

Creative Access Thrive Report.

Who's really thriving?
Diversity & inclusion progress
in the creative industries

**Thrive**

**CREATIVE
ACCESS**

July 2023

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Introduction.

In this annual Thrive report by Creative Access, which examines business sentiment around DE&I with employers and career sentiment amongst individuals from our community, the majority of which (70%) come from groups underrepresented in the creative industries.

This study conducted over a two week period in May 2023 sets out to compare how far the dial has moved for individuals when it comes to career progression and what employers are doing to facilitate this. We also looked into whether enough is being done to secure and foster mid to senior diverse talent to thrive in the creative industries. A career level where we've consistently seen industry-wide under-representation.

- For employees, we looked at whether they felt they have the necessary tools and resources for career progression, such as a strong network, skills and knowledge as well as more intangible factors such as confidence
- In our research with employers, we examined their progress towards putting in the structures needed to support employees and building inclusive business cultures



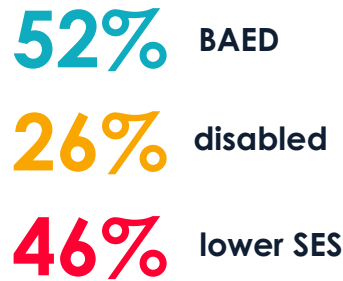
Research scope.

Creative Access conducted two surveys against a Theory of Change backdrop:

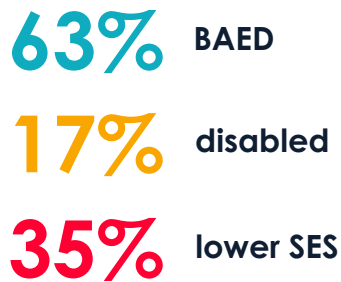
- One survey was sent individuals in receipt of support from CA (interns, alumni, mentees, Kickstart placements) and those signed up to our opportunities board
- A second survey was sent to Creative Access' employer partners

The surveys included further questions to employers to gauge future plans regarding Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) and individuals' experience in the workplace. The survey captures 446 total responses.

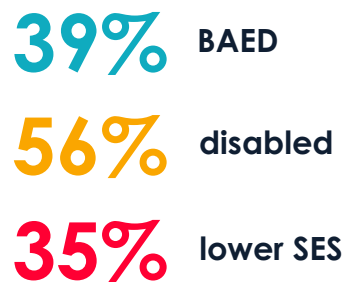
Individuals response breakdown



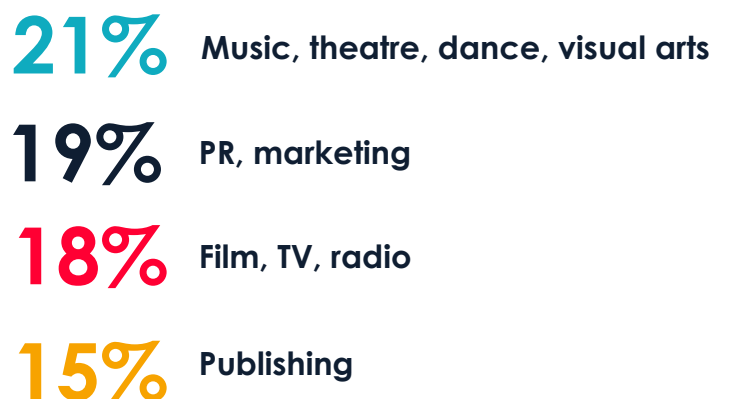
In receipt of services from CA



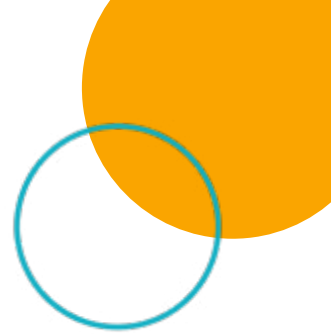
Not in receipt of services from CA



Employer response breakdown



Executive summary.



The last year has been one of the most challenging in living memory for organisations and individuals working in the creative industries, particularly those from under-represented groups. Against a backdrop of funding cuts, rocketing energy prices and inflation and an increasingly hostile socio-political climate, it's sadly unsurprising that we have seen a decline in individuals from under-represented groups saying they feel they are thriving and progressing in the creative industries.

Is anyone thriving?

Our research was conducted with both individuals who had and hadn't participated in a Creative Access programme.

While the overall number of respondents reporting feeling sufficiently prepared and resourced for advancing their careers has dropped since 2022, the outlook changes for individuals who have been placed and supported by Creative Access:

- The number of respondents reporting feeling sufficiently prepared and resourced for advancing their careers has dropped since 2022
- Feelings of confidence, optimism and resourced-ness are also lower amongst disabled respondents than amongst other groups, this is especially true when intersectionality is considered, for example when disabled candidates are also Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse (BAED)
- The top five career progression barriers most likely to be impacting individuals from under-represented groups are:
 - ◇ Organisational structures preventing progress
 - ◇ Financial barriers (for equipment or training)
 - ◇ Physical location where an individual lives
- Individuals who have not received support from CA are less also likely to report working in a supportive and inclusive culture (73% versus 59%), less likely to report that their organisation is making progress on equity, diversity and inclusion (76% versus 65%). And they're also much less likely to report feeling confident or optimistic, or having the skills, knowledge, contacts and networks they need to progress in their careers



Employers & their inclusion journey

Despite an increase in inclusive recruitment practices implemented by most employers for over a year - 68% said they're spending more on DEI than last year - it does not yet appear to have resulted in significant increases in the representativeness of the workforce - over a quarter said the diversity of their workforce hasn't changed in the last year (28%).

It raises the question: are employers investing in the right inclusive practices? And what does follow-up work or implementation across the organisation look like?

- **While most employers recognise that their DE&I focus has been concentrated at entry level so far, there is recognition that this needs to shift towards the whole of the organisation, especially at mid to senior level.**
- **Almost three quarters of respondents told us that their organisation had either a DE&I lead or a dedicated DE&I team, and 60% told us that they had increased spend on DE&I in the last 12 months.**
- **89% of respondents said working with CA contributed towards their organisation's progress against their DE&I goals. And the majority report that they have a strategy in hand (38%).**



Stuck in the middle.

The creative industries still report low representation in senior and high earning roles. Only 11% of black, Asian and ethnically diverse (BAED) workers in positions earning more than £70,000 (Major Players (2022)), and 52% of the creative industry's workforces are from high socio-economic backgrounds, compared to 38% across all industries (PEC 2021).

Individuals told us that their organisations were focused on advancing DEI at entry levels but that they ought to be focusing efforts across all levels of the organisation, including mid to senior level.

When asked about the current DEI focus our employer partners said effort is mainly focused on entry level positions (45%).

However, when asked where effort ought to be focused in the future 70% said addressing the lack of diverse talent across all roles in the organisation was.

Over the last year, some employers have already activated progressive tactics such as investing in mid-senior development programmes for diverse employees with Creative Access to minimise barriers to progression for this under-represented talent.

“ This is not a box ticking thing, and it won't be resolved overnight. It's all about intention. At Nutopia we want to create a lasting legacy in factual TV across senior levels. That's why we partnered with Creative Access to acquire diverse talent and create a comprehensive development programme to minimise barriers that are clearly being faced by mid and senior diverse talent in TV production. It's our most comprehensive initiative to date.

Jane Root, CEO, Nutopia



“ As someone who has benefitted from being on a mid-level development programme I have to say the thing that makes the difference is accepting that this is continuous, not a one off. And that you need to have an open feedback culture.

Cheyney Smith, Marketing Manager, Pan Macmillan



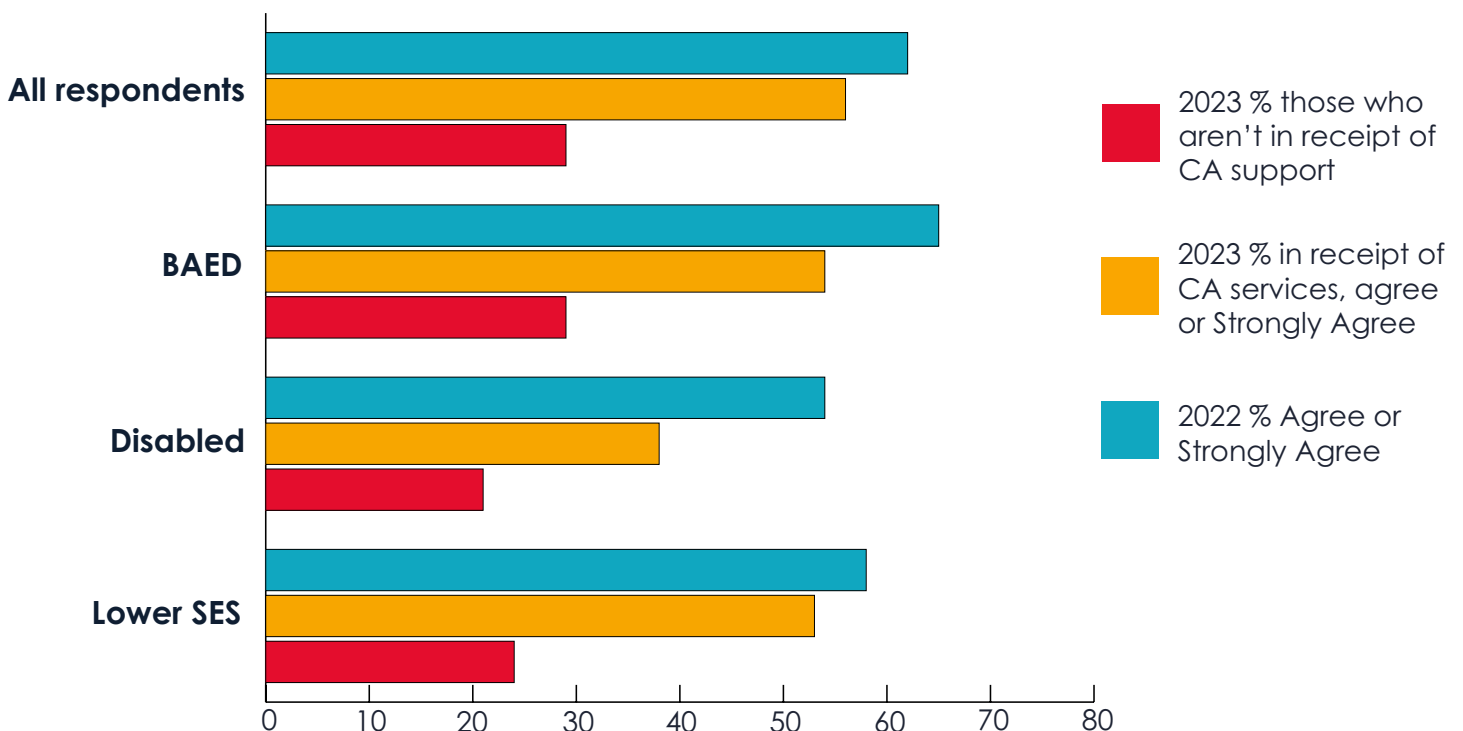
Empowering the individual.

Working your network

Barriers to accessing the creative industries impact those who are under-represented in the space hardest, and the survey supports this, as individuals who have protected characteristics state that they are lacking industry contacts or the ability to network in order to progress in their career. In real terms it may be the case that an individual is the first in their family to go to University, or be without family or friends in that sector, and as a result face a more difficult pathway in.

It makes it that much more important to arm under-represented individuals with support that includes: networking with peers and industry influencers, as well as access to mentors who may be from a similar background. Individuals who are without such support are less confident that they have the contacts and networks they need to succeed (29% versus 56%). The exception to this is whether or not individuals feel that their organisation has a supportive and inclusive culture. In contrast to the other metrics, this has risen for all respondents, by 9% overall, which, despite the dip in confidence, is positive to see.

% report having access to the necessary contacts and networks to progress their career (Q1)



Of our alumni, **96%** overall are still in the creative economy two years after the completion of a programme with CA, and **98%** ranked one area of support received from CA as either 'significant' or 'very significant' to the progress of their careers.

Managers play an influential role

Respondents in all categories told us that work was more likely to have a negative than a positive impact on their mental health. This was most striking amongst disabled people. Poor line management was the second most cited reason. **30% of respondents told us that their employer provides no support for wellbeing at work.**

The cost of living

Disabled and lower SES individuals rated financial barriers as the greatest hurdle to overcome in their career progression. Location was also significant for these groups, this shines a light on the concentration of creative economy opportunities in London, as well as the continued impact of the cost of living crises felt across the UK, and concentrated in major cities such as London.

Mental health

We also asked individuals about the impact of their job on their mental health. Respondents in all categories told us that work was more likely to have a negative than a positive impact on their mental health. **This was most striking amongst disabled people. We delved into the causation, the top three ranked areas were: working hours (19%), poor line management (19%), lack of wellbeing focus (15%).**



Creative Access impact

As a mission-led organisation, we know it's vital to measure the impact of our own services. Here's what our community had to say:

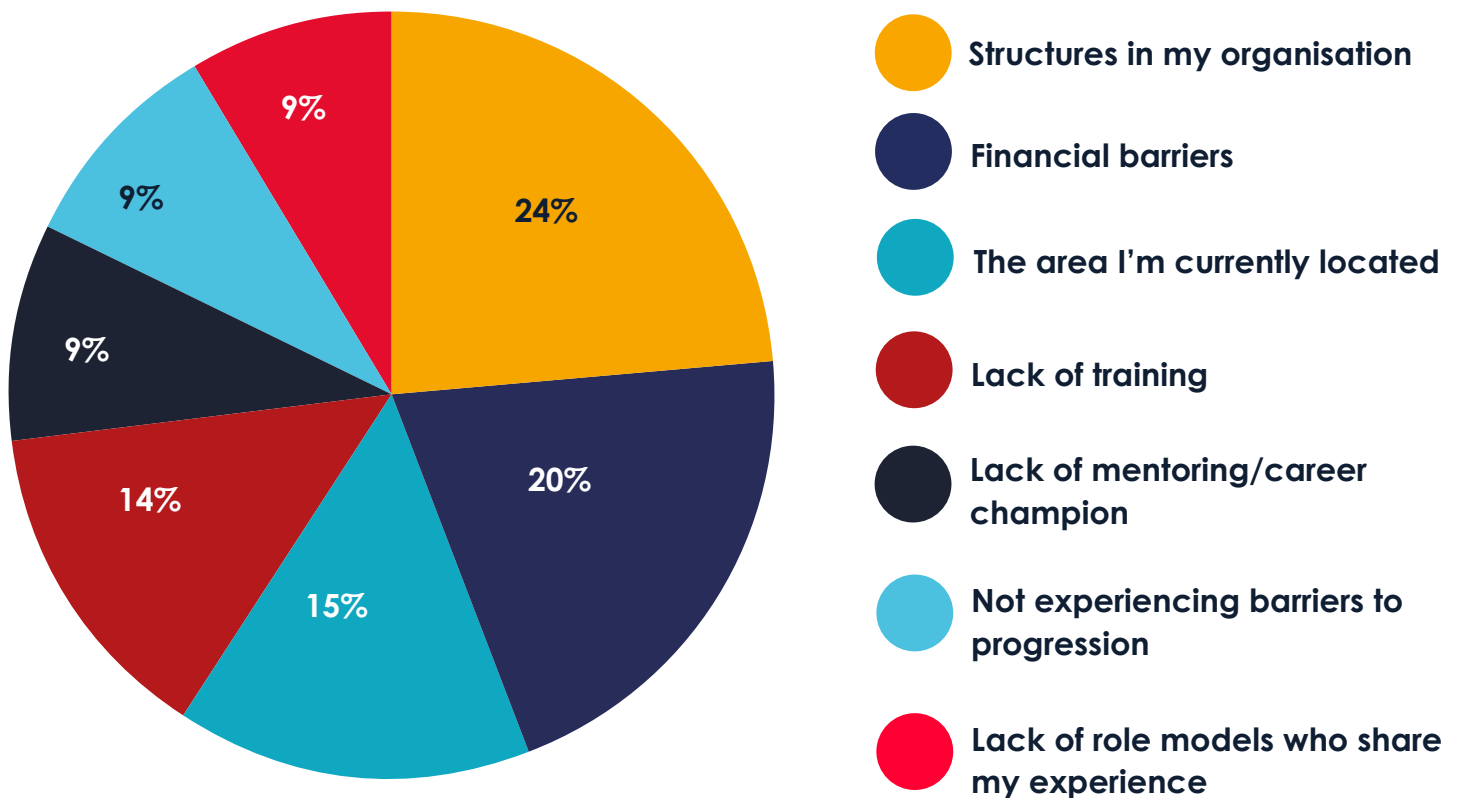
- **75%** of respondents ranked at least one area of support as 'very significant' and **98%** ranked one area as either 'significant' or 'very significant' to the progress of their careers.
- This is up from last year where **90%** ranked at least one area of support as either 'significant' or 'very significant'.
- Most of all, individuals told us that they want DEI focus to be applied holistically across their organisations.



Barriers to career progression

A significant portion of respondents flag that not having space to progress within their organisation was the greatest barrier. **The impact of this intensifies in individuals with more than one protected characteristic, for example: both disabled and lower SES individuals rated financial barriers as a greater problem than organisational structures.** Disabled people also cited location as a significant barrier and this was ranked third for Lower SES individuals, perhaps pointing to the concentration of creative economy jobs in London (and the cost of living in London and the South East).

Mental health and wellbeing training is only provided in 12% of the workplaces of our respondents, and that 30% of respondents told us that their employer provides no support for wellbeing at work.



Employers and the business of inclusion.

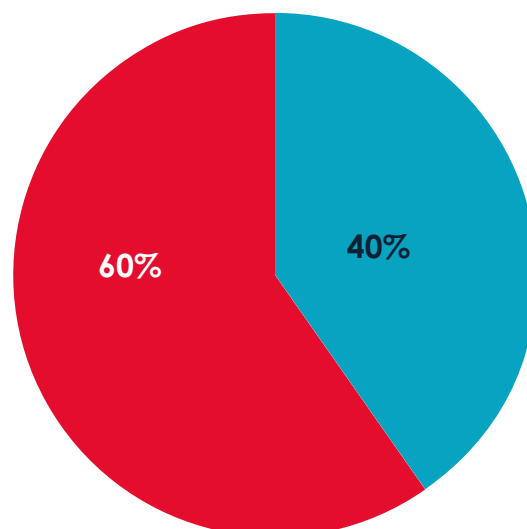
The state of the creative economy

Impact on workplace representativeness across all levels is clearly not an overnight exercise. Most employers are now employing inclusive recruitment practices, and most have been employing these practices for over a year. However, there is still more to do to make a significant impact in the representativeness of the workforce, particularly at a senior level.

The kinds of inclusive recruitment practices employers are taking varies, but the most highly indexed activities are: Taking positive action (you can find more information on positive actions schemes under Creative Access' [FAQ section of the website](#)) with:

- **85%** either already adopting this approach or having introduced it in the last 12 months.
- Employers have also turned their attention towards the language of job adverts, with **92%** either already practising or having introduced the in the last 12 months more inclusive language.

Change in DE&I spend



Representation at all levels

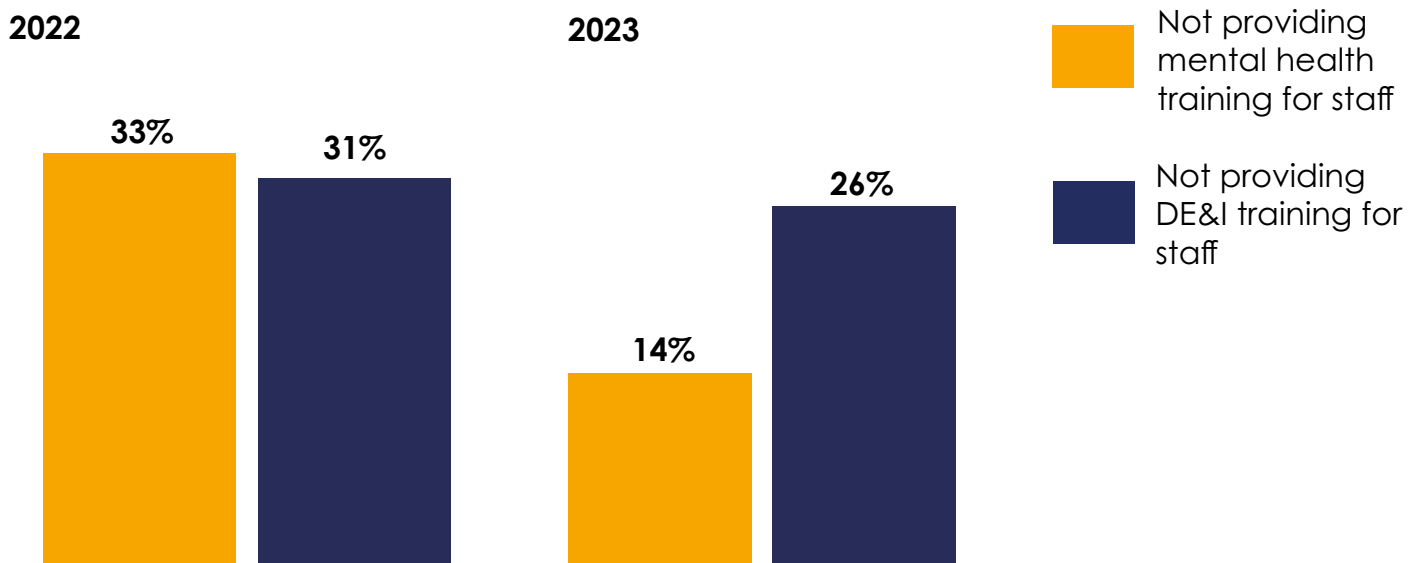
The study also noted a stark difference between the overall representativeness of the workforce and the equitable distribution of progression and rewards, which speaks to the need for DE&I action to be more holistic, supporting employees at all levels in the organisation and over their entire careers. When asked about the current DE&I focus within their organisations, respondents told us that effort is overwhelmingly focused on entry level positions (46%), but that a large portion intend to shift their focus towards recruiting and retaining diverse talent across the entire career cycle in the future (70%).



Employer training

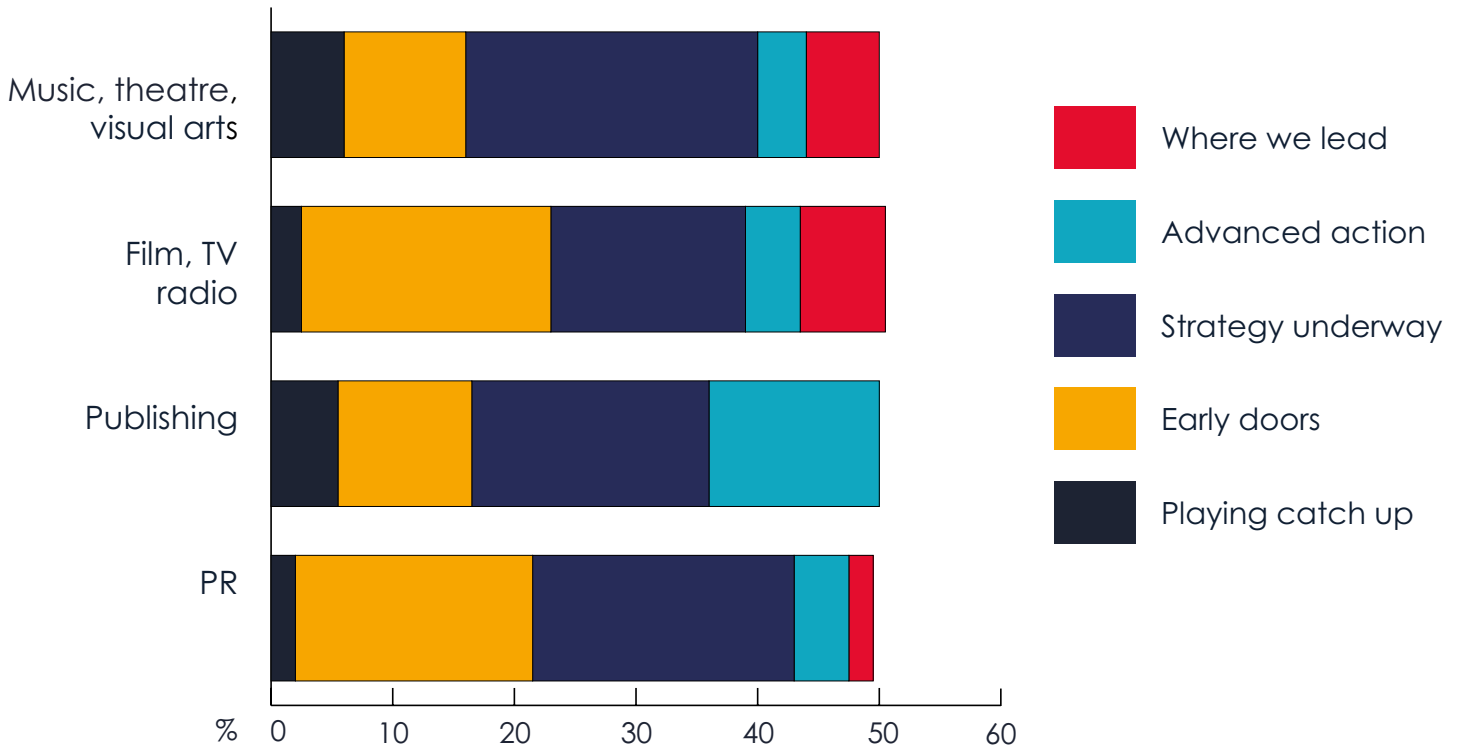
In a positive move, a larger number of organisations are now providing training around mental health & wellbeing, which is a positive upward trend in addressing the post-pandemic mental health crisis.

A considerable minority of employers do not yet provide DE&I training for relevant staff, or work with an inclusive recruitment partner despite the direct impact on hiring, representation and development. A similar picture exists in work to create and maintain an inclusive culture, with a considerable minority of employers not providing DE&I training for all staff.



Comparing sectors within the creative industries

It's encouraging to see an even distribution of DE and I activity having commenced amongst employers, however when optimism from individuals has stagnated and in fact dipped year on year (63% in 2023 versus 66% in 2022) it begs the question, are organisations applying efforts on the most impactful practices in order to hit their inclusion goals? This is most markedly still the case in publishing and PR.



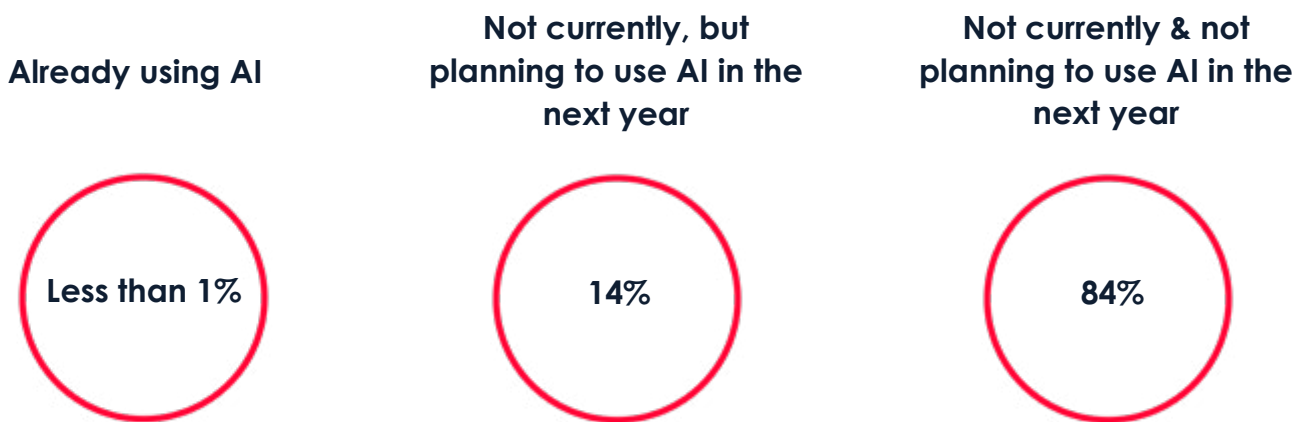
The survey also reflects slight differences in career progression likelihood between sectors, with average progression numbers in PR & broadcast but above average in publishing for people who have benefitted from Creative Access support services:

	PR	Film, TV, radio	Publishing	All
Progress in career	63% true 37% false	63% true 37% false	71% true 29% false	63% true 37% false

Reluctance around AI in the creative industries?



Only a small proportion of organisations are already using AI and a minority are considering using it in the next 12 months, with 84% of organisations state that they have no intention to introduce this technology. It is noted that larger organisations are more likely to be considering introducing AI.



Organisations already using AI are using it for talent outreach and HR processes, for example exit interviews. Employers intending to start using AI are intending to use it for a range of purposes including developing job descriptions and ads and recruitment selection processes. The most popular potential use is in developing job descriptions and ads.

How can Creative Access help you?



Future goals.

From Bibi Hilton, CEO, Creative Access:

“It’s encouraging to see that despite a year of challenging economic headwinds, organisations are still prioritising DE&I work. They’ve taken steps to appoint DE&I leads or dedicated teams and have invested more this last year to reach their DE&I goals.

However, while 38% admit to having a DE&I strategy in place, that means the vast majority do not, and we’re seeing the knock-on impact by way of increased poor mental health and a lack of career progression optimism from under-represented groups without support. It begs the question as to whether employers are investing in the most impactful areas to acquire, develop & retain diverse talent...

We’re also spotting high churn among junior to mid level diverse talent in particular. This is significant, because if not addressed head on and talent is not retained then they cannot progress to more senior, influential positions where they can drive further change in both their own organisation and the wider industry acting as role models for the next generation.

In many cases, career progression and access to development opportunities is still allocated in an inequitable and opaque way – without clear, consistent and transparent processes. It further highlights the importance of the work we’re doing and confidence in our overall mission at Creative Access **to level the playing field** when it comes to ensuring that under-represented talent has a driving force for career inspiration, access as well as genuine opportunity to thrive in the creative industries.”



Retention, retention, retention

1. It's encouraging to see **almost three quarters of respondents either appointing a DE&I lead or a dedicated DE&I team, and 60% told us that they had increased spend on DE&I in the last 12 months.** But change isn't achieved overnight, and barriers to entry and development need proactive and consistent action.
2. However, respondents in all categories told us that **work was more likely to have a negative than a positive impact on their mental health** This was most striking amongst disabled people which highlights the key role employers and third party institutions play in creating the sorts of nurturing and inclusive environments which support staff mental health & wellbeing.
3. Poor line management was the **second most cited reason** for poor wellbeing, and **a third of respondents** said their employer provides no support for wellbeing at work.

How can employers address mid-senior talent representation & development?

1. **Sign up under-represented talent to a mid-senior development programme.** This series provides diverse talent access to training, mentoring and networking to improve confidence, skills & knowledge needed to progress in their career.
2. **Employer training!** From 'disability equity' and 'eliminating microaggressions', to 'anti-racism in the workplace' and 'championing neurodiversity' CA runs structured and bespoke training for hundreds of employers. Content always follows the latest governmental guidance and research and is delivered by leading expert consultants. These sessions build on existing knowledge, facilitate safe discussion and where relevant, arm attendees with action plans.
3. **Mentoring.** Research has shown that people from underrepresented groups who advance the furthest in their careers, all share one characteristic – a strong network of mentors who nurture their professional development.



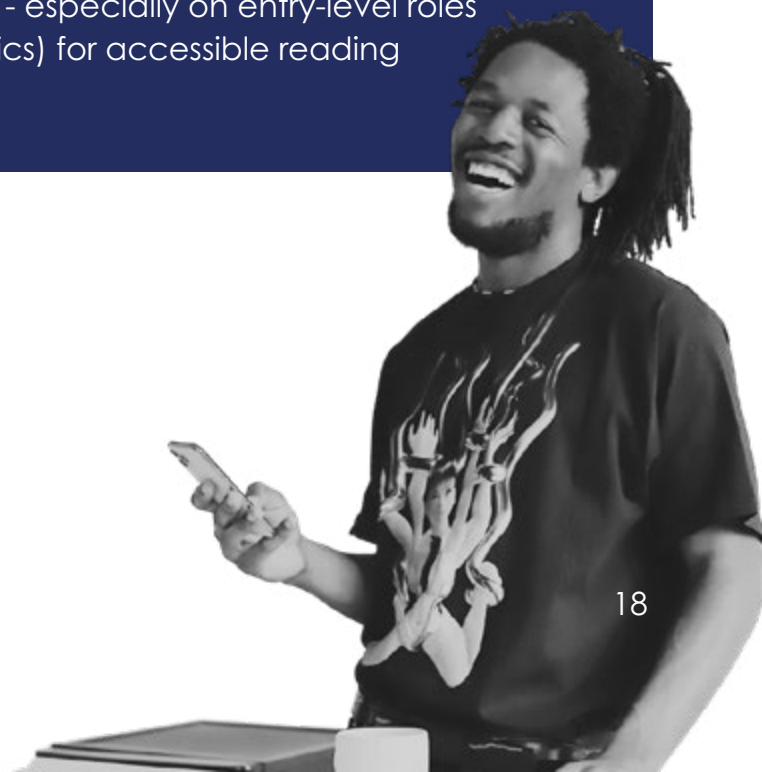
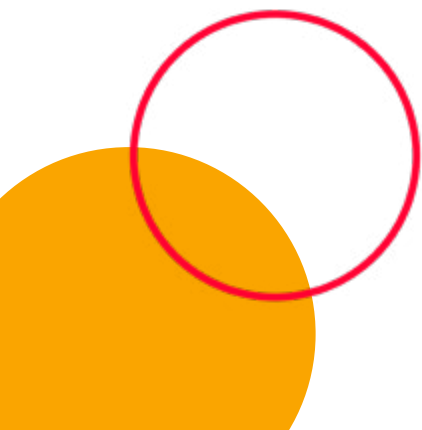
Creative Access mentoring

Creative Access runs a range of mentoring programmes, including one for mid to senior level individuals through our Development Programme. Mentoring partnerships typically last six months and we ask that mentors commit to meeting with their mentee for approximately 1 hour per month. Once you're allocated a mentee, you'll be invited to attend a training workshop, be introduced to your mentee and provided guidance notes and a template mentoring agreement for you to complete together. You'll be supported by Creative Access throughout the

Inclusive language

The language you use is so important! Creative Access has a team of copywriters who take each job listing and make sure it uses inclusive language, reflects the most current terminology in DE&I and is as clear as possible. Consider the following:

- We try to avoid ableist terms and requirements that imply physicality and strength are needed for the role.
- You should also think about heavily gendered language for certain roles.
- Terms like "You'll be **crazy** to miss this opportunity" or "if you're a news **junkie**, this is for you", are examples of common phrases that could be received differently by people who may have experienced mental health difficulties or addictions respectively.
- Avoiding jargon and corporate language - especially on entry-level roles
- Highlighting words in bold (rather than italics) for accessible reading



In a hiring position? Here's an overview of just some of our services:

- Jobs board advertising
- End-to-end recruitment services
- Support programmes for under-represented junior, mid & senior talent
- Inclusive training & open workshops



Or on the hunt for your next career move?

How do you get your organisation to better support your professional development?

Ask your employer to support you via one of our career development programmes whether you're just starting out in your career, or you've progressed to mid or senior level status. Get in touch with us at info@creativeaccess.org.uk to request a template for making your case.

What else?

[Sign up](#) to our [jobs and opportunities board](#) for entry to mid and senior roles. You'll be the first to hear about:

- The hottest new live roles and opportunities in the creative industries
- Bursary application launch timings
- Free masterclass & networking evenings

Follow and join the discussion about career advancement on our social channels:

- [TikTok](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Twitter](#)





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