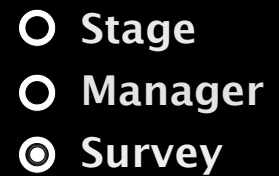


## 2015 STAGE MANAGER SURVEY UNITED STATES

Conducted: November 2015

Report Published: January 2016

<http://smsurvey.info>



When the Stage Management program at the University of Iowa conducted its first survey of stage managers in 2006, we relied on our own connections and support from groups such as the Stage Managers' Association (<http://www.stagemanagers.org>) and the SM Network (<http://smnetwork.org>) to receive 283 responses. Nearly a decade later, the Stage Manager Survey continues to grow through its partners (213 participants from the SMA and 106 participants from the SM Network) but also through the power of social media. In 2015, 735 stage managers reported finding the survey via social media and our total reach nearly doubled the previous record: 1,662 completed surveys.

Another major supporter of the 2015 survey was Actor's Equity Association (AEA), which promoted the survey in *Equity News* and through its social media outlets. We surpassed our previous record of 478 AEA stage managers in 2013 with a total of 618 responses this year. While Equity does not track how many of its members are stage managers since some members work as both actors and stage managers, it does report that an average of 895 AEA stage managers work in any given week. Also, according to *The 2014-2015 Theatrical Season Report*, published in the December 2015 edition of *Equity News*, 17,712 Equity members worked in the past year. If no more than 10% of all AEA members work as stage managers (it is very likely that the percentage is lower), then 1,771 stage managers worked under Equity contracts in 2014-2015. In our survey, 504 Equity stage managers reported earning income from stage management in the past twelve months. While the timelines of the AEA report and this survey do not perfectly align and some AEA members may be working on education contract waivers or non-theatrical projects, it could reasonably be argued that this study surveyed at least a quarter of all active AEA stage managers.

In order to investigate new topics and to reduce participant fatigue, every survey cycle contains new questions in addition to the longitudinal tracking of demographics (age, gender, race, etc.). Please visit our website, <http://smsurvey.info>, for reports on previous surveys. Each survey report follows a similar format to assist readers in tracking trends over time.

Ultimately, the success of this survey is dependent upon the hundreds of volunteers who shared their practices and views about our profession. The goal of this survey is to identify trends among stage managers. While this study will never fully represent all American stage managers, it hopefully will allow us to analyze our agreements and disagreements, track our evolution as a field, and glimpse part of our future.

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## SECTION I: STAGE MANAGER DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2015 survey recorded 1,662 complete responses plus an additional 270 responses from participants who answered at least 30% of the survey but did not finish the full survey. Responses that did not reach the 30% completion rate were discarded to reduce the risk of duplicate responses or responses from people who realized that they were not eligible for this survey. All survey data in this report is based on the number of recorded responses for that question. So an early topic about SM/ASM preferences (58% of participants preferred the SM role, 17% preferred to ASM, and 25% had no preference) is based on 1,911 responses but statistics about a later topic related to career satisfaction are based on 1,669 responses. Participants were not required to answer all questions.

This survey is based on complete anonymity for the individual. While we do track trends for larger groups, e.g. the 1,287 stage managers who took the survey for the first time, we do not search for data from groups smaller than 10 as it might inadvertently reveal an individual's views. We did ask several demographic questions of all participants as part of our longitudinal study of the profession.

The survey was open to anyone who has stage managed an American theatrical production. When asked to identify their current occupation, 55% indicated stage manager, 21% were assistant stage managers, 1% were retired, 18% were students, 6% were teachers, 6% were apprentices or interns, 20% held other positions in the arts, and 12% listed "Other." It was possible for participants to select more than one occupation, given the trend towards multiple sources of income. Later sections of this report will isolate the responses of just the current stage managers and assistant stage managers: 76% of those surveyed. Participants were also asked how many weeks they had worked in a stage management role in the previous twelve months:

Figure 1: Weeks Served in a Stage Management Role

	0 Weeks	1-2 Weeks	3-10 Weeks	11-20 Weeks	21-30 Weeks	31-40 Weeks	41-52 Weeks
ASM	26%	5%	24%	18%	13%	8%	5%
SM	15%	6%	24%	21%	15%	11%	8%
PSM	26%	5%	17%	16%	13%	11%	12%

The survey was designed primarily for stage managers working in Theatre, but many stage managers work in multiple arts disciplines for a variety of employers. We asked in which genres the survey participants had worked most often over the past two years:

Figure 2: Most Common Art Forms/Genres of Stage Management Work in Past Two Years

	Responses	%
Non-Profit Theatre	1307	69%
Commercial Theatre	555	29%
Theatre for YA (N-P & Commercial)	393	21%
Dance	318	17%
Opera	269	14%
Cirque/Cirque-style	68	4%
Circus	42	2%
Industrials	110	6%
Events	522	27%
College/University	675	35%
Other	134	7%

The most common answers for the Other category were concerts, puppetry, high school productions, immersive installations, benefit events, and theme parks. Participants who reported working in theatre were then asked whether they worked primarily on Musicals (29%), Straight Plays (46%) or an equal split between the two (25%). For stage managers who reported working in dance, 25% reported working primarily on Ballet, 64% reported Modern Dance, and 37% reported working on other dance genres such as Hip Hop, Jazz, Folk/Cultural, or a mix of genres.

Participants also reported the number of different theatres/producers for whom they had worked in the past year [Figure 3] and the percentage of their annual income that was earned through stage management [Figure 4]. The number of employers did not vary by more than 2% from the 2013 survey: there was a slight decrease in the Five Employers category that was reflected in a slight increase in the Four Employers category. There was, however, an increase in the number of participants who earn 100% of their income from stage management jobs (364 participants) and those who earn 75% of their income from stage management (201 participants). This data is very encouraging in that more participants are relying completely or primarily on stage management work for their income. The survey tracked income percentages rather specific dollar amounts as acceptable salary amounts will vary based on region.

Figure 3: Number of Employers Over Past Twelve Months

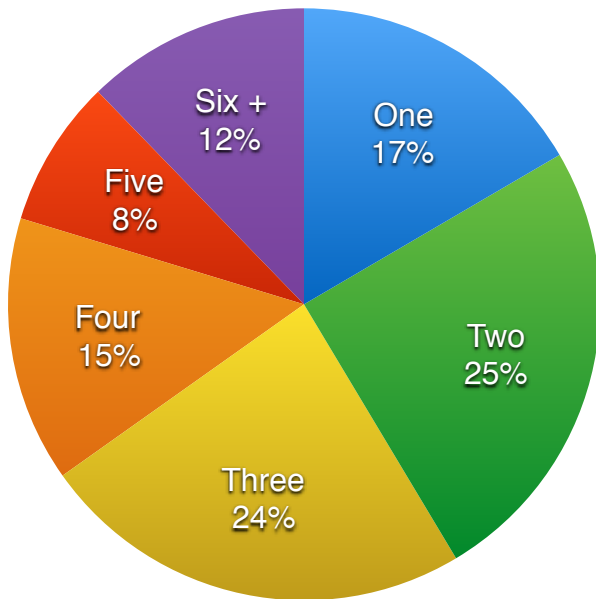
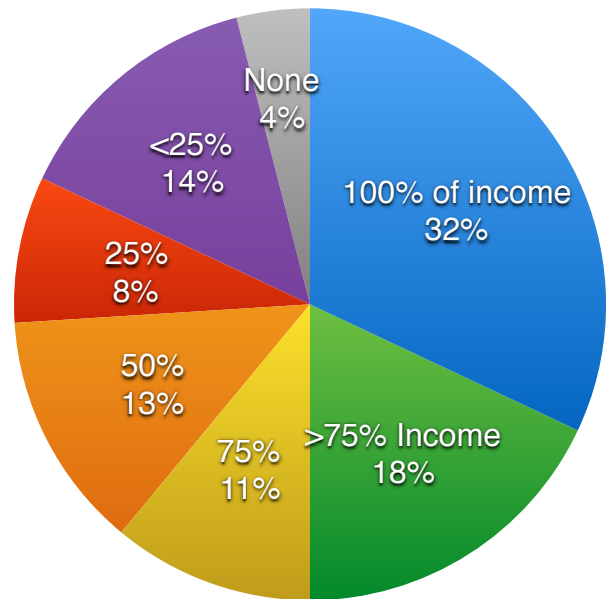


Figure 4: Income from Stage Management



Survey participants also shared information about the number of years they have worked in stage management and their ages. Forty participants (2%) reported being 61-70 years old and another dozen participants (1%) reported being 71 years old or older.

Figure 5: Years of Experience

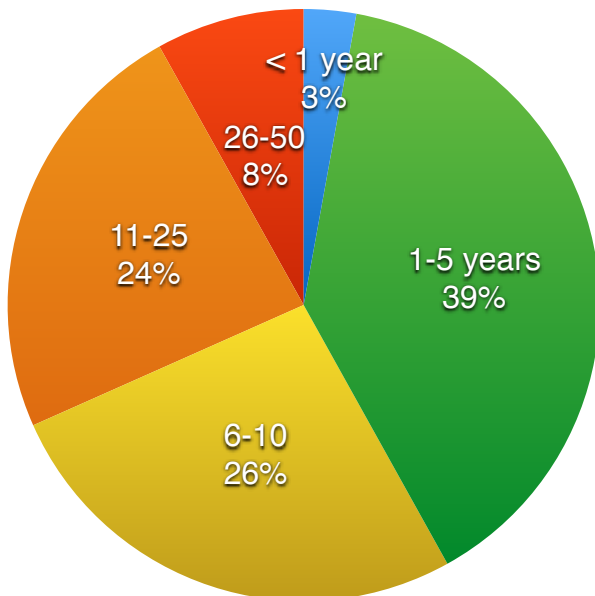
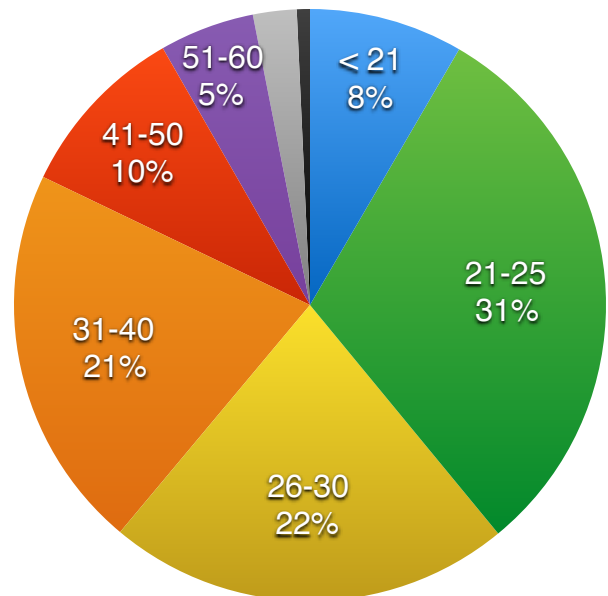


Figure 6: Age



While the largest experience bracket was 1-5 years, 555 participants have worked as stage managers for more than 10 years. Moreover, Figure 7 demonstrates that years of experience and age are not directly linked.

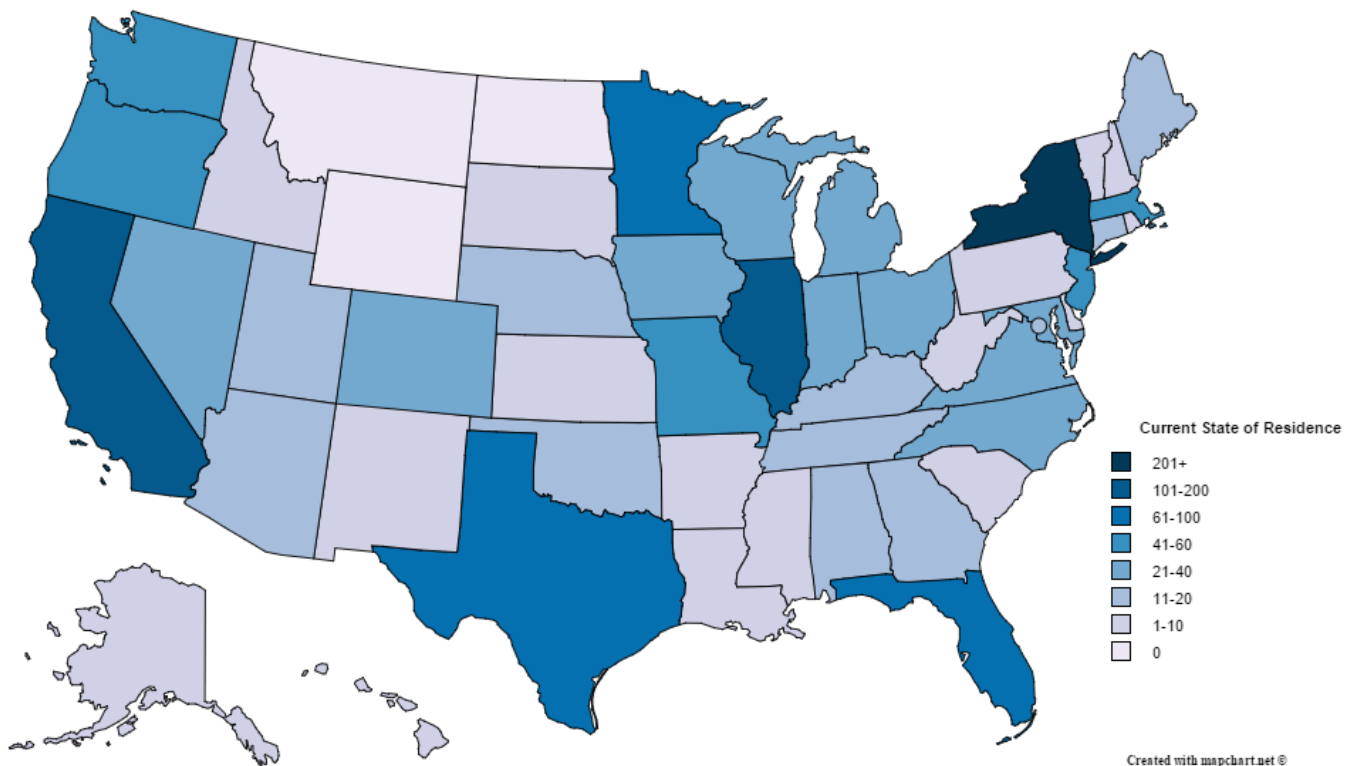
Figure 7: Experience Levels Divided by Age Brackets

Age	SMs by Age Group	<1 Year Experience	1-5 Years Experience	6-10 Years Experience	11-25 Years Experience	26-50 Years Experience
Under 21	139	10%	84%	6%	--	--
21-25	511	5%	71%	23%	1%	--
26-30	369	2%	37%	52%	9%	--
31-40	351	1%	7%	36%	57%	1%
41-50	161	1%	3%	9%	65%	22%
51-60	87	1%	2%	8%	29%	60%
61-70	40	--	3%	8%	8%	83%
71+	12	--	--	--	8%	92%

Participants identified their state of residence [Figure 8], indicating participation from 47 states. As has been the case in every survey, the state of New York had the strongest representation with 297 responses, but responses have increased significantly from other states, including California (199), Illinois (157), Texas (76), Florida (65), and Minnesota (63). A full 25% of responses (414 stage managers) reported working primarily outside of their state of residence over the past two years. The majority who do cross state lines for work do so to work in New York (149 responses) and Florida (86). And while no stage managers in our survey reported residing in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming, a total of 12, 4, and 7 participants reported working in those three states over the past two years. In addition, 95 survey participants reported being currently on tour.

Since so many stage managers indicate that they live in or commute to New York City, we wanted to see just how many stage managers have been employed there. Out of 1,676 total responses, 33% (555 participants) have, at some point in their careers, worked on a stage management team in New York City. Participants who currently reside in New York State (rather than only New York City), reported the highest level of Equity membership (68%). Other states can also make impressive claims: 24% and 48% of Indiana SMs were very satisfied/satisfied with their Work/Life Balance and 43% of Nevada SMs reported being very satisfied with their careers (based on States with at least 20 responses).

Figure 8: State of Residence for Survey Participants [Map created with mapchart.net]



In addition to age and years of experience, our study also tracks trends in stage management training and education. Figure 9 shows the type of training that stage managers have received. The “Other” training experiences included observing stage managers while working in other theatre positions and stage managing with guidance from a mentor. In future surveys, we will include an option for new workshops like the SMA’s A View from the Wings and the Broadway Stage Management Symposium. Figure 10 lists the levels of formal education in stage management. The most common “Other” responses in education were the BS degree in Stage Management and participants who are still earning a degree.

Twenty-five percent of survey participants reported serving as an apprentice/intern within the past two years. Figure 11 shows how much, if any, money they earned each week through these training programs (11 participants reported paying the theatre in order to apprentice). Of the 431 people who interned in the past two years, only 13% reported earning overtime pay as interns and those participants primarily live in New York, California, and Illinois.

There have been anecdotal reports of stage managers starting over at the Production Assistant position when entering new job markets. Of the 1,728 stage managers who responded to this question, 34% reported taking a PA position even though they had professional credits in another community. While many stage managers valued the opportunities created by being a PA, others called for higher pay, Equity status, or at least getting weekly credits toward Health coverage for production assistants who are already Equity members.



Figure 9: Stage Management Training (Can Indicate More than One Category)

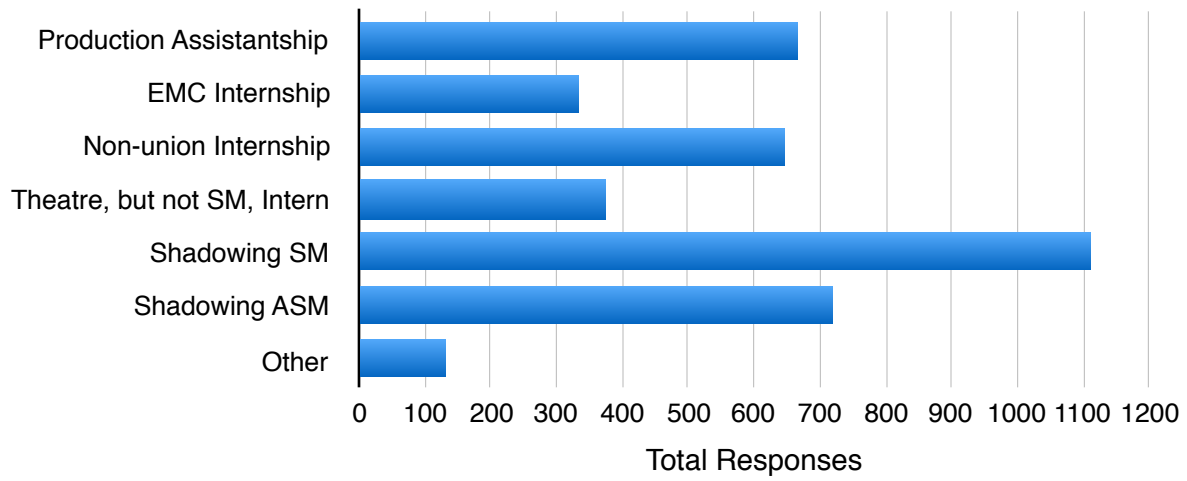


Figure 10: Highest Level of Stage Management Education

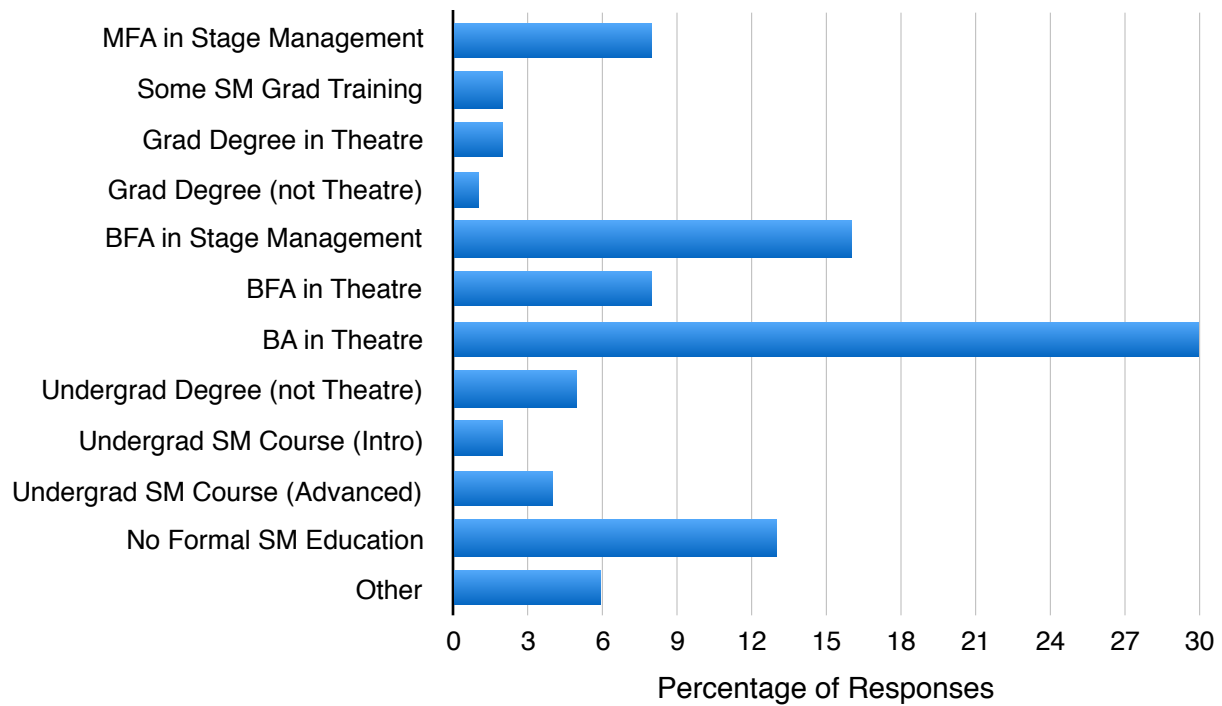
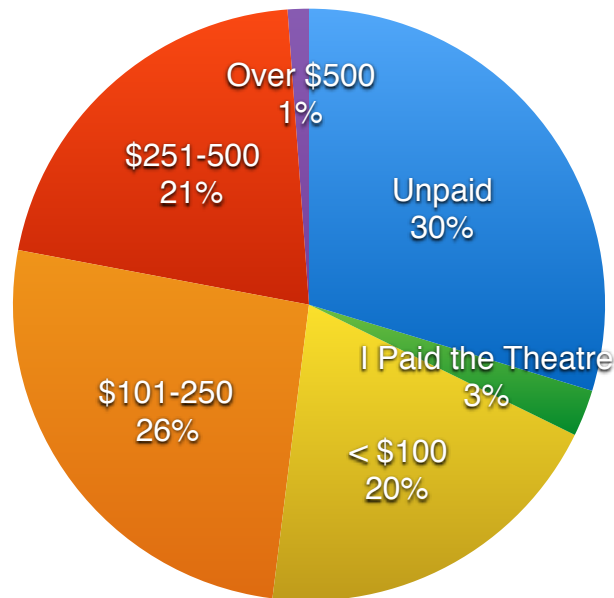


Figure 11: Weekly Payment for Most Recent Internship/Apprenticeship in Past Two Years



This series of surveys continues to track the shift in stage management from a male-dominated to a female-dominated profession. In the 2006 survey, 66% of participants were female. Female representation rose to 68% in 2009, rose to 70% in 2011, fell to 69% in 2013, and has now climbed to an all-time high of 73% this year. Eight respondents identified as transgender male, one identified as transgender female, seven selected Other (primarily Genderqueer) and eleven preferred not to answer. Figure 12 shows the gender divide by age.

Survey participants were also asked to identify their race/ethnicity based on the categories provided by the U.S. Census. Figure 13 shows both the race/ethnicity of surveyed stage managers and the national averages from the 2014 Census. Please note that stage managers were allowed to indicate more than one race whereas the Census data relates single-race selections. Although Pacific Islander appears as a zero percentage, 7 survey participants selected this category.

The gender divide varied by the race/ethnicity of participants, as Asian-American stage managers were 82% female while multi-racial stage managers only identified as female 65% of the time. But given the limited representation of non-White stage managers, it may not be prudent to draw conclusions from such a small sample. There are indications of increasing racial diversity as 12% of participants ages 21-25 reported race other than White/Caucasian, compared to 8% of ages 26-30 and 8% ages 31-40. But the very small pool of participants under the age of 21 identify as White/Caucasian with a rate of 93%, so it is not yet possible to claim increasing diversity as a trend.

Figure 12: Male/Female Gender Ratios by Age Brackets

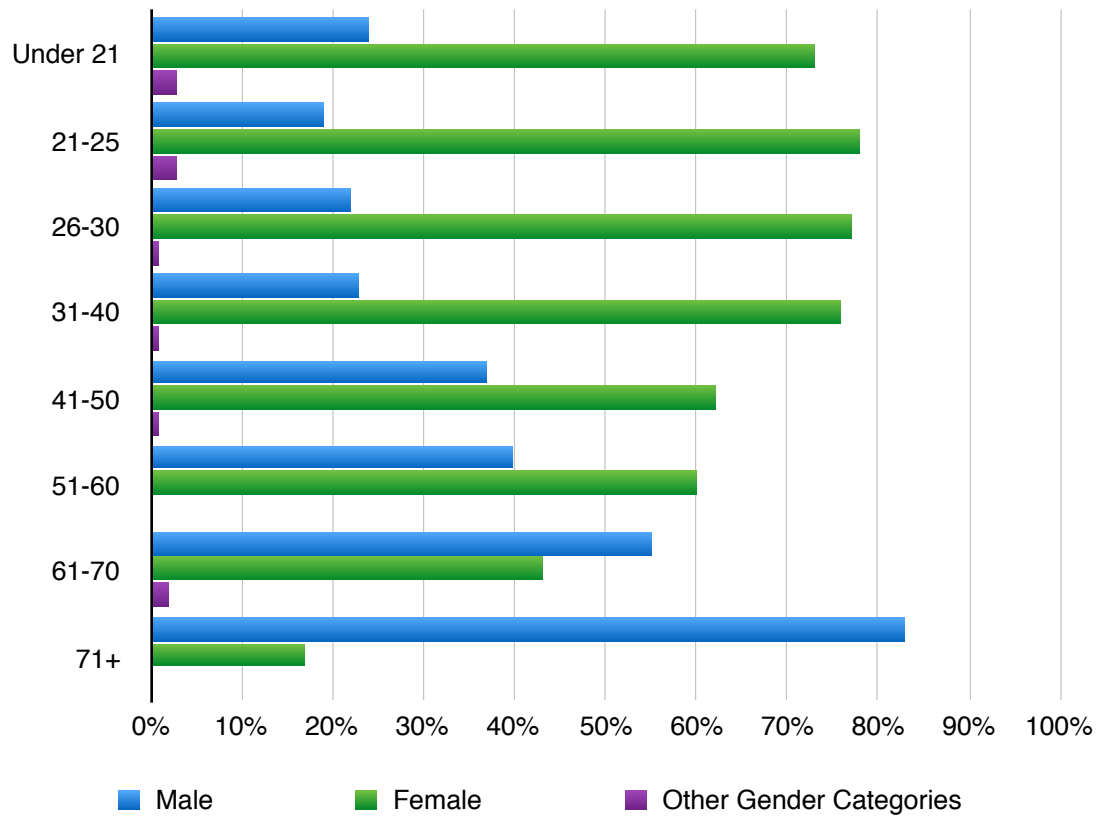
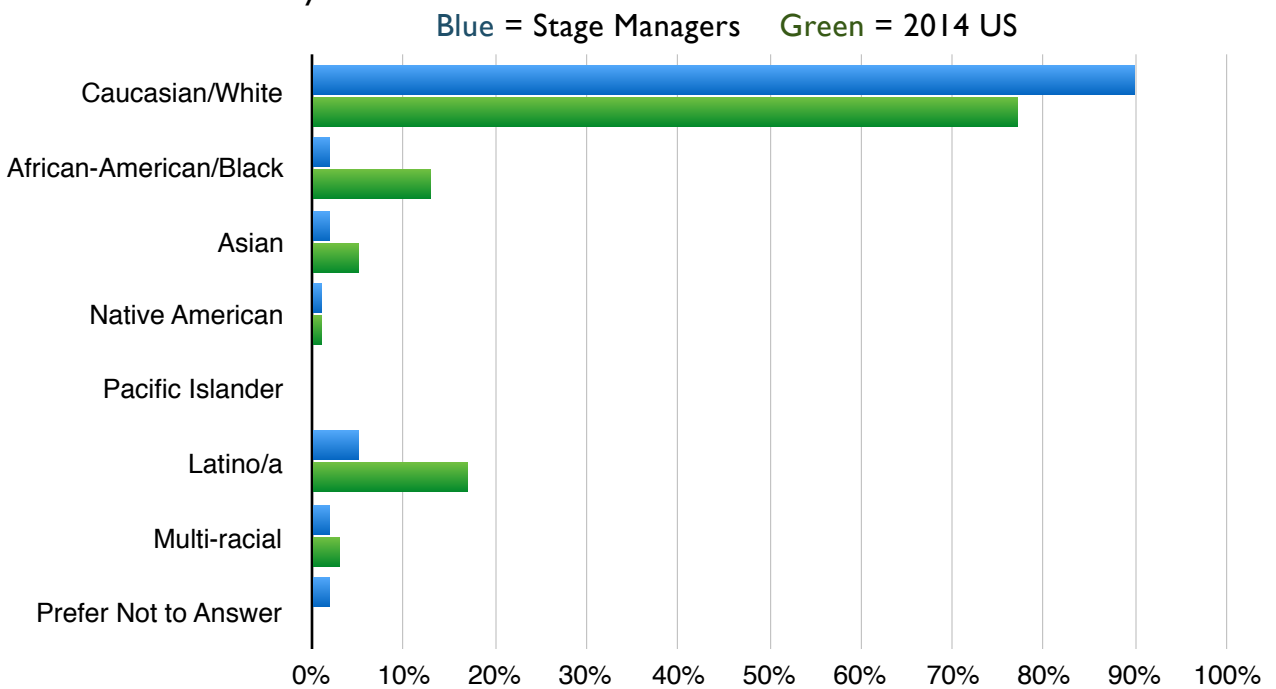


Figure 13: Race and Ethnicity



This is the second round of surveys to include questions about whether participants identify themselves within the LGBTQ community and, if so, whether they had ever felt unsafe due to their sexual orientation. In the 2015 survey, 30% of participants identified as within the LGBTQ community, up from 27% in 2013. A May 2015 Gallup poll of more than 58,000 Americans reported only 3.8% being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/183383/americans-greatly-overestimate-percent-gay-lesbian.aspx>). Among the 1,676 stage managers who answered these questions, 47% of male stage managers identified themselves within the LGBTQ community versus 24% of female stage managers who identified both their gender and their sexual orientation. Within the group of 505 stage managers who identified as part of the LGBTQ community, 52 participants (10%) reported feeling “unsafe in a theatrical community.” This survey did not provide a definition of the LGBTQ community nor did it investigate any claims of harassment.

All survey participants were asked about discrimination and 27% reported discrimination (based on gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) having negatively affected their careers. This response rate increased from 22% in 2013. The majority of comments were related to gender or sexual orientation discrimination from technical staff, though there were also comments about ageism, inappropriate sexual humor, and racial stereotypes.

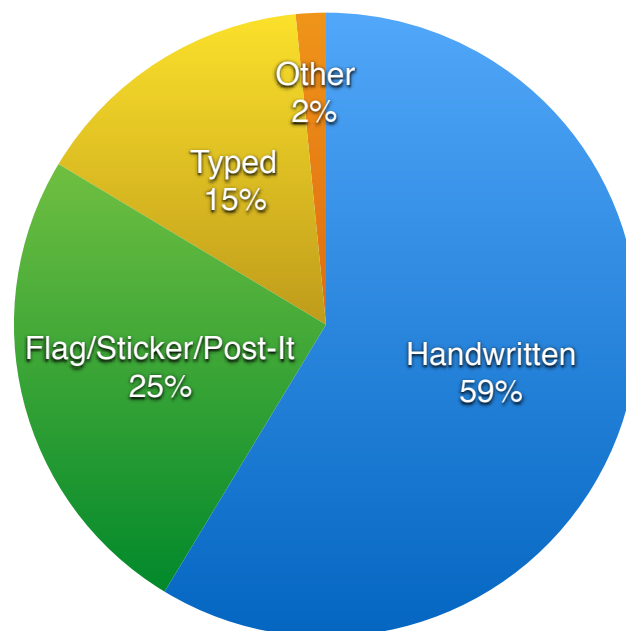
The last group of demographic questions focused on relationships and family status. In 2013, 36% of participants listed that they were married, in a civil union or had a domestic partner but in the 2015 study, this rate decreased to 28%. This is the lowest rate by at least 7 percentage points since the question first appeared on the survey in 2009. When the responses from participants under age 21 are removed (96% of this age bracket reported being single), the overall response rate climbs to 31% for married, domestic partner, or civil union. There was a moderate difference between male stage managers (31.1%) and female stage managers (27.7%) being married, but male stage managers (4.3%) also reported a higher frequency of divorce as a relationship status than female stage managers (2.1%). A 2012 Census Bureau report (<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/acs/acs-30.pdf>) found that 66% of men and 72% of women over age 15 have been or are currently married. This survey only tracks census-based relationship status types such as marriage or civil unions; these legal designations have also changed with marriage equality legislation since the 2013 survey.

Of those participants with spouses or legal partners, 41% reported that their partners also work in theatre and 20% reported that their partners had formerly worked in theatre. All survey participants were asked about children: 9% of surveyed stage managers have children or dependents under the age of 18. This rate of having children is the same as in the 2013 survey as was the almost non-existent difference between male/transgender male parents (8.55%) and female/transgender female parents (8.81%). Among the 143 stage managers with children, 90% are married or within a civil union or have a domestic partner and another 6% were divorced.

## SECTION II: CALLING TECHNIQUES

No matter the year, the field is still divided on whether to use separate calling and blocking scripts, but the preference for two books is currently ebbing: 56% usually prepare separate blocking and calling scripts compared to 61% in 2013. The preferred method of recording cues is also divided but holding steady over the past two years. “Other” preferences often were handwritten through technical rehearsal and typed after Opening or use of apps with digital scripts.

Figure 14: How Do Cues Appear in Your Most Recent Calling Script?



When this study began in 2006, there was a small group of stage managers experimenting with calling cues directly from digital devices. That group continues to grow, but at a relatively mild rate: 21% have tried calling from some kind of digital device (up from 18%) with the biggest growth being 8% of surveyed stage managers having called from a tablet. And not all who have experimented with this new technique favor it. While 18% recommended calling from digital devices, 64% had a neutral opinion and 18% did not recommend it. The most vocal proponents were stage managers working in Dance, at least one of which preferred the mobility of calling from a tablet. An opera stage manager recommended the iPad app ForScore, which allows for annotating cues and notes directly on a score. And one stage manager learned that if she/he needed to catch up to an actor jumping lines, “Ctrl+F” helped find the actor’s textual landing spot. From those less inclined to call from a digital device, we received horror stories of mid-show frozen screens and reboots, with recommendations of back-ups, which in turn reduces the environmental savings of not printing scripts.

Regardless of whether the script is on paper or a screen, survey participants had a range of reactions to cue terminology [Figure 15] and frequency [Figure 16]:

Figure 15: Announcement Prior to Cue

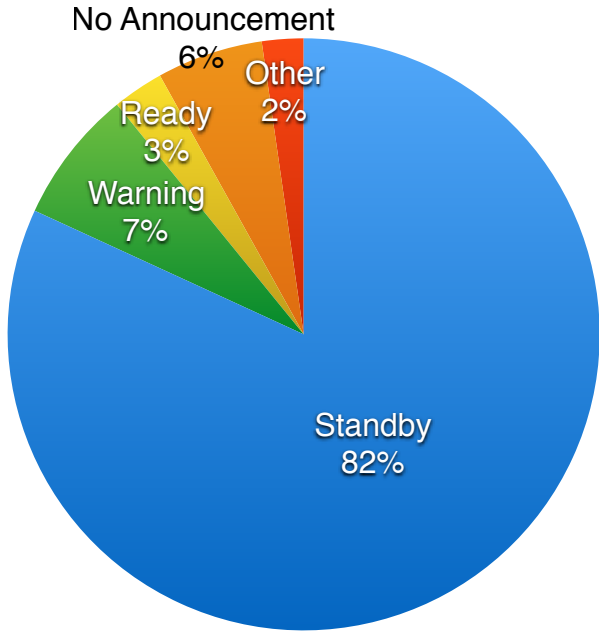


Figure 16: Both Cue Announcement & Warning?

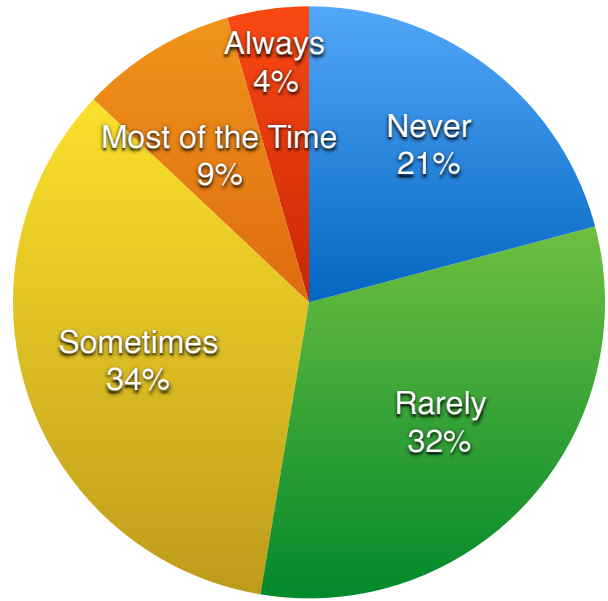
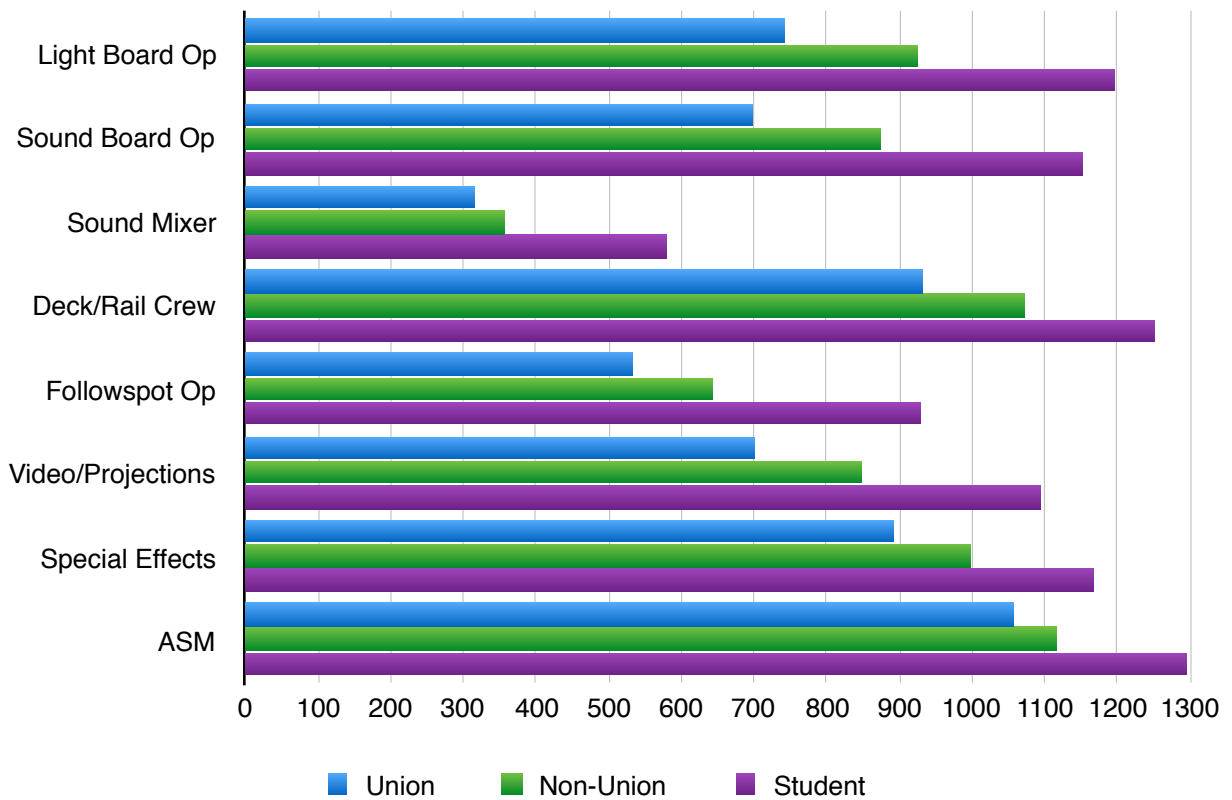
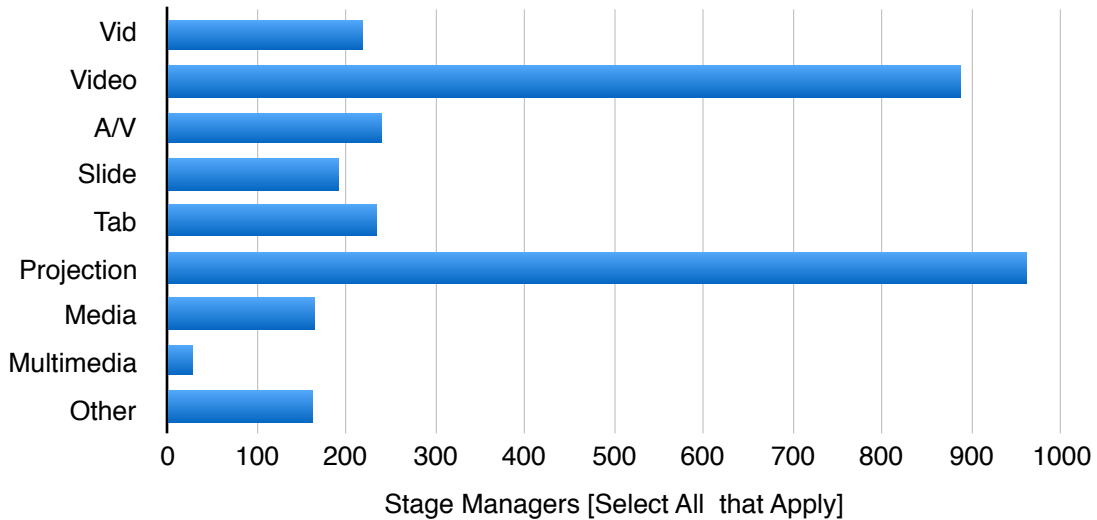


Figure 17: Do You Expect a Verbal Confirmation of Your Cue Announcement?



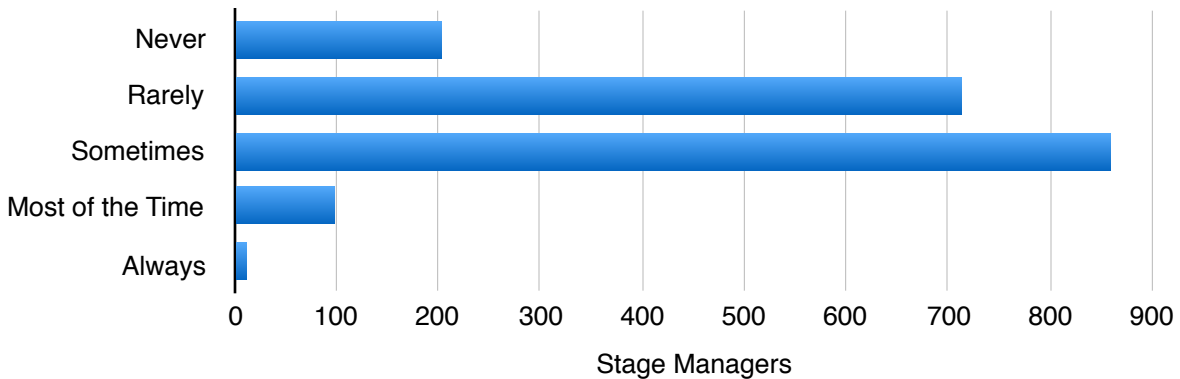
There are two front-runners for what we call projected image cues:

Figure 18: What do You Name Projections and/or Video Cues?



Other popular cue names included Graphics/GFX, VT, Electrics, and Sound (when running cues through QLab). The survey then asked about not calling some cues:

Figure 19: Do You Allow Crew Members on Headsets to Take Their Own Cues?

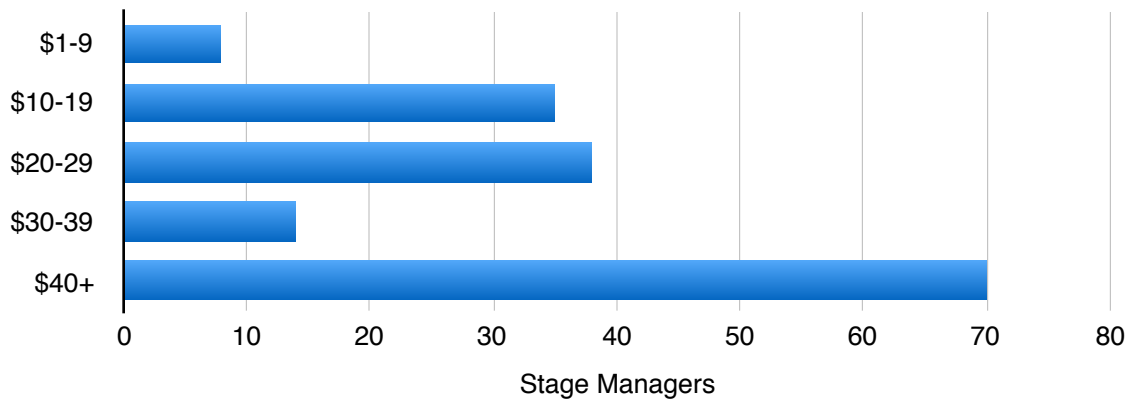


The main reasons cited for allowing crew to take their own cues were actor/crew safety, a better visual vantage point for the crew member, sound effect visuals, and if the crew member was off headset. A full 74% of surveyed stage managers have also used cue lights for signaling crew.

Sometimes the stage manager doesn't need to call a cue because the SM is also running equipment. Over a thousand stage managers (53% of those surveyed) reported running their own light board at some point in the past two years. But only 17% of those who ran a board were paid extra for the additional job responsibility (another 12% reported that they ran the light board on a

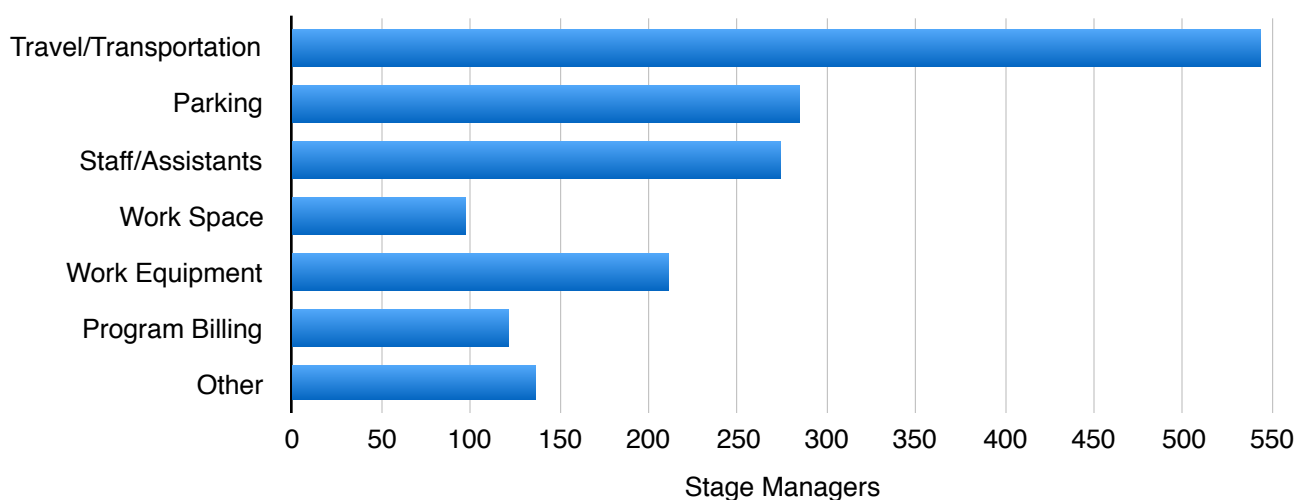
production in which the SM position was unpaid). Those who were paid extra received the following compensation:

Figure 20: How Much did You Earn per Week to Run the Light Board?



Whether or not stage managers earned more for running the light board was often related to whether stage managers negotiated their contracts in general. When asked about their last three stage management jobs, 8% of participants had tried to negotiate for a higher salary for all three jobs, 33% had attempted to negotiate for at least one job, and 59% (993 stage managers) had chosen not to attempt any salary negotiations. Those who had tried, however, were generally met with very favorable outcomes: 24% were always successful and another 69% were successful in at least one of the negotiations. So of the 692 stage managers who negotiated, only 51 were unsuccessful at any/all attempts. Salaries weren't the only items that were negotiated:

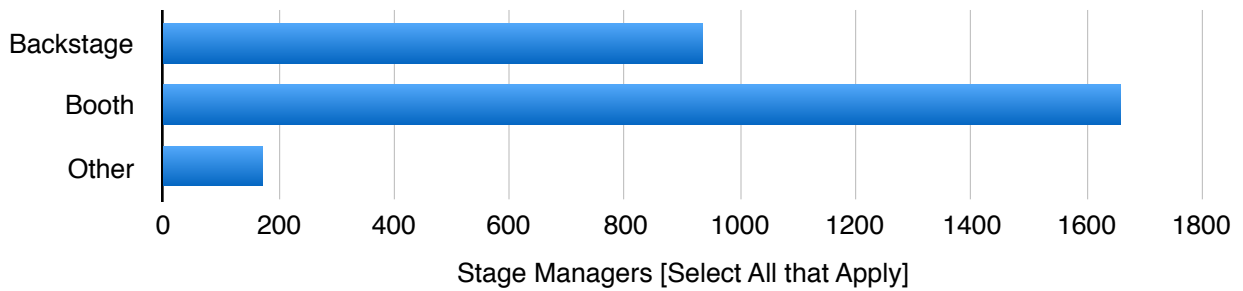
Figure 21: Have You Negotiated for Items Other than Salary on Stage Management Jobs?



The most common "Other" categories being negotiated were housing, comp tickets, benefits, vacation, and per diem. Another factor that impacted whether the stage manager operated the light board or allowed crew to take their own cues was the stage manager's calling location.



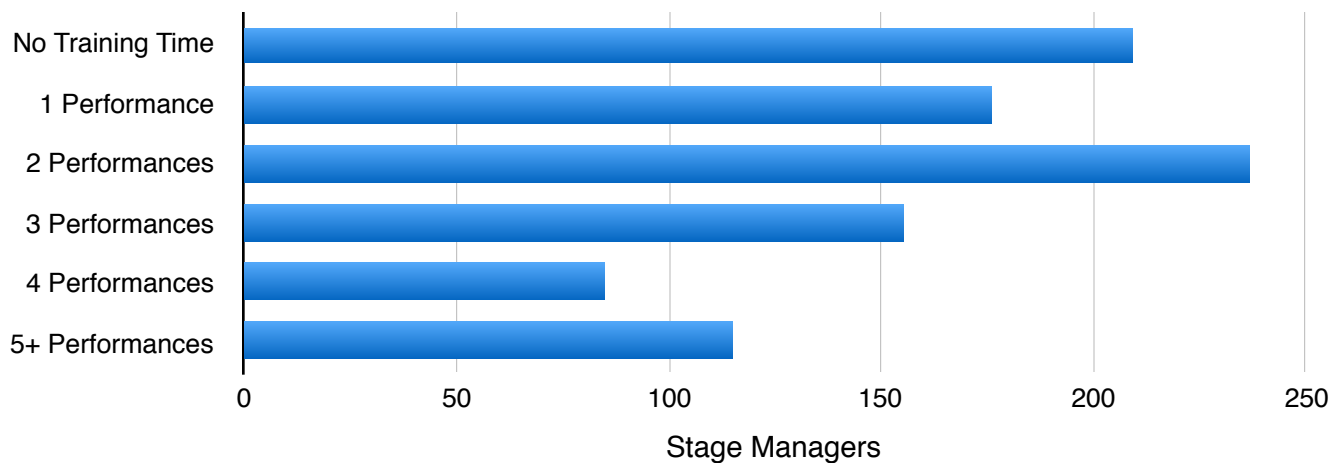
Figure 22: In the Past Two Years, Where Did You Call Shows?



Other calling locations included back of house, balconies, cat walks, pin rails, outdoor tents, and within immersive performance environments.

Many of the questions within this section of the survey were about creating cues during Tech. Yet 52% of surveyed stage managers have taken over cue calling responsibilities from another stage manager. This frequency is a decrease from 60% in 2013, but the amount of training time for the handover has remained relatively constant.

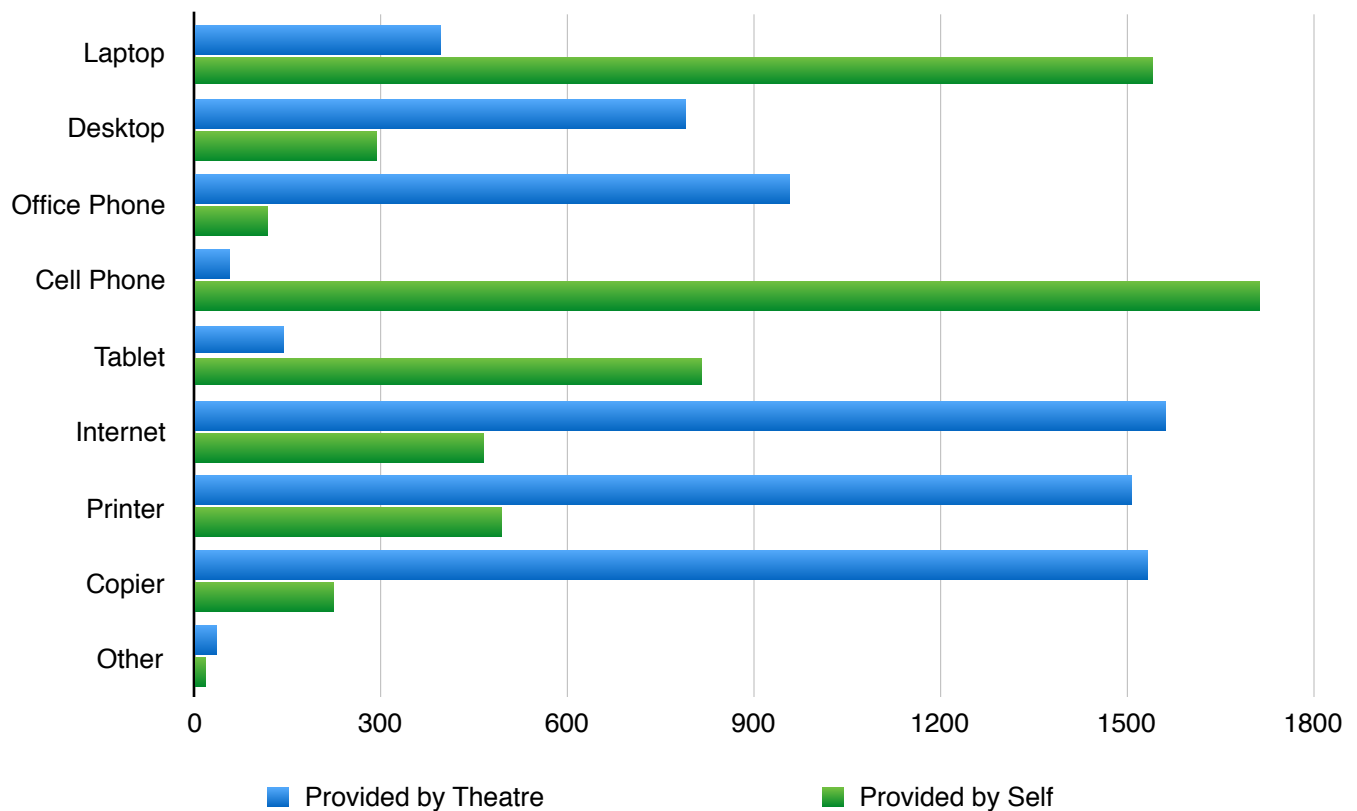
Figure 23: Training Time for Taking Over Calling an Existing Production



## SECTION III: TECHNOLOGY FOR STAGE MANAGERS

Communication technology continues to become more embedded within the rehearsal room, the tech table, and the calling station, so we asked which communication technologies are being provided by theatres and which ones the stage managers are expected to provide on their own.

Figure 24: Sources of Communication Technology



“Other” communication technologies included cameras and video cameras, scanners, and laminators. It is interesting to see that out of 1,792 answers to this question, 1,714 stage managers used their own cell phones and another 56 had producer-provided phones. It is also noteworthy that more than half (54%) of all surveyed stage managers used tablets (personal or theatre-provided) for work. When asked about computer operating systems, a majority of stage managers (65%) preferred Macs overall, 60% had Macs for personal use, and 55% used Macs for professional work. While Macs continue to be used by a majority of stage managers, their widespread use is in decline from 2013.

Following the use of these devices, the survey asked when and what kinds of communication technology stage managers were using.

Figure 25: Technology Use in Rehearsals (Total Responses)

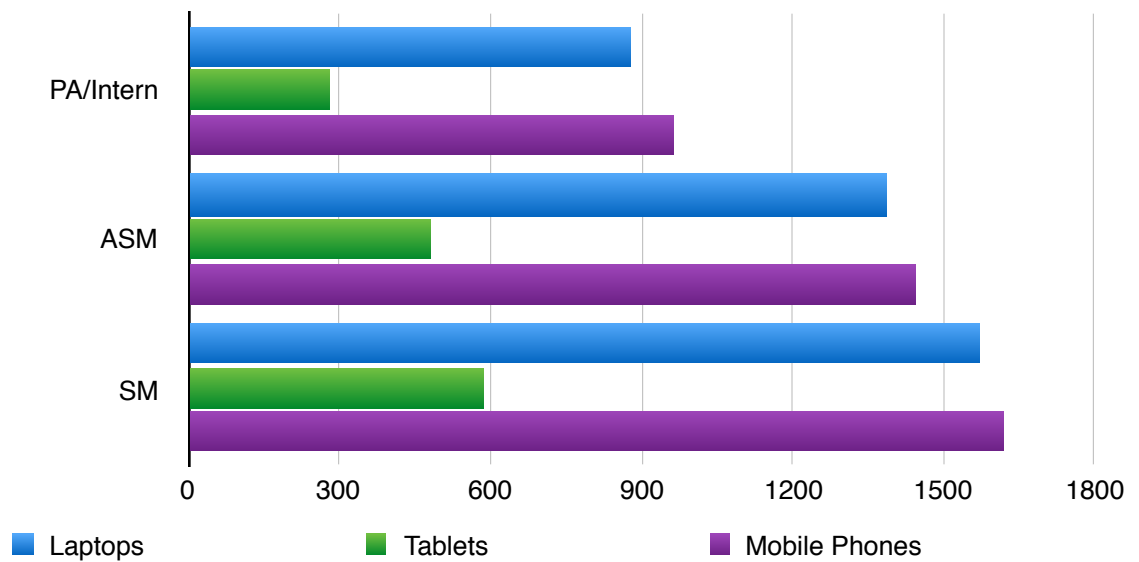
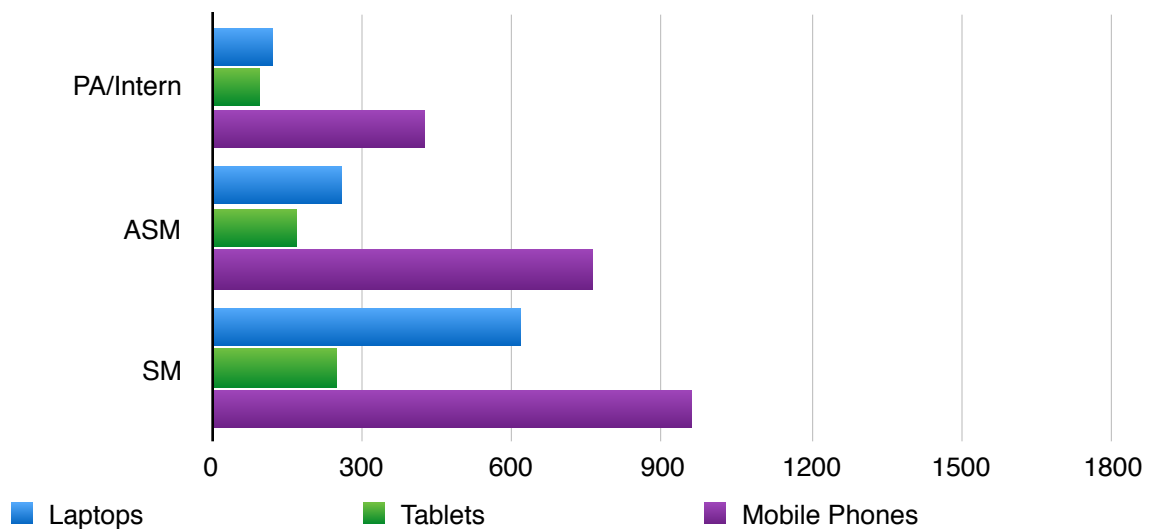


Figure 26: Technology Use in Performances (Total Responses)



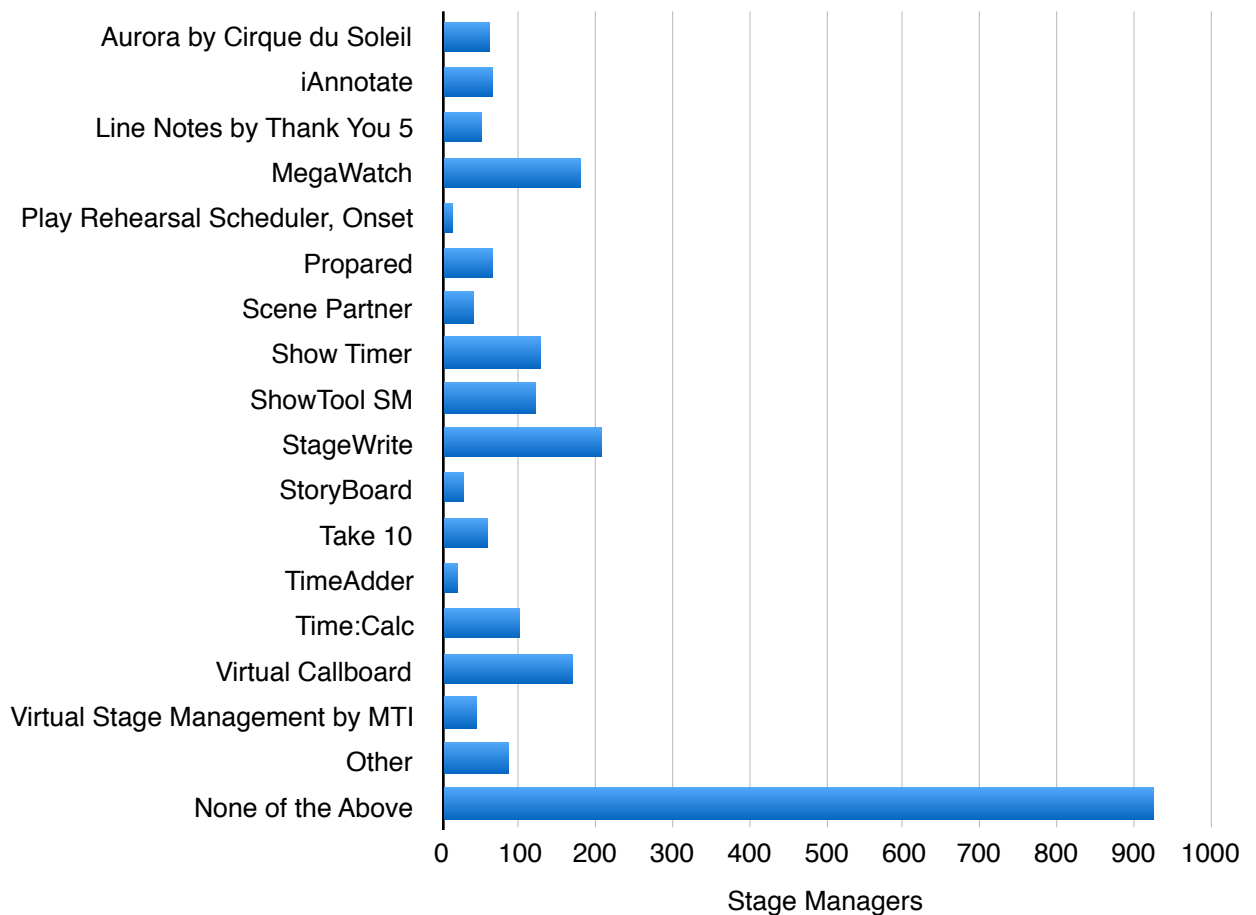
Survey participants gave a wide variety of reasons for including or eliminating technology in these settings:

- ❖ “It’s 2015. Technology, responsibly used, is a fantastic tool for our work.”
- ❖ “I find it often necessary for me and my team to use, but sometimes challenging to ensure that it doesn’t also become a distraction.”

- ❖ “As technology advances, it furthers the abilities of stage managers and theatre in general. For example, StageWrite is a fantastic tool in a dance heavy musical and for organizing scene changes. However, due to how much technology is relied upon, it can also create a barrier between stage managers and the rest of the room by physically blocking their view and/or being a distraction and keeping the stage manager disengaged from the rehearsal/performance.”
- ❖ “Using technology during rehearsal is a very efficient way to get work done as well as cut down on the amount of hours stage manager has to work outside of the rehearsal room”
- ❖ “You have to feel out the room and the situation. I feel there is no hard and fast rule.”

Despite, or perhaps due to, the willingness of stage managers to innovate, there does not appear to be any commonly-adopted software among stage managers.

Figure 27: Stage Management Software/Applications



“Other software” that received votes included Showflow, ShoFlo, SM Box, Production Pro, ForScore, and FileMaker. We asked survey participants about their interest in new SM software. Interest in trying new apps or software [Figure 28] has actually declined slightly since 2013.

Figure 28: Likelihood of Trying a New Stage Management Application for Laptop or Tablet

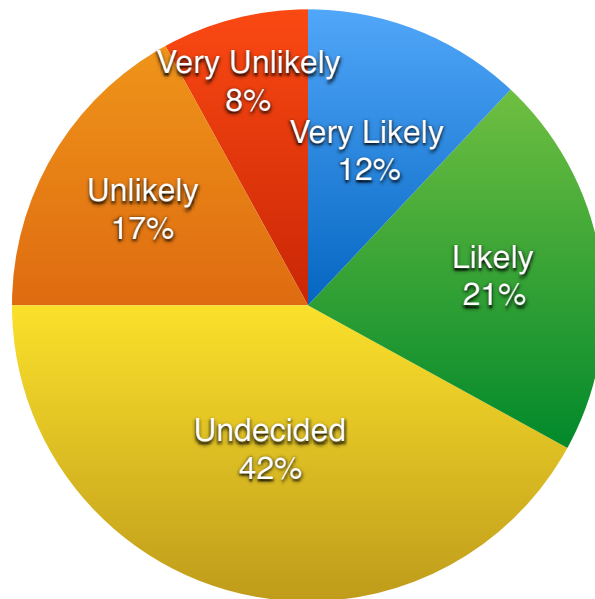
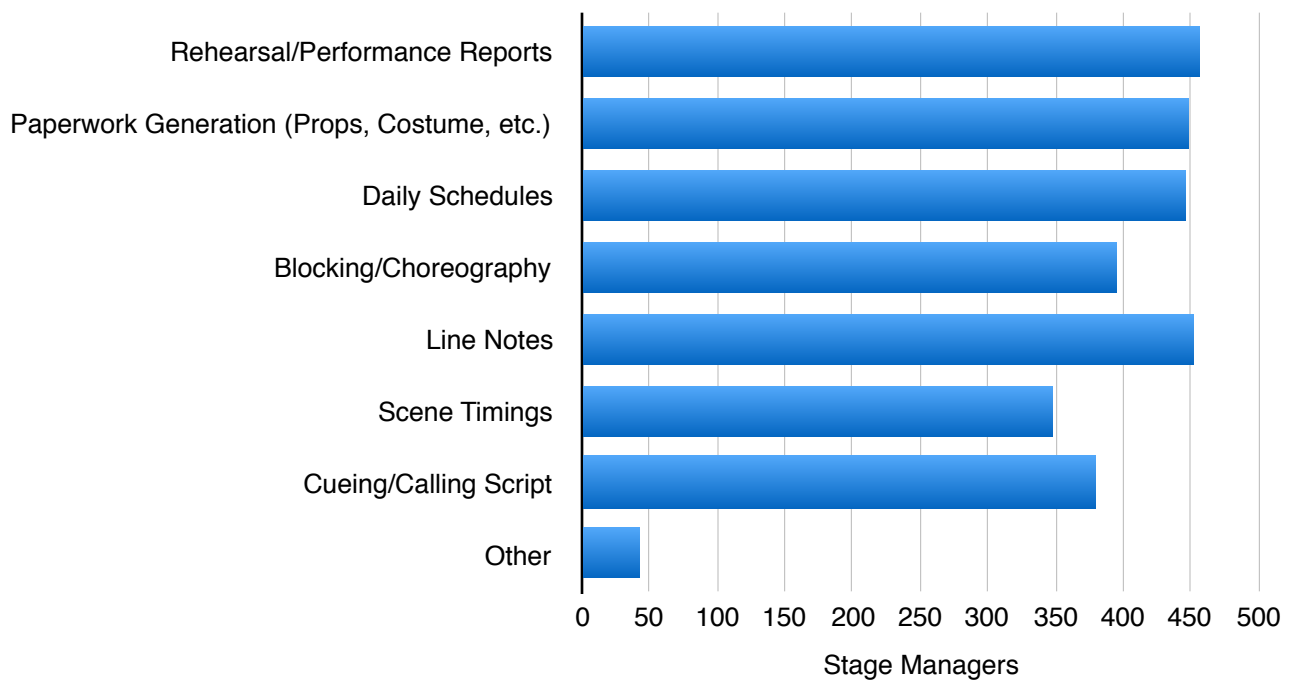


Figure 29: What Features Would You Find Useful in a Laptop or Tablet Application?



Some of the other features that stage managers are looking for in new computer or tablet apps include schedules and reports that could be e-mailed directly from within the app, reloadable checklists, ways of tracking props/costumes during a show, and calling script options.

Opinions varied widely on the creation of stage management-based software:

- ❖ “I don't have enough familiarity with various programs or down time to experiment - I'd rather not try something new during rehearsal that would take my attention away. Conversely, that would be the best way of seeing if it works.”
- ❖ “I've been a Stage Manager for over 25 years, and while I appreciate how technology has made many aspects of the job easier, I am sometimes reluctant to try new things that I am already comfortable doing without the technology.”
- ❖ “Even as a younger-generation stage manager, I don't believe that there is anything an application can do that pen and paper (or Word and Excel) can't do better.”
- ❖ “I just took a picture of the list above [survey question listing apps]. I haven't heard of most of them. Would like them to be better advertised.”
- ❖ “I'm always willing to try to new software and apps, but money is almost always a factor. If I can't try it for free, I won't try it.”
- ❖ “One of the problems with SM software is that it needs to encompass a job that changes each time you do it. Theaters sometimes have their own preferred formats, sometimes your SM does, and sometimes you just need to modify something to meet the needs of a show. That's a lot to ask of any software package - to be universal, and yet simple to use.”

## SECTION IV: EMPLOYMENT

For over half of all survey participants (56%), stage management was their first career. Another 18% came from other theatre professions but no other industry (business, sales, hospitality, etc.) saw more than 5%. We asked questions on both finding work for yourself and hiring others: 526 survey participants (30%) have hired SMs, ASMs, Interns, or other stage management team positions. Over half of these employers (57%) received 10 or fewer applications when advertising a stage management position and only 16% received more than 25 applications for a job opening.

Since stage managers often work on a show-by-show basis (19% of surveyed stage managers have collected Unemployment in the past twelve months), the survey asked where stage managers found work [Figure 30]. Besides the survey listings and simple word-of-mouth, other job notice sources include Opera America, the Minnesota Playlist, League of Chicago Theatres, StageJobsPro, and Facebook groups dedicated to regions and/or performance genres. We asked separate questions about which social networking sites stage managers use to promote themselves and their theatres [Figure 31] and whether participants had ever been contacted for stage management jobs via social networking sites [Figure 32]. Over half of surveyed stage managers (55%) reported being approached with job offers or interview requests through social media. In addition to the listed sites, stage managers reported using SMNetwork, TourReady, Snapchat, Controlbooth.com, and regional message boards.

Figure 30: Sources Used to Find Stage Management Work

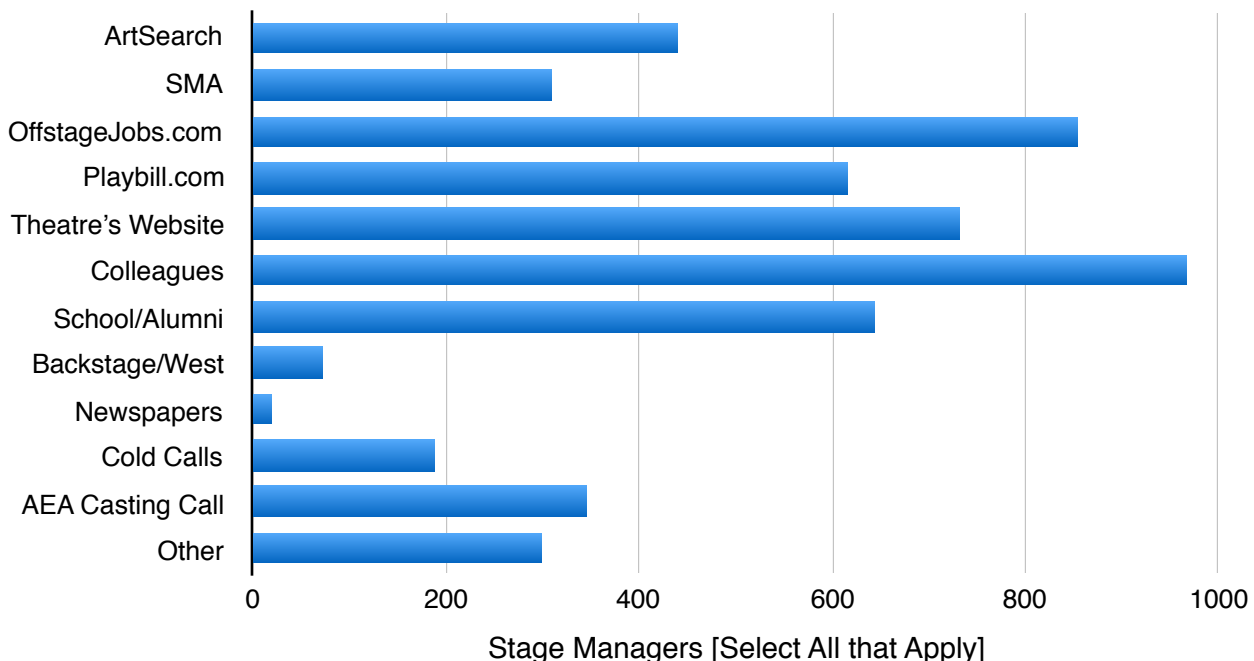


Figure 31: Social Media Usage to Promote Yourself or Promote Your Theatre/Arts Org

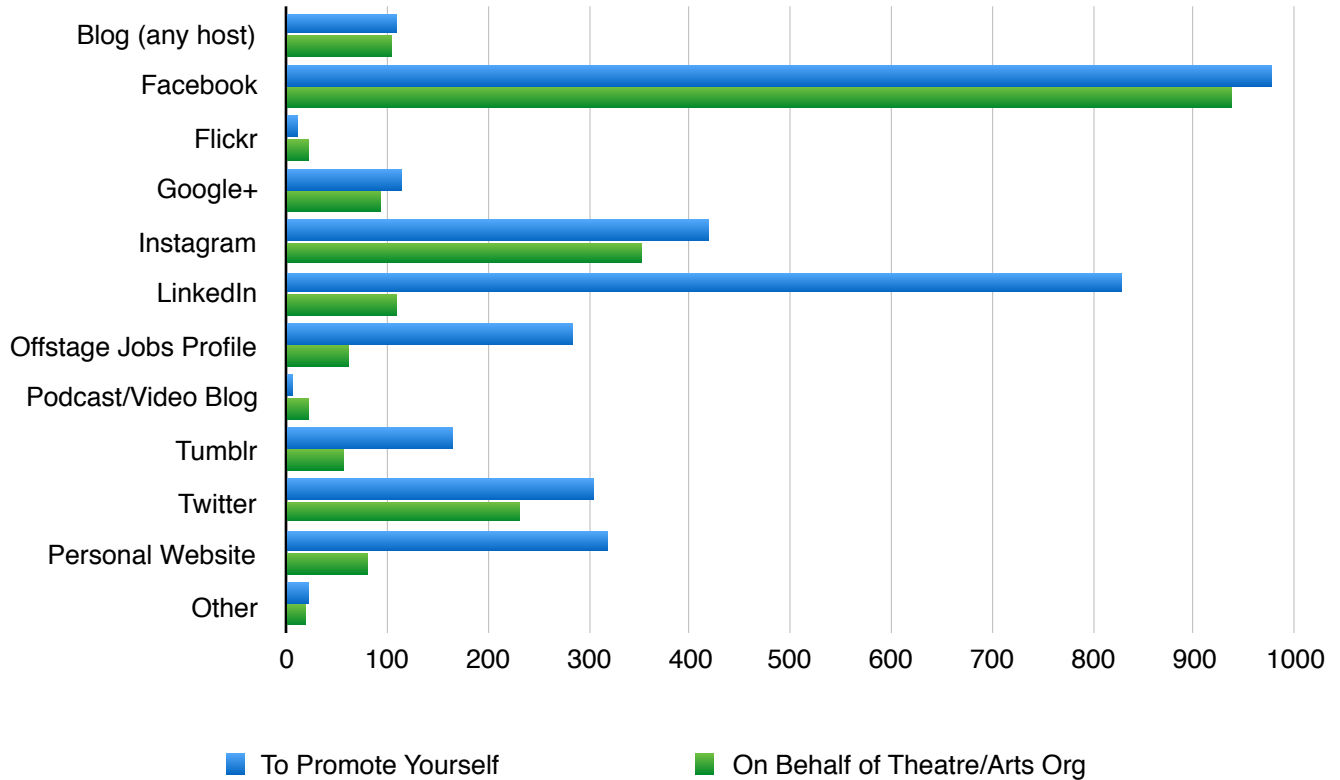
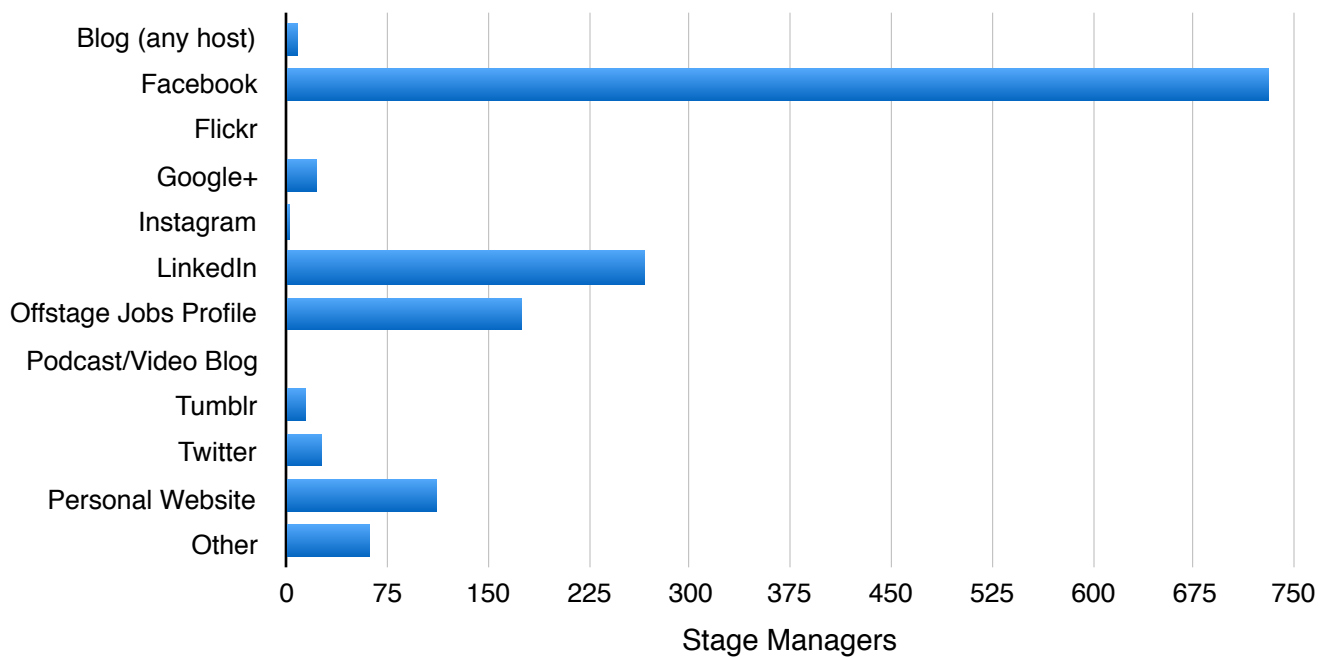


Figure 32: Have You Ever Been Contacted for Interviews/Job Offers Through these Websites?

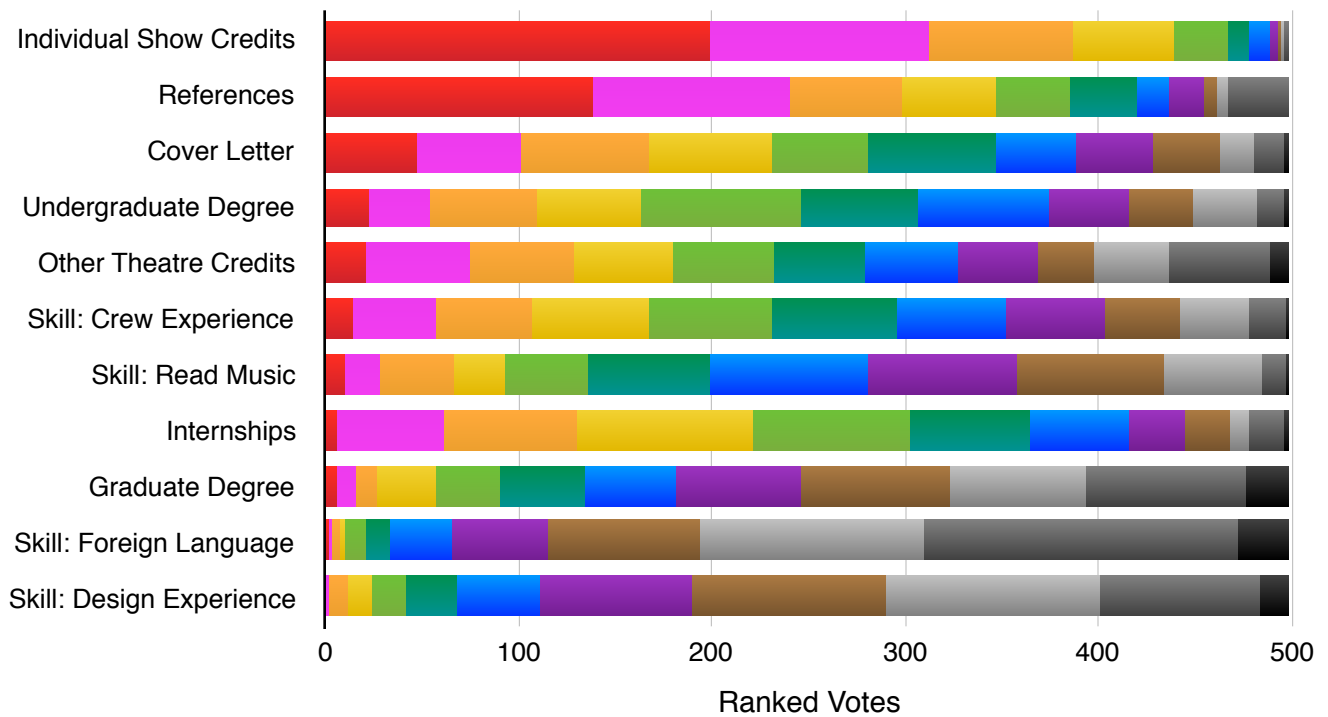




We asked those who hire stage management staff to rank the impact of 11 items commonly found on SM resumes when comparing candidates for a position. Figure 33 shows how many first place, second place, etc. votes each resume component received among 498 potential employers. The components are listed in the order of receiving first place votes. It was also possible to write in other resume items; the most common write-in responses were familiarity with previous employers and availability.

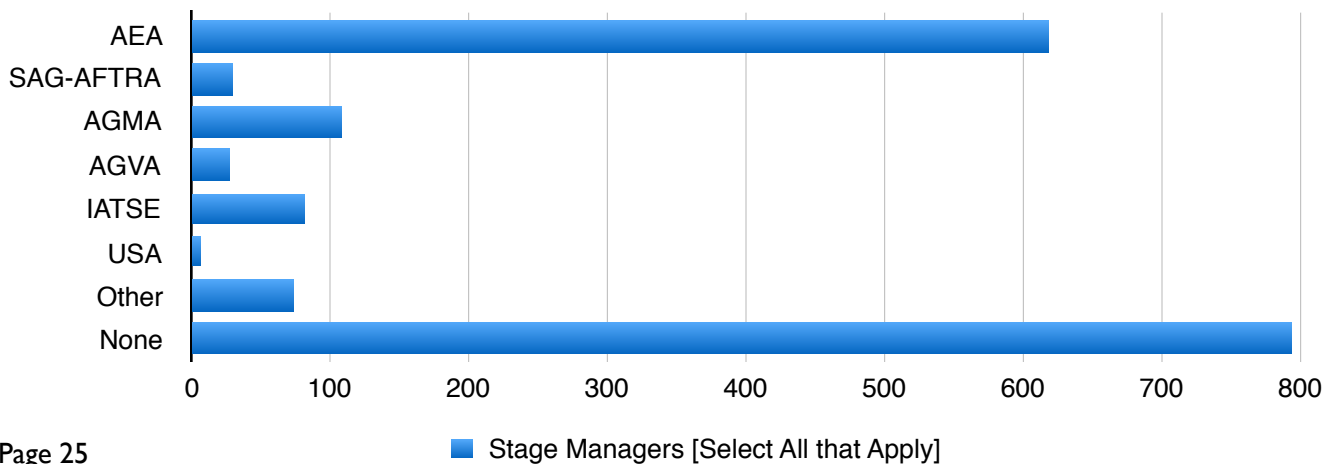
Figure 33: Impact of Resume Components in Comparison of Stage Management Candidates

1 - Most Important 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 - Least Important



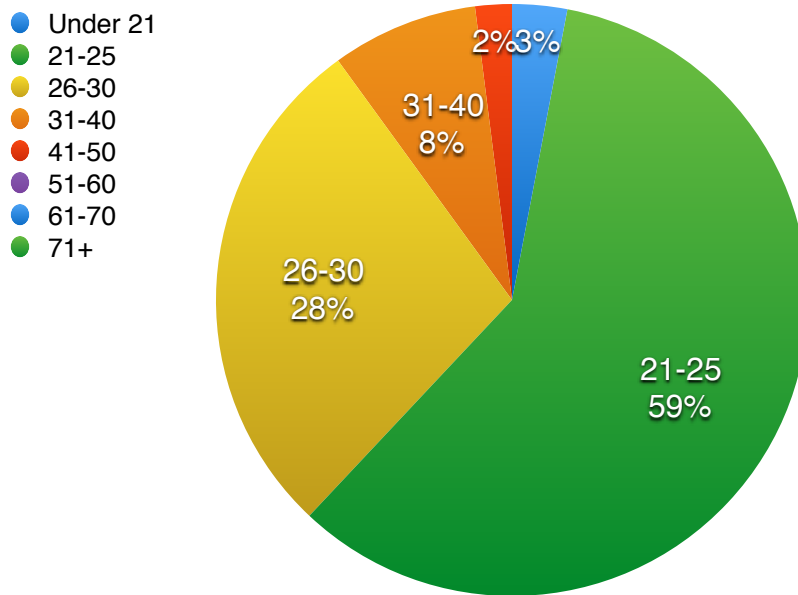
As noted at the start of this report, participants were asked about union/group membership:

Figure 34: Union Membership



Among the 618 Equity members, 53% joined the union on a SM contract and another 42% joined as an ASM (a slight increase for ASM contracts since 2013). Only 5% joined AEA on an Actor or an Actor/ASM contract. Among participants who are not Equity members, 31% plan to join the union at some point and another 44% were unsure. Most current AEA members joined in their twenties, though two members joined in their fifties and another two joined in their seventies.

Figure 35: Age of Stage Manager when Joining Actor’s Equity Association (Percentage)



In addition to their stage management work, many survey participants earned income from other sources [Figure 36] while 45% of participants reported no work other than stage management. The survey also asked about the educational roles that many stage managers have taken on in addition their other stage management duties [Figure 37].

Figure 36: Apart from Stage Management, How Else Do You Earn Income?

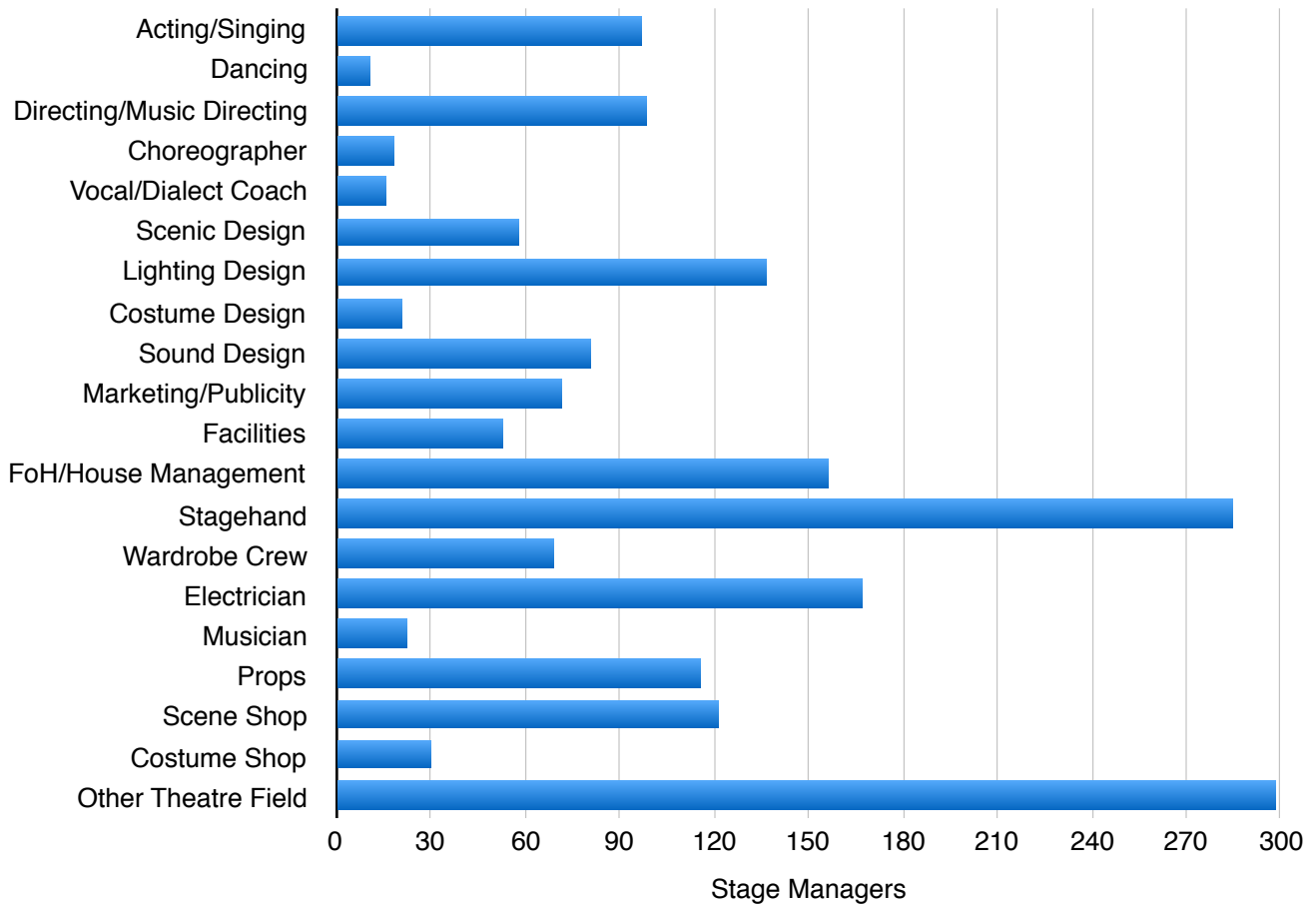
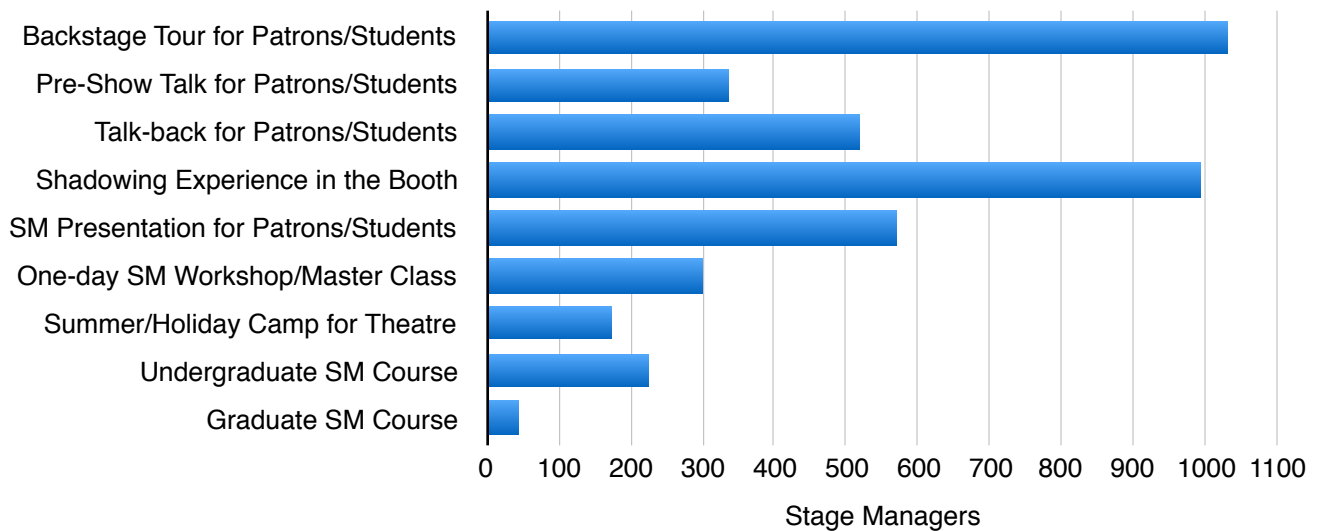
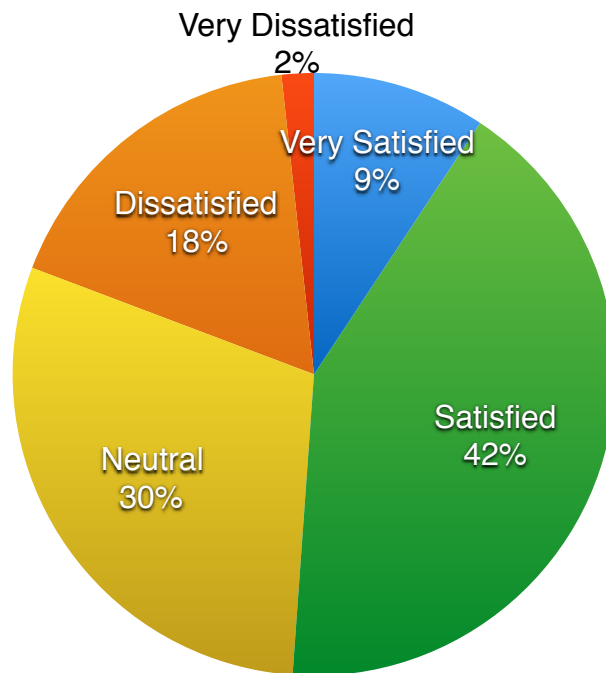


Figure 37: In the Past Two Years, Have You Taught or Led Any of the Following?



Each year we have added questions about work/life balance, time off, health and wellness, and general career satisfaction. It remains to be noted, however, that some stage managers who are very dissatisfied with their careers may be less likely to take a 15-20 minute survey.

Figure 38: How Satisfied are You with your Work/Life Balance?



The comments received about work/life balance included:

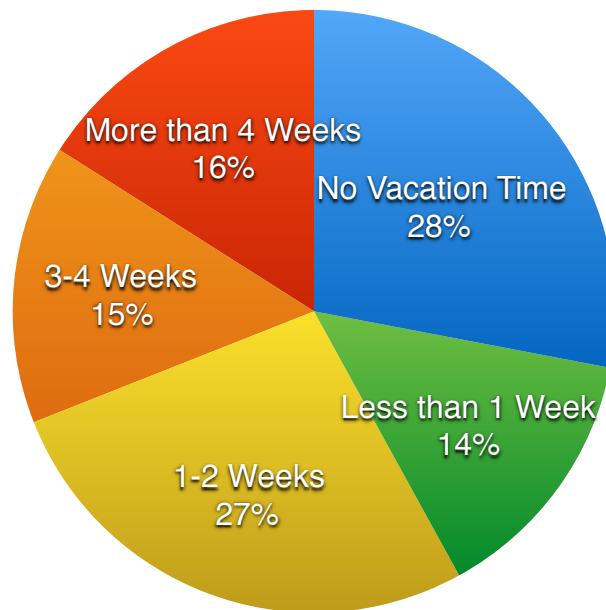
- ❖ “We as an industry do not talk about the toll our jobs have on our personal lives. We get consumed by it and put shows before our health and relationships.”
- ❖ “It's a tricky thing. I think it is a pipe dream to believe that in any given period you can have a 50/50 split. The balance comes in with alternating periods of extreme work, with downtime.”
- ❖ “Gotta love it when you're there and leave it when you're home. It's easiest when you're part of a great team. Everyone trusts each other for time tables and dead lines. So it's easy to really care while on the clock and then not carry that worry home. When a team is under paid or short handed or has a weak link, that stress is harder to leave at the door because it could affect safety and possibly the final product the audience receives. So since I'm in charge or hiring I work to find passionate, talented candidates who also value their off work hours.”
- ❖ “Working the in the professional theatre requires sacrifices in all other aspects of our lives. We face challenges people in other more "traditional" professions do not face. It is worth it all because I am in the profession I love but I do occasionally have regrets about the limitations placed upon me by my career choice.”
- ❖ “Life/work balance was a big challenge for me for many years. Truthfully, guess when I really came to a place of understanding as far as valuing my personal needs against the needs of show? When I got

my first B'way show. The regular schedule, coupled with the paycheck of a production contract, allowed me to stop thinking only of the show (or finding my next show). Some of the lessons I've learned:

1. Ask for personal days when you need them. Don't miss once-in-a-lifetime events.
2. Listen to my body, and stay home sick when the show has the coverage to allow it.
3. Split my down-time between casual social encounters with positive people. I'm lucky enough to have a circle of friends AND family who count for this.
4. Relaxation is a valid use of time-off. Even if there's laundry to do, and groceries to buy, sometimes a Monday needs to be spent napping, at a massage or in a sauna, or sitting on a beach watching the waves....”

We have limited the data results on vacation time [Figure 39] to current SMs, ASMs, and PA/Interns as students and teachers skewed the overall findings with their academic calendars.

Figure 39: How Much Vacation Time Did You Take in the Past 12 Months?



The majority of stage managers (63%) drive to work, but 23% and 6% choose the healthier options of walking and bicycling, respectively, on their job commute. Figure 40 shows how much fast food, caffeine, and alcohol stage managers reported consuming each week. Recent studies have found that the average American eats fast food for three meals a week and consumes 300 mg of caffeine (approximately 3 cups of coffee) a day. Alcohol consumption varies greatly, with 60% of Americans consuming no alcohol or less than one drink per week, but another 20% consume more than 15 alcohol drinks per week.

Figure 41 measures the activities that stage managers do to relieve stress. In addition to the listed categories, multiple survey participants also mentioned video games, smoking, knitting, yoga, meditation, pets, music, sex, and cooking as ways of reducing stress.

Figure 40: Fast Food/Caffeine/Alcohol Consumption in a Regular Work Week

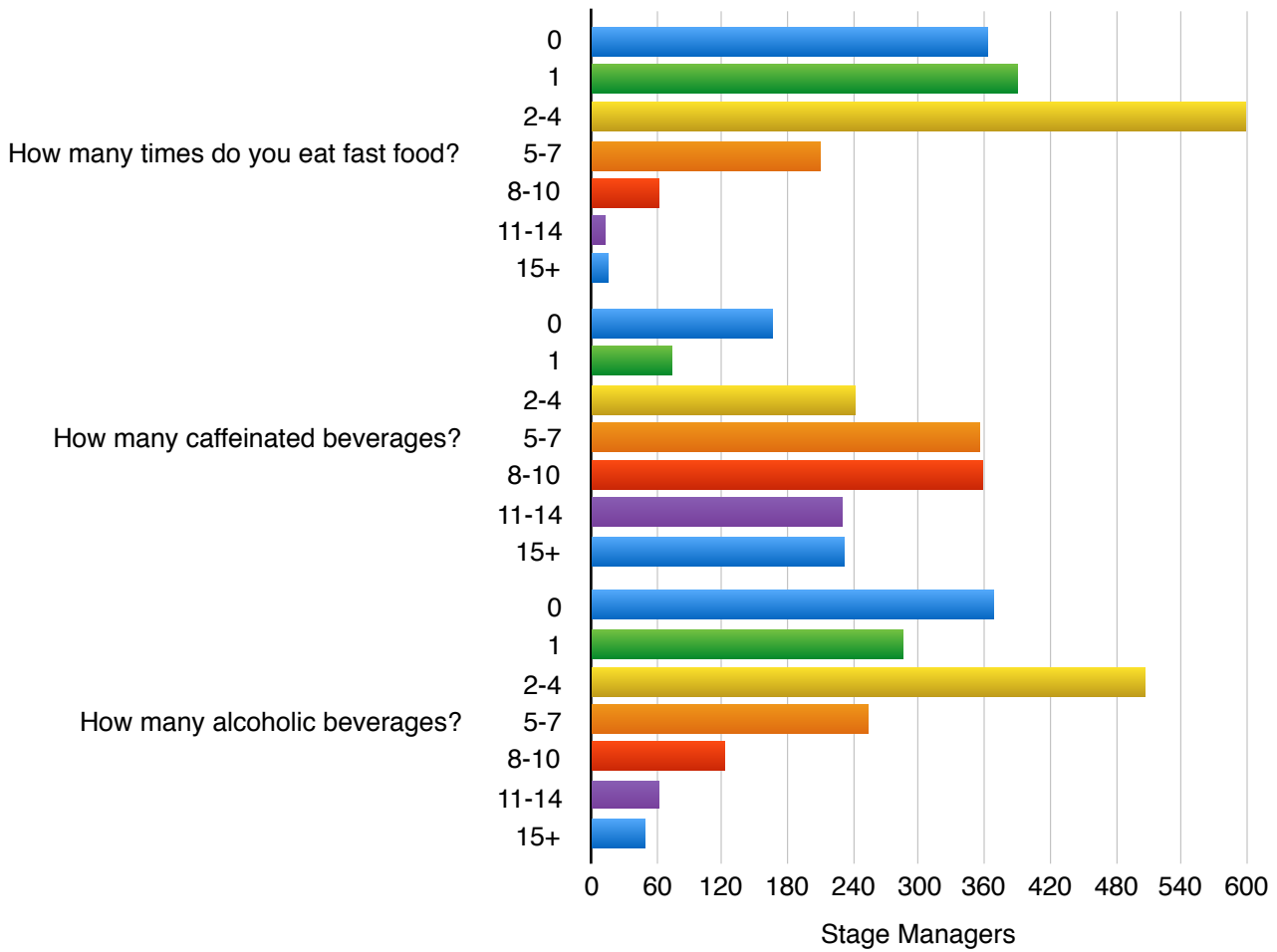
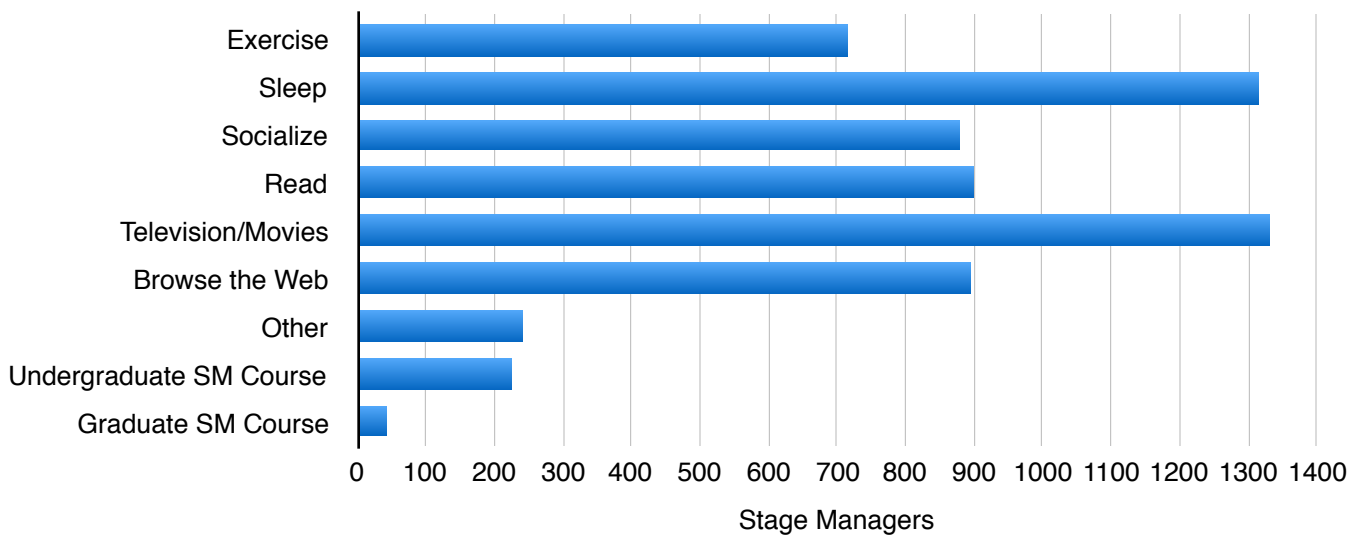
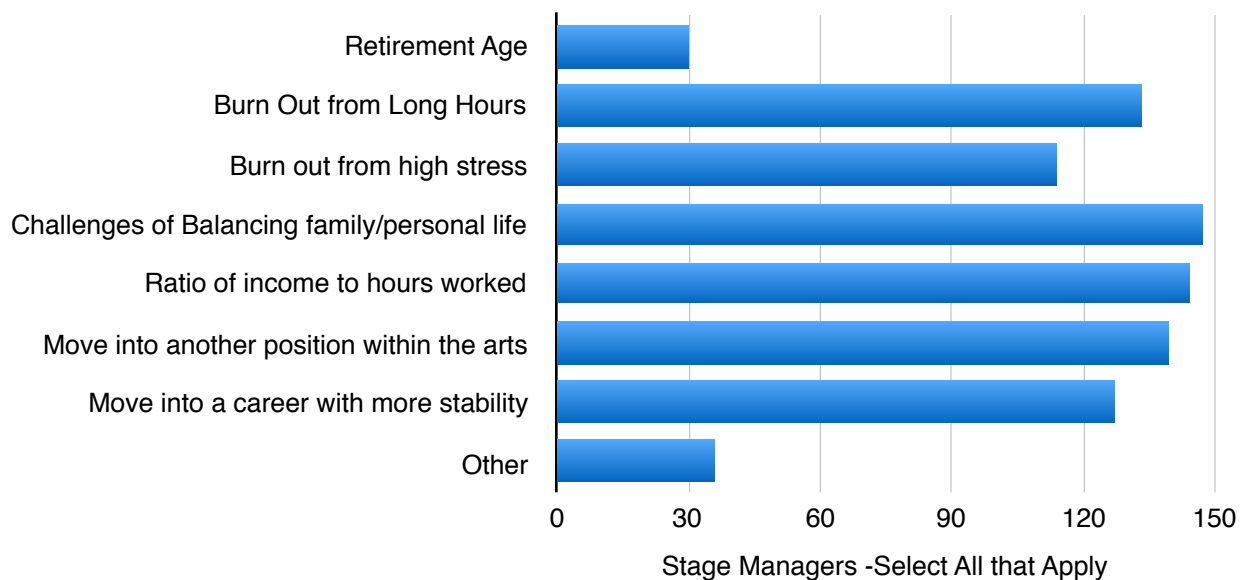


Figure 41: What Do You Do to Relieve Stress?



The final survey questions were about overall job satisfaction and likelihood of leaving the field in the near future. When asked how likely a participant was to leave stage management in the next five years: 9% were very likely and another 10% thought it was likely that they would exit the field in this timetable. When narrowed to just those survey participants who listed SM or ASM as their current occupation, “very likely” lowered to 6% and “likely” remained at 10%. Figure 42 shows the primary reasons for leaving stage management among those most likely to leave the profession. The majority of “Other” reasons were based on a lack of work, health concerns, a desire for new challenges, a desire to have children, and a transition into teaching.

Figure 42: Contributing Factors in Decision to Leave Stage Management



But those who choose to remain in stage management are generally very happy to do so. Over three-fourths of the survey participants listed that they were very satisfied (22%) or satisfied (55%) with their careers. Factors contributing to career satisfaction and dissatisfaction included:

- ❖ “I choose my projects and I work with people I want to. I also enjoy traveling for shows and learning new ways of doing theatre.”
- ❖ “Quality of the work being offered. Too many equity showcases and readings and not enough time spent working with real professionals.”
- ❖ “Though I’m still in the early stages of my career, I believe I am laying a foundation of work that will pay off in the long run. Working toward my goals and feeling the successes of that process helps me continue to feel like I’m in the right place and on the right track.”
- ❖ “I’m not getting enough work to pay my bills or my student loans so I have to take day jobs that interfere with theatre.”
- ❖ “Employment where I am a valued team member, allowed to speak up and make suggestions, not micro-managed, seen as a human first, an artist/collaborator second, and a stage manager third. Working with people who have a similar approach to and respect for the work we do.”
- ❖ “I am in my second year of internships/apprenticeships and need to be making a salary but am still living off of \$250/week in order to support a future career.”

## CONCLUSION

We would like to thank the hundreds of stage managers who volunteered their time to make this study possible. Each time we conduct the survey, we are overwhelmed with both the number of responses and the candor of the participants to create such a comprehensive examination of our occupation and our art.

If you have any questions about the data or would like a cross-tabulation (e.g., the percentage of stage managers who have worked for over ten years who use laptops in rehearsal), or would like to make a recommendation for a future survey, please e-mail [info@sm-sim.com](mailto:info@sm-sim.com) with “SM Survey” in the subject line. If you would like to participate in future surveys, please sign up at <http://smsurvey.info>. The next survey will be conducted in November 2017.

In each survey cycle we field questions about expanding the survey beyond the United States (27 participants in the 2015 survey have worked on American shows but reside in other countries.). Due to some of the specific terminology (SM vs. Deputy SM, etc.) and union practices, we think it works best to limit this study to American theatrical stage management. The graduate stage management program at the University of Iowa would be very interested in partnering with other groups to conduct stage management surveys in other performing art genres or in other countries. We would be happy to provide guidance and we could potentially help develop and host the survey. In this decentralized field, there is much that we all can learn from each other.

We would like to thank again everyone who volunteered to create a comprehensive examination of our occupation and our art.

*Nathan Brauner*

*Kelsey Petersen*

*Rachele Ekstrand*

*Nicholas Steffes*

*Alison Kochman*

*Lindsay Warnick*

*Katy McGlaughlin*

*Lauren Watt*

*Timothy Mizones*

*Rachel E. Winfield*

*Samantha Paradis*

*David J. McGraw, Instructor*

Stage Management Special Topics course, University of Iowa

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