THE CREATOR REVOLUTION

RESULTS FROM A GLOBAL SURVEY

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Richard Florida and the Creative Class Group

creative class group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the turn of the millennium, the rise of digital technologies and platforms have allowed anyone with access to a computer and a network to generate original content, share it widely, and monetize it. Whether that content is music and dance, political memes, edutainment, podcasts, parody, or serious commentary, digital Creators are enlivening and enriching popular culture while generating significant economic value. Even so, there has been a paucity of reliable studies on the size, scope, and make-up of the Creators, their motivations and work styles, and their economic impact. Drawing on a detailed new survey spanning 20 countries, this report seeks to fill those gaps with new and detailed data on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Creators; their geographic distribution and major clusters of activity; their revenues and economic impact; and the new technologies they may adopt in the future. The survey defines Creators as *people who create and share original content via social media and have 1,000 or more followers on at least one of the platforms that they use*.

The overall finding from our research is that there are two very different worlds of Creators. The first is the world of superstar Creators, celebrities, and influencers who have tens or even hundreds of millions of followers and earn millions of dollars. The second and far larger world is made up of the vast majority of Global Creators who have much smaller follower counts, make much less money, and are primarily motivated by showcasing their talent, connecting with people, and sharing their content with others.

Our research informs a number of more detailed empirical findings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Large Number of Creators: Our research estimates that there are 362 million Creators in the 20 countries surveyed. The United States is home to 39 million of them, slightly more than 10 percent of the total. Other nations with large numbers of Creators are India with 137 million, Indonesia with 47 million, Brazil with 40 million, Mexico with 18 million, and Nigeria with 14 million. Five countries are home to between 5 and 10 million Creators: Germany (8 million), Saudi Arabia (7.7 million), the United Kingdom (7.3 million), Italy (6.6 million), and Argentina (5.2 million). The remaining nine countries surveyed—Egypt, Poland, France, South Africa, South Korea, UAE, Kenya, Australia, and Japan—have between two and five million Creators each.

Creators Have a Substantial Economic Impact Our research estimates that Creators generate a direct economic impact of $29 billion in the United States and $368 billion in revenue across the 20 countries surveyed. This aggregate figure is comparable to the entire economic output or GDP of countries like Hong Kong ($382 billion) or South Africa ($378 billion) in 2023, and it's larger than that of Finland ($300 billion), New Zealand ($253 billion), or Greece ($238 billion).

Most Creators Have Modest Followings: Less than 1 percent of Creators have a million or more followers, while more than 75 percent have less than 10,000. More than 60 percent have less than 5,000 followers.

Creators Span Every Age Bracket: While the popular image of a Creator is a teenager or young adult, Creators span all ages. While 16 percent of Global Creators are in their teens, over 40 percent are between 20 and 34 years old, and 21 percent are between 35 and 44. Almost 10 percent are 55 and older.

Creators Are Highly Educated: More than 40 percent of adult Creators (25 years of age and older) in the United States have at least a four-year college degree, compared to 36 percent of all American adults. On the flip side, only 4 percent of adult Creators in America did not complete high school, compared to 10 percent of all American adults. The difference in education between Creators and overall populations is more pronounced in many of the other countries surveyed. A third of adult Creators in India have completed the equivalent of a college education, compared to just 12 percent of all its adults, while adult Creators in France, South Africa, and Indonesia are about twice as likely to have completed college as all adults in those countries.

Creators Cluster in Large Cities and Regions: Though digital technologies enable Creators to produce and share content from virtually anywhere, they are geographically concentrated in major population centers. Roughly two-thirds of US Creators are located in metropolitan areas that have more than one million people, and a third are located in metros that are home to more than five million people. Large US Creators, those with at least 100,000 followers, are even more geographically clustered. While 25 percent of Americans overall live in metros with five million or more people, such metros are home to 40 percent of Large Creators.

Creators Are Motivated by More than Just Money: While rich and famous influencers attract the most attention, the reality is that the substantial majority of Creators are not only or even primarily driven by the pursuit of wealth and fame. The top five motivations survey respondents report for creating and sharing content are: showcasing their talent, having fun, entertaining others, connecting with people, and sharing content with others. Earning money ranked sixth, about the same as making a positive impact and educating others.

Most Creators Earn Modest Amounts: More than three quarters of Global Creators earn less than $10,000 per year; half earn less than $1,000; and almost 40 percent report no revenue at all. Just 7 percent earn $50,000 or more, with 2 percent making $100,000 and up annually.

Creators Have Diverse Income Sources: Creators monetize their content through a variety of channels, including ads on platforms, subscriptions, digital gifts from followers, affiliate links and programs, sponsored content deals, and merchandise sales.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Most Creators Work Alone or Depend on Unpaid Help: More than 40 percent of Creators work alone, while 58 percent rely on one or more sources of help. Forty percent of Creators depend on unpaid help from friends and family; 12 percent pay family and friends for support; 13 percent pay others for technical support; 12 percent pay for creative support; and 10 percent pay for management support.

Most Creators Work Other Jobs: Over half of Creators work another full-time job, and 14 percent work another part-time job. Just 2 percent are contract or gig workers, while 17 percent are students, 2 percent are homemakers, 2 percent are retired, and 3 percent are unemployed. Less than 10 percent of Creators own their own business or are self-employed.

Most Creators Are Employed in Creative Class Occupations: About half of US Creators are employed in creative, professional, and knowledge occupations that span science and engineering; management and business; education; the legal and medical professions; and arts, culture, and design. Fourteen percent of US Creators work in arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations, compared to just 2 percent of the overall US workforce. On the other side of the coin, 14 percent of Creators work in blue-collar occupations and another 36 percent work in routine service occupations, such as office and administrative support, food service, and personal care.

Use of Augmented and Virtual Reality Technology: While only a small share of Creators currently uses virtual reality (5 percent) and augmented reality (4 percent), almost 80 percent report interest in adopting those technologies when they become cheaper and easier to use.

The rise of digital Creators is the latest phase in the ongoing shift from an industrial economy driven by extraction and physical labor to a new kind of Creative Economy that is powered by knowledge and talent. But the Creator Revolution is more than just a driver of economic growth. For tens of millions of digital Creators around the world, their work provides a source of meaning, purpose, and community.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Creators and of the Creative Economy more generally represents a significant shift in the nature of society and the economy. For most of history, civilizations were organized around the mobilization of physical labor and the extraction and exploitation of natural resources. But over the past several decades, knowledge, intelligence, and creativity have become essential engines of economic growth.[1] In my 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, I documented the dramatic growth of what I identified as the Creative Class: workers in occupations spanning arts, culture, and design; science and engineering; management and business; education; and legal and medical professions. The Creative Class has grown from less than 10 percent of the workforce a century or so ago to more than 40 percent today, accounting for approximately 50 percent of US wages and as much as 70 percent of discretionary spending.[2]

We are now in a new phase of the Creative Economy—a veritable Creator Revolution enabled by the rise of new digital technology. My 2022 study on *The Rise of the Creator Economy* identified digital Creators as the most recent manifestation of this shift.[3] The rise of new digital tools and technologies enable Creators across the world to produce and share their content online and to bypass traditional gatekeepers such as movie studios, TV networks, music labels, and book, newspaper, and magazine publishers. But as that report noted, research on these digital Creators suffers from a lack of reliable data. In fact, “Digital Creator” is such a new occupational category that the US government does not collect data on it. “The creator economy has a data problem” is how a 2022 article bluntly put it, adding that this data problem stems in part “from the complicated definition of who counts as a creator.”[4] A 2020 study identified 50 million Creators worldwide, while a 2022 study estimated their numbers at closer to 300 million, including 86 million in the United States.[5] A 2021 study estimated the size of the creator economy to be $104 billion, while a 2023 Goldman Sachs estimate put it at $250 billion and projected that it would grow to $480 billion by 2027.[6]

Our research seeks to fill those gaps and more by reporting the findings of a major new global survey of Creators that collected detailed information on their key social and economic characteristics, their motivations, work styles, employment status, earnings, and their use of new virtual and augmented reality technologies.

While the survey generates many unique and important findings, the big story our research tells is of two different types of Creators—what we can think of as two very different Creator worlds. The first Creator world and the one that gets most of the attention in the popular media is the world of superstar Creators, like MrBeast, Charli D'Amelio, and Olajide Olatunji, who boast tens or even hundreds of millions of followers and make millions of dollars. The second and far larger Creator world comprises the vast majority of Global Creators who have much smaller follower counts, make much less money, and value personal fulfillment over fortune or fame. The gulf between these two worlds is not unique to Creators per se but a defining feature of the "winner-take-all" nature of today's economy where a small number of superstars in music, entertainment, sports, business, and finance capture a disproportionate share of economic rewards with the rest earning far less.[7]

Global Survey of Creators

This report is based on a series of surveys that were commissioned by Meta and carried out by Factworks in 20 countries in 2023, including the US in North America; France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom in Europe; the Latin American countries of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico; Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in the Middle East; Australia, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea in the Asia Pacific; India in South Asia; and Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa in Africa.

The survey research was carried out in three phases.

Phase 1 used a funnel approach to identify Creators based on our definition of those who "create and share original content via social media and have 1,000 or more followers on at least one of the platforms that they use." Samples of people who use the Internet were selected in each of the 20 countries covered and asked to fill out questionnaires. The two key questions were: "Do you share any content?" and "Do you share *original* content?" Other questions asked about the numbers of followers they have and how they interact with them.

Phase 2 focused on the almost 10,000 (9,582) Creators identified in Phase 1, including 1,804 in the United States. The sample was weighted equally across countries by age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity where possible. The survey asked the sample of Creators detailed questions regarding their motivations, incomes, sources of earnings, the ways in which they work, the extent of their teams, their primary occupations and employment status, and their use of virtual and augmented reality technologies.

Phase 3 concentrated on a smaller, more focused group of 207 Large Creators (each having 100,000 or more followers on at least one social media platform) in the United States, to help ensure that systematic data was collected from the small number of Creators with large follower counts. When analyzing Large Creators, we combined subsets of the observations from Phase 2 and Phase 3. We also drew on data from other sources when it was useful and appropriate.

NUMBER OF CREATORS

We estimate that there are 362 million Global Creators across the 20 countries surveyed. Figure 1 shows the number of Creators across the 20 nations covered by the survey. India has the largest number, 137.3 million, followed by Indonesia with 46.8 million, Brazil with 40.1 million, and the United States with 38.7 million. Mexico is fifth with 18.0 million Creators, and Nigeria is sixth with 14.1 million. Five additional nations are home to between 5 and 10 million Creators: Germany with 8.0 million, Saudi Arabia with 7.7 million, the United Kingdom with 7.3 million, Italy with 6.6 million, and Argentina with 5.2 million. Egypt, Poland, France, South Africa, South Korea, UAE, Kenya, Australia, and Japan each have between 2 and 5 million Creators.

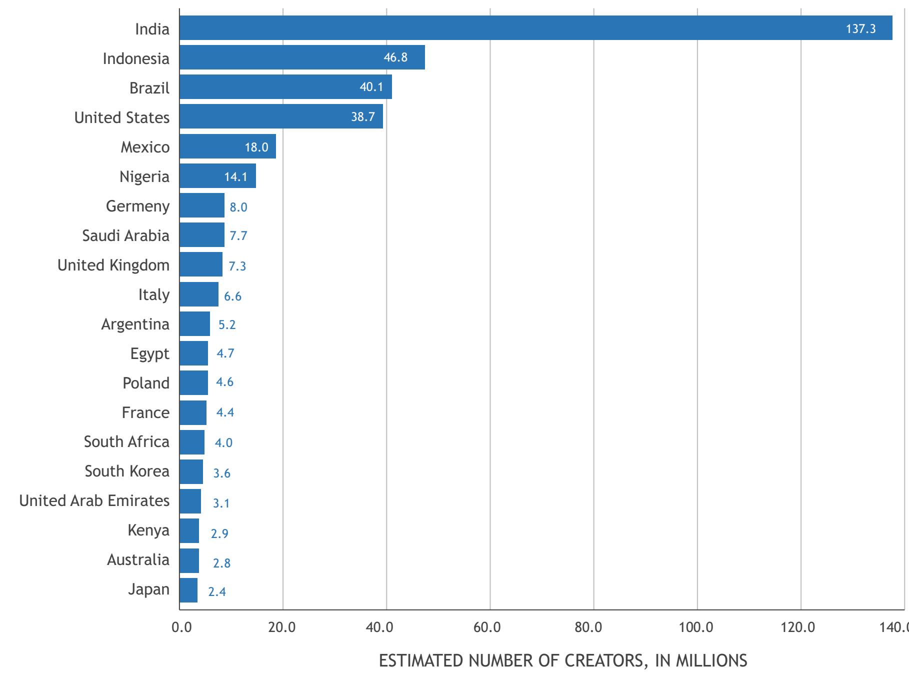


Figure 1. Number of Creators in 20 Countries
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

Follower Counts for Creators

A look at the follower counts of Global Creators is telling. Most have modest followings, as detailed in Figure 2. Nearly 90 percent have less than 25,000 followers; more than 75 percent have less than 10,000 followers; and over 60 percent have less than 5,000 followers. Just 1 percent have one million or more followers, and 2 percent have between 500,000 and a million followers.

The follower counts of US Creators follow a similar pattern, as seen in Figure 3. More than three-quarters of US Creators (77 percent) have less than 10,000 followers, and nearly two-thirds have less than 5,000 followers. Fewer than 1 percent of US Creators have a half million or more followers.

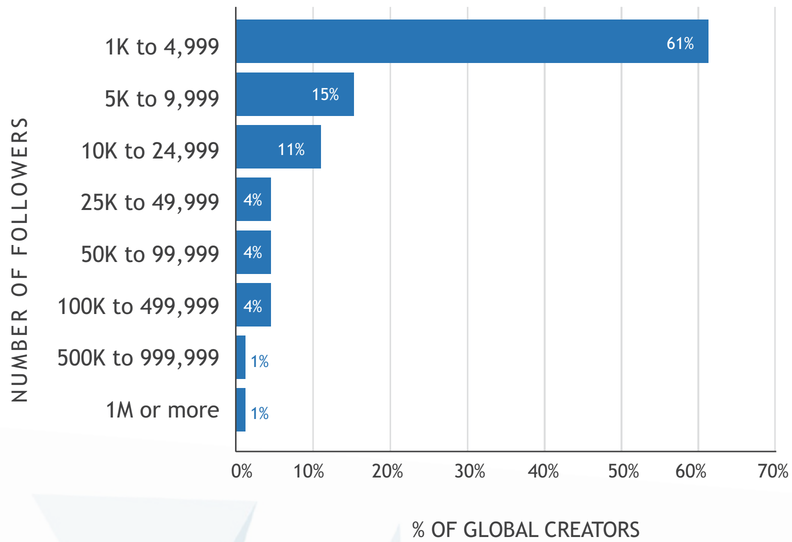


Figure 2. Distribution of Followers for Global Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Follower counts are based on the platform with the Creator's largest number of followers.

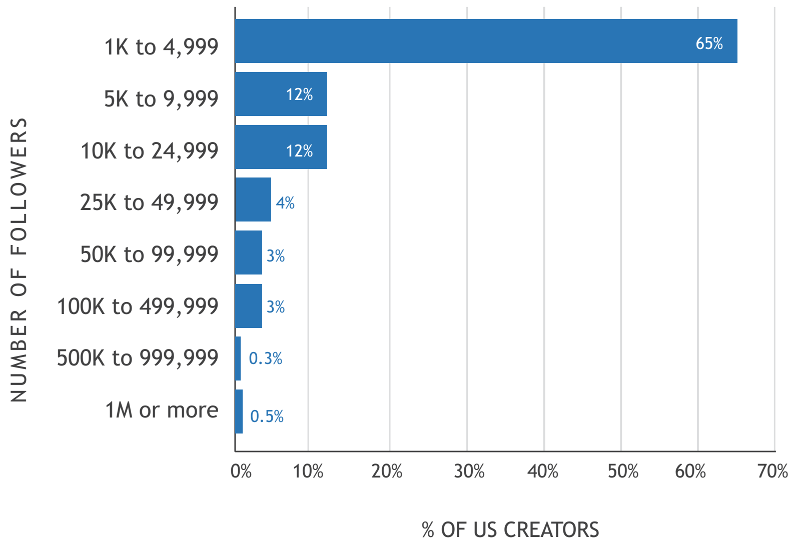


Figure 3. Distribution of Followers for US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Follower counts are based on the platform with the Creator's largest number of followers.

That said, while teenagers make up 16 percent of US Creators, they only comprise 4 percent of the overall US workforce that is under 20 years old, as shown in Figure 5, which compares the age distribution of US Creators to the workforce as a whole. This makes sense, given that most teenagers are still in school. It also squares with the career aspirations of many young people. Roughly 30 percent of kids ages 8 to 12 in the US and UK said they wanted to be a Vlogger or YouTuber when they grow up, the most highly desired occupation according to a [2019 survey.](#) [8] At the other end of the age distribution, just 10 percent of US creators are 55 and up, compared to almost a quarter (24 percent) of the overall US workforce.

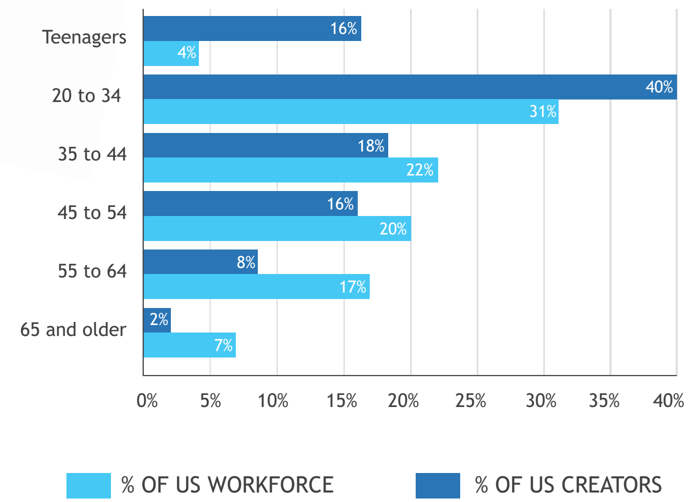


Figure 5. Age Distribution of US Creators Compared to the Overall Workforce
Sources: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023, and US Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS Occupational Employment Projections, 2022-32.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CREATORS

While the media tends to focus on young Creators, Creators span every age bracket according to the survey. Figure 4 details the age distribution of Creators. More than one in five Global Creators are 45 and older, compared to just 16 percent who are in their teens. Just over 40 percent are between 20 and 34; 21 percent are between 35 and 44; and almost 10 percent are 55 and older.

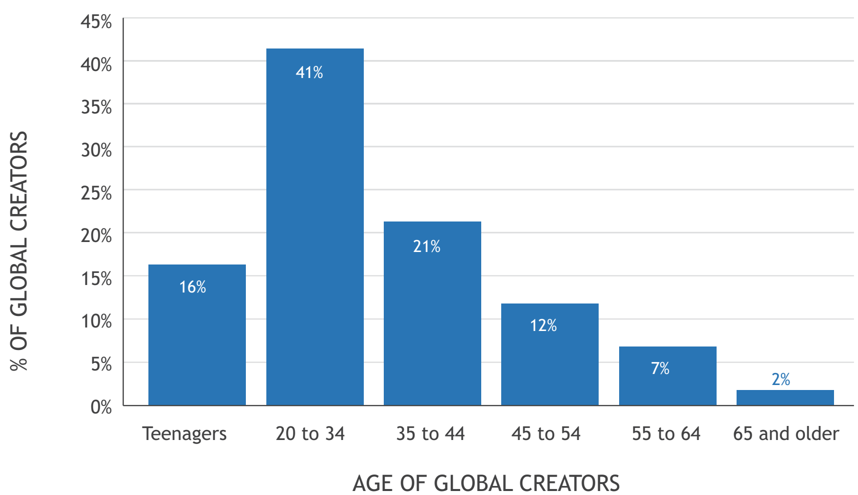


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Global Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

EDUCATION LEVELS OF CREATORS

Creators have relatively high levels of education, as Figure 6 shows. More than 40 percent (43 percent) of US Creators aged 25 and older have at least a four-year college degree, compared to 36 percent of all Americans in this age cohort.[9] Still, Creators do lag when it comes to advanced degrees; just 12 percent of US Creators aged 25 and older have an advanced or graduate degree, compared to 14 percent of all Americans aged 25 and older. On the flip side, just 4 percent of US Creators aged 25 and older did not complete high school, compared to 10 percent of Americans aged 25 and older. Roughly a fifth of US Creators (21 percent) count high school as their highest level of education, another fifth (19 percent) have some college, and 13 percent have two-year degrees.

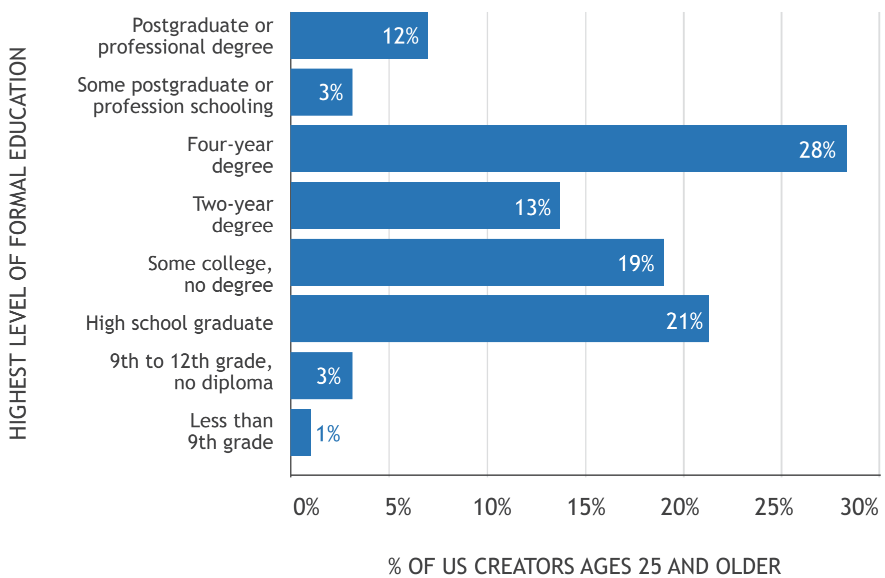
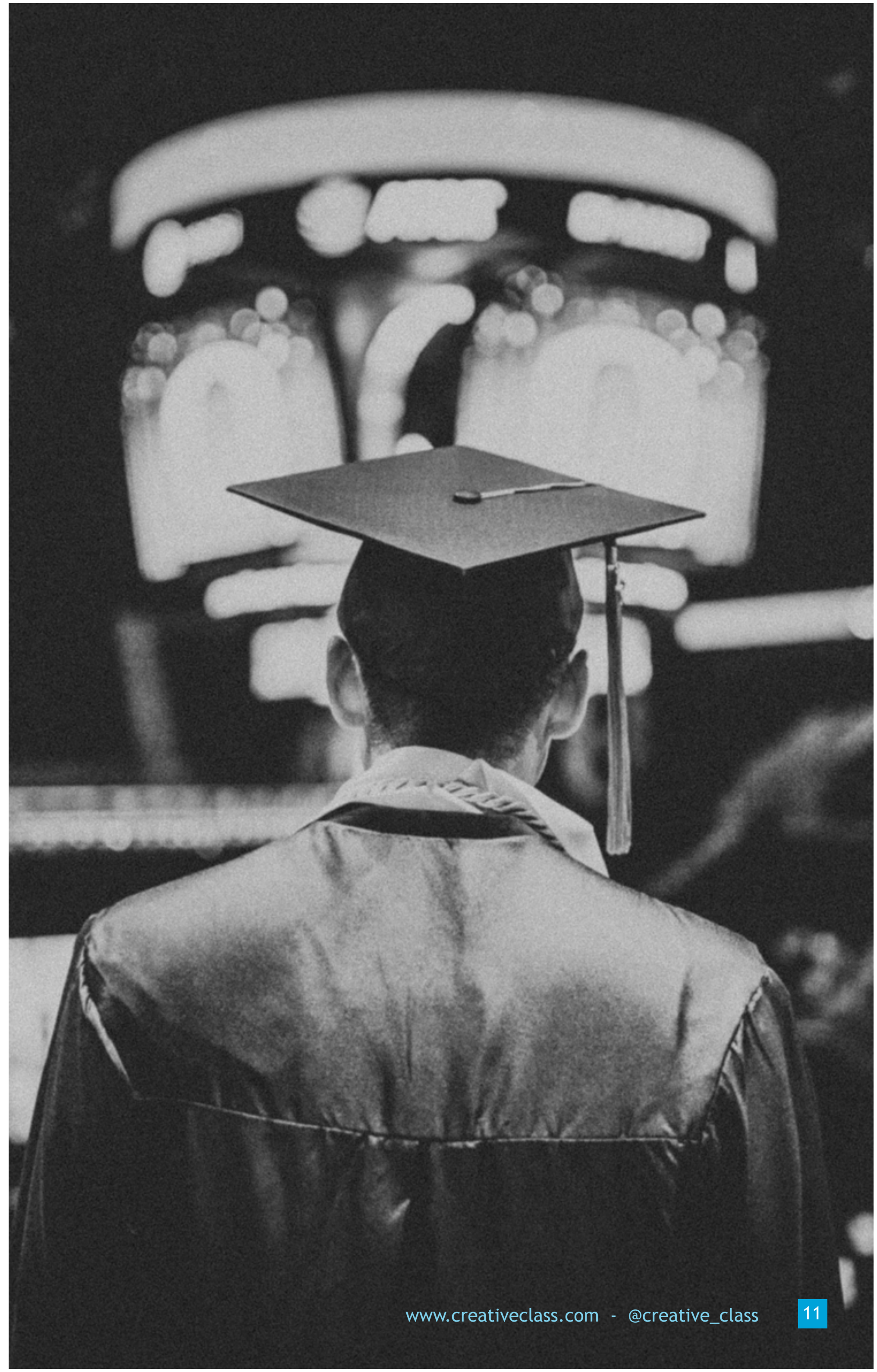


Figure 6. Education Levels for US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.



EDUCATION LEVELS OF CREATORS (CONTINUED)

The difference in education between Creators and the overall population is even more pronounced in other countries, as can be seen in Figure 7. A third of India's Creators have completed their tertiary education, which is roughly equivalent to having gone to college, compared to just 12 percent of all Indian adults.[10] Creators in South Africa, Indonesia, and France are about twice as likely to have completed their tertiary education as members of the population at large, and those in Italy, South Korea, and Germany are about 50 percent more likely to have done so. This is not surprising, as highly educated people are likely to have more time and resources to devote to creative activity, and education is highly correlated with relatively high-paid creative class occupations.

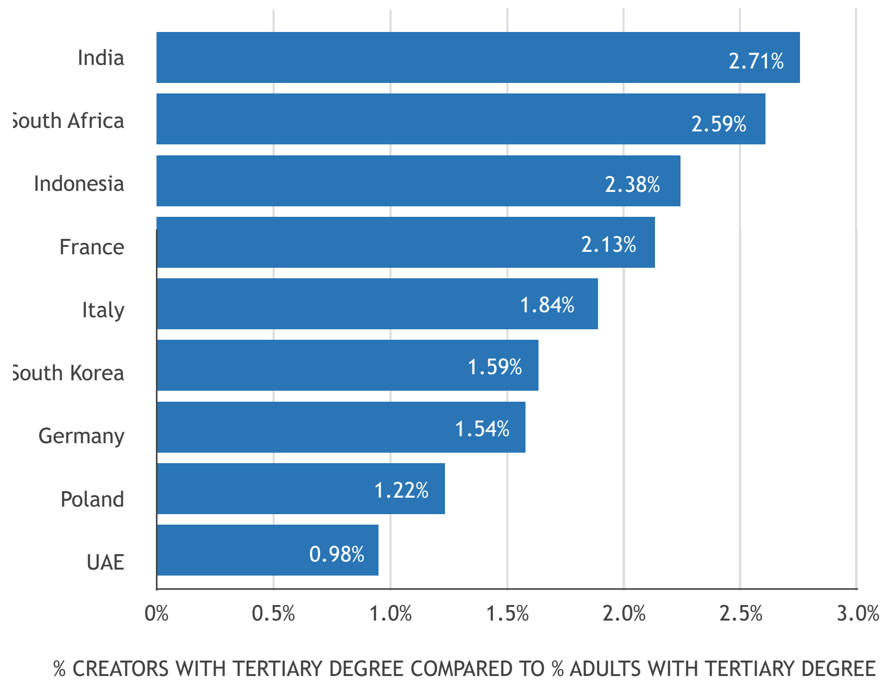


Figure 7. Education Levels of Creators Compared to All Adults
Sources: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023, and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), accessed from the World Bank Group.
Note: The data needed to calculate this ratio are not available for all of the countries surveyed.

GEOGRAPHIC CLUSTERS OF CREATORS

The Internet and digital tools allow Creators to create and post their content from literally anywhere. Still, the reality is that Creators remain clustered geographically. As Figure 8 shows, nearly a third (32 percent) of US Creators are located in the ten metropolitan areas that have populations of five million or more, and another third live in metros with between one and five million residents.[11]

Large US Creators—those with 100,000 or more followers—are even more geographically concentrated. Forty percent of them live in metros with five million or more people—one and a half times as much as the share of all Americans (26 percent) who live in those areas.

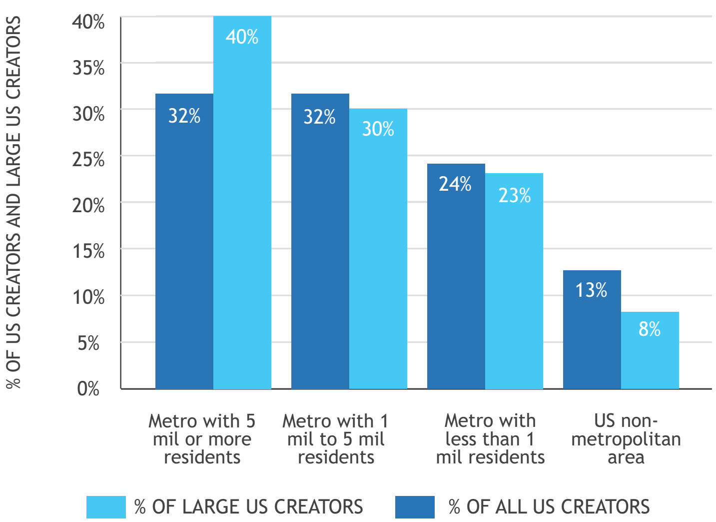


Figure 8. Share of US Creators in Large versus Small Metropolitan Areas
Sources: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023, and United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey, B01003 Total Population.
Note: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

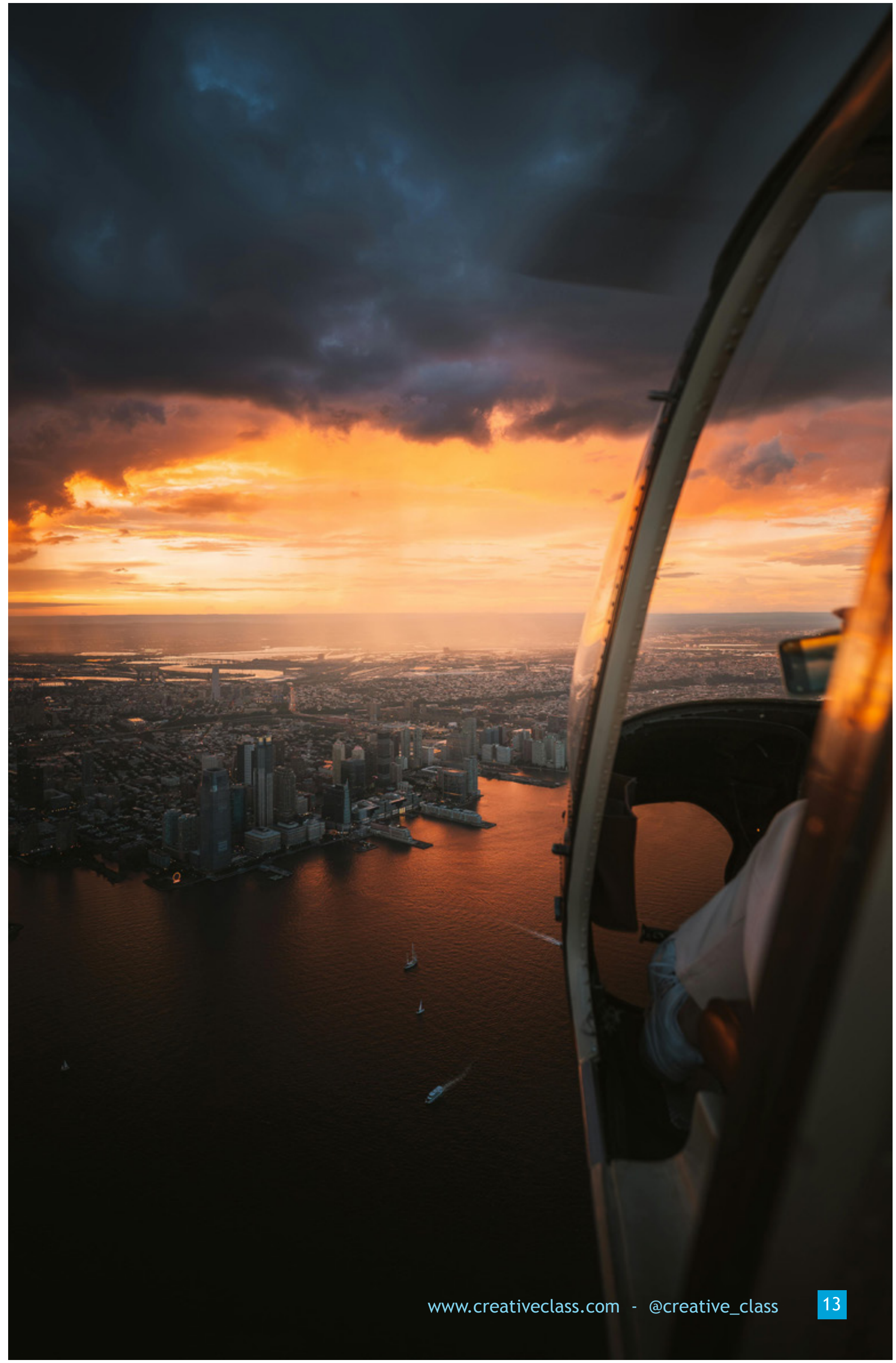


Figure 9 shows the top 20 US metros for Creators based on their share of all US Creators. At the top of the list are New York and Los Angeles, which account for 8.9 and 5.3 percent of US Creators respectively. The next two metros, Chicago and Atlanta, are each home to more than 3 percent of Creators. Five more metros—Houston, Dallas, Seattle, Miami, and Philadelphia—are each home to between 2 and 3 percent of Creators. And 11 other US metros are home to between 1 and 2 percent of Creators.

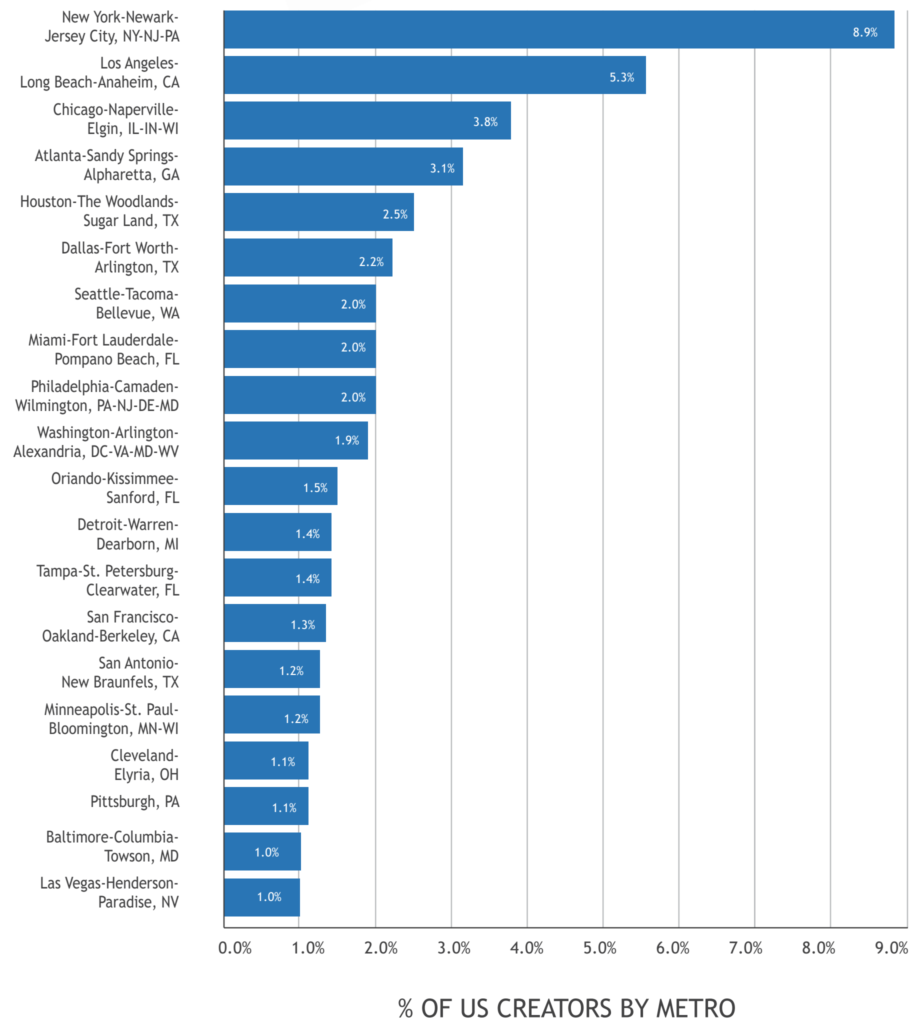


Figure 9. US Metropolitan Areas with the Largest Numbers of Creators

Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

The fact that New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago have the largest numbers of Creators is hardly surprising—they are America's three largest metros. So, it is useful and important to look at the relative concentrations of Creators. To do so, we use a measure called a location quotient or LQ, which is essentially the ratio of a metro's share of Creators compared to its share of the US population overall (see Figure 10).

Using a location quotient, we see that Creators are over-concentrated in a small number of US metros. Seven have LQs of more than 1.5, meaning their concentrations of Creators are at least 50 percent greater than their shares of the overall population. And 11 metros have LQs greater than 1.25, meaning their shares of Creators are at least 25 percent larger than their shares of the population. Eighteen of the top 20 US metros for Creators have location quotients of more than 1.0, which means their shares of Creators exceed their shares of the US population.

Orlando, home to Walt Disney World, which employs large numbers of performers and content producers, tops the list with an LQ of 2.29. Cleveland, Atlanta, Seattle, San Antonio, and Pittsburgh have higher concentrations of Creators than New York and Los Angeles. Tampa and Las Vegas, which, like Orlando, employ large numbers of performers, have higher concentrations of Creators than Los Angeles.

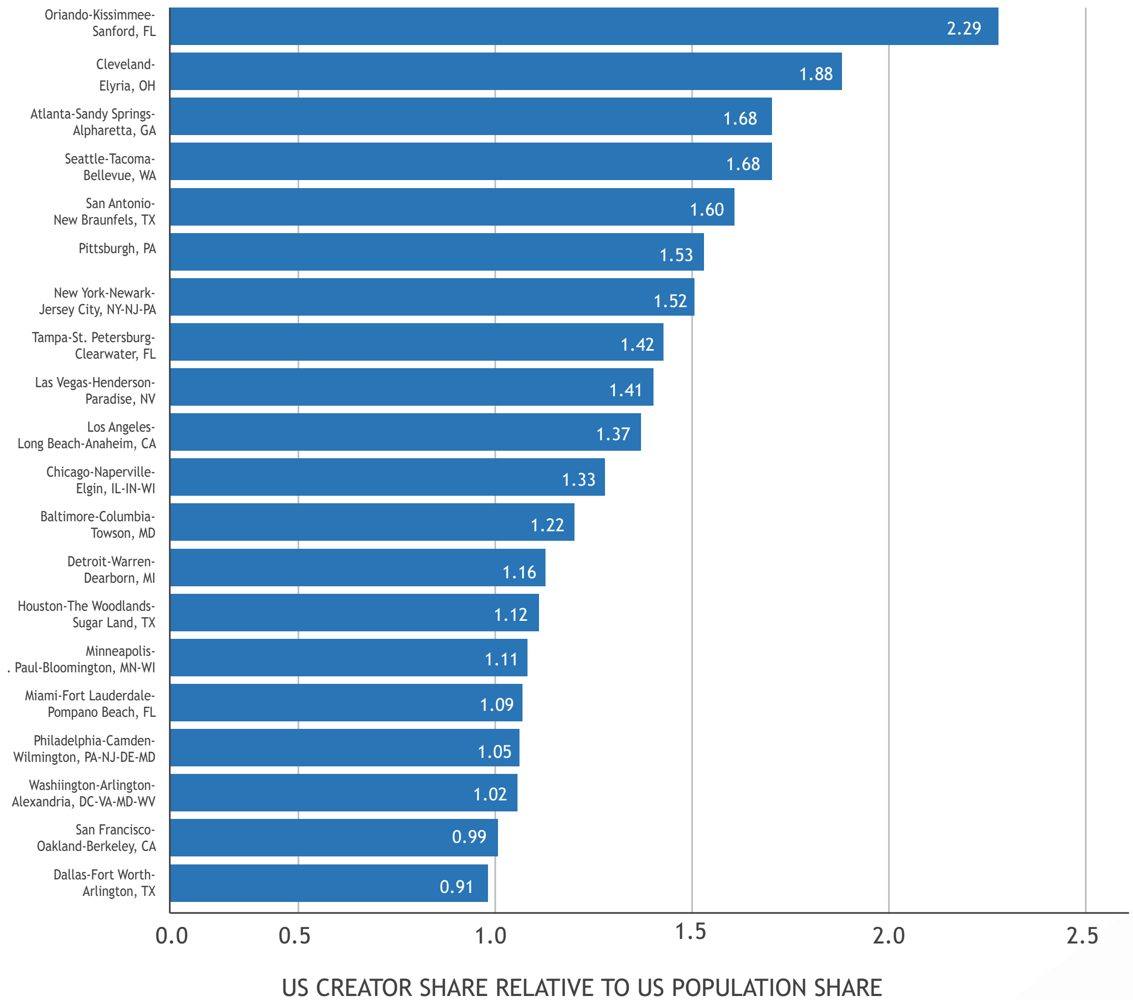


Figure 10. US Metropolitan Areas with the Highest Concentrations of Creators
Sources: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023, and United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey, B01003 Total Population.

WHAT MOTIVATES CREATORS?

Despite what is often said about Creators' fevered pursuits of attention and wealth, many, if not most, are motivated by more than just money. As Figure 11 shows, survey respondents report their top motivations to be: the desire to showcase talent (29 percent); have fun (29 percent); entertain others (28 percent); connect with people (28 percent); and share their content with others (28 percent). Earning money ranked sixth (with 25 percent), about the same as attract an audience (25 percent); have a positive impact (23 percent); improve skills (23 percent); feel good about oneself (22 percent); and educate others (22 percent). Boost self-confidence came next (with 19 percent), followed by the desire to build a community with shared interests (also 19 percent). Becoming famous and building a career and business ranked near the bottom of the list, each with 16 percent or less. The relative lack of interest in fame or even building a business or career may seem surprising, but it is squarely in line with the motivations of the Creative Class more broadly. As I documented in *The Rise of The Creative Class*, surveys and studies have consistently found that its members tend to be intrinsically motivated to follow their passions and work on ideas, activities, and projects that give them a sense of purpose; connect with like-minded others; engage in work that is challenging, interesting, and fun; and have control over their schedules.

WHAT MOTIVATES CREATORS? (CONTINUED)

The motivations of Large US Creators are somewhat different (see Figure 12). Earning money tops the list of what motivates them, with over half (53 percent) citing it, compared to just 21 percent of all US Creators and one-quarter of all Global Creators. Large US Creators are considerably more likely to cite a desire to build a career from their content creation as well (32 percent compared to 14 percent for Creators overall) and to build a business (23 percent compared to 13 percent for Creators overall).

The greater emphasis that large US Creators place on money and career likely reflects the fact that Creators at this scale are more likely to treat their activities as a full-time pursuit. It is hard to say whether these larger Creators built up their followings because they were more motivated by money or became so as their followings developed. That said, the second largest motivation reported by Large US Creators is to make a positive impact (45 percent), compared to just 23 percent for all Creators.

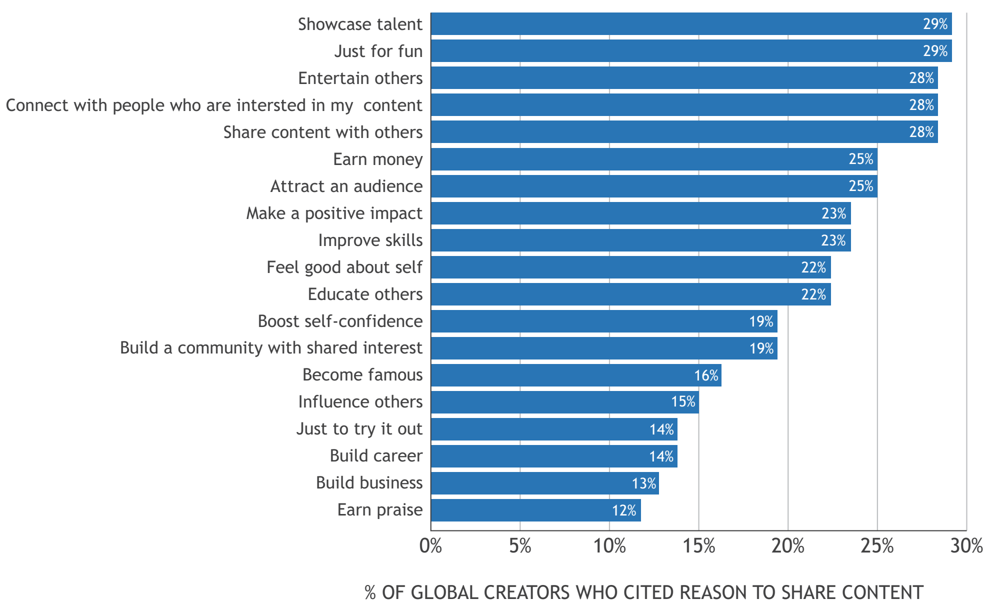


Figure 11. Leading Motivations of Global Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Survey asked respondents to select up to five leading motivations for publishing.

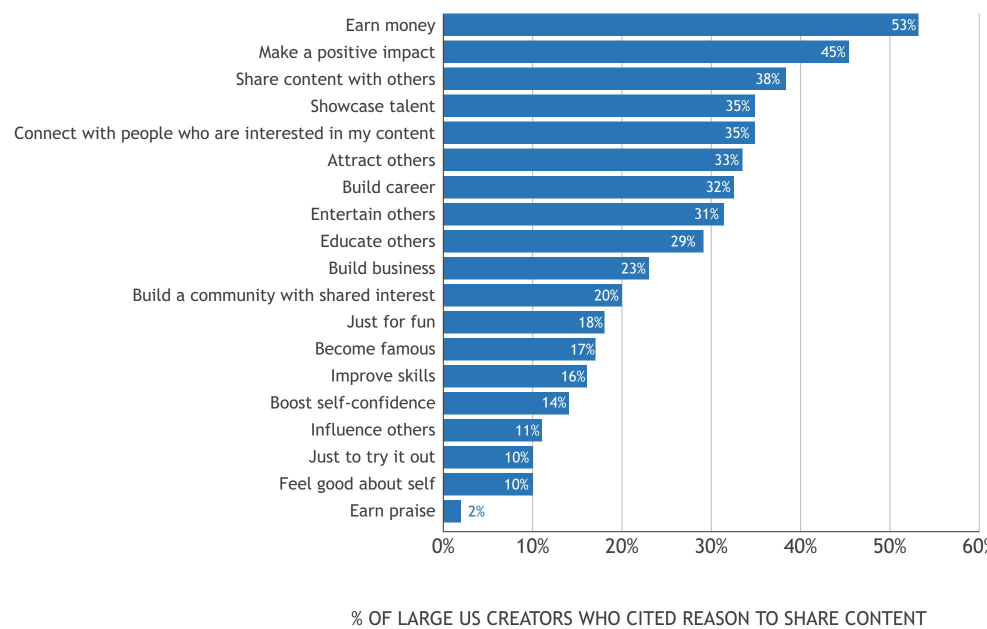


Figure 12. Motivations of Large US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Analysis focuses on Large US Creators with 100,000 or more followers. Survey asked respondents to select up to five leading motivations.

WHAT MOTIVATES CREATORS? (CONTINUED)

Figure 13 takes another look at the motivations of Creators by considering the extent to which they are motivated by personal fulfillment versus extrinsic rewards. Roughly half of Global Creators say personal fulfillment is their prime motivation versus less than a fifth who say they are primarily motivated by external rewards. This compares to slightly less than 30 percent of Large US Creators who say they are primarily motivated by personal fulfillment. That said, less than a fifth (19 percent) of Large US Creators say they are primarily motivated by external rewards, while more than one-half (52 percent) say they equally value personal fulfillment and external rewards.

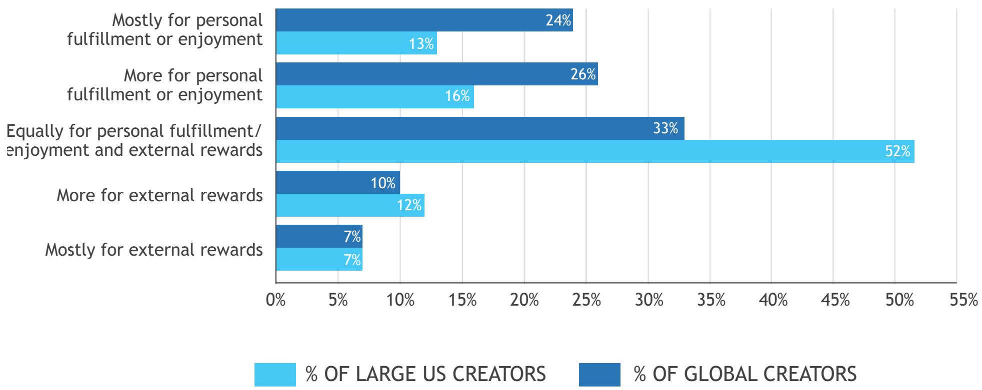


Figure 13. Personal Fulfillment versus External Rewards as Motivation
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

There are good reasons to expect the motivations of Creators to differ across countries. To get a clearer picture, we identified the most distinctive motivations cited by Creators across each of the 20 countries by comparing the share of Creators that cited a particular motivation in each country relative to the share of Global Creators that cited it (see Figure 14).

COUNTRY	MOTIVATION
North America	
United States	Just for Fun
Europe	
France	Just to try it out
Germany	Earn praise
Italy	Build business
Poland	Build career
United Kingdom	Just to try it out
Latin America	
Argentina	Just for fun
Brazil	Influence others
Mexico	Make a positive impact
Asia Pacific	
Australia	Earn praise
Indonesia	Build business
Japan	Build a community with shared interest
South Korea	Feel good about self
South Asia	
India	Build career
Middle East	
Egypt	Become famous
Saudi Arabia	Become famous
UAE	Improve skills
Africa	
Kenya	Influence others
Nigeria	Educate others
South Africa	Educate others

Figure 14. Most Distinctive Motivation for Creating and Sharing Content by Country
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

WHAT MOTIVATES CREATORS? (CONTINUED)

As Figure 14 also shows, Creators in India and Poland are relatively more likely to want to build a career, while those in Japan are more interested in building communities of shared interest. The desire to become famous is the most distinctive motivation in two out of the three countries surveyed in the Middle East, and a desire to educate others is the most distinctive motivation in two of the three African countries. None of the nations in Latin America, the Middle East, or Africa have a most distinctive motivation that is related to building a business or career. Creators in the US cite the desire to have fun as their most distinctive motivation.

The role played by money as a motivator also varies across nations. Money seems to play a more prominent role as a motivator in India (where 42 percent of Creators selected “Earn money” on the survey question shown in Figure 11), Saudi Arabia (33 percent), Indonesia (32 percent), and Nigeria (30 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, money seems to play less of a role as a motivator to Creators in France, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Japan, where 20 percent or fewer Creators named it. These differences could be driven by the variation in their countries’ overall economies and job markets, as well as cultural norms related to the pursuit of money.

HOW CREATORS WORK

The common image of a Creator is of a solitary figure generating content by themselves and sharing it online. But this is not the norm. According to the survey, only 42 percent of Global Creators work by themselves, with wide variations across nations.

As Figure 15 shows, the share of Creators who work alone ranges from about one-fifth in the UAE, Kenya, and Egypt to more than one-half in Italy, Germany, Poland, South Korea, and Japan. The US sits right around the global average, with 44 percent of its Creators reporting that they work alone, although the percentage drops to 39 percent for Large US Creators (see Figure 16), who, of course, need more help, given the larger scale, reach, ambition, and financial returns of their activities. Creators in emerging economies such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Indonesia are generally less likely to work alone than Creators in more advanced economies like Germany, Japan, and the UK. Creators in emerging economies may be able to afford more help because wages are lower. The differences may also be driven by cultural norms.

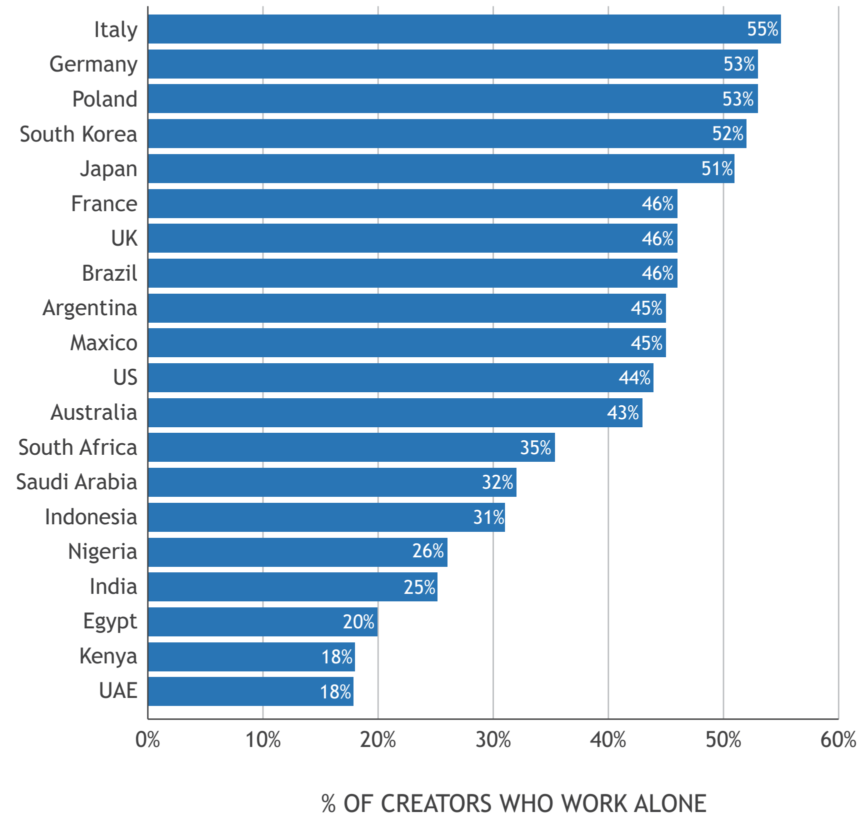


Figure 15. Share of Creators Who Work Alone by Country
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

HOW CREATORS WORK (CONTINUED)

Creators get a significant amount of help from unpaid sources (see Figure 16). A large share of Global Creators (41 percent) gets free help from family and friends, while only 12 percent pay for such help. Another 13 percent pay for additional technical support, 12 percent pay for creative support, and 10 percent pay for additional management support. Not surprisingly, Large US Creators make more use of paid help.

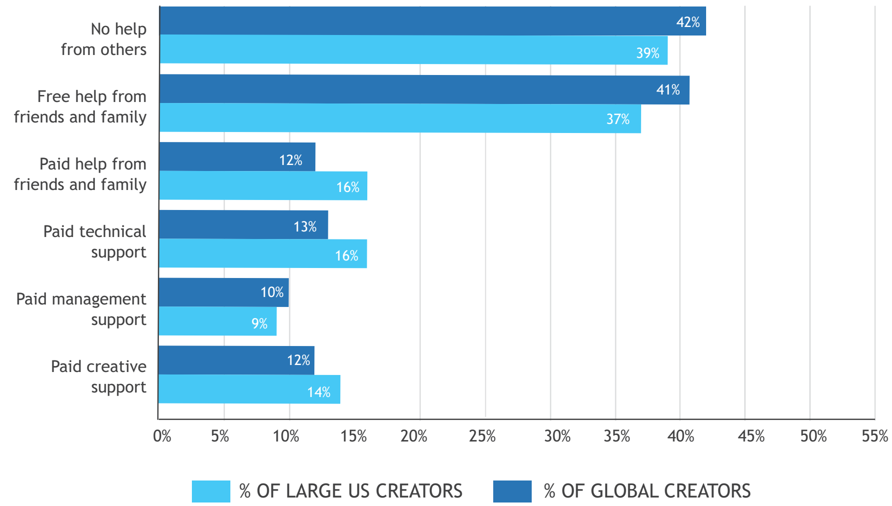


Figure 16. Creators' Use of Paid versus Unpaid Support
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

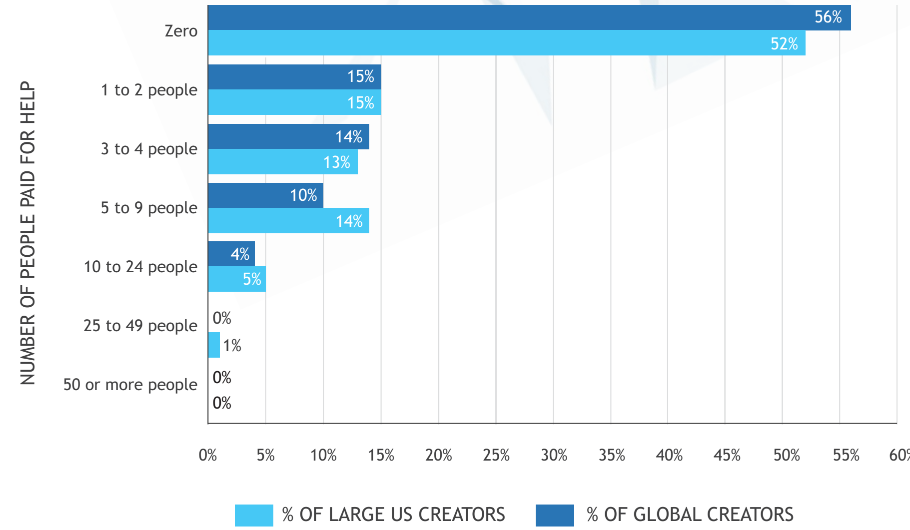


Figure 17. Number of Paid Employees
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

More than half of Global Creators (56 percent) report that they do not employ any paid staff, as Figure 17 shows. Roughly 30 percent pay between one and four people. Another 15 percent of Global Creators pay five or more people. Less than 1 percent have a support team with between 25 and 50 people and even fewer employ more than 50 people. But while Large US Creators employ more people than Creators overall, the differences are not that significant. More than one-half of Large US Creators (52 percent) do not employ any paid staff, just a four-percentage-point difference from all Creators.

MOST CREATORS DEPEND ON OTHER JOBS

Creators who are successful enough to make a living wage from the content they create are the exception and not the rule. Figure 18 shows the employment status of Creators. Over half of Global Creators work full-time and 14 percent work part-time. Another 2 percent are contract or gig workers, and 3 percent are unemployed. While 17 percent are students, 2 percent are homemakers, and 2 percent pursue their Creator activities in retirement. Fewer than one in ten (9 percent) of Global Creators own their own businesses or are self-employed. Eight percent of US Creators are business owners and/or self-employed, slightly below the 11 percent self-employment rate for all US workers.[12]

Not surprisingly, the pattern is different for larger US Creators. More than one-fifth of US Creators with 10,000 or more followers and nearly 40 percent of US Creators with 100,000 or more followers are business owners or self-employed.

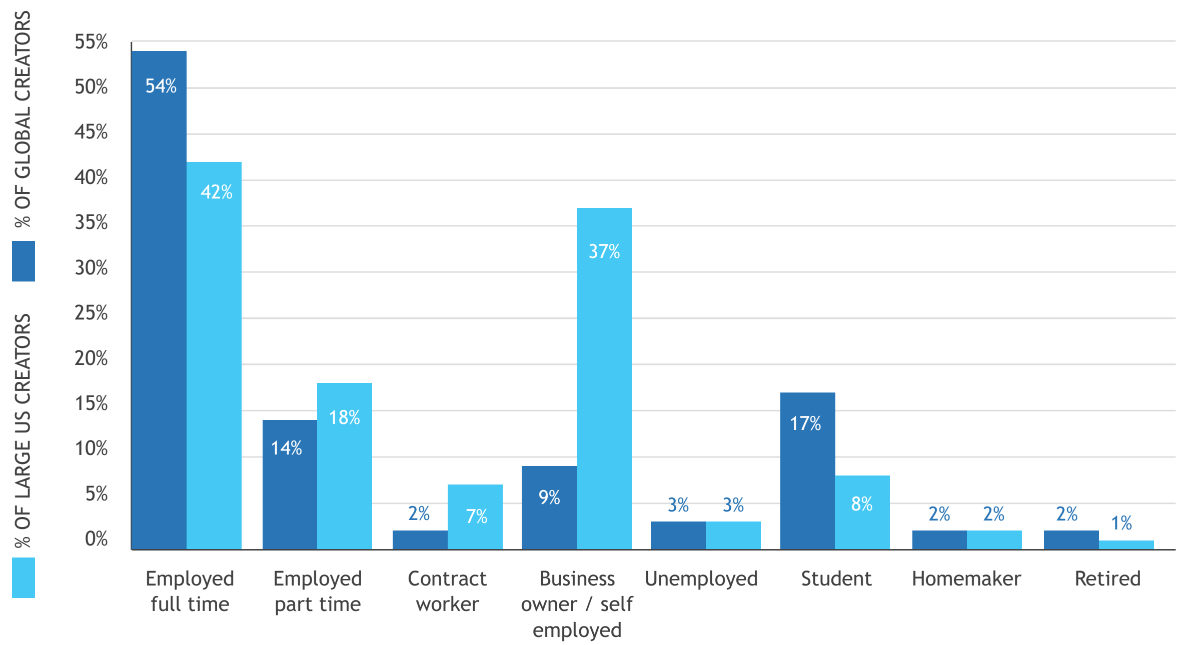


Figure 18. Employment Status of Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers. Survey question asked respondents to select all that apply.

LEADING OCCUPATIONS OF CREATORS

Since their work involves content creation, one might expect that Creators would be more likely to have artistic and creative backgrounds. And this is indeed the case. Figure 19 details the occupations of US Creators. While 14 percent of US Creators report that they work in arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations, only 2 percent of the overall US workforce is employed in those fields. More than half of all US Creators are employed in Creative Class occupations: arts, culture, and design; science and engineering; management and business; and the professions.[13] This is notably higher than the share of US workers who are members of the Creative Class (41 percent). In addition, more than 30 percent of US Creators work in arts and design, the sciences and engineering, computers and math, and education, which make up the core Creative Class occupations, almost double the rate for all American workers (16 percent). Other leading occupations of US Creators are management, business, healthcare, and law.

That said, a considerable share of US Creators does not work in Creative Class occupations. Roughly 14 percent of US Creators report blue-collar occupations like production, construction, and transportation and materials moving, compared to 21 percent of all US workers; and another 36 percent work in routine service occupations like sales, office and administrative support, food service, and personal care, versus 38 percent of the US workforce as a whole.

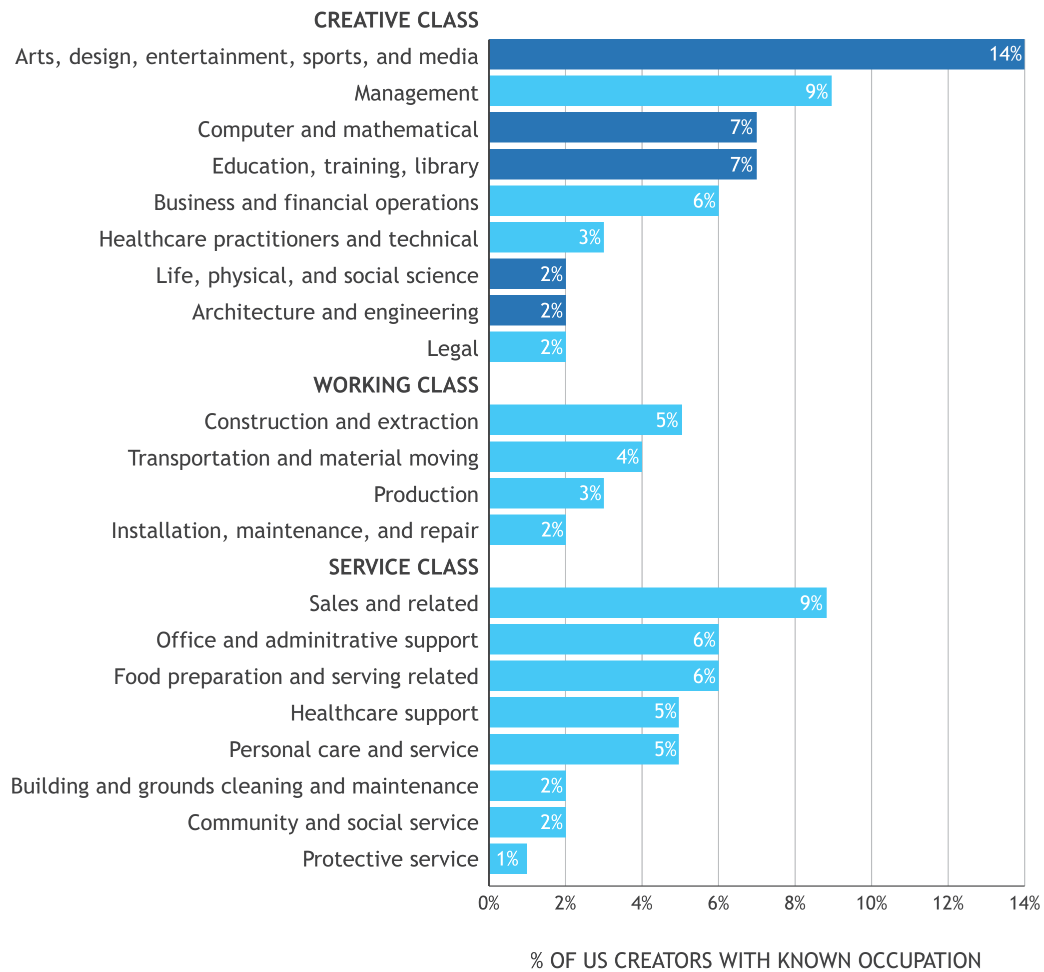


Figure 19. Occupations of US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Dark blue bars represent core Creative Class occupations of arts and design, the sciences and engineering, and education.

LEADING OCCUPATIONS OF CREATORS (CONTINUED)

The pattern is a bit different for Global Creators, as Figure 20 shows. Just 8 percent of Global Creators are employed in arts, entertainment, and related jobs. Less than half (46 percent) hold jobs that fall under the rubric of the Creative Class.

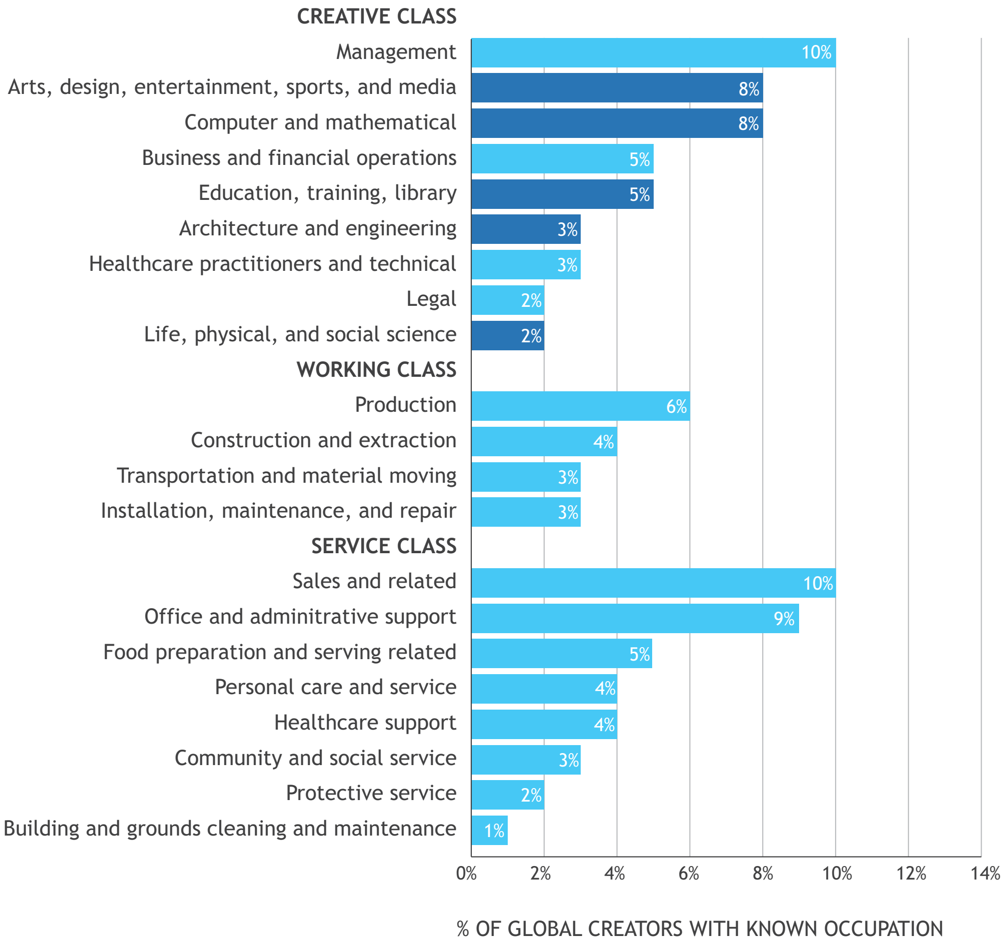
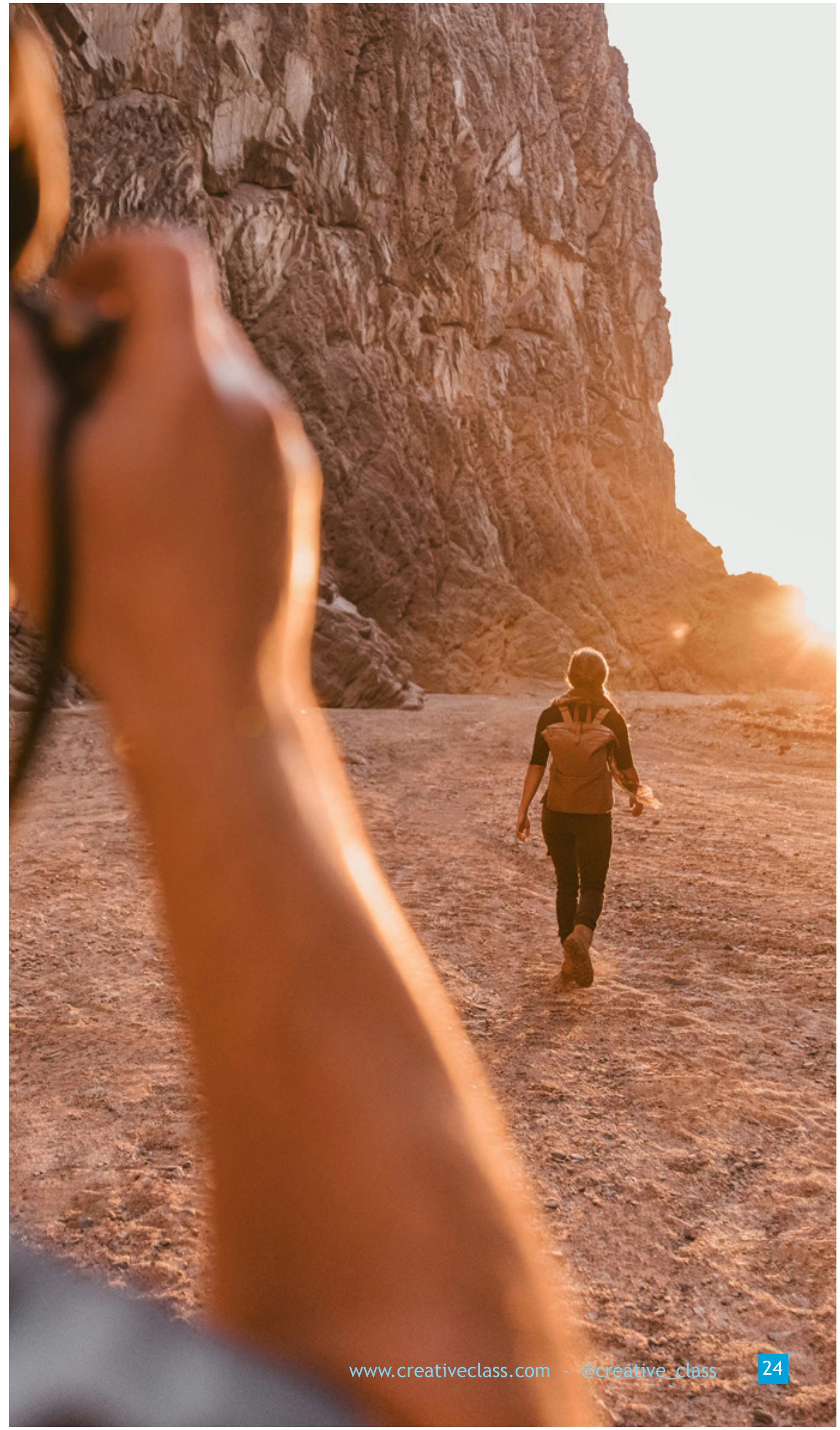


Figure 20. Occupations of Global Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Dark blue bars represent core Creative Class occupations of arts and design, the sciences and engineering, and education.



SOURCES OF EARNINGS

So, how do the Creators who earn money do so? Figure 21 details their earnings, which come from a wide array of sources.

The leading sources of earnings that Global Creators report are ads shown by platforms (28 percent), subscriptions (25 percent), digital gifts from followers (25 percent), affiliate links or programs (24 percent), sponsored content, brand deals, collabs, or endorsements (22 percent), and merchandise (21 percent). Next in line are creator funds or bonus payments from platforms (19 percent), donations or tips (19 percent), and single access payments (19 percent). Interestingly, just 8 percent of Global Creators say they earn money indirectly, by growing a business.

The pattern for Large US Creators is different, as Figure 22 shows. They are more likely to make money from sponsored content, brand deals, collabs, or endorsements (60 percent versus 22 percent for Global Creators), creator funds or bonus payments (44 percent versus 19 percent), affiliate links or programs (43 percent versus 24 percent), ads included by the platform (43 percent versus 28 percent), subscriptions (37 percent versus 25 percent), and merchandise (30 percent versus 21 percent).

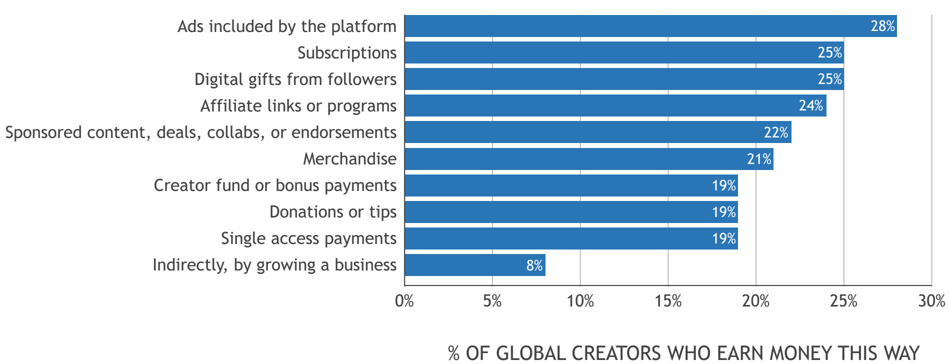


Figure 21. Earnings Sources for Global Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Survey question asked respondents to select all that apply.

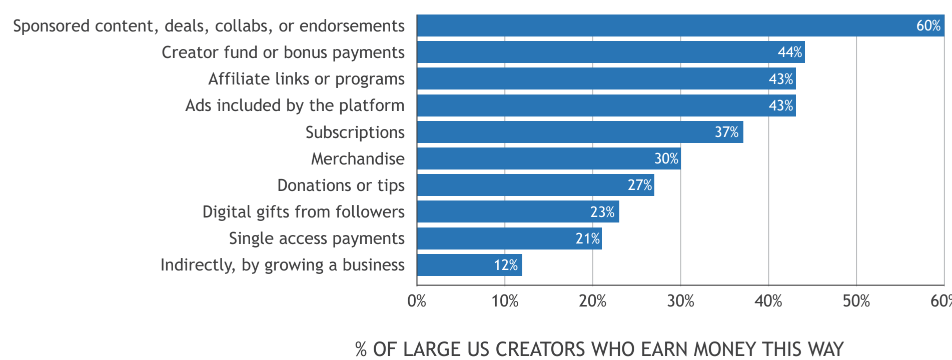


Figure 22. Earnings Sources for Large US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Analysis focuses on Large US creators with 100,000 or more followers. Survey question asked respondents to select all that apply.

SOURCES OF EARNINGS (CONTINUED)

The much greater role played by brand deals and collabs certainly reflects Large Creators' higher follower counts. But it is also due to the greater amount of money spent on influencer marketing in the United States, which accounted for more than three-quarters of the estimated $34 billion spent on brand deals in 2023.[14]

For the vast majority of Creators, earnings from content creation amount to at most a source of supplemental income, as Figure 23 shows. In fact, just 12 percent of Global Creators report Creator earnings as their main source of income. Thirty percent say they make some money from Creator activities, but do not consider it to be part of their income. Almost 30 percent (29 percent) indicate their Creator earnings are enough to supplement their income. Roughly a quarter (24 percent) say that while they do not make income from their Creator activity, they benefit from free products or experiences. Seventeen percent say that their creator activities do not generate any benefits.

Not unexpectedly, the pattern is entirely different for Large US Creators: 42 percent report that their content creation and sharing is their main source of income. Another 26 percent say that it supplements their income. Just 4 percent of Large US Creators say they do not derive any economic benefit from their activities.

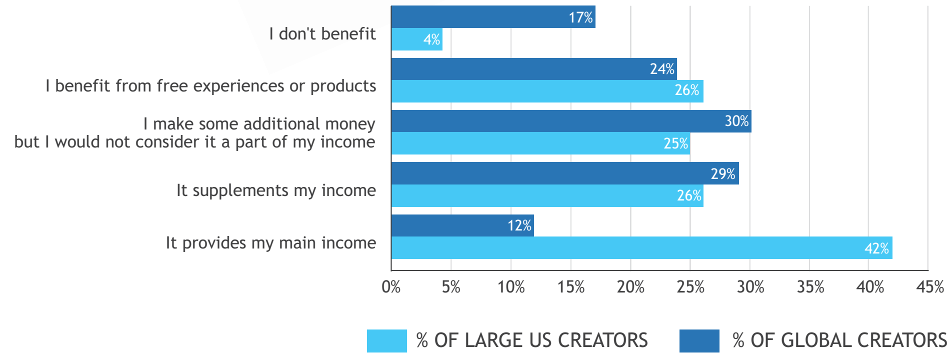


Figure 23. Benefits of Creator Earnings: All Creators versus Large US Creators
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

Distribution of Creators by Revenue

When it comes to the distribution of Creators by revenue, we again see the tale of two Creator worlds (see Figure 24). The vast majority of Creators earn very little money from their content creation.[15] More than half (56 percent) make less than $1,000 in revenue per year, and roughly three-quarters (78 percent) earn less than $10,000. And as Figure 24 shows, 37 percent report no revenues at all. At the other end of the spectrum, just 7 percent of Global Creators earn $50,000 or more from their content, and only 2 percent make $100,000 or more.

The pattern is somewhat similar for US Creators. Roughly four in ten US Creators report no revenue at all, while 28 percent make $10,000 or more. Just 10 percent of US Creators make $50,000 or more, and 2 percent earn at least $100,000 from their creator activity. In contrast, nearly 60 percent of Large US Creators earn $10,000 or more per year, and nearly 20 percent make $100,000 or more.

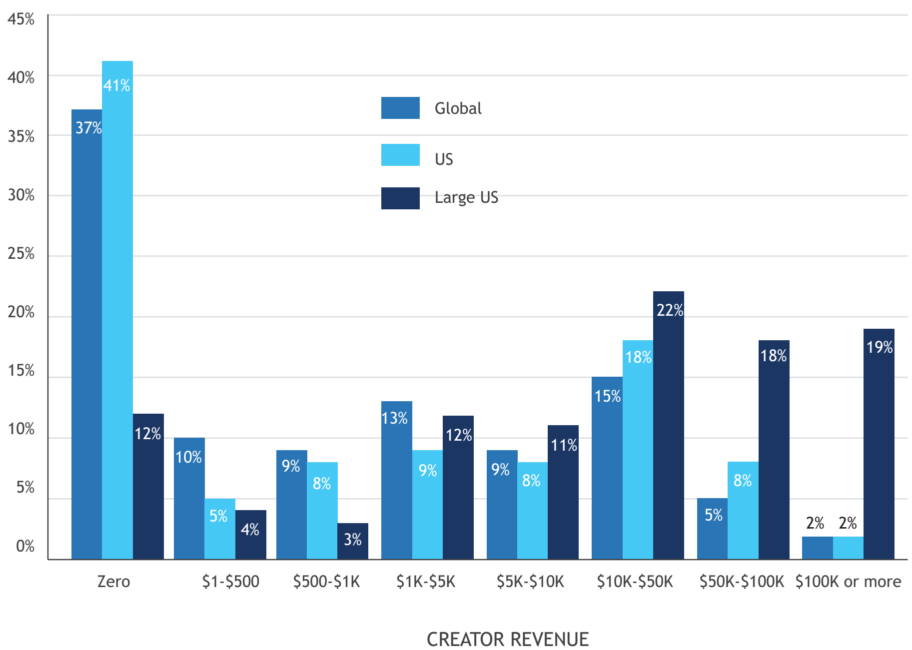


Figure 24. Distribution of Creators by Revenue
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CREATORS

We estimate the direct economic impact of US Creators to be $29 billion and that of Global Creators across the 20 surveyed countries to be $368 billion in annual revenue. To place this in context, our estimate of the global economic impact of Creators is comparable to the entire economic output (i.e., GDP) of Hong Kong ($382 million) or South Africa ($378 billion) in 2023 and larger than that of Finland ($300 billion), New Zealand ($253 billion), or Greece ($238 billion).[16] Comparing our estimate of the global economic impact of Creators to other estimates, ours is more than three times larger than NeoReach + Influencer Marketing Hub's much-cited 2021 estimate of $104 billion. It is somewhat larger than the 2023 Goldman Sachs estimate of $250 billion, but roughly in line with Goldman Sachs' projected estimate of $480 billion by 2027.[17]

Our estimate is based on median revenue earned by Creators in each country. We found this to be the most effective way to deal with the highly skewed nature of the revenue data. We calculate aggregate Creator revenue by simply multiplying the number of Creators in each country by the median revenue for Creators in that country and then summing the values across the 20 countries. That said, our estimates of the aggregate revenue of Creators should be viewed as provisional and likely conservative in light of several caveats. The data on Creator revenues are self-reported and thus subject to the usual reliability concerns. Differences in cultural norms, currencies, and price levels can also affect the reliability and comparability of these data. It is also possible that the survey sample itself may not reflect the actual earnings of the entire population of Creators. Furthermore, our estimates do not include the economic impact of social media platforms or of Creator Economy startups; nor do they consider the multiplier effects associated with the revenues generated by Creators. And finally, our estimates cover just the 20 countries surveyed and are not extrapolated to cover the entire global population of Creators.

USE OF VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY

Virtual and augmented reality promise to change both the ways we create and experience the online world and how Creators produce, share, and monetize content. Virtual reality uses computer modeling and simulation to create a fully immersive digital environment. Users enter it as digital representations of themselves such as avatars, explore the space, handle weapons, tools, and other objects, and interact with other visitors. In contrast to a full digital immersion, users of augmented reality remain grounded in the real world but can perceive and interact with virtual overlays, such as graphics, text, or video.

The survey asked Creators about their use of these technologies currently and whether and how they plan to use them in the future. A testimony to the accelerated pace of change in this area, the survey was conducted before the recent boom in generative artificial intelligence was fully recognized.

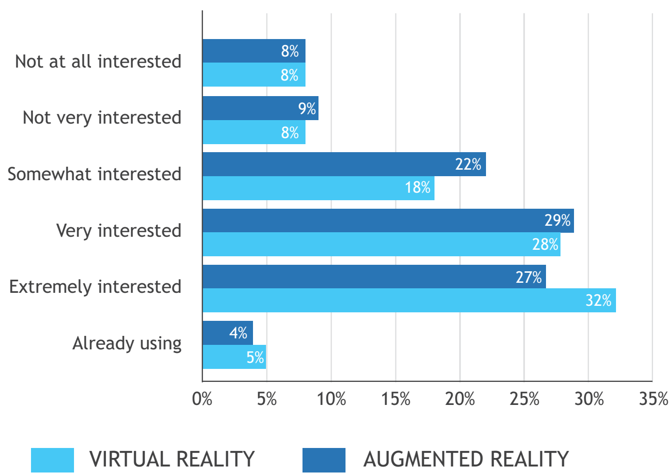


Figure 25. Interest in Augmented and Virtual Reality
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.

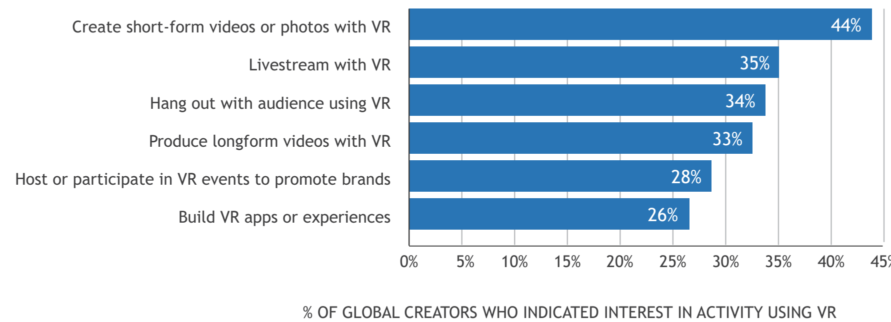


Figure 26. Future Use of Virtual Reality
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Note: Survey asked respondents to select all that apply.

The use of both technologies remains quite limited, as Figure 25 shows. Only 5 percent of Global Creators report that they are using virtual reality, and only 4 percent say they are using augmented reality. But more than three-quarters (78 percent) of Global Creators say they are at least somewhat interested in using both down the road.

According to Figure 26, significant percentages of Creators say they would use virtual reality to create short-form videos or photos (44 percent), livestream content (35 percent), hang out with their followers (34 percent), produce longform videos (33 percent), host or participate in events with brands (28 percent), and build new virtual reality apps or experiences (26 percent).

USE OF VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY (CONTINUED)

As detailed in Figure 27, more than a third (34 percent) of Global Creators say that they would adopt virtual reality in the future if it were easier to use, as do 37 percent of Large US Creators. Other factors affecting Global Creators' future use of virtual reality are discovering virtual reality applications that are of use to them (33 percent) and finding a greater interest in virtual reality among their current audiences (31 percent). Twenty-nine percent of Global Creators say they would benefit from training in these technologies, and 28 percent would like to know more about how they fit into their work as Creators.

While only 30 percent of Global Creators said the ability to earn money via virtual or augmented reality is a factor affecting their future use of them, more than half of Large US Creators expressed this sentiment. This makes sense, as Large US Creators are both more likely to earn money via their content creation and better able to afford new investments in technology and training.

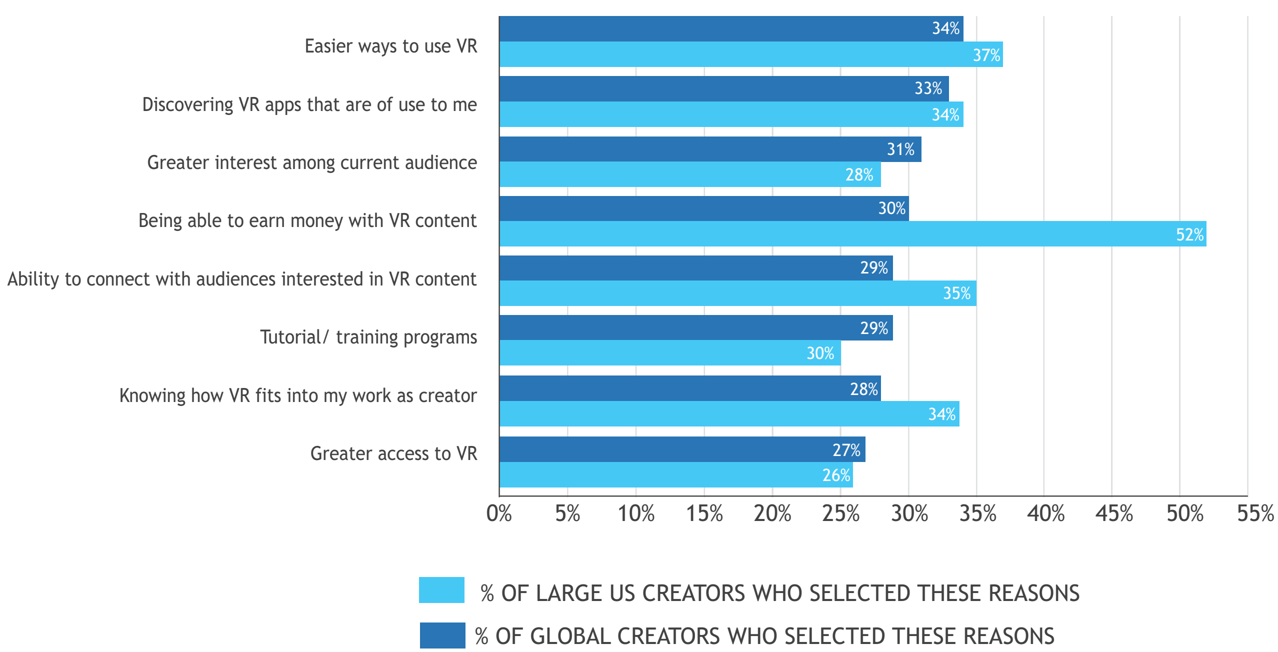


Figure 27. Factors Affecting Future Use of Virtual Reality
Source: Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023.
Notes: Large US Creators have 100,000 or more followers.

CONCLUSION

Until now, research on digital Creators has been hampered by a lack of systematic and comparable data on them. We undertook a major new global survey to fill these gaps, and its findings are far-reaching and extensive. But the overarching pattern that emerges from the data is that of two distinct worlds of Creators. The first and best-known is the world of superstar Creators, celebrities, and influencers with tens or even hundreds of millions of followers, who earn six-, seven-, and eight-figure incomes. The second and far larger world includes the vast majority of digital Creators, who have much smaller follower counts, make much less, if any, money, and value personal fulfillment over fortune and fame. Both, however, are culturally and economically important.

The future of our economy and society literally turns on the further development of the innate creativity of each and every human being. The promise of the Creator Revolution is that it is doing just that.

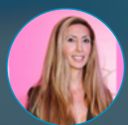
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project like this turns on the collective intelligence and creativity of a talented team and I owe a debt of thanks to the Creative Class Group team: Rana Florida for managing and stewarding all facets of the project, Todd Gabe for research, Arthur Goldwag for editing, Mark Block for logistical support, and Roman Pietrs for graphics and design.

We are especially grateful to Axel Bichler, Medha Sarkar, and Nikitha Ramesh of Factworks for their work on the survey of Global Creators, and we thank Amy Garczynski, Ben Carroll, and Katie McLean of Meta for their support and collaboration on the research. We also thank Kevin Chan and John Bockstanz for their insights into innovation and policy, and Paige Cohen and Katrina Estrella for their support with outreach and communications.

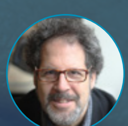
CREATIVE CLASS GROUP TEAM

Richard Florida, founder of the Creative Class Group, led the research. Florida is currently Visiting Distinguished Professor at Vanderbilt University and University Professor at the University of Toronto. He is also a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Kresge Foundation. Florida previously taught at Carnegie Mellon University and has been a visiting professor at Harvard and MIT and a Fellow at the Brookings Institution. He has authored several bestsellers, including the award-winning *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *The New Urban Crisis*. Florida is co-founder of CityLab, the world's leading publication for cities and urbanism, and serves as strategic advisor and board member to several leading real estate development firms, venture capital firms, and investment funds.



Rana Florida guided and managed all aspects of the project. As CEO of the Creative Class Group, she has worked with a diverse array of private and public sector clients around the world, including BMW, Converse, IBM, Cirque du Soleil, Audi, Zappos, and Starwood Hotels. She has decades of experience in corporate strategy, communications, and marketing, having directed global strategic communications for HMSHost, the world's largest airport developer, as well as Disney on Ice, Disney Live, and Ringling Brothers. She has developed marketing strategies with such clients as Starbucks, *The Atlantic*, CityLab, The Aspen Institute, and The Knight Foundation. Rana holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications and an MBA with a double major in marketing and management from Michigan State and Wayne State University. Her book, *Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary*, was named a "Business Best Seller" by Tattered Cover, the largest independent book retailer in the US, and an "Editor's Pick" by *The Globe and Mail*.

Todd Gabe analyzed the survey data collected by Factworks and conducted the research for this project. He is a Professor of Economics at the University of Maine and the author of *The Pursuit of Economic Development: Growing Good Jobs in U.S. Cities and States*. Gabe has over twenty years of experience in teaching classes, mentoring students, and studying the keys to regional economic development. He has published over 150 book chapters, journal articles, and technical reports on topics ranging from human capital and workforce development to regional growth and resilience.



Arthur Goldwag served as editor for this project. Senior Writer and Editor for the Creative Class Group, he has held positions at Random House, *The New York Review of Books*, and the *Book-of-the-Month Club* and is the author of several books, including *The Politics of Fear* and *The New Hate*.

Mark Block is Director of Events for the Creative Class Group. He began his career in the U.S. Senate in 1990 and served as Director of Scheduling & Advance and Deputy Chief of Staff for U.S. Senator Bob Graham of Florida. After receiving an MBA from Johns Hopkins University, Block joined *Newsweek* as Director of External Relations in 2003, where he created the Newsweek Executive Forum, which became the standard Q&A event series at the magazine.

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10. "Educational attainment, at least Bachelor's or equivalent, population 25+," UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), September 30, 2024, accessed from the World Bank Group.

11. United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey, B01003 Total Population.

12. The US self-employment rate is from the US Current Population Survey, May 2024.

13. Creative Class occupations include arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; architecture and engineering; life, physical, and social science; computer and mathematical, which represent the core creative class occupations; education, training, and library; management; business and financial operations; legal; and healthcare practitioners and technical, which make up the group of creative class professionals. Updated data on US occupations are from the 2022 American Community Survey. Our analysis focuses on Creators that listed an occupation on the survey. Note that 27 percent of US Creators and 24 percent of Global Creators did not indicate an occupation (e.g., student, retired), while 6 percent of US Creators and 4 percent of Global Creators listed an occupation other than those included on the survey.

14. US and global influencer marketing numbers are from PQ Media's "Global Influencer Marketing Forecast" and *Media Daily News*.

15. The "Factworks Survey of Global Creators, 2023" asked Global Creators about the revenue they earn using income categories expressed in their "local currency," which we converted to US dollars.

16. Data on country-level economic output, or GDP, is from the World Bank's national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, accessed from the World Bank Group.

17. The $104 billion figure is from "Creator Earnings: Benchmark Report 2021," NeoReach + Influencer MarketingHub, 2021. The $250 billion estimate is from "The Creator Economy Could Approach Half-a-Trillion Dollars by 2027,"Goldman Sachs Research, April 19, 2023.