NEXTWEALTH

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Financial Advice Business Benchmarks Report 2026

What kind of growth are financial advice firms creating?

Introduction

How to read this report

Financial Advice Business Benchmarks (FABB) 2026 is based on a survey of 318 UK financial advice professionals conducted in June 2026. In its 8th year, the research explores changes to client service, growth, people, technology, investment, fees and operating models as reported by those who run an advice business or help one run.

This year alongside the survey, we have drawn on 11 of NextWealth's research projects conducted over the past 12 months and share key trends and interview quotes. For further reading, we provide links to the reports referenced.

The report is designed as a series of standalone benchmark pages, each bringing together a small number of key insights with NextWealth interpretive analysis on what they may mean for advice businesses.

The central question running through this year's findings is:

What kind of growth are financial advice firms creating?

The data show that firms looking to grow are doing so through new clients, deeper relationships with existing clients and additional staff. At the same time, many are reviewing cost to serve, changing propositions, repricing some relationships and making more deliberate decisions about which clients fit their ongoing service model.

The result is a more complicated picture than simple expansion. This report looks at how firms are trying to create a sustainable match between client need, adviser capacity and the economics of service.

Letter from NextWealth

What you refuse to do determines what you can do.

I came across that line recently and it stuck with me.

We talk a lot about growth in financial advice. More clients. More assets. More advisers. More technology solutions.

Sometimes growth starts with what you stop doing.

That is one of the clearest themes in this year's Financial Advice Business Benchmarks.

Growth is firmly on the agenda. Nearly two thirds of our 318 respondents work at firms that plan to grow by taking on new clients. Almost half of advisers tell us they're already serving more client relationships than a year ago. And seven in ten expect adviser headcount at that firm to rise over the next 12 months.

At the same time, firms are looking much harder at how they serve their existing client books and making some tough decisions. 44% of advisers work at firms that have switched off ongoing fees for some clients who no longer fit their core service or pricing model. Others are moving clients to different propositions or advisers. 40% have reviewed what it costs to serve a typical client and a further 25% plan to do so.

We don't believe this is a contradiction.

We think this is a sign that growth is becoming more deliberate.

The question is shifting from 'how do we grow?' to 'what kind of growth do we want?' and 'what kind of growth can we sustainably support?'.

Which clients need a full ongoing advice service? Who could be served differently? Who should do the work? Where can technology create capacity?

What do we need to stop doing to make space for the things that matter more?

Those questions are becoming more important as the work itself changes. Some client relationships are becoming more complex. Advice is increasingly delivered by a wider team. Technology and AI are changing how the work gets done, but firms are still planning to hire advisers and paraplanners.

For me, that is the story of this year's Financial Advice Business Benchmarks.

Growth is no longer simply about adding more clients, assets or advisers. It is about making deliberate decisions about who to serve, how to serve them, who should do the work and whether the economics hold.

Sometimes the biggest growth decision is not what to add next.

It is what to stop doing.

Heather Hopkins
CEO & Founder
NextWealth

Executive summary

What kind of growth are financial advice firms creating?

Ambition remains high. Most firms want more clients, more assets and more people to serve them. But growth is no longer simply addition. Firms are turning off ongoing fees for some clients, moving others to different propositions and repricing the relationships that no longer fit.

GROWTH →

64% plan to grow by taking on new clients

49% of advisers are serving more clients than a year ago

70% expect adviser headcount to rise at their firm

← RESHAPING

44% have turned off ongoing fees for clients who no longer fit

40% have reviewed the cost to serve a typical client

33% have moved clients to another proposition or adviser

62hrs **Some client relationships are becoming more intensive**
A typical client takes 32 hours to onboard and 62 hours of ongoing support a year. Advisers account for 15 of those 62 hours.

47% **People and technology, together**
47% already use AI and 47% expect the number of paraplanners at their firm to increase.

"Firms are asking which clients to serve, how to serve them and who should do the work."
Base: 318 UK financial advice professionals, June 2026.

Firm economics at a glance

WHAT ADVICE COSTS

£1,949
Average minimum initial advice fee:

£1,935
Average minimum ongoing advice fee, per year

THE FIRM

1:4 (21%)
the average ratio of advisers to other employees

88
Average number of individuals/ households managed by an adviser

THE CLIENT BOOK

£536,904
Average client portfolio size

37%
advise clients with £500k+ portfolios

63%
Of advisers personally manage more than £10m of client assets

Adviser confidence up year-on-year

- Confidence is up year-on-year across all metrics except for a slight decline in 'long-term career prospects in advice'. The upward shift was greatest on fairness of fees, the ability to generate asset growth and stability of the economy.
- Confidence is strongest where firms have the most control. Advice professionals feel good about understanding their clients, the advice and investment solutions they offer and the value they provide.
- Confidence is lowest when the focus moves to the wider environment around the firm: technology, markets and regulation.
- The findings that follow are less about whether advisers believe they can give good advice, and more about how their firm builds a practice capable of delivering it sustainably as client needs, technology and regulation change.

Figure 1: Advisers remain confident in their advice and fees. Confidence is rising fastest where it was weakest.

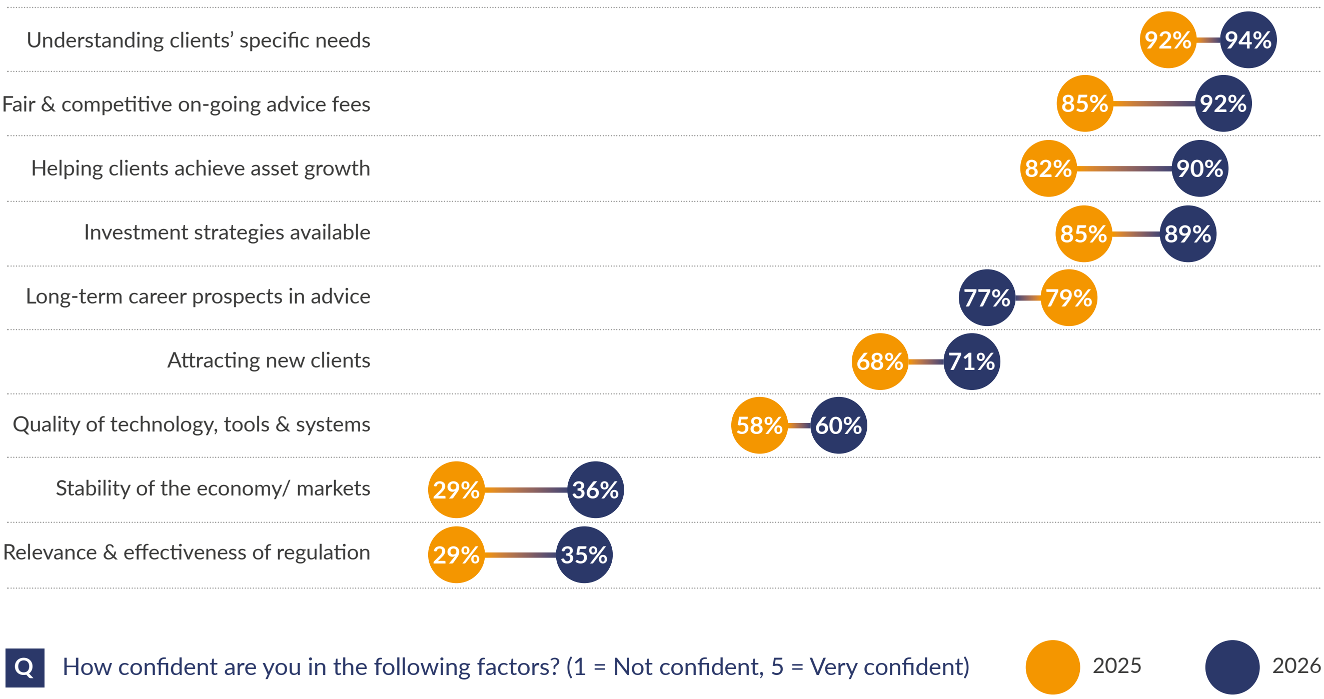


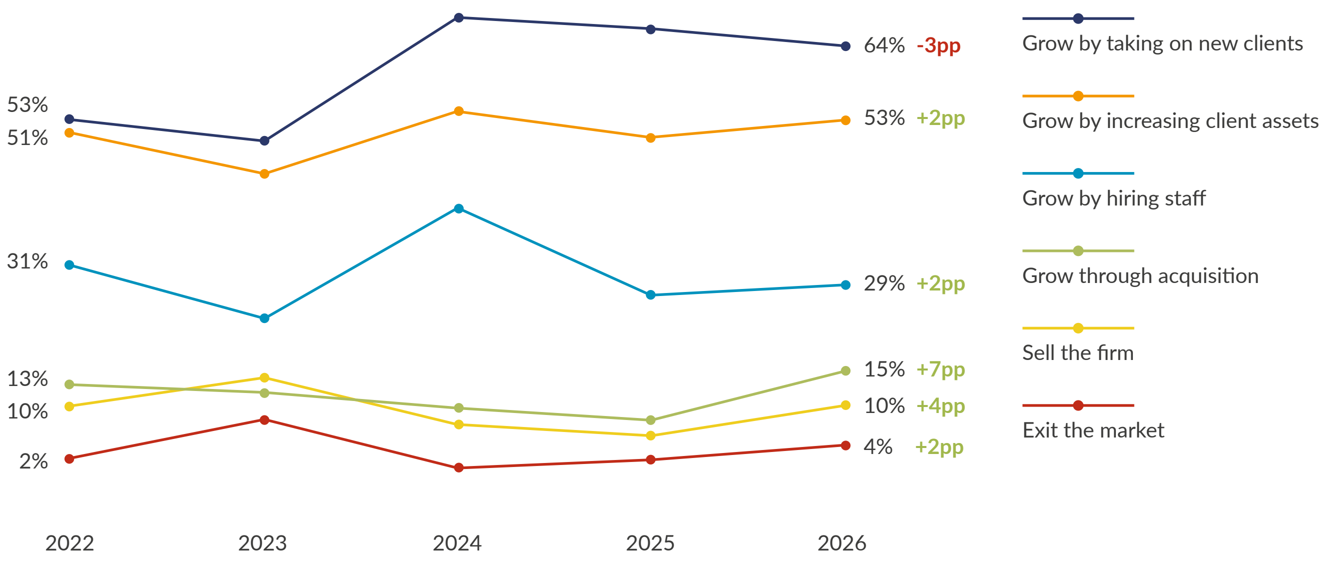
Table of Contents

Section 1. Growth and the client book

Growth ambition remains high

64% plan to grow by taking on new clients **53%** plan to grow by increasing assets from existing clients **47%** say organic growth from new or existing clients is a major driver of change

Figure 2: Nearly two thirds of financial advisers work at firms planning to grow through adding new clients



Q Over the next 18 months, do you or your firm intend to do any of the following?

NextWealth view:

Organic growth remains the dominant ambition. Firms want more clients, more assets and many are targeting stronger relationships with existing households.

From our wider research:

"Our growth has been organic to date. Most of our work comes from referrals, from existing clients... We've doubled in size over the last five years, and we'll probably double in size again over the next five years."
Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

"As a business we have shifted strategically, because growth through the years has been primarily through M&A. That has shifted very deliberately into organic growth. We have identified areas where we are leaning all our marketing, new business messaging, everything we're doing."
Adviser, 25-50 adviser firm

Read more:

In partnership with Aegon, our **Guide to Organic Growth** shares practical examples and case studies of how advice firms are developing referral strategies, client segmentation and share of wallet.

Acquisition appetite is rising, but integration is the deeper issue

15% say their firm is planning to grow through acquisition, up from **8%** in 2025

At the same time, **12%** say they are planning to sell or exit, also up from **8%** in 2025

NextWealth view:

The numbers suggest more movement at both ends of the market: more firms looking to buy and more owners considering their route out. FABB measures appetite for acquisition; our wider consolidation research shows that success increasingly depends on whether firms can bring people, client data, technology, investment propositions and working practices together.

From our wider research:

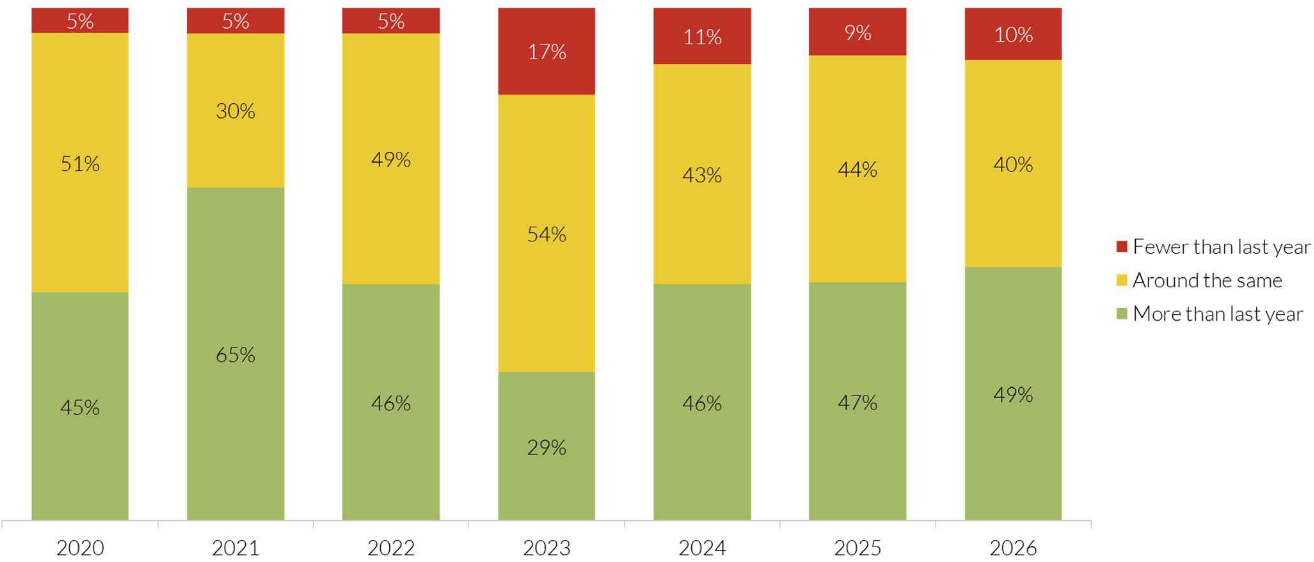
"Integration is really I think the key for any successful M&A. The success of the M&A is fundamentally linked to the level of integration that you achieve."
Optimisation-led acquirer

Read more:

NextWealth publishes an annual report, **Consolidation of Advice**, profiling acquirers, tracking deal volume over time and charting the ambition for consolidators.

Advisers are personally serving more clients

Figure 3: 49% of advisers are personally serving more clients than a year ago



Q How does your personal number of actively advised client relationships compare with this time last year?

This is the highest share reporting more clients since 2021, and up from 47% in 2025.

From our wider research:

"We're looking after 50 households per adviser at the moment, but we think all of our advisers, with a new way of working, can get to 100."
Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

"Can we use AI better to keep the same team and service more clients really well? Can we use it to get a growing number of clients?"
Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

NextWealth view:

Ambition is building and evidence of growth is coming through in the numbers. Almost nine in ten advisers are serving the same number or more client relationships than a year ago. That suggests growth is already showing up at individual adviser level, not just in firms' stated ambitions.

However headline growth figures should be tested against complexity of client need and the support available around each adviser. The number of relationships an adviser can support depends on the complexity of client needs, how work is shared across the wider team and how effectively technology and processes remove work from the adviser's desk.

49% personally servicing more client relationships than a year ago

40% are serving roughly the same number

10% are serving fewer

Read more:

IFA DNA 2026: The adviser's expanding role. This annual research, in partnership with Fidelity, explores how advisers may be able to serve more clients, but the role itself is expanding and client needs are becoming more complex.

Client books are being reshaped

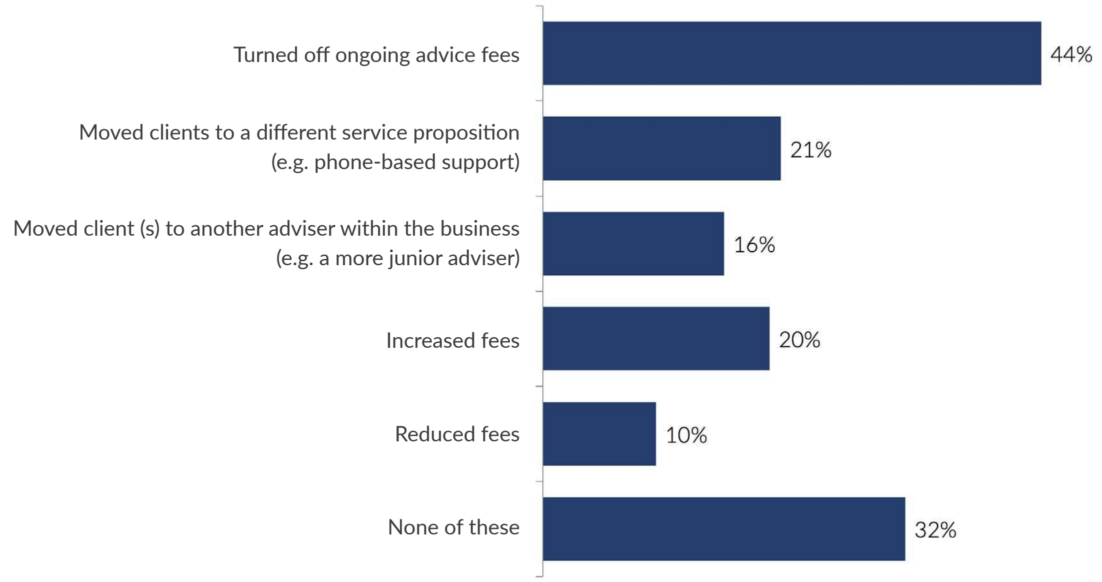
From our wider research:

"They still have a relationship with us, and they still have access to their named adviser. However, we recognised that they don't need an ongoing service from us, and actually it wasn't commercial for us to provide that ongoing service to them."
Proposition lead, 50-100 adviser firm

NextWealth view:

Advisers are not only adding clients. Their firms are also deciding which relationships fit their ongoing service and pricing model. A growing advice firm can be expanding in one part of the business, while narrowing or redirecting in another part.

Figure 4: 44% of advisers work at firms where ongoing fees have been switched off for non-core clients



Q In the past 12 months, has your firm done any of the following for clients who no longer fit your core service or pricing model?

44% **have turned off ongoing advice fees for clients who no longer fit the core service or pricing model (47% at firms with 2-5 advisers)**

33% **have moved clients to another proposition or adviser within the business (e.g. a more junior adviser)**

20% **have increased fees for clients who no longer fit the current model (41% at firms with more than 50 advisers)**

Read more:

Consolidation of Advice: NextWealth publishes an annual report, Consolidation of Advice, profiling acquirers, tracking deal volume over time and charting the ambition for consolidators. Consolidators are under pressure to grow organically. Advice firm professionals are looking to take on new clients. Both are important: firm-level ambition and practitioner-level willingness. This combination suggests that the industry is on the cusp of a step-change in growth in client numbers.

Cost to serve is changing who firms serve and how

MEASURING

40% have reviewed the cost of serving a typical client

25% plan to review cost to serve

SEGMENTING

50% segment their clients by life stage

32% by complexity

31% by asset level

DESIGNING

22% say developing new propositions or client segments is a major driver of change

34% offer, are developing, or refer clients to some form of digital or lower-touch proposition

23% offer or are considering targeted support (more likely at larger firms)

37% offer or are developing a simplified advice service (17% of firms with 2-5 advisers; 43% of firms with 6-50 advisers)

The decisions that firms are making about existing clients are increasingly being informed by a more explicit understanding of what different relationships cost to serve. Something to be actively measured and designed around, rather than something firms might loosely have known.

NextWealth view:

Firms are looking more closely at which clients need a full ongoing advice service, which can be served differently, and where digital, simplified or targeted support might provide another route.

The challenge is to match the level of service to the client's needs while keeping the relationship commercially sustainable. That means understanding cost by client type, not just relying on an average across the whole client book.

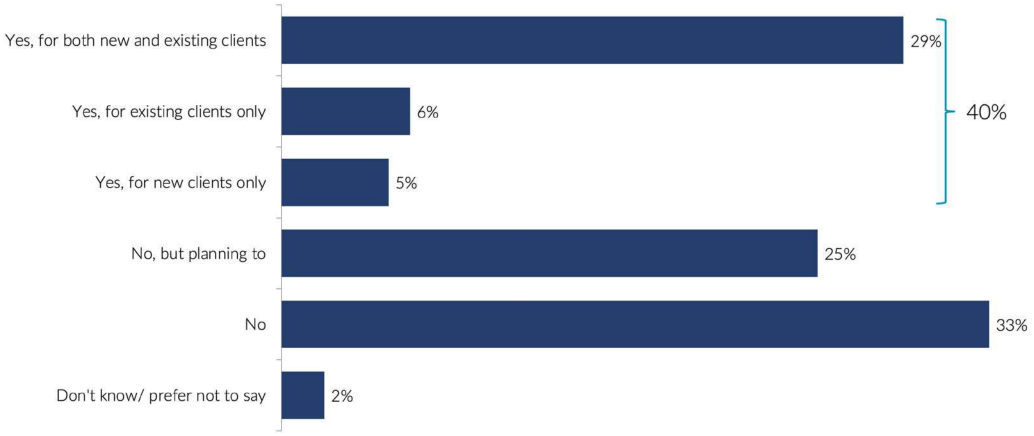
Half of firms are segmenting clients by life stage and nearly a third by complexity, suggesting that service design is being built around more than portfolio value. Cost to serve can also be dynamic. A client who is cheap to serve may become much more intensive later.

From our wider research:

"You'll have clients that don't have many needs for a long period. Then they hit retirement and start to decumulate at a significant rate, at the very point they need way more support."

NextWealth Adviser Business Forum attendee

Figure 5: 40% of firms have reviewed the cost to serve a typical client in the last 12 months



Q In the last 12 months, has your firm undertaken a review to determine the cost to serve a typical client?

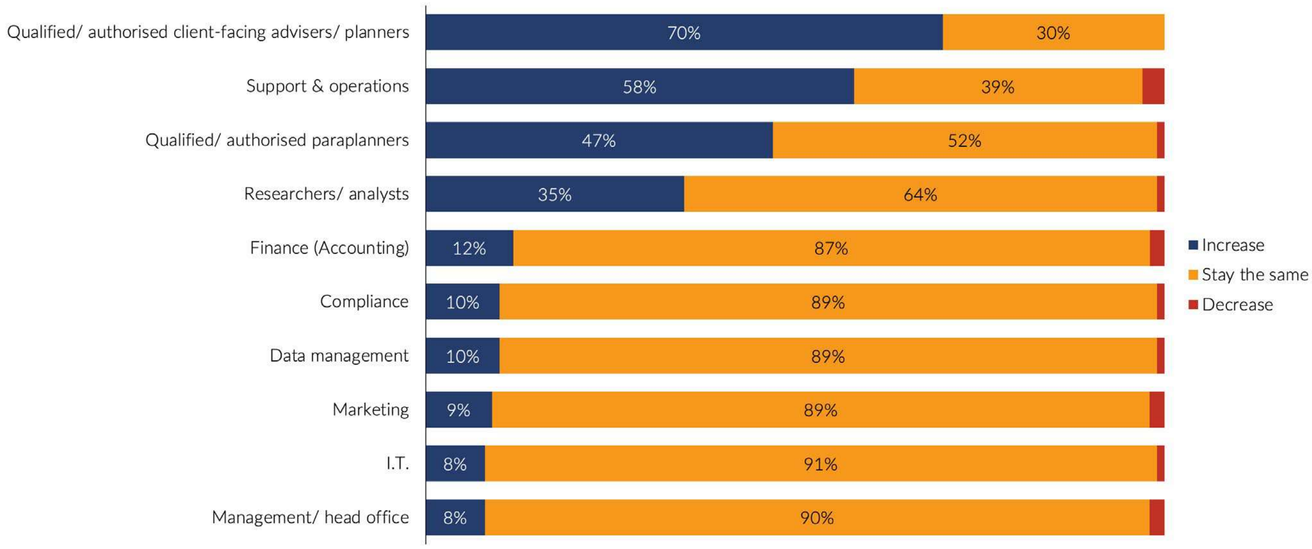
Read more:

- NextWealth's annual Fee Benchmarking report. The 2026 update found that total cost remains flat but advice is taking a larger share.
- Retirement Advice in the UK report supported by BNY shows how planning evolves to support client needs and service intensity around retirement.

Section 2. People and capacity

Firms plan to grow headcount

Figure 6: 70% expect the number of advisers at their firm to increase



Q Looking ahead over the next 12 months, what change, if any, do you expect in headcount across the following roles at your firm?

From our wider research:

"When I'm looking to recruit new paraplanners, I want them to have attended meetings, not just people that have been writing reports for years. I want somebody that actually speaks to clients and can speak to clients."
Paraplanning lead, 6-10 adviser firm

NextWealth view:

Growth ambitions continue to depend on people. Firms are investing in technology and operational efficiency, but they are not planning for a technology-only future. Most expect their firm to add advisers, and almost half expect paraplanner numbers to rise too. This pattern suggests that growth is not simply about putting more advisers in front of clients. Firms need people who can prepare, support and increasingly participate in client conversations as the advice process becomes more continuous and complex.

29% say their firm is planning to grow by hiring staff

70% expect adviser headcount to increase at the firm over the next year

47% expect paraplanner headcount to increase, 52% expect it to stay the same

Read more:

IFA DNA: In partnership with Fidelity, for more on recruitment routes, career changers, adviser academies and the skills firms expect advisers to increasingly need.

AI is becoming part of the advice relationship

54% say technology, cyber security and data improvements are a leading driver of change at their firm

47% are currently using AI

13% are implementing an AI solution

20% of sole traders are not using or considering AI

Meeting notes and summaries are the leading use case

Almost half of advisers are personally serving more active client relationships than a year ago

NextWealth view:

AI adoption is moving into the mainstream, but current use remains concentrated in practical tasks such as meeting notes, summaries and follow-ups. Financial Advice Business Benchmarks data show how advice firms are adopting AI internally. Our wider research suggests the change is also happening on the client side. Clients are using it to test questions and recommendations between meetings through general purpose AI. This can make them better informed, and perhaps reduce initial concerns about not knowing enough to participate in the initial meeting, but it can also introduce confident-looking errors. The adviser's role now includes explaining where AI might fall short and helping the client decide what to trust.

From our wider research:

"I basically had to end up saying, either you believe me or you believe ChatGPT."

Adviser, 25-50 adviser firm

"They're sticking our suitability reports in [to an AI tool] as well and challenging those too."

Compliance lead, 25-50 adviser firm

"Two years ago, most of the paraplanners' day was writing reports after meetings. Now the paraplanning team spends much more time on prep rather than post."

Managing Director, 2-5 adviser firm

Read more:

- As part of **NextWealth's Adviser Tech Stack** series, our AI report explores adoption and provides use-case benchmarking
- **NextWealth AI Lab:** for practical advice from peers on AI implementation that delivers positive ROI and is used by staff
- **IFA DNA & AI Adoption report:** In partnership with Fidelity, on the changing role of the adviser and detailed case studies on implementation, governance and time savings

Advice is being delivered by a wider team

NextWealth view:

Client capacity is increasingly determined by the whole delivery team, not the adviser alone. Paraplanners, researchers, client services and compliance all contribute materially to the work involved in bringing a client on and supporting them over time. Growth isn't just adviser numbers or client relationships; it's how work is divided among the team and whether each role is spending time where it adds most value.

From our wider research:

"Every client family has three people surrounding them: the adviser, paraplanner and the client relationship manager."
Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

32 hours average human time to onboard a typical client

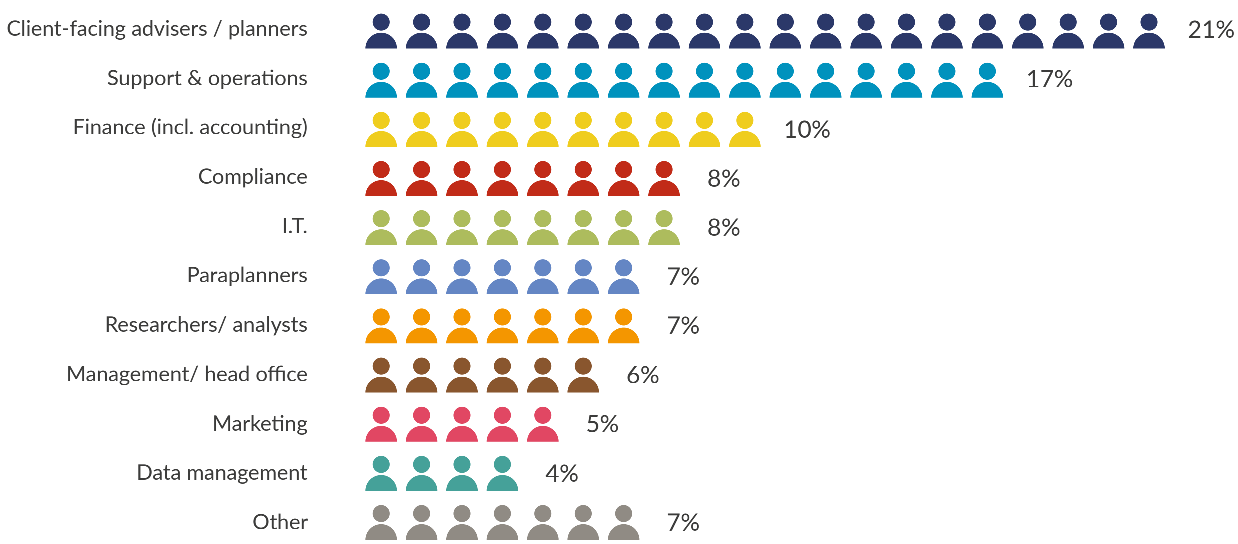
For onboarding, the average is 9 adviser hours, alongside 8 researcher, 7 paraplanner, 6 client services/admin and 3 compliance hours.

62 hours average human time spent each year on ongoing support for an existing client

Advisers account for only part of that time:

For ongoing support, advisers average 15 hours, with 47 hours coming from other roles combined.

Figure 7: Average proportion of employees at a financial advice firm



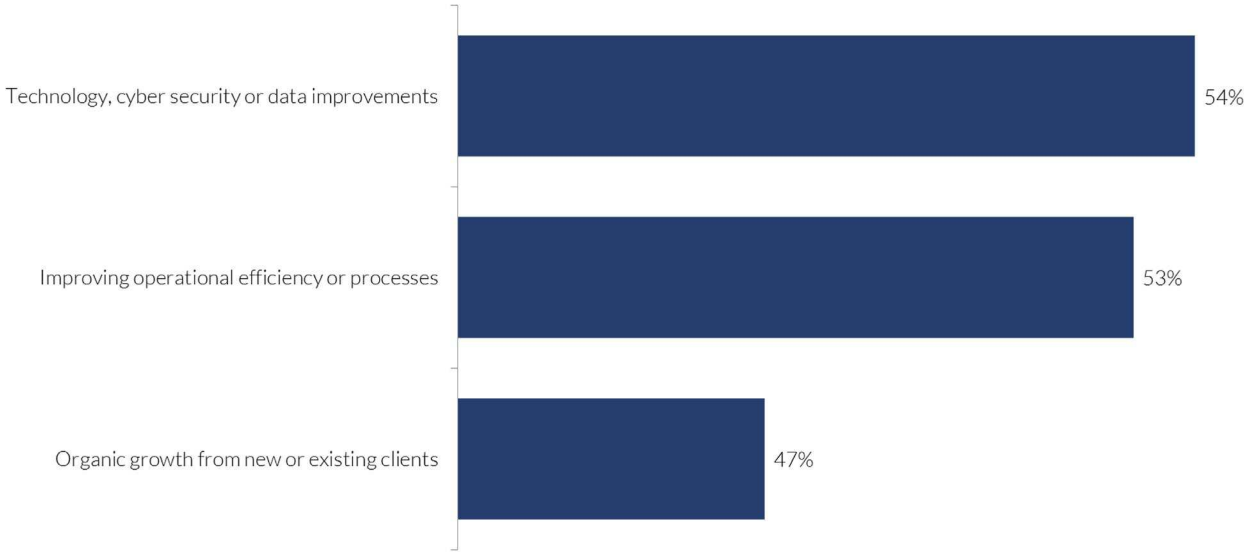
Q Approximately how many individuals are employed at your firm in each of the following roles?

Read more:

IFA DNA: In partnership with Fidelity, this report explores the expanding role of advisers

Firms are focusing as much on efficiency as growth

Figure 8: The top three drivers of change for advice firms



Q Which of the following are currently driving change within your firm?

NextWealth view:

Growth is not the only priority. Firms are giving at least as much attention to making the business work better. Improving processes, technology and data sit alongside, and may be necessary to support, ambitions to serve more clients and grow assets.

From our wider research:

“The numbers are ticking along and now I’m in the process of realising I’m outgrowing spreadsheets, so trying to automate and systemise and write standard operating procedures as I’m now starting to think about outsourcing and starting tentatively to scale the business.”

Adviser, sole adviser firm

Read more:

In partnership with Ortec Finance, our Innovation with Integrity report explores the importance of connected processes and data.

Section 3. The advised relationship

Who is the client: the individual or the household

NextWealth view:

Firms are split between defining the relationship around the individual, the household or on a case-by-case basis. The approach has implications for fees and service design as well as continuity when circumstances change.

A household approach can help plan across shared goals, assets and family decisions.

From our wider research:

"We have a legal obligation to make sure we open the conversation wider, but it comes back to advisers positioning their service and value in a way that both parties [in an advised couple] understand it is of value to them and they want to be involved."

Compliance lead, 25-50 adviser firm

39% say client relationships at their firm are typically with a household

20% say it is held with an individual client

41% say it depends on the particular case and there is no single standard approach

Read more:

- New research with Scottish Widows explores what helps clients participate more actively in financial advice, and how firms can build relationships that engage both individuals within a household.

- **The Headlines that Matter:** In partnership with Quilter, this report shows how changes to inheritance tax on pensions builds the case for more engaged household relationships.

Referrals still provide most new clients

56% say new clients come from existing client and family referrals, down from 67% in 2025

16% come from professional referrals, such as accountants and lawyers

13% come from marketing, up from 6% in 2025

NextWealth view:

The interesting change is that existing client referrals have fallen from 67% to 56%, while marketing and events have increased. This gives substance to the idea that growth is becoming more deliberate. This is well supported by our wider qualitative research, in which interviewees repeatedly describe referrals as the foundation for their new client pipeline, but they are also adding reviews, digital presence, LinkedIn posts and seminars around them.

From our wider research:

"The vast majority of our work, like a lot of firms, comes through a referral, either from existing clients or professional connections. We're also asking more for reviews. Having a decent set of Google reviews, for example, has made a big difference."

Business owner, 2-5 adviser firm

Read more:

Our Guide to Organic Growth, published in partnership with Aegon, for referral engines, building productive professional connections and turning accidental niches into growth strategies.

Ongoing advice is being redesigned

Of those considering or making changes to ongoing advice reviews following the FCA's consultation paper:

25% are reviewing what is included in the ongoing service

21% are reviewing ongoing fee structures or charges

20% are segmenting review frequency by client need, complexity or value, or considering greater use of trigger-led reviews

NextWealth view:

The annual review remains the anchor of ongoing advice, but firms are reconsidering what the service should include and how often it should be delivered.

Across our wider research, the direction is towards a more flexible relationship. Some clients need little contact for long periods, while retirement, bereavement, inheritance or other life events can suddenly create a much greater need for support.

From our wider research:

"We only have to meet annually, but I always make a point of saying in initial meetings, that doesn't mean that's the only time you can speak to me. You can speak to me whenever."

Adviser, 5-10 adviser firm

"The majority of clients are always speaking to an adviser. We actually see a lot of clients reject their prescribed review windows, purely because they know they've been speaking to the adviser."

Paraplanning lead, 6-10 adviser firm

Read more:

- **IFA DNA 2026** in partnership with Fidelity on the shift to continuous client contact.

- **Closing the participation gap:** New research with Scottish Widows on life events, client participation in advice and when people actually need support

- **Retirement Advice in the UK:** a report with BNY on the periods when client needs become much more intensive

Clients' financial lives are getting more complicated

NextWealth view:

The investment solution is often not the hardest part. Tax, inheritance, retirement, family circumstances and later-life decisions are adding to the work involved in advising some clients. Communicating changes to the inheritance tax treatment of unused pensions for example frequently requires more modelling, explanation and follow-up than a routine review. This may absorb some of the capacity firms hope to create through technology and operational efficiency.

From our wider research:

"The investments don't necessarily get more complicated. Everything around them is more complicated."

Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

"The fact that pensions would effectively just sit there outside of your estate and you could draw down on them, there's nothing as simple as that anymore."

Adviser, 25-50 adviser firm

46% say inheritance tax changes are a major driver of change within their business

65% of advisers in our IFA DNA research say the complexity of client needs has increased over the past three years

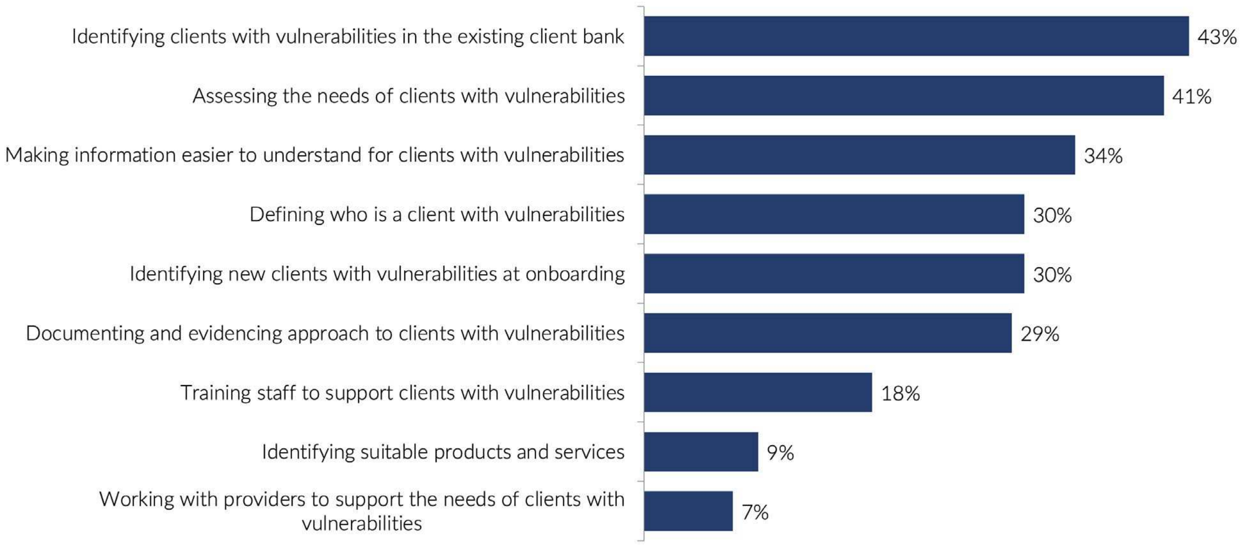
Read more:

- **IFA DNA 2026:** in partnership with Fidelity on client complexity, retirement and the expanding adviser role

- **The Headlines that Matter:** In partnership with Quilter, on client impacts of the pension and inheritance tax changes

Firms are focused on identifying and understanding vulnerability

Figure 9: 43% of advice professionals say their firm is focusing on identifying existing clients with vulnerabilities



Q Which of the following areas are you most focused on to meet the needs of clients with vulnerabilities?

From our wider research:

"People can identify. The bit that I think needs more work is the, so what? So you've identified they're vulnerable or potentially vulnerable, or display the characteristics of vulnerability, now so what do you do with that?"

Proposition lead, 50-100 adviser firm

"The understanding about your client's behaviour is a big part of assessing vulnerability as well. People move in and out of vulnerability all the time."

Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

NextWealth view:

Identification of clients with vulnerabilities remains one of the biggest priorities, although its prominence has fallen since 2024. Much smaller proportions of our survey respondents are focused on staff training (18%), suitable products and services (9%) or working with providers (7%).

Identifying vulnerability is only the first step. What firms do differently once they find it – how they adapt communication, service and advice to that individual - can be the harder question. Our wider research also suggests vulnerability needs to be understood as something that can change, rather than simply a permanent flag on a client record.

43% **say their firm is most focused on identifying vulnerability in the existing client bank**

41% **say they are focused on assessing the needs of vulnerable clients**

34% **are focused on making information easier to understand**

Read more:

- **Beyond the Numbers:** A 2025 NextWealth report in partnership with Standard Life on understanding the full picture of clients' lives.

Section 4: Operating model and infrastructure

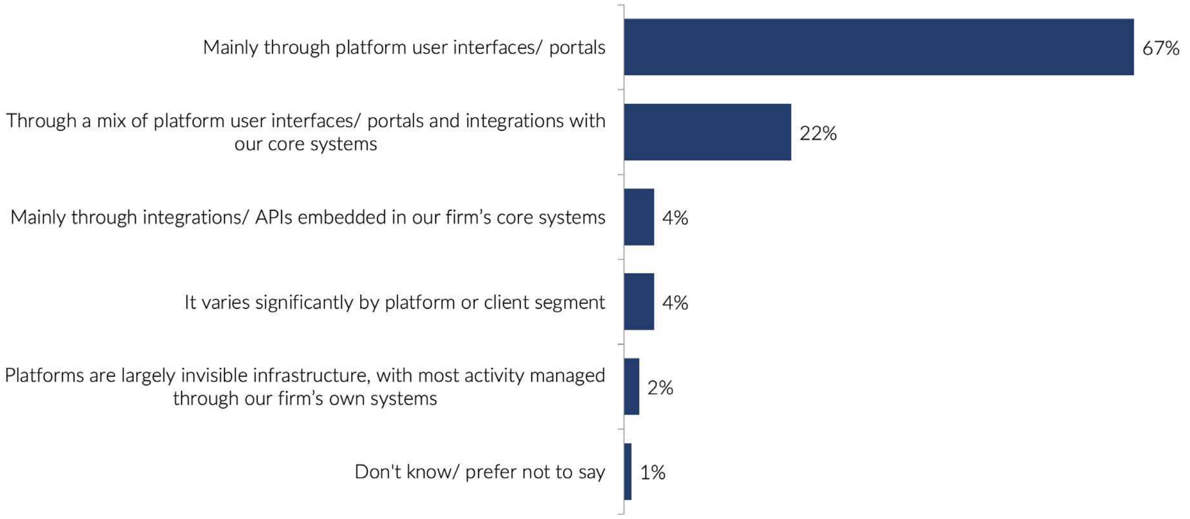
Technology ambition is ahead of integration

54% say technology, cyber security and data improvements are a leading driver of change

67% still mainly interact with their platforms through individual provider portals

47% expect paraplanner headcount to increase, 52% expect it to stay the same

Figure 10: Two-thirds of advisers say they interact with their platforms through individual interfaces



Q Which of the following best describes how your firm currently interacts with platforms?

NextWealth view:

Technology is high on the agenda but it will not create a connected advice process unless firms have a dependable client record and reliable data flows. The platform remains a separate working environment for most firms rather than a fully integrated part of the advice workflow.

Across our wider research, advisers repeatedly describe the same underlying problem: better tools do not automatically create a connected advice process.

From our wider research:

"Everyone sells integration capability, but none of them have got a consolidated data model."

COO, consolidator firm

"We always try to look at being integration-first to minimise any rekeying so we can maintain that single source of truth."

Operations lead, 25-50 adviser firm

Read more:

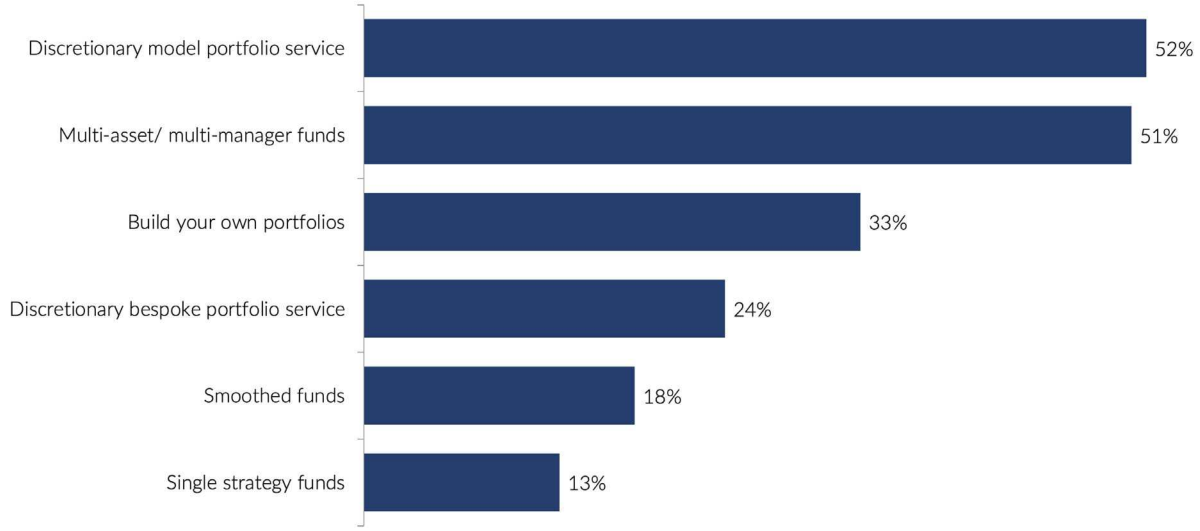
- Ortec Finance/Innovation with integrity: on the need for a unified data spine

- Part of our Adviser Tech Stack series, the Data Openness 2026 report explores the data pipeline between financial advice firms, platforms and providers.

- Platforms After the Shakeout: A NextWealth report on how firms interact with providers, and what they expect

Model portfolios move into the lead

Figure 11: Investment solutions used for new client money



Q Which of the following investment strategies do you use for new client money?

52% **use discretionary model portfolios for new client money**

51% **use multi-asset or multi-manager funds**

32% **expect to increase their use of MPS over the next year**

From our wider research:

"Five years ago... I'm a financial adviser. I'm a wealth manager and I run people's money. I invest people's pensions. That's what we do. Now it feels more like we're financial planners... we're doing so much more than picking funds nowadays."

Adviser, 2-5 adviser firm

NextWealth view:

Discretionary model portfolios have moved ahead of multi-asset and multi-manager funds for the first time in a three-year comparison. The change is gradual: half of advisers still use multi-asset/multi-manager, and firms can select more than one strategy. However, the data point to continued demand for outsourced investment management.

Forward-looking data reinforces this shift, although only narrowly: 32% expect MPS use to increase and 31% expect greater use of multi-asset/multi-manager funds.

Read more:

- NextWealth publishes a full annual report on MPS propositions and a mid-year update quantifying assets in discretionary MPS.

- **The CRP You Already Have:** in partnership with Brooks Macdonald this report explores the relationship between retirement frameworks and investment-strategy choice

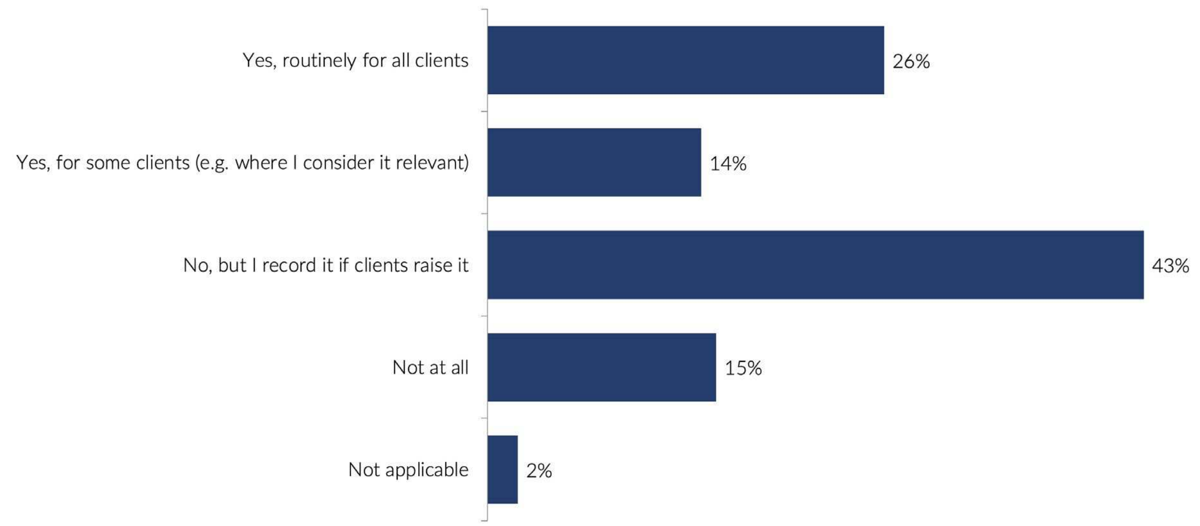
Advisers are encountering a broad range of client investment interests

Cryptocurrency

Crypto is becoming part of the fact find: 26% routinely ask all clients about cryptocurrency or digital-asset holdings. 43% only record crypto holdings if the client raises them.

Crypto is another example of the financial life extending beyond the assets an adviser directly manages. Even where firms do not advise on digital assets, these holdings can still affect a client's overall wealth, risk exposure and tax position.

Figure 12: Cryptocurrency as part of the fact find



Q Do you proactively ask clients about existing cryptocurrency or digital asset holdings as part of your fact-find or review process?

Private markets

53% of advisers say they do not discuss investing in private market assets with their clients. One fifth will bring it up if they consider it suitable for the client.

Sustainable investments

Interest in sustainable investing has rebounded. 25% of client assets are in ethical or sustainable funds and in 23% of adviser conversations clients raise the topic.

Section 5: Comparing high revenue firms to the rest

In this section we compare firms with higher relative revenue to see what makes them stand apart. We do this by size of firm, segmented by number of advisers.

Looking beneath the headline averages reveals some distinctive patterns. High revenue-producing firms do not all follow the same route to growth: depending on their size, some are serving more clients, while others are concentrating on fewer, wealthier relationships. At the adviser level, technology is also beginning to distinguish how some advisers work and the client conversations they are having.

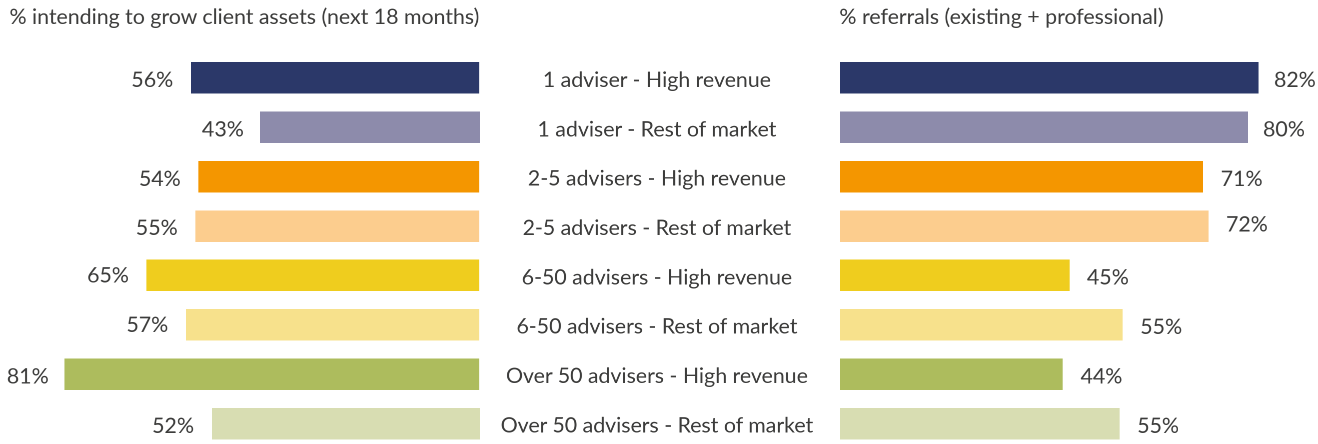
This section highlights groups within the Financial Advice Business Benchmarks data whose behaviours stand out from their peers and offer a glimpse of some of the different ways the advice market may be evolving.

In this section, high revenue-producing firms are defined as those in the top half of firms by gross annual revenue within each firm-size category.

Four things high revenue-producing firms do differently from the rest

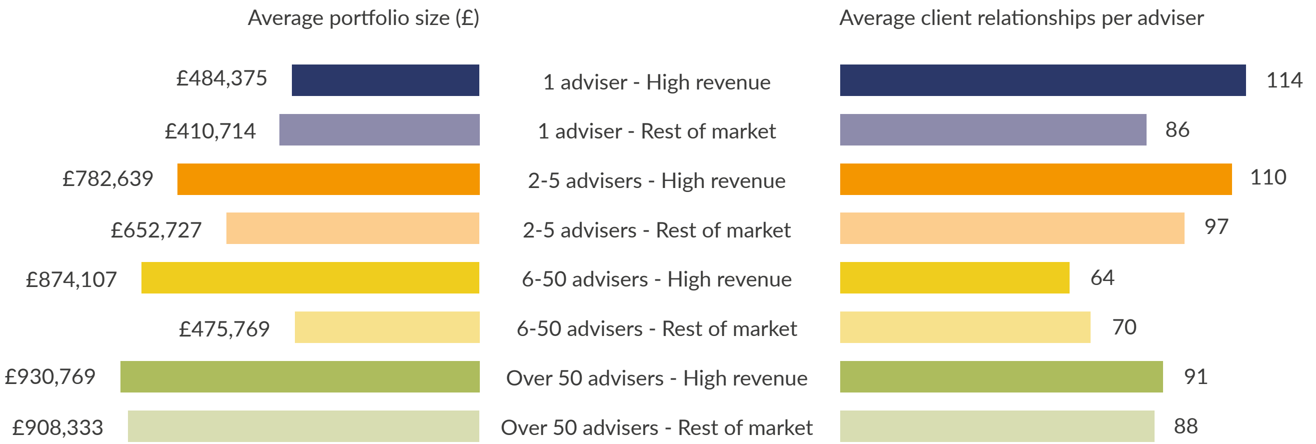
1. They prioritise organic growth. Growing client assets is the goal for most: 81% of high-revenue firms with more than 50 advisers aim to grow client assets, against 52% of lower-revenue firms of the same size.
2. They win clients differently. The largest high-revenue firms rely less on referrals, leaning instead on networking and adviser recruitment.
3. They segment their clients more deliberately, particularly by client asset level.
4. Their client model shifts with firm size. The smallest and largest firms give each adviser more clients to look after (sole traders around 114 each versus 86; firms with more than 50 advisers 91 versus 88). Mid-size firms do the opposite, holding fewer but wealthier clients, with more £500,000 to £1m portfolios.

Figure 13: Differences in high revenue firms



Q Over the next 18 months, do you or your firm intend to do any of the following? - Grow by increasing client assets under advice

Q Approximately what proportion of your firm's clients come through the following channels? Referrals from existing clients + Referrals from professional third party



Q What is the average portfolio size of a typical client at your firm?

Q Approximately how many client relationships (either individual or household) does a typical adviser at your firm manage?

The modern-day tech adviser

Technology is reshaping advice on two fronts: how advice is produced, and what clients hold. AI is changing the work behind the advice, while cryptocurrency and other digital assets are entering the client conversation. These two groups of advisers overlap but have nuanced approaches to advice.

47% of respondents work at firms using AI

Adopting AI

How AI is showing up in the practice.

Mainstream: nearly half of firms now use AI, and adopters look like the market, not a distinct type

Where it lands: concentrated in larger, growing firms:
69% plan to hire next year, against 61% overall

Footprint: more likely to be working in firms with a regional spread

What it changes: more confident in regulation and compliance

So what: These advisers tend to be at larger, more regional firms with more data and are able to use AI to support a more complex client database.

21% of advisers personally hold crypto

Crypto in the conversation

How advisers are approaching crypto.

Into the fact-find: more likely to ask clients about crypto holdings: 37% proactively ask some clients, against 23% overall

Investment approach: the least confident in the availability of investment solutions to support their clients and more open to recommending a range of investment strategies

Who is leading it: younger but better qualified: 39% hold a Level 6 qualification as their highest, against 31% overall

Their clients: fewer, wealthier relationships: more likely to have clients with £1m-plus portfolios

So what: For these advisers crypto is less a product to sell than a holding to understand and a sign of openness to a wider investment proposition.

Section 6: Conclusion

The question running through this year's benchmarks was what kind of growth financial advice firms are creating. The headline answer is that ambition remains high: most firms want more clients and in many cases more people to serve them. FABB data and our wider conversations reveal some complexities that sit beneath that ambition:

Advisers are personally serving more relationships than at any point since 2021, yet at the same time firms are turning off ongoing fees for some clients, moving others to different propositions and repricing relationships that no longer fit.

A firm can be expanding in one direction, while narrowing or redirecting in another. Increasingly those decisions are informed by an explicit understanding of what different clients cost to serve, rather than an average spread across the whole book.

The number of clients an adviser can support is increasingly a function of the whole advice team: paraplanners, researchers, client services and compliance account for most of the time spent onboarding and supporting a client.

Firms are investing in people and technology together, and AI is changing how the work is done. But the capacity it creates is being partly absorbed by rising complexity: tax, retirement, inheritance and later-life decisions are making some individual relationships more intensive.

These behaviours are not spread evenly across the market. A recognisable profile surfaces through this year's FABB data: growth-oriented firms that lean less on referrals and more on marketing and proposition design, who segment their clients more actively and are more willing to reprice a relationship than to withdraw from it.

Firms are no longer treating growth as a matter of adding more clients or advisers. They are asking which clients to serve, how to serve them, who should do the work and whether the economics hold.

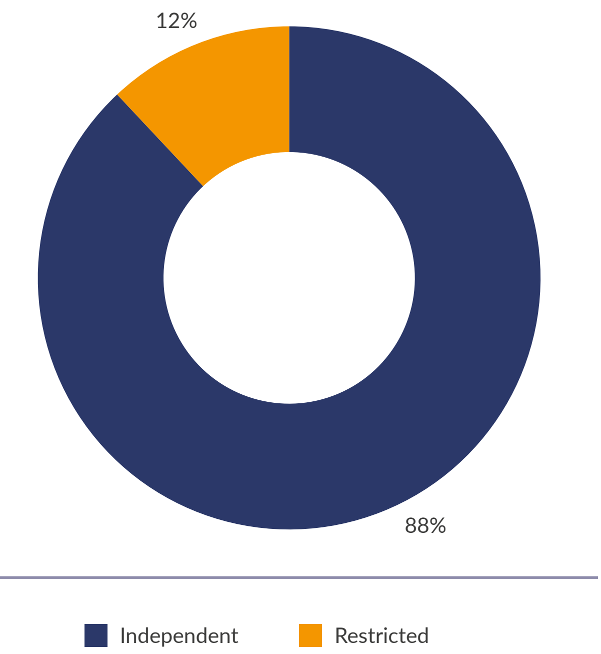
The strongest growth model is the one that creates a sustainable match between client need, adviser capacity and the economics of service.

Methodology and respondent profile

The results in this report are based on a survey of 318 financial advice professionals, conducted in June 2026. Results have been weighted by size of firm by number of advisers to be representative of the whole market. The charts in this section show the profile of the financial advice professionals who responded to our survey. We use the term 'financial advice professional' because we want to hear views from across financial advice businesses, from planners and paraplanners to operations and admin teams. This year's respondent profile is similar to past reports.

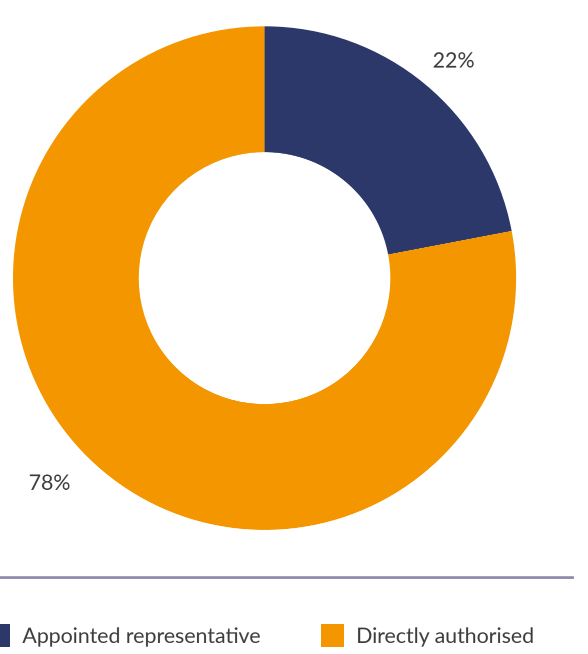
- 78% work in firms that are directly authorised.
- The majority (88%) are at firms that provide independent advice.
- 37% are aged between 45 and 64, and 80% are aged 54 or under.
- Firms operate across the UK, most often in the South East (34%), London (21%) and the South West (18%).
- Respondents represent a wide range of firms by size, by assets under advice and number of client-facing advisers.

Figure 14: Firm status



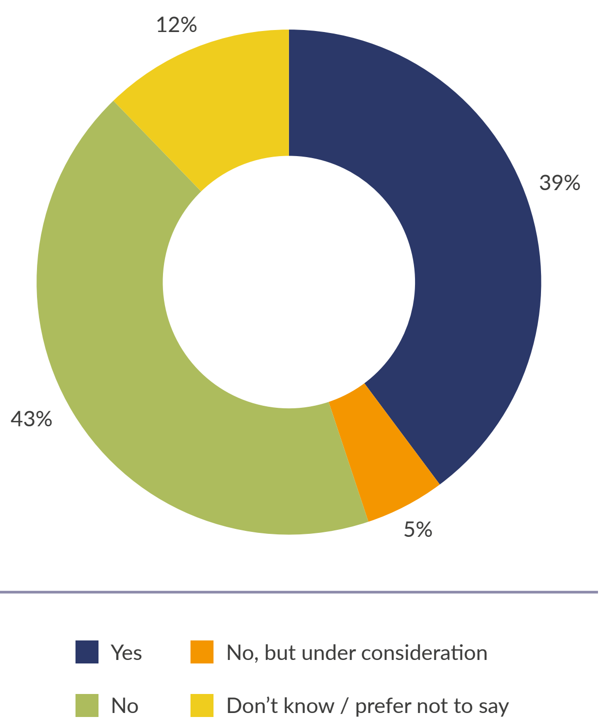
Q What is the status of your firm?

Figure 15: Firm authorisation



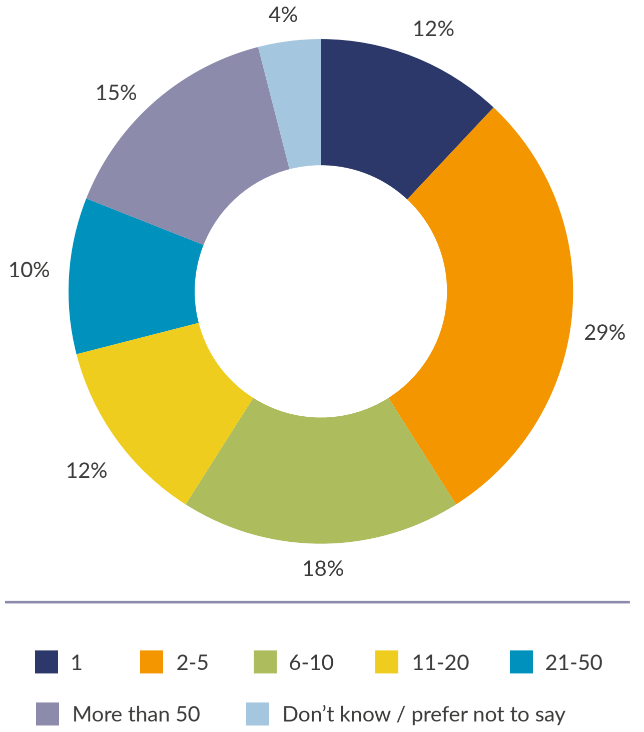
Q Do you work for a firm that is directly authorised by the FCA, or an appointed representative

Figure 16: Discretionary permissions



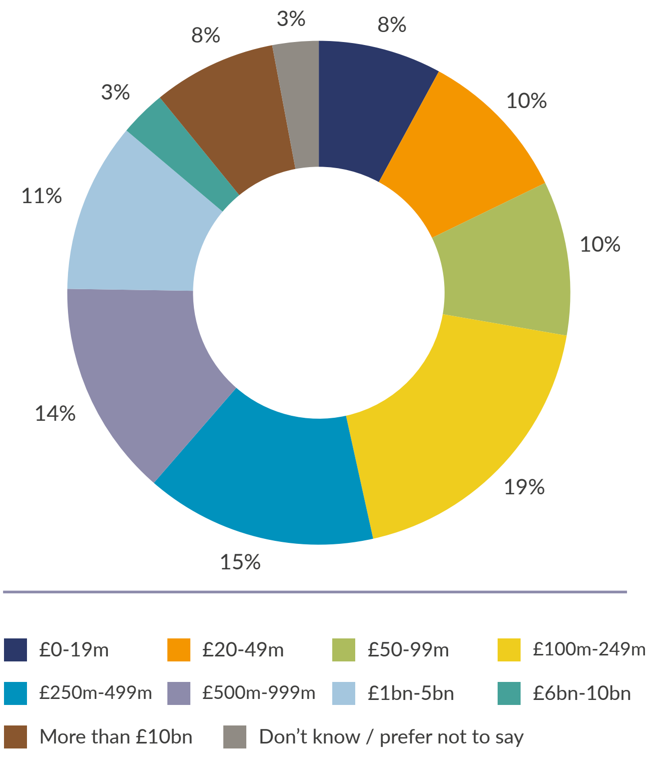
Q Do you work for a firm that holds discretionary permissions?

Figure 17: Number of advisers in firm



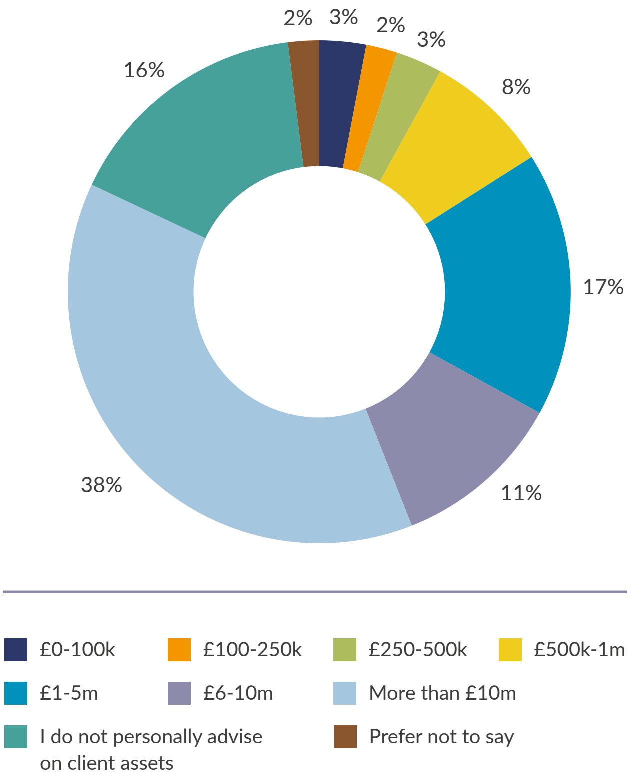
Q How many authorised client-facing individuals are qualified to recommend investment advice within your firm?

Figure 18: Firm assets under advice (AUA)



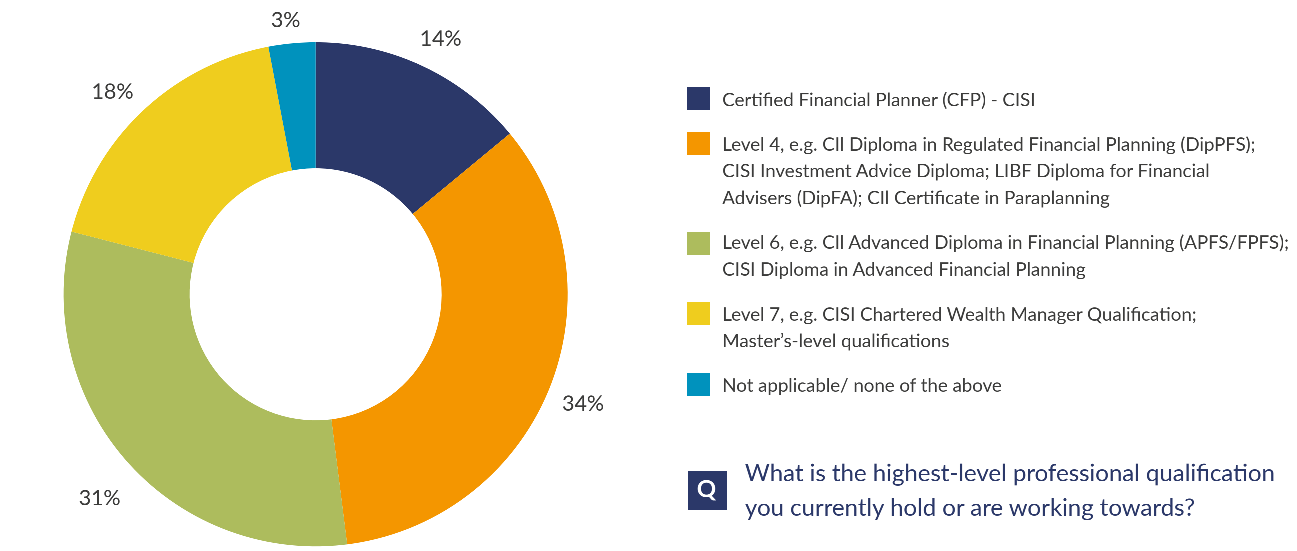
Q What is the total value of client assets currently advised by your firm?

Figure 19: Adviser assets under advice



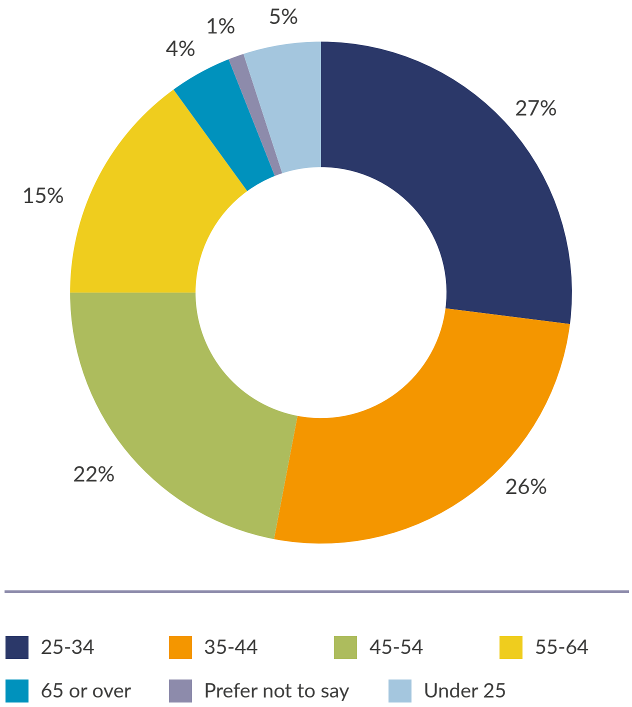
Q Approximately, what is the total asset value of all your clients that you personally advise on?

Figure 20: Highest professional qualification



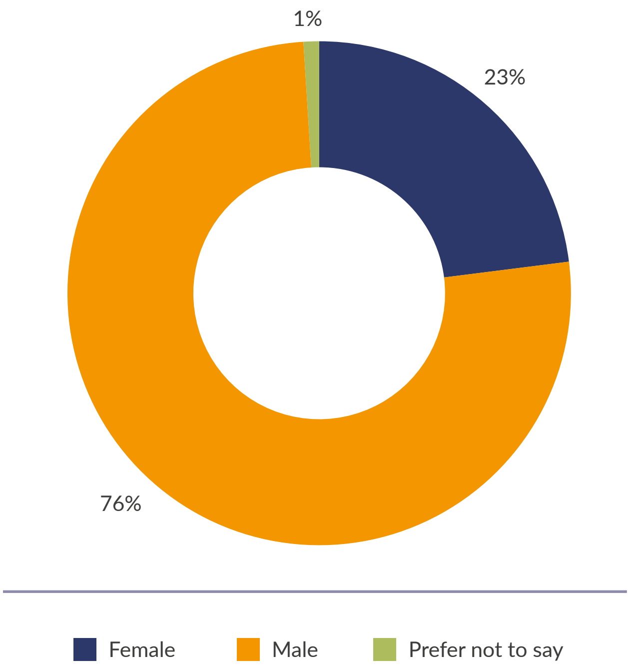
Q What is the highest-level professional qualification you currently hold or are working towards?

Figure 21: Respondent age



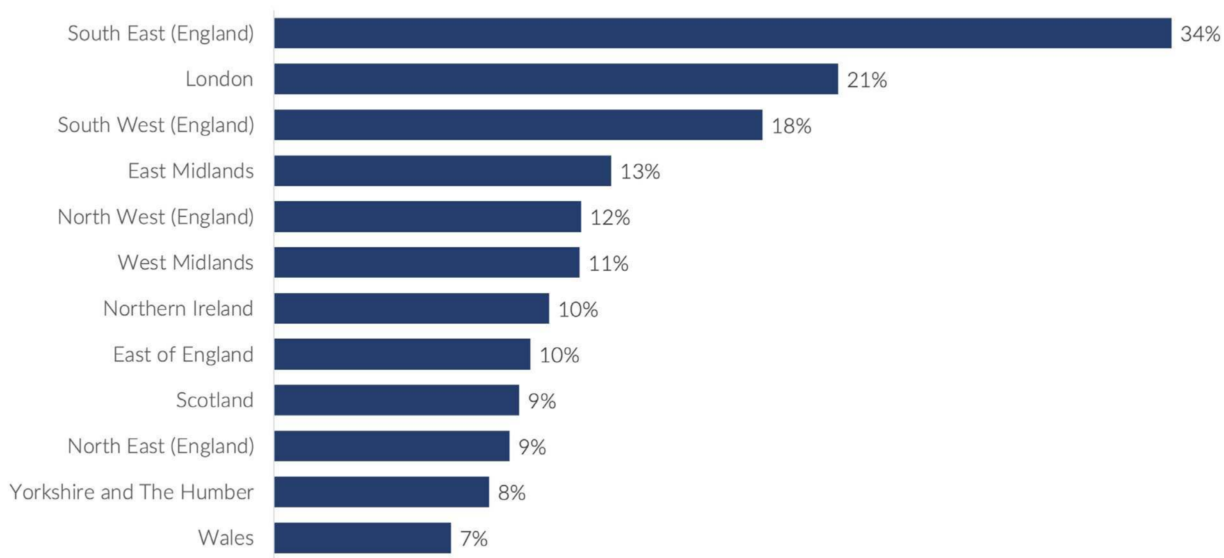
Q What is your age?

Figure 22: Respondent gender



Q Are you...?

Figure 23: Firm regional coverage



Q Which of the following regions does your firm operate in? Firms could select more than one region.

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