



UK MiFID Firms

Investment firms in 2025

 HACKFORD

Introduction

Hackford is excited to announce that data on MiFID investment firms is now available on our platform. Users can search and analyse the 2,480 MiFID firms operating in the UK, with visibility of their regulatory permissions, market segment, key individuals, and appointed representatives.

To mark the launch, we're publishing this short report summarising key insights from the dataset. The standout finding: London dominates, with 79.5% of all UK MiFID firms based in the capital. Westminster (897 firms) and the City of London (633) together account for more than half of the national total, underscoring the enduring concentration of financial services in the Square Mile and West End. Edinburgh, with 45 firms, is the only non-London local authority in the top ten, reflecting the city's historic strength in asset management.

The dataset also reveals how firms approach investment permissions. Almost all are authorised for core securities such as shares and debentures, but far fewer operate in higher-risk derivatives like contracts for difference or rolling spot FX – products that have attracted repeated FCA intervention.

On governance, over 9,200 individuals currently hold Senior Management Functions at MiFID firms. Strikingly, in 75% of firms one person performs both the Compliance Oversight (SMF16) and MLRO (SMF17) roles – efficient in smaller firms but a notable concentration of accountability.

Finally, appointed representatives expand the footprint further: with 1,264 ARs linked to MiFID firms, the effective size of the regime grows by around 50%. All of these insights are now directly searchable on Hackford.

Definition of a UK MiFID firm

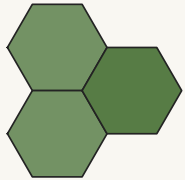
A UK MiFID firm is an investment firm authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to provide or perform investment services and activities under the UK MiFID regime, the UK's implementation of the EU Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID).

For this report, the population is drawn from the FCA's Investment Firms Register, which covers UK-authorised firms and excludes those benefitting from MiFID exemptions or authorised under other directives such as UCITS, AIFMD, or the Capital Requirements Directive.

“London dominates, with 79.5% of all UK MiFID firms based in the capital.”



Dan Robinson
Founder & CEO
HACKFORD



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Location

The geography of UK MiFID firms is overwhelmingly London-centric. An extraordinary 79.5% of all active firms are based in the capital, making it by far the dominant hub. Within London, Westminster (897 firms) and the City of London (633) account for more than half the national total, reflecting the traditional clustering of financial services around the West End and the Square Mile. Neighbouring boroughs such as Camden (85), Tower Hamlets (83), and Kensington & Chelsea (67) add further depth, hosting investment managers, brokers, and specialist firms.

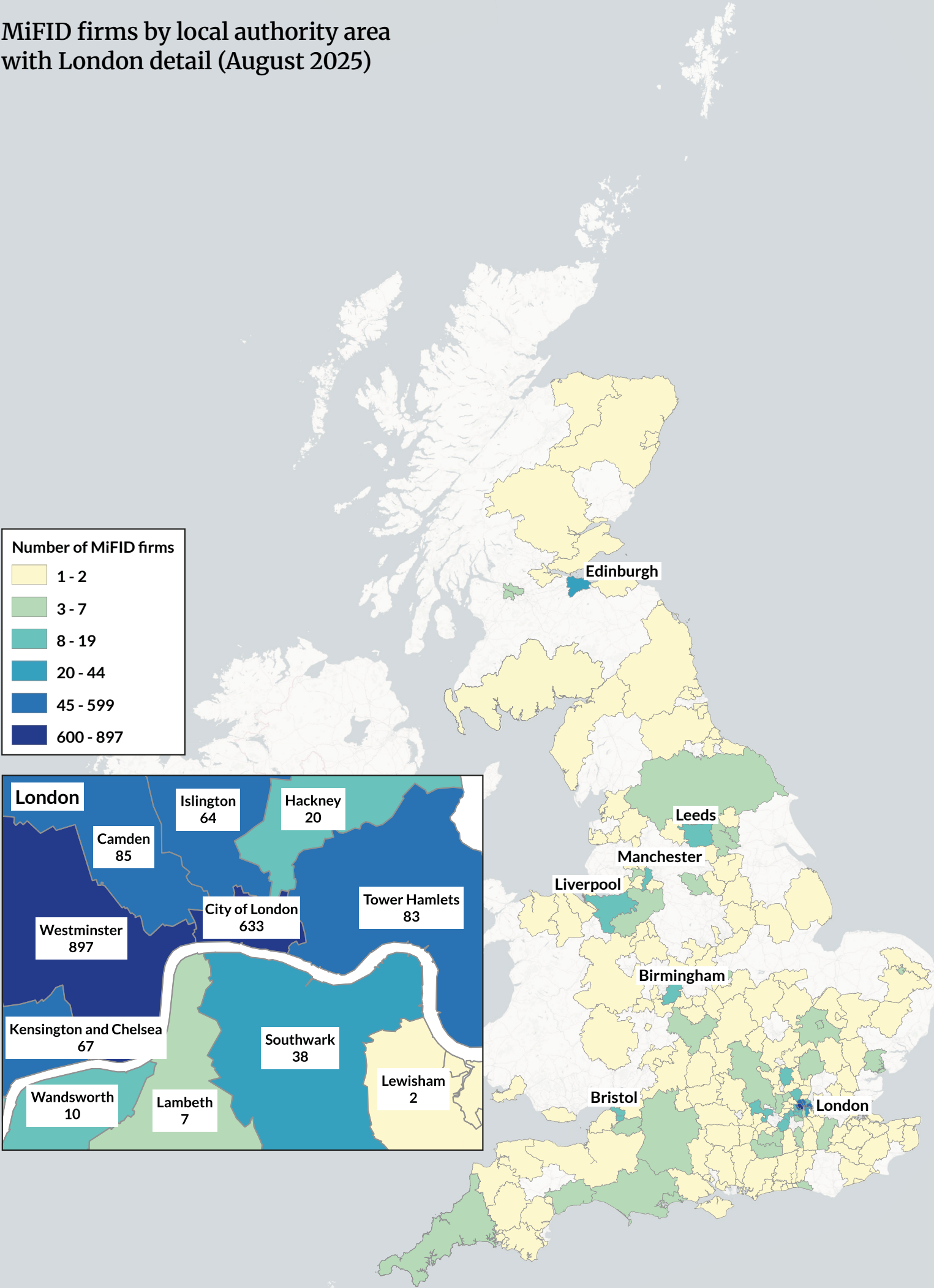
Outside London the picture thins considerably. The City of Edinburgh (45 firms) is the only non-London authority in the top ten, underlining the city’s strength in asset management. Centres such as Greater Manchester (27), Leeds (16), and Bristol (12) register smaller communities. The map makes the imbalance stark: a dense core in central London, a Scottish hub in Edinburgh, then scattered outposts.

“The map makes the imbalance stark: a dense core in central London, a Scottish hub in Edinburgh, then scattered outposts.”

1,971
Number of MiFID firms in London

79.5%
Proportion of MiFID firms in London

MiFID firms by local authority area with London detail (August 2025)



Instruments and market segments

The permissions profile of UK MiFID firms shows a broad base in core securities. Almost all firms are authorised to deal in shares (93%), debentures (88%), and related securities, reflecting the foundational role of equity and debt markets. Permissions taper as products become more complex. About three-quarters cover options (75%) and futures (71%), but numbers fall sharply in areas such as contracts for difference (49%), rolling spot forex (54%), and spread betting (27%). These derivative instruments have been subject to repeated FCA interventions designed to curb consumer harm from high-risk trading models.

The permissions map onto the types of firms active under MiFID. Investment managers (713), the largest group, require broad securities permissions to run client portfolios. Brokers (348) and investment support providers (309) hold narrower sets focused on execution and arranging deals, while hedge funds (92) are among the firms most active in derivatives. Specialist niches such as wealth managers (198) and corporate finance advisers (151) also feature.

The scope of a firm’s services and required permissions will dictate its regulatory status: a wealth manager running discretionary securities portfolios will fall within MiFID, whereas holistic advice firms that also focus on insurance or pensions may not, sometimes operating under the Article 3 exemption. The permissions reflect the activities firms consider commercially valuable and feasible, with high uptake in core securities and fewer firms pursuing complex or higher-risk derivatives.

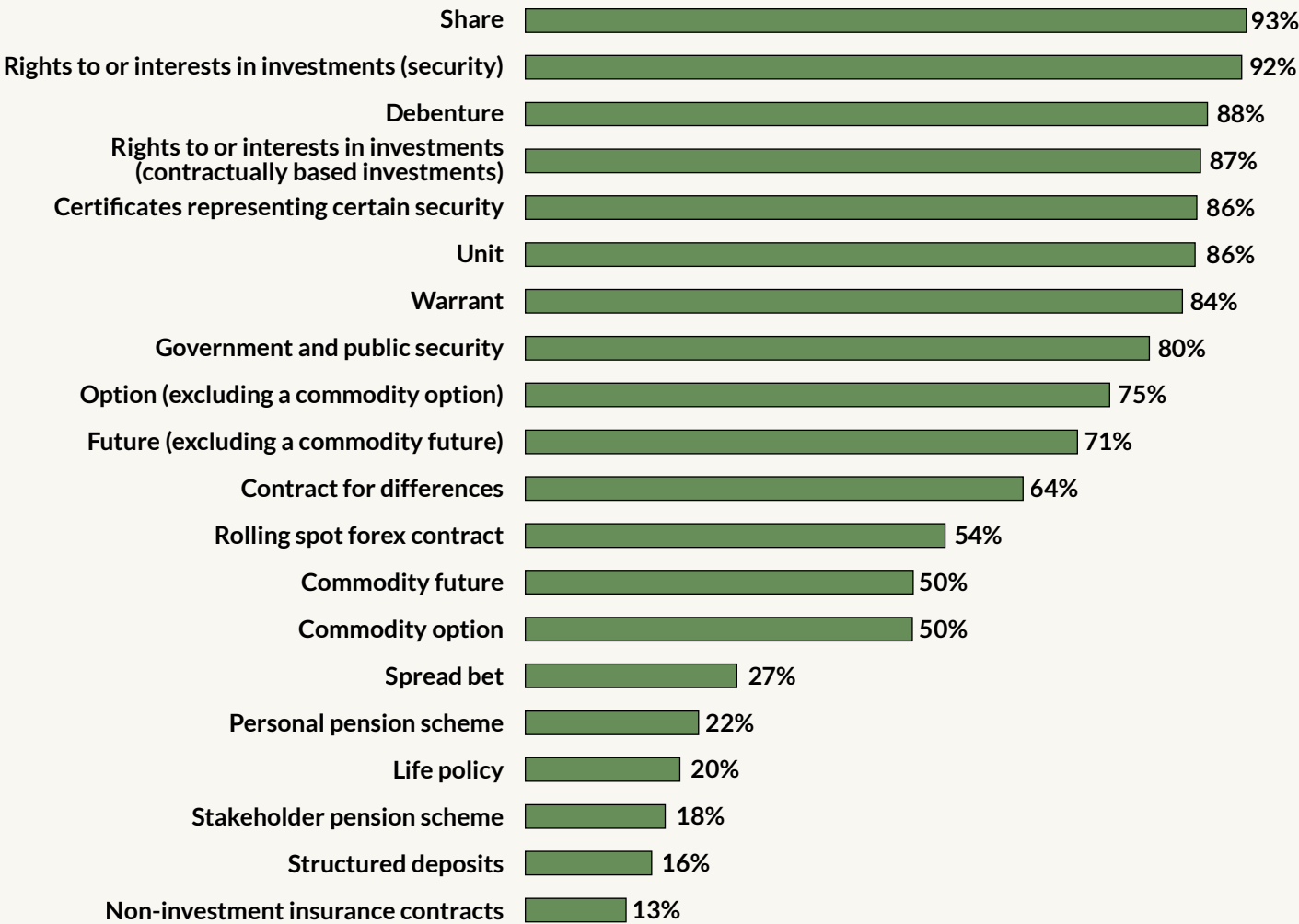
28.8%

Proportion of MiFID firms classified as investment managers August 2025

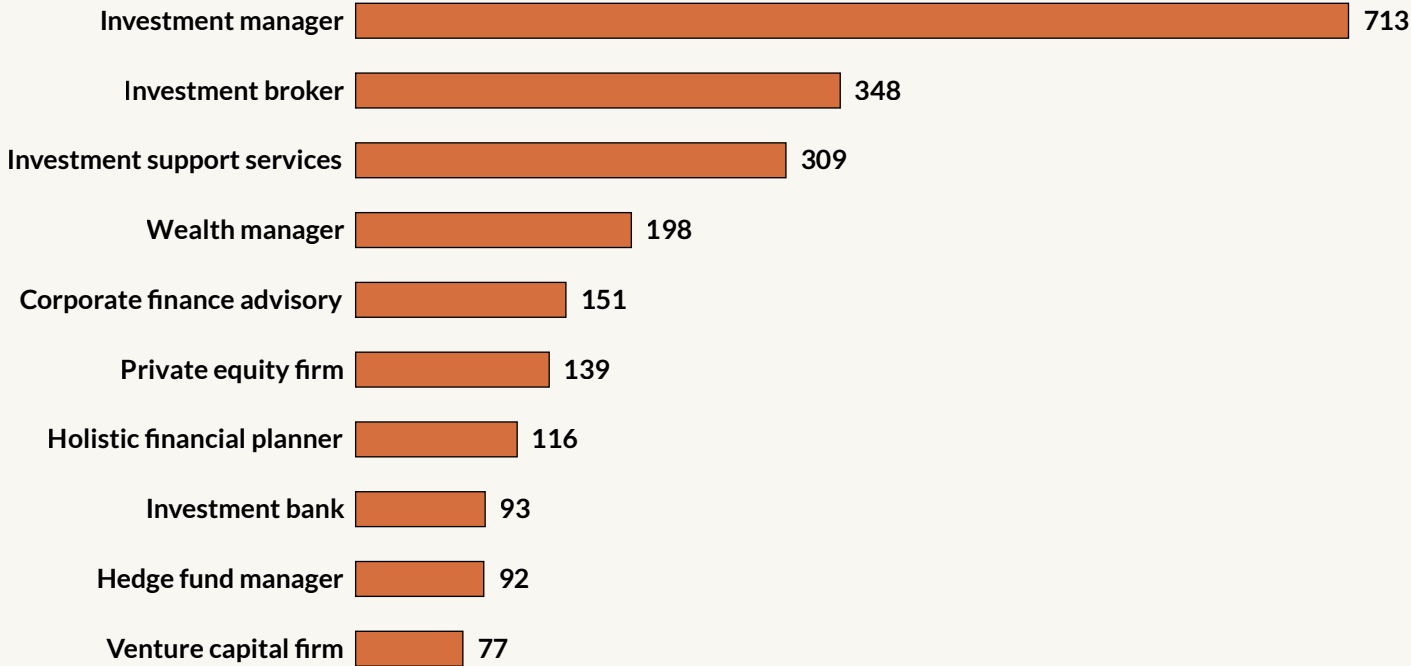
14.0%

Proportion of MiFID firms classified as investment brokers August 2025

Financial instrument type by proportion of MiFID firms with permissions for that type (August 2025)



Top 10 market subsegments by number of active MiFID firms (August 2025)



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Regulated roles

UK MiFID firms employ a wide range of Senior Management Functions (SMFs), with over 9,200 individuals currently active. The most common roles are Executive Director (SMF3, 4,685 individuals) and Chief Executive (SMF1, 2,085), followed by compliance-focused positions. Among these, 2,220 firms have both SMF16 (Compliance Oversight) and SMF17 (Money Laundering Reporting Officer) in place. At 1,857 firms—75% of the total MiFID population—the same individual holds both roles.

This is a striking feature of the data. SMF16 is intended to oversee compliance across all regulatory obligations, while SMF17 is responsible for identifying and managing the firm’s money laundering risks, as well as reporting suspicions to the National Crime Agency (NCA). While combining SMF16 and SMF17 in one person is efficient, especially in smaller firms, it also concentrates accountability—and risk—in that individual.

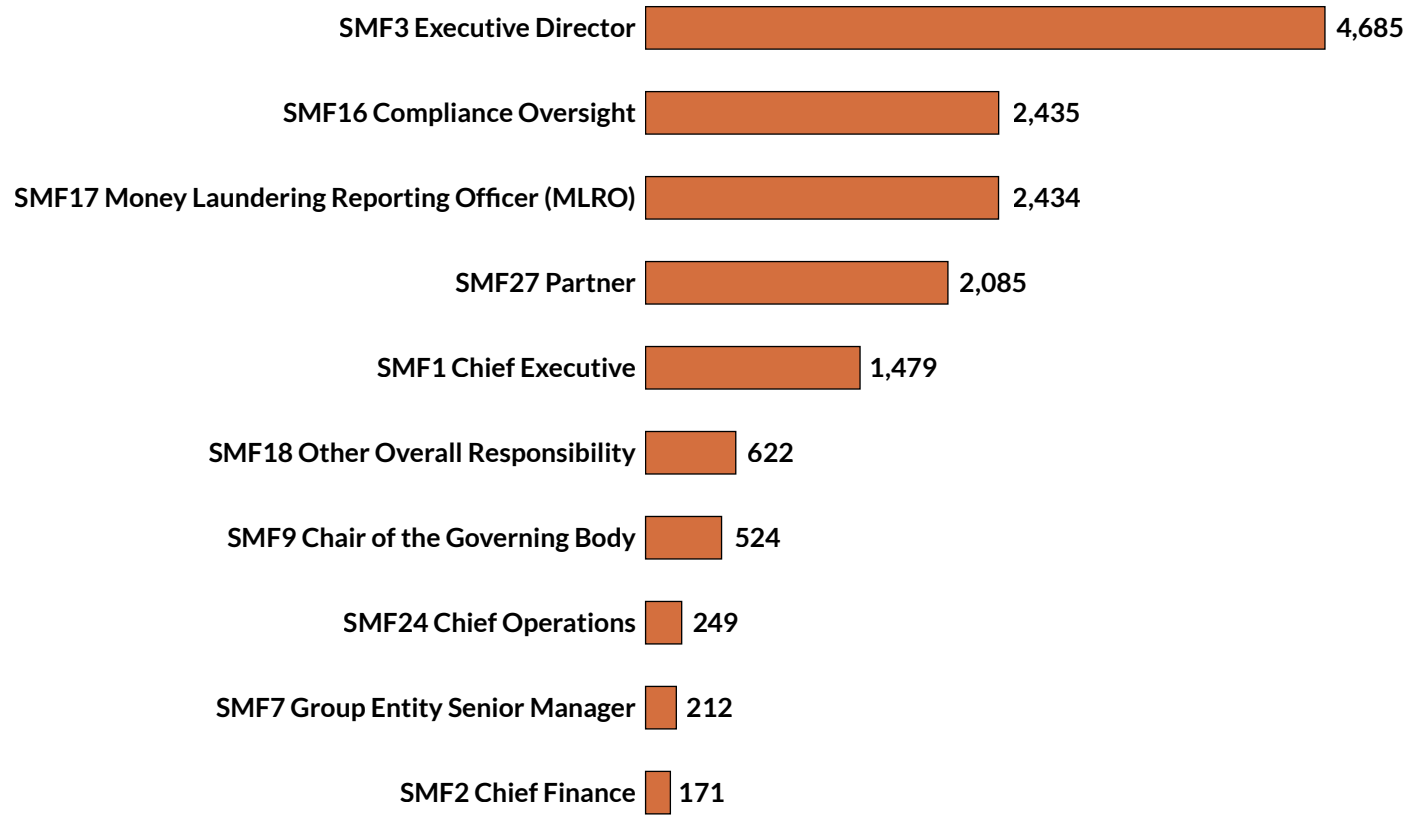
By contrast, very few MiFID firms have an SMF4 (Chief Risk) role. The FCA only requires SMF4 where there is a significant, independent risk function — a threshold more typical of banks or large investment firms. In most MiFID firms, risk responsibilities are absorbed by compliance or executive directors, reflecting proportionality in the regime.

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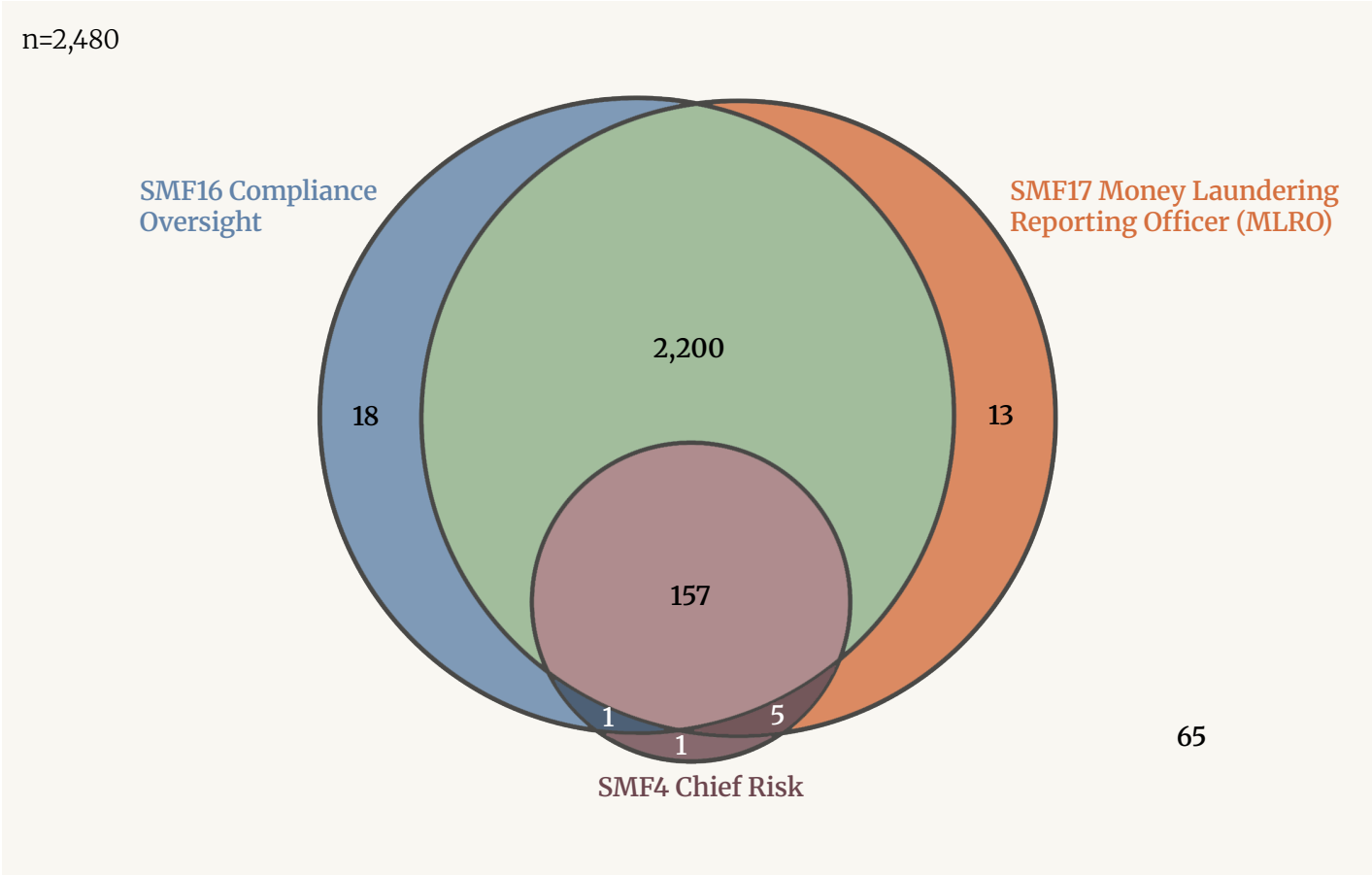
9,218
Individuals with active SMF roles at MiFID firms
August 2025

1,857
Firms where one person holds SMF16 & SMF17
August 2025

Most common Senior Mangement Functions (SMFs) among MiFID firms (August 2025)



Key compliance SMFs by number of firms (August 2025)



Appointed Representatives of MiFID firms

The UK’s Appointed Representative (AR) regime was introduced in 1986 under the Financial Services Act, allowing unauthorised firms to carry out regulated activities on behalf of authorised principals. Broadened under FSMA 2000, the regime has become a core mechanism for participants to provide financial services in the UK.

In total, there are almost 2,500 principals with nearly 32k ARs across all of UK financial services. Of the MiFID firms, there are 224 MiFID pricipals responsible for 1,264 active ARs.

Given that the total directly authorised MiFID population is 2,480 firms, ARs expand the effective footprint of the regime by around 50% – meaning many more entities are active in MiFID markets than the principal firm count alone suggests.

Most MiFID-AR relationships are relatively recent: 62% have been in place for fewer than five years, with a median duration of 3.5 years. Leading subsegments include investment advisers (244 ARs), mortgage brokers (194), and holistic financial planners (166).

Industry view: AR status as a complement to direct authorisation

Sentinel was established to provide MiFID Principal services to new ARs wishing to take advantage of the speed and flexibility of the AR regime.

In our experience, as supported by Hackford’s data, it is an important complement to the FCA direct authorisation route, which allows start-ups, spinouts, and incoming overseas firms quick access to UK financial markets. Furthermore, it is interesting to see the duration of ARs, which supports the view that firms use the regime as a short-medium term solution rather than avoiding direct authorisation.

The AR regime has come under intense regulatory scrutiny over recent years, so it’s reassuring to see

1,264

Appointed Representatives of MiFID firms
August 2025

62.3%

Proportion of ARs that have had a MiFID
principal for <5 years
August 2025

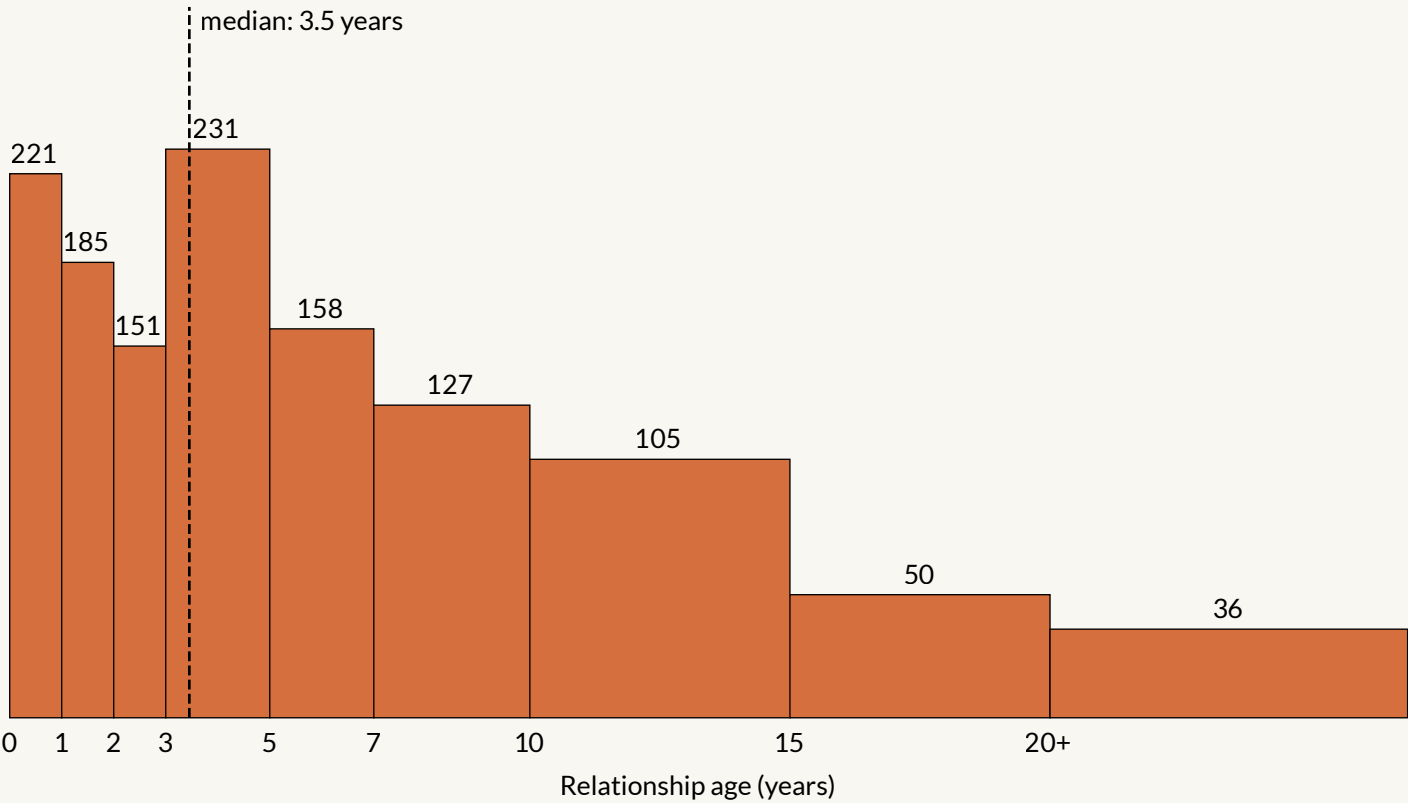


Ian Manson
Co-founder and Executive Director

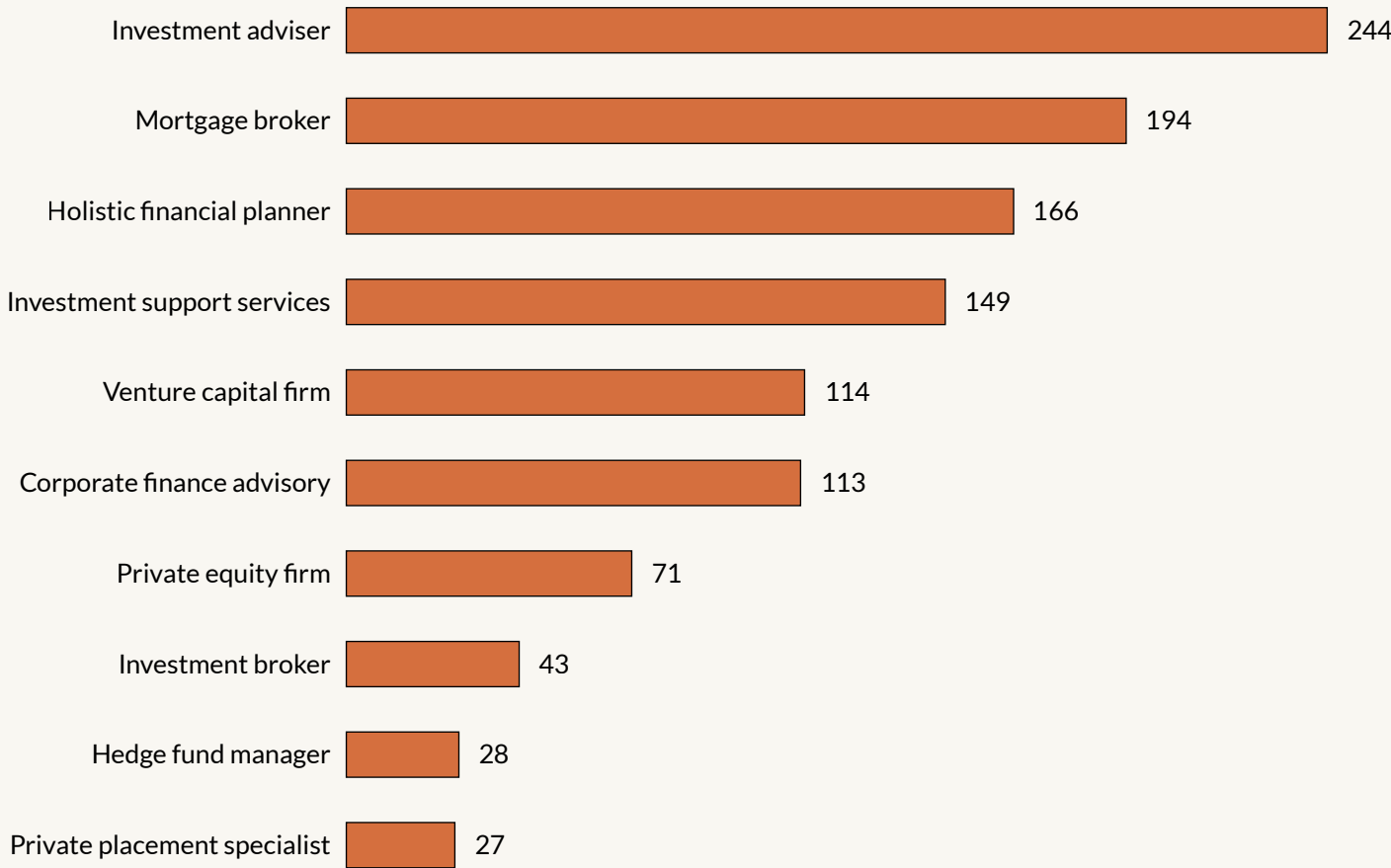


both the FCA and HM Treasury reinforcing their commitment to the regime, subject to appropriate control enhancements. Such developments can only help improve the attractiveness of UK PLC.

Count of ARs by age of AR-principal relationship (August 2025)



Top 10 market subsegments by number of active ARs of MiFID firms (August 2025)





Methodology

This report is based on data drawn from the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) [Investment Firms Register](#), which lists firms authorised to provide or perform investment services and activities under the UK MiFID regime, the UK's implementation of the EU Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID).

For the purposes of this report, a UK MiFID firm is defined as an investment firm authorised by the FCA under this regime. The Investment Firms Register covers UK-authorised firms and excludes those benefitting from MiFID exemptions or authorised solely under other directives such as UCITS, AIFMD or the Capital Requirements Directive (CRD).

The population underlying this analysis was taken from the FCA Investment Firms Register as at 21 August 2025. More up-to-date information on FCA regulated firms is available from the FCA Register at <https://register.fca.org.uk/s/>.

Hackford's market subsegments are derived by classifying firms according to their primary activity. This classification draws on multiple sources, including FCA permissions, firm websites, Companies House SIC codes, and other publicly available information.

The report is an information resource only. It is not endorsed by the FCA.

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Hackford is the intelligence platform built for compliance and regtech professionals in UK financial services. It allows users to search over regulated financial services businesses using commonsense market segments, SMFs, regulatory permissions, and FCA fines among other criteria. Watchlists, email alerts, and detailed company profiles help compliance consultants and regtech teams navigate an increasingly complex landscape.

To find out more, please visit hackforddata.com.

