



# Skills That Pay: What Producers Need to Learn to Stay Relevant



Contents	1
Executive Summary	2
How Was This Survey Made	5
The Changing Landscape: AI's Rise in Music Production	7
Embracing AI in the Studio: Adoption Patterns and Tools	9
Attitudes & Perceptions	15
Evolving Skillsets: Old vs. New in the Age of AI	19
Genre Impact Perceptions	23
Ethics and Transparency	25
Future Outlook	27
Conclusions and Implications	29



# Executive Summary

**Based on original research:** In November 2025, Sonarworks partnered with Sound on Sound to survey 1,194 music creators worldwide. This report presents real, first-hand data from working professionals to reveal authentic insights from the people navigating AI's impact on music production today.

As algorithms learn to compose melodies and auto-mix tracks, music creators face a defining question: which skills will keep them in demand? AI represents the latest chapter in a long history of technological disruption. From synthesizers to digital recording, those who adapted thrived.

## Scope and Context

This research focuses on AI tools for music production - assistive technologies for mixing, mastering, sound design, and workflow optimization. Full generative AI content creation (services like Suno and Udio) bypasses the production process entirely and represents a separate domain relevant to listeners, distributors, and platforms rather than producers.

Our earlier research from Sonarworks examined broader AI trends. This study narrows its focus to production-specific tools because that's where professionals are actually engaging. The data shows producers use full generative AI minimally, not from resistance, but because quality hasn't reached professional standards. Assessing the in-depth impact of prompt based content generation is a critical and interesting topic, and we will try to address it in future studies.

## Who We Surveyed

Nearly 1,200 music creators worldwide: 64% producers and engineers, plus songwriters, sound designers, educators, and multimedia professionals. Crucially, 71% have over a decade of experience, with more than a quarter working for 30+ years. These are seasoned professionals who can contextualize AI within decades of technological change.



# Five Key Findings

## ① Ethics are non-negotiable.

81% demand AI tools built on licensed, ethically sourced material. Creators are prepared to reject tools with questionable provenance.

## ② Creativity trumps job security.

77% worry more about losing originality than losing jobs. The deepest fear is creative homogenization, not unemployment.

## ③ Most are watching and waiting.

49% have tested AI tools but don't use them regularly; around 20% are consistent users. The industry remains in "wait-and-see" mode.

## ④ Genre matters.

More than 67% expect AI to strongly influence EDM/electronic, and pop. The majority believe jazz and blues will resist automation due to their improvisational, human-driven nature.

## ⑤ Creative vision is the premium skill.

50% identify originality and creative direction as most valuable, outranking technical AI mastery. Visionaries will thrive; the ability to imagine something genuinely new becomes the ultimate differentiator.

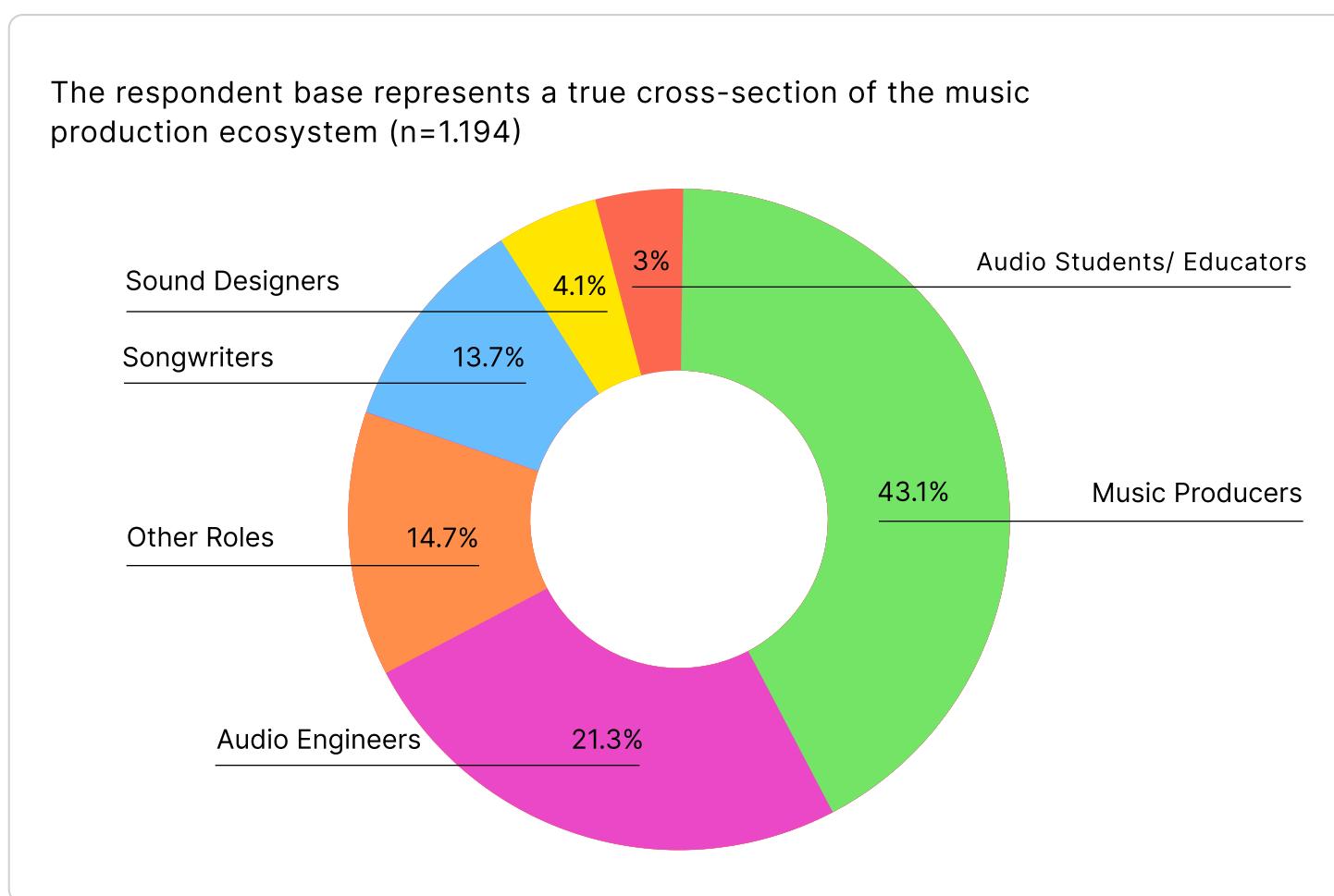
Overall, producers are determined to shape how AI integrates into future production workflows. They're open to tools that save time on tedious tasks, skeptical of anything threatening creative control, and adamant about ethical foundations. As the AI hype cycle matures, we expect tools will be judged on benefit and value rather than the AI label itself. Metadata and detection algorithms will provide transparency around AI-made music, shifting ethical debates toward automated trust systems and freeing professionals to focus on creative work. AI must earn its place by demonstrating real value while respecting the artistry that makes music matter.

Now you probably have questions: What separates those who thrive in this new landscape from those who get left behind? Which skills should you invest in? Where is AI actually adding value, and where is it falling short? We spent 74 hours analyzing this data so you can get exactly those answers. Let's explore what the data reveals.



# I. How Was This Survey Made

The survey draws on responses from 1,194 music creators worldwide, encompassing a broad spectrum of roles and experience levels. This robust sample provides statistically significant insights into the music production community's response to AI disruption.

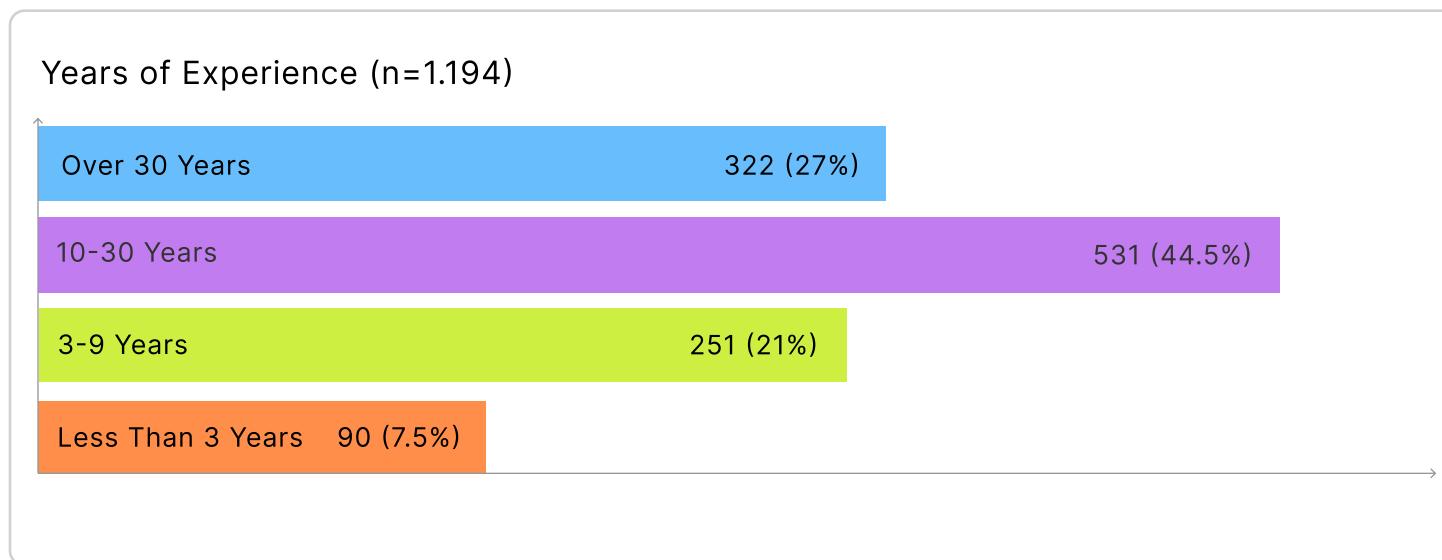


This distribution reflects strong representation from technical production roles, with music producers and audio engineers comprising 64% of participants, joined by songwriters, sound designers, educators, and other multimedia professionals. These figures represent respondents' primary roles, as many wear multiple hats in today's music ecosystem. The diversity ensures insights that reflect the full spectrum of modern music creation, from studio engineers to digital creators working across multiple formats.

**71.5% of respondents have over a decade of professional experience**

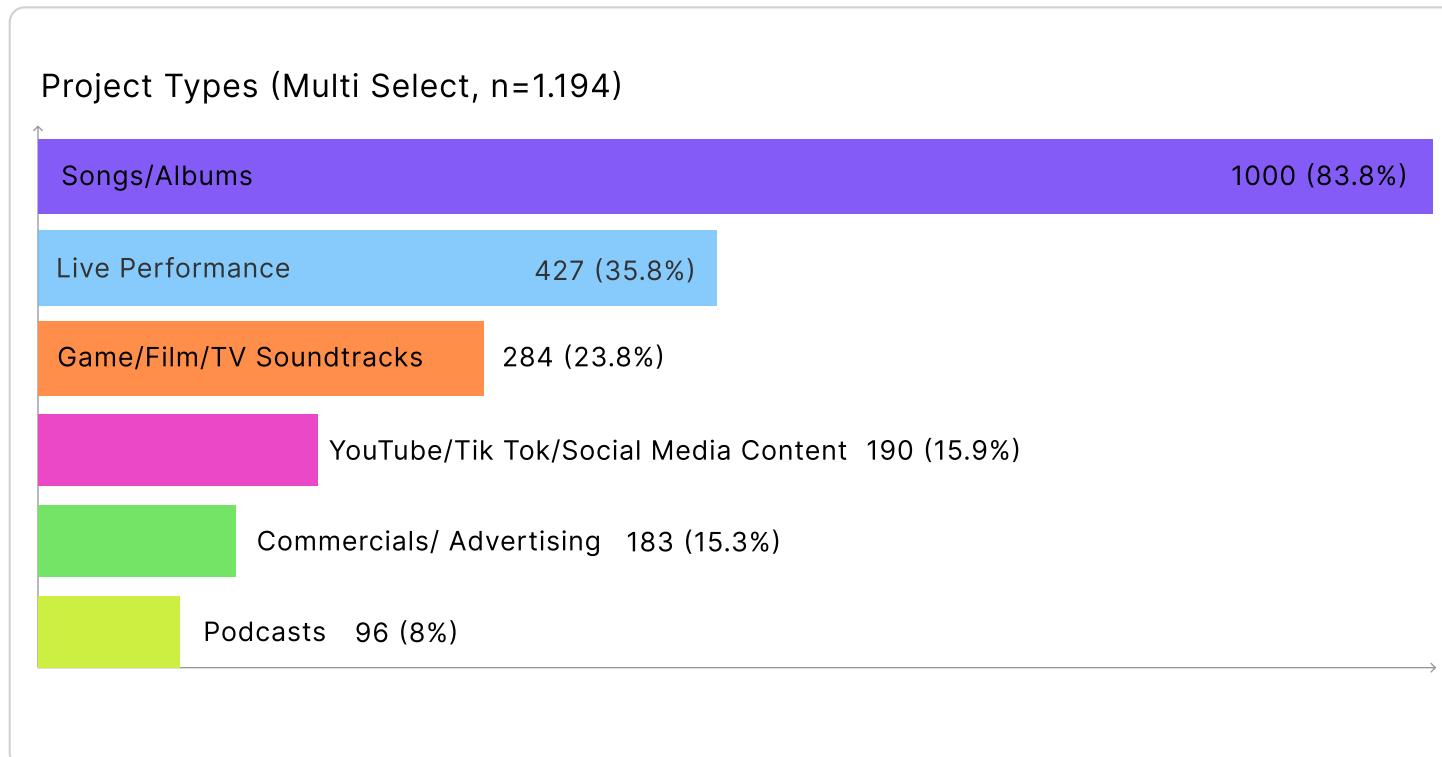


The majority of respondents are seasoned professionals rather than novices experimenting with new technology:



A striking 71% of respondents have more than a decade of professional experience, with more than a quarter having over 30 years in their primary role. Only 7.5% are newcomers with fewer than three years of experience. This depth of experience means the findings reflect the perspectives of creators who have lived through multiple waves of technological disruption - from the rise of digital workstations (DAWs) to the Auto-Tune era to the shifts brought on by streaming. These professionals can place today's AI developments in a meaningful historical context.

## Respondents engage in a variety of project formats



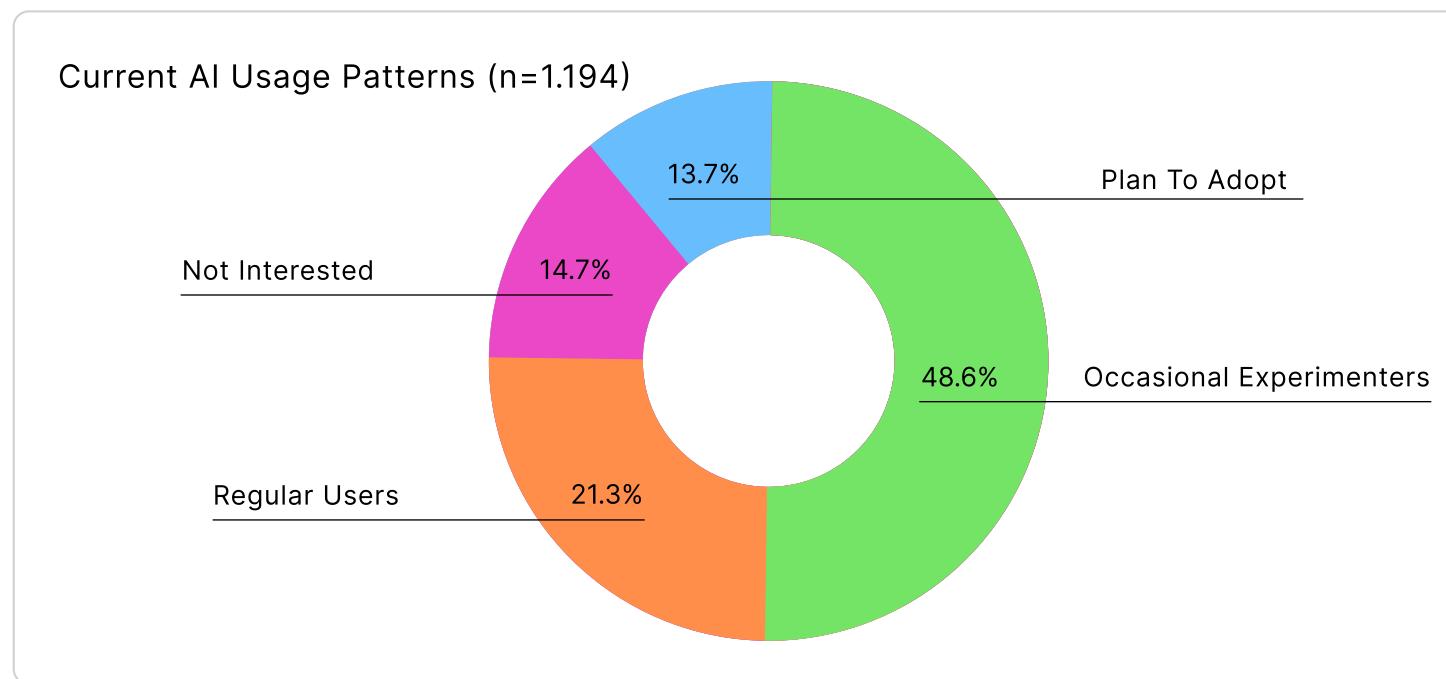


The overwhelming majority of respondents (83.8%) work on traditional songs and albums, often alongside other formats. More than one-third contribute to live performance contexts, and nearly one-quarter produce music for visual media. A notable 15.9% identify as social media content creators, underscoring how modern music production increasingly overlaps with digital content creation. This diversity means our findings are relevant across commercial music, media production, and emerging online platforms.

## II. The Changing Landscape: AI's Rise in Music Production

The influence of AI on music production has shifted from theoretical to tangible. Previous surveys (AI Music Statistic, Bedroom Producers Blog, 2023) indicate that roughly one-third of music producers already use AI tools in their workflow, with another third planning to try them soon. These tools range from AI-driven mixing assistants to composition generators. Only a small minority (~17%) of producers hold a negative view of AI in music, while nearly half remain neutral and the rest express optimism. These trends reflect a shift away from the fear that often accompanies new technologies in the arts, toward more exploratory engagement.

**As of the end of 2025, one in five producers is a regular AI user**





Approximately one in five producers (20.1%) report regularly using AI, while nearly half (48.6%) have experimented with AI but haven't integrated it into their regular workflow. Critically, only 18.2% express no interest in AI tools at all, meaning that 81.8% of creators are either using AI or open to it. Looking at committed adoption: 20.1% are regular users now, and when combined with those planning to adopt soon, 33.2% represent the actively engaged segment.

The dominant group of "occasional experimenters"—the 48.6% who have tested AI but remain unconvinced—represents a critical inflection point. Their hesitancy indicates that for most producers, AI is still in a trial phase, and broader adoption will depend on tools demonstrating clear, reliable value. "AI is doing some pretty amazing things", observes veteran producer and industry analyst Bobby Owsinski. "Is it going to replace people? Well, to some degree, yes... but not totally. So that's a good thing," noting that while certain tasks may be automated, human creativity remains irreplaceable (Modern Musician Podcast, Episode 79, 2022).

## Historical Context and Industry Perspective

It's useful to recall earlier technological inflection points to contextualize AI's emergence. When John M. Chowning introduced FM synthesis in the 1980s, skeptics accused him of "dehumanising music." Chowning's retort – "No... I'm humanising computers" – encapsulates the idea that technology can serve artistry rather than subvert it ([Guardian, 2024](#)). AI follows the same arc: a set of tools designed to augment human creativity. Today's intelligent plugins can handle rote tasks in seconds that once took engineers hours. Owsinski embraces this efficiency: "In the studio, I love AI-driven plugins because it make everything go faster... If I don't have to spend an extra hour, why should I say no?"

This pragmatism underscores a key benefit: AI's ability to eliminate drudgery and free producers to focus on creative decision-making. At the same time, scholars urge caution. Audio engineering researcher Joshua Reiss reminds us that mixing is both art and science—and while "intelligent systems... automate much of the music production process," they also raise fundamental questions about aesthetics and originality ([Acoustical Society of America, 2022](#)). Reiss's work focuses on automated mixing systems that handle technical chores like phase correction and balance control — assistive tools that support rather



than replace the engineer's creative role.

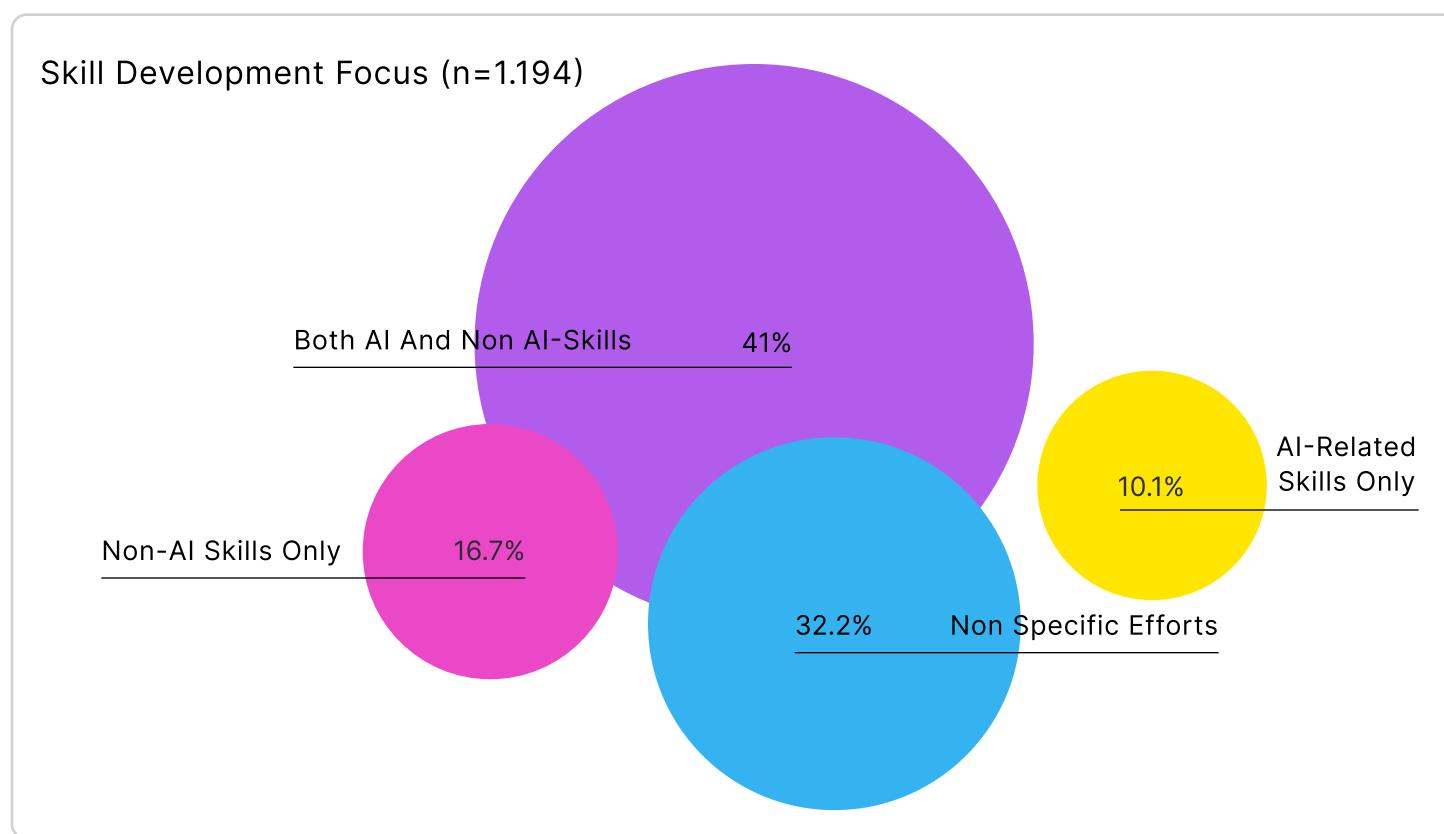
This distinction matters. While generative AI services that create complete songs raise different questions about authorship and creativity, the production tools Reiss studies (and that our survey addresses) are designed to augment human decision-making, not bypass it. The results reflect this: producers are more open to AI handling tedious technical tasks than replacing their creative judgment.

The tension reveals a key insight: the human elements of creativity, emotional interpretation, and the cultivated "ear" remain paramount. Tools may evolve, but the laws of acoustics and psychoacoustics do not. A flawlessly engineered mix matters little without a compelling musical idea or performance at its core.

### III. Embracing AI in the Studio: Adoption Patterns and Tools

#### Active Skill Development

Our survey reveals that producers are responding to AI's emergence through deliberate and strategic skill development:





When asked "Have you been actively learning or developing new skills in response to recent AI advancements in music?", 67.8% of respondents said yes — whether pursuing AI-related skills, non-AI differentiation skills, or both. The largest single group (41%) is taking a hybrid approach, building AI competencies while simultaneously strengthening traditional or complementary skills.

Only one-third (32.2%) report making no specific skill development efforts tied to AI. This suggests most producers treat AI as a meaningful catalyst for professional development rather than a passing trend. Lifelong learning has become a baseline expectation—and while those without technical backgrounds may find this shift daunting, most recognize that adaptation is now essential to the job.



# AI tools usage patterns reveal clear preferences for certain applications

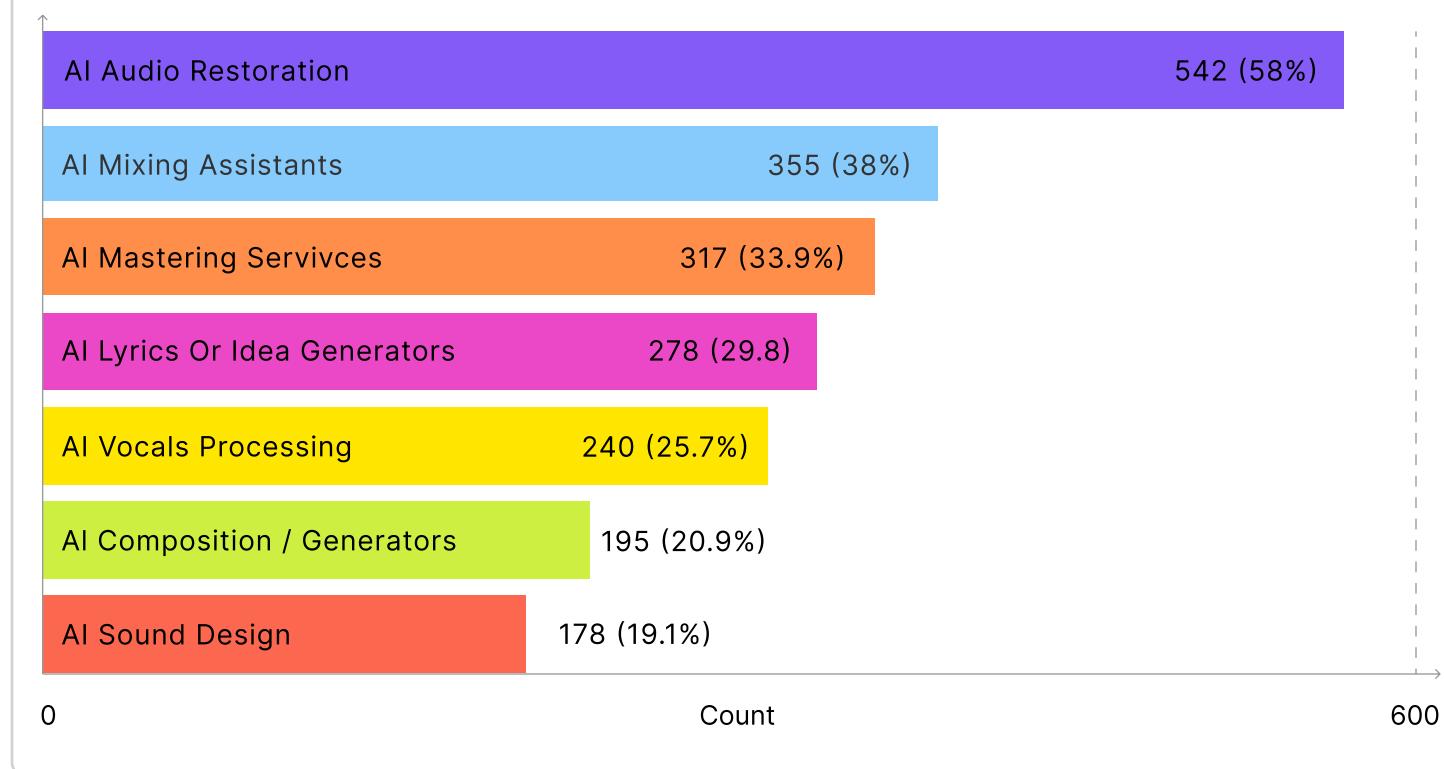
When asked "Which types of AI-driven music tools have you used so far in your creative process?", respondents could select up to three categories. 22% of respondents selected none; therefore, the categories are split based on the remaining 934 respondents.

AI Audio Restoration tools—including noise reduction, stem separation, and audio cleanup—lead adoption at 58.0%, significantly ahead of all other categories. This suggests producers gravitate toward "utility" applications that solve tedious technical problems while leaving artistic control intact.

AI Mixing Assistants (38.0%) and AI Mastering Services (33.9%) follow, confirming willingness to delegate time-consuming production tasks. These top three categories share a common thread: they enhance or fix existing creative work rather than generate it.

However, the middle tier reveals a more nuanced picture. AI Lyric or Idea Generators reach 29.8% adoption—higher than AI Vocal Processing (25.7%), AI Composition/Generation (20.9%), and AI Sound Design (19.1%). This disrupts a simple "technical good, creative bad" framework.

Most Popular AI Tool Categories (n=1.194)





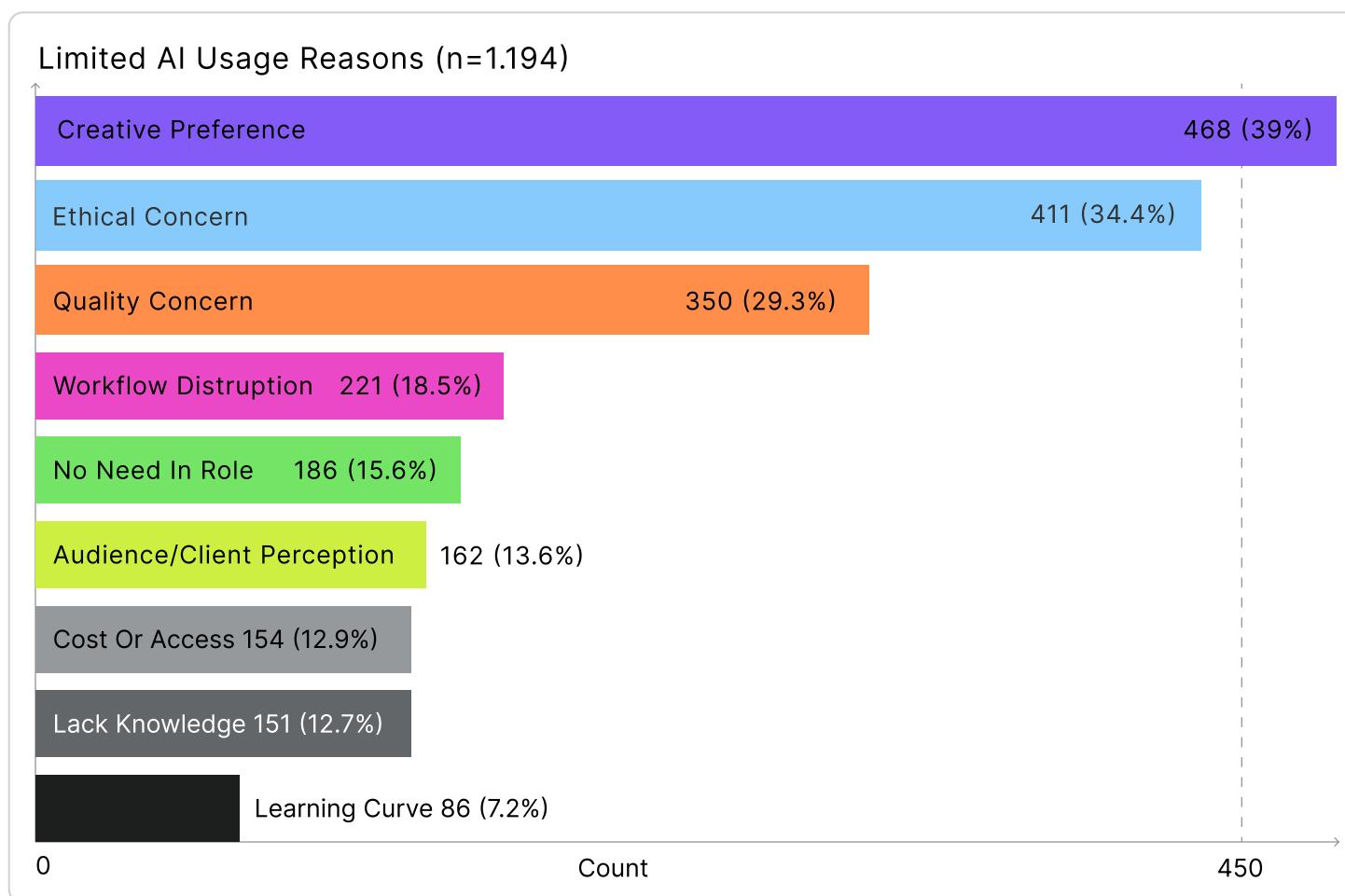
The likely explanation: how the tool is used matters more than what it generates. Lyric and idea generators may be adopted as brainstorming assistants—sparking ideas producers then refine or reject—rather than as final output generators. This keeps the producer in control while offloading the blank-page problem. In contrast, AI Vocal Processing underperforms despite including technical applications like pitch correction. This suggests producers may be wary of authenticity concerns around AI vocals and voice cloning, even when using these tools for technical fixes.

Full AI Composition/Generation (20.9%) and AI Sound Design (19.1%) sit at the bottom, representing tools that most directly threaten producer identity and creative agency. Creating melodies, chord progressions, or signature sounds sits at the core of what producers consider their craft.

The pattern: Producers embrace AI for technical enhancement and idea stimulation, but resist tools that replace their compositional voice or generate output they'd claim as their own work. The line isn't purely technical vs. creative—it's about control, authenticity, and creative identity.

## Barriers to AI Adoption

However, not all creators are convinced of AI's value. Among those who use AI only occasionally — or not at all — specific concerns and obstacles emerge. Survey data and responses consistently highlight several key barriers that limit broader adoption:





# Top Reasons for Limited AI Usage

- **Creative Preference:** 468 selections (nearly 40%). Many creators prefer traditional, hands-on techniques and worry that relying on AI might hinder their creativity. They derive satisfaction from tasks like dialing in compressor settings by ear and fear that automation could diminish their artistic input.
- **Ethical Concerns:** 411 selections (34.4%). Respondents express concerns about copyright, data sourcing, and the broader ethical implications of AI tools. Some abstain from AI tools because they're uneasy about how these tools were trained or the implications of using them.
- **Quality Concerns:** 350 selections (29.3%). A significant number have tried AI tools and found the quality disappointing or not useful enough. Some cite mediocre results – e.g., AI mastering that sounds lifeless or drum generators that feel generic. For these users, current tools simply aren't up to professional standards.
- **Workflow Disruption:** 221 selections. Many feel their current workflow/tools work fine, don't feel a need for AI yet. Integrating new tools can temporarily slow down one's process, and busy producers may not have time to experiment.
- **No Need in My Role:** 186 selections – AI doesn't really apply to the specific work they do.
- **Audience/Client Perception:** 162 selections – concerned that using AI could negatively affect how listeners or clients perceive their work. Particularly for professionals producing or engineering for clients, there's a worry that admitting the use of AI could devalue their work in clients' eyes
- **Cost or Access:** 154 selections – available AI tools are too expensive or inaccessible
- **Lack of Knowledge:** 151 selections – not sure how to get started with AI tools or which ones to use. Many simply aren't sure how to get started with AI tools or which ones are worth trying. The landscape can be overwhelming. As one respondent admitted, "I don't know



where to begin with AI – it's intimidating"

- Learning Curve: 86 selections – the learning curve for new tech is steep, haven't had time to learn AI tools

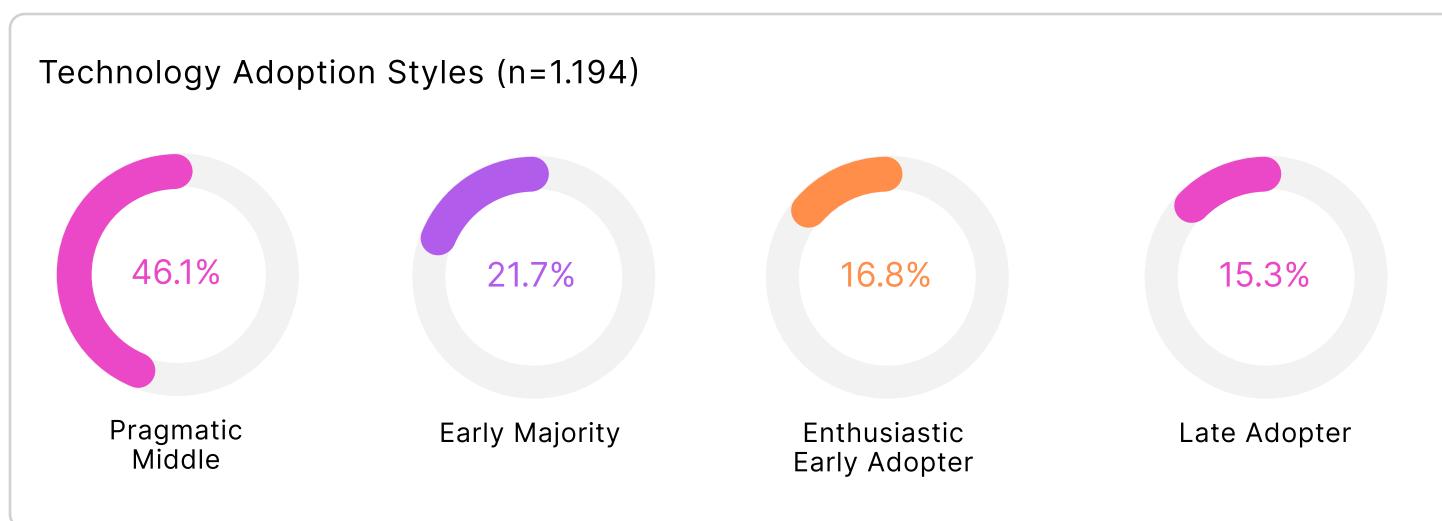
**Creative preference tops the list** – This reflects a philosophical stance rather than a technical barrier. There's an almost romantic attachment to doing things the "hard way" because of the unique results and happy accidents it can yield.

**Ethical concerns rank second** - This represents significant moral friction preventing adoption among a substantial minority. For instance, if a mastering AI is trained on thousands of commercial tracks without permission, is it indirectly endorsing copyright infringement?

**Quality concerns affect 29.3%**. "My ears tell me the AI's EQ moves are off – I'd rather trust my own judgement," said one engineer. This speaks to a quality gap: while AI is advancing quickly, it doesn't always meet the seasoned ear's standards. This represents a credibility gap AI developers must address through improved output quality and reliability. Until AI can consistently deliver mix decisions that align with human taste, this barrier remains.

## Technology Adoption Styles

Producers' approaches to adopting new technology vary widely, and the survey reveals a largely pragmatic community. Nearly half (46.1%) place themselves in the cautious middle—willing to try new tools, but only after experiencing clear value. When combined with the early majority (21.7%), this means 67.8% adopt new technology only after some level of validation. They are neither resistant nor impulsively experimental.





A smaller group, 16.8%, identifies as enthusiastic early adopters who are eager to try cutting-edge tools immediately. This vanguard likely drives initial experimentation with AI and provides feedback that eventually shapes broader industry adoption. As expected, these early adopters tend to hold more positive attitudes toward AI's potential, while late adopters are more cautious.

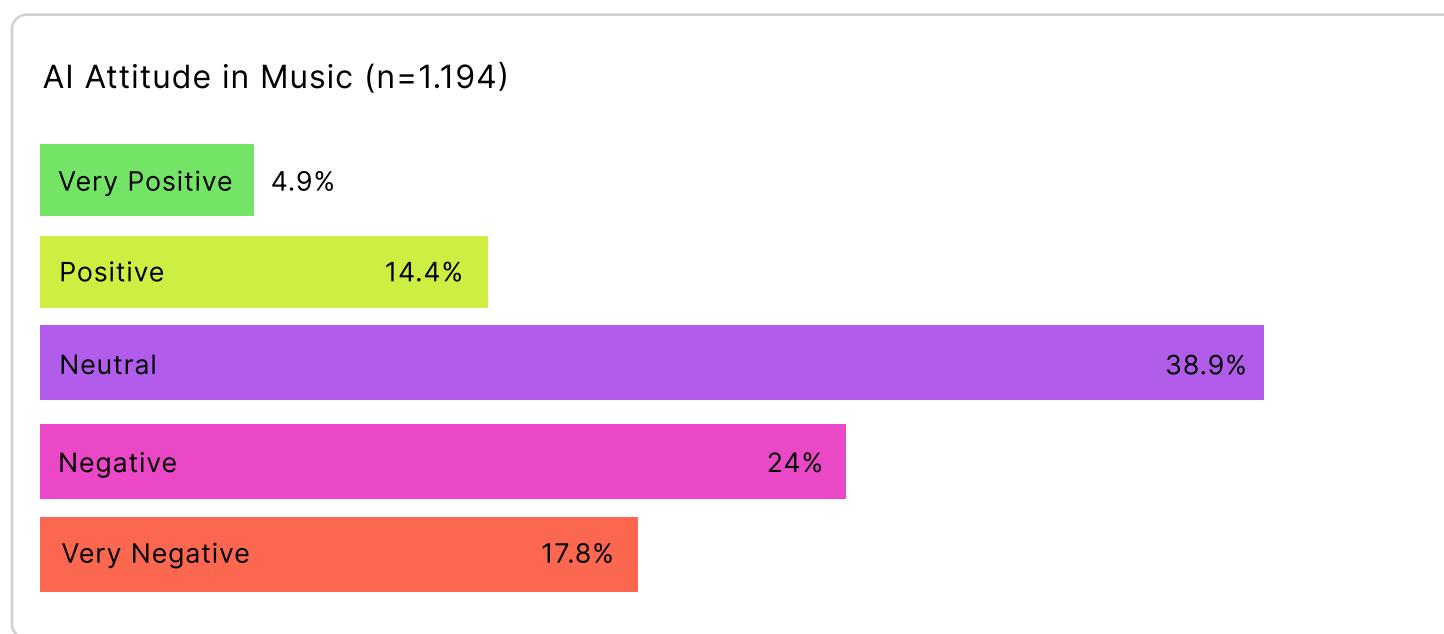
Late adopters make up 15.3% of respondents—a minority, but significant enough to suggest that a portion of the industry will delay integrating AI until it becomes unavoidable or completely standardized.

One early adopter we interviewed likened AI tools to new instruments: "As a producer, I see AI like when synths first appeared – it's something novel to experiment with. Not every synth sound fits every song, and the same with AI: you use it where it serves the music." This pragmatic creativity sums up the approach of many who have integrated AI: it is another tool in the palette, not a panacea or a replacement for fundamental creative skills.

## IV. Attitudes & Perceptions

### Overall Sentiment Toward AI in Music Production Is Not That Positive As It May Seem

We asked respondents to rate their overall attitude toward AI in music production on a scale of 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive):





The data reveal a predominantly neutral-to-skeptical community. The largest single group (38.9%) holds a neutral stance – neither embracing nor rejecting AI outright. When we combine ratings, the breakdown becomes clearer: Negative (1-2): 500 respondents (41.8%) express negative to very negative attitudes.

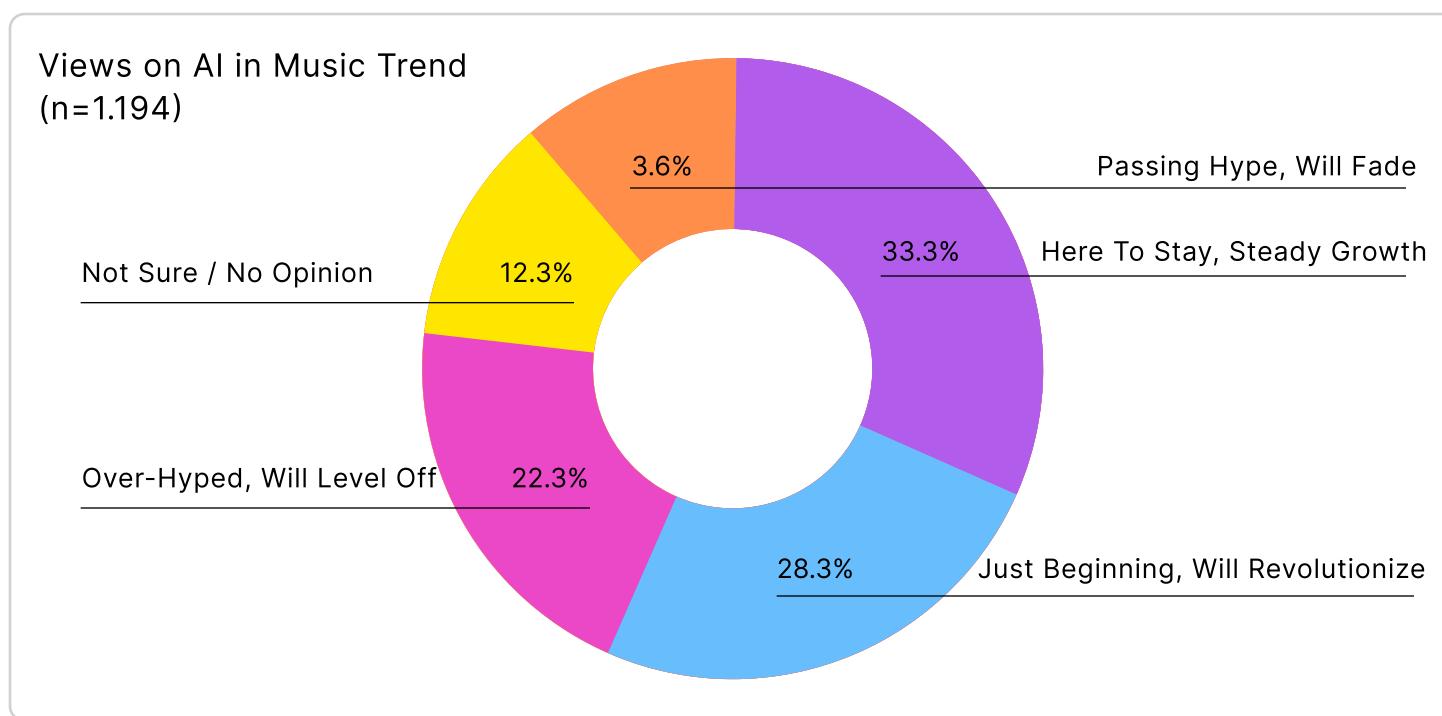
1. Neutral (3): 464 respondents (38.9%) are taking a wait-and-see approach.
2. Positive (4-5): 230 respondents (19.3%) express positive to very positive attitudes.

This distribution differs significantly from other industry narratives that suggest widespread AI enthusiasm. In reality, only about one in five producers holds a clearly positive view of AI in music production, while more than two in five hold negative views. The plurality remains neutral, suggesting opinions are still forming as creators gain more experience with AI tools.

The relatively small "very positive" contingent (4.9%) indicates that passionate AI advocates remain a distinct minority within the production community.

## Creators See AI as a Lasting Force. The Revolution Is Underway

When asked which statement best describes their view on the "AI in music" trend:





61.6% of respondents believe AI is a lasting force in music production — either "here to stay" with steady growth, or "just beginning" a transformation. A substantial majority accepts AI as a permanent fixture in music production, even if they disagree on the pace and extent of change.

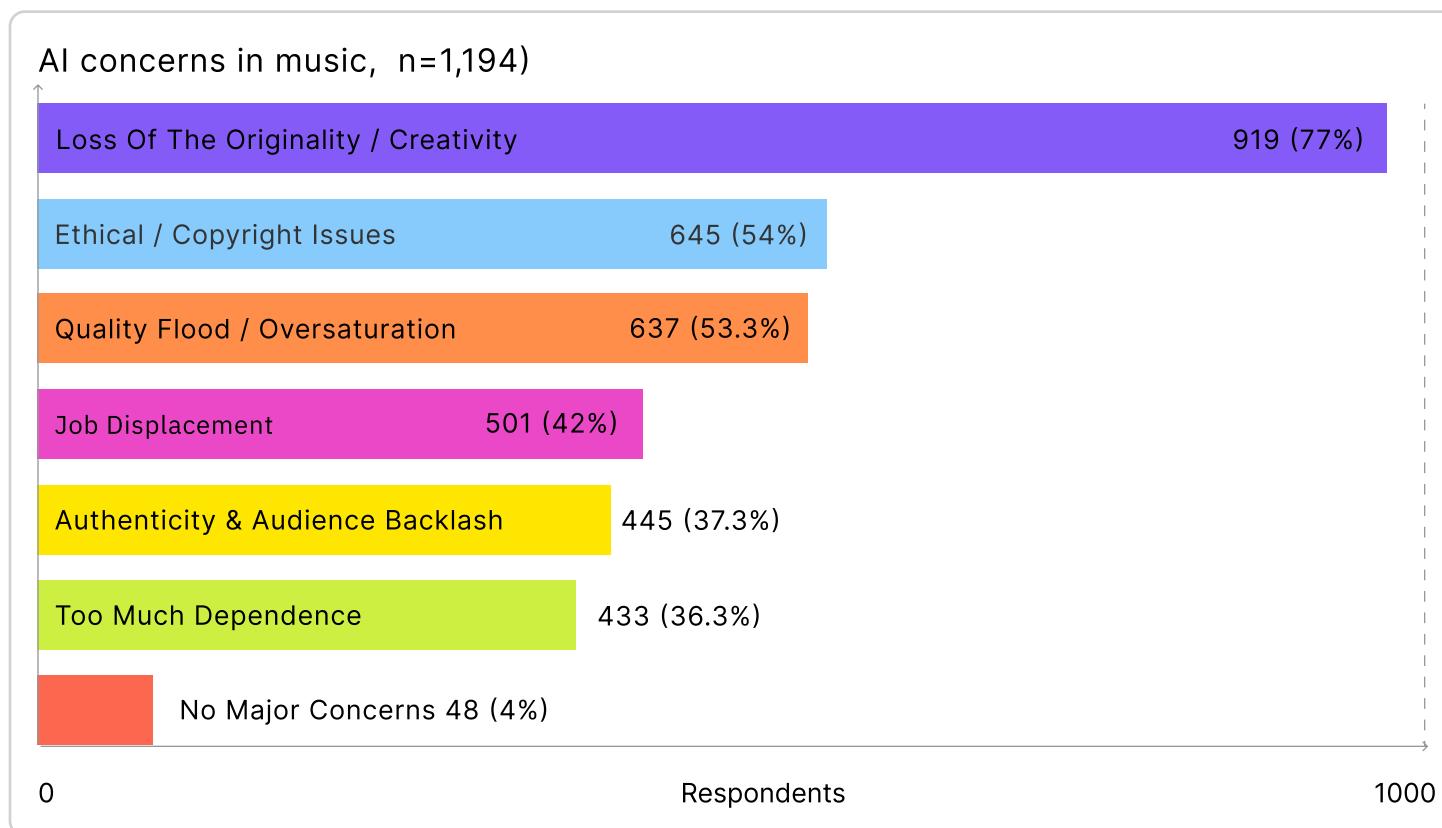
The nearly even split between "steady growth" (33.3%) and "revolutionary transformation" (28.3%) reveals disagreement not about whether AI will stick around, but about how fast and dramatically it will change the industry. One camp sees gradual integration; the other expects rapid disruption. Both agree AI isn't going anywhere.

Skeptics who view AI as over-hyped (22.6%) or a passing fad (3.6%) comprise about one-quarter of respondents. They are a significant minority, but clearly not representative of the wider industry.

Only 3.6% believe AI will fade away entirely. Even skeptics mostly accept that AI will play some lasting role, though they question its current prominence.

# Biggest Concern About AI in Music Is Loss of Originality

When asked to select up to three biggest concerns regarding AI's influence on music creation:





Loss of originality and creativity overwhelmingly tops the list of concerns, cited by 77.0% of respondents. More than three-quarters fear that AI tools could lead to formulaic, less original music. This existential concern about artistic value outweighs other practical worries.

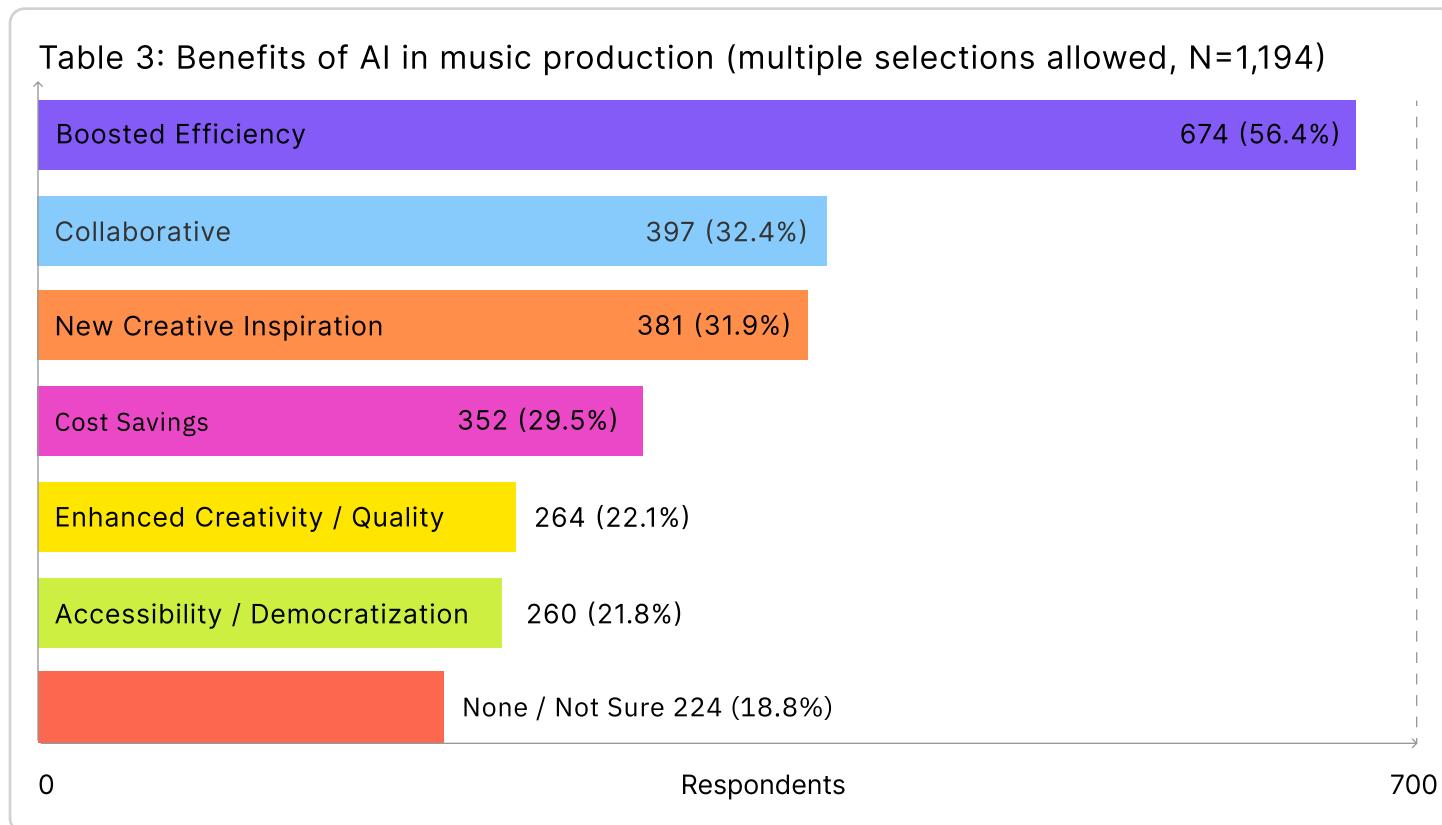
Ethical and copyright issues rank second (54.0%), followed closely by concerns about market oversaturation with mediocre AI-generated content (53.3%). These three concerns—artistic integrity, ethical implications, and quality degradation—form a triad of fears, each shared by more than half of the producers surveyed.

Job displacement ranks fourth (42.0%), affecting about two in five creators. While significant, it trails behind artistic and ethical concerns, suggesting producers are more worried about the soul of music than about their own immediate job security.

Concerns about authenticity and the potential for over-reliance on AI each affect about one-third of respondents. Notably, only 4.0% report no major concerns, meaning 96% of producers harbor at least one significant worry about AI's influence on music creation.

# Perceived Benefits and Opportunities

Balancing concerns, respondents also identified (up to three) positive aspects:





Efficiency gains dominate perceived benefits at 56.4%. More than half see AI's primary value in handling tedious tasks and speeding up production processes. This pragmatic advantage resonates widely.

Creative benefits, inspiration (31.9%), and collaboration (32.4%) each appeal to about one-third of respondents. Framing AI as a collaborative partner rather than a replacement for humans appears meaningful to many creators.

Cost savings (29.5%) and democratization/accessibility (21.8%) represent economic and social benefits, which appeals to roughly one-quarter to one-third of the sample.

Notably, 18.8% see no meaningful benefits or remain unsure. Nearly one in five producers, despite widespread experimentation, remain unconvinced that AI offers a positive value proposition for their work.

## V. Evolving Skillsets: Old vs. New in the Age of AI

One clear theme is a shift in how certain skills are valued. As AI and automation take on more tasks, producers are reassessing which abilities set them apart.

### Skills Becoming Less Critical

Survey responses and industry observations point to several once-essential technical tasks that algorithms can now perform with ease. Manual tape splicing, beatmatching records by ear, and other skills that required years of practice are now largely automated or achieved with a click. As one respondent put it, "Things like aligning drum hits or noise reduction, which used to showcase an engineer's meticulous craft, are increasingly done by AI."

Commonly cited skills losing importance include:

→ **Manual audio editing tasks:** Pitch correction, drum alignment, and noise reduction, once indicators of meticulous craft, are now routinely automated.



- Technical mixing/mastering execution: Basic EQ, compression, and balance decisions are increasingly delegated to AI assistants
- Analog recording techniques: Tape editing and physical console operation are becoming rarer as digital workflows dominate.
- Music notation and transcription: AI can now handle transcription tasks that previously required specialized training.

The pattern is clear: highly technical, repeatable tasks with predictable outcomes are being automated. These skills once served as professional gatekeepers, requiring years of practice to master, but AI now performs them competently. This doesn't mean the knowledge is useless, but the time investment in refining these manual techniques no longer offers the same competitive advantage.

## Irreplaceable Traditional Skills

Conversely, respondents consistently celebrate "timeless" skills that technology can't supplant:

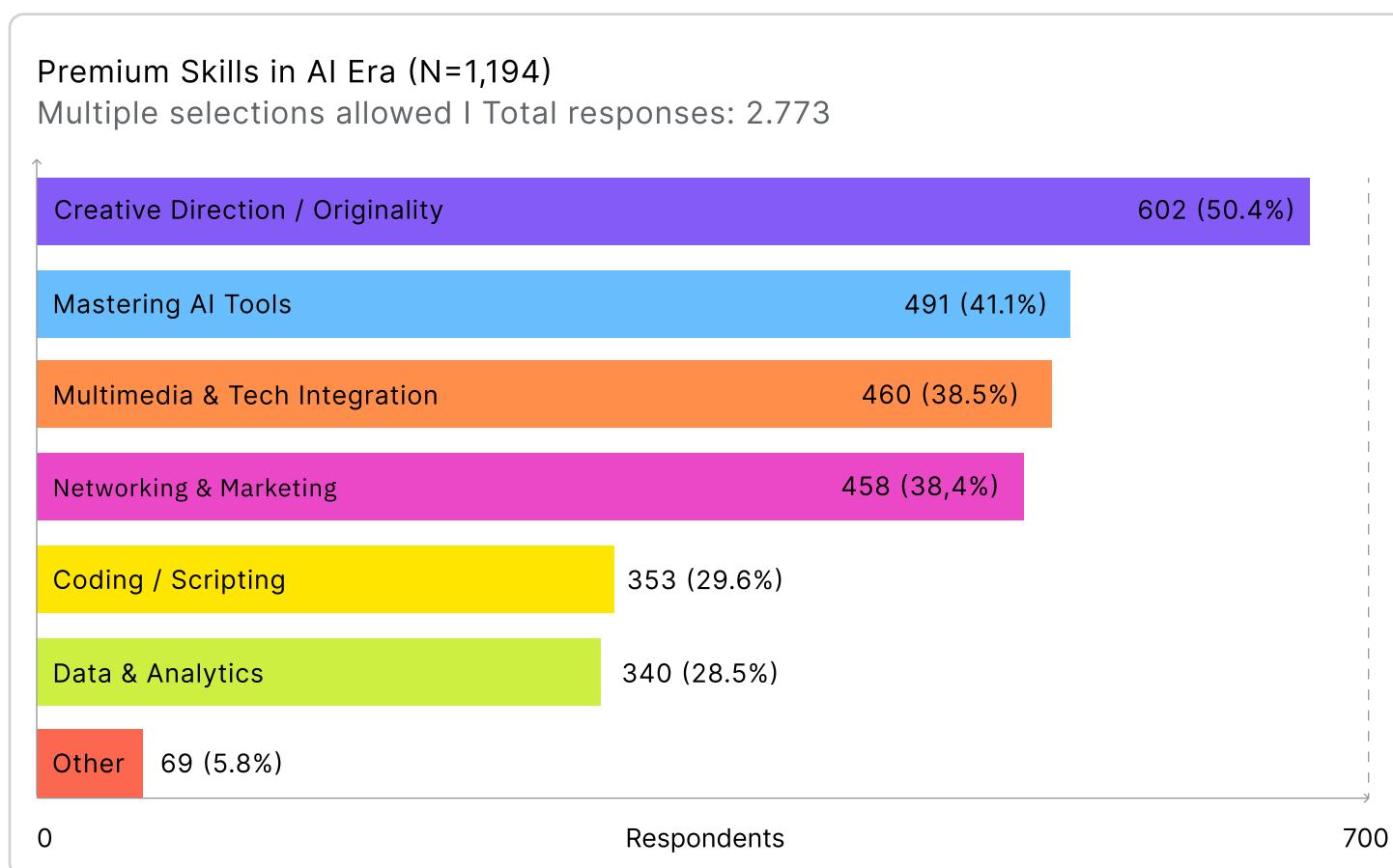
- **Musicality:** Songwriting, live performance, and deep knowledge of music theory remain irreplaceable. No matter how advanced tools become, the ability to craft a moving melody or evoke emotion is a uniquely human domain.
- **Critical listening:** The trained ear—the ability to recognize subtle tonal issues, evaluate artistic choices, and shape the emotional contour of a mix—remains central to professional production.
- **Interpersonal skills and collaboration:** Great production often depends on inspiring artists, communicating ideas, and managing creative energy in the studio. The tasks that require human empathy and experience. As one seasoned engineer put it: "You can't automate trust in the studio – artists need a human to vibe with."
- **Analog artistry:** Working with vintage hardware and coaxing distinctive tones from physical instruments continues to carry value, especially because these skills have become rarer in a digital era
- **Arrangement and composition:** Understanding emotional arc, song structure, dynamics, and what best serves the music is a deeply creative role that AI cannot meaningfully replicate.



Human creativity, emotional intelligence, and aesthetic judgment emerge as strongly AI-resistant. The lesson: core creative skills and domain expertise gain even more value when paired with new tech.

# New Skills That Command Premium Value

So which new skills are emerging as must-haves in the AI era? Respondents selected up to three skills or knowledge areas that command premium value in the AI era:



Creative direction and originality dominate. Half of respondents (50.4%) identify developing a unique artistic vision as the most valuable skill in an AI-dominated landscape - a 9-percentage-point lead over the second-ranked skill. As one survey respondent noted, "Developing a point of view as an artist, that's something no AI can learn."

Mastering AI Tools ranks second at 41.1%. This includes expertise in AI-driven composition, mixing, and mastering software. Respondents view proficiency with AI systems as a distinct skill set separate from traditional production capabilities.

The middle tier shows near-parity between Multimedia & Tech Integration (38.5%) and Networking & Marketing (38.4%). The multimedia category encompasses video production, VR/AR



experiences, and interactive digital media integration. Networking and marketing covers personal branding, relationship building, and work promotion.

Technical skills cluster in the lower tier. Coding/Scripting ranks fifth at 29.6%, covering programming ability for automation, plugin development, and AI model training. Data & Analytics follows at 28.5%, encompassing data analysis for market trends, music recommendation systems, and audience targeting.

The value hierarchy is clear: respondents place creative differentiation substantially ahead of technical AI proficiency, which in turn ranks above business skills and specialized technical capabilities. The 21.9-percentage-point gap between top-ranked creative direction and bottom-tier data analytics suggests respondents view human creativity as approximately twice as valuable as analytical capabilities.

## Traditional Skills Under Threat

Our survey asked which traditional skills are becoming less important or nearly obsolete. While responses varied widely, common themes emerged:

As AI becomes more capable, many of the skills that once signaled technical mastery are quietly moving into the background. Respondents repeatedly pointed to routine, rule-based tasks—like detailed manual editing, basic mixing and mastering moves, and legacy analog workflows—as areas where software now performs at a professional level. These were historically skills that required years of hands-on practice; today, they’re increasingly handled by assistants and algorithms, freeing producers from some of the most repetitive parts of the job.

## Irreplaceable Traditional Skills

At the same time, the survey makes clear that the skills which define a producer’s long-term value are not the ones most vulnerable to automation. Musicality, critical listening, emotional intelligence in the studio, and a strong sense of arrangement and narrative remain firmly human domains. Respondents agree that AI can execute, but it cannot originate a point of view, read the room, or build trust with artists. In practice, this means technical execution can increasingly be delegated,



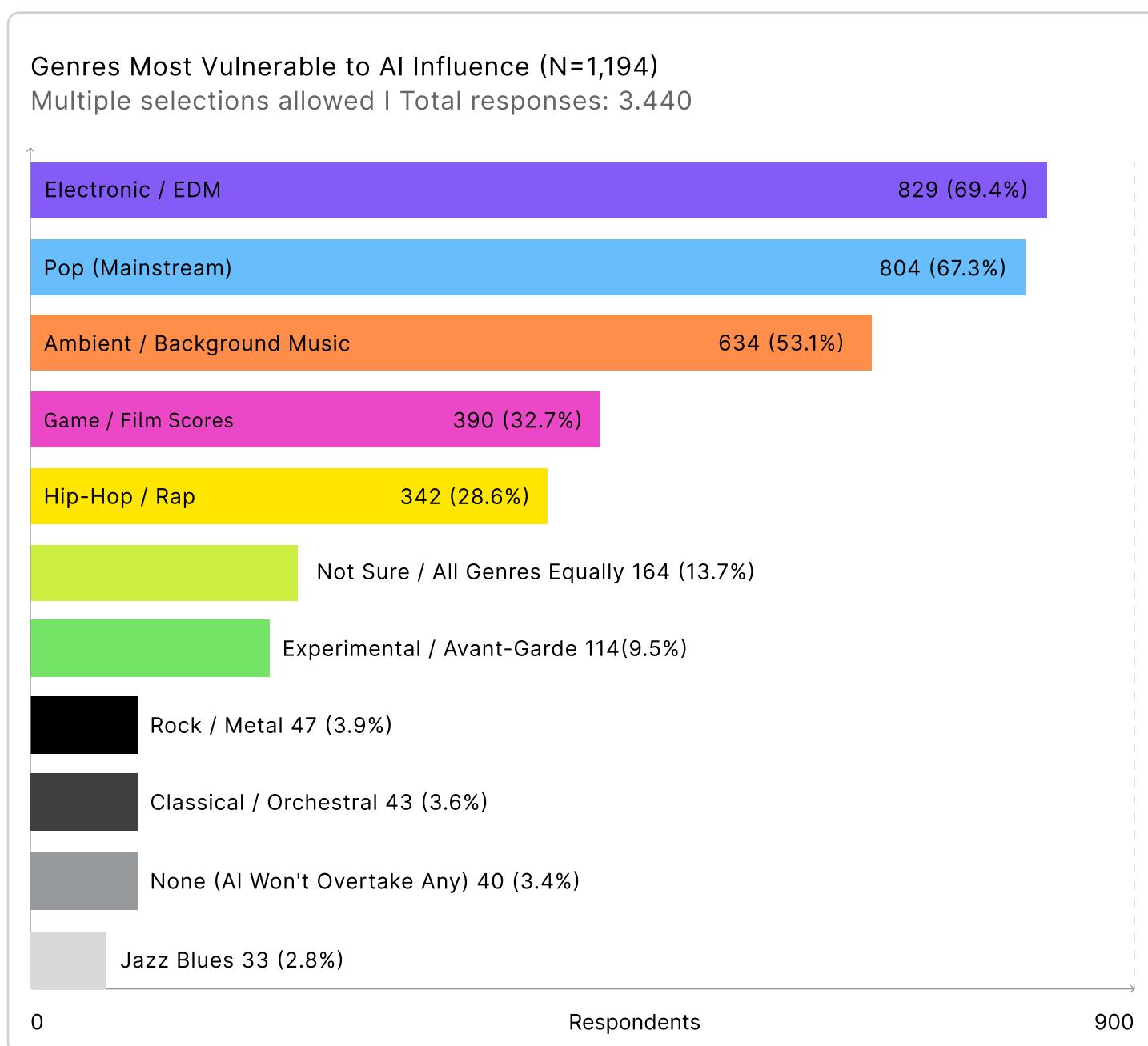
while creative judgment, collaboration, and taste become the real currency of the profession.

As one seasoned engineer put it in our survey: "You can't automate trust in the studio – artists need a human to vibe with."

# VI. Genre Impact Perceptions

# Producers Expect the Biggest AI Impact in EDM and Pop

When asked which genres are most likely to be heavily influenced or taken over by AI (up to 3 selections):





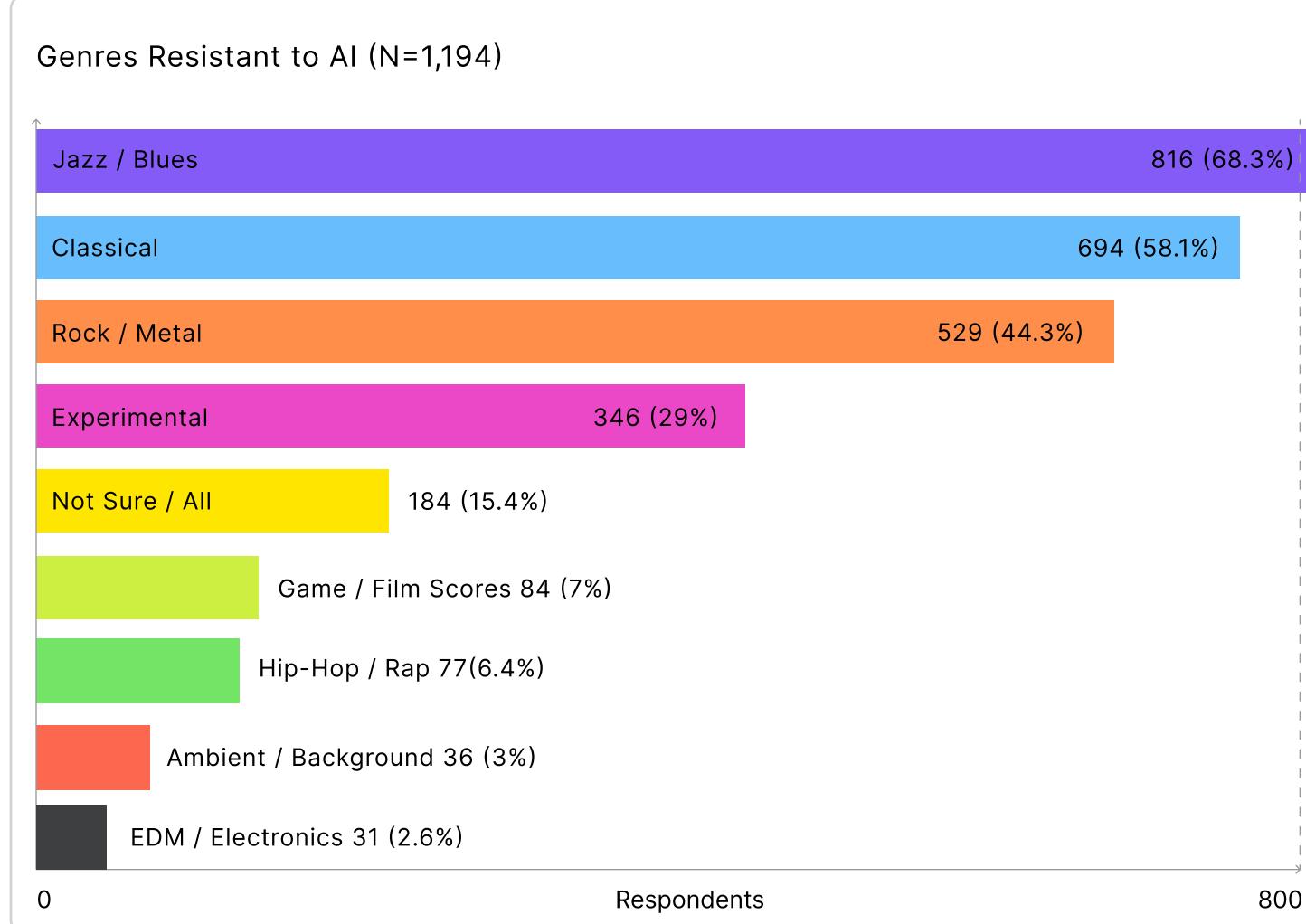
Electronic and pop music dominate perceptions of AI vulnerability. Nearly 70% of respondents (69.4%) expect significant AI influence in Electronic/EDM, while 67.3% identify mainstream pop as vulnerable - a statistically equivalent level of concern.

Ambient and background music ranks third at 53.1%, 14 percentage points below the top tier. This functional music category, atmospheric tracks for videos, podcasts, and commercial spaces, shows moderate perceived vulnerability.

Mid-tier genres show substantially lower concern. Game/Film Scores (32.7%) and Hip-Hop/Trap (28.6%) sit approximately 35-40 percentage points below Electronic/EDM, indicating respondents view these as meaningfully less vulnerable.

Traditional and experimental genres show minimal concern. Rock/Metal (3.9%), Classical/Orchestral (3.6%), and Jazz/Blues (2.8%) collectively represent less than 11% of responses, suggesting most respondents do not perceive these genres as significantly threatened by AI influence.

13.7% remain uncertain, selecting "Not Sure/All genres could be equally affected," while 3.4% reject the premise entirely, believing AI will not significantly overtake any genre.





Jazz and blues top the list of AI-resistant genres at 68.3%. These styles rely heavily on real-time improvisation, complex musician-to-musician interaction, and expressive nuance — qualities that defy algorithmic reproduction.

Classical and orchestral music follows at (58.1%), protected by the interpretive artistry of live performers. Even if AI might eventually compose competent classical pieces, the human component of performance is still viewed as essential.

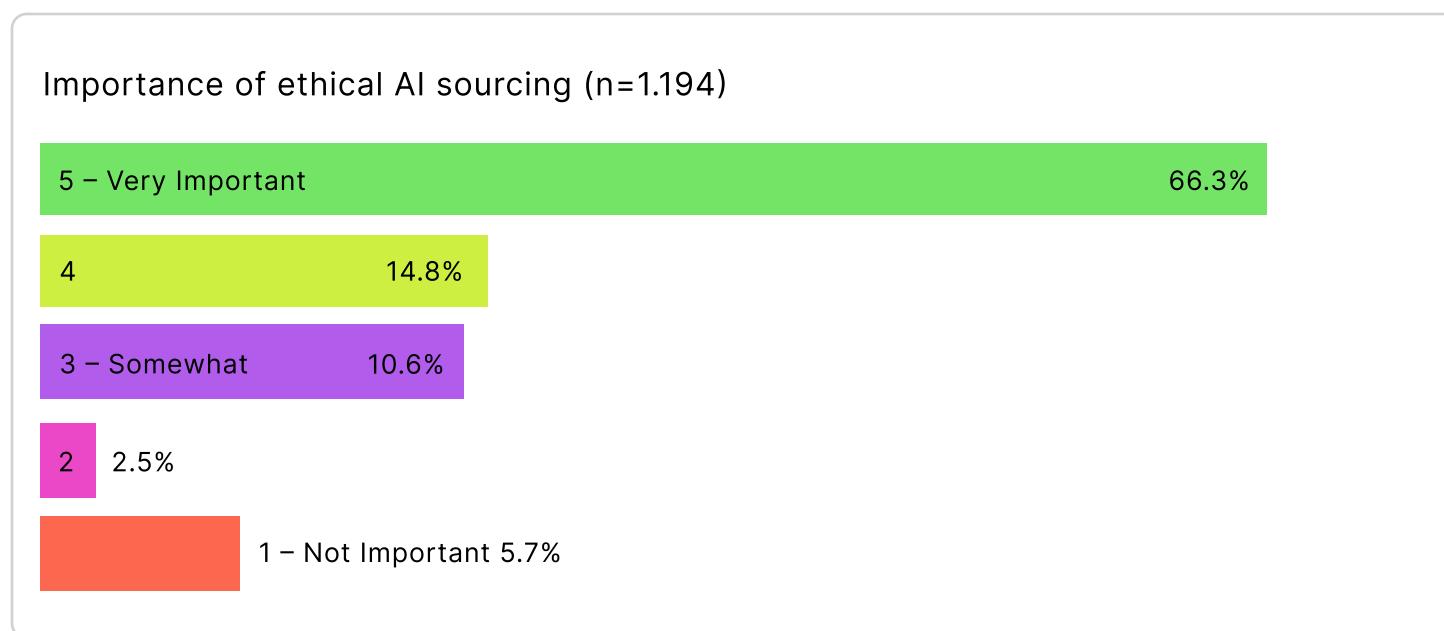
Rock and metal (44.3%) also show notable resistance. These benefit from band dynamics, physical energy, and the cultural value placed on "real" instruments and authentic performance..

The pattern is unmistakable: genres grounded in human spontaneity, organic interaction, and emotional authenticity are perceived as AI-resistant. Conversely, styles that rely on production techniques, repetitive structures, or serving functional roles are seen as vulnerable.

## VII. Ethics and Transparency

### Music Creators Overwhelmingly Demand Ethically Sourced AI Tools

Respondents rated the importance of ethical sourcing—ensuring AI tools are trained on licensed or royalty-free material, not unauthorized artist content—on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).





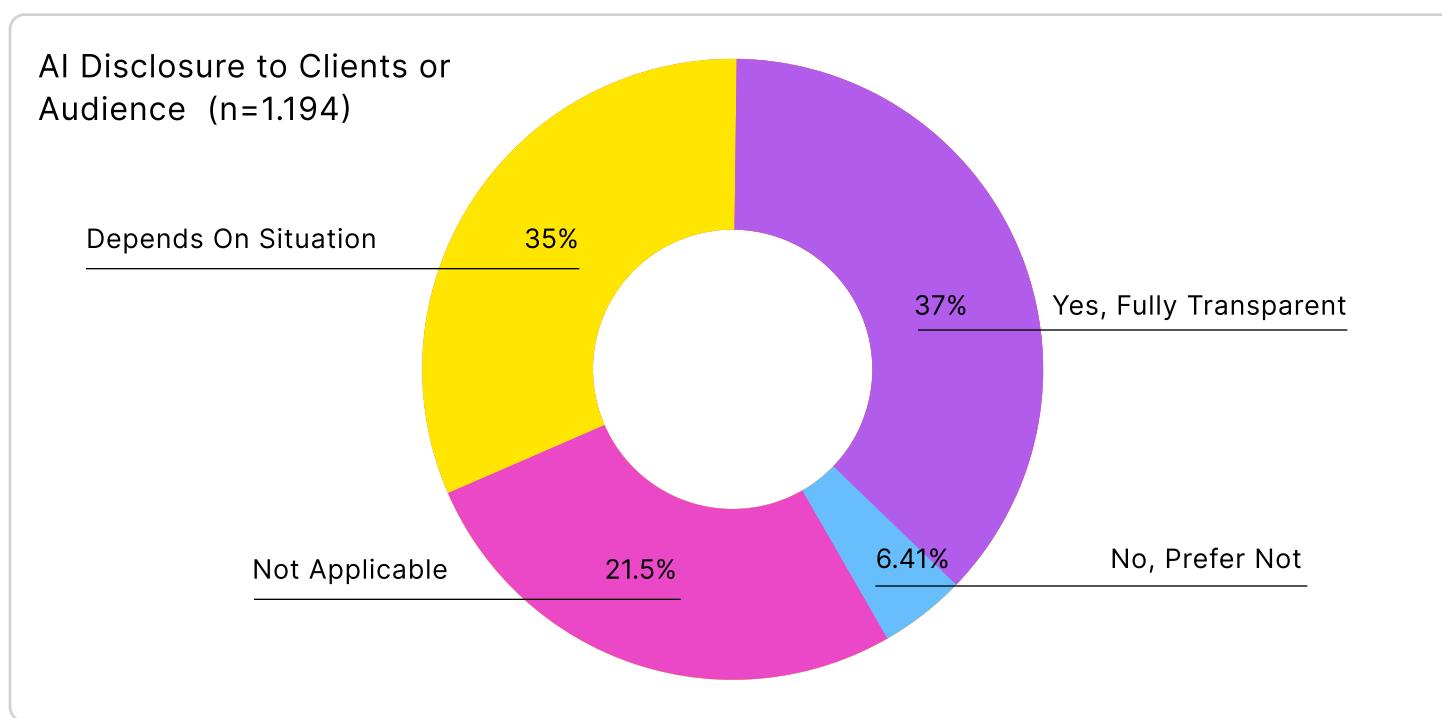
81.2% rate ethical sourcing as important (4) or very important (5), with two-thirds (66.3%) giving it the highest possible rating. This represents an overwhelming consensus that ethical training practices matter to the music production community.

Only 8.2% rate ethical sourcing as relatively unimportant (ratings of 1–2), indicating that this is far from a fringe issue. Even the neutral group is small at 10.6%, underscoring how mainstream this priority is.

This data suggests AI tools on transparent, licensed training data will hold a significant competitive advantage in the music production market. Conversely, any tool revealed to have been trained on copyrighted material without permission faces a substantial risk of backlash.

## Most Producers Support Transparency Around AI, Though Many Prefer Case-by-Case Disclosure

When asked if they would disclose AI use to clients or audiences:



Among creators who use or are open to using AI, attitudes toward disclosure are almost evenly split between full transparency (37.0%) and situational disclosure (35.0%). Only 6.4% prefer to conceal AI use – a small minority, though their existence indicates some stigma about perception persists.



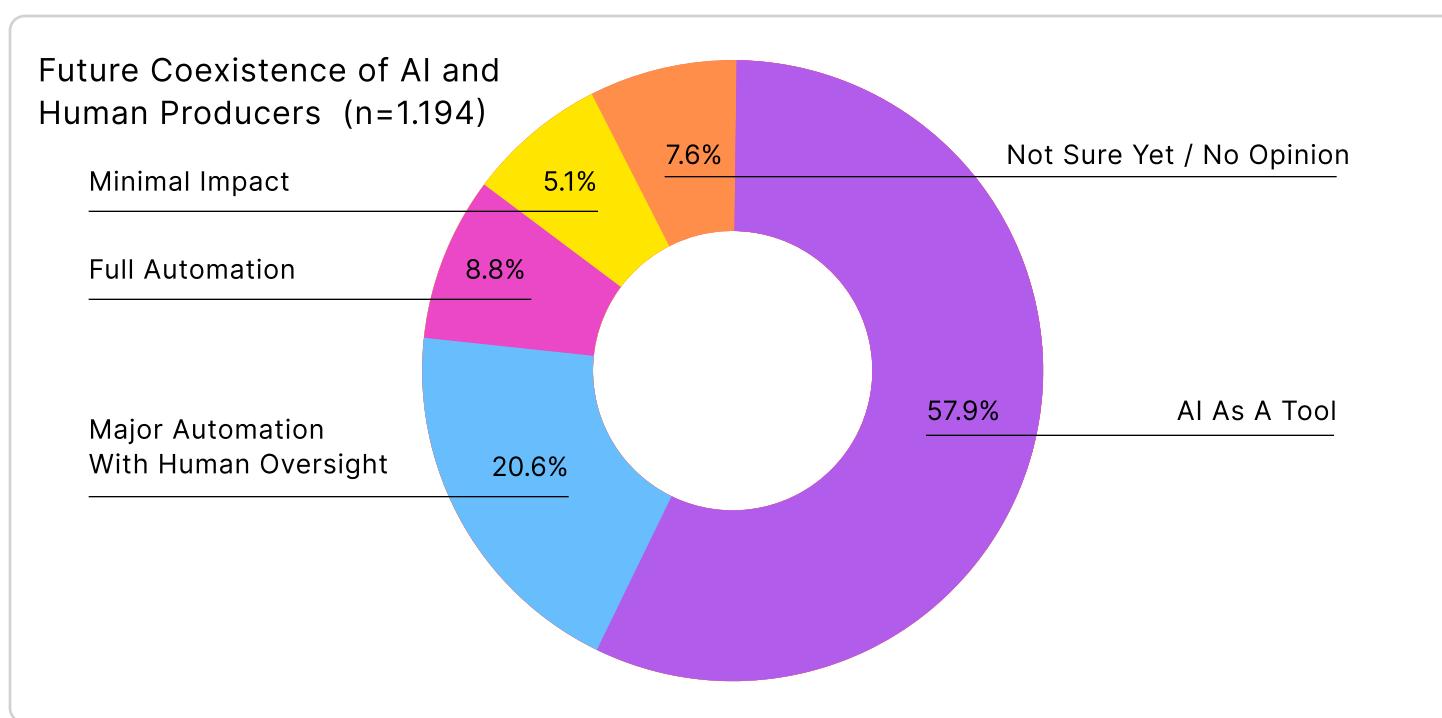
The large "depends on situation" contingent (35.0%) suggests nuanced thinking: perhaps many seem comfortable disclosing AI involvement for technical cleanup or efficiency tasks, but may hesitate when it comes to core creative decisions. Others may be open about AI in personal projects while taking a more cautious approach with commercial clients.

The 21.5% "not applicable" group – non-users of AI – reminds us that roughly one-fifth of producers are non-users, or haven't yet reached the point where disclosure becomes relevant.

## VIII. Future Outlook

### Most Creators See AI as Assistive Tech, Not a Replacement for Human Production

When asked which statement best reflects how they envision AI and human producers coexisting in the future for music production:



The dominant view (57.9%) frames AI as an assistive tool rather than a replacement. Most producers expect to maintain creative control while delegating specific tasks to AI systems.

When combined with those who foresee "major automation with human oversight" (20.6%), 78.5% anticipate a future where humans remain central to music production, either as primary creators using AI tools or as creative directors guiding AI execution of many tasks.



Only 8.8% predict fully automated workflows in which AI handles entire productions without human input. Even this small minority likely imagines such automation only for functional or low-stakes music (background, ambient, or functional content) rather than for artist-driven work.

The minimal-impact minority (5.1%) comprises producers who argue that current AI capabilities are overstated and won't fundamentally change human-driven workflows.

## Summary of Future Expectations

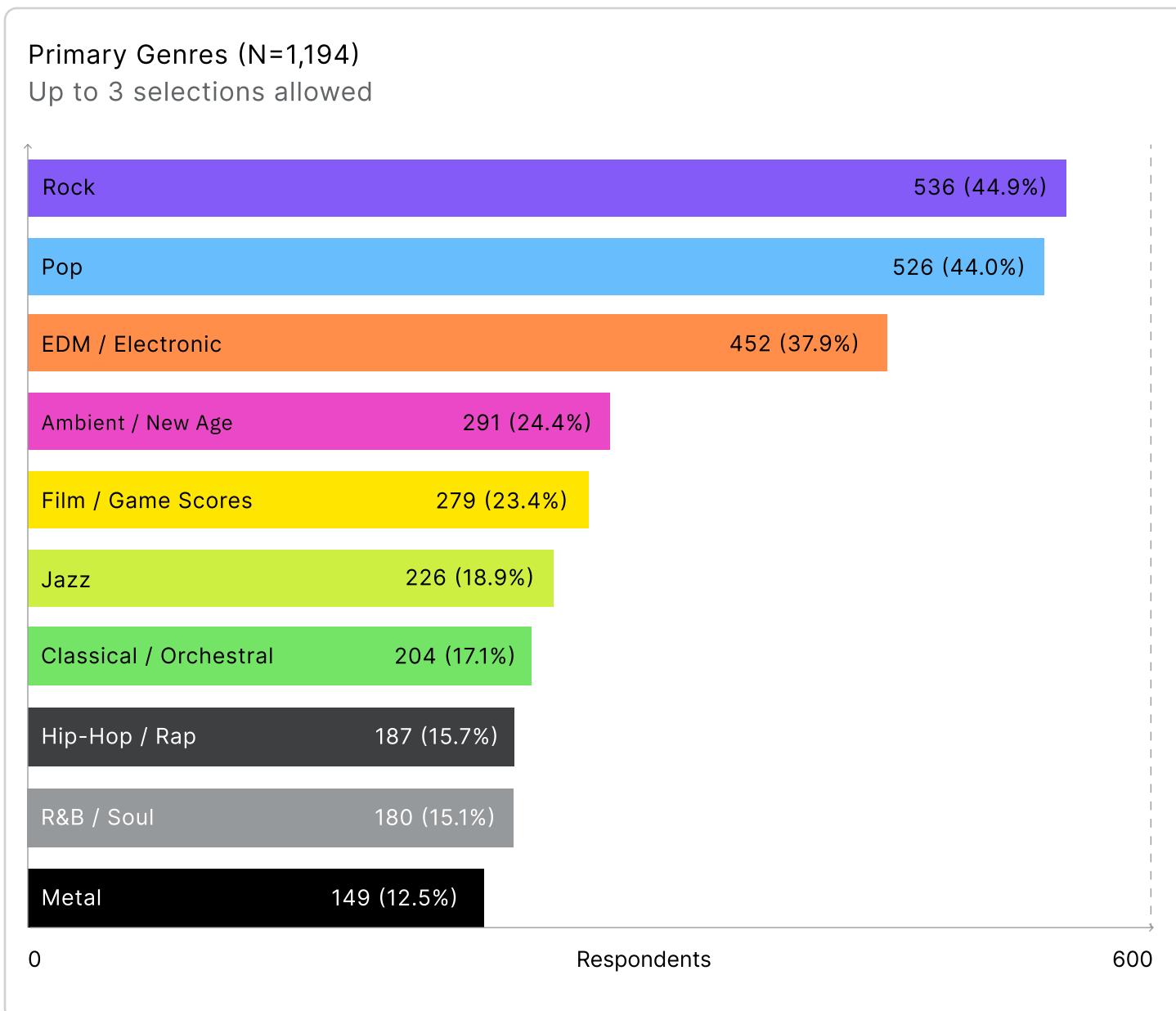
The data suggests a consensus built around cautious technological integration:

- Most producers expect to remain creative leaders, not to be replaced.
- AI will likely automate many technical or repetitive tasks, but human aesthetic judgment will remain essential.
- Full automation may occur in some market segments—such as functional or background music—while artist-driven, premium work is expected to remain human-led.
- The producer's role will evolve to include AI oversight and direction, but won't disappear.

This aligns with historical precedent: previous technological shifts (electric instruments, synthesizers, drum machines, DAWs, Auto-Tune) transformed workflows and techniques without eliminating the need for human musicians. Producers largely expect AI to follow a similar trajectory—disruptive and transformative, but ultimately augmenting rather than replacing human creativity.

## Primary Genres

Understanding respondents' primary genres provides context for their perspectives:



Rock and pop dominate (each around 44-45%), followed by electronic music (37.9%). This traditional genre distribution suggests our sample represents mainstream music production rather than niche specialties.

At the same time, substantial representation from significant minorities working in film/game scoring (23.4%), jazz (18.9%), and classical music (17.1%) ensures that the survey captures a broad cross-section of creative perspectives. This range strengthens the validity of the findings across both commercial and artistic contexts.

# X. Conclusions and Implications

# Key Findings Summary

Our survey of 1,194 music creators worldwide reveals a production community in transition:



1. AI adoption is gradual relative to hype, but swift in absolute terms. Only 20% are regular users, and nearly half remain in experimental mode—a "wait and see" approach dominates. However, reaching 20% adoption in approximately two years is remarkably fast for the music production industry. The pace is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, but it's hardly slow.
2. Attitudes are mixed but not hostile. While 42% hold negative views, 39% are neutral and 19% positive – creating space for AI adoption to grow if tools demonstrate real value.
3. Concerns center on creativity, not just jobs. Loss of originality (77%) far exceeds worries about job displacement (42%), revealing that producers fear AI's impact on artistic identity more than on employment.
4. Ethics matter profoundly. 81% consider ethical sourcing important, signaling that AI tools must compete on ethical grounds, not just technical performance.
5. Human skills are being redefined, not eliminated. Creative direction, originality, and interpersonal skills gain value, while technical execution is becoming less central.
6. Genre matters. Electronic and pop music appear more vulnerable to AI disruption, while improvisation-driven genres (jazz, blues) are viewed as protected by human nuance.
7. The future is collaborative. 78.5% envision humans remaining central to music production, either using AI as an assistive tool or directing AI-driven processes, rather than being displaced by them.

## Implications for Music Producers

Adapt but don't abandon core values. The data suggests that producers who thrive in the AI era will be those who:

- Master AI as a production assistant while maintaining creative control.
- Develop a distinctive artistic voice that algorithms cannot replicate.
- Invest in human-centric skills, including collaboration, emotional intelligence, and original thinking.



- Choose ethical AI tools that align with community values.
- Practice transparency about AI usage in appropriate contexts.
- Commit to lifelong learning that evolves alongside technology.

Together, these factors define the emerging archetype of the modern music producer: part artist, part technologist, part creative director—a hybrid professional who blends human insight with technological capability.

## Market Imperatives: How Industry Stakeholders Must Adapt

The data reveals strong stated preferences around ethics, quality, and creative partnership. Whether these preferences will actually shape market outcomes remains uncertain, because consumer behavior doesn't always align with stated values. However, the patterns provide clear signals about what producers currently prioritize.

The numbers tell a consistent story: 81.2% consider ethical sourcing important, 56.4% see AI's primary value in efficiency gains, and 78.5% expect humans to remain central to music production. The critical challenge lies with the 48.6% "occasional experimenters"—those who have tested AI but haven't committed. They cite knowledge barriers, unclear value propositions, and concerns about creative compromise as reasons for hesitation.





**Implications for AI tool developers:** With 83.8% of producers working primarily on traditional songs and albums, accessible pricing and clear onboarding matter. Transparent AI provenance tracking could address the 77% worried about loss of originality, giving creators control over documentation and disclosure. The path to converting experimenters into regular users runs through proven quality improvements and frictionless workflow integration.

**The genre question reveals quality thresholds, not market positioning.** Respondents expect AI to influence functional music contexts (ambient, library music, game scoring) more readily than artist-driven work. But this likely reflects differing quality bars rather than inherent genre receptiveness. For jazz, rock, and folk—where 68.3% believe AI will face resistance—the issue isn't positioning or messaging. AI simply hasn't demonstrated the quality needed for improvisational subtlety and emotional depth. Until that changes, adoption in these genres will remain limited regardless of how tools are marketed.

**Broader implications:** The finding that 50.4% identify creative direction as the most valuable skill aligns with existing educational priorities in many institutions, suggesting curriculum adjustments may be less urgent than initially assumed. The widespread concern about originality points toward potential demand for transparency around AI use in music—though our survey didn't directly ask about content labeling, and whether such systems emerge depends on multiple stakeholders beyond producers.

Ultimately, sustainable market positions will belong to companies that recognize producers as creative partners rather than users to be disrupted. Those who deliver genuine productivity benefits while respecting creative autonomy and ethical standards stand the best chance of building durable businesses in this space.

## Looking Forward

Anything that makes the process easier or better should be welcomed—but the data suggests producers draw a firm line when tools threaten what makes the music distinctly theirs. Based on our findings, we believe success will likely favor producers who can seamlessly blend human artistry with AI's capabilities: part craftsman, part conductor, and part coder.



The survey reveals a clear trend toward hybrid practice. Producers are combining traditional craft with new technology, and 67.8% of our respondents report actively expanding their skillsets to keep pace. The data suggests tomorrow's producer will need comfort both as an artist and as someone who can direct intelligent tools effectively.

AI already excels at specific tasks, and more will inevitably be automated. One message emerges consistently throughout this survey: human creativity, emotional connection, and artistic vision remain irreplaceable. The producers who thrive will be those who discern which tasks AI can handle and which only humans can fulfill—and who dedicate themselves to mastering the latter while leveraging the former.

Staying relevant isn't just about chasing every new tool. It's about understanding the essence of one's role as a music creator in a changing world, and doubling down on the uniquely human skills that technology can't overshadow.



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