

# The Pursuit of Change:

Issues Affecting Parents  
& Carers in Ireland's  
Screen Industries

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## 01

## Executive Summary

## Context

In May 2021, Raising Films Ireland, the advocacy and support group for parents and carers in the screen industries, launched a survey to identify the issues facing carers and parents today. Given the nature of the work, for many individuals working in Irish film, television or animation, becoming a parent or a carer brings numerous challenges.

## Respondents

The survey was completed by 455 respondents. The vast majority live in Leinster, with over half in Dublin. 76% of respondents identify as female, 23% identify as male. 61% of respondents are freelancers or self-employed, and working in a variety of positions across the industries; writer, director, producer, and in a range of roles categorised as 'crew'. This high percentage of freelance workers is indicative of the nature of the screen industries, not only in Ireland but internationally. 73% have caring responsibilities\*. Of those with caring responsibilities, 79% are caring for children.

## Consistent themes

The survey was hugely revealing, highlighting very clear barriers for parents and carers in the the screen industries. These barriers affect women disproportionately. Core themes identified by both male and female respondents are:

- **Long hours**  
Many respondents shared their experiences of working in an industry that requires extremely long hours, often on location and at short notice.

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- **Financial uncertainty**  
Coupled with this reality is the financial uncertainty, and the absence of long-term stable employment which often characterises freelance work. For example, 18% of respondents earn under €10,000 per year, with a further 10% earning €11,000–€19,999. The lack of local or regional opportunities is also problematic for many. The vast majority of respondents are located in or around Dublin.

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- **Juggling work and caring responsibilities**  
The overwhelming majority of respondents (75%) say caring has a negative impact on their work, and 79% find caring has a negative impact on their earnings. The strain of managing both work and family life emerges repeatedly as a major concern, particularly for freelancers, as childcare costs are exorbitant and services difficult to source, especially when working atypical hours.

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- **Bias/discrimination**  
Many respondents report bias against parents and carers or, on occasion, outright discrimination. Limited career opportunities and inflexible working arrangements can result in withdrawal from the screen industries altogether.

## Need for structural change

The strong desire expressed by respondents for structural change includes suggestions such as: reducing the length of the working day; budgets that acknowledge care costs; improved paternity leave; and equal parenting legislation. Specific solutions include on location/set caring facilities; short notice city centre drop-in care centres; tax relief; and flexible working roles.

*The Pursuit of Change* also highlights the desire for broader cultural change and the need to intensify debates about caring in our culture. Respondents call for an end to the climate of silence and invisibility around caring and carers in Irish society more generally and, specifically, in our screen industries.

*Dr Susan Liddy (MIC/University of Limerick) and Dr Anne O'Brien (Maynooth University)*

\*The gender differences are not statistically significant.

## 02

# WORKING FOR CHANGE:

*Foreword by Chair of Raising Films Ireland*

We are proud to present *The Pursuit of Change: Issues Affecting Parents and Carers in the Irish Screen Industries*, a ground-breaking research report, which is the first of its kind to gather data regarding patterns and needs of parents and carers in the screen industries in Ireland.

Raising Films Ireland arose from noticing a pattern of exclusion. I'm a line producer with over a decade working in the Irish industry. I found that I would call countless people (predominantly women it has to be said) to offer them a job which many declined because of caring responsibilities. It made me lie awake at night, wondering how many people we were losing due to the industry's refusal to address the challenges of childcare, the need for a work life balance and the responsibilities of carers. Would I be joining them, when it became my turn to be a mother? It put me off starting a family. I still haven't.

When I heard Hope Dickson Leach speak about Raising Films in the UK, at the X-Pollinator event in November 2019, it was like a chink of light. And not just for me, for countless people in that room and in this industry. That day, a light shone on a very deep and very large problem in the Irish screen industry. It was too big to ignore. It was too important to stand back and wait for someone else to care as much about it.

Raising Films Ireland was born in February 2020, just before the world stood still. In spite of that, we found our industry reinvented itself quickly into an amazing online resource and support network with new funding opportunities. We were inspired to continue to challenge ourselves and to continue to create and trailblaze in different ways and on new platforms. It felt revolutionary, amidst all the uncertainty.

This research is a result of that new and burgeoning support that Screen Ireland and its Screen Skills sector created in the darkest days of the pandemic. Raising Films Ireland is a proud recipient of the first round of Screen Stakeholders funding, for which we are grateful and without which this report would not be possible

What does this research tell us about ourselves, and our attitudes to the hidden and invisible work of care? Unfortunately, the results are stark, and somewhat unsurprising. We have learned that invariably, the majority of people affected by the issues surrounding care identified as female. 76% of the survey's respondents identified as female. The results continued to skew heavily female, from the impact that caring has on career progression, to the financial burden created by working with uncertain contracts as a freelancer with caring responsibilities. The research also highlighted the active exclusion, bias and discrimination experienced by the survey's respondents, as well as the impact of working in an industry that struggles to provide a work life balance at every level.

The key challenges identified centre on the long absences from home responsibilities due to the long hours expected, as well as the financial burden this created. As a result the industry is suffering a loss of talent, a loss of skilled, experienced and diverse industry practitioners, due to a biased attitude to those with caring responsibilities.

Raising Films Ireland has a responsibility to our respondents and to our industry to tackle these issues head on. We are calling on our industry stakeholders, our funders, our producers, our broadcasters, and most importantly of all, our Government, to support us in effecting change. We need to sustain the talent and skill that we have all worked so hard to cultivate.

We know that change can be made, and quickly – we have witnessed it with the amazing adaptability of the industry to any challenge, most recently, COVID19. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to these challenges, but we at Raising Films Ireland have witnessed a huge appetite for change since our inception. We urge our fellow changemakers to continue to help us make everyone in our wonderful industry visible, included and counted. If we really believe in building a diverse, equitable and inclusive industry, these challenges must be addressed and I truly believe that innovative solutions can be found.

**Ailish Bracken**  
Chair, Raising Films Ireland

## 03

## METHODOLOGY

**Research team**

Dr Susan Liddy lectures in the Department of Media and Communication Studies, MIC (UL). Areas of expertise include gender issues in the screen industries, motherhood and representations of older women. She is Chair of WFT Ireland and Chair of the Equality Action Committee of the WGI. Dr Anne O'Brien lectures in the Department of Media Studies, Maynooth University. Areas of expertise include gender and creative industries, motherhood, women's media production work, and representations of women in Irish broadcasting.

**Data collection**

Data for *The Pursuit of Change* was gathered via a Survey Monkey online survey, available from May 11–June 8 2021.

**Distribution and promotion**

A request to participate with a link to the online survey was circulated to all Raising Films Ireland stakeholders and supporters and made available on raisingfilmsireland.com, and via Twitter. The survey was shared by a number of film and television organisations via their social media and

online outlets, including: Animation Skillnet; Broadcasting Authority of Ireland; Extras Ireland; Irish Equity; Scannain; Screen Guilds of Ireland; Screen Ireland; Screen Producers Ireland; Screen Skillnet; Screen Skills Ireland; Women in Film and Television Ireland; Writers Guild of Ireland; and X-Pollinator. The survey was also shared via social media by many individuals working in the industry as well as by researchers and academics.

**Respondents**

535

People accessed the survey

455

Respondents who completed the survey.

95%

Raising Films Ireland's level of confidence that results are within the margin of error and representative of this population.

12,000

approximate population of workers in the screen industries in Ireland

**Data analysis**

Analysis was completed by Fergal Rhatigan, Postgraduate Researcher, Department of Sociology, Maynooth University. He collated results in their entirety and by subdivisions across: gender; care status; marital status; employment status; and current role.

**Conclusions**

The research team selected headline findings and key statistics. This report is freely available on raisingfilmsireland.com.

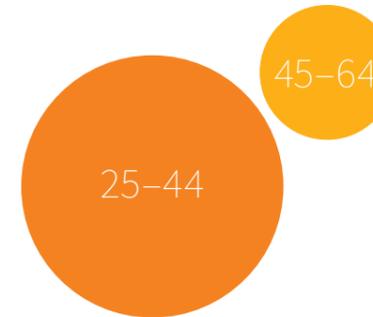
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## WHO'S TALKING? *Respondent Demographics*



### Age Groups

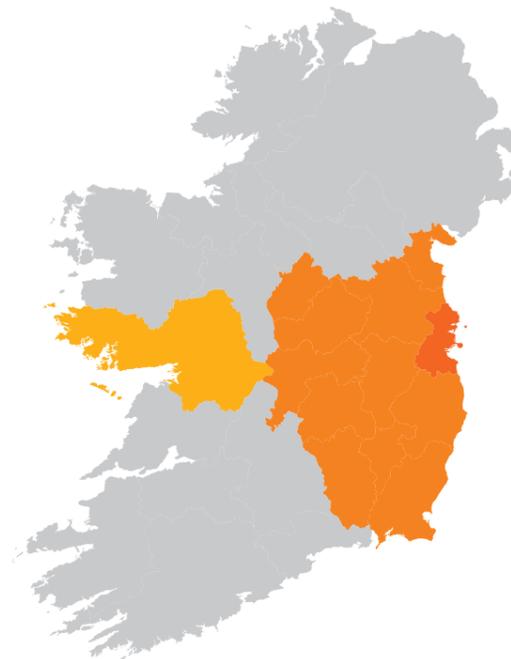
The majority of the 455 film and industry professionals in Ireland who completed the survey are aged between 25-44 (64%) and 45-64 (33%).



### Location

56% of respondents live in Dublin; 22% live in the rest of Leinster; and 5% live in Galway. A very small percentage (< 5%) are dispersed throughout other locations.

- Living in Dublin (56%)
- Living in Leinster (22%)
- Living in Galway (5%)
- Dispersed in other counties (17%)



### Gender

76% of respondents identify as female, 23% identify as male. This flags the uneven distribution of caring responsibilities for professionals, with women carrying a disproportionate care burden.



### Current Industry Role

31% of respondents are crew; 17% directors; 12% writers; 10% onscreen cast; and 8% producers.

### Employment Status

61% of respondents are freelancers or self-employed. Only 19% are employed full time, with 4% employed part time. 11% are employed on fixed-term contracts.

### Marital Status

49% of respondents are married. A further 22% respondents are co-habiting. 18% are single.

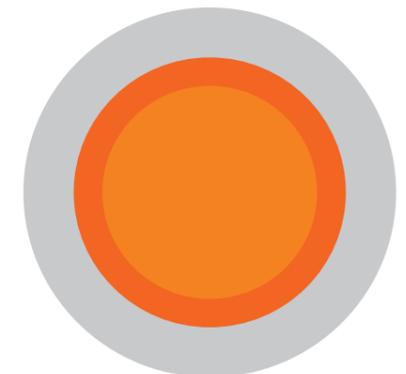
### Income

18% of respondents earn under €10,000 per year. Approximately 10% earn €11,000-€19,999; 11% earn €20,000-€29,999; 19% earn €30,000-39,999; 15% earn €40,000-49,999; 28% of respondents earn over €50,000. While more males than females earn over €50,000, the differences in pay are not statistically significant.

### Profile of Caring Responsibilities

73% of respondents have caring responsibilities, the gender differences were not statistically significant. Of those with caring responsibilities, 79% were caring for children.

- (100%)
- (79%)
- (73%)



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## TELLING OUR STORY:

Parents and Carers in the screen industries:  
identifying key parenting & caring issues

The complexities of parenting and caring issues – including caring for parents – emerge as hugely significant for a large percentage of respondents.

Issues raised by many respondents include accessing care and the problem of cost; the impact of caring responsibilities on career and professional development; and the biases and discrimination faced.

*“We could not afford childcare and so my wife looked after the children before they started school to the detriment of her career and our ability to save money. Childcare is much cheaper/free in other countries, the government needs to fund it. We moved to another EU country and didn’t have to pay anything, my wife went back to work. I commute to Ireland or wherever for work.”*

Male, 25–44, Married, Director, outside Ireland

*“There is no support for any aspects of care, and this has gotten worse since the lockdown where 24 [hour] access is expected.”*

Female, 45–64, Separated, Manager, Limerick

### 73%

are currently caring for a child or another person, or have in the past

### 97%

of single/solo parents/carers are women.

### 14%

are caring for parents.

### 79%

are looking after children, the majority of whom are primary-school age.

### 86%

of carers are parenting or caring jointly, while 14% are single parents/carers.

### 30%

have a co-parent/carer working in the screen industries, but over half of respondents (58%) have partners working outside the industry.

Women are significantly more likely co-parent with someone also working in the screen industries, but for male respondents, their co-parents are more likely to work in other industries.

### Accessing Care

47% of respondents have no access to free childcare. Just over a quarter (28%) rely on family or friends for support while only 11% access State-provided care relief.

### Paying for Care

While the types of paid care vary, the issue of exorbitant cost was a common thread.

*“It has been financially crippling – the cost of a house – to provide care for my kids for the hours required in the industry.”*

Female, 25–44, Single, Crew, Cork

Both childminders and creches are equally popular choices of paid childcare (25% of all respondents in each case). Very few respondents use the paid services of a nanny, au-pair or carer. 23% use a paid childminder for 10 hours and under per week. A further 30% pay for over 25 hours of care per week. 35% use creches for 10 hours or less per week, and 33% use creches for 25 hours and more per week. The majority of respondents (64%) report that they find it either difficult or impossible to vary the amount of paid childcare. This was irrespective of the employment status, current role or net earnings of the respondents. Only three respondents pay for an after-school club for childcare.

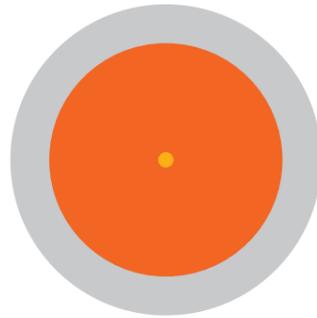
*“Childcare was so expensive because of the hours (having to pay full time creche, and also childminders for the hours outside of creche hours) so it was nearly costing me to work, especially when I was working as a trainee. I was pocketing around €40 a day after deducting tax and childcare costs.”*

Female, 25–44, Single, no longer working, formerly Make-Up Artist, Dublin

## Impact of Caring on Career Progression, Upskilling and Mentoring

Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents (75%) say their caring role has had a negative impact on their career, and their career would have progressed differently without these responsibilities. Only 5% say their caring duties have had a positive impact.

- (5%)
- (75%)
- (100%)



*“I didn’t seek out more senior roles for fear of the time demands it would place on me.”*

Male, 25–44, Married, Crew, Dublin

*“Job prospects and hours are not flexible at all. I avoid disclosing I have children as much as possible.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, Crew, Dublin

Those worst affected by caring duties are: cast (85%); writers (78%); and directors (79%). 79% say their career would have progressed differently if they did not have caring responsibilities. More females think this than males, and 92% of solo-carers as opposed to 77% of co-parents/carers think that careers would have progressed differently without caring duties.

*“Not being able to attend events, training/upskilling etc as I am the only person available to take care of my children.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, Dublin

In terms of financial/in-kind assistance, 43% say it is absolutely crucial to performing their role in the industry, while a further 28% report it is somewhat important. Only 11% of respondents say that financial assistance in terms of childcare or other care is not important. Significantly more females (76.5%) think that financial assistance is crucial or somewhat important compared with men (51.7%). 77% of the single people compared with 64% of married people are of the view that financial assistance is crucial or somewhat important to them.

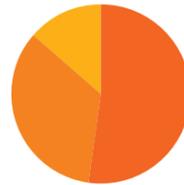
*“It’s difficult to build the network and to find time to do that discretionary relationship building, especially if you are emerging and don’t live centrally, and finances are tight. Film festivals, courses and events are expensive.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, rest of Leinster

Reflecting the fact that most respondents (75%) say that caring has a negative impact on their work, a large number of comments from respondents are also negative. Many of these are about how job prospects or career advancement were negatively affected because of caring work. Another significant impact that respondents report was having to turn down jobs or certain roles within the industry because of caring duties. Respondents also report they had to change roles because of caring duties, or could not travel for work because of caring commitments. Caring duties also have negative impacts on respondents’ health and financial well-being. 79% of the respondents say their caring roles negatively impact on their earnings.

### Importance of Financial/In-Kind Assistance

- Crucial (56%)
- Somewhat important (22%)
- Not important (5%)



*“I was unable to take jobs because of lack of childcare.”*

Female, 45–64, Separated, Writer, Dublin

*“Career progression or mentoring has been difficult, [it] has been an assumption since becoming a parent that I’m not interested anymore in either.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Dublin

*“It’s alarming to see that over a certain age, most composers are either (a) men or (b) young childless women. Yikes. Most of my tutors have been men also. I need role models and I need mentoring!!!”*

Female, Single, 45–64, Music Composer, Dublin

## Managing Practical Limitations

In an industry that routinely operates on long hours and fast turnaround times, many respondents report that managing childcare or other caring responsibilities becomes complex and often unsustainable.

*“I couldn’t take any jobs for a long while, because I had no access to childcare (being too expensive and out of reach) but also working such long hours with the sleeping patterns of a baby and the fact that I wouldn’t see her at all was out of the question.”*

Female, 25–44, Single, Crew, rest of Leinster

*“The unrealistic requirements to work late evenings and weekends and the industry’s tendency to withhold information or changes in information until late in the day but expecting turnaround by the next morning.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Ulster

## The Problem of Active Exclusion

Respondents give specific examples of active exclusion and/or discrimination based on their caring status. 31% find it very difficult, and a further 32% say it is difficult to re-engage with work following a period or periods of maternity leave. Only 9% say it was very easy or easy to re-engage with work following a period of leave.

*“Some of the companies I worked with before having children no longer call me for roles.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Director, Dublin

*“Assumptions being made that I am looking after my father and therefore not available for freelance work.”*

Male, 45–64, Married, Director, Dublin

*“I was within the State-mandated (leave period beginning) 10 days before my due date and pressured into coming into the office. I was told by another staff member that she and the member of the senior management team had a good laugh about how I probably had Braxton Hicks contractions rather than the medical issue I did have, which was a genetic uterine abnormality which was causing issues and led to hospitalisation. I thought if I wrapped up my work well before going on maternity leave, I would be okay when I came back. I was wrong. I was in the office in the weeks before my return to be told that the person covering for me would be kept on. I didn’t realise it was in my role until the morning I returned to work, and they were sitting at my desk.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, Dublin

*“When I got pregnant, work slowed for me as an actor and I felt it was my agent took a back seat from pushing me which I feel was wrong as I’ve never had an issue with childcare.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, Writer, Dublin

## When It Works, It Really Works.

While in the minority, the positive comments reported by respondents illustrate how incorporating a more caring-friendly approach can have significant benefits.

*“As a carer for kids and my Dad, I find myself better organised and very efficient.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, rest of Munster

*“As a single parent there was work I could no longer do, for example, line producing but focusing on my own slate meant I had the time to develop projects which are now close to production.”*

Female, 25–44, Single, Producer, Dublin

*“I am generally able to fulfil my professional and family responsibilities due to family support and childminder.”*

Male, 25–44, Married, On-screen cast, Dublin

*“My company is very flexible with regard to me being a mother. I could not do what I’m currently doing in another company or if I were to work freelance. I feel very supported.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Dublin

## PARENTS AND CARERS IN THE SCREEN INDUSTRIES: IDENTIFYING KEY CHALLENGES

While the extent of challenges varies between respondents, and between people working in different roles, all respondents identify five top challenges. In addition, respondents cite many personal examples of dealing with additional or role-specific challenges. Whether dealing with bias in the industries or ageism, or the complexity of organising caring responsibilities in a sector often characterised by irregularity, clearly the challenges for parents/carers in the screen industries are significant.

*“People do not have to be at their desks to do a good job. Those in management roles like myself need to acknowledge that and create a working environment that allows flexible working hours.”*  
Female, 45–64, Living together, Producer, Dublin

### Top five challenges:

1. Long hours/weeks.
2. Financial uncertainty.
3. Location shoots.
4. Lack of long-term/stable employment.
5. Lack of local/regional opportunity.

*“Longer contracts mean I can’t spend as much time at home with family, so I generally now avoid them.”*  
Male, 25–44, Married, Videographer, Galway

*“I devote myself to being able to move for roles and work for free to get experience as a female director, but there is bias against females, always thinking [that] you will have kids.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, rest of Leinster

Where respondents identify primary and secondary challenges specific to their roles, issues of time and financial stability predominate:

ROLE	PRIMARY CHALLENGE	SECONDARY CHALLENGE
Producer	Long hours/weeks	Financial uncertainty
Director	Financial uncertainty	Long hours/weeks
On-screen Cast	Financial uncertainty	Lack of long-term stable employment
Writer	Financial uncertainty	Location shoots
Crew	Long hours/weeks	Financial uncertainty
Exhibition	*	
Development	Long hours/weeks	Lack of long-term stable employment
Education/Academia	Financial uncertainty	Long hours/weeks
Distribution	*	
Training/Skills	Long hours/weeks	Financial uncertainty

\*Too few responses received.

### Producers

For full-time and freelance producers alike, the main challenge is long hours and a long working week, followed by financial uncertainty.

### Directors

For full-time and freelance directors alike, the main challenge is financial uncertainty, followed by long hours and a long working week. (There were too few responses from part-time directors to enable comparison with full-time directors.)

### On-screen cast

The main challenge for on-screen cast is financial uncertainty, followed by the lack of long-term/stable employment.

### Writers

Financial uncertainty is the primary challenge, followed by location shoots. Full-time workers find location shoots most problematic, followed by financial uncertainty. For freelance workers, financial uncertainty is the primary challenge, followed by location shoots.

### Crew

For full-time and freelance crew alike, the primary challenge is long hours and a long working week, followed by financial uncertainty.

### Exhibition

There were too few responses in this category to describe a pattern of role-specific challenges.

### Development

The primary challenge is long hours or weeks, followed by the lack of long-term stable employment.

### Education/Academia

The primary challenge is financial uncertainty, followed by long hours.

### Distribution

There were too few responses in this category to describe a pattern of role-specific challenges.

### Training/Skills

The primary challenge is long hours and a long working week, followed by financial uncertainty.

### Additional Challenges

While respondents identify in large numbers with the top five challenges, these are not the only issues impacting career sustainability on a day-to-day level. Other challenges include:

#### Lack of Industry Flexibility

*“I’m under pressure to work the same hours as everyone else whilst trying to be present for baby.”*  
Female, 25–44, Living together, Crew, Dublin

*“Working with more flexibility would enable me to do everything!”*  
Female, 45–64, Single Producer, Ulster

#### Bias or Prejudice from Funders/Employers

*“Pregnancy makes my job very difficult. I have to hide it, for fear that I won’t be cast otherwise.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, On-screen cast, Dublin

#### Sexism and Discrimination

*“I’m over 40, I have a child with a disability, I’m not a person who is considered. My age and my son are seen as valid reasons not to employ me.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Education, Munster

*“Sexism is rampant.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, video editor, Dublin

*“People presume you can’t do the job [so] you don’t get the opportunity. There is definitely a gender issue with this.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, Dublin

*“I think some employers are hypocrites in terms of how they treat staff. My old boss would routinely be invited on panels about gender and say how supportive he was, but then asked me to return to work with him for production and at the last minute cancelled the job because of childcare concerns – even though that was none of his business and looked after.”*  
Female, 25–44, Single, Producer, Dublin

### Difficulty in Re-entering Work after a Caring Break

*“I haven’t worked anywhere that provided more than State maternity benefits, because of this I was unable financially to take more than six months maternity leave. I was also expected to jump straight back into full-time busy hours without any support or acknowledgement of my changed personal circumstances. I have found being a parent was either ignored or used against me.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Dublin

*“My return from my third maternity leave was a nightmare. My role was promised to another staff member who had been covering my maternity leave [and] who wished to continue in my role, and it was a terribly upsetting time.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Training, rest of Leinster

*“My employers of four years told me that I would have to return three months before my maternity leave ended or they would hire someone else, which they did.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, not currently working, previous job Producer, Dublin

*“Women re-entering the industry face ageism as emerging talents.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, rest of Leinster

### PARENTS AND CARERS IN THE SCREEN INDUSTRIES: THE IMPACT OF EXCLUSION

Discrimination and exclusion of parents and carers, whether intentional or as a result of inflexible conditions or circumstances, has a negative impact on the screen industries and creates a loss of skills and knowledge. The loss of talent as a result of burnout caused by the gruelling work patterns currently accepted as normal in the industry, was noted. Respondents also note the loss of diversity that occurs when some cohorts of people are not supported to stay in the industry. A significant number of women believe their careers would have progressed differently if they did not have caring duties. As a result, the industry loses out on women’s voices, talents and skills in a situation where women are already under-represented internationally, both on and off screen. Specific impacts noted by respondents include:

#### Loss of Talent and Skills Resulting from Industry Hours

*“Long hours and six day working weeks lead to shorter spanning careers – the industry can lose experienced people as they get older and find the unsociable hours impacting on/detracting from other aspects of their lives.”*

Female, 45–64, Single, Education, Dublin

#### Loss of Talent and Skills Resulting from Industry Attitude to Workers with Care Duties

*“Isolating people with families drives talent out of the industry and leads to experience gaps.”*

Male, 25–44, Married, Crew, Dublin

*“The main challenge is an attitude towards carers that you have somehow ‘lost’ your edge if you become a carer.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Producer, Dublin

*“Childcare costs rule out single parents in the industry.”*

Female, 45–64, Living together, Development, Dublin

#### Loss of Women from the Workforce

*“Caring duties impact women more than men and lessen the number of women significantly who can fully engage with their career at a crucial time in its development.”*

Female, 45–64, Separated, Producer, Dublin

*“There is a significant lost generation of female filmmakers from 35–45 who missed out on opportunities due to gender bias and now have children and parents to care for.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, rest of Leinster

06

## SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS

The data is clear evidence of the nature and scale of challenges currently faced by parents and carers, and the impact these challenges have on careers. If the screen industries are to better include workers with caring responsibilities, these issues must be addressed. Respondents were asked to pick their top three choices from a list\* provided in *The Pursuit of Change* survey.

They also had the opportunity to identify and describe additional solutions which they felt might usefully be considered by the industry. In seeking solutions, most respondents believe that financial/in-kind assistance is ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ in order to combine work and care giving. More women than men identify financial barriers as a serious concern, echoing the gendered nature of care; this was a consistent finding in the research.

**Solution rankings:**

1. Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget.
2. Flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care.
3. Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation.
4. Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal).
5. Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles.
6. A legal requirement that all roles be available for job share.
7. City-centre drop-in creches/adult care centres for film and TV workers.
8. Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (production).
9. Part-time/freelance workers to be given same status as full-time employees in terms of their level of commitment to the project.
10. Stronger union rules on early morning, late night and weekend work.
11. Better understanding by employers and financiers of the impact of caring.
12. Increase in tele/video conferencing for meetings.
13. Five day working week maximum.
14. Greater structural support for return to work after a period of parental or compassionate leave.

RANK ORDER	SOLUTION	FIRST SOLUTION IDENTIFIED BY RESPONDANTS
1	Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget.	63%
2	Flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care.	42%
3	Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation.	40%
4	Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal).	43%
5	Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles.	36%

**Note:** The respondents were asked to pick their top 3 solutions from a list of 14 possible solutions and Table 1 gives the percentages of the first of their three preferences.

1. *Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget: top solution for 63% respondents.* The difficulty in organising child/adult care to cover long working days and encompassing times when many care providers are not open (i.e. to allow for an early start and late finish at work) emerges as a serious practical concern. Respondents do not want to be put in a position where a choice between work and care must be made by the individual. Emotional bonds are also referenced, with the separation from children for

long hours – up to 14 hours a day for some crew roles – of key concern. Additionally, some respondents regard the provision of care solutions necessary in order to make caring visible in an industry that has long denied its existence.

*“As a director it can be impossible to find the headspace required to function while caring. Creche facilities as part of a production would make it much easier.”*

Male, 45–64, Living together, Director, Galway

*“The trauma of not seeing your mummy for weeks is heart-breaking and could be avoided by being able to be on set in some capacity. Even just some days.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, On-screen Cast, Ulster

*“Childcare on set would be amazing. You get to see your children even for an hour during heavy working periods and this helps parents be freer in work. And children always feel better when they are closer to Mum or Dad.”*

Female, 25–44, Single, Director/Producer, rest of Munster

*“I think this is a fabulous idea but I’m not sure it would work in practice as bedtime for children and wrap time for productions on TV (is) generally 7pm. So, in order for this to work, employers would still have to let you leave before wrap to bring the child home to bed.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, Crew, Dublin

2. *Flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care: most important solution for 42% respondents.* This is particularly attractive for freelancers who do not want to pay for a creche unless there is work available. It is also supported in order to minimise the stress involved in searching for childcare at short notice either for work or work-related obligations.

*“Having a flexible short-term carer available to care for children would make it easier to get to set for the times when I have to leave the house at 5:30 or 6:00am, and no regular childminder can help.”*

Male, 45–64, Living together, Crew, rest of Leinster

*“Quality childcare on location would be relatively straightforward but would transform the opportunities for working parents. I have seen a similar thing done with collective doggie day care for pets during shoots but never for children.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Ulster

3. *Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation: most important solution for 40% respondents.* This would facilitate couples in making their decisions about childcare, and those taking maternity and/or paternity leave, depending on their own circumstances. It would also encourage the greater involvement of fathers in childcare.

4. *Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal): most important solution for 43% respondents.* Respondents cite high childcare costs and the poor provision of care services as important factors. This solution would enable freelancers to avoid committing to expensive creches when work, and their monthly income, was uncertain.

*“Tax relief on childcare costs is a quick way of alleviating the costs associated with childcare.”*

Male, 45–64, Married, Crew, Dublin

5. *Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles: most important solution for 36% respondents.* Respondents believe greater flexibility would facilitate a better work life balance.

*“Flexi-time so kids can be dropped / picked up from childcare providers. Working from 8am–8pm as standard doesn’t allow for this.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Crew, Dublin

*“As a parent I would like to be with my child, but it would be wonderful if roles were part-time or had more flexible hours so I could do both.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Training & Skills, Dublin

*“Part-time and job share opportunities are key for me. Many people wish to continue working in the industry after they have children, but it can feel like an either/or scenario.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Post Production, rest of Leinster

**Table 2: Respondents’ Primary and Secondary Solutions**

SOLUTION	SELECTED BY % OF RESPONDENTS
Child/adult care on location/set	87%
Flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care	81%
Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation	81%
Personal tax relief	75%
Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles	70%

\*List sourced from other Raising Films surveys.

Preferred options vary from dedicated on-set child/adult care to State-funded care that can accommodate unscheduled work in a freelance industry to legislative change around paternity leave and equal parenting; and the availability of more part-time or flexi-work that would allow parents to maintain a foothold in the industry while caring for loved ones. While there are variations between roles in suggestions for action that can be taken, all solutions suggested are underpinned by the recognition that managing child/adult care while remaining in the screen industries requires systemic change and financial assistance from the State or/and the production.

**Table 3: Solutions Identified by Role Type**

ROLE	PRIMARY SOLUTION	SECONDARY SOLUTION
Producer	Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal)	Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles
	<i>Freelance</i> Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal)	
	<i>Fulltime</i> Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation	
Director	Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal)
	<i>Freelance</i> Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	
	<i>Fulltime*</i>	
On-screen Cast	Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	Flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care
Writer	Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation
	<i>Freelance</i> Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation
	<i>Fulltime*</i>	
Crew	Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in production budget	Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles
	<i>Freelance</i> Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal)	

**Note:** The occupations Development, Distribution, Education, Exhibition, and Training had too few responses to generate any results.

\*Too few responses received to generate results.

**Producers**

Tax relief for childcare/adult care expenses (personal) is the primary solution. Full-time producers rank improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation higher. All producers, freelance and fulltime, opt for greater availability of part-time/flexible roles as a secondary solution.

*“Maternity and paternity leave should be a shared timeframe of 18 months, with tax relief and job share options available on return to work when the child is 18 months old.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, rest of Leinster

*“The first few weeks of a child’s life can be the hardest on parents, particularly new parents. The mother has gone through trauma and will be suffering physically and mentally from that. More time at home for the father or partner is essential in those early days.”*  
Male, 25–44, Married, Producer, Dublin

**Directors**

Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in the production budget is the primary solution. (It was not possible to distinguish preference between freelance and full-time categories of employment due to small numbers of responses). However, all directors rate tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal) as a secondary solution.

*“The only reason I was able to do my most recent directing job was because I had a nanny with me (I breastfeed and my baby has to be with me as she won’t take a bottle). It was only four days, but I had to pay for the nanny – if it was a longer job, I wouldn’t be able to afford it.”*  
Female, 25–44, Living together, Director, Dublin

**Crew**

Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in the production budget is the primary solution. Tax relief for child/adult care expenses (personal) is also rated as an important key solution, irrespective of whether crew were freelance or full-time. Greater availability of part-time/flexible roles is identified as a secondary solution.

*“Being female and explaining about caring of elderly commitments is still perceived as being negative and male employers can be both disparaging and dismissive so can tend to be overlooked.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Crew, rest of Munster

*“Flexi-time so kids can be dropped/picked up from childcare providers. Working from 8am–8pm as standard doesn’t allow for this.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, Crew, Dublin.

**Writers**

Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in the production budget is the primary solution. (It was not possible to distinguish preference between freelance and full-time categories of employment due to small numbers of responses). Improved paternity leave and equal parenting legislation is the secondary solution.

*“Budget for childcare on set is the perfect solution. Mothers can keep an eye on their children, be around if needed in an emergency, feel more confident on set that they can just forget about all other things child related and focus on the work. They deserve that peace of mind while creating.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Writer, Galway

**Cast**

Child/adult care provided on location/set as a line item in the production budget is the primary solution. The secondary solution is flexible, short-notice, State-funded 24-hour child/adult care.

*“Sometimes, you just have to be within reach of your cared-for, no matter what (e.g. high dependency needs people). I know this would really help my husband in caring for me (and it being more normal that he attends work as my PA to mitigate some of my disabilities).”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, On-Screen Cast, rest of Leinster

*“As a freelancer, it doesn’t make sense to have regular childcare, and this is a waste of money if you don’t have a project on the go to pay the bill. A short-notice creche facility would have been amazing for me when my kids were young.”*  
Female, 45–64, Married, Producer, Dublin

### Additional Solutions Offered by Respondents

Comments made by respondents are strongly supportive of widespread industry change in multiple ways, including legislative and financial support; a cultural shift on the value put on caring; and the need to ‘educate’ employers. Specific suggestions include:

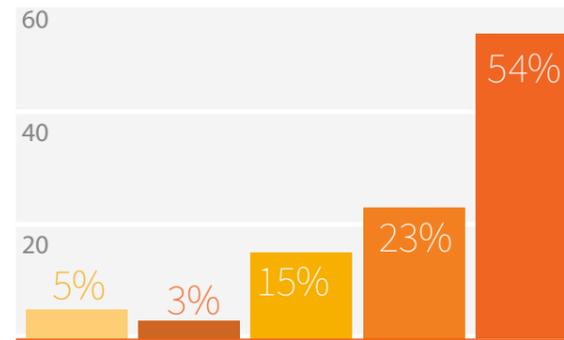
- The ability to take an (unpaid) day for caring or important days in a child’s life.
- Employers avoid overburdening staff with (for example) out of hours emails.
- More remote working. This would open the industry up to people who do not live in cities, or who have disabilities that prevent them doing 12-hour shifts on location.
- The introduction on set of breastfeeding/ pumping room which offers privacy and a fridge. Concern was expressed that breastfeeding while working on a film is currently very difficult.
- Facilitating two people to share a shift in order to manage long working days.
- More education for employers about the importance of caring, and its impact on parents and carers.

### What is the Role of Raising Films Ireland?

The Pursuit of Change survey asked respondents what they thought was the best way for Raising Films Ireland to share/ educate about the challenges and possible solutions for parents and carers.

**Provision of childcare at events.** The survey first asked how important it was to have a creche on site at Raising Films Ireland events. When the ‘not applicable’ were excluded, as Chart 1 illustrates, 54% stated it is very important, while another 23% think it somewhat important. This means that creche facilities are important, to some degree, for over 75% of respondents. 70% of respondents who consider creche facilities important for Raising Films Ireland events are married, 91% are single.

**Chart 1:** How important is it to you that any Raising Films Ireland event have a creche on-site or welcome children?



### Top five solutions

From this list of ten suggestions provided, respondents were asked to pick the five suggestions they feel would best share/ educate about challenges and provide possible solutions:

- Physical meet-ups in different cities/venues.
- Social media meet-ups (Twitter chats, Google hangouts, Facebook groups etc).
- Family friendly screenings with discussion opportunity.
- Raising Films Ireland website with resources and community forum.
- Events at film festivals and conferences.
- Email newsletter.
- Articles in mainstream/industry media.
- Panels/platforms for specific industry organisations.
- Presentations at large media companies.
- Training/mentoring sessions.

These are ranked based on the mean score:

RANK ORDER	MEAN SCORE	RANK ORDER
Raising Films Ireland website with resources and community forum	2.6364	1
Events at film festivals and conferences	2.7111	2
Presentations at large media companies	2.0825	3
Articles in mainstream/industry media	2.0845	4
Social media meet-ups (Twitter chats, Google hangouts, Facebook groups etc)	2.8866	5
Panels/platforms for specific industry organisations	2.9593	6
Family-friendly screenings with discussion opportunity	3.0930	7
Training/mentoring sessions	3.1194	8
Physical meet-ups in different cities/venues	3.2125	9
Email newsletter	3.3500	10

### Raising the Issues

Respondents were encouraged to share any further thoughts at the end of the survey, and additional further systemic and social challenges that exist for those who are trying to balance work and family were identified. Many accounts articulate the desire for parents to be in physical proximity to their children during the working day. This is a key finding in the search for solutions in the Irish screen industries. It is clear from responses that there is no ‘one size fits all’ answer to childcare needs. However, the range of solutions supported and identified by respondents is evidence that, with political will, effective solutions can be found. Childcare issues, currently (implicitly) regarded as ‘individual troubles’, can be solved by collective action.

*“So many roles, particularly in production/coordination could be done as job-share/part-time. There could also be a greater number of remote work roles, especially after the normalcy of this for most industries due to the pandemic.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, Dublin

*“For female creatives and HOD’s particularly (though also for men), having the ability to have children close by and accessible, whilst being well cared for during a production/ shoot, would make an enormous difference in being able to take on more work, both practically and emotionally.”*  
Female, 25– 44, Married, Director, splits time between Dublin and London

*“The only way things will change is to liaise with producers and commissioners to include family friendly practices and supports in their budgets. It’s not surprising to see so few mothers with very young children entering this industry. Also, many women take years off before they come back or delay having children as they know the demands of the industry.”*  
Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, rest of Munster

# 07

## CALLING FOR ACTION: NEXT STEPS

### Heeding the Call for Change

Raising Films Ireland was launched in August 2020, less than one year prior to commissioning *The Pursuit of Change* survey. It is a testament to the support we have garnered in that time, and the pressing nature of the issues at hand, that over 455 parents and carers took the time to respond to the survey and hear the views of their peers. There is a groundswell of support for change in the Irish screen industries and more and more individuals and organisations are calling for change.

2020 and 2021 saw the publication of a number of reports, journal articles and books, some of which capture general calls for equality, diversity and inclusion in the industry, while others are specifically directed towards motherhood.

This Pursuit of Change report adds weight to the work that has preceded it, by recording the concerns and challenges of parents and carers in the Irish screen industries as they try to negotiate family and working life in a highly gendered sector. It also includes a range of solutions proposed by those who are most immediately impacted by the rigidity of an industry that is only now starting to interrogate its practices, and the price parents and carers pay in order to remain actively working.

### Further Research and Monitoring

*The Pursuit of Change* offers a quantitative overview of a range of experiences in the industry, but more research is needed to gain a nuanced understanding of the part intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) plays in the challenges facing parents and carers. Raising Films Ireland has made a start by teasing out the key issues for Irish parents and carers. However, many unanswered questions remain. We know very little about:

- Carers who care for adults and people with special needs
- Carers who left the industry
- Self-care
- Male carers
- Carers with a disability; class, race and caring; caring and ethnic minority groups
- How the industry responds to the views of parents and carers presented here

The success, or otherwise, of the solutions identified here will also require monitoring over time.

### Core Actions to Create Change

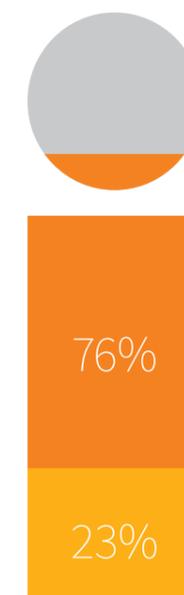
*The Pursuit of Change* describes the challenges and proposed solutions identified by 455 participants. An analysis of those responses leads us to identify four core actions for the screen industries.

### ACTION 1: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDCARE/ADULTCARE

Financial support would make a significant impact to the gendered nature of the industry as well as addressing the problems associated with long working hours. Most respondents seek financial assistance for caring, which could be provided by the production, the State, or by way of personal tax credits. Suggestions for other supports include facilities for children or adults requiring care, on location/set, or short notice State-funded care in the community.

### Cost and gender

Childcare costs in Ireland are among the highest in the OECD. These costs have had a significant impact on mothers particularly who carry a disproportionate burden of childcare and later-life caring roles. The gendered order of caring – a feature of Irish society – is also illustrated by the fact that 76% of respondents were women, and 23% were men.



*“I believe that tax relief on childcare is essential to working parents who are freelance. If we could write off this huge outlay, it would make it possible to commit to full or part-time childcare places. As it stands, two children in creche costs anything up to €1850 per month. When you don’t know your income month-to-month, it is impossible to commit to that – and then you lose your place in the crèche.”*

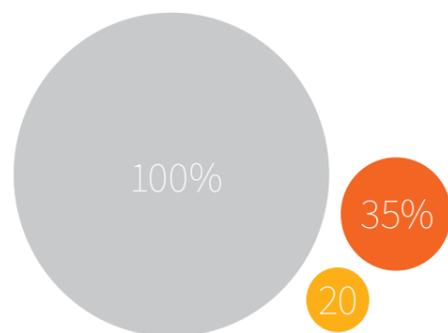
Female, 25–44, Married, Director, Dublin

### Cost and hours

Caring is particularly problematic for parents and carers in the screen industries, much of which is freelance work characterised by very long hours. 35% of respondents work 10–11.5 hours a day, and a further 20% work 12 hours a day or over. The long working hours required of many carers puts a significant financial burden on workers who are reliant on paid care. Proportionately more single people (74%) work 10 hours and over. Long hours are also a feature of those in a relationship but living apart. This is particularly onerous for lower paid workers, given high childcare costs, and the challenges in accessing creches or childminders who work atypical hours. For instance, one-third of freelance respondents earn €20,000 or less per year. 21% of those working part-time earn €10,000. Financial assistance for childcare in some form (e.g. via personal tax credit, or childcare covered by the production) is supported by the vast majority of respondents.

### Respondent Hours Worked in a Day

- Work 10–11.5 hours (35%)
- Work 12 hours a day or > (20%)
- Total recorded respondents (100%)



*“When the shoot goes over, you are expected to stay for as long as it takes on short notice.”*

Male, 45 to 64, Single, Crew, Dublin

*“There is no average in editing, it could be 7–8 (hours) on a well-organized, well-scheduled project that is going to plan, or anything upwards of 10 hours on a job that is coming to the end, or for various reasons has not had enough time allocated for the volume of work involved. Most editors I know have experienced 16-hour days, unless for example they are staff in RTÉ, where shifts are capped at 12 hours, as far as I’m aware.”*

Female, 45–64, Living together, offline editor for TV, Dublin

*“I spent €2000 a month on creche until kids went to school.”*

Female 25–44, Married, Crew, Dublin

### ACTION 2: REMOTE WORKING, FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS, JOB-SHARING

There is widespread support for new models of working, heightened by working experiences during the pandemic. Many roles, particularly in production/coordination could be done as job-share/part-time. There is support for remote working, flexible hours, part-time work and job sharing. Many working professionals do not want to be forced to choose between a career they love and have invested in, and a family life; especially time spent with children.

*“There could also be a greater number of remote work roles, especially after the normalcy of this for most industries due to the pandemic.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, Dublin

*“I would absolutely jump at the opportunity to go part-time or job share. I think a lot of talented crew have to bow out of the industry early because these options are not there.”*

Female, 25–44, Living together, Education, Galway

*“Considering we have co-production meetings in three different countries remotely, why can’t we do more remotely?”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, Dublin

### ACTION 3: AMPLIFY THE CONVERSATION

Debate and lobbying are crucial to ensure that caring is visible and regarded as a matter of public rather than private concern. The launch of Raising Films Ireland is welcomed by respondents; we must add our voice to national debates on childcare and highlight the specific challenges and obstacles facing parents and carers in the screen industries. It is important to engage with production company owners, senior producers and financiers in order to ensure that the difficulties facing parents and carers is fully understood and appreciated. In order to reimagine the industry, cross-sector dialogue is vital.

*“There needs to be serious public pressure involved. It’s a huge parent (and particularly women’s) rights issue.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Assistant director, rest of Munster

*“The fact this is being highlighted [by Raising Films Ireland] is a huge step forward. Parents particularly women have been left on the scrapheap for too long. We need change & we need it now. A generation of voices are being silenced because we can’t get a babysitter!”*

Female, 25–44, On-screen cast, Dublin

*“The only way things will change is to liaise with producers and commissioners to include family friendly practices and supports in their budgets. It’s not surprising to see so few mothers with very young children entering this industry. Also, many women take years off before they come back or delay having children as they know the demands of the industry.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Writer, rest of Munster

Public funders could demonstrate creative leadership by allowing childcare to be a line in the budget, and by signalling their support for the normalizing of this practice going forward. However, support from government agencies is not always forthcoming, as this account illustrates:

*“I once was invited to attend an industry event – a launch – daytime – when my youngest son was six weeks old. It wasn’t a conference or a meeting, just a gathering. I approached the agency organising the event to ask if it would be ok for me to bring my newborn son, as I was still feeding him. The person in question said they’d have to check it out and came back to say it was felt it wouldn’t be appropriate. To this day it makes me mad that I didn’t take it further. I was made to feel that there was no place for me at such events as a new mother. It’s still a sore point for me. And a disgrace for a government agency.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Galway

### ACTION 4: CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES

Findings from the screen industries endorse the call from Raising Films (UK) that there needs to be a formal process in which perceived discrimination can be reported to a single body. This body should have the resources and tools to support best practice and, where necessary, the teeth to incur sanctions. Repeatedly, responses point to discriminatory and exclusionary practices relating to pregnancy or care work.

*“Hard to get work. Relegated status because of being a mother. Left out of meetings and all communication.”*

Female, 45–64, Married, Freelance Editor, rest of Leinster

*“Haven’t had a new contract since telling my agent I was five months pregnant.”*

Female, 25–44, On-screen cast, Galway

*“I had to forgo a role as SP on one of Ireland’s highest rating shows as I was required to be available 24/7 in Dublin. Other roles were unavailable to me also as it was ‘known’ I had a child so producers/company owners knew that I would not be available all the time in Dublin. Effectively it meant I was out of the running on certain jobs simply because I was a parent.”*

Female, 45–64, Single, Producer, Cork

*“When I returned to the workplace after my first child, I was told that I wouldn’t be able to take on a role that I was well capable of doing and wanted to do, unless I ‘sorted out my childcare situation’. I have withheld telling colleagues that I am expecting so as not to be treated differently or passed over for opportunities.”*

Female, 25–44, Married, Producer, Ulster

Similarly, another respondent believes she was not:

*“...asked to do a job because I believe that people assume I want to be at home with the baby.”*

Female, 24–44, Living together, Crew, Dublin

## 09

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