



## RECRUITMENT & RETENTION SURVEY

Information gathered on behalf of the ABTT for the MAKE A DIFFERENCE CONFERENCE 2023  
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## FOREWARD

The “Recruitment & Retention” survey was launched in February 2023 to coincide with the release of the ABTT’s (<sup>1</sup>Association of British Theatre Technicians) MAKE A DiFFERENCE conference.

The MAKE A DiFFERENCE conference day was developed as a way to better host some of the great joined up thinking that was happening in the many ABTT seminars that take place throughout the year and at the ABTT Theatre Show, an annual two day trade show. It was developed to provide a more proactive platform to encourage actions and develop practical solutions to industry issues. The conference is more than simply discussing problems. It’s asking people who attend to commit to actions to achieve positive change.

The aim of the survey was to collect some data from across the industry: to obtain thoughts and views from people about the current issues we are facing in recruiting staff and retaining the staff we have.

The survey was launched in February and ran for three and a half weeks. The survey was distributed and shared at first via the ABTT press release for the conference. It was then shared with the other associations linked to AAPTLE (<sup>2</sup>The Alliance of Associations and Professionals in Theatre and Live Events). Word of mouth and industry sharing further expanded the reach of this survey to gather data.

The findings of this survey will be presented to the conference delegates on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023 in an online pre-conference meeting. The findings of this survey will be used to guide the conference design and structure and provide us with provocations to consider. The aim is for delegates to digest the results and bring to conference any thoughts and ideas they might have to help us progress and move forward in the topics highlighted.

The MAKE A DiFFERENCE conference is scheduled to take place at the Albany Theatre in London on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2023.

 **MAKE A**  
**DiFFERENCE**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abtt.org.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://aaptle.uk/>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There were an equal number of opinions from people that identified as an employee (33.58%) as there were from employers (32.36%).
- 11% of the survey sample were under the age of 25.
- The survey sample percentage that identified as working in lighting, sound & video (36%) was the same as the survey sample that identified as working in production / technical and stage management (36%). Therefore, the data collected yielded a good analysis of opinions in these backstage working areas.
- **Pay** was the highest-ranking answer across all recruitment & retention questions.
- **Pay** yielded a higher percentage total for the topic of recruitment at 47% suggesting it's a bigger priority on this issue.
- **Pay** was the highest percentage issue for RETENTION (34%). However, when you group together all **well-being issues**, (work life balance, staff feeling valued & support in the workplace) they become the highest percentage total (55% average across both questions). Therefore, the biggest issues to tackle in **retention** are well-being related concerns.
- Stage technicians responded with the highest percentage total with the answer of **pay** across all 4 questions 52% average.
- On average across both retention questions half of the LX, Sound and Video (49%), and the Production technical & stage managers (53%) responded with **well-being related issues**.
- **Work life balance** was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest ranking answer across all recruitment & retention questions.
- **Work life balance** is a greater issue to look at in retention due to the smaller percentage gap in relation to pay:  
Recruitment difference 24%  
Retention difference 8%
- There was no real significant difference between the opinions of employers and employees. Largely the percentages across all answers for recruitment & retention were the same. Giving us an indication that both parties feel similarly on all issues.



## RECOMMENDATIONS



The 2 main issues to discuss in relation to RECRUITMENT & RETENTION are:

PAY

WELL-BEING ISSUES

RECRUITMENT

Additional areas to consider discussing are:

Job security

Working hours

Education & outreach

RETENTION

Well-being issues encompass:

Work life balance

Staff feeling valued

Support in the workplace

Things to consider:

Employers and Employees largely have the same views on what issues effect recruitment and retention. There are no real differences to report.

Pay proportionally is a bigger issue for those that identify as a stage technician.



## SURVEY RESULTS

### Sample size

The data collection process yielded a good number of participants for this survey especially given the short survey opening time of 3.5 weeks.

### In total there were 437 responses

It was decided that in the spirit of designing a short swift survey we wouldn't dissect the analysis of our survey sample too many times. We simply obtained two further lines of enquiry about our survey sample, type of employment and what area they worked in backstage.

### Which do you identify as?

This line of enquiry was to establish what type of employment our survey sample identified with.

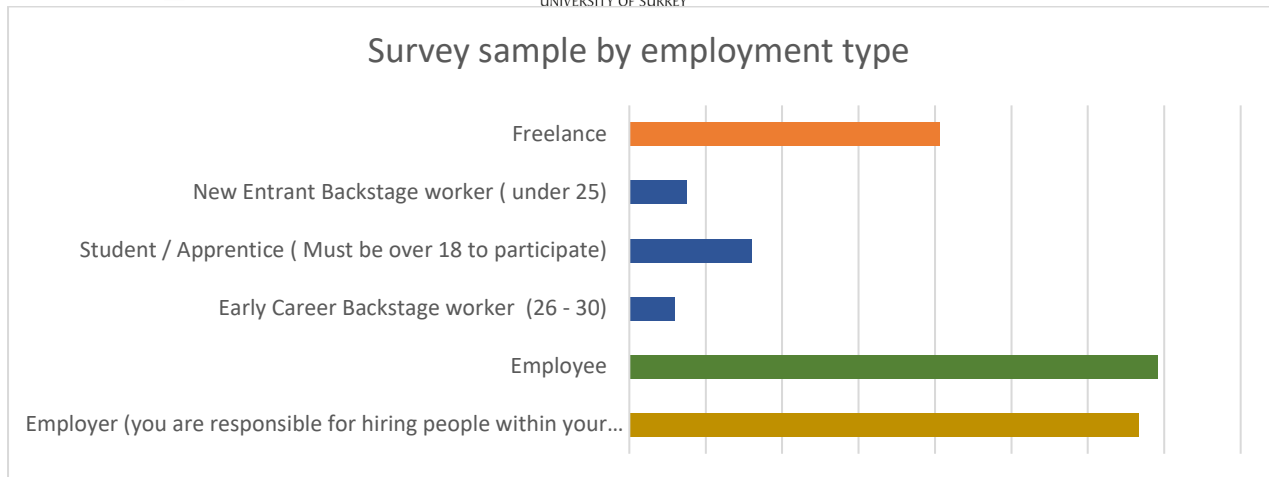
We got a healthy percentage of people that identified as working as an employee 33.58% (n=138), which was matched by an equal number of people that identified as an employer 32.36% (n=133). These gave us a nice balanced view between employment types for the data collected.

We had 20% of people that took the survey that identified with being freelance which gave us that perspective.

14% of the survey sample were under the age of 30 (n=59)

11% of the survey sample were under the age of 25. (n=47)

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Employer (you are responsible for hiring people within your business)	32.36%	133
2	Employee	33.58%	138
3	Early Career Backstage worker (26 - 30)	2.92%	12
4	Student / Apprentice ( Must be over 18 to participate)	7.79%	32
5	New Entrant Backstage worker ( under 25)	3.65%	15
6	Freelance	19.71%	81
	Total	100%	411



**In which backstage area do you mainly work?**

This line of enquiry was to establish what areas of backstage employment our survey sample worked in.

Lighting, Sound and Video yielded the same percentage result 36% (n=145) as Production / Technical and Stage Management also 36% (n=144)

7.5% identified as a stage technician (n=30)

The survey sample size for the following areas were low in numbers and as such no real meaningful analysis could be made. I would suggest that higher numbers in these backstage areas would allow us to obtain better more accurate views in these backstage working areas.

Wigs, hair, makeup and wardrobe made up 3% (n=13)

Production Carpenters made up 2% (n=9)

Manufacturers and hire made up 1% (n=5)

Automation made up 1.73% (n=7)

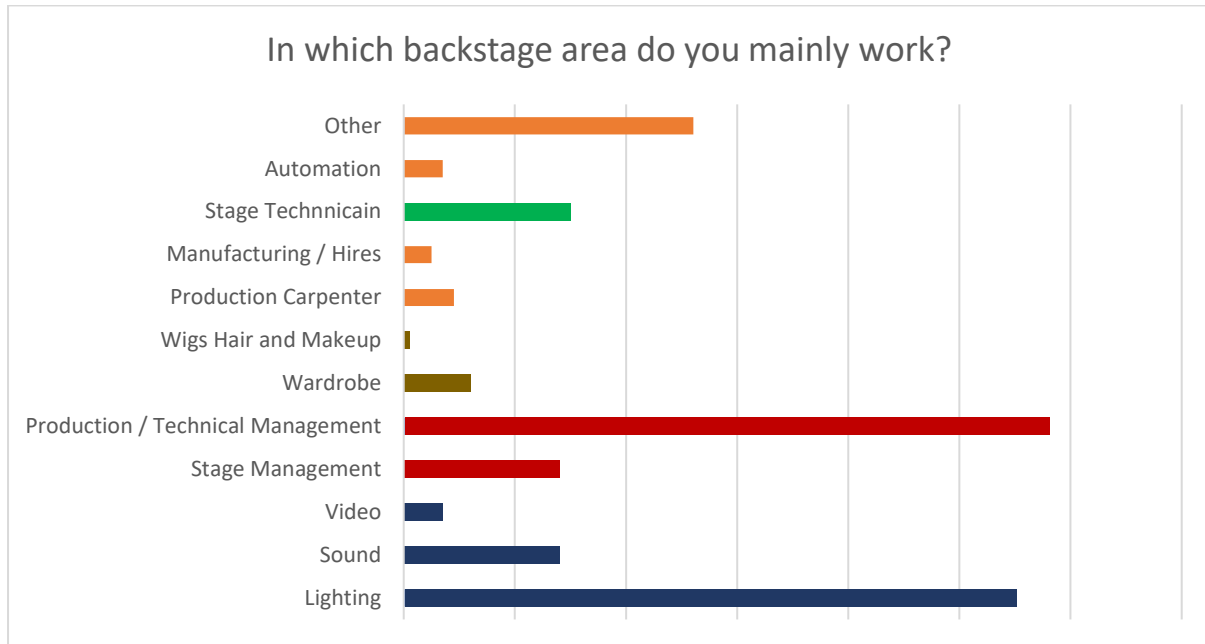
13% of the survey sample selected other (n=52)

Only 5 of them went on to specify in the open question, the results of these 5 questions are below.

	Please Specify
1	Equipment Maintenance
2	Operations Coordinator
3	Management
4	Educator
5	Trade Body



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Lighting	27.16%	110
2	Sound	6.91%	28
3	Video	1.73%	7
4	Stage Management	6.91%	28
5	Production / Technical Management	28.64%	116
6	Wardrobe	2.96%	12
7	Wigs Hair and Makeup	0.25%	1
8	Production Carpenter	2.22%	9
9	Manufacturing / Hires	1.23%	5
10	Stage Technician	7.41%	30
11	Automation	1.73%	7
12	Other	12.84%	52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>405</b>

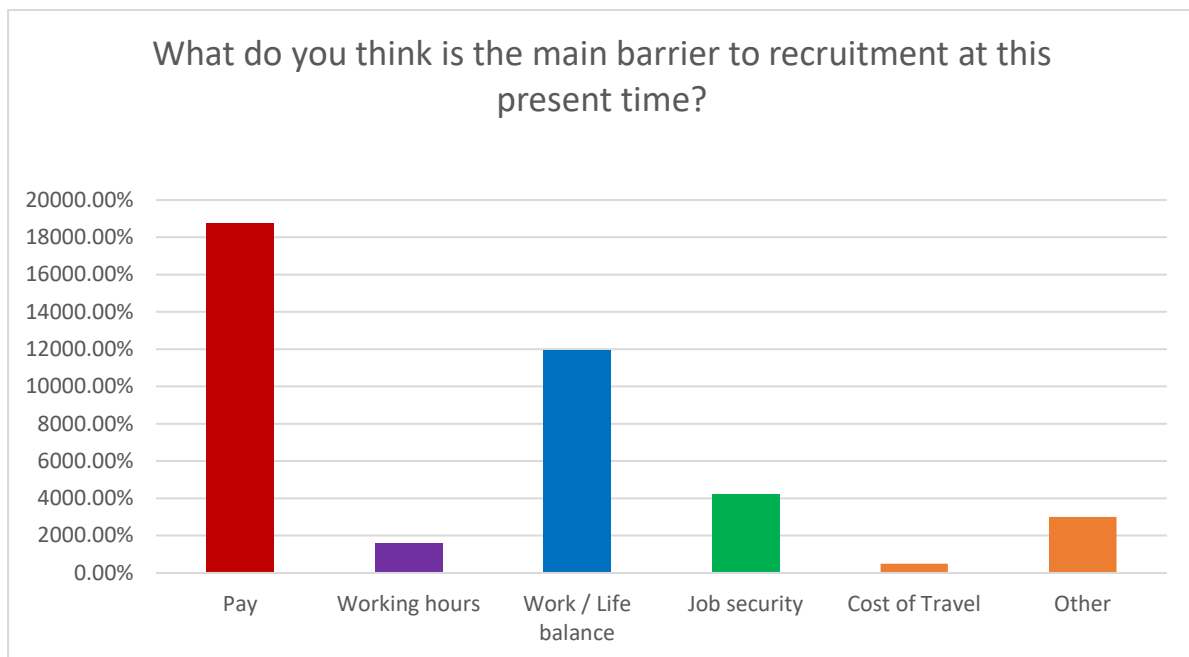






### What do you think is the main barrier to recruitment at this present time?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Pay	46.87%	187
2	Working hours	4.01%	16
3	Work / Life balance	29.82%	119
4	Job security	10.53%	42
5	Cost of Travel	1.25%	5
6	Other	7.52%	30
	Total	100%	399



The three highest yielding results for this question were: pay 46.87% (n=187), work life balance 29.82% (n=119), and job security 10.53% (n=42).

#### Looking further into the data for PAY: (n=187)

34% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employer** (n=65)

38% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employee** (n=71)

16% of those responding with pay identified as being **freelance** (n=30)

31% (n=15) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with pay to this question.

48% (n=69) of those in lighting sound or video responded with pay (n=145)



50% (n=72) of production, technical or stage managers responded with pay (n=144)

50% (n=15) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of pay

### **Looking further into the data for work life balance: (n=119)**

31% of those responding with work life balance identified as being an **employer** (n=37)

31% of those responding with work life balance identified as being an **employee** (n=37)

*The percentage total is equal for employers and employees in responding with work life balance.*

26% of those responding with work life balance identified as being **freelance** (n=31)

21% (n=10) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with work life balance to this question.

26% (n=38) of those in lighting sound or video responded with work life balance (n=145)

5% (n=7) of production, technical or stage managers responded with work life balance (n=144)

27% (n=8) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of work life balance

### **Looking further into Job Security: (n=42)**

19% of those responding with job security identified as being an **employer** (n=8)

21% of those responding with job security identified as being an **employee** (n=9)

26% of those responding with job security identified as being **freelance** (n=11)

26% (n=12) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered job security to this question.

10% (n=15) of those in lighting sound or video responded with job security (n=145)

7% (n=10) of production, technical or stage managers responded with job security (n=144)

20% (n=6) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of job security



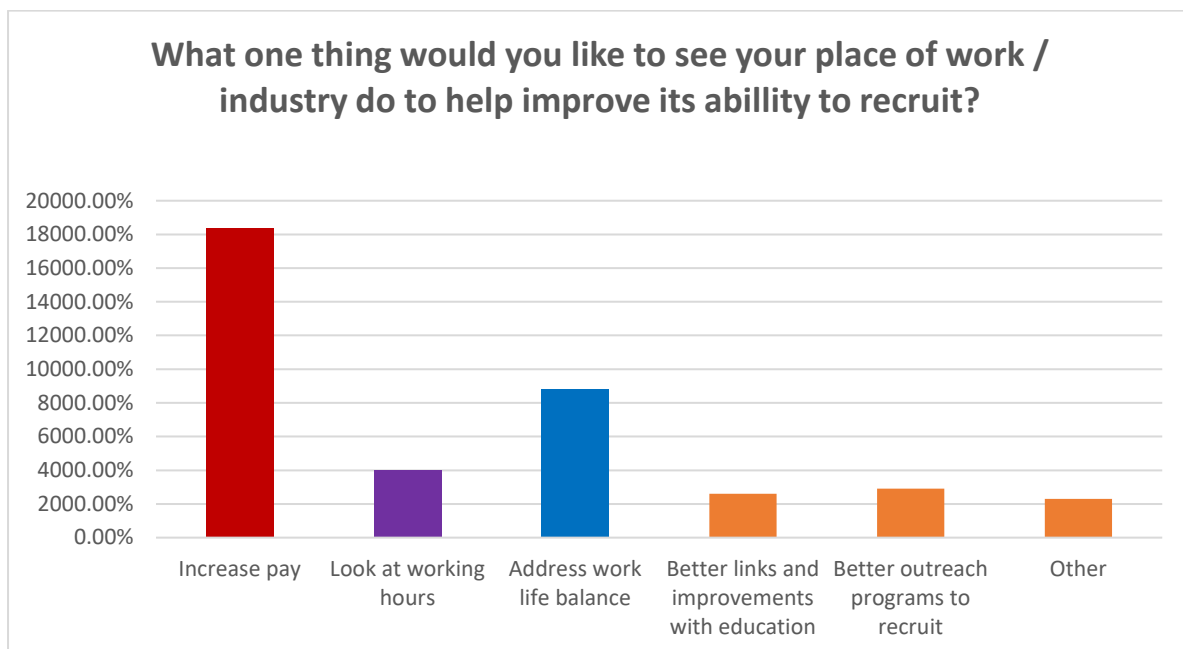
**30 people responded with other, 15 people went on to specify:**

	Please Specify
1	Training
2	Skills, experience
3	Skillset
4	Reduced numbers of people looking for work. Plenty of recruits at the lower level but more experienced people to train the younger ones are no longer in the workforce
5	Lack of Skillset/experience, pay, lack of Human Resources
6	People want to work in the concert/ music/hi tech programming / flashy beam work, and are largely uninterested in straight theatre. I believe that most training schools do not stress the art of drama light enough.
7	Narrow recruitment that doesn't take into account the new job market
8	Value
9	Conservative govt underfunding the arts
10	Wokeness, anti-indigenous racism, toxic feminism, misandry and heterophobia
11	A mix of post Covid apathy, pay, work life balance and all theatre is very hard work at the moment
12	Demand of experience for entry level positions
13	vocational opportunities at 15-18
14	Lack of continuing professional development
15	Roles available that I might like to apply do not reflect my skillset. The parameters that industry defines roles within are outdated and biased.



What one thing would you like to see your place of work / or the industry do to help improve its ability to recruit?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Increase pay	47.04%	183
2	Look at working hours	10.28%	40
3	Address work life balance	22.62%	88
4	Better links and improvements with education	6.68%	26
5	Better outreach programs to recruit	7.46%	29
6	Other	5.91%	23
	Total	100%	389



The three highest yielding results for this question were: **pay** 47.04% (n=183), **work life balance** 22.62% (n=88), and **working hours** 10.28% (n=40). Which I will go on to analyse further:

### Looking further into the data for PAY: (n=183)

30% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employer** (n=56)

37% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employee** (n=67)

20% of those responding with pay identified as being **freelance** (n=36)

38% (n=18) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with pay to this question.



52% (n=75) of those in lighting sound or video responded with pay (n=145)

43% (n=62) of production, technical or stage managers responded with pay (n=144)

63% (n=19) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of pay

### **Looking further into the data for work life balance: (n=88)**

3% of those responding with work life balance identified as being an **employer** (n=28)

31% of those responding with work life balance identified as being an **employee** (n=28)

27% of those responding with work life balance identified as being **freelance** (n=24)

9% (n=4) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with work life balance to this question.

14% (n=21) of those in lighting sound or video responded with work life balance (n=145)

23% (n=33) of production, technical or stage managers responded with work life balance (n=144)

17% (n=5) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of work life balance.

### **Looking further into the data for working hours: (n=183)**

8% of those responding with working hours identified as being an **employer** (n=14)

8% of those responding with working hours identified as being an **employee** (n=14)

3% of those responding with working hours identified as being **freelance** (n=6)

11% (n=5) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with working hours to this question.

9% (n=13) of those in lighting sound or video responded with work life balance (n=145)

13% (n=18) of production, technical or stage managers responded with work life balance (n=144)

7% (n=2) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of work life balance.



**23 people responded with other, 15 people went on to specify:**

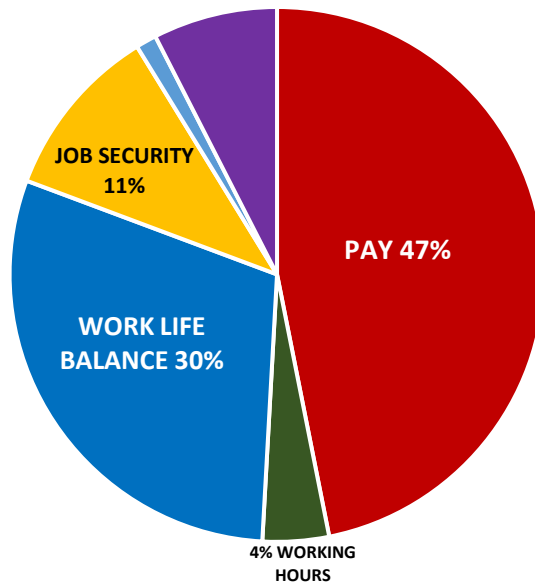
	Please Specify
1	Covering accommodation and expenses for touring staff would make a huge difference to recruiting technical staff for tours
2	Experienced staff being required to perform their role whilst training others due too necessity
3	All the above
4	Get more light artists involved in drama schools alongside the technical and training strands. The psychology of light, emotion and how to control it, play analysis for light and a general rebalance of approach.
5	Cross skilled recruitment
6	Hire more people to enable the work life balance to be better.
7	Stop working on a freelance basis and move all employment to part time/full time
8	Personal Development
9	We need to create more staff positions rather than relying on freelancers
10	Putting time and energy into keep and caring for staff and not constantly feeling utterly disposable
11	idk
12	Stop the nauseating wokeness & virtue signalling
13	Training to help new recruits, that is cheap and accessible to help transferable workers from other industries, work life balance, better pay,
14	Better links with the ABTT
15	Employers to recruit more diversely in every way.



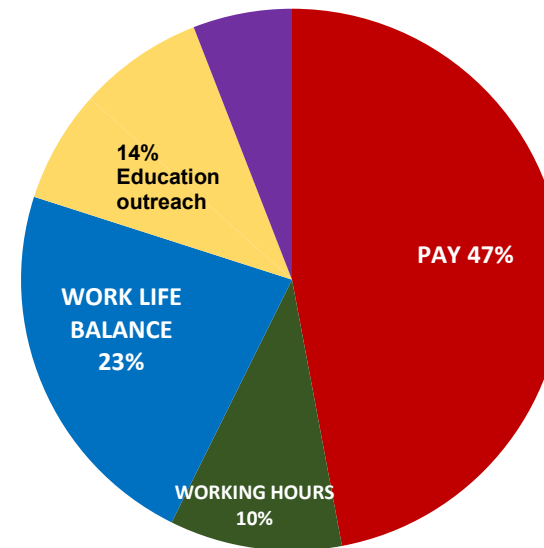
## RECRUITMENT SUMMARY

You will note we asked two questions on the topic of “recruitment”. Both were similar in phrasing some of the answers were the same and some differed. Pay, work life balance and working hours were asked for both questions We asked the question in two different ways to be able to compare and contrast the data from each question. Confirming the accuracy of our data

What do you think is the main barrier to recruitment at this present time?



What one thing would you like to see your place of work /industry do to help improve its ability to recruit?





The pie charts above better show the correlations between the two very similar questions.

Both Questioned yielded a similar sample size of replies, 389 for “what do you think is the main barrier to recruitment at this present time? (from here on referred to as question 1) 399 for “what one thing would you like to see your place of work / industry do to help improve recruitment” (from here on referred to as question 2)

Pay yielded exactly the same percentage total for both questions, which suggests very strongly that this issue is important to people.

Work life balance yielded only a 7% difference in total but still maintained the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage total for both questions.

Other significant finds are:

Job security yielding 11% of the answers for Question 1

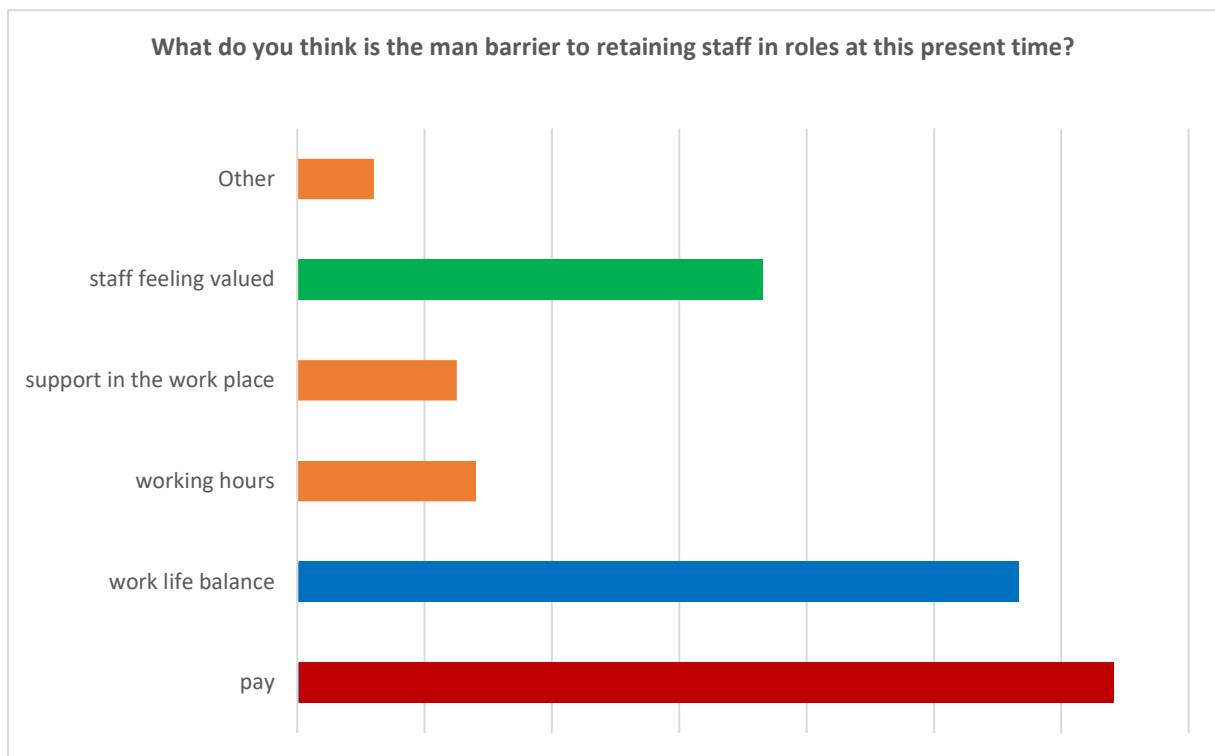
Education and outreach yielding 14% of answers for Question 2 – this was made up of 7% (n=29) better links to outreach programmes, and 7% better links and improvements with education (n=26). (Total n= 55)





What do you think is the main barrier to retaining staff in roles at this present time?

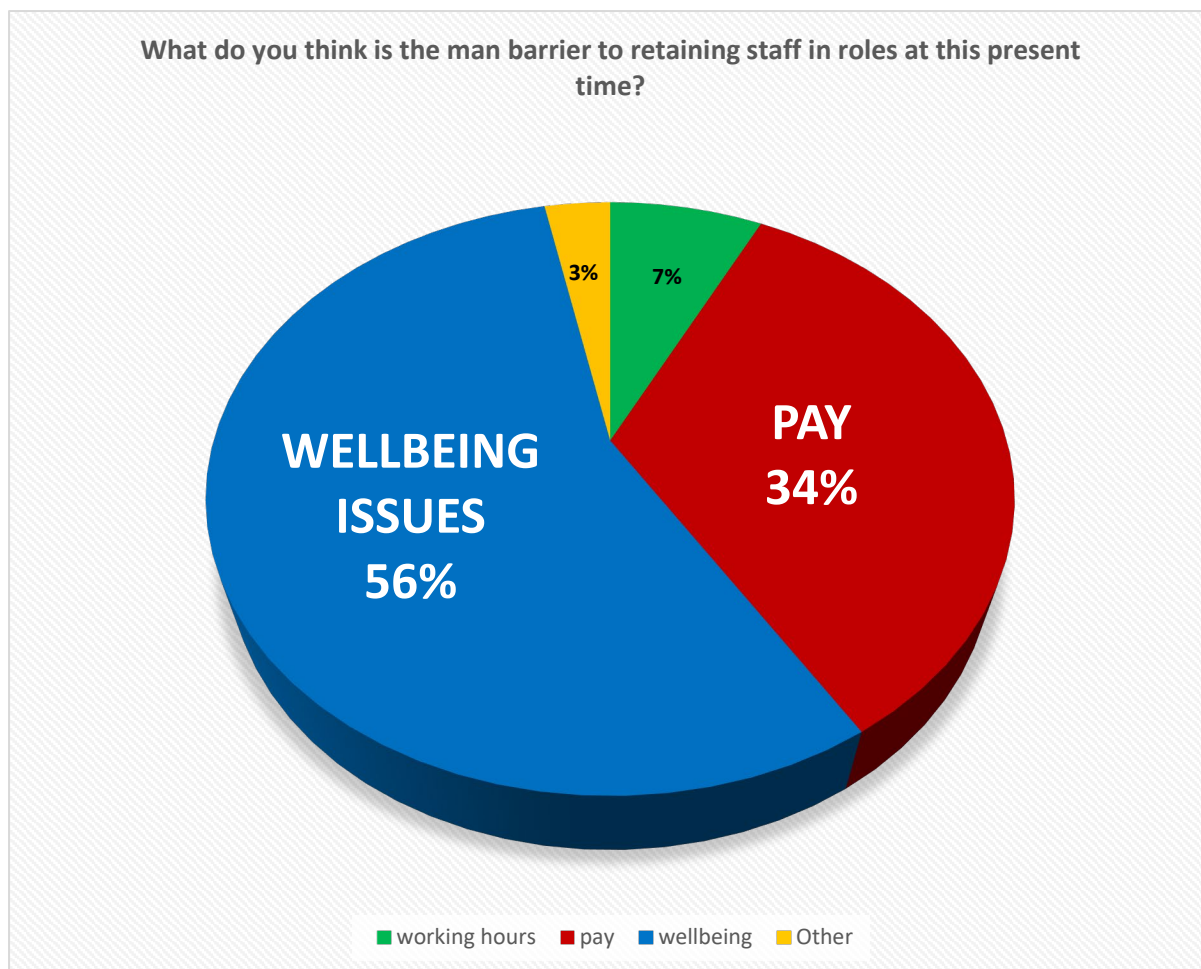
#	Answer	%	Count
1	pay	33.77%	128
2	work life balance	29.82%	113
3	working hours	7.39%	28
4	support in the work place	6.60%	25
5	staff feeling valued	19.26%	73
6	Other	3.17%	12
	Total	100%	379





The highest yielding result is Pay with 33.77% (n=128). Closely followed by work life balance at 29.82% (n=113). The 3<sup>rd</sup> highest outcome was staff feeling valued at 18% (n=67). It is these 3 I will analyse further.

If you link together all the well being related issues, staff feeling valued, support in the work place & work life balance these collectively show more percentage total that pay. Well-being 56% (n=211) / Pay 34% (n=128).



**Looking further into the data for PAY: (n=128)**

37% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employer** (n=47)

30% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employee** (n=39)

13% of those responding with pay identified as being **freelance** (n=16)

38% (n=18) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with pay to this question.

37% (n=53) of those in lighting, sound or video responded with pay (n=145)

29% (n=41) of production, technical or stage managers responded with pay (n=144)



43% (n=13) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of pay

**Looking further into the data for well-being issues  
(work life balance, staff feeling valued, support in the work place): (n=211)**

28% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being an **employer** (n=60)

36% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being an **employee** (n=74)

24% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being **freelance** (n=51)

47% (n=22) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with work life balance to this question.

50% (n=72) of those in lighting, sound or video responded with well-being issues (n=145)

54% (n=78) of production, technical or stage managers responded with well-being issues (n=144)

43% (n=13) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of well-being issues

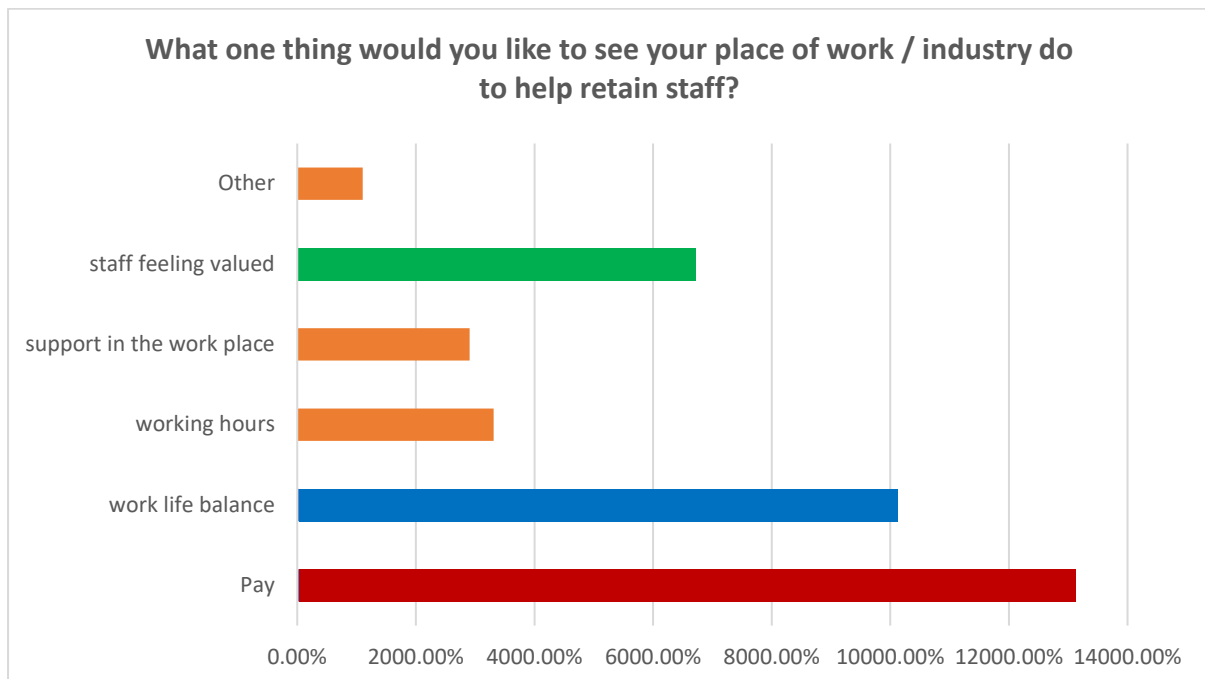
**12 people responded with other, 15 people went on to specify**

	Please Specify
1	Wokeness, anti-indigenous racism, toxic feminism, misandry, heterophobia & climate cultism
2	Staffing levels, Experience
3	Flexibility and feeling valued
4	Development/ Progression
5	Being open minded to recruitment. Recognising the worlds changed.
6	Because we make no commitment to the people we hire, they don't commit to us.
7	All the above



What one thing would you like to see your place of work / industry do to help improve staff retention?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Pay	35.22%	131
2	work life balance	27.15%	101
3	working hours	8.87%	33
4	support in the work place	7.80%	29
5	staff feeling valued	18.01%	67
6	Other	2.96%	11
	Total	100%	372



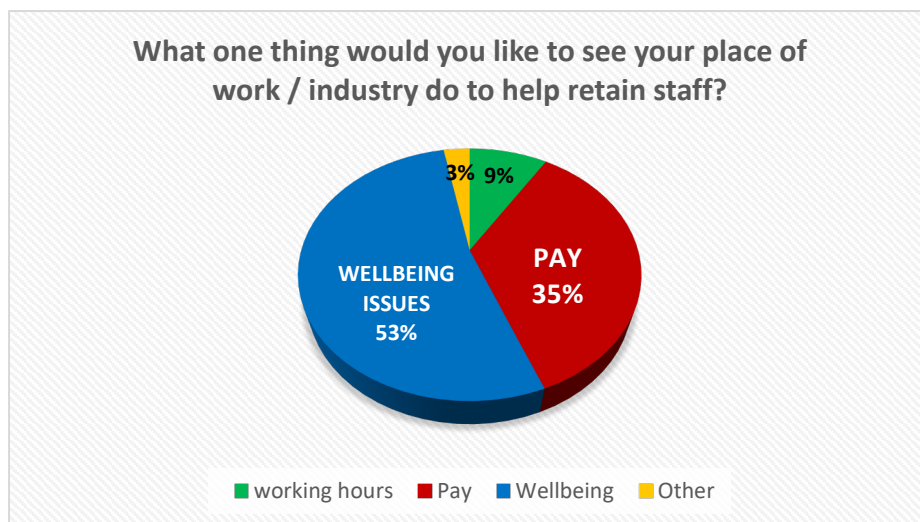
**The labelling along the x-axis of the table above needs correcting**

The highest yielding result is pay 35.22% (n=131)  
 The next is work life balance at 27.15% (n=101)

**It is worth noting that while the results are similar to recruitment in that pay is highest and work life balance is second. The percentage difference between them is lower in the retention question.**

**Recruitment percentage difference (between pay and work life balance) 24%**  
**Retention percentage difference (between pay and work life balance) 8%**

**If you group well-being issues together, staff feeling valued, support in the work place, and work life balance the total is 53%. (n=197)**



### Looking further into the data for PAY: (n=131)

33% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employer** (n=43)

31% of those responding with pay identified as being an **employee** (n=41)

18% of those responding with pay identified as being **freelance** (n=24)

34% (n=16) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with pay to this question.

32% (n=46) of those in lighting sound or video responded with pay (n=145)

31% (n=44) of production, technical or stage managers responded with pay (n=144)

53% (n=16) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of pay

### Looking further into the data for well-being issues

#### (work life balance, staff feeling valued, support in the work place): (n=197)

30% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being an **employer** (n=60)

34% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being an **employee** (n=67)

22% of those responding with well-being issues identified as being **freelance** (n=43)

47% (n=22) of **under 25's** (n=47) answered with work life balance to this question.

48% (n=70) of those in lighting sound or video responded with well-being issues (n=145)



51% (n=73) of production, technical or stage managers responded with well-being issues (n=144)

37% (n=11) of the stage technicians (n=30) responded with the answer of well-being issues

**11 people responded with other, 8 people went on to specify**

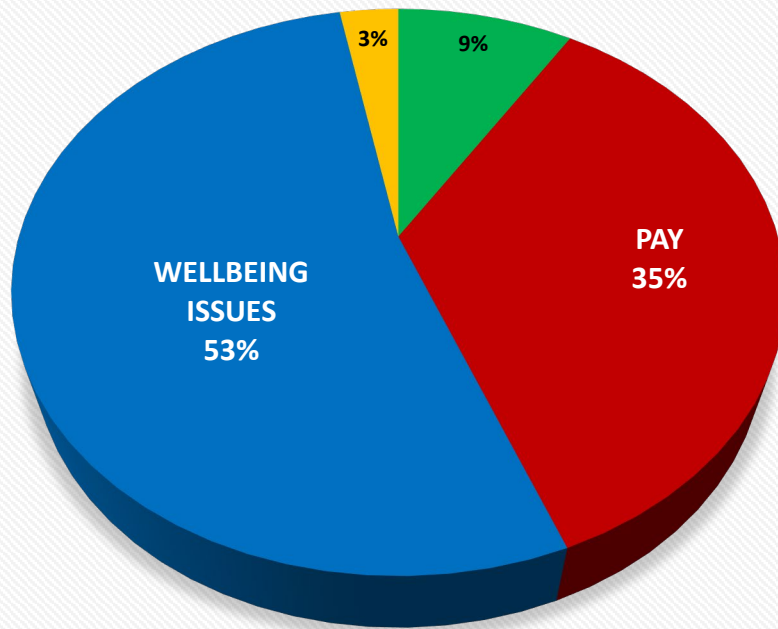
	Please specify
1	More Staff, the right experience
2	Increase number of staff
3	Stop using freelancers. Offer time contracts
4	Staff value, pay within the industry and accepting that drama school/ university isn't for everyone.
5	idk
6	Stop the mind numbing wokeness and virtue signalling
7	after paying contract staff to go on ABTT course then not continuing their contract is wasted staff
8	Expectation Management! Staff wanting everything but not willing to give back.



### RETENTION SUMMARY

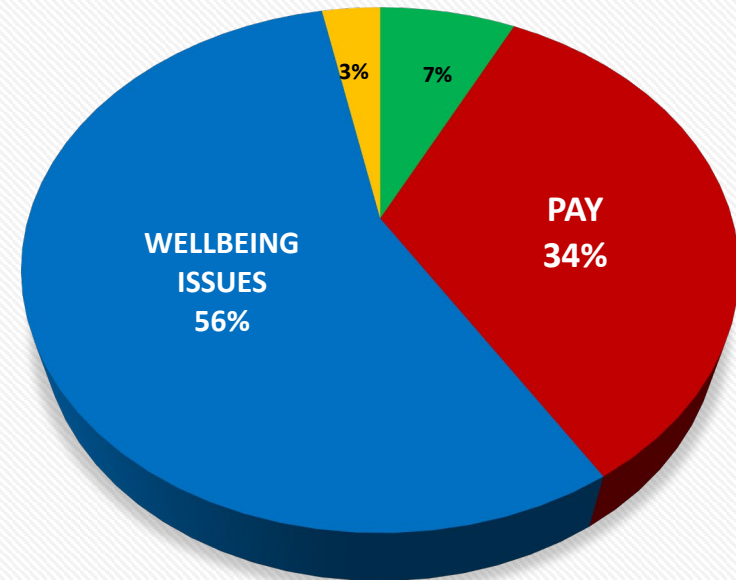
You will note we asked two questions on the topic of “retention”. Both answers were the same. We asked the question in two different ways to be able to compare and contrast the data from each question. Comparing the data in a pie chart form confirms the consistency of the answers

What one thing would you like to see your place of work / industry do to help retain staff?



working hours Pay Wellbeing Other

What do you think is the main barrier to retaining staff in roles at this present time?



working hours pay wellbeing Other