EXTRACT

# The UK Consulting Market in 2021

Market Trends Programme





## What's included in this report

Our reports offer a wealth of market sizing, growth, and forecast data alongside engaging, in-depth analysis of the trends that matter. Using our highly flexible, multidimensional model we provide firms with robust, trusted data to make informed decisions about strategic investments and plan for the future.



© Source Information Services Ltd 2021

### Contents

#### Market overview

Explores the key trends that were front of mind for consulting firms in this market in 2020.

The UK consulting market in numbers	4
The UK consulting market in 2020	6
Market segments	9
Sectors	9

#### The client perspective

What clients tell us about their plans for the year—and where they'll be asking consultants for help.	
As clients start to look beyond the crisis, they recognise that some changes are here to stay	10
Day-to-day priorities are still shaped by the events of 2020	16
Most clients expect their use of consulting support to stay the same but many say the crisis has changed how they'll use consulting going forward	22
We've identified four key actions UK consulting firms should take in 2021, ranging from the importance of demonstrating your expertise to deepening existing client relationships	32



#### The UK consulting market in 2021

Our forecasts for growth through the end of 2021.

Forecast for 2021

75

#### About this report

Our report draws on four main sources:

- Our Global Data Model covering the professional services market
- Our annual global client perception survey of senior end-users of consulting firms
- Our interviews with senior management consultants from a range of consulting firms
- Our in-depth desk research on the market

A detailed view of our methodology and more information about Source can be found below:

Methodology	76
Definitions of sectors and market segments	79
Contributors	81
About the authors	82
Programme schedule for 2021	83
Our custom work	84
About us	85



### The UK consulting market in 2020

We opened last year's report by urging you to "come out from behind the sofa". Telling you that, despite the political and economic challenges that had weighed on the consulting market in 2019, it was still growing at a solid pace. And things were only looking up in 2020.

Well, with the benefit of hindsight, that call to come out of hiding may have been slightly premature.

In our defence, after several somewhat turbulent Brexit-burdened years, the UK consulting market appeared to have bottomed out in 2019, and there were signs of increased stability and even an uptick in demand heading into last year. And that promising landscape was certainly the story of the first couple of months of 2020, with consultants telling us they were busier than they had been for some time, with a raft of different projects running straight through from the front to the back of clients' offices. Digitisation remained at the heart of much of what consultants were being called on to deliver, and growth and transformation work were once again on the march.

COVID-19's arrival on UK shores towards the end of the first quarter, however, put paid to that buoyant start as uncertainty and lockdown brought much of the consulting market, and the country, to a grinding halt. Indeed, in late March and through much of April, projects both big and small were mothballed or cancelled altogether as clients scrambled to implement remote working solutions in an effort to continue operating during lockdown.

There were some glimmers of hope, though, and the initial sharp decline in demand proved to be relatively short-lived, with some clients—particularly those already well set up for remote working coming back to the party within just a few weeks. Yes, clients in the leisure, transportation, and energy sub-sectors, which continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic, were forced to significantly cut back on consulting. But many other clients, including those in pharma & biotech, healthcare, and the public sector, were on the hunt for consultants to help cope with issues directly related to COVID-19 as well as other challenges of last year. In these early days of recovery, however, pressure on fees remained a feature of the market.

As the year progressed, so the recovery accelerated. Consultants' spirits were buoyed by signs of recovery in the late second quarter, and over the summer, they found themselves busier than expected. By all accounts, things were absolutely booming by the final quarter, as deal-hungry private equity investors returned to the market and clients of all stripes looked to kick off new initiatives in the hope that the UK's vaccine programme might bring some level of normality back in 2021.

Digitisation remained at the heart of much of what consultants were being called on to deliver, and growth and transformation work were once again on the march.

# As clients start to look beyond the crisis, they recognise that some changes are here to stay

Details of our survey methodology are here.

Please note that we had a relatively small number of respondents from the pharma & biotech sector, which is a highly consolidated market dominated by a small number of large organisations. We included data from this sector in the charts in this section as a point of comparison, but it should be regarded as directional only.

... few will be surprised to learn that a substantial majority (67%) of UK clients surveyed for this report say that the COVID crisis had a negative impact on their businesses.

### While most clients say their organisations suffered during the pandemic, more than a quarter report faring well

Given the enormous economic and social upheaval visited upon the UK-and indeed the world-in 2020, few will be surprised to learn that a substantial majority (67%) of UK clients surveyed for this report say that the COVID crisis had a negative impact on their businesses. Asked to pinpoint the specific harms they suffered, nearly half (48%) cited a significant decline in sales, while 43% pointed to being forced to furlough staff. More than a third (37%) say the year was made difficult by the number of employees who became ill or found themselves with increased personal commitments during lockdowns. Upper-mid-sized organisations (those with between 1,000-4,999 employees) were hit harder than their larger counterparts: 74% of clients in the former group said their organisations were either somewhat or very negatively impacted, compared to 60% of those in larger organisations (with 5,000+ employees). This is perhaps testimony to the fact that many larger organisations were better positioned to absorb the shock-and costs-of the crisis than their smaller counterparts.

Given the severity of the crisis, what may be surprising is the rather sizeable share of respondents-28%-who said that the pandemic, horrible though it is, was actually good for business. Those who fared well often credited an increased demand for their products/services (46%), and nearly as many cited the latitude to implement changes more quickly (43%) and the cooperativeness their staff displayed during this trying time (43%).

Meanwhile, a small share of clients (5%) tell us the pandemic didn't affect business at all, with large organisations four times more likely than their mid-sized counterparts to report emerging unscathed (8% and 2% saying this, respectively).

#### Figure 4

#### The reasons why the crisis had a negative impact on UK clients

Note: Respondents were asked to select all the statements they agreed with



#### Figure 5

The reasons why the crisis had a positive impact on UK clients

Note: Respondents were asked to select all the statements they agreed with



### Insights from consultants

### Interviews with consulting leaders

At Source, we have always believed that the only way to truly understand a consulting market is to have real conversations with the consultants who are on the ground working in that market, serving their clients day in and day out. Below, you'll find condensed versions of our most recent discussions with the UK's consultants, as they reflect on 2020, tell us how the previously unimaginable events of 2020 are reshaping the market, and in the case of a few brave souls, venture a guess as to what comes next.

### Eric Benedict, Managing Director, AlixPartners

#### How did you see the market perform in 2020?

The cyclical and countercyclical nature of our consulting business really has paid dividends. We've grown globally, a strong performance that showed the resilience of our business, especially in the US. Europe was more nuanced. The UK restructuring market was strong, especially in the second half, powered by the scale of challenges in some sectors, especially travel, retail, and casual dining due to restrictions on movement. But the level of government intervention and the plentiful supply of debt and equity in the UK have meant that there's been less turnaround work.

The private equity market went pretty quiet in H2 last year. Spending was on hold and investment activities went down whilst the focus on portfolio optimisation increased. Overall deal activity in private equity went down but that's undoubtedly coming back now. One of the big themes for us last year—which affects all enterprise improvement, digital, litigation support, and financial advisory services—was the progress we've made with a number of very large clients, especially in the retail and TMT sectors. A lot of portfolio-related work has come from the consumer goods industry, particularly clients refocusing on the business. By contrast, demand has been weaker across manufacturing-based industries.

## Where will demand be strong in 2021 and what can we expect from clients?

With government intervention inevitably going to taper off, the restructuring market is anticipated to be much more active later this year. The area of financial advisory, litigation-related work, etc. is strong at the moment. The whole disputes area is a very vibrant market. Clients also expect profound changes to consumer behaviours in the long term, with the acceleration of digitisation—and that's going to drive a wave of new thinking about strategy and business models.

With weaker demand in corporates and in PE, I think there's some excess capacity in the consulting market, so it's becoming something of a buyer's market in terms of price competition at this time.

We've seen a growth in imaginative and creative risk-sharing deals. There's more keenness to have conversations about such deals in the transformation space, partly because clients want to make a case to their stakeholders that they're not just getting a PowerPoint deck. My sense is that in the bigger corporate world—less so in private equity—the husbandry of cash has significantly gone up the agenda. Payment on results has therefore become more of a theme.

#### What other challenges do you foresee in 2021?

Freedom of movement as a result of Brexit is an obvious one. It matters little at the moment because everybody's working remotely and can't travel, but it will be a feature when those restrictions are relaxed. Throughout all of this, it's going to be important to stay focused on the challenge of new business development.

### About this report

### Methodology

### Sources

#### Megamodel: our Global Data Model

The quantitative market data in this report comes from our unique model of the global professional services market.

Rather than making high-level assumptions, this model has been built from the bottom up, sizing the market capability by capability—assessing how much work a firm earns delivering each professional capability within each sector and country. This results in a robust view of the size of the supply-side market, which can then be broken down to view the size of the market by country, sector, line of business, capabilities, and market segments.

This year's model has been expanded, with a new capability taxonomy and a much broader range of professional services firms included-all of which reflects convergence and other changes we see in the industry. For the purposes of this report we've focused on types of firm and market segments that broadly equate to traditional definitions of consulting. As a result of these changes to our methodology, there are changes to our market sizing data, which take into account that conventional consulting firms now compete in many non-consulting markets-in essence that their addressable market is larger. Historic data has been restated to match our new definitions. but the inclusion of new types of firm and additional services may also have an impact on growth rates.

Alongside this market segmentation, we also limit our market sizing and analysis to what we at Source call "big consulting"—work done by midand large-sized firms (those with more than 50 people). Please note that we don't track the long, thin tail of work done by contractors and very small firms, as most readers of this report would not seek or be able to compete in this part of the market.

All of the data in the model is calibrated through extensive interviews with, and surveys of, professional services firms and their clients, allowing us to discuss broader trends in the market alongside detailed dimensions such as headcount. These interviews and surveys are supplemented with desk research, which allows us to assess the impact of wider macroeconomic trends on professional services. This, combined with our detailed modelling, results in a long-term view of the market that is able to support both historic and forecast data.

All figures given in this report are in British pounds. For reference, Source is using the following exchange rates in its reports this year:

US dollar to British pound US\$1 = £0.78

US dollar to euro US\$1 = €0.87

#### **Client perspective**

We carry out a client survey to help us build a rich picture of how different trends in the UK are affecting clients' organisations and their use of consulting. This survey focuses on trends in the UK, providing detailed insights into the nuances of the market. For this, we surveyed 100 senior clients of consulting firms from across the UK, all of whom work in organisations with more than 1,000 employees. This survey focuses on the following areas:

- How they expect to use consultants during 2021 and the first half of 2022
- Factors that affect the way clients work with consulting firms
- The ways consulting firms market themselves to clients and the impact this has on client decision-making

#### Figure 36

Respondents by sector







#### Interviews with senior consultants

In addition to our quantitative research, we interviewed 19 very senior consultants in the UK, representing most of the leading consulting firms in the geography and many smaller local specialists to understand more about how the consulting market is performing and the major trends, changes, and challenges consultants and their clients face. Throughout the year, Source analysts remain plugged into the global consulting market through our bespoke research and consulting projects, adding further depth to our understanding of the consulting industry.

#### In-depth desk research

We also conducted a thorough PEST analysis of the UK that drills down into finer macroeconomic details on a holistic and sector-by-sector basis and allows us to fit our research into a wider macroeconomic picture.

#### Definitions of sectors and market segments

Our definition of management consulting includes a broad range of business advisory services, but excludes:

- tax advisory
- audit
- the implementation of IT systems
- the delivery of outsourced/offshored services
- HR compensation/benefits administration and technology

Where mergers and acquisitions work is concerned, consulting on deals is included (under strategy), but corporate finance fees on deals themselves are generally not included, although it is not always straightforward to separate the two.

For more information about how we classify consulting services and sectors, please see "Definitions of sectors and market segments".

#### **Sectors**



#### 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, and 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.

#### Defence

Includes national security and consulting around defence issues.

#### Not for profit

Includes non-commercial research organisations, religious, political and professional membership organisations, trusts, labour unions, and business associations.



#### 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 computerrelated devices, audio and video equipment, broadcasting and communication equipment.

#### Media

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

#### Market segments

We've taken the lines of business and capabilities from our taxonomy that broadly align with traditional definitions of consulting and divided them into market segments that include the following. Please note that for some lines of business, for example, forensics, we've taken a subset of the relevant capabilities and excluded others.



#### Technology & innovation

Ideation, Innovation management, Innovation strategy, Strategies for growth from innovation, Cloud advice, ERP consulting, IT strategy, planning & review, IT training, Programme management, Vendor selection, Clean technology, Green IT, Corporate identity, Graphic & UI design, UX & service design, Customer journey & UX benchmarking, Data visualisation, business intelligence & semantic layer.



#### • Strategy

Capital allocation strategy, Commercial due diligence & valuation, Financial due diligence, M&A transaction strategy, Operational due diligence, Portfolio & investment strategy, Public-private partnerships, Technology due diligence, Business & financial modelling, Category management, Channel management, Corporate recovery & turnaround, Corporate restructuring, Corporate strategy, Market analysis & strategy, Policy formulation, Pricing, Strategic sourcing/offshoring services, Real estate strategy, Environmental & social impact research, Macro/microeconomic research, Market research. Customer feedback. Customer segmentation, Employee feedback, Advanced analytics, Sustainable investment.



#### Cybersecurity consulting

Cybersecurity advice, Cybersecurity incident response, Penetration testing & wargaming, Technology & security risk services.



#### HR. change & people strategy

Benefits, compensation & pensions, excluding actuarial & investment advice, Change management, Diversity & inclusion, Employee engagement, Governance & board effectiveness, HR strategy & effectiveness, Leadership, Organisational design & culture, Organisational training & development, Outplacement, Pension fund evaluation & advice, Performance management, Stakeholder management, Talent management, Team effectiveness & collaboration, Resourceefficiency strategy, Purpose-led strategy & change, Resource-efficiency implementation, Social impact & trust.



Benchmarking, Business continuity & recovery, Cost cutting, Customer service, DevOps, Distribution strategy, Lean & Six Sigma, Operational review, Outsourcing advice, Post-M&A integration, Process design, reengineering & automation, Procurement/ purchasing, Property & estate management, Sales & distribution planning, Sales force effectiveness, Supply chain management, Target operating model, Sustainable supply chain, Corporate, occupier services & facilities management, Integrated real estate developer services, Real estate deal/transaction services.

**Risk & financial management** Operational risk, Programme risk, Responding to regulation, Risk management, Budgeting/ financial planning process, Debt advisory, Finance function, Financial advisory, Financial restructuring & insolvency, eDiscovery, Forensic accounting.

### Contributors

We are extremely grateful to all the people we spoke to for making this report possible. Below is a list of individuals who have contributed (excluding those consultants who wished to remain anonymous).

Name	Job title	Organisation
Alejandro Alvarez	Director - Operations Performance	Ayming
Eric Benedict	Managing Director	AlixPartners
Brandon Bichler	Partner	Elixirr
Pierre-Yves Commanay	Executive Director – UK Consulting & Continental Europe	Sopra Steria
Tony Doocey	M&D & Global Media Entertainment and Communications Lead	North Highland
Philip Dunne	UK Managing Partner	Roland Berger
Alan Frost	Business Consulting Director	Mazars
Amanda Gosling	Vice President – Telco, Media, Technology and Services Market Leader	Capgemini Invent
Ben Grinnell	Global Digital & Technology Lead	North Highland
Lisa Heneghan	Chief Digital Officer, KPMG UK	KPMG
Jonathan House	Partner, Markets and Services Leader - Consulting	PwC
Tim Medforth	EY Global Energy SAP Business Transformation Offering Leader	EY
David Rowlands	Head of Consulting KPMG UK	KPMG
Anthony Shaw	Portfolio Leader	North Highland
James Siswick	Partner, Financial Services	Guidehouse
Andrew Stewart	Partner	Kearney
Luca Stoppino	UK and Ireland Managing Director	EFESO
Conrad Thompson	Head of Sectors, UK and Europe	PA Consulting
Dave Williams	Country Managing Director, UK	Slalom

### About the authors

#### Ashok Patel

Ashok is a writer and editor at Source in our Market Trends team. He is an experienced writer, editor, and analyst, providing insights into the latest trends and developments across the professional services market. He has been quoted by a variety of trade publications and has previous experience in Source's Client Perception Programme. Prior to joining Source, Ashok was an editor and consultant in the commodities market, as well as working in the UK automotive industry.

#### Ashok Patel

 $\mathbf{M}$  ashok.patel@sourceglobalresearch.com

#### Sophie Gunn

Sophie joined in November 2020 and is an Analyst in our consulting practice area. She supports bespoke project work and report writing, analysing the results of our client surveys and interviews. Before joining Source, Sophie completed a history degree at the University of Edinburgh and spent over two years working at a boutique management consultancy as a research analyst.





### Programme schedule for 2021

Rep 202	orts 1	Market Trends Programme	Client Perception Studies	Emerging Trends Programme
Q1	January	Forecasts for 2021 US GCC UK Nordics Canada	UK US	
	February		Germany Financial Services	
	March		Healthcare & Pharma GCC France	Buying and Selling
Q2	April	DACH France South America Australia China Japan South East Asia Benelux India Southern Europe Eastern Europe & Russia	Nordics Energy & Resources Technology, Media & Telecoms	
	May		China Japan	Beyond Digital
	June			
Q3	July	Africa Energy & Resources Financial Services		
	August		Perceptions of Risk Firms Perceptions of Tax Firms	Investing for Growth
	September		Perceptions of Audit Firms	
Q4	October	The Global Tax Advisory Market The Global Risk & Cybersecurity Services Market Healthcare & Pharma Technology, Media & Telecoms		Building a Trusted Brand
	November			
	Consumer Products & RetailDecemberPlanning for Growth in 2022			

Please note that with the purchase of all Market Trends reports in 2021, you will also gain access to a monthly video summary on the global market, presented by Fiona Czerniawska.

White	A powerful research tool that allows subscribers to keep up to date with the
Space	latest content being produced and maximise their return on investment.
	A series of reports that analyse the quality and effectiveness of thought
	leadership are published throughout the year.

© Source Information Services Ltd 2021



About us

Source analyses the way in which economic, business, behavioural, and technology change drives how organisations use professional services, and the implications that has for professional services firms.

Since its inception in 2007, Source has invested in sophisticated, proprietary research techniques that not only provide unique insights on current and future trends in the market, but also provide a better and faster solution than you would be able to reach yourself.

Our analysis and recommendations are derived from data and experience, and we use our team's extensive knowledge of the industry to provide actionable and clear conclusions on the best course of action for you and your firm. Our insights have underpinned some of the biggest strategic investment decisions made by professional services firms around the world.

Source Information Services Ltd 20 Little Britain | London | EC1A 7DH UK +44 (0)20 3478 1207 US +1 800 767 8058 info@sourceglobalresearch.com www.sourceglobalresearch.com

#### © Source Information Services Ltd 2021

Source Information Services Ltd and its agents have used their best efforts in collecting the information published in this report Source Information Services Ltd does not assume, and hereby disclaims, any liability for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this report, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or other causes.



Our custom work

In addition to our report programmes, we also provide custom advice and research-led consulting services to the world's biggest and most successful professional services firms, helping them identify the best areas for investment and plan their strategic responses.

Among other things, our work includes:

- Deep market and competitor analysis
- Acquisition strategy
- Proposition strategy and development
- Brand and client sentiment analysis
- Thought leadership and content strategy, development, and review

For more information about any of these, please visit our website or get in touch.