

PCG commissions university to research freelance market

The [Professional Contractors Group](#), which represents UK freelancers, has commissioned Kingston University in South West London to carry out a research project aimed at defining and estimating the size of the freelance workforce in the UK.

The project will be led by Dr John Kitching and Professor David Smallbone from the Small Business Research Centre at Kingston University. Its aims are to:

- o provide a definition of freelance work;
- o derive estimates of the size of the freelance workforce in the UK and in particular sectors;
- o provide details of the nomenclature used to describe freelance work in different sectors and work contexts; and
- o profile the personal, work and organisational characteristics of the freelance workforce.

PCG has long been calling for research in the UK and across Europe in an attempt to establish just how many people work as freelancers.

John Brazier, MD of PCG said, "We believe that because official statistics are sketchy, the number of professional freelancers is far greater than the Government recognises. That's partly because of the way people describe themselves, the way they are officially described and the very fluid nature of the freelance community. We hope this research will help define freelancing and will help people accept and understand that there is a third way in the labour market - it's not just about being an employer or an employee. It is astonishing that the Government has never recorded the number of people who work like this, but therefore not surprising that we have to campaign to be recognised."

“ We hope this research will help define freelancing and will help people accept and understand that there is a third way in the labour market. ”

Professor David Smallbone commented: "We welcome the opportunity to investigate what is clearly an important but often unacknowledged group within the UK economy."

John Brazier - Managing Director, PCG

A definition

The starting point will be to define what exactly is a "freelance worker", "contractor", or "consultant". Different terms are often used for the same type of work across different sectors. Journalists for example refer to themselves as 'freelance journalists'. Information Technology (IT) freelancers call themselves 'contractors'. But when IT professionals start consulting, then they refer to themselves as 'freelance consultants'. Whilst this can certainly be confusing, they do have one thing in common - and that's the nature in which they work.

Freelancers are highly skilled individuals who provide their skills on a project basis. Temporary workers are used to provide temporary cover, perhaps in periods of high demand or to cover sickness or maternity leave. Temporary workers predominately use agencies to find work, and it is those types of workers that any new [agency workers legislation](#) will be intended to help. The problem is, many freelancers also use agencies to find work, and they don't want any rights, and don't want to be included in any future legislation coming from the EU - (see [agency workers directive](#)).

This new research will help to define a clearer definition and give PCG the opportunity to continue to effectively lobby the Government and promote the freelance way of working.

The research project will begin next month and initial findings are expected later this year.

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