

# Director Census 2023

The need for paid pitches remains indisputable.

*“Unpaid treatment/pitch work for jobs that aren't real or haven't been won by agencies are growing and a real problem—exploitative of directors.”*

30 

AVERAGE HOURS DIRECTORS WORKED ON PITCHES  
—TYPICALLY UNCOMPENSATED.

## FOR BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS, TO BENEFIT EVERYONE IN THE INDUSTRY.

**FREE THE WORK** is a global nonprofit relentlessly focused on shifting the prevailing systems in media. Our mission is to ensure that intersectional storytellers are not just heard, but also have unhindered access to create and influence within the film, television, and advertising sectors. We believe in more than just representation; our goal is to transform the foundational structures that dictate narrative opportunities and platforms.

This year, we conducted our second annual Director Census. We looked again at inefficiencies in the commercial and branded content pitch-and-bid process and added some questions about work culture in the industry. This document is a preview of our findings, based on the responses of 375 directors around the world. **For the full findings, visit the report page.**

The need for increased transparency remained a top concern for directors.

*“The agency was not transparent about who I was pitching against. If I had known I wouldn't have spent 3 days on my holiday when I was home for my Grandma's 100th birthday working on it. The agencies don't respect the time and energy that goes into pitches.”*

As did the need for reformed bidding timelines.

Over a third of directors said that timelines involved in production are difficult to work through and that they would produce better work with more time.

We also found evidence of discrimination and tokenization.

*“I feel like as a woman I'm often asked to bid in a tokenistic fashion and then lose to the man I was pitching against.”*

71% OF DIRECTORS SAID THAT THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH EFFORTS/INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS DEI.

72% of white respondents said that they felt like they were on the same team as the client/agency most of the time on commercial jobs versus only 63% of underrepresented ethnicities.

## Support this initiative

- 1 Send these results along to relevant industry stakeholders.
- 2 Share this widely on social media
- 3 Sign our open letter.
- 4 Help us build a compelling case—leave a testimonial.
- 5 Participate in INVOKE Bidding to help us collect more demographic data on bids/awards.
- 6 Sign up for our volunteer committee working to address this issue.

**Some of the data was heartening.** For example, the average percentage of projects that people bid on and won did not differ substantially among groups. However, white and straight directors won significantly more bids over \$1.5 million.

	WHITE	OTHER ETHNICITIES	STRAIGHT	QUEER	MALE	OTHER GENDERS
ALL BIDS	43%	41%	42%	46%	40%	43%
BIDS OVER \$100K	36%	35%	37%	36%	36%	36%
BIDS OVER \$1.5M	48%	34%	44%	36%	35%	49%

## Let's build a world where...

- Pitches would be paid across the board.
- Companies would provide a standardized pitch template to all parties bidding.
- Companies would provide clear information about pitching competition, whether or not directors are a check bid, whether projects have been confirmed by the client, projected timelines, and feedback or explanations in the cases of lost bids and cancellations.
- Companies would refine bidding timelines with minimum time to pitch 3 days not including weekends.

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To view the full report, visit [www.freethework.com/programs/director-census](http://www.freethework.com/programs/director-census).