



Fair Pay/Play in the UK Voice-Over Industries: a survey of 200+ voice-overs

Online Survey Executive Summary

Voice-overs are key contributors to the UK creative economy

The study demonstrates that the voice-over market is extremely versatile, and contributes to an impressive range of cultural, communication and entertainment sectors. Working closely with voice-overs, the team details no less than 32 specialisms, ranging from more traditional careers utilising broadcasting platforms to others based on new digital technologies. The survey results revealed that the list was far from exhaustive. On average, a voice-over will intervene in 5 or more areas of voice-over work. Diversity in a voice-over's portfolio applies regardless of their profile (part-time, full-time), years of experience or annual income. This confirms the critical role voice-overs play in the creative economy.

Voice-overs' annual income for part-time and full-time work

Survey results on annual income from voice-over work span across £5,000 and £100,000 for part-time and full-time work, with a few exceptions earning more. Annual earnings for voice-overs working on a part-time basis average between £5,000 and £10,000, with very few responses declaring earning more than £20,000. The scale of annual income for voice-over working full time was widespread, with the largest group of respondents situated between £20,000-£50,000.

Survey results confirm a correlation between the number of 'jobs', 'contracts' or 'gigs' and revenue levels. Annual income increases proportionately to the number of 'jobs' secured by voice-overs up until a certain point (100 to 200 'jobs' or 'contracts' per year), after which remuneration levels decrease, indicating lower levels of pay for the work executed. *NB: Caution should be exercised in interpreting these numbers further as individual interpretation of what constitutes a 'job', 'contract' or 'gig' varies.*

Voice-overs' recruitment is mediated

Survey results evidence that voice-overs secure work via mediated sources more often than they do directly with clients. Mediated sources refer to agents, recording companies or work secured via peer-to-peer online recruitment platforms. Peer-to-peer recruitment platforms are making their presence felt as a recruitment method by clients or source of work for voice-overs. 64% of the respondents declare being registered with at least one of these platforms. One-half of respondents report that they secure up to 25% of their paid work via these platforms. Another 17% work via online marketplaces regularly (between 25% and 50% of their paid work), whilst a further 15% secure the majority of their work through them (over 50%).

Voice-overs rate online peer-to-peer recruitment platforms as exploitative

Survey results unequivocally evidence that online peer-to-peer recruitment platforms are perceived very negatively by voice-overs who describe them as “poor value”, “exploitative”, “unfair” and “low quality”. Whilst part-time voice-overs also described online platforms negatively, they noted that they could nevertheless be a “useful” source of work. This suggests that this type of recruitment method does fulfil a need on the voice-over market, catering notably for those engaged in the industry on a part-time basis. However, negative attributes far outweighed positive ones.

In sharp contrast, voice-overs’ rating of their working experience with agents, end clients or recording companies are significantly more positive stressing professionalism, fairness, respect and trust in the working relationship. Traditional agents are the most highly rated (noted as particularly knowledgeable), followed by end clients and then recording companies in terms of quality of working relationships.

Voice-overs negotiate contracts over emails

Survey results reveal that the use of written contracts, summarizing the key aspects of a transaction, is extremely rare. Emails (a form of written agreement nonetheless) remain the preferred method of conducting business and forming agreement, followed by telephone conversations. Over 13% of the respondents report signposting clients to their own term and conditions, displayed on their professional website.

Voice-overs rarely negotiate intellectual property rights for lack of knowledge

Voice-overs report that they sometimes, though rarely, raise the question of intellectual property rights in the context of negotiations. This is consistent with low levels of unawareness or knowledge on intellectual property rights disclosed by respondents. Around half of the respondents declare being familiar with intellectual property rights (40.2%), including performers’ rights (57.3%). A similar number of respondents (46%) report making use of them in negotiating their contracts, but less than a third of the participants (29.7%) declare knowing the difference between assignments and licences of intellectual property rights or being aware of equitable remuneration rights (26.8%). The overwhelming majority of voice-overs (82.8%) declare having no knowledge of the Copyright Tribunal.

Voice-overs are un-represented by union and representative organisations

The majority of voice-overs (82%) could point to a union or organisation, that they felt acted as a representative body. Three-quarters of them (73.2%) named Equity (followed by Screen Actors Guild American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) at 6.6%). However, only 13% of voice-overs find themselves well represented by this organisation (here, Equity)