



**IMAGO**

**The European Federation of  
Cinematographers**

**EU CODE ID 33723813886-15**  
[www.imago.org](http://www.imago.org)

**Contact: IMAGO**

**Boulevard General Wahis 16 F**

**1020 Schaerbeek. Brussels**

**The First IMAGO SURVEY on  
Living and Working Conditions of  
Cinematographers  
in Europe and on International Territory**

Preliminary version, depending on definitive approval on IMAGO'S General Assembly

10th of February 2012 in Paris

**Brussels, February 2012**

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments

Introduction (Background and objectives)

Chapter 1: Characteristics of cinematographers participating in the survey.

Chapter 2: Work patterns

Chapter 3: Income and Taxation

Chapter 4: Social and Health Protection

Chapter 5: Working Conditions and Mobility

Chapter 6: Reflections on careers

Chapter 7: Conclusions

## **Acknowledgements**

The present survey has been commissioned by the Board of IMAGO (European Federation of Cinematographers) in January of 2011 to the working condition committee in the context of important initiatives on European level in order to improve working and social conditions of workers, especially regarding the approval of the Directive of working time rules. IMAGO intention is to contribute to this discussion.

IMAGO would like to thank especially Tony Costa and Dr. Cristina Busch, legal advisor for their work regarding the elaboration, ongoing control of data collection and final evaluation or interpretation of the questionnaire.

IMAGO also thanks specially Moritz Gieselmann and Idan Or for their assistance in the evaluation and Andreas Fischer Hansen, Professor Kurt Brazda, Dr. Michael Neubauer and Rolv Hahn for their input to the survey questionnaire. Thanks too to Joao Pinto for the graphics illustrating the survey.

Of course, IMAGO thanks the 344 cinematographers from all over the world who had the interest and patience to complete the questionnaire. Without their collaboration this study could not have been possible.

Nigel Walters

President of IMAGO

February 2012

## **Introduction: Background and objectives**

One of the important objectives of IMAGO is to support each of its 3461 members within our Societies and to improve their working conditions, status of employment and social protection. Without gathering these current facts about the verifiable situation of cinematographers in Europe and in the international territory, any strategy of IMAGO in this mission would have been doomed to failure.

Living and working conditions of audiovisual creators have been changed dramatically by the digital revolution. This revolution started some 15 years ago. As a result the work of every creative involved in the production of an audiovisual work, increased by the economic crisis, has to be faster and cheaper from one production to the next with the corresponding dangers for their health and social security.

IMAGO began in 2011 with the questionnaire: the first extensive fieldwork about living and working condition of a representative number of professionals of the Federation. The present fieldwork involved a survey of 344 cinematographers, 56% of them with more than 15 years of professional experience and all members of IMAGO and at the time members of 38 national Societies of cinematographers from the total 47 who are members or associated with IMAGO. Based on the survey, the professional cinematographers answering the questionnaire are mostly (80%) working on the Cinema sector. The anonymity of the cinematographers' responses had been assured during all the process of data collection, the data being stored without any possibility of restoring an identifiable link to the person who participated in the survey.

The study refers to "cinematographers". IMAGO includes under this term all those professional creatives working in fictional film originating narrative stories using camera composition and lighting techniques, regardless of their current employment status and the category of creative cinematography (features films, documentaries, music videos, etc.).

On May of 2011 the questionnaire, which is the basis of the present study had been put on the web-side of IMAGO. To encourage participation reminders had been sent by E-mail during the following months. The collection of data ceased on 31 of December 2011. Data analysis and interpretation started immediately afterwards.

The data collection had been undertaken to facilitate a further analysis to examine differences and coincidences between the position of artists and /or cultural workers in general on the one hand and on the other of cinematographers; in this sense the present study upgrades and amplifies existing comparative studies in the field of the various types of employment,

social protection and working conditions of cultural workers or artists<sup>1</sup>. It may appear an obvious fact but it should be remembered that any political discussion regarding ideas to support creative workers is not only a debate about policy but affects real people and their lives.

The survey has been instigated by IMAGO with neither external financial nor human support, nor any special statistical consulting. Nevertheless IMAGO is convinced of its value as an important sample of the cinematographers' working conditions in Europe and even on a wider international level.

The questionnaire had been developed on basis of the survey questionnaire used in March 2010 by the Arts Council in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (prepared by Hibernian Consulting, Insight Statistical Consulting with Mc Andrew/Mc Kimm) about the living and working conditions of Artists to allow comparison with existing data. But IMAGO has not limited its fieldwork to this, because the questionnaire posed to cinematographers (base of the present resume) had been accompanied by another questionnaire to be answered by the individual national associations of cinematographers, members of IMAGO, about the legal situation of their countries regarding social protection and working conditions, which will provide further information in the future.

The present study of working and living conditions of cinematographers had been the first one made by IMAGO. In order to optimise the value for policy and effective governmental intervention IMAGO will undertake to make similar studies on a more regular basis. In this sense IMAGO not only wants to contribute to a major economic security, health and safety survey of cinematographers, but also to achieve knowledge and recognition of the profession of cinematographers in the audiovisual sector of Society.

It is important to state that although cinematographers face currently difficult working and private lives, 66 % of the cinematographers would again choose to work as cinematographers when starting again. One of the most important reasons is a "natural vocation" and/ or "love to this profession".

Cinematographers are responsible by the use of light and composition for the visual design of audiovisual works. They create the images of the film by using the most varied techniques, being "storytellers" as well as scriptwriters, for example, by their use of light to create mood and drama. In this respect the digital era has changed nothing, without "light" and imagery there is no film. Technique alone cannot create. This is why we believe that the creative role of cinematographers should be reflected and rewarded as already developed in some countries by actions which assist artists should also include

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, EAEA's (*European Arts and Entertainment Alliance*) Study relating to the various regimes of employment and social protection of cultural workers in the European Union, 2001; European Parliament, *The situation of artists in Europe*, 2006; in more general terms: European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions: comparative analysis of working time in the European Union, 2010; in more special terms: *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*, 2010.

cinematographer without any discrimination (as for example favourable taxation schemes with income tax exemption, VAT deductions, social welfare schemes relating to work and unemployment, measures relating to pensions and retirement, other direct and indirect state support<sup>2</sup>). These measures should even be improved, adapted, amplified for cinematographers and other creatives involved in the production of audiovisual works, as at the same time incentives measures for the producer should be designed and introduced.

Audiovisual works contribute to cultural diversity and heritage and are having an increasing importance for the economy of creative industry and technical innovation.

The present study does not value the importance of recognition of co-authorship of cinematographers of the audiovisual work, which is another main objective of IMAGO. The recognition of economic intellectual property rights (the right to participate in the income of exploitation, rights of equitable remuneration administered by Collecting Rights Societies) without doubt contributes to an important improvement of the economic situation of cinematographers. On the other side, the recognition of moral intellectual property rights of cinematographers would contribute to a higher regard of their profession by producers and society, which might also influence their economic situation .

The Survey has followed a structure, similar to the one used in other international studies of professional creative artists, mentioned before, but adapted to the cinematographer's and IMAGO's need.

The **first chapter** is dedicated to the cinematographers participating in the survey, age, education, training and membership of Trade Union of Film workers.

The **second chapter** deals with work patterns as for example the period dedicated to cinematographic work or other works, experience of periods of not working, reasons to undertake other works.

The **third chapter** treats income, tax status of cinematographers and taxation.

The **fourth chapter** deals with health insurance, unemployment and pension.

The **fifth chapter** concerns working conditions and experience of work mobility.

The **sixth** chapter is a reflection on careers.

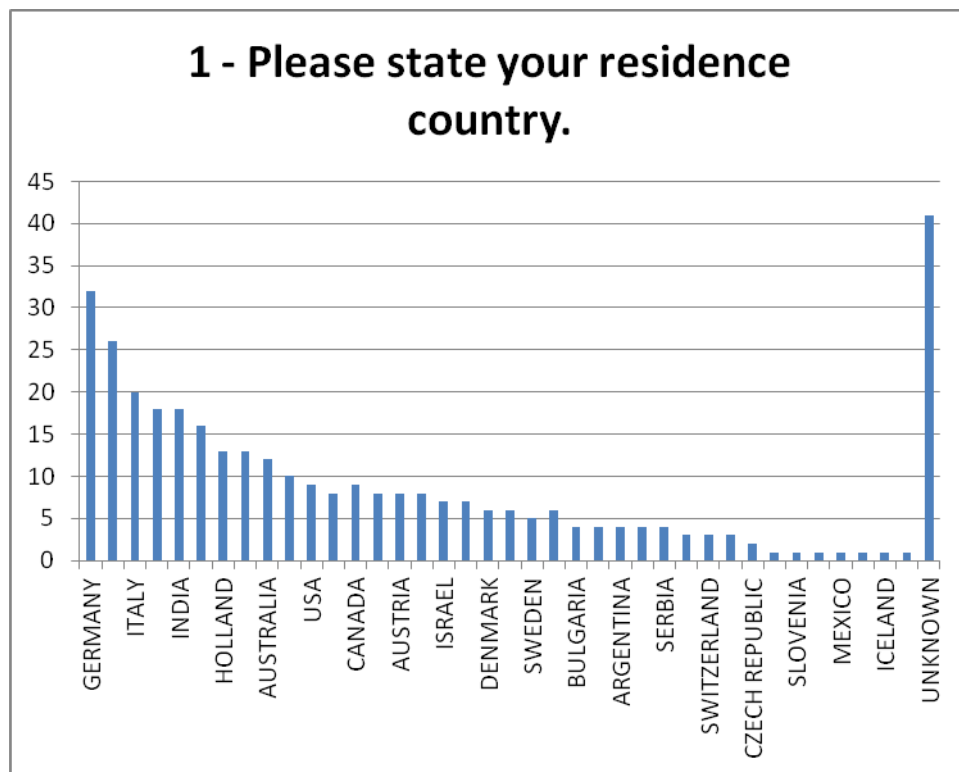
The **seventh** chapter concludes the survey.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. The living and working condtions, up. note 1

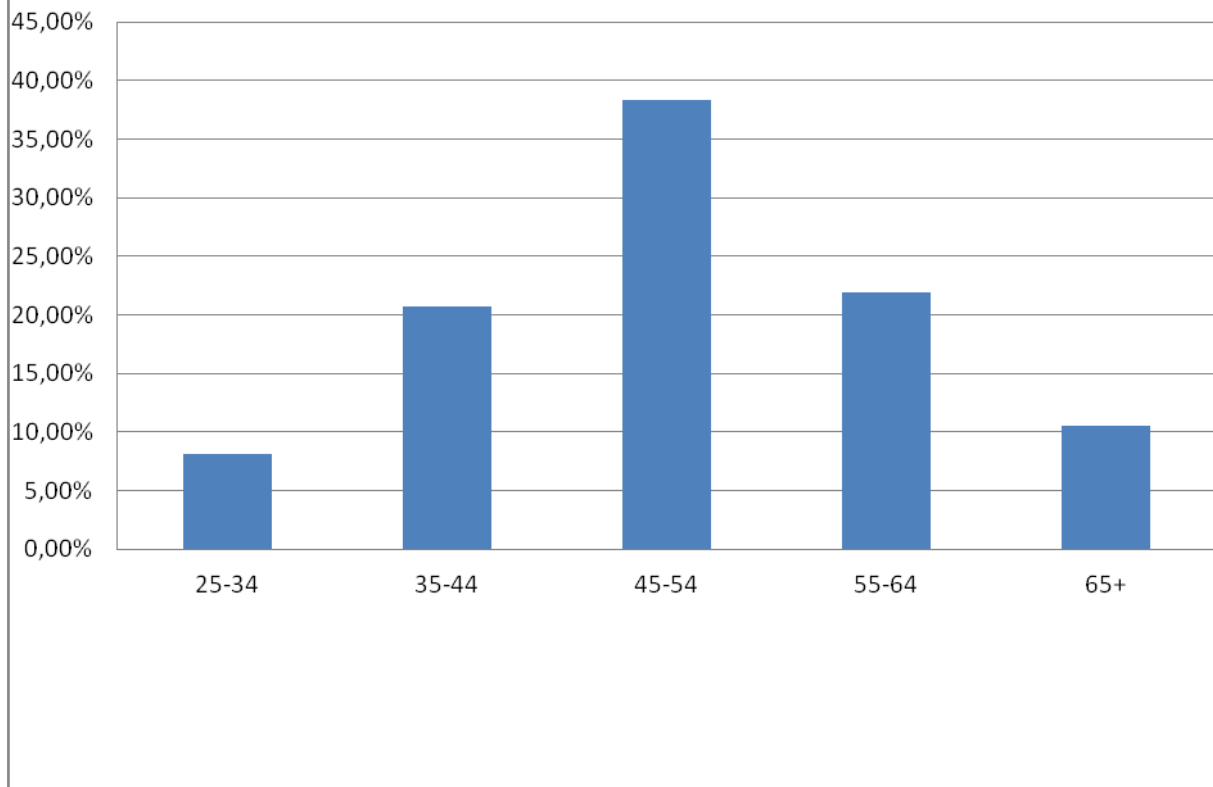
# CHAPTER 1

## Characteristics of cinematographers participating in the survey.

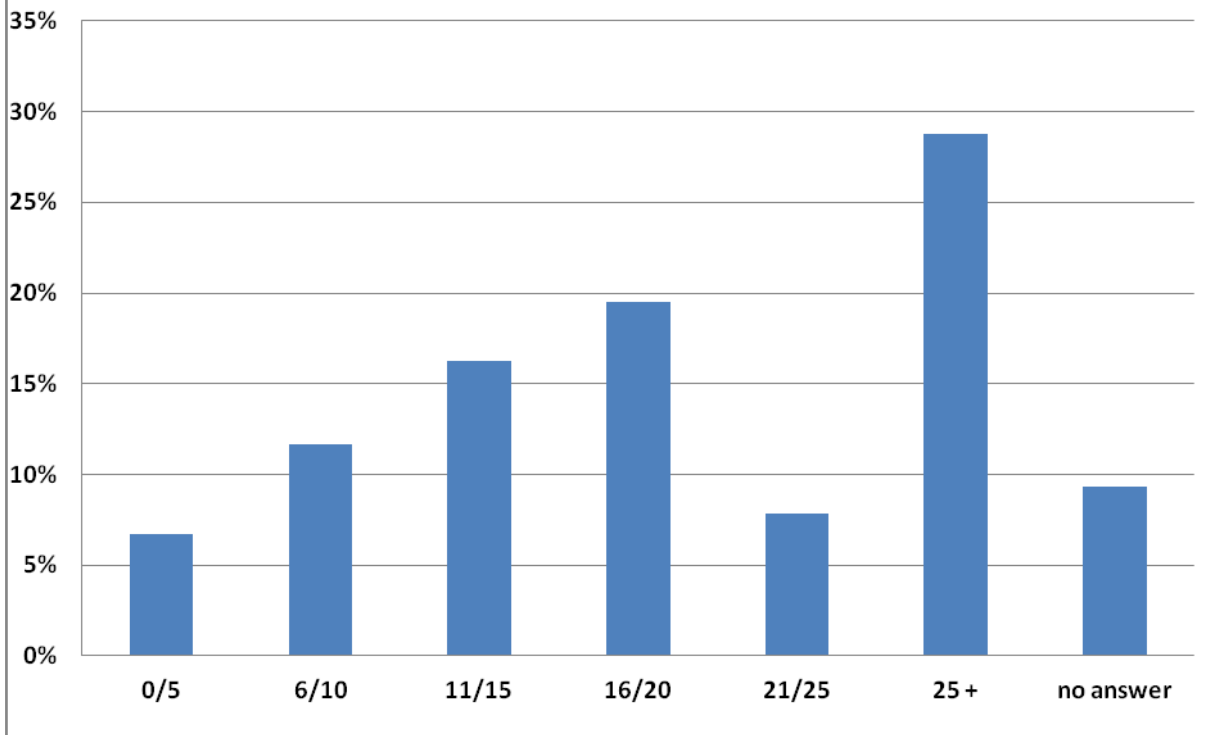


A total of 344 cinematographers from 38 countries have replied to the survey.

## 2 - Please state your age group



### 3. For how many years have you been working professionally as cinematographer?



29% - 25 years +

19% - 16 to 20 years

16% - 11 to 15 years

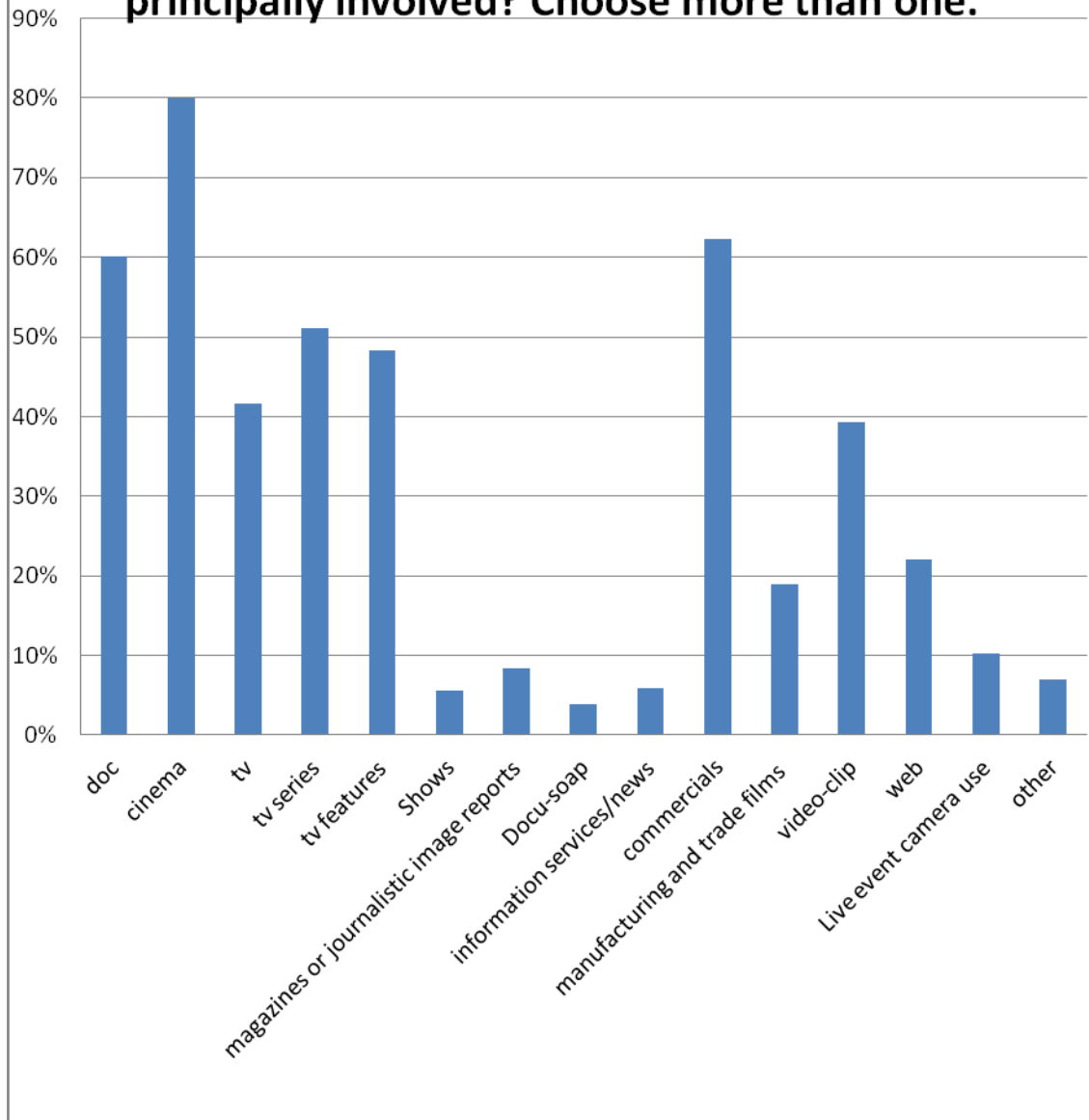
12% - 6 to 10 years

8% - 21 to 25 years

7% - 0 to 5 years

56 % - With more than 15 years of experience.

**4. Could you please specify in which category of creative cinematography you are principally involved? Choose more than one.**



80 % - Cinema

62 % - Commercials

60 % - Documentaries

51 % - TV series

48 % - TV Features

42 % - TV

39 % - Music Videos

22 % - Web

19 % - Corporate

10 % - Live Event camera use

8 % - Magazine or Journalistic image reports

7 % - Other (ex. Artistic video installation)

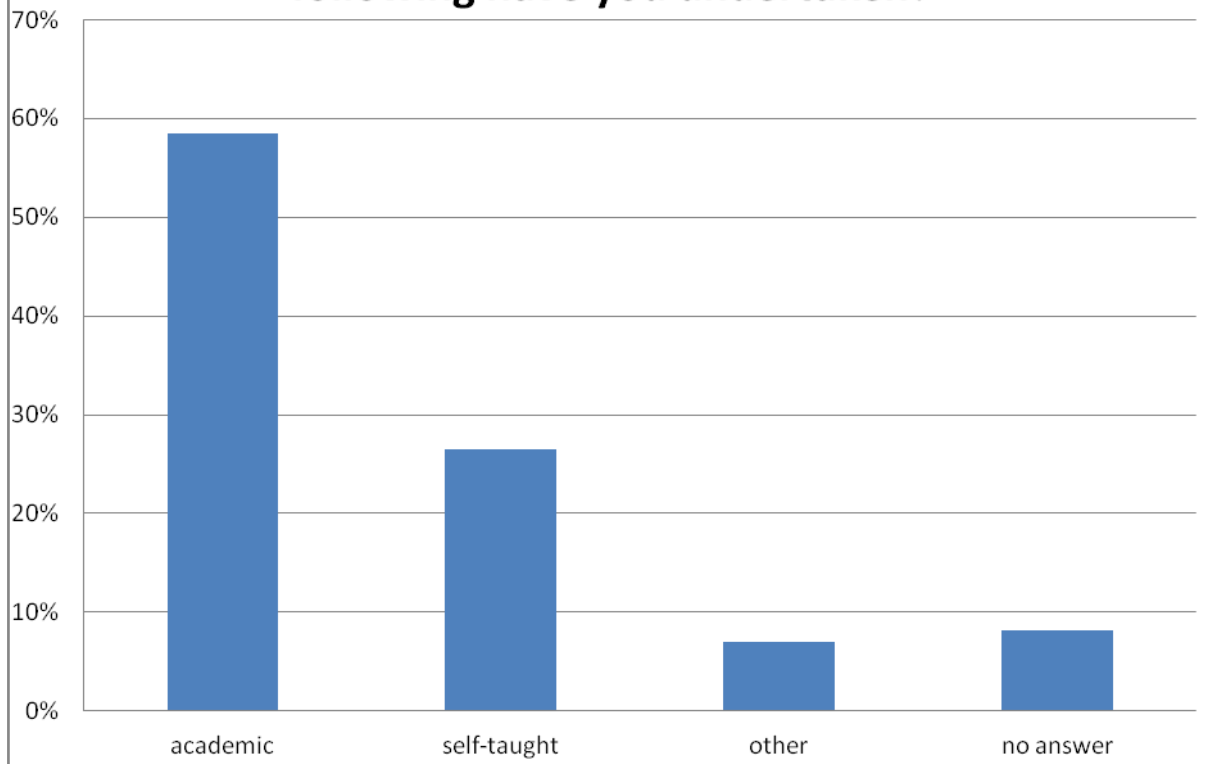
6 % - Information News

6 % - Shows

4 % - Docu-soap

**80% of participants of the survey are dedicated primarily to cinema. The result shows as well the importance of commercials, documentaries and the TV features which uses the same technique and artistic approach as a feature film for cinema.**

**5. With regard to specific education or training to be a cinematographer, which of the following have you undertaken?**

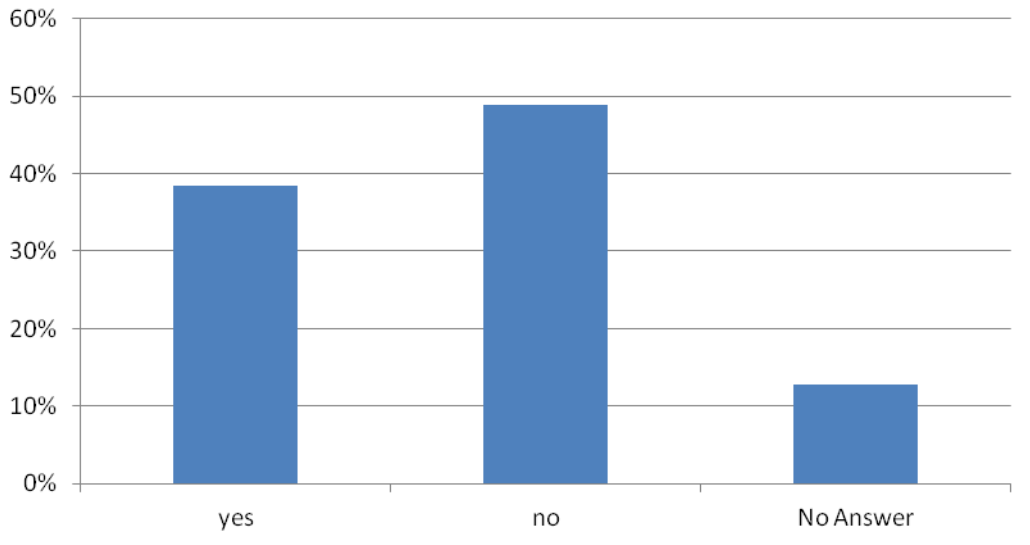


58 % - Academic

26 % - Self-taught

7 % - Other (Workshops/seminars/Visual communication/Arts School/Training rental houses/BBC training/ TV New Zealand training/Camera assistant)

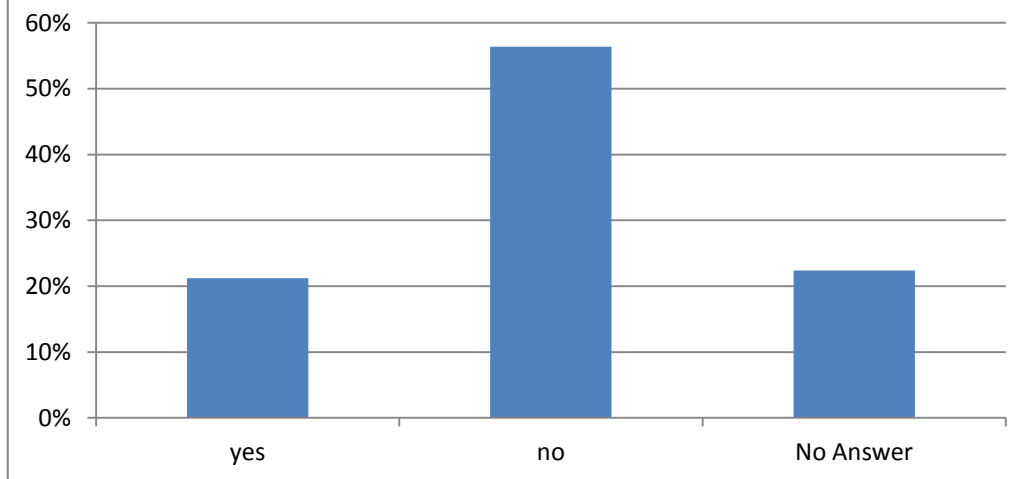
**6. Looking back over the past 12 months, have you undertaken education, training or other development, related to your creative development as cinematographer (master-class, formal course, workshops)**



49 % - No  
38 % - Yes

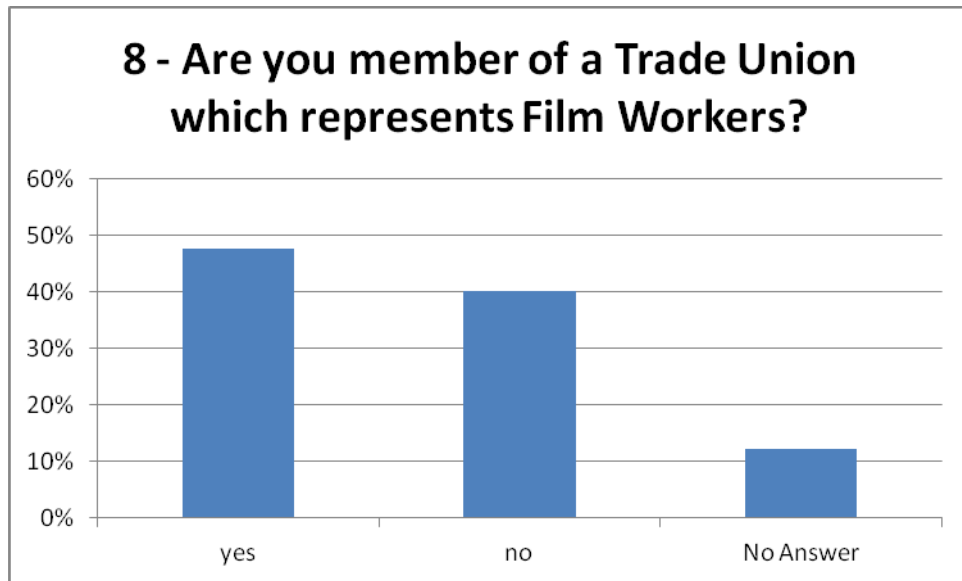
Despite the uncertainty of working schedule of the cinematographer which makes difficult to program well in advance to participate in education activities still 38% makes this effort to improve skills and update knowledge.

**7. Looking back over the past 12 months, have you undertaken education, training or other development, that supports your status as cinematographer/entrepreneur (e.g. business skills, author's rights symposium)**



56 % - No  
21 % - Yes

The survey proves that cinematographers prefer to center their education in the field of the profession.



48 % Yes  
40 % No  
12 % No answer

The survey proves, despite the majority of the cinematographers being self employed, cinematographers also enjoy the protection of a trade union.



56 % No  
44 % Yes

This result probably reflects the difficulties of cinematographers with the Trade Unions due to their status as self employed.

# CHAPTER 2

## Work patterns



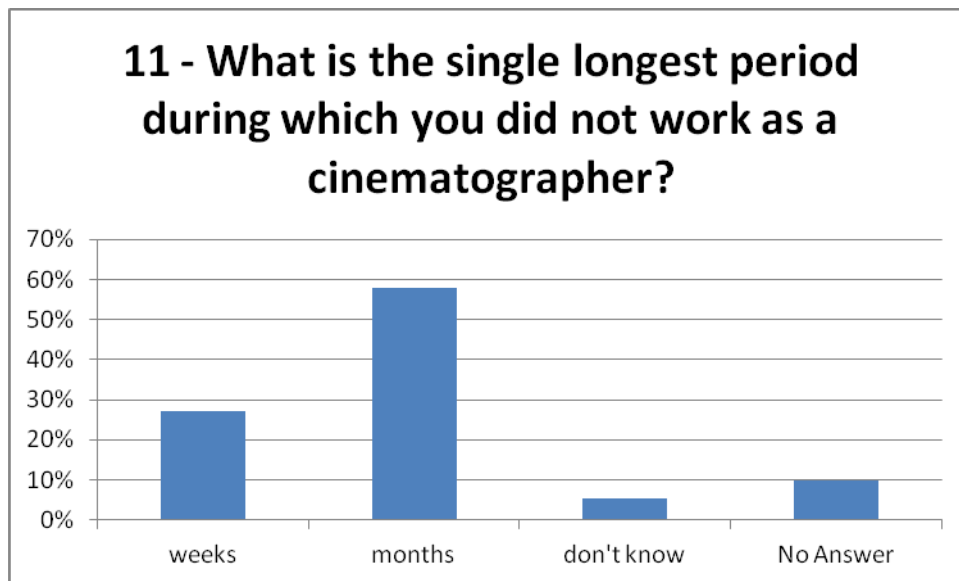
39 % - 1 to 3

27 % - 4 – 6

15 % - 7 to 10

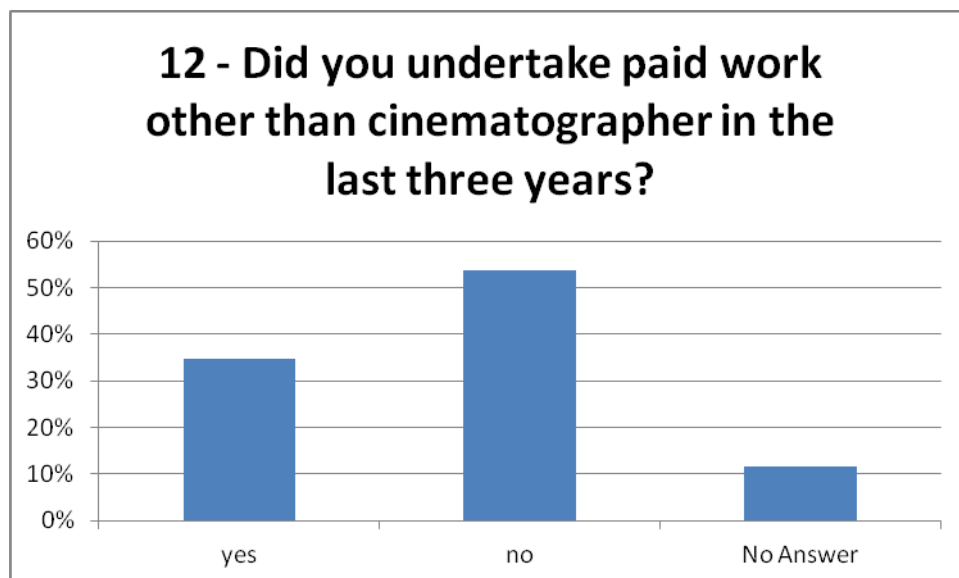
10 % - 11 or more

The survey proves the reality of the characteristic of the creative work of the cinematographer regarding the number of production companies with which they are collaborating during their professional life: it is a rather reduced or limited number of production companies.



- 58 % - Months
- 27 % - Weeks
- 10 % - No answer
- 5 % - Don't Know

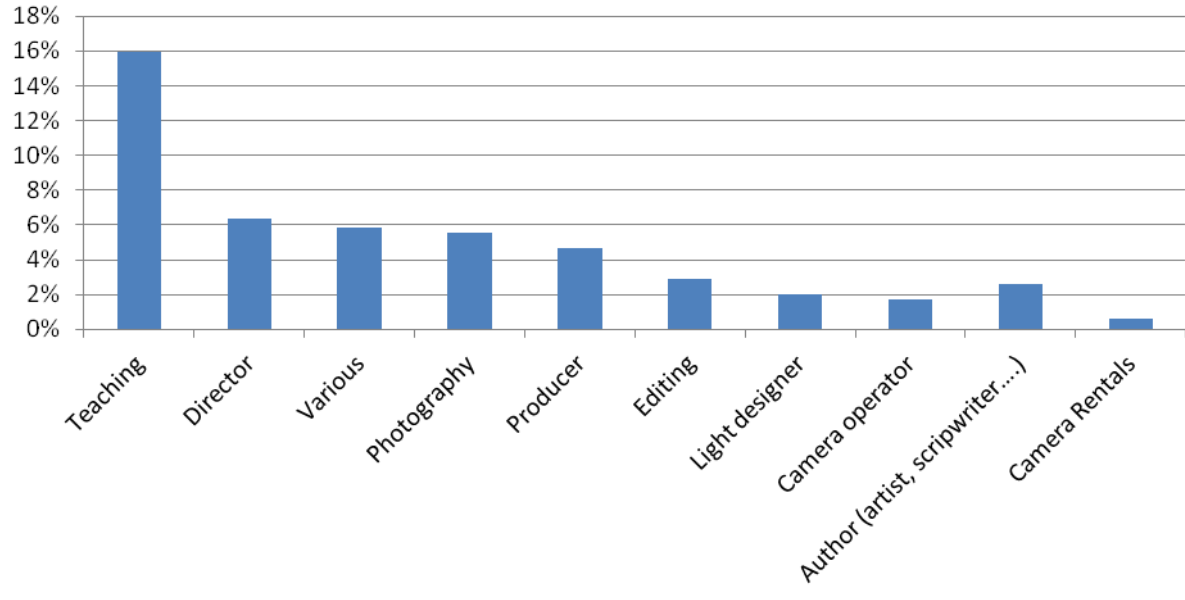
This proves not only the uncertainty of contacting of cinematographers but also the absolute irregularity of the professional activity.



- 54 % No
- 35 % Yes
- 12 % No answer

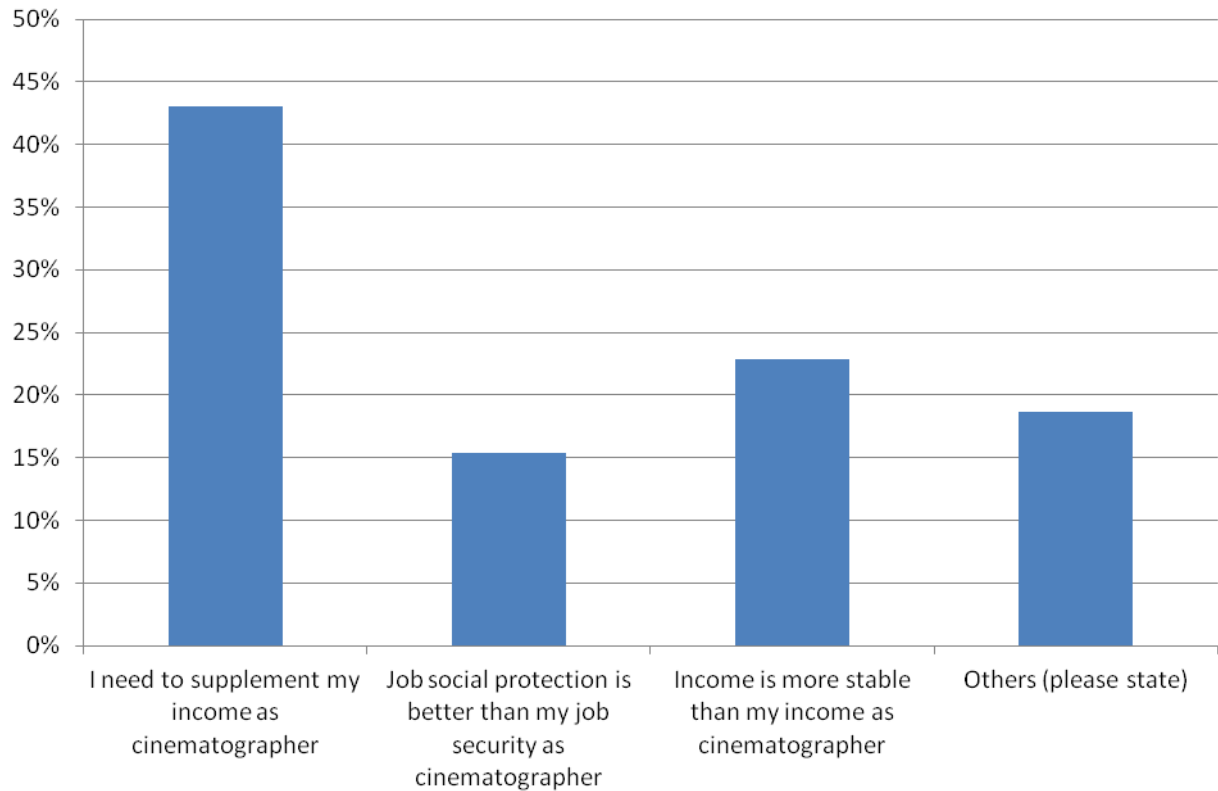
The specialization of the profession with uncertain contracting makes it difficult for cinematographers to making a living just based on cinematography work but also makes for difficulty in searching for other ways of income.

### 13 - If you undertake paid work other than your work as cinematographer, what type of work is this?



Most cinematographers search for additional income in their own sector of experience. The choice of career as cinematographer permits them to work in other creative professions of the audiovisual sector where their skills are in demand.

**14 - If you undertake additional paid work other than your work as cinematographer, what are the reasons for undertaking this work? (Please write yes or no in all that apply)**



43 % -Need to supplement my income as cinematographer.

23 % - Income is more stable.

15 % - Job social protection is better.

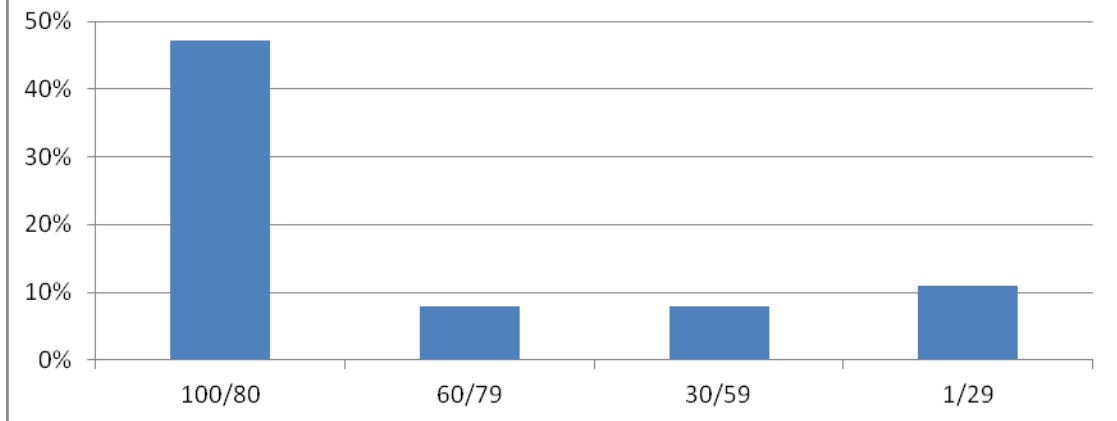
19 % - Other (please state)

The main reason for undertaking additional paid work other than as a cinematographer is the short and unstable income, as well as the lack of sufficient social protection.

# CHAPTER 3

## Income and Taxation

**15 - Please compare in percentage terms your gross personnel income (before expenses) of the full financial year of 2011 with the one of 2010.**



47 % - Maintain the level of 80 to 100 %

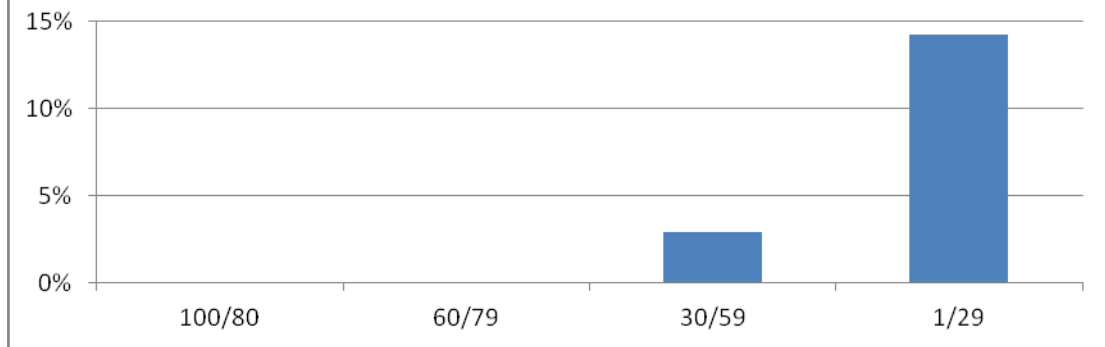
8 % - Maintain the level of 60 to 79 %

8 % - Maintains the level of 30 to 59 %

11 % - Maintain the level of 1 to 29%

Almost a half succeed in maintaining their level of income.

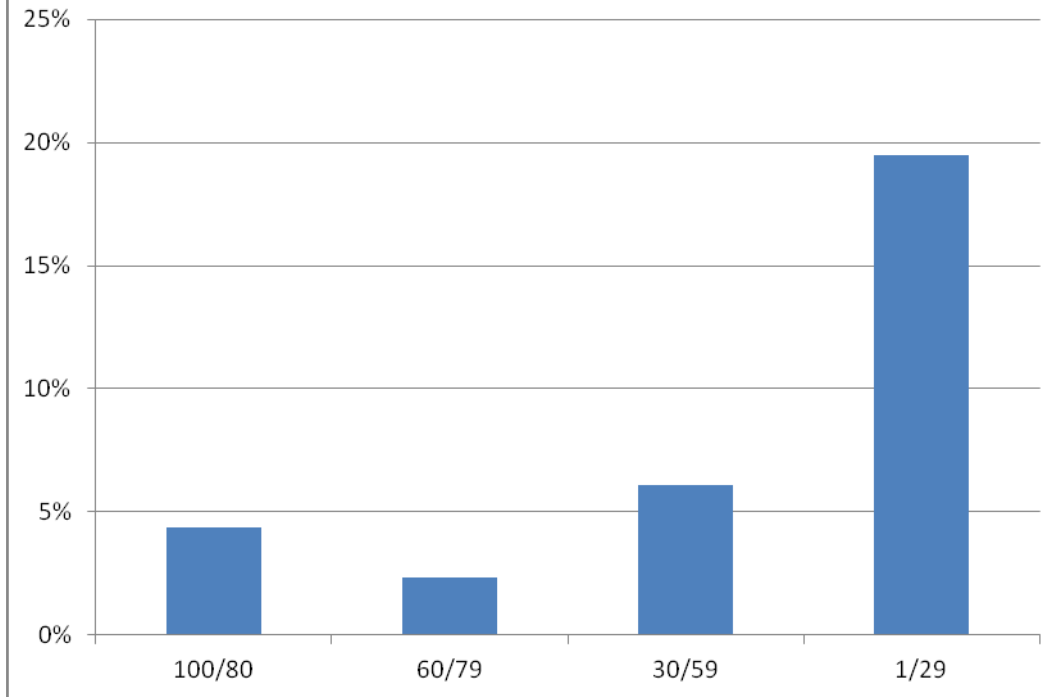
**16 - Please estimate in percentage terms your income from royalties, advances or other copyright earnings (included remuneration collected by Collecting Right Societies) in the last financial year.**



14 % of cinematographers had 1 to 29% of income from royalties etc..  
3% of cinematographers had 30 to 59 % of income from royalties etc..  
0 % got royalties more than 60%.

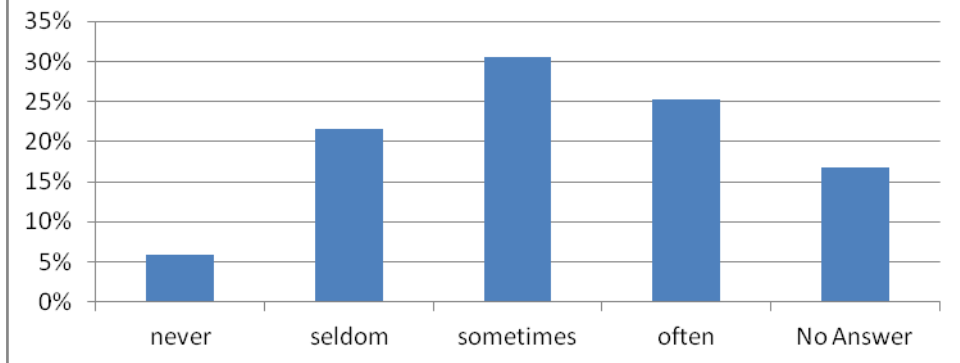
The income from royalties is minimal.

**17 - Please estimate in percentage terms  
your income from other work than  
cinematographer.**



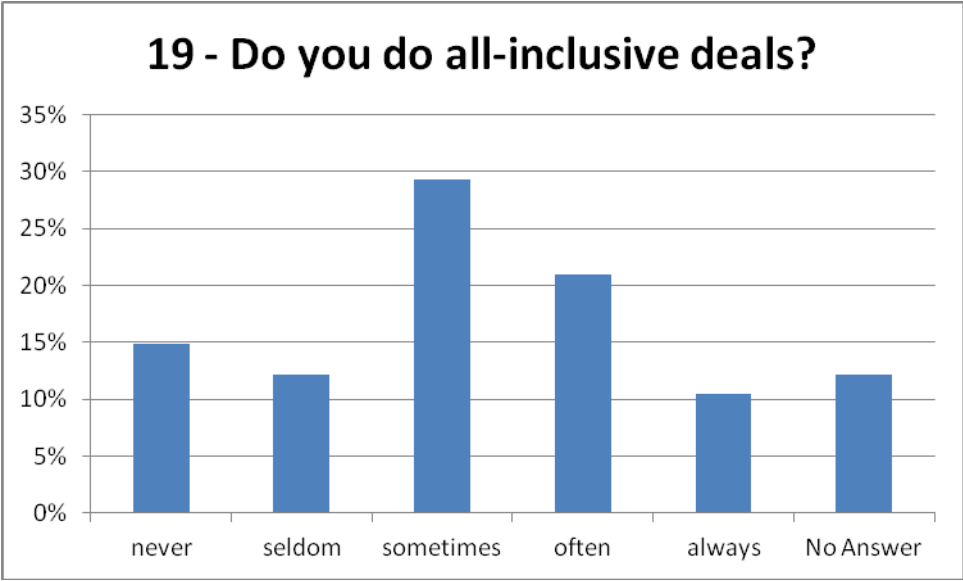
- 19 % of cinematographers made 1 to 29 % of income from another activity.
- 6 % of cinematographers made 30 to 59 % of income from another activity.
- 4 % of cinematographers made 80 to 100 % of income from another activity.
- 2 % of cinematographers made 60 to 79 % of income from another activity.

### 18 - Is the experience of cancellation of jobs resulting in lost payment a problem?



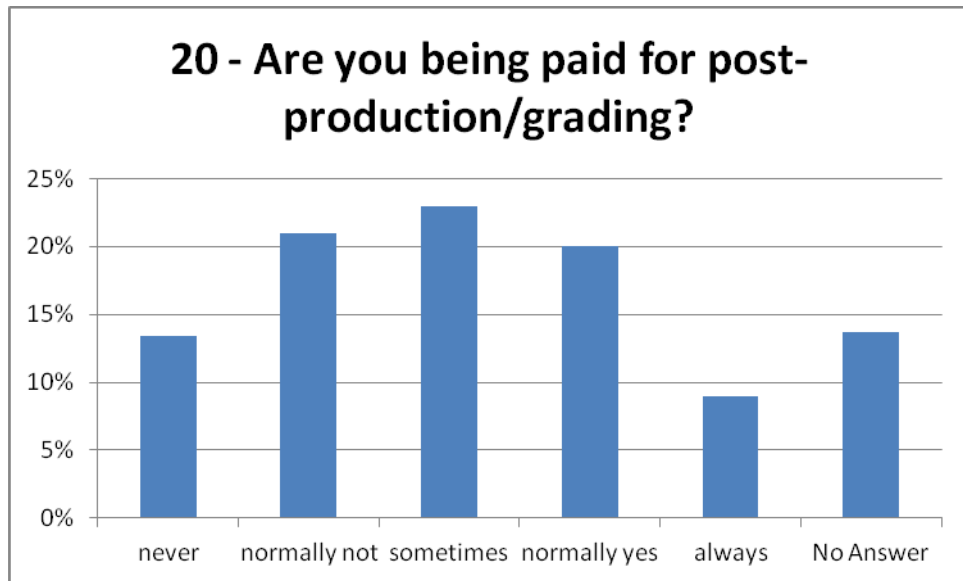
- 31 % - Sometimes
- 25 % - Often
- 22 % - Seldom
- 17 % - No answer
- 6 % - Never

Only 28 % have stated not to have problems in case of cancellation of jobs.



- 29 % - Sometimes
- 21 % - Often
- 15 % - Never
- 12 % - Seldom
- 10 % - Always
- 12 % - No answer

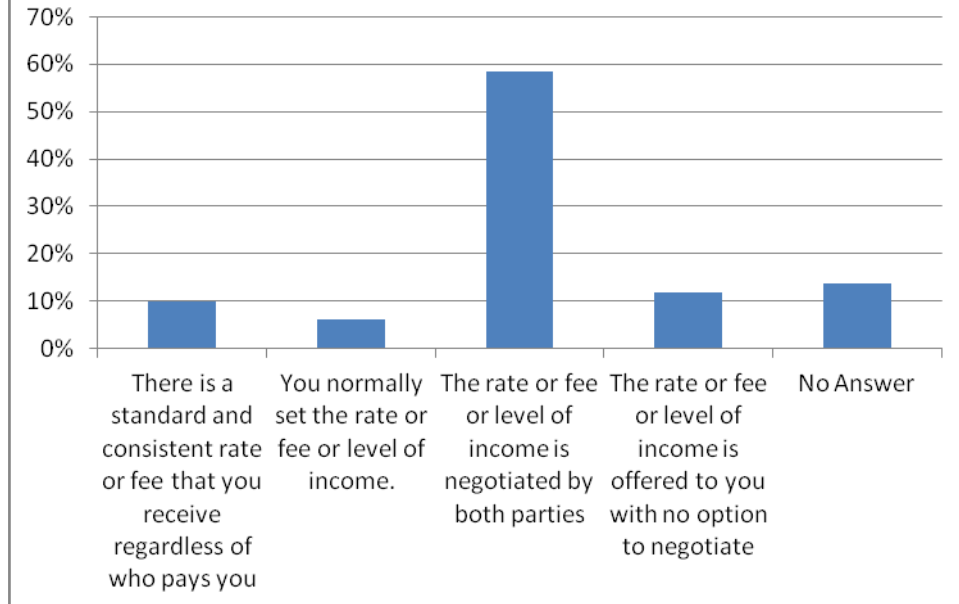
Only 15 % seems to be in the position not to do all inclusive deals.



- 23 % - Sometimes
- 21 % - Normally not
- 20 % - Normally yes
- 14 % - No answer
- 13 % - Never
- 9 % - Always

77 % - sometimes or never are being paid for the post-production grading. Only 23 % seems to be paid for the post-production grading. The time for post production grading can vary from days to weeks.

## 21 - When you are being paid for your work as a cinematographer, the normal situation is that:



58 % - The rate or fee or level of income is negotiated by both parties.

14 % - No answer

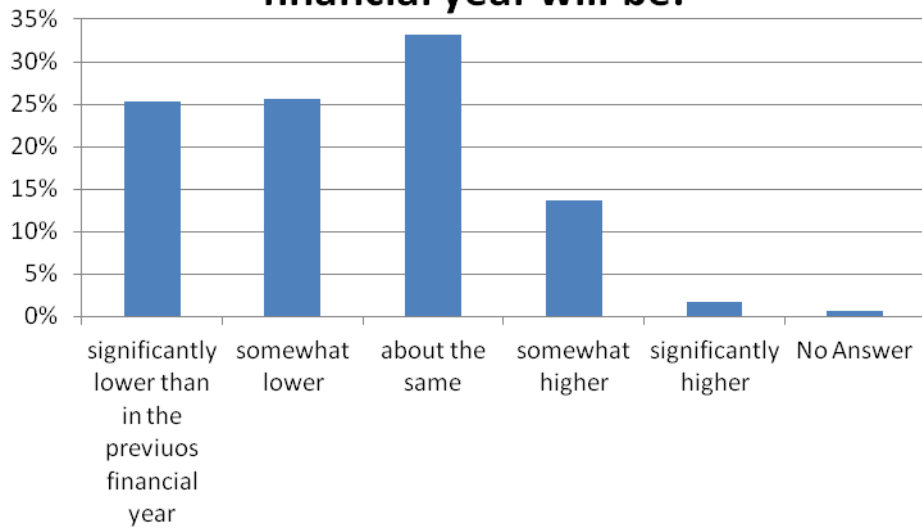
10 % - There is a standard and consistent rate or fee that you receive regardless of who pays you.

12 % - The rate or fee or level of income is offered to you with no option to negotiate,

6 % - You normally set the rate or fee or level of income.

**NOTE:** In order to avoid misunderstanding, those responsible for this survey want to stress the fact that negotiation by both parts in case of low level of income and/or non-payment of royalties does not mean acceptance by the cinematographers they will mostly be the weaker party in the negotiation. The coercive agreements can never be considered as "natural consequence of "market position"; it is simple abuse of position.

**22 - Based on the year to date, do you feel your income as cinematographer in the current financial year will be:**



33 % - About the same

26 % - Somewhat lower

25 % - Significantly lower than in the previous financial year

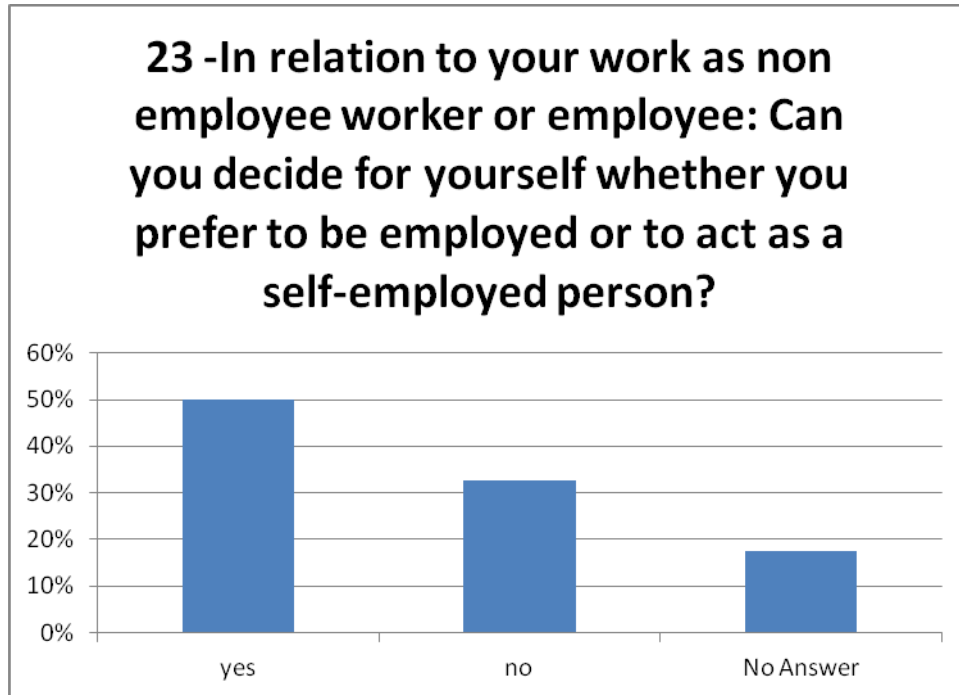
14 % - Somewhat higher

2% - Significantly higher

The survey concludes that more than 50 % of cinematographers expect a reduction of income.

# CHAPTER 4

## Social and Health Protection



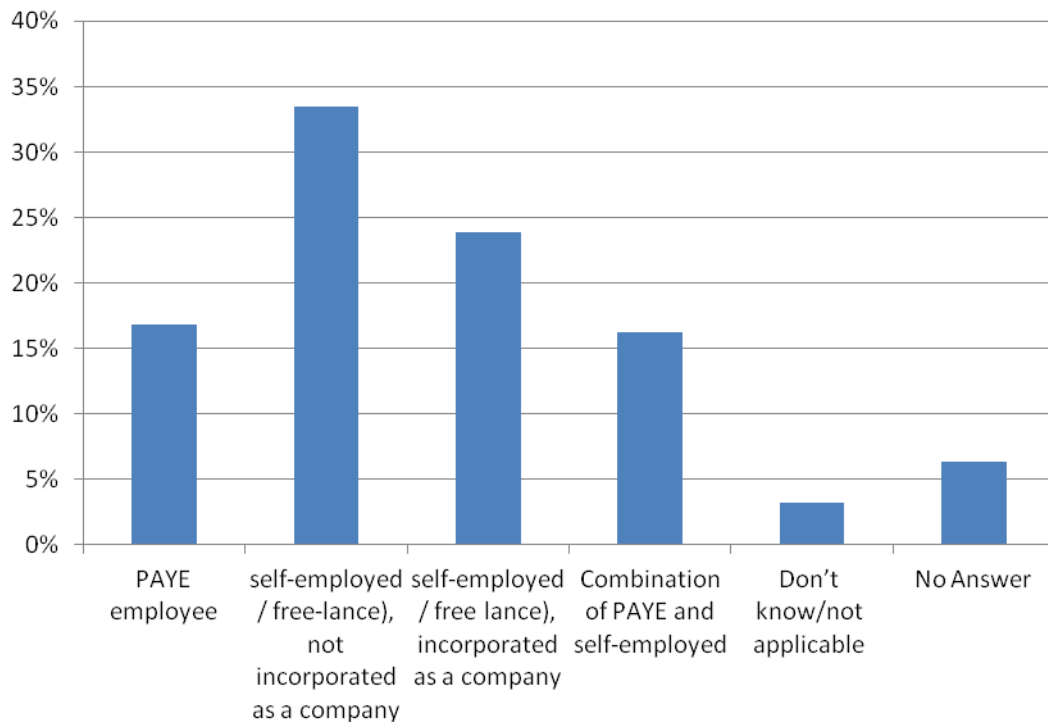
50 % - Yes

33 % - No

17 % - No answer

**NOTE:** Regarding the evaluation of this answer IMAGO must stress the fact that in most countries actually “free-choice” exists, but in fact this choice is not a real option. In case cinematographer demands a contract in order to be employed even for a short period it will cost more to the producer. As the film worker is the weak part of the negotiation and the malpractice to impose status as self-employed has been strengthened in this sector, the cinematographer is resigned to this option and signs the disadvantageous contract with producer.

## 24 - If you undertake paid work as cinematographer, what is your tax status?



33 % - self-employed / free-lance), not incorporated as a company

24 % - self-employed / free lance), incorporated as a company

17 % - Paid employee

16 % - Combination of payment and self-employed

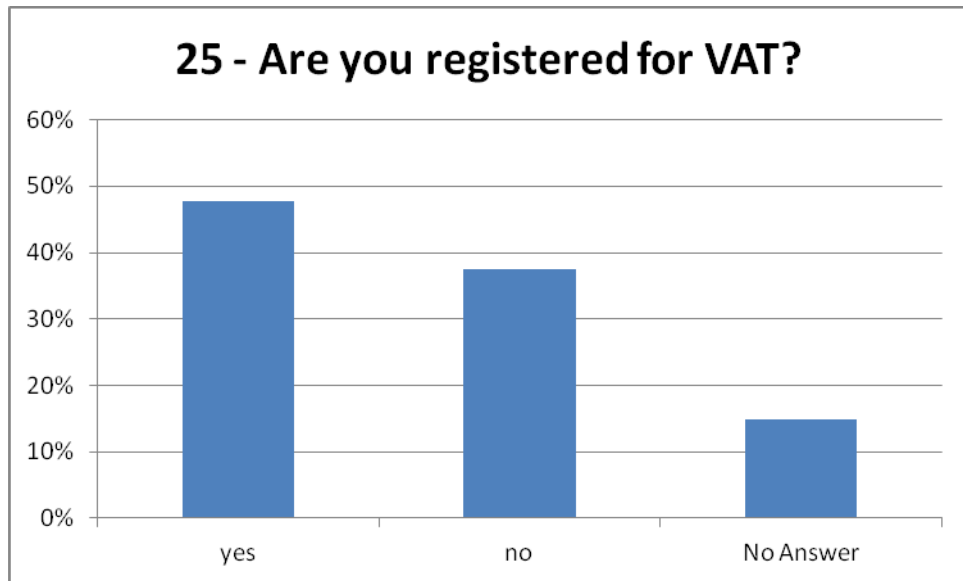
6 % - No answer

3% - Don't know/not applicable

Self employed = 49 %

Self employed as company = 40 %

The conclusion is that 89 % of cinematographers are self employed.

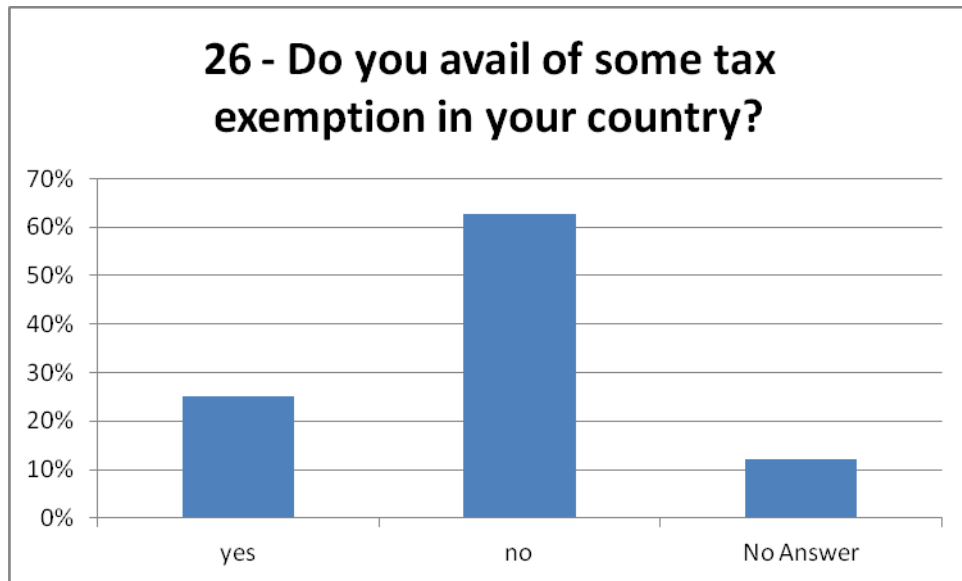


48 % - Yes

38 % - No

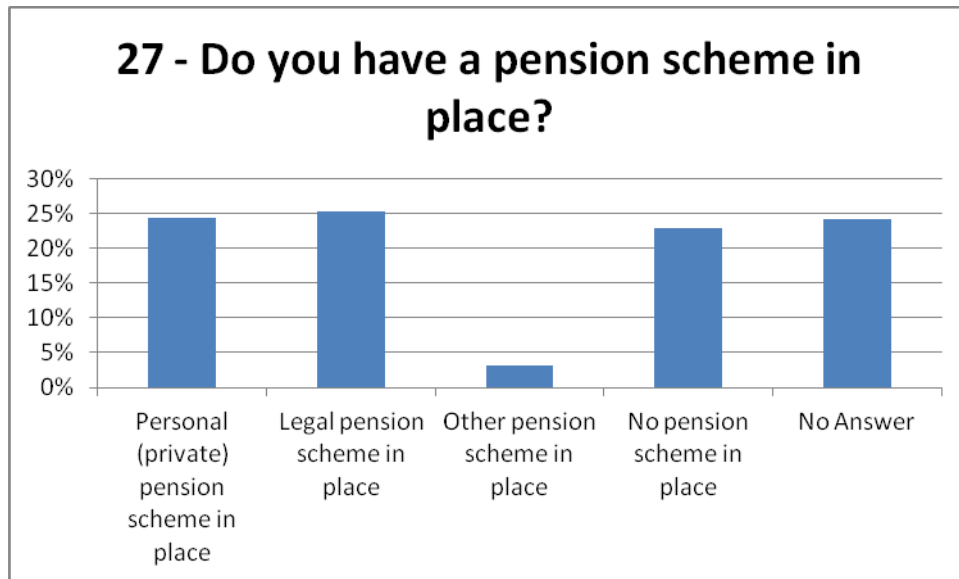
15 % - No answer

As the survey concludes the VAT is directly related to invoicing as a company. But in certain countries if the self employed earns a certain amount of income there is an obligation to pay VAT.



63 % - No  
25 % - Yes  
12 % - No answer

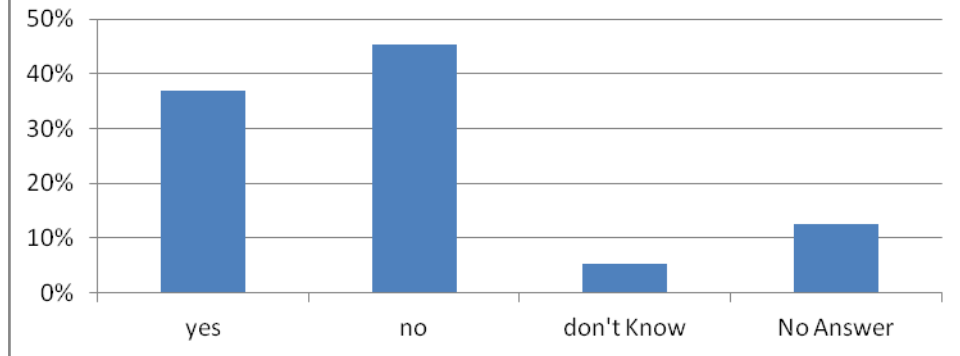
A recognized artist benefits from tax reductions in most European Countries to different levels but as the survey illustrates the cinematographer in most countries cannot claim those tax exemptions.



- 25 % - Legal pension scheme in place
- 24 % - Personal (private) pension scheme in place
- 23 % - No pension scheme in place
- 3% - Other pension scheme in place

Considering the reduced percentage of cinematographers enjoying measures relating to pensions the great majority face a great financial insecurity in their older age.

**28 - Do you have any arrangement in place to provide you with financial security in your older years (e.g. investment income, etc.)?**



45 % - No

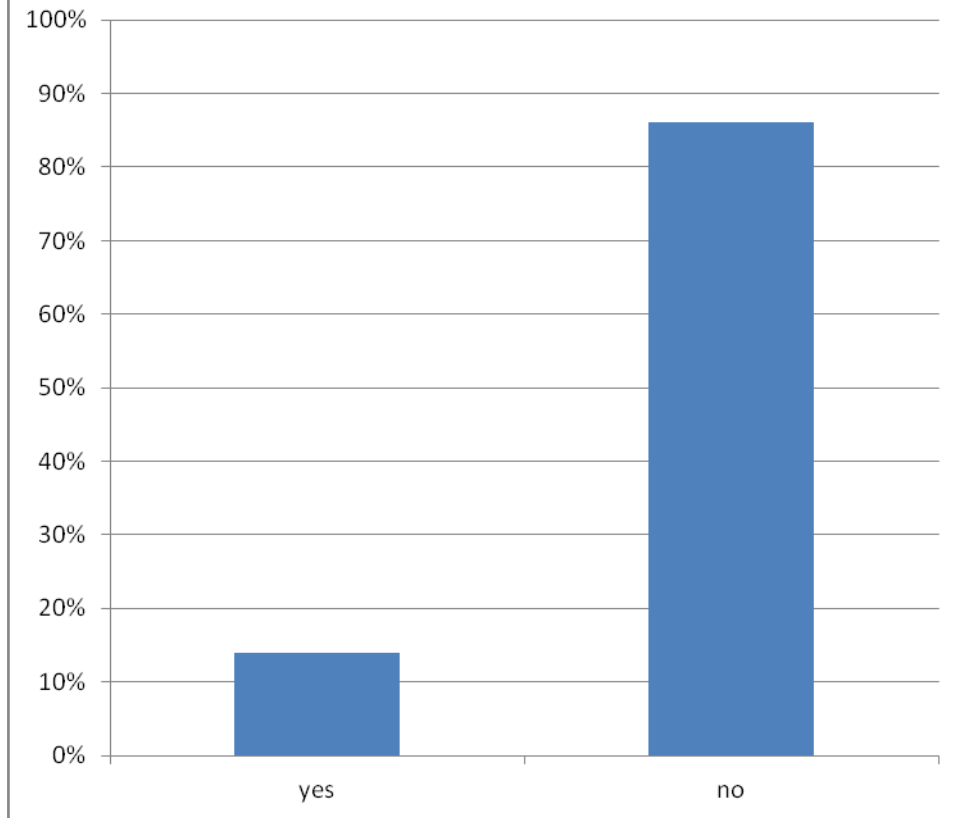
37 % - Yes

5 % - Don't Know

13 % - No answer

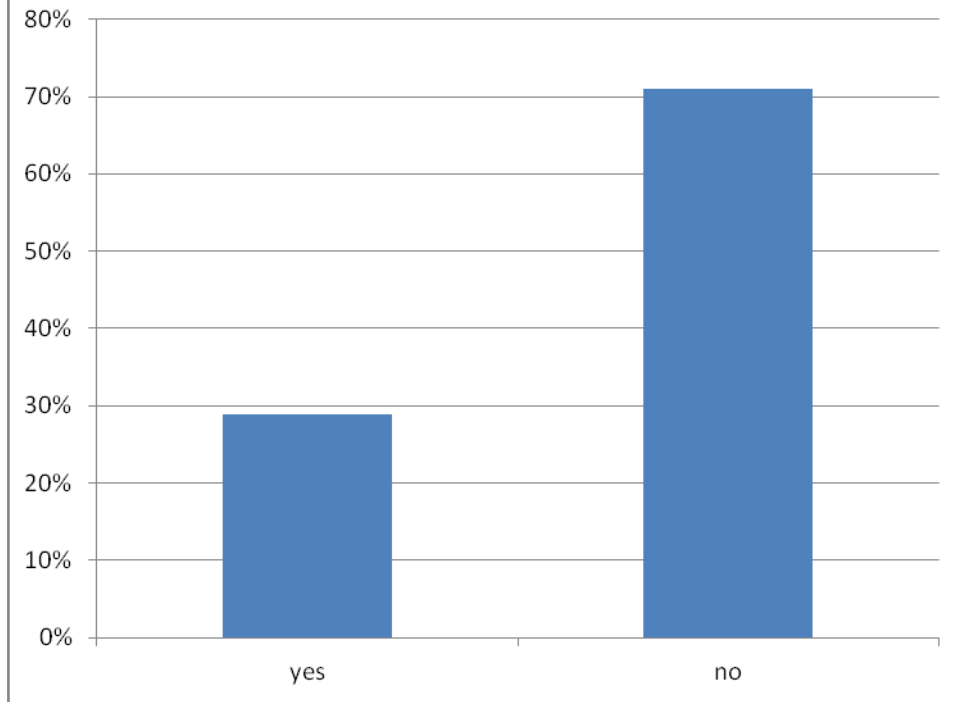
**NOTE:** As a result of this survey IMAGO should initiate an awareness campaign to cinematographers of the importance of securing better living conditions for their later years.

### 29 - Can you be registered officially as unemployed in the Department of Social and Family Affairs?



The survey proves that due to the fact that cinematographers mostly do not benefit from social security.

**30 - If you have been registered as unemployed in the past, did you receive unemployment (or jobseekers) benefit or assistance while you were unemployed?**

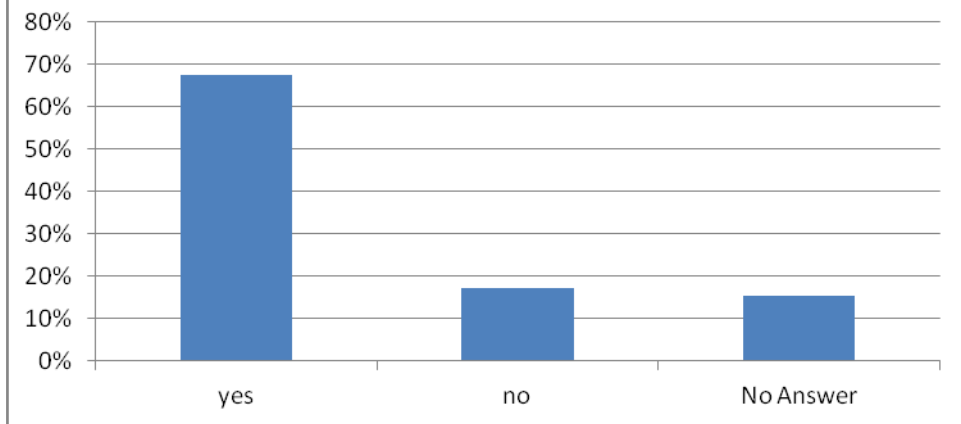


71 % - No

29 % - Yes

52 % -No answer

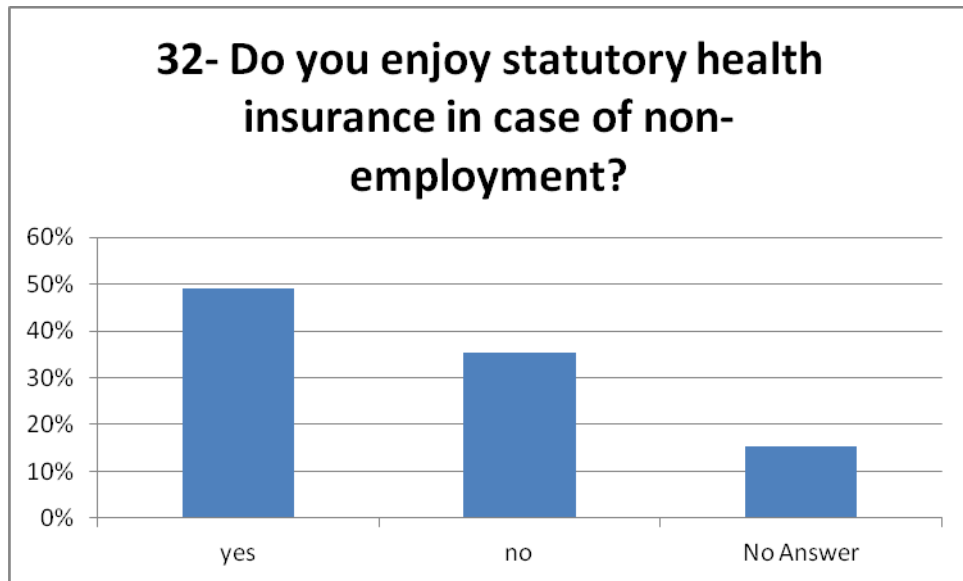
### 31 - Do you enjoy statutory health insurance?



67 % - Yes

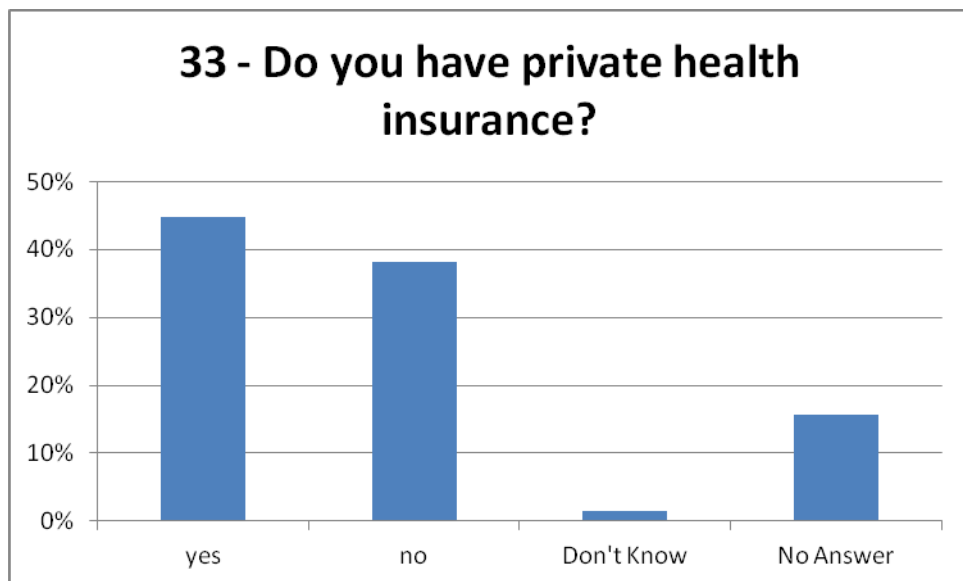
17 % - No

15 % - No answer



49 % - Yes  
 35 % - No  
 15 % - No answer

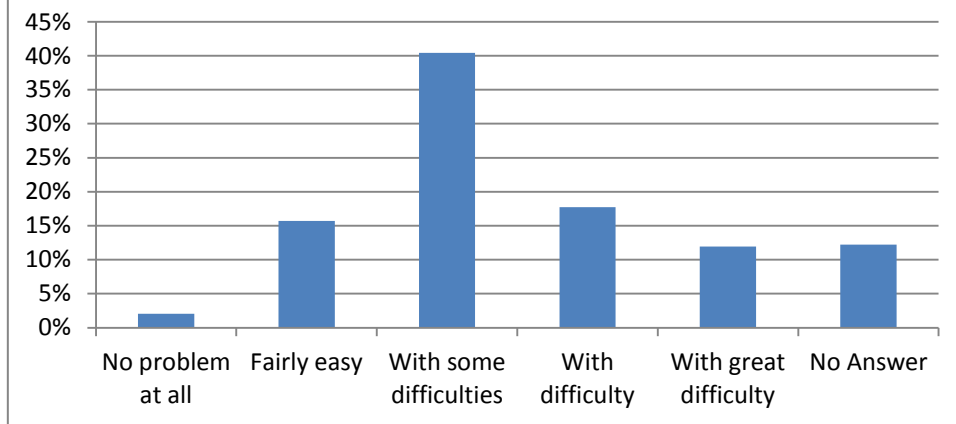
It is noticeable in this the survey that a high percentage (35%) of cinematographers are excluded in case of non-employment from statutory health insurance.



45 % - Yes  
 38 % - No  
 16 % - No answer

According to the previous replies these cinematographers are obliged to purchase private health insurance for their protection.

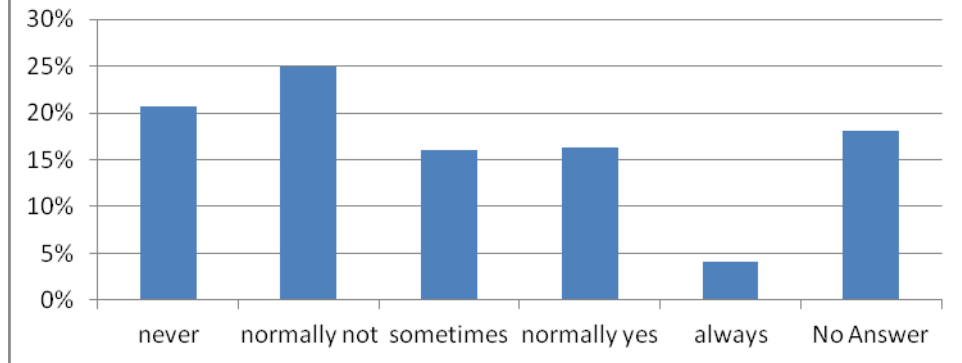
### 34 - How do you assess your financial security in your older years?



- 40 % - With some difficulties
- 18 % - With difficulty
- 16 % - Fairly Easy
- 12 % - With Great Difficulty
- 2 % - No problem at all.

We can conclude that 70 % of the cinematographers are concerned about their financial security while in retirement.

### 35 - Do you enjoy a special insurance paid by your producer in case of hazardous assignments?



25 % - Normally not

21 % - Never

18 % - No answer

16 % - Sometimes

16 % - Normally yes.

4 % - Always

Never enjoying special insurance - 46 %

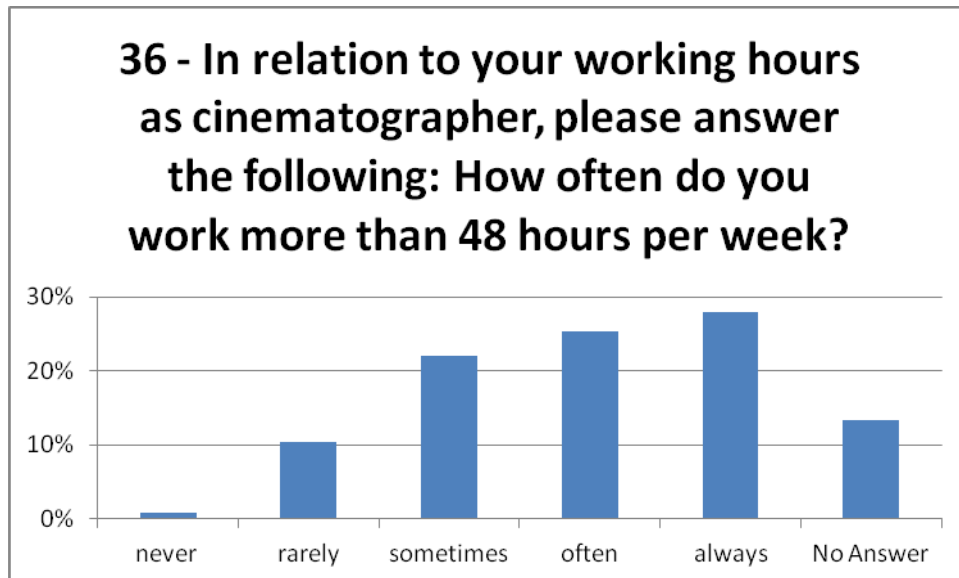
Receiving – 32%

Always – 4 %

A great majority of cinematographers do not benefit from a paid insurance by producer in the case of a dangerous assignment.

# CHAPTER 5

## WORKING CONDITIONS AND MOBILITY

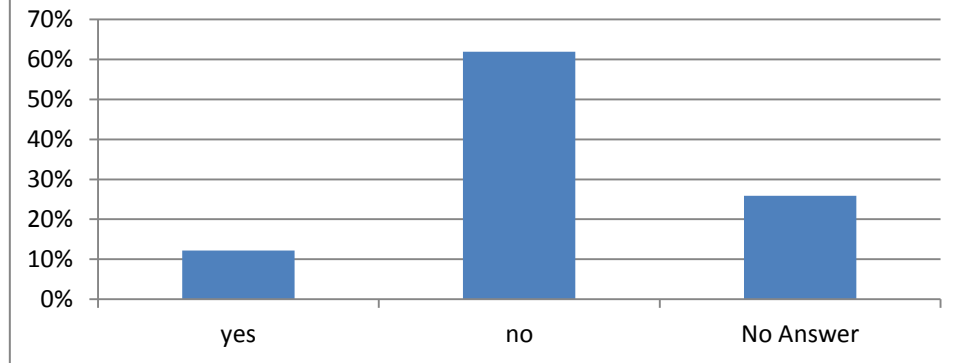


- 28 % - Always
- 25 % - Often
- 22 % - Sometimes
- 13 % - No answer
- 10 % - Rarely
- 1% - Never

75 % - are working more than 48 hours per week.

This is the clear proof that legislation regarding working hours is systematically infringed in the film industry.

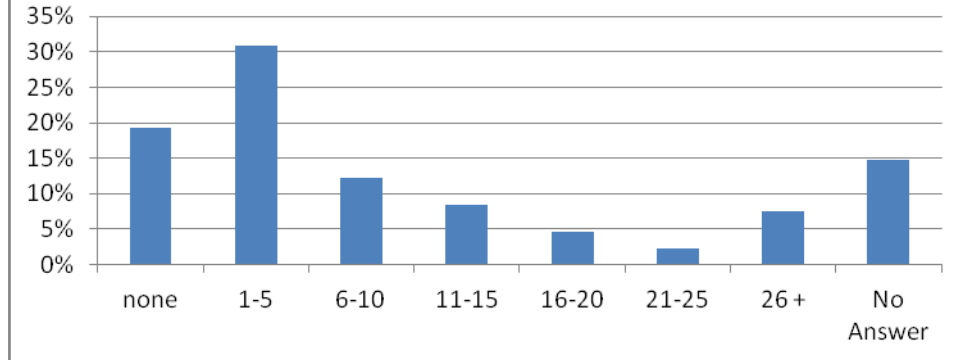
### 37 - Is there a minimum time period that notice has to be given prior to working overtime?



62 % - No  
26 % - No answer  
12 % - Yes

The answer is one of the proofs of the difficulties of facing cinematographers in coordinating their work and private lives.

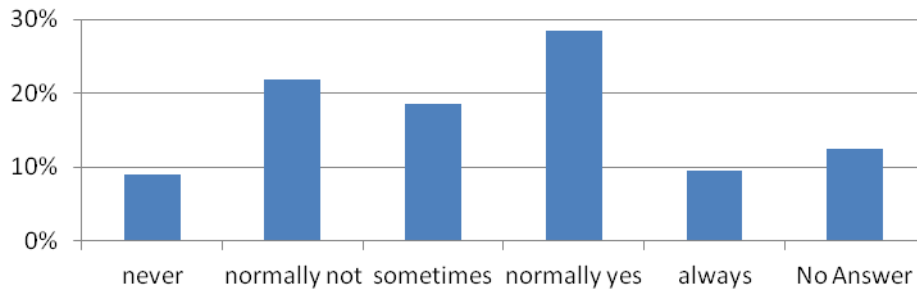
### 38 - As an average, how many days do you work on a project without being paid?



- 31 % - 1 to 5 days
- 19 % - None
- 15 % - No answer
- 12 % - 6 to 10 days
- 8 % - 11 to 15 days
- 8 % - 26 or more days
- 5 % - 16 to 20 days
- 2 % - 21 to 25 days

This result reflects the contribution of the cinematographer for the viability of the production. Nevertheless the time of the cinematographer during location scouting, pre-production and post-production should be accounted for in remuneration.

### 39- Do you take responsibility for the working hours and condition of your camera crew including gaffer and grip?



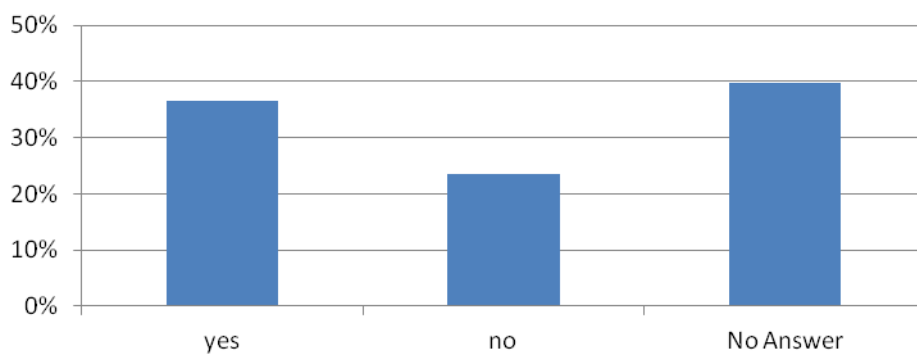
- 28 % - Normally yes
- 22 % - Normally not
- 19 % - Sometimes
- 13 % - No answer
- 10 % - Always
- 9 % - Never

Takes care of the crew – 57 %

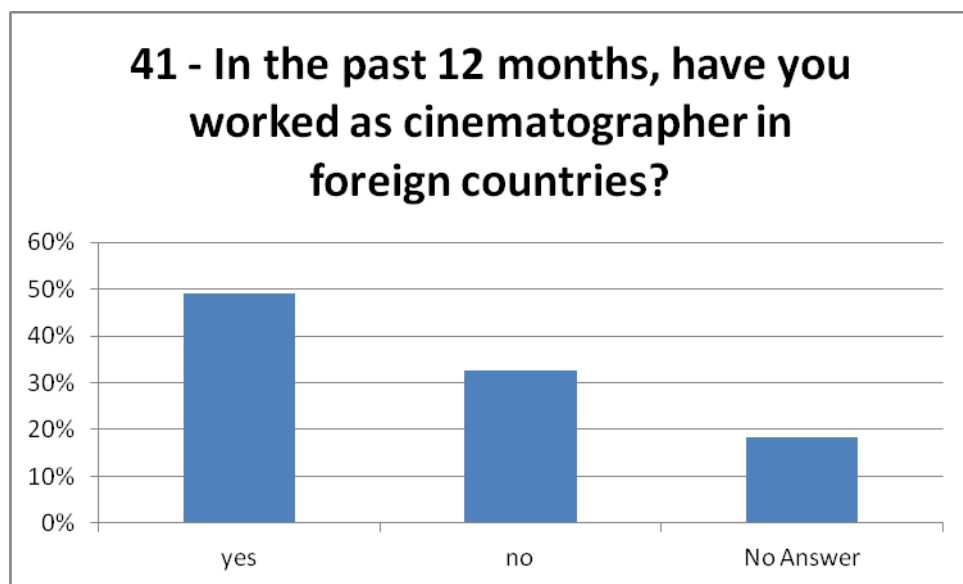
Does not care for the crew – 31 %

During the shooting the cinematographer is not only responsible for the image creation but also assumes the well being of the crew as head of department. But according to this survey it is noticeable that a considerable number are not assuming this responsibility.

### 40 - Do you think that shooting time has changed during the last few years?



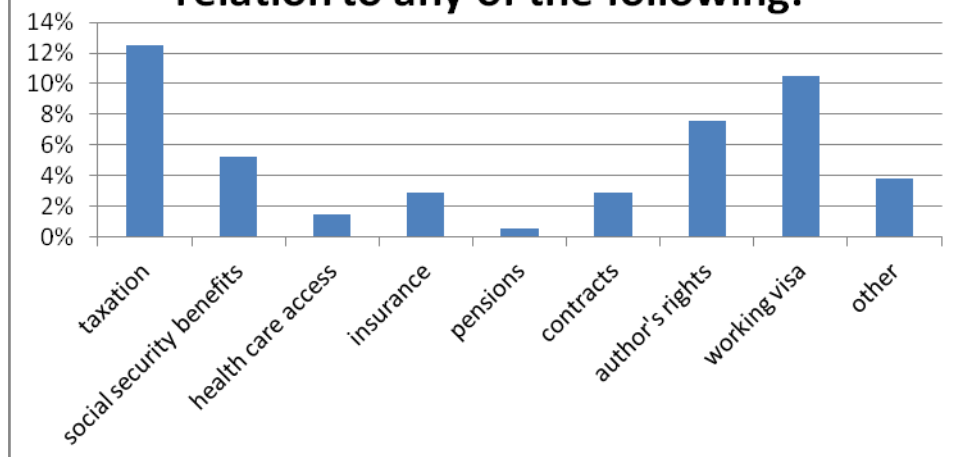
37 % - Yes  
24 % - No  
40 % - No answer



49 % - Yes  
33 % - No  
18 % - No answer

The cinematographer is a profession that requires mobility between countries which leads us to the conclusion for the need to have legislation to facilitate co-productions between European and non European countries.

**42 - If you have worked as a cinematographer in foreign countries, have you experienced problems in relation to any of the following:**



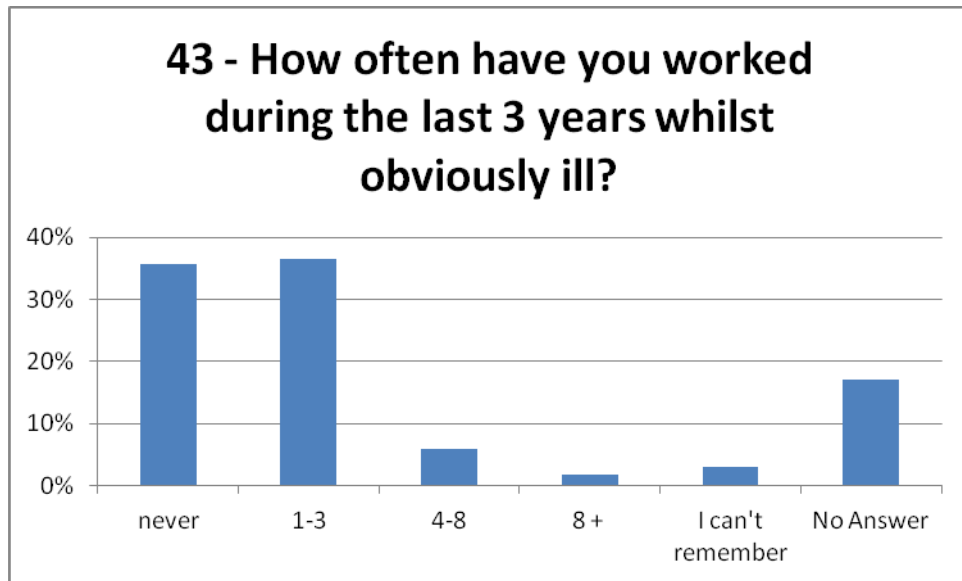
- 13 % - Taxation
- 10 % - Working Visa
- 8 % - Author's rights
- 5 % - Social Security Benefits
- 4 % - Other ( Mostly affectively paid)
- 3 % - Contracts
- 3 % - Insurance
- 1 % - Health Care access
- 1 % - Pensions

The answer shows that the historical problem of double taxation and working visa remains as an obstacle for the mobility of the cinematographer and harms the audiovisual sector in general.

**NOTE:** IMAGO adds that many cinematographers mentioned the great difficulty with the fulfillment of the obligation of payment.

# CHAPTER 6

## Reflections on careers



37 % - 1 to 3 times

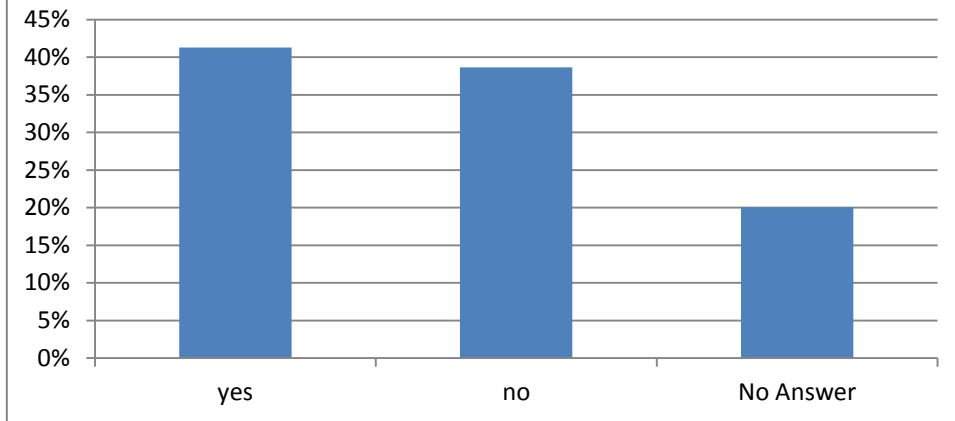
36 % - Never

6 % - 4 to 8 times

2 % - 8 times and more

17 % - No answer

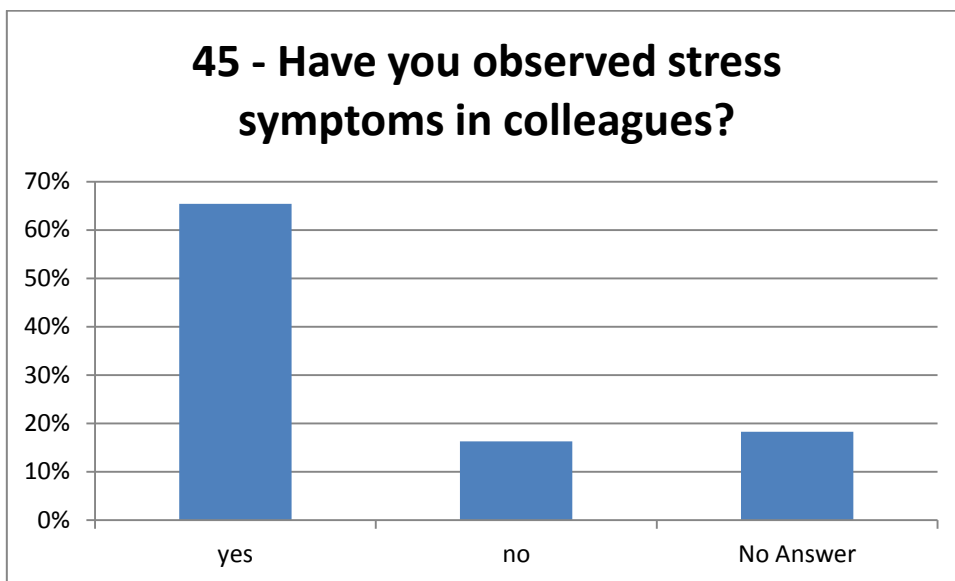
### 44 - Do you have suffered stress symptoms?



41 % - Yes

39 % - No

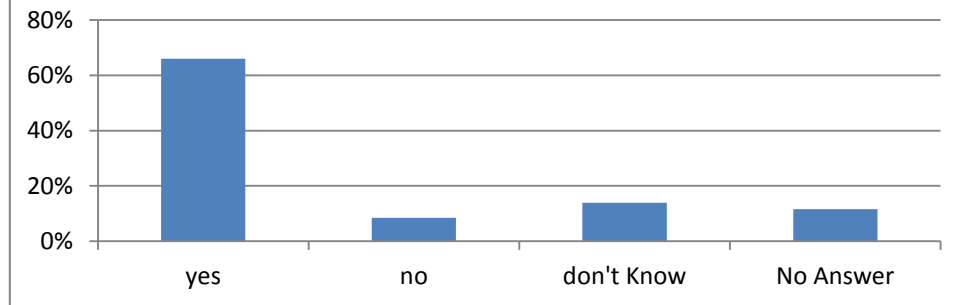
### 45 - Have you observed stress symptoms in colleagues?



65 % - Yes

16 % - No

**46 - Looking at the positives and negatives in your career, if you were starting over again, would you choose to work as cinematographer?**



66 % - Yes

14 % - Don't Know

8 % - No

12 % - No answer

**47: Cinematographers answers to the question:  
... add any final comments on the living, social and  
working conditions of cinematographers.**

- We live in strange times where amateur equipment mixes with professional productions. Where a producer asks me if I can shoot a feature on a photo camera without knowing the consequences. Where prices and fees have to be lower than yesterday or like previous jobs. Where days of 10 become days of 12 or more as a standard.
- The working conditions for most cinematographers differ enormously but it is not a career any more where you can keep working until old age. The films have to be made faster and cheaper and because of the digital age they don't need to rely on the experience of the cinematographer anymore. It is a bit scary now, I would not advise younger people to start on the same track.
- It is difficult to have a family - seldom at home - sometimes less or no money. As a freelancer it is not allowed to be ill! Nearly every day there is no paid overtime. Most of us will be poor after retirement.
- The living and social conditions of cinematographers are increasing but the working conditions are worsening. The control over the IMAGE, the cinematographers enjoyed in old time is NO MORE. The director and Producer has instant access to visuals in this digital AGE, therefore dictating terms not only composition but lighting look of the film. India, recently one film was shot without a cinematographer (on 5D) and it got released commercially also. After DI, even cinematographer lost control over Post and finally, digital projection has given the way for big corporate and distributors to dictate terms, so cinematographer even does not have the control over how his IMAGE is finally seen. And finally, nowadays people don't have patience on the set, they want as soon as camera is switched on the shot to be taken- as if the cinematographer is a magician.
- Working conditions are largely ignored by production, and pay has decreased by approx. 30% over the last ten years. We have no pension support, no health benefits, no support if too ill to work, and no remuneration if the film is successful. In the UK, our rates are generally lower than in other parts of the EU and USA.
- We must get better conditions for our profession. The better we get as cinematographers, often, the worse the conditions we have to work in.
- It is a difficult career because you don't know what's going to be tomorrow, I can't plan my holidays, or I'm very busy or I have a lot of free time.
- Living in an unknown situation of when will be work, is very stressful, but when there is work it seems like one of the most enjoyable jobs. Frustration and agony is also a part of being a cinematographer.

- As noted above in box 59, the long hours of work should be addressed by Producers and all Film Unions in the world. Nobody should have to work more than 9-10 hours per day. Years ago, the argument was that the high equipment and studio rental rates were what justified the long hours. These days, you can rent all your camera, lighting and grip gear at a 1.5 day WEEKLY rate. Long hours only benefit the Producer's bottom line at the risk of the crew's health (both physical and mental) and potentially their life. I personally know several people who have been killed driving home after a 15 hour day. I have discussed this issue with many peers and colleagues over the years and most people harbor the same sentiment, but feel there is nothing they can do about it. The general consensus is that if you cannot take it, and then leave the industry.
- We need agents and authorship status, for legal problems and working status.
- Given the nature of the film making process and the "Americanization" of the industry it's hard to see how anything will change. The French seem to have the best working conditions but poor pay and high taxes lead many of their best DP's to work in the UK.
- In the end you are always on your own, which means, YOU will have to fight for your rights or have to decide on how much you are prepared to compromise. All the better, if an association like IMAGO can take away some pressure from you!
- Getting older in this profession in the NL and BE area is a tricky thing. Normally producers prefer to work with younger and inexperienced DoP's since they don't cost that much and are easy to manipulate. This way experience and knowledge disappear.
- In the last ten years the work of cinematographer has become purely commercial performance. The new organization of work in the cinema has produced long-term damage to the creativity and passion of the individual personality. The obsession of productive time and the speed of execution have created an approval in the results and images. Get yourself out of all this misery? How to recover our passion for making movies?
- It is not a good time to talk about that because I come from Greece where everything we knew is collapsing. Sorry! E.g. we work and we never take our money because production companies are closing down one after the other...So sad!
- Unless, You´re Mainstream you´re invisible, and sometimes regarded as "help" or a mere technician ... Cinematographers Worldwide Unite in Achieve True Auteur Status, Recognition, Benefits, Royalties, and Creative Control & Authority.
- We should change the production paradigm, not just for cinematographers, but for all film workers. The (American) production model is reminiscent of the textile mills of early industrial Britain, in which the workers were slaves to the machines -- with the machines

themselves running constantly. The labor was exploited to maximize the benefit of capital invested in the physical plant. Currently in the film biz, the costs of above-the-line personnel and the cost of financing dictate an intense work schedule that pays no heed to the health and well-being of the technical/artistic crew. Could films be made while working only 9-10 hours per day? They used to be in some countries. What happened?

- Too many hours per day to work safely. A lack of the director's ability to have final say on choosing the cameraman.
- Shame we have lost a lot of respect in this society that only sees this as a financial matter and don't understand that filmmaking, even in this times of easy doing digital revolution, can only gain from the collaboration with d.o.p's
- Everything is faster now... Directors and producers want more shot in a day, made faster. It's very stressful for actors in TV series when they have to learn 14 pages per day in 11 different scenes of 6 different episodes.... The control of the final color timing of features and TV series should be in cinematographer's contract. Video color timing is a great tool for cinematographers but it's also a big instrument of control for producers: they can do anything with ours images nowadays and change our work completely forever.
- I am interested in the idea of authorship on the part of a cinematographer, and ownership of the image. I do think that we work in an often toxic industry in terms of politics and personal issues - which balance is needed to avoid having DP's suffer from drug/alcohol addictions and family problems. There should be some literature created to raise awareness on this front.
- The living, social and working conditions has very much changed and degrading. We are working too fast, too much during short period, and not enough during long period.
- Nevertheless how hard the times will be for working freelance. It's still a very important and specialized profession. We need to find new ways of working together with producers and TV producers and directors. The old fashion way of producing is at its end. We need to work together, maybe by sharing risks and new solutions on producing films.
- Socially, though admired, they are considered people with unstable income. Because of the unorganized Industry, it hasn't got the status of being a noble profession as medicine; engineering etc. the lack of retirement plans is a serious concern. No organization and other factors leading to collapsing of the working conditions.
- It is very hard to get in the industry, but it seems to be even harder, to stay in...
- In Germany, TV stations, especially the public channels, are constantly increasing the pressure on production companies to reduce costs, which is detrimental to the crew's working conditions. The TV stations ignore the consequences of their actions, passing the blame for long hours and poor pay on to the production companies. A way must be found to force

TV stations to accept their responsibility to supply budgets which allow for reasonable working conditions.

- In France, it's probably not the bad place but the working conditions became very hard (hour and hours, salary are more discuss with economic crises, too much student from cinema schools arrived each years in this industry. No good syndical representation for workers in cinema.
- The job is getting to be really different; we have less consideration and respect. It's obvious in the salary and the way the young part of the crew is feeling with us. I don't know the way to resist in a positive direction.
- It sounds very strange, but: one of the main problems in my country is the wrong system of the collective agreement! We need lower rates for preparation and finalizing. We have only the high rates for shooting periods which the producers can afford only for very few weeks. If so, I could maybe reach 26 weeks of employment and enter the social system.
- Cinematographers are needed in our world full of audiovisual trash to preserve visual traditions and develop it to an easeful visual language of the future. They are only able to fulfill this task, if they can do it under human working conditions and in relatively social security. They are artists therefore should be recognized as co-authors of a film.
- We have to find out again solidarity between us.
- Not anything for the nice guy. You need to be salty as hell. Durable like à rock. Gentle as a saint. And you need to bleed. For the work, for the life.
- Well, in order to express how I feel about working in the film business, and specially about working as a cinematographer, I would like to paraphrase Sir Ernest Shackleton who, when looking for men for his "Endurance" Antarctic adventure, published an advertisement in a local paper stating: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, and safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success"
- Our work is increasingly devalued, both artistic and technical field.
- A financial roller coaster ride. From riches to poverty.
- It is alarming that technically well-educated young colleagues are forced to quit the lifelong learning wonderful cinematographer's job after only five years, because it becomes impossible to live from the earnings. It is senseless and sad.
- I feel exploited by my employer and will be leaving the industry soon for either the oil or mining industries, despite the fact of my volume of experience, many national awards won, and that I have had Australian accreditation (ACS) for 10 years.
- I hope that one day there'll be a strong and powerful union for dp's in Europe, protecting our rights against producers.

- As stated, the conditions for cinematographers have been bad for ten years now and it's not going to be any better. Today my daily price for camerawork is the same as they were in 2001 and with the recession in view, I see no way out.
- We spend long periods away from home, working long hours and are expected to give 110% to the production, but are not adequately compensated for our efforts.
- Cinematography has dramatically changed over the last ten years, but this had started some 15 years before even though we mostly ignored those changes then. Everything has changed, equipment, working conditions (sometimes in relation with the equipment changes), and foremost the cinematographer's status, not only in his/her relationship with production but also sometimes with directors. The relative inexperience of new directors often expresses itself by wariness for everything technical which comes evidently out of their control, whereas for producers, we seem to no longer be a referent of quality for the major support of a film (images) but more often perceived as expensive and spending too much money. Talent has become a secondary value, it seems.
- We are fortunate to be in a creative and buoyant industry at a time of great technical change. The work we do is creatively varied and more demanding in technical terms than ever before. This is both challenging and greatly rewarding. We are generally well paid but I feel we should have some form of ownership over the creative contribution to our work as cinematographers/cameramen.
- The timing of this questionnaire is good: this was on my mind even today before I opened the email. We work very hard and have a huge impact on successes of films etc...I get good feedback and reviews often on my input to films/TV/doc's I work on but am consistently pushed down with my hire rate... so income is lowering but the films are being successful etc (although that is hard to measure... success may be with good ratings, but not return a profit) ...we are often asked to do special deals /rates..This in effect means we are investing in the work, film, TV feature etc...so as with any investment we should see a return of that investment...it is very clear that most successful films etc are shot by experienced cinematographers...it is no coincidence and real producers know that...but more and more rates are static or lowering. In fact due to inflation rates have dropped for us in New Zealand dramatically...we still work for same rates as in 2001....and some producers/shows only pay rates that were around in 1994.I just finished a feature film (low budget \$1m) on which most crew were paid near minimum wage and we get zero return from its success, if it is successful. On this film in particular if it is successful it is due to the experienced crew that worked on it. I also part own a camera rental business and work 20 hours per week there to try to supplement income, but it doesn't as even with equip' supply the rates are low and deals always done so it just pays for itself. Its impact is that I work silly hours sometimes, I may come off a 15 hour day on a TV feature and then have to sort hire equipment for a client, then do paper work...this impacts my work/career/health. I'd rather earn enough to be able to relax, think, ponder research, plan, and practice my craft for the

film and future films.

- Respect and living conditions become better when Dop has a financial connection (liable and profitable) with the project. He is an artist and contributor to the project. Cinema is a work of art created by many people. Everyone involved should be able to enjoy the benefit on a relative basis. More stringent industry rules should be applied to film industry to make the work a happier one instead of a struggle.
- Quite difficult for women to get a job whilst working, there's no problem in cooperation.
- It is absolutely deplorable to work in the film business nowadays. In fact we can call it slavery. First: the number of hours per day and six days a week is immense and in my point of view unnecessary to push people to work so hard during such long periods of the day. Second the pressure and coercion over the film workers if they do not obey or comply with such terrible rules dictated by the production company. Third: which amazes me is the huge lack of solidarity that exists amongst colleagues which I find to be terrible and the source of the problems. Fourth: People work under fear of losing the job and that is not healthy working such long hours.
- 4) Features, historic and epic picture, spiritual and artistic subject. 9) I believe that cinematographers should be considered above the line as a freelance professional and not to be included in any union category 12) I love to have long time to prepare a project 20) normal shooting time in Italy is 9 hours for 5 days, outside Rome with Saturday for 7 hours. 21) In Italy production usually asks if you can't do overtime 23-24) usually at the moment of signing of contract I'm asking a forfeit of money that will include all the preproduction and postproduction time. The estimated numbers of necessary working weeks are paid at 50% of the normal salary 26) I'm insured by the production during all pre-prod. and post production of a film that in case of illness they will stop shooting under insurance responsibility- like actors and directors. 27) It depends on production Professionally For any other question feel free to contact me . Vittorio Storaro.

# CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSIONS

### CHAPTER 7

#### Conclusion

The study provides an important insight into the working and personal lives of professional cinematographers and permits some first conclusion about the differences to other creative workers. In advance has to be stated the peculiar fact that beside the study guaranteed the anonymous of participants, there had been a high rate of "abstention" of answers or participant ticked the option "do not know" regarding essential daily and professional live conditions or circumstances.

This attitude or behavior might be interpreted in a more romantic way in the sense of "cinematographers are only living for their profession and do not have any interest in the "world around", or in a more drastic way that cinematographers have a great lack of knowledge in the areas of the survey. IMAGO will initiate a campaign of sensitization/information, which must be designed especially for the younger generation of cinematographers, giving them an "all around education" regarding social and health security, working conditions and author's rights. University and Film schools have to be integrated in this campaign.

The study proves that Cinematographers have mostly a high level of education and continue to undertake training in relation to their profession (graphics 5 and 6). The fact that only 8, 2 % of participant cinematographers was younger than 36 years old (graphic 2) can be interpreted that with growing age preoccupation for working conditions, social and health security of cinematographers is increasing too. They are the elder ones, who get difficulties to stand the high stress of working in the digital environment, aggravated by the economic recession and don't know how to face their retirement.

According the survey the majority of cinematographers dedicate in first place to cinema and are working during their professional live mostly only with 1-3 producers (graphics 4 and 10). At the first glance this seems to be a surprising result, but it is perfect understandable from the insight view of filmbusiness: Currently producers prefer working together with the same directors; directors, in turn, fancy more or less the same cinematographers.

48% are members of a Trade Union which represents film workers, but 42% feels unable to say if they are satisfied with the work, which might be an indication for the lack of information about the work of the Trade Union (graphics 8 and 9).

Cinematographer's work patterns are similar to the one of artists or creative workers. A portfolio career with continues work periods during the year does not exist anymore. A 58% have suffered break-down of work for months, meanwhile a 27% only for weeks (graphic 11). One measure to stabilise their income is to combine cinematography with other jobs. But only a 35% of cinematographers

confirm this reality in the study (graphic 12). A 6% are making even more than 60% of their income from other activities than the one of working as cinematographer (graphic 17). Meanwhile for 19% the income of other activities constitutes a 1 to 29% of their earning. Nevertheless, a total of 41% needs the additional paid work as supplement as cinematographer in order to have a more stable income (graphic 14).

Reasons for the low percentage of the one who are effectively undertaking other work than cinematographers are, between others, the following: working time of cinematographers is almost always higher than 48 hours a week, work is made during atypical hours, evening, weekends, and work is much more uncertain and less structured than that of other workers. As consequence, it is not as easy for cinematographers to organize a stable additional income to cinematography.

The study reveals that in case of additional income, the most common type of work undertaken is teaching (graphic 13). The next common type of work is in relation to film production or photography (director, producer, photography, etc.). It has to be stressed that cinematographers execute for additional income mostly creative professions, will say that they can use their creative talents and skills from their education as cinematographers. The anecdote is that on European level regarding those creative professions are recognised as authors or co-authors with full economic and moral intellectual property rights; meanwhile the recognition of co-authorship of cinematographers regarding the audiovisual work still is not admitted by all EU-countries or on international level. This is why, that only a 3% had earned 30-to 59% of income in the last year by royalties, advances or other copyright earning (graphic 16).

As mentioned above, cinematographers suffer periods of unemployment, but only a very small number of cinematographers (11%) can be registered officially as unemployed in the Department of Social and Family Affaire (graphic 29), and even registered they do not get automatically access to unemployment benefit or assistance while they are unemployed (71 % does not receive). In most countries cinematographers (especially if they are self-employed) do not reach the minimum of working days necessary for obtaining unemployment benefit (graphic 30).

But the standard of living of cinematographers, according the study, seems to be frightening low regarding health insurance of other workers. 67% said that they are enjoying statutory health insurance, but only 49% affirms that they can enjoy statutory health insurance in case of non-employment. This is why that 45% has contracted a private health insurance (graphics 31, 32 and 33).

The payment of this private health insurance in the near future will not be easy for a great number of cinematographers. 50% of cinematographers assesses that they are expecting in the current financial year a reduction of income. Only 2% are expecting a significantly higher income (graphic 22).

This situation hits with the statement that a 58% affirms that they are negotiating the fee or level of income (graphic 21). IMAGO can only insist, that

of course in most countries rules the principle of “free contractual negotiation”, but it would be naive, to think that the great majority of cinematographers can impose their conditions. They will always be the weak part of negotiation. And having signed a document after a short negotiation does not mean acceptance of conditions of cinematographers.

This leads to another, important item of the study, which might lead to confusion (graphic 23): status and taxes. 50% of cinematographers states on request if they can decide in their relation with producers whether to be employed or to act as a self-employed person, that they can choose freely. It is obvious that in case that film worker demands a contract in order to be employed even for a short period, it will cost more to the producer. As the film worker is nearly almost the weak part of the negotiation, cinematographer will “freely obliged” renounce from their right for free choice.

Consequently the study (graphic 24) shows that 89 % of cinematographers are self-employed or incorporated or not in a company. So, 48% are registered for VAT, as directly related to invoicing as a company (graphic 25). But, at the same time in relation to tax exemption available to cinematographers, 54% denies such possibility (graphic 26).

The study proves that cinematographers not only work long hours (75% work more than 48 hours a week cfr. Graphic 36), but also unpaid: 31% states that they are doing work for one to five days on a project without being paid (graphic 38). Especially post-production/grading seems to be considered by Producers “as included”, because graphic 20 shows that 77% has never been paid for this work, as only 15% seems to be in the position to reject all-inclusive deals (graphic 19).

Cinematographers reported a very low level of arrangement in place to provide with financial security in their older years (graphic 28). Only 37% affirms to have made arrangements, despite the fact that only 25% has a legal pension scheme in place (graphic 27).

Regarding the changes provoked by the digital environment, gravated by economic crisis, 37% affirms that shooting time has changed during the last few years (graphic 40), 37% had worked during the last 3 years being obviously ill (graphic 43) and 41% had suffered stress symptoms (graphic 44).

Regarding mobility, the study proves that cinematographers contribute to reinforce (for minimum) a “European cultural area”, because their profession makes them travelling beyond national borders, prior being contracted by national, other foreign European or even international producing companies (graphic 41). The study shows at the same time that cinematographers experience the “traditional” obstacles working outside their country, which are double taxation, working visa and, last not least, to get effective payment from producers (graphic 42).

The survey asked cinematographers for an overall view on their careers. A cross-section of comments on those issues is presented in graphic 47. On the whole, 66% of cinematographers love their profession which helps them to find meaning in life, they would choose it again (graphic 46), beside the obstacles for combining personal and working lives in a digital environment, where images are omnipresent and seem to have lost value.