



UK PRODUCERS' ROUNDTABLE: SURVEY RESULTS

10 February 2020

WHO FILLED IN THE SURVEY?

Numbers

149 independent film producers filled in the survey

Age

18-24: 2%

25-30: 26%

31-40: 53%

41-50: 15%

51+: 4%

Gender

Female identifying: 64%

Male identifying: 36%

Transgender identifying: 0%

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual: 78%

Bisexual: 11%

Gay: 5%

Race

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - 3.8%

Asian/Asian British - 4.5%

Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups-9.8%

Other ethnic group- 3%

White- 78.8%

Disability

2% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability

Caring Responsibilities

32% respondents have children

Socioeconomic Background

20% of respondents consider themselves to be from a disadvantaged socio-economic background

40% were the first in their family to go to university

1% receive state benefits

19% had their university or film school tuition fees paid for them

44% of respondents own their own property

PRODUCERS' ROUNDTABLE SURVEY RESULTS

Education

31% attended private school for secondary education (compared to 6.5% in the UK as a whole)

35% went to state secondary school

11% went to a selective or grammar school

24% were educated outside of the UK

90% attended university

15% went to Oxford or Cambridge (compared to 1% of the population)

19% went to a Russell Group university (compared to 8% of the population)

26% attended film school

Of those, 57% went to the NFTS

Experience Level

59% of respondents have been working in the industry for over 6 years

21% have been working in the industry for over 15 years

38% of respondents have produced more than 5 short films

64% of respondents have produced at least one feature film

20% have produced 2 feature films

14% have produced 3-5 feature films

3% have produced more than 10 feature films

54% have 1-3 features in funded development

19% have more than 4 features in funded development

Industry Recognition

Screened at a top tier festival: 55%

BIFA nominated/winning: 25%

BAFTA nominated/winning: 20%

Screen Stars of Tomorrow: 12%

iFeatures alumni: 15%

Microwave alumni: 18%

Edinburgh Talent Lab alumni: 22%

Guiding Lights alumni: 15%

Berlinale Talents alumni: 11%

Vision Awardee: 14%

“I am all the things the industry claims it wants more of. Black, a woman, a mother. I come from a socially disadvantaged background. I had free school meals, grew up on a council estate and I was the first person in my family to go to university. Despite having none of the advantages I succeeded in making films but my passion for producing has had to take a back seat as I could not support my children as an independent producer and they come first. The day the industry really investigates why people like me have not been embraced by the industry it will start to find answers that can lead to deep and meaningful change.”



WORK PRACTICES

Most respondents run a limited company, with high personal financial investment and low profits, meaning despite working as many hours as a full time job, work alongside running the company is essential, unless already wealthy.

Company Structure

88% of respondents run a limited company

In the past two years, 59% of those companies made no profit

62% of producers who have produced 1-2 feature films made no profit in their company during the past two years

27% have personally invested more than £20k into their company

26% have invested between £1k-£5k

30% have invested between £5k-£20k

“Films take too long to develop, development finance is very difficult, talent is being syphoned off by TV. Producer fees are too low and often deferred and net profits are often unachievable. Time taken to develop and produce is never compensated nearly well enough when a film is finally produced”



TV vs Film

10% of respondents have produced television shows

32% have television shows in development

46% of respondents say producing TV pays better than producing film

Other Income

40% of those surveyed work as a film producer full-time

25% of respondents produce commercials, with 56% saying they pay better than producing film

28% of respondents teach film studies

40% of respondents engage in freelance work within the industry

15% of respondents have a full-time job in the industry

8% of respondents have a part-time job outside the industry

Working Hours

Of those producing full-time:

- 42% of respondents spend 50+ hours a week producing their projects (equivalent to a full-time job plus weekends)
- 36% spend 40 hours a week (equivalent to a full-time job)

Of those producing whilst also taking on other paid work:

- 37% of respondents spend around 25 hours a week (equivalent to a part-time job) producing their projects
- 21% of respondents spend around 40 hours a week (equivalent of a full-time job)

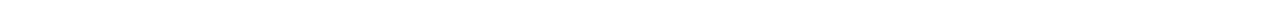
On a typical individual feature film project, 50% of all respondents spend 5-15 hours per week on that project, with 30% spending 15-30 hours

On a typical individual feature film project, 30% spend 24-36 months developing the project, with 24% spending 18-24 months

Employees

78% of respondents do not employ staff to work for them

“As an emerging producer it often feels like my writing and directing peers progress at a faster rate because after a few successes they are picked up by the handful of British production companies that have the money and resources required to sustain themselves.”



INCOME

Income from independent film producing is minimal, with projects requiring cashflow through development and production. A significant number of respondents deferred fees - meaning they only get paid if the film makes profit, which many independent films never do.

Other Sources of Income

Renting out property: 23%

Personal savings: 23%

Spousal support: 20%

Company/Studio backing: 13%

Owning a business outside the industry: 9%

Parental support: 8%

Inheritance money: 6%

“I am so often held up as an example of diversity and opportunity when the work I do is only possible by my willingness to be vulnerable financially in order to make better work”



Income from Film Producing Work

Over the past two years:

- 30% of respondents earned less than £1k for their producing work
- 69% earned less than £15k
- 7% earned more than £50k

95% of producers who have produced 3-5 feature films earned less than £25k a year from their producing work over the last two years (12.5k a year)

Over the past five years:

- 24% of producers earned less than £1k for their producing work
- 67% earned less than £20k
- 8% earned more than £100k

82% of BAFTA nominated/winning producers earned less than £15k a year during the past five years

Cashflow

In the past 12 months:

- 78% of respondents have had to cashflow their projects
- 30% have had to cashflow between £1-5k
- 20% have had to cashflow between £5-15k

Feature Film Fees

For those who recently produced a feature film:

- 27% received a fee of only 1% of the production budget
- 17% received no fee whatsoever
- No respondents received a fee of more than 10%, with only 12% earning a fee of 6-10%

77% of respondents have had to defer their fee at least once on a project

53% have deferred their fee multiple times

Development Costs

Per year, our respondents spend on development:

- Between £1-3k: 22%
- Between £3-7k: 21%
- Between £7-12k: 7%
- More than £12k: 8%

Overhead Costs

20% of respondents spend more than £20k a year on overheads.

HOW OUR RESPONDENTS FEEL ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

The lack of accessibility and sustainability in the UK independent film industry is a concern, with lack of money a perceived barrier to entry.

Sustainability

83% of respondents think being an indie producer in the UK today is not sustainable.

"If the definition of sustainable is expanded to mean 'sustainable for a diverse group of people' then the answer is no. It isn't now and won't become so without a significant overhaul of working practices in the industry. It's an extraordinary luxury to be able to countenance making very little, if any, money for the first several years of your career."



Optimism

65% of respondents do not feel optimistic about the state of the UK film industry today

However, 60% of respondents say their experience with UK public funders has been positive

Perceived Barriers to Entry

When asked what they felt were barriers to people like themselves entering the industry, responses were:

- Lack of money: 71%
- Lack of contacts: 49%
- Length of time for projects to get off the ground: 45%
- Lack of opportunity: 43%
- Producing not seen as viable career path: 24%
- Lack of role models/visibility of people like me: 17%
- Prevalence of nepotism: 17%

What would make producing more sustainable?

When asked what changes would make producing a more sustainable career in the UK today, respondents said:

- More development funding: 59%
 - Greater access to revenue in the waterfall: 51%
 - A shift in attitudes towards producers/production companies making money: 47%
 - A higher percentage of development money going to the producer: 45%
 - An agreed floor to producers' fees: 43%
 - A wider range of tastes among executives: 37%
 - More support from film organisations for producers: 33%
 - A higher tax credit: 32%
 - A better understanding amongst financiers of what a producer does: 30%
 - Help with legal fees: 29%
 - Higher fees for producers: 29%
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“There are very few other professions where the project leader, who carries all the responsibility, takes so much personal risk with so little support.”



MENTAL HEALTH

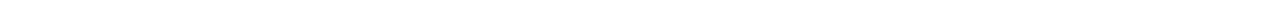
Independent film producing has a considerable impact on mental health, with lack of money being a major contributing factor.

Impact of Producing on Mental Health

82% of respondents say their job has had a negative effect on their mental health

50% of respondents have taken action to improve the adverse effect their job has on their mental health

“I have a very negative outlook at present... I am very tired of the constant battle... this feeling is a problem that our industry should beware of - many people are feeling like this, particularly people of colour or who sit in the ‘diversity’ bracket... It would help if we acknowledged that the industry is a rich white boy’s club”



Negative Factors

When asked what might force our respondents to give up producing film, the responses were:

- Lack of money: 80%
- Slow career progression: 27%
- Tastes not aligning with financiers: 26%
- Lack of opportunity: 25%
- Raising children: 25%
- Mental health: 16%
- Prevalence of nepotism: 12%
- Geography: 7%
- Harassment or bullying: 5%
- Disability: 4%
- Socioeconomic background: 3%
- Race: 3%
- Gender: 2%

Positive Factors

When asked what keeps our respondents going, the responses were:

- Peer support: 76%
 - The time and advice of more experienced colleagues: 54%
 - Unofficial mentors: 52%
 - Support of public financiers: 32%
 - Company support: 22%
 - Organisations (such as WFTV, Pact, Lift): 15%
 - Official mentors: 14%
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GUIDELINES

Drawn up by the Producers' Roundtable in consultation with BFI, BBC Films, Film4 and PACT.

- 1)** In order for production companies and producers to be able to sustain themselves, and the writers and directors they work with, we recommend the production fee on any film under \$3.9m (£3m) should be no less than 8% of the direct costs of production, to be divided between the producer(s) and production company(ies) as the lead producer sees fit.
 - 2)** Deferral of producer fees for development or production should not be encouraged, endorsed or suggested by any financier or their representatives, and the Producers' Roundtable strongly encourages producers not to defer any of their fees, instead finding alternative solutions and savings within the budget. Most producers have already deferred their fees during the development of the project, and even successful features which find an audience are unlikely to see a return at the back end for the producer themselves, making fees pivotal.
 - 3)** Given the importance of talent relationships and transparency across the board, as well as a need to not undermine the fundamental role of the producer, especially at an early stage of their career, the producer must be involved in all meetings and correspondence with the writer or director, pertaining to the shared project. Financiers must not meet with the writer or director, specifically about the shared project, except as organised and attended by the producer(s). This should be the case during the consideration of the project, during development and production, and during the project's initial exploitation.
 - 4)** No production financier may participate in net profits from the producer pool of net profits, even in the event of receiving a producer credit; this must be reserved only for the filmmakers.
 - 5)** Given the importance of film festivals in promoting and selling a film, and in career progression for all filmmakers involved, it is vital that the producer of a film is supported in attending its premiere, equal to the director, especially as salaried executive producers are often paid to attend themselves. We therefore encourage sales agents to make sure the producer is always tied to the director in attendance of any international and UK premiere of the film, including their travel, accommodation and accreditation expenses. We hope financiers will also encourage and financially support this move.
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