MCA
A POSITIVE FORCE
FOR THE ECONOMY

# MCA Member Survey

# 2021
## January

Savanta:

CONSULTING
EXCELLENCE

## Contents



## Methodology

In its third year, this research is based on the results of an online survey of 506 active management consultants from the Management Consultancies Association membership. Survey participants represented firms of all sizes and specialisms, and all levels within their organisations – from Analysts to Heads of Consulting.

MCA council representatives are senior leaders in member firms responsible for submitting firm wide data to the MCA.

The online survey was active from 13 October to 17 November 2020. It was conducted by independent research company Savanta on behalf of the MCA.



## About the MCA

**THE MCA IS THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR THE UK'S LEADING MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRMS. FOR OVER 60 YEARS, THE MCA HAS BEEN THE VOICE OF THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY, PROMOTING THE VALUE OF CONSULTING TO BUSINESS, THE PUBLIC SECTOR, MEDIA COMMENTATORS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.**

The MCA's mission is to promote the value of management consultancy for the economy and society as a whole. The MCA's member companies comprise over 50% of the UK consulting industry, and work with over 90 of the top FTSE 100 companies and almost all parts of the public sector.

See the full list of current members at **www.mca.org.uk.**

Compliance with the MCA's tough entry criteria and adherence to the principles of consulting excellence means that MCA member companies are widely acknowledged to provide high quality services to their clients. Many of their achievements are recognised in the annual MCA Awards.

## Chief Executive's foreword

**THE MCA COMMISSIONED THIS MEMBER SURVEY TO IDENTIFY THE KEY TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE CONSULTING SECTOR IN THE UK, AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CLIENTS AND CONSULTANTS. OUR RESEARCH DRAWS ON DATA FROM INDIVIDUALS, SENIOR LEADERS AND CEOS EMPLOYED AT A WIDE VARIETY OF FIRMS ACROSS THE UK, AND PROVIDES AN UNRIVALLED ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CONSULTING SECTOR IN THE UK IN 2020, AND FUTURE PREDICTIONS FOR GROWTH.**

The research explores the effects of the pandemic on key aspects of the consulting industry, the impact on clients, and attitudes to flexible working. Over 500 management consultants participated in the research work from firms of all sizes and specialisms and at all levels, from Managing Partners to Heads of Consulting and Junior Consultants, in the last few weeks of 2020.

Roughly three-quarters of respondents worked for larger and medium sized firms while one quarter of participants came from smaller firms. As ever, the importance of attracting and nurturing talent is a key focus for our industry and we have looked at how training and development has been negatively impacted by the switch to remote working. As well as publishing forecasts and predictions, the survey also highlights some of the key internal and external challenges facing our member firms, and we hope this report will provide some interesting insights into trends in the sector.

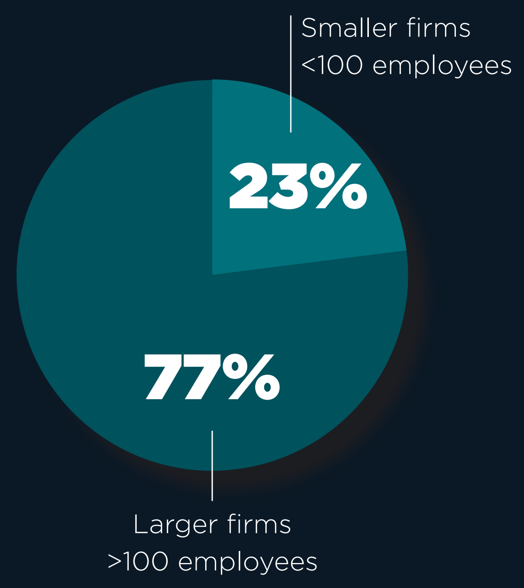
We hope you enjoy reading this report.

**Tamzen Isacsson**
Chief Executive, MCA

## The Survey

**506**
respondents from Analysts to Heads of Consulting

Survey participants by firm size




## Growth in 2020

Consulting activity grew by
**2.5%**

**6 in 10**
said business performance had met or exceeded expectations

## Growth in 2021/22

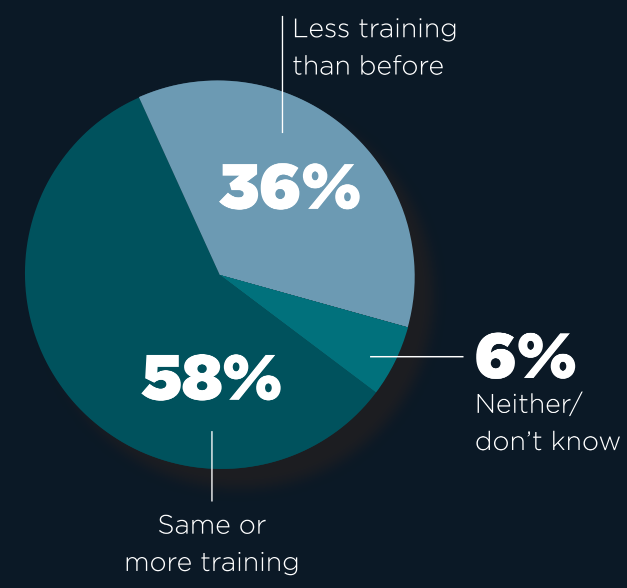
Consulting activity is expected to grow by
**9%**

Digital & tech leads the way
**88%**
expect growth in the sector over the next one-to-two years

Overall mood is positive
**95%**
of MCA council representatives expect growth in the next two years

## Training during Covid-19

**36%**
of consultants feel that they have not received as much training during the pandemic or that the quality has dropped




## Recruitment

The top four most important benefits consulting firms could offer to attract and retain the best talent

| Competitive salaries | Work-life balance | Flexible/remote working | Training & development |
|---|---|---|---|
| **33%** | **16%** | **16%** | **13%** |
| 2019: 31% | 2019: 18% | 2019: 11% | 2019: 13% |

## Young MCA

The number of young consultants attending Russell Group universities has declined since 2016

## 2020: YEAR IN REVIEW

The MCA estimates that consulting activity grew by **2.5%** in 2020. This is according to data collected from MCA council representatives, the senior leaders at member firms responsible for submitting firm wide data on performance.

Growth was less than previously anticipated but still stable, reflecting the resilience of the consulting sector and the huge efforts made by firms to react quickly to events and cater to new client demands. A third of MCA council representatives stated that consulting activity exceeded expectations in 2020 **(32%)** while a third did not meet their expectations **(34%)** and the final third felt they generally met expectations.

When it came to the widespread shift to working remotely in 2020, member firms articulated a series of advantages and disadvantages. Less money spent on travel and hotels was viewed as one of the biggest advantages to clients in 2020; **62%** ranked this among the top three benefits to clients of working remotely with consultants. Nevertheless, three-quarters **(73%)** of respondents said that less interaction with clients was one of the top three biggest challenges.

## 2020-21: LOOKING AHEAD

MCA leaders estimate that consulting activity will grow by around **9%** in the next 12-24 months and consultants are optimistic, with **95%** expecting consulting activity to increase in the next two years. This growth is expected to be fuelled in part by growth in both the digital consulting and government and public sector service lines.

In a year of unforeseen change to ways of working, three-quarters **(73%)** of MCA members named the increasing requirement for flexible/remote working as one of the top three areas that will have a significant impact on consulting firms over the next two years.

Over half **(56%)** of respondents stated the impact of Brexit as one of the top three significant issues they expect to affect firms over the coming 12-24 months, while two in five **(42%)** said the same of growing societal demand for more diverse representation at all levels in all firms. Younger consultants, who have an average of two years working in the industry, were the group most likely to see a lack of diversity and inclusion as one of the three main challenges over the next 12-24 months.

## THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

Training and development remains an important priority for the industry. Nonetheless, it is one that has been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic: over a third **(36%)** of consultants believe that they have not received as much training as usual during the pandemic or that the quality of training declined.

When looking to attract talent in the consulting industry, a competitive salary is unsurprisingly a must-have for many; a third **(33%)** described this as the top priority. Beyond financial remuneration, many consultants are keener now to see an improved work-life balance with sociable working hours, no doubt as a result of the changes in the working environment experienced in 2020.

Almost two-thirds of consultants predicted that reduced spend on consulting due to economic conditions **(64%)** will be one of the top three challenges to significantly impact firms over the next two years, while a similar proportion said the same of a general slowdown of the UK economy **(62%)**.

## THE YOUNG MCA

When looking at experiences of training and development for young consultants during COVID-19, only half **(53%)** of Young MCA members have received at least the same amount of training when compared to before the pandemic. Young MCA members are also more likely to say they have received training, but not to the usual standards compared to those with more than five years of experience **(7% vs 13%)**.

The number of consultants attending Russell Group universities has decreased, signalling a further diversification of the consulting talent pool. This is mirrored in a decrease in the number representing Oxbridge universities and is a reflection of the number of initiatives MCA member firms are undertaking to increase social mobility.





## 2020 WAS A YEAR OF UNPRECEDENTED, HISTORIC CHANGE. THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC EMERGED TO DISRUPT THE CORE OF MANY SECTORS AND BUSINESSES, BUT IT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER MAJOR EVENTS SUCH AS MASS POLITICAL PROTESTS INCLUDING THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT, WIDESPREAD GLOBAL POLITICAL DISRUPTION, AND THE END OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD AS THE UK DEPARTED FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION.

In 2019 the MCA calculated that the consulting industry grew by **7%**, based on fee income data provided by MCA members[1]. Estimates provided by MCA council representatives in this member survey so far suggest that consulting activity in 2020 will have grown by **2.5%**[2]. This average, however, masks a mixed performance across the industry both in public and private sector work and across other different sectors. Some firms reported a decline of **40%** of income across the year and others are up **20%** to **30%**. The Big 4 reported growth of over **3%** and the rest of the industry reported a contraction of nearly **-2%**.

**+2.5% GROWTH IN 2020**

Over 2020, there was a great range of experiences across the membership in overall business performances against original expectations for the year ahead. A third of consulting leaders felt their organisation exceeded expectations **(32%)**, a third felt they generally met expectations **(32%)** and a third did not meet expectations **(34%)**. The sentiment of the wider consulting workforce including younger consultants was more positive: over half felt they had generally met expectations **(51%)** and a third felt that their organisation had exceeded expectations **(32%)**.

The experiences of smaller firms with regards to business performance and consulting activity in 2020 were slightly more negative when compared with larger firms. While a third of council representatives from smaller firms **(32%)** felt that their business' performance and consulting activity over the past 12 months exceeded expectations, two in five **(42%)** felt that their organisation did not meet its expectations over this period.

Council representatives from the Big 4 firms report a different experience: **66%** said they generally met expectations, while **33%** reported that their firm did not meet expectations in 2020, highlighting the contrast in performance between large and small firms.

[1] https://www.mca.org.uk/reports/mca-annual-report
[2] Weighted on assumption that Big 4 represent 85% of the industry

**Figure 1**
2020 MCA member firm council representatives' expectations vs reality

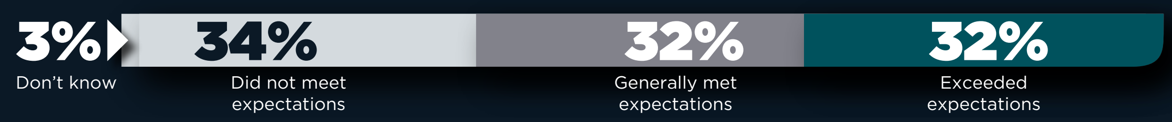
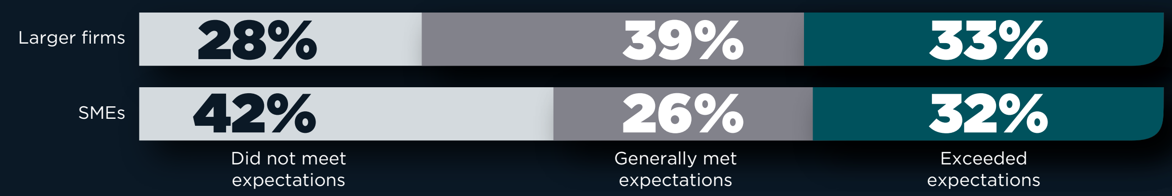



**Figure 2**
2020 MCA member firm council representatives' expectations vs reality (by size of firm)



## Factors driving growth in 2020

### THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO DID EXPERIENCE GROWTH IN THEIR ORGANISATION'S CONSULTING ACTIVITY OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS HIGHLIGHTED A NUMBER OF FACTORS:

- Adaptation in offerings to cater to, and mitigate against, the impact of COVID-19 – particularly servicing the government and public sector
- General increase in demand for specialist consultancy in growth areas (e.g. digital transformation and cyber security, clients' transition to remote working, and those seeking innovation in times of change)
- Responsiveness to the geopolitical environment, including Brexit-related work
- Increased client focus and relationship building

"Exceptionally close and trusted supplier relationships built over many years. Ability to adapt quickly and appropriately to change and providing learnings to clients. Desire to work hard and still consistently deliver even with lockdown restrictions.
**Consultant, *larger firm***

"Working from home was a new way of working and an easy starting point for many projects due to resources being freed up and new problems arising.
**Senior Consultant, *larger firm***

"Strong existing client relationships enabling sell-on, clients viewing COVID as an opportunity to do things differently and better as opposed to returning to how things have always been.
**Senior Consultant, *smaller firm***

"An increased level of uncertainty including Brexit, COVID, geopolitical climate and the pace of change in the development and adaptation of technology.
**Director, *larger firm***

"We won a big contract to support the government on test and trace. Although we lost a lot of other business due to COVID, I think we also generated some new opportunities. Management were also quick to reduce costs as much as possible without losing headcount.
**Consultant, *larger firm***

"Healthy mix of good quality advice, practical delivery and cost-competitive rate card.
**Partner, *larger firm***

"Strong relationships with senior stakeholders at our clients – we are perceived as 'problem solvers' that can be thrown into any challenge... Entrepreneurial mindset and compensation model incentivises our team to go out and source new business despite market conditions. Strong, transparent leadership and working from home allowances (e.g. to improve home office space) that has kept the team motivated and connected.
**Director, *smaller firm***

"External factors were largely down to increased need for digital and cyber security consulting especially in government and defence markets. Our aviation market contracted but has maintained revenue better than expected due to continued need to meet regulatory changes and stay up to speed in cyber. Some internal factors also contributed.
**Head of Consulting, *larger firm***

"COVID-19 and clients needing assistance in finding alternatives to on site working i.e. remote working. As a consequence of that, a focus on compliance and data protection governance has been required.
**Manager, *larger firm***

"We are a growing business with a great proposition, increasingly sought after in the market. The need for a combination of consulting and data science in the market is clearly growing and this is the core of our proposition.
**Senior Partner, *smaller firm***





## Factors curbing growth in 2020

### WHILE SOME MEMBER FIRMS SAW AN INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR SERVICES IN 2020 AS THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC EVOLVED, THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE CAUSED OTHER ORGANISATIONS' CONSULTING ACTIVITY TO CONTRACT DURING 2020.

Among those who witnessed a contraction in growth over the past 12 months, some reasons given included the following:

"COVID-19 and consequent reduction in resources available to our client base (local government/registered providers).
**Director, *smaller firm***

"Loss of large automotive accounts/ projects, loss of retail and leisure accounts/projects.
**Consultant, *smaller firm***

"Economic slowdown, deferred decisions and management attention diverted by COVID-19.
**Partner, *larger firm***

"COVID – prime focus of our clients planning for and treating the sick therefore unable to concentrate on other areas outside of this, lack of tenders in healthcare, larger companies undercutting on competitive tenders, NHS restrictions on spend on consultancy.
**Manager, *smaller firm***

"International travel ban.
**Owner/MD, *larger firm***

"Brexit and COVID. Some of our clients were already citing political and economic uncertainty due to Brexit coming into 2020 and had therefore postponed start dates on projects. Then COVID hit.
**Senior Partner, *smaller firm***

"COVID impact on engagements and the speed of decision making.
**Manager, *larger firm***

"In general, reduced spend from clients due to compressed margins in 2020, low appetite from clients to tackle new big projects due to uncertainty with COVID-19, and increased drive to internalise change functions to further reduce cost are causing fewer consulting engagements, and lower rates for those that are offered.
**Managerer, *larger firm***

# Impact of COVID-19 on the consulting industry



## DESPITE UNPRECEDENTED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES, 87% OF RESPONDENTS NEVERTHELESS SAID THAT CLIENTS' NEEDS WERE FULLY MET DURING LOCKDOWN, THE STRICTEST MEASURES OF WHICH OCCURRED BETWEEN MARCH AND JUNE 2020.

Only **10%** felt that clients' needs were partially met, while just **1%** said clients' needs were not met during this period. MCA council representatives were even more positive than the wider consulting workforce, with **92%** saying that clients' needs were fully met.

Less money spent on travel and hotels was viewed as one of the biggest advantages to clients in 2020: **62%** ranked this among the top three benefits to clients when working remotely with consultants. Half also cited having a greater pool of consultants available due to being less constrained by having to be on site as a positive benefit for clients, and a further **50%** stated that consultants had more time to service clients.

Despite there being many advantages and efficiencies found in the switch to remote working with clients, there have also been some significant drawbacks. Three-quarters **(73%)** of respondents said that less interaction with clients was one of the top three biggest challenges when working remotely in 2020. While over half **(56%)** of the wider consulting workforce felt that fewer opportunities to explore and discuss future work had been one of the biggest challenges, this rises to **79%** for MCA council representatives who were more likely to recognise the threat that 2020 has posed to traditional business development and the pipeline of projects.

With the end of the Brexit transition period in December 2020, a third **(34%)** of MCA council representatives' firms were involved in Brexit-related work for clients in the last six months, compared with **63%** whose organisations were not. Our survey results show that the Big 4 firms were much more likely to have been involved in Brexit preparations.

**Figure 3**
How well did you serve your clients' needs when working remotely during the recent lockdown?

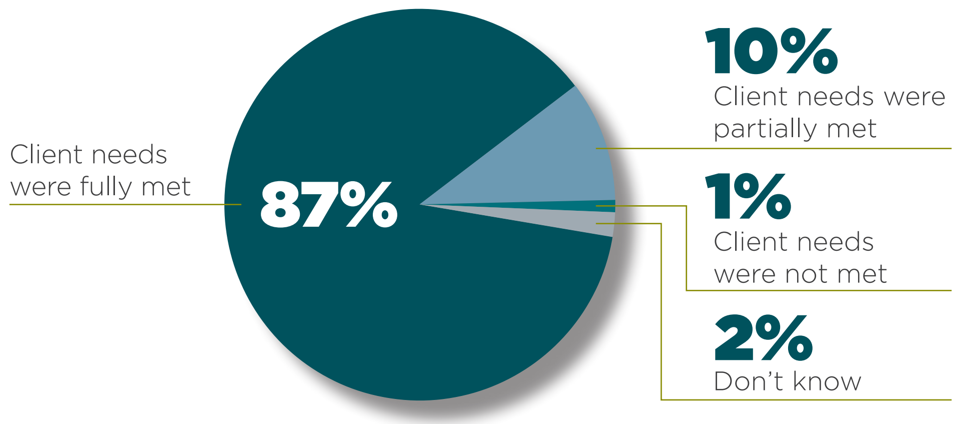



**Figure 4**
What have been the top three benefits to clients of working remotely with consultants?

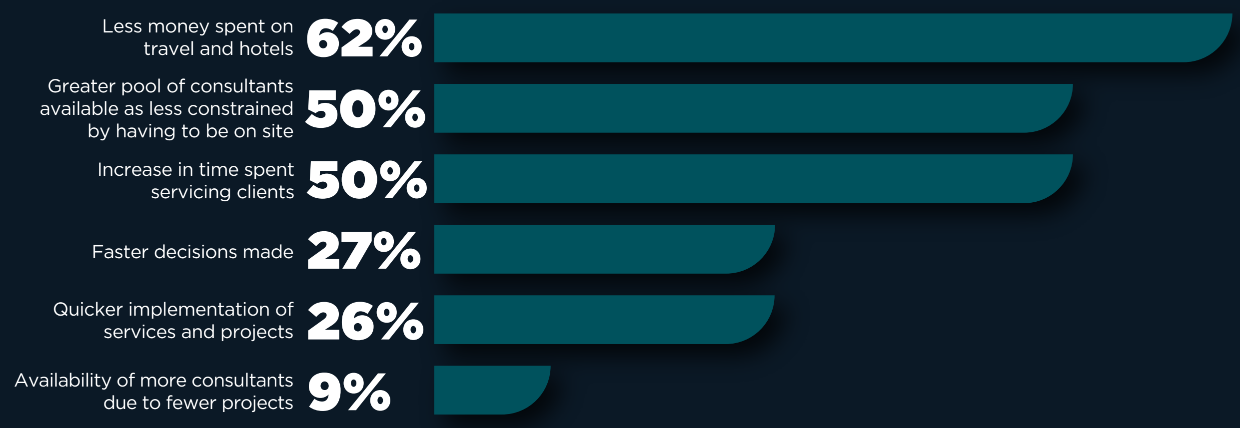
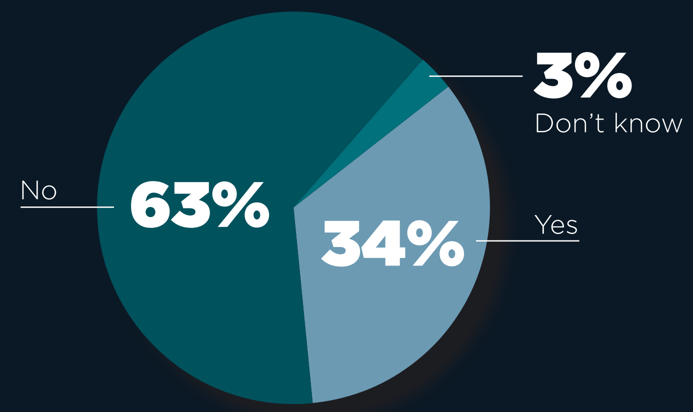



**Figure 5**
What have been the top three challenges with clients when working remotely?


**Figure 6**
Has your firm been involved in any Brexit-related work for clients in the last six months?
*(Views of MCA member firm council representatives)*

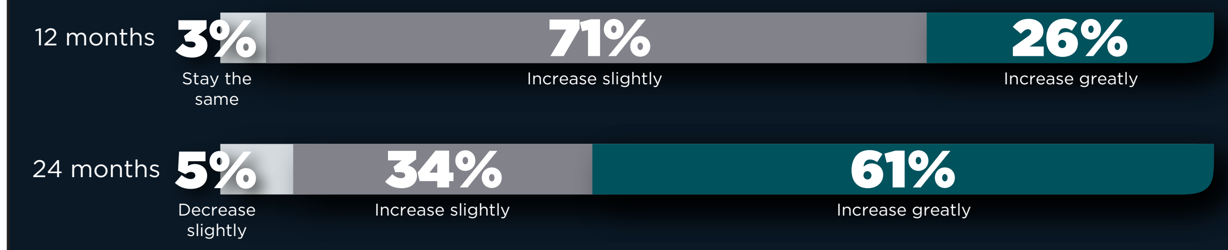


## LOOKING AHEAD INTO 2021 AND 2022, ESTIMATES PROVIDED BY MCA COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES IN THIS MEMBER SURVEY SUGGEST THAT CONSULTING GROWTH WILL INCREASE BY **9%**[3], PAINTING AN OPTIMISTIC PICTURE OF THE NEXT TWO YEARS[4].

**+9% ESTIMATED GROWTH IN 2021-22**

The vast majority of MCA members expect their organisation's overall consulting activity to increase over the next two years. **97%** of MCA council representatives anticipate that their consulting activity will increase in the next 12 months, with **26%** expecting activity to increase greatly. This improves to **61%** of respondents estimating that consulting activity will increase greatly during the next 24 months.

**Figure 7**
MCA member firm council representatives' expectations of consulting activity growth in the next 12-24 months



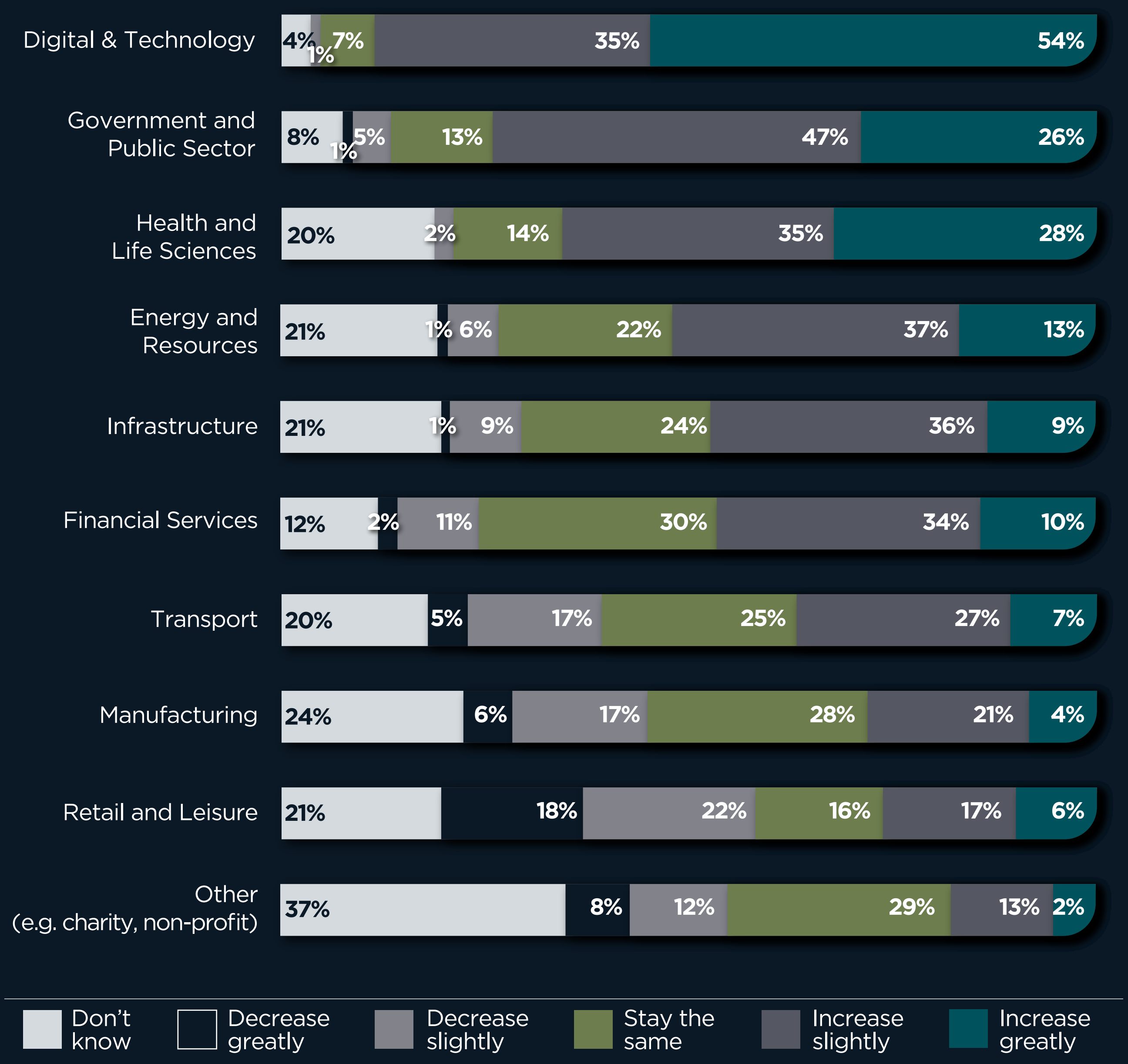

When it comes to perceptions of which consulting services will increase over the next 12-24 months, members were most likely to name digital technology **(72%)** as one of the top three areas of anticipated growth. Just under half respectively said the same of COVID-19 government response services as well as cost reduction services (both **46%**).

MCA members expect growth in the digital and technology sector to be particularly high in the next 12-14 months, with **88%** predicting growth in this area.

This rises higher still among MCA council representatives **(92%)**. Three-quarters **(74%)** of respondents anticipate growth in activity in the government and public sector, while around two-thirds **(63%)** said the same of health and life sciences.

[3] Weighted on assumption that Big 4 represent 85% of the industry
[4] Growth estimate based on the mean average of growth figures provided by participating MCA council representatives

**Figure 8**
MCA member firm council representatives' expectations of consulting activity growth in the next 12-24 months *(by sector)*



# **2021-22** : Looking ahead (cont.)

## TRENDS IN THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY

A broad range of issues were cited by members as presenting major challenges to the industry in the next couple of years. The increasing requirement for flexible, remote working is by far the biggest challenge for consulting firms to manage, with three-quarters of respondents **(73%)** saying this will have a significant impact on the industry over the next 12-24 months. This represents a significant increase from a quarter **(24%)** who said the same in last year's survey, indicative of the widespread changes to ways of working many businesses have experienced as a result of COVID-19. Over half **(56%)** of respondents also cited Brexit as a major defining issue for the sector, while **42%** said the same of growing societal demand for more diverse representation at all levels within the consulting sector. This anticipation of an increasing demand for diversity is shared among both Young MCA members as well as more experienced consultants. With consulting becoming a lot more home based and individuals travelling less alongside clients, the reduction of urban office space is not unexpected.

*(see Fig 9)*

## TOP ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY TRENDS

When asked to highlight the environmental topics and trends members expect to have a significant impact on their clients' needs in the next 12-24 months, seven in 10 **(69%)** said their clients will need to review business models for sustainability. Over half **(56%)** said the same of sustainability supply chains, reflecting the increased public and political scrutiny of businesses and the importance of net zero. MCA council representatives were even more likely to predict this trend **(66%)**, as were consultants working for the Big 4 **(71%)**.

*(see Fig 10)*

## BIGGEST CHALLENGES OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS

The state of the UK economy dominates member firms' perceptions of key challenges for the industry over the next 12-24 months. Two-thirds predict that reduced spend on consulting due to economic conditions **(64%)** will be one of the top three challenges to significantly impact firms, while a similar proportion said the same of a general slowdown of the UK economy **(62%)**. Growth of internal consulting practice among clients **(12%)** and growth of freelancing and new consulting disruption models **(10%)** are viewed as the least pressing challenges over this period.

Consultants who have an average of two years working in the industry are the group most likely to see a lack of diversity and inclusion as one of the three main challenges over the next 12-24 months.

*(see Fig 11)*





**Figure 9**
Which three topics and trends do you see as having a significant impact on management consulting firms over the next 12-24 months?

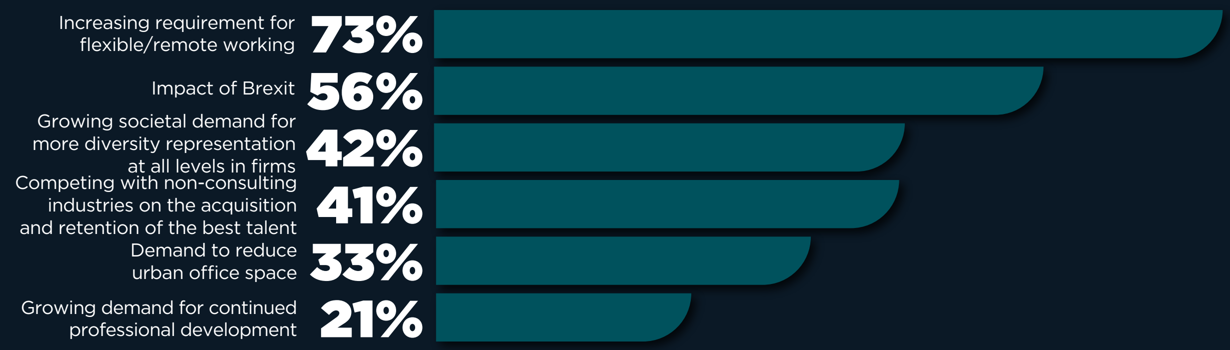



**Figure 10**
Which of the following environmental topics and trends do you see as having a significant impact on clients over the next 12-24 months?

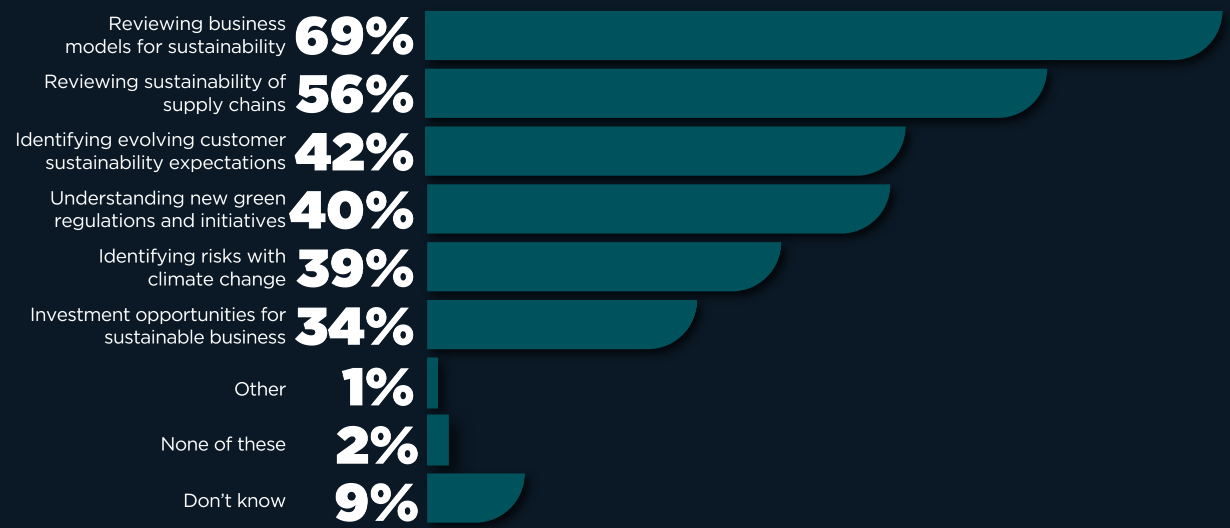
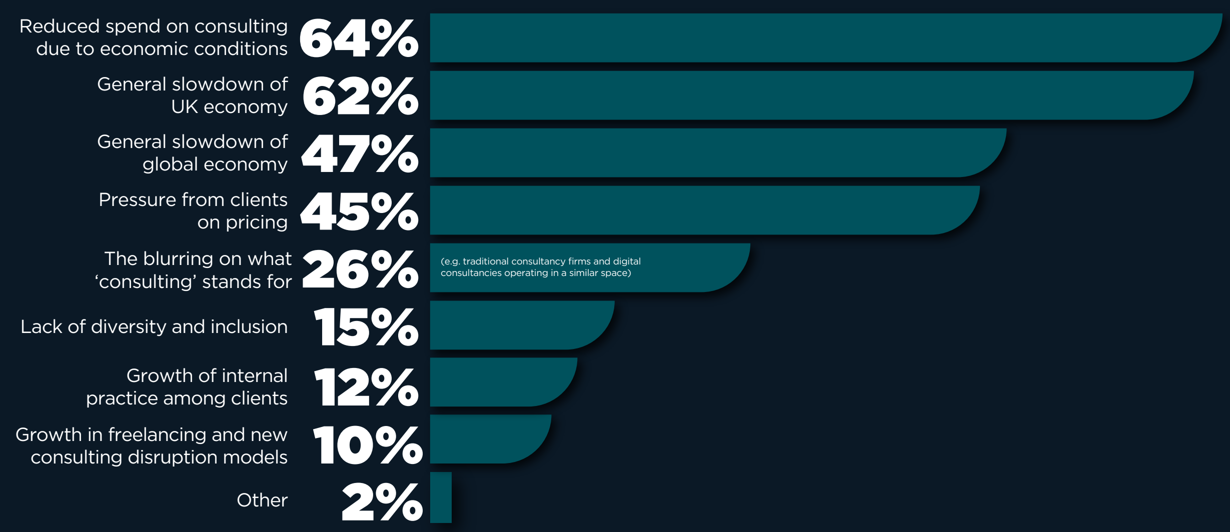



**Figure 11**
Which three challenges do you see as having a significant impact on management consulting firms over the next 12-24 months?



## WITH THE UK RECOVERING FROM THE ONGOING DISRUPTION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, MCA MEMBERS ARE BEING ASKED BY CLIENTS TO DO MORE WITH LESS AND SPECIALISE.

Moreover, senior management within consulting firms expect to see an ongoing impact from the pandemic on ways of working and staff expectations of work-life balance. With many companies opting for a reduction in their available office space, it is vital that the impact of remote working on employee well-being be considered and catered to in the coming months and years. This especially applies to younger consultants who do not necessarily have an adequate set up to work from home as well as missing out on the social interaction that the previous working environment brought.

### HOW THE CONSULTING ROLE WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

“Remote working and location independence will alter client-relationship dynamics and potentially alter the way consultants are engaged and used by clients. This will bring potential new opportunities, but it also challenges traditional ways of working and therefore will cause disruption to established business models.
**Owner/MD, *larger firm***

“I'd like to think that remote working will mean that the role will open up more broadly to people with childcare and other responsibilities.
**Head of Consulting, *larger firm***

“The 'next generation' of consultants have different expectations of employee engagement and work-life balance than has been the norm in many consultancies. This will lead to consulting firms changing fundamentally 'how we work' (or they will face above average attrition).
**Senior Partner, *smaller firm***

“Expectation from clients of (a) higher degrees of specialism (b) higher reliance on technology and (c) competitive/innovative pricing models.
**Owner/MD, *larger firm***

“Will require a deeper understanding of the clients' business as transactional services become increasingly automated.
**Owner/MD, *smaller firm***



## IN RECENT YEARS, THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTISE HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT TREND, AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS ONLY ACCELERATED THIS.

MCA members are at the forefront of evolutions in this space, and therefore it's not surprising that such skills are expected to be the most important for consultants to gain in the next five years. In addition, knowledge of the ongoing changes to how clients operate and organise themselves is expected to be increasingly important to the consulting industry going forwards.

### TOP THREE SKILLS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

“DIGITAL TRANSLATOR — bridging the gap between clients and data and analytics in the background.
**Partner, *larger firm***

“TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS — in particular emerging technology whose adoption is accelerating. The ability to relate technological opportunities and risks to a particular business.
**Head of Consulting, *larger firm***

“ORGANISATIONAL (AND HUMAN) CHANGE — It will be even more important in the future, especially in the face of the client workforce dynamics changing. A sufficient understanding of opportunities to leverage data science across all areas of business.
**Senior Partner, *smaller firm***

“Facilitating workshops and consulting, with charisma, via Zoom.
**Senior Partner, *smaller firm***

## ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT IN THE INDUSTRY

When it comes to attracting talent, unsurprisingly a competitive salary is the best incentive consulting firms can offer **(33%)**. Beyond monetary remuneration, consultants are eager for an improved work-life balance with sociable working hours. Training and development are also important — particularly in digital skills.

When comparing 2019 to 2020, the biggest change is in the proportion of consultants who would like to work for a firm that prioritises flexible and remote working. This is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has shown that the industry can operate well with staff working from home and without an often long, daily commute.

To retain talent, firms must focus on the areas of work consultants find most satisfying. Namely the culture of the business; the variety of projects and work streams; recognition of work by clients; learning and developing new skills; and remuneration.

Given the importance of learning and training and nurturing talent to the competitiveness of the industry, it has been important to maintain a focus on these areas throughout the pandemic. Our data suggests this has been a significant challenge, with over a third **(36%)** of consultants feeling that they have not received as much training during the pandemic or that the quality has dropped. On the other hand, over half of consultants felt that they received at least as much training compared to before the pandemic **(58%)**. This must be a key focus going forward as firms consider more hybrid ways of working using office space and adapt their training, especially for apprentices, graduates and new staff.

### SEEKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Over three-quarters **(77%)** of consultants are not actively seeking a new role either in consulting or a different industry, up from around seven in 10 last year **(72%)** and reflecting the labour market in the UK. While the majority are looking to stay where they are, **44%** are open to offers or are simply waiting for the right position to become available **(19%)**.

Of those who are seeking new opportunities, **41%** are looking to stay within the consulting industry while **37%** are seeking a role outside the consulting industry. Only **10%** are seeking to move within their current organisation.

**Figure 13**
Most important benefits consulting firms could offer to attract & retain the best talent

| Competitive salaries | Work-life balance | Flexible/remote working | Training & development |
|---|---|---|---|
| **33%** | **16%** | **16%** | **13%** |
| 2019: 31% | 2019: 18% | 2019: 11% | 2019: 13% |

**Figure 12**
Which element of your role provides the most job satisfaction?

| # | % | Element |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 15% | Overall culture of the business |
| 2 | 14% | Variety of projects and work streams |
| 3 | 11% | Recognition of my work by clients |
| 4 | 10% | Learning and developing new skills |
| 5 | 8% | Remuneration (e.g. pay, bonuses, perks) |
| 6 | 8% | Exposure to a diverse range of clients |
| 7 | 7% | Flexible working conditions |
| 8 | 6% | Recognition of my work by colleagues |
| 9 | 6% | Exposure to large and influential clients |
| 10 | 6% | Working with a diverse group of colleagues |
| 11 | 2% | Formal training and development opportunities |
| 12 | 2% | Working for a world-renowned business |
| 13 | 1% | The international nature of the work |
| 14 | 2% | Other |

**Figure 14**
Do you still feel that you have been receiving training and development during the COVID-19 pandemic?

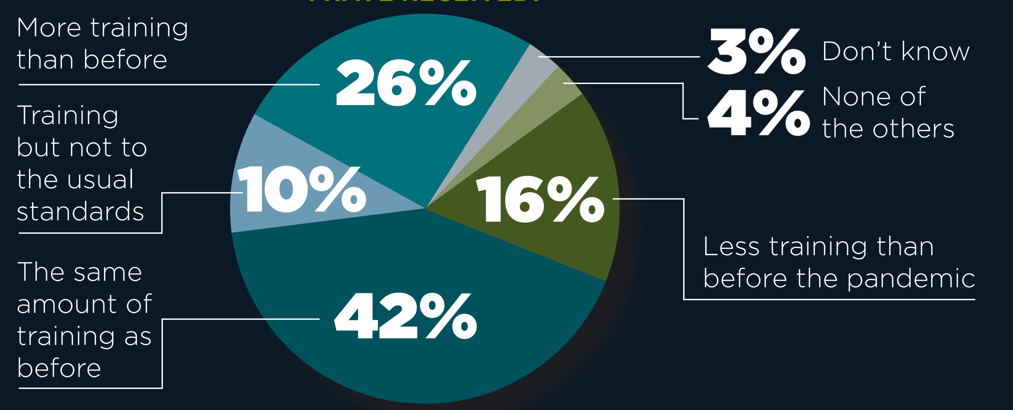



**Figure 15**
Which of the following best describes your attitude to future job prospects?

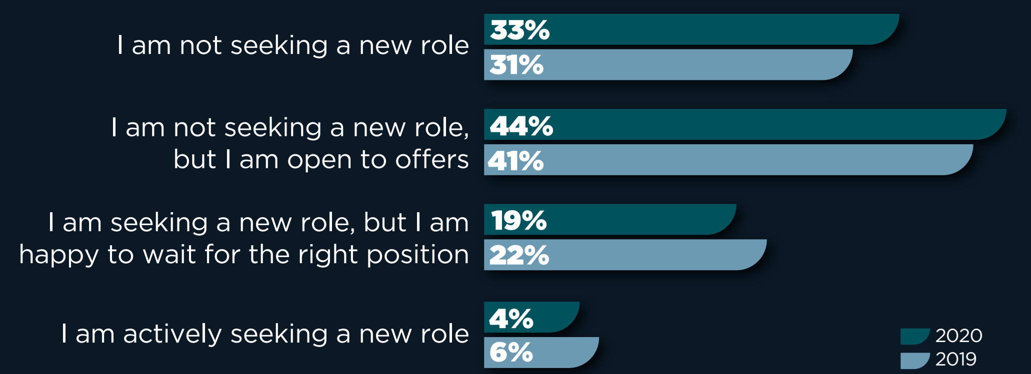
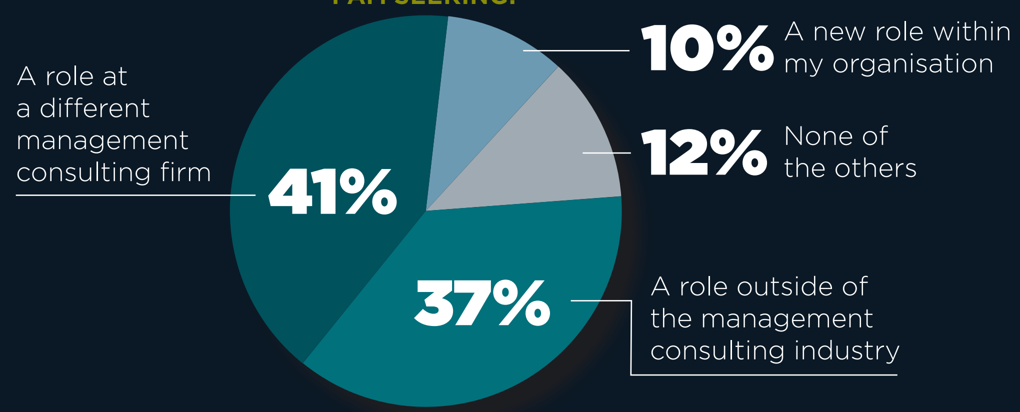



**Figure 16**
Which of the following best describes the scope of opportunities you are open to?
*(asked of those seeking a new role)*



## TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS, WANTS AND OPINIONS OF NEW CONSULTANTS, THIS SECTION WILL FOCUS ON RESPONDENTS WITH ZERO TO FIVE YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY.

Consultants with this level of experience are considered part of the Young MCA group, a network for those at the start of their consulting career[5].

Young MCA members believe that the increasing requirement for flexible/remote working will be one of the biggest trends to impact the consulting industry over the next two years. They are also more likely to expect a demand to reduce urban office space to be one of the main topics affecting the industry over the next two years, when compared with those with more than five years experience **(38% vs 28%)**.

When looking at experiences of training and development during the COVID-19 pandemic, some Young MCA members felt they received less training and that the training that was received was not up to the usual standards compared to those consultants with more than five years of experience. With firms set to continue recruitment and digital training schemes until the end of the pandemic, businesses will need to find new and innovative ways to induct new hires and ensure that they undertake comprehensive training and are made to feel part of the organisation.

When it comes to benefits that attract talent to the industry, younger consultants tend to be most concerned with salary **(59%)**; work-life balance **(53%)**; and training and development opportunities **(40%)**, mostly aligning with the priorities of those with longer experience. While a third of Young MCA consultants **(37%)** prioritised flexible/remote working, more experienced colleagues cited this as a more important factor **(53%)**.

With job satisfaction, younger members have slightly different priorities compared to their more experienced colleagues. Younger consultants are more concerned about learning and developing new skills, working on a variety of projects, and having their work recognised by colleagues. In contrast, more experienced consultants are more focused on the overall culture of the business, working with a diverse range of clients and colleagues and seeking greater recognition by clients.

**Figure 17**
Which of the following topics and trends do you see as having a significant impact on management consulting firms over the next 12-24 months?


**Figure 18**
Do you still feel that you have been receiving training and development during the COVID-19 pandemic?


[5] www.mca.org.uk/about-us/the-young-mca

**Figure 19**
What are the top three things consulting firms could offer to attract the best talent?

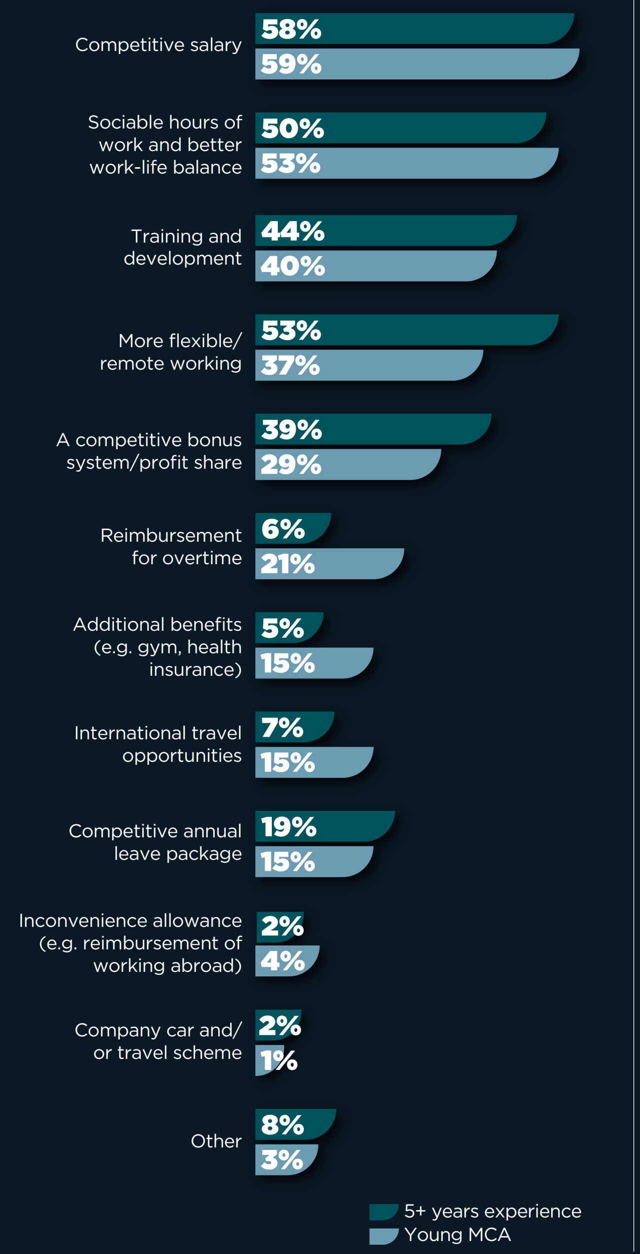
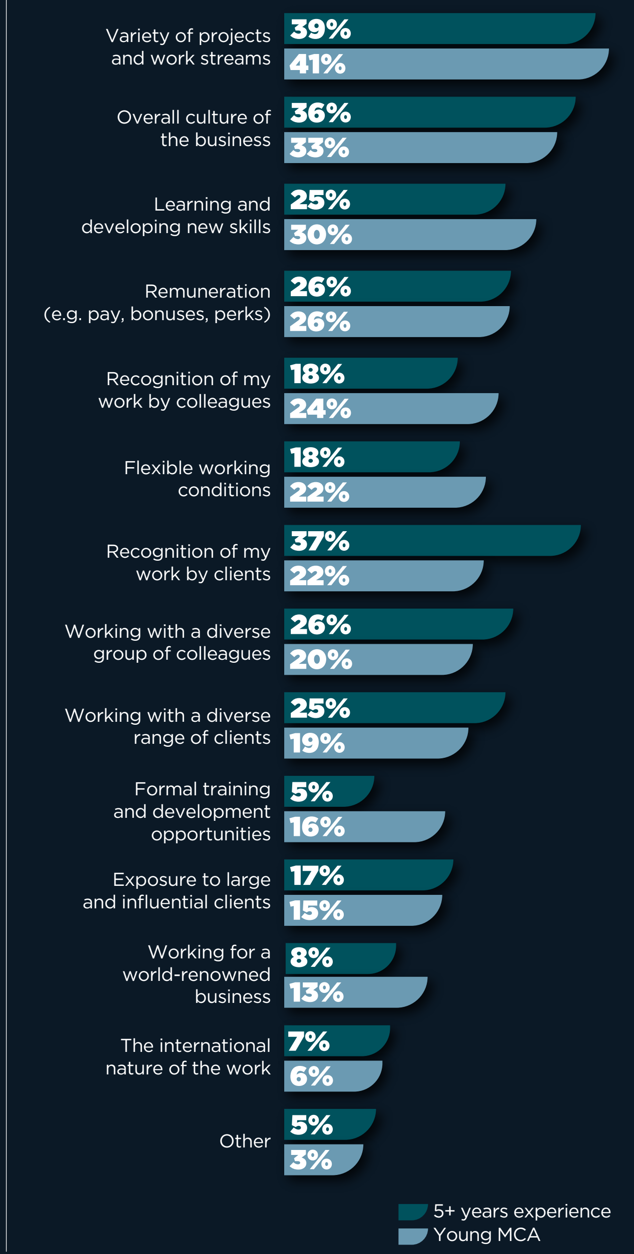



**Figure 20**
What are the three areas of your role that provide the most job satisfaction?



When it comes to anticipated challenges for management consultant firms over the next 12-24 months, the prospect of reduced spend on consulting due to economic conditions and a general slowdown of the UK economy are key concerns by both Young MCA members and those with more than five years experience. Meanwhile, those with more than five years of experience in the consulting industry are more likely than their younger counterparts to see pressure from clients on pricing as one of the three key challenges **(51% vs. 39%)**.

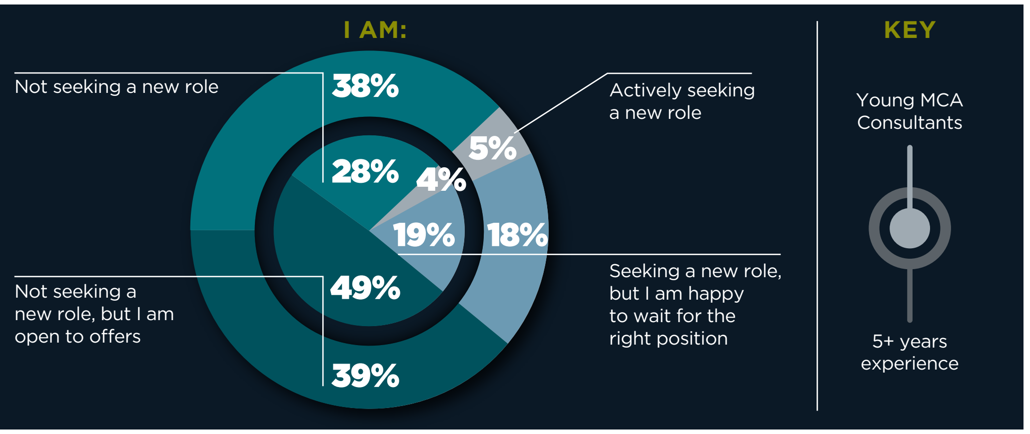
Compared to their longer-serving colleagues, young consultants are just as likely to be proactively seeking a new position **(4%)**; however, they are very much open to offers **(49%)** and willing to wait for the right position **(19%)**.

Young MCA members tend to work across a smaller number of sectors as they start out with the variety of clients and range of sectors worked on understandably increasing with experience.

The MCA Member Survey findings confirm that the consulting industry continues to be more accessible to graduates from a diverse range of backgrounds. The ongoing decline of young consultants who attended a Russell Group university signals a widening of the talent pool and an increase in efforts by firms to improve social mobility. The percentage of young consultants that attended a Russell Group university has fallen by **29%** since 2011, from **73%** to **44%**.

After a small increase in 2019, the percentage of young consultants attending Oxbridge has decreased to its lowest point since 2011 **(3%)**.

**Figure 21**
Which of the following best describes your attitude to future job prospects?




The University of Nottingham was the most attended university for young MCA members in 2020, knocking the University of Durham off the top of this list for the first time since 2016. The University of Bath and Loughborough University are the two non-Russell Group institutions to feature in the top 10.

| Top 10 2019 | % | Top 10 2020 | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| University of Durham | 4% | University of Nottingham | 5% |
| University of Oxford | 4% | University of Bath | 4% |
| University of Bath | 3% | University of Bristol | 4% |
| University of Birmingham | 3% | University of Birmingham | 4% |
| University of Cambridge | 3% | University of Durham | 3% |
| University of Nottingham | 3% | University of Leeds | 3% |
| University of Warwick | 3% | University of Warwick | 3% |
| Cardiff University | 2% | Loughborough University | 2% |
| City University | 2% | University of Exeter | 2% |
| Loughborough University | 2% | University College London | 2% |





**Figure 22**
Which of the following challenges do you see as having a significant impact on management consulting firms over the next 12-24 months?

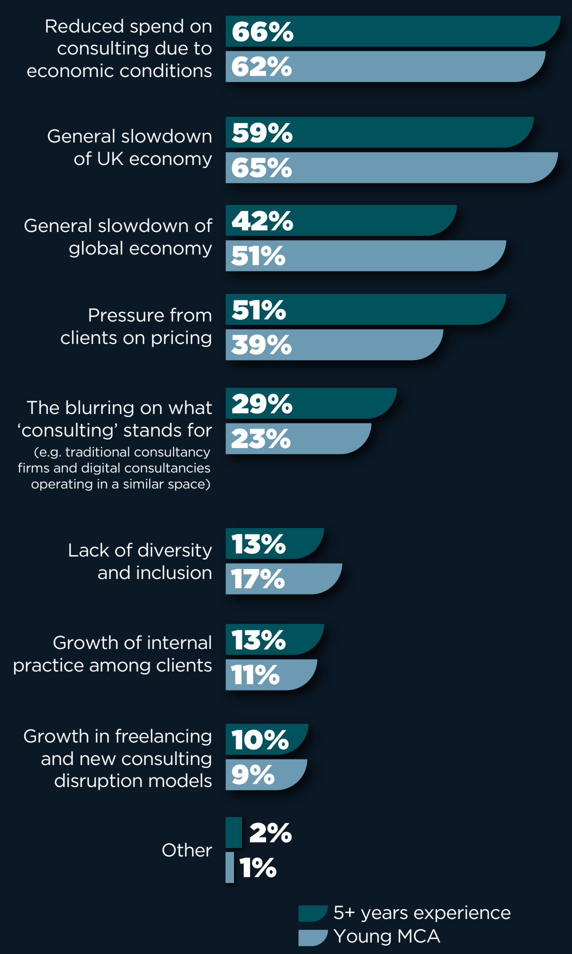



**Figure 23**
Consultants operating in each sector

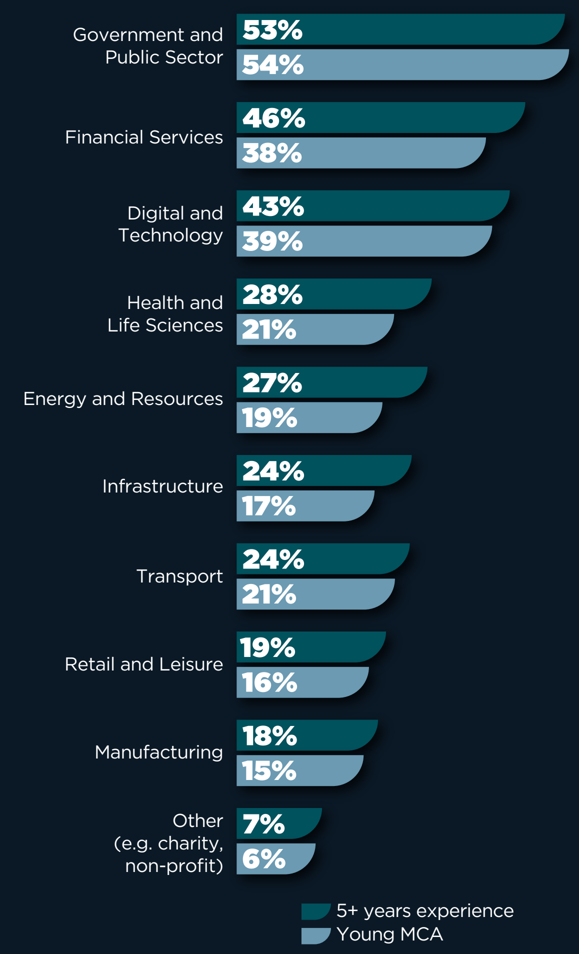



**Figure 24**
Young MCA consultants attending a Russel Group university

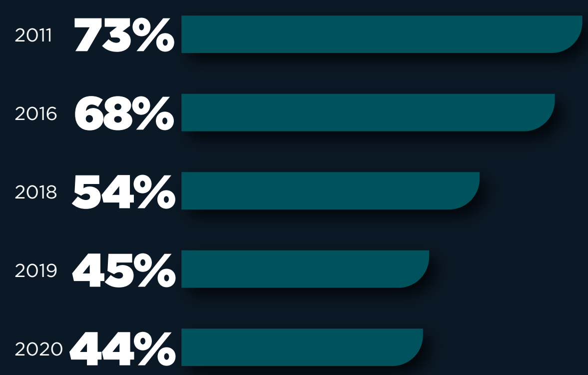
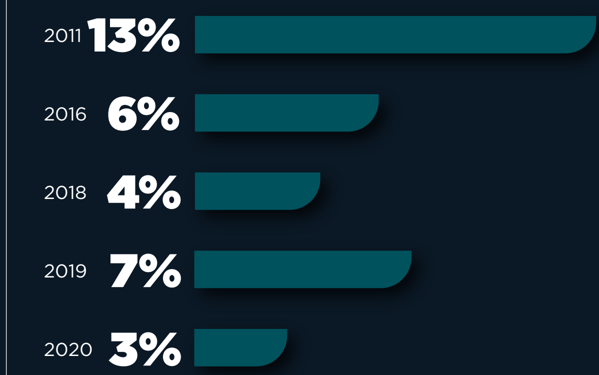



**Figure 25**
Young MCA consultants attending Oxbridge



## THE MCA MEMBERSHIP IS HOME TO A WIDE RANGE OF LEADING CONSULTANCY FIRMS, OPERATING ACROSS A VAST ARRAY OF SECTORS, AND OFFERING A DIVERSE VARIETY OF SERVICES.

Consultants in more senior positions tend to have around two decades of experience in the industry, while those in more junior roles, including analysts, have been working in the industry for approximately two years on average.

The majority of those who completed the survey were from member firms with over 100 employees. **77%** of respondents were from larger firms while **23%** of respondents were from smaller firms.

As in previous years, the government and public, financial services and digital & technology sectors continue to be the top three sectors that MCA members operate in.

Consultants are most likely to work in the business transformation **(64%)** service line, reflecting findings from last year's survey. Over half of respondents work in digital & technology consulting **(56%)**, change management **(54%)** and programme and project management **(52%)**.

The MCA membership comprises some of the largest and most renowned firms in the industry, with a quarter **(25%)** of respondents working at companies with 10,000+ employees. A notable proportion of niche and specialist organisations are also members; around one in five have 11-99 employees.

**Figure 26**
Number of years working in the consulting industry

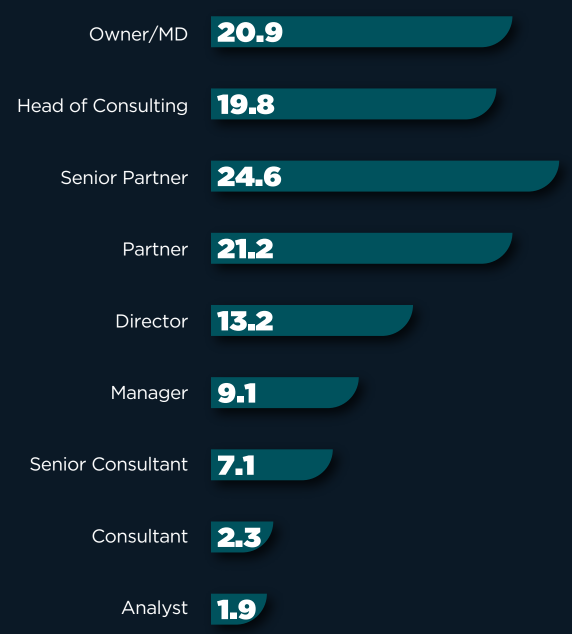



**Figure 27**
Consultants operating in each sector

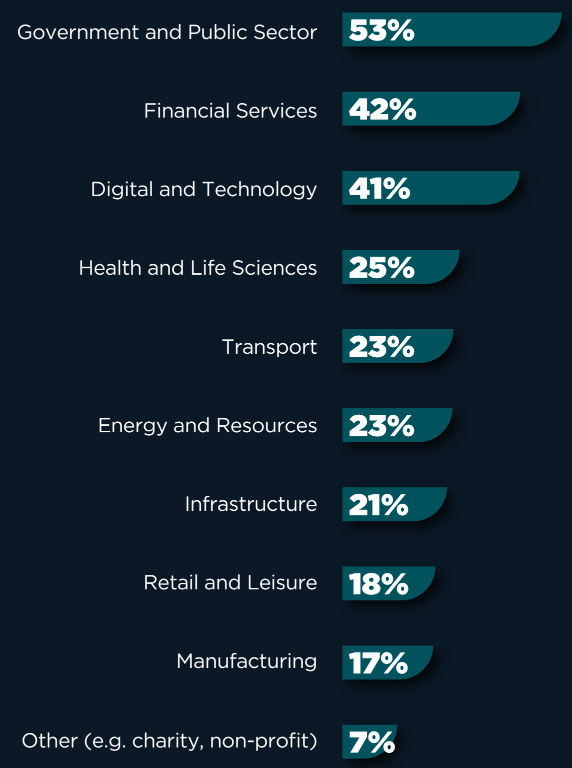
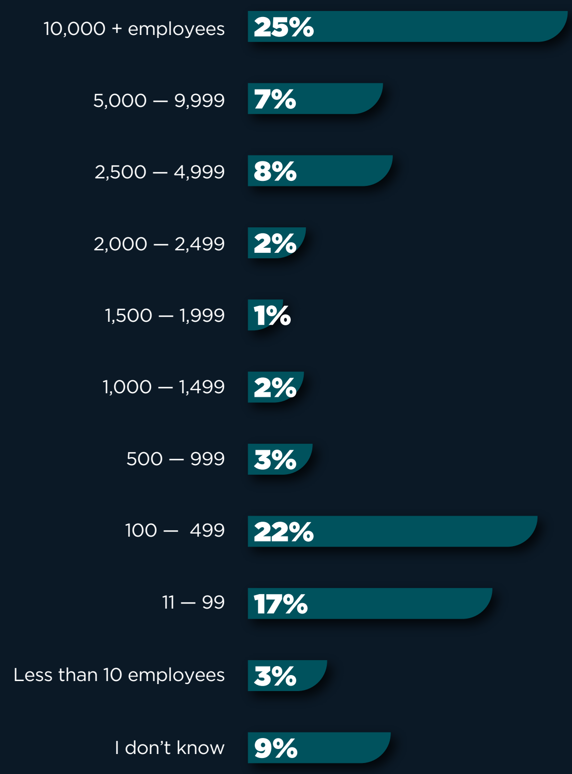



**Figure 28**
Consultants providing advisory in each service line


**Figure 29**
Number of employees at MCA member firms



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