

**British Film Institute  
Television Industry Tracking Study**

**Third Report - May 1999**



BFI Centre for Audience and Industry Research

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Jobs & Gender** - A higher percentage of Producers and Directors were women (41% of women, 39% of men) and a higher percentage of freelancers were women compared with men (48% of women, 39% of men). However, men were more likely to be in Managerial and Executive Producer roles, and more likely to be Company Owners than women.
- **Families & Gender** - Women working in television were found to be far less likely to have children than men. The latest figures show that over half of the women have no children compared with only a quarter of the men. When looking at those aged over forty, 56 per cent of women over forty have no children compared with only 15 per cent of men of this age with no children.
- **Income** - In the latest questionnaire almost a third of respondents (30%) earned between £30,000 and £50,000 per annum and 21% earned over £50,000. However, almost half of all respondents (48%) earned under £30,000, with 23% earning under £20,000. Freelancers earned less than staff with the majority of freelancers in the £10,000 to £20,000 bracket, compared with the majority of those with staff jobs earning in the £30,000 to £50,000 bracket. More people in London and the South East earned under £10,000 than those elsewhere, but more were also earning over £70,000 compared with those elsewhere.
- **Income & Age** - For those in the 31-40 year age bracket, incomes have polarised somewhat over time. The percentage earning incomes in the middle income brackets has slowly reduced and the percentages earning less than £10,000 or over £70,000 have increased.
- **Income & Gender** - Women earned significantly less than men in the survey. In the final questionnaire, 13% of women earned less than £10,000 compared with 4% of men. At the other end of the scale, 2% of women earned over £70,000 compared with 15% of men. A significant difference still remained when excluding all those not in full time employment. In addition, these differences were found to be still apparent when looking at incomes within specific job groups. Female Producers and Directors still earned less than their male counterparts, even when controlled for age and full time or part time employment status. For example, 35% of the women earned less than £20,000 as Producers/Directors, compared with 16% of men.
- **Unpaid Work** - In the final questionnaire, 63% of all freelancers stated that they had worked unpaid at some point in the last year. Half of these had worked unpaid for over a month, and for anything up to a year.
- **Other Sources of Income** - 53% of all respondents earned income from other sources outside television work and for 30% of these, this other income source constituted over half of their total income. The most common source of alternative income was from teaching or lecturing.
- **Hours** - The number of hours worked by respondents during the course of the survey slowly reduced. Those working over 50 hours in a week reduced from 47% to 36%, but 17% of respondents were still working over 60 hours a week. Men, 41-50 year olds, Freelancers, Managers and Londoners were the groups most likely to work longer hours.
- **Short-term contracts** - 83% of those with experience of short term contracts found that this work 'made their income unpredictable', 78% found it 'made career planning difficult' and 54% had 'had to accept lower income rates'. In addition, 82% had found it 'hard to take sick leave'. 36% felt that short-term contract work 'made them cautious

about new ideas in their work', and 50% felt short term contracts had 'made them uncertain about continuing a career in television'. On the other hand 73% of those with experience of short term contracts felt it had 'enabled them to gain a taste of other genres' and 40% had 'gained more time with their families'.

- **Preferred workplace** - When asked what type of workplace they would prefer to work in, the majority (56%) of respondents indicated they would prefer to be working as staff. 29% indicated a preference for freelance work and 10% indicated a preference for work outside TV altogether. Those in post production and technical roles were those most likely to state a preference for freelance work.
- **Work values** - Respondents were asked to rate a set of work values in terms of the degree to which they 'liked' or 'disliked' these values. The values rated most highly throughout the survey were 'achievement', 'responsibility', 'relationship with peers', 'independence', 'creativity' and 'intellectual stimulation'. 'Uncertainty' was the only value to receive a negative rating.
- **Uncertainty** - In analysing respondents' strategies to deal with uncertainty, it was found that TV workers responded by attempting to find stable work; by building and maintaining networks within the industry; and by looking for alternative income sources. 41% of respondents had 'stayed in the same job', 72% had 'sought commissions for long running series'. 72% had 'maintained work contacts' and 63% had 'worked with people they knew'. 60% had 'sought income from non-TV sectors'.
- **Finding Work** - In each questionnaire, 'personal contacts' was recorded as respondents' most important method of finding work. In the final questionnaire 50% of respondents stated 'personal contacts' as their most important method, compared with only 5% in 'response to advertisements'. Recruiters also predominantly used 'personal and work contacts' to find staff (66%).
- **Skill Shortages** - 57% of recruiters declared they had experienced shortages of skilled staff, mainly in the post production and technical roles, but also for Producers and Directors and Production Support. The majority experiencing shortages complained of a 'lack of skilled/experienced people available in certain job types' and a 'lack of trusted/known people' available. A significant percentage also said that 'commissions and contracts at short notice made it hard to find suitable staff'.
- **Training Type** - The majority of training undertaken, both formal and on-the-job, in the previous six months before each questionnaire wave, was in computers and new technology (e.g. 29% formal and 52% on-the-job in Diary 8) and in business management (e.g. 26% formal and 16% on-the-job in Diary 8). Only 4% had had any formal Producer or Director training, and only 7% on-the-job training in Producing or Directing, in the six months prior to the final questionnaire.
- **Training requirements** - When asked if there was any training that TV workers in the survey wanted but had not received - 43% said there was. When asked for the reasons why they hadn't received the training they had wanted, the majority indicated pressures of time (44%). A further 11% felt the costs were too high and 10% that the courses they wanted were not available to them.
- **Stimulating Creativity** - When asked what factors respondents felt were 'most important' in stimulating creativity in the work place, 'working with talented individuals' was rated the highest (59%). Other factors rated highly in helping to stimulate creativity were 'trust', 'working as a team', 'effective leadership', 'effective management', 'exchange of ideas', 'sufficient time', and 'responsiveness to ideas'. 'Competitiveness' was rated the least important factor in stimulating creativity.

- **Work Environment Experiences** - Many of the aspects rated highly in stimulating creativity were also those experienced the most by respondents in their current work. 'Working in a team', 'working with talented individuals', 'trust', 'exchange of ideas' and 'responsiveness to ideas' were all experienced by over half of the respondents. However, 'sufficient time', 'effective management' and 'leadership' were each experienced by less than 40% of respondents, despite being rated highly as important for stimulating creativity.
- **Quality** - 70% of respondents felt that the quality of television programmes had worsened over the last four years. Only 10% felt that quality had improved in that time. The majority of comments on falling standards in quality attributed it to shrinking budgets.
- **Budgets** - The areas felt to be most affected by budget cuts were; the 'Scale of Shooting' (74%), 'Research and Development' (60%), 'Staff Pay' (59%) and 'Post Production' (50%).
- **Standards** - 55% of all respondents felt that ethical standards were lower than four years ago, compared with only 4% who felt that they were higher. 49% of respondents felt that standards of accuracy were lower, compared with 7% who felt that they were higher. Views on technical standards were more divided; 40% of respondents felt that technical standards were lower compared with 27% who felt they were higher and 26% who felt they had stayed the same. For creative standards the picture was similar: 37% felt they were lower than four years ago compared with 22% who felt they were higher. Almost a third indicated that they felt standards of creativity had stayed the same. Older respondents were more likely to view standards as having declined. Of all those working in factual programming, over half had experienced pressures at odds with how they felt contributors should be treated, and a similar number had experienced pressures at odds with maintaining accuracy.
- **Accuracy** - When asked about the importance of accuracy in specific factual genres, over 90% of those working in factual programmes felt that accuracy was 'most important' in Current Affairs programmes. Only three quarters of the respondents felt that accuracy was 'most important' in Documentaries, and less than half felt the same about Studio Debates. Docu-Soaps and Infotainment programmes were regarded as the least important genres when it comes to maintaining accuracy, only just over a third of respondents felt it was 'most important' in these genres. The older age groups rated the importance of accuracy in these genres highest compared with other age groups.