TTGDA MEMBER SURVEY:

USE OF GENERATIVE AI

TABLETOP
GAME DESIGNERS
ASSOCIATION

Summary

In late February 2026, TTGDA sent a survey to members asking about their own use of AI, and how they feel about publishers using it. We asked about several uses of generative AI platforms including ideation, art, in-game text, and marketing materials. In addition, designers were able to leave free-form comments about where they have and have not found AI to be useful.

Between February 26 and March 23, 2026, 171 of our 470 members (36%) responded to the survey. Some takeaways from their responses include:

1. **Just over half of respondents have tried using generative AI** for something related to game design. However, of the seven types of use that we specifically asked about, none has been used by more than 40 percent of these designers.
2. **Many respondents were all-or-nothing on generative AI,** with over a quarter being opposed to all uses and another fifth not opposed to any of them.
3. **About a quarter of respondents have tried using AI to come up with game ideas or mechanisms**, while over half of designers said they were strongly opposed to this use of AI.
4. **There is almost no support for using AI to make the art that will be included in a published game.** However, almost a third of respondents have used AI to generate placeholder art for prototypes.
5. **About a quarter of designers use AI to edit text they've written,** while fewer than one-fifth of respondents use AI to generate placeholder text, and fewer still use it for text to be included in the final version of a game.
6. **About 4 in 5 respondents say they do not want publishers to use AI-generated marketing materials** for their games and are not using it to generate marketing materials themselves.
7. **Designers' other uses of AI** include as a tool to help them do math, run simulations, and code digital implementations for human play.
8. **Other concerns** mentioned in open-ended responses include commonly-cited problems such as plagiarism and AI's environmental impact. Designers also had more industry-specific concerns, such as the possibility that AI could flood the market with bad games, degrade publisher decision-making and customer service, and divide the game-making community.

TTGDA MEMBER SURVEY: USE OF GENERATIVE AI

In late February 2026, TTGDA sent a survey to members asking about their own use of generative AI and how they feel about publishers using it. The use cases we asked about were:

- Coming up with ideas for games or mechanisms;
- Writing placeholder text;
- Writing text for the final version of a published game;
- Editing or proofreading text;
- Making placeholder art;
- Making art for the final version of a published game; and
- Creating marketing materials for a game.

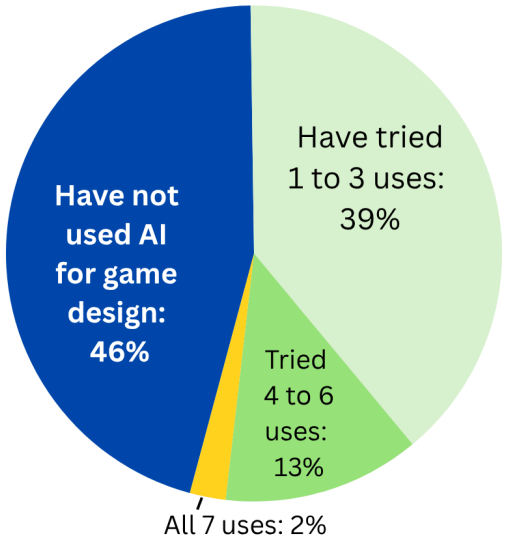
In addition, designers were able to leave free-form comments about where they have and have not found AI to be useful. Between February 26 and March 23, 2026, 171 of our 470 members (36%) responded to the survey. The following sections highlight key takeaways from their responses. A full list of the survey questions and results are provided in the Appendix.

1. About half of respondents have tried one of the seven uses of generative AI that were included in the survey.

Just over half (54%) of the designers who responded to our survey said that they had tried a generative AI platform for at least one of the seven uses that we asked about (Exhibit 1). This level of AI use is roughly on par with data from the Federal Reserve's GenAI Adoption Tracker, which shows that as of November 2025, about 56 percent of working-age adults were using generative AI for work or personal activities.

Of the designers who had used generative AI in some part of game design, only a few designers had tried AI for all seven of the uses that were in our survey. Most had tried three or fewer uses.

Exhibit 1. Of AI uses that the survey asked about, number that respondents have tried

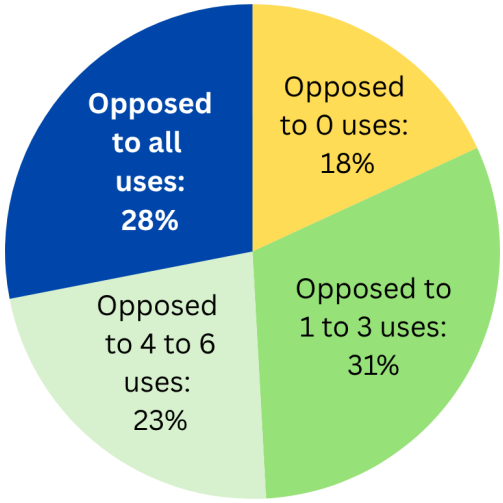


Note: Respondents answered "Using regularly," "Using occasionally," or "Have tried; don't plan to use again."

2. Many respondents were all-or-nothing on generative AI.

Over a quarter (28%) of respondents were strongly opposed to all of the 7 types of AI use that we asked about, and almost one-fifth (18%) were not strongly opposed to any of them (Exhibit 2). The other half of respondents were somewhere in between, strongly opposing some uses and not others.

Exhibit 2. Number of personal uses for which respondents answered "strongly opposed; will not do this"



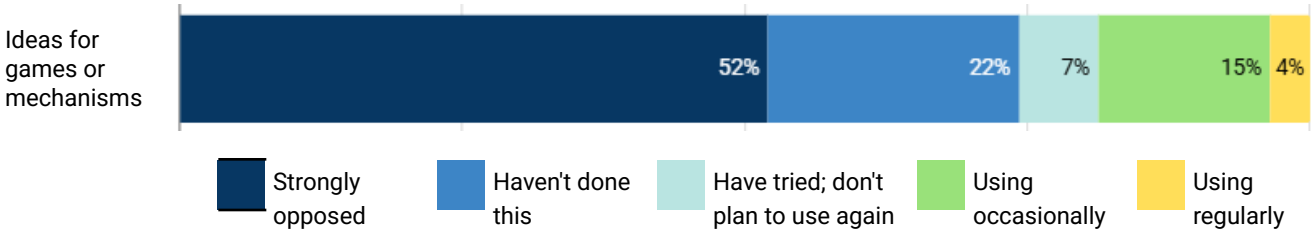
3. About a quarter of respondents have tried using AI for coming up with game ideas or mechanisms, while half are strongly opposed.

About a quarter of designers who responded to the survey (26%) said they had tried using a generative AI platform for coming up with game ideas or mechanisms, but some of these respondents said they would not do it again (Exhibit 3). Over half of respondents (52%) said they are strongly opposed to this use of AI.

In the free-response section of the survey, multiple designers said that the process of chatting with the AI particularly helped them better articulate their own goals or ideas for a game. One said, "It's like asking another human who may not know much about games. They know enough to at least bounce a couple ideas, which ends up with me getting to where I want to go."

Several designers who had tried asking generative AI platforms to come up with its own ideas described the material they got from the AI with terms such as "derivative" or "slop." One designer said that when they tried to prompt an AI for ideas, the AI recommended inappropriate mechanisms from mass market games, like "lose a turn." Some said that a fraction of the output from their prompts would contain nuggets of useful ideas or angles that were worth considering.

Exhibit 3. Share of respondents using AI to come up with ideas for games or mechanisms



4. Almost a third of respondents use AI to generate placeholder art; most oppose using AI to generate final art.

Almost a third (30%) of designers who responded to the survey said they use AI to generate placeholder art, but there are more respondents (39%) who are opposed to this use of AI (Exhibit 4a). In free-response questions, designers using AI for placeholder art said they thought it helped them attract playtesters, visualize the game experience, and set the tone. One said:

> Publishers want pretty prototypes and the AI art makes me better able to illustrate the narrative direction and make play less boring than it would be with black and white words or 'close enough illustrations.' Some of the games I am working on have no illustrations in the real world that anyone has done and if I wanted those I would have to pay artists which I cannot afford to do.

However, other designers said that AI assistants had failed to create usable placeholder art in response to their prompts. Several said that after trying AI-generated placeholder art, they returned to clipart and other online searches.

When asked how they feel about publishers using AI for placeholder art, 40 percent said they would be ok with it, but 29 percent would like to contractually prohibit it and another 31 percent said they don't like it (Exhibit 4b).

Opposition to using AI-generated art in final products is much stronger. Only 2 people (1% of respondents) said they are regularly or occasionally generating art that they plan to keep in a final game. Over three-quarters of respondents said they were strongly opposed to this type of use, both on their own (78%) and by publishers (81%).

Exhibit 4a. Designer Use of AI to Generate Art for Prototypes and Final Games

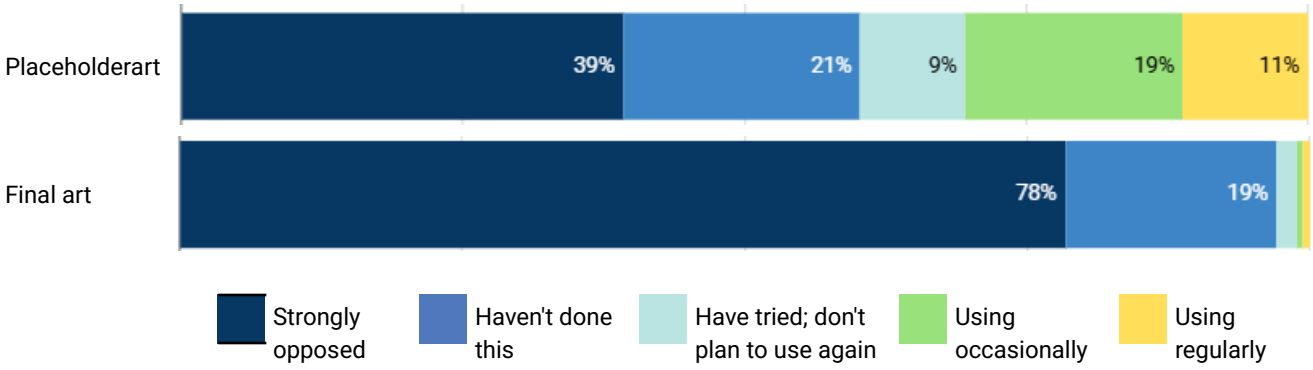
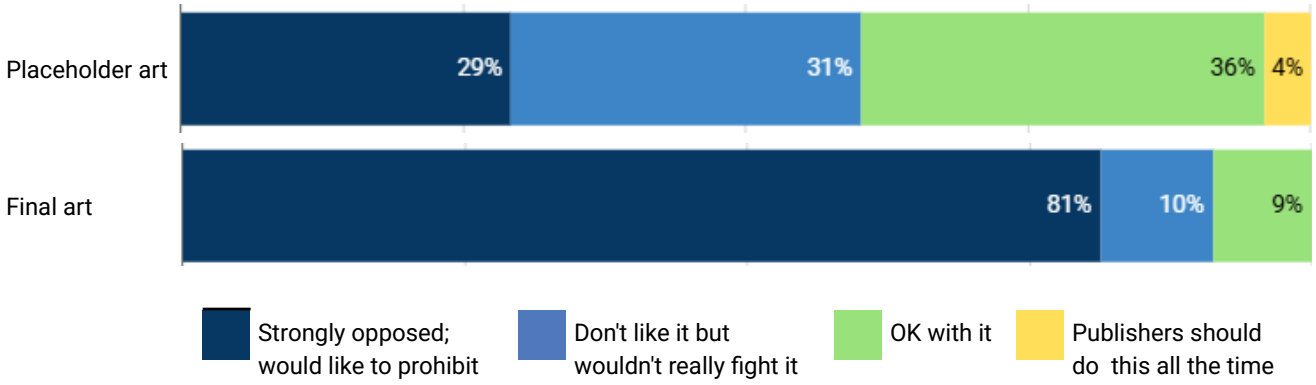


Exhibit 4b. Designer Support for Publisher Use of AI to Generate Art for Prototypes and Final Games



5. A quarter of designers use AI to edit text they've written; this is more popular than using AI to generate text.

We asked designers about using generative AI platforms to edit text they've written, and about using them to write new text.

Editing. Of all the AI uses that the survey asked about, editing and proofreading had the lowest number of "strongly opposed" responses, at 35 percent for personal use (Exhibit 5a) and 30 percent for publisher use (Exhibit 5b). About a quarter of designers (28%) are using AI to edit things they've written at least occasionally.

Some designers gave examples of AI not working well as an editor for their games, saying it "made the rulebook worse," or "creates more problems than it solves." The problems they described included hallucinations and inappropriate tone. Designers also raised concerns that publishers might use AI for proofreading without a final human check, leaving the game vulnerable to errors.

Exhibit 5a. Designer Use of AI to Edit or Generate Text

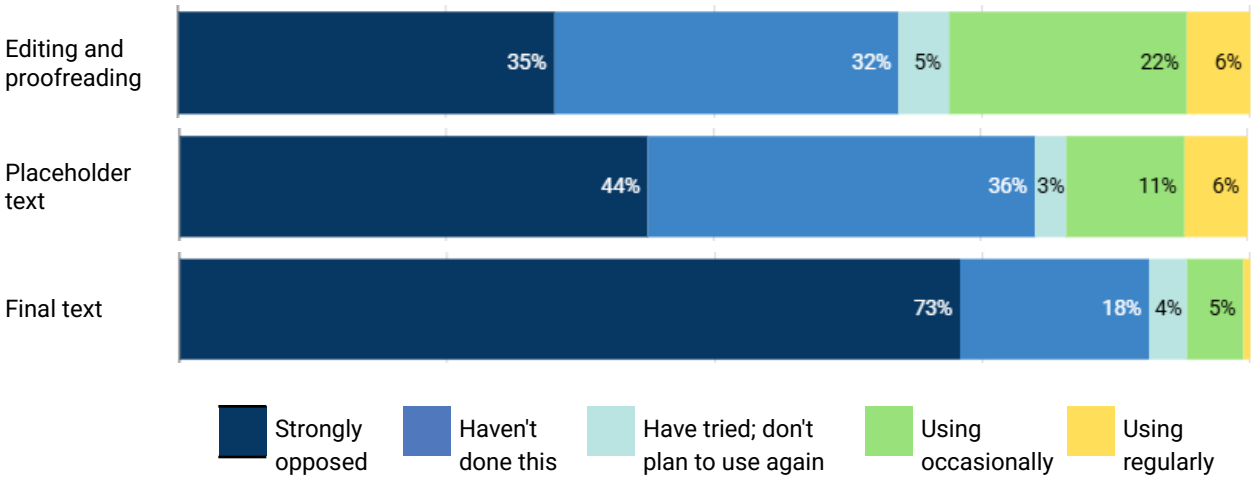
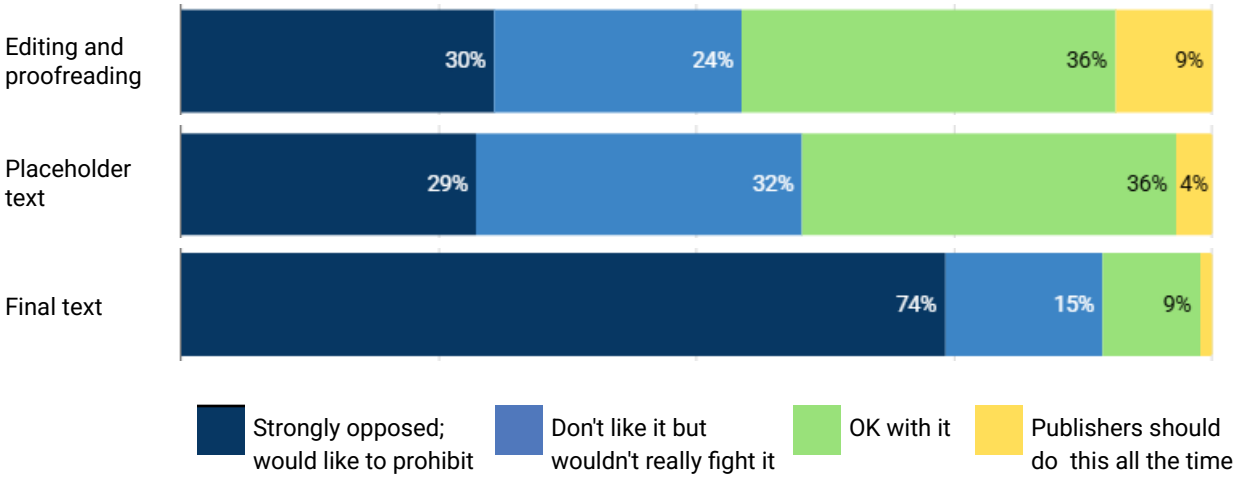


Exhibit 5b. Designer Support for Publisher Use of AI to Edit or Generate Text



Generating text. Nearly three-quarters of respondents said they were strongly opposed to using AI-generated text in a final game personally (72%) or by publishers (74%). Only 17 percent of respondents are using AI to generate placeholder text, and 6 percent say they are using AI to generate text that they plan to keep.

Some designers gave examples of how they had successfully used AI to generate text for their games. Two designers said they liked to use AI to get unstuck on writing rules. A few designers said they used AI to generate lists of names, traits, characters, or places in their games. Others said they use AI for what one called "low level story creation." These designers said the AI-generated text was not good enough to use as final, but it often felt like a helpful starting point.

One designer who had judged a design contest had negative experiences with multiple games that seemed make extensive use of AI-generated text, saying: "They were full of contradictory statements and assumptions about how the game worked and why it was fun. They were basically gibberish throwaway entries that no reputable publisher would take seriously."

Another designer said that they had concerns about publishers specifically using AI to translate game text. When they realized that a localization partner was planning to do this, they were able to push for a human translator instead.

6. Most designers do not want AI-generated marketing materials for their games.

Only 1 in 10 designers said that they occasionally or regularly use AI to generate marketing materials for their games (Exhibit 6a). Most (85%) have not done this, and another 5 percent said they have tried it but don't plan to do it again. One said, "I've noticed a rise in AI pitch/sizzle videos…I haven't felt that it added any value, and in some cases detracted from understanding the pitch."

Similarly, most designers (81%) said they do not want publishers to use AI to generate marketing materials for their games (Exhibit 6b). In open responses, multiple designers also said that they are turned off by the use of AI in content creation around games, and will not work with influencers who use generative AI in their workflow.

Exhibit 6a. Designer Use of AI to Create Marketing Materials for a Game

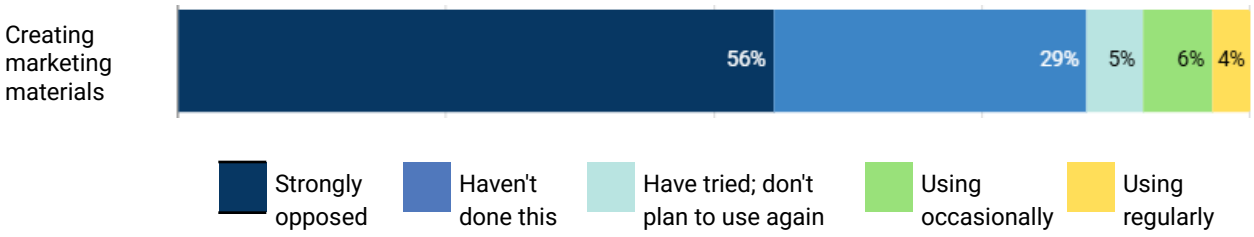
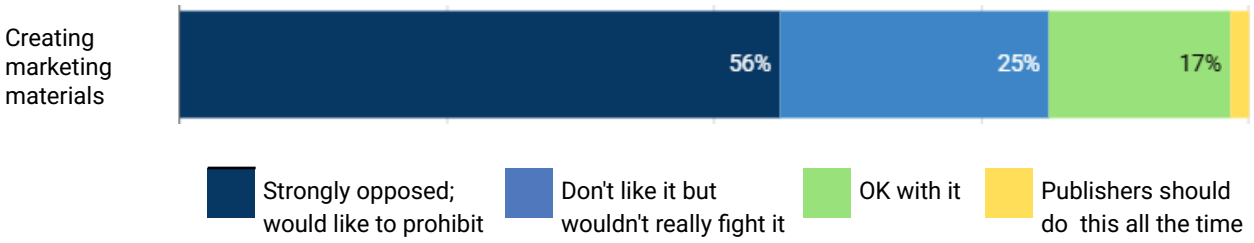


Exhibit 6b. Designer Support for Publisher Use of AI to Create Marketing Materials for a Game



7. Designers are using AI as a tool to help them do math, run simulations, and code digital implementations for human play.

We asked designers the open-ended question, "Do you have any examples you want to share of how AI has been useful to you in your design process?". In addition to the examples shared in previous sections, multiple designers shared three other use cases:

Doing math for design. One of the most common additional uses mentioned was as a source for help with probability, mathematics, and thinking about balance. In some cases, designers are having the AI write spreadsheet formulas that they then use to do calculations in the spreadsheet. In others, they are simply asking the AI to do calculations.

However, nearly as many designers said they had quite poor results with asking LLMs to do math, reporting errors and hallucinations. For example, one designer who used ChatGPT to calculate detailed probabilities (*e.g.* how often a certain set of cards might appear in a starting hand) said when they checked the results, they were wrong "roughly 1/4th of the time." Another called ChatGPT "surprisingly bad at maths."

Doing simulations. A few designers mentioned using generative AI to write code for Monte Carlo simulations or other similar processes. These simulations are also considered AI, but are not run on the generative AI platforms currently garnering attention. Multiple designers specifically mentioned that they were much more comfortable with this type of AI use than with generative AI. One shared a published case study by researchers from Queen Mary University of London, who have started a company called Tabletop R&D to do AI-based game testing. Another said a publisher contracted with such a service for their game.

A few designers had tried to run simulations using an LLM-based AI, but they did not have success. One fed their cards and rules into the system and asked it to simulate some full games, but the AI "didn't follow the rules and didn't understand how the game worked."

A few designers also raised their discomfort with the concept of testing game balance through simulations, because it might miss key elements of human interaction.

Coding digital implementations. A few designers mentioned using AI to write code for a digital version of their game that they then used for playtesting. One mentioned that this type of ability could also make it easier for publishers to add their games to Board Game Arena.

8. Designers have many other concerns that were not explicitly quantified in our survey.

In an open-ended question about designers' concerns with AI, designer-raised issues included the following:

The most commonly voiced concern was that current generative AI tools are based on plagiarism, because they were trained on art and written materials without the creators' consent**.** Many said things like, "All uses of stolen material are problematic." Multiple designers also mentioned that they want contract language that will prohibit a publisher from allowing AIs to be further trained on their game materials.

The next most common concern was AI's high environmental cost. A ChatGPT request uses 10 times more electricity than a typical Google search (2.0 vs 0.3 Wh). Other impacts include the use of rare earth elements, mercury, and lead in data center equipment; and the use of large amounts of water for cooling.

Some designers worry that AI could flood the market with bad games. One designer thought it would be easy for unethical publishers to quickly create "clones that are slightly different" and crowd the games they are copying out of the market. Another designer worried that "AI is great at making things that look like games for crowd funding campaigns, but without actual rules that make sense." The general sentiment from these and other designers was the worry that in a market where it is already difficult for a game to stand out, these practices will only make it harder.

Some designers worry that publishers might use AI for decisionmaking. As other industries move to adopt AI tools for hiring and other decisions, designers speculated that we might see this at game publishers as well. Several mentioned they did not want to see publishers use AI to review game submissions or make decisions about a game's market viability.

Some designers worry about publishers using AI for customer service. They noted that AI tools might give bad information on customer service inquiries and rules questions.

Some designers are worried that AI would detach them from their creative process. Multiple designers shared variations on the idea that working with AI to shortcut certain parts of their design process would harm the process as a whole. One shared a Bryan Sanderson speech on AI that argues that part of the value of art is that artists are changed by the act of making it, while using generative AI skips that transformational process. Similarly, a designer said, "The point of imagination is to flex your creative muscles and play. GEN AI robs creative people of having an imagination."

Another said:

> I have tried AI extensively, in order to test its capabilities, and I'll continue to do so…I find the results poor, but this might change over time. The biggest reason I won't use it, even if AI becomes a lot better, is I don't find it beneficial to my creative process. Spending time on the nuts and bolts of game design, even if AI will eventually do pieces of that faster, is what helps immerse me in my design and come up with creative solutions. It's like a painter getting inspiration cleaning their brushes; having a robot-brush-cleaner will not necessarily make that painter's work better, since the brush cleaning may be a ritual that's part of their process. And finally, many people (myself included) want to know the games they play were entirely human created, and that's part of the appeal for them.

Some designers are worried about the impact of social divisions over AI. Some mentioned being worried about being ostracised if they admit that they use AI in their workflow. One designer who was opposed to most uses of generative AI also raised this issue, in this way:

> One of my concerns about GenAI/LLMs is its potential for *divisiveness* – where people bullish on AI blow off the genuine harm and ethical concerns, or people with negative views or who are at risk entrench those negative views so much that it becomes a purity topic, where no possible use could ever be reasonable.

APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

Q1. What is your experience or interest in using AI in your game design process?

	n	Strongly opposed; will not do this	Haven't done this	Have tried; don't plan to use again	Using occasionally	Using regularly	TOTAL
Coming up with ideas for games or mechanisms	171	44%	36%	3%	11%	6%	100%
Writing placeholder text that I expect to replace later	171	35%	32%	5%	22%	6%	100%
Writing text that I expect to keep in the final published game	170	73%	18%	4%	5%	1%	100%
Editing or proofreading text I have written	171	52%	22%	7%	15%	4%	100%
Making placeholder art that I expect to replace later	171	39%	21%	9%	19%	11%	100%
Making art that I expect to keep in the final published game	171	78%	19%	2%	1%	1%	100%
Creating marketing materials for a game	171	56%	29%	5%	6%	4%	100%

Q2. How comfortable are you with publishers using AI in the following ways?

	n	Strongly opposed; would like to contractually prohibit this	Don't like it but wouldn't really fight it	Ok with it	They should do this all the time
Writing placeholder text that they expect to replace later	171	29%	32%	36%	4%
Writing text that they expect to keep in the final published game	170	74%	15%	9%	1%
Editing or proofreading text humans have written	171	30%	24%	36%	9%
Making placeholder art that they expect to replace later	171	29%	31%	36%	4%
Making art that they expect to keep in the final published game	171	81%	10%	9%	0%
Creating marketing materials for a game	171	56%	25%	17%	2%

Q3. Are there other use cases of AI that you are concerned about?

Q4. Do you have any examples you want to share of how AI has been useful to you in your design process?

Q5. Do you have any examples you want to share of trying AI and finding it NOT useful in your design process?