

WGA Writer Employment Snapshot

Job statistics reflect decline in television jobs across levels, and a lesser decline in screenwriting employment

Series Employment

TV writers have reported the difficulties with finding work in the post-Peak TV landscape, and the numbers bear those experiences out. With an industry in transition—cable TV subscriptions and cable programming declining, a massive run-up and then pullback in streaming series as Wall Street demands quicker streaming platform profits—the number of TV jobs has declined. The studios’ prolonged unwillingness to negotiate a fair deal in 2023 further shortened the 2023-24 season.

Approximately 37% fewer WGA-covered episodic series aired in the shortened 2023-24 season and the season’s series had 1,319 fewer writer jobs than the prior season. The 2023-24 season numbers are also significantly lower than those in two largely pre-pandemic seasons, 2018-19 and 2019-20.¹

Table 1: Episodic Series

	'18-'19	'19-'20	'22-'23	'23-'24	Change '22-23 to '23-24 (%)
WGA-covered series	345	345	362	228	-37%

Table 2: Television Writing Jobs, by Level

	'18-'19	'19-'20	'22-'23	'23-'24	Change '22-23 to '23-24
Lower Level (Staff Writer, Story Editor, Exec. Story Editor)	795	741	824	446	(378)
Mid-Level (Co-Producer through Consulting/Supervising Producer)	708	649	720	421	(299)
Upper Level (Co-EP through Showrunner)	1,508	1,332	1,594	952	(642)
Total	3,011	2,722	3,138	1,819	(1,319)

This decline in the number of jobs was shared across all levels, and the share of jobs by level has remained fairly stable across these seasons.

Table 3: Share of Television Writing Jobs, by Level

	'18-'19	'19-'20	'22-'23	'23-'24	Change '22-23 to '23-24 (% pts)
Lower Level (Staff Writer, Story Editor, Exec. Story Editor)	26%	27%	26%	25%	-1%

¹ These numbers exclude pilot development and development room work for series that did not air. For each season, TV series employment is measured by programs airing from September 1st to August 31st.

Mid-Level (Co-Producer through Consulting/Supervising Producer)	24%	24%	23%	23%	0%
Upper Level (Co-EP through Showrunner)	50%	49%	51%	52%	1%

While series released in the 2023-24 season include both pre- and post-strike employment, subsequent rooms continue to hire writers at all levels. The 2024-25 season is months away from being complete for full analysis, but our still in-progress information shows that there have been at least 380 staff writer, story editor and executive story editor positions on series and in development rooms after the 2023-24 season.²

Screen Employment

Screenwriters are also feeling pressure from industry contraction. The number of WGA-covered films has mostly remained stable in recent years.

Table 4: Films Released

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change 2022 to 2024 (%)
WGA-covered films released	193	148	181	198	195	197	-1%

Screenwriter earnings and employment declined 6% for the first three quarters of 2024, and the number of screenwriters working declined 15%, compared with the same period in 2022.³

Table 5: Screenwriter Earnings and Employment, Q1-3

	2019 Q1-3	2020 Q1-3	2021 Q1-3	2022 Q1-3	2023 Q1-3	2024 Q1-3	Change 2022 to 2024 (%)
Screenwriter earnings (millions)	\$399.0	\$362.6	\$342.0	\$356.9	\$303.5	\$333.9	-6%
Screenwriters working	2,036	1,914	1,956	1,947	1,769	1,651	-15%

The Guild continues to monitor employment levels and trends.

² The numbers in Tables 2 and 3 include employment only on aired shows, while this partial post-2023-24 season information includes writers in development rooms that may not air, or may air in a future season, and so is not directly comparable.

³ Writer earnings for the full calendar year of 2024 are not yet complete; this information will be updated in the upcoming annual report. Screen earnings and employment are WGAW-only, and include spec sales.