FILM + TV CHARITY

Looking Glass 2026

Mental health and wellbeing in UK film, TV, and cinema

November 2026

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Marcus Ryder
Chief Executive Officer

The Looking Glass Report is, I believe, the most important survey of mental health and wellbeing in the screen industries, not only in the UK but globally.

This report details the results of the Film and TV Charity's fifth Looking Glass Survey. Its importance lies not simply in the number of people who respond, or the depth of the data it provides. Looking Glass gives the screen industries something they otherwise lack: a shared, independent and authoritative picture of the mental health and wellbeing of the people who make film and television, and work in cinema.

It provides a common language and body of evidence that the whole industry can use to create meaningful change. By comparing findings across the five surveys since 2019, Looking Glass shows us where progress is being made, where harm persists and where action is most urgently needed.

That evidence has helped the Charity shape frontline services for people who need support, focus attention on the working conditions that contribute to poor mental health, and work with partners to develop the Principles for Mentally Healthy Productions.

But Looking Glass is not, and must never become, simply a report that informs the Charity's own strategy. Just as the 2019 survey helped the industry recognise the scale of its mental health crisis, the collective weight of five surveys must now be regarded as a resource for the whole industry. It allows us to understand where we are, track change and judge whether our collective efforts are making a difference.

Its findings should act as a point of reference against which commissioners, producers, broadcasters, streamers, studios, funders, trade bodies, unions, government and policymakers can identify priorities and measure progress.

That is important because no single organisation can create a mentally healthy film and television industry.

Our industry is an interconnected network of commissioners, production companies, studios, suppliers and freelancers, supported by organisations including the Film and TV Charity. Decisions made in one part affect people throughout it. Yet responsibility can too easily become lost within that interconnectedness. Everyone may agree that change is necessary, but ensuring it happens requires collective ownership across the industry. This is especially true while the industry is weathering many other challenges, including existential threats.

Meaningful change depends on the whole industry working together around shared evidence and shared responsibility. And we know collective action can work.

The continued progress on bullying, harassment and discrimination identified in this report, with prevalence down by almost a third compared to five years ago, shows what sustained, sector-wide action can achieve. Years of collective focus, clearer expectations and greater accountability are beginning to shift people's experiences. Of course, that work must continue, but it should also give us confidence that change is possible and provide a model for bringing the same coordinated approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Some improvements identified in Looking Glass 2026 may appear incremental, but their real-world impact is significant. A single per-centage-point shift on a key indicator can mean around 2,000 to 2,500 more people experiencing the industry as a mentally healthy place to work. Systems change tends by its nature to be slow work, requiring patience and resolve, but sustained over time, small movements can represent thousands of people facing less harm, receiving better support and having a greater chance of building healthy, durable careers.

But we should not conclude that the job is done. We should ask what we could achieve if we used that progress as a reason to redouble our collective effort. ▸

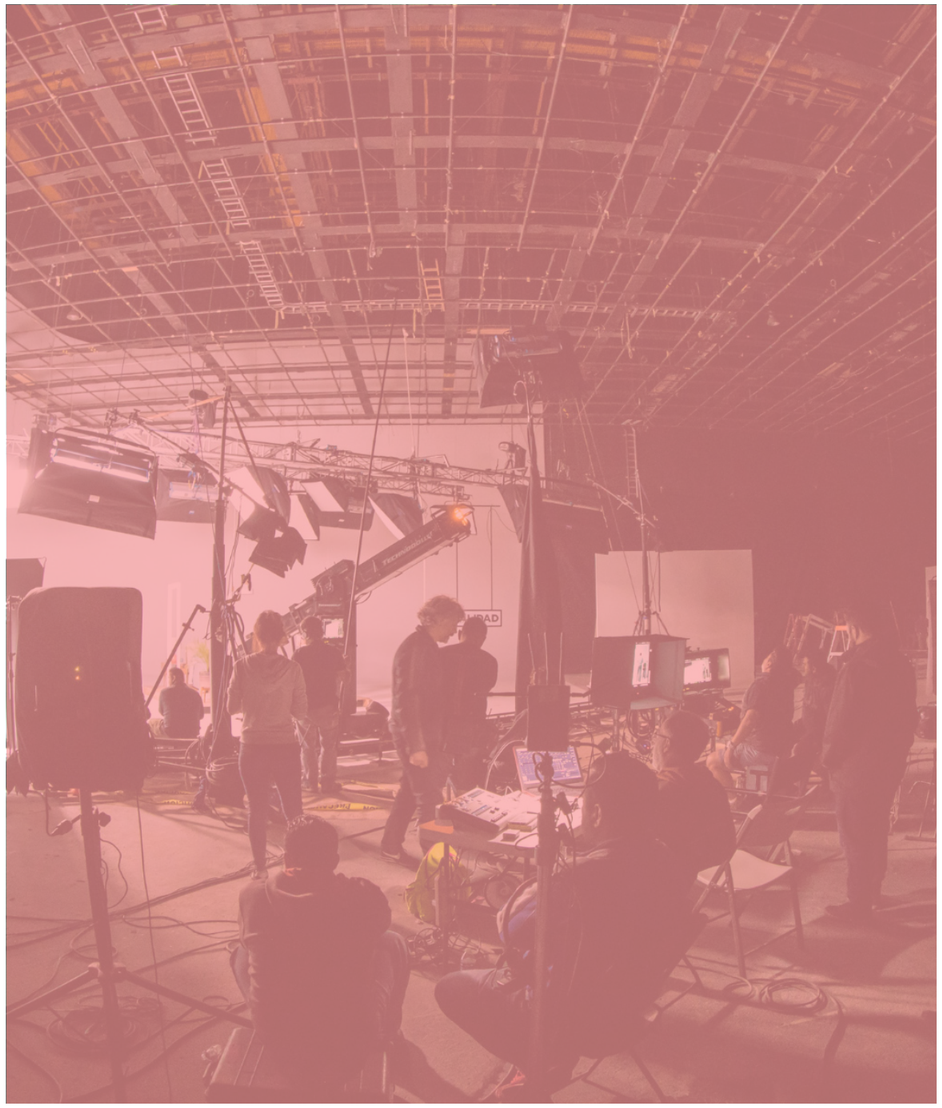
FOREWORD

The Principles for Mentally Healthy Productions turn ambition into action. They give organisations of every size provide a shared framework to improve working practices, strengthen account-ability and maintain consistently high standards of care and respect.

Looking Glass shows us where we are. The *Principles* show us where we need to go. But neither can change our industry alone; that depends on all of us.

Mental health is where this work starts, not where it ends. Taking it seriously involves recognising that the wellbeing of those in the industry and the health of the industry itself are inextricably linked. So, embed the *Principles*. Use Looking Glass to set priorities and measure progress. Share what works, learn from one another, and take responsibility for delivering change.

If we act together, and sustain that action, we can make mentally healthy working practices the norm and create an industry in which people can build long, healthy and sustainable careers.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The clearest message from Looking Glass 2026 – based on survey responses from 3,394 industry workers – is that mental health and wellbeing in UK film, TV, and cinema remain unacceptably poor. Workers continue to report substantially poorer outcomes than national averages across almost every headline measure. At the same time, there are grounds to be cautiously encouraged. As listed in the box below, the reported incidence of poor mental health, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts have each improved significantly since 2024, alongside improved experiences and perceptions of working in the industry.

- **Almost a third of respondents rated their mental health as poor**. In 2026, 31% described their mental health as poor or very poor, nearly twice the UK workforce average of 16%. This was an improvement from 35% in 2024, but remained the second-highest level recorded across the Looking Glass series, which began in 2019.
- **A quarter experienced high levels of loneliness.** The proportion fell from 30% in 2024 to 25% in 2026, but remained almost three times the average among adults in England.
- **Almost a quarter experienced suicidal thoughts.** In 2026, 23% reported having had thoughts of taking their own life during the previous 12 months, down from 30% in 2024 but still more than three times the average among adults in England.
- **More than half said that working in the industry negatively affected their mental health.** The proportion fell from 63% in 2024 to 56% in 2026, but remained more than double the UK workforce average of 25%.
- **Only a small minority considered the industry mentally healthy.** Just 13% agreed that the film and TV industry is a mentally healthy place to work, continuing the pattern of small, incremental improvements recorded across the Looking Glass series.
- **Many workers were considering leaving the industry.** More than three in five respondents (62%) had considered leaving due to concerns about their mental health. Three in ten (30%) had taken firm action towards doing so.

The positive changes since 2024 outlined above were evident across several industry subsectors and were largely concentrated among freelancers:

- Poor mental health among freelancers fell from 38% to 31%.
- High levels of loneliness among freelancers fell from 32% to 27%.
- Suicidal thoughts among freelancers fell from 32% to 23%.
- The proportion of freelancers saying that work negatively affects their mental health fell from 67% to 57%.

The demographic profile of freelancers responding in 2026 is broadly similar to that of respondents in 2024. This suggests that the improvements in wellbeing are unlikely simply to reflect more vulnerable freelancers leaving the industry during challenging times over the past few years.

Despite the improvements, however, outcomes for freelancers remain worse than for permanent staff, with freelancers continuing to experience higher levels of loneliness and sustained worklessness than their counterparts in permanent employment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Underlying causes: conditions, culture, and capability

Since the inaugural survey in 2019, the Looking Glass series has established a framework of interconnected workplace factors that likely contribute to the poor outcomes described above. We have organised these factors around the following three C's: working **conditions**, workplace **culture**, and the industry's **capability** to support good mental health.

Conditions

- **Sustained worklessness remained elevated.** In 2026, 15% were out of work at the time of the survey and had worked for fewer than three of the previous 12 months. This was unchanged from 2024, but three times the level reported in 2022. Among those experiencing sustained worklessness, the median time since their last industry job was around eight months.
- **Job security improved but remained low.** Only 18% felt secure in their job, up from 13% in 2024 but below 28% in 2022.
- **Long-hours working continued to decline.** Overall, 14% worked 50+ hours in the previous week, down from 18% in 2024 and 33% in 2022, but still higher than national averages.
- **Work continued to interfere with personal lives.** Almost three-quarters (72%) found it difficult to relax during personal time because of their job, compared to a UK workforce average of 26%.

Culture

- **Bullying, harassment, and discrimination remained widespread but continued to decline.** More than a third (37%) experienced at least one of these behaviours in the past 12 months, down from 41% in 2024 and continuing the decline from the peak of 53% recorded in 2021. The recent fall was driven by fewer reported experiences of bullying and harassment, while experiences of discrimination remained broadly unchanged.
- **Half of those affected did not report their experience of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.** The main reasons included fear of losing future work, scepticism that the issue would be addressed and concern that reporting would make things worse.
- **Reporting arrangements appear to be becoming clearer, but confidence in organisational action remains limited.** The proportion who felt that there are clear policies and processes for reporting adverse behaviour increased from 35% to 44%. However, still only a third believed reports would be acted upon regardless of who the perpetrator was.
- **A third continued to feel undervalued.** In 2026, 34% did not feel valued at work, though this was down from 38% in 2024.

Capability

- **Support for managers in handling their teams' wellbeing remained mixed.** Among managers with responsibility for others' wellbeing, 30% rated available support as poor and only 32% as good.
- **Managers felt better equipped to respond.** Almost half (48%) felt largely or fully equipped when a colleague sought mental health support, up from 41% in 2024.
- **Just over half (55%) of respondents who experienced a mental health issue in the past 12 months told someone at work about it.** Disclosure remained more common among permanent staff than freelancers.
- **Disclosure did not improve the situation for most respondents.** Only 24% said their situation improved, while 11% said it worsened.
- **Awareness of support increased but remained limited.** Compared to 2024, more respondents recalled a named mental health contact, wellbeing plan, mental health first aider, assistance programme, or access to counselling.

Poor outcomes were not experienced equally across the workforce. While the average industry worker is already at heightened risk of poor mental health compared with national averages, workers with a disability or long-term health condition, neurodivergent workers, carers, LGBTQ+ workers, Black and Global Majority workers, and those from working-class backgrounds experienced particularly poor outcomes across multiple measures.

A basis for further progress

Looking Glass 2026 does not describe a mentally healthy industry. Mental health and wellbeing remain substantially worse than national averages; worklessness and insecurity remain widespread; and bullying, harassment, and discrimination continue to affect more than a third of the workforce.

However, the findings also provide grounds to be cautiously encouraged. Although the improvements are built on a very low base, reductions in poor mental health, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts have occurred alongside corresponding reductions in bullying and harassment, clearer reporting arrangements for adverse behaviour, greater awareness of mental health support, fewer people working excessive hours, and managers feeling better equipped to support colleagues.

These improvements, particularly the reduction in bullying and harassment, indicate what can be achieved when the industry acknowledges shared problems and sustains a collective response.

The task now is to build on that progress through sustained and coordinated action. This means maintaining accessible support for workers when difficulties arise, while tackling the culture, conditions, and working practices that contribute to poor mental wellbeing in the first place. The Charity's Principles for Mentally Healthy Productions provide an important basis for this broader approach, bringing together practical action on leadership, workplace relationships, mental health support, workload, working patterns, and role clarity. Though the *Principles* provide a foundation for this work, lasting change will require organisations and stakeholders across the industry to translate them into practice and connect them with the wider Good Work policy agenda. Sustained collective action to create fairer, safer, and more sustainable working conditions will be central to achieving lasting improvements in workers' mental health and wellbeing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Film and TV Charity's research aims to highlight issues that are unique to or disproportionately affect the wellbeing of the UK film, TV, and cinema workforce. Its purpose is to enable policymakers, employers, industry bodies, and the workforce itself to make informed decisions. Supporting and improving mental health and wellbeing across the workforce is one of the Charity's core goals, with the Looking Glass survey acting as a key barometer of mental health and working conditions across the industry.

The inaugural Looking Glass survey, conducted in 2019, was the first large-scale study dedicated to exploring the mental health of people working behind the scenes in film, TV, and cinema. Its findings brought the scale of the challenge into sharp focus, with key indicators such as overall mental wellbeing and experiences of suicidal thoughts substantially worse than national averages. The survey was subsequently repeated in 2021, 2022 and 2024.

Following some small signs of improvement in 2021 and 2022, the findings from Looking Glass 2024 were particularly concerning, indicating a reversal of the progress of the preceding years. In 2024, more than a third of respondents rated their mental health as poor, while almost a third experienced high levels of loneliness or had thoughts of taking their own life during the previous 12 months. All three outcomes were the worst recorded across the series. The 2024 survey was conducted at an especially difficult time for the industry's workforce. Following a production boom which lasted until around 2022, the industry has since experienced a prolonged downturn. By the time of the 2024 survey many workers, particularly freelancers[1], were facing heightened job insecurity and were deeply uncertain about their future in the industry.

The context in which Looking Glass 2026 was conducted remained challenging. Film and High-End Television production spending increased in 2024 and 2025, suggesting some level of stabilisation or recovery.[2] However, whilst spending increased, the number of productions remained lower than in recent years and many production workers continued to have significantly less work than they wanted, with the workforce estimated to be operating at around half of its potential capacity in 2024-25.[3] This apparent stabilisation therefore coexists with continuing insecurity. Indeed, the Charity's latest Money Matters research, conducted in 2025, highlighted widespread financial insecurity and sustained worklessness, with freelancers particularly exposed.[4]

Employment prospects are, however, only one part of the explanation for the poor mental health and wellbeing seen across the Looking Glass series. The research has consistently identified a range of interconnected workplace factors that likely contribute to these outcomes. These are grouped into a framework we call the three C's: working **conditions**, workplace **culture**, and the industry's **capability** to support good mental health. Relevant factors include bullying, harassment, and discrimination, poor workplace relationships, long and irregular working hours, and gaps in managerial support. These concerns have also been documented in wider academic research, which has highlighted under-resourced productions and unrealistic schedules, inconsistent management practices, freelance precarity and workplace power imbalances.[5] Research has further suggested that adverse behaviours such as bullying and harassment should not be understood solely as isolated acts by individuals, but should be recognised as occurring in the context of wider working practices, conditions, and industry structures.[6] Subsequent analysis of Looking Glass data has also identified loneliness as a key mechanism through which workplace culture and conditions affect workers' mental wellbeing.[7]

In response to the Looking Glass findings from the first survey in 2019, the Charity developed the Whole Picture Programme, combining direct support for individuals with practical action to address some of the underlying causes of poor mental health. This includes a free and confidential Support Line, access to free counselling, a Bullying Advice Service and the Whole Picture Toolkit – a digital resource giving productions the necessary tools, guides and support to improve working environments.

The Charity's work is continuing to evolve with the recent launch of the Principles for Mentally Healthy Productions. Developed with more than 45 organisations from across the industry, the *Principles* provide a shared framework for preventing and managing risks to mental health across areas including leadership and culture, workplace relationships, mental health support, workload, working patterns, and role clarity.

Two years on from the last iteration, Looking Glass 2026 was conducted between 11 May and 22 June 2026, receiving 3,394 eligible responses, the third-largest total across the series. It provides an opportunity to assess mental health and wellbeing following an extended period of industry volatility, and to examine whether recent efforts to improve workplace culture, support, and working practices are reflected in workers' experiences.

This report presents the key findings from the 2026 survey and is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of mental health and wellbeing across the UK film and TV workforce, covering self-rated mental health, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts, alongside perceptions of the industry and its impact on workers' mental health.
- **Chapter 3** explores factors associated with poor mental health through the three C's framework: working conditions, workplace culture, and the industry's capability to support mental health and wellbeing.
- **Chapter 4** examines differences between demographic and professional groups, identifying parts of the workforce that experience particularly poor mental health outcomes or greater exposure to adverse workplace factors.
- **Chapter 5** draws together the principal findings and considers their implications for continuing efforts to improve mental health, workplace culture, and working conditions.

Details of the research methodology and a breakdown of respondent demographic and professional characteristics are included in the appendices to this report.



[1] Note that in this report the term 'freelancers' is treated as including: those who are self-employed (sole trader), those trading through a limited liability company but without employees, and those on temporary employment contracts (PAYE) – i.e. so-called 'PAYE freelancers'.

[2] British Film Institute (2026). Official BFI statistics reveal £6.8 billion film and high-end TV production spend in the UK.

[3] Ampere Analysis (2026). Sizing Up the Future: Forecasting the Screen Workforce. An Ampere Analysis report for ScreenSkills and 4Skills.

[4] Film and TV Charity (2026). Money Matters 2: Financial wellbeing of the UK's film, TV, and cinema industry workforce.

[5] van Raalte, C. et al. (2021) State of Play 2021: Management practices in UK unscripted television.

[6] van Raalte, C. et al. (2023) More than just a few 'bad apples': the need for a risk management approach to the problem of workplace bullying in the UK's television industry.

[7] Hawkins, O., Topakas, A. & Wigfield, A. (2025). Loneliness in the Film and TV Industry.

2. THE OVERALL PICTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN UK FILM, TV, AND CINEMA

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the mental health and wellbeing of the UK's film, TV, and cinema workforce by exploring answers to various key topics in the survey. Included among these are respondents' self-ratings of their mental health and wellbeing, their experiences of loneliness in general and in the workplace, as well as their experience of having suicidal thoughts. The chapter also includes respondents' perceptions of whether the industry is a mentally healthy place to work and the extent to which working in the industry positively or negatively impacts their mental health.

Chapter Summary

- **Self-rated mental health remains substantially worse than among the wider UK workforce, despite some improvement since 2024.** Almost a third of respondents (31%) rated their mental health as poor or very poor: nearly twice the UK workforce average of 16%. This is the second-highest level recorded across the Looking Glass series, although it represents a four percentage point improvement since 2024.
- **Levels of loneliness also improved but remain much higher than among the wider population.** A quarter of respondents (25%) experienced high levels of loneliness, almost three times the average among adults in England. This represents a five percentage point improvement since 2024, mirroring the improvement in self-rated mental health.
- **Almost a quarter of respondents experienced suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months.** In 2026, 23% reported having thoughts of taking their own life during the previous 12 months, which is more than three times the average among adults in England. Although this remains alarmingly high, it represents a seven percentage point decrease since 2024.
- **Recent improvements in mental wellbeing have been concentrated among freelancers.** Between 2024 and 2026, freelancers experienced statistically significant improvements in self-rated mental health, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts, while there were no statistically significant changes among permanent staff. Despite these improvements, freelancers continued to experience higher levels of loneliness than permanent staff.
- **A majority of respondents continue to feel that working in the industry negatively affects their mental health.** More than half of respondents (56%) said that their work in the industry had a negative impact on their mental health: more than double the UK workforce average of 25%. This represents a seven percentage point improvement since 2024, largely driven by improved perceptions among freelancers.
- **Many workers continue to consider leaving the industry because of concerns about their mental health.** More than three in five respondents (62%) had considered leaving during the previous 12 months, including 30% who had taken 'firm action' towards doing so. Both proportions were broadly unchanged from 2024.

Self-rating of mental health

In Looking Glass 2026, just under a third of respondents (31%) rated their mental health as either poor or very poor. Conversely, just over a third (34%) rated their mental health as either good or very good.

From these ratings there are three important observations to make:

- **Firstly,** these ratings of mental health among film and TV workers are substantially worse than those among the wider UK workforce. As shown in Figure 1, in the CIPD's latest *Good Work Index* 16% of UK workers rated their mental health as poor or very poor and 63% rated their mental health as good or very good.[8] The proportion of film and TV workers rating their mental health as poor is therefore almost twice the national average.
- **Secondly,** the proportion rating their mental health as poor is the second highest across the Looking Glass series.
- **Thirdly,** these self-ratings of mental health have improved since the 2024 Looking Glass survey, when they were at their worst level across the series. Specifically, the proportion reporting poor mental health has decreased by four percentage points (from 35% to 31%), and the proportion reporting good mental health has increased by the same amount (from 30% to 34%). As will become clear from the remainder of this chapter, the improvement in self-ratings of mental health is mirrored across many of the other key measures of mental health and wellbeing included in the 2026 Looking Glass survey. Also, as is explored in more detail in the final section of this chapter, the improvement in self-ratings of mental health is concentrated among freelancers, albeit that freelancers still generally report worse mental health than permanent staff.

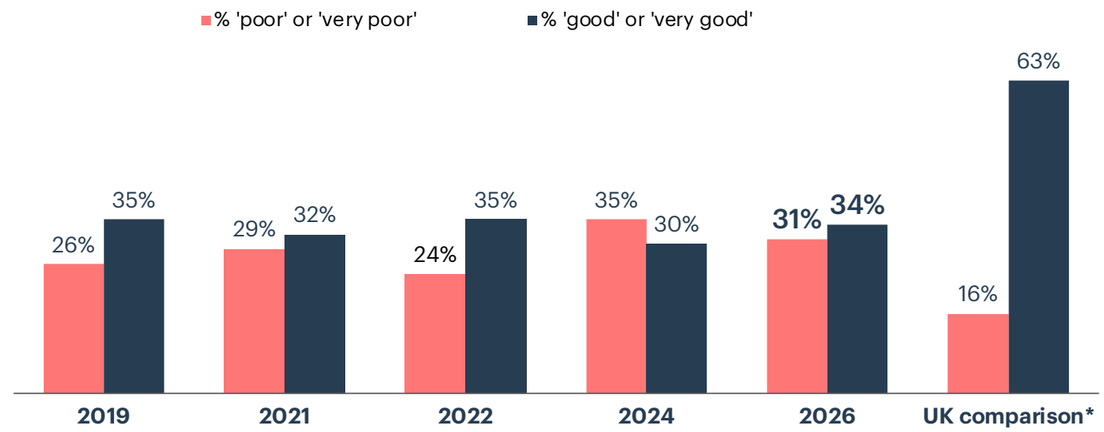
Loneliness

The Looking Glass series has consistently flagged loneliness as being abnormally prevalent among the UK film and TV workforce. By loneliness we mean the emotional experience that results from lacking the desired quantity and quality of social relationships[9], with loneliness in the workplace being associated with feelings of being alienated or disconnected from other colleagues in the workplace.[10]

Statistical analysis of Looking Glass 2024 data established that loneliness acts as a key mechanism through which workplace culture and conditions affect mental wellbeing.[11] That is to say, for example, if a worker perceives the industry to be a mentally unhealthy place to work this would likely impact their own mental health negatively because it makes them feel alienated or disconnected from their managers and co-workers.

Figure 1

Self-ratings of mental health across the Looking Glass series



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909; 2021: 2,097; 2019: 4,877)
*Source for UK comparison: CIPD Good Work Index 2025.

[8] Young, J. (2025) Health and wellbeing at work 2025: Views of employees. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

[9] DCMS (2018) A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness.

[10] Firoz, M., Chaudhary, R. & Khan, A. (2021) Desolated milieu: exploring the trajectory of workplace loneliness (2006-2019).

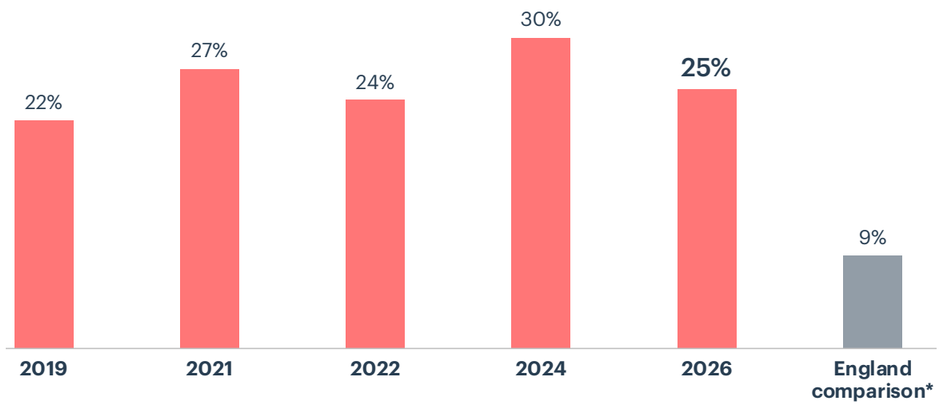
[11] Hawkins, O., Topakas, A. & Wigfield, A. (2025) Loneliness in the Film and TV Industry.

In Looking Glass 2026, a quarter (25%) of respondents were often lonely.[12] As shown in Figure 2, this level of loneliness is almost three times greater than the national average of 9% among adults in England.[13] It does, however, represent a five-percentage point decrease (from 30% to 25%) compared to the 2024 Looking Glass survey. Given the previously discussed connection between loneliness and mental health, the improvement in both measures since 2024 is probably linked. Supporting that inference is that, like the decrease in poor ratings of mental health, the decrease in loneliness is most pronounced among freelancers, albeit that freelancers generally report higher levels of loneliness compared to permanent staff. These differences between freelancers and permanent staff are detailed later in this chapter.

The Looking Glass 2026 survey also asked a direct question about workplace loneliness as loneliness can often mistakenly be assumed to be a solely domestic or personal matter.[14] 16% of respondents reported that they 'often or always' feel lonely at work, with a further 29% reporting that they feel lonely at work 'some of the time'. Interestingly, there is substantial overlap between the two measures, with three quarters (75%) of respondents who score high on the UCLA loneliness scale also reporting that they are lonely at work either often/always or some of the time. Academic research suggests that while some people may be predisposed to experiencing loneliness across different environments, there are specifics about workplace relationships and other aspects of the work environment that act as important contributors to loneliness at work.[15] Indeed, research commissioned by the Charity identified various structural and cultural conditions of working in film and TV which are strongly associated with feelings of loneliness, including: long and irregular working hours, job insecurity, experiences of bullying, the prevalence of freelance, and short-term contracts, as well as a competitive and transactional culture, with few opportunities for authentic social interaction or emotional support.[16]

Figure 2

Proportion of respondents scoring eight or nine on the UCLA loneliness scale - indicating high levels of loneliness - across the Looking Glass series



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909; 2021: 2,097; 2019: 4,877)
*Source for England average: DCMS Community Life Survey 2024/25

[12] As measured using the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) three-item loneliness scale. Respondents were asked three questions: "how often do you feel that you lack companionship?"; "how often do you feel left out?"; and "how often do you feel isolated from others?" using an answer scale of 'hardly ever or never', 'some of the time', and 'often'. Responses to the questions are combined to generate a composite score ranging from three to nine, with nine indicating the highest levels of loneliness.

[13] DCMS (2025) Community Life Survey 2024/25: Loneliness and support networks.

[14] Respondents were asked "how often do you feel lonely at work?" with response options of 'never', 'hardly ever', 'occasionally', 'some of the time' and 'often or always'.

[15] Bryan, B.T. et al. (2023). 'Loneliness in the workplace: a mixed-method systematic review and meta-analysis'.

The overlap between the two measures of loneliness therefore does not establish the direction of the relationship, but indicates that loneliness within and outside work are closely connected and should not be considered in isolation.

Self-ratings of wellbeing

The 2026 Looking Glass survey included a set of wellbeing measures developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which are often referred to as ONS4.[17] These were first incorporated in the Looking Glass series in 2024, requiring respondents to evaluate how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether they feel they have meaning and purpose in their life, and to describe their feelings of happiness and anxiety experienced during the previous day.

As shown in Figure 3, between a quarter and a third of respondents in Looking Glass 2026 were categorised as having low levels of life satisfaction (32%), a low sense of worth (25%), and low levels of happiness (28%). Half (50%) of respondents in 2026 were categorised as having high levels of anxiety.

Figure 3 also shows that film and TV workers compare unfavourably to national averages on each of these measures. It is also notable that reported measures of life satisfaction and anxiety are consistent between Looking Glass 2024 and 2026, but that measures of sense of worth and happiness have improved slightly. As with self-ratings of mental health and loneliness, the improvement has been concentrated among freelancers.[18]

Suicidal thoughts

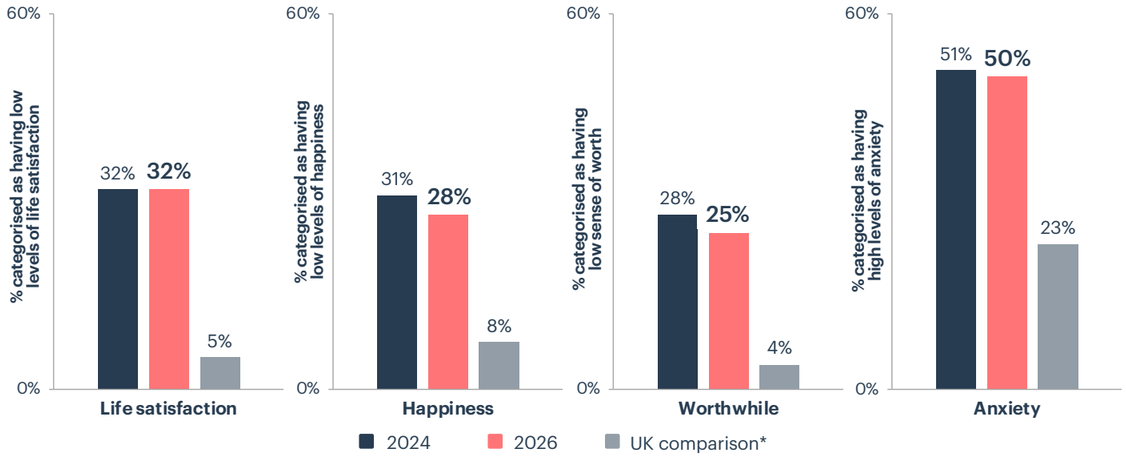
One of the most distressing statistics from each of the previous Looking Glass reports has been the high proportion of respondents who report experiencing suicidal thoughts. In Looking Glass 2026 the proportion is, again, shocking.

As shown in Figure 4, almost a quarter (23%) of respondents reported having thoughts of taking their own life over the past 12 months. The proportion reporting suicidal thoughts is more than three times the national average of 7% among adults in England.[19]

Whilst not losing sight of how alarmingly high the figure of 23% is, it does, nevertheless, represent a seven-percentage point decrease from the 30% reported in 2024. Like the other measures of mental health and wellbeing discussed in this chapter, the decrease in experiences of suicidal thoughts is concentrated among freelancers – a theme which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Figure 3

Proportion in Looking Glass 2024 and 2026 categorised as having 'low' levels of personal wellbeing across the ONS4 measures (% 'high' for the anxiety measure), compared to average among UK adults



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)
*Source for UK average: ONS Annual Population Survey, July-Sept 2025

[16] Hawkins, O., Topakas, A. & Wigfield, A. (2025) Loneliness in the Film and TV Industry.

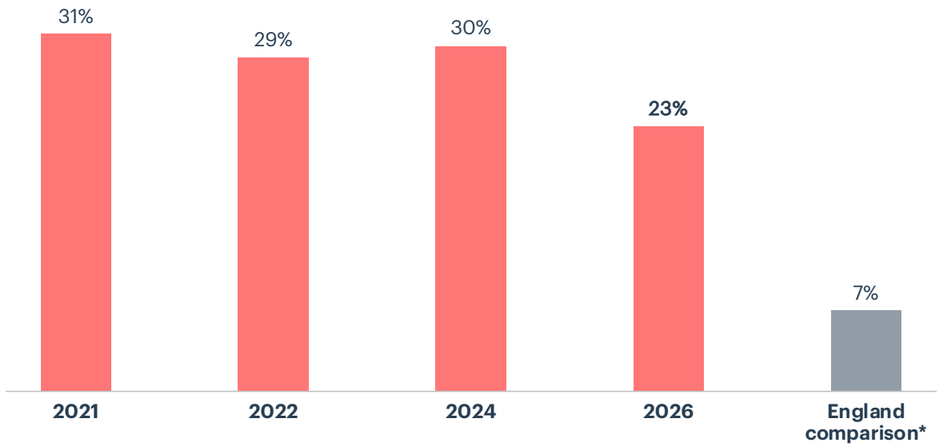
[17] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/personalwellbeingsurveyuserguide

[18] In Looking Glass 2026, 26% of freelancers were categorised as having a low sense of worth (down from 30% in 2024), compared to 23% among permanent staff (not significantly different from 20% in 2024). For the happiness measure, 29% of freelancers had low levels of happiness (down from 34% in 2024), compared to 25% among permanent staff (which has increased from 21% in 2024).

[19] NHS England (2025). Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2023/4.

Figure 4

Proportion of respondents experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months, across the Looking Glass series



*Source for England average: NHS England's Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, 2023/24

Mental health and wellbeing measures by employment type

As has been alluded to in the previous sections of this chapter, when looking at changes since 2024 in the key measures of mental wellbeing, there is a clear distinction between freelancers and permanent staff.

Specifically, there have been appreciable and statistically significant[20] improvements across the key wellbeing measures among freelancers, but not among permanent staff. As shown in Figure 5:

- The proportion of freelancers rating their mental health as poor decreased from 38% in 2024 to 31% in 2026. Among permanent staff, the proportion rating their mental health as poor increased from 25% to 29% – albeit the increase was not statistically significant – such that the proportion of freelancers and permanent staff rating their mental health as poor are broadly on a par with each other. (That said, ratings of 'good' mental health were higher among permanent staff compared to freelancers – 38% and 33% respectively).
- Frequent experiences of loneliness (scoring 8 or 9 on the UCLA loneliness scale) decreased among freelancers, from 32% in 2024 to 27% in 2026. Among permanent staff the proportion who are often lonely did not differ significantly between 2024 and 2026. It is still the case, however, that loneliness was higher among freelancers compared to permanent staff (27% and 19% respectively).
- The proportion of freelancers experiencing suicidal thoughts over the previous 12 months has decreased from 32% in 2024 to 23% in 2026. Among permanent staff, the proportion experiencing suicidal thoughts increased from 22% to 24% – albeit the increase was not statistically significant. As a result, the proportions of freelancers and permanent staff experiencing suicidal thoughts are now on a par with each other.

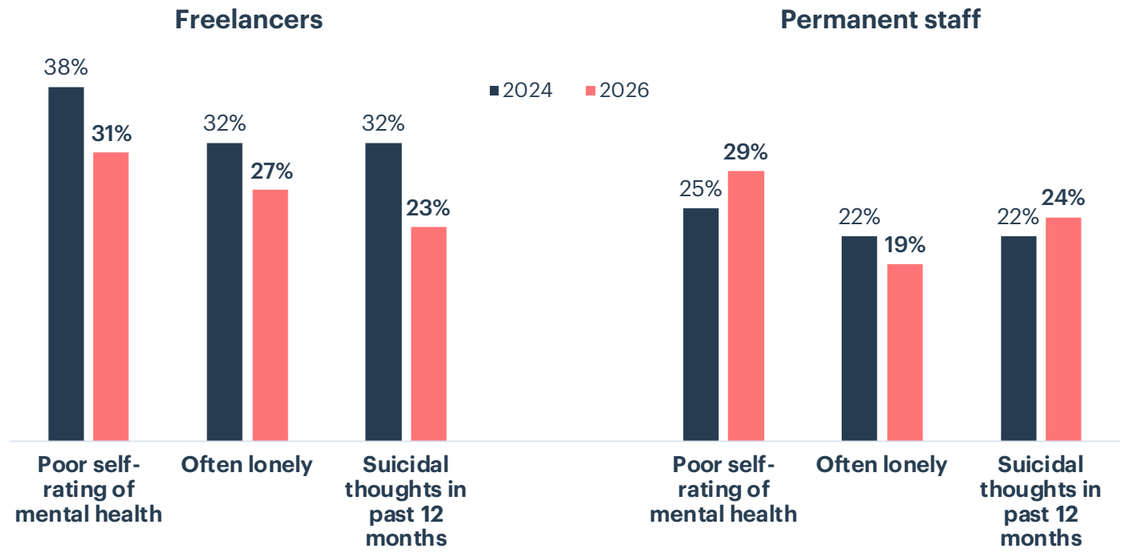
The improvement in key measures among freelancers raises a number of questions, including:

- Is the profile of freelancers surveyed in 2026 comparable with 2024?
- Is the improvement among freelancers isolated to particular parts of the industry?
- What might have contributed to this improvement?

[20] As noted in the Methodology section in Appendix A, unless otherwise stated, all differences between subgroups referred to in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Figure 5

Comparison of key measures of mental wellbeing between freelancers and permanent staff across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026



On the first of these questions, Table B3 in Appendix B compares the profile of freelancers across the two surveys. It shows that the profiles are broadly similar, including in the representation of demographic groups we have previously found to be at greater risk of poor mental health. This suggests that the improvements in wellbeing are unlikely simply to reflect more vulnerable freelancers leaving the industry between the two surveys. That said, there were a few notable differences between the surveys which may reflect disproportionate numbers of certain groups having left the industry between 2024 and 2026. For instance, the profile of freelancers responding in 2026 contained a higher proportion who were aged 50+ than in 2024, increasing from 24% to 31%. This is broadly consistent with the relative increase in representation of over-50s in off-screen roles reported in the latest *Diamond* report.[21] Another difference is that the proportion of freelancers working in unscripted TV decreased, while the proportions working in scripted TV and film – especially higher budget film – increased.[22] Again, this broadly tracks with wider changes in production roles detailed in a recent report prepared by *Ampere Analysis* for ScreenSkills.[23] In other words, where there were notable differences, these appear to reflect wider workforce trends rather than a skew in our sample.



On the second question, the improvements in mental wellbeing measures among freelancers is evident across various parts of the industry and not isolated to just one or two sub-sectors. For instance, as is detailed across Tables C1 to C3 in Appendix C, the proportion of freelancers experiencing suicidal thoughts in the previous 12 months was significantly lower in 2026 than in 2024 among those working in TV, film, and post-production. Similarly, the proportion of freelancers with high levels of loneliness significantly reduced among those working in TV, and film, while the proportion with self-reported poor mental health reduced significantly among those working in TV, film, and post-production.

The third question of what might have contributed to this improvement is perhaps the trickiest to answer and we can only draw inferences rather than causal links. However, as is detailed in the next section of this chapter, there have been notable improvements in freelancers' perceptions of the industry and of how the industry impacts their mental health. Furthermore, as is covered in later chapters about the conditions, culture, and capability of the industry, there have been notable positive changes in freelances' experiences on various key measures. These include, for example: freelancers' exposure to good working practices; improvements (i.e. reductions) in the proportion of freelancers experiencing bullying or harassment; and the extent to which they feel secure in their jobs. Whilst the emphasis here is on 'improvements', we must not lose sight of the fact that these are improvements from a low bar – we are still seeing around a quarter to a third of freelancers experiencing loneliness, suicidal thoughts, and reporting poor mental health.

Views of the industry and how it impacts mental health

Taken together, the measures discussed above show that mental wellbeing among film and TV workers remains substantially worse than national comparisons. However, the 2026 findings also point to a modest improvement since 2024, particularly among freelancers. This raises an important question: to what extent are both the poorer outcomes relative to national comparisons and the recent signs of improvements linked to people's experiences of working in the industry itself?

One way of exploring whether improvements in mental wellbeing are at least partly linked to changes within the industry is to examine whether respondents feel that working in the industry has a positive or negative impact on their mental health. As shown in Figure 6, only 17% of respondents in Looking Glass 2026 consider their work in the industry to have a positive impact on their mental health, while more than half (56%) say that it has a negative impact. Whilst the proportion saying that working in the industry has a negative impact on their mental health is worryingly high – more than double the average of 25% among the wider UK workforce[24] – it does nevertheless represent a seven-percentage point improvement compared to the proportion in 2024 who reported that work has a negative impact on their mental health.

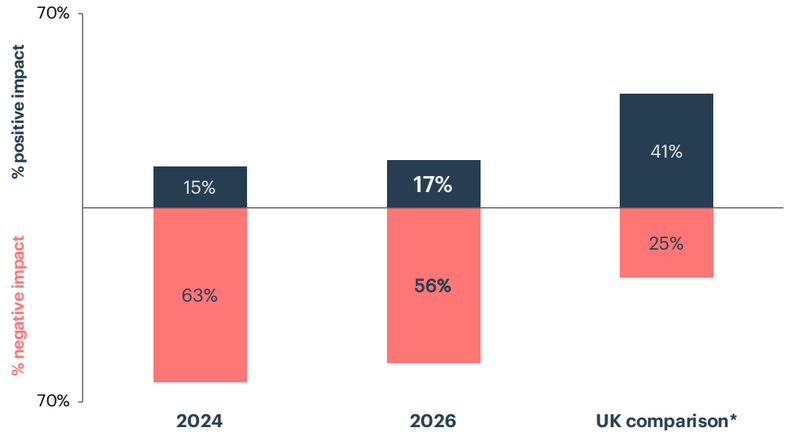
[21] According to Creative Diversity Network's Diamond Report 2025, over-50s accounted for 28.4% of off-screen roles in 2025, up from 25.2% in 2024.

[22] As detailed in Table B3 in Appendix B, the proportion of freelancers surveyed in 2026 who most strongly associate themselves with unscripted TV was 36%, down from 47% in 2024. On the other hand, the proportion working in scripted TV increased from 21% to 27%. The proportion working in film increased from 16% to 20%, including an increase from 5% to 8% among those working on higher budget films (>£30m).

[23] Estimates from the 2026 Ampere Analysis report 'Sizing Up the Future: Forecasting the Screen Workforce' suggest that production roles in large-scale film increased by 15% over the period 2023-25, whereas Unscripted TV fell by 5%.

Figure 6

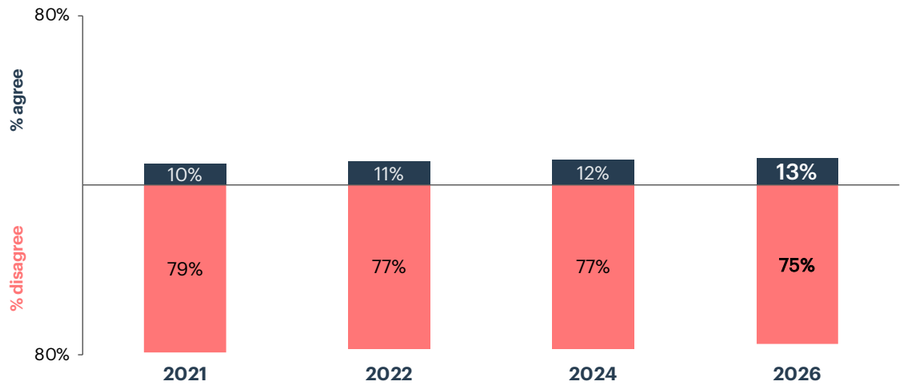
Whether work has a positive or negative impact on mental health in Looking Glass 2024 and 2026 compared to average among UK adults



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)
*Source for UK comparison: CIPD Good Work Index 2025

Figure 7

Levels of agreement with the statement 'the film and TV industry is a mentally healthy place to work', across the Looking Glass series



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909; 2021: 2,097)

Corresponding with the previous sections, this overall improvement is driven by improved sentiment among freelancers. Specifically, the proportion of freelancers reporting that work has a negative impact on their mental health decreased from 67% in 2024 to 57% in 2026. Among permanent staff the proportion reporting a negative impact on mental health did not change significantly (from 51% in 2024 to 53% in 2026).

The improvement among freelancers since 2024 was evident across various industry sub-sectors, and significantly so among those working in unscripted TV (down from 71% to 61%), and film (down from 65% to 55%) – specifically mid budget and low-to-micro budget film.[25] Table C4 in Appendix C provides a full breakdown by industry sub-sector.

The measure discussed above focuses on how respondents feel their own work in the industry affects their mental health. A related measure included in the survey asks whether respondents consider the industry, more broadly, to be a mentally healthy place to work. As shown in Figure 7, only a minority

[24] Young, J. (2025) Health and wellbeing at work 2025: Views of employees. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

[25] Among freelancers, the proportion reporting that work had a negative impact on their mental health decreased from 65% in 2024 to 51% in 2026 among those working on mid-budget films (£3m to £30m), and from 62% to 48% among those working on low-to-micro-budget films (less than £3m) and/or shorts. Among those working on higher-budget films (more than £30m), the proportion decreased from 69% to 63%, although this change was not statistically significant.

of respondents (13%) consider the UK film and TV industry to be a mentally healthy place to work. As also shown in Figure 7, this 13% figure continues the pattern of small, incremental improvements seen in this measure from one Looking Glass survey to the next. Whilst there is clearly a long way to go before a majority of the workforce considers the industry to be a mentally healthy place to work, these slow but incremental improvements should not be dismissed. If the one percentage point improvement is reflective of the workforce at large, it would equate to approximately 2,000-2,500 more workers considering the industry to be mentally healthy.[26]

Sentiment about the industry was better among permanent staff (with just over a fifth, 22%, considering the industry to be mentally healthy), compared to freelancers (10%).

Respondents' personal testimonies reflect the mixed picture outlined above. Some recognised that mental health support and workplace policies have improved in recent years. However, they also described a persistent gap between the support that organisations provide and the underlying conditions affecting workers' mental health. These accounts are illustrative of one of the central messages from Looking Glass 2026: although there are signs of progress, there remains a considerable way to go before the industry can be considered a mentally healthy place to work.

> "When I am lucky enough to be working, the mental health support has been a lot better recently than it used to be. However, long periods of unemployment are extremely difficult to deal with mentally and emotionally." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**
>
> "I've worked on series where the mental health policy may have gotten better, but the production is expecting more episodes in fewer days because budgets are tight. Sometimes the new policies feel like lip service when, at the same time, working conditions are getting worse." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**
>
> "Companies have got better and better at providing counselling, 24-hour helplines and mental health first aiders. But this feels like window dressing because it doesn't take account of the underlying stresses of working in an industry that is massively under pressure and underfunded." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

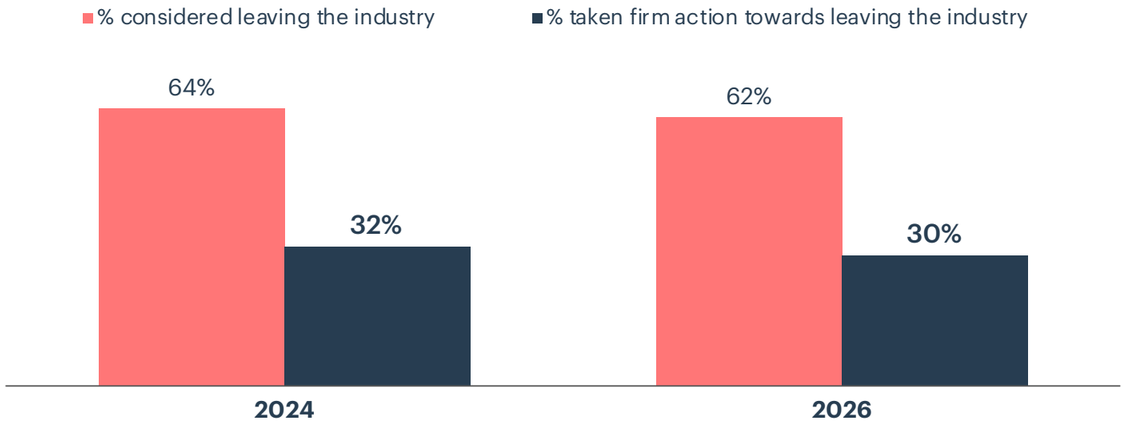
Given that a clear majority of both freelancers and permanent staff still consider the industry to be mentally unhealthy and say that working in it negatively affects their mental health, it is perhaps unsurprising that a large proportion of respondents (62%) considered leaving the industry over the past 12 months due to concerns about their mental health. Just under half of them (30% of all respondents) had taken 'firm action' towards leaving the industry. That is to say that they have either applied or had interviews for jobs outside the industry, discussed leaving the industry with a recruitment agent, or have actually taken a job outside of the industry.

As shown in Figure 8, the proportion taking firm actions towards leaving the industry has decreased by two percentage points between 2024 and 2026. This decrease is exclusively among freelancers (down from 37% in 2024 to 32% in 2026), whereas among permanent staff it increased from 19% to 24%.

[26] This is based on 1% of an off-screen workforce size of approximately 244,500 – 252,000, as estimated by Ampere Analysis in its 2026 report: Sizing Up the Future: Forecasting the Screen Workforce.

Figure 8

Consideration and 'firm action' towards leaving the industry over the past 12 months due to concerns about mental health, across the Looking Glass series



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)



3. THE UNDERLYING CAUSES: CONDITIONS, CULTURE, AND CAPABILITY

The Looking Glass series has established a framework for exploring the root causes of poor mental health across the industry. This framework is built around the three 'C's: **conditions**, **culture**, and **capability**. Collectively, these interconnected themes reflect many of the aspects of job quality identified in wider research as being critical to employee health and wellbeing.[27] Key considerations include job security, working patterns and hours, workload, and autonomy, and the extent of support and positive relationships within the workplace. This chapter considers each of the three 'C's in turn, including, where possible, how they may have changed over time.

3.1. CONDITIONS

In examining working conditions across the film and TV industry and their relationship with mental health, this section explores the shortage of available work and its implications for perceptions of job security among the workforce. It also considers the pressures experienced by those in employment, including long working hours and the impact these can have on achieving a healthy work-life balance.

Chapter Summary

- **Sustained worklessness has plateaued since 2024, but remains much higher than in 2022.** In 2026, 15% of respondents were out of work at the time of the survey and had worked for fewer than three of the previous 12 months, meeting our definition of 'sustained worklessness'. This is unchanged from 2024 but three times the level recorded in 2022.
- **Job security has improved since 2024 but remains low.** Fewer than one in five respondents (18%) felt secure in their job, up from 13% in 2024 but still well below the 28% recorded in 2022.
- **Long-hours working has continued to decline.** Overall, 14% of respondents worked 50 or more hours in the previous week, rising to 29% among those working on higher-budget films and 24% among those working in scripted TV. Fewer people report working very long hours than in 2022 or 2024, and this decline remains evident even when controlling for the higher levels of worklessness since 2022.
- **Work continues to interfere substantially with respondents' personal lives.** Almost three-quarters (72%) found it difficult to relax in their personal time because of their job, largely unchanged from 2024 and far higher than the UK workforce average of 26%. Nearly two-thirds (62%) also said that their work in the industry negatively affected their personal relationships.

[27] Institute for Employment Studies (2024). Exploring the interactions between job quality, industries and health: A report for the Commission for Healthier Working Lives.

[28] Ampere Analysis (2026). Sizing Up the Future: Forecasting the Screen Workforce. An Ampere Analysis report for ScreenSkills and 4Skills.

Worklessness and job insecurity

Since hitting a peak in 2022, the UK film and TV industry has experienced a prolonged production downturn. A report by *Ampere Analysis* suggests that UK content output for both film and TV has declined by 13% over 2022-2025.[28] This includes a 24% decline in first run and renewal TV commissions during that period. However, the authors note that most production departments saw stabilising activity across 2024-25. This suggests that the sharp declines in activity seen between 2022 and 2024 have levelled off and that industry activity is potentially settling at a new, lower baseline – perhaps a 'new normal'.

At the individual level, however, any apparent stabilisation in production activity will not necessarily translate into improved employment prospects and will vary for different parts of the industry. For example, the *Ampere Analysis* report notes that while the workforce in technical roles appears to have grown in 2025, the development and editorial workforces have contracted in 2025, likely driven by a drop in commissions for Unscripted TV. The upshot is that for many workers, securing regular work remains challenging, with some experiencing prolonged periods of inactivity. Our latest Looking Glass data provides evidence of this.

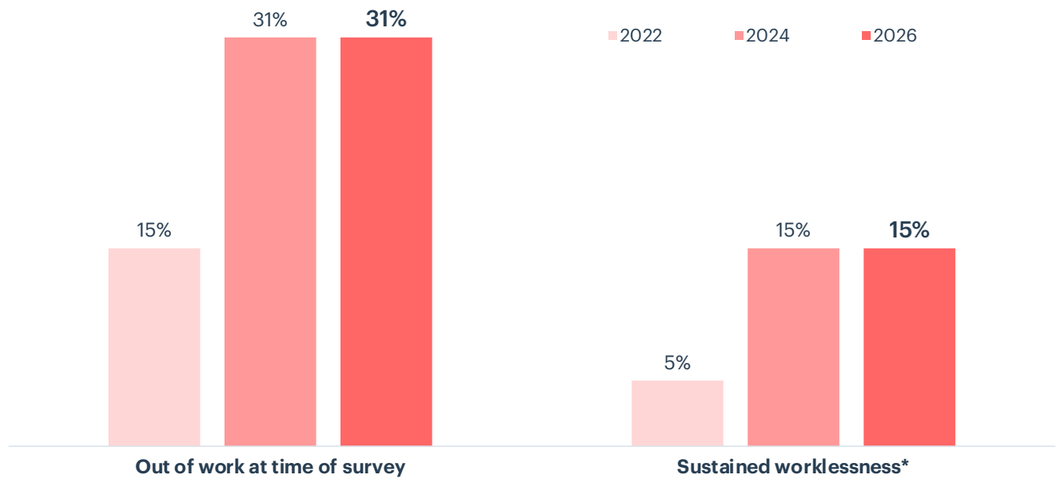
As shown in Figure 9, the proportion of respondents who were out of work at the time of the survey was unchanged at 31% between Looking Glass 2024 and 2026. In both years, it was substantially higher than the 15% recorded in 2022.

However, the concept of being "out of work" is somewhat elastic in the context of the film and TV industry. This is particularly true among freelancers who would consider it normal to experience gaps in employment between one production ending and another beginning. Reporting only the proportion of respondents out of work at one point in time likely overstates the true extent of work scarcity.[29] It is for this reason that in our recent research publications we have reported on *'sustained worklessness'* – that is, those who were out of work at the time of the survey and have worked fewer than three months out of the past twelve.

Figure 9 also shows that levels of sustained worklessness have stabilised at 15% between the 2024 and 2026 surveys, having been much lower at 5% in 2022.[30] Among respondents experiencing sustained worklessness in 2026, the median number of days since their last industry job was 245 (around eight months).[31]

Figure 9

Proportion of respondents out of work at the time of the survey and experiencing 'sustained worklessness'



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909)
*Sustained worklessness defined as being out of work at the time of the survey and worked fewer than 3 months out of the past 12.

[29] For instance, of the 31% who were out of work at the time of the survey, a fifth of them had been out of work for less than one month.

[30] In our *Money Matters 2* report (January 2026), we reported a sustained loneliness figure of 22%. As noted in that report, the Money Matters survey may have attracted more respondents struggling with work and finances relative to Looking Glass, given its publicised focus on financial wellbeing – which could account for the difference.

[31] The interquartile range was 74 to 486 days.

[32] The level of sustained worklessness was 27% among those working on low-to-micro budget films (<£3m) and/or shorts, compared to 21% among those working on mid-budget films (£3m to £30m) and 17% among those working on higher budget films (>£30m).

Experiencing sustained worklessness was more common among:

- **Freelancers** (19%) compared to permanent staff (4%)
- Respondents working in **film** (21%) – particularly those working on low-to-micro budget films[32] – and **TV** (15%).[33] These compare with the levels of sustained worklessness among those working in post-production (10%), animation and VFX (10%), sales, distribution, marketing and PR (7%), and cinema, exhibition, and film festivals (3%).
- Those who are **relatively new to the industry** (up to five years' experience) **and those with 20 or more years' experience** – 17% and 18% respectively – compared to those in their mid-career phase of 5-10 years' experience (10%) and 10-20 years (12%).

The figures above do not fully capture the real-world impact that a lack of work can have on individuals. We know from our latest Money Matters research that the vast majority of those experiencing sustained worklessness report difficulty in managing financially.[34] In qualitative responses to Looking Glass 2026, respondents described not only financial difficulties, but also about experiencing a form of career grief, alongside a loss of identity, purpose, and belonging. The quotes below illustrate the profound personal impact that prolonged periods without work can have.

"There is a deep sense of loss from having to face up to the fact that I might never work in TV again – a career I've dedicated 15+ years of my life too and expected to flourish in until retirement. It's deeply impactful on my mental health." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"I'm having to face leaving an industry I've known and loved since I left school purely because there isn't enough work being commissioned and the work that is coming through often goes to inexperienced people 'stepping up' because they're cheaper." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"The lack of work affects my mental wellbeing. Having worked for decades as a cameraman on dramas, documentaries and commercials I now feel that with the lack of work that my identity has been lost, who am I?" **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"The variable state of the industry in the last few years is not only a huge financial worry, but work is a big part of our identity, sense of purpose and social connection. Particularly as I get older and savings remain elusive, long periods out of work are starting to really get me down." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"I personally feel spat out and forgotten by an industry I regarded as family and to which I gave 30 years of long working days to." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

Alongside objective measures assessing the availability of work in the sector, the Looking Glass survey included a subjective measure of whether respondents feel a sense of security in their job. Given the production downturn of recent years, it is perhaps unsurprising that only a minority (18%) of respondents felt that their job was secure. That does, however, represent an increase from 13% in 2024, but is still much lower than was reported in 2022 (28%).

The increase in feelings of job security between 2024 and 2026 is driven by freelancers, among whom the proportion feeling secure in their job increased from 6% in 2024 to 12% in 2026. Among permanent staff, feelings of job security were relatively stable across the period (35% in 2024 and 37% in 2026).

Although the vast majority of respondents continue to feel insecure in their jobs, the increase in feelings of job security may be indicative of the industry's recent stabilisation, suggesting that the apparent levelling off in the production downturn is beginning to translate into improved perceptions of job security among at least some parts of the workforce. It is also possible that the lack of improvement in feelings of job security among permanent staff may be reflective of various announcements of restructures, mergers, redundancies, and closures among some broadcasters and studios. There is also uncertainty over the impact of AI on the workforce, though these AI-related uncertainties are of course not limited to the film and TV industry.

The measures discussed in this section, including worklessness and perceived job insecurity, are strongly associated with wellbeing. For instance, among those experiencing sustained worklessness, 44% rated their mental health as poor compared to 28% among those more consistently in work. Similarly, among those feeling insecure in their job, 36% rated their mental health as poor compared to 14% among those feeling relatively secure in their job.

Work intensity

Long working hours have long been recognised as a feature of working in film and TV, where demanding schedules and tight deadlines are common. The Looking Glass series has tracked the prevalence of long-hours working since the first survey in 2019.

Based on hours worked in the past week, Looking Glass 2026 shows that 14% of respondents worked 50+ hours in their job. Working 50+ hours was more common among:

- **Freelancers** (15%) compared to permanent staff (11%).
- Respondents working in **film** (18%) – particularly those working on higher budget productions (29%)[35] – and **TV** (15%), particularly scripted TV (24%).[36] This compares with 11% of respondents in post-production working 50+ hours in the past week, 4% among those working in animation and VFX, 5% among those working in cinema, exhibition, and film festivals, and <1% among those working in sales, distribution, marketing, and PR.

Working long hours is more common in the film and TV industry than among the wider workforce.[37]

Nevertheless, the proportion working 50+ hours in Looking Glass 2026 represents a reduction compared to 2024 (from 18% to 14%), and is much lower compared to the 33% reported in 2022. It is of course possible that the production downturn and increased levels of worklessness partially explain the reduction in people working long hours since 2022 – but only partially. Even when controlling for the increased levels of respondents who were out of work at the time of the surveys, we still see a reduction in the proportion working 50 or more hours, from 2022 to 2024 and again from 2024 to 2026.[38]

Work-life balance

The demands of working in film and TV, including the higher prevalence of working long hours compared to national averages discussed above, can contribute to feelings of excessive work-life interference (i.e. lack of balance). Indeed, alongside long hours, *Action for Freelancers* recently highlighted out-of-hours contact as a source of stress and burnout in the industry and published a set of Digital Contact Guidelines to help establish better work-life boundaries.[39]

The Looking Glass survey included two measures assessing the extent to which work interferes with respondents' personal lives. Findings from these include:

- 72% of respondents find it difficult to relax in their personal time because of their job. This is largely unchanged from Looking Glass 2024, but still much higher than the UK workforce average of 26%.[40]
- 62% of respondents report that their work negatively affects their personal relationships. This is practically unchanged from Looking Glass 2024 (63%).

On both measures, perceptions of work-life interference were, perhaps unsurprisingly, worse among respondents working 50+ hours per week. Specifically:

- 77% of respondents working 50+ hours say that work negatively affects their personal relationships. This compares to 55% among respondents working less than 50 hours.
- 81% of respondents working 50+ hours find it difficult to relax in their personal time because of their job. This compares to 67% among respondents working less than 50 hours.

[33] Levels of sustained worklessness were similar across scripted and unscripted TV (15% and 16% respectively).

[34] Film and TV Charity (2026). Money Matters 2: Financial wellbeing of the UK's film, TV, and cinema industry workforce.

[35] 29% of respondents working on higher budget films (>£30m) worked 50+ hours in the past week, compared to 16% among those working on mid-budget films (£3m to £30m), and 6% among those working on low-to-micro budget films (<£3m) and/or shorts.

[36] 24% of respondents working in scripted TV - including 25% of respondents working on high-end productions (budgets of ≥£1m per hour) and 22% of respondents working on productions with lower budgets – worked 50+ hours in the past week, compared to 9% among respondents working in unscripted TV.

[37] Data from the ONS Labour Force Survey shows that 14% of UK workers usually worked over 45 hours in the period Mar-May 2026. Using this lower threshold of 45+ hours as an indicator of 'long hours', the comparative figure among film and TV workers in Looking Glass 2026 is 23%.

[38] Among those who worked at least some hours in the week prior to the survey, the proportion working 50 or more hours was 20% in 2026, down from 27% in 2024 and 39% in 2022.

[39] Action for Freelancers Contact: A Guide to Work-Life Boundaries

[40] CIPD (2022). CIPD Good Work Index 2022: UK Working Lives Survey.

3.2. CULTURE

Workplace culture encompasses the shared values, norms and behaviours that shape how work is experienced within an organisation or industry. It influences how people treat one another, whose voices are heard, whether individuals feel valued and included, and how effectively concerns are addressed when problems arise.[41]

The findings in this chapter provide insight into several important dimensions of workplace culture in the film and TV industry. Specifically, this chapter explores experiences of bullying, harassment, and discrimination; workers' confidence in reporting inappropriate behaviour; attitudes towards mental health; and perceptions of feeling valued and recognised at work.

Chapter Summary

- **Bullying, harassment, and discrimination remain widespread, despite a further reduction since 2024.** More than a third of respondents (37%) experienced at least one of these behaviours in the previous 12 months, which is around two and a half times the UK workforce average. This was down four percentage points from 2024 – driven by reduced prevalence of bullying and harassment – continuing the downward trend across the Looking Glass series.
- **Being undermined or humiliated was the most common form of bullying or harassment. This was reported by 76% of those affected.** Unreasonable pressure, shouting or heated arguments, and isolation or exclusion from social activities were also more common than among the wider UK workforce.
- **Half of those experiencing bullying, harassment, or discrimination did not report it.** At 51%, the proportion not reporting their experiences remained virtually unchanged compared to 2024. The main barriers were fears of losing future work or making the situation worse, and scepticism that the issue would be addressed.
- **Awareness of reporting policies and processes for adverse behaviour increased, but confidence in them remains limited.** More respondents knew where to obtain support (51%, up from 45%) and reported having access to a clear policy and reporting process (44%, up from 35%). However, only around a third believed reports would be acted on regardless of the perpetrator.
- **A third of respondents continued to feel undervalued at work.** The proportion fell from 38% in 2024 to 34% in 2026, but remained the second highest recorded across the series. Feeling undervalued improved among freelancers, deteriorated slightly among permanent staff, and was worse among those in mid-career.
- **Positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues are not yet widespread.** Only 28% believed people across the industry held positive attitudes towards those experiencing mental health issues, virtually unchanged from 2024. Perceptions of day-to-day colleagues were more positive, at 49%, but also unchanged.

[41] CIPD (2022) Organisational culture and climate: an evidence review. Practice summary and recommendations.

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

Experiencing adverse behaviour at work in the form of bullying, harassment, or discrimination is known to be damaging to wellbeing and is considered one of the workplace factors most strongly associated with poor mental health outcomes.[42]

It is therefore extremely worrying that in Looking Glass 2026, 37% of all respondents experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination over the past 12 months. This is around two and a half times higher than the national average of between 14%[43] and 16%.[44]

Although rates of bullying, harassment, and discrimination remain abnormally high, Figure 10 shows that the level recorded in Looking Glass 2026 was four percentage points lower than in 2024, continuing the downward trend seen across the Looking Glass series.

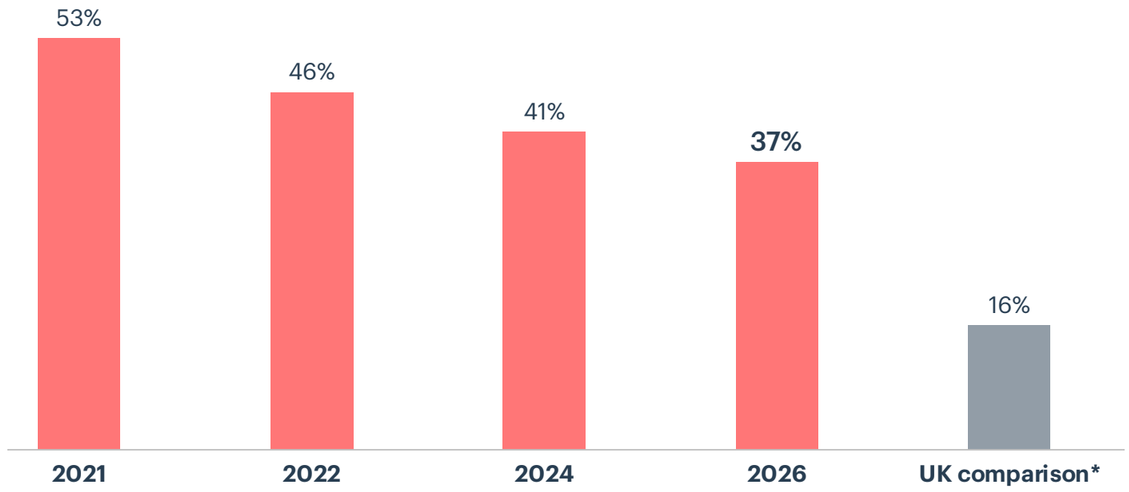
The 37% figure in Looking Glass 2026 comprises 28% who experienced bullying or harassment over the past 12 months, and 18% who experienced discrimination. To help understand the change since 2024:

- It is specifically experiences of bullying and harassment that have reduced (from 32% to 28%), whereas the proportion who experienced discrimination is largely unchanged compared to 2024 (18% and 19% respectively).
- Like many of the other time-series changes covered in this report, the improvement in experiences of bullying, harassment, and discrimination is most evident among freelancers (declining from 43% in 2024 to 38% in 2026), whereas among permanent staff it is largely unchanged (33% in 2024 compared to 34% in 2026).
- Among freelancers, the decrease was most pronounced in unscripted TV (from 42% in 2024 to 33% in 2026) and scripted TV (from 49% to 43%), particularly lower-budget scripted TV.[45] See Table C6 in Appendix C for a full breakdown by industry sub-sector.

Bullying and harassment can take many different forms. To provide greater insight into the nature of bullying and harassment experienced within the film and TV industry, Looking Glass 2026 introduced a new question for respondents who reported experiencing such behaviours in the past 12 months.

Figure 10

Proportion of respondents who experienced workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination in the past 12 months, across the Looking Glass series



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909; 2021: 2,097)
*Source for UK comparison: European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS), 2021

[42] Institute for Employment Studies (2024). Exploring the interactions between job quality, industries and health.

[43] Green, F. et al. (2025) How Common is Workplace Abuse? Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2024.

[44] Institute for Employment Studies (2024). Exploring the interactions between job quality, industries and health.

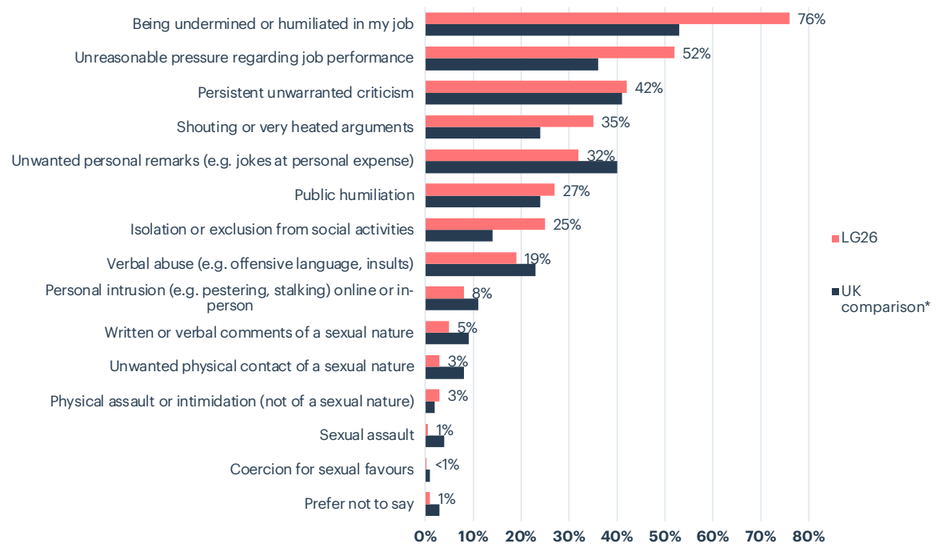
[45] Among freelancers working in lower-budget scripted TV (<£1m per hour), the proportion experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination decreased from 51% in 2024 to 38% in 2026. The decrease among those working in high-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour), from 48% to 44%, was not statistically significant.

These respondents were asked to indicate the forms that the bullying or harassment had taken, selecting from a predefined list of behaviours.

As shown in Figure 11, the most common behaviour associated with bullying or harassment among film and TV workers was being undermined or humiliated in their job. Just over three quarters (76%) of those who had experienced bullying or harassment in the last 12 months said that their experience encompassed this type of behaviour, which is a higher proportion than has been reported among the wider UK workforce.[46] The qualitative comments below help to illustrate the types of experiences that respondents were referring to when they reported being undermined or humiliated in their job.

Figure 11

What form did the bullying or harassment take?



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents who experienced bullying and/or harassment in the past 12 months (955)
*Source for UK comparison: CIPD (2020) Managing conflict in the modern workplace

"The people behind it probably never thought of it as bullying, but the 'cliquey' mentality and constant questioning of my capabilities, as well as rising tempers made for a very unpleasant work environment. The exec apologised at the end of the production." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"I was persistently made to feel stupid, clueless and useless by my Line Manager at a job I've been doing well with no complaints for nearly 10 years. Feedback on work was never delivered in a timely or constructive manner, only delivered in the most damning and public way possible to heap humiliation on the person receiving the feedback." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"Constant criticism, humiliation and being undermined and joked about. It is psychological and with a smile – there is very little I can do." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

[46] CIPD (2020). Managing conflict in the modern workplace.

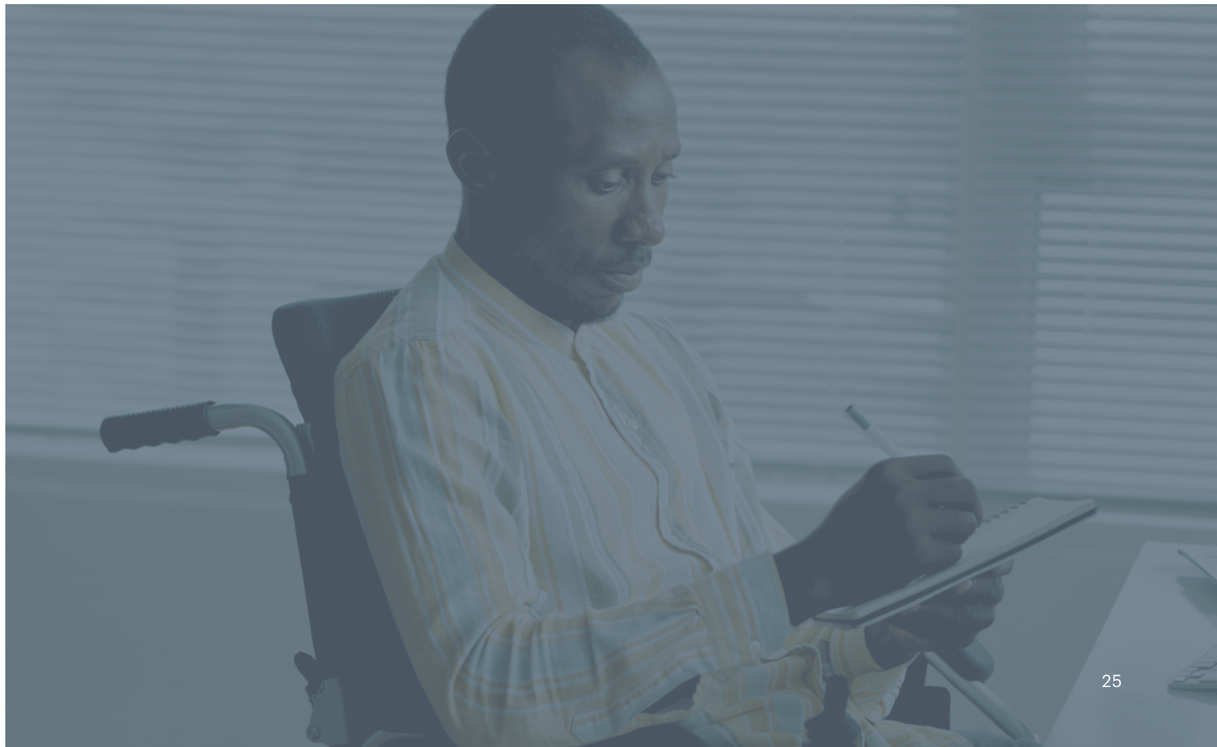
"Over a period of around three years, there were repeated incidents of being spoken to aggressively, criticised in front of colleagues, having my confidence undermined, and feeling unable to safely voice concerns due to fear of repercussions within the industry. The cumulative effect was significant anxiety, hyper vigilance, loss of confidence, emotional exhaustion, and a lasting impact on my mental wellbeing, despite continuing to perform my role professionally throughout." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

It should be noted that respondents could select more than one type of behaviour. Indeed, among the 76% who reported being undermined or humiliated in their job, around half also reported experiencing either unreasonable pressure regarding their job performance or persistent unwarranted criticism, and around a third also reported experiencing public humiliation, unwanted personal remarks, or isolation, or exclusion from social activities.

Figure 11 also shows that three other forms of bullying or harassing behaviour were reported more frequently by film and TV workers than by the wider UK workforce. These were unreasonable pressure regarding job performance (52%, compared with 36% across the UK workforce), shouting or very heated arguments (35% compared with 24%), and being isolated or excluded from social activities (25% compared with 14%).

The forms of bullying and harassment reported also varied between demographic groups. For instance:

- Women were more likely than men to report being undermined or humiliated in their job (80% compared with 66%) and unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature (4% compared with 1%).
- Respondents aged 16-29 more commonly experienced unwanted personal remarks (46%, compared to an average of 29% among older age groups).
- Black and Global Majority respondents were more likely than white respondents to report personal intrusion through pestering, spying, or stalking (12% compared with 6%) and physical assault or intimidation (5% compared with 2%).
- Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition more commonly experienced unwanted personal remarks (37%, compared to 29% among those without a disability or health condition), public humiliation (33% compared to 25%), and isolation or exclusion from social activities (33% compared to 22%).



Reporting inappropriate behaviour

Over half (51%) of respondents who experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months did not report it to anyone at work or to an official authority (such as a union representative). This is virtually unchanged from 2024 when 53% did not report the adverse behaviours they experienced.

Of those who did report their experiences, only 17% said the situation or environment at work had improved as a result. Most (58%) said the situation or environment did not change, or it was too early to say. Worryingly, a quarter (25%) said the situation or environment at work got worse.

Analysis of qualitative responses among those who said the situation or environment got worse identified three main, often overlapping, explanations for why respondents felt that the situation had worsened after reporting. These are:

- That reporting led to detrimental career or employment consequences. This included job loss, non-renewal of contracts, being pushed out, and fears of blacklisting.
- Perceived organisational or HR failure, including accounts of processes being ineffective, performative, overly biased towards protecting the organisation, or of organisations failing to act at all.
- The perpetrator was protected due to their seniority and/or being influential, commercially valuable, and well connected.

The following quotes are illustrative of these three themes:

"When I sent the first letter in confidence to HR, they reported it back to the line producer and production manager who I had the problems with! They then confronted me and when I told them the truth and how I felt about it they shouted that I was lying. Since then the bullying got worse until eventually they fired me because my performance was apparently no good." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"I was ignored, physically avoided in corridors, given unfair tasks to do with unrealistic timeframes. I was let go earlier than planned and told it was because the work was no longer there, but they hired another person a week after I was let go, to do the work that was apparently no longer there" **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

"I was told that I should try and not be so sensitive and that I should try harder to not take it personally as the perpetrators were 'characters' and that's just who they were. After I raised this issue, I terminated my contract [despite having] nothing lined up and being the sole earner in my household. That is a clear indication of how bad it got." **Looking Glass 2026 respondent**

The three themes broadly overlap with the main reasons for why respondents opted against reporting their experiences at all. As shown in Figure 12, the main reasons for not reporting experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination were: a fear that doing so would stop them getting work in future (61%); scepticism about whether the issue would be addressed (49%); and a concern that reporting would make the situation worse (45%).

These were also the main reasons for not reporting bullying, harassment, or discrimination in Looking Glass 2024 and 2022. However, there is further evidence of the gradual improvements first reported in 2024, with several indicators suggesting improvements in both reporting processes and the culture surrounding the reporting of adverse behaviours. For instance:

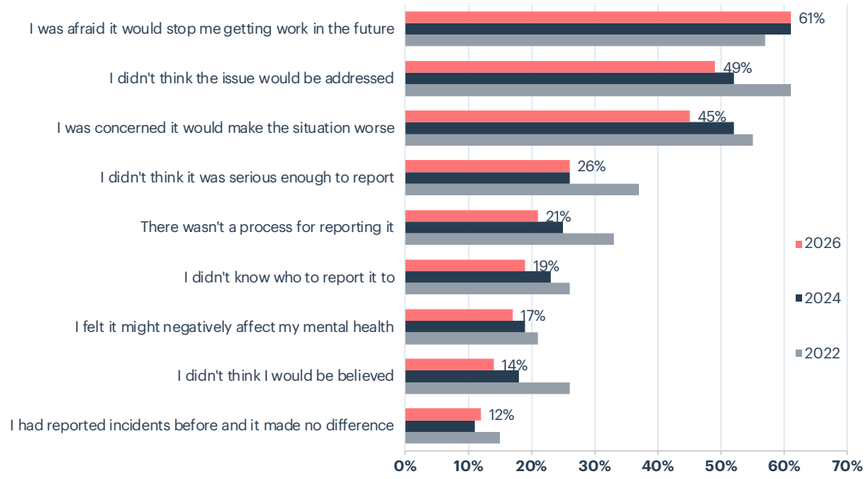
- Not reporting due to fears that doing so would make the situation worse has reduced from 55% in 2022, to 52% in 2024, and now 45% in 2026.
- Not reporting due to the lack of a bullying, harassment and discrimination reporting process has fallen from 25% in 2024 to 21% in 2026, having previously stood at 33% in 2022.
- Similarly, not reporting due to not knowing who to report such behaviours to has reduced steadily from 26% in 2022, to 23% in 2024, and now 19% in 2026.
- Not reporting due to an assumption that they would not be believed has reduced from 26% in 2022, to 18% in 2024, and now 14% in 2026.

While challenges remain, the positive changes in reporting behaviours described above are mirrored by improved perceptions of workplace policies, reporting processes, and support related to bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

As shown in Figure 13, the proportion of respondents indicating that they know where to get support if they experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination has increased from 45% in 2024 to 51% in 2026.

Figure 12

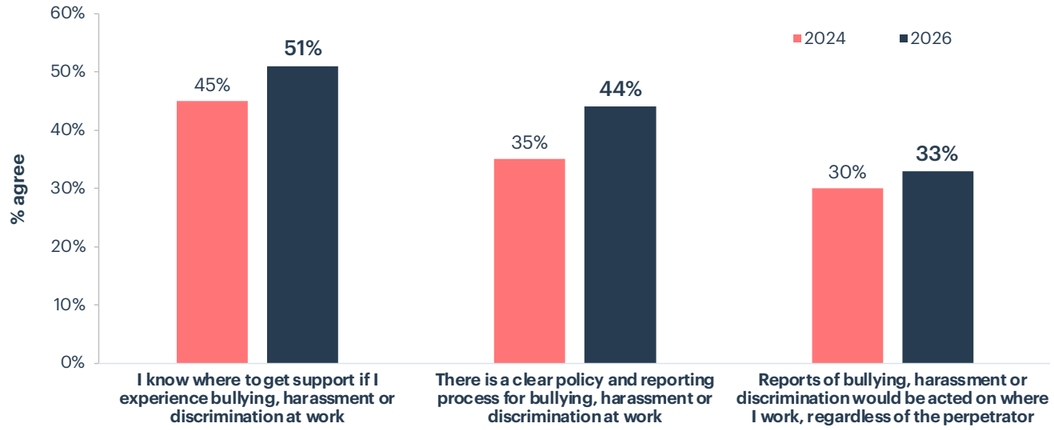
Reasons for not reporting the bullying/harassment/discrimination experienced in Looking Glass 2026 compared to 2024 and 2022



Base: all who did not report experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination (2026: 639; 2024: 937; 2022: 698)

Figure 13

Proportion of respondents in Looking Glass 2026 and 2024 agreeing with the statements related to bullying, harassment and discrimination policies and culture



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)

There has been an even greater increase in the proportion of respondents who say that there is a clear policy and reporting process for bullying, harassment, and discrimination – from 35% in 2024 to 44% in 2026. However, the proportion of respondents who agree that reports of bullying, harassment, and discrimination would be acted on regardless of the perpetrator, has remained relatively static between 2024 and 2026 with around only a third of respondents agreeing.

Feeling valued at work

Feeling undervalued at work can create barriers to forming trusting and meaningful professional relationships. In the previous Looking Glass in 2024, the proportion of respondents feeling undervalued was the worst it had been in the research series. This was possibly reflecting the conditions of the industry at that time: in the heat of a production downturn and in the aftermath of US actors and writers strikes, resulting in less work, more competition among the workforce, and people feeling disposable.

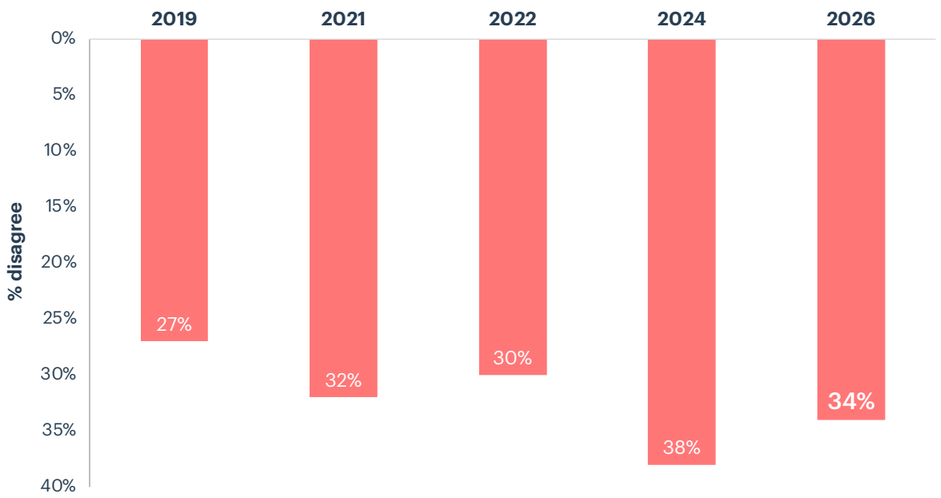
Two years on, with levels of work seemingly having 'stabilised' – neither deteriorating further nor returning to previous levels – we have seen a slight improvement in the proportion of workers saying they feel undervalued. As shown in Figure 14, 34% of all Looking Glass 2026 respondents disagreed with the statement "I feel valued at work". This is the second highest level of disagreement in the Looking Glass series.

Feeling undervalued has improved among freelancers (down from 40% in 2024 to 34% in 2026), and deteriorated slightly among permanent staff (up from 31% in 2024 to 35% in 2026).

Interestingly, feeling undervalued was most common among respondents in their mid-career (37% among those with 5-10 years' experience and 39% among those with 10-20 years' experience), compared to those in early-career (28% among those with less than 5 years' experience) and late-career (32% among those with 20+ years' experience).

Figure 14

Levels of disagreement with the statement "I feel valued at work" across the Looking Glass series



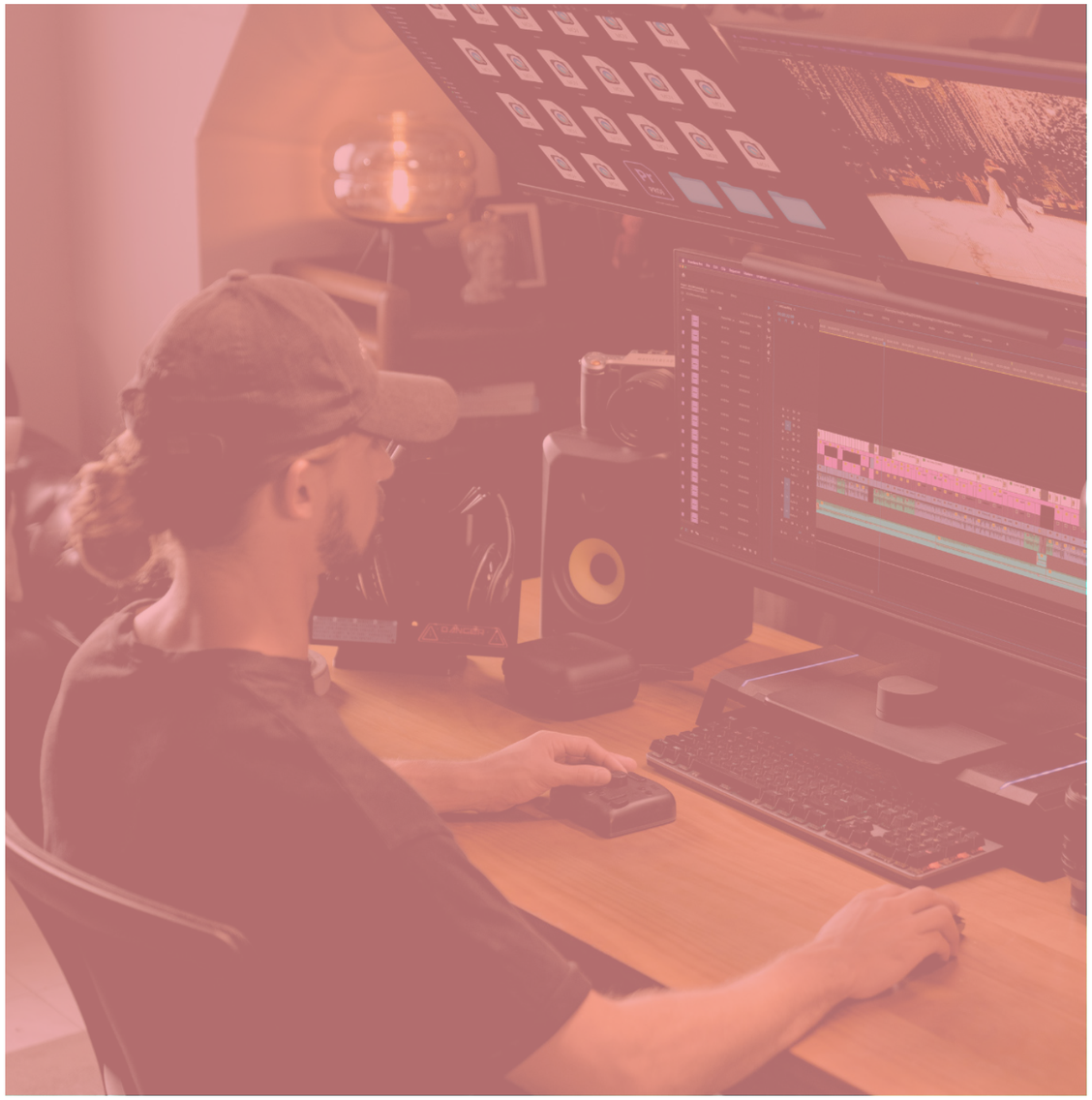
Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376; 2022: 1,909; 2021: 2,097; 2019: 4,877)

Attitudes towards mental health

In response to the statement *"people working in this industry have a positive attitude towards people experiencing mental health issues"* 28% of Looking Glass 2026 respondents agreed. This is virtually unchanged from 2024 (29%) and is the second highest level of agreement across the Looking Glass series. Levels of agreement were higher among permanent staff compared to freelancers (39% and 24% respectively).

Perceptions were more positive when respondents were asked about the attitudes of colleagues they work with day to day, rather than people working across the industry more generally. Almost half (49%) agreed that *"colleagues I work with day-to-day in the industry have positive attitudes about people experiencing mental health issues."* This is also unchanged from 2024, and is also higher among permanent staff than freelancers (59% compared with 45%).

Taken together, these findings suggest that positive attitudes towards people experiencing mental health issues are not yet widespread across the industry, and that stigma around mental health remains. The next chapter touches on the topic of stigma, including whether workers disclose mental health issues at work.



3.3. CAPABILITY

Managers are often central to determining how individuals experience their working environment and the support available to them. Accordingly, this section considers the capability of managers in the film and TV industry to support colleagues experiencing mental health challenges. It further examines workers' experiences of seeking help, and the degree to which they experience working practices and policies designed to foster positive mental health and wellbeing.

Chapter Summary

- **Support for managers with responsibility for others' wellbeing remains mixed.** Among managers, 32% rated the support available from their employer or workplace to support the wellbeing of others as good, while 30% rated it as poor. Ratings have improved slightly since 2024, although freelancers remained more likely than permanent staff to rate the support as poor.
- **Managers felt better equipped to respond to colleagues seeking mental health support.** Almost half (48%) felt largely or fully equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, up from 41% in 2024. The proportion feeling not at all or only slightly equipped fell from 25% to 19%, with the improvement most evident among freelancers.
- **Only just over half of respondents who experienced a mental health issue disclosed it at work.** In 2026, 55% told someone at work, broadly unchanged from 2024. Disclosure remained substantially higher among permanent staff than freelancers, at 69% and 51% respectively.
- **Disclosure did not improve the situation for most respondents**. Only 24% of those who disclosed a mental health issue said that their situation improved, while 11% said that it worsened.
- **Awareness of workplace mental health support has increased, but remains limited.** Compared with 2024, more respondents recalled being offered or made aware of support including named contacts for mental health, wellbeing plans, mental health first aiders, and access to counselling. These improvements were concentrated among freelancers, although awareness remained higher among permanent staff.

Management capability to support colleagues with their mental health

Progression within many parts of the film and TV industry is often driven by demonstrated expertise in a particular craft, discipline, or production role. As a result, individuals can find themselves taking on responsibility for leading and managing others without having received formal management training or having had sufficient opportunity to develop the skills and experience required to manage others effectively.[47] In an industry where working conditions can be demanding and workplace cultures may present additional challenges, the quality of day-to-day management becomes especially important.

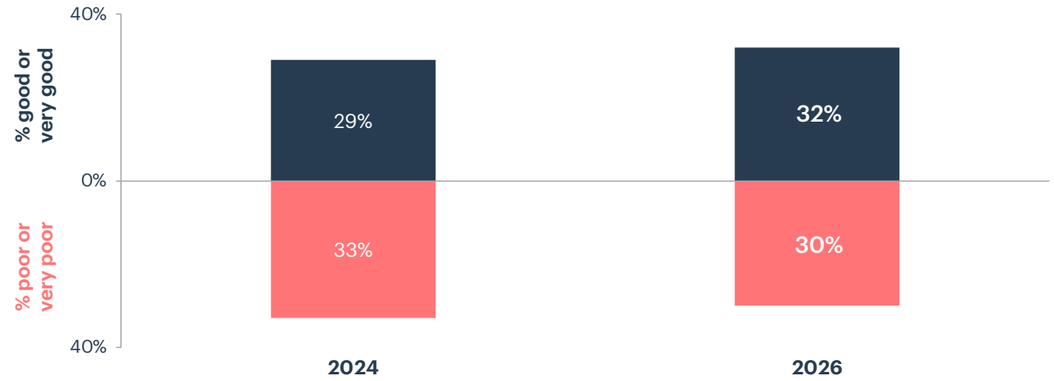
Among Looking Glass 2026 respondents, just over two fifths (44%) were in a managerial role that involved responsibility for the wellbeing of others.[48] When asked to rate the help made available to them by their employer or workplace to support the wellbeing of others, around a third (32%) rated it good, and a similar proportion (30%) rated it poor. As shown in Figure 15, these ratings are similar to those recorded in 2024, although there was a slight positive shift: fewer respondents rated the support as poor and more rated it as good.

As was the case in 2024, freelancers in managerial positions were more likely to rate such support as poor (33%) compared to those employed in managerial positions on a permanent basis (23%).

Among respondents in managerial positions, 41% had a colleague request support with their mental health over the past 12 months. When asked to reflect on their preparedness to deal with such situations, almost half (48%) felt that they were largely or fully equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to adequately deal with the issues raised by their colleague, whereas 19% felt they were not at all or only slightly equipped. As shown in Figure 16, this represents an improvement compared to 2024, when 41% felt fully or largely equipped to handle such situations and 25% felt they were not at all or only slightly equipped. Like many of the other changes over time discussed in this report, the improvement was most evident among freelancers.[49]

Figure 15

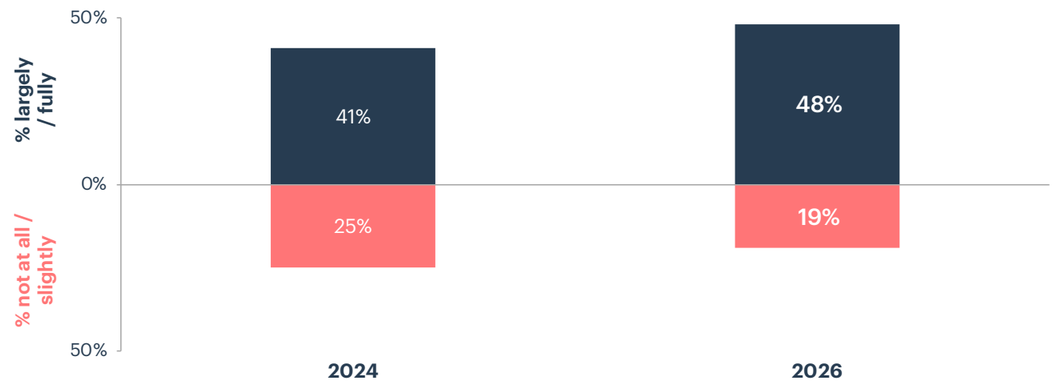
How would you rate the support made available to you by your employer/workplace to support the wellbeing of others you are responsible for?



Base: all 'managers' in roles with responsibility for the wellbeing of others (2026: 1,482; 2024: 1,812)

Figure 16

Thinking about the most recent case of someone seeking support with their mental health, to what extent do you feel you had the knowledge and skills needed to adequately address the issues raised?



Base: all 'managers' who had a colleague request support with their mental health in the last 12 months (2026: 609; 2024: 769)

[47] van Raalte, C. & Wallis, R. (2024) The good manager in TV: tales for the Twenty-first century.

[48] Most commonly, this was as a line manager, or as someone with significant responsibility for the company / production / project, or as a team leader or head of department.

[49] In Looking Glass 2026, 21% of freelancers in managerial positions felt they were not at all or only slightly equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle their colleague's request for support with mental health in the last 12 months. This compares to 29% in 2024. On the flip side, 44% felt they were largely or fully equipped, up from 33% in 2024.

Challenges in responding to mental health disclosures

Just over half (55%) of respondents who experienced an issue with their mental health in the past 12 months told someone at work about it. Disclosure was higher among permanent staff (69%) compared to freelancers (51%). These levels of disclosure are in line with Looking Glass 2024, and similar to what has been reported elsewhere for the wider UK workforce.[50]

However, disclosure did not lead to an improved situation for most respondents. Only 24% of those who disclosed a mental health issue to someone at work said that their situation improved as a result. Two thirds (65%) said that their situation either did not change or that it was too early to say, whilst, worryingly, 11% said that their situation worsened following disclosure.

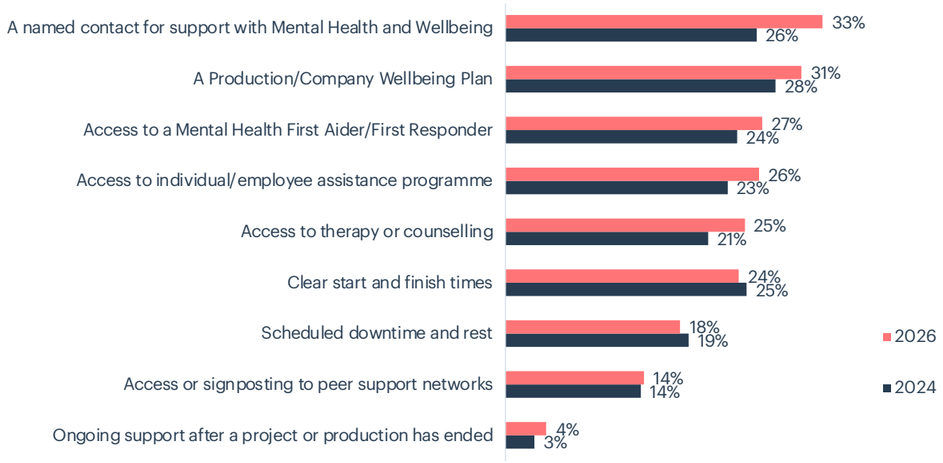
Limited exposure to good working practices

Alongside effective management, creating a mentally healthy workplace requires appropriate policies, resources, and support to be in place. The survey therefore examined workers' exposure to a range of practices and initiatives intended to support mental health and wellbeing.

Figure 17 shows the proportions of respondents in Looking Glass 2026 who were provided with, or made aware of, various types of support or initiatives that may be considered good practice in supporting workers' mental wellbeing. The first thing to note is that it is only a minority of respondents who recall being provided with or made aware of each type of support. However, there have been notable changes since 2024, with a greater proportion of respondents in 2026 being provided with or made aware of the following:

- A named contact for support with mental health and wellbeing (33% were made aware of this, up from 26% in 2024)
- A production or company wellbeing plan (31%, up from 28% in 2024)
- Access to a mental health first aider or first responder (27%, up from 24% in 2024)
- Access to an individual or employee assistance programme (26%, up from 23% in 2024)
- Access to therapy or counselling (25%, up from 21% in 2024)

Figure 17
Thinking about your current or most recent work in the industry, were you provided with, or made aware of, any of the following?



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)

[50] The Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health (2024). Mental Health in the workplace: the UK picture.

All of the increases described above were driven by improvements in freelancers' awareness of support and initiatives since 2024. However, overall levels of awareness remain higher among permanent staff than among freelancers.

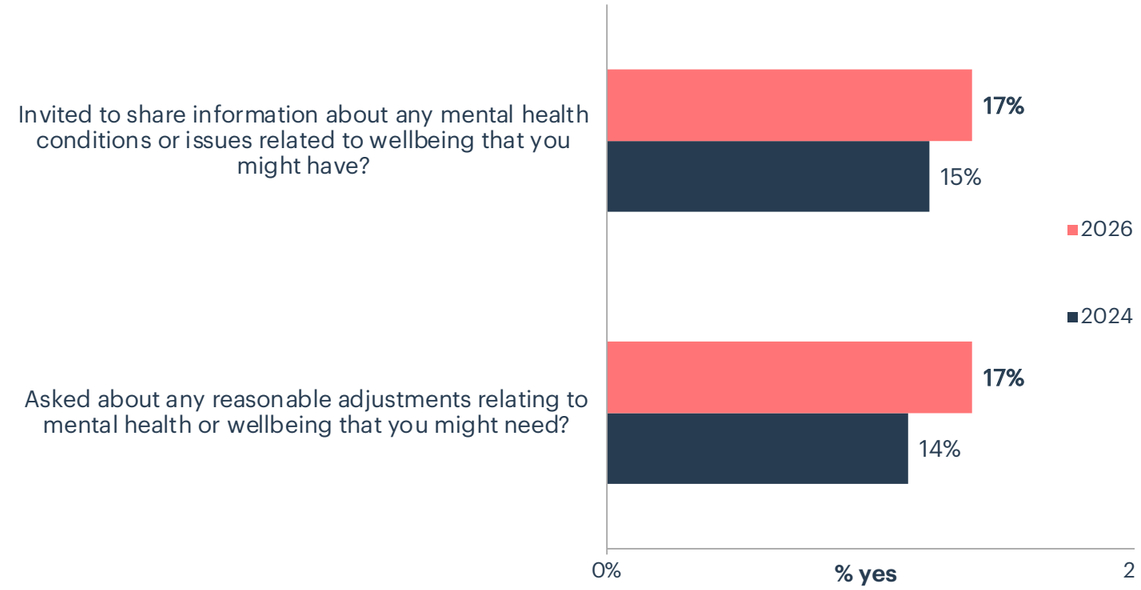
Another indicator of good practice explored in the survey was whether respondents had been invited, in their current or most recent job, to disclose any mental health conditions or wellbeing-related issues they might have, and whether they had been asked about any reasonable adjustments that could support their mental health and wellbeing. This matters because encouraging positive self-disclosure in this way may help to reduce stigma around mental health and signal that employers take workers' wellbeing seriously. As shown in Figure 18, there were small but statistically significant increases between Looking Glass 2024 and 2026 in both the proportion of respondents who had been invited to share information about their mental health or wellbeing (from 15% to 17%) and the proportion who had been asked about any reasonable adjustments they might need (from 14% to 17%).

Many of the practices and procedures discussed above are encompassed in the Film and TV Charity's Whole Picture Toolkit. Respondents who said they had definitely worked on a production using the *Toolkit* in the past 12 months reported more positive outcomes across several key indicators than respondents overall. Specifically, among this group:

- A higher proportion considered the industry to be a mentally healthy place to work (22% compared with 13% among all respondents);
- Fewer rated their mental health as poor (21% compared with 31% of all respondents); and
- Fewer had taken action towards leaving the industry over the past 12 months due to concerns about their mental wellbeing (21% compared with 30% of all respondents).

These responses are consistent with the *Toolkit* having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, and mirror the positive association reported in Looking Glass 2024. It should be noted, however, that there is a limit to how far a survey such as this can fully account for other relevant factors influencing mental health and wellbeing. So while the association is suggestive, we cannot draw firm conclusions about causality.

Figure 18
Thinking about your current or most recent work in the industry, were you...



Base: all Looking Glass survey respondents (2026: 3,394; 2024: 4,376)

4. WORKERS AT GREATER RISK

The preceding chapters have reported on measures of wellbeing and workplace factors among respondents as a whole, occasionally highlighting subgroup differences – particularly those that exist between freelancers and permanent staff, as well as between various industry sub-sectors. In this chapter, we focus more closely on how experiences vary across different demographic groups.

While the average industry worker is already at heightened risk of poor mental health compared with the wider UK population, the purpose of this chapter is to identify groups for whom outcomes appear to be especially poor. These include groups with higher levels of self-reported poor mental health, loneliness, or exposure to workplace factors strongly associated with poor mental health, such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination. These groups are identified and discussed below, with the Table D1 in Appendix D providing a full breakdown of key measures by demographic subgroups.

Workers with a disability or long-term health condition

Workers with a disability or long-term health condition were significantly more likely than non-disabled workers to report poor mental health and greater exposure to adverse factors in the workplace. This includes, for example, almost half (49%) of disabled respondents rating their mental health as poor (compared to 25% among non-disabled respondents), two-fifths (41%) experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months (compared to 18%), a similar proportion (39%) often feeling lonely (compared to 21%), and almost half (49%) having experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months (compared to 34%).

The experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination were more common among women with a disability or long-term health condition than among men (52% and 43% respectively). This includes bullying and harassment specifically: experienced by 38% of women with a disability or long-term health condition, compared with 30% of men with a disability of long-term health condition.

Neurodivergent workers

Poor mental health and negative workplace experiences were more commonly reported by neurodivergent workers than by neurotypical workers.[51] For instance, 42% of neurodivergent respondents rated their mental health as poor (compared with 24% among neurotypical respondents), 35% reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months (compared to 17%), 36% were often lonely (compared to 20%), and 45% had experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months (compared to 33%).[52]

Carers of dependent adults

Respondents with caring responsibilities for dependent adults – including 'sandwich carers' who care for dependent adults as well as children – were significantly more likely to report poor mental health and greater exposure to adverse workplace factors than both those caring for children and those with no caring responsibilities. For example, 37% of carers of dependent adults rated their mental health as poor (compared with 29% among respondents caring for children and 30% among those with no caring responsibilities). Loneliness was also more prevalent among those caring for dependent adults (38% were often lonely, compared with 22% among those caring for children and 25% among those with no caring responsibilities), as were experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months (45%, compared with 38% among those caring for children and 35% among those with no caring responsibilities).

[51] Neurodivergence was determined based on responses to the question "do you have any of the following neurocognitive conditions? These might be conditions for which you've received a formal diagnosis, conditions where you're in the diagnosis process, or conditions you're confident you have." If any of the following options were selected, respondents have been classified in this report as being neurodivergent: a learning disability (e.g. Down's syndrome), a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia or dyscalculia), a condition affecting coordination (e.g. dyspraxia), autism, ADHD (or other conditions affecting concentration).

[52] Many of the statistics presented for neurodivergent workers are similar to those reported for respondents with a disability or long-term health condition. These are, however, two relatively distinct groups as only 43% of neurodivergent respondents also disclosed having a disability or long-term health condition.

Carers of children with disabilities or special educational needs

Although the key measures of mental health and wellbeing among carers of children do not notably differ from respondents without children, one important qualification is that respondents caring for children with disabilities or special educational needs stand out as having higher levels of loneliness (29%) compared with other carers of children (19%). They were also more likely to have experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination over the past 12 months (44%) compared with other carers of children (35%).

LGBTQ+ workers

Though there was a small but statistically significant difference in the proportion of LGBTQ+ workers rating their mental health as poor compared with heterosexual respondents (33% and 29% respectively), the difference in experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months was starker (33% among LGBTQ+ respondents, compared with 21% among heterosexual respondents).

Workplace factors were broadly similar across the two groups at the aggregate level. However, examining particular identities within the LGBTQ+ community reveals important differences. Experiences of bullying, harassment, or discrimination were particularly high among bisexual workers (48%, compared with 36% among heterosexual workers), while loneliness was especially pronounced among trans and non-binary respondents (41% were often lonely, compared with 25% among cisgender respondents).

Black and Global Majority workers

Though there was no statistically significant difference in self-rated mental health between Black and Global Majority respondents and those from white ethnic backgrounds, Black and Global Majority respondents reported poorer outcomes on several other measures, including: often or always feeling lonely at work (20%, compared to 15% among white respondents); experiencing bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months (45%, compared to 35%); and experiencing sustained worklessness (20%, compared to 14%).

Sustained worklessness was particularly high among Black and Global Majority men, at 25%, compared with 18% of Black and Global Majority women. However, both groups experienced higher levels than their white counterparts of the same gender.

Freelancers

Despite the improvements in various measures for freelancers discussed in this report, it is still the case, across many measures, that freelancers report worse outcomes and experiences than permanent staff. This includes, for example, a higher proportion of freelancers reporting frequent experiences of loneliness (27%) compared to permanent staff (19%). A higher proportion of freelancers also reported experiencing bullying, harassment, or discrimination over the past 12 months (38%) compared to permanent staff (34%). Moreover, a particularly marked difference is that freelancers were much more likely to be experiencing sustained worklessness than permanent staff (19% and 4% respectively).

Gender

Although some of the demographic characteristics discussed above intersect with gender to create particular vulnerabilities (see the sections on disability and ethnicity), there were few gender differences across the various conditions, culture, and capability measures included in the survey. One exception is bullying, harassment, and discrimination which was experienced by 40% of women compared with 32% of men. This included bullying and harassment specifically, reported by 31% of women and 23% of men.

It is notable, however, that across some of the key measures of mental health, men reported poorer outcomes. Specifically, more than a third of men (35%) rated their mental health as poor or very poor, compared with 28% of women, and 28% had experienced suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months, compared with 20% of women.

These differences appear to have an important age dimension. Among respondents aged 16 to 29, suicidal thoughts were reported by similar proportions of women and men, at 33% and 32% respectively. Among older respondents, particularly those aged 30 to 49, the gender gap was much wider: suicidal thoughts were reported by an average of 32% of men, compared with 18% of women.

Working-class backgrounds

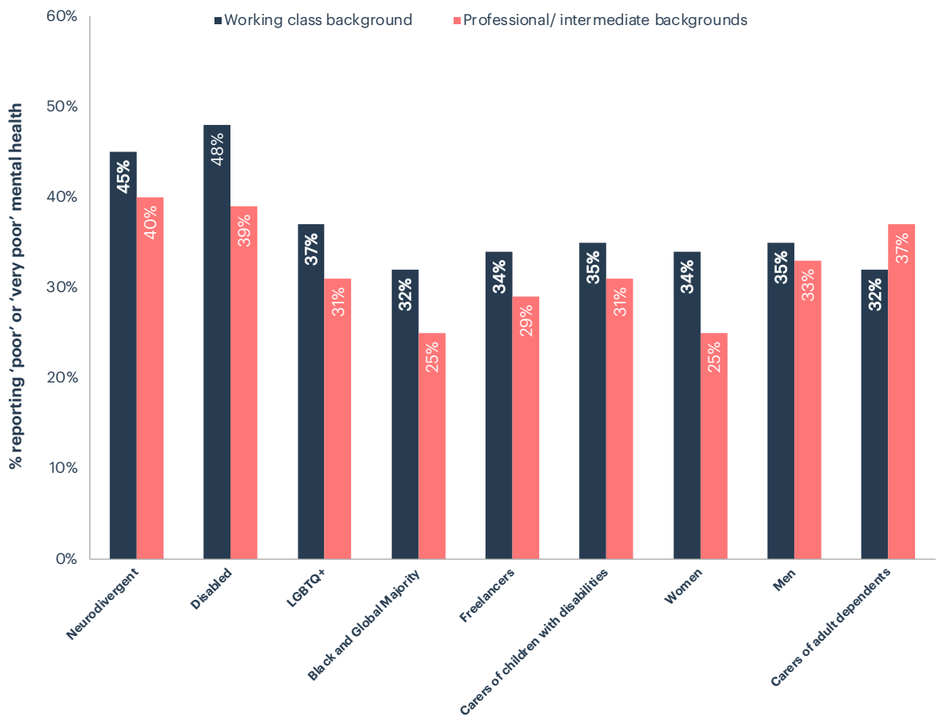
Respondents from working-class backgrounds[53] reported higher rates of poor mental health than respondents from professional or intermediate class backgrounds (34% compared with 28%). They were also more likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months (27% compared with 21%) and to report frequent loneliness (29% often feel lonely, compared with 23% of respondents from professional or intermediate class backgrounds). In addition, a higher proportion of respondents from working-class backgrounds reported experiencing bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the past 12 months (40%, compared with 35% of respondents from professional or intermediate class backgrounds).

Our analysis of previous Looking Glass data has also shown that a working-class background seems to act as an amplifier of vulnerabilities associated with other demographic and professional characteristics.[54] Based on Looking Glass 2026 data, Figure 19 shows that, across most of the at-risk groups discussed in this chapter, poor mental health was more prevalent among respondents from working-class backgrounds than among those from professional or intermediate backgrounds. These differences were statistically significant among freelancers and women.

A similar pattern was evident for workplace loneliness. As shown in Figure 20, across most of the at-risk groups examined, respondents from working-class backgrounds were more likely to feel lonely at work often or always. The differences were statistically significant among respondents with a disability, Black and Global Majority respondents, freelancers, and women.

Figure 19

Self-ratings of poor mental health by selected demographics groups, intersected with socio-economic class backgrounds

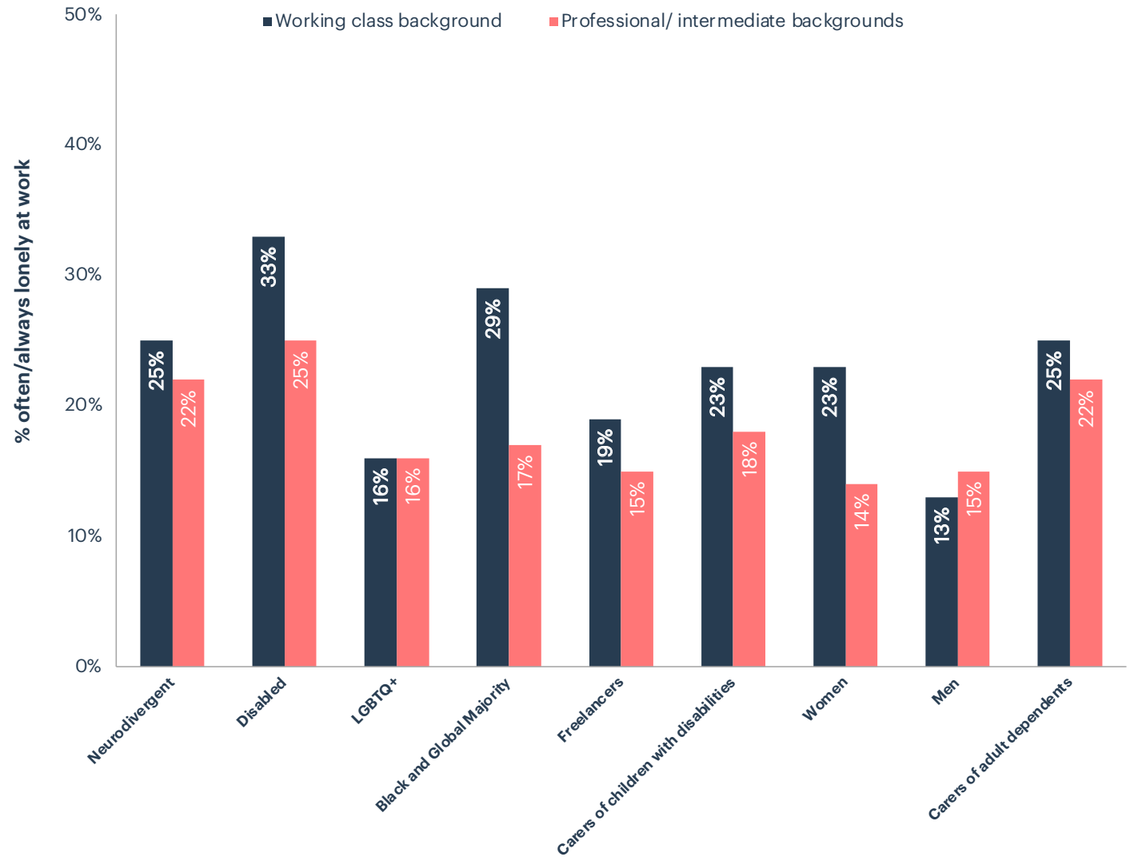


[53] Socio-economic backgrounds are based on parental occupation at age 14 and are coded to the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). 'Working-class backgrounds' are assigned to those whose main household earner was employed in lower supervisory and technical occupations, routine or semi-routine occupations, or who were long-term unemployed.

[54] Film and TV Charity (2025). Class and mental wellbeing in the UK film and TV industry.

Figure 20

Often or always feeling lonely at work, by selected demographics groups, intersected with socio-economic class backgrounds





CONCLUSION

The clearest message from Looking Glass 2026 is that mental health and wellbeing in UK film, TV, and cinema remain unacceptably poor. The industry's workers continue to report significantly worse outcomes than the wider UK workforce, comparing very unfavourably with national averages across almost every headline measure. Almost a third rate their mental health as poor; a quarter experience high levels of loneliness; almost a quarter have had thoughts about taking their own life in the past 12 months; and more than half say that working in the industry negatively affects their mental health.

These findings leave no room for complacency. At the same time, however, the findings of Looking Glass 2026 provide some grounds for encouragement. Since 2024, there have been significant reductions in the proportions of respondents reporting poor mental health, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts. Fewer respondents say that working in the industry negatively affects their mental health, fewer have experienced bullying or harassment, and awareness of mental health support and confidence in workplace policies and reporting processes have improved. Many of these positive changes have been concentrated among freelancers, who have consistently been identified as particularly vulnerable across the Looking Glass series.

Understanding the improvements

One possible interpretation is that some of the apparent improvement reflects changes in who remains in the industry. Amid a prolonged production downturn, conditions in recent years have been exceptionally difficult for many workers, particularly freelancers, and it is likely that some of those experiencing the greatest financial and mental wellbeing pressures have permanently left the industry. If so, those remaining in the industry and responding in 2026 may be in more secure circumstances or less exposed to the pressures experienced by those surveyed in 2024.

This may form part of the explanation for the reported improvements. However, the evidence does not suggest that it is the main explanation. Improvements in mental wellbeing have occurred alongside positive changes in workers' experiences and perceptions of the industry itself, including a reduced prevalence of bullying and harassment; greater awareness of policies and practices for reporting adverse behaviour; greater exposure to good working practices; and managers feeling better equipped to support colleagues with their mental health. Moreover, the demographic and professional profiles of respondents in 2026, including the profile of freelancers, are comparable with those in 2024, and improvements are evident across several industry sub-sectors rather than being concentrated in one or two areas. While this research cannot firmly establish cause and effect, the breadth and consistency of the findings suggest that the improvements reflect more than a change in the composition of the survey sample. Taken together, the results provide encouraging evidence that conditions have improved since 2024, albeit from a very low base. Although the drivers of this change cannot be determined from this survey alone, the findings are consistent with the industry's ongoing efforts to improve workplace culture.

Signs of progress from sustained, collaborative action

The decline in the prevalence of bullying, harassment, and discrimination provide one example of this progress. Although the proportion of respondents experiencing these behaviours remains abnormally high, it has fallen consistently and significantly across the Looking Glass series. This decrease has been accompanied by fewer respondents saying that they do not know who to report inappropriate behaviour to, more respondents believing that clear reporting policies and processes are in place, and fewer citing an expectation that they would not be believed as a reason for not reporting their experiences. Together, these findings suggest that efforts to improve workplace culture and reporting arrangements may be becoming more visible to workers.

There is still a long way to go, and the decline in the combined bullying, harassment, and discrimination measure has been driven by fewer people experiencing bullying and harassment rather than a reduction in discrimination. Nevertheless, the sustained downward trend indicates what may be possible when organisations across the industry acknowledge a shared problem and maintain a collective response over time. This response has taken several forms, from campaigns that have brought harmful workplace behaviour into greater focus through to the development of clearer standards, guidance and training. Examples include Bectu's *Unseen on Screen* campaign, the BFI's principles and guidance on preventing and addressing bullying, harassment, and racism, the establishment of the CIISA Standards, and targeted parts of the ScreenSkills training offer. Augmenting this preventative and culture-changing work, the Film and TV Charity's Bullying Advice Service provides support and guidance to workers who have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

Sustaining and broadening the collective response

The same sustained and coordinated commitment is now needed across the broader mental health and wellbeing agenda. This means continuing to provide accessible support when people experience difficulties, while also addressing the aspects of work that create or intensify those challenges.

The Film and TV Charity's Principles for Mentally Healthy Productions provide an important foundation for this broader response. Building on the Charity's Toolkit for Mentally Healthy Productions, the *Principles* have been developed in co-ordination with multiple organisations from across the sector. The *Principles* bring together practical action relating to leadership and culture, workplace relationships, mental health support, workload, working patterns, and role clarity. Their breadth is important because it reflects and responds to the fact that mental health cannot be separated from the way work is designed, planned, managed, and delivered.

The need for such a holistic response is supported by findings from the Looking Glass series. For instance, statistical analysis of Looking Glass 2024 data identified loneliness and social disconnection as a key mechanism through which workplace culture



and conditions affect mental wellbeing.[55] It showed that experiences such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination, insecure work, poor workplace relationships, and work-life interference can contribute to workers feeling alienated or disconnected from those around them, which in turn can negatively affect their mental health. In light of those findings, the positive changes reported in Looking Glass 2026 across individual measures should not be viewed in isolation. The reduction in experiences of bullying and harassment, improved perceptions of workplace policies and reporting processes, reduced prevalence of excessive hours, and lower levels of loneliness may instead be interconnected. While the survey cannot establish a causal relationship, the findings are consistent with the possibility that improvements in working culture and conditions can strengthen workers' sense of connection and, in turn, support better mental health.

This need to address mental health through the wider conditions in which people work connects the topics covered in this report with the Good Work policy agenda. Good Work provides a framework for measuring and improving job quality across seven dimensions: terms of employment; pay and benefits; health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing; job design and the nature of work; social support and cohesion; voice and representation; and work-life balance.

Applying Good Work to a predominantly freelance and project-based industry is not straightforward. However, recent *WorkTakes* research produced for the BFI found substantial common ground between workers, company executives, and sector stakeholders about what better work should look like in UK film and TV.[56] Reducing work's negative impact on mental health was a top priority reported by all participant groups. Workers also emphasised the importance of greater clarity and predictability around contracts, pay, schedules, and working hours.

The research identifies the industry's focus on mental health in recent years as a promising starting point for a broader Good Work agenda in the sector. Current initiatives addressing mental health and workplace relationships remain essential, but preventing harm also requires attention to employment insecurity, pay, working patterns, and workloads. By bringing these interconnected aspects of job quality together, Good Work offers a way to build on existing activity and create fairer, safer and more sustainable conditions that support wellbeing, productivity, and workforce retention.

A basis for further progress

Looking Glass 2026 does not describe a mentally healthy industry. However, it provides encouragement that change is possible, and that sustained, collective action can make a difference. The task now is to build on that progress: maintaining support for workers when difficulties arise, while tackling the culture, conditions, and working practices that contribute to poor mental wellbeing in the first place.

[55] Hawkins, O., Topakas, A. & Wigfield, A. (2025) Loneliness in the Film and TV Industry.

[56] Eikhof, D. R. et al. (forthcoming 2026) WorkTakes: Applying Good Work principles to UK film and TV. Glasgow: Design Otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the research. It is an in-depth survey and many of you took the time to recount difficult experiences. Your contribution is vitally important in allowing us to evidence issues in the industry that need to be improved – thank you for entrusting us with your response.

We are also extremely grateful to the many industry partners and stakeholders, as well as members of the trade press, who shared and promoted the survey through their networks. Without this support we would not have achieved such a large response to the survey – **thank you.**

This report was authored by Mark Tweddle, Research and Insight Manager, with input from colleagues across the Film and TV Charity.

The report was designed by OC.



APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The research took the form of an online survey carried out between 11 May and 22 June 2026. The survey was disseminated and promoted through the Film and TV Charity's social media channels, industry trade press, and contact lists, as well as via our industry partners and friends – including industry bodies, guilds, and community networks – for whose support we are grateful.

A total of 3,394 eligible respondents completed the survey. Whilst this is down on the number of respondents in the 2024 survey, it is, as detailed in the table below, the third-highest response total recorded across the Looking Glass series.

	Looking Glass survey				
	2019	2021	2022	2024	2026
Number of respondents	4,877	2,097	1,909	4,376	3,394

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 available industry employment data, the profile of respondents is broadly representative of the workforce and consistent with the profile achieved in previous iterations of the research.

A full breakdown of the survey sample by key demographics and work characteristics is provided in Appendix B.

Unless otherwise stated, all differences between subgroups referred to in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

In the tables and figures included in this report, responses of 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' are often excluded for presentational reasons; consequently, percentages may not sum to 100%.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The two tables in this appendix provide a breakdown of the 3,394 responses received in Looking Glass 2026, first by professional characteristics, then by other demographic factors.

Table B1

Number of survey responses, by professional characteristics

	No. of responses received	As percentage of the total (3,394) responses received
Usual employment type		
Freelance	2,532	75%
Temporary contract ('PAYE freelancer')	803	24%
Self-employed, sole-trader	1,206	36%
Ltd Co. with no other employees	490	14%
Permanent	841	25%
Sector		
TV	2,069	61%
Scripted	810	24%
• High-end drama (£1m+ per hour)	585	17%
• Lower budget drama (<£1m per hour)	225	7%
Unscripted	1,144	34%
• Entertainment	174	5%
• Factual	504	15%
• Factual entertainment	351	10%
• News and current affairs	55	2%
• Sports and outside broadcast	60	2%
Other (incl. broadcast engineering and corporate services)	115	3%
Film	574	17%
Higher budget (>£30m)	217	6%
Mid budget (£3m to £30m)	161	5%
Low-to-micro budget and/or shorts	171	5%
Post-production	290	9%
Animation and VFX	101	3%
Cinema, exhibition, and film festivals	151	4%
Sales, distribution, marketing, PR	60	2%
Time in industry		
Early career (up to 5 years)	558	16%
Mid-career (5-20 years)	1,545	46%
5-10 years	635	19%
10-20 years	910	27%
Later career (20+ years)	1,285	38%
Managerial responsibilities		
Role includes responsibility for wellbeing of others	1,482	44%
No such responsibilities	1,643	48%

Note: 'prefer not to say' responses are not shown, therefore the percentages in each category may not sum to 100%.

APPENDIX B

Table B2

Number of survey responses, by demographics

	No. of responses received	As percentage of the total (3,394) responses received
Gender		
Female	2,015	59%
Male	1,248	37%
Trans and non-binary	49	1%
Cisgender	3,237	95%
Age		
16-29	494	15%
30-39	943	28%
40-49	870	26%
50-59	731	22%
60+	277	8%
Ethnicity		
Black and Global Majority	579	17%
Asian or Asian British	125	4%
Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African	149	4%
Jewish	90	3%
Arab and Middle Eastern	26	1%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	179	5%
White	2,687	79%
Sexuality / sexual orientation		
LGBTQ+	621	18%
Heterosexual	2,423	71%
Region		
England - East Midlands	54	2%
England - East of England	97	3%
England - London	1,411	42%
England - North East	73	2%
England - North West	246	7%
England - South East	505	15%
England - South West	288	8%
England - West Midlands	135	4%
England - Yorkshire and the Humber	99	3%
Northern Ireland	72	2%
Scotland	208	6%
Wales	107	3%
Disability or long-term health condition (LTHC)		
With disability or LTHC	812	24%
No disability or LTHC	2,582	76%
Neurodivergence		
Neurodivergent	1,009	30%
Neurotypical	2,194	65%
Caring responsibilities		
No caring responsibilities	2,175	64%
Caring for dependent adults	255	8%
Caring for dependent children	851	25%
Caring for children with disabilities or special educational needs	214	6%
Socio-economic background		
Working class	739	22%
Professional/intermediate	2,280	67%

Note: 'prefer not to say' responses are not shown, therefore the percentages in each category may not sum to 100%.

Table B3

Profile of freelancers in Looking Glass 2026 compared to 2024

	Proportion of freelancer respondents	
	Looking Glass 2026 (N=2,352)	Looking Glass 2024 (N=3,256)
Usual employment type		
Temporary contract ('PAYE freelancer')	32%	35%
Self-employed, sole trader	48%	43%
Ltd Co. with no other employees	19%	22%
Sector		
TV	64%	70%
Scripted	27%	21%
Unscripted	36%	47%
Film	20%	16%
Higher budget (>£30m)	8%	5%
Mid budget (£3m to £30m)	6%	4%
Low-to-micro budget and/or shorts	6%	6%
Post-production	8%	6%
Animation and VFX	3%	3%
Cinema, exhibition, and film festivals	1%	1%
Sales, distribution, marketing, PR	1%	<1%
Time in industry		
Early career (up to 5 years)	16%	19%
Mid-career (5-20 years)	46%	49%
Later career (20+ years)	38%	32%
Gender		
Female	59%	59%
Male	38%	39%
Age		
16-29	14%	17%
30-39	28%	32%
40-49	25%	26%
50-59	22%	18%
60+	9%	6%
Ethnicity		
Black and Global Majority	18%	18%
White	79%	79%
Sexuality / sexual orientation		
LGBTQ+	18%	20%
Heterosexual	71%	71%
Region		
England	86%	85%
London & South East	56%	57%
Northern Ireland	2%	1%
Scotland	6%	7%
Wales	3%	4%
Disability or long-term health condition (LTHC)		
With disability or LTHC	23%	26%
No disability or LTHC	77%	74%
Neurodivergence		
Neurodivergent	30%	28%
Neurotypical	64%	67%
Caring responsibilities		
No caring responsibilities	65%	66%
Caring for dependent adults	8%	7%
Caring for dependent children	24%	24%
Socio-economic background		
Working class	22%	25%
Professional/intermediate	67%	68%

Note: 'prefer not to say' responses are not shown, therefore the percentages in each category may not sum to 100%.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C:
KEY MEASURES BY INDUSTRY AREA

The tables in this appendix provide a multi-level breakdown of selected key findings, by industry area, employment type, and survey year (2024 and 2026).

Table C1

Proportion of respondents reporting poor mental health, by sub-sector and employment type, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Self-rated poor mental health	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**31%↓**	35%	**31%↓**	38%	**29%**	25%
TV	**30%↓**	34%	**30%↓**	37%	**26%**	24%
Unscripted TV	**28%↓**	34%	**29%↓**	37%	**25%**	22%
Scripted TV	**32%**	36%	**33%**	37%	**27%**	28%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**30%**	34%	**31%**	35%	**25%**	27%
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**38%**	40%	**39%**	42%	**	**
Film	**36%**	39%	**35%↓**	41%	***39%***	*31%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**39%**	38%	**38%**	40%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**33%**	41%	**32%↓**	44%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**34%**	40%	**34%**	39%	**	**
Post-production	**30%**	38%	**31%↓**	42%	***30%***	*29%*
Animation & VFX	**26%↓**	42%	***20%↓***	*48%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**36%**	28%	**	**	**36%↑**	23%
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	***23%***	*26%*	**	**	**	*22%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50)*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons
See table C7 for base sizes.

Table C2

Proportion of respondents reporting high levels of loneliness (score of 8/9 in the UCLA loneliness scale), by sub-sector and employment type, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Often lonely (score of 8/9 on UCLA loneliness scale)	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**25%↓**	30%	**27%↓**	32%	**19%**	22%
TV	**25%↓**	29%	**27%↓**	31%	**16%**	19%
Unscripted TV	**22%↓**	27%	**24%↓**	30%	**14%**	14%
Scripted TV	**28%↓**	33%	**30%**	34%	**16%**	25%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**28%**	30%	**30%**	32%	**15%**	24%
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**29%↓**	38%	**30%↓**	39%	**	**
Film	**29%↓**	35%	**29%↓**	35%	***32%***	*30%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**29%**	34%	**28%**	32%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**24%**	30%	**23%**	32%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**36%**	40%	**35%**	41%	**	**
Post-production	**23%**	29%	**26%**	31%	***16%***	*22%*
Animation & VFX	**18%↓**	30%	***22%***	*31%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**28%**	23%	**	**	**28%**	20%
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	***20%***	*30%*	**	**	**	*29%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50)*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons
See table C7 for base sizes.

Table C3

Proportion of respondents experiencing suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months, by sub-sector and employment type, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**23%↓**	**30%**	**23%↓**	32%	**24%**	22%
TV	**21%↓**	29%	**22%↓**	31%	**20%**	18%
Unscripted TV	**20%↓**	28%	**20%↓**	30%	**19%**	18%
Scripted TV	**24%↓**	30%	**25%↓**	33%	**19%**	15%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**22%↓**	29%	**23%↓**	33%	***19%***	*14%*
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**28%**	33%	**30%**	35%	**	**
Film	**28%↓**	37%	**27%↓**	37%	**	*33%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**27%**	36%	**26%**	36%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**24%**	35%	**22%↓**	37%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**33%**	41%	**32%**	40%	**	**
Post-production	**25%↓**	35%	**24%↓**	34%	***27%***	*36%*
Animation & VFX	***23%↓***	*37%*	***18%↓***	*38%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**29%**	25%	**	**	***30%***	*22%*
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	**	*19%*	**	**	**	*19%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50).*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons.
See table C8 for base sizes.

Table C4

Proportion of respondents reporting that working in the industry has a negative impact on their mental health, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Work in the industry has negative impact on mental health	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**56%↓**	63%	**57%↓**	67%	**53%**	51%
TV	**58%↓**	65%	**60%↓**	69%	**53%**	50%
Unscripted TV	**59%↓**	67%	**61%↓**	71%	**53%**	50%
Scripted TV	**58%**	62%	**59%**	64%	**55%**	53%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**57%**	60%	**58%**	62%	**52%**	56%
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**60%**	65%	**60%**	68%	**	**
Film	**55%↓**	64%	**55%↓**	65%	***58%***	*61%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**63%**	68%	**63%**	69%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**53%↓**	66%	**51%↓**	65%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**47%↓**	62%	**48%↓**	62%	**	**
Post-production	**57%**	64%	**57%**	65%	***57%***	*63%*
Animation & VFX	**49%**	61%	***38%↓***	*64%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**47%**	49%	**	**	**46%**	47%
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	***43%***	*50%*	**	**	**	*44%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50).*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons.
See table C7 for base sizes.

APPENDIX C

Table C5

Proportion of respondents working 50+ hours in the past week, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Worked 50+ hours in the past week	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**14%↓**	18%	**15%↓**	19%	**11%↓**	15%
TV	**15%↓**	19%	**16%↓**	19%	**14%**	18%
Unscripted TV	**9%↓**	14%	**9%↓**	14%	**11%**	14%
Scripted TV	**24%**	27%	**25%**	28%	**22%**	26%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**25%**	31%	**26%**	31%	**22%**	30%
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**22%**	19%	**22%**	20%	**	**
Film	**18%↓**	25%	**17%↓**	26%	***18%***	*25%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**29%**	36%	**30%**	38%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**16%↓**	27%	**15%↓**	29%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**6%↓**	15%	**6%↓**	15%	**	**
Post-production	**11%**	11%	**13%**	10%	***9%***	*12%*
Animation & VFX	**4%**	10%	***0%↓***	*11%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**5%**	6%	**	**	**6%**	7%
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	***0%↓***	*10%*	**	**	**	*10%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50).*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons.
See table C7 for base sizes.

Table C6

Proportion of respondents who experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination in the past 12 months, across Looking Glass 2024 and 2026

Experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination in the past 12 months	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	**37%↓**	41%	**38%↓**	43%	**34%**	33%
TV	**37%↓**	42%	**37%↓**	44%	**34%**	33%
Unscripted TV	**33%↓**	40%	**33%↓**	42%	**31%**	31%
62.5 mm	**42%↓**	48%	**43%↓**	49%	**41%**	41%
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	**43%**	46%	**44%**	48%	**39%**	38%
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	**40%↓**	51%	**38%↓**	51%	**	**
Film	**48%**	48%	**47%**	47%	***56%***	*56%*
High budget (≥£30m)	**53%**	53%	**52%**	50%	**	**
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	**43%**	49%	**44%**	47%	**	**
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	**44%**	44%	**43%**	45%	**	**
Post-production	**32%**	33%	**33%**	36%	***31%***	*28%*
Animation & VFX	**25%**	27%	***20%***	*31%*	**	**
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	**28%**	26%	**	**	**25%**	24%
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	***28%***	*31%*	**	**	**	*27%*

Arrows within the 2026 columns denote a significant difference at the 95% level of confidence compared to the corresponding 2024 column.
*'**' denotes data redacted due to too few responses for reliable time-series comparisons (<50).*
Italicised data in grey font should be treated with caution due to moderately low base sizes (50-99) for time-series comparisons.
See table C7 for base sizes.

Table C7

Base sizes for tables C1, C2, C4, C5 and C6

Base sizes	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	3,394	4,376	2,532	3,256	841	1,088
TV	2,069	2,877	1,624	2,270	442	595
Unscripted TV	1,144	1,877	900	1,530	242	341
Scripted TV	810	847	679	694	130	148
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	585	576	484	465	101	109
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	225	271	195	229	29	39
Film	574	607	507	516	62	84
High budget (≥£30m)	217	204	192	168	25	36
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	161	164	142	142	19	22
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	171	212	156	194	10	14
Post-production	290	296	191	208	94	88
Animation & VFX	101	125	65	85	36	40
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	151	156	32	30	115	122
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	60	70	14	14	45	55

Table C8

Base sizes for tables C3

Base sizes for those opting to answer questions about suicidal thoughts and self-harm	Total		Freelance		Permanent staff	
	2026	2024	**2026**	2024	**2026**	2024
Total	2,718	3,555	2,003	2,655	701	880
TV	1,667	2,396	1,292	1,897	373	491
Unscripted TV	930	1,557	726	1,275	203	277
Scripted TV	644	710	535	586	108	121
• High-end scripted TV (≥£1m per hour)	458	490	375	398	83	92
• Lower-end scripted TV (<£1m per hour)	186	220	160	188	25	29
Film	428	464	380	396	46	63
High budget (≥£30m)	168	153	151	127	17	26
Mid budget (£3m to <£30m)	119	133	103	119	16	14
Low-micro budget (<£3m) and/or shorts	121	154	113	139	6	12
Post-production	247	231	159	164	85	67
Animation & VFX	84	98	57	66	27	32
Cinema/exhibition & festivals	119	125	22	26	93	97
Sales, distribution, PR etc.	46	53	10	9	36	43

APPENDIX D:
KEY MEASURES BY DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS

The table presents a selection of key measures crossed by various demographic subgroups. Data from this table are referred to in chapter 4.

Table D1

Selected key measures from Looking Glass 2026, by demographic subgroups

Row percentages		No. of respondents (n)	Poor self-rating of mental health	Suicidal thoughts in past 12 months	Often lonely (score of 8-9 on UCLA loneliness scale)	Sustained worklessness	Experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination in past 12 months
Gender							
Female	**A**	2,015	28%	20%	25%	14%	**40% B**
Male	**B**	1,248	**35% A**	**28% A**	26%	**17% A**	32%
Trans and non-binary	**C**	49	35%	**43% D**	**41% D**	20%	43%
Cisgender	**D**	3,237	31%	23%	25%	15%	37%
Age							
16-29	**A**	494	**32% E**	**33% BCDE**	28%	11%	39%
30-39	**B**	943	**33% DE**	**26% CDE**	27%	11%	38%
40-49	**C**	870	**34% DE**	21%	24%	**15% B**	37%
50-59	**D**	731	**27% E**	19%	25%	**19% ABC**	38%
60+	**E**	277	20%	17%	20%	**26% ABCD**	31%
Ethnicity							
Black and Global Majority	**A**	579	28%	21%	27%	**20% B**	**45% B**
White	**B**	2,687	31%	24%	25%	14%	35%
Sexuality / sexual orientation							
LGBTQ+	**A**	621	**33% B**	**33% B**	26%	11%	40%
Heterosexual	**B**	2,423	29%	21%	25%	**15% A**	36%
Disability or long-term health condition (LTHC)							
With disability or LTHC	**A**	812	**49% B**	**41% B**	**39% B**	**17% B**	**49% B**
No disability or LTHC	**B**	2,582	25%	18%	21%	14%	34%
Neurodiversity							
Neurodivergent	**A**	1,009	**42% B**	**35% B**	**36% B**	16%	**45% B**
Neurotypical	**B**	2,194	24%	17%	20%	14%	33%
Caring responsibilities							
No caring responsibilities	**A**	2,175	30%	24%	25%	15% C	35%
Care for dependent adults	**B**	255	**37% AC**	**31% C**	**38% AC**	**26% AC**	**45% AC**
Care for children	**C**	851	29%	20%	22%	12%	38%
Socio-economic background							
Working class	**A**	739	**34% B**	**27% B**	**29% B**	**17% B**	**40% B**
Professional/ intermediate	**B**	2,280	28%	21%	23%	14%	35%

Letters denote statistically significant differences from the corresponding comparison subgroup at the 95% confidence level. Each letter identifies the comparison subgroup from which the result significantly differs.