

# MUSEUMS, GALLERIES AND LIBRARIES



**Creative Industries  
Policy and Evidence Centre**

Led by  
 Newcastle University Business School

with  
 RSA

# Creative Industries Skills Audits

# Creative Industries Skills Audits

## MUSEUMS, GALLERIES AND LIBRARIES

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### About Work Advance

Work Advance undertakes research, analysis and evaluation to advance understanding of developments in the world of work. We drive practical improvements in policies, programmes and practices that support inclusive and sustainable growth; productive businesses and better management practices; a skilled, agile and healthy workforce; and stronger, more vibrant and cohesive local communities.

Through our networks, we provide research, policy and consultancy services to a range of partners, including businesses large and small, trade unions, professional bodies, policymakers and wider practitioners.

Work Advance adopts an approach that is client-centred. We aim to secure practical solutions through blended research and consultancy services, as well as strong stakeholder engagement and partnership, which brings value through evidence-based and expert insights into what works. We design and support the delivery of tailored programmes and initiatives to test and trial new innovations, including help with monitoring and evaluation to track results and impact.

For further information please visit: [www.workadvance.co.uk](http://www.workadvance.co.uk)

### About the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

The Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) works to support the growth of the creative industries in the UK through the production of independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice.

Led by Newcastle University, with the Royal Society of Arts, and funded by the UKRI via the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Creative PEC comprises a core consortium of Newcastle University, Work Advance, the University of Sussex and the University of Sheffield.

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# Executive summary

## 1 Skills shortages when recruiting: The picture today

The museums, galleries and libraries (MGL) sector is a core component of the UK's creative industries and of the country's soft power globally, but recent years have seen significant challenges affecting its resilience, including Covid-19 and reductions in public funding.

One in three MGL employers (34%) that had hired staff (including freelancers and agency staff) in the past two years reported recruitment difficulties. Often this was due to candidates lacking the skills or experience required for the role. However, compared with all creative industries, MGL employers were more likely to cite 'poor terms and conditions', including pay, as a key driver of skills shortages (32% vs 14%), which suggests that some skilled workers may be discouraged from applying.

Skills shortage vacancies in the MGL sector are particularly acute for entry-level roles. Employers are also struggling to recruit for a range of occupations, particularly museum and heritage assistants, museum education officers, and collection managers and curators. Recruitment difficulties also persist in marketing and hospitality.

The skills shortages that employers report are wide-ranging: digital skills remain a challenge for the sector, both in the use of basic IT software like Microsoft Office Suite and specialist software related to digital engagement and collections management. Employers also suggest those applying for roles can lack important transversal skills, such as planning and organising, team working, speaking and listening.

## 2 Current skills gaps in the existing workforce

In addition to skills shortages, employers in the MGL sector also highlight skills deficiencies within their existing workforce (including freelancers and agency staff). In 2025, two in five employers in the MGL sector were affected by skills gaps.

Some of these are likely transitory, for instance when staff are new to a role or when their training is only partially complete. A quarter (24%) of employers suggested that the main cause was that staff had not received the appropriate training. Roundtable participants also pointed to issues with workers needing to be multi-skilled across multiple business functions, and issues with staff retention.

Skills gaps are found across all levels of seniority but are particularly acute in early-career and entry-level roles. Similarly, a wide range of occupations are affected by skills gaps, including museum and heritage assistants, administration assistants and business support managers, and fundraisers and financial managers.

According to employers, the types of skills that their workforce need to improve are the same as those lacking in candidates. These include upgrading digital skills, including how to develop a digital strategy, as well as skills linked to sustainability, with one third (31%) of employers in the sector reporting skills gaps in this area.

## 3 Jobs and skills priorities over the next three to five years

MGL employers remain uncertain about the future resilience and growth of the sector: 66% anticipate that employment will remain the same over the next three to five years, and only 32% expect the number of staff to grow, compared with 46% in the creative industries.

Many of the roles subject to skills shortages and gaps today are expected to grow in the future and encompass a range of business functions. These include museum managers; marketing executives; fundraisers; company secretaries and finance managers & directors; and front-of-house roles, including in retail and hospitality.

Employers in the sector also point to growing skills needs around the use of AI across business functions – from developing competence in using it for general tasks such as document writing, to the use of AI in collections management, research and audience engagement. Alongside practical application, employers highlight the need for greater understanding of ethical and legal use of AI in their work.

Employers also point to the need for greater skills related to digital literacy and income generation, be they in fundraising or in commercial activities, such as retail, hospitality or commercial events.

## 4 Taking action to address skills challenges for the industry

Skills challenges are impacting MGL employers, with the most commonly cited being: increased workload for other staff, having difficulties meeting deadlines, and difficulties meeting quality standards. However, MGL employers were also more likely to report having no impacts from skills challenges compared with the creative industries overall (52% vs 31%).

Employers in the sector report a range of steps they are taking to address skills challenges. Positively, 68% have increased training for their existing workforce, and 21% have taken on and trained up less qualified recruits. As such, employer training provision in the MGL sector is higher than the creative industries as a whole.

MGL employers highlight several financial and practical constraints to training: over half report a lack of funds for training (56%). In addition, managers often lack time to organise training, and staff are also often too busy to undertake it, reflecting the high workloads of current staff members – likely due, in part, to a challenging funding environment in the sector.

When considering measures that could help employers in the sector to invest further in skills and training, employers were most likely to call for financial subsidies or tax relief. Many would also welcome improved information and support on finding relevant training, and opportunities to collaborate with other businesses and training providers to shape training offers.

# 1. Introduction to the Creative Industries Skills Audits

**Throughout 2025, Creative PEC and Work Advance embarked on a series of UK-wide Skills Audits for the creative industries and its sub-sectors. A commitment in the Creative Industries Sector Plan and funded jointly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Creative Industries Council (CIC), the Skills Audits have sought to provide an evidence base to enable the creative industries to speak with a united voice on current and future skill needs, pressing skills shortages and gaps and wider workforce issues.**

The Skills Audits have been delivered in two phases.

**Phase 1:** Assessed the skills priorities across the creative industries as a whole.

**Phase 2:** Examined in greater depth the skills priorities of different creative sub-sectors.

This report is part of the suite of sub-sector Skills Audits produced during Phase two, presenting the skills needs, challenges and priorities of the museums, galleries and libraries (MGL) sector.

The research utilises the DCMS definition of the creative industries, which includes the following Standard Industrial Classification for the MGL sector (DCMS, 2025c):

91.01 Library and archive activities

91.02 Museum activities

The analysis for the Skills Audits is underpinned by an established labour market framework, covering issues of labour demand, occupational structure, current and future skills needs, and drivers of change (Government Office for Science, 2016; OECD, 2019). The framework provides a structured way of thinking about the different dimensions of the labour market around skills supply and demand and the way in which they interact with one another (e.g. driving shortages and gaps).

The Skills Audits have adopted a five-stage approach:

- **A rapid evidence review** involving a high-level review of evidence on skills issues across the creative industries and synthesising skills research in the different UK nations, including trade bodies and other industry stakeholders;
- **Secondary data analysis** of official, national sources of labour market information to provide a robust, consistent and comparable baseline of employment and skills issues;
- **New primary research** involving the Creative Employer Skills Survey (CESS), which included over 1300 telephone interviews with establishments with over two employees to explore their perspectives on skills priorities and the skills system and talent pipeline to the industry;

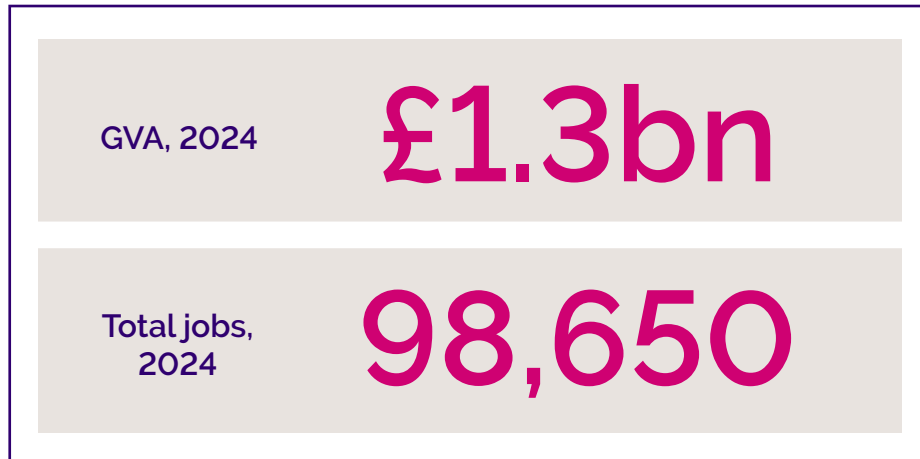
- **A series of stakeholder roundtables** to contextualise the findings and identify and promote shared consensus on skills priorities. These involved representatives from government, national and subnational creative agencies, trade bodies, unions, creative businesses and major cultural organisations, and training/education providers; and
- **Reporting and dissemination** to draw the findings together and use them to enhance policy developments.

The Skills Audits have been overseen by a Project Board comprised of the project funders and members of the research consortium. Day-to-day delivery has been shaped by a Steering Group including representatives from the governments across the UK, as well as industry and training providers.

Figure 1: Developing the Creative Industries Skills Audits



## 2. Sector profile and performance

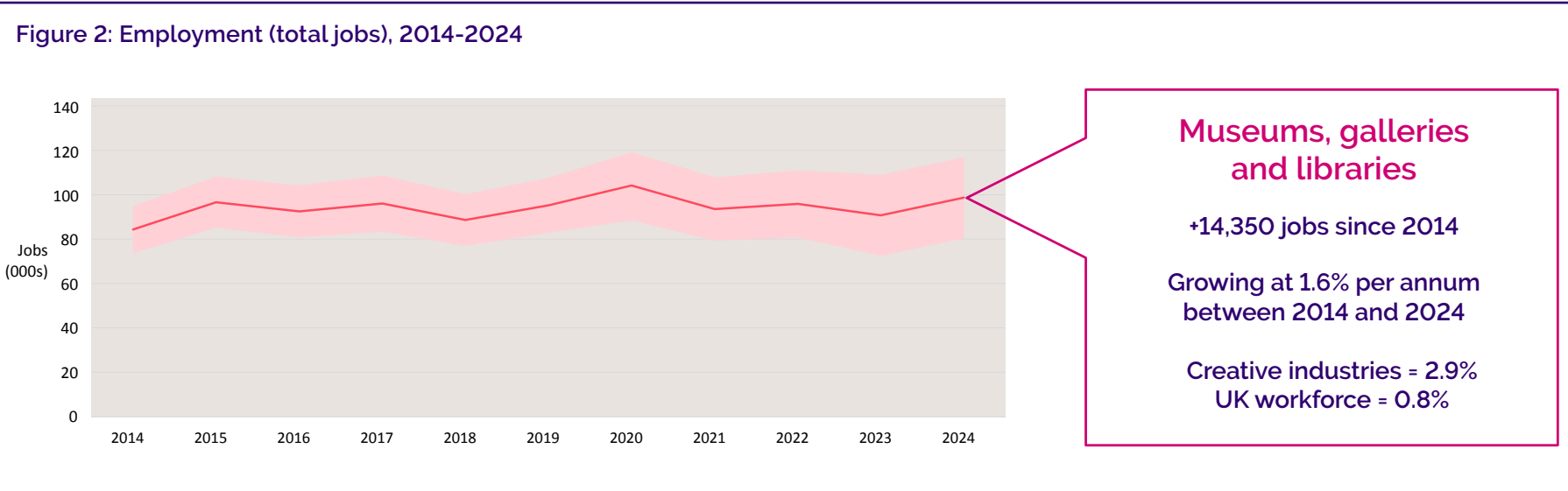


**The MGL sector is a central part of the UK's creative industries. The sector engages communities across the UK (McAndrew et al., 2024) but is also internationally oriented and plays a crucial role in the UK's soft power agenda, with twelve of the one hundred most visited museums globally being based in the UK (Easton, 2025).**

The sector includes museums, galleries, libraries and archives that range in scale and have a variety of specialisms. It includes national museums and libraries, as well as local-authority-funded institutions and charitable, not-for-profit and private organisations. For the purposes of this analysis, commercial art galleries are not included within this sub-sector in line with the DCMS definition.

The MGL sub-sector is reliant on a mixture of public, corporate and philanthropic income. Over the last decade or more, the sector has seen declining public funding, including from local authorities (Ashton et al., 2024; Di Novo and Easton, 2023), with smaller organisations in particular struggling to offset public funding reductions through increased income generation and other sources (The Audience Agency, 2025). Covid-19 also had a disproportionate impact on the sector, both due to loss of audiences during lockdown and through impacts on the workforce (McAndrew et al., 2024). Many organisations had to rapidly pivot to develop digital offers during that time, which have continued to shape their activities (Kidd, Nieto McAvoy and Oxtrowska, 2021).

Despite these challenges, in 2024 the sector contributed £1.3bn to the UK economy and accounted for 98,650 jobs. Employment figures have also been resilient over the 2014–2024 period, despite reductions in public funding to culture over the last decade and reductions in audiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. The sector had a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 1.6% per annum over the last decade of data, lower than in the creative industries as a whole at 2.9%, but higher than the UK workforce at 0.8%.



Source: DCMS (2025b, 2025d)

Notes: Gross value added (GVA) at current prices. GVA data for 2024 is provisional. Employment is total filled jobs, including second jobs and including both employees and self-employed workers in all occupations. The shaded confidence band represents the plausible range around the central estimate (95% confidence interval). It reflects the uncertainty in the data: when the band widens, the estimate is less precise; when it narrows, the estimate is more reliable. Growth rates are compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

# 3. Jobs and skills

**In contrast to other creative industries sub-sectors, the vast majority of workers in the MGL workforce are employed. Only 5% of workers in this sector are self-employed, compared with 14% in the UK workforce and 28% in the creative industries. Previous research has also highlighted that they are more likely to be working part-time, with a minority of those wishing they had more hours of work (Carey, Giles and O'Brien, 2023).**

As we discuss further below, workforce wellbeing and low pay have been areas of focus for the MGL sector and crucial issues in workforce retention and upskilling (Museums Association, n.d.). In 2024, median gross annual earnings for the sector were £30,282 – below the UK average and creative industries average (DCMS, 2025e).

As also highlighted by previous research (Kinetiq, 2023; O'Brien, Taylor and Wang, 2025), the MGL workforce is highly qualified, with 70% holding a degree or equivalent qualification, similar to the proportion found in the creative industries (69%) and greater than that found in the UK workforce (43%). Higher education is the primary route into the MGL sector, although the subjects studied by those working in key occupations in the sector vary. For instance, only 12% of archivists and curators have undertaken a creative degree (Holt-White et al., 2024, p. 43).

The MGL occupational profile encompasses a range of roles. Across the sector we find jobs in: archives, information and collection management; curation, learning and public engagement; business operations and support; fundraising and commercial teams; as well as front-of-house functions, including retail, hospitality and visitor experience.

Alongside this, the sector relies on a significant volunteer workforce. As a result, we find relatively low levels of concentration of any one kind of occupation within this part of the creative industries.

The MGL workforce also encompasses a mixture of UK and non-UK nationals, although it comprises a higher proportion of UK nationals than the UK creative industries workforce (Maioli et al., 2025). Only 11% of workers in the sector are non-UK nationals, compared with 15% in the creative industries and 12% in the UK workforce (Maioli et al., 2025).

Importantly, inequalities in representation persist within the MGL workforce. While women and disabled people make up a larger proportion of the sector workforce compared with the UK workforce average, people from working class backgrounds are underrepresented in the sector, accounting for 32% of the sector workforce compared with 40% of the UK workforce. Wider research has also highlighted that White people are overrepresented in the MGL workforce (O'Brien, Taylor and Wang, 2025), especially in specific occupations, such as curatorial roles (Art Fund, 2022).

Figure 3: Employment status of the workforce, 2022-2024

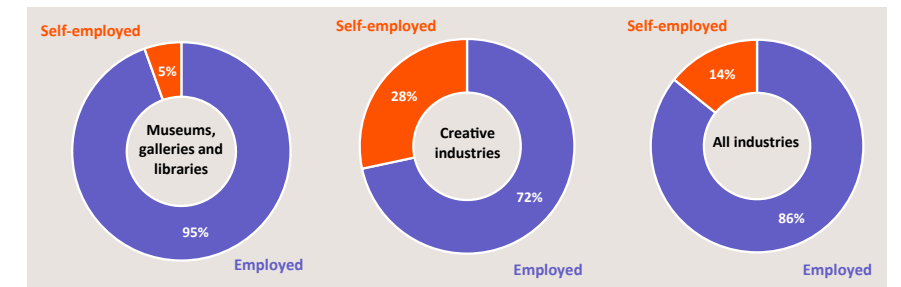


Figure 4: Workforce qualifications (% degree-qualified), 2022-2024

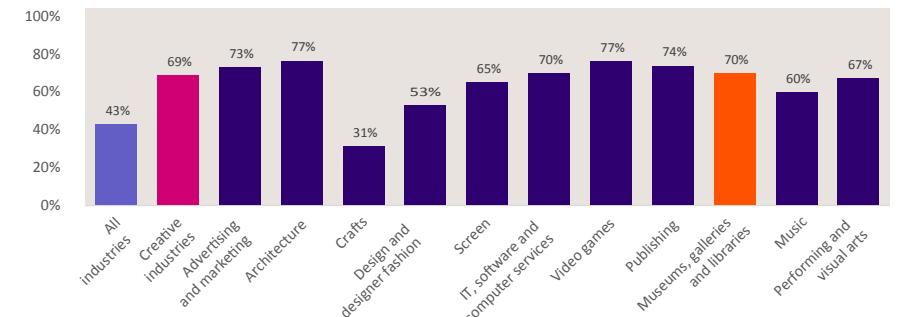
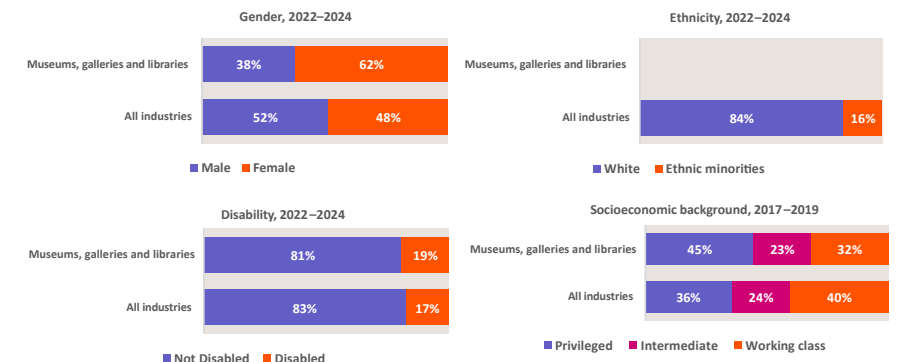


Figure 5: Workforce diversity



Source: DCMS (2025a); Carey, Giles and O'Brien (2023)

Notes: Data based on a three-year pooled sample from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey. Data for socioeconomic background is from the Creative PEC Good Work Review – see Carey, Giles and O'Brien (2023) for further information on the definitions used.

# 4. Recruitment difficulties

The CESS 2025 provides insight into the recruitment practices and challenges facing the MGL sector and allows us to compare these to the broader creative industries population. It finds that recruitment in the sector, which includes hiring freelancers, contractors and agency staff as well as employees, is active. A higher proportion of MGL employers have recruited in the last two years (80%) compared with creative industries (65%).

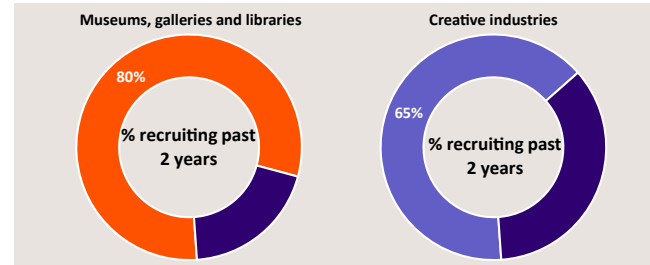
The most common recruitment methods in the MGL sector are the use of online job platforms and websites (65%), advertising on a company website (48%) and other (37%). MGL sectors are also less likely than the creative industries as a whole to rely on mechanisms like word of mouth (26% vs 46%) and professional networks (19% vs 35%).

Among MGL recruiters, 34% reported hard-to-fill vacancies over the last two years, which is similar to the proportion found in the creative industries (32%). However, the main causes of these recruitment difficulties show some variation.

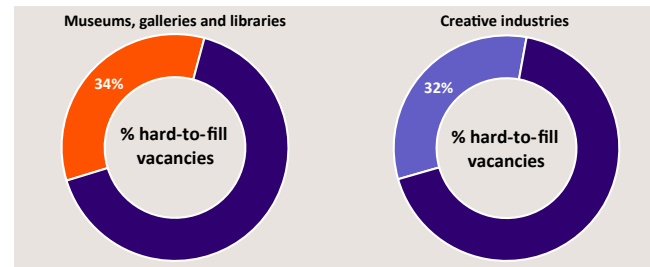
In the MGL sector, the most common reason employers cited for vacancies being hard to fill was that candidates lacked the required skills (44%), although this was significantly less likely to be reported than for all creative industries (72%). Consistent with broader research (Museums Association, n.d.; Carey, Giles and O'Brien, 2023), MGL employers were also twice as likely as employers in all creative industries to highlight 'poor terms and conditions' including pay (32% vs 14%) and more likely to highlight that the job entails shift work (25% vs 4%), suggesting that these may also be key barriers to recruiting appropriately skilled workers.

Figure 6: Hiring and recruitment difficulties, 2025

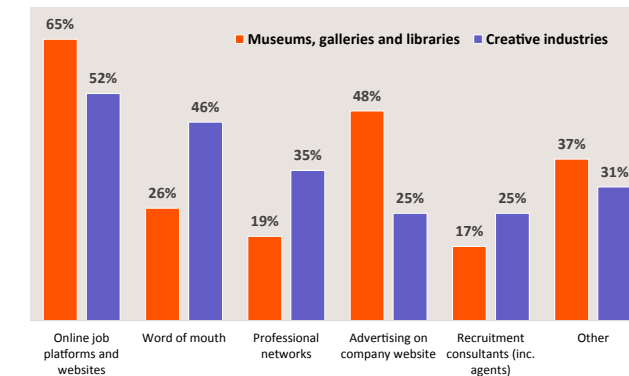
Q: Has this site recruited anyone, including any paid employees, agency staff, and self-employed or freelance workers, in the past two years?  
Base = all establishments (n = 79)



Q: Did any of the vacancies you had at this site in the past two years prove hard to fill?  
Base = establishments that have recruited in the past two years (n = 66)



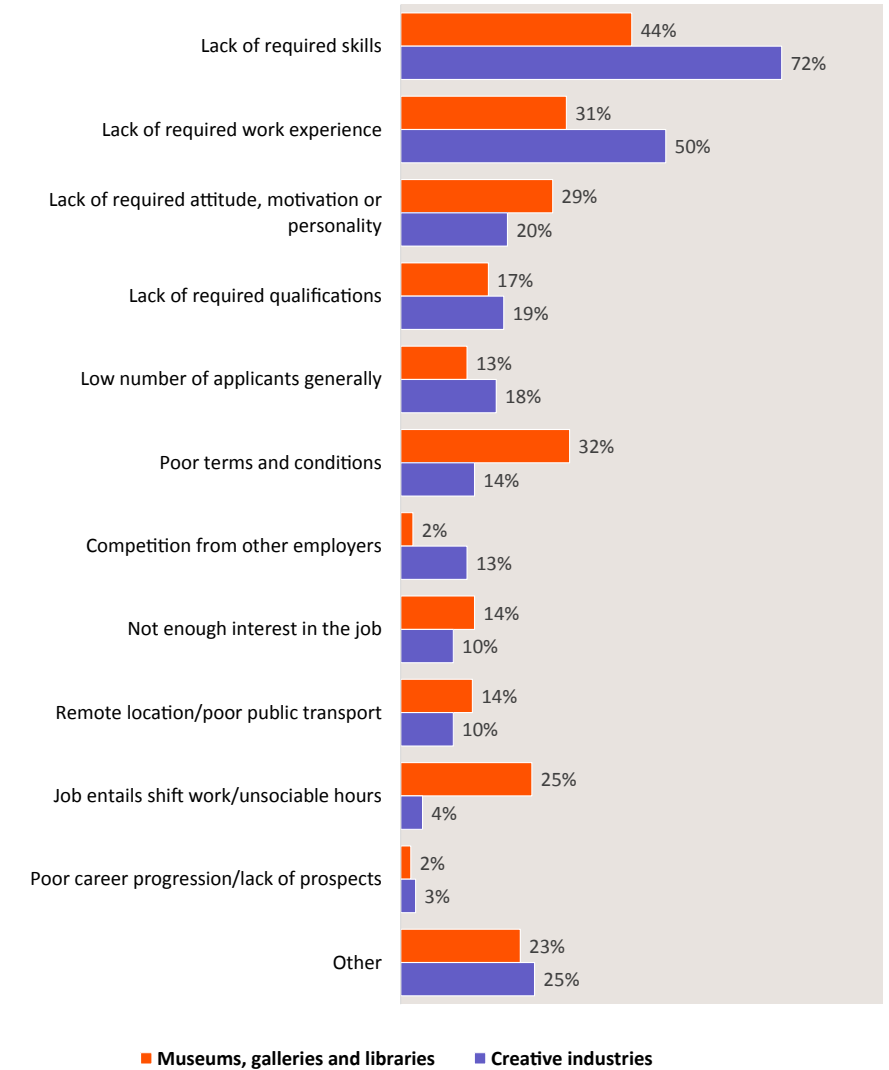
Q: What recruitment methods do you use to fill vacancies at this site?  
Base = establishments that have recruited in the past two years (n = 66)



Source: CESS 2025

Figure 7: Main causes of recruitment difficulties, 2025

Q: What were the main causes of your vacancies for [occupation] being hard to fill?  
Base = establishments with hard-to-fill vacancies (n = 22)



Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

# 5. Skills shortages

The CESS examines the roles that MGL employers struggle to fill and the skills potential recruits are lacking. In the MGL sector, only 45% of hard-to-fill vacancies were caused by skills shortages; this compares with 79% for all creative industries. Both rates are higher than those found in previous research (DCMS, 2025f), which may reflect the larger coverage of the creative industries in this survey, although caution should be taken in interpreting this result due to the low sample size.

MGL employers responding to the survey overwhelmingly reported skills shortages with respect to entry-level roles (63%), almost three times the rate for the creative industries. Shortages also persist at other levels of seniority, with 25% for early-career and 24% for experienced roles. Roundtable participants also highlighted skills shortages for management and

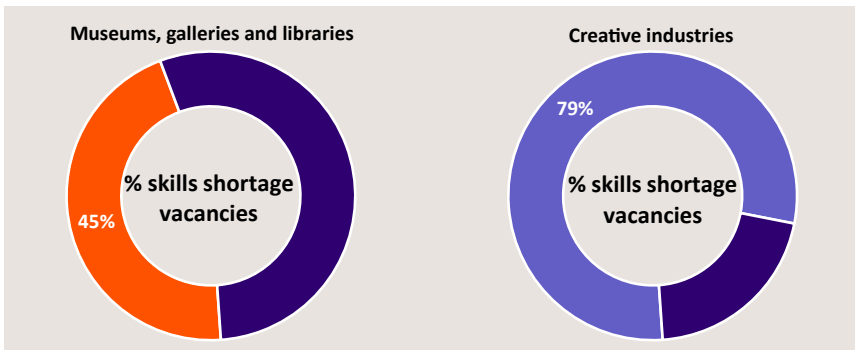
leadership roles in the sector and emphasised that organisational changes were resulting in a loss of junior and mid-level roles.

There is a wide range of specific occupations that the MGL sector finds hard to fill. The most common are: museum and heritage assistants (25%), museum education officers (15%), collection managers and curators (13%) and marketing managers (10%). It is notable, however, that the occupations on the list reflect the breadth of organisational activity in the MGL sector, also including roles like kitchen and catering assistants (9%), chefs (4%), and facilities coordinators (3%).

The Skills Audits aim to identify the main skills lacking in the MGL sector. A primary area of focus has been to identify specialist skills or knowledge that employers found difficult to obtain from applicants. As a part of this, the audits examine digital skills shortages, given acute challenges for the creative industries in accessing digital skills, especially advanced or specialist skills (Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025).

**Figure 8: Hard-to-fill vacancies caused by skills shortages, 2025**

*Q: What were the main causes of your vacancies for [occupation] being hard to fill? = Lack of applicants with required skills, qualifications or experience*  
Base = establishments with hard-to-fill vacancies (n = 22)

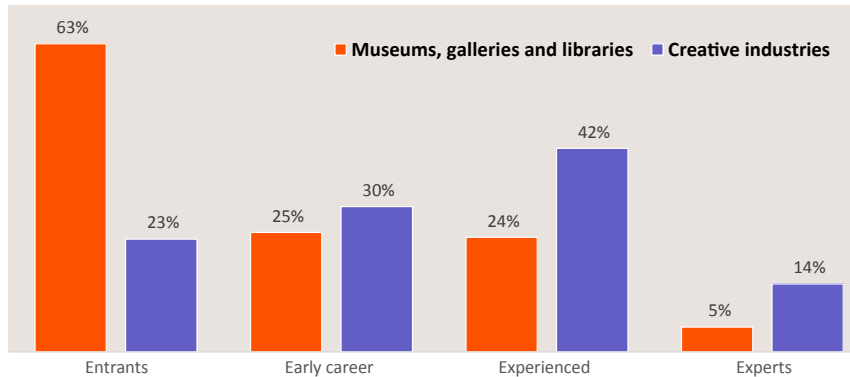


Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

**Figure 9: Seniority of roles with skills shortages, 2025**

*Q: How would you describe the level of experience or seniority of the candidates sought for ISS occupation] vacancies?*  
Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies (n = 12)

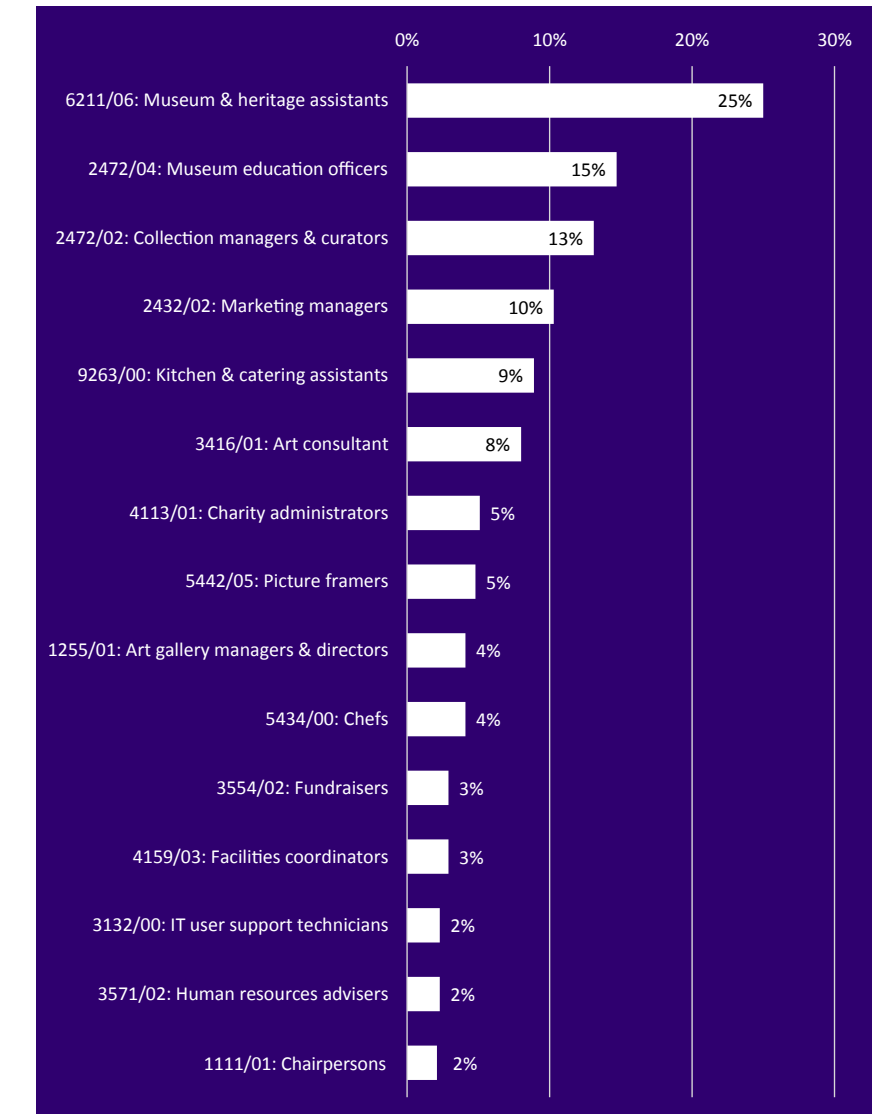


Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

**Figure 10: Hard-to-fill occupations (six-digit Standard Occupational Classification [SOC]), 2025**

*Q: For which specific occupations did vacancies at this site prove hard to fill?*  
Top fifteen occupations cited. Base = establishments with hard-to-fill vacancies (n = 22)



Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

## 5. Skills shortages (continued)

Sector research and the roundtables undertaken as part of the Skills Audits highlight that digital skills shortages remain a significant challenge for the sector (e.g. BOP Consulting, 2016). Many museums, galleries and libraries offer digital experiences both on- and off-site and play an important role in supporting digital literacy across the UK population (Good Things Foundation, 2023; One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022).

Roundtable participants highlighted that museums, galleries and libraries are often later adopters of digital technologies, with a key barrier being a lack of skills and knowledge in developing digital strategies (see also: BOP Consulting, 2016; One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022). In other words, there is an issue of 'not knowing what you don't know' when it comes to identifying digital skills shortages in many parts of the sector.

Others highlighted a mixture of digital skills gaps in using basic IT software such as Microsoft Office Suite, social media such as Facebook, Twitter/X and YouTube (see also BOP Consulting, 2016; Oxford Cultural Associates, 2022) and more general creative software like Adobe Suite. Roundtable

participants also highlighted the need for specific roles to continually upskill in specialist software, such as digital asset management programmes like ResourceSpace and collection management software such as MuseumPlus.

A growing need for skills in using AI was also highlighted by roundtable participants and secondary literature. The skills challenges reported range from the effective use of AI software such as ChatGPT and Copilot and AI research assistants such as Elicit (see also Cox, 2025), to the use of more specialist AI applications and AI development in areas such as collections management, research and in developing digital experiences for audiences (One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022).

Alongside this, roundtable participants highlighted specialist skills gaps in collections storage, preservation and display, as well as conservation techniques and an understanding of collection hazards (e.g. working with and being able to identify potentially hazardous materials or objects). Finally, participants also emphasised the need for greater skills with respect to fundraising roles which previous research by the Audience Agency for Arts

Council England has suggested are a particular challenge for SME cultural organisations (The Audience Agency, 2025). Participants also highlighted the need for greater skills in other income-generating roles, such as retail and commercial events, as well as an understanding of specific legislation relating to funding across the four nations.

In an increasingly automated modern economy characterised by constant disruption, transversal or 'core' skills are also key. This is particularly true for the MGL sector, which involves many audience-facing and engagement roles, as well as multi-skilled workers who can balance specialism in a particular role with the ability to support other functions in an organisation (BOP Consulting, 2016).

In line with previous research (Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025), the transversal skills most difficult for MGL employers to find are: working with others (34%), planning and organising (29%), speaking (25%) and listening (24%).

Roundtable participants also highlighted the need for skills related to people management and engaging with communities, volunteers and young people. People management skills, in particular the ability to manage difficult conversations and navigate stakeholder relationships, were emphasised.

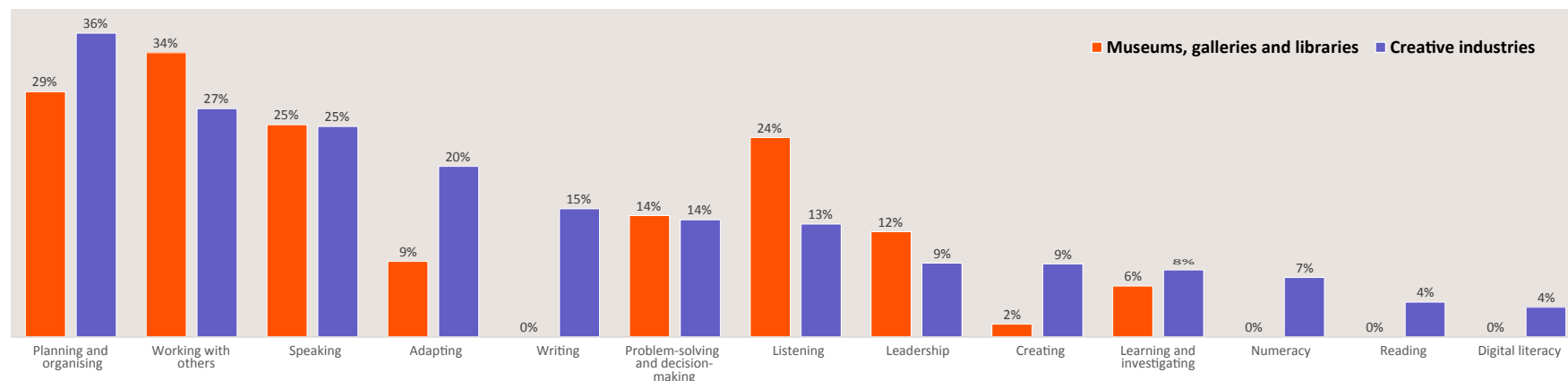
Consistent with broader research on wellbeing issues in the sector (Museums Association, n.d.; Carey, Giles and O'Brien, 2023), participants also highlighted the need to increase individual and organisational resilience and wellbeing, given challenges around pay, hours and funding conditions in the sector.

The Skills Audits also consider skills shortages related to sustainability or 'green skills' associated with minimising environmental harms and/or increasing environmental benefits. Our rapid evidence review found that sustainability skills are sought across the MGL sector and in a range of roles, be they associated with buildings and operations management, exhibitions or curatorial and learning functions (Arts Council England, 2023; National Museum Directors' Council, 2023). Roundtable participants highlighted specific sustainability skills shortages with respect to decarbonising historic buildings and in heritage maintenance and preservation.

**Figure 11: Core skills shortages, 2025**

*Q: Have you found any core or 'transversal' skills difficult to obtain from applicants for skills shortage occupation vacancies. If so, what specific core or transversal skills have been lacking?*

Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies (n = 12)



Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

# 6. Skills gaps

Turning to skills deficiencies in MGL employers' existing workforces, 40% of employers report skills gaps, a higher proportion than for all creative industries (32%). The most common cause of skills gaps reported was 'other reasons' (57%), which included specific issues with being able to recruit due to low pay, requirements for workers to be multi-skilled across multiple business functions, issues with staff retention and a lack of relevant interpersonal skills. These reported issues are consistent with the relatively high number of MGL employers reporting an inability to recruit staff with the required skills which subsequently feeds through to skills gaps (20% vs 11% for creative industries).

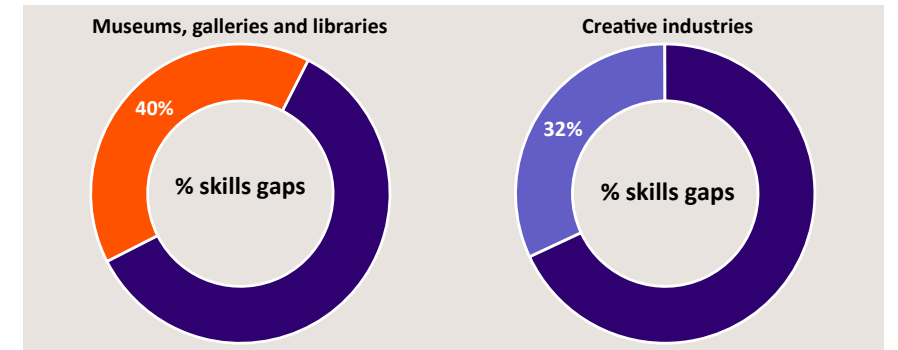
Other common causes cited are potentially transitory issues. For instance, the second most common response was that workers are new to a role (37%), followed by 'their training is only partially complete' (27%) and that 'they have not received the appropriate training' (24%).

MGL employers were less likely to report skills gaps caused by the introduction of new technologies or working practices or the development of new products and services than the creative industries average. However, as we discuss below, these remain important drivers of skills needs for the sector.

Figure 12: Skills gaps, 2025

Q: Thinking about your current workforce (including employees, agency staff, self-employed or freelance workers), approximately what percentage would you regard as fully proficient at their job? = <100%.

Base = all establishments (n = 79)

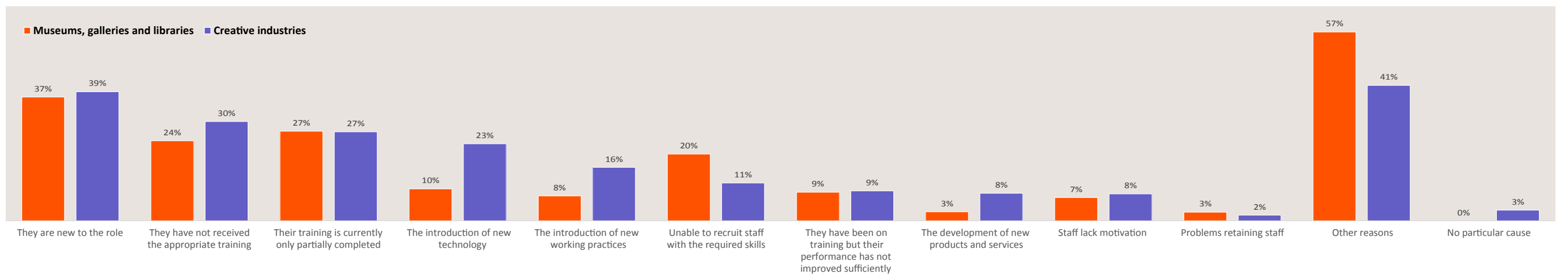


Source: CESS 2025

Figure 13: Main causes of skills gaps, 2025

Q: What are the main causes of staff in [skills gap occupation] not being fully proficient at their job?

Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



Source: CESS, 2025.

## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

When considering the seniority of staff with skills gaps, the MGL sector differs to the creative industries overall. The most common level of seniority for staff with skills deficiencies in the MGL sector was early career (44%) compared with 32% in creative industries. Entrants (31%) were the second most common; however, there also remain skills deficiencies in some experienced and expert-level roles.

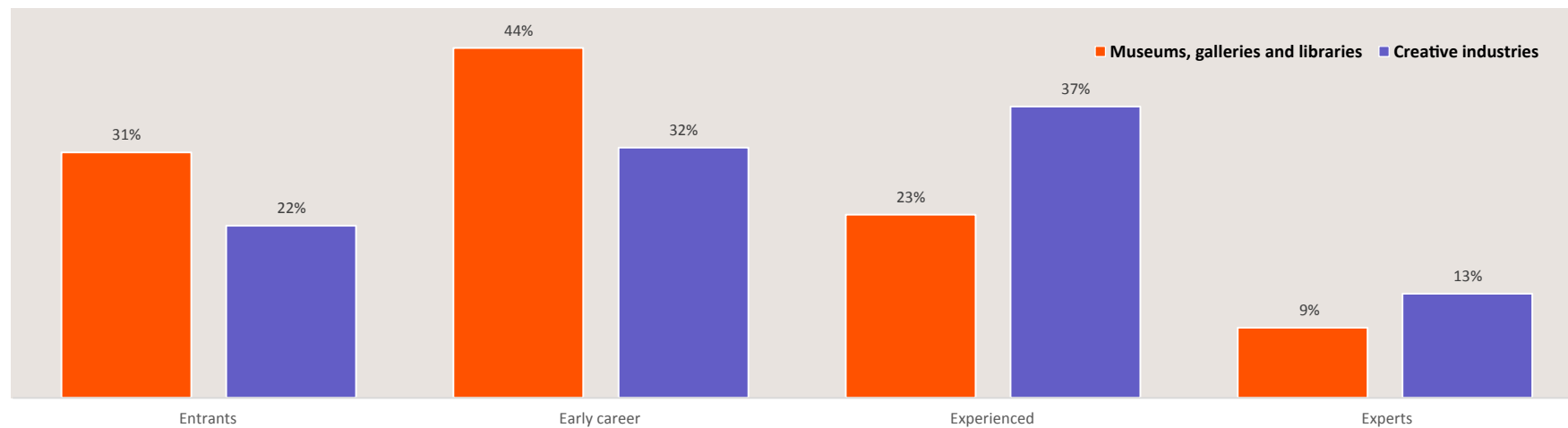
The CESS provides an indication of occupations where skills gaps are most common. In the case of the MGL sector, these were: museum and heritage assistants (29%), other administrative occupations, which includes roles such as administrative assistants and business support managers (14%), museum managers and proprietors (8%) and fundraisers (7%). This shows that skills gaps occur across the business functions of MGL organisations.

Relatedly, roundtable participants highlighted a growing trend in the sector to require workers to cover multiple job functions and roles due in large part to funding constraints.

Consistent with our findings on skills shortages, an additional area emphasised by roundtable participants and wider research (The Audience Agency, 2025; Art Fund, 2024) was skills gaps related to fundraising and income generation, given funding challenges facing the sector (Ashton et al, 2024). These skills were seen to be relevant to not only fundraising jobs but commercial roles, such as events managers and retail staff. Similarly, hospitality roles, such as waiters and catering assistants, were seen as relevant to income generation, and indeed these feature in the top-fifteen skills gap occupations listed in the CESS.

**Figure 14: Seniority of staff with skills deficiencies, 2025**

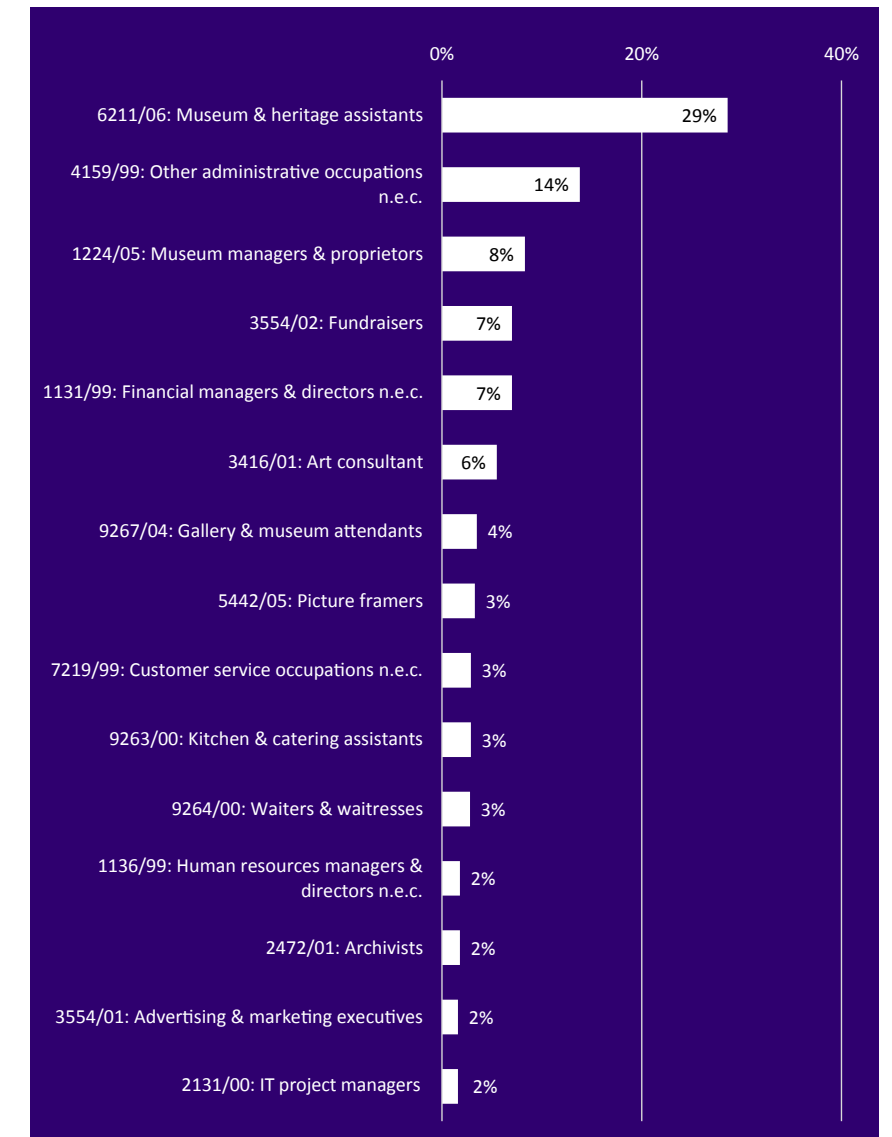
*Q: How would you describe the level of experience or seniority of the staff working as (skills gap occupation)?*  
Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 15: Skills gap occupations, 2025**

*Q: In which specific occupations are staff not fully proficient at their role?*  
Top fifteen occupations cited. Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

For employers reporting a lack of full proficiency in certain roles, the CESS identifies which skills are lacking in the MGL workforce compared with the creative industries overall, including specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform these roles.

As for skills shortages, a key priority of the survey has been to understand digital skills gaps, given their critical importance to the creative industries. While the majority of MGL employers reported that skills gap occupations did not lack the requisite digital skills (78%), where these existed the most cited were Microsoft Office skills (17%) and multimedia production skills (9%).

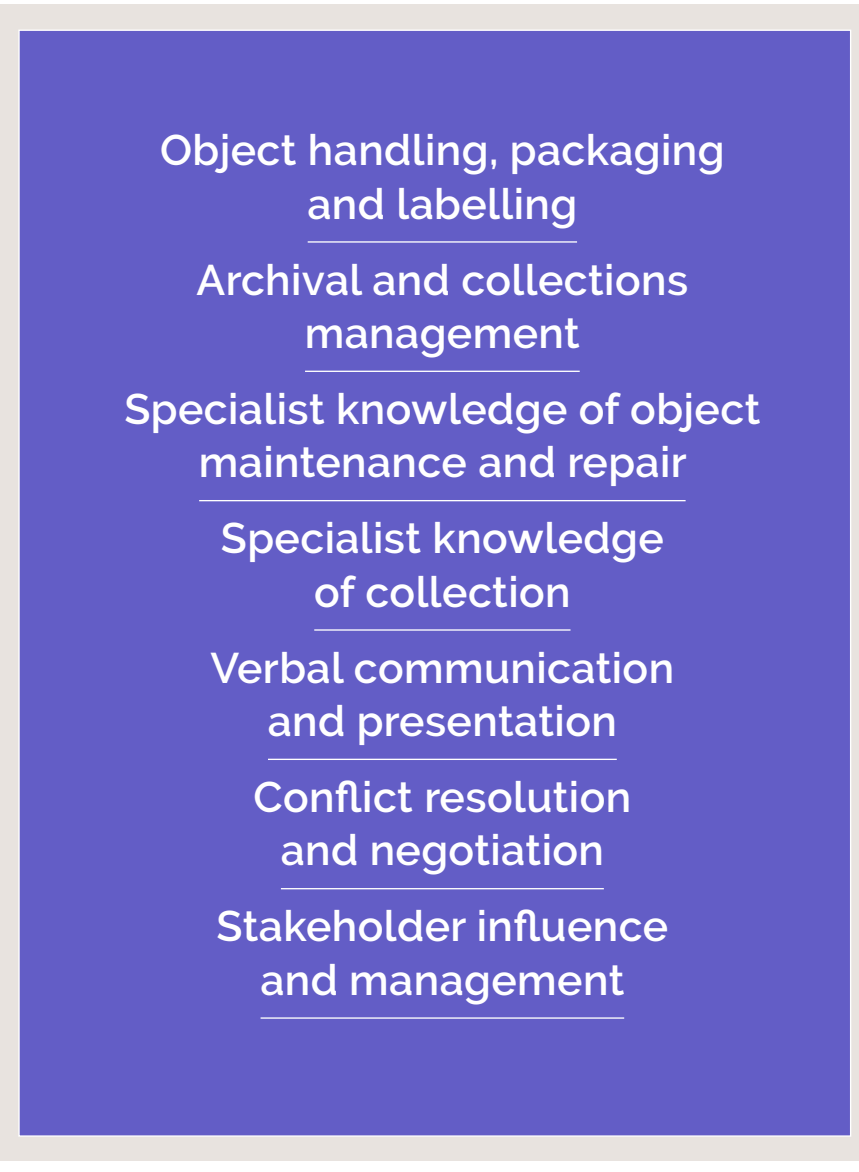
MGL employers were less likely to report skills shortages in specialist software/hardware/systems compared with all creative industries (2% vs 10%). However, broader research has highlighted that specialist digital skills gaps are a key area of concern for the sector (One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022). Specialist software used in the sector varies by role, for instance communications and digital teams may use software such as Adobe Creative Suite, whereas collections management and research are more likely to use database and collections management systems.

Recent research on the museum sector has highlighted that digital skills with respect to audience development remain uneven and often siloed in museums, with interest from museum workers in developing digital skills increasing post-pandemic (One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022, p. 8). Recent research from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has also found that many information management professionals in the library sector are now using AI, but a lack of technical skills holds back AI adoption, including in the use of general AI applications like ChatGPT, Copilot and Claude AI (Cox, 2025).

Figure 16: Specialist skills gaps, 2025

Q: Do any of your staff working as [skills gap occupation] lack full proficiency in terms of specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role? If so, what specific specialist skills or knowledge are they lacking full proficiency in?

Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)

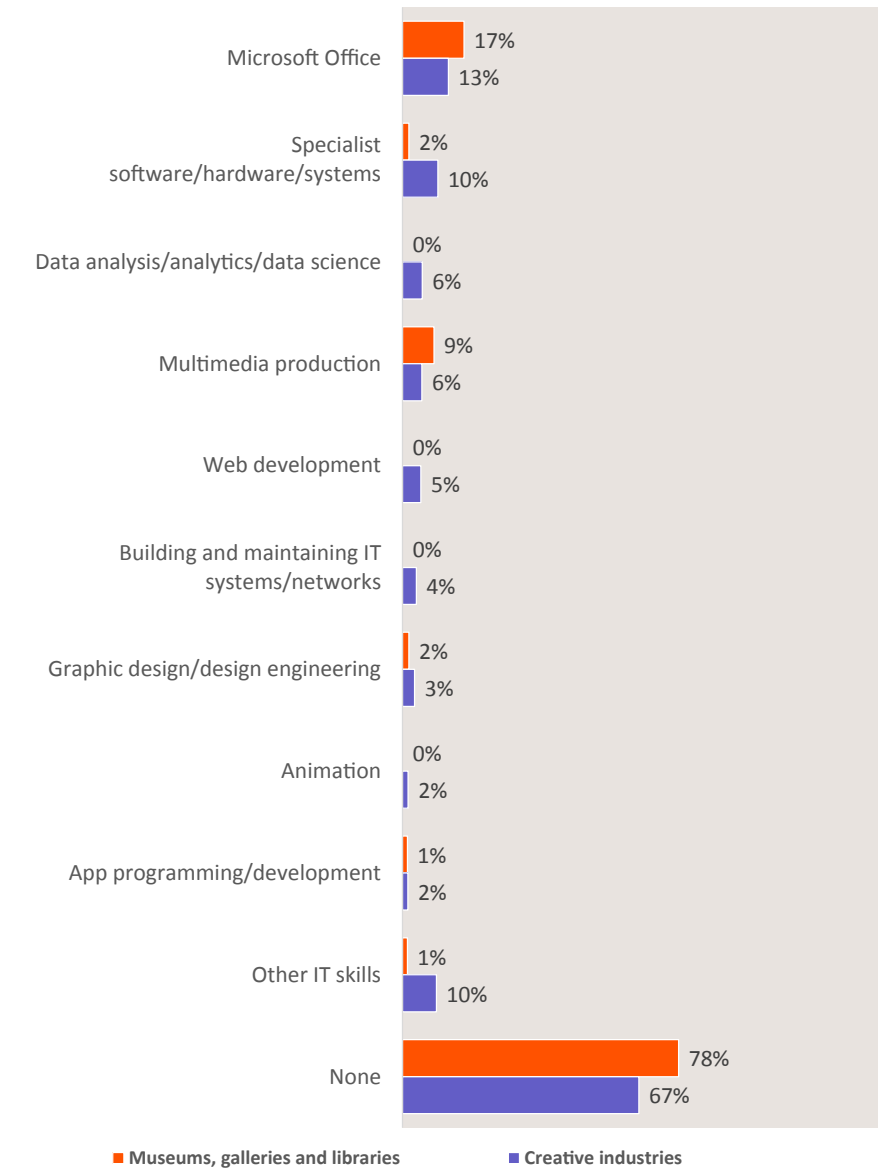


Source: CESS 2025

Figure 17: Digital skills gaps, 2025

Q: Do any of your staff working as [skills gap occupation] lack full proficiency in terms of basic or advanced IT skills? If so, what specific IT skills do you feel need improving?

Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



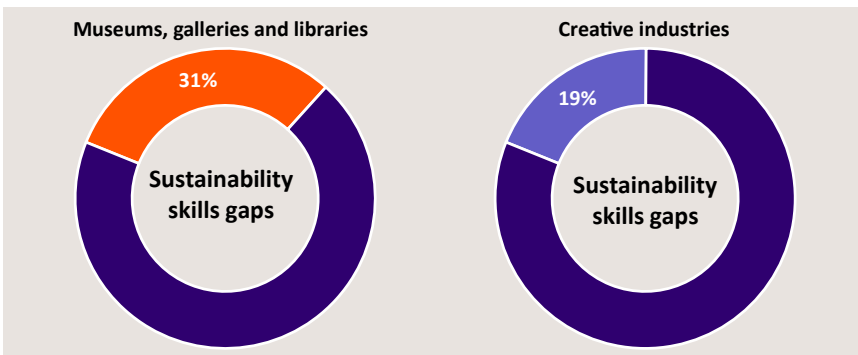
Source: CESS, 2025

## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

**Figure 18: Sustainability skills gaps, 2025**

*Q: Were any of the skills you mentioned needing improving among staff working as [skills gap occupation] related to wanting to be more sustainable or carbon-neutral? If so, what specific sustainability or 'green' skills are they lacking full proficiency in?*

Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



As discussed earlier, transversal skills are particularly important to MGL employers given the high proportion of audience- and visitor- focused roles in the sector. Concerningly, the CESS found that transversal skills were deficient across the workforce. These most commonly involved: planning and organising (34%), adapting (21%) and speaking (20%). All three were reported more commonly than for the creative industries as a whole. Skills Audit roundtable participants emphasised the importance of inter-personal skills in the MGL sector, with respect to working with not only audiences and communities but also wider stakeholders, including volunteers and trustees.

The MGL sector was, however, less likely to report skills gaps related to problem-solving and decision-making, learning and investigating, leadership, creating and numeracy.

There has been growing focus in the MGL sector on the role it can play in fostering sustainable behaviours with visitors, and in the ways the environmental footprint of the sector can be minimised. This has been

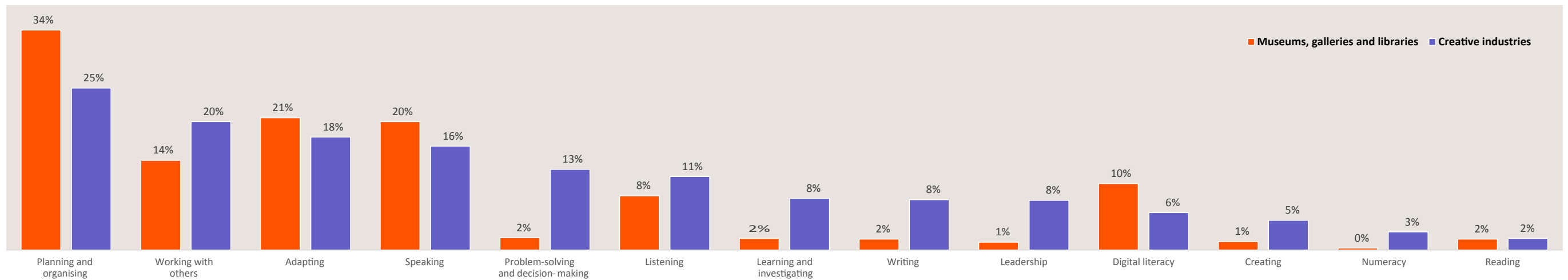
reflected in a range of sector-specific initiatives such as the Gallery Climate Coalition and environmental reporting requirements for some publicly funded institutions. For example, Arts Council England requires national portfolio organisations to provide annual environmental reporting (Arts Council England, 2023), with similar requirements from Creative Scotland and the Arts Council of Wales.

With respect to sustainability, it is therefore unsurprising that we find a high level of employer demand for skills related to environmental impact and benefit: 31% of MGL employers with skills gaps report deficiencies are associated with sustainability skills, compared with 19% across the creative industries. Specific sustainability skills gaps highlighted by survey respondents include: carbon literacy and climate action awareness, sustainable building use and energy reduction, as well as waste management.

**Figure 19: Core skills gaps, 2025**

*Q: Do any of your staff working as [skills gap occupation] lack full proficiency in terms of core or 'transversal' skills? If so, what specific core or transversal skills do you feel need improving?*

Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 31)



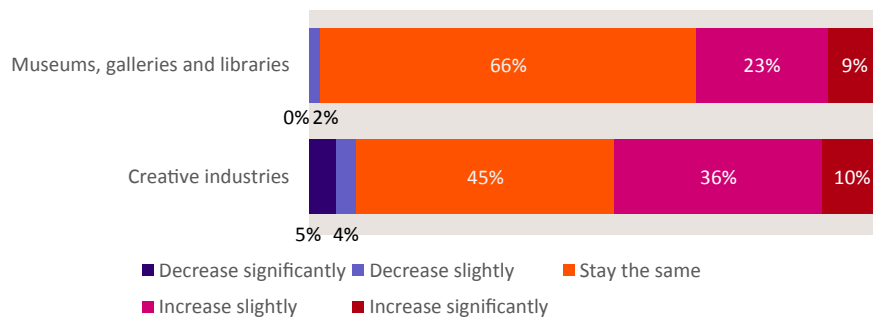
Source: CESS, 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

# 7. Future jobs and skills needs

**Figure 20: Employer expectations for employment in the next three to five years, 2025**

*Q: Over the next three to five years, how do you expect the number of staff (including employees, agency staff, self-employed or freelance workers) at this site to change?*  
 Base = all establishments (n = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

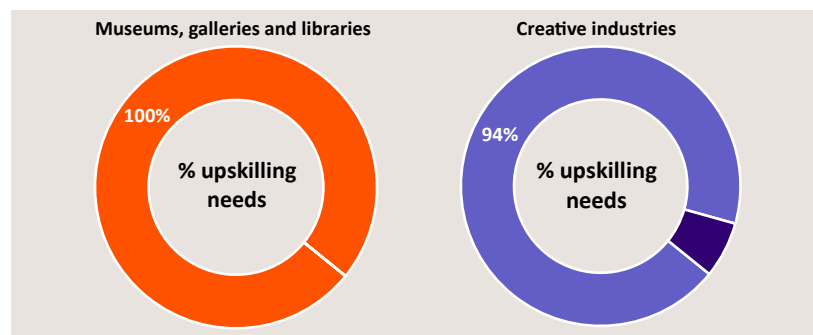
**The CESS provides an indication of employers' expectations for the future and whether they anticipate the need to increase levels of employment and/or upskill their workforce in the next three to five years. The majority of MGL employers expect the number of staff at their site to remain the same (66%), a higher proportion than found for the creative industries as a whole (45%). This may reflect business models in the sector or assumptions about future revenue due in part to a higher reliance on public and charitable funding (The Audience Agency, 2025; Di Novo and Easton, 2023).**

Further, all MGL employers that expect to grow staff numbers also anticipate a need to upgrade the skills of their workforce over the next three to five years. The main drivers of upskilling needs reported were: the introduction of new technologies or equipment (89%), the introduction of new working practices (85%), new legislative or regulatory requirements (85%) and the development of new products and services (80%). Roundtable participants highlighted that AI tools are increasingly being used for collection inventories, documentation and archival work, prompting a need for greater understanding of ethical use of AI and copyright issues, as they relate to the training of AI models on digital collections. Others highlighted the increasing use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to provide digital experiences for audiences in museums and galleries.

Other reasons highlighted by survey respondents include the need to increase commercial operations, changes to health and safety requirements, and a growing need for customer service skills.

**Figure 21: Employer expectations for upskilling in next three to five years, 2025**

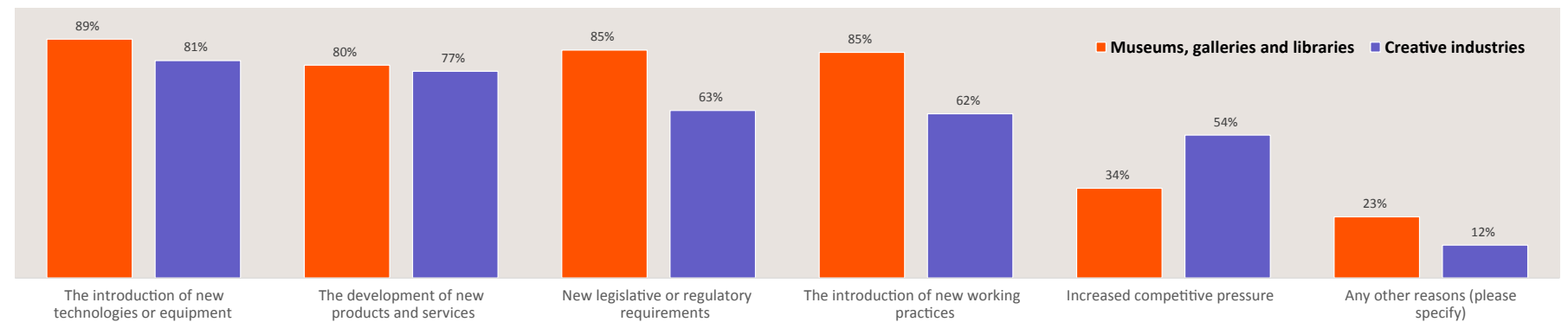
*Q: Over the next three to five years, do you expect that any staff at this site will need to acquire new skills or knowledge? ≠ 'None'*  
 Base = establishments expecting to increase staff numbers in future (n = 26)



Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 22: Main drivers of upskilling needs, 2025**

*Q: Over the next three to five years, do you expect that any staff at this site will need to acquire new skills or knowledge as a result of the following factors?*  
 Base = establishments with upskilling needs (n = 26)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

## 7. Future jobs and skills needs (continued)

The CESS also enables a more detailed look at the nature of new roles that employers expect to require in the next three to five years. The most common roles reported by employers were: museum managers and proprietors (27%), advertising and marketing executives (26%), fundraisers (24%) and company secretaries and finance managers and directors (10%).

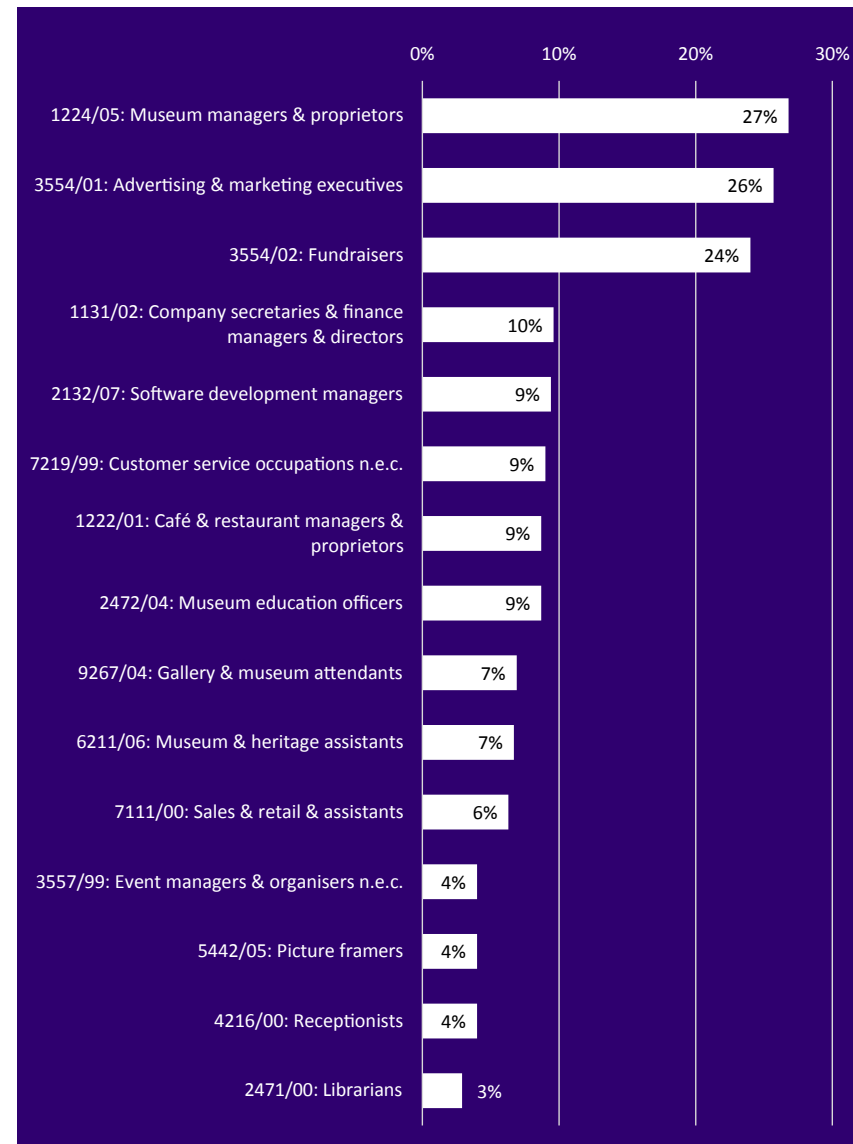
These indicate the perceived importance of roles focused on management and leadership as well as income generation for the sector over the next few years. Also important are business support staff and those focused on visitor experience, such as customer service occupations (9%), museum education officers (9%) and café & restaurant managers and proprietors (9%).

The survey also asks employers which specific occupations they expect staff will require new knowledge of skills in. We find a wide range of occupations reported, with the most common being fundraisers (20%), collection managers and curators (15%) and software developers (13%). The presence of digital-related roles in the list of occupations with upskilling needs is consistent with broader research highlighting worker expectations that digital skills needs, be they in digitising archives and collections management or in the adoption of AI in existing workflows, are expected to increase (One Further and Cultural Associates Oxford, 2022; Cox, 2025).

**Figure 23: Occupations in demand in future, 2025**

*Q: In which specific occupations do you expect the number of staff to increase over the next three to five years?*

Top fifteen occupations cited. Base = establishments that expect staff numbers to increase (n = 26)



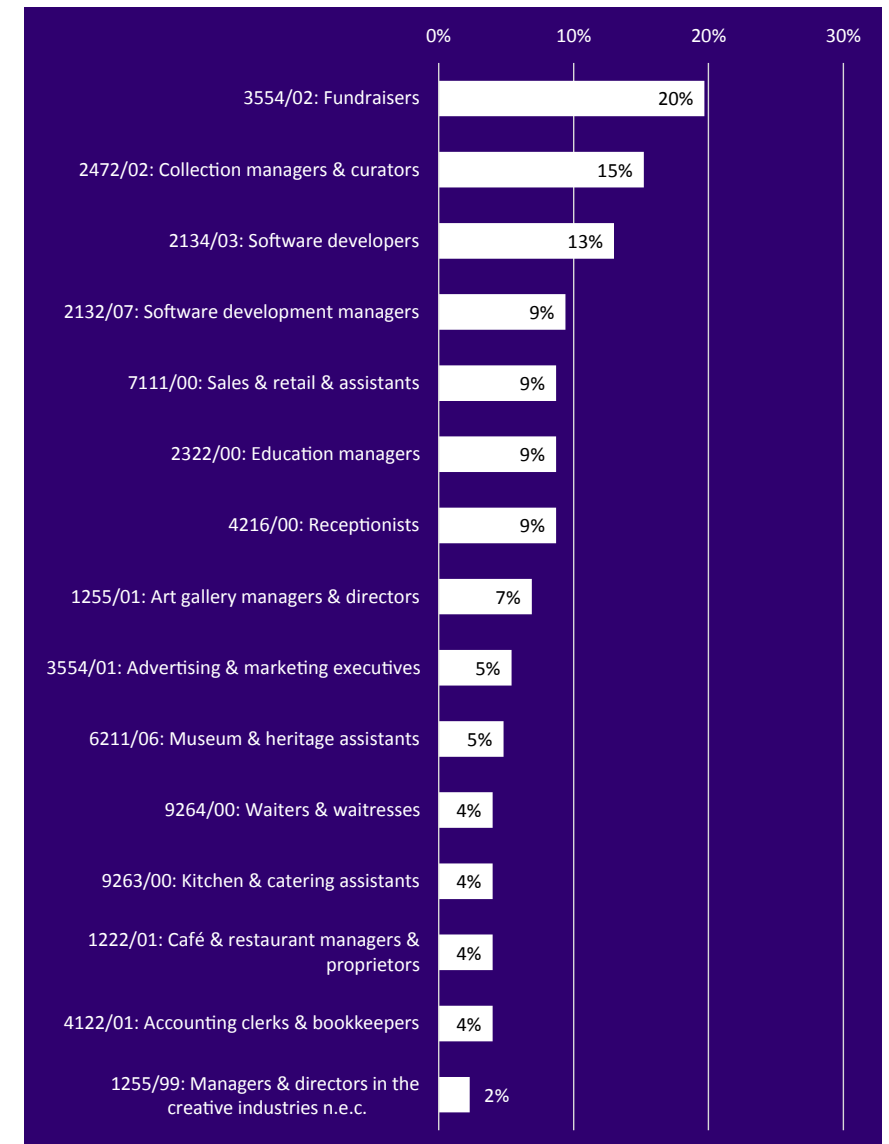
Source: CESS 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

**Figure 24: Occupations with upskilling needs, 2025**

*Q: In which specific occupations do you expect staff to have the greatest need to acquire new skills or knowledge over the next three to five years?*

Top fifteen occupations cited. Base = establishments that expect staff numbers to increase (n = 26)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

## 7. Future jobs and skills needs (continued)

The CESS also identifies the main skills MGL employers expect to be required in the future, including the specialist skills or knowledge staff will need to be able to continue performing their roles. A critical challenge for MGL employers lies in keeping digital skills up to date, especially advanced and specialist skills.

We find that the most common skills needs are in the other IT skills category (49%), with respondents highlighting skills needs around AI, VR, social media and digital marketing (including platforms like Twitter/X, TikTok and YouTube). Other commonly cited digital skills needs included web development skills (27%), specialist software/hardware/systems such as database management and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems (18%) and Microsoft Office skills (15%).

These again suggest a growing use of digital technologies within the MGL sector, including with respect to audience engagement. Survey respondents highlighted the need for increased skills in working with AR and VR, as well as hand-held digital devices both on- and off-site.

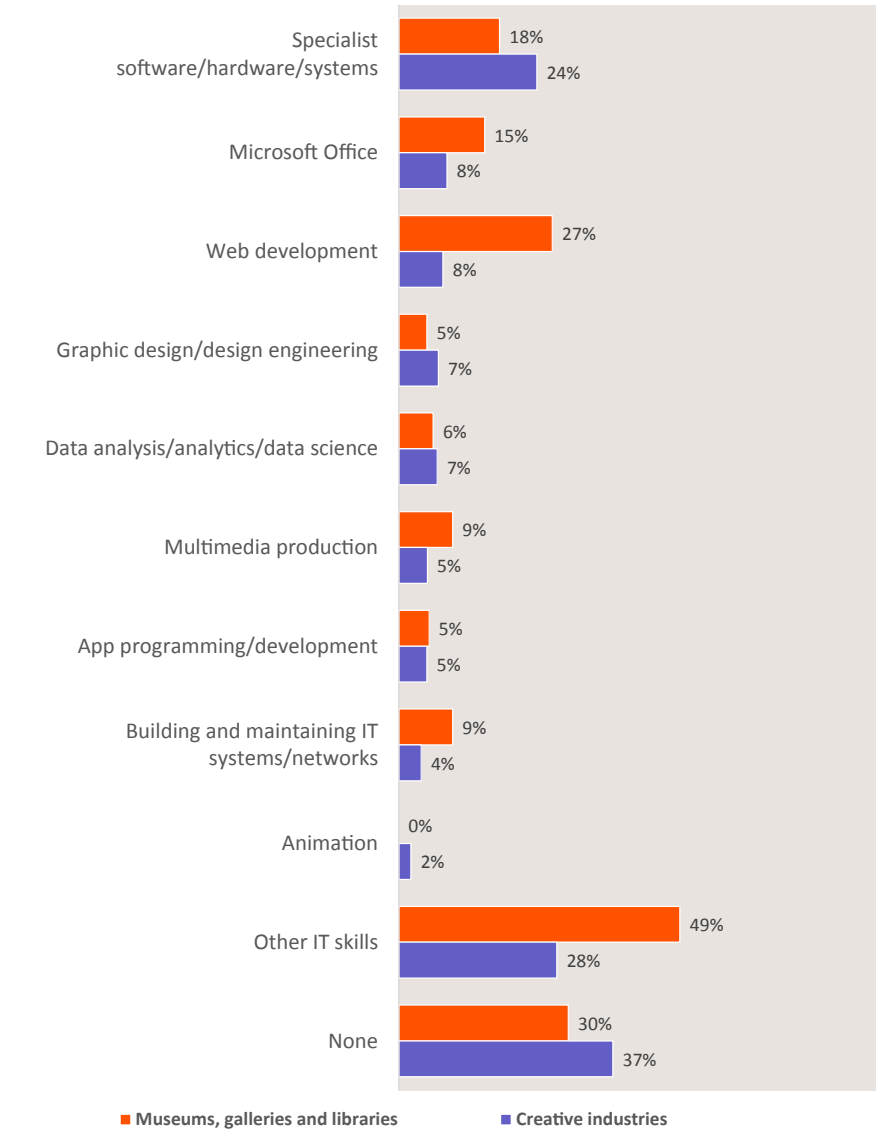
Increased use of AI was also highlighted by survey respondents, and wider research suggests increasing use of AI tools within the sector to support collections management and research, as well as to support day-to-day tasks, such as document drafting (Pavis, 2023; Cox, 2025). MGL organisations also play a role in supporting digital literacy. For example, a recent report from CILIP highlighted that many libraries are now providing training and support in AI literacy with their users but have upskilling needs in effective and ethical use of AI (Cox, 2025).

Alongside specialist digital skills, roundtable participants and survey respondents highlighted a growing need for specialist knowledge and skills in working with a range of audience groups, for instance, increased understanding of supporting adult literacy or working with children with special educational needs and disabilities. Consistent with findings on current skills shortages and gaps, others highlighted the need for increased skills related to fundraising, retail and customer service.

**Figure 25: Digital skills needs in next three to five years, 2025**

*Q: Do you expect staff will need to acquire new IT skills over the next three to five years? If so, which specific IT skills do you feel will need improving?*

Base = establishments with upskilling needs (n = 35)



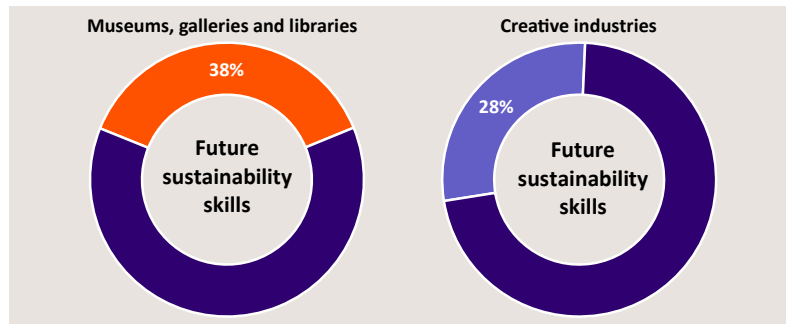
Source: CESS 2025

## 7. Future jobs and skills needs (continued)

**Figure 26: Sustainability skills needs in next three to five years, 2025**

*Q: Are any of the skills you expect staff will need to acquire over the next three to five years related to wanting to be more sustainable or carbon-neutral? If so, what specific sustainability or 'green' skills will need improving?*

Base = establishments with upskilling needs (n = 26)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

When we consider which transversal or core skills employers anticipate will need improving over the next three to five years, we see significant variation for the MGL sector compared with the creative industries as a whole. Indeed, the MGL sector is less likely to report a need to improve transversal skills in most categories over the next three to five years.

A notable exception to this is digital literacy, which is the second most common skills need for MGL sectors at 20%, compared with 9% for the creative industries. This is unsurprising both given the increasing use of digital tools and technologies across the MGL sector and the role these sectors – and in particular libraries – play in fostering digital literacy with audiences and communities (Good Things Foundation, 2023).

The other two most common skills needs for the MGL sector are planning and organising (21%) and working with others (10%). Roundtable participants also highlighted the importance of management and leadership skills, as well as personal resilience in adapting to change.

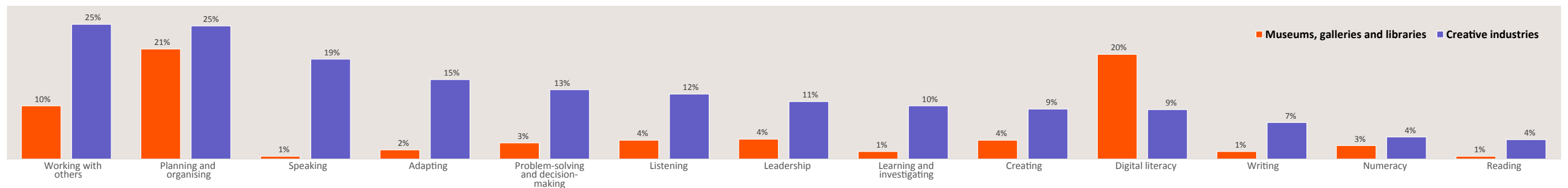
As discussed in previous sections, the MGL sector is increasingly focused on its environmental impact. As such, we find that the anticipated requirement for staff to acquire new sustainability and carbon neutral skills in the next three to five years is particularly high for this sector: 38% of MGL employers that expect to grow staff numbers also anticipate staff will need to acquire new sustainability or 'green' skills in the next three to five years, compared with 28% for the creative industries on average. Specific skills areas highlighted by survey respondents range from basic carbon literacy and sustainable collections care and management to building maintenance and operations and waste management.

Roundtable participants also noted a growing focus on providing leadership around climate action for communities, and the need for sustainability skills to be embedded at management and leadership levels within organisations.

**Figure 27: Core skills needs in next three to five years, 2025**

*Q: Which, if any, core or 'transversal' skills do you feel will need improving among your staff over the next three to five years?*

Base = establishments with upskilling needs (n = 26)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: Responses are based on a small sample size. This may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution.

# 8. Employer investment in skills

The CESS enables an assessment of the impact of skills challenges on employers in the MGL sector, relative to the creative industries – that is, it explores the effects of skills shortage vacancies and/or skills gaps on firm performance. This suggests, as with wider evidence, that skills deficiencies are an important business concern for the sector.

The most cited impact for the MGL sector was increased workload for other staff (31%), consistent with findings from a recent survey of 324 museum directors by Art Fund, which reported staff capacity as one of the top four biggest challenges facing directors in the sector (Art Fund, 2024). Other common impacts reported by employers were: having difficulties meeting deadlines (30%) and having difficulties meeting quality standards (27%).

More positively, most MGL employers are taking some action to address skills challenges in their existing workforce: 68% are increasing training for the existing workforce, 21% are taking on and training up less-well-qualified recruits and 12% are redefining existing jobs (see also Kinetiq, 2023).

While actions taken by MGL employers largely reflect those taken by creative industries employers overall, there are notable variations. Only 1% of MGL employers are bringing in contractors (compared to 17% in creative industries), and no respondents for the MGL sector are using new recruitment methods (vs 7%). MGL employers are also more likely to increase training for their existing workforce.

Figure 28: Impact of skills challenges, 2025

Q: Thinking now about all occupations in which you have skills challenges – that is, either where you cannot recruit someone with the right skills or where the people doing these jobs do not have all the skills that they need – what impact are these skills issues having on this site?

Base = establishments with skills shortages or skills gaps (n = 38)

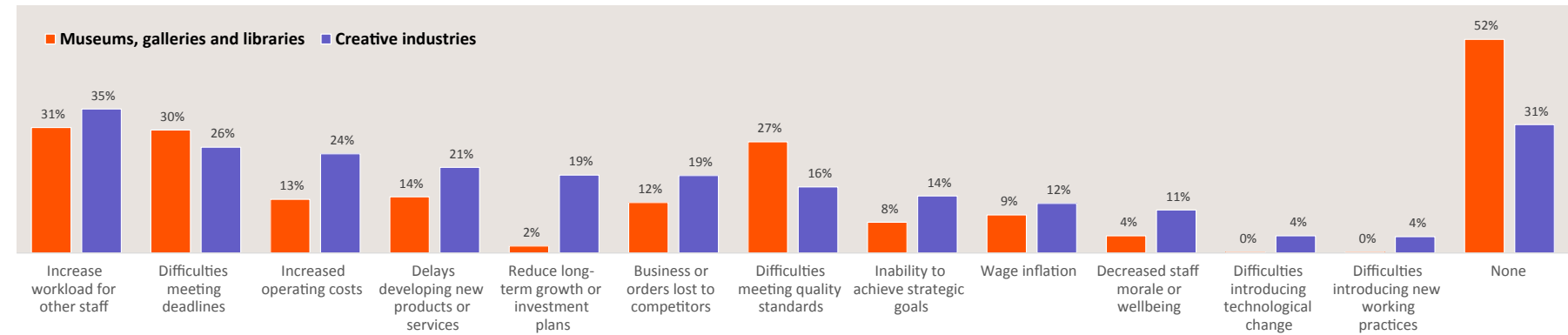
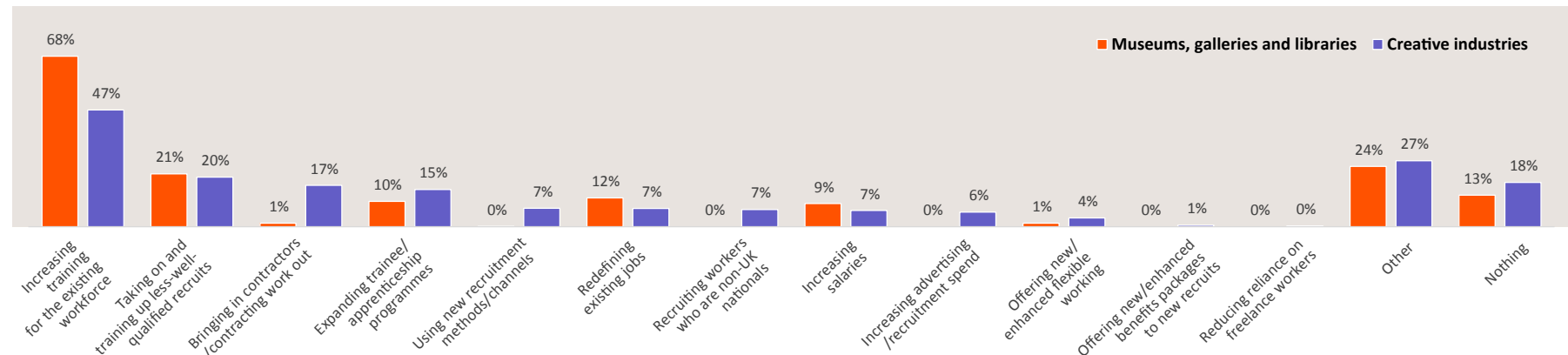


Figure 29: Response to skills challenges, 2025

Q: What, if anything, is your site doing to overcome these skills challenges?

Base = establishments with skills shortages or skills gaps (n = 38)



Source: CESS 2025

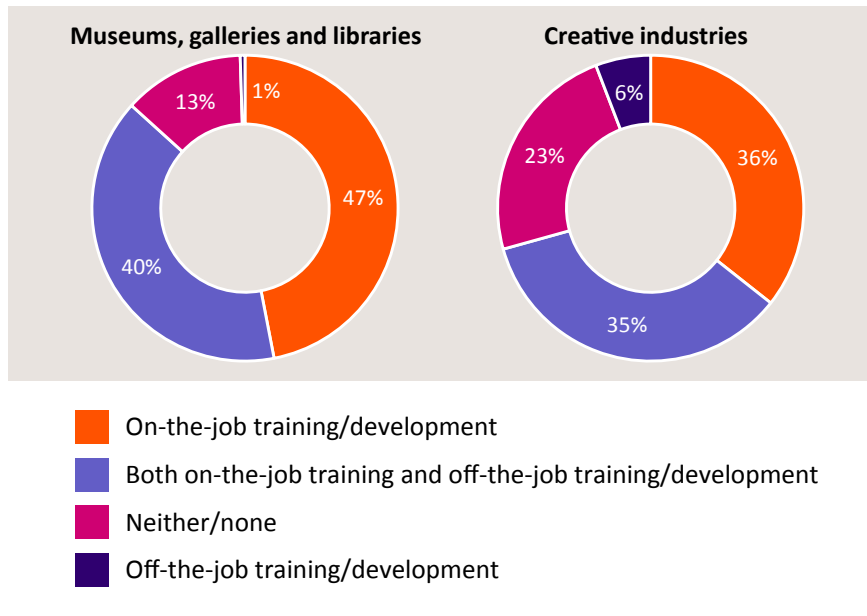
## 8. Employer investment in skills (continued)

In reflecting on the skills challenges employers are facing, and the anticipated need to develop new skills in the years ahead, an important question is whether creative industries employers are investing sufficiently in upskilling and reskilling their workforce.

The CESS provides an indication of the extent to which MGL employers have organised or funded training provision over the last twelve months. This includes training not only for employees but for agency staff, the self-employed and freelance workers.

**Figure 30: Employer training provision, 2025**

*Q: What, if any, training has your organisation arranged or funded over the past twelve months?*  
Base = all establishments (n = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

Positively, the CESS data points to higher levels of training with this broader definition than indicated elsewhere (see for example the Employer Skills Survey 2022 as discussed in Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025). Indeed, 87% of firms in the MGL sector provide some kind of development, a slightly higher share than found for the creative industries overall (77%).

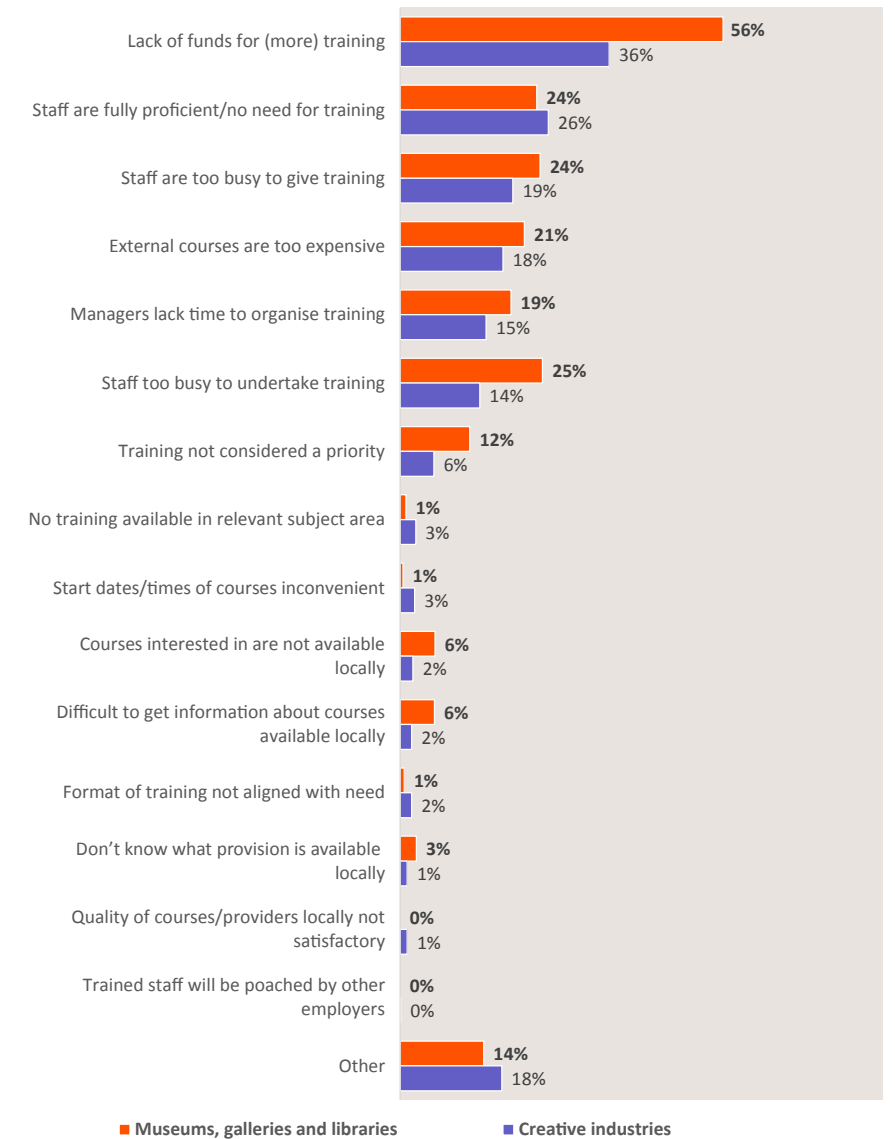
The most common type of training provided is on-the-job training (47%), also higher than for creative industries (36%). In addition, a significant proportion (40%) are providing on- and off-the-job training, which can help reinforce learning and result in better outcomes (Carey, Giles and O'Brien, 2023).

The survey also provides information on the barriers employers face to offering training. Unsurprisingly, given funding constraints and challenges facing the sector, barriers related to cost and staff time are reported to an even greater degree for the MGL sector than for creative industries: 56% of employers stated lack of funds as a barrier, followed by staff being too busy to take training (25%) and staff being too busy to give training (24%).

Skills Audits roundtable participants also highlighted lack of funds and time as a barrier, particularly for those museums, galleries and libraries based in rural areas where travel costs and time off-site can place a disproportionate burden on organisations.

**Figure 31: Barriers to training provision, 2025**

*Q: What, if anything, prevents your organisation from offering (more) training for staff at this site?*  
Base = all establishments (n = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

## 8. Employer investment in skills (continued)

Although the CESS suggests that higher levels of training are already underway in the MGL sector, employers must be supported to continue to invest in the skills of their workforce – particularly given the considerable future upskilling needs in digital, community and audience engagement, sustainability and income generation.

When considering the measures that would enable MGL employers to continue to invest in skills and training, a range of factors are considered important. The most common enabler reported was financial subsidies (75%), which was also the most common for creative industries, followed by tax reliefs on expenditure on staff training (48%). Roundtable participants and wider literature highlighted the need for greater financial

support in skills provision, with some parts of the sector also calling for increased support for grassroots organisations to help them develop early-career talent (Easton, 2025).

A related issue highlighted by roundtable participants was reforming the Growth and Skills Levy both to allow greater flexibility in how (and on whom) the levy is spent and to simplify requirements on host organisations.

However, financial mechanisms were not the only potential enablers of employer investment: 43% of MGL employers noted that they would benefit from information on finding training relevant to their needs;

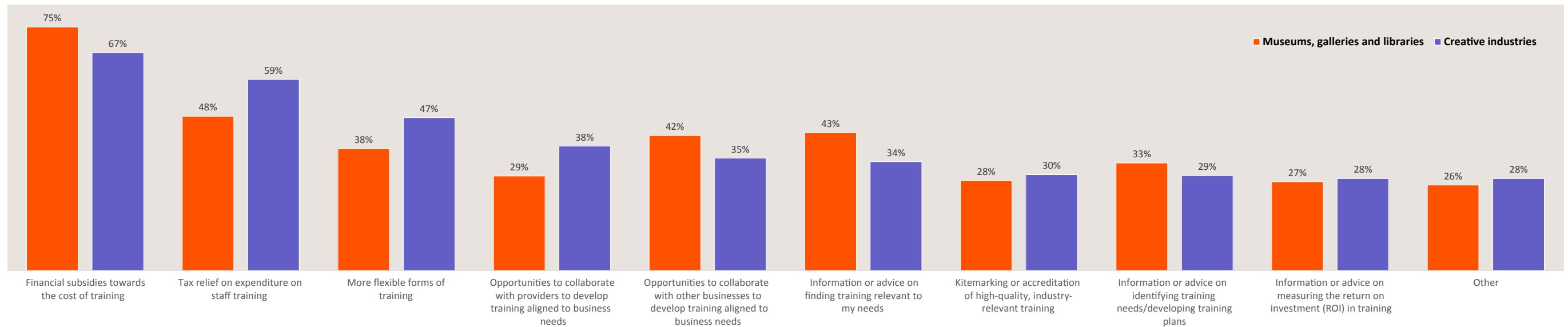
42% indicated opportunities to collaborate with other businesses to develop training; and 38% noted more flexible forms of training. Roundtable participants also highlighted the importance of peer-run support networks for skills development as well as the important role that partnerships with universities can play, not least given the high proportion of higher education graduates entering the MGL workforce.

Further concerns highlighted by roundtable participants included the way current funding pressures on the higher education sector might affect the talent pipeline, and the need to ensure that recent immigration reforms do not create barriers to hiring non-UK workers for specialist roles such as curators or collections managers.

**Figure 32: Enablers of employer investment in training, 2025**

*Q: What measures would enable your organisation to offer (more) training in future?*

Base = all establishments (n = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

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