



THE STATE OF THE DOCUMENTARY FIELD

# 2026 STUDY OF DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS

**COMPLETE DATA  
FOR GLOBAL AND  
U.S. RESPONDENTS**

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# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT



 SCHOOL of COMMUNICATION  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

The Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), based at American University's School of Communication in Washington, D.C., is a creative innovation lab and research center that creates, studies, and showcases media and storytelling for human rights, social good, and civic participation. Focusing on three core themes—*Documentary & Independent Media*, *Participatory & Civic Media*, and *Entertainment & Popular Culture*—the Center bridges boundaries between scholars, producers and communication practitioners across media industries, social justice, public policy, and public engagement. CMSI produces resources for the field and academic research; creates original media; convenes conferences and events; and works collaboratively to understand and design media that matter. [cmsimpact.org](https://cmsimpact.org)

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# ABOUT THE STUDY

## THE DOCUMENTARY FIELD IN 2026: OPPORTUNITY & CHALLENGE

Documentary has long enjoyed a vibrant space in the global media ecology, and the marketplace for creative nonfiction storytelling continues to expand around the world. Despite an expansive landscape for documentary filmmakers and audiences, challenges persist. It's difficult to make a sustainable living in documentary filmmaking, full editorial freedom to tell boundary-pushing stories can be elusive, and distribution in a consolidated commercial global media system is increasingly difficult. The struggle for diverse representation among documentary storytellers requires constant scrutiny and intentional effort. As viewers continue to discover documentary storytelling across various platforms, and as new filmmakers enter the craft, tracking industry professionals' perspectives and lived experiences is a vital pursuit. This study is motivated by these ideas and imperatives.

## STUDY OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

In 2016, in collaboration with the International Documentary Association (IDA), the Center for Media & Social Impact identified a need to understand documentary trends, as well as the motivations, concerns, and perspectives of documentary industry professionals and makers at a moment of transition and opportunity. Sparked by this need and curiosity, we launched a pilot phase of this research in 2016, which was released at the 2016 IDA Getting Real convening. A 2018 version, which focused on U.S.-based documentary professionals, launched at the 2018 IDA Getting Real convening. In 2020, the *State of the Documentary Field* study expanded to include a broader snapshot of documentary professionals around the world. The 2020 study was the first research to reveal trends and experiences of contemporary documentary professionals based in the United States and around the world, although we note the overrepresentation of U.S. respondents given our institutional home and access in the United States. The 2026 version of this report presents global findings (inclusive of U.S. data) and U.S. findings as distinct sections, given the study's origin, execution and funding in the United States.

Originally crafted by CMSI with feedback from the International Documentary Association, the study was informed by insights and questions from documentary professionals who were consulted in several waves of research. The study is designed to understand documentary industry members' perspectives and lived experiences based on four key themes:



## DOCUMENTARY MOTIVATIONS, OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES



## DOCUMENTARY CAREER SUSTAINABILITY, ECONOMICS & FUNDING



## DOCUMENTARY & FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



## DOCUMENTARY DISTRIBUTION & PLATFORMS

For the 2026 report, CMSI collected survey responses between March and May 2025. Respondents' participation was voluntary, and personally-identifiable information was not collected. The survey was anonymous and confidential, and internet protocol information was not collected through the online survey platform. No financial incentives were offered or given. American University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the research protocol, and the authors—trained university researchers required to indicate regular research ethics training certification (CITI)—captured and analyzed the data. The survey was hosted online on American University's Qualtrics platform.

To assure robust participation from documentary film professionals, CMSI worked with an impact producer, Alice Quinlan of Red Owl Partners, to identify and invite additional documentary groups and communities to participate in outreach; these groups notified their members and strongly encouraged participation in the survey through email lists and social media promotion. For international outreach, CMSI collaborated with Doc Society to engage with the international documentary community and invite respondents to participate. Note that the survey was made available to all documentary professionals around the world who wished to participate. The 2026 study was generously funded by the Perspective Fund.

(To see key highlights, see the separate "The State of the Documentary Field 2026: 15 Key Highlights" report, available on [cmsimpact.org](https://cmsimpact.org).)

# REPORT FORMAT: “DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS” & “DOCUMENTARY MAKERS”

These survey findings are based on the perspectives of 820 documentary industry professionals.<sup>1</sup> The survey was designed to assess two groups of documentary professionals and makers:

- The sections with “**Documentary Professionals**” in the title reveal the major findings of the survey based on all respondents. Based on a filter question that asked respondents to indicate their “primary position” in documentary, this section of questions offered opportunities for all self-described members of the documentary profession to respond. This group of respondents included those who identified their primary role as directors, producers, editors, directors of photography, as well as nonprofit professionals, impact producers or strategists, film festival professionals, broadcasters, professors, and funders.
- The sections labeled “**Documentary Makers**” include responses to additional economic questions asked of those professionals who identified themselves primarily as “directors” or “producers,” given that these roles allow a full understanding of the key creative, business decision-making, and full economics of their individual films. (Note that this study does not make the claim that roles like editor, cinematographer and sound mixer are not “makers,” but this designation simply allows the researchers to gather reliable and precise information from the film’s decision-making roles about the full economic realities of their films, which the other roles typically may not have as fully or readily). In this way, we were able to ascertain film economics information and other insights from decision-making documentary filmmakers who have this information to share about their individual films and film experiences. In total, 544 respondents identified themselves as primarily “directors” or “producers.”<sup>2</sup>

**Note:** In past research, the report broke down all findings by gender identification and broad racial identification. This year, the study did not find meaningful distinctions among these categories, so reported findings apply to all respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> The total of “820” is the total possible respondents. Because some respondents skipped some questions, despite our best efforts to discourage this practice (directed in the survey introduction text), the exact number of people who answered varies from question to question, but not in a way that is systematically meaningful. In total, 820 people completed at least some questions in this survey.

<sup>2</sup> About 544 directors and producers reliably answered these “primary makers” questions. Again, because each question was not set up as “must respond,” there is some naturally occurring variation in the number of “maker” respondents for each individual question, as expected.

PART ONE

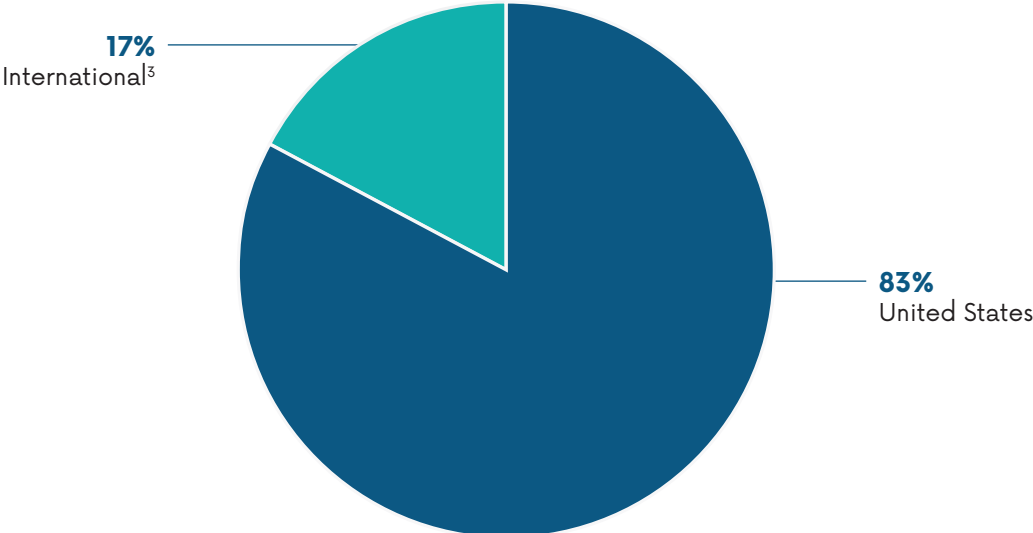
# STATE OF THE GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY FIELD (INTERNATIONAL DATA)



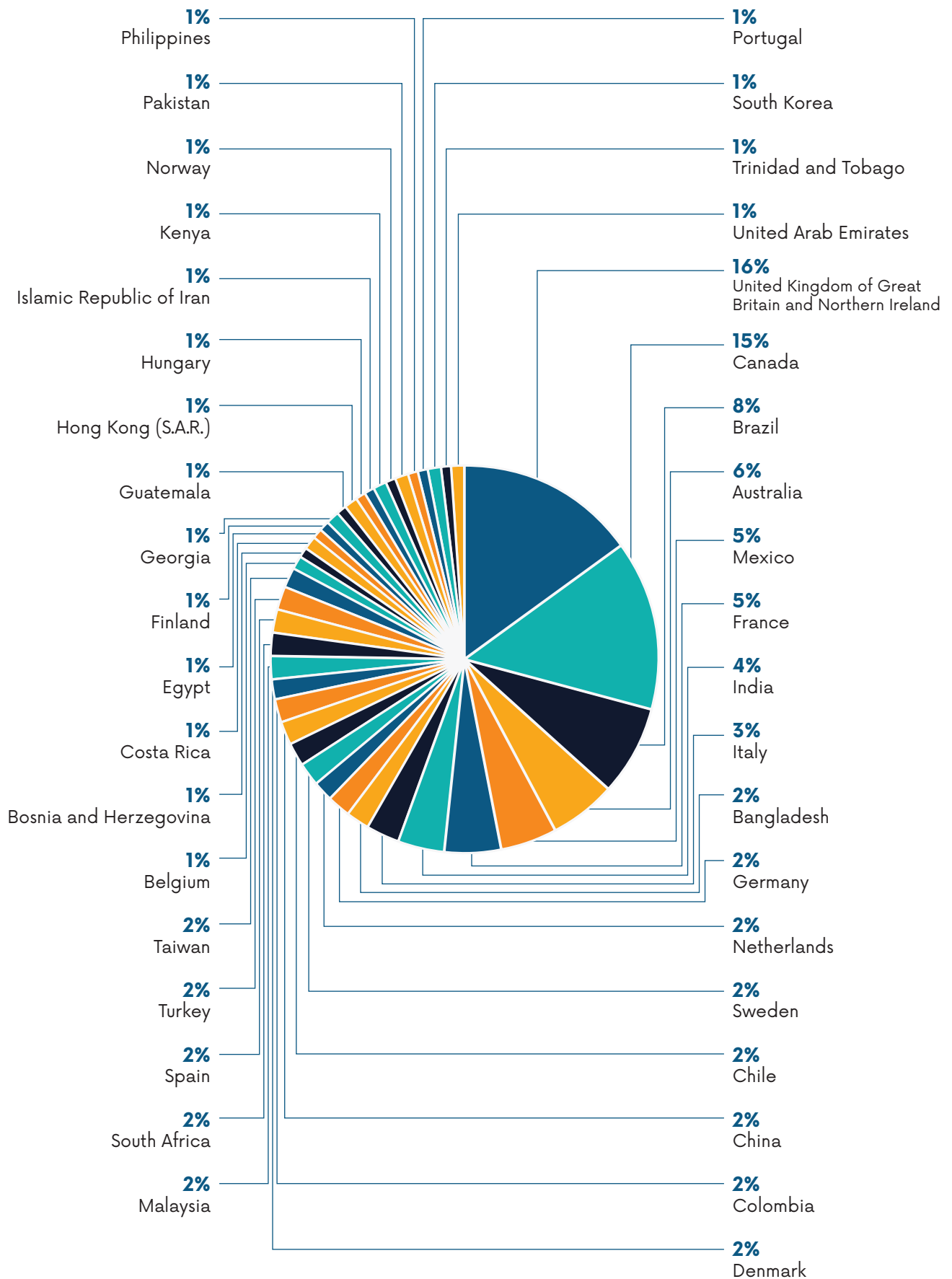
# OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS IN THIS STUDY

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## Residency GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

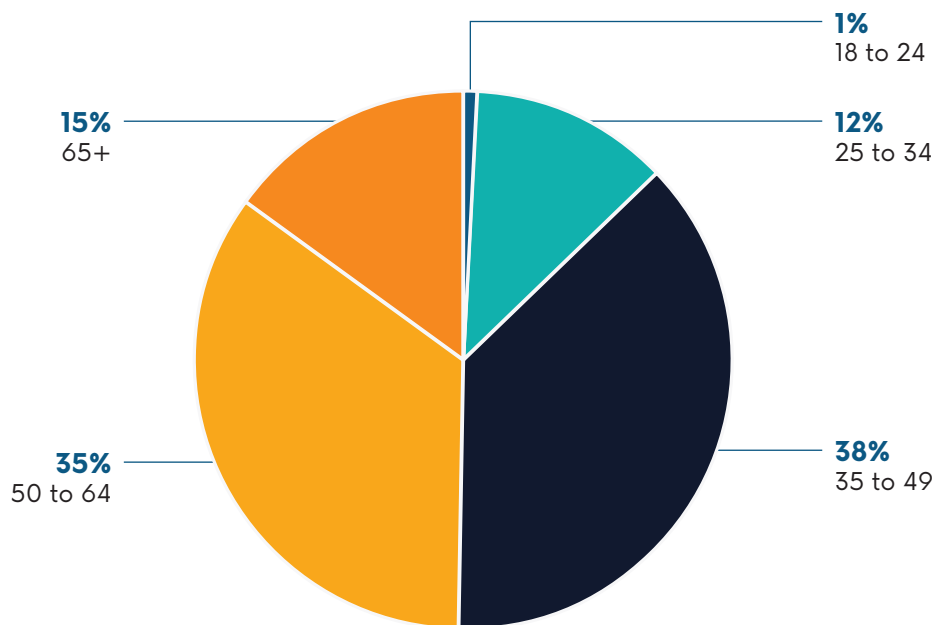


<sup>3</sup> International details by country appear on page 9.



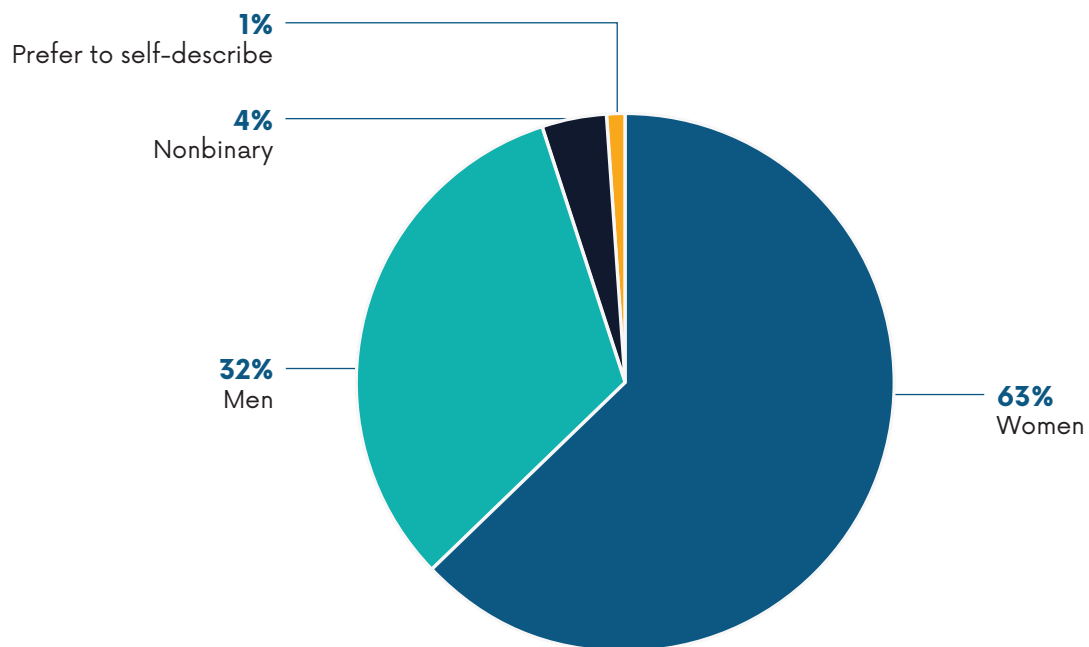
## Age of Global Documentary Professionals

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

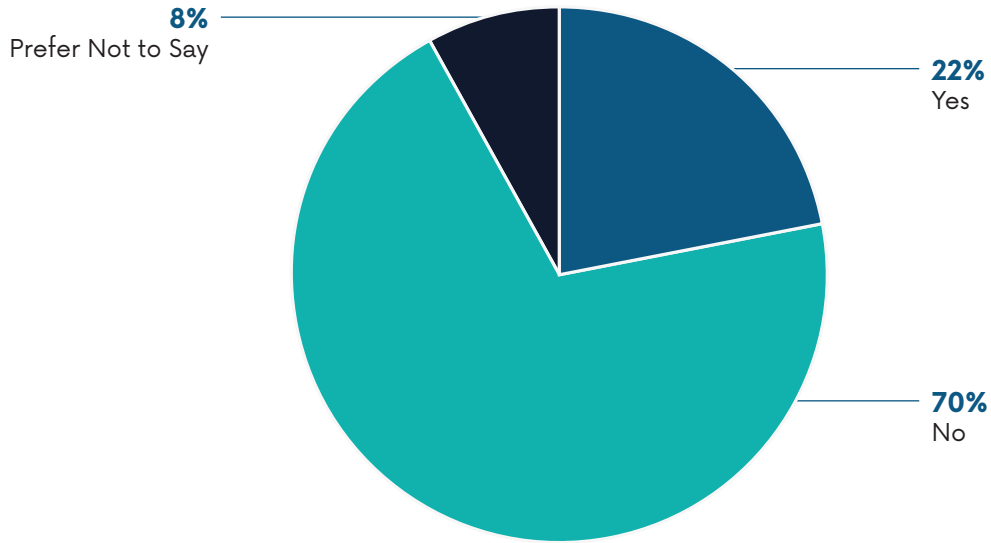


## Gender Identity of Global Documentary Professionals

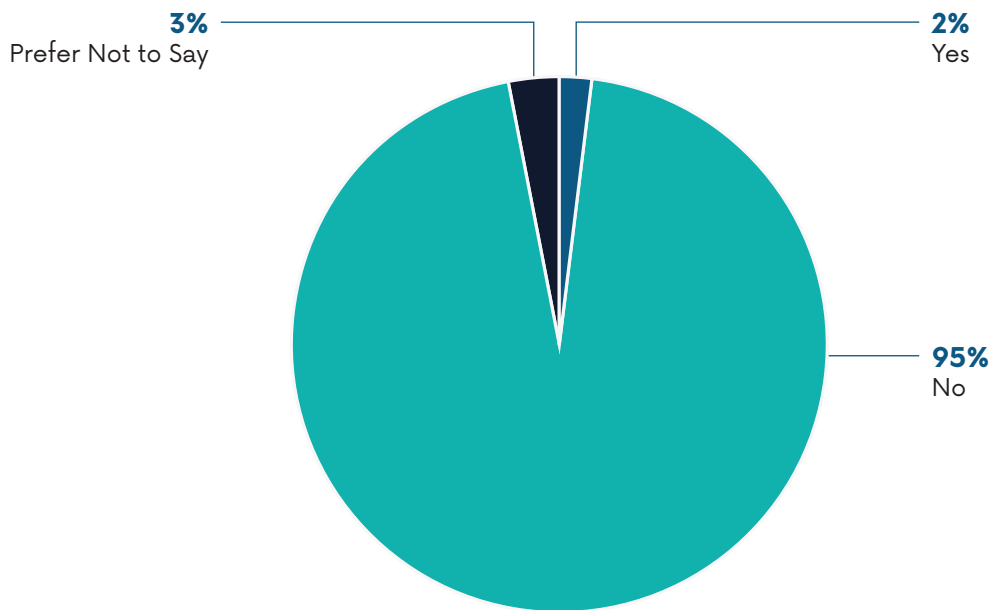
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



**LGBTQ+ Orientation of Global Documentary Professionals**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

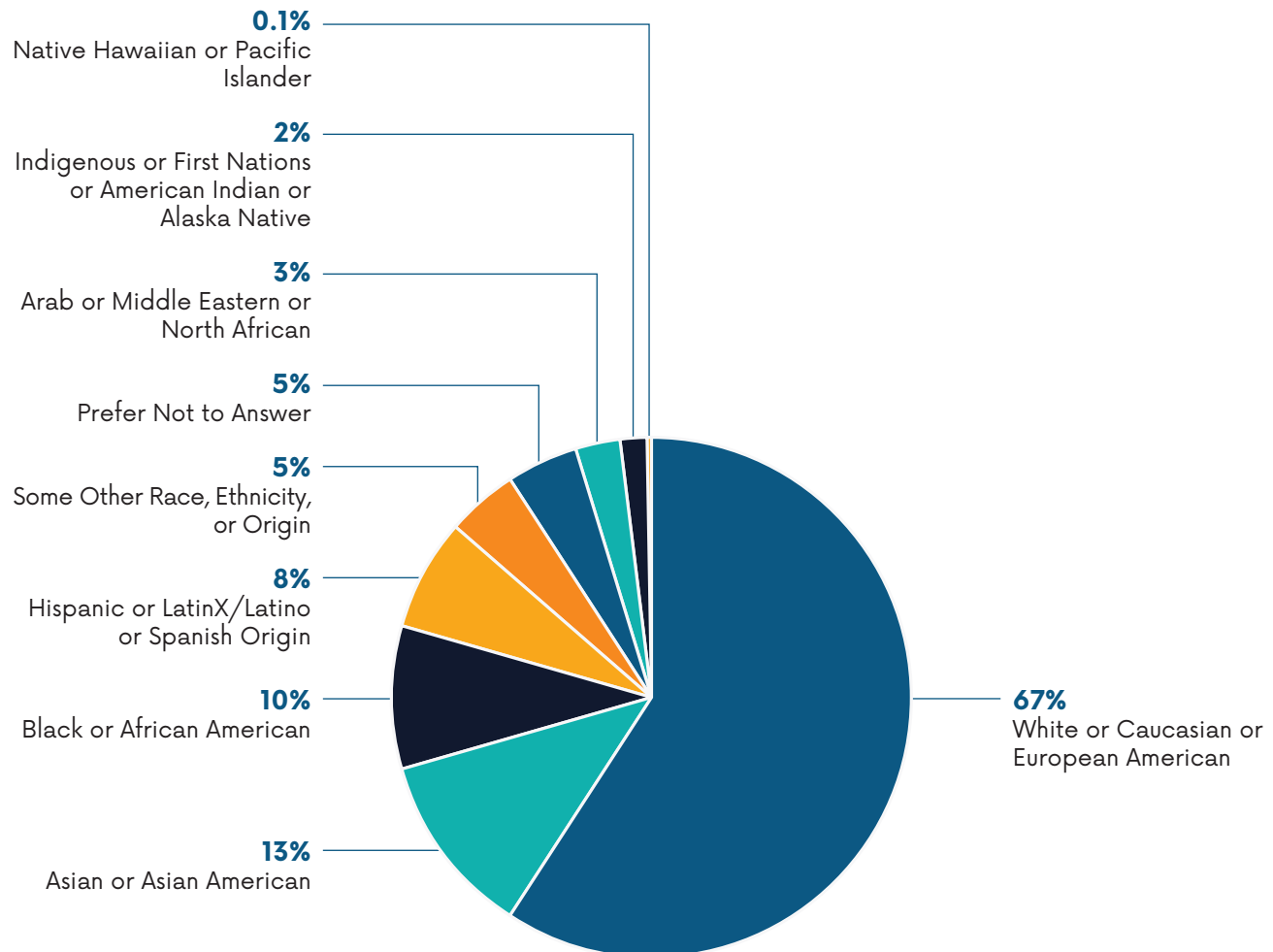


**Transgender Identity of Global Documentary Professionals**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



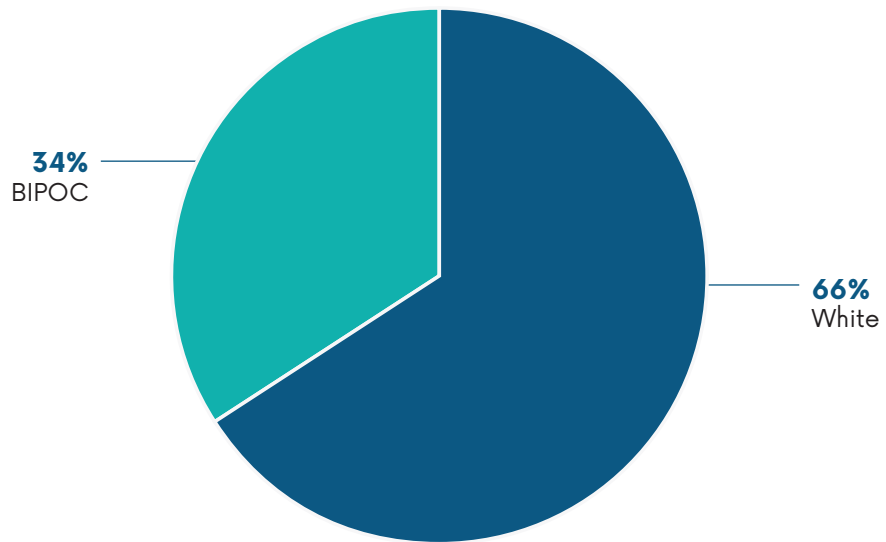
## Race and Ethnic Identification of Global Documentary Professionals<sup>4</sup>

### GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



<sup>4</sup> The race and ethnicity question was asked in a “select all that apply” format to accommodate individuals who identified in multiple ways. All responses selected are reflected in the race and ethnicity chart, resulting in the pie total exceeding 100%. The 66% reflects the total number of respondents who selected “White, Caucasian, or European American” (n=533). Only 66% of respondents were classified as “White” (n=526) for the collapsed binary chart because individuals who selected White along with other racial and ethnic categories were coded as BIPOC. Similarly, the percentage placed in the BIPOC category (34%) may appear smaller than expected based on the race and ethnicity table because individuals with multiple BIPOC identities were counted as one BIPOC individual. The binary variable was used for all cross-tabulations.

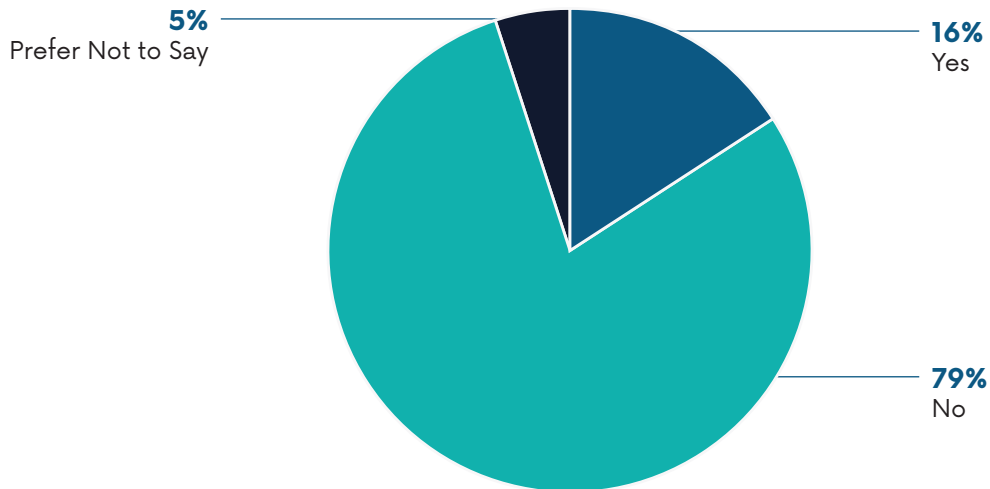
**BIPOC and White: All Global Documentary Respondents**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



## Disability Identification of Global Documentary Respondents

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

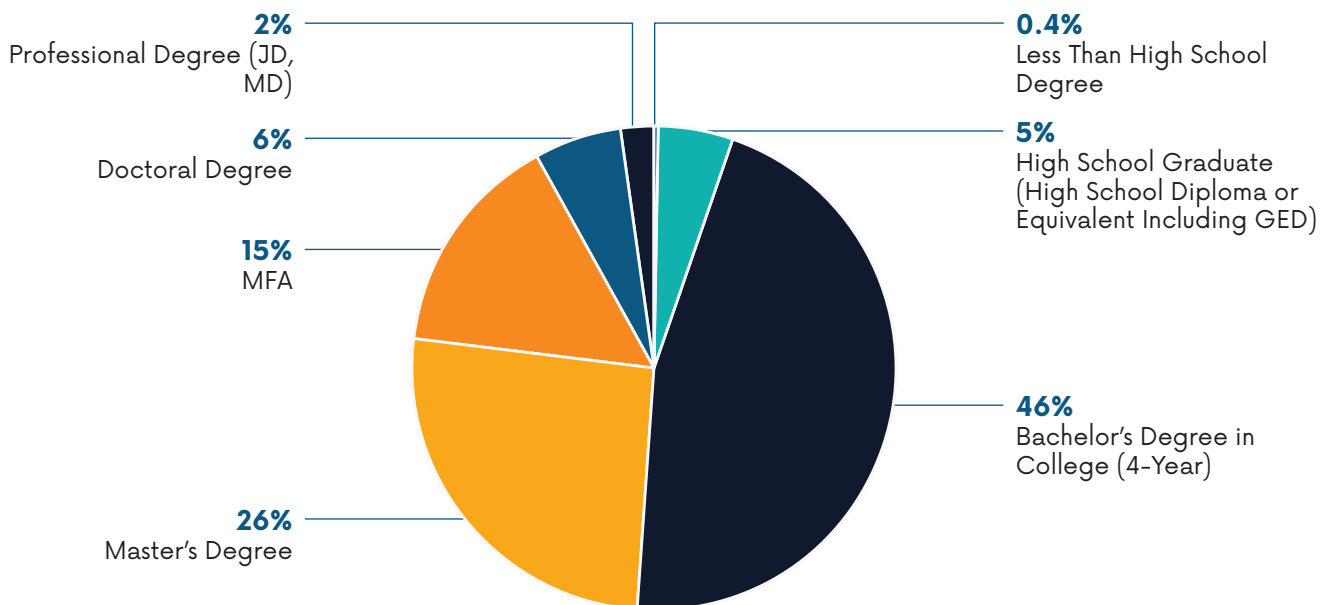
Do you identify as a person with a disability?



## Education of Global Documentary Respondents

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

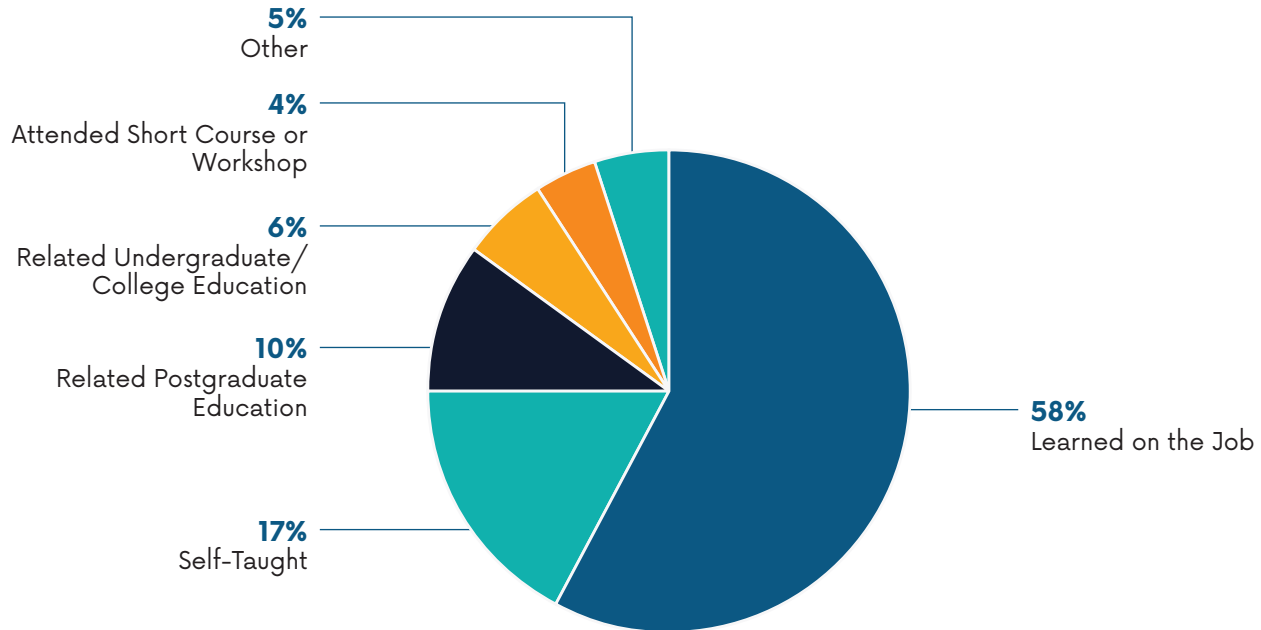
What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?



## Most Valuable Job Training in Documentary

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

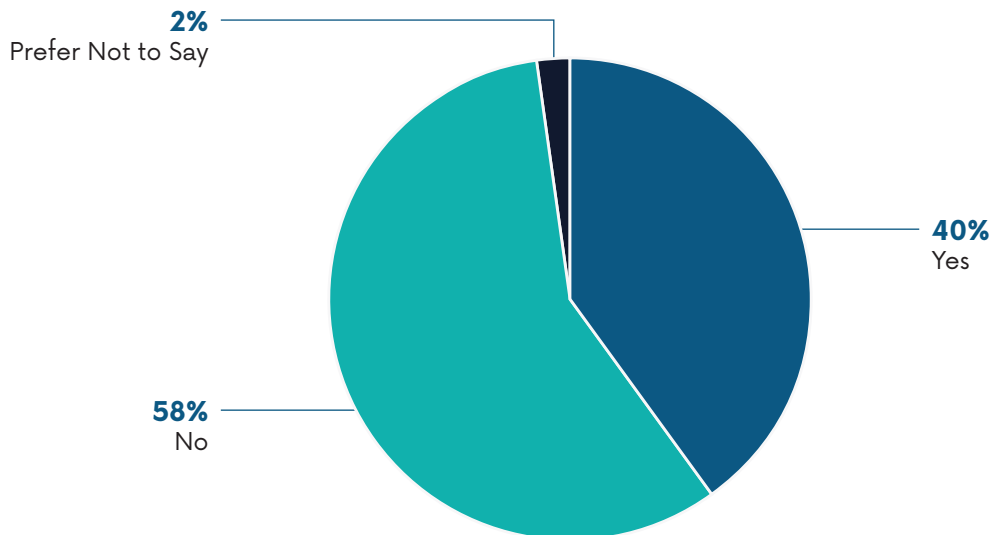
How would you describe your MOST valuable job training in documentary?



## Caregivers to Adults

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

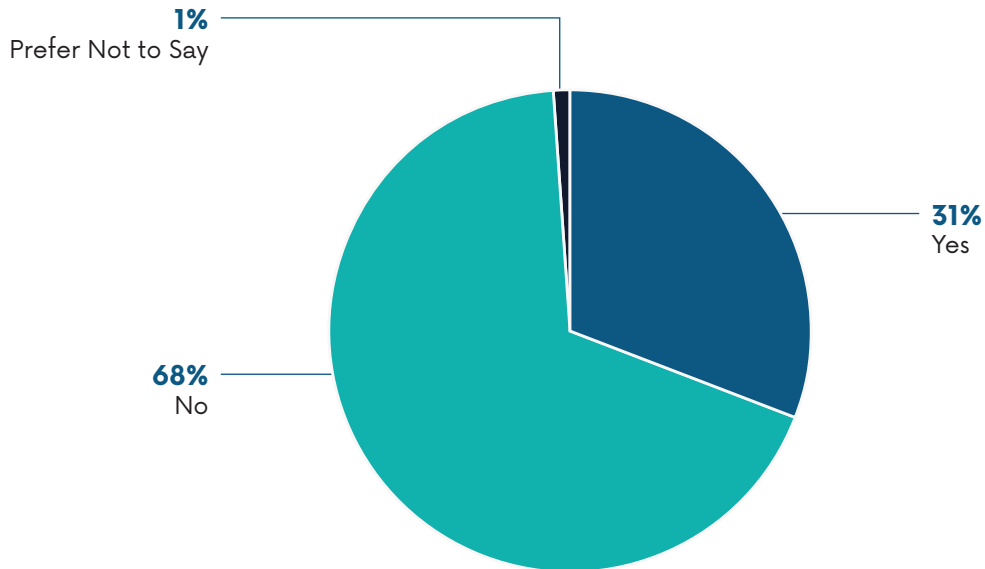
In the last 12 months, have you provided unpaid care to a relative or friend 18 years or older to help them take care of themselves?



## Caregivers to Children Under 18

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

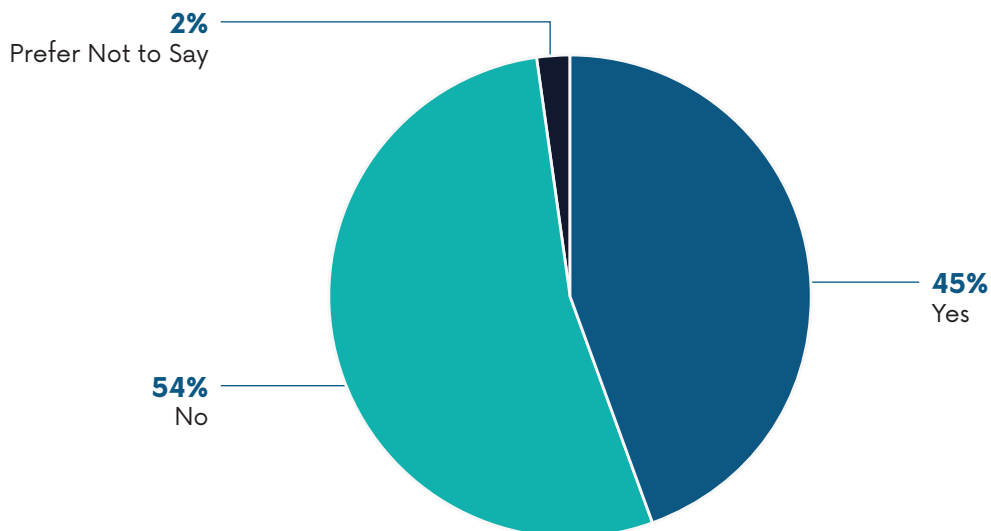
In the last 12 months, have you provided unpaid care to a relative or friend under the age of 18 to help them take care of themselves?



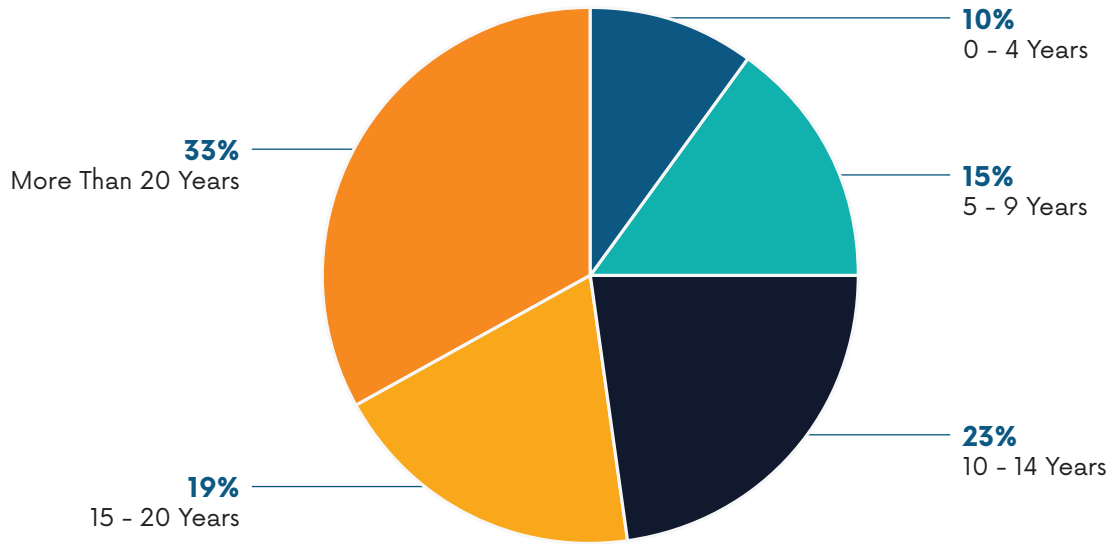
## Household Wage Earner Support

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Does another person in your household work for a salary or wage that helps to support you financially?

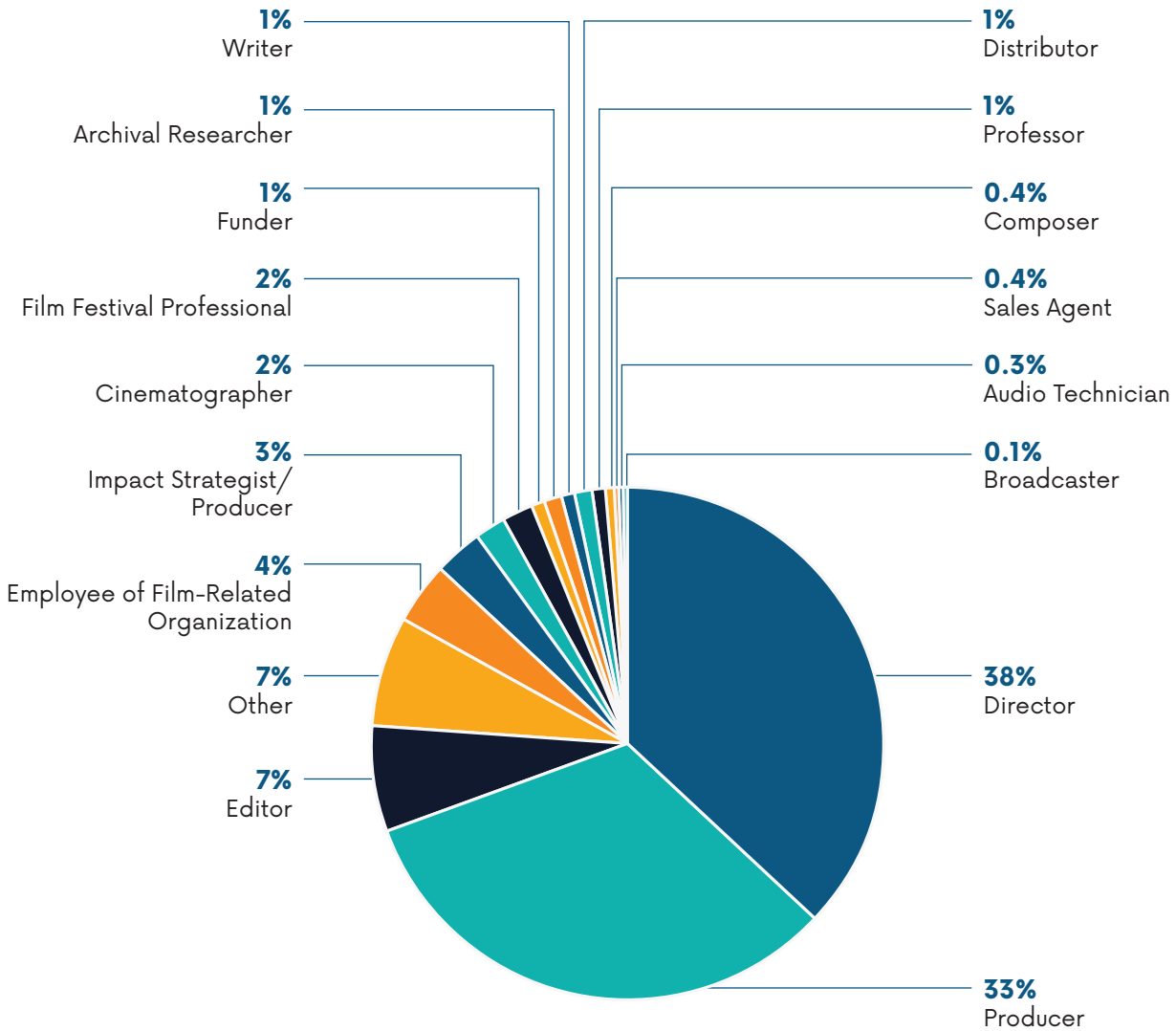


**How many years have you worked in the documentary field?**



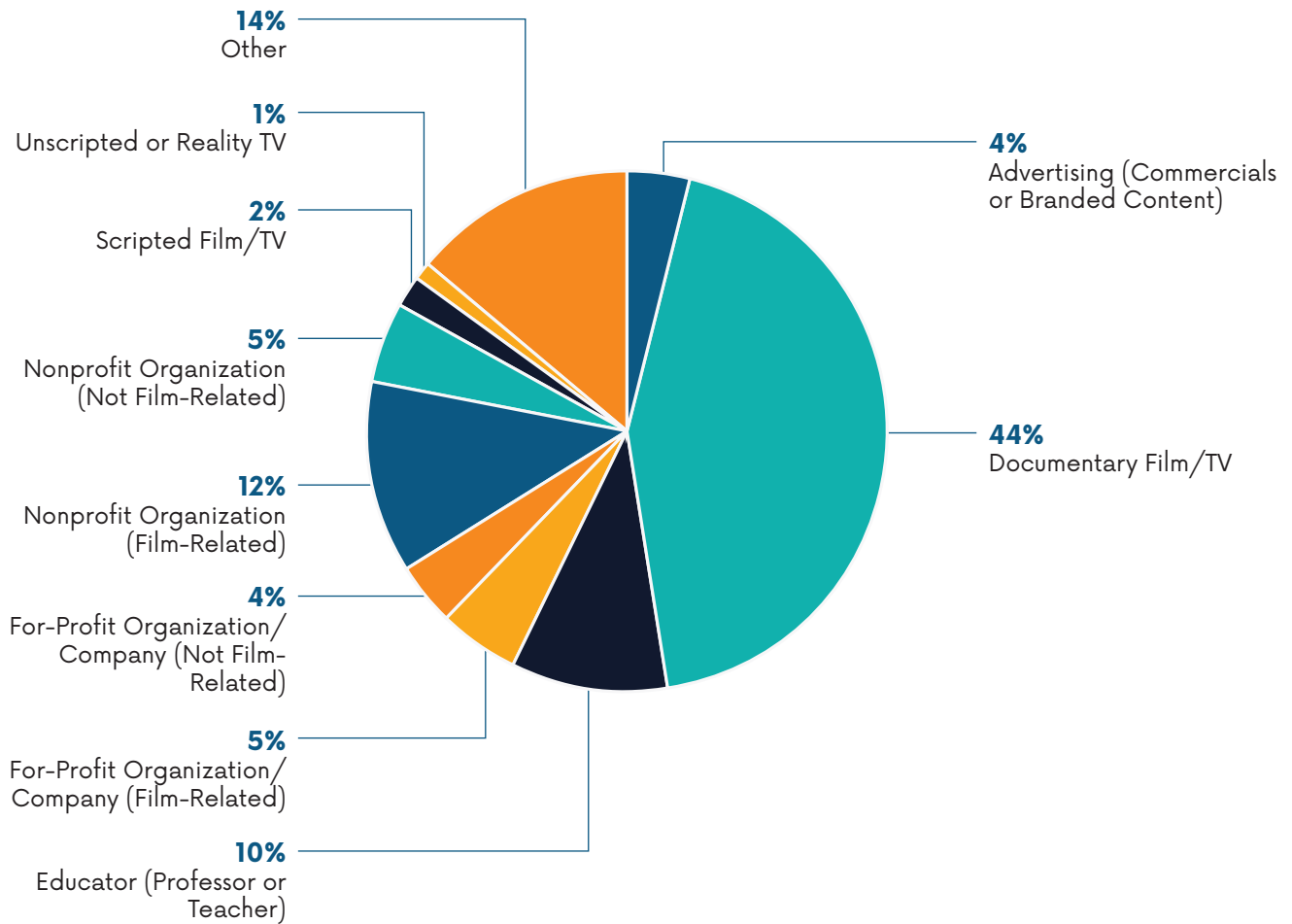
**Primary Positions in the Documentary Field**  
**GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**In documentary, which category describes your primary position?**



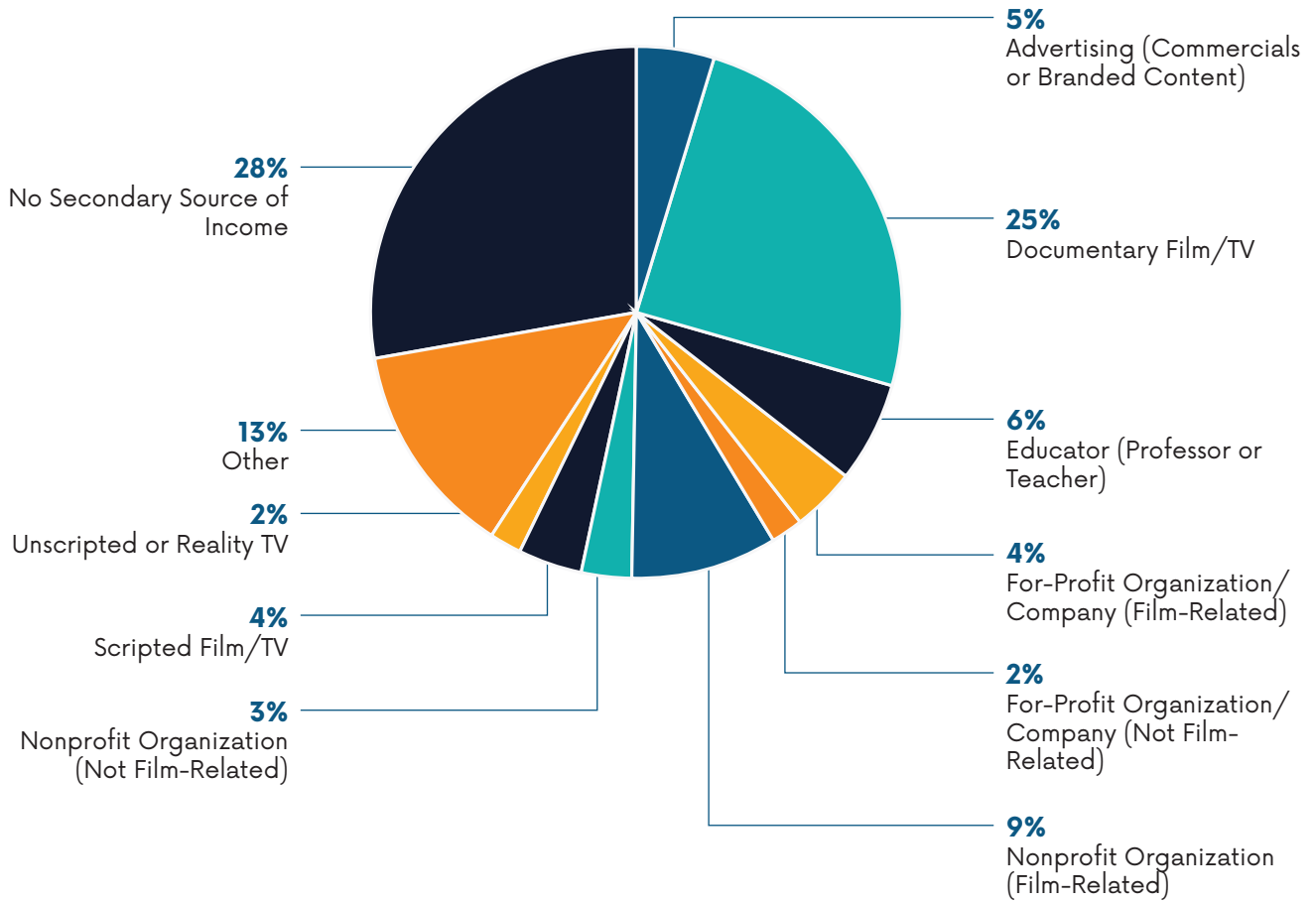
## Primary Source of Income GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Which best describes your primary source of personal income?



## Secondary Source of Income GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

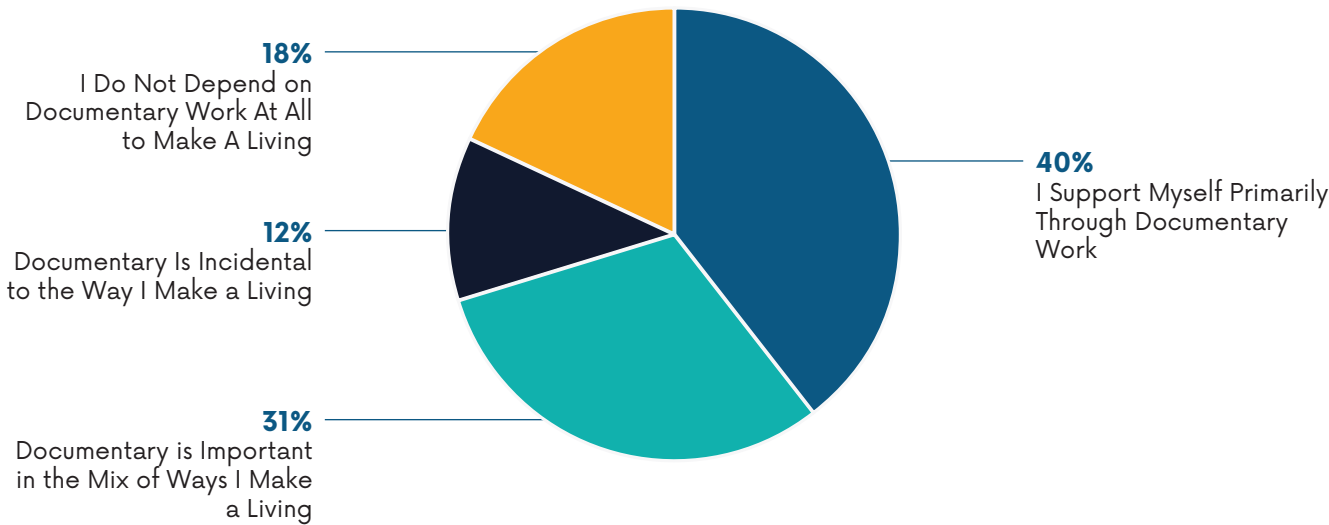
Which best describes your secondary source of personal income?



# GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS: EXPERIENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

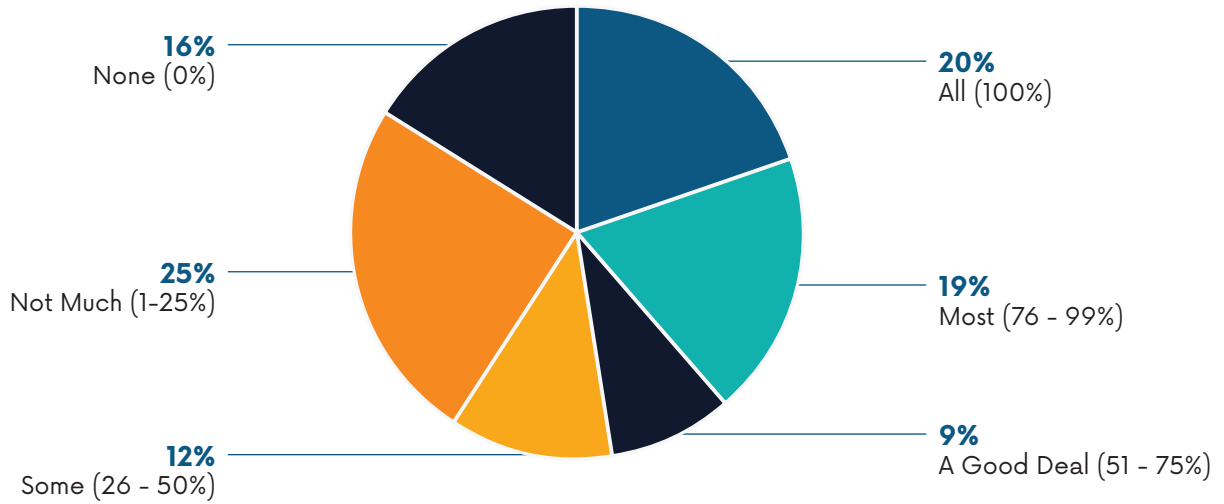
## Importance of Documentary Income to Livelihood GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

How important is income from documentary work to your livelihood (including contract work and technical services)?



## Percentage of Gross Annual Income from Documentary GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

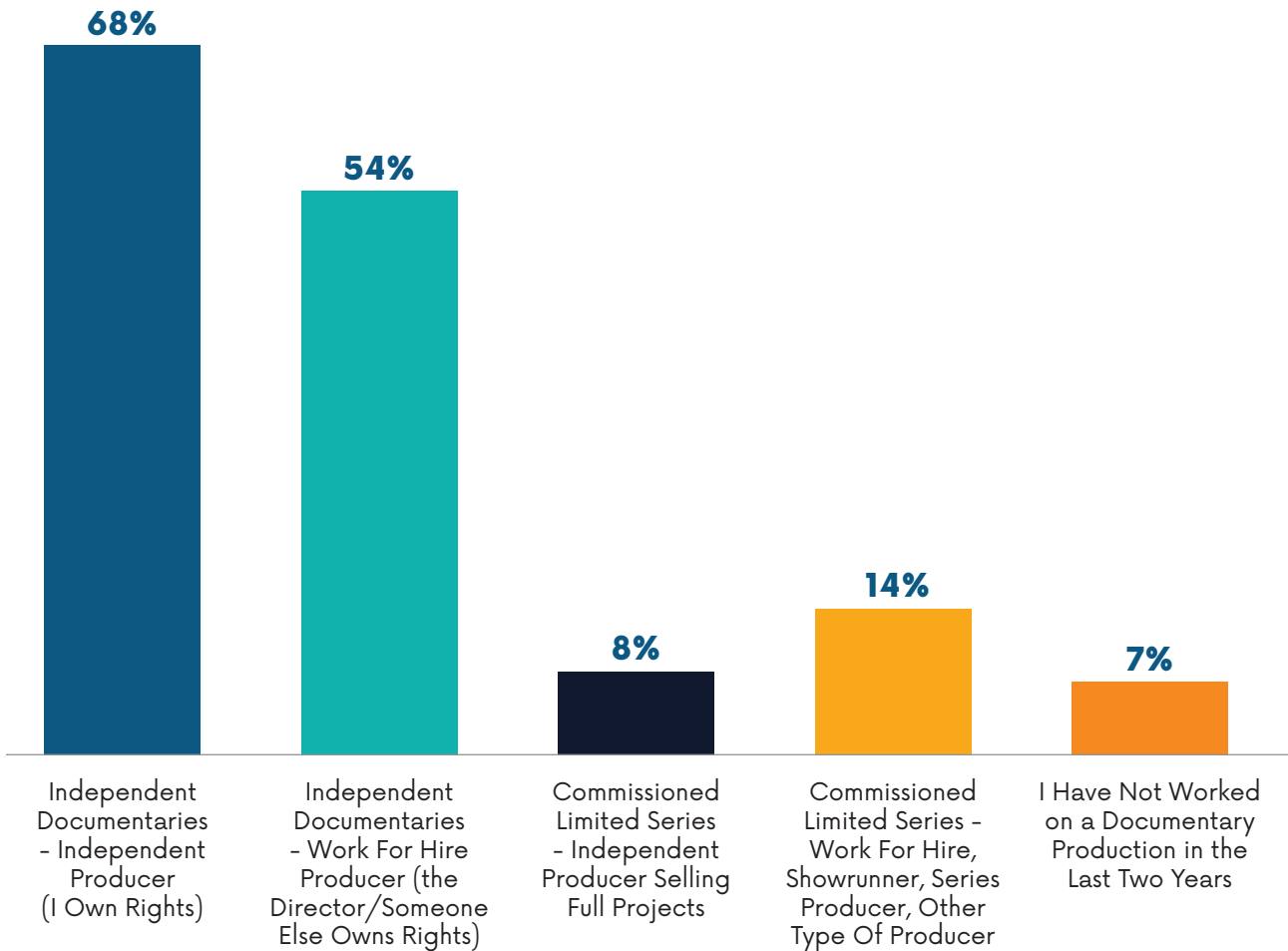
Over the last year, what percentage of your personal gross income came from documentary work, as an estimate?



## Types of Recent Documentaries

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

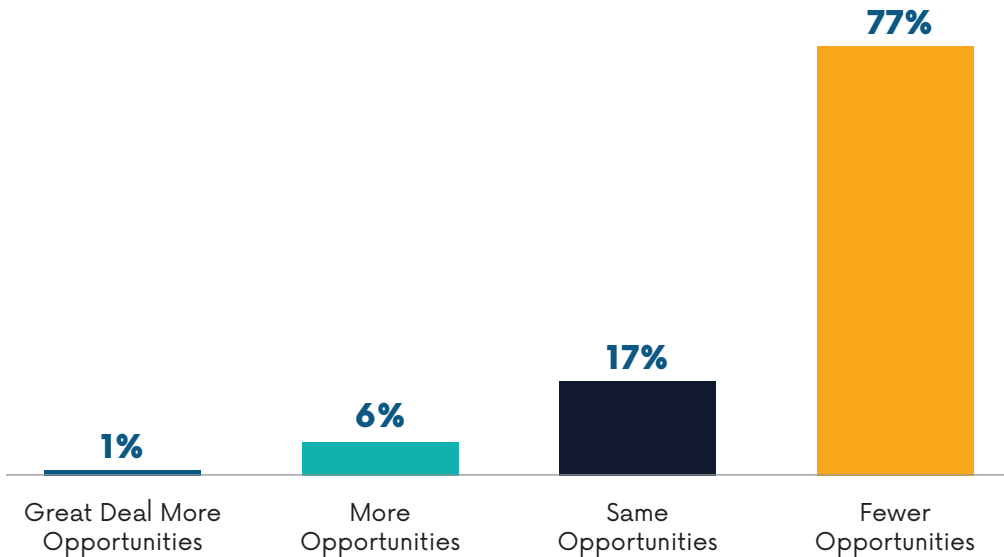
What kinds of documentary productions have you worked on within the last two years?  
[Select all that apply.]



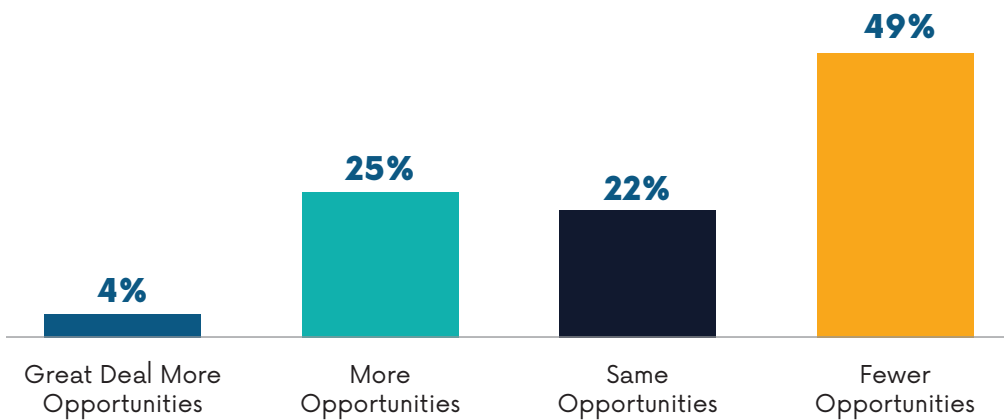
**Perceptions About Documentary Opportunities (past 2 years)**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



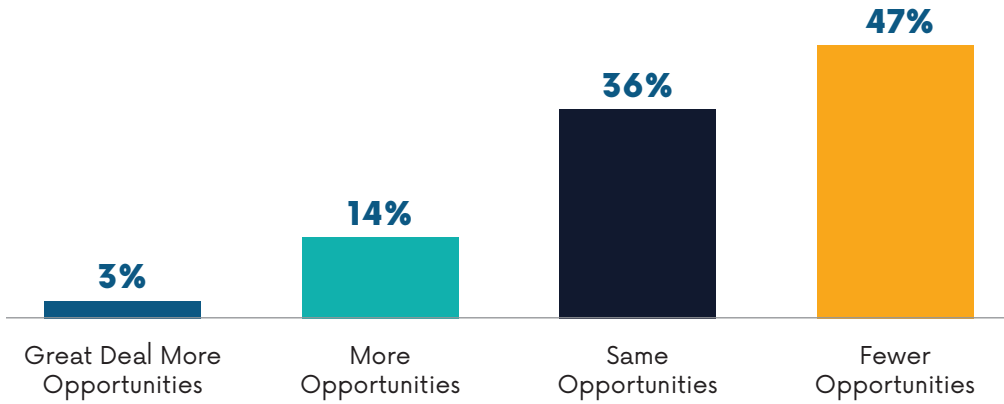
Which statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for documentary makers and professionals, over the past two years?



Which statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for documentary makers and professionals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, over the past two years?

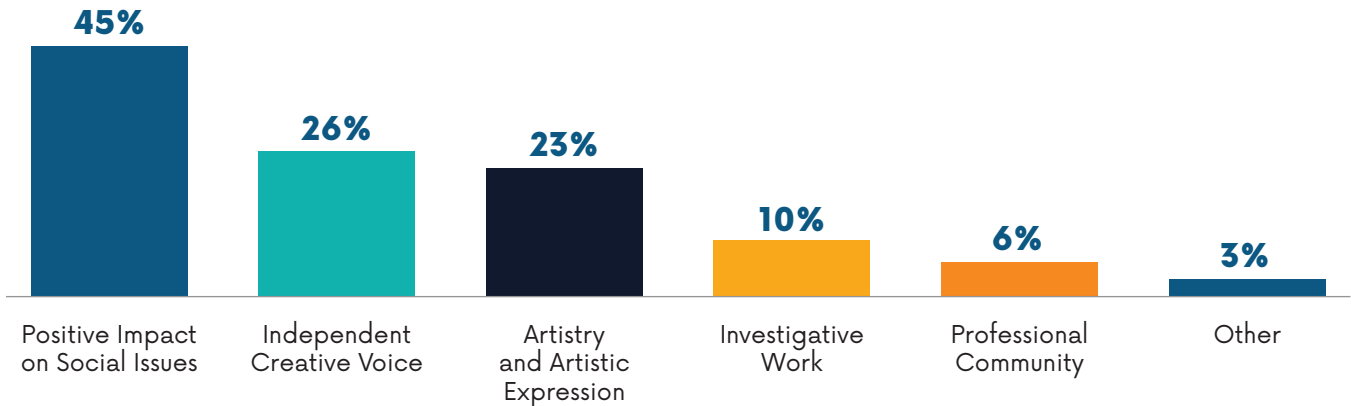


Which statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for documentary makers and professionals for women-identifying documentary makers and professionals, over the past two years?



**Most Meaningful Part of Documentary Work**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What is it about documentary work that you find most meaningful?

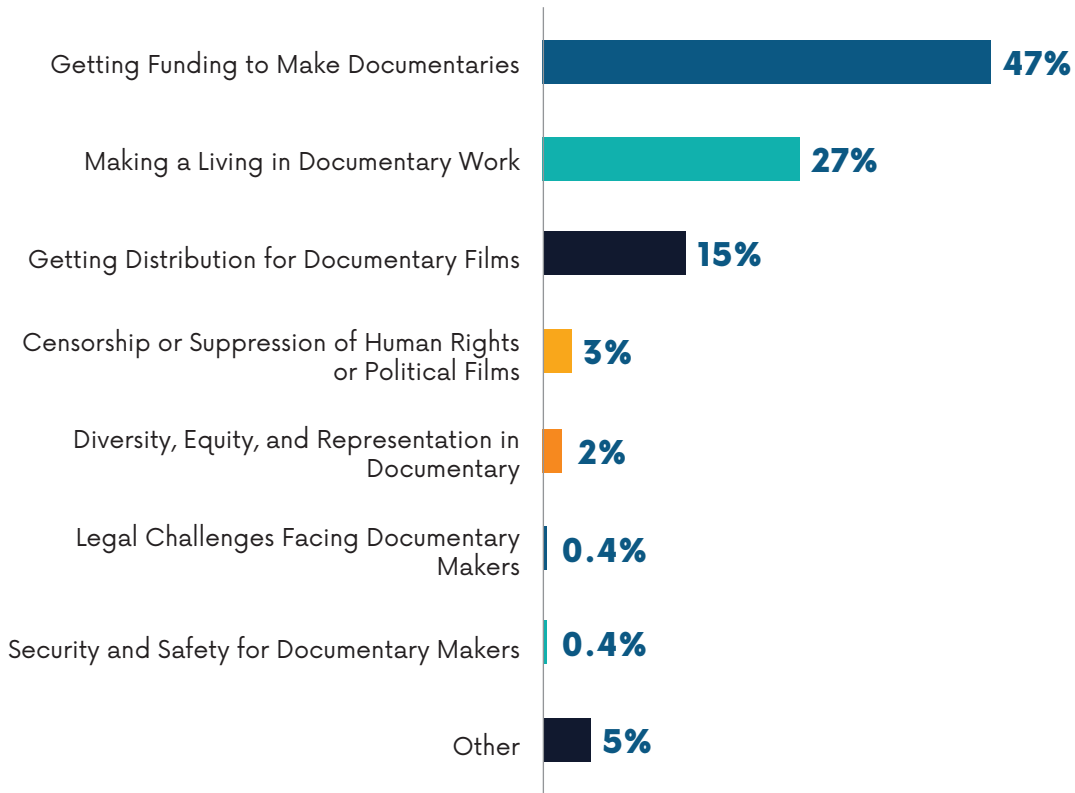


## Greatest Challenges Facing Documentary Today

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

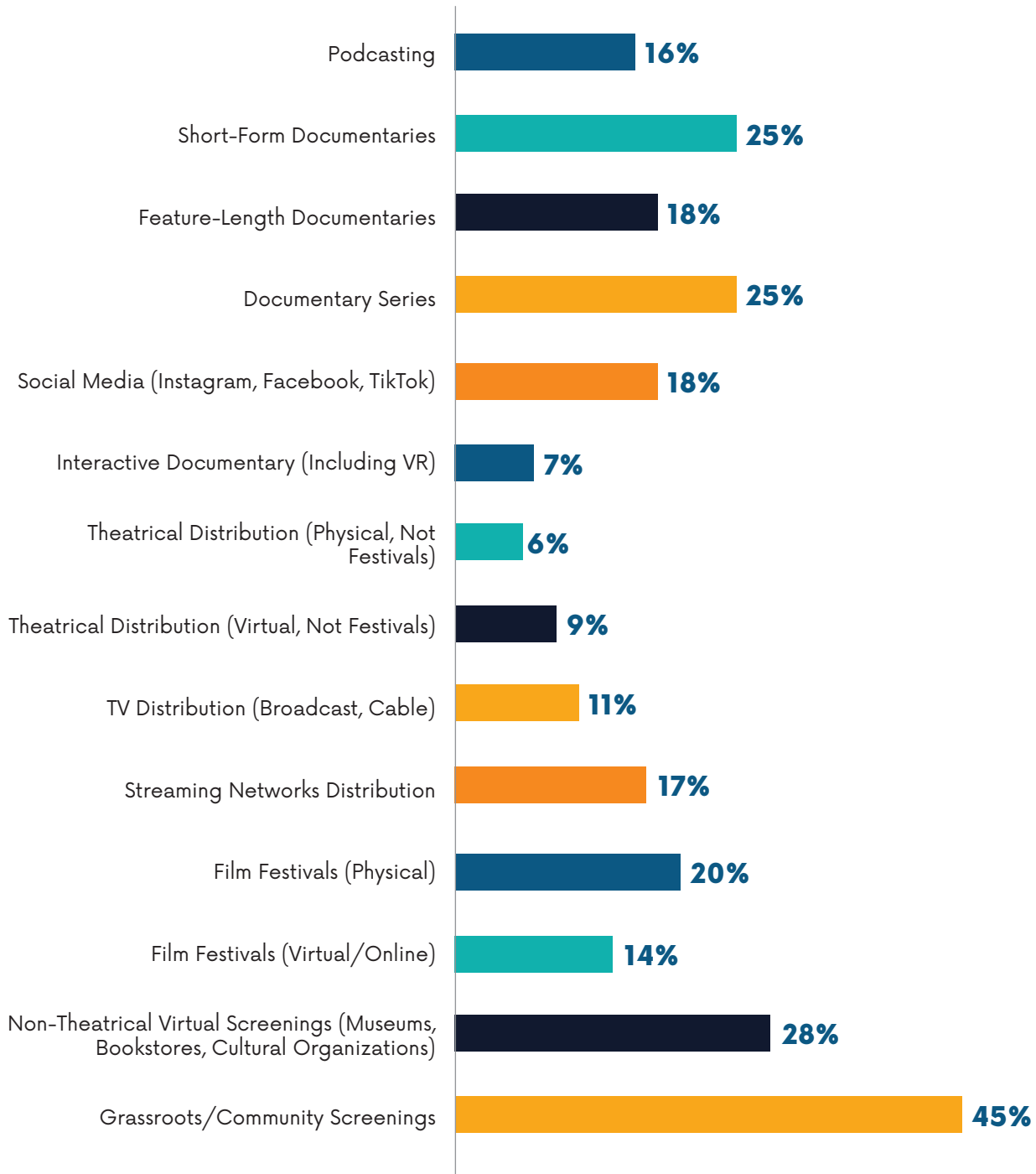


### What is the greatest challenge facing the documentary field today?



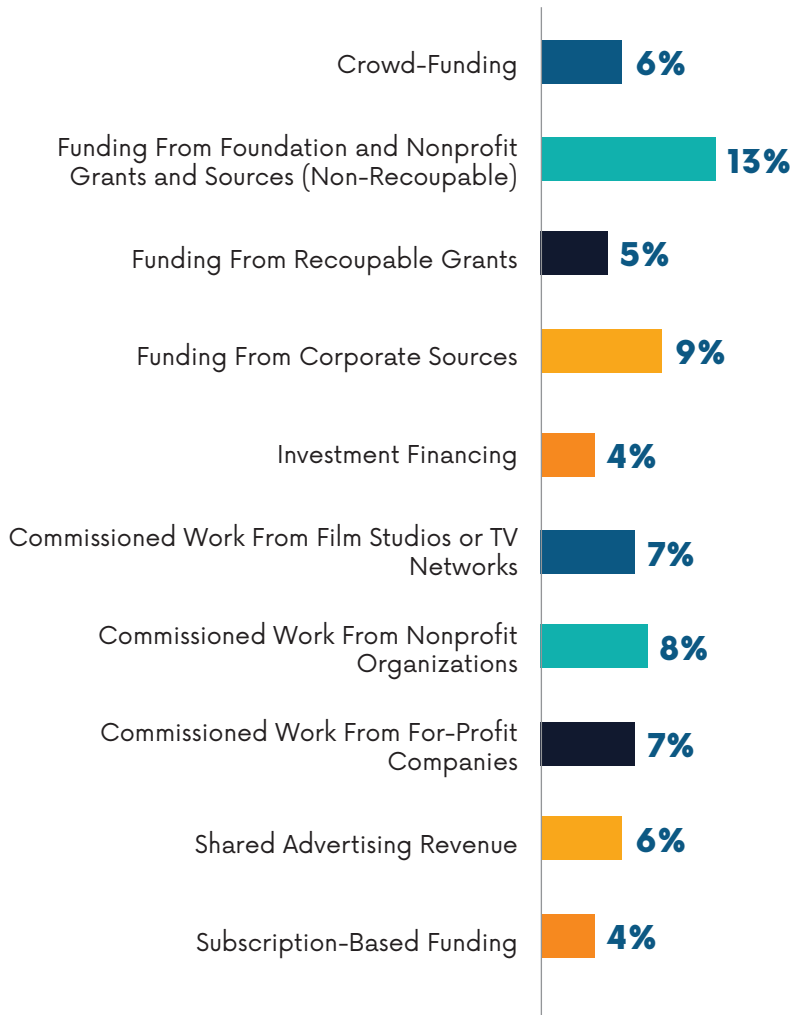
**Format and Distribution: Perceptions of Greatest Future Opportunity**  
**GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**In terms of format and distribution, to what extent do you feel these offer positive future opportunities for documentary? (% who said "a great opportunity.")**



## Perceptions of Greatest Future Economic Opportunity GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

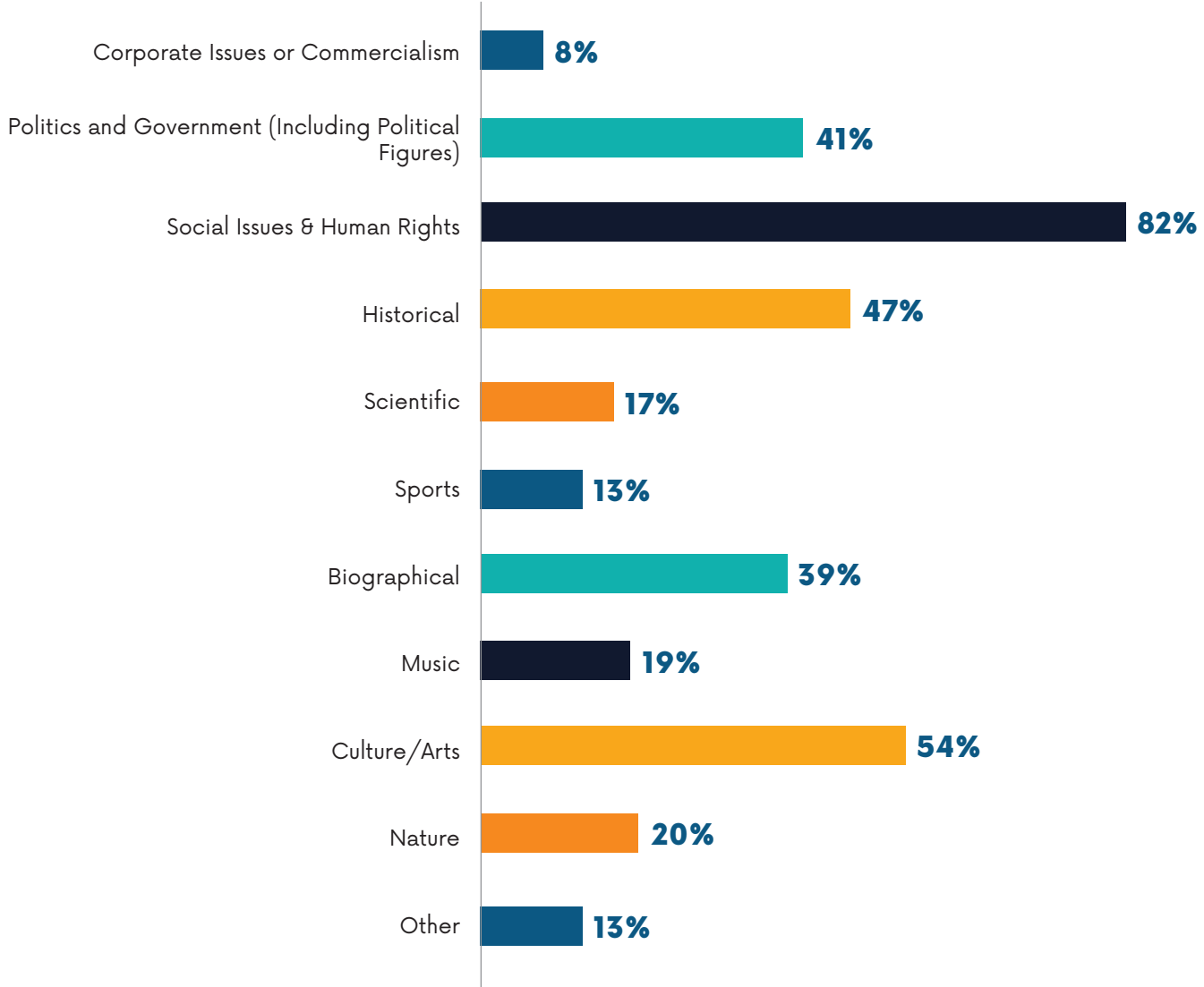
In terms of economics, to what extent do you feel these areas offer positive future opportunities for documentary? (% who said "a great opportunity.")



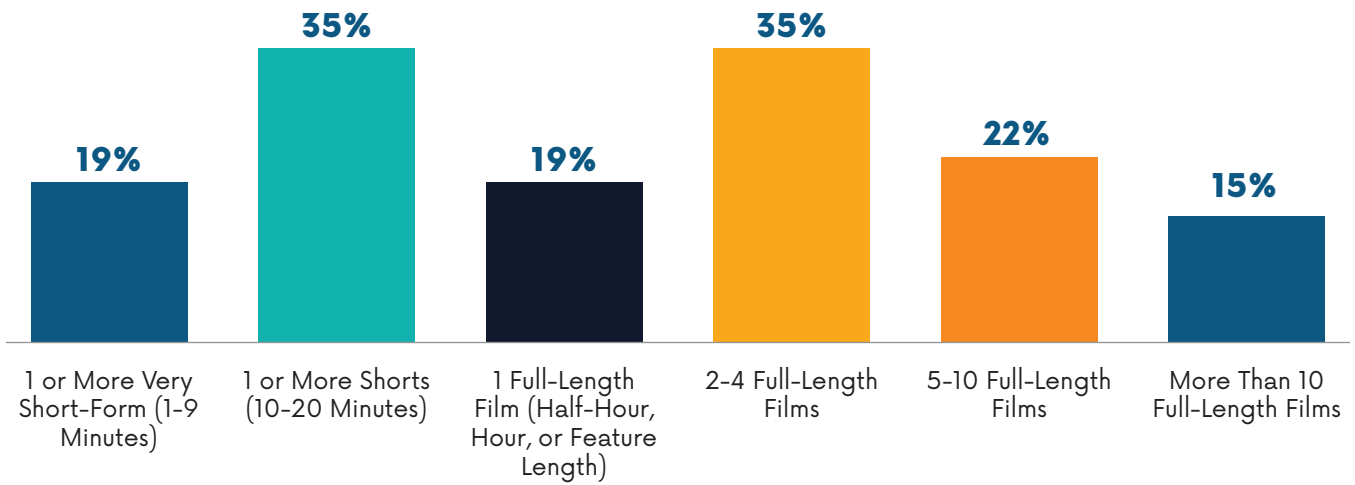
# GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY MAKERS (DIRECTORS & PRODUCERS): EXPERIENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

## Documentaries Produced So Far GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What topics have you covered in your films over the past two years? [Select all that apply.]

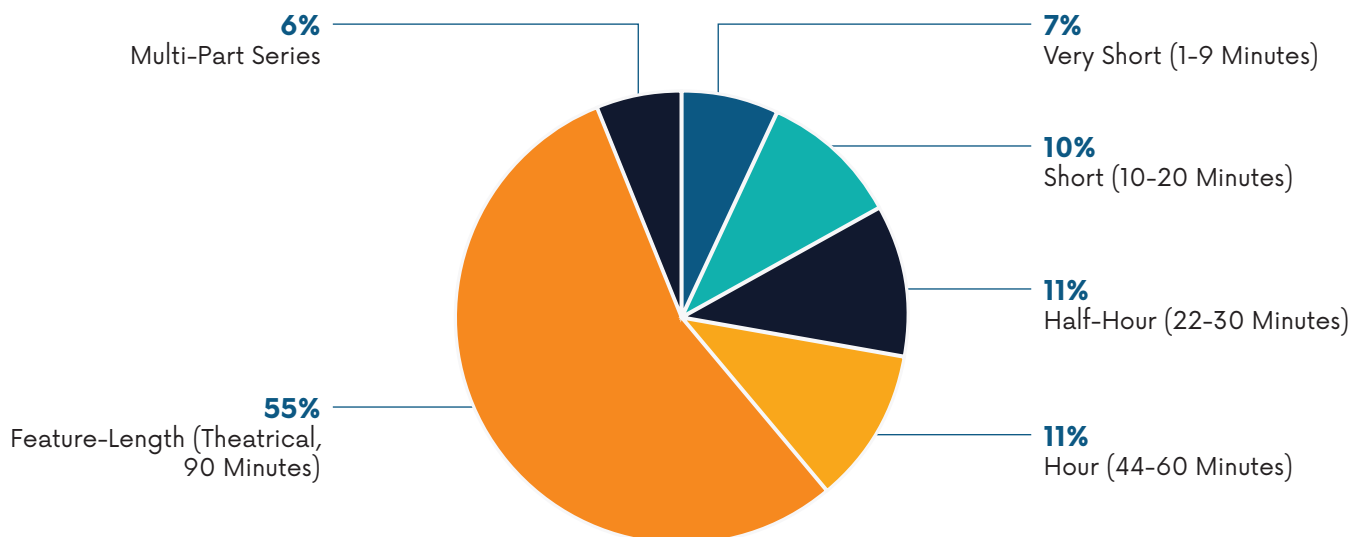


How many documentaries have you made in your career? [Select all that apply.]



**Most Recent Documentary Film Length**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

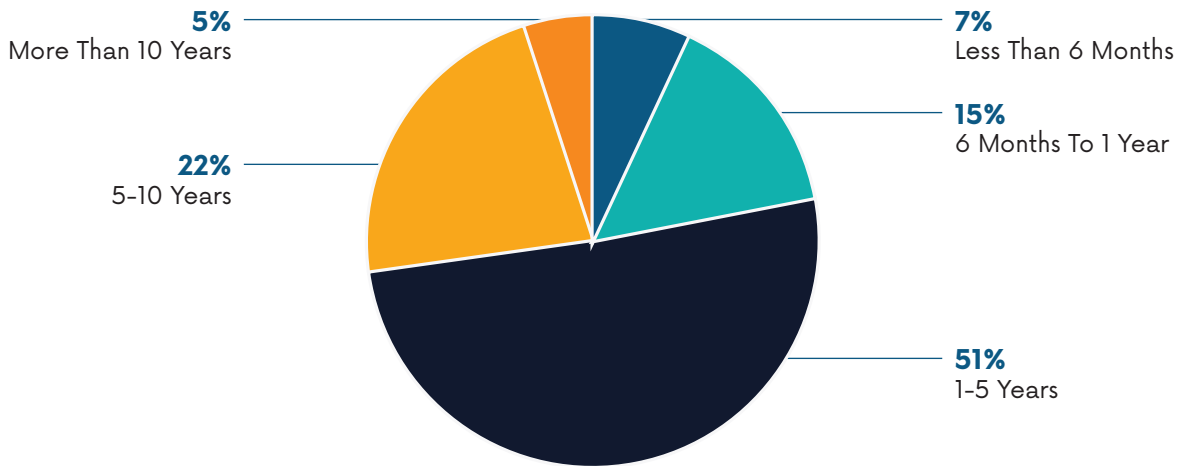
How would you primarily characterize your most recent documentary in terms of length?



## Amount of Time Spent Making Most Recent Documentary

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

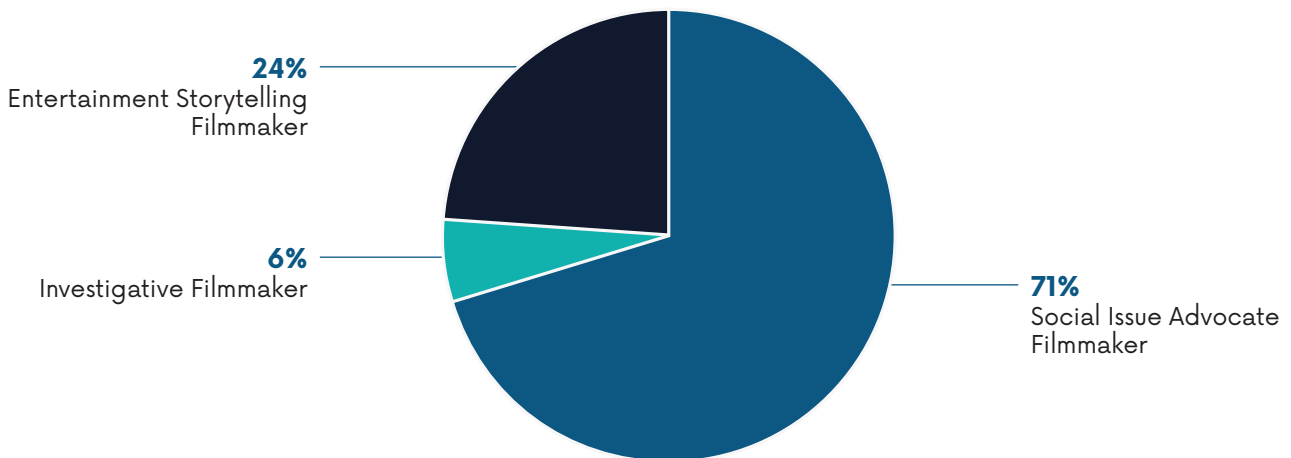
### How long did you work on your most recent documentary, in total? (Makers Only)



## Filmmaker Self-Description: Social Issue or Entertainment

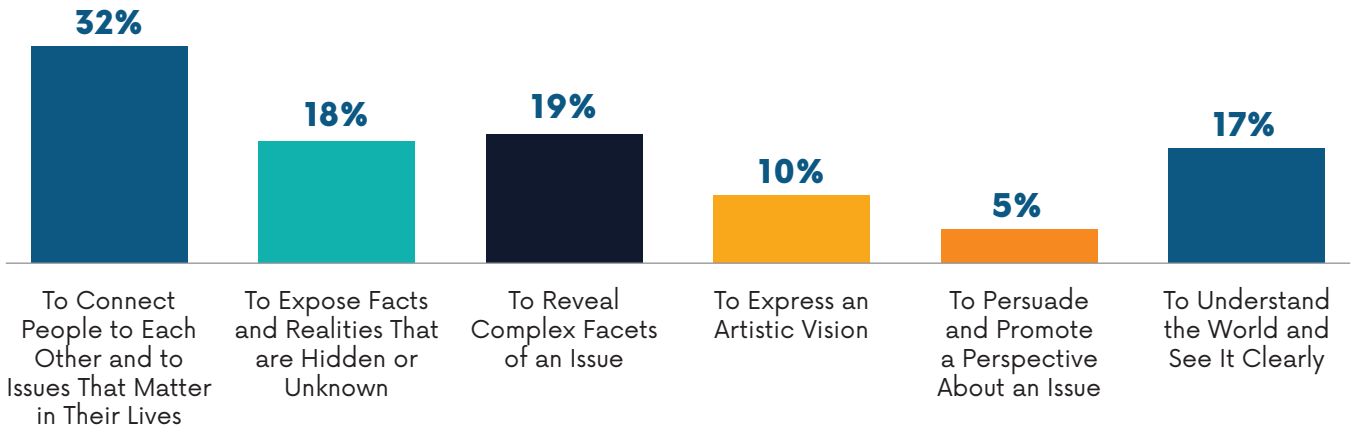
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

### Thinking of yourself as a documentary maker, what primary description would you use of the ones presented here? (Makers Only)





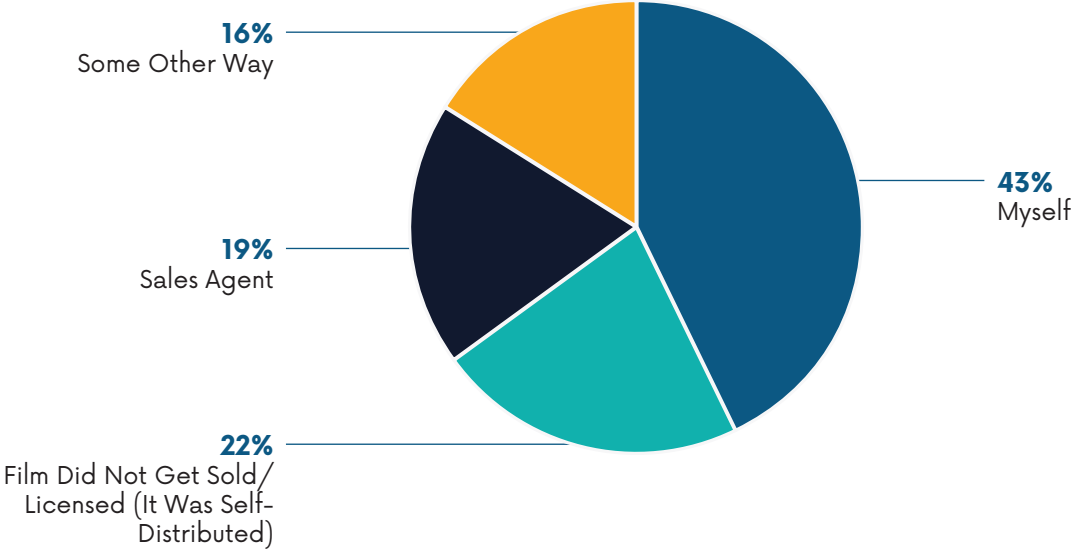
**How would you best characterize your approach as a documentary maker?  
I want: (Makers Only)**



# GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY MAKERS: THE ECONOMICS & DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

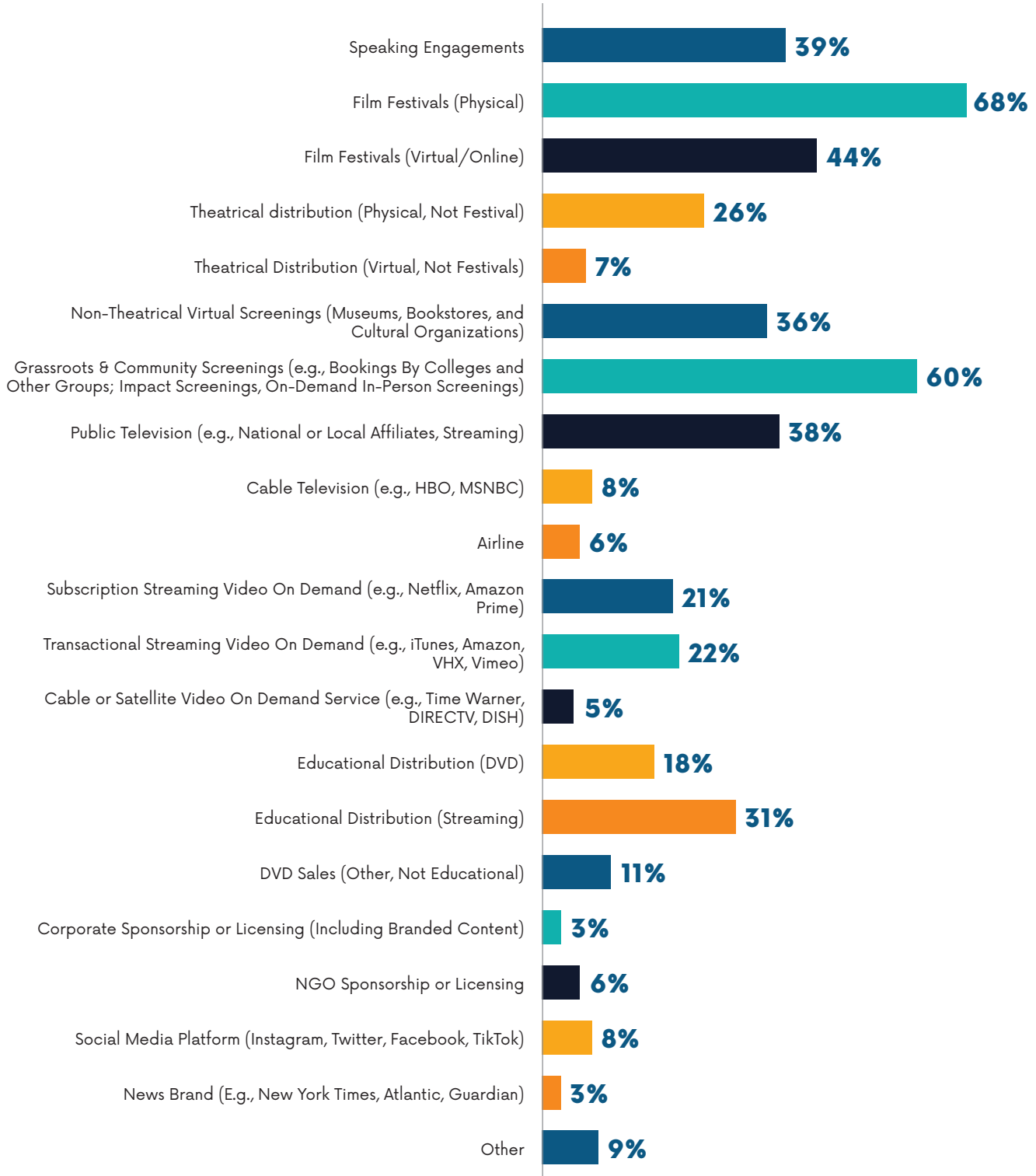
## Film Licensing Experience for Most Recent Film GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Who was responsible for selling or licensing your most recent film to a distributor?  
(Makers Only)

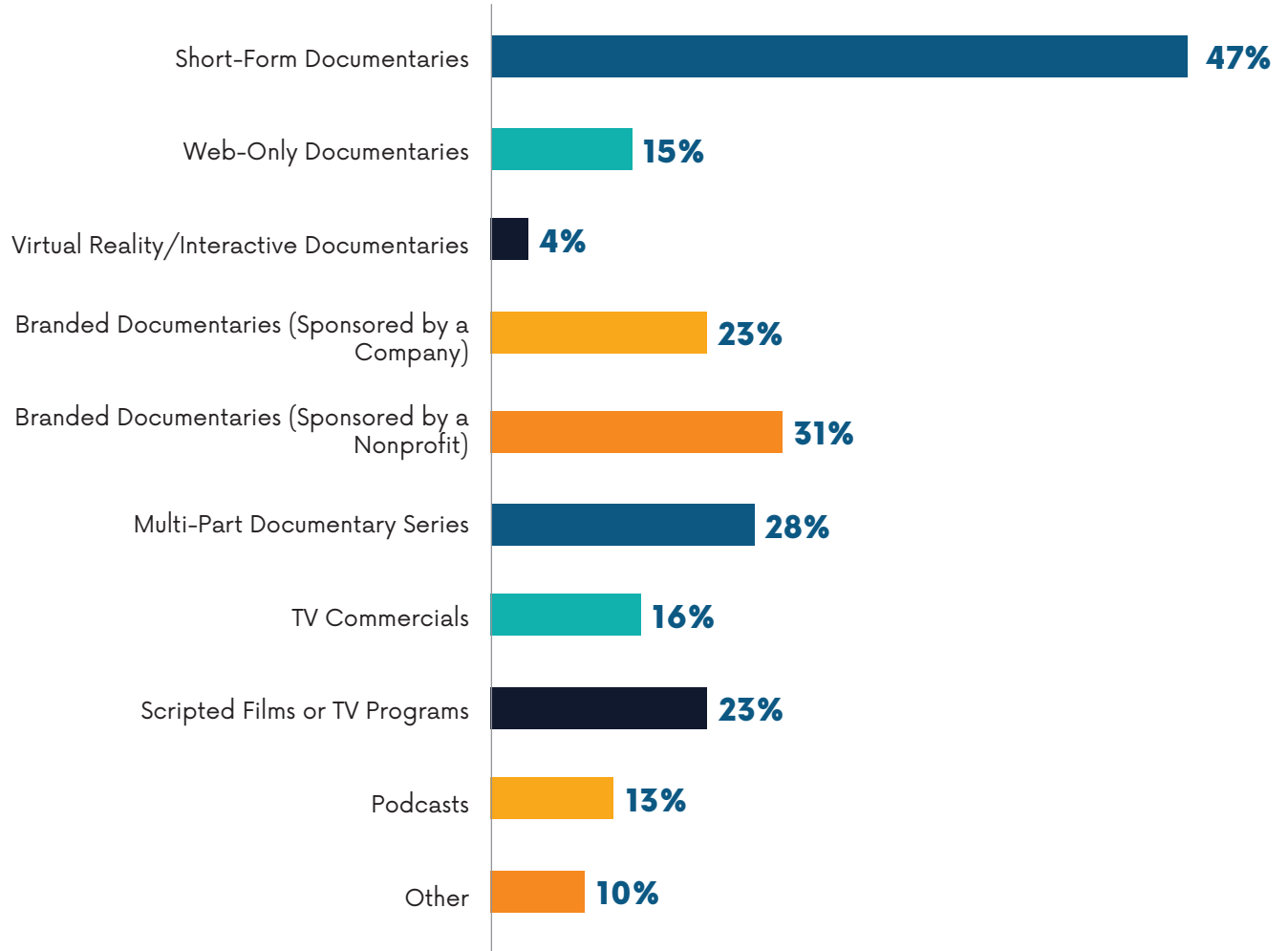


**Distribution for Most Recent Film**  
**GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**How was your most recent documentary distributed? [Select all that apply.] (Makers Only)**

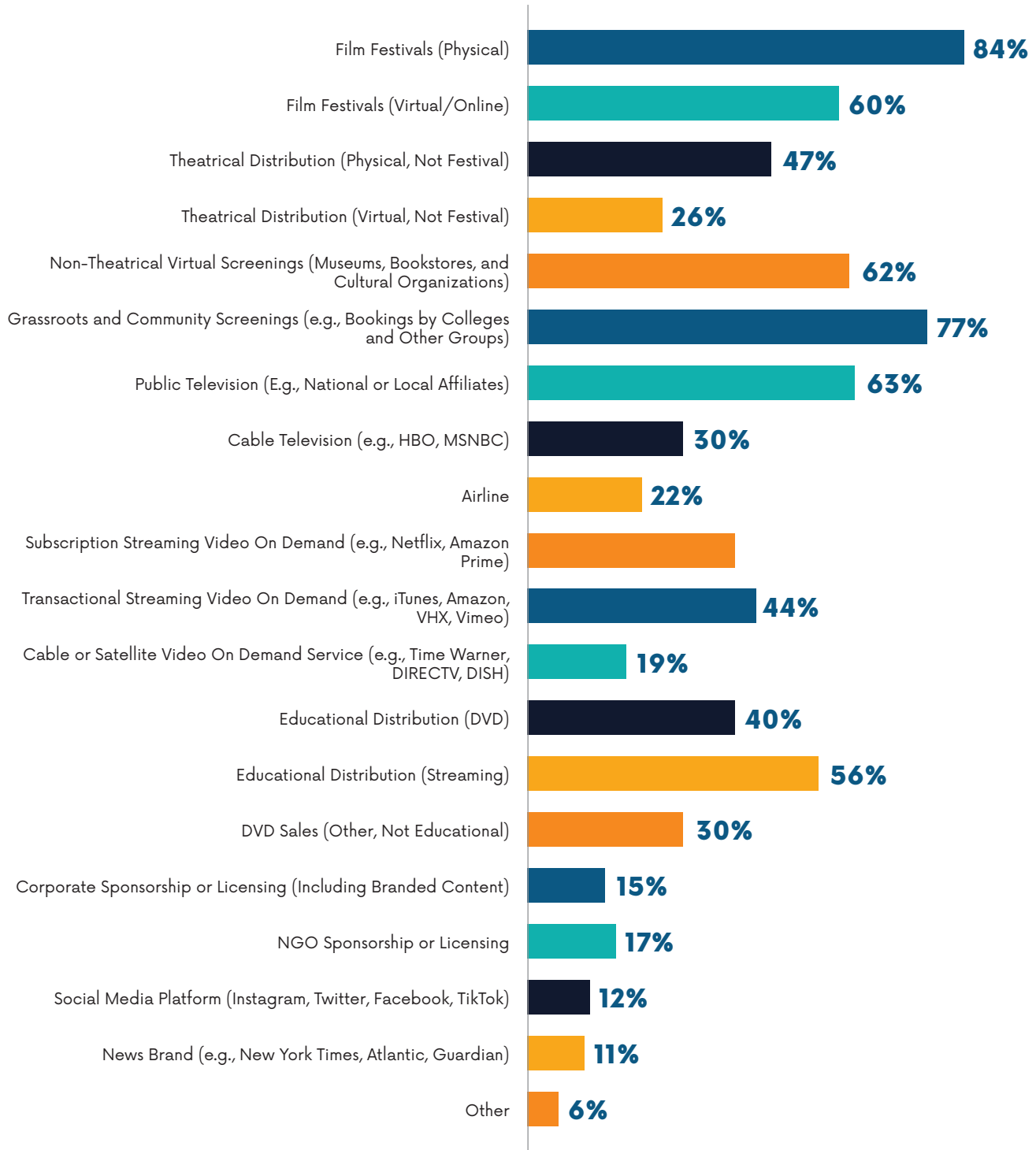


**Which statement reflects your documentary production plans in terms of format? (Makers Only) (% who said "I have produced this already and plan to continue to do so")**



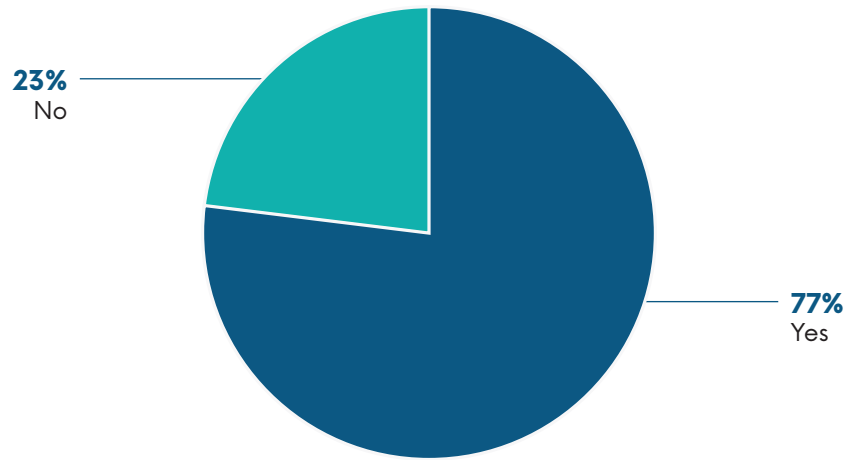
## Distribution Future Plans GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Which statement best reflects your documentary distribution plans for the future?  
(Makers Only) (% who said "I have distributed this way already and hope to do so again")



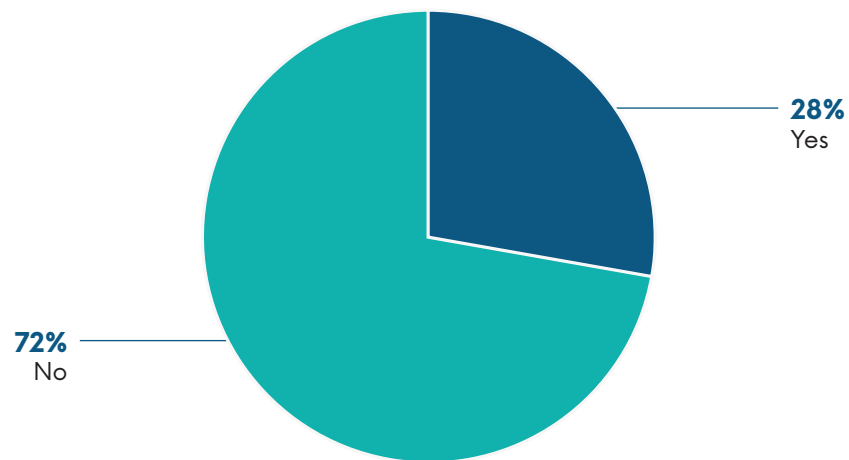
**Community Screenings for Most Recent Film**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Did your most recent film include community screenings as part of your intentional outreach campaign? (Makers Only)**



**Work with Impact Producer for Most Recent Film**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

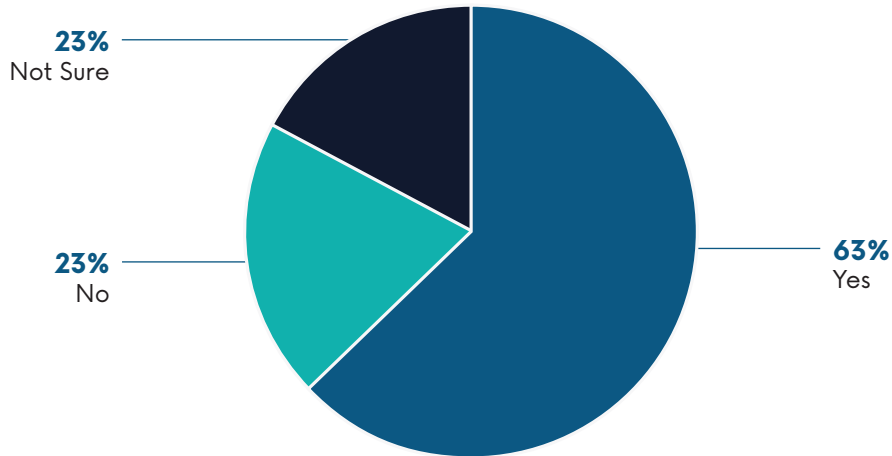
**Did you work with an impact producer or public engagement consultant on your most recent film? (Makers Only)**



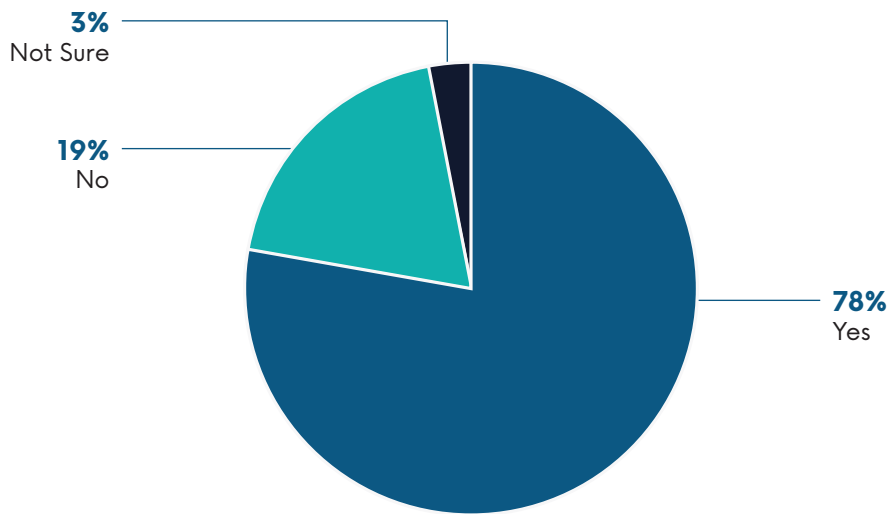
**Leveraging Fair Use in Most Recent Film**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



Fair use is the right to use copyrighted material without permission or payment when you are repurposing material and using an appropriate amount for your new purpose. Does this match your understanding of fair use?

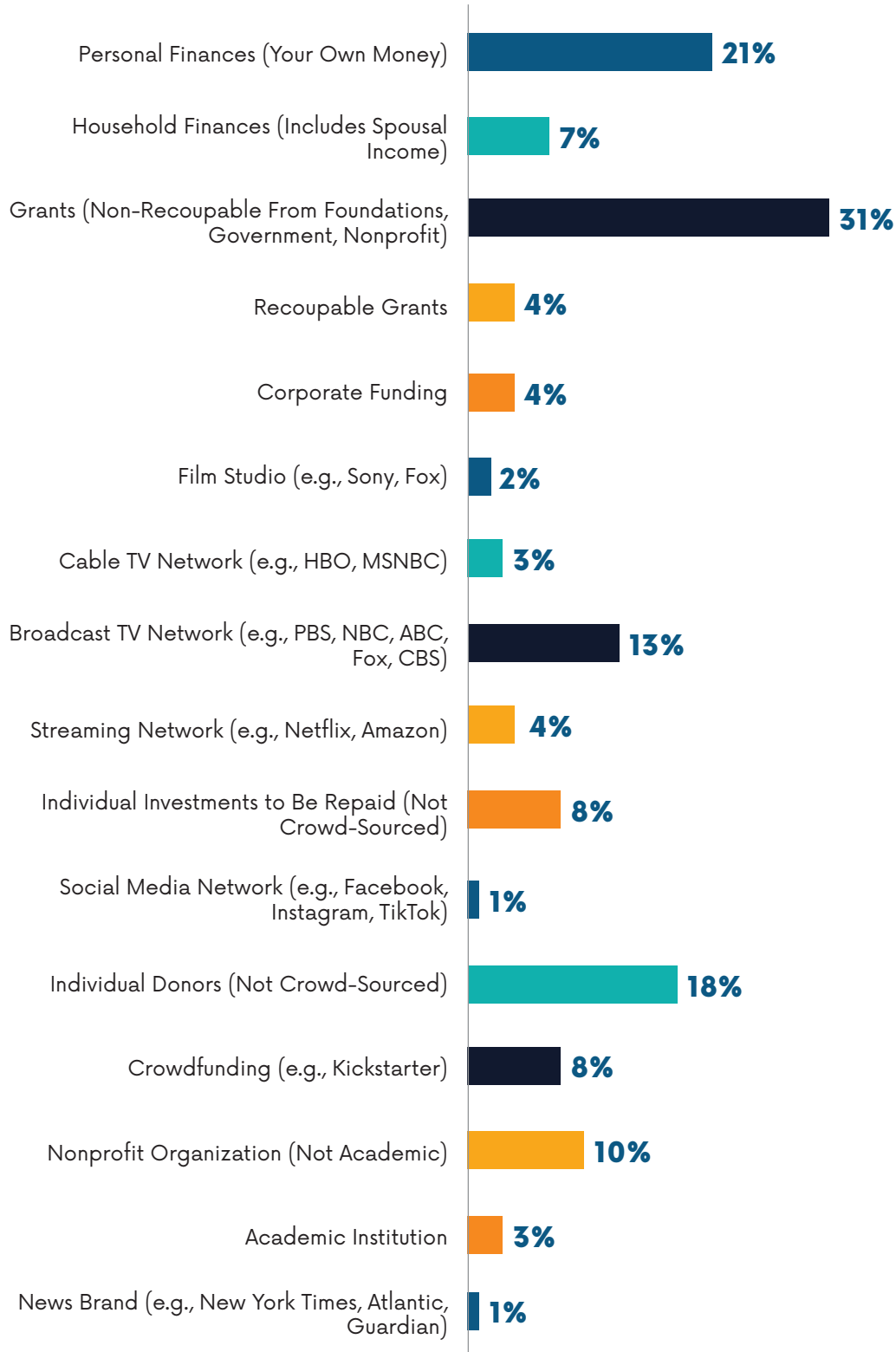


Have you used fair use in any of your last three documentaries? (Makers Only)



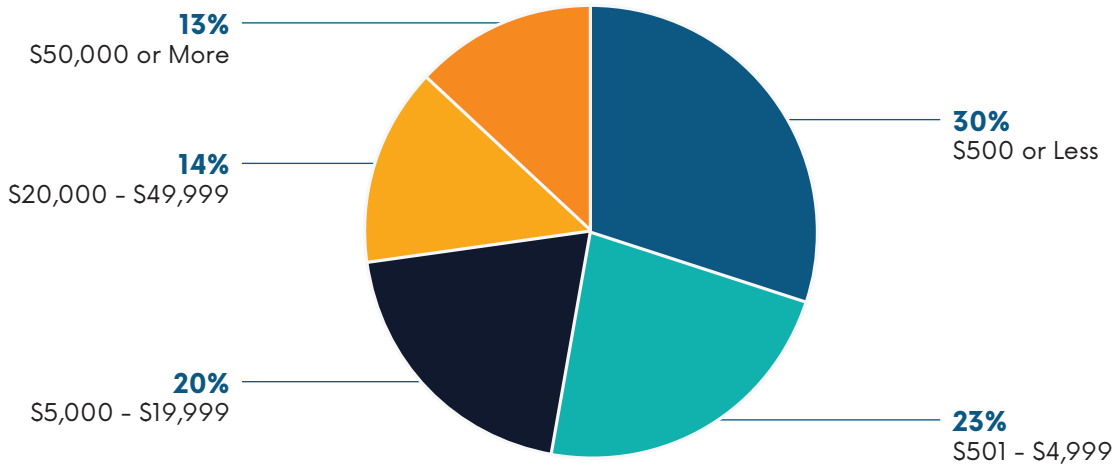
**Main Source of Funding for Most Recent Film**  
**GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**How would you characterize each source of funding to produce your most recent documentary? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of funding")**



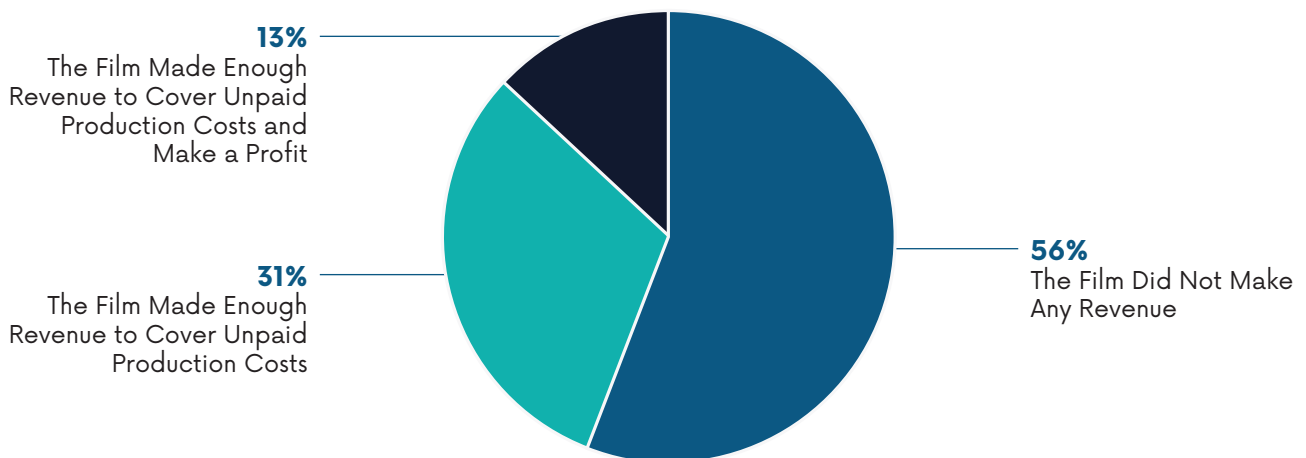
**Amount of Personal Money Spent Making Most Recent Film**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**How much of your own money did you spend on your most recent documentary project? (U.S. dollars) (Makers Only)**



**Revenue from Most Recent Documentary**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

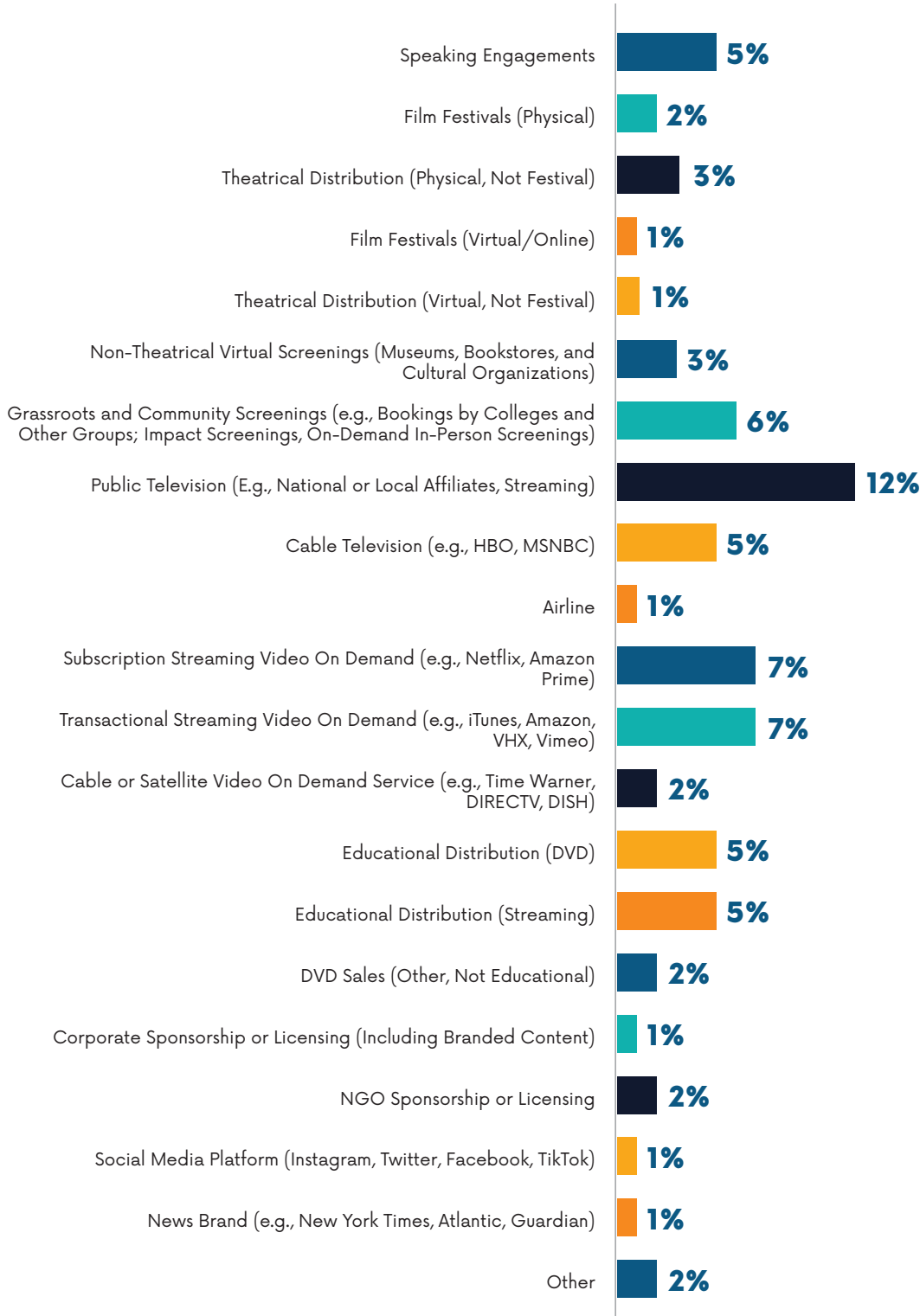
**Describe the amount of revenue from your most recent documentary project? (Makers Only)**



## Main Revenue Source from Most Recent Documentary

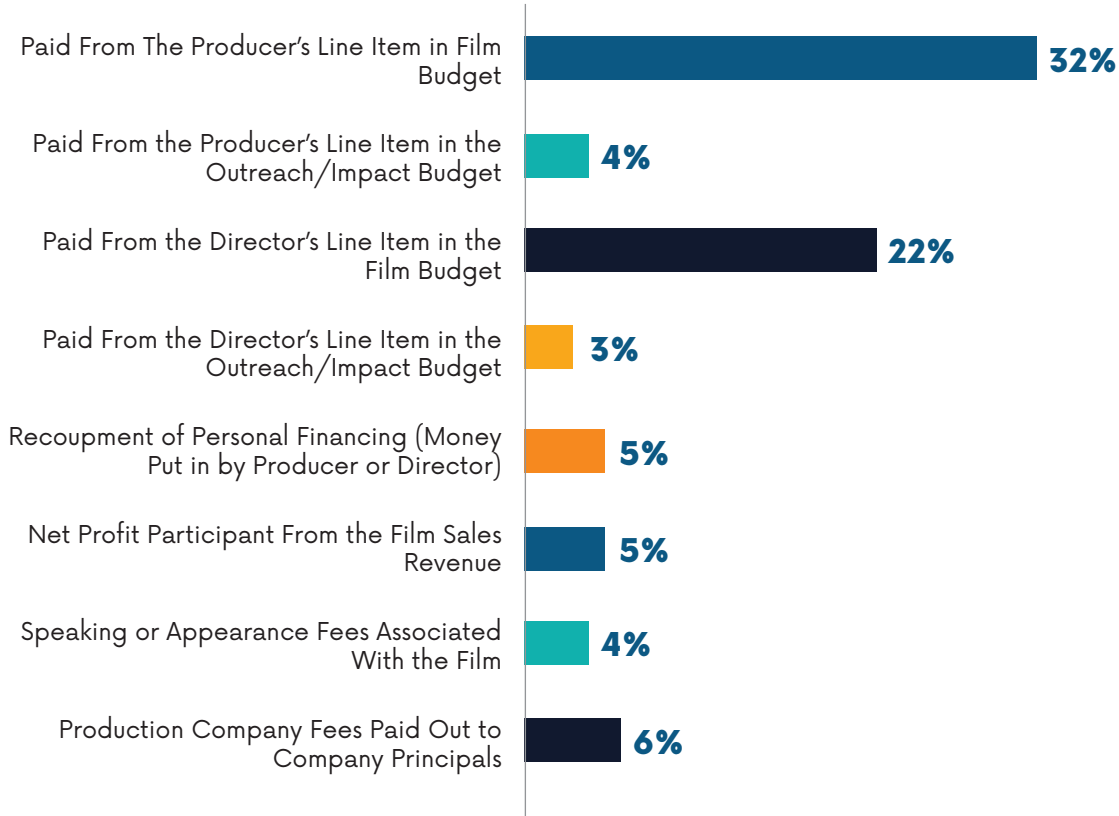
### GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

How would you characterize each source of revenue made from your most recent documentary project? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of revenue")



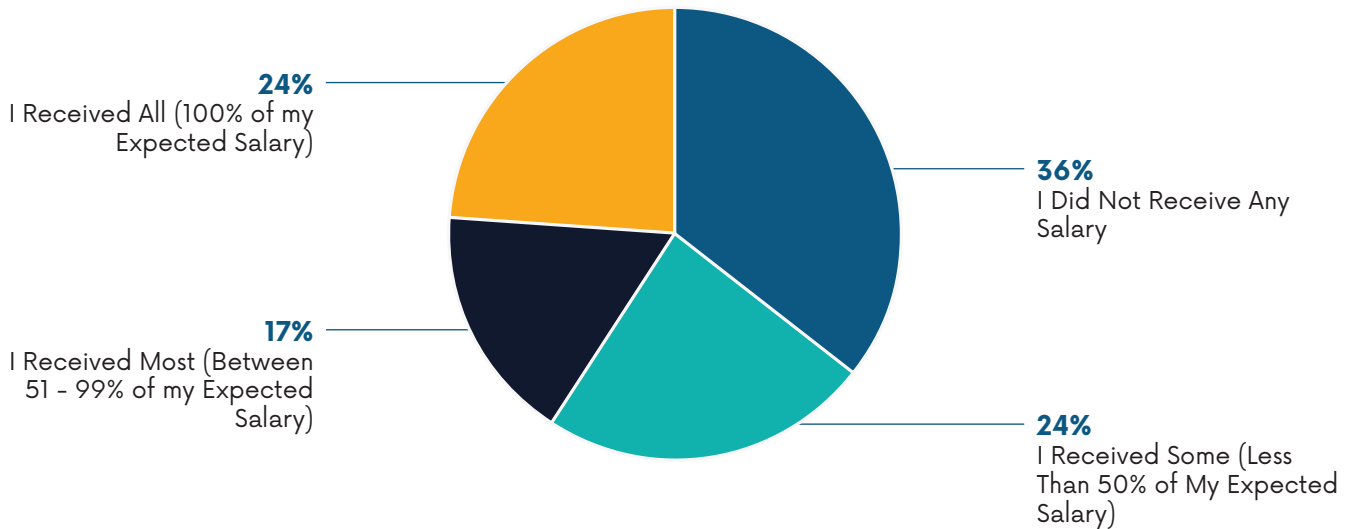
## Main Income Source from Most Recent Documentary GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Thinking about personal income from your most recent documentary work, how would you characterize each source of income? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of income")



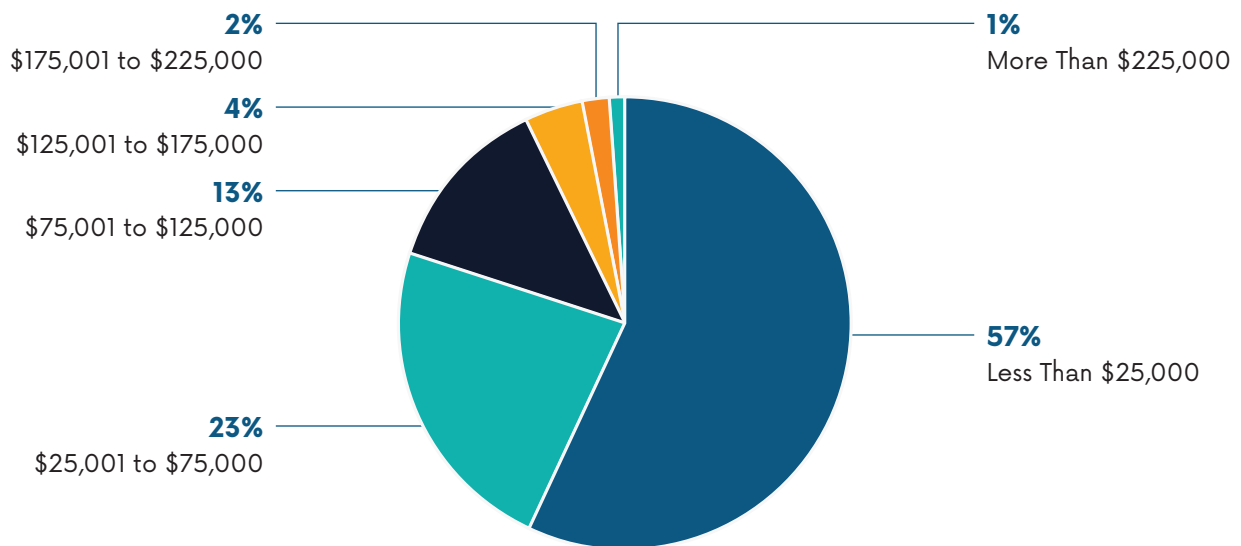
**Salary from Most Recent Documentary**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

For your most recent documentary project, choose the option that most accurately describes your salary. (Makers Only)



**Personal Income Amount from Most Recent Documentary**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

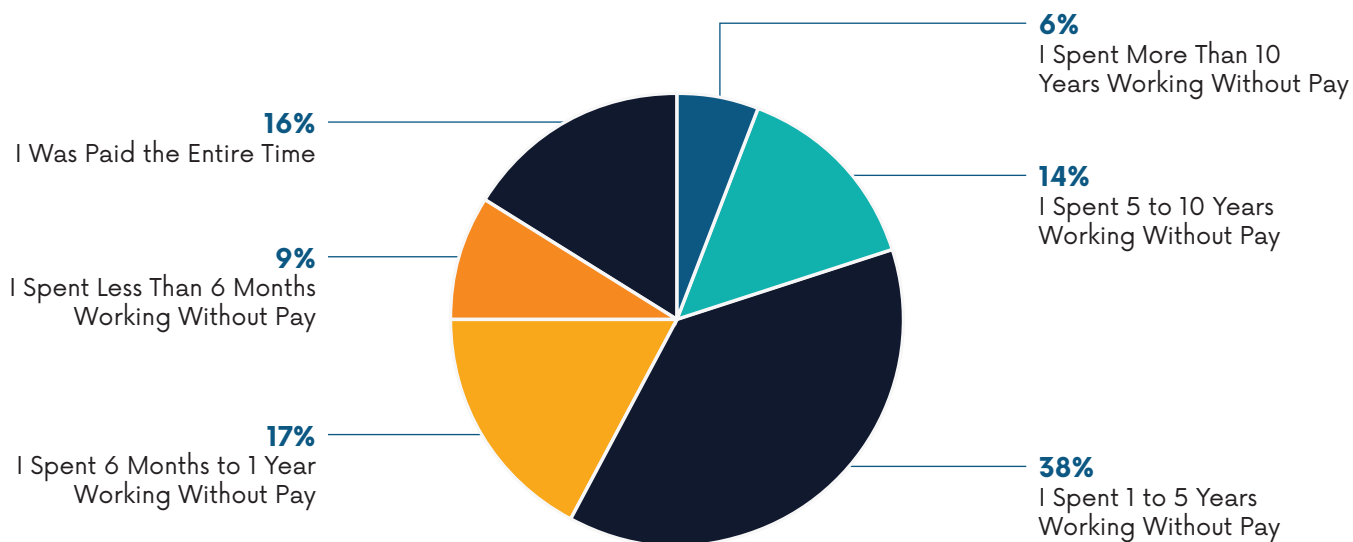
Describe the amount of revenue from your most recent documentary project? (Makers Only)



## Amount of Time Working on Most Recent Documentary Without Pay

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

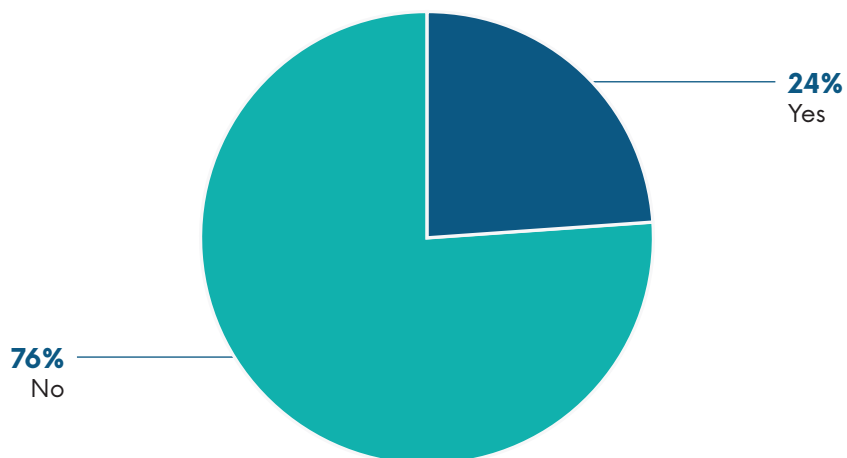
Which statement best characterizes your payment experience on your most recent documentary? (Makers Only)



# THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF DOCUMENTARY: CENSORSHIP, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

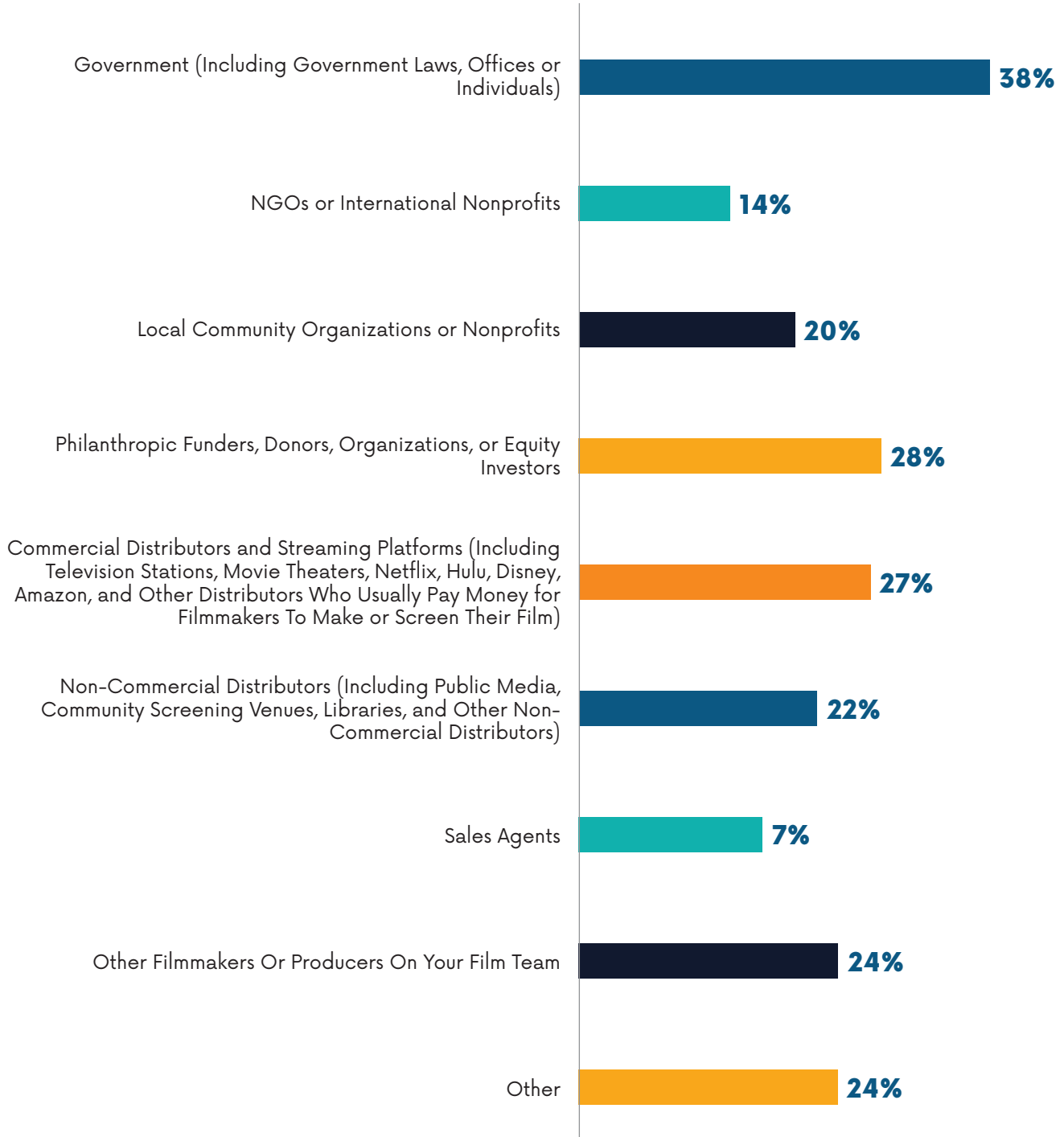
**Direct or Indirect Censorship or Suppression**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last two years, have you faced any direct or indirect censorship or suppression efforts related to your work? (not including self-censorship) (Makers Only)



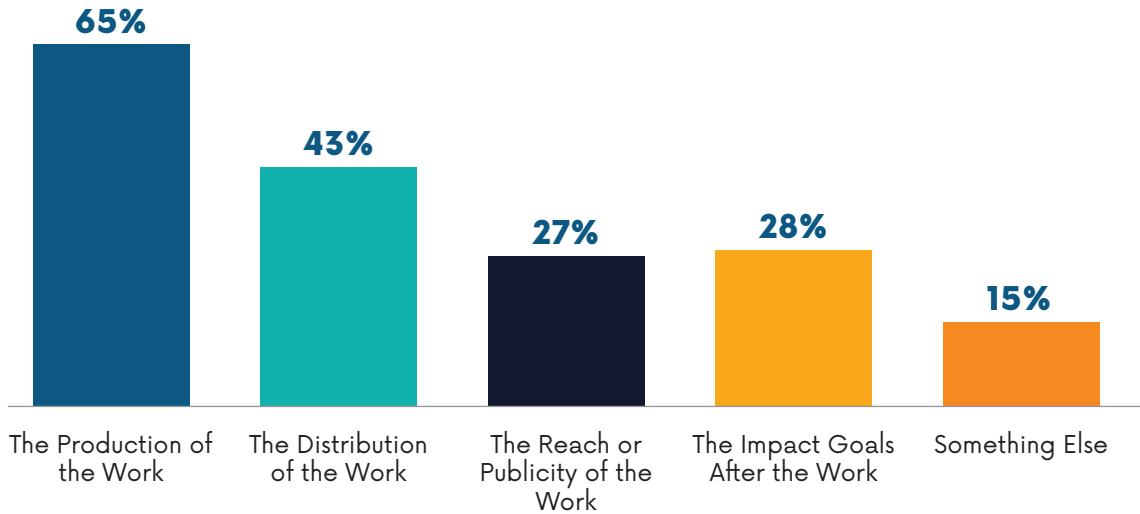
**Sources of Censorship/Suppression**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**From what type of source did you experience censorship/suppression?**  
[Select all that apply.]



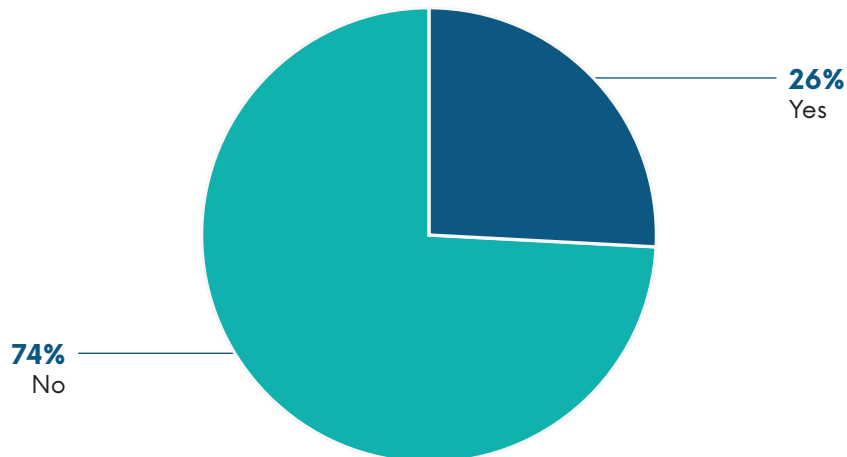
**Focus of Censorship/Suppression**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Were these censorship/suppression efforts related to... [Select all that apply.]  
(If "yes" selected in "censorship" question)



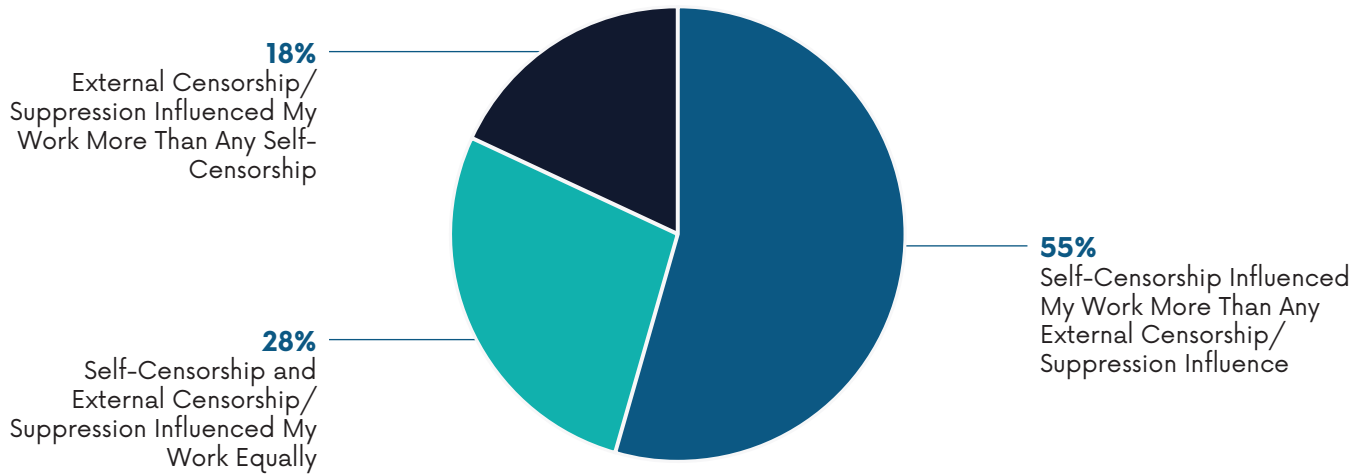
**Self-Censorship/Suppression In Last Two Years**  
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last two years, have you engaged in self-censorship in your documentary work? (\*Self-censorship is defined here as "any restriction that was carried out by you personally in limiting or restricting your own creative expression—including limiting potentially objectionable beliefs, opinions, storylines, and preferences—in order to prevent any negative reaction to that expression.") (Makers Only)





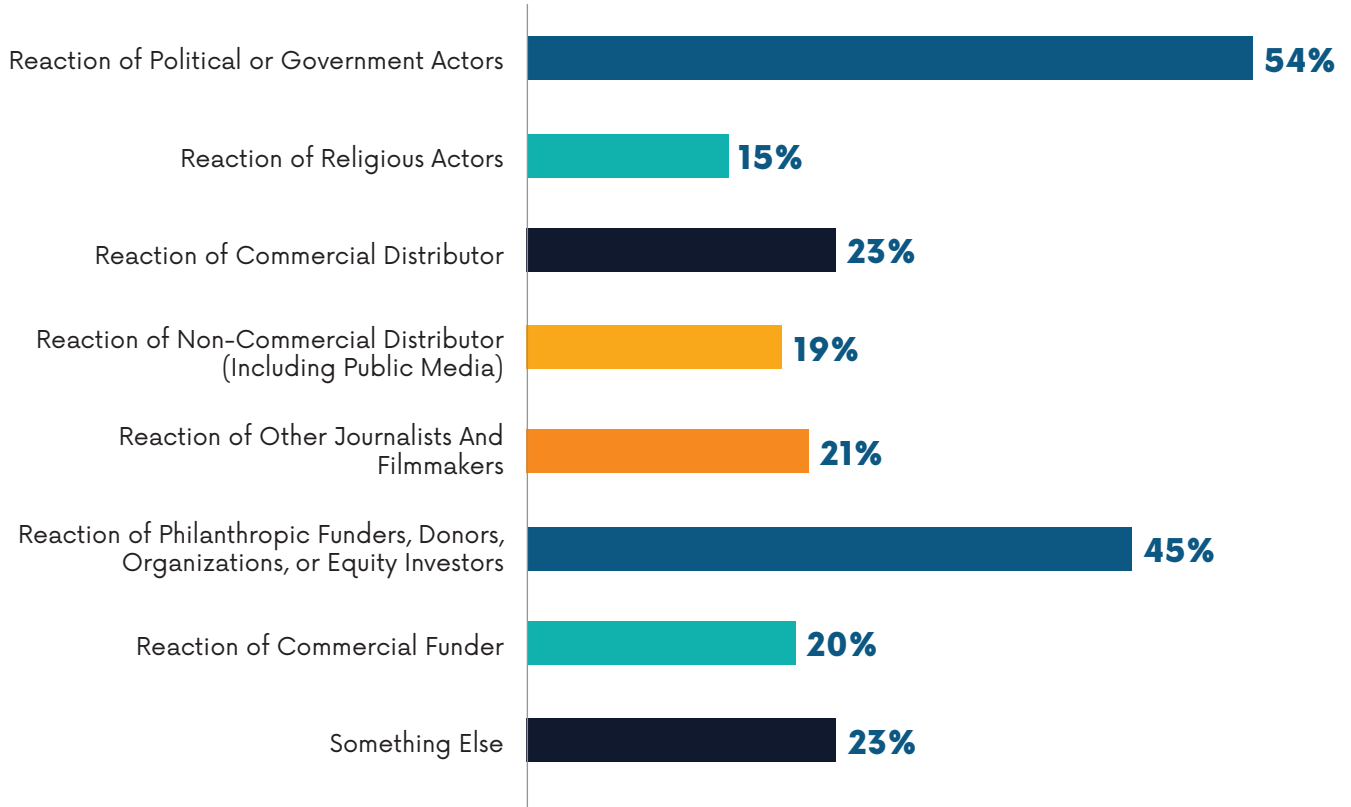
**How would you characterize the level of influence that self-censorship had over your work and creative expression? (If “yes” selected in “censorship” question)**



## Sources Contributing Most to Self-Censorship

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

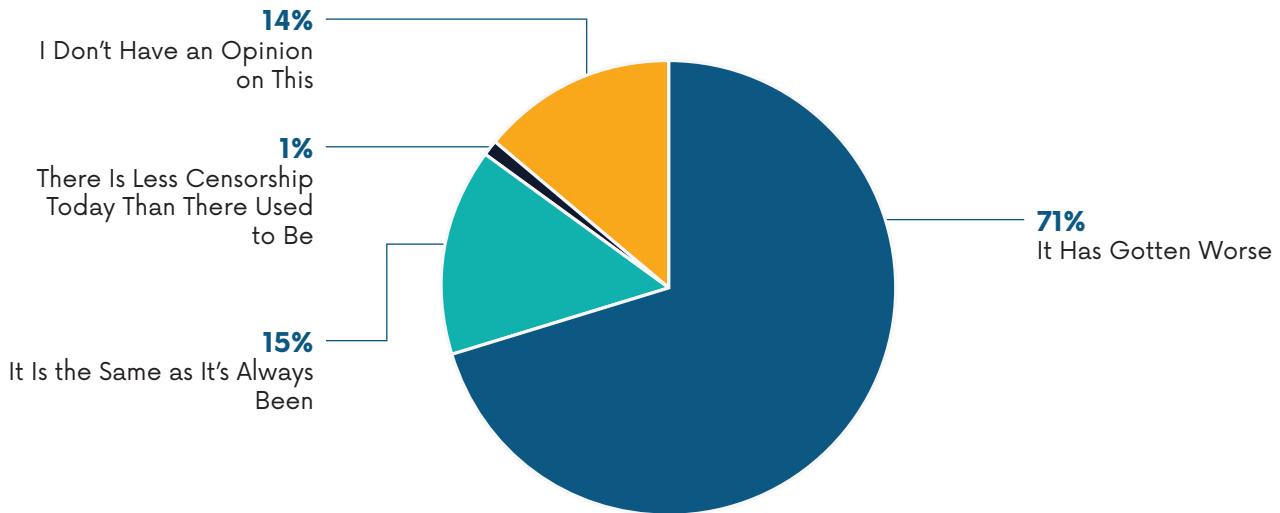
Which of the following sources most contributed to your self-censorship? [Select all that apply.] (If “yes” selected in “self-censorship” question)



## Opinions about Censorship/Suppression Efforts Over Past Two Years

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

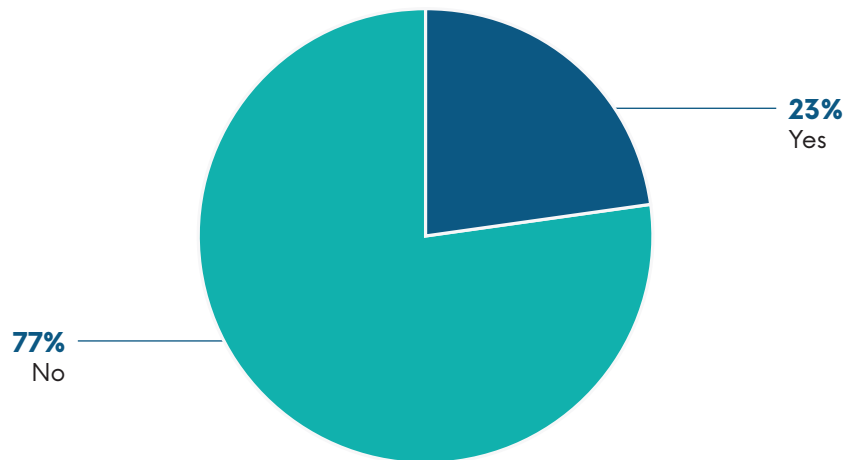
How do you feel about censorship and suppression efforts (related to the documentary industry in the countries where you work) over the last two years? (Makers Only)



## Use of AI Tools in Most Recent Documentary

GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

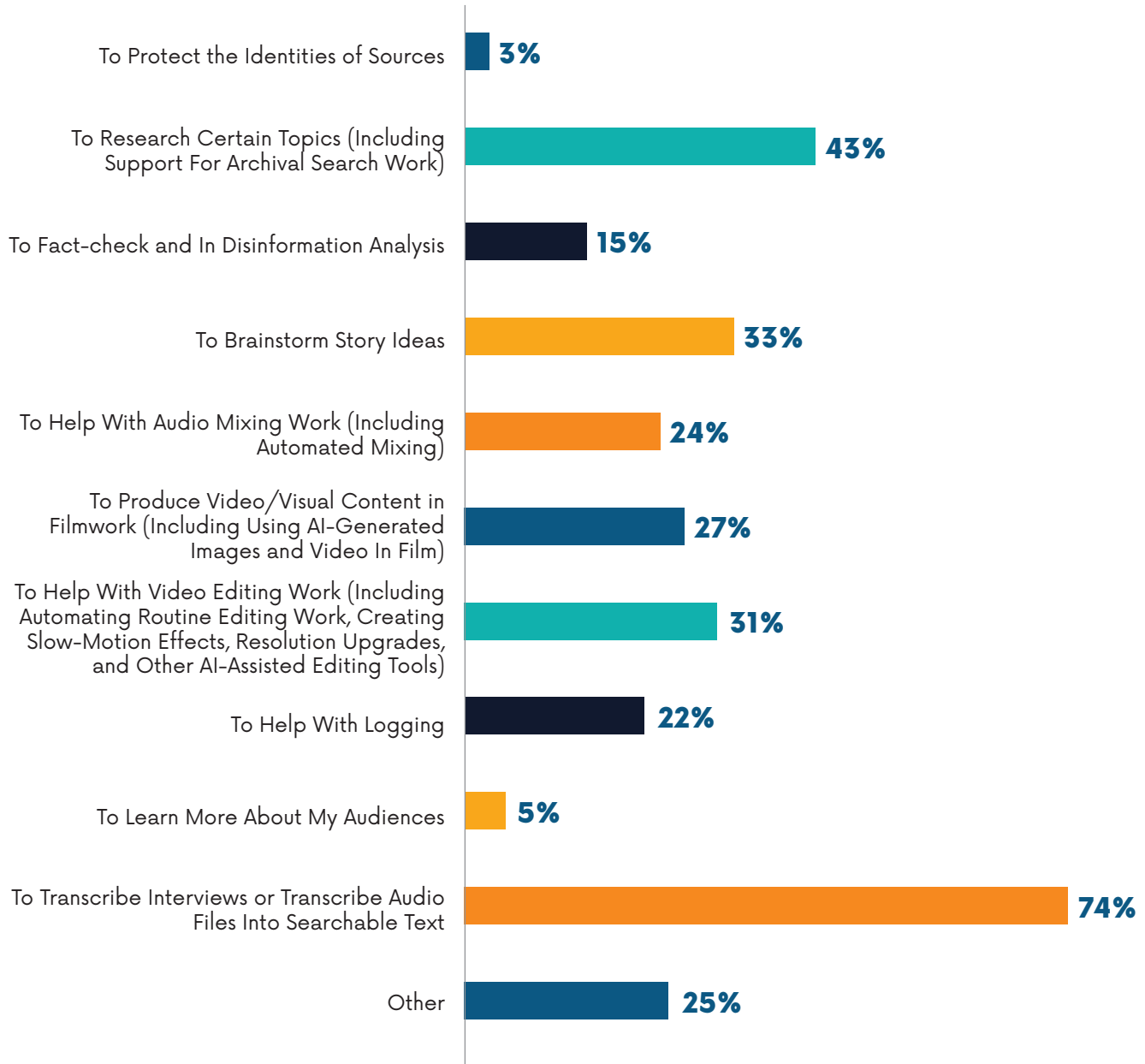
Did you use any artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your most recent documentary work? (Makers Only)



## Type of AI Use in Most Recent Documentary

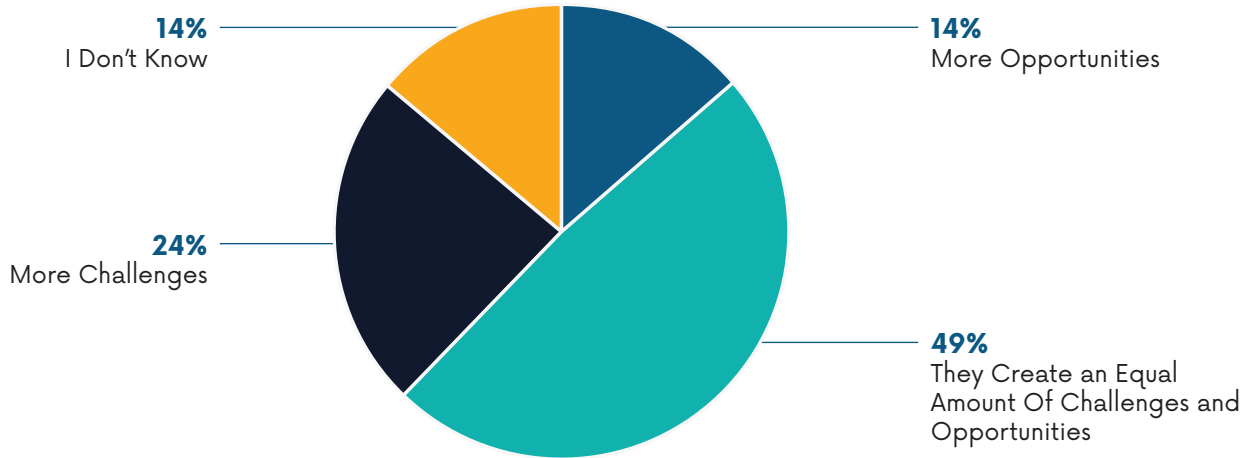
GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

To what capacity have you used AI tools in your work? [Select all that apply.]  
(If "Yes" selected for "used AI" question)





**Do you think AI tools create more opportunities or challenges for filmmakers?  
(Makers Only)**



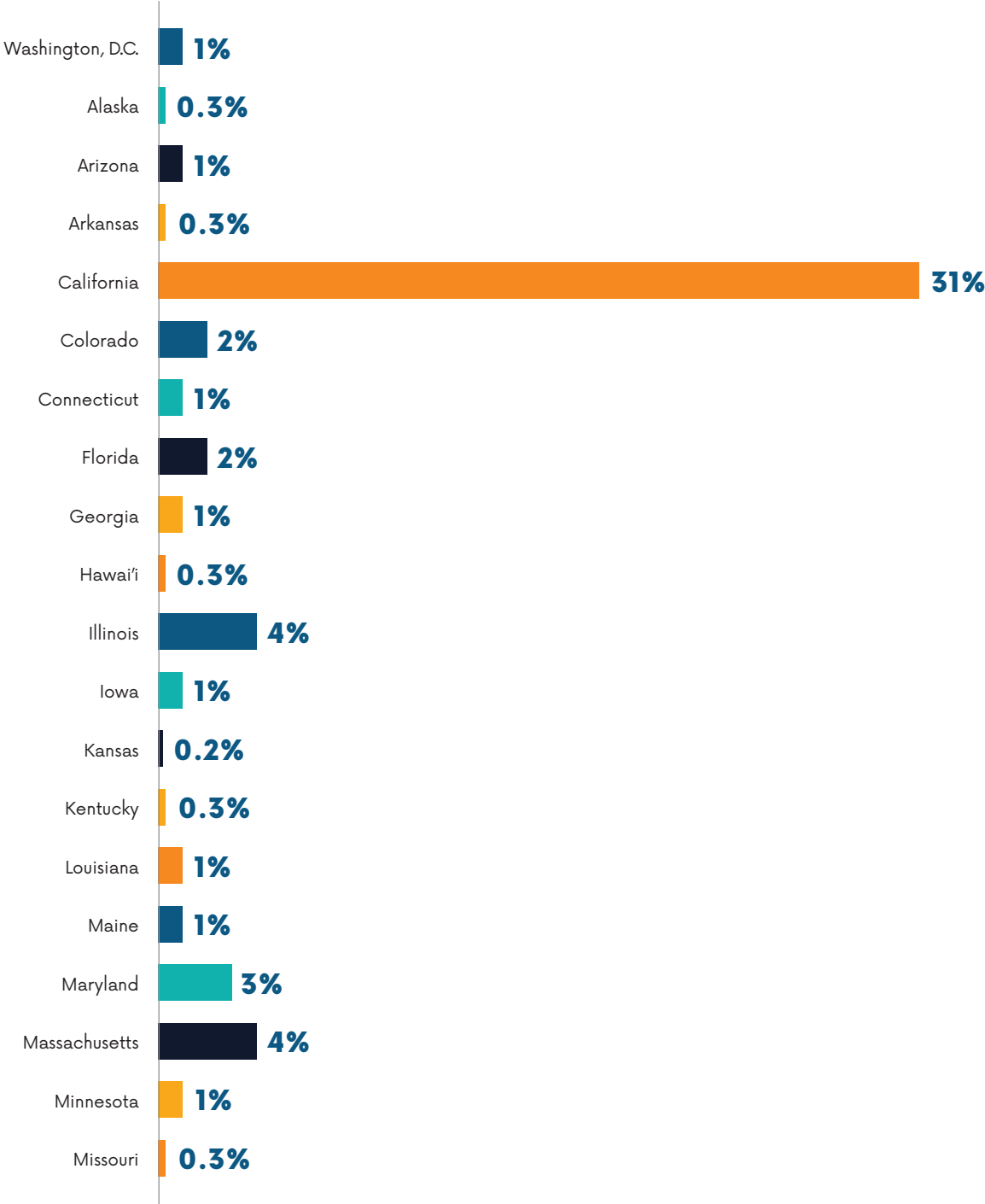
PART TWO

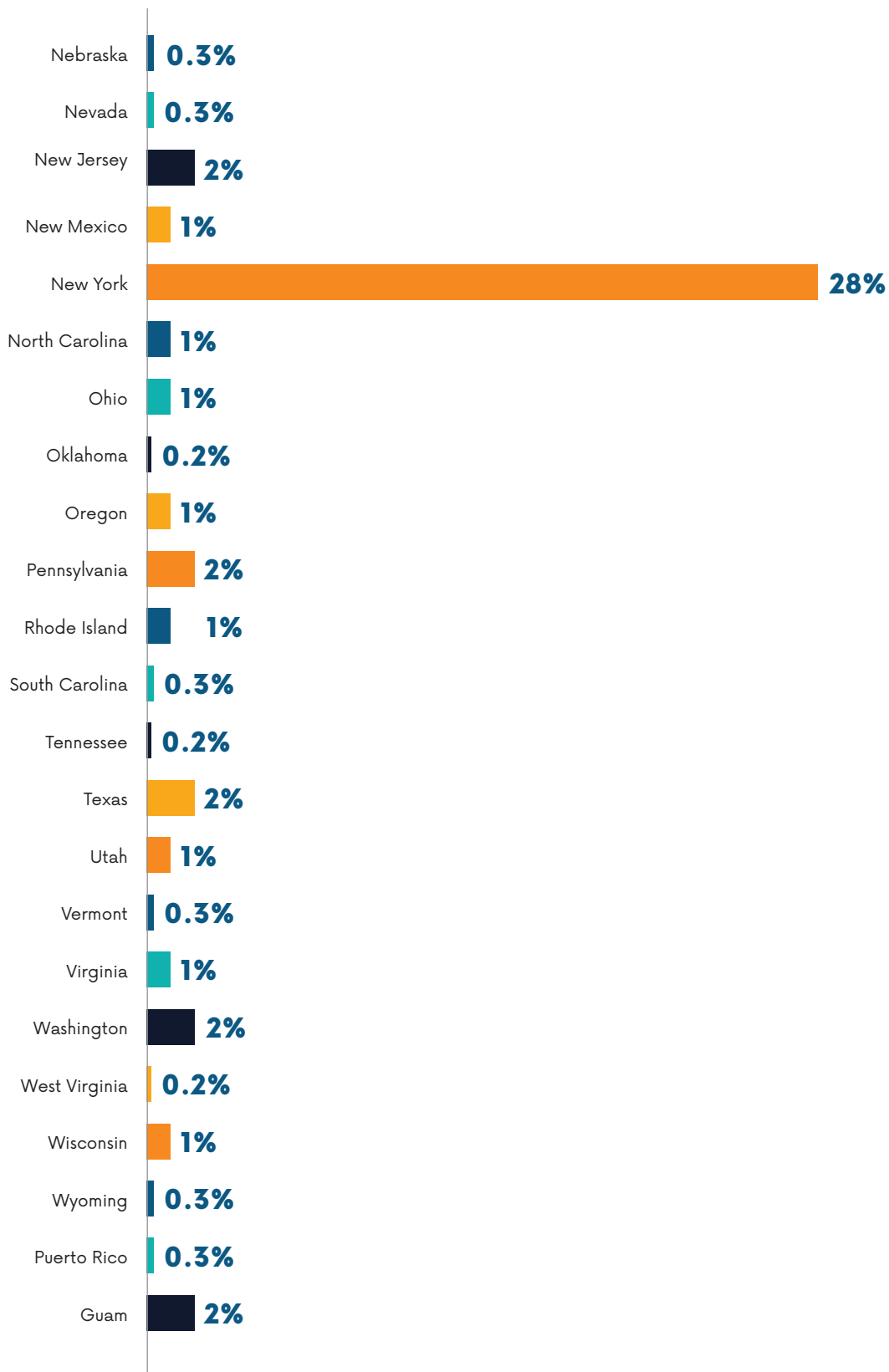
# STATE OF THE U.S. DOCUMENTARY FIELD (U.S. DATA)



# OVERVIEW OF U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS IN THIS STUDY

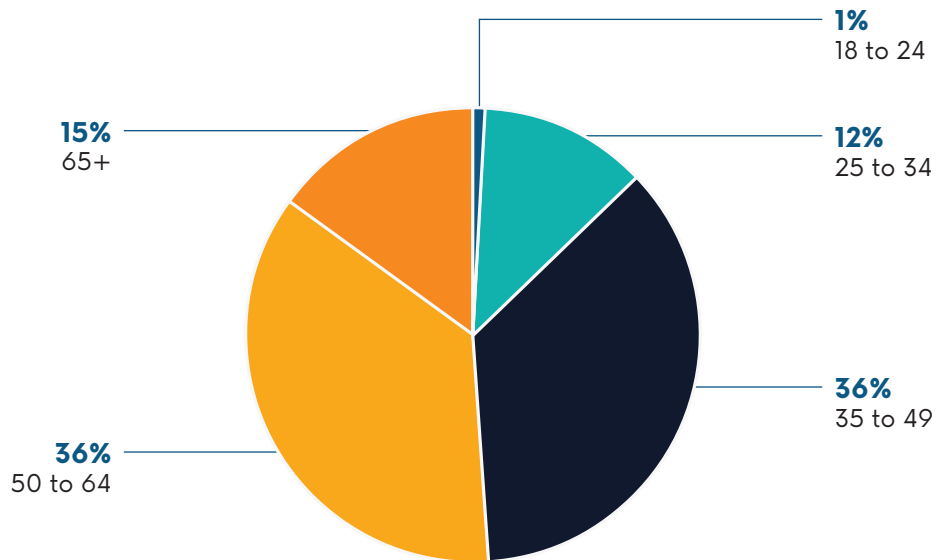
## Primary U.S. State of Residence ALL STATES (ALL RESPONDENTS)





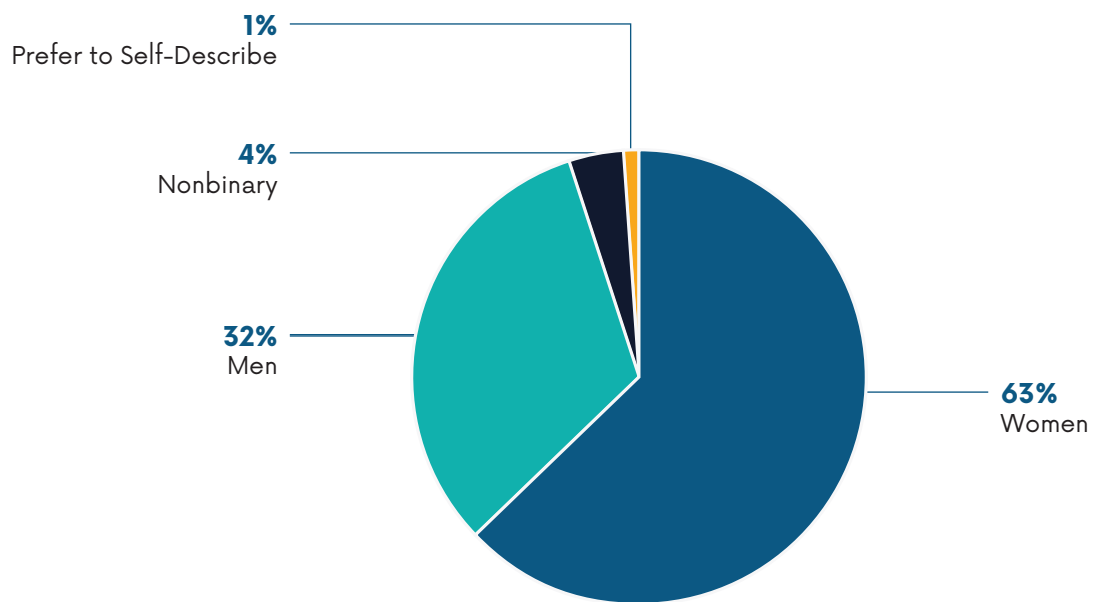
## Age of U.S. Documentary Professionals

U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



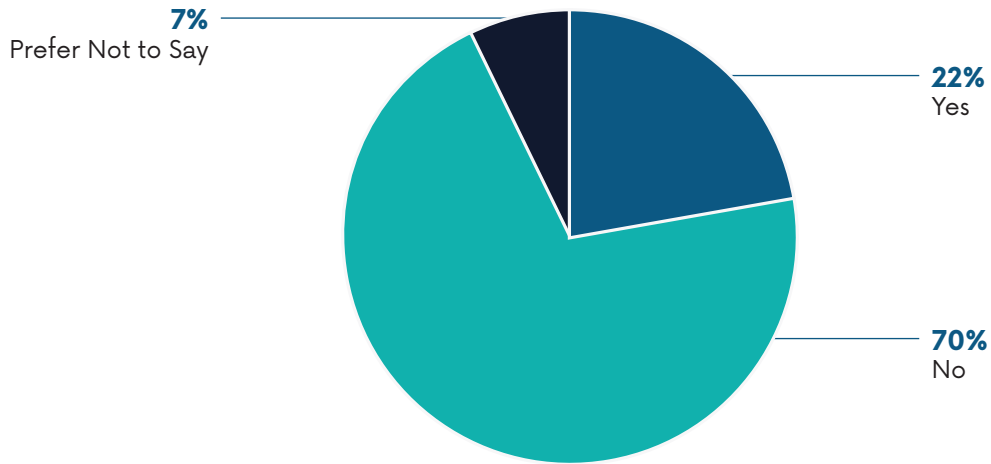
## Gender Identity of U.S. Documentary Professionals

U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



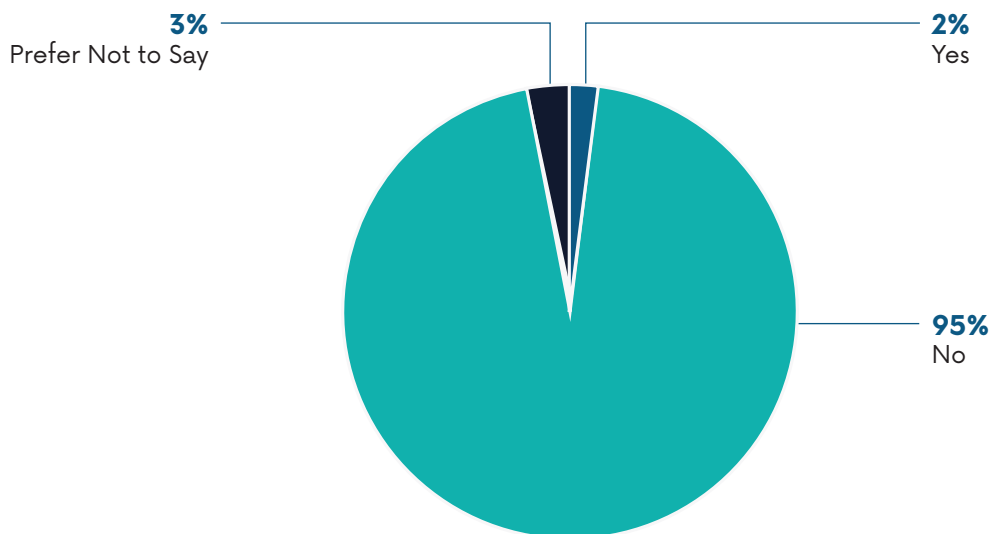
**LGBTQ+ Orientation of U.S. Documentary Professionals**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Do you consider yourself a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other Sexual and Gender Identities (LGBTQ+) community?**



**Transgender Identity of U.S. Documentary Professionals**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

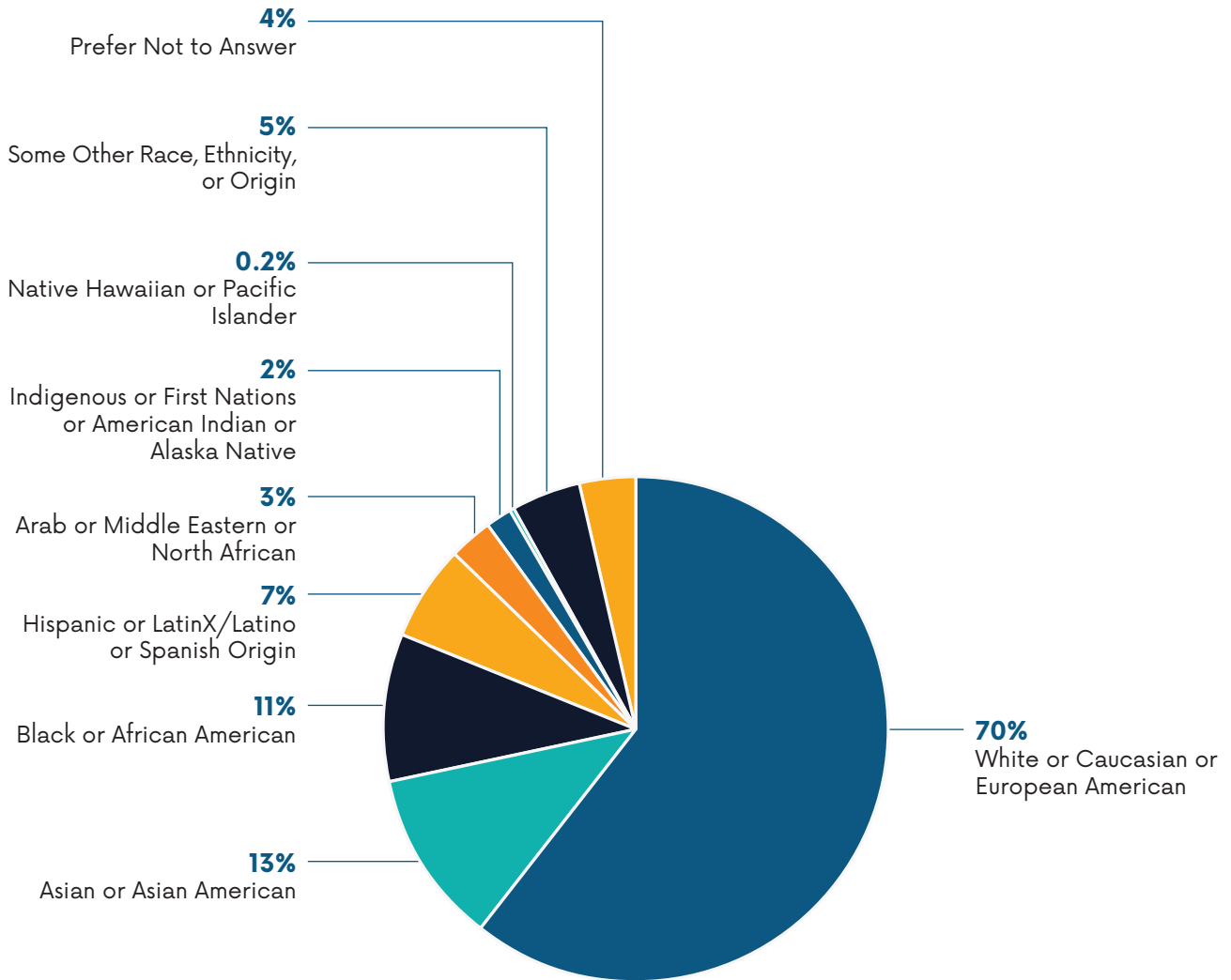
**Do you identify as transgender?**



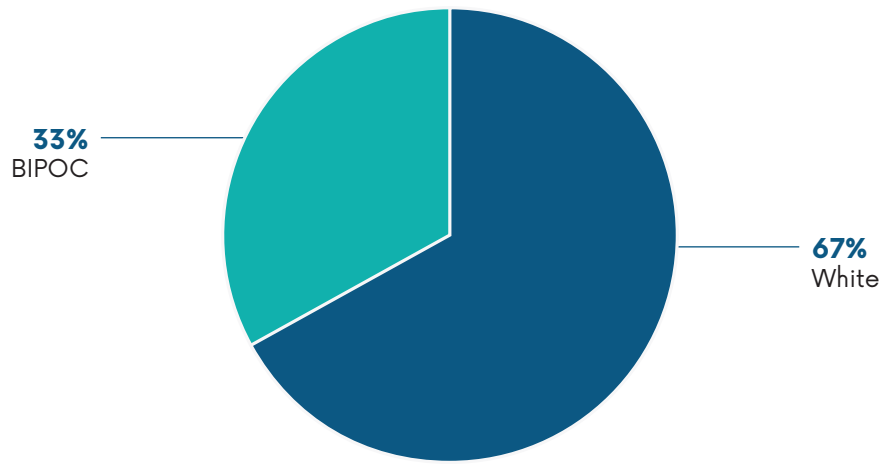
## Race and Ethnic Identification of U.S. Documentary Professionals

U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Which category or categories describe you (race, ethnicity, national identity)? [Select all that apply.]

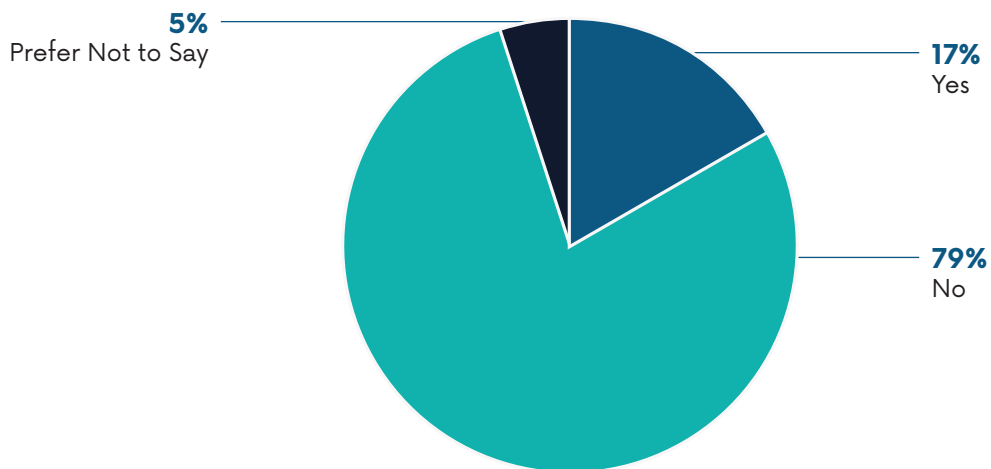


**BIPOC and White: U.S. Documentary Respondents**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)



**Disability Identification of U.S. Documentary Respondents**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

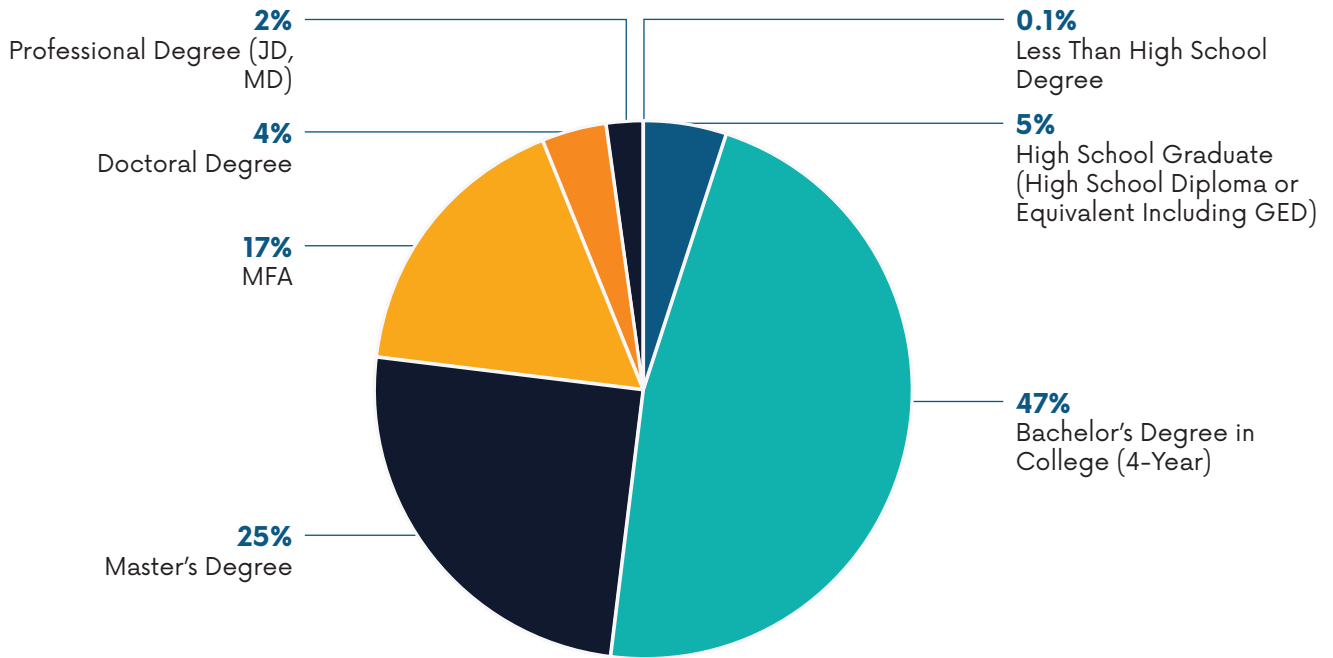
**Do you identify as a person with a disability?**



## Education of U.S. Documentary Respondents

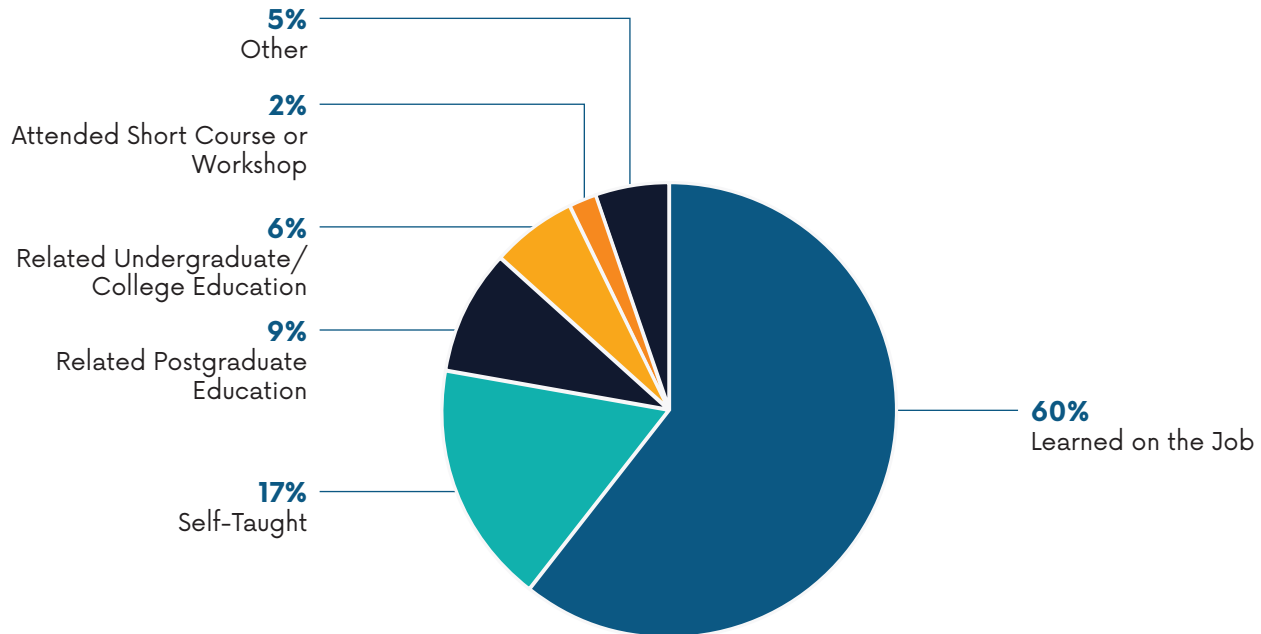
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?



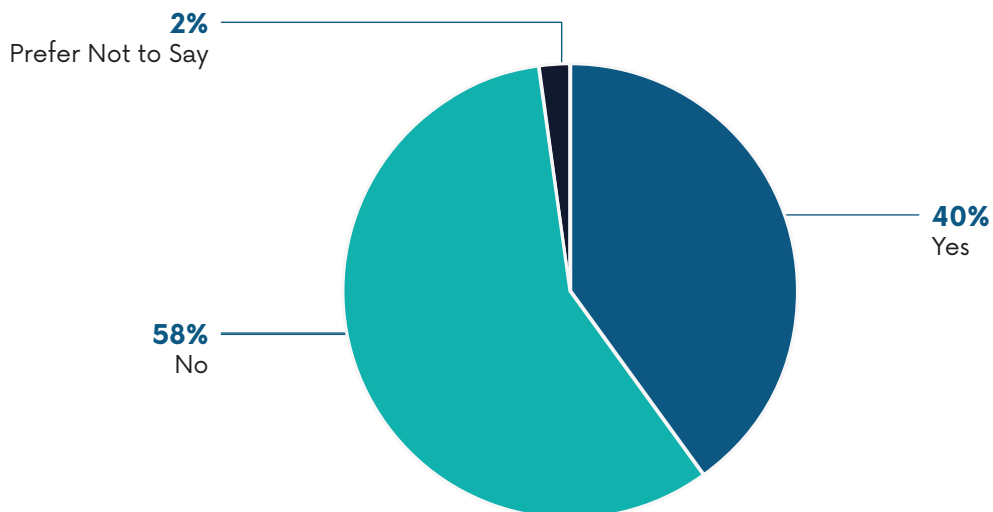
## Most Valuable Job Training in Documentary U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

How would you describe your MOST valuable job training in documentary?



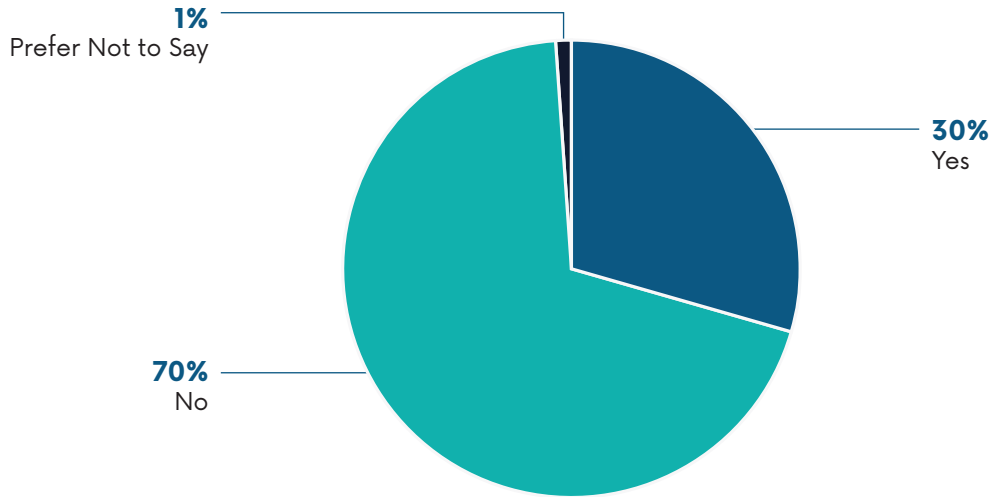
## Caregivers to Adults U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last 12 months, have you provided unpaid care to a relative or friend 18 years or older to help them take care of themselves?



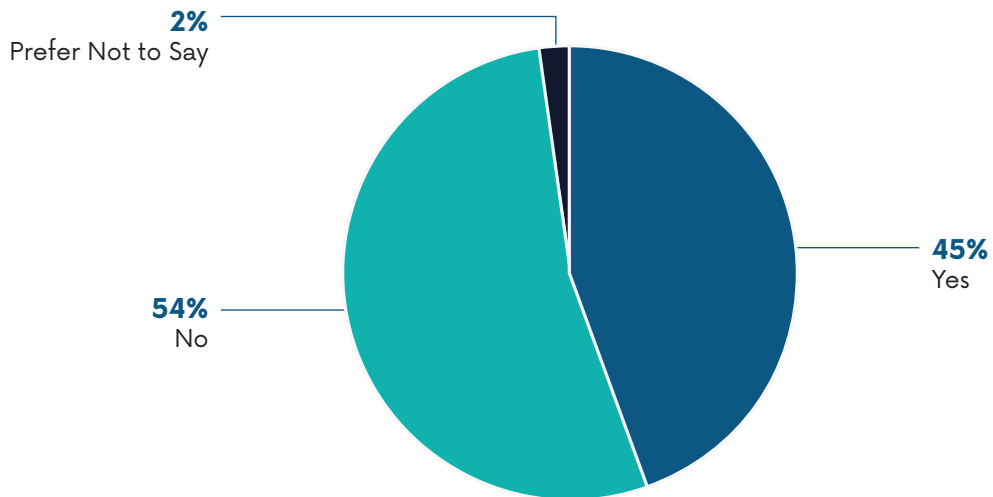
**Caregivers to Children Under 18**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last 12 months, have you provided unpaid care to a relative or friend under the age of 18 to help them take care of themselves?



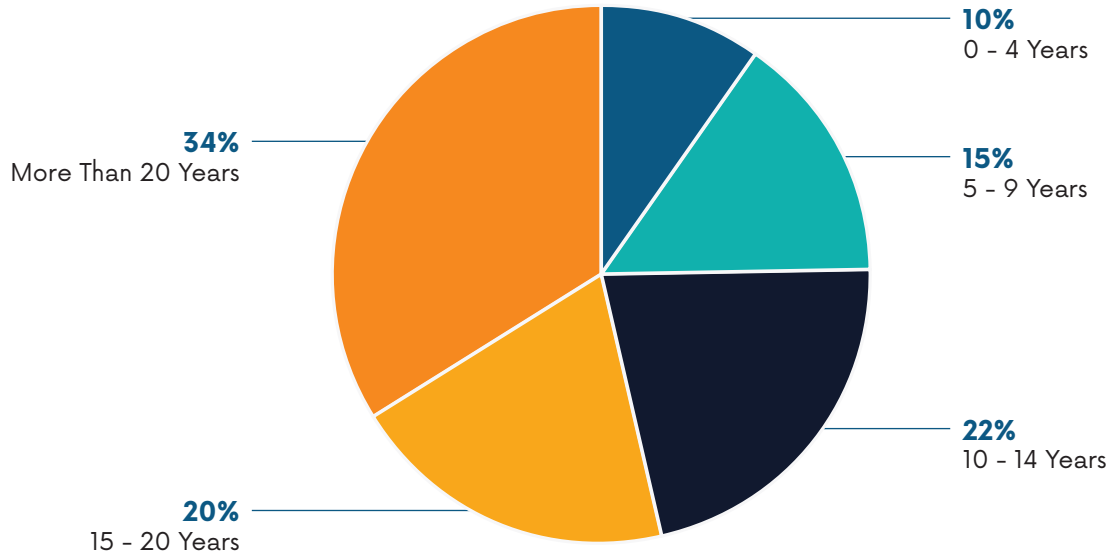
**Household Wage Earner Support**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Does another person in your household work for a salary or wage that helps to support you financially?



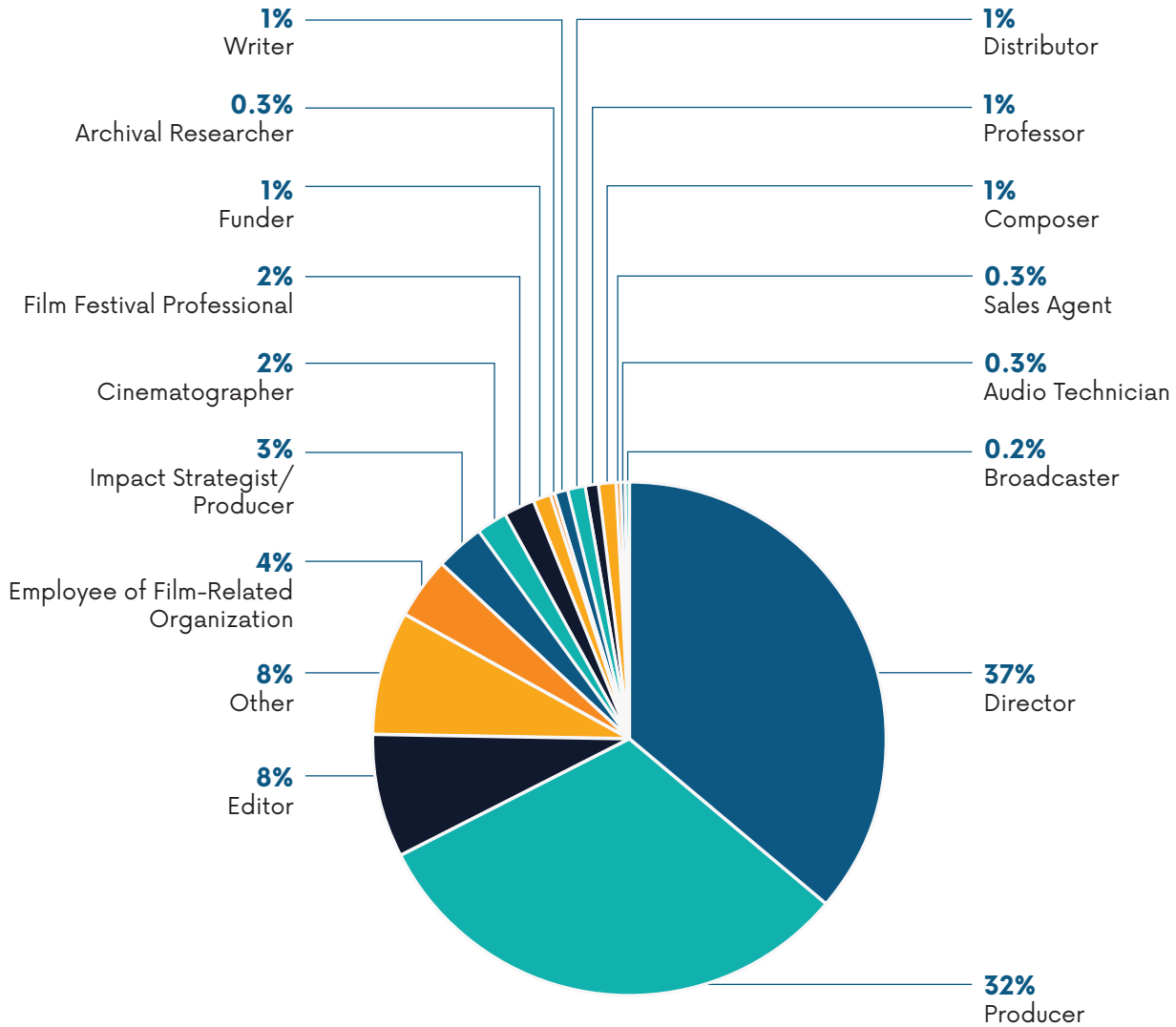


**How many years have you worked in the documentary field?**



**Primary Positions in the Documentary Field**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

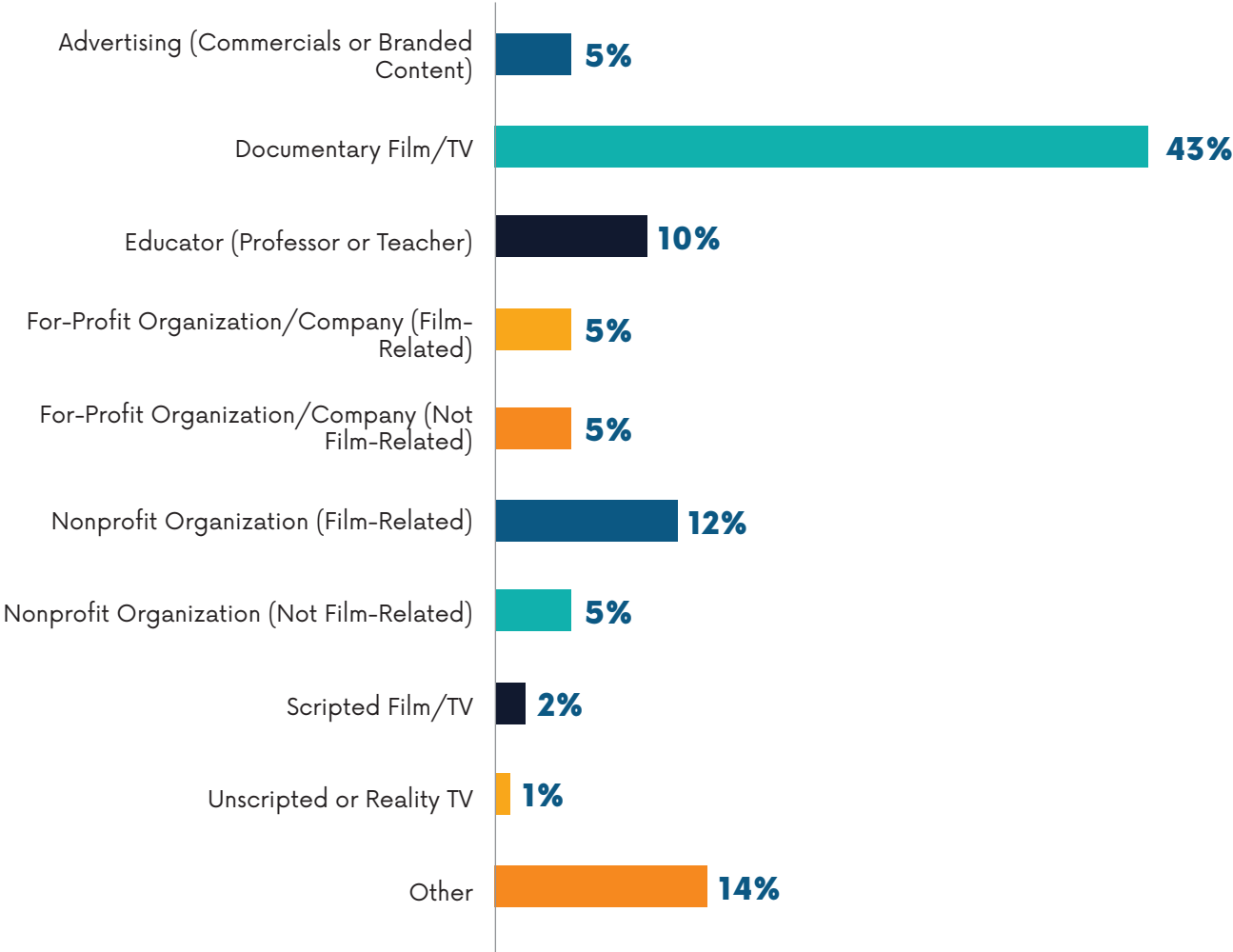
**In documentary, which category describes your primary position?**



# U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS: EXPERIENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

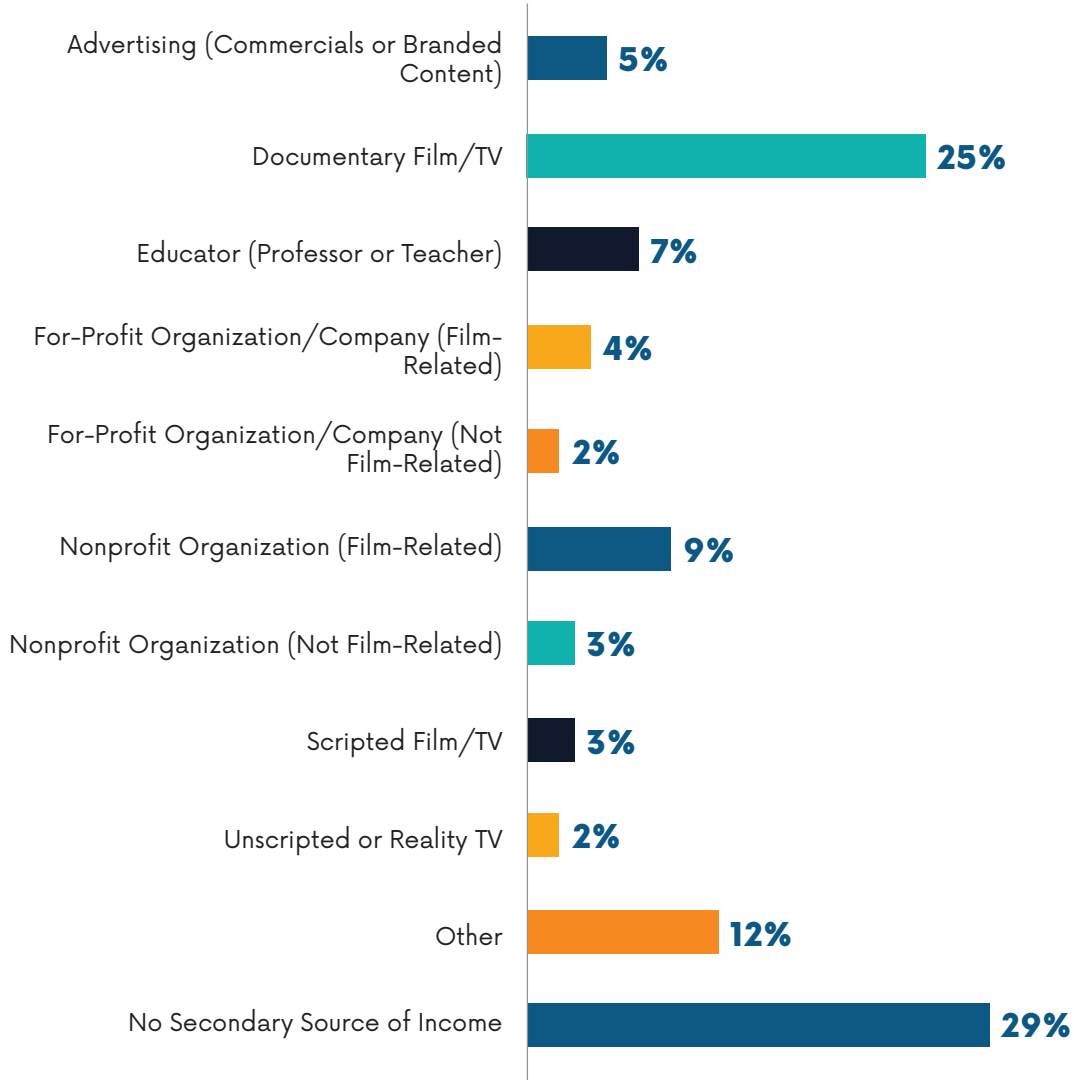
## Primary Source of Income U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Which best describes your primary source of personal income?



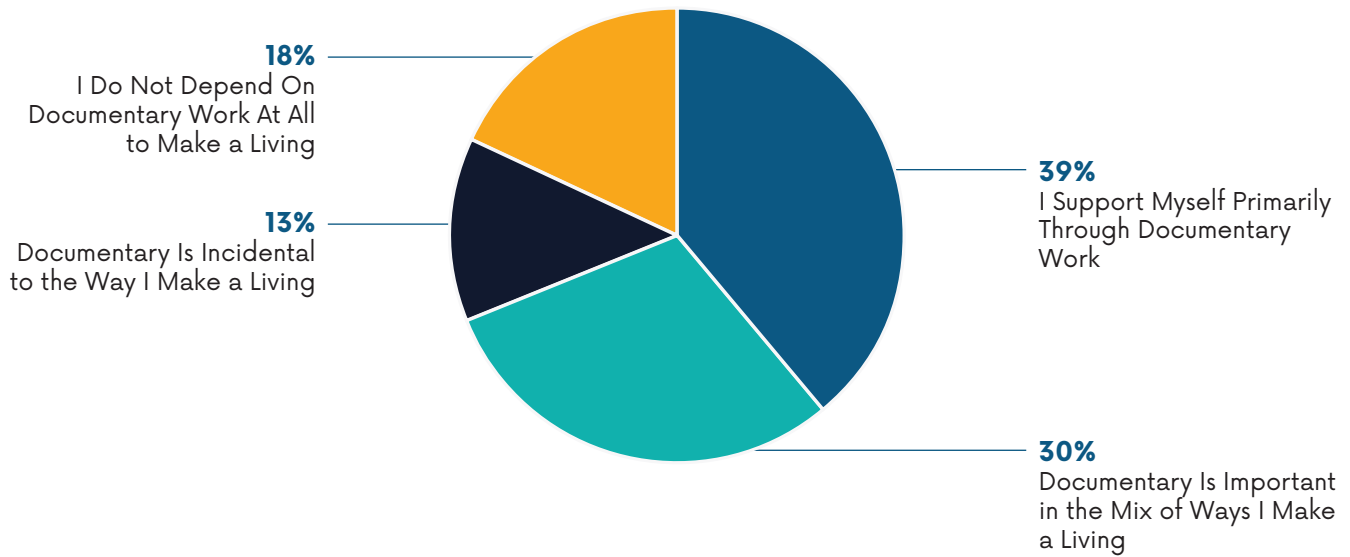
## Secondary Source of Income U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

### Which best describes your secondary source of personal income?



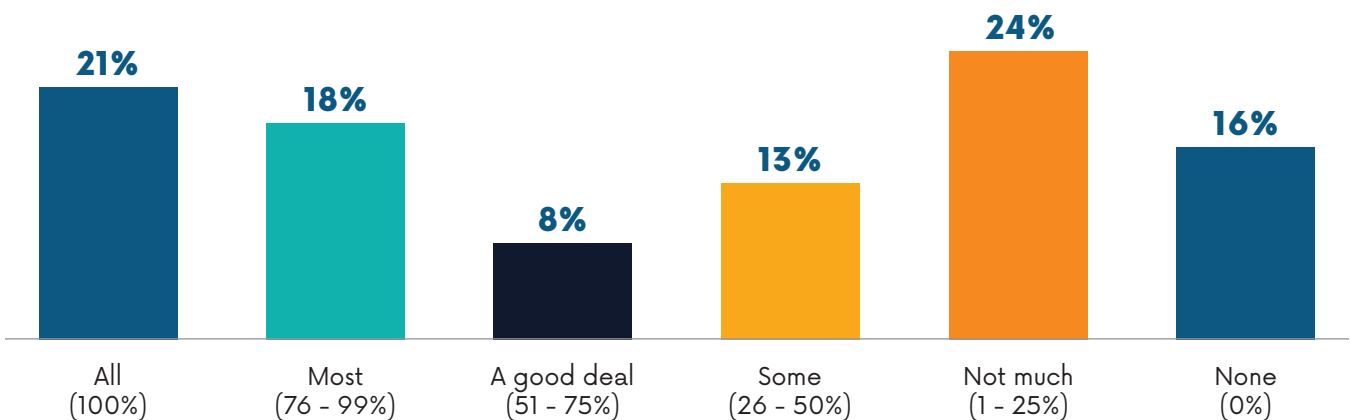
## Importance of Documentary Income to Livelihood U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

How important is income from documentary work to your livelihood (including contract work and technical services)?



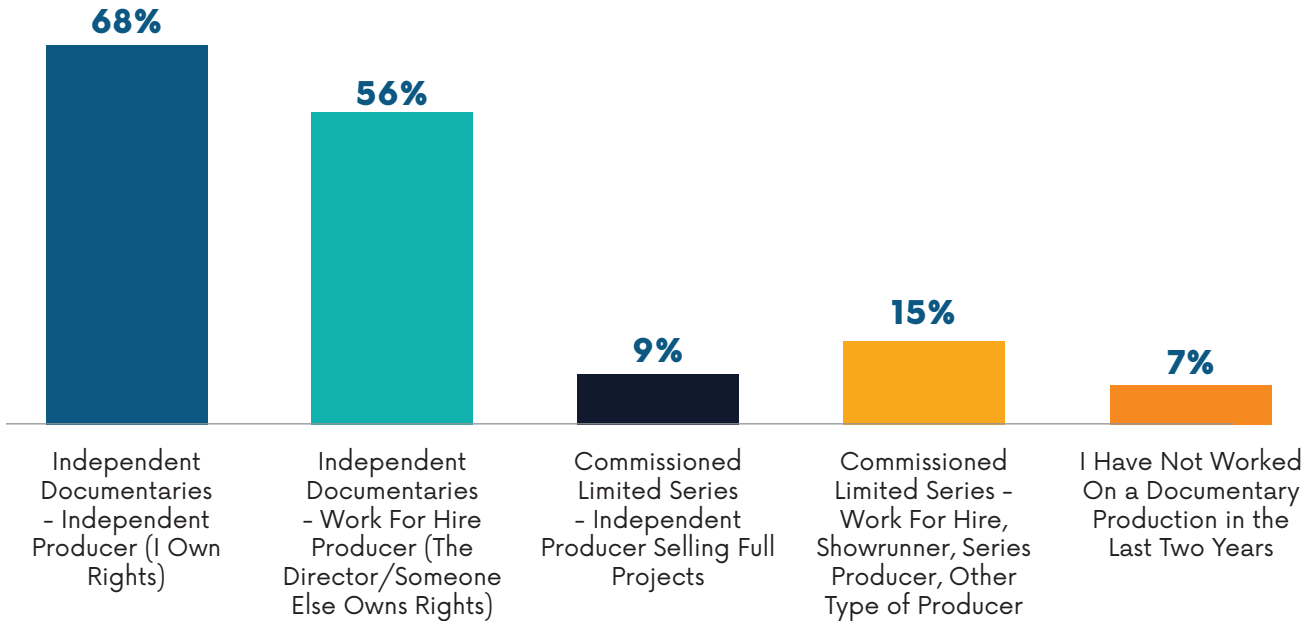
## Percentage of Gross Annual Income from Documentary U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Over the last year, what percentage of your personal gross income came from documentary work, as an estimate?



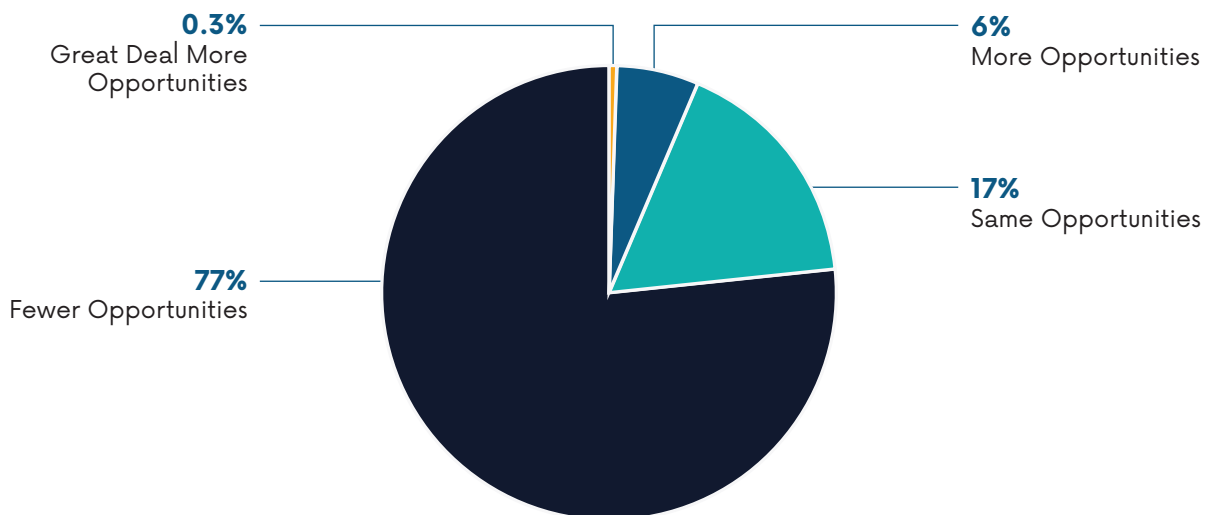
**Types of Documentaries Worked On**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What kinds of documentary productions have you worked on within the last two years?  
[Select all that apply.]

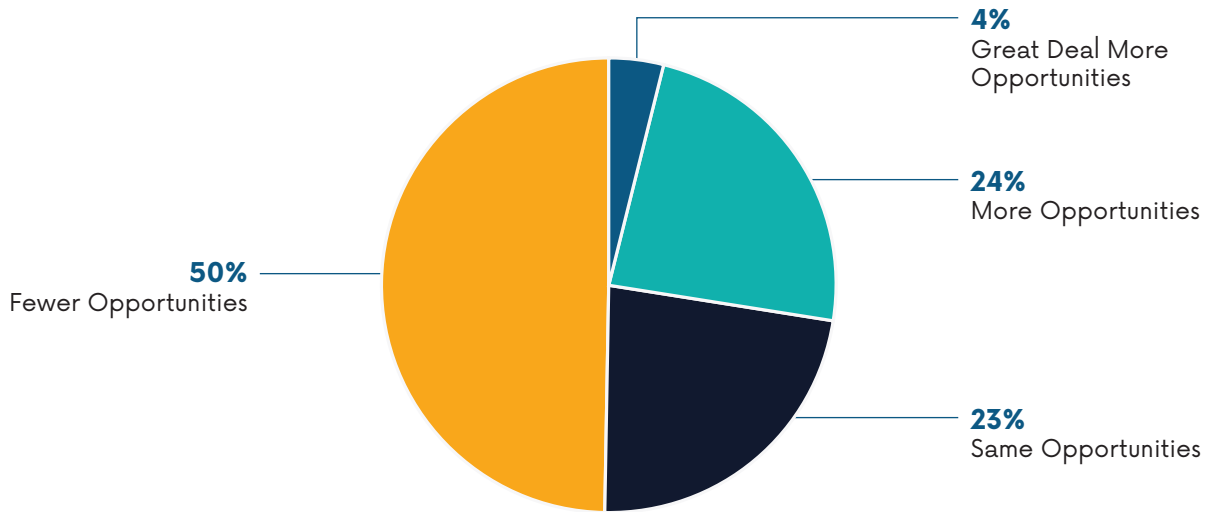


**Perceptions About Documentary Opportunities**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

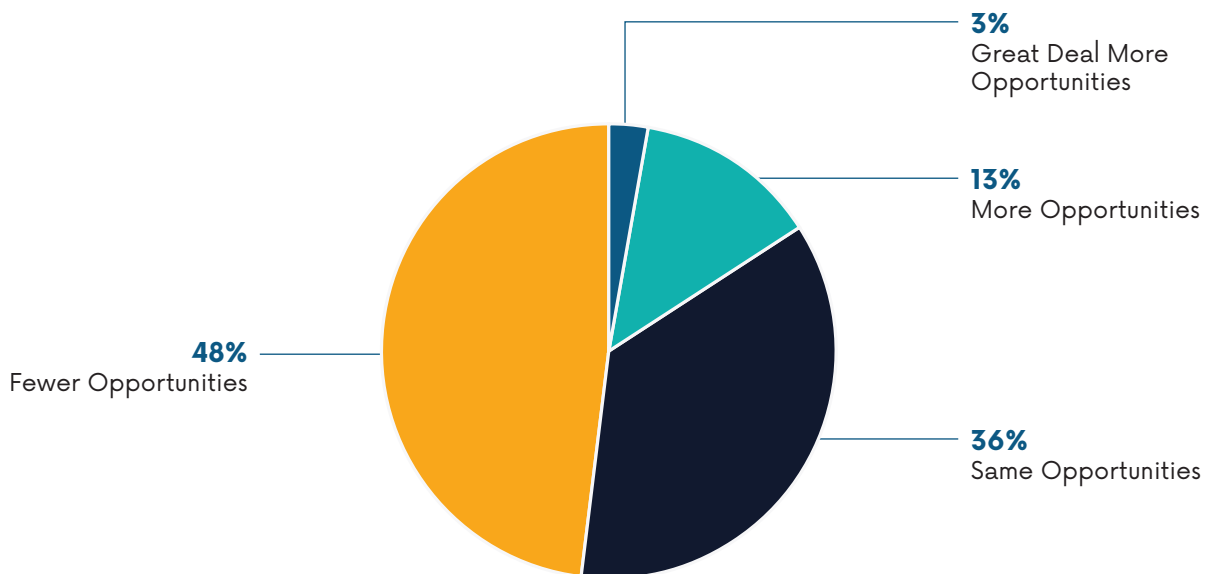
Which statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for documentary makers and professionals, over the past two years?



**What statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for documentary makers and professionals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, over the past two years?**

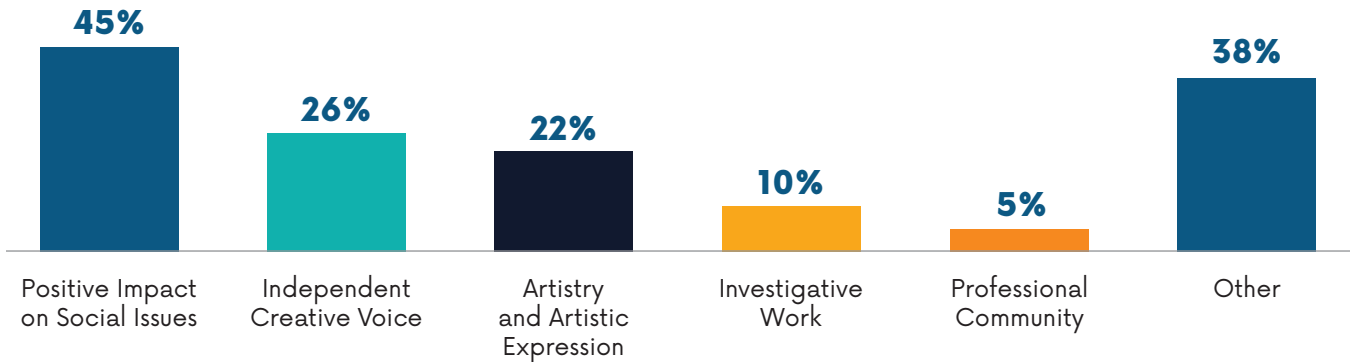


**Which statement best reflects your perspectives about opportunities for women-identifying documentary makers and professionals, over the past two years?**



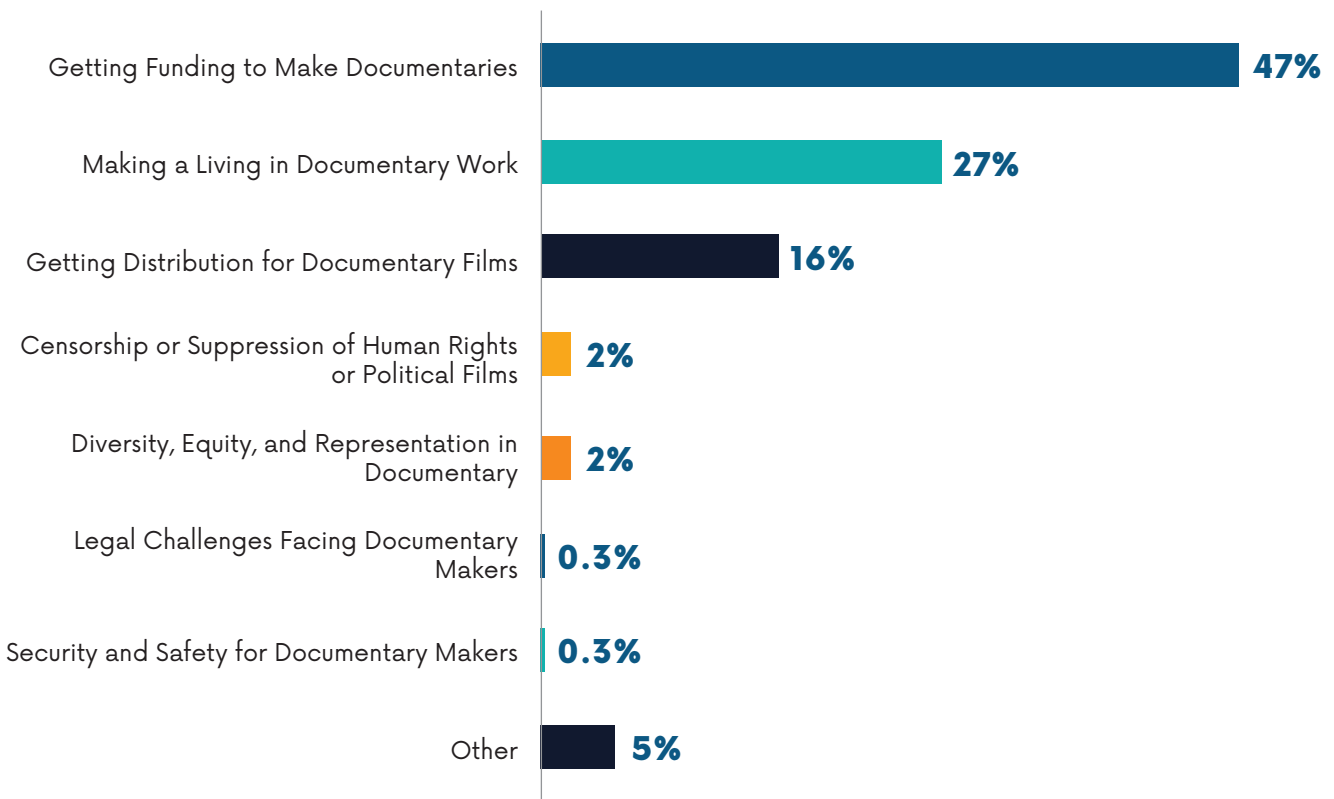
## Most Meaningful Part of Documentary Work U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What is it about documentary work that you find most meaningful?  
(% who indicated “most meaningful”)



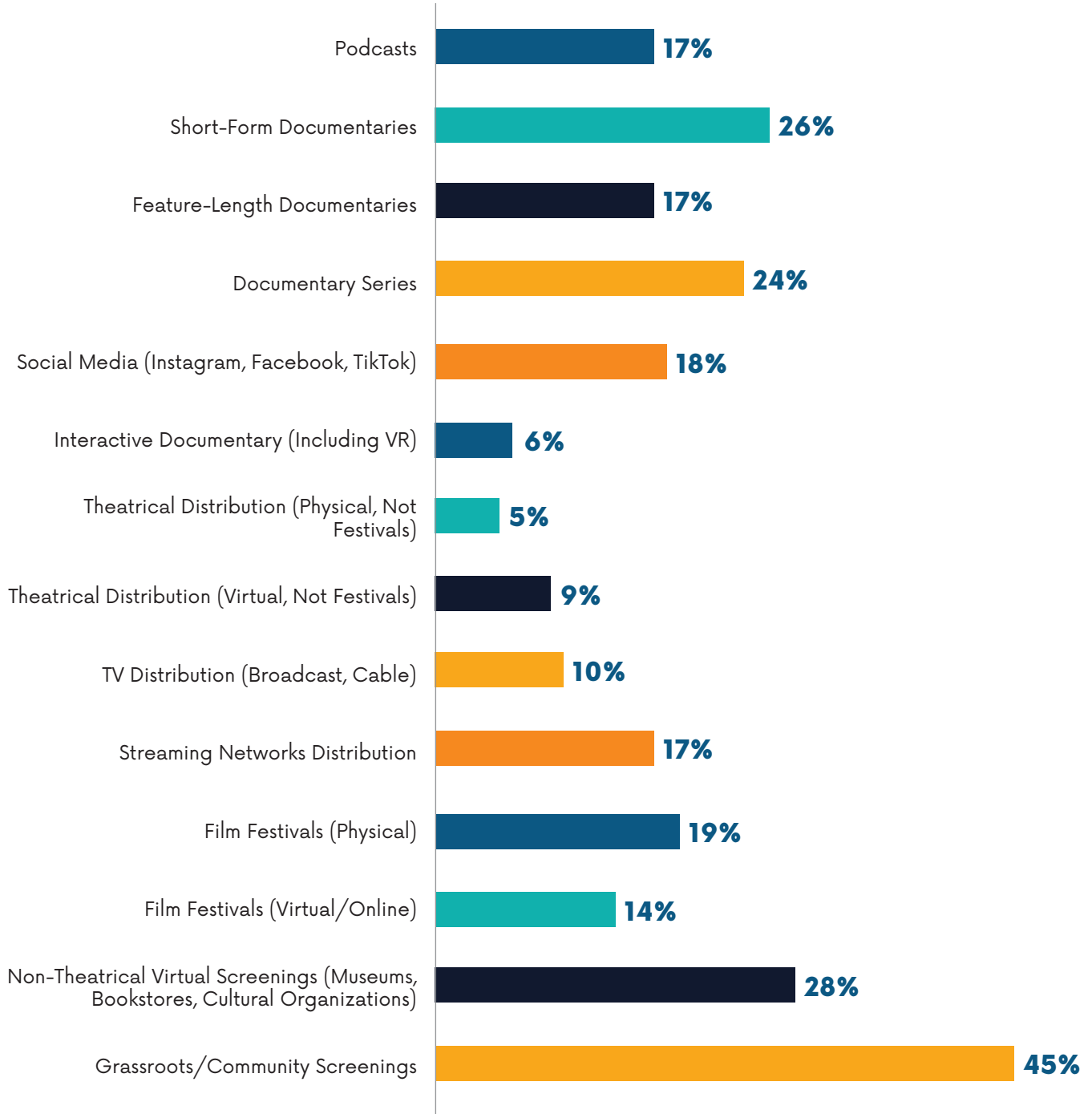
## Greatest Challenge Facing Documentary Today U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What is the greatest challenge facing the documentary field today?



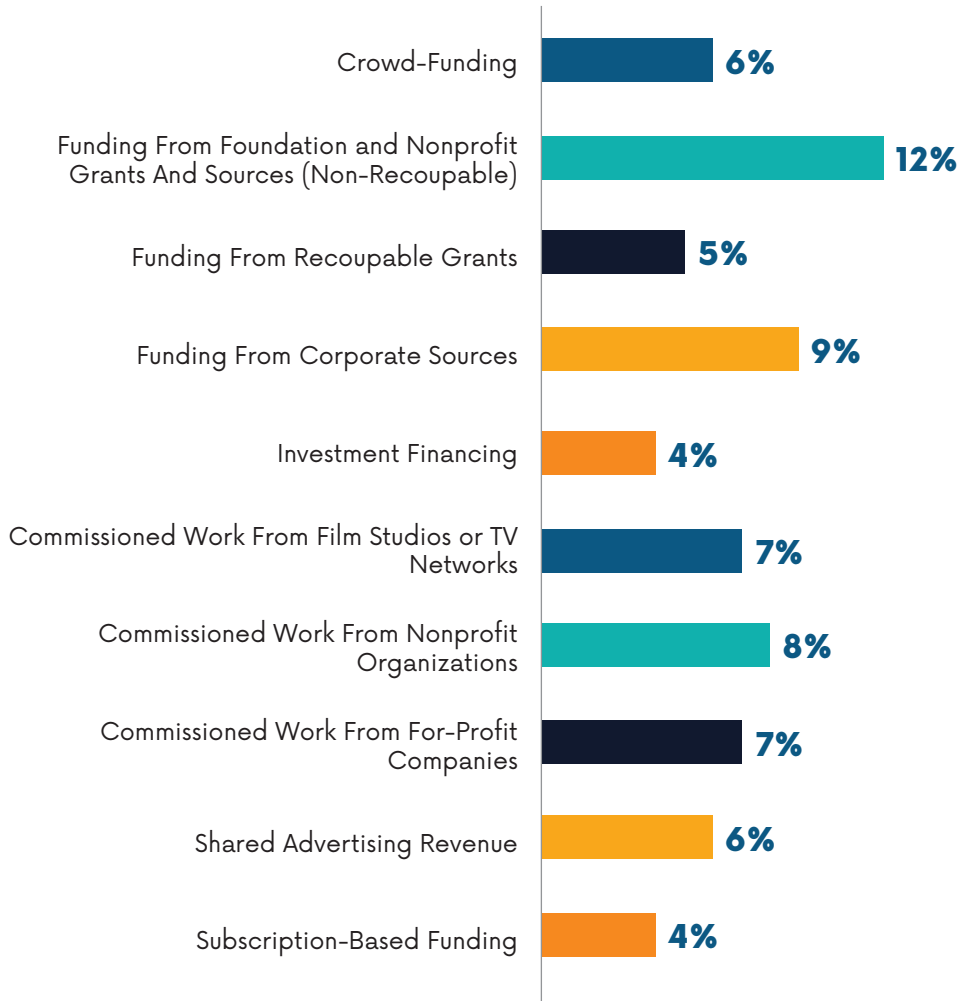
**Format and Distribution: Perceptions of Greatest Future Opportunity**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**In terms of format and distribution, to what extent do you feel these offer positive future opportunities for documentary? (% who said "a great opportunity")**



## Perceptions of Great Future Economic Opportunity U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

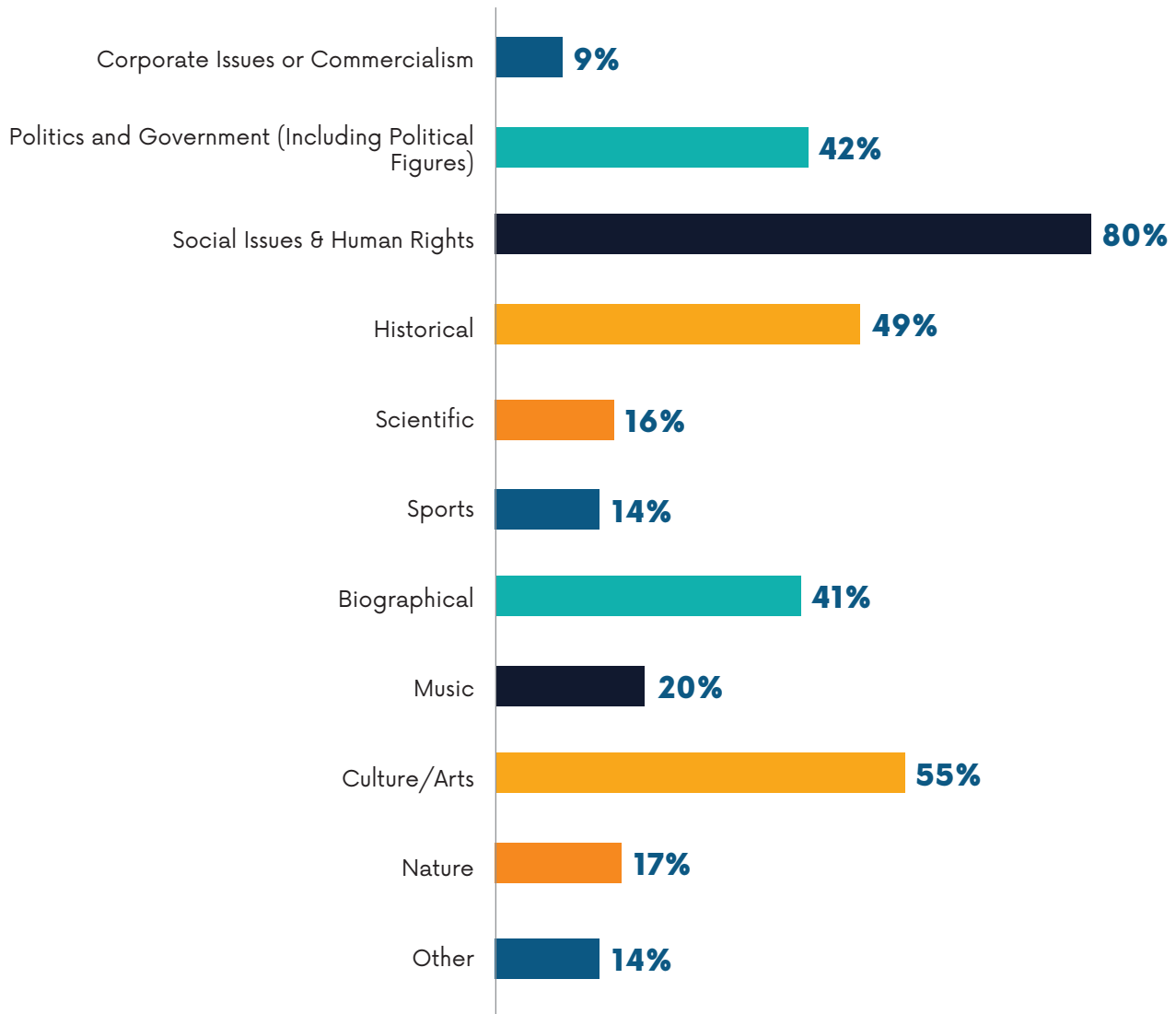
In terms of economics, to what extent do you feel these areas offer positive future opportunities for documentary? (% who said "a great opportunity")



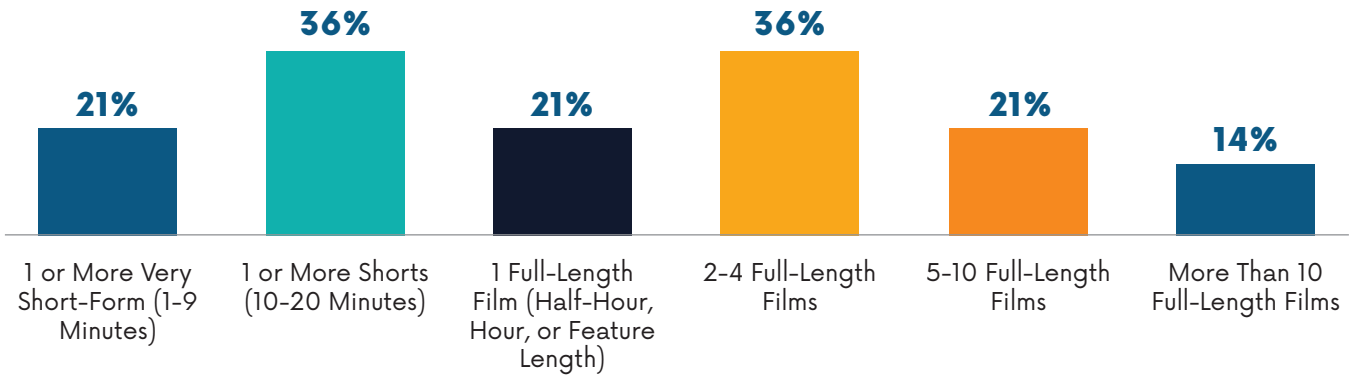
# U.S. DOCUMENTARY MAKERS (DIRECTORS & PRODUCERS): EXPERIENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

Documentaries Produced So Far  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

What topics have you covered in your films over the past two years? [Select all that apply.]  
(Makers Only)

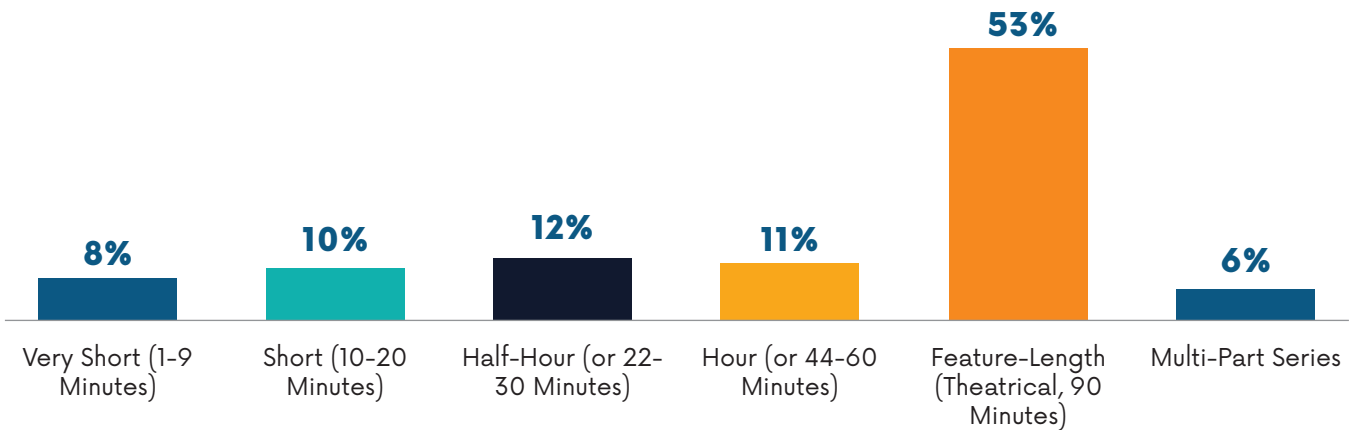


**How many documentaries have you made in your career? [Select all that apply.]  
(Makers Only)**



**Documentary Length of Most Recent Film  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

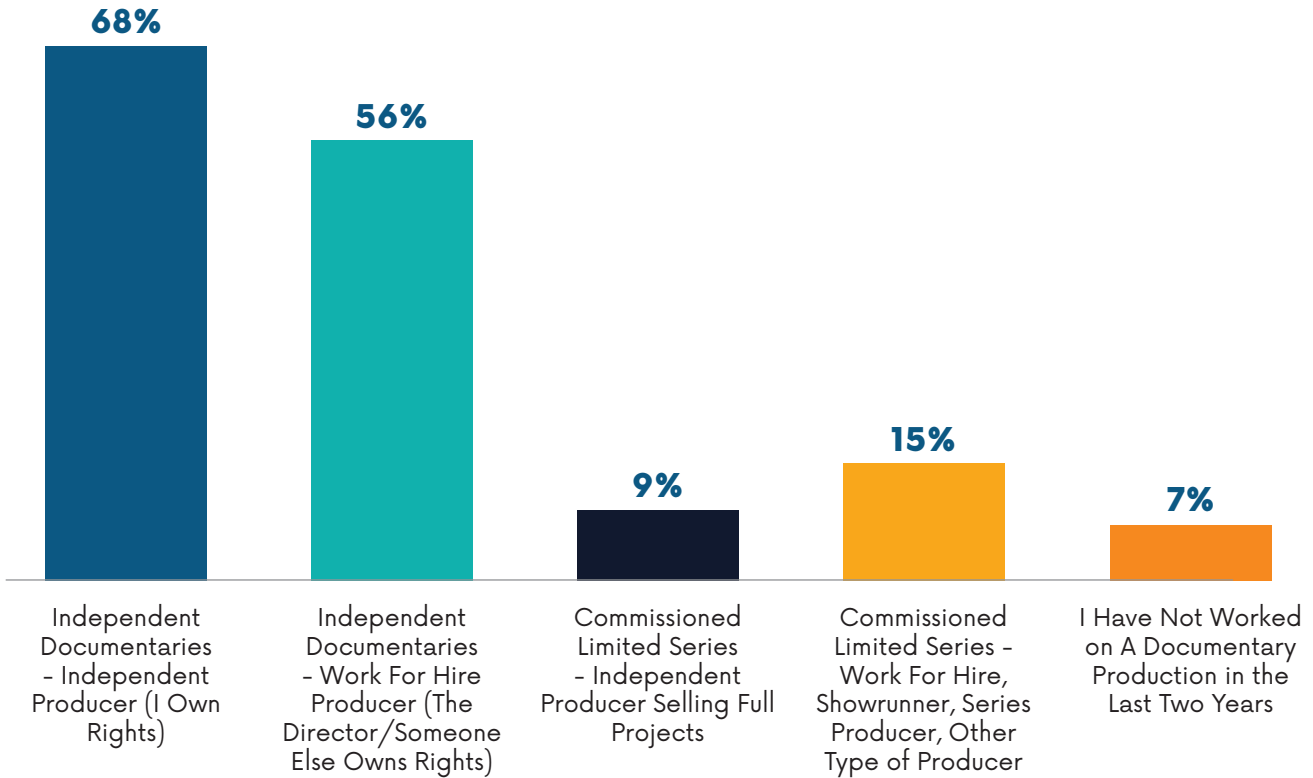
**How would you primarily characterize your most recent documentary in terms of length?  
(Makers Only)**



**Documentary Format of Most Recent Film**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

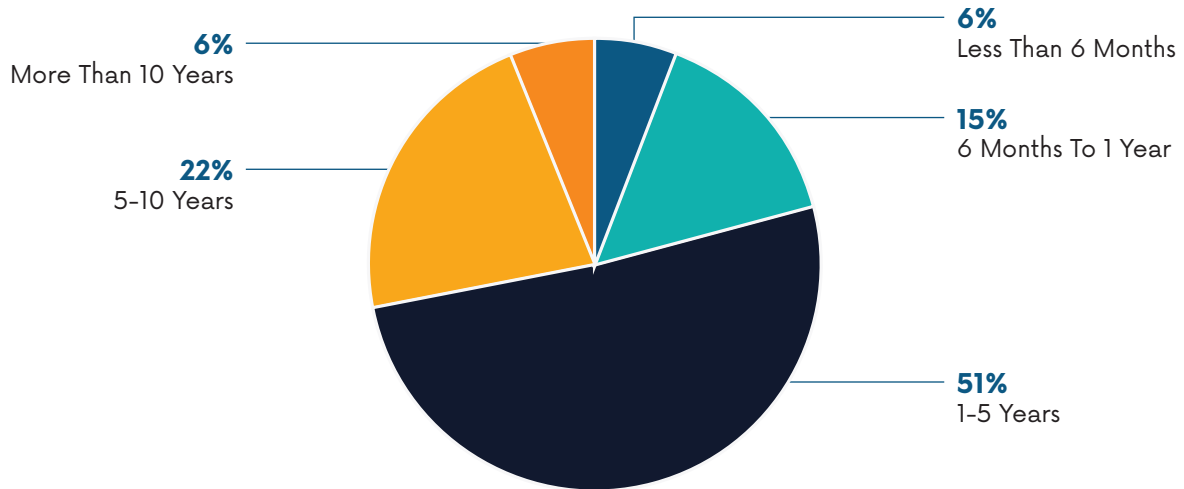


**What kinds of documentary productions have you worked on within the last two years?**  
[Select all that apply.]



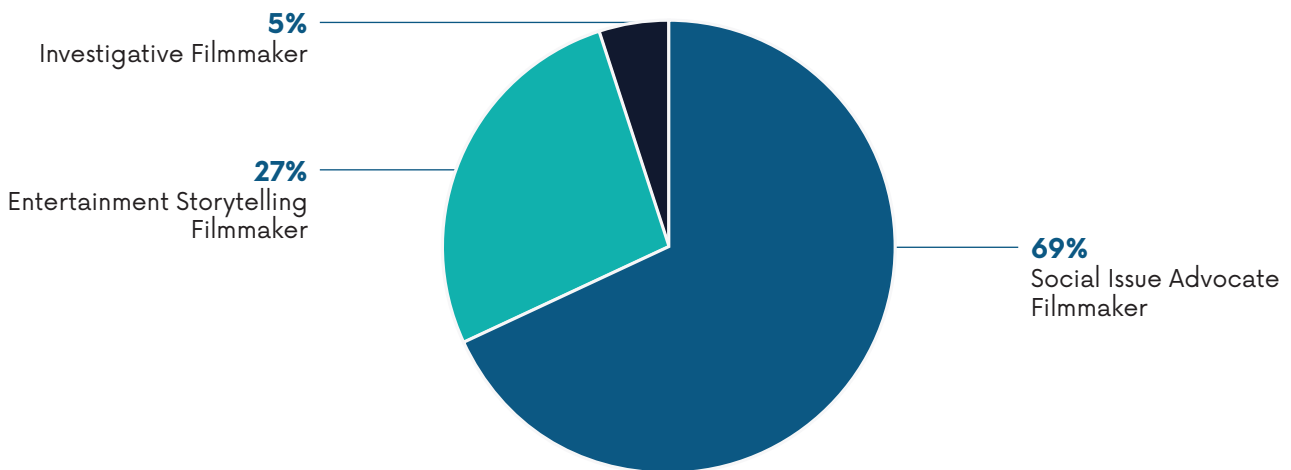
**Amount of Time Spent Making Most Recent Documentary**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**How long did you work on your most recent documentary, in total? (Makers Only)**



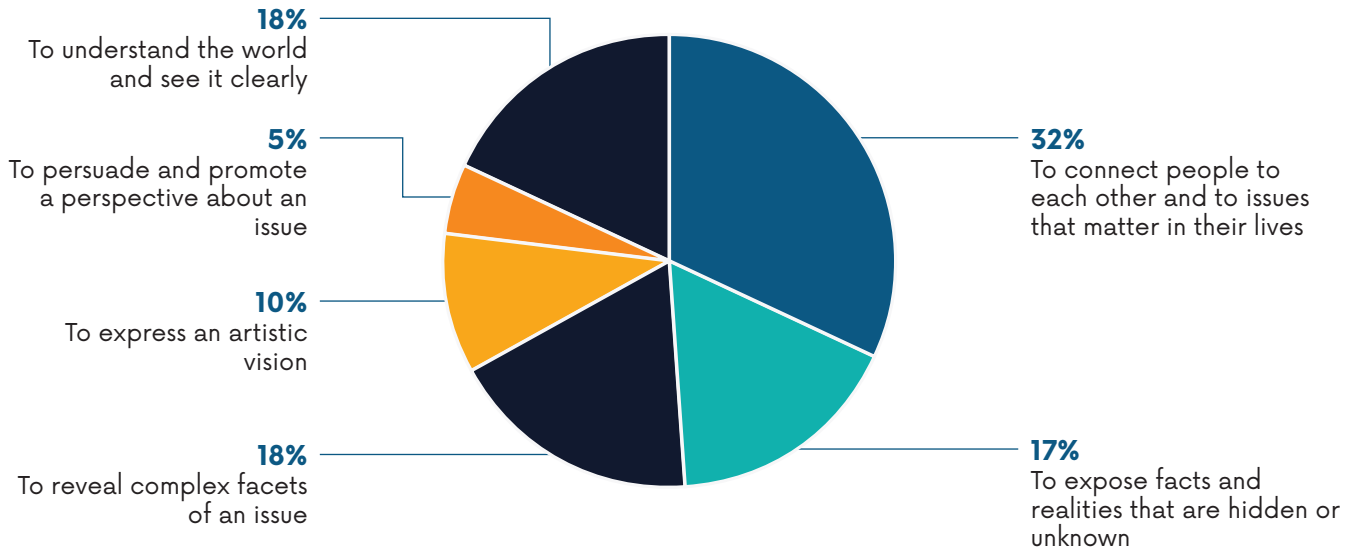
**Social Issue or Pure Entertainment**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Thinking of yourself as a documentary maker, what primary description would you use, of the ones presented here? (Makers Only)**

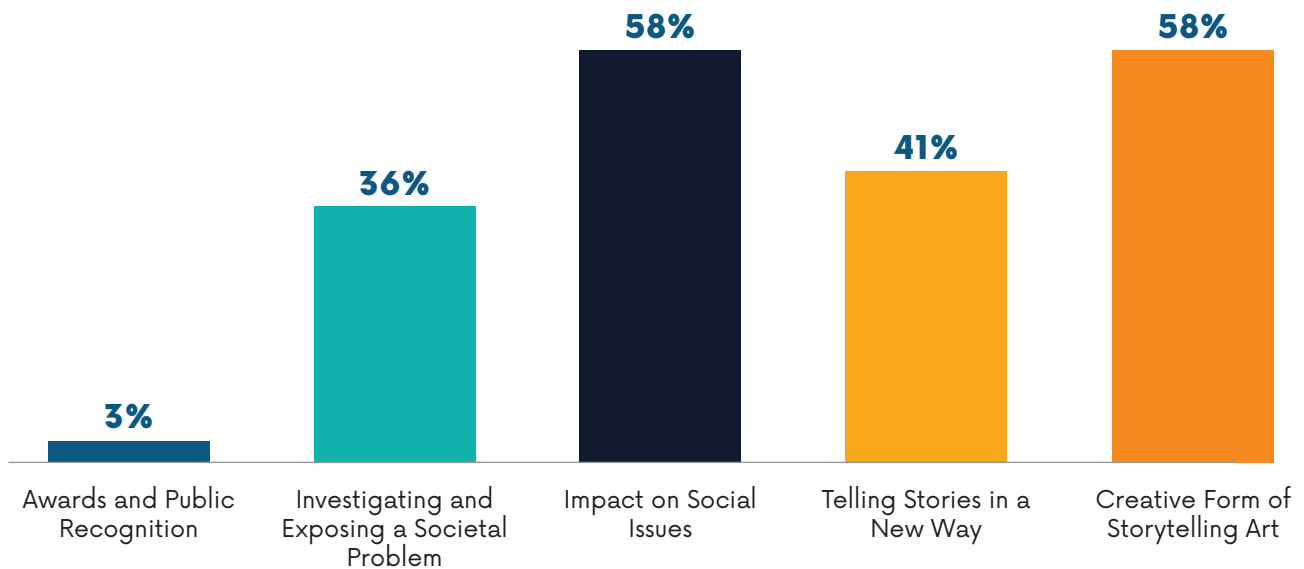


**Social Change Motivation with Documentary**  
 U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**How would you best characterize your approach as a documentary filmmaker? I want: (Makers Only)**



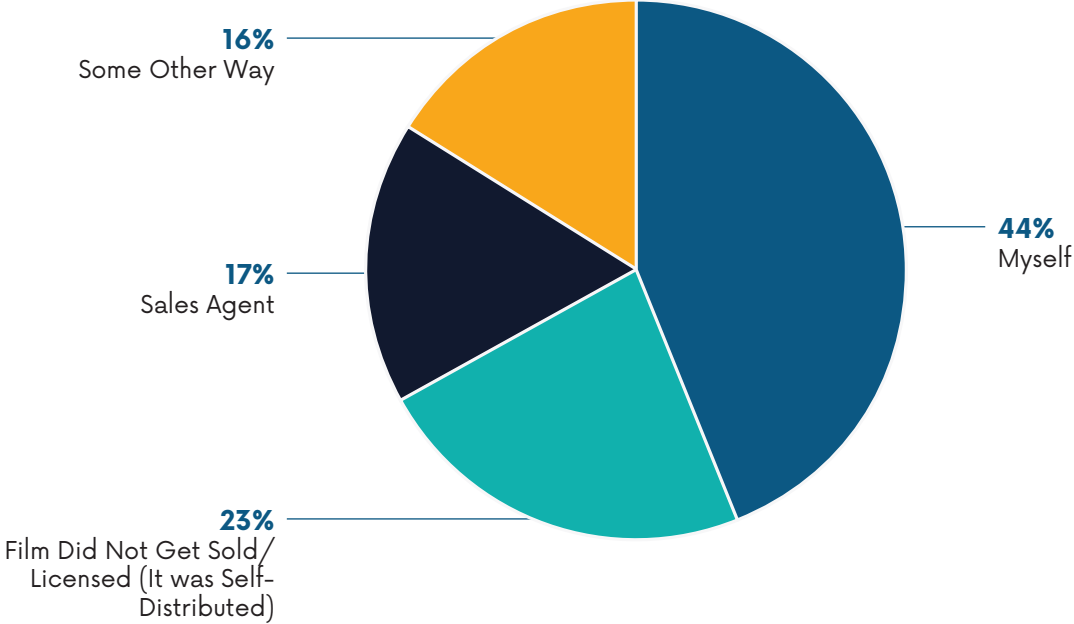
**What motivates you to work in documentary? (Makers Only) (% who said "a primary motivation")**



# U.S. DOCUMENTARY MAKERS: THE ECONOMICS & DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

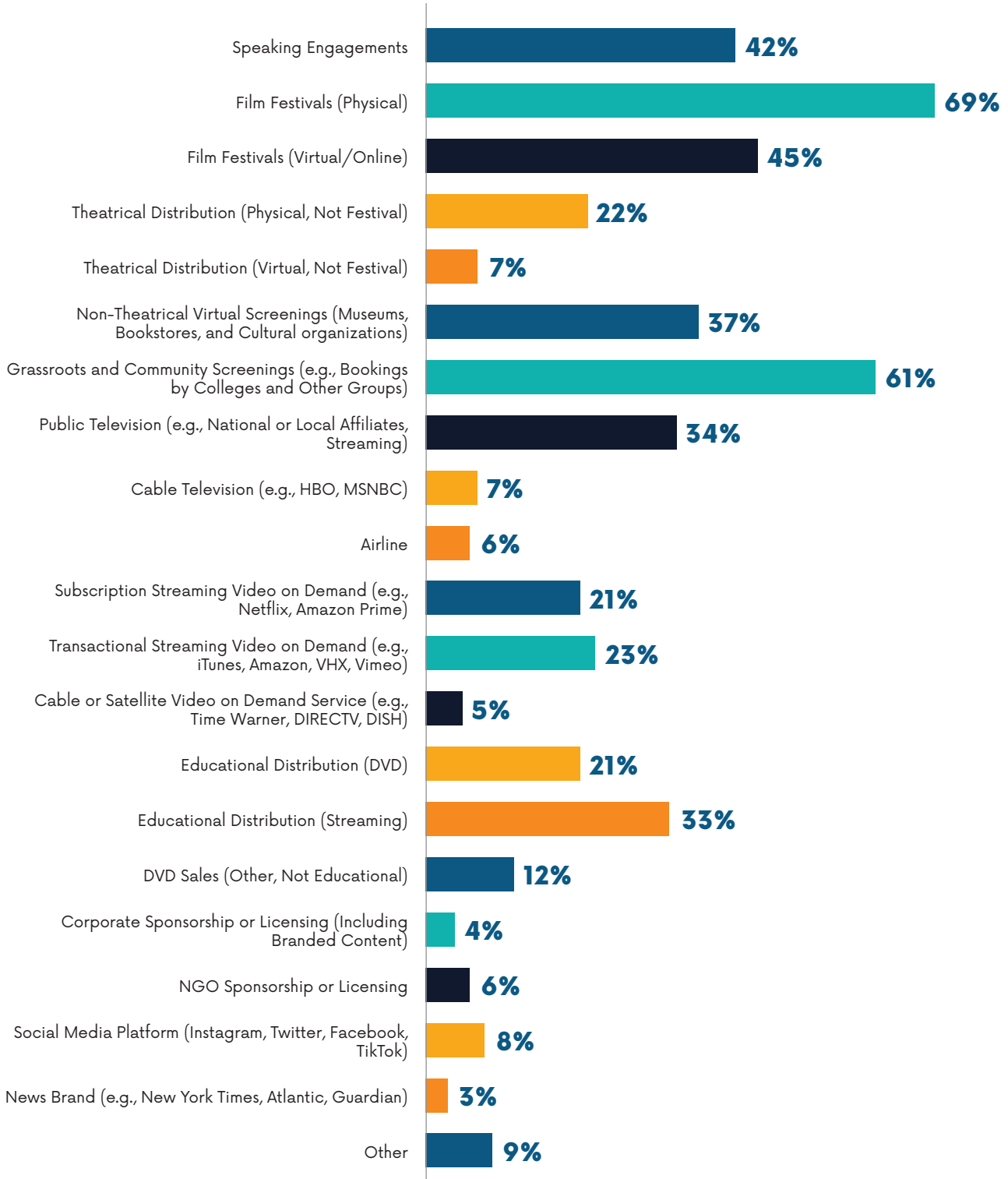
## Film Licensing Experience for Most Recent Film U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

Who was responsible for selling or licensing your most recent film to a distributor?  
(Makers Only)

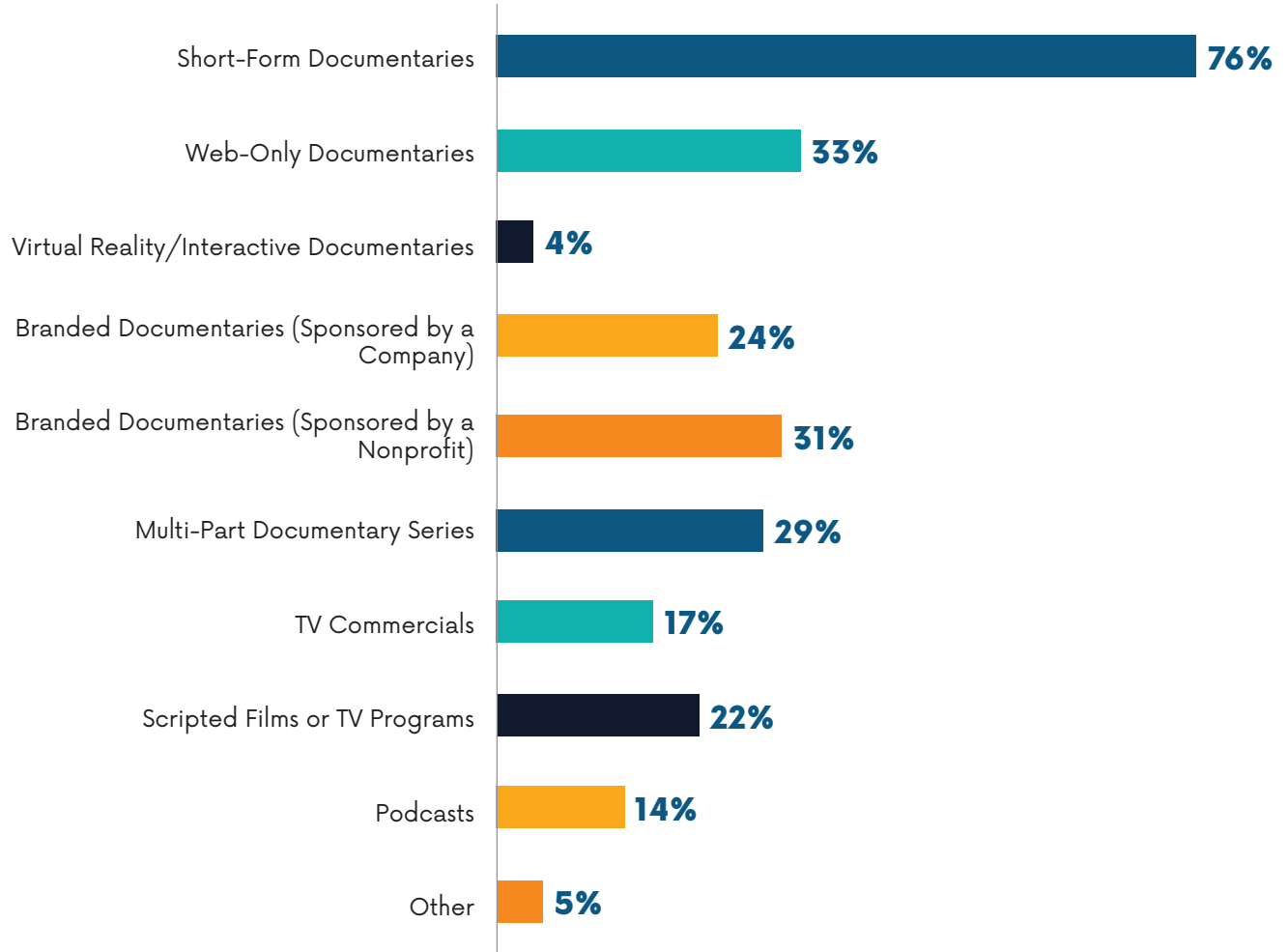


**Distribution for Most Recent Film**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**How was your most recent documentary distributed? [Select all that apply.] (Makers Only)**

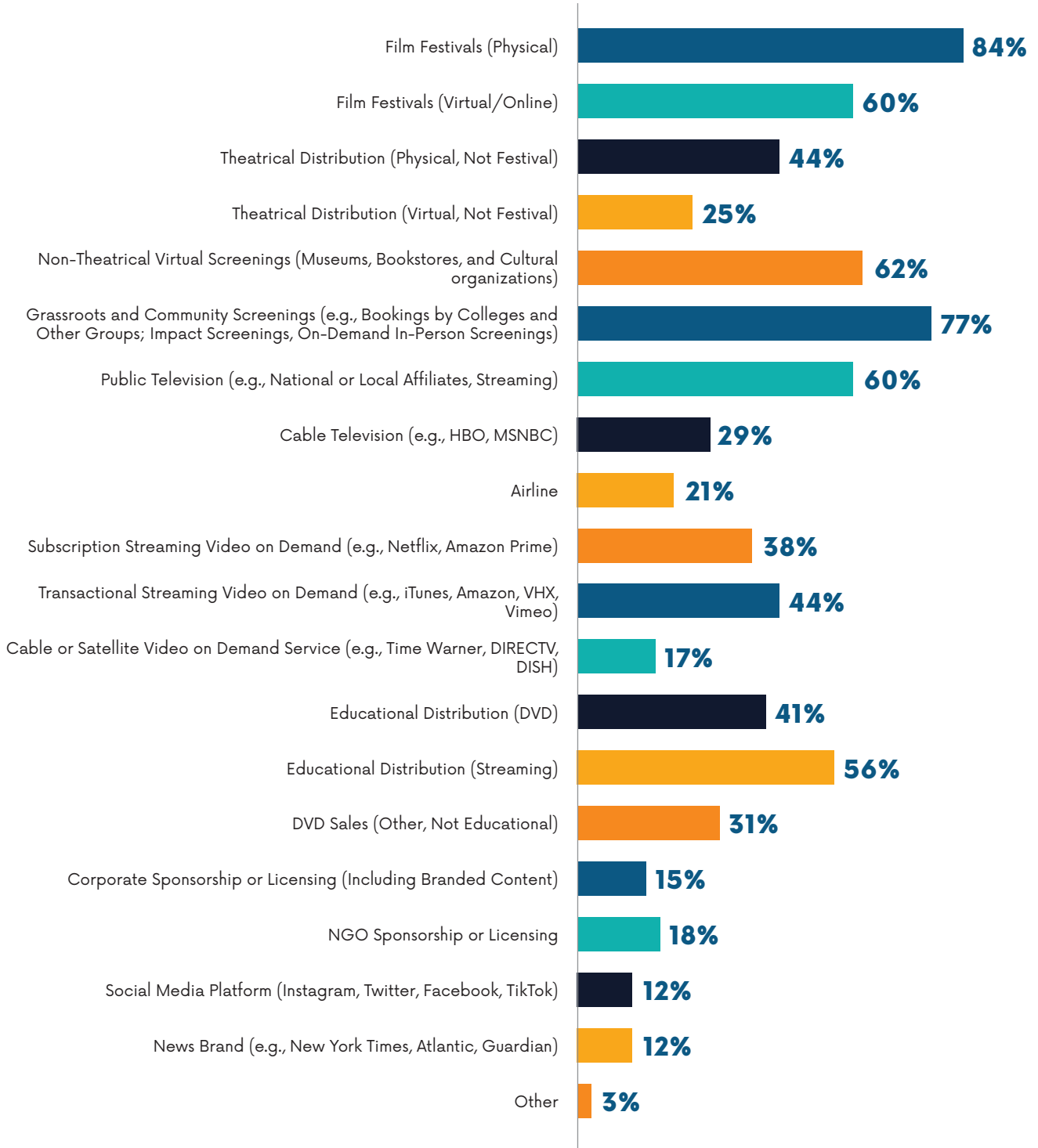


**Which statement reflects your documentary production plans in terms of format?  
(% who said "I have produced this already and plan to continue to do so") (Makers Only)**



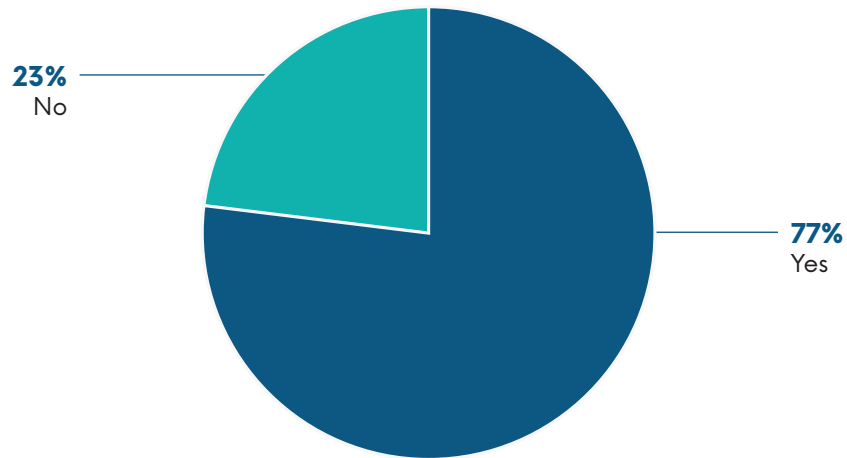
**Distribution Future Plans**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**Which statement best reflects your documentary distribution plans for the future?**  
 (% who said "I have distributed this way already and hope to do so again") (Makers Only)



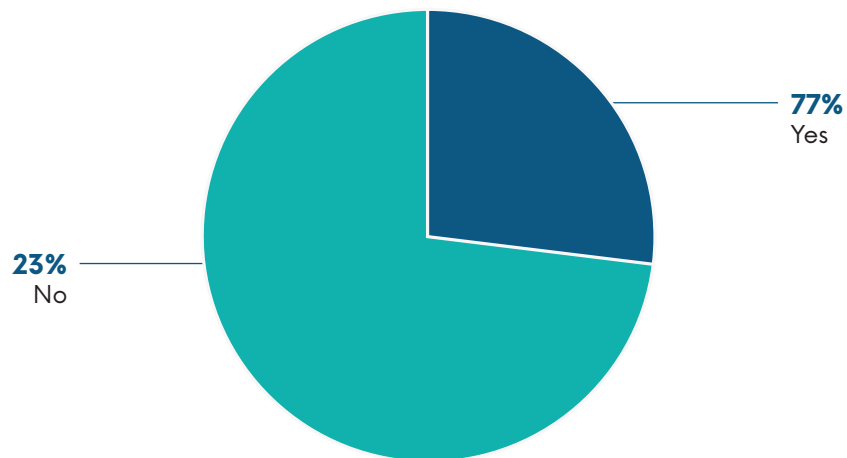
**Community Screenings for Most Recent Film**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Did your most recent film include community screenings as part of your intentional outreach campaign? (Makers Only)**



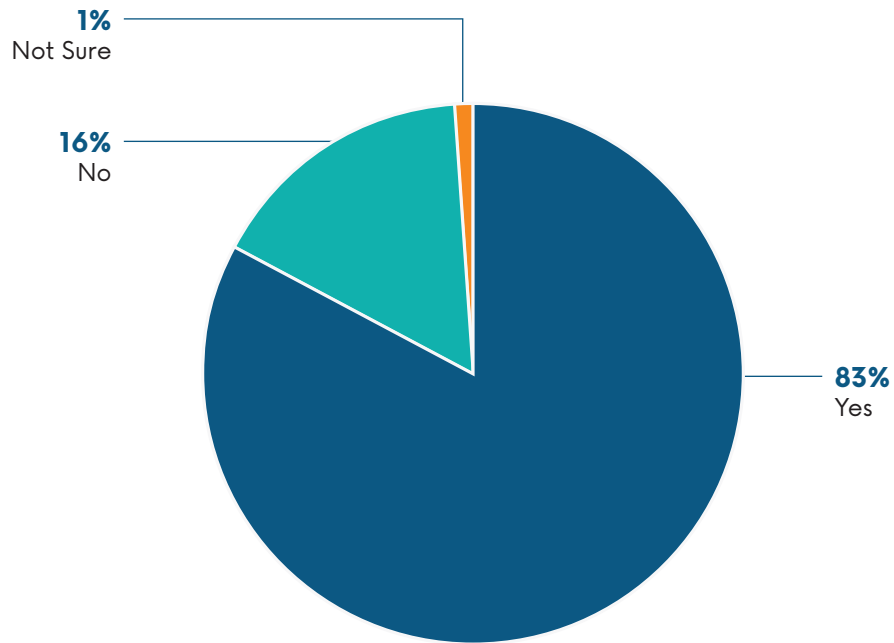
**Work with Impact Producer for Most Recent Film**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Did you work with an impact producer or public engagement consultant on your most recent film? (Makers Only)**



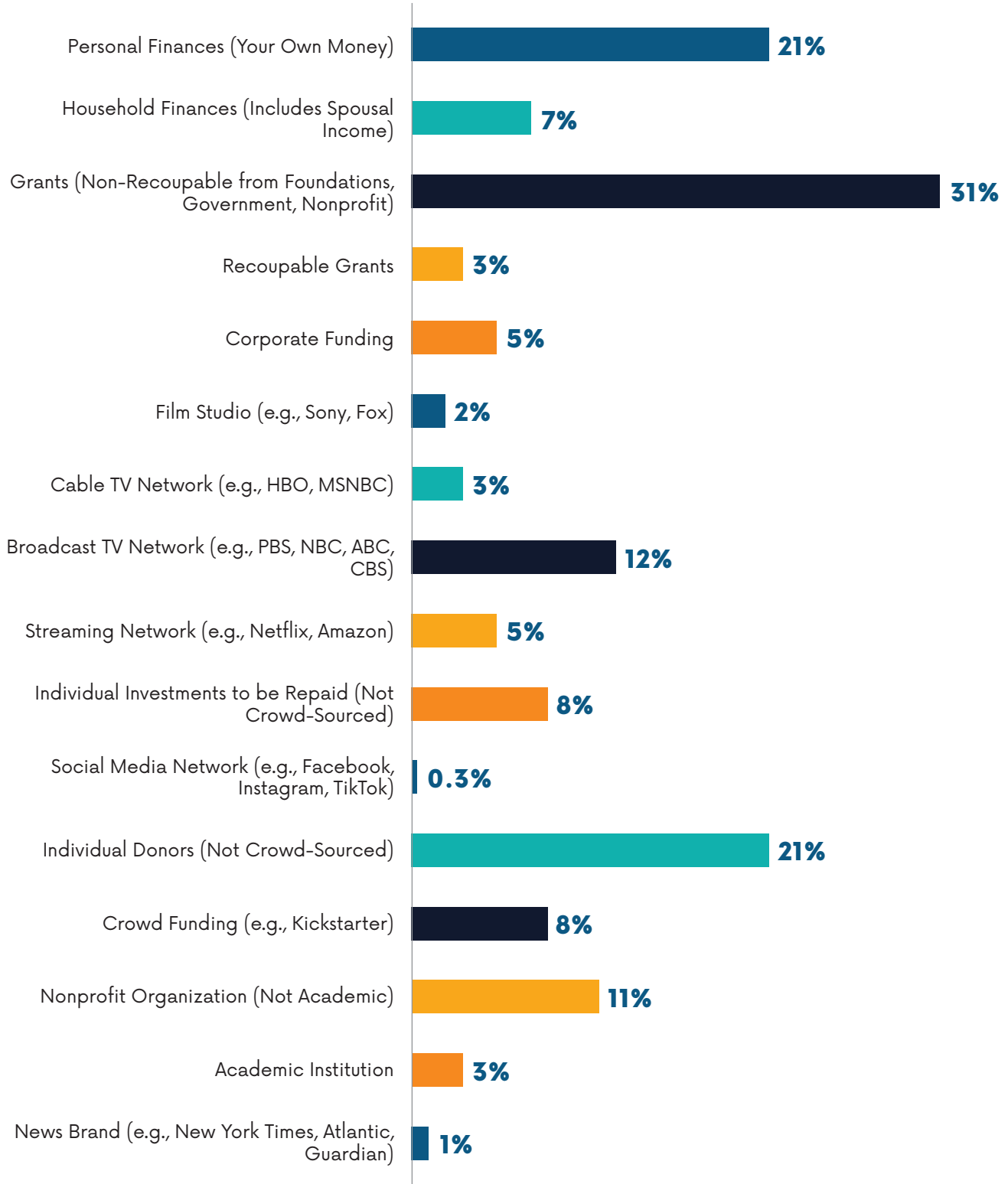


**Have you used fair use in any of your last three documentaries? (Makers Only)**



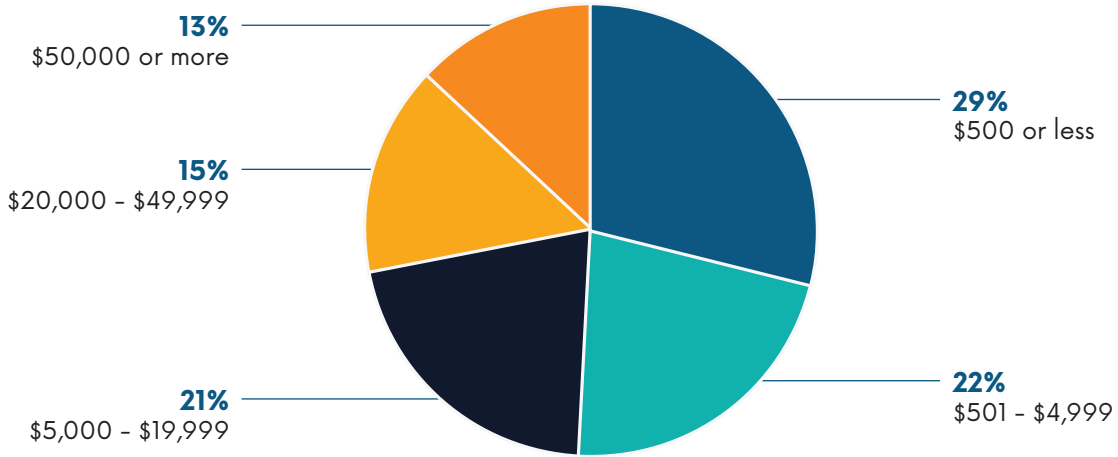
**Main Source of Funding for Most Recent Film**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**How would you characterize each source of funding to produce your most recent documentary? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of funding")**



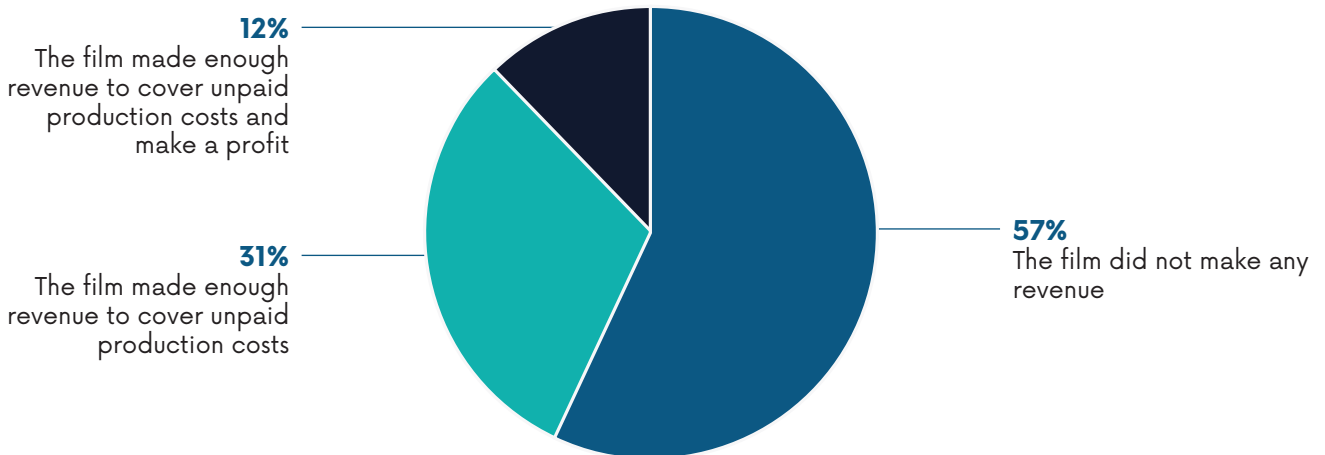
**Amount of Personal Money Spent Making Most Recent Film**  
 U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**How much of your own money did you spend on your most recent documentary project? (U.S. dollars) (Makers Only)**



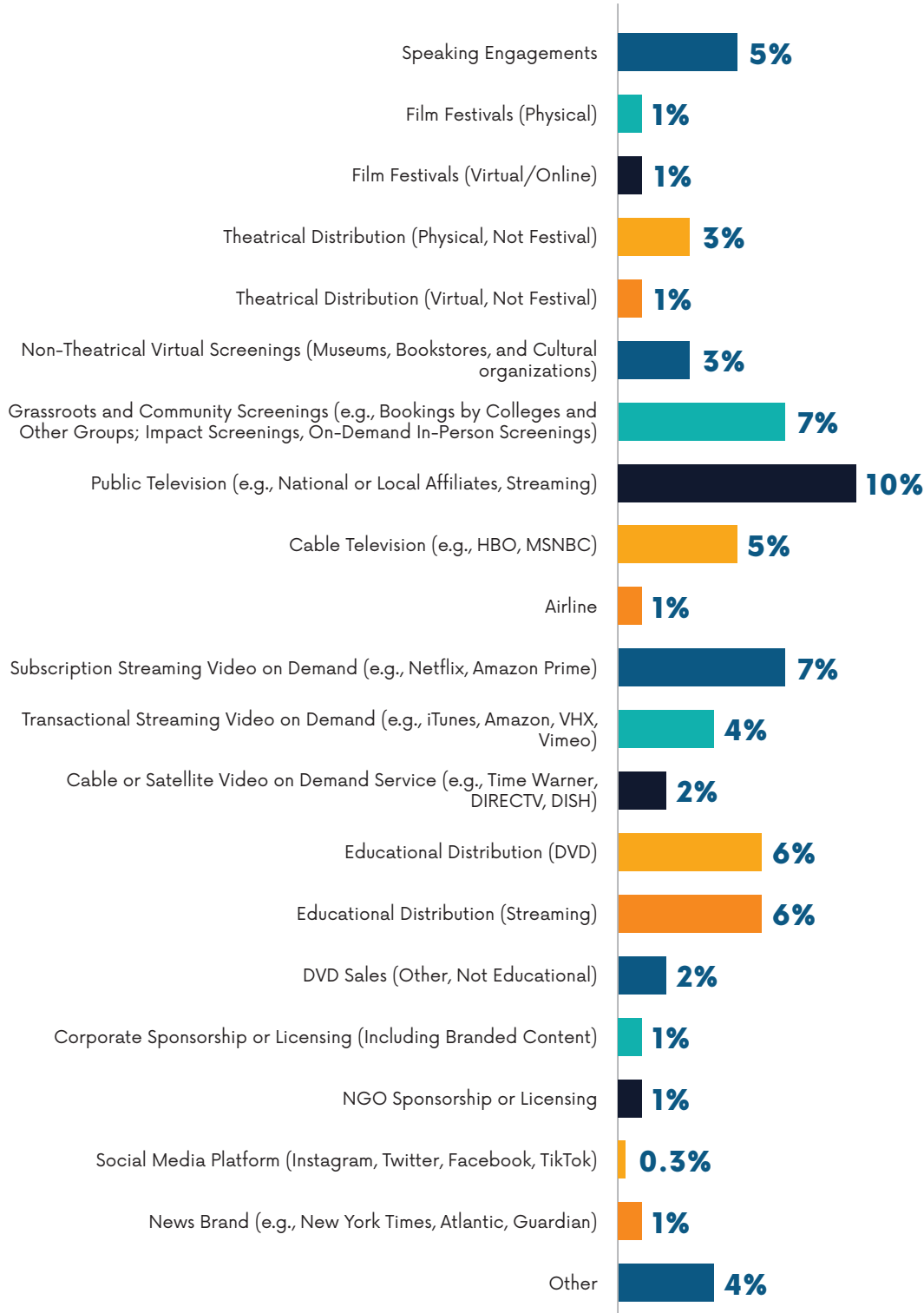
**Revenue from Most Recent Documentary**  
 U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Describe the amount of revenue from your most recent documentary project. (Makers Only)**



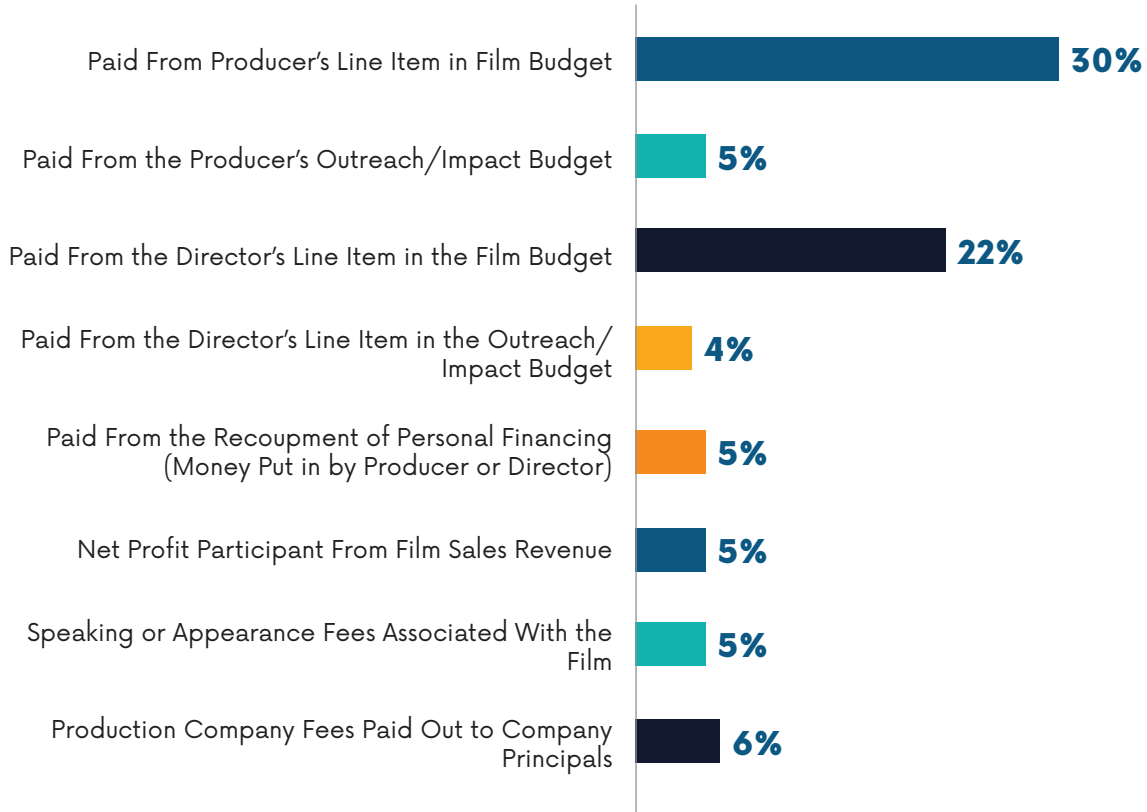
**Main Revenue Source from Most Recent Documentary**  
**U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

**How would you characterize each source of revenue made from your most recent documentary project? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of revenue")**



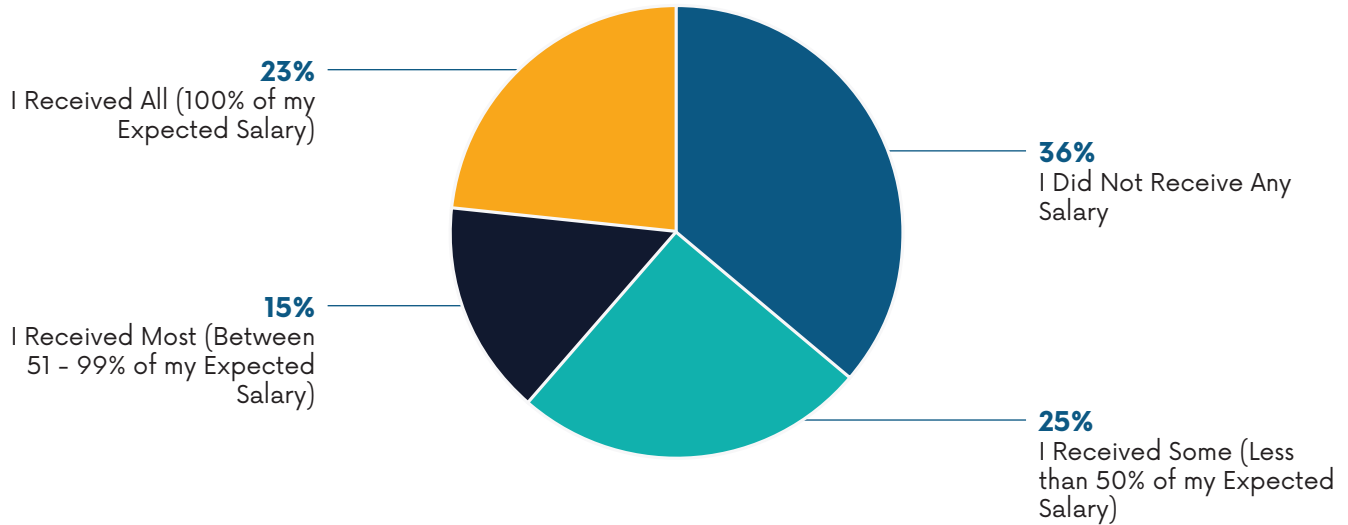
**Main Income Source from Most Recent Documentary**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

**Thinking about personal income from your most recent documentary work, how would you characterize each source of income? (Makers Only) (% who said "main source of income")**



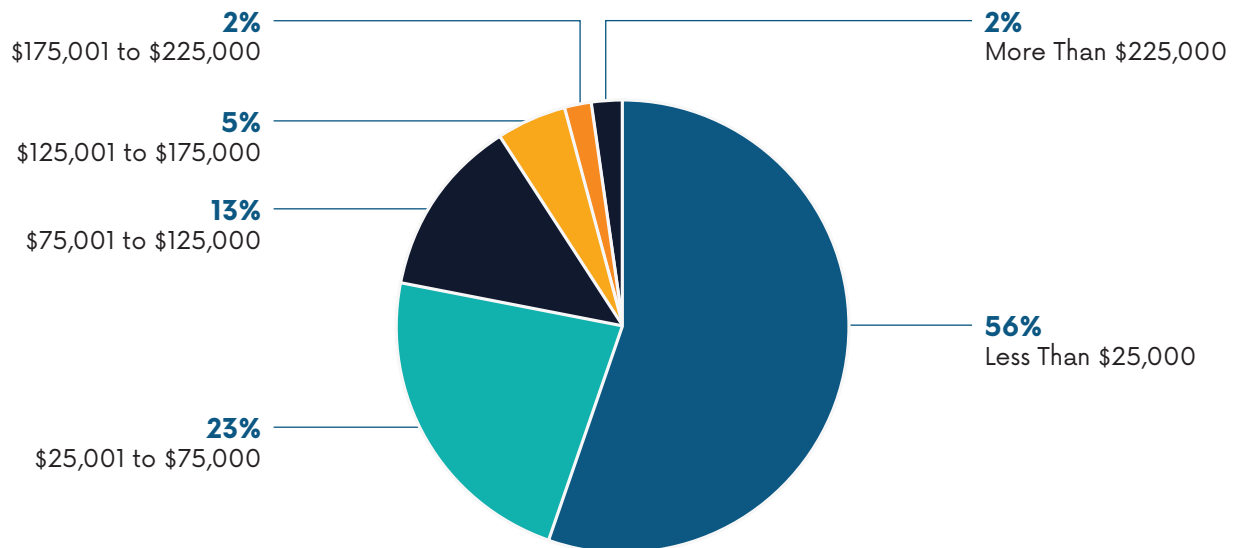
**Salary from Most Recent Documentary**  
 U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

For your most recent documentary project, choose the option that most accurately describes your salary. (Makers Only)



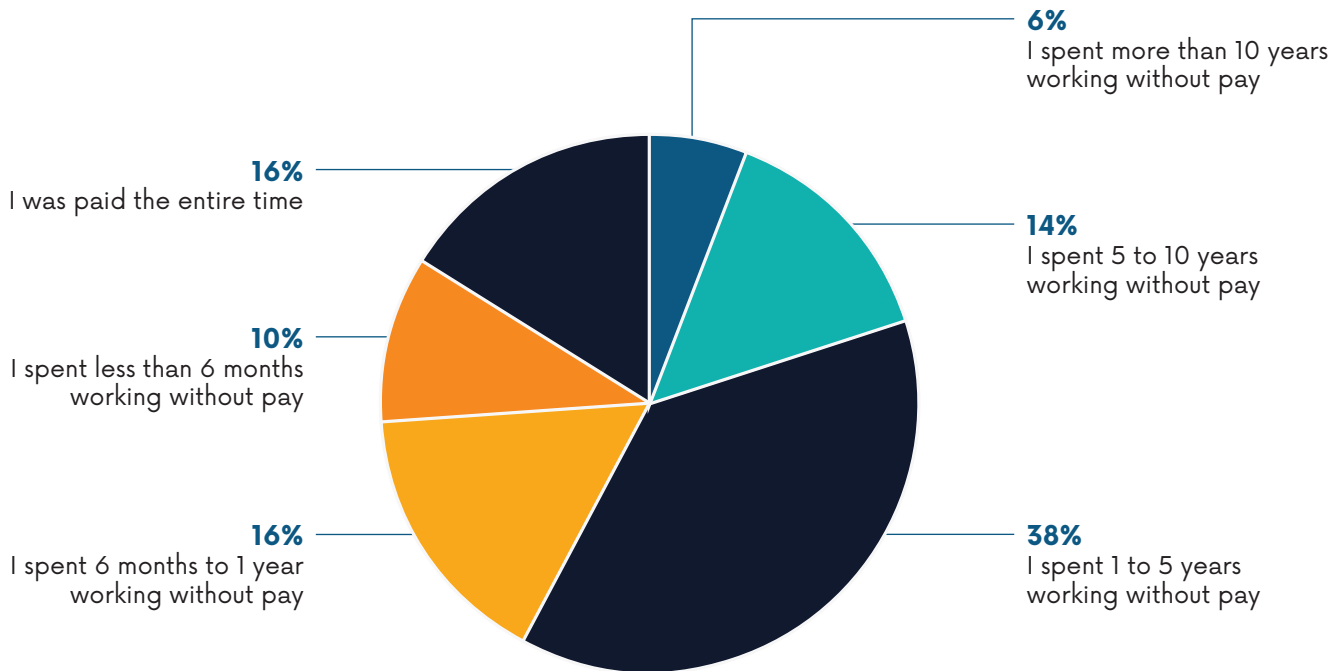
**Personal Income Amount from Most Recent Documentary**  
 U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In total, how much money did you personally get paid – as income, not reimbursement for costs – from your most recent documentary? (Estimate the gross amount, not net after taxes, with currency calculation to U.S. dollars.) (Makers Only)



## Amount of Time Working on Most Recent Documentary Without Pay U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

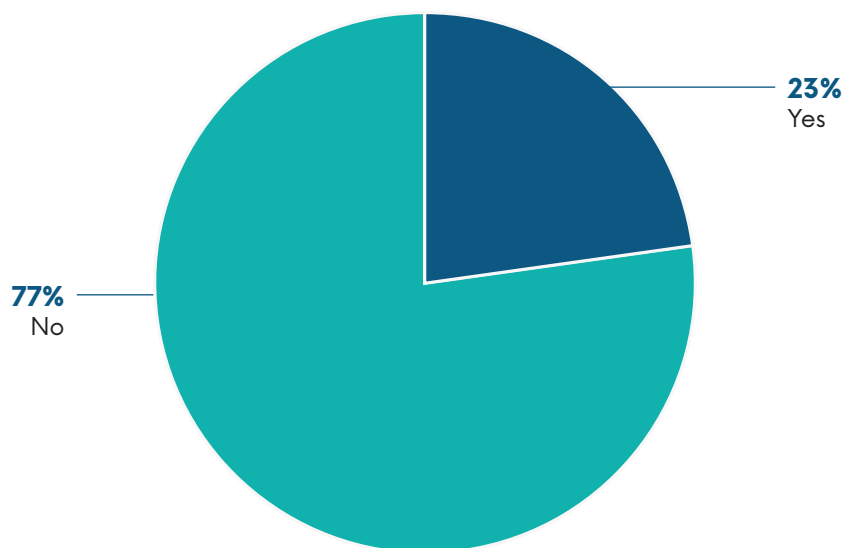
Which statement best characterizes your payment experience on your most recent documentary? (Makers Only)



# THE POLITICS OF U.S. DOCUMENTARY: CENSORSHIP, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Direct or Indirect Censorship or Suppression  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last two years, have you faced any direct or indirect censorship or suppression efforts related to your work (not including self-censorship)? (Makers Only)



**Sources of Censorship/Suppression**  
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

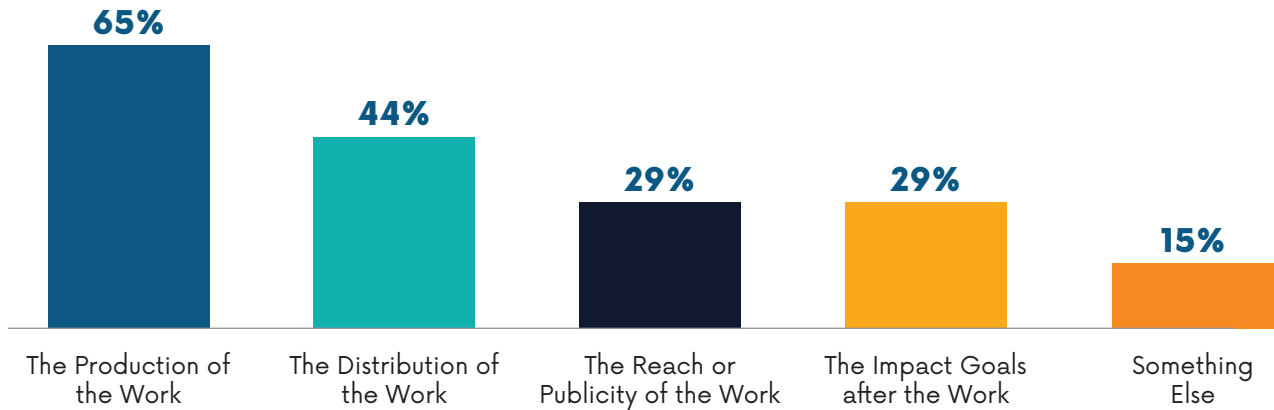
**From what type of source did you experience censorship/suppression? [Select all that apply.] (If “yes” selected for “censorship” question)**



## Focus of Censorship/Suppression

U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

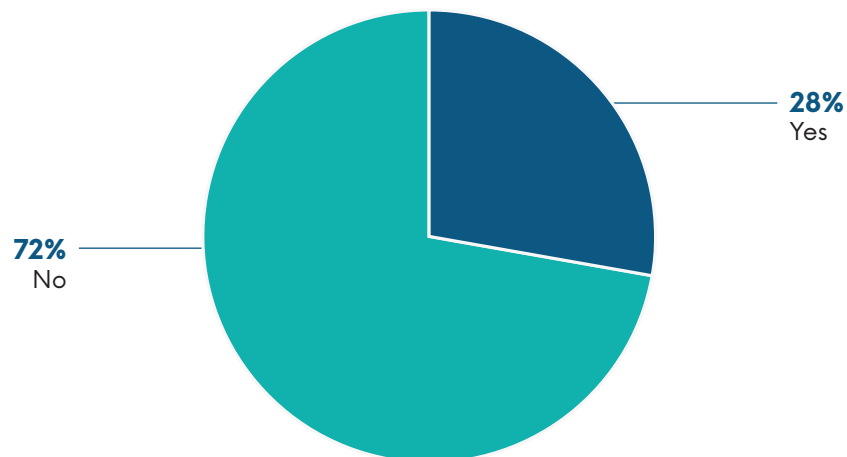
Were these censorship/suppression efforts related to ... [Select all that apply.]  
(If "yes" selected for "censorship" question)



## Self-Censorship/Suppression In Last Two Years

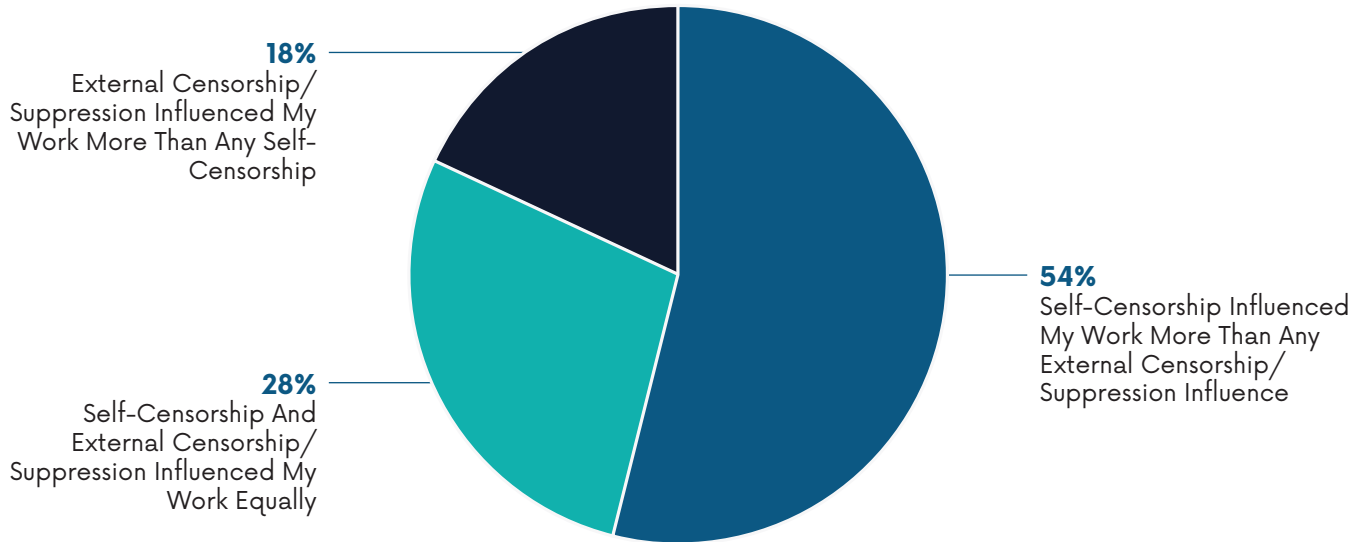
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

In the last two years, have you engaged in self-censorship in your documentary work? (\*Self-censorship is defined here as "any restriction that was carried out by you personally in limiting or restricting your own creative expression—including limiting potentially objectionable beliefs, opinions, storylines, and preferences—in order to prevent any negative reaction to that expression.") (Makers Only)





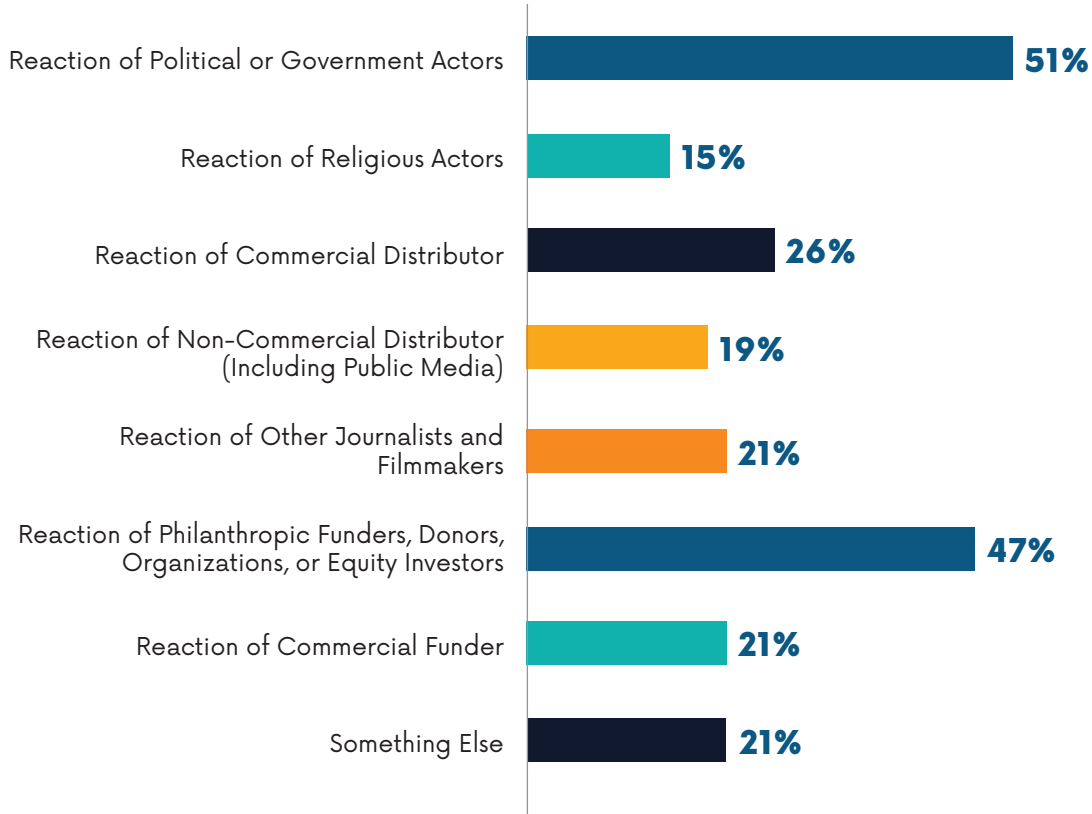
**How would you characterize the level of influence that self-censorship had over your work and creative expression? (If “yes” selected for “self-censorship” question)**



## Sources Contributing Most to Self-Censorship

U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

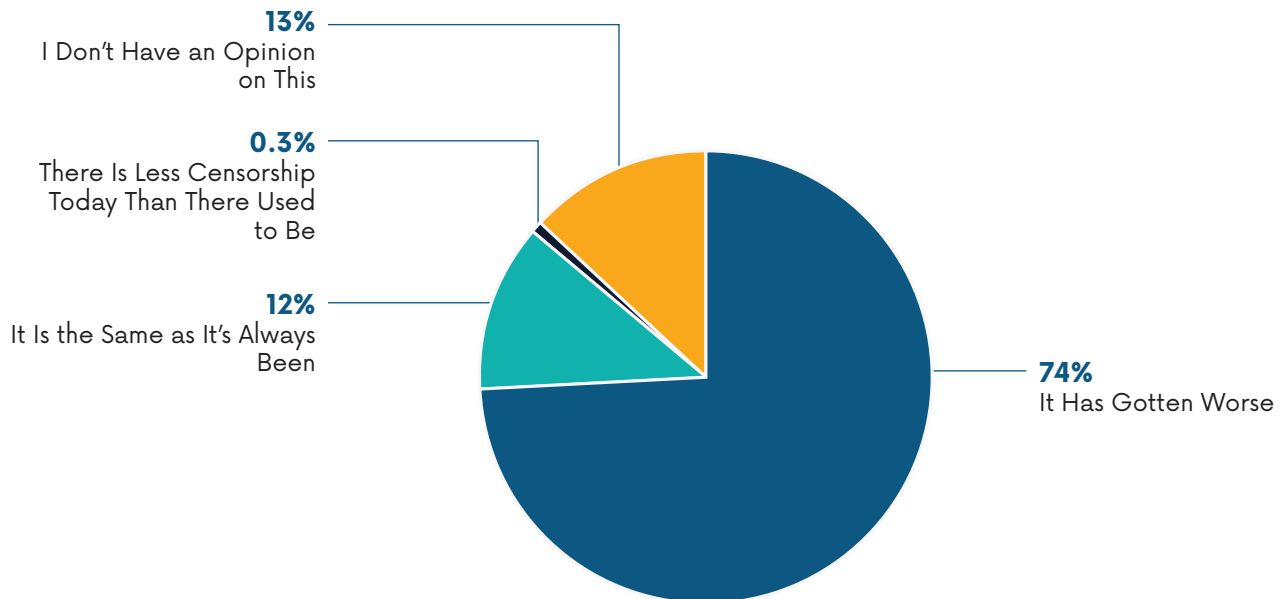
Which of the following sources most contributed to your self-censorship?  
[Select all that apply.] (If “yes” selected for “self-censorship” question)



## Opinions about Censorship/Suppression Efforts Over Past Two Years

U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

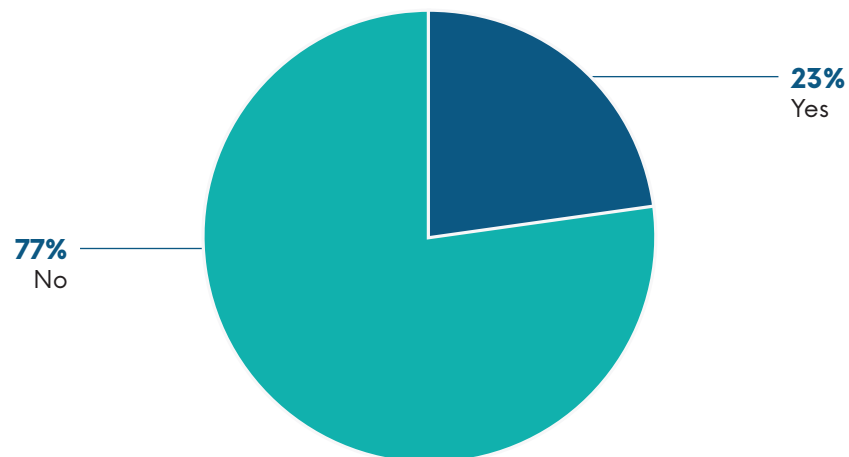
How do you feel about censorship and suppression efforts (related to the documentary industry in the countries where you work) over the last two years? (Makers Only)



## Use of AI Tools in Most Recent Documentary

U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

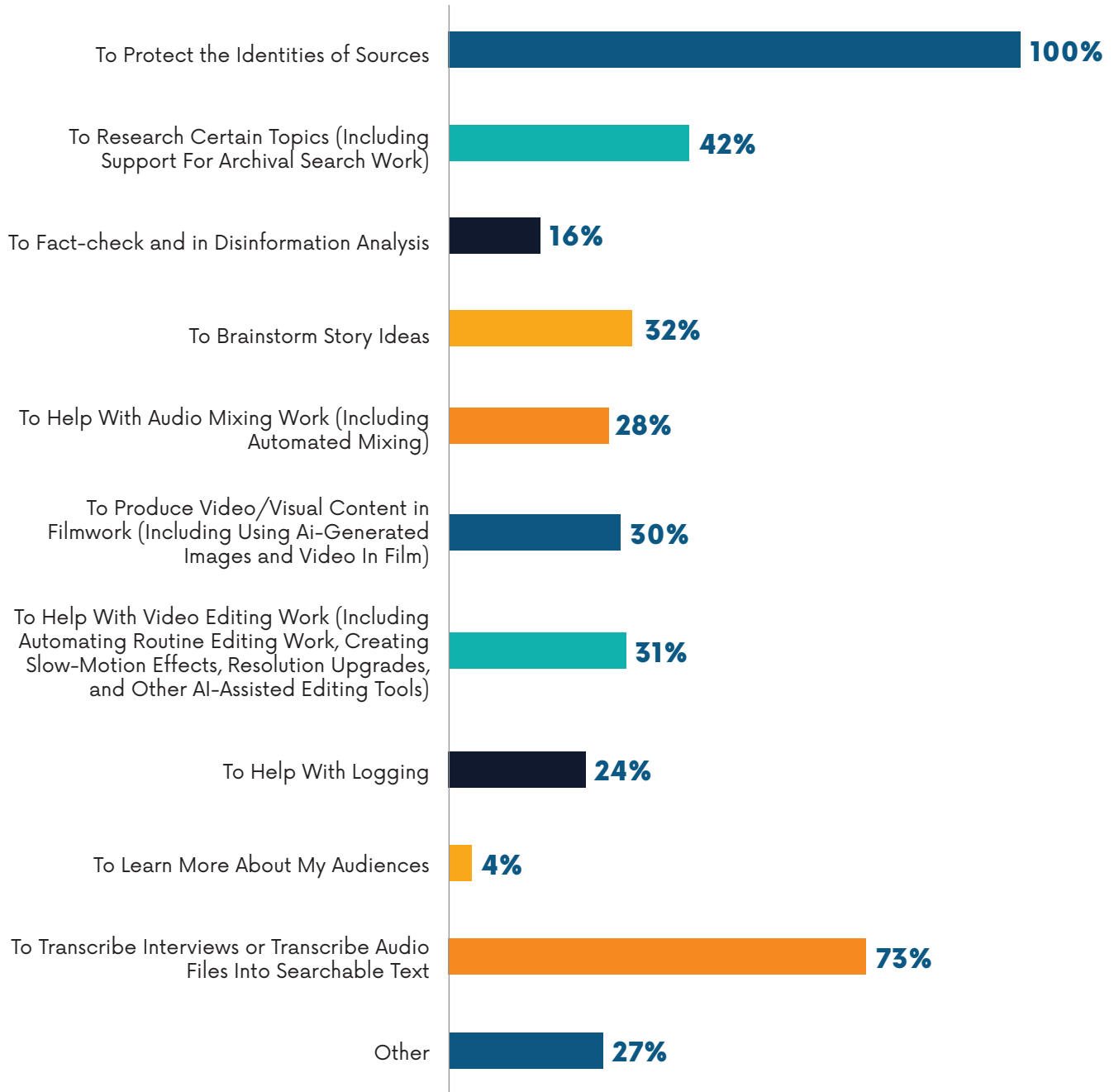
Did you use any artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your most recent documentary work? (Makers Only)



## Type of AI Use in Most Recent Documentary

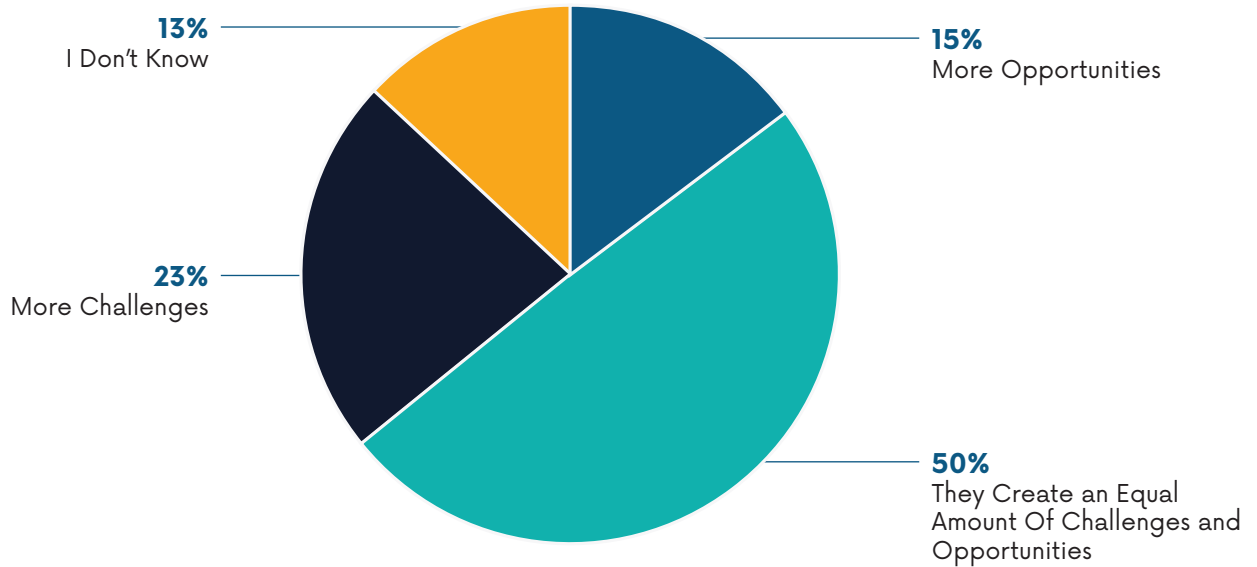
U.S. DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

To what capacity have you used AI tools in your work? [Select all that apply.]  
(If “yes” selected for “AI use” question)





**Do you think AI tools create more opportunities or challenges for filmmakers?  
(Makers Only)**



THE STATE OF THE DOCUMENTARY FIELD

# 2026 STUDY OF GLOBAL DOCUMENTARY PROFESSIONALS

**COMPLETE DATA  
FOR GLOBAL AND  
U.S. RESPONDENTS**



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