

Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

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with



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Creative Industries Skills Audits

Key findings

Heather Carey

Director, Work Advance

Sub-sector audits: the detail

11 x sub-sector
audits providing
rich, granular
'bottom-up' LMI

**ADVERTISING
AND MARKETING**



Creative Industries Skills Audits

ARCHITECTURE



Creative Industries Skills Audits

CRAFTS



Creative Industries Skills Audits

**DESIGN AND
DESIGNER
FASHION**



Creative Industries Skills Audits

**IT, SOFTWARE
AND COMPUTER
SERVICES**



Creative Industries Skills Audits

**VIDEO
GAMES**



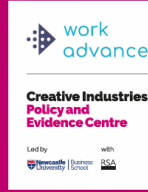
Creative Industries Skills Audits

SCREEN



Creative Industries Skills Audits

**MUSEUMS,
GALLERIES AND
LIBRARIES**



Creative Industries Skills Audits

PUBLISHING



Creative Industries Skills Audits

MUSIC



Creative Industries Skills Audits

**PERFORMING
AND VISUAL
ARTS**



Creative Industries Skills Audits

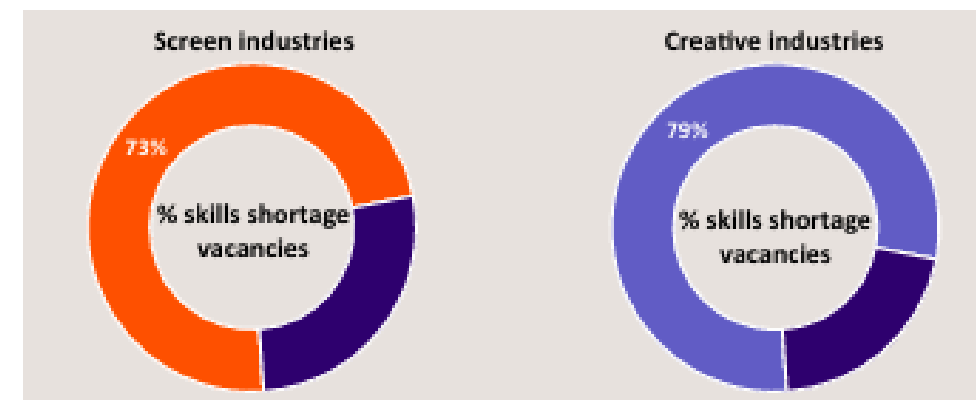
Sub-sector audits: the detail

A robust, systematic and comparable assessment of:

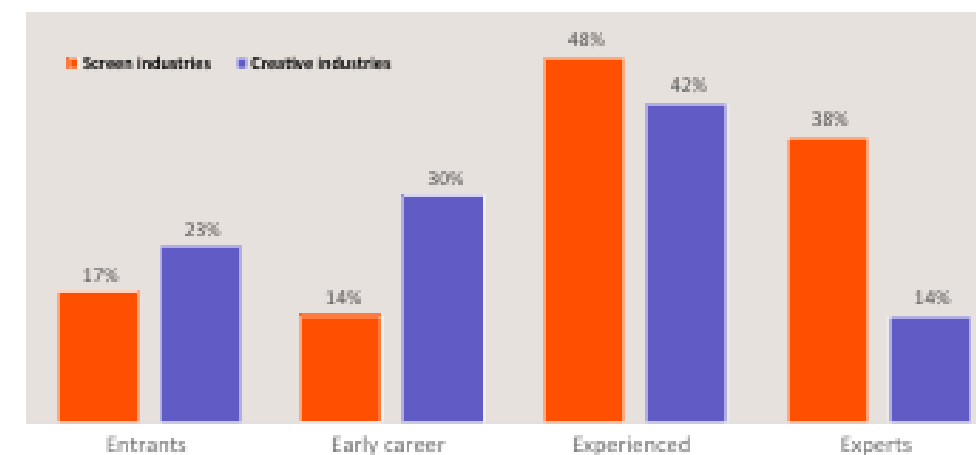
- The picture of skills shortages today
- Skills gaps amongst the existing workforce
- Jobs and skills priorities for the future
- Barriers to and enablers of training

Skills shortages

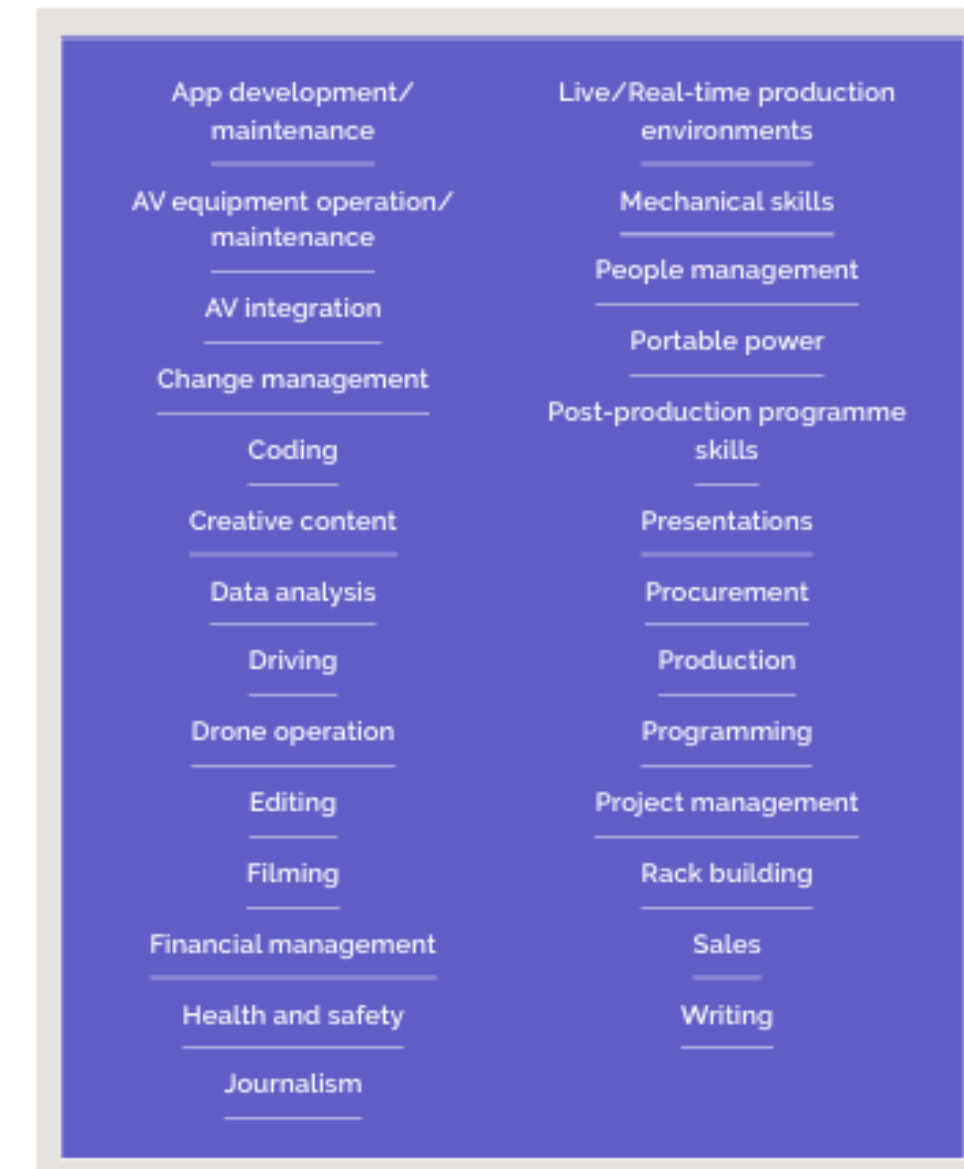
Hard-to-fill vacancies caused by skills shortages, 2025



Seniority of roles with skills shortages, 2025



Specialist skills shortages, 2025

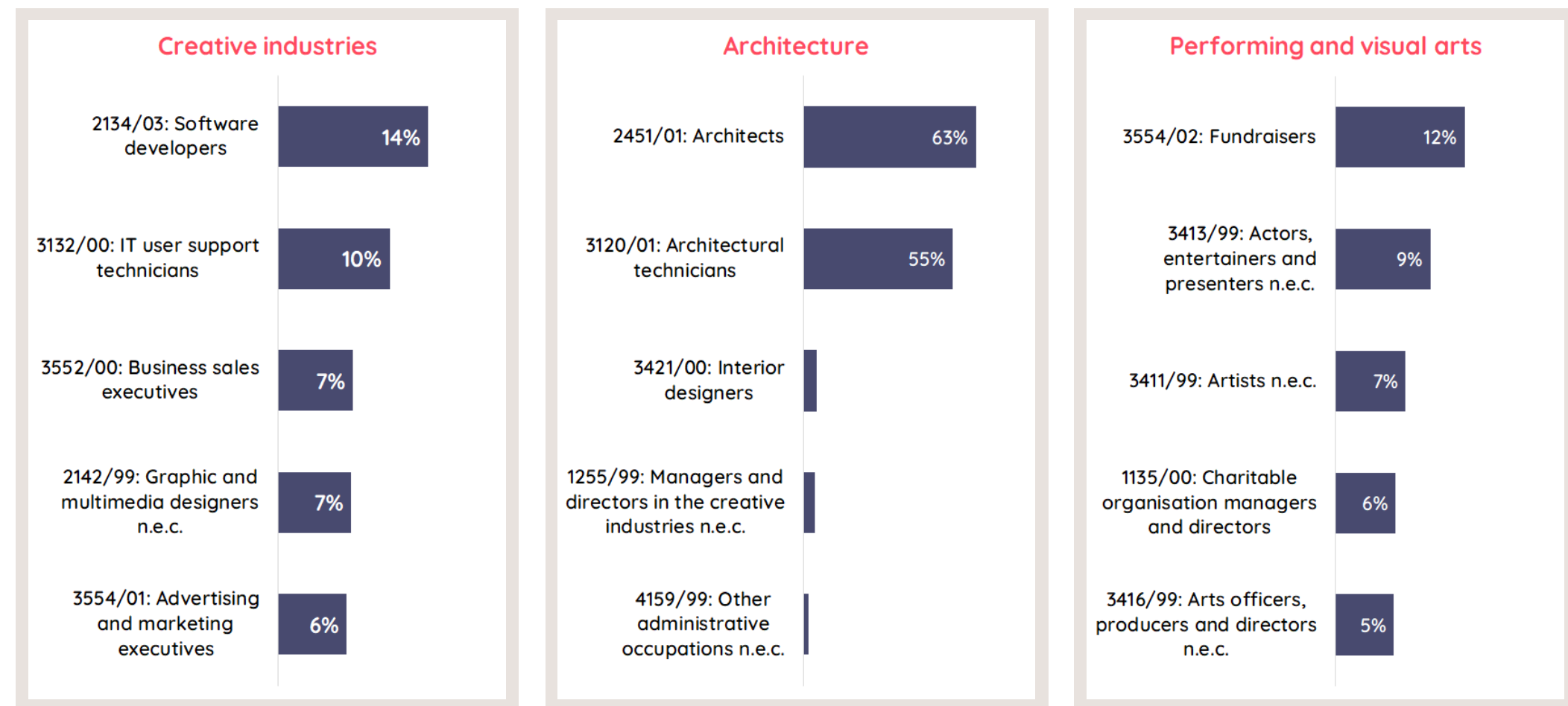


Sub-sector audits: the detail

And this detail matters...

- The make-up of the creative industries can skew the picture and mask the distinct needs of creative sub-sectors
- Sometimes the issues are highly nuanced – specific jobs, specialist skills, distinct technologies

Occupations in demand in future, 2025



CI Summary Report: cross-cutting themes

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SKILLS AUDITS

Creative Industries
Summary Report

Heather Carey and
Lesley Giles (Work Advance)
Bernard Hay (Newcastle University)

May 2026

Figure 3.8: Top five hard-to-fill occupations in different creative sub-sectors, 2025
% of recruiting employers that had experienced difficulty filling vacancies



The use of AI technologies is growing rapidly across the globe (McKinsey, 2025; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2026). 2025 was seen by many as a 'watershed' moment, with significant advancements in Large Language Model (LLM) based generative AI (GenAI) shifting AI technologies from technical domains into mainstream use. Foundational models, the OpenAI's ChatGPT-5 and Anthropic's Claude3.5, have vastly extended capabilities (coding, complex reasoning, ideation) while specialised models can now generate text, video, images and music and create immersive interactive 3D environments (UK Government, 2026).

The Creative Industries Skills Audits were undertaken against this backdrop. And while the research was designed prior to these developments and has not looked explicitly at the impact of AI, it is clear these new technologies are already having a profound impact on the sector.

As is the case across the economy (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2025; Skills England, 2025a; UK Government, 2026), we find creative sub-sectors are at different positions with regards to the scale of AI impact and the extent of AI adoption.

In advertising and marketing, for example, AI was already seen to be driving industry transformation, with dramatic shifts in content creation, workflows and commercial models, and major industry restructuring. In museums, galleries and libraries, AI tools are increasingly used for collection inventories, documentation and archival work. Research by RIBA found that 60% of the 500 architects surveyed were using AI in their work, in design, bid creation, project management, report writing and environmental sustainability analysis (RIBA, 2025). In screen, the Skills Audits suggest growing use of AI across a very wide range of industry processes - from administrative tasks to idea generation. Renay, digital content creation and in post-production, echoing research by the CoSTAR Foresight Lab. Reported screen sectors were at the vanguard of AI use and experimentation, though often beneath the surface, was widespread. Finney, Tansel and Coughlan (2025). In games, AI technologies are increasingly viewed as a tool for creators but are also being used to augment gaming experiences. In contrast, the Skills Audits suggest that some sub-sectors are earlier in the journey. For instance, in craft and performing and visual arts, fewer employers highlighted AI and stakeholders engaged through the process suggested the industry was just beginning to understand how to apply these new technologies.

A shared concern across all creative sectors is the risk that AI poses to creator rights and commercial models. At the time of writing, the UK government is currently re-assessing its policy position (UK Parliament, 2026) following the recent House of Lords Communication and Digital Committee's report, which concluded the unlicensed use of protected works, and limited transparency from developers on how their models are trained, leaves rights holders unclear on how their content has been used and unable to enforce their rights (House of Lords, 2026). The Skills Audits suggest many creative firms use a pressing need to build awareness across their business of IP and copyright protection and wider work is calling for further guidance and support for freelancers to navigate AI, particularly around rights, income, and practical use of tools (Creators' Writers Alliance (CWA), 2025; Institute for the Future of Work (IFOW), 2026).

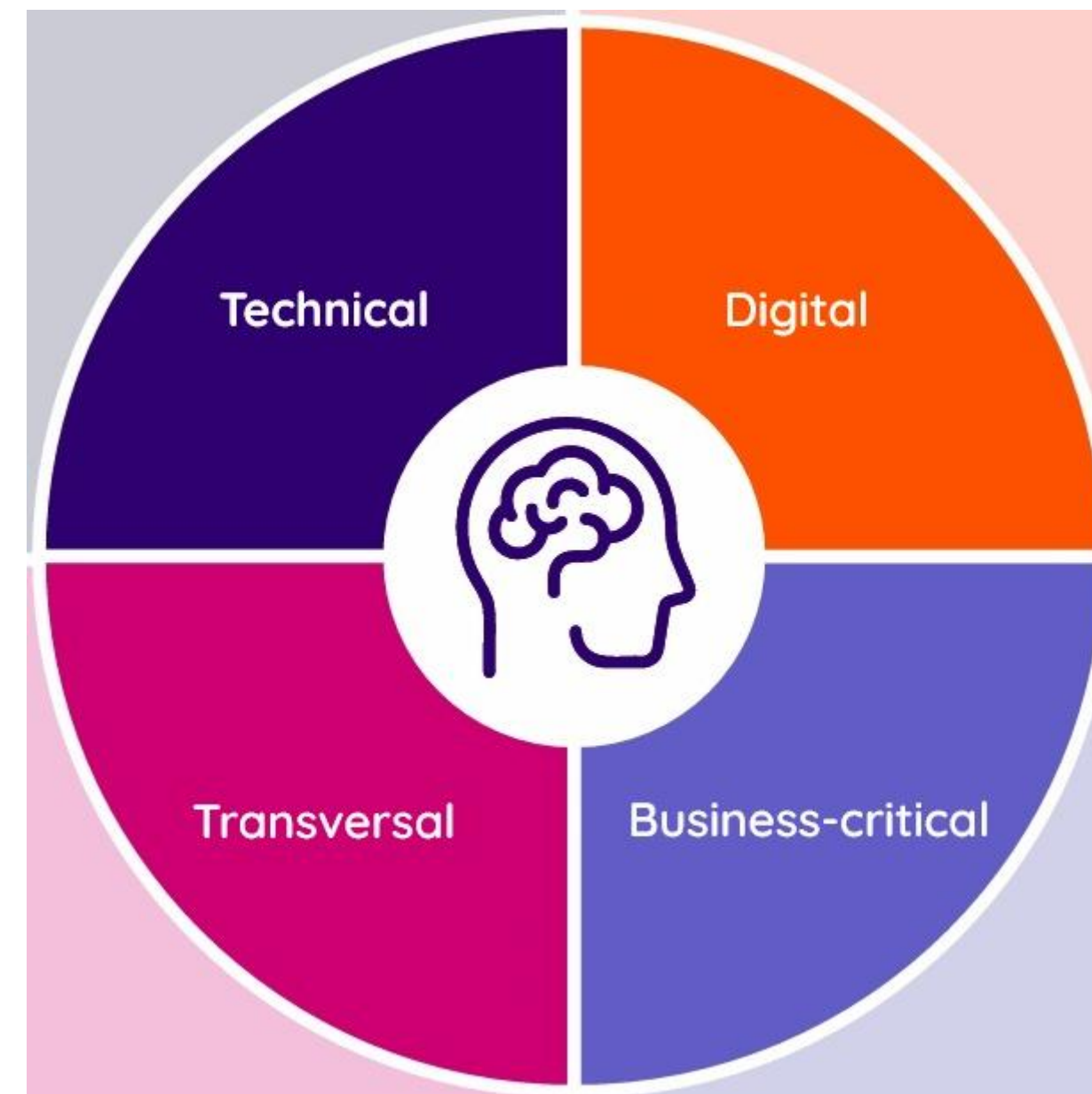
Alongside concerns surrounding creator rights, there was considerable discussion about the impact of AI on jobs and skills in the creative industries. Some highlighted the risk that AI might displace entry-level opportunities, especially in advertising and marketing and computer games, raised concerns that AI had the potential to displace junior workers, noting that few

Examples of AI adoption in selected creative sub-sectors

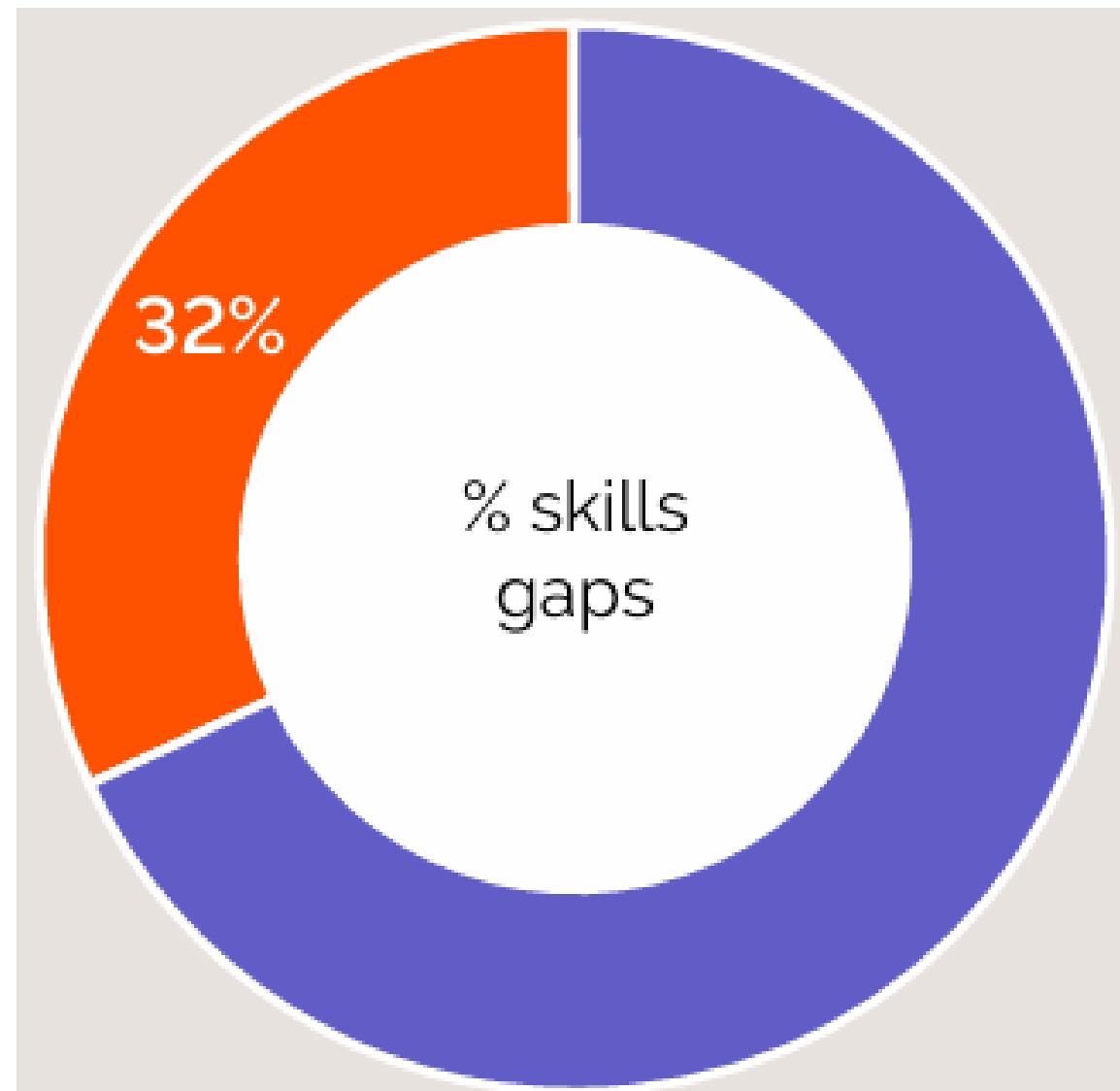
<p>Advertising and marketing</p> <p>AI is used to generate ad copy, images and video variations at scale, test and optimise campaigns in real time, and automate audience targeting through predictive analytics. Emerging practices such as GenAI optimisation (GEO) reflect a wider industry shift towards marketing in AI-mediated search and content environments.</p>	<p>Architecture</p> <p>AI is used to generate design-ready production and rendering building systems, automated report and bid writing, and project planning. It is also applied to simulate energy use, carbon footprint and environmental performance to inform sustainable design decisions.</p>	<p>Design and designer fashion</p> <p>AI is used to generate visual concepts, create design variations, and support prototyping and production. It is also used to analyse trends and consumer data, informing product development and personalised design.</p>
<p>Screen</p> <p>AI is used for script drafting and story development, automated editing and scene assembly, visual effects generation, character creation, and post-production tools such as colour grading and sound processing. It is also used in virtual production environments.</p>	<p>IT, software and computer services</p> <p>AI is used to build and deploy machine learning models, automate coding through AI assistants, detect anomalies in cybersecurity and analyse large datasets. It underpins applications such as recommendation engines, natural language processing and predictive systems.</p>	<p>Computer games</p> <p>AI is used to create adaptive gameplay, help non-player character behaviour, difficulty scaling, generate assets such as environments or dialogue, and streamline development workflows. It also supports analytics on player behaviour to refine game design and monetisation.</p>
<p>Publishing</p> <p>AI is used for automated editing (grammar, style, summarisation), translation and content generation for articles or marketing recommendation systems. It also supports audience analysis and the production of multimedia formats such as audiobooks and interactive content.</p>	<p>Museums, galleries and libraries</p> <p>AI is used to catalogue and tag collections, help image recognition, support archival research (eg text analysis), and develop interactive exhibits or personalised digital guides. It also underpins recommendation systems and audience insight tools.</p>	<p>Music</p> <p>AI is used to generate melodies, harmonies and sound textures, assist mixing and mastering, and create adaptive soundtracks for games or virtual environments. It also supports generating and real-time audio manipulation in live or digital settings.</p>

1. Skills matter most

72% of employers with hard-to-fill vacancies suggest the main cause was candidates lacking the skills required for the role. **19%** point to a lack of qualifications.



2. The skills half-life is short



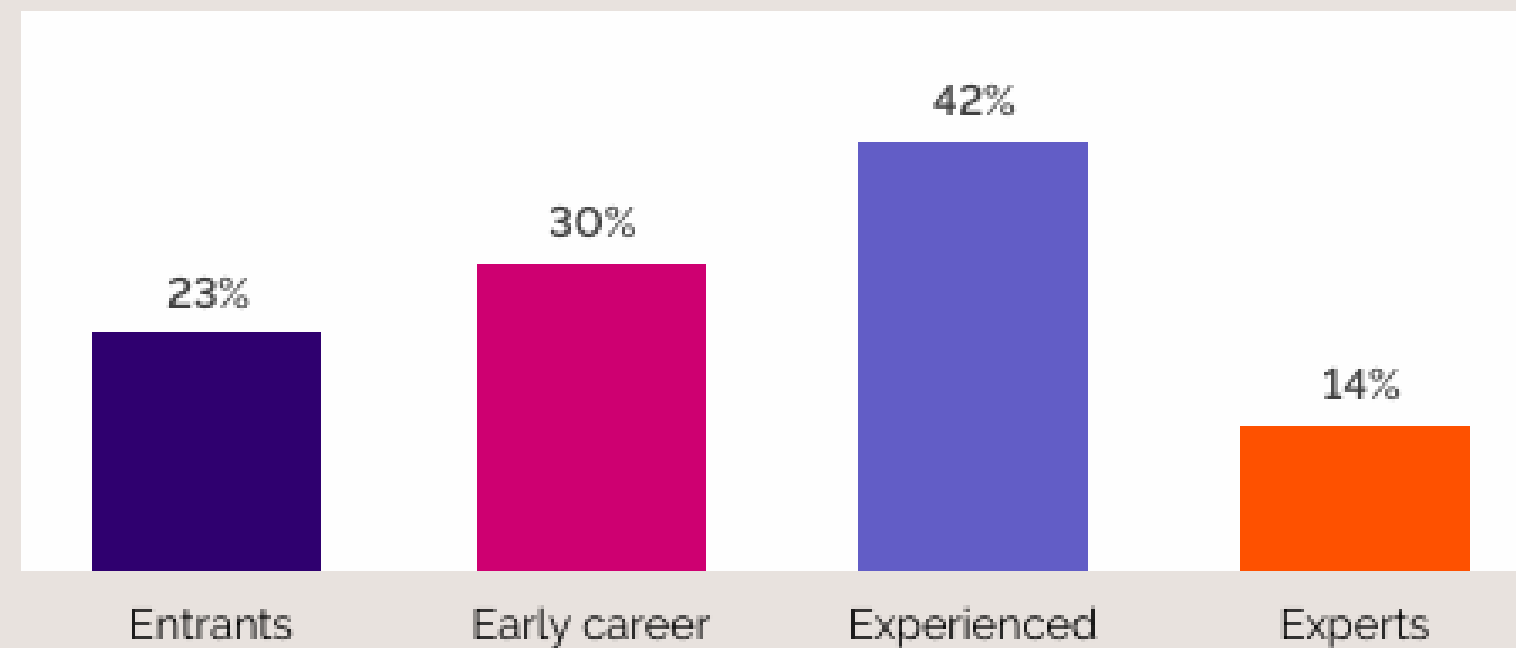
32% of creative firms report skills deficiencies among their workforce and **23%** of those that do suggest skills gaps are driven by new technology.

3. Skills challenges are most acute at mid-career level

42% of employers with skills shortages and **37%** of those with skills gaps suggest their skills challenges concern experienced staff.

Seniority of skills shortage occupations, 2025

	Years post full-time education
Entrants	< 2 years
Early career	2-5 years
Experienced	5-10 years
Experts	10+ years



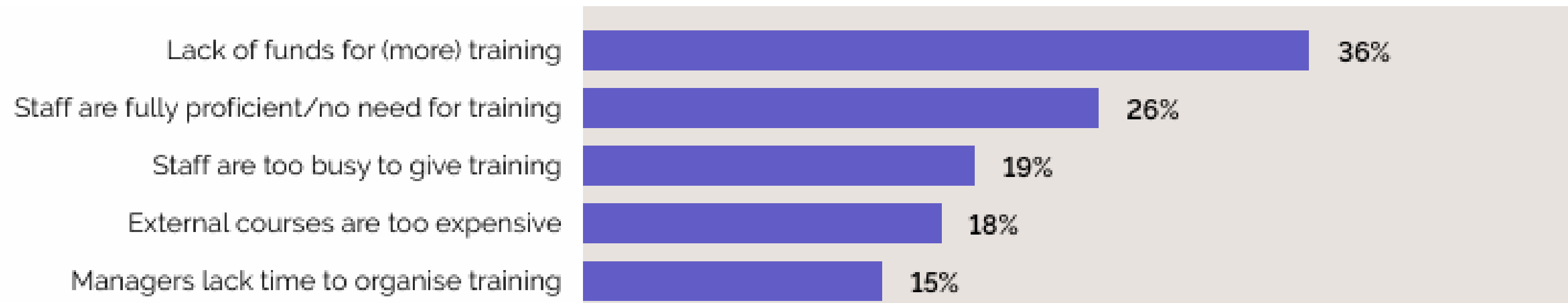
4. Skills challenges threaten to undermine growth potential



21% of employers with skills challenges suggest these are hindering innovation and **19%** said they were having to scale back growth or investment plans.

5. Structural features hinder investment & collaboration

Barriers to training, 2025



35% of creative industries employers are keen to collaborate with others to develop relevant training provision. Just **11%** achieve this in practice.

5 Skills Priorities for the UK Creative Industries

- 1 Forward-looking, three-dimensional skills intelligence
- 2 Embed transversal, digital and sustainability skills across education and skills provision to develop the 'alchemy' of skills needed by the sector
- 3 Strengthen and diversify talent pathways into key creative industries jobs
- 4 Precision upskilling that drives innovation and growth
- 5 A stronger partnership between government, education and industry

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Thank you.

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