

# PR and Communications Census 2021 | UK





# Making business decisions CAN BE CHALLENGING

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facts, not fiction

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## Foreword

**FRANCIS INGHAM MPRCA**  
PRCA Director General  
and ICCO Chief Executive

**“The last eighteen months have proved beyond dispute the value that practitioners bring to business, to democracy, to our daily lives. When the need to communicate effectively had never been greater, thousands of communicators around the UK rose to the challenge magnificently, in unthinkable circumstances.”**

The message from the 2021 PRCA UK Census is simple –the industry has bounced back from its greatest ever challenge.

The numbers here reflect what we have been hearing now for months –teams are growing again. Salaries are rising again. The industry is confident again.

And our industry has many reasons for that confidence. The last eighteen months have proved beyond dispute the value that practitioners bring to business, to democracy, to our daily lives. When the need to communicate effectively had never been greater, thousands of communicators around the UK rose to the challenge magnificently, in unthinkable circumstances.

Of course, this is not simply a reset to where we were. Sadly, not everybody who had a job in our industry when Covid struck still does so. The data show the even greater challenge of mental ill health –something which

people at every level now feel far more free to discuss. We can also see that working patterns have changed, and most likely changed for good. When in March 2020, we were all told to go home for two weeks, none of us predicted the change this would bring for how we work today.

The gender pay gap remains –but it’s smaller. Our industry is still whiter than the people it engages with –but less so. And a third of people still work outside of offices hours –but that’s down from nearly a half.

So there are obviously many challenges ahead, but great progress has made. Our industry’s resilience has been verified. Its value has been confirmed. And its future is a rosy one.



# 1

## Executive Summary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PR and Communications industry is showing signs of a clear and strong recovery following a difficult year during which organisations made redundancies, furloughed staff, and transitioned to remote working as a result of COVID-19.

Despite the disruption of the pandemic, the industry has continued to grow at a steady pace of 6.1% since 2020 and is now worth £16.7bn.

The industry employs 99,900 employees, a marginal increase from the 97,300 practitioners employed in 2020.

Last year, we asked people about their employment status after many organisations had made redundancies or furloughed staff. In 2020, of the 9% of practitioners that had been furloughed 10% were made redundant, 62% were back to work full-time, and 17% were back to work part-time.

This year when we asked the same question to those who had been furloughed at any point since March 2020, only 2% had been made redundant, 69% are back to work full-time and 26% are back to work part-time.

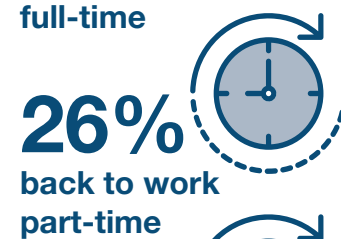
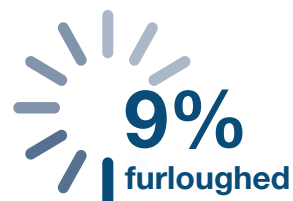
Finally, when asked whether they would be returning to the office once lockdown restrictions lifted 16% of practitioners said they would be returning to the office full-time, 13% said they would be working remotely full-time, and 63% said they would be working remotely part-time.

**£16.7bn<sup>1</sup>**

Value of UK PR and Communications industry

**99,900**

Practitioners in PR and Communications



## METHODOLOGY

This year's PR and Communications Census was issued in April 2021. The online survey was generated by 3Gem using two different sample sources:

- Targeted sample sent to PRCA members and PRWeek subscribers.
- Public on PRCA and PRWeek website.

The fieldwork was conducted between 22nd April and 21st June.

The survey generated 541 responses.

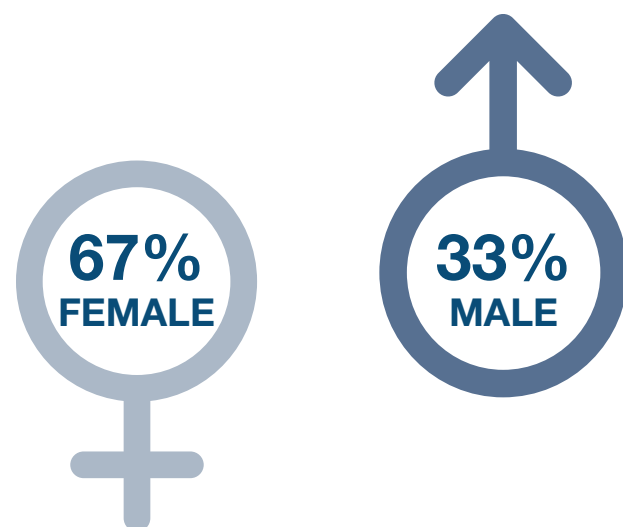
Respondents had to fulfil the following criterion: work in a communications or PR remit.

<sup>1</sup>. The 2021 figure is based on the 2020 value with 6% industry growth rate (from PRCA Benchmarking 2020) and 0.85% inflation applied.

# 2 Diversity

## GENDER

The industry is predominantly female, 67% identify as female and 33% identify as male.



## AGE

Public relations is a predominantly young industry with a median age of 38.

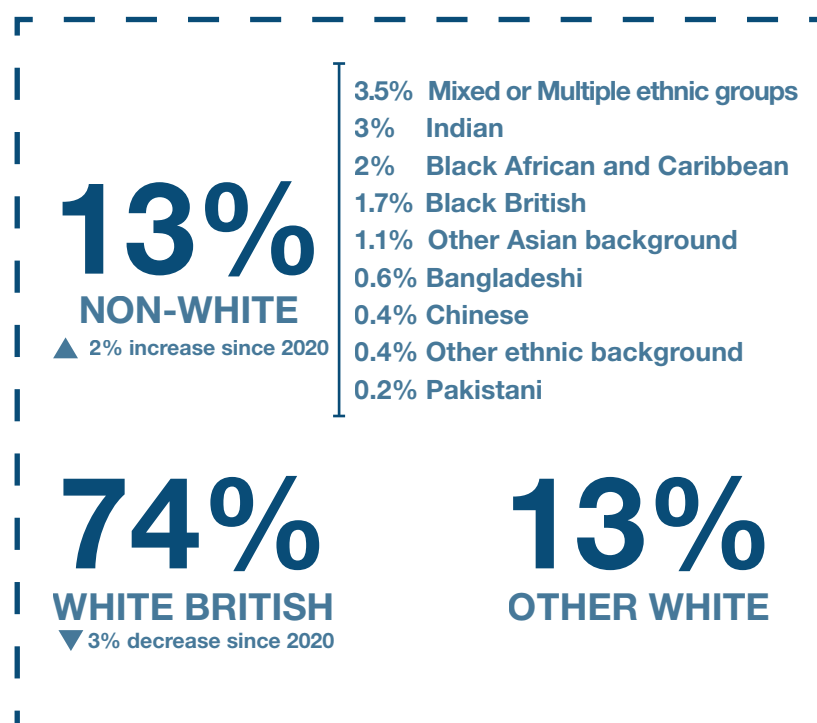


## ETHNIC ORIGIN

Ethnically, the majority of the industry is White. 74% of the industry identify as White British and 13% identify as Other White.

The other ethnicities represented in the industry are: Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (3.5%), Indian (3%), Black African and Caribbean (2%), Black British (1.7%), any other Asian background (1.1%), Bangladeshi (0.6%), Chinese (0.4%), other ethnic group (0.4%), and Pakistani (0.2%).

87% of public relations professionals identify as White. The number of professionals identifying as Non-White grew modestly from 11% in 2020 to 13% in 2021.



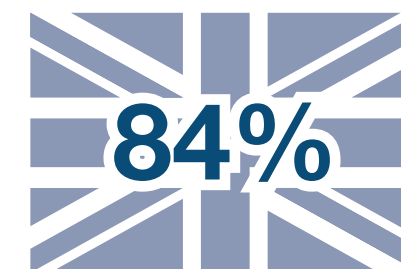
## NATIONALITY

Unsurprisingly, 84% of the industry identify as British, this has largely remained the same since 2020.

The second most represented nationality in the PR and communications industry are EU nationals at 6.5%. Following EU nationals, 4% of practitioners have a nationality from a country outside the EU.

Finally, 5% of practitioners have dual or multiple nationalities.

## BRITISH NATIONALS



10.5% OTHER COUNTRY OUTSIDE OF THE UK

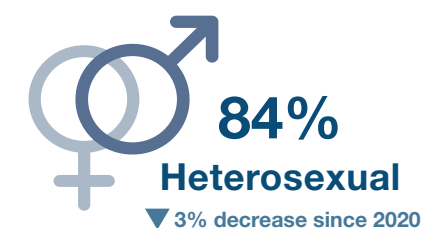
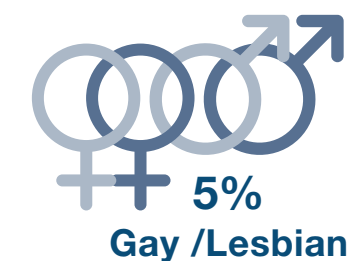
5% DUAL OR MULTIPLE NATIONALITIES

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

84% of industry professionals identify as heterosexual. This figure has decreased by 3% since 2020.

5% of practitioners identify as gay or lesbian and 4% of practitioners identify as bisexual (3% increase since 2020).

Around 1% of practitioners prefer to describe themselves in another way and 6% prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation.



## DISABILITY

Around 5% of the industry consider themselves to have a disability, an increase of 1% since 2020.



MENTAL HEALTH

When asked if they had ever suffered from or been diagnosed with mental ill health, 40% of practitioners said they had, which represents a 6% increase since 2020.

The PRCA also published additional research on mental health which found that 90% of practitioners have struggled with their mental wellbeing to some degree in the last 12 months with many citing feeling stressed due to the global pandemic and their workload.

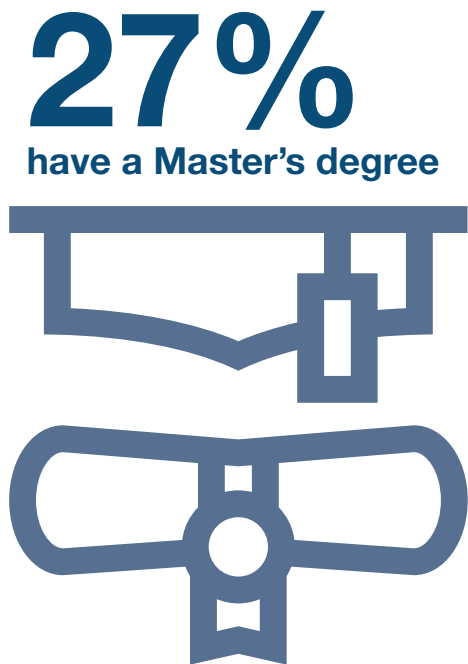
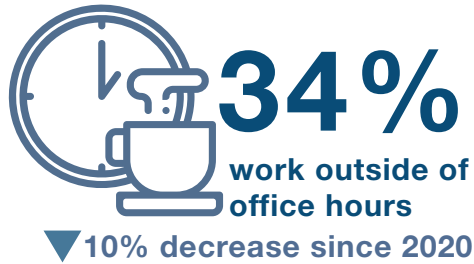
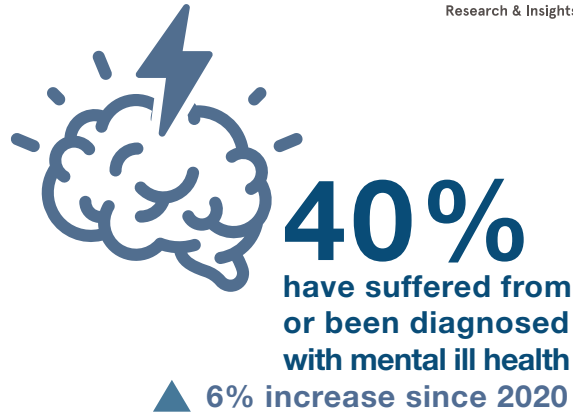
When asked to rate their organisation's approach to workplace wellbeing 63% said their organisation had a good approach whereas 9% said their organisation's approach was poor.

Finally, when asked to describe their working habits outside of office hours, 34% of practitioners said they make work-related calls or send work-related emails after work every day. This is a significant improvement since last year when 44% said they worked outside office hours every single day. While it is encouraging to see that fewer practitioners are working beyond office hours every single day, the number is still too high. In contrast only 4% said they never worked outside of office hours and 10% said this occurred less often than once a week.

EDUCATION

When asked about their educational background, 48% of PR practitioners attended a state run or funded non-selective school. This is followed by a state run or funded selective school (21.6%), an independent or fee-paying school (20%), and a school outside the UK (8%).

When asked about their qualifications, 74% of practitioners hold an undergraduate degree and 27% have a Master's degree.

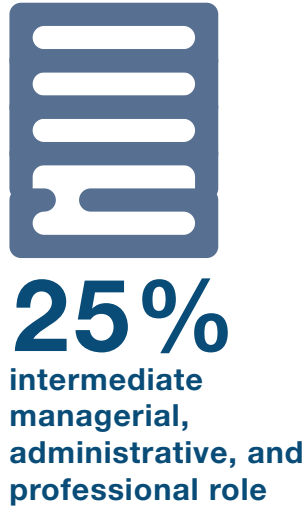


SOCIAL MOBILITY

We asked practitioners to describe the main income earner in their household during their childhood to get a better picture of social mobility across the industry.

Most practitioners (40%) grew up in a household where the main income earner occupied a higher managerial, administrative, and professional role. This is followed by 25% of practitioners who grew up in a household where the main income earner occupied an intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional role. Only 2% of PR practitioners described the main income earner in their household as state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, or unemployed with state benefits only.

MAIN INCOME EARNER IN HOUSEHOLD DURING CHILDHOOD



WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

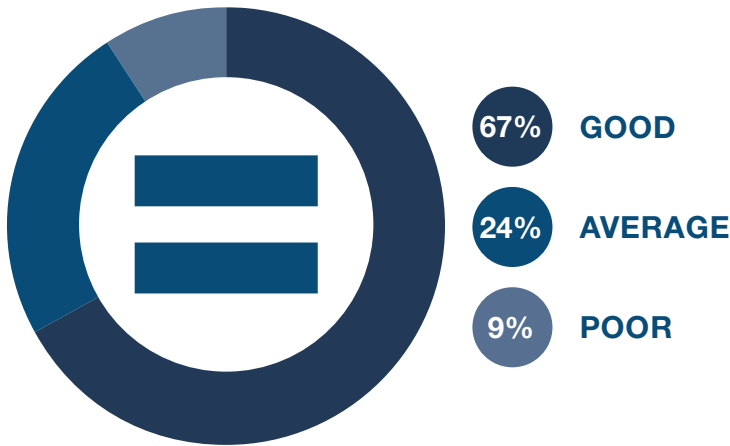
We asked practitioners to rate their organisation's performance of promoting diversity and inclusion within the workplace. Around 67% of practitioners would rate their organisation's approach as 'good', this is up by 6% since 2020.

Only 9% would describe their organisation's performance as 'poor'.

Finally, 24% of practitioners described their organisation's performance as 'average'.

This is a positive direction for the industry and it shows that employers are taking steps to make the workplace more diverse and inclusive. However, the industry must not be complacent. These figures show that some employees feel like their organisations could be doing more to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It is important for employers to listen to staff and address their concerns in their diversity and inclusion policies.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR ORGANISATION'S APPROACH IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE?



# 3

## Salaries

### AVERAGE SALARIES

The average salary for all PR and communications professionals is £50,681.

**£50,681**  
average salary in the industry in 2021

**£46,513**

AVERAGE SALARY  
IN THE INDUSTRY  
IN MARCH 2020

### AGENCY

The average annual salary for agency professionals is £52,474. However, salaries are considerably higher than the average of £46,832 reported in March 2020. This could be explained by the fact that the industry is more senior now than it was a year ago due to redundancies that mostly affected junior members of staff.

**£52,474**  
average agency salary in 2021

**£46,832**

AVERAGE SALARY  
FOR AGENCY  
PROFESSIONALS IN  
MARCH 2020

	2021	MARCH 2020
BOARD DIRECTOR/PARTNER	<b>£67,075</b>	£67,810
ASSOCIATE/DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR	<b>£64,832</b>	£59,818
SENIOR ACCOUNT DIRECTOR	<b>£58,710</b>	£59,818
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR	<b>£48,854</b>	£47,464
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER	<b>£40,832</b>	£40,736
ACCOUNT MANAGER	<b>£33,207</b>	£30,893
SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	<b>£28,970</b>	£27,368
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE	<b>£23,000</b>	£22,499



## IN-HOUSE

The average salary across in-house teams is £46,974, which is a slight increase from the average of £46,357 in March 2020. This could indicate that in-house roles have remained relatively stable throughout the pandemic in contrast to agency roles.

# £46,974

current average salary for  
in-house professionals

# £46,357

AVERAGE IN-HOUSE SALARY  
IN THE INDUSTRY IN MARCH 2020

Here is the current breakdown of all the salaries by job level:

	2021	MARCH 2020
VP/DIRECTOR	£80,832	£59,252
HEAD OF UNIT	£60,324	£62,648
SENIOR MANAGER	£48,946	£48,443
JUNIOR MANAGER	£40,905	£38,582
SENIOR EXECUTIVE	£34,934	£32,380
JUNIOR EXECUTIVE	£26,826	£29,764

On average, in-house professionals are earning more than they did a year ago except for Heads of Units and Junior executives.

## FREELANCE

The average income for freelancers is £56,638. This is considerably higher than the average of £49,370 in March 2020.

Historical data from previous censuses shows that freelancer income tends to be less predictable and stable than agency and in-house salaries. However, the sudden increase in freelancer income could indicate that organisations are increasingly relying on freelancers to cope with the increase in workload caused by the reduction in headcount.

# £56,638

average annual freelance  
income in 2021

# £49,370

AVERAGE ANNUAL FREELANCE INCOME  
IN MARCH 2020

## PAY RISE

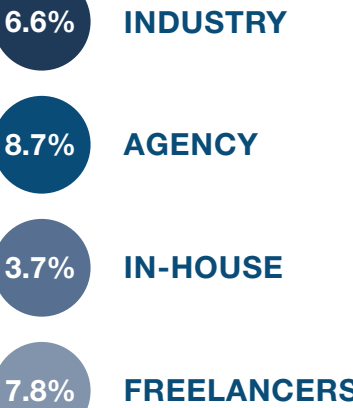
The majority of practitioners (52%) said they had received a pay rise in the last 12 months. The average pay rise is 6.6%. This increases to 8.7% for agency professionals. Freelancers saw a 7.8% increase in their income. The average pay rise for In-house professionals is 3.7%.

At agencies, Managing Directors and CEOs saw the biggest increase in their pay at 10.4%, followed by Senior Account Managers (10.44%), and Account Directors (10.04%).

In contrast, Junior Executives working at In-house organisations saw the biggest increase in their pay at 5%. This is followed by Junior Managers (4.2%), and Heads of Unit (3.9%).



## AVERAGE PAY RISE



## GENDER PAY GAP

The gender pay gap is 12.7% with women in the industry earning an average of £48,293 and men earning an average of £55,312.

The gender pay gap appears to be decreasing in comparison to March 2020 when the gender pay gap was 14.8%. This year's figure is also significantly lower than the figure in September 2020 which was 21%.

While this is a positive trend, the gender pay gap is far too high given that PR and communications is a female dominated industry. Senior roles in the industry tend to be male dominated which explains the high gender pay gap.

When we asked practitioners if they believed their organisation was doing enough to address the gender pay 70% said yes. We also asked respondents which actions would assist in reducing the gender pay gap. The most common responses were creating roles with more flexibility, greater equity of maternity/paternity benefits, and redesigning senior roles so they are open to all.

# 12.7%

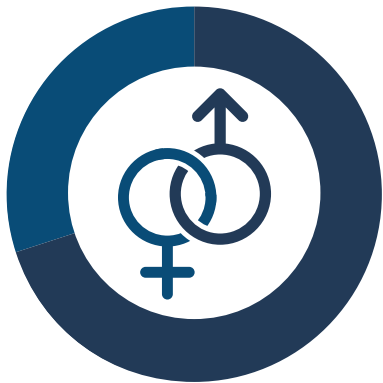
Current gender pay gap  
in the PR and Communications industry

	MARCH 2020	SEPTEMBER 2020
Gender pay gap in the PR and Communications industry	14.8%	21%

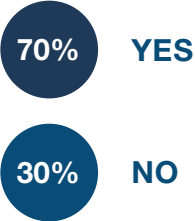
£55,312 ♂ £48,293 ♀

AVERAGE SALARY  
FOR MALE  
PROFESSIONALS

AVERAGE SALARY  
FOR FEMALE  
PROFESSIONALS



DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR ORGANISATION IS DOING ENOUGH TO HELP COMBAT THIS?



ETHNICITY PAY GAP

The ethnicity pay gap in public relations is £8,084.50 or 16% of the average salary.

46% of white professionals earn an average salary of more than £50,000. By contrast, only 32% of non-white professional earn an average salary of more than £50,000.

The pay gap can, in part, be attributed to a lack of non-white professionals in senior roles.

PR professionals identifying as white are more likely to occupy senior roles within in-house organisations and agencies. For in-house professionals, white respondents are most likely (20%) to be Head of Unit/ Departments and non-white respondents were most likely to be Senior Managers (36%).

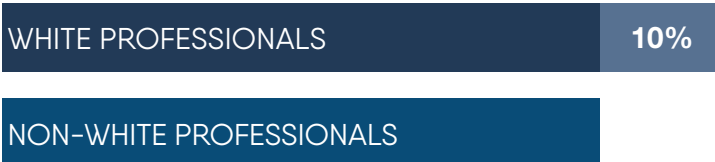
In agencies, respondents that identified as white were even more likely to occupy senior positions than those who identified as non-white. Non-white professionals in agencies were most likely to be occupy Account Executive roles (20%), whereas white professionals were most likely to occupy Chairman/Chief Executive/ Managing Director.

When asked about workplace wellbeing, encompassing everything from the quality and safety of the environment to how workers feels about their work and their working environment, PR professionals that identify as white were 10% more likely than non-white respondents to rate their organisation as good or very good.

Similarly, when asked whether there is a line manager that you can confide in regarding mental and workplace wellbeing, non-white respondents were 10% more likely than white respondents to respond 'no'.



PROFESSIONALS EARNING AN AVERAGE SALARY OF £50,000 <



PR PROFESSIONALS THAT IDENTIFY AS WHITE ARE 10% MORE LIKELY THAN NON-WHITE RESPONDENTS TO RATE THEIR ORGANISATION AS “GOOD” OR “VERY GOOD”

SECTOR PAY

Here is the average pay by sector in the industry:

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	£40,970	↓
BUSINESS SERVICES	£54,620	
CHARITY/NOT-FOR-PROFIT/THIRD SECTOR	£45,487	↓
CONSUMER SERVICES, MEDIA & MARKETING	£56,159	
FINANCE/FINANCIAL SERVICES	£61,016	↑
FOOD/BEVERAGES/TOBACCO	£53,874	
HEALTH/PHARMACEUTICAL	£54,719	↑
INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING	£65,332	↑
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	£45,961	
NHS	£46,590	
NON-DEPARTMENTAL BODY (PUBLIC SECTOR)	£41,728	↓
PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION	£54,771	
RETAIL & WHOLESALE	£49,874	
TECHNOLOGY	£49,791	

The highest paying sectors are industrial and manufacturing, finance and financial services, and health and pharmaceutical.

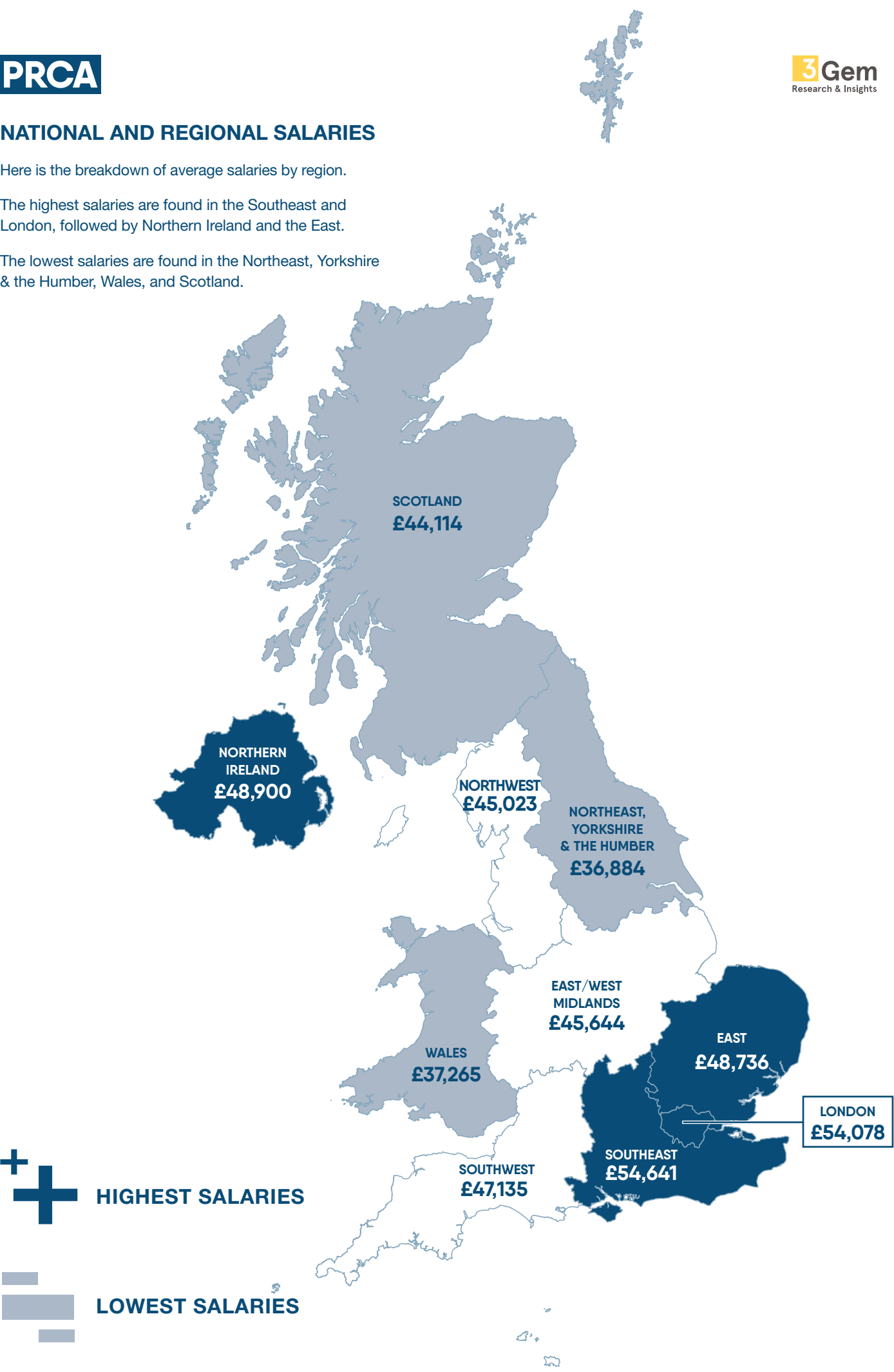
The sectors with the lowest pay are central Government, public sector, and charity and not-for-profit.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SALARIES

Here is the breakdown of average salaries by region.

The highest salaries are found in the Southeast and London, followed by Northern Ireland and the East.

The lowest salaries are found in the Northeast, Yorkshire & the Humber, Wales, and Scotland.



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