



# Powering Production

Identifying skills needs in  
the UK's screen industry

April 2026

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# Foreword

The UK screen industry is a global leader; the sector contributes roughly £21 billion in GVA to the UK economy and supports well over 190,000 jobs.<sup>1</sup> Despite this success, the industry faces many challenges including tackling critical skills gaps. Following years of turbulence one factor remains: the industry's biggest asset is its highly skilled workforce.

Whilst the report highlights the depth of skilled crew across the UK, key skills gaps and shortages do remain; despite a workforce which in many areas is underutilised, there are not enough suitably skilled people in key roles to deliver the productions which entertain us 365 days a year.

Essentially, keeping our skills up to date and learning new ones is an indispensable part of growing a thriving creative industry. This is ever more important, as our report shows that the hardest-to-fill roles are in mid-senior positions.

As the industry endorsed skills body for the screen sector, we are committed to being data-driven to support investment in training across industry, guide the training delivered by our five skills funds and to provide stakeholders with evidence-based policy recommendations. Meeting the skills needs of large and small employers across the UK and freelancers and employees is vital if the sector is to deliver sustainable jobs and fulfil the ambitions of the Industrial Strategy.

It is crucial that we evaluate how industry, local and national government can support individuals to develop the skills they need now and, in the future, to build sustainable careers anywhere in the UK. The importance of place is a critical factor in addressing skills shortages especially in the screen sector in which workforces are highly mobile and lack uniformity. Collaboration is key if we are to foster local talent and infrastructure across the UK.

One of the most important priorities for industry is to address the AI skills gap, with 52% of employers anticipating AI will change some working practices in their department. We need a human centred approach to AI skills development, so we can enhance skills that blend human talent with technical proficiency.

Our report shows 46% of employers identify on-the-job training as the most useful training intervention, it's highly effective due to the practical, project-based nature of the industry. However, we must not lose sight of the need to invest in the future pipeline of talent, tomorrow's roles may look far different from today's, but we will still need a highly skilled workforce and invest not just for now but for the future. Ensuring that all forms of vocational training are well respected and aligned with industry needs is essential.

This report provides industry leaders and policymakers with key granular information and suggestions to address complex skills problems across the screen industry. It is our mission to work with employers, freelancers, national and local governments to create a world-leading, agile and inclusive workforce, offering people from every background opportunities to realise their potential.

**Laura  
Mansfield**  
CEO



# Executive Summary

The report finds that the UK's screen workforce is highly skilled with the majority of employers responding that **at least 80% of the workforce is proficient**. However, some skills gaps (i.e. when workers don't have the skills employers need) still persist. These are largely interpersonal skills such as **communication, leadership/management, planning/organisation and resilience**. In particular, mid-level and senior staff were largely seen as needing to be upskilled as their role shifts from task delivery to management.

Skills gaps are also causing skills shortages (i.e. not enough skilled workers to fill positions) in the sector, with nearly half of employers suggesting that the cause of shortages is a lack of job-specific skills. The shortages therefore reflect the skills needed, with **the hardest-to-fill roles in mid-senior positions**. Although shortages aren't currently overwhelming, this may be due to the gradual reduction in production activity since the pandemic and some felt that long-term capability may be lacking should the market dynamic change once more. The specific roles associated with shortages also mirror those with gaps and are familiar shortages areas: production coordinators, accountants, production assistants, location managers, electricians and producers. **Shortages are more keenly felt in some areas such as film than others, for example, in Unscripted TV.**

A theme of experience was picked up throughout the research. Other than skills gaps, **a lack of experience was the clear reason for shortages in the sector** – relating to specific technical skills and working to the required scale (either sizes of teams or budgets). With the market evolving to accommodate different types of content, budgets and scales change – as do the skills needed to service such productions.

The picture didn't vary too much across the UK in regard to skills gaps and shortages, although there's a stronger depth of experienced crew in major hubs with thinner pipelines in areas where the industry is less well-developed. This was often linked to patterns of talent migration as some people move to more developed hubs in their early/mid-career and return to regions when they reach more senior levels. Some regional clusters were highlighted as exceptions, where local demand supports a steadier skills base.

Interventions which best address these skills issues, according to employers, typically involve those which prioritise hands-on experience: **on-the-job training/placements** were by far the most popular choice, with **job shadowing also being seen as useful**. **Expert guidance and advice**, in the form of **mentoring/coaching** and **masterclasses**, were also seen as important interventions.

As the market develops and impacts skills issues, so too does technology. The research suggests there is uncertainty around the adoption of AI in the sector. **Around half of respondents anticipate some changes to working practices, others predicted redundancies and some were uncertain**. Adoption of AI is variable, with many reporting using it for back-office efficiency and coding but there have been many concerns around generative AI, with respondents citing concerns about copyright liability and risk. **Many respondents struggled to specify which roles lack AI skills** – either because they weren't using it yet, or they felt that it was too early to judge. The perceptions around AI were more variable with early adopters – such as those working in animation, post-production and visual effects (VFX) – being clearer on how it could impact their respective workforces and a higher percentage being more confident it could result in redundancies.

The following report provides granular detail by key subsectors and departments and demonstrates the specific challenges within different streams of the industry.

# Key Findings

## Recruitment

Almost two-thirds of employers (64%) found it hard to recruit over the last 12 months.

Nearly two-thirds of those that have experienced recruitment difficulties stated this was due to a low number of people with the required skills (65%) and a lack of experience (57%).

92% of employers recruited freelancers in the last 12 months.

## AI

52% of respondents anticipate some changes to working practices.

Those in the technical department are the most likely (30%) to say that AI will have minimal impact in their department.

Just over a fifth (21%) of respondents think that AI will make some roles redundant, this varies across the industry:

- Animation/VFX/post-production (29%)
- Film (25%).

## Skills gaps and shortages

55% of employers state that at least 80% of their workforce is proficient.

Mid-level roles were seen to have the most skills gaps and shortages.

Employers identified communication and interpersonal skills (41%) skills and leadership and management skills (37%) as key skills gaps, other skills gaps included:

- Planning/organisational skills (35%)
- Resilience (35%).

36% of employers state skills shortages have impacted their production budgets/finances.

## Useful training interventions

Respondents identified the following training interventions as the most useful in addressing skills gaps and shortages:

- On-the-job training/placements (46%)
- Mentoring/Coaching (39%)
- Job shadowing (28%)
- Masterclasses (25%)
- Short courses combined with paid placements (21%)
- Apprenticeships (21%).

# Pan-sector overview

## Introduction

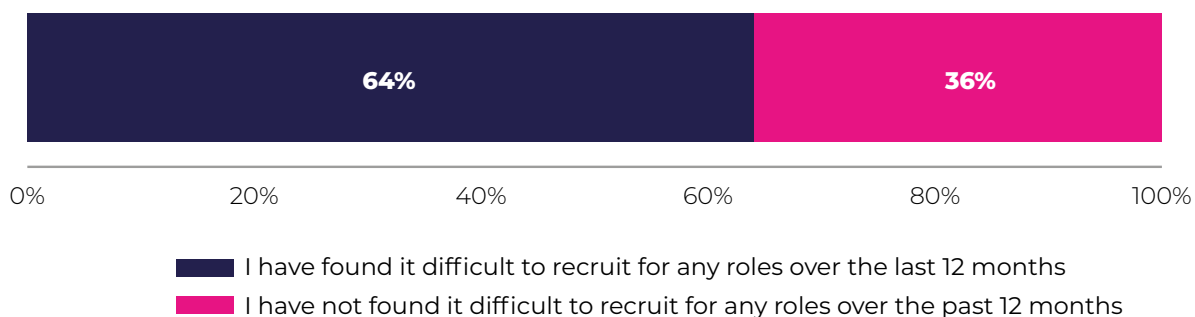
ScreenSkills commissioned Harlow Consulting to undertake research on labour force issues within the screen sector workforce. The methodology employed an online survey of 522 employers, between Nov-Dec 2025, and 20 follow-up depth interviews with survey respondents. The respondents include a broad range of individuals who are involved in crewing-up/hiring: from line producers and HoDs to post-production supervisors and key grips. There was a balance of employers from departments, regions and subsectors to ensure perceptions spanning the breadth and depth of the screen sector were captured. Full details of the methodology and the respondent profile can be found in appendix 1 and appendix 2, respectively.

## Recruitment challenges

As shown in the first chart, almost two thirds (64%) of all survey respondents reported experiencing difficulty recruiting for any role over the last 12 months.

There is more variation by sub-sector than by department. For example, in the Film sub-sector 71% of respondents identified difficulties, compared with 65% in HETV and 64% in Unscripted TV and a low of 55% in Animation. In terms of departments, this compares with a high of 71% of respondents in technical, 70% in production management and a low of 61% in editorial and 60% in craft.

Difficulty recruiting staff over the last 12 months



Base: 522 respondents

## Skills shortages

Shortages are most frequently identified to be caused by a lack of appropriately skilled workers. Of the respondents who stated they had found it difficult to recruit over the last 12 months, **65% stated this was due to a low number of people with the required skills**. The second most common reason for recruitment difficulties was a 'lack of experience' (57%), followed by a 'low number of people with the required attitude, motivation or personality' (41%). The least common responses, across departments, sub-sectors and geographical areas was 'remote location/poor public transport' (10%) and the impact of Brexit, making it more difficult to recruit EU nationals (5%).

When focusing on skills shortages due to potential recruits **lacking experience**, survey respondents most often highlighted lack of experience with:

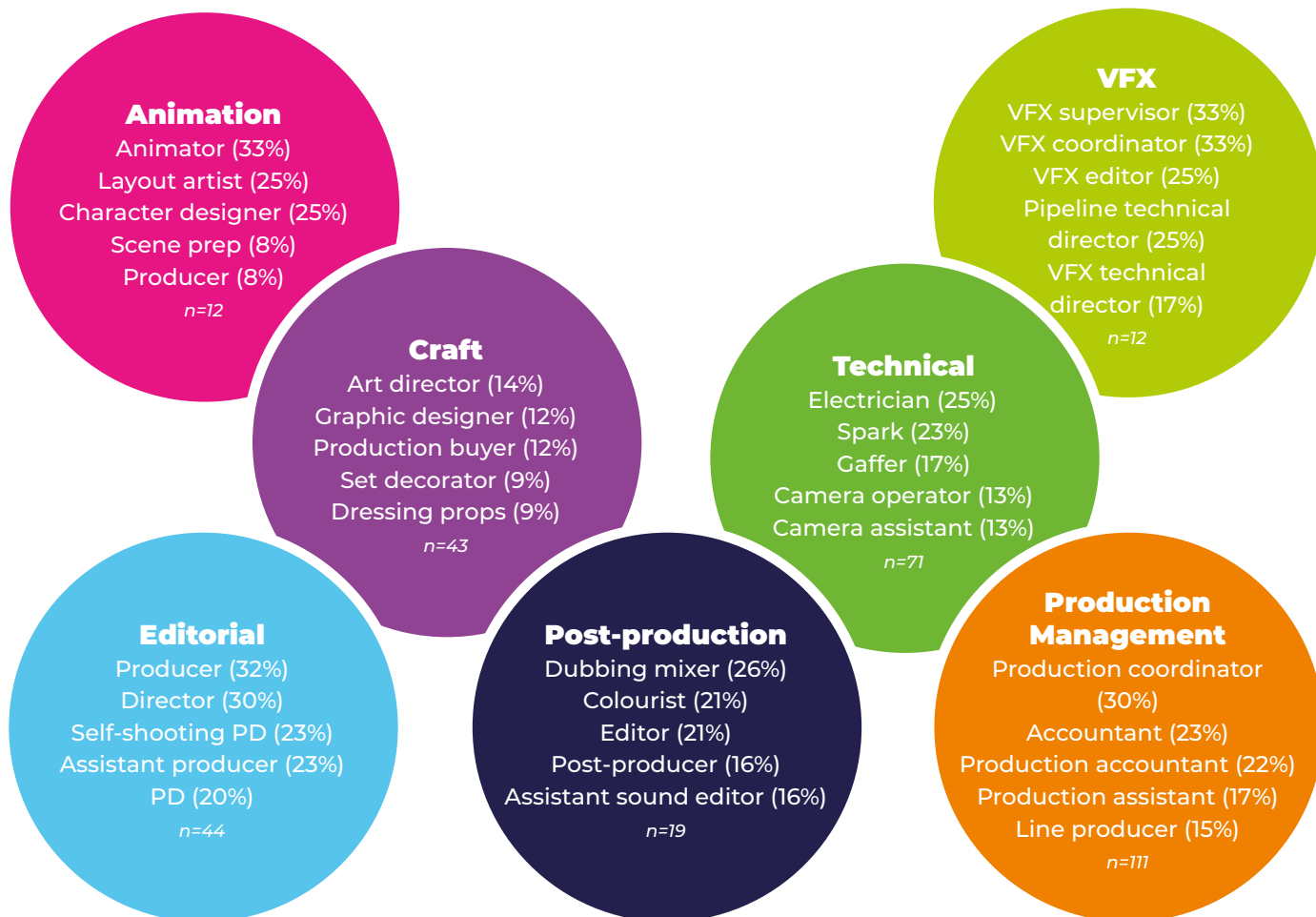
- specific technical skills (58%)
- experience working at the required team/department scale (50%)
- budget scale (37%)

**Leadership and management** capabilities were also frequently cited as lacking, including managing peers, navigating difficult conversations, and maintaining client-facing confidence. Interviewees additionally described gaps in technical and workflow literacy – such as understanding production pipelines, adapting to changing tools, AI awareness, and basic health and safety – echoing survey-reported deficits in job-specific competence.

## Roles experiencing shortages

Respondents were then asked to identify the job roles they had found difficult to recruit for in the one department where they primarily work. The results were split across various job roles; the **top 5 most difficult**

to recruit for are shown below, by department. Note: this question was only asked of those who stated that they had difficulty recruiting (n=334).



## Seniority and characteristics of shortages

**Hardest-to-fill roles were typically described as those combining high responsibility, pace, and people skills, especially where there is limited time to train, often framed around mid-level “delivery-critical” roles** where people must lead, organise, and make decisions (for example, assistant producer-type roles and equivalent step-up points). Also highlighted were specialist roles needing both domain knowledge and production know-how (for example, food/home economics knowledge on certain shows, or production finance expertise). “Hidden” shortages were noted by some, where the role exists, but people lack key workflow knowledge (for example, post-production understanding within production leadership roles).

**“Stepping-up” – i.e. progression from early career to roles which needed experience, were viewed by some as the pinch point, rather than entry-level supply.** Some role pressures appeared tied to specific production types (for example, unscripted formats needing strong assistant

producer pipelines; post-heavy work needing stronger post workflow knowledge). A few suggested that current low levels of greenlights reduce immediate shortage pressure, even if longer-term capability concerns remain. The greatest severity of skills shortages was identified in these types of roles, where people need more than basic experience, but they are not yet in senior leadership. The issue is not due to a lack of workers in these basic roles, but they are not always ready for the pace, responsibility, or breadth expected in the next role.

Where senior-level skills shortages were mentioned, they were linked to niche expertise or proven delivery on high-pressure productions. Where discussed, **the mid-level pipeline (into Assistant Producer/Coordinator/Junior leadership equivalents) was a common pressure point.** Some also emphasised “experience at scale” as a differentiator: people may have experience in a particular job title, but not at the required complexity.

## Impacts of skills shortages

The **impacts of skills shortages** were widespread. Among the 334 respondents who had struggled to fill roles, the most common consequences were:

- **Crews having insufficient experience (59%)**
- **The need to step up existing staff too soon (46%)**
- **Negative effects on production quality (40%)**

Survey respondents also described additional pressures, such as staff covering multiple roles, longer working hours, wellbeing concerns, delays, increased supervision demands and, in some cases, having to turn down work or compromise on quality. A further operational impact was the need to hire outside

local nations and regions, reported by respondents across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the North of England, and the Midlands. While most respondents reported clear skills pressures, a minority believed that a slack jobs market, rather than skills shortages, was the more significant challenge.

Qualitative accounts support this, pointing to editors and junior-to-mid-level staff (particularly those promoted before being ready) as groups frequently lacking the depth of experience needed. Some also noted that remote and hybrid working have reduced opportunities for juniors to gain informal observational experience.

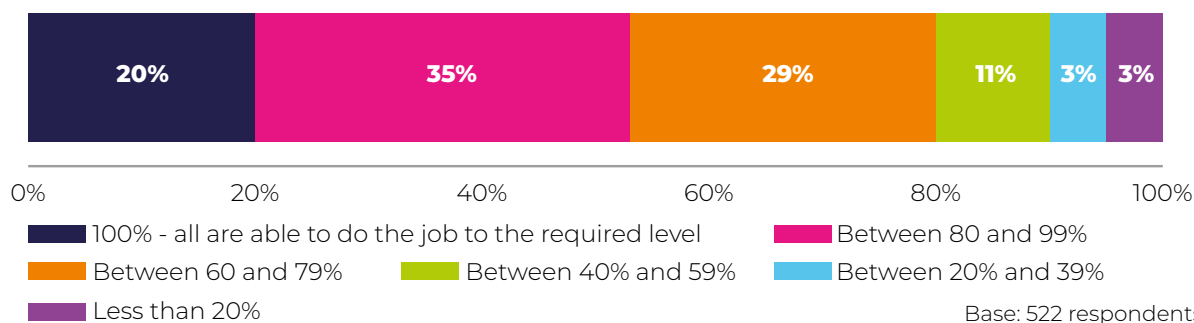
## Skills gaps

Skills gaps exist when an individual lacks the skills to fulfil the requirements of their job.

The survey findings suggest a highly skilled workforce, overall, with **over half of all respondents stating that over 80% of the people they have hired in the last 12 months were skilled enough to do their job.**

Amongst sub-sectors, respondents who hire into roles in Unscripted TV report the fewest skills gaps with Film and HETV reporting slightly more than average. At a departmental level, those who hire into technical roles report the fewest skills gaps, of all respondents, with those in production management reporting the most.

**Percentage of staff hired over the last 12 months regarded as able to do their job to the required level**



**Skills identified as lacking in the current workforce** include:

- **Communication/interpersonal skills (41%)**
- **Leadership/management skills (37%)**
- **Planning and organisational skills (35%)**
- **Resilience (35%)**
- **Ability to deliver/receive feedback (33%)**

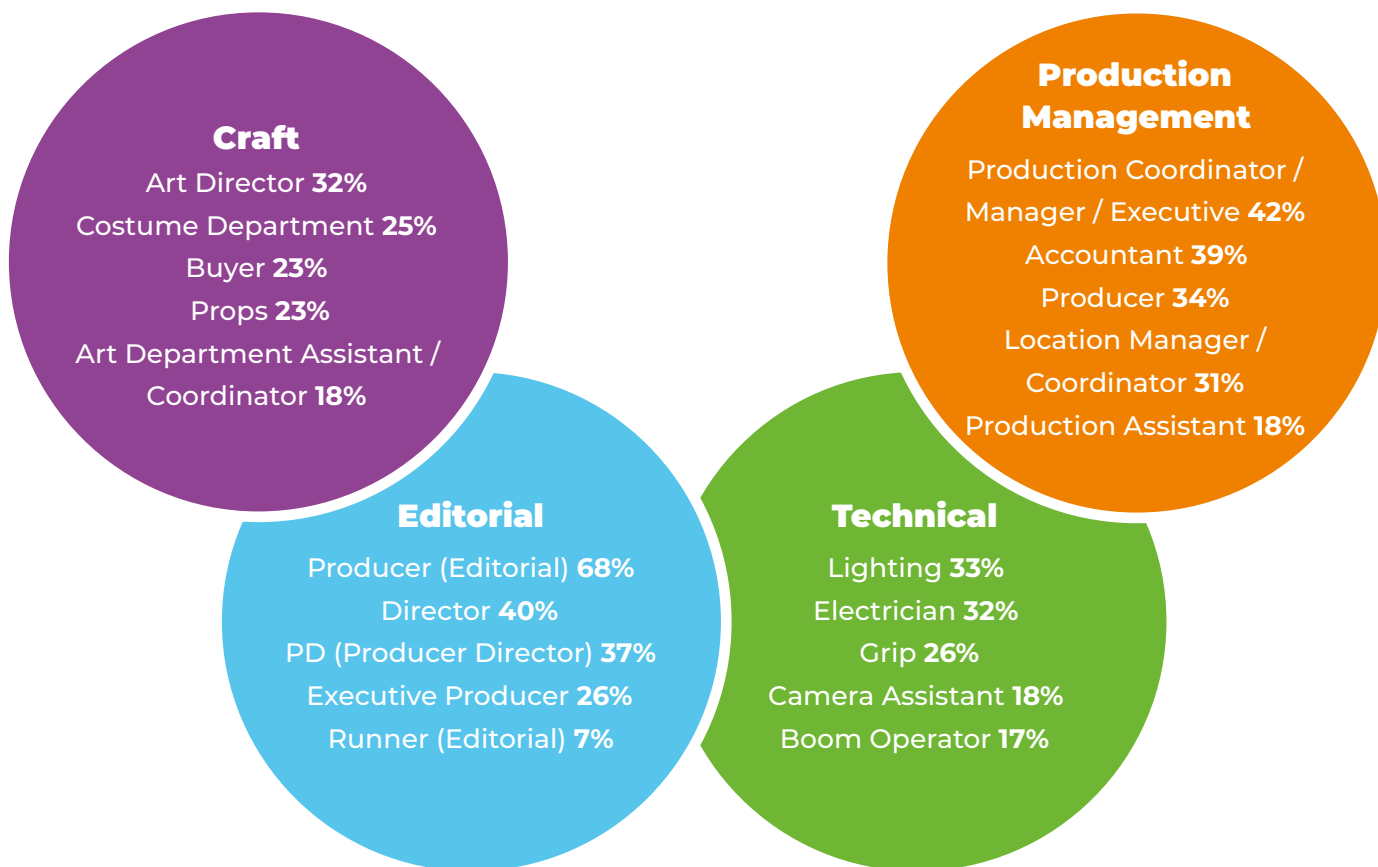
Entry level roles were often described in interviews as needing stronger workplace basics – such as initiative, confidence, communication – and clearer understanding of role expectations. Mid-level staff were often seen as needing stronger leadership, negotiation,

and “managing up” skills as their responsibility increases as they stepped up; this insight appears to be isolated to responses regarding the severity of skills gaps. Some interviewees also noted that even senior staff can lack confidence in negotiation or structured people management, suggesting gaps persist across levels.

The “first leadership step” was frequently seen as the hardest jump, because the required skillset shifts from task delivery to people and stakeholder management. Experience of complex, large-scale work was described here as a key differentiator, and not evenly available across career histories.

## Roles with skills gaps

Respondents were asked to identify the job roles which were experiencing skills gaps within the department in which they have responsibility for hiring. The top five job roles experiencing skills gaps are listed below.



## Future skills needs

Depth interviews indicate that AI, automation, and shifting workflows are reshaping specific roles across the screen industries. Many changes centre on entry, early career and support roles, where routine tasks, such as basic monitoring, admin collation and repetitive pipeline steps are increasingly automated. As a result, traditional entry-level pathways may narrow, and junior roles may become fewer, or require higher starting capability. Roles are also becoming more generalist, with individuals expected to handle a wider mix of tasks and work within smaller, more digitally fluent teams.

**Emerging skillsets** include general AI literacy, ethical and responsible use of tools, multiskilling, and broad digital fluency. Realtime and visualisation skills (e.g., Unreal Engine), virtual production workflows, and end-to-end production/pipeline awareness are becoming more valuable, particularly in VFX, animation, and immersive contexts. Social first content skills and platform specific storytelling are also rising in importance.

**Roles changing** rather than disappearing include production assistants, coordinators, and other admin-heavy positions, which may shift toward more technical or oversight-focused functions. In some VFX/animation pipelines, increased automation may reduce demand for narrowly specialised craft tasks, though most interviewees caution that core creative judgement remains essential.

**New and emerging roles** identified include:

- Visualisation/real time artists (e.g. Unreal specialists)
- Virtual production and LED volume technicians
- Multi-skilled shooter-editor roles
- Social/digital content creators
- Sustainability officers and wellbeing facilitators

Overall, change is characterised less by job loss and more by evolving responsibilities, increased multiskilling, and growth in technology driven and socially oriented roles.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Employers were also asked about their perceptions of the future impact of AI. It's important to note these are perceptions of respondents and should be treated as such.

The data shows moderate expectations of change: 52% of respondents anticipate "some changes to working practices," driven mainly by post-production and VFX departments. Film, HETV, and technical departments foresee fewer shifts, and roughly one fifth of respondents in most subsectors are uncertain about AI's future impact.

Interview participants reported that AI is currently used at task level, rather than in strategic or leadership functions. Its practical applications include research, drafting, formatting, automation, and accelerating repetitive workflows. In post-production and technical teams, AI enabled features are used for first pass work, such as sound cleanup, initial picture grading, and auto functions embedded in editing and graphics software. In animation and VFX environments, some described broader effects on the pipeline, including real time and visualisation workflows, whereas those who recruit into production roles often emphasised administrative efficiency and process streamlining.

Adoption levels vary widely. Interviewees described how some organisations impose strict internal controls, especially around copyright risk, leading to limited use. Others rely on AI daily for back-office efficiency, using tools for coding help, spreadsheet automation, social media monitoring, or generating early concept, casting, or pitch materials. Views on generative AI are cautious. Participants regularly cited concerns about copyright liability, client acceptance, and the accuracy and verifiability of outputs. AI was broadly considered valuable for time consuming or repetitive tasks, but risky for activities where factual accuracy, creative intent, or legal clarity are critical.

Across sectors, the skills identified as most important for adapting to new technologies were (in order of frequency):

- 1. Interpersonal skills**, including project management, resilience, openness to new ideas, and adaptable mindsets.
- 2. Technical skills**, particularly those linked to AI enabled tools and emerging workflows.
- 3. Administrative and workflow skills**, ensuring smooth integration of new tools.
- 4. Understanding of new technologies**, including their limitations and appropriate use.
- 5. Appropriate attitudes**, including ethical awareness.

Many respondents struggled to specify which roles lack AI skills – often because teams were not yet using AI they were unsure how it applied to their roles, or they felt its impact was too early to judge. Some believed everyone in a department would require training, while a small minority felt their teams were already sufficiently prepared. No clear pattern of at risk or under-skilled job roles emerged across subsectors.

## Training interventions

Respondents across all sub-sectors were asked which three of a list of training interventions were most useful to address skills issues and the most popular option across all subsectors (with the exception of VFX and animation) identified **on-the-job training/placements** (set-ready training from early to experienced career stages) as one of the most useful interventions to address skills gaps and shortages (46%), followed by **mentoring/coaching** (39%). Continuous professional development (CPD) was considered essential, with many suggesting it should be prioritised alongside, or even above, new entrant training. Participants tended to judge the suitability of training interventions on three criteria: realism (learning under real constraints), relevance (role-specific content), and credibility (proof a person can do the job).

In relation to training interventions, the research identified a preference for hands-on experience and expert coaching and advice. The most useful training interventions identified by respondents were:

- **On the job training/placements (46% identified as an important training intervention):**

- Higher education courses were viewed as not adequately preparing graduates with the hands-on skills, behaviours, and team awareness required in real production environments.

- **Mentoring/coaching (39%):**

- Strong mentoring was suggested as a good way of overcoming skills gaps quickly when teams have capacity to support learning, particularly confidence and resilience which need active development to achieve successful progression.
- Mentoring and coaching (including industry-wide schemes) were often seen as high-impact, especially when paired with incentives or recognition for mentors. Those who identified mentoring as a suitable intervention also did so because it is seen as supporting leadership.

- **Other types of training interventions:**

- Job shadowing (28%) and masterclasses (25%) were both also regarded as useful training interventions.

- Respondents also identified other training interventions, such as bootcamps, practical “how the job really works” workshops, masterclasses on evolving tools and workflows, and accreditation approaches like skills passports. Interviewees emphasised that practical training builds not just knowledge but also confidence, judgement, and industry networks.

- **Apprenticeships (21%):**

- Twenty-one per cent of all respondents’ stated apprenticeships are one of the most useful training interventions (the intervention identified as the fifth-most useful intervention).
- Apprenticeships can be a powerful and effective way of building a skilled and inclusive workforce for example, the Level 3 Lighting Technician apprenticeship is as an excellent standard that’s well regarded by gaffers and lighting experts as a structured pathway into the industry. However, for the majority of the screen industry apprenticeships are inaccessible because they can only be accessed by full time employees who could commit to doing an eight-month apprenticeship. As our evidence shows the screen industry relies significantly on a freelance workforce and with the apprenticeship model excluding ‘atypical workers’, screen sector employers are largely barred from apprenticeships.
- In March 2026, the government announced significant reforms to the apprenticeship system in England, effective from September 2026, which will see the withdrawal of public funding for several key leadership and management standards further eroding the industry’s ability to access the Growth and Skills Levy.

- **Least useful interventions:**

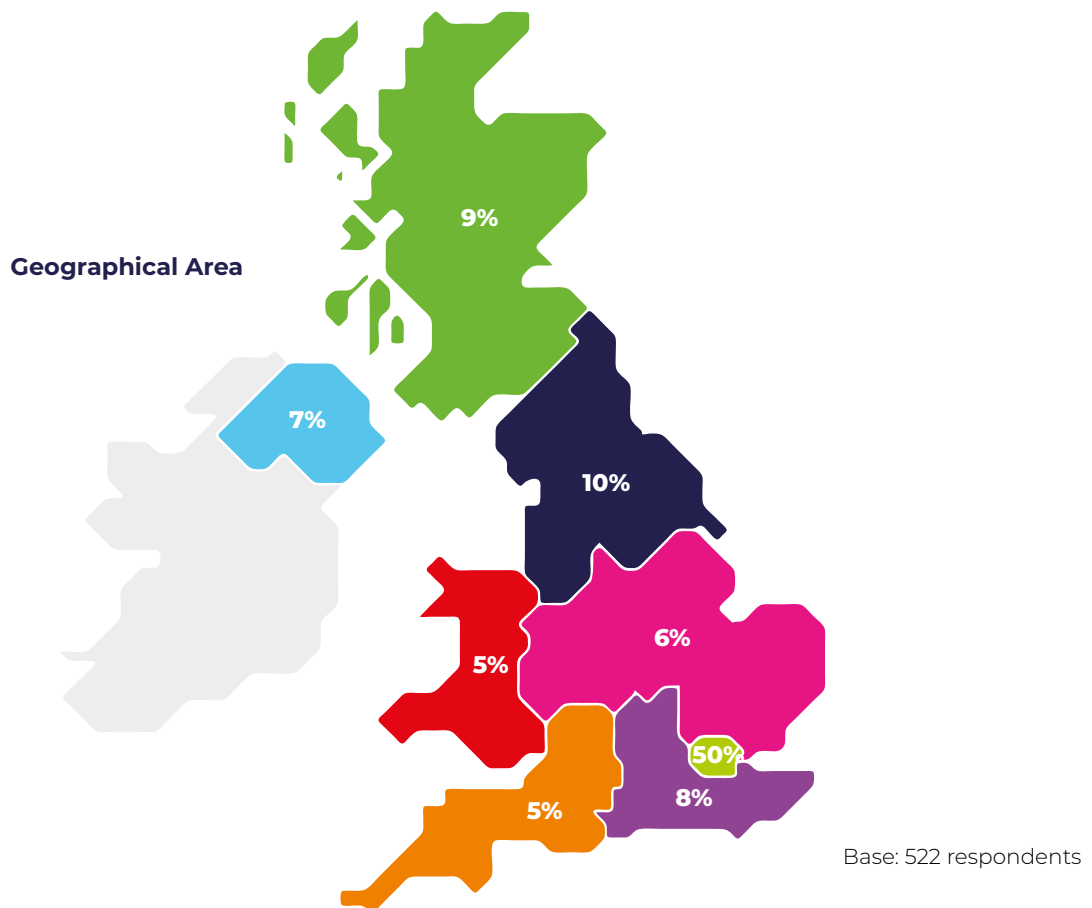
- Interventions considered least useful were ‘more local skills support’ (11%), Industry/National Lottery funded bootcamps (8%) and T-levels (3%).

Respondents identified the need for clearer pathways and placed value on accreditation because participants expect these will support hiring managers trust capability and help individuals understand “what’s next” thus supporting career development.

# Geographical findings

The UK screen sector is heavily centred around London and the South East, however, growing clusters in areas such as Birmingham, Belfast, Cardiff and Manchester are continuing to expand, reflecting the skilled talent located in the nations and regions.<sup>3</sup> The survey sought to identify how skills gaps and shortages differ across the UK with responses from those who have had responsibility for crewing up or hiring from across the UK. Half of survey respondents worked primarily in London, with no more than 10% working in each of

the other English regions, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This broadly reflects the figures from the ScreenSkills Sizing Up report which placed 40% of the screen workforce in Greater London, followed by the North & Yorkshire (13%) the South East of England and South West England (8%). The two sets of data are not directly comparable as the geographical areas of the UK are defined slightly differently, and geographical data in Sizing Up is based on where respondents live, rather than where they work.<sup>4</sup>



## Skills shortages across the UK

The main causes of skills shortages cited in each geographical region reflect the pan-sector picture, with the top causes across all areas being 'low number of people with the required skills' and 'lack of experience'. A lack of skills is most pronounced in the Midlands and the East of England (81%), with this being less of

a concern amongst respondents in London (61%) and in the South West (61%). 'Lack of experience' was most selected by respondents in Scotland (73%) and the Midlands and the East of England (71%), and identified by the fewest respondents in the North of England (49%) and in London (51%).

The depth interviews reveal a picture of stronger depth of experienced crew in major hubs, with thinner pipelines in areas where the industry is less well-developed. This was linked by some to people often moving to hubs early in their career, then returning to regions later at more senior levels, leaving mid-level gaps. However, regional clusters were highlighted as exceptions, where local demand supports a steadier skills base.

Where specified, mid-level production roles and experience of large-scale productions were the most cited regional pressure points, with some suggesting that training tied to local employers (bootcamps, college links) can help build regional pipelines.

Impacts of skills shortages vary by nation. The most identified impact by respondents in all English geographical areas, and in Wales, is 'crew had a lack of experience', in line with the pan-sector view – but this masks some geographical nuance. For respondents in Northern Ireland, the most common impact is that 'existing crew needed to be stepped up too soon' (56%) and, in Scotland, 'impacts on budgets/finances' were most common (64%), which had the most variation in respondents selecting this option, and was least common in the South East of England (14%).

Regional skills disparities were a notable theme in response to an open question on the impacts of skills gaps on productions, particularly from those responsible for hiring to roles in editorial, production management and technical roles.

### Skills gaps across the UK

The extent of skills gaps within the workforce varies by geographical area, as demonstrated in the table below.

Proportion of workers hired in the last 12 months who are able to do their job to the required level	100%	80-99%	60-79%	40%-59%	20-39%	Less than 20%
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
England - North	14%	46%	24%	10%	2%	4%
England - Midlands and East of England	35%	21%	17%	14%	0%	14%
England - London	18%	35%	32%	11%	2%	2%
England - South East	30%	21%	26%	5%	16%	2%
England - South West	29%	29%	25%	14%	0%	4%
Northern Ireland	8%	38%	41%	8%	5%	0%
Scotland	21%	43%	28%	6%	2%	0%
Wales	20%	36%	20%	16%	4%	4%

The skill most typically reported as missing from new recruits is **'communication/interpersonal skills'**; this is true of respondents from all geographical areas, with the exception of respondents from the Midlands and the East of England, who most identified **'planning/organisational skills'** and **'leadership/management skills'** in equal numbers. Relatively high proportions of respondents in other areas also identified these skills as lacking in the current workforce. Respondents in

the South West of England report the highest levels of skills gaps than any other region.

Some depth interview participants linked the existence of skills gaps to the scale of work available locally, whereby smaller regional production can mean fewer chances to build "big show" experience. Where specified, experience of large-scale operations and the associated planning and compliance workload was the clearest regional differentiator.

### Potential impact of AI across the UK

Overall, a change to working practices is the main impact of AI predicted by respondents (52%); but there is some variation by geographical area, with fewer people in Northern Ireland (27%) and more people in the North of England (60%) predicting this impact.

However, just over a fifth of all respondents (21%) are unsure of the potential impacts of AI, with uncertainty being highest amongst respondents in Northern Ireland (33%), and lowest in the Midlands and the East of England (7%).



## Skills and training needs across the UK

On-the-job training was identified as the most useful training intervention (46% by respondents in all geographical areas), with the exception of Wales (44%) where most respondents selected 'job shadowing' (48%) and the Midlands and the East of England, where most respondents selected 'mentoring/coaching' (48%). This is also a popular option amongst respondents in London (41%), Wales (44%), Scotland (43%) and in the South West of England (39%).

In June 2025, the Government published the Creative Industries Sector Plan. The government stated they will continue to increase the quantity of creative training pathways including further regional creative skills bootcamps. Less than one in five (17%) of survey respondents across all geographical areas stated that Government-funded Skills Bootcamps (England only) are 'a useful training intervention'.

Some geographical differences and issues were noted in response to open survey questions:

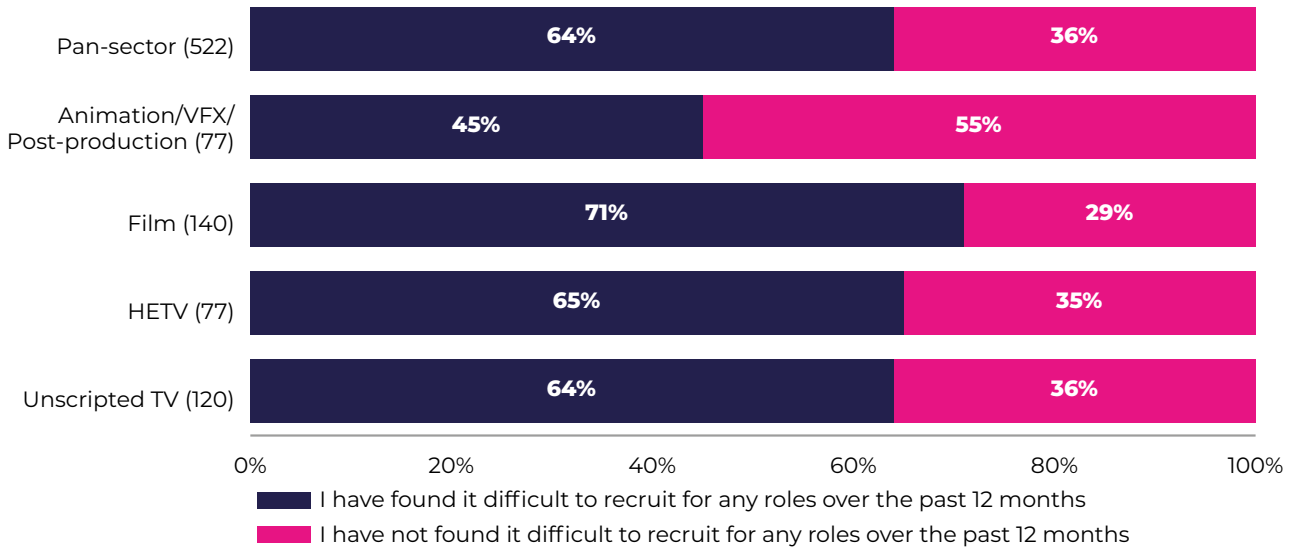
- A gap in the **Midlands** (England) for post-production roles and a need to create a pipeline of work so that staff can build experience.
- In **Wales** a need was flagged for investment in freelancers and creatives alongside, a lack of crew in North Wales, and lack of Welsh applicants to roles in the screen industry in Wales.
- The **South West of England** respondents report a lack of career paths for young people and, feeling separate from the rest of the UK.

It was suggested that training could be more equally balanced across the UK and outside of London. Although most comments were in favour of regional development outside of London, others felt that regional development leads to smaller, under-skilled workforces.

# Sub-sectors

Just under two thirds (64%) of all respondents have found it difficult to recruit for any roles in the last 12 months, with the Film sector experiencing most

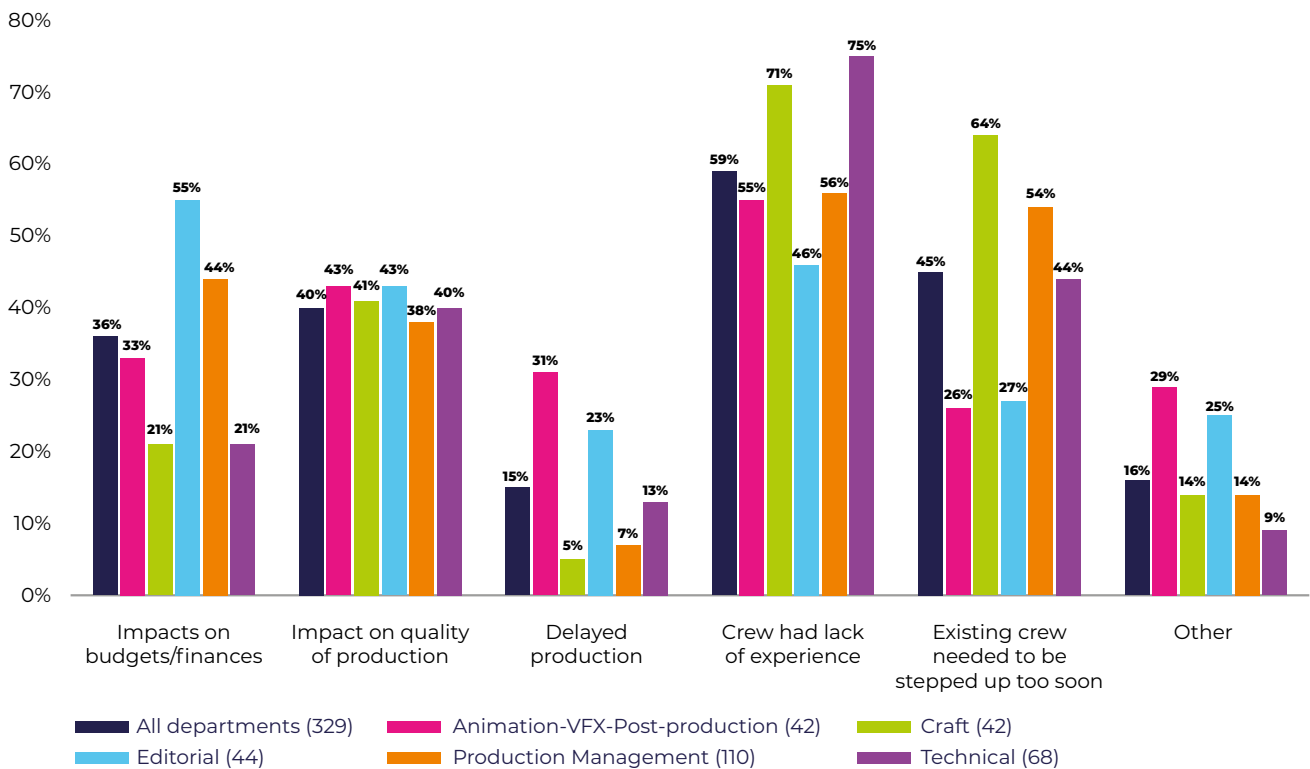
difficulty (71%) and Animation/VFX/Post-production experiencing the least difficulty (45%).



Base: Indicated in brackets in the chart

Impacts of skills shortages mostly result in crew having a lack of experience (59%), particularly in the Film sub-sector (64%), whereas impacts on budgets/finances are more common in Unscripted TV (51%, compared

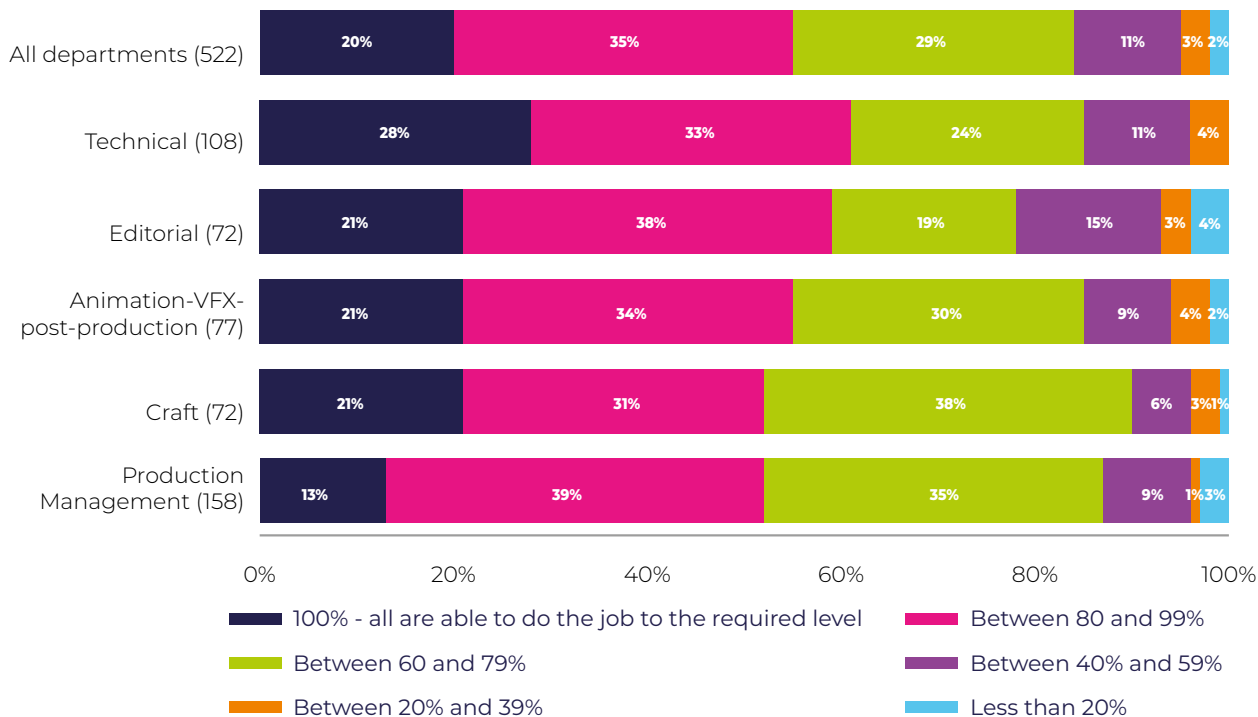
to 36% of all respondents). Delays in production are more common amongst respondents in Animation/VFX/Post-production (31%, compared with 15% of all respondents).



Base: Indicated in brackets in the chart

Skills gaps are relatively low amongst all sub-sectors; most are in line with the pan-sector average. The only exception is Film, where respondents suggest there

may be more skills gaps amongst those hired in the last 12 months than in other sectors.

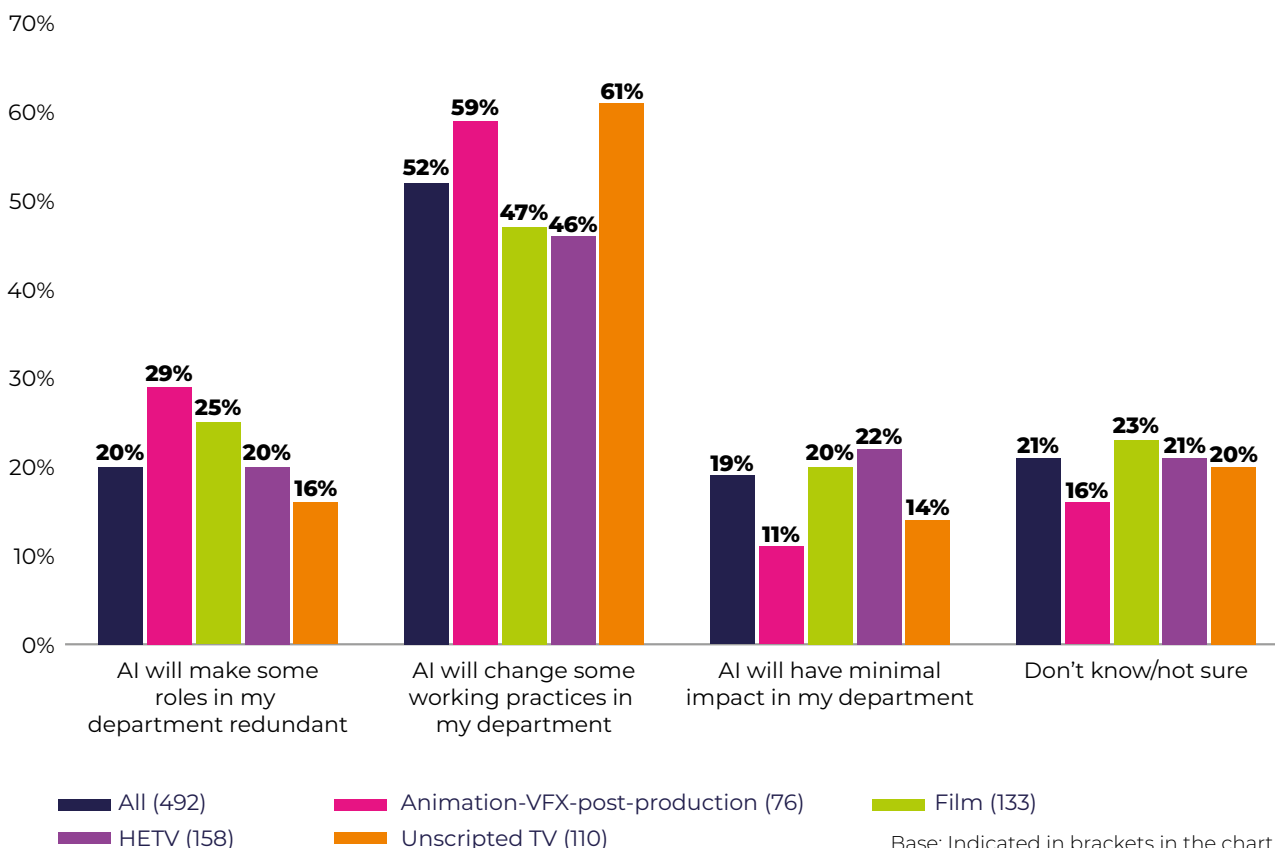


Base: Indicated in brackets in the chart

Details of the roles experiencing shortages are included in the sub-sections below.

In terms of the impact of AI on the workforce, more respondents in Unscripted TV predict AI will change

some working practices in their department than in other sectors: 61% of respondents, compared with a pan-sector average of 52%. There is little difference between sub-sectors in the proportions of respondents identifying other impacts.<sup>5</sup>



Base: Indicated in brackets in the chart

Overall, views on the training interventions that would be most useful to address skills gaps and shortages differ little by sub-sector. There are few exceptions:

- Masterclasses are more popular amongst respondents who hire into HETV, than those in any other sector
- Government-funded skills bootcamps are more popular amongst respondents to who hire into Animation/VFX/Post-production, as is online training
- Online training is least popular amongst respondents who hire into Film
- Short courses combined with paid placements are least popular amongst respondents who hire into Animation/VF/Post-production

	All (522)	Unscripted TV (120)	HETV (169)	Film (140)	Animation/VFX/Post-production (77)
On-the-job training/placements	46%	47%	46%	41%	49%
Mentoring/Coaching	39%	39%	36%	36%	43%
Job shadowing	28%	30%	26%	28%	29%
Masterclasses	25%	19%	33%	19%	29%
Apprenticeships	21%	23%	20%	21%	22%
Short courses combined with paid placement	21%	20%	21%	25%	10%
Government-funded Skills Bootcamps	17%	16%	18%	15%	26%
Online training	15%	18%	16%	10%	21%
In-person short courses	13%	13%	15%	14%	12%
Industry engagement in academic qualifications	12%	8%	12%	14%	17%
More local skills support	11%	13%	9%	9%	7%
Industry/National Lottery funded bootcamps	8%	7%	7%	11%	8%
T-Level industry placement(s)	3%	3%	2%	4%	8%
None of the above	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	1%	-

# Film

## Recruitment difficulties and skills shortages

The film sub-sector reported more recruitment difficulties than any other sub-sector: 71% of respondents stated it had been difficult to recruit staff in the last 12 months, compared with 64% of all survey

respondents. Of these, **62% stated that recruitment difficulties were due to a low number of people with the required skills.**



Respondents were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

**Skills shortages** were prevalent across a wide range of different roles (as they are in HETV and Unscripted TV), with the most common (top five) being in job roles in the production management and technical departments. Listed below are the top five most mentioned job role categories:

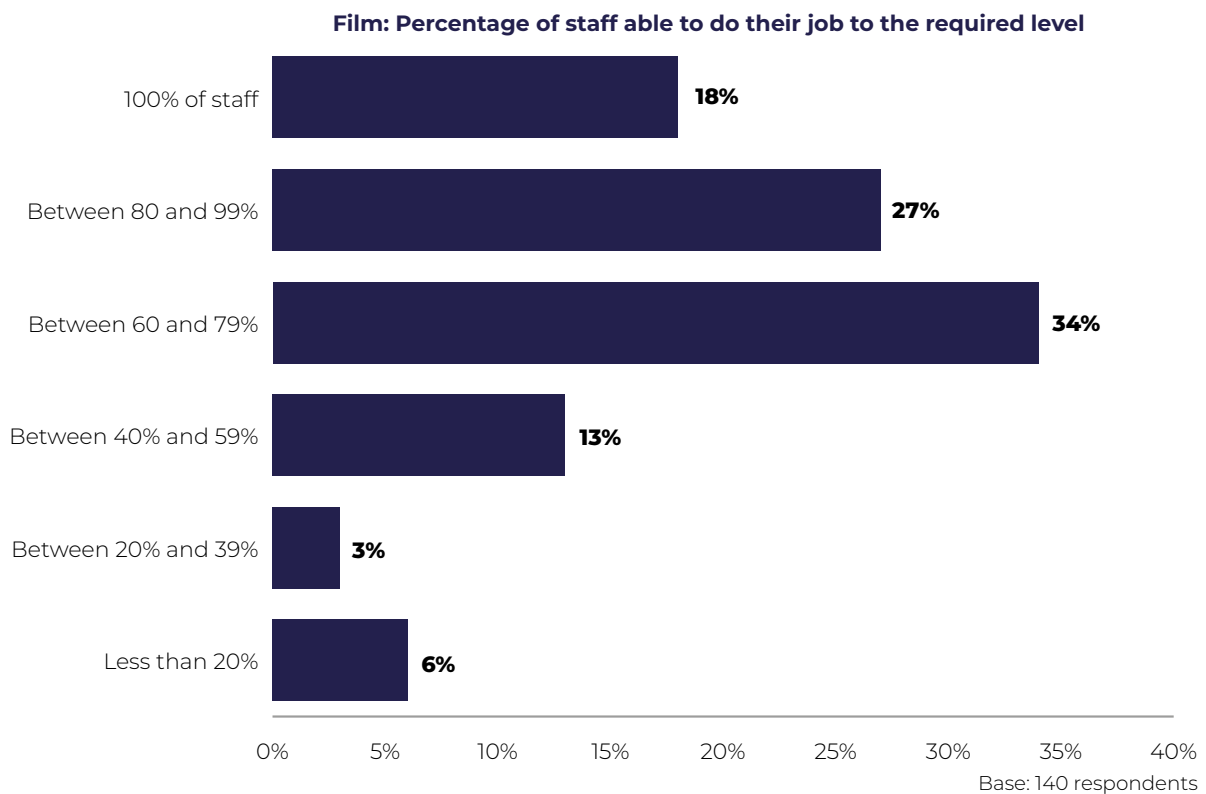
- Accountant
- Location Manager / Coordinator
- Lighting
- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Grip

All of the specific roles that were selected by respondents are listed in Appendix 2: Specific job roles experiencing skills shortages.

The main **impacts** of the reported recruitment difficulties are:

- a lack of experienced crew on productions (64%)
- existing crew needing to step-up too soon (52%)
- impact on quality of production (42%)

## Skills gaps



Although respondents report slightly more skills gaps than skills shortages, respondents suggest that the staff they hired over the past 12 months (i.e. in the current workforce) were fairly highly skilled, with just under half reporting that 80-100% of the workforce were able to do their job to the required level.

Where respondents identified skills gaps, these were broadly in line with the types of skills identified across all sub-sectors, with the **most identified skills gaps** being:

- Communication (38%)
- Ability to organise work (35%)
- Resilience (34%)
- Planning and organisational skills (30%)
- Job-specific skills (30%)

A wide variety of **job-specific skills** were cited across various departments; therefore, there is not a clear theme or trend other than general awareness or knowledge of the demands of the role, and relevant experience.

Where specific skills gaps were mentioned, these included (in order of number of mentions):

- AI skills/knowledge
- Trade-specific skills, such as painting, plastering, carpentry
- Driving
- Sewing (i.e. fitting, alteration, sewing, maintenance, repair skills)

The data also show that, overall, respondents experienced slightly more skills gaps than skills shortages in the last 12 months. Most of the **roles** with the highest reported shortages also have the **highest reported gaps** (top five):

- Accountant
- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Producer (Production Management)
- Location Manager / Coordinator
- Lighting

The exception is the role of Producer, which twice as many respondents reported as experiencing skills gaps than as a shortage.

## AI

Nearly half of respondents (47%) working in film predicted that AI will change some of the working practices in their department, with a quarter of respondents also suggesting the AI will make some roles in their department redundant. However, almost a quarter (23%) were unsure of the impact.

Some of the roles that are currently experiencing the highest numbers of skills shortages and gaps are also those which respondents suggest are **lacking the necessary skills to use AI**, namely:

- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Accountant
- Producer

Assistant Director is the second most commonly identified role lacking the necessary skills to use AI, but was identified by far fewer respondents as suffering from a skills shortage, or from skills gaps suggesting that this could be a role needing specific AI training.

## Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The top three for film were:

- On the job training/placements (41%)
- Mentoring/coaching (36%)
- Job shadowing (28%)

# High-end TV

## Recruitment difficulties and skills shortages

The proportion of respondents who have experienced difficulty recruiting into roles in HETV in the last 12 months (65%) is similar to the pan-sector average (64%). This suggests that recruiters in this sub-sector have less difficulty than those who recruit into roles in Film.

However, a higher proportion of respondents in HETV equate recruitment difficulties to a low number of people with the required skills (71%), suggesting more skills gaps than other sub-sectors.



Those who did report difficulties were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

Most respondents who had recruited into HETV in the last 12 months were responsible for recruiting into Production Management. As with the Film and Unscripted TV sectors, skills shortages are prevalent across a wide range of different roles, but there are some clear themes that reflect **shortages** reported at the pan-sector level. Listed below are the top five most mentioned job role categories:

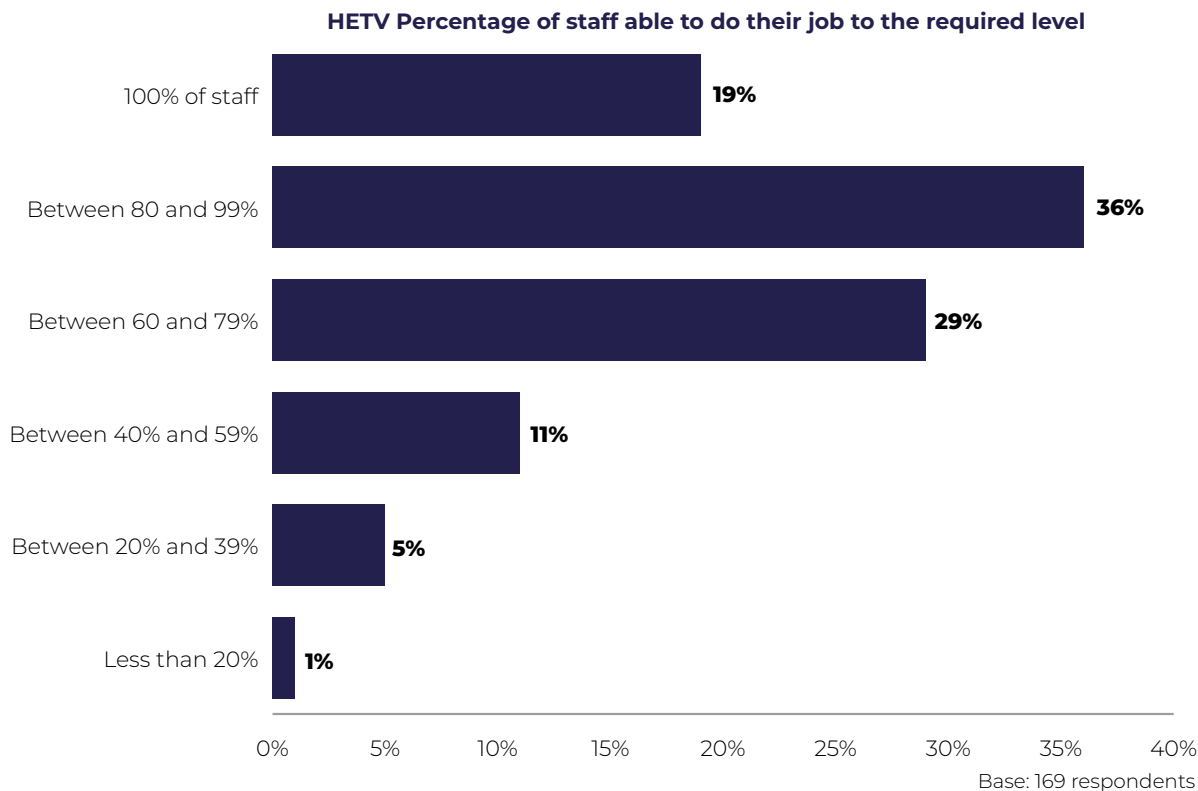
- Accountant
- Location Manager/Coordinator
- Electrician
- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Lighting

All of the specific roles that were selected by respondents are listed in Appendix 2: Specific job roles experiencing skills shortages.

The main **impacts** of the reported recruitment difficulties are:

- A lack of experienced crew on productions (62%)
- Existing crew needing to step-up too soon (51%)
- An impact on quality of production (32%)

## Skills gaps



Although respondents report slightly more skills gaps than skills shortages – particularly for Location Manager/Coordinator, Producer (Production Manager) and Production Coordinator/Manager/Executive – respondents suggest that the staff they hired over the past 12 months (i.e. in the current workforce) were **fairly highly skilled**. Over half of those recruited in the last 12 months were viewed as 80-100% able to do their job to the required level.

Where respondents identified skills gaps, four were selected by almost equal numbers of respondents:

- Leadership/management skills (39%)
- Planning/organisational skills (39%)
- Communication/interpersonal skills (39%)
- Ability to organise work (38%)

Three of these skills were identified by a higher proportion of respondents, on average, than the pan-sector findings (the exception being 'communication/interpersonal skills'). Where **job-specific skills** were identified as a gap (by 26% of respondents) these related to:

- **Practical requirements of the job**, across various roles including IT (IT networking and soft VP knowledge); video production; costume making; craft/trade experience, including qualifications (e.g. electrotechnical); driving (e.g. a Luton van); networking of desks and associated lighting equipment; radio miking; rigging equipment

safely; mould making, modelling, pyrotechnics and explosives, hydraulics, pneumatics, gas and propane, fire and DSEAR substances, motion control, wiremen

- **Applied knowledge**, such as payroll; understanding liability; legal ramifications, timeliness of paperwork; the information that needs including in wrap documents, wrap memos, and how to sufficiently complete a handover to someone else
- **Prior experience** (especially amongst those who have been stepped-up too quickly), e.g. in a production of similar budget; prior background in a relevant trade; understanding of what crew do and what they require to do their job; understanding the demands of the job
- **Interpersonal skills** that are required on a production, e.g. bigger picture thinking; desire to learn the skills to succeed; following instructions and prioritising; accepting criticism; attention to detail

Broadly, similar roles appear affected by **skills gaps** as with shortages; with more respondents identifying gaps than shortages. These are (top five):

- Accountant
- Location Manager/Coordinator
- Producer (Production Management)
- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Electrician

The data suggests that for the roles of Location Manager/Coordinator, Producer (Production Manager) and Production Coordinator/Manager/Executive skills gaps are more severe than skills shortages (as twice as many respondents identify these are roles with skills gaps, than with skills shortages).

## AI

Nearly half of respondents (46%) suggest that AI will change some working practices in their department, whilst a fifth think that AI will make some roles redundant (20%). Just over a fifth also think that AI will have minimal impact in their department (22%), or they are not sure (21%).

Some of the roles that are currently experiencing the highest numbers of skills shortages and gaps are also those which respondents suggest are lacking the necessary skills to use AI, namely:

- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Accountant
- Producer (Production Management)

This reflects the findings from those who recruit into roles in the Film industry.

## Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The top three for HETV were:

- On the job training/placements (46%)
- Mentoring/coaching (36%)
- Masterclasses (33%)

# Unscripted TV

## Recruitment difficulties and skills shortages

The proportion of respondents who report difficulties recruiting for Unscripted TV in the last 12 months is in line with the pan-sector average, at 64%.

**Fewer respondents who recruit for Unscripted TV report that recruitment difficulties are due to a 'low number of people with the required skills' (60%), suggesting fewer skills gaps than other sub-sectors.**



Those who did report difficulties were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

Most respondents who had recruited into Unscripted in the last 12 months were responsible for recruiting into Editorial and Production Management. As with the Film and HETV, skills shortages are prevalent across a wide range of different roles. The findings suggest that shortages within Unscripted TV are at a more senior level than in other sub-sectors. Particularly high numbers of those were reported hiring into roles in production management suggesting production coordinators were a shortage. Listed below are the top five most mentioned job role categories:

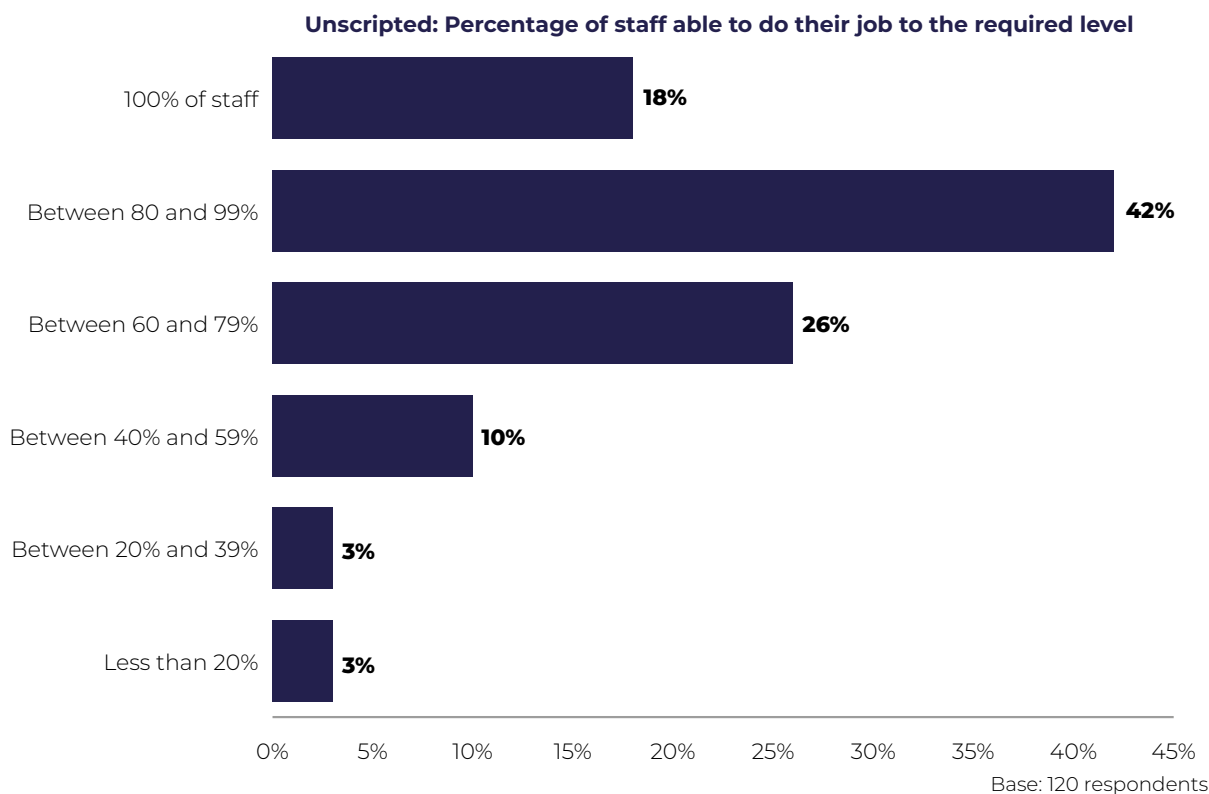
- Producer (Editorial)
- Production Coordinator/Manager/Executive
- Director
- Accountant
- Runner (Production Management)

All of the specific roles that were selected by respondents are listed in Appendix 2: Specific job roles experiencing skills shortages.

The main **impacts** of the reported recruitment difficulties are:

- A lack of experienced crew on productions (54%)
- Impacts on budgets/finances (51%)
- An impact on quality of production (45%)

## Skills gaps



Although respondents report slightly more skills gaps than skills shortages, respondents suggest that the staff they hired over the past 12 months (i.e. in the current workforce) were fairly highly skilled, with three fifths reporting that 80-100% of staff were able to do their job to the required level.

The most commonly identified skills gaps in Unscripted TV were:

- **Communication/interpersonal skills (44%)**
- **Ability to deliver/receive feedback (41%)**
- **Resilience (38%)**
- **Leadership/management skills (37%)**

Just under a fifth (18%) identified **job-specific skills** as a gap which tended to fall into the following categories:

- **Data and technology:** creating and managing relevant data for social media; understanding how algorithms work versus participating audiences; which platforms are best for different types of content; understating of AI and how to implement; data wrangling
- **Editorial skills:** editing skills; combining good editorial skills with good camerawork
- **Directing:** how to shoot for the edit; how to step into editing roles; multi-camera directing
- **Production:** research, writing briefs, finding locations, clearing locations
- **Interpersonal skills:** initiative; working to the required standard
- **Welfare:** welfare of contributors; duty of care

## AI

More than any other sub-sector, those who recruit for Unscripted TV expect that AI will change some working practices in their department (61%), and far fewer (16%) than other sub-sectors expect that AI will make some roles in their department redundant. A fifth weren't sure of the impact of AI (20%) and only 14% predicted that AI will have minimal impact on their department.

Roles most identified as lacking the necessary skills to use AI reflect those most identified as currently suffering from skills shortages and skills gaps. These are senior roles:

- Producer (Editorial)
- Executive Producer
- Director (e.g., Director, Co-Director)

## Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The top three for HETV were:

- On the job training/placements (47%)
- Mentoring/coaching (39%)
- Job shadowing (30%)

# Children's TV

**Fourteen respondents stated that they had (or had in the past 12 months) responsibility for hiring staff or crewing up in Children's TV. The following summary should therefore be viewed as anecdotal.**

Respondents worked across the following departments and geographical areas:

Departments	Geographical areas
Animation (2)	London (3)
Craft (1)	South West (3)
Editorial (2)	West Midlands (2)
Production Management (7)	East of England (2)
Technical (2)	South East (2)
	Scotland (1)
	Wales (1)

Across the departments in which respondents had responsibility for recruitment, Production Management was least difficult to recruit to (four respondents reporting no difficulties). Where respondents had experienced difficulties, the following roles were mentioned, each by one respondent:

- Animation Artist (e.g., Animator, Character Designer, Layout Artist)
- Animation Supervisor
- Accountant (e.g., Accountant, Assistant Accountant, Financial Controller, Production Accountant, Payroll Accountant, Cashier)
- Assistant Director (e.g., First Assistant Director, Second Assistant Director, Trainee Assistant Director, Unit Director)
- Location Manager / Coordinator (e.g., Location Assistant, Location Coordinator, Location Manager, Location Scout, Unit Manager)
- Production Assistant (e.g., Production Assistant, Assistant, Set Production Assistant)
- Runner (Production Management)
- Script Supervisor

The main causes of recruitment difficulties are: Not enough people interested in doing this type of role' and 'Low number of available workers generally'. The main impacts of skills shortage vacancies are 'crew had lack of experience', 'impacts on budgets/finances' and 'existing crew needed to be stepped up too soon'.

Findings suggest a highly skilled workforce – with all respondents stating that at least 80% of the staff they had hired in the last 12 months are able to do their job to the required level (seven stating 100%). Respondents did not identify any job-specific skills as lacking in staff they had hired in the last 12 months.

The top five skills lacking were:

- Communication/interpersonal skills
- Ability to organise work
- Resilience
- Ability to deliver/receive feedback
- Sustainability skills

'AI will change some working practices in my department' was the most common response (6) when asked about the impacts of AI on working practices, however four respondents were unsure.

The most useful training interventions to address skills gaps and shortages were:

- On-the-job training/placements (57%)
- Mentoring/Coaching (43%)
- Apprenticeships (43%)

# Animation/VFX/Post-production

Due to the various disciplines in animation such as stop-motion and motion graphics, as well as the smaller sample sizes in these sectors, for the purposes of the report, we have grouped animation, VFX and post-production together. This aligns with 'digital

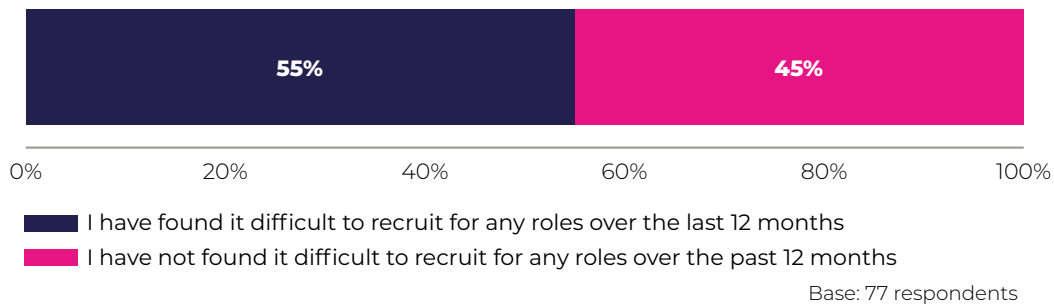
content production' sectors as outlined by the BFI and Olsberg-SPI.6 Role level data has been disaggregated where appropriate and more role-level data can be found in Appendix.

## Recruitment difficulties and skills shortages

The proportion of respondents who report difficulties recruiting for animation/VFX/post-production in the last 12 months is below the pan-sector average, at 55%. A higher proportion of respondents that in other

sub-sectors equate the cause of skills shortages to 'a low number of people with the required skills', 76%, compared with a pan-sector average of 65%.

Animation/VFX/Post-Production: Difficulty recruiting staff in the last 12 months



Where respondents identified skills shortages, they were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

Where skills shortages have been experienced in the last 12 months, these were across a range of job roles. Please see appendix 2 for full details of all roles, by department. Listed below are the top five most mentioned job role categories, with top three in animation:

### Animation

- Animator
- Layout artist
- Character designer

### Post-Production

- Dubbing mixer
- Assistant colourist
- Editor
- Post-producer
- Assistant sound editor

### VFX

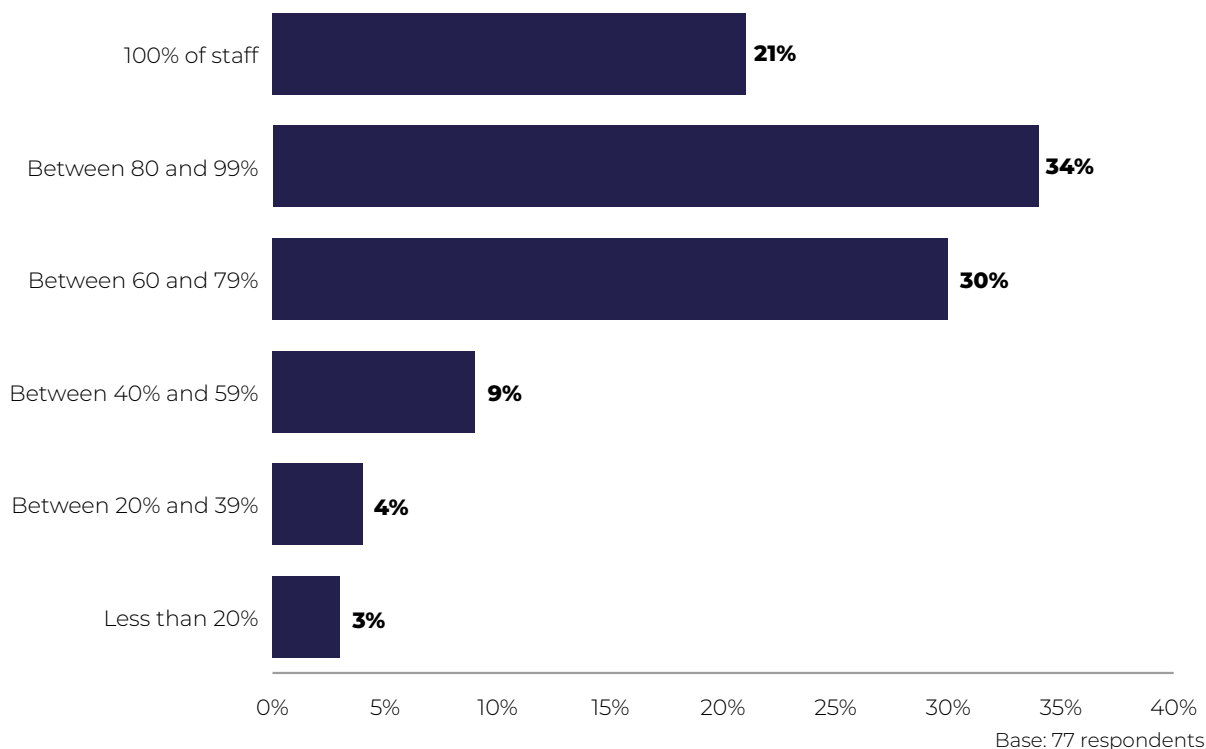
- VFX Supervisor
- VFX coordinator
- VFX editor
- Pipeline technical director

The main **impacts** of the reported recruitment difficulties are:

- Crew having lack of experience (55%)
- Impact on quality of production (43%)
- Impacts on budgets/finances (33%)

## Skills gaps

Animation/VFX/Post-Production: Percentage of staff able to do their job to the required level



Although respondents report slightly more skills gaps than skills shortages, respondents suggest that the staff they hired over the past 12 months (i.e. in the current workforce) were fairly highly skilled, with over half (55%) reporting that 80-100% of staff were able to do their job to the required level.

Job role categories experiencing skills gaps include:

### Animation:

- Animation artist
- Animation director

### Post-production:

- Post-production producer
- Editor
- Colourist
- Sound editor

### VFX:

- VFX editor
- Composer
- Pipeline technical director
- VFX producer
- VFX artist
- VFX coordinator

The most commonly identified **skills gaps** in animation/post-production/VFX were:

- Leadership/management skills (44%)
- Communication/interpersonal skills (41%)
- Ability to deliver/receive feedback (34%)

### The technical skills that are difficult to find are varied,

but mostly relate to having sufficient experience in technical skill areas and with relevant tools. A few examples were given, including: 'specific software', such as Houdini Arnold; environment modeller; character modeller; 'high animation' drawing skills; 'AI skills'. Other skills related to personal attributes or characteristics, such as a desire to do the role, willingness to relocate, understanding of the role and 'ability to work independently within a reasonable timeframe'.

**Examples job-specific skills include:** Rotoscoping; Media server operation; LED panel technical skills; Rigging characters; Scene preparation.

## Future skills and AI

Interpersonal skills were mentioned most frequently when respondents were asked which skills have become critical to the department they work within, due to new and emerging technologies. This was also the case within Animation/VFX/Post-production. Interpersonal skills included: organisation skills, project management, problem solving and people management. There was a sense from respondents that these are the skills that are not replaceable by emerging technologies, such as working with clients.

The need for individuals to have the right attitude was also highlighted both in the sense of their general attitude towards work, and towards technologies.

For example, having an open-minded approach, being able to adapt to change and the ability to apply oneself to work. Linked to this, skills related to critically engaging with emerging technologies and making informed decisions about their use and using them ethically was also seen as important.

Skills related to administration and workflows were also mentioned. For some this was about having the skills to understand where AI tools fit into this, and to apply these tools effectively. Technical skills were also important and included speed and technical skills in rigged animation and the ability to cut to a high standard.

**“Skills and soft skills will be just as vital as well as technical knowledge to adapt to new technologies.”**  
(Animation, Northern Ireland)

**“AI will cross all departments - from copilot for Admin to generative for creatives. Being open to learning new ways of working and leaving comfort zones are skills all departments now need.”**  
(Post-production, Wales)

The list below shows the top three roles in each sector that respondents suggest lack the necessary skills to use AI in Animation/VFX/Post-production.

### Animation:

- Animation artist
- Animation supervisor
- Animation director

### Post-production:

- Post-production producer
- Editor
- Colourist

### VFX:

- VFX coordinator
- VFX producer
- VFX artist

Other responses reveal a mixed picture, with a small number of respondents expressing opposition to the use of AI (and one respondent stating the question is irrelevant). Where 'other' roles were cited, these include: CG Generalist (modelling, rigging, lighting, rendering

and compositing); Leadership; Loggers; Modellers; Rigging; Scene prep; Virtual Production Supervisor; Colour Scientist; Unreal Engine Operator; Virtual Art Department Supervisor; Virtual Art Department Artists; Pipeline Supervisor; Software Engineer; Software Supervisor.

In terms of the impacts of AI, 59% believed that AI will change working practices in their department and nearly a third (29%) think that AI will make some roles in their department redundant. Fewer respondents in animation/post-production/VFX than other subsectors think that AI will have minimal impact (11%) or are unsure of AI's impact (16%).

Fourteen people specified roles that they think will be made redundant by AI, with entry level roles being most mentioned. These roles varied – each mentioned by one respondent – and included: Production Assistants and Production co-ordinators (as tasks become automated); Edit producers; Colourists; Post-supervisors; Post-coordinators; VFX Production; VFX Editorial; Modellers; Texturing; Riggers, as well as roles involved in pre-visualisation and storyboarding.

**“There is a risk to Animators and Designs, as some of their techniques will be replaced, as well as animation storyboarding and editing, as well as certain 3D animation roles.”** (Children's TV, London)

## Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The most selected options were:

- On the job training/placements (49%)
- Mentoring/coaching (43%)
- Masterclasses/Job shadowing (29%)

In common with the pan-sector findings, respondents expressed concern regarding the lack of work for current professionals and the knock-on effect this has

on opportunities for new entrants. There is a need to balance opportunities for training and development for both these groups. Specific areas of development for existing staff include budgets and accounts as well as ensuring there is provision to be prepared for industry changes in terms of AI and new models of working. In terms of training to enter the industry, several comments point towards the importance of industry experience amongst any staff delivering training and engaging those at college and university level with professionals.

**“The post-production industry is struggling with redundancies across the industry. This is making recruitment of skilled workers easier because there is talent available in the market. However, it does feel like there will be a lack of new talent coming through as entry level jobs are not being created.”** (Post-production, London)

**“University programmes need to be more industry-oriented and taught by professionals with real production experience. There should also be more accessible masterclasses and short courses where working artists can share practical tips, workflows, and techniques for achieving different visual styles.”** (Animation, London)

# Departments

This section summarises and compares survey findings on the:

- extent of recruitment difficulties;
- extent to which these recruitment difficulties are attributed to skills shortages;
- impacts of skills shortages;
- extent of skills gaps;
- impacts of AI on working practices and roles.

The sections that follow present discrete department-specific findings on:

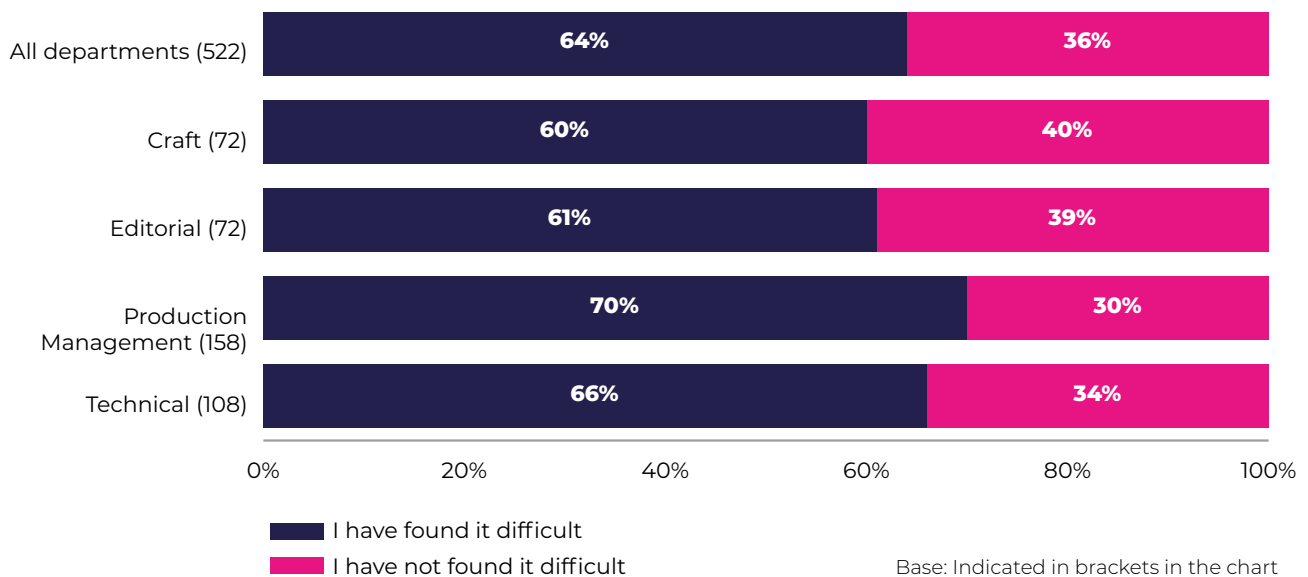
- A comparison of the job role categories that are experiencing skills shortages, with those experiencing skills gaps;
- Specific job roles experiencing skills shortages;
- Skills that are difficult to find;
- Skills gaps amongst the current workforce;
- Future skills needs;
- Job role categories lacking the necessary skills to use AI;
- Views on skills and training interventions.

## Recruitment difficulties and skills shortages

Overall, just under two-thirds of all respondents (64%) report experiencing difficulty recruiting staff due to a lack of skills, qualifications or experience amongst applicants in the last 12 months. There is some variation

by department, with those recruiting into production management reporting the highest proportion of difficulties (70%) and those in craft reporting the least (60%).

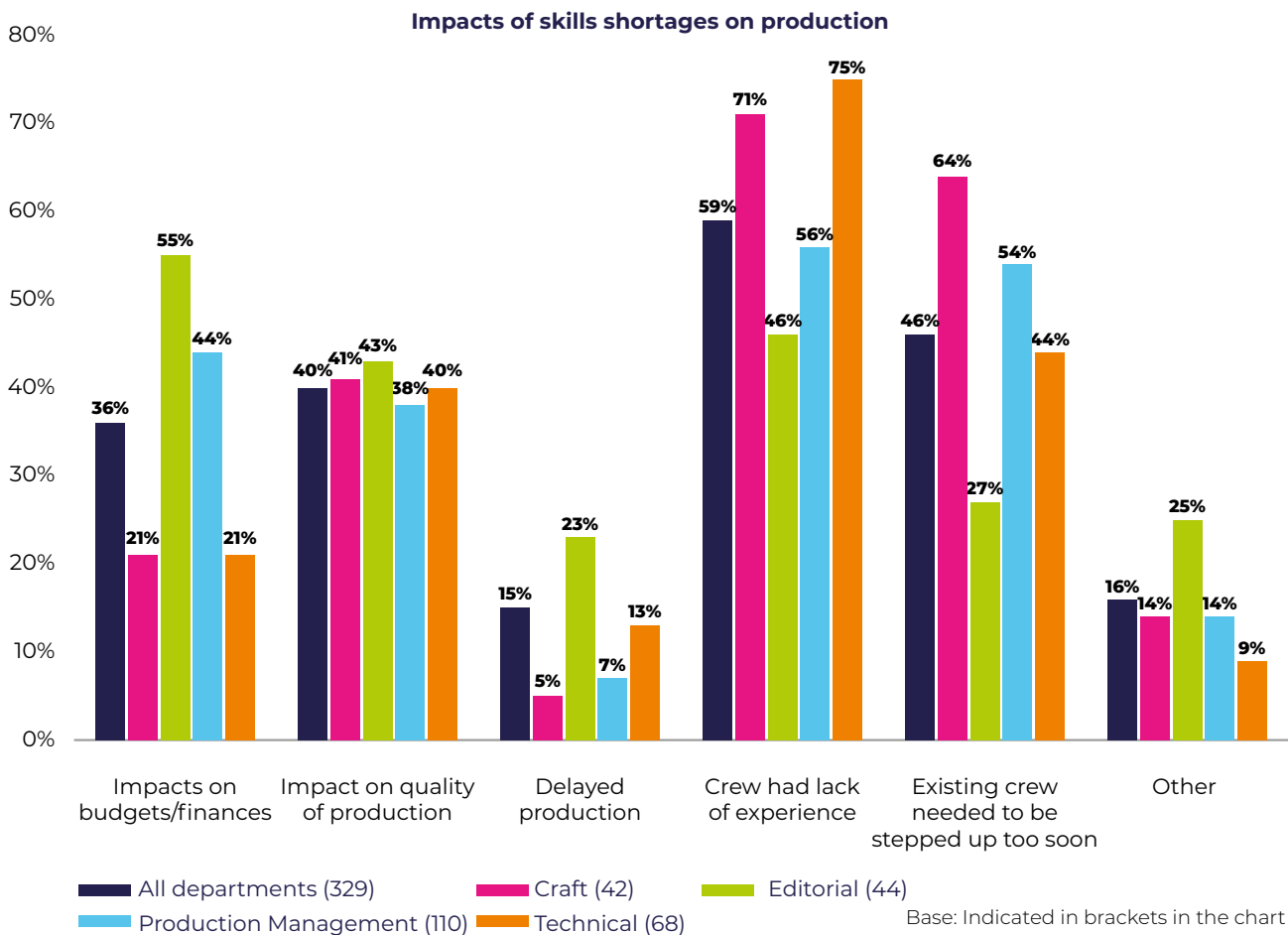
Difficulty recruiting staff in the last 12 months



## Impacts of skills shortages

The impacts of skills shortages vary by department.

- More respondents recruiting into technical roles report that crew had a lack of experience (75%) than in any other department (in contrast with 46% of those recruiting into Editorial roles).
- Those recruiting into editorial roles identified 'impacts on budgets/finances' as the most common impact (55%) – more than those who recruited into any other department – compared with only 21% of those in craft and technical roles
- A lack of experience appears to be more of an issue for those recruiting into craft roles, with 64% of respondents identifying this as an impact of skills shortages on production.
- Delayed production was, on average, the least common impact, but was highest amongst those who recruited into editorial roles (23%).

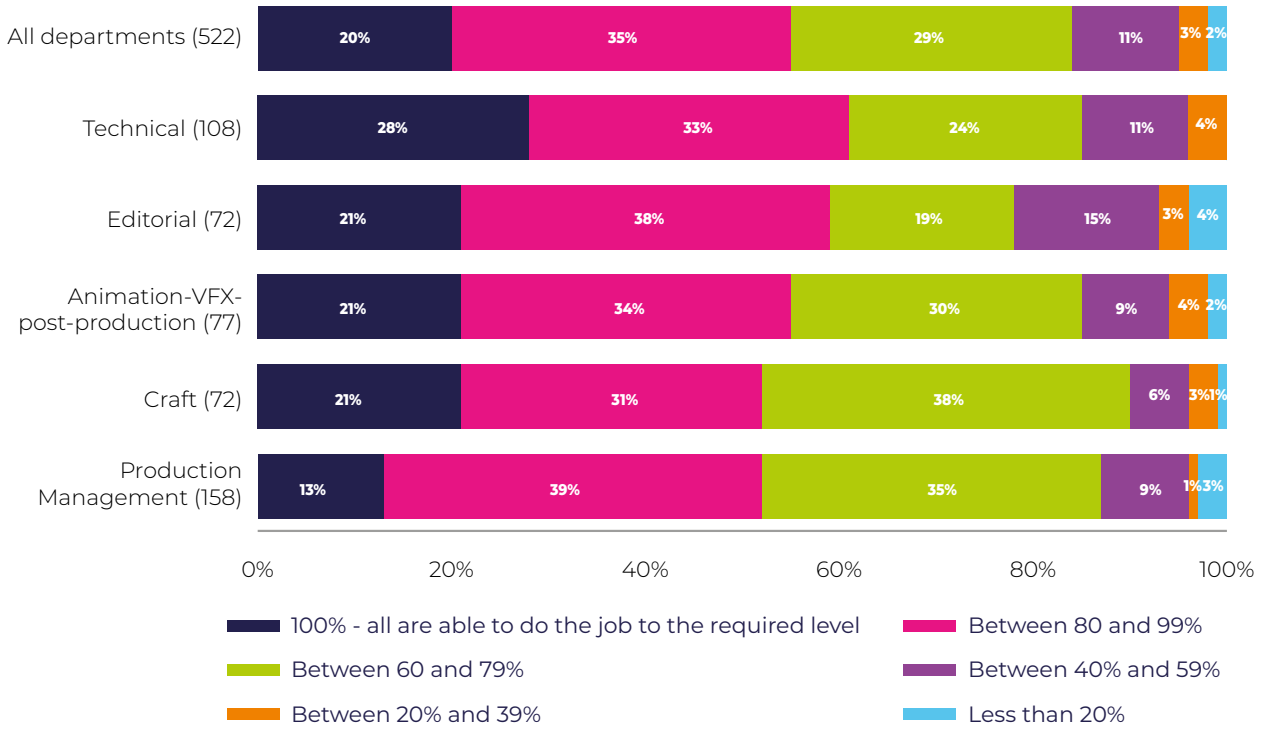


### Skills gaps

Overall, the survey findings tend to suggest a highly skilled workforce, with just over half of all respondents stating that the people they have hired in the last 12 months are at least 80% skilled. Those who recruit into

technical roles report the fewest skills gaps (i.e. the proportion of workers less than 80% able to do their job to the required level).

Percentage of staff able to do their job to the required level



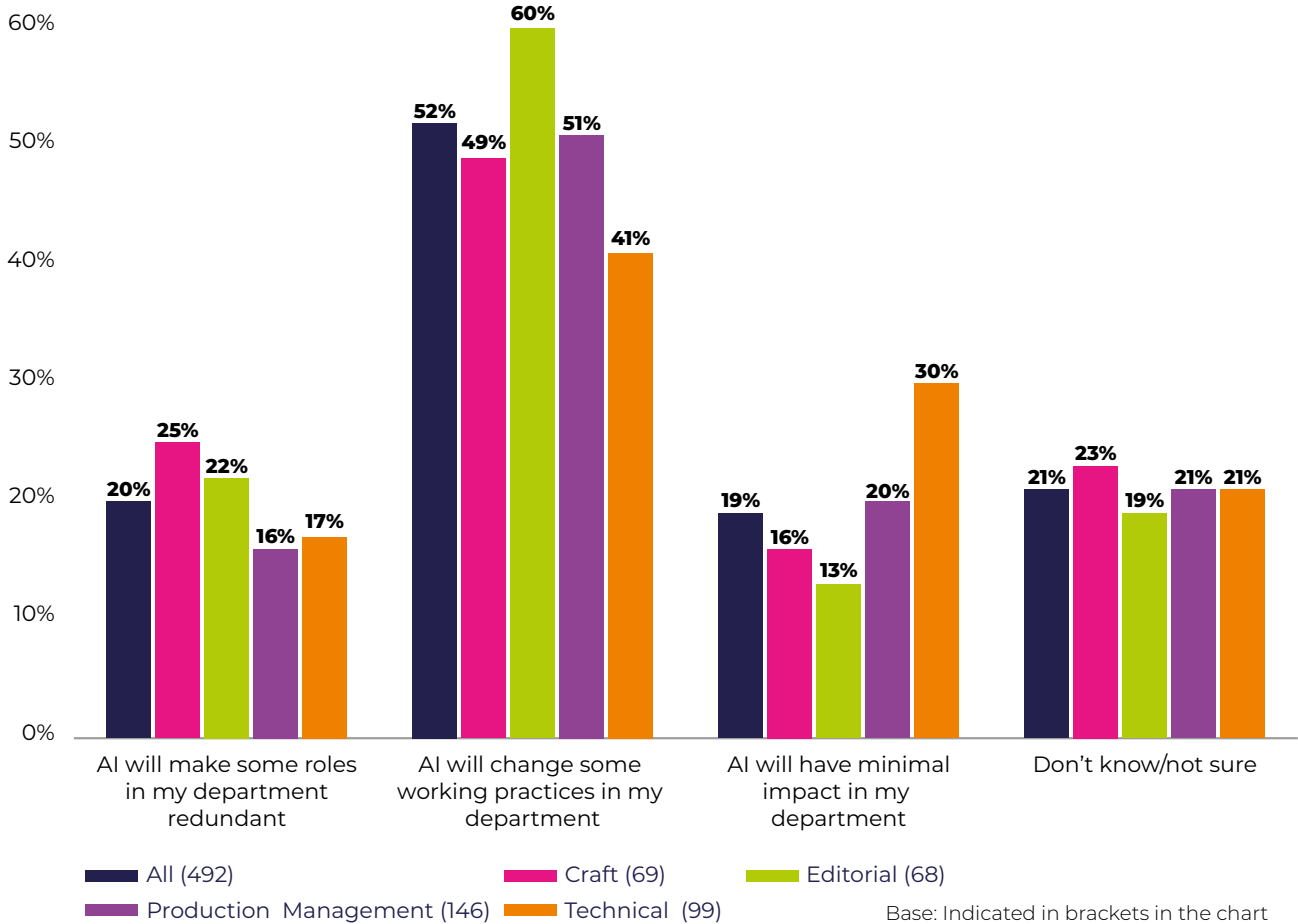
Base: Indicated in brackets in the chart

AI

Across all departments, most respondents suggest that the most common impact of AI on working practices will be that 'AI will change some working practices in my department'; this is highest amongst respondents who recruit into Editorial roles (60%). The survey findings also suggest that, of all departments,

AI is most likely to make roles in Craft redundant. However, there is also a fairly high degree of uncertainty about the impacts of AI, with just over a fifth (21%) of all respondents stating that they are not sure what the impacts of AI will be on working practice.

Impacts of AI on working practices and roles



# Craft

## Skills shortages

Where respondents identified skills shortages, they were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

Where skills shortages have been experienced in the last 12 months, these were across a range of job roles (respondents could select more than one job role).

### The top 5 job roles that were difficult to recruit to were:

1. Art Director
2. Graphic Designer
3. Production Buyer
4. Set Decorator
5. Dressing Props

Please see appendix 2 for full details of all roles, by department.

## Skills gaps

The most commonly identified skills gaps in craft differ slightly from the pan-sector picture. The most commonly identified skills gaps were:

- Planning/organisational skills (54%)
- Ability to organise work (40%)
- Communication (39%)

The top five job role categories experiencing skills gaps were:

- Art director
- Costume
- Buyer
- Props
- Art department assistant/coordinator

The types of skills commonly identified as gaps by respondents working in craft differ slightly from the pan-sector picture. Whereas 'communication' is the most commonly lacking skill amongst all respondents, selected by 41%, slightly fewer of those working in craft identified this as a skills gap (39%). 'Planning/organisational skills' was the top answer from respondents in craft (54%), followed by 'ability to organise work' (40%).

Where respondents stated that job-specific skills were lacking, practical skills, such as driving, were mentioned more than in other departments. Examples of the specific technical and creative skills mentioned include: hair styling and hair styling for afro hair types; experience in crafts and trades -painting, plastering, carpenters; sewing; prop making. These skills missing in the current workforce reflect skills shortages experienced by respondents when recruiting.

### Future skills

When considering the skills that will become more critical in response to the development of new and emerging technologies, those working within a craft

department mentioned technical and creative skills most often for example, costume design without the use of AI, 3D printing and hairdressing.

**“Ability to drive. Ability to source props and set dressing without overly relying on online sources. Some of the best options are not online and this has and always will be the case.”**  
**(Film, South East England)**

**“Flexibility and a good work ethic/attitude are still very important. Our department still requires complex interpersonal skills and building good team relationships, whilst still working within a structured team, respecting levels of seniority.”** (Film, London)

The table below shows the roles that respondents suggest lack the necessary skills to use AI in craft roles.

Craft job category	% of respondents
Construction	26%
Costume Department	26%
Art Director	23%
Buyer	23%
Props	23%
Set Decorator	23%
Art Department Assistant / Coordinator	21%
Artist / Sculptor / Carpenter	21%
Production/Set Designer	21%

Base: 43 respondents

Amongst the 15 respondents who provided their thoughts on which **roles would be made redundant by AI**, Concept Artists were most mentioned. Recreating crowds and crowd/costumer work was also

mentioned by three respondents. Other roles included Assistant Coordinator (administrative tasks), illustration, pre-visualisation, pitching, script writing, composing, graphics, production designers and buyers.

**“Buyers need will probably be reduced as the AI will probably scoop all the purchases options... Design trainees are spending a lot of time putting boards together. AI will probably do the first version of breakdown and budgets automatically which is the Costume Supervisor’s role... these roles, they won’t disappear, but their jobs will be transformed. AI could, if use properly, save a lot of time for these roles but also take a lot of meaningful tasks away.” (Film, London)**

**“I think as it is, production try to save money on costume anyway, we are the dept that is cut first when budgets are tight, I would not be surprised if they start creating costume using AI instead.” (Film, Wales)**

### Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The most useful were identified as:

- On the job training/placements (49%)
- Mentoring/coaching (31%)
- Apprenticeships (28%)

The clearest theme within the responses from those in craft department roles was the need to ensure new entrants were equipped with the right practical skills. Some comments suggested that current training paths are not providing the correct level of training, rigour or awareness of the nature of the industry.

For example, ‘more comprehensive’ training is needed prior to entry level and degree courses (e.g. in Animation/3D Design/Stop Motion) that train skills to a high standard. There were also concerns regarding the amount of work available for new entrants. Respondents suggest training for both new entrants and those in the industry should be hands on, however, this potentially requires upskilling of professionals to train others. They also suggest that roles in construction, such as plastering, could be promoted as there is a lack of craftspeople currently performing this role.

**“We need to look at how we can upskill workers in the industry already, make sure they’re given the right tools to be able to move up and shift roles if needed due to AI and Automated tools starting to take certain roles.” (HETV, London)**

# Editorial

## Skills shortages

Where respondents identified skills shortages, they were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

The top 5 job roles that were difficult to recruit to were:

- Producer
- Director
- Self-shooting PD
- Assistant Producer
- PD

Please see appendix 2 for full details of all roles, by department.

Three respondents from Scotland explained that they were forced to hire from outside of the region/country due to skills shortages. Most of the respondents who provided 'other' responses were responsible for hiring into roles in Unscripted TV.

**The skills that are difficult to find mostly relate to having sufficient experience in general, or in specific context and sub-sectors** – HETV, Unscripted TV, landmark TV, documentary, daytime TV. Where job-specific, technical skills were mentioned these include: archiving, shooting (and self-shooting), multi-camera directing. Interpersonal skills were less-mentioned but included handling sensitive subjects and experience in duty of care.

## Skills gaps

The most commonly identified skills gaps in editorial broadly reflected the pan-sector findings, these were:

- Communication (49%)
- Leadership/management skills (47%)
- Ability to deliver/receive feedback (46%)

The top five job role categories experiencing skills gaps were:

- Producer
- Director
- PD
- Executive producer
- Runner

## Future skills and AI

When considering the skills that have become critical in response to the development of new and emerging technologies, those working within in an editorial department mentioned interpersonal skills most often.

Communication, people and interpersonal skills were most often included in answers about interpersonal skills. Understanding AI, its pros, cons and limitations were also mentioned as a cross-cutting theme.

**“Currently, I think the skills needed are the same. I like to hire people who can talk well and relate well to people as that’s the most crucial skill in these specific roles.” (Unscripted TV, London)**

**“Ability to identify appropriate uses of AI and understand its limitations.” (Unscripted TV, Northern Ireland)**

The table below shows the roles that respondents suggest lack the necessary skills to use AI in Editorial departments.

Editorial job category	% of respondents
Producer (Editorial)	78%
Executive Producer	60%
Director	55%
Producer Director	49%

Base: 55 respondents

For those working in editorial, the biggest impact is predicted to be on researchers and, specifically, researchers in pre-production. Typically, 'lower-end' roles were mentioned, which would also include entry-level and mid-level jobs in production management.

Other roles mentioned include Assistant Producers, Production Coordinators, Production Secretaries. Examples of comments made in response to this comment are included below (verbatim).

**“AI will replace almost the entire department in the long run. In the short to medium run, it may make processes more efficient and possibly replace the likes of a coordinator.” (HETV, Northern Ireland)**

**“We expect some entry level roles to be impacted, as some production management processes will be automated.” (Animation, London)**

### Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages and the most common responses were:

- On-the-job training/placements (57%)
- Mentoring/coaching (50%)
- Job shadowing (36%)

Exposure to on-the-job training and practical experience was a key theme for the editorial department (as well as for Animation/VFX/Post-production), however, financial pressures related to gaining and providing this experience were acknowledged, and there was support for funded

placements to facilitate this. It was noted that hybrid styles of working have also reduced exposure to the working environment for entry-level staff.

Some comments highlighted inconsistencies of skills and training within roles. Setting formal competencies for roles which could be used within hiring, as well as simple skills tests, were suggested as potentially being helpful (such as skills-based exams so that KPIs can be tracked). Respondents also suggested that training may be seen as siloed and professionals would benefit from a range of training and understanding how to potentially pivot into different sectors due to the current downturn in work (3).

**“Due to the shortage of work every role is oversubscribed by people who are hugely overqualified. The lack of contracts mean people are trying to work out how to pivot to make a living. Personally, I think the gap comes in HOW to do this i.e. how to translate those skills into adjacent roles or unrelated industries.” (Unscripted TV, South West England)**

# Production Management

## Skills shortages

Where respondents identified skills shortages, they were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

The top 5 job roles that were difficult to recruit to were:

1. Production Coordinator
2. Accountant
3. Production Accountant
4. Production Assistant
5. Line Producer

Please see appendix 2 for full details of all roles, by department.

As with other departments, the main areas in which skills are missing tend to relate to hands-on experience, either in a similar role or on a similar production, with one respondent stating that no specific skills are needed 'just manpower plus work experience'. AI skills were also mentioned (reflecting skills shortages), in terms of a general competency and/or awareness and how to implement it. Practical skills include the ability to drive a van/vehicle, tow a trailer, electrical training.

## Skills gaps

The most commonly identified skills gaps in production management were:

- Communication (45%)
- Leadership/management skills (42%)
- Resilience (42%)

The top five job role categories experiencing skills gaps were:

- Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive
- Accountant
- Producer
- Location Manager / Coordinator
- Production Assistant

**“The production coordinator and PM had to cover for the runners who did not have the required initiative, drive or enthusiasm.”**  
(Unscripted TV, London)

**“Impact on the quality of support we can provide when productions are pushing to be more accessible and inclusive - there needs to be more rounded thinking and consideration for this - this goes for all of these support roles - there is more being done for BSL interpreters but that is just a drop in the ocean for what is needed.”** (HETV, Wales)

### Future skills

When considering the skills that have become critical in response to the development of new and emerging technologies, for those working in production management, answers typically related to interpersonal skills (this is similar to Animation/VFX/ Post-production). As within other departments, many responses specifically mentioned communication and

personal skills as well as efficiency, attention to detail, team management and problem solving.

Skills related to administration and workflows were the second most mentioned group of skills. This is related to the often-complex planning involved in production management.

**“The human touch is vital when it comes to dealing with cast and crew on a shoot. AI will be able to reschedule quickly but it will lack the empathy and the forward thinking of humans.” (Children’s TV, Wales)**

**“Personal communication skills, ability to keep clear, open way of passing on information to department and create a team spirited department.” (HETV, Northern Ireland)**

The table below shows the roles that respondents suggest lack the necessary skills to use AI in Production Management.

Production Management job category	% of respondents
Production Coordinator / Manager / Executive	47%
Producer (Production Management)	32%
Accountant	31%
Assistant Director	26%
Production Assistant	26%
Location Manager / Coordinator	22%

Base: 97 respondents

Sixteen respondents stated that they did not know which roles lack the necessary skills to use AI.

Twenty respondents gave further details about roles that may be impacted by AI, and how some of these are similar to the roles that are predicted to be affected in editorial departments, such as crowd teams,

researchers, and production secretaries. Accounting roles were also highlighted, including Payroll Assistants, Payroll Accountants and Filing Clerks. Others include Contractors, Coordinators, Secretaries and Assistants. One respondent suggested that driverless vehicles will also have an impact “eventually.”

**“AI will replace almost the entire department in the long run. In the short to medium run, it may make processes more efficient and possibly replace the likes of a coordinator.” (HETV, Northern Ireland)**

**“Reduction in the number of secretaries and assistants who complete admin only functions.” (HETV, London)**

### Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages, the most identified in production management were:

- On-the-job training/placements (46%)
- Mentoring/coaching (41%)
- Job shadowing (29%)

Cross-cutting themes in responses include the need for continuous training and providing opportunities to current professionals as well as inclusion and diversity. The example was given of the current situation of lower budgets for production and rising costs of living, meaning that young people cannot afford to be on low pay and are not able to continue in the industry.

**“Upon entering the industry people lack basic skills the older generation take for granted such as using excel or writing emails. A basic course with no fee could be useful, it could also include an introduction to other TV basics such as Albert.” (Unscripted TV, London)**

**“I’d like to see continuing support and training that builds progressively on previous trainings / experience.” (HETV, London)**

# Technical

## Skills shortages

Where respondents identified skills shortages, they were asked to identify the job role categories they found difficult to recruit in the one department in which they primarily worked.

The top 5 job roles that were difficult to recruit to were:

1. Electrician
2. Spark
3. Gaffer
4. Camera Operator
5. Camera Assistant

please see appendix 2 for full details of all roles, by department.

## Skills gaps

Slightly fewer respondents responsible for recruiting into technical roles identified skills gaps in the current workforce than those in other departments. The most commonly identified skills gaps in the technical department broadly reflected the pan-sector findings, these were:

- Communication (37%)
- Ability to organise work (35%)
- A lack of technical skills (33%)

The top 5 job role categories experiencing skills gaps were:

1. Lighting
2. Electricians
3. Grips
4. Camera assistants
5. Boom operators

As well as those working in Technical roles, general in-office or on-set IT roles were also identified as experiencing skills gaps, and a need was highlighted for more experienced ADs and Directors who understand technical roles. This sentiment was supported by another respondent who stated that, whilst they have not necessarily experienced skills gaps within the Technical department, they have found issues with the producing/office teams not knowing the requirements of the job, making jobs unsustainable or unsafe. Respondents who recruit into Technical roles also highlighted that relevant qualifications are sometime missing, such as a Level 3 Grips qualification, or a Level 2 Crane Tech Diploma.

Those who selected 'technical skills' were invited to provide more detail. Of those who did, a lack of relevant qualifications was mentioned - only by respondents responsible for hiring into Technical roles. Four respondents also highlighted a lack of relevant electrical knowledge and experience. Other examples include: boom operation; grip skills; aerial chromatography; rigging of equipment; electrical knowledge and safety.

**“Electrical technical skills and industry knowledge.”**  
(HETV, South West England)

**“Relevant respected qualifications (not a generic ‘media’ course).”**  
(HETV, South East England)

**“Technical skills, actual skills that make them employable and effective freelancers.” (Unscripted TV, Midlands and East of England)**

**Future Skills**

For those working in technical roles, the developing of new and emerging technologies was most often reported as having an impact on technical skills. These skills were often related to lighting and sound, for example use of

complex lighting systems or wireless control. As with other departments, interpersonal skills were seen as important; for example, communication, problem solving, critical thinking and remaining calm under pressure.

**“Problem solving, technical ability, AI will not impact camera/tech roles.” (Unscripted TV, Midlands and the East of England)**

**“Keeping up with latest equipment and understanding complex lighting programming.” (HETV, Scotland)**

**“Technical problem solving, being able to identify and solve issues on set in an efficient manner in real time without outside help.” (HETV, South West)**

The table below shows the roles that respondents suggest lack the necessary skills to use AI in Technical departments.

Technical job category	% of respondents
Lighting	29%
Electrician	22%
Cinematographer	18%
Boom Operator	16%
Camera Operator	16%

Base: 55 respondents

Respondents who provided further detail on which roles they think will be made redundant by AI cited various different roles, with six suggesting that all technical roles will be made redundant. In line with the findings reported by those hiring into other

departments, entry level roles such as Production Secretary and Account Assistant were also singled out as being impacted. Other examples include Boom Operators and VFX Artists

**“I imagine that initially lengths of contract will be reduced across roles and departments. After that, one role will be dropped within e.g. editorial / production management. There will be a reduced need to outsource graphics.” (Unscripted TV, Scotland)**

**“All roles. When we remove the creative human skills required to make images, everyone suffers.” (Unscripted TV, Scotland)**

**“Boom Operator: the largest and best quality microphone placed in the optimum position to record a human voice may not be necessary, if there are many microphones of reasonable enough quality to provide AI to recreate the sound afterwards.” (Film, London)**

### Skills and training

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to three training interventions they felt would be most useful for addressing skills gaps and shortages. The most useful interventions were perceived as:

- On-the-job training/placements (35%)
- Mentoring/coaching (32%)
- Job shadowing (28%)

Learning on the job and practical experience were seen as important for respondents from the technical department. Specific skills and knowledge were seen to be lacking, such as understanding electrical

work and equipment. A concern was also expressed regarding the numbers of skilled professionals currently looking for work as perhaps being more pertinent than addressing skills gaps.

A range of comments were related to the theme of diversity and inclusion. Some of these comments related to how diversity and equality need to be addressed, such as the impacts of financial difficulties faced by those on low wages. Other comments were related to respondents feeling that fulfilling diversity quotas leads to less skilled and interested trainees and staff.

**“Production offices need to be more proactive in making the link between getting us trainees and having trainees on site. Too often the trainee position is considered too expensive by production and thus not worth it. Every electrical department needs a Spark trainee and a Desk Op/Data Technician trainee as minimum. This should be the rule, not the exception.” (Film, London)**

**“There is no substitute for learning from more experienced technicians. Practical on-the-job training is essential. A good example of this is how quickly practical 35mm & 16mm Film skills have diminished, as digital has taken hold in feature production.” (Film, South East England)**

**“There is no shortage of sound people in HETV. There are already not enough jobs to go around for existing people. What I’m noticing is people who have families to support and a mortgage/rent to pay are struggling to get enough work to fulfil that.” (HETV, South East, England)**

# Policy

# Recommendations

## Growth and Skills Levy

The Department for Work and Pensions and Skills England should:

**Develop short courses/apprenticeship units fundable through the Growth and Skills Levy for the screen sector with industry and training providers from 2027/28.** In March 2026, government confirmed the introduction of seven apprenticeship units to support employers and the delivery of the Industrial Strategy. The government stated it wished to develop further units informed by ongoing input from industry. Our evidence highlights the need for employers to upskill their staff and the introduction of apprenticeship units could benefit employers and workers. ScreenSkills' Industry Skills Plan (ISP) could be an effective opportunity for the screen industry and policymakers to come together. The ISP will bring together employers, industry bodies, and training providers to develop a shared Industry Skills Plan. Utilising research from Powering Production, the ISP can inform Skills England and government on future apprenticeship units.<sup>2</sup>

**Actively utilise the latest data from ScreenSkills and from Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) when directing funds to deliver modular training.** ScreenSkills amongst other bodies supported the Skills Audits, research delivered by Creative PEC and Work Advance, commissioned by DCMS and the Creative Industry Council into skills shortages, skills gaps and training interventions across the Creative Industries.

## Lifelong Learning Entitlement

The Department for Education (DfE) should:

**Recognise the creative industries as a one of the eight growth sectors and include creative arts subjects on the eligibility list for modular provision under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE).** The UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan, published in June 2025, is a core pillar of the Industrial Strategy. Shortly afterwards the DfE updated its plans for the LLE, but the plans did not include provision for creative higher education courses, if we are to build a strong pipeline for talent for the future, government needs to include rather than exclude the creative industries from funding.

## Freelance Champion

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) should:

**The new freelance champion should develop a credible plan for creative freelancers and prioritise skills and training needs of the creative freelance workforce.** This should be supported by DCMS to support wider sustainable economic growth across the sector. Although skills is recognised by the Government as a barrier for growth, freelancers are largely unsupported in skills policy. Our evidence shows employers recruited over 90% of freelancers in the last 12 months, highlighting the importance of freelancers to the UK screen industry.

## Skills bootcamps

Local authorities (in England) should:

**Local authorities with centres of screen production should invest in specific skills bootcamps, for example, roles such as carpenters, plasterers and painters.** Our research highlights roles such as carpenters are in shortage across the screen industry. In addition, skills bootcamps were seen as more useful intervention in English regions such as the South West. Local authorities based in or close to areas of screen production should work with local employers, training providers and industry leaders to structure skills bootcamps where individuals have existing experience but lack the required competency levels to work in screen. This would encourage sector transfer and mid-career upskilling. This would not only have an impact on reducing skills shortages within the industry but also improve regional employment levels.

## Local Skills Improvement Plans

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) (in England) should:

**LSIPs should strengthen their relationships and insights with sectoral bodies, employer representative bodies, training providers, and regional leaders to develop co-own shared skills plans which support local growth.** ScreenSkills has identified nine LSIPs that cover areas of screen production. LSIPs are an employer-led initiative in England designed to ensure that post-16 technical education and training provision better meets the specific needs of local employers and the economy. LSIPs have the ability to build on the existing employer led system, improve strategic planning, and maximise the impact of skills funding. This can only be achieved in partnership.

## HETV tax credit regime below £3 million per hour

HM Treasury should:

**Enhance the HETV tax credit for budgets below £3million p/h.** Our evidence shows the most popular useful training intervention identified by employers to alleviate skills gaps is on the job training (46%), but on the on-the-job training is only possible if content is being commissioned. This should include an exemption from the 80% cap on qualifying expenditure for UK VFX costs. In 2022, HMRC research found 'there is strong evidence that the tax reliefs across screen have made the UK a more attractive filming and production location and led to more productions taking place in the UK'. UK-commissioned HETV drama costing £1-3m per hour is in decline and below pre-pandemic levels from £1.62 billion in 2021 to £0.94 billion in 2024. This area of production is particularly important for skills development and is where workers develop their skills to progress within the industry. The UK has become well known for developing talent within these areas; however, if this area of industry is reduced significantly, industry lacks the skills for to attract inward investment. A tax credit would support the commissioning of mid-level content by broadcasters.

# Endnotes

- 1 Sizing up: workforce composition and capacity in the screen industries, April 2025, [https://www.screenskills.com/media/pfcoubcw/ampere\\_sizing-workforce\\_final-report\\_2025.pdf](https://www.screenskills.com/media/pfcoubcw/ampere_sizing-workforce_final-report_2025.pdf)
- 2 BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2024/25, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/documents/bbc-annual-report-and-accounts-24-25.pdf>.
- 3 Oliver & Ohlbaum, Screen sector clusters: securing sustainability and growth, COBA and PACT (2024)
- 4 Ampere (2025) Sizing Up: Workforce Composition and Capacity in the Screen Industries, ScreenSkills and 4Skills: [https://www.screenskills.com/media/pfcoubcw/ampere\\_sizing-workforce\\_final-report\\_2025.pdf](https://www.screenskills.com/media/pfcoubcw/ampere_sizing-workforce_final-report_2025.pdf)
- 5 Please note that respondents could select more than one option relating to redundancies and working practices.
- 6 Olsberg-SPI, Skills scoping study for the UK's Digital Content Production Sectors, BFI (2023)

# Who we are

ScreenSkills is a charity and the industry-led strategic skills body for the United Kingdom (UK) screen industries. We are funded by all the major broadcasters, streamers, independent producers and production companies across the UK screen industry.

We work across the UK to support a principally freelance workforce. In the last year, the five Skills Funds - Animation, Children's TV, Film, High-end TV (HETV) and Unscripted Television - received record contributions from across the sector, these contributions were reinvested in training and development programmes across every nation and region.

We are fully committed to supporting the development of the talent and expertise required to build a world-leading, inclusive, and adaptable workforce for the UK screen industry. We do this via a robust, data-led approach to create wide-reaching skills delivery and training throughout the whole of the UK.

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 [ScreenSkills.com](https://www.ScreenSkills.com)

 [info@ScreenSkills.com](mailto:info@ScreenSkills.com)

 [UK ScreenSkills](#)

 [uk\\_screenSkills](#)

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