

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OF SLOVENIAN ACTORS EMPLOYED IN PUBLIC THEATRES

## **BACKGROUND.**

This pilot study was developed to research the well-being of Slovenian actors and to determine the state of health and safety issues among them. The goal of the study is to show where are the problem areas concerning the health and safety issues and to show the importance that the personal preparation has for the mental and physical well-being of actors.

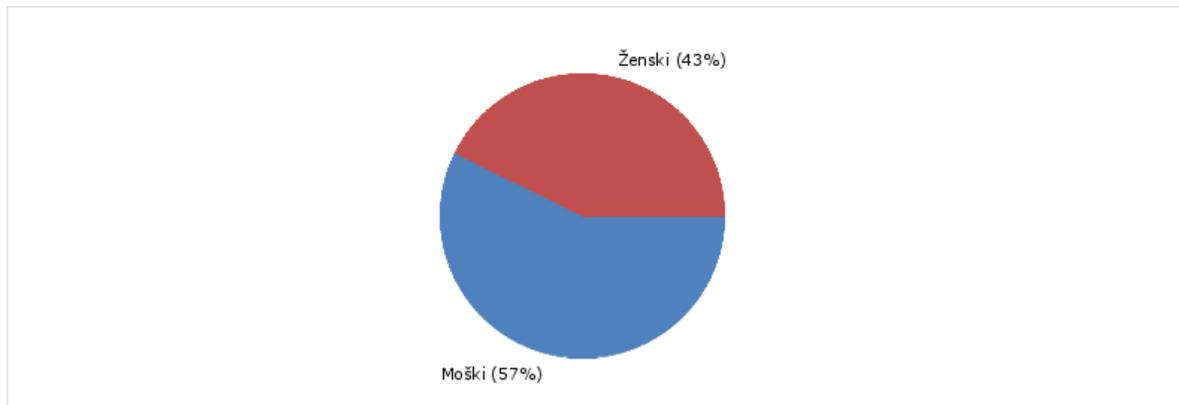
## **METHOD.**

Pilot survey was administered through an online questionnaire. The link was sent through ZDUS members list to actors who are employed in Slovenian theatres. Survey was active for 2 weeks.

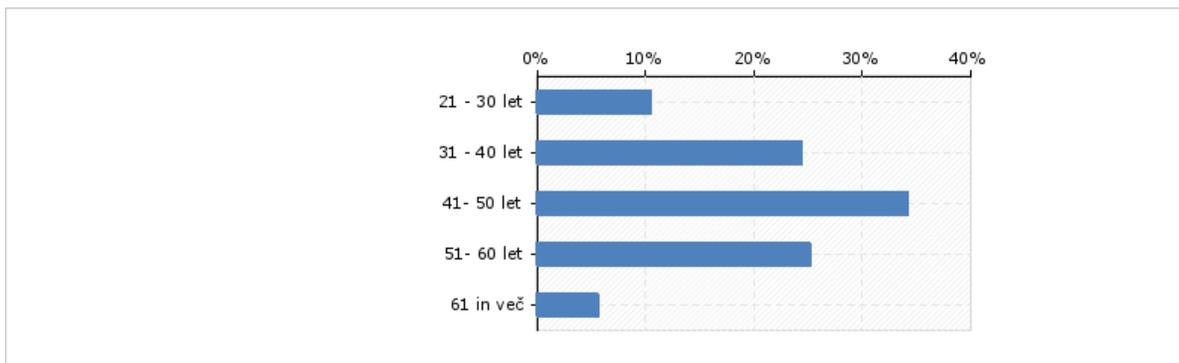
## **RESULTS.**

Of 143 survey respondents 82 (57%) were male and 61 (43%) were female. Graphs 1 - 4 present data for age groups, education and type of employment.

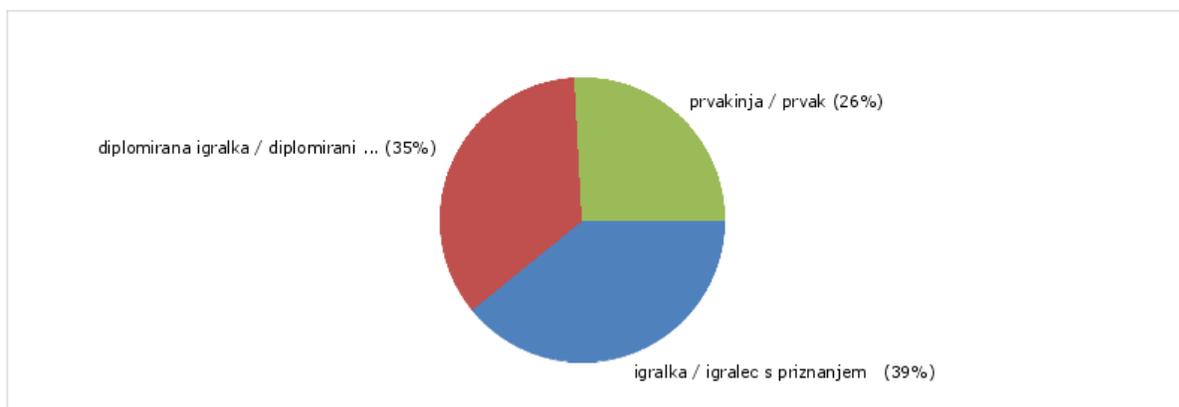
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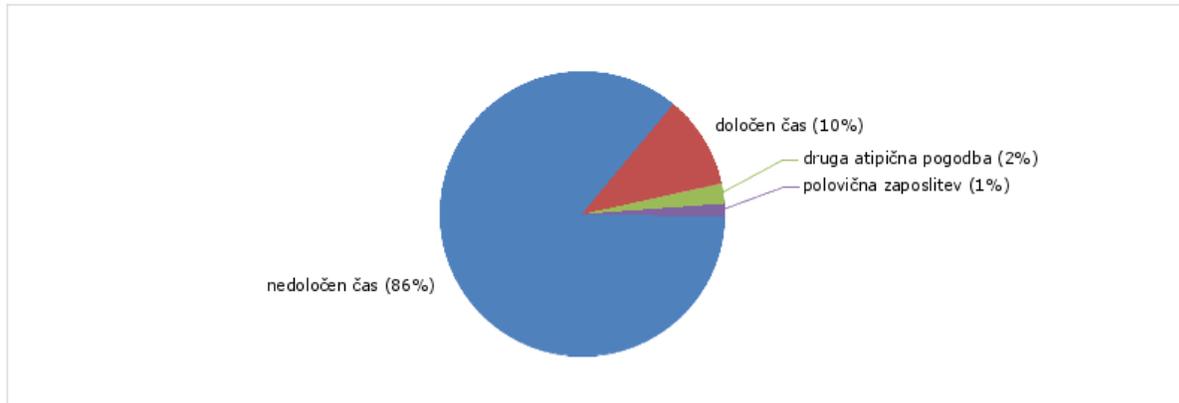
Graph 1. Respondents by gender. [ženski = female; moški = male]



Graph 2. Respondents by age. [21 – 30 years; 31 – 40 years; 41 – 50 years; 51 – 60 years; more than 60 years]



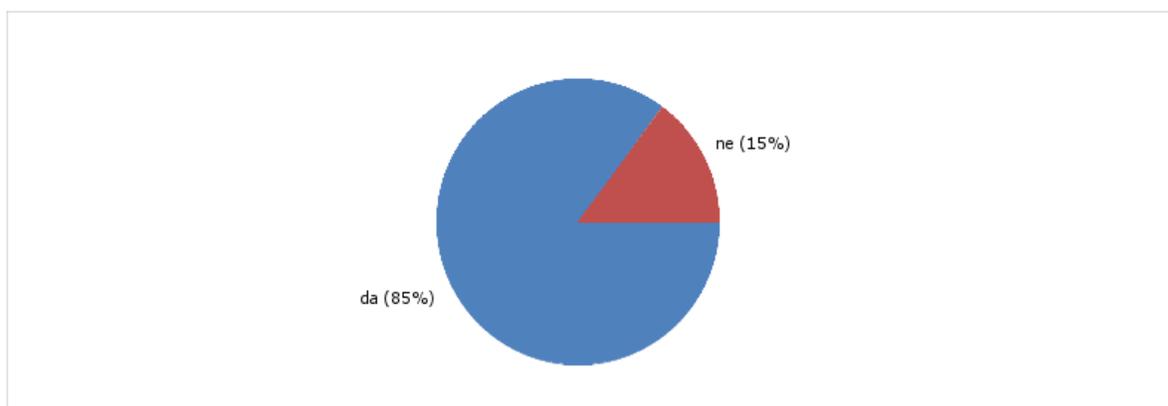
Graph 3. Respondents by education. [diplomirani igralec = BA actor; igralec s priznanjem = awarded actor; prvak = principal]



Graph 4. Respondents by type of employment.

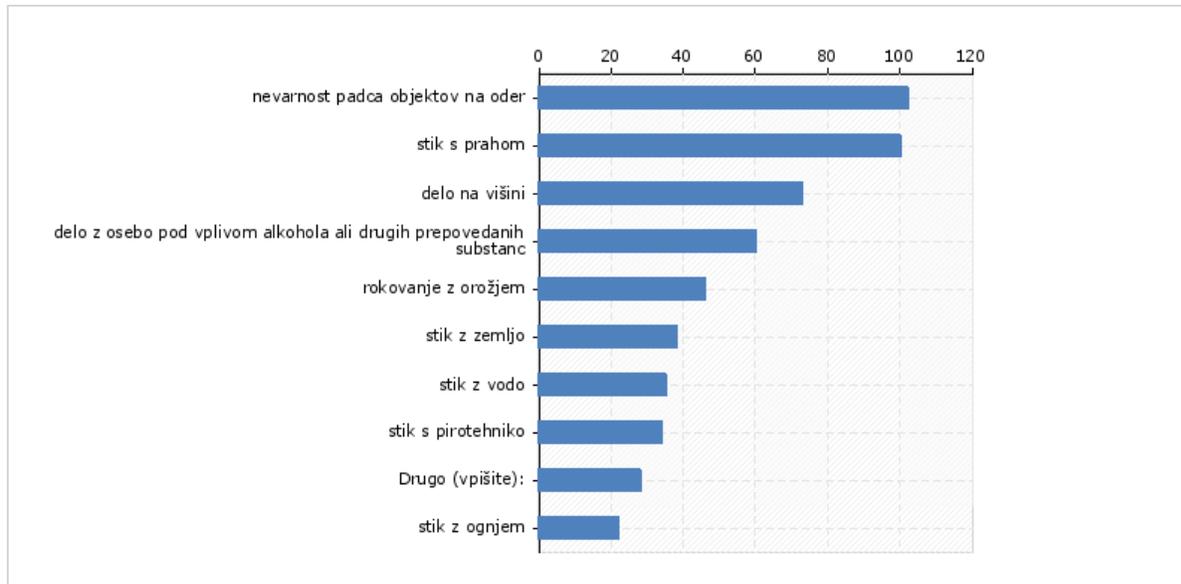
Most respondents (84%) report that they are subjected to health and safety risks while working. Among main reported risks are: contact with dust (84%), risk of objects falling on stage (86%) and working with persons under the influence of alcohol or drugs (50%). Although there is a common premise that actors live bohemian lifestyle, this clearly shows that alcohol consumption makes work difficult for anyone. A lot of respondents also pointed out that stress is a big health risk factor. Fractures and sprains are quite frequent. Worryingly, there are also reports of performing when ill, only because of the management pressures.

62% of actors that reported to believe to be under health and safety risk also reported to having been injured in the past. Which means that the shows in which they are performing are either physically very demanding and would need extra preparation or that the scene is not well lit / checked or tagged.



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Graph 5. Answers to question: Do you feel exposed to health and safety risks? [da = yes; ne = no]

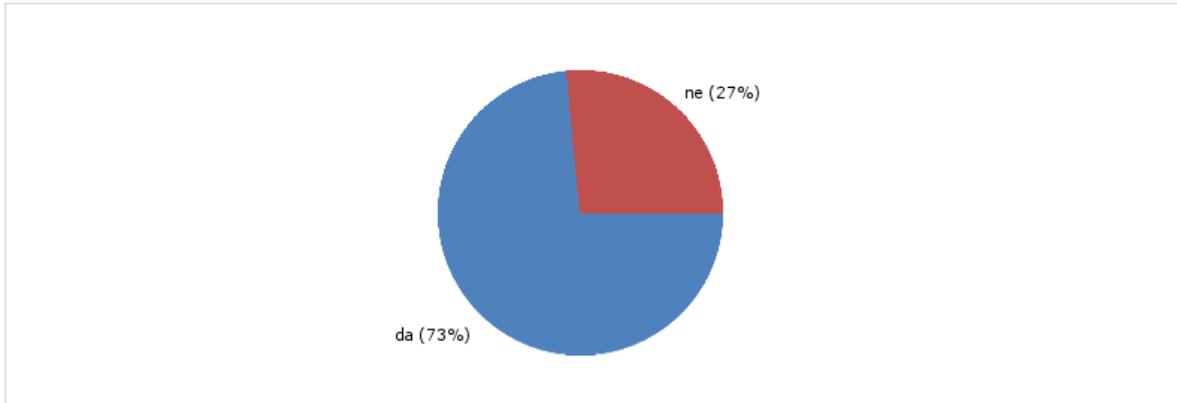


Graph 6. Answers to question: To which health and safety risks are you exposed? [ 1. danger of falling objects on stage; 2. contact with dust; 3. work on heights; 4. working with person under the influence of alcohol and / or drugs; 5. handling with weapons; 6. contact with soil; 7. contact with water; 8. contact with pyrotechnics; 9. other; 10. contact with fire]

Answers: other
Mold
Sprains, physical and vocal overload
Mental pressure, emotional blackmail
Stress
Overworking
Clumsiness
Working while ill
Raked stage
Noise, inadequate clothing
nevarnost ovir na odru in padca v globino
Draught, low temperatures
Old building – problems with electric installations and safety in case of fire, earthquake ...

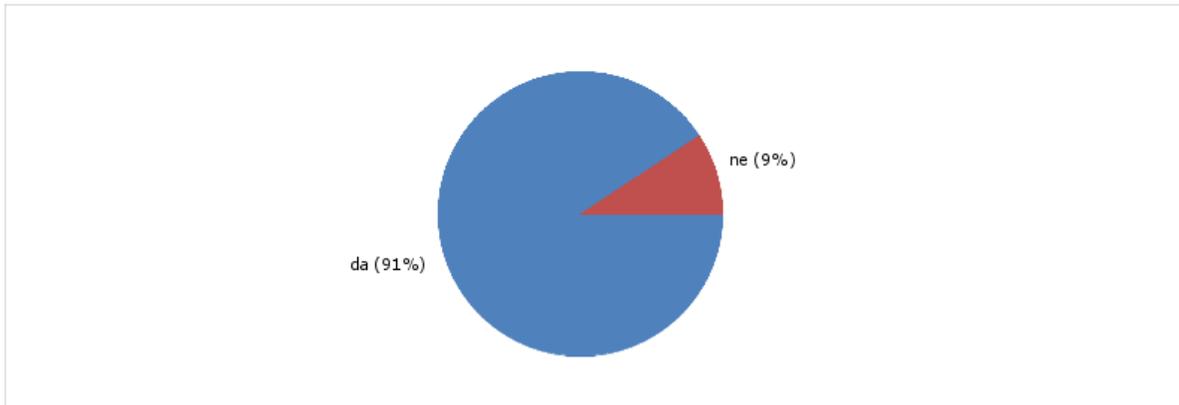
Unqualified drivers for transportation for touring shows
Heavy weight lifting (actors), persistence in unnatural body positions

*Table 1. Answers for question To which health and safety risks are you exposed? that were written under 'Other'.*

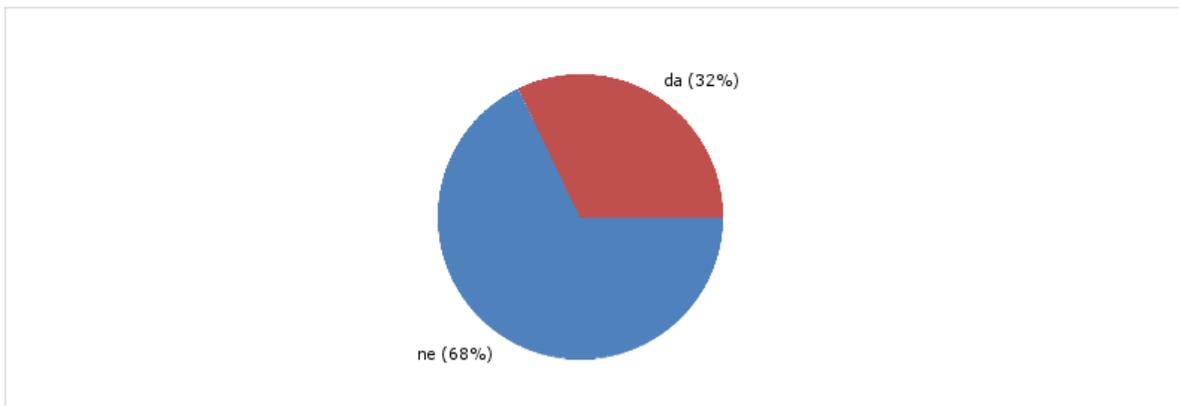


*Graph 7. Answers to question Have you ever been injured during work? [da = yes; ne = no]*

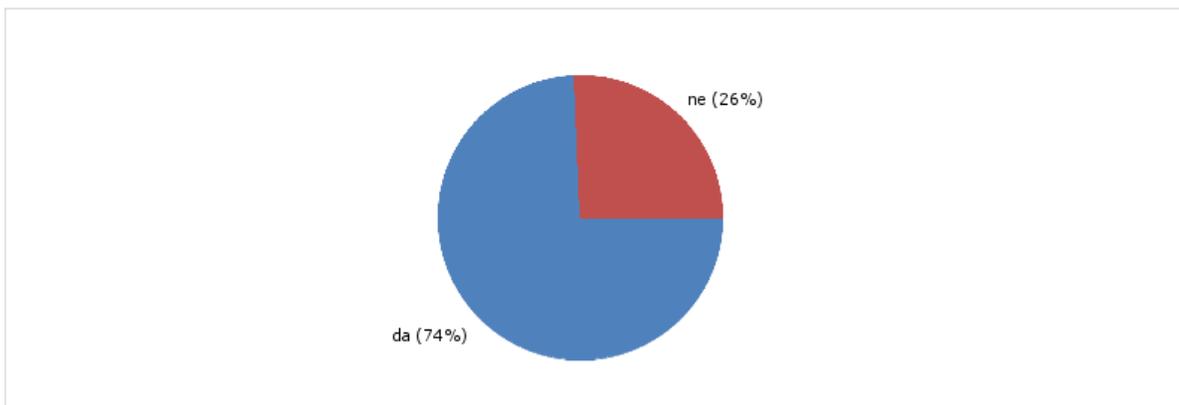
88% of all respondents feel that they are adequately informed about safety measures. Being informed about security measures is negatively connected to the exposure to the health and safety risks ( $\rho = -0.129$ ,  $p = 0.132$ ). Which means that the actors are well-informed about safety measures, but they are voluntarily exposed to risk for 'good performances'. 66% of respondents don't know who their worker representative for health and safety issues is. 73% of respondents already had work connected health issues. The occurrence of work-related health problems is statistically significantly connected with exposure to the health and safety risks ( $\rho = 0.386$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Which means that most actors who feel that they are exposed to health and safety risk factors have already had health problems associated with work. Most reported health issues are allergic reaction to theatre make-up (66%), psychological issues like anxiety, insomnia and mood swings (80%). As 'other issues' actors reported injuries like sprains and fractures and voice loss and vocal cord issues. Out of all respondents 57% pointed out mental issues as main health issue. This connects with previous questions where work overload and inadequate support system have been pointed out.



Graph 8. Answers to questions Are you informed about the safety measures? [da = yes; ne = no]

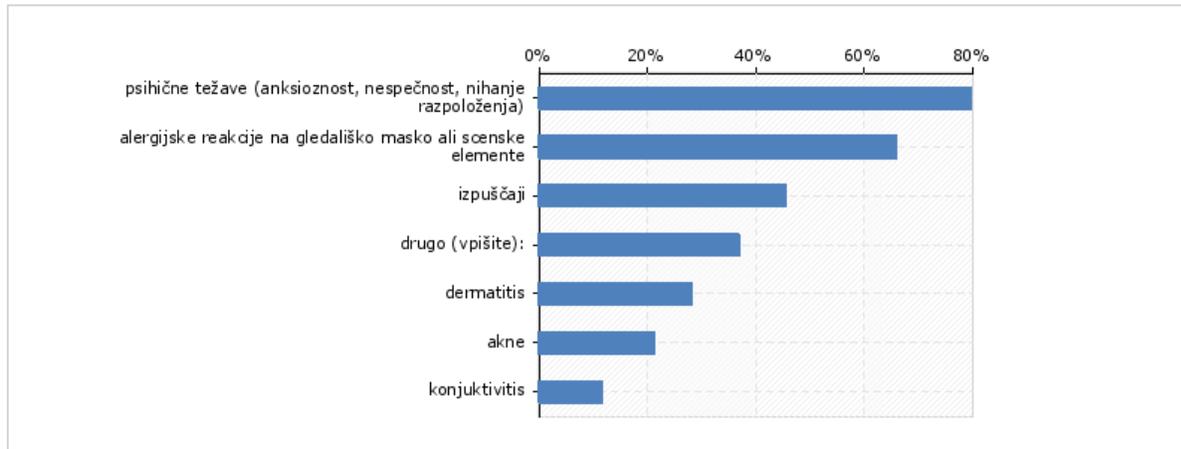


Graph 9. Answers to questions Do you know who your worker representative for health and safety issues is? [da = yes; ne = no]



Graph 10. Answers to question Have you ever had work connected health issues? [da = yes; ne = no]

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Graph 11. Which health issues did you have? [1. mental issues (anxiety, insomnia, mood swings); 2. allergic reactions to theatre make-up or scenery; 3. rashes; 4. other; 5. dermatitis; 6. acne; 7. conjunctivitis]

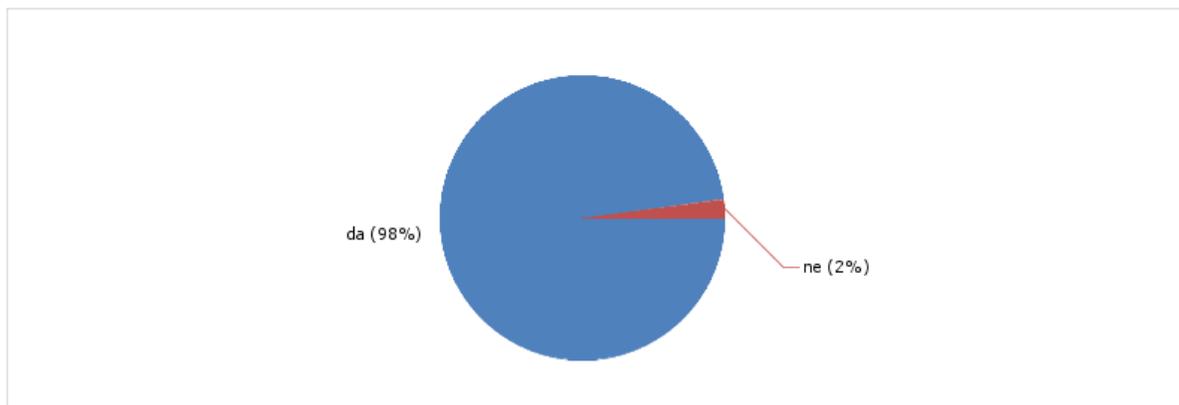
Answers
Vocal cord issues
voice loss because of tiredness and overwork
inflammations because of poorly heated spaces
throat inflammation, voice loss, arrhythmia
Knees and spine issues
Injuries due to falls
Physical, mental and vocal burnout
Mycosis because of poorly cleaned costume
Back pains
Vocal cord injury
Cold due to the draught, dust allergy
Fungus
Injuries
damage to the intervertebral discs
Hoarseness due to exhaustion, voice loss, bruises, sprain
meningitis, fatigue
Stretched muscle
inflammation of the nerves and muscles

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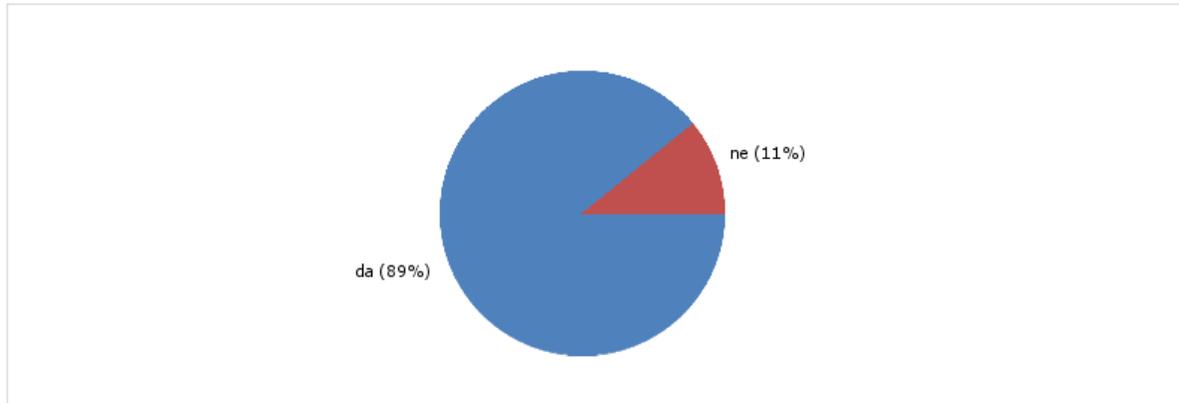
stress
physical damage to the spine, arms and legs, exhaustion of the vocal cords, hair loss
Voice loss, panic attacks, excessive gastric acid activity
High blood pressure
Sprained ankle, inflammation of the Achilles tendon, partial hearing loss, bruises
Knee injury
Arthritis, chronic muscular disease
Spine injury
Broken ankle
Joint inflammation, muscle inflammation, broken bones

*Table 2. Answers to Which health issues did you have? that were written under 'Other'.*

Most actors are in direct contact with the audience when working (94%). This differs significantly from the classical plays, where there is a fourth wall between the stage and the audience. In modern plays there is almost always the need for the actors to be in direct contact with the audience, which for the actor means more mental strength and energy used for each performance. 86% of actors have already been a part of devised theatre. That kind of shows demand more creative input from actors than classic theatre shows, because the actors need to contribute the part that usually comes from the playwright. Modern theatre is developing toward the direction of devised theatre and because of that it is important that this is considered with personal preparation



Graph 12. Answers to question *Do you ever come into direct contact with the audience.* [da = yes; ne = no]



Graph 13. Answers to question *Have you ever worked in devised theatre performance that needed from you different kind of involvement?* [da = yes; ne = no]

Most actors believe that they have enough time for personal preparation and enough rehearsals for creating the part (almost always and frequently: 62%). But there were some actors that chose that they only rarely have time for personal preparation. It may mean that these actors are more used and cast in shows and also have more demanding parts, which is why they don't have enough time for personal preparation. At least 55% of actors would like to have more time for rest during rehearsals and shows. Which may mean that actors have just enough time to prepare for rehearsals and shows but not enough time to rest and regenerate. Most of actors agree that acting profession is connected with high stress risk. According to other results in this study we can agree that most actors feel this stress. Graph 14 shows that some actors get enough time for rest during one day and another but others don't. Almost half of respondents almost always or frequently get their 11 hours of rest between one working day and another. There is quite a difference between the results, but that may be because actors come from different theatres and different theatres have different policies. But even though there are 10% of actors that still feel that they almost never have 11 hours to rest between two working days. We can only guess that these are the same actors that don't get enough time for personal preparation and are also heavily overworked.

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<b>Do you have enough time for personal preparation?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percents</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (almost always)	48	35%	35%
2 (frequently)	38	28%	62%
3 (sometimes)	36	26%	88%
4 (rarely)	15	11%	99%
5 (almost never)	1	1%	100%
Sum	138	100%	

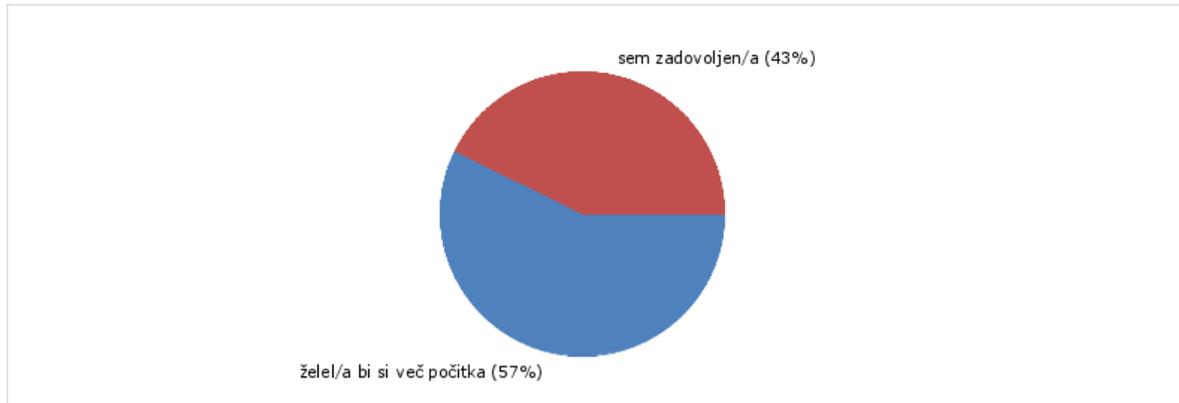
*Table 3. Answers to question Do you have enough time for personal preparation?*

<b>Do you have enough rehearsals for creating your part?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percents</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (almost always)	45	33%	33%
2 (frequently)	41	30%	62%
3 (sometimes)	34	25%	87%
4 (rarely)	17	12%	99%
5 (almost never)	1	1%	100%
Sum	138	100%	

*Table 4. Answers to question Do you have enough rehearsals for creating your part?*

<b>Do you agree that acting profession is highly stressful one?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percents</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (very agree)	113	81%	81%
2 (agree)	20	14%	96%
3 (neither agree neither disagree)	5	4%	99%
4 (disagree)	1	1%	100%
5 (very disagree)	0	0%	100%
Sum	139	100%	

*Table 5. Answers to question DO you agree that acting profession is highly stressful one?*



Graph 14. Are you satisfied with ratio between rehearsals, shows and rest? [sem zadovoljen = i'm satisfied; želel bi si več počitka = I would wish more rest]

Do you always have 11 hours between one working day and another?			
Answers	Frequency	Percents	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	32	23%	23%
2 (frequently)	38	27%	50%
3 (sometimes)	35	25%	76%
4 (rarely)	20	14%	90%
5 (almost never)	14	10%	100%
Sum	139	100%	

Table 6. Answers to question Do you always have 11 hours between one working day and another?

Most actors aren't informed on time about their future assignments in the theatre (51%). When one is informed on time about their work duties not only creating safe environment but also provides less stressful work environment. Most actors feel that if they were informed in the beginning of the season that would be soon enough.

Most actors report that their employer is true to the agreed casting plan.

Do you think you are soon enough informed about casts for next season?			
Answers	Frequency	Percents	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	13	9%	9%

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2 (frequently)	27	19%	29%
3 (sometimes)	26	19%	47%
4 (rarely)	44	32%	79%
5 (almost never)	29	21%	100%
Sum	139	100%	

Table 7. Answers to question *Do you think you are soon enough informed about casts for next season?*

<b>When would you like to be informed about your work commitments?</b>
<b>Answers</b>
Six months in advance /// listed couple of time
Before the start of the season //// mostly listed
At the end of one season for the next one /// mostly listed
At least three months in advance /// listed couple of times
At least a month ahead /// listed twice

Table 8. Different answers for the question *When would you like to be informed about your work commitments?*

<b>Does your employer stick to the agreed schedule?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percents</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (almost always)	44	32%	32%
2 (frequently)	55	40%	72%
3 (sometimes)	25	18%	90%
4 (rarely)	10	7%	97%
5 (almost never)	4	3%	100%
Sum	138	100%	

Table 9. Answers to question *'Does your employer stick to the agrees schedule?'*.

Most actors report that they can only rarely artisticly develop through their work assignments. It may mean that prepared season is not cut out for actors needs and abilities. But it may also mean that actors don't have enough time to prepare for some parts. Actors don't have any say in their artistic development (74%) – at least through the part choice. Which means that it is mostly the managment which decides who plays what – which brings us to the responsibility for each

ansamble member and their possibility for artistic development.

Can you artistically develop through your work assignments?			
Answers	Frequency	Percents	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	18	13%	13%
2 (frequently)	35	26%	39%
3 (sometimes)	57	42%	80%
4 (rarely)	25	18%	99%
5 (almost never)	2	1%	100%
Sum	137	100%	

Table 10. Answers to question 'Can you artistically develop through your work assignments?'

Do you have any influence in your own artistic development (choice of roles or projects)?			
Answers	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	4	3%	3%
2 (frequently)	6	4%	7%
3 (sometimes)	22	16%	23%
4 (rarely)	38	28%	51%
5 (almost never)	67	49%	100%
Sum	137	100%	

Table 11. Answers to question 'Do you have any influence in your own artistic development?'

Some respondents report that they are invited for career talk every year (31%), but some never are (31%). These results are probably due to the fact that actors come from different theatres and the theatres have different policies. Some theatres don't see career talk as one of their key functions. Actors who may wish to be part of career talk, may not be aware that it is their right to get one.

Does your employer invite to the yearly career talk?			
Answers	Frequency	Percents	Cumulative

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1 (almost always)	45	33%	33%
2 (frequently)	15	11%	44%
3 (sometimes)	11	8%	52%
4 (rarely)	16	12%	64%
5 (almost never)	50	36%	100%
Sum	137	100%	

Table 12. Answers to question 'Does your employer invite you to the yearly career talk?'

Most actors sometimes feel that they work too much (41%). There are more actors who believe they work too much than who believe they work too little. Almost 50% of them think that almost never or rarely work to little. Some of them believe that they work too much (12%) – which can be explained by the fact that there are few actors who are rarely cast in play or if they are they tend to get smaller parts.

Do you feel you work to much?			
Answers	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	18	13%	13%
2 (frequently)	33	24%	37%
3 (sometimes)	59	43%	80%
4 (rarely)	21	15%	96%
5 (almost never)	6	4%	100%
Sum	137	100%	

Table 13. Answers to question 'Do you feel you work to much?'

Do you feel you work to little?			
Answers	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1 (almost always)	2	2%	2%
2 (frequently)	16	12%	14%
3 (sometimes)	40	31%	45%
4 (rarely)	37	28%	73%

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5 (almost always)	35	27%	100%
Sum	130	100%	

Table 14. Answers to question 'Do you feel you work too little?'

Most actors haven't been exposed to sexual harassment (64%). More have been exposed to mobbing (table 15). It is important to note that there are no significant differences between men and women at these two questions. But there still are 6 participants who reported to be frequently harassed – which only shows that this is still a very important issue which needs to be addressed. The same goes for mobbing – there are participants (17) who are frequently exposed to it. It is important to create a safe environment where no employee would be subjected to any kind of violence.

<b>Have you ever been sexually harassed while working? (Sexual harassment at the workplace is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature.)</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (almost always)	3	2%	2%
2 (frequently)	3	2%	5%
3 (sometimes)	19	15%	19%
4 (rarely)	15	11%	31%
5 (almost never)	91	69%	100%
Sum	131	100%	

Table 15. Answers to question 'Have you ever been sexually harassed while working?'

<b>Have you ever been exposed to physical or physical maltreatment or mobbing? (Maltreatment or mobbing is any repetitive or systematic, deplorable, or manifestly negative and offensive behavior or behavior directed against individual workers at work or in connection with work.)</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (almost always)	2	2%	2%
2 (frequently)	15	11%	13%
3 (sometimes)	37	28%	41%

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4 (rarely)	30	23%	64%
5 (almost never)	47	36%	100%
Sum	131	100%	

*Table 16. Answers to question 'Have you ever been exposed to physical or physical maltreatment or mobbing?'*

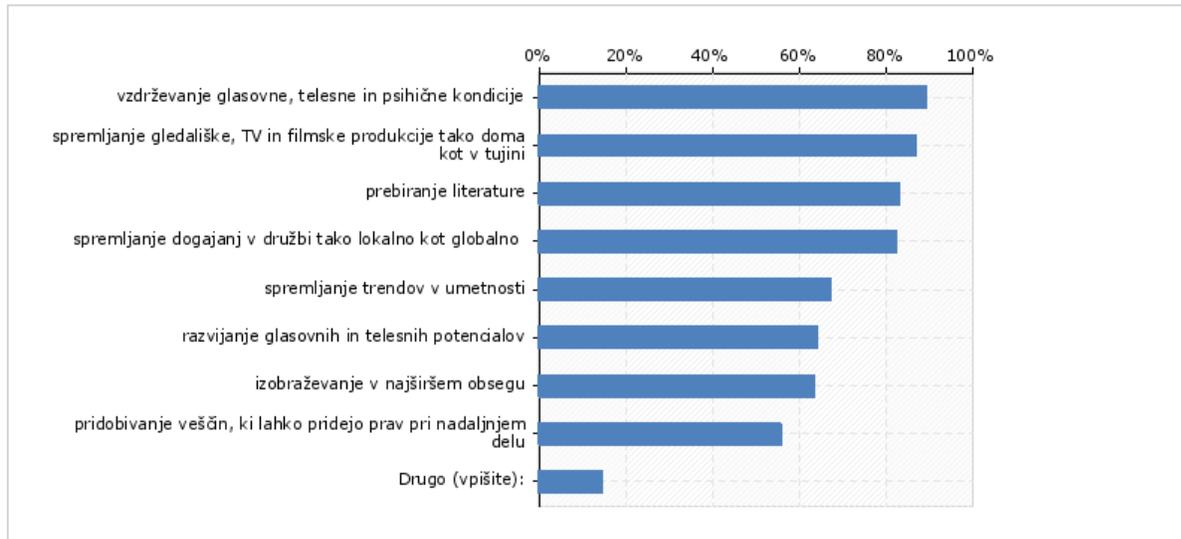
Most actors (84%) are not well aware of all their rights. Better awareness of individuals about their rights has an important role in the fact that an individual can because of that take better care of himself and for his rights.

<b>Do you know your rights under the ZDR-1 (Employment Relationships Act) and the Collective Agreement?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
1 (yes)	7	5%	5%
2 (mostly yes)	14	11%	16%
3 (neither yes neither no)	36	27%	44%
4 (mostly no)	45	34%	78%
5 (no)	29	22%	100%
Sum	131	100%	

*Table 17. Answers to question 'Do you know your right under the ZDR-1 and Collective Agreement?'*

Time for personal preparation actors mostly use for watching theatre production home and abroad (87%), watching whats happening in society (82%), reading (83%), keeping up the physical, vocal and mental shape (89%). Which only proves that actors see personal preparation as necessity and not just as learning the lines and showing up on stage.

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Graph 15. Answers to question 'How do you use your personal preparation time (what is that you do to develop as a creative and is not necessarily connected to the rehearsal process and shows)?'. [1. education in its widest sense, 2. reading literature, 3. maintaining voice, physical and mental fitness, 4. acquiring skills that can come in handy at work, 5. developing voice and body potentials, 6. watching theater, TV and film production both at home and abroad, 7. monitoring trends in art, 8. monitoring of events in society both locally and globally and 9. other]

<b>Other:</b>
<b>Answers</b>
Travels, meditation, yoga.
Developing good personal relationships with colleagues, teambuilding.
Regeneration, filming, doing project outside your theatre.
volunteer work with youth, work in non-governmental organizations
learning the text and reading the biography of the author and bibliography
running, swimming, yoga, developing my own techniques for relaxation and concentration.
I try to make the best of every free moment, I don't think about the theater. I try to do a variety of things to live a life, so that later I can then try to live it out on stage. Because how are you going to be a good actor that brings people realistically to life on stage, if you don't even know how to live a life.
care for personal development, in the field of ethics, morals and spirit.
I'm doing different relaxation and concentration exercises.
there is almost no time to prepare, because the time we have during the rehearsal is so cordial, that you maybe have enough time to eat a meal during this time and then you have to go back to the theater.

I take care of my psychological stability with relaxation exercises.
acting workshops
personal development
development of memory capacity, physical appearance
I use the time of personal preparation for learning and text analysis and for psychological preparation for the rehearsal. In the current theatre form, it is nearly impossible to keep up without the independent part at home.
spiritual growth

*Table 18. Answers filled under 'Other' as an answer to the question "How do you use your personal preparation time (what is that you do to develop as a creative and is not necessarily connected to the rehearsal process and shows)?".*

Among all answers there are no statistically imported differences between males and females, as well as no differences between age groups, education groups or employment groups. Which means that all actors are equally subjected to risks, health issues or have the same idea and need for personal preparation.

## **DISCUSSION.**

From the results of the study we can conclude that actors are subjected to different working conditions than 'normal traditional' employees. Since these are different kinds of mental and physical burdens, which have already been explored in research (Konijn, 2000; Evans et al., 1996; Brandfonbrener, 1999; Maxwell, Seton and Szabó, 2015) means that an individual must be provided with an appropriate regulation of working time, with which the employer provides for mental and physical well-being. The time of personal preparation enables each player to ensure the possibility to create quality artistic production and to regulate his mental and physical well-being.

In the process of creating and performing, actors are exposed to major emotional changes and psychological pressures that they face in different ways. In an Australian study (Maxwell, Seton and Szabó, 2015), which dealt with the well-being of actors, actors were found to be more anxious and more susceptible to stress than other professions. In the survey, this was attributed to the greater

emotional vulnerabilities to which actors are exposed to when creating and performing. They also found that as many as 40% of the players have problems to shake off the emotionally and physically demanding roles in their private lives. Konijn (2000) says that an actor on a stage experiences task-emotions - which appear on the physical level as a greatly increased pulse, increased sweating, and the like - but they do not express these feelings because they are concealed by emotions that he plays. Veselko (2012) says that the emotions the actors play they also experience as their own, although they know that the emotions are not connected with the real situation and can be controlled to a large extent. Seton (2008) coined the term 'post-dramatic stress', which refers to the player's feelings at the end of the performance (op. Word play and comparison with post-traumatic stress). Similarly, the emotional hangover was used by Greer (1993) for the actor's condition. It is precisely because of a different kind of working conditions that it is extremely important that they have a mentally and physically safe working environment. According to the results shown by the survey, we can see that most actors do not have a secure work environment. The working requirements that actors face vary according to the changes in the development of a modern theater - more of the devised theatre means more personal input from the actor is required than with the classical theatre that prevailed 20 years ago. It is therefore important that actors not only are provided the same amount of time for personal preparation, but also get adequate mental and physical support. On the basis of the results of the survey (Maxwell, Seton and Szabó, 2015), Equity began to encourage the leaders in the institutions to educate themselves about the importance that the actor's mental and physical well-being, which means one gets proper preparation as well as the release. Similarly, as the athletes need time for preparation, for warming up and for relaxation, same goes for performance artists. They found that the heart rate of the actor on the stage can reach 180 beats per minute, which is equal to the physical load of the athlete during actual physical activity (Konijn, 2000). Although mental effort is not detected at first glance (as with athletes), the psychological effects of emotional efforts felt by actors on the stage are as large as the running the winning lap. It is therefore important that we take an appropriate position for the actors as well. Which means that the least number of injuries (such as various, obviously frequent fractures and wounds) is taken care of, and for the least possible exposure to

stress (or providing adequate mental support).

The welfare of each employee should be the care of their employers. Depending on the problems highlighted by the survey, the theater should provide working conditions where actors would not be forced to choose between the failure of the show and their health.

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