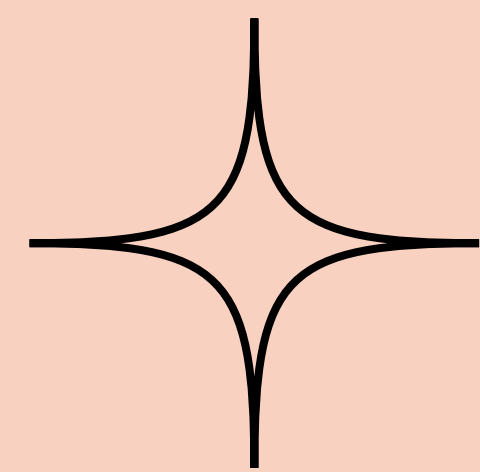
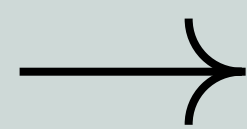
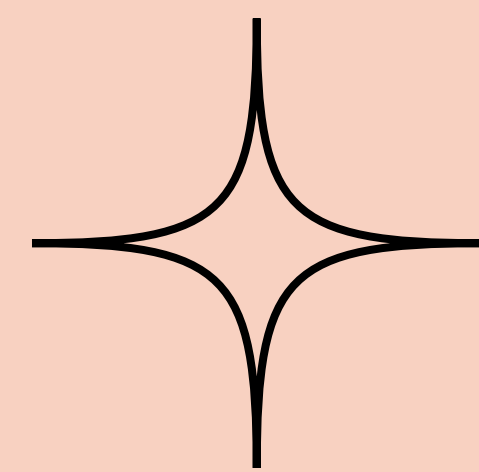


SAA Research Forum

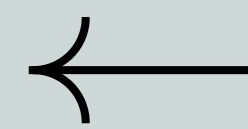
2025



Preserving Composers' Process in the Digital Age



Survey Results



Stephanie Akau & Jessica Grimer

Methodology

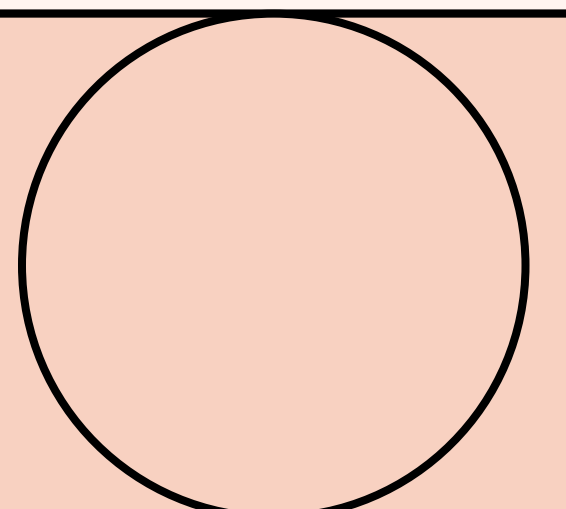
Survey meant to capture:

- Process
- Tools
- Files
- Preservation
- Gaps
- Challenges

Distribution:

- Big 10 universities & conservatories
- Music Library Association and American Musicological Society listservs
- Boosted through social media by composers

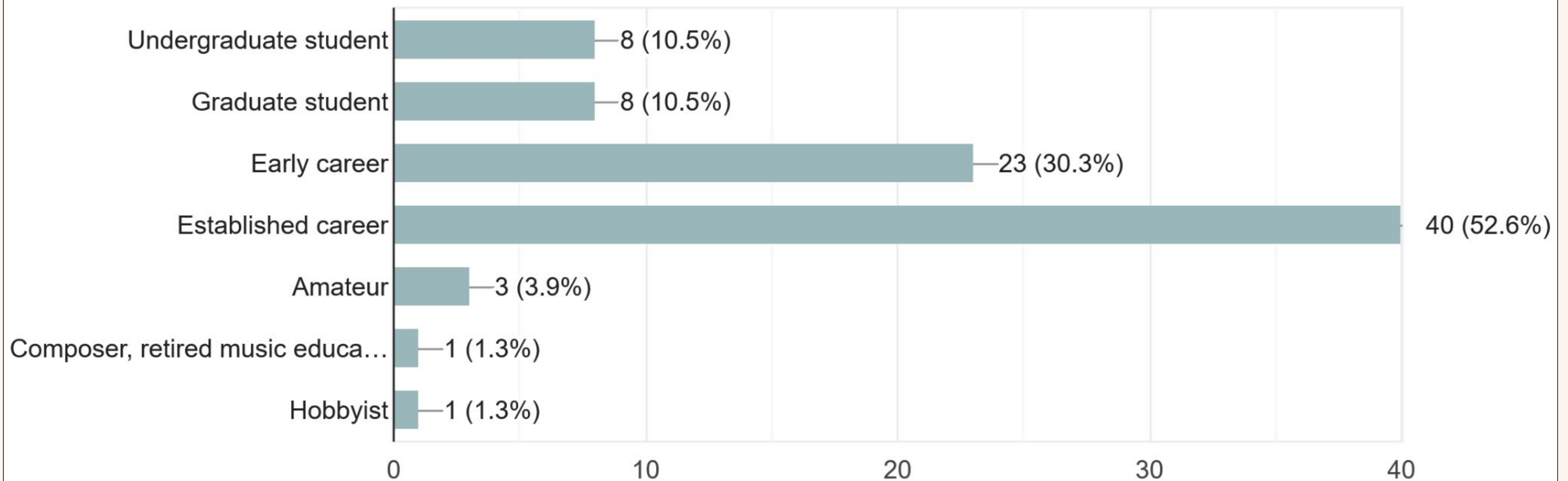
*IRB exception granted



Respondents

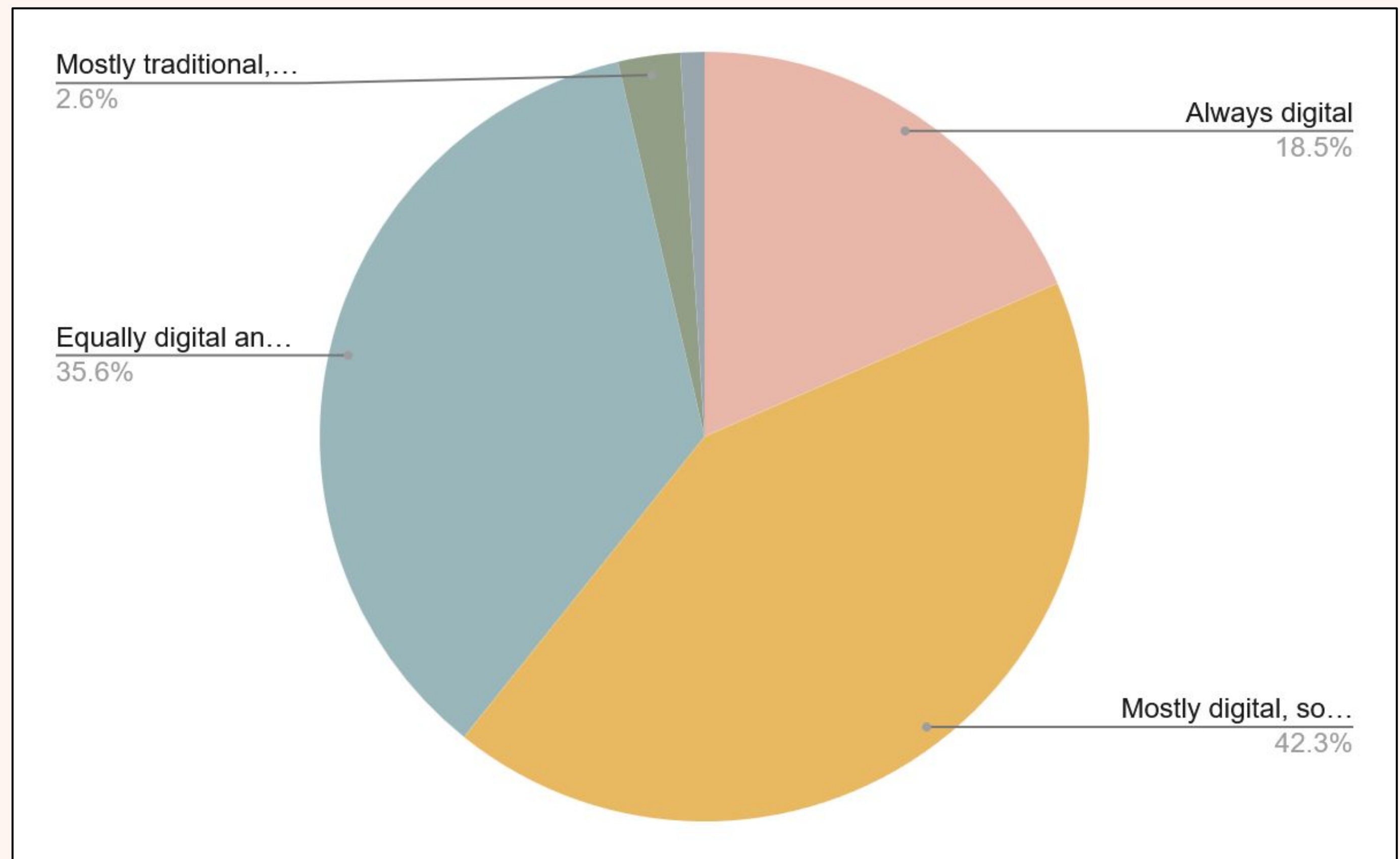
Please describe the current stage of your career:

76 responses



Compositional Process and Tools

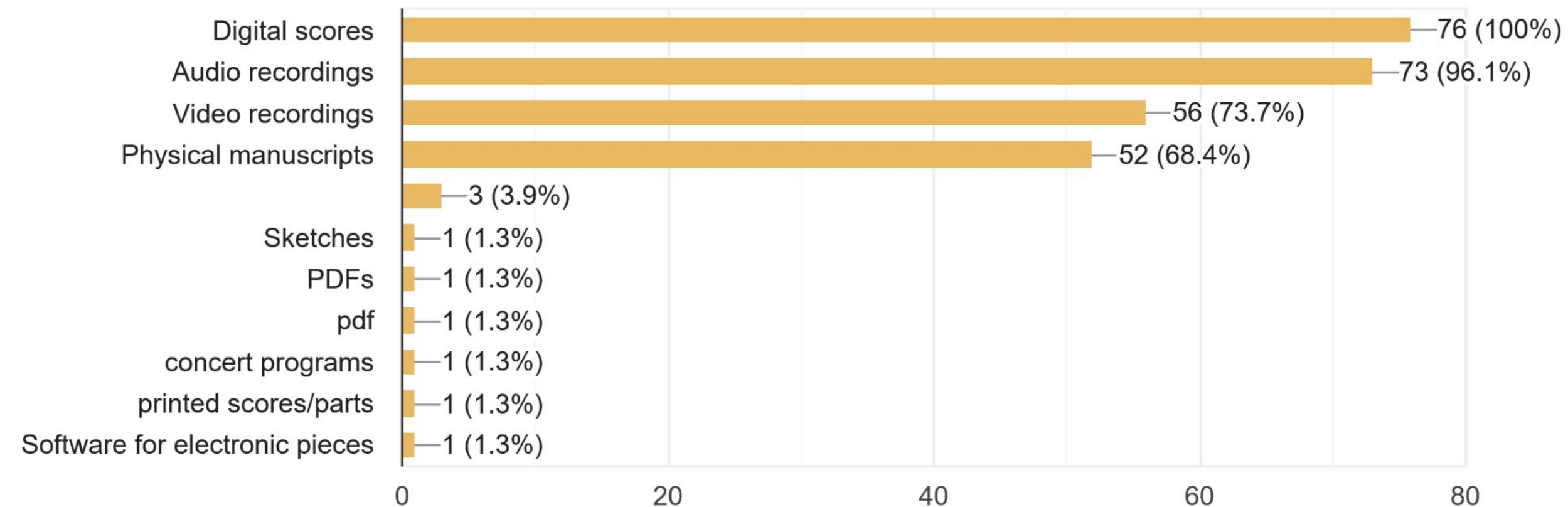
- All but one respondent use digital tools in their creative process
- 96% use digital tools at least half the time
- Only 8% use them exclusively when starting a composition
- Most tools are proprietary



Preservation Practices

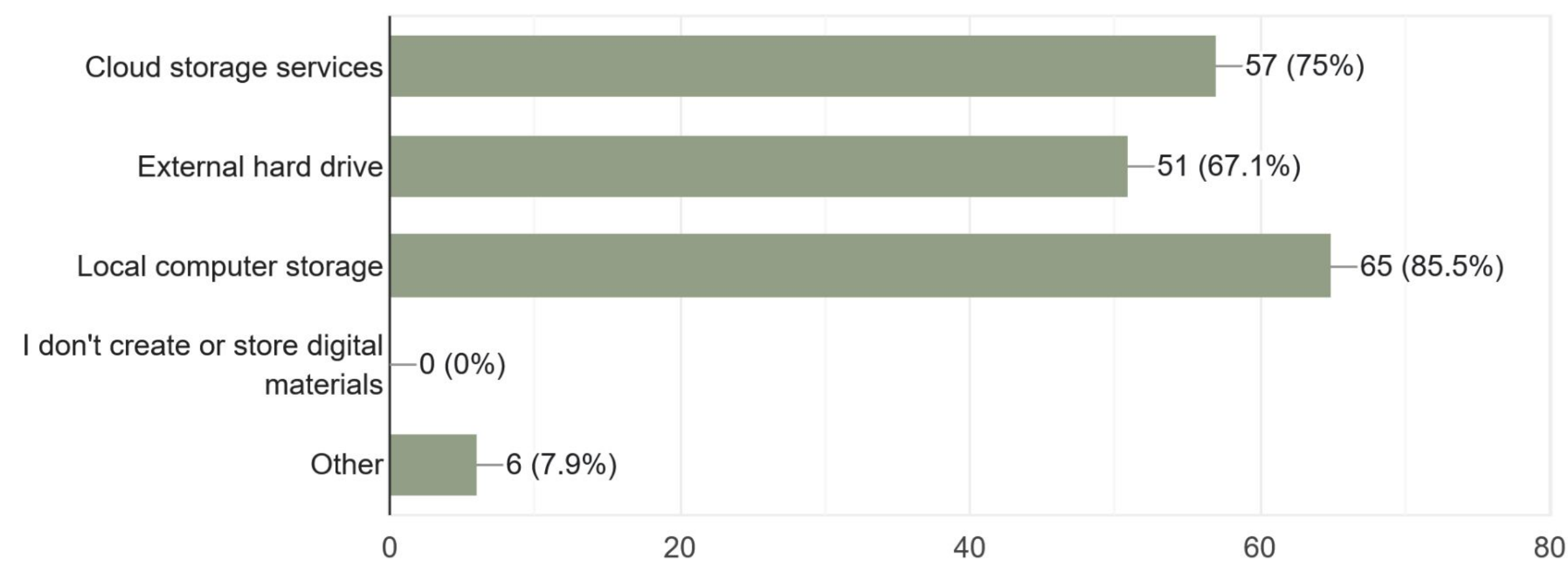
What types of material do you currently save or preserve? Check all that apply.

76 responses



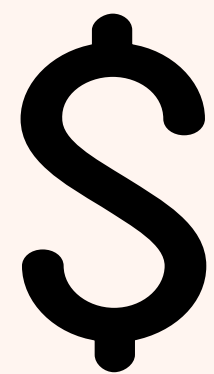
How do you currently store your digital materials. Check all that apply.

76 responses

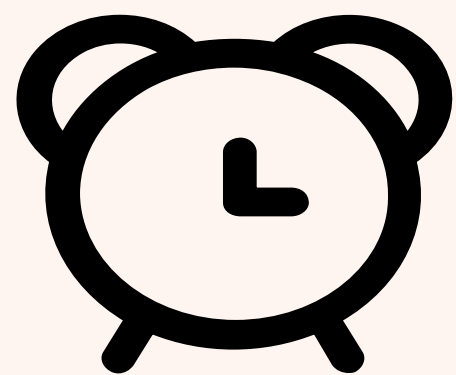


Though all respondents save digital scores, over 2/3 save their physical manuscripts. The actual number of respondents who *generate* physical manuscripts in their creative process may be higher.

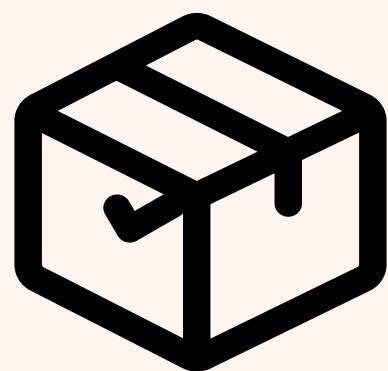
Quotes on Preservation Practices



“**Buying** storage,external drives, and physical space is the **most challenging.**”



“I try my best to preserve, but there is only so much **time** I can devote to it when I am working and on deadlines.”

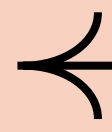


“If I chose to print out all of my output and **store** it..how is the best way to do it and where should I do it?”



“The sheer volume... is overwhelming.”

Conclusions



- There is a divide between preservation practices composers think they should be doing and what they actually undertake
- Composers are interested in learning more about preservation
- Recommended preservation practices must include actions for analog and digital materials
- Exact recreation of a musical work may not be the ultimate preservation goal

Future Outcomes

- Publish full survey results
- White paper for archival community
- Open access toolkit for composers

Feedback:

