

# PERCEPTIONS OF CONSULTING IN THE UK



Assesses the reputation of consulting firms,  
as seen by clients

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The UK: just your average, mature consulting market

It might be a little anticlimactic, but when looking at the UK's 2016 client perception data, what really stands out is, well, how very little actually stands out.

Looking at clients' overall perceptions of the quality that consulting firms have on offer, we find that UK firms finish in sixth place out of ten geographies (if you're keeping score, clients are more impressed in Australia, China, South East Asia, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the US; less impressed in the DACH region, France, the Benelux countries, and the Nordics)—hardly an auspicious position. Considering the UK data in isolation further reveals that there's very little difference in quality perceptions from one service line to the next: The most well-regarded consulting service in the UK—business transformation—finds 61% of clients rating the quality of the market's overall offering as "high" or "very high", while the least-regarded service—HR & change management—find 55% of clients saying the same. Overall quality scores are similarly undifferentiated from one firm to the next: The 20 points that separate first from last place may sound like something of a gulf, but spread out over the 20 firms considered in the report, this data produces a rather gently sloping curve. The scant 16-point spread between the best and lowest rated firms for value cuts a similarly gentle profile.

All of this, we think, is indicative of the UK's position as a very mature, very advanced consulting market. Quality has been largely standardised, the bumps smoothed out, and everything has coalesced around the middle. And we have to wonder if that lack of differentiation between services and even firms is in part responsible for the UK's lone stand-out statistic: Compared to clients in other markets, those in the UK are very unlikely to recommend a consulting firm to a colleague. While 72% of clients in China report having passed on the name of a firm that's impressed them, only 38% of UK clients own up to having recommended any of the 20 big-name firms in our survey. Is it because many clients believe that no one firm stands out enough to justify recommending it? Is it because the market is so active that all the clients are generally familiar with all the firms anyway, meaning there's little point in offering up a suggestion? Or is it something cultural? Do the British (and Northern Irish) just not go in for singing firms' praises to anyone else? It's hard to be certain. What is certain is that, in the absence of help from their clients, consulting firms in the UK have their work cut out. And, because they do, a comprehensive understanding of how both existing and potential clients view them is essential.

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# METHODOLOGY

## Who did we talk to?

We have 2,239 responses from our survey of executives, directors, and senior managers in the UK in November 2015 through to January 2016, all of whom have been responsible for buying substantial volumes of consulting services in the previous year. They represent a wide range of industries and business functions, and 79% work in organisations that generate more than \$500m in revenue.

Figure 1

Respondents' level of responsibility

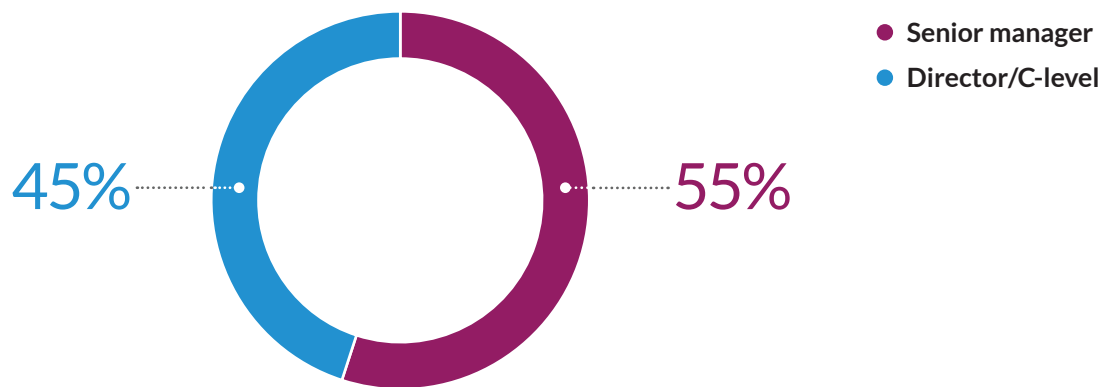


Figure 2

Respondents by industry

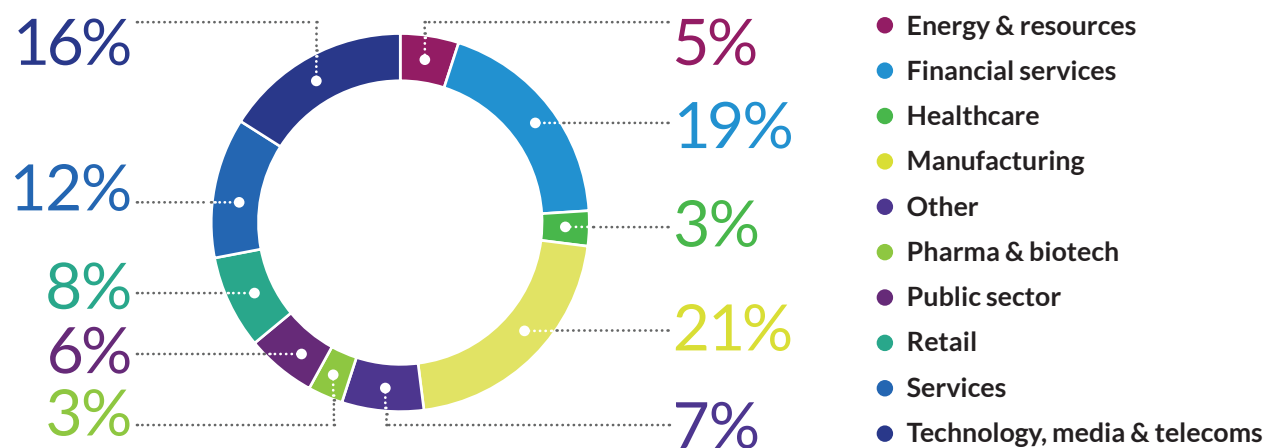
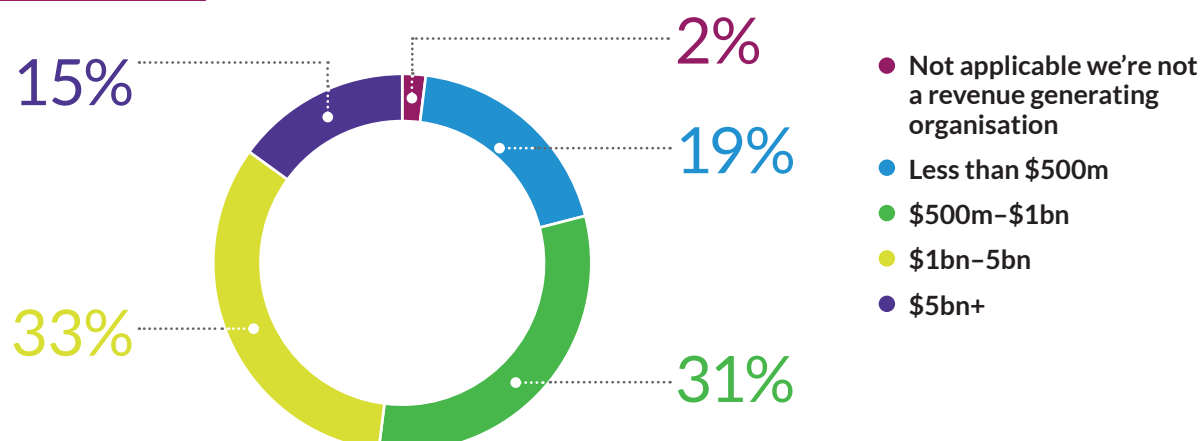


Figure 3

## Respondents by organisation size (revenue)

*What did we ask them?*

Each respondent was asked to tell us about three consulting firms and was presented with a list of 20 leading consulting firms in the UK. Clients did have the opportunity to tell us about consulting firms that weren't on the list, but this report focuses on the firms for which the number of responses was sufficient for us to carry out detailed analysis.

We asked each respondent to share their views on each of the three firms selected, focusing on the following areas:

- **Quality:** Their perception of the quality of service provided by each firm in ten different consulting services
- **Value:** Their view of how much value each firm added in relation to the fees paid for its services
- **Recommendations:** Whether they have recommended any of these firms for any consulting service
- **Attributes:** How they rate each firm and the individuals from it across a range of attributes

*Which firms are included in this report?*

For each firm we tried to get responses from at least 20 direct clients and 20 indirect clients, to give the reader a "20:20" rounded view of each firm. In most cases we have several times this amount of data, but for a very small number of firms (five in this report) we have fallen slightly short of 20 for one type of client. Where this is the case, we've highlighted it in the firm's profile. Nonetheless, we do have enough data to provide a detailed profile for 19 of the 20 firms we asked about

Firm	Did we ask about this firm in this market?	Included in general analysis?	Detailed profile available?
Accenture	✓	✓	✓
Aon Hewitt	✓	✓	✓
A.T. Kearney	✓	✓	✓
Bain & Company	✓	✓	✓
BearingPoint	✗	✗	✗
The Boston Consulting Group	✓	✓	✓
Capgemini Consulting	✓	✓	✓
Deloitte	✓	✓	✓
EY	✓	✓	✓
Hay Group <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✓
IBM Global Business Services	✓	✓	✓
KPMG	✓	✓	✓
L.E.K.	✓	✓	✓
McKinsey & Company	✓	✓	✓
Mercer	✓	✓	✗
Oliver Wyman	✓	✓	✓
PA Consulting	✓	✓	✓
PwC	✓	✓	✓
Roland Berger	✓	✓	✓
Strategy&	✓	✓	✓
Towers Watson	✓	✓	✓

### How we rank firms in this report

In this report, we reveal the top-ranked firms in four areas: mindshare, quality, value, and most recommended firm. We look at the top-ranked firms overall, but where we can, we also split the data to look at perceptions in each consulting service, by client type, by industry, and by function (that is, looking at how views of respondents in different industries and different business functions vary). In breaking down the data to this level, our sample sizes can become quite small, so where it isn't big enough for us to be confident making a ranking, we've declined to do so. That means that in this report we are unable to provide a ranking for services, public sector, healthcare, pharma & biotech and are unable to comment on the most-recommended firms in the energy & resources industry. If you have questions about the industries we've omitted from this report, please contact [Sarah Burgess](#).

**Mindshare:** We base our rankings on the numbers of respondents talking about each firm, relative to each other. To calculate that, we awarded a score of 100 to the most-mentioned firm, and work out how many times each other firm was mentioned in relation to it.

**Quality:** We base our rating on the sum of the proportion of people who describe quality as either "high" or "very high". Where that produces an equal result between two firms, we take into account the share who have described quality as "very high" to determine the order in which they are ranked.

<sup>1</sup> Our survey was launched before Korn Ferry's acquisition of Hay Group completed in December 2015.

**Value:** We base our rating on the sum of the proportion of people who say that the value a firm delivers is greater (to any extent) than the fees it charges. Where that produces an equal result between two firms, we take into account the extent to which value is seen to be greater than fees (respondents had the choice of saying it was twice, five times, or ten times greater than fees) to determine the order in which they are ranked.

**Most recommended:** We base our ranking on the proportion of people who say they have recommended a firm. Where that produces an equal result between two or more firms, those firms simply tie.

**New for 2016:**



The Source badge—an award given to those firms that have been rated number one by clients in a given region/industry for mindshare, quality, and value. If your firm has a badge next to its name and you'd like to find out more about how to use it externally please contact [Ella-Sian Jolley](#).

### *The difference between direct and indirect clients*

We talk about two types of clients in this report: direct and indirect.

Direct clients are clients who either have very recent experience of working with the firm they chose to tell us about or are working with it now.

Indirect clients are clients who feel qualified to share an opinion about a firm but aren't among their direct clients. They may have had exposure to the work the firm has done elsewhere in their organisation or have simply formed an impression based on reading a firm's thought leadership or being exposed to its marketing in some other form. In simple terms, indirect clients are prospects.

The differences between the opinions of these two types of clients tell us a lot about the differences between expectation (indirect clients) and reality (direct clients). But it also tells us something about the differences between a firm's marketing and what it actually delivers.

### *Discover more online*

The data contained and referred to within this report is also available online, where it can be sorted and filtered according to your preferences. In fact, some of the charts contained in the report link directly through to the online database. Note that wherever you see a quickcode next to the title of a chart, that code can be entered into the search function of the database to reproduce exactly the same chart.

When you log on, you'll notice that in some areas there's data that's in a faded grey colour. This is where we have data, but it's not a big enough sample to include in a ranking in this report. Nonetheless, we share it online in case you do want to see what, for example, indirect operations clients in the public sector (or a similarly complex split) think of a particular firm. If you have any questions about any of the data, please contact [Sarah Burgess](#).

To find out how you can get access to the online database, please contact the person in your organisation who bought the report or email [ella-sian.jolley@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:ella-sian.jolley@sourceglobalresearch.com)

# Definitions of industries and services

## Industries



### Energy & resources

#### Energy

*Includes the exploration and production of energy, including oil, gas, coal, and renewables.*

#### Utilities

*Includes the delivery of electricity, gas, water, sanitation, and other related services.*

#### Primary resources

*Includes agriculture, chemicals and chemical products, commodities, forestry, fishing, metals, mining, and plastics.*



### Financial services

#### Banking

*Includes retail banking, commercial banking, and lending.*

#### Insurance

*Includes general insurance (e.g., motor, home, pets, health—anything on an annual contract), life insurance, pension products, retirement planning.*

#### Private equity

*Includes both consulting work for private equity firms and consulting work with private equity portfolio businesses.*

#### Capital markets

*Includes investment banking, trading of stocks and financial products, corporate finance, and broking.*

#### Investment and wealth management

*Includes private banking, high net-worth banking, investment management, trust funds, the management of pension funds, and asset management.*



### Manufacturing

#### Aerospace

*Includes space research and technology, the manufacture of aircraft, aircraft parts, rockets and other space equipment, and tanks and ammunition.*

#### Automotive

*Includes the manufacture of motor vehicles, industrial vehicles, and vehicle supplies and parts.*

#### Construction

*Includes surveying, architectural, and engineering services, heavy construction, house building, and the building of infrastructure.*

#### Consumer packaged goods

*Includes the manufacture of clothes, foods, alcohol, tobacco, furniture, home furnishings, cleaning products, small arms, children's toys, and sports equipment.*

#### Consumer and industrial electronics

*Includes electrical components, household and industrial appliances, commercial and professional equipment.*

#### Industrial products

*Includes industrial machinery, steel and metal products, and plastic products.*



### Pharma & biotech

*Includes research into and the production of drugs, biological products, medicinal chemicals, and life sciences.*



### Healthcare

*Includes private- and publicly-funded healthcare, hospitals, laboratories, and medical equipment.*



### Public sector

#### Government

*Includes federal/national, state/regional, local government, emergency services, justice, social services, public transport, and conservation.*

#### Education

*Includes public and private schools, universities, and libraries.*

#### Defense

*Includes national security and consulting around defense issues.*



### Retail

*Includes the selling of clothes, food, consumer goods, and automobiles.*



### Services

#### Logistics

*Includes warehousing, storage, packing and crating, and distribution including cargo, freight, and haulage.*

#### Business services

*Includes services relating to law, accountancy, IT maintenance, security systems, advertising, employment agencies, and vehicle leasing.*

#### Leisure

*Includes museums, art galleries, theatre, golf courses, hotels, hospitality, travel agencies, restaurants, and bars.*

#### Real estate

*Includes estate agencies and operators of residential and commercial buildings.*

#### Transportation

*Includes private and people-related transportation, including airlines, airport management, train operators, rail infrastructure management, water transportation, courier services, and private bus services.*



### Technology, media & telecoms

#### Telecoms

*Includes telephone, mobile, digital, and other communication services.*

#### High-tech

*Includes IT related devices, computer and computer related devices, audio and video equipment, broadcasting and communication equipment.*

#### Media

*Includes radio, television and digital broadcasting stations and services as well as printing and the publishing of newspapers, periodicals, and books.*



## Services



### Financial management

*Includes finance function and budgeting/financial planning process.*



### Risk & regulatory

*Includes responding to regulation, technology and security risk services, operational risk, financial risk, programme risk.*



### HR & change management

*Includes HR strategy and effectiveness, benefits, compensation and pensions, change management, internal communications, organisational design and culture, stakeholder management, team effectiveness and collaboration, leadership and governance, performance management, talent management/training and development.*



### Operational improvement

*Includes business continuity and recovery, knowledge management, Lean and Six Sigma, property and estate management, quality and performance management, supply chain management, cost-cutting, innovation, M&A integration, managing quality, post-M&A integration, process design and re-engineering, procurement/purchasing, research and development, benchmarking, distribution strategy, environmental, sustainability and CSR, and operational review.*



### Strategy

*Includes business and financial modelling, corporate re-structuring, corporate recovery and turnaround, corporate strategy, market analysis and strategy, market research, policy formulation, strategic sourcing/offshoring strategy, due diligence and valuation, infrastructure/asset financing and management, PFI, mergers and acquisitions, customer service, new product development, branding, marketing and channel management, customer relationship management, pricing, sales force effectiveness, category management, sales and distribution planning.*



### Technology

*Includes ERP consulting, IT training, application of new technology, hardware/software selection, IT design and build, IT strategy, planning and review, IT testing and integration, management information and business intelligence, requirements definition, web and internet consulting, project and programme management (e.g., where consulting firm has been engaged to run a specific project that it is otherwise not involved in).*

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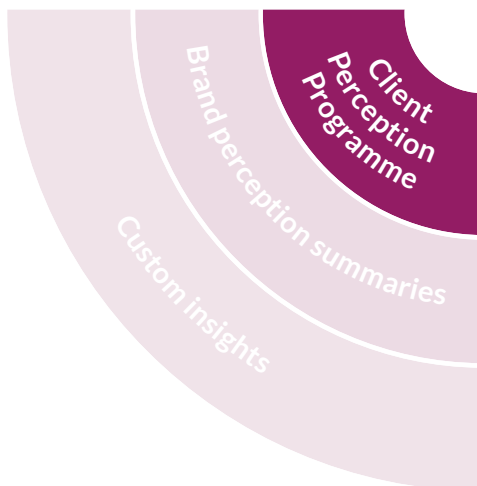
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The newest of our major research programmes, our *Client Perception Programme* is a suite of eleven reports which assess the reputation of consulting firms, as seen by clients.

At the heart of the programme are two important questions:

- What is the reputation of a consulting firm?
- What do clients think about the quality of service and the value added by consulting firms?












The first section of each report looks at the perceptions of clients in the market as a whole (either by geography or industry) and ranks the top three firms in each of the following areas: mindshare (how likely clients are to be thinking about a consulting firm), quality, value added, and likelihood to be recommended. The report then looks at perceptions by consulting service (and where relevant, by industry), ranking the top three firms for each. In our analysis we draw on our extensive knowledge of the consulting market to explain why particular firms are perceived as they are, and highlight interesting stories within the data along the way.

Finally, the report looks at clients' perceptions of individual firms in the relevant market. It compares each firm's mindshare, quality, and value perceptions with those of the leading firms, as well as comparing the views of direct and indirect clients to highlight the challenges that need to be addressed either during a project, or by marketing. The report also highlights which services clients are recommending each firm for, and what they perceive to be each firm's strongest attributes.

## The *Client Perception Programme* can help you to:

- Understand how your consulting firm compares with competitors in the market
- Understand what clients and prospects see as your core strengths
- Where your clients think you can improve, and where they want you to make improvements

### Geographies and industries covered in this Programme:

 GCC	 Energy & resources
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For information about the products or services available from Source, please contact:

#### UK, EUROPE AND US

Alice Noyelle

+44 (0)20 3795 2662

[alice.noyelle@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:alice.noyelle@sourceglobalresearch.com)

#### MIDDLE EAST

Jodi Davies

+971 52 989 5224

[jodi.davies@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:jodi.davies@sourceglobalresearch.com)

[www.sourceglobalresearch.com](http://www.sourceglobalresearch.com)

## About Source

Source Global Research is a leading provider of information about the market for management consulting. Set up in 2007 with offices in London and Dubai, Source serves both consulting firms and their clients with expert analysis, research, and reporting. We draw not only on our extensive in-house experience but also on the breadth of our relationships with both suppliers and buyers. All of our work is underpinned by our core values of intelligence, integrity, efficiency, and transparency.

Source was founded by Fiona Czerniawska and Joy Burnford. Fiona is one of the world's leading experts on the consulting industry. She has written [numerous books](#) on the industry including: [The Intelligent Client](#) and *The Economist* books, [Business Consulting: A Guide to How it Works and How to Make it Work](#) and [Buying Professional Services](#).

For further information please visit [www.sourceglobalresearch.com](http://www.sourceglobalresearch.com)

### UK AND EUROPE

Source Information Services Ltd

📍 20 St Dunstons Hill • London • EC3R 8HL

☎ +44 (0)20 3795 2668

### MIDDLE EAST

📍 PO Box 340505 • Dubai • United Arab Emirates

☎ +971 (0)52 989 5224

✉ [info@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:info@sourceglobalresearch.com)

🌐 [www.sourceglobalresearch.com](http://www.sourceglobalresearch.com)

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