



Broken turnaround survey 2025: crew testimonies

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Bectu, a sector of Prospect union, surveyed over 400 UK freelancers working in film and TV about their experiences of productions breaking turnaround.

A worker is considered to have 'broken turnaround' when they are required by their employer to return to work within less than 11 consecutive hours in each 24-hour period.

Respondents work in various roles including costume, hair and makeup, electrical, locations, rigging, sound, production, and more. In this document, you can find some of their testimonials about the impact of broken turnaround on their work and personal lives, and physical and mental wellbeing.

Health and safety

- '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.'
- 'Nearly falling asleep at the wheel on several occasions.'
- '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.'

Mental health

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

Work/life balance

- '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.'
- 'I have missed out on life/family events.'
- 'Our working day is ridiculously long as it is. It's incredibly difficult to be a working mother in this industry.'
- '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.'
- '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.'

Productions' use of broken turnaround

- '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.'
- '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.'

- 'The broken turnaround rate has been reduced to a level where it is no longer a penalty to productions if we don't get our 11 hours. They no longer care.'
- '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.'
- 'Poor planning and scheduling from the Producers and ADs leads to broken turnaround.'
- 'Working in a department which can have multiple hours of additional prep/wrap on top of the filming hours, I find it is sometimes expected to break turnaround to fit in with the filming schedule. Also when going over on camera it is not always acknowledged that this will mean broken turnaround for certain departments.'
- 'Often broken turnaround is caused by bad planning by producers, often caused by the increasingly more common occurrence of last-minute script changes.'
- 'On every job I have broken my turnaround. When I have flagged it with my designer, I've always been made to do it. It's never a choice.'
- 'We are never asked, we are told, it is expected and I never feel like you have an option to say no.'

Impact on work

- 'If you don't do the broken turnaround, you miss things in the beginning of the day and production thinks you're not doing your job.'
- 'Just makes you tired and you don't work to your full potential.'
- 'I've been so exhausted from long weeks that I've fallen straight to sleep at home, forgotten to set alarms and missed call times.'

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