



IKIGAI LAW

# CREATORS FIRST

ENABLING INDIA'S CONTENT CREATOR ECONOMY



A REPORT BY IKIGAI LAW

## ABOUT IKIGAI

Ikigai Law is a technology and innovation focused law and policy firm. We bring together ambitious thinking with deep knowledge to help clients make critical decisions when faced with transformational opportunities or challenges. We have a rich history of working in new and emerging sectors defined by regulatory uncertainty.

We work with several of the world's largest technology companies as well as startups, industry associations and the government.

Our practice areas include platform governance, digital content, data protection, cloud, digital competition, fintech, artificial intelligence, among others. Our unique combination of law, public policy and government affairs practice allows us to provide an informed and 360-degree support to our clients.

Ikigai Law and its team members have been consistently recognized for excellence over the years by the *India Business Law Journal*, and global directories such as *Asian Legal Business*, *The Legal 500*, and *Chambers and Partners*.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

India's digital economy is being reshaped by the rise of digital native content creators<sup>1</sup>. Unlike traditional media or broadcasting, this content is self-produced by user-creators, platform-native, and directly distributed to audiences. It reflects a decentralised model of creative expression that is changing how content is made, monetised, and consumed online. Creators today not only drive engagement and creativity, but influence consumer behaviour and power digital commerce. They are shifting the influence and control over content from traditional cultural gatekeepers, to individuals with their own perspectives and opinions, shaped by their lived experiences and local contexts. Their rise signals more than just a shift in how content is consumed: it reflects the emergence of a vibrant creative economy that is central to India's growth ambitions.

***Understanding this landscape begins with defining what we mean by content, creators, and the creator economy. In this report:***

**Creators or content creators** are individuals or teams of user-creators who use digital tools and platforms to produce and/or monetise original content across video, audio, and text formats for platforms like YouTube, Instagram, ShareChat, Spotify, and others. They span a wide range of domains – from educators and artists to influencers and entrepreneurs – focused on building audiences, personal brands, and revenue streams. Creators rely on their skills, creativity, and direct audience engagement. They monetise through subscriptions, brand deals, advertising, digital tips, endorsements, platform payouts, among others.

**Content** means digital-first content created by content creators. It includes video, audio, visual art, text, games, and other multimedia forms distributed online. Unlike traditional or curated media (such as TV broadcasts or OTT productions), such digital content is often niche, personal, and designed for interactive engagement. It reflects the creator's individual perspective and fosters connections with audiences.

**The creator economy** refers to the broader ecosystem that enables creators to produce, distribute, and monetise content. It includes digital platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, ShareChat, Spotify), management agencies, brands, creator-focused tools (e.g., Canva, InVideo), service providers (e.g., editors, designers, marketers), and startups (e.g., TagMango, Pepper Content) that support creator workflows, audience engagement, and monetisation.

Creators – spanning diverse fields such as music, education, entertainment, lifestyle, art, financial literacy – can significantly boost economic activity, employment generation, and creative innovation. It is no surprise that the creator economy is now central to the Indian government's strategic objectives for economic growth and cultural diplomacy. This sector is key to projecting India's soft power globally by sharing Indian narratives, art forms, and cultural identities reflected through content. At WAVES 2025 – India's first global media and entertainment summit – the government announced a USD 1 billion fund to support creators through access to capital, skilling, and international exposure<sup>2</sup>. New institutions like the proposed Indian Institute of Creative Technology aim to nurture digital-first talent and build long-term creative infrastructure<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, persistent challenges remain, impeding the sustainability and growth potential of India's creator economy. Economic vulnerabilities, including stark income disparities, the absence of a viable "middle-class" creator segment, and inconsistent monetization pathways, threaten stability. Operational constraints, marked by heavy multitasking demands and limited access to support or infrastructure, exacerbate these economic pressures. Additionally, creators face pronounced mental health and well-being challenges, with widespread reports of burnout, stress, and anxiety, particularly affecting female creators. Infrastructure and skill gaps further widen disparities, limiting access to professional tools, training resources, and essential business knowledge, especially among creators located outside major urban centres.

Compounding these practical challenges is a fast-evolving legal and policy landscape. While the Indian government's overall policy direction remains positive and enabling, recent regulatory developments generate uncertainty. Proposed policies such as the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, which seeks to impose traditional broadcast compliance frameworks on digital creators, pose significant concerns. Similarly, sector-specific guidelines like SEBI's influencer regulations have introduced complexities and additional compliance burdens, deterring creators from engaging freely in financial education content. Uncertainties surrounding copyright and the varying interpretations of "fair use" create additional painpoints. Platform policies informed by applicable law on copyright and/or content moderation can lead to disproportionate actions against creators, highlighting the urgent need for clearer, balanced legal guidelines.

# Objectives

This report aims to clearly articulate the challenges faced by content creators in India, situating these issues within broader contexts of policy, governance, social and market dynamics. Specifically, it seeks to:

- ▶ Identify and elaborate on key challenges impacting creator sustainability, including economic, operational, well-being, infrastructural, and regulatory factors.
- ▶ Bridge gaps between the practical realities of content creators and the policymakers.
- ▶ Provide targeted, actionable recommendations for stakeholders – including policymakers, industry bodies, digital platforms, and creators themselves – to collectively enhance and sustain the creator ecosystem.

# Methodology

The report employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining:

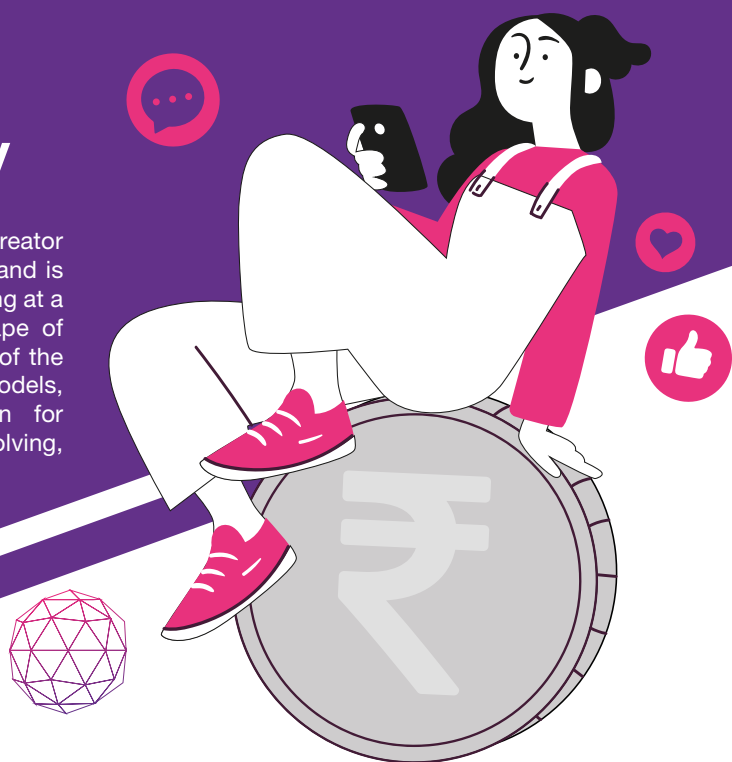
- ▶ Secondary research, including a review of existing industry reports, whitepapers, academic studies, and global policy analyses.
- ▶ Primary research involving direct consultations with content creators and industry stakeholders.
- ▶ Insights gathered from an expert stakeholder roundtable convened for this report. These stakeholders ranged across the creator and technology ecosystem and included content creators, platforms, marketing agencies, and experts from think tanks, among others. Insights from the roundtable and consultations are called out in the form of 'Field Insights' throughout the report.



# Chapter II:

## Mapping India's Creator Economy

With over 4 million active creators, India's creator economy was valued at USD 976 million in 2023 and is projected to reach USD 3.93 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 22%<sup>4</sup>. This chapter maps the landscape of India's creator economy – the size and trajectory of the creator economy, its key actors, monetisation models, and support systems. It sets the foundation for understanding how this dynamic ecosystem is evolving, and what's needed to unlock its full potential.



## Market size & growth trajectory

Millions of Indians are joining the creator economy, making content creation a mainstream profession. The creator community grew from under 1 million influencers in 2020 to over 4 million by 2024 – a 322% increase in just four years<sup>5</sup>. Many of these are “nano” or micro-influencers: about 2 million have fewer than 1,000 followers, reflecting a broad base of small creators engaging niche audiences<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, an estimated 2–2.5 million Indian creators have crossed the 1,000-follower mark and are considered monetized content creators<sup>7</sup>. This rapid expansion is spread across India, and not bound to its larger cities or a specific demographic. Surveys show creator content now reaches roughly two-thirds of consumers in both metro and smaller tier 2/3 cities, with similar influence levels across age groups and genders, demonstrating that creator influence is not only a metro phenomenon<sup>8</sup>.

The decentralized nature of this growth is reflected in the creator economy's nationwide economic footprint. As of 2024, the creator economy is valued at INR 125 billion, with projections to nearly INR 500 billion by 2030 (about 25% CAGR)<sup>9</sup>. Comprising a single segment of the broader creator economy, influencers collectively drove an estimated USD 20–25 billion in revenues in 2024 and influenced USD 350–400 billion in consumer spending<sup>10</sup>. As per studies, influencers impact broadly 30% of all consumer purchases in India<sup>11</sup>. Other studies indicate the impact of content creators on purchasing decisions of consumers<sup>12</sup>, with 80% of the surveyed consumers discovering beauty products and brands on social media, with 92% of them finding them over Meta platforms, including 47% on Instagram<sup>13</sup> reels.

More broadly, creators have emerged as small businesses, driving growth in the gig economy and creating jobs in content production, such as editing, marketing, and distribution. By providing monetization opportunities, platforms have allowed creators to sustain livelihoods and contribute to the economy. No longer limited to hobbyists or part-time ventures, content creation is now a sought-after profession, reflected in shifting societal perceptions<sup>14</sup>. Children and young adults increasingly aspire to become creators, viewing them with the same admiration traditionally reserved for professions like doctors, engineers, or athletes<sup>15</sup>.

On a cultural and developmental level, creators are emerging as ambassadors of India's culture and vernacular identities, reaching audiences across the diaspora and beyond. Much like Korean content (K-content) has elevated Korea's global cultural influence<sup>16</sup>, Indian creators—through food, comedy, commentary, and local language content—are beginning to play a similar role. They have built sustainable businesses while also creating educational and skill-building value. These examples show that creator success is not limited to mainstream entertainment, but spans genres like education, wellness, regional cuisine, and career coaching.

## Indian creators building global audiences

Creators such as Vishnu Kaushal and Kusha Kapila have collaborated with international brands and platforms, while others like Dhruv Rathee and BeerBiceps have built audiences spanning multiple geographies and languages. Within India, creators like Abhishek Kar (finance), Meenakshi (Tamil UPSC prep), or Chef Ranveer Brar (culinary content) are prominent.

## Key drivers of growth

The rapid expansion of India's creator economy is the result of a convergence of several structural enablers – rising digital access, demographic advantage, technological innovation, and expanding monetisation options. These have lowered barriers to entry and created fertile ground for this sector to thrive in the present and the future<sup>17</sup>.

### Digital connectivity and a low barrier to entry

India's digital transformation – fuelled by the widespread availability of low-cost smartphones and affordable data – has brought over 954 million users online, with the vast majority accessing the internet via mobile<sup>18</sup>. India continues to offer some of the world's lowest data costs, enabling not just passive consumption but also active content creation at a significant scale<sup>19</sup>. By 2023, Indians were spending an average of 5 hours online daily<sup>20</sup>, with nearly 70% of it dedicated to social media platforms, gaming and videos<sup>21</sup>. This deep engagement has created a vast and engaged audience for digital content. Crucially, the accessibility of internet infrastructure has expanded the creator economy beyond metros to Tier II and III cities – bringing new voices, regional languages<sup>22</sup>, and hyperlocal storytelling into the fold<sup>23</sup>. Notably, 95.15% of villages in India have access to internet connectivity, indicating significant rural digital inclusion<sup>24</sup>.

### Young, digitally native population

India's young demographic profile is a major catalyst<sup>25</sup>. With more than 65% of the population under 35<sup>26</sup>, the country has a massive base of *digital nagriks* who are both prolific consumers and aspiring creators. According to recent figures, India's social media penetration stands at 32.2%, or approximately 462 million active users, and is steadily rising<sup>27</sup>. Younger users are quick to adopt new content formats – such as short-form videos, reels, and interactive livestreams – and engage with creators in real-time<sup>28</sup>. Platforms like Instagram, Moj and YouTube have become cultural touchpoints for this demographic, influencing how they connect with peers, discover brands, and express themselves<sup>29</sup>. There are an estimated 491 million social media user identities in India, or 33.7% of the entire population<sup>30</sup>. In response, creators continuously adapt their content to match fast-evolving trends and audience preferences<sup>31</sup>.



## Technology-led creative enablement

C

Advancements in technology have significantly lowered the technical barriers to content creation. AI-based design and editing tools (e.g., Canva, Adobe Express), augmented reality filters, and easy-to-use mobile editing apps have empowered even first-time creators to produce high-quality content<sup>32</sup>. Features like virtual avatars, AR-based effects, and integrated live-streaming tools – offered by platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat – have made content more interactive and engaging<sup>33</sup>. These tools not only enhance production value but also allow creators to experiment with new formats and build deeper engagement with their audiences.

## Expanding monetisation pathways

D

Creators today have access to a diverse set of monetisation models, ranging from platform ad revenue and brand deals to direct fan funding, subscriptions, and merchandising<sup>34</sup>. This has transformed content creation into a viable economic activity. While the earnings of creators vary based on their reach and audience engagement, the average monthly income of creators ranges between INR 10,000 – INR 200,000 monthly, with top creators earning INR 700,000 – INR 1,500,000 on Instagram and INR 100,000 – 500,000 on platforms like YouTube<sup>35</sup>. Amid an unpredictable job market and a 7.73% unemployment rate<sup>36</sup>, content creation has emerged as a viable career path, allowing individuals to engage audiences while securing financial stability.

### Field Insight

## Trends of Monetisation and Format

Creators described a strong shift toward authentic, self-shot content, particularly from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns. While platform monetisation remains critical, creators are increasingly relying on diverse revenue streams—live commerce, fan funding, merchandise, and even offline events—to sustain their work.

## Rise of regional content

E

The surge in regional and vernacular content has been a key contributor to this sector's growth. It has helped expand the creator economy beyond urban centres and making it more inclusive. As of 2024, over 98% of internet users in India access content in local languages, with Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Marathi leading in engagement<sup>37</sup>. This shift has opened up new markets for creators operating outside of English-dominated spaces. Platforms have responded by building language-specific tools and recommendation algorithms<sup>38</sup>. Regional creators are increasingly partnering with local brands and public campaigns.

## Platform-led support for creators

F

Platforms have played a central role in shaping the structure and sustainability of the creator economy. YouTube's Partner Programme, Instagram's Creator Marketplace, Meta's Reels monetisation tools, and Snapchat's Spotlight fund are examples of formal monetisation pathways now available to Indian creators. Indian platforms like ShareChat, Moj, and Josh have also rolled out training programs, live stream tipping, and in-app monetisation features tailored to regional creators<sup>39</sup>.

In addition to financial incentives, platforms are investing in creator education<sup>40</sup>, community development, and analytics dashboards to support creator growth. These initiatives reduce entry barriers, professionalise creator workflows, and offer visibility into audience behaviour<sup>41</sup>.

# Enablers of India's creator economy

India's creator economy is driven by a diverse network of actors, with each playing a role in content creation, distribution, monetisation, and amplification. This is a value chain comprising of platforms, agencies, service providers, and other enablers which form the backbone of this industry.

A

## Digital platforms

Platforms serve as the foundation of the creator economy – offering distribution, discoverability, and monetisation. India is YouTube's largest user base globally, with content spanning genres and languages<sup>42</sup>. Instagram follows closely, hosting over 360 million Indian users as of 2024, with Reels becoming a key driver of creator engagement after TikTok's ban in mid-2020<sup>43</sup>. Homegrown platforms like Moj (ShareChat) and Josh (DailyHunt) emerged as short-form alternatives<sup>44</sup>, while Loco has become a leading live-streaming platform for gamers, raising \$42M to grow the Indian esports scene<sup>45</sup>. In audio, platforms like Spotify, JioSaavn, and Kuku FM have supported the growth of regional language podcasts and audio storytelling<sup>46</sup>.

B

## Talent agencies and multi-channel networks (MCNs)

The rise of creators has led to the emergence of talent management agencies and MCNs that represent creators, manage brand collaborations, and provide production and growth support<sup>47</sup>. Early leaders include One Digital Entertainment, Qyuki Digital, and Monk Entertainment, while newer entrants like ClanConnect, ChtrSocial, and Mad Influence offer influencer marketplaces and campaign analytics. These agencies help formalise the creator-brand relationship, offer compliance support (e.g. contracts, ad disclosures), and incubate new talent.

C

## Creator-focused startups and tool

A wave of Indian startups is building solutions tailored to creator needs:

- Monetisation platforms like TagMango<sup>48</sup> and Topmate<sup>49</sup> allow creators to offer paid workshops, consultations, and subscriptions.
- Social commerce tools like HYPD let creators run digital storefronts and earn from product recommendations<sup>50</sup>.
- Content tools like InVideo simplify video editing for non-technical users<sup>51</sup>, while startups like Reevely and Banzan Studios develop AR/VR capabilities for content enhancement.
- AI tools are being widely adopted—over 92% of knowledge based workers now use AI for scripting, editing, and subtitles<sup>52</sup>.

## D

## Production support and creative services

As creators scale, production quality becomes critical. This has led to a rise in boutique studios, production houses and even traditional ad agencies launching influencer content arms (e.g., Pocket Aces, BB Ki Vines Productions). These entities provide filming, editing, and post-production services, supporting creators as they move into scripted, music, or branded formats<sup>53</sup>.

## E

## Fintech and monetisation enablers

Creators run micro-enterprises and require financial infrastructure to support them. Startups like Razorpay and Instamojo allow easy payment collection for digital goods and events. Others are exploring creator financing—e.g., loans against AdSense revenue or upfront payment on brand deal invoices<sup>54</sup>. UPI-based tipping and local currency micro-payments are growing on live platforms. While crypto and NFTs saw limited uptake, global payout platforms like Stripe and PayPal remain essential for cross-border creator earnings.

Stakeholder	Role in the Creator Economy	Examples
Creators	Core producers of original, digital-first content; build audiences and monetise through various income streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time and part-time creators</li> <li>• Influencers</li> <li>• Creator-entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Educators, artists, entertainers, commentators</li> </ul>
Enablers	Provide tools, services, and infrastructure to help creators grow, manage, and monetise their content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent management agencies (e.g., Monk-E, Qyuki)</li> <li>• Creator SaaS tools (e.g., InVideo, Canva, InShot)</li> <li>• Marketplaces (e.g., TagMango)</li> <li>• Production/editing service providers</li> <li>• Fintechs and digital lenders</li> </ul>
Platforms	Digital distribution channels and monetisation enablers; enable discoverability and revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, ShareChat, Moj, Josh</li> <li>• Spotify, Gaana, Kuku FM</li> <li>• Loco, Rooter (gaming/livestreaming)</li> <li>• Patreon, FanTiger, etc.</li> </ul>
Brands	Major source of creator revenue through ads, partnerships, and product integrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMCG, lifestyle, fashion, fintech, edtech</li> <li>• Regional brands</li> <li>• D2C companies engaging in influencer marketing</li> </ul>
Investors	Fund creator-led startups, tools, and in some cases individual creators; drive sector formalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VC and angel networks</li> <li>• Creator funds and accelerators</li> <li>• Platform-linked grants and equity deals</li> </ul>

# Monetization Models in India's Creator Economy

Indian creators today rely on multiple monetization models, some platform-driven, others independent. While advertising and brand deals remain dominant, alternative revenue streams such as fan payments, affiliate sales, and merchandise are steadily gaining traction. The table below outlines key revenue models shaping the Indian creator economy:

Model	Description	Share of Creator Income	Examples / Trend
Advertising & Platform Revenue	Creators earn from ad views on platforms (e.g. YouTube Partner Program, Spotify ads) or based on the performance of the content (e.g. Meta's performance based payouts).	10–15%	YouTube is the main source; other platforms like Facebook and Spotify offer limited ad-share.
Brand Sponsorships	Paid partnerships with brands for product placements, reviews, and endorsements.	90% (2023)	Major driver of income; from micro- to top-tier influencers across sectors.
Affiliate Marketing & Social Commerce	Earnings from product sales via referral links, promo codes, or social commerce storefronts.	10% (2023); projected to reach 15% by 2030	Enabled by platforms like HYPD; common in beauty, tech, lifestyle.
Fan Donations & Virtual Gifting	Viewers pay directly via live stream gifts, tips, or memberships.	<5% today; projected to grow to 10% by 2030	BuyMeACoffee, Indian live apps.
Subscriptions & Memberships	Recurring payments for exclusive content or community access.	1–2%; projected to reach 5% by 2030	YouTube Memberships, Subscriptions on Facebook and Instagram.
Merchandise & Creator-Led Brands	Sales of branded products, courses, or creator-founded D2C brands.	Top-end income stream	Examples include TechBurner's Layers brand, influencer-led fitness or fashion startups.



## Looking ahead

Only around 8-10% of creators can monetize their content, compared to 40% or higher in mature markets<sup>55</sup>. This indicates significant room for growth as the market matures. Recognizing the potential, the government has also stepped in with support<sup>56</sup>. Social media and content platforms are also pitching in: Meta committed to invest USD 1 billion towards programs for creators and has upskilled over 250,000 creators<sup>57</sup> and launched a knowledge hub for creators to guide them on content creation<sup>58</sup>. YouTube introduced the YouTube Shorts Fund, worth USD 100 million, to encourage creators to produce engaging short-form content globally<sup>59</sup>. Similarly, Snap launched its India focused creator fund for independent music artists on its platform for tapping into the regional Content creators in India<sup>60</sup>.

While these efforts have opened up unprecedented opportunities, economic, operational, and regulatory hurdles pose challenges, and are discussed in subsequent chapters.

# Chapter III: Challenges Facing Content Creators in India



As discussed in the previous chapter, millions of Indians now participate in the creator economy and produce content across genres to contribute to India's growing cultural and economic influence. However, parallel to the growth and opportunity lie structural and operational challenges that constrain sustainability, particularly for content creators operating outside established support systems. Creators often shoulder multiple roles – content producer, editor, marketer, and financial manager – while contending with multidimensional challenges, spanning economic, operational, psychological, infrastructural, and legal domains. This chapter examines such barriers, focusing on their implications for the growth and sustainability of India's creator economy.

## Key challenges

- ▶ The lack of stable and predictable income for a broad segment of creators—what some have termed the “missing middle” of the creator economy.
- ▶ Operational constraints, including limited access to production resources, digital tools, and time to consistently create content.
- ▶ The mental health implications of content creation under constant audience and algorithmic pressure, with particular effects on women and marginalised voices.
- ▶ Persistent infrastructure and skills gaps, especially for creators outside Tier 1 cities, such as inadequate broadband access, financial literacy, and language barriers.
- ▶ The impact of regulatory uncertainty, where proposed frameworks such as the Broadcasting Bill, may impose compliance obligations that are difficult for small or solo creators to navigate.

# Economic sustainability and monetization

Despite the rapid growth of the creator economy, financial sustainability remains elusive for most creators. Only 8-10% of India's creators effectively monetize their content, compared to monetization rates exceeding 40% in countries like the United States, Germany, South Korea, and Brazil.<sup>61</sup> Globally, studies indicate that only 31% of global creators earn their main income from content; 30% earn no revenue at all.<sup>62</sup>

There is also a broad income spectrum with significant disparity between high-earning creators between those at the middle and lower end of the scale.<sup>63</sup> A vast majority of creators earn between INR 20,000 and INR 200,000 per month, with some top-tier creators earning significantly more based on their reach and brand collaboration.<sup>64</sup> In countries like the US, roughly 95% of creator earnings go to the top 5% of creators, leaving only 5% of revenue for the bottom 95%.<sup>65</sup> This demonstrates a notable absence of a “middle class” within the creator ecosystem. In other words, there are few creators who earn consistently enough to sustain independent operations but are not part of the top-performing cohort. This missing middle limits the viability of creative careers and contributes to a fragile economic base. There is also dissatisfaction with the workload and the associated compensation. Surveys from across the world indicate that creators increasingly feeling both overworked and undercompensated, with significant numbers expressing dissatisfaction with their current earnings relative to the effort involved.<sup>66</sup>

Monetization pathways are also concentrated and can be difficult to access for emerging creators. This is despite the general increase in the number or types of income streams. Despite the opportunities available through streaming, advertising, and partnerships, these can tend to benefit creators with large followings or significant promotional resources.<sup>67</sup> For smaller creators, revenue is often fragmented and unreliable, limiting their ability to invest in production quality or expand their teams.<sup>68</sup> Brand partnerships, in particular, are becoming increasingly vital to monetization, but are not so frequent or consistent. Creators often struggle to establish credibility with brands and create content in alignment with their niche, style and personal brand.<sup>69</sup> Even for creators who manage to monetize their content, income volatility is another concern. Unlike a steady salaried job, creator earnings can fluctuate wildly month to month. Revenues are often dependent on factors outside the creator's control – ad market swings, algorithm changes, seasonality, or one-off deals. 1 in 10 creators say that financial instability is their number one source of stress.<sup>70</sup>

## Field Insight

### Regulatory Uncertainty and Disruptions

Some creators expressed being caught off-guard by financial regulations, such as RBI's recurring payment rules that affected many credit card payments for creators. Some had built loyal paying audiences through platforms like Substack, Patreon, or BuyMeACoffee—only to face sudden income drops when these platforms, which relied on Stripe for billing, were unable to process recurring transactions under the new rules. Stripe had exited India, and alternatives hadn't been integrated yet. These disruptions, compounded by ambiguous tax treatment and credit treatment create instability and make long-term financial planning difficult for creators.

# Operational and resource constraints

India's creator economy depends heavily on individual initiative, yet most creators operate with minimal structural support. Survey data shows that a large number of creators run their businesses entirely on their own, while several rely on micro-teams – leaving only a small minority with access to specialized support staff.<sup>71</sup> Based on an Indian study, 65% respondents mentioned that they creators feel inadequately supported.<sup>72</sup> This lean staffing structure translates into long working hours and burnout, which is compounded by the multitasking required of most creators, who often function simultaneously as producers, marketers, editors, and rights managers.<sup>73</sup> Research notes that many part-time and hobbyist creators combine these functions with a separate day job, and one in five juggles content work alongside a part-time position.<sup>74</sup> The resulting multi-tasking leaves limited capacity for skills upgrading or strategic planning. For instance, about 40% creators in India spend several hours every day producing or refining content – time that comes on top of audience engagement and administrative duties.<sup>75</sup>

## Improving trust between creators and platforms

Creators reflected on the importance of trust between platforms and creators. They rely on platforms for income, visibility and audience engagement. While platforms have introduced valuable support tools and monetisation programs, creators shared that they sometimes experience a lack of clarity around issues such as content takedowns, demonetisation, or algorithmic changes. They pointed out to lack of strong support or redressal mechanisms. This is particularly acute for smaller or regional creators, who may not have access to agency representation or platform contacts.

Resource gaps further exacerbate the workload. An Indian study of 500 music creators reported that only 56% have reliable access to the equipment and infrastructure needed to record at professional quality, and 35% reinvest more than half of their earnings in gear and software just to stay competitive.<sup>76</sup> Similar constraints affect video and short-form creators who must finance cameras, lighting, editing rigs, and high-bandwidth connections out of pocket.

These operational pressures not only reduce time available for content development but also contribute to burnout and high exit rates from the ecosystem.<sup>77</sup> Creators report a high physical strain, with 36% facing frequent headaches.<sup>78</sup> This has a negative impact on mental and physical health, as discussed in the upcoming section. But taken together, these findings point to an ecosystem in which creators shoulder the full burden of production without the organisational support available in more mature creative and cultural sectors.

# Mental and physical well-being

## Isolation and Mental Health

Being a creator is isolating. Some of the creators described the constant content cycle, unpredictable audience response, and the stress of takedowns or demonetisation as drivers of burnout and anxiety. Support systems are limited, and they often face the journey alone unlike other professions which may have a strong community that already exists.

Working as a creator requires sustained public visibility, constant content production, and brings with it a complex set of challenges. This can contribute to high levels of stress and burnout which many creators navigate largely on their own. Recent surveys estimate that around 80% of creators experience excessive stress or pressure in their work at least once every week while nearly 33% experience it every other day/daily.<sup>79</sup> Extended and continuous production cycles, audience engagement, and self-management responsibilities combine to create a work environment that is always active and rarely predictable. This pressure is not gender-neutral and women creators report higher stress levels than men, with female creators more likely to feel stressed (33%) than male creators (20%).<sup>80</sup> While creators also struggle with self-esteem, more have reported facing self-esteem issues compared to male creators.<sup>81</sup> This reflects the compounded impact of audience scrutiny, harassment, and the additional expectations often placed on women, all of which can contribute to emotional fatigue.

Several studies also point to the mental impact of hate speech.<sup>82</sup> According to the UNESCO, about a third of surveyed creators reported being targeted by hate speech. In another survey, 21% of creators claim that trolling and negative comments are their number one stressor.<sup>83</sup> Although many creators try to stay 'thick-skinned' and view trolling as part of being public-facing, constant criticism takes a toll on their work environment.<sup>84</sup> Notably, all of these factors create a physical and mental effect. The pressure to create content constantly causes creators to feel exhausted and strained, while taking a toll on their health, with 36% of creators reporting a high physical strain in one study.<sup>85</sup> All of which has a direct impact on the creative process and directly undermines the sustainability and viability of content creation as a profession. Latest data indicates that a significant number of creators – 78% as per one study – feel that burnout impacts their motivation to be a creator or create quality content.<sup>86</sup>





## Safety, Harassment, and the Cost of Expression

Women creators shared accounts of rape threats, trolling, and emotional burnout. Safety concerns are increasingly driving self-censorship. Many said they feel alone when facing hate or takedown threats. Some also highlighted that there is no clear recourse to address this problem for creators – even if there were – most creators are unaware of such a recourse.

# Resource and skill gaps

Despite the rapid rise of India's creator economy, underlying infrastructure, skilling and knowledge gaps continue to limit the growth and sustainability of creators. Many operate without access to recording spaces, equipment, or reliable editing or supporting tools. While smartphones and affordable software have reduced some technical barriers, the lack of access to meaningful production infrastructure and resources, such as co-creation spaces or community studios, limits content quality and consistency. These challenges are especially pronounced in smaller cities and towns, where creators often struggle with patchy internet connectivity, limited access to mentors or collaborators, and fewer networking or training opportunities. In contrast, creators in urban centres benefit from stronger infrastructure, more professional contacts, and greater exposure to industry best practices.

## Unlocking Infrastructure for Creators

Stakeholders called for repurposing underutilized public assets—Prasar Bharati studios, NFDC infrastructure, cultural halls—into creator hubs with subsidized access to editing setups and recording space. This would enable inclusion without building new infrastructure from scratch.

Legal knowledge is another critical gap. According to UNESCO, while 82% of surveyed creators are aware of laws related to freedom of expression, defamation, and copyright, only a third report a thorough understanding.<sup>87</sup> Nearly half admit to having only partial knowledge, and over 11% believe these laws do not apply to their content.<sup>88</sup> This highlights a clear gap between legal awareness and practical understanding, especially troubling given that over a quarter of creators (27%) are unaware that any laws specific to digital content creation even exist. Access to training is equally limited. Just over half of creators (56.4%) are aware of any media and information literacy programmes, or business trainings, and only a small fraction (13.9%) of those have actually participated in one.<sup>89</sup> Given that content creation is effectively a small business, the lack of formal support can lead to feeling unprepared for essential operational tasks such as pricing their services, managing finances, negotiating with brands, or understanding tax obligations. More broadly, without access to basic business training, creators may struggle to scale their work or sustain long-term livelihoods.

The lack of accessible training also impacts the quality and ethical integrity of the content creators produce. For instance, creators must navigate complex decisions about tone, representation, and social impact. Without adequate guidance or structured learning, many struggle with these judgments. Studies indicate that over one-third of surveyed creators reported facing ethical dilemmas while creating content, and several expressed concern about how their posts might be perceived or the risk of making unintentional mistakes – highlighting the need for training that not only covers laws and monetization, but also equips creators to make informed, responsible content choices.<sup>90</sup>

The creator economy still lacks the institutional maturity of more established industries. Nearly 85% of creators do not belong to any professional association, and almost 20% are unaware such associations exist.<sup>91</sup> While organisations like the Indian Influencer Governing Council are beginning to take shape, their reach needs to expand further.<sup>92</sup> Strengthening these institutions, and building creator awareness and trust in them, will be key

to promoting industry standards, offering professional support, and fostering a more resilient creator ecosystem.

## Legal and regulatory challenges

The legal and regulatory environment applicable to creators in India is dynamic and continues to evolve. While this signals a growing recognition of the sector's importance, the rules that currently or are proposed to apply to creators can be difficult to understand and even implement. This is compounded by the fact that many creators have limited awareness or understanding of legal frameworks, as discussed above<sup>93</sup>. As a result, they may inadvertently fall afoul of compliance requirements or find it difficult to navigate contractual, intellectual property, or content-related regulations.

### Field Insight

#### Regulation and Policy Design

Creators raised concerns about the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, calling it misaligned with the realities of individual, digital-native creators. Requiring small teams to follow codes built for large broadcasters was seen as unworkable. Participants also felt excluded from regulatory conversations, urging greater representation in policymaking forums.

A prominent example is the reconsideration of broadcast-style regulation for creators through the proposed Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill<sup>94</sup>. While it is currently being reconsidered, if implemented in its current form, this bill could introduce content classification, registration, and compliance obligations for a wide range of creators<sup>95</sup>. For creators already grappling with financial pressures, operational limitations, and health challenges, such requirements may prove disproportionately difficult to fulfil. Survey data from the music industry offers an illustrative parallel: 75% of respondents felt that pre-release compliance reviews would restrict creative expression, and 82% anticipated that content evaluation standards would limit musical diversity and uniqueness<sup>96</sup>. More than 70% also expressed concern that compliance would reduce production volume or delay release timelines<sup>97</sup>. These concerns are particularly acute for creators without organisational support or legal infrastructure to interpret and meet such requirements.

Similar issues have emerged in the financial content space. Guidelines issued by SEBI<sup>98</sup> governing the activities of “influencers”, i.e. creators offering financial education or market commentary, have introduced a high bar for permissible content. While aimed at curbing misinformation and fraud, these rules have also had the unintended consequence<sup>99</sup> of disincentivising smaller creators from engaging with financial topics altogether, out of concern that they may inadvertently violate unclear standards or trigger regulatory scrutiny<sup>100</sup>. The effect has been a chilling one, leading some creators to reduce or stop producing content in this area.

Copyright law presents another area of uncertainty. While India's copyright framework is well-established, many digital creators – especially those who repurpose existing material, use film or news clips, or engage in parody – struggle to understand where the line lies between legitimate fair use and infringement. This lack of clarity can create legal risk for creators who operate in good faith but without detailed legal knowledge<sup>101</sup>. Moreover, the enforcement of copyright through platform mechanisms has, in some cases, led to takedown actions that creators perceive as disproportionate<sup>102</sup>. There have been instances where rights holders, such as news agencies, have used copyright takedown tools to remove commentary or derivative content, including criticism and commentary that may otherwise could qualify as fair use<sup>103</sup>. This underscores the need for greater clarity and balance in the application of copyright enforcement tools, ensuring that rights are protected without unduly limiting legitimate creative expression.

## Lack of Clarity in Copyright

Creators admitted that there is a lack of legal awareness around many policy issues affecting creators. There is limited understanding of what qualifies as fair use, how to respond to copyright strikes, and how to assess risks in remixing or using third-party content. Some said they only found out about platform restrictions after takedowns occurred, suggesting a reactive learning environment.

Content moderation and platform liability remain another area of ongoing regulatory development. While platforms play an important role in enforcing standards and responding to harmful content, regulation can tend to incentivise over-removal. This applies both to general rules, such as those under the Information Technology Act<sup>104</sup> and the Intermediary Guidelines<sup>105</sup>, and to specific legal mandates such as those related to child sexual abuse material under the POCSO Act<sup>106</sup>. In addition, the Supreme Court has, in various proceedings, weighed in on the responsibilities of platforms and content creators<sup>107</sup>, further contributing to a fragmented and evolving jurisprudence. A more balanced approach would enable platforms to act responsibly, with flexibility to apply their terms of service, while offering clear principles to guide moderation and avoid creating incentives for unnecessary or excessive takedown of content.



## Chapter IV: Global Regulatory Approaches

The creator economy raises unique regulatory questions: should creators be treated like advertisers, media outlets, or simply private individuals exercising speech? Governments of other countries are looking to answer these questions, focusing on issues that include undisclosed advertising, misinformation, copyright infringement, taxation, and labour protections<sup>108</sup>. Most countries regulate these risks through targeted, issue-specific rules – often enforced via platforms – rather than through broad, creator-focused mandates<sup>109</sup>. At the same time, many governments have recognised creators as strategic actors in their digital economies. France’s influencer laws, South Korea’s creator funding programmes, and the EU’s Creative Europe initiative all signal a shift toward enabling creators through grants, infrastructure, and skill-building<sup>110</sup>.

India’s regulatory approach is still evolving as outlined in the previous chapter, with recent efforts, such as the announcement of a USD 1 billion creator fund, signalling growing recognition of the sector’s importance<sup>111</sup>. As India continues to shape its policy approach, there is an opportunity to deepen institutional support for creators and ensure that it is careful to avoid overly broad or burdensome regulations that stifle innovation and growth in this rapidly expanding space. This chapter examines how governments across the world are responding to the rise of the creator economy – both through regulation and institutional support – and what lessons India can draw from global practice.

## European Union

Europe regulates the creator economy through a layered mix of general consumer law, platform liability frameworks, and creator-specific regulations – which cover both EU-level and national rules<sup>112</sup>. While there is no single or specific ‘creator law’ at the EU level, content creators are subject to multiple overlapping obligations, largely implemented through national laws<sup>113</sup>. These regulations primarily target platforms but often extend directly to creators, focusing on content standards and transparency especially influencers. The broader regulatory strategy aims to address specific risks like undisclosed advertising, illegal content, and copyright infringement and support creators as cultural actors through funding, training, and legal education<sup>114</sup>.

At the EU level, key directives like the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (**UPCD**) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (**AMSD**) aim to safeguard consumers from misleading advertising and ensure accountability in media services, including influencer marketing and digital content creation<sup>115</sup>. The European Advertising Standards Alliance (**EASA**)<sup>116</sup> introduced guidelines on best practices for influencer marketing, aiming to standardize practices across member states in 2023<sup>117</sup>.



The Digital Services Act (**DSA**) imposes obligations on platforms to moderate content and promote advertising transparency, indirectly impacting creators using these platforms<sup>118</sup>. Additionally, the EU's Copyright Directive tightened platform liability for copyright-infringing uploads<sup>119</sup>, prompting platforms (like YouTube) to implement robust filtering – indirectly influencing how creators use copyrighted music or video (they risk content removal or demonetization if they use unlicensed IP). At the national level, many member states have either adapted existing EU regulations or introduced specific measures to address the unique challenges posed by creators<sup>120</sup>. For example, France pioneered dedicated legislation targeting influencer marketing, mandating transparency in partnerships and requiring clear disclosure of sponsored content<sup>121</sup>. Germany, meanwhile, uses case law<sup>122</sup> and general advertising and competition law (UWG) to guide influencer activity<sup>123</sup>. Other countries have opted for non-binding guidelines, emphasizing voluntary compliance<sup>124</sup>.

The EU pairs regulation with public support. The Creative Europe MEDIA programme allocates over €2 billion (2021–2027) for audiovisual content, including digital series and cross-platform works<sup>125</sup>. In addition, some EU countries offer grants or incubators for creators. Additionally, the European Commission has launched an Influencer Legal Hub with compliance guidance for creators<sup>126</sup>. This underscores an educational support approach: rather than just penalize, help creators understand the rules.

Looking ahead, there are potential repercussions coming from the EU AI Act, which mandates labelling of misleading “deepfake” or AI-generated media<sup>127</sup>, which could affect creators using such tools in satire or commentary. Similar concerns over digital violence – especially relating to debates in Germany – may create additional obligations in the future that impact creators<sup>128</sup>. Governments and regulators are also paying closer attention to child influencers and financial transparency. Notably, France and Belgium considered – but ultimately dropped – broadcaster-style rules for top influencers (such as local content quotas), citing industry backlash – indicating caution against applying traditional media frameworks to creator-driven content<sup>129</sup>.

## France

Alongside platform regulation, France has introduced laws directly targeting content creators, particularly in the realm of influencer marketing. The Influencers Law, adopted in 2023, requires influencers to transparently disclose brand endorsements, prohibits the promotion of certain products like tobacco and cosmetic surgeries, and mandates ethical advertising practices<sup>130</sup>. These measures aim to protect consumers from misleading or harmful content while fostering greater accountability within the creator economy. However, the law has been criticized for its stringent requirements and steep penalties for non-compliance<sup>131</sup>.

They suggest the lack of clarity around what constitutes an influencer could lead to confusion and uncertainty in the industry. The potential impact of the law on small businesses and small-time or part-time influencers has also been raised as these entities or persons may struggle to compete in the influencer market without the resources needed to comply with the regulations. Enforcement challenges especially for influencers who are based outside France but cater to the French audience has also been a cause of concern<sup>132</sup>.

## United States

The U.S. regulatory approach to the creator economy is largely decentralized, with minimal direct regulation specific to content creators<sup>133</sup>. The framework is shaped more by general laws—on IP, consumer protection, advertising standards, and platform liability—than by creator-specific mandates<sup>134</sup>. Regulation has historically focused on specific risks rather than imposing broad rules on creators or platforms<sup>135</sup>. The default model in the U.S. is one of limited liability for platforms<sup>136</sup> and high flexibility for creators, backed by the First Amendment and safe harbour protections. This open environment has supported the growth of global platforms and creators alike. However, sector or risk specific laws—like those governing copyright<sup>137</sup>, financial advertising<sup>138</sup>, and sex trafficking<sup>139</sup>—require compliance. Some states (like California) have also proposed or passed laws addressing digital advertising disclosures, children's online safety<sup>140</sup>, or worker classification<sup>141</sup> (e.g., AB5), which could indirectly affect creators.

For creators, rules are fragmented but expanding. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Endorsement Guidelines require creators to disclose any material relationship with brands<sup>142</sup>—whether paid, gifted, or affiliated. Disclosures must be clear, conspicuous, and platform-appropriate. Enforcement has escalated, with the FTC warning creators that non-compliance could result in civil penalties. Further, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued rules<sup>143</sup> applicable to creators endorsing investment products. Under anti-touting provisions, creators must disclose any compensation received for promoting financial instruments, including cryptocurrency<sup>144</sup>. Several high-profile cases have resulted in significant fines for undisclosed promotional posts<sup>145</sup>.

For platforms, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act provides them immunity for most user-generated content, enabling scale without direct liability<sup>146</sup>. However, growing bipartisan pressure may lead to carve-outs or conditional safe harbour, which could prompt platforms to tighten content moderation policies, indirectly impacting creators. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) sets out a notice-and-takedown process for copyright infringement<sup>147</sup>. While this system protects creators' rights, it also enables false or overbroad claims that can result in takedowns or demonetization, often with little recourse for smaller creators. Fair use doctrine plays a crucial role, especially in commentary, parody, and reaction content. The FOSTA-SESTA (2018) amended Section 230 to hold platforms liable for facilitating sex trafficking<sup>148</sup>. While targeted at illegal activity, it has led platforms to proactively remove broader categories of sex-related or harm-reduction content, affecting creators working on health, education, or advocacy<sup>149</sup>. Further, Under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)<sup>150</sup>, platforms targeting children must comply with strict rules on data collection and advertising. YouTube has been fined for violations, prompting major changes to how kids' content is monetized<sup>151</sup>.

The regulatory landscape in the U.S. is shifting under pressure to address emerging challenges. Proposals to reform safe harbour provisions reflect this shift<sup>152</sup>, with differing viewpoints across the political spectrum<sup>153</sup>. Some advocate for greater accountability from platforms to tackle misinformation and harmful content, while others warn against stifling innovation and free expression. At the same time, discussions on regulating AI-generated content, misinformation, and privacy concerns highlight the growing need to modernize policies to address new realities<sup>154</sup>.



# United Kingdom

The UK regulates the creator economy through a mixed model: light touch obligations for creators around advertising, combined with increasing duties on platforms to manage harmful content which indirectly impacts creators. Like the EU, there is no dedicated “creator law”, but content creators are subject to a web of obligations enforced primarily by the Advertising Standards Authority (**ASA**)<sup>155</sup> and the Competition & Markets Authority (**CMA**)<sup>156</sup>, with platform obligations expanding under the new Online Safety Act. This approach is reinforced through co-regulation and self-regulatory enforcement mechanisms.

Advertising disclosures are governed by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations and the CAP Code<sup>157</sup>. Under this, advertising by influencers is directly regulated, with platforms expected to assist with compliance. Under the CAP Code and consumer law<sup>158</sup>, creators must clearly label sponsored posts using terms like “#Ad” or built-in platform tags<sup>159</sup>. Enforcement is led by the ASA and CMA. Persistent non-compliance has led to public naming of influencers<sup>160</sup> and interventions requiring platforms to redesign ad-labelling tools. The CMA has also shaped platform design – following its intervention, certain platforms made changes to encourage disclosure and detect unlabelled paid posts<sup>161</sup>. A forthcoming consumer protection law<sup>162</sup> will give authorities stronger tools to penalise misleading promotions, expanding accountability for both creators and brands. By contrast, harmful and illegal content is largely regulated through platforms. The Online Safety Act (2023) imposes duties of care on platforms to remove illegal content and mitigate risks to children<sup>163</sup>. While creators are not directly liable under the law, platform enforcement affects their content’s visibility and monetisation. The Act also mandates user protection tools, such as content filters and abuse reporting, which indirectly shape the content environment in which creators engage.

Other areas of regulation apply variably. Copyright enforcement follows a notice-and-takedown model via platforms<sup>164</sup>, though UK fair dealing rules offer creators flexibility for parody and critique. Labour protections for creators remain limited, but policy discussions – especially around child influencers<sup>165</sup> and unionisation – are ongoing<sup>166</sup>.

While there is no dedicated funding scheme for creators, they benefit indirectly from broader creative industry support and partnerships with public broadcasters and platforms. Lawmakers are exploring safeguards around deepfakes and virtual influencers, and the Financial Conduct Authority<sup>167</sup> has issued warnings to “finfluencers” promoting regulated products without licences. As these debates evolve, the UK appears to favour proportionate, layered oversight—strengthening compliance mechanisms while engaging with creators as part of its broader digital economy and cultural policy agenda.

# South Korea

South Korea regulates the creator economy through a dual model: strict, creator-facing rules on advertising<sup>168</sup> and harmful content, and strong platform obligations to manage takedown requests, identity verification, and livestream moderation<sup>169</sup>. These legal duties are complemented by some of the world’s most active government support programs for digital creators<sup>170</sup>.

The Korean Fair Trade Commission (**KFTC**) enforces<sup>171</sup> clear rules on advertising disclosures through its Recommendations on Online Advertising Endorsements. These rules require that social media influencers “clearly state if their content is financially rewarded or intended for promotion” – vague disclosures are prohibited<sup>172</sup>. Influencers must use terms equivalent to “paid advertisement” in Korean, presented prominently in text or speech. Non-compliance carries penalties of up to 2% of the related ad revenue, applying to both creators and brands<sup>173</sup>. These rules are grounded in Korea’s Fair Labeling and Advertising Act<sup>174</sup>, which the KFTC enforces. Sector-specific rules also apply: health or finance influencers are subject to additional scrutiny from relevant regulators.

South Korea’s broader content regulation relies heavily on platform enforcement. The IT Network Act<sup>175</sup> plays a central role here and codifies a notice-and-takedown system that obliges platforms to remove illegal content once notified – failure to act can result in platform liability<sup>176</sup>. This system impacts creators indirectly, as platforms may remove or restrict access to creator content upon receiving defamation, privacy, or copyright complaints. Additionally, Korea’s Copyright Act mirrors the DMCA in scope. Creators also face direct legal risks under these laws. While a 2021 proposal to increase penalties for “fake news” was withdrawn<sup>177</sup>, enforcement remains active under existing laws. Another critical law is the Online Digital Sexual Crime law<sup>178</sup> which created obligations for platforms to remove non-consensual intimate images quickly; this also penalizes individuals (including content sharers)<sup>179</sup>.

## Korea's Broadcasting Law

Korea's Broadcasting Act<sup>180</sup>, traditionally limited to TV and radio, has not been broadly extended to online content or content creators. While proposals to apply certain broadcasting standards to "one-person media" have been considered, they remain unimplemented. The Korea Communications Commission (KCC)<sup>181</sup> has instead taken a targeted approach—such as a 2019 amendment allowing sanctions on large platforms like YouTube or AfreecaTV for content like obscenity or gambling<sup>182</sup>. It has also issued non-binding guidelines encouraging age ratings for popular streamers, which some platforms have voluntarily adopted<sup>183</sup>.

What sets South Korea apart is its strong institutional backing for creators. Government bodies like the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism<sup>184</sup> and KOCCA<sup>185</sup> run training academies, offer grants, and provide free studio access through one-person media programs<sup>186</sup>. Over 1,000 creators received support in 2021 alone, with long-term plans to scale further. The state also promotes creators as cultural ambassadors—enlisting foreign influencers to promote Korean culture and running domestic campaigns via paid collaborations. There are academic paths for content creation – a number of universities have established departments or majors in content creation<sup>187</sup>.

The country continues to refine its approach. Proposed regulations include mandatory labelling for AI-generated avatars or deepfakes, licensing requirements for MCNs, and stronger protections for children in content. While its regulatory framework is among the stricter ones globally—especially in content and disclosure—South Korea's coordinated state support makes it one of the most creator-focused policy environments in Asia.

## China

China adopts a highly centralised and control-oriented approach to regulating the creator economy<sup>188</sup>. While the government supports certain types of content—such as livestream e-commerce, patriotic messaging, or educational content—online creators face detailed restrictions on speech, behaviour, and monetisation<sup>189</sup>. Regulation operates through a mix of direct creator obligations, platform liability, and pervasive content monitoring, enforced by agencies such as the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC)<sup>190</sup>, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the State Taxation Administration<sup>191</sup>. The CAC in particular, over time, put out a substantial number of regulations governing the content that may be posted, as well as the responsibility shared by platforms in hosting possibly infringing content.

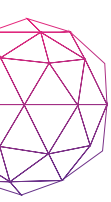
Creators are subject to real-name registration requirements<sup>192</sup>, with platforms mandated to verify identities. Influencers discussing news, politics, finance, health, or education must hold state-issued credentials or professional licenses<sup>193</sup>. A live-streaming code of conduct sets out 31 banned behaviours<sup>194</sup>, including explicit content, superstition, vulgarity, and criticism of state policy<sup>195</sup>. Creators are expected to uphold "core socialist values" and promote "positive energy"—content that aligns with official narratives<sup>196</sup>.







Content enforcement is both proactive and punitive. Platforms are required to censor political, religious, or socially destabilising material in real time, using AI moderation and human censors<sup>197</sup>. Influencers can be deplatformed for spreading "rumours," making offhand political jokes, or violating content codes. Repeat offenders may be blacklisted across platforms, effectively banned from the industry<sup>198</sup>. Platform accountability is strict: under China's Cybersecurity Law and CAC rules, platforms are liable for creator content, including illegal product sales, misinformation, and online scams<sup>199</sup>. E-commerce platforms are jointly liable with creators for counterfeit goods, misleading flash sales, and improper tipping practices<sup>200</sup>. Streamers must follow rules on gift limits, minor protections, and sales disclosures—platforms must enforce these through design (e.g., real-name and age checks)<sup>201</sup>.

Despite this restrictive framework, the state actively supports the creator economy where it aligns with national goals. Livestreaming is promoted as a tool for rural development and domestic consumption<sup>202</sup>. Government-run training programs, content incubators, and party-affiliated influencer campaigns are part of a broader strategy to professionalise and manage digital influence. Select influencers are integrated into state media or recruited to promote tourism and culture domestically and abroad.



# Global Regulatory Approaches to Creator Economy



Regulatory Approach	Key Issues Covered	Primary Target of Regulation	Application of Broadcasting Rules to Content Creators	Government Support Mechanisms	Emerging Regulatory Trends
 United States					
Decentralized, sectoral regulation; applies to both creators (disclosure, IP) and platforms (liability, safety)	Advertising, copyright, misinformation, illegal content	Platforms (under Section 230); creators (disclosure, tax, COPPA)	No broad broadcasting rules; regulation is issue-specific	Limited grants, creator funds by platforms, some training	Debates on platform liability, creator transparency, AI content
 United Kingdom					
Co-regulatory regime; applies to creators (ad disclosures) and platforms (duty of care under Online Safety Act)	Misleading ads, harmful content, copyright, misinformation	Both creators and platforms	No; Online Safety Act duties apply only to large platforms	Support via DCMS, Arts Council, media literacy training	ASA updates to influencer guidance; safety regulations for content
 France (EU)					
Statutory regulation; creator-specific laws (Influencer Law), sectoral content controls, platform duties	Advertising, health/financial promotions, image manipulation, potentially AI content	Both creators (legal duties) and platforms (compliance checks)	No broad broadcasting rules; narrow overlaps in regulated sectors	France 2030 funds, BPI incubators	EU alignment of influencer laws, creator licensing in sensitive areas
 Germany (EU)					
Sector-specific rules under media and consumer protection laws; creators regulated under state media treaties if thresholds are met	Advertising disclosures, IP, illegal content, youth protection	Primarily creators; platforms support enforcement (e.g. takedowns)	No; large creators may fall under media oversight if crossing viewership thresholds	Federal culture funding, creator hubs in states	Harmonisation under EU media law; focus on youth & creator rights
 South Korea					
State-led with soft law for creators (guidelines); hard law for platforms under Broadcasting Act	Age rating, ad transparency, illegal content, fair competition	Platforms (Broadcasting Act); large creators face increasing scrutiny	No broad broadcasting rules yet; proposals to bring "one-person media" under scope are pending	KCC grants, training centres, creative economy innovation centres	Renewed push to classify top creators as "media," AI content flagged
 China					
Centralized, mandatory regulation of creators and platforms; creators must be licensed and registered	Advertising, censorship, IP, ideological content, data control	Both creators (licensing, identity verification) and platforms (algorithmic controls, censorship)	Yes; large creators treated like broadcasters, with content and licensing mandates	Strong integration into e-commerce, party-led promotion	Crackdowns on livestreaming, deepfakes, monetisation rules tightening

# Chapter V:

## Recommendations

India must strike a balance between enabling creative digital entrepreneurship and protecting against risks discussed earlier in this report. This requires a whole-of-ecosystem approach. While the government has a key role in setting the policy tone, the responsibility to build a safe and sustainable creator economy is shared across stakeholders across government, platforms, creator communities, economy enablers, investors, and industry associations.



### Initiate multi-stakeholder engagement to address targeted risk areas:

The government could consider convening structured, multi-stakeholder consultations involving other ministries, regulators, creators, industry representatives, academics, and other experts. Such engagement would help build understanding and best practices in high-risk promotional areas like gambling, extreme dieting products, and unregulated cryptocurrencies – as well as challenges around copyright enforcement and protections for child creators. These discussions should also address creator mental health and well-being, including safeguards against harassment and burnout.

### Expand training and capacity-building for creators

Capacity-building support for creators should be scaled through coordinated efforts across government, platforms, creator-led organisations, industry associations, and others. Ministries such as the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), MeitY, and MIB can play an enabling role by supporting structured training programmes – with support from the private sector – on content production, monetisation strategies, digital marketing, and business operations. This support can also include targeted awareness programs around legal, regulatory and policy issues that creators face. Platforms and creator economy startups or investors should invest in accessible skilling modules and incubator-style programmes that pair technical upskilling with hands-on mentorship. Creator collectives and industry associations can contribute by co-designing curricula tailored to emerging creator needs. These initiatives should also address long-term well-being, offering support on managing online stress, digital wellness, and work-life balance. Models from other countries, such as creator incubators and mentorship networks, can be adapted within platforms like Skill India, Digital India, or through public-private partnerships.





## Avoid broadcasting-style regulation for content creators:

It is essential to distinguish content creators from traditional broadcasters. Content creators work in a decentralised, fast-moving ecosystem vastly different from traditional media institutions. Other countries surveyed earlier have adopted varied approaches to regulating creators, but have largely avoided imposing traditional broadcasting-style regulations – such as mandatory licensing, content pre-clearance, or registration – recognizing that such measures risk stifling innovation. Other studies indicate how these compliances may negatively impact creators, who are already facing significant economic, operational, well-being, and infrastructural challenges. India should avoid replicating these approaches and instead create an enabling policy environment.

## Build infrastructure and incentives that empower creators:

A thriving creator economy needs foundational infrastructure and incentive mechanisms that lower entry barriers and support long-term sustainability. This includes physical infrastructure such as shared content creation hubs with access to studios, editing tools, and production facilities. Platforms and brands can offer micro-grants, creator funds, and targeted amplification to underrepresented or early-stage creators. Government initiatives, such as public campaigns (e.g., a Bharat Darshan initiative featuring regional travel creators) and tax relief for small creators can enhance visibility and reduce financial burdens. The government can also consider opening access to its existing public infrastructure such as the wide network of radio stations by Prasar Bharati, which can act as studios for creators. These are often underutilized and can be a massive opportunity for creators to make high quality content in studio-level infrastructure. These efforts should be complemented by peer support networks and safe spaces for creators to engage with each other – led by creator organisations and supported by platforms and civil society.



## Reinforce safe harbour protections:

India must maintain and reinforce safe harbour protections under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. These protections are key to ensuring that digital platforms carry out content moderation responsibilities in a manner that is proportionate, predictable, and consistent with fundamental rights. Strong safe harbour provisions foster innovation while protecting users from harm.

## Strengthening trust between platforms and creators:

Platforms should build on the existing work on fostering a healthy and inclusive environment for creators and mitigate creator concerns around trust and transparency. This includes enhancing transparency around how content is discovered and recommended and strengthening creator engagement and feedback channels. Establishing formal channels for creator engagement can help ensure platform practices are shaped with input from the communities they affect. Platforms can also consider publishing periodic insights and trend reports on the creator economy to contribute to a more informed ecosystem. Highlighting instances of creator support—such as dispute resolution, infrastructure access, or success stories—can reinforce that platforms are invested in the long-term growth and wellbeing of creators.



## Support creator-led communities:

Community-driven creator networks can play a vital role in supporting creators, especially those who are early-stage or working independently. These creator-led organisations can offer safe spaces for peer learning, mentorship, and mental health support, while also helping surface shared challenges such as burnout, platform navigation, or evolving content norms. These can be within content niches, or focused on creators from different geographical regions. Platforms, brands, and civil society can support such efforts through partnerships, funding, or co-creating community-building initiatives that strengthen the social and professional fabric of the creator ecosystem. These communities can continue to engage with policymakers and regulators and facilitate continuous dialogue, as opposed to engagement during policy crisis.

# References

## Chapter I: Introduction

<sup>1</sup> In this report, we focus specifically on this group of content creators, and the *creator economy* that surrounds them: the broader network of platforms, brands, agencies, tech tools, and investors that support content creation, distribution, and monetisation.

<sup>2</sup> See *One-billion-dollar fund received by creator's economy*, News on Air, March 2025. Available at: <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/govt-announces-1-billion-dollar-fund-for-creators-economy-ahead-of-waves-2025/>

<sup>3</sup> See Sudhir Suryawanshi, *Centre announces premier institute for creative technology modelled after IIT*, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025, Available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/May/03/centre-announces-premier-institute-for-creative-technology-modelled-after-iits-iims>

## Chapter II: Mapping India's Creator Economy

<sup>4</sup> See Scale of India's creator's economy growth, Tech in Asia, May 2025. Available at: <https://www.techinasia.com/news/youtube-to-invest-101-4m-in-indias-creator-economy>

<sup>5</sup> See A studio called India, Ernst & Young LLP, May 2025 Available at: <https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-in/insights/media-entertainment/documents/ey-a-studio-called-india.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See A studio called India, Ernst & Young LLP, May 2025 Available at: <https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-in/insights/media-entertainment/documents/ey-a-studio-called-india.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See *From Content to Commerce: Mapping India's creator economy*, Boston Consulting Group, May 2025. Available at: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2025/india-from-content-to-commerce-mapping-indias-creator-economy>

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## Chapter III: Challenges Facing Content Creators in India

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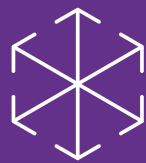
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