

Mental Health in the Film and TV Industry after Covid

**Looking
Glass
2021 2021 2021**

Summary

The Film and TV Charity's 2019 *Looking Glass* research (*Looking Glass '19*)¹ uncovered a "mental health crisis" in the industry, which had its roots in working conditions, culture, and a lack of support capability. Two years later the research was re-run by our partners Brightpurpose in Summer 2021 to evaluate changes during Covid. *Looking Glass '21* establishes baseline metrics for the start of what is hoped will be the industry's long-term change, and adds new questions including in relation to the prevalence and mental health effects of racial harassment and discrimination.

At first glance the results are mildly encouraging: despite a global pandemic and the accompanying wellbeing and mental health impacts across society and in our industry, the headline wellbeing and mental health measures have stayed reasonably stable: the wellbeing score for the industry's workforce is more or less the same, and the percentage saying their mental health is 'good' or 'very good' at the moment is also roughly the same. There is certainly an acknowledgement of the steps the industry has begun to take on mental health, and some optimism that the tide may be beginning to turn.

However, behind the headlines there is some tough reading. The production boom has brought opportunity but also even longer hours, with inevitable mental health impacts. 78% say that work intensity has negatively affected their mental health compared with 63% in the 2019 survey. Rapid and often premature promotion without adequate line management training has repercussions for the wellbeing of individuals and their teams; and nearly half (46%) say that working under the Covid protocols has negatively affected their mental health. Bad behaviours abound or even flourish in this environment and it is alarming to find that the majority of respondents (57%) have experienced bullying, sexual harassment, racial harassment or discrimination, or other forms of harassment or discrimination *in the past year*. Four in 10 (39%) of Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents had experienced racial harassment or discrimination (which like all forms of harassment and discrimination relating to a protected characteristic are illegal) – which had caused 43% of them to consider leaving the industry.

Another troubling finding is that 51% of respondents now say that culture and values are having a *negative* impact on mental health compared with 29% in 2019. In this context it's perhaps not surprising that **only 10% of respondents agree that the industry is currently a mentally healthy place to work.**

At a time when production is rocketing and people are desperately needed, the risk of a 'leaky bucket' is very real. In 2019 we found that 63% had ever considered leaving the industry due to mental health concerns, but the 2021 data show that 65% had considered leaving *in the past year*; and that this rose to a shocking 74% of disabled respondents.

Notes of hope do exist, and most of those interviewed for the research did believe that things would improve. Conversations are beginning and mental health is now firmly on the industry's agenda. But change comes from action – not just words. The workforce is certainly wary of PR gestures and 'mental health washing'. All of us need to follow through on the commitments we have made, to demonstrate tangible change.

Summary of key insights

1. Mental health and wellbeing: no better, no worse

No change in the headline measures with a wellbeing score of 19.3, similar to the score of 19.4 in 2019 (compared to a national average of 23.6)²; and those rating their mental health as 'good' or 'very good' about the same at 32% (35% in 2019).

2. The production explosion: working all hours

Very long working hours are reported, with 39% saying they work more than 50 hours a week, compared with 29% in the 2019 survey; and 1 in 6 people are working 60+ hour weeks, compared with the UK average of 1 in 50.

78% say that work intensity is having a negative impact on their mental health, compared with 63% in 2019.

3. Making it up as you go along: the case for stronger line management

When asked what practical steps could support wellbeing the most common answer was better line management, with half (51%) of respondents asking for this. This capability gap is increasingly exposed as the demand for people encourages early promotion, and individuals rely on strategies of impersonation and improvisation to survive.

4. The mental health impacts of working under Covid safety protocols

Working under the Covid protocols has had some negative side effects, with 4 in 10 (42%) saying it negatively affected their ability to do their job, and nearly half (46%) saying it negatively affected their mental health. On the other hand, a minority (10%) reported that working under Covid protocols had a positive impact on their mental health, showing that the way we do things really matters.

5. Bullying, racism and harassment: a hill to climb

Bullying, harassment and discrimination remain problematically entrenched with **more than half** of respondents (57%) having been the target of unacceptable behaviours *in the past year*.

Racial harassment and discrimination are widespread with **4 in 10** (39%) of Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents having been targets of these behaviours (which are illegal) *in the past year*.

Most suffer mental health impacts as a result.

6. Culture is key: behaviours, values and mental health stigma remain problems

Only 10% agree that the industry is a mentally healthy place to work and one alarming finding is that 51% say that culture and values are having a negative impact on mental health, compared with 29% in 2019.

Stigma around mental health remains with four in ten (42%) saying they wouldn't tell anyone in the industry if they were experiencing a mental health problem for fear of judgment. Of those that did tell someone only one-quarter (23%) said the situation got better as a result.

7. A leaky bucket? The risk of losing people due to mental health concerns

At a time when demand for people has never been higher, 65% said they had thought of leaving the industry in the last year alone due to mental health concerns – which looks high considering that the 2019 survey found that 63% had ever considered leaving.

The propensity to leave is even higher for some groups already badly under-represented. Three-quarters (74%) of disabled respondents had considered leaving the industry *in the past year* to due mental health concerns.

8. Signs of a tide turning?

Respondents were generally optimistic things would get better, and that momentum was building.

They highlight the importance of broadcasters in improving production practices. Many believe that things will only change on a wholesale basis when there is an insistence on productions adopting healthier working practices and conditions. They also recognised the importance of strong support from trade unions and professional bodies.

9. Beware of 'mental healthwashing': the cynicism of a weary workforce

Along with the (guarded) optimism about mental health, there is also scepticism about how sincere change really is.

In 2019 1 in 4 (24%) said that people in the industry had positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues. In the 2021 survey, it was 1 in 5 (20%).

Workers feel that the industry is beginning to 'talk the talk' about mental health, but they have yet to see culture change and are sceptical about whether big industry players are really 'walking the walk' yet.

² Short Warwick-Edinburgh Subjective Wellbeing Scale. Scores range from 7 to 35 with higher scores indicating higher subjective wellbeing.

The Film and TV Mental Health Tracker

The Film and TV Charity will re-run the *Looking Glass* research in 2022 and every 2 years thereafter, tracking improvements in the industry's mental health, and highlighting any areas for concern. The research provides a great depth of data, but the tracker below contains the most important metrics that together constitute a barometer of progress and a mechanism for accountability.

We plan to grow the reach of the research in future years, and potentially augment the central survey methodology, so that it becomes increasingly representative of all the sectors of our industry and all minoritised groups including disabled workers and Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers.

The tracker provides a snapshot of our industry's mental health, and monitors for improvements in the '3 Cs' identified as underlying causes of poor mental health in the *Looking Glass '19* research: Conditions, Culture and Capability.

The Whole Picture Programme was established in October 2020 as a 2-year urgent intervention leading into a 10+ year change process; we hope to see these metrics move in the right direction in the years ahead.

	Looking Glass '19	Looking Glass '21	'21 compared with '19 ³	National comparators (where they exist)
Mental health and wellbeing indicators				
Subjective wellbeing score ⁴	19.4	19.3	SAME	23.5
Rate their mental health at the moment 'good' or 'very good'	35%	32%	ABOUT THE SAME	-
↳ Disabled individuals	29%	24% ± 4%	WORSE	-
↳ Black, Asian or minority ethnic individuals	33-52%	32% ± 6%	WORSE	-
↳ LGBTQ+ individuals	22-37%	25% ± 4%	SAME	-
Experienced suicidal thoughts	55% (Ever)	31% (Past year)	-	20% ⁵
Conditions				
Feel the industry is a mentally health place to work	Not asked	10%	-	-
Culture				
Have experienced bullying, racial harassment, or other harassment or discrimination	84% (Ever)	57% (Past year)	-	-
Would not tell anyone about a mental health issue	42%	42%	SAME	-
Capability				
Feel the industry has the necessary capability to support workers	Not asked	30%	-	-
Propensity to leave				
Considering leaving the industry due to mental health concerns	63% (Ever)	65% (Past year)	WORSE ⁶	-
↳ Disabled individuals	71%	74% ± 5%	SAME	-
↳ Black, Asian or minority ethnic individuals	54-73%	60% ± 6%	SAME	-
↳ LGBTQ+ individuals	62-69%	68% ± 4%	SAME	-

³ Changes are indicated only where they are statistically significant.

⁴ The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, ranging from 7 to 35. The mean UK population score has been established as 23.5 with a standard deviation of 3.9 meaning that 15% of the population fall below a score of 19.6. [See here](#) for further information.

⁵ APMS (2016) Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, NHS

⁶ The question in 2019 asked about whether individuals had ever considered leaving the industry whereas the question in 2021 asked about this in the past year.

Thank you

We would like to thank our partners at Brightpurpose who conducted the *Looking Glass '21* research for all their work delivering the survey and accompanying qualitative interviews.

Our thanks also go to all those who continue to participate in the design and delivery of the Whole Picture Programme. The programme is special and – we hope – impactful because of its co-design approach with a wide range of freelancers, other workers, producers, directors, broadcasters, studios, streamers, and experts in mental health and other disciplines. In particular, we'd like to thank the members of the Impact and Evaluation Working Group who guided this research: Dr Paul Litchfield (Corporate Medical Advisor) and Helen Butler (Evaluation and Research Manager at Mind).



Mind are our strategic partners in the Whole Picture Programme, and we are enormously grateful for their expert guidance.

Our sincere thanks go to the members of the Whole Picture Programme who have funded and driven this important work: Amazon, Banijay, BBC and BBC Studios, the BFI, Channel 4, Disney, IMG, ITV and ITV Studios, Sky, Sony, ViacomCBS and Paramount, and WarnerMedia. We quite literally couldn't do this without you.



Finally, and most importantly, we want to thank everyone who participated in the research. Many of you took the time to recount difficult experiences, which perhaps you'd not shared before. Your data is so important to mobilising change, and we thank you for entrusting us with it and we treat it with great care. I hope you can see your experiences and those of your colleagues reflected in this report and that it gives you confidence that change is coming.

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In 2019 the Film and TV Charity's Looking Glass research⁷ found that a shocking 9 in 10 of nearly 5,000 respondents had experienced a mental health problem.

⁷Source: The Work Foundation, *The Looking Glass: mental health in the UK film, TV and cinema industry*, 2020

Introduction: from 2019 to 2021



In 2019 the Film and TV Charity's Looking Glass research⁸ found that a shocking 9 in 10 of nearly 5,000 respondents had experienced a mental health problem – well above the 65% UK-wide figure – and worse, that more than half had considered taking their own life.

Freelancers⁹ were particularly vulnerable, and those in our industry who identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic; LGBTQ+; or disabled (or who identified with more than one of those characteristics) were shown to be at significantly greater risk of mental health issues.

The research revealed that working conditions, culture, and lack of capability to support mental health were the principal causes of such poor mental health in the film and TV industry, and it catalysed the creation of the **Whole Picture Programme** in October 2020 as an urgent 2-year intervention to begin to turn the tide. The charity has been enormously grateful for the support of the many industry organisations who have both funded and led a range of initiatives including the introduction of new **bullying services**, an online **Freelancer Wellbeing Hub**, the **Let's Reset behaviour change campaign**, a new **framework for mental health training** in the industry developed with our partners ScreenSkills and now the Whole Picture Toolkit for mentally healthy productions – all co-designed with the industry's workforce. Since the programme started the charity has been able to help more than 5,000 people, and partners and friends across the industry have worked with and alongside us to produce the support we all appreciate is so desperately needed.

Turning the tide on poor mental health would be a huge undertaking in normal times, but the past two years have been extraordinary times, with the **Covid pandemic** rocking each one of us in our personal and professional lives. The effect on the wellbeing of the entire UK population is well documented, with ONS data showing marked declines in life satisfaction, happiness and feeling that life is worthwhile; while anxiety increased¹⁰. By April 2020 93%¹¹ of film and TV freelancers found themselves suddenly out of work, and many were not able to access the government Covid Protocols and the Production Restart Scheme.

Film and TV were able to return from Autumn 2020, and soon we saw huge lift-off as the pre-pandemic growth returned, and studios have been fully booked and crew in high demand.

⁸ Source: The Work Foundation, *The Looking Glass: mental health in the UK film, TV and cinema industry*, 2019

⁹ NB. We use the term 'freelancers' to refer to all those operating as sole traders, PAYE freelancers on short-term contracts, and self-employed working through limited companies.

¹⁰ Source: ONS *Personal well-being in the UK: April 2020 to March 2021*, annual data to March 2021

¹¹ Source: Film and TV Charity Industry Survey 31/3/20 – 2/4/20, n=1696 freelancers

About Looking Glass '21

So, how has our industry's mental health fared through these strange times? In Summer 2021 we re-ran an amended version of the *Looking Glass* survey to find out¹². This report provides updates on some of the 2019 metrics, but also provides fresh data on issues such as racism in the industry, which was not sufficiently captured in the last survey.

As before, the centrepiece of the research was a survey, and this was complemented with qualitative interviews which fill out the picture. Over 9,000 people responded to the 2019 survey, with nearly 5,000 responses complete enough to be used in the analysis. Over 3,000 people responded to the 2021 survey between 28 May and 28 June 2021, with 2,097 complete and valid responses used in this analysis. This quantitative dataset was complemented with 20 depth interviews conducted one-on-one with individuals.

Survey responses were received from all parts of the industry and all types of people working in the industry, but in varying proportions. Compared with the industry employment numbers, the survey responses over-represent people working in development, production and post-production, women, disabled people, Scottish workers and those identifying as bisexual. The responses under-represent those working in programming and broadcasting and film exhibition, men and those aged 16-29. Because of this, we take care not to over-claim about the degree to which the survey fully represents the industry. We also note that whereas the *Looking Glass '19* data were weighted to help model predictive relationships between variables, Brightpurpose chose not to weight the '21 data to maintain data accuracy (following testing of a weighting approach).



We only report percentages as being different from each other where the difference is big enough to be statistically significant. Our intention going forward is to expand the reach and representativeness of the survey so that we can strengthen the reporting on all sectors of the industry and track progress on mental health over time. We will be seeking industry support to help this happen.

We have cross-referenced with other recent sector research, and our findings are consistent with The Time Project on excessive working hours in film and TV¹³ and the *State of Play* report by Viva la PD, with Bournemouth University and BECTU¹⁴, which highlighted the impact of excessive working hours and poor management and recruitment practices in the unscripted TV sector. We hope our report is a useful contribution to this growing body of work.

Looking Glass '19 provided a detailed analysis of mental health across the industry and largely looked at lifetime experiences (e.g. the proportion of respondents who had ever experienced mental health issues). This report provides updated numbers for 2021 but generally asked about experiences of the past year, in order to provide a baseline from which we could begin to track change over time. We are happy to share further results tables with those interested. Please email us on research@filmtvcharity.org.uk.

We are grateful to Brightpurpose for carrying out the survey and analysis and writing the longer report this summary is based on.

The *Looking Glass* survey will be repeated in 2022 to monitor the progress of the Whole Picture Programme, and thereafter run every two years.

¹² The *Looking Glass '21* research was conducted by Brightpurpose on behalf of the Film and TV Charity.

¹³ Source: University of York, *Screen Industries Growth Network, The Time Project*, January 2022.

¹⁴ Source: Bournemouth University, *State of Play 2021: Management Practices in UK Unscripted Television*, 2021.

Key insights from Looking Glass '21

Looking Glass '21 found 9 important findings, as follows:

1. Mental health and wellbeing: no better, no worse

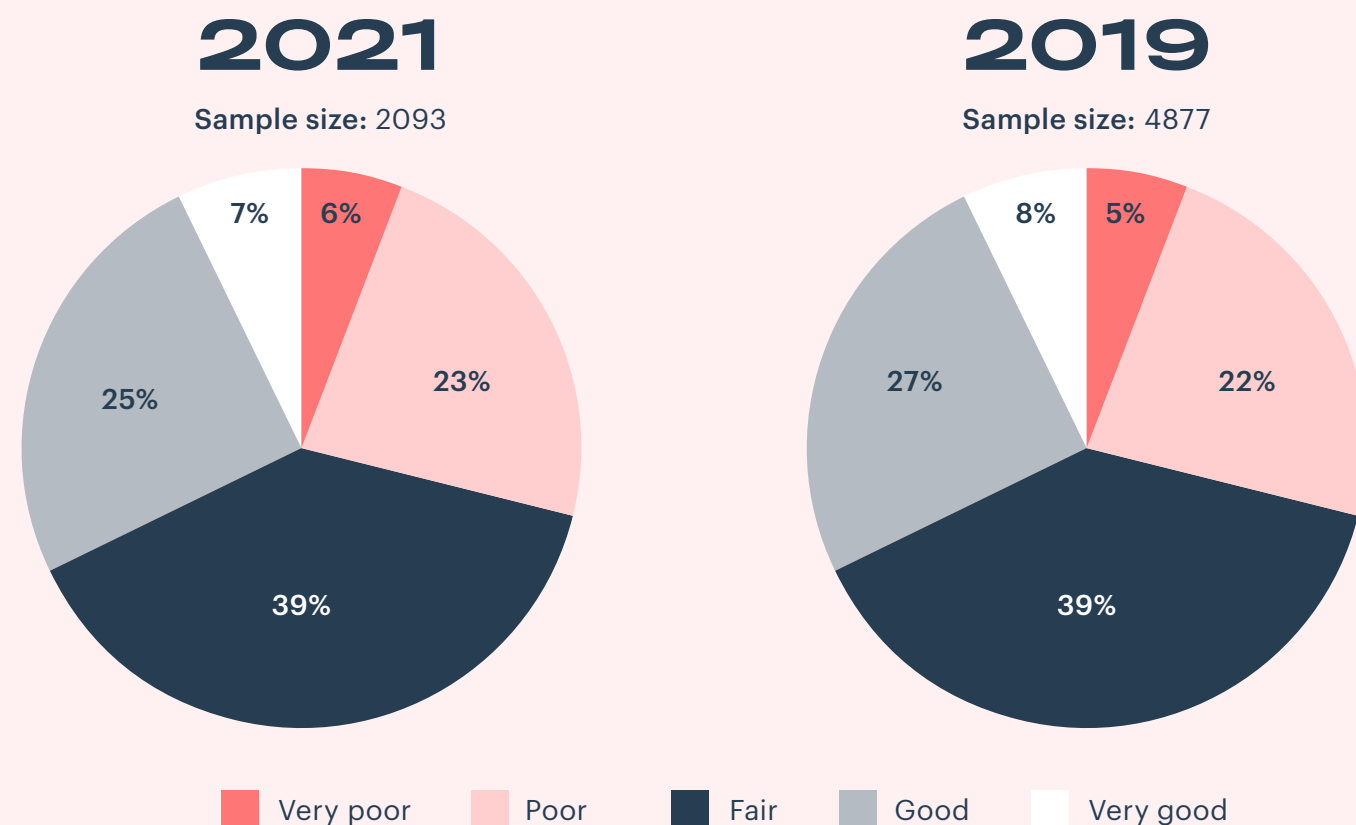
At the headline level there was no difference in wellbeing scores reported for 2019 and 2021, with the SWEMWBS¹⁵ measure of subjective wellbeing standing at 19.3,

compared with 19.4 in the earlier survey (and the national average of 23.6).

In 2021, 32% rated their mental health 'at the moment' as 'good' or 'very good', statistically about the same as the 35% who said this in 2019.

Chart 1

How would you rate your mental health at the moment?



On the other hand, 31% said they had experienced suicidal thoughts *in the last year*, compared with the 55% who said in 2019 they had ever experienced such thoughts. This is a worryingly high number that underlines the significant personal and work pressures that a lot of our industry colleagues have been facing.

Of course, average figures mask variations in the experience of different groups, and we knew from the 2019 research that there are higher mental health risk factors experienced by marginalised and under-represented groups, which become higher still for those facing intersectional discrimination and structural barriers. Most notably, in 2021 more respondents with caring responsibilities (35%) and disabled respondents (42%) reported 'poor' or 'very poor' mental health than the average (29%). This was also the case for lesbian respondents (42%).

The 2019 results were so poor that the Work Foundation described them as indicative of a 'mental health crisis', and clearly this crisis persists into 2021. However, given that the intervening period has been overshadowed by a global pandemic it is perhaps reason for some (limited) positivity that the core wellbeing measures have not fallen even further.

2. The production explosion: working all hours

The rapid ramping-up of production from Autumn 2020 has brought plentiful work opportunities – but also some significant side-effects which are having marked impacts on mental health and pose longer-term risks to the sector.

Looking Glass '19 reported that working hours were already untenable and were a key contributor to the industry's poor mental health outcomes. In Looking Glass '21 we see respondents reporting even higher hours:

- 39% say they are working more than 50 hours a week (equivalent to 10-hour days over 5 days or 7-hour days every day over 7 days) compared with 29% in 2019.
- Moreover, we now have 1 in 6 people working 60+ hour weeks, compared to the UK average of 1 in 50 working those hours¹⁶.

Commensurate with this picture, 78% of respondents reported that work intensity was having a negative impact on their mental health, compared with 63% in 2019.

Interviewees spoke about the 'Covid catch-up', but also an element of trying to outrun Covid, and wrap production before anyone caught the virus and needed to isolate, with the knock-on delays this creates. Exacerbating this were the budget pressures also seen in 2019, which caused long production days with no break for recuperation.

Working very long hours is not only damaging but also compounds other issues including access to support. Nearly half of respondents (46%) said that they simply didn't have the time to access mental health support.

Another effect of the incredible pace of production is that it is reinforcing issues of networked recruitment – essentially hiring who you know, because you need to find people so fast. This of course acts against the industry's urgent need to improve representation across multiple dimensions of identity including race, disability, class and geography.

¹⁵ Short Warwick-Edinburgh Subjective Wellbeing Scale. Scores range from 7 to 35 with higher scores indicating higher subjective wellbeing.
¹⁶ Source: The Work Foundation, *The Looking Glass: mental health in the UK film, TV and cinema industry*, 2020

3. Making it up as you go along: the case for stronger line management

The most commonly requested intervention to support improved wellbeing was not actually more mental health support – it was, in fact, better line management, with half (51%) of respondents asking for this.

This finding resonates with that from the *State of Play Survey 2021* by Bournemouth University, Bectu and Viva La PD¹⁷, which found that 70% of those with management responsibilities said that they had not received adequate training in the practical and legal aspects of managing people.

Our qualitative interviews highlighted inconsistency in people management practices, and the absence of training or standards for workers with responsibility for managing people and teams.

This capability gap is exposed when the demand for people encourages early promotion into higher roles. In these scenarios people tend to rely on one or both of the following strategies:

- **Impersonation** – replicating the behaviours that managers have used with them, because they think that must be how it's done, for better or worse.
- **Improvisation** – winging it, going with what they think is the right thing to do, again for better or worse.

Some improvisation works, depending on the person's skills, experience and preferences. Some impersonation works if the person had good examples to learn from. But in an industry needing improved culture and role models it is more likely that these strategies perpetuate bad behaviours, with an impact on everyone around the new manager as well as the manager themselves.

“I've had lots of training about health and safety on sets, how to operate camera, but I've never had a session on how to look after mental health or a training session on good management, how to respond to grievance, or someone with a mental health crisis”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

4. The mental health impacts of working under Covid safety protocols

A range of protective measures have enabled productions to restart safely during the pandemic, enabling people to get back to work after a long period of unemployment and uncertainty. For those in office-based roles, working from home has been required on and off throughout 2020 and 2021.

The 2021 survey was conducted while these protocols remained in force and revealed some negative consequences of these new ways of working, with 4 in 10 (42%) saying the new ways of working negatively affected their ability to do their job, and nearly half (46%) saying they negatively affected their mental health.

In addition to the longer days noted above, Covid has had other effects including the separation of teams, which limits the informal interactions which can often 'oil the wheels' and minimise conflict, and the isolation of crew working in Covid bubbles without their usual family and friend support networks, or even in some cases without the opportunity to socialise and offer peer support back at the hotel.

On the other hand, a minority of respondents (10%) reported that working under Covid protocols had a positive impact on their mental health. There was a strong association between good mental health and Covid protocols having either no impact or a positive impact on mental health. Conversely, there was a strong association between poor mental health and a negative impact from Covid protocols. This suggests that the way we do things really matters for mental health outcomes.

Chart 2
The impact of Covid working practices on workers' ability to do their job (Sample size = 2096)

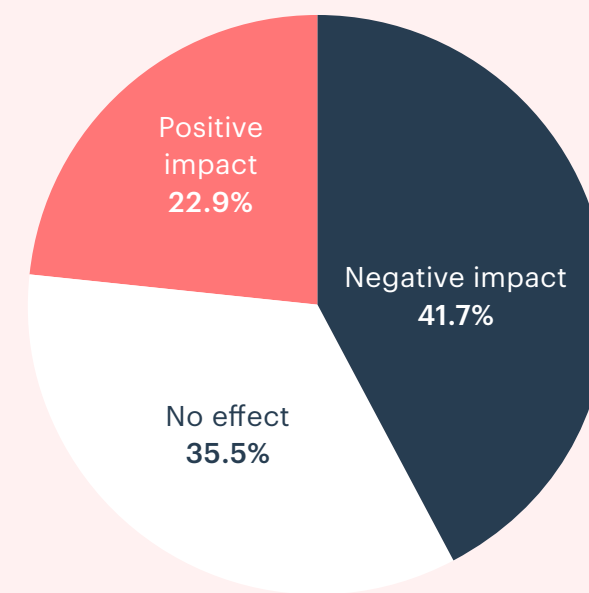
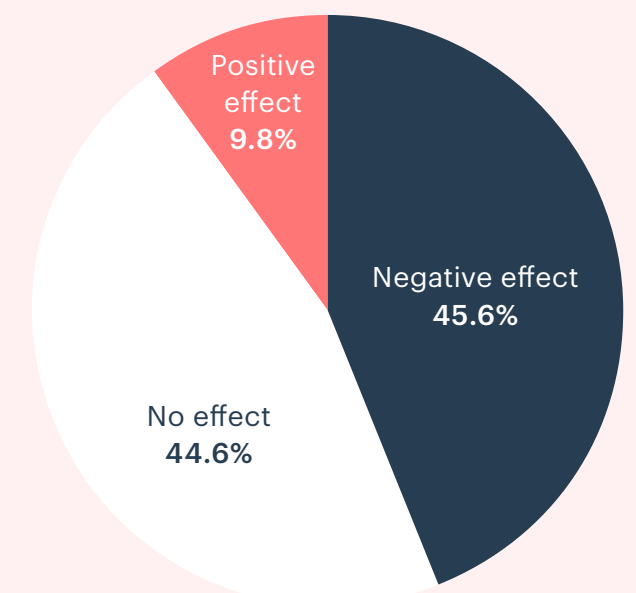


Chart 3
The impact of Covid working practices on workers' mental health (Sample size = 2097)



¹⁷ Source: Bournemouth University, *State of Play 2021: Management Practices in UK Unscripted Television*, 2021.

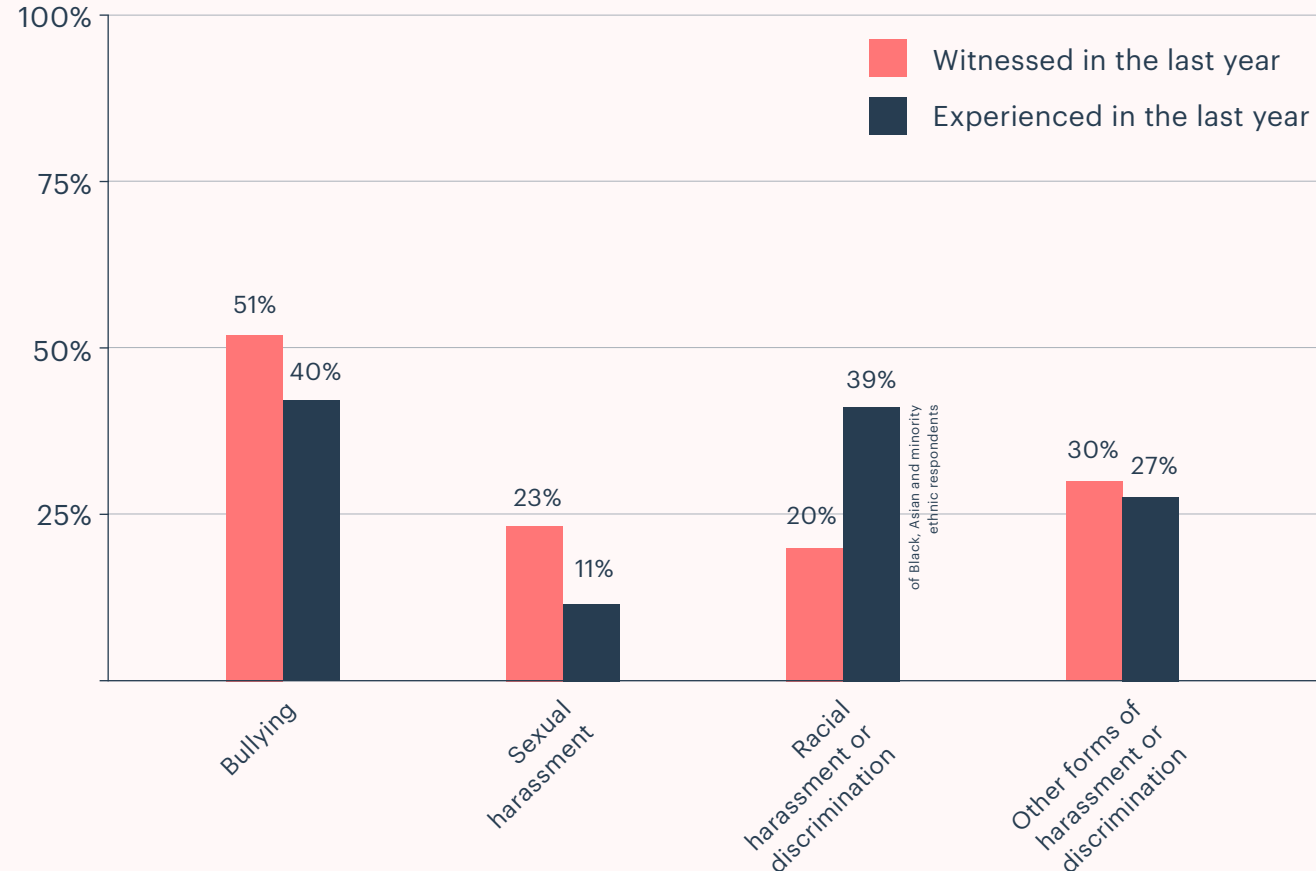
5. Bullying, racism and harassment: a hill to climb

The *Looking Glass '19* survey asked about people's lifetime experiences of bullying and harassment in the workplace and found that many parts of the film and TV industry's working culture is characterised by bullying with more than half (56%) of respondents having experienced bullying at work. This ranged from deeply personal criticism and humiliating jokes on a one-off basis to targeted abusive behaviour over an extended period. Sexual harassment also remained a serious problem, particularly for women, with 4 in 10 (39%) women having experienced sexual harassment at work.

Exposure to bullying at work has direct impacts for mental wellbeing and has been found to cause symptoms of depression, anxiety and other stress-related issues¹⁸ and those who had experienced bullying were much more likely to have considered leaving the industry.

In 2021 we added specific questions about racial harassment and discrimination, and asked about people's experiences *in the past year*, so data are not directly comparable, but nonetheless clearly reinforce the conclusion that bullying, racial harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment and discrimination all remain problematically entrenched in the industry.

Chart 4
Incidence of bullying, harassment and racial harassment or discrimination (data for all respondents to the question unless otherwise indicated)



Some of the most significant findings in 2021 were:

- **More than half of respondents have been the target of unacceptable behaviours in the past year.** 57% had experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination *in the past year*; while two-thirds (67%) had witnessed these behaviours.
- **Racial harassment and discrimination are widespread.** Four in 10 (39%) of Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents had experienced racial harassment or discrimination (which are illegal) in the past year.
- **Bisexual workers are more likely to experience bullying.** Bisexual respondents reported a higher incidence of bullying (51%) than the average (40%).
- **Women report being bullied much more than men.** 43% of female respondents had experienced bullying *in the past year*, compared to 34% of men.

The 2021 interviews told stories all too similar to those we heard in 2019:

“I was told ‘we’ll speak to them’, but now I’m carrying the weight of the experience and they’re still out there working”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

“I was bullied last year and there was no-one to turn to, no HR, the person doing it was quite senior – I put up with it. It never crossed my mind to report for fear of losing job”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

“If you speak up you are thought of as being awkward or difficult so people put up and shut up”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

The links between bullying, racial harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment and discrimination and poor mental health are very clear. All caused widespread negative mental health effects; affected the quality of work; and caused many to consider leaving the industry.

The new questions on racial harassment and discrimination make clear the mental health impact of these damaging experiences. Of the 39% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents who had experienced racial harassment and discrimination:

- Most said it had negatively affected their mental health;
- Many said it had negatively affected the quality of their work; and
- Many said it had made them consider leaving the industry.

¹⁸ Source: Verkuil et al., *Workplace Bullying and Mental Health: A Meta-Analysis on Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Data*, 2015 as reported in The Work Foundation, *The Looking Glass: mental health in the UK film, TV and cinema industry*, 2020

A lack of knowledge and trust in policy and process was also revealed: only one-third (34%) thought their workplace had a bullying and harassment policy; and again only one-third believed a complaint would be acted on regardless of the perpetrator.

This lack of trust may help to explain why so few people report their experiences.

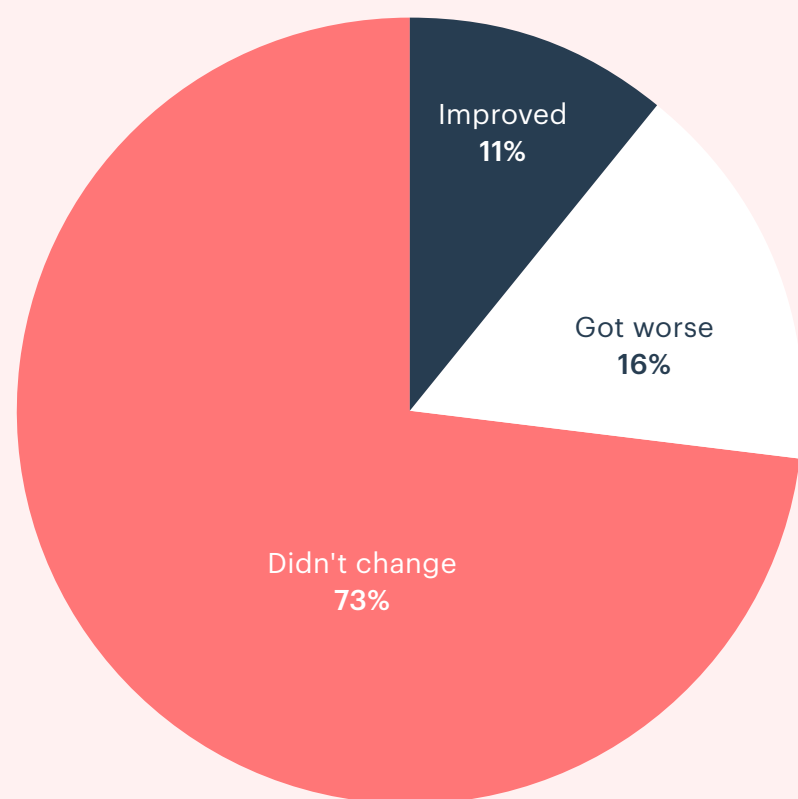
On average 58% told someone at work (although that ranged from a high of 65% in cases of bullying to a low of 48% in cases of racial harassment or discrimination)¹⁹.

And of the 58% who did report, only 11% say things improved as a result – i.e. on average only 6% of those experienced bullying, racial harassment or discrimination, sexual harassment or other forms of harassment actually saw positive outcomes following their experience.

As worryingly, 1 in 6 (16%) of those who reported their experiences say things actually got worse as a result.

Chart 5

Few of those who did tell someone at work about bullying, racial harassment or discrimination, sexual harassment or other forms of harassment saw things improve as a result (Sample size = 988)



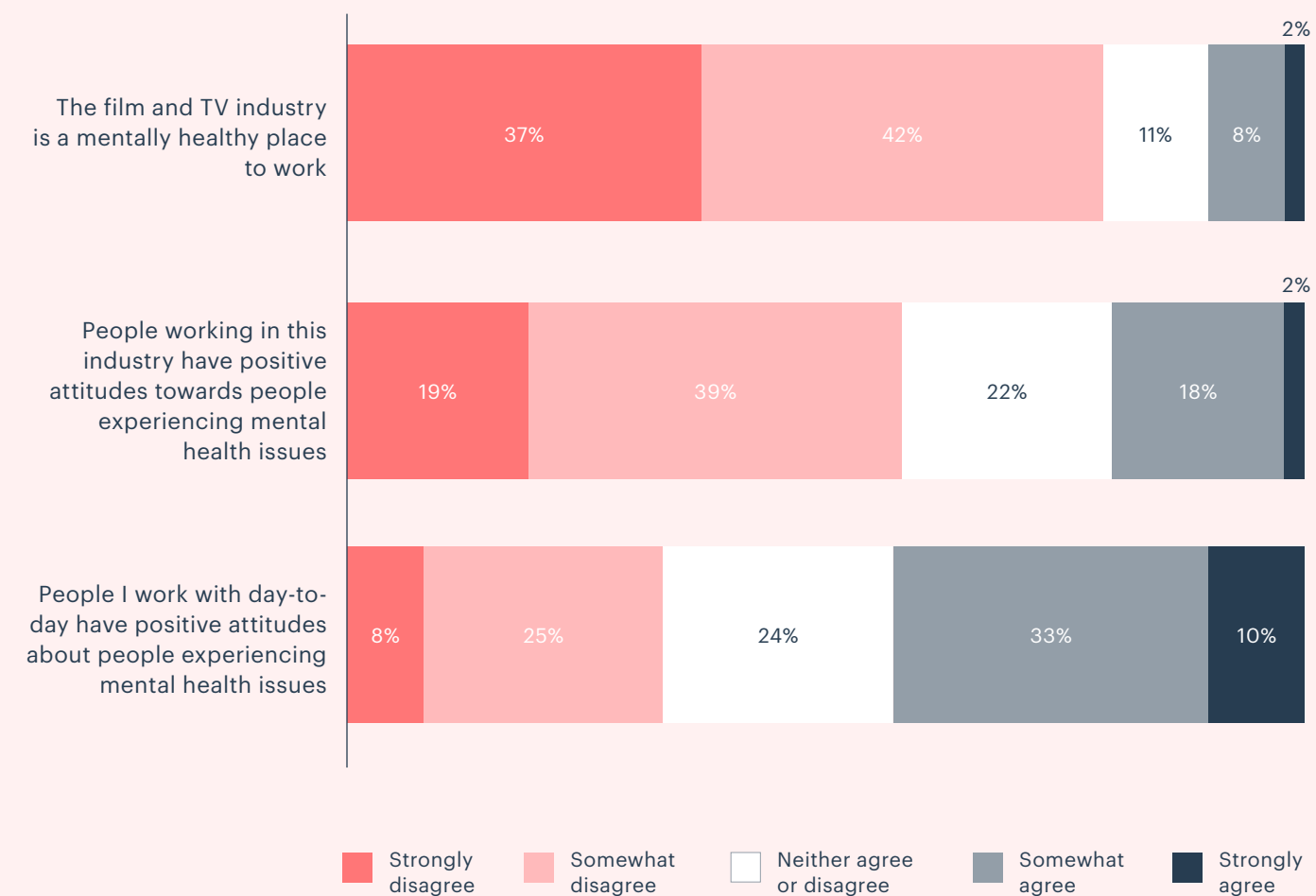
6. Culture is key: behaviours, values and mental health stigma remain problems

In a new question for 2021 only 10% of respondents agreed that the industry was a mentally healthy place to work (and we will use this metric in future as a barometer for the industry's progress); and only 20% say that people working in the industry have positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues.

Conversely, 43% of people say that the people they work with day-to-day have positive attitudes about people experiencing mental health issues. We saw a similar apparent paradox in the 2019 research: the perception that those closest to you are more positive on mental health than the industry is as a whole. Whatever the reason, this finding highlights the importance of peer and community-based support for mental health in the industry.

Chart 6

Most see the industry as a mentally unhealthy place to work – but their day-to-day experience with colleagues is more positive (Sample size = 2096)



¹⁹ The State of Play 2021 survey and report from Bournemouth University, Bectu and Viva La PD reports that the most common reasons for not reporting were: 42% felt it would negatively affect their career prospects; 31% were afraid it would make matter worse; 30% didn't feel the necessary processes existed to report or address such matters; and 27% didn't think reporting the matter would help.

One particularly alarming finding was that the proportion saying that culture and values were having a negative impact on mental health was much higher in 2021 at 51%, compared with 29% in 2019.

Culture is expressed in the behavioural norms that prevail within the industry. The reasons for the higher level of negative perceptions aren't clear, but the qualitative interviews pointed to a variety of colliding factors, such as work intensity, Covid working practices and on-set pressures, being drivers. This is an insight we want to explore further in the future.

Certainly, the stigma around mental health found in 2019 remains. As in 2019, in this survey four in ten (42%) said they wouldn't tell anyone in the industry if they were experiencing a mental health problem, for fear of judgment. Among those who had talked to someone about their mental health, 23% said the situation got better as a result, but 59% said nothing changed and 6% said it got worse – largely comparable to the 2019 data of 28%, 54% and 5% respectively. Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were much more likely to tell someone, but some found that the situation got worse as a result (10%).

7. A leaky bucket? The risk of losing people due to mental health concerns

At a time when the sector is experiencing strong growth and demand for people has never been higher²⁰, there is a real risk that the industry might lose the people it desperately needs due to concerns about mental health. This points to the need for improved focus on **retention**, not just recruitment.

65% of respondents to *Looking Glass '21* said they had thought about leaving the industry *in the past year* because of concerns about their mental health, compared with 63% having ever considered this in 2019. In both cases rates were higher amongst freelancers.

This figure was higher for some groups already badly under-represented, with three-quarters (74%) of disabled respondents, for example, considering leaving the industry *in the past year* to due mental health concerns. This group had concerns about how mental health issues were judged, whether they would be offered work and the cost barriers to accessing mental health support.

Interviews revealed that Covid had given people a moment to pause and reflect on their careers and re-evaluate their lives. Freelancers faced serious financial insecurity in the first 2020 lockdown. Some described feeling as though they had reached breaking point and couldn't see how they could carry on.

Others, though, recognised that they were well rewarded despite the insecurity, and 'golden handcuffs' were a major factor in their decision to stay.

A more positive reason for staying was that so many love their jobs. They described their work as being part of them, and couldn't imagine doing anything else. Though that passion can also mean that people push themselves to extremes.

“ I haven't spoken to anyone that hasn't [thought about leaving]. I think about it most days. What keeps you there? – passion – you're doing your dream job why would you want to leave?”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

8. Signs of a tide turning?

Research interviewees did recognise the increased discussion about mental health issues in society and saw this as a positive step in increasing openness in the industry.

“ Not everyone's attitude has changed, but it is better with more people talking about it”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

Two-fifths of respondents said that their day-to-day colleagues had positive attitudes to people experiencing mental health issues. 39% of people who experienced a mental health issue had spoken to someone about it and 23% said that things improved as a result. Respondents were generally optimistic things would get better, and that the Film and TV Charity and its partners had created some momentum to build upon.

To do so, they highlighted the importance of engaging broadcasters and commissioners in the process of improving production practices. Many believed that things will only change on a wholesale basis when there is an insistence on productions adopting healthier working practices and conditions. They also recognised the importance of strong support from trade unions and professional bodies.

“ People that run the companies need to realise they have responsibility to people that work for them. The only way you will do your job well is if you feel safe and secure, confident, and have time to sleep”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

9. Beware of 'mental healthwashing': the cynicism of a weary workforce

Alongside the signals of progress and (guarded) optimism about mental health, there is also scepticism about how sincere the intention to change really is.

For example, only 20% of respondents in 2021 said that the industry had positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues.

The qualitative interviews suggested that individuals feel the industry is beginning to 'talk the talk' about mental health, but they have yet to see culture change and are sceptical about whether big industry players are really 'walking the walk' yet.

“ Talk [about mental health] is there but it can feel tokenistic and those high up are only interested in getting the product done”

Looking Glass '21 respondent

This final observation is an important one for the industry to reflect on: how can we move beyond intention to make the tangible changes which will improve our industry's mental health over the long term?

²⁰ See this article from The Guardian, 12 September 2021, '[Streaming demand for UK shows will create 30,000 film and TV jobs](#)'.

Conclusion

Since we conducted the *Looking Glass '19* survey the industry and its workforce have undergone arguably the toughest two years of its long history. That the headline wellbeing and mental health measures have stayed stable, as national wellbeing measures have declined, should provide us all with some cautious optimism that the tide is just starting to turn on the historically poor mental health of the film, TV and cinema industry.

Clearly, though, we have a long way to go. On most of the measures which we know drive mental health (working conditions, culture and support capability) things appear to be getting worse before (we hope) they get better.

But the pandemic saw mental health being discussed much more openly – in society and the industry – than ever before. Industry activism drew much-needed attention to the mental health effects of poor working practices and racism amongst other issues. The industry's conversation on mental health has certainly started. Now it is down to those in positions of power to take action.



Sample Tables for *Looking Glass '21* survey (Sample size = 2097)

The following tables show the breakdown of responses from different demographic groups and industry subsectors for the 2,097 complete and valid responses to the *Looking Glass '21* survey.

This table analyses each group's responses as a proportion of total responses, and how that compares with their estimated representation in the industry taken from the Annual ScreenSkills Assessment 2019.

	No. of responses received	This group as estimated percentage of total industry workforce	Responses from this group as percentage of total responses received	Responses from this group as percentage of total responses received	
Subsector					
Production and Development	1383	38%	67%	+599	+76%
Post-production	239	8%	12%	+80	+50%
Distribution	61	4%	3%	-20	-25%
Programming and Broadcasting	320	32%	15%	-363	-53%
Exhibition and Motion Projection	71	12%	3%	-213	-75%
Gender					
Male	776	63%	37%	-545	-41%
Female	1262	35%	60%	+526	+71%
Age					
16-29	443	30%	21%	-190	-30%
30-39	682	29%	33%	+83	+14%
40-49	534	21%	26%	+103	+24%
50+	410	20%	20%	0	0
Ethnicity					
White	1770	90%	88%	-40	-2%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	45	2%	2%	0	0
Mixed/Multiple	107	4%	5%	+21	+25%

Asian or Asian British	54	2%	3%	+18	+50%
Other ethnic group	41	1%	2%	+21	+100%
Region					
North East	28	2%	1%	-28	-50%
North West	126	7%	6%	-21	-14%
Yorkshire and The Humber	73	3%	4%	+18	+33%
East Midlands	42	2%	2%	0	0
West Midlands	49	3%	2%	-25	-33%
East of England	41	2%	2%	0	0
London	1019	53%	49%	-83	-8%
South East	288	11%	14%	+62	+27%
South West	198	6%	10%	+79	+67%
Wales	77	3%	4%	+19	+33%
Scotland	93	1%	5%	+74	+400%
Northern Ireland	31	2%	2%	0	0
Disability or Long Term Health					
No	1599	84%	79%	-101	-6%
Yes	368	12%	18%	+123	+50%
Carer					
No	1611	75%	78%	+62	+4%
Yes	429	21%	21%	0	0
Sexual Orientation					
Heterosexual or straight	1578	81%	76%	-104	-6%
Gay or lesbian	144	8%	7%	-21	-13%
Bisexual	212	4%	10%	+127	+150%
Other	62	1%	3%	+41	+200%

Genre*	No. of responses received	This group as estimated percentage of total industry workforce	Responses from this group as percentage of total responses received	Variance from expected response rate for this group (number and percentage)	
Arts	391	18%	8%	-489	-56%
Children's	299	10%	6%	-199	-40%
Comedy	440	8%	9%	+49	+13%
Daytime	194	6%	4%	-97	-33%
Drama	1084	11%	23%	+566	+109%
Entertainment	779	16%	17%	+46	+6%
Factual / documentary	783	10%	17%	+322	+70%
News	85	3%	2%	-43	-33%
Reality	207	1%	4%	+155	+300%
Sports	122	3%	3%	0	0
Does not apply	84	8%	2%	-252	-75%
Other	199	4%	4%	0	0

*Respondents could select more than one option for the genre question

2021 2022

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