

Director Census 2021 Summary

Read the full report 

freethework.com/programs/director-census

Hi. We are FREE THE WORK. We are a global nonprofit working to level the playing field for underrepresented creators behind the lens. As part of our mission, we're working to improve how the film, television, and advertising industries operate. To that end, we conducted our first global census of directors last year.

We focused the census on directors' experiences of the pitch-and-bid process for commercial and branded content because for many years, creators in our community have talked about the many ways the process is broken.

This document is a preview of our findings, based on the responses of **332 directors** around the world. For the full findings, [visit the report page](#).

How you can support this initiative

- Share these findings widely with your community
- [Click here](#) to sign up to receive next year's census
- Visit our [homepage](#) to donate to FTW and support further industry advocacy efforts

This study was supported and led by: FREE THE WORK (Pamala Buzick Kim, Chloe Coover, Jaz Lawrence, Jasmine Baten, Kasey Woo).

Alma Har'el, Lauren Greenfield, Dr. Patricia Marks Greenfield, Elisha Smith-Leverock, Crystal Moselle, Adam Hashemi, and the DRCT E.V. (Union of German Advertising Directors and Content Creators).

Special thanks to all census participants, including the 168 who contributed their names in support of this cause. To view the full report and full list of names, visit www.freethework.com/programs/director-census.

THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

Directors reported that agencies:

- have directors pitch for projects without disclosing that the projects aren't yet confirmed by the client;
- fire or drop directors without warning or explanation;
- practice nepotism in hiring;
- obscure information about who else is pitching;
- steal ideas from rejected pitch materials;
- expect production companies and agencies to work days, nights, weekends, and holidays for pitches.

These labor conditions have led to an infeasible work/life balance and chronic burnout among many directors.

THE NEED FOR PAID PITCHES

Directors are inadequately compensated.

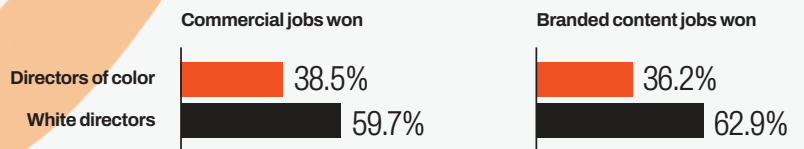
AVERAGE NUMBER OF UNPAID HOURS WORKED PER PITCH FOR THE WHOLE SAMPLE:



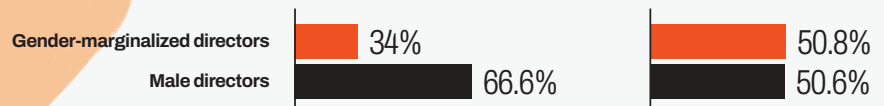
People from marginalized groups tended to work more hours on pitches, but still had lower win rates.

DISCRIMINATION/ TOKENIZATION

Directors from marginalized groups experience discrimination and tokenization while white directors win jobs at a disproportionately high rate. Many directors from marginalized groups reported that they are often included in the pitching process just to "check a box."



Gender-marginalized people (women, transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming) had disproportionately low win rates compared to men for commercial jobs but were equally represented in branded jobs.



Only 8 directors identified as having a disability, indicating a need for efforts to examine the accessibility of industry practices. Directors with disabilities reported issues with unpaid pitches, tokenization, and burnout from lack of progress.

