

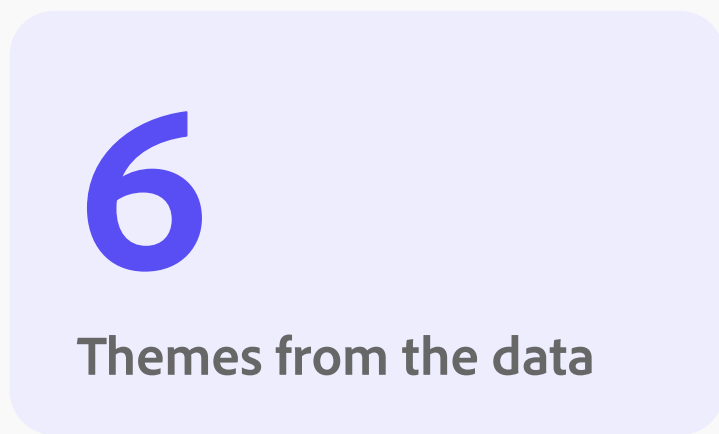
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How Creatives are thinking about AI



Creative professionals are deciding, on their own terms, where AI fits in their creative process

Tracking the creative community's relationship with AI continues to be a fascinating endeavor. This report sets out to explore AI from the perspective of creative professionals, while discussing a range of themes that emerged from our research. It takes the US as its primary lens and uses findings from the UK and Japan, where there are meaningful differences in how Creatives are thinking about AI. We hope this data will inspire further investigation into causal links shaping adoption, sentiment, and creative concerns.



Key findings at a glance

01

The undecided majority

The nearly 2,000 creative professionals and independent creators surveyed across the US, UK, and Japan cluster into four groups with distinct AI adoption profiles — these range from enthusiastic adopters to experienced pros who remain skeptical.

03

Where AI is seen as a fit depends on the task

Brainstorming and ideation are where Creatives are integrating AI most — and they are also the areas where Creatives believe the technology is expanding access and enabling people without traditional training to participate more easily.

02

Optimistic about their future, unsure about AI

Creatives remain optimistic about their professional future, even as they continue to evaluate AI's place within it. Younger Creatives report the lowest levels of excitement about AI, while monetizing creators and mid-career creative professionals are among the most enthusiastic. The pattern suggests that comfort with AI may be linked less to age and more to professional confidence, stability, and experience.

04

Trust remains a prominent question

Altogether, the data reveals concerns around trust and ethics and a creative community that is engaging with AI but still evaluating its place in their lives.

Most Creatives are undecided about AI

One of the clearest themes in the data is that there is no single creative response to AI. Some people are already using it every day and seeing real value in it. Others remain skeptical. The largest group sits somewhere in between.

In fact, 41% of all Creatives in the study fell into what can best be described as a “pragmatic middle.” They are open to AI but not fully convinced. Most use AI at least weekly, but only 25% use it daily. Even so, 86% say AI has been positive for their work overall. This segment reflects where much of the creative world is right now: engaged, observant, and still deciding.

To better understand these differing perspectives, we analyzed patterns in AI attitudes, usage, and sentiment across respondents. That analysis revealed four distinct groups of Creatives, each representing a different answer to the same question: What role should AI play in creative work?

41%

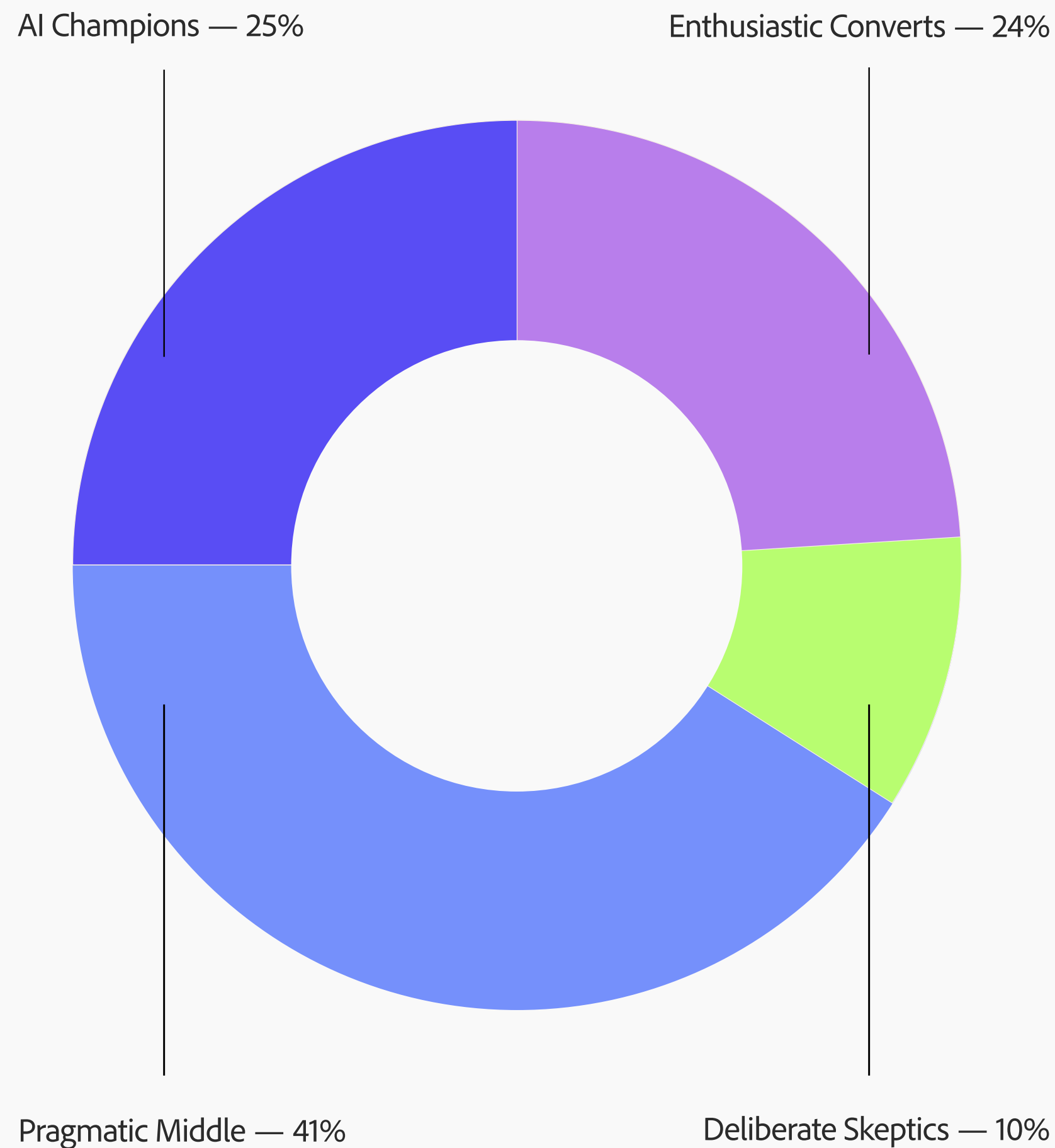
of all Creatives in the study fell into what can best be described as a “pragmatic middle”

86%

say AI has been positive for their work overall

25%

use AI daily



AI Champions

Optimistic, experimental, shaping new norms.

25%

AI USAGE	47% daily — highest
CAREER OUTLOOK	55% very optimistic
WHO THEY ARE	Younger, less experienced, heavily US. Photo & Graphic Design prominent. Building new norms.
EXCITMENT	

Pragmatic Middle

Open, engaged, still deciding.

41%

AI USAGE	Mostly weekly, 25% daily.
CAREER OUTLOOK	65% broadly optimistic
WHO THEY ARE	The largest group. All roles, ages & experience levels. More prevalent in US.
EXCITMENT	

Enthusiastic Converts

Experienced users with measured confidence.

24%

AI USAGE	32% daily
CAREER OUTLOOK	73% broadly optimistic
WHO THEY ARE	Cross section of age and experience, but landed on AI being genuinely good for who are they.
EXCITMENT	

Deliberate Skeptics

Experienced, cautious, boundary-setting.

10%

AI USAGE	Rarely — 4% daily.
CAREER OUTLOOK	35% pessimistic
WHO THEY ARE	Oldest group. Nearly half have 10+ yrs experience. More prevalent in UK & Japan. Heavily Graphic Designers.
EXCITMENT	

AI Champions

Optimistic, experimental, shaping new norms.

25% of all creatives



- 85% excited about AI in their creative work. Nobody is skeptical or against.
- 47% use AI every day.
- 78% say AI is very positive for their work.
- 55% are very optimistic about their careers.
- Fewest 18–24–year olds across the groups.
- Photography and graphic design roles are prominent.
- 98% are excited about AI opportunities, 98% see it presenting opportunities, and 94%–97% say it has made their work more satisfying, efficient, and higher quality.
- AI enablement is high across all six tasks.
- These are the Creatives building new norms. Their usage patterns today will become the baseline of tomorrow.

Enthusiastic Converts

Experienced users with measured confidence.

24% of all creatives



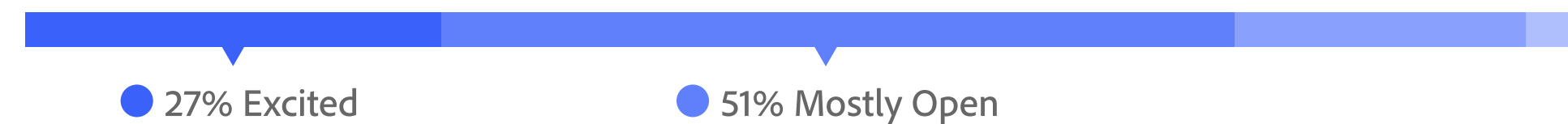
- 58% excited about AI. 36% open but not fully committed.
- Strong daily and weekly AI use.
- 90% find AI positive for their work.
- 73% are optimistic about their careers.
- Similar age and experience profile to the Pragmatic Middle.
- 68% are concerned about copyright — they're enthusiastic users who haven't let go of legitimate concerns.
- Reviewing with clients stands as a strong AI-enablement task, showing a willingness to bring AI into stakeholder-facing work.
- Settled Adopters share a similar enthusiasm level to Early Movers. What distinguishes this group is not just enthusiasm but earned conviction. Their support for AI appears to come through experience rather than instinct.

Pragmatic Middle

Open, engaged, still deciding.

41% of all creatives

EXCITEMENT



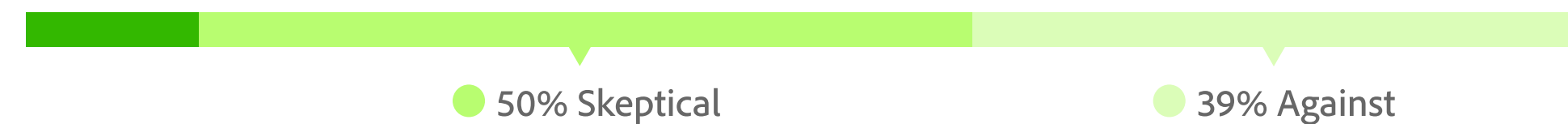
- About half are open to AI but not convinced yet. About a quarter describe themselves as excited.
- Most use AI at least weekly, but not every day.
- 86% say AI has been positive for their work overall.
- 65% feel broadly optimistic about their career.
- Balanced across generations and spread across all roles and experience levels.
- 77% see AI as presenting opportunities, and 92% believe AI shouldn't be trained on artists' work without consent. Their scores on efficiency (79%) and quality (67%) suggest AI is working for them in practice, even if they haven't fully committed ideologically.
- The task of reviewing with clients has low AI enablement — confirming that cautious users draw their hardest line at stakeholder-facing work, regardless of how freely they use AI elsewhere.
- This is the largest group in the study. They have not made up their minds. They are still reachable.

Deliberate Skeptics

Experienced, cautious, boundary-setting.

10% of all creatives

EXCITEMENT



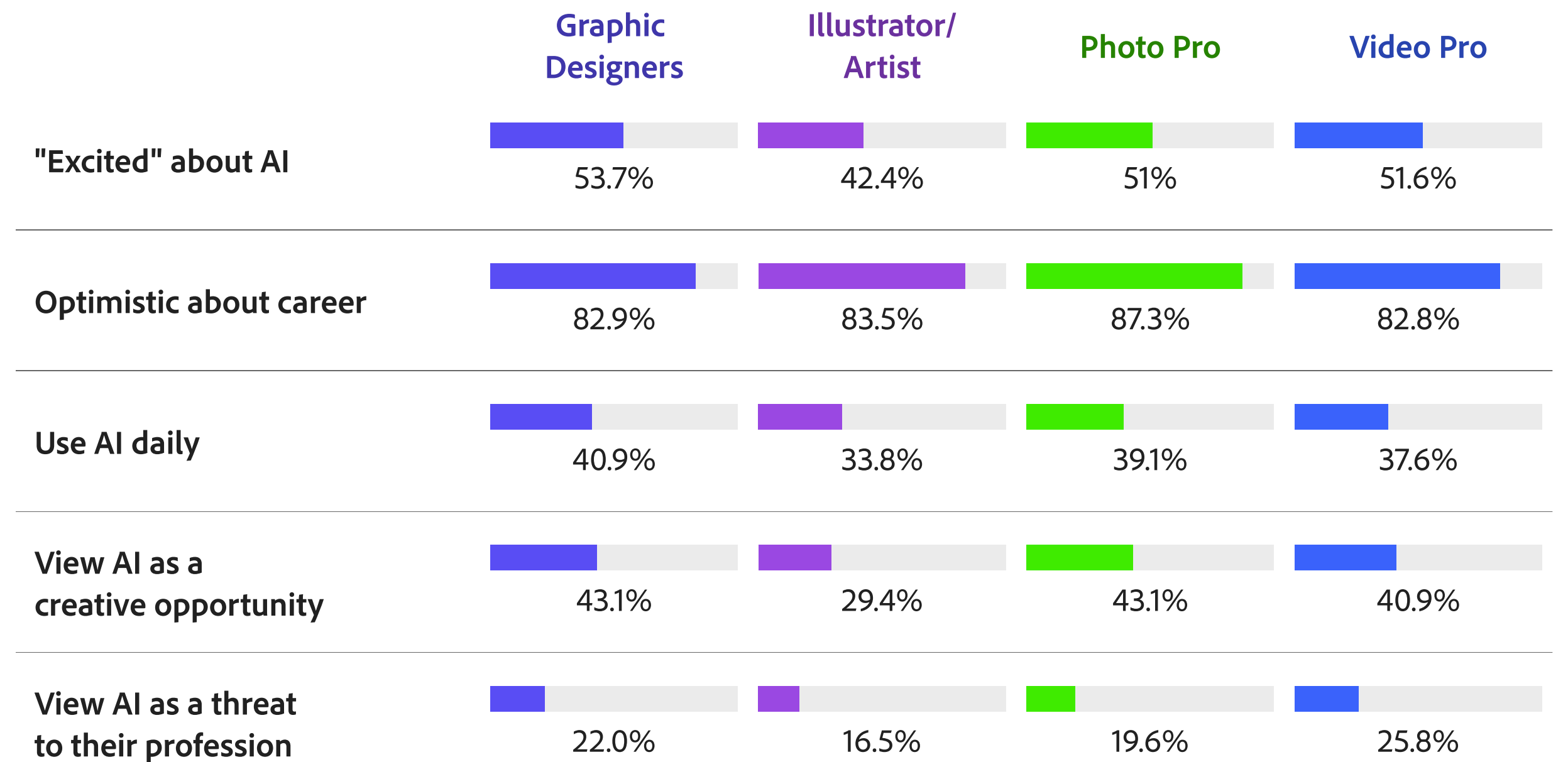
- About 40% of this group are strictly against AI in creative work. Half is mostly skeptical.
- Almost no one uses AI regularly. Only 4% use it daily.
- 56% say AI has been negative for their work.
- 35% feel pessimistic about their career.
- The oldest group in the study. Nearly half have 10+ years of experience. More prevalent in UK and Japan.
- More common for Graphic Designers than other creative professionals.
- 97% believe AI shouldn't train on artists' work without consent, and 87% are concerned about copyright — the highest ethical concern scores in the dataset.
- Brainstorming scores high on creativity and enjoyment, yet AI enablement is low. Their resistance is most acute precisely where their creative investment is highest.
- Their resistance reads as protective, not uninformed. These are experienced Creatives who feel most exposed to what AI is doing to their field.

Creatives are optimistic about their futures, even as AI evolves

The research also shows a meaningful gap between optimism about creative careers and excitement about AI. Among US creative professionals, 84% say they feel optimistic about where their career is headed. Only 50% say they feel excited about AI, while another 30% describe themselves as mostly open but not convinced yet. Creative professionals still have confidence in the value of what they do. Their hesitation is about whether AI strengthens the work in ways that feel useful, respectful, and worth embracing.

The same dynamic appears across global markets, even where overall confidence is lower. UK creative professionals report 67% career optimism but only 36% excitement about AI, while Japanese creative professionals report 41% career optimism and 30% excitement about AI. Although the baseline levels differ, Creatives in each market express greater confidence in their future than in AI itself — suggesting that uncertainty is less about creative careers and more about AI's place within them.

Key metrics by creative role

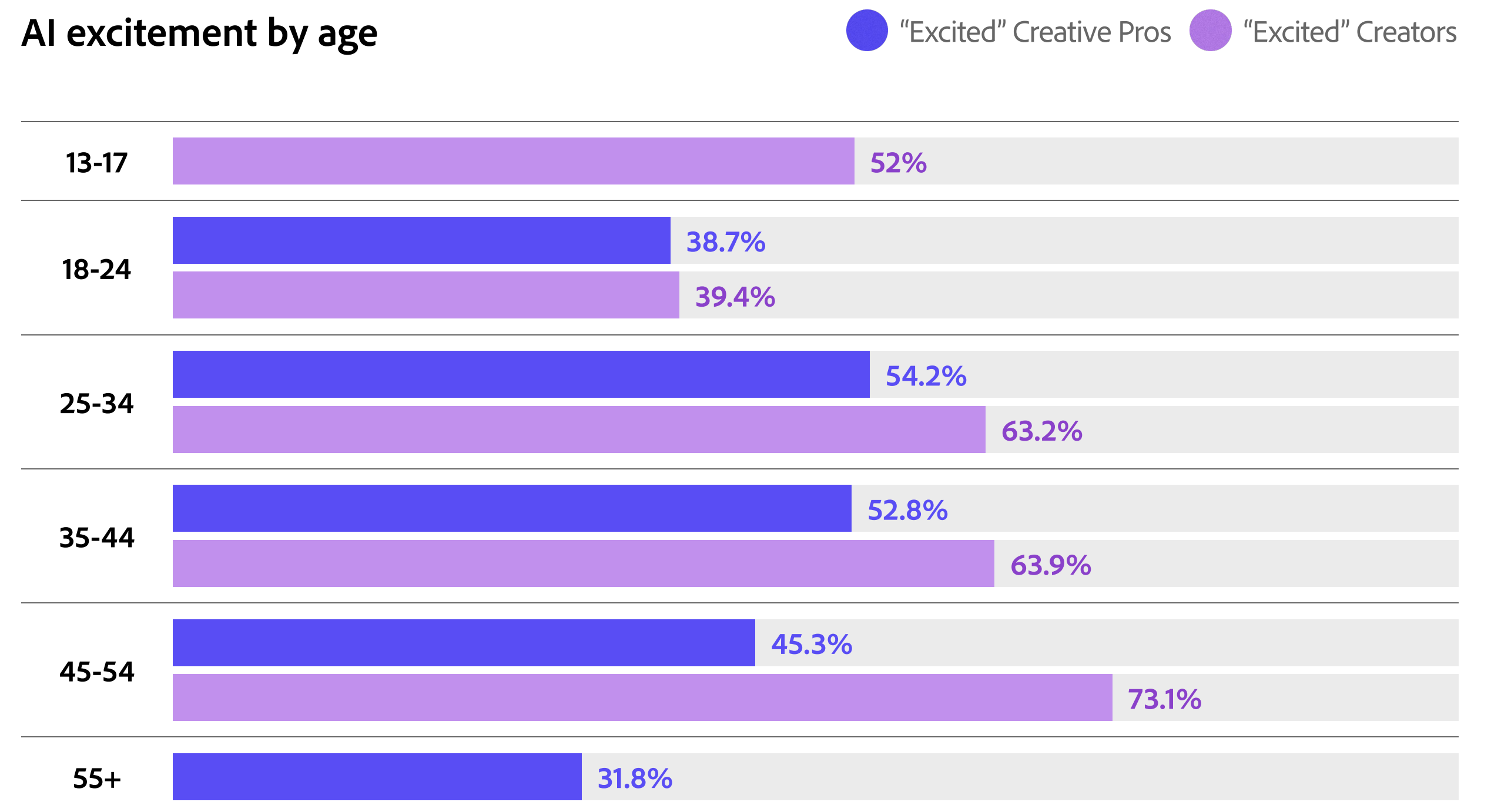


There is an age-based AI enthusiasm gap

Age adds another layer to the story. Contrary to traditional assumptions about digital-native workers, 18- to 24-year-olds consistently report the lowest levels of AI excitement across both creative professionals and creators. In the US, only 39% of creative professionals aged 18 to 24 say they are excited about AI, compared with 54% of those aged 25 to 34. Among creators, the pattern is just as striking: Only 39% of 18- to 24-year-olds are excited, compared with 63% of those aged 25 to 34 and 73% of those 45 and over.

The 18- to 24-year-old enthusiasm gap may reflect differences in career stage as much as differences in age.

AI excitement by age



Reasons 18- to 24-year-olds say they're resisting AI

Ethical & consent concerns

“

It'll take 'inspiration' from artists but... use our work to falsify a creation, rendering it lifeless. Art is human, and AI has no place in art.

“

It steals work from creators without their permission, looks horrible, doesn't serve my creative visions, and hurts the environment.

“

I don't like it stealing other artist artwork and using [it] for their creations.

“

Don't support it ethically and company policy is against it either way.

“

I find it disrespectful to art forms.

Creative ownership & growth

“

I find that using my own personal creative flair is more important than allowing a computer to do it for me.

“

I personally strive to make my own fixes... it helps me to find out what I can improve on as a human.

“

I enjoy learning through mistakes, and AI often skips that process, which is actually where most of my growth happens.

“

Editing by hand feels like a quiet conversation with the image, something gentle and personal that AI shortcuts can't quite replicate.

Practical / not needed yet

“

I'm comfortable with my current tools, prefer full creative control, and am unsure about quality and effort needed to adopt it.

“

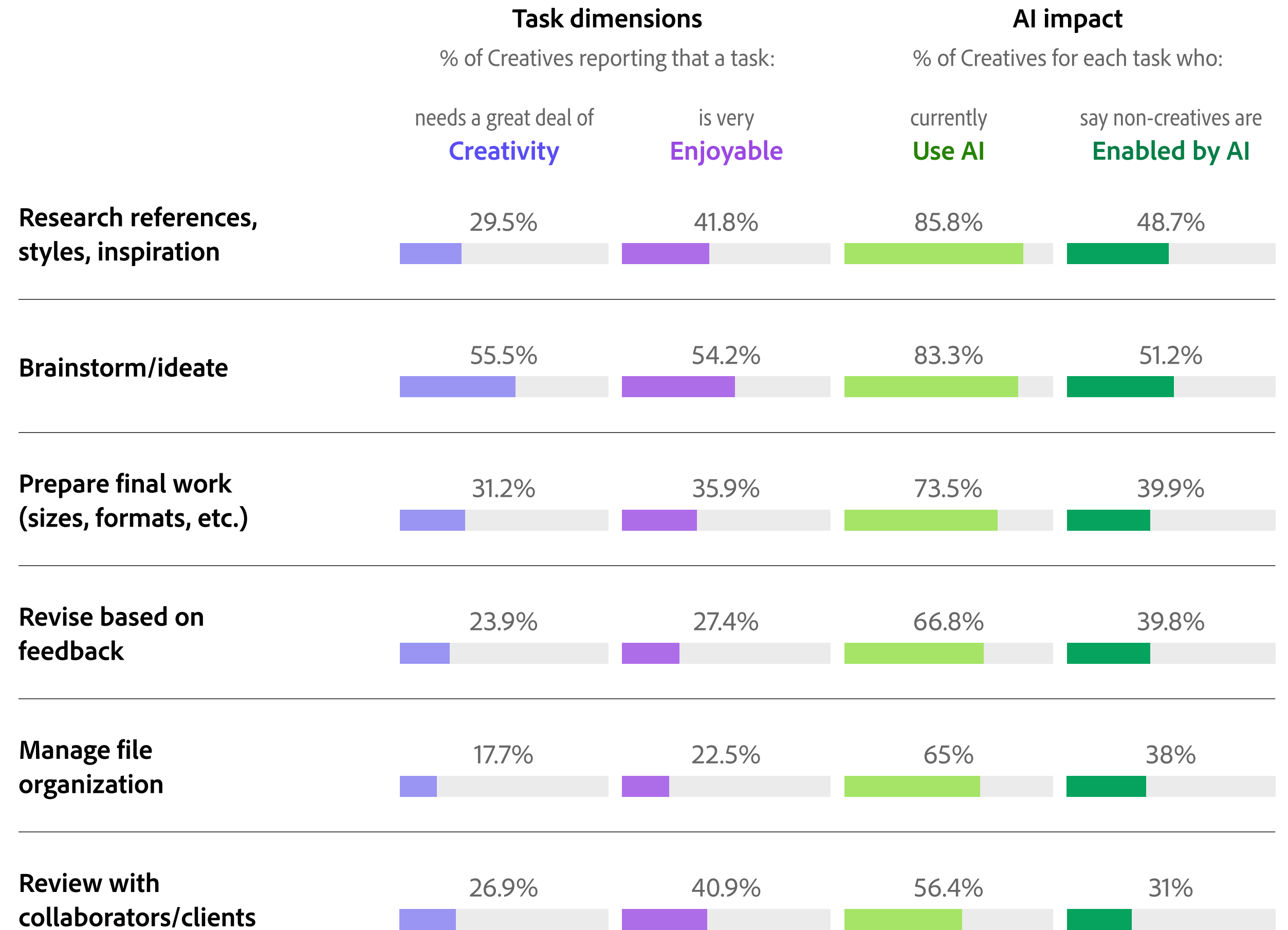
I haven't needed it for anything but editing the background.

Adoption is concentrated in specific parts of the creative process

The creative tasks where AI has gained the most traction are also some of the most valued parts of the process. Among creative professionals who brainstorm as part of their work, 56% say it requires a great deal of creativity and 54% find it very enjoyable. Research follows a similar pattern: 30% consider it highly creative, while 42% rate it as very enjoyable. These same activities are where respondents are most likely to feel AI is broadening participation. More than half of creative professionals who brainstorm say AI enables people without professional training to do it "a lot," and 49% say the same about research.

By contrast, lower-stakes workflow tasks such as file management, formatting, and collaboration had lower AI adoption. Still, this isn't a sign of Creatives resisting AI. Because there are a variety of practical restraints surrounding these tasks, there's nothing that clearly says Creatives aren't open to experimenting with AI.

Analyzing AI adoption



THEME 04

While we cannot say based solely on this data whether Creatives are considering the effects of AI when it comes to introducing non-Creatives into the workflow, it's a notable pattern: The tasks being democratized by AI are the very same tasks where we see the most AI integration.

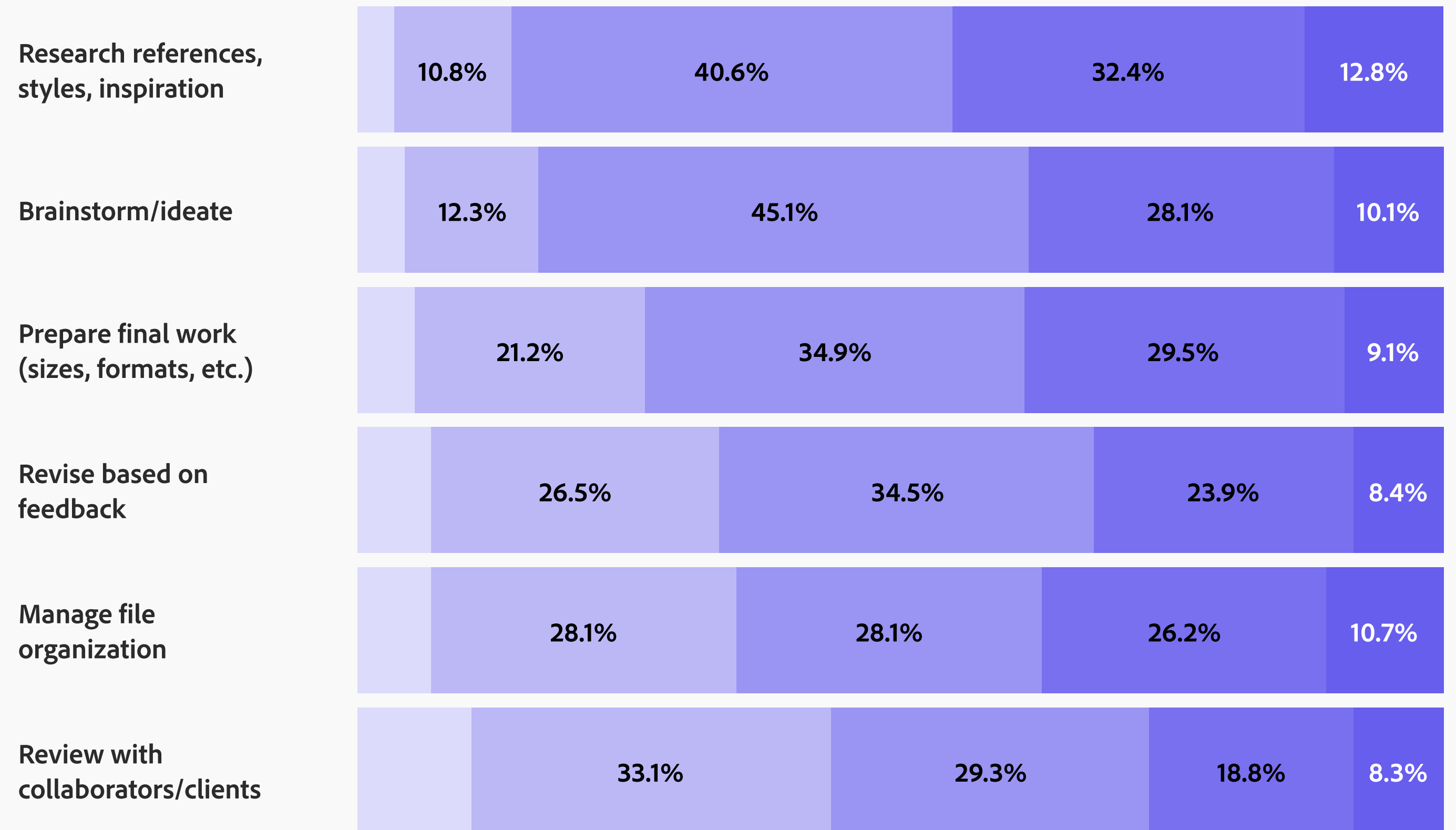
Across every task we measured, creators were more likely than creative professionals to say AI enables people without professional training to do the work. The biggest gap is brainstorming. But higher democratization results do not equal more anxiety. Creators also show higher excitement. For them, AI is an active tool. For creative professionals, feeling democratized tends to register more as a professional concern.

This doesn't hold consistent globally. UK Creatives feel less AI pressure on brainstorming than US Creatives do. Japan tends to show the flattest scores across the board, suggesting lower adoption at this stage.

Across both creative professionals and creators, reviews with collaborators or clients, and file-management tasks show the highest "open but not using" rates.

Most creative tasks are already majority AI-integrated — Review with collaborators is the clear holdout

● Not open
● Open, not using
● Helps some aspects
● Substantial amount
● Performs task



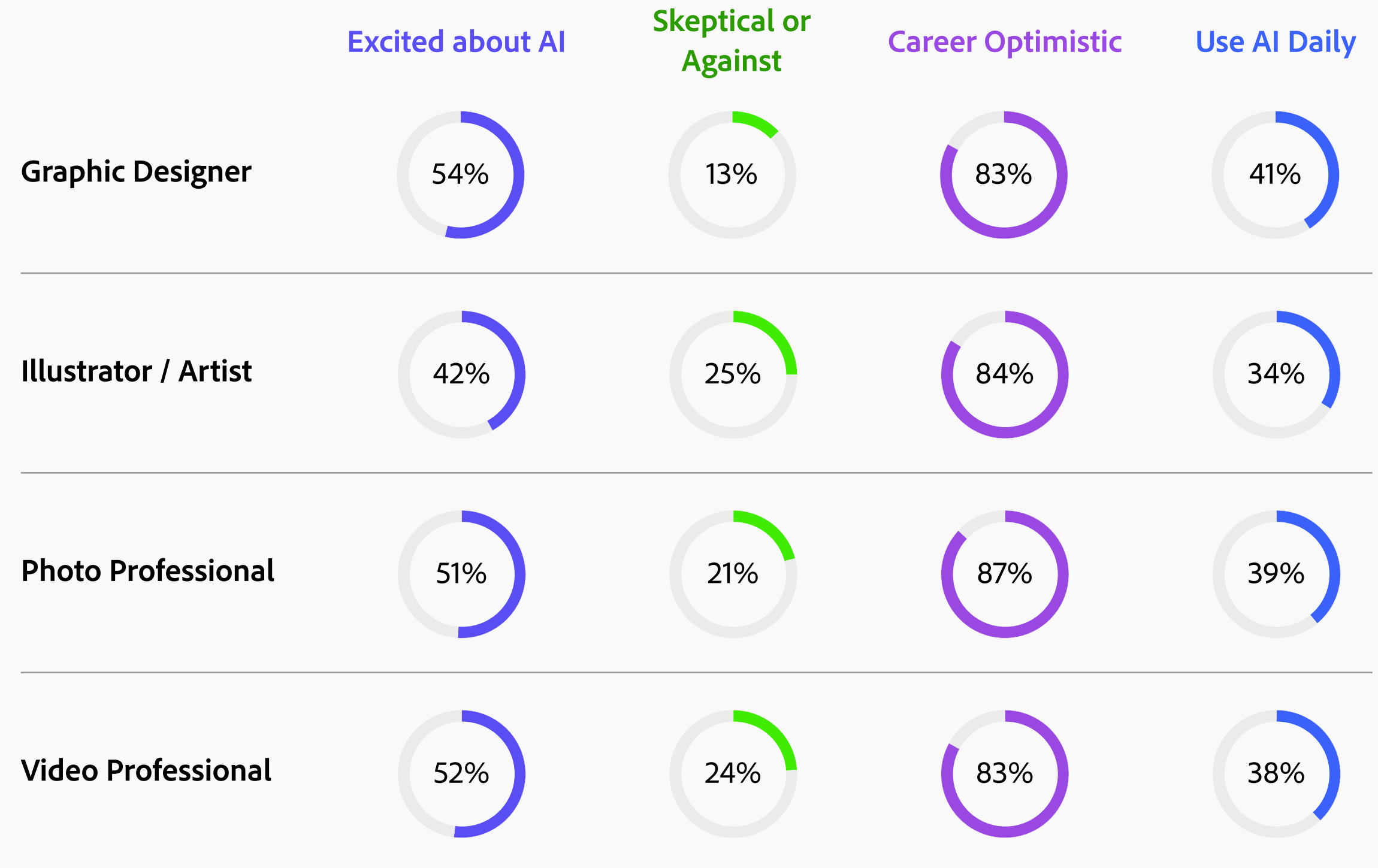
THEME 04

The tasks generating the least resistance are also the ones furthest from creative authorship. Collaboration, file management, and workflow organization are viewed as lower-stakes entry points — practical areas where Creatives can experiment with AI without feeling like they are handing over ownership of the creative process itself.

That distinction matters. The findings suggest many barriers to adoption are still practical rather than ideological. Rather than drawing a simple line between acceptance and resistance, Creatives appear to be evaluating AI task by task, embracing it in some areas while remaining more cautious in others.

How different roles are responding

Not every creative role feels the same level of AI pressure. Illustrators remain among the most cautious groups in the study, while Graphic Designers report high levels of excitement; there remain concerns around IP / consent.



UK AND JAPAN COMPARISON

UK Video Professionals are the most resistant group in any market we surveyed, with 40% against or skeptical. UK Illustrator career optimism falls to 59%, the most deflated of any role in the UK. Japan Graphic Designer career optimism drops to 26%.

Excitement about AI peaks among those with 6-9 years' experience

Meanwhile, enthusiasm and daily AI use peak among Creatives with more established workflows and professional experience. Looking at the data through years of professional experience reveals a similar pattern. Creatives with 6 to 9 years of experience report the highest excitement levels and the highest rates of daily AI use, while those with just 1–2 years in the field are the least enthusiastic and least likely to use AI regularly.

Key metrics by experience

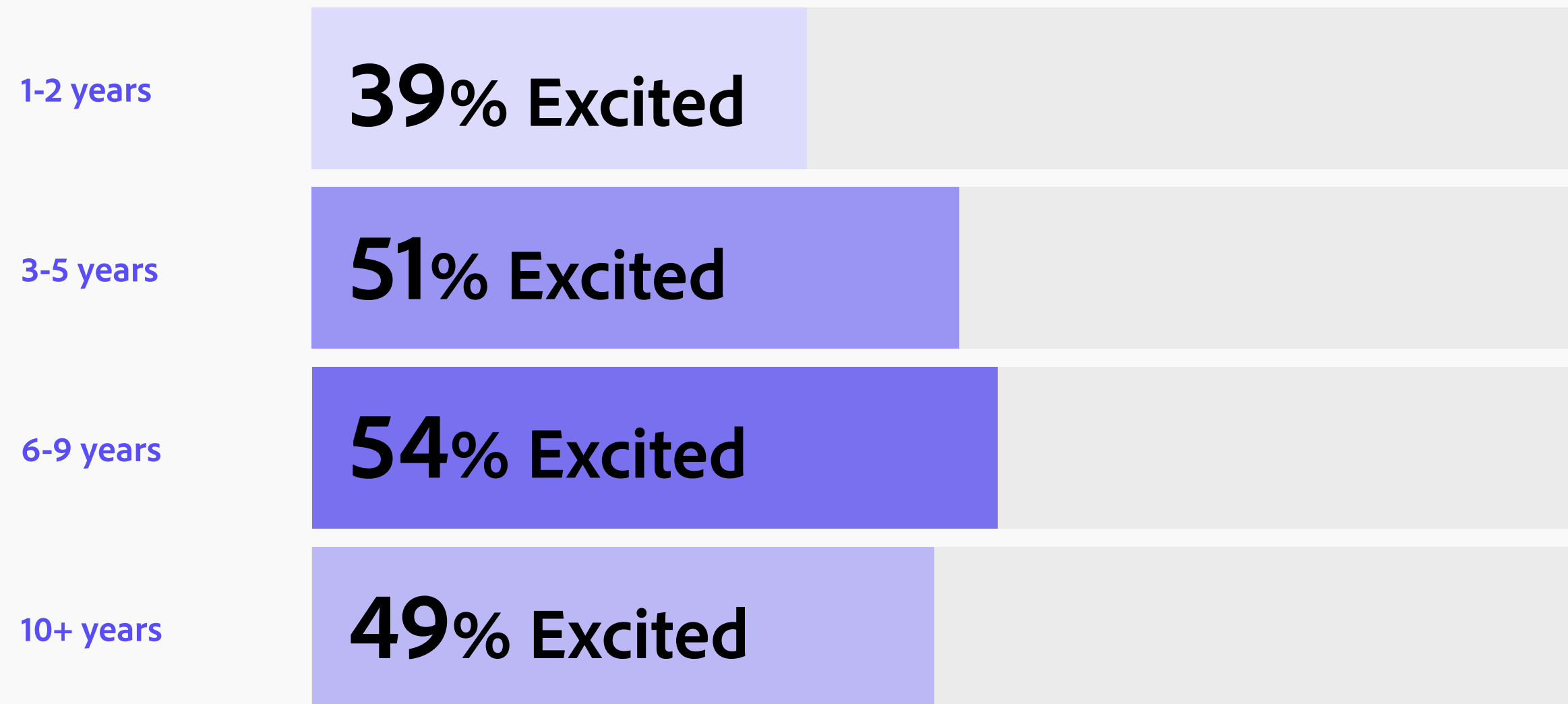
	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6-9 yrs	10+ yrs
% Excited	39%	50.8%	53.6%	48.9%
Threat "Strongly Agree"	22.0%	25.0%	20.0%	16.7%
% Career optimistic	82.9%	87.1%	85.7%	77.8%
IP concern "Strongly Agree"	34.1%	45.5%	34.3%	42.2%
% Use AI daily	17.6%	34.5%	46.9%	39.0%

THEME 05

The 6- to 9-year sweet spot holds in the UK (43% excited), but UK veterans with 10+ years drop to 31%, well below the 49% US figure. In Japan, most creative professionals in the sample have 10+ years of experience, and only 25% are excited about AI.

The 3- to 5-year group shows the highest concern about AI. They have likely invested enough in their skills to be aware of the stakes.

AI confidence rises with professional stability



THEME 05

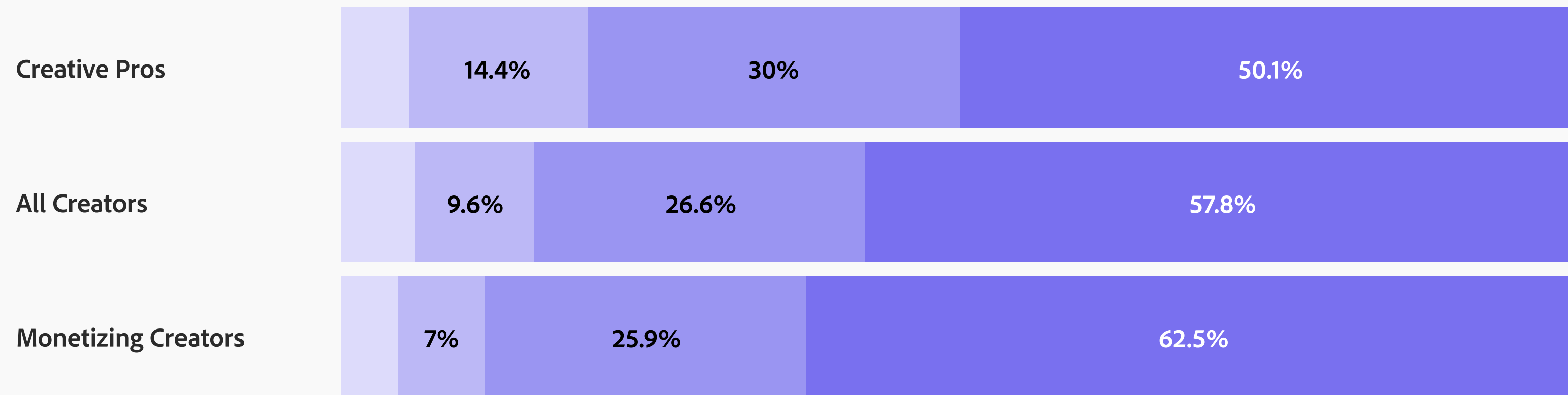
Creators who earn income from their work report the highest excitement levels in the study, alongside professionals with 6–9 years of experience. These groups also report the strongest daily AI usage, suggesting that confidence with AI grows once Creatives feel secure enough in their craft to integrate the technology into existing ways of working.

The data shows that those with work experience, workflow stability, or economic incentive are more willing to integrate AI.

The Creatives adopting AI most successfully are not necessarily the youngest or most experimental. They are often the people with enough experience, workflow stability, or economic incentive to integrate AI without feeling displaced by it.

Monetizing Creators are the most AI-bullish group — outpacing even Creative Pros

Strictly against Skeptical Mostly open Excited



Creatives are concerned about IP and consent

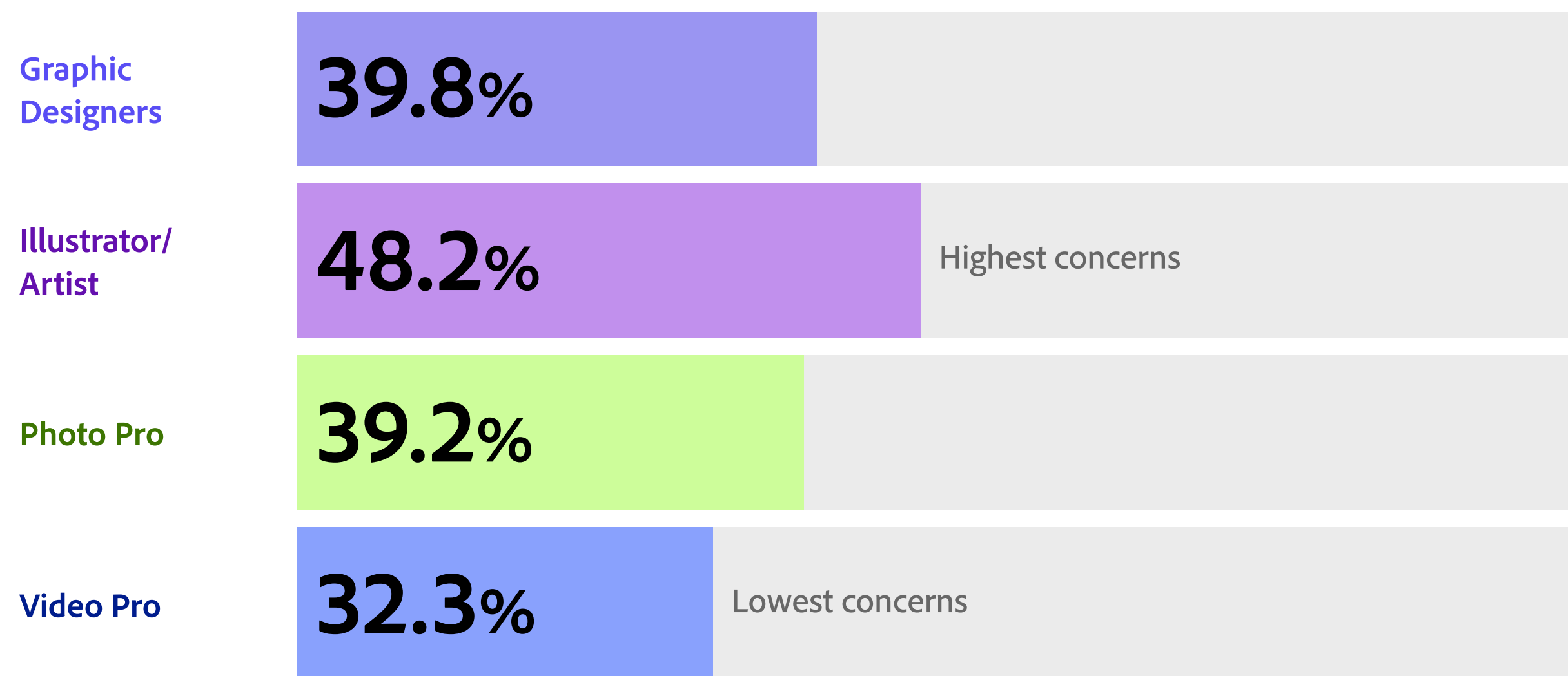
Still, creative professionals are not evaluating AI on capability alone. Across the study, concerns around ownership, consent, and creative control consistently emerged as some of the strongest factors shaping how Creatives engage with the technology.

Even among highly engaged users, skepticism around copyright and training data remains widespread. The findings suggest that enthusiasm for AI and concern about its consequences are not opposing mindsets — many Creatives hold both at once.

This tension is most evident among Graphic Designers. They report some of the highest excitement levels around AI, while also expressing concern around IP. Their response reflects a broader pattern throughout the study: Creatives are often willing to explore AI's possibilities, but they want greater clarity around how creative work is sourced, protected, and attributed.

IP & consent concern by creative role

% who strongly agree: AI models should not be trained on artists' work without consent

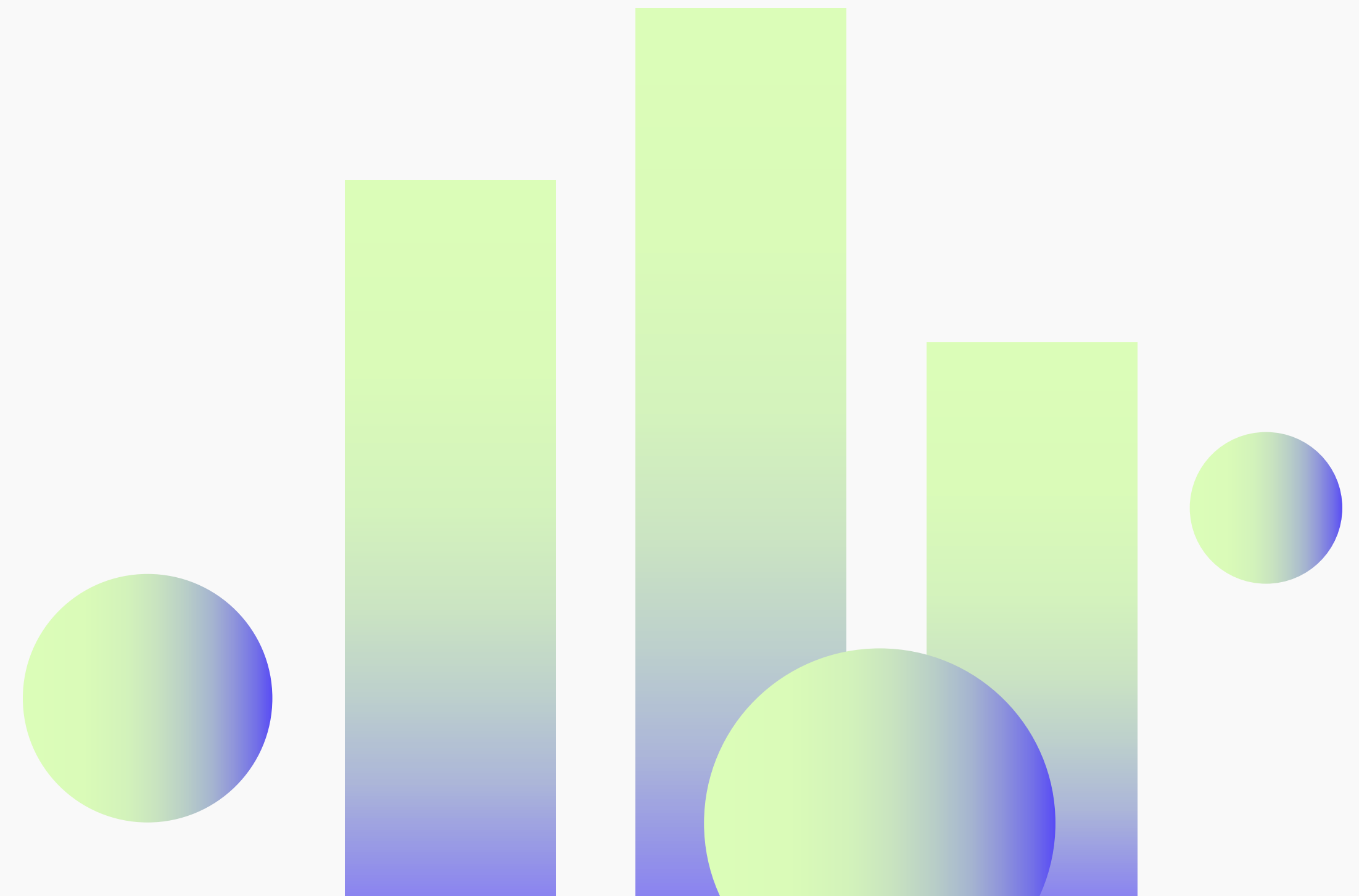


— THEME 06

The relationship between optimism and concern appears throughout the data. Photo Professionals report the highest career optimism levels, while Video Professionals express the strongest threat perception. One possible explanation is that AI's impact is not evenly distributed across creative disciplines. Video Professionals are already seeing rapid advances in tools that assist or automate editing workflows, while many photography roles still rely heavily on the human act of image capture, where AI has yet to meaningfully replace professional expertise. Illustrators remain among the most cautious audiences overall, reporting lower excitement and higher skepticism than other creative roles.

Importantly, ethical concerns are not limited to the most resistant groups. Even among Creatives who use AI regularly, concerns around consent, copyright, and creative ownership remain elevated. For lighter users, these concerns often appear before the benefits of AI feel tangible or personal. That makes trust more than a communications challenge — it becomes a prerequisite for broader adoption. If AI is going to play a lasting role in creative work, trust cannot be treated as an afterthought.

Taken together, the findings point to a creative community that is thoughtful, engaged, and very much in the middle of defining what comes next. AI is already part of the landscape, but its role in creative work is still being shaped by the people doing that work every day.



AI brings with it clear opportunity

What emerged from this research was not a creative industry dividing cleanly into believers and skeptics. It was a creative community actively negotiating the terms on which AI becomes part of creative work.

Creatives are craving assistance that goes beyond helping people move faster. They want support in the parts of the process where ideas form, craft develops, and ownership still matters deeply, from tools that are designed with respect for how creativity works. The question remains not whether AI has arrived, but how creative people are choosing to work with it, question it, and shape it into something that serves the future of creative expression.

WHAT WE HEARD

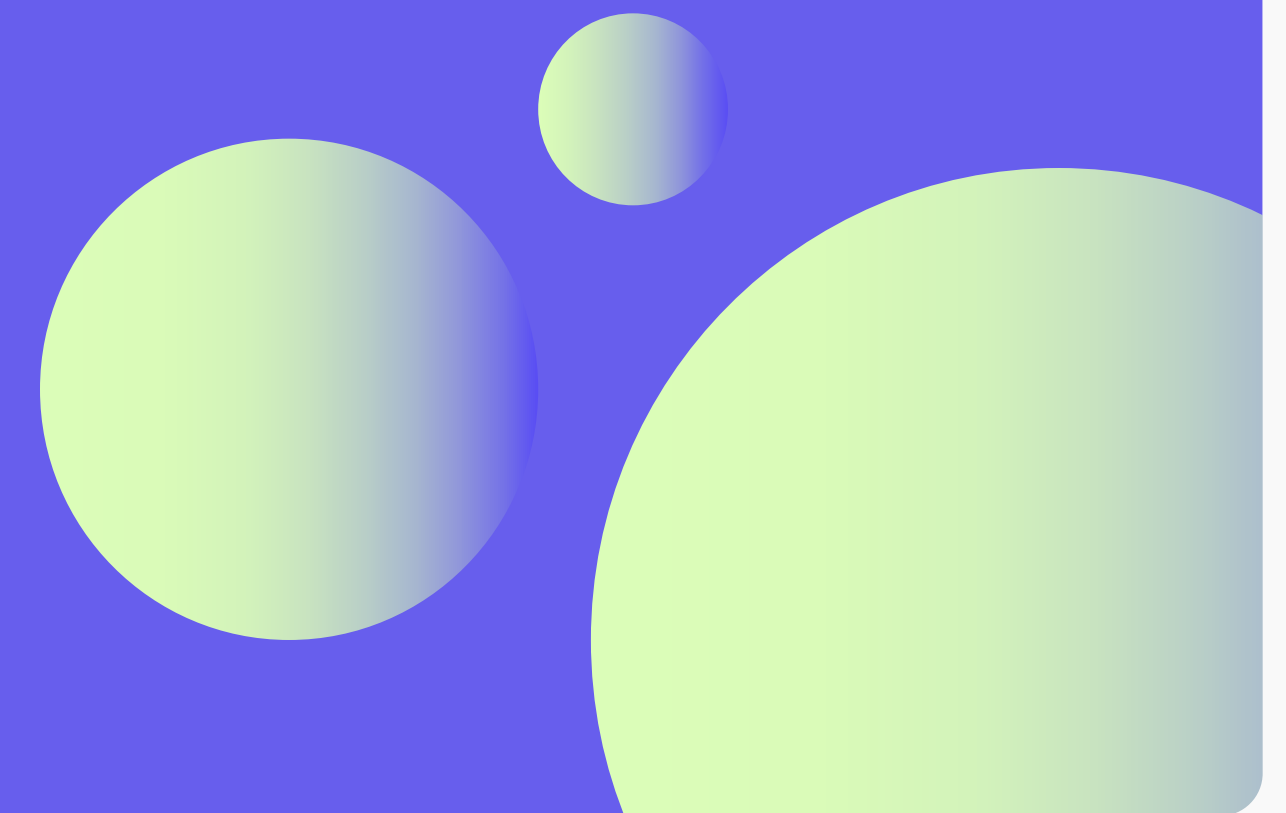
A community still defining what comes next

- Creatives are not responding to AI uniformly. Most remain open, engaged, and still actively deciding where AI belongs in their work.
- The dominant tension in the data is not fear of technology, but uncertainty around creative value, authorship, and identity.
- Career optimism and AI enthusiasm are not the same thing. Many Creatives feel confident about their future while remaining cautious about AI's role within it.
- Younger Creatives are among the least excited about AI, and they stated ethical concerns — as well as a desire to grow creatively — as reasons.
- Brainstorming, ideation, and research are among the tasks most associated with AI use, and they are also some of the tasks Creatives feel are being democratized by AI.
- The data suggests Creatives are not deciding whether AI belongs in creative work — they are deciding where it belongs.
- The benefits of AI are currently landing most clearly among Creatives with established workflows, professional confidence, and direct economic incentives to adopt.
- Trust, consent, and ownership remain central concerns across every segment, including among many of the most enthusiastic AI users.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The creative community is already living with AI. The question now is not whether Creatives will engage with it, but how they will shape its role within the creative process — where it enhances craft, where it supports exploration, and where human judgment remains essential.

The tools that resonate most deeply with Creatives will not simply help people move faster. They will consider the moments where ideas form, perspective develops, and ownership still matters deeply. Because the future of creative AI will ultimately be shaped not only by what the technology can do, but by how Creatives choose to use it in coordination with how they feel about their identity and the meaning of creativity itself.



About this research

This report was developed in partnership between Adobe and Bond Brand Loyalty, combining Adobe's deep understanding of the creative ecosystem with Bond's expertise in customer intelligence and engagement. Fieldwork was conducted by The Directions Group, using a survey designed by Nick Brown and Bazile Lanneau (Adobe Design Research & Strategy).

Who we asked

We gathered feedback from nearly 2,000 creative professionals (in roles like graphic design, illustration, photography, and video) and independent creators who earn income from their work in the US, the UK, and Japan. If a respondent began the survey and answered that they were not at all familiar with AI, they were not served any more questions, and their answers were not considered among the data.

How we looked at the data

Looking at the data, we sought to understand where and how Creatives (including creative professionals and content creators) were aligned and where they differed by role (Graphic Designer, Illustrator, Photo Professional, Video Professional), years of experience, age, and geography. We also looked at Creatives on the macro level, understanding how their attitudes toward AI and the creative field differed, to show how people are really clustering around AI.

What we asked about

We asked participants to share how AI is shaping their creative lives today and where they think it is headed. Questions covered their overall feelings about AI, whether it has made their work more satisfying, efficient, or higher quality, and how excited they are about what AI makes possible. We also asked about the issues that matter most to the creative community, including consent and copyright, so we could understand not just how Creatives are using AI, but how they feel about the terms on which it is being introduced to their field.

A final note

The findings shared in this report are what people believe about their own experiences with AI and their personal perception of the market.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Be part of the conversation

As this conversation continues to evolve, share where you stand on social, pinpoint the findings that you found most surprising, and let everyone know how AI is reshaping creative work, identity, and ambitions.