

# MARK MILSOME FOUNDATION HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

OCTOBER 2021

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# Introduction

The Mark Milsome Foundation launched a campaign in May 2020 to investigate the attitudes towards Health & Safety within the TV & Film Industry. The Foundation reached out to newsletter subscribers, personal contacts, organisations and their contacts on social media in order to attract a far ranging sample size. The survey closed and the data was assessed in the summer of 2021. With nearly 2,000 participants and 5,000 additional comments that the participants voluntarily gave the data is vast and therefore we can draw a range of solid conclusions from the survey. The data provided by each participant was anonymous.

# **Demographic**

- 1,906 total respondents
- · 53% number of participants were BECTU members
- · 43% are not members of any union
- Others notably listed: GBCT, Assistant Directors Guild, Local 600, IATSE, also

#### listed

- 92% of participants were Film/TV crew members
- 2% of participants were actors
- 6% of participants were production based
- Others notably listed: Camera operators, Clinical Advisor, Director, Director of Photography, Fashion/ Editorial Based Makeup Artist, Stunt Coordinator, Stunt performer, post production editor, Screenwriter, Independent documentary director, MA film student (nfts) and Subcontracted service provider

### People we have reached out to:

Newsletter subscribers

# Organisations:

• BECTU, GBCT, BAFTA, Equity, BSC, ASC, Stunt Register GB, ACO, ADA, The Production Guild, UK Film and TV Coordinators and Wireman Organisation

#### Social Media Channels:

- MMF Instagram page
  - @camerabranch repost on story
  - @gtc\_tv repost on story
  - @crewmatter repost on story
  - @camerarevolution repost on story
  - @women\_behind\_the\_camera repost on story
  - @aco\_uk repost on story
- MMF Facebook page
- MMF Twitter page
- Movie Set Memories Facebook page

# **Findings**

#### Main points

- 62% of participants believe that current H&S regulations need improving
- 20% of participants don't think they are adequate at all
- 71% of participants say they would support and sign up to an MMF online course, rising to 94% if mandatory
- 85% of participants believe there are issues related to stress and mental health in the industry which are not addressed
- Working hours, sleep deprivation and driving tired are the main H&S causes of concern in the industry. 83% of participants say that working hours and sleep deprivation are most likely to blame for poor H&S standards
- 80% of participants also voted to say that budget restrictions could be blamed for poor Health & Safety standards

#### **Qualitative data**

# Working hours and sleep deprivation

Over half of the respondents stated that regulations relating to Health & Safety are adequate but need improving. With only 14% stating they are completely substantial. The main areas of concern were working hours, with only 2% of respondents stating that productions *always* respect regulations relating to working hours. This is supported by the fact that 83% of respondents stated that working hours and sleep deprivation were most likely to blame for poor Health & Safety standards. This was highlighted by one participants who stated:

"People outside the film industry work 8hr days - over time is rare and only in certain circumstances. How did we get to a 10 hr day min before prep and wrap? There is no work /life balance. I love my job but it is exhausting"

Furthermore, 84% of respondents stated they believed accommodation should have been provided for Health & Safety reasons to reduce travel pressure and fatigue, with 55% of respondents stating they have at least once felt in danger of having a road traffic accident

because they were too tired to drive to or from a shoot (only 7% stated they have never felt this way), with 9% having actually had an accident. This is further supported by the fact that a large number of respondents who provided more detail could recall an accident which happened or nearly happened due to tiredness while driving. One participant stated:

"I've been denied accommodation countless times after working long hours. I've then been expected to drive a large vehicle full of equipment back to base or to the rental house for storage overnight. It makes you feel expendable and it feels like the equipment is more important than your life. Surely putting crew members up in a hotel or hostel would cost less than the cost of a someone falling asleep at the wheel? I think it does have to come from the top down, as although crew members have expressed in the past how frustrating it is that we have had to work this way, it seems that HODs and production often turn a blind eye to it."

Sleep deprivation was often referred to in the context of lack of an insufficient amount of turnaround time. One participant stated "The days are getting longer with more overtime. Driving on broken turnaround gets dangerous". Furthermore, another participant claimed:

"Excessive hours worked, then having to drive to and from work while extremely fatigued. No real breaks during the day as most productions are continuous working days. Productions regularly break turnarounds, especially once you factor in the average travelling time either end of the day."

### Preparation and wrap time/ rushing to make the day

Additionally, preparation and wrap time was the second most substantial cause for concern, with only 2% of respondents stating that productions in the UK *always* respect regulations in comparison to 48% who agreed that productions *rarely* respected regulations relating to prep/wrap time. Additionally, 75% of people stated that when they hear of serious injury or death on a production in the UK, they think that it was probably related to lack of prep/rehearsal time/rushing to make the day. 63% of people still believe this to be the case when working abroad.

The sense of rushing to get things done in a short amount of time was also prevalent after reading through the comments as one person stated:

"Crews are always rushed, leaving behind debris kit or whatever they didn't have time to tidy. Stunts are often rushed because of time and money. It's the wild west."

Sentiments of this kind were supported by another participant who stated:

"Health & Safety is often overlooked at times when people feel rushed on set/the shoot is falling behind/a scene, shot or location needs completing before the end of the day and very little consideration is given for crew fatigue."

Inextricably linked to 'rushing', was the idea that Health & Safety is neglected when the crew are 'rushing to get the shot'. For example one participant stated there is "too much emphasis on getting the shot in time, over doing it safely". This was further supported by another participant who stated "If directors are in a hurry to get their shot or complete a scene then crew safety goes out of the window." Time constraints seemed to be a big problem when it came to Health & Safety, with many participants stating their concerns that getting the shot is seemingly more important than H&S regulations being followed.

#### Work/life balance

Furthermore, a prominent theme that is highlighted after analysing the qualitative data is the effect that working long hours and tiredness has on one's work/life balance. For example one respondent stated:

"I feel there is a disregard for working hours, working weeks resulting in fatigue and it's effect on family home life and relationships"

This was supported by another participant who stated:

"Our everyday exposure to risk from tiredness to driving hours never seems to be a consideration, the working hours also impacts on personal life's with relationships and sharing family needs often suffering."

Overwhelmingly, 42% of participants stated that 9 - 10 hours was a safe and reasonable working day from call to wrap time. Anything above this was deemed unacceptable in order for people to maintain a work/life balance. It is within this context that many participants mentioned the effect that working long hours has on personal life and mental health. For example one participant stated:

"There is such a bad work/life balance in the industry and we are worked so relentlessly purely to save money for producers. We are paid massively inferior OT compared to the US - actually less per hour than normal time. We then suffer from exhaustion and bad quality of life."

This was further supported by another participant who stated "9-10 is achievable for safety. 8-9 would be much better for any semblance of a home life and better mental health." There appears to be a direct correlation between working long hours, sleep deprivation and the negative impact it has on family life and mental health. Alarmingly, one participant stated:

"Over the years peoples family life have been eroded away - and whilst pay used to reflect this, the unchanging / slow changing rates no longer reflect the anti-social hours asked of crews. Many productions shoot weekends now or have working weeks that change from mon - fri to over weekends with no additional payments to compensate for lost family life and this leads to poor mental well being and people driving unsafely."

The sense that there isn't enough time for a life outside of working in the industry was discussed by another participant as they stated:

"I believe the only reason that prevents a standard 8 hour shooting day is the cost (shorter days, longer shoots overall...) Anyone who refuses to lead the way in crew wellbeing and safety because of money should be profoundly ashamed. Wellbeing in film is not just about getting enough sleep at night: it is about seeing our friends and families, pursuing hobbies, nurturing ourselves outside of food and rest. We are so lucky to work in a vibrant and prosperous industry, but no job deserves the current levels of commitment and sacrifice Crew. No film or tv show is so important that you have to miss a wedding, a family holiday, even just a dinner date. All crew are complex individuals with fulfilling lives outside of the film industry and we all deserve to enjoy a life outside of work. We have been sold the myth that a job is everything, but this is false: the crew are everything, without them a job is nothing."

Moreover, the detrimental impact that working in the film and tv industry has on the mental well-being of workers is illuminated by the fact that 85% of participants believe there are

issues related to stress and mental health in the industry. When asked to comment further, the results are filled with concerns relating to long hours, neglect of family life With one participant stating:

"Absolutely. Mental illness on top of it as a result of our industry is brutal, and until recently not taken seriously. Long hours, travel and the sheer intensity of our work makes us prone to so many health conditions. Caring for ourselves can so often be frowned upon, as it looks like we aren't as dedicated or hard working."

## **Bullying and sexual harassment**

Unfortunately, when asked about mental health, many participants referred to bullying and some reference sexual harassment whilst working in the industry. After analysis of the data, it becomes clear that many participants believe this to be a big problem. A few of the answers listed below outline the problems and concerns:

"Hell yes including impact of harassment, bullying and mental health issues..."

"I expressed concern no medical staff were present when a newborn was on set. My 2nd AD behaved in a bullying fashion, trying to gaslight me into believing it was not a concern. My 1st AD however had my back.

"The bullying and shaming of women."

"Long working hours. Impact on family members and relationships. Lack of sleep. Dealing with pressure and bullying within the hierarchies of a film production."

"There is a culture of fear and bullying that is so deep rooted no amount of antibullying pre production courses seem to make any difference"

"Bullying is part of the mental health challenges on set."

"Mental health issues, awareness and transparency needs to be taken as seriously and be as visible as the recent bullying and harassment frameworks and protocols."

"Crew member of a higher grade and wage bully or gang up on people lower than them."

"The working hours and tight budgets can also make cast & crew members short tempered which can lead to bullying and antagonism."

"Amongst the young assistants, there has been a lot of bullying in various department and in some cases resulted in post-traumatic stress. We are told to not address this as it will show we are a difficult assistant and that the bully who is usually above, will be hired again regardless as they have a good work reputation."

"Bullying, fear factor of losing your job, and being afraid to speak out because of the two above."

"Again, hours. Also bullying on set is still bad."

"The film and television industry preaches support and anti bullying but does not practice it."

"I've seen (and occasionally experienced) bullying by senior people - i.e. leading actors, director, 1st AD, line producer, DoP, other HoDs - which is considered 'part of the culture' & so crew are expected to just take it. These senior people are rarely challenged about their behaviour because they are considered too vital to the production. A blind eye is turned, people are afraid to be seen as troublemakers & make things worse for themselves, and when they do the reaction is usually to brush it under the carpet. Also the issue of fatigue (as outlined above in my response to question 9) in relation to mental health is a big unaddressed problem. I'm in my late 40s & loads of colleagues my age or thereabouts have mental health issues (diagnosed and undiagnosed) which have built up over time, relating to work stress, anxiety, emotional & family problems, divorce etc etc - often because of long hours being away from home, and exacerbated by fatigue. It's extremely difficult for working crew to get regular weekly appointments with therapists/counsellors because of the hours we work, so many end up on anti-depressants & just keep going - until they can't any more."

"Sexual assault - I am not aware of any body that ensures health and safety guidelines are adhered to. I assume that in theory this is Equity's job (at least as far as protecting actors is involved) but Equity literally told me in writing that a director I

was up for a job with sexually assaulting me in the lobby of a theatre was nothing to do with them and that "it is not reasonable to expect Equity to police what our members to in their personal lives." So apparently if someone harasses you in the audition room, that's considered "the workplace" but the second you step into the corridor or pop to the loo that's off-duty and therefore fair game for assault? Oh and btw the director in question holds a high-up elected position within Equity and literally is one of the people who RUNS Equity. I could name multiple other ways tat Equity fucked up and actively endangered my physical and emotional well-being. So my trust and confidence in Equity's ability and willingness to protect actors is null."

"Sexual harassment for sure. People are still woefully ill educated on the topic - that includes the perpetrators, the victims, the authorities and the bystanders."

"I was sexually harassed in my last job on the first day, which was repeated on the fourth and fifth day until I made it clear I didn't like his behaviour but I didn't report it, despite having a good working relationship with the producer. I only eventually came forward officially when I found out that two assistants in editorial had been similarly harassed and had stayed silent. By then it was too late and he moved on to another project but luckily I know the producer on that project and I told him my experience and it went to HR so at least they were aware of a pattern of behaviour. What we don't do is explain the psychological effect of harassment. I am a confident take no shit person but that doesn't matter, it's shocking when it happens and the perpetrator is normally clever about how far they go so when you say it out loud it sounds petty even to your own ears so then in order to avoid them you avoid everyone else. Now those people don't know you or what's going on so they make assumptions about your character and leave you alone. This means the perpetrator has even more access than they did before. He got short shrift from me but I still alienated myself because I wanted to avoid him at all costs. It was six weeks before I found out about the other women and that may not have happened had he not left the production. We need to educate ourselves and others on the insidious nature of harassment and abuse of power so we can all do better jobs of protecting the vulnerable and weeding out those who missed the memo on #metoo."

Unfortunately, the issue of bullying was commonly referred to in relation to mental health problems in the industry.

# Online training course

Attitudes towards the Mark Milsome Foundation delivering a thorough, inexpensive, online Health and Safety certified course was overall positive. 71% of people stating they would take an MMF online course, however many said it should not be a "tick box" exercise. There was a feeling that Health & Safety was a much more complex issue than how it is currently handled in the industry. The work ethic and culture seems to be the biggest problem for H&S, rather than solely environmental factors like danger hazards and so forth. This was illuminated by one participant who stated:

"I don't know. I have to continually update health & safety courses. I'm interested in real H&S rather than the version that ticks the boxes for companies who want to avoid litigation."

Many stated they believed the numerous courses they have previously taken were not very useful or were only done in order for production companies to avoid litigation. There was a feeling that past courses that the participants had taken failed to cover enough ground, focusing solely on particular departments. As illuminated by one participant who said:

"Only however if it included all departments as most health and safety courses and BECTU training only focus on camera grip and lighting departments when 'female departments' are not as focused on when costume make up have extremely dangerous elements to their department that are overlooked."

Some respondents even suggested that production companies should take the training course. One participant stated:

"Crew members don't need the course. Production companies and producers are the people putting our lives at risk. I feel that this would just shift the blame onto the crew so when accidents happen they can prove the liability was with us as we should have known better."

This was further supported by other participants who said:

"I feel the onus is more on Production to enforce health and safety rules"

"I feel I am responsible and feel safe on set with current health and safety awareness being good, however I think productions and producers are the problem pushing crew to unhealthy amounts of work."

Many participants also said it was dependent on the cost of the course, with some suggesting it should be paid for by production companies.

## Saying 'no'

Furthermore, after analysing the data it is apparent that there is a stigma surrounding saying 'no' to potentially precarious/dangerous situations on set. One of the most prominent factors contributing to this appears to be the hierarchical structure of the film and television industry. One's confidence in saying no is dependent on their time working in the industry and the level of their job title. As highlighted by many participants who are new to the industry:

"As a trainee I often feel like my word is never heard."

"I'm too new to make a fuss. But also something I know upsets a lot of people."

"As a trainee this happened countless times. But in the industry it's not your place to pipe up..."

"Was ignored due to being in a junior position"

"I did not speak up earlier in my career but I do now. "

"As a female camera trainee/2nd AC, it's hard to speak up about those concerns as your opinion is either ignored or you are criticised for it"

"It most certainly isn't my place as a trainee. I would be shunned."

"When I was a trainee yes, I believe people in junior grades will often fear reprisal or being silenced for highlighting safety failings."

"Felt like my role is not high enough to voice my opinions."

Moreover, 41% of participants stated they have wanted to step forward to express concerns about Health & Safety but felt nervous to do so in fear of being considered difficult. Whilst another 39% of participants stated that they have also felt this way but have spoken up anyway. Therefore 80% of participants have felt a pressure to keep quiet in fear of being difficult, demonstrating that the repercussions of saying no to certain

Health & Safety risks on set pose as a large risk to people working in the industry. Many participants spoke of fear of losing their jobs, being blacklisted and therefore losing out on future work if they were seen as uncompromising. This was highlighted by many participants as below:

"The problem is not with crew members not understanding health and safety the problem lies with some producers, production managers, putting crew in a position where they feel they can't complain, they can't try to improve things, without being targeted, labelled and risking unemployment! I think we have to be careful that by doing H&S courses for production companies that the onus does not then lie with the individual. Negating the responsibilities of the production company completely."

"I think they are, but are sometimes overlooked / ignored by senior members of production thinking that the worst will never happen on their shoot. The shot is more important. Plus, filmmakers don't want to hear the word 'No'. It's a systemic issue, not necessarily a legal one"

"Fearful of losing future work for being 'difficult'."

"I feel the main issue is with enforcement. And no one should be labelled as "difficult" or "blacklisted" when they point out problems or feel they are being put at risk."

"The fear is that if you do not meet sometimes impossible tasks you will be fired or have a reputation of not completing affecting future opportunities."

"Production not respecting the rules that are in place already. Using excuses to break the rules and exploiting the fear of no future employment."

Additionally, in relation to question 21 where participants were asked to anonymously provide any situations where they have felt that Health & Safety regulations were ignored and/or they could recall any past experiences that could have, or did result in injury or death, there were many respondents who gave concrete examples of when they had spoken up and been punished for it or had not spoken up and subsequently had paid the health consequences. A couple of examples are demonstrated below, however the list is extensive.

"On my first day, no instruction or help was offered to me when I flagged my concern about the hire car provided being an automatic - I have never driven one having always driven manual, and I had no time to practice in the car before doing my first pick up of the day. From first pick up to last drop off I was working approx 15 hour days, and 6 day weeks. As well as picking up/dropping off cast and HODs I was also required to floor run, and was exhausted. On the sixth day of the first week of filming I was driving 2 cast and 1 crew member between locations when I got into a car accident, and the hire car was written off. Miraculously the passengers only suffered minor injuries (concussion, small cuts from impact) and I was not injured however long term, my mental health has been badly affected and I have ptsd. I was suspended from the production and no further communication was given. I felt incredibly guilty as I was the driver and was responsible for the accident, however looking back I was exhausted and after voicing my concerns about this (prior to the accident) to HODs, my concerns were brushed off and dismissed. The aforementioned incident has been the main factor in my recent decision to leave the industry."

"I was filming inside a morgue in Sheffield many years ago. The Lighting Director wanted the UV lights on, even though the mortuary staff said this was only done at night when the room was unoccupied. The Lighting Director insisted the lights were the same as disco lights and are not harmful. Later that night, I woke up, unable to see and with very, very swollen eyes. In total, 16 members of cast and crew were affected and it turned out that the UV lights had burnt our retinas. The pain and symptoms lasted three days. An investigation was conducted by the tv company but no-one was held accountable. As I was only a junior member of Production, I was advised not to take the matter further as it could affect my future work with the company."

## **Looking forward**

After analysis of the data, it is clear that respondents are ready for change within the industry and would embrace new regulations and procedures. With only 4% of participants saying they would not welcome a review of the current Health & Safety regulations. Furthermore, fortunately 64% participants stated that they were not concerned that a

heightened awareness of Health & Safety would stifle the daily work flow and creativity on set, and 13% weren't sure. Therefore illuminating the fact that for most participants, a restructuring of H&S regulations would be welcome, despite changes to the daily work routine. As previously highlighted above, the eager feeling for change is further supported by the fact that 71% of participants would take part in a Health & Safety training course, and 23% if it was mandatory. 94% of those who said yes were Film & TV crew members, 1% were actors and 5% were production based. 55% were BECTU members, while 40% weren't part of any union. The most popular suggested H&S regulation was a phone line to call anonymously and register a complaint which would result in an organisation approaching the production and making them aware there were concerns on set, as 65% of participants voted for this option. In close popular proximity was the idea of a designated Health & Safety officer on every shoot, with 63% respondents voting in favour of this regulation. Interestingly, some other suggestions were "quiet spaces or sleeping pods to go and rest", "peer review and cultural change", "a trained union rep" and "a live chat"

Furthermore, there was a vast amount of stress on the fact that all procedures must be anonymous, for example one participant stated:

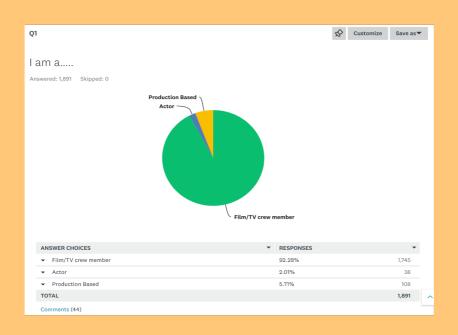
"Anonymous email address to production and or said health and safety nurse. Anonymity is key. Careers will be cut short and people blacklisted if complaints are made against higher ups".

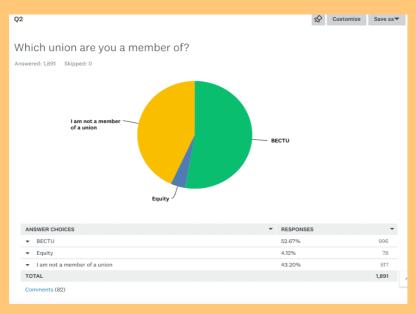
Many participants were concerned that having a crew member on set would hinder the individuals relationship with production and other crew members, and in some cases cause "bullying" with only 28% voting in favour of this suggested procedure. This was highlighted by one participant who stated "Having a person on set will not help in my opinion as if there have any connections with people their role is compromised", which was further supported by another participant who stated "Having a designated person won't work as no one would put their neck out. The amount of H&S people that are just there to tick a box and standby as we do 15-18 hours a day shows that."

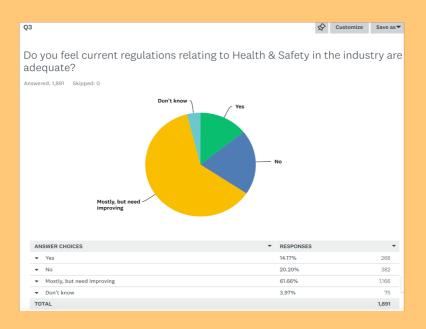
Additionally, there were a minority of participants who were not hopeful regarding any of the suggestions, such as one person who stated:

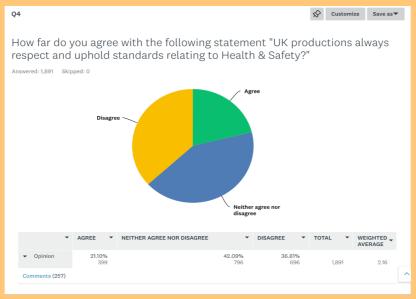
"None of the above!!!! All three options are pointless!! (1) It will range from being misused to incompetent responses. Tried and done - look to the US. (2) Production will have a favourable person there. What's the point? (3) An additional clueless person on set? How about the producer, line producer in person are legally responsible for any accident and have to prove a crew member was acting reckless or irresponsible and are therefore not liable. It would take production a split second to hire competent supervision on set."

#### **Quantitative data**



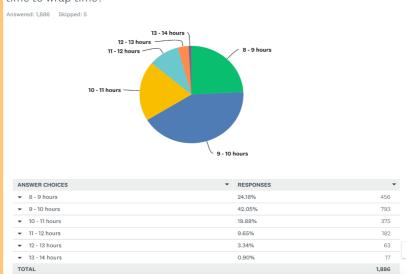


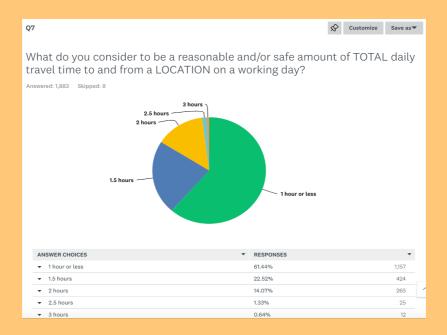


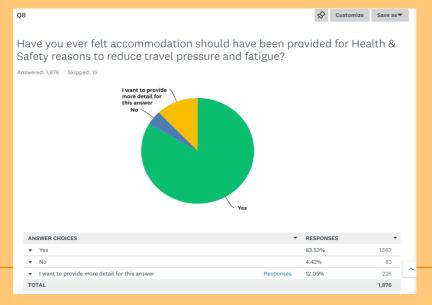


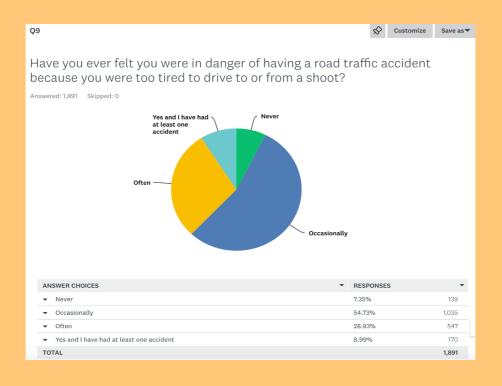


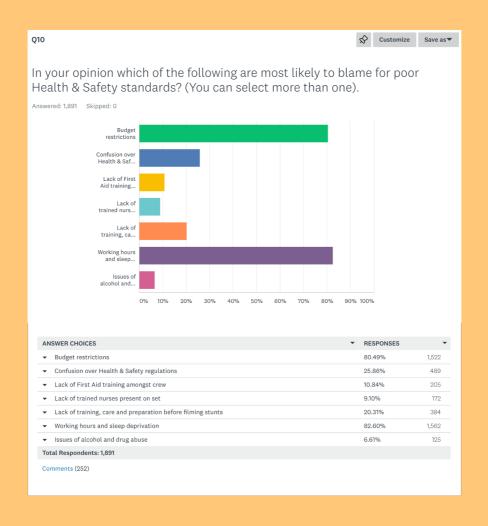


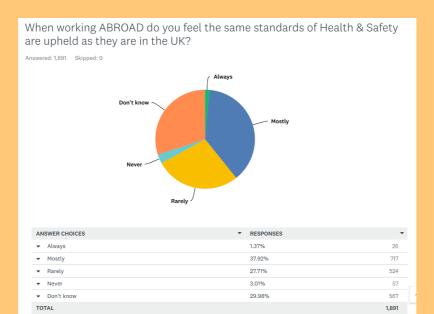


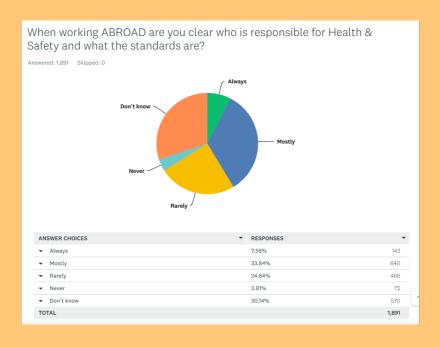




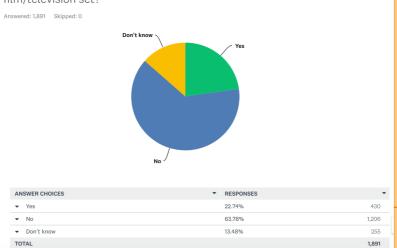




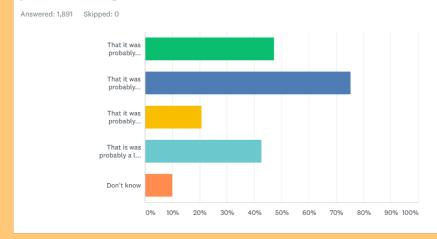


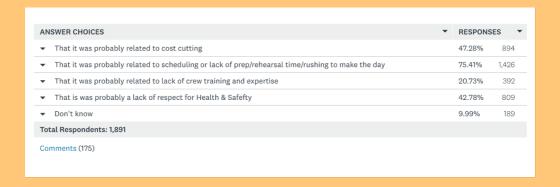


Would you say that one of your concerns is that heightened awareness of Health & Safety will stifle the daily work flow and creativity on a film/television set?



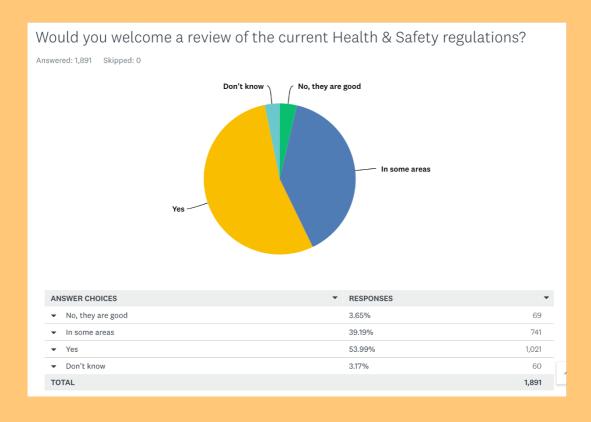
When you hear of a serious injury or death on a production IN THE UK what is your first thought? (You can tick more than one).

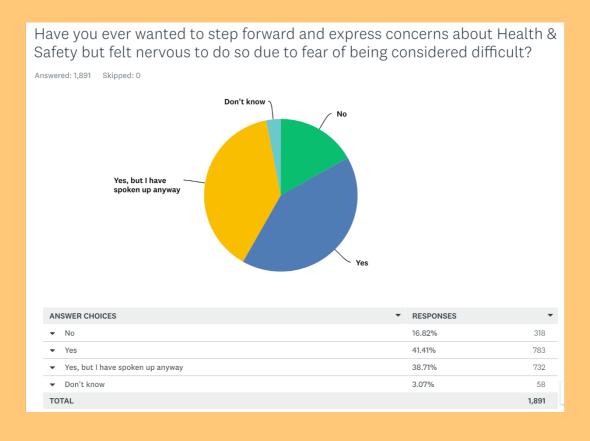


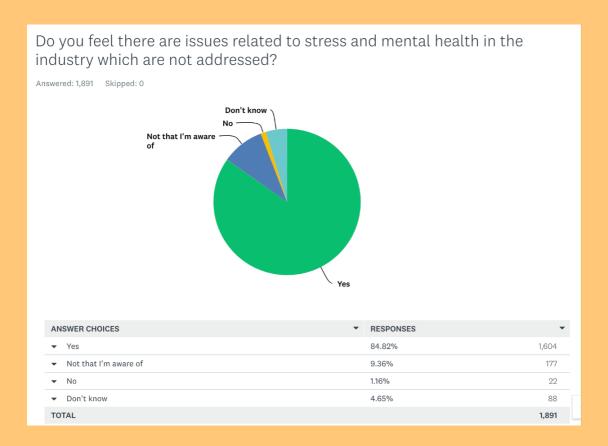


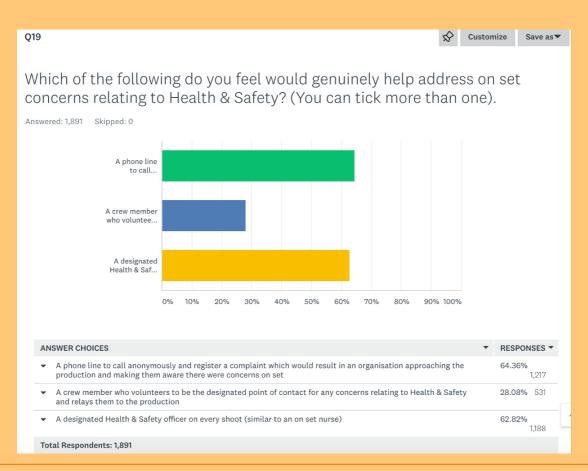
When you hear of a serious injury or death on a production OUTSIDE THE UK what is your first thought? (You can tick more than one).



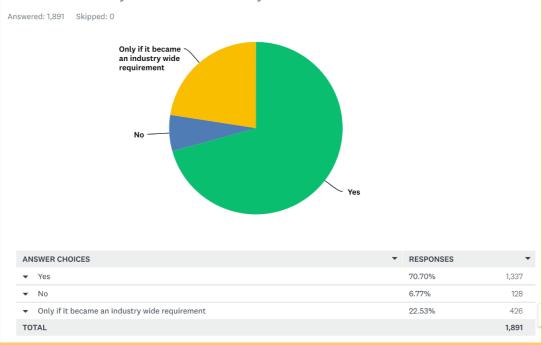








The Mark Milsome Foundation is about to develop an inexpensive, certified, online Health & Safety training course. Would you be interested in taking this course to help promote better expectations and understanding of modern health and safety across the industry?



# **Conclusion**

To conclude, after analysing the data it is apparent that Health & Safety in the modern TV and Film industry is inadequate and it is time for a change, which would be strongly welcomed by the participants. Furthermore, participants feel that the issues with the current Health & Safety regulations cannot be resolved with tick box exercise's and responses. The issues run deeper and are engrained in the culture and work ethic of the industry with problems being as complex and as serious as bullying and sexism. Participants feel pressured to be compliant, even when they may be putting their own lives, and the lives of others at risk.

Long working hours, sleep deprivation and lack of implementation for a sufficient turnaround time proved to be the biggest Health & Safety risk for the participants that took part in the survey. With many recalling instances where lack of sleep has nearly, or has, resulted in a road traffic accident. Additionally, the impact that the long working hours has on family and personal life, mental health and stress levels is overwhelmingly referred to in the qualitative data.

However, despite this, many participants were clearly passionate and positive about working in the industry, although calling for overdue change. Many participants love their jobs but don't see why their Health & Safety should be compromised at work, as highlighted below:

"Working hours need to be addressed. We put them in (often unpaid) because we love our jobs and are passionate about the projects we work on, but we shouldn't have to compromise our safety as we regularly do when having to drive long distances in an exhausted state."

"I love my job and I love working on set but the long hours are the one area that makes me reconsider this career."

"People outside the film industry work 8hr days - over time is rare and only in certain circumstances. How did we get to a 10 hr day min before prep and wrap? There is no work /life balance. I love my job but it is exhausting."

"I love my job but these hours are a nightmare also have no work life balance!"