State of Creativity:

How a Global Pandemic and Cultural Movements are Impacting the Industry
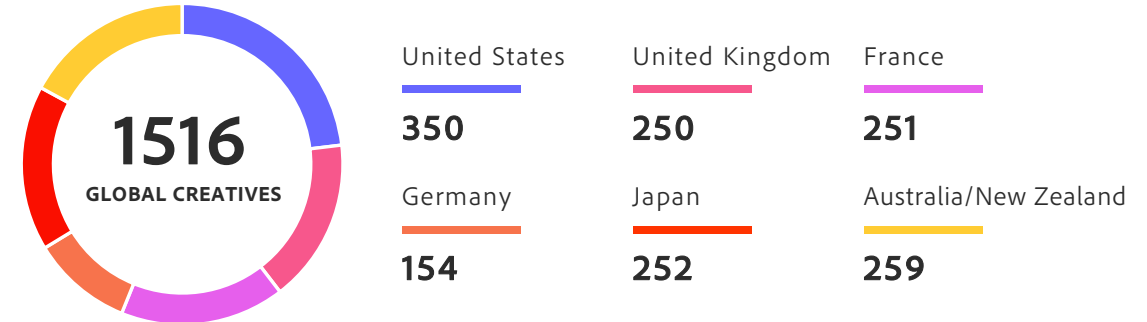
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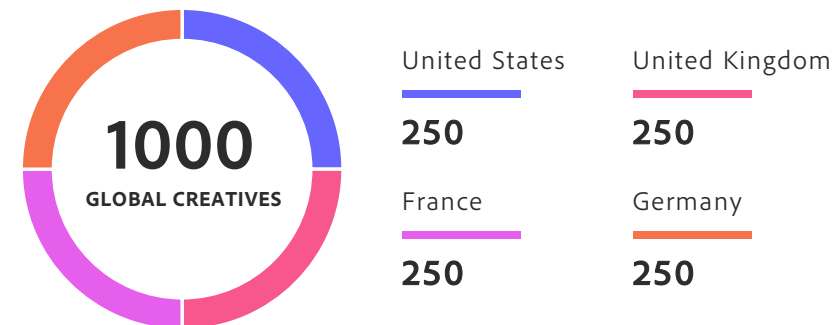
Taking a pulse on 2020.

Each year, Adobe conducts a study to get a deep understanding of the top challenges and impactful solutions that creative professionals experience.

Amid the events of 2020 (COVID-19 and cultural movements), Adobe surveyed creative professionals to explore what new challenges and opportunities are emerging.

In July 2020, we surveyed:

1516
GLOBAL CREATIVES

United States	United Kingdom	France
350	**250**	**251**
Germany	Japan	Australia/New Zealand
154	**252**	**259**

In September 2019, we surveyed:

1000
GLOBAL CREATIVES

United States	United Kingdom
250	**250**
France	Germany
250	**250**

Exploring challenges and opportunities brought on by the events of 2020, this research sought to understand:

- How creativity and trends are changing, or adapting, amid the pandemic and recent cultural movements

- The immediate impact on creative businesses, and what the future of creativity looks like

- How Adobe customers are evolving their usage of stock imagery in campaigns
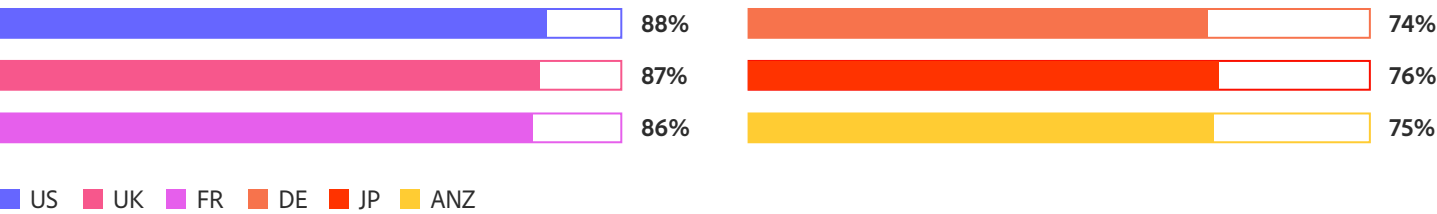
Key Findings

2020 became a pivotal year, pushing creators more than ever before and generating a lasting impact on how people will create moving forward.

BONNINSTUDIO/Stocksy | 169622910

81% of creatives believe the events of 2020 will have lasting changes on creative businesses.

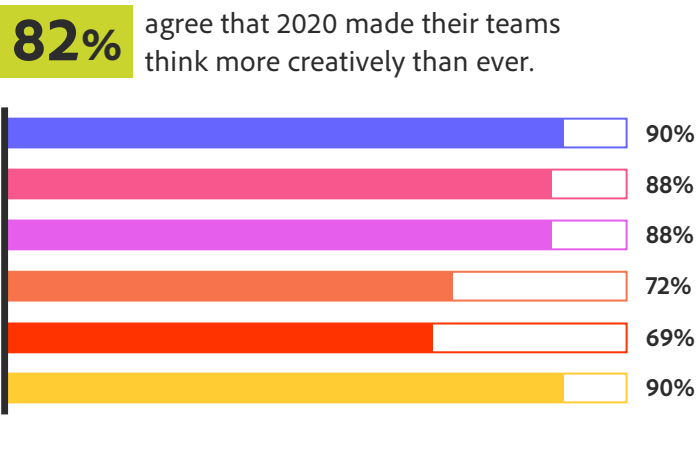|	
88%	74%
87%	76%
86%	75%

■ US ■ UK ■ FR ■ DE ■ JP ■ ANZ

"I think a lot of companies now see the value of remote work, especially since they are able to reduce office space… I think remote working will increase, but I'm positive that many creatives will only be motivated by the challenge."

"The permanent impact will be mostly financial for the creativity department as well as how we do our job in terms of our selectivity of imagery being used."

Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...
Q31. Thinking ahead to the next 2-3 years, what do you think will be the permanent impact of COVID-19 on creativity?

Change goes beyond how creative businesses operate.

Despite quickly pivoting their creative strategy, or adapting to unforeseen circumstances, the majority of creators agree that 2020 has brought inspiration.

75% said 2020 has forever changed how they create.

US	83%
UK	81%
FR	78%
DE	68%
JP	63%
ANZ	75%

82% agree that 2020 made their teams think more creatively than ever.

US	90%
UK	88%
FR	88%
DE	72%
JP	69%
ANZ	90%

■ US ■ UK ■ FR ■ DE ■ JP ■ ANZ
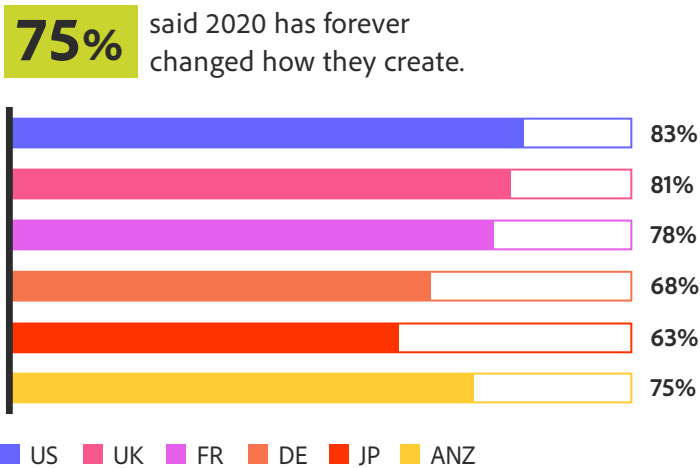
"[The events around] George Floyd and racial equality have inspired us to be more racially diverse."

"People are getting more personal due to the pandemic. There is less emphasis on quality and more on realness."

Q20. In your own words, how would you say that creativity has changed in 2020 so far? How have content teams changed the way they create?
Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...

Creative Challenges of 2020

Panfilia | 259802792

While the world was in flux with the impact of COVID-19, the rise of social justice movements began to influence creators, as well. The one thing 9 in 10 creators have been able to count on from this year? Uncertainty.

"We follow trends very closely and navigate stormy waters to ensure accurate depictions of pandemic-era business trends."

"We plan to add more training workshops for our employees, so we are ready for any upcoming unexpected events."

82%
AGREE

the events of 2020 have made it necessary to reevaluate the subject matter of the stock imagery being used in upcoming campaigns.

89% US   **86%** UK   **82%** FR

73% DE   **75%** JP   **90%** ANZ

84%
AGREE

the events of 2020 have made it challenging to plan for upcoming campaigns.

86% US   **90%** UK   **85%** FR

77% DE   **77%** JP   **86%** ANZ

Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...
Q33. What are some of the ways that your team is managing uncertainties as you plan your upcoming 20/21 campaigns?

Impact by industry:

78% agree that the disruption of 2020 has been extensive, though creativity in the entertainment industries is perceived as the most disrupted.

77% US   **82%** UK   **82%** FR
70% DE   **72%** JP   **83%** ANZ

		US	UK	FR	DE	JP	ANZ
Film	78%	74%	83%	79%	77%	80%	77%
Performing arts	78%	76%	83%	82%	73%	76%	76%
Fashion	71%	70%	81%	65%	70%	77%	65%
Marketing/Comms.	69%	65%	71%	75%	69%	65%	67%
Photography	67%	66%	72%	66%	68%	68%	64%
Music	67%	62%	73%	63%	72%	73%	57%
Design	66%	64%	71%	65%	66%	66%	66%
Visual arts	65%	63%	75%	65%	65%	65%	59%
Crafts	64%	59%	67%	69%	68%	62%	59%
TV/Streaming	59%	54%	63%	55%	65%	63%	51%

Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...
Q32. To what extent will the COVID-19 pandemic disrupt creativity in each of the following industries?

Our research finds that teams are feeling the pressure to do more with less. With the impact of our current environment challenging businesses overall, creatives are finding it difficult to know what to expect. This is leading to tight turnarounds and major shifts in content.

77%
AGREE

I am being asked to develop more content in less time.

83% US   **81%** UK   **78%** FR
68% DE   **63%** JP   **75%** ANZ

80%
AGREE

my team's workflow could be more efficient.

87% US   **81%** UK   **79%** FR
68% DE   **82%** JP   **86%** ANZ

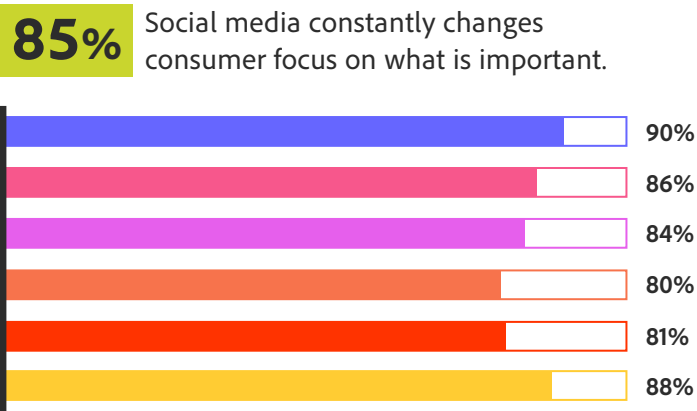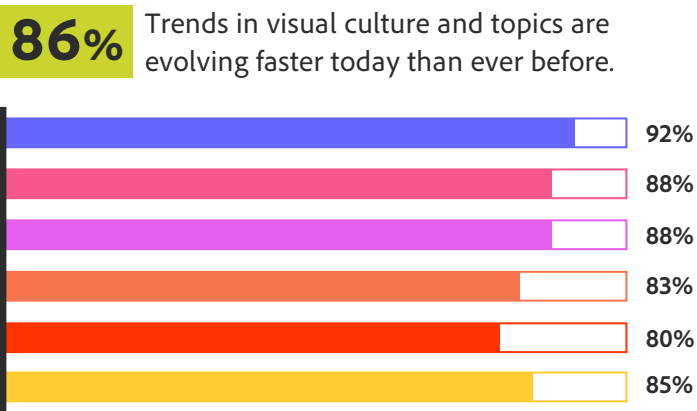Q19. How much do you agree or disagree that...

Design Evolution and Trends

With the rapid pace at which visual trends and culture continue to evolve, creators know they need to keep up. Navigating these quick changes in an authentic way has become challenging, and they feel the responsibility to develop realistic, current campaigns.
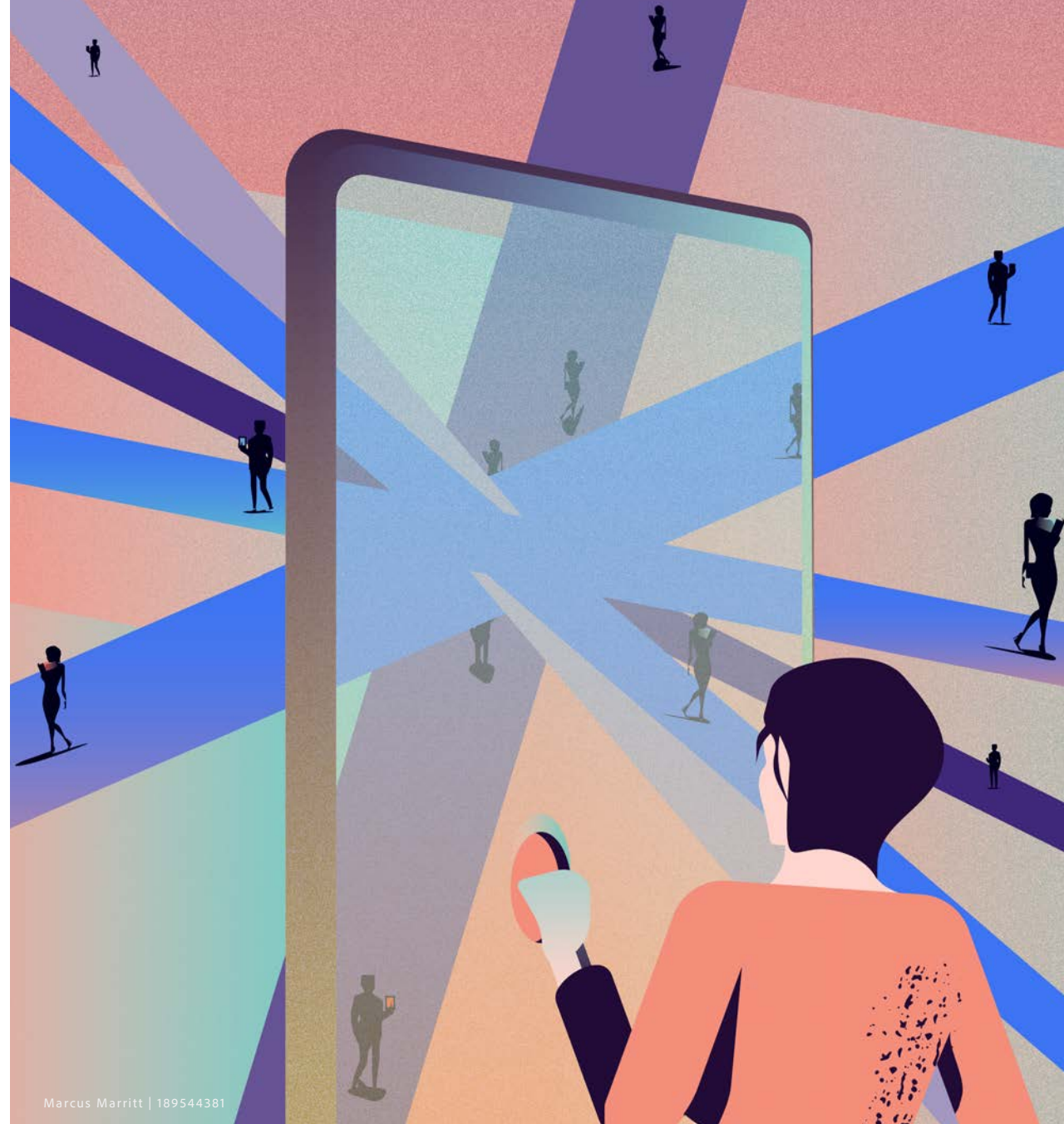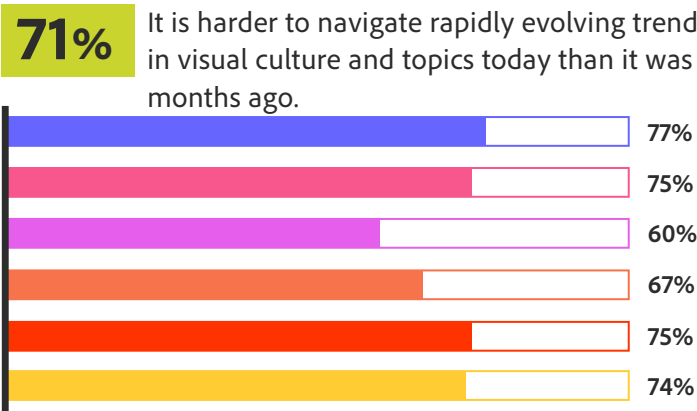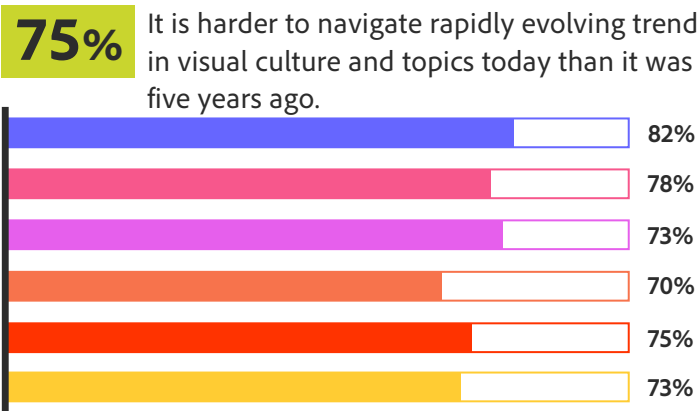
Marcus Marritt | 189544381

The majority agree that it's a struggle to navigate visual trends, and this problem has been even more difficult since the beginning of 2020.

86% Trends in visual culture and topics are evolving faster today than ever before.

Region	%
US	92%
UK	88%
FR	88%
DE	83%
JP	80%
ANZ	85%

85% Social media constantly changes consumer focus on what is important.

Region	%
US	90%
UK	86%
FR	84%
DE	80%
JP	81%
ANZ	88%

75% It is harder to navigate rapidly evolving trends in visual culture and topics today than it was five years ago.

Region	%
US	82%
UK	78%
FR	73%
DE	70%
JP	75%
ANZ	73%

71% It is harder to navigate rapidly evolving trends in visual culture and topics today than it was six months ago.

Region	%
US	77%
UK	75%
FR	60%
DE	67%
JP	75%
ANZ	74%

Legend: US UK FR DE ANZ JP

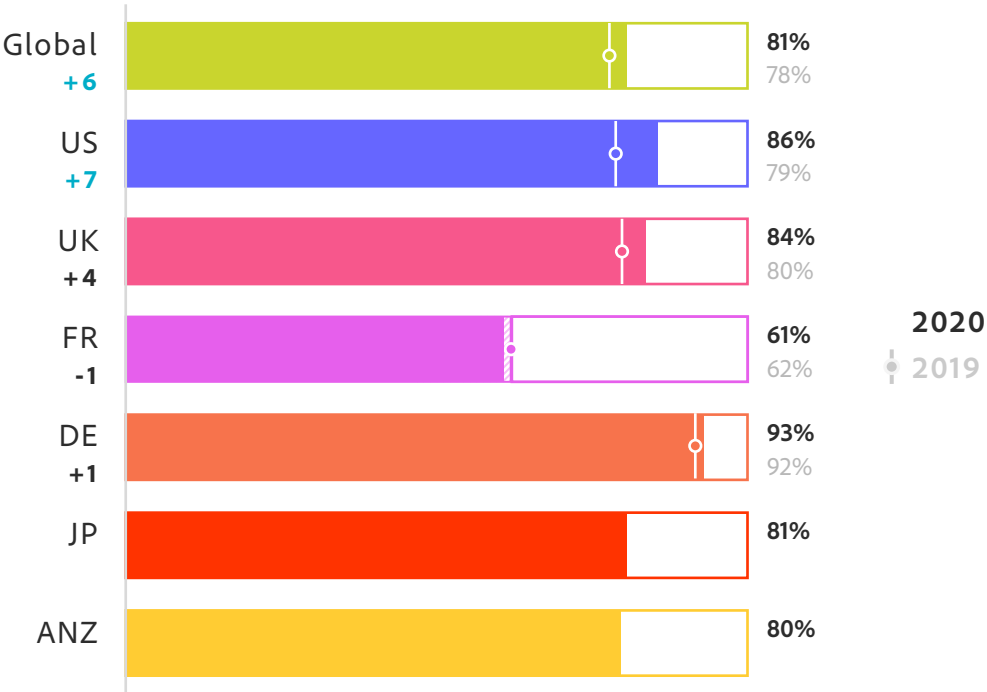Q13. How much do you agree or disagree that…

There's more pressure to stay relevant to customers with new ideas, and produce work that stands out from the competition.

Creators struggle with:

🇺🇸 *"Coming up with new ideas because we already have created so many. It's hard to come up with something new."*

🇬🇧 *"Finding content that stands out from the crowd that nobody else is using."*

## Creatives are struggling today more than ever before to stay relevant to customers.

Note: Statistically significant differences shown in **blue**

Q1. What are three of the top challenges that your creative team faces in delivering innovative creative work that stands out?

Avoiding risk and controversy.

Creators are finding it harder to strike a balance between visuals that do not cause negative attention, yet still stand out to consumers.
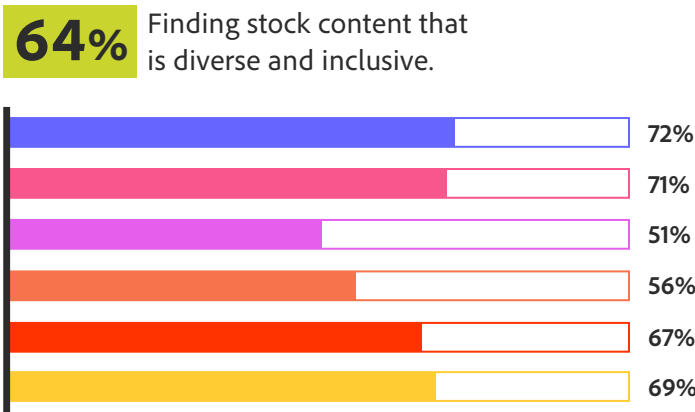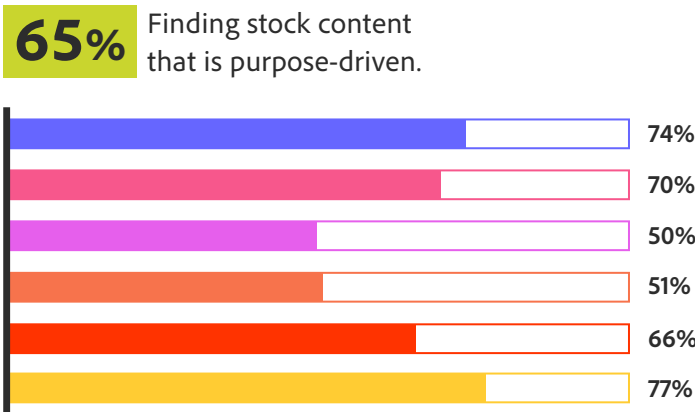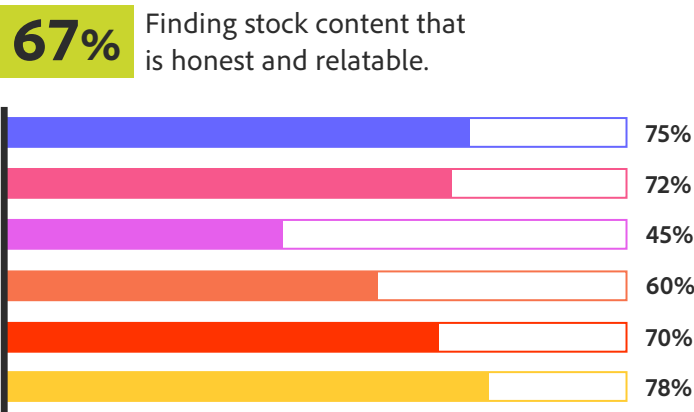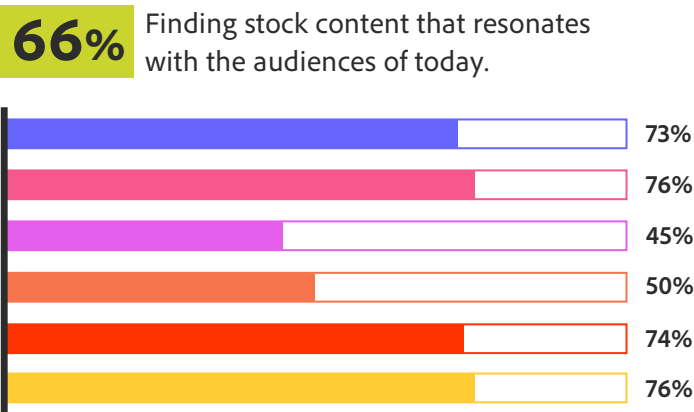
They're also feeling more pressure working with clients who are risk averse (74%, up from 65% in 2019).

71%
AGREE
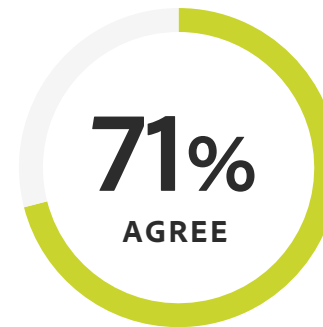
my company (or my client) is risk averse when it comes to visuals used in creative content.

78% US   **70%** UK   **65%** FR

66% DE   **78%** JP   **69%** ANZ

Q23. How much do you agree or disagree that…

Q35. Below is a list of ways that a creative stock asset company might help creative teams navigate this shifting environment. How interested would you be in each of the following solutions from a creative stock asset company?v

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Finding content that resonates with consumers continues to prove challenging for creators.

66% Finding stock content that resonates with the audiences of today.

US	73%
UK	76%
FR	45%
DE	50%
JP	74%
ANZ	76%

65% Finding stock content that is purpose-driven.

US	74%
UK	70%
FR	50%
DE	51%
JP	66%
ANZ	77%

67% Finding stock content that is honest and relatable.

US	75%
UK	72%
FR	45%
DE	60%
JP	70%
ANZ	78%

64% Finding stock content that is diverse and inclusive.

US	72%
UK	71%
FR	51%
DE	56%
JP	67%
ANZ	69%

US   UK   FR   DE   ANZ   JP

Q12. How challenging are each of the following for you and your team?

Empowering Positive Change

Creators are rising to the occasion by doing what they do best — getting creative.

Hero Images | 316211798

Creating opportunity.

Creating campaigns in 2020 means that the shift to be timely and relevant is more important than ever before.
To stay on top of these unexpected changes, creators are making quick pivots on what they create and how they create.

Our survey found that **43%** (**48%**/**34%**/**28%**/**31%**/**36%**/**45%**) have prepared their creative projects for big changes in direction when unforeseen events occur — leaving creators inspired from these cultural shifts.

85% agree the events of 2020 have inspired their team to incorporate real-world issues into their creative work.
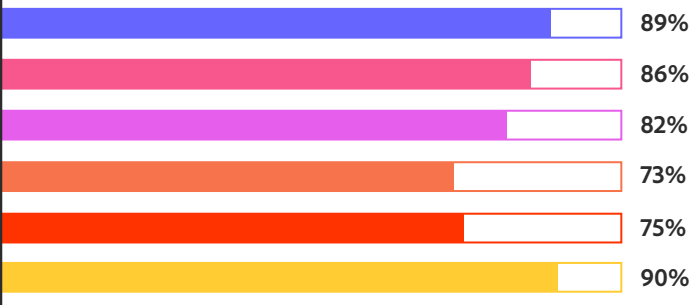
US	93%
UK	89%
FR	85%
DE	76%
JP	77%
ANZ	91%
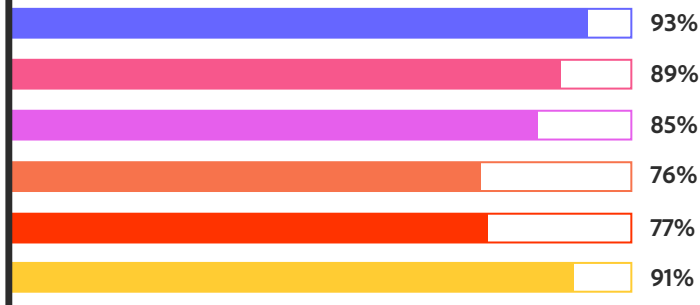
83% show interest in diverse and inclusive stock collections.

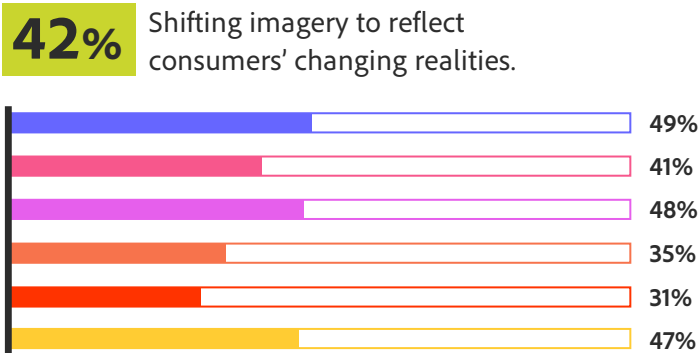|	
US	93%
UK	83%
FR	75%
DE	81%
JP	76%
ANZ	91%
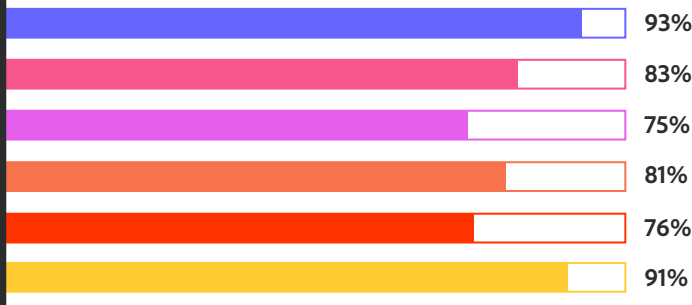
82% said this made it necessary to reevaluate the subject matter of stock imagery in campaigns.

US	89%
UK	86%
FR	82%
DE	73%
JP	75%
ANZ	90%

■ US ■ UK ■ FR ■ DE ■ ANZ ■ JP

Q20. In your own words, how would you say that creativity has changed in 2020 so far? How have content teams changed the way they create?
Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...

19

Where creatives are shifting their focus in 2020:

Teams feel inspired to incorporate real-world issues into their work, developing campaigns with positive societal impacts to reflect the current reality.

55% Creating new campaigns around COVID-19.

US	59%
UK	60%
FR	56%
DE	55%
JP	49%
ANZ	52%

49% Creating new campaigns for offerings or services that emerged due to COVID-19.

US	51%
UK	52%
FR	44%
DE	44%
JP	48%
ANZ	54%

43% Creating campaigns with positive societal impacts.

US	53%
UK	45%
FR	43%
DE	35%
JP	35%
ANZ	46%

42% Shifting imagery to reflect consumers' changing realities.

US	49%
UK	41%
FR	48%
DE	35%
JP	31%
ANZ	47%

31% Creating new campaigns addressing racial injustice.

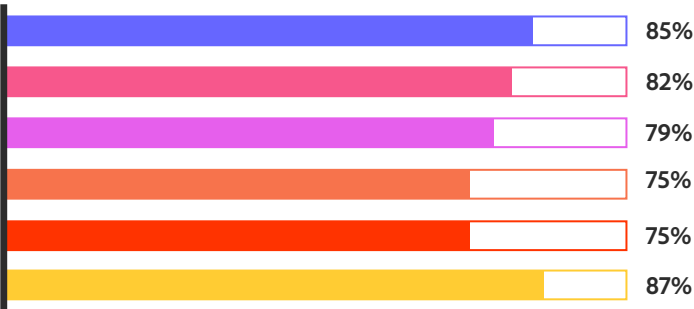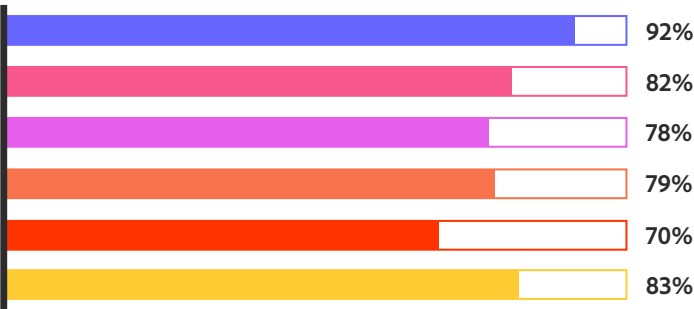|	
US	43%
UK	37%
FR	24%
DE	26%
JP	34%
ANZ	31%

■ US ■ UK ■ FR ■ DE ■ ANZ ■ JP

Q21. Below is a list of ways that some teams have changed how they create in 2020. Which, if any, apply to your creative team?
Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that…
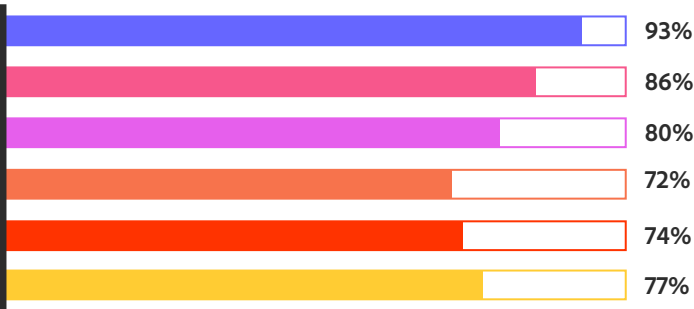
How creatives are thriving:

81% The events of 2020 have made it more important than ever to expand creative skillsets.
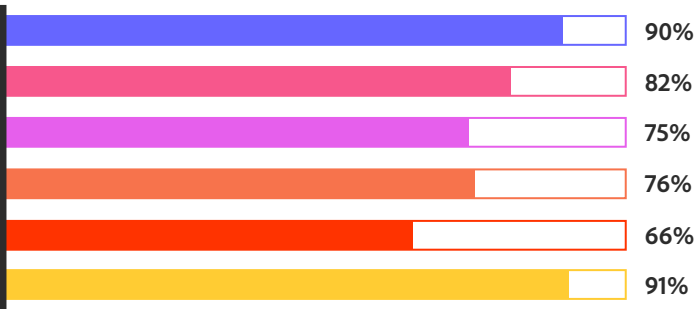
- 85%
- 82%
- 79%
- 75%
- 75%
- 87%

81% Training to expand creative skills in terms of interactive design and web UI/UX.

- 93%
- 86%
- 80%
- 72%
- 74%
- 77%

81% Training to expand creative skills in terms of 3D and virtual photography.

- 92%
- 82%
- 78%
- 79%
- 70%
- 83%

79% Training to expand creative skills in terms of video production.

- 90%
- 82%
- 75%
- 76%
- 66%
- 91%

US UK FR DE ANZ JP

Q22. How much do you agree or disagree that...
Q35. Below is a list of ways that a creative stock asset company might help creative teams navigate this shifting environment. How interested would you be in each of the following solutions from a creative stock asset company?

Our Path Forward: Adobe Can Help

Hero Images | 375480270

Westend61 | 315421608

Lea Jones/Stocksy | 184010108

iracosma | 326564215

| 22
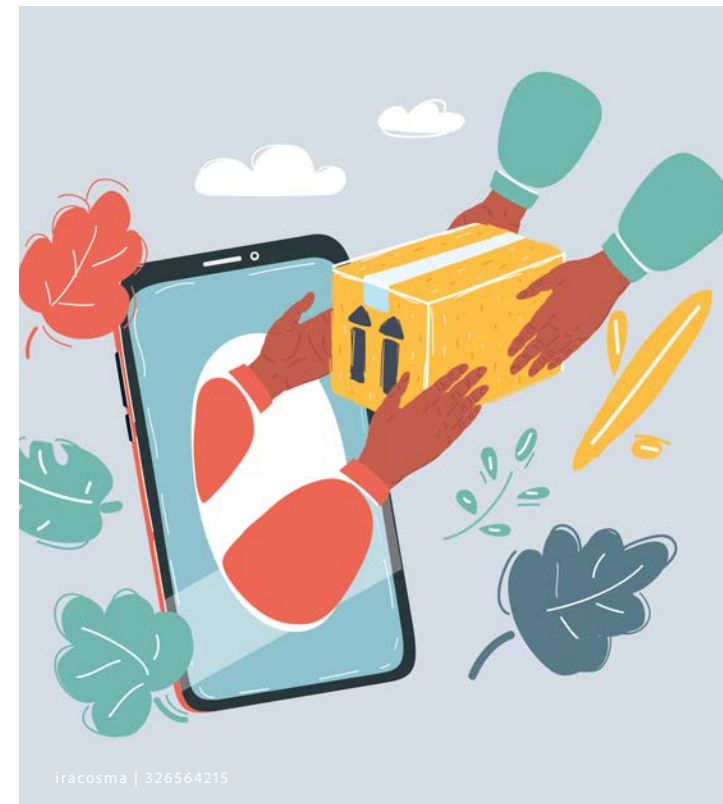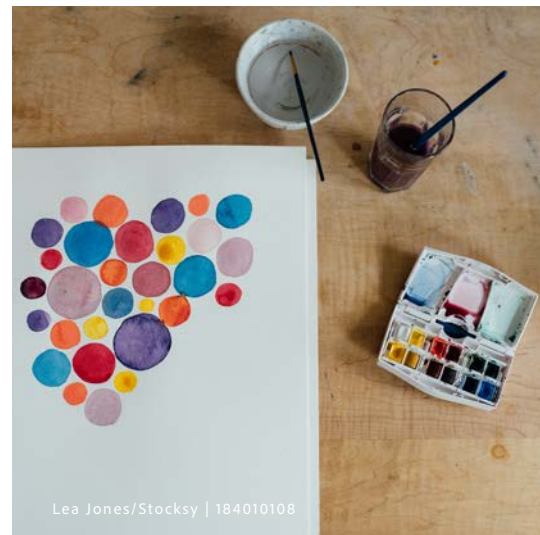
Looking ahead.

At Adobe, we have always believed that stock represents creatives helping other creatives. The challenges of this year make this point more resonant than ever. We strive to be your creative partner and help where you need it most, by providing a world-class collection that creates time- and money-saving efficiencies, without compromise. The responsibility of our collection is to provide more diverse and inclusive stock collections, an alternative to custom productions, access to emerging aesthetic trends, and culturally relevant regional content from around the world — all created with a contemporary, authentic approach that reflects life today for your brand and campaign needs.

The role stock plays in the future of visual fluency and cultural relevance is critical, especially as creatives continue to navigate an uncertain path ahead. We are committed to providing quality content that, rises to the moment, and meets your creative needs. And for our creative community, we will continue to provide guidance amid a rapidly evolving visual landscape.

[Learn more about how our world-class assets can help you build a world-class brand.](#)

Adobe

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