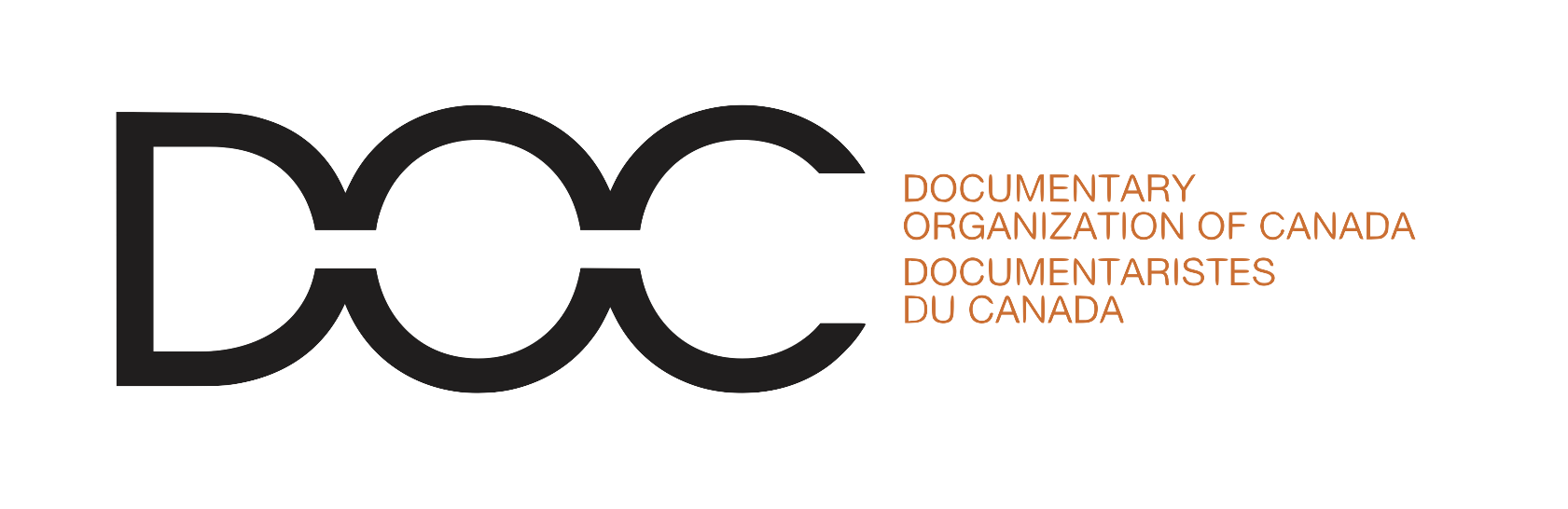
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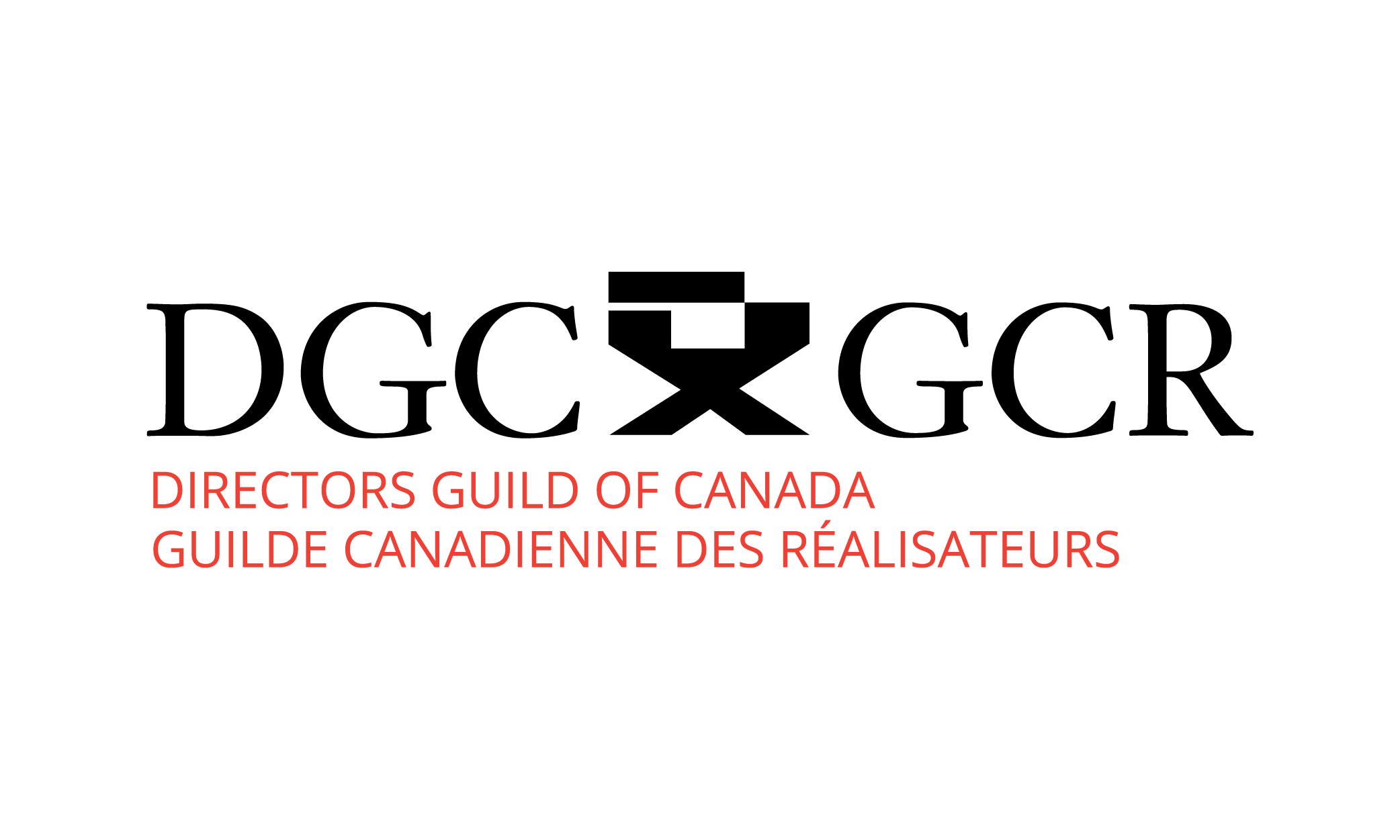
**Writer/Researcher: Chanda Chevannnes**

This guide was created by the [Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC)](https://www.docorg.ca/) for Canadian documentary professionals who are actively engaging in production and post-production in the wake of COVID-19.

The online version can be accessed at: [covid19/docorg.ca](https://covid19.docorg.ca/)

This PDF version of the guide was last updated on December 14, 2020.

DOC gratefully acknowledges the support and partnership of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC) in the creation of this guide.



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| **How to Use this Guide** |

This guide addresses practical questions that documentary professionals have been asking: [**Should I Shoot?**](#_603pyidc86cv) (about ethics); [**Can I Shoot?**](#_qsh70q) (about legalities); and [**How Do I Shoot?**](#_1rvwp1q)(about logistics). Work your way through the questions, or refer to the **Contents** section below for an overview of the guide.

This resource is intended as a tool to help with your planning. Be sure to consult with your funders, partners, and lawyers; while keeping abreast of shifting industry expectations and expanding scientific information.

***I felt a lot of responsibility to my crew and subjects... I didn’t understand how we would be able to function as a nimble, tiny doc crew and also practice social distancing. And that was the challenge.***

Sherien Barsoum, Producer/Director

In a research interview on July 23, 2020

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| **A New Normal** |

Our research demonstrated that many documentary filmmakers are eager to get back to work. They are also hopeful that they will soon be able to approach their work in ways that feel similar to our pre-pandemic approaches. But at this time, government officials and public health authorities are unable to set an end date for any of the current precautionary measures.

Our new approaches to health & safety will become the basis of documentary production planning for the foreseeable future. We cannot expect to return to business as usual—this way of working will become our new normal.

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| **SHOULD I SHOOT? Ethical Considerations** |

Whether to film during a pandemic isn’t a decision many of us have had to make in the past. This section aims to help filmmakers consider whether they should be shooting at this moment in time.

#### In this Section

* [Varying Perspectives](#_8v382aeznt41)
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As we adjust to this new normal of pandemic precautions, documentarians will be asking themselves ethical questions repeatedly, while remaining attuned to the shifting contexts.

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| **Varying Perspectives** |

As film & television production is allowed to resume across the country, many documentarians have paused before restarting their work. In our July 2020 survey of 327 Canadian documentary professionals, we found that 33% of respondents had not yet returned to production or post-production work.

The main reasons cited by producers and directors for not being in production or post was that their productions weren't ready (37% of respondents). For directors and crew members, a key reason was that there was no work available (31% of respondents).

But 27% of respondents also indicated that they felt the health & safety risks were simply too high. In fact, of the respondents who had not yet gone back to production or post, 8% indicated that they have no plans to shoot until COVID-19 is no longer a risk.

***I don’t think it’s actually ethical or safe to shoot now. My risk tolerance is zero, and if mine is zero, I’m not asking people to have a bigger risk tolerance than that.***

Kami Chisholm, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on August 6, 2020

In both the survey and the interviews, many documentary professionals expressed a deep feeling of uncertainty. Some were feeling ambivalent about their projects. Others just didn’t know where to begin in this strange new time.

***At this time, we are not certain when and if we are going to start new productions. We have several projects in development and we still need to figure out how we will work post pandemic.***

Anonymous Survey Respondent   
In our online survey on July 23, 2020

Others are getting back to work. 42% of survey respondents have been filming since March 13, 2020. In our interviews with some of these documentarians, the research and logistical planning undertaken by producers was often found to be robust and carefully considered. The significant work undertaken by producers to learn about COVID-19, review emerging film & television guidelines, and create production-specific health & safety plans demonstrated these professionals’ deep dedication to finding new ways to approach production as safely as possible.

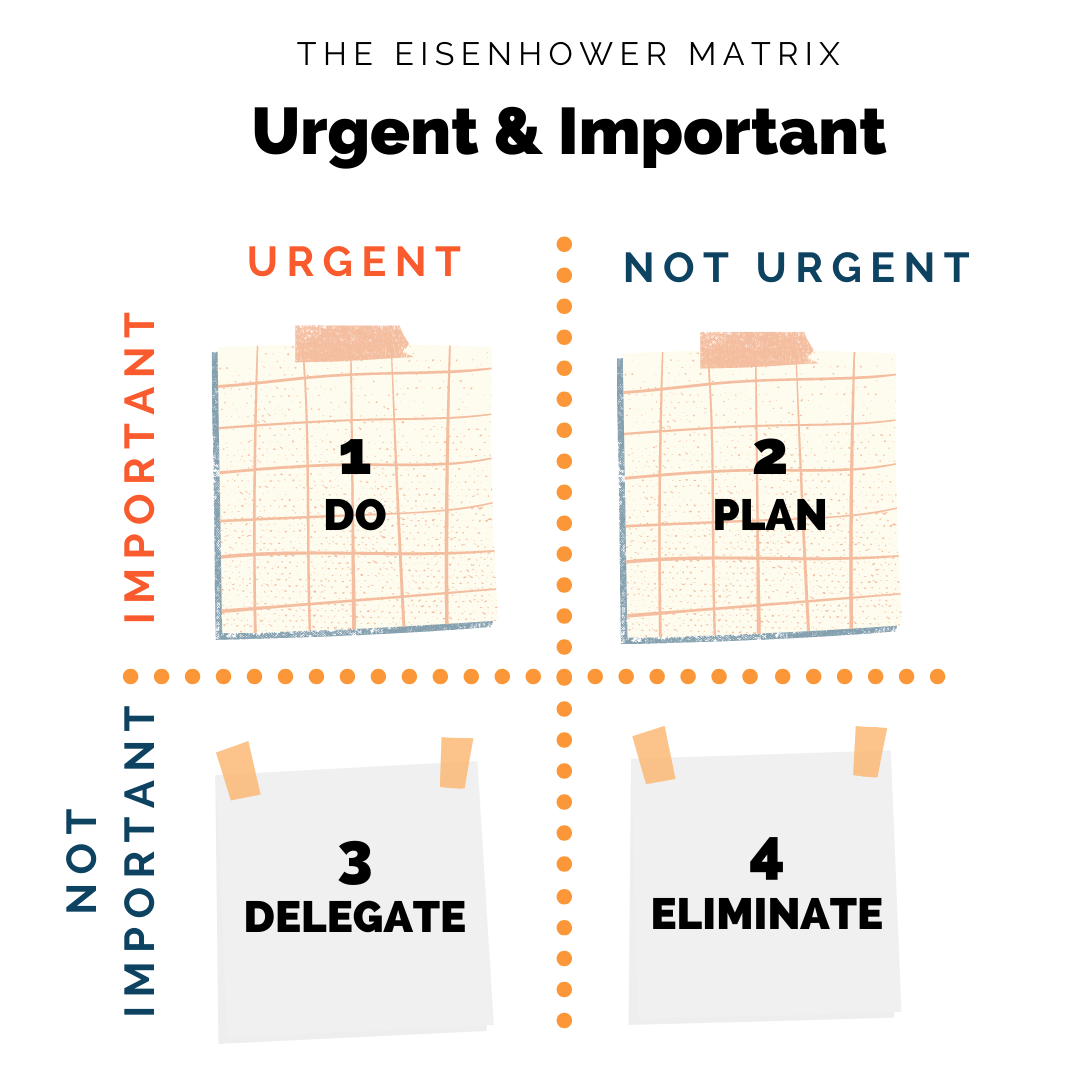
***It was interesting having to amass and dissect the info to create our own procedures to keep everyone safe—we feel very prepared now.***

Kelly Steele, Producer/Director  
In our online survey on July 22, 2020

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| **Urgency & Importance** |

Why do you need to make your film right now?

In asking yourself this question, you might choose to consider the urgency and importance of your project. The Eisenhower Matrix is one way to do so. This simple 4-box table helps us to think through our work by ranking a task’s urgency and importance. The rank you assign to each task determines how, when, and *if* you will complete it. During this pandemic, we might choose to consider our films in a similar way.



***Questions for Consideration:***

* Is my project urgent? Everyone will have a different definition of urgency. For some, an urgent film might:
  + tell stories of the pandemic
  + chronicle events that are occurring now and won’t happen again
  + feature on-camera participants whose stories must be captured soon
  + be currently needed by audiences, activists, educators, or your broadcaster
  + bring in funding that is urgently required to pay your rent, your crew’s wages, and/or other expenses
* Is my project important? Only you can determine what qualifies as important, but this could include a project:
  + with artistic, social, educational, or economic value
  + that inspires and excites you, your crew, your production partners, and/or your audiences
  + that tells a true story in a nuanced and focused way (in the current climate of fake news, this feels particularly important to many documentarians)
* Where does my project fit in the above matrix, in light of the current public health crisis?

1. Urgent and Important
2. Not Urgent, but Important
3. Urgent, but Not Important
4. Not Urgent, and Not Important

As documentary filmmakers, we hope that we are always making films that are important on some level. Those that are urgent *and* important are the ones you might decide to prioritize during the most intense periods of a pandemic (for example, if we experience the possible second wave). Those that are important but not urgent are those that you might consider working on a bit more slowly; developing, planning, and then waiting until it’s safer to head into production.

***I just worry when we make decisions around doing projects, based on whether they're important enough... In the current climate, you could argue that none of them are important. But what if it means never working again, and what if it means not telling our stories during a time that is important to document?***

***I just think we have to weigh those things. It is a bigger discussion than just the subject of your film.***

Teresa MacInnes, Producer/Director

In a research interview on August 3, 2020

Our assessments of importance and urgency are individual. Whether you are a producer, director, or crew member, you are the only person who can determine what qualifies as urgent or important for you. But, it is also your responsibility to examine the potential impacts of your decisions on other people, including your crew, participants, and the community in which you are shooting.

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| **Risks & Benefits** |

When asking ourselves whether we should shoot during the pandemic, it’s critical to consider the risks that we are taking, and the risks we’re asking others to take.

In our research interviews, we observed that the level of risk tolerance varied greatly from person to person. Having filmed in other dangerous situations previously, many documentarians felt a degree of comfort filming during the pandemic. However, the risk of asymptomatic transmission and the characteristics of the populations that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 make this specific endeavour different from other documentary situations.

***If we proceed with filming during COVID and someone on our crew or one of our doc participants contracts COVID, there are a number of outcomes, all of which we are ultimately responsible for.***

***If someone dies from COVID after contracting the virus while participating in our production, we have to carry the weight of that reality.***

Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Writer/Director/Producer  
In a research interview on July 22, 2020  
See Case Study #2

According to the [Government of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/people-high-risk-for-severe-illness-covid-19.html#:~:text=%2D%20People%20with%20medical%20conditions,.%20%2D%20Older%20adults), those who are currently at greater risk for severe complications from COVID-19, include:

* Older adults;
* People with weakened immune systems from a medical condition or treatment, such as chemotherapy; and
* People with specific medical conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes, and cancer; and
* People living with obesity.

And while anyone can be infected with COVID-19, some communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. [Data collected](https://www.toronto.ca/news/toronto-public-health-releases-new-socio-demographic-covid-19-data/) by Toronto Public Health, for example, reveals that 83% of Torontonians who have contracted COVID-19 are racialized (while racialized people represent 52% of the city’s population). Additionally, 51% of those diagnosed with COVID-19 are lower-income individuals (compared to 30% of the city’s population).

***While COVID-19 has affected all of us, unfortunately it has had a greater impact on those in our community who face greater health inequities…***

***There is growing evidence in North America and beyond that racialized people and people living in lower-income households are more likely to be affected by COVID-19 infection.***

Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health, City of Toronto  
During a [press conference](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_GZwxcn4jw&list=PLp11YxteHNp2ta73sC3tKuFZXV9JW0Kpv&index=2) on July 31, 2020

### As the scientific community increases its understanding around the vulnerabilities to COVID-19 , all documentary professionals should remain abreast of the evolving understanding of the disease.

### ***Questions for Consideration:***

* What is the risk of COVID-19 in your province/territory and local community?
* What is the risk in the province/territory and community where you will be shooting?
* How big is your crew and how many people have they come into contact with in the last 14 days?
* Are participants and/or crew members from communities that are already vulnerable to COVID-19 infection? (e.g., BIPOC or low-income communities)
* Are participants and/or crew members individuals who are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19? (e.g., as those who are older, immuno-compromised, or with pre-existing conditions)
* Are participants and/or crew members living with people who are more vulnerable to COVID-19?
* Are participants and crew members fully aware of the above risks?

### Importance of Local Context

*If* and *how* you shoot is very much dependent on *where* you shoot. Not only are the rules and guidelines different in different countries, provinces/territories, and municipalities. But, the risk of COVID-19 also varies greatly from place to place.

***Everything is contingent on where you are: geographically and in time.***

***We wouldn’t have been able to do our studio shoot two months ago. And maybe not in Montreal two weeks ago. But when we were shooting, Saskatchewan had been seeing low rates for a while.***

Jon Montes, NFB Producer

In a research interview on July 15, 2020  
[Read about the studio shoot](#_3ep43zb) in How Do I Shoot?

#### Questions for Consideration:

* How many active and resolved cases of COVID-19 are in the country, province/territory, and community where I want to shoot?
* If I am from outside of the community where I plan to film, what is the situation with COVID-19 in my own area?
* If I am filming in an area with a significant number of cases, will I be putting myself and my crew at risk?
* If I am filming in an area with a low number of cases, will I be putting my participants, their families, and their wider communities at risk?

To date, Quebec and Ontario have had the highest numbers of cases—over 300,000 between them. In the last months of 2020, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have all seen a dramatic increase in cases of COVID-19. Meanwhile, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have had only a few dozen cases each. If you are a filmmaker from Quebec, therefore, it might not be advisable for you to film in Yukon. The risk would simply be too great to the community there. Likewise, it might be inadvisable for a crew from Halifax to travel to Toronto, as they would run a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and infecting loved ones and community members back home.

At the onset of the pandemic, many rural and remote communities barred visitors from entering their borders, out of concern that people from areas with high rates of COVID-19 might bring the virus into areas that had lower case numbers, infecting residents and potentially overburdening healthcare facilities.

Today, many Indigenous communities continue to restrict entry. This is being done in an attempt to protect communities and their members, many of whom are often already marginalized and vulnerable.

For example, on July 30, 2020, the province of British Columbia restricted non-essential travel to Haida Gwaii, in order to limit the spread of COVID-19. But, approximately four months earlier, the Haida Nation had already established its [own travel restrictions](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/haida-gwaii-visitor-ban-covid-19-1.5547249). In addition to working to protect the community of less than 5,000—which has only twelve hospital beds and two ventilators—the restrictions also seek to prevent a terrible history from repeating itself. The risk in this case is huge for a culture that is carried by a tiny population that was almost wiped out by a previous pandemic.

***Haida Gwaii lost many of its people in the smallpox pandemic of 1862, which effectively depopulated the whole BC coast, and left the survivors demoralized and unable to resist colonial encroachment.***

***Another pandemic would be a catastrophe.***Crawford Kilian, Freelance Journalist  
In a [blog post](https://crofsblogs.typepad.com/h5n1/2020/07/canada-covid-19-outbreak-declared-on-haida-gwaii-with-13-cases.html) on July 24, 2020

As international borders open up, it is inevitable that Canadian documentary filmmakers will begin to cross them again. In our research, we found that many documentarians were working in foreign countries (often remotely and with local crews) without always fully considering the local public health context.

Sandra Steingraber is a biologist and an authority in public health who lives in New York State, which was the epicentre of the pandemic in the U.S. in spring 2020. Steingraber is used to fielding media requests—she has been the main character in two feature documentaries and an expert interviewee in countless others. But she was shocked by the requests to film that she received during the pandemic.

***I was approached by three different documentary filmmakers. I said no to all of them. Not because I was concerned that we couldn’t do it safely, but because it’s just such a hard time.   
  
One pushed me pretty hard. He said, “We will come to you in Ithaca, and I will do it at your office.” I had to laugh. There are no colleges open now. All public parks were closed. The only possible venue would be to welcome them into my home. No one comes into my house, because we are in quarantine.   
  
This director didn’t understand how terrifying it was in New York. We were at the height of the dying. We were losing 700 to 800 people a night. The idea that he was going to carry on in a time of profound crisis and mourning was unbelievable to me. The disjunction was too jarring.***Sandra Steingraber, biologist, author, former documentary participant  
In a research interview on July 28, 2020

Now more than ever, not only is having an awareness of the local context important for everyone involved in your film, but it’s also key to building trusting relationships with potential on-camera participants.

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| **Rights & Responsibilities** |

As employers, documentary producers have the responsibility to keep their crews safe. And while our on-camera participants are not employees, we also have a responsibility to protect them in the same way we would our crews.

***Everyone in the workplace has a role to play in keeping workplaces safe and healthy.***

***Workers in the workplace who see a health and safety problem... have a duty to report the situation to the employer or a supervisor.***

***Employers and supervisors are, in turn, required to address those situations.***

Ontario Ministry of Labour  
In response to a research questionnaire on August 12, 2020

According to our online survey, the majority of respondents have felt safe while doing their work during the pandemic: 38% indicated they felt “very safe” and 40% indicated that they felt “somewhat safe.” While the number of respondents who felt “somewhat unsafe” was small (a bit less than 8%), we have the responsibility as employers to ensure that everyone feels safe while working for us—not simply the majority of our crew members.

***I have another concern regarding all of the health and safety protocols which is that I would hope that there would be a mechanism for productions to have the ability to enforce and encourage a culture/environment that is unified and doesn't allow for a collapsing or relaxing of the rules once actual filming begins.***

***I would fear that those who are more agreeable to being flexible with the protocols and willing to film in less safe conditions will be chosen over others (similar to when crew members are chosen over others when the question of filming in dangerous situations arises).***

***I would hope that there would be respect all around for people's comfort levels and wishes around safety.***

Anonymous Survey Respondent  
In our online survey on July 31, 2020

In our research interviews, we heard from several crew members who found themselves in the stressful position of working on a production they felt was not following appropriate health & safety protocols. While voicing their concerns about safety, these crew members had sometimes been met with impatience, condescension, and even ridicule.

Paying attention to those who are flagging potential health & safety issues is one of the simplest ways to ensure that we are truly mitigating the risks of working during the pandemic. Those who are flagging health & safety concerns might possess a **situational awareness** that will help us to keep one another safe and healthy.

***Those of us who are interested in metacognition—how we think—tend to conceive of situational awareness as a learned ability to notice and interpret what is happening around us so we are prepared for what might happen next.***

***Critically, it also allows us to anticipate and navigate common thinking and behaviour traps. The latter is especially important because our situational awareness in emergencies can be unduly influenced by the behaviour—including the under-reactivity—of those around us...***

***Our behavioural responses are both learned and dependent on our environment, and when we encounter unfamiliar situations we often revert to a default setting: looking at what others are doing. This concept is known as social proof. We’re aware of the pandemic, but because people around us aren’t wearing masks, we’re tricked into thinking that what they’re doing must be right.***

Dr. Jillian Horton, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, Max Rady College of Medicine  
In an [op-ed](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-repeat-after-me-this-is-an-emergency/?utm_source=Shared+Article+Sent+to+User&utm_medium=E-mail:+Newsletters+/+E-Blasts+/+etc.&utm_campaign=Shared+Web+Article+Links) in *The Globe and Mail* from August 7, 2020

Ultimately, safety is everyone’s responsibility. And everyone has the right to refuse unsafe work. Since most documentary professionals are not unionized, crew members facing unsafe situations should first speak with their producers. If those conversations fail, crew can choose to [refuse unsafe work](#_bt34ige7z8az) and can also [report unsafe working conditions](#_k6fqvp2nzfiy) to the provincial/territorial authorities (See Deal With Sticky Situations in How Do I Shoot?).

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| **Alternative Approaches** |

If you have decided to go ahead with filming at this time, first consider whether any alternative approaches to having a traditional crew might be possible. These approaches will reduce your crew’s exposure to other people and reduce your participants’ exposure to you and your crew.

Your options for alternative approaches might include:

* [Audio-only interviews](#_meukdy)
* [Remote filming](#_36ei31r)
* [Participant-generated video](#_1ljsd9k)
* [Creative Visual Approaches](#_45jfvxd)

(See examples in How Do I Shoot?)

In our online survey, we found that 29.5% of those who have been working since March 13, 2020 have been conducting remote interviews (i.e., video chats), while another 8% have been having their participants generate their own video content (in the form of video diaries, for example).

Even if you cannot fully eliminate traditional filming approaches, replacing some shooting days with one or more of the alternative approaches will reduce the risk of COVID-19.

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| **CAN I SHOOT? Legal & Practical Considerations** |

Before embarking on our documentaries during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must first assess whether we are able to shoot—both legally and practically. This section aims to help filmmakers consider whether they can be shooting at this moment in time.

In this Section:

* [Is Documentary an Essential Service?](#_dvkp71fkxmyr)
* [Government Rules & Regulations](#_1hmsyys)
* [Insurance Coverage](#_xbhbgm5pmpsl)
* [Effects on Budget & Financing](#_2dlolyb)

If you need to travel for a shoot, in addition to the above pages, see also the travel-specific considerations in How Do I Travel?

Of course, always be sure to speak with your broadcaster(s) and other financiers before beginning or resuming production during this pandemic.

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| **Is Documentary an Essential Service?** |

While film & television production is generally being permitted across Canada, as we move into winter, many regions across the country are experiencing a second wave of infections., As new lockdowns are mandated and workplaces ordered to close again, some documentarians might wish to begin or continue shooting. But is this permitted under the law?

The answer to this question is nuanced and often situation-dependent. When the first wave hit and businesses were closed, documentarians were left to wonder whether they were allowed to continue their work. It often came down to whether your work as a documentary-maker could be considered **an essential service**.

***If you don’t know if your story is essential, it’s probably not.***

Carrie Lozano, International Documentary Association   
In [DOC Institute’s Law & Ethics webinar](https://www.dropbox.com/s/fkgltc875omctz1/Law%20%26%20Ethics%20Webinar.mp4?dl=0) on May 27, 2020

According to interviews we conducted with industry associations in both Manitoba and Nova Scotia, their provincial governments made it clear that no one in the film & television industry—including documentarians—was considered to be an essential service.

But in other jurisdictions, such as Ontario, lawyers were advising their clients that this question can only be answered on a case-by-case basis.

***“Generally speaking, the news media is considered as an essential service. So if you’re doing a documentary that you consider to be news and a current event, then you can consider that to be an essential service.”***

Danny Webber, Entertainment Lawyer  
In [DOC Institute’s Law & Ethics webinar](https://www.dropbox.com/s/fkgltc875omctz1/Law%20%26%20Ethics%20Webinar.mp4?dl=0) on May 27, 2020

Hatty Reisman, an entertainment and corporate lawyer based in Toronto offers a slightly different legal interpretation. According to Reisman, your journalistic documentary might be considered an essential service, but that judgment will likely be made based on the subject matter.

***“If your film is journalism, does it offer essential information? There is an argument to be made that you are providing an essential service if you are offering information that isn’t otherwise available.”***

Hatty Reisman, Entertainment & Corporate Lawyer  
In a research interview on August 6, 2020

Ultimately, Reisman says that filmmakers who are making a film during times when other film and television productions are restricted need to consider the risk involved if they are not deemed an essential service.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* What are the potential consequences?
  + Might you run the risk of being fined for disobeying a public health order?
  + Might your work put others at risk and lead to a lawsuit?
  + Might you or your production company be incurring potential liability, that in non-COVID times might have been covered by insurance?

If your community is currently in lockdown, speak with your lawyer in advance of starting (or continuing) production and rely on their professional legal judgment, based on your unique situation and your provincial/territorial context. If, after this consultation, you believe that you would not be deemed to be an essential service, then you can consider yourself to be a regular film & television production, and follow the reopening plans for your province/territory accordingly.

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| **Government Rules & Regulations** |

### Provincial/Territorial Reopenings

Currently, film and television production is generally permitted in all Canadian provinces and territories. But, because workplace closures are mandated at the provincial/territorial level, it’s at that level that you must first investigate to know if filming is permitted. And of course, our provinces and territories are not monolithic entities. As such, many provinces are now taking a regionalized approach to lockdowns and reopenings and producers will need to be aware of regional differences and restrictions. Consult your province or territory’s reopening plan and its most current public health orders to assess whether you are permitted to film at this moment in time.

This will take some research, as the answers are not always simple or straightforward. For example, in [Manitoba’s public health order of December 9, 2020,](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/2020_2021/orders-soe-12092020.pdf) businesses that engage in film & television production are permitted to continue operating if they were in production before the lockdown orders came into effect. And while [several regions in Ontario](https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10287747-ontario-lockdown-york-windsor-moving-into-covid-19-grey-zone/) had been designated as grey zones (i.e., regions in lockdown) as of December 11, 2020, film & television productions [are allowed to continue to operate,](https://nowtoronto.com/news/full-list-ontario-lockdown-restrictions-toronto-peel-november-23) with certain restrictions.

### Provincial/Territorial Legislation and Public Health Orders

As employers, producers are required to follow their [provincial/territorial occupational health and safety legislation](#_7hpkaw5rwr00) as well as all [public health orders, notices, and guidance documents](#_3vl2vj1vrwm7) (see the resources section).

### Gathering Limits

Throughout the pandemic, we have been told to limit our gathering sizes. These gathering limits vary from place to place and also change depending on the provincial/territorial reopening stage. Sometimes, these limits apply to private gatherings only, and sometimes they apply to private *and* professional gatherings. Consult your [provincial/territorial reopening plan](#_icyjqplz0tz7) (see the resources section) for more information on whether you must adhere to the gathering limits during your filmmaking work.

### Mask Rules

Currently, the Public Health Agency of Canada is [recommending the use of masks](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html) “for periods of time when it is not possible to consistently maintain a 2-metre physical distance from others, particularly in crowded public settings, such as stores, shopping areas, public transportation.” In most jurisdictions the use of non-medical masks is advised.

***Physical distancing is not enough protection on its own when we are in closed spaces, crowded spaces or in close contact with people outside of our social bubble…***

***In these situations, whether indoors or outdoors, we need an additional layer of protection by wearing a non-medical mask or face covering.***Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada  
In a [tweet](https://twitter.com/CPHO_Canada/status/1288513822546944001) on July 29, 2020

Wearing a mask while on set is widely suggested in the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines. But in certain contexts and jurisdictions, wearing a mask is also the law. As with gathering limits, mask rules differ between provinces/territories, and often between one city and another. Many municipalities and some entire provinces are requiring that masks be worn in indoor public spaces. In addition masks are currently required in all Canadian airports and on all aircraft leaving or arriving in Canada.

Check the requirements of your jurisdiction to better understand the masking rules in your area.

### Municipal & Local Responsibilities

While the provincial/territorial governments have the most authority over filming, municipalities are responsible for film permitting, for example. As such, they often have their own sets of regulations that productions filming within their jurisdictions are expected to follow.

### At the more localized level, individual communities also have the power to determine whether filming will be allowed. For example, many Indigenous communities have restricted public access as a protective measure. When it comes to marginalized and vulnerable communities, the question of Should I Shoot? becomes even more critical.

Municipal and local governments also have the power to issue bylaws within their borders. Various mask bylaws, such as those in effect in cities in Ontario and Alberta, are examples of this. But the municipalities in which you choose to shoot might have additional bylaws for you to consider. Review those thoroughly as you begin making your plans for filming.

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| **Insurance Coverage** |

### The COVID Exclusion

While film & television producers can still purchase production insurance, all insurance policies now include a **COVID exclusion**. This means that producersare assuming the responsibility for any COVID-related losses. In fact, many insurers are being even broader with their exclusions, by creating a communicable disease exclusion in their policies.

The kinds of losses that are not covered under new insurance policies include the following:

* Extra expenses incurred due to pauses in production caused by government shutdowns, thereby restricting access to planned locations (also known as **civil authority coverage***).* When COVID-19 first hit, this is the clause under which most insurance claims were made.
* Expenses incurred because of production delays due to a COVID-related illness or death of key crew, cast, or on-screen participants (which might normally have been included in your optional **cast insurance**).
* Cost of lawsuits and/or settlements if crew, cast, on-screen participants, or individuals connected to them contract COVID-19 and decide to sue the production for negligence.
* Cost of travel cancellation or interruption due to illness, death, or unexpected travel restrictions related to COVID-19.

If you purchased your insurance before the exclusions were being written into insurance policies, you should be covered for COVID-related losses for the time being. However, if you need to renew your policy or revise it for any reason (including a revision in principal photography dates), the insurer will also revise the policy to include the communicable disease exclusion. Check with your broker to confirm the details of your production insurance.

According to Diane Konecny of Front Row Insurance Brokers, it is likely that production insurance will continue to include the communicable disease exclusion for the foreseeable future.

### Moving Into Production with a COVID Exclusion

You can choose to move into production with a COVID exclusion on your insurance policy. But be sure to consult with your lawyer before making any decisions, as doing so means that you are accepting the liability risk this presents.

Ways to mitigate the risk include purchasing [other forms of insurance](#_9fptyznxngu6) (see below) and asking participants and crew members to sign [liability waivers](#_3ygebqi) (see below). But in addition to the legal considerations, there are also ethical questions to consider.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* Are you confident that your health & safety plan will be protective of public health and safety?
* What are the ways you can reduce the risks for crew members, participants, and the wider community?
* Will you be in contact with vulnerable people during filming (as crew members, participants, or members of the wider community) and how comfortable are you in working with them without insurance coverage?
* Are you comfortable asking crew and participants to sign a waiver, releasing you from liability if they catch COVID-19 and become ill or die?
* Are you willing to accept the risk of being sued by your crew, your participants, or their families, if they catch COVID-19 and become ill or die?
* Are there [alternative forms of insurance](#_9fptyznxngu6) that you can access?

### Government Insurance Programs

#### Quebec Insurance Initiative

In the summer of 2020, the government of Quebec created an insurance fund for producers in the province. This temporary program closed on November 3, 2020.

The [pilot program](https://sodec.gouv.qc.ca/domaines-dintervention/cinema-et-television/aide-financiere/aide-temporaire-dans-le-secteur-audiovisuel-cinema-television/) offered financial assistance to cover a portion of the eligible expenses related to an interruption of filming in Quebec, resulting from directors or actors catching COVID-19.

In order to qualify, producers must have been covered by a regular production insurance policy with a communicable disease exclusion. This temporary program only covered projects filming in Quebec.

#### Canada-wide Insurance Initiative

At the national level, the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) and Association québécoise de la production médiatique (AQPM) have been leading a process of industry engagement with the Government of Canada to encourage the creation of a federal fund to assist film & television productions with the insurance needs that have arisen due to the COVID insurance exclusion.

In recognition of these needs, the Government of Canada launched a [Short-Term Compensation Fund for Canadian Audiovisual Productions](https://telefilm.ca/en/financing/short-term-compensation-fund-for-canadian-audiovisual-productions) on October 28, 2020. The program is currently slated to run until March 31, 2021.

#### Through the Fund, Telefilm Canada will indemnify eligible producers for reasonable Canadian production costs directly caused by an interruption of more than one day in filming or the producer’s abandonment of the production prior to the end of filming due to:

#### (i) a confirmed diagnosis (COVID-19) of an Actor or Director declared on the insurance policy covering the project or;

#### (ii) any confirmed outbreak (COVID-19) on set that requires a complete production shutdown in accordance with current standards required by the applicable authorities.

#### Department of Canadian Heritage In their [website announcement](https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2020/09/government-of-canada-announces-temporary-measure-to-compensate-for-the-lack-of-insurance-coverage-for-production-stoppages-due-to-confirmed-covid-1.html) of September 25, 2020

Documentary producers should note that eligibility for the program is restrictive and its coverage is quite narrow. For example, civil authority shutdowns and international shoots are not covered.

Note also that productions must register and enter into an agreement with Telefilm **before** any cases of COVID-19 emerge.

See Telefilm’s [website](https://telefilm.ca/en/financing/short-term-compensation-fund-for-canadian-audiovisual-productions) for more information.

#### Workers’ Compensation Insurance

Workers’ Compensation Insurance is a reasonably priced insurance option for employers in Canada. The premiums are calculated based on an employer’s labour costs and the employees are covered for job-related injuries and illness.

If an employee becomes sick or is injured, it’s up to them to file the claim directly with the insurance board. The workers’ compensation board will then investigate the illness/injury to confirm that it is workplace related. If this confirmation is made, the employee will receive workers’ compensation.

Many documentary producers purchase workers’ compensation as part of their standard business practice. However, there are also many producers who do not. With COVID-19 shining a spotlight on workplace health & safety, broadcasters are beginning to require that producers purchase this insurance and many producers who have not previously purchased this insurance are now doing so. Note, of course, that on-camera participants are not employees of your production and will, therefore, not be covered by this insurance.

Learn more about [workers’ compensation in your province/territory.](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/wcb_canada.html)

### Waivers for Crew and On-Camera Participants

In order to reduce their own liability, many documentary producers have begun asking participants and crew members to sign liability waivers, often including these in crew deal memos and on-camera participant release forms. Some Canadian broadcasters and funders have begun asking producers to include a statement in these waivers that release the broadcasters/funders from liability, in addition to the producer. Meanwhile, ACTRA has recently [advised their members](https://www.actratoronto.com/covid-19-return-to-work/#faq) not to sign waivers that release producers from their responsibility to insure performers.

Liability waivers, written by your entertainment lawyer, will ask your crew and your on-camera participants to acknowledge that they:

1. Understand the risks of filming during a pandemic.
2. Have reviewed the production’s plans for filming and believe those plans make the risks personally acceptable.
3. Release the producer from any liability for COVID-related losses due to illness or death (so long as the producer has followed the mandated and agreed-upon protocols, and has not acted in a negligent manner).

Note that the legal rules around liability waivers vary significantly between provinces/territories, so using template language found online might not be adequately protective. For example, in Quebec’s legal system, liability disclaimers are interpreted fairly restrictively and professional legal guidance on the language used in waivers should be sought.

Speak with your lawyer to decide whether this kind of waiver makes sense for you and your project and about what to do if you are uncomfortable asking crew members or participants to sign these documents.

If you do decide to use waivers, be sure to draw your crew and your participants’ attention to these clauses.

***There’s a lot of case law around waivers and about how much you have to draw people’s attention to actually look at these things and pay attention to them. In this kind of situation, it’s not really good enough to get people to sign it, you have to make sure you’re drawing people’s attention to it and they understand what they are signing. If you don’t, that puts you more at risk.***

Danny Webber, Entertainment Lawyer  
In a research interview on August 17, 2020

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| **Effects on Budget & Financing** |

### What Are the Additional Costs Associated with Filming Now?

Documentary producers who are in production during the pandemic have noted, for the most part, that the costs of their productions have been increasing. Some producers indicate that these costs are adding up to a 10-15% increase in their budgets.

In thinking through whether you can move forward with production at this time, it’s critical to consider the additional costs you will incur, including possibly:

* Additional costs for legal fees associated with consultations with your entertainment lawyer about the potential risks of working during COVID-19 and the creation of additional legal documents, including COVID waivers.
* Costs for additional insurance, such as workers’ compensation.
* Additional shoot days for a slower, safer pace.
* Additional crew members (or additional days of work) for COVID-safety plan creation, implementation, communication, etc.
* Additional pay for crew members (including sick pay, quarantine pay, hazard pay).
* Additional equipment for remote and participant-generated filming.
* Higher rates of pay for foreign crew members, to eliminate the need for Canadian crews to travel.
* Costs for personal protective equipment for crew members.
* Additional vehicles and/or mileage for all crew members to self-drive to location.
* Additional per diem costs for crew members to purchase their own meals and snacks.

Some broadcasters and funders have asked producers to supply a COVID budget, outlining the additional expenses that will be incurred because of COVID-19. This is somewhat challenging, because, in many cases, all aspects of the projects have had to be reimagined and reworked. The additional costs have therefore been woven into the fabric of the production and cannot always be readily teased out.

#### A Note on Legal Fees

In our online survey of Canadian documentary filmmakers, we found that only 11% of respondents who were actively in production or post-production had consulted their entertainment lawyers when preparing to return to work. Additionally, only 13% of those respondents who are currently working identified the potential liability issues are a top concern.

While we recognize that legal fees can be a significant line item in budgets that are already incredibly stretched, working with an entertainment lawyer is more critical than ever before. Your lawyer will be able to discuss liability issues around COVID-19, draft legal contracts and forms, and offer advice on your policies and procedures.

### What Are the Implications for Our Financing?

As budgets increase on projects that were already in production when COVID-19 hit, producers are concerned that any additional funding that they need to raise will potentially put them offside of their current financing agreements. For example, additional funding that is not in the form of Canadian license fees will raise the overall financing totals while decreasing the percentage that the broadcast licence fee represents, potentially dropping the licence fee below the threshold prescribed by the Canada Media Fund (CMF), thereby making the production ineligible for any previously committed CMF funding.

And with many producers choosing to use local crews in foreign locations, rather than sending their own Canadian crews, the non-Canadian costs and out-of-province costs are mounting, potentially putting productions at risk of losing their federal and provincial tax credits. DOC and a number of other industry associations have been meeting with representatives of the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO) on this issue. While CAVCO has confirmed that it is working to gain temporary flexibility, no timelines or specific details have been released to date.

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| **HOW DO I SHOOT? Logistical Considerations** |

Once you have considered whether you [should](#_603pyidc86cv) shoot, and whether you [can](#_qsh70q) shoot, the inevitable question is this: How Do I Shoot?This section aims to help filmmakers consider all the logistics for shooting at this moment in time.

#### In this Section:

* [Understand Your Provincial/Territorial Film & Television Guidelines](#_nhdwoirlub4u)
* [Conduct a Risk Assessment](#_4bvk7pj)
* [Create a Health & Safety Plan](#_3q5sasy)
* [Include the Essential Production Protocols](#_43ky6rz)
* [Consider the Additional Production Protocols](#_pkwqa1)
* Examine  [Situation-Specific Best Practices](#_haapch)
* [Deal with Sticky Situations](#_mifko518t23f)
* [Consider Alternative Approaches](#_279ka65)

Once you’ve worked your way through the contents of this section, you might also review the [Case Studies](#_7c0b93bmrqzy), to learn from other documentary filmmakers’ experiences during COVID-19.

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| **Understand Your Provincial/Territorial Film & Television Guidelines** |

Most Canadian provinces and territories have released guidelines for film and television production during COVID-19. The majority of these guidelines were created by industry coalitions, with formal governmental approvals. Many producers waited for the release of their provincial/territorial guidelines before restarting their own productions, to ensure that they were taking a proactive and responsible approach to their work.

In the film & television sector, these guidelines are the standard and they are to be used as the foundation of all our production-specific health & safety plans. These plans are required by provincial/territorial reopening legislation and are also quickly becoming requirements of all Canadian broadcasters and funders.

While most of the provincial/territorial guidelines have been positioned as recommendations—rather than regulations—the guidelines offer best practices for engaging in production during this time. In the case of Quebec, however, the guidelines created by the Commission des normes, de l’équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) are the minimum rules to be observed by film and television professionals and fines can be issues for non-compliance.

Consult your official [provincial/territorial film & television guidelines](#_7vfw5cv54rne) to learn more.

If you live in a province/territory that has not created their own film & television guidelines (New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, or the Northwest Territories), consider consulting the general business reopening guidelines of the province/territory, as well as the film & television guidelines of other neighbouring jurisdictions.

In our research interviews, many filmmakers—especially those working in smaller communities—indicated that following the provincial/territorial guidelines and the established best practices was key to demonstrating our sector’s commitment to health & safety, and was ultimately helpful in building trust with participants and the general public.

***One of the things that I was most concerned about was people's perceptions. It's a very close community here (in New Brunswick) and people talk to each other.***

***We have to be very careful about how we are doing things, how we are going to appear, since in the eyes of the public, we are not an essential service—like an ambulance or a hospital.***

***Even though things are going well, we are in an "emergency." The borders are still closed. It is also not known if a second wave will occur.***

Christine Aubé, NFB Producer  
In a research interview on July 28, 2020

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| **Conduct a Risk Assessment** |

### What Is a Risk Assessment?

***Risk assessment is a term used to describe the overall process or method where you:***

* ***Identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm (hazard identification).***
* ***Analyze and evaluate the risk associated with that hazard (risk analysis, and risk evaluation).***
* ***Determine appropriate ways to eliminate the hazard, or control the risk when the hazard cannot be eliminated (risk control).***

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)  
On their [website](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/risk_assessment.html), last modified on September 2, 2020

In the Canadian documentary industry, risk assessments are not yet commonplace. Producers in our sector typically only undertake a risk assessment when they are required to do so by their insurance company or when they are planning to film in a very dangerous environment (such as a warzone).

Our research has revealed what appears to be a disconnect on the need for a risk assessment. In our online survey of documentary professionals, 58.5% of directors and crew members who had not yet returned to work hoped that producers would conduct a risk assessment. And in fact, 64% of producers who had not yet begun shooting or editing indicated that they planned to conduct a risk assessment before returning to work. However, when we interviewed producers who had already begun filming, only 15% had conducted a risk assessment for their project(s).

However, with COVID-19 forcing a renewed focus on health & safety, risk assessments are being widely suggested in the various provincial/territorial film & television guidelines. In fact, as part of the regulations for a safe return to work, many provinces/territories require employers to complete a risk assessment.

### Understanding Risk Mitigation

By conducting your own risk assessment, you will identify the areas of risk and how to reduce those risks. Taking the precautions outlined in this guide and in the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines will reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 during your production. Doing as much as you can to reduce the risks is important. But it is never a complete guarantee of individual safety.

Key to creating a good risk assessment is understanding what Brian Resnick calls the “four dimensions.”

***The story is a little more complicated than the simple “stay 6 feet away” guidelines. Coronavirus risk is simply not one-dimensional.***

***We need to think about risk in four dimensions: distance to other people, environment, activity, and time spent together.***

Brian Resnick, Senior Science Reporter, Vox.com  
In an [article](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2020/5/22/21265180/cdc-coronavirus-surfaces-social-distancing-guidelines-covid-19-risks) on June 16, 2020

In our research interviews, we found that many documentary professionals were not considering these four dimensions. In fact, many were taking an all-or-nothing view of the risks presented by COVID-19. If a director removes their mask because a participant cannot hear them in an interview, the director may feel as though the damage has been done; and they then leave their mask off during all interviews. If a crew flies together on a plane, they may feel as though they have already been exposed to any of the viruses that each other might be carrying; and they then feel comfortable driving together in one small car.

But public health officials tell us that we must think more holistically about the risks of COVID-19 transmission.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* Even if I can’t work outdoors exclusively, can I work outdoors most of the time?
* Even if I can’t stay 2m away from fellow crew members all of the time, can I do it most of the time?
* Even if I need to remove my mask for a moment, can I be 2m away from others when I do so, and remove it only briefly?

### How to Conduct a Risk Assessment

In conducting a risk assessment, you must first have a very strong sense of your production, including where you will be shooting, what you will be shooting, and how you will be shooting (including what kinds of specialty gear you might be using).

The risk assessment should be completed by someone who has the responsibility for the safety of the crew, but who also has a detailed understanding of the film’s creative needs and logistical plans. Often, a risk assessment is a responsibility that is shared between several people; perhaps a producer, production manager, production coordinator, and a crew member. If you are conducting the risk assessment for your production, consider consulting with additional crew members who will be on location, on-camera participants, and anyone directly responsible for the shooting locations. Initiating these discussions early in the process will help to ensure that you are accurately assessing the risks, while also finding approaches to risk reduction and mitigation that will work in the field.

You might choose to work through your risk assessment on a location-by-location basis. It makes sense to take this approach because so many of the risk factors for COVID-19 (such as ability to practice physical distancing, the quality of ventilation, and the number of high-touch surfaces) are location-based.

If your production is occurring in a COVID-positive environment (such as a hospital or a long-term care facility in the midst of an outbreak) or with individuals who have COVID-19 or have a high probability of having COVID-19, the risks for your crew are significantly higher. As such, your risk assessment will necessarily be more involved and complex and should be conducted in close collaboration with individuals who are knowledgeable about risk reduction and mitigation in your specific circumstance.

#### 1. Ask yourself the following questions.

* What type of location is this? (e.g., private home, public interior space, an environment with potentially vulnerable individuals)
* What are the physical attributes of this location? (e.g., size of space, ventilation, access to restrooms, access to shade/rain cover if outdoors, high-touch and high-traffic areas)
* Who will be present in this location? (e.g., crew, participants, participants’ family and friends, members of the public)
* What style of shooting will we be doing in this location? (e.g., interview, b-roll, vérité)

#### 2. Consider the risk factors for each location and your plan for reducing risks.

* Can physical distancing be maintained in this location, given the size of your crew? If not, can you reduce the size of your crew and consistently wear masks? Or can you find a larger location?
* Is there good air circulation in this location (including the ability to open windows)?
* Are there people in the location who might be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19?
* Are there people in the familial or social circles of those in the location who might be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19?
* Are there pieces of equipment or other items that need to be passed back and forth between crew members and/or participants?
* Are there production practices or needs that must be reevaluated or redefined?
* Where might you run into difficulties in trying to follow the provincial/territorial health & safety guidelines while working to execute your plans in this location? How can you anticipate and reduce these difficulties in advance?

#### 3. Assign a risk level (low, moderate, high) to each risk factor identified.

#### 4. For each risk factor identified, think through the ways in which you might reduce the risk level further, until you feel the risk is at an acceptable level.

### Sample Risk Assessment Forms

If you are conducting a risk assessment to satisfy the needs of your insurance, your broker will provide you with an online portal through which to input your risk assessment. However, if you are doing this to satisfy your own internal health & safety requirements, you can use whatever templates or forms you choose.

**Below, please find some sample risk assessment forms.** Every production’s risk assessment is intimately tied to the particular production. As such, these forms are being provided as inspiration only.

* Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS) offers a generic [**Sample Risk Assessment Form**](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/sample_risk.html) on their website.
* Essex Insurance Brokers (a U.K.-based production insurance provider) offers a [**Film Production Risk Assessment Form**](http://essexinsurancebrokers.com/film-liability)
* City Council of Oxford also offers a [**Filming Risk Assessment Form**](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20249/filming_in_oxford/1003/filming_on_our_land) on their website, for productions applying to the city for a film permit. This form includes a list of potential hazards to consider (although COVID-19 is not currently listed).

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| **Create a Production Health & Safety Plan** |

### What Is a Health & Safety Plan?

A Health & Safety Plan is a written document that outlines the specific processes you have developed to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in all stages of your work (development, pre-production, production, post). These plans are also sometimes called **COVID Protocols***.*

By completing your [risk assessment](#_2r0uhxc), you have done a lot of the preparatory thinking that is needed to complete your health & safety plan for your production. And, like the risk assessment, employers in most provinces/territories are required to develop a health & safety plan (also sometimes known as an **operational plan**) before returning to work in the wake of COVID-19.

According to our online survey, 25% of documentary crew members who have been working since March 13, 2020 indicated that their production did not provide or explain their health & safety plan. Meanwhile, 19% of producers and directors who have been working since March 13, 2020 indicated that they did not create a health and safety plan. While it’s likely that many of these respondents were working in post-production only, it should be noted that a health & safety plan is a requirement of any employer who is legally resuming work during COVID-19. This is the case for projects in production, but also those in development, pre-production, and post-production. A health & safety plan for projects that are not actively in production would, obviously, be considerably shorter than a health & safety plan being created for production.

***In our safety plan, we wrote this at the top: “These are the things we think will keep us more safe.”***

***However, they may not. We are doing this to the best of our ability. We know that it will not necessarily safeguard us. It only mitigates the risk.***

Sherien Barsoum, Producer/Director

In a research interview on Thursday July 23, 2020

The health & safety plan is one key way to mitigate the risk and make your best efforts to keep everyone safe. And this is clearly something that documentary filmmakers care about. When asked to reflect on their three top concerns about filming in the era of COVID-19, 75% of respondents indicated that one of their top concerns was for the safety of their participants, crews, and post-production teams. 42.75% indicated that a top concern was for the safety of secondary individuals, such as their family, their crew members’ family, and their subjects’ family. Personal safety was named as a top concern by 32% of respondents.

When asked about our post-pandemic future, 65% of survey respondents indicated that they hope producers will continue creating health & safety plans for their productions.

### How Do I Create a Health & Safety Plan?

1. Review your risk assessment, paying special attention to the section in which you identified the actions to be taken to reduce the risks.
2. Consider what needs to be done to ensure that these actions will be taken. This work should include reviewing your provincial/territorial film & television guidelines, as well as any other guidelines and protocols that might be useful to you (including those created by the locations in which you plan to film, or the facilities you plan to use).
3. See the rest of this section for specific questions you should be asking of yourself and approaches you should be considering.

If your health & safety plan is more than one page in length, consider creating a truncated one-page version with the main points for crew to review at the beginning of each shooting day.

### What Do I Do Once the Health & Safety Plan is Created?

Your health & safety plan will become a living document. As you gain experience in the field, you will see what works as it was planned, and what problems might arise that need to be better anticipated and addressed. In an effort to share what other documentarians have already learned from their early experiences of production during the pandemic, this guide offers some [case studies](#_7c0b93bmrqzy) highlighting potential challenges and opportunities.

Well in advance of your shoot, be sure to initiate conversations with your crew and participants about health & safety. 49% of our survey respondents who have been working since March 13, 2020 indicated that their productions had increased communications about risks, rights, and responsibilities. This was the third most frequent action observed, after working from home (66%) and physical distancing (60%).

Some of the approaches producers are taking to mitigate the risks of production during COVID-19 (such as conducting outdoor interviews) are less than ideal for the high production standards on which documentary professionals pride themselves. Acknowledging this and discussing it in advance with crew members will help ensure crew alignment around your health & safety plan.

#### Consider taking the following steps:

1. Provide a written draft of your health & safety plan to all those involved in your production.
2. Discuss the plans in detail with all crew members, participants, and locations by phone or video chat, soliciting feedback on your plans. These conversations will help to identify potential areas of concern, to ensure crew compliance with the plan, and to create an overall feeling of safety and security on set.
3. Implement changes as appropriate.
4. Share the revised draft of your health & safety plan with your broadcaster(s) and other financiers for their review and comment.
5. Distribute the final written document to everyone involved and have them acknowledge in writing that they have received the plan, understand the plan, and will comply with the plan.
6. Train your crew (and participants, as necessary) in your health & safety plan and direct them to additional training resources. See information on [safety training](#_nflc66f0sc3c) in our Include the Essential Production Protocols section below.
7. Attach the health & safety plan to releases, crew deal memo, and call sheets. Printed versions might also be posted if you are working in a location over which you have control (such as in a studio, production office, or edit suite).
8. Date your health & safety plan and/or assign it with a version number so that the most recent version is easier to identify.

### Sample Health & Safety Plans

**Below, please find links to some sample health & safety plans, created and shared by Canadian documentary producers.** Every production’s health and safety plan is intimately tied to the particular production, determined by the risk assessment conducted and the unique nature of the production. As such, these plans are being provided as inspiration only.

* CatBird Films, [*Corona Protocols*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QQBiuf7CyyWWBDi97l2At43wh5Fxv6FE/view)June 19, 2020
* White Pine Pictures’ [*Operational Protocol Under COVID-19 Restrictions*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zK6YL-cGRamtClPvCIiejwkPl-yiPtcy/view)  
  Prepared by Mike Connors, July 20, 2020

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| **Include the Essential Production Protocols** |

In close alignment with the various provincial/territorial guidelines for the film & television industry, we strongly recommend that all producers include the following protocols in their production-specific health & safety plans. The protocols listed below should be viewed as the minimum standard.

### 1. Familiarity with Provincial/Territorial Film & Television Guidelines

In our online survey of documentary professionals, 57% of respondents who were currently in production or post-production had consulted their provincial/territorial film & television guidelines.

While some of these documents are lengthy reads, it’s critical for all documentary professionals to be familiar with these guidelines, as they will form the basis of our industry’s work for the foreseeable future.

Some producers are taking the additional step of asking their crews to confirm in writing that they have read their provincial/territorial guidelines.

### 2. Informed Consent

In the time of COVID-19, documentarians should not only consider the various risks faced by participants and crews, but should fully and openly discuss those risks with everyone involved. Before proceeding into production, the producer or the director should speak with everyone individually to confirm that they understand the risks—COVID-related and otherwise—and are comfortable with them. Ideally, these conversations are approached with care, concern, and profound respect.

***I really appreciate the increased communication while shooting during this time. I like subjects communicating their comfort level around interactions, health, and safety. It sets everything up on a good note...***

***We start this process not by asking “What are your talking points and what are you offering to our film?” But, “Are you OK with this? Are you comfortable with this?”***

***And I think that's something a little bit less tangible than paperwork. But it is going to have a long lasting change for me and my filmmaking process.***

Hannah Donegan, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on July 21, 2020  
[Read about hiring local crews](#_hh52r7zpi0u)in How Do I Travel?

### 3. Safety-First Policy

As we sought out research interview subjects to inform the creation of this guide, many crew members were unwilling to speak with us about their recent experiences in production. Several others agreed to speak, but only under the condition of anonymity.

***There was a meeting and I said I wasn't comfortable filming. The others laughed at me when I said I wanted people to wear masks. They decided we would shoot anyway.***

***If you saw me on set, you'd think I didn't care: I don't have time to think about COVID. And I feel it hurts me to express concerns about the pandemic: it makes me appear to be someone who is not "part of the team." So, I turn off my scared brain.***

Anonymous Crew Member  
In a research interview on July 28, 2020

We all know that there is an intense pressure to conform in documentary crew culture. Even if documentary colleagues are not intending to exert pressure, the power dynamics within a crew and the boundary-pushing culture of documentary can encourage crew members to take unwise risks. Being aware of these dynamics is key to keeping everyone as healthy and safe as possible.

***As the director and the co-producer of our project, I felt a lot of responsibility to my crew and subjects. My DOP is a dad. We made everything voluntary and asked them about their comfort level with everything.***

***There’s an imbalance of power in these relationships and there’s a dependence. We are paying these folks; this is their income. I was just really wanting to make sure that power wasn’t misused or abused.***

Sherien Barsoum, Producer/Director

In a research interview on July 23, 3030

Because producers are not always on set, there is sometimes the additional problem of a disconnect between the planned protocols and the protocols as they are being implemented (or *not* being implemented) during shoots.

#### Consider the Following:

* Adopting a safety-first policy that encourages open communication and problem-solving among crew members.
* Respecting and responding to everyone’s concerns about safety.
* Assigning the tasks of monitoring and enforcing on-set compliance to one crew member. See more information about [COVID-19 safety officers](#_1302m92) in our Additional Production Protocols section.
* Holding a safety meeting at the beginning of each shooting day.
* Holding post-mortem safety meetings after shooting to discuss what went well, what could have gone better, whether any new protocols should be implemented or existing protocols adapted.

### 4. Health Screening

Before travelling to set each day, every crew member should be mandated to complete a health screening questionnaire in a digital format. Each participant should also be required to complete the questionnaire before meeting up with the crew. If you are planning to film in an indoor location (such as your participant’s home), everyone at that location should likewise be required to complete the questionnaire.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to reduce the likelihood of workplace transmission of COVID-19. If anyone responds to the questionnaire in a manner that indicates the possibility of COVID infection, the producer will ask them not to come to work and to seek medical advice. If anyone onsite begins feeling ill after completing the questionnaire, they must quarantine immediately and contact their healthcare provider. Some producers are also choosing to do temperature checks at the beginning of the day with a contactless thermometer.

Be aware that the collection of private medical information by employers is heavily regulated by employment law. Consult your lawyer about the health screening practices you are planning to implement and how long you should keep the completed questionnaires and other medical information on file. (Most provincial/territorial guidelines recommend archiving the questionnaires for 14 days and then destroying them to protect the respondents’ private information.)

***In Canada, medical assessments or tests to verify or determine an employee’s fitness to perform work are only permissible in limited circumstances (i.e., bona fide occupational requirement). Generally, absent express consent from employees, Canadian employers are prohibited from requiring employees to undergo mandatory health-related testing, including health screening and temperature scans.***

***That said, employers have an obligation to provide a safe environment for employees. Given the infectious nature of COVID-19, health screening and temperature scans are arguably a bona fide occupational requirement and a reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of workers.***

***As a best practice, employers should provide advance written notice and obtain employee consent to implement health screening and temperature scan measures.***

Baker McKenzie LLP, Canadian Labour and Employment Lawyers  
In [The Canadian Employer’s Reopening Playbook (Part 3)](https://www.labourandemploymentlaw.com/2020/05/the-canadian-employers-reopening-playbook-part-3/), on May 27, 2020

While many producers are designing their questionnaires in a simple Google Doc format, there are also several [screening tools and sample questionnaires](#_w4mtggnziexi) available online.

#### Notes on Mandatory COVID-19 Tests

Some productions—especially unionized scripted productions—have begun implementing mandatory and routine COVID-19 testing. In our research, we found that some documentary producers were wondering whether they should also ask their crews to undergo testing.

There are, however, many ethical, legal, and logistical questions to consider before suggesting that your crews be tested.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* Is it legal for you to mandate or request that your crew undergo a COVID-19 test? Employment lawyers differ in their opinions on this, but generally, less invasive methods of screening (including the above-mentioned health questionnaires and contactless temperature checks) are recommended before testing. Consult your lawyer before implementing any kind of a testing policy.
* Is testing available in your province/territory to asymptomatic individuals?
* Can you hire a private lab to conduct testing to lessen the burden on the public healthcare system?
* What is the current margin of error for COVID-19 tests in your province/territory? Will negative test results of your crew members provide a false sense of safety?
* Will the test results be meaningful for your production? Remember that COVID-19 testing only provides a snapshot of whether an individual is infected at that particular moment in time. If crew members are working on other productions or socializing outside of their COVID bubble, they will continue to be at risk of infection even if the test they take for you is negative.

### 5. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is the most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Everyone on a production should remain at least 2m apart from others at all times. If 2m of distance cannot be maintained, a face mask must be worn and additional personal protective equipment might be recommended, depending on the circumstances. This is true both for indoor and outdoor locations.

Because on-camera participants will not typically be wearing masks during filming, it’s critically important that the crew members remain at least 2m away from participants. If the scene involves more than one on-camera participant, they must also remain 2m away from one another unless they are in one another’s COVID bubble.

Note that if you are working in Manitoba, that province’s guidelines recommend 4m physical distancing whenever active shooting is occurring or whenever cast members (including on-camera participants) are present. If this 4m cannot be maintained, non-medical masks and face shields should be worn (camera operators may be excluded from the face shield requirement).

In order to maintain appropriate and consistent physical distancing, some specific policies will likely need to be put into place:

* Smaller crew sizes (eliminate all crew members who are not essential).
* Production should make it possible for crew members to self-drive to location whenever possible (either by renting individual cars or by compensating crew members for mileage when using their own personal vehicles). See the [Travel to Set](#_2afmg28) best practice for additional information.
* The flow of traffic into and out of a space should be managed, with separate exits and entrances when possible.
* Shooting setups will need to be more carefully planned before the camera rolls, to ensure adequate distance is maintained, especially between the crew and unmasked on-camera participants.
* Filming in cars should be strictly avoided, given the impossibility of adequate physical distancing. Consider using a remote setup instead.
* Directors might need to reconsider the ways in which they conduct interviews and work with their teams. For example, it’s impossible to maintain physical distancing practices while sitting close to the camera during an interview or standing next to the DP while shooting B-roll or vérité. See the [Interviews](#_1gf8i83) and [Vérité](#_upglbi) sections of this guide (in How Do I Shoot?) for some information around best practices.

### 6. Personal Protective Equipment

In addition to face masks, personal protective equipment used during your production might also include face shields, eye protection, and gloves. The recommendations around this protective equipment varies by province and territory, so consulting your provincial/territorial film & television guidelines is highly recommended.

#### Face Masks

The use of face masks is being recommended or required in all provincial/territorial film & television guidelines.

In principle, everyone should wear masks when they cannot remain at least 2m away from other people. In practice, most crews are wearing masks at all times, because consistent physical distancing is often difficult and it can be challenging to predict when a person will suddenly find themselves within 2m of another.

Therefore, best practice is to remain at least 2m away from others at all times and to wear a mask, both indoors and outdoors. If you must remove your mask for any reason, do so only outdoors and remain at least 2m away from others while your mask is off.

There is, however, some variation around the specific types of masks that are being recommended/required. While most provinces and territories suggest the use of non-medical masks, Quebec requires that film & television workers wear medical masks.

***This protective equipment was chosen in partnership with Public Health. The procedural mask (also called a surgical mask) is approved for medical use. It ensures the protection of the worker and that of the individuals around him. This mask is different from the cloth face cover. The workmanship of the procedural mask is assured, its filtration is more efficient, its fit is better, and it is usually easier to breathe with a procedure mask.***

***The Institut national en santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) recommends this type of protection in most work situations where physical distancing cannot be respected (with anyone). It also recommends changing the procedural mask if it is wet, visibly soiled, damaged, or if breathing is difficult. The maximum suggested weartime for a procedural mask is 4 hours.***

Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST)  
In a research questionnaire on August 19, 2020

Also be aware that various jurisdictions have implemented mask regulations in public spaces. While a film set is not typically considered a public space (unless you are on location in a public space, which is, of course, quite common in the doc world), best practice suggests that you treat your locations as if they are public spaces.

In our online survey, 47.5% of respondents who had begun working again indicated that their productions had implemented a mandatory mask rule. And 54.5% of respondents who had not yet begun production or post-production indicated that they hoped that producers would implement a mandatory mask rule.

#### Consider the Following:

* Crew members should receive training in proper mask usage. [Written information and an instructional video](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/how-put-remove-clean-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html) can be found on the Government of Canada’s website.
* Participants should be strongly encouraged (or even mandated) to wear a mask when filming is not actively occurring.
* The producer must always have masks readily available for crew and participants. If surgical masks are available for purchase in your province/territory for non-medical workers, provide everyone with clean disposable masks several times throughout the day (especially if you are moving locations).
* While close contact between individuals should be generally prevented, if short periods of close contact are unavoidable, some provincial/territorial guidelines recommend surgical masks and additional personal protective equipment be employed.

#### Face Shields

A face shield is considered to be an additional layer of protection. It is not as protective as a face mask and should only be worn in combination with a mask—not as a mask replacement.

Face shields are being recommended by the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines for specific situations, such as during the times when physical distancing between cast and crew cannot be maintained. Many of the guidelines recognize that the work of camera operators is not possible while wearing a face shield.

#### Eye Protection

Generally, eye protection—such as goggles—is only being recommended by the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines when close contact is necessary. However, Quebec’s CNESST is currently mandating that film & television workers wear eye protection at all times.

***Eye protection is also mandatory, as it serves to protect the worker from splashes that could infect him through the ocular mucosa.***

Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST)  
In a research questionnaire on August 19, 2020

#### Gloves

Gloves are not recommended for consistent on-set use. Public health officials have stated that regular handwashing offers more protection from COVID-19 than gloves. However, some of the various provincial/territorial film & television guidelines do recommend gloves be considered for specific uses, including:

* During the disinfection of surfaces or equipment.
* If physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as when there are two people in a car together.
* When a crew member needs to touch a cast member (such as is the case for people in the hair & makeup departments, which is less of a consideration for documentarians).

**Consult your** [**provincial/territorial film & television guidelines**](#_7vfw5cv54rne) **to be sure of the specific recommendations and requirements around personal protective equipment in your province/territory.**

### 7. Hand Washing & Sanitizing

Frequent and correct handwashing is a key component to reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Production should identify places for crews and participants to wash their hands where soap, warm water, and paper towels will be present. Productions might consider renting portable hand-washing stations for shoots happening in locations without these facilities.

Using hand sanitizer when no handwashing stations are available is the second-best option. Note that the Government of Canada and most of the provincial/territorial guidelines recommend hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. However, Nova Scotia’s guidelines, for example, recommend hand sanitizer with 70% alcohol.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* When filming outdoors, How many handwashing facilities are on location and where are they?
* If filming outdoors, where are the closest handwashing facilities (e.g., in public restrooms) and are these facilities easily accessible for your crew during the times of the shoot?
* Should production implement specific protocols around when hands are to be washed. For example, setting a timer for hands to be washed every 30 minutes.
* Will we use shared hand sanitizer or will we provide crew members and participants with their own individual kits?

### 8. Equipment & Surface Disinfection

Provincial/territorial film & television guidelines are recommending the frequent disinfection of all equipment and high-touch surfaces.

#### Consider the Following:

* All crew members should be responsible for their own gear, including regular disinfection according to industry standards. (Review [Sim’s Equipment Disinfection](https://www.siminternational.com/covid-19-our-continued-response/) document or [Production Equipment Rental Group’s Safe Return to Work Guidelines](https://my.esta.org/perg-reopening-guidance) to learn which disinfection products are appropriate.)
* As much as possible, gear should not be shared between individuals. When it is necessary for crew to pass equipment to one another (as is sometimes the case within the camera department or between the sound recordist and a participant), equipment should be disinfected before the transfer occurs.
* When possible, sound recordists should disinfect lavalier microphones before the shooting day, sealing them in new plastic baggies. These baggies should be given to participants through a contactless transfer and participants should be verbally instructed on the positioning of the lavs. Some producers are choosing to forgo the use of lavs altogether, especially in controlled indoor situations with little background noise.
* One crew member should be assigned to regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as door handles and tables.
* If filming indoors, protocols should be established for disinfecting door knobs, taps, and the flush handle in the washrooms after each use. (Consult the [Government of Canada’s website](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html) to learn more about which surface disinfectants are most protective against COVID-19.)

### 9. Prioritizing Exterior Locations

Spending time outdoors with others is less risky for the transmission of COVID-19 than spending time indoors. As such, producers should prioritize exterior filming whenever possible.

Of course, outdoor filming—and even indoor filming with open windows—presents a range of particular challenges, especially for sound recordists. Discussing these challenges in advance with the full crew and deciding which challenges can be reduced and which must simply be accepted will help your shoot to run more smoothly. Consider also allocating more time in your shooting day and being more intentional with your setups, as increased advance planning will benefit crew members and help them to deliver high-quality work.

***I liked that there were very few, if any, surprises… You can really think about how to set up. It wasn’t like, “Oh boy, here we go, they’re running to the car, let’s follow them.”***

***Because we knew exactly what we were doing in advance, I could dial in and get really good results. I brought a lot of equipment. In one outdoor scene, we had planned that four family members would be seated around a rectangular outdoor dining table, covered by a large umbrella. I positioned three fixed mics in the umbrella, over where the family would be sitting.***

***It sounded amazing. But you can only do that when you know what’s happening hours in advance.***

Dave Draper, Sound Recordist  
In a research interview on July 15, 2020

See Case Study #1

***Questions for Consideration:***

* Is the outdoor space large enough to allow for physical distancing? If not, can you find a larger outdoor location or prioritize those individuals who need to be at that location at any given time?
* What will you do in inclement weather? Can you set up tents for some sun and light rain coverage? These could also be used as an outdoor staging area or as an additional space for crew members to stand. Make sure the tents are large enough to accommodate physical distancing, however.
* Can you consult with your crews about how your plans will affect the quality of your work, understanding that some compromises to the production values might be required?
* If you must shoot indoors:
  + Can you find a large, well-ventilated space (such as a studio or a conference room)?
  + Can you limit the number of crew members who are inside at any given time? Consider sending the DP in alone, for example.
  + Can you open the windows and doors of the space for increased ventilation?
  + Can you ensure that no one who is currently in the indoor space has been exposed to COVID-19? One way to do this is to have everyone in a location also complete a health screening questionnaire before the shoot begins.

The Canadian winter months bring a whole new set of challenges. The need for physical distancing and proper ventilation remains, but shooting outdoors becomes more complicated. Some producers addressed this reality by working to shoot as much as possible during the warmer months. Others are investigating the possibility of filming in large indoor spaces, for example, studios and hotel conference centres.

### 10. Travel & Meals

Travel to set presents a variety of risks for crew members and a good health & safety plan will consider the production’s transportation needs carefully.

Private transportation is generally considered the safest means of travel, as it brings the crew member into contact with fewer individuals than public transit or other forms of shared transportation. But self-driving is not possible for all crew and can be its own health & safety risk, depending on the length of your shooting day and the distance of the drive.

#### Consider the Following:

* Can crew members self-drive safely (either in cars rented by the production or in their own personal vehicle, with mileage compensated)?
* Is the shooting day short enough that crew members can drive to and from the location without experiencing fatigue or drowsiness? (Remember that implementing COVID-19 health & safety protocols is a tiring process and crews working during this time are more prone to exhaustion as a result.)
* If self-driving is not an option, consider:
  + Assigning two people to a large vehicle (like a minivan) and placing them as far away from one another as possible.
  + Wearing masks for the entire drive.
  + Keeping windows open for better ventilation.
  + Eliminating all unnecessary conversation.
  + Disinfecting the high-touch areas of the vehicle before and after each use.
  + Installing a temporary Plexiglas barrier between the driver’s area and the passenger’s area. (Note that this will require additional planning and time with rental vehicles.)

Mealtimes present challenges, too. Because crew members need to be unmasked while they eat, maintaining adequate physical distancing is critical and eating in restaurants is therefore generally inadvisable. Some documentary producers are approaching this dilemma by providing pre-packaged lunches. Others are providing crew members with per diems for takeout meals or for crew members to purchase and prepare their meals in advance. When crew members live close to the location, productions will sometimes build in a longer meal break so crews can go back home for a meal and a rest, dividing the shooting day into more manageable chunks.

### 11. Smaller Crews

The provincial/territorial film & television guidelines recommend reducing crew sizes and encouraging smaller groups to work in pods. Reducing crew sizes reduces risk of transmission and increases the ability to practice physical distancing.

In our survey, we found that 75% of respondents were working in 1- to 3-person crews. And 11.5% were using no traditional crew at all (instead filming remotely, working exclusively with archives, or having participants film themselves). 42% of respondents indicated that their productions reduced the size of the crew in response to COVID-19.

***What’s worth taking the risk of catching COVID? It's like Russian roulette: it takes one person who doesn't listen to the instructions. On small teams, all of this is easier to control.***

***When I was in production, BC was in Phase 2. Everyone was isolated, no one went to parties. But now, in Phase 3, I realize that it is becoming more dangerous, that people are less careful.***

***If I had to shoot indoors, I would shrink my crew even further. I could be the second camera op. (I already use a mic stand/boom for my interviews). (Even after the pandemic) I will continue to reduce my team. I am learning to use a high-end cinematic camera... I think learning a new technical skill is pretty good. Maybe because I have no choice...***

***My images may suffer in quality and it will be more work for me as a producer, but it's less risky for me and my team during this pandemic. And the smaller the teams, the more the interview subjects tend to engage.***

Christine Baudry, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on July 24, 2020

While working to reduce the size of your crew, discuss the anticipated changes with your crew members in advance. They will help you assess whether these changes will work for your project, including whether the reduced crew size will create an overburden of responsibilities on the remaining crew members, and whether any production approaches might need to be shifted in order to be successfully accomplished by a smaller crew. For example, a DP who typically works with a camera assistant might need additional help from the director, a less complicated shooting day, and more time to set up.

### 12. Safety Training

The provincial/territorial guidelines recommend that everyone involved in a production be trained in the production’s health & safety plan before production begins. While we all feel as if we have become experts on proper handwashing technique (only one respondent in our online survey felt that there was a need for additional hand-washing instruction), that’s not necessarily the case for the many other new protocols, such as what to do when you feel ill, how to disinfect equipment, and how the crew will all work together in new ways.

Set up a time to train your staff in your production’s health & safety plan and the provincial/territorial protocols. Proper training will help your crew feel safer at work and will help to embed your protocols in their consciousness before they begin shooting. Additionally, if an area of risk has not been properly identified or if a protocol will be impossible to implement on set, this training session will offer another opportunity to problem solve before your shoot begins.

### Consider also mandating crew to use specific external supports, such as an industry webinar on your provincial/territorial protocols or a free online COVID safety course, such as the [COVID-19 Certificate](https://practicesafesets.co/certificate/) provided by Safe Sets International (which is currently available in English, French, and Spanish).

### 13. Work-from-Home Policies

Whenever possible, all production staff and post-production staff should work from home. Some creative productions have even devised ways for crew members who would normally be on location to also work from home—such as directors based in Canada who are conducting interviews and directing the shooting of local teams in other countries.

### 14. Digital Delivery of Documents

Whenever possible, paperwork should be digitized and sent electronically. This includes health & safety plans, deal memos, participant releases, call sheets, health screening forms, expense reports, and waivers. Consult your lawyer to confirm whether electronic signatures or written email affirmations are acceptable.

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| **Consider the Additional Production Protocols** |

Documentarians who have launched back into production have begun to establish a range of additional policies aimed at making their productions safer and keeping their crews and participants healthy. Producers who are currently creating their own health & safety plans might consider including some of the additional production protocols below.

### 1. Sick Pay

Including a provision for sick pay in a crew member’s deal memo is a way to help ensure that crew won’t come to work if they are feeling unwell. This provision could take the form of payment for the day(s) of missed work in the event that the crew member feels ill or does not pass the health screening questionnaire.

### 2. Quarantine Pay

The federal government currently requires anyone entering Canada from another country to quarantine. This is also true for travellers entering certain provinces and territories.

If your crew is travelling into a jurisdiction that requires a quarantine period, negotiating a quarantine pay rate with them will allow them to earn an income while in quarantine and ensure their ability to quarantine responsibly. At the height of the pandemic, some producers were offering quarantine pay to crew members travelling from one region of their province/territory to another, simply to reduce the risk of community spread.

### 3. Workers’ Compensation

***Workers' Compensation programs protect employees from the financial hardships associated with work-related injuries and occupational diseases.***   
  
Government of Canada  
On their [website](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/compensation.html), last updated April 25, 2017

Workers’ compensation insurance is run at the provincial/territorial level. Employers have the option of buying into these insurance programs in order to protect their workers in the event of workplace injuries or illness. In many jurisdictions, purchasing workers’ comp for crew members and office employees is a standard business practice for documentarians. In other jurisdictions, workers’ comp is rarely discussed and even more rarely purchased by independent documentary producers.

**However, with the COVID exclusions being written into our various insurance policies, purchasing workers’ comp makes even more sense now than it ever has.** Whether employees contracted through loan-out corporations are insurable under workers’ comp varies by province/territory. However, if contract employees are not eligible on the production company’s insurance plan, it is important for producers to make this clear and to assist contractors in navigating the system so they can purchase their own insurance coverage, if they choose.

Find the [workers’ compensation board in your province/territory](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/wcb_canada.html).

### 4. Waivers

Because our production insurance now includes COVID exclusions, many documentary filmmakers are being advised to ask their crew members and participants to sign waivers, confirming that they:

1. Understand the risks of filming during a pandemic.
2. Have reviewed the production’s plans for filming and believes those plans make the risks personally acceptable.
3. Release the producer from any liability for COVID-related losses due to illness (so long as the producer has followed the mandated and agreed-upon protocols, and has not acted in a negligent manner).

Some Canadian broadcasters and funders have begun asking producers to include a statement in these waivers that release the broadcasters/funders from liability, in addition to the producer.

Discuss the requirement of having participants and crew sign waivers with your lawyer and if you choose to do this, have them draft appropriately protective language. Also discuss what to do in a situation where crew or participants are uncomfortable signing your waiver.

See also the [discussion of the COVID exclusion](#_xbhbgm5pmpsl) in Can I Shoot?, which includes additional details for the ethical and legal considerations surrounding the practice of requiring liability waivers.

### 5. COVID-19 Safety Officers

Large scripted productions are sometimes hiring one or more crew members to act as COVID Safety Officers on set. These new crew roles are intended to help productions follow their own health & safety plans, by paying attention to how the crews are working and enforcing the protocols as necessary.

Of course, on documentaries, we aren’t often in the position to add a new person to our crews. Not only would it be too costly, but it would exponentially increase the size of our small crews. However, it *is* possible to assign the tasks that would be undertaken by a COVID Safety Officer to someone who is already on the crew. Whether you ask your production coordinator to help the crew follow the production health & safety plan, or whether the producer or director is in charge of this task, having one person take responsibility for this work is key.

***This is the classic thing you learn as a parent. You have to designate one person to watch the kid. If you don’t, the kid’s going to end up at the bottom of the pool. Because everyone thinks someone else is watching the kid.***

***It’s important to always designate a COVID protocol person. Give them extra money. If you just leave it to everybody, nobody is going to do it.***Cornelia Principe, Producer  
In a research interview on July 16, 2020  
[Read the case study.](#_4iylrwe)

Be sure to carefully consider the responsibilities of this work and the size and disposition of your particular crew. While PAs can be tasked with some of the COVID-19 duties (such as reminding others to maintain physical distancing and disinfecting equipment, for example) having a more senior crew member enforcing protocols will likely be most effective.

### 6. Compliance Policies

In order to ensure that everyone is on the same page, you might wish to include language in your health & safety plan about your compliance policies. For example, if a crew member refuses to wear a mask while shooting, how will you handle this situation?

If crew members are not compliant with the health & safety plan, will you:

* Stop shooting immediately?
* Ask the crew member to comply and then ask them to leave set if they refuse?
* Terminate their contract for non-compliance?
* Allow shooting to continue for the day but replace the crew member thereafter?
* Make a judgement call on the day based on the urgency of the shoot and the severity of the infraction?

Make sure your compliance policy is clear to everyone involved in your production and consider including a written outline of the policy in both your health & safety plan and in your crew deal memos. If specific employment actions will be taken, including discipline or termination, this must be clearly identified in all deal memos and verbally discussed with crew members when they are hired.

### 7. Slower Schedules, Shorter Shoot Days, and Longer Breaks

Consider scheduling shorter shoot days and longer breaks. While your initial impulse might be to try to get more done in a day, we all know instinctively that pushing crews to work harder and longer—even during non-pandemic times—is a recipe for disaster. 12- to 14-hour days are hard on our bodies and minds. We are never as efficient nor as effective during the last hour of the day as we are at the first. And the bottom line is this: a tired crew makes more mistakes than a well-rested crew. In an acknowledgement of this, On Screen Manitoba’s guidelines suggest an 11-hour shooting day.

Working during COVID-19 brings additional challenges to the already-challenging work of making a documentary. While over 78% of our survey respondents indicated that the health & safety guidelines were not overly challenging or impossible to implement, 21.5% felt that there were significant challenges.

***It is all challenging. Even feeding the crew and going to the bathroom is challenging.***

Anonymous Survey Respondent  
In our online survey on July 30, 2020

Making your shoot days shorter and providing your crews with longer breaks will reduce the fatigue that comes from the additional vigilance we are being asked to maintain. This will make your production a safer and more enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

Consider also encouraging crews to move a bit more slowly and intentionally, making their movements more deliberate and considering their first instincts while shooting. Encourage everyone to take a beat before jumping into action.

***We’re always confronted with these split-second decisions... Often you're with your crew and you're about to film something that could be remarkable… But you've got to go into the tiny little tunnel with your crew and, you know, you're following your subject, or whatever it may be.***

***And there's a pause there that we need to remind ourselves of. You know, what is the exchange? What is the sacrifice that we're making? And I think that's the constant challenge… The Werner Herzog approach to filmmaking doesn't always work, especially now in COVID times…***

***But that's one of the things that constantly comes up: how to pause, how to remind ourselves of the repercussions?***

Yung Chang, Director   
In a meeting about the creation of this guide on July 10, 2020

***What I have found (and attempt to practice) is the pause… A pause is not a stop. It is implied that you will continue moving, continue engaging, continue to react to what your world presents to you.***

***A pause is simply space and time to defer your judgement. To gain a little perspective. To think about your response and actions.***

Matthew Rigby, Registered Nurse, Emergency & Acute Care  
In a [blog](http://somethingfromeverything.com/practicing-the-pause/) from January 9, 2020

### 8. Acknowledge the Mental Health Strain, Support Colleagues, and Practice Self-Care

Time and time again, our research revealed that the current public health crisis and the impact it is having on our industry is increasing documentarians’ stress levels and significantly affecting their mental health.

***The pandemic really made me realize how fragile one is as a self-employed worker in relation to burnout, chronic fatigue, job security. There is no net. And we never talk about that.***

Mélanie Carrier, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on July 27, 2020  
See C[ase Study #4](#_1yyy98l)

As many documentary professionals (especially those of us who are producers and directors) work alone a lot of the time, working during COVID-19 can feel especially isolating and stressful.

***I have been in very stressful situations. Every documentary shoot is very stressful. But working in the early days of COVID-19 pushed me to the limits of stress. Normally at the end of my shooting day, the crew has cold beers and we talk about what happened…***

***But because of the need to physically distance and reduce time spent together, there wasn’t any of that. I was living in a vacuum. It was very difficult. More stressful than any other shoot I’ve been on.***

***I felt like I was inventing the wheel again. It was almost like I was fresh out of university trying to make my first documentary.***

Matt Gallagher, Director  
In a research interview on July 22, 2020  
See Case Study #1

As we launch back into our productions, finding ways to discuss the difficulties of working during this time period with colleagues and crew members might be helpful. By acknowledging the additional stresses and mental health challenges facing us—and by making room for your crews and colleagues to do the same—we can begin to normalize these conversations in our industry and seek ways to address these challenges. See the [mental health supports](#_4mh9uejofviw) listed in the Resources section of this guide.

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| **Consider Situation-Specific Best Practices** |

### Interviews

In the era of COVID-19, many doc directors are relying more heavily on interviews than ever before—as interviews offer the greatest amount of predictability and control and can be done in a variety of environments.

In our online survey, 71.5% of respondents who had been shooting since March 13, 2020 were conducting interviews outdoors, while 54.5% were conducting interviews indoors.

Consider taking the following precautions during your interviews:

* Conduct interviews outside whenever possible.
* When interviews are to be conducted inside, do so in a large, controlled space like a studio or a conference room.
* Limit the amount of time spent in an interview setting, especially when indoors.
* Set up so everyone can remain at least 2m apart.
* Have on-camera participants wear face masks until the interview is about to begin.
* Have on-camera participants place their own lav mics under the physically distant guidance of the sound recordist, or forgo lavs altogether and rely on a shotgun mic only.
* Have each crew member wear a mask at all times, especially when indoors. If a crew member’s mask must be removed, they should wash their hands first, be outdoors, and remain at least 2m away from others.
* When conducting an interview, directors have sometimes found it difficult to wear a mask, as it muffles their questions and makes personal connections more challenging. If the interview is being conducted outdoors and everyone is 2m away from one another (including the director and the DP), then the director can consider removing their mask. Also consider the following adaptations:
  + Testing eye-lines and camera positioning in advance to see how the director/interviewer can be positioned so that the participant’s eye-line is where you want it to be, while still maintaining 2m between the director and the DP.
  + Having the director use a clear face mask, designed to be used with those who benefit from lip-reading. (Be sure to find a mask that has been tested and approved by Health Canada or the U.S. Food & Drug Administration.)
  + Using an Interrotron or an EyeDirect, which allows the director to be positioned away from both the DP and the participant, while the participant sees their face in front of the camera lens, causing direct eye-contact with the camera without the requirement of close face-to-face proximity.
  + Erecting a Plexiglas barrier between the crew and the participant and/or the director and the DP. More details on the safest approach for the creation and cleaning of these barriers is available from the [National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health](https://ncceh.ca/content/blog/physical-barriers-covid-19-infection-prevention-and-control-commercial-settings).

### B-roll

With interviews currently forming the basis of more documentaries, more B-roll will also likely be required. As with your interviews, setting up to shoot B-roll in controlled environments will likely be necessary for remaining in compliance with the production’s health & safety guidelines.

#### Consider the Following:

* Using a skeleton crew for B-roll shoots (DP only or DP and director only for MOS shooting, for example).
* Plan the shots in advance and rehearse as necessary to coordinate crew movements while maintaining physical distancing.

Consider also using alternatives to traditional B-roll, including:

* Archival materials
* Animations
* Graphics and Illustrations

### Vérité

The precautions we must take in the era of COVID-19 are shifting our filmmaking towards stylistic approaches that can be more easily controlled. As such, the act of following a story as it unfolds in real time is one of the more complicated styles of documentary filmmaking to undertake during this time.

But, with careful planning and creative ingenuity, capturing life as it unfolds is hopefully not something we will have to abandon entirely. In fact, in our online survey, 31% of those who have been shooting since March 13, 2020 have been shooting in a vérité style.

Producer/Director Teresa MacInnes is currently in development on a film that involves vérité shooting, set inside a public library in Halifax, Nova Scotia. So far, she has shot once during the pandemic: the day of the library’s reopening. Masks are now mandatory in public spaces in Nova Scotia—as such, all library patrons, staff, and crew will be wearing masks whenever the library is open.

***I think we need to continue trying to push ourselves to do our work and to do vérité shooting, if it makes sense for the project. Although it’s more challenging, it hasn’t stopped us. It’s only through pushing ourselves—not pushing to break rules—but pushing ourselves to find new ways to keep making films. Because what if it never ends, or another crisis takes its place? I just don’t want to give up trying to get some of those real moments that a lot of us strive for in our documentary films.***

***In the end, we managed to get a few moments where people forgot we were there. Perhaps not as many as we might have liked, but we are all a bit nervous and it makes our job harder.***

***While we thought long and hard about even doing it, we decided to give it a try and set out to be as safe as we could, following all the rules. We also took more breaks, worked shorter days, and set out to see what we could gather.***

***As long as we follow the guidelines, I think it’s important to keep trying to break through the discomfort and uncertainty of it all.***

Teresa MacInnes, Producer/Director

In a research interview on August 3, 2020

In planning your vérité shooting, consider the following:

* Using a very small crew (maybe as small as one person).
* Devising a way to follow participants for short amounts of time, preferably outdoors, while maintaining appropriate physical distancing.
* Using the Allan King method of vérité filmmaking, where the smallest crew possible is with the participants and other crew members are elsewhere. (In his own later work, King himself wasn’t often in the room while shooting.)
* Eliminating the need for your sound recordist—who is often the closest in proximity to participants— to operate the boom mic by using wireless lavs (placed by participants) and a camera-mounted shotgun mic.
* Maintaining physical distance between the director and the crew and participants by equipping the director with the following gear:
  + a wireless audio receiver, to monitor the sound recordist’s production mix;
  + a wireless video monitor to watch as the DP is shooting; and
  + a wireless lav that sends its signal back to the sound recordist’s mixer and then to the camera.

In this way, the director can still see and hear what’s being recorded and can communicate back to the sound recordist and DP safely, without needing to be in close proximity.

* For a more traditional, up-close-and-personal vérité approach, consider having the crew member(s) self-isolate for 14 days and then bubble with your film’s participants. While this might seem like going to extreme measures, several filmmakers interviewed for this guide who took this approach reported successful results.
* Training participants in the basics of camera-phone cinematography and having them create participant-generated home-movie-style vérité for your film.
* Using remote camera setups to film participants without being in the room.

### Recreations

Recreations often require larger crews than documentaries and more controlled setups. Your [provincial/territorial guidelines](#_7vfw5cv54rne) will offer good guidance for how to work with larger crews on the scripted portions of your documentary.

If the logistics of this feel too daunting to you, consider the following alternatives:

* Archival materials
* Animations
* Graphics and Illustrations
* Innovative Alternatives, such as the approach taken by Jessica Brown and Jackie Torrens, described below.

Producer Jessica Brown and director Jackie Torrens of Peep Media had about 60% of their film shot before COVID hit. Based on their 2018 BravoFACTUAL short, this currently untitled feature-length film tells the story of Corporal Bernard Langille, who died in 1968 under mysterious and unresolved circumstances. Corporal Langille’s grandson and namesake, Bernie Langille, grew up hearing the story of his grandfather’s death and seeing how deeply it affected his family. Now, 52 years later, Bernie sets out on a journey to uncover the truth. It’s a story about a mystery, but it’s also a story about the ways in which family narratives shape individual identities.

While the filming of interviews and some B-roll was resumed in the summer of 2020, Torrens had already planned to take a different approach to dramatic recreations well before the pandemic.

***The idea to tell the recreations in miniature came from my doing a radio documentary in 2012 for CBC about a group of artists who create in miniature. As soon as I saw the work of these artists I knew I wanted to tell a documentary story using miniatures for the recreations.***

***But I also knew the concept needed a subversive story to play against the traditional stereotypes of miniatures as children's toys, and therefore, easy to dismiss. I was very much inspired by the work of Frances Glessner Lee, who created* The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*, a series of miniatures based on crime scenes that are still used to train police today.***

***Bernie's story was perfect for my concept because he has grown up with this story being told to him as a dark family fable and the way we film the miniatures reinforces this idea. The use of miniatures also allows us to re-create the world of 1968, the year Corporal Langille died, with historical accuracy. And it also allows us to build the military world that Corporal Langille lived and worked in—giving us access to military bases in miniature that we would never have in real "big" life.***

Jackie Torrens, Director

In a research email on August 31, 2020

### Private Home Shoots

In our online survey, 39% of respondents who have been shooting since March 13, 2020 indicated that they have been filming in their participants’ homes. While private homes have always been a preferred location for many documentarians, this practice might be inadvisable during a pandemic.

Outdoor filming is far less risky than indoor filming. And indoor filming in a large room with good ventilation (like a studio or conference centre) is less risky than indoor filming in a small space (like a house or an apartment). Additionally, entering a participant’s home means bringing your crew into contact with all the individuals who live in the space—and vice versa.

As such, we would recommend a careful rethinking of the practice of filming in participants’ homes at this moment in time.

Instead of filming in your participants’ homes, consider alternative means of capturing and depicting personal and intimate moments:

* Participant-generated video (like video diaries and vérité-style home movies)
* Remote filming setups
* Outdoor filming
* Audio interviews and recorded phone calls

After having assessed the increased risks and the alternatives available to you, should you still choose to film in your participants’ homes, consider taking the following precautions:

* Some of the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines (including those for BC, Ontario, and Nova Scotia) offer suggestions for location filming in their department-specific sections. While these guidelines generally assume that productions will have total control over the locations and that the residents will not be present for filming, the location guidelines will still offer some valuable suggestions for documentary filmmakers.
* In addition to asking participants to complete a health screening prior to the shoot and to sign a waiver (if a waiver is part of your protocol), you should also ask all other residents of the home to do the same.
* Practice informed consent with all the residents of the home and crew. For example, if residents of the home or crew members have been actively socializing outside of COVID bubbles, this information should be disclosed to others in advance of arriving at the location.
* Before the crew enters the home, one responsible individual should enter with a mask and disinfect all high-touch surfaces. When the shoot has wrapped, that same person should disinfect all high-touch surfaces again.
* Washrooms should have high-touch surfaces disinfected after every use.
* Limit the number of crew in the home to the absolute minimum and limit the amount of time spent inside the home to an absolute minimum.
* Limit the amount of gear inside the home by setting up a staging site outside whenever possible.
* Crew should wear masks at all times, whether 2m apart or not.

As the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines do not offer direct guidance for documentary filmmakers who are filming in participants’ homes, some public health and occupational health & safety authorities have suggested that documentary filmmakers consult [public health guidelines](#_xdcwcz7zbvt3) for other professionals who are entering private homes during the pandemic—including healthcare workers. While the situations are admittedly quite different, there are some useful logistical suggestions to be found in those guidance documents (some of which have been used to inform this list of considerations).

### Studio Shoots

Filming in studios is likely to become increasingly common for documentary filmmakers—especially as winter approaches. Studios offer a controlled environment where health & safety protocols can be more easily implemented and they offer enough space to maintain adequate physical distancing.

### Of course, studio shoots represent a very different approach than filming in a participant’s home. But, they also offer new stylistic opportunities. Jon Montes was the producer on the first indoor crewed shoot in the NFB’s English Program. The film, called *Jia* (a Mandarin word that refers to home and family), is about a Chinese-Canadian couple who live in Regina. In January 2020, they were visiting family in Wuhan and a week after they arrived, the city went into lockdown.

***The film is a straight-ahead conversation—as interview.***

***We wanted to push stylization of that. Because of the subject matter, there’s also an opportunity to call attention to the protocols that we were all following that might not be as resonant in other films.***

***It was all set up in a 9,000 square-foot soundstage in Regina. There was lots of room for the crew to maintain social distance with each other, to practice appropriate sanitization.***

***We bought Plexiglas sheets and created an L-shaped barrier. The Plexiglas was doing narrative work, but also the practical work of creating a barrier between crew and participants.***

Jon Montes, NFB Producer  
In a research interview on July 15, 2020

The [provincial/territorial film & television guidelines](#_7vfw5cv54rne) are very useful when planning your studio shoots.

### Large Public Events

The way we film in large public events—such as protests, performances, and celebrations—must necessarily shift during COVID-19. While we prefer being up close and personal with our subjects, large public events present challenges for physical distancing that make this difficult to do safely.

***I think we’re just avoiding all things run-and-gun right now. As tempting as all of these Black Lives Matter movements were, we didn’t focus on any of that documentation.***

***If we were younger, maybe we would have. But my mother lives with us, we have our children, there are these bigger things to really consider and to put as a priority. We will take our time.***

***Especially with the Black community being so high in getting COVID and dying of COVID. Alison Duke (my producing partner) and I have both had family members die of COVID. One of our employees’ family members caught COVID early on, so we have been very cautious, just knowing how it is attacking our community.***

***With Black Lives Matter-led anti-Black racism movements going on, it’s been a very, very heavy time. There has been bonding on those levels, but also a caution to just take our time and to really focus on people’s well-being first. Production is so secondary right now.***

Ngardy Conteh George, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on August 17, 2020  
[See](#_99gs10uqdckm) Case Study #5

Public health officials have generally permitted protests to continue during the pandemic and have encouraged the media to document these protests. Many jurisdictions are now permitting gatherings for weddings, religious services, and other events—provided they do not exceed the allowed gathering limits.

If, after considering the risks, you are planning on covering large public events consider the following:

* Prioritize filming during the portions of the events that are more well-controlled and predictable (for example, the wedding ceremony, rather than the reception or the protest rally, rather than the march).
* Film in outdoor venues whenever possible.
* Wear masks at all times and maintain physical distancing.
* Use a very small crew.
* Consider eliminating the need for your sound recordist—who is often the closest in proximity to participants— to operate the boom mic by using wireless lavs (placed by participants) and a camera-mounted shotgun mic.
* Assign one crew member with the task of managing physical distancing, just as you would with spotting your DP as they are moving through crowds.
* Understand that your crew will need to move more slowly and deliberately and that your shooting ratio will likely be lower as a result.
* Train on-camera participants in the basics of camera-phone or GoPro cinematography and have them create their own videos of the event.
* Seek out additional video footage and stills from those who attended the event.

### Filming in Cars

### A favourite device of documentary filmmakers, filming with participants in moving cars is one activity that is likely best avoided, if at all possible. If driving shots are a necessary part of your project, consider remote filming using special rigs instead.

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| **Deal with Sticky Situations** |

In our research, we heard from producers, directors, and crew members who had found themselves in unexpected and challenging situations while working in this new era.

***I wish I had thought through some possible scenarios. After an emotional conversation with someone, he offered to shake my hand and I didn't know how to refuse. So I did. It's been on my mind ever since.***

Anonymous Director of Photography  
In our online survey on July 23, 2020

Below are some common scenarios and suggestions for what to do if these challenging situations should arise.

### A Crew Member Refuses to Follow Protocols

***One very key crew member blatantly refused to follow any guidelines.***

Anonymous Survey Respondent  
In our online survey on July 24, 2020

This is a common concern for crew members and producers alike. When one crew member does not follow the production’s health & safety protocols, it increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission, creates a set that feels less safe for others, and might also encourage others to ignore the protocols.

#### Consider the Following (For Producers and Directors):

* Immediately and privately ask the crew member to follow the protocols.
* If the crew member fails to comply, ask them to follow the protocols again and remind them of the consequences of non-compliance, as laid out in your health & safety plan.
* Work to understand why the non-compliance is occurring. Is the mask fogging up the DP’s glasses? Is the sound recordist trying to help a participant who is struggling to place the lav appropriately themselves? If these actions are being taken in response to a logistical issue, work with the crew member to solve this problem in a way that allows the protocols to be followed.
* If the crew member continues to fail to comply, you must decide what to do. Possible options might include the following:
  + Ask the crew member to leave the set and, if possible, have someone else on set do their job.
  + Terminate the shoot and reschedule for another day with a different crew member.
  + Continue with the shoot, finding ways to mitigate the risks for your participants and other crew members. This option should only be considered if the other two options are impossible and should not be used as a long-term strategy.
* Be sure to document this incident fully, in an email to the crew member.

In anticipation of this as a possible issue for upcoming productions, producers should discuss their health & safety plan with their crew members as it is being drafted, implementing a clear non-compliance policy, and asking crew members to review and agree to following the policies before signing their deal memos.

#### Consider the Following (For Other Crew Members):

* Depending on your working relationship with your colleague, you might simply request that they comply with the protocols. A straightforward request by another crew member might feel very awkward initially, but it is often the most effective approach.
* Speak immediately with the producer or director on set and request that they speak directly with the crew member about protocol compliance.
* If the producer is not on-set at the time and the director or a junior producer is not responsive to your complaint, consider calling the producer to notify them of what is happening and to express your concerns.
* See the section below if this safety issue is with [a producer or a director](#_t0tamgu1gzi).

In anticipation of this as a possible issue for upcoming productions, before signing your deal memo, you might ask to review a copy of the production’s health & safety plan. Consider also asking the producer for a written policy on non-compliance, so you understand how the production’s policies will be enforced and how you should raise non-compliance issues, should they arise.

### A Participant Suggests that the Protocols are Unnecessary

In our research, we heard from many directors whose participants were relatively unconcerned about the risk of COVID-19. At times, participants might feel as though the precautions being taken are excessive or unwarranted.

#### Consider the Following:

* Immediately and privately ask the participants to follow the agreed-upon protocols.
* Explain to the participant that your production protocols are aligned with the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines and that all productions are expected to follow these rules, in order to keep crews and the general public as safe as possible.
* Express gratitude to the participant for being so welcoming and easy-going, but explain why ignoring the protocols is too great a risk—for you and for them. Often this situation arises when participants invite filmmakers into their homes, or invite them to remove their masks. Often, participants are simply trying to be polite and hospitable. Other times, participants’ enthusiasm for appearing in your film might be overshadowing their own awareness of the risk.
* If the participant refuses to follow a protocol that you’ve deemed to be essential (e.g., wearing a mask when not on-camera or standing 2m away from your crew members), you must decide whether you will continue with the shoot or cancel it. You might choose to consult with your crew about their comfort levels before making the decision.

In anticipation of this as a possible issue for upcoming productions, be sure to fully discuss the health & safety protocols and the reasons for these protocols with your participants. Explain which protocols will be followed by the crew only and which protocols the participant will also be expected to follow. Confirm their understanding and intention to comply with the protocols before scheduling the shoot.

### A Production Does Not Have an Adequate Health & Safety Plan

A health & safety plan is a necessity for all film & television productions in the era of COVID-19. It is mentioned in all of the provincial/territorial health & safety guidelines for film & television production and is a requirement of businesses returning to operation, according to the various provincial/territorial reopening plans.

And yet, in our online survey, we found that 25% of directors and crew members were working without having received their production’s plan. Almost 29% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their production’s plan.

***The plan proposed by the production company was wholly inadequate. I raised my concerns (CC’ing all crew and producers) and that resulted in the venue being changed, the work day being reduced and the dissemination of a proper protocol for all crew to follow.***

Anonymous Crew Member  
In our online survey, July 24, 2020

#### Consider the Following:

* Ask the producer for the production’s health & safety plan.
* If no plan exists, ask the producer to create one and explain why it’s necessary. Consider offering to share this resource and your provincial/territorial guidelines with the producer, so they will have the tools they need.
* If the producer indicates that they do not intend to create a health & safety plan, consider whether this production is providing you with the safe workplace to which you have a right and make your decision about continuing (or taking) this job accordingly.
* If you choose to terminate your work with this production, give the producer as much notice as possible and explain your reasons clearly and in writing. You have the right to refuse unsafe work, but you also have the responsibility to your employer to make them aware of any issues.

In anticipation of this as a possible issue for upcoming productions, ask the producer for the production’s health & safety plan before signing your deal memo. If you are uncomfortable with anything in the plan, discuss these concerns with the producer immediately.

### A Producer or a Director Asks You to Do Things You Feel Are Unsafe

While this was not an overwhelmingly common concern uncovered in our research, we did find that some crew members were fearful for their health & safety, often due to the actions—or inaction—of a producer or a director.

#### Consider the Following:

* Consult the production’s health & safety plan for the protocols outlined to see if your situation is addressed and how it should be dealt with.
* Voice concerns about health & safety immediately and privately to your producer or director. Do so verbally, but consider also sending an email so your concerns are documented in writing. (Consider your own safety, but also the safety of other crew members or participants.)
* If your concerns are brushed aside, consider speaking confidentially with other crew members about whether they have similar concerns. If so, consider bringing these concerns forward to the producer or director as a group.
* Is there someone above or on the same level as your producer or director with whom you could speak about your concerns? (Another producer or an executive producer, for example.)
* If the safety concern is urgent, decide whether you will comply with the producer or director, or whether you will refuse.

#### Refusing Unsafe Work

Producers and crew members alike should be aware that employees have the right to refuse unsafe work.

***Refusal to work if danger***

***128 (1)*** *Subject to this section, an employee may refuse to use or operate a machine or thing, to work in a place or to perform an activity, if the employee while at work has reasonable cause to believe that*

*(a) the use or operation of the machine or thing constitutes a danger to the employee or to another employee;  
(b) a condition exists in the place that constitutes a danger to the employee; or  
(c) the performance of the activity constitutes a danger to the employee or to another employee.*

***No refusal permitted in certain dangerous circumstances  
(2)*** *An employee may not, under this section, refuse to use or operate a machine or thing, to work in a place or to perform an activity if*

*(a) the refusal puts the life, health or safety of another person directly in danger; or  
(b) the danger referred to in subsection (1) is a normal condition of employment.*

Part II Occupational Health and Safety  
In the [Canada Labour Code](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/L-2/page-26.html?txthl=refuses+refusal+refuse#s-128), most recently amended on March 25, 2020

Once the refusal is made, the employer has the immediate responsibility to investigate the specific working conditions and to attempt to rectify the safety situation. If the employee is satisfied with the changes, they will return to work. If the employee is not satisfied and believes that the situation is still unsafe, they can continue to refuse work and report the unsafe working conditions to their provincial/territorial authorities. See information specific to your province/territory about [refusing unsafe work](#_23nfpgq8tfn2) and [reporting unsafe working conditions](#_k6fqvp2nzfiy) in the Resources section.

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| **Consider Alternative Approaches** |

Rather than looking for ways to make the same kinds of films we have always made, documentary professionals might also want to use this as an opportunity to try new approaches. These alternative approaches to filming with a traditional crew will reduce your exposure to other people, and reduce your participants’ exposure to you and your crew.

***What you do with the constraints you have is what makes you an artist.***

Kami Chisholm, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on August 6, 2020

***COVID, just like 911, will change the way we work well into the future. We learn to work within the restrictions and find ways to create content and find new ways to work.***

Anonymous Survey Respondent  
Online survey completed July 27, 2020

Even if you cannot fully eliminate your use of a traditional crew, replacing some of your traditional filming days with one or more of the alternative approaches will reduce the risk of COVID-19.

### Audio-only Interviews

Audio-only interviews can be recorded by you through online video chat software or over the phone. They can also be recorded by your participant(s) directly into their phones, computers, or high-quality audio recorders provided by the production. These interviews can be approached as regular interviews conducted over the phone or video chat, or as more of a diary style recording. Either way, participants can be trained to capture the best sound through an online video call.

### Remote Filming

Remote filming can be relatively simple or complex. The simple version would be to launch a video chat and record the conversation, either through a screen-recording program or through the video chat’s recording features. In our online survey, almost 30% of those respondents who were actively in production were making use of this technique.

See guidance on remote interviewing techniques in [The Art of the Remote Interview](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRJfdZ-ilMw&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0dI2pBWRWlC6mMAKGy2gpXW3QjHMH_yzkkgkq5q84900FcjPenbIK7y5w), a helpful webinar from PBS Newshour Student Reporting Labs. To learn more about improving the quality of Zoom recordings, see [How to Record a Zoom Meeting in High Quality for Video Editing](https://jonnyelwyn.co.uk/film-and-video-editing/how-to-record-a-zoom-meeting-in-high-quality-for-video-editing/).

### Participant-generated Video

Participant-generated video can be as simple as video diaries shot with a webcam or a smartphone. Or, you can purchase higher quality gear, ship it to participants, and train them in its use through a video chat platform. Of course, if your participant is camera savvy already, this last step will be unnecessary.

The style of your participant-generated video footage can vary from traditional interview-style setups, to informal stream-of-consciousness video diaries, to vérité-style home movies. You might find that your participants’ personalities begin to be reflected in the style of their videos. This approach, in particular, could move your film towards the community-based process of participatory filmmaking. See Case Study#5 about [Ngardy Conteh George’s work](#_99gs10uqdckm) to learn more about the possibilities for this approach.

### Creative Visual Approaches

Animation is a versatile technique that enables documentarians to paint a picture that would otherwise be impossible to render. During the pandemic, when opportunities to film with others might be severely restricted, filmmakers have been playing with myriad creative approaches to visualize the stories of their films, including—but not limited to—animation. For some inspiration, read more about Jackie Torrens’ [innovative visual approach using miniatures](#_bnf7ichuzhg6) in our section on recreations.

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| **HOW DO I TRAVEL?** |

COVID-19 has greatly restricted our ability to travel, which is, of course, a key part of documentary filmmaking. This section offers a high-level overview to help filmmakers think through their travel plans.

#### In this Section:

* [Should I Travel?](#_y4bgew7idmzm)
* [Can I Travel?](#_8q411m3enjnn)
* [How Can I Travel More Safely?](#_102tz0go1job)
* [What Are Alternatives to Travel?](#_2lwamvv)

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| **Should I Travel?** |

"COVID-19 has created a situation in which documentary filmmakers are being asked to more carefully consider their travel plans. The first question must now be *should I travel*?"

Always be sure to consult the appropriate authorities’ websites before you plan your travel and again before you leave. As the Canadian government points out, even if travel is permitted when you depart Canada, one of the great risks for travellers during the time of COVID-19 is the possibility of sudden changes in government policies with regard to visitors.

***The governments of those destinations that have opened their borders to tourists could impose strict travel restrictions suddenly, should they experience an increase in cases of COVID-19. International transportation options could be reduced significantly, making it difficult for you to return to Canada. There are no plans to offer additional repatriation flights. Should you decide to travel despite our advisories, know that you might have to remain abroad longer than you expected.***Government of Canada  
Official Global Travel Advisories [webpage](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories), retrieved December 14, 2020

#### Questions for Consideration:

* Are you able to quarantine for 14 days when you return home? This is currently mandated by the Canadian government for international travellers and by some provinces and territories for interprovincial travel.
* Is travel permitted by the region, state/province/territory, and country that you plan to enter? If so, will you be required to quarantine there upon arrival, too?
* What is the current public health situation in the region, state/province/territory, and country you plan to visit?
  + Are there many active cases of COVID-19, making travel to this place more risky for you and your crew?
  + Are there many regulations in place that would make filming too challenging to undertake?
* What is the current public health situation in Canada and in your home region and province/territory?
  + If the cases at home are high and the cases in the area you plan to visit are low, consider whether you want to risk spreading the virus to the people and places in your film.
  + If the opposite is true, consider whether you want to risk infecting yourself and your crew, or bringing COVID-19 back to your family and community.
* Are there specific COVID-19 film & television production guidelines in the country you plan to visit? Are these suggested guidelines or enforceable pieces of legislation? Either way, what do they require of you and your crew, and will you be able to follow them?

Also consult the Should I Shoot? section for a detailed reflection on the ethics around filming—and filming in communities that are not your own—in the era of COVID-19.

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| **Can I Travel?** |

### Is Travel Within Provinces and Territories Allowed?

Yes, travel within your own home province/territory is generally allowed.

However, it is advisable to research any specific regions of filming well in advance of making travel plans. At the onset of the pandemic, many rural and remote communities barred visitors from entering their borders, out of concern that people from areas with high rates of COVID-19 might bring the virus into areas that had lower case numbers. As many regions experience a second wave of infections, residents of regions with high-infection rates are often being advised to limit their movements—including travel into other regions.

Read more about [the importance of the local context](#_yrh0tjvcddzb) (in the Should I Shoot? section) before you decide whether to film in places with higher case loads, lower case loads, or vulnerable populations.

### Is Travel Between Provinces and Territories Allowed?

Yes, travel between provinces and territories is currently allowed in Canada.

However, depending on where you are travelling from, you might be required to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in the new province/territory. You also might be required to quarantine for 14 days when you return home. Review the up-to-date [provincial/territorial travel advisories](#_mvc2mwkva9lc) (in the resources section) to learn more about the specific provincial/territorial requirements.

Additionally, some provinces/territories—or regions within provinces/territories—have created their own travel zones. The “Atlantic Bubble” (which includes New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador) is the most well-known example of this. Beginning in early July of 2020, residents of the four Maritime Provinces were permitted to travel between provinces without a requirement to quarantine. As cases of COVID-19 increase, however, some of the Atlantic provinces have been implementing travel restrictions for visitors from other bubble provinces.

### Is International Travel Allowed?

Yes. However, the Canadian government is [advising](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html#domestic) Canadians to “avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice.”

**Non-essential travel**(also known as *discretionary/optional* travel) is [defined](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html#_Canada-U.S._border_restrictions_1) as travel for purposes of tourism, recreation, or entertainment. **Essential**(or *non-discretionary travel)* is defined as travel for purposes of work and study, critical infrastructure support, economic services and supply chains, and health, immediate medical care, safety and security.

So, if you are making your documentary for professional purposes (rather than for your own private enjoyment), international travel is permitted by the Canadian government.

Be sure to check whether travel and filming are allowed in the jurisdiction(s) you plan to visit. With COVID-19 cases increasing in the autumn of 2020, many countries have banned or restricted entry of travellers arriving from Canada. The most publicized travel restriction for Canadians might be the one announced by the European Union on October 21, 2020, which removed Canada from the EU’s “safe list.” However, individual European countries are in charge of their own borders meaning that producers will need to conduct country-specific research to understand the travel restrictions of each. For a quick snapshot of the countries that are restricting access to Canadians, see the [Travel Off Path](https://www.traveloffpath.com/list-of-eu-countries-that-have-now-banned-canada-for-entry/) website.

Be sure to also review the questions for consideration earlier in this section to determine whether travel is appropriate for you at this time.

Like Canada, most countries have a nationwide policy on whether to admit visitors during the pandemic and whether a period of quarantine needs to be observed. However, some countries, like the U.S., have taken a more patchwork state-by-state approach (see details of this in the section on [U.S. travel](#_h1h3xrr8rpn4) below).

Before making any international travel decisions, review the following:

* [General travel health notices](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices) from the Government of Canada
* [Travel advisories](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories) from Global Affairs Canada

The above information is useful whenever you are planning to travel internationally, regardless of whether we are working in the wake of this pandemic. And, as is always the case, the final decision on whether you are permitted to enter another country is dependent on the decision of the border agent at the port of entry.

### Is Travel to the U.S. Allowed?

Yes, but with several caveats.

First, all of the information above about [international travel](#_1t5k11mm3vgb) also applies to travel into the U.S. But due to our special relationship with our neighbours to the south, there are a few additional pieces of information that are worth considering:

1. In response to COVID-19, the governments of Canada, the U.S., and Mexico first agreed to restrict non-discretionary travel between the three nations on March 21, 2020. [This agreement](https://ca.usembassy.gov/travel-restrictions-fact-sheet/) comes up for renewal every 30 days (and is currently set to expire on January21, 2021). This agreement is separate from our federal government’s advisory against non-essential international travel.
2. While the U.S. government is currently [restricting some visa services](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspending-entry-immigrants-present-risk-u-s-labor-market-economic-recovery-following-covid-19-outbreak/) to protect the nation’s economic recovery, I-Visas (the type of visas that documentary filmmakers are most often issued by U.S. Homeland Security) are not currently included in the restricted categories.
3. While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that international travellers all quarantine for 14 days, for travellers from Canada, it is only an unenforceable recommendation.
4. Each U.S. state controls its own quarantine policies. The New York Times has created (and is regularly updating) a list of the [states with current travel restrictions](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/10/travel/state-travel-restrictions.html). Use it as a starting point before taking a deeper dive into the information provided by the governments of the U.S. states you plan to visit. Note, however, that you might need to contact the individual states’ departments of health for clarification on the requirements for international travel. For example, while New York State began requiring travellers from 34 different states to quarantine upon arrival in New York, our call on August 11, 2020 to New York’s Department of Health confirmed that there are no such requirements for travellers from Canada. Meanwhile, Hawai’i is currently mandating a [14-day quarantine for everyone](https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/covid-19-updates/) arriving without proof of a negative COVID-19 test from outside of the state.
5. Upon return to Canada, travellers are required to quarantine for 14 days.

Anecdotally, many Canadian documentary filmmakers have indicated that they prefer entering the U.S. by air, rather than using land border crossings, which are often more cumbersome for filmmakers. According to [recent news reports](https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/u-s-travel-restrictions-covid-19-land-border-fly-1.5607741), the U.S. Embassy’s [Travel Restrictions Fact Sheet](https://ca.usembassy.gov/travel-restrictions-fact-sheet/), it also appears that the American COVID-related travel rules are only being enforced by the U.S. at land, passenger ferry, and passenger rail border crossings.

### Is Filming Allowed in the Jurisdiction?

Once you have confirmed that travel is allowed into the country of filming, be sure to check to make sure that the act of filming is also currently permitted—and to understand the specific regulations and guidelines of the country or region in question.

Helpful lists of global COVID-19 production guidelines have been assembled by the [American Film Market](https://americanfilmmarket.com/worldwide-covid-19-film-production-guidelines/) and [Safe Sets International](https://practicesafesets.co/resources/). These lists are not necessarily comprehensive or up to date, so be sure to also check directly with the jurisdiction for their most recent guidelines.

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| **How Can I Travel More Safely?** |

If you decide that it is necessary for you to travel for your film, consider the following approaches:

* Be sure to understand [the local context](https://covid19.docorg.ca/should-i-shoot/risks-benefits/#importance-of-local-context) (see Should I Shoot?) of the country and community you’re visiting.
* Research and consider the questions around the requirements for quarantining, both in the country you’re visiting and once you’ve returned back home.
* Decide whether embedding yourself in the new community for a longer period of time might be feasible. You could perhaps get tested or quarantine upon arrival, then bubble with your crew and key participants to eliminate the need for masks and social distancing with those in your bubble. Ideally, all crew and participants would also quarantine or get tested to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to you. See Case Study #6 about Devon Cooke’s travels across Canada for one example of this approach.
* Work to reduce the number of people with whom you come into contact and the length of these contacts during travel. This might mean choosing to drive instead of flying, for example. While the government of Canada offers no guidance on which forms of travel are the safest, CBC [spoke with experts](https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/safe-travel-domestic-covid-questions-answered-1.5615855) who agreed that travelling by car alone or with people in your bubble is the safest means of transport, because physical distancing can be better maintained than in a plane or a train.
* If travelling by car:
  + Can you travel alone or bubble with your crew? If not, is it possible to maintain a 2m physical distance and wear masks at all times? Talking should be kept at a minimum and windows should be fully opened.
  + Limit the number of rest stops used.
* If travelling by airplane:
  + Try to book with an airline that is creating the possibility of physical distancing by creating buffer zones of unbooked seats.
  + Book seats with your crew, rather than with other travellers.
  + If possible, eat, drink, and use the restroom before boarding the plane or train and leave your mask in place during the entire flight.
  + Note that masks are currently required in all Canadian airports and on flights departing from or arriving into Canada.

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| **What Are Alternatives to Travel?** |

Possible alternatives to the fast-paced travelling that documentary filmmakers often do might include:

* Re-envisioning your film and making it closer to home.
* Using some of the [alternative approaches](#_279ka65) (such as remote filming and participant-generated video), as described in How Do I Shoot?
* Hiring local crews (see below) to conduct the filming in their home communities while the producer and director work remotely from Canada. See the section on [hiring local crews](#_hef6hu2nrriz) for more information.
* Embedding yourself in the new community for a longer period of time. See Case Study #6 about Devon Cooke’s work to learn more about this possible approach.

#### Hiring Local Crews

Our research has shown that many Canadian documentary producers and directors are continuing to make their international projects by working remotely from Canada, while hiring international crews to film in their local communities.

While the majority of the international shooting being done this way is focused on filming interviews and simple B-roll, one of the more complicated international shoots that we heard about during this research was described by producer/director Hannah Donegan of Fathom Film Group. Currently shooting in Florida, Donegan’s production has made use of local crews, is being directed remotely, and often focuses on vérité-style storytelling.

***In Florida, we knew what we were going to do throughout the day. We had a shot-list of things for the DP to cover off, and our subject is very media-friendly. I talked with the subject about how he thought the day would best unfold, when he thought major events were going to happen. And then I built a pretty decent shot-list around that, in the order that I thought things were going to happen.***

***I was able to discuss with both the DP and subject in advance by saying, “I want a tour of the property. I want to see you set up your bio digester. I want you to light the gas on fire. They're digging a ditch to put a bio digester in—I want to see that process happen. I need to see it being lowered by the crane into the hole. I need to see our subject telling people what to do and how he commands the project.”***

***I gave the crew the free rein to move in and around that. If something interesting or dramatic is happening, you know, go for it. I told them things that I could potentially foresee as being good drama points and told them to look out for those. And then I just had to trust them.***

***During the sit-down interview, the DP sent me shots of the framing, and the sound person called me and hard-wired me to their receiver. I was able to listen to the interview, take notes, and ask follow-up questions based on the conversation. This was our first time filming with our subject, and he was very open, willing, and game. He runs an eco property so I think he's very used to getting his hands dirty. He spends most of his days outside so it was not a stretch to make sure all filming happened outdoors.***

***We didn't just pick any crew either. These were two people who worked together often and they worked together on a lot of National Geographic projects. Our subject has also been a face for National Geographic for a while, so that all made the relationship a lot easier.***

Hannah Donegan, Producer/Director  
In a research interview on July 21, 2020

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| **HOW DO I POST?** |

Through various open-ended responses in our online survey, we learned that many producers and post-production team members do not believe that the post-production phase requires the same level of vigilance as the production phase. While it’s true that risk assessments and health & safety plans for productions that are currently shooting will be more involved, it’s vital that documentarians approach post-production with the same level of thought and planning that they bring to production.

This section aims to help filmmakers to undertake the tasks necessary for approaching post-production as safely as possible during this time.

#### In this Section:

* [Conduct a Risk Assessment](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zxW7XV6VRGW3hYLz0pxAyBryxXZWdxmMUQrqeV-dO_E/edit#heading=h.1qoc8b1)
* [Create a Health & Safety Plan](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zxW7XV6VRGW3hYLz0pxAyBryxXZWdxmMUQrqeV-dO_E/edit#heading=h.ypdpqhe7a87s)
* [Include the Essential Post-Production Protocols](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zxW7XV6VRGW3hYLz0pxAyBryxXZWdxmMUQrqeV-dO_E/edit#heading=h.gcqi24fyo8n2)

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| **Conduct a Risk Assessment** |

Conducting a risk assessment for a project in the post-production phase will be a much more narrow process than for a project that is shooting. Still, documentarians will need to consider the various working environments:

* In home edit suites:
  + Is the director reviewing cuts remotely, or are the editor and director working side-by-side?
  + If the latter, is there enough room for physical distancing and adequate ventilation?
* In post houses:
  + Is the director reviewing the work remotely, or are they attending the sessions in person?
  + If in person, is the director attending by themselves or are there additional team members?
  + Is there enough room for physical distancing and enough ventilation?
* In post houses:
  + Does the post house have their own protocols?
  + If so, can you obtain a copy and discuss them with your post-production team members in advance of your sessions?
  + If not, can you devise protocols for working with them that they can implement?
* Narration and other sound recording:
  + Where is this occurring and is there the ability to practice physical distancing?
  + Will the narrator/actor/singer/musician be in a contained recording booth or in an open space with the sound engineer?
  + Can different voices be recorded separately?
  + What are the disinfection protocols for the recording suite, microphones, and other equipment? See [Quebec’s health & safety guidelines](https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/toolkit-audiovisual-production.aspx) for some specific and useful tips around protocols for sound recording studios.
* Are files being transferred over the internet, or through hard drives that will need to be disinfected?

Once you’ve considered your post locations and the risks presented by each, complete a risk assessment template to better identify the ways in which you will reduce or mitigate the risks.

Review more details about how to conduct [a risk assessment](#_4bvk7pj) in the Can I Shoot? section.

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| **Create a Health & Safety Plan** |

When getting back to work, according to government regulations, all businesses must create a health & safety plan, regardless of whether those film businesses are in production, post-production, or even development. Your post-production health & safety plan will likely be much shorter than a safety plan for projects that are actively shooting. But it should still include the essential production protocols and how they apply to your post-production environment.

Review more details about [production-specific health & safety plans](#_3q5sasy) in the How Do I Shoot? section.

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| **Include the Essential Post-Production Protocols** |

There are several protocols that are essential for everyone in post-production to follow. The below protocols should be included in your production's health & safety plan.

### 1. Work-from-Home Policies

As much as possible, post-production team members should be encouraged to work by themselves in their own private residences, connecting virtually to review cuts.

### 2. Informed Consent

Making sure that everyone you are working with understands and is comfortable with the risks.

### 3. Health Screenings

If people are working outside of their homes, they should complete a health screening questionnaire before arriving on the worksite (including another individual’s home studio). If a colleague is coming into a home edit suite or studio, the best practice would be for everyone in the home to also complete the health screening questionnaire.

### 4. Physical Distancing

Everyone should maintain at least 2m distance from one another.

### 5. Personal Protective Equipment

When working together in an indoor space, face masks should be worn.

### 6. Hand Washing & Sanitizing

When entering and leaving facilities, handwashing and sanitizing should be practiced (including in another individual’s home studio).

### 7. Equipment & Surface Disinfection

High-touch surfaces and shared equipment should be disinfected frequently and in between users.

For more detailed information on the protocols you might choose to implement, review the [Essential Production Protocols](#_43ky6rz) and the [Additional Production Protocols](#_pkwqa1) in How Do I Shoot?

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| **CASE STUDIES Challenges & Opportunities** |

We have seen COVID-19 expose deep problems in our systems. Consider the devastation that occurred in long-term care facilities, the worrisome approaches to school reopenings, and the massive increase in demand experienced by food banks. Each of these systemic issues highlights the challenges we face, but also the opportunities for real and lasting change.

Documentary production is no different. COVID-19 is forcing us to consider how we run our productions, how we engage with our crews and participants, and how we tell our stories. This section aims to help filmmakers consider the challenges and opportunities through the experiences of other documentary filmmakers who have been working during this difficult time.

#### In this Section:

* Case Study #1: Methodical Approaches ([Matt Gallagher & Cornelia Principe](#_4iylrwe))
* Case Study #2: Protecting [Vulnerable Communities (Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers](#_3jtnz0s))
* Case Study #3: [Prioritizing Safety (Mark Miller](#_5290qtopj4ub))
* Case Study #4: [Creative Flexibility (Mélanie Carrier](#_1yyy98l))
* Case Study #5: [Building Relationships (Ngardy Conteh George](#_99gs10uqdckm))
* Case Study #5:  [Safer Journeys (Devon Cooke](#_5v41xbosmhsk))

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| **Case Study #1: Methodical Approaches** |

**Matt Gallagher & Cornelia Principe**

Different documentary styles require different production approaches. Fast-paced, run-and-gun filmmakingcan be as exciting for crews as it is for audiences, but there are some very real concerns about this way of working during COVID-19. A calm, organized, and more methodical approach might be what’s necessary to keep everyone safe.

Producer Cornelia Principe and director Matt Gallagher (*Prey, How to Prepare for Prison*) began production on a new film, *Dispatches from a Field Hospital* (working title)*,* in the early days of COVID-19. Gallagher’s hometown of Windsor, Ontario was hit hard by the virus. Quickly, a field hospital was set up and the city’s COVID-19 patients were all isolated there. Initially, because of the hometown connection, Gallagher and Principe were keen to make a film about the field hospital itself. But that interest became much more personal when Gallagher’s father, who suffers from Alzheimer’s and had been living in a long-term care facility, was diagnosed with COVID-19 and moved into the field hospital.

Because they were not allowed to film with patients in the field hospital, Gallagher and Principe shifted to focus on the story of the patients’ relatives as they worried and waited for news of their loved ones, while also self-isolating in their own homes. The three-person crew included Gallagher, who was both director and cinematographer; Dave Draper, the sound recordist; and Liam Adams, Gallagher’s nephew who filled the role of PA on the shoot.

***We developed a system. At the beginning, we didn’t quite know how the system would work. We went by the protocol we were given. The system evolved…. It was painful in the first 4, 5, 6 days. In the case of my mother, whose husband (and my dad) had COVID-19, the stakes were huge. I didn’t want to be responsible for my mother getting a COVID-19 infection because we did something wrong.***

***We were incredibly careful, to the point of policing ourselves and each other. That was necessary. Once we got those rules and systems down, it became easier and the shoots became a bit more relaxed. That was a good thing.***Matt Gallagher, Director  
In a research interview on July 22, 2020

The crew members followed strict protocols and established a way of working together that felt rigid and uncomfortable to Gallagher, but also necessary. Here are some of those protocols:

* All crew wore face masks throughout the shoot day. The only exception was when Gallagher was interviewing someone on camera. Once seated and at least 10 feet from the subject, Gallagher only would remove his mask.
* All crew handled their own equipment and travelled separately to locations.
* Hand sanitizer and a bleach/water spray for sterilizing equipment was on hand at all times.
* Filming all interviews with participants outside and shooting footage through windows.
* Never entering participants’ homes when the participants were present; and only going inside to set up limited amounts of gear.
* Taking a lunch break of several hours to allow the crew time to decompress, find their own food, and use the washroom (few restaurants and public washrooms were open during this period of lockdown).
* Maintaining a strict protocol around communicating with the participants, where Gallagher was the only crew member to speak with or deal directly with on-camera subjects.

This last point was the most difficult for Gallagher, who likes to have a collaborative set and for his crew members to build their own personal relationships with participants. But, because the crew members were wearing masks and the participants were often elderly, he made the decision to control the communications in order to avoid confusion and to help him to create a direct personal relationship with his participants.

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| **Case Study #2: Protecting Vulnerable Communities** |

**Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers**

Many of us entered the field of documentary because we wanted to have a positive impact on the world by telling stories of people, communities, and ideas. But in the same way that we take care to tell those stories in the most truthful and affecting way possible, we must also take care to protect the communities that are sharing their stories with us.

Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (*The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open, The City Before the City*) is an independent writer, director, producer, and actor. She is a member of the Kainai First Nation in southern Alberta and had already been working for four years on a documentary about addiction and harm reduction initiatives in her community on the Blood Reserve when the pandemic hit.

Co-produced with the NFB, Tailfeathers’ feature-length film was in the editing phase in the winter of 2020, but her plan was to return to her community in the spring to do some pickup shooting with her full crew. This plan changed. Instead, Tailfeathers arrived back home in July to do a more limited shoot with just herself on camera and one other crew member who lives on the reserve as the sound recordist.

Before launching into production, both Tailfeathers and her colleague got tested for COVID-19. In the summer of 2020, a condition of the Kainai First Nation is that everyone entering the community from outside Alberta’s South Zone be tested for COVID-19 and self-isolate until they receive their results. But even if this were not a requirement, Tailfeathers feels she would have chosen to take this precautionary step. In late July 2020, there were eight active cases on the reserve, which is home to approximately 9,000 people.

***It’s so important to be cognizant of how vulnerable First Nations communities are. My uncle passed away from COVID last month. He was the first person on a First Nation in Alberta to pass away. He contracted COVID from an asymptomatic individual who came into his home. My uncle got sick and passed away within a week and a half.***

***So I think it’s really important for anybody who’s coming into a First Nations community to be incredibly cognizant of the fact that there is multigenerational housing, sometimes overcrowded housing, and a lot of people with complicated health issues.***Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Writer/Director/Producer  
In a research interview on July 22, 2020

Whenever we make our documentaries, careful consideration about our participants and their communities is necessary. But, during the time of COVID-19, it has become absolutely essential. Working with vulnerable people and in vulnerable communities is a choice that requires the enthusiastic consent of the community and a very careful and protective approach by the documentary team. Even though hers is almost exclusively a vérité-style film, Tailfeathers made the decision to limit her shooting time to two or three hours each day, and to never enter people’s homes during her reshoots.

While Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers feels some sadness at the ways in which these decisions will impact the style of her film, she says she has embraced it as the new normal. “It’s beyond our control in a lot of ways. This is reality and we have to accept that it’s reality. But I’m just making the best of the current situation.” And doing her best to prioritize the health and safety of her community.

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| **Case Study #3: Prioritizing Safety** |

**Mark Miller**

A commitment to safety is one that the documentary community has always espoused. But in the pursuit of a great story or an amazing shot, we can sometimes forget to behave as safely as we should. COVID-19 is demanding that we remember.

Mark Miller (*Highway Thru Hell, High Arctic Haulers*)is a producer and the CEO of Great Pacific Television in Vancouver, British Columbia. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Miller was producing fifty-six hours of programming for CBC, Discovery, The Weather Channel, and APTN. But, because of the dangerous nature of some of his shows, safety had always been a top priority. As such, Miller and his teams felt well-equipped to handle the new COVID-19 health & safety protocols.

Miller’s productions are taking the standard precautions: masks, physical distancing, hand sanitization. But they are going a few steps further. Crews are smaller than before (3 people instead of 5 people). And they work together and with the same participants for two-week cycles, forming their own working pod. If crew members fall ill, they are given sick pay.

In the one instance when a crew member suspected that he had COVID-19, that crew member and the two others he had come into contact with were all quarantined and given quarantine pay until their test results came back. Then, Miller and his team reflected on how they could improve their equipment handoffs so that crew members wouldn’t come into contact with others outside their pods, deciding that a 48-hour equipment quarantine was the safest option.

Long before the pandemic hit, in addition to **daily safety meetings** and promising crews that they would be **provided with all the safety equipment they requested**, Miller had implemented a number of progressive health & safety policies:

* A **safety ombudsman**, who is available 24/7 to all the crews. The role of the ombudsman is to receive questions and concerns around safety issues, to investigate, and to suggest changes. The complaints are kept confidential and the ombudsman has free reign to conduct safety investigations and audits. Part of his role is to arrive unannounced on location at least twice per season to observe the crew.
* An **employee assistance program** (EAP), which provides employees with a 1-800 number for free confidential counselling. Because some crews can find themselves filming fatal accidents on Miller’s shows, it was important to Miller that his company find a way to support crew members’ mental health.
* A **regularly scheduled survey**, in which all employees can share the challenges they are facing anonymously. Through this survey, Miller most recently learned about challenging work-from-home conditions for some of the animators and post-production team members who are living in small apartments without air-conditioning during the hot Vancouver summer.

While most documentary producers don’t have the budgets to even imagine hiring a safety ombudsman, Mark Miller’s policies can all potentially be implemented on a smaller scale.

#### Questions for Consideration:

* Can you assign someone who is outside the direct chain of command to be your safety point-person, keeping complaints strictly confidential?
* Can you offer ways to support crews in their mental health challenges?
* Can you hold safety briefings before the shoot day and ask crews what they need to do their jobs more safely?
* Can you behave in ways as a producer that demonstrate a strong commitment to safety?

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| **Case Study #4: Creative Flexibility** |

**Mélanie Carrier**

As documentarians, we pride ourselves on our creative flexibility. So often, we have a vision for our work, but then that vision shifts due to the realities of life and the constraints of our budgets. Now, more than ever before, we are required to use our flexibility—making huge creative shifts—in order to work as safely as possible during COVID-19.

Mélanie Carrier (*Wandering, A Rohingya* Story; *Québékoisie*)is a producer/director with MÖ Films in Quebec City. When COVID-19 hit, she was in production on *Deep Inside Humanity* (*Ce que le monde porte en soi)* , a feature-length film about education. The plan was for a two-year production schedule, during which time Carrier would follow four children through their first year of school as they were learning to read and write.

***The idea was to think about how a child of that age constructs his view of the world.***

Mélanie Carrier, Producer/Director  
In a research interview in July 2020

Shooting began at the end of August 2019 in Quebec, with Émile, the first of four children, who is also Carrier’s son. Three other children had been cast in the film, from Haiti, Nepal, and Palestine. International filming was set to begin in Nepal in April 2020. But, of course, because of the restrictions on travel, these shoots could not move forward. Rather than rescheduling, Mélanie made the heart-breaking decision to cancel those shoots entirely. Because the premise of the film revolves around the idea of following the children as they enter their first year of school, by the time international travel was once again less risky, it would be too late.

In eliminating the international participants, Carrier’s film naturally shifted to a much more local—and deeply personal—story. While schools reopened in Quebec in April 2020, she and her crew were not allowed back into the institution to film during that school year. So, while continuing to film Émile and his family at home, the team devised alternative production approaches, to capture the moments that were happening at school:

* Go-pros mounted on children’s heads
* iPhone filming by Émile
* Drone shots of landscapes, cityscapes, and the schoolyard for the more philosophical moments

In a way, the film has become more evocative and the approach to production is more closely connected with the subject matter of the film. By seeing the world through Émile’s eyes—literally—the filmmaker’s hope is that audiences will really understand a child’s experience of education. In the end, the creative flexibility that Mélanie Carrier brought to this project might help her to create a more revealing and intimate film than she had initially planned.

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| **Case Study #5: Building Relationships** |

**Ngardy Conteh George**

One of the concerns that have been flagged repeatedly by documentary directors is the difficulties that COVID-19 presents for relationship-building with our participants. Without the ability to meet over dinner, or visit a potential participant in their home, or conduct an on-camera interview without a mask, directors are rightfully worried about getting to know their participants and building the trust that’s so necessary in our line of work.

Ngardy Conteh George (*Mr. Jane and Finch*, *The Flying Stars*) is a producer/director with Toronto-based Oya Media Group. Conteh George is currently in development on *This Land of Ours,* a feature documentary about the small Caribbean island of Barbuda. In 2017, the island was hit by Hurricane Irma and the residents are now working through questions around the equitable development of the nation. Ultimately, Conteh George’s is a film about the recovery after one disaster (the hurricane) in the midst of another disaster (COVID-19). And she is unable to be there to capture the events of her film as they unfold.

But Conteh George feels as though COVID has created the opportunity for her to deepen the relationships with her participants in a new way.

***Looking back over the past months, our relationships have become stronger because now, with the status quo of video calls and zoom calls and other forms of digital communications, it’s not such a foreign thing to do.***

***My subjects are in the Caribbean. Before COVID, I was kind of in touch sporadically. But I feel like COVID has allowed us to increase communication with our subjects and has allowed us to build bigger relationships.***

***Before COVID, anytime there was a crisis or a conflict in the story I was telling, communication naturally increased. If I could get to my subject, then I could be there for them, document what was happening, and my relationship could grow because we were going through something difficult together—in person.***

***But after COVID, I felt my work was about finding a new way to do this from a distance. I had a desire to check in way more than normal because the world is going through a pandemic. And I had the need to involve the subjects in the filmmaking process, as they were self-filming with instructions from me. Both of these things allowed me to open up my process more, which has taken us deeper than just the traditional director/subject relationship.***

Ngardy Conteh George, Director/Producer  
In a research interview on Monday August 17, 2020

According to Conteh George, there have been no cases of COVID-19 in Barbuda and the only hospital on the island opened up in early August. Before that, anyone who got sick would have to be airlifted off the island. As such, the country was in lockdown to outside travellers for two months. While that lockdown has since been lifted, all new arrivals are now required to quarantine. Conteh George hopes to travel to Barbuda to do some filming in early 2021, and plans to quarantine for 14 days to ensure the community’s safety before launching into production.

In the meantime, Conteh George is asking her participants to do their own filming. They are also sending her their photos and audio recordings. This has given Conteh George a different view into her participants’ lives and has helped keep them feel connected with one another, even across the miles. Conteh George feels that this work of engaging participants in the creation of video content for the film has created a feeling of immediacy and a spirit of collaboration that she hasn’t experienced in her previous work. What she is learning about working with participants on this film is moving her filmmaking practice in a different direction, towards a more participatory approach. Ngardy Conteh George has also realized that she doesn’t need to be so protective of her process. She can check in with her participants when she doesn’t have an immediate filming need. She can let them take the lead sometimes, and discuss the film’s story with them as they move forward together.

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| **Case Study #6: Safer Journeys** |

**Devon Cooke**

How to travel safely is one of the most confounding questions currently facing documentary filmmakers.

Devon Cooke (*Tofu Meets Greens, The Hands that Feed Us: Amara Farm*)is a documentary sound recordist by trade. But when COVID-19 hit, he saw it as an opportunity to embed himself with his participants while making *The Hands that Feed Us,* a film that tells a rich story of farming and local food security. It was a project that he had been developing for three years, but COVID presented him with the opportunity he needed.

Cooke decided to work as a one-person crew: directing, shooting, and recording sound by himself. He began production on April 15, 2020 in BC and plans to wrap in Quebec by November. As he travels slowly across Canada, Cooke is filming with farmers and telling the story of local food security during COVID-19. He is spending multiple weeks on each of his participants’ farms, trading work as a farmhand for filming access.

Cooke is driving from farm to farm by car, embedding himself with the farm workers and the farmer’s family as he goes. Each farm is a little bit different and Cooke takes his cues from his participants. In BC, he quarantined on each farm after arrival and before beginning production. In Alberta in August 2020, he was able to access on-demand testing and awaited his test results while staying at a campsite in his tent.

Once his negative test results came back, Cooke moved his tent onto Susan Manyluk’s farm in Red Deer. Manyluk was initially concerned about Cooke’s presence during the pandemic. But the two agreed to take things slowly and Manyluk eventually felt comfortable with Cooke’s careful plan.

***He was extremely personable on the phone and answered all my questions. But of course, COVID is COVID.***

***I had a few reservations. There are three generations on the farm. My husband and I are both in our 70s. We are in that risky demographic. Our daughter lives here with our three grandchildren. The girls have been home from school. We have had as little contact as possible outside of the family.***

***We decided that when he made his move to Alberta, he would stop by and we would take each other’s temperature; figure out what we mutually needed. He came and we chatted initially. He had come to Red Deer earlier, camped at a campground, did the testing, got his results. He was following due process as best as anybody can at the moment.***

***We are now two weeks in, and it’s been a pleasure to work with him… He is having to deal with the vagaries of farming, and weather, and customers.***

Susan Manyluk, Documentary Participant  
In a research interview, conducted on August 13, 2020

Cooke’s approach has made production much more affordable, but also much more possible in pandemic times. This is a way to gain deep access to his participants and their farms—and to travel as safely as possible. By living on the farms with his participants for a number of weeks, he has been able to follow their stories closely, always ready to capture life as it unfolds on the farm.

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| **ABOUT THIS GUIDE** |

This guide, *Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19: Best Practices by and for Documentary Filmmakers,* was created for Canadian documentary professionals who are actively engaging in production and post-production in the wake of COVID-19.

*Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19* was created by the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC); and in consultation with Canadian documentarians, professional film & television associations, and governmental agencies and authorities.

#### In this Section:

* [Research Methodology](#_sdp2prmj8s26)
* [Scope & Limitations](#_3dy6vkm)
* [Acknowledgements](#_xb79d4l91hj)

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| **Research Methodology** |

DOC initiated this project in July and August of 2020, in response to calls from documentary filmmakers for more genre-specific pandemic guidance. The provincial/territorial film & television guidelines are purposefully high level and intended for use by all film & television professionals. But in reviewing those guidelines, documentarians would often come away with many questions. Our research, therefore, aimed to identify and answer these questions; ultimately helping documentary filmmakers to navigate new ways of working in the wake of COVID-19.

We first conducted **an** **environmental scan and a literature review** to better understand what guidance was available to film & television professionals in Canada and globally. This included:

* The provincial/territorial film & television production guidelines (11 guideline documents from 10 jurisdictions and 2 department-specific appendices).
* A selection of international film & television production guidelines, including the documentary-specific *Independent Documentary Filming in the Time of Corona*, produced by Field of Vision, Doc Society, and Sundance Institute.
* Protocol documents created by independent producers, equipment rental facilities, post-production houses, and both the CBC and NFB.

We disseminated **an** **online survey** to documentary professionals across Canada to identify areas of confusion, gaps in knowledge, and specific informational needs. In total, 327 individuals responded to the survey (278 in English and 49 in French). Responses were received from Canadians living in all ten provinces, one territory (Yukon), and internationally (U.S., Chile, Mexico, and Pakistan).

Finally, we conducted **in-depth research interviews** in both English and French with over 50 individuals. We spoke with 44 documentary producers, crew members, and participants from across Canada who have engaged in (or have considered engaging in) production activities since mid-March. In these interviews we sought to identify documentarians’ biggest challenges and to understand their creative solutions in making their films during the pandemic. We also spoke with 3 legal and insurance professionals who support the work of documentary filmmakers, 5 individuals who were involved in the creation of their provincial/territorial film & television guidelines, and 1 public health policy expert. We also received written responses to our questions from 2 provincial occupational health & safety authorities.

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| Scope & Limitations |

The official provincial/territorial film & television guidelines are the foundational documents for all film & television professionals working in this new era. This guide is intended as a complement to the official guidelines—not as a replacement.

Because COVID-19 is a new virus, the scientific understanding is constantly changing. While our intention is to update this guide regularly, it’s critical that users also conduct their own research, keeping abreast of the evolving scientific information, including current public health advisories and local context.

The guidance offered in *Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19* are suggestions only and the case studies and samples included within are for illustrative purposes alone. The recommendations are not legally enforceable, nor are they intended to be used as legal guidance. It is the user’s responsibility to consult their local public health ordinances and legislation and to seek professional legal advice.

The findings and recommendations expressed in this guide do not necessarily reflect the views of the NFB, CBC, or DGC, who are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

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| **Acknowledgements** |

*Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19* is a project of the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC). DOC gratefully acknowledges the support and partnership of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC).

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Banner Photography: **Home Page** Photo by Zachary Bonnell

From *Evan’s Drum,* Dir. Ossie Michelin, NFB

**Should I Shoot?** Photo by Philip Dransfield

From *Momento Mori*, Dir. Niobi Thompson, ID Productions & NFB

**Can I Shoot?** Photo by Barri Cohen

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**How Do I Shoot?** Photo by Julia Fullerton

From *Jia*, Dir. Weiye Su, NFB

**How Do I Travel?** Photo by Jackie Torrens

From *Bernie Langille Feature* (working title), Dir: Jackie Torrens,

Peep Media

**How Do I Post?** Photo by Karen Shopsowitz

**Case Studies** Photo by Rohan Fernando

From *Goin’ Down the Highway Smilin’* (working title), Dir. Susan Rodgers, NFB

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In addition to the contributors listed above, we are thankful to all the documentarians who took the time to respond to our survey and share their experiences, opinions, and needs with us. Thanks are also owed to the many organizations that acted as connectors during our research, including L’Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada, the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), Creative BC, the Indigenous Screen Office, On Screen Manitoba, Ontario Creates, Screen Nova Scotia, and Women in Film & Television.

In particular, we would like to thank those who participated in our research interviews, offering us an in-depth understanding of their experiences during COVID-19.

* Documentary professionals: Christine Aubé, Stéphane Barsalou, Sherien Barsoum, Christine Baudry, Jessica Brown, Mélanie Carrier, Mark Caswell, Kami Chisholm, Ngardy Conteh George, Devon Cooke, Hannah Donegan, Dave Draper, Matt Gallagher, Chris Hsiung, Bryn Hughes, Amen Jafri, Tara Jan, Merit Jensen Carr, Mark Johnston, Mandy Kane, Alex Kronstein, Teresa MacInnes, Mark Miller, Jon Montes, Elisa Paloschi, Nadine Pequeneza, Cornelia Principe, Cailleah Scott-Grimes, Katarina Soukup, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Myriam Therrien, Lynne Trépanier, Colette Vosberg, Diana Warmé, and Dave Wells.

* On-camera documentary participants: Susan Manyluk and Sandra Steingraber.

* Legal and insurance professionals: Diane Konecny of Front Row Insurance Brokers, Hatty Reisman of Reisman Law Offices, and Danny Webber of Hall Webber LLP.

* Individuals who were involved in the creation of their provincial film & television guidelines: Laura Mackenzie, Executive Director of Screen Nova Scotia; Nicole Matiation, Executive Director of On Screen Manitoba; and Marsha Newbery, Acting Vice-President of BC Industrial Relations and Sean Porter, Director of National Industrial Relations & Counsel for CMPA.

In addition to those interview subjects named above, we are thankful to the seven unnamed interviewees who shared their experiences and insights under the condition of anonymity. These interviewees included two directors, two producers (one of whom was involved in the creation of their provincial film & television guidelines), a sound recordist, a director of photography, and a public health policy expert.

We are grateful to the Ontario Ministry of Labour and Quebec’s Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail for responding to our occupational health & safety queries in a written questionnaire.

Finally, the author would like to thank her children Hannah and Henry and her partner Sarah for allowing themselves to be ignored during the summer of 2020, while she worked to create this resource for her community.

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| **SURVEY RESULTS** |

*COVID-19 Documentary Guidelines and Best Practices Survey* was launched by the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) on July 22, 2022. This online survey was one key element in [our research](#_sdp2prmj8s26) for the creation of this guide.

The survey was widely distributed to DOC’s membership through email newsletters and social media posts. In order to reach beyond DOC’s membership base, the survey was also shared by our project partners at the NFB, CBC, and DGC. Many other film and television organizations and associations also assisted in the dissemination of the survey to their members and social media followers, including the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), the Indigenous Screen Office (ISO), the National Screen Institute (NSI), L’Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada (APFC).

The goal of the survey was to take a snapshot of documentary production in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. We wanted to learn who was working and how they were doing it; who wasn’t yet working and when they were planning to begin; which best practices were emerging and which were yet to be established; and what were the specific information needs of the documentary community at this moment in time.

By the time the survey closed on August 10, 2020, 327 responses (278 in English and 49 in French) had been collected. Responses came from Canadians living in all ten provinces, one territory (Yukon), and internationally (U.S., Chile, Mexico, and Pakistan).

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| **General Questions** |

These questions were answered by all survey respondents.

### #1 – Where do you live?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| British Columbia | 18.65% | 61 |
| Alberta | 9.17% | 30 |
| Saskatchewan | 1.22% | 4 |
| Manitoba | 3.06% | 10 |
| Ontario | 38.53% | 126 |
| Quebec | 20.49% | 67 |
| New Brunswick | 1.53% | 5 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 0.31% | 1 |
| Nova Scotia | 2.45% | 8 |
| Prince Edward Island | 0.31% | 1 |
| Nunavut | 0.00% | 0 |
| Northwest Territories | 0.00% | 0 |
| Yukon | 0.31% | 1 |
| USA | 3.06% | 10 |
| Other (please specify) | 0.92% | 3 |
| **Answered** |  | 327 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following locations:

* Chile (1 respondent)
* Mexico City (1 respondent)
* Pakistan (1 respondent)

### #2 – What’s your professional role?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Producer | 64.53% | 211 |
| Director | 60.55% | 198 |
| Production Manager | 6.12% | 20 |
| Production Coordinator | 4.89% | 16 |
| Production Assistant | 2.75% | 9 |
| Director of Photography | 24.16% | 79 |
| Sound Recordist | 5.50% | 18 |
| Editor | 20.80% | 68 |
| Assistant Editor | 0.31% | 1 |
| Sound Editor | 0.61% | 2 |
| Other (please specify) | 14.07% | 46 |
|  | **Answered** | 327 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following roles, amongst others:

* Writer (5.81%, 19 respondents)
* Researcher (0.92%, 3 respondents)

### #3 – How long have you been working in the documentary sector?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Less than 1 year | 3.67% | 12 |
| 1-5 years | 14.37% | 47 |
| 5-10 years | 18.65% | 61 |
| 10-15 years | 14.37% | 47 |
| 15-20 years | 13.76% | 45 |
| Over 20 years | 31.80% | 104 |
| I do not work in the documentary sector | 3.36% | 11 |
|  | **Answered** | 327 |

Respondents who selected “I do not work in the documentary sector” were disqualified from the survey, as the integrity of the responses was dependent on respondents having a professional history in the documentary sector.

### #4 – Are you a member of DOC?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 48.05% | 148 |
| No | 37.34% | 115 |
| Previously (but not currently) | 12.01% | 37 |
| I don’t know | 2.60% | 8 |
|  | **Answered** | 308 |

### #5 – Would you use an online resource with guidelines and best practices for documentary filming during COVID-19?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 82.14% | 253 |
| No | 2.27% | 7 |
| Maybe | 15.58% | 48 |
|  | **Answered** | 308 |

### #6 – Have you been involved in production or post-production on a documentary since March 13?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes – production | 16.23% | 50 |
| Yes – post-production | 24.68% | 76 |
| Yes – both production and post-production | 25.97% | 80 |
| No | 33.12% | 102 |
|  | **Answered** | 308 |

Based on their response to the above question, respondents were then streamed into different portions of the survey, as follows:

* Those who indicated that they had been in production were asked to respond to the Production Questions (#7-14) and the Health & Safety Questions (#17-28).
* Those who indicated that they had been in post-production were asked to respond to the Post-Production Questions (#15-17) and the Health & Safety Questions (#17-28).
* Those who had been in both production and post-production were asked to respond to both the Production and Post-Production Questions (#7-17) and the Health & Safety Questions (#17-28).
* Those who had not been in production or post were asked to respond to questions the Holding Questions (#29-36).

After having completed the above questions, all respondents were then asked to respond to the remaining questions, beginning at Question #37.

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| **Production Questions** |

### These questions were answered by those who responded that they have been in production since March 13. #7 – How many documentary projects have you been shooting since March 13?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 64.29% | 72 |
| 2 | 22.32% | 25 |
| 3 | 8.04% | 9 |
| 4 | 2.68% | 3 |
| 5 | 0.00% | 0 |
| 6 or more | 2.68% | 3 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #8 – When did you actively begin shooting this project? (For multiple projects, select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Before March 13 | 45.54% | 51 |
| Shortly after March 13 | 6.25% | 7 |
| April | 7.14% | 8 |
| May | 13.39% | 15 |
| June | 22.32% | 25 |
| July | 35.71% | 40 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #9 – On an average day, how big is the production crew on this project? (For multiple projects, select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 person | 22.32% | 25 |
| 2 people | 23.21% | 26 |
| 3 people | 29.46% | 33 |
| 4 people | 17.86% | 20 |
| 5 people | 13.39% | 15 |
| 6 people or more | 10.71% | 12 |
| No formal production crew (e.g., remotely, through video chat, or through subject-generated footage, etc.) | 11.61% | 13 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

Author’s Note: Based on the above answers, 75% of respondents were working with a crew of 3 people or fewer.

### #10 – What kinds of shooting are you doing? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In-Person Interviews – Outdoors | 71.43% | 80 |
| In-Person Interviews – Indoors | 54.46% | 61 |
| Remote Interviews (i.e., video chats) | 29.46% | 33 |
| Video Diaries (i.e., subject-generated video) | 8.04% | 9 |
| B-roll – with Subjects | 59.82% | 67 |
| B-roll – without Subjects | 57.14% | 64 |
| Vérité | 31.25% | 35 |
| Crowd Scenes – Outdoors (e.g., protests, festivals, street fairs) | 9.82% | 11 |
| Crowd Scenes – Indoors (e.g., performances, political rallies, sporting events) | 3.57% | 4 |
| Re-enactments | 7.14% | 8 |
| Motion Capture | 0.89% | 1 |
| AR/VR/360 | 0.89% | 1 |
| No shooting (e.g., only animation, archival, etc.) | 8.93% | 10 |
| Other (please specify) | 5.36% | 6 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #11 – In what kinds of locations are you shooting? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In my home | 11.61% | 13 |
| In my subject’s private home | 39.29% | 44 |
| Private outdoor spaces (e.g., a subject’s backyard) | 64.29% | 72 |
| Public outdoor spaces (e.g., a local park) | 66.07% | 74 |
| In a studio | 12.50% | 14 |
| In a private office | 18.75% | 21 |
| In an indoor environment with potentially vulnerable populations (e.g., longterm care facility, hospital, jail) | 7.14% | 8 |
| In a publicly accessible space (e.g., store, church, school) | 15.18% | 17 |
| Other (please specify) | 9.82% | 11 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #12 – In what kind of community are you shooting? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Urban | 70.54% | 79 |
| Suburban | 26.79% | 30 |
| Rural | 43.75% | 49 |
| Remote | 22.32% | 25 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #13 – Where are you shooting? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In my home province | 85.71% | 96 |
| In another province | 20.54% | 23 |
| In another country/countries | 18.75% | 21 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

### #14 – If you are shooting outside of your home province, where? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| N/A (i.e., shooting in my home province only or not shooting at all) | 61.61% | 69 |
| British Columbia | 10.71% | 12 |
| Alberta | 4.46% | 5 |
| Saskatchewan | 2.68% | 3 |
| Manitoba | 4.46% | 5 |
| Ontario | 4.46% | 5 |
| Quebec | 8.93% | 10 |
| New Brunswick | 0.89% | 1 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 3.57% | 4 |
| Nova Scotia | 0.89% | 1 |
| Prince Edward Island | 0.00% | 0 |
| Nunavut | 0.89% | 1 |
| Northwest Territories | 1.79% | 2 |
| Yukon | 1.79% | 2 |
| Other Countries (Name the US State(s) or Other Countries) | 17.86% | 20 |
|  | **Answered** | 112 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following locations:

* U.S. (9 respondents) shooting in California, New York, Texas, DC, Connecticut, Utah, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey
* France (2 respondents)
* U.K. (2 respondents)
* Australia (1 respondent)
* Caribbean (1 respondent)
* Ecuador (1 respondent)
* India (1 respondent)
* Italy (1 respondent)
* Japan (1 respondent)
* South Africa (1 respondent)

|  |
| --- |
| Post-Production Questions |

These questions were answered by those who responded that they have been in post-production since March 13.

### #15 – What phases of post-production have you engaged in since March 13? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Picture Edit | 92.19% | 124 |
| Sound Edit | 59.38% | 75 |
| Colour Correction | 60.94% | 70 |
| Online Edit (titles, packaging) | 57.81% | 70 |
| Visual Effects | 21.88% | 24 |
| Animation | 23.44% | 24 |
| VR/AR/360 Editing | 3.13% | 3 |
| Other (please specify) | 3.13% | 13 |
|  | **Answered** | 145 |

### 

### #16 – How many documentary projects are you currently in post-production on?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 60.94% | 87 |
| 2 | 26.56% | 33 |
| 3 | 6.25% | 8 |
| 4 | 4.69% | 9 |
| 5 or more | 1.56% | 3 |
|  | **Answered** | 134 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Health & Safety Questions** |

These questions were answered by those respondents who indicated that they had been in production and/or post-production since March 13.”

### #17 – Why did you decide to continue to move forward with your project(s) during the pandemic? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| We generally felt we could approach the work safely and responsibly | 71.79% | 112 |
| We devised alternate ways of working to mitigate the risk (e.g., interviews over video chat, animated sequences, subject-generated footage, work from home) | 48.08% | 75 |
| We (or I) needed to keep working for financial reasons | 23.72% | 37 |
| We had a non-pandemic story to tell that was being affected by COVID-19 | 21.15% | 33 |
| We had a pandemic story to tell | 17.31% | 27 |
| Other (please specify) | 17.31% | 27 |
| The risks of COVID are not high in our jurisdiction | 16.67% | 26 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

The most common reasons specified by respondents who selected “Other” included the following:

* We had an urgent (non-COVID) story to tell (6 respondents)
* We had an obligation to deliver to broadcasters/funders (5 respondents)
* We were working remotely (5 respondents)

### #18 – What have been your top concerns about working since March 13? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Safety of the participants(s), production crew, and/or post-production team | 75.00% | 117 |
| Safety of secondary individuals (my family, crew’s family, subject’s family) | 41.03% | 64 |
| My safety | 29.49% | 46 |
| The creative and logistical challenges presented by physical distancing, mask wearing, etc. | 23.72% | 37 |
| Safety of the wider community | 18.59% | 29 |
| The mental health strain of making documentaries during a pandemic (for me, my crew, my participants) | 14.10% | 22 |
| The additional planning required | 14.10% | 22 |
| The potential liability issues | 12.82% | 20 |
| The larger ethical implications of making documentaries during this time | 12.18% | 19 |
| Other (please specify) | 11.54% | 18 |
| The additional cost of implementing new shooting and editing protocols | 10.90% | 17 |
| No concerns | 2.56% | 4 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following:

* Can’t pick only 3 / All of the above (4 respondents)
* Risking tax credit eligibility by hiring local crews due to travel restrictions (4 respondents)
* Personal finances (2 respondents)

### #19 – What external resources (if any) did you consult when preparing for production/post? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| My province’s general public health directives and guidelines | 61.54% | 96 |
| My province’s film & television production guidelines | 57.05% | 89 |
| The general public health directives and guidelines of the jurisdictions where I was going to be filming | 34.62% | 54 |
| Other documentary professionals | 32.69% | 51 |
| DOC’s COVID-19 webinars | 29.49% | 46 |
| Guidelines or protocols from production partners (co-producers, broadcasters, funders) | 28.85% | 45 |
| Independent Documentary Filming in the Time of Corona by DOC Society, Field of Vision, Sundance Institute | 28.21% | 44 |
| The film & television production guidelines of the jurisdiction where I was going to be filming | 19.87% | 31 |
| My insurance agent | 16.67% | 26 |
| Protocols from my equipment rental or post-production house | 12.82% | 20 |
| My entertainment lawyer | 10.90% | 17 |
| No resources | 8.97% | 14 |
| Other (please specify) | 7.69% | 12 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

### #20 – What information do you wish had been more accessible when you were prepping for production and/or post? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How to create a production-specific health & safety plan (for producers) | 38.46% | 60 |
| How to conduct a risk assessment (for producers) | 35.26% | 55 |
| What specific activities were legally allowed or prohibited at the time | 24.36% | 38 |
| How to brief and/or train crew on the production’s health & safety plan (for producers and directors) | 18.59% | 29 |
| How to implement the production’s health & safety plan (for directors and crew) | 18.59% | 29 |
| How to deal with the additional stress of shooting during a pandemic | 16.67% | 26 |
| How to practice proper disinfection of equipment and locations | 15.38% | 24 |
| How to discuss the risks with participants | 14.74% | 23 |
| Other (please specify) | 14.74% | 23 |
| The findings of the producer’s risk assessment (for directors and crew) | 12.82% | 20 |
| How to safely shoot in other jurisdictions | 10.26% | 16 |
| How to adequately maintain social distancing | 7.05% | 11 |
| How to practice proper handwashing | 0.64% | 1 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following:

* No additional information was needed (9 respondents)
* N/A (4 respondents), sometimes additional explanations were offered, for example, indicating that the respondent was working from home
* Insurance & liability issues (2 respondents)

### #21 – What actions did your production take in response to COVID-19? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Work from home | 66.03% | 103 |
| Physical distancing (i.e., staying 6 feet apart) | 60.26% | 94 |
| Increased communication about risks, rights, and responsibilities | 48.72% | 76 |
| Mandatory masks for crew | 47.44% | 74 |
| Remote prep meetings and/or pre-interviews | 44.23% | 69 |
| Smaller-than-usual crew on location | 42.31% | 66 |
| Creating and sharing a production-specific health & safety plan | 38.46% | 60 |
| Conducting a risk assessment | 34.62% | 54 |
| COVID waivers for crew and/or participants | 30.13% | 47 |
| Outdoor filming only | 29.49% | 46 |
| All crew responsible for their own gear | 27.56% | 43 |
| Mandatory masks for participants when not on camera | 25.00% | 39 |
| Hiring local crew only | 23.72% | 37 |
| Shorter working days | 17.31% | 27 |
| Remote filming | 16.03% | 25 |
| New health & safety crew position(s) (i.e., a PA for disinfection tasks) | 13.46% | 21 |
| Other (please specify) | 9.62% | 15 |
| No crew on location (e.g., remote filming, participant-generated footage) | 8.33% | 13 |
| Mandatory health screenings | 7.05% | 11 |
| Purchasing workers compensation insurance for crew members | 3.85% | 6 |
| Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass dividers) | 3.21% | 5 |
| Higher pay rates | 2.56% | 4 |
| Mandatory quarantine – with quarantine pay | 2.56% | 4 |
| No new actions | 2.56% | 4 |
| Mandatory quarantine – without quarantine pay | 1.92% | 3 |
| I don’t know | 1.92% | 3 |
| Sick pay (i.e., if crew is ill, they are still paid for the shoot day) | 0.64% | 1 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

### 

### #22 – What actions do you wish your production had taken in response to COVID-19? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No new actions | 27.66% | 39 |
| I don’t know | 23.40% | 33 |
| Conducting a risk assessment | 14.18% | 20 |
| Creating and sharing a production-specific health & safety plan | 14.18% | 20 |
| Other (please specify) | 14.18% | 20 |
| Increased communication about risks, rights, and responsibilities | 13.48% | 19 |
| Higher pay rates | 10.64% | 15 |
| Mandatory masks for crew | 9.22% | 13 |
| Purchasing workers compensation insurance for crew members | 7.80% | 11 |
| Work from home | 7.80% | 11 |
| Mandatory masks for participants when not on camera | 7.80% | 11 |
| Sick pay (i.e., if crew is ill, they are still paid for the shoot day) | 7.80% | 11 |
| COVID waivers for crew and/or participants | 6.38% | 9 |
| Shorter working days | 6.38% | 9 |
| Physical distancing (i.e., staying 6 feet apart) | 6.38% | 9 |
| Mandatory health screenings | 6.38% | 9 |
| Remote filming | 5.67% | 8 |
| Mandatory quarantine with quarantine pay | 5.67% | 8 |
| Remote prep meetings and/or pre-interviews | 4.96% | 7 |
| Outdoor filming only | 4.96% | 7 |
| Hiring local crew only | 3.55% | 5 |
| Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass dividers) | 3.55% | 5 |
| Smaller-than-usual crew on location | 2.84% | 4 |
| All crew responsible for their own gear | 2.84% | 4 |
| No crew on location (e.g., remote filming, subject-generated footage) | 1.42% | 2 |
| Mandatory quarantine without quarantine pay | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 141 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following:

* Actions taken were sufficient (6 respondents)
* No new actions were necessary (2 respondents) sometimes additional explanations were offered, for example, indicating that the respondent was working from home

### #23 – For Producers and Directors: Who prepared the health & safety plan for your production? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Producer | 62.96% | 85 |
| Production Manager | 20.74% | 28 |
| Production Coordinator | 11.11% | 15 |
| Consultant | 5.93% | 8 |
| We did not create a health & safety plan | 19.26% | 26 |
| Other (please specify) | 23.70% | 32 |
|  | **Answered** | 135 |

Respondents who selected “Other” indicated the following:

* No safety plan was necessary, because we were not filming, for example (8 respondents)
* Created collaboratively between multiple individuals/departments (3 respondents)
* Facilities and service providers, such as a studio or a post-production house (3 respondents)

Author’s Note: Based on the various write-in responses to the questions around production health & safety plans, there seems to be a general feeling amongst some documentary professionals that a health & safety plan is only necessary for projects that are actively shooting. As such, post-production teams seem to be often working without creating or implementing health & safety plans.

### #24 – For Directors and Crew Members: Who explained the health & safety plan to you? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Producer | 51.61% | 64 |
| Director | 10.48% | 13 |
| Production Manager | 17.74% | 22 |
| Production Coordinator | 11.29% | 14 |
| Another Crew Member | 0.81% | 1 |
| I was given a document to read | 14.52% | 18 |
| No plan was explained | 25.00% | 31 |
| N/A | 16.94% | 21 |
| Other (please specify) | 16.94% | 21 |
|  | **Answered** | 124 |

### #25 – Overall, how satisfied were you with your production’s health & safety plan?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Very satisfied | 39.10% | 61 |
| Somewhat satisfied | 32.05% | 50 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 22.44% | 35 |
| Somewhat dissatisfied | 5.77% | 9 |
| Very dissatisfied | 0.64% | 1 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

### 

### #26 – Were there any health & safety guidelines (either from your production or from your regional jurisdiction) that were very challenging and/or impossible for you to implement? If so, what were the challenges and how did you overcome them?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No | 78.43% | 120 |
| Yes (please explain) | 21.57% | 33 |
|  | **Answered** | 153 |

The challenges experienced by the respondents who answered “Yes” to this question included the following:

* Everything is challenging! (4 respondents)
* Physical distancing (5 respondents)
* Mask wearing (5 respondents)
* Travel restrictions, logistics, and varying jurisdictional rules (4 respondents)
* Non-compliance of crew and participants with the health & safety protocols (3 respondents)

### #27 – Overall, how safe have you felt while working since March 13?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Very safe | 37.82% | 59 |
| Somewhat safe | 39.74% | 62 |
| Neither safe nor unsafe | 14.74% | 23 |
| Somewhat unsafe | 7.69% | 12 |
| Very unsafe | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 156 |

### #28 – If the public health risks of COVID-19 continue indefinitely, will you continue to do documentary work in this way?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No | 16.03% | 25 |
| Yes | 47.44% | 74 |
| Yes with some adjustments (please specify) | 36.54% | 57 |
|  | **Answered** | **156** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Holding Questions** |

These questions were answered by those who responded that they have not been in production or post-production since March 13.

### #29 – Why aren’t you currently in production or post-production? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| My production isn’t ready yet | 37.04% | 30 |
| I could not find any work (for directors and crew) | 30.86% | 25 |
| I felt the health & safety risks were too high | 27.16% | 22 |
| I could not raise the necessary funding (for producers and directors) | 20.99% | 17 |
| I did not feel as though my production was urgent enough to warrant shooting at this time | 18.52% | 15 |
| I had personal responsibilities that needed to take priority (e.g., childcare, elder care) | 17.28% | 14 |
| Other (please specify) | 17.28% | 14 |
| I was not insured and did not want to take the risk with a COVID exclusion | 16.05% | 13 |
|  | **Answered** | 81 |

### 

### #30 – What are the main factors for deciding when to begin working again? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| When I am able to raise funding for my project (for producers and directors) | 48.48% | 32 |
| When my production is ready | 45.45% | 30 |
| When I am able to find work (for directors and crew) | 40.91% | 27 |
| When the health & safety risks feel lower | 37.88% | 25 |
| When I find a way of working that feels less risky | 36.36% | 24 |
| When I can obtain insurance without the COVID exclusions | 21.21% | 14 |
| When my jurisdiction is back to fairly normal business practices | 13.64% | 9 |
| When it becomes a financial necessity | 13.64% | 9 |
| Other (please specify) | 10.61% | 7 |
|  | **Answered** | **66** |

### 

### #31 – What have been your top concerns about working since March 13? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Safety of the participants(s), production crew, and/or post-production team | 65.43% | 53 |
| Safety of secondary individuals (my family, crew’s family, participants’s family) | 43.21% | 35 |
| My safety | 33.33% | 27 |
| The creative and logistical challenges presented by physical distancing, mask wearing, etc. | 29.63% | 24 |
| Safety of the wider community | 22.22% | 18 |
| The potential liability issues | 17.28% | 14 |
| The additional cost of implementing new shooting and editing protocols | 13.58% | 11 |
| The larger ethical implications of making documentaries during this time | 13.58% | 11 |
| The mental health strain of making documentaries during a pandemic (for me, my crew, my subjects) | 11.11% | 9 |
| Other (please specify) | 8.64% | 7 |
| The additional planning required | 6.17% | 5 |
| No concerns | 1.23% | 1 |
|  | **Answered** | 81 |

### 

### #32 – What external resources (if any) have you consulted? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| My province’s general public health directives and guidelines | 61.73% | 50 |
| My province’s film & television production guidelines | 53.09% | 43 |
| The general public health directives and guidelines of the jurisdictions where I was going to be filming | 29.63% | 24 |
| Other documentary professionals | 29.63% | 24 |
| Guidelines or protocols from production partners (co-producers, broadcasters, funders) | 28.40% | 23 |
| The film & television production guidelines of the jurisdiction where I was going to be filming | 27.16% | 22 |
| DOC’s COVID-19 webinars | 24.69% | 20 |
| Independent Documentary Filming in the Time of Corona by DOC Society, Field of Vision, Sundance Institute | 23.46% | 19 |
| Other (please specify) | 13.58% | 11 |
| No resources | 11.11% | 9 |
| My insurance agent | 9.88% | 8 |
| Protocols from my equipment rental or post-production house | 7.41% | 6 |
| My entertainment lawyer | 6.17% | 5 |
|  | **Answered** | 81 |

### #33 – What information or resources would be helpful for your future planning? (Select up to 3)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How to create a health & safety plan (for producers) | 37.04% | 30 |
| How to implement a production’s health & safety plan (for directors and crew) | 29.63% | 24 |
| How to implement alternate ways of working (e.g., remote shooting) | 28.40% | 23 |
| How to conduct a risk assessment (for producers) | 27.16% | 22 |
| How to brief and/or train crew on health & safety plan (for producers and directors) | 25.93% | 21 |
| How to practice proper disinfection of equipment and locations | 23.46% | 19 |
| What specific activities are legally allowed or prohibited at any given time | 23.46% | 19 |
| How to plan for filming in another jurisdiction | 23.46% | 19 |
| How to discuss the risks with participants and crew | 16.05% | 13 |
| How to deal with the additional stress of working during a pandemic | 13.58% | 11 |
| How to adequately maintain physical distancing | 7.41% | 6 |
| Other (please specify) | 3.70% | 3 |
| How to practice proper handwashing | 1.23% | 1 |
|  | **Answered** | 81 |

One of the respondents who selected “Other” indicated “all of the above.”

### #34 – For Producers: When you are ready to begin shooting and/or post, what new actions are you likely to take in response to COVID-19? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Creating and sharing a production-specific health & safety plan | 67.16% | 45 |
| Mandatory masks for crew | 65.67% | 44 |
| Conducting a risk assessment | 64.18% | 43 |
| Physical distancing (i.e., staying 6 feet apart) | 53.73% | 36 |
| Remote prep meetings and/or pre-interviews | 52.24% | 35 |
| Smaller-than-usual crew on location | 49.25% | 33 |
| Increased communication about risks, rights, and responsibilities | 47.76% | 32 |
| Mandatory masks for subjects when not on camera | 46.27% | 31 |
| Work from home | 38.81% | 26 |
| COVID waivers for crew and/or participants | 31.34% | 21 |
| Outdoor filming only | 26.87% | 18 |
| All crew responsible for their own gear | 26.87% | 18 |
| Purchasing workers compensation insurance for crew members | 22.39% | 15 |
| Remote filming | 22.39% | 15 |
| Mandatory health screenings | 22.39% | 15 |
| Shorter working days | 20.90% | 14 |
| New health & safety crew position(s) (i.e., a PA for disinfection tasks) | 19.40% | 13 |
| Other (please specify) | 19.40% | 13 |
| Hiring local crew only | 16.42% | 11 |
| Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass dividers) | 13.43% | 9 |
| I have no plans to shoot until COVID-19 is no longer a risk | 11.94% | 8 |
| Mandatory quarantine – with quarantine pay | 10.45% | 7 |
| I don’t know | 10.45% | 7 |
| Higher pay rates | 8.96% | 6 |
| No crew on location (e.g., remote filming, participant-generated footage) | 5.97% | 4 |
| Sick pay (i.e., if crew is ill, they are still paid for the shoot day) | 5.97% | 4 |
| Mandatory quarantine – without quarantine pay | 2.99% | 2 |
| No new actions | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 67 |

### 

### #35 – For Directors and Crew: When you are ready to begin shooting and/or post, what new actions are you hoping producers will take in response to COVID-19? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Creating and sharing a production-specific health & safety plan | 64.94% | 50 |
| Increased communication about risks, rights, and responsibilities | 59.74% | 46 |
| Conducting a risk assessment | 58.44% | 45 |
| Physical distancing (i.e., staying 6 feet apart) | 58.44% | 45 |
| Mandatory masks for crew | 54.55% | 42 |
| Smaller-than-usual crew on location | 46.75% | 36 |
| Mandatory masks for subjects when not on camera | 46.75% | 36 |
| Remote prep meetings and/or pre-interviews | 44.16% | 34 |
| Purchasing workers compensation insurance for crew members | 31.17% | 24 |
| Work from home | 31.17% | 24 |
| All crew responsible for their own gear | 29.87% | 23 |
| COVID waivers for crew and/or participants | 28.57% | 22 |
| Shorter working days | 24.68% | 19 |
| Mandatory health screenings | 20.78% | 16 |
| Outdoor filming only | 19.48% | 15 |
| Higher pay rates | 18.18% | 14 |
| Hiring local crew only | 14.29% | 11 |
| Remote filming | 14.29% | 11 |
| Sick pay (i.e., if crew is ill, they are still paid for the shoot day) | 12.99% | 10 |
| Mandatory quarantine – with quarantine pay | 11.69% | 9 |
| Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass dividers) | 9.09% | 7 |
| I have no plans to shoot until COVID-19 is no longer a risk | 7.79% | 6 |
| I don’t know | 6.49% | 5 |
| No crew on location (e.g., remote filming, participant-generated footage) | 3.90% | 3 |
| Mandatory quarantine – without quarantine pay | 2.60% | 2 |
| New health & safety crew position(s) (i.e., a PA for disinfection tasks) | 2.01% | 18 |
| Other (please specify) | 1.30% | 1 |
| No new actions | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 77 |

### 

### #36 – Overall, how safe do you feel when you imagine shooting or posting at this moment in time?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Very safe | 7.41% | 6 |
| Moderately safe | 33.33% | 27 |
| Neither safe nor unsafe | 24.69% | 20 |
| Somewhat unsafe | 28.40% | 23 |
| Very unsafe | 6.17% | 5 |
|  | **Answered** | 81 |

Author’s Note: Compare the above responses, given by those respondents who had not yet begun production or post production since March 13, with Question #27, which asks a similar question of those who had begun production or post-production. There was a much higher feeling of safety amongst those who were actively working than those who had yet to resume their work.

|  |
| --- |
| **Future Questions** |

### These questions were answered by all survey respondents.

### #37 - Are you planning to begin production or post-production on a new project in the next year?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes – production | 48.51% | 114 |
| Yes – post-production | 6.81% | 16 |
| Yes – both production and post-production | 35.74% | 84 |
| No | 8.94% | 21 |
|  | **Answered** | 235 |

### 

### #38 – If you are planning to begin a new production in the next year, where do you plan to film? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In my home province | 64.10% | 150 |
| In another province | 26.50% | 62 |
| In another country/countries | 36.32% | 85 |
| N/A | 15.38% | 36 |
|  | **Answered** | 234 |

### 

### #39 – If you plan to shoot outside of your home province, where? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| N/A | 40.55% | 88 |
| British Columbia | 14.29% | 31 |
| Alberta | 5.53% | 12 |
| Saskatchewan | 3.23% | 7 |
| Manitoba | 5.99% | 13 |
| Ontario | 15.21% | 33 |
| Quebec | 8.76% | 19 |
| New Brunswick | 1.38% | 3 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 2.30% | 5 |
| Nova Scotia | 1.38% | 3 |
| Prince Edward Island | 0.46% | 1 |
| Nunavut | 1.84% | 4 |
| Northwest Territories | 0.92% | 2 |
| Yukon | 1.84% | 4 |
| Other (please specify with US state names and/or country names) | 29.49% | 64 |
|  | **Answered** | 217 |

### 

### #40 – In imagining a future once the pandemic has passed, what COVID-related changes would you like to see permanently implemented in the documentary industry? (Select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Producers creating and sharing a health & safety plan | 65.02% | 132 |
| Increased communication about risks, rights, and responsibilities | 54.19% | 110 |
| Producers conducting a risk assessment | 48.28% | 98 |
| Work from home for post team | 35.47% | 72 |
| Remote prep meetings and/or pre-interviews | 32.51% | 66 |
| Shorter working days | 32.02% | 65 |
| Higher pay rates | 31.53% | 64 |
| Health-related waivers for crew and/or participants | 25.12% | 51 |
| Smaller-than-usual crew on location | 24.14% | 49 |
| Sick pay (i.e., if crew is ill, they are still paid for the shoot day) | 20.20% | 41 |
| New health & safety crew positions (i.e., a PA for disinfection tasks) | 19.21% | 39 |
| Hiring local crew only | 13.79% | 28 |
| Mandatory masks for crew | 13.79% | 28 |
| Mandatory masks for subjects when not on camera | 12.32% | 25 |
| No new changes | 11.82% | 24 |
| All crew responsible for their own gear | 10.34% | 21 |
| Physical distancing (i.e., staying 6 feet apart) | 9.85% | 20 |
| Mandatory health screenings | 8.37% | 17 |
| I don’t know | 7.88% | 16 |
| Mandatory quarantine with quarantine pay | 6.90% | 14 |
| Other (please specify) | 6.40% | 13 |
| Physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass dividers) | 5.42% | 11 |
| No crew on location (e.g., remote filming, subject-generated footage) | 4.43% | 9 |
| Outdoor filming only | 2.96% | 6 |
| Mandatory quarantine without quarantine pay | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 203 |

### #41 – Is there anything else you would like to share?

57 respondents replied to this open-ended question. Responses ranged from expressions of anxiety and frustration over the current global public health crisis to very specific concerns related to tax credit eligibility and COVID exclusions on production insurance.

|  |
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| **Demographic Questions** |

The below questions were all optional.

### #42 – Which gender do you identify as? (Optional)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Female | 59.42% | 123 |
| Male | 38.65% | 80 |
| Non-binary | 1.93% | 4 |
| Other (please specify) | 0.00% | 0 |
|  | **Answered** | 207 |

### 

### #43 – Do you identify as: (Optional – select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Black | 1.97% | 4 |
| Indigenous | 4.43% | 9 |
| Person of Colour | 12.32% | 25 |
| LGBTQ2SIA+ | 9.85% | 20 |
| Neurodiverse | 3.94% | 8 |
| Deaf | 0.99% | 2 |
| A person with a disability | 5.42% | 11 |
| N/A | 67.49% | 137 |
|  | **Answered** | 203 |

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### #44 – Are you an individual who is considered to be vulnerable to COVID-19? (Optional)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 29.25% | 62 |
| No | 59.91% | 127 |
| I don’t know | 10.85% | 23 |
|  | **Answered** | 212 |

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### #45 – Do you live with an individual who is considered to be vulnerable to COVID-19? (Optional)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 30.48% | 64 |
| No | 65.24% | 137 |
| I don’t know | 4.29% | 9 |
|  | **Answered** | 210 |

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| **RESOURCES** |

This section aims to provide documentary filmmakers with quick access to the various resources they need to access in order to make plans for working during COVID-19.

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| **General Information on COVID-19** |

There is still a great deal that is unknown about COVID-19. As science learns more about the virus, its transmission, and its long-term effects, public health officials will adapt their advisories and guidelines accordingly. As such, it’s incredibly important that we all keep up to date with the latest information on COVID-19.

Here are some resources to help you do that:

* **World Health Organization:** [**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic**](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
* **Government of Canada:** [**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update**](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html?&utm_campaign=gc-hc-sc-coronavirus2021-ao-2021-0005-10682704212&utm_medium=search&utm_source=google-ads-113824938468&utm_content=text-en-434525470059&utm_term=%2Bcovid)
* **CBC:** [**COVID-19: Top Stories**](https://www.cbc.ca/news/covid-19)

Learn more about your provincial/territorial context at the below government websites:

* [**Canada**](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/measures-reduce-community.html#s)
* [**British Columbia**](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx)
* [**Saskatchewan**](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus)
* [**Manitoba**](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html)
* [**Ontario**](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/index.html)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/)(in English)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/biling/coronavirus.html) (in English & French)
* [**Nova Scotia**](http://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirus)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/covid-19)
* [**Newfoundland and Labrador**](https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/)
* [**Nunavut**](https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus)
* [**Northwest Territories**](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/)
* [**Yukon**](https://yukon.ca/en/covid-19-information)

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| **Provincial/Territorial Film & Television Guidelines** |

Most Canadian provinces and territories have released guidelines for film and television production during COVID-19. These guidelines are the standard and are to be used as the foundation of all our production-specific health & safety plans. All film & television professionals should be familiar with their provincial guidelines.

This list was last updated on December 14, 2020. While we make every effort to update this section regularly, the situation around COVID-19 is rapidly evolving, and as such, some of the links below might not be fully up to date.

* **British Columbia** has two sets of guidelines. The first was created by the provincial government and the second, which is more detailed, was created by Creative BC and an industry coalition, then approved by the provincial government.

**General Provincial Government Guidelines**

[Motion Picture and Television Production: Protocols for Returning to Operation](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/motion-picture-television-production)

July 13, 2020 (Update); WorkSafe BC

**Detailed Guidelines from Creative BC**

[Motion Picture Industry COVID-19 Safety Guidelines](https://www.creativebc.com/database/files/library/BCMPIBP_Coalition_Safety_Guidelines_Final_Web_June24_2020(1).pdf)  
June 24, 2020 (Version 1); Creative BC & BC Motion Picture Industry COVID-19 Best Practices Coalition

**Department-Specific Guidelines from Creative BC**

[BC Motion Picture Industry Pandemic Production Guide](https://www.actsafe.ca/bc-motion-picture-industry-covid-19-pandemic-production-guide/)

August 10, 2020 (Version 1); Creative BC & BC Motion Picture Industry COVID-19 Best Practices Coalition

* **Alberta:** [Guidance for the Screen-based Production Industry](https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-screen-based-production-industry.pdf)

June 12, 2020; Government of Alberta

* **Saskatchewan:** [Saskatchewan On-Set COVID-19 Safety Protocols](https://www.smpia.sk.ca/saskatchewan-on-set-covid-19-protocols/)  
  September 4, 2020; Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association
* **Manitoba:**[Manitoba Media Production Industry COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide](https://onscreenmanitoba.com/covid-19-information-resources/)

October 7, 2020; On Screen Manitoba

* **Ontario:** [Film and Television Industry Health and Safety During COVID-19 (aka Section 21)](https://www.filmsafety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/S21-Film-Television-COVID19-Guidance-June.25.20.pdf)

June 25, 2020; Section 21 Film and Television Health and Safety Advisory Committee of the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

* **Quebec** (in English)**:** [Toolkit for the Audiovisual Production](https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/toolkit-audiovisual-production.aspx)

**Quebec** (in French): [Trousse d’outils pour le secteur de la production audiovisuelle](https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19/Pages/outils-secteur-production-audiovisuelle.aspx)

The above includes a guide, *Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for Audiovisual Production – COVID-19*, a daily checklist, and a poster

Undated; Commission des normes, de l’équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST)

* **New Brunswick:** The province has not released COVID guidelines for the film & television industry. However, [Embracing the New Normal](https://www.worksafenb.ca/media/61016/embracing-the-new-normal.pdf) is the province’s guideline document for workplaces. Documentarians in this province might also consider reviewing Screen Nova Scotia’s film & television sector guidelines.
* **Nova Scotia:** [Screen Nova Scotia: COVID-19 Related Health & Safety Guidelines for the Screen Industry](https://screennovascotia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Screen-Nova-Scotia_-COVID-19-Related-Health-Safety-Guidelines-1-1.pdf) & [Departmental Appendices](https://screennovascotia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Screen-Nova-Scotia_-Departmental-Appendices-to-COVID-19-Related-Health-Safety-Guidelines-for-the-Screen-Industry-Final.pdf)

July 21, 2020; Screen Nova Scotia

* **Prince Edward Island:**[Guidelines for Filming](https://www.filmpei.com/filmpei-and-covid-19/)

Undated; Film PEI

* **Newfoundland and Labrador:** No COVID-specific guidelines currently available.
* **Nunavut** (in English)**:**[COVID-19 Productions Resuming Operations](https://nunavutfilm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Nunavut-Return-to-Small-Shoots-Guidelines-1.pdf)

**Nunavut** (in Inuktitut)**:** [COVID-19 Productions Resuming Operations](https://nunavutfilm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PRODUCTIONS-RESUMING-OPERATIONS-INUK.pdf)

Undated; Nunavut Film Development Corporation

* **Northwest Territories:** No COVID-specific guidelines currently available.
* **Yukon:** [COVID-19 Screen Media Industry Guidance: Considerations for a responsible return to work in Yukon](https://yukonfilmsociety.com/assets/files/yfs/MED_Info_COVIDScreenGuidelines_finalforHEOC.pdf)  
  Undated; Department of Economic Development, Yukon Government

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| **Other Film & Television Guidelines & Protocols** |

In addition to the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines, many other guidelines and resources exist for our industry. Below is a small sample of those that are available.

### Documentary Guidelines & Resources

* [**Independent Documentary: Filming in the Time of Corona**](https://fieldofvision.org/new-covid-production-risk-assessment-guide), released by Field of Vision, DocSociety, and Sundance Institute is a documentary-specific resource for documentarians who are considering starting or resuming production. First released May 12, 2020, the updated second edition was released in August, 2020.
* [**The Ethics of Documentary Production in a Pandemic**](https://www.documentary.org/online-feature/ethics-documentary-production-pandemic), an article by Carrie Lozano, which argues that shooting a documentary during the present pandemic is too risky, therefore, the International Documentary Association cannot offer guidelines for production at this time. Published April 27, 2020.

### Canadian Production Guidelines

* **Alliance of Image and Sound Technicians** (Alliance québécoise des techniciens et techniciennes de l'image et du son - AQTIS): [Sanitary Best Practices Guide - By Department (Guide des bonnes pratiques sanitaires - par département)](https://aqtis.qc.ca/en/covid19/)

### International Production Guidelines

Helpful lists of global COVID-19 production guidelineshave been assembled at the following websites:

* [**American Film Market**](https://americanfilmmarket.com/worldwide-covid-19-film-production-guidelines/)
* [**Safe Sets International**](https://practicesafesets.co/resources/)

Note that these lists are not necessarily comprehensive or up to date, so be sure to also check directly with the jurisdiction for their most recent guidelines.

### Equipment & Surface Disinfection Protocols

* [**Equipment Disinfection**](https://www.siminternational.com/covid-19-our-continued-response/)from Sim International
* [**Safe Return to Work Guidelines**](https://my.esta.org/perg-reopening-guidance) from Production Equipment Rental Group (PERG)
* [**Hard-Surface Disinfectant**](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html) from the Government of Canada’s website

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| **DOC’s COVID-related Resources** |

Since COVID-19 hit Canada, the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) has been actively working to understand and serve the evolving needs of documentary professionals across the country, providing the resources below to this end.

[Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Canada’s Documentary Community](https://www.docorg.ca/covid_19_impact_survey)  
Survey Results, June 3, 2020

[Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO3_0EQSrPM)  
DOC Webinar, presenting an overview of this guide, October 8, 2020

[Documentary Production in the Era of COVID-19](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1194320414270763)  
Facebook Group, offering an opportunity for documentarians to discuss pandemic production

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| **Provincial/Territorial Reopening Plans** |

As we are experiencing a wave of increasing COVID-19 infections, in many regions of the country, a number of provinces and territories have paused or revised their re-opening plans.

For the most up-to-date information, documentarians should continue to consult these plans, but also pay special attention to the public health orders, notices, and guidances.

* **British Columbia’s** [**Restart Plan**](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/phase-3)

Film & television production allowed in Phase 3 (as of June 24, 2020), according to [WorkSafe BC](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/motion-picture-television-production).

* **Alberta’s** [**Relaunch Strategy**](https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-relaunch-strategy.aspx)

Film & television production allowed in Phase 2 (as of June 12), according to a [Global News](https://globalnews.ca/news/7104990/alberta-film-sets-restart-production-covid-19/) report by Global.

* **Saskatchewan’s** [**Re-Open Saskatchewan**](about:blank)

Film & television production not officially listed.

* **Manitoba’s**[**Restoring Safe Services**](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/restoring/phase-three.html)

Film & television production allowed in Phase 2 (as of June 1, 2020), according to the [Phase 2](https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/2020_2021/restoring-safe-services-phase-2.pdf) overview.

* **Ontario’s** [**Reopening Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario-stages#regions)

Film & television production allowed in Stage 2 (as of June 24, 2020), according to [Reopening Ontario in Stages](https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario-stages#stage2-5).

* **Quebec’s** [**Gradual resumption of activities under the COVID-19-related pause**](https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/gradual-resumption-activities-covid19-related-pause/)  
  Film & television production allowed as of June 8, 2020, according to the [Montreal Gazette](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/tv-shoots-to-resume-but-with-no-lovey-dovey-or-fighting%20retrieved%20August%204,).
* **New Brunswick’s** [Recovery Plan](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/recovery.html)

Film & television production not officially listed.

* **Nova Scotia’s** [Reopening Nova Scotia](https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/?utm_source=halifaxtoday.ca&utm_campaign=halifaxtoday.ca&utm_medium=referral)  
  Film & television production was not ordered to shut down by the provincial government, but most productions were halted until the release of Screen Nova Scotia’s guidelines on June 18, 2020.
* **Prince Edward Island’s**[Renew PEI Together](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/renew-pei-together)  
  Film & television production not officially listed.
* **Newfoundland and Labrador’s COVID** [**Alert Levels**](https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/)  
  Film & television production not officially listed.
* [**Nunavut’s Path**](https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/nunavuts-path)
* **Northwest Territories’** [**Emerging Wisely – Path to Eased Public Health Restrictions**](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/services/public-health-orders/emerging-wisely)  
  Film & television production not officially listed.
* **Yukon’s** [**A Path Forward**](https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/eco/eco-path-forward-yukons-plan-lifting-covid-19-restrictions_2.pdf)

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| **Provincial/Territorial Public Health Orders, Notices, and Guidances** |

Everyone is required to follow their provincial/territorial public health orders, notices, and guidance documents.

* [**Canada**](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents.html)
* [**British Columbia**](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx)
* [**Saskatchewan**](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/public-health-measures/public-health-orders)
* [**Manitoba**](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/protection/soe.html)
* [**Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/progressive-regional-alert-and-intervention-system/map-of-covid-19-alert-levels-by-region/)(in English)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/EmergencyUrgence19.pdf)
* [**Nova Scotia**](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/alerts-notices/)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/public-health-orders)
* [**Newfoundland and Labrador**](https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/covid-19-news/)
* [**Nunavut**](https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/chief-public-health-officer-orders)
* [**Northwest Territories**](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/public-health-orders)
* [**Yukon**](about:blank)

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| **Provincial/Territorial Occupational Health & Safety Legislation** |

As employers, producers are required to follow their provincial/territorial occupational health and safety legislation.

* [**British Columbia**](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-regulation)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx)
* [**Saskatchewan**](http://www.worksafesask.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/OHS-Legislation-190611.pdf)
* [**Manitoba**](https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/w210e.php)
* [**Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/document/guide-occupational-health-and-safety-act)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/resources/occupational-health-and-safety-act-workplace-OHS-QC)(in English)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www.worksafenb.ca/policy-and-legal/legal/acts-and-regulations/)
* [**Nova Scotia**](http://www.worksafeforlife.ca/Home/About-Us/Occupational-Health-Safety)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](http://www.wcb.pe.ca/Workplace/OHSActAndRegulations)
* [**Newfoundland and Labrador**](https://workplacenl.ca/employers/health-and-safety/ohs-program/)
* [**Nunavut & Northwest Territories**](https://wscc.nt.ca)
* [**Yukon**](https://yukonregs.ca/RegsPublic/Home/Details/8137)

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| **Right to Refuse Unsafe Work** |

Information about the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees can be found at the Government of Canada’s webpage, explaining the [Workplace Safety](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/workplace-safety.html) portion of the Canada Labour Code.

Information about the right to refuse work can be found at the following governmental websites:

* [**Canada**](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/right-refuse.html)
* [**British Columbia**](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/toolbox-meeting-guides/the-right-to-refuse-unsafe-work)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/refuse-dangerous-work.aspx)
* [**Saskatchewan**](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/safety-in-the-workplace/rights-and-responsibilities-in-the-workplace/duties-and-rights-of-workers)
* [**Manitoba**](https://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety/wsh_faqs_right_refuse.html)
* [**Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/document/guide-occupational-health-and-safety-act/part-v-right-refuse-or-stop-work-where-health-and-safety-danger)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.csst.qc.ca/en/prevention/Pages/en_right_refuse_work.aspx)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www.worksafenb.ca/workers/health-safety/your-rights/)
* [**Nova Scotia**](https://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/employeeright.asp)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](http://www.wcb.pe.ca/Workplace/RightsAndResponsibilities)
* [**Newfoundland and Labrador**](https://www.gov.nl.ca/snl/ohs/legislation-summary/)
* [**Nunavut**](https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/files/Finance/HRM/hrm1002_occupational_health_and_safety.pdf)
* [**Northwest Territories**](https://www.wscc.nt.ca/content/steps-refuse-unsafe-work)
* [**Yukon**](https://www.wcb.yk.ca/QuestionResults/OHS/Rights-and-Responsibilities/Q0238.aspx)

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| **Reporting Unsafe Working Conditions** |

If employees have spoken to employers about unsafe working conditions and the problems have not been rectified, as a last recourse, employees can report unsafe working conditions to the following provincial/territorial departments and agencies:

* [**British Columbia**](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/contact-us/departments-and-services/health-safety-prevention)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/report-unsafe-work.aspx)
* [**Saskatchewan**](http://www.worksafesask.ca/contact-us/)
* [**Manitoba**](https://www.safemanitoba.com/Campaigns/Pages/Report-Unsafe-Work.aspx)
* [**Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/page/filing-workplace-health-and-safety-complaint)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/toolbox/online-complaints/index.html)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/People/content/EmploymentStandards/making_a_complaint.html)
* [**Nova Scotia**](https://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/safety-injury-prevention/incident-reporting-and-investigation-safe-line)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/work-refusal-information-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions)
* [**Newfoundland and Labrador**](https://workplacenl.ca/contact/)
* [**Nunavut & Northwest Territories**](https://connect.wscc.nt.ca/OH-S-e-Services/Unsafe-Work/Report-Unsafe-Work)
* [**Yukon**](https://www.wcb.yk.ca/QuestionResults/OHS/Reporting/Q0228.aspx)

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| **Provincial/Territorial Travel Advisories** |

COVID-19 has greatly restricted our ability to travel, which is, of course, a key part of documentary filmmaking. Consult the below links to better understand the restrictions on travel to and from jurisdictions within Canada.

* [**Canada-Wide**](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories)
* [**British Columbia**](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/driving-and-cycling/traveller-information/travel-affected-by-covid-19)
* [**Alberta**](https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-travel-advice.aspx()
* [**Saskatchewan**](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/travel-information)
* [**Manitoba**](https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/protection/soe.html)
* [**Ontario**](https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-stop-spread#section-5)
* [**Quebec**](https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/instructions-for-travellers-covid19/)
* [**New Brunswick**](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/travel.html)
* [**Nova Scotia**](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/travel/)
* [**Prince Edward Island**](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/travel-restrictions-and-screening)
* [**Newfoundland & Labrador**](https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/individuals-and-households/travel-advice-2/)
* [**Nunavut**](https://gov.nu.ca/health/information/travel-and-isolation)
* [**Northwest Territories**](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/services/travel-moving-around/travellers-arriving-nwt)
* [**Yukon**](https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/covid-19-information/borders-and-travel-covid-19/information-people-entering)

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| Provincial/Territorial Guidelines for Home Visits |

As the provincial/territorial film & television guidelines do not offer direct guidance for documentary filmmakers who are filming in participants’ homes (while participants and their families are also living there), some public health and occupational health & safety authorities have suggested that documentary filmmakers consult their provincial/territorial public health guidelines for other professionals whose work involved private home visits, including healthcare practitioners making home healthcare visits and in-home services, such as residential repair and renovations. While the situations are admittedly quite different from documentary filmmaking, there are some useful suggestions to be found in the below guidance documents.

* **Government of Canada’s** [Infection prevention and control for COVID-19: Interim guidance for home care settings](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/infection-prevention-control-covid-19-interim-guidance-home-care-settings.html)
* **Alberta’s** [Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Home Care Staff](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-home-care-staff.pdf)
* **Quebec’s** [**Home Visits Sheet**](https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/covid/2944-visite-domicile-hors-sante-covid19.pdf) **from the Institut national de santé publique du Québec** (available only in French)
* **New Brunswick’s** [COVID-2019 -Guidance for Workers who provide in-Home Services (Non-Personal Care)](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/Guidanceforworkers.pdf)

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| **Health Screening Tools & Sample Forms** |

Before arriving on set each day, every crew member and participant should be mandated to complete a health screening questionnaire in a digital format. The purpose of the questionnaire is to reduce the likelihood of workplace transmission of COVID-19.

While many producers are designing their own questionnaire in a simple Google Doc format, the following tools are also available for use:

* A subscription-based service from the CMPA, offering a [health screening questionnaire tool](https://mailchi.mp/cmpa.ca/cmpa-launches-new-healthq-canadian-production-industry-health-screening-tool) for film & television productions.
* [Sample Health Screening Questionnaire](https://screennovascotia.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SNS-Sample-Questionnaire.pdf) in PDF, provided by Screen Nova Scotia

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| **Insurance Resources** |

Because of the COVID exclusions being placed on insurance policies, producers may wish to consider the following possibilities for additional insurance coverage.

* **Workers’ Compensation**[Provincial Workers’ Compensation Boards](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/wcb_canada.html)on the CCOHS website offers links to information about workers’ comp in your province.
* **Canada-Wide Production Insurance Initiative**Details of the[Short-Term Compensation Fund for Canadian Audiovisual Productions](https://telefilm.ca/en/financing/short-term-compensation-fund-for-canadian-audiovisual-productions) were announced byTelefilm on October 28, 2020 and the program is set to expire on March 31, 2021. This fund is intended to address the gap in production insurance, caused by the COVID exclusions that have been implemented by insurance companies. In order to qualify for this fund, productions must apply for pre-eligibility and enter into an agreement with Telefilm **before** any cases of COVID-19 are diagnosed.
* **Quebec Initiative**  
  [Programme d’aide temporaire dans le secteur audiovisuel (cinéma et télévision)](https://sodec.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/programme-aide-temporaire-secteur-audiovisuel-082020.pdf)was a pilot program developed by the Government of Quebec has for producers in the province. It expired on November 3, 2020.

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| **Risk Assessment Resources** |

When conducting a production risk assessment, producers may find the below resources to be useful.

* [**Risk Assessment Fact Sheet**](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/risk_assessment.html) from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS)
* [**Sample Risk Assessment Form**](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/sample_risk.html) (not specific to film & television) from the CCOHS
* [**Film Production Risk Assessment Form**](http://essexinsurancebrokers.com/film-liability)from Essex Insurance Brokers (a U.K.-based production insurance provider)
* [**Filming Risk Assessment Form**](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20249/filming_in_oxford/1003/filming_on_our_land) from the City Council of Oxford, for productions applying to the city for a film permit. This form includes a list of potential hazards to consider (although COVID-19 is not currently listed).

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| **Implementing Alternative Approaches** |

Many documentary filmmakers are working to implement alternative approaches to traditional crewed productions. Below are some resources that others have found helpful in this work.

* [The Art of the Remote Interview](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRJfdZ-ilMw&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0dI2pBWRWlC6mMAKGy2gpXW3QjHMH_yzkkgkq5q84900FcjPenbIK7y5w), a helpful webinar from PBS Newshour Student Reporting Labs.
* [How to Record a Zoom Meeting in High Quality for Video Editing](https://jonnyelwyn.co.uk/film-and-video-editing/how-to-record-a-zoom-meeting-in-high-quality-for-video-editing/)

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| **Mental Health Supports** |

Below are some resources to help documentarians consider and address the mental health challenges that many are facing in the current climate.

* [**Call Time Mental Health**](https://www.calltimementalhealth.com) is an initiative of the BC motion picture industry, aimed at connecting film & television workers with mental health information and resources.
* The [**Canadian Mental Health Association**](https://cmha.ca/resources/)offers a number of mental health resources on its website.
* [**Morneau Shepell**](https://www.morneaushepell.com/ca-en/workplace-mental-health) is a provider of technology-enabled HR services. They deliver employee and family assistance programs with a focus on mental health. DGC members can access their services as part of their benefits package. The company has also launched free online tools for supporting mental health.
* [**Mental Health: A Crisis in Our Community**](https://www.documentary.org/online-feature/mental-health-crisis-our-community) is an essay that was written by American documentary producer and psychotherapist Rebecca Day in August 2019. The piece reflects on the mental health challenges that are particular to documentary making, while also brainstorming ways that the industry might better support the mental health of documentary filmmakers and crews.