

WeTransfer

IDEAS REPORT '21





We asked over 10,000
people from 135 countries
**how 2021 transformed
their creative worlds.**

Look out—the balance of creative power
is shifting under pressure.

Intro from our CCO

I started working with brands at the turn of the century, spending years at agencies until I started my own. Back then, we expected the creative industry to automatically evolve with the times—but I've learned instead that honest change takes honest communication.

That's why we started the Ideas Report, a conversation with our global creative community about what they're really thinking, feeling, and doing. → **Four years on, this year's Ideas Report confirms the industry hasn't changed—enough.** 😞

I get it. Change is hard. We can adjust ourselves and our peers at the drop of a hat, but long-

term change—that's where it gets tricky. It takes perseverance and focus, and let's be honest, a lot of us creative types are generalists who—*ooh look there's a new NFT drop from Homer and Balenciaga*—d'oh, get easily distracted.

Those of us who define ourselves as creatives (or work in creative industries) are complicated beasts, plagued by insecurity, arrogance, self doubt, brilliance, and indifference.

But I wouldn't change it for the world. My daughter says, "without darkness there is no light," and she knows. My kids are 13 and 15, and their self awareness is tenfold that of mine. That introspection, especially from younger generations, is vivid in this year's Ideas Report.

→ **In 2021, we solidified a few truths** 🌐—that creatives and clients are seemingly at

odds (despite their respect for each other), young people are (as usual) taking the fall, and progress doesn't come easy.

→ **However, we also learned a few new things. We're rejecting the awards industry. We're hearing from new voices. We're doing away with egos.** 😊

So will no one turn up to the Emmys next year? Will Cannes be a ghost town in June? I don't want to give it all away, but there are some learnings in this year's report that should make us all think.

About what? That's up to you.

WORDS BY
DAMIAN BRADFIELD

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
CO-FOUNDER | PRESIDENT

Methodology

METHODOLOGY



The be-all and end-all of creative reports

Our annual Ideas Report is one of the world's largest studies about the creative workforce, digging into the minds of creatives (and clients) from almost every corner of the planet.

In July and August of 2021, we asked over 10,000 people from 135 countries **how their creative worlds have changed in the past year.**

United Kingdom, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Italy, France, United States, Germany, Netherlands, Canada, Spain, Portugal, Colombia, Argentina, Poland, Turkey, Belgium, Greece, Australia, Romania, The Philippines, United Arab Emirates, Chile, Pakistan, Peru, China, Afghanistan, Austria, Malaysia, Serbia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Switzerland, Ecuador, Ireland, Kenya, Bulgaria, Denmark, Slovenia, Hungary, Israel, Albania, Singapore, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, New Zealand, Uruguay, Croatia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Japan, Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Czech Republic, Finland, Ukraine, Venezuela, Algeria, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic, Jordan, Qatar, Egypt, Bolivia, American Samoa, Ghana, Panama, Vietnam, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Georgia, South Korea, Slovakia, Taiwan, Honduras, Jamaica, Nepal, Angola, Malta, Namibia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Andorra, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Puerto Rico, Azerbaijan, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Mozambique, Paraguay, El Salvador, Kuwait, Latvia, Mauritius, Oman, Macedonia, Tanzania, Europa Island, Antilles, Antarctica, Armenia, Estonia, Ethiopia, Botswana, Fiji, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Belarus, Tunisia, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Belize, Burma, Iceland, Madagascar, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Barbados, Bassas da India, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, The Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), Guyana, Reunion, Suriname, Zambia, Bermuda, British Indian Ocean Territory, Cape Verde, Cook Islands, Cote d'Ivoire, French Polynesia, French Southern and Antarctic Lands, Micronesia, Federated States of Moldova, Sudan, Anguilla, Bhutan, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Cuba, Grenada, Guinea, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Maldives, New Caledonia, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Cayman Islands, Central African Republic, Gabon, Gambia, Guadeloupe, Guam, Guernsey, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Juan de Nova Island, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malawi, Mali, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Solomon Islands, Spratly Islands, Swaziland, Vanuatu, West Bank, Yemen, British Virgin Islands, Burundi, Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Faroe Islands, Gaza Strip, Glorioso Islands, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Jan Mayen, Kiribati, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Martinique, Mauritania, Mayotte, Monaco, Norfolk Island, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Tonga, Tuvalu, Virgin Islands, Wallis and Futuna

METHODOLOGY



2020 was a game-changer. This year was no different.

We want to thank all of you who soldiered through as we quizzed you about your work life, got nosy with personal questions, and wondered how your ideas were holding up this year. Creativity is a tough thing to pin down, but we'd like to think of it as "a constant belief that things can be done better or differently." So, we asked you about it—what are you doing now? And what would you like to be doing better (or differently)?

We partnered with a research agency, TRIPTK, and Strategy Consultant Traci Lupo to conduct our survey online in July and August of 2021, hoping some of you were willing to let us into your brains for a few minutes. In the end, people from all seven continents shared their thoughts with us (even those of you chillin' in Antarctica). 32% of you are getting back to normal from the pandemic, but a fair few are still in the thick of it or are just plain unsure of what is going on.

We saw perspectives from filmmakers, designers, musical artists, photographers, tech gods, marketing gurus, and PR maestros (the list goes on). Designers, for the third year in a row, showed up the most, toppling their previous record of 16% of respondents with a whopping 31% this

year. We see you. We appreciate you. You're really making it pop in 2021.

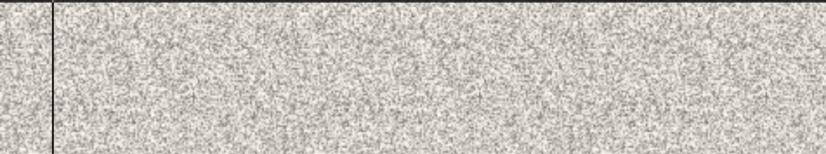
After crunching some numbers and organizing mountains of data, we finally have our answers. In this year's report, anything 5% and above is considered statistically significant. We also brought in some experts to shine light on our findings and suggest ways to move forward. To put it plainly, there was a lot to take in—but more came out of it than we ever expected.

We're seeing divisive results. We're seeing shifts in creative power. We're seeing who's coming out on top, and who's falling behind.

But enough teasing. Let's dig into this year's findings.

Q1

THERE'S
A NEW
CREATIVE
WORLD
ORDER





There's a
new creative
world order

Creativity is dying in the West—make way for younger, bolder challengers.

In an explosion of confidence and pure gumption, → **creatives from Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia are 12% more likely to take risks than their Western counterparts, 11% more confident in their ideas, and 11% more optimistic about their careers.** 😊

It's inspiring (and mind blowing) to see such creative spirit from countries that have been, and continue to be, severely impacted by the pandemic, a strong testament to last year's findings—when the going gets tough, the tough gets creative.

Meanwhile, creatives in the US, UK, France, Germany, and Canada are stagnating (and, well, growing old). → **55% of creatives in the US are over 45 years old, versus only around 30% in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.** 🌐

They're also taking fewer creative gambles.

It looks like the West is getting comfortable, preferring to rest in what's familiar—we wonder if it's an effective survival strategy in these uncertain times, or if it will amount to a whole lot of “meh”. Time will tell.

SUPPORTING DATA

When it comes to Mexican, Brazilian, and Colombian creatives—

38%

earn less than \$10k per year (vs 21% in the West)

53%

are working from home (vs 45% in the West)

DEMOGRAPHIC

Young Latin American creatives

FUN FACT 

INDIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND NIGERIA ARE ALSO FEELING MORE CREATIVE THAN WESTERN COUNTRIES. LOOK OUT—THE RACE IS ON.

SNAP THIS 

Creativity is dying in the West—make way for younger, bolder challengers

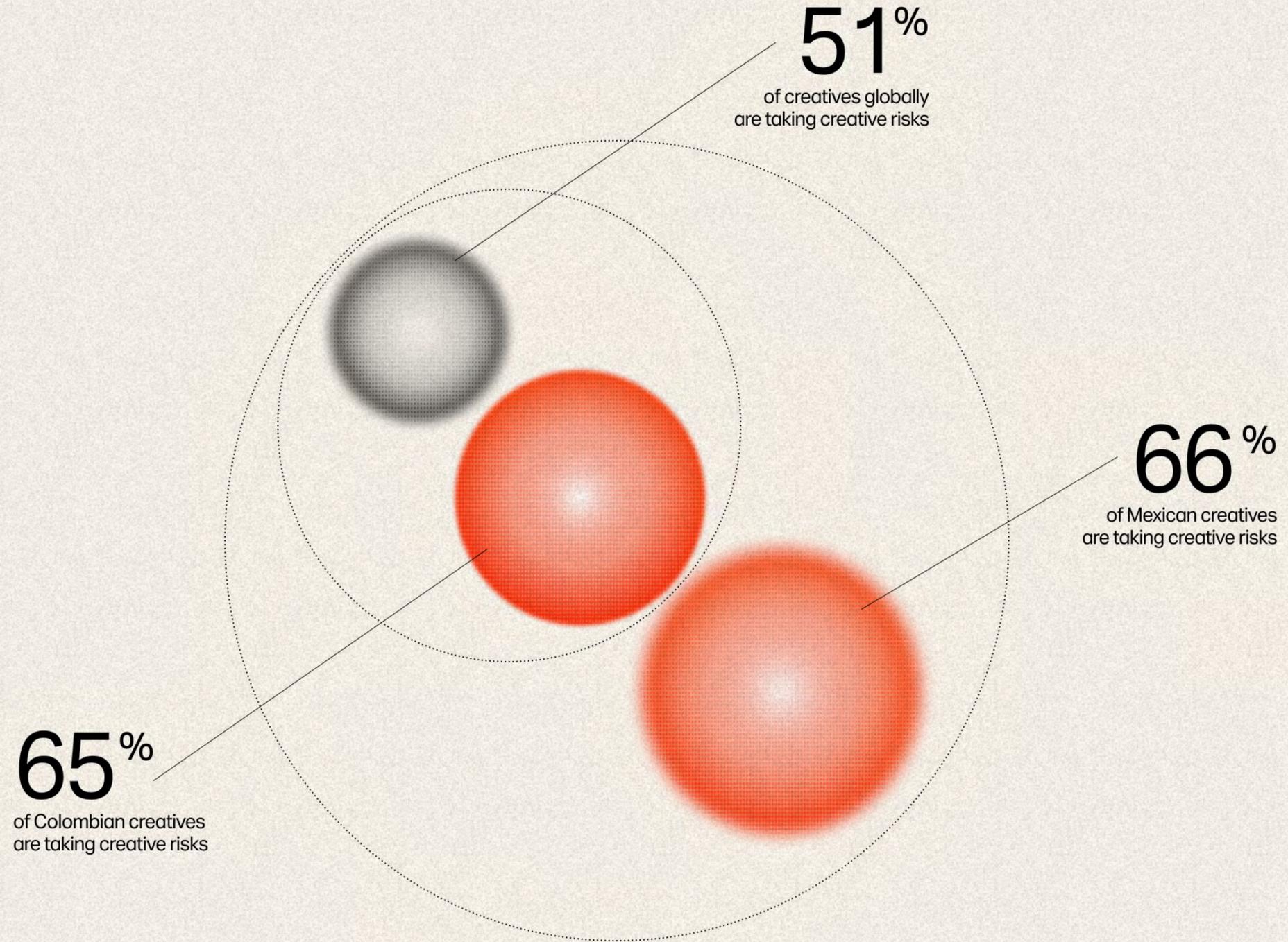


Creatives in Latin America are **12% more likely to take risks** than their Western counterparts, **11% more confident in their ideas**, and **11% more optimistic** about their careers.

WeTransfer IR'21



Creative progress demands an element of risk—and Latin America is delivering



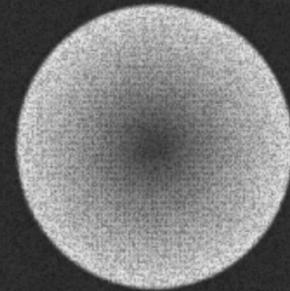


Latin American creatives are pushing their boundaries more than those in Europe and North America

Europe and North America

1 in 3

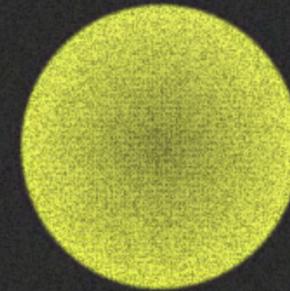
creatives are only willing to take the same amount of creative risk as before the pandemic



Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Peru

2 in 3

creatives are taking more creative risks since the pandemic



WORDS OF WISDOM

“



“As a Latinx creative, you quickly realize you’re not just concepting. You’re part of the craft. You’re an artisan.”

WORDS BY FELIPE RIBEIRO

EXECUTIVE
CREATIVE
DIRECTOR

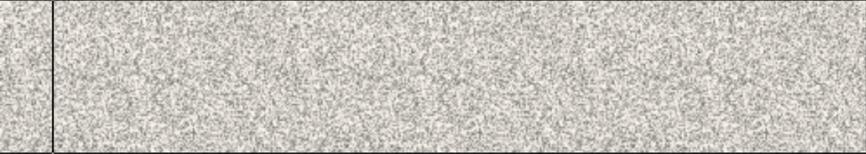
READ THE ESSAY 

Yup, this is a magic button. Click it.



Q2

GEN Z
UNDER
PRESSURE



02—05

Gen Z is feeling
the pressure—but
that won't stop
their creativity

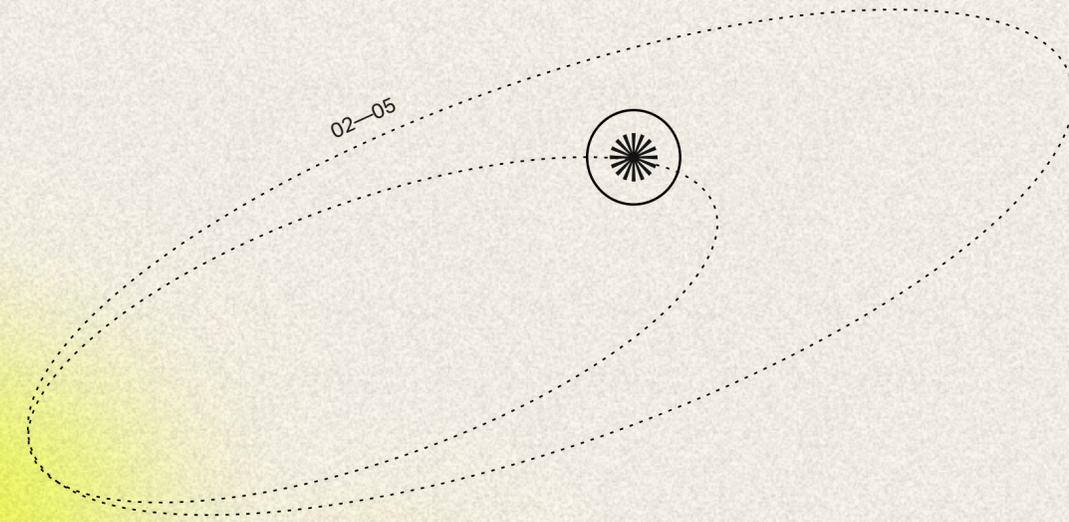


Brands, it's time to step up and stand for something

(and, you know, act on it).

Under 25s are feeling undervalued, underpaid, and overworked. As much as 50% of Gen Z respondents cite mental health as the main creative distraction during the pandemic and → **60% are thinking of switching jobs in the next six months.** 🕒 It doesn't help that they're expected to solve the complex problems of the world they inherited.

When it comes to addressing climate and social issues, junior creatives don't want it on their plates. Gen Z respondents were 8% less likely to be personally committed to climate issues than average respondents. Instead, → **they want brands to take the lead in fighting for a more sustainable future.** 🌍 We think they're onto something—the fate of our future lies largely in how we behave as businesses.



Yet despite the dissatisfaction at work and pressure to save the world, → **Gen Z is teeming with creative energy. 61% are willing to take more creative risks and 53% are dedicating more time to creativity,** 😊 outperforming other age groups by 5-10%.

Gen Z has nothing left to give, but everything left to stand for. It's up to brands to take some pressure off. → **We all need to ask ourselves how we can uplift young creative voices, giving them the tools they need to flourish and make use of that billowing creative energy—without putting the weight of the world on their shoulders.** 🌍

SUPPORTING DATA

Gen Z has made it clear that brands should take the lead in pushing for a better future.

75%

of Gen Z respondents think it is vital for brands to be committed to climate, racial, and social justice issues, the highest across all age groups.

58%

of Gen Z are committed to climate, racial, and social justice issues—the lowest levels of commitment across all age groups.

DEMOGRAPHIC

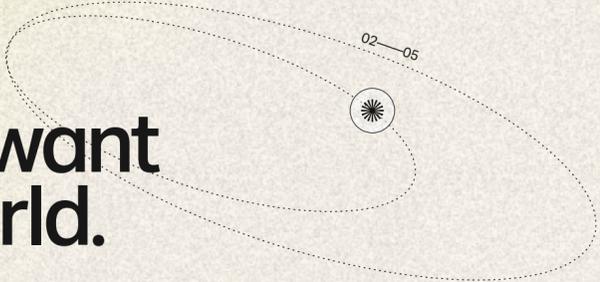
Gen Z creatives

FUN FACT 

GEN Z IS THE GROUP MOST LIKELY TO ADVOCATE RECHARGING THROUGH NAPPING. WE CAN GET BEHIND THAT.

SNAP THIS 

Gen Z doesn't want to save the world.



They want brands to take the lead in fighting for a more sustainable future. Gen Z is experiencing more mental health issues, feelings of isolation, and financial troubles than other age groups. They don't want to clean up the mess older generations made on top of all that.

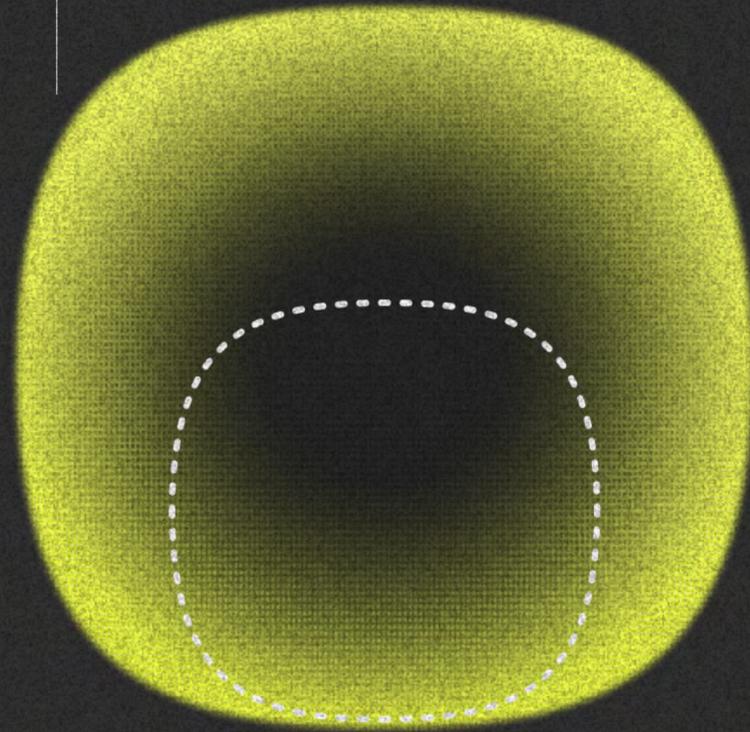
WeTransfer IR'21



These issues
are **blocking**
Gen Z's
creativity

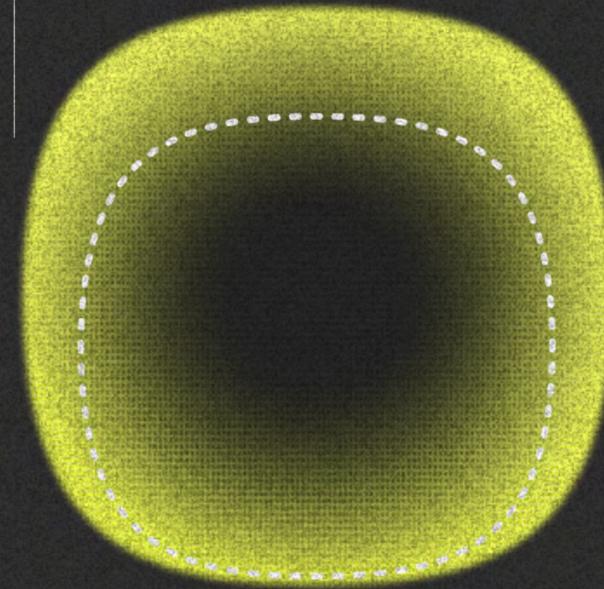
50%

Mental health
above the average of 29%



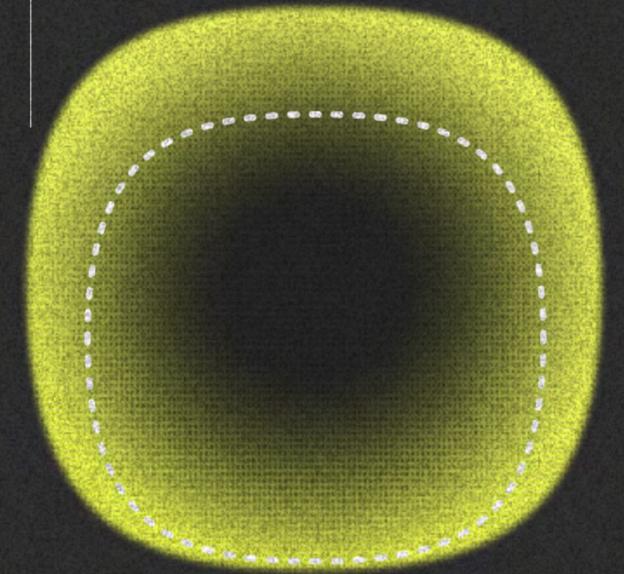
40%

Isolation
above the average of 32%



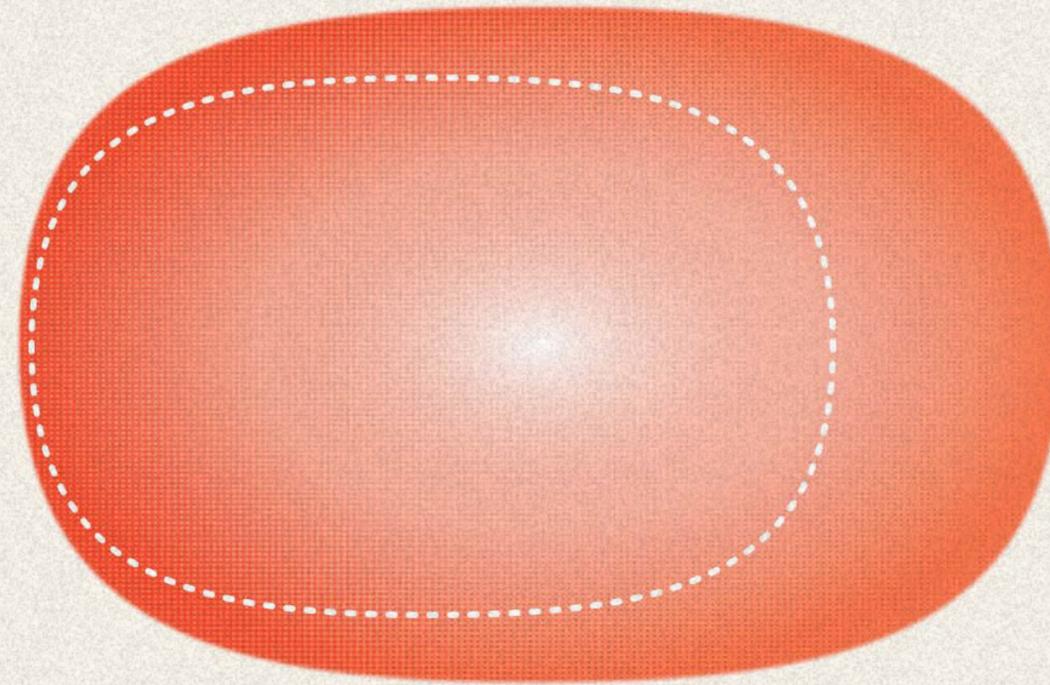
39%

Financial concerns
above the average of 31%



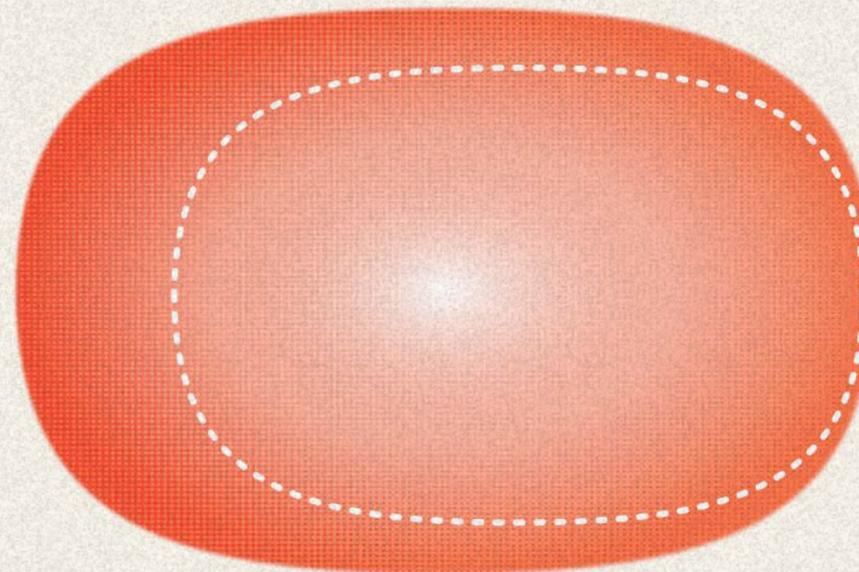


Despite all the challenges thrown at them, **Gen Z is feeling more creative than older generations**



61%

are willing to take more creative risks above the average of 51%



53%

are dedicated to creativity above the average of 48%

WORDS OF WISDOM

“



“Stories of ill treatment are far too commonplace among Gen Z creatives, who often feel pushed into having to decide between advancing in their chosen industry and valuing their mental wellbeing—and worth.”

WORDS BY MOYA LOTHIAN-MCLEAN

JOURNALIST
AND PODCASTER

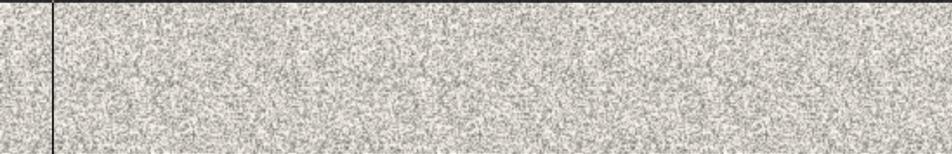
READ THE ESSAY



Yup, this is a magic button. Click it.

Q&A

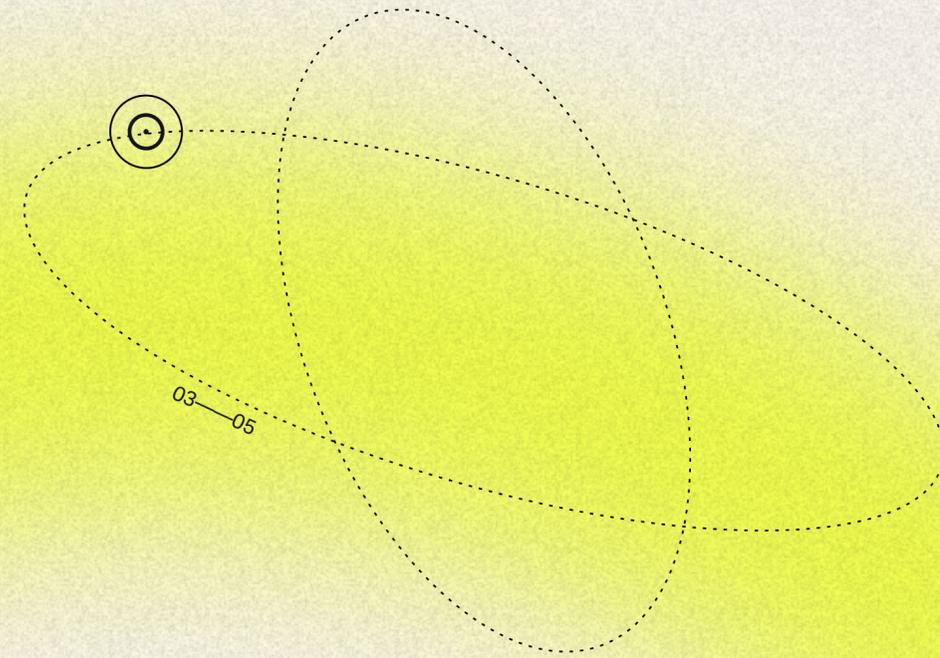
FIRED
UP FOR
CHANGE



Women and people of color are fired up for change

(white men,
wake up)

Those who push for change are those who are most affected.



Last year, women bore the brunt of uncertainty while struggling with depression and imposter syndrome—almost half of women questioned whether they had the skills to pull an idea off, and 53% had deep concerns about the future.

Yet in an inspiring upheaval from last year's state of despair, women are taking their frustrations and using them as fuel to pursue professional work that reflects their inner moral compasses—and they're not alone. Nonbinary people and people of color are also among those who cared the most about aligning their personal values with work.

→ **The issues at the top of the list involve the environment (62%), sustainability (59%), gender and racial equality (45%), and humanitarian issues (44%).** 🌍

Men, on the other hand, are struggling to see the relevance.

→ **Only 33% of men cared about aligning their personal values with work (even though it's still a luxury to do so), compared to 42% of women and 40% of nonbinary people.** 😞

Men are also feeling less productive and are taking fewer risks than women. Maybe we're due for yet another change in creative power.

SUPPORTING DATA

Since the pandemic, almost 50% of creatives of color are feeling less financially stable. That's 15% above average.

43%

of creatives are struggling or desperate to find work—for creatives of color, it's even more so.

DEMOGRAPHIC

Everyone except white men

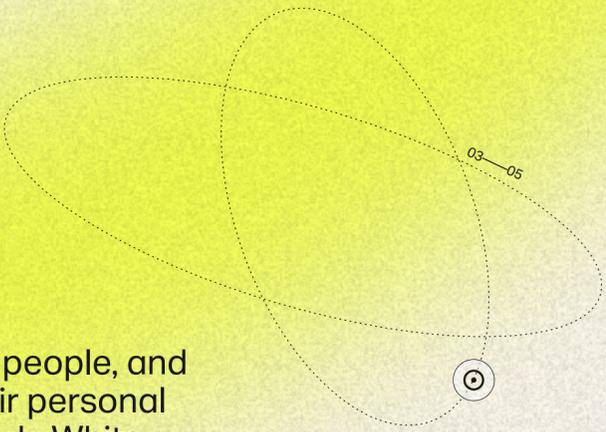
FUN FACT 

IT MAKES SENSE—PARENTS ARE ALSO PUSHING FOR CHANGE, WITH ONE THIRD OF ALL PARENTS SURVEYED ONLY TAKING ON PROJECTS THAT ALIGN WITH THEIR VALUES. WAY TO WORK TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS!

SNAP THIS 

Fired up for change.

About half of women, nonbinary people, and people of color want to align their personal values with their professional work. White men, on the other hand, are struggling to see the relevance, with only 33% saying the same.

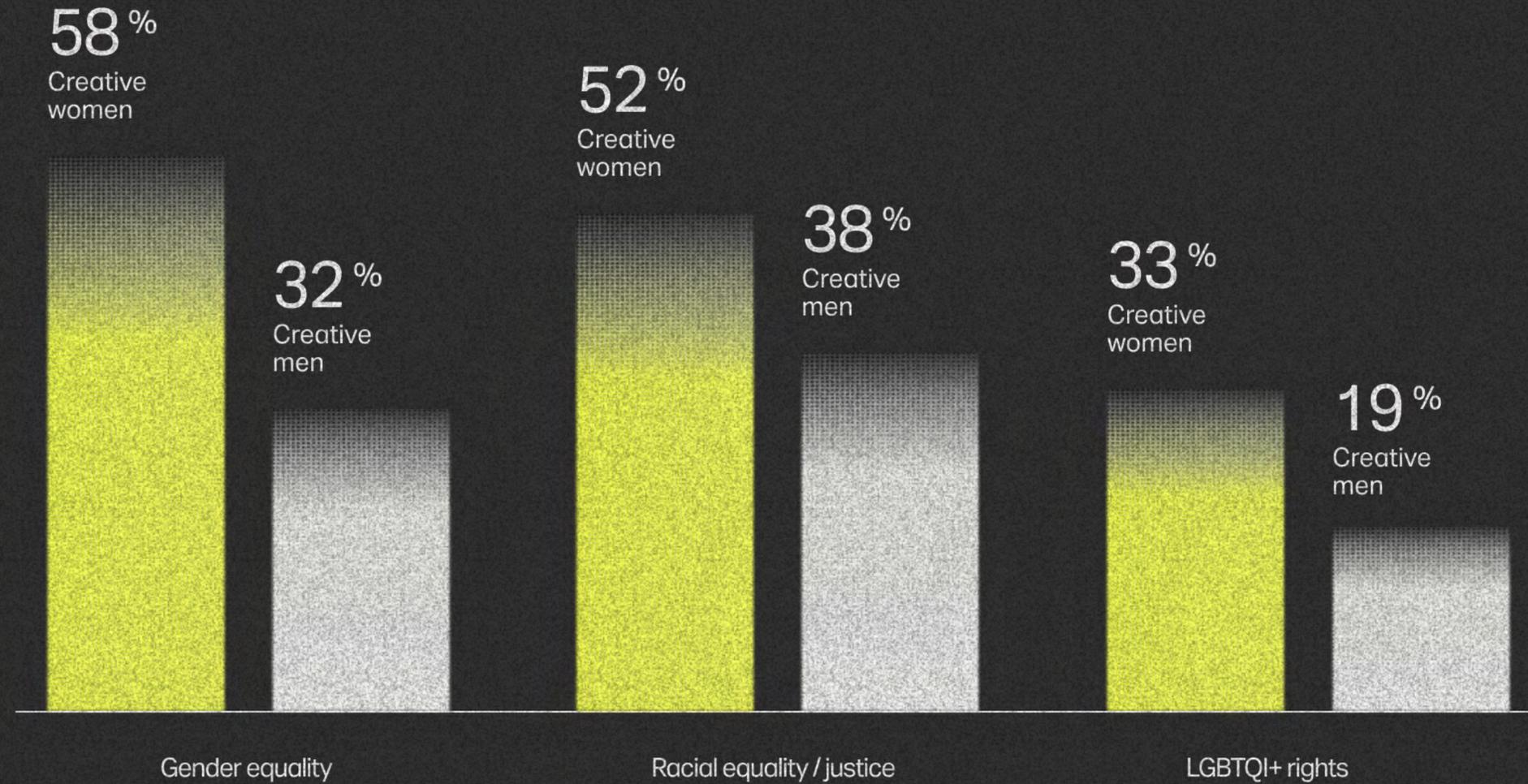


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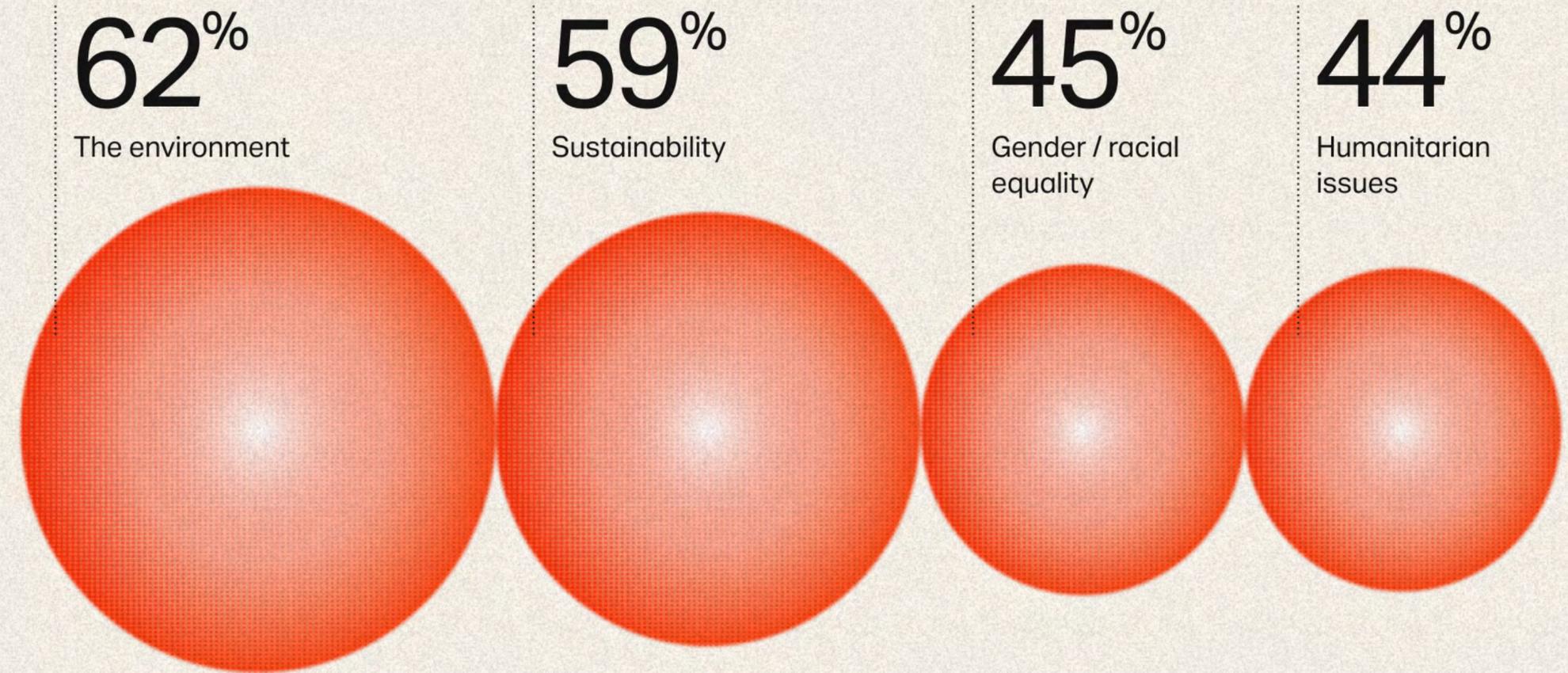
Women are driving change in the creative workforce

ISSUES PEOPLE WANT TO BRING TO WORK





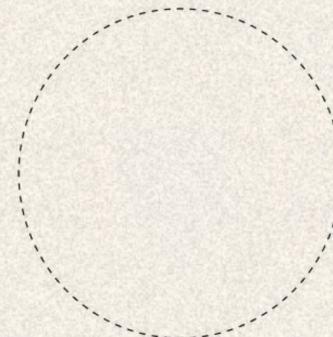
Addressing these issues is crucial to the creatives pushing for change



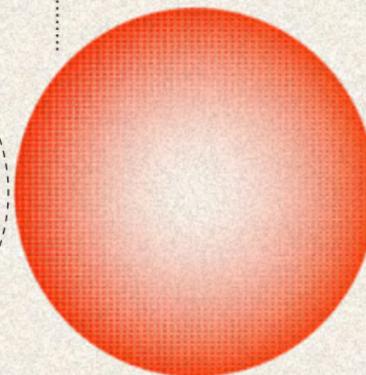


Creatives want to bring their personal values to work—some more than others

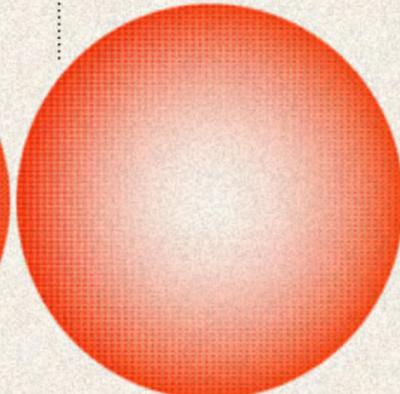
52%
of all creatives state that personal values have become more important to their work since the pandemic



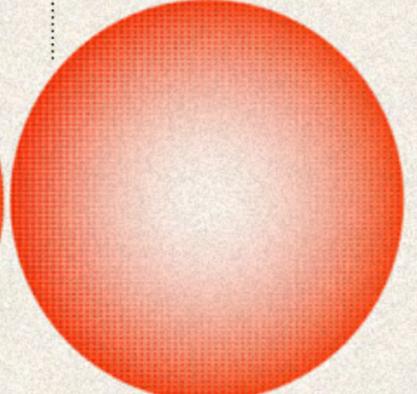
58%
of all Asian creatives



60%
of all Hispanic / Latinx creatives

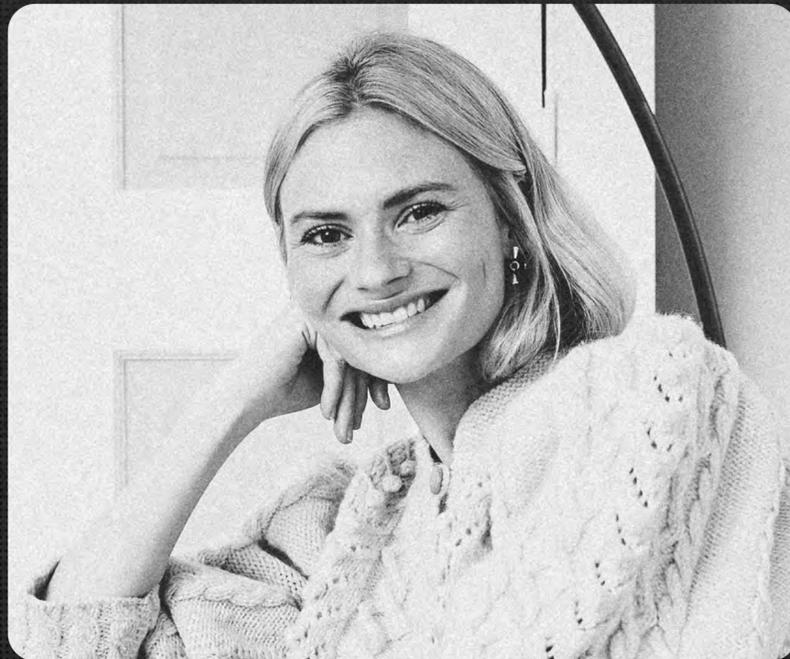


61%
of all Black / African creatives



WORDS OF WISDOM

“



“...when your work aligns with your moral compass, when your professional life feels like an extension of your own personal ethics, you’re so much more able to claim it.

To stand by it, defend it, inhabit it.”

WORDS BY PANDORA SYKES

JOURNALIST AND
BROADCASTER



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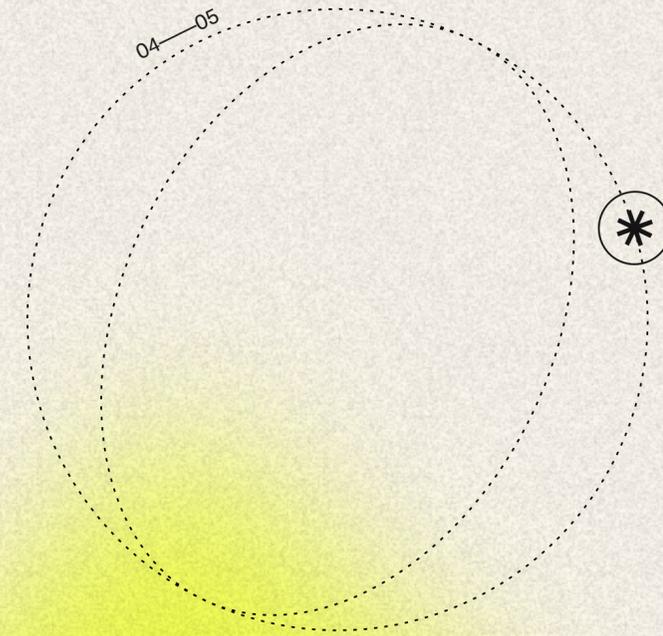
CREATIVITY
DOESN'T
MATTER
(KIND OF)

44



**Clients don't
care about
your creativity**

The age of the creative ego is dying.



Gone are the days of holier-than-thou creatives and overbearing clientzillas (we hope). Creatives and clients alike are craving open, honest communication and respect above all else. They don't want wild, award-winning thinking. → **It's not that originality and creativity don't matter, or that clients don't "get it"—how it's communicated is the real issue.** 🌐

When → **almost a third of clients feel less connected to the people they work with,** 😞 perhaps what we need is some good old fashioned couple's therapy. Aside from honesty and respect, clients want creatives who are organized. And creatives want clients who are trusting. The enemies of both parties are big egos and small budgets—are we starting to see the path through the trees here?

→ **Drop the egos, present ideas in ways that make sense for everyone, and trust each other to do great work.** 🗣️

It might be time to reconsider the ways we communicate—or the tools we trust to do the job for us.

SUPPORTING DATA

The love is there—we just need to communicate better.

90%

of creatives believe clients play a crucial role in the creative process

81%

of clients think the same about creatives

DEMOGRAPHIC

Creative vs client

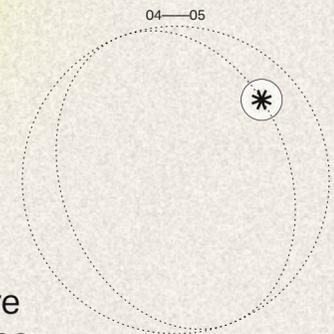
FUN FACT 

CLIENTS USE TIKTOK MORE THAN CREATIVES AS AN ONLINE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.

SNAP THIS 

Clients don't care about your creativity.

Ouch, that stings. Clients and creatives alike are craving open, honest relationships above all else. Award-winning work and wild thinking are no longer desirables.



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For creatives and clients alike, **being human matters more** than racking up accolades

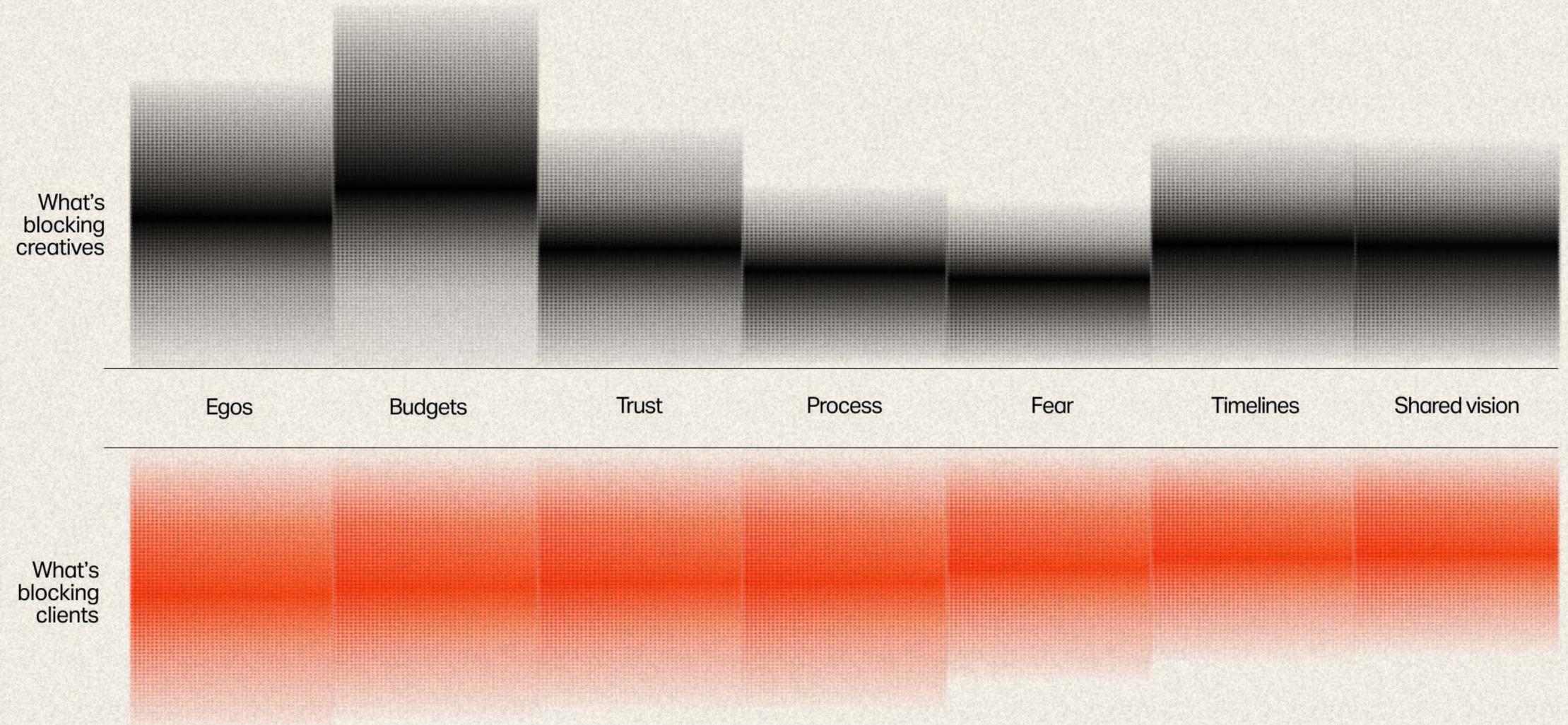


*STATISTICS REFER TO 2021 IDEAS REPORT SURVEY RESPONDENTS ONLY

**EACH DATA POINT REPRESENTS AN INDEX VS. THE AVERAGE (100) FOR EACH COHORT



In two years of great change, some **key barriers to fruitful creative relationships** remain the same



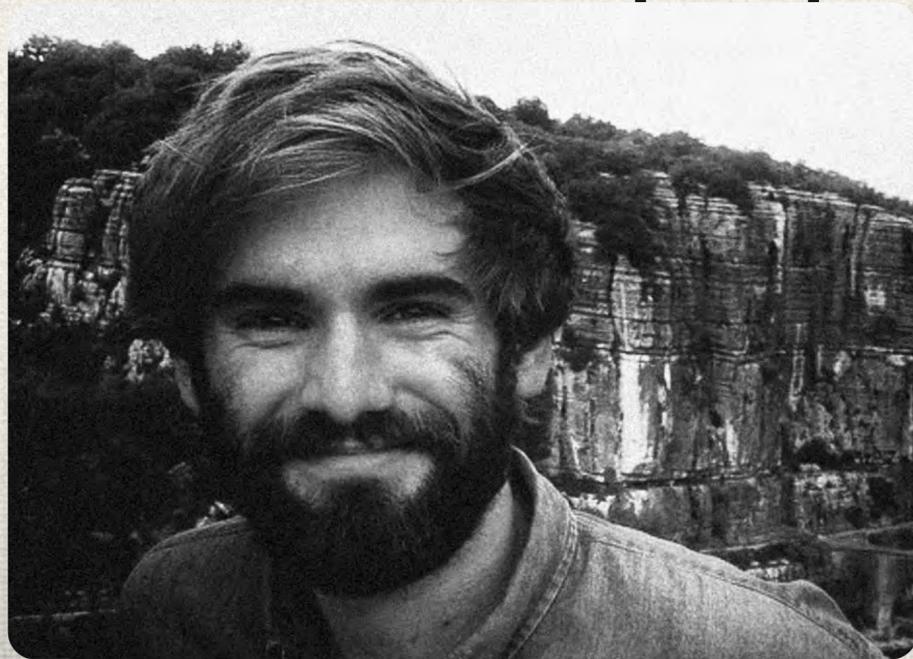
*STATISTICS REFER TO 2021 IDEAS REPORT SURVEY RESPONDENTS ONLY

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WORDS OF WISDOM

“

“I propose we...ditch our egos and thank everyone who's helped us make work that we're proud of, whichever side of the client/creative divide we're on.”



WORDS BY **JAMES
CARTWRIGHT**

WRITER,
EDITOR AND
ART DIRECTOR

READ THE ESSAY

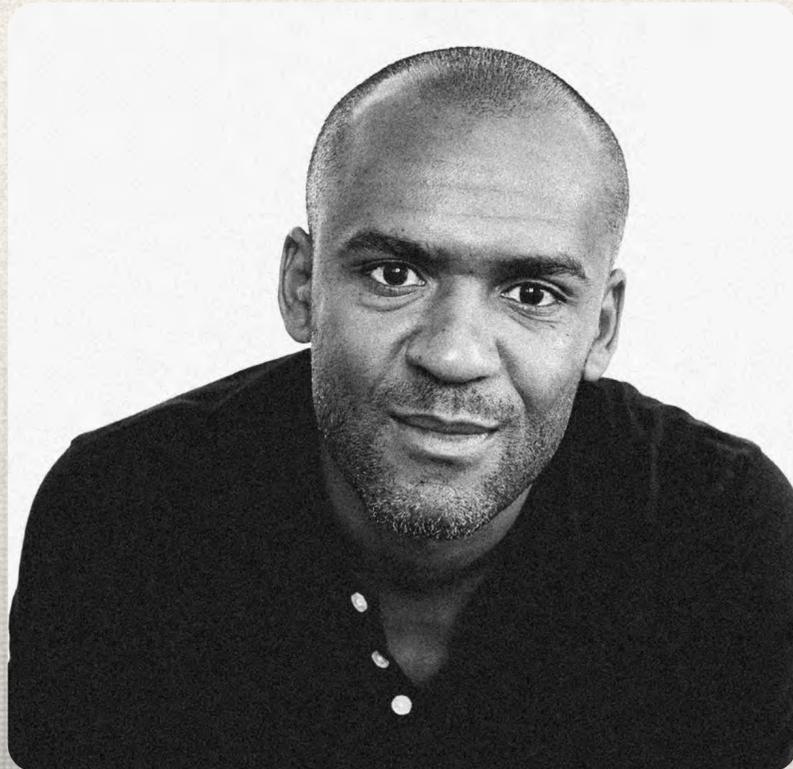


Yup, this is a magic button. Click it.

WORDS OF WISDOM

“

“Balance between the reality and the visionary. Begin with offering practical solutions that serve the client at the start, but envision together what else is possible along the way.”



WORDS BY ALAIN SYLVAIN

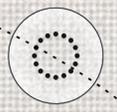
STRATEGIST AND ENTREPRENEUR

Q&A

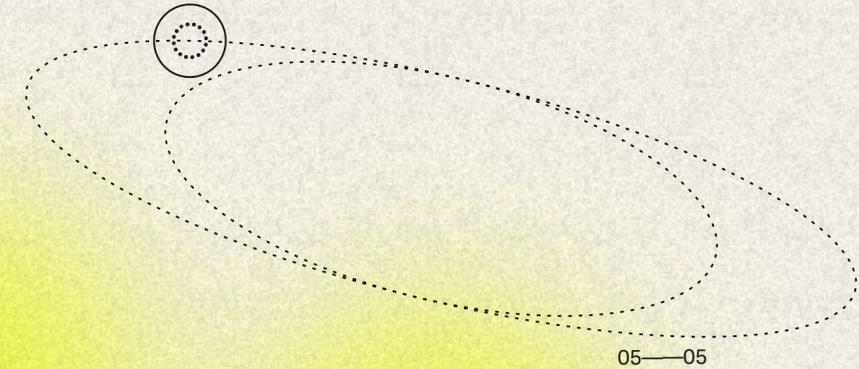
THE GREAT
(CREATIVE)
RESIGNATION

The mass exodus of creatives has begun

05—05



Creatives are walking out on unfulfilling work.



Pretty much every industry is going through the Great Resignation, and the creative workforce isn't coming out unscathed. **→ 45% of global creatives are thinking of changing their jobs in the next six months.** 🌐

When we look back at last year's data, it comes as no surprise. In 2020, the pandemic made people reevaluate what's important in life, holding their sense of self in higher regard than years prior. It's no wonder we're seeing them act on it in 2021.

→ Creatives who are thinking of switching jobs are 36% more likely to feel squeezed financially, 32% more likely to feel their work/life balance is off, and 50% less likely to feel connected to the people they work with. 🗣️ So, what do we do about it?

Money matters, but so do respect and recognition. As reflected in Insight 4, traditional awards are no longer important measures of success. Creatives want to know the work they're doing has meaning, and they want to be rewarded for it—not

only with cold hard cash, but with a chance to see their visions come to life. They want to make a difference, for the world and for the companies they work for.

→ Start recognizing, respecting, and challenging creative talent, or lose them to someone who will. 😞 If there's one thing we're seeing this year, it's that creativity can't be bought and sold. It's something that needs to be nurtured, encouraged, and rewarded.

SUPPORTING DATA

When we asked creatives where they want their work to show up—

35%

said they wanted to be featured in industry publications

15%

said award shows

DEMOGRAPHIC

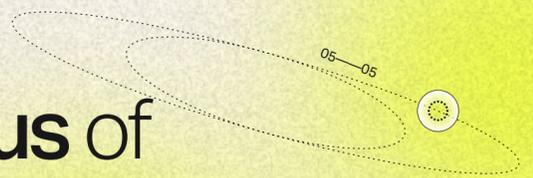
Creatives

FUN FACT 

COMPANIES SPEND MILLIONS CREATING WORK FOR INDUSTRY AWARDS—BUT MOST CREATIVES COULDN'T CARE LESS. THEY WANT THEIR WORK TO SHOW UP IN PUBLICATIONS, ON INSTAGRAM, AND IN MAGAZINES INSTEAD.

SNAP THIS 

The mass exodus of creatives has begun

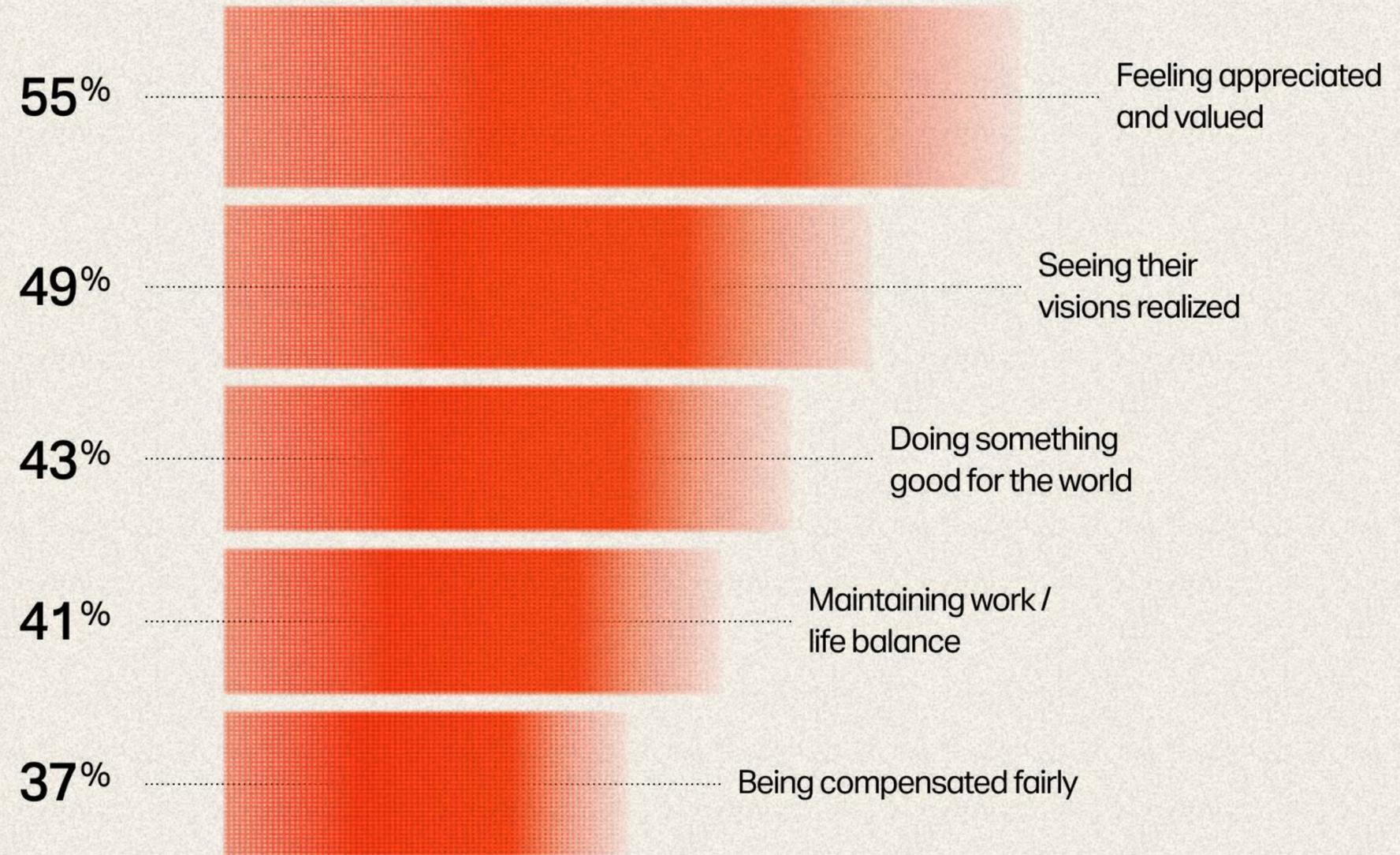


45% of global creatives are thinking of leaving their jobs in the next six months. They want to know the work they're doing has meaning, and they want to be rewarded for it—not only with cold hard cash, but with a chance to see their visions come to life.

WeTransfer IR'21



Motivate your creative workforce with what they actually want

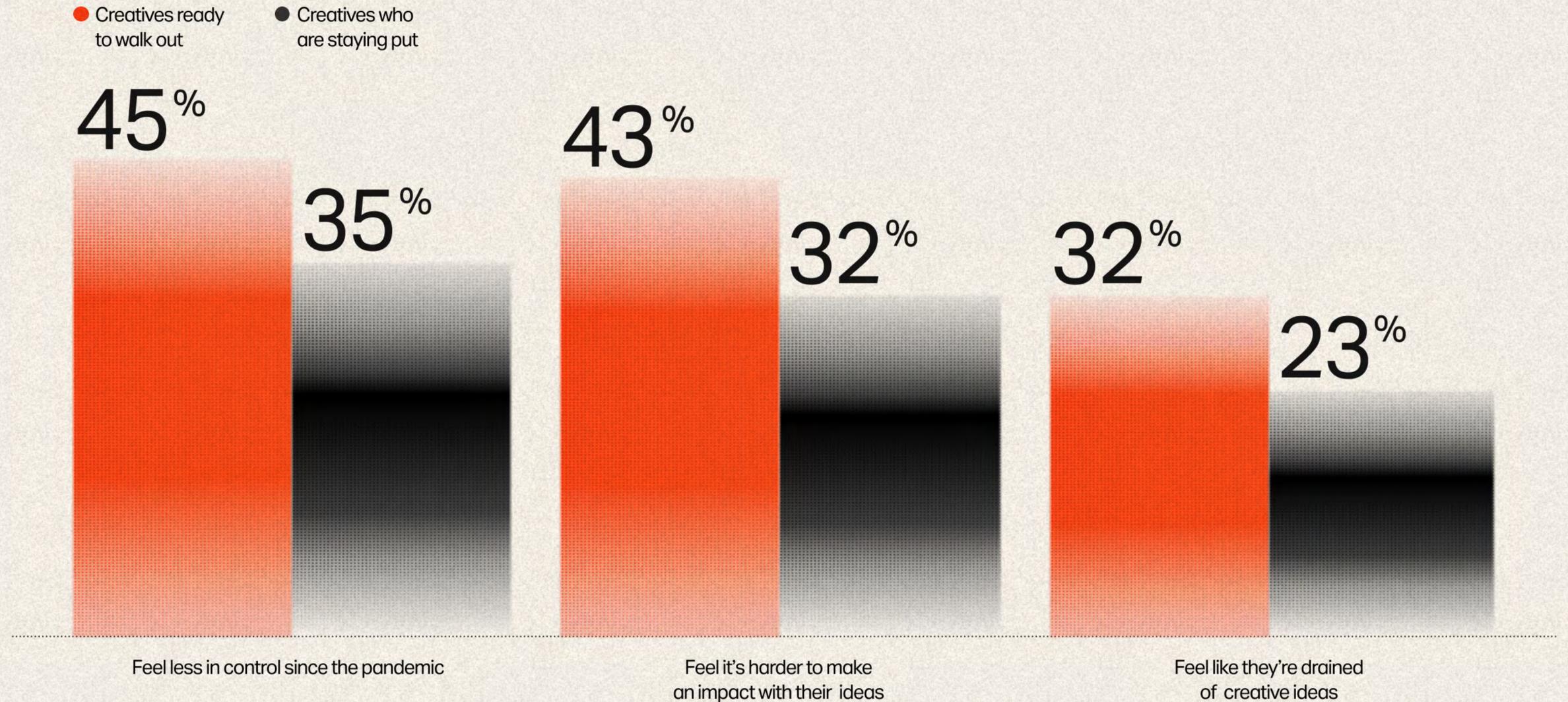


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Creatives who want to quit their jobs aren't feeling great (well, duh)



*STATISTICS REFER TO 2021 IDEAS REPORT SURVEY RESPONDENTS ONLY

**EACH DATA POINT REPRESENTS AN INDEX VS. THE AVERAGE (100) FOR EACH COHORT

WORDS OF WISDOM

“

“Rather than working ourselves to the point of burnout, we’d do well to quit our own unrelenting standards, ease off the accelerator and set some healthy boundaries.”



WORDS BY **RUBY TANDOH**

FOOD WRITER AND AUTHOR

The finale

The answer to **life,** the universe, and how creative minds work

SO, THIS
IS IT
↗

We learned a lot this year, expanding our annual study to cover a greater spectrum of the creative world than ever before.

We discovered that during a time when everything is changing, some things haven't—but that doesn't mean we haven't found new ways to approach old habits.

The results of this year are clear. Diverse voices from across the globe are pushing creative excellence forward. We saw Latin America challenge the status quo, and Gen Z take a stand. We saw women, nonbinary people, and people of color change their workplaces for the better. We saw creatives put themselves first, and clients prioritize open, honest relationships. We even got the help of some wildly talented experts, hoping they'd drop some words of wisdom into our laps to guide us in this new landscape (they did).

We saw all of you grow from last year, and you helped us grow too (cheesy, but true). Thank you for tuning into our biggest Ideas Report yet. We hope you came out of it with some, well, ideas.

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WeTransfer was founded in 2009 as the **simplest way** to send big files around the world.

ABOUT US



Whether it's designing intuitive tools to get ideas on the move or building big, beautiful ads that don't get in the way, WeTransfer has always looked at creativity a little differently. Having made its name in the game of quick and simple file-sharing, WeTransfer has grown into a suite of creative productivity tools with more than 80 million monthly active users in 190 countries.

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