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# What can we do to help? Employer and hirer survey

August 2020

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## Employer and hirer survey

### Introduction

In June 2020, ScreenSkills undertook a survey targeting employers and hirers<sup>1</sup> in film, TV, animation, VFX, and post-production. The research aims to shed light on how we can best support employers and their staff, crews and freelancers with the most suitable training, to work safely during Covid-19. The study looks at training needs highlighted by employers as essential in the current circumstances, including the introduction of the Covid-19 H&S supervisor, a new role suggested in the British Film Commission guidance *Working Safely During COVID-19 in Film and High-end TV Drama Production*<sup>2</sup>.

At the time of writing, industry is continuing to assess how best the additional responsibilities identified in the guidance can be delivered and whether a dedicated supervisor is necessarily the best option. Evidence produced by this study suggests that employers would be more likely to distribute these responsibilities among the existing staff and crew.

It is worth mentioning that there are other sector-specific sources aimed at supporting the screen industries to work safely during Covid-19, including the *TV Production Guidance*, released by ITV, BBC, Sky, Channel 4, Channel 5, STV, ITN, the Association for Commercial Broadcasters and On-Demand Services (COBA) and Pact<sup>3</sup> and the *Guidance for Safe Working in Post-Production and VFX during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, published by UK Screen Alliance<sup>4</sup>.

The coronavirus crisis has had a major impact on all parts of the economy including screen. The research findings suggest that over 50% of respondents have been substantially negatively influenced by the Covid-19 outbreak and 27% have been negatively affected. However, for 4% of the sample the pandemic has not had any impact, 5% of respondents have been positively affected and a small 2% have been substantially positively affected.

When it comes to deciding how to frame the Covid-19 supervision responsibility within the company or the production, 54% of respondents said they were more inclined to assign Covid-related responsibilities to an existing member staff. A sizeable minority (24%) said they were more likely to appoint a new member of staff for the job of Covid-19 H&S supervisor.

To ensure the Covid-19 H&S supervisor and those with Covid-related responsibilities have the required understanding and expertise, most of the respondents (54%) would look to ScreenSkills to deliver relevant training. A fifth - 20% - of respondents are likely to deliver the training for staff and freelancers themselves, finding a trainer that could deliver a service tailored to their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Eg talent managers with crewing responsibility

<sup>2</sup> Working Safely During COVID-19 in Film and High-end TV Drama Production, <http://britishfilmcommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/British-Film-Commission-Working-Safely-During-COVID-19-in-Film-and-High-end-TV-Drama-Production-V.2.0-06-07-20.pdf> accessed on 07/07/2020

<sup>3</sup> TV Production Guidance: Managing the Risk of Covid-19 in Production Making, <https://www.pact.co.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/bafea386-4e38-4bfe-b77a98e804384e9b.pdf?userDownload=true>, accessed on 22/07/2020

<sup>4</sup> Guidance for Safe Working in Post-Production and VFX during the COVID-19 Pandemic <https://www.ukscreenalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/UK-Screen-Alliance-Post-VFX-Covid-19-Guidance-Version-1-4.pdf>, accessed on 21/07/2020

Several additional Covid-related pieces of training have been highlighted as essential to working safely in these unprecedented times, with 60% of respondents indicating they would look to ScreenSkills for the training provision.

These include training on safe costume and make-up fittings, training on how to clean equipment, guidance on how to use personal protective equipment and bespoke training for small productions on how to implement Covid-19 guidelines on a limited budget. The latter was emphasised multiple times in light of the tight budget constraints small productions are operating under.

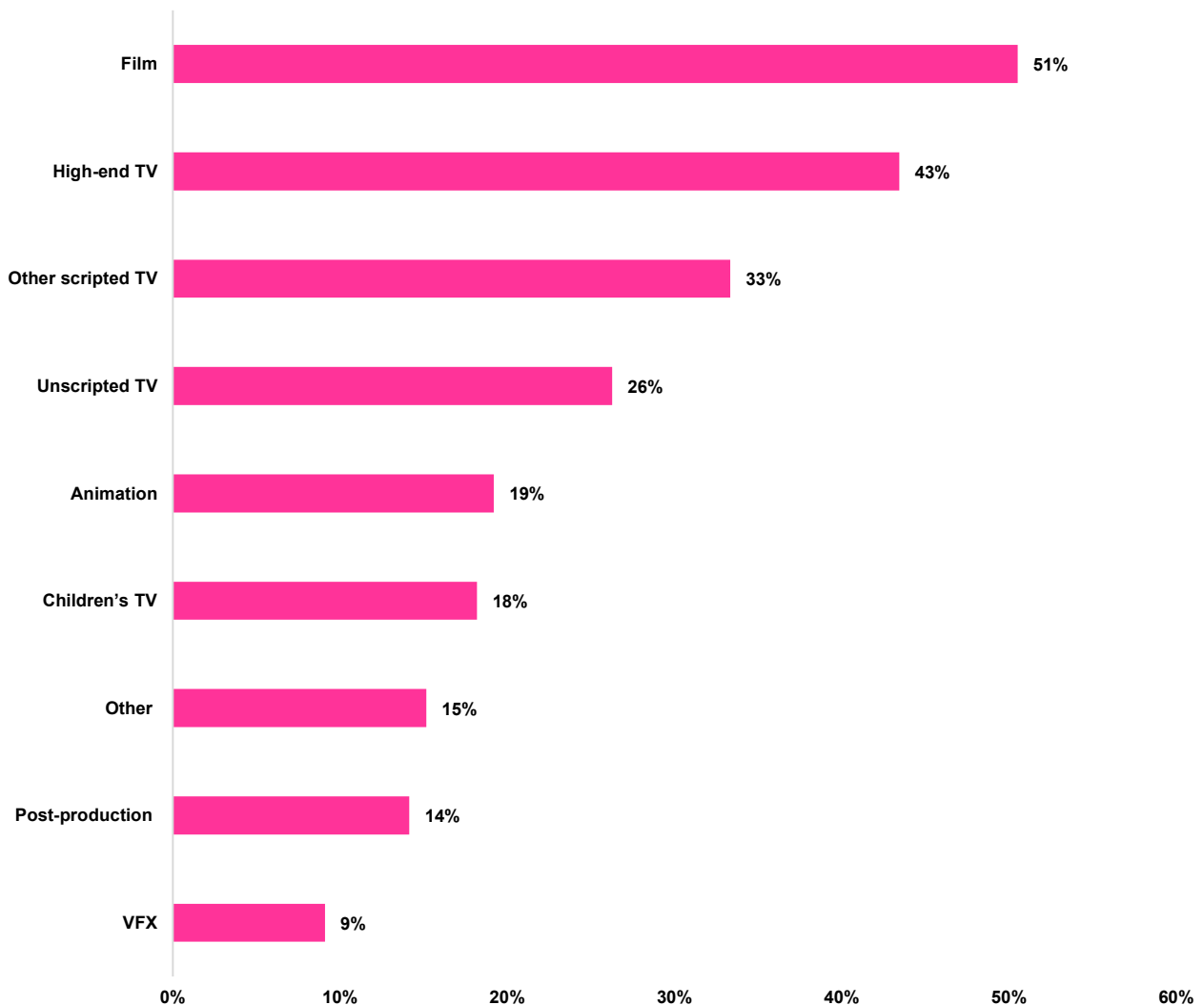
## Methodology

The survey was distributed via ScreenSkills' social media and newsletters as well as through the ScreenSkills' website. It was also shared with and promoted by partner bodies. It was completed by 99 respondents.

The majority of respondents within the sample work in film (51%), followed by high-end TV (43%), other scripted TV (33%), and unscripted TV (26%). Slightly lower percentages can be observed for animation and children's TV (19% and 18%), post-production (14%), and VFX (9%).

15% of respondents work in other parts of the industry, including training, online content production, branded content and advertising.

Figure 1 Sample composition, broken down by screen sectors



Source: ScreenSkills survey – base: 99

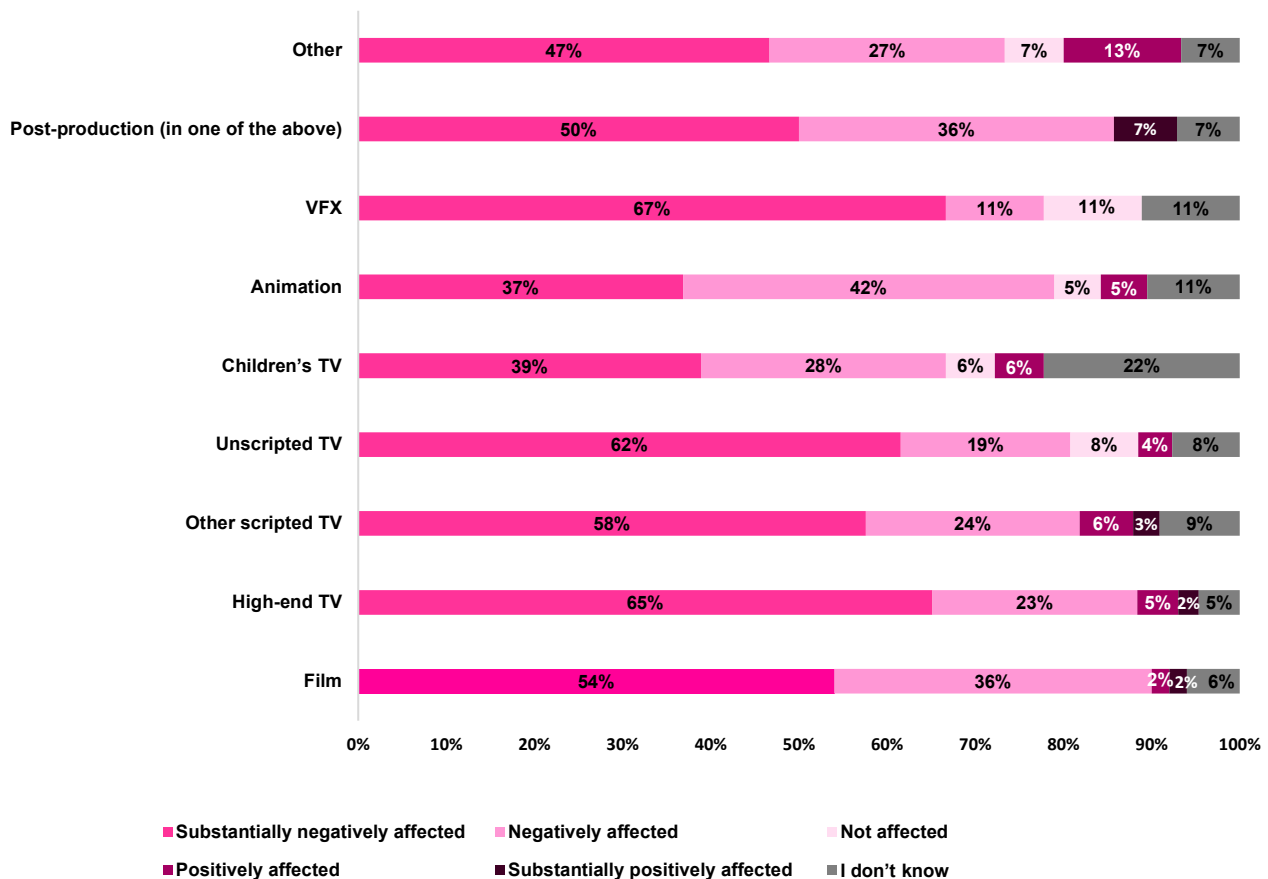
## Key findings

By way of introduction, we asked respondents in what way they have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (

Figure 2).

90% of respondents in film, followed by 88% in high-end TV and 86% in post-production felt that they have been negatively affected. For a small proportion of the sample the pandemic has not had any impact - this is the case for VFX (11%), unscripted TV (8%), children’s TV (6%) and animation (5%). Conversely, an average of 5% of respondents across all sectors stated they were positively affected.

Figure 2 In what way has you or your company/production been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak?



Source: ScreenSkills survey – base: 99

To better understand the industry’s needs regarding the Covid-19 H&S supervisor, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would be more inclined to appoint a Covid-19 H&S supervisor or assign the responsibility of the Covid-19 H&S supervisor to an existing member of the company or production. This is a new dedicated role that is tasked with overseeing, monitoring and ensuring that Covid-19-specific safety measures are complied with. Key responsibilities include pre-admission health screening before anyone enters the set or the studio, undertaking Covid-19 risk assessments, overseeing the implementation of necessary controls, with authority to stop unsafe working practices.

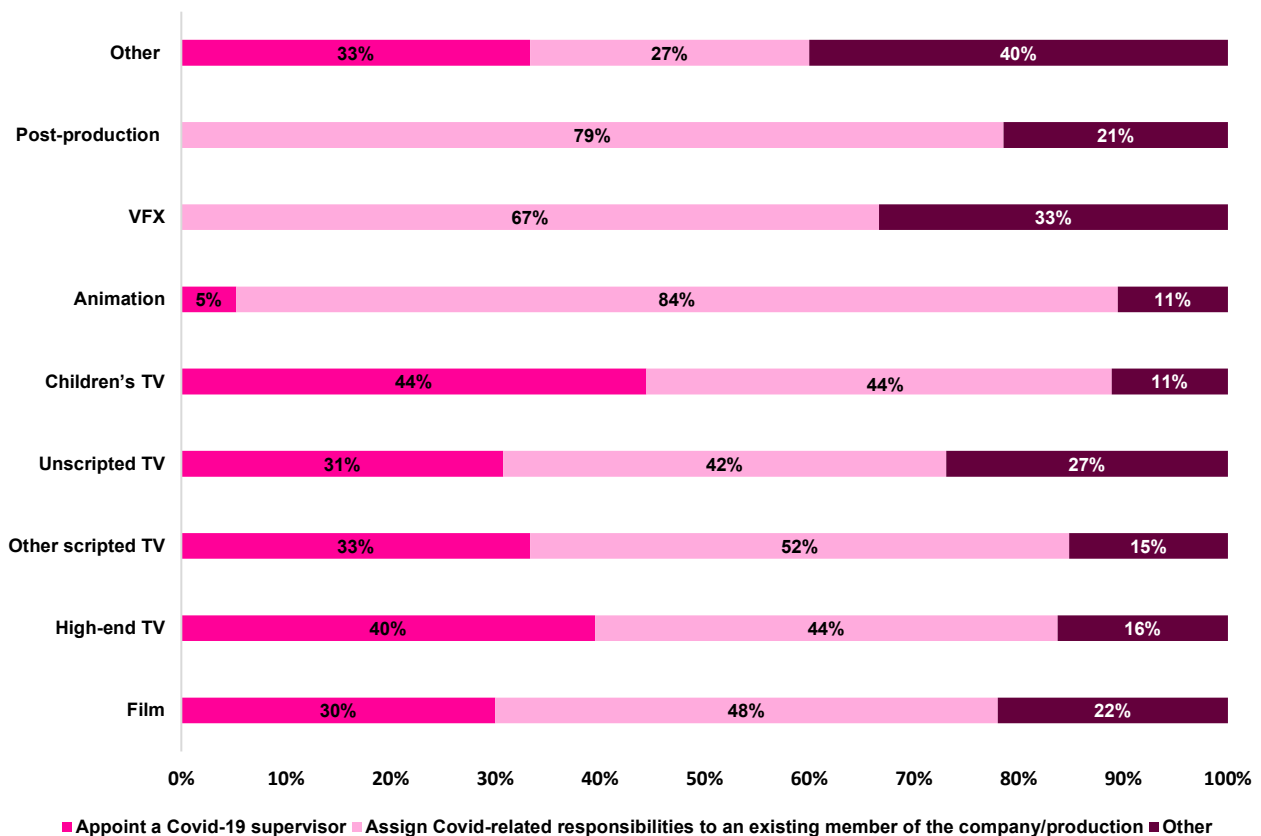
As shown in Figure 3, respondents’ consensus revolves around allocating Covid-19 H&S supervisor responsibility to an existing member of staff. This is not surprising in light of the negative effect that the pandemic has had on business activity presented in the previous section, whereby hiring new staff might be a prohibitive cost.

Respondents in animation (84%), post-production (79%) and VFX (67%) were likely to assign Covid-19 H&S supervision responsibility to existing staff, alongside the majority of the sample in other scripted TV ( 52%), film (48%) and high-end TV (44%).

Notwithstanding these findings, a sizeable minority envisages the Covid-19 H&S supervisor as a brand-new role that will need to be carved out of the budget. A more granular look at the data shows that this is true for 44% of respondents working in children’s TV and 40% in high-end TV, followed by other scripted TV (33%), unscripted (31%) and film (30%). Conversely, none of the respondents within post-production and VFX plan to appoint a new role solely devoted to Covid-19 supervision.

An average of 22% of the sample across all sectors ticked the “other” option and provided some useful insights in the open-text box. Three respondents suggested that the choice between appointing a new member of staff/crew or assigning Covid-19 supervision responsibility to the existing workforce would depend on budget size and scale of the project. Two indicated that their preferred option was likely to be a combination of both, specifying that the newly appointed Covid-19 H&S supervisor would need to report to the health and safety manager.

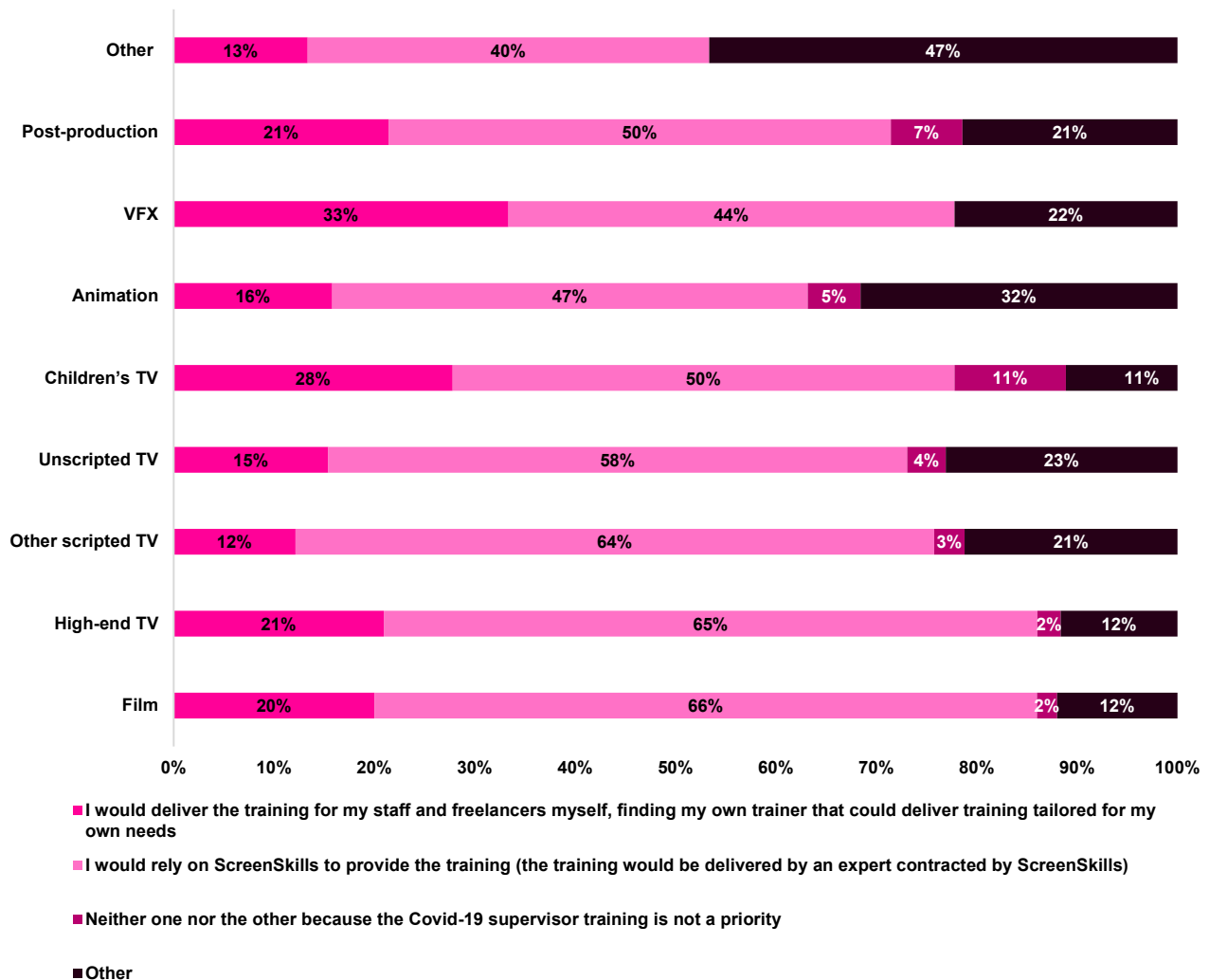
**Figure 3 It has been suggested that companies/productions should appoint a Covid-19 H&S supervisor or assign the responsibilities of Covid-19 H&S supervisor to an existing member of the company/production. Please tick the option that best describes what you would be more likely to do.**



Source: ScreenSkills survey – base: 99

Figure 4 shows how employers plan to handle the Covid-19 supervision training to make sure the company or the production is equipped with the required understanding and expertise. The findings suggest that the majority of respondents would hope to rely on ScreenSkills to deliver the training, via an expert that is directly contracted by ScreenSkills: film and high-end TV respondents were most likely to look to ScreenSkills to deliver the training (respectively 66% and 65%), whereas VFX shows the lowest percentage (44%). 22% of respondents, averaged across all sectors, opted for the “other” option, pointing to a combination of ScreenSkills-delivered as well as internally-managed training.

Figure 4 To ensure the Covid-19 H&S supervisor /those with Covid-related responsibilities have the required understanding and expertise, please tick the option that best describes what you would be more likely to do.



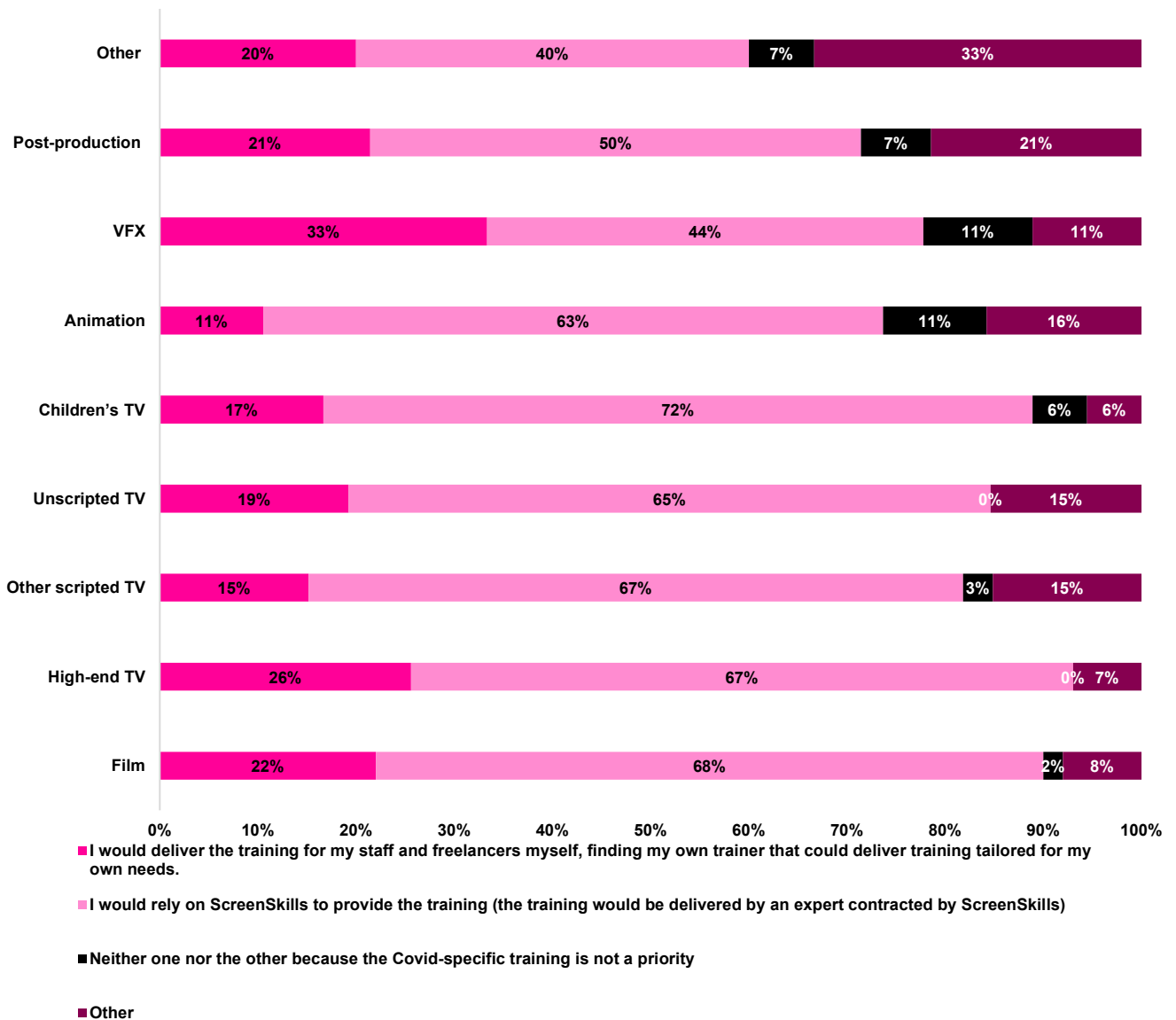
Source: ScreenSkills survey – base: 99

Respondents were then asked whether there was any further Covid-specific training that they might require. This was an open-ended question, therefore responses have been coded to identify the key themes, which are presented below:

- Mental health training in the context of Covid-19, looking at working from home and how it affects work and wellbeing, anxiety, stress, and fatigue
- Guidance on how to create risk assessments and compile health and safety policies focused on Covid-19
- Training on protocols for safe costume and make-up fittings
- Training on effective cleaning of equipment
- Guidance on how to work with different forms and sizes of crews – ie there will be fewer crew members on location and how to make this work
- Guidance on the use of personal protective equipment
- Bespoke training for low budget, independent production - ie how to implement Covid-19 guidelines on a limited budget
- Basic Covid-19 training for all crew members
- Ongoing updates on changes in regulation and how this varies in the devolved nations
- Sector-specific Covid-19 training - eg children's scripted production during Covid-19

- Training on how to provide first aid to those with Covid-19 symptoms if required, as well as how to provide first aid in general whilst adhering to social distancing
- Insurance liability concerns
- Guidance on remote working - eg auditions and edits
- Understanding the additional budgetary costs of filming in the context of Covid-19
- Lessons learned from the continuing dramas that have now started filming, with as much detail as possible regarding the logistics.

Figure 5: If there is further Covid-specific training you will require to support you or your company/production, please tick the option that best describes what you would be more likely to do.



Source: ScreenSkills survey – base: 99

Respondents were asked whether they would rely on ScreenSkills to deliver the training or organise bespoke training themselves (Figure 5). Most of the respondents (60% averaged across all sectors) stated that they would look to ScreenSkills to put the necessary training in place. At the two extremes of the spectrum, 72% of respondents in children’s TV said they were more likely to rely on ScreenSkills for the training while 33% of the VFX sample would take charge of their training delivery. Respondents that opted for the “other” option, were either unsure or suggested a combination of ScreenSkills-delivered as well as company/production-managed training.

In addition to supporting employers to work safely during the Covid-19 pandemic, previous research<sup>5</sup> showed that the screen industries are affected by severe skills gaps and shortages that existed pre-pandemic, which negatively affect the ability of businesses and productions to perform. To this end, we asked respondents to indicate any other training that they would like ScreenSkills to provide. Open-ended responses were coded and classified, based on the two categories below.

**Job-specific skills** such as working with a piece of software:

- Story and content development overview within bigger studios, how and why projects are greenlit, and what happens after
- Better ways to make production and accounting paper-free
- Job-specific training for new entrants (eg Toon Boom, Premiere Pro, DaVinci Resolve)
- Production accounting and assistant production accounting training
- Safe design and construction of production sets
- Remote storyboard training
- How to step up from coordinator to production manager/line producer
- Movie Magic budgeting and scheduling.

**Transferable skills** such as communications and leadership:

- Team management and leadership, negotiation and communication skills
- Adapting knowledge from one role to another if the crew size has reduced on-set and crew members are doubling up
- General health and safety and emergency first aid at work (both with certification)
- Moving across from one sector of the industry to another
- Better awareness of expenses and budget
- Working on a low budget production with Covid-19 guidelines
- Protocols and the law regarding working with children
- Training for line producers and production managers on how to deal with mental health issues and harassment and bullying issues.

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<sup>5</sup> Annual ScreenSkills Assessment (2019) <https://www.screenskills.com/media/2853/2019-08-16-annual-screenskills-assessment.pdf>, accessed on 28/07/2020

High-end television in the UK 2019 workforce research (2020) <https://www.screenskills.com/media/3625/2020-05-18-hetv-report.pdf>, accessed on 28/07/2020



