

PRESS RELEASE

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Directors working only 27 weeks of the year, working practices must improve to allow for long-term sector growth finds University of Glasgow survey

- UK TV and film directors are facing financial instability due to irregular employment and a reduction in opportunities to work and earn, according to new research by the University of Glasgow.
- Directors experience a number of poor working practices, that are accepted as the 'norm'. These factors exacerbate systemic inequalities in the industry and have dire consequences for inclusivity and diversity.
- The report finds that an improvement in the working conditions of directors offers a valuable opportunity to strengthen the sector's resilience, allowing for long-term growth and competitiveness.

The independent survey of UK TV and film directors – conducted by CREATE, the Centre for Regulation of the Creative Economy based at the University of Glasgow, and commissioned by Directors UK - found that 78% of directors feel that their income is unstable.

Looking at the financial year 2022/2023, the survey found that 32% of directors undertook non-paid creative work, such as developing new ideas or writing scripts, showing that a significant part of their working time is dedicated to invisible, unpaid labour.

39% of directors reported that the value of residuals and royalties have decreased - a particular challenge being the change in how directors are compensated for the use of their work in a digital market.

Andy Harrower, Directors UK CEO said: *"With employment being so unpredictable, and opportunities to work as a director decreasing, our members are finding the instability of work challenging, which is why royalties are extremely important to make directing a viable and sustainable career. Collecting and paying out the royalties directors are due is at the heart of what Directors UK does. The survey tells us that programmes we all enjoy watching are made by directors that are working long, often unpaid hours, with no idea where the next job is coming from. That is why we continue to fight for directors' rights to be recognised. The work that they do must be fairly remunerated."*

Natasha Moore, Head of Insight at Directors UK said: *"The drop in programme commissioning by UK broadcasters, and their focus on making fewer works with greater commercial appeal has been widely reported across industry press. And directors tell us there's greater competition for work and lower budgets on projects. What we couldn't show until now, was the impact this shift was having on the economic stability of directors. The numbers in this independent report are sobering. How can anyone secure, or regularly pay, a mortgage if the income they get is unreliable, unpredictable, and there are long periods of unemployment? A steady income that enables people to plan their lives shouldn't be exceptional, but this report shows that for directors, it is."*

The findings of this survey confirm that directing is a financially precarious profession for the majority of those who work in it.

Beyond this, the survey also highlights the human cost of pursuing a career as a director, finding that, when directors are in work, 56% report working 41-60 hours a week, with 31% exceeding 60 hours, and some even noting 17-hour work days.

While many may associate the film and TV industry with glitz and glamour, what is less visible is the hard work in less-than-ideal conditions that directors undertake to deliver the TV programmes and films that we watch. In response to the survey, directors shared their concerns around the hiring and working practices of the industry.

"You can't push back on things. If you do and it upsets someone, they'll find some reason to get rid of you, because someone else will do it."

"There's some traumatic moments that should be in a courtroom, but you have to go with it. Because if you make waves you might not work again."

"I or anyone else in the industry, can't afford to make an enemy of any company, no matter how badly you've been treated."

"Even when I've signed the contract, I still don't believe that I'm 100% going to do that job until it is day one. Even the day before, I should be starting the job tomorrow. But I also could not be."

The precarity of work, the long and often unpaid hours, and the poor working practices that directors face, exacerbate systemic inequalities in the industry, have dire consequences on the inclusivity and diversity of the profession.

CREATE's **Dr Amy Thomas** and **Dr Arthur Ehlinger**, who led the reports, noted: *"Compared with other creative industries we have surveyed, directors are among the least inclusive and diverse. For example, only 31% of directors are women, 6% of directors have a disability, and more than half come from a socio-economic background with the highest levels of privilege. This tells us that people without financial safety nets, or who require any kind of flexibility for project-based work, cannot sustain themselves in an industry where irregular income is pervasive."*

The report concludes its findings by stating that **"while the industry is undergoing important changes, addressing the working conditions of directors offers a valuable opportunity to strengthen the sector's resilience. By ensuring fairer contracts, equitable pay structures, and sustainable employment practices, the audiovisual industry can not only support its creative workforce but also position itself for long-term growth and competitiveness."**

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Download highlights and a summary of the findings: [*The Director's Cut: Unpacking Earnings, Contracts and Working Practices*](#)

Download the full report: [*UK Screen Directors \(2025\): A survey of earnings and contracts*](#)

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Notes to Editors

About CREATE

CREATE is the Centre for Regulation of the Creative Economy, anchored in intellectual property, competition, information and technology law. The name is an acronym for Creativity, Regulation, Enterprise and Technology. CREATE was established in 2012 as the result of a competition for a national centre for "copyright and new business models in the creative economy". As the only UK research centre funded jointly by AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council), EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) and ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), CREATE conceived and delivered an interdisciplinary research programme at the intersection of law, technology, social sciences and humanities.

About Directors UK

Directors UK is the professional association of UK screen directors. It is a membership organisation representing the creative, economic and contractual interests of over 8,000 members – the majority of working TV and film directors in the UK. Directors UK negotiates rights deals and collects and distributes royalties to its members. It also campaigns and lobbies on its members' behalf and provides a range of services including legal advice, events and career development. Directors UK works closely with fellow organisations around the world to represent directors' rights and concerns, promotes excellence in the craft of direction and champions change to the current landscape to create an equal opportunity industry for all.