

# UK PUBLISHING WORKFORCE

Diversity, inclusion and belonging

2024



**Publishers  
Association**

**Savanta:**

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## Introductions



Fostering a respectful and welcoming workplace that reflects and celebrates the rich diversity of our society is more important than ever for all of us as employers and as businesses. That's why I am proud that the Publishers Association was among the earliest organisations in the creative industries – and in

publishing globally – to acknowledge the importance of regular workforce surveys. You can't celebrate – or change – what you don't know.

We play a crucial role in sharing stories, ideas and knowledge to help others make sense of the world and we know about the transformational power that books, reading and education can have. The more inclusive the publishing community, the more potent that power becomes.

We believe it is essential that everyone who works in publishing, in whatever capacity and from whichever background, feels valued and is given the opportunity to realise their full potential. Inclusion is critical, if the publishing industry is to thrive.

Through the hard work of everyone in the publishing industry, including the challenge and championing of ideas and initiatives from colleagues within our sector, we have continuously worked to make progress when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion. Since the launch of the sector's first plan in 2017, we have seen improvements in terms of our workforce reflecting the population of the UK. We recognise that inclusion is an ever-changing journey, and that as culture transforms, we must continue to respond to new challenges in creative and innovative ways. This is an ongoing and evolving priority for our sector, and as the 2024 workforce survey results show there is no time for complacency.

Dan Conway  
Chief Executive, The Publishers Association

There has been improvement in geographic diversity over time and the industry can be proud to perform very strongly in female and LGB+ representation. However, we have seen a small, but statistically significant, decrease in Asian and British Asian members of the workforce since 2022. We need to understand this disappointing trend and work with the specialist support from Creative Access and our Diversity Working Group to address this in the year ahead. Elsewhere, there is some good news on ethnic diversity, with London increasing representation significantly since last measured in 2022. That said, there is still a long way to go to match the overall population demographics and the Publishers Association is setting out a range of activities we will scope, develop and deliver in the year ahead.

One of the most important things publishers can do is to ensure the results of the 2024 workforce survey are read and discussed within their workplace. Now, more than ever, we urge companies to commit to creating a more inclusive publishing sector by signing up to the Inclusivity Action Plan.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the workforce survey – whether you filled in the survey, or you have taken part in recent workshops to discuss the findings – your time and effort is a vital part of the work needed to bring about change.

*The UK Publishing Workforce: Diversity, inclusion and belonging in 2024* is a snapshot of a moment in time, but the important work to ensure we are a diverse, equitable and inclusive sector continues.



The Diversity Working Group exists to collaborate and innovate DEI activity in the sector. Having a rigorous three-year Inclusivity Action Plan is critical to ensure its future impact.

To this end, we will continue to support, challenge and champion the Publishers Association on

ongoing strategies and future endeavours. Our goal is that the UK publishing industry is representative of all communities and individuals, and in turn ensure that the book sector retains a key cultural and commercial role in the wider UK economy.

Forging a creative career has never been an easy road to travel. And for people from marginalised or under-represented communities – it's toughest of all. At Creative Access, we know from our experience with other employers, that the issues faced in publishing are echoed in other creative industries.

We need to double down and re-state our commitment to creating a more inclusive industry. We are determined that the results of the survey will not be put on the shelf. We have already held listening sessions with key stakeholders and identified areas to explore in the year ahead to support both individuals and employers. We will introduce interventions that are driven by, and rooted in, the needs of those they are aimed at; ones that deliver lasting results and secure the best talent and ideas for the sector.

Last month, we launched an industry-wide training programme for mid-level freelancers at under-represented levels to support their professional development and boost opportunities for networking. We are planning to deliver other initiatives aimed at smashing the glass ceiling that has been cited in many of our consultations.

Josie Dobrin OBE  
Executive Chair & Co-founder, Creative Access  
Co-Chair, Publishers Association's Diversity Working Group

Specifically with the Publishers Association, as we work to address the issues behind the changing demographics in this report, we will work over the coming year to:

- Produce guidance documents on inclusive recruitment and to support staff retention, with a specific focus on people from under-represented backgrounds
- Signpost mentoring and career development opportunities – and identify gaps in provision which we can seek to address
- Build on our existing work to better explain to potential recruits, advisers and teachers, the variety of roles and skills needed to enter the publishing sector and to demonstrate career pathways and progression routes
- Work collaboratively to design the next iteration of our Inclusivity Action Plan for 2026 onwards

Collectively, the sector has the power to unite and provide more transparent and consistent pathways to leadership and it's gratifying to see so many publishers come together in recent weeks to help shape plans.

We need to keep investing in people and the untapped stories they can deliver. I am very proud of the impact that Creative Access has had on the sector since our inception in 2012 and am looking forward to driving further positive changes with colleagues in the publishing industry during 2025.

## Background and methodology

Since 2017, the Publishers Association has conducted annual socio-demographic surveys of the UK publishing workforce. The insights from these surveys feed into the organisation's ongoing work to understand representation within the industry and monitor changes over time.

In 2023 the Publishers Association, working with Creative Access, launched the latest [Inclusivity Action Plan](#) with a set of 10 commitments for publishing businesses to undertake over the period 2023-2026. One of these commitments was around data collection, as follows:

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**Commit to data collection and support consistent cross-industry data collection. This will help measure both the demographics of the publishing workforce (to ensure we are building diverse and representative teams) and the culture within the sector (to help ensure equity in experience, progression and retention).**

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In order to be able to fulfil the above, this year the Publishers Association commissioned Savanta, an independent market research agency, to undertake the data collection. In addition, some larger businesses provided their data from their own staff surveys directly to Savanta to amalgamate with the wider sector survey results. The data collection took place between March and July 2024 using an online survey.

The survey of publishing employees was modelled on the Office for National Statistics Census for England and Wales, and has been developed to align with current inclusive best practice for the collection of socio-demographic data. The survey – and the report below – uses the ethnic group, national identity, language and religion variables as used in the [Census 2021](#).

As not every respondent answered every question in the survey, and some of the aggregate data provided by businesses was partial, the base size varies across questions. The proportion of respondents who chose not to answer a question by selecting 'prefer not to answer' or 'don't know' is not visualized in the data charts.

Where possible, comparisons have been made to the results from the England and Wales 2021 Census. These are represented by dotted line bars on the right of graphs (Figures 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 17 in the report). Comparisons have also been made to the Publishers Association's previous annual Workforce Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging surveys.

Participation

A total of 9,707 employees from 52 businesses took part in the 2024 Publishing Workforce Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging survey. The total number of respondents was slightly lower than in 2022, despite more businesses taking part in the survey (52 vs 50 in 2022).

This decrease in the number of participants in this year’s survey was due largely to some members being in the midst of HR system changes and thus being unable to conduct the survey.

Figure 1: Number of individual respondents year-on-year

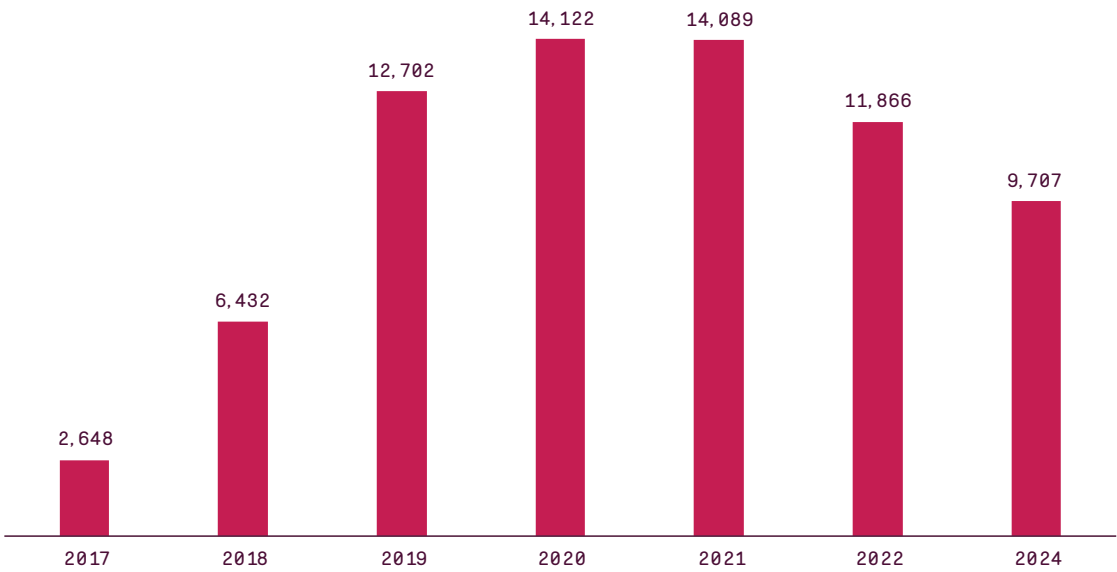
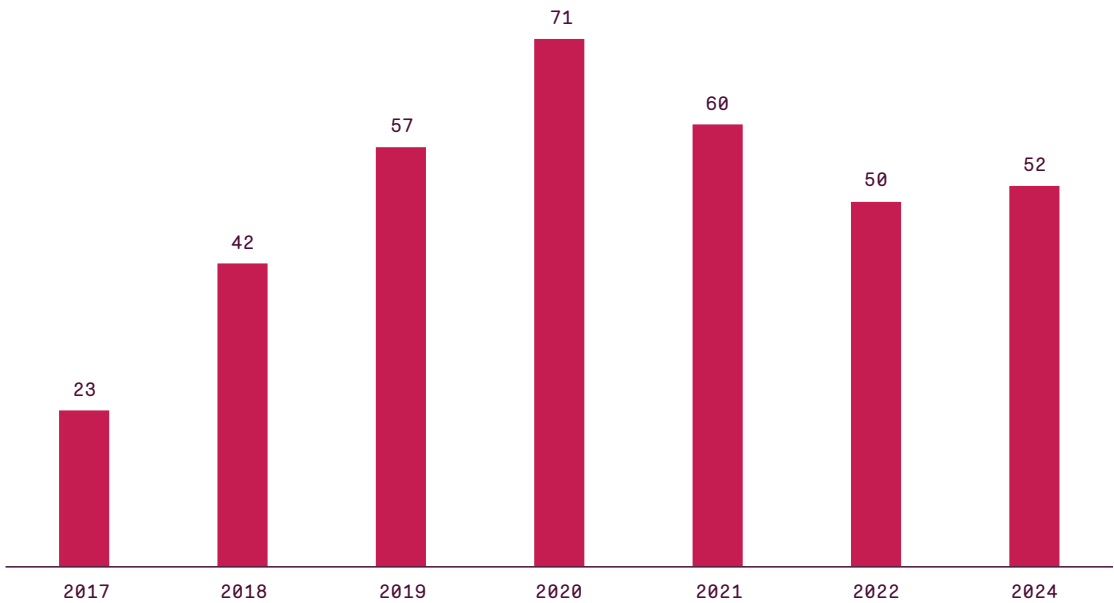


Figure 2: Number of participating businesses year-on-year



## Key findings



Since 2022, the proportion of **respondents living in London** has decreased by 10 percentage points, now accounting for 35%. Meanwhile, the **South East** has seen a rise in respondents, increasing from 21% to 27% during the same period. The proportion of respondents who grew up outside of the UK has remained on a par with previous years (16%).



The **age distribution** of the publishing industry remains predominantly within the 25 to 44 age group (60%), consistent with the 61% reported in 2022. Only 5% of respondents were aged between 18-24 years, and 15% were aged 55 years or older, with both figures being consistent with the 2022 results (6% and 13% respectively).



As in 2022, the majority of respondents identified as **non-religious**, (61% vs 60% in 2022). This is much higher than the general population, where 37% are non-religious, according to 2021 Census data.



In 2024, 84% of respondents identified their national identity as **British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish** – a similar figure to 2022 (85%).



Just over two in three respondents identify as **female** (68%), a slight increase since 2022 (66%), however consistent with the overall trend year-on-year.



The publishing industry continues to foster a diverse workforce in terms of LGB+, with 16% of respondents identifying as **LGB+** (15% in 2022), as compared to the general UK population (3%).



People from **ethnic minority groups** make up 15% of all respondents in 2024. This represents a small, however statistically significant, decrease since 2022 (17%).



Two thirds of respondents (65%) came from **professional backgrounds** – on a par with the 2022 results (66%).



Overall, 16% of respondents **attended an independent or fee-paying school**. This represents a 1 percentage point drop since 2022 (17%). This is, however, far higher than the proportion of privately educated individuals in the UK (7%).



The majority of the publishing workforce is **educated to a degree level** (postgraduate or undergraduate), though there has been a small drop in this proportion (79% vs 82% in 2022).



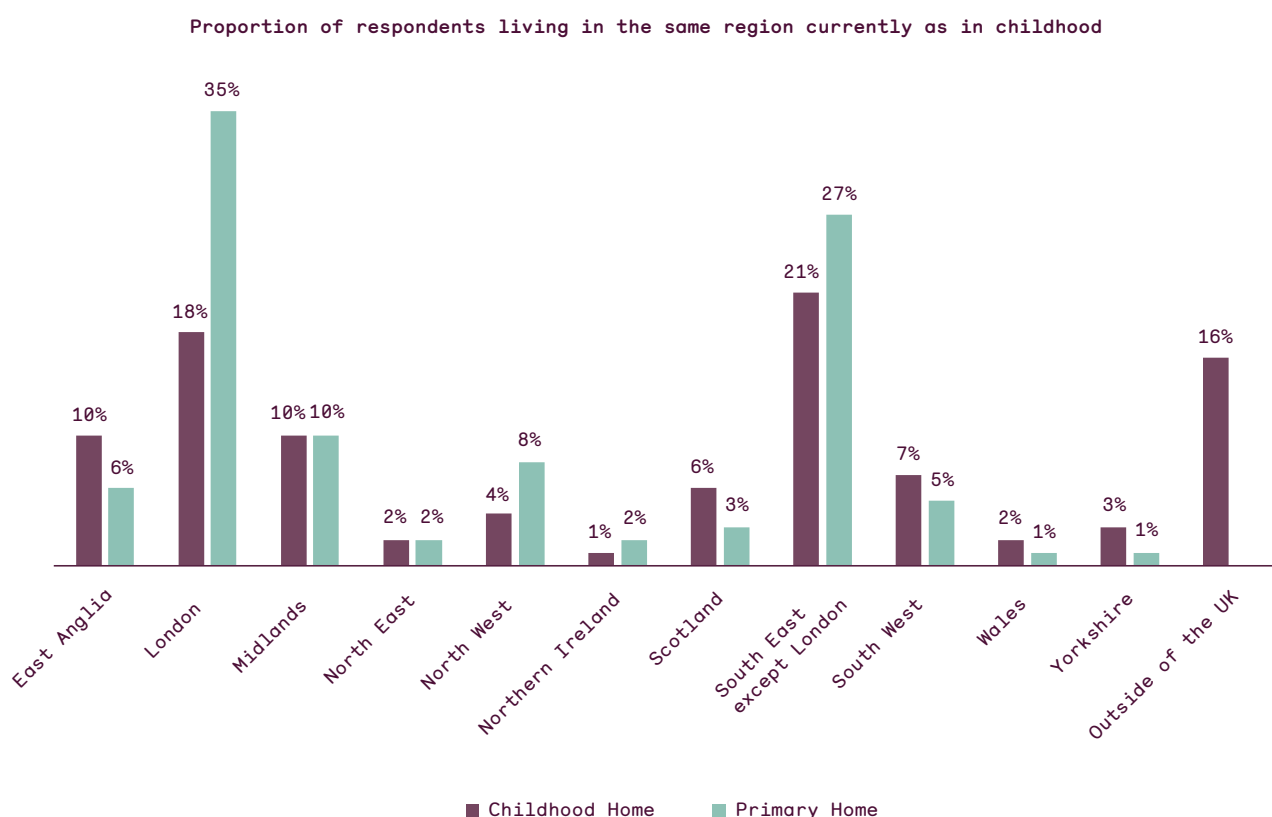
The representation of respondents with **disabilities or long-term health conditions** within the publishing workforce has remained on a par with 2022 (15% vs 16% in 2022).

## About our respondents

### Childhood home and where they live now

Publishing sector employees are still most likely to reside within London and the South East, however we continue to see a downward trend.

**Figure 3:** *Where did you spend the majority of your childhood? Where is your primary home located?*



Where did you spend the majority of your childhood? Base: 4,967 respondents

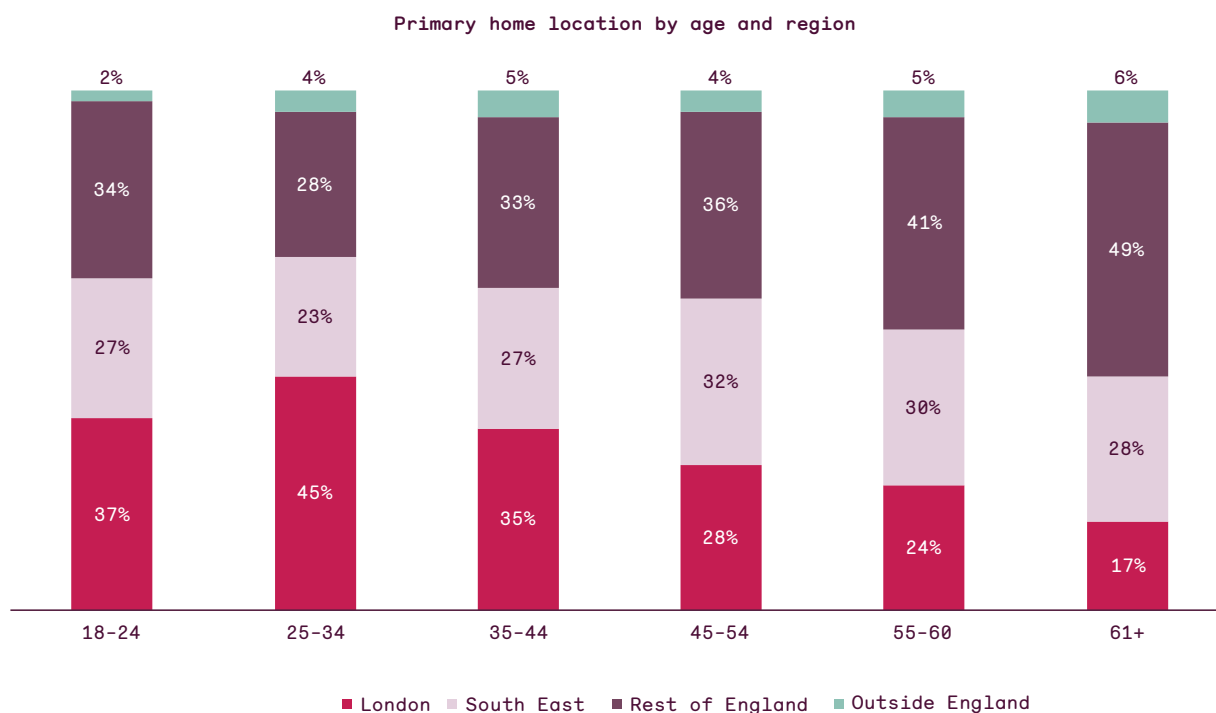
Where is your primary home located? Base: 7,485 respondents

In 2024, there has been a continued decline in the number of respondents residing in London and the South East. The cumulative percentage for these regions dropped from 80% in 2021 to 66% in 2022 to 62% in 2024. Over a third (35%) of respondents are living in the capital – a 10 percentage point drop since 2022. Meanwhile, 27% of respondents reside in the South East, an increase from 21% in 2022. The proportion of respondents who grew up outside of the UK has remained on a par with previous years (16%).

Overall, nearly one in four respondents (23%) still live in the same region they spent their childhood in. Almost one in five (18%) respondents grew up in London, a slight increase since 2022 (16%). A similar proportion grew up in the South East (21%), a notable increase, compared to 2022 (13%).



**Figure 4:** *Where is your primary home located? (by age)*



Base: 7,485 respondents

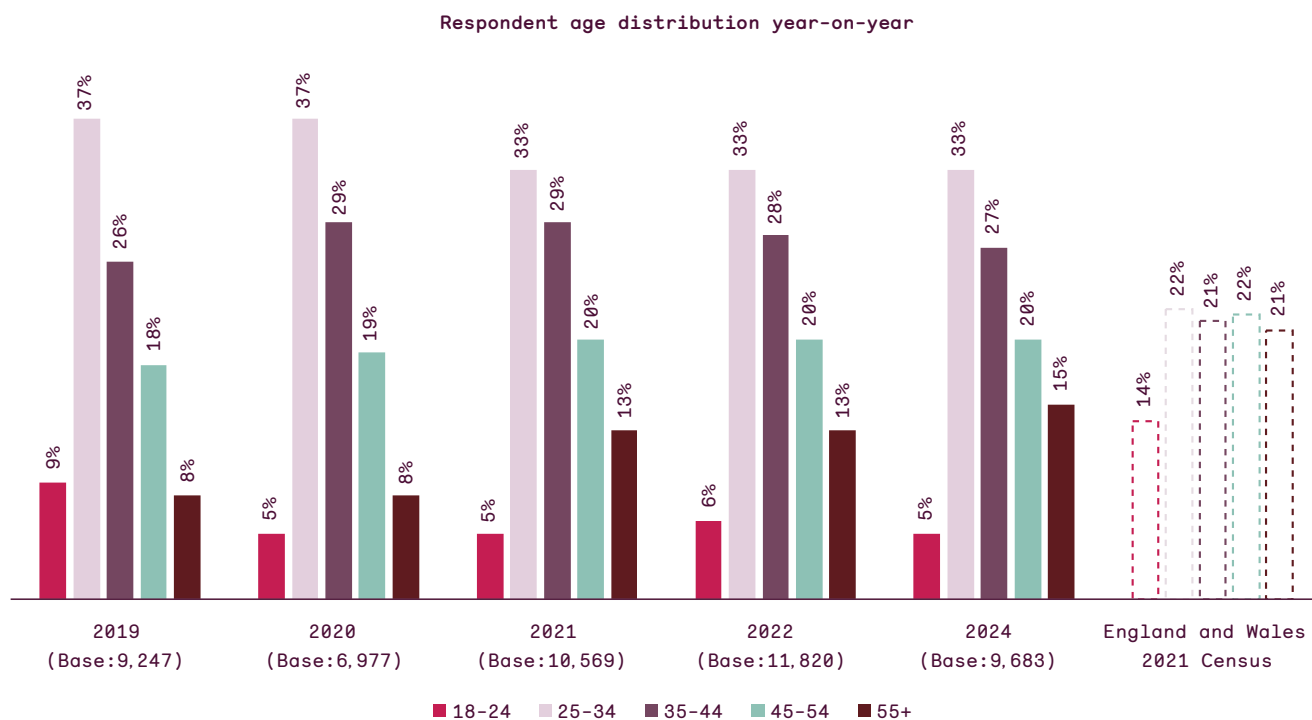
As shown in Figure 4, younger respondents (18-34 years-old), are more likely to be living in London, suggesting that more publishing career opportunities are available in the capital. At the same time, respondents in their thirties and older show a trend of moving out of the city – in line with the general population migration trends<sup>1</sup>. Given the limited base sizes, we are unable to look beyond England for this analysis.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/escape-to-the-country/population-decline-was-driven-by-people-moving-out-of-london/#:~:text=Figure%205%20shows%20the%20typical,people%20aged%2030%2D45>

## Age

Age distribution in the publishing industry remains on a par with previous years.

Figure 5: What is your age?



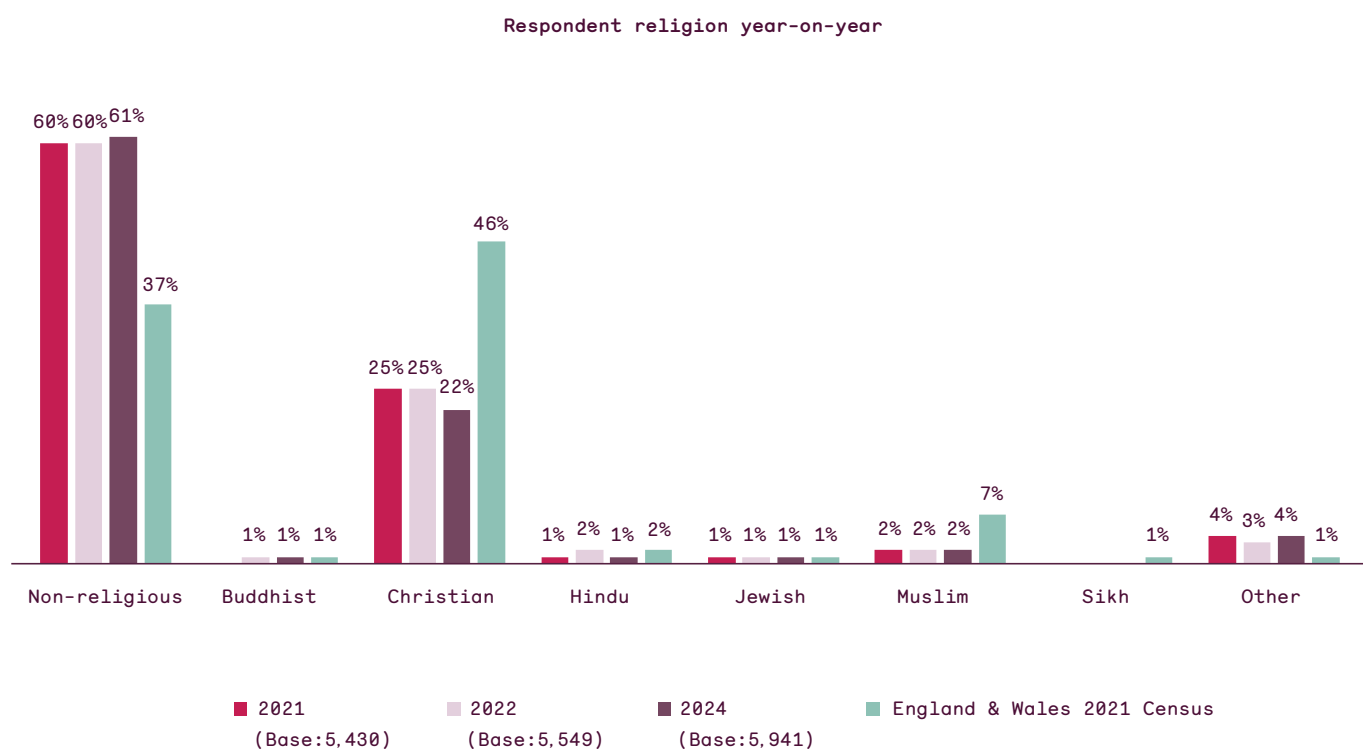
The age distribution of the publishing industry remains predominantly within the 25 to 44 age group (60%), consistent with the 61% reported in 2022. The 25 to 34 age group continues to be the largest segment (33%), mirroring the results from 2021 and 2022. Additionally, individuals aged 35 to 44 make up another third (27%) of respondents, closely aligning with 28% in 2022.

Only 5% of respondents were aged between 18-24 years, and 15% were aged 55 years or older, with both figures being consistent with the 2022 results (6% and 13% respectively).

## Religion or belief

The majority of our industry do not consider themselves religious, with all religions underrepresented in comparison to the 2021 Census data.

**Figure 6:** What is your religion or belief?



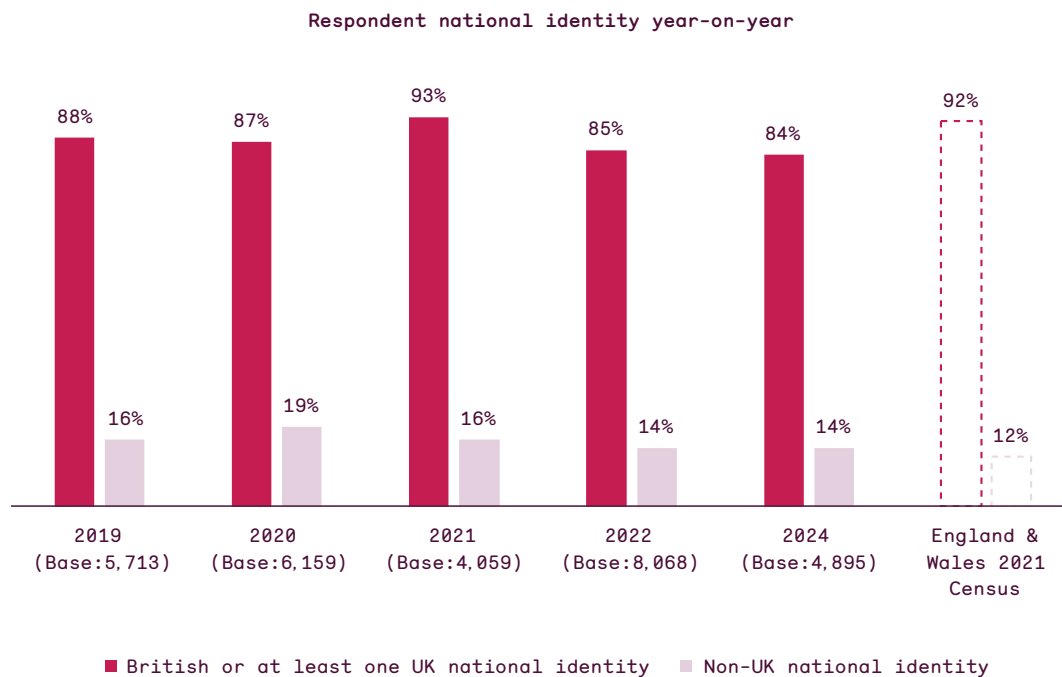
As in 2022, the majority of respondents identified as non-religious (61% vs 60% in 2022). This is much higher than the general population, where 37% are non-religious, according to 2021 Census data. Non-religiousness is significantly more common among younger respondents (63% among those aged 18-44 vs 50% aged 45 or above).

Christians represented a fifth (22%) of respondents – a slight decrease from 2022 (25%). The proportion of Muslim (2%), Hindu (1%), Jewish (1%), Buddhist (1%), and Sikh (less than 1%) respondents has remained on a par with 2022 and 2021 findings.

## National Identity

Majority identify as British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish, however this figure is on a downwards trend since 2021.

**Figure 7:** How would you describe your national identity?



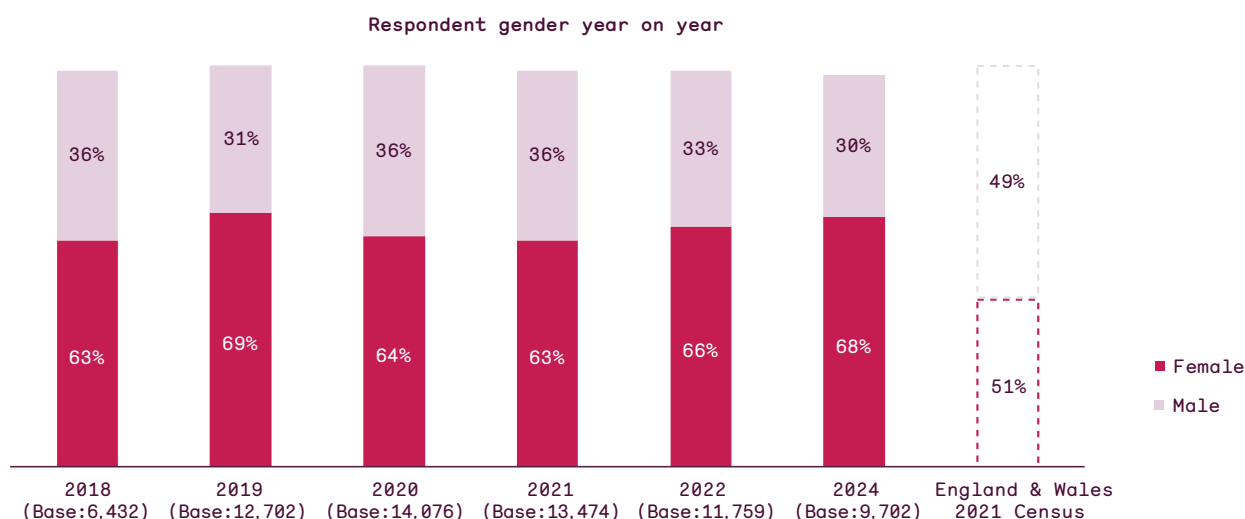
In 2024, 84% of respondents identified their national identity as British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish – a similar figure to 2022 (85%). Since 2021, there has been a 9 percentage point drop, and the number of British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish respondents is no longer aligned with the 2021 Census figure (92%).

The same proportion of respondents as in 2022 (14%) held a non-UK national identity – a slightly higher figure than the general population (12%). Non-UK residents are more likely to be younger (16% of 18-44 year-olds vs 6% aged 45 and over) and live in London or Northern Ireland (21% and 50% respectively).

## Gender

Females continue to dominate publishing overall.

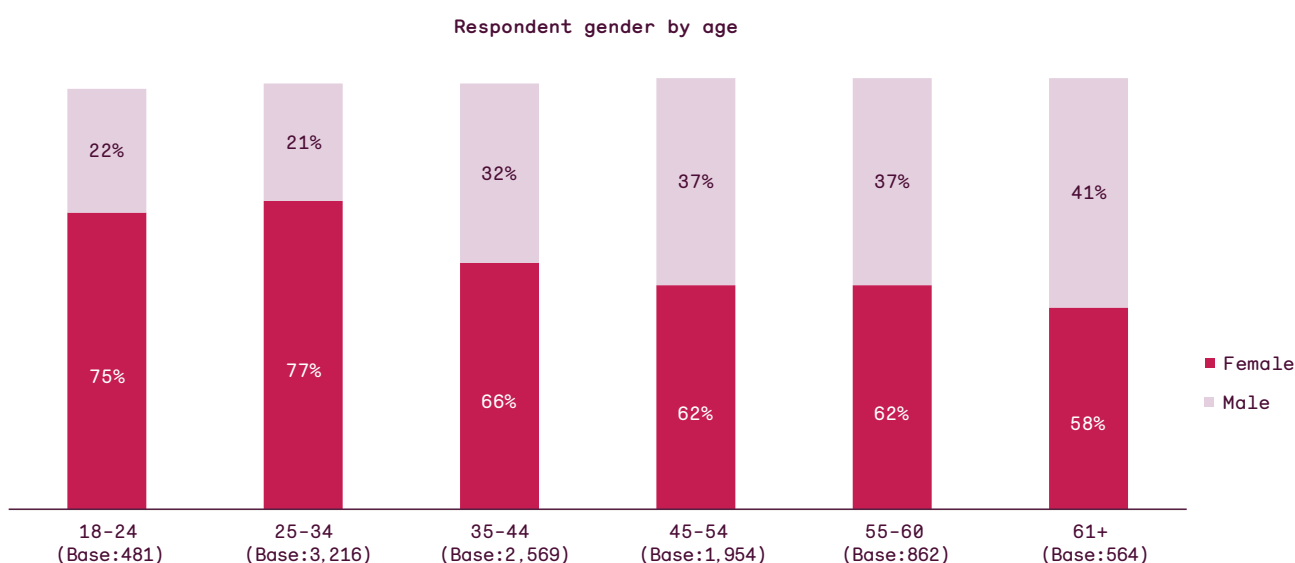
**Figure 8:** What best describes your gender?



Just over two in three respondents identify as female (68%), a slight increase since 2022 (66%), however consistent with the overall trend year-on-year. Compared to the 2021 Census data, the proportion of females in publishing surpasses that of the general population (51%), whilst males remain underrepresented (30% - a 3 percentage point decrease since 2022).

Regionally, women form a larger part of the workforce in London (72%), Scotland (72%), and Yorkshire (77%) than other regions. At the same time, higher numbers of men are seen in the North (40%) and Northern Ireland (46%).

**Figure 9:** What best describes your gender? (by age)



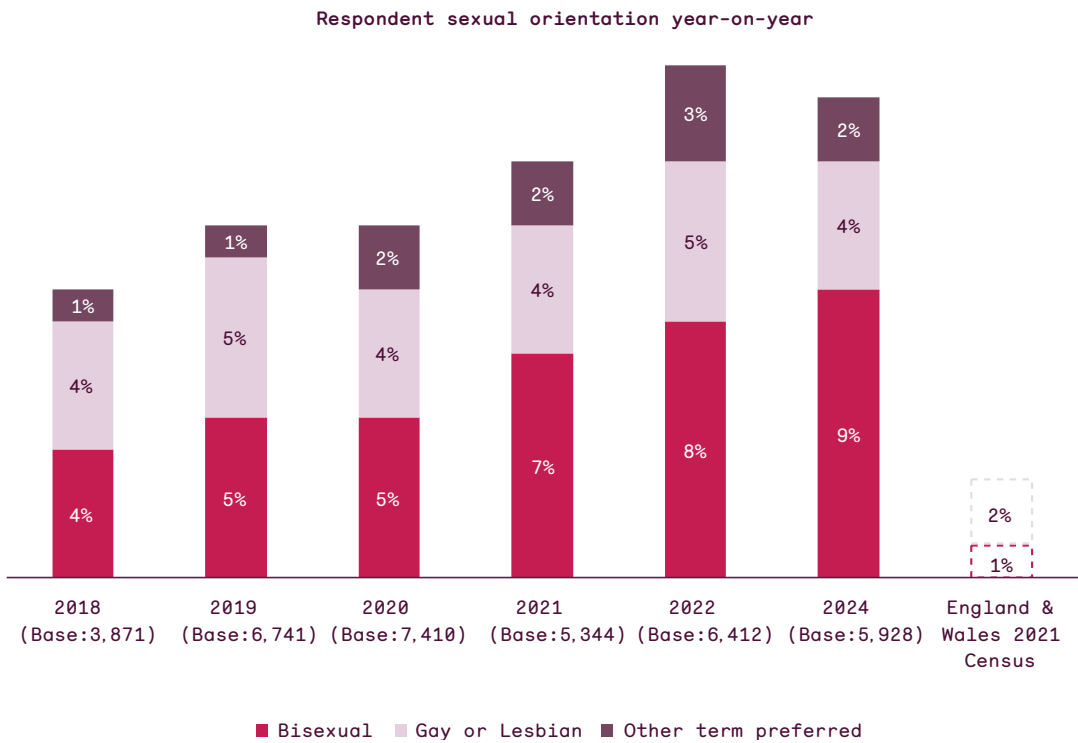
Base: 9,702 respondents

Females make up a significantly larger proportion of young employees in the publishing industry, with three quarters of all 18-34 year-old respondents identifying as females.

LGB+

LGB+ representation in publishing continues to grow, driven by the continuous increases of respondents who identify as bisexual.

Figure 10: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?



The publishing industry continues to foster a diverse workforce in terms of LGB+, with 16% identifying as LGB+ (15% in 2022), as compared to the general UK population (3%). This has been steadily increasing over the years, with a continuous increase in respondents identifying as bisexual.

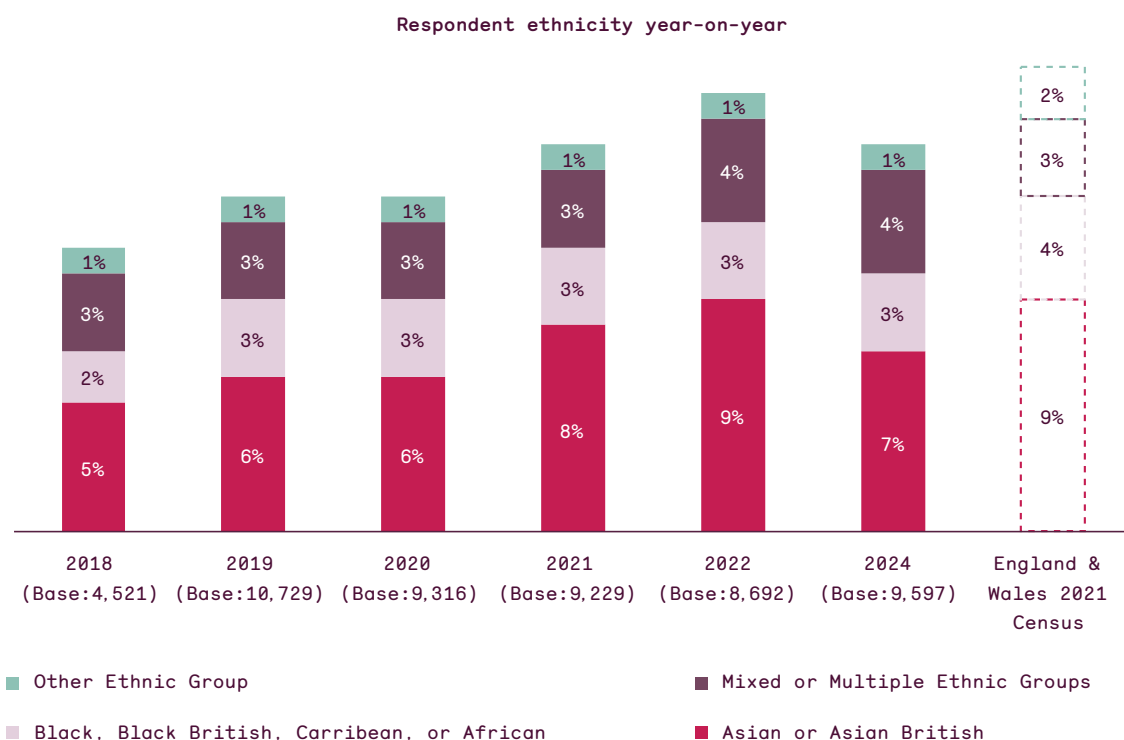
The highest numbers of respondents identifying as part of the LGB+ community are in Scotland (25%), Yorkshire (22%) and London (21%), whilst the South West, East Anglia and South East house the highest numbers of heterosexual respondents (83%, 82% and 80% respectively).

Consistent with the 2022 research and wider population, 1% of the respondents in the publishing industry identify as transgender, when asked if their gender identity has remained the same as sex assigned at birth. The majority (97%) of respondents reported that their gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth, and 2% preferred not to answer the question.

## Ethnicity

Representation from ethnic minority groups has decreased by 2 percentage points since 2022.

**Figure 11:** How would you describe your ethnic origin?



People from ethnic minority groups make up 15% of all respondents in 2024. This represents a small, however statistically significant, decrease since 2022 (17%), and the 2021 Census figure (18%).

The two percentage point drop is seen in the Asian or Asian British group, which has dropped from 9% in 2022 to 7% in 2024.

The proportion of respondents who identified as Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African continues to remain stable, with the same 3% figure staying consistent since 2019 (3%). This figure is on a par with the general population of England and Wales (4%).

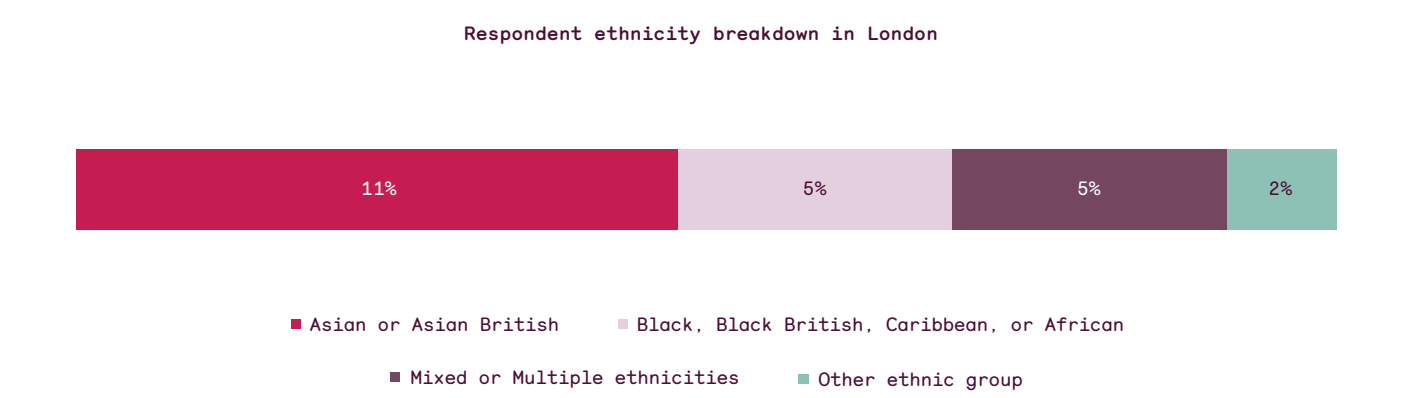
4% of respondents identified as a Mixed or Multiple ethnic group – the same proportion as in 2022, and the general population of England and Wales (3%).

Lastly, 1% identified themselves as being in the Other ethnic group category – a figure consistent year-on-year since 2018, and in line with the general population of England and Wales.

London ethnicity

Unlike the figures for the UK overall, representation of ethnic minority groups based in London has increased since 2022.

Figure 12: How would you describe your ethnic origin (Londoners)?



Base: 2,558 respondents

We carried out further analysis looking at ethnic characteristic breakdown in the capital, given that this is the area which houses the majority of respondents. It should be noted that not all existing data that was received from organisations included respondents’ primary home location, hence this analysis was based on the subset of data that was available.

Firstly, the rate of ethnic minority representation in London is much higher – and has further increased since 2022 (23% vs 17% in 2022). That being said, this proportion is still notably lower than the general London population (46%).

The proportion of respondents living in London who identified their ethnic group as Asian or Asian British has risen since 2022 from 7% to 11%, but is still only half of the equivalent of the general London population (21%).

Additionally, respondents living in London identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African continue to be in-line with 2022 results (5% vs 4% in 2022), and below the London population (14%).



## Socio-economic background and education

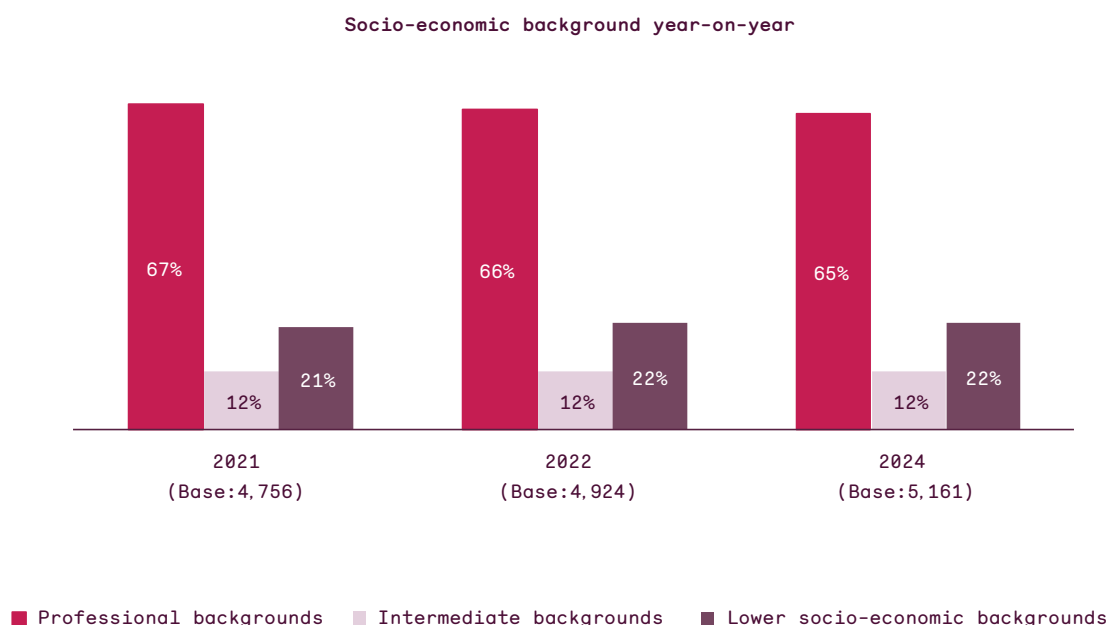
Socio-economic background and education continue to skew towards more privileged backgrounds.

Socio-economic background has been measured using the Social Mobility Commission's recommended question around the occupation of the main household earner during respondents' childhood.

Socio-economic background has been reported in three groups:

- **Professional backgrounds** – Modern professional and traditional occupations; senior or junior managers or administrators.
- **Intermediate backgrounds** – Clerical and intermediate occupations; small business owners.
- **Lower socio-economic backgrounds** – Technical and craft occupations; routine, semi-routine manual, and service occupations; long-term unemployed.

**Figure 13:** Finally, what was the occupation of your main household earner when you were aged 14?



**Note:** As per Social Mobility Commission guidance, respondents who answered 'Other' or preferred not to say were removed from the analysis.

Two thirds of the respondents (65%) came from professional backgrounds – on a par with 2022 (66%). This figure is still much higher than the benchmarks set by the Social Mobility Commission's benchmarks for publishing industry (50%), creative industries (52%) and the national benchmark (37%).

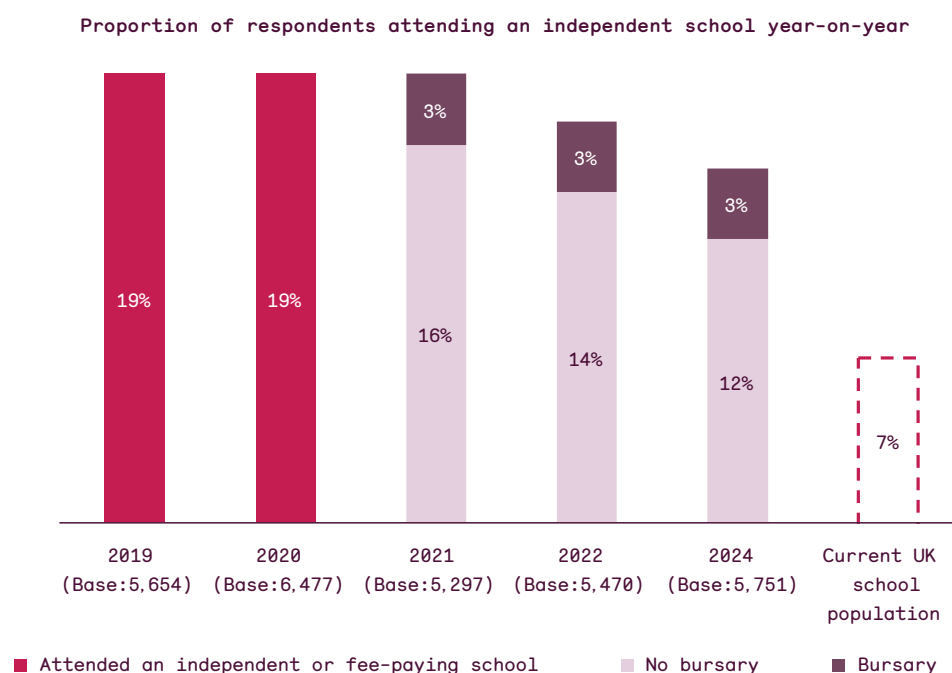
12% of respondents came from intermediate backgrounds, same as in 2021 and 2022. This too was lower than the benchmarks set – 24% for the publishing industry, 21% for the creative industry and 24% as the national benchmark.

Lastly, around one in five respondents (22%) were from lower socio-economic backgrounds – in line with the results from the previous two years, but lower than the publishing, creative industry, and national benchmarks (26%, 27% and 39% respectively).

## Education

Whilst most of our industry continue to have attended state schools, the representation of those who were privately educated remains higher than the general population.

**Figure 14:** What type of school did you mainly attend between the ages of 11 and 16?



Overall, 16% of respondents attended an independent or fee-paying school. This represents a 1 percentage point drop since 2022 (17%). This is however far higher than the proportion of privately educated individuals in the UK (7%). Of the individuals who attended an independent or fee paying school, 3% reported having a bursary while 12% did not.

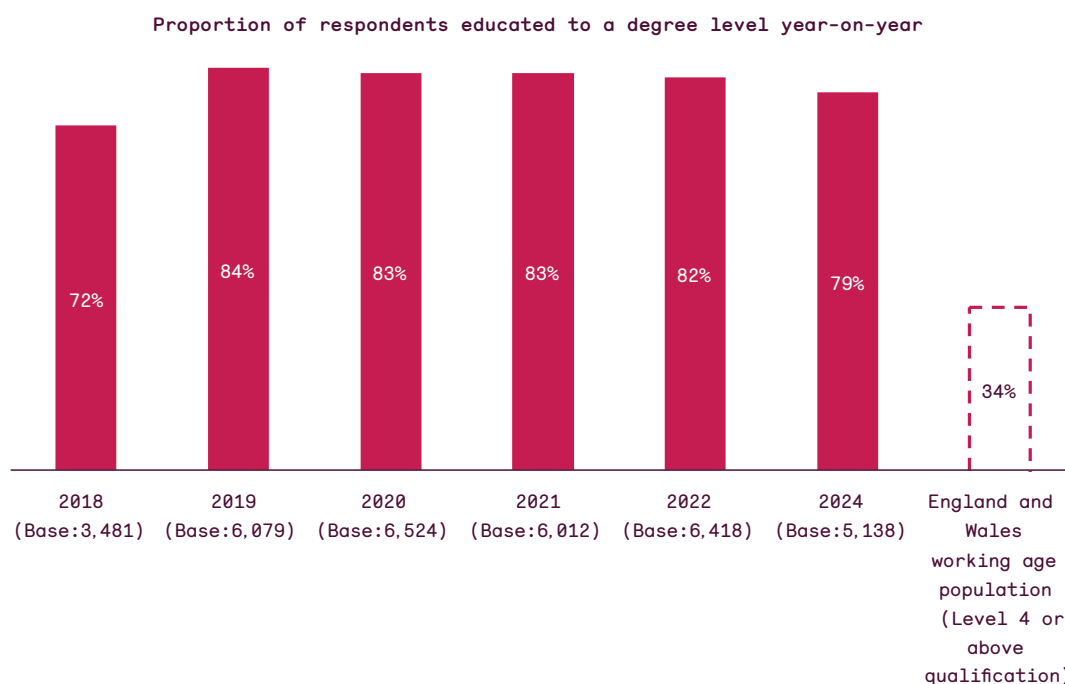
7 in 10 respondents (67%) attended a state-run school, and 11% attended school abroad.

Among respondents who finished school after 1980, 13% received free school meals – a 1 percentage point drop since 2022.

The higher rate of respondents attending independent schools is at least partly linked to the respondent backgrounds, as those from professional backgrounds are more likely to have attended an independent school.

The results suggest that small businesses may have higher requirements for employee education, as respondents from small businesses are significantly more likely to come from an independent school (25% vs 14% of large businesses) or have a postgraduate degree (45% vs 35% of large businesses). At the same time, large businesses employ more undergraduate students than small businesses (50% vs 42%), possibly due to having more funds to invest in the development of new talent – such as internships or graduate schemes.

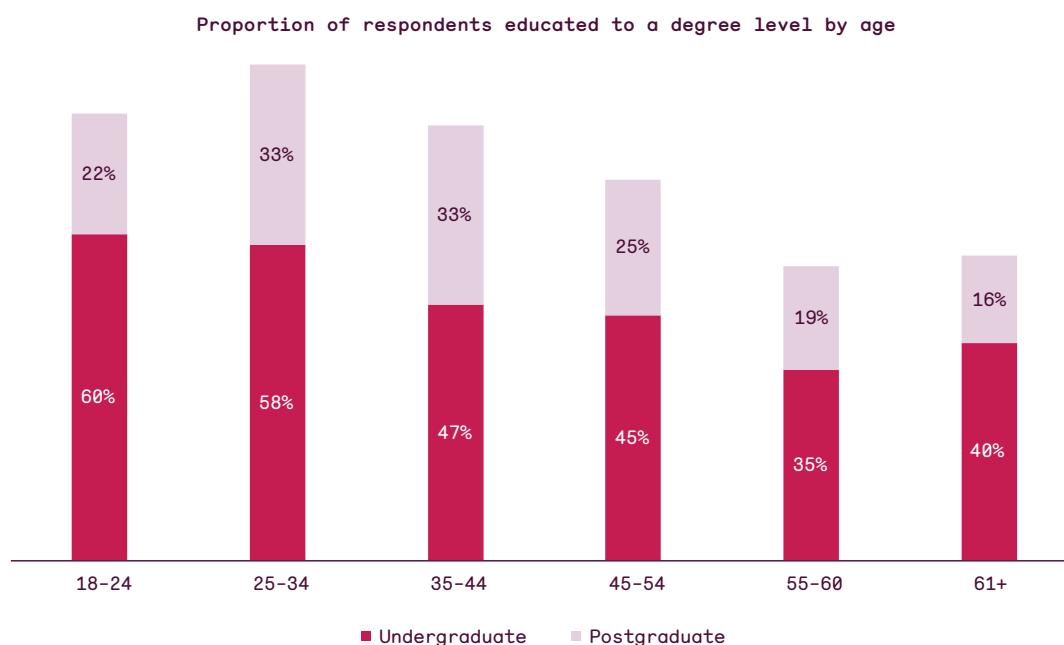
**Figure 15:** What is the highest level of education you have achieved to date (showing all with an undergraduate or postgraduate diploma)?



The majority of the publishing workforce is educated to a degree level (postgraduate or undergraduate), though there has been a small drop in this proportion (79% vs 82% in 2022). This is notably higher than the England and Wales working age population figure (34%).

Younger respondents are the most likely to have achieved a university degree, illustrating the growing popularity of higher education in the UK.

**Figure 16:** What is the highest level of education you have achieved to date (showing all with an undergraduate or postgraduate diploma)?

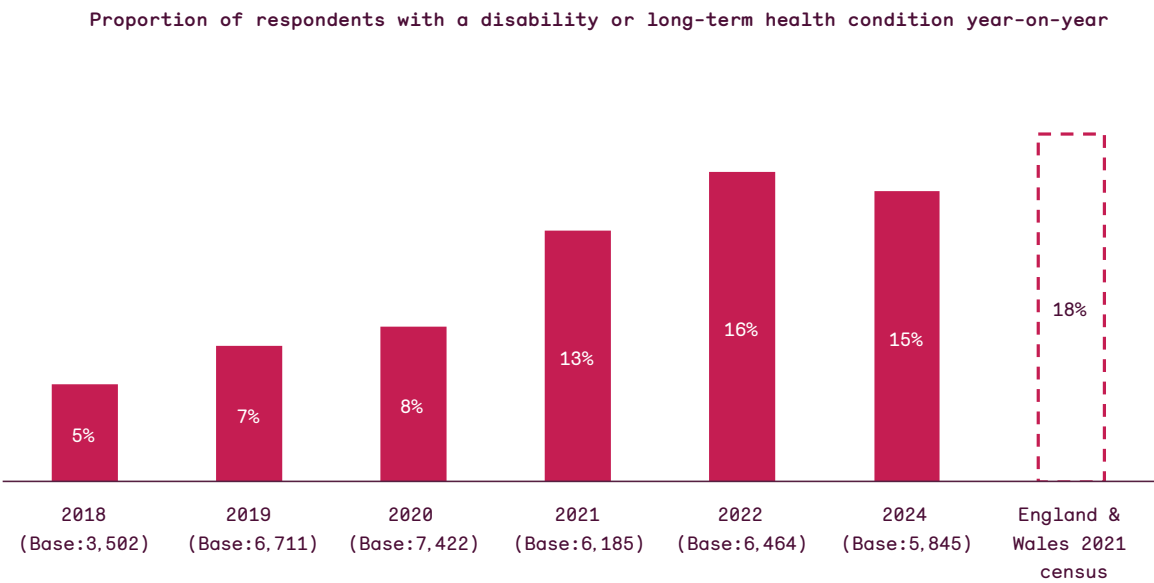


Base: 5,138 respondents

# Disability and long-term health conditions

Disability and long-term health conditions representation within the publishing sector remains on a par with previous years.

Figure 17: Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long-term health condition (mental health and / or physical health)?



The representation of respondents with disabilities or long-term health conditions within the publishing workforce has remained on a par with 2022 (15% vs 16% in 2022). This proportion remains slightly lower than disability representation in the population of England and Wales (18%).

Having a disability or long-term health conditions is more common amongst females (15% vs 12% of males), and LGB+ respondents (31% vs 12% of heterosexual respondents).

## About the Publishers Association

We are the member organisation for UK publishing, representing companies of all sizes and specialisms.

Our members produce digital and print books, research journals and educational resources across genres and subjects.

We exist to champion publishing to the wider world and to provide our members with everything they need to thrive.

We are passionate about the capacity for books and reading to make life better for people.

### Representing UK Publishing

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