



# Asia Pacific PR and Communications Census 2021

# GET NOTICED.

**YouGov** Recommend Rankings 2021 reveals the most recommended brands by APAC consumers. Singapore Airlines tops the list in Singapore; Garuda Indonesia ranks first in Indonesia; Nike leads the rankings in Thailand; Netflix occupies the first spot in Hong Kong; and the top brand in Australia is Toyota.

Our media whitepaper investigates **what** kind of media subscriptions do Singaporeans pay for and finds that 43% have paid for **the** film/ TV subscription. Indians (27%) and Indonesians (26%) are more likely than the **world** (15%) to think celebrities are effective at promoting media & telecoms services. 1 in 7 consumers in Hong Kong (15%) and Singapore (14%) feel they are fully represented in adverts.

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# Foreword

**FRANCIS INGHAM MPRCA**  
 Director-General, Public Relations  
 and Communications Association

**“Professional and ethical communication has never been more important to business and society, and I am proud of the work the PRCA does to support that.”**

I am delighted to present the PRCA APAC PR and Communications Census. The PRCA's various Census reports are an important part of our mission to both understand and tackle the issues facing our members and the profession in every region in which we operate.

A lot has happened since the first Asia Pacific Census was published in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has created substantial challenges both personally and professionally for PR and communications practitioners. I have been delighted to see our members across the globe respond to these challenges with resourcefulness and hard work. Professional and ethical communication has never been more

important to business and society, and I am proud of the work the PRCA does to support that.

Throughout the pandemic, the PRCA's regional team has continued to provide networking and training opportunities and promote ethics and best practice. Membership in the Asia Pacific region has expanded considerably in both numbers and geographical reach. I'd like to thank our newly promoted Head of Asia Pacific, Tara Munis MPRCA, for her great work steering the organisation, and the three new joint chairs Carolyn Devanayagam CMPRCA, Caroline Hsu CMPRCA, and Nitin Mantri CMPRCA for stepping up to be part of this exciting era.

## METHODOLOGY

The Asia Pacific PR and Communications Census is based on a sample of 560 respondents from across the region, with data gathered between 13th April and 22nd June 2021. The survey was generated by YouGov

using sample sources from PRCA's own database:

- Targeted sample sent to PRCA members and other organisations
- Public link on the PRCA website



# Introduction

**TARA MUNIS MPRCA**  
 Head of APAC, Public Relations and  
 Communications Association

**“The fact that so many respondents (58%) received pay rises in the last year, with a similar number (55%) getting a bonus suggest the profession is doing many things right.”**

Welcome to PRCA Asia Pacific PR and Communications Census.

It would be wrong not to start by addressing the huge health, social, economic and political crisis faced not just across the region, but the whole world, in the shape of COVID-19.

All PR and communications practitioners in Asia Pacific will have been impacted in some way. It is sad, but not hugely surprising, to find in this Census that a third of respondents were asked to take unpaid leave since March 2020, and a slightly higher proportion saw their company make people redundant. Despite all the challenges, there may be some changes we come to see as positive - for example, I hope that the emerging hybrid model of both home- and office-based work can promote productivity and wellbeing in the PR profession.

This report's section on diversity is very important - diversity, equality and inclusion are rightly high on the corporate and political agenda, and of course communications teams can only be truly effective if they incorporate perspectives representative of their audience. In

a huge and diverse region like Asia Pacific, that is particularly relevant. The findings in this section should provide food for thought on issues like gender equality, ethnicity, social mobility and more.

The report also includes findings on mental health and work-life balance. The fact that men work an average of eight hours longer than they are contracted each week, while for women the figure is even higher at 10 hours, speaks to risks of inequality, and poor mental wellbeing, but also the issue of overservicing, something the PRCA is aware of as an issue across the PR world.

Despite pandemic gloom and caution on issues like diversity and mental wellbeing, the fact that so many respondents (58%) received pay rises in the last year, with a similar number (55%) getting a bonus suggest the profession is doing many things right. The relaunched PRCA Asia Pacific is committed to supporting its members as they continue to improve standards - we hope this report provides the data and benchmarking you need to help do this.

# 1

## State of the profession

“The pandemic demonstrated the ability to work from anywhere. While this enabled freedom, agility, and creativity, it removed the power of collaboration and networking. The panacea is balance and flexible, hybrid models.”

Carolyn Devanayagam CMPRCA, Co-Chair, PRCA APAC, and EVP & APAC Head of Corporate, Weber Shandwick

“PRs are extremely agile and thrive in crisis situations. While 2020 was a lot about reacting to the pandemic, companies in 2021 created strategies to launch their products or services regardless of the pandemic. Confidence is key, and PR is a way to help companies build brand trust and stay relevant while strengthening relations and averting crisis – everything you need during a pandemic.”

Sai Roshini Daswani MPRCA, Director - Client Strategy APAC, Sinclair



PR agencies and other companies have had to respond to the physical and economic challenges of COVID-19 in many ways, including remote working and redundancies.

### UNPAID LEAVE

A third (34%) of respondents said they had been asked to take unpaid leave at some point since March 2020.

This was more common among men (38%) than women (29%), and almost twice as common among in-house respondents.

#### Asked to take unpaid leave

##### All respondents



##### Agency



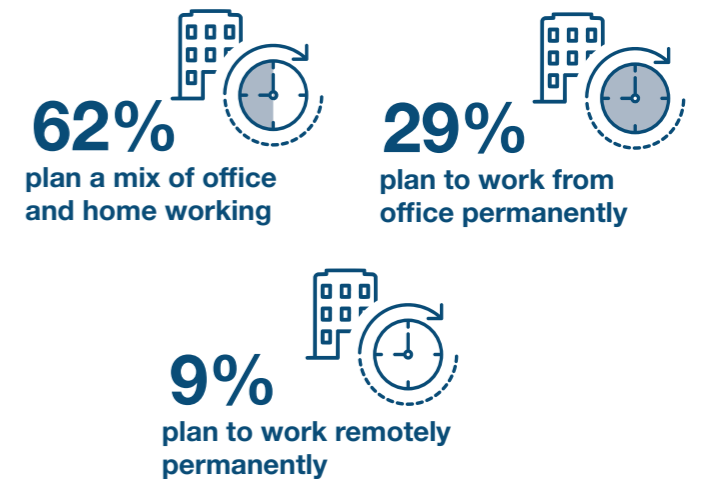
##### In-house



### REMOTE WORKING

Most of the region's PR practitioners are working remotely at least some of the time - either full-time (44%) or part-time (39%). Only 17% said they were permanently in the office.

This is likely to change as economies reopens fully, although only 29% of respondents expect to be back in the office full-time when it reopens. Meanwhile, 9% will continue to be fully remote. Younger staff are more likely to want to be in the office full-time.



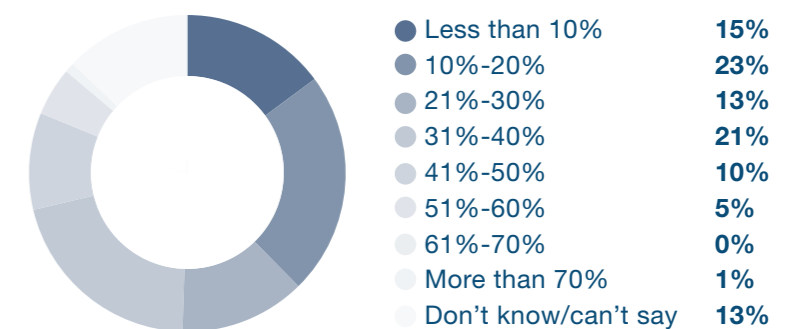
### REDUNDANCIES

More than a third (39%) of respondents said their company had made people redundant since the start of the COVID-19 crisis - a figure which was much higher among in-house respondents (59%) than for agency staff (20%).

Of those companies making redundancies, very few (6%) made more than half of their staff redundant.



If your company made redundancies since March 2020, what proportion of staff were laid off?



# 2

## Diversity

“Equal opportunity must be the cornerstone of the industry. For me, diversity means having a blend of individuals with diverse backgrounds, creeds and beliefs who are looking for opportunities to make a difference.”

Carolyn Devanayagam CMPRCA, Co-Chair, PRCA APAC, and EVP & APAC Head of Corporate, Weber Shandwick

“PR firms must make diversity a part of their business model. It should be embedded in our values and culture and used as a lens for every decision from strategy to recruitment.”

Nitin Mantri CMPRCA, Co-Chair, PRCA APAC, and Group CEO, Avian We

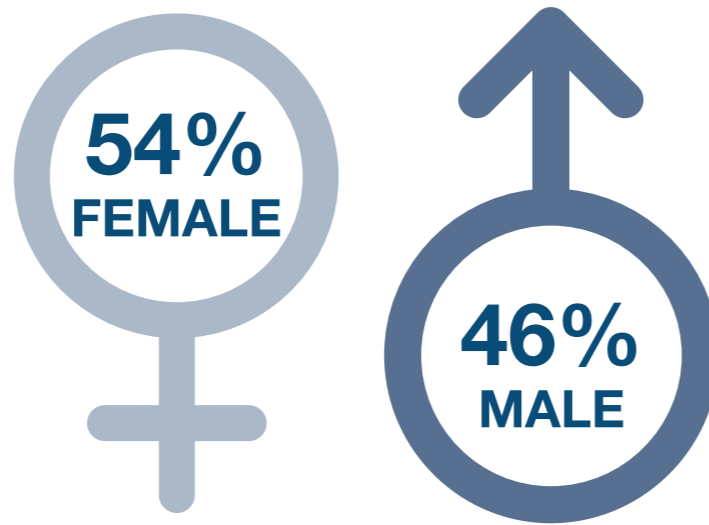
“We are proud of being very diverse - ethnically, linguistically, as well as in terms of gender, sexual orientation and age. This is definitely a strength, and it has helped us to work with clients from all over the world to successfully execute campaigns overseas.”

Karin Lohitnavy MPRCA, Founder and Master Connector, Midas PR

**GENDER**

The PR and communications profession industry globally is predominantly female, with respondents to PRCA Census reports for other regions often being around two-thirds female overall.

In this year's APAC Census, the figure is lower, with 54% of respondents identifying as female, and 46% as male - compared to 61% female respondents in 2019. What remains the same is that men are more likely to be in more senior positions, and to be paid more.



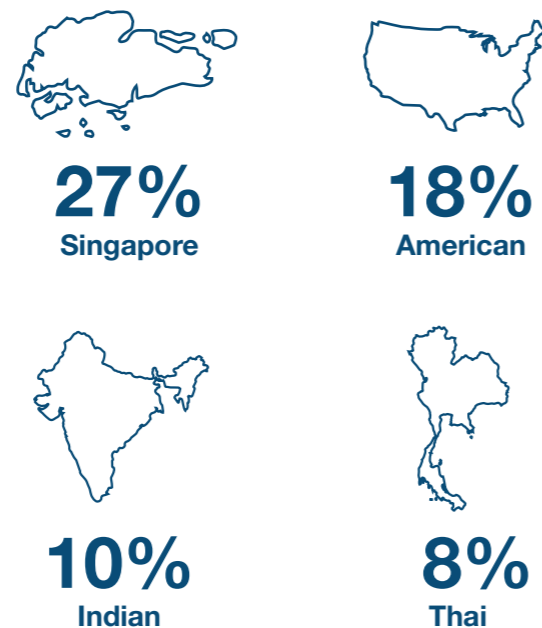
**AGE**

Overall, 57% of practitioners responding to this survey are aged between 25 and 34. The next most common age range is 35-44 year olds (19%), then 45-54 years old (14%), 18-24 years old (5%), 55-64 years old (4%) and finally 65+ years old (1%). The median age is 31 years old.



**NATIONALITY**

The most common nationality of the practitioners in the survey is Singapore (27%). The other major nationalities represented are: American (US) (18%), Indian (10%), Thai (8%), British (UK) (6%), Malaysian (6%), Indonesian (5%), Australian (4%), Chinese (3%), Filipino (3%), Vietnamese (2%), Myanmar (1%), Hong Kong (1%) and Bangladeshi (1%). Another 3% of respondents classed themselves as being an 'other' nationality, and 1% as having a dual or multiple nationalities.



**LANGUAGE**

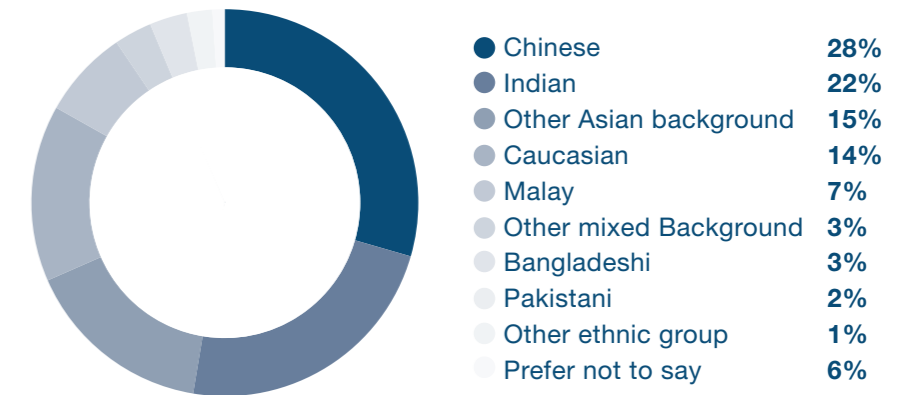
We asked respondents if they spoke a language other than English well another to conduct a business conversation.

The vast majority (79%) said yes, with the most common languages being: Chinese (19%), Bahasa Melayu (16%), Bahasa Indonesia (11%), Thai (10%), Cantonese (7%), Tamil (7%), and Vietnamese (6%).



**ETHNICITY/RACE:**

Questioned about their racial or ethnic origin, the respondents' answers show that they represent the diversity of the large and varied APAC region.



**DISABILITY**

One in four (25%) of the respondents answered 'yes' when asked if they consider themselves to have a physical disability or condition which has limited or made their day to day activities in the work place difficult.

This is a far higher number than the 2% recorded in the 2019 APAC Census, although the question was phrased differently that year. Either way, it is likely that more needs to be done in most areas of the profession to ensure it is an inclusive place for people with a disability.

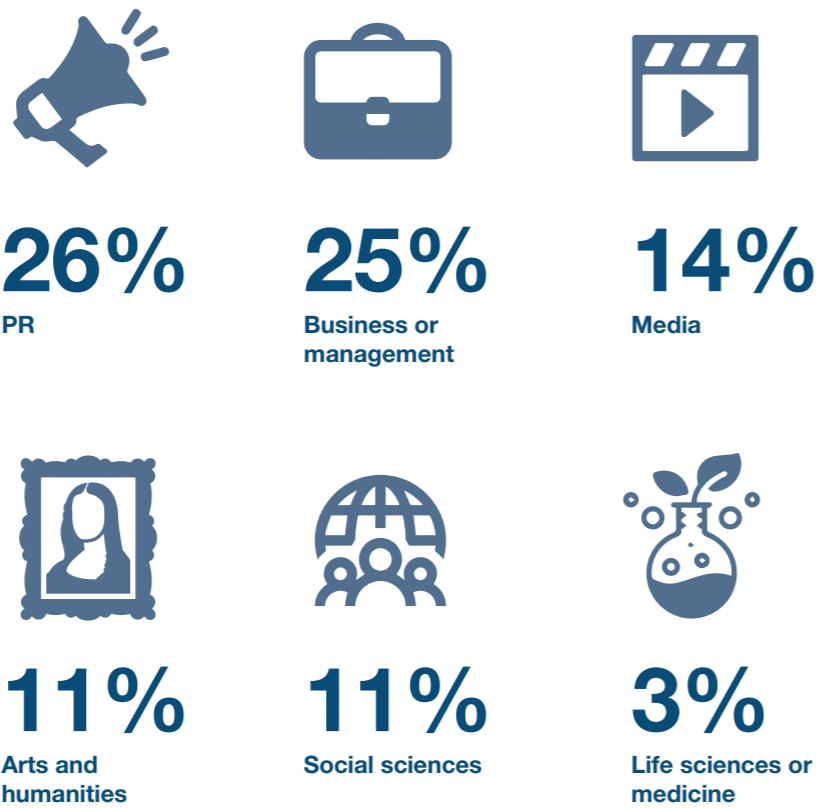


### EDUCATION

The majority of practitioners (54%) attended a public school. This is followed by private (or fee-paying) school (31%), special school (7%) and distance education (4%), while a few (1%) were home schooled.

The vast majority of practitioners have attended university - 57% have an undergraduate (Bachelor's) degree and 26% have a higher degree (Master's, MBA, or PhD). The lack of non-graduates means the industry is unrepresentative of national populations, in education terms.

The most common university degrees studied by respondents are PR and business - men are more likely to have studied business, while women are more likely to have studied PR. Other common degree courses are shown to the right.

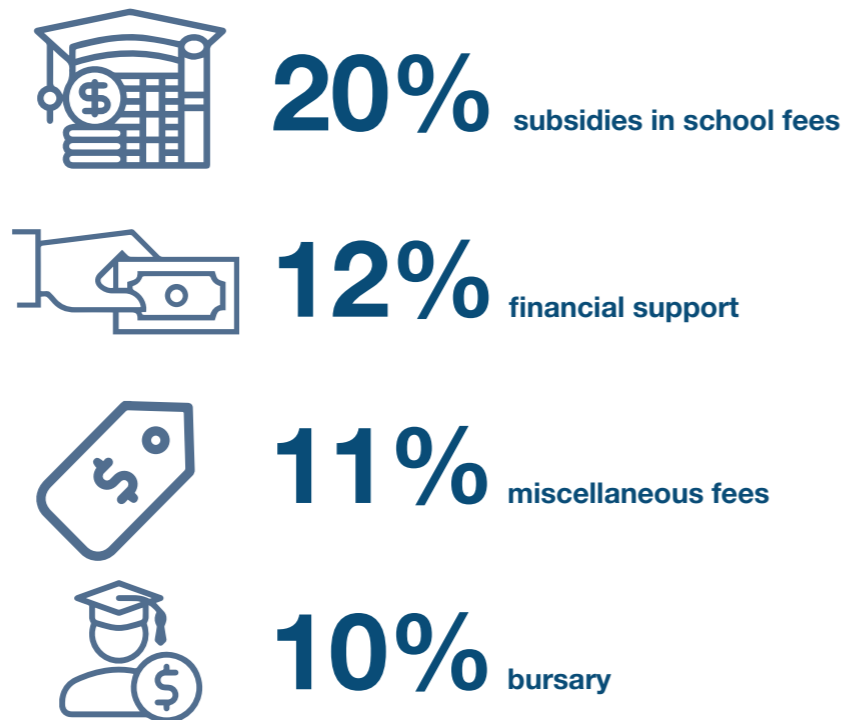


### SOCIAL MOBILITY

To build a picture of social mobility across the industry, we asked practitioners about their parents' education. More than half (54%) said that their parents had a university degree, 36% said they did not, and the remaining 9% were unsure or did not answer 2%.

Respondents also disclosed which financial aids they received during their school years - more than half (58%) received something, with school fee subsidies the most common.

#### FINANCIAL AID RECEIVED DURING SCHOOLING



### WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Respondents were asked to rate the PR and communications industry's approach to promoting women to leadership positions. While nearly two in three (63%) said it was 'good' or 'very good', this figure drops to 58% among women.

Overall, respondents are more positive about their own organisation's approach, with 73% rating it as 'good' or 'very good' - and here, women (75%) are more positive than men. In both questions, agency respondents are more positive than in-house practitioners.

### MENTAL HEALTH

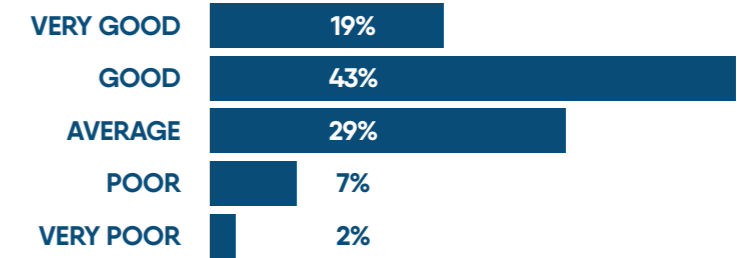
Respondents were asked whether they had been diagnosed with a mental health illness. Only 4% of respondents (1% of male respondents, and 6% of female respondents) said 'yes'.

This is much lower than the 31% of respondents who said they had suffered from a mental health illness in the recent [PRCA APAC Mental Health Report 2021](#) - although the questions were different in each survey.

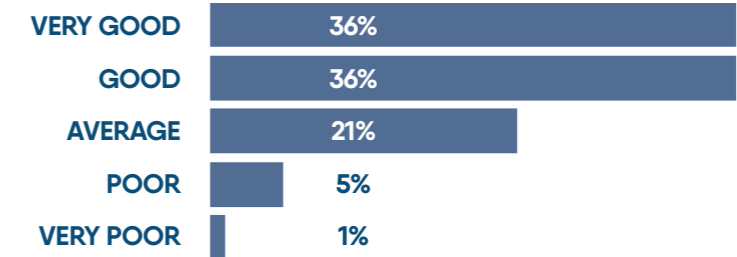
It is clear that mental wellbeing should be a concern for employers of PR professionals. The Census research finds that 34% of practitioners make work-related calls and emails outside of office hours every day, rising to 38% among agency practitioners.

It also shows that while practitioners on average are contracted to work 36.7 hours per week, the actual number of hours worked averages 45.5 - with women (46.4) overworking more than men (44.8).

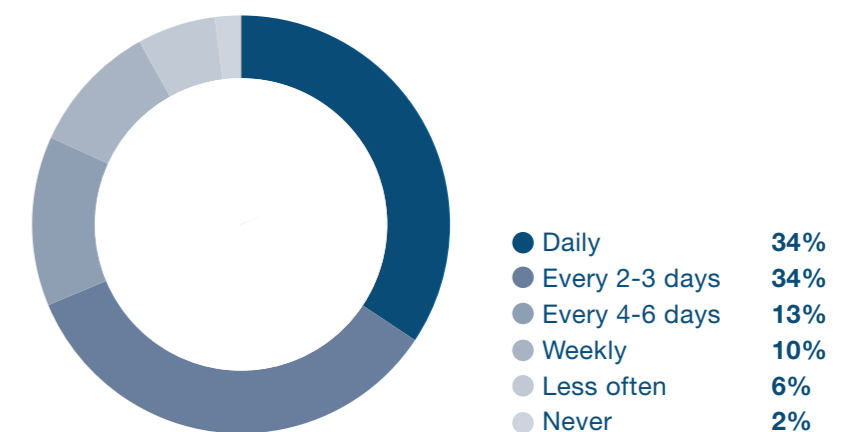
#### Approach across the industry



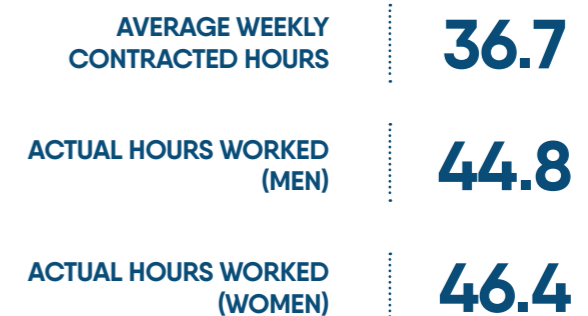
#### My organisation's approach



### OUT-OF-HOURS CALLS & EMAILS



### AVERAGE WEEKLY CONTRACTED HOURS



# 3

## Pay and perks

“The pandemic has fundamentally changed the relationship many employees have with their livelihoods, and many are opting not to return to jobs where they felt overworked, underpaid or disrespected. Alongside pay and bonuses, good benefit packages and flexibility around working hours are the key factors that will drive hiring and retaining of good talent in a post-pandemic world.”

Nitin Mantri CMPRCA, Co-Chair, PRCA APAC,  
and Group CEO, Avian We

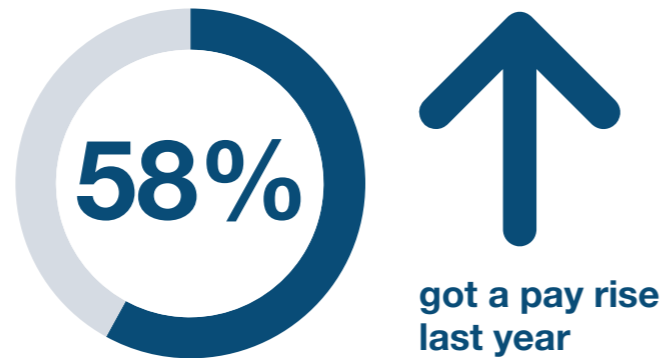


With the majority of practitioners getting a pay rise and/or a bonus in the past year, the PR profession appears to be in decent health despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

**PAY RISES**

Nearly three in five (58%) APAC PR professionals said they got a pay rise in the last year - a number rising slightly to 61% among men.

Agency professionals are less likely (54%) than in-house staff (63%) to have had their salary increased. We also asked how big a pay rise respondents got, regardless of whether that was within the last 12 months or not. Many (41%) said it was more than 10%.



**BONUS**

More than half of the respondents (55%) received a bonus in addition to their regular salary last year. This was more common for in-house respondents (67%) than agency respondents (45%), but there was no difference between male and female practitioners.

However, the data also suggests that bonuses received by men are generally higher than those received by women.



**GENDER PAY GAP**

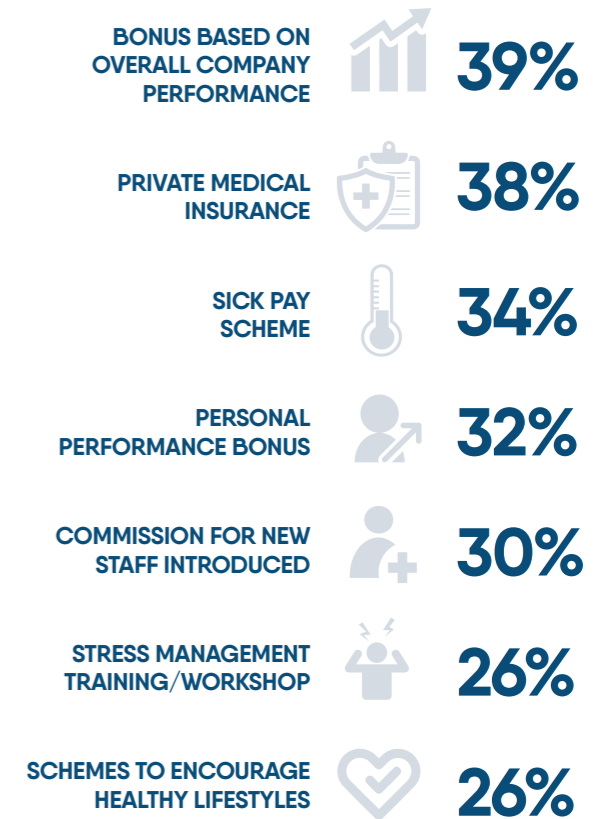
Numerous surveys have pointed to the fact that men are generally paid more than women for doing the same job. The same is true of data collected in this survey. However, due to the way data was collected, and the differences in average salaries across the region, it is not possible to calculate a specific pay gap percentage.



**BENEFITS**

Alongside pay and bonuses, practitioners receive a wide range of financial and non-financial benefits.

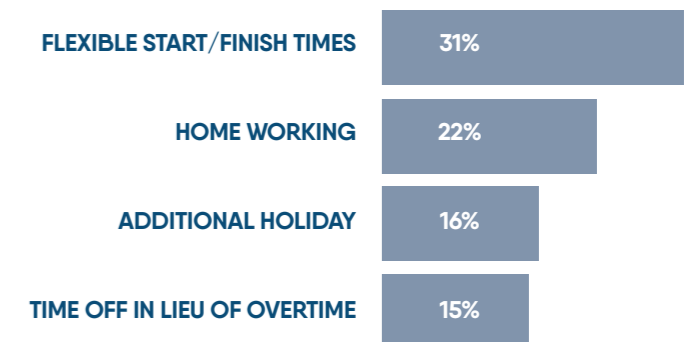
In total, 96% of agency respondents and 98% of in-house respondents said they receive at least one of the listed benefits - women (95%) are also less likely to have access to these than men (98%). The most common benefits received are shown on the right.



**FLEXIBLE HOURS**

Most respondents (62%) have applied for some sort of flexible working arrangement - this is more common among in-house staff (67%) and men (68%) than agency and female practitioners.

The most common scheme requested is control over start and finish time, followed by home working for at least one day a week. It will be interesting to see how these figures change as the post-pandemic reality emerges.



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