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State of Play 2021

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN UK UNSCRIPTED TELEVISION

Christa van Raalte, Richard Wallis and Dawid Pekalski

Foreword by Marcus Ryder

It is 8am and I have just completed a 10km run. The weather on the run was beautiful, not too hot with a slight breeze. I smiled at three other runners and a dog walker. Two children waved at me from the back of their parents' car, although to be honest I am not 100% sure they waved at me or something behind me – I was after all running at the time.

Detailing my morning run is not the way I originally expected to start the preface of the State of Play report when I was first approached, but after reading the findings it seemed the most appropriate thing to do. I took up running marathons just over ten years ago. I didn't realise it at the time but looking back on it, and having worked in the film and TV industry for close to 25 years now, it was clearly a response to the level of stress I had accumulated and was still suffering from, and the knock-on impact on my mental health.

The fact is, the vast majority of us – whatever walk of life we come from – work in the film and TV industry because we love the craft. I fell in love with television at a young age and still get a rush when I walk onto a film set. But love does not conquer all. It is no longer good enough for us to accept working conditions that are literally making us ill and excluding far too many people.

These difficulties are laid bare in this report and should serve as a wake-up call for everyone in the industry and, in particular, those at the top who can shift the systems of power to really address our challenges. The time is now to do so. It is an understatement to say we live in unprecedented times. The COVID -19 pandemic has not only created new challenges to the film and television industry it has also exposed issues that previously far too many in the sector had chosen to ignore.

Following COVID -19, the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 which swept across the globe also forced our industry to confront some uncomfortable truths that for too long have suffered from wilful neglect.

The State of Play is an extremely timely and much needed report for everyone working in the industry who wants to create a better and more equitable working environment. It not only details the stresses that far too many people are labouring under, it also identifies the working practices that cause these adverse conditions.

Running has helped me to restore balance in my life and manage the difficulties of working in the UK film and TV industry. But going forwards, I hope to be running just for the former, not for the latter. It is time to take stock of what is happening in the industry we love and implement the policies that are needed to make a positive change.

This valuable report will help us to do exactly that.

Marcus Ryder MBE is a leading campaigner for diversity in the media industries. He is Head of External Consultancies for the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity at Birmingham City University and Co-Author of *Access all Areas: The Diversity Manifesto for TV and Beyond*.

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Executive Summary

From a creative and commercial perspective, UK television has, in many respects, been a great national success story. However, this success has been at the expense of those who work in the industry. This report finds that in unscripted television – the focus of this study – the casualisation of the work force, and a lack of professionalism with regard to recruitment and management, have combined to create an unhealthy and unsustainable work culture.

- Based on a survey of almost twelve hundred television production professionals, with a broad range of experience and expertise, the report highlights the negative impact of poor management practices, particularly on the freelance staff who constitute the creative life-blood of the industry.
- Although this research was triggered by concerns about the implications of the pandemic, all the issues that have been highlighted pre-date it. COVID -19, therefore, should be understood, not as the cause, but as providing the context within which many television employers have begun to acknowledge that the industry has a problem.
- Our respondents paint a picture of an industry characterised by long hours, difficult working conditions and insecurity, in which work-life balance is impossible. A lack of effective communication, feedback or support under these circumstances exacerbates the impact on staff wellbeing and, in particular, on mental health.
- Recruitment is informal and heavily dependent on networks, which makes it difficult for 'outsiders' to access entry level roles or for established professionals to broaden their experience, while opportunities for career progression are largely dependent on personal relationships. These practices limit the fulfillment of individual potential and significantly reduce the possibility of equality and diversity in the industry.
- Further inequalities result from a lack of transparency around rates of pay and terms of employment. Practices such as 'penciling in' and 'buy-out contracts' have become the norm rather than the exception and are used to circumvent conventional employment rights. Meanwhile employers expect an almost infinite degree of flexibility from freelance staff yet offer almost none in return, which contributes to a brain drain of key skills, particularly among women.

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- All of these factors create a set of conditions within which discrimination, nepotism and bullying thrive and indeed are normalised as "just the way the industry works".
- For freelancers, there are very limited opportunities for training and professional development to help them realise their career ambitions or to contribute the level of skills the industry needs. A lack of management training is seen as particularly problematic, contributing to a range of poor practices within the industry.
- The current 'state of play' with regard to management and recruitment practices is not only unethical and damaging to individuals, but also damaging to the ongoing commercial and creative success of the industry, impacting, as it does, mental health, diversity and skills. It is the view of the authors that a world class television industry deserves better.

Key Findings

1 **Productions are chronically under-resourced.** Commissioning broadcasters offer contracts with budgets that do not reflect real world costs. Production companies often squeeze available budgets further in order to maximise profits. Consequently, savings have to be made further down the food chain. The commissioning system is thus predicated on staff being willing and able to work unreasonably long hours over extended periods of time without compensation.

2 **Greenlighting practices create unfeasibly short timeframes for delivery of projects.** Current lead times do not allow for equitable recruitment practices, coherent on-boarding or any form of professional development. Pre-production is frequently rushed as a result, which can lead to companies incurring additional costs later in the process. Schedules do not allow for reasonable working hours or safe working practices.

3 **Precarious employment and market forces create a fear of saying no.** Production companies are rarely in a position to turn down commissions and those who hold out for more realistic budgets risk being undercut by their competitors. Similarly, individuals are rarely in a position to turn down work and risk being undercut if they insist on a fair rate. Continual competition for contracts by both companies and individuals encourages self-imposed work schedules that are unhealthy and ultimately unsustainable.

4 **The culture of long hours and 24/7 availability is unhealthy and unsustainable.** It both enables, and is exacerbated by, the under-resourcing of productions and the precarious position of the freelance workforce. This culture has extended beyond the shoot, to all areas of pre- and post-production and is manifest in presenteeism, poor time management and scheduling that makes insufficient effort to avoid long working days. The fact that overtime is largely unpaid in so many roles means that there are no penalties for poor management in this regard.

5 **Stress at the 'top' impacts negatively throughout the production pipeline.** Managers at all levels are frequently placed under extreme stress by the combination of working to deliver on an unrealistic brief, over-commitment of their own time, and the precariousness of their position. Many do not have the strategies or support to deal with these pressures. Their anxiety filters down to their teams, and makes for micromanagement, indecision and what is often unwittingly bullying behaviour.

59%

think production teams are well managed only half the time or less.

70%

of people with management responsibilities have received no management training.

6 **Managers are unprepared and untrained for key aspects of their roles.** Successful creatives promoted into management roles often lack understanding of finances and entire areas of the production process. Many lack effective people management and communication skills. There is little incentive for freelancers to undertake self-funded training in this area, while production companies do not usually employ individuals for long enough to see a return on such an investment.

7 **Management in the industry rarely prioritises a duty of care towards employees.** Broadcasters take no responsibility for the welfare of those who make their output and commissioning editors are not held accountable for the consequences of their decisions in this respect. For the most part production companies do not have the resources, the expertise, or any incentive to invest in the wellbeing of transient staff. Individual managers in turn are not expected to prioritise the working conditions of their teams, while the culture in which they work is largely dismissive of concerns around work-life balance or mental health.

93%

More than 93% claim to have experienced or witnessed some form of bullying or harassment.

8 **Bullying behaviour is common throughout the industry.** This in part reflects the lack of management skills and the anxieties of managers themselves. However, it is also symptomatic of the wider culture. An unstructured, highly pressured, work environment without job security or protection facilitates bullying and supports bullies, as does a tendency to turn a blind eye to bullying behaviour or punish those who report it. Critically, there is no effective and safe recourse for people who have been mistreated and who fear repercussions if they report their experiences.

73%

think recruitment practices in television are generally unfair.

9 **Recruitment is informal and unprofessional.** Hiring is heavily dependent on networks, which makes it very difficult for newcomers, or those perceived as outsiders, to get fair access to employment opportunities. More established professionals often find themselves 'pigeon-holed' without the means to expand their skill set and range of experience. The current recruitment context fosters nepotism and unimaginative hiring practices. As well as negatively impacting individual wellbeing, these practices militate against diversity, contribute to skills shortages and ultimately result in unoriginal content.

76%

have had first-hand experience of people getting jobs for which they are less qualified than others, due to their personal connections.

10 **Discriminatory practices abound, both in recruitment and in the workplace.** This reflects a deficit of management training and awareness, and a lack of recourse for victims of discrimination (as discussed elsewhere). It also reflects an avoidance of corporate responsibility or accountability in an environment dominated by small employers and freelance employees, where the larger players do not directly employ a great number of those who create their products. Notwithstanding some well-intentioned initiatives, the absence of checks and balances within the industry means hiring and promotion are subject to prejudice and ultimately reinforce existing social inequalities.

11 **Rates of pay are unfair, inequitable and lack transparency.** Individual freelancers with similar experience and in comparable roles are often paid at very different rates, even within the same company or on the same production. The lack of any generally recognised rate for many roles makes negotiation stressful for many and the lack of a minimum standard enables cycles of undercutting which can lead to an under-skilled workforce. Unjustifiable inequities in pay lead to mistrust and anxiety that impact working relationships as well as individual wellbeing.

83%

would like to see standardised guidance on appropriate rates for TV work.

12 **Contracting practices are inequitable and often unethical.** It is not unusual for freelance staff to receive contracts several days or weeks into a job; in some cases contracts are never received at all. This makes staff vulnerable to unforseen changes in their contracts and to being dropped without explanation or notice. It is difficult for freelancers to manage their working schedules and impossible to manage their personal lives.

80%

would like to see agreed minimum standards for hours, overtime, health and safety and welfare for freelancers.

13 **Antipathy to flexible working is widespread among managers.** Although employers expect almost limitless flexibility from their freelance hires, this is rarely reciprocated by any flexibility on the part of the employers themselves. Only a minority of companies will consider part-time, job-share or other flexible working arrangements, notwithstanding the advertised policies of some broadcasters. This is often justified in terms of the 'impossibility' of such arrangements despite there being many examples of successful flexible working across a range of roles, with more emerging during the pandemic. A lack of flexible working opportunities is a key factor in the brain drain of skilled women in particular and thus in the persistence of skills shortages, especially around female dominated areas such as production management.

14 **Development and training is unsupported.** Freelancers have limited access to either formal training or informal development opportunities. This is as much a function of structural factors as it is of costs. A lack of investment in, or commitment to staff is symptomatic of a 'throwaway' approach to freelance labour at the level of individual employers. The impact of this deficit is seen across the industry in skills shortages at all levels, including that of leadership and management.

"... the SP on my first day expected me [to] travel from London to Preston, meet contributors immediately, move into a really awful student residence in the worst part of town, carry boxes of heavy equipment up very steep stairs alone, assemble two full FS7 kits from loads of boxes and drive to film a contributor I'd never met. Then I was asked to film with two cameras. At the same time alone and doing the sound and full lights. This was day one. After 15 days working in a row I wanted a weekend with my family. I was seen as betraying the production and told I could go for two days if I was on call. Then they called me every hour to ask me to do stuff anyway. I was so stressed I decided to go back to work early anyway. I then got a call out at 4 am ... They pushed me then to work till evening time despite being exhausted." (Self-Shooting Producer Director)

Recommendations

1 **Broadcasters should take responsibility for the pipeline that is created to fulfill their demands.** Broadcasters and other commissioning bodies, supported by the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) or its agents, should formulate, agree and adopt a code of practice, whereby they undertake to enable and support good working practices within the industry and discourage the use of exploitative or unethical practices. Key components of this code of practice would include ensuring that:

1.1 Greenlighting practices and resulting lead times allow for equitable recruitment processes and viable production schedules.

1.2 Budgets enable (or at least do not prohibit) ethical recruitment and working conditions and agreed minimum standards and rates of pay.

1.3 Commissioning editors are held accountable for the consequences of their decisions, as they impact on working hours and working conditions.

1.4 Commissions are awarded preferentially (and, in time, exclusively) to production companies who meet an employer's kitemark as discussed below, or who can otherwise demonstrate a commitment to ethical employment practices.

2 **Production companies should take responsibility for the wellbeing of all staff, including those employed on freelance contracts.** This responsibility should be recognised, rewarded and reinforced through the introduction of a kitemark, predicated on the standards and protocols outlined in Recommendation 3 below. This will be developed by a third-party organisation (see Recommendation 4), and awarded to employers who evidence a commitment to:

2.1 Agreed minimum standards for rates of pay and working conditions.

2.2 Professional and equitable recruitment processes – to include ensuring that staff involved in recruitment have been appropriately trained.

2.3 Dignity and diversity principles – to include instituting training at senior levels to raise awareness of unconscious bias, bullying, mental health issues and equality legislation – and actively incentivising engagement in such training by freelance managers.

2.4 Encouraging flexible working patterns to support work-life balance and mental wellbeing, and to retain talent.

2.5 Supporting the development of all staff, including freelancers, whether through formal training or informal approaches such as mentoring.

3 BECTU and other representative organisations should work with industry leaders to develop employment standards and protocols, as well as raising awareness of key issues throughout the industry. To this end, they should establish:

3.1 Minimum standards for rates of pay and working conditions: to include expectations around maximum hours, payment of overtime, contracts, health and safety.

3.2 Protocols for ensuring dignity and inclusivity in the workplace: to include guidance on how to prevent, recognise and respond to instances of bullying and discrimination.

3.3 Protocols for professional, equitable and transparent recruitment practices: to include specific expectations that advertised jobs are discoverable through online searches, not exclusively offered from behind paywalls or through social media; that recruiters are trained in relevant equality legislation; that unsuccessful interviewees are provided with feedback.

3.4 Protocols for flexible working based on existing positive models, together with promotion across the industry of the benefits of employing a diverse range of people in production.

4 An industry coalition should set up a third-party organisation, recognised by Ofcom, to monitor and support the management of human resources within the industry and to act as an independent standards body to protect the rights of employees, including freelancers. This organisation should be resourced to:

4.1 Develop and manage a kitemark system (potentially offering three levels of affirmation e.g. bronze, silver, gold) that identifies and rewards ethical and progressive employers.

4.2 Receive and address reports of bullying and harassment, discrimination and other unfair employment practices.

4.3 Monitor, review and advise on recruitment strategies in the industry, particularly addressing diversity among new entrants.

4.4 Monitor, review and advise on strategies for career support and professional development within the industry, particularly addressing areas of skills shortage in mid-career and senior roles.

4.5 Provide HR support and advice to employers, particularly to production companies too small to have their own HR support.

5 An industry coalition, working with ScreenSkills, and drawing on DCMS support, should address the gap in the provision and uptake of training for television staff with hiring and team management responsibilities. To this end they should:

5.1 Identify and commission bespoke management training – to include a range of topics from handling finances, to building teams, to unconscious bias and the legal and policy frameworks impacting equitable hiring practices.

5.2 Identify strategies and funding to incentivise and/or subsidise management training for freelance staff.

5.3 Identify strategies and funding to incentivise and/or subsidise production companies with good (kitemarked) employment practices to offer 'on the job' training and development.

6 The DCMS should actively support the strategies outlined above, enforcing the compliance of broadcasters with working practices designed to improve working conditions, diversity and skills development throughout the industry. In particular, the department (or its agents) should:

6.1 Regulate commissioning practices, requiring that an agreed quota of productions are commissioned from kitemarked companies and that broadcasters comply with a code of practice. (see Recommendation 1 above).

6.2 Provide formal recognition and funding for an advisory and reporting third party organisation (as described in Recommendation 4 above).

6.3 Provide funding for development in priority areas, particularly management skills (see Recommendation 5 above).

About this Report BY JAMES TAYLOR

I've been saying for a while now that the freelance model is broken. This report should make clear in black and white to anyone who doubted that it is true. Sadly these findings will not be a surprise to the thousands of freelancers who work in our industry.

In autumn 2020, I was approached by Christa van Raalte and Richard Wallis from Bournemouth University. They wanted to talk about the Viva La PD surveys which highlighted the issues so many were facing when the TV industry went dark overnight due to the pandemic. One thing that stood out loud and clear was that many were considering leaving the industry. The situation we all found ourselves in highlighted the precariousness of being a freelancer in television.

In that initial call with Christa and Richard I mentioned my intention of doing another more general survey for those working in unscripted TV and joked that they'd be very welcome to get involved. If it's possible to look at each other through a Zoom call, they did the equivalent, and in that moment it felt like a plan was coming together. Within days, they'd swung into action and within a fortnight we had developed the first draft set of questions.

The survey opened in December, and reading the initial headline results a few weeks later actually shocked me. Although they confirmed many things I'd suspected for a while, for the first time I was seeing the data to back it up. I scanned through the written responses too, and it was clear that freelancers needed a voice. We presented the preliminary report at the Coalition for Change meeting in January. The reaction in the virtual room was a moment of stunned silence.

We intended this full report to be published in the spring, but the more Christa and Richard interrogated the data, the more they felt the results needed further analysis. It was clear that this was an important piece of work, not just academically but for the industry. Nothing like this has been attempted in recent years. So, we agreed to delay publication until the full and proper study was complete.

I have worked in TV production for nearly twenty years. I still do it because I love it and I am proud of what our industry can achieve. Working in TV is a real pleasure and a privilege. It is something that should be more accessible, more diverse and a viable career choice for people of all backgrounds.

This research makes for sobering reading. It shows how the UK's TV production industry takes its toll on mental health. It sets out how it has become a toxic environment and an enabling one for bullies. And it lays bare how the industry disregards discrimination towards women, disabled people, ethnic minorities and those from a working class background.

Someone once remarked to me that if this was any other industry, there'd be an undercover documentary exposing the working practices within it. I hope this report shines a light where there has been darkness for far too long.

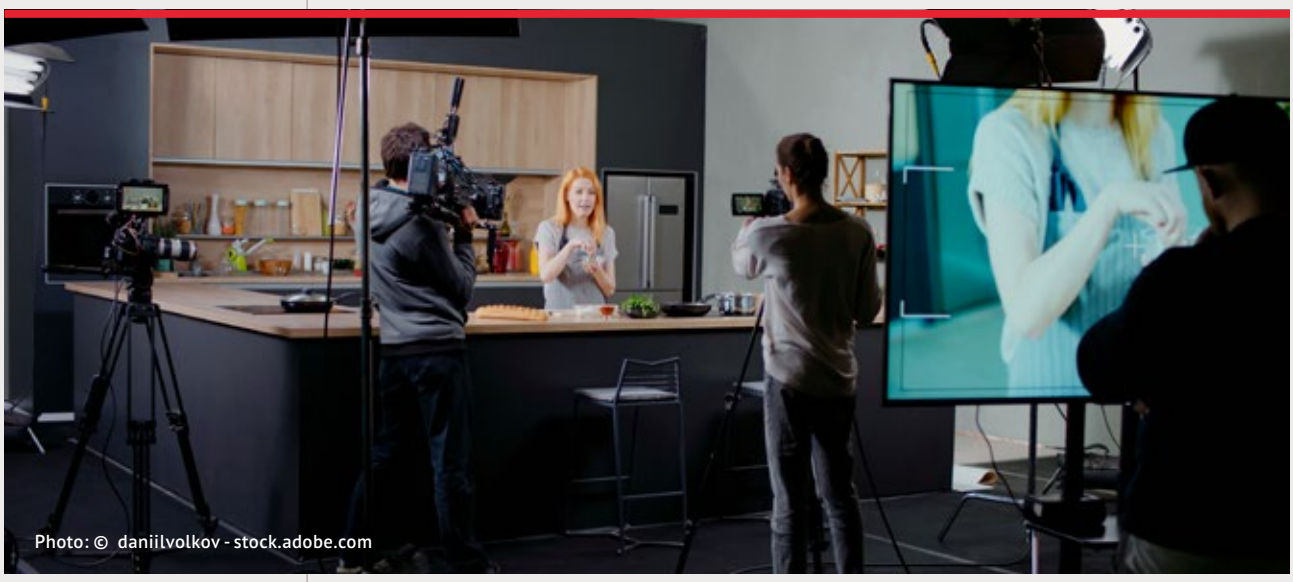
James Taylor is Chair of the Unscripted TV Union (Part of Bectu) and Co-Administrator of Viva La PD

Introduction

The UK film and television industries have been hailed as a success story, and in many ways, rightly so. Yet it would seem that this success has been bought at a price paid for by a largely freelance workforce. The resounding and emphatic findings of this study are that these industries in general, and unscripted television as a subsector in particular, have a problem.

During the six months we have been analysing the data produced by our survey and compiling this report, there has been a steady stream of press stories graphically illustrating many of the very issues we have been examining. They range from reported allegations of high profile reality shows where staff are routinely shouted at and forced to work excessive hours without breaks, to accusations of sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour and bullying. For obvious reasons, such stories in the press often come from anonymous sources and are strenuously denied. There is often an implication that they originate with a few disaffected staff, or where evidence is indisputable, an inference that it's a problem of a few 'bad apples'. This research tells a different story. It suggests a widespread and complex set of related problems that have become entrenched in an entire work culture.

For over a decade, a growing body of scholarship has been highlighting many of the issues that are now beginning to be more openly discussed (see the references and selected reading section of this report for some key examples). It is clear that the COVID -19 pandemic – and the perilous situation that many, particularly freelance workers, found themselves in during the first lockdown – triggered a level of critique, and self-examination, that the television industry has never experienced before. The issues themselves are not new. But until recently, many such concerns were only whispered, or at best acknowledged with a kind of regretful resignation: 'it's just the way the industry works'.



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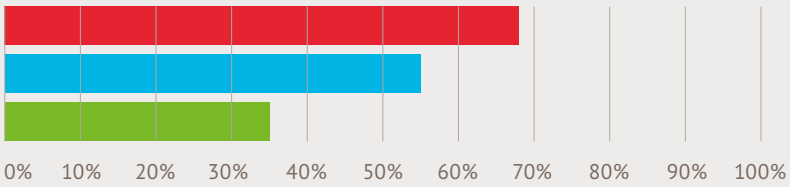
It would be a mistake to assume that the timing of this new dissatisfaction – this appetite for change – is only (or even mainly) a response to the pandemic. This moment is a consequence of the alignment of a number of stars over a period of months and years. The swell in support for Black Lives Matter, which followed in the wake of #MeToo, was a reminder of how limited the industry's progress in diversifying its workforce has been, despite endless 'initiatives' over two decades. The uncomfortable public scrutiny of TV's gender pay gap – another running sore – is one more tangible example of mood change. The recent DCMS Select Committee report on public service broadcasting, meanwhile, makes it clear that progress on diversity within the industry remains glacially slow notwithstanding years of policies, actions and audits purporting to support this agenda – itself indicative of fundamental problems in the way the workforce is recruited and managed. In February 2020, just as the pandemic was taking hold, The Film and TV Charity published *The Looking Glass*, a report that revealed an alarmingly high number of those working in the TV, film and cinema industries experienced mental health problems, suggesting that this state of affairs was attributable to poor working conditions (such as over-long hours, high levels of stress, poor work-life balance, etc). There has been a dawning recognition that the industry's skills shortages may have less to do with recruitment, and more to do with poor retention in an industry that considers its workforce to be disposable. Meanwhile Bectu's Unseen on Screen campaign has provided a glimpse of a work culture that tolerates bullying and intimidating behaviour. The resurgence in the profile of the union Bectu, the appearance of a range of campaigning and reform groups, and the emergence of initiatives like the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, have all contributed to a propitious sense that the status quo can no longer continue.



68% have considered leaving for an alternative career in the last year

55% were already considering such a move before the onset of Covid-19

When asked if, knowing what they now know, they would still have pursued a career in TV, **35%** said 'no'

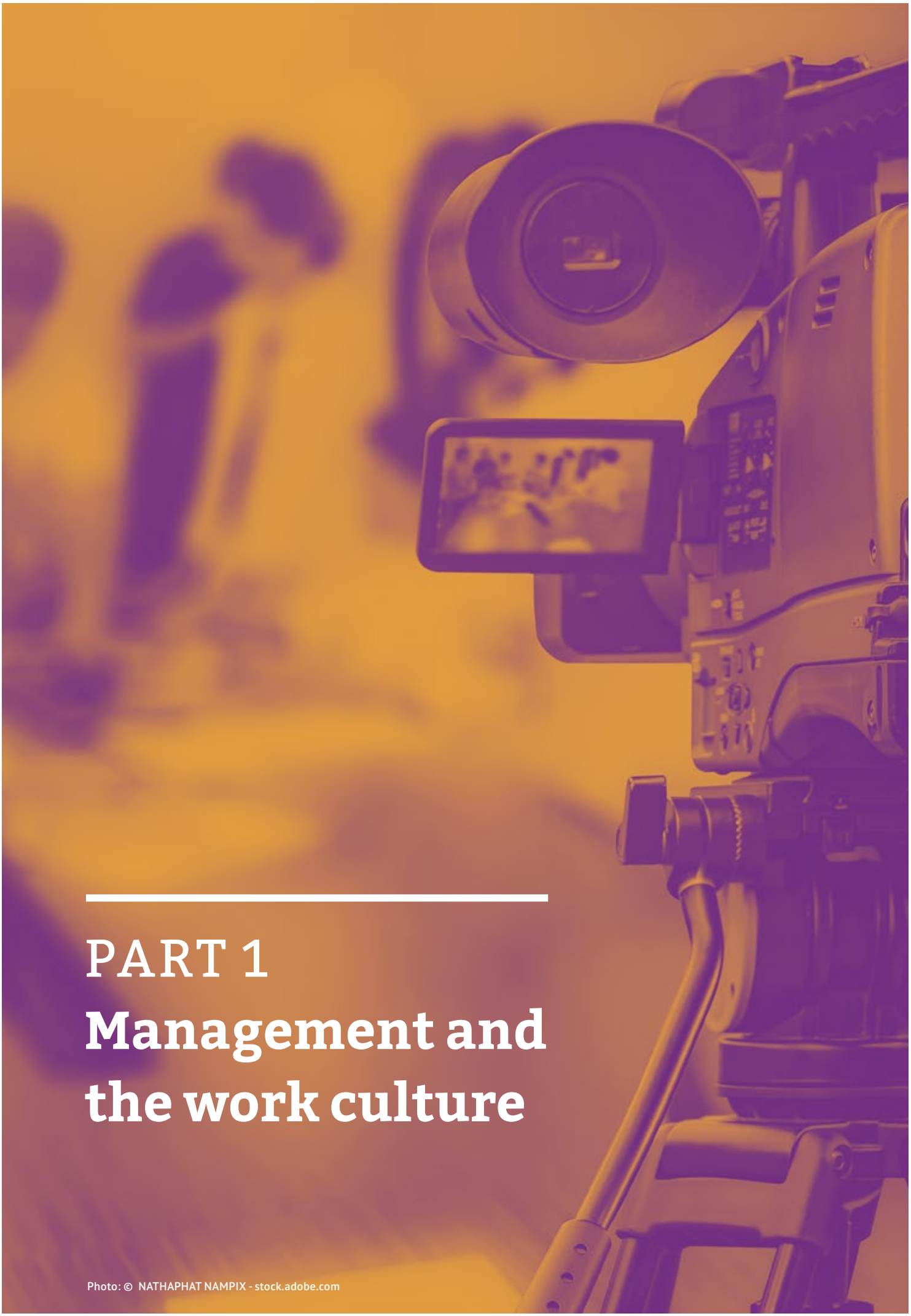
FIGURE 1: **Covid-19 has highlighted a widespread loss of confidence in the TV industry as a place of suitable employment.**

The purpose of this study is to provide a fuller picture of the experience of the TV labour market than has previously been available, with a particular focus on those who work in unscripted content. Casualisation and the growth of non-standard forms of employment increasingly came to characterise the TV sector over more than two decades. Whilst some of the consequences of these changes have been plain to see, what has often been less clear, particularly among those working at its coalface, is the extent of their reach, the inter-connectedness of many of these issues, and their systemic nature. It is this which has been our focus here. By examining perceptions of the style and effectiveness of organisational management – in particular, human resource management practices – we hope to present a clearer idea of the industry's essential state of health, in order to inform current conversation about how this might be improved to the benefit of the sector as a whole. We have taken it upon ourselves to make a number of specific recommendations with policy implications. These are based on our reading and interpretation of our findings, and may or may not reflect the views of our contributors. As authors, we take full responsibility for these. We hope that, at the very least, they will spark some lively debate.

The extensive survey that underpins this report was undertaken between 6th December and 18th December 2020. It consisted of 74 questions (61 multiple choice and 13 open-ended). We had 1184 responses, with our respondents taking an average of just over 40 minutes to complete it. Each open-ended question was then coded. Initial sets of nodes were created after a review of a sample of responses; these formed the basis of a more detailed process of computer-aided analysis to help identify emerging patterns and ideas.

Respondents were self-selecting, and came from a wide range of roles: 53% described themselves as working in editorial roles, 17% in senior management, 18% in production and only 9% in craft. Most respondents reported having more than ten years of experience working in the industry (57%). The majority of respondents have management responsibilities as part of their current role (70%). Just 6% identified themselves as disabled, and 14% identified as being from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic group. (A full profile of our respondents can be found can be found in the Appendix to this report).

A preliminary report was produced within three weeks of the survey's closing, focused on the key findings from the quantitative data. This more detailed report draws extensively from the qualitative data. As much as possible we have expressed the views of our respondents in their own words. We make no apology for the extensive use of illustrative quotes, since it is the voices of our participants that provide such valuable insight into the lived experience of work in the UK's TV industry.



PART 1
Management and the work culture

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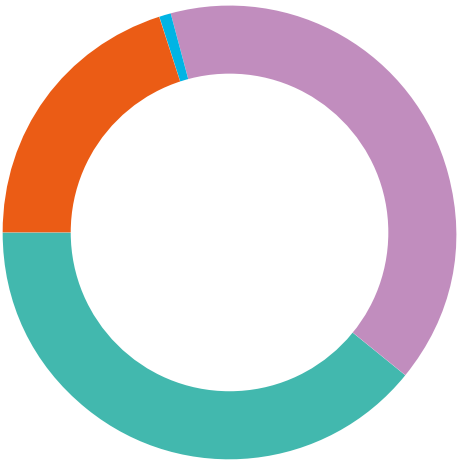
"Good management is the exception"

"Generally good management is the exception, especially at owner managed companies. The list includes bullying, shouting, swearing, being poked in the chest, micromanagement, excessive presenteeism and long hours culture, lack of boundaries, blame culture, poor communication, poor scheduling and budgeting, not backing decisions and failure to manage expectations of the commissioner." (Series Director)

FIGURE 2:
Most respondents felt teams were well managed only half the time or less.

It is management that determines the culture of an organisationand responses from professionals at all levels of the industry attribute to management responsibility for an unhealthy work culture at the heart of the UK TV industry. Poor planning and people skills in general serve to exacerbate the stresses produced by shrinking production budgets and unrealistic delivery expectations.



"Unachievable expectations"

The chief underlying cause of poor management is considered to be the "unachievable expectations" placed on teams who are "trying to deliver shows on a shoestring" and to "impossible schedules". These fundamental incongruities, which permeate the whole production process, are attributed to decisions made at the commissioning stage.

Unrealistic timeframes lead to "shortened recruitment and planning time", impacting on recruitment and casting as well as creating costs further down the line:

"I worked on one show where it hadn't been signed-off by the channel in time for the casting call-out to go out which led to a very stressful environment as we scrambled to get enough contestants together to make the series." (Assistant Producer)

Channels are thought to be "out of touch" with the real costs of production, but production companies are often complicit in their keenness to secure contracts, suggesting "that a project can be done in less time and/or with less money than it actually can".

> "All too often commissioners are promised the world but with no realistic ways of achieving it with the budget and staff available and that is where poor management comes in." (Producer)

Problems rooted within the commissioning stage are then exacerbated at company level, as margins are prioritised,and budgets tightened further. "Taking too much off the top to hit their targets" leads to the under-resourcing and "unworkable schedules" creating a pressure that sets the tone of the entire management culture.

> "Some companies try and save money from the budget not to put on the screen or as a contingency, but to keep as profit. This means that although there are lines in the budget for specific roles, they are never filled, instead the actual team are expected/forced to work longer hours and take on tasks they have never done before, quite often tasks well above their pay grade and experience." (Development Producer)

"Trying to deliver shows on a shoestring," in the view of many professionals, not only produces "lacklustre content" but "sets the team up for long working hours, stress and bullying" from the start. In addition, a lack of lead time often makes for chaotic organisation, resulting in the waste of the limited resources available:

> "Being sent away for a few days casting, only to get there, receive a phone call and come straight back to the office where my help was more needed. Same for location . . . Going a few hours away for casting only to sit in a corner all day and make phone calls, which I could have done from the office . . ." (Assistant Producer)

The under-staffing of productions is considered to be a fundamental problem by a majority of our respondents. In most cases this is quite simply a result of "not having adequate funds to employ enough staff for the task at hand", as one Producer recounts, resulting in teams working "unsustainable" hours. In addition, however, many respondents criticise production companies for "hiring too many senior level people and not enough juniors . . . to *do* the work, rather than just sign it off", in particular, "hiring a surfeit of expensive part-time execs and not enough production coordinators or researchers". A Production Manager, meanwhile, expresses a concern that "smaller budgets mean series producers are not included on more and more productions" resulting in a lack of "direction and coherence" across the project.

Planning

> "Of course, the nature of TV is that plans change, however the best managers seem able to 'plan for the changes of plan'. They keep the team abreast of where the project is up to, and what their intentions and expectations are." (Producer Director)

Poor planning is identified as a common problem. In many cases this is directly related to the same unrealistic timeframes, and managers "deciding that the timescale to set up a shoot is determined by their delivery date rather than by the amount of time it will actually take to set up a shoot". Plans frequently fail to account for "basic things like travel or paperwork/media wrangling", location recce, or "briefing talent and crew", or to allow for "even the most obvious and common disruptions (e.g. bad weather, traffic problems)". The result is that crew are expected to "plough on", working without breaks and for days extending well beyond their contracted 10 or 12 hours. Further pressure is put upon crews by last minute changes to shooting scripts and locations, with one Self-Shooting PD recalling an email received "literally driving to the shoot . . . can we please change location and film another sequence."

Similar problems are reported in post-production, with one Editor describing "terrible planning, terrible (lack of) communication, terrible logistics in terms of the planning of edit suites and an often complete lack of workflow and pipeline management". Again it is staff who must compensate for managerial shortcomings.

> "I've just worked on a show where the expectation was that the edit would just keep working to the deadline even though the goalposts kept changing from both the execs and the channel. It was unrealistic to expect to deliver anything of quality and no chance it could be finished. The execs would not kick back to the channel and expected us to keep going. We were expected to work three weeks straight, no days off, 12 to 15 hours a day." (Edit Producer)

In some instances poor planning seems to result from a lack of experience or understanding, with unrealistic schedules reflecting ignorance of "the full process of making a TV show". Some managers, for example, simply do not realise that "more time given to pre-production helps . . . save money" down the line, or do not understand "how long it takes to edit a show"; others "have never been on location so have no idea what it's like" and do not appreciate "how physically and mentally exhausting a location-based job can be". This can result, as one Editor recounts, in "gross miscalculation of how long things take and things being missed out completely". Some senior managers, on the other hand, knowingly agree to unfeasible timelines, which one Assistant Producer argues "in itself is mismanagement" not only putting staff under undue stress but ultimately driving costs up and quality down.

People management

Poor management of people is the issue that most exercises our respondents at all levels of the industry. The majority tell that they have experienced poor management of production teams in at least half the projects they have undertaken. Even those who have for the most part encountered good management have shared examples of extremely poor practice of a kind that would not be tolerated in most industries.

> "Some companies literally can't manage people. I put this down to lack of training for the senior staff members. Some companies treat people so badly it's infuriating and there isn't much you can do about it." (Series Director)

Tight budgets, tight deadlines and moving goalposts clearly make management in television very challenging, often "more about fire-fighting than any sort of management or development". The problems are exacerbated, however, by the fact that many managers seem ill-prepared for this aspect of their job. Senior staff, as one Production Coordinator observes, "are promoted due to creative success rather than prowess in management" and for the most part receive no training in "how to manage a team"; in fact, as a senior manager admits, "people are just winging it with no repercussions for poor management". The results are depressingly familiar to many of our respondents:

> "Lack of clear direction, rudeness, bullying, inflexibility, egomania, micromanagement. Your basic endemic TV bullshit really." (Edit Producer)

Unrealistic expectations and the insecurity of their own positions means that senior managers often "struggle with stress" and "take it out on the team because they haven't got [the] support they need or expect everyone to work all hours to make things work".

> "By far the biggest problem is an expectation that staff/crew will work as many hours as necessary to fit the work into the available time." (Self-Shooting PD)

While excessive working hours are seen as a common symptom of poor management, the expectation embedded in TV culture that staff will be "always on" and prepared to work unlimited, unpaid overtime is also seen as a cause, since managers do not have to consider the best use of their most valuable resource. As one Editor puts it: "It's better to work 16-hour days than actually schedule correctly." Meanwhile, cultures of fear and blame mean that struggling managers do not ask for support, and those they manage do not report their concerns, reinforcing a cycle of poor and damaging practices.

Our respondents identify a broad range of specific yet interconnected concerns arising from their experiences as TV workers. In the following sections we discuss some particular features of poor management practices highlighted in their accounts.

Decision-making

Poor planning often reflects poor decision-making and poor decision-making structures. Many productions lack "a clear sense of direction" from senior managers, with indecisiveness, "slow decision-making" and decisions being "rushed through" flagged as equally problematic and often interconnected. Thus, as one Production Manager explains, greenlighting decisions that are too slow put pressure on pre-production teams to get shows "prepped and out of the door to be filming within weeks of commission" with the result that "more impulsive decisions and staffing are made which could affect the budget later on, impact on the schedule or … put more pressure on people" further down the line. This in turn contributes to "chaotic" productions, plagued by "last-minute decision-making and changes of plan". This often begins with commissioners.

> "Irresponsible decision-making from broadcast commissioners leads to inefficiencies and excess pressure on production teams. Commissioning Editors need to be more accountable for changes of direction or reversals of decisions …" (Executive Producer)

Our respondents are particularly frustrated by "changing goalposts" and "unclear expectations". Managers' "inability to prioritise or make decisions [makes] the workload unmanageable for the rest of the team" while "constantly changing the parameters … wastes time and money."

> "Exec and Series Producers not being able to make decisions first, so will ask for all variables to be delivered. Five versions of a cut that should be one. No trust in the team that has been hand-picked for their skills to actually deliver. Then after going around the houses we return pretty much to cut one." (Editor)

Ill-advised budgeting decisions are another source of frustration, making people's jobs "impossible" and ultimately costing more than they save. One Producer Director gives the example of "not paying for transcriptions which then slows down edits drastically and causes them to overrun creating a much greater cost". A Gallery Director, meanwhile, highlights the potentially ludicrous consequences of "having management at company exec level making decisions based on budget and not on what is required" observing that "cancelling camera equipment on a shoot is not a good budget call."

"Blame culture", according to one Series Producer, prevents the proper delegation of responsibility with "too many execs/ commissioners/ network stakeholders so the people on the ground can't make any decisions for themselves". For staff this can result in "three different line managers all having different agendas and giving constantly conflicting instructions" or similarly impossible situations. For example:

> "…changing things in an edit because the exec producer said so then the commissioner from the channel comes to view and doesn't like the changes but the exec doesn't take responsibility for giving the instructions…" (Self-Shooting PD)

The added complexities of COVID -19 have exposed the potentially damaging repercussions of these organisational weaknesses:

> "On a recent shoot that was shut down due to a (false) positive COVID test there was a complete breakdown of communication between the Directors of the Production Company, the Production team and the crew. Ultimately this came down to a great deal of hesitancy from the broadcaster, which meant that we had two occasions where shoots (which involved travel across the country) were stood down 72 hours before crew were due to travel…" (Production Coordinator)

Our respondents find that decisions are too often made by individuals who do not have the appropriate experience or knowledge to do so. Thus companies will employ someone "because they 'get on with the talent' rather than because they're good at their job" as one Series Producer explains, "leading to everyone else on the team having to make up for that person's lack of experience or poor decision-making". A Line Producer, meanwhile, complains of "senior management failing to make decisions other than creative, so leaving aside legal, financial or team welfare which should fall under their remit".

In many cases it appears that poor decision-making practices speak to, and are enabled by, the culture of long hours and fundamental lack of consideration for the team. There are no repercussions, it seems, for a manager whose "illogical" choices "make life harder unnecessarily for the ever smaller crews on location", or for "a commissioner who keeps changing their mind", or for "editorial decisions being taken late at night the day before shoots". On the contrary there is, as one Producer Director observes, "a mindset that we will work long hours because we have to and there is no other choice". At best these practices create a "very rushed and stressful working environment" and at worst productions and people break down:

> "…another production fell apart when the Series producer would not make an editorial decision (changed the shoot at 10pm the night before and expected me to action this) you just cannot live like that." (Production Coordinator)

Time-management

> "I very often have extra workload placed on my shoulders by senior editorial people . . . not meeting their own deadlines and feeding back late with the expectation that I'll work extra hours for free." (Self-Shooting PD)

Given that time is such a limited and valuable resource, managers' inability to effectively manage their own time, or that of their team, is especially galling for many of our respondents. The list of poor management practices in this respect includes "poor timekeeping", "continuous postponement or cancellation of meetings", "setting spontaneous meetings 5 mins before", "recruiting for roles to start the next day or next week" and "emailing on evenings and weekends" – the latter often "about something that could wait until Monday morning".

All too often "last minute changes are given to junior staff at home time and they are expected to turn things around before the morning". The frequency with which this happens does not make it any less stressful – in fact one Researcher describes the tension of anticipation, waiting for that moment when he and his colleagues will arrive at the end of their contracted hours "only to be given a long list of 'urgent' tasks which should have been delegated earlier in the day". As one Development Producer confirms "sometimes you know full well that decision was made at 1pm but you find out at 5pm". These practices result in a great deal of unpaid overtime for the staff involved, and often impact on other team members – as one DV Director remarks: "Schedules being sent out super late in the evening [means] not being able to plan your life through not knowing when you're working."

> "I've had calls at midnight from Producers who call and say 'I'm so sorry I know it's late but can we just go through the schedule or the per diems for tomorrow?'. That's not urgent! Calls at midnight should only be life and death. And do we get compensated for this? Nope." (Production Manager)

All this, as one Producer Director observes, is justified as "part of the nature of unscripted", when in reality it could be avoided with better planning. There are some managers, however, who, far from respecting the work-life balance of staff "believe that their team should be available 24/7", habitually "demanding things out of work hours, late in the night, weekends – with the expectation for it be completed immediately". As one senior Casting Producer remarks, late night calls are "fair enough if there is an emergency on a shoot" but otherwise there is "no excuse". People, as a Producer Director puts it, should not expect other members of the team "to drop everything because they have not planned their time efficiently . . .".

Communication

> "Some senior people in television are, ironically, appalling communicators." (Series Producer)

Our respondents are frequently frustrated by "poor communication" by managers at all levels, including a fundamental "lack of communication from senior members of production to the people who are actually producing the programmes". Instead there are "lots of separate conversations happening with different people, with everyone on a different page". This impacts negatively on efficiency and the quality of the final show as well as staff wellbeing.

There is often "little to no briefing before production begins" so that people are unclear about expectations. This is unnecessarily stressful, as highlighted by one Assistant Producer who finds a lack of "proper introductions" on a new job makes her feel "really anxious and not good enough because everyone else seems to know what they're doing". It also generates additional work for the team:

> "When I joined nobody introduced me, or introduced themselves so I didn't know who individuals were, their responsibilities or titles. There was no formal handover to me, or clear explanation of the systems used for the production. I felt on the back foot and I was regularly on the phone to the production co-ordinator and manager because I felt nothing had been clearly explained to me about how the production functioned." (Shooting AP)

During production, many respondents report a sense of being "kept in the dark" about key decisions and being "passed bits of information at the last minute" rather than being given a "clear bigger picture". This is exacerbated by "senior team members contradicting and undermining one another leading to confused messages". As a result, teams are left guessing at what they are trying to achieve. Meanwhile, a failure to share key information and to involve junior staff in meetings creates "a culture of people feeling left out and feeling like they aren't valued enough to be kept in the loop".

> "A recent experience saw me working with an SP and an exec with shockingly bad communication skills. No guidelines or templates on how to make the show, no checking in to see how the edit [was] going, not making themselves available to answer questions, not sending feedback on time (in one case, four days late in a seven-week edit), not checking to see how your working day is or why you're forced to stay late." (Edit Producer)

Some of the problems would appear to be structural, arising because "productions are too fragmented into too many stages e.g. casting, shoot and edit". Sometimes, as a result, "information isn't passed down so you end up on shoots or productions unprepared". In particular, our respondents are concerned about a lack of communication together with "a 'them' and 'us' attitude" between production and editorial. Another concern is the "huge chasm . . . opening up between production and post-production" which creates considerable inefficiencies. One Editor describes "being left with a pile of rushes and very little idea of what the programme is supposed to look like" while another is frustrated by the "surprisingly common" problems arising when notes are not passed on "resulting in days of pointless labour chasing the wrong 'spin'".

There is a sense that poor communication between teams means that the work itself becomes "diluted in meaning, and no one can claim artistic ownership for it". There can also be serious financial repercussions when managers fail to listen to their teams. One Producer Director describes repeatedly flagging problems to an Exec, only to be ignored and given the sense that "they thought I was being the problem"; the result was an eight-week editing overrun that "could have been avoided". Experiences of this nature are not uncommon.

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Professional feedback and support

> "There is no proper feedback process in the industry. People begin and end jobs having no idea whether they are qualified, able to do the role, have done a good/bad job, areas of improvement etc." (Shooting Assistant Producer)

A lack of constructive feedback – either during or after a job – is frequently cited as a key management issue. Our respondents find it undermining when executives fail to "acknowledge any of the hard work of the team" at any point, or allow a long project to end "without even a 'thank you' email". They describe having to "read between the lines" to tell whether their work is satisfactory. The fact that there is no convention of (or time for) "exit interviews or general production practice reviews" means that there is no opportunity to "learn from our mistakes and failures".

> "The problem, even in good teams, is a lack of positive management practices (reviews, support, training, giving people feedback and chances to improve their skills). There's never any time for people to arrive as anything other than already being able to do the job." (Producer)

Our respondents find "a general reluctance to give honest and constructive feedback if someone isn't performing well". Many managers will "totally avoid any confrontation", talking about a person's performance behind their back, rather than addressing concerns while they "quietly shuffle them out the door". Thus people may be told to leave the production or "simply not be hired again" and remain completely unaware of the reasons.

> "I think a lot of people in this industry struggle with how to deal with poorly performing personnel. I think there is a tendency to ignore it rather than try to improve the situation … reinforcing negative practices in the industry." (Line Producer)

Often work is "taken away from people if they can't instantly do it perfectly"; instead of managers sitting people down and talking them through where they're going wrong and how they can improve things" the work is simply "passed on to someone else to fix". As well as creating extra work for other members of the team, this approach means "people are allowed to make the same mistakes over and over again" with no opportunity to improve. In other cases our respondents have encountered "a culture of sacking people if they are deemed not up to scratch" rather than supporting them, which is described as "brutal" and "toxic" – especially given that the proponents of these poor management practices are often overstretching their teams to begin with, setting "unrealistic expectations or time pressures" and viewing requests for support as "a nuisance or a sign of weakness".

> "Earlier this year I saw a shooting PD sacked from a very low budget, very high pressure series because the Exec felt he wasn't doing a good job, but this poor man was set up to fail … His work actually ended up being in the final product, but it must have been a kick in the teeth for him to see … that he was replaced by a producer and DoP – if he had had that support in place, I'm sure he would have done a good job." (Assistant Producer)

The lack of support and feedback given to less experienced staff is particularly damaging. Our respondents report junior staff being put on productions that "outstrip their experience" without proper guidance, "not being told clearly what's required", and being blamed when mistakes are made (either by themselves or by more senior colleagues). Poor and untrained managers pick apart people's work "in a way that makes them feel bad at their job", one Producer explains, "rather than using positive reinforcement to get the best out of the team member to empower them to do better".

> "I've seen senior staff latch on to single mistakes of individuals. And leave little room for growth or support that damages the career chances of junior staff. People are written off very quickly." (Production Manager)

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Micromanagement

Lacking the skills to guide and support their teams, many managers resort to micromanagement, a tendency that is highlighted as "a real problem in television". Some of our respondents ascribe this to working "in an industry of control freaks", but others see it as a symptom of anxiety.

> "Anxious executive producers insisting on attending location shoots or even surreptitiously watching rushes behind the Director's back are lows that I've witnessed recently even from smart capable execs." (Producer Director)

Like many others in the industry, this problem starts at the top, with "Commissioning Editors not trusting creative decisions" and too much "micromanaging from broadcasters". It reflects a fundamental "lack of trust in staff;" and a resulting "failure to delegate". Micromanagement, our respondents report, "disempowers the team" and "prevents junior members from doing their jobs, even if very experienced." As well as making individuals feel "undervalued", it interferes with all areas of production. One Assistant Producer describes how "overly involved and controlling" series producers too often undermine the agency of the editorial team which is "always a disaster". A Sound Supervisor explains that, when leaders "prefer to do everything themselves" the rest of the team "become confused as to their role . . . , take a step back and so the team falls apart". A Gallery Producer describes how on some "big prime TV shows" staff can be left "waiting around for hours to get things signed off or waiting around on shoots to get approval from the office to move on", adding "if you can't trust [your team], then why did you employ them?"

> "My worst experience was a Prod Exec who micromanaged to an exhausting level until it didn't suit and then complained about how she was doing my job for me. It was toxic and at times felt abusive." (Production Manager)

At its worst, micromanagement becomes a form of workplace bullying, often going hand in hand with other forms of management behaviour that are at best inconsiderate and at worst abusive.

Working hours

> "On every job I can think of, the company have relied on the good will of their staff working long hours and overtime to complete projects on time and on budget which have not been properly budgeted for or managed." (Assistant Producer)

The theme of working hours is raised a number of times in this report across a number of contexts; this reflects the frequency and vehemence with which our respondents raise concerns about this aspect of their experience and the far-reaching consequences of the culture and practice of working extremely long hours. While there is general acceptance that long hours are often inevitable during shooting, the fact that some members of a team are paid overtime while others are not is contentious, as are the assumptions and expectations that lead to practices such as presenteeism and 24/7 availability. The encultured assumptions and expectations around working hours that have become widespread within the industry are seen as underpinning and enabling many poor management practices.

For freelancers these assumptions are enshrined in the buy-out contract, which effectively lays the responsibility for the consequences of poor management decisions at the feet of the worker.

> "Expectations to work all hours [are] set out in most freelance buy-out contracts, i.e. working hours are in line with business needs. This results in long working hours, weekend work etc. but no extra pay. If you invoice extra days, the implication is that you didn't manage your workload properly or that the extra work wasn't authorised in advance. There is a real gap between the results expected and the workload required to achieve this." (Producer)

Long hours, as one Shooting AP points out, "are not something unique to our industry", however, other industries are regulated to protect the health and safety of workers. Whereas "a truck driver will have a certain amount of hours they can drive in a day", for example, in television it is not uncommon to do a ten hour day on location followed by a five hour drive. There are also disparities within the industry between, for example, traditionally unionised technical crew who "can only film for a 12-hour day" and production staff who are regularly required to work an 18-hour day. Indeed, the disparity is recognised by other crew members:

> "Members of production [are] expected to work ridiculous hours with no overtime or compensation, often going weeks without a day off. They are made to feel as if they are lucky to have the job and cannot complain or they will be replaced." (Camera Operator)

The notion of being 'lucky to have a job' in a competitive environment supports a culture where staff are expected "to work overtime for free, sacrifice weekends and skip personal events without complaints"; professional pride and a sense of responsibility to co-workers is also exploited by managers to support demands for what are, in fact, "illegal working hours".

> "Regularly expected to work until 10pm or we would be 'letting the team down'. This type of management leads to a constant state of anxiety and leads to negative lasting effects on mental health. I was signed off for 2 weeks through stress." (Assistant Producer)

It is this culture that likewise supports the under-resourcing or funding of productions, as staff strive to plug the gap created by "massive expectations of a production without the matching budget" by "doing 70 – 100 hours a week".

> "Commissioner X thought it was absolutely fine to ask me as the PD to shoot an entire 45-minute programme in 2.5 days . . . I worked until midnight prepping, started shooting at 7am and didn't finish until 1am the next day; I then had to get up and do the same. This isn't isolated. Crews are expected to just go out and deliver no matter the impact on . . . their personal health." (Self-Shooting PD)

The accounts of "insane hours" required from our respondents are too many to include here but the following sample gives a flavour of some of the worst management practices in this respect:

> "One particularly awful day before a shoot I finished work at 2:30am and my taxi arrived at my house to take me to work at 6:15am." (Assistant Producer)

> "I had to do 180 hours of overtime over a four-week period in order to get a one-hour programme cut and ready to go to air . . . I am a fast editor, but even I cannot cut a complex one-hour documentary in four weeks without doing horrendous amounts of overtime." (Editor)

> "I work on a well-known and large-scale production that has been running for a number of years. On several occasions I've finished at 11pm or later and have been asked to be back on location for 6am the next day – typical for Runners." (Runner)

Moreover, staff are often expected to keep up these kinds of hours over protracted periods. One Assistant Producer recounts working on a production where "the shortest day of a 23-day filming schedule was around 16 hours" while a Production Manager describes as "horrific" the experience of "working 18 to 20-hour days for two months".

While representing some of the more extreme demands, these are not isolated instances of poor practice. Excessively long working hours have become for many "the 'norm' rather than an exception", just "part of the deal" together with "an expectation that you can just drop everything" as required. Anyone expressing "dismay" is told that "it's normal in the industry and because budgets are tight". One Producer Director describes "being told by my boss 'I just assumed you'd do a 24-hour shift' when I asked for … someone to come and cover some of the work as I was exhausted", while another recounts how "an SP once laughed when I asked when he thought I'd be able to sleep, based on the proposed schedule". Employers have come to expect absolute flexibility from staff.

> **"When you sign off for a job, it's as though your soul is theirs. There are no boundaries …, no separation. No structure." (Producer Director)**

It is not only during shooting, moreover, that staff are expected to work excessive hours. A parallel culture of presenteeism has developed in some areas of pre- and post-production whereby people are "expected to stay late every day because 'that's how it's always been done'", with team members criticised "for taking a lunch break and leaving to go home on time at 6pm". Many of our respondents consider this difficult to justify.

> **"It is understandable that during filming you will be working longer hours than usual but you shouldn't be expected to leave the office late in the evenings most nights." (Production Manager)**

Our respondents are aware that the hours they find themselves working with "no downtime" are impacting on their "relationships, family life, social life … physical and mental health, etc.", yet they feel unable to protest.

> **"Everyone is on their knees from production managers, directors, through to runners. 12-hour days turn into 14-hour days, emails and texts fly around at 8am, 11pm, and all through the weekend. Doils can't be taken to ensure a shoot is able to happen, and everyone just carries on, worried about creating fuss or a bad reputation." (Shooting AP)**

The perception is that employers are indifferent both to the health and safety risks posed by staff working long hours without breaks, and to the "long- and short-term" impact on the mental health of their teams.

Attitude to staff wellbeing

Our respondents describe managers as appearing indifferent to the wellbeing of their teams, remarking upon a lack of "compassion", "empathy" and "respect for freelancer's time". For example, a Producer Director describes "racing to meet a rough-cut deadline … only for the senior editorial staff member to then not watch the playout for a few days" while a production manager describes how many executive producers "have zero consideration for people's home lives and need for rest". Execs themselves are not immune: one describes how she "had a manager nod wisely but say they could not help when struggling under months of 7-day weeks to deliver a difficult project". Such attitudes make people feel devalued

> "I often get the impression management do not care or have time for you – you're a freelancer, once they're done with you and have used all your energy, you're back on your own again … I've had Series Producers/Execs not even bother to introduce themselves or learn my name before directly talking to me or telling me to do something." (Assistant Producer)

Few managers seem to recognise a "duty of care" toward their teams. Many neglect to check in with teams to make sure that they "feel supported and are able to manage their workload", which one Producer Director ascribes to a "fear of hearing a truthful answer". Thus, for example, teams can do "continuous night shifts without any check-ups on wellbeing" while many managers remain unaware of how many hours staff are working.

> "They rarely engage with you around working hours, personal commitments and when things are raised, I've been made to feel like these are an annoyance and I'm not pulling my weight." (Producer Director)

In the experience of one DV Director, "those in senior management positions frankly do not consider the mental health or workload of their team at all". Instead they treat staff as expendable and "just rely on good workers until they break down because they can't cope".

When told someone is struggling or needs more time, managers are largely unsympathetic. As one Editor puts it "the implication always seems to be that it's my problem and not the schedule/budget". Almost as galling is managers "witnessing staff working to exhaustion and saying they shouldn't work so hard yet not providing support or time off". Effective management under such stressful and highly pressured conditions requires good people skills, but unfortunately these are routinely lacking, not least as managers themselves are often "overwhelmed in their own workloads".

Health and Safety

A range of concerns are reported around the management of health and safety. Some of these arise as a result of inexperience, others because, as one Director of Photography observes, managers are "happy to put efficiency and cost over safety" with the result that "blind eyes are turned when working conditions have become dangerous". Respondents often feel "pressured" to put themselves at risk, and meet with "indifference" when they share their concerns.

Poor management practices in this respect range from "filming on live train tracks and drone filming without permission because senior staff members prioritise the shot over safety" to "dropping people off into remote and dangerous locations with little support " to simply leaving vulnerable junior staff "at the other side of London at 1am . . . with no way to get back home". One of the most common, however, and one that seriously impacts on staff welfare over time, is failing to provide "proper meals" – or in some cases any food at all – or breaks during a shooting day.

> "The job [a three-week shoot] required me to sit in the back of a van, operating rig cameras from 10pm to 6am, in the winter, with no runners to provide food and drink, and no opportunity for a break." (Shooting AP)

Another common concern is around unsafe driving with people regularly "being expected to drive huge distances to get back home after long shoots rather than overnighting" or being asked "to drive in foreign countries after long haul flights". In more extreme cases people are asked to break the law, with one researcher, for example, being asked "to get a runner to drive a van they were not insured on (and were too young to be insured on a vehicle that size)". In this instance the researcher refused. In other cases senior managers have knowingly made decisions that put lives in danger:

> "I worked on a show where I had scheduled out our movements and they said they wouldn't get it past the insurers, so they re-tweaked it and lied to get the shoot approved . . . We then had 2 car crashes in 2 weeks from two junior members of the team who were utterly exhausted . . ." (Producer)

COVID -19 has highlighted some managers' disregard for health and safety, with examples of companies failing to provide PPE or COVID safety training, or demanding staff "come to the office to work" in opposition to government advice. One runner reports "sticking to the COVID measures put in place" then having a manager "kick off" at her because it was "an inconvenience for them". The pandemic has also highlighted a "lack of mental health awareness and support" within the industry, as illustrated by the experience of one Series Producer who notes that "I've just researched, shot, edited and delivered 6 eps in 18 weeks during a pandemic working remotely" and yet "no one has asked about my mental health".

Mental Health

Many employers appear oblivious to the potential impact of experiencing or witnessing traumatic events on the mental health of staff. A Producer Director, describes how after a traumatic incident on one particular series the junior member of staff concerned was" told to have a cup of tea and just carry on working". In this instance other team members "overrode the SPs advice" and stood in so the member of staff could take the rest of the day off. More commonly, however, people are left to their own devices:

> "Having worked on multiple blue light series on the front line with medical staff and never been offered counselling or even spoken to about my experiences by production, I ended up paying for counselling myself as I recognised there were things I needed to address once we had wrapped." (Producer)

It is perhaps not surprising then, that managers fail to recognise the deleterious effects of "intense production schedules" and "pressure" created by poor management practices leading to "a constant state of anxiety" as people struggle to meet impossible targets. Several of our respondents describe suffering from panic attacks or other physical symptoms of stress such as migraines or vomiting brought on by work. For some this kind of experience simply becomes part of the job:

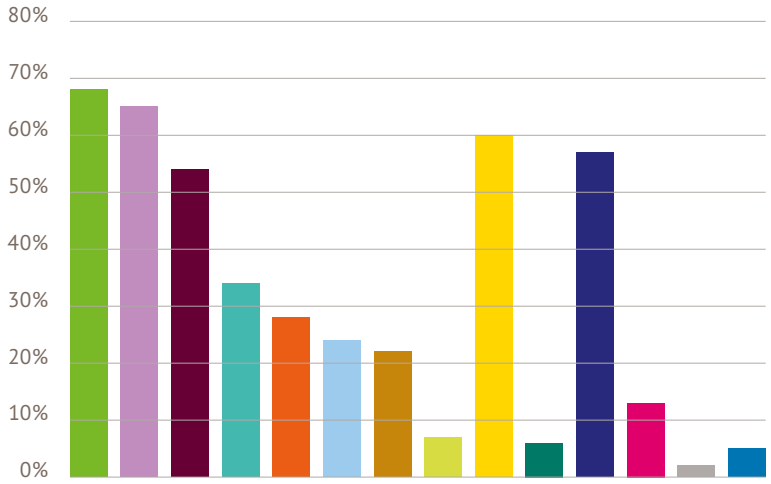
> "Being told to "get on with it" or "well that's your job, deal with it" when you've been working for 9 days straight from 7am – 11pm and have to go to the edit house in central London. You end up crying in the taxi exhausted. One of many examples! So many more I can't even remember them it happens so often. You get used to it!" (Assistant Producer)

Managers' indifference to the wellbeing of their teams can be dehumanising and fosters the kind of disrespect for other professionals that is exemplified by "senior members of the editorial team calling production and runners 'dogsbodies'" and treating them as such. Indeed, one experienced Series Producer believes that dehumanisation has been built into the way teams are structured in recent years, "whereby the Production Executives are kept away from the team, so they don't see the human consequences of their budget decisions". It is only a short step from these behaviours and attitudes to workplace bullying, which is reported as "rife" in the industry, along with "a culture that rewards it."

Bullying and belittling

"I've found that a lot of managers will balance their own anxieties around their role out by bullying junior members, not that they'd recognise it as that. They'll undermine them at every turn so that it looks like that junior member is the problem, rather than the whole production, schedule and management." (Assistant Producer)

FIGURE 3:
More than 93% of respondents claimed to have experienced or witnessed some form of bullying or harassment.



I was expected to work excessive hours **68%**
I felt undermined by someone more senior than me **65%**
I was bullied, harassed or belittled by someone managing me **54%**
I was the victim of sexism in the course of my work **34%**
I was bullied, harassed or belittled by a fellow team member **28%**
I was the victim of sexually inappropriate behaviour in the course of my work **24%**
I was bullied, harassed or belittled by on-screen talent/contributors **22%**
I was the victim of ableism or a refusal to make reasonable adjustments **7%**
I felt my expertise was not recognised or fully utilised **60%**
I was the victim of racism in the course of my work **6%**
I have witnessed bullying behaviour or harassment in the workplace **57%**
I have been discriminated against because of parenting or caring commitments **13%**
None, or prefer not to say **2%**
Other **5%**

Our respondents report bullying as often a consequence of "poor people skills" in managers who have "no idea how to treat the team or get the best out of them", resorting instead to "belittling [and] intimidating behaviour" and to bullying and manipulation to try and get results". In some cases these behaviours arise out of highly pressured working conditions, in which managers "can't keep their own stress to themselves and aim their anger at junior staff", creating a "toxic work environment".

> "I had an awful experience with a casting producer, who constantly patronised, belittled, criticised everything I did. I can't say he was bad at casting but he was an awful manager." (Assistant Producer)

The borderline between bad management practices and bullying is subtle and subjective. Our respondents feel undermined by covert bullying in the form of "dictatorial behaviour" and "rude or impersonal correspondence" as well as more explicitly aggressive behaviour.

> "Bullying ... [is] often done in a way that implies that if unpaid overtime is not worked or the slightest hitch or error occurs then that person will not get another contract, so what happens is people work long hours, make mistakes and cover them up." (Development Producer)

More overt aggression takes many forms, including "picking on" or ignoring individuals, "criticising people behind their backs to other team members", "shouting and swearing at staff", belittling and embarrassing people "in front of a room of people" and making "inappropriate comments", including "racist, sexist and homophobic 'jokes'". Examples from our respondents include a Senior Producer who, on joining the project, "individually took us all into a meeting room and told us he wouldn't have hired us and why"; a casting producer who, when his researcher suffered a bereavement, "used to stand over her shoulder asking how many calls she'd made that day"; and an exec who "pulled a couch across the door [of the edit suite] and fell asleep on it so that the editor and edit producer wouldn't be able to leave on time – which for the exec was 'early', and a sign that the crew were lazy". Our respondents recounted a range of experiences of which this one was typical.

> "Being taken into a room with another producer and shouted at because you hadn't delivered tricky access, you hadn't secured enough before the abroad recce, there wasn't enough content for a story (there was, the presenter agreed and it turned into Episode One of the series despite everyone telling me I was a failure and the story was shit!). The other producer just sat and listened and didn't support. This was an hour before the first bit of filming." (Producer)

Some managers seem oblivious to their impact on team members. Others, however, knowingly use "intimidation" and humiliation as management strategies, "creating an atmosphere of fear and distrust"

> "I've worked for an Exec (now a commissioner) who used bullying tactics to over-work staff and devalue the work they did throughout the course of the production. He would boast about putting staff on his 'blacklist' because of seemingly unfair reasons like going onto another production when their contract had finished, instead of agreeing to an extension." (Assistant Producer)

Many professionals report "gas-lighting" and other forms of deliberately manipulative behaviour by managers calculated to create competition and insecurity, or to maintain control, for example, by "playing off" one member of the team against another.

> "…we were pitted against each other, kept in the dark to create a feeling of insecurity. One manager filmed a heated debate between myself and a colleague after we were told to" decide between ourselves what stories we would own". Then shared it between the execs …" (Senior Producer)

Abuses of power to gain sexual favours and sexual harassment are not uncommon. Some of our respondents report "senior members of production sleeping with junior members and promoting / giving them preferential treatment", as well as managers refusing to provide references when their overtures are rejected. Others describe individuals who habitually subject junior staff to sexual harassment without repercussions.

Female respondents regularly encounter sexism, ranging from "holding meetings where only the male team members were invited to speak" to "being asked by members of senior staff if I am pregnant while waiting for a decision on a contract extension." COVID -19 highlighted particular kinds of gender bias, such as "paying home-schooling women a part-time wage while keeping home-schooling men on their full-time salary". While racism and ableism are also endemic in some areas.

> "I've seen a white production manager complain that there were too many black runners." (Edit Producer)

> "I am deaf. I remember when I was working in props on [a drama series] in 2018 – my art director and designer were both leading the charge on a piss-take where they would call my name from a distance to see whether I could hear it or not. I'd spend my days checking over my shoulder whenever there was a group of people behind and even now, it's really made me paranoid". (Development Researcher)

Bullying often goes "unchallenged" by senior staff, with "red flags" and complaints ignored. People are told that "they should accept poor treatment or unprofessional behaviour as it's 'part of the industry'".

> "I have experienced bullying and verbal abuse on a job. You are expected to just accept it and work your contract because you want to be rehired for that company and not be weak or cause a fuss." (Senior Producer)

Yes, I have reported incidents of bullying and harassment **37%**

No, I haven't reported incidents of bullying and harassment **63%**

FIGURE 4: **37% respondents had reported incidents of bullying or harassment.**

It was resolved to my satisfaction **11%**

It was partially resolved **22%**

It was not resolved to my satisfaction **54%**

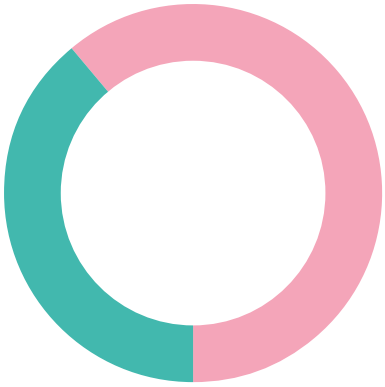
Other **13%**

FIGURE 5: **Only 11% of those who had reported such incidents considered that the matter was satisfactorily resolved.**

In most cases bullying behaviour goes unreported as freelancers are afraid of losing their current jobs or "being blacklisted for rocking the boat".

> "There is a blame culture which means people are scared to flag bad behaviour in the industry as they're scared of being labelled a trouble maker and not working again, most companies don't even have a HR representative so if you don't feel you could talk to your exec or Director about the problem (especially if they ARE the problem) then you have nowhere to turn." (Producer)

Where bullying is reported, our respondents found, it is rarely satisfactorily resolved.



Yes, I have witnessed, or been the victim and not reported it **61%**

No, I have not witnessed, or been the victim and not reported it **39%**

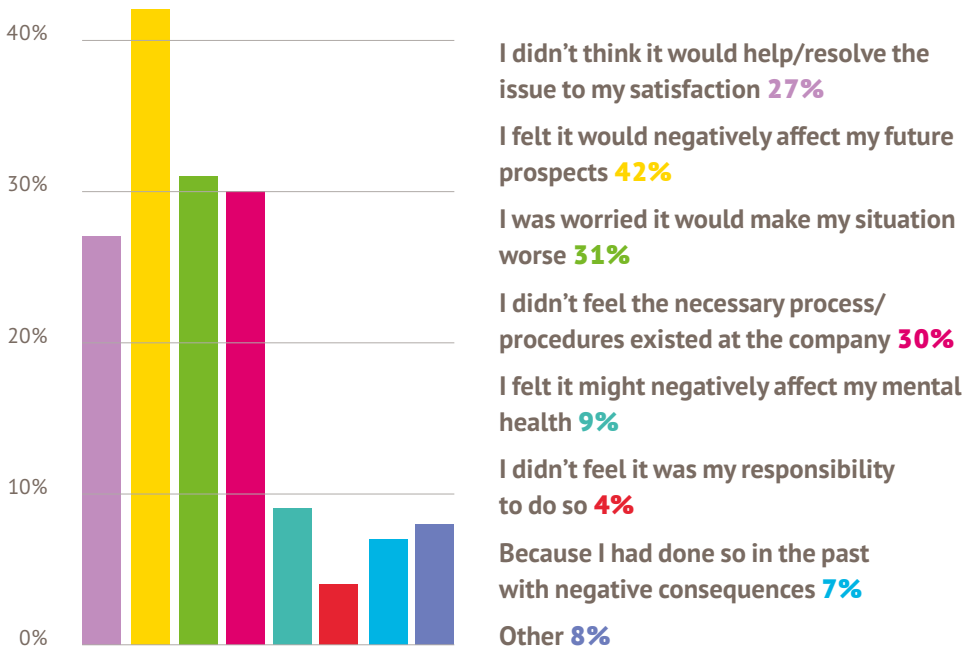
FIGURE 6: **61% had experienced or witnessed such incidents but *not* reported them.**

Many of our respondents have personally experienced the negative consequences of reporting bullies. A Production Executive who was bullied reports making a complaint "and two days later my contract was terminated", while an Edit Producer reports being subjected to 'traumatic' levels of bullying as a direct reaction to "calling out my line manager on their own poor behaviour towards me and the team in general". In many cases companies knowingly retain and protect abusive managers. An Assistant Producer recounts working with a "sociopathic Executive Producer" who was "a danger on set" as well as a bully: "I got fired on Day 8 of 10 after I finally confronted them for being rude and nasty to the only honest Runner on my team. Got full pay though, [because the] Production Coordinator knew they were nuts and dangerous". This is not an isolated example as another respondent illustrates

> "On a major daytime home show, the producers received several complaints about a presenter, mainly regarding sexual harassment and bullying. Editors were asked to compile on-camera evidence and submit it to the executive producer. When the presenter wasn't sacked, it was revealed that the footage was used to keep their fee down during contract negotiations." (Editor)

In the experience of one Edit Producer, "bullies get away with being bullies because of who they know". A Casting Producer confirms that "bullying is allowed if it's from the top or from talent", with companies often protecting, promoting and rehiring known bullies as long as they "make good TV". Bullying behaviour, according to one Producer Director, starts right at the top of the industry with "aggressive bullying commissioners" being actively promoted by broadcasters because "a culture of fear is bizarrely seen as productive in some areas".

FIGURE 7: Reasons why instances of bullying go unreported.



"A culture of fear"

The competitive, freelance nature of the industry contributes to a "culture of fear" described by many of our respondents. Some employers adopt a deliberate strategy of "management by fear of dismissal", instilling insecurity and distrust in their teams.

> "In my last production I was constantly worrying if I didn't hit casting targets I would lose my job." (Assistant Producer).

> "[The] Exec called the show runner back from his family holiday early in order to fire him. HoP was present and it wasn't done discreetly, so everyone of all levels on the production knew about what happened. It was an open secret and incredibly uncomfortable for everyone and created a culture of fear." (Line Producer)

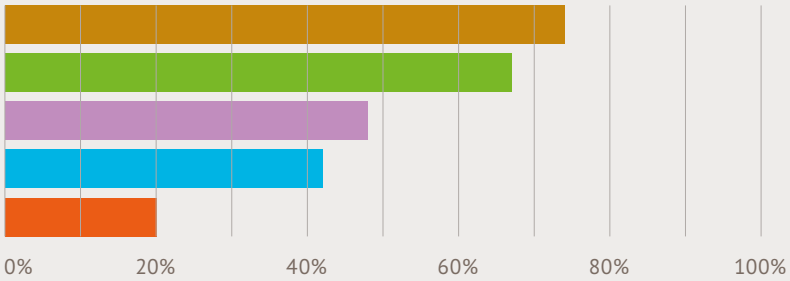
Others explicitly encourage internal competition, gossip and "backstabbing between colleagues" as a means of control. Meanwhile freelance staff at all levels feel that "they are lucky to have the job and cannot complain or they will be replaced", or "labelled a trouble maker" and blacklisted.

> "All freelance staff are frightened of criticising the person who employs them as they know they won't get booked again. This enables a culture of bullying and under-payment and consequent exploitation to thrive." (Runner)

One Production Coordinator recounts how he and a colleague "flagged to our PM and Production Exec that we were feeling burnt out and struggling to keep up with the round-the-clock demands". Their concerns were dismissed – and they "weren't asked back for the next series".

This culture of fear starts at the top, and "bleeds downward". Production companies are themselves "too scared to rock the boat and call out the budget implications" when commissioners change the brief or make unreasonable demands. The same is said of a blame culture that is "rife and toxic", with Commissioning Editors and Executives "passing the buck when things go wrong", people "arbitrarily" sacked for problems not of their making and "senior producers using junior employees as scapegoats".

FIGURE 8: **The impact of bullying and harassment on individuals.**



It was upsetting and/or made me feel uncomfortable 74%

My mental health was negatively affected 67%

It affected the quailty of my work 48%

It made me want to leave the industry 42%

I decided to leave the production before the end of my contract 20%

For many of our respondents, these cultures and practices impact negatively not only on the wellbeing of individuals but on the quality of their work. A significant number had considered leaving the industry as a result and some had walked out of productions. Because our survey was of working professionals, we were unable to capture the experience of any individuals who had actually left television due to abusive management practices.

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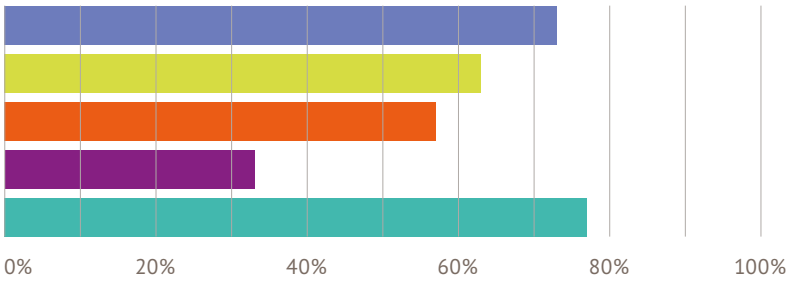
Improving Management Practices

Our respondents are vociferous about the need for change. Many believe that working practices cannot be improved without addressing culture and practice at the very top of the industry. Many identified management training as a priority alongside more responsible commissioning practices on the part of broadcasters.



Compulsory management training for senior team members 73%

Better HR support 63%

A third-party reporting body 57%

Fewer freelance senior managers 33%

Earlier commissioning of series/projects 77%

FIGURE 9: **Strategies which our respondents felt would improve management practices.**

Role and responsibility of commissioners

Commissioners need to be held accountable for the impact of their decision-making on those making the programmes. Too many of the problems identified as poor management are thought to have their origin at the commissioning stage, where broadcasters' expectations are unrealistic, and competition is such that companies over-promise to secure work. It is clear that late greenlighting impacts negatively on hiring, budgeting and scheduling, while, once in production, our respondents are often frustrated by "channels changing parameters" both before and during production.

> "Interference from commissioners is often the cause of the major poor management issues in my experience. Whether that's delay in commissioning, confused / mixed messaging, micromanaging or asking for too much or too little budget, all of the issues that are created from the 'top' trickle down into poor management throughout the team." (Line Producer)

In the view of our respondents, Commissioning Editors "have too much power" despite the fact that many "don't know how [production] works on the ground" and as a result they "often hinder the production wasting time and money". Commissioners, it is said, "are treated like gods but act like spoilt children demanding the undeliverable", given to "temper tantrums" that go "unchecked". They "fail to address concerns" raised by the production teams and, as one Producer Director observes, "often haven't got a clue on how to fix a series that's in trouble and just repeatedly kick down without being constructive".

> "Irresponsible decision-making from Broadcast Commissioners leads to inefficiencies and excess pressure on production teams. Commissioning Editors need to be more accountable for changes of direction or reversals of decisions …" (Executive Producer)

Our respondents' greatest concern, however, is what many see as an "increasing" trend toward commissioning shows on an "impossible budget" that is simply "not robust enough to make a programme of the quality required". The inevitable result is that the pressure "filters down" to teams who are expected to work "endless" hours without recompense. One Editor, with over twenty years' experience in the industry, gives as an example a recent job "where the commissioner said, although they loved the show, that if it was to return the budget needed to be slashed by 25%", adding "so you can imagine where they are going to make savings".

> "I've regularly worked on productions where a company has gained a commission from a channel and accepted a budget to make it, knowing they will not be able to pay the going rate for crew. This seems particularly egregious because it is essentially the exploitation of people for the sake of profit." (Producer Director)

Many would like to see a fairer system that enabled production companies to push back against unrealistic expectations, as well as supporting freelancers to push back against unreasonable rates and conditions; one that valued the skilled individuals on which it depends.

Management training

> "I honestly believe a lot of the current issues in our industry (bullying, racism, stressful working conditions) could be dealt with if there was compulsory training for managers" (Senior Producer)

A great deal of poor management practices generally, and bullying behaviours in particular, are attributed to a lack of management training.

> "I feel like my line manager's behaviour was largely a result of a lack of management training in the industry (rather than them being a terrible person). Although their behaviour was awful, it felt rooted in poor people management skills … Some people are natural leaders and have excellent people skills, but for those that don't have these skills naturally, the gap in effective training in this area can have wide reaching implications for the workforce as well as the production." (Edit Producer)

The industry's persistent failure to address this issue appears to reflect a failure to acknowledge and value management skills in the context of production. "Creative and ambitious people", our respondents observe, are promoted to management positions despite having "no experience of managing people", no idea how to delegate or "motivate less senior members of staff" and no interest in "encouraging or teaching people". As one Senior Producer argues: "you can be a brilliant programme maker … but that doesn't mean you know how to manage people."

> "Our industry needs a real overhaul of those in management positions who simply don't have the skills or basic empathy … to do their jobs." (Development Producer)

Those respondents with management responsibilities are among the most outspoken about a lack of formal training. Most confirm that they have received no management training and many feel that this impedes their ability to fulfil their role, with one production manager identifying as a serious issue "Production Managers and Series Producers who have had no formal management training (myself included)". This, one Producer confirms, leads to highly stressful situations for everyone, including the team manager."

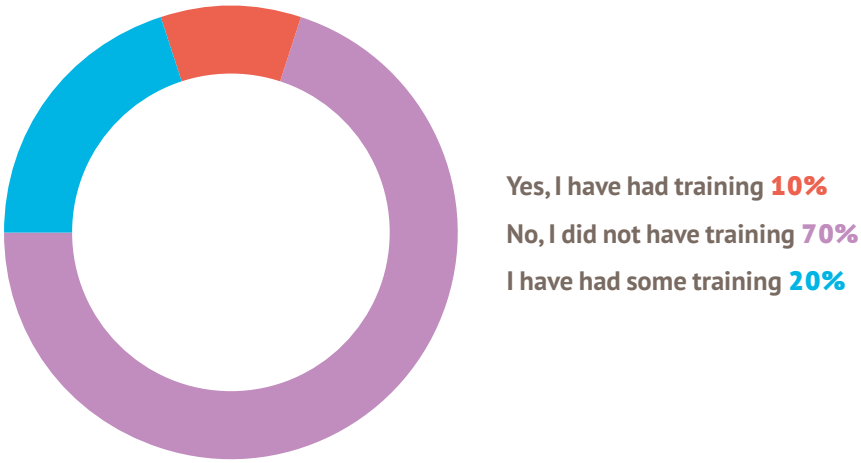


FIGURE 10:
70% of individuals with management responsibilities have received no management training.

As well as lacking opportunities for formal training, one Producer explains, prospective leaders "often don't have opportunities to gain experience in managing teams until it's an integral part of a new position". At this point, a Line Producer confirms, because they are freelance, "the company they are working at is not interested in paying for training." Many believe that progress cannot be made without addressing this lack of management training and expertise.

PART 2
Recruitment & development

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"Who you know, not what you know"

It is clear that a significant number of the issues outlined in Part 1 of this report are directly related to poor human resource management practices, and in particular, to the prevailing attitude to investment in the industry's workforce. This begins with the industry's recruitment practices. Our participants unanimously agree that jobs in television are awarded based on contacts and 'word of mouth' – that "it's strictly who you know, not what you know". Many see this as an inevitable consequence of project-based employment, limited budgets and tight schedules. A few do not see it as problematic, taking the view that talent rises to the top. Most however, including professionals who feel their own careers have benefitted from the current system, are critical of recruitment practices, describing them as "opaque", "unregulated", "nepotistic", "dodgy" and "biased". Lack of regulation means that there are no real checks on individual abuses of power, while recruitment processes (or the lack thereof) are inherently resistant to diversity. As one Producer Director put it "The TV industry seems to think it is above employment law".

> "'Does anyone know a good AP' shouted through the office is more common than someone entering the door on the merits of their CV or a good interview" (Assistant Producer)

This approach, according to one Producer Director, "not only creates a monoculture but results in less creative work and an expensive, last minute panicked trawl for people when the 'usual suspects' aren't available." The normalisation and general acceptance of these practices is itself felt to be a problem, with "a great deal of conservatism and trepidation about working with someone who hasn't been recommended to you by someone else you already know". It is clear that this dependence on "who you know" shapes the industry at all levels.

FIGURE 11:
How respondents got their first career break.

Unpaid placement or work experience 37%
Personal contacts 23%
Formal job advertisement 16%
Paid placement, internship or scheme 12%
Other means 12%

Most of our participants got their first career break though taking unpaid work or through personal contacts within the industry. Many recognise that 'breaking in' to the industry is more difficult for some than for others, with many young people effectively priced out of the industry by the discrepancy between entry-level wages and the cost of living in London.

> "Increasingly it is impossible for young people to start out unless they are bankrolled by wealthy parents and / or have existing industry contacts." (Senior Producer)

The 'word of mouth' system creates what is, in effect, a closed shop. The few opportunities that do exist are typically promoted though Facebook – and thus, by definition, to "friends of friends", excluding "outsiders", however talented. This potential waste of new talent is recognised by our respondents as a serious flaw in the system:

> "I understand that … people need to know that they are getting the right people for the job, however, if you don't try new people how will the industry know if they're not missing out on something better?" (Series Director)

FIGURE 12: How respondents got their most recent job.

Most established freelancers get work through professional or personal connections. In many cases this is based on a successful working relationship, for example, with a senior executive who has employed them previously. In some cases, however, employment is thought to be based on popularity rather than ability. Even on those rare occasions when work is advertised, one participant noted, "it generally goes to someone they know" meaning that it isn't worth the trouble of applying. This ongoing dependence on 'who you know' is felt to be fundamentally unfair by those who benefit from the system as well as by those who feel they have been disadvantaged.

> "I feel that at my level it is very much who I know that is getting me the job, not what I know (Although I know that I know my stuff!). It doesn't feel fair." (Editor)

> "It's awful, one person can say 'oh I didn't like them' and you don't work on that production …" (Casting Producer)

This habit of "using the same people over and over, often from within the same friendship circles, or work circles" often limits breadth of opportunity for even the most experienced "making it nearly impossible for people to break into new companies" or to expand into new genres. It also limits career development and opportunities for progression, which are considered to be largely dependent on "contacts and friends in high places".

> "No other industry I can think of offers jobs for huge salaries over a cup of coffee!" (Senior Manager)

Even most senior jobs, our respondents argue, are typically filled by friends of commissioners or highly placed individuals in the broadcasting companies, while "many people in positions of power in indies are complicit" in this system – themselves often from privileged backgrounds. Diversity is rarely to be found "at the top where decisions are made"; making reform unlikely in the view of some of our respondents:

> "How can change be made when a large amount of senior people in the industry benefit from nepotism, classism and the fact that they are white, demographically 'good looking' or 'funny'?" (Assistant Producer)

As one Archive Producer argues, this cannot be addressed without "encouragement and empowerment of people who may not 'fit' to reach the highest positions".

Of course there are many advantages to an employer of hiring "a safe pair of hands". Tight schedules mean that there is no time to look beyond a pool of known individuals as "companies don't have the time or resources to look externally for candidates". Meanwhile tight budgets mean employers cannot risk "taking a punt on someone they don't know" and possibly making a mistake. Given that most contracts are short term "it's totally unlike other industries where you grow into a role" and few feel they can afford the luxury of nurturing new talent or trying to recruit from a more diverse range of candidates. One senior producer explains the relationship between schedules, budgets and inequality of opportunity thus:

> "The pressure is always on to recruit very, very quickly, as budgets are so tight, production schedules are shorter and shorter, and the first weeks are totally lost in a scramble of CVs and interviews. If a colleague recommends someone you leap on it, as you are so pushed to fill all the roles and get the production moving ASAP. Clearly this does not lead to a good range of diversity in any sense." (Executive Producer)

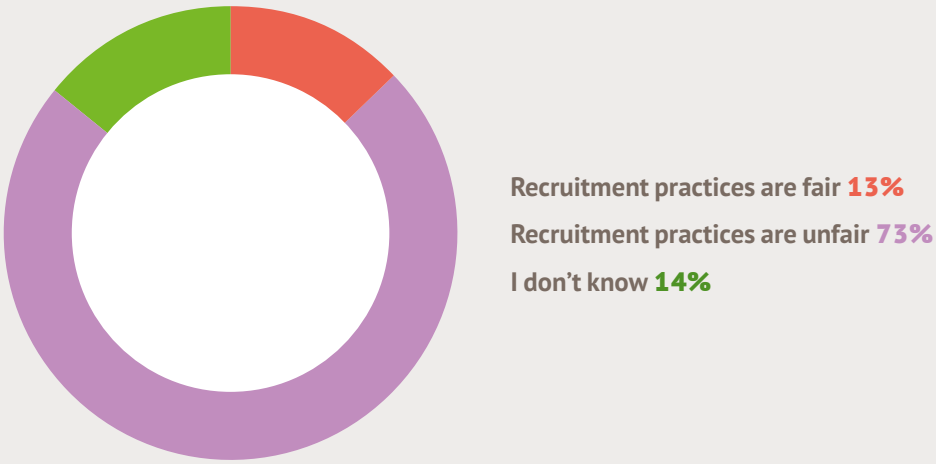
Hiring 'people you know', moreover, is not always a guarantee of quality as it seems that "people who are no good manage to keep getting work" while even senior team members often move from show to show unchecked, "bringing with them their damaging practices".

"Unfair" recruitment practices

"It's the Wild West! … It's as if employee rights don't exist in the industry."
(Head of Development)

Some respondents believe that the 'word of mouth' system creates a meritocracy in which employers come back to "the same people over and over again – because they know they are good" and "the 'dead wood' is soon found out and basically not re-hired" but the vast majority believe that recruitment practices are unfair and lack transparency.

FIGURE 13:
Most of our respondents thought recruitment practices in television are generally unfair.



Some report inappropriate hiring practices as commonplace. Senior staff, one Assistant Producer claims, "want 'fun' people on the team regardless of experience" while one production company is thought "to hire and promote 'good looking' people over experience."

Advertising job vacancies

Many jobs are not advertised, and when they are it is often as a last resort, or even in bad faith, while circulation strategies can be discriminatory. Opinion is divided on the use of Facebook to advertise jobs – often through closed groups. On the one hand, jobs are not "stuck behind a paywall", on the other, their limited circulation means that "people are hired because they are people's friends rather than they are the right person for the job". Meanwhile, unlike on dedicated recruitment sites, advertisers often fail to provide basic details such as "location, start/end dates, rate, office only or if location filming is involved" and frequently post at the very last minute, insisting, for example, that candidates "must be available tomorrow for six weeks".

Several respondents recount instances where jobs have been advertised to "tick a box" or "purely for protocol" while the employer already has a favoured candidate "lined up". Larger organisations, in particular, are accused of "going through the motions of interviewing external candidates when they know they plan to employ someone internal," a practice described as "doubly unfair" and "a waste of everyone's time".

Others complain about the practice of advertising jobs with a "ridiculous" requirement "to have worked on identical / similar shows" or on "shows on the exact same topic" in a way that completely fails to recognise transferrable skills and experience.

> "I get really irritated by ads that say things like 'Must have worked on programmes about selling property in Spain' or other highly specific stuff. MOST of the time, in features/ fact-ent, there is no need for specialist knowledge – what's needed are core skills for identifying and structuring a compelling narrative" (Edit Producer)

A similar tendency is observed with regard to channels, with one Producer Director commenting that "if your last few jobs have been C4 then ITV wouldn't look at you". This is a cause of considerable frustration to those who, having "worked hard to build a good reputation", find themselves increasingly "pigeonholed" by potential employers. The result for the industry of this "short-sighted" approach is that "the same people make the same programmes all the time", something our respondents feel is reflected in less creative or original content.

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Job interviews

Asked about their most recent experience of unsuccessfully applying for a job, our respondents report that over half of the interviews were informal, and over a third were conducted by just one person.

FIGURE 14:
How interviews were conducted: type of interview.

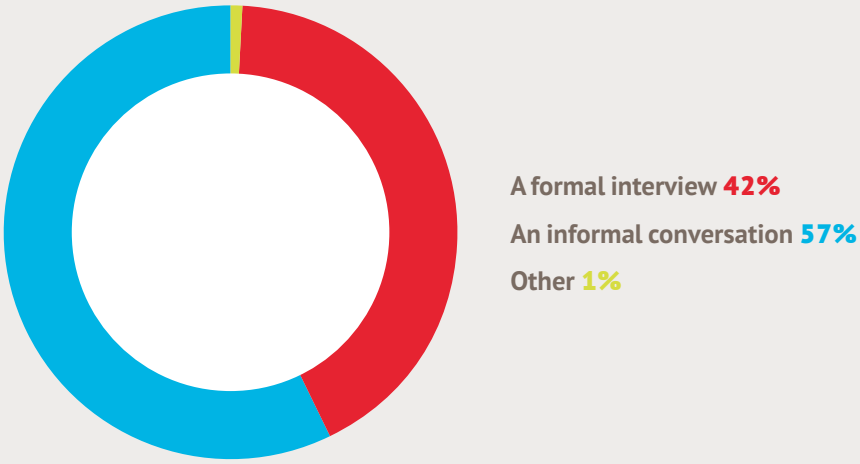
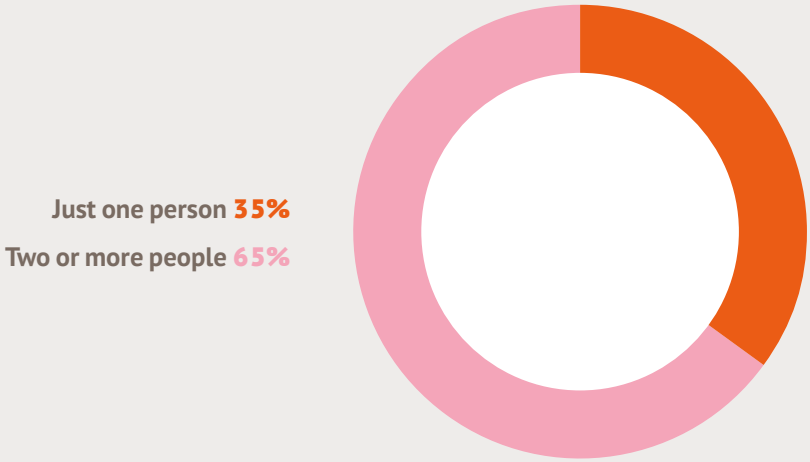


FIGURE 15:
How interviews were conducted: how many interviewers.



Interviews are predominantly informal across the sector, and a structured set of interview questions is rare. There is little sense that the interviewers themselves understand the purpose or proper conduct of an employment interview.

> "I don't think I have ever been interviewed where the employer used a fair selection process. On occasion, I have been asked how my experience matches the criteria of the role but this is quite rare. Rarely asked problem solving or critical thinking questions or anything about my technical ability. Never been asked what training I have." (Line Producer)

On the contrary, what are labelled 'interviews' often take the form of a casual conversation, "where it feels like the interviewee with the most in common with the interviewer (usually socially, mutual friends or contacts) gets the job". It is not uncommon for questioning to be entirely inappropriate.

> "One male interviewer (MD of a company) asked me numerous inappropriate questions on an interview with the SP for a researcher position on a fixed rig show – did I have a boyfriend, did I used to be a goth, why do I dress the way I do, what my parents did for a living … etc. – asked me nothing about my experience." (Assistant Producer)

It is common practice, meanwhile, for employers to solicit informal references from their contacts in a way that "would be wholly unacceptable in any other industry," and can lead to discrimination.

> "I worked with a bully. His friend, who never worked under him, and therefore never experienced the bully side of him … I'm sure she took his word that I was difficult etc. I can't be sure this is what happened but isn't that just as bad? I didn't have him down as a reference but people just ask around." (Development Producer)

Interviewees are often left demoralised by the sense that, far from being a transparent process to which all candidates are invited in good faith, "informal interviewing allows for 'jobs for the boys' and the ability to square away nonsense decisions."

Feedback and notice

Those who are unsuccessful in interviews rarely receive useful, developmental feedback – and sometimes receive no feedback at all. Our respondents were both vocal and angry about what they called "appalling" practices that are "both unprofessional and disrespectful", and that would be unacceptable in any other industry.

> "There are times when I've gone to a lot of trouble to prepare for an interview, including organising childcare especially, and the company don't even have the courtesy to let you know you didn't get the job. You're left to conclude you haven't got it because of the radio silence." (Senior Edit Producer)

Similar scenarios have been experienced by people applying to work for large broadcasters as well as small independent production companies. Apart from the inconvenience and "dehumanising" effect on individuals, a failure to give feedback reinforces a sense of "shadiness and opaqueness" in the hiring process whereby "it's not clear what makes one candidate clearly more suited than another". This does not support career development or wellbeing:

> "The lack of feedback from talent managers and interviews is depressing. You never know where the gaps are in your skill set and where you can improve." (Self-Shooting PD)

Of those respondents who were unsuccessful at a recent job interview, 32% didn't hear back at all afterwards, and 68% did not receive any feedback on why they were unsuccessful.

In some instances, even those who are hired fail to hear back to this effect.

> "Once a PM called to ask me my availability and then didn't call me back until the day before the job started! I had no idea they actually wanted me to do it." (Edit Producer)

FIGURE 16:
How interviewees learned they hadn't got the job.

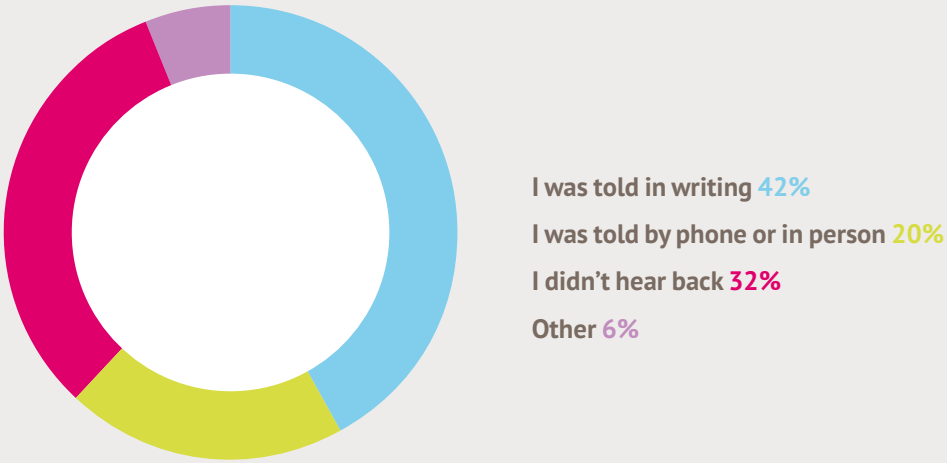
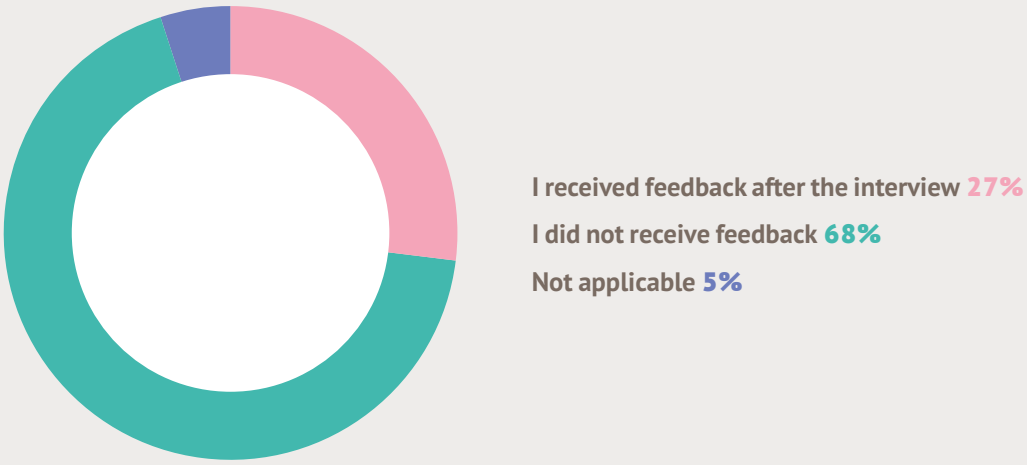


FIGURE 17:
Few interviewees received feedback to explain the decision.



People are frequently "semi-offered jobs" then "left dangling", unable to manage their commitments. Once a hiring decision is confirmed it is often at the "very last minute", with people expected to "drop everything" in response. This, our respondents agree, is extremely "stressful" and makes it "impossible to have a work-life balance" or to plan to enjoy time off or participate in events from holidays to weddings. The fact that there is "no settling in period" on most of these "last minute" jobs, meanwhile, is described as "exhausting."

"My jobs are usually at very short notice, often get cancelled as soon as they are booked, often I am competing against a number of other people, and I'm not made aware of that. The etiquette of the booking system is very weak. (Director of Photography)

"We all need to work quickly and crew up quickly which is fine, but we also need to be more professional. Jobs should be recruited in a more professional and accountable manner and onboarding needs to be much better, along with initial training" (Senior Producer)

Altogether our respondents' experiences suggest that the "last minute" culture created by current processes and expectations within the industry is not supportive of the wellbeing of the workforce.

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"Hiring in their own image"

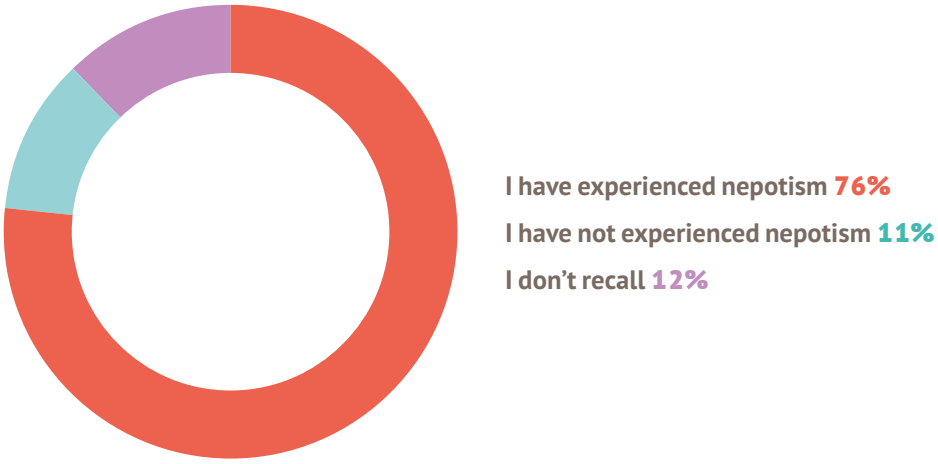
Informal, unregulated hiring practices mean that there is nothing to prevent employers simply "hiring in their own image", or on the basis of ill-founded assumptions and prejudices. In practice this tends to mean "hiring middle/ upper class people over working class people, hiring majority white people on teams rather than actively seeking to branch out and take time to train or interview Asian, Black or other ethnicities." Thus the informality of the system conspires to keep outsiders outside and maintain the industry's predominantly white, male, middle-class constituency:

> "If you only know white people that is who you will continue to hire." (Self-Shooting Producer Director)

> "An actual process would be nice not just giving jobs to people you know, who live in London and are male." (Runner)

The replication of privilege, especially at the top of the industry, is regarded as highly problematical by many – not only because it results in inequality of opportunity but also because it "stifles diversity, ethnic, social and cultural", while "sadly . . . 'freshness' disappears because the same people keep getting the same kinds of jobs." On the one hand, it is clear that company loyalty and proven competence will be important factors in hiring freelance crew; on the other hand, the industry appears to tolerate the most flagrant instances of nepotism where hiring decisions cannot be justified in these terms. 76% of respondents reported having had first-hand experience of people getting jobs for which they are less qualified than others, due to their personal connections.

FIGURE 18: **Experiences of nepotistic hiring practices.**



Nepotism is described as "a cancer in the industry" that needs to be "stamped out". Our respondents are critical of companies that "just hire their mates over and over again, regardless of whether they are capable or do a good job" to the detriment of the industry and to "the individuals trying to progress through it". Many have seen opportunities given to the relatives or acquaintances of senior staff – typically the "children of wealthy people" – irrespective of merit.

> "The worst I've witnessed is an Exec letting their friend's daughter get a job as a runner. She was awful, had zero work ethic and the company immediately regretted it . . . The runner became a Production Co-Ordinator within 9 months." (Assistant Producer)

These practices are commonplace, but none the less dispiriting for all that. They also cut across the declared policies of broadcasters. As one respondent points out:

> "Diversity is not going to be solved with Channels issuing unreachable targets, meanwhile nepotism continues at pace." (Line Producer)

Experiences of discrimination

Our respondents' experiences suggest that unconscious bias and discriminative practices dramatically reduce the opportunities available to many television professionals. Racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and simple elitism were described as "rife" in the industry, along with an ignorance of, or unwillingness to adopt reasonable adjustments for disabled people. Indeed, one Series Producer suggests in many cases "recruiters don't have the necessary legal knowledge and are actually in breach of the Equality Act 2010."

Notwithstanding assorted initiatives, representations of people of colour behind the camera is considered "shocking", especially "at the top where decisions are made." Until this changes, it is argued, nothing will change, meaning non-white professionals will continue to struggle, and in many cases to leave the industry.

> "As somebody who is not white, I have been overlooked and underpaid and frankly it has made me want to give up. But I don't. Because if I do then they've won." (Senior Producer)

One BAME Producer Director argues that entry-level "diversity schemes" often fail because there is no "support structure/time to nurture people", especially "those without experience or . . . from a less privileged educational background". These limitations also impact on the prospects of individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds. As well as being disadvantaged at entry-level by rates that are not "liveable" without economic subsidy and hours that make it impossible to self-subsidise with a second job, many working-class respondents feel that their opportunities are limited by the prejudices of more privileged employers.

> "You're in an interview but the SP is swearing, has their feet on the table and has never taken a management or hiring training course. If you haven't grown up in this middle class, entitled setting, you cannot flaunt your skill set in this 'interview style'," (Shooting AP)

There is a perception that working-class people, and those who "are from a poor background or speak with strong accent or come from a remote corner of the UK" not only find it hard to progress within TV, but find themselves pigeonholed into making particular kinds of content. Women also describe being pigeonholed into specific roles based not on their skill set but on their gender, particularly when it comes to shooting:

> "Recruiters 'cast' the sort of people they think should do a certain role. Young men late 20's are DV directors – shooting PD's are men early 30's. Casting Producers are women . . ." (Female Self-Shooting PD)

One Executive Producer explains that she receives "a lot of unofficial reference requests for female shooting PDs. 'I notice you worked on this together x years ago, how did you find her, how was her shooting?' whereas with a male PD 'they seem happy with 'he's a confident shooter' and that is the end of the interrogation." The sense that it is "assumed that men are better at shooting in general" results in some women abandoning their ambitions in that direction. Meanwhile pregnant women and mothers frequently find themselves sidelined if they cannot "commit to working more than a 10-hr day", or simply based on their employers' prejudices and assumptions:

> "When I was a PM offering CVs for edit producers / PDs, execs would not look at them if they were from women with young children . . . !" (Assistant Producer)

> "I also experienced my contract being cut short after three-and-a-half years working for one large company when I was 8 months pregnant." (Production Executive)

> "My TV mum friends and I have a joke #whatkids as we feel unable to even mention them at any point." (Senior Edit Producer)

Many employers show a similar lack of imagination and understanding when it comes to hiring disabled people – many of whom feel obliged to hide their disability in order to work, since legal protections do not appear to apply:

> "I once went for a position at a company, sat in front of four people and it was going really well until I disclosed an illness. Their demeanour quickly changed, there were a couple of glances between them and then I was talked down from the position. This should not happen and therefore I no longer disclose." (Production Coordinator)

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Our respondents have also experienced discrimination on the basis of sexuality and of age, the latter being particularly problematic for women. Indeed, younger professionals are haunted by the fear, as they become older, of being considered too expensive (compared with younger, cheaper people), or too experienced (and therefore harder to exploit), or simply being "ignored":

> "I worry about when I get into my late 40s and 50s and my face doesn't fit anymore or I sound older [in telephone interviews]. I know I'll find it much harder to get hired" (Production Manager)

Where employers do attempt to address diversity in its hiring practices, their efforts are often felt to be clumsy 'box-ticking' exercises.

> "I being a clear member of the LGBT+ community would like to stop feeling like the only reason why I have got an interview was to tick a box. I know from the way their body language looks and how they speak that they actually have no interest in giving me the job." (Runner)

Staff training and continuing professional development

As well as opening up opportunities to a more diverse pool of candidates and improving wellbeing within the workforce, a more considered approach to recruitment may also improve career development within the industry:

> "Companies would be more likely to invest in staff if they had to spend more time and effort recruiting people as opposed to just giving jobs to people after a 5-minute phone call." (Development Producer)

Currently, our respondents suggest, the industry is "very short termist" with "a kind of sink or swim approach to new hires". Most companies cannot afford to retain talent so hire from production to production, and so have no incentive to provide staff with either formal training or informal development opportunities. This is frustrating for staff and managers alike:

> "In an ideal world I would like to put together more diverse teams and making sure junior crew members have time for personal development, this doesn't need to be an official training course, just maybe a list of training objectives we need to hit …" (Production Manager)

> "There is great talent but I think more has to be done to truly nurture and develop it." (Researcher)

Instead, with an expectation that everyone is already prepared, many talented individuals are hampered by a lack of confidence, while others bluster through on 'ego' alone, often with consequences for others on the production.

A "chronic lack of formal training across the industry" is seen as problematic at all levels. For junior staff, as one line producer remarks, the lack of "on the job" training means that there are "no explanations of how to complete a task or why it should be done that way". Indeed, in some cases the failure to train or support junior staff borders on the abusive:

> "They … gave the researcher a very difficult camera with no training on it and said you need to film a birth. The poor researcher had no clue how to operate the kit." (Self-Shooting Producer Director)

Many experienced staff, who themselves benefit from the "who you know" system, nevertheless express concern that new talent is not being developed within the industry

"I understand that people want to hire editors they know, or who are recommended by people they trust, and I appreciate that crewing can be stressful and it takes the pressure off. I think we could at least make the path to entry clearer, and more rooted in training for the actual job so that we can get new talent coming through." (Editor)

For established professionals wishing to progress in their careers, formal training is often something they must fund themselves, although some have been subsidised through schemes such as those run by ScreenSkills. In fact only 19% of our respondents feel they have received the training they need for their chosen career.

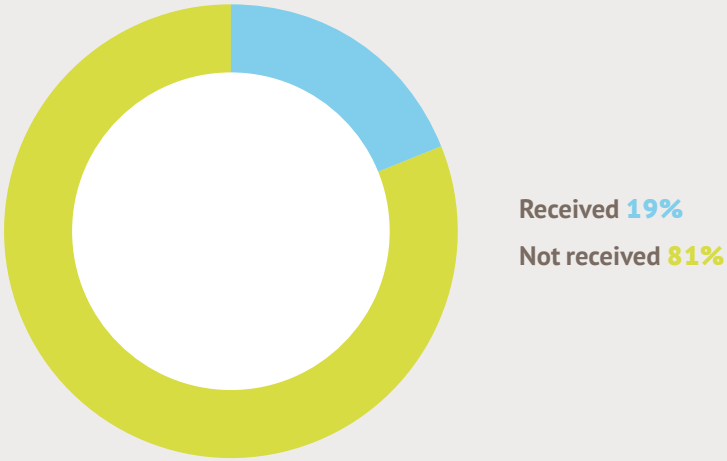

FIGURE 19:
81% of freelancers had not received relevant training and development.

Aside from mandatory courses such as health and safety or data control, fewer than half have been offered any formal training by employers and of those, only a minority found it useful.

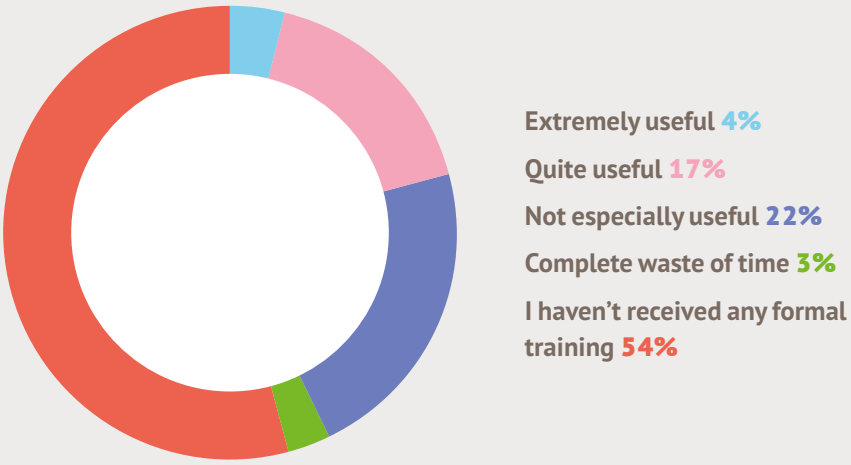

FIGURE 20:
Usefulness of training offered by employers.

The consequences of a lack of training opportunities across the industry, according to our respondents, impact on a number of concerns highlighted elsewhere in this report. A lack of training prevents the industry from improving diversity within the workforce:

> "There needs to be investment in training and rather than endless rhetoric about diversity, the industry needs to be looking seriously at PRACTICAL solutions – particularly at entry level." (Senior Producer)

It contributes to inequitable recruitment practices:

> "Staff should get more training on recruitment. I have never had any training or even any advice on recruiting people and I've lost count of the number of people I've hired." (Production Manager)

It can block individual opportunities for career progression:

> "Many of the jobs require specific experience in a certain genre or skill and they are often unwilling to accept someone with similar experience who would be willing to train in that skill. This makes it harder to progress." (Camera Assistant)

It undermines wellbeing within the workforce and contributes to the "bullying culture" found on too many productions:

> "... unlike almost every other industry, we don't teach our managers and team leaders how to manage and lead. We just throw them into the deep end, with no guidance on how to care for the welfare of the people reporting to them." (Talent Executive)

For many of our respondents, the lack of formal training was exacerbated by the lack of informal development through constructive feedback already described. A great many of our respondents, at all levels of the industry, express concern that a lack of constructive feedback during or at the end of a job makes it more difficult for them to learn from their experiences and develop professionally. As one Researcher complains "you never know whether your work has been good enough when you finish a job."

Understanding what has gone well and how to improve is largely "a guessing game" according to one Casting Producer. Managers, themselves often freelance, have "no incentive" to give constructive feedback. Where staff perform poorly they tend to avoid confrontation. Instead "they just decide someone hasn't 'got it' and let them go, depriving them of the chance to learn and improve.

This lack of feedback while on a job is "undermining" as one Editor of more than 30 years' experience explains. A Series Producer adds "one of the worst practices is not telling you when you are not doing something properly ... there is a feeling of

something not being right but you don't know what." This can lead to an unhealthy degree of paranoia, especially for less established staff:

> "…I thought I did a great job on a series, I applied for the job for another year and didn't even get a reply to my application – this causes stress and anxiety. Does this mean I didn't do a good job last time or is there another reason? …it makes you doubt everything." (Researcher)

The cumulative effect can impact negatively on the wellbeing of freelancers, who report that a lack of feedback causes anxiety, as well as on commitment and retention.

> "The lack of support, feedback and career progression possibilities have led to me wanting to leave telly many, many times over the years. In so many other industries you would have appraisals, feedback and some CPD to help develop. But as a freelancer in telly I have felt 'on my own' for many years." (Senior Edit Producer)

It is clear that the professional development the industry needs to remain competitive has in many cases been a casualty of casualisation.

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Professionalising Recruitment

> "To give two suggestions: Talent executives at production companies need to be given proper training, and shouldn't just be former producers who think they know everything about the industry. Recruitment periods should be embedded within production schedules, to allow job opportunities to be properly advertised and open to all, as opposed to people the exec has worked with before." (Development Executive)

Senior respondents to the survey highlight the causal links between "poor recruitment practices, rates and diversity" which need to be addressed "across the entire industry". While the larger production companies and the broadcasters "talk a good game about wanting to improve diversity and hiring practices" this is seen as no more than "lip service" given that "schedules and budgets have been shredded" by those same organisations. Our respondents were very clear that, despite being an industry that relies on a supply of creative talent, the current arrangements for making television in the UK do not allow the time or resources to seek out or nurture that talent.

> "Staffing is never scheduled as part of the set up in my experience. It's one part of a long list of urgent tasks …" (Production Manager)

> "I always start the job on the back foot, inevitably it's already late in the schedule and you have to start off at breakneck speed … you get the best you can in the time, but not the most diverse or those who need a little more support." (Series Producer)

Once again, last minute greenlighting is highlighted as a particular problem in relation to responsible recruitment, as once contracts are in place, production "needs to start yesterday to meet the schedule and delivery deadline". There is a sense that the cards are stacked against those who try to recruit ethically.

> "I work hard as a talent exec or SP to make sure that I recruit a diverse team from varied sources. There are trained people in the industry who know what they are doing regarding diverse recruitment, [but] we are fairly few and far between, and the speed at which we are required to recruit puts pressure to fill roles with the first good available freelancers." (Senior Producer)

At the same time it would seem that some other employers are comfortable "'just getting a mate' to do it" and have neither the skills nor the motivation to cast the net wider, even when schedules allow.

"…in a lot of instances I have been offered or put forward for work where a more open recruitment strategy would have been possible". (Production Coordinator)

Indeed, large companies and broadcasters, notwithstanding their declared policies, actively encourage unethical recruitment practices by utilising closed social media groups and exclusionary networks to advertise work.

A more formal recruitment process is seen by many as key to addressing discrimination, nepotism and the perpetuation of privilege within the industry. However, this will involve "changing schedules from the top and at commission stage" to create more lead time into projects and require broadcasters to "ring fence some money in every budget to allow for this to change". At the same time, when the opportunity does present itself, employers themselves must be prepared to "take risks with hiring the 'unknown' and not always hiring someone as they will 'fit in' easily with the rest of the team". For many this will involve both management training and HR support.

"[Recruitment] needs to be formalised and standardised across the board. We all need to work quickly and crew up quickly which is fine, but we also need to be more professional. Jobs should be recruited in a more professional and accountable manner and onboarding needs to be much better, along with initial training. We also need to introduce exit interviews at the end of contracts. Too often job roles are all encompassing with no idea of what you are actually accountable for or who to – even just starting with standard job specs/descriptions would be a help. I think these changes would also help open up the industry to new entrants and create a more diverse workforce which is less cliquey." (Senior Producer)

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PART 3
Rates, contracts and flexibility

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Rates of pay

A majority of respondents consider rates of pay and the way in which they are negotiated to be unfair a great deal of the time.

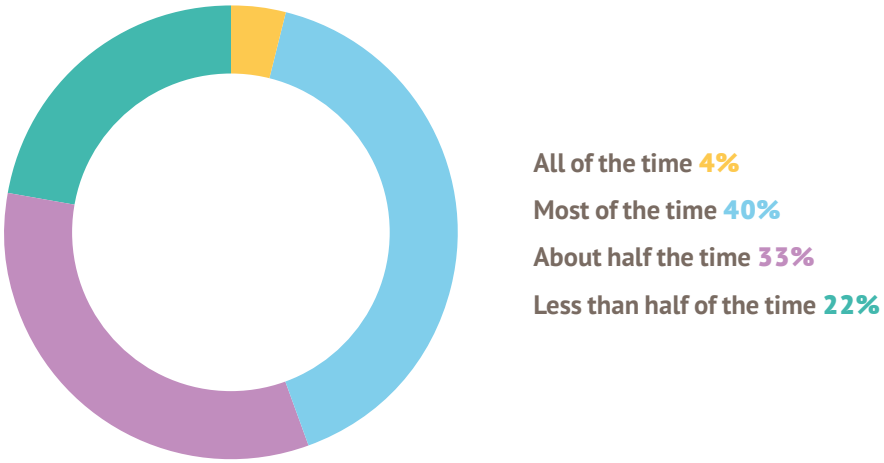

FIGURE 21:
Most respondents felt that they received a fair rate only half the time or less.

The question of rates is quite complex. Many of our respondents feel that "compared to other job roles and sectors, television is well paid" when rates are taken at face value. However, once the long hours and unpaid overtime that is "expected" in most roles are taken into consideration, many professionals calculate that they receive "less than minimum wage".

> "I once worked out my hourly rate based on the hours I had physically done and it worked out that my hourly wage was less than that of someone working at McDonald's." (Series Producer)

Others feel that rates, particularly in junior roles, are too low, with one DV Director remarking: "And they wonder why runners 'have an attitude'. I wouldn't do those hours for £95 a day either."

> "…you're expected to be on call 24/7. You're expected to work the latest, be on call at all hours, be available to run and get random props or make random calls at any time and none of it is ever paid which is ridiculous. I believe overtime pay should be the norm, OR at the very least we should work on an hourly 'clock in' basis whereby you at least get paid for all the stuff you have to do." (Researcher)

A number of respondents working in a range of editorial, production and craft positions, remark that their rates have been static for many years, while roles expand with staff "expected to do more for the same money". Meanwhile our respondents expressed concerns around a lack of transparency, inequity, and the process of negotiation itself as well as a lack of clarity around contracts and job descriptions that border on the exploitative.

> "My rate is always knocked down, then adverse conditions either hidden in the contract or added as rider in email offer after acceptance e.g. reduced rate travel days, enforced breaks etc. which effectively reduce the rate at the same time as making me unavailable for other work." (Series Director)

Rates are described as "secretive" and "cryptic" with our respondents offered different rates for the same job by different employers or even "different rates on similar shows for the same company". There are numerous examples, moreover, of two similarly qualified individuals doing the same job on the same show being paid rates that may vary by as much as £350 a week – a practice that, as one producer puts it "makes for a negative work space."

> "It's horrible when you are working alongside other staff who are the same level as you ... and you know that you are all getting paid different rates for the same job." (Self-Shooting PD)

> "As a junior AP I found myself managing a researcher who I later found out was on a higher weekly salary that me." (Assistant Producer)

In the experience of our respondents it is "still a taboo to discuss rates" with such discussions "actively discouraged by many companies" who "rely heavily on a lack of transparency about what others in the same role are earning in an attempt to employ you for as little as possible". This lack of transparency allows discriminatory practices to go unchallenged, creating a "pay gap between white and non-white workers [that] is never mentioned" as well as notable disparities between the rates commanded by male and female staff in all areas of the industry from editorialto production to craft roles.

> "I have been paid substantially less than under-informed, better connected men in every single TV job over the last 20 years." (Production Engineer)

> "I know I'm paid less than a man doing the exact same job as me right now with less years' experience in the same series." (Executive Producer)

Women's rates are also subject to what is sometimes called the 'motherhood penalty'. One describes how, on returning form maternity leave, she had to accept "really low rates to get my foot back in the door" while another with a young family feels she can only stay in work as a "cheap" hire:

> "I know I am selling myself short and others with my level of experience ask for more money. But I have a toddler and another on the way so I am grateful for any work I get and try not to rock the boat …" (Producer)

Our respondents also highlight inequities between roles, some of which appear to have a gendered dimension. Thus one production manager attributes the fact that production jobs are paid less than editorial roles with a comparable level of responsibility to the perception that "they are traditionally female roles".

The disparity between production and editorial rates is one that clearly creates a sense of injustice, and to being "undervalued". It is commented on in the survey by senior producers as well as by production staff themselves, who are often "managing and having responsibility for people who are paid more than they are".

> "LPs should be on the same as show-runners or Series Producers and often this isn't the case. More often than not Production Management salaries are cut or budgeted as much less, yet we tend to work way longer hours and take on greater responsibility. It's often very unfair." (Line Producer)

This may help to explain the skills gaps often experienced in this area – as one PM puts it: "…and they wonder why no one wants to work in production." Another inequity that exercises many editorial staff is the rate offered to a Self-Shooting PD:

> "…my rate is slightly lower when I take a self-shooting job (argument being that the budget is lower) but I'm expected to shoot and direct as well as take on the roles of a craft camera operator and sound recordist. I really believe self-shooting PD roles should be at a higher rate not a lower rate – productions are already saving a fortune by not employing crews and I'm doing the job of two or three people." (Self-Shooting PD)

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Negotiating rates

The process of negotiating a fair rate for a job is described as "opaque", "incredibly difficult", "so unpleasant" and "a constant battle". Many of our respondents struggle with the process because "we never know what the real rate is" making it difficult to pitch their price. On the one hand, what a person is paid "comes down to how hard you barter", with some individuals feeling they would be better paid if they were more "bullish" or "pushy". On the other hand, in a competitive market, rates "can be a deal breaker" and many people will pitch low because they would "rather not risk losing out on work" by pricing themselves "out of the market". Where they do try to stick to what they consider the appropriate rate for the job, many respondents report it being "battered", "hammered" or "knocked down" to well below the recommended Bectu rate.

> "I have to haggle for what I'm worth every single time and sometimes the need for a job outweighs sticking to my guns." (Edit Producer)

In such cases, however, "the work is still the same and in some instances harder or more full-on than jobs that pay the full rate". Established professionals find it "insulting" that their experience "counts for nothing", while new entrants struggle to survive on as little as "half the recognised day rate". There is a sense that this situation has become worse over the years as, according to one Producer Director, "production managers have unworkable budgets and are forced to try and bully people down on rates."

> "Every job now lowers the daily rate as 'we do not have the budget to pay the regular rate'. [I'm] made to feel like I should be grateful for a booking. (Lighting Operator)

Meanwhile PMs themselves feel just as powerless with respect to their own rate. As one Production Manager puts it: "I feel I have to be grateful for what I can get and keep quiet". On occasions individuals will "compromise on pay in exchange for credit" or the opportunity to develop new skills or get "an 'in' with a new production company", however, there is a view that this cumulatively tends to depress rates.

> "The expectation that you will accept reduced pay and long hours because 'it'll be a great experience' is out of control." (Producer Director)

On the whole our respondents attribute their experiences to "budget pressures", but they also expressed a view that rates "are not respected by employers but automatically seen as something to chip away at, often out of principal" and that "it is just standard to try to pay [the] lowest rate regardless". This can make for bad feeling on a production.

> "I recently had a battle on my hands for a three-week job, negotiating a rate which I reluctantly took because I'd just relocated and wanted to make a good impression. Only to be handed the budget I was working with on the first day and found it to be incredibly healthy. It started things off on the wrong foot immediately as I felt duped by the production company who had now secured my services but battered me down on my rate when they could have easily afforded to pay me what I asked for (which was already slightly below industry standard)". (Producer)

This sense of being "duped" by production companies is particularly irksome to our respondents, who too often agree a rate only to find "the goalposts are moved" once they start the job:

> "My rate is usually bargained down … using all sorts of tactics "You won't be working weekends" "The show is on a smaller budget" "The job doesn't entail that level of experience" … Of course when you get the job you are working weekends, [and] you end up doing more than your job description". (Shooting AP)

The impact of "constantly fighting to get a fair wage" and being "misled" is "demoralising" for television professionals, who feel that they are "undervalued" and not treated "with the respect they deserve" which, as one Assistant Producer remarks "isn't a good starting point for any production." Many would like to see a more transparent process and an end to the "game of sliding scale rates" they are obliged to play.

Contracts and job descriptions

Our respondents are often quite frustrated by the way in which contracts are produced late (in some cases as many as "a few weeks or months into the job"), cancelled without notice, or fail to reflect the original agreement. There is a view that the "buy-out" contract offers workers no protection against exploitative working practices. On the contrary, as one Senior Edit Producer observers "my contracts for years have had clauses forcing me to opt out of the European working time directive". Meanwhile, a Shooting AP refers to a job where the contract, which was issued only after the start of the job, "expressly stated I would have no sick pay". Where contracts do specify hours to be worked, they are rarely honoured in practice – or at least not in the worker's favour.

> "I am often asked to take half pay for a half day's work, but not offered overtime for plus-10 hour day." (Self-Shooting PD)

It is also not uncommon for terms to change, especially where contracts arrive late into the process. This can involve changing start and end dates and making it hard to schedule other work.

> "Signing a contract for one show for 15 weeks only to be told that the last five would be on a different show for a different channel on a show I wouldn't have chosen to work on." (Editor)

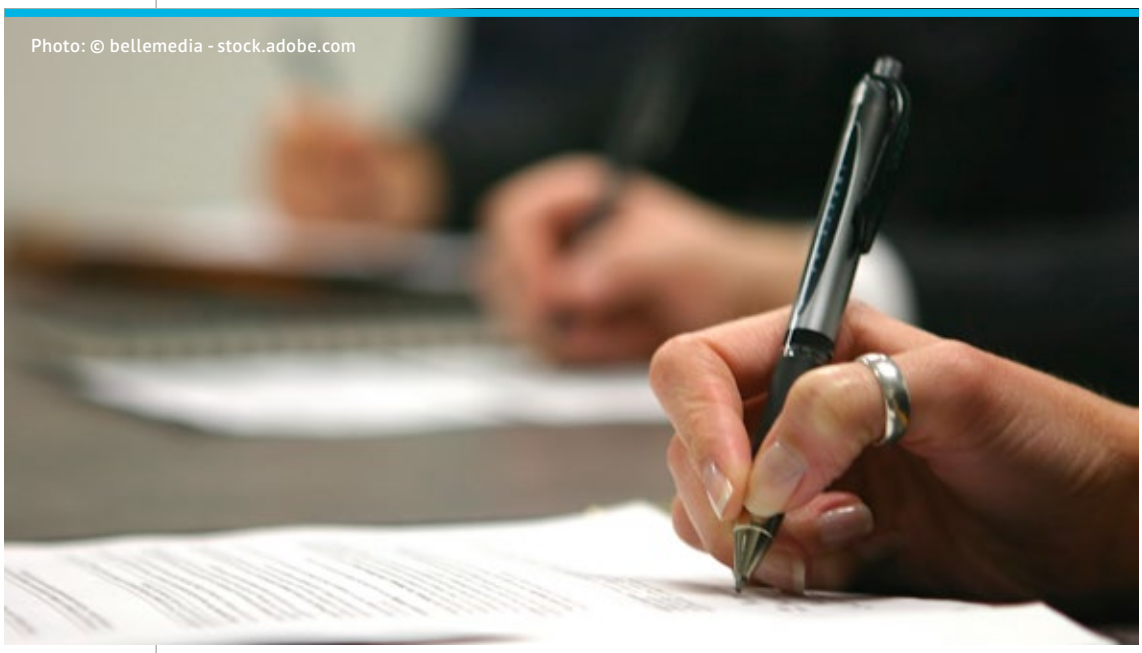
Staff can find themselves "expected to take on (unpaid) additional duties" or to be given "much more senior responsibilities but without the pay or credit for that role".

A Senior Producer remarks that, in the absence of standard job descriptions, "too often job roles are all encompassing with no idea of what you are actually accountable for or who to". This has allowed a situation to develop whereby, according to one Assistant Producer, the "demands of each role seem to increase as budgets fall, and teams get smaller, so there's less people to do the same job", something evidenced in the experiences of many of our respondents.

> "My current role I accepted as an edit producer having worked for the same production company and senior management team before. It was only upon starting that they told me I'd be running two edit suites with tighter deadlines than expected so essentially doing 2/3 times my job but my rate wasn't discussed or negotiable … So I'm working triple hours for the same rate as one edit." (Edit Producer)

> "… more common is that I'm paid my rate but once in the role I am asked to manage more productions than expected without asking me first. It's very common for PMs to be spread too thinly across multiple productions." (Production Manager)

This expectation for staff to take on multiple responsibilities, like the expectation to work excessive hours, comes about because projects are "under-budgeted, understaffed and under-scheduled", it is believed, with profit margins taking precedence over fair pay and working conditions.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Two-way flexibility

> "Flexible working is vital if our industry is to move forward and to become more accessible to people returning to work after parental leave, as well as people from more varied economic backgrounds etc." (Archive Producer)

The television industry demands a great deal of flexibility from employees in service to the needs of productions, however, this is not reciprocated when it comes to the needs of individuals. The culture of long hours, of being "on call 24/7" and the implicit expectation that "if you work in TV that should be your life" makes many areas of the industry and many individual employers extremely resistant to the idea of 'flexible working' to support work-life balance. More than half our respondents, however, would like to see more opportunities for flexible working or job sharing.

The most common, although by no means the only reason, why television professionals would like access to flexible working arrangements is in order to better manage their parental responsibilities. Most have found the industry to be unaccommodating or actively hostile to making even minor concessions in this regard. As one Editor remarks, "It never goes down well when you have to leave early to attend a parents evening." A Producer confirms that "it is very difficult to get senior (male) members to consider job shares/flexible working. Even senior members who are parents themselves." As well as part-time work, working at home is at odds with an "underlying ethos" whereby "you must be seen at the office/studio working, if not where are you? – that is what the company is paying you for?"

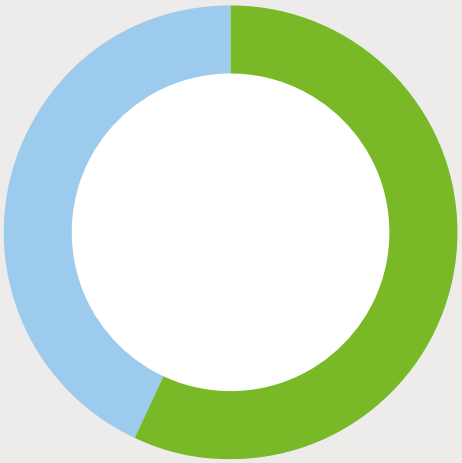
> "In fact even suggesting working from home (when you work even harder than in the office) makes many TV bosses heads spin. They just can't get their head around not watching you work" (Casting Producer)

Asking for flexible working arrangements

> "Flexible working is entirely possible at almost every grade in this industry and yet it remains taboo." (Self-Shooting Producer Director)

About a third of our respondents had experienced circumstances when flexible working arrangements would have been beneficial; of these, however, the majority felt unable to make such a request. The reasons given range from a generalised sense that employers would not be receptive to the idea of flexible working, to a fear that even raising the issue might have negative consequences for an individual's employment prospects.

FIGURE 22: **Of those who felt the need for flexible arrangements, 57% had not felt able to request them.**



Many professionals have been deterred from requesting flexible working arrangements by their own previous experiences. Thus, for example, one Production Manager recalls how "at the time I had my son I had already been party to several discussions with the HoP that concluded a Production Manager position is not one that can be done well as a flexible worker". For others such arrangements are simply "unheard of" or regarded as not being "something the production company would entertain". Some of our respondents have themselves dismissed the option of flexible working as impractical, concluding "it wouldn't have worked on a freelance basis" or "there wasn't space in the schedule" to accommodate flexible working. One Producer admits "I'm not sure I understand how it would work on a busy production that's ever changing and evolving" while another confirms "It's hard to be away from a production for a day as everything changes so quickly."

In other cases the deterrent has been fear. One Assistant Producer explains that she felt she would be "rejected from the job if I were to suggest flexible hours" while another worries that "insisting on flexible working arrangements would end up in someone else with no commitments being offered the job." Several of our respondents fear being perceived by employers as "problematic", "troublesome" or "causing too much fuss" if they request flexible working arrangements. They are also concerned about being seen by colleagues as "a slacker", "lazy" or "unreliable". Some have been explicitly warned that to do so would negatively impact their career prospects in the longer term, and several others have experienced this effect at first hand.

> "I was granted flexible working but the opportunities available were limited, and I was not considered for some roles because of it – without any discussion with me about how I would like to manage my career." (Producer)

Even where flexible working arrangements are available they are often treated with a suspicion that "any concession to flexible working/work-life balance for freelancers is lip service" and that adopting such arrangements will ultimately be detrimental to the individual.

> "Whilst some companies I have worked at have offered flexible working, I have always felt that unless you are at Management level your work will be viewed as less if you ask for flexible working. I felt that it would negatively affect how I was viewed by my employers and would result in me not being rehired by the company and/ or not being in a position to negotiate the correct fee for my role." (Archive Producer)

In fact, our findings demonstrate that resistance to flexible working is by no means universal in the industry, and where our respondents have felt comfortable requesting such arrangements, most have met with some degree of success. However, in a significant number of cases the outcomes have been far from satisfactory.

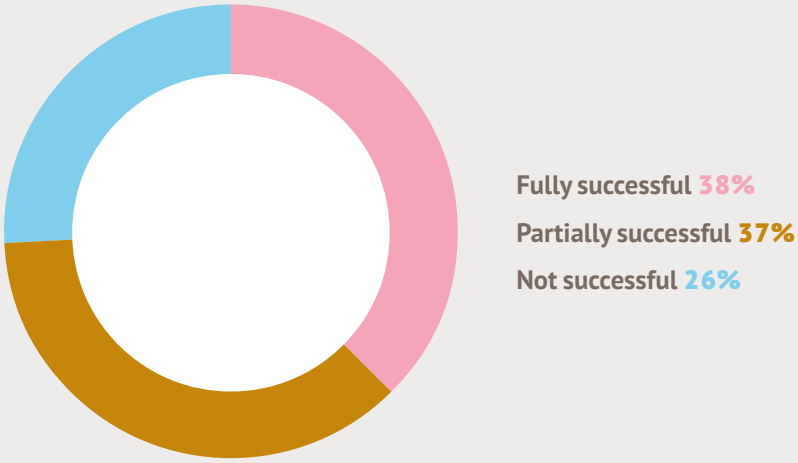


FIGURE 23:
Where respondents *had* requested flexible working arrangements, 75% had been fully or partially successful.

Difficulties with flexible working

In practice, arrangements for part-time work often put our respondents at a significant disadvantage. As one Line Producer explains "part-time doesn't always mean part-time" and staff may find themselves asked to work on their days off without additional payment; as one production manager remarks "there is a danger you get paid for 3 days but work 4 days." Meanwhile a Producer recounts "being paid half the wage of my peers, because I was classed as part time" even though she was contracted for a four day week. Our respondents have found, moreover, that while "some production companies are good" and "embrace job sharing" for some roles, other employers fail to provide appropriate structures to support these arrangements.

> "A job share was granted, but rather than having one person's workload and sharing it between two people we were given two people's workloads and half the time to do it in. Creating an environment that neither of us in the job share could maintain and subsequently we both left." (Senior Producer)

Similar problems arise with other flexible working arrangements, for example, where staff have been contracted on the basis of some days working at home only to find the arrangement is not honoured in practice. Many workers find it difficult to challenge such practices, especially while still establishing themselves in their career.

> "I had agreed flexible working hours so I could collect my young children from nursery but I was regularly asked to work late at the last minute meaning I would have to make frantic arrangements for other people to pick up my children. I wish I had stood up for myself and said no but I had not long returned from maternity leave and I felt it would reflect badly on me." (Edit Producer)

Benefits of flexible working

Notwithstanding these negative experiences, flexible working arrangements had worked well for many of our respondents and their employers. An Executive Producer, for example, recalls that "flexible working was amazing when I had my twins. I still accomplished the same amount on three days a week as I did working full time, but was able to be at home with my children a bit more" while an editor explains that "I do a job share with a colleague and it works brilliantly. We love it and productions have given us great feedback and reviews". Producer Directors, Production Managers and Edit Producers also recount positive experiences of flexible working and job sharing.

> "I am currently doing a job share and life has never ever been better!!!! For once since having kids I feel like maybe I can still carry on in the industry." (Edit Producer)

The attitudes of employers remain hugely variable, with flexible working "actively discouraged" in some places but "proactively" offered in others. There is a perception that "bigger companies seem to be open to flexible working", more likely to have the resources and policies in place to support progressive employment practices; yet in practice some of our respondents have found larger organisations to be "very conservative in their thinking" and that smaller indies are "more likely to consider and grant flexible arrangements". Our findings suggest that much depends on the attitudes of individual senior managers. Where these are positive, professionals have shown themselves equal to the challenge.

> "I've been met with varied responses to flexible working. The worst is not getting the job – quite common. The best was edit producing on a prime time BBC documentary with reduced hours and being fully supported and trusted and got the job done well and on time." (Producer Director)

COVID -19 has played a part in helping employers "to understand that working from home and flexible hours is possible to accommodate and still create successful TV shows". Many of our respondents are optimistic that the pandemic might represent a "turning point" in combatting the culture of presenteeism. As one Producer Director puts it "Now we've proven we can work from home and the sky won't fall down."

Several of our more senior respondents stress the benefits of flexible working not just to individuals but to the industry. One Talent Executive declares herself "proud to be able to offer [flexible working] to talent to ensure we get the best out of them" while a Head of Production is adamant that flexible working "should not just be seen as a parent thing or an inconvenience. It should be seen as a way of keeping good people". The alternative is a "brain drain" that impacts across the workforce and the output of the industry.

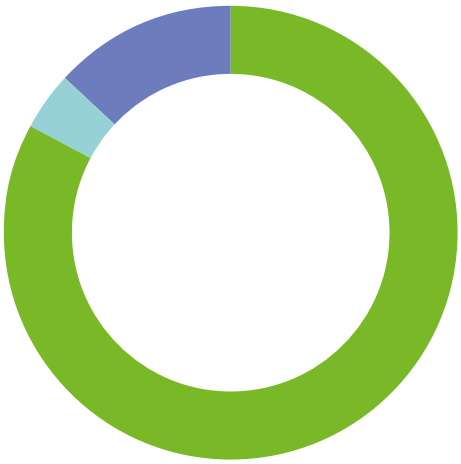
> "I do worry that we lose valuable talent because people (particularly females in the industry) cannot get the flexible working required to work around being a parent. And not only is that a loss behind the camera as more people have to be trained up, but it means that perspectives are lost, which will ultimately have an effect on the final product on screen too." (Senior Producer)

The issue of flexible working speaks directly to, and is arguably emblematic of, the industry's difficulties around supporting wellbeing, retaining talent and growing a more diverse workforce.

Standardised pay and conditions

83% of our respondents would like to see standardised rates for television work. A few have reservations that rates might be set too low or fail to account for experience. Others feel it would be impractical and that "in a freelance market the most important factor is supply and demand". Most, however, feel that standardised minimum rates are the only way to protect wages against inflation, and to stop the widespread practice of "undercutting" which is exploited by employers to drive down costs and tends to "perpetuate the cycle of driving down the general rate level".

FIGURE 24:
Most people would like to see standardised guidance on appropriate rates for television work.



Many feel very strongly that there should be "equal pay for equal work across all roles and departments" and believe that standardised rates would help eliminate the gender pay gap and other unjustifiable inconsistencies between individuals in similar jobs. The potential benefits of standardised rates and conditions included an end to the exploitation of junior staff in particular, improved access and diversity, a less stressful and safer working environment and improved working relationships. Greater transparency around rates, in the view of several senior producers, would not only help freelancers, it would also help employers budget properly and would be particularly valuable to independent production companies in helping them negotiate with broadcasters.

> "It's a muddle at the moment, companies are so desperate for commissions they slash budgets to get work and then pass those cut rates onto the production team." (Executive Producer)

Many of our respondents believe that a standardised rate "backed by a large number of television companies" would create a "level playing field" for negotiating a fair rate. Indeed, the view that negotiations would be less stressful and more constructive for all concerned was shared by professionals on both sides and at all stages of the process:

"Having standardised rates would enable a more fruitful negotiation on both parts; the freelancer is supported by the rate card and knows what an appropriate rate is and the production company knows the boundaries in which they can work within – less cloak & dagger, more honest & open." (Shooting AP)

"A large part of my job is negotiating rates for freelancers. I always try and pay what is fair but it would be good to have a standardised rate card to fall back on or to be sure of this and also to begin negotiations." (Production Manager)

"It would help in budget negotiations with the broadcasters who often dispute any proposed increase in production pay rates." (Head of Production)

Minimum standards on working conditions are an essential corollary to standardised rates. There is a danger otherwise, as one Production Manager explains, that "people will start to double up on roles and across shows without being properly compensated". 80% of our respondents are in favour of an agreement setting out minimum standards on hours, overtime, health and safety and welfare for freelancers working in unscripted TV, with only 4% opposed to the idea.

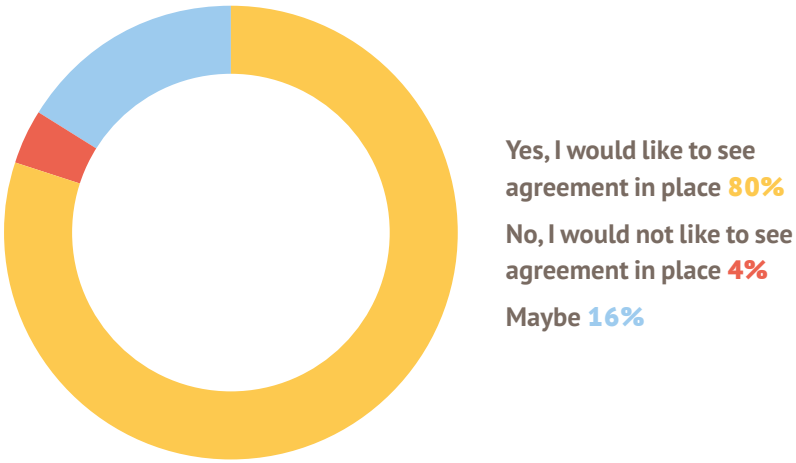


FIGURE 25:
Most people would like to see an agreement on minimum standards for working conditions in the sector.

Some respondents find that the BECTU rate card already fulfils a standardising function, but many others have found BECTU rates to be "wildly out of line with what most people are paid" and that many employers are "dismissive" of the union. Meanwhile, while it appears that "most employers have never heard of the PMA (Production Managers Association) – which sets rates for production staff, many of whom would like to see a greater level of equivalence between their rates and those of editorial. The evidence suggests the need for a revised and agreed set of standards working across the industry.

Designing a new set of standards

An effective set of standard rates would need to account for different levels of responsibility, experience and expertise as well as the specific demands of different projects. Some of our respondents consider any standardisation "unrealistic", with one talent manager arguing that "there is just far, far too much variety in terms of skills and experience, and specific job requirements, across the industry". Others think that, while standardised rates can provide a useful indicator, "in a freelance market the most important factor is supply and demand." Some are nervous about potential loss of flexibility in negotiation, or about being "pushed into a lower bracket" that does not account for their experience – although most acknowledge that it would be "helpful to know what acceptable rates are, especially when moving up the ladder".

> "There needs to be a broken down minimum for levels of skill with each pay grade. Complicated, but means you always know you will at least get the fair base rate of your skill set, and not be bartered down because it's 'small' or a 'one off' or [the producer's role] was 'in the budget as an AP'." (Producer)

Minimum rates: The principle of a "starting base rate" for every role would be welcomed by most of our respondents, providing, as one PM warns, it doesn't lead to "races to the bottom"; new entrants and those moving up into new positions are seen as particularly vulnerable within an unregulated system. Beyond that a successful framework would need to be flexible and responsive to the "huge variation in experience, market supply and production budgets" while still providing "greater transparency" and a degree of parity – particularly, as one Production Coordinator stresses "parity across individual projects". To do this effectively there would also need to be greater clarity around roles and responsibilities as well as a formal recognition of skills and experience through, for example, "a band system . . . as there is in public service organisations like the BBC".

> "We need agreed pay scales and ranges within each role to account for [the] level of experience in role. This should tie in with job descriptions and skill sets that match job roles." (Production Exec)

Experience: Some of our respondents take the view that "if it's the same job, you should be paid the same, regardless of years of experience", but most believe that experience should be taken into account when calculating rates – albeit, as one Junior Researcher puts it "not to an extreme". Clearly any effective framework will need to find the right balance between guaranteeing "a minimum rate" and recognising that "there are jobs where you bring an extraordinary skill set and talent which needs to be considered" or even the fact that productions may depend on more experienced staff to rectify mistakes. The case of paying more for experience is persuasively put here:

> "As a highly experienced person I would expect to be paid more than someone new to the role. I'm bringing years of experience as an Edit Producer, PD and SP to the Edit Producer role so (in my view) I'm more self-sufficient at problem solving and managing up and down than a newbie, and thus a more efficient team member. (No disrespect to newbies who could obviously bring fresh ideas and more to the mix.)" (Edit Producer)

Responsibilities: As well as accounting for experience a standardised framework needs to account for the specific requirements of a particular contract: "the big job titles could mean a lot of different things in the industry" with different jobs having "vastly different skill and experience requirements" and a given role meaning "one thing in one production and an entirely different thing in another." Such variability makes television workers vulnerable to exploitation unless the parameters of a role are clearly quantified.

Hours: The relationship between hours and rates is critical for our respondents. For many, "standardised rates would require a degree of standardised hours" to be meaningful. One Production Manager points out, for example, that the hours involved in one job "far exceed" those involved in others, and that "pay might need to reflect that". Several professionals are of the view that contracts should set out not just fair rates but "working hours too against those rates" while others would like to see editorial and production staff receive overtime for working over contract – after all, as one Shooting AP reasons that "if crew work over their standard hours they get overtime, presenters too".

> "I would like to see a fair system set out for rates of pay for each job role, as well as making sure people are paid for all the hours they work. Rather than feeling they are replaceable if they don't or that we're "lucky" to be able to even do the job." (DV Director)

There is a widely held view that, outside of shooting days, "12 hour days shouldn't be standard and SP's/Director's emailing/calling at all hours" and that there is no necessity for long office and edit days, which are detrimental to health. One Edit Producer speculates that "if the rates reflected [the actual hours worked], then I think production companies and broadcasters would be quick to realise they couldn't afford it", while a Production Coordinator believes that if staff were paid by the hour "the expectation to constantly be on our phones would decrease and we'd work more standardised hours".

Existing Models: In terms of designing and operationalising an effective framework for negotiations, there is much to be learnt from existing models – both those that work and those that, in our respondents' experience, do not. One Production Manager notes that the guidance offered by BECTU and the PMA is "useful, while another describes the BECTU rate card as 'a piece of fantasy' with regard to work outside London, or in factual entertainment. Several respondents mention the 'Ratechecker' tool recently launched by The Talent Manager as a particularly useful tool to inform negotiations since "it allows you to compare like for like e.g. PAYE/holiday pay inc., not inc. etc.", while others note that "groups like Viva La PD have done an amazing job opening the discussions of our rates", leading to greater transparency. But clearly employer engagement with recommended rates is patchy: as one Assistant Producer has found, for example, the PACT rates are ignored "even [by] companies who have worked with PACT". Several respondents mention the APA (Advertising Producers Association) rates, which are routinely honoured by commercial employers with overtime appropriately compensated.

> "I feel it would be appropriate to deem something 'PACT Rate' . . . that all production companies [who are] signed up to PACT abide by as a minimum. It would be agreed by the unions through negotiation and then we're all on the same page. Similar to APA rates in the Advertising world." (Producer)

Employers responsibilities and compliance

It is clear that no system can work without the cooperation of employers, and indeed the support of broadcasters and commissioners, all of whom need to be brought "into the conversation". There is a strong sense that, as one Assistant Producer puts it, "the problems begin with the channels that are commissioning – they expect a lot and pay little – and this filters down into lower wages and extra time pressures for the crew." A Production Executive explains that for any agreement on rates and conditions to work, "broadcasters need to understand these agreed pay scales too and apply them to budgets" since, as a Production Coordinator explains, "often rate directives are issued at the budget sign-off stage" leaving little leeway thereafter. For one Production Manager, having agreement on standardised rates at the budget stage would "avoid awkward conversations" and "stop companies having to short change freelancers because broadcasters haven't given a realistic budget figure to make the programme." Our respondents were very much aware that both commissioners and production companies have to work within budgetary constraints, but at the same time felt that both should be deterred from "over promising a product which they can't deliver without undercutting staff." As one experienced Editor put it, if "they say that they can't afford editor rates . . . then they can't afford to make the show!"

Many of our respondents question how standardised rates and conditions could be enforced. Without any form of sanction they fear that companies would "still try to push the rate down or "find ways to get around the rates" or even "club together and low ball us" as, it is suggested, is currently the practice in some regional centres.

Photo: © gnepphoto - stock.adobe.com

> "…how can we ensure production companies must adhere to standardised rates with so little transparency and with the profit margin (not just a standardised profit margin but the case of some companies as much of a profit margin as can be squeezed) takes precedence over fair salary for what on many productions ends up being 12+ hour days and working weekends without additional pay?" (Executive Producer)

It is suggested that any formal system would need to be recognised by PACT "or companies won't sign up" and would need to operate like the APA rate in corporate, whereby "people just won't work for anything less and it's never questioned". With the competition for jobs, and the vulnerability of freelancers this is seen as a potential weakness. Many of our respondents would like to see minimum rates and contracted hours legally enforced, however, it is acknowledged that staff desperate for work might be complicit in undercutting rates or afraid to "rock the boat" by reporting bad practice. A successful system, then, would need to be underpinned by an organisation able to protect the rights of workers who "call out companies" who do not abide by agreed rates and conditions.

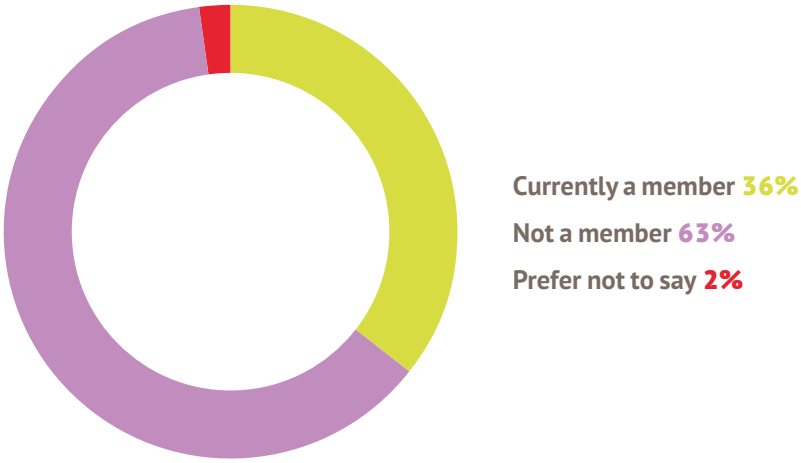
Voice and representation

Only a little over a third of our respondents are members of a union or trade association. Of those who are not, many believe that there is a "stigma" attached to union membership – that companies and individuals responsible for hiring "frown upon hiring a member of a union" who "might start demanding certain rights". Editorial staff, in particular, fear that union membership will make them "less employable" and that actually calling on their union to resolve an employment issue would be "the nuclear option".

"If I ever had a problem, and a union did fix it, the result would be never being employed by that company again – or any subsequent companies the staff concerned worked for." (Producer Director)

While some have benefitted from union support in the past, others do not believe that their union is currently able to protect freelancers from exploitative employers or unfair practices.

FIGURE 26:
Only 36% of our respondents are currently members of a union or trade association.



Many of our respondents would like to see a union that is "proactive about change" and "carries a real voice" within the industry – one that has some "clout". They would like to see a union or representative organisation able to "challenge senior figures who are in fact responsible for a lot of bad workplace practice" and to protect the interests of individual freelancers without fear of "personal repercussions". They recognise, however, that such an organisation would have to be recognised by employers as well as broadcasters and commissioners and several felt that this was unlikely "given [the] vast amount of companies and so much disparity". Some feel that unions simply cannot exert any real influence "in an industry run by freelancers" and that the model of representation unions provide "doesn't apply to the fragile nature of TV freelancing"; others look to the US and Canada for examples of effective representation – but acknowledge that the model may not easily translate to the UK context, with one Production Coordinator opining: "It would take the UK a long time or an EXCEPTIONAL shift to be in line with that, I don't see it happening".

On the whole our respondents are not optimistic about the prospect of establishing a powerful, effective voice for freelancers within the UK industry. At the same time, however, they acknowledge that without such a voice and without the protection afforded by a powerful representative organisation, it will be difficult to challenge or change poor management practices within the industry.

PART 4
Agenda for change

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Conclusion

The production of unscripted television in the UK is predicated on an unhealthy and unsustainable model. It is an open secret within the industry that production teams are routinely required to fulfil unrealistic expectations with inadequate resources and within timeframes that militate against equitable recruitment and humane working practices. Professionals across the industry, at all levels, are effectively complicit in this system due to a culture that normalises and valorises working excessive hours with relatively little compensation: this is "just the way the industry works". A casualised workforce in which every individual is working for their next reference, creates a climate in which dissent is not an option for those who wish to maintain a career in the industry.

The shift from a predominantly staff-based model of employment to a transient freelance base has resulted in an abdication of responsibility for welfare, training and development by broadcasters, with no corresponding move to take on this responsibility by independent production companies, many of which lack the resources, the expertise or the desire to do so. Meanwhile a lack of institutional memory, together with a lack of time or resource to capture lessons learned from individual productions, means that poor practice persists without check, including practices that are ultimately wasteful of that same limited resource.

The current environment is one in which skills shortages, a lack of diversity and poor mental health are all but inevitable.

Past experience has shown that these issues cannot be successfully addressed by 'initiatives' and schemes while the fundamental structures and processes that underpin television production in the UK make for a toxic working environment. Neither can they be addressed by broadcaster policies that pay lipservice to ethical employment practices, but do not enable or enforce them in their suppliers.

It is with this in mind that the authors offer the following recommendations in the hope that they will be instrumental in helping the industry to improve its employment practices, become more sustainable and thus be better prepared to meet the new challenges that the next decade will bring.

Recommendations

1 **Broadcasters should take responsibility for the pipeline that is created to fulfill their demands.** Broadcasters and other commissioning bodies, supported by the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) or its agents, should formulate, agree and adopt a code of practice, whereby they undertake to enable and support good working practices within the industry and discourage the use of exploitative or unethical practices. Key components of this code of practice would include ensuring that:

1.1 Greenlighting practices and resulting lead times allow for equitable recruitment processes and viable production schedules.

1.2 Budgets enable (or at least do not prohibit) ethical recruitment and working conditions and agreed minimum standards and rates of pay.

1.3 Commissioning editors are held accountable for the consequences of their decisions, as they impact on working hours and working conditions.

1.4 Commissions are awarded preferentially (and, in time, exclusively) to production companies who meet an employer's kitemark as discussed below, or who can otherwise demonstrate a commitment to ethical employment practices.

2 **Production companies should take responsibility for the wellbeing of all staff, including those employed on freelance contracts.** This responsibility should be recognised, rewarded and reinforced through the introduction of a kitemark, predicated on the standards and protocols outlined in Recommendation 3 below. This will be developed by a third-party organisation (see Recommendation 4), and awarded to employers who evidence a commitment to:

2.1 Agreed minimum standards for rates of pay and working conditions.

2.2 Professional and equitable recruitment processes – to include ensuring that staff involved in recruitment have been appropriately trained.

2.3 Dignity and diversity principles – to include instituting training at senior levels to raise awareness of unconscious bias, bullying, mental health issues and equality legislation – and actively incentivising engagement in such training by freelance managers.

2.4 Encouraging flexible working patterns to support work-life balance and mental wellbeing, and to retain talent.

2.5 Supporting the development of all staff, including freelancers, whether through formal training or informal approaches such as mentoring.

3 BECTU and other representative organisations should work with industry leaders to develop employment standards and protocols, as well as raising awareness of key issues throughout the industry. To this end, they should establish:

3.1 Minimum standards for rates of pay and working conditions: to include expectations around maximum hours, payment of overtime, contracts, health and safety.

3.2 Protocols for ensuring dignity and inclusivity in the workplace: to include guidance on how to prevent, recognise and respond to instances of bullying and discrimination.

3.3 Protocols for professional, equitable and transparent recruitment practices: to include specific expectations that advertised jobs are discoverable through online searches, not exclusively offered from behind paywalls or through social media; that recruiters are trained in relevant equality legislation; that unsuccessful interviewees are provided with feedback.

3.4 Protocols for flexible working based on existing positive models, together with promotion across the industry of the benefits of employing a diverse range of people in production.

4 An industry coalition should set up a third-party organisation, recognised by Ofcom, to monitor and support the management of human resources within the industry and to act as an independent standards body to protect the rights of employees, including freelancers. This organisation should be resourced to:

4.1 Develop and manage a kitemark system (potentially offering three levels of affirmation e.g. bronze, silver, gold) that identifies and rewards ethical and progressive employers.

4.2 Receive and address reports of bullying and harassment, discrimination and other unfair employment practices.

4.3 Monitor, review and advise on recruitment strategies in the industry, particularly addressing diversity among new entrants.

4.4 Monitor, review and advise on strategies for career support and professional development within the industry, particularly addressing areas of skills shortage in mid-career and senior roles.

4.5 Provide HR support and advice to employers, particularly to production companies too small to have their own HR support.

5 An industry coalition, working with ScreenSkills, and drawing on DCMS support, should address the gap in the provision and uptake of training for television staff with hiring and team management responsibilities. To this end they should:

5.1 Identify and commission bespoke management training – to include a range of topics from handling finances, to building teams, to unconscious bias and the legal and policy frameworks impacting equitable hiring practices.

5.2 Identify strategies and funding to incentivise and/or subsidise management training for freelance staff.

5.3 Identify strategies and funding to incentivise and/or subsidise production companies with good (kitemarked) employment practices to offer 'on the job' training and development.

6 The DCMS should actively support the strategies outlined above, enforcing the compliance of broadcasters with working practices designed to improve working conditions, diversity and skills development throughout the industry. In particular, the department (or its agents) should

6.1 Regulate commissioning practices, requiring that an agreed quota of productions are commissioned from kitemarked companies and that broadcasters comply with a code of practice. (see Recommendation 1 above).

6.2 Provide formal recognition and funding for an advisory and reporting third party organisation (as described in Recommendation 4 above).

6.3 Provide funding for development in priority areas, particularly management skills (see Recommendation 5 above)

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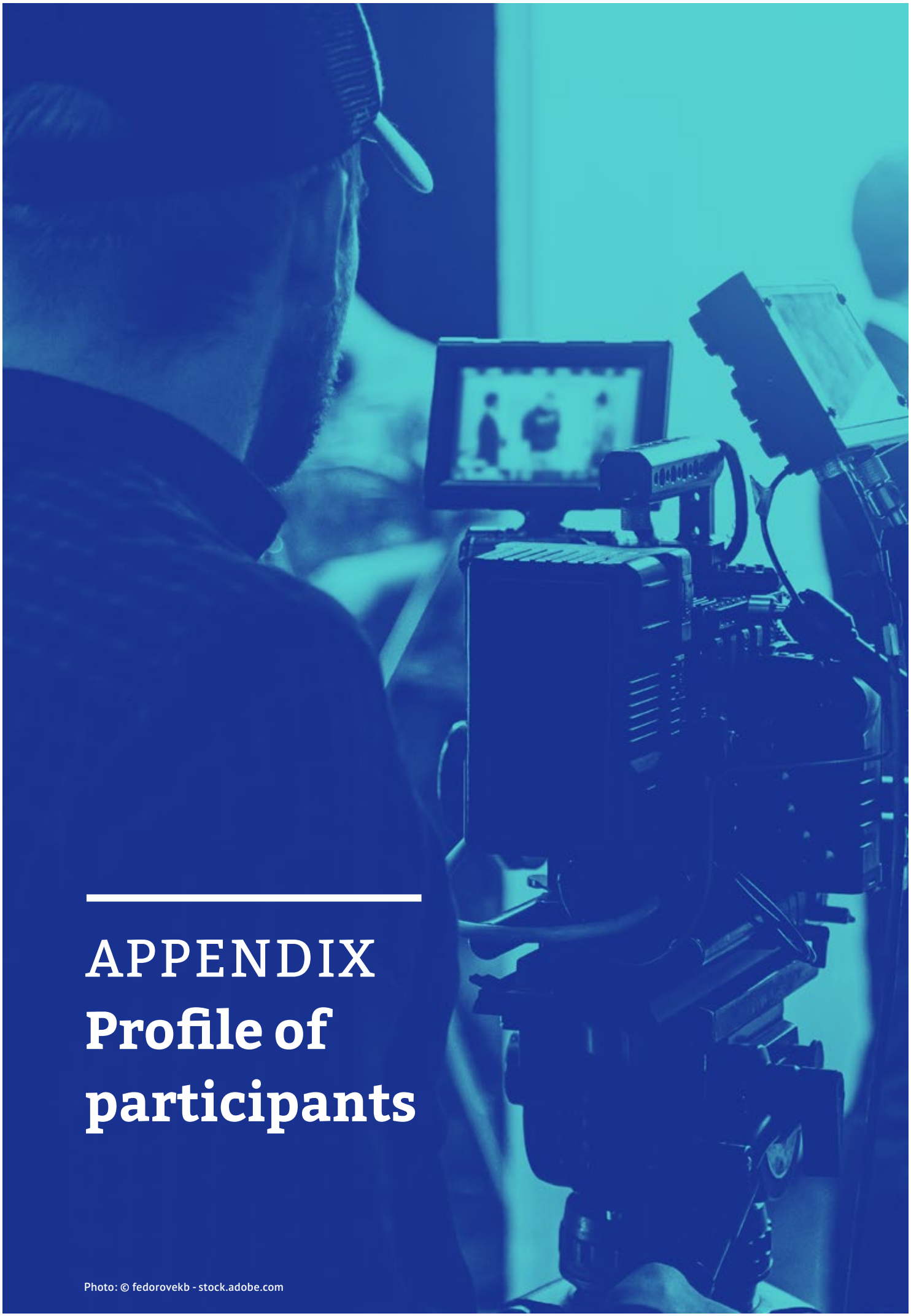
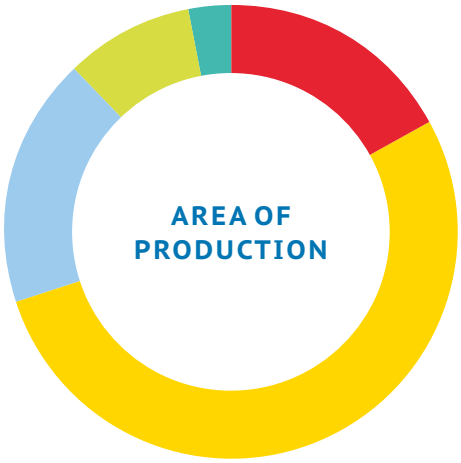


APPENDIX
Profile of participants

Photo: © fedorovekb - stock.adobe.com

Employment profile



Senior Management **17%**

Editorial **53%**

Production **18%**

Craft **9%**

Other **3%**

Executive Producer **18%**

Line Producer **19%**

Production Executive **13%**

Series Producer **36%**

Commissioner **2%**

Other **12%**

Runner **1%**

Production Assistant **2%**

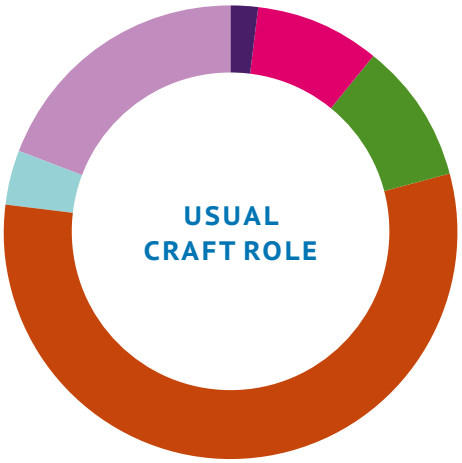
Line Producer/HoP **6%**

Production Co-ordinator **27%**

Production Manager **55%**

Production Secretary **6%**

Other **3%**



Assistant Editor **2%**

Camera Operator/Assistant **9%**

DoP **10%**

Editor **56%**

Sound Recordist **4%**

Other **19%**

Runner or Researcher (including Junior, Senior and Development Researchers) **11%**

Assistant Producer (of which 23% Self-Shooting APs) **19%**

Edit Producer **9%**

Producer (including Casting, Gallery, Archive, Development Producers) **17%**

Senior Producer **6%**

Producer/Director **11%**

Self-Shooting PD or DV Director **21%**

Director (including Gallery, Series, PSC and Multi-Camera Directors) **3%**

Other **3%**

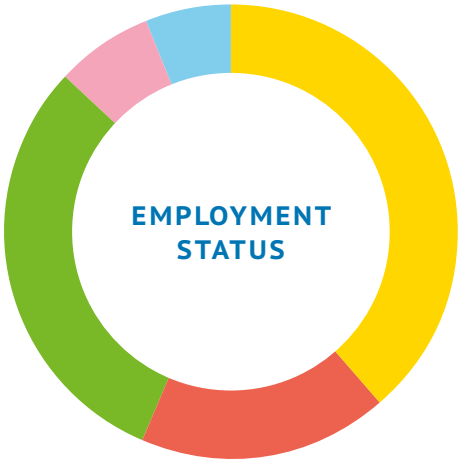
5 years or less **16%**

6–10 years **27%**

11–20 years **35%**

21–30 years **18%**

Over 30 years **4%**



Sole Trader 39%

Limited Company 18%

Fixed-Term PAYE 31%

Staff Position PAYE 7%

Mixture of the above 6%

London 75%

South East (outside of M25) 3%

South West 6%

North West 7%

North East 1%

Midlands 1%

Scotland 5%

Wales 1%

Northern Ireland 0%

London 60%

South East (outside of M25) 14%

South West 8%

North West 7%

North East 2%

Midlands 2%

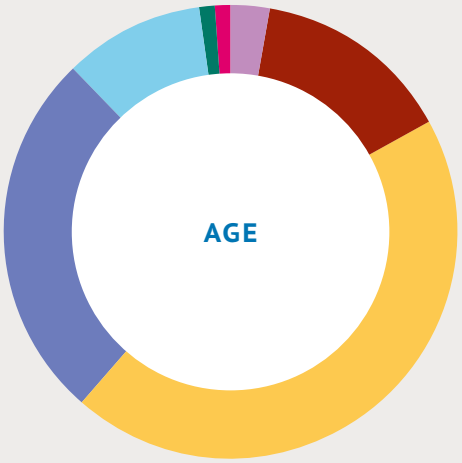
Scotland 5%

Wales 2%

Northern Ireland 0%

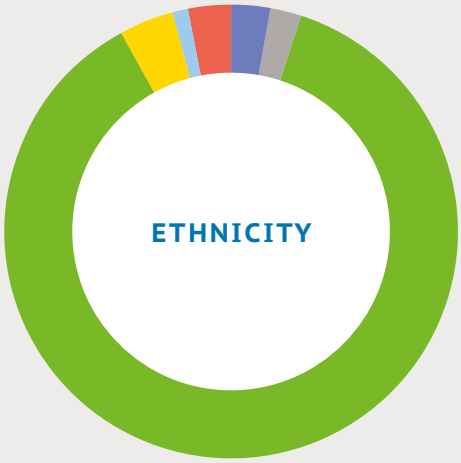
Note: all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

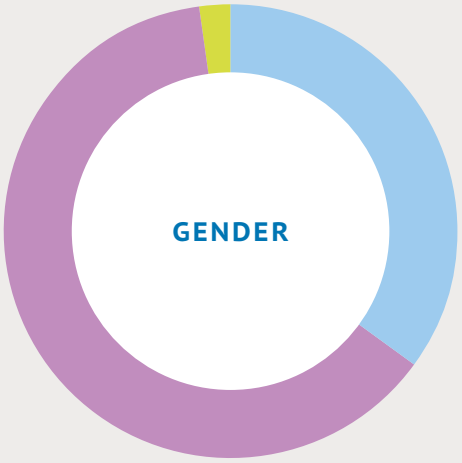
Demographic Profile



24 or under 3%
25–29 14%
30–39 44%
40–49 26%
50–59 10%
60 or over 1%
Prefer not to say 1%

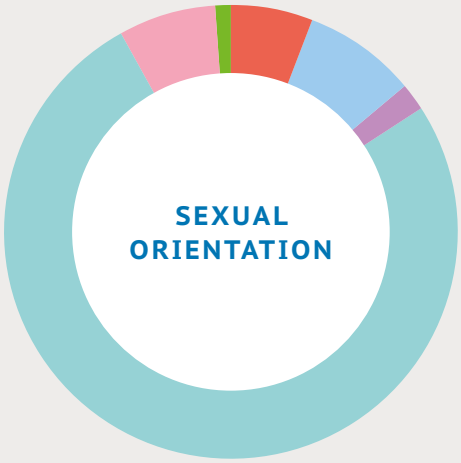
Asian Background 3%
Black Background 2%
White Background 87%
Mixed Background 4%
Other Background 1%
Prefer not to say 3%





Male 35%
Female 63%
Non-binary 0%
Prefer not to say 2%

Note: all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



Bisexual **6%**

Gay man **8%**

Gay woman **2%**

Heterosexual **76%**

Prefer not to say **7%**

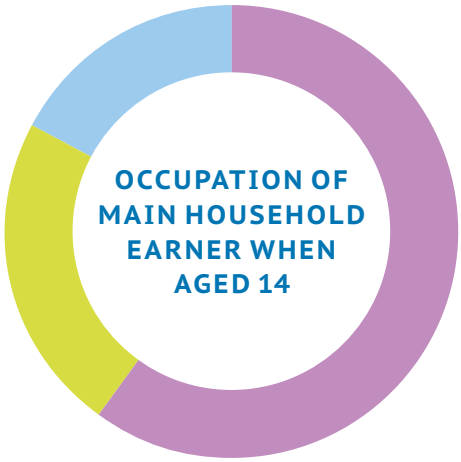
Other **1%**

Disabled **6%**

Not Disabled **92%**

Prefer not to say **2%**

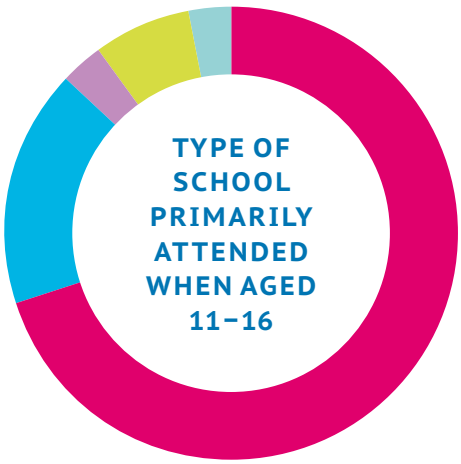
Socio-economic background



Professional or managerial background 60%

Clerical, intermediate, skilled craft or small business owners 23%

Lower socio-economic background 17%



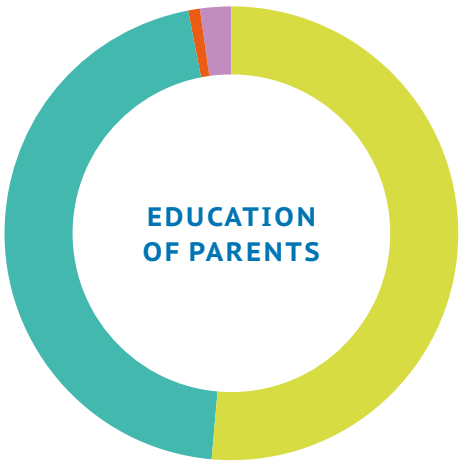
A state-run or state funded school 70%

Independent or fee-paying school 17%

Independent or fee-paying school-received bursary 3%

Attended school outside the UK 7%

Prefer not to say 3%



Neither of my parents attended university 51%

One or both of my parents attended university 45%

Don't know/not sure 1%

Prefer not to say 2%

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