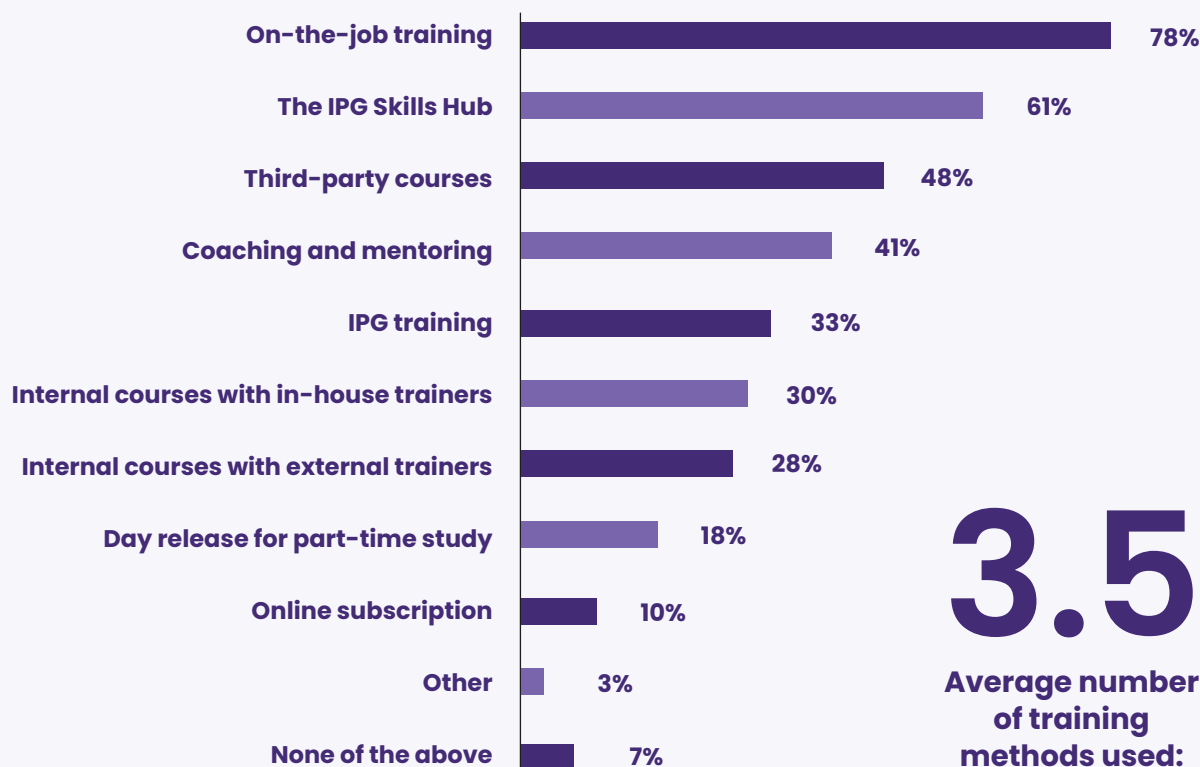
Nearly half (**45%**) of survey respondents say their organisation has a training budget—6 percentage points more than in 2024, though **55%** do not.

3.2 Types of training

On-the-job training is the most common type of training; **78%** of organisations provide this. Three in five (**61%**) use the IPG Skills Hub and a third (**33%**) have used the IPG's other training, which is delivered by the Place for Publishing Excellence.

Other forms of training include third-party courses (**48%**), coaching and mentoring (**41%**), internal courses with either in-house trainers (**30%**) or external trainers (**28%**) and day release for part-time study. Members use an average of **3.5** different types of training. Coaching and mentoring—including through the IPG's mentoring scheme—are regarded as the most impactful ways to improve the skills and knowledge of staff.

Which, if any, of the following does your organisation use to train and develop staff?



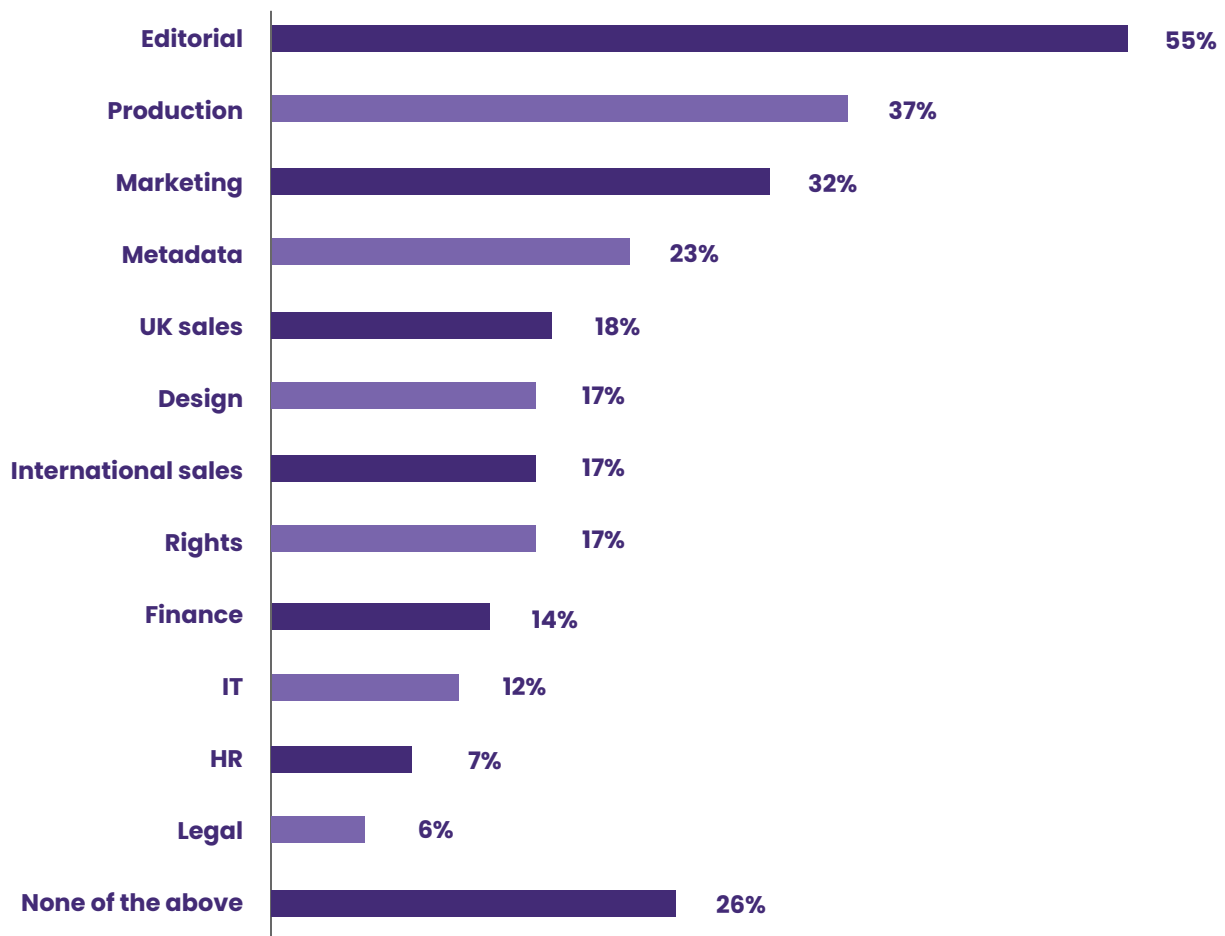
3.3 Areas of training

Editorial is the area most frequently identified by members as having good training and development; **55%** of members feel their provision is sufficient here. Editorial is followed by production (**37%**) and marketing (**32%**).

Numbers feeling their organisation's training and development is sufficient are much lower in areas including metadata (**23%**), UK sales (**18%**),

design (**17%**), international sales (**17%**), rights (**17%**) and more. Overall, there has been a modest improvement in satisfaction with provision, but there remains a shortage of training in these and other important fields. Members also emphasise the need for more training in digital skills and soft skills, particularly in negotiation and leadership.

In which, if any, of the following areas do you feel your organisation provides sufficient training and development?



4 AI, sustainability and other challenges

4.1 AI policies

Members have moved to address the major opportunities and challenges of AI in the last year. Around a third (**34%**) now have a formal policy on AI—nearly triple the number who did so a year ago (**12%**). This suggests growing organisational maturity in this area.

There has been a modest increase in confidence around AI readiness. Nearly a quarter (**23%**) of respondents agree their organisation is equipped to deal with AI-related challenges and opportunities—**5** percentage points more than in 2024.

Question: Does your organisation have a formal policy on AI?



34%

Yes, we have a formal policy around AI



40%

Not yet, but we are exploring AI



26%

No

4.2 Sustainability policies

There are signs that many members are advancing their work in sustainability. Just over a third (**35%**) of survey respondents say they have a formal policy in this area—a sharp increase of **14** percentage points year-on-year. Another **45%** have at least some guidelines on sustainability, and only **20%** have no guidance at all.

Question: Does your organisation have a formal policy on sustainability?



35%

Yes, we have a formal policy



45%

No, but we have some guidelines



20%

No

4.3 Other challenges

As well as AI, members highlight the economy, rising costs and sales as their most pressing challenges. Those concerned about the economy point to uncertainty driven by geopolitical factors including trade wars, tariffs and conflicts. Rising costs and declines in sales have added to budgetary pressures at some organisations. These have often resulted in recruitment constraints and increased workloads for existing staff.

What do you think are the main challenges facing your organisation in 2025?



Five conclusions

1. Working patterns are flexible but more staff are returning to offices.

The large majority of members' staff—far above the national average—work either fully or partly from home. However, numbers working fully in offices are increasing, and more employers are expecting staff to be in offices for a set number of days.

2. Full-time employment is rising.

The number of staff working full-time has increased year-on-year, while part-time work has dropped. This is in line with national trends.

3. Workforce demographics are stable.

Women outnumber men by two to one, while representation of both non-white ethnicities and people with physical or mental differences both remain below the national employment average.

4. Action is increasing in AI and sustainability.

The proportion of members adopting policies in both these areas has sharply increased year-on-year. This suggests a shift from intention to implementation and a growing sense of strategic direction. Policies have increased publishers' confidence in responding to AI-related opportunities and challenges, but the majority remain underprepared.

5. Economic uncertainty and rising costs are causing widespread concern.

Alongside AI, these are the two challenges most commonly cited by members and are negatively impacting sales and recruitment.



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