



BetterBriefs
Project

Topline Global Report



How did the BetterBriefs Project come about?

Two strategists wanting to better understand why there's so much confusion and misalignment around marketing briefs and the briefing process.



An important topic, lightly researched

UK

The Briefing Process by IPA, MCCA, PRCA & ISBA (2003).
Sample size = 277 (121 marketers and 156 agencies).



NL

Reclamebriefing. Een goede brief is het halve werk by SWOCC (2007).
Literature study, including 37 interviews with marketers and agencies.



USA

Enhancing Client-Agency Relationships by the ANA (2015).
Sample size = 231 (126 marketers and 105 agencies).

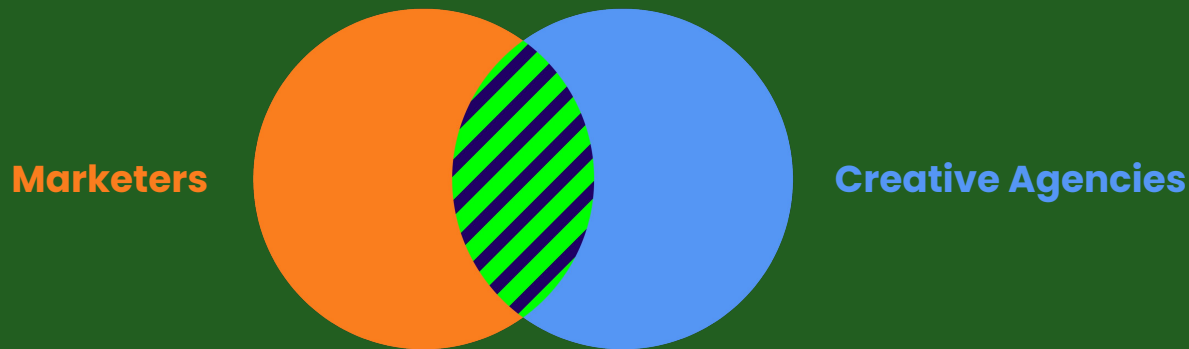


Global

Briefing for Integrated Communications by the WFA (2014 & 2017).
Sample size = 78 (32 brand owners and 46 from agencies) for the '17 study.



The aim of the project



A survey to help agencies and marketers better understand where marketing briefs fail and where they succeed.

We hope the results help both parties have better and more objective conversations on how to make briefs better.



An online survey with a difference

Created in conjunction with [Flood+Partners](#).

A quant. survey built to engage and involve people.

Fresh question formats made to capture Type 1 emotional responses *and* to elicit deeper thoughtful consideration.

The result: a vivid picture generated from over 1,700 highly engaged respondents.

FLOOD
RESEARCH FOR HUMANS



Sample

USA 172

UK 508

AUS 383

1731 respondents
from 70 countries

944 from marketing
organisations

and 786 from
creative agencies



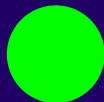
Glossary of terms



marketer = brief-writers, contributors and approvers all employed by a brand (aka the client).



creative agency = account managers, strategists, creatives or management (aka the agency).



marketing brief = the brief written by the client, for the purposes of developing a creative solution (aka the client brief).





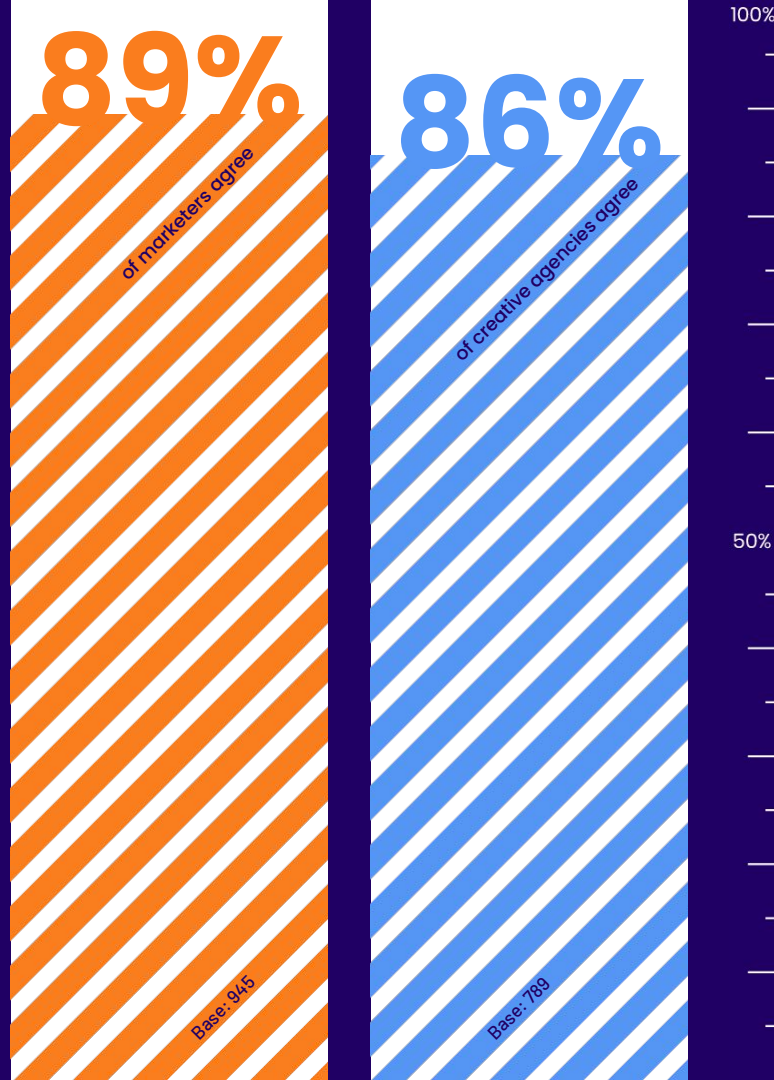
Part 1: The Problem

**Marketers and agencies
are on different planets**



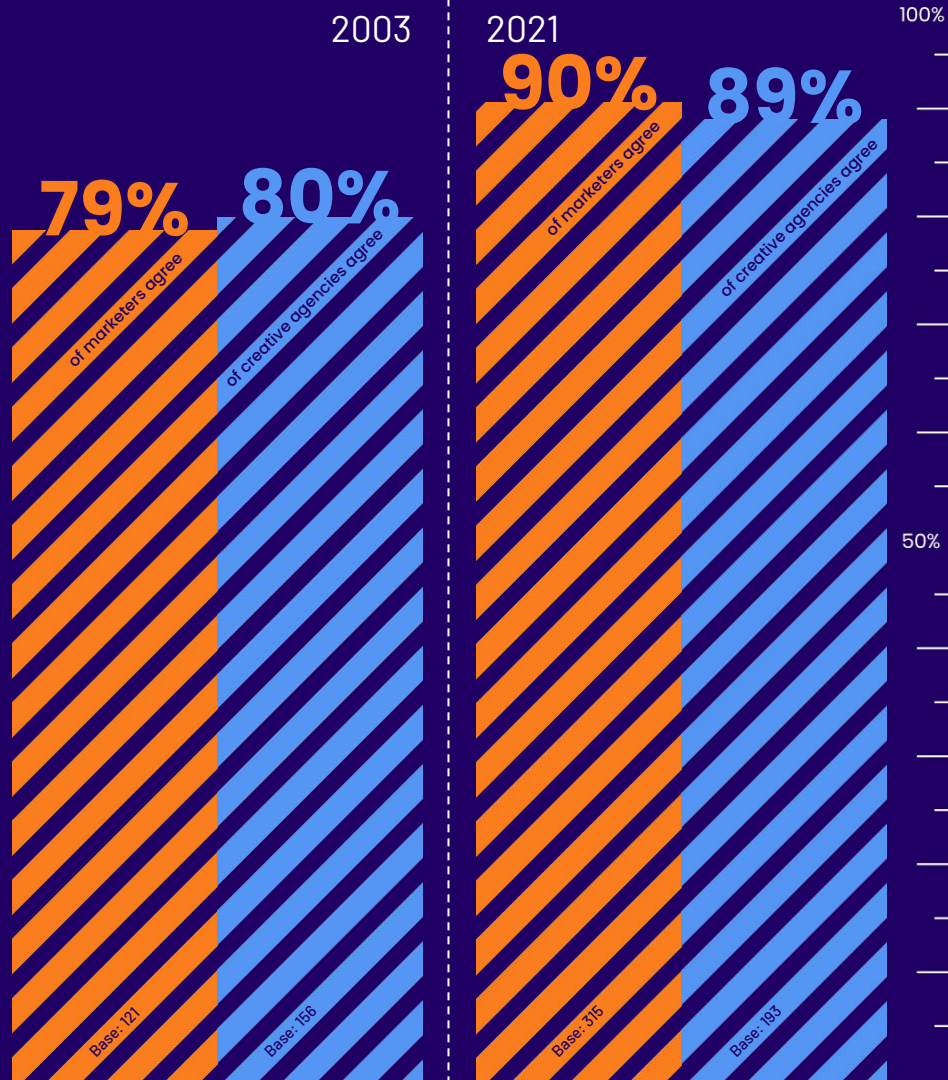
Both marketers and agencies agree that briefs are important

'It's difficult to produce good creative work without a good marketing brief'



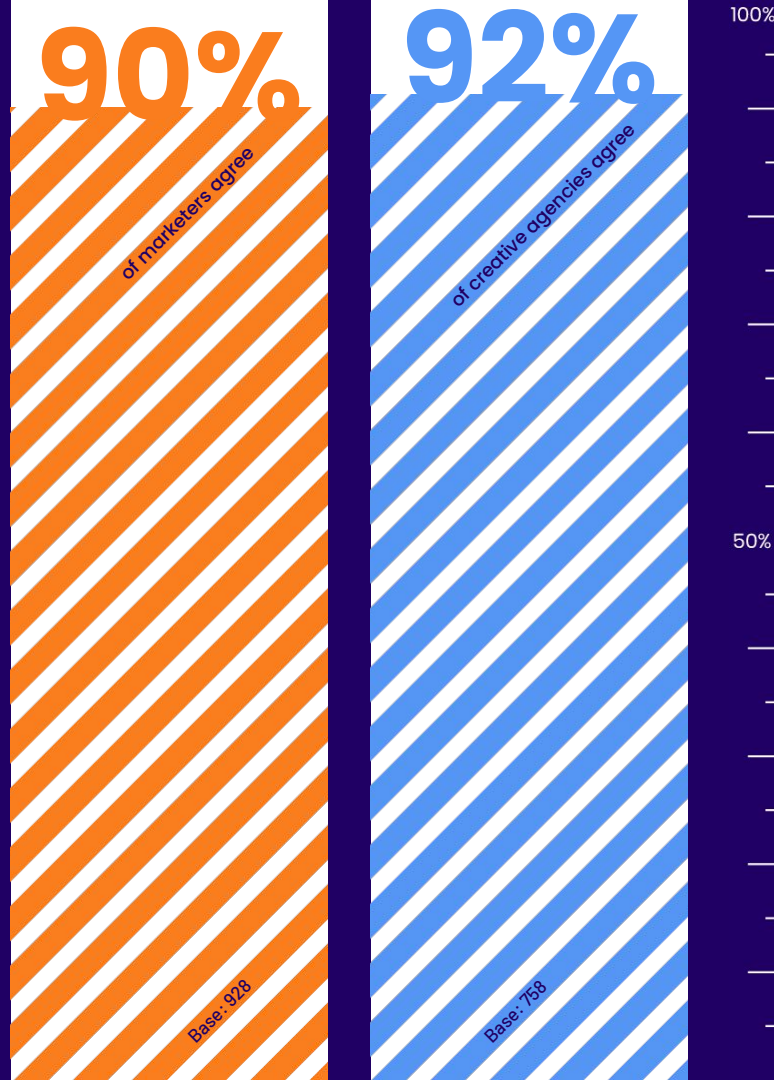
In the UK, briefs have grown in importance since the last time they were researched

'It's difficult to produce good creative work without a good marketing brief'



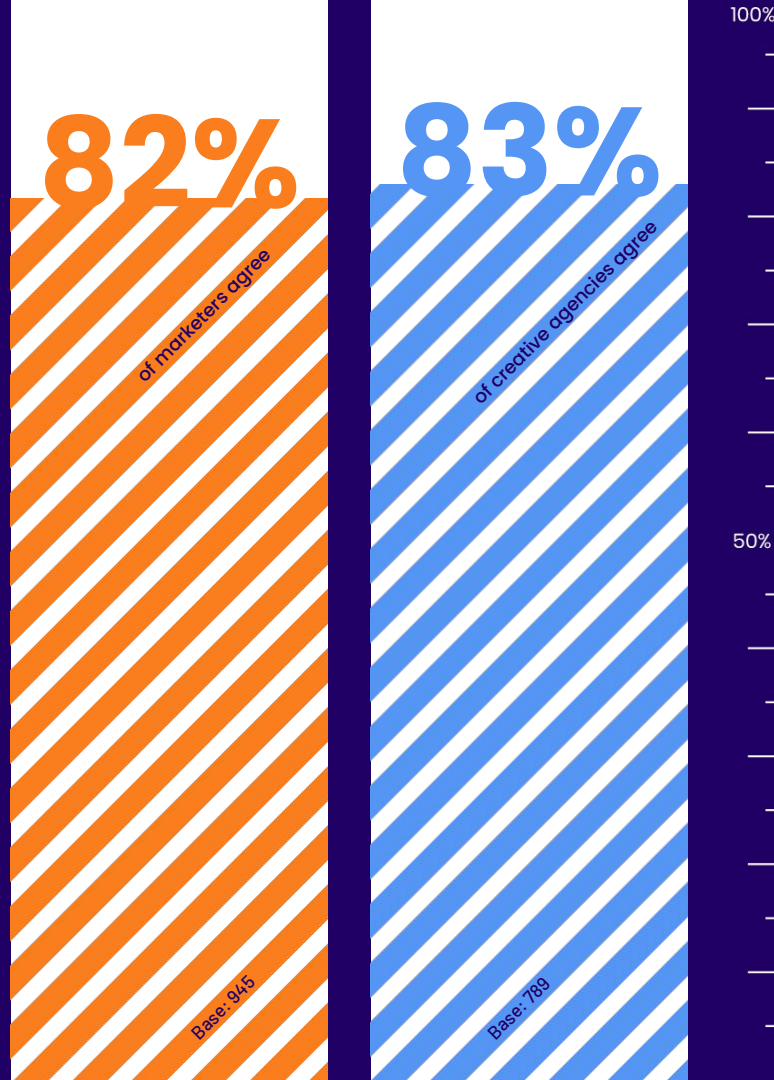
However, despite their importance and value, most marketing briefs are neglected

'The brief is one of the most valuable and paradoxically most neglected tools marketers have to create good work'



Both marketers and agencies
acknowledge that writing briefs
isn't easy

'Writing briefs is hard'



And it doesn't get any easier
the more experience you have

'Writing briefs is hard'

78%

of marketers
with 0-7 years
experience

Base: 134

81%

of marketers
with 8-14 years
experience

Base: 305

84%

of marketers
with 15+ years
experience

Base: 505



Our findings are fairly consistent
across at least 3 markets

‘Writing briefs is hard’

76%
of marketers
in **Australia** agree

Base: 240

86%
of marketers
in the **UK** agree

Base: 315

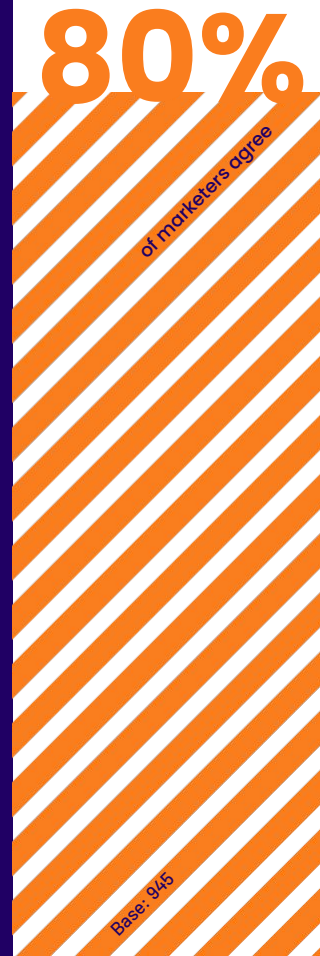
88%
of marketers
in the **USA** agree

Base: 57



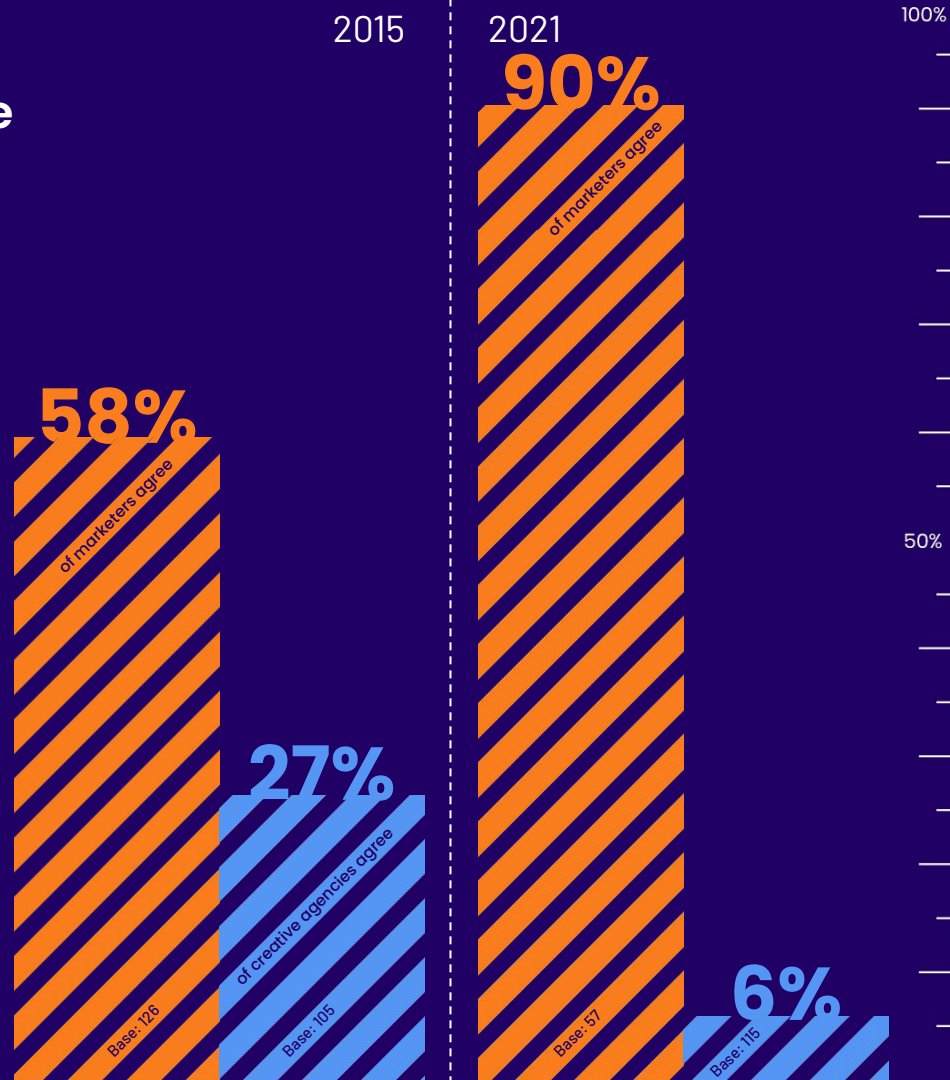
Most marketers think they're good at writing briefs; most agencies disagree

'I consider myself/my clients good at writing briefs'



In the USA, this gap has widened since the last time the question was asked

'I consider myself/my clients good at writing briefs'



The perceived quality of the last three briefs written/received is concerning

marketers

31%
not good enough

52%
ok

17%
good

creative agencies

75%
not good enough

22%
ok

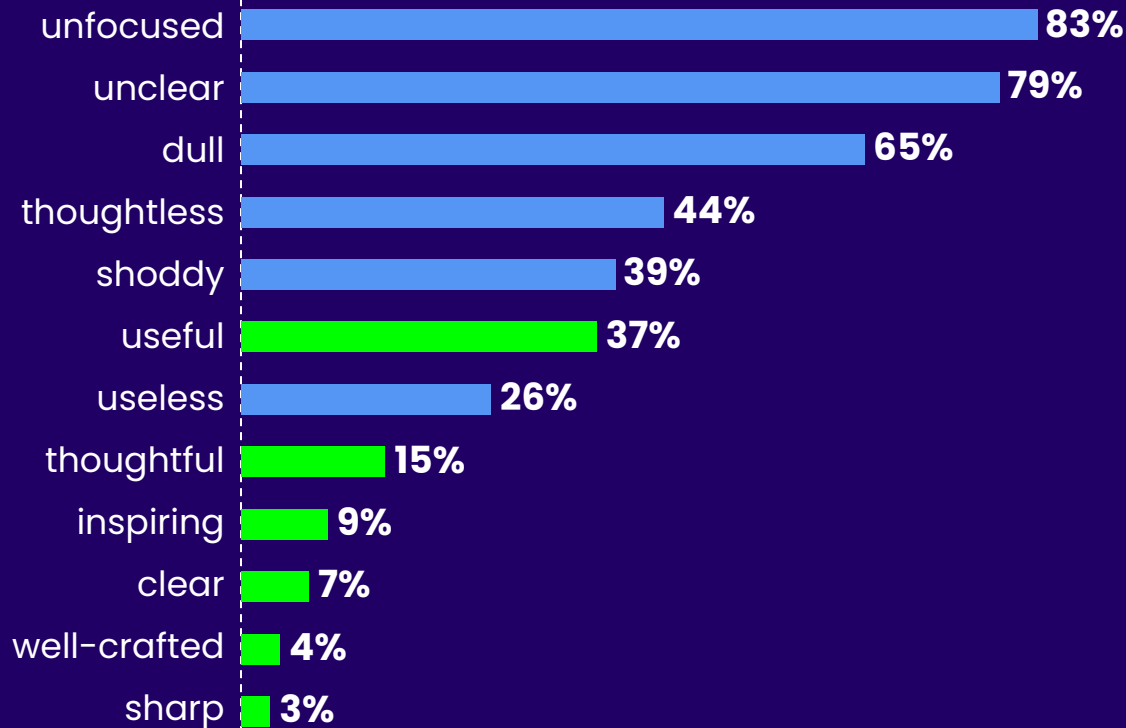
3%
good

Base: All 1731



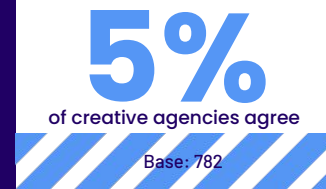
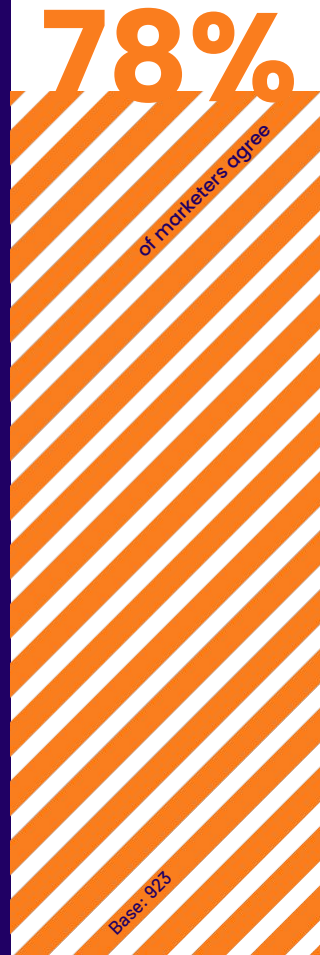
Creative agencies think most marketing briefs lack focus, clarity and inspiration

'Choose from the list below the words that describe the typical client brief'



Most marketers think the briefs they write provide clear strategic direction; most agencies disagree

'The briefs I/my client write(s) provide clear strategic direction'



The missing ingredient from most marketing briefs (according to creative agencies)



Clarity is key in briefs, however most marketers and creative agencies aren't even speaking the same language

'The briefs I/my client write(s) contain clear and concise language'

83%

of marketers agree

Base: 900

7%

of creative agencies agree

Base: 786



But it's not just language. 80% of creative agencies feel marketers have a poor or limited *understanding of what they need from briefs*

23%
poor

57%
limited

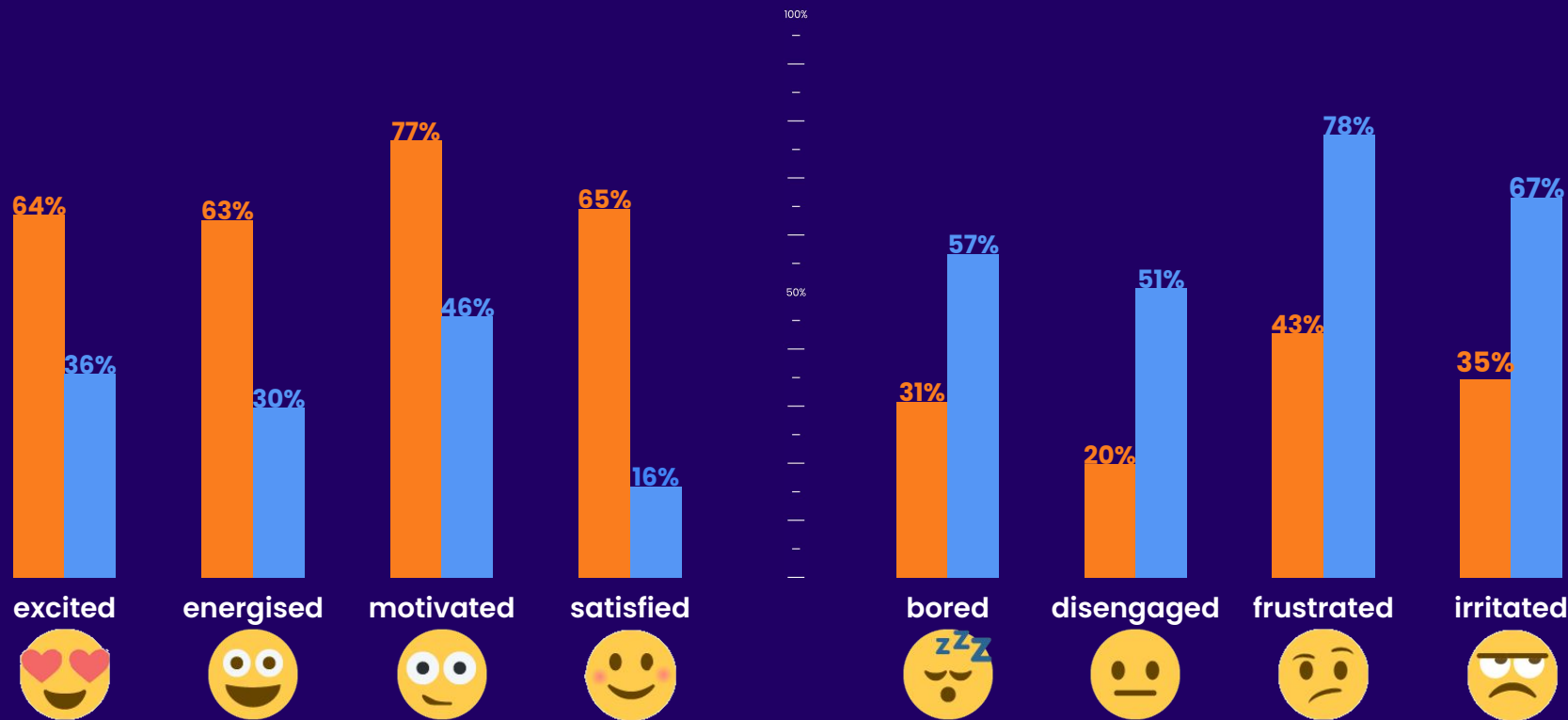
19%
reasonable

1%
good

Base: All Agency 786



Most marketers feel positive about briefs; creative agencies feel the exact opposite



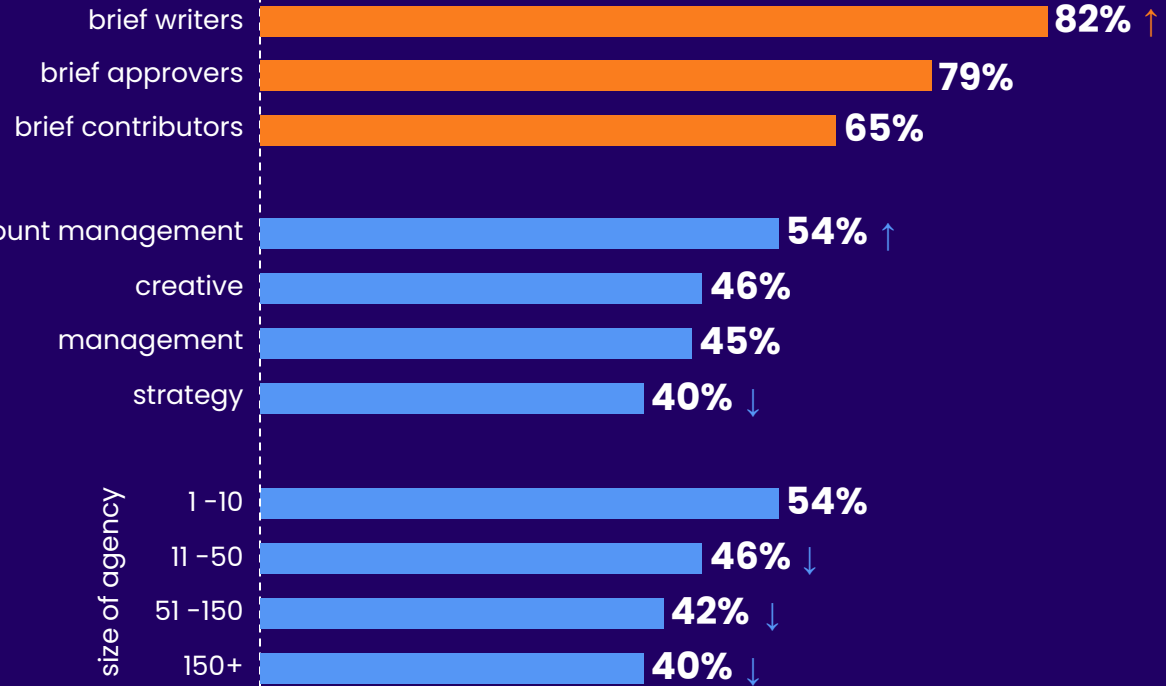
And there are significant differences in how *actively positive* people feel towards briefs spending on job function and size of agency

excited



&

energised





Part 2: The Impact

**A lot of time, money
and energy is wasted**



Staggeringly, briefs often change

9 out of 10 marketers admit that their briefs change once they are briefed-in.

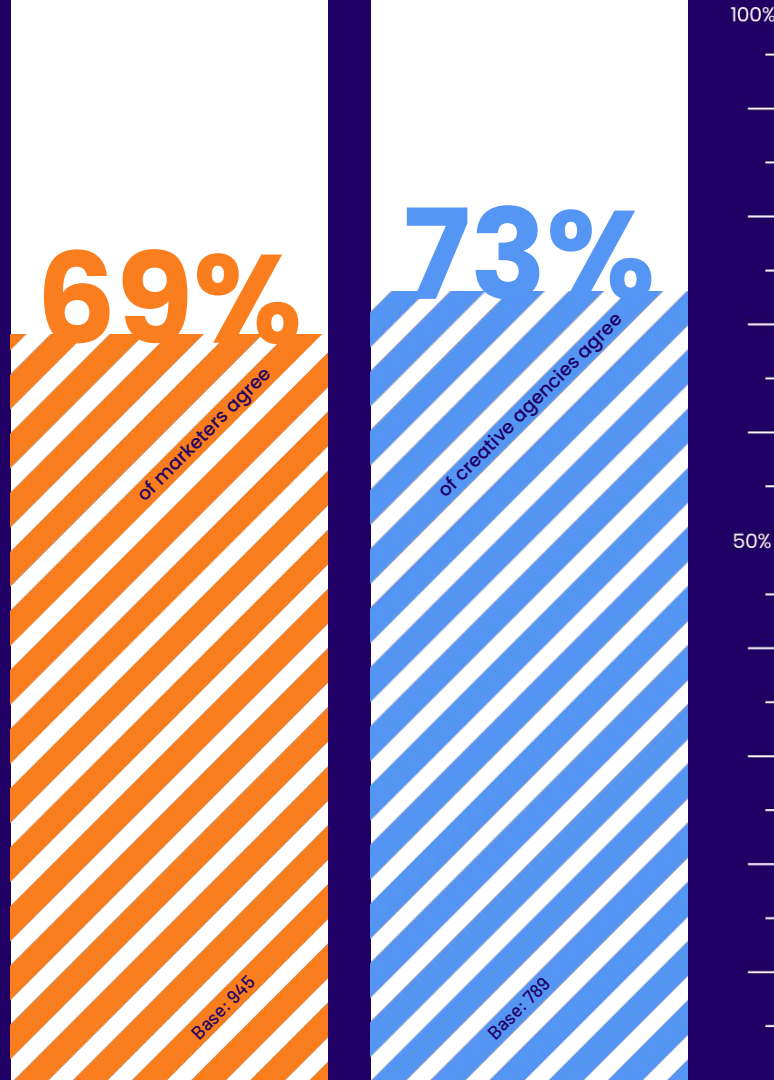
90%

Base: 945

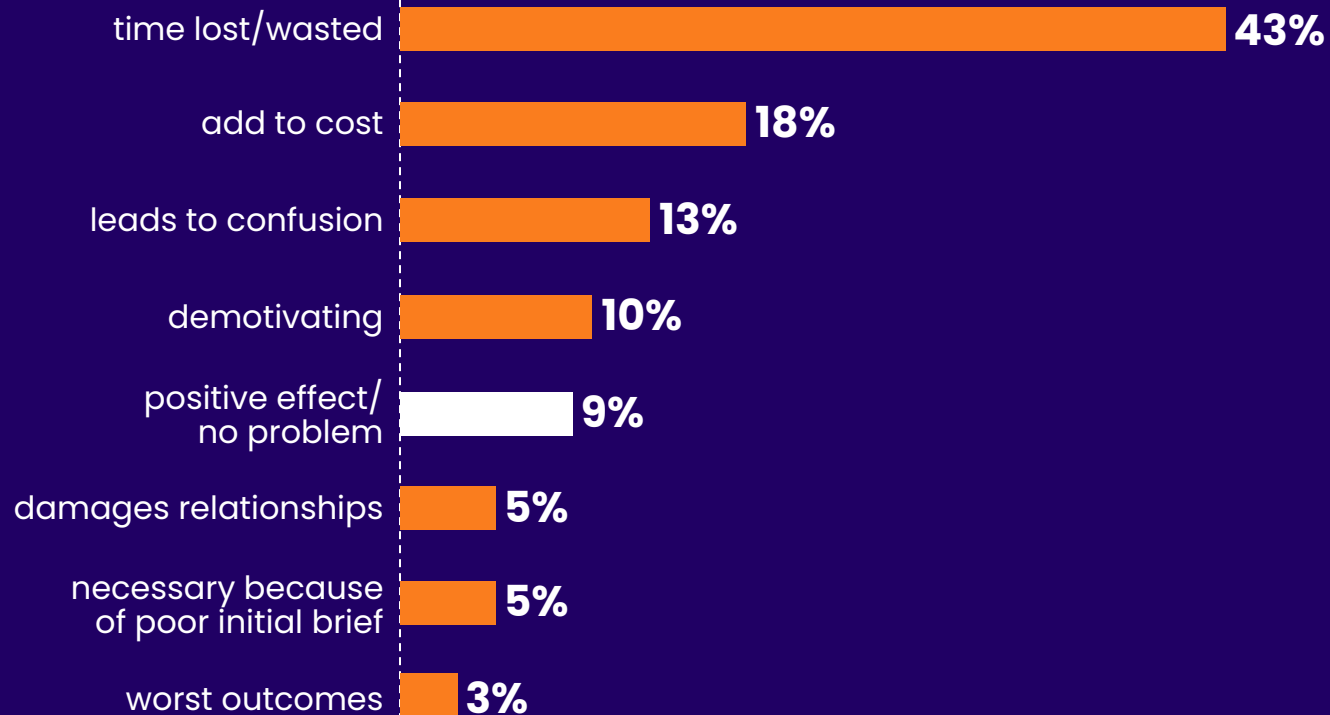


And rebriefs occur too often
for anyone's liking

'Rebriefs happen too often'



Most marketers understand the negative impact of a rebrief



It means that unfortunately,
the creative process is not always
used for what it's intended

6 out of 10 marketers admit
to using the creative process
to clarify the strategy.

60%

Base: All Marketing 945

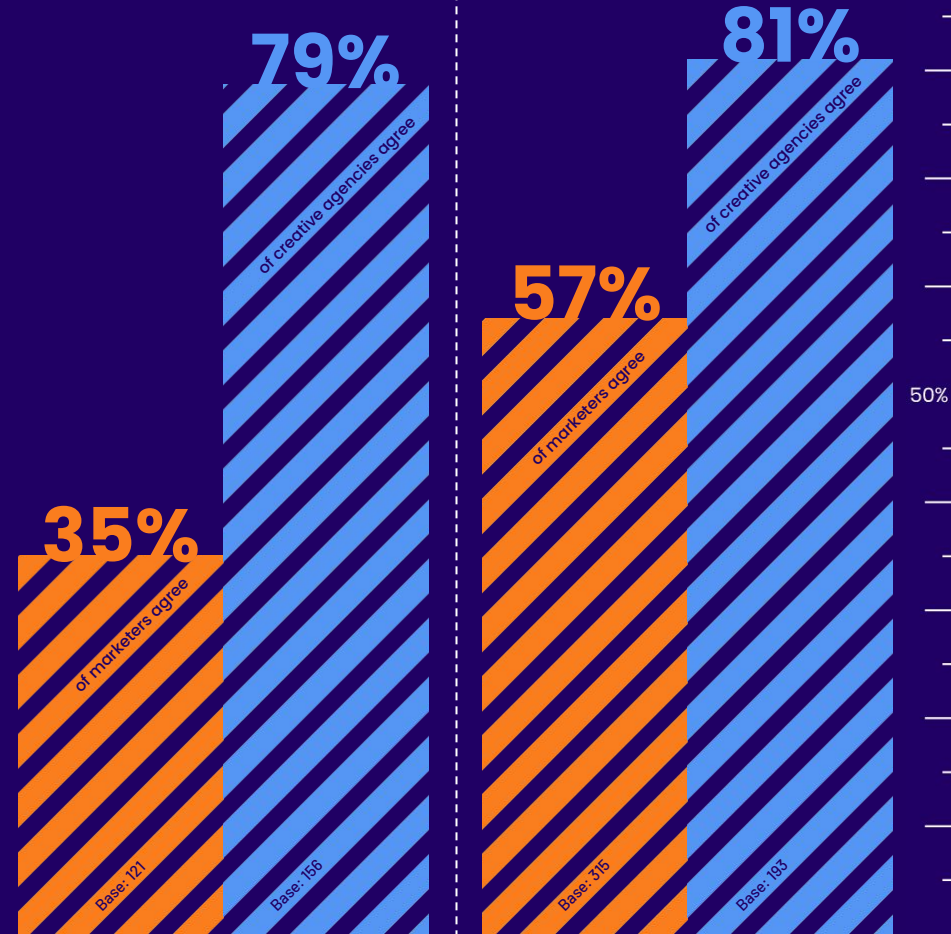


2003

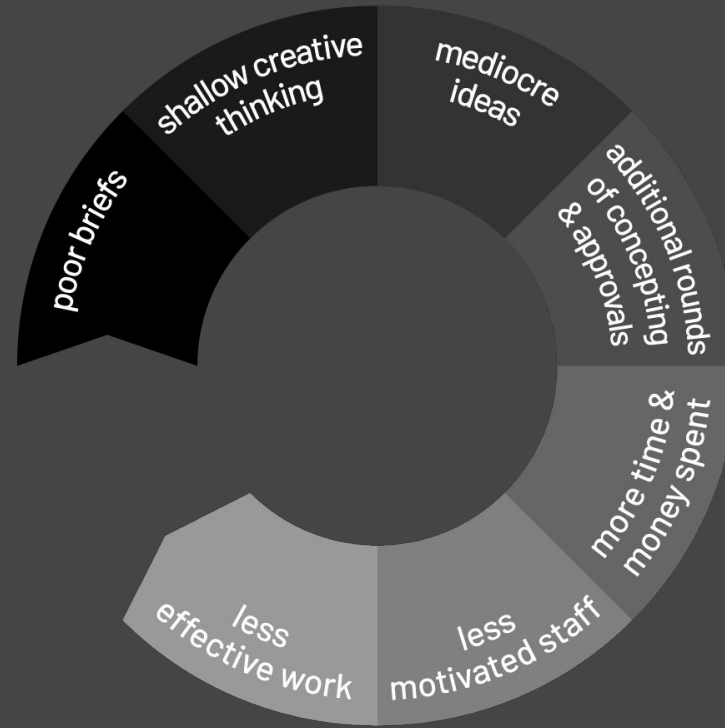
2021

And in the UK, this is happening
more than it has in the past

'The creative process is often
used to clarify the strategy'



A lot of time and effort is wasted as a result of poor quality briefs



Poor briefs can have a big impact on marketing budgets

It is estimated that 1/3 of marketing budgets are wasted on poor briefs and misdirected work.

33%

Base: All 1686





Part 3: A Way Forward

Suggestions for making briefs better





Be clear on the strategy
before writing the brief

2x

Creative agencies are
twice as energised
to work on briefs that provide
clear strategic direction.



To help provide clear direction, ensure every marketing brief contains clear objectives

'Rank in order of
importance the
most critical
elements of a
marketing brief'

1

objectives

61%

71%

2

insights

18%

9%

3

target group
definition

13%

8%



Bring more structure to the briefing process

More than 7 in 10 marketers state
agency briefings could work better
if they were more structured.

72%

Base: All Marketing 659





Get the right people to sign-off the brief

Half the time, the right people aren't
signing-off marketing briefs internally.

50%

A vertical bar chart with a white background. The bar is filled with orange diagonal stripes. The top of the bar is labeled '50%'. The bottom of the bar is labeled 'Base: All Marketing 945'. On the right side of the chart, there is a vertical axis with horizontal tick marks and labels '50%' and '100%'.

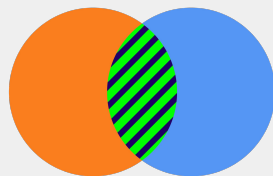


A quote that sums up the internal struggle from a passionate marketer in the UK

“ My briefs get re-written by committee – and those people are very senior but with no clue about marketing. My briefs get filled with jargon, nonsense and irrelevance, plus audiences, targets and topics are added in order to keep everyone feeling like their area of work is valid. I’m ashamed to send them over. ”



General advice



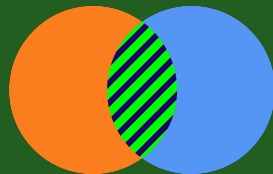
Marketers

Be clear on your strategies and use clear and simple language.
Don't send briefs to your agencies that you're not happy with.

Creative Agencies

Don't be silent. Flag what's missing, clarify what's unclear with your clients. Better briefs are your responsibility too.

In summary



Invest more time in briefs

Work closer together on briefs

Ensure you're speaking the same language

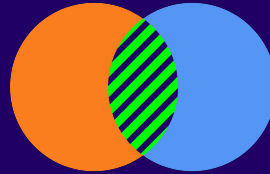


The BetterBrief cycle



With special thanks





To find out more about our products & services:

Free report

The first global study on marketing briefs.

In-depth report

Custom-built reports for your business.

Brief Auditing & Training

Custom-solutions to save time, money & energy.

Speaking & Conferences

Tailored presentations for brands & industry bodies.

