

# SCREEN



**Creative Industries  
Policy and Evidence Centre**

Led by  Newcastle University | Business School with  RSA

# Creative Industries Skills Audits

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## SCREEN

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### About Work Advance

Work Advance undertakes research, analysis and evaluation to advance our 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 strong 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, and strong stakeholder engagement and partnership working, which brings value through evidence-based and expert insights of 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.

For more details visit [www.pec.ac.uk](http://www.pec.ac.uk)

Supported by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Creative Industries Council, ScreenSkills and the BFI, awarding National Lottery funding.



# Executive summary

## 1 Skills shortages when recruiting: The picture today

The screen industries are one of the UK's greatest success stories, but recent years have been marked by considerable volatility. The current picture is one of contrasts. The fallout from US industrial action and cutbacks in streamer commissioning have left many out of work and has driven down wages. Yet labour surpluses in some areas sit alongside skills shortages in others.

One in four (25%) screen employers that had hired staff (including freelancers) in the past two years reported recruitment difficulties, mostly caused by candidates lacking the skills or experience required for the role.

In the screen industries, skills shortages are most acute among experienced staff and experts. Employers struggle to recruit key creative roles such as senior/line/assistant producers; editors and animators; technical operators (AV, lighting, sound); and business, finance, sales and marketing roles.

Skills shortages are wide-ranging, including technical and craft skills; creative skills; and digital and data skills. Finding candidates with the skills to work with the plethora of specialist software used in the industry is a particular challenge. Employers also suggest those applying for roles often lack important transversal skills, such as planning and organising, team working, communication, digital literacy and adaptability.

## 2 Current skills gaps in the existing workforce

Alongside the challenge of skills shortages when recruiting, screen employers also point to skills deficiencies among their workforce. In 2025, skills gaps affected three in ten employers in the screen industries.

While these can be transitory in nature (for example, where staff are new to role), one third of screen employers suggested the main cause of skills gaps was that staff had not received appropriate training. Others pointed to staff lacking experience for the role, potentially reflecting the culture of 'stepping up' without adequate training. The pace of technological advancement is a particular driver of skills gaps in the sector.

While skills gaps among experienced workers are a challenge, screen employers also suggest new entrants and those early in their careers need to develop stronger skills. This was also reflected in the job roles most affected, with skills gaps reported among a range of junior, trainee and assistant positions.

The types of skills that employers say need improving among their workforce closely mirror those lacking in candidates. A need to upgrade management and leadership skills is an additional concern, particularly as the industry moves to develop content for nontraditional platforms.

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

Screen employers remain cautious about the outlook: 42% expect to grow staff numbers over the next three to five years. Yet there are concerns an attrition of talent from the industry may inhibit future growth.

Many of the roles subject to skills shortages and gaps today are expected to be in growing demand in the future: producers, directors, editors; digital roles, like animators and multimedia designers; technical operators across a range of departments; and business roles in sales, business development and marketing.

The vast majority of screen employers expect a need to upgrade the skills of their workforce in the years ahead, and nearly nine in ten of these employers suggest this will be driven by new technology.

Often this is related to software or hardware upgrades in varying forms. However, many screen employers are exploring how to effectively, legally and ethically embed the use of AI across a very wide range of industry processes – from administrative tasks to idea generation, filming, digital content creation and in post-production.

Screen employers were also more likely to point to a need for stronger sustainability skills in the future, with many referencing training and certification, such as BAFTA albert's offerings, as an important way to establish sustainable practices across the industry.

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

Skills challenges are having a significant impact on screen businesses, such as increasing workload, reducing staff morale and wellbeing, increasing operating costs, hindering delivery capability and delaying innovation.

The majority of screen employers are taking action in response, and more than three-quarters had provided training over the past year. While reported rates compare favourably with wider surveys, a minority provide off-the-job training.

Employers report a range of practical and financial constraints to training. Nearly half point to a lack of funds, and one quarter suggest external training is too expensive. Managers often lack the time to arrange training, and staff lack the time to train others or participate themselves, often linked to the project-based nature of work in parts of the sector, particularly film and TV production.

Screen employers called for more financial support and flexible/modular training better aligned to production cycles. Many would welcome help to develop training plans and identify relevant courses. Building on the long history of collaboration and collective skills investment in the screen industries, there was a strong appetite to collaborate with other employers and providers. This was also mirrored by stakeholders, keen to work collaboratively to shape a comprehensive and coordinated approach to developing the skills needed for the future success of the screen industries.

# 1. Introduction to the Creative Industries Skills Audits

**Throughout 2025, the 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 of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Creative Industries Council, 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 screen industries.

The research utilises the DCMS definition of the creative industries, which includes the following Standard Industrial Classification codes for the screen industries:

- 59.11 Motion picture, video and television programme production activities;
- 59.12 Motion picture, video and television programme postproduction;
- 59.13 Motion picture, video and television programme distribution;
- 59.14 Motion picture projection activities (cinemas);
- 60.1 Radio broadcasting;
- 60.2 Television programming and broadcasting activities;
- 74.2 Photographic 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 (OECD, 2019). The framework provides a structured way of thinking about the different dimensions of the labour market: skills supply and demand, and the way in which they interact with one another.

The research team deployed a rigorous, five-stage approach to developing the Skills Audits, including:

- **A rapid evidence review**, examining evidence on skills issues across the creative industries, in different UK nations and sub-sectors, produced by government, industry stakeholders and the research community;
- **Secondary data analysis** of official, government sources of labour market information (or 'top-down labour market information') to provide a robust, consistent and comparable baseline;

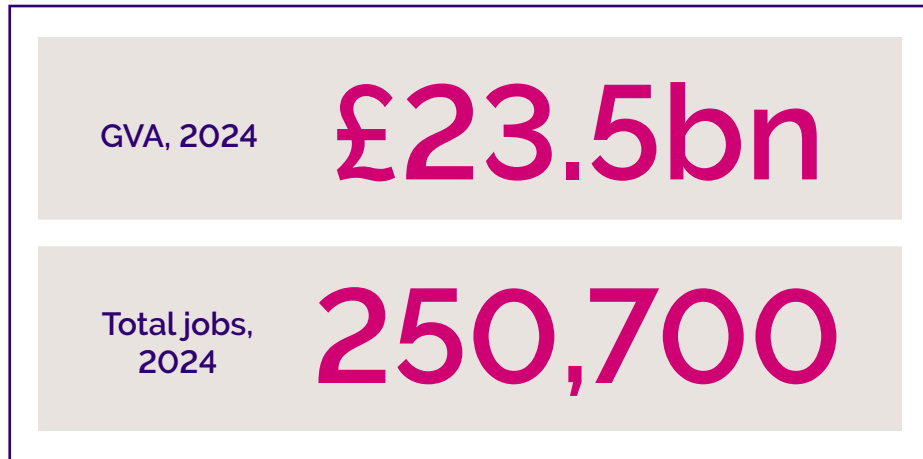
- **New primary research** – the Creative Employer Skills Survey (CESS) – including over 1,300 telephone interviews with employers across the creative industries to explore their perspectives on skills priorities, the talent pipeline, barriers and enablers to skills investment;
- **A series of roundtables** bringing together government, national and subnational creative agencies, trade bodies, unions, creative businesses, major cultural organisations and education providers to promote shared consensus on skills priorities;
- **Reporting and dissemination**, including the production of the Creative Industries Skills Audit and a suite of eleven sub-sector audits.

The Skills Audits have been overseen by a Project Board comprised of the project funders, Skills England and members of the research consortium. It was also informed by a Steering Group that included representatives of government from each UK nation and every creative industries sub-sector.

Figure 1: Developing the Creative Industries Skills Audits



## 2. Sector profile and performance



**The screen industries, as defined by DCMS, encompasses the production, post-production and distribution of film and TV programmes; motion picture projection in cinemas; TV and radio broadcasting; and photography.**

The UK is recognised as one of the best places in the world to make films, high-end TV and animation. The screen industries are a key source of competitive advantage and soft power, positively contributing to the UK's trade balance and driving innovation (UK Government, 2025; DCMS, 2025d).

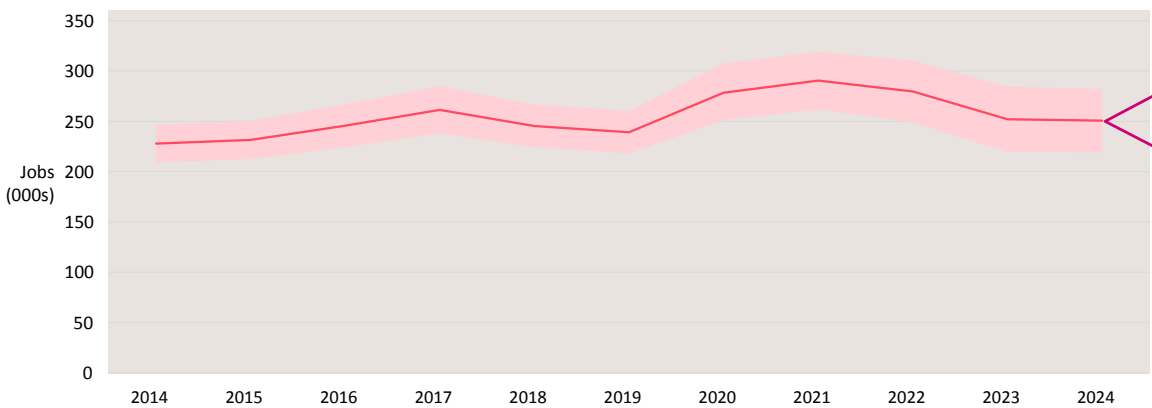
In 2024, the screen sector contributed £23.5bn in gross value added (GVA) – equivalent to 16% of the economic output of the creative industries and around 1% of the UK economy.

The screen industries have expanded substantially over the past decade, but recent years have been marked by considerable volatility. The rapid expansion in production activity during the latter stages of the Covid-19 pandemic has been followed by sizeable economic challenges posed by strikes by the WGA and SAG-AFTRA unions in the US and cutbacks in streamer commissioning (Screen Sectors Skills Taskforce, 2023; Ampere Analysis, 2025; ScreenScotland, 2023).

The pattern of employment in the screen industries has followed suit. In 2024, the screen industries supported a little over 250,000 jobs – 22,800 more than a decade earlier, but 40,000 short of its peak in 2021 (DCMS, 2025c; Ampere Analysis, 2025). Recent research suggests that the screen workforce is currently underemployed (Ampere Analysis, 2025) and that nearly one-third of freelancers are out of work (Bectu, 2025).

Indeed, a defining feature of the UK screen industries is the predominance of microbusinesses – 94% of firms employ fewer than ten people – and its large freelance workforce. Activity is spatially concentrated in London, which accounts for 55% of screen sector GVA, though regional hubs like Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff, Belfast and Glasgow are growing (Ampere Analysis, 2025; Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025).

Figure 2: Employment (total jobs), 2014-2024



**Screen industries**

**+22,800 jobs since 2014**

**Growing at 1.0% per annum between 2014 and 2024**

**Creative industries = 2.9%**  
**UK workforce = 0.8%**

Source: DCMS (2025b, 2025c, 2025d)

Notes: GVA is at current prices, and 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

**Work in the screen industries is highly skilled, and the workforce is highly qualified: two-thirds (65%) hold a degree or equivalent, compared to just over four in ten (43%) workers across the UK economy (DCMS, 2025a). On average, those working in the screen industries earn around £10,000 more than the average annual UK salary, but wider research points to significant pay disparities between screen workers (Carey, Giles and O'Brien, 2023). Stakeholders engaged through this research suggest fierce competition for work is driving down wages and widening differentials between the pay on offer in the sector compared to other industries, particularly in cross-cutting areas like finance, data and technology.**

The structure of work in the screen industries is distinct. Nearly half (46%) of those working in the sector are self-employed – three times the average across the wider economy (14%). This reflects the propensity for project-based work in parts of the sector, particularly in film and TV production, where workers are often under contract for the duration of a production. While jobs in film and TV conjure images of actors, writers and directors, in practice the screen industries offer a diverse range of careers operating 'below the line' across different departments and business functions (ScreenSkills, n.d.; Olsberg SPI, 2023a, 2023b):

- **Pre-production:** development and editorial (script writing, storyboarding); budgeting and finance; rights, legal and compliance; scheduling and logistics; casting;
- **Production:** production management (producers, line producers, coordinators, runners), craft and technical departments (camera, sound, art, lighting);
- **Post-production:** where footage is edited, sound, music and workflows completed (edit suite, online grading, sound studios, deliverables);
- **Animation:** a distinct pipeline involving development, pre-production (storyboards, character/design), production (modelling, rigging, animating, lighting) and post-production (compositing, effects);

- **Visual effects (VFX):** combining computer-generated imagery with live action; key roles include previsualisation, modelling, lighting, compositing;
- **TV broadcasting:** includes engineering, technical and operational roles that get programmes from the studio to audiences, including broadcast engineering, studio/outside broadcast operations, playout and distribution;
- **Film distribution and exhibition:** roles concerned with securing markets and platforms (sales agents, distribution executives), release strategy (theatrical windows, digital), and running cinemas/exhibition venues (programming, audience development).

In addition, there are wider dimensions that impact the job roles and skill needs of the sector, including the type of production (e.g. film, high-end TV, unscripted etc) and its scale and location (see Ampere Analysis, 2024).

Those working in the screen industries often require a diverse mix of creative, technical and transversal skills, albeit skills needs vary considerably across different Screen sectors and job roles, as well as being influenced by the seniority of the position and the size of the business (ScreenSkills n.d.; Olsberg SPI, 2023b; Carey et al. 2024). The transferability of skills across film, TV, animation, games and even live events is a growing feature of the industry, and individuals increasingly build portfolio careers across the screen and wider creative sectors (ScreenSkills, 2025; ScreenScotland, 2023).

Despite the breadth of roles, it is clear that opportunities are not equitably distributed, and a lack of workforce diversity continues to be a key challenge for the sector. Women are underrepresented in the screen industries, particularly in VFX (UK Screen Alliance, 2019), post-production and technical roles, and senior positions (Ampere Analysis, 2024, 2025). People of colour are also underrepresented, particularly in the context of the spatial concentration of the industry in more ethnically diverse urban centres (Ampere Analysis, 2024; Creative Diversity Network, 2025). There remain persistent and pronounced class-based disparities (Carey et al., 2023; Carey, O'Brien and Gable, 2021; Ampere Analysis, 2024). Further, there are growing concerns that the challenging industry context is disproportionately impacting diverse talent, risking reversing any progress made in promoting greater equality and inclusion in the sector (Bectu, 2024; Ampere Analysis, 2025).

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

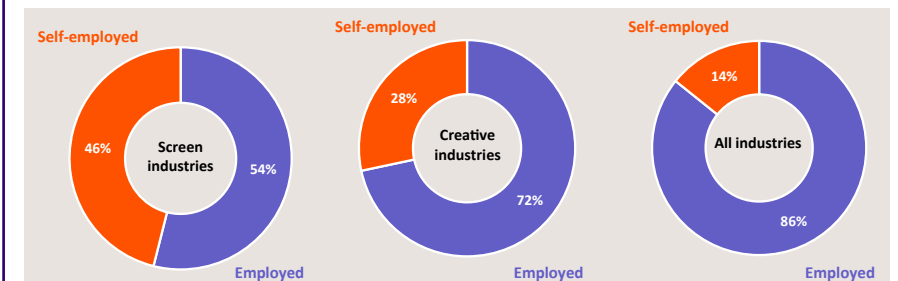


Figure 4: Workforce qualifications (% degree-qualified), 2022-2024

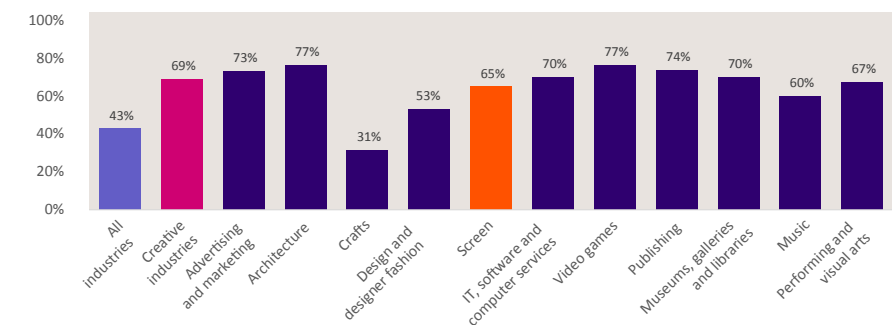
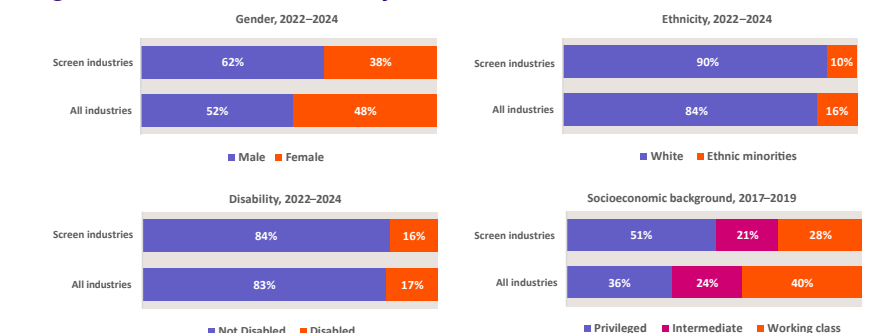


Figure 5: Workforce diversity



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

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

# 4. Recruitment difficulties

While growth has slowed in recent years, recruitment activity in the screen industries has remained buoyant, likely reflecting the project-based nature of work in parts of the sub-sector, particularly film and TV production. Data from the CESS 2025 suggests that more than three quarters (77%) of screen employers had recruited in the past two years (including freelance workers) – exceeding trends seen across the creative industries (65%).

Screen employers utilise a range of recruitment methods, being more likely to use online job platforms and professional networks. However, echoing wider research (Bectu, 2025; BFI, 2022), the most common approach to finding candidates was via word-of-mouth, cited by 57% of recruiting employers in the screen industries, compared to 46% across the creative industries.

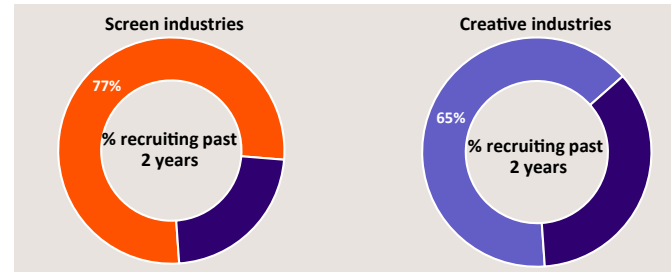
Despite the ongoing turbulence in the screen industries, one in four (25%) screen employers that had recruited over the past two years found vacancies hard to fill, suggesting that reported labour surpluses in some areas coexist with skills shortages in others (Ampere Analysis, 2025; Bectu, 2025).

As for other employers in the creative industries, the main causes of hard-to-fill vacancies were candidates lacking the required skills – cited by 60% of screen employers with recruitment difficulties – or experience (cited by 46%) required for the role. It is noteworthy that these were viewed as much bigger constraints than candidates lacking the required qualifications.

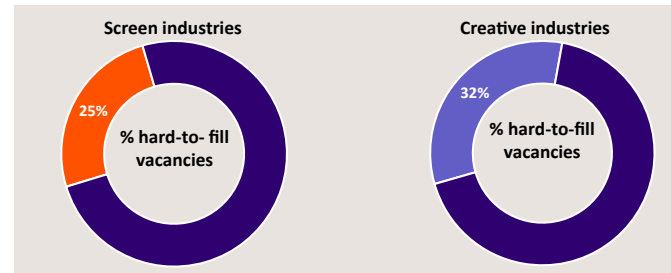
Screen employers were also more likely to point to the job entailing unsociable hours or work being conducted in remote locations with poor public transport, echoing wider research highlighting long hours and the need to film in remote locations in film and TV production (Carey et al., 2023; Swords et al., 2022).

Figure 6: Hiring and recruitment difficulties, 2025

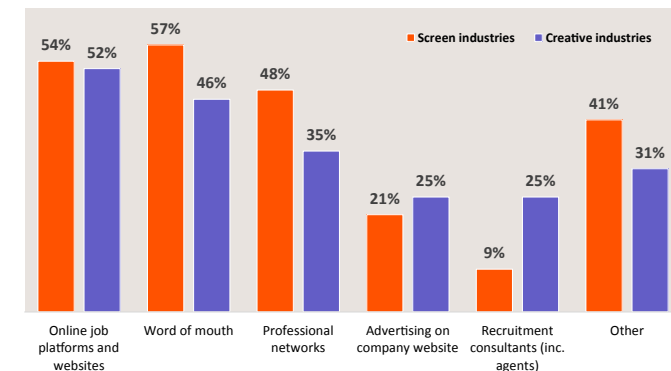
Q: Has this site recruited anyone, including any paid employees, agency staff, and self-employed or freelance workers, in the past two years?  
Base = all establishments (n = 176)



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 = 148)



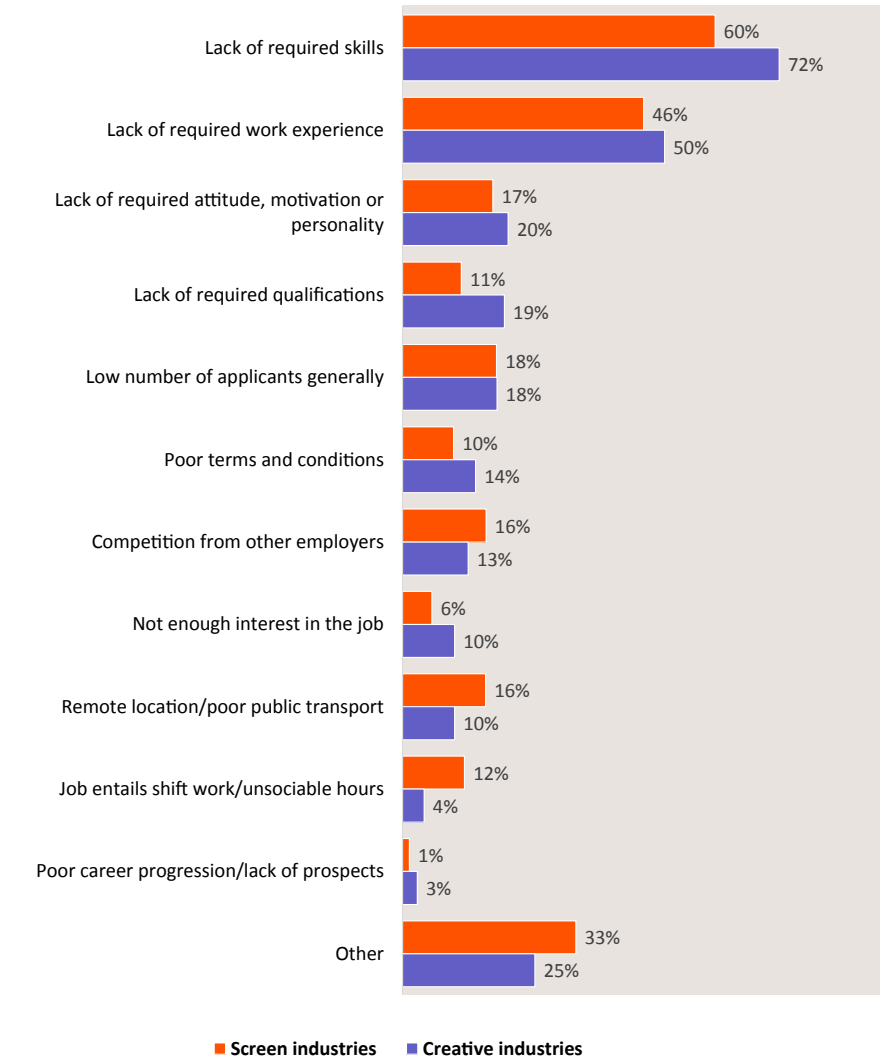
Q: What recruitment methods do you use to fill vacancies at this site?  
Base = establishments that have recruited in the past two years (n = 148)



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 = 52)



Source: CESS, 2025

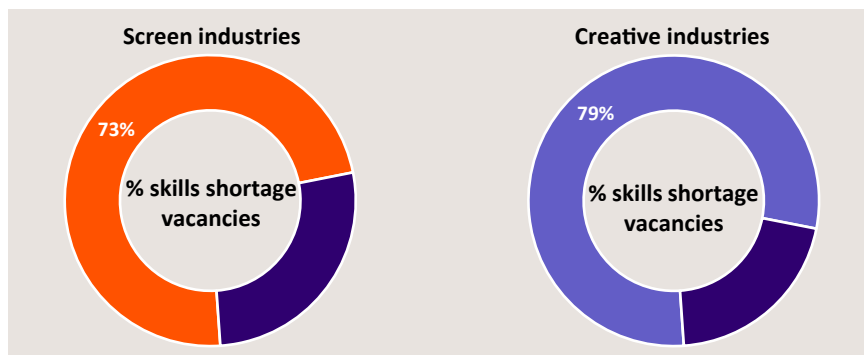
# 5. Skills shortages

**Taken together, nearly three quarters (73%) of screen employers that reported recruitment difficulties pointed to candidates lacking skills, qualifications or experience necessary for the role – a slightly smaller share than across the creative industries (79%).**

The CESS has also sought to examine the occupations in which skills shortages were most acute. In line with wider research, we find skills shortages in the screen industries to be most acute among more experienced roles (Ampere Analysis, 2025; Olsberg SPI, 2023b; BFI, 2022). Nearly half (48%) of screen employers with skills shortages suggest these are vacancies for staff with five to ten years of experience, and 38% were struggling to recruit experts with more than ten years of experience. In contrast, only 17% of screen employers reported skills shortages for entry-level roles.

**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 = 52)



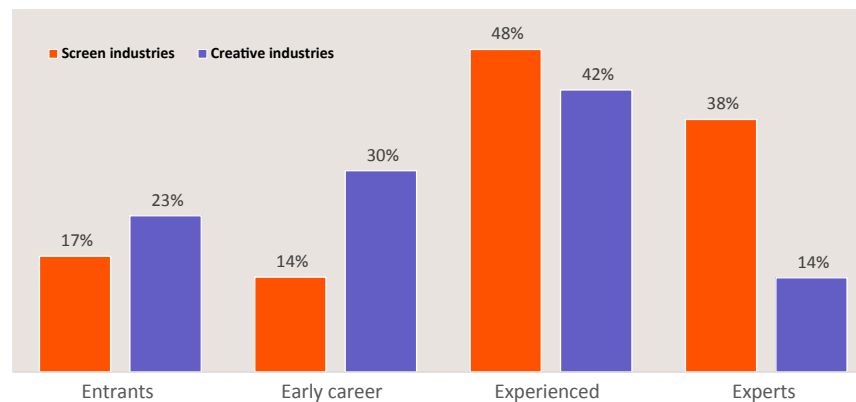
Source: CESS, 2025

Employers suggest a wide range of occupations were proving hard to fill. Broadcasting and entertainment producers (e.g. senior/line/assistant producers) top the list, cited by 38% of employers facing recruitment difficulties. This was followed by broadcasting and entertainment editors (e.g. editors and assistant editors) cited by 17%, multimedia animators (e.g. VFX artists, animators, composers, digital matte painters) cited by 15% and film and TV production managers cited by 13%.

One in ten screen employers with recruitment difficulties struggled to recruit photographers, AV and broadcasting equipment operators, which included a diverse range of technical operators working with AV equipment, drones, lighting and sound. Echoing wider research, data from the CESS 2025 suggests a range of business, finance, sales and marketing roles were also proving difficult to fill (Brazanti, Howe and Cortvriend, 2021; Olsberg SPI, 2023b).

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

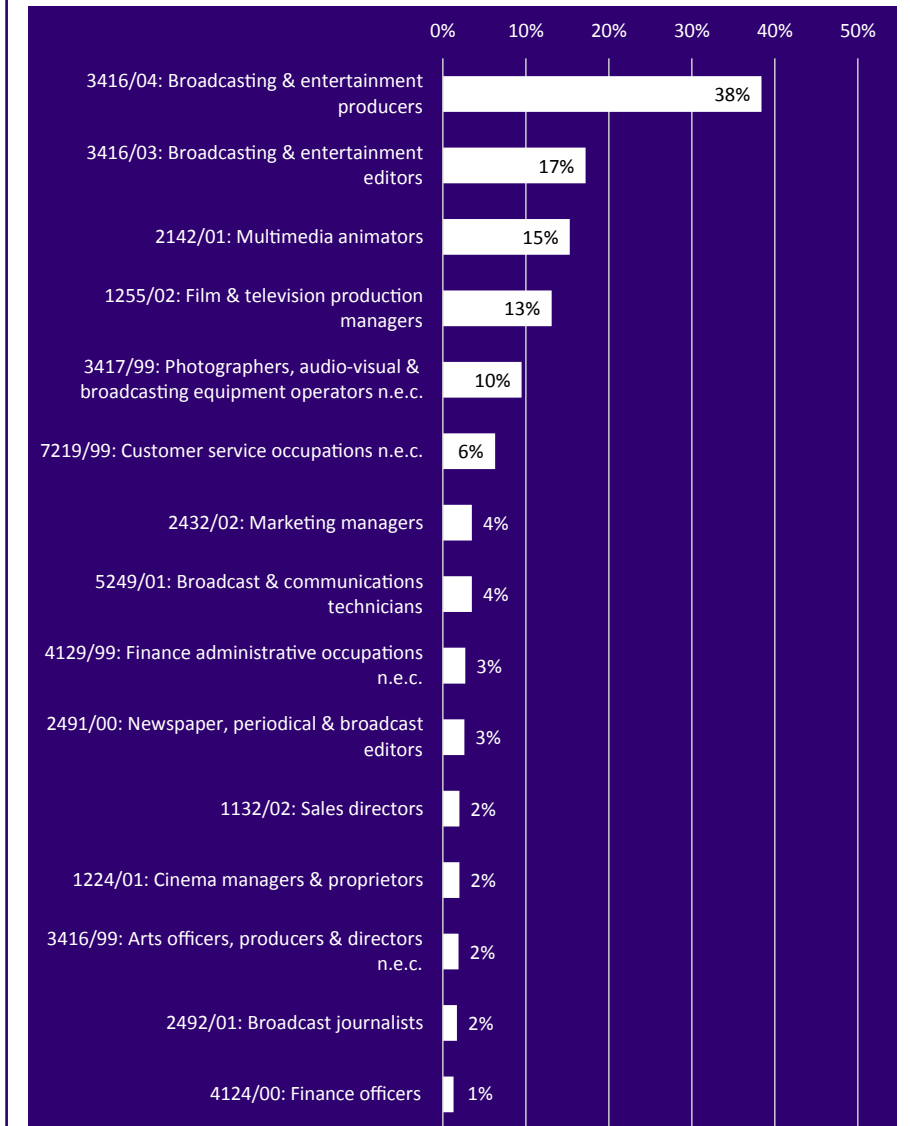
*Q: How would you describe the level of experience or seniority of the candidates sought for [skills shortage occupation] vacancies?*  
Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies (n = 42)



Source: CESS 2025

**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=52)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: n.e.c.: not elsewhere classified

## 5. Skills shortages (continued)

The CESS 2025 sought to explore the specialist or technical skills that employers found lacking among applicants. In the screen industries, skills shortages were diverse, ranging from technical and craft skills, such as AV equipment operation and rack building, to creative skills, such as writing, editing and production. Digital and data skills also featured heavily, including coding, programming and app development, as well as wider business skills, including financial, people and change management. Wider research also points to a shortage of screen heritage skills,\* particularly technical skills to work in film preservation, digitisation and archiving (BFI, forthcoming; ScreenScotland, 2023).

When asked explicitly about basic or advanced IT skills lacking among candidates, one third (32%) of screen employers with skills shortages identified one or more area where digital skills were lacking. This was a slightly smaller proportion than the average across the creative industries (45%).

Over one in four (28%) employers with skills shortages in the screen industries suggested candidates lacked specialist software, hardware or systems skills. When asked for further detail on exactly which software skills were lacking, employers highlighted a range, including database building skills, SQL and coding/programming skills (e.g. Python, C++ for Unreal), fault finding and programming of AV equipment, intellectual property-related software, editing (e.g. Avid, Adobe Creative Cloud), accounting software (e.g. Xero), and production management integration software (e.g. Octopus).

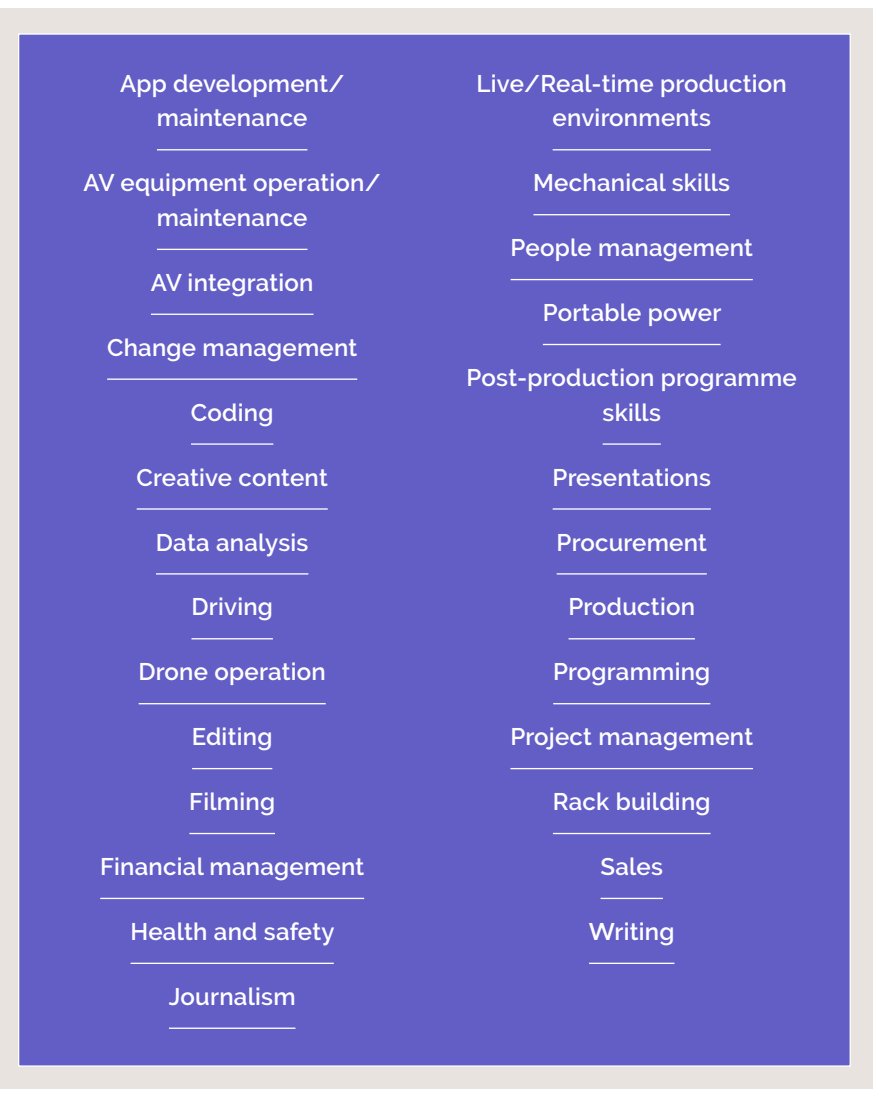
However, screen employers were also more likely to suggest that candidates applying for hard-to-fill job roles lacked data analysis, analytics or data science skills (cited by 14% of those with skills shortages in the sector compared to 4% across the creative industries); Microsoft Office skills (18% vs 9%); and graphic design/design engineering (9% vs 6%).

\* Screen heritage sits outside of the DCMS definition of the screen industries but is viewed by industry stakeholders as an integral part of the sector.

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

*Q: Have you found any specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role difficult to obtain from applicants for [skills shortage occupation] vacancies? If so, what specific specialist skills or knowledge have been lacking?*

Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies [n = 42]

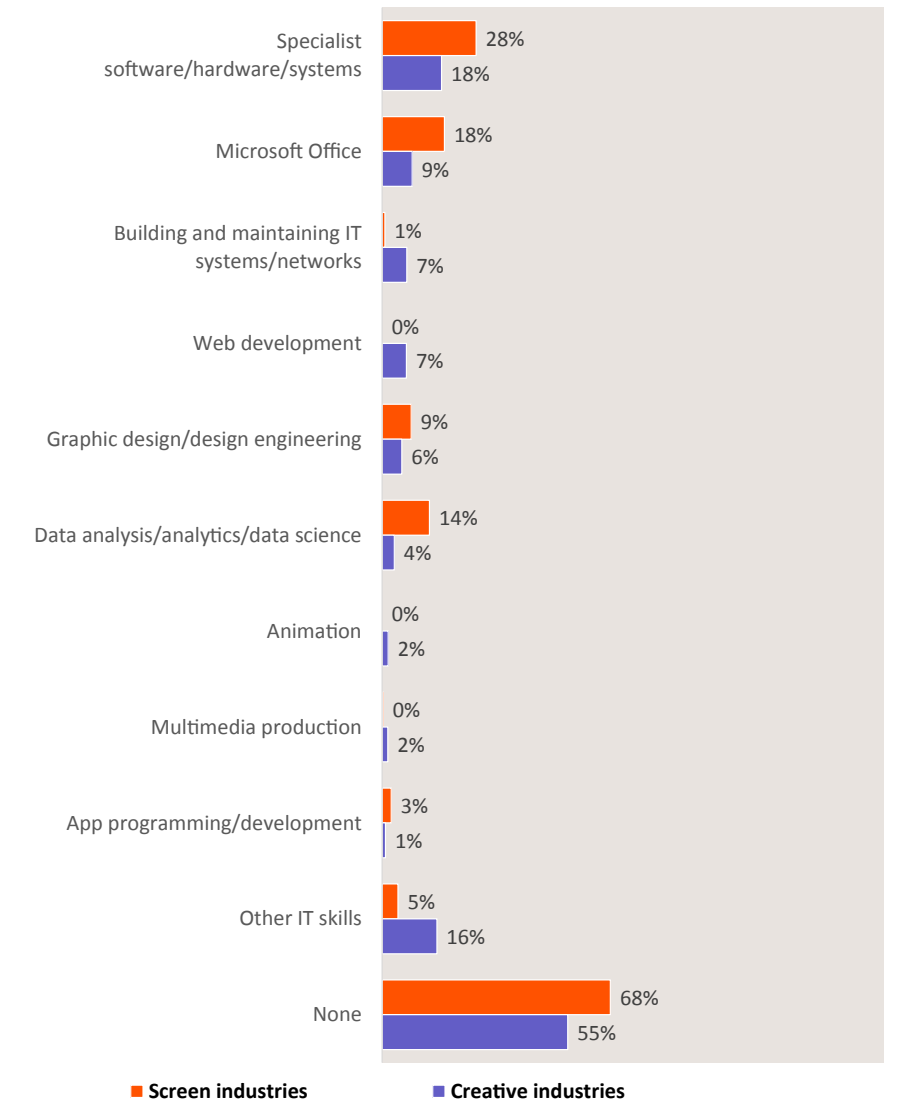


Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 12: Digital skills shortages, 2025**

*Q: Have you found any basic or advanced IT skills difficult to obtain from applicants for [skills shortage occupation] vacancies. If so, what specific IT skills have been lacking?*

Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies [n = 42]



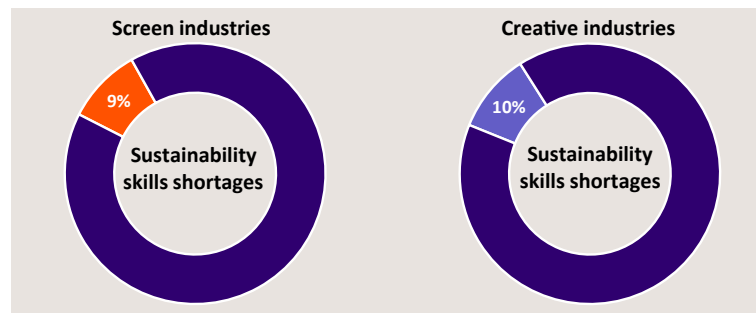
Source: CESS 2025

## 5. Skills shortages (continued)

**Figure 13: Sustainability skills shortages, 2025**

*Q: Were any of the skills you found difficult to obtain from applicants for [skills shortage occupation] vacancies related to wanting to be more sustainable or carbon-neutral? If so, what specific sustainability or 'green' skills have been lacking?*

Base = establishments with skills shortage vacancies (n = 42)



The CESS also sought to explore the extent to which the skills that employers found lacking among candidates were linked to any sustainability goals.

Almost one in ten (9%) employers in the screen industries with skills shortages pointed to inadequate sustainability or 'green' skills among applicants, broadly in line with the picture across the wider creative sector. Most commonly, this related to the need to minimise travel distances or to meet industry environmental standards, notably BAFTA albert training and certification.

Echoing wider research (Carey et al., 2024; Olsberg SPI, 2023b), candidates were also reported as lacking a range of core or 'transversal' skills. Indeed, many screen employers emphasised that skills shortages were often a consequence of candidates lacking the distinct mix of technical, digital and transversal skills viewed as essential to operating effectively in the screen industries.

Planning and organising was a particular concern for screen employers – likely reflecting the propensity for project-based work in parts of the screen sector – cited by 42% of those with skills shortages, compared to 36% across the broader creative industries.

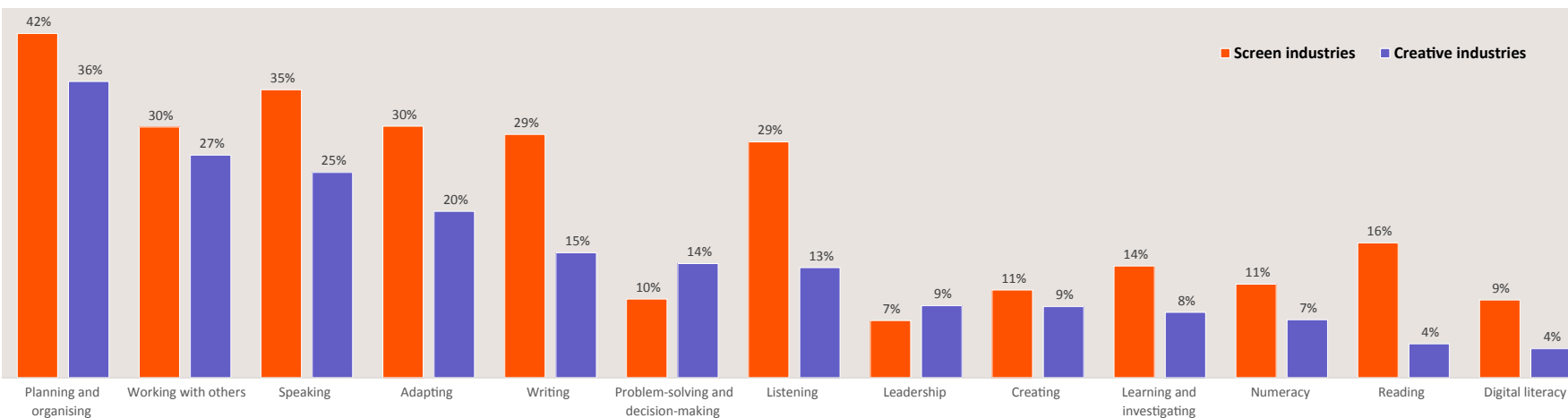
Screen employers were also more likely to suggest candidates lacked verbal and written communication skills – cited by 35% and 29% (respectively) of screen employers facing skills shortages. This resonated strongly with attendees at the screen industries Roundtable, who felt junior crew needed stronger verbal communication skills. Screen employers responding to the survey were also more than twice as likely as other creative employers to suggest those applying for jobs needed better listening skills.

Three in ten (30%) employers with skills shortages in the screen industries suggested applicants lacked adaptability and team working skills. In reviewing the open-ended survey responses, we also find several screen employers that offered further elaboration on skills issues stressed the need for workers to 'wear multiple hats' and be able to work effectively with others in varying contexts.

**Figure 14: 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 = 42)



# 6. Skills gaps

**When considering skills deficiencies amongst their current workforce, three in ten (30%) employers in the screen industries reported skills gaps, broadly in line with the average across the creative industries (32%).**

Employers report a range of factors as contributing to skills deficiencies among their workforce. In line with the findings of wider research (Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025), CESS 2025 suggests the most common causes of skills gaps are transitory. For example, 37% of screen employers with skills gaps suggest the main cause is that staff are new to the role, and one quarter (26%) suggested that staff training was only partially complete.

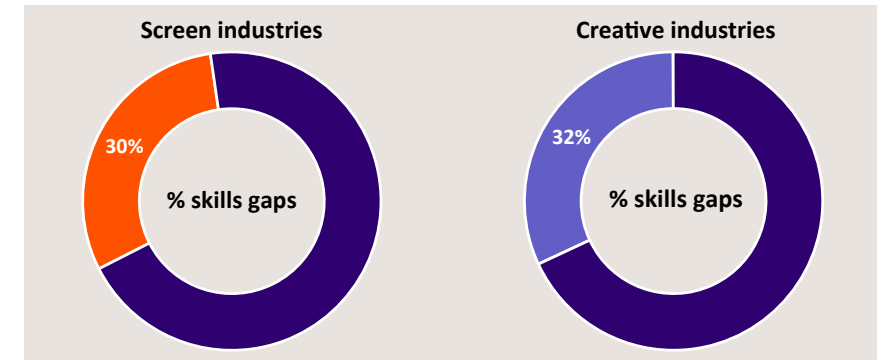
Other, more transformative factors, are also at play, with 29% of employers in the screen industries with skills gaps suggesting these are a consequence of the introduction of new technology – higher than the average across the creative industries (23%). However, one third of screen employers with skills gaps also suggest these are a result of workers not having received the appropriate training.

It is noteworthy that over 40% of employers point to 'other' reasons. In the screen industries, this often related to staff lacking experience for the role they were in, potentially reflecting the culture of staff 'stepping up' without adequate training reported by wider research and which, anecdotally, accelerated during the production boom that occurred during and immediately following the Covid-19 pandemic (ScreenSkills, 2022; Carey et al., 2024; Ampere Analysis, 2025).

**Figure 15: 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 = 176)

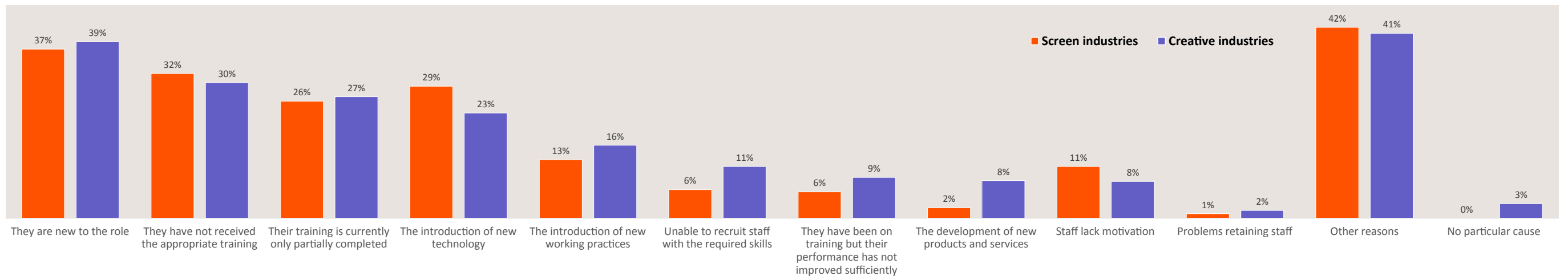


Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 16: 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 = 63)



Source: CESS 2025

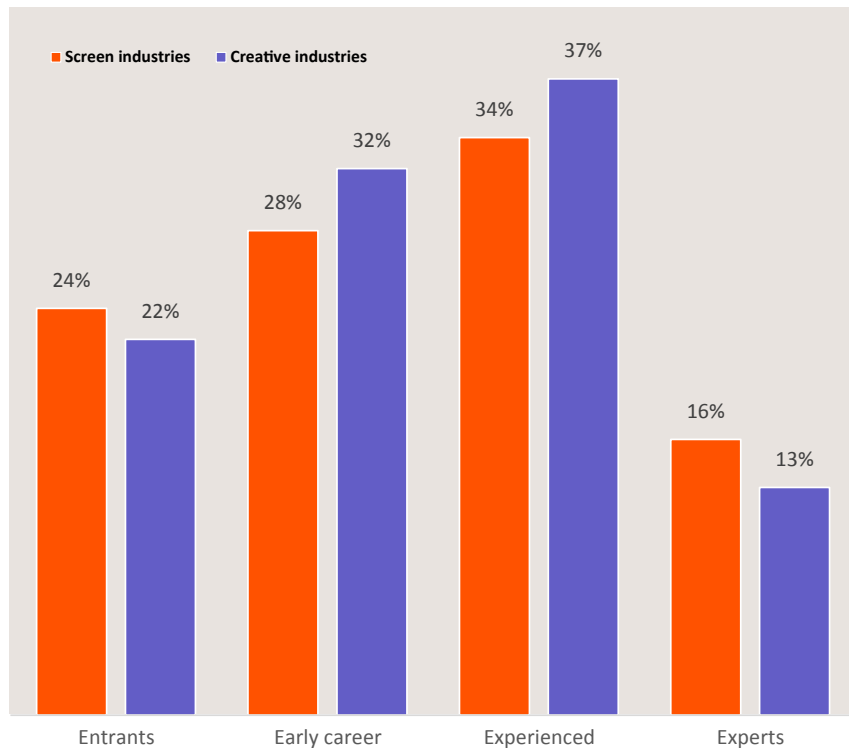
## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

As for skills shortages, screen employers suggest skills gaps are most prevalent amongst experienced staff – cited by one third (34%) of employers in the screen industries that report skills deficiencies amongst their workforce, which is broadly in line with the picture across the creative industries (37%).

**Figure 17: 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 = 63)



Source: CESS 2025

However, skills gaps amongst early career and entry-level staff are also a challenge for screen employers, and the latter slightly more so than for other creative employers. Indeed, one in four (24%) employers in the screen industries with skills gaps suggested these affected new entrants, less than two years out of full-time education.

When we explore the occupational profile of skills gaps, we find employers in the screen industries report skills deficiencies in a very wide range of roles. This included various sector specific occupations:

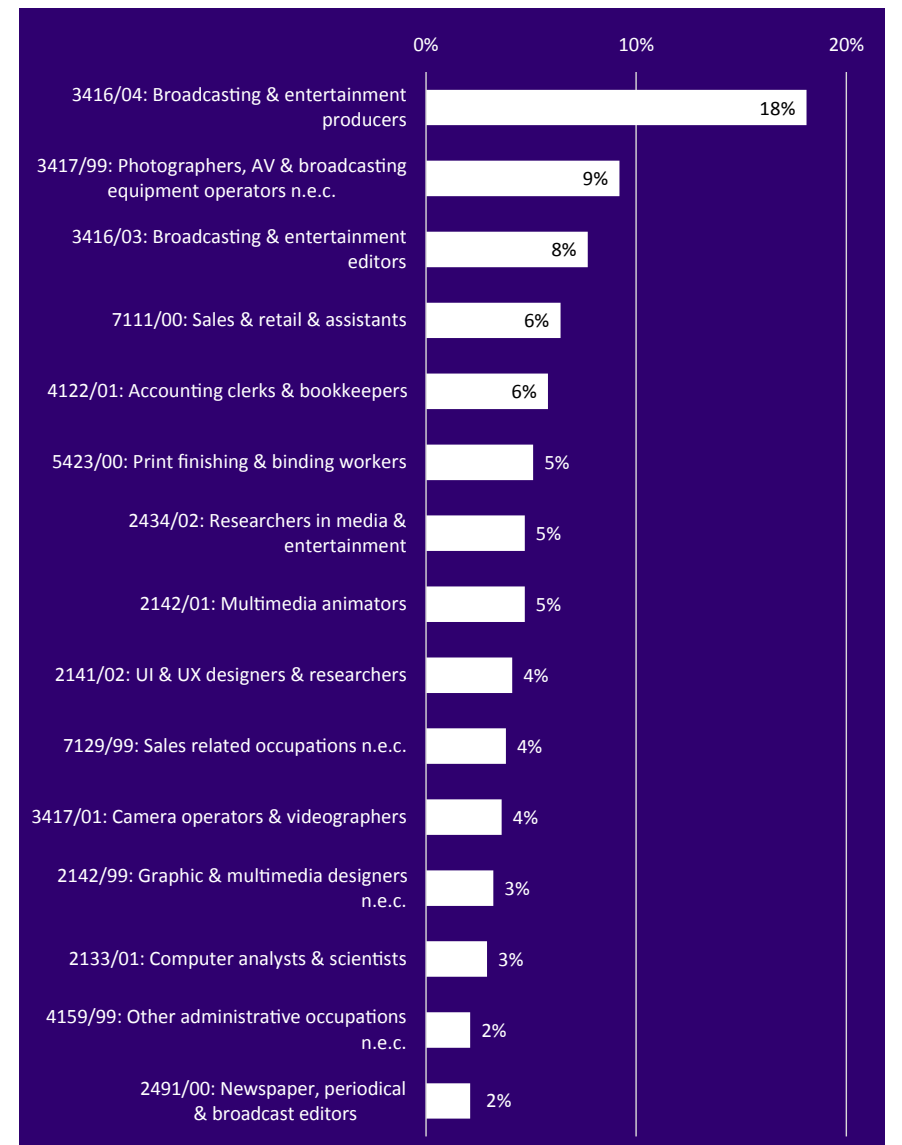
- **Broadcast and entertainment producers** (cited by 18% of screen employers with skills gaps), including production managers, assistant producers, video producers, junior producers and production assistants;
- **Photography, AV and broadcasting equipment operators** (9%), including imagery technicians, trainee technicians, riggers, film technicians, and trainee VFX artists;
- **Broadcasting and entertainment editors** (8%), including video editors but often editorial assistants;
- **Researchers in media and entertainment** (5%), including researchers and trainee researchers;
- **Multimedia animators** (5%), including junior trainee animators and animators.

However, skills gaps were also identified in wider occupations across screen businesses, including among those working as sales and retail assistants (6%) and accounting clerks and bookkeepers (6%).

**Figure 18: 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 = 62)



Source: CESS 2025

Notes: n.e.c.: not elsewhere classified

## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

The types of skills that employers say need improving among their staff closely mirror those lacking in candidates. Past research has emphasised a need to strengthen specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role (Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025) and this was echoed by employers responding to the CESS 2025.

Again, the list of specialist skills that needed improvement among the workforce was diverse in the screen industries. In technical/craft areas, this included cabling, lighting, sound and camera. Digital skills including computer-aided design (CAD), editing, VR/AR, programming and AI production were also in need of improvement.

Screen employers also suggest staff required stronger business, finance and management skills. This chimes with past research and was also echoed by stakeholders consulted through the Skills Audit process, who highlighted the imperative of strong commercial skills in effectively navigating shifts in content production, audiences and business models associated with the rise of non-traditional platforms (e.g. YouTube and TikTok).

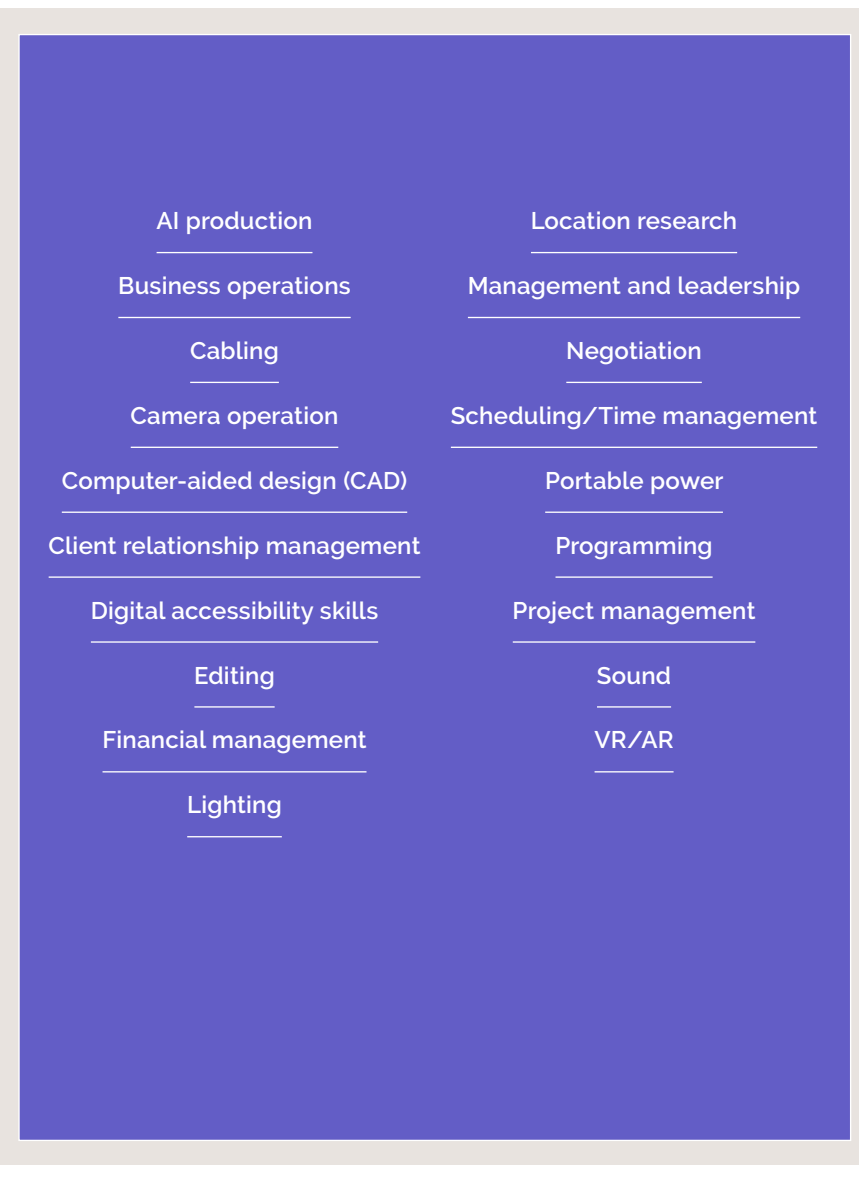
Digital skills gaps were also reported as an area of concern by one third (34%) of screen employers with skills deficiencies. Sometimes this related to a need to improve Microsoft Office Skills (cited by 15%) or multimedia production (6%). Employers also often pointed to the need to improve 'other' IT skills, which included a range of software used in the industry, such as Avid Media Composer; Adobe Photoshop, Animate, Illustrator, After Effects; Daylight; Wipster; LucidLink; Jamf Pro; Unreal engine; Darkroom; software for Bullet TV; ProSelect; and TouchPoint EPOS.

A small number of employers also referenced the need for better awareness of the development of AI, while others pointed to the need for staff to have better awareness of copyright issues, generally and particularly in the context of AI.

**Figure 19: 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 = 63)

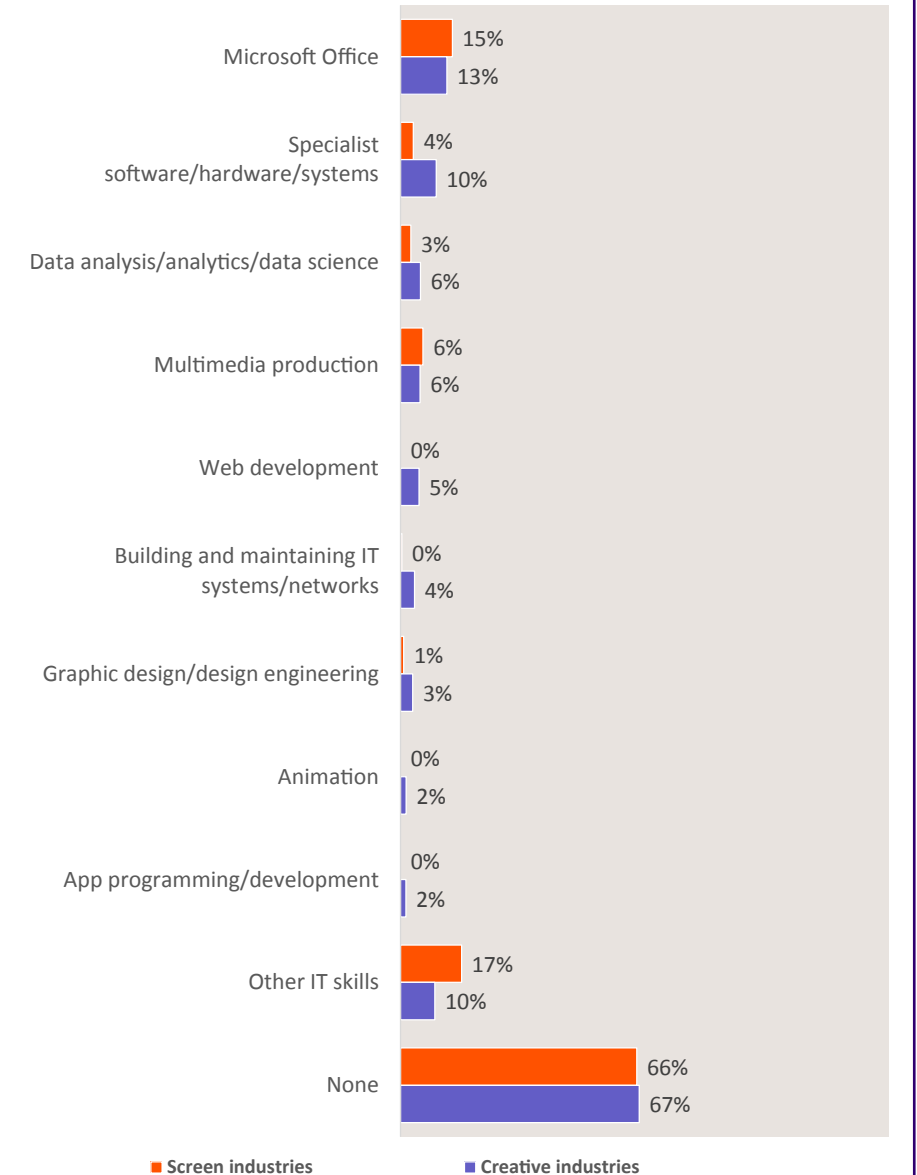


Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 20: 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 = 63)



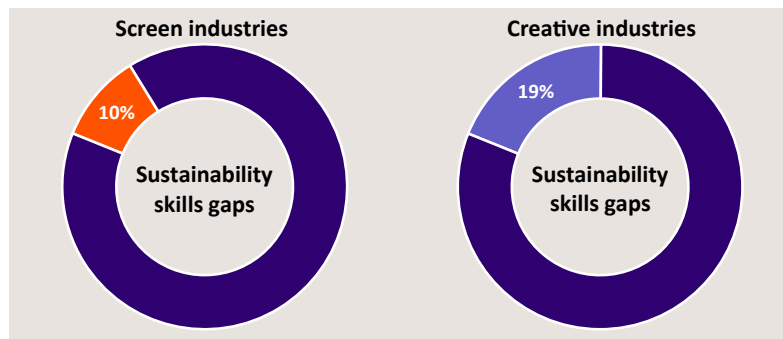
Source: CESS 2025

## 6. Skills gaps (continued)

**Figure 21: 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 = 63)



One in ten employers in the screen industries suggested the need to upskill their workforce was related to sustainability goals – a slightly smaller share than across the creative industries (19%).

However, looking in detail at the responses of those employers that were looking to strengthen sustainability skills among their workforce, there is clearly strong ambition in this area. Several employers pointed to the need for staff to complete BAFTA albert training in order to promote more sustainable film and TV production. Others had introduced stricter policies on hiring vehicles, transportation and deliveries or were embedding sustainable solutions (e.g. hybrid generators) that required a degree of staff upskilling. One organisation was seeking B-Corp status, calculating its carbon footprint and implementing net zero targets.

Employers in the screen industries also suggested a need to improve the transversal skills of their workforce in a range of areas.

Around one in five screen employers that reported skills deficiencies suggested workers needed to strengthen planning and organising skills (20%), team working (19%) and adaptability (20%).

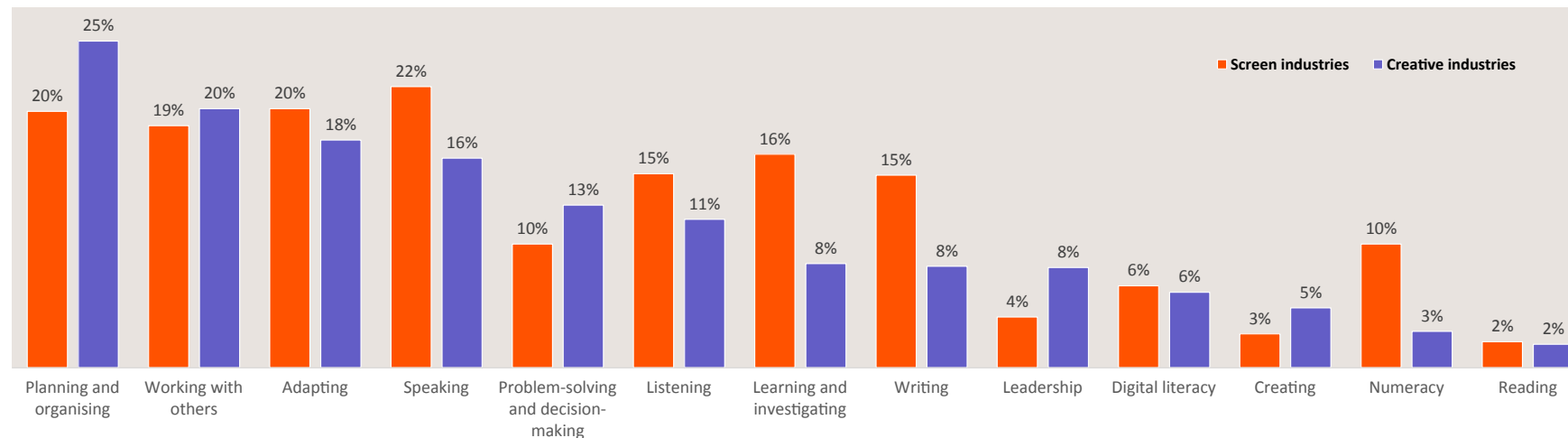
A higher share of employers in the screen industries that reported skills gaps pointed to a need for staff to upgrade their speaking skills (22% vs 16% across the creative industries); listening skills (15% vs 11%), writing skills (15% vs 8%) and numeracy skills (10% vs 3%). This was echoed by attendees at the screen industries Skills Roundtable, who emphasised a need particularly for younger workers to have stronger verbal communication skills.

Screen employers were also twice as likely to suggest staff needed stronger learning and investigating skills – cited by 16% of those reporting skills gaps in the sub-sector, compared to just 8% across the creative industries.

**Figure 22: 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?*

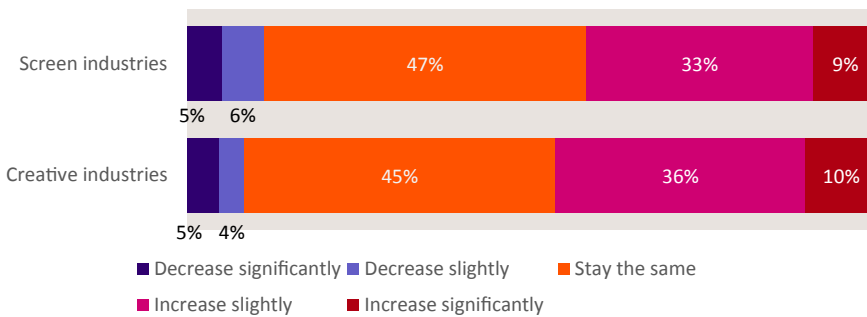
Base = establishments with skills gaps (n = 63)



# 7. Future jobs and skills needs

**Figure 23: Employer expectations for employment in the next three to five years, 2025**

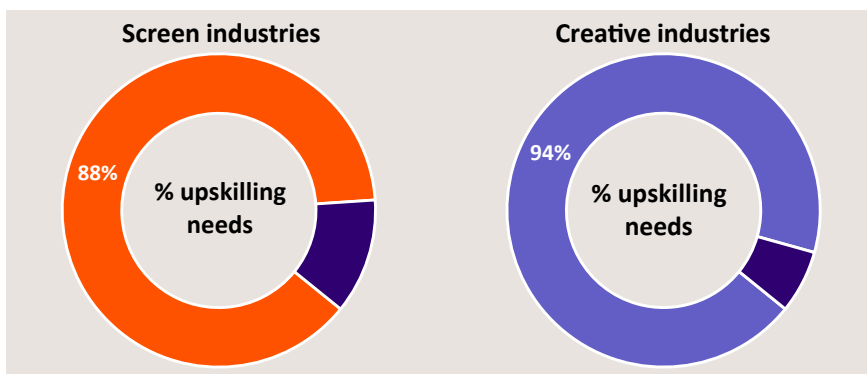
*Q: Over the next three to five years, how do you expect the number of staff (including employees, agency staff, self-employed or freelance workers) at this site to change?*  
Base = all establishments (n = 176)



Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 24: 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 = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

## CESS 2025 also sought to explore employers' expectations for the future, specifically whether they anticipate the need to increase staff numbers and/or upskill their workforce in the next three to five years.

Employers in the screen industries were slightly more cautious than other creative industries employers about the outlook, likely reflecting the challenging industry context at the time of the survey (Ampere Analysis, 2025; Screen Sector Skills Taskforce, 2023). Of those surveyed, 42% expected to increase staff numbers (including freelancers) in the years ahead, slightly below the creative industries-wide average (47%). Just under half (47%) expected staff numbers to remain unchanged, and one in ten (11%) expected them to decrease over the next three to five years.

Despite the more cautious outlook, stakeholders consulted through the Skills Audit process raised concerns about the attrition of talent from the industry given the challenging industry context of the day and how this might act as a barrier to growth in future.

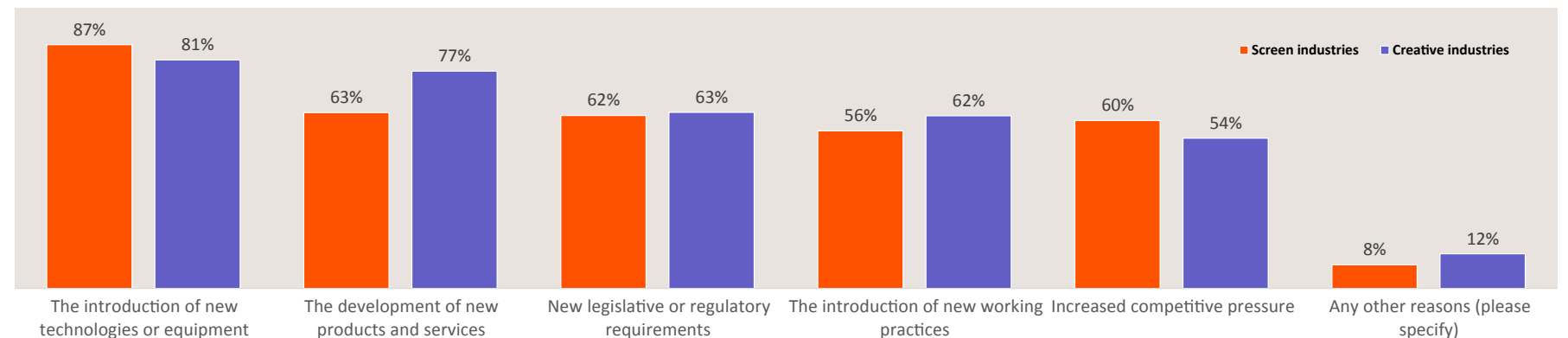
Further, the vast majority (88%) of screen employers that expect to grow staff numbers also anticipate a need to upgrade the skills of their workforce over the next three to five years. As for other parts of the creative sector, upskilling needs are predominantly driven by technological advancement and innovation.

Nearly nine in ten (87%) employers in the screen industries with upskilling needs suggest staff will need to acquire new skills or knowledge as a result of new technologies; a higher share than across the creative industries (81%). When examining the technologies expected to drive shift in the skills needed in the sector, we find this is often related to software or hardware upgrades in varying forms and functions within the industry.

However, in line with wider research (Finney, Tarran and Coupland, 2025), screen employers are increasingly exploring the impact of AI on their businesses. In particular, they emphasised the need to better understand how to effectively, legally and ethically embed the use of AI across a very wide range of industry processes – from administrative tasks to idea generation, filming, digital content creation and in post-production. Stakeholders consulted through the Skills Audit process also emphasised the importance of upskilling staff in this area but stressed the need to move beyond generic, introductory AI courses, towards more intensive, in-depth training, customised to specific applications and particular issues arising from AI in the screen industries context.

**Figure 25: 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 = 79)



Source: CESS 2025

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

CESS 2025 also takes a detailed look at which job roles will be in increasing demand, and which will require staff upskilling over the next three to five years.

Many of the roles that are subject to skills shortages and gaps today are expected to be in growing demand in the future. One in four (25%) employers that expected to growth their workforce pointed to an increase in arts officers, producers and directors (e.g. directors, directors of photography, assistant directors). This was closely followed by broadcasting and entertainment producers (e.g. producers, series/line/assistant producers, 21%) and broadcasting and entertainment editors (e.g. editors and assistant editors, 16%).

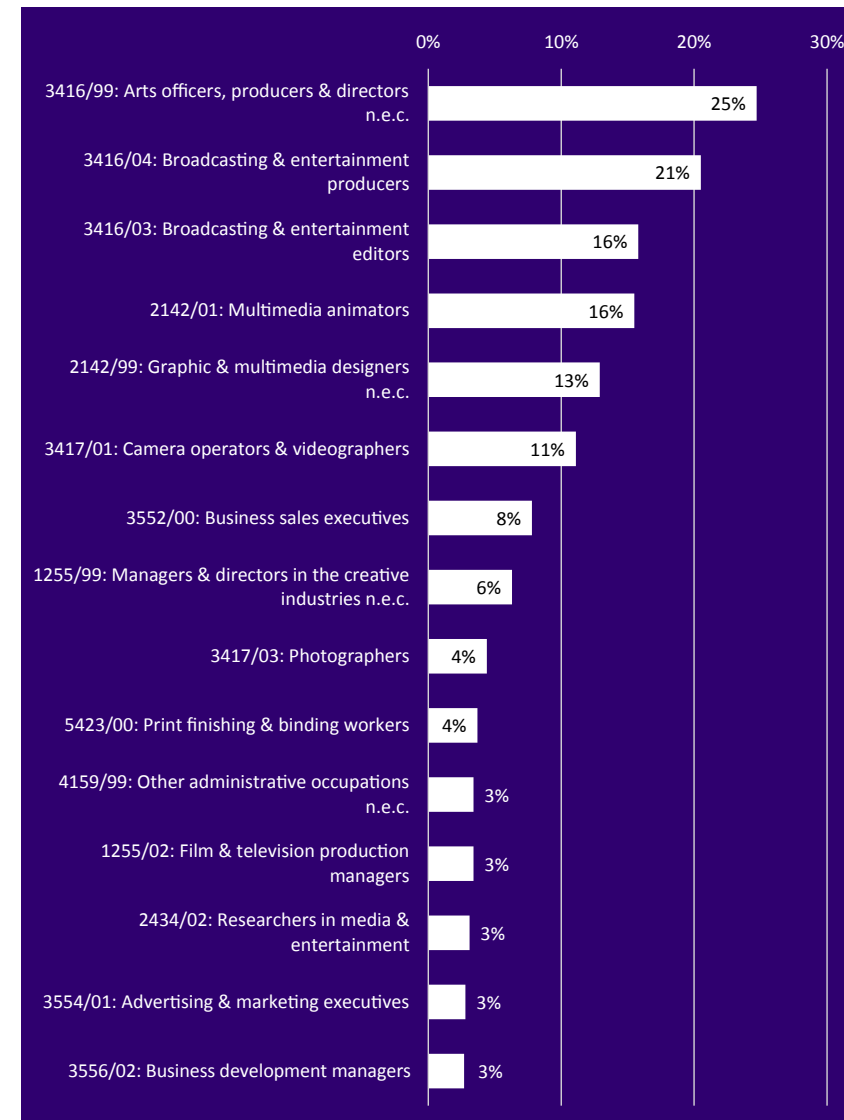
Digital roles in the sector are also expected to grow, including multimedia animators (e.g. animators, stop-frame animators, motion graphic animators, 16%) and graphic and multimedia designers (e.g. motion graphic designers, graphic designers, 13%). The sector is also expected to need various technicians – including camera operators and videographers – and wider business roles, including in sales and business development, marketing (including social media marketing) and business administration.

When looking at the list of occupations where employers anticipate a need for upskilling, the picture is broadly similar. Again, a range of roles in development (e.g. directors, executives, assistants, researchers); production (e.g. managers, producers and production assistants); craft and technical departments (e.g. camera, art, sound, lighting); as well as post-production roles (e.g. animators, visual effects designers and editors). Others pointed to finance and account managers, legal staff and people managers.

**Figure 26: 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 = 79)



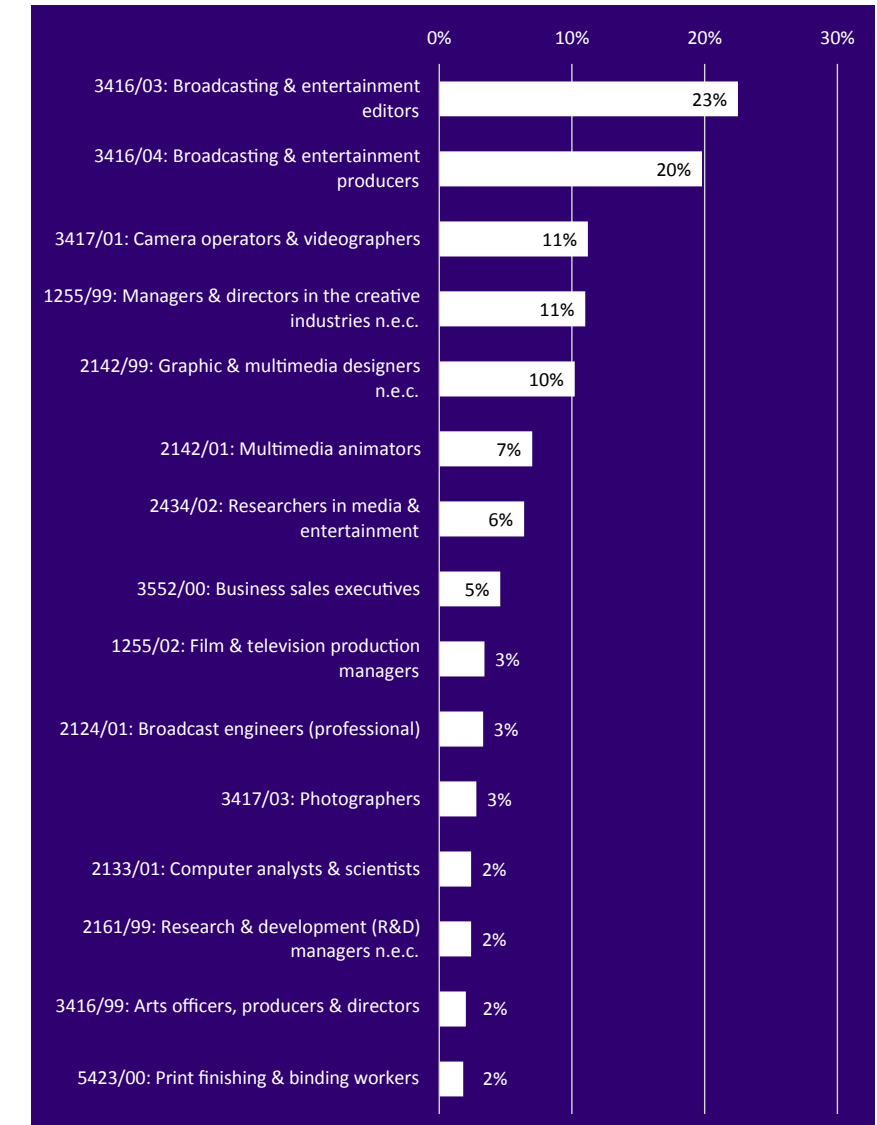
Source: CESS 2025

n.e.c. Not Elsewhere Classified

**Figure 27: 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 with upskilling needs (n = 74)



Source: CESS 2025

n.e.c. Not Elsewhere Classified

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

Turning to the skills needed to operate effectively in these roles, screen employers identified a range of specialist skills or knowledge that they felt would need to be strengthened in the years ahead. This included a range of technical and craft skills such as content creation, filming, editing and wider post-production skills, as well as screen heritage skills such as restoration.

Many of the skills that screen employers identified were business-related, including sales and business development, finance and forecasting, legal and compliance, HR and management skills. A range of advanced digital skills were also identified (e.g. animation, VFX, programming) but most employers also pointed to the need to strengthen workforce skills around AI, including general awareness/use, copyright and ethical concerns and more specific technical applications.

With technology acting as a key driver of upskilling needs, it is no surprise that 70% of screen employers that anticipate a need to upskill their workforce point to digital skills as a key area for improvement – a higher proportion than across the creative industries (63%). Most commonly this related to specialist software or systems (cited by 28%), with employers referencing specific software, including Baselight, Blackmagic DaVinci, Avid, Autodesk Flame, Pro Tools, Spectrix, Resolve Studio, Adobe Creative Cloud, ToonBoom, Unreal, as well as production/project management software such as Monday, Click-Up and Trello.

Screen employers were also more likely to point to the need for staff to upgrade their graphic design/design engineering skills, multimedia production skills, skills for building/maintaining IT systems, and animation skills.

Nearly one third (31%) pointed to the need to strengthen 'other' IT skills. More often than not, this concerned the skills required to interact with and effectively utilise AI. Just one employer pointed to cybersecurity, highlighting the importance of industry efforts to build awareness and upskill the workforce in this area (ScreenSkills, 2025).

**Figure 28: Specialist skills needs in next three to five years, 2025**

*Q: Which, if any, specialist skills or knowledge do you feel will need improving over the next three to five years?*

Base = establishments with upskilling needs (n = 74)

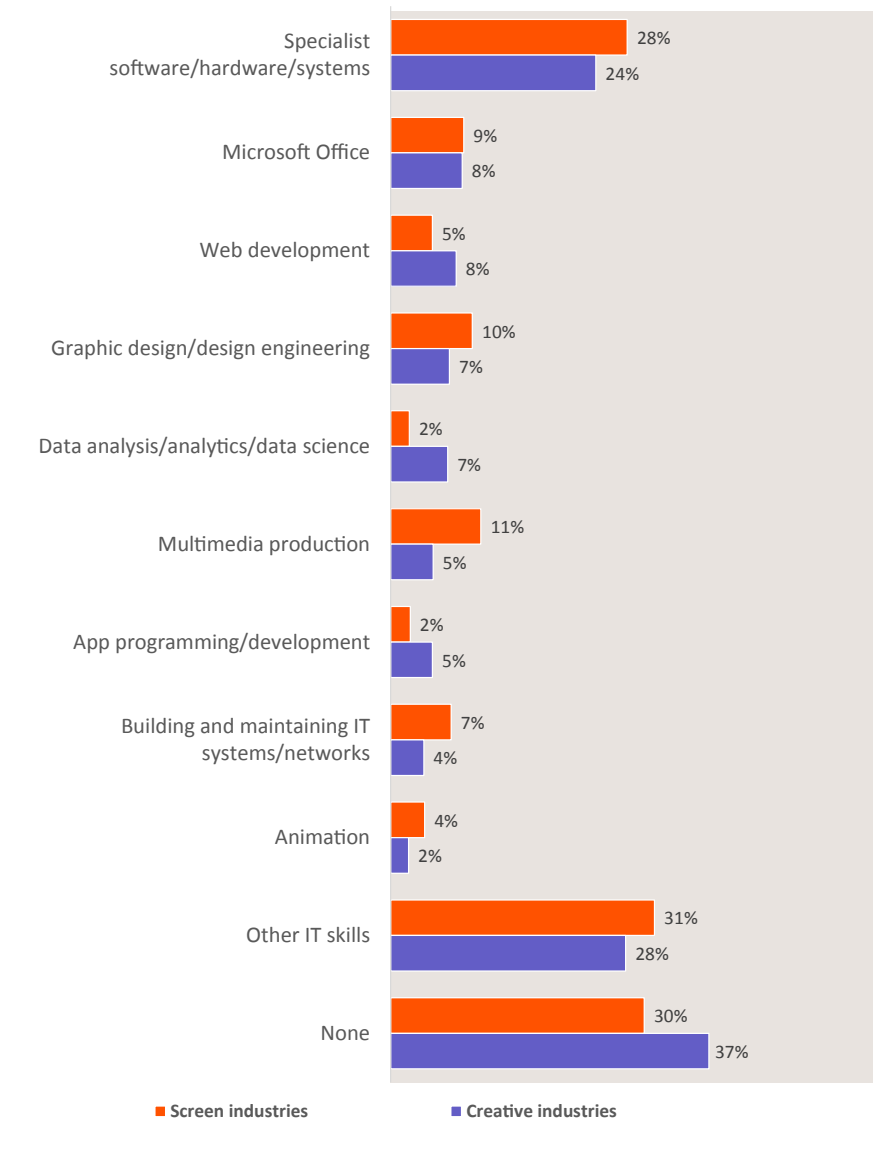


Source: CESS 2025

**Figure 29: 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 = 74)



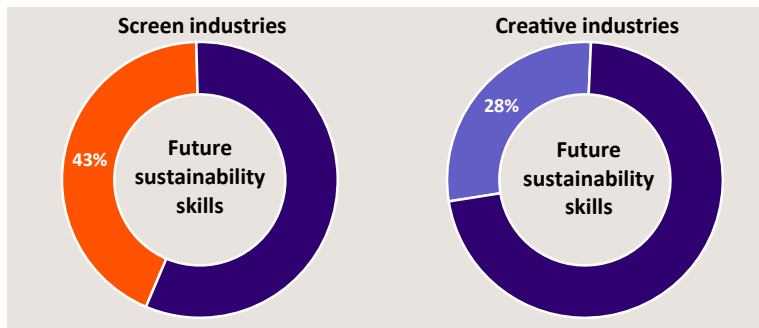
Source: CESS 2025

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

**Figure 30: 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 = 74)



Employers in the screen industries also emphasised the importance of improving transversal skills of staff in the future, echoing the findings from wider research examining future skills needs in the screen industries (Olsberg SPI, 2023a).

Team working and planning and organising skills were viewed as most important, both cited by over one in five (22%) screen employers that anticipated a need to upskill their workforce over the next three to five years – a slightly lower proportion in the sub-sector than across the creative industries (25%). Screen employers were, however, more likely to point to the need for their workforce to upgrade digital literacy and creativity, both cited by 12% of screen employers compared to 9% across the creative sectors.

Screen employers were also significantly more likely than other creative employers to point to the need for staff to have stronger sustainability skills in the years ahead.

More than four in ten (43%) employers with upskilling needs in the screen industries suggested staff would need to acquire new skills or knowledge over the next three to five years in order to meet organisational sustainability goals – a higher share than across the creative industries (28%).

When exploring the sustainability skills required, employer responses were very wide-ranging.

Many emphasised the need for better staff awareness and working practices, including around travel and transportation, energy use, waste and recycling (e.g. paper, plastic and equipment). One employer referenced working with a non-profit organisation to reduce the use of paper.

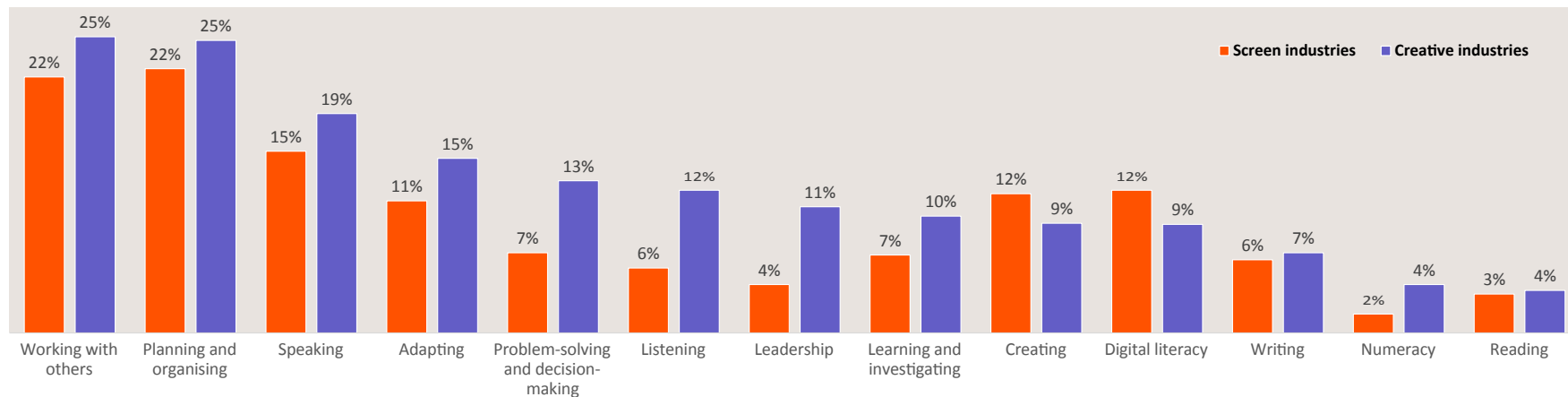
Some employers referenced the potential for AI to enable more remote working (rather than travelling to studios to shoot) and to move towards more online-based rather than physical workflows, though at the same time acknowledging the energy cost and environmental impact of this software. Others suggested they were investing in new sustainable technologies, including hybrid and electric vehicles, solar panels and other renewable energy, which would create a need for staff to undertake training.

Many referenced BAFTA albert training and certification as an important way to establish sustainable practices across the industry, particularly noting the ramifications of mandatory requirements (i.e. for broadcaster-commissioned productions) for future skills needs in the industry.

**Figure 31: 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 = 74)



# 8. Employer investment in skills

**CESS 2025 also examines the impact of skills shortages and skills gaps (collectively referred to as ‘skills challenges’) on employers, and any actions they are taking in response.**

More than two thirds (68%) of employers in the screen industries facing skills challenges suggest they are having an impact on their business, and 44% report an increase in workload for other staff – a higher share than across the creative industries (35%). Further, those experiencing skills challenges in the screen industries were also more likely to report difficulties in meeting deadlines (29% vs 26%), delays in developing new products and services (31% vs 21%) and decreased staff morale or wellbeing (18% vs 11%) – something identified through wider industry research (Film and TV Charity, 2025). In both the screen industries and wider creative industries, one in four employers with skills shortages or gaps report increased operating costs.

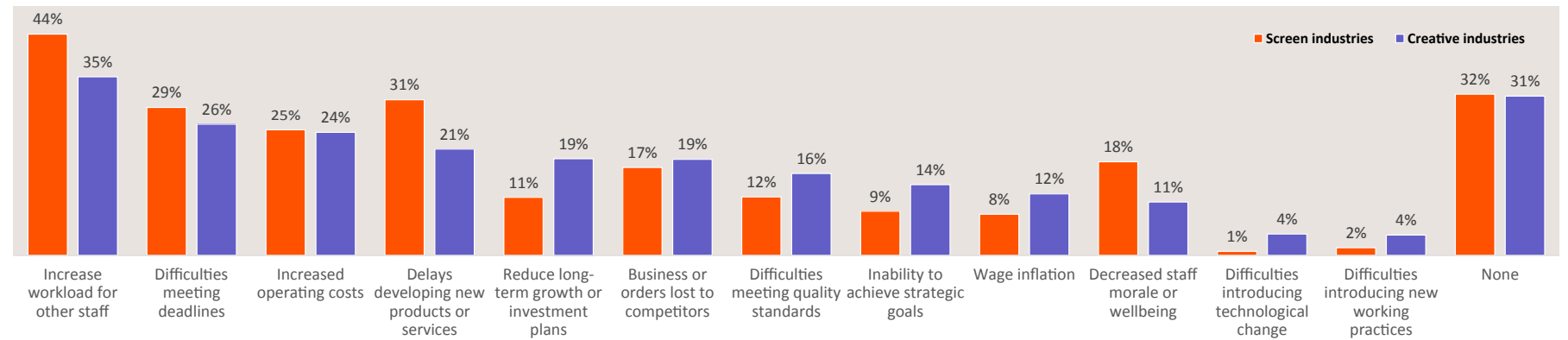
The majority of employers (82%) across the sub-sector were taking action in response to skills challenges. Often this involved increasing workforce training – cited by 43% of employers in the screen industries with skill challenges, compared to 47% of employers across the creative industries. Screen employers also reported recruiting and training up less qualified recruits (cited by 18%), bringing in contractors or contracting out work (21%) or expanding trainee or apprenticeships schemes (19%). They were also twice as likely as other employers facing skills challenges in the wider creative sector to redefine existing jobs (15% vs 7%).

One third pointed to ‘other’ responses, which included providing shadowing and mentoring; widening the geographic area from which they were recruiting; accelerating AI adoption; or collaborating with universities, training providers, sector representative bodies or other employers to develop relevant training and design professional development pathways.

**Figure 32: 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?*

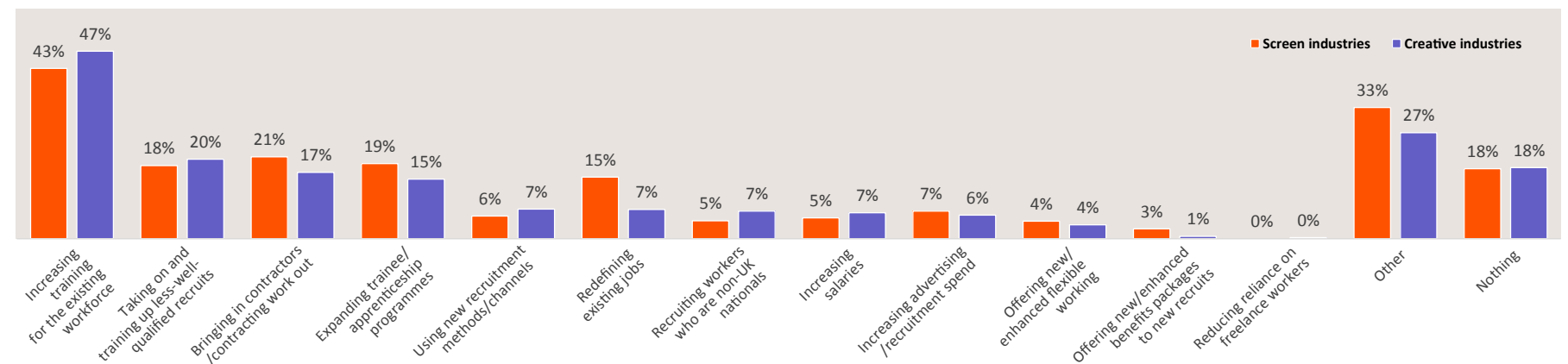
Base = establishments with skills shortages or skills gaps (n = 88)



**Figure 33: 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 = 88)



Source: CESS 2025

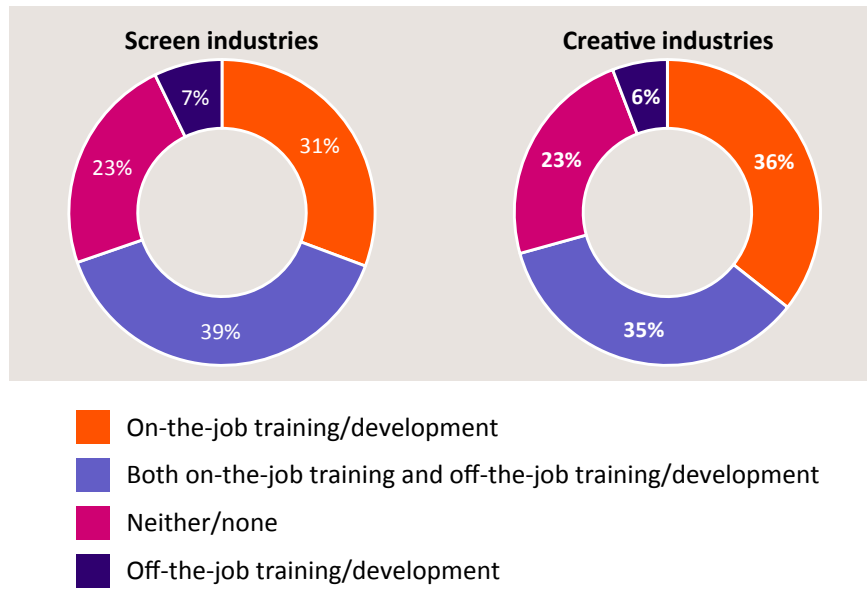
## 8. Employer investment in skills (continued)

CESS 2025 also looks more widely at training provision by creative employers over the past year. The survey finds that three quarters (77%) of employers in the screen industries and across the creative industries more widely had provided training for staff. This suggests higher levels of training than indicated by wider surveys (see for example the Employer Skills Survey 2022 in Giles, Carey and O'Brien, 2025), potentially reflecting the wider definition in this sub-sector, including training provided for agency staff and the self-employed or freelance workers, alongside employees.

Often training is either 'on-the-job', as provided by one in three (31%) screen employers, or a blend of on- and off-the-job training (39%). Only a small proportion of employers in the screen industries and across the creative industries had provided only off-the-job training (7% and 6% respectively).

**Figure 34: Employer training provision, 2025**

*Q: What, if any, training has your organisation arranged or funded over the past twelve months?*  
Base = all establishments (n= 176)



Source: CESS 2025

When we examine barriers faced by employers in providing more, or indeed any, training for workers, practical financial and time constraints feature heavily. Nearly half (48%) of screen employers suggest they lack funds for training – a significantly higher share than across the creative industries (36%). They were also more likely to suggest that external courses are too expensive, cited by one in four (24%) compared to 18% of all creative employers.

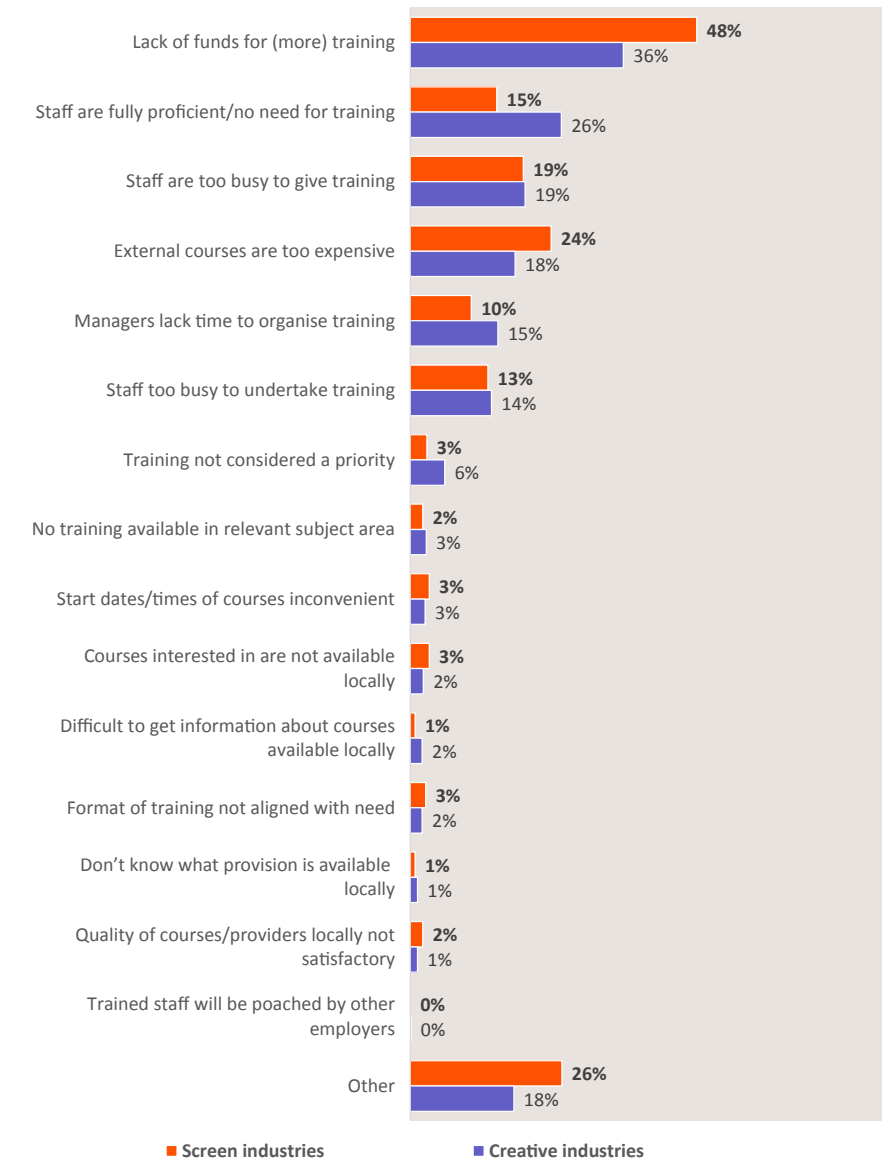
Time constraints are also a concern, with employers in the screen industries suggesting managers lack the time to organise training (cited by 10%) and staff lack the time to either give training to others (19%) or undertake training themselves (13%).

Somewhat surprisingly, only a very small share of employers in the screen and wider creative sectors identified barriers relating to the relevance, format, timing or location of training. This contrasts strongly with past research that has demonstrated the challenge posed by the structural features of some skills products, not least being apprenticeships (BFI, 2022; Screen Sector Skills Taskforce, 2023). However, analysis of those reporting 'other' barriers suggests screen employers often require highly specialised skills and training, which they struggled to find externally and hence offered in-house.

The project-based nature of work in parts of the screen sector was also viewed as a challenge, where, during busy periods, it is not feasible to offer or participate in training. Employers based in remote/rural locations highlighted the travel cost associated with attending courses, and smaller firms pointed to the difficulty of getting cover for staff who go on external training. Additionally, stakeholders consulted through this research suggested that the industry context may act as a disincentive for more experienced workers to offer training for others, with whom they may now be competing for roles.

**Figure 35: 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= 176)



Source: CESS 2025

## 8. Employer investment in skills (continued)

When considering the measures that would enable screen employers to continue to invest in skills and training, a range of factors were considered important. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the barriers to training, employers frequently point to financial support, including financial subsidies towards the cost of training, cited by more than three quarters (78%) of screen employers – a higher proportion than across the wider creative sector (67%). Employers in the screen industries were also more likely to point to tax relief on expenditure on staff training as an enabler (cited by 67% vs the creative industries average of 59%). Some stakeholders consulted also questioned the scope to fund experienced screen workers to provide training during downtime in order to retain talent and transfer skills.

Wider enablers of training included more flexible forms of training (58% vs 47%), likely reflecting the project-based nature of work in parts of the sector, which means on-the-job training needs to align with short-term production cycles and off-the-job training undertaken during downtime. Indeed, Roundtable participants responded positively to developments in the English skills system in this area, including ongoing support for skills bootcamps and the funding of short courses/modular training through the Growth and Skills Levy (HM Government, 2025). Short courses addressing the specific applications of AI in the screen industries was seen as an immediate opportunity for the sector to harness.

Compared to the wider creative sectors, screen employers also responded more positively towards information and advice on identifying training

needs or developing training plans (37% vs 29%) and identifying training relevant to their needs (43% vs 34%) – an area where stakeholders also felt businesses would benefit from support. Indeed, several of those consulted through the Skills Audit process emphasised the need for clearer competency frameworks, linked to training options, that would enable screen employers and workers (including freelancers) to identify upskilling needs and access relevant, high-quality courses or wider development opportunities (e.g. mentoring).

Finally, data from CESS 2025 also demonstrates the strong appetite for collaboration evident in the screen industries. More than one third (38%) of screen employers were keen to collaborate with other businesses to shape relevant provision – a slightly higher share than across the creative industries as a whole (35%) – and 45% were keen to collaborate with providers (vs 38% all creative employers).

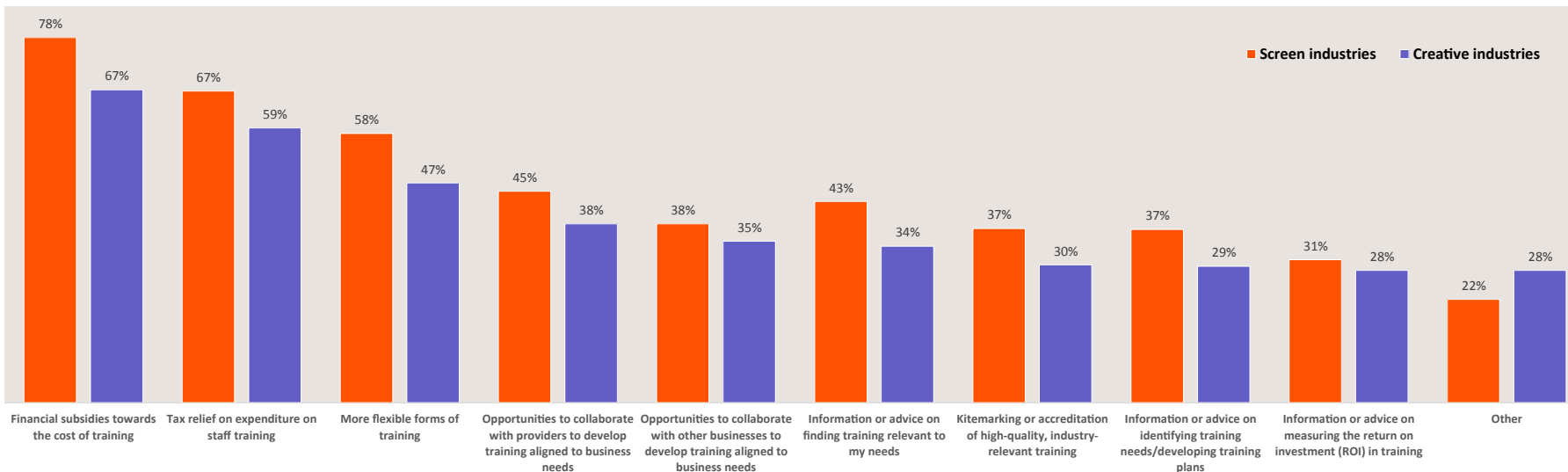
The screen industries have a long history of collaboration on skills development, in part enabled through skills funds administered by ScreenSkills and place-based initiatives, such as the BFI Skills Clusters, Scotland's Screen Training Alliance, Media Cymru and Studio Ulster. Ongoing collaboration was seen by many as key to ensuring the screen industries can adapt and thrive in the future, as climate change, the proliferation of AI and wider technological advancement drive an almost continual shift in the skills needs of the workforce.

Indeed, there was a strong sense that with more sector recognition across the skills system, a new 'freelance champion' with skills as part of their mandate, and with greater flexibility in core skills products, there was an opportunity for industry stakeholders to work together to shape a comprehensive and coordinated skills strategy for the screen industries. This could clearly set out the needs of the sector; identify how core skills products and skills policy in the four national skills systems could be effectively leveraged; target industry investment towards skills interventions where further customisation or greater agility is needed; and build on and scale-up the strong and enduring partnerships between industry and educators that can effectively develop and deliver industry-recognised, world-class skills provision.

**Figure 36: Enablers of employer investment in training, 2025**

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

Base = all establishments (n= 176)



Source: CESS 2025

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