

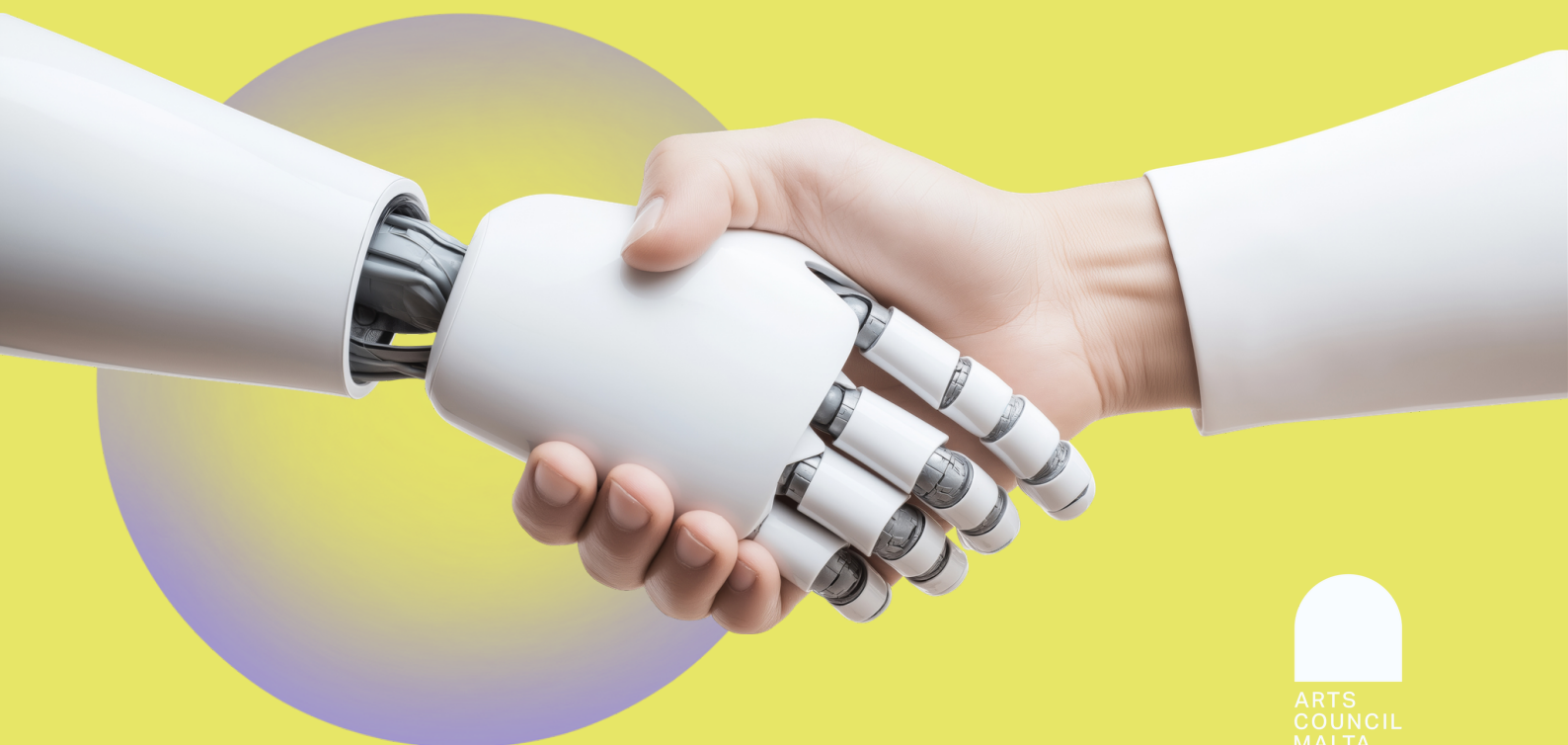
Artistic Practice & Artificial Intelligence

Impacts and future directions for Malta's arts sector.

A research project by Culture Venture

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Disclaimer

The views, findings, interpretations and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of any institution that contributed to the research.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, Artificial Intelligence is a rapidly evolving field. References to technologies, legislation, policies and examples reflect the evidence available at the time of writing and may subsequently evolve. Readers are encouraged to consult the latest legislation, policy documents and technical guidance where appropriate.

The authors disclose that Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used in this project as an assistive research and editorial tool. AI supported selected stages of the research process, including the refinement of research questions, literature exploration, the organisation and summarisation of qualitative data, editorial review and language refinement. AI was not used to generate primary research findings, make analytical decisions or formulate the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report. All research design, methodology, data collection, interpretation of findings, verification of sources, policy analysis and editorial decisions remained the responsibility of the authors, who critically reviewed and validated all AI-assisted outputs.

Table of Contents

1.Introduction	1
2.Background & Literature Review	6
3.Interview with Octavio Kulesz	19
4.The Maltese Context	23
5.Methodology	26
6.Findings	32
7.Challenges & Opportunities for Artists	43
8.Recommendations for AI-driven practices in Malta’s cultural and creative landscape	59
9. Legacy and Impact of Research	65
10.References	68

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the way cultural and creative work is conceived, produced, distributed and experienced. While technological innovation has always influenced artistic practice, recent advances in generative AI have accelerated this transformation, raising fundamental questions about creativity, authorship, intellectual property, artistic labour and cultural diversity. AI is no longer confined to technical experimentation. It is increasingly embedded across the cultural and creative sectors, influencing visual arts, literature, music, performing arts, design, audiovisual production, arts management and cultural heritage.

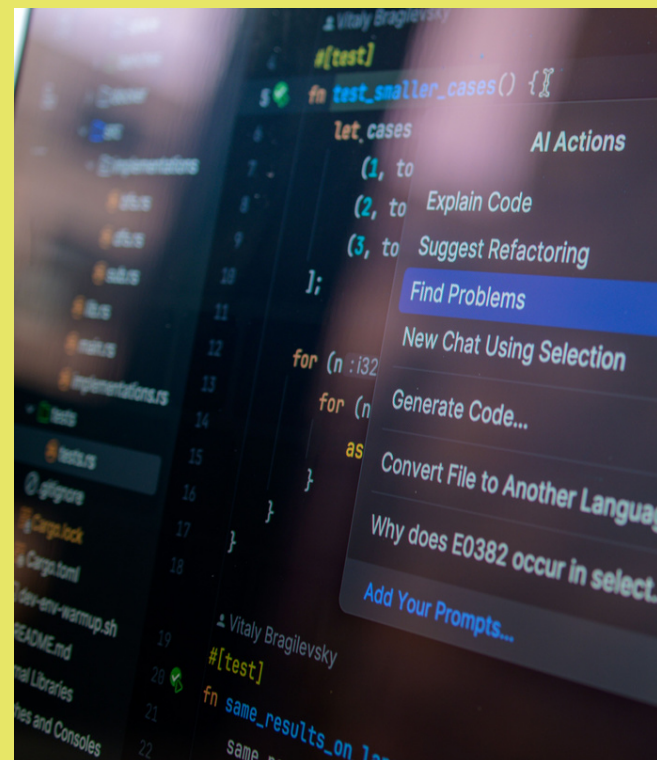
The emergence of AI presents both significant opportunities and considerable challenges. Artists are increasingly using AI as a creative partner to generate ideas, explore new aesthetic possibilities, automate repetitive tasks and enhance production processes. At the same time, concerns have intensified regarding copyright infringement, the unauthorised use of artistic works to train AI systems, declining economic opportunities for creative professionals, changing client expectations, and the concentration of technological power within a small number of global platforms. These developments are reshaping not only artistic practice itself but also the working conditions under which artists operate.

Across Europe, policymakers have recognised that the cultural and creative sectors require specific responses to AI that extend beyond general technological regulation. Recent initiatives by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO emphasise the need to ensure that AI supports cultural diversity, artistic freedom, fair remuneration, ethical innovation and human-centred creativity. Rather than viewing AI solely as a technological issue, these organisations increasingly frame it as a cultural, social and economic challenge requiring interdisciplinary policy responses.

In Malta, the conversation surrounding AI and artistic practice is still emerging. Although individual artists, creative organisations and public institutions have begun experimenting with AI-enabled creative processes, there remains limited evidence on how artists are adopting these technologies, how they perceive the opportunities and risks they present, and how AI is affecting their professional practice and working conditions. Existing research has largely focused on the technological capabilities of AI rather than on its implications for artistic ecosystems, cultural policy and the sustainability of creative careers.

This research opens a conversation on AI and artistic practice within the Maltese cultural and creative sectors. It investigates how artists working across multiple practices are engaging with AI technologies, how these technologies are influencing artistic processes and employment conditions and what forms of institutional, educational and policy support are required to ensure that AI contributes positively to Malta's cultural development.

Ultimately, the research reflects on how AI is positioned within artistic creativity and how transformative technology depends on the regulatory frameworks, ethical standards, educational opportunities and cultural policies that accompany its adoption. By placing artists and their working conditions at the centre of the discussion, the research seeks to contribute to a more informed, inclusive and sustainable approach to AI within Malta's cultural and creative sectors.



1.1. Research Aims and Objectives

The research focuses on artistic practice, with particular emphasis on the experiences and working conditions of artists as they engage with one of the most significant emerging developments within contemporary cultural ecosystems: Artificial Intelligence. By examining how AI is influencing creative processes, professional practice and the wider artistic landscape, the study addresses an important gap in research within the Maltese context. In doing so, it directly supports Arts Council Malta's strategic objectives of fostering artistic excellence, innovation and sectoral development. As one of the first studies of its kind in Malta, the research provides an evidence base for understanding the opportunities and challenges presented by AI, with particular attention to its implications for visual artists while also offering insights that are relevant across the wider cultural and creative sectors.

Current Use

Map AI in the Arts, usage in Malta and profile existing models.

Perception & Impact

Understand the perceptions on the use and benefit of AI in the arts in Malta.

Actionable Recommendations

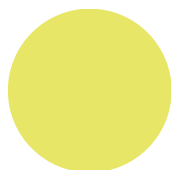
Develop recommendations on the use of AI, artistic work practices and conditions.

This research explores the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the practices and working conditions of artists in Malta, specifically those working in literature, visual arts, music, performing arts, and interdisciplinary fields. The study aims to understand how AI is perceived by artists and its influence on their creative processes. It examined the challenges and opportunities AI presents to artistic practices and how it affects the working conditions of artists. Using ground research for mapping the field as well as a mixed-methodology, the research identifies barriers, ethical considerations, and the institutional support necessary for AI adoption. The research methods included an online opt-in targeted survey as well as focus groups and interviews with artists and experts. This study served as a framework for developing recommendations on the use of AI, artistic work practices and conditions. Additionally, it produced actionable recommendations through a co-design process, addressing the use of AI and its impact on the work practices and conditions of artists.

1.2. Research Questions



How are artists in Malta engaging with and integrating Artificial Intelligence into their practice?



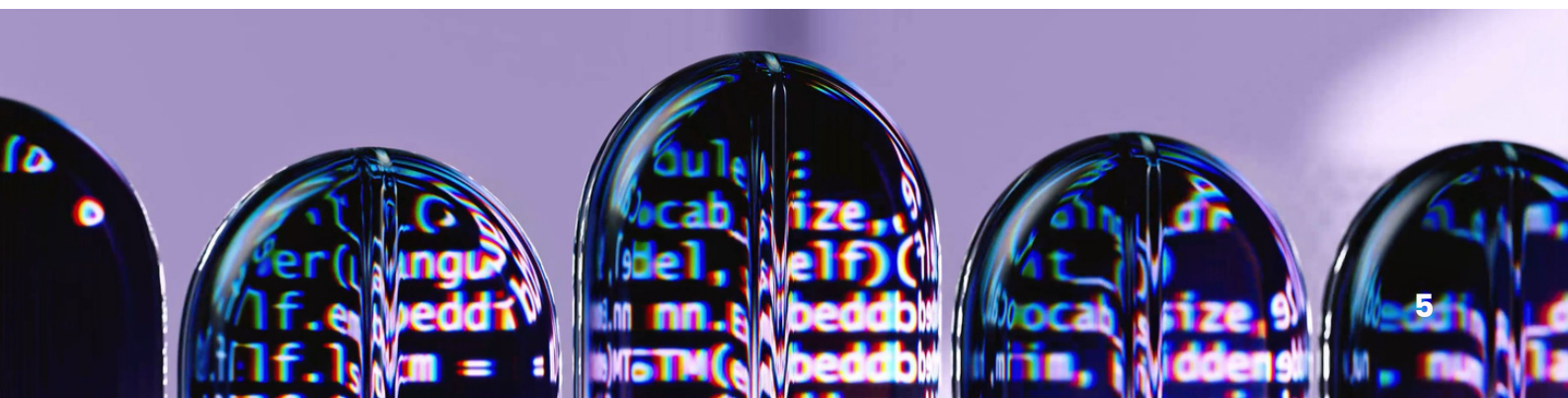
What are the challenges and opportunities in using AI for artists?



What are the potential future directions for AI-driven practices in Malta's artistic landscape?

This project specifically focused on ensuring acceptable and decent working conditions for artists and creative practitioners, in alignment with the Charter for the Status of the Artist (2025). The principles outlined in this Charter served as the foundational reference for any legislation, policy, or initiative that directly or indirectly impacts artists, as well as the cultural and creative sectors.

This project also fostered collaboration with international platforms in this area, such as Ekip - the Innovation Policy Platform for the Cultural and Creative Industries, funded by the European Commission. The platform consists of 5 universities, 4 consultancies, 4 creative and cultural organizations, and 4 cities. The outcomes of the Ekip research on Artificial Intelligence informed our ground research.



2. Background & Literature Review



This section provides an overview of the principal themes that emerged from the literature on the application of AI within the cultural sectors. The findings are organised into three broad categories: the main application areas of AI, the benefits and opportunities associated with its adoption, and the ethical and practical challenges that accompany its implementation. Within each theme, key subtopics and illustrative examples are presented to demonstrate how AI is transforming arts management, cultural heritage preservation, and cultural policy, while also highlighting concerns relating to ethics, bias, privacy, employment, and the need for sector-specific governance frameworks. This thematic overview serves as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of AI's evolving role in cultural research, practice, and policymaking.

Table 1: Thematic Review

Theme	Subtopics	Key Examples
Application Areas	Arts Management	Automating tasks: ticketing, marketing, data analysis- personalised audience engagement- programming & marketing optimisation
	Cultural Heritage & Preservation	Digitisation: 3D modelling, VR, scanning- Restoration: AI damage detection- environmental monitoring via sensors
	Cultural Policy	Trend analysis & behavioural insights- resource allocation & feedback- promoting diversity through inclusion analysis
	Efficiency & Innovation	Cost reduction, scalability, and faster processes
Benefits & Opportunities	Accessibility & Inclusion	Wider access to collections, inclusive policy-making
	Creative Enhancement	Human-machine collaboration in artistic creation
	Proactive Preservation	Environmental threat detection, sustainable conservation
	Dehumanisation Risk	Concern over loss of emotional/human element in art
Challenges & Ethics	Algorithmic Bias	Risk of reproducing social inequalities
	Data Privacy	Ethical concerns in data collection & use
	Economic Inequality	IMF estimate: AI could affect 40% of global employment

2.1. Grounding the Research: AI and the Cultural & Creative Industries (CCIs)

2.1.1. Defining Artificial Intelligence

AI has evolved from a specialist technological field into a general-purpose technology with significant implications across society, including the cultural and creative sectors. The European Commission (2018) defines AI as systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions, with a degree of autonomy, to achieve specific objectives. These systems may be purely software-based – such as search engines, speech and image recognition systems, language models, and recommendation engines – or embedded within hardware, including advanced robots, autonomous vehicles, drones and Internet of Things (IoT) applications. This broad definition recognises AI as a family of technologies capable of supporting perception, reasoning, learning and decision-making across a wide range of domains, including the cultural and creative sectors.

The definition of AI has evolved alongside rapid technological developments. The Artificial Intelligence Act defines an AI system as "a machine-based system that is designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment, and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments" (European Union, 2024). This updated legal definition reflects the growing capabilities of contemporary AI systems, including generative AI applications that can produce text, images, music, video and computer code. As a result, AI is increasingly influencing creative production, artistic workflows and cultural labour across the Cultural and Creative Sectors.

For the purposes of this research, AI is understood not simply as a technological innovation but as a transformative ecosystem influencing artistic creation, cultural production, professional practice, employment and public participation in culture.

2.1.2. Artificial Intelligence in Cultural Policy

AI has become both a strategic tool for cultural policymaking and an increasingly important policy objective in its own right. On the one hand, AI strengthens evidence-informed policymaking by enabling the analysis of large and complex datasets, providing policymakers with deeper insights into cultural participation,

audience behaviour, artists' working conditions and the socio-economic impact of cultural investment. Through predictive analytics, data visualisation and real-time monitoring, AI can support more informed decision-making, improve resource allocation, strengthen programme evaluation and contribute to the design of more responsive and targeted cultural policies.

On the other hand, AI has itself become a central concern of cultural policy. As AI increasingly influences artistic creation, creative labour, intellectual property, cultural participation and access to culture, governments are required to develop policy responses that enable innovation while safeguarding artistic freedom, creators' rights, cultural diversity and fair working conditions. Cultural policy is therefore no longer concerned solely with supporting the adoption of AI but also with shaping the conditions under which AI is developed, governed and integrated into the cultural and creative sectors.

Within the cultural heritage sector, AI supports the digitisation, preservation and interpretation of cultural assets, improving accessibility while safeguarding historical collections for future generations. At the same time, its deployment raises important questions concerning algorithmic bias, data governance, environmental sustainability and the balance between technological innovation and human-centred cultural values.

As AI technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace, cultural policy cannot be regarded as a static regulatory framework. Instead, it requires continuous adaptations, evidence gathering and regular realignment to respond to technological developments, emerging risks and changing artistic practices. This demands an adaptive and anticipatory approach to policymaking, where ongoing dialogue with artists, cultural organisations, researchers and technology developers informs policy development. In this context, AI should be understood not only as a tool for strengthening evidence-based policymaking but also as a dynamic policy domain that requires continuous review, experimentation and collaboration to ensure that technological innovation contributes to a creative, inclusive and resilient cultural ecosystem.

2.1.3. Artificial Intelligence as a European Cultural Policy Priority

AI has rapidly evolved from being primarily a technological and economic concern to becoming a significant cultural policy issue within the European Union. While early European AI policy focused on strengthening innovation, research capacity and global competitiveness, recent policy developments increasingly

recognise that AI is fundamentally reshaping cultural production, artistic practice, creative labour and public participation in culture. Consequently, AI is no longer viewed solely through the lens of digital transformation but also as an issue of cultural rights, intellectual property, democratic participation and cultural diversity.

The European Union's approach to AI is underpinned by the ambition to develop a human-centred and trustworthy AI ecosystem that combines technological innovation with the protection of fundamental rights. This vision is reflected in the Artificial Intelligence Act, which establishes the world's first comprehensive legal framework governing AI systems. The legislation seeks to ensure that AI development remains aligned with European values including transparency, accountability, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity. These principles have direct implications for the cultural and creative sectors, particularly in relation to artistic authorship, copyright, algorithmic transparency and the ethical use of creative content.

Culture has subsequently become an increasingly visible component of the European AI agenda. This strategic direction was reinforced through the European Commission's Culture Compass for Europe (2025), adopted in November 2025, which establishes a long-term vision for Europe's cultural and creative sectors by placing culture at the heart of EU policymaking. The Compass recognises that AI presents both significant opportunities for innovation, competitiveness and technological development, while also creating challenges relating to copyright, creators' rights, ethical AI, cultural diversity, artistic freedom and the working conditions of artists and cultural professionals. To address these issues, the Commission announced a series of flagship initiatives, including the development of a dedicated AI Strategy for the Cultural and Creative Sectors, an EU Artists' Charter promoting fair working conditions, an EU Cultural Data Hub, and a regular State of Culture Report to strengthen the evidence base for cultural policymaking.

Complementing the European Union's regulatory approach, the Council of Europe has adopted the *Guidelines Given the Latest Technological Developments, Such as Artificial Intelligence, Complementing Council of Europe Standards in the Fields of Culture, Creativity and Cultural Heritage* (2024). The Guidelines provide Member States with a framework of policy measures organised around four strategic policy objectives to support the responsible integration of AI across culture, creativity and cultural heritage. Drawing upon the *Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law*, the Guidelines acknowledge that emerging technologies, particularly AI, present both significant opportunities and substantial challenges for the cultural sector. They seek to encourage the development and use of AI systems that guarantee equal and safe access to culture, foster cooperation, strengthen public trust, and support innovation while remaining consistent with human rights, democratic

values and cultural diversity. By identifying practical and future-oriented policy measures, the Guidelines establish an important reference framework for governments seeking to balance technological innovation with the protection of artistic practice, cultural heritage and the rights of creators.

At the national level, Arts Council Malta's *Strategy 2030* positions Artificial Intelligence as a cross-cutting enabler supporting the long-term development of Malta's cultural and creative sectors. Rather than presenting AI as an independent strategic objective, the strategy frames it as a technology capable of strengthening institutional capacity, improving organisational efficiency, supporting skills development and enabling new forms of cultural engagement. At the same time, it recognises that AI raises significant questions concerning ethics, environmental responsibility, creative rights and the future of artistic work. Consequently, the strategy advocates a balanced approach whereby technological innovation is accompanied by ethical governance, professional development and the protection of artists' rights, aligning Malta's national cultural policy with broader European discussions on responsible AI and sustainable cultural ecosystems.

2.1.4. Opportunities and Challenges for the Cultural and Creative Sectors

Literature consistently identifies AI as both a significant opportunity and a disruptive force for the cultural and creative sectors. Rather than representing simply another digital technology, AI is increasingly recognised as a structural transformation affecting artistic creation, cultural production, labour markets, intellectual property, cultural participation and governance (European Commission, 2025; OECD, 2024). Recent policy literature therefore argues that AI should be approached not solely as a technological issue but as a cultural policy challenge requiring coordinated responses across innovation, education, labour, copyright and cultural governance (PEC, 2025).

The opportunities in the integration of AI spans from the automation of administrative functions – such as ticketing, marketing, and data analysis – to the personalisation of audience engagement strategies. AI-powered tools can forecast audience behaviour, refine programming, and tailor marketing initiatives through data-driven insights. Moreover, AI contributes to curatorial practices, collection management, and even supports artistic creation, fostering new forms of collaboration between human creativity and machine intelligence. While AI offers advantages in terms of cost-efficiency, scalability, and innovation, it simultaneously raises critical concerns around ethical governance, data privacy, and the potential erosion of human-centred artistic expression. Nonetheless, AI's expanding presence is poised to redefine the future of arts management, creating new opportunities for innovation, inclusivity, and cultural sustainability.

2.1.5. Creativity, productivity and innovation

AI presents considerable opportunities to enhance creativity, improve productivity and increase accessibility. Generative AI systems enable artists to experiment with new creative processes, accelerate ideation, assist with writing, image generation, music composition and audiovisual production, while automating repetitive administrative and technical tasks. Beyond artistic creation, AI increasingly supports audience development, multilingual communication, recommendation systems and data-driven decision-making. Within museums and cultural heritage institutions, AI contributes to digitisation, conservation, cataloguing, interpretation and visitor engagement through technologies such as computer vision, virtual reality and automated translation (Council of Europe, 2024).

Evidence suggests that AI is already becoming embedded within creative practice. Adobe's Creators' Toolkit Report (2025), based on a global survey of 16,000 creators, found that 86% already use generative AI within their creative workflows. The most common applications include editing and enhancing media, generating new creative assets, and supporting ideation and brainstorming. Furthermore, 81% of respondents reported that AI had enabled them to create content they would otherwise have been unable to produce, suggesting that many creators increasingly perceive AI as augmenting rather than replacing human creativity.

The application of AI in cultural heritage preservation has introduced innovative and effective methods for digitization, analysis, restoration, and long-term conservation. Drawing from a range of literature-based examples, this study illustrates how AI technologies are revolutionizing the documentation and safeguarding of cultural artifacts and historical sites. Advanced tools such as automated scanning, 3D modelling, and virtual reality enable the creation of precise digital replicas, enhancing public and scholarly access to cultural heritage. AI algorithms also play a pivotal role in conservation by detecting damage and informing restoration strategies, particularly for fragile artifacts and archaeological materials. Through image recognition and pattern detection, AI supports conservation professionals in maintaining the integrity of artistic and historical works. Environmental monitoring, supported by AI-powered sensors, allows for early detection of risks such as fluctuations in temperature, humidity, and air quality—enabling preventative interventions. Thus, AI contributes significantly to sustainable conservation efforts, ensuring the longevity and accessibility of cultural heritage while also raising necessary ethical considerations.

Similarly, the OECD (2024) argues that AI has the potential to increase productivity across the cultural value chain while enabling new forms of collaboration between human creativity and machine intelligence.

2.1.6. Ethical considerations, intellectual property and artistic integrity

Alongside these opportunities, AI raises profound ethical, legal and economic concerns. One of the most contested issues concerns intellectual property and the large-scale use of copyrighted works to train commercial AI models without the knowledge or consent of creators. These developments have generated international debate regarding authorship, ownership, licensing, transparency and fair remuneration.

Discussions surrounding AI often centre on risk, uncertainty, and ethical concerns, particularly in relation to its implications for the creative industries and their labour forces. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that AI could affect approximately 40% of global employment, potentially intensifying existing economic inequalities (BBC, 2025). Thought leaders in AI express divergent views about its societal implications, underscoring the urgent need for robust ethical frameworks.

The Council of Europe (2024) identifies copyright, artistic integrity and the economic sustainability of creative work among the principal policy challenges arising from AI. Likewise, Jiang et al. (2023) argue that current generative AI systems depend upon artistic labour while often failing to recognise or compensate the creators whose work forms part of training datasets. The authors conclude that AI governance should move beyond technical regulation towards mechanisms that protect artists' rights, promote informed consent and ensure equitable compensation.

Recognising these challenges, Creative Scotland (2025) has published practical guidance encouraging artists and cultural organisations to adopt AI responsibly. Rather than discouraging AI, the guidance advocates transparency regarding AI use, respect for copyright, human oversight of creative processes and organisational policies that preserve artistic integrity. This reflects a growing international consensus that AI should complement rather than replace human creativity.

2.1.7. Working conditions and the future of creative labour

Beyond its impact on creative production, AI is fundamentally reshaping the conditions under which artists create, collaborate and earn a living. Rather than replacing entire professions, AI is expected to automate specific tasks within occupations, changing the organisation of creative work rather than eliminating creative professions altogether. Occupations such as illustration, graphic design,

translation, copywriting, photography and audiovisual production appear particularly exposed to the automation of routine and intermediate creative tasks (Jiang et al., 2023).

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 estimates that 39% of the key skills required across the labour market will change by 2030 as a result of technological transformation, including advances in AI. While AI and Big Data is identified as the fastest-growing technical skill area, the report also highlights the increasing importance of human-centred capabilities such as creative thinking, analytical thinking, resilience, leadership, curiosity and lifelong learning (World Economic Forum, 2025). Rather than diminishing the importance of creativity, AI is expected to increase demand for cognitive, interpersonal and creative capabilities that complement technological systems.

The implications are particularly significant for the cultural and creative sectors, where employment is characterised by high levels of freelancing, self-employment and micro-enterprises. The OECD (2024) notes that many creative practitioners have limited access to digital infrastructure, AI expertise and investment capital, creating unequal opportunities to benefit from technological change. Consequently, AI has the potential to improve productivity while simultaneously widening inequalities between practitioners with differing levels of technological capacity.

The economic sustainability of artistic careers has become a central concern within the emerging literature. The Creative Pulse Survey conducted by Culture Action Europe (2024) found that almost half of cultural professionals reported precarious working conditions, including underpaid work, false self-employment and insecure contractual arrangements. These findings resonate strongly with previous research undertaken by Culture Venture on freelancing and creative work in Malta, which identified persistent challenges relating to income insecurity, fragmented career pathways, project-based employment, limited social protection and the uneven distribution of professional opportunities.

Within this context, AI may intensify existing vulnerabilities by increasing competition from AI-generated content, reducing certain commissioning opportunities and accelerating client expectations regarding production timelines. At the same time, AI also creates opportunities for artists to diversify their practice, expand entrepreneurial activity and engage with new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration.

2.1.8 Impact on Artists

The Policy and Evidence Centre's report, *A Global AI Agenda for the Cultural and Creative Industries* (2025), argues that AI is changing commissioning processes, redistributing value across the creative economy and requiring new approaches to copyright, licensing, remuneration and professional development. The report advocates an artist-centred approach to AI governance, ensuring that creators remain active participants in shaping technological change rather than passive users of AI systems.

The rapid rise of machine learning-based image generators such as Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and DALL-E has transformed visual creation into a multi-billion-dollar industry. These tools can generate high-quality images from text or image prompts, attracting millions of users. Yet, alongside this innovation, artists face serious harms including economic displacement, reputational damage, and exploitation of their work without consent.

Jiang et al (2023) examines these impacts and proposes regulatory and ethical interventions to protect human creators. A central claim is that image generators are not artists. Drawing on philosophical traditions across cultures, the authors argue art is a uniquely human endeavour rooted in lived experiences, cultural context, and intentional communication. While machines can replicate styles and aesthetics, they lack the emotional, experiential, and cultural depth necessary for authentic artistry. Anthropomorphizing AI as “inspired” or “creative” shifts accountability away from the corporations building these systems and devalues human labour.

The most immediate harm is economic loss. Companies like Stability AI and OpenAI, backed by billions in funding, compete directly with working artists using datasets built from artists' unpaid labour. Generative AI enables mass production of “acceptable” images, displacing jobs in industries from publishing to film and gaming. Examples include Netflix Japan using AI for animation instead of hiring artists, and Marvel's *Secret Invasion* using AI-generated credits where human illustrators were previously employed. Such practices depress wages, push artists into precarious freelance work, and create barriers for marginalized creators.

Another major issue is digital forgery and style mimicry. Models are trained on billions of scraped images, often without consent, leading to unauthorized replication of artists' unique styles. Beyond individual harm, these systems perpetuate bias and stereotyping. For example, Black artists report misrepresentations of African settings or distorted depictions of Black women, reflecting cultural erasure and reinforcing hegemonic norms.

These harms create a negative effect on cultural production. Students and emerging artists become discouraged, fearing obsolescence, while established artists hesitate to share work online due to data scraping. This reduces cultural diversity, mentorship opportunities, and the overall vitality of human creativity. If unchecked, reliance on AI-generated works risks creating a closed loop where originality stagnates.

Legally, the situation is still ambivalent. Authorship remains human-only, meaning AI outputs are not copyrightable. While copyright infringement and fair use doctrines may apply, small-scale artists often lack resources to challenge large corporations. Moreover, copyright law does not fully address reputational damage, consent, or the broader social harm of appropriation. Corporate-academic partnerships exacerbate these problems through “data laundering,” where nonprofits collect training datasets later used for commercial purposes under the guise of research.

To counter these harms, the authors recommend regulations and tools. Proposals include requiring explicit opt-in consent for training data, mandating transparency about datasets, watermarking AI outputs, and restricting AI-generated work to reference material rather than final products. They also call for funding independent of corporate influence, and research methodologies like value-sensitive design that prioritize the needs of artists. Tools such as “Glaze,” which perturbs images to prevent style mimicry, demonstrate how technical measures can support artists’ agency.

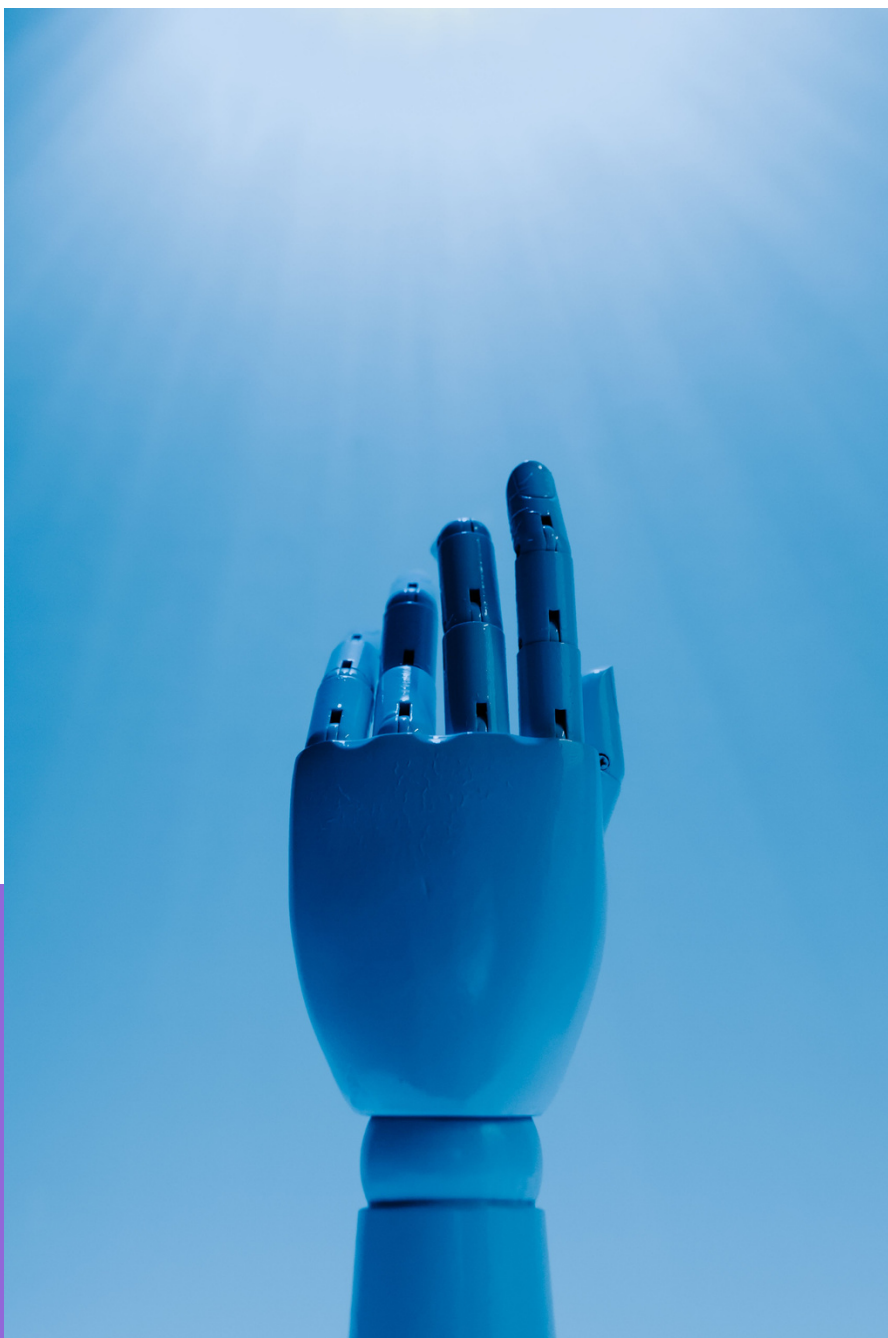
2.1.9. Cultural diversity, language and digital sovereignty

Additional concerns relate to cultural diversity, representation and digital sovereignty. Contemporary AI systems are trained predominantly on large, globally available datasets that favour dominant languages and cultures. UNESCO (2025) warns that this imbalance risks reinforcing cultural homogenisation while marginalising minority languages, local knowledge systems and underrepresented artistic traditions.

This challenge is particularly significant for smaller linguistic communities such as Malta. Advances in multilingual AI present unprecedented opportunities to strengthen the Maltese language through translation technologies, language models and increased digital accessibility. At the same time, the limited availability of high-quality Maltese-language datasets creates risks relating to representation, algorithmic bias and cultural sovereignty. Ensuring that smaller languages are adequately represented within future AI systems is therefore not simply a technological objective but an important cultural policy priority.

2.1.10. Towards artist-centred AI governance

Increasingly, international organisations argue that successful AI adoption depends not only on technological capability but also on governance frameworks that protect creators, promote transparency, safeguard cultural diversity and support sustainable working conditions (Council of Europe, 2024; European Commission, 2025; PEC, 2025). Understanding how artists experience and respond to AI therefore becomes essential for developing policies that encourage innovation while preserving artistic integrity and ensuring that the benefits of AI are shared equitably across the cultural and creative sectors.



3. Interview with Octavio Kuleszwith

Expert interview with UNESCO AI expert

The conversation between Valerie Visanich and philosopher Octavio Kulesz [1] explores the profound implications of artificial intelligence (AI) on the arts and cultural industries. Kulesz emphasises that AI is not merely a tool but a transformative force that both enhances and threatens creative ecosystems. His reflections identify opportunities, risks, and ethical dilemmas central to understanding how AI is reshaping creativity, cultural policy, and artistic labour.



AI as Creative augmentation and Democratisation

Kulesz identifies two primary benefits of AI in the arts. First, AI acts as a creative augmentation tool, serving as a collaborator that can inspire, accelerate, and expand artistic processes. Artists increasingly view creation as a co-construction between human and machine. Second, AI lowers barriers to entry, enabling people without formal training to generate high-quality artistic outputs. This “democratisation” opens creative opportunities to wider audiences.

Challenges: Quality, authenticity and Banalisation

Despite these advantages, Kulesz warns of critical downsides. The mass production of AI-generated content risks banalising art, flooding cultural spaces with technically competent but shallow works. This raises questions about artistic quality, meaning, and authority. Who decides what has cultural value? If evaluation remains bound to human-centric standards, emergent forms may be unfairly marginalised. At the same time, AI outputs often resemble pastiche or imitations of existing styles, raising doubts about originality and authenticity.

AI, Cultural Commodification and Platform Power

Kulesz highlights a larger structural risk: the commodification of culture. He argues that algorithmic curation and platform-driven content prioritise profit and engagement metrics over creativity and meaning. Culture, in this sense, becomes optimised for platforms rather than reflective of diverse identities or values. This dynamic echoes Ted Striphas's notion of "algorithmic culture," in which corporate-controlled technologies govern cultural production.

Labour Market Disruptions

AI is rapidly eroding creative professions such as translation, editing, illustration, and photography. While generative AI is often presented as augmenting work, in practice it reduces commissions and devalues professional labour. Instead of original creation, many artists are hired merely to refine machine outputs, a shift that undermines their sense of value. This change is particularly damaging for emerging professionals, as opportunities for apprenticeships and collaborative learning diminish.

Policy Gaps and the Collingridge Dilemma

Kulesz criticises the lack of effective cultural policy responses to AI. While creative practice has quickly embraced AI, cultural governance lags behind, still operating in "pre-digital" frameworks. He invokes the Collingridge Dilemma: early opportunities to shape AI development were missed, and now technologies are entrenched and harder to regulate. UNESCO's 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of AI offered guidance, but little has been implemented.

Intellectual Property and Ethical Risks

A major unresolved issue concerns ownership. Courts generally deny copyright to simple AI outputs, though more complex human-guided processes may qualify. More troubling is the unconsented use of copyrighted works to train AI models, which results in systems competing against the very artists whose work they exploit. Indigenous communities face additional risks, as AI appropriates traditional cultural expressions without protection. Further ethical concerns include bias, homogenisation of culture, deepfakes, and dependency on tech monopolies.

Looking Forward: AI as Servant, Not Master

Kulesz insists AI lacks agency, emotion, or intention, and should be seen as a powerful but subordinate collaborator. Its dangers stem less from the technology itself than from human ignorance, overestimation, or inaction. He calls for artists and policymakers to develop a deep understanding of AI, ensuring its integration is ethical, inclusive, and supportive of cultural diversity. Future collaborations, he concludes, hold immense potential, but only if humans remain in the lead.



[1] Octavio Kulesz is a philosopher, digital publisher and director of Teseo, one of Latin America's leading electronic publishing houses. As an expert collaborating with international organizations including UNESCO, OIF, IFACCA and the International Alliance of Independent Publishers, his research focuses on issues related to cultural diversity and creative industries in the digital age. Some of his articles, such as "Culture, Platforms and Machines" (UNESCO, 2018), presciently anticipated the contemporary challenges associated with the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the cultural sectors by over five years. In 2020, he was selected by UNESCO, along with 23 other international experts, to draft the text of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the world's first standard-setting instrument on this topic.

4. The Maltese Context

The expansion of digital arts, including the incorporation of multimedia elements, has seen growing interest in how technology can complement traditional artistic forms. In recent years, Malta has been at the forefront of digital innovation, with various institutions and artists experimenting with new forms of media, including interactive installations, virtual reality, and, more recently, AI.

4.1. Artists and Working Conditions

In 2023, approximately 7.8 million Europeans were employed in the cultural and creative sector, encompassing roles such as musicians, artists, designers, dancers, and journalists (Eurostat, 2023). However, nearly half of the respondents in the 2024 Creative Pulse report reported poor working conditions, including abusive subcontracting, false self-employment, underpaid or unpaid work, and coercive contracts (Culture Action Europe, 2024). Additionally, one-third felt their freedom of expression was limited due to funding dependencies on political alignment or legal actions against them for offending religious or national symbols. In Germany, artists' support groups have noted that artists fear losing jobs and opportunities when speaking out against the Israeli government.

Employment in the cultural and creative sector is unevenly distributed across the EU, with Northern and Western Europe having higher concentrations of cultural workers compared to Southern and Eastern Europe. Economic security appears to be a significant factor influencing artistic success. Migrants moving from less affluent regions to cultural hubs may still encounter pay disparities compared to local counterparts. For example, in the Netherlands, which has the highest proportion of cultural workers, studies have highlighted that women and individuals from migrant backgrounds earn less than their male and non-migrant colleagues across the creative sector (Culture Action Europe, 2024).

4.2. AI adoption

Eurostat data published in December 2025 indicate that Malta is among the leading adopters of generative AI within the European Union. Almost half (46.5%) of people aged 16–74 reported using generative AI tools, compared with an EU

average of 32.7%, placing Malta third among EU Member States. The findings also show that AI is increasingly being used for professional and educational purposes, highlighting the growing integration of AI into everyday life and reinforcing the importance of understanding its implications for Malta's cultural and creative sectors. The Special Eurobarometer 562: Europeans' Attitudes towards Culture, published by the European Commission in May 2025, indicates that AI is already having a visible impact on cultural participation across Europe, with Malta often recording higher levels of engagement than the EU average. While a majority of Europeans (81%) expressed a preference for human-created cultural content, this preference was even stronger in Malta (84%). At the same time, concern about the impact of generative AI on artists' employment and earnings was also more pronounced, with 76% of Maltese respondents expressing concern compared with 73% across the European Union.

The survey further suggests that Maltese citizens are more familiar with AI-generated cultural content than the average European. 69% per cent of respondents in Malta believed they could distinguish between AI-generated and human-created works of visual art, music or literature, compared with 48% across the EU. Similarly, 54% of Maltese respondents stated that they regularly encountered AI-generated cultural content, substantially higher than the EU average of 36%. Malta also reported higher levels of personal use of generative AI for creative purposes, with 40% of respondents indicating that they use AI tools to produce visual art, music or literary works, compared with 27% across the European Union.

Key Malta findings from the Eurobarometer

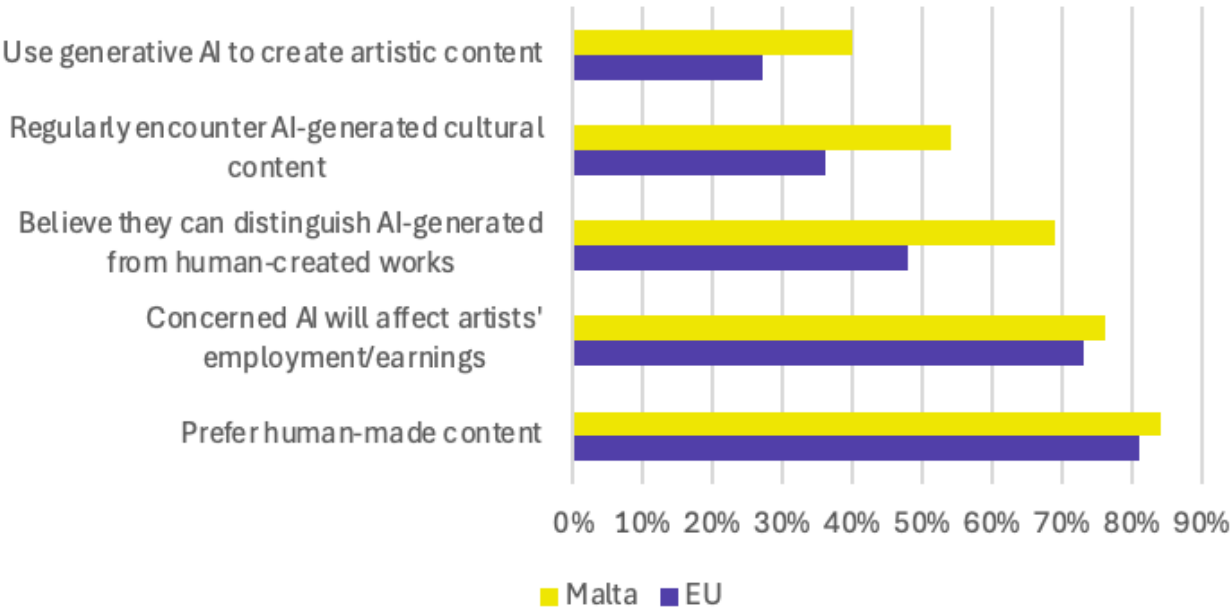


Figure 1: Key Malta findings from the Eurobarometer

5. Methodology

5.1. Research & Design

This project focused on artists in Malta working across various disciplines, including literature, visual arts, music, performing arts, and interdisciplinary fields, as well as policymakers, institutions and researchers. Recognising the evolving role of AI in artistic practices, the project aimed to engage both established and emerging artists, ensuring the representation of a wide range of experiences and perspectives. Adopting a participatory and inclusive approach, the project involved artists in shaping the research outcomes.

The research methods adopted were:

- **Survey**

A survey targeting 100 participants was launched through direct engagement with artists to understand their perceptions, challenges, and opportunities related to AI. Dissemination took place via Culture Venture's social media channels and targeted social media adverts. Dissemination also was encouraged via networks and associations.

- **Expert interviews**

Engaging stakeholders in cultural policy, AI and technology to integrate diverse insights.

- **Workshop**

A co-designing workshop was organised with participation through an open call workshop to encourage dialogue between artists, AI developers, and policymakers to co-create recommendations.

- **Conference participation**

Researchers participated in a range of national and international conferences, workshops and professional forums focusing on Artificial Intelligence, cultural policy, arts management and the cultural and creative sectors. These engagements provided opportunities to discuss emerging trends, exchange knowledge with researchers and practitioners, validate preliminary observations, and situate the findings within wider European and international policy debates.

- **Digital and Social Media Outreach**

Findings were shared through online platforms, ensuring accessibility and visibility

- **Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data collected from focus groups and interviews. Common themes were identified through repeated coding and pattern recognition, particularly focusing on key areas such as:

1. Artist experiences with AI tools
2. Perceived advantages and disadvantages of AI in artistic creation
3. Ethical considerations and concerns related to AI and creativity
4. Institutional support and barriers for the use of AI in the arts

5.2. Survey

A survey instrument was available online for practitioners in the cultural and creative sectors for two months between the end of November 2025 and the end of January 2026. Overall a total of 74 valid responses were received. The following is an analysis of the responses received.

What needs to be highlighted is that there is a considerable number of respondents who replied to as being 'unsure' or that they 'neither agree nor disagree' to various questions related to the use, and general knowledge and perception of AI, highlighting a level of uncertainty and that AI, for many, is still a grey area.

Survey respondents were 59% males, 38% females, 1% non-binary. 1% preferred not to state their gender (Figure 2). 30% of respondents were aged between 25-34 years old and another 30% of respondents were aged between 35-44 years old. 20% of respondents were aged between 45-54 years old (Figure 3). 72% of respondents stated that they have a tertiary level of education. 73% of respondents were born in Malta, whilst out of the 27% of respondents who were not born in Malta, most respondents have lived in Malta for a considerable number of years. 19% of respondents are engaged in visual arts, followed by 15% of respondents who are engaged in film and audiovisual, 13% in theatre and performance and 12% in literature and writing (Figure 4). Within their chosen sub-sector, the majority of respondents identified their role as artist/creative practitioner (76%) (Figure 5), followed by producer (12%). The respondents' main employment status within the cultural and creative sector is self-employed/freelancer (69%) followed by respondents who said that they are currently not active in the sector (but were previously active) (16%) and students or emerging artists (9%) (Figure 6). 51% of respondents earn between 76% and 100% of their income from working in the sector (Figure 7). 55% of respondents worked internationally occasionally or rarely, whilst 30% of respondents worked internationally on a frequent basis.

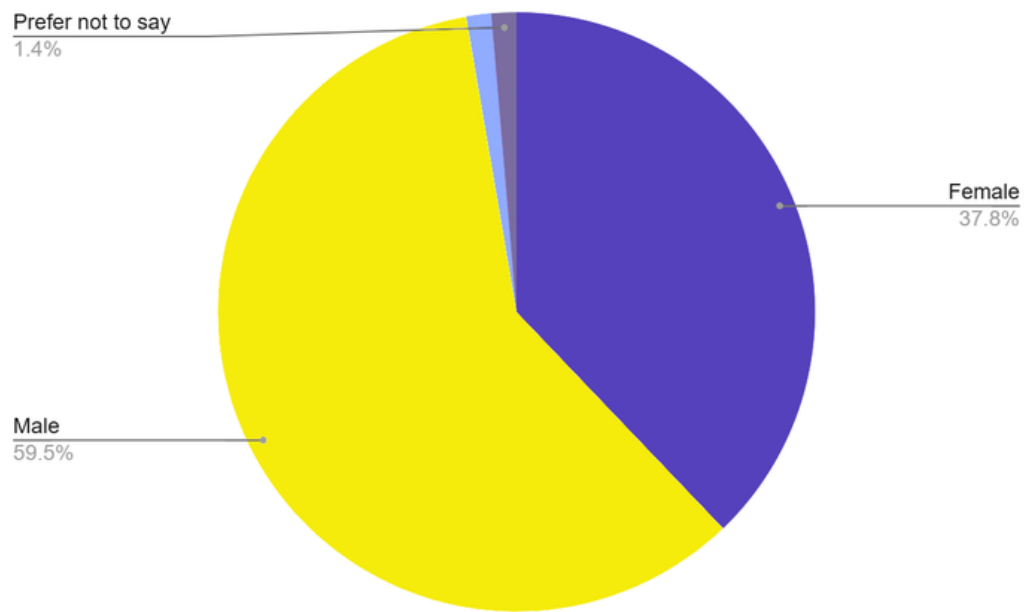


Figure 2: Gender of survey respondents

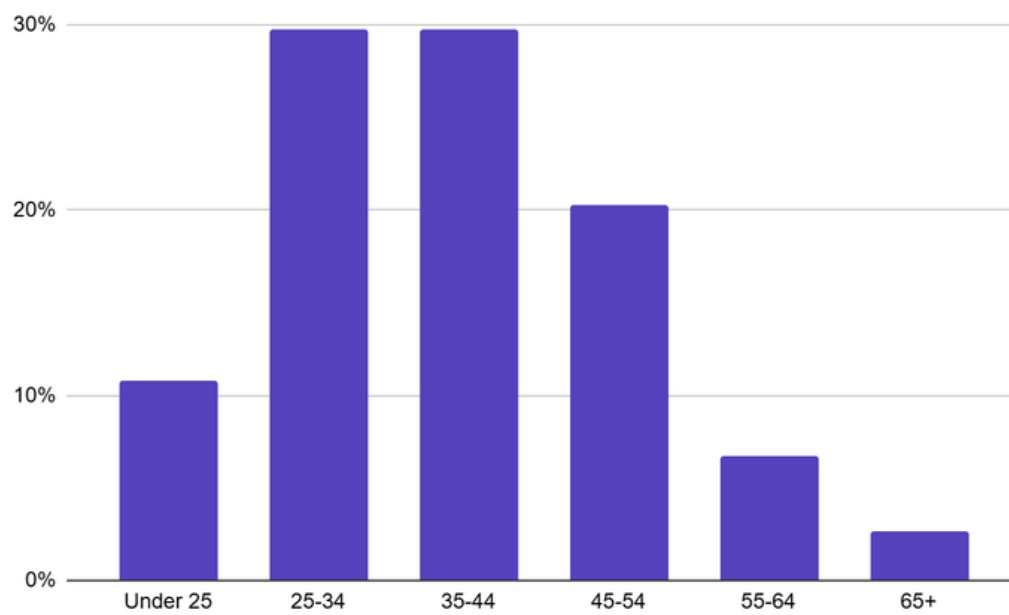


Figure 3: Age of survey respondents

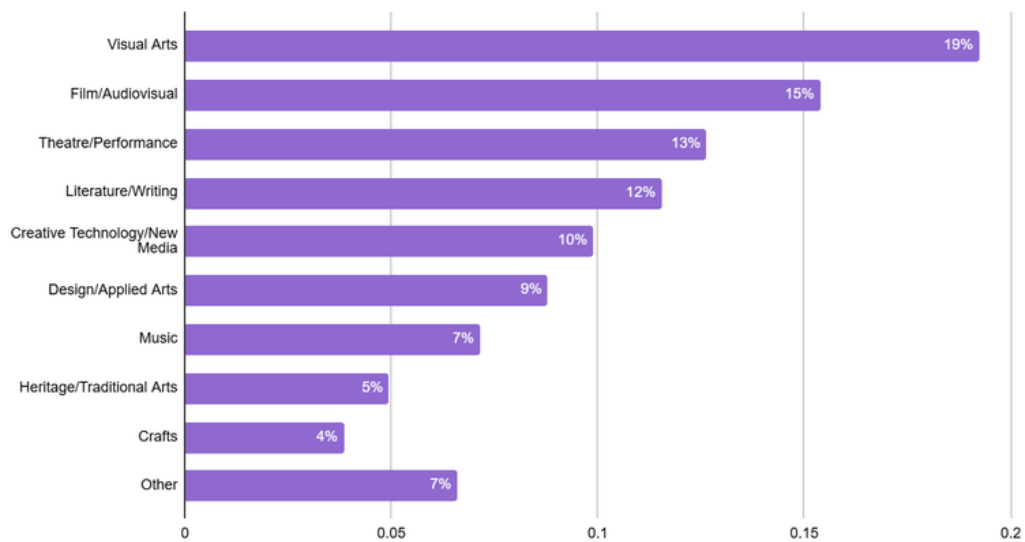


Figure 4: Main field of engagement in the cultural & creative sector

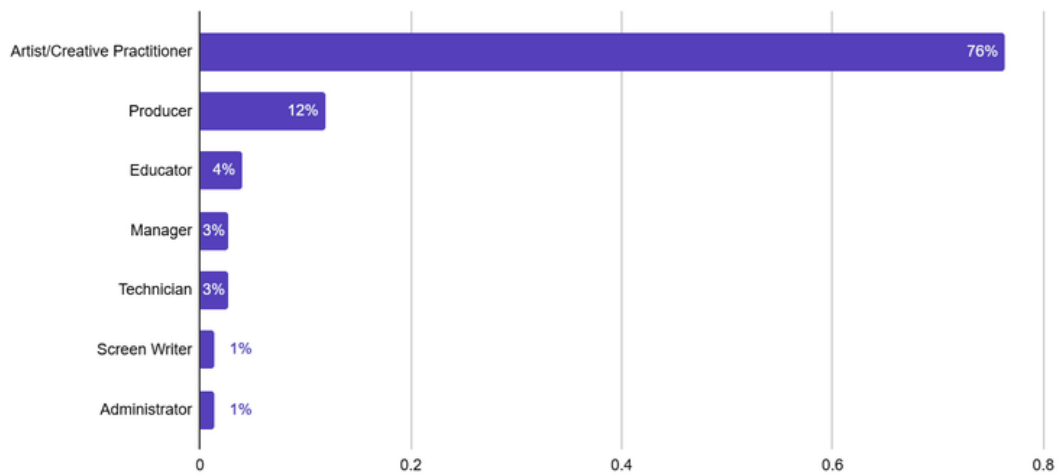


Figure 5: Main role in the cultural & creative sector

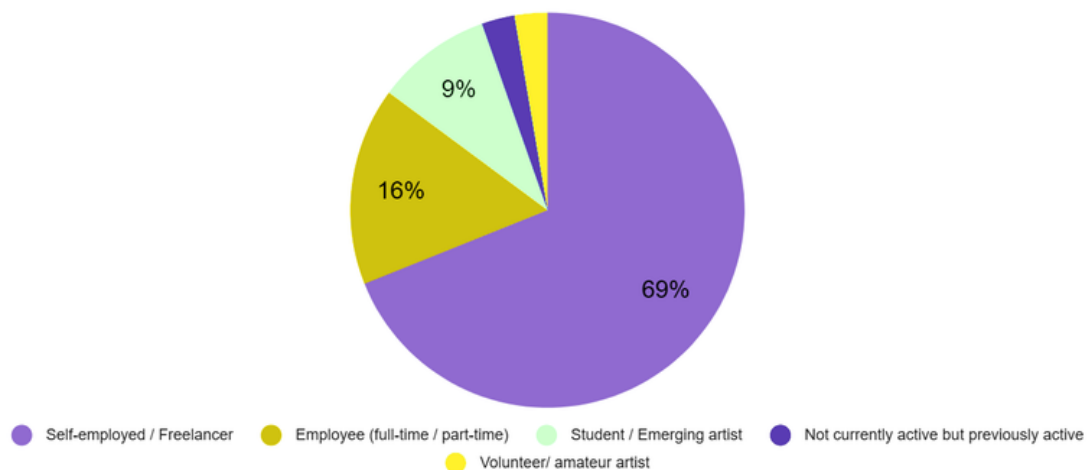


Figure 6: Type of employment in the cultural & creative sector

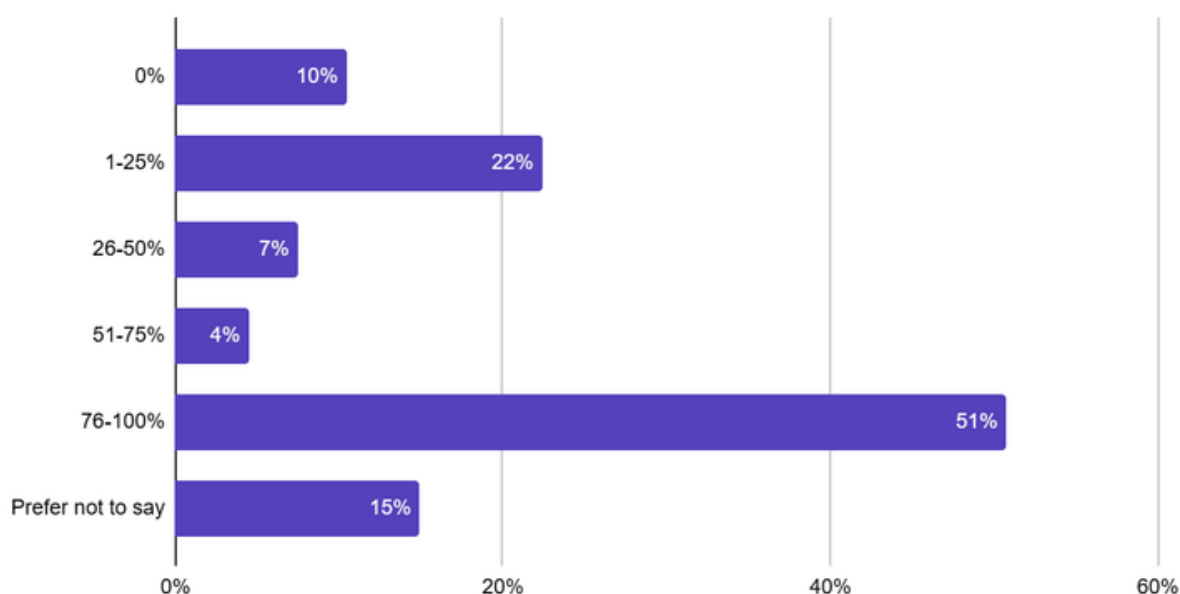


Figure 7: Level of Income from the Cultural & Creative Sector

5.3. Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with recognised ethical principles for social research. All participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily, providing informed consent prior to completing the survey or participating in interviews. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage before the analysis was finalised. All responses were treated confidentially, with personal information anonymised where appropriate and reported in aggregate form to protect participants' identities.

AI was used selectively as a research support tool throughout the project. Its use was limited to assisting with the refinement of the research questions, supporting the organisation and summarisation of qualitative data, reviewing draft content for clarity and coherence, and assisting with the thematic organisation of findings. AI was not used to generate primary data, interpret findings independently or replace the researcher's analysis or professional judgement. All research design, data collection, interpretation of results, policy analysis, conclusions and recommendations remained the responsibility of the research team. AI-generated outputs were critically reviewed, verified and edited to ensure their accuracy, relevance and consistency with the evidence collected throughout the study.

6. Findings

This project findings aim to:

- **Establish a foundation for future research** on AI within Malta's cultural and creative sectors, contributing to ongoing discussions on artistic practice, working conditions, ethics and cultural policy.
- **Create an evidence base** that supports artists, cultural organisations, educators and policymakers in navigating the opportunities and challenges presented by AI.
- **Contribute to national and European policy discussions** by bringing the perspectives of Maltese artists into wider debates on AI governance, cultural policy and the future of the cultural and creative sectors.
- **Provide practical recommendations** that support responsible AI adoption, strengthen artists' working conditions and help ensure that technological innovation contributes to a resilient, inclusive and artist-centred cultural ecosystem.
- **Initiate an informed national dialogue** on the role of AI in the arts, creating a platform for continued collaboration between artists, policymakers, researchers, educators and technology developers.

6.1. Adaptation of Malta's present artistic communities to AI

Survey findings indicate that participants from Malta's artistic and cultural communities are gradually adapting to the growing integration of AI. While a substantial proportion of respondents report utilising AI tools in some capacity, formal training and specialised knowledge remain relatively limited. This pattern suggests that the integration of AI within Malta's cultural and creative sectors is currently driven by experimentation, accessibility, and practical necessity, rather than structured institutional support or formal educational initiatives.

6.1.1. Knowledge Levels and the Training Gap

Respondents generally demonstrated moderate levels of familiarity with AI technologies. When asked to assess their technical knowledge of AI tools on a scale from 1 to 5, the largest relative share (35%) selected ‘3’, indicating an intermediate level of understanding situated between operational competency and a lack of confidence in their technical proficiency (Figure 8). Concurrently, 82% of respondents stated that they had not received any formal training related to AI technologies. Among the 18% minority who had undertaken some form of instruction, training was split between formal short courses and self-taught learning methods. These findings highlight a significant skills and training gap within the sector, despite the increasing prevalence of AI technologies in creative and professional environments.

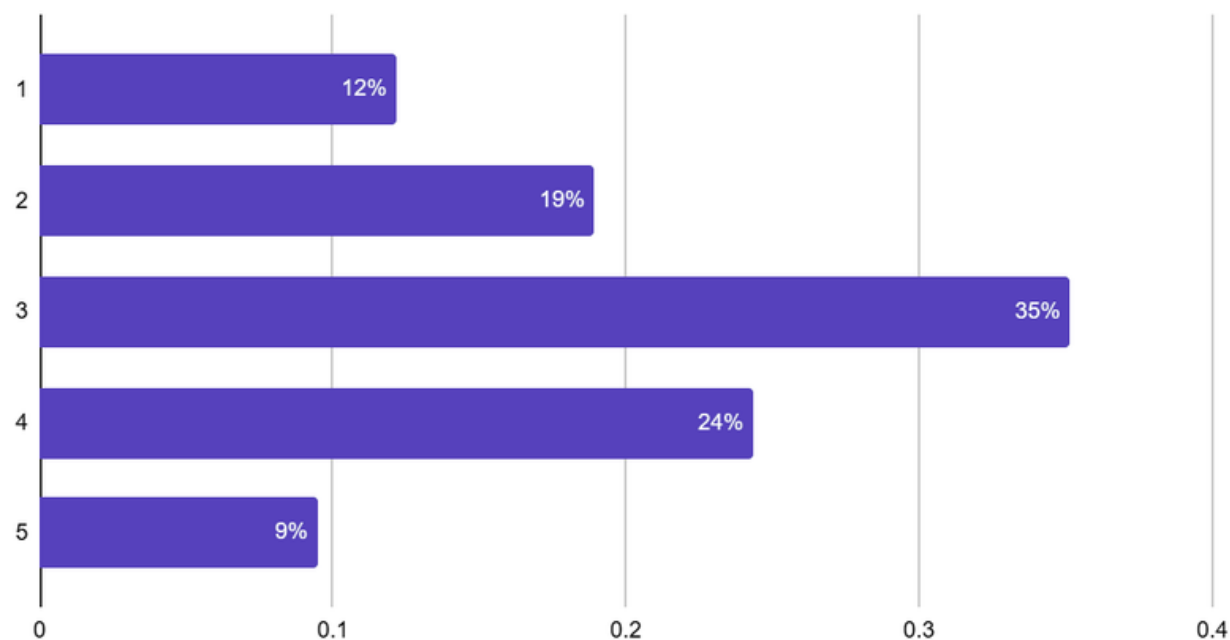


Figure 8: Knowledge of AI

6.1.2. Adoption Rates and Typology of AI Tools

Despite the lack of formal education, the overall adoption rate of AI tools among respondents is notably high, with 81% stating that they utilise AI tools in some capacity (Table 2). Generative AI emerged as the most prominent category with 38% of respondents reported using AI systems capable of generating text, images, audio, or video content (Figure 9). This was followed by automation tools (22%), which assist with repetitive technical or administrative functions such as auto-editing, color grading, and project management. Predictive and analytical AI tools accounted for 16% of responses, primarily utilised for data analysis, workflow optimisation, and social media analytics. By contrast, only 4% reported using machine-learning-enabled hardware, such as robotics, motion capture systems, or digital fabrication tools.

The clear predominance of generative and automation tools indicates that artists and practitioners are adapting to AI mainly through software that enhances operational efficiency, ideation, and workflow management.

Generative AI	38%
Automation Tools	22%
Predictive or analytical	16%
Machine learning in hardware	4%
None	19%

Table 2: Type of AI tools used

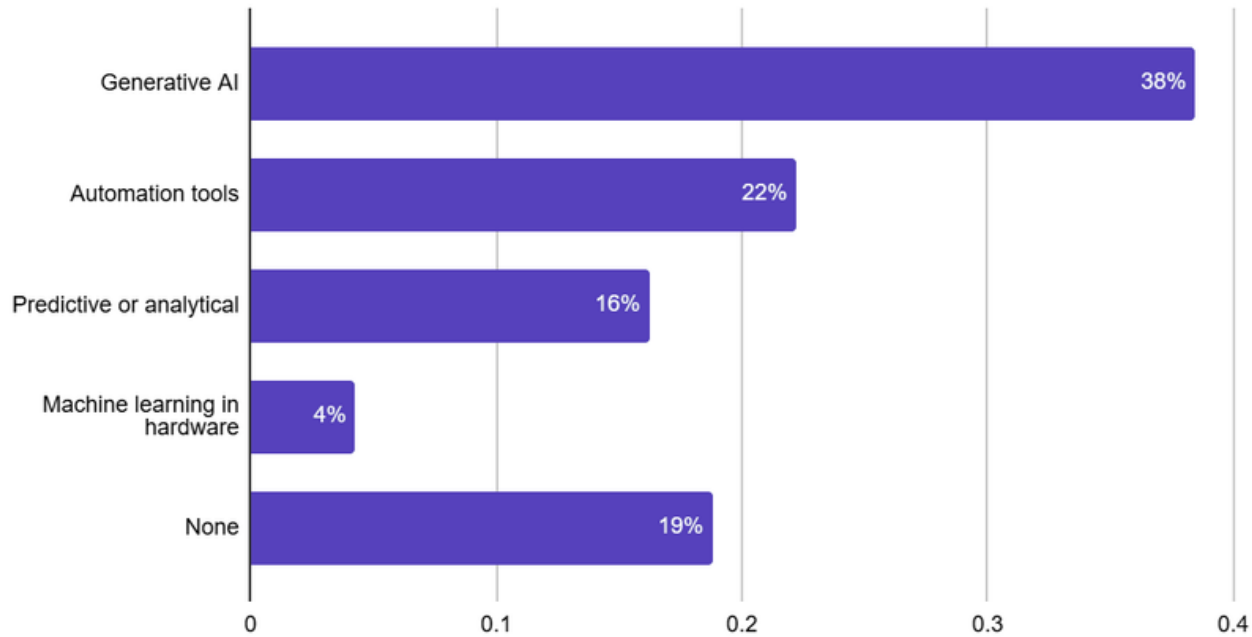


Figure 9: Type of AI tools used

6.1.3. Operational Integration and Generational Dynamics

The data reveals a more balanced distribution when respondents were asked whether they specifically deploy AI within their cultural and creative practices. 53% stated that they incorporate AI tools directly into their artistic or professional work, while 47% indicated that they do not (Figure 10). This variance suggests that a portion of the community engages with AI technologies in personal or general contexts without fully integrating them into their core creative outputs.

Among practitioners who use AI professionally, the majority do so "sometimes" (54%), followed by "most of the time" (34%) and "rarely" (11%). These figures indicate that AI functions primarily as an assistive tool rather than a deeply embedded component of artistic production.

The findings also point toward clear generational differences in adoption rates:

- **AI Users**

Among respondents who actively use AI in their creative work, 53% belong to the 25–34 age demographic.

- **Non-Users**

Among those who do not use AI within their practice, the largest segment (33%) is aged between 35 and 44, followed closely by 28% in the 25–34 age bracket.

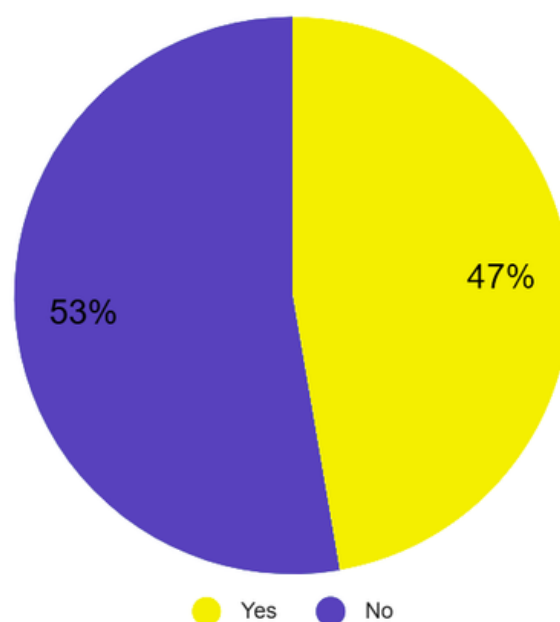


Figure 10: Use of AI in the cultural and creative work

6.1.4. Application Focus and Contextual Overlap

In practical terms, respondents reported using AI tools primarily for research purposes (16%) and generating early-stage concepts (14%). Other prominent use cases include design, visualisation, and mock-ups (9%), alongside writing, scripting, and content creation (9%) (Figure 11). This distribution reinforces the trend that AI is predominantly adopted to support the conceptual, preparatory, and experimental stages of artistic workflows, rather than replacing core creative execution. The findings also demonstrate a significant overlap between general and professional AI usage. Respondents who utilise AI within their artistic practice also reported using AI tools for broader purposes outside of work. Within this group, 68% utilised generative AI tools for general activities, while 29% deployed automation tools across various daily contexts.

Conversely, among respondents who initially engaged with AI for general purposes, 67% eventually incorporated these tools into their professional practices, leaving 33% using AI exclusively outside of work. This cross-contextual overlap suggests that casual familiarity with AI in everyday life serves as a gateway for its gradual integration into professional creative activities.

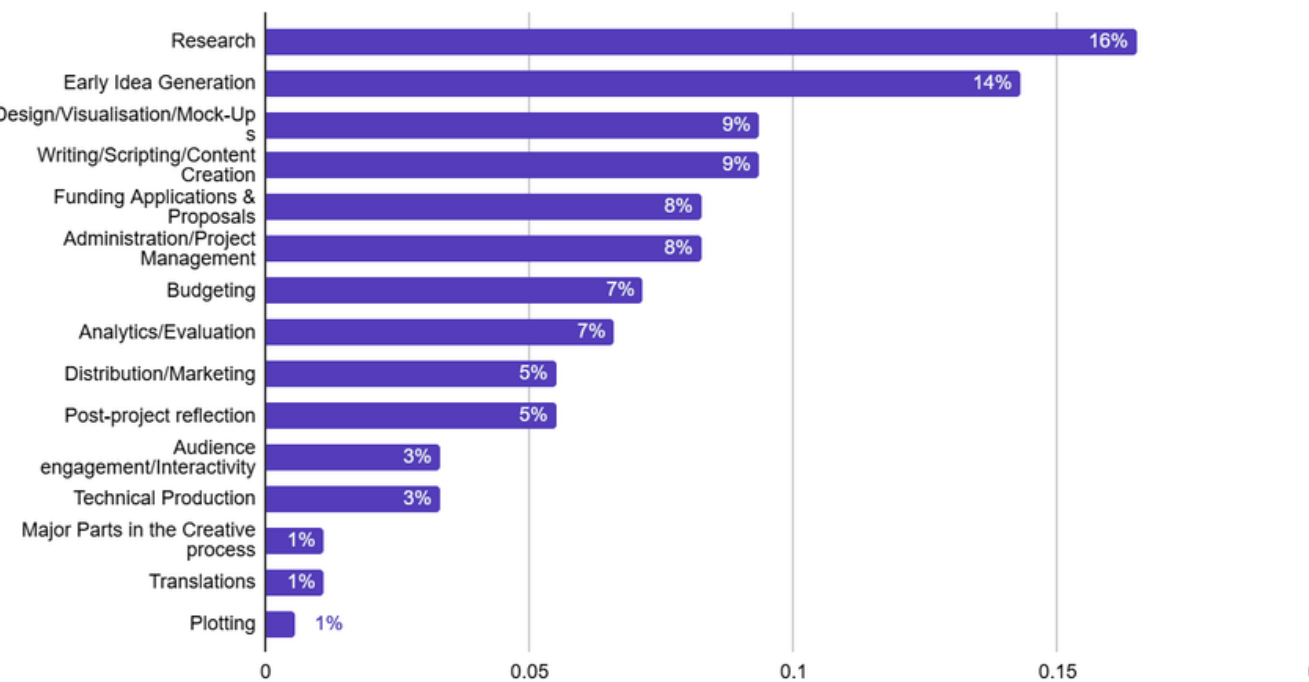


Figure 11: Main use of AI for cultural and creative practices

6.1.5. Perceived Professional Impact

Respondents generally view AI as having a positive or neutral impact on their working conditions and professional roles (Table 3 and Figure 12). AI tools are most strongly associated with gains in efficiency and processing speed (89%) and administrative effectiveness (80%). Respondents also observed positive impacts on creativity and ideation (66%), data insights (66%), cost-effectiveness (66%), and overall job satisfaction and well-being (66%).

Relatively few respondents reported negative disruptions. The principal operational concern centers on the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content, with 11% stating that AI has worsened this aspect of their work. Beyond this specific friction point, the majority of respondents reported either tangible improvements or no significant change across the evaluated dimensions.

Overall, the community perceives AI more as an efficiency-enhancing technology than as a disruptive force that threatens artistic quality or professional standards. However, the high proportion of "no change" responses in areas such as audience engagement and artistic quality highlights that the transformative effects of AI within Malta's artistic sectors remain gradual and unevenly distributed.

	Creativity & idea generation	Quality of artistic or professional output	Efficiency & speed of work processes	Cost-effectiveness of your work	Accessibility & reliability of content or results	Ability to innovate or experiment	Access to funding & investment	Administrative effectiveness	Audience reach or engagement	Data insights	Overall job satisfaction & well-being
Improves/Significantly Improves	66%	43%	89%	66%	40%	54%	46%	80%	34%	66%	66%
No Change	23%	40%	11%	31%	40%	34%	40%	11%	49%	20%	26%
Worsens/Significantly Worsens	0%	6%	0%	0%	11%	3%	0%	0%	3%	0%	3%
Not Applicable	11%	11%	0%	3%	9%	9%	14%	9%	14%	14%	6%

Table 3: AI influence on work practices and roles

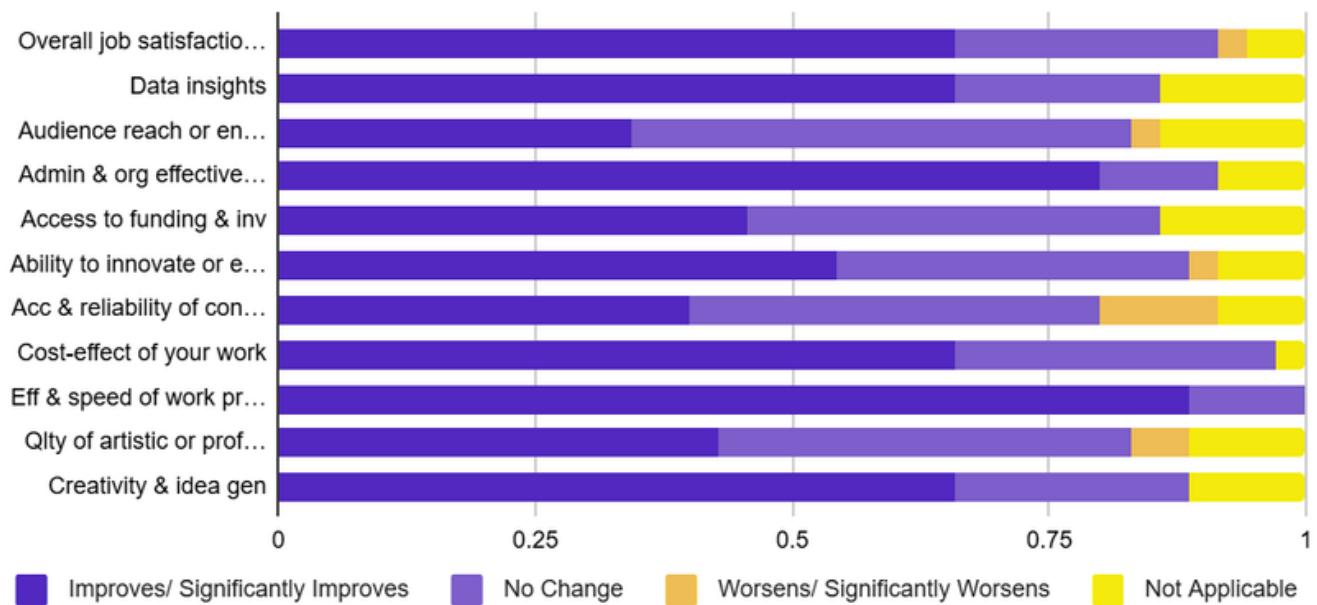


Figure 12: AI influence on work practices and roles

6.1.6. Preferred Models and Platforms

When looking at specific software applications, writing assistants are the most commonly utilized AI tools or models (37%), followed by image-generation software (27%) and coding assistants (16%) (Figure 13). In terms of specific platform market share within Malta's creative cohort, the most frequently cited systems include ChatGPT (27%), Gemini (13%), Adobe Firefly (10%), and Canva AI (10%) (Figure 14). The prominence of these specific platforms aligns with broader international trends, reflecting the high accessibility, user-friendly interfaces, and versatile creative/administrative applications of these commercial generative AI tools.

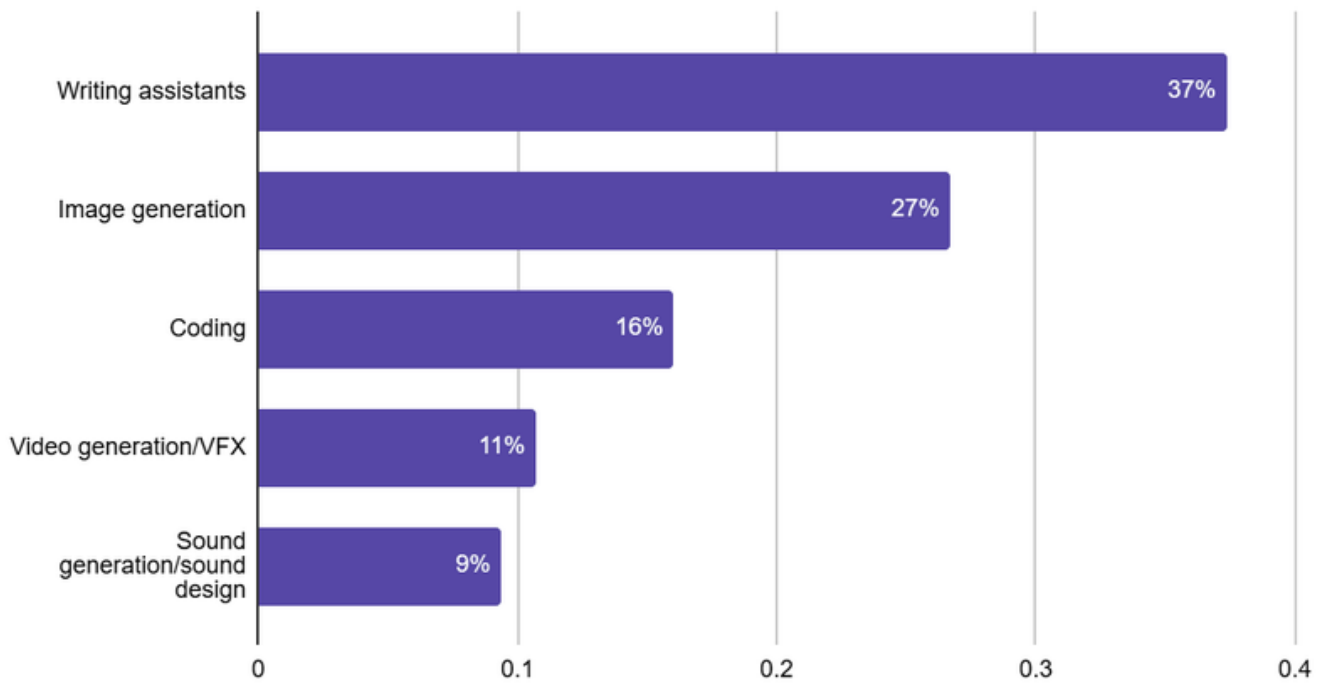


Figure 13: AI models used

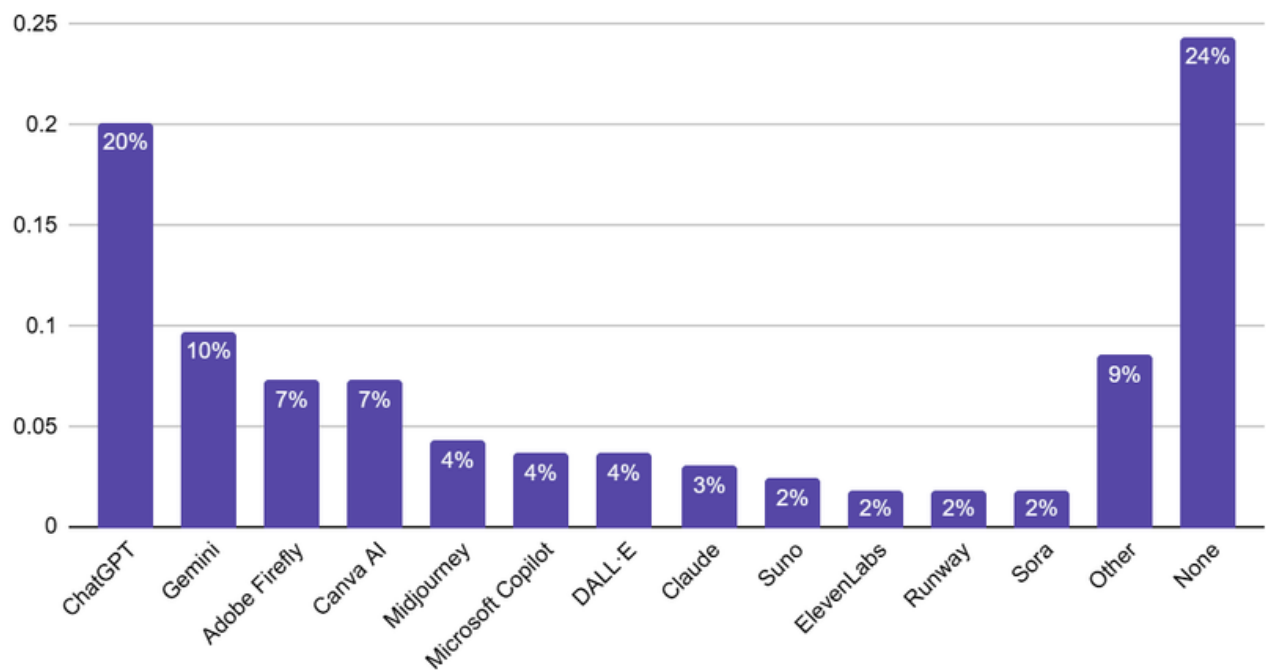


Figure 14: AI tools used

6.1.7. Overall Summary

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that while Malta's artistic communities are actively adapting to the emergence of AI technologies, this transition remains unevenly distributed across different professional disciplines and digital literacy levels. AI tools are increasingly utilised to optimize research, ideation, administrative workflows, and operational efficiency, particularly among early-adopting age cohorts.

However, because this adoption is largely self-directed and informal, as a result of a lack of institutional training, there is a clear structural requirement for targeted educational initiatives, professional development funding, and sector-specific policy guidance. Implementing these frameworks will be critical to ensuring a responsible, inclusive, and sustainable transition as Malta's cultural and creative sectors continue to interface with AI.



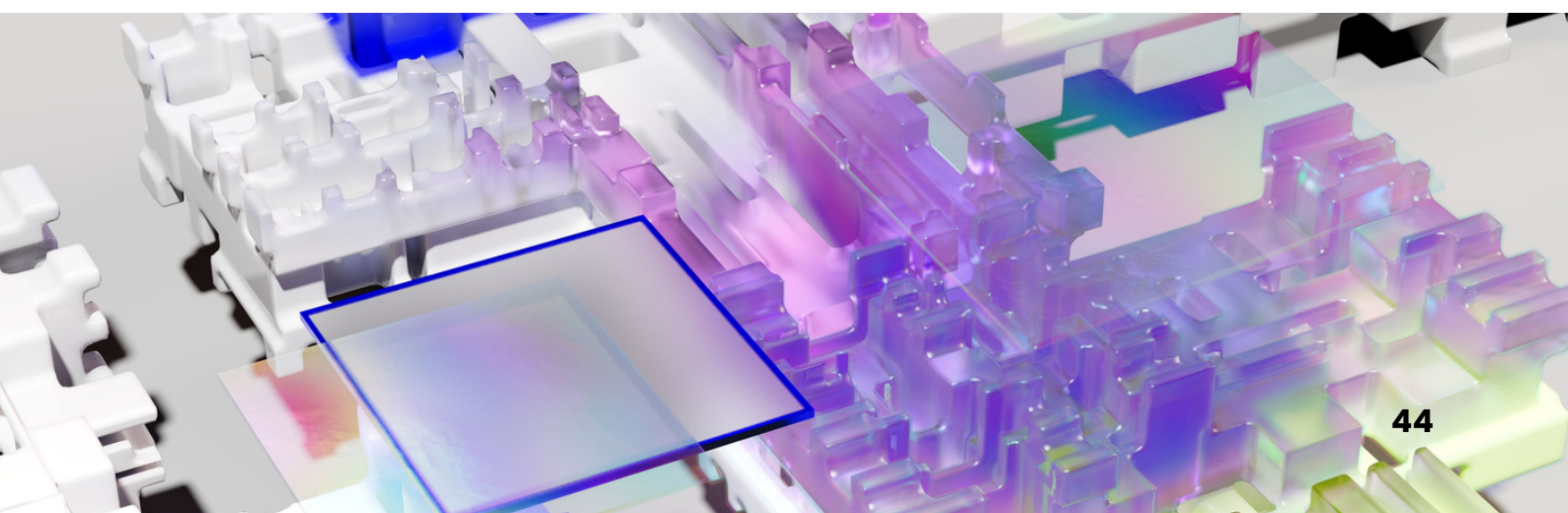
7. Challenges & Opportunities for Artists

The survey data reveals widespread integration of AI within the creative sector. 81% of survey respondents stated that they currently make use of AI tools in their practice. Among these active users, the vast majority (94%) employ AI for multiple purposes, indicating that AI is rarely confined to a single isolated task but is instead integrated across various stages of the creative and operational workflow. Despite this high rate of adoption, practitioners express deep concerns regarding the systemic governance of these technologies. 81% of all respondents agreed that stronger regulation of AI is required to safeguard creators, with a solid majority (58%) strongly agreeing. Furthermore, 76% of respondents, including 51% who strongly agreed, expressed strong concerns regarding the ethical use of AI technologies (Table 4 and Figure 15). These findings suggest a widespread perception that current regulatory and ethical frameworks are insufficient to address the growing influence of AI within artistic and cultural production.

7.1. Cultural Identity and Creative Tension

A total of 62% of respondents agreed that AI poses a danger of homogenising cultural expression, while 51% agreed that AI technologies could contribute directly to the erosion of Maltese or local cultural identity (Table 4 and Figure 15). Concurrently, the data highlights an ongoing tension between the perceived creative benefits of AI and its long-term implications for artistic labour:

- **Opportunities:** Nearly half of the respondents (47%) agreed that AI offers new methods and possibilities for their creative processes.
- **Threats:** Perceptions remain highly polarised with 42% viewed AI as a direct threat to their creative work.
- **Economic and Professional Outlook:** 43% disagreed with the notion that AI generates genuine new artistic or professional opportunities.



	AI is a threat to my creative work	AI offers new methods for my creative process	AI creates new artistic or professional opportunities	I am concerned about ethical use of AI	AI needs stronger regulation to protect creators	AI risks homogenising cultural expression	AI risks erasing Maltese or local cultural identity
Agree/ Strongly agree	42%	47%	34%	76%	81%	62%	51%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	24%	23%	15%	11%	23%	23%
Disagree/ Strongly disagree	32%	28%	43%	9%	8%	15%	26%

Table 4: Concerns about the use of AI

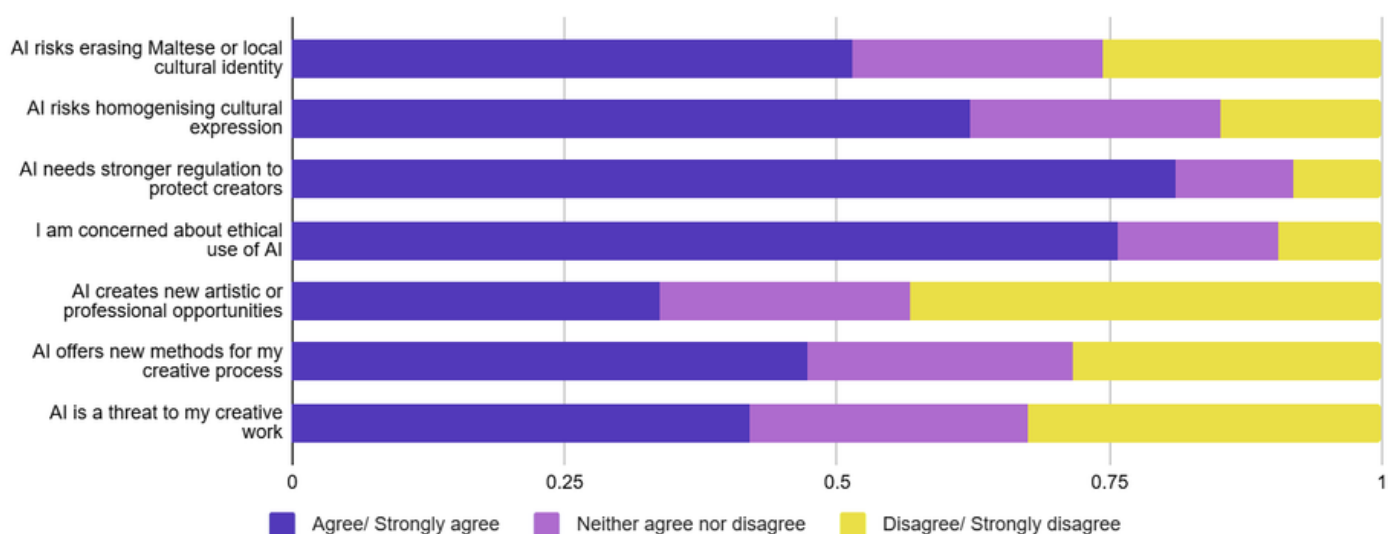


Figure 15: Concerns about the use of AI

7.2. Intellectual Property, Consent, and Authorship

The issues of consent and Intellectual Property (IP) rights stand out as critical challenges for the sector. When asked to rate their concern on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("significantly"), 39% of respondents reported being significantly concerned (rating of 5) that their intellectual property or creative work might be used without consent to train generative AI models. Interestingly, this perceived anxiety persists despite the fact that a majority (55%) stated they had not yet personally encountered a verifiable violation of their work. Furthermore, 64% of respondents indicated that they do not consider AI-generated outputs to hold the same authorship value as human-created work (Figure 16). This underscores continuous skepticism regarding the authenticity, originality, and artistic legitimacy of machine-driven content.

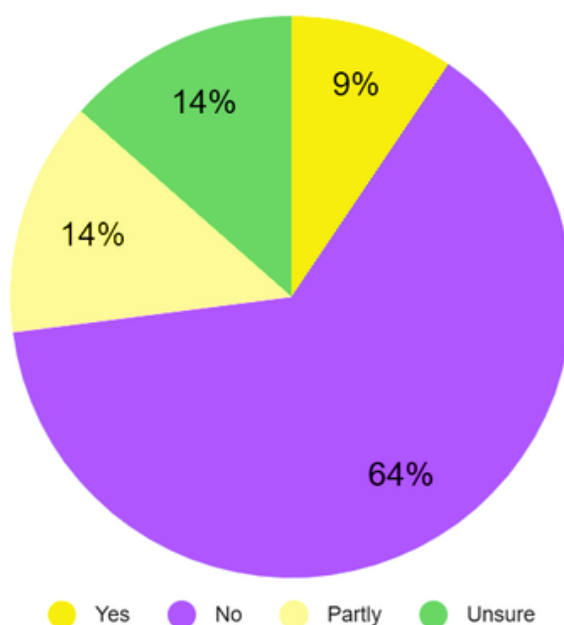


Figure 16: Concern of the use of their work to train AI without consent

7.3. Institutional Preparedness and Governance Gaps

Respondents expressed clear dissatisfaction with the current level of preparedness among institutional leaders and policymakers, noting a distinct lag in addressing AI's systemic impacts on the cultural sector:

- Local Cultural Institutions: 54% stated that Maltese public arts and cultural institutions are not adequately addressing the relationship between AI and artistic work, while 32% were unsure.
- National Governance: 66% believed that the Maltese government is not dedicating sufficient attention to protecting cultural and creative workers from AI-related disruptions, with 27% remaining uncertain.
- European Union Policy: 47% believed the EU is paying insufficient attention to safeguarding creative workers, while 41% were unsure.

These figures point toward a significant policy and governance gap, across local, national, and international tiers.

When asked to identify the specific enabling conditions required to facilitate an effective, responsible, and secure adoption of AI technologies, respondents prioritised structurally secure environments over technological access (Figure 17):

- Stronger protective legislation for creative work (24%)
- Establishment of ethical standards for AI applications (22%)
- Greater public education and awareness regarding AI capabilities and risks (16%)
- Targeted AI training opportunities for artists and cultural practitioners (12%)

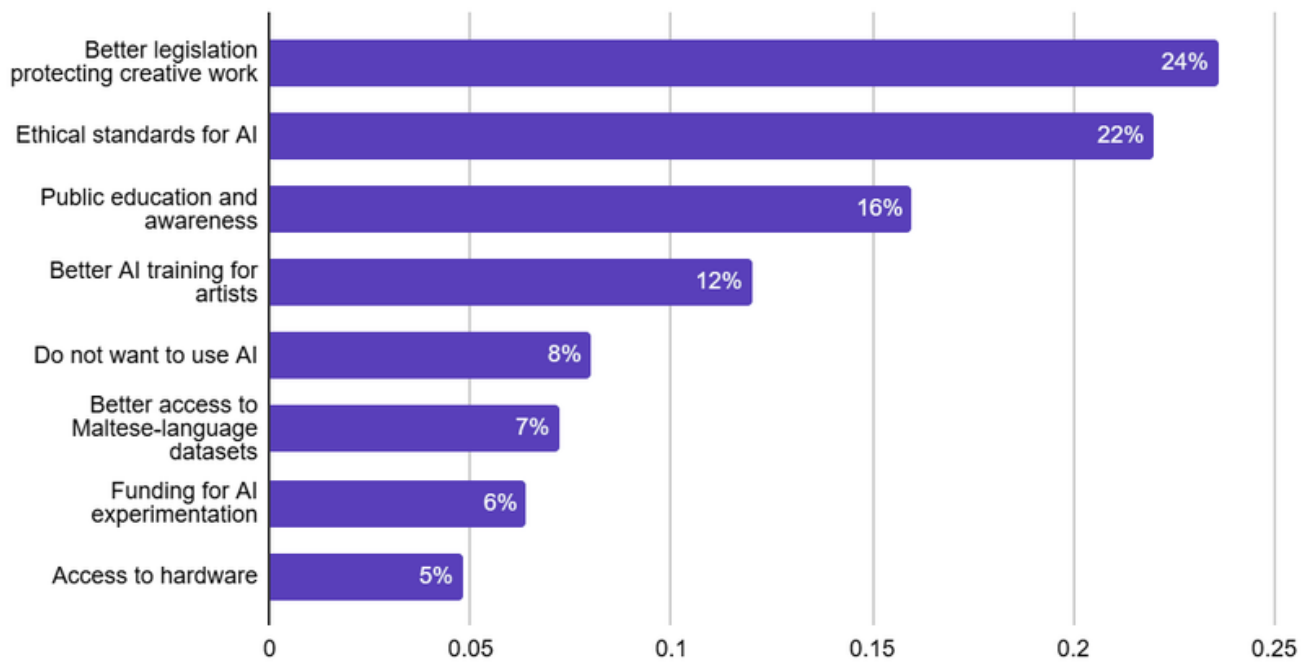


Figure 17: Conditions for better use of AI

These priorities suggest that cultural workers are not fundamentally opposed to AI as a tool, but rather demand robust regulatory safeguards, ethical benchmarks, and infrastructural support to navigate its deployment safely.

7.4. Labor Disruption and Task Replaceability

The potential restructuring of artistic labour is a pressing concern, with 41% of survey respondents considering their current professional roles to be at least partly replaceable by AI technologies (Figure 18).

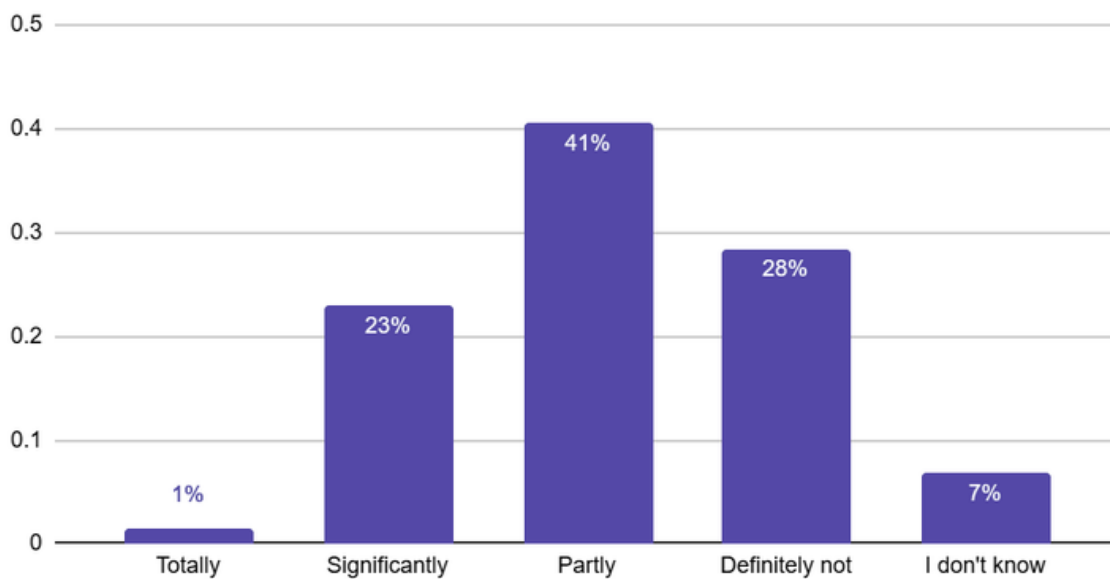


Figure 18: Replaceability of your work through AI

When analysing which specific dimensions of their work are most vulnerable to automation, a divide emerges between administrative, technical, and deeply creative tasks (Table 5 and Figure 19):

- **High Automation Vulnerability:** Respondents identified administrative and coordination tasks (70%), technical tasks (70%), information and research tasks (64%), and communication and promotional tasks (59%) as the areas most susceptible to AI substitution.
- **Low Automation Vulnerability:** Conversely, core creative, interpretive, and evaluative competencies are viewed as highly resilient. Significantly lower replaceability scores were recorded for learning, training, or facilitation roles (35%), decision-making or evaluative roles (35%), creative development (45%), and audience engagement (45%).

This pattern indicates that while generative tools can efficiently absorb operational tasks, practitioners continue to view human imagination, emotional expression, cultural interpretation, and critical artistic judgment as distinct qualities that remain deeply challenging for AI to replicate.

	AI is a threat to my creative work	AI offers new methods for my creative process	AI creates new artistic or professional opportunities	I am concerned about ethical use of AI	AI needs stronger regulation to protect creators	AI risks homogenising cultural expression	AI risks erasing Maltese or local cultural identity
Agree/ Strongly agree	42%	47%	34%	76%	81%	62%	51%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	24%	23%	15%	11%	23%	23%
Disagree/ Strongly disagree	32%	28%	43%	9%	8%	15%	26%

Table 5: Which aspects of your work could be replaced



7.5. Balanced Overview: Benefits vs. Drawbacks

Ultimately, the cultural sector's relationship with AI is defined by a calculated trade-off between operational utility and professional devaluation.

On the positive side, AI is primarily valued as a utility to optimise productivity and backend support (Figure 20):

- Increased efficiency was the most frequently cited benefit (39%), showing that practitioners use AI to streamline workflows and reduce time investments on repetitive tasks.
- Operational assistance in administrative workloads (16%) and specialised research support (12%) were also highly noted.

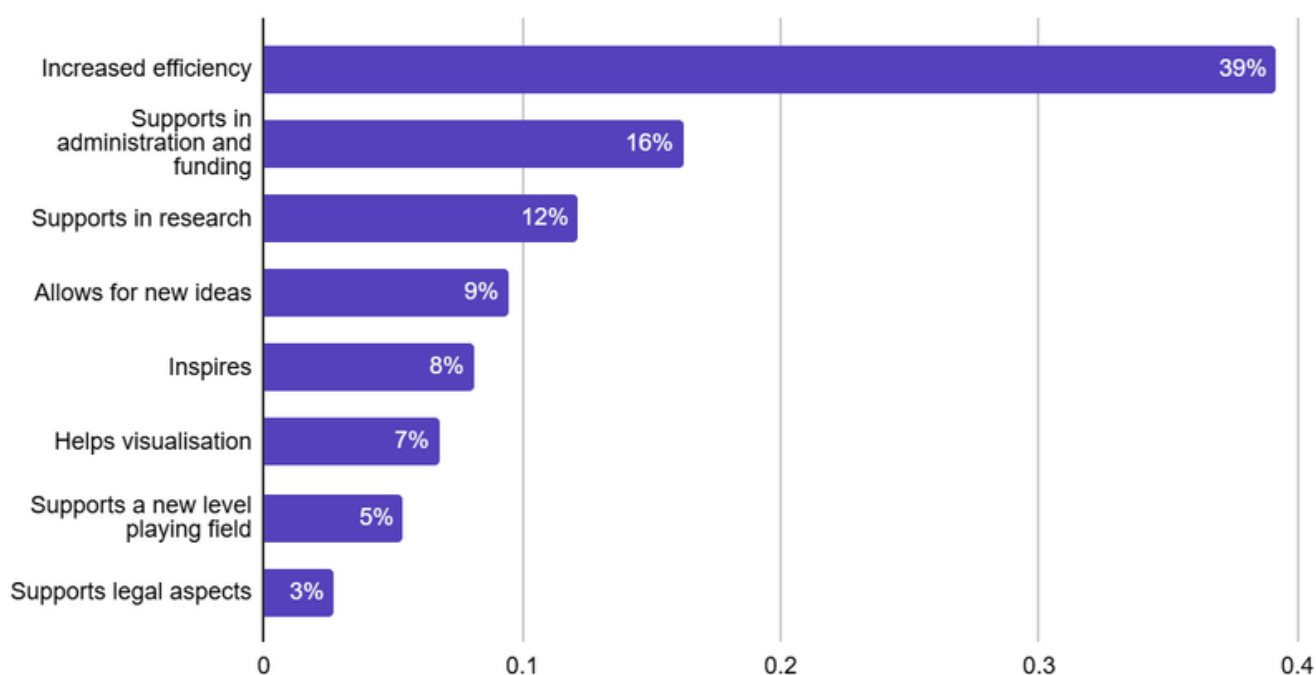


Figure 19: Positive aspects of AI

Conversely, the negative implications cited by respondents cut directly to the core values of artistic practice (Figure 21):

- **Diminished creative intimacy**

23% reported experiencing or fearing a reduced sense of personal creativity.

- **Loss of human touch**

18% expressed concern that AI weakens the unique human element that defines the value of cultural and creative goods.

- **Economic precarity**

17% projected a contraction of professional opportunities, while 16% raised explicit concerns regarding the structural misuse of AI tools within the industry.

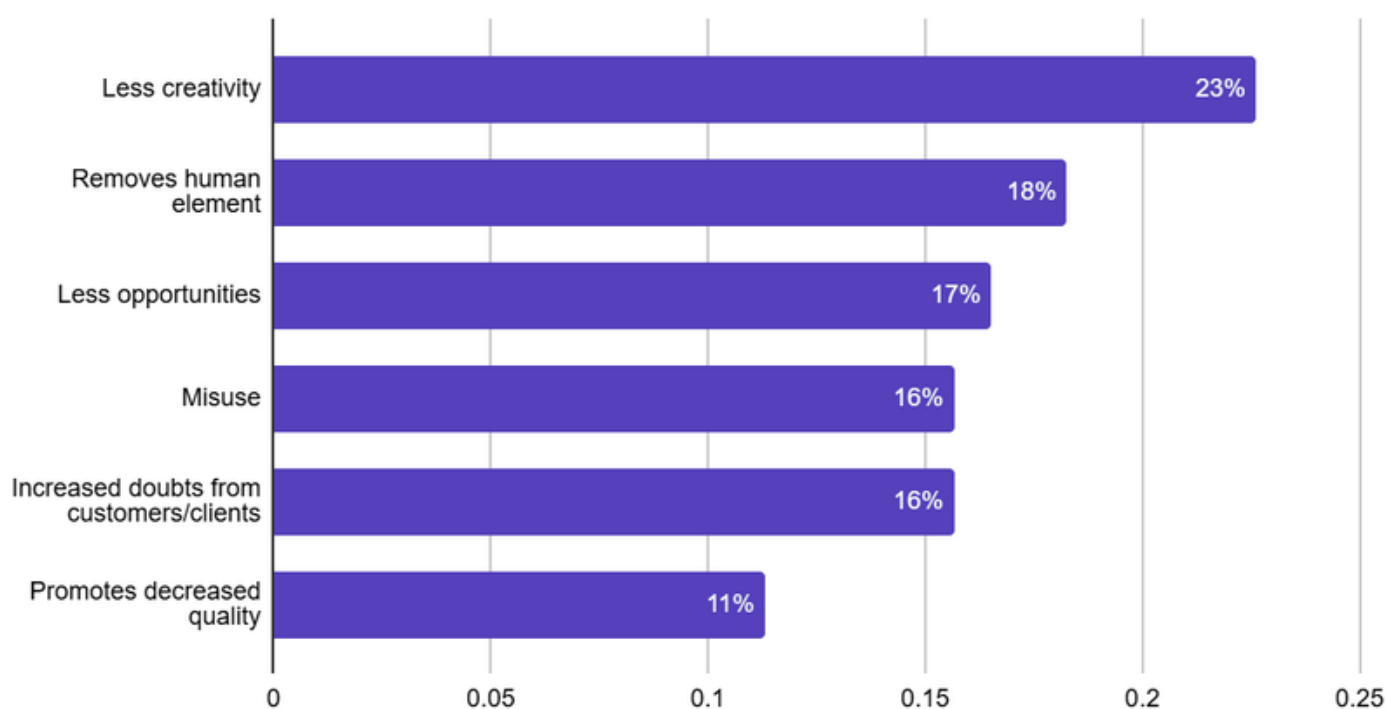


Figure 20: Negative aspects of AI

7.6. Overall Summary

Overall, these findings reveal a highly nuanced and profoundly ambivalent perspective towards AI among artists and cultural practitioners. While AI is increasingly accepted as a functional asset for enhancing workflow efficiency, optimising research, and supporting operational tasks, deep anxieties remain regarding ethics, systemic regulation, cultural homogenization, authorship rights, and long-term professional sustainability.

The data strongly suggests that the successful future integration of AI within Malta's cultural and creative ecosystems will not be determined by rapid technological adoption alone. Rather, it will depend on the swift establishment of robust regulatory frameworks, transparent ethical safeguards, updated educational frameworks, and proactive institutional support systems designed explicitly to defend artistic integrity and local cultural diversity.

7.7. The perception of local stakeholders of the integration of AI in the cultural sector & future expectations

Survey respondents acknowledged that AI is increasingly shaping operational workflows, production timelines, and professional expectations, while simultaneously prompting critical reflections on artistic value, market competition, and the long-term viability of AI-driven creative practices. Overall, the findings indicate that while stakeholders recognize AI's capacity to optimise efficiency and productivity, its integration introduces considerable uncertainty regarding professional sustainability, creative authenticity, and evolving industry standards.

7.7.1. Production Dynamics and Workflow Efficiency

When asked whether AI had notably influenced the time, financial cost, or complexity associated with their work, a majority of 54% of respondents confirmed that AI had affected these core aspects of production. Furthermore, 34% reported that AI had directly reduced their overall workload, with 58% of this specific subgroup also noting a substantial impact on production time, cost, or complexity. Collectively, these insights indicate that local stakeholders primarily perceive AI as a catalyst for driving operational efficiency and streamlining technical processes within their professional practice.

7.7.2. Interpersonal Collaboration and Creative Synergy

In contrast to shifting production timelines, respondents generally did not view AI as a disruptive force within collaborative frameworks. A clear majority (60%) stated that the integration of AI had not altered the sense of collaboration within their work. This underscores that despite the accelerating adoption of digital tools, creative and cultural production in Malta continues to rely fundamentally on interpersonal networks, human interaction, and collective processes that automation has not substantially displaced.

7.7.3. Economic Implications, Market Competition, and Labor Valuation

Stakeholder perceptions regarding the economic realities of AI remain highly nuanced and divided:

- **Client Remuneration**

46% of respondents reported that AI had not affected the professional fees clients are willing to pay, while 40% remained uncertain about whether AI tools had influenced client willingness to meet established rates. This indicates that the financial impact of AI on cultural and creative labor is still emerging and its long-term market implications remain ambiguous.

- **Employment and Opportunities**

Perceptions around job security and professional opportunities were equally balanced. While 46% stated they had not lost work opportunities due to AI, an identical 46% reported that AI tools had enabled them to expand their capacity and take on more paid work. This suggests that AI is not universally viewed as a threat, but rather as an optimisation tool that can yield new avenues for productivity.

- **Competitive Pressures**

Despite these expanded opportunities, market friction remains an active concern. Among respondents who actively use AI, 40% stated they had observed AI-generated content directly competing with their own professional outputs, reflecting a growing awareness of new competitive pressures within local creative markets.

7.7.4. Shifting Client Expectations and Professional Pressures

One of the most definitive impacts highlighted by stakeholders concerns changing client behavior. A substantial majority (74%) observed that clients' expectations regarding project delivery times had shifted as a direct result of AI accessibility. This finding implies that the efficiency gains associated with AI are rapidly normalising a fast-turnaround culture, wherein clients increasingly anticipate shorter production cycles. Consequently, while AI offers workflow relief, it simultaneously intensifies the professional pressure on practitioners to deliver high-quality outputs at an accelerated, highly competitive pace.

7.7.5. Transparency, Disclosure, and the Value of Human Labor

Practices surrounding the disclosure of AI use reveal an underlying tension between operational normalisation and professional stigma. Among respondents who utilise AI tools (Figure 22):

- 51% stated that they "sometimes" acknowledge the use of AI within their work.
- 34% reported that they "always" disclose its deployment .
- 14% indicated that they deliberately avoid mentioning their reliance on AI due to anxieties that transparency could diminish the perceived artistic or financial value of their work.

These patterns indicate that while AI utilisation is increasingly commonplace, significant anxiety persists regarding how AI-assisted work is evaluated by audiences, clients, and peers. This hesitation to disclose underscores broader philosophical and economic concerns regarding authenticity, original intent, and the societal value attributed to unassisted human creativity.

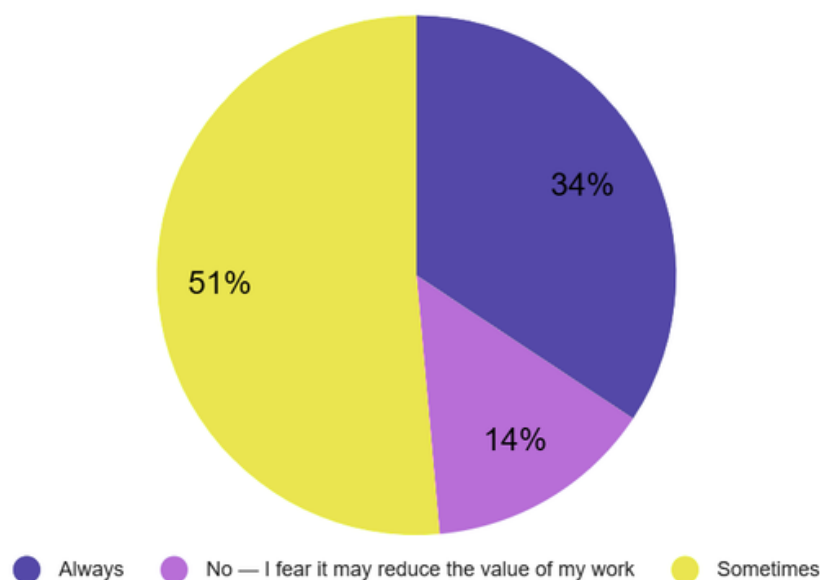


Figure 21: Acknowledging use of AI

7.7.6. Cultural, Ethical, and Generational Barriers to Non-Adoption

The data gathered from respondents who do not use AI tools illuminates distinct cultural, ethical, and structural reservations within the creative community (Figure 23)

- **Value Conflicts**

28% of non-users stated that AI directly conflicts with their core artistic values.

- **Methodological Preferences**

22% expressed an explicit preference for traditional, analog, or established manual working methods.

- **Automation Anxieties**

14% avoided AI out of concern that the technology might eventually fully displace or replace human labour.

- **Skills Barriers**

A smaller cohort (9%) cited a lack of sufficient technical knowledge, highlighting that digital literacy and limited training access remain active barriers to entry.

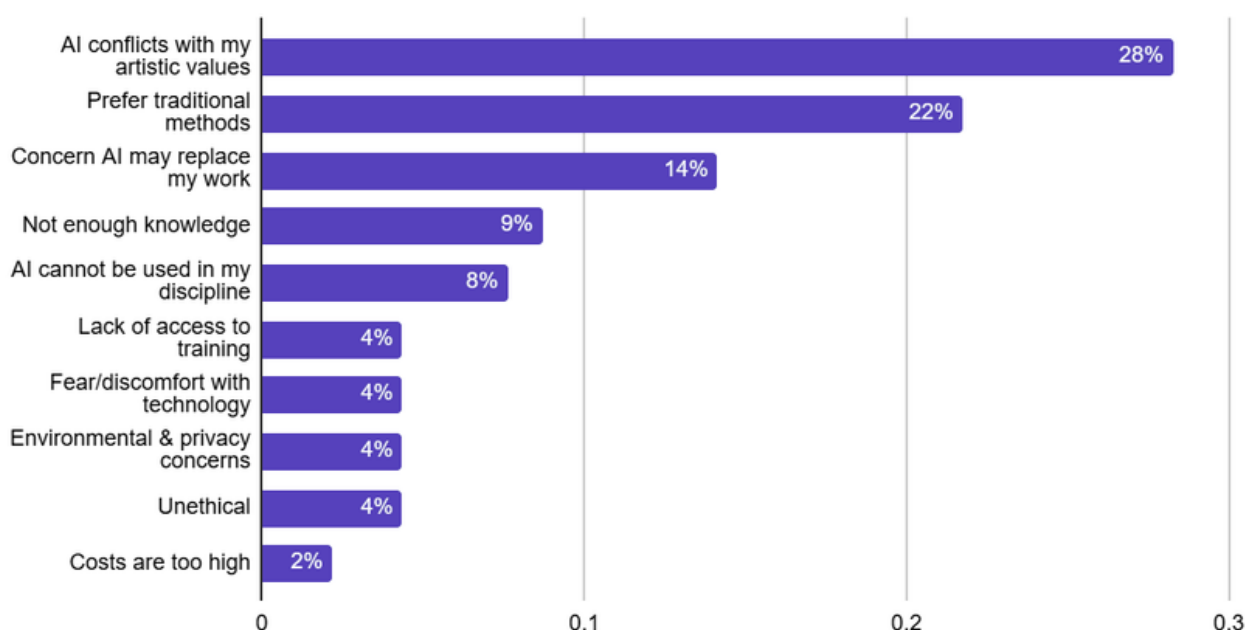


Figure 22: Reasons for not using AI tools in their work

Demographic analysis of non-users also reveals clear generational trends. The largest relative share of non-adopters (34%) belonged to the 35–44 age bracket, followed closely by 29% within the 25–34 age demographic. This variance suggests that mid-career and older practitioners may be comparatively less inclined to integrate AI into their workflows, potentially due to deeply entrenched professional methodologies, distinct career trajectories, or a stronger commitment to traditional creative practices.

7.7.7. Overall Summary

In conclusion, local stakeholders perceive AI as a dual-faceted phenomenon, simultaneously presenting clear opportunities and systemic challenges for Malta's cultural and creative sectors. While widely credited with enhancing operational speed, alleviating repetitive administrative burdens, and opening up new avenues for expanded output, AI simultaneously introduces market anxieties. Stakeholders remain actively concerned by escalating competition from synthetic content, accelerating client deadlines, issues of creative authenticity, and the potential devaluation of human craftsmanship.

Ultimately, these findings indicate that the future trajectory of AI integration within Malta's cultural ecosystem will depend heavily on the capacity of artists, cultural institutions, policymakers, and educational entities to foster technological innovation while firmly safeguarding artistic integrity, fair labor standards, and the intrinsic value of human culture.

7.8. Overall Survey Findings

The findings show that AI has rapidly transitioned from a novel technology to an operational staple, with 81% of practitioners adopting it to streamline the administrative and technical overhead of their workflows. Yet, this widespread integration is matched by equally intense systemic friction. Local creators are leveraging these tools out of necessity while simultaneously sounding the alarm on profound ethical vulnerabilities, intellectual property threats, accelerating client demands, and the potential homogenization of Maltese cultural identity. Ultimately, while automation effectively absorbs routine tasks, the community fiercely defends core creative development, critical artistic judgment, and interpersonal collaboration as resilient, uniquely human domains.

What emerges from this data is the need for a more proactive structural intervention rather than passive institutional observation. The fact that 82% of artists navigate these advanced tools without any formal training, compounded

compounded by widespread dissatisfaction with local, national, and EU governance, highlights a critical policy vacuum. For Malta's cultural ecosystem to survive and thrive, the transition must shift from anxious, self-directed experimentation to a secure, regulated framework. Sustaining the sector will ultimately depend on the swift implementation of robust protective legislation, targeted educational infrastructure, and ethical standards that firmly safeguard both the economic stability and the intrinsic value of human craftsmanship.



8. Recommendations for AI-driven practices in Malta's Cultural and Creative landscape

1. Develop a National AI and Culture strategic framework

The findings of this research demonstrate the need for a coherent national strategic framework that addresses the opportunities and challenges presented by AI within Malta's cultural and creative sectors. While AI is increasingly influencing artistic practice, cultural production, audience engagement and the working conditions of artists, policy responses remain fragmented across culture, innovation and digital policy. The development of a dedicated AI and Culture Strategic Framework that aligns with National and European policies and strategies on AI in the cultural and creative sectors will establish clear principles for the ethical, transparent and responsible use of AI while ensuring that technological innovation supports artistic freedom, cultural diversity and sustainable working conditions. It should also provide strategic direction for funding, education, research and governance, creating a shared vision for the future development of AI within Malta's cultural ecosystem.

2. Establish an artist-centred AI literacy programme

The survey findings reveal that although AI tools are increasingly being adopted by artists, many practitioners continue to express uncertainty regarding their practical application, ethical implications and legal responsibilities. This highlights the need for an AI literacy programme specifically designed for the cultural and creative sectors. Rather than focusing exclusively on technical skills, the programme should promote critical AI literacy, enabling artists to understand both the opportunities and limitations of AI within creative practice. Training should cover practical applications of generative AI, prompt design, copyright, consent, licensing, transparency, bias, responsible experimentation, environmental sustainability and the use of AI within the Maltese language.

The programme should also support artists in using AI responsibly for professional and administrative tasks, including funding applications, project planning, budgeting, reporting and audience development. While AI can reduce the administrative burden associated with grant writing and enable artists to devote more time to creative practice, training should emphasise that AI is a support tool rather than a substitute for artistic vision, critical reflection and project design. Artists should be encouraged to use AI to improve clarity, structure and efficiency while ensuring that applications accurately reflect their own ideas, experiences and creative intentions.

3. Develop guidance on copyright, consent and fair remuneration

One of the strongest concerns emerging from both this research and international literature relates to the use of copyrighted artistic works within AI training datasets and the absence of clear mechanisms for consent, attribution and remuneration. Organisations like Arts Council Malta could develop practical guidance to support artists, cultural organisations, commissioners and funders in navigating these emerging issues. The guidance should clarify the distinction between AI-assisted and AI-generated work, outline good practice relating to licensing, consent and attribution, and promote transparency regarding the use of AI within creative production. It should also explore appropriate approaches to fair remuneration where artistic works contribute to AI systems and provide model contractual clauses that help artists protect their intellectual property while encouraging responsible innovation.

4. Invest in Maltese language and cultural data infrastructure

The future development of AI will depend heavily on the availability and quality of cultural and linguistic datasets. As a small linguistic community, Malta faces the dual challenge of ensuring that the Maltese language is adequately represented within AI systems while safeguarding its cultural heritage from misrepresentation or exclusion. Investment should therefore be directed towards the creation of high-quality Maltese-language datasets, the digitisation of cultural collections and the ethical governance of cultural data. Such initiatives would strengthen digital sovereignty, improve the performance of AI tools in Maltese, facilitate translation and accessibility, and ensure that Malta's cultural identity is represented within future AI ecosystems. Partnerships between cultural institutions, universities, language specialists and technology developers will be essential in achieving these objectives.

5. Establish an observatory on AI and artists' working condition

Given the rapid pace of technological change, there is a need for continuous monitoring of AI's impact on Malta's cultural and creative workforce. This research provides an exploratory baseline; however, the long-term implications for employment, remuneration and professional practice remain uncertain. An AI and Artists' Working Conditions Observatory should therefore be established to collect evidence on how AI affects commissioning practices, fees, client expectations, employment opportunities, freelancing, unpaid labour, skills requirements and new forms of creative work. Regular reporting would provide policymakers with evidence-based insights to inform future revisions of cultural policy while ensuring that artists remain central to discussions concerning technological change.

6. Introduce an ethical AI disclosure standard for publicly funded cultural work

Public trust in artistic production increasingly depends upon transparency regarding the role of AI within creative processes. Rather than imposing restrictive regulations, a proportionate disclosure standard should be introduced for publicly funded cultural projects where AI has contributed significantly to the creative outcome. Artists and organisations could simply indicate whether AI was used, identify the stages of production in which AI contributed and describe the extent of human creative direction. Such an approach would encourage openness and accountability while preserving artistic freedom and allowing audiences to better understand the evolving relationship between human creativity and machine assistance.

Funding bodies should also develop clear guidance regarding the acceptable use of AI during the preparation of funding applications. The use of AI for language editing, proofreading, translation, budgeting or administrative support should generally be considered acceptable, provided that the artistic concept, project design and substantive content remain the work of the applicant. Such guidance would promote transparency while avoiding unnecessary barriers to the responsible use of AI.

7. Create AI innovation grants for artists and cultural organisations

Innovation requires opportunities for experimentation. Many artists and small cultural organisations currently lack the resources necessary to explore AI technologies despite demonstrating strong interest in their creative potential. Dedicated funding schemes should be established, or new strands created within existing programmes, to support artistic experimentation with AI across different disciplines. Particular emphasis should be placed on projects exploring the Maltese language, cultural heritage, accessibility, audience engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration and socially engaged artistic practice. These grants should encourage critical exploration of AI rather than technological adoption for its own sake, enabling artists to investigate both the creative possibilities and ethical implications of emerging technologies.

8. Protect the right not to use AI

While AI offers significant opportunities, its adoption should remain a matter of artistic choice rather than professional obligation. Funding programmes, commissioning processes and procurement systems should remain technologically neutral, ensuring that artists who choose traditional or analogue methods of creation are not disadvantaged. Recognising the right not to use AI is an important safeguard for artistic freedom, allowing practitioners to determine the most appropriate creative methodologies for their own practice. Cultural policy should therefore encourage informed and responsible adoption of AI without creating implicit expectations that technological integration is a prerequisite for artistic excellence or public support.

9. Establish a cross-sector AI and culture advisory group

Given the pace at which AI technologies are evolving, Malta would benefit from a permanent advisory group bringing together expertise from across the cultural, technological and academic sectors. Representatives from Arts Council Malta, the Malta Digital Innovation Authority, the University of Malta, MCAST, cultural organisations, artists, AI researchers, intellectual property specialists, language experts and representatives of the creative industries should work collaboratively to monitor emerging developments, advise government on policy, identify

research priorities and facilitate dialogue across sectors. Such a multidisciplinary forum would strengthen coordination between culture and digital innovation while ensuring that policy development remains grounded in the realities of artistic practice.

10. Promote sustainable and public-interest AI for Culture

AI should be integrated into Malta's cultural and creative sectors in ways that promote public value, cultural diversity, environmental sustainability and the long-term resilience of artistic practice. Rather than viewing AI solely as a tool for efficiency or commercial gain, relevant policies and programmes should adopt an artist-centred approach that recognises culture as a public good and ensures that technological innovation strengthens, rather than undermines, artists' working conditions, creative autonomy and cultural rights. Public investment should prioritise AI initiatives that generate clear cultural and societal benefits, support the Maltese language and cultural heritage, encourage responsible environmental practices and promote ethical data governance based on transparency, consent and fair remuneration. Malta should also invest in collaborative research, shared digital infrastructure and partnerships between artists, cultural institutions, universities and technology developers to build a trusted public-interest AI ecosystem that reflects Malta's cultural identity, reduces dependence on commercial AI platforms and supports the sustainable development of the cultural and creative sectors.



9. Legacy and Impact of Research

This research represents one of our first studies examining the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and artistic practice within Malta's cultural and creative sectors. By combining international policy analysis with evidence gathered directly from artists, it establishes an important baseline for understanding how AI is influencing creative processes, professional practice and artists' working conditions within Malta.

The findings suggest that AI should be understood not simply as a technological innovation, but as a structural transformation reshaping artistic creation and creative labour. Rather than presenting AI as either an opportunity or a threat, the research highlights the diversity of artists' experiences, revealing both enthusiasm for AI's creative potential and concerns regarding copyright, remuneration, authorship, artistic integrity and professional sustainability. Importantly, these challenges are not created by AI itself. Instead, AI is exposing and amplifying longstanding structural issues within the cultural and creative sectors, including precarious employment, uncertain remuneration, evolving intellectual property frameworks and unequal access to opportunities. The report therefore argues that future AI governance should address technological change alongside the underlying conditions affecting artists' work.

The recommendations presented in this report provide a framework for developing an artist-centred approach to AI that promotes responsible innovation while safeguarding artistic freedom, cultural diversity and sustainable creative careers. They also offer practical directions for policy development, professional training, funding programmes and continued collaboration between artists, cultural organisations, researchers, educators and policymakers.

The findings should also be considered within the limitations of the study. The research captures artists' perceptions at a particular moment in the rapid evolution of AI technologies and primarily reflects self-reported experiences rather than longitudinal evidence. While providing valuable insights into the Maltese context, certain artistic disciplines are underrepresented and the findings should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of the entire cultural sector.

The survey generated a more modest response rate than studies such as artists' working conditions. This may itself reflect the current stage of AI adoption within the sector. Unlike remuneration or employment, which affects all artists, AI remains an emerging area of practice characterised by varying levels of awareness, confidence and perceived relevance across disciplines. The findings therefore suggest that engagement with AI remains uneven, reinforcing the need for continued monitoring as technologies become more embedded within professional practice.

A further observation emerging from both the survey and expert interviews concerns the technological ecosystem within which artists engage with AI. Participants predominantly referred to commercially available platforms developed by a relatively small number of large, predominantly non-European technology companies, with limited awareness of open-source, public-interest or European alternatives. This raises broader questions concerning digital sovereignty, cultural diversity and the representation of smaller linguistic communities, highlighting the importance of investing in Maltese-language resources, ethical cultural data governance and stronger European collaboration. Future research should build upon this baseline by monitoring how AI adoption evolves across artistic disciplines, career stages and organisational contexts.

Ultimately, the legacy of this research lies not only in documenting the relationship between AI and Malta's artistic community, but in opening an informed conversation about how AI can best support the cultural and creative sectors. By placing artists' experiences, concerns and aspirations at the centre of this discussion, the report provides insights for future policy and practice. Rather than advocating for or against AI, it seeks to enable informed decision-making that allows Malta to harness AI's creative, educational and societal potential while addressing the ethical, legal and professional challenges it presents. In doing so, the report encourages a vision of AI that strengthens artistic practice, protects creators' rights and contributes to a resilient, innovative and culturally distinctive creative ecosystem.



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