

Surviving the Peaks and Troughs – The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Australian Screen Composers

Craig Morgan, PhD

Australian Guild of Screen Composers (AGSC), April 2018

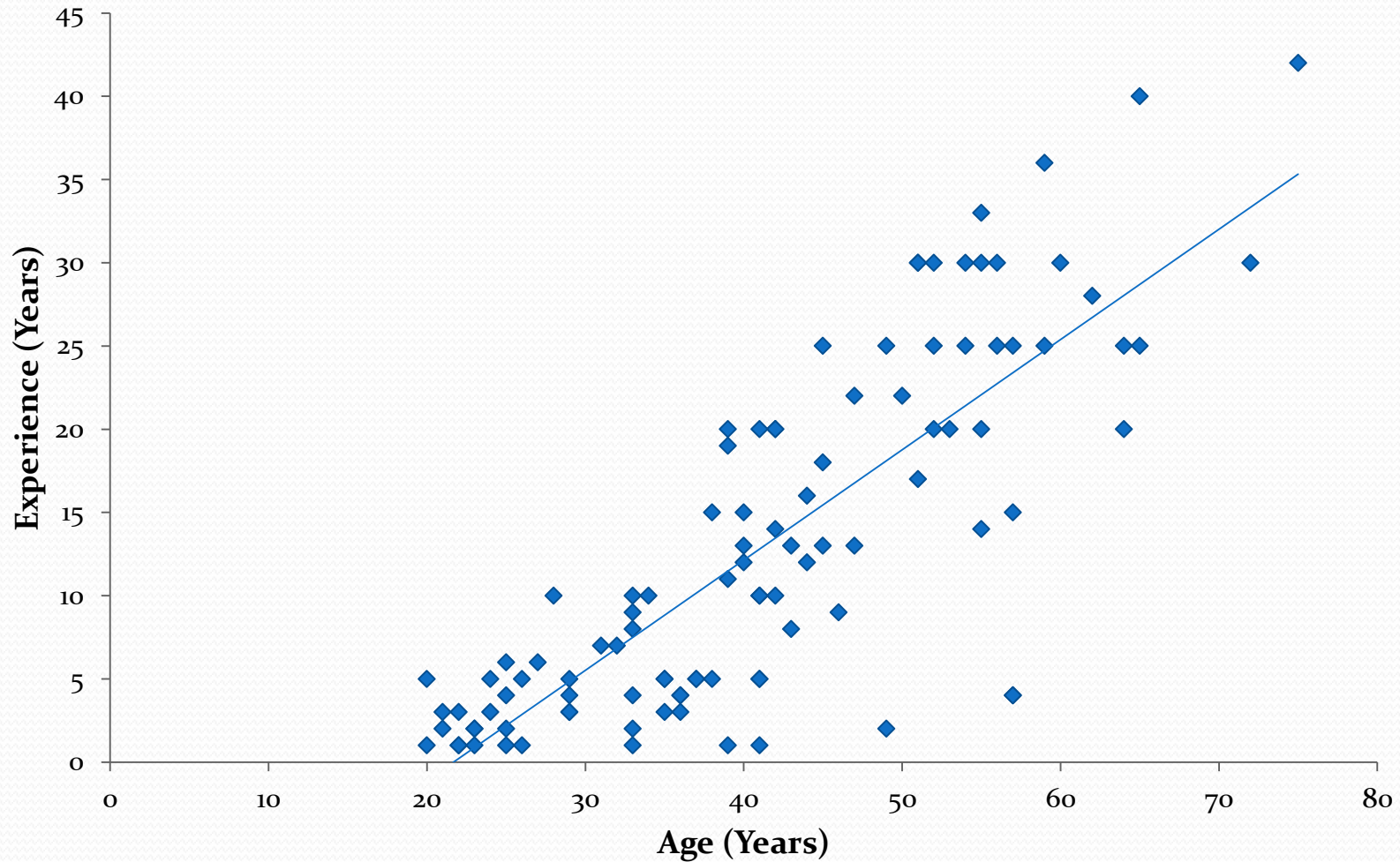
Background

- We are always looking out for the health and well-being of our members - so when we saw a report* that indicated that those in our industry sector are:
 - **5 times** more likely to experience symptoms of **depression** than the general population,
 - **10 times** more likely to experience symptoms of **anxiety** than the general population,
 - **suicide** attempts are more than **double** that of the general population,

Given this, the AGSC decided to make this a priority issue.

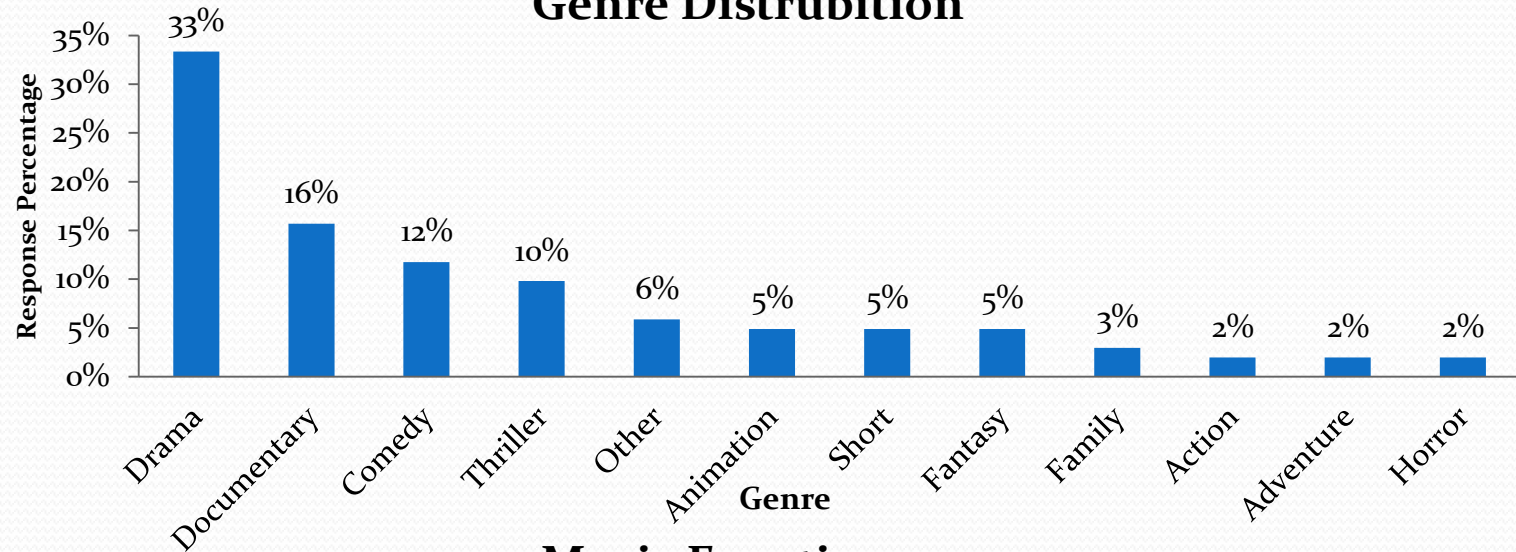
* <http://theconversation.com/mental-health-woes-are-rife-in-the-arts-no-wonder-54386>

Who are we?

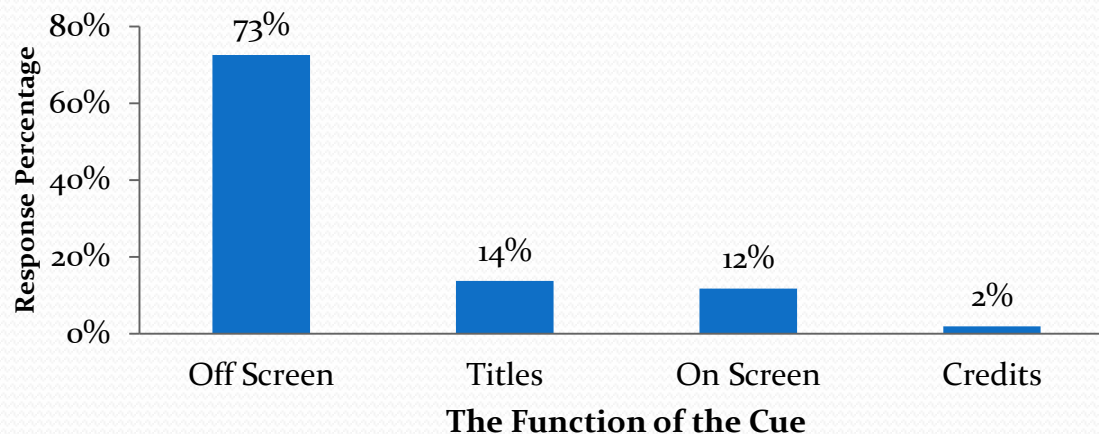


What do we do?

Genre Distrubition



Music Function



How do we do our jobs?

Virtual Instruments Only

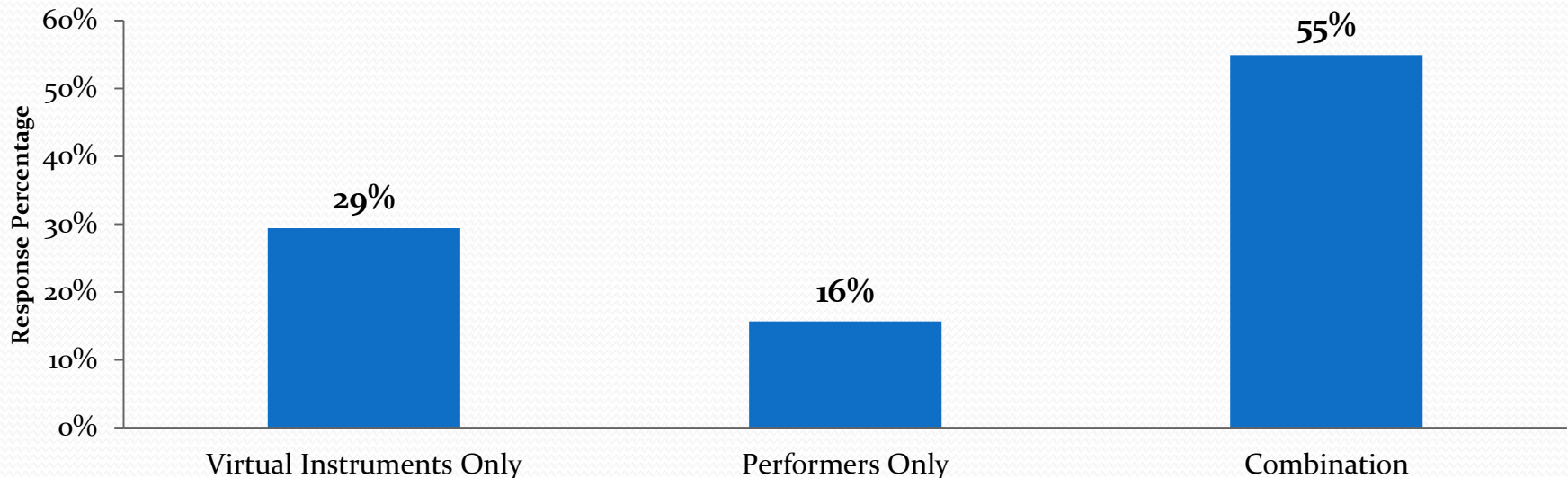
- Cue created by sampled instruments / virtual instrument libraries.
- Use of Digital Sequencing software
- Little use of Notation software

Performers Only

- Cue created by recording performers in a home or professional recording studio.
- Use of both Digital Sequencing Software and Notation software.

Combination

- Cue created by a combination of virtual instruments and real instrument recordings specific to that project
- Prolific use of both Digital Sequencing Software and Notation Software.



Because of our work...

- There is isolation:
 - Most screen composers work alone,
 - No collaboration.
 - Poor culture of communication.
- Fierce competition between screen composers,
 - Work insecurity.
 - The market is saturated with screen composers.
 - There is gender bias.
- Stressful *when* working **and** stressful *when not* working...

Because of our work (cont...)

- Fast approaching deadlines,
 - Frequent night shifts. Substance use and abuse.
- Poor nutrition.
 - Fast food at the 11th hour.
 - No food.
- Alone with visual content,
 - Content is sometimes confronting and upsetting.
- Last in the post-production process,
 - Work vulnerable to changes / edits / cuts.
 - Disillusioned at the process.

The Mental Health of Screen Composers

From the research, screen composers are:

- **5 times** more likely to experience symptoms of **depression** than the general population,
- **10 times** more likely to experience symptoms of **anxiety** than the general population,
- **suicide** attempts are more than **double** that of the general population,

Depression: symptoms

- **Behaviour**

- not going out anymore
- not getting things done at work/school
- withdrawing from close family and friends
- relying on alcohol and sedatives
- not doing usual enjoyable activities
- unable to concentrate

- **Feelings**

- overwhelmed
- guilty
- irritable
- frustrated
- lacking in confidence
- unhappy
- indecisive
- disappointed
- miserable
- sad

- **Thoughts**

- 'I'm a failure.'
- 'It's my fault.'
- 'Nothing good ever happens to me.'
- 'I'm worthless.'
- 'Life's not worth living.'
- 'People would be better off without me.'

- **Physical**

- tired all the time
- sick and run down
- headaches and muscle pains
- churning gut
- sleep problems
- loss or change of appetite
- significant weight loss or gain

... there are many !

Anxiety: symptoms

- **Physical:**

- panic attacks,
- hot and cold flushes,
- racing heart,
- tightening of the chest,
- quick breathing,
- restlessness, or
- feeling tense, wound up and edgy.

- **Psychological:**

- excessive fear,
- worry,
- catastrophizing, or
- obsessive thinking.

- **Behavioral:**

- Avoidance of situations that make you feel anxious which can impact on study, work or social life.

Suicide Warning Signs



Responding to warning signs.

- **How to start a conversation about suicide:**
 - “You haven’t seemed yourself lately and I’m worried about you.”
 - “I have noticed that you have been doing (X/Y/Z), and I’m wondering how you are going?”
- **Questions you can ask:**
 - “What can I do to help you?”
 - “I’d like to help you get through this, is there something I can do for you?”
- **What you can say that helps:**
 - “I want to help you and I am here for you when you want to talk.”

What does Medicare offer?

- The 'Mental Health Treatment Plan',
- Visit your GP and you will be set up with a Mental Health Treatment Plan – this is a good thing.
- Medicare will cover *most* of the cost of you seeing a psychologist for **10 times** in a calendar year (with a review after 6 times by your GP).
- The amount you are covered for by Medicare depends on where you go and whether the 'Psychologist' is a 'Clinical Psychologist' or not. *
- For more information please see your GP.

'Entertainment Assist' and the 'Australian Alliance for Wellness in Entertainment'.

- Statement of Values highlighting respect, integrity, empathy, courage and collaborative leadership.
- Raise awareness and provide practical support and monitoring of the mental health and wellbeing of our industry people.
- As a member of AAWE, we ask that you uphold these values. If enacted, we will see an industry full of people who feel valued, supported and connected knowing it's OK to talk and ask for help.

Recovering from a mental health condition

- **Stages of Recovery.**
- **Shock** at having to deal with something difficult and scary that you have no prior experience of.
- **Denial** or difficulty in accepting having a health problem.
- **Despair** and **anger** at having to deal with the condition and its related difficulties.
- **Acceptance** of having a condition and the changes it brings, and accepting how others see you and how you see yourself.
- **Coping** by finding new ways to live with and tackle these changes and challenges.

Summary

- There is some heavy information here, ‘nothing worthwhile is easy’.
- We belong to a unique group of people – reach out to others who are doing it tough – be kind.
- Because we belong to this group, we probably share many of the same issues and concerns.
- You may be able to help someone just by being a good friend – I believe we can do that.
- Most importantly seek professional medical assistance if you think you are unwell – you are not alone.
- This presentation is just a ‘heads up’ guide.

Thank you.

- If this presentation has raised concerns for you:
 - BeyondBlue: 1300 22 4636
 - Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Thank you!
- craig.morgan@hotmail.com