

Creative Confidence Poll – Aug 2025

SUMMARY:

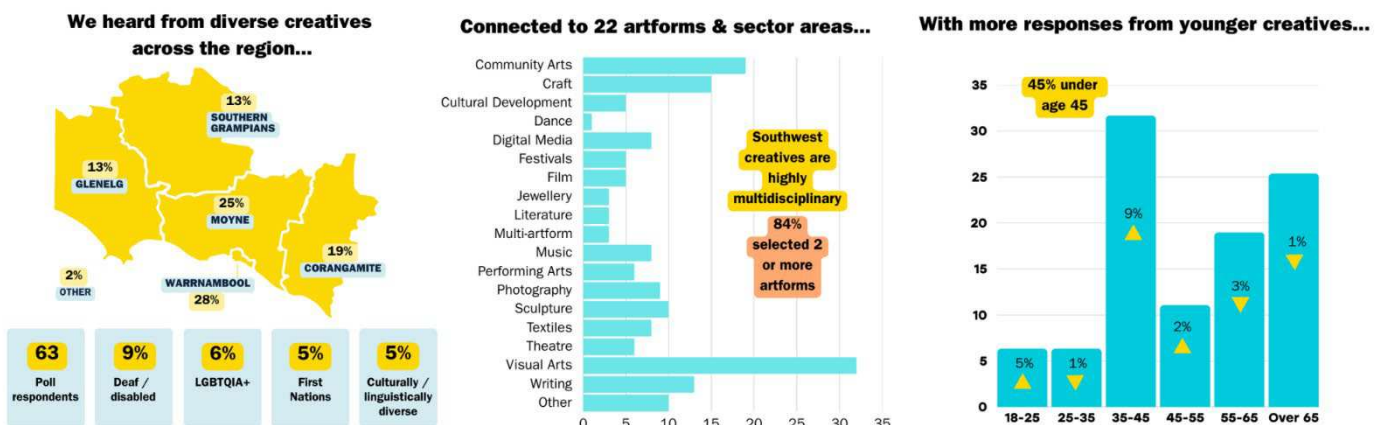
The annual Creative Confidence Poll is a pulse check to monitor and inform the [South West Creative Industries Strategy](#), a partnership approach to supporting the sector across the region.

In a nutshell: 2025 responses show a decline in individual confidence, and stronger sentiments about the region’s creative sector, with a slight increase in regional optimism. Less people reported creating full-time, with multiple references to economic and personal pressures, amidst some individual success and optimism. The most common themes centred on financial considerations, connection, visibility and finding audiences alongside affordable, accessible spaces and venues.

Where does this data come from?

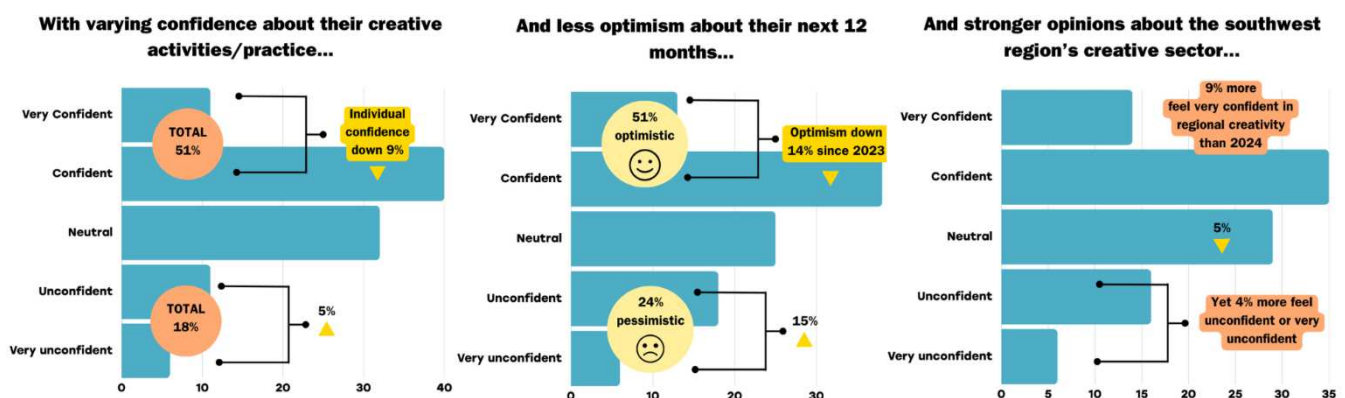
- The survey gathered insights from **63 respondents** working in **22 varied creative sectors** across **6 local government areas**.
- **84% were multi-disciplinary**, with practices spanning everything from music, writing and digital media to textiles, ceramics, illustration, dance... even bookbinding, basket making, comics, and comedy. Interestingly, **“craft” and “film” responses doubled** – perhaps indicative of the resurgence in craft-based practice and the growing relevance of screen/digital.
- We had more representation from those who don’t identify solely as individual artists, including creative workers and volunteers, teachers, art therapists and those in the festivals and events sector.
- There were more responses from **younger creatives** - 44% were under 45 compared to 23% in 2024.
- There were more responses from **First Nations creatives and diverse demographics** - 9% deaf/disabled, 6% LGBTQIA+, 5% First Nations and 5% Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- There was an **even split of early, mid-career and established** artists represented, due to a 5% increase in responses from **early-career artists** - 33% vs 28% in 2024 – perhaps a result of younger-skewing respondents.
- A declining number of respondents practice **full-time, down 5% in 2 years** to 25% in 2025, with a corresponding **increase in part-time** practitioners – 41% in 2025 up from 34% in 2024 – perhaps tied to the need to earn other income as identified in numerous comments.

[> SEE 2025 INFOGRAPHICS](#)



How is the sector feeling?

- Confidence in one's **own creative practice is down** - an opposite trend to 2024's results.
- 9% fewer respondents felt Very Confident or Confident in their creative practice/activities - 51% in 2025, compared to 60% in 2024 and 55% in 2023
- The number of respondents feeling Very Unconfident or Unconfident returned to 2023 levels of 18%, up from 12% in 2024.
- Confidence in **the region's creative sector** varied, with more opinionated responses at either end of the spectrum, but generally positive opinions.
- The greatest change in regional sentiment is that **9% more feel Very Confident** in the region's creative sector compared to last year, with an overall trend **up 6% since 2023**.
- However, there were less "neutral" responses and **4% more responses feeling Unconfident or Very Unconfident** in the region's creative sector.
- People are feeling **less confident** in their future creative practice/activities, again with 5% more conviction on both ends, but an **overall decline in personal confidence** about the coming 12 months - 14% less feel very confident or confident and 15% more feel very unconfident or unconfident.
- When asked why, optimistic comments reflected a sense of a growing artistic community and opportunities for increasing engagement, whereas pessimistic comments mostly centred on economic pressures or personal capacity.



Sector Needs & Priorities

- When asked "What's your greatest need or the highest priority you see for the southwest creative sector?", responses reflected similar themes to 2024's survey and the consultation that informed the South West Creative Industries Strategy:

<i>2025 Creative Confidence Poll Themes</i>	<i>Mentions</i>
Funding & Financial Support / Economy (sales decline, cost-of-living pressures, affordability, grants, subsidies)	22
Networking / Connection / Collaboration (connecting groups, individuals and places, promotional networks, cross-regional links, engaging with tourism sector)	16
Recognition / Promotion / Marketing / Audience Development (visibility, media coverage, finding audiences, ticket sales, social media, marketing training)	16
Spaces & Venues (affordable studios, exhibition venues, theatre hire, designated galleries, use of vacant spaces)	13
Time, Capacity & Wellbeing (time pressures, family commitments, health impacts)	8
Inclusion, Access & Diversity (LGBTQIA+, gender-diverse, neurodiverse, multicultural access and fairness concerns for all ages/artforms/genres)	7
Value/importance of sector (need for greater understanding/awareness, wholistic)	4
Mentoring & Peer Support (buddy systems, mentorship programs)	3
Support for Businesses (business/admin advice, sole trader support)	3
Council / Institutional Support (criticism of councils and public galleries)	3
Career / Learning Pathways (for future and established creatives, all ages)	2
Youth Programs (inc. training/work experience)	1

A huge thank you to the creatives who helped inform this work. Regional Arts Victoria and our partners will continue working on addressing these challenges, and creating opportunities for the kind of support, connection, recognition and learning that's most impactful for the southwest.

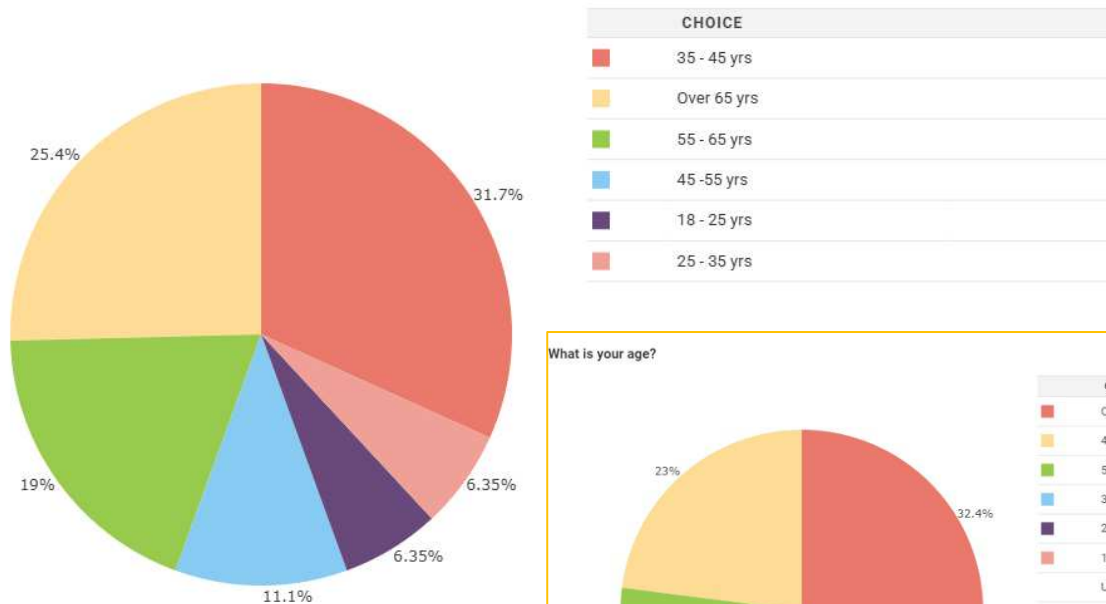
Read on for more detailed insights into 2025 survey responses.

DATA REPORT

Larger graph = 2025 data, smaller boxed graph = 2024 data

DEMOGRAPHICS

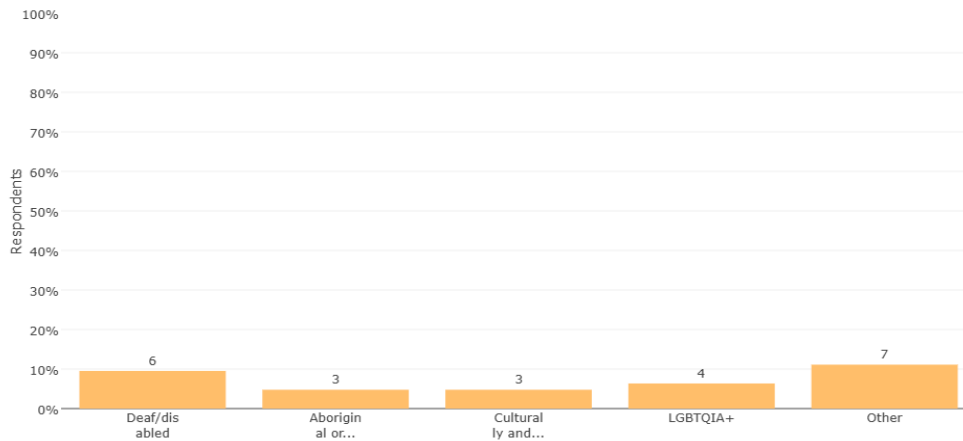
What is your age?



More responses from younger creatives:

- 12.7% under 35, compared to 9.5% in 2024
- **44.4% under 45, compared to 23% in 2024**
- **Almost 1/3 aged 35-45** – Up significantly from 13.5% in in 2024, 28.3% in 2023 (*could be influence of RM networks*)
- 44% over 55 in 2025 compared to 54% in 2024

Do you identify as any of the following?

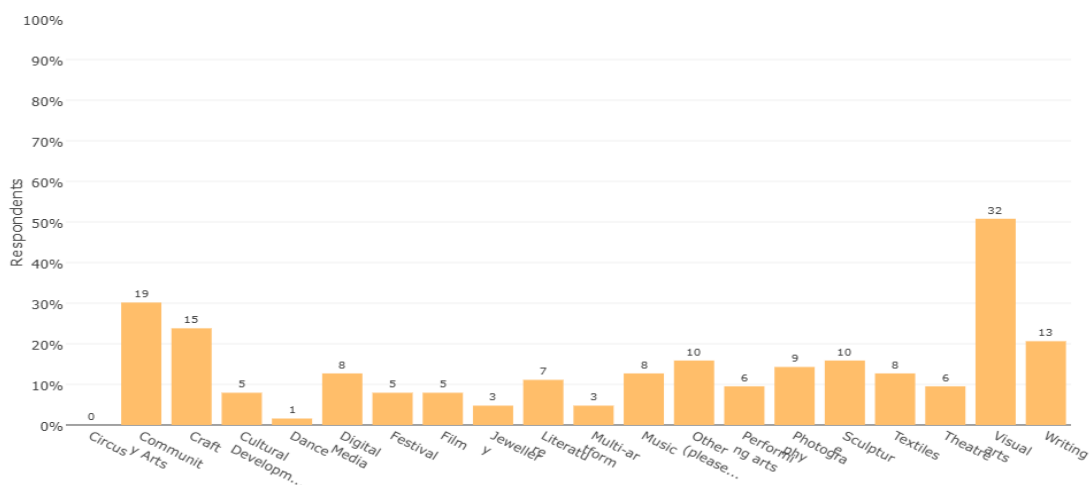


- In 2025 we added demographic questions beyond if people identified as First Nations.
- **Pleasing representation from diverse practitioners – 9% deaf/disabled, 6% LGBTQIA+, 5% First Nations and 5% CALD**
- **Increase in engagement from First Nations practitioners** – 3 responses from First Nations creatives vs 0 in 2024, and 1 in 2023.
- 2 “Other” responses were “Neurodiverse” and 2 were “None” – **add as options in 2026.*

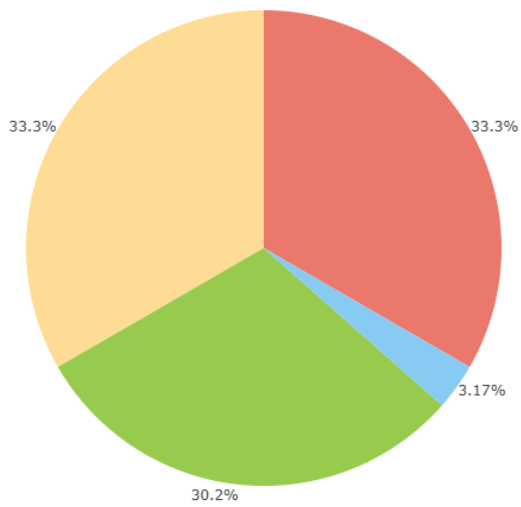
ARTS PRACTICE / CAREER STAGE

- **Visual arts** again most common response to “what are your 3 main artforms” though **more interdisciplinary** – 84% selected 2+ sector areas.
- Major rise in responses from **community/cultural development** and arts facilitation roles rather than only individual practicing artists.
- **“Craft” and “Film” responses doubled** - suggests resurgence in craft-based practice and identification, alongside growing relevance of screen and digital.
- Many detailed specific events and festivals or community groups they are involved in.

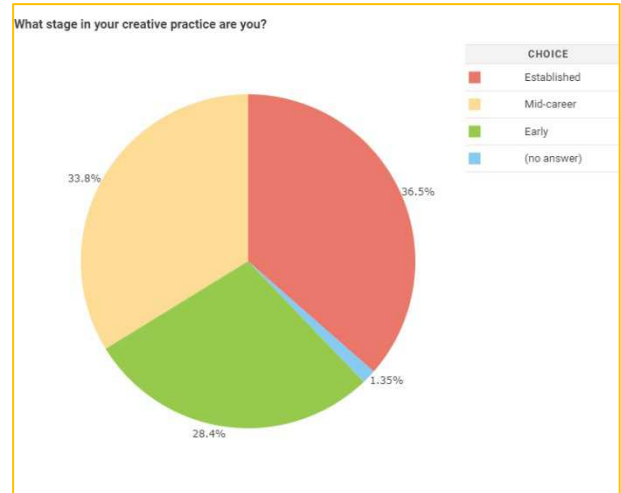
What are your 3 main artforms? If you are a creative worker or volunteer and not a practitioner please select...



What stage in your career are you?



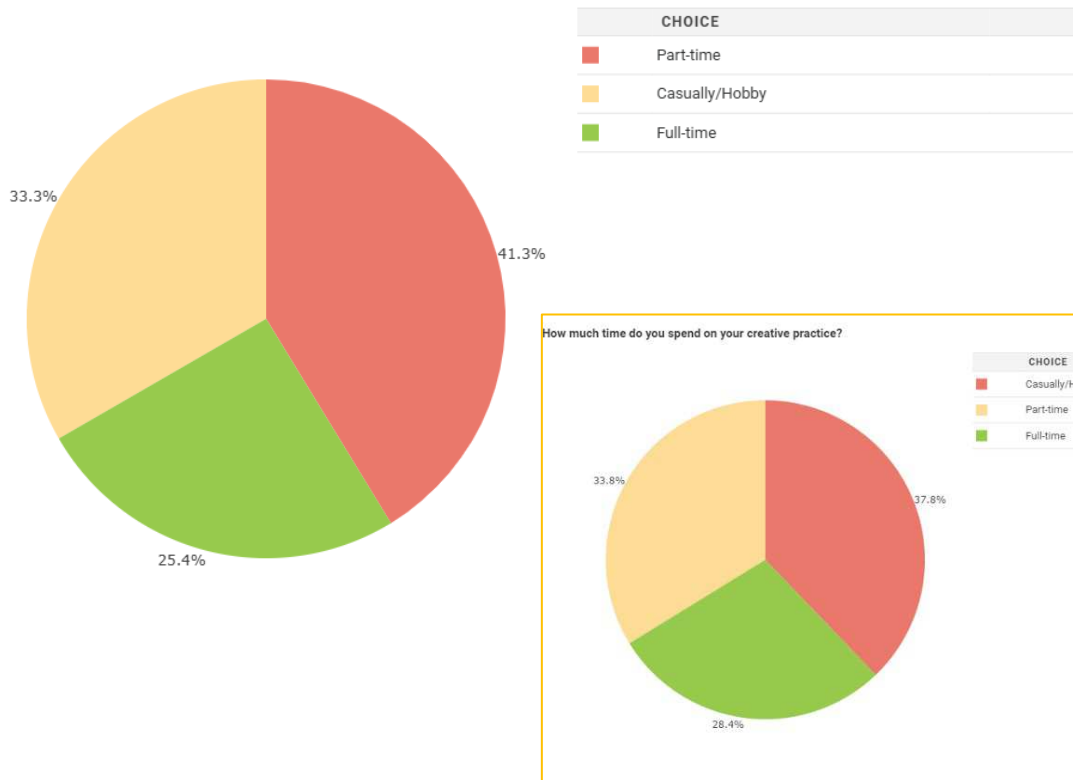
CHOICE	
Early	
Established	
Mid-career	
(no answer)	



CHOICE	
Established	
Mid-career	
Early	
(no answer)	

- **Early, mid-career and established artists represented almost evenly in 2025**
- **5% increase in responses from early-career artists** - 33.3% in 2025 vs 28.4% in 2024.
- Slightly less creatives identified as "established" in their careers - 33% vs 37% in 2024 and 20% in 2023.

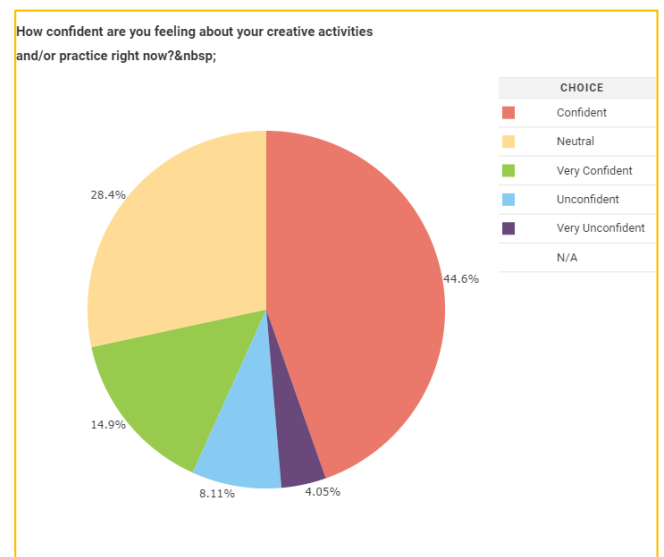
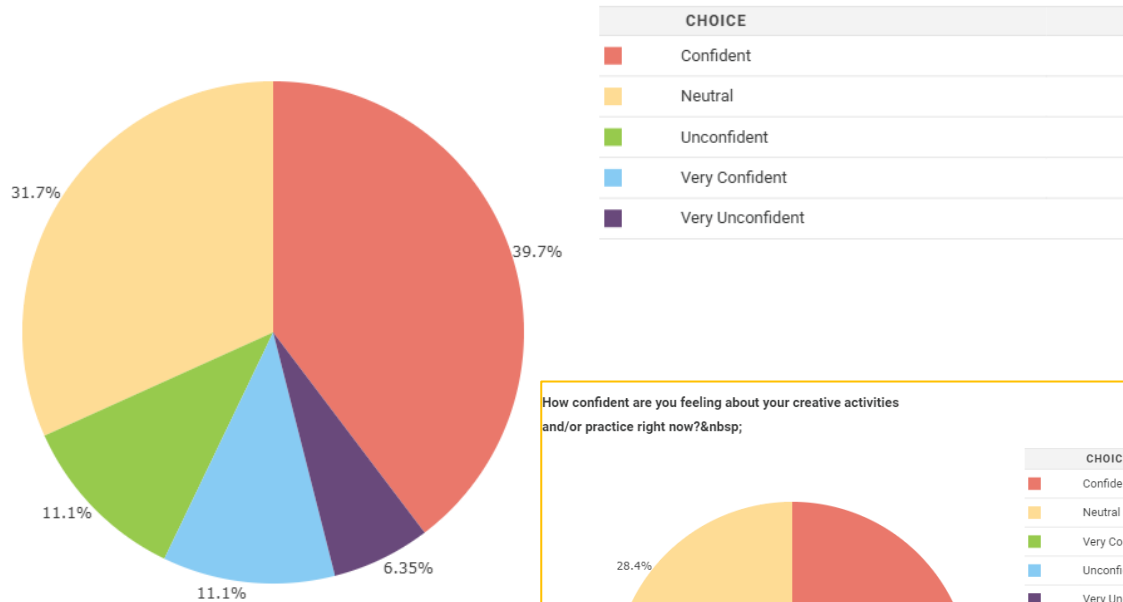
How much time do you spend on your creative practice or creative activities?



- Declining number of respondents practicing full-time, down 5% in 2 years – 25% in 2025, 28% in 2024, 30% in 2023
- Corresponding increase in part-time practitioners – 41% in 2025, 34% in 2024
- Similar numbers practicing casually or as a hobby - 33% in 2025, 38% in 2024
- Potentially due to need to earn other income to support rising costs of living.

CONFIDENCE

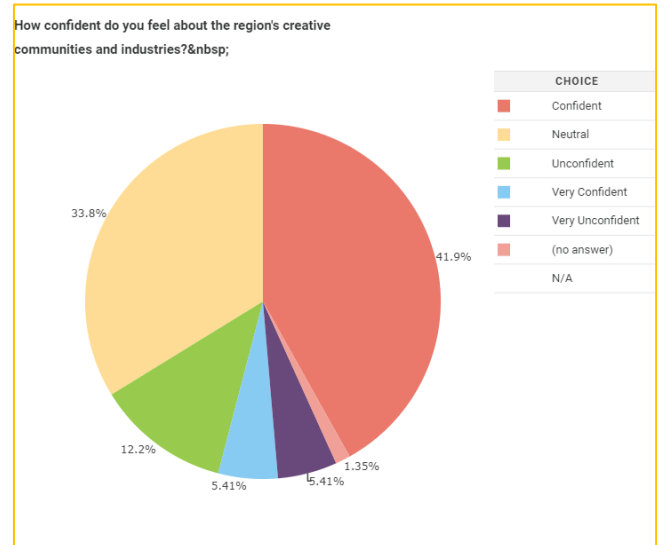
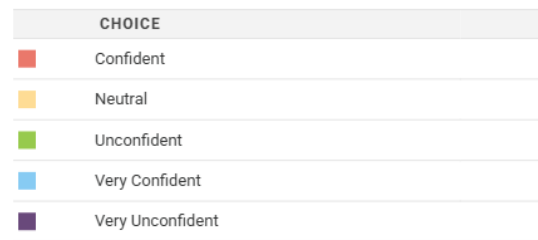
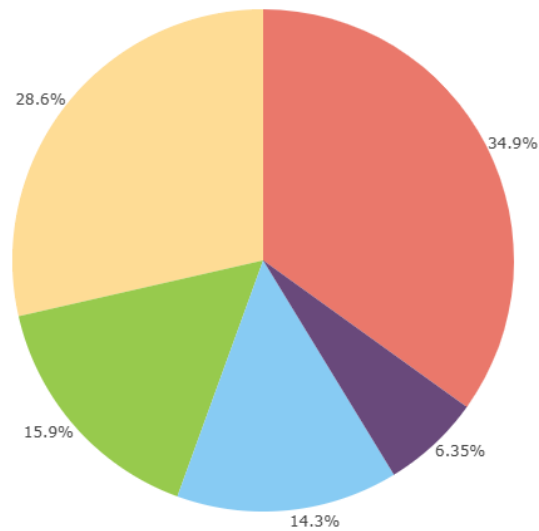
How confident are you feeling about your creative practice and/or activities?



Confidence in own creative practice is down

- Opposite trend to 2024 poll, which showed individual confidence up 5% to 45%
- Total very confident or confident = 50.8 in 2025, 59.6% in 2024, 55.2% in 2023 = **down 8.8% in 1 year**
- Total very unconfident or unconfident = 17.5% in 2025, 12.2% in 2024, 18.3% in 2023 = **up 5% in 1 year**, closer to 2023 lack of confidence.

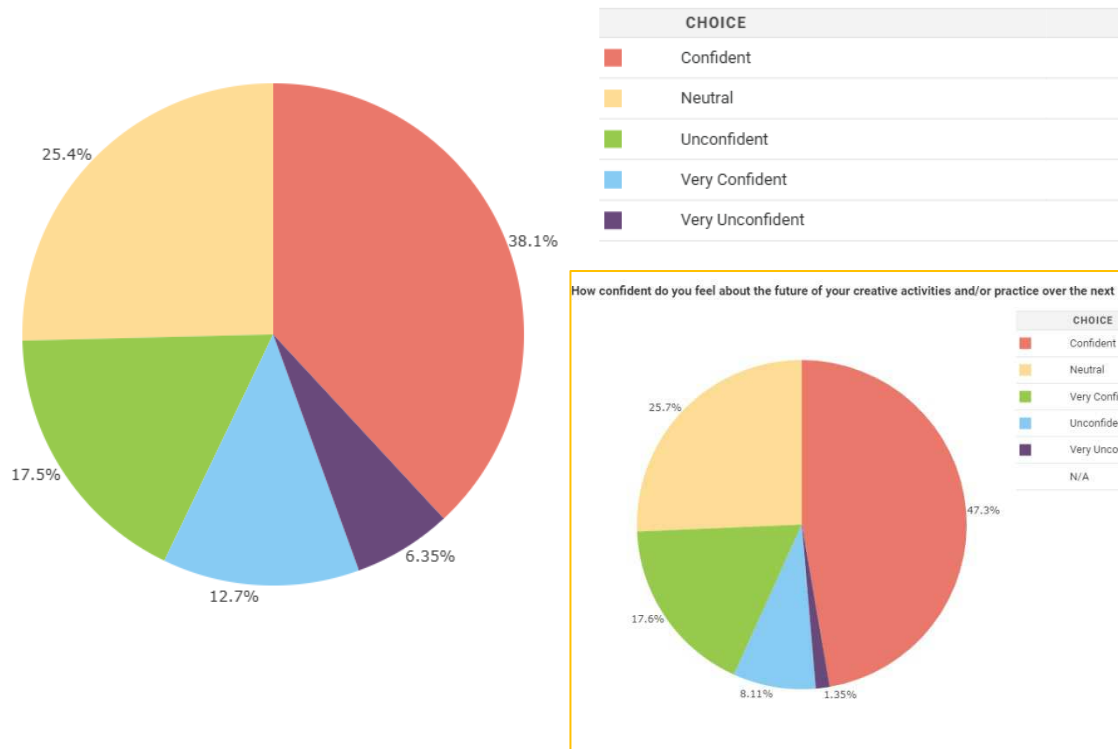
How confident do you feel about the region's creative sector?



Confidence in the region's creative sector varies – a slight lift in regional optimism but more opinionated responses at both ends.

- Greatest change in regional sentiment is that **9% more feel very confident in the region's creative sector** compared to last year, with an overall trend up of **6% since 2023**.
- However, there were **less "neutral" responses** and **4% more responses of feeling unconfident or very unconfident**.
- 2% increase in creatives' confidence in the region since 2024 and 6% since 2023.
- 2% increase in feeling very confident or confident - 49% in 2025, 47% in 2024, 43% in 2023
- 4% increase in feeling very unconfident or unconfident = 22% in 2025, 18% in 2024, 32% in 2023
- 5% less feel neutral – accounts for more opinionated answers.

How confident do you feel about the future of your creative practice and/or activities over the next 12 months?



People are feeling less confident in their future creative practice/activities

- There’s greater conviction on both ends of the spectrum, with more responses of “Very Confident” (5% more) and “Very Unconfident” (also 5% more), but an **overall decline in confidence about creative’s own future.**
- 14% less feel very confident or confident = 51% in 2025, 65% in 2024, 53% in 2023.
- 15% more feel very unconfident or unconfident =24% in 2025, 9% in 2024, 15% in 2023

Reflected in comments that convey a sense of insecurity about making a living as a creative.

When asked **why creatives felt this way**, responses were themed around:

Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
Financial Pressures & Sustainability	Rising costs, reduced sales, and funding competition make sustaining a practice difficult. Some creatives are generating income outside of own practice.	<p><i>“It’s very expensive, the materials, hiring spaces torn classes, the entry fees for exhibitions and markets, it just adds up to more than I make.”</i></p> <p><i>“Sales have dropped dramatically in the last year. The number of visitors interested in the arts has declined.”</i></p> <p><i>“With funding becoming more competitive and the cost of living crisis I worry about being a ‘paid’ artist.”</i></p> <p><i>“Have taken a step back on my practice as I’ve taken on a permanent role”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m not reliant on my creative activity for income”</i></p>

Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
Opportunities & Access	Limited platforms and inequitable access to funding/support.	<p><i>"There's no local platforms to show your art or sell your craft during the year. We only have very few options during summer."</i></p> <p><i>"The same people are always selected for support. There needs to be more support for musical genres that are not represented in the STH West."</i></p> <p><i>"I am confident in my abilities, however I worry I won't have many opportunities to showcase them."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel we have great opportunities to foster creativity pursuits in youth however there aren't many pathways in my field on a larger scale"</i></p>
Confidence & Personal Practice	Confidence varies; some optimistic and achieving success, some rebuilding after hiatus, others experiencing creative block.	<p><i>"It is the diversity of my approach to art as a career that offers me a level of success as a full time artist"</i></p> <p><i>"After years of creating daily I have a creative block. There are no local workshops that cater to my inspiration, so I go out of the area."</i></p> <p><i>"I've planned out the re-beginning of my arts practice... more or less learning to walk again."</i></p> <p><i>"I am going through a period of growth and exploration creatively so I'm building my confidence in my work"</i></p>
Community & Support Networks	Disparate voices – much positivity, but some creatives feel isolated or unsupported.	<p><i>"The creative community in SW VIC is very strong and supportive."</i></p> <p><i>"Its great seeing the arts/creative industry taken more seriously and for being appreciated..."</i></p> <p><i>"I have a stable client base, but as I work for myself and mainly from my home studio, I feel a bit isolated and disconnected from the broader arts community."</i></p> <p><i>"It seems that as I am a sole trader I am standing alone in a category that [isn't] able to get support"</i></p>
Recognition & Visibility	Desire for more promotion, recognition, and marketing support.	<p><i>"It would be lovely if I would be recognised and supported by local newspapers the council local Radio stations community groups libraries."</i></p> <p><i>"Artists have been encouraged to display their work in our community...which helps artists be recognised."</i></p>
Diversity & Representation	Inclusion gaps for some groups and underrepresented art forms.	<p><i>"I wish there were more opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people to come together and celebrate and do art"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't feel there is room for someone like me."</i></p> <p><i>"There needs to be more support for musical genres that are not represented in the STH West. If you can't see it you can't be it."</i></p>
Optimism vs. Uncertainty	Variable - region seen as creatively vibrant but struggles note,	<p><i>"Over the past 10-15 years I have seen the art scene in Warrnambool and district blossom. It continues to grow."</i></p> <p><i>"Our creative community is vibrant and growing... I see our generation bringing new ideas alongside experience. It's an</i></p>

Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
	with future stability tied to economy and funding.	<p><i>exciting time for the arts locally.</i></p> <p><i>“We have made it this far post pandemic, it’s still hard, but there is light at the tunnel.”</i></p> <p><i>“Not sure if current opportunities, such as workshops, commissions and sales will continue. Hopeful that funding applications are successful.”</i></p>

SECTOR NEEDS

When asked “What’s your greatest need or the highest priority you see for the southwest creative sector?”, responses reflected similar themes to 2024’s survey, with more references to broader economic factors like rising costs of living, and more personal challenges.

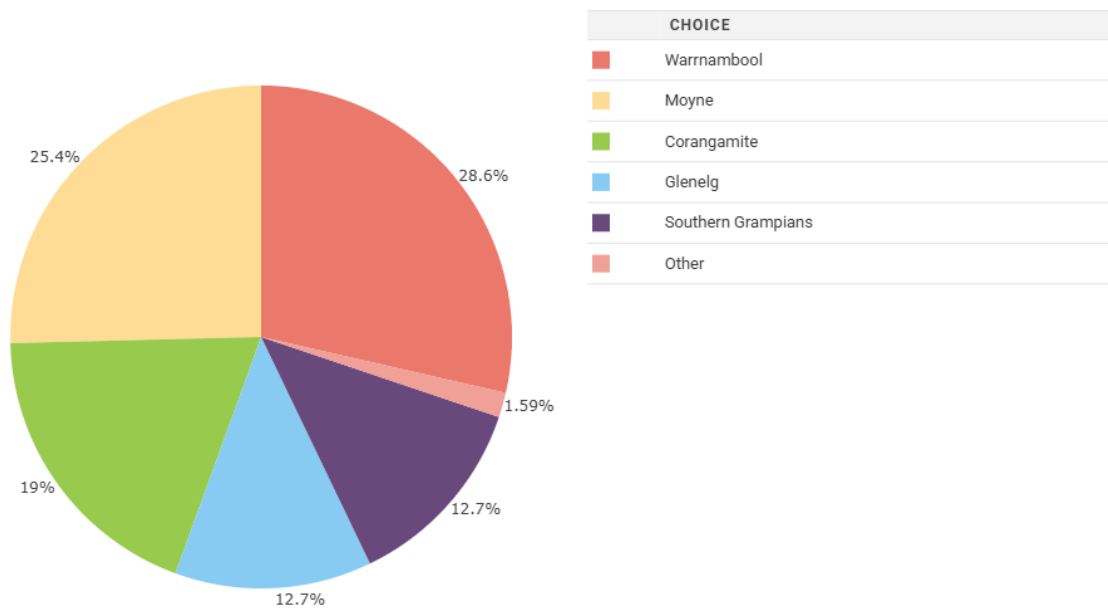
Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
Funding & Financial Support	#1 issue in 2025 and 2024 but framed more within tighter economic context and rising costs	<p><i>“Funding! With a holistic approach to it that incorporates and involves all sectors of society including education, business, etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Financial support / sponsorship / philanthropy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Greatly needed subsidies to survive the long haul.”</i></p> <p><i>“Funding for regional artists and their projects. That their projects shouldn’t always have to have an outcome for the community. The artist is the community!”</i></p>
Affordable & Accessible Spaces	Remains a top concern, more focus on low-rent spaces, venues for making/selling work, opening empty shops and vacant spaces.	<p><i>“More communal studio art space and exhibition space.”</i></p> <p><i>“Hire charges for a venue can be very expensive.”</i></p> <p><i>“Affordable theatre hire”</i></p> <p><i>“Affordable art lessons”</i></p> <p><i>“Somewhere to show and sell items”</i></p> <p><i>“The shops in town [should] open to artists or schools to showcase our art...instead of them sitting empty!”</i></p> <p><i>“We have vacant spaces... that the council could be offering to creatives.”</i></p>
Skills Development, Learning & Business Support	Stronger business capability focus than 2024’s emphasis on grant writing & governance. Calls for training in sales / social media alongside career pathways.	<p><i>“Sell-ability training, or social media training. Not having a shop front...means social media is one of the platforms I rely on and don’t really know what I can do on there...”</i></p> <p><i>“Helping artist’s reach a large, sustainable and interested audience should be the highest priority.”</i></p> <p><i>“My greatest need currently is not knowing about how or where to find help for artist admin information regarding licensing, insurances, copyright issues etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Opportunity for learning, skills development and collaboration.”</i></p> <p><i>“Learning pathways for future creatives”</i></p>

Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
Connection & Collaboration	Strong call for more networking, mentorship, collective strategies, and cross-regional links.	<p><i>"A collective strategy and networks where artists can get together and share resources and ideas."</i></p> <p><i>"More connection and collaboration between different groups. Bringing artists together for exhibitions, learning and social wellbeing."</i></p> <p><i>"A buddy-buddy mentorship system or program."</i></p> <p><i>"Connecting groups...connection between different places"</i></p> <p><i>"More events to connect creatives and or some type of creative festival"</i></p> <p><i>"I would really like to have the opportunity to play my own music live at the local festivals and that, but honestly finding musicians is the rate limiter."</i></p>
Recognition & Value of Arts	Need for broader community understanding of arts' value and role in society.	<p><i>"Having the community understand the value of art, and having the community understand the nature of arts funding."</i></p> <p><i>"Ongoing foregrounding and emphasising the importance of the creative sector to fulfil our lives...A thriving cultural community enables a more successful business community."</i></p> <p><i>"Greater awareness of the entire SW sector as a holistic sector."</i></p>
Council & Institutional Support	Creatives voiced frustrations and requested more support for sole traders	<p><i>"Regional art galleries are funded by rate/taxpayers and do not focus on the region's best creatives/artists."</i></p> <p><i>"More support for sole traders and recognition for the contribution to the creative arts we make. A more progressive and inclusive council that is sharing."</i></p>
Inclusion & Diversity	Desire for inclusive programs while balancing fairness in funding allocation.	<p><i>"More accessibility for LGBTQIA+, gender diverse and neurodiverse people to be involved."</i></p> <p><i>"Youth Programs, Multicultural Arts and Community Programs that offer arts training or work experience."</i></p> <p><i>"Support for artists of all ages, nationalities and methods of creating."</i></p>
Tourism, Regional Promotion, Infrastructure	Link between arts and tourism still seen as underdeveloped. Promotion, networks and infrastructure to drive visitation and awareness	<p><i>"Promote visual arts tourism."</i></p> <p><i>"Building connection between creatives, funding for community projects. Engaging with the tourism sector."</i></p> <p><i>"Promotional networks"</i></p> <p><i>"Prioritising long-term investment in regional creative infrastructure"</i></p>
Time, Personal Capacity & Wellbeing	Emerging theme. This year stronger mentions of needing time,	<p><i>"My time and motivation."</i></p> <p><i>"Time. Support as a single parent."</i></p> <p><i>"My need to help is hurting my health as I can't seem to find a balance of sustaining both myself and the"</i></p>

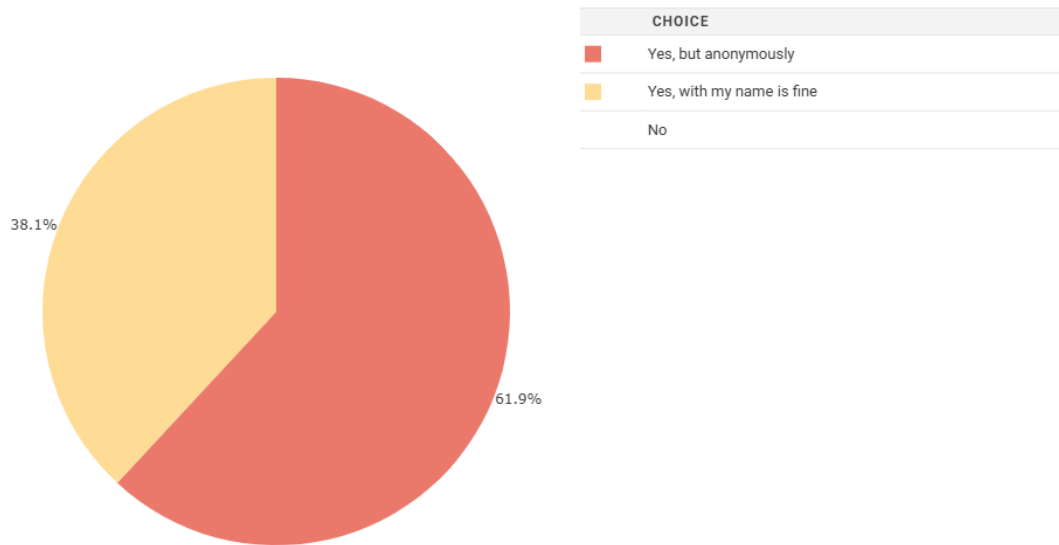
Theme	Insight	Key Quotes (Examples)
	balance and personal challenges	<i>community I serve.” “It's an ongoing struggle and still feels like a form of resistance to keep creative endeavours afloat day to day”</i>

Other insights:

Your primary Council area:



Do you consent to your insights being used for promotional / reporting purposes?



To see a comparison of 2024 and 2023 Confidence Poll Data in last year's Poll results, visit the timeline at rav.net.au/swcis.