

# BROKEN TURNAROUND

You can say 'NO'



## A report on Broken Turnaround in the UK Film and TV industry

July 2025

[bectu.org.uk/broken-turnaround/](https://bectu.org.uk/broken-turnaround/)



# Overview

## About Bectu

Bectu, a sector of Prospect union, represents nearly 40,000 staff, contract, and freelance workers in the media and entertainment industries.

## Introduction and summary of the film and TV industry

The UK film and TV industry contributed an estimated £5.6 billion to the UK economy in 2024<sup>1</sup>, and that figure does not even include figures connected to non-high-end TV production. Research from the BFI showed that although the exact tax revenues generated by the industry in 2024 are not publicly detailed, the high production spend in the UK, along with the government's investment in creative industries, including over £1 billion in tax reliefs, indicates that the tax revenue is significant.<sup>2</sup> As of 2024, the UK film and TV industry employed between 183,000 and 194,000 people in off-screen roles.<sup>3</sup> Despite the challenges the industry has faced and future concerns, such as the threat of US tariffs, the industry is still set to grow profits in film and high-end television from approximately 26% to 37% year-over-year.<sup>4</sup> However, for those working in the film and TV industry, excessively long hours, burnout, and poor work/life balance are rife.

## Broken Turnaround

Under UK law, you have the right to 11 hours of uninterrupted rest in a 24-hour period. Most film and

TV workers will take this as an overnight break between their working days. It allows for a rest period between finishing one day of work and starting the next one.

In special cases, a worker may be required to work during an 11-hour rest period. When this is the case, by law, they are entitled to an equivalent period of compensatory rest instead. If compensatory rest cannot be provided, then the worker must be given appropriate protection to safeguard their health and safety. Working on film and TV productions is not classed as a special case (like the armed forces or medical personnel).

## Bectu's Broken Turnaround Survey

Bectu's survey in February 2025, which polled nearly 500 film and TV crew members (in just two weeks), revealed that broken turnaround is commonly used on UK productions.

Responses make clear its detrimental impact – from falling asleep at the wheel and accidents on set to mental health struggles, missed family events and an inability to maintain a work/life balance.

The negative effects of broken turnaround are felt across all the film and TV departments and genres, including Unscripted TV. Departments affected in the survey included costume, hair and makeup, electrical, locations, rigging, sound, production, and more.

We received 446 survey responses in total. (See *graphic on page 3 for survey responses breakdown by department breakdown*.)

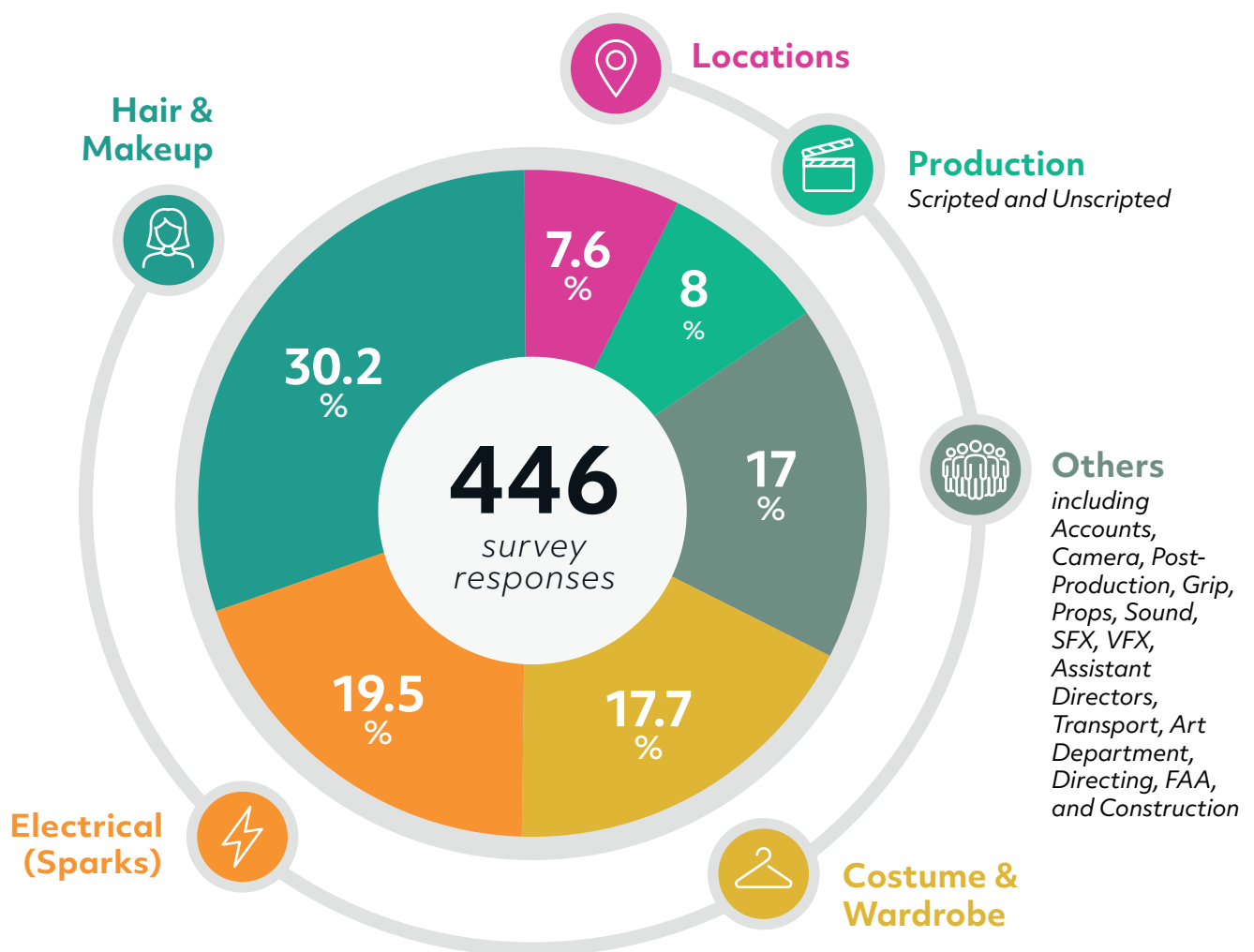
1 BFI 2024 stats reveal £5.6b film and HETV production spend in the UK

2 Official BFI statistics for 2024 reveal £5.6 billion film and high-end television production spend in the UK | BFI

3 Structure: "Sizing Up: Workforce Composition and Capacity in the Screen Industries – An Ampere Analysis report for ScreenSkills and 4Skills" – April 2025

4 New forecast of skills and training needs in film and HETV production – ScreenSkills

## Bectu Broken Turnaround Survey 2025 respondents by department



# Health & Safety

In Bectu's broken turnaround survey, over 90% of respondents said that breaking turnaround impacted their ability to do their job safely and effectively.

When asked about the effect of working broken turnaround, one in four respondents mentioned either

driving while tired, falling asleep or nearly falling asleep at the wheel, getting into crashes and/or car accidents, and 'near-misses'.

*"Broken turnaround often makes me feel as though I'm at danger of falling asleep at the wheel either the same day or next morning. I worked with a trainee who wrote her car off after falling asleep at the wheel and crashing into the back of a lorry after her turnaround was broken."*

*"I was driving to and from set and sometimes had to pull over and have a rest in the car due to hours overworked and sometimes actually slept in my car as I didn't feel safe to drive and had no means of accommodation."*

*"I have started booking hotels more at my own expense to get more sleep due to feeling dangerous when driving. In the last couple of years, I have been reluctant to take full-time work on larger jobs due to this as my body can't keep up anymore."*

*"Members of the team have had car accidents in the morning, and I had a very close call."*

*"[Referring to a production that repeatedly broke turnaround] There were many injuries, near misses, and accidents on set, and several crew members had accidents while driving home in dangerous conditions. We often still joke about the collective PTSD, but it took me around 3 months to physically recover from that job, and it affected my outlook on the industry forever."*

*"After the job, I am drained for several days. It impacts my sleep quality and my overall health."*

*"I fell at the wheel of my car and crashed into a parked van. My car was wrecked, and I had to give up work."*

*"I have worked on shoots where the turnaround was as little as 3 hours, working incredibly long days with little rest in the week. It's left me burnt out, unable to do my job well or safely, been terrible for my mental and physical health. Often, when finishing on a job of this sort I fall ill for several weeks after."*

*"[Broken turnaround] has severely affected me... It's a huge factor into what led me into addiction ... I would rarely have energy to socialise, let alone deep clean... So I go behind on laundry, dishes, I'd rarely cook, and order takeaway for time saving. And my mind was so wired I couldn't sleep. So I'd turn to painkillers, and alcohol to get me to sleep."*

*"I have...fallen asleep driving on the M25 and woken up driving along the hard shoulder. Broken turnaround is so dangerous, but production companies don't get any penalties for breaking it."*

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# Mental Health

64% of film and TV workers are considering leaving the industry due to concerns about mental health, 30% reported having thought of taking their own life in the past 12 months, and 63% said their work in film and TV has a negative effect on their mental health.<sup>5</sup>

Broken turnaround clearly plays a role in deteriorating mental health, as many of the comments from the Bectu survey show.

*"Broken turnaround has impacted my sleep, relationships, productivity and mental health. I have arrived home after work with only 8 hours until I have to leave again for work. It's exhausting, mentally draining and not sustainable on top of the long hours we do already."*

*"I've suffered huge mental health impacts due to lack of proper rest and social interaction during my 'home hours', as I have to go to bed on walking through the door."*

*"I feel like it impacts your emotional state. You can't regulate yourself."*

*"Have been to work on only a few hours' sleep which had severely impacted my mental health in the long run, leading to burnout and triggering depression."*

*"I have lost sleep, ruined my mental health, impacted personal relationships and been unable to plan anything in my life in times that I have been employed, as there is a constant risk of being asked to do more hours... My resilience is completely gone and I'm looking to leave the industry after my current contract ends. I just can't keep doing it anymore. We aren't saving lives, it's only telly. We should not be killing ourselves for a job that doesn't love us back."*

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# Work/Life Balance

A relentless long hours culture also impacts on workers' ability to balance their work and their personal lives, especially for working parents. 63% of film and TV workers said that their work negatively affects their personal relationships, and 72% of them find it difficult

to fulfil commitments outside of work because of the amount of time they spend on their job<sup>6</sup>. Many of our survey respondents highlighted how broken turnaround impacts their work/life balance.

*"Have not seen any friends for 3 months, because every day off I was feeling sick or tired because of the long hours. They have always paid us broken turnaround, but I'd rather sleep and have a life."*


*"Children and family life upset and in chaos."*

*"I cried at work from pure exhaustion, it was humiliating. I never see my family, I neglect most of my personal life to be able to keep up with the hours."*

*"Missed family meals, costs of cancelled appointments – which are already expensive to get medical appointments out of hours and I have to go private...less time at home for life admin & responsibilities, lack of life outside of work, impact on hobbies, social life, strain on home life as partner having to take on more responsibilities."*

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72% of them find it difficult to fulfil commitments outside of work because of the amount of time they spend on their job.

# Productions' use of broken turnaround

One of the reasons broken turnaround happens is because of poor planning by productions, with unrealistic schedules and last-minute changes that mean crew have no choice but to break turnaround.

Often, there are no significant repercussions for production who break turnaround; many members

highlighted to us that the current financial penalty in the Scripted TV agreement is not a strong enough incentive for productions. Unscripted members also reported that the 11-hour 'rest period' is regularly broken and is often accepted as an unofficial part of the working day without being included in published schedules.

*"Often broken turnaround is caused by bad planning by producers, often caused by the increasingly more common occurrence of last-minute script changes."*

*"The current broken turnaround agreement doesn't work. Productions can take advantage of making crew work longer hours and not incur a sufficient penalty ... Production are aware of the hours and how little rest the crew gets, but because it doesn't cost them hardly anything, they just go ahead with running over."*

*"Poor planning and scheduling from the Producers and ADs leads to broken turnaround."*

*"We are never asked, we are told, it is expected, and I never feel like you have an option to say no."*

*"Every job expects you to be happy to break your turnaround. We used to get well paid for those hours, and in a way, that both compensated and discouraged productions from doing so. Those fees are no longer paid, and I am definitely breaking turnaround more than before."*

*"The removal of the 1.5 penalty rate has made broken turnaround no longer a deterrent for productions. 0.5 is not worth the risk or financial reward for breaking the time."*

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# Conclusion – we need the industry to come together

## A collective solution

Bectu is calling on Pact and the broadcasters to enter into meaningful negotiations with Bectu members and officials to resolve this issue through changes to existing agreements and the creation of new agreements in areas of the industry where they do not currently exist, such as Unscripted TV.

## The HSE and the law

Bectu is working closely with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the UK's independent regulator, which has far-reaching powers to enforce H&S laws in workplaces. We have been exploring the obligations and responsibilities of productions and how the regulator can help with ensuring the health, safety and welfare of everyone on production is protected.

Furthermore, with the support of the HSE, we are currently looking at all production activity and whether sufficient precautions have been taken to reduce the risk to our members.

Therefore, please complete the reporting form if you work in Film and TV and are experiencing broken turnaround:

[bectu.org.uk/broken-turnaround/](https://bectu.org.uk/broken-turnaround/)

Working Hours Rest breaks should be provided in line with the Working Time Regulations as a minimum or greater where productions are following Union Agreements.

This means crew members are entitled as a minimum to:

- a rest period of no less than 11 consecutive hours in each 24-hour period
- an uninterrupted rest period of no less than 24 hours in each seven-day period
- an uninterrupted rest break of at least 20 minutes for every six hours at work.

## Great film and TV can be made without broken turnaround



Bectu National Secretary Spencer Macdonald

*"Film and TV crew have undergone a particularly challenging 18 months in what can already be a very precarious industry to work in. Worryingly, many respondents to our survey told us of their fear of being replaced and pressure to simply accept broken turnaround as part of the job.*

*"But our research clearly shows the detrimental impact of broken turnaround and excessive hours. Fatigue, missing family events, severe mental health struggles, accidents and near misses – the effect on crew is clear and we are calling on Pact, streamers and broadcasters to collaborate meaningfully with Bectu to find a solution that benefits both parties."*

*Bectu's broken turnaround survey has shown how detrimental broken turnaround is to those who work in film and TV. Bectu believes that by coming together, Bectu members have the power to challenge what has become a toxic new normal. Productions, Pact and broadcasters need to work with Bectu to break the dangerous cycle of broken turnaround."*



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