Institute *for the* Future of Work

Research Report

Creative Industries and GenAI

Good Work impacts on a sector in rapid transition

Michael Katell, Mhairi Aitken, Kester Brewin, Abigail Gilbert, Peaks Krafft, David Leslie, Mia Leslie, Alex Mehta Brown, Aoife Monks, Claddagh NicLochlainn, Antonella Perini, Vjosa Preniqi, Elona Shatri, Magdalena Soffia. Anna Thomas

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1. Introduction

Creative work and the creative industries ('CIs') are at the sharp end of technological and societal transformation driven by GenAI. From artists to technicians, workers across the CIs are experiencing some of the fastest and most fundamental changes to their working conditions, work quality and livelihoods.

The creative industries have been identified as having the potential to create one million new jobs by 2030. However, a recent decline in growth is an indicator of the wide range of challenges and missed opportunities faced by creative workers. These challenges have opened up dialogue about the real drivers and wider societal implications of new threats – and what flourishing creative work, 'good jobs' and sustainable growth really mean for creative work and industries.[1]

Based on research undertaken by the CREAATIF (Crafting Responsive Assessments of AI and Tech-Impacted Futures) project, this report explores the new challenges and opportunities of GenAI faced by creative workers through the lens and framework of 'good work'.

Good Work: a frame to interrogate workplace and social impacts of GenAI

The Institute for the Future of Work's Good Work Charter framework sets out ten fundamental dimensions or principles of 'good work' – work that has fair pay and conditions; work that promotes dignity, autonomy and equality; work where people are properly supported to develop their creativity, skills and capabilities; and work where they have and can express a sense of community.[2]

The framework may be applied by different actors – government, industry, academia and civil society – for different purposes, at different levels: systems, organisational and individual. The dimensions of good work are interdependent and interrelated. The framework directs attention towards rights, freedoms and interests at work protected by a range of hard and soft laws and focuses attention on substantive, known impacts to access, pay, terms and conditions and quality of work, acting as a 'checklist' for known impact areas. But it also aims to help surface neglected, emerging and cumulative impacts and their relationships, exploring and 'testing' new evidence against a baseline, while inviting review and development over time.

The Good Work framework also acts as a normative framework and bridges AI principles to practice – something widely understood to be the next frontier of 'Responsible AI'. Recent guidance and recommendations from the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe support this approach, highlighting specific risks and impacts to the realisation of AI principles in the workplace, across the domains of good work'.[3]

Beyond this, recent research has shown that good work is central to the wellbeing and flourishing of individuals, communities and the country. Good work can help address the toughest socioeconomic challenges and rebuild strong, resilient communities. Research shows that access to good work confers protection against social and economic shocks[4], and that it can build and enables capabilities in ways which make individuals more resilient to technological disruption.[5]

For these reasons, the framework doubles as an overarching orientation for mission-driven policy making, as well as for research.[6] This report also uses the framework to organise evidence of workplace and social impacts of AI.

A June 2025 report by Skills England highlights the challenges to good work being faced across the CIs:

> While addressing skills gaps and training needs is crucial, the creative industries face a broader set of interconnected challenges linked to job quality that impact talent attraction and retention. The most significant influences are financial instability, workplace conditions, systemic professional barriers (including those faced by freelancers... More than a quarter (28%) of freelancers stated that they would not be able to stay in the sector without the financial support of a spouse or partner with a steady income. The sector's low employer investment in training, with creative businesses among the least likely to develop staff training plans or identify talent, further exacerbates these challenges.

With the CIs such a powerhouse of the UK economy, the challenges to job quality and work precarity in this crucial sector require an urgent and integrated response.

Creative Work: the canaries in the coalmine

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is a term that describes computational systems capable of producing text, imagery, music, video, computer code, and other content that meets aesthetic and coherence standards to match similar material produced by humans. Technologies for producing convincing content in various forms have been with us for some time. However, the release of the ChatGPT 3.5 model in 2022 was a watershed moment in public awareness about the capabilities of GenAI models.

In 2023, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) five-month 'Hollywood writers' strike' gained global attention by articulating the dangers of automating the most essential human ability or 'skill': human creativity. Changes to work varied by role – with displacement of entire jobs happening in some cases. While the use of text generators to replace writers wholesale was a concern, the WGA had a more nuanced complaint. Their members were seeing reduced compensation and inferior conditions for work, reduced agency over creative outputs, and reduced dignity and meaningfulness of the work they could secure. Workers who have long been considered to have significant agency, and autonomy - freedom to imagine at work - were becoming peripheral to the production process.

This matters for several reasons. Each is important in its own right. But these reasons are also important because they reveal significant but often hidden things about technological transformation, responsible innovation and social partnerships, which have wider, cross-sector and societal implications. They also invite deeper reflection about the role of collective human work, in particular creative work and the CIs, for individual and societal flourishing, and its collective and relational impacts.

In this report, we show how examining the impacts of GenAI on good work provides both a lens and sharp use case for understanding, anticipating and managing social and economic transformation. This approach reminds us that workers are also citizens, consumers and represent different groups and communities – and that work is also a lens on, and site for, societal change.[7]

2. Changes to Good Work in the Creative Industries

The CREAATIF project is a project funded by AHRC and the Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) programme. CREAATIF – 'Crafting Responsive Assessments of AI and Tech-Impacted Futures' - has comprised a core research team from the Institute for the Future of Work, Queen Mary University of London, and The Alan Turing Institute working with several UK artist unions and freelancers associations (The Society of Authors, Equity, The Musicians' Union, UK Music, the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union, aka Bectu) to convene creative workers to assess the impacts that the rapid spread of GenAI technologies is having on their fundamental rights and working conditions. CREAATIF tackles this challenge by centring the voices and views of creators in evaluating the societal effects of GenAI.

This work is based on a year-long project, drawing upon the following data and methodologies:

- A desk review of the risks posed by various GenAI technologies to creative work
- Semi-structured interviews with employers who procure work from freelance workers in the creative industries and law firms who represent these organisations.
- A series of workshops with workers in the creative industries.
- A survey of workers in the creative industries.

A full methodology is available as Annex 1.

GenAI is driving profound changes to the nature, conditions and quality of creative work, and its distribution. Here, we have organised and synthesised existing and new evidence against each of the ten Good Work principles to demonstrate the range of impacts which are being experienced by creative workers across the UK.

2.1 Access to Good Work

> ***"I am no longer commissioned to produce work, but to review AI-generated content" [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

Gen AI is transforming access and the distribution of good jobs through the creation and loss of different types of work. The most common concern in automation debates relates to the loss of work. Access to work can also reflect changes in how work is found, secured or 'matched', including by the algorithmic systems and platforms that increasingly mediate market transactions. Our project has surfaced changes to the type, level and distribution of work available, which is especially pertinent to freelance work and sectors where 'under-employment' is common.

Background

Whilst the creative sector was once thought of as having little exposure to job displacement from AI developments[8], with recent advancements and commercialisation of GenAI models, experience and perceptions are rapidly changing. Some predict that GenAI could automate 26% of tasks in sectors including arts, design, entertainment, and media.[9] GenAI has

propelled the automation of tasks previously done by many creative workers, from dubbing and proofreading to image and video editing. This raised significant concerns about job security and job opportunities[10, 11, 12], with warnings that, much like the economic shocks due to the Covid-19 pandemic[13, 14, 15, 16], it will intensify precarity and inequality issues within the creative sectors, with freelance creative workers being the most exposed to vulnerability factors.[17]

There is clear evidence that employers in some sub sectors, such as the game and dubbing industries, are laying people off in the name of increasing efficiency and reducing production costs[18, 19, 20]. This is reported to have come largely from the displacement of work, or its intensification.[21] Other studies have found a reduced availability of work on popular freelance platforms since the release of ChatGPT, with the number of job posts related to writing and image creation dropping 21% and 17% respectively.[22] Here then, GenAI has been found to exacerbate a tendency towards 'underemployment' in the CIs. The impact of potentially fewer job posts in freelance platforms is likely to affect more creative workers without permanent contracts and new artists who rely on smaller projects to build up their portfolios.[23] This could also have a downward impact on wages.

In the recent decades, independent or freelance creative workers have shared their work in social media platforms, crowdfunding campaigns, and other sites.[24] These channels have provided them with opportunities to reach their target audiences. This has its limitations, however, as creative workers need time to gain greater visibility and build their audience, and to do so within a highly attention-competitive and information-overloaded environment. The industrialisation of GenAI has prompted an exponential flood of cheaply made AI-generated content in the creative market. In the light of this, many practitioners have voiced concerns about both the noisy and over saturated market for those consuming creative content and an unfair competition scenario for creative workers, reducing access to audiences, which may force some workers out of the market.[25]

Some scholars suggest that the adverse impacts of Generative AI on creative work, coupled with an industry with increasing precarity, have propelled chilling effects among many artists, who have become more reluctant to share their artwork or broaden their visibility online to prevent AI developers from scraping their data.[26] Apart from the emotional and psychological impact, the discouragement to share their work further reduces the chances of commissions or work prospects and changes the distribution of access to good work.

Our Findings

Our survey has revealed significant impacts on access to and the distribution of work across the creative industries. Among the three dimensions of work identified as most negatively impacted by Generative AI in our survey, was 'job security', with 19% of respondents reporting that it had greatly diminished and 49% that it had diminished. Conversely, one of the job elements that individuals reported improving due to Generative AI was 'productivity' with 5% reporting that it has greatly improved and 26% that it has improved. While in employment contexts, the productivity benefits derived from using AI may only be captured by employers, technically, the productivity benefits gained from efficiencies by freelancers are returned to them in time, directly.

However, these impacts are sectorally biased. Looking across the creative industry sectors represented in the sample, those who are cross-disciplinary indicated at the highest rate that their job security had improved due to exposure to Generative AI (40%), followed at 13% by those in music and audio production. However, no respondents from advertising, marketing and PR or visual arts and design felt that the technology had brought improvements to the security of their work. Of particular note is the overwhelmingly negative impacts reported by those whose work in translation and language services. These respondents reported at the

highest rate that their job security had diminished due to exposure to Generative AI (86%), closely followed by those in performing arts (82%).

One respondent who works in translation tellingly explained that their work had changed so much that they are "no longer commissioned to produce work, but to review AI-generated content". This sentiment was echoed by other working in translation who have experienced changes to the nature of their work and working conditions since the advent of Generative AI.

2.2 Equality

> ***"Trying to protect my copyright has drastically reduced the amount of time I can spend on creating." [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

Equality tends to be understood as the right not to be discriminated against, closely related to the foundational principle of dignity. However, as our findings show it is also important to recognise and promote equality at all levels, beyond protected characteristics, including system level and socio-economic impacts that arise across sectors, geographies and communities, reflecting and compounding historic patterns of resource and behaviour. Our research has reinforced this perspective.

Background

A central concern in the literature on AI and Creative Industries relates to what is commonly described as 'bias'. It is well documented that Generative AI technologies not only can embed patterns of biases, discrimination, and stereotyping[27] but are also trained with datasets that overrepresent specific geographies, dominant languages, and cultural values.[28] This leads to the overrepresentation of Western-style art in AI-generated images of popular generative models or the exclusion of local social groups who are underrepresented in the online data that the models have been trained on.[29]

When used in creative processes, the encoded and embedded biases of Generative AI technologies could first reinforce and exacerbate discriminatory patterns, misrepresent, distort, make invisible, or even erase group and cultural identities, and perpetuate cultural hegemony.[30] These risks, moreover, could negatively affect diversity in the artwork and creative industry, leading to significant societal and cultural harms. Scholars note that, similarly, this could lead to potential misappropriation, insensitivity, and decontextualisation of cultural styles, narratives, and other elements from various traditions.[31] Other scholars warn that in embedding legacies of coloniality, Generative AI tools risk colonising the creative processes of Majority World practitioners.[32] Opposing this view, it has also been pointed out that well-designed and deployed AI has the potential to reverse this trend, enabling the detachment from subjectivity which could potentially dismantle colonisation.[33]

Other work has highlighted the tendency for benefits and risk to be unevenly distributed across demographic groups and geographies.[34] Some authors highlight that whilst task automation and job displacement by Generative AI have the potential to affect the ability to be compensated for one's work for creative workers at large, the impacts are likely to be first experienced by marginalised and disadvantaged workers, who already face barriers to job opportunities and are more likely to be subject to precarious working conditions.[35] When considered in tandem with the use of training data from marginalised communities, research suggests that the profits from AI-generated or assisted creative content are broadly moving from gender and racial minorities to Western white male-run AI companies, exacerbating existing social injustices.[36]

With publicly available Generative AI creative tools, more individuals and entities acquired access to tasks requiring formal training, resources, and/or physical abilities and motor skills. Some welcome this broadening of access to creative tools, arguing that it propels a more inclusive and diverse creative environment, where different perspectives and voices can convey their creativity.[37]

Our Findings

Our research reveals marked and growing inequalities across the good work framework. In terms of job characteristics and the influence of respondent characteristics on perceptions about the impact of Generative AI, men reported experiencing more positive impacts of Generative AI on their work. Specifically, men reported at almost twice the rate than women that Generative AI had improved innovation within their creative practice (31% and 17% respectively). Similarly, men reported at twice the rate that the technology had improved their ability to choose how, when and where they work (19% of men and 8% of women), whilst women reported that the same job characteristic had diminished at double the rate (32% of women and 16% of men). Looking at the age of respondents and how they reported the impact of Generative AI on their creative work, those aged 31-40 reported at the highest rate (39%) that Generative AI had diminished their opportunities to learn and progress (the average across all age groups 25% reported that it had diminished).

Regarding financial compensation for their work, those aged 63% of those 31-50 reported that it had diminished as a result of Generative AI. Interestingly, those within the youngest age category within the sample (18-30) reported at the highest rates that their health and wellbeing had diminished at work due to the technology, whereas those aged 61 and over were the least likely to report negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.

Respondents aged 30 and under reported noticeably higher improvements (26%) in how meaningful their work is due to Generative AI than their counterparts. They also were the age group that felt how others valued their work had improved the most. In contrast, 72% of respondents aged 41-50 felt that the value given to their work by others had diminished since the introduction of Generative AI.

2.3 Fair Pay

> ***"I am finding it harder to negotiate my rates as my competition is AI-generated and costs a fraction of what I do" [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

Pay is the outcome of many different factors. Some workers in the creative industries - 'creatives', have an economic right associated with their labour - copyright. This can be seen as an anomaly, relative to the wider workforce, who typically cannot retain the economic rights to their ideas or creations. This is also the case for the majority of workers in the creative industries.

While copyright is a critical issue when thinking about the development of Generative AI in this section, here we see more changes in how work is being valued more generally, noting that pay is one indicator of how certain types of work are valued in a society. Issues relating to copyright are picked up in the transparency section of 'terms and conditions' and 'dignity'.

Background

The potential loss of job opportunities due to non-consensual uses of artwork to capture and imitate workers' style replicates extractive patterns, whereby the developers of Generative AI

models mass appropriate the product of creative labour without consent.[38] This compounds and can create new dimensions of unjust distribution of economic opportunities and gains, with AI companies disproportionately benefiting from creative work' pro. These, in turn, experience a reduction in their ability to be compensated for their work.[39]

As Generative AI helps to scale the volume of content available in the creative industry, some worry that this could be accompanied by reduced quality and a lack of human expression and narratives. These perspectives warn that an increased quantity of low-quality AI-generated creative content could lead to disreputation of creative genres or sectors[40]. In a similar vein, some creative workers and scholars have raised concerns that the oversaturation of AI-generated creative content could lead to decreased value of creative skills, work, and processes.[41]

The broad commercialisation of Generative AI tools has enabled access to creative content creation for individuals who previously lacked the means or skills to do so and for others to expand their possibilities. In the context of visual arts, there are opposing views on what scenario the increasing availability of low-cost visual content could propel. It has been suggested that this will result in fewer commissions for high-quality art pieces that could force experienced artists to lower the prices for their work, whilst others expect that a saturated market will push the prices up for outstanding artwork[42], or create a counter-effect of higher appreciation for human creativity.[43]

Artificial intelligence has created new business opportunities, which has transformed the market in some sectors, and the distribution of opportunities along the value chain.[44] Some suggest that Generative AI could similarly impact the economic structures of the creative industry, in particular, that of Visual Arts and Design, with Adobe Stock accepting AI-generated images and freelance service marketplace Fiverr allowing users to offer AI-enhanced art services.[45] Mechanisms such as non-fungible tokens could also expand to cover AI-generated content, which would provide an alternative source of royalties for artists.[46] Generative AI could also enable freelance workers to become more self-sufficient and bring tasks 'in-house' at a lower cost. For instance, a writer can create a book cover or generate the audiobook themselves.[47]

Despite this view, others suggest that Generative AI could instead affect the creative market by undermining the economic earning power of creative workers, oversaturating the market with AI-generated work, and creative workers moving out of the industry (see below).

Our Findings

Our survey found that a top dimension of work negatively impacted by GenAI was pay. 18% of respondents said that how others value their work had greatly diminished and 43% that it had diminished. Regarding 'financial compensation' 16% said that this has greatly diminished and 39% that it had diminished.

Our workshops suggest widespread concern that uses of Generative AI were leading to changes in how creative professionals, or creativity, are valued, with increasing expectations of productivity and a prioritisation of efficiency over creative quality. A number of participants noted that there is increasingly an expectation of "more from less" whereby creative professionals are being expected to produce larger volumes of work in shorter timeframes and for less pay. As Generative AI is being viewed as an enabler or as a tool that can create new efficiencies, creatives point to major challenges such as teams getting smaller, workload intensifying and productivity expectations increasing. These challenges lead to increased stress and poorer working conditions for creative professionals.

One respondent said that they have been asked on multiple occasions "to 'edit' a post machine-translation at a rate of remuneration far below what a translator should expect

with an unrealistic timescale" made worse by the fact that "the literary texts produced are unintelligible and actually require more, rather than less, work". Another reiterated that translation work had become a job of correcting AI-generated text and that there was "[no] creativity. Very little work". This individual also explained that their annual income was now a "third of what [they had] earned 10 plus years ago".

Respondents across visual arts and design and performing arts reported at high rates that the value given to their work by others has diminished. A writer and illustrator who utilises a multitude of methods to protect their work from being used as training data - and now spends more time online to prove that the work they create comes from a 'real person'. They said: "AI is making my human, traditional work take much longer, trying to protect my copyright has drastically reduced the amount of time I can spend on creating. Most of my time is now admin to protect my creations". This has consequences for time that can be allocated to paid work.

A voice artist said that their work is "being devalued - the expectation is that our performances should be cheap if we want to compete with commercially available AI voice generating software". A respondent who works across film, TV and media production and music and audio production, said that the value of their work "has been cheapened" and that whilst the demand for creative services hasn't really reduced, it seems that those paying for the work now think that it is "easier and [has] less thought put into it which I believe is inaccurate".

Another simply said that they have "no doubt that the value of my work is being eroded because, regardless of quality or artistic merit, I cannot compete with 'free'". An author with over 21 years of experience in the sector said that they feel less valued, "as clients tend to think they get the benefits of my hard-won experience for free". Interestingly, respondents with more experience in their chosen fields reported less improvement in the value they feel others give to their work since being exposed to Generative AI, compared to those with 10 years or less experience. Those with over 21 years' experience also reported the highest negative impact on their job security (71% said that it had diminished) and the financial compensation they receive for their work (62% said that it had diminished).

The nature of creatives' work is also seen to be changing. For example, one participant noted that in the case of an art director, the role is becoming increasingly one of overseeing AI rather than creating artworks from scratch. In some industries, it was felt that wider digital transformations and the growth of social media have already had negative impacts in reducing opportunities for creatives. One workshop participant stated: "Content became a big thing, and we are now competing with that, e.g. a cat video. The algorithm does not care that our videos are creative with a lot of skill and talent vs a cat video".

Participants across all three workshops observed that there are broader challenges with practices across creative industries and that Generative AI is being used in ways which aggravate these challenges rather than creating new sets of risks. For example, some workshop participants working in the music industry noted that many orchestras have been using pre-recorded backing tracks alongside live musicians, reducing the opportunities for paid work for musicians. Generative AI was seen as potentially leading to increased use of AI generated music or voices which would further reduce opportunities for paid work in these areas. As one participant stated: "It is wrong that we as a community have to pay this price. This is likely to accelerate with AI."

2.4 Fair Terms and Conditions

> ***"I may not want to sign with someone that in the contract they have consent to use work for AI, [but] I can't afford that loss of income all the time." [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

Terms and conditions are central to the experience of freelance workers exposed to GenAI disruption. Our research suggests that meaningful consent (at an individual level) is often impeded as a result of coercive contracts by firms (interaction level) and malpractice relating to consent, and transparency by GenAI developers (ecosystem level).

We present our findings across these themes, both in our review of background material and our findings.

Background

Coercive Contracts

It has been evidenced that performers and creative practitioners have long been subjected to deceptive contractual agreements and non-consensual, pervasive data collection practices enabled therein.[48] The UK Performing Arts and Entertainment Trade Union Equity warned about unclear and complex contract provisions on the AI use of workers' images, voices, or likenesses. Provisions often request unlimited rights to use them without clarification on how they will be used.[49] Contracts may have been signed before the advent of Generative AI or without a complete understanding of their implication.[50] Creative workers' unions and associations warn that, in other cases, creative workers are pressured into signing contracts that waive their moral rights and authorship as the only option to be hired.[51] They note that such contractual agreements often lead to exploitative terms with little or no compensation. Pervasive data collection and cagey contractual practices at the expense of creative workers could have further negative implications, including reduced income opportunities and undermining creative workers' identities.[52]

Several voice actors have made public their concerns around deceptive contract practices in the Film and Interactive Media industry that allow unlimited AI use without compensation. Workers discovered their voices have been used to train AI only when AI-generated versions of their voices are sold or distributed online.[53] Equity has also noted that some of their members have recorded their voice for AI voice developers. Whilst these works were initially intended for data and research purposes only, they discovered that their rights were assigned to end clients using their voice and likeness for commercial gains.[54] Both Equity and the US National Association of Voice Actors have warned that the language of the clauses in contracts that give a producer the right to synthesise an actor's voice tends to be confusing and ambiguous.[55]

Transparency and Consent

The evolution of large-scale Generative AI models was propelled, among other things, by the scaling of training datasets. With AI developers prioritising more data and scale over responsible data curation and stewardship[56], large-scale Generative AI models fail to 'obtain consent from copyright holders and to establish a legal basis for the legitimate use of copyrighted material', potentially leading to copyright infringements and violations to intellectual property regimes[57]. Generative AI systems can replicate elements contained in their training data leading to unintentional plagiarism or content appropriation[58], digital forgery[59], and AI-enabled content piracy or theft[60].

In the UK, copyright grants economic rights, whereby creative actors can make commercial gains from their works and authorise or prohibit acts, such as distribution and adaptation, and moral rights, that protects non-economic interests of literary, dramatic, musical and

artistic works and films and some performances, including the right to attribution, to object to derogatory treatment of a work, to object to false attribution, and to privacy of certain photographs and films.[61]

During the last couple of years, several creative workers have raised concerns about AI companies scrapping copyrighted work in their portfolios to train Generative AI models without consent requests, proper attribution, nor compensation. Some argue that the use of artwork to train Generative AI models follows the standard practice of taking inspiration from others, which is largely accepted in the field , or that remixing content is natural in digital creative practice.[63] By contrast, others argue that mass appropriation of copyrighted artwork will lead to a concentration of creativity among a handful of firms, requiring further interrogation of data sharing, use and processing, including among intermediaries.[64]

Due to the lack of transparency on the sources and content of the training datasets, creative workers do not know if their artwork has been used to train AI, nor have the means 'to opt out of image training databases or otherwise control how their art is used'.[65] Many have only found out when AI-generated content with their style or based on their work was shared online. Some researchers have analysed several datasets on which some Generative AI models have been trained and found subsets that came from third-party websites, as is the case of the dataset LAION-5B on which Stable Diffusion was trained, which included images from Pinterest and Fine Art America.[66]

Many creative workers, including writers, dedicate part of their time identifying copyright infringements or piracy and requesting hosting websites or platforms to have them taken down. Some suggest that new venues for copyright infringement harms, as a result of illegal use of artwork to train popular Generative AI models, could create further burdens on creative workers.[67] In addition, the risk of copyright infringements and violations to intellectual property law disproportionately impacts marginalised creative workers, who may not have the means to engage in legal disputes.[68]

Use case Publishers Universal Music, ABKCO, and Concord Publishing have initiated a lawsuit against the AI company Anthropic. The lawsuit, filed in the Tennessee, USA federal court, accuses Anthropic of misusing copyrighted song lyrics to train its AI chatbot, Claude. The case suggests that Anthropic may have infringed upon copyright laws by reproducing lyrics from over 500 songs - ranging from classics like the Beach Boys' "God Only Knows" to contemporary hits like Beyonce's "Halo" - without obtaining the necessary permissions from the rights holders.[69]

Our Findings

Coercive contracts and the ability to negotiate

Overall, our focus groups reveal that AI is contributing to a worsening of already poor terms and conditions of work. AI therefore does not propose a novel risk but rather amplifies vulnerabilities already facing freelance workers. Among the respondents to our survey, 77.4% identified as self-employed or freelance, 20.3% as employees and 8.5% as other. Employees reported feeling the benefits of the technology more than their counterparts with other worker statuses. 16% of employees reported that their job security had improved as a result of Generative AI, compared with only 5% of self-employed or freelance workers and 9% of others. In terms of productivity, 46% of employees had experienced improvements, whereas only 27% of those who are self-employed or freelance felt the same.

Similarly, employees reported negative impacts of Generative AI at a lower rate than other workers across nearly all job characteristics. This is particularly stark in how changes to financial compensation for work are being experienced. 61% of self-employed and freelance respondents said that their financial compensation had diminished as a result of Generative

AI, followed by 52% of other workers, but only 30% of those in more stable employment. Likewise, only 27% of employees felt that the terms and conditions of their work had diminished as a result of the technology, in comparison to 47% of those in self-employed and freelance and 48% of other workers. The only job characteristic that falls outside of this pattern is in relation to opportunities to learn and progress, where 'other' workers report the least negative impacts.

The survey findings indicate that those without the job security and stability that standard employee-employer dynamics affords are the most exposed to vulnerability factors. To an extent, these findings correspond with those from the literature: freelance creative workers are highly exposed to vulnerability factors. However, the survey findings reveal that this is not limited to freelancers alone, and negative impacts are being felt sharply by a broader category of 'non-standard workers'.

It is not uncommon for workers to have no defined contract, for workers to be in a weak bargaining position when they are given a contract – subject to coercive consent; and for very short periods to review and accept terms. Many workshop participants noted that while they may have significant concerns about the ways that Generative AI may be used, or how their own work may be used to train Generative AI models, the precarity of their work and the need to secure paid work mean that they are not in a position to turn down work or negotiate on details in a contract even where this may require them to agree to allow their data to be collected and used to train future Generative AI models. As one participant noted: "I may not want to sign with someone that in the contract they have consent to use work for AI [but] I can't afford that loss of income all the time".

A workshop participant mentioned that performers might have to agree to the cloning of their voice for multiple uses as a condition of employment. Participants emphasised that it is vital that freelancers have a meaningful choice over the way their work or their data are used without fear of losing work. Commonly, personal data, which could be used for training, was collected, with no regard to current protections or 'consent'. One anecdote shared by a workshop participant involved an experience from the set of a major motion picture from a superhero franchise. Actors were told to go into a room to have their photo taken with no information as to why. Two days later, the actors didn't get called back by the studio. On another occasion, photos were taken again without explaining why. The individual was booked for three days, then let go. The participant suggested that these images were being used by the employer to generate background images, such as of crowds, without permission. A singer shared concerns about the use of demos. "They want it in the next couple of hours or tomorrow. No time to check policy on AI. There is no time to check." Another musician shared: "You don't know what the policy is before you show up." There was uncertainty around the shifting norms for this kind of practice and the processes for resisting or querying the use of AI. A voice actor emphasised the barriers faced when raising concerns: "I asked about AI clause... They came back and said we don't agree to these. They said they won't sell or clone my voice, but they didn't want to sign to clauses to agree to that. There was a lot of back and forth, and in the end they ghosted me. It turned out that it wasn't the small company policy, it was a much bigger global brand who had the policy."

Over one quarter of respondents indicated that those paying for creative works are not engaging in conversations about its usage or explicitly amending their approach with Generative AI in mind (29%). The most common response to our survey item on changes in approach to contracting or commissioning of work was that it was largely unaffected by Generative AI.

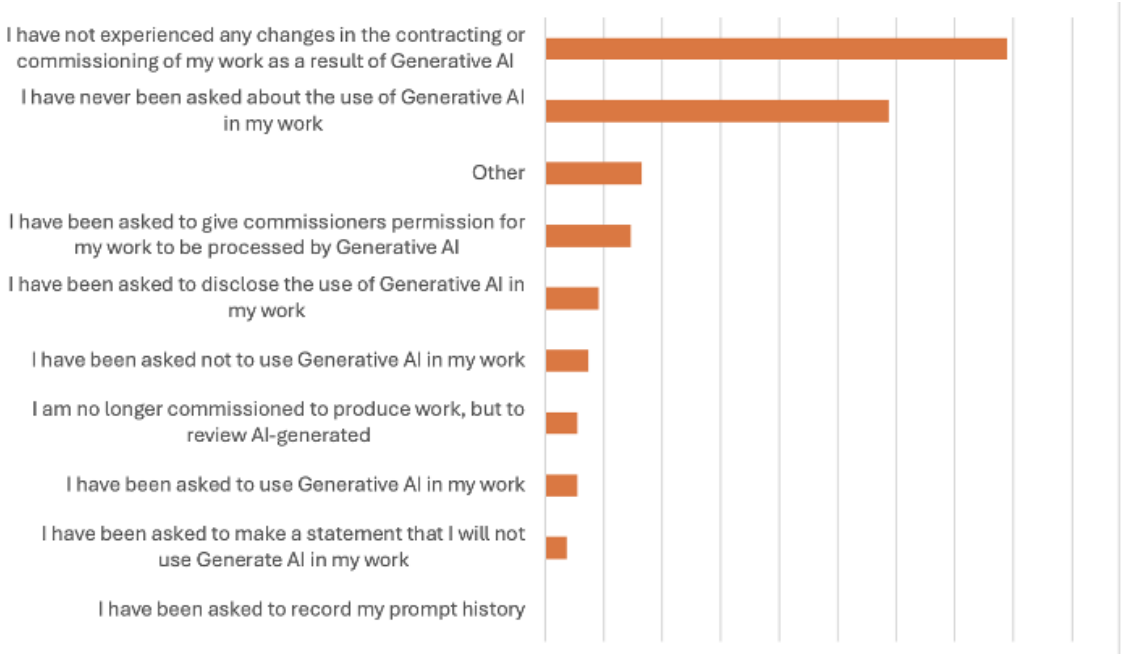

Figure 1 - Changes to the contracting and commissioning of creative workers due to Generative AI

With changes to commissioning and contracting of work also come changes to the retention of revenue for some respondents. 15% indicated that they have retained less revenue due to Generative AI, with women experiencing this at over twice the rate of men (60% compared with 32%). Those working, again, in advertising, marketing, and PR or translation and language services were represented at the highest rate within this group.

Transparency

At the interaction level, between workers and firms, the conditions of freelance employment were understood to be the cause of a lack of transparency. As one workshop participant suggested “Since there’s a lot of layers between the employer and the freelancer, a lot of things that happen along the way makes it difficult for the freelancers to tackle employment rights.” The lack of understanding of the technology among employers and intermediaries like agents was also deemed to be a problem. One participant thought “people who lead top companies like BBC and Netflix do not have very good knowledge of AI and how it is being utilised and its repercussions”. Another pointed out, “it is important that the agents of creative workers know about AI and protect their artists.”

When asked whether they think their work has been used to ‘train’ Generative AI systems, the most common responses were that they don’t have enough information to know / don’t know where to find information about whether my work has been used (33%), with another 30% indicating that they suspect that it has been but do not know for certain. Only 5% said that they knew their work had been used to train Generative AI and had given permission.

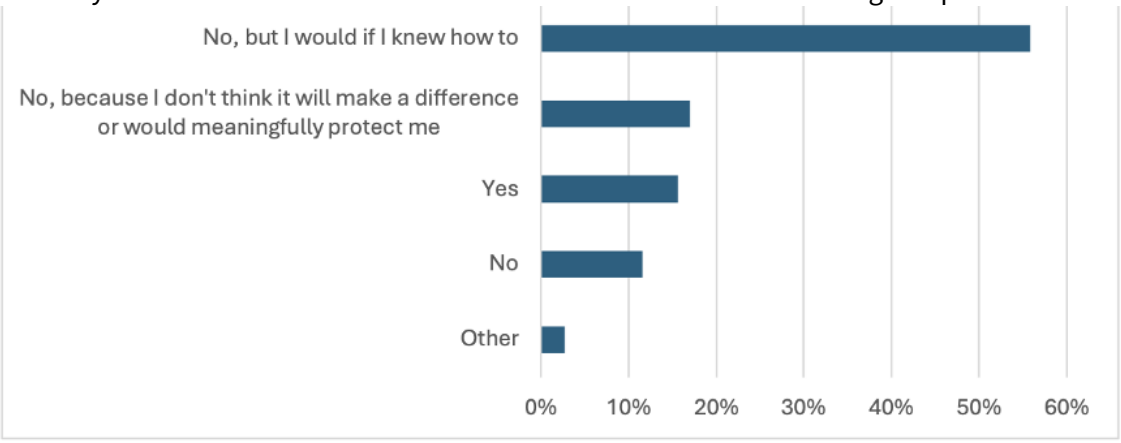

Figure 2 - Do you do anything which seeks to protect the work you make available online from use by Generative AI?

Whilst many respondents are not sure whether their work has been used to train Generative AI systems, Figure 2 demonstrates that the majority would seek to protect their work if they knew how (56%). Of those who would protect their work from being used as training data for Generative AI if they knew how to, the majority (63%) are union members. Of those who do currently protect their work, more than three-quarters are union members.

One respondent said that are "very concerned about… the lack of copyright protection", with another professing that "there is a landgrab going on to take our copyrighted material and use it for AI" and that "it will take years to sort". Others expressed frustrations about the current methods of obtaining consent for work to become training data, specifically that they do not believe "an "opt-out" model is sufficient" and that "you should be automatically opted-out unless you opt-in and allow your work to be used as training material". The methods adopted by respondents vary, with many utilising the terms of their contracts to express that their work cannot be used to train AI whilst others have stated publicly that they do not give their permission or have opted-out from social media companies' (such as Meta's) ability to use their work as training data. However, one respondent indicated that although they have opted out where possible, they are "without any confidence [that it will] prevent use by most Generative AI developers".

Some participants noted that there are longer-standing challenges facing creative professionals in relation to increasingly exploitative contractual processes. One participant noted that while contracts now might include a clause to retain a creative's data (whether voice recording, likeness, writing or images) to train future Generative AI models, this is not substantially different from previous experiences (going back to the early 2000s) of performers whose contracts included clauses allowing their performance to be recorded and reused, repurposed or reshared in the future. In these ways, creative professionals viewed Generative AI in the context of a much longer process of deterioration of working conditions and reduction of opportunities for paid work. One participant described "performances done in the past [which] have been used without compensation". An author reported "many books used and stolen and reproduced without consent". One participant said that legal contracts often omit any reference to AI usage or possible usage.

2.5 Dignity and Wellbeing

> ***"I have no doubt that the value of my work is being eroded because, regardless of quality or artistic merit, I cannot compete with 'free'." [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

As we set out above, many of the Good Work Charter framework dimensions are related, and interdependent. This is certainly the case – and represented in current legal protections – regarding the relationship between dignity, relating to fundamental recognition of an individual's personhood or humanity. In creative labour, this also relates to pay through a formalised and associated economic protection and to the 'meaning' and value of work created. As art can so sharply convey the individual's humanity, its appropriation, mistreatment or reproduction can also have significant psychosocial effects. Dignity also underpins the legal right to privacy, which under GDPR extends to biometric data, which is central to the automation of work in performance industries (voice, likeness, and so on). Lastly, here we include broader wellbeing-related impacts, primarily arising from fear about the acceleration of these trends.

Background

Current lawsuits and claims by creative workers have evidenced that popular Generative AI models have scraped artwork without consent to train their models. First, data scraping has been conducted without properly informing nor empowering creative workers how their work was to be used. Second, some argue that distinct from inspiration seeking, these systematic non-consensual uses of artwork have not ensured such uses align with the workers' desires and thus lead to the undermining of their autonomy and the undermining of self-respect across creative communities[70].

In addition to copyright infringement and violations to intellectual property, current debates centre on how Generative AI challenges understandings of authenticity and authorship of the created work. As noted by Garcia[71], traditional copyright laws protect human authorship and 'were not designed to accommodate the concept of non-human creators'. In addition, many have highlighted that AI-generated creative content lacks the human touch and influence of lived experiences and purposes, a gap that many sign as contributing to biases against AI-generated work and the perceptions of authenticity when creative content is created exclusively by a human.[72] As a result, practitioners are confronted with ethical challenges when integrating Generative AI in their creative processes as opposed to content solely created by Generative AI[73], which also raises considerations around disclosure of Generative AI use, with opposing views on whether this should be a requirement.[74]

Due to the risks of deepfakes and appropriation of one's likeness and voice (see Impacts on creative workers' access to good work and Impacts on wellbeing), unions such as Equity are calling for the introduction of image rights (also referred in other geographies as personality rights or publicity rights) in the UK, where, at the moment, there is no codified law but a 'patchwork of statutory and common law causes of action'.[75] These rights could give individuals control over the commercial use of personal identifiable aspects, such as name, voice, image, or likeness. Equity noted that these rights could help 'to safeguard meaningful income streams, as well as defend their artistic integrity, career choices, brand, and reputation. More broadly for society, it is an important tool for protecting privacy and allowing an individual to object to the use of their image without consent.[76] Some scholars caution, however, that image rights could reinforce the separation of the creators' identity from their labour (or output of labour) and 'institutionalise the trade of personality', as well as reinforcing the uneven distribution of economic benefits, stating that only some creative workers, such as well-known actors, singers, and media celebrities, will create a new avenue for income generation.[77]

Some of the ethical concerns highlighted by existing literature point to the risks of moral and emotional trauma and reputational damage when artists' names become associated with AI-generated content that uses their likeness or mimics their style.[78] First, there could be trauma and damage associated with the non-consensual and inauthentic nature of the style mimicry and impersonation of the artist. Generative AI technologies can also mimic creative workers' styles, and some companies are mimicking the style of their in-house illustrators. Many artists find that work imitating their style being shared or sold on the internet leads to decreasing interest in their work[79] further limiting job opportunities. Some creative sectors are more susceptible to mimicry-based impacts, notably illustrators[80], music production[81], junior designers, photographers, game developers[82], and animation[83].

As some artists have voiced, their style is shaped by their unique lived experience and connects with deep personal aspects.[84] Second, non-endorsed artwork could impact the reputation of the workers' market and their livelihood. Third, the content could be used for nefarious purposes, such as harassment, hate speech, or genocidal denial, or non-endorsed messages under the artists' names.[85] Indeed, some artists, including film and

media celebrities, are especially exposed to deepfakes. The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) labour union estimates that 99 per cent of deepfake subjects are from the entertainment industry.[86]

Generative AI has made possible the imitation of human likeness, including writing style, voice, and image. This has brought opportunities for the creative industry. For instance, Generative AI eliminates the need for rerecording dialogue by the actors when aiming to improve the audio quality or change the scripted dialogue after film production. It has also enabled actors' voice de-aging, expanding the possibilities of storytelling. However, use cases and literature illustrate that these possibilities, coupled with non-consensual and exploitative market practices, also enable unprecedented appropriation of likeness for income generation and profit without care for the creative worker's personal and creative identity, their control over their own identity, nor compensation.[87] Some signal that Generative AI allows the separation of the creative worker's identity from their labour,[88] risking further commodifying the creative identity of popular performers or media celebrities.

Voice actors have been subject to appropriation of their likeness for commercial gain. Many have claimed that their voices have been used to train speech generators or that synthetic or cloned versions of their voices are distributed online without their consent nor compensation.[89] In addition, their voices are being used without care for their identity, such as in the case of voice actor Beverly Standing, whose voice is available for TikTok users looking for 'a North American accent'.[90] Artist Greg Rutkowski found online content with his name attached, but which he did not create. Used in the prompts of at least 93,000 images generated by Stable Diffusion, Greg Rutkowski worries that the internet will be flooded with AI-generated content with his style at the expense of his actual work not being easy to find. The artist uploaded his work in an online portfolio on the website ArtStation, which Stability. AI scraped to build the dataset used to train Stable Diffusion.[91]

Some use cases suggest that creative workers may be encouraged or pressured by their contractors to use Generative AI tools to increase productivity.[92] This pressure can lead to an intensification of work impacting wellbeing. In other cases, use of Generative AI tools may be framed as necessary in order for a firm to stay competitive with the market and avoid running the risk of losing their jobs.[93] Illustrators in video game companies in China have noted that they can increase the number of scenes or characters created in a day by 40 times their usual rate. Still, they also feel pressure to work longer hours to produce more and stay competitive.[94]

In a study exploring the use of Generative AI in early career artists and programmers participating in a summer internship programme in the field of game development, Boucher and colleagues found that many of them were being suggested to use Generative AI tools. Yet, due to both ethical and practical concerns, many artists were reluctant to use them.

Our Findings

Our research suggests that workers are seeking to reclaim dignity through two main means. Individual action to protect and resist, and seeking to change public narratives about what is happening in the sector and its consequences. We found workers were resisting the appropriation of their work, to reclaim their agency - and gaming Generative AI systems. Some shared with us that they use tools such as Nightshade, which turns images into data samples that are unsuitable for model training by transforming the images into 'poison' samples so that models trained on them without consent will see their models learn unpredictable behaviours that deviate from expected norms. Similarly, some respondents said that they use Glaze, which works to disrupt style mimicry by making minimal changes to artworks so that they appear unchanged to the human eye but appear to an AI model like a dramatically different art style. Others have shifted to promoting their work on sites like Cara,

a social media and portfolio platform for artists that filters out Generative AI images and automatically implements anti-AI tags to images that intend to tell AI scrapers not to scrape from Cara. This distrust in the effectiveness of methods materialised in additional apathy towards protecting their artwork in 16% of respondents, who reported that they have not protected the work they make available online, because they do not think it would make a difference or meaningfully protect them.

Moving on to more directly wellbeing-related impacts, our workshops found that the use of GenAI has resulted in employers demanding ever-greater efficiencies with an associated decrease in value placed on creative work. This has consequences for wellbeing. Workers are also anxious about the impacts of Generative AI on their work.

Figure 3 shows that this shift away from neutrality when considering future impacts of the Generative AI is a shift toward more negative feelings, which the percentage of respondents reporting negative feelings at higher rates across every job characteristic. As above, 'negative' impacts are a consolidation of responses of 'diminished' and 'greatly diminished' to the impact of Generative AI.

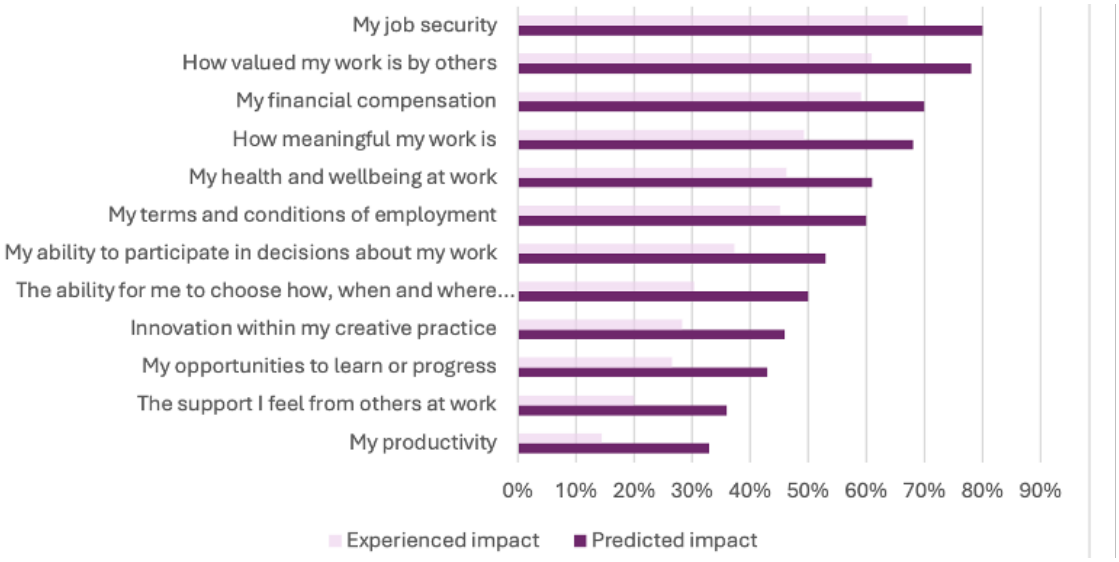

Figure 3 - Comparison of feelings of negativity toward job characteristic changes as a result of Generative AI

The increase in negative opinions on the impact of the technology on working conditions in the long term may suggest that respondents expect the impact of the technology to intensify over time, resulting in positive elements of their work diminishing with more noticeable effect in the future. This is supported by remarks made by respondents when prompted to consider whether Generative AI had brought about any other changes to their work or to the commissioning of their work. Whilst the question focused on past experiences, many took the opportunity to share their thoughts on predicted impacts. A writer said, "I expect Generative AI to reduce my income in due course. I hope it won't, but I expect it will". Another pointed out how the work that authors create sustains a lot of other creative people in different industries. With many TV and film adaptations being based on novels, they worry that if authors are not able to sustain themselves financially with their work, they will find it difficult to keep going and create new works which will "undermine the basis of TV and film".

Across all job characteristics, the predicted negative impacts were higher than the experienced negative impacts. For example, 14% of respondents felt that Generative AI had diminished their productivity to date, yet 33% reported that they expect Generative AI to diminish their productivity in the future. In terms of how meaningful their work is, 49% of respondents felt that it had diminished as a result of Generative AI, and 68% reported that they expect it to in the future.

2.6 Autonomy and Learning

> ***"A concrete relationship with the world is very important, e.g. learning tangible skills like playing instruments. Can we have some assurance that these human qualities will not be lost due to AI?" [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

The transformation of creative work in some sectors is a direct challenge to the common trope that automation would only, or was meant to, remove dull, dirty or dangerous tasks and work from the economy. However, beyond this being proven a falsehood by the experience of creative workers, far more nuanced and complex dynamics between automation and autonomy, automation and learning, and relationships can be seen.

Background

Automation of creative tasks, without the entire displacement of roles, means workers are being given work which is increasingly peripheral to the process, such as editing or refining AI-generated outputs[95]. This reflects what has been described as 'low discretion augmentation', where meaningful, core or high-autonomy tasks are substituted, but a worker remains in their role.[96]

Whilst some argue that Generative AI tools can assist and inspire creative workers in generating new ideas and facilitating the exploration phase during creative processes, enhancing individual creativity, some studies suggest that a wide uptake of Generative AI tools risks limiting aggregate novelty.[97] As AI generative tools are increasingly built on the same models, they tend to generate similar or uniform outcomes across different deployments. This phenomenon has been described as outcome homogenisation.[98] In addition, the increasing presence of AI-generated content in public data pools could feed the large-scale training datasets that new developments of Generative AI models will rely on, which, if tending towards less variation and diversity, could over time further impact the diversity of AI-generated outputs.[99] Some scholars point to indicators that already show increasing monotony in training datasets, resulting both from a lack of variety in AI outputs and recent less diversity in music and human writing creations.[100] Jiang and colleagues[101] warn that if we increasingly rely on AI-generated work, 'to provide us with the media we consume, the words we read, the art we see, we would be heading towards an ouroboros where nothing new is truly created, a stale perpetuation of the past' (p. 368).

Some scholars note that Generative AI could assist in art teaching and education, as it can be used for students and aspiring artists to provide inspiration, and virtually experiment with different styles, techniques, and colours. Similarly, Generative AI could create interactive lessons to illustrate the main characteristics and techniques of specific art movements, expanding the possibilities for art education. Further, some suggest that Generative AI could be used as a feedback provider, where students can benefit from suggestions on ways to improve their work and explore alternative methods.

Some argue that off-the-shelf Generative AI tools enable individuals who previously lacked the means or skills to participate or advance in creative practice to bridge the skills gaps.[102] As Generative AI tools burst into the market and propelled opportunities to broaden access to creative tools, so did narratives of adaptation and resources on how to use these for creative work. However, many identify a gap in the quality of the available learning resources, particularly for non-hegemonic languages.[103] Furthermore, creative workers may increasingly feel pressure to integrate Generative AI tools to remain competitive, and those with fewer learning opportunities risk being excluded from an already precarious and competitive market.[104]

Individuals with access to learning resources, however, also have varying experiences in the use of Generative AI tools. When AI generative tools are not available in varied languages, practitioners have to produce prompts in a foreign language. This poses the risks of mistranslations of cultural nuances, erasure of local rhetoric and understandings, and de-contextualisation of inputs and, consequently, outputs.[105] In a similar vein, whilst some off-the-shelf Generative AI tools require little financial or technical resources, many text-to-video generative tools require mathematical and programming skills to expand the possibilities that they can provide, such as camera movement control.[106] This leads to some creative workers disproportionately benefiting more than others. Lastly, those creative workers who use generative machine learning techniques as part of their practices require continuous upskilling and access to financial or technical resources, such as expensive equipment. These requirements often overlap with the financial and social barriers present in technology careers, contributing to systematic discrimination and entry opportunities in the field.[107]

At the sharpest end of this wedge, whilst it is often argued that Generative AI tools could overcome skills gaps and make some jobs more accessible for individuals with little experience or fewer creative skills[108], some worry that overreliance on these tools could affect workers' efficiency when completing a task that they were previously proficient in[109], or that overreliance undermines creativity and the development of observational and critical thinking skills, which contribute to independent creative ideas generation.[110] Whilst some argue that Generative AI contributes to the exploration phase of the creative process, Inie and colleagues explored responses of creative professionals to a survey and noted that some were concerned about the overlook of the exploration phase of the creative process that to them, Generative AI skips and the potential consequent stagnation of creativity.[111] In a similar vein, Mim and colleagues[112] warn that 'The imaginations of many image practitioners are being shaped, modified, distorted, and often bounded by the various GAI tools, which in turn trigger a perplexed ideation phase limiting the potentials of marginal creative minds' (p. 6). The authors, in an exploration of the ways popular text-to-image Generative AI tools impact digital image practitioners in Bangladesh, also found that some practitioners involved in education fear that new generations of artists who are detached from their social surroundings would undermine the role of art (and artists) as revolutionary and influencing positive change.

With concerns about the viability of creative industries as a career option and the devaluation of creative skills, work, and processes, some argue that this scenario could discourage individuals from learning traditional artistic skills and entering the creative Visual Arts and Design field.[113] Furthermore, this scenario, coupled with the reluctance of experienced creative workers to share their artwork, fearing misuse without proper compensation[114] could result in a shortage in the availability of resources and trainers for aspiring or prospective artists, thereby reducing educational opportunities for new talent.

Some argue that Generative AI has the potential to expand creative boundaries. First, it could provide a source of inspiration. In a survey of creative professionals, Inie and colleagues[115] describe that workers saw Generative AI tools as a source for examples. They also identified the potential for iterations and trialling of ideas in an easier and quicker way. Creative workers can use generative tools to explore new forms and aesthetics that were otherwise challenging to achieve, such as pieces with complex textures and patterns, or combinations of styles and techniques. Generative AI technologies can also assist them in making associations among remote concepts.[116] Similarly, Generative AI could propel cross-cultural artistic exchanges by facilitating the merging of disparate artistic elements to create coherent works that resonate with multiple and diverse cultures.[117] Furthermore, Generative AI reduces the gap between conceptualisation and realisation, opening up avenues for further and less time-consuming exploration and accelerating the process from ideation to the

finished work.[118] Many suggest that, when combined with streamlining tasks and automating labour-intensive processes, Generative AI has the potential to improve efficiency and enable creative workers to focus on the discovery of new ideas, paving the way for a new phase in the evolution of art.[119]

Generative AI tools can significantly simplify complex tasks in the creative sector, making completing the tasks quicker and more effectively. This especially benefits less experienced creative workers.[120] Tasks that were once time-consuming but fundamental to artistic creation, such as drafting detailed storyboards, characters, or costume design, can now be completed in minutes through prompt inputs. However, while this simplification has its benefits, it also raises considerations around the changing nature of creative practices. Some argue that the integration of Generative AI technologies may require creative workers to adapt to the functions and limitations of the generative tools in ways that could significantly alter traditional creative methods and practices[121] and place creative workers as responsible for only part of the creative process[122].

As a result of task simplification, some suggest that the use of Generative AI tools in creative processes transforms the role of the creative workers, leaving them with smaller and editing tasks, such as refining AI-generated content.[123] This has been exemplified in the media by a freelance illustrator in the video game industry in China who would spend a full week working on the completion of an illustration for a promotional poster. This task entailed drafting a sketch, refining outlines, and adding colours. With the increasing use of Generative AI in the industry, the illustrator is now offered smaller tasks that entail fixing AI-generated images, such as 'tweaking the lighting and skewed body parts, for a tenth of her original rate'.[124]

Some scholars argue that the reduction of creative decisions could have further implications for workers' agency. First, creative workers have limited control over the process and the desired outcome. Where practitioners use text-to-image generation models, for instance, changes in specific or localised areas of an image for improvement are constraint by prompt inputs and/or linguistic skills to craft appropriate prompts.[125] Second, by focusing on product over process, the use of Generative AI tools limits the exploratory phase and the understanding or contributions to the creative process.[126] Some visual artists, with the technical skills, may craft the generative models and sometimes even the datasets.[127] However, access to this is largely shaped by financial and social barriers.[128]

Our Findings

While overall, the levels of reported improvement across job characteristics are lower than the reported negative effects due to Generative AI, the job elements reported as most improved due to Generative AI in our survey included 'opportunities to learn and progress' (4% said that it had greatly improved and 22% that it had improved), and 'innovation within my creative practice' (2% reported great improvement and 21% an improvement).

Some workshop participants raised the benefits for automating mundane or time-intensive tasks in creative work. There were multiple applications for musicians including interest in tools for analysing chords, creating manuscripts or transcriptions for musicians, and tasks of editing. For a band leader, GenAI can help with marketing such as in the creation of promotional materials. But other participants noted the risk to loss of tangible skills due to technology: "A concrete relationship with the world is very important e.g. learning tangible skills like playing instruments. Can we have some assurance that these human qualities will not be lost due to AI? " And one participant shared, "tech dominates my style, instead a diversifying of style".

Some participants identified the value that GenAI offered relating to access to the industry.

A participant from the music industry raised the idea that GenAI could lower the barrier to entry for musicians who are on a budget to use for mixing and mastering tracks. Other comments emphasised how GenAI can help enable live transcription and translation, prepare responses for email communications, especially benefiting deaf and neurodivergent people, drafting easier to understand contracts.

Many participants commented on the need for greater awareness raising and education about Generative AI across the creative industries. Some workshop participants stressed it is important that creative professionals keep up to speed with new technologies in order to benefit from them, for example one participant stated "we can't stop the technology, so train people how to use the tools."

Education was also important to raise awareness of the risks and potential negative impacts of Generative AI for creative industries and society more broadly. There was some concern that currently there is a lack of training or education for creative professionals relating to the impacts of AI. For example: "there's not been sufficient work done in training or education about how to respond to this. Drama schools etc are only just catching up".

When respondents were asked whether they have personally used Generative AI in their work process to date, the majority reported that they had not (65%), 31% reported that they have and 4% were not sure.8 67% of those aged 18-30 had personally used Generative AI, and only 33% of the same age group reported not having used it. Those aged 41-50 had the lowest reported usage. Of those who had used Generative AI in their creative work processes, the use cases provided varied in terms of complexity, purpose and relation to their creative work. Some individuals stated that they had used the technology to assist with writing task such as "email wording", "writing first drafts of marketing materials such as social media captions and press releases" and "to suggest plot ideas" . Others have used Generative AI to assist the creation of artwork, one respondent had used "Bing image creator (and others) to brainstorm artwork", similarly another said that they used "Dall-e to generate an idea for cover art for an ep then created the actual image [themselves]". A few respondents said that they had used Generative AI for "research" and one person said that they had used it because they were specifically asked to do so by freelance clients to "produce work faster".

Through the survey respondents commented on the lack of available information on how Generative AI is developed, which has left them feeling "very uneducated about AI in general, and how it might be affecting [their] work already and in the future". Many expressed a desire to "be better-informed, but [that they] do not have the time to dig out a lot of information when [they don't know where to start" so would like there to be "clear guidelines" so that they can inform themselves.

2.7 Support and Participation

> ***"It has made me quite paranoid and fearful, and worried for how long I'll be able to work in the career that I've worked so hard to build up for myself." [Respondent, workshop, 2024]***

Support and participation can be read for their relevance within, but also beyond the workplace context extending to the relationships with community, consumer, and peers. In the context of changes to creative work, where creative workers share a rare connection – more than transactionally – with their audience who may be direct consumers - these dynamics are sharply interesting.

Background

There is not insignificant literature on the changing relationship between creator, and consumer of creative work owing to AI. Forgery, inaccuracies, or low-quality content can impact audience trust in the creative work. Some studies suggest that people are more likely to place greater value on human-generated creative content.[129] When the audience cannot distinguish between human- and AI-generated content, lack of clarity over provenance and attribution could lead to disruption in the relationship between the creative work and the audience, where the latter feel 'unsettled' or 'betrayed'.[130]

There are also possible changes to the structure and relationships between workers as a result of technological transformation. Not only is there wide-reaching evidence of polarised impacts, with some rare cohorts of worker both more legally protected (such as by copyright or GDPR) but also greater tensions between workers within the production process. For instance, Indie publishing increasingly relies on AI for cover design, proofreading, and voice acting, which some see undermining its historically collaborative practices and potentially building hierarchical structures which did not previously exist.[131]

Unions are also central to the creative industries – not least because the share of freelance work makes the need for efficiencies in bargaining much higher. Collective bargaining is the process by which unions negotiate with employers on behalf of members. An agreement falls within the statutory definition to the extent that it relates to the terms and conditions of employment; or how technology is used to recruit or dismiss workers; or to allocate tasks and duties (See Trade Union and Labour Relation Relations (Consolidation) Act 1991 section 187 (2)). Schedule A1 (paras 3 and 31) highlights the right to enter into collective bargaining over terms and conditions related to the core issues of pay, hours and holidays, as well as to the information that is necessary for the purpose of collective bargaining (TULCRA, section 181). Although this does not amount to general coverage of all uses, it means that AI or algorithmic technologies that could be used to determine or could impact pay - as we've seen is the case with Generative AI in the creative industries - or to set or allocate shift patterns that determine working hours, will be covered.

In the context of creative work, there are other regimes and rights which unions stand in to defend, see enacted and protect. This includes copyright and GDPR where it is directly related to terms of workers. This is particularly the case for performance artists as discussed above. However, under current conditions union membership does not reliably guarantee that workers will have these protections respected. Wider structural conditions are at play. Indeed, in a survey to their members, Equity found that 61% of respondents signed contracts that enable AI firms to own and have unlimited use to their biometric data.Our Findings

Survey respondents reported feelings of neutrality toward the impact of Generative AI on the job characteristics surveyed. 'The support I feel from others at work' was the characteristic least sensitive to change, with 67% of respondents saying it had not been impacted positively or negatively by Generative AI. This may reflect the sample's bias towards freelance, and individual workers but is nonetheless significant in highlighting that solidarity and relation within the creative industries is not being plainly hampered by these new tools.

However, differences between high and low status members of the community were seen as important. It was noted that less high-profile creatives are the most vulnerable to risks of Generative AI, with one participating noting "it is not going to be the people at the top, like Taylor Swift, that lose out but those nearer the bottom". Power inequalities mean that prestige is protecting the most powerful figures in the workforce, who may find generative GenAI positive for their creative practice. Less powerful creatives and those doing the 'backroom' work in the creative industries are most vulnerable to the effects of GenAI.

This inequity in how the risks of Generative AI are distributed was also seen to be mirrored in inequitable access to the potential benefits of technologies: “Prominent figures may exploit technology to their advantage, contrasting with lesser-known individuals who might be exploited by the same technologies”

Some participants felt that creatives should proactively engage with AI to ensure that their interests are advanced in the ways that this is used. One participant stated, “we need to get more serious thinking about AI [and] lead the discussion in some way”. Participants suggested that as the challenges faced were common across many roles and industries creatives ought to engage in collective bargaining to establish fair compensation as well as common standards on clauses relating to use of AI or collection of data to train AI. Participants also felt that unions should work together to develop joint approaches and ensure fair practices across the creative professions.

This need for better representation was also highlighted by those flagging the inefficiencies of individual negotiation around contract terms, and copyright entitlement or protection. One respondent said they were unhappy that “the permission to use our data - and everyone else’s - is being “sneaked” into the terms and conditions of large companies, especially on social media. Apple, Meta, Google... many people are completely unaware of this and so are given “consent” passively, without realising it”. Another built on this, explaining that it is difficult to exercise rights under an opt-out model because “individually removing every instance of your artwork from the database takes hour after tedious hour that small businesses cannot afford to waste”.

Increasing public awareness – or greater recognition – of the impacts of Generative AI on creative workers, but also the sources of creative content on creative professionals was considered important to build greater public support. Participants in our workshops advocated for increased transparency about the sources of training data, and role of GenAI in creative outputs, to promote public awareness and enable consumers to make informed choices. Participants argued that there should be transparency around the tasks that Generative AI is being used for and which roles may have been displaced. One participant suggested an approach to determining what percentage of work is performed by humans and accounting for human hours in AI-assisted projects.

3. Conclusions

The CREAATIF project shows how creative workers are experiencing some of the most fundamental changes to the nature, conditions and quality of their work and lives. Our new research reveals the pace, breadth and fears for this transformation, and begins to highlight new ways that current trajectories could be reversed. Drivers of the changes to 'good work' have been identified at systems, organisational and individual levels and the experiences we have documented here are indicative of wider societal and relational impacts of Generative AI, from economic justice to creative integrity.

Here, creative workers can be seen as the 'canaries in the coalmine,' offering warning signals of challenges to come across the economy on our current trajectories. This report shows why we should listen to the canaries in the coalmine before the air becomes unbreathable.

Annex 1 - Methodology

Workshop Characteristics

We conducted 3 workshops in April-May 2024, 2 in person and 1 online, with 52 participants across all three workshops. Participants were recruited via our union partners, Equity, BECTU, Musicians' Union and Society of Authors. 42% of participants reported their gender as female, 52% as male and 6% as transgender or non-binary.

29% reported their ethnicity as being from Black, Asian or Global Majority backgrounds, and 71% from White British/European ethnic backgrounds. 46% reported their age as 26-40, 35% as 41-55 and 19% as 55+. Time in the industry ranged from 18months to 40+ years. 34% were members of BECTU, 15% Equity, 32% Musicians' Union and 19% Society of Authors. All participants reported that they were self employed/freelance.

The workshops focused on:

- Discussing case studies to explore how freelance creative work is impacted by AI
- Contributing to a mapping project looking at how roles are affected by AI
- Exploring changes to the conditions of work happening as a result of AI
- Thinking about employment rights and the transparency of policies related to AI

Survey Characteristics

We conducted two online surveys of adults who work in the creative industries. The first survey ran between 13 June and 31 August 2024 and the second between 3 October and 23 October 2024. The first survey contained 39 questions, covering the characteristics of respondents and their work, union membership, their exposure to Generative AI through work, the impacts of the use of Generative AI in the creative sector, on their work and working conditions including the ownership and commissioning of their work.

The sample size from wave one is 151. The second survey contained 15 questions, covering only exposure to Generative AI, its impacts and characteristics of respondents, union membership and their type of work. The sample size from wave 2 is 132, bringing the total sample size to 283. The largest proportion of respondents work within performing arts (28.3%) which includes acting, theatre, dance and music performance. This is followed by the 24.7% of respondents who are in writing, publishing or journalism and the 23.7% who are in film, TV or media production.

Only 6.7% of respondents identified their work as being in digital, technology or game, which includes roles in digital design, UX, software engineering and only 3.2% as advertising, marketing or PR. Most of the work carried out by respondents is paid for by small to medium companies (62.7%), followed by multinationals at 42.7%. On the other end of the scale, collective and grassroots organisations and spaces were the least commonly reported funders of the work carried out by respondents (4.7%).

The age group most highly represented within the sample is 51-60 (24%), followed by 41-50 (21.2%) and jointly by those 31-40 and 61+ (19.8%). Only 11.7% of respondents were in the 18-30 age bracket. Regarding years of experience in the creative industries, 43.1% have worked in their chosen sector for 21+ years and 13.1% for 5 years or less. In terms of gender, 50.9% of respondents identified as women, 43.1% as men and 2.1% as non-binary.

The majority of participants are White 78.1%, 6.4% Mixed, 3.5% Asian and 2.1% Black. 9.9% of respondents chose not to disclose their ethnic group. Economically, most respondents are from professional or higher socio-economic backgrounds (59.7%), and 20.5% from working class or lower socio-economic backgrounds. In terms of current personal income levels, responses were distributed relatively evenly.

The most common reported average yearly incomes from work in the creative industries as £35,101-£54,600 (19.1%), followed jointly by £27,301 - £35,100. and £20,300 or less at 13.4%. However, 22.6% of respondents opted not to disclose this information. Three quarters of the sample (75.3%) are members of a creative industries union. Of these, the best represented were the Society of Authors (29%), followed by Equity (25.4%), and the Musicians Union (18.3%). Other unions reported included BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union), ITI (Institute for Translation and Interpreting), BAFTA, ALCS, WGGB.

The main route of distribution for the first version of this survey was through the creative industry unions who are partnered with this project, which means that union membership figures from this survey should not be taken as representative of the whole industry. The second version was distributed more widely. Some respondents (2.1%) preferred not to disclose their union membership status. The term ‘creative industries’ was used in a broad sense and subject to respondents’ interpretation. However, to encourage consistency respondents were given examples of different creative work types, with job role and types provided as illustrative examples.

Table 1 - Sample Description		Total Sample	
		Count	%
Working Status	Employee	62	20.3%
	Self-employed or freelance	219	77.4%
	Other	24	8.5%
	Subtotal	305	-
Work funded by	Individuals	56	37.1%
	Trusts and Foundations	14	9.3%
	Collective and grassroots	7	4.6%
	Community interest	43	28.5%
	Small to medium companies	96	63.6%
	Multinationals	64	42.4%
	Public sector	33	21.9%
	Other	28	18.5%
	Subtotal	341	-
Sector	Performing Arts	80	28.3%
	Film, TV, and Media Production	67	23.7%
	Writing, Publishing, and Journalism	70	24.7%
	Visual Arts and Design	31	11.0%
	Music and Audio Production	52	18.4%
	Translation and Language Services	38	13.4%
	Digital, Technology, and Gaming	19	6.7%
	Advertising, Marketing, and PR	9	3.2%
	Other / Cross-Disciplinary	11	3.9%
	Subtotal	377	-

		Total Sample	
		Count	%
Years of Experience	0 to 5 years	37	13.1%
	6 to 10 years	51	18.0%
	11 to 20 years	73	25.8%
	21+ years	122	43.1%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%
Creative Industries Union Membership	Yes	213	75.3%
	No	64	22.6%
	Prefer not to say or other	6	2.1%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%
Age	18-30	33	11.7%
	31-40	56	19.8%
	41-50	60	21.2%
	51-60	68	24.0%
	61 and over	56	19.8%
	Prefer not to say	10	3.5%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%
Gender	Woman	144	50.9%
	Man	122	43.1%
	Non-binary	6	2.1%
	Prefer not to say	11	3.9%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%

		Total Sample	
		Count	%
Ethnic Group	White ethnic group	221	78.1%
	Asian ethnic group	10	3.5%
	Black ethnic group	6	2.1%
	Mixed ethnic group	18	6.4%
	Other or prefer not to say	28	9.9%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%
Socioeconomic Background	Social Mobility Commission classification of socioeconomic background (assessed on parental occupation aged 14)		
	Professional or higher socio-economic background	169	59.7%
	Intermediate background	34	12.0%
	Working class or lower socio-economic background	58	20.5%
	Prefer not to say	22	7.8%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%
Annual Gross income for full-time job	£20,300 per year or less	38	13.4%
	£20,301 - £27,300	27	9.5%
	£27,301 - £35,100	38	13.4%
	£35,101 - £54,600	54	19.1%
	£54,601 per year or over	43	15.2%
	Don’t know	19	6.7%
	Prefer not to say	64	22.6%
	Subtotal	283	100.0%

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Acknowledgements

CREAATIF is a collaboration between IFOW and Queen Mary University of London and The Alan Turing Institute, working in partnership with four major unions: Equity, Bectu, the Musicians' Union and the Society of Authors.

Through the project we:

- Conducted workshops and surveys reaching 335 freelance creative sector workers on the frontline of the GenAI revolution, highlighting major changes to the quantity and quality of their work.
- Focused on cross-sectoral challenges, examining the effects of AI on all stages of cultural production, from ideation, through to production and distribution.
- Spoke to performers, writers and musicians and to workers including technicians, producers and translators who aren't always seen as 'creators' but play key roles in the creative economy.
- Examined our findings in light of the rapidly evolving policy and regulatory environment to develop a coherent set of responses.
- Acknowledged creative workers aren't confined to working in a single sector, and many supplement one area of creative practice with other forms of work in the creative industries.

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The work of CREAATIF is dedicated to the loving memory and lifework of Dr. Michael Katell, esteemed Senior Ethics Fellow at the Alan Turing Institute and Visiting Senior Lecturer at DERI.

Mike acted as CREAATIF's project lead until his sudden and untimely death in August, 2024. He was a prominent interdisciplinary AI ethics and critical data studies scholar, who made significant intellectual contributions to the fields of data justice, critical platform studies, and AI policy and governance. As a champion of advancing social justice, equity, and inclusion amid expanding processes of datafication and digitisation, Mike significantly influenced the international discourse on responsible and equitable AI futures. His research and advocacy work in the fields of digital justice and labour rights stands as a torchlight of intellectual integrity, societal sustainability, and human liberation.

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Institute for the Future of Work
Somerset House
Strand
London
WC2R 1LA
ifow.org / @ifow.org

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