Work in Culture

AI for Administration in Ontario's Creative Industries

# A Snapshot of Current Use, Concerns, and Considerations

Final Report

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# Table of Contents


**1. Introduction** **4**

1.1. Research Approach 5

**2. Key Findings** **8**

2.1. Thematic Takeaways from Survey and Roundtable 8

2.2. Personas: Three Approaches to AI at Work 11

**3. Opportunities for Action** **13**

3.1. Foundational AI Literacy Initiative 14

3.2. Policy Support 15

3.3. Ongoing Training and Resources 16

3.4. Conclusion 17

**4. Detailed Findings** **18**

4.1. Survey Analysis 18

4.2. Industry Roundtable 32

# 1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has moved rapidly from the margins to the mainstream. Whether dedicated tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity or AI-enhanced features increasingly integrated into everyday platforms like Canva, Grammarly, and Zoom, even those who consider themselves skeptical or cautious may already be using AI without realizing it. For creative professionals, this shift raises profound questions about ethics, control, and the future of creative labour. At the same time, it is prompting the sector to ask pragmatic questions about new opportunities – including whether AI can play a productive, responsible role in supporting the business side of creative work.

In this context, this project sought to explore and understand the specific potential of AI tools for business operations and administration in Ontario's creative industries. Specifically, the study asked how organizations and individuals in film and television, book and magazine publishing, music, and interactive digital media are using generative AI to streamline tasks and manage day-to-day demands – and whether AI is helping to alleviate the pressure to do more with fewer resources. While the focus here is on Ontario's creative industries, the findings are likely to resonate more widely, particularly with the experiences of cultural workers and small businesses navigating similar operational pressures across Canada.

This research is intended to help creative organizations situate themselves within a rapidly evolving landscape, to gain insight into how their peers are approaching AI, and to reflect on their own values, needs, and readiness. At the same time, it supports a broader understanding for sector leaders, including Work in Culture and Ontario Creates, of how AI is currently being used in practice – and where knowledge gaps, barriers, and opportunities remain.

## A Note on Study Scope and Context

Work in Culture, Nordicity, and Avery Swartz, as partners in this research, recognize the difficult context in which any exploration of AI in the creative sector takes place. Creative professionals in Canada and around the world are rightfully advocating for stronger protections, clearer regulations, and fair compensation in response to the rapid advancement of generative AI. These concerns – including how AI tools have been trained and what safeguards are in place – are serious and ongoing. This study does not minimize those issues, but instead focuses in on the specific question: What role, if any, might AI tools play in supporting the business and administrative functions of creative organizations?

Throughout the study, participants raised important questions about the ethics of AI adoption in any capacity. As explored in Section 2, some felt that any use of AI – including in non-creative or back-office contexts – was inseparable from the broader concerns around copyright infringement, bias, and environmental impact. Others challenged the very premise of dividing creative and administrative work, arguing that these roles are often blended in practice. While this report maintains a focus on administrative use cases, it acknowledges that boundaries are blurred, and ethical considerations apply across the board.

Work in Culture, Nordicity, and Avery Swartz reaffirm their commitment to supporting responsible, ethical AI use that puts creators at the centre and prioritizes credit, control, and compensation for their work, on their terms. The lack of transparency in how models are trained, as well as the risks associated with unchecked adoption, raise serious concerns. This research is intended to provide a grounded, specific look at current practices, helping to surface the questions, concerns, and capabilities that matter most for the creative and cultural industries today.

# 1.1. Research Approach

Within this study, AI tools are defined as software or platforms that use generative artificial intelligence to assist with tasks such as automation, data analysis, content generation for communications, or decision-making. Common examples include ChatGPT, Claude, Canva, DALL-E, Grammarly, Hemingway, HubSpot AI, Tableau, and UiPath. These tools are distinguished by their ability to generate content, identify patterns in data, support decision-making, and adapt their outputs – rather than simply following predefined rules. This capability is in contrast to standard automation, which typically refers to technology that performs routine tasks with minimal human input, without generating new content or making decisions:

- **"Standard" Automation:** The use of technology, programs, robotics, or defined processes to perform tasks with minimal human input. These systems follow predefined rules or sequences – for example, "if X happens, do Y" – and are commonly used to improve productivity, reduce errors, and streamline repetitive tasks.
- **AI Automation** builds on the principles of traditional automation but introduces adaptability. Instead of following a fixed set of rules, AI automation systems can analyze patterns in data, make decisions, and

adjust their outputs dynamically. These systems “figure out what to do” based on context, rather than executing only what they are explicitly told. AI automation is particularly useful in environments that require flexibility, learning from past outcomes, or processing complex data.

The study focused specifically on how AI tools are being used to support operations and administration across Ontario’s creative industries. These functions include tasks such as research, data analysis, strategy development, writing and documentation, audience and customer management, and marketing and communications.

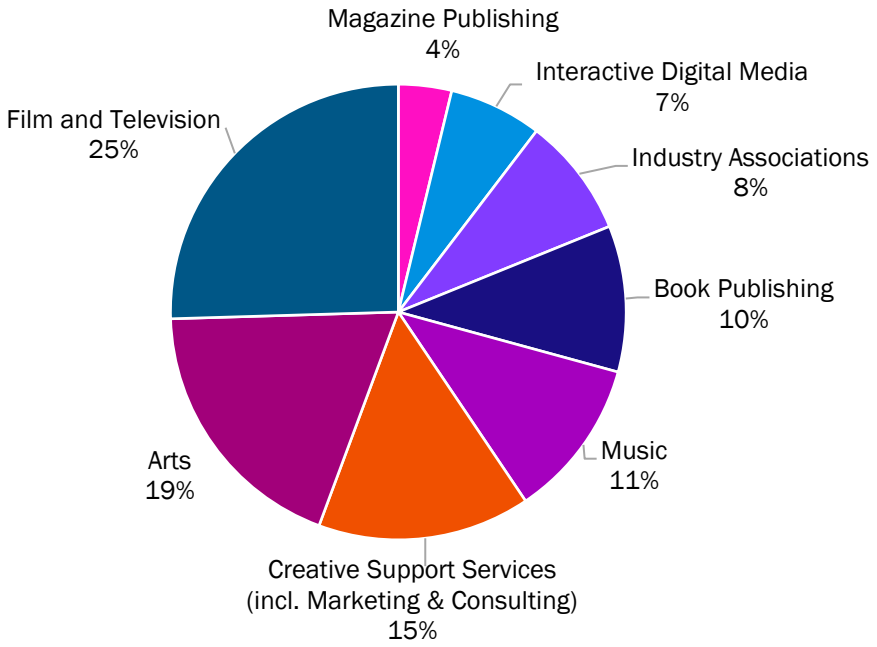
Three main goals guided this research:

1. **Explore the potential use of AI** to improve productivity for creative industry business operations and workflows
2. **Adopt a "common and critical" lens** to shed light on AI's cross-creative-industry workforce and training implications
3. **Support a continuous learning mindset**, arming the creative industry with a framework for assessing the benefits and risks of AI tools for operational uses

The resulting research findings are based on a high-level literature scan, an online survey, and an industry focus group. The survey ran from February 11 to March 14, 2025, and received 106 usable responses. Respondents represented a cross-section of Ontario’s creative industries, with the largest share from film & TV (25%), followed by music (11%), book publishing (10%), interactive digital media (7%), and magazine publishing (4%). Additional respondents came from creative support services (15%), industry associations (8%), and the arts sector[1] (19%).

[1] Arts sector respondents were included in survey analysis, in consultation with Ontario Creates, given the close alignment in day-to-day operations and shared pressures around capacity, administration, and digital adoption.

**Figure 1: Survey respondent breakdown by creative sector**




The focus group followed on April 15, 2025, with five participants from book publishing, music, and interactive digital media. Section 4 of this report provides a detailed analysis of findings from both the survey and the focus group.

The survey analysis and roundtable discussion were synthesized and reviewed in a collaborative session with Work in Culture, Nordicity, and Avery Swartz. The goal of this session was to identify key opportunities to support the cultural industries. The discussion focused both on the big-picture question of whether there is any ethically justifiable use for generative AI in operations and administration, and more concrete issues such as the potential value of automation and whether the nuances between AI and other technologies are well enough understood.

# 2. Key Findings

Creative workers engaged through this study are navigating a rapidly evolving AI landscape with a mix of curiosity, caution, and critical concern. Many participants saw potential for efficiency gains, but few feel fully equipped or supported to adopt AI in their day-to-day administrative work. Others remain deeply apprehensive about the ethical implications of using AI in any capacity.

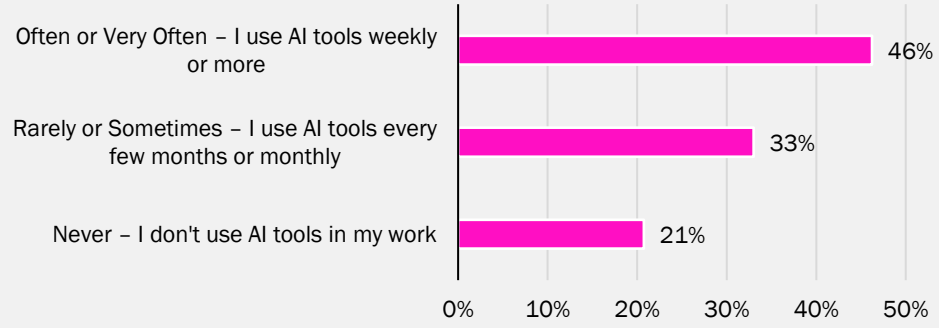
This section presents a synthesis of core themes from the survey and roundtable discussion, followed by three user personas that illustrate the ways creative professionals are – or are not – approaching AI adoption in their administrative workflows.

## 2.1. Thematic Takeaways from Survey and Roundtable

Creative workers shared diverse perspectives on AI adoption, but several consistent themes emerged across the study. The insights below reflect common and critical findings around motivations, barriers, and underlying values. Taken together, the results reveal a creative workforce that is both curious and cautious about artificial intelligence: embracing it for productivity gains, yet grappling with knowledge gaps, ethical concerns, and deep discomfort about its place in creative environments.

- **Usage is high, but not universal**. Study participants covered the full range of AI adoption levels: Nearly half of survey respondents report using AI tools "often" or "very often," a third use them "sometimes" or "rarely," and one-fifth say they never use them in their work. Most users are turning to these tools for operational tasks such as writing, documentation, and marketing, with a general aim of saving time and increasing efficiency.

**Figure 22: How often do you use AI tools in your work in any capacity?**




n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

- **Productivity is the main driver for use**. Enhancing productivity or saving time was by far the most frequently cited motivator for using AI tools among survey respondents (86%). In comparison, far fewer respondents selected improving quality (32%), supporting learning and experimentation (27%), improving customer service (14%), or gaining competitive advantage (12%). A small number of respondents said they only use AI because it is embedded in their platforms, or to enhance accessibility. These findings underscore creative workers' desire for tools that will help them manage workload and administrative burden.

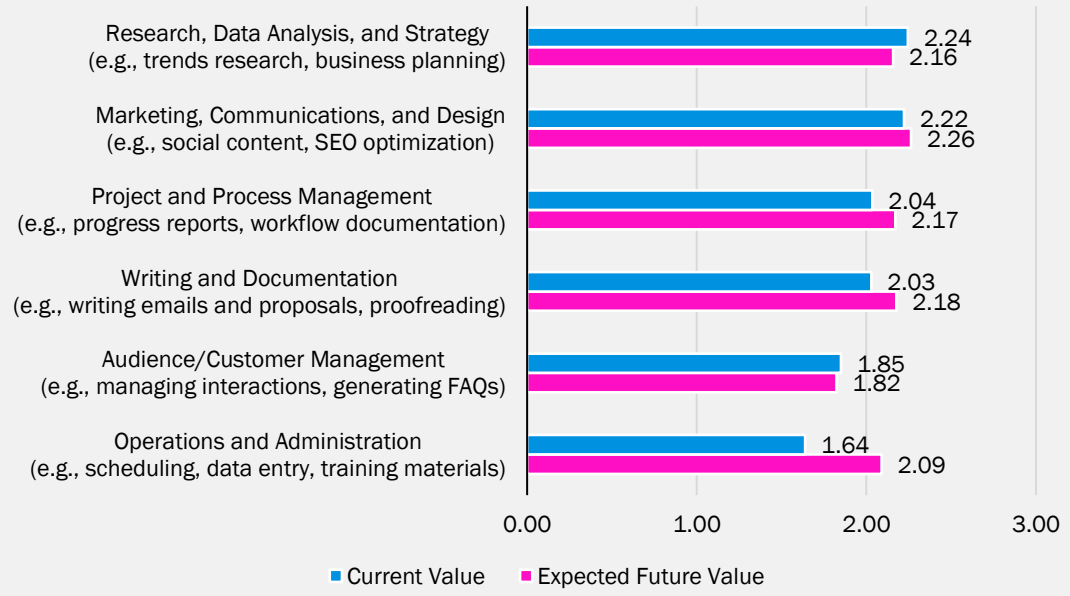
- **Adoption is uneven and mostly unsupported**. Few workplaces have formal AI policies or training supports, leaving most users to figure out new tools on their own and contend with opportunities and consequences along the way. Even among those using AI regularly, support is limited and inconsistent. Some study participants noted that AI use is often passive or automatic, embedded into major platforms from Google, Adobe, and Microsoft without clear consent or parameters.

- **Knowledge gaps are prevalent**: Many respondents seem to have limited knowledge of current AI tools and capabilities, and sometimes struggle to distinguish generative AI from automation. Most had not received formal training, and few had access to clear workplace guidance on AI use. Findings also suggest that some professionals may be hesitant to use AI tools due to uncertainty around disclosure expectations. For example, when funders, employers, clients, or other audiences request disclosure of AI use, the absence of clear norms and sector-wide dialogue can make users wary of being "found out." This discomfort may reinforce general stigma and discourage informed and transparent assessment and, where appropriate, exploration of new tools. These gaps point to a need for industry-specific

resources to help creative professionals assess what AI tools can do, how they work, and where they may or may not align with organizational values.

- **Users are concerned *and* excited.** Ethical concerns were front and centre for many participants, particularly around copyright infringement, consent, data privacy, and bias in AI tools. These concerns were often shaped by sector-specific issues – for example, the use of creative work in training datasets was a major sticking point in book publishing. Environmental impact and the potential erosion of critical skills (like writing and analysis) were also frequently cited. In the case of bias, it was noted that AI systems tend to reinforce dominant – often Eurocentric – perspectives embedded in the training material and/or by those who design and train the tools. At the same time, many users expressed excitement about the potential to streamline administrative work, support analysis, and spark learning or experimentation. Some participants saw promise in applying AI to tasks like metadata generation, research, or project planning – but even when tools showed potential, they emphasized that ethical concerns remained a barrier to adoption. Others cautioned that AI's derivative nature (i.e., producing content based on what has been previously created) could limit innovation and reinforce sameness, particularly for creators working in niche or boundary-pushing spaces.
- **Creative practice and AI remain at odds**. Many participants expressed discomfort with the idea of incorporating AI into workplaces fundamentally rooted in human creativity. Some also rejected the idea that administrative and creative tasks can be cleanly separated. It was noted that activities related to marketing, research, and strategy development often involve significant creative judgement – and that AI use in these contexts raises the same concerns as it does in purely creative processes.
- **Perceptions of value are mixed, now and into the future**. Among study participants currently using AI, most consider it functionally significant – particularly for research, communications, and project management. Looking ahead, most current users expect the importance of AI to grow, but a notable share expressed uncertainty about how relevant or valuable AI tools would ultimately prove to be. Among non-users, most anticipated that AI tools would remain unimportant or unnecessary to their work in the next three years.

**Figure 33: For current users of AI, how would you describe the current value and expected future value (in three years) of AI tools in the following task categories to your work and/or business?**




n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025. Responses were scored on a 0–3 scale, where "unimportant" was assigned a score of 0 to reflect the absence of perceived value, and "essential" a score of 3 to reflect maximum importance. "No opinion" responses were excluded from average calculations.

## 2.2. Personas: Three Approaches to AI at Work

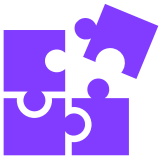
To complement the thematic findings, the following personas offer a more concrete look at how individuals across Ontario's creative industries are approaching AI in their day-to-day work. These fictional composites illustrate three common user types that emerged through the survey and roundtable: each with different levels of engagement, trust, and comfort with AI tools.

### The Selective User: Cautious Experimentation

This user has started experimenting with AI for some operational tasks like drafting emails, proofreading, and generating contracts templates. They are aware that AI use is becoming more prevalent in jobs like theirs but are still trying to understand what these tools can do and how to use them effectively. The knowledge they do have is drawn largely from personal trial and error, off-hand conversations with colleagues or friends, or personal interest. In their organization, there is little structured conversation about AI adoption, no clear policies, and no formal training. They are open to the

idea of using AI to lighten their workload and have begun to do so selectively, but without guidance and with immediate work demands taking priority, it has not become a regular part of their workflow.

This user is also worried about the broader implications of using AI tools, particularly around data privacy and the misuse of sensitive information. They have heard that many AI tools are trained on existing creative work, but they are not entirely sure how that process works or what it means for their use of the technology. They would prefer that the AI tools available to them were built specifically for their industry or workplace, ideally on closed systems that do not store or share user data – or perhaps even with Canada-based operations that feel more tightly regulated than those in the US.



## The Regular User: Comfortable but Capped

This user has grown comfortable using AI for a range of operational tasks, from scheduling and drafting content to more complex applications like data analysis and business planning. They are at ease with browser-based tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Perplexity AI, and they tend to use the integrated AI features within platforms like Google Workspace or Microsoft Office. They see clear productivity gains from using these AI tools, relying on them in some form on a near-daily basis to manage their busy workload and handle repetitive or time-consuming tasks.

Despite their growing use and familiarity with AI, this user is still figuring out how to extend it beyond their immediate tasks and/or scale adoption across their team. Much of their AI use remains self-driven. Their workplace is starting to have conversations about AI and has developed an early AI-use policy, but it sometimes feels disconnected from the user's everyday work. They also carry lingering concerns, including about data privacy and ethics, even as they continue to use AI in their daily work. They recognize its value in improving efficiency and even enhancing their skills but sometimes worry that overreliance or unchecked adoption could introduce errors or unintended consequences.

## The Non-User: Ethically Opposed

This user has chosen not to use AI tools at all, even for everyday tasks like scheduling or data entry. For them, the ethical concerns surrounding AI are too serious to ignore. They are deeply troubled by generative AI's reliance on material scraped from artists and creators without consent. They see AI as built on the unauthorized use of creative work, and as workers in the creative industries, this fuels a mistrust of the technology and the companies behind it. They do not see a meaningful difference between using AI for basic administrative work and its broader role in undermining creative labour, feeling that even using it for routine tasks would make them complicit in practices they cannot support.

They are also worried about the environmental impact of AI's energy and resource use, and about the lack of clear safeguards or transparency from AI companies. While they understand that others in their field might use AI to save time or increase productivity, they believe this comes at too high a cost. They sometimes feel frustrated that so many people around them are adopting AI without appearing to address these underlying issues and grappling with the theft of so much human-made creative work.

# 3. Opportunities for Action

Study participants expressed a mix of caution and curiosity around AI use in administrative and operational contexts. Many reported limited or tentative adoption to date but anticipated that the role and influence of generative AI would grow. There was a clear desire for greater resources, guidance, and ethical frameworks to support responsible use. Some participants highlighted the potential for AI to help Ontario's creative industries stay competitive, especially by enabling small organizations to scale more effectively. At the same time, they emphasized that AI should be approached as one tool in a broader toolkit – not a panacea.

In response to these insights, three interconnected opportunities for action emerged:

1. **Launch a foundational AI literacy initiative.**
2. **Support the development of AI policies.**
3. **Provide ongoing AI training and resources.**


AI literacy is defined by the University of Saskatchewan as "The ability to understand, evaluate, and effectively use artificial intelligence tools and technologies. AI literacy encompasses knowledge of AI concepts, algorithms, data privacy, ethics, and potential implications of AI on society. It empowers individuals to assess AI applications critically, make informed decisions, and navigate an increasingly AI-

driven world."[2] In this context, AI literacy lays the foundation, enabling policy development, which in turn guides training and resource needs – all contributing to informed, ethical, and values-aligned AI adoption. Each of these opportunities is explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

## 3.1. Foundational AI Literacy Initiative

Despite ethical concerns emerging at every stage of this research, there was strong consensus that Ontario's creative industries must stay informed about AI – its origins, current capabilities, future evolution, and how to use it effectively. There is also a need to better recognize when AI is being used and understand its implications. Ontario's creative industries are recognized innovators. It is therefore vital that individuals across all levels of seniority and along the creative industry value chain develop a strong foundation of AI literacy that is relevant to and grounded in the realities of the sector.

These foundational AI literacy resources would support the sector's understanding of how AI systems work, the implications of using the tools, and best practices for success. Equipping creators and other interest-holders (such as industry associations, guilds and unions as well as government agencies, funders, and sector partners) with this baseline knowledge can strengthen awareness of data privacy and security, risks, and bias in AI systems. This shared foundation is essential for informed policy development and future training. It can be supported through resource sharing, peer-to-peer learning, online modules, guides, and more.

An **AI Literacy in the Creative Industries** initiative — be it a resource hub, training program, or convened committee – would build on the baseline understanding established in this study. It would also complement the important advocacy work taking place at the post-secondary, sector and governmental levels to audit, monitor, and invest in the creative industries' access to AI literacy tools and training, helping to ensure they remain globally competitive.

[2] University of Saskatchewan, "Generative Artificial Intelligence: Glossary of AI Related Terms", Retrieved June 2025.

## AI and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

While the scope of this study did not extend to a direct exploration of AI and Indigenous data sovereignty, it is important to acknowledge the broader implications of AI adoption for data governance, cultural safety, and self-determination. Many AI systems are developed within Western, Eurocentric frameworks that do not reflect Indigenous knowledge systems, values, or governance models. Without intentional engagement with Indigenous perspectives and protocols, the use of AI risks reinforcing long-standing patterns of digital colonization and data extraction without consent.

Across Canada and internationally, Indigenous leaders and organizations are advancing frameworks – such as OCAP® and the CARE Principles[3] – that emphasize community control over data and advocate for ethical, culturally grounded approaches to technology. These frameworks offer essential guidance for supporting equity and accountability in the development and use of AI.

As future industry-wide initiatives around AI literacy and governance take shape, there is a clear need to engage with these frameworks and coordinate with Indigenous-led efforts. Doing so can help align sector practices with principles of self-determination, cultural safety, and equity.

# 3.2. Policy Support

In this context, policy support refers both to broader policy development efforts and to internal organizational policies around AI use. At the sector level, policies are evolving provincially, federally, and globally to establish a clearer path forward for AI adoption. Supporting these efforts and ensuring that the creative industries are represented in policy discussions is essential to the sector's long-term success. In Ontario, for example, the Province is advancing, "Ontario's Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI) Framework" to "to set out risk-based rules for the transparent, responsible and accountable use of AI in Ontario."[4]

At the organizational level, policy support means developing clear, responsible guidelines for AI use. In both the survey and roundtable discussions, it was clear that meaningful, transparent, and effective adoption of AI depends on **staff training and clear internal policies** – which are long-standing challenges, especially for small organizations. The findings in this study indicate that AI use across creative organizations is often uneven, informally managed, and in some cases, not explicitly addressed at all.

Study participants expressed strong interest in having Work in Culture provide templated workplace policies and guidelines to help small organizations develop responsible approaches to AI adoption. These templates

[3] OCAP® stands for Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, and is a set of standards developed by the First Nations Information Governance Centre that asserts First Nations' rights to govern the collection, use, and sharing of their data. CARE Principles (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) were developed by the Global Indigenous Data Alliance to ensure that data governance reflects Indigenous values and rights.

[4] Government of Ontario, Ontario's Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI) Framework, December 2024.

could support organizations in understanding what AI is and is not, what various tools can and cannot do, and how to align use with their existing values and priorities. Policy guidance of this kind would be a valuable extension of AI literacy work, providing organizations with the structure to make informed, principled decisions about AI use. While there are limited public examples of AI policies for creative industries companies or organizations, the workplace training firm Ethena provides one example of a detailed, generic workplace Generative AI Policy Template that could be leveraged for this purpose. Additionally, the Government of Canada's Guide on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence offers guidance for public service employees and has been adapted by other organizations for their internal AI use policies.

A parallel step could be to explore the policies developed in other jurisdictions – either generally or specifically for the creative industries, for example the UK's Creative AI Lab and Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, and adapt for the Canadian context.

## 3.3. Ongoing Training and Resources

With foundational AI literacy and responsible use policies in place, the next priority is providing ongoing training and access to resources. These efforts can help creative workers deepen their understanding, stay current with evolving risks and tools, and apply AI in ways that align with sector values.

Study participants expressed interest in a mix of offerings, including peer knowledge exchange forums, templates and toolkits, and in-person and online training opportunities. Several priority areas emerged to meet immediate and practical training needs:

- AI hallucinations – what they are and how to spot them
- Algorithmic bias – the system is not neutral
- Data privacy and security – protecting yourself, your organization, and your content
- Prompting strategies – getting more from your experience

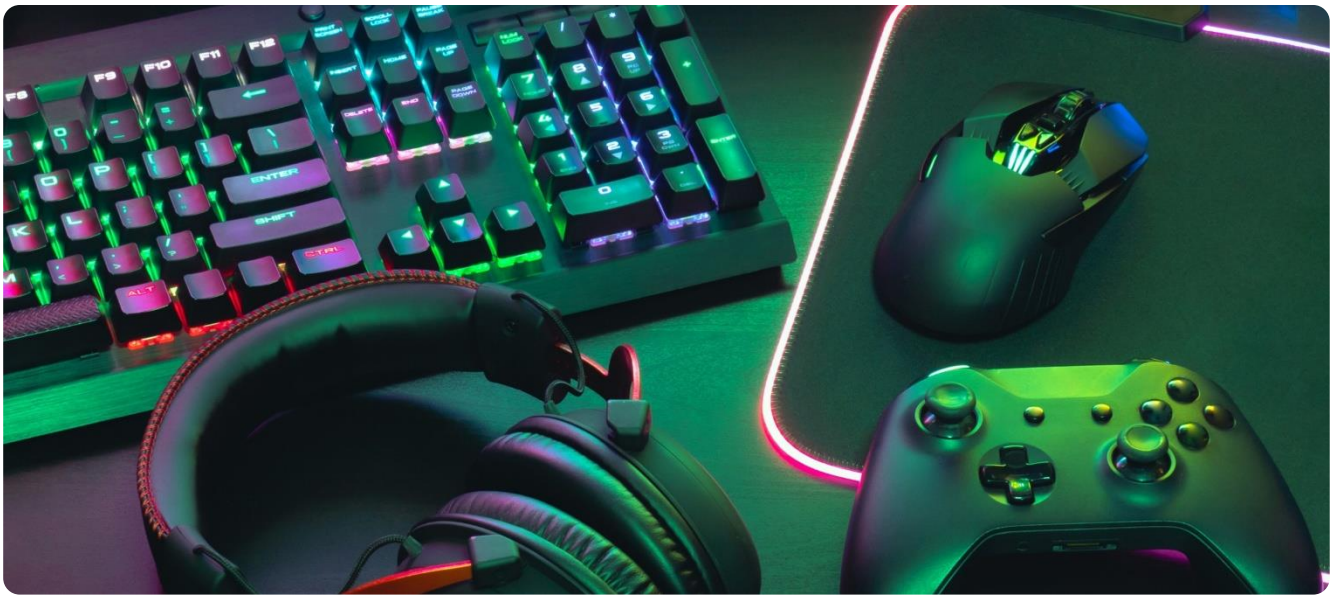
In the context of rapid AI change, these modules would not promote specific tools or even advocate for AI adoption. Rather, they would help demystify the technology and offer practical guidance relevant to the creative industries. The goal would be to build a solid understanding of how AI works, what its trade-offs are, and how to protect personal and organizational information. This foundational knowledge would help individuals and organizations make informed decisions about if, when, and how to use AI. This deeper training enables organizations to adapt, make context-specific decisions, and evolve their AI practices over time. Over time, training resources would iterate and expand to support ongoing learning and adaptation. Models to explore could include, BC's AI4 Creators - a not-for-profit organization helping entrepreneurs harness AI for growth by providing education, tools, and other supports.

## 3.4. Conclusion

The opportunities for action outlined here respond to shared sector needs and align with broader goals to strengthen business skills and expand access to resources across Ontario's creative and cultural industries. These findings are intended to inform and support the sector as a whole – helping those working in the creative industries make informed decisions about if, when, and how to approach AI tools in ways that reflect their values, priorities, and day-to-day realities.

While concerns remain prevalent, the study also points to a measured openness to exploring the potential role of AI – particularly in operational and administrative contexts – provided that core conditions around consent, compensation, and transparency are met.

At the same time, this work contributes to broader conversations around creator remuneration, consent, and control, offering timely insight into how operational uses of AI intersect with systemic issues across the sector. By surfacing common entry points, knowledge gaps, and areas of tension, this study supports future efforts to build sector-wide understanding, preparedness, and critical engagement during a period of rapid technological change.



# 4. Detailed Findings

This section presents the detailed findings from the online survey and industry roundtable. The survey ran from February 11 to March 14, 2025, and received 106 usable responses. The focus group followed on April 15, 2025, with five participants from book publishing, music, and interactive digital media.

## 4.1. Survey Analysis

For the survey, AI tools were defined as “software or platforms that use artificial intelligence (AI) to assist with tasks such as automation, data analysis, content generation for communications, or decision-making. Common examples include ChatGPT, Claude, Canva, DALL-E, Grammarly, Hemingway, HubSpot AI, Tableau, and UiPath.”

### Survey Response Profile

The survey sample (106 responses) included representation from across the creative industries. The largest share of respondents was from Film & TV (25%), followed by Music (11%), Book Publishing (10%), Interactive Digital Media (7%) and Magazine Publishing (4%). Respondents also spanned Creative Support Services such as marketing and consulting (15%) and Industry Associations (8%). Some 19% of respondents were from the arts sector but have been included in this sample in consultation with the funder, Ontario Creates, given the close alignment in day-to-day operations and shared pressures around capacity, administration, and digital adoption across the broader cultural sector.

The sample was relatively mixed in terms of freelancers and self-employed respondents (50%) and those working full time at an organization or company (45%); very few were permanent part-time (5%). Respondents skewed toward single-person companies (33%) and 2-5 person companies (30%); relatively fewer were companies with 6-10 employees (12%), 11-20 employees (8%), 21-50 employees (8%) and 51-100 employees (6%), and only 2% had more than 100 employees.

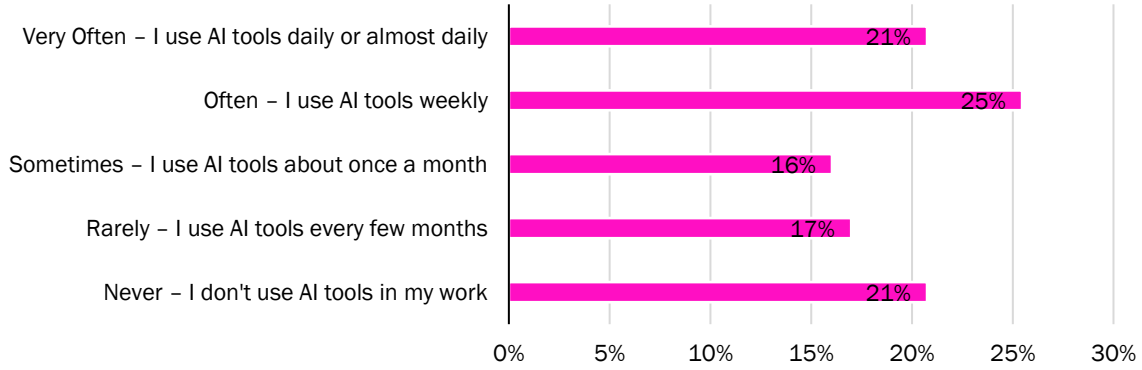
Approximately half of survey respondents described themselves as senior leaders within their companies, but many of those respondents are leaders within small companies of five or fewer people. Other commonly reported roles for respondents included manager/coordinator (17%), creative (15%), operations/administrative (9%) and marketing/communications (8%), while only 1% identified as technical or IT specialists.

In terms of demographics, respondents represented a fairly even distribution of working ages, skewing toward 25-54 years of age. A majority of respondents identify as women (70%), followed by men (18%) and non-binary, agender, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, or two spirit, or prefer to self-define (8%). Respondents identified as belonging to equity-deserving groups in the following numbers: 2SLGBTQIA+ (31%); Racialized, Black, or Person of Colour (24%); person with a disability (22%); newcomer (6%); Indigenous (4%).

# AI Adoption: Current State

**Within the survey sample, the full range of AI adoption-levels is represented.** As seen below, responses were fairly evenly spread in terms of how often respondents use AI tools. Nearly half of respondents said they use AI tools “often” or “very often”, while 21% reported never using them at all.

**Figure 44: How often do you use AI tools in your work in any capacity?**

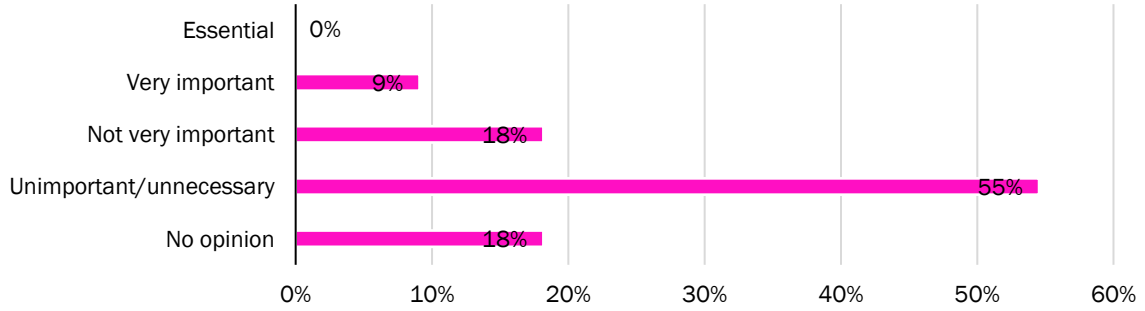



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario’s Creative Industries, 2025

Among the 22 respondents who indicated they **do not** currently use AI tools in their work, most (55%) anticipated AI tools would remain unimportant or unnecessary over the next three years. A smaller share (9%) expected them to become very important, while none viewed them as essential.

**Figure 55: If you selected "never" for the previous question, what do you expect the value of AI tools to be for your work and/or business in three years?**

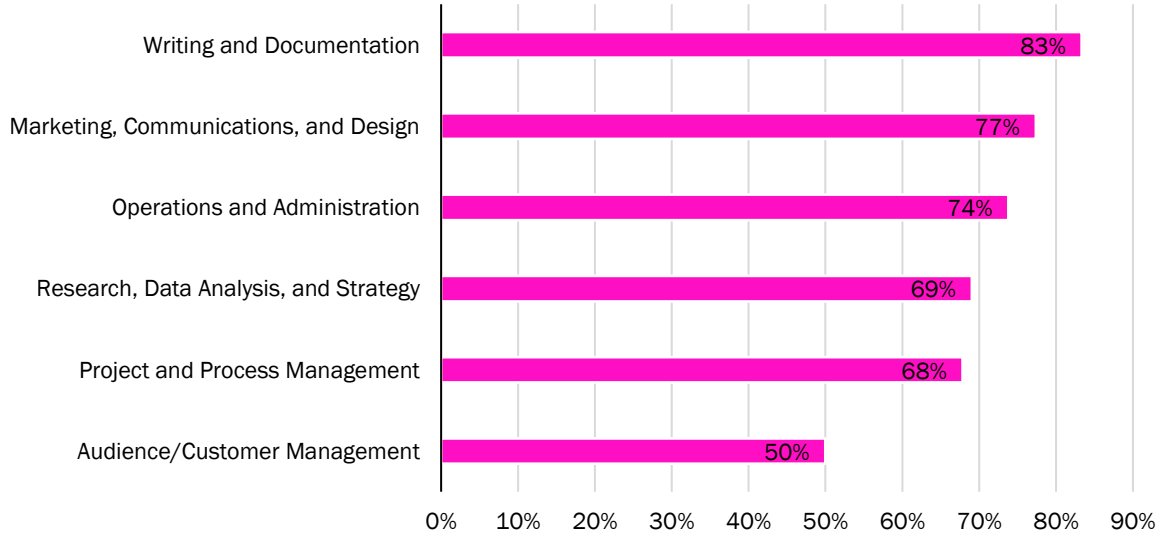



n=22

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Among the 84 respondents who **do** currently use AI tools at work in some capacity, the most common areas of application were writing and documentation (83%), marketing and communications (77%), and operations and administration (74%). Audience and customer management was the least cited, though still used by half of respondents (50%), indicating fairly broad adoption of AI across different work activities.

**Figure 66: Summary of AI adoption by task category (by current AI users)**

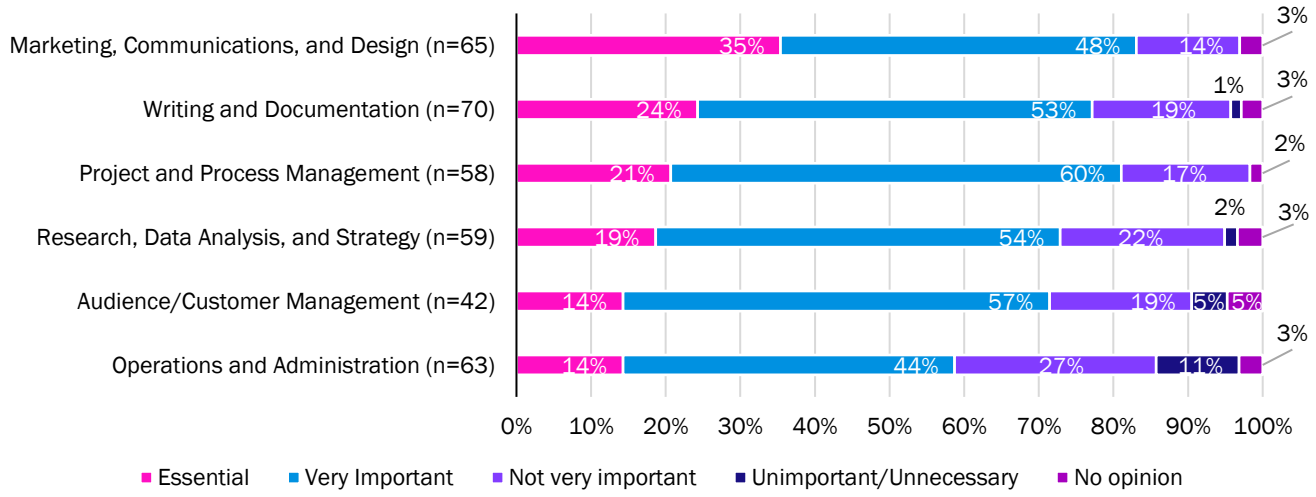



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Among respondents who currently use AI tools, perceptions of its value varied by task category, though most considered it **functionally significant**. For every task category, a majority of users rated AI as either 'essential" or "very important." Notably, operations and administration had the highest share of respondents rating AI as not very important (27%) or unimportant (11%), suggesting more mixed views in that area.

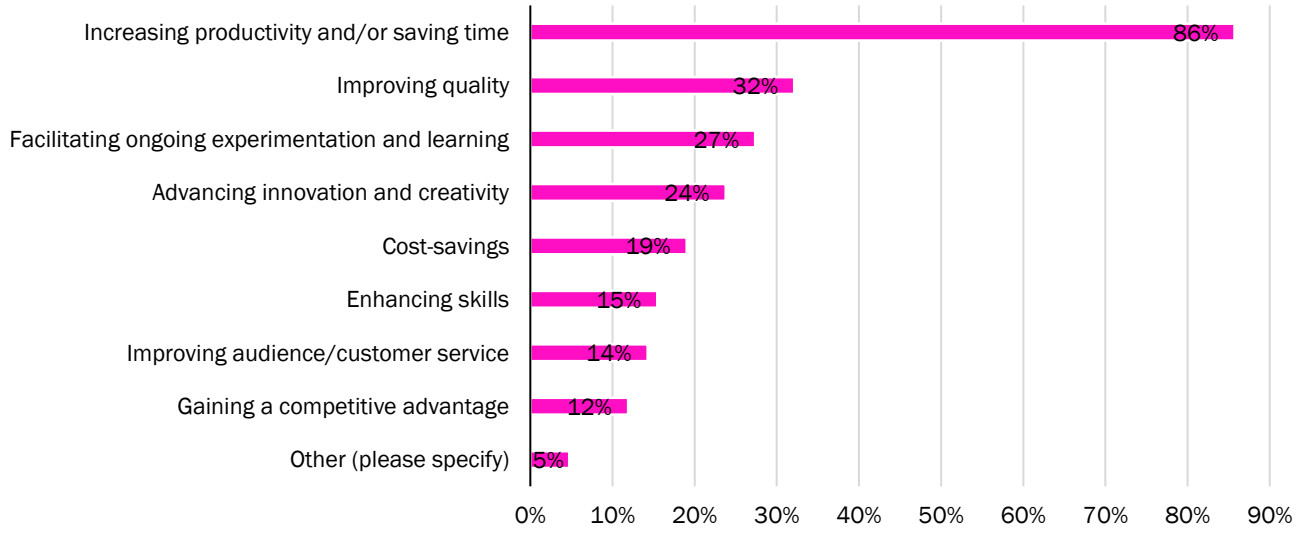
**Figure 77: How would you describe the value of AI tools to your work and/or business currently?**




Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

By far the most common reason respondents cited for using AI tools was to increase productivity or save time (86%). Improving quality (32%) and supporting experimentation and learning (27%) were the next most frequently selected, whereas comparatively few identified competitive advantage (12%) or customer service (14%) as primary motivators. Finally, 5% selected "Other." Of those, several indicated that they only use it because it is already embedded in existing tools and one respondent noted increased accessibility. Ethical considerations were also raised here as a concern, although this question did not explicitly ask about concerns.

**Figure 88: When thinking about the AI tools you use for work, what are the most important factors driving your decision to use them? Select up to 3.**

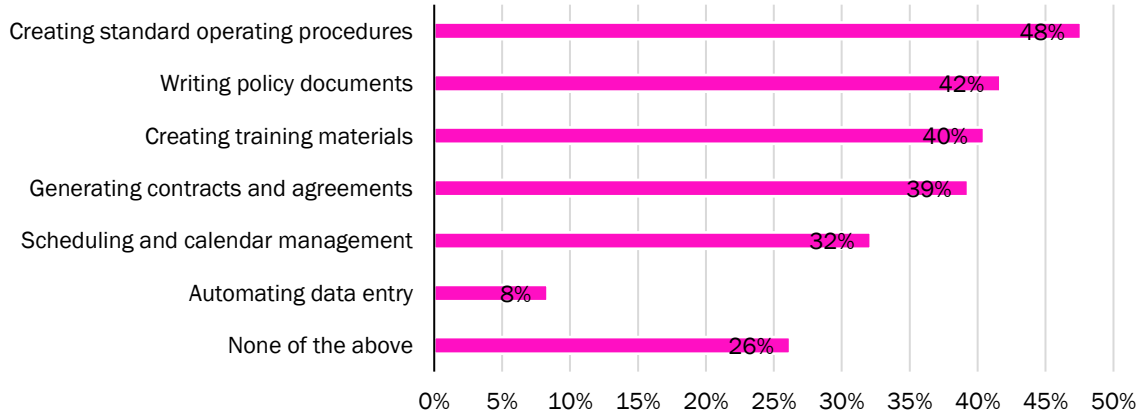



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

For **administrative and operational applications**: Nearly half reported using AI to create standard operating procedures (48%). A large share used AI for writing organizational policy documents (42%) and creating training materials (40%).

**Figure 99: Do you use AI tools for any of the following operations and administration tasks? Select all that apply.**

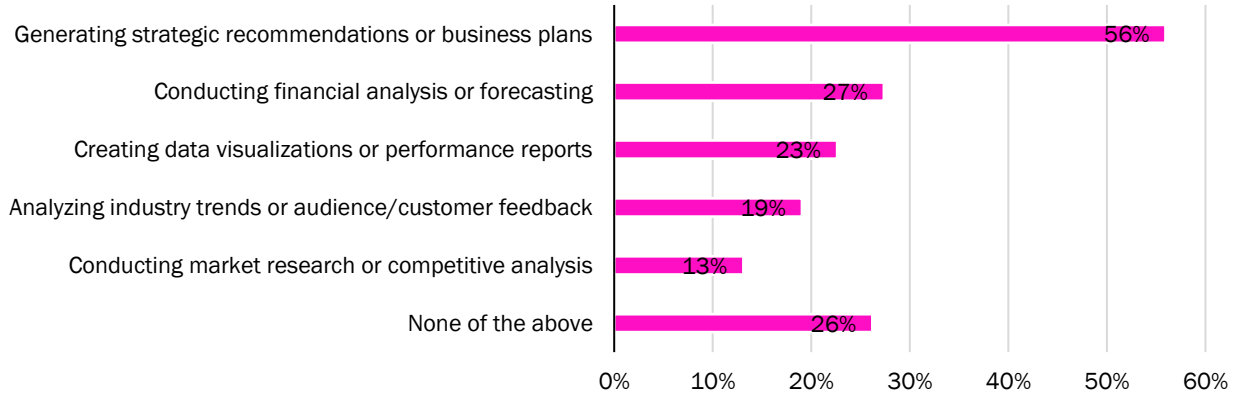



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries

For **research, data analysis, and strategy**: AI adoption was largely focused on generating strategic recommendations or business plans (56%). Smaller shares used AI for financial analysis or forecasting (27%) and data visualization or reporting (23%).

**Figure 1010: Do you use AI tools for any of the following research, data analysis, and strategy tasks? Select all that apply.**

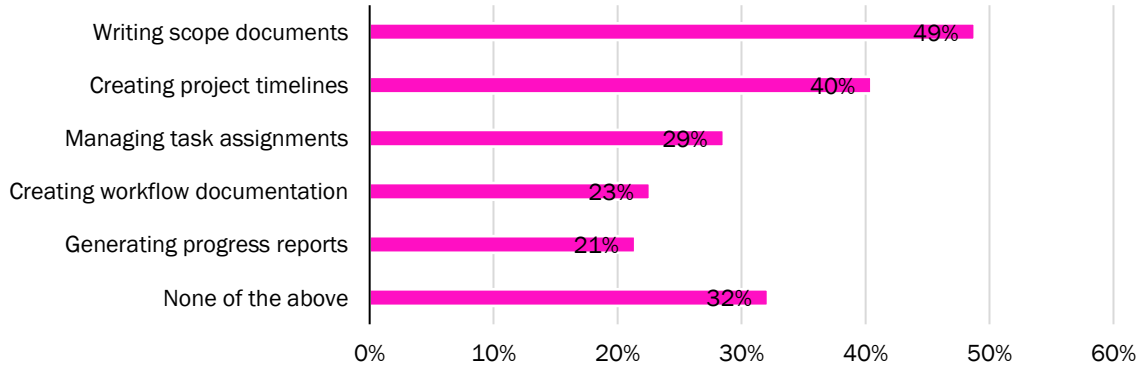



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

In **project and process management:** the most common AI tools usage was for writing scope documents (49%), creating project timelines (40%), and managing task assignments (29%).

**Figure 1111: Do you use AI tools for any of the following project and process management tasks? Select all that apply.**

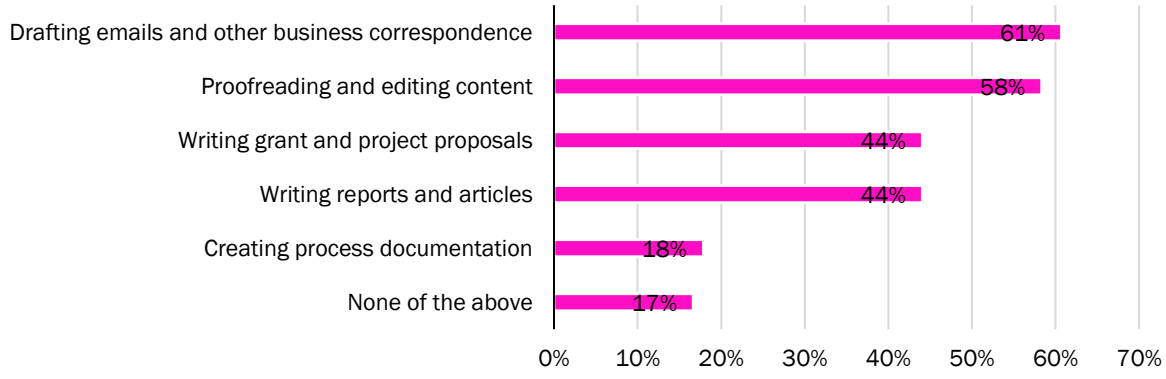



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

For **writing and documentation** tasks: The uptake of AI tools here was generally higher than the other use cases measured in the survey. The most common uses were drafting emails and business correspondence (61%) and proofreading or editing content (58%). Support for writing reports/articles and grant/project proposals each saw 44% uptake.

**Figure 1212: Do you use AI tools for any of the following writing and documentation tasks? Select all that apply.**

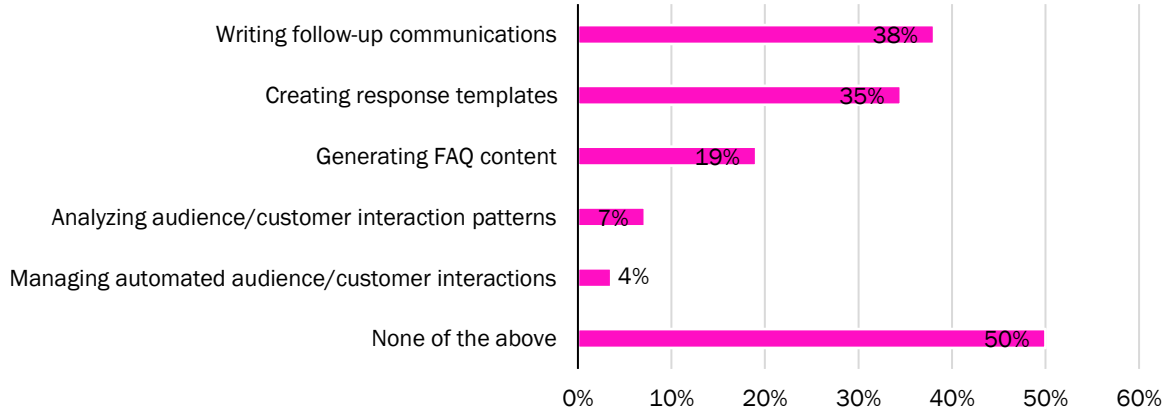



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

For **audience and customer management:** The use of AI tools here was relatively limited. Among those who did use AI tools for audience and customer management tasks, the most common uses were writing follow-up communications (38%) and creating response templates (35%).

**Figure 1313: Do you use AI tools for any of the following audience/customer management tasks? Select all that apply.**

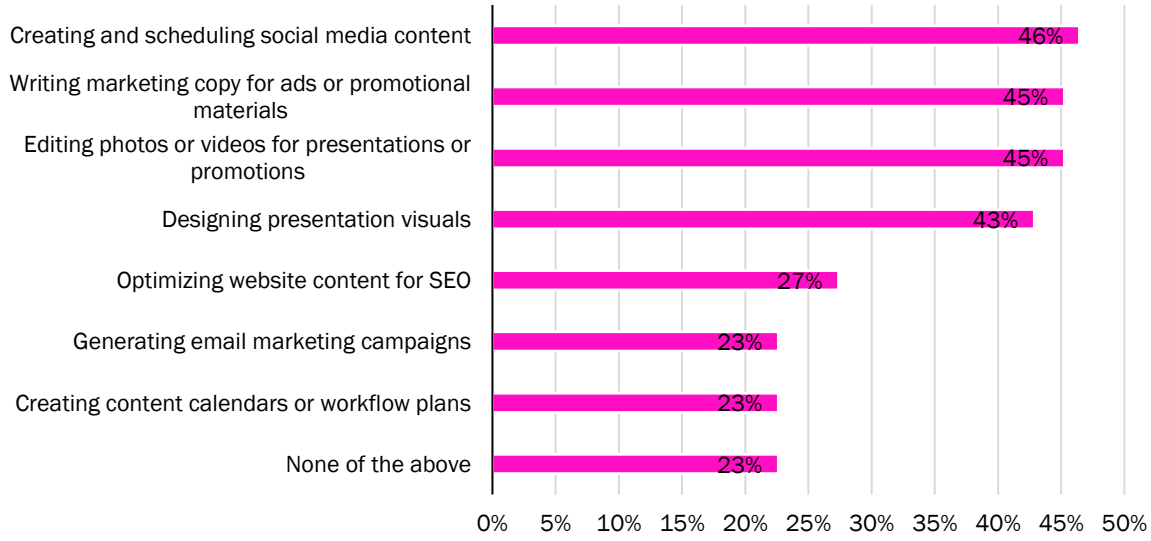



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

For **marketing, communications and design** tasks: common use cases included to create and schedule social media content (46%), write marketing copy (45%), and edit photos and video for promotional use (45%), and designing presentation visuals (43%).

**Figure 1414: Do you use AI tools for any of the following marketing, communications, and design tasks? Select all that apply.**




n=84

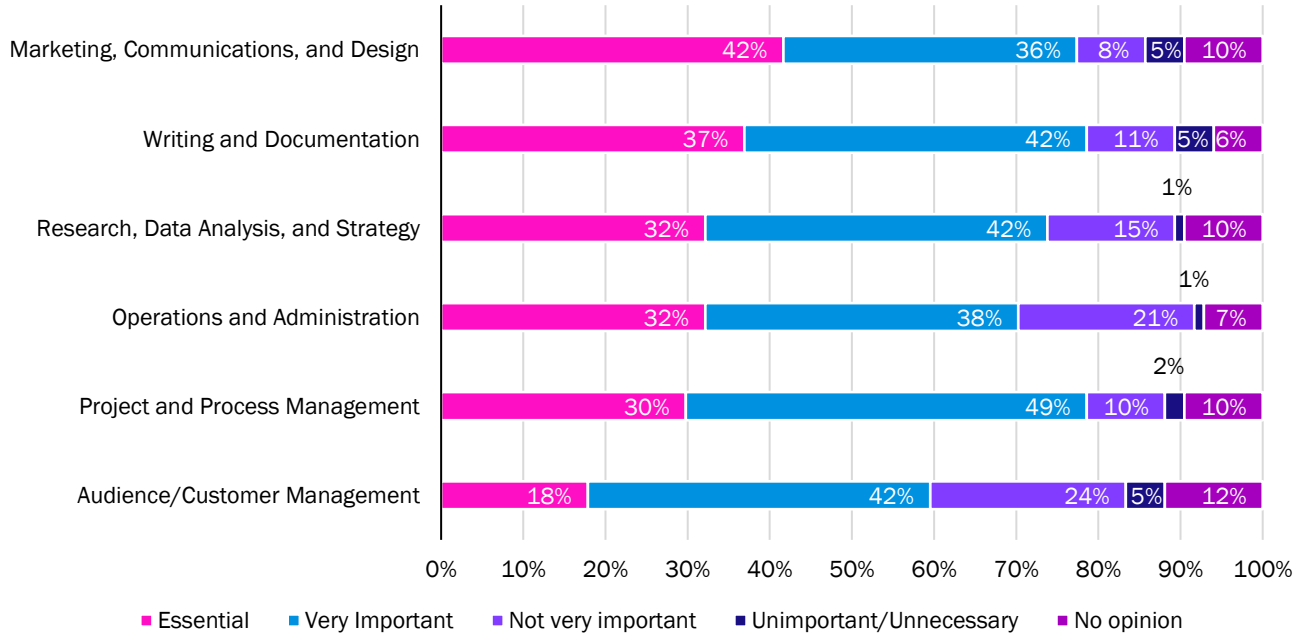
Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries

# AI Adoption: Looking Forward

This section explores the future of AI adoption in respondents' workplaces. Questions focus on their perspectives on the key drivers and barriers to AI adoption at creative industries business and organizations.

When asked about the role of AI tools three years from now, **most current users anticipated continued or increased importance across task categories**. Marketing, communications, and design saw the strongest expectations, with 78% describing AI as likely to be essential or very important. Writing and documentation (79%) and research and data analysis (74%) followed closely. Notably, expectations for operations and administration tasks increased, with 70% of respondents anticipating AI would be essential or very important – up from 58% in current assessments. Meanwhile, the proportion of respondents selecting "no opinion" grew across categories, suggesting some uncertainty about AI's long-term relevance.

**Figure 1515: What do you expect the value of these AI tools to be your work and/or business in three years?**

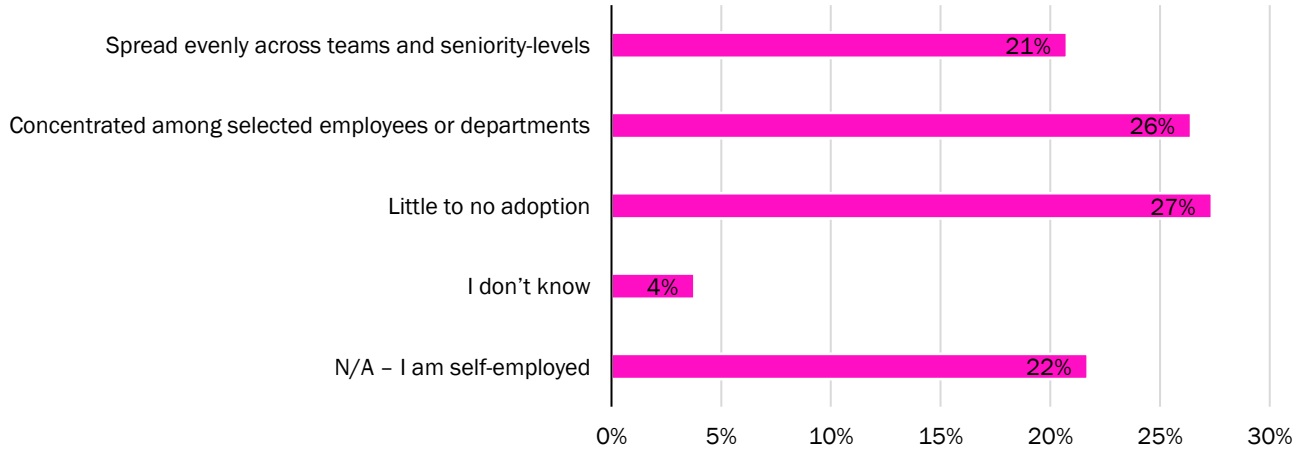



n=84

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Respondents offered a range of views on **how AI has been adopted within their workplaces**. The most common responses pointed to limited or uneven use, while just 21% said adoption was widespread across teams. A little over one in five respondents noted the question didn't apply because they are self-employed.

**Figure 1616: How would you characterize AI adoption at your workplace?**

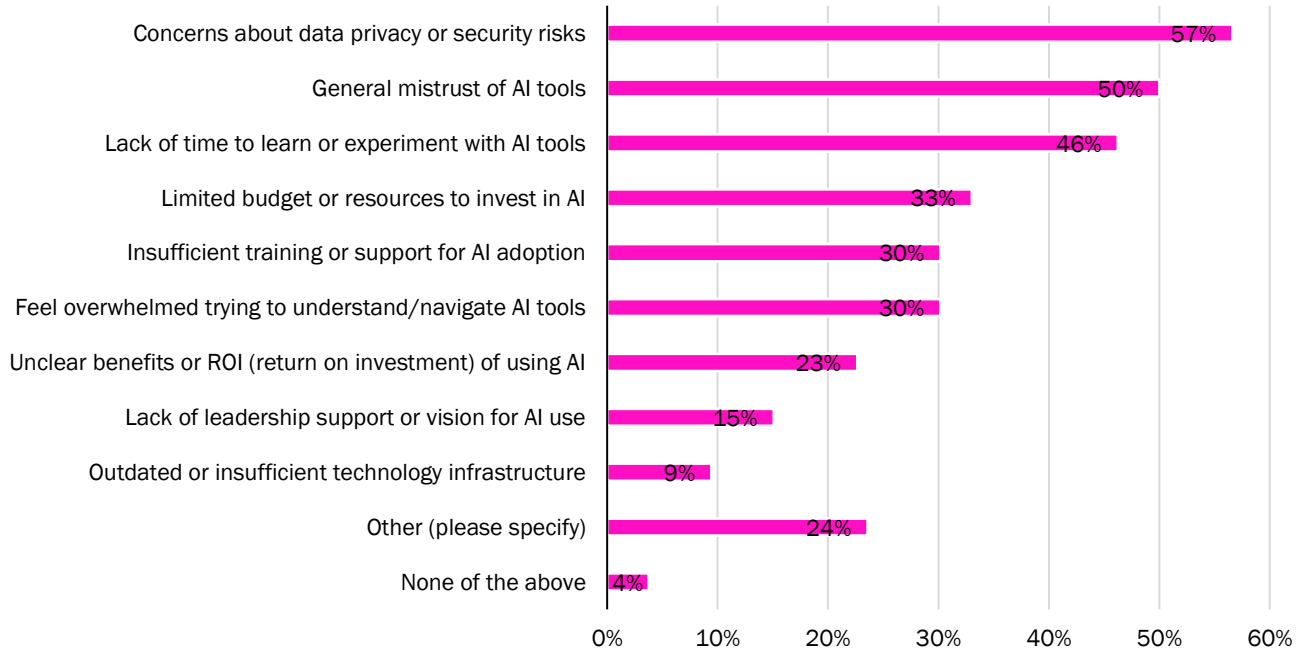



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

The most frequently cited barriers to AI adoption were concerns about **data privacy and security** (57%) and **general mistrust of AI tools** (50%). **Time constraints** (46%) and **limited budgets** (33%) also featured prominently. Additionally, 24% selected "Other," with responses primarily reflecting four themes: **ethical and moral opposition** (especially related to copyright infringement), **environmental sustainability concerns**, **erosion of creative integrity and skills**, and **risk of bias or inaccuracy**. Fewer respondents pointed to **technical infrastructure** or **leadership support** as major obstacles.

**Figure 1717: What barriers most stand in the way of AI adoption in your workplace? Select up to 5.**

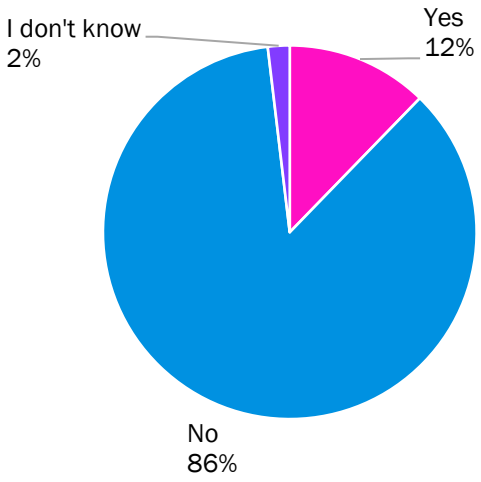



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Only 12% of respondents said their organization provides **AI training** or budgets for it. The vast majority (86%) reported no such support, with an additional 2% unsure. Given that half of respondents identified as freelancers or self-employed, this finding may reflect a broader trend of limited investment in professional development overall for this segment of the workforce (i.e., not specific to AI training.).

**Figure 1818: Does your organization offer any AI-based training directly or provide budget for AI training?**

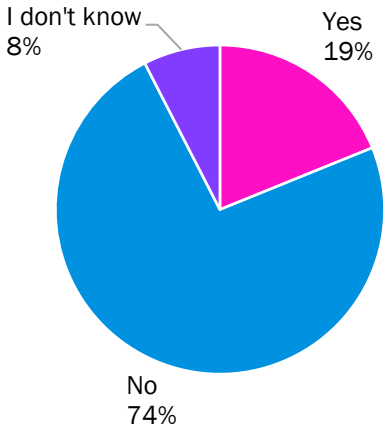



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Just 19% of respondents said their organization has an **AI use policy** in place. Most (74%) reported that no such policy exists, while 8% were unsure.

**Figure 1919: Does your organization have an AI use policy?**

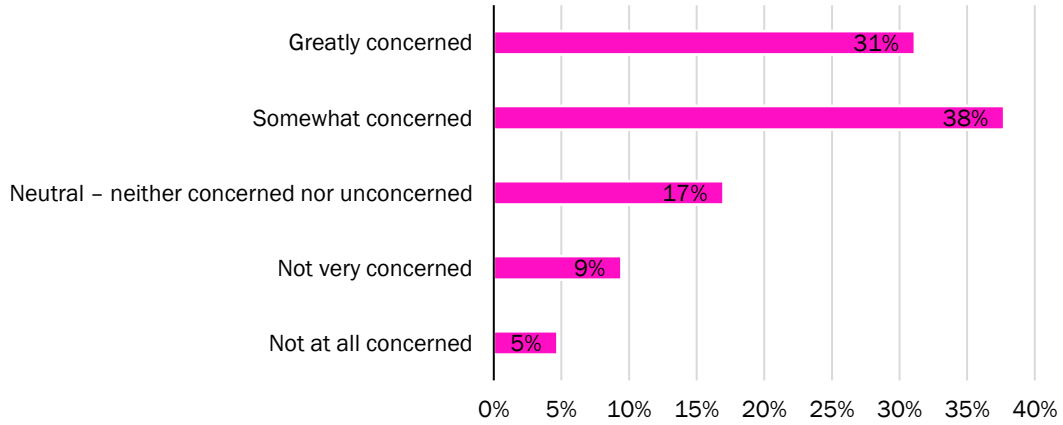



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Most respondents expressed at least some **concern about the growing use of AI at work**, with 38% somewhat concerned and 31% greatly concerned. These concerns align with earlier findings, where mistrust of AI tools and data privacy risks were among the most frequently cited barriers to adoption. Only 14% of respondents reported low levels of concern, and 17% were neutral.

**Figure 2020: Are you concerned about the growing use of AI at work in general?**

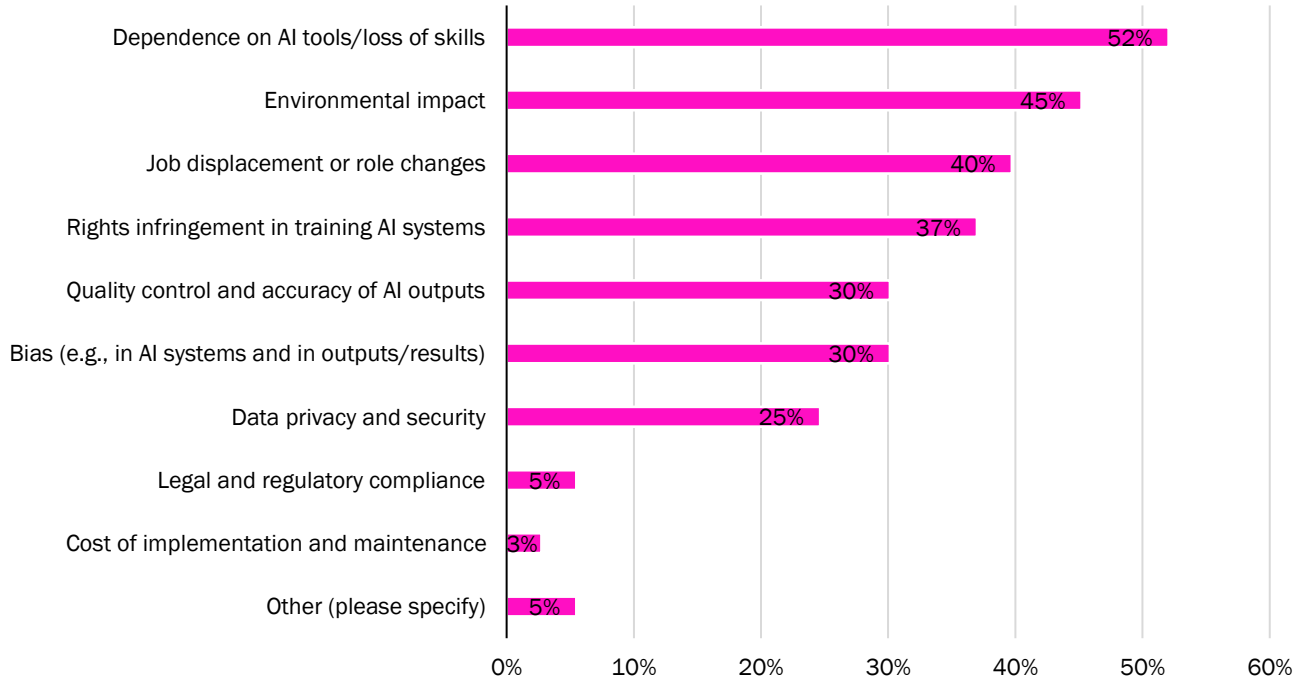



n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

The most cited **concerns** about AI at work were **dependence on AI and loss of skills** (52%), **environmental impact** (45%), and **job displacement** (40%). Other concerns included **rights infringement**, **bias**, and **accuracy of outputs**. Only a few respondents pointed to **legal compliance** or **cost** as major issues, while 5% identified barriers not captured by the listed options related to **sameness, devaluation of human creativity**, and involvement with the **US technology sector**.

**Figure 2121: What most concerns you about the growing use of AI at work?**




n=73

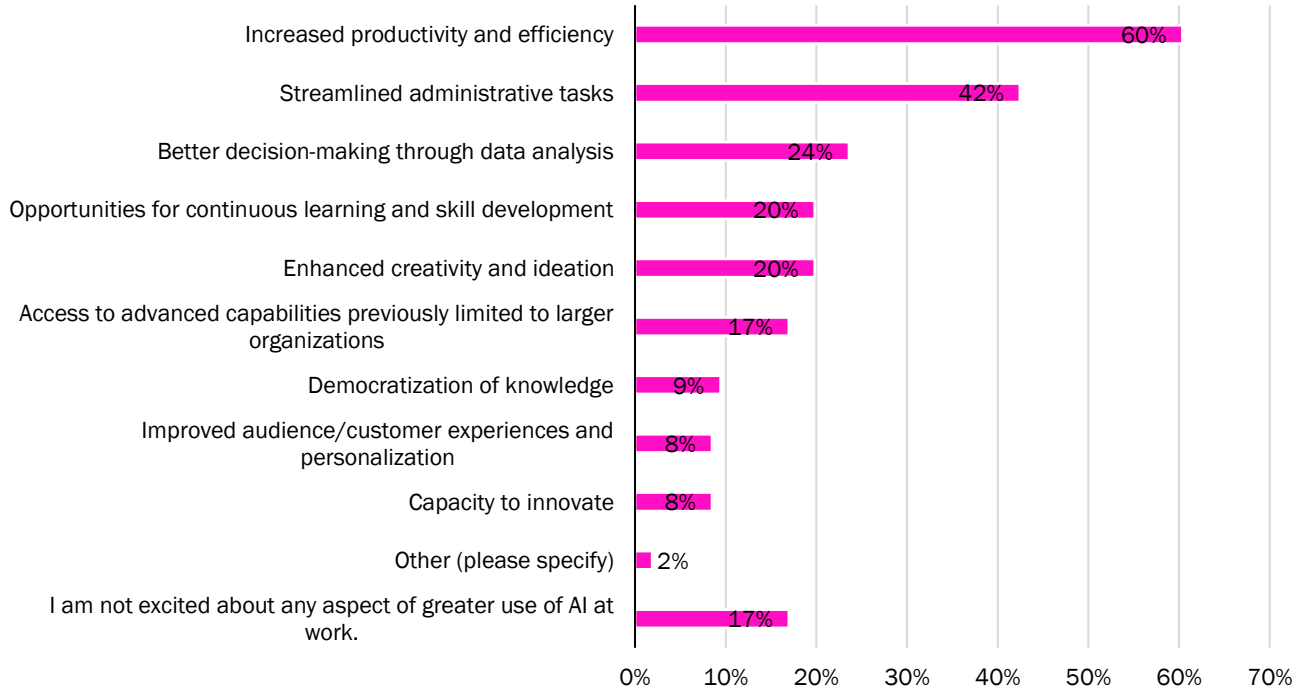
Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Respondents were asked if they wish to expand upon their answer around what most **concerns** them about the growing use of AI at work. Those who elaborated on their AI concerns most often raised issues related to **copyright infringement and ethics**, the **environmental cost of AI**, the **erosion of skills and critical thinking**, and a **lack of transparency and regulation**. Many questioned the relevance of AI in creative fields, arguing that its **harms currently outweigh its benefits** in a sector already facing precarity.[5]

[5] There were 18 respondents who expanded on what concerns them about the growing use of AI at work; this paragraph summarizes their comments.

In terms of what **excites** them about greater use of AI at work, respondents were most optimistic about the potential for **increased productivity and efficiency** (60%), followed by **streamlined administrative tasks** (42%) and **better decision-making through data analysis** (24%). At the same time, 17% said they weren't excited about any aspect of greater AI use at work.

**Figure 2222: What are you most excited about (if anything) when it comes to greater use of AI at work? Select up to 3.**




n=106

Source: Nordicity Survey on AI Adoption for Operations and Administration of Ontario's Creative Industries, 2025

Respondents were asked if they would like to expand upon their answer around what **excites** them about greater user of AI at work. Those who expanded on their answers here tended to offer **more measured or critical reflections**. Some pointed to potential **efficiency gains for routine tasks** and highlighted interest in **AI's data processing capabilities**. Others emphasized the need to **distinguish AI from traditional automation**, and several reiterated concerns about its use in creative work, particularly around **ethics and quality control**.[6]

[6] There were 12 respondents who expanded on what excites them about growing use of AI at work; this paragraph summarizes their comments.

# 4.2. Industry Roundtable

An industry focus group was conducted on April 15, 2025 with five attendees from book publishing, music and Interactive Digital Media. The discussion built on the initial themes that emerged from the survey, beginning with understanding current AI uses in administration and operations, looking ahead to the near future (3-5 years) and finally an open discussion of hopes and fears surrounding the use of AI for administration and operations in the creative industries.

When asked to share three words to describe how they feel about AI at work, we heard terms including:

- **"Caution" and "Concern."** especially around licensing and consent, transparency in data use, the impact of AI on critical thinking, and environmental impact
- **"Curiosity."** particularly about potential use cases, ethical applications, and revenue opportunities for artists
- **"Frustration" and "Threat."** citing big tech attitudes, unethical practices like training AI on stolen content, and a lack of public understanding (particularly about what AI is and how it differs from automation)
- Others saw **"promise,"** with references to accessibility benefits, usefulness if implemented properly, and optimism about scaling and growth – especially as a way for smaller companies to become more competitive against major players

## Current Use Overview

In discussing current use of generative AI for administration and operations, roundtable participants were aware of the potential benefits, but largely skeptical and unimpressed with the tangible applications. We note that roundtable participants were relatively senior at their given organization or association, largely director or founder level, only to say that the views presented may not reflect more junior roles. The discussion mainly focused on:

- **Ethical barriers preventing experimentation:** IP concerns were paramount. Concerns extended to IP ownership, platform bias, and the limitations of predictive models – particularly in supporting innovation. Some participants questioned whether the focus should be on automation, rather than Generative AI. In book publishing in particular, the ethical concerns acted as a non-starter for AI use and exploration.
- **The rewards of using AI for administration not clear and did not outweigh risks:** Many participants felt that existing generative AI tools were not sophisticated enough to save time or justify use. It was noted that in smaller organizations, administrative needs were often highly tailored. For example, for HR functions, the amount of time and effort required to tailor AI to provide a useful output seemed to negate any potential efficiency gains. Participants suggested that administrative tasks may not be the biggest area of need in terms of alleviating overwhelm. Instead, much of the time and energy in the sector is spent on creative or human-centred work – and these are often the most meaningful and enjoyable aspects of the job. They also described some use as automatic or without clear consent – specifically through platform integrations (e.g., Google, Adobe).

- In contemplating areas of potential gain, or emerging interest, the following tangible and currently available applications emerged as having some promise, *should* the barriers be resolved: e-book listings and meta-data, detecting copyright enforcement in music, piracy detection, AI-assisted lip syncing for translation, and developing prompt-based workflows and writing aids.

# Looking Ahead

Participants were asked to imagine Ontario's creative industries in 3–5 years and consider what AI use for administration *might* look like across three levels: **Individual**, **Workplace**, **and Industry**. Participants described the following considerations and possibilities – with caution:

- **Individual Skills and Practices:** Assist with business plan development, elevator pitches/summaries, polishing language. Understanding how to use AI as a tool becoming an essential skill.
- **Workplace Culture and Capacity:** Meaningful and effective adoption would depend on staff training and clear internal policies – long-standing challenges, especially for small organizations.
- **Systemic/Industry-Level Impacts:** Participants highlighted opportunities for: Metadata and royalty tracking, Ethical training models aligned with advocacy values, Scalable tools that support sector-wide capacity. Some wondered if AI could improve discovery – e.g., through more intuitive or context-aware search functions that surpass what's currently possible with Google. Participants also flagged the importance of being mindful of how we measure success of the creative industries – if it continues to be based on jobs (vs. simply productivity) that may shift how we consider the role of AI. Several participants underscored the need to retain a focus on job creation and preservation.
- **Derivative nature of AI a barrier:** Participants made the point that generative AI tells you "what you want to hear or what it thinks makes sense based on what has worked for others." As a result, it may not support genuinely innovative, niche, or nuanced ideas – and can reinforce confirmation bias and other forms of systemic bias embedded in training data. This derivative limitation was a major weakness.

# Hopes, Fears, and Readiness

Participants were asked to share any additional hopes and fears, as well as what would help them feel prepared for potential greater adoption of AI for administration and operations.

## Hopes

- **Explore how AI could help Ontario remain competitive** – especially through support from organizations like Ontario Creates and Work in Culture. This hope included scaling opportunities for small businesses, but also for Ontario to show leadership in how AI is understood and applied in creative industries – treating AI as one tool in the toolkit, not a panacea.
- **Strength in Knowledge:** Participants were especially interested in having Work in Culture provide templated policies and guidelines to make it easier for small organizations to develop responsible

approaches to AI adoption. Improved digital literacy and ongoing learning were seen as essential to future success.

## Fears

- **Learning Loss / Critical Thinking Erosion:** Concern that overreliance on AI may erode key competencies like writing and critical thinking. If those foundational skills are lost, people also lose the ability to evaluate or vet the output of AI tools (see "Learning Loss" in glossary of terms).
- **US Domination and Trade Barriers:** Strong concern about the dominance of US tools and lack of Canadian-made alternatives. The US political climate was seen as emboldening big tech and weakening checks on corporate power. Trade disputes related to technology and IP were also mentioned – especially the risk of escalation into virtual products or digital trade barriers.
- **Employment Impacts:** Overuse of generative AI and automation, and the potential loss of critical creative labour were key concerns.

## Support Needs

- **Sector-wide leadership**, transparent dialogue, and support for critical thinking – rather than "feeding into the hype" around AI. Participants expressed the desire to "shift the narrative" and frame AI as a practical tool for work, not an all-powerful or inevitable force.
- **Alternative Models:** Interest in further exploring closed AI models or other collaborative, collective approaches that align with sector values.

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