

Inequality in 1,900 Popular Films

Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & Characters with Disabilities

Dr. Stacy L. Smith &
the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

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USCAnnenberg
Inclusion Initiative

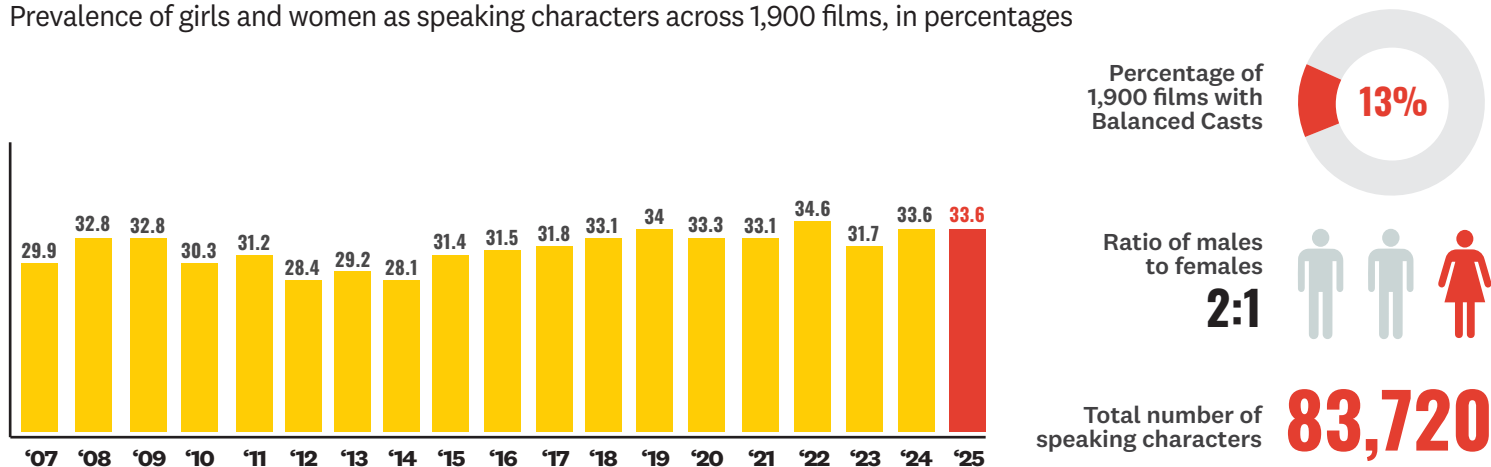
INEQUALITY IN 1,900 POPULAR FILMS

DR. STACY L. SMITH & THE USC ANNEBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE

@Inclusionists

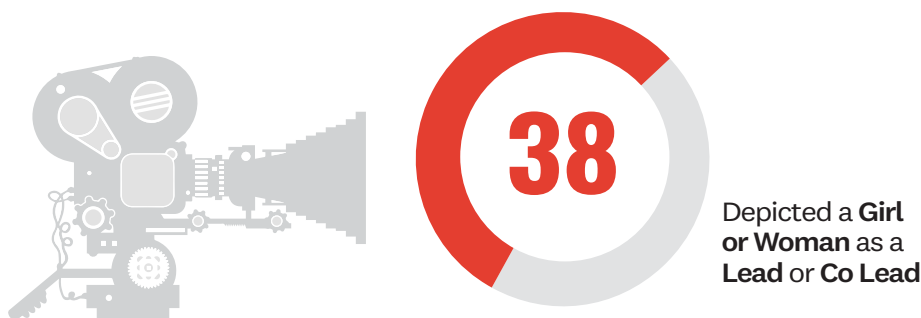
GIRLS & WOMEN FILL ONLY ONE-THIRD OF SPEAKING ROLES ON SCREEN

Prevalence of girls and women as speaking characters across 1,900 films, in percentages



GIRLS & WOMEN IN LEADING/CO LEADING ROLES IN 2025

Of the 100 top films in 2025...



55 films in 2024 and 20 in 2007 depicted a girl or woman as a lead or co lead.

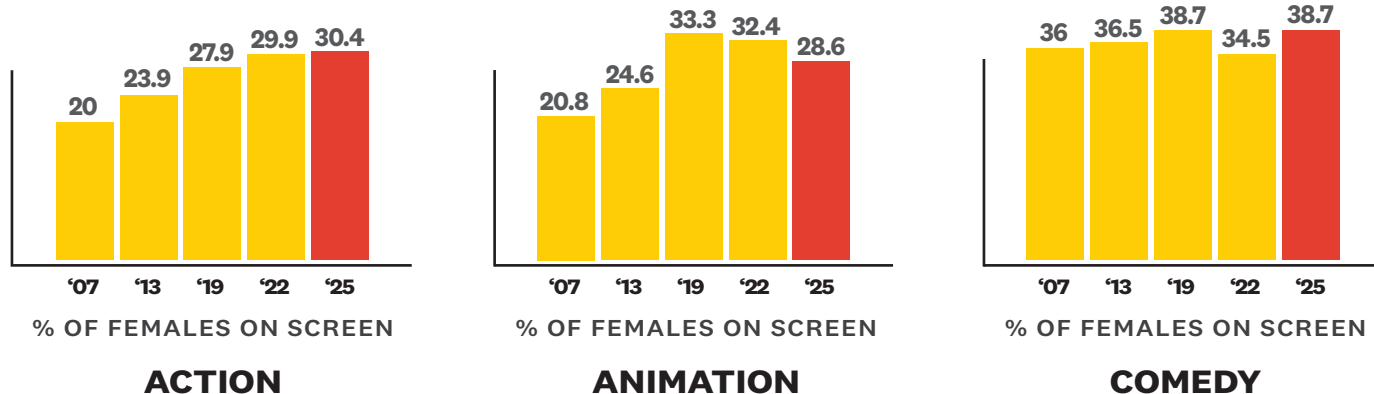
And of those 38 films...

15 had a female lead/co lead from an **underrepresented racial/ethnic group**

3 had a female lead/co lead **45 years of age or older**

Excludes films w/ensemble casts

GIRLS & WOMEN IN SPEAKING ROLES ACROSS GENRES



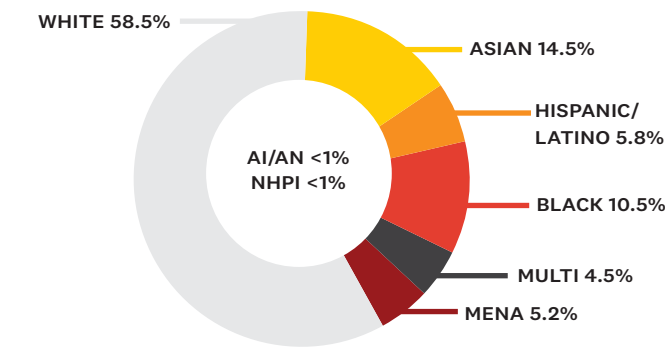
PROTAGANISTS OF COLOR IN TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Number of films with underrepresented leads or co leads by year

	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25	OVERALL
ALL UR LEADS	13	13	17	12	9	13	17	17	15	14	22	27	32	29	35	31	37	26	34	22%
FEMALE UR LEADS	1	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	11	17	9	14	18	14	14	15	8%

INCLUSION OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS ON SCREEN IN 2025

Percentage of all speaking characters by racial/ethnic group



**Since 2007, the percentage of White speaking characters decreased by 19.1 percentage points and the percentage of Asian characters increased by 11.1 percentage points*

percentage of under-represented characters: **41.5%**

30 films had **NO Black or African American** speaking characters

46 films had **NO Hispanic/Latino** speaking characters

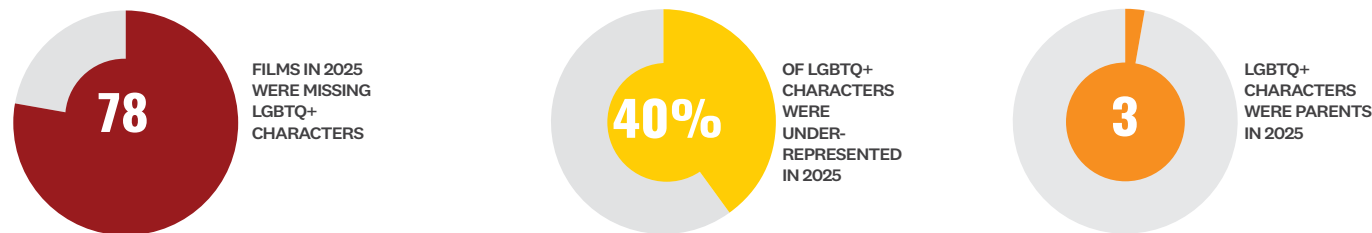
26 films had **NO Asian** speaking characters

LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS ACROSS TOP-GROSSING FILMS

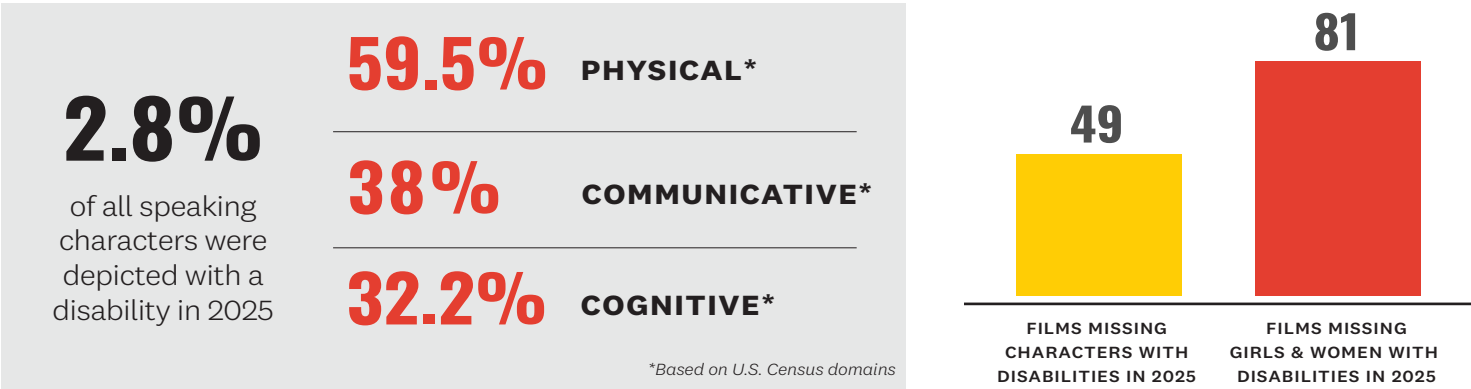
Of 52,469 speaking characters across 1,200 films...

MEASURES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
GAY	12	19	36	16	33	45	12	24	43	31	12	22
LESBIAN	4	7	9	9	17	10	15	6	27	20	18	7
BISEXUAL	5	5	6	6	8	3	2	7	13	8	8	5
TRANSGENDER	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	5	0	1	0

**Two characters in 2023 and 2025 were coded as having another sexuality.*



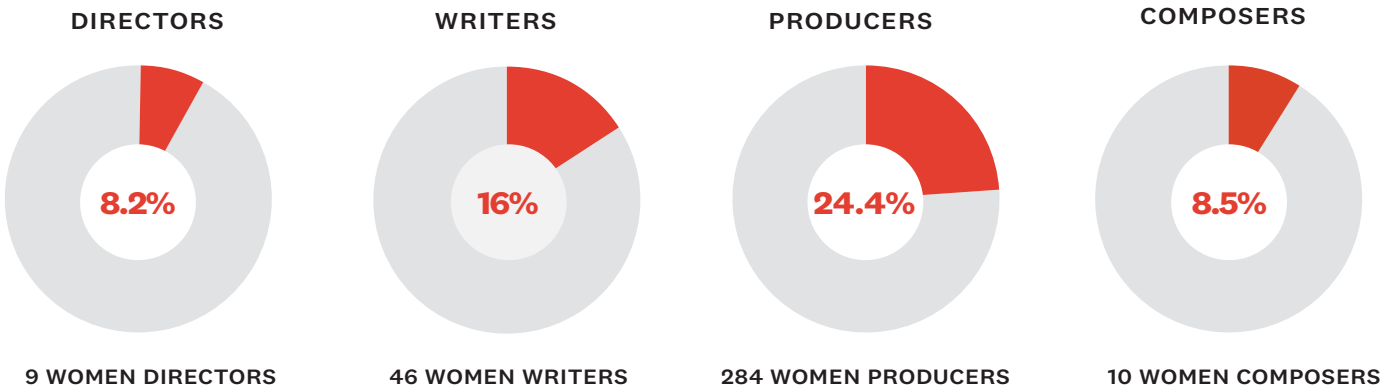
CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN 2025’S MOST POPULAR MOVIES



WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA IN 2025

Across 1,560 content creators....

MEN WOMEN



GENDER NON BINARY REPRESENTATION IN TOP FILMS



DIRECTORS AND COMPOSERS FROM 2007 TO 2025

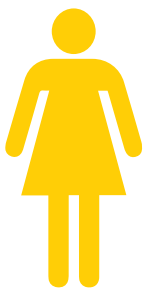


MOST CASTING DIRECTORS ARE WHITE WOMEN

Across 1,900 films and 2,913 casting directors...



17.9%
ARE
WHITE
MEN



69.6%
ARE
WHITE
WOMEN



2.5%
ARE
UNDERREPRESENTED
MEN



10%
ARE
UNDERREPRESENTED
WOMEN

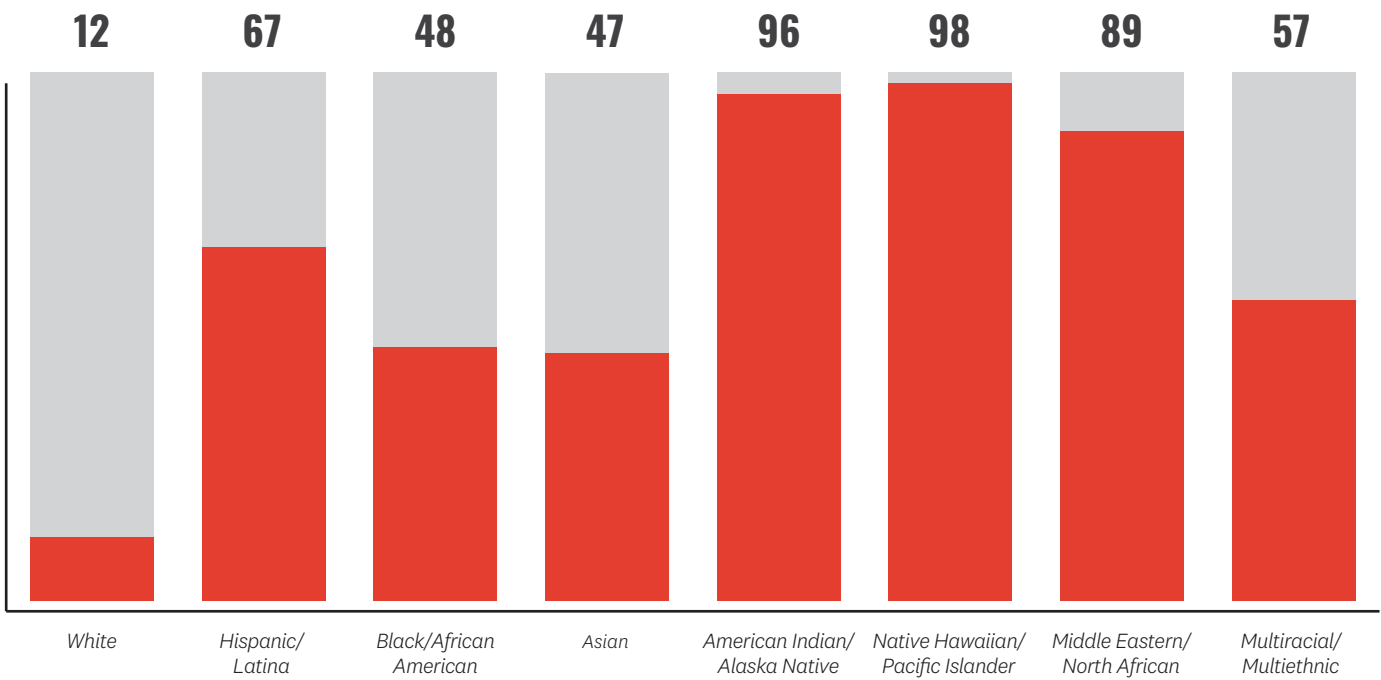
STORYTELLERS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Across 1,900 films and 2,121 directors...



GIRLS & WOMEN OF COLOR IN TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Of the 100 top films in 2025, the number missing girls and women on screen that were...



STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS TO FOSTER SYSTEMIC CHANGE

COLLECTIVE ACTION	SET TARGET INCLUSION GOALS	INCLUSION RIDER	SHAREHOLDER ACTIVISM
COMPANY-WIDE INCLUSION POLICIES	TRANSPARENT INTERVIEWING & HIRING PRACTICES	CREATE INCLUSIVE CONSIDERATION LISTS	SUPPORT NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TRAINING NEW FILMMAKERS

WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,900 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Abby Kohn	Emma Seligman	Kirsten Sheridan	Olivia Wilde ⁺
Adele Lim	Emma Tammi ⁺	Kitty Green	Patricia Riggen
Angelina Jolie	Faryn Pearl	Lana Wachowski ⁺	Patty Jenkins ⁺
Anna Boden	Fawn Veerasunthorn	Laura Brousseau	Phyllida Lloyd ⁺
Anna Foerster	Floria Sigismondi	Laura Terruso	Rachel Morrison
Anne Fletcher ⁺	Gabriela Cowperthwaite	Liesl Tommy	Reed Morano
Arkasha Stevenson	Gail Mancuso	Lilly Wachowski	Robin Wright
Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari	Gina Prince-Bythewood ⁺	Lisa Joy	Rosalind Ross
Autumn de Wilde	Greta Gerwig ⁺	Lorene Scafaria	Rose Glass
Ava DuVernay ⁺	Halina Reijn	Loveleen Tandan	Roxann Dawson
Betty Thomas	Hallie Meyers-Shyer	Lucia Aniello	S.J. Clarkson
Brenda Chapman	Hikari	Madaline Sharafian	Sam Taylor-Johnson ⁺
Castille Landon	Janicza Bravo	Maggie Kang	Samantha Jayne
Cate Shortland	Jennifer Flackett	Maria Schrader	Sanaa Hamri
Catherine Hardwicke ⁺	Jennifer Lee ⁺	Marielle Heller	Sarah Smith ⁺
Cathy Yan	Jennifer Yuh Nelson ⁺	Meghna Gulzar	Shari Springer Berman
Celine Song ⁺	Jessica M. Thompson	Melina Matsoukas	Sharon Maguire
Charise Castro Smith	Jessie Nelson	Mimi Leder	Sofia Coppola
Chinonye Chukwu	Jill Culton	Miranda July	Stacy Title
Chloé Zhao ⁺	Jodie Foster	Nancy Meyers ⁺	Stella Meghie ⁺
Christy Summerhays	Julie Anne Robinson ⁺	Natalie Erika James	Susanna Fogel
Coralie Fargeat	Julie Taymor	Natalie Krinsky	Susanna White
Dana Ledoux Miller	Kasi Lemmons ⁺	Nia DaCosta ⁺	Thea Sharrock
Diane English	Kat Coiro	Nia Vardalos	Tina Gordon
Domee Shi	Kathryn Bigelow	Niki Caro	Trish Sie
Elaine Bogan	Kay Cannon	Nisha Ganatra	Veronika Franz
Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nora Ephron	Zelda Williams
Elizabeth Banks ⁺	Kimberly Peirce	Olivia Newman	Zoë Kravitz
Emerald Fennell ⁺			

Across the top-grossing films from 2007-2025....



THERE WERE
118
INDIVIDUAL WOMEN
DIRECTORS

ONLY
35
DIRECTORS WERE
WOMEN OF COLOR

THERE WERE
148
FILMS DIRECTED
BY WOMEN

**Inequality in 1,900 Popular Films:
Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & Characters with Disabilities
from 2007 to 2025**

**Dr. Stacy L Smith
&
Annenberg Inclusion Initiative
USC**

This study examines inclusion across 1,900 of the top-performing theatrically-released films in the U.S. from 2007 to 2025.¹ Across 19 years, we have assessed every speaking or named character on screen for gender and race/ethnicity. LGBTQ+ coding was added in 2014 and characters with disability in 2015. No documentaries, music videos, or episodic TV shows were included in the sample, even if they were shown in theaters. Behind the camera, we examined the frequency and percentage of women and people of color employed as directors, writers, producers, composers and casting directors. The report is segmented by highlighting findings by identity group below.

Key Findings

Gender

On Screen. Of the 4,333 speaking or named characters coded, two-thirds of these characters were men and boys (66.3%, $n=2,874$) and 33.6% ($n=1,455$) were women and girls.² This calculates into a gender ratio of 1.97 male characters to every 1 female character. Only 4 non-binary speaking or named characters were coded across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2025.

The percentage of girls and women on screen has not changed over time. The percentage of girls and women on screen in 2025 was identical to 2024 (33.6%) and was not meaningfully different from 2007 (29.9%).

Only 14% of the 100 top movies of 2025 were gender balanced. This is a non-significant decrease of 4 percentage points from 2024 (18%) and an increase of 2 percentage points from 2007.

Focusing solely on films with single leads or leads/co leads as protagonists, only 38% were girls and/or women. This was a substantial decrease from 2024, when 55% of all films were centered on female leads/co leads. However, the 2025 percentage was higher than the 2007 percentage, when only 20% of all movies were led/co led by a girl and/or woman on screen.

Only 30.4% of all speaking characters on screen were girls and women in action/adventure, 28.6% in animation, and 38.7% in comedy. Across all three genres, no differences emerged for females from 2024 to 2025. The percentage of female speaking characters in action/adventure and animation in 2025 movies was significantly higher than in 2007 (20% action/adventure, 20.8% animation). No differences in the percentage of female speaking characters emerged for comedy over time.

Roughly a quarter (24.2%) of all on screen roles for speaking or named characters 40 years of age or older were filled with women. This finding has not budged in 19 years.

Behind the Camera. A total of 1,559 directors, writers, and producers were employed across the 100 top-grossing films of 2025. Only 21.7% ($n=339$) of the workforce were women and 78.2% were men ($n=1,220$). Overall, this represents an above-the-line ratio of crew at 3.6 males to every 1 female.

A total of 110 directors were credited across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2025. Only 8.2% or 9 of these directors were women. The percentage and number of women directors has significantly decreased since 2024 but was identical to 2008.

The sample-wide top-performing women directors were Anne Fletcher and Lana Wachowski, both with 4 films each. Chloé Zhao and Greta Gerwig both directed 3 movies across the 19-year sample time frame and 20 different women directed 2 movies. For comparison purposes, the top performing male director across 19 years was Tyler Perry (18 movies) followed by Steven Spielberg (15 films), Clint Eastwood (12 films) and Ridley Scott (12 films). Three male directors each helmed 9 movies (i.e., Jaume Collet-Serra, M Night Shyamalan, Guy Ritchie).

Only 16% of credited screenwriters were women. This calculates to a gender ratio of 5.2 men working to every 1 woman. The percentage of women writers in 2025 (16%) was not significantly different (± 5 percentage points) from 2024 (12.9%) or 2007 (11.2%). Focusing on producers, 24.4% were women across the 100 top movies of 2025. There has been no meaningful change in the percentage of female producers from 2025 to 2024 (27%) or 2007 (19.7%).

In 2025, 0 or 8.5% of the 118 composers were women. This is a gender ratio of 10.8 male composers working to every 1 female composer. No change was observed from 2024 to 2025. Significant progress has been achieved if we compare 2025 to 2007, when no women composers worked across the 100 top-grossing films.

A full 80.1% of all casting directors were women across the sample. No change emerged from 2024 (78.4%) to 2025. However, the percentage in 2025 was significantly lower than the percentage in 2007 (86.1%).

Films with women directors attached have significantly more female leads/co leads and girls and women on screen than do films with only male directors attached. These findings are based on associations and therefore causality is not assumed.

Race/Ethnicity

On Screen. A total of 3,729 speaking or named characters were coded with a discernible race/ethnicity. A total of 58.5% were White, 14.5% Asian, 10.5% Black, 5.8% Hispanic/Latino, 5.2% Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, <1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 4.5% Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic/Other. In total, 41.5% of all speaking characters were underrepresented or non-White, which is on point with U.S. Census (43.9%). Given the crude nature of our underrepresented variable, the comparison to the population estimate should be interpreted with caution.

When looking at each racial/ethnic group measured, there is little deviation between 2024 and 2025. One significant difference pertains to White characters. There was a lower percentage of White speaking or named characters in 2025 than in 2024. While not significant, the opposite pattern emerged for MENA characters. Matter of fact, 2025 records the highest percentage of MENA speaking characters across the 19-year study. When comparing 2025 to 2007, the percentage of Asian speaking characters on screen has dramatically *increased* (14.5% vs. 3.4%) whereas the percentage of White speaking characters has *decreased* (77.6% vs. 58.5%).

In 2025, the percentage of under-represented characters in action/adventure (40.4%) *decreased* from 2024 (49.9%) whereas the percentage in animation (2024=41.4%, 2025=77.7%) and comedy (2024=25.2%, 2025=47.5%) *increased*. In animation, over three-quarters of the speaking or named characters who were applicable to be coded on this variable were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Both animation and comedy featured the highest percentage of underrepresented characters across the 19-year sample.

For Black characters, a total of 30 movies did not feature any speaking or named characters from this community. 2025 (30 movies) was substantially higher in erasure than 2024 (18 movies) and 2018 (13 movies). The total number of films ± 2 percentage points within U.S. Census (13.5%) was 12 movies. This number was similar to 2024 (15 movies) but lower than 2018 (17 movies). Twenty-five movies were above proportional representation, a number lower than 2024 (31 films) and 2018 (31 films).

The number of 100 top movies erasing Hispanic/Latino speaking or named characters was 46, which is not different from 2024 (49) or 2018 (47). Similarly, the number of films at or above proportional representation (20.5%) in 2025 does not differ from 2024 or 2018.

For Asians, a different pattern emerges. While not different than 2024, there were fewer films missing Asians in 2025 compared to 2018. In terms of proportional representation, fewer films in 2025 (21 films) were within ± 2 percentage points than in 2024 (31 films). No difference was observed comparing 2025 to 2018 (20 films). For Asian characters with films above proportional representation, 2025 was a standout year. Greater than a third (35 films) depicted Asian characters above proportional representation, which was higher than 2024 (24 films) and 2018 (27 films).

34% of the 100 top films' leads/co leads of 2025 featured an underrepresented protagonist. 2025 movies were more inclusive than 2024 movies (26%) or 2007 movies (13%). The 34% of movies featured a total of 37 leads/co leads: 9 Black, 4 Hispanic/Latino, 11 Asian, 2 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2 MENA, and 9 Multiracial/Multiethnic.

In 2025, 15% of all films depicted a story centered on a woman/girl of color. This percentage was equivalent to 2024 (14%) but substantially higher than 2007 (1%).

White girls and women were the least likely to be erased across the 19-year sample. However, an uptick in films without any White girls and women was observed in 2025 (12 films) in comparison to 2018 (4 films). There has been an increase in the erasure of Black girls and women across the 100 top films of 2025 (48 movies) in comparison to 2024 (38 movies) or 2018 (33 movies). American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and MENA girls and women were very rarely seen on screen in 2025, 2024, or 2018. More films erased Multiracial/Multiethnic girls and women in 2025 (57) than in 2018 (51).

Behind the Camera. A total of 110 directors worked across the 100 most popular films of 2025. Of these directors, 75.4% ($n=83$) were White and 24.6% ($n=27$) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates into a ratio of 3.1 White directors to every 1 underrepresented director. The percentage of underrepresented directors in 2025 (24.6%) was not different from 2024 (23.2%) but was higher than 2007 (12.5%).

The top-performing underrepresented directors were Tyler Perry (18 movies), M. Night Shyamalan (9 movies), Jaume Collet-Serra (9 movies), and Antoine Fuqua, Jon M. Chu, Tim Story, and James Wan each had 8 movies. The top-performing White directors were Steven Spielberg (15 movies), Clint Eastwood (12 movies) and Ridley Scott (12 movies).

In terms of Black directors, only 4 were attached to the 100 top-grossing films of 2025. This number is not different from 2024 ($n=3$) but was only half of the number working in 2007 ($n=8$). Across these 3 years (2007, 2024, 2025), only 1 of the directors was a Black woman.

Focusing on the Latino community, only 4 directors worked across the 100 top movies of 2025. All 4 directors were men and the findings did not differ from 2024 ($n=7$) or 2007 ($n=3$). It is important to note that the modal number of films across the sample time frame for Latina directors was zero.

In terms of Asian directors, 11 males and 6 females worked across the 100 top films of 2025. For male directors, this number was on par with 2024 ($n=10$) but substantially higher than 2007 ($n=3$). For women, the number in 2025 (6 females) has doubled from 2024 (3 females). 2025 was also substantially higher than 2007 (0 females).

In 2025, White women were most likely to work as casting directors followed by White men (19.3%) and underrepresented women (13.1%). No differences emerged from 2024 across the 4 groups. Since 2007, White women (66.9% vs. 79.1%) have worked *less* whereas underrepresented women (13.1% vs. 7%) and White men (19.3% vs. 13.3%) have worked *more*. No change has been observed with underrepresented men, however, though some years (2021), underrepresented men reached as high as 8% of casting directors.

LGBTQ+

The 100 top films of 2025 depicted 36 LGBTQ+ on screen speaking or named characters. This is <1% of the entire sample of characters. Of the 36 coded LGBTQ+ characters in 2025, 7 were lesbian, 22 were gay, 5 were bisexual, 0 were trans, and 2 were from “another sexuality.” The proportion of LGBTQ+ characters on screen was substantially below U.S. population estimates (10%).

The sheer number of Lesbian characters was lower in 2025 (7 characters) than in 2024 (18 characters) but roughly the same as in 2007 (4 characters). The year with the highest frequency of lesbians on screen was 2022 (27 characters). In 2025, the number of gay characters was 22. This number was up from 2024 ($n=12$) and 2014 ($n=12$). 2019 featured the highest number of gay characters on screen across the 12-year sample. Bisexual characters in 2025 ($n=5$) were like those in 2024 ($n=8$) and 2007 ($n=5$). 2022 was the sample year where the most bisexual characters appeared on screen ($n=13$). There were no trans characters across the 100 top films of 2025, which is not different from 2024 (1 character) or 2014 (0 characters).

Only 1 film depicted an LGBTQ+ lead/co lead across the 100 top films in 2025, which was not meaningfully different from 2024 (5 movies) or 2014 (2 movies).

A little more than three-fourths (78%) of the movies exclude LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters from the screen in 2025. This percentage was down 4 percentage points from 2024 (82%) and 8 percentage points from 2014 (86%). The percentage of films erasing the LGBTQ+ community on screen in 2025 was identical to 2019, however. Only 3 movies depicted the LGBTQ+ community at proportional representation in 2025, which did not differ from 2024 (2 movies) or 2014 (1 movie).

Of the 36 LGB characters, a full 69.4% were male ($n=25$) and 30.1% were female ($n=11$). In terms of race/ethnicity, 60% were White, 20% Asian, 8.6% Black, 8.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 2.9% Multiracial/Multiethnic. The vast majority (72.2%, $n=26$) of the LGBTQ+ characters were young adults (21-39 years), 22.2% ($n=8$) were middle aged (40-64 years), 2.8% ($n=1$) were elderly (65 and over) and 2.8% ($n=1$) were teenagers (13-20 years). Three (2 lesbians, 1 gay male) of the LGBTQ+ characters were parents or caregivers.

Disability

Only 121 (2.8%) speaking or named characters with a disability were coded across the 100 top films of 2025. U.S. Census documents that 27.2% of Americans identify with a disability. The percentage and number of people with disabilities in 2025 was similar to 2024 (2.4%) and 2015 (2.4%).

The most frequent type of disability shown on screen was physical (59.5%, $n=72$). Examples of speaking or named characters with physical disabilities shown in storytelling include but are not limited to characters with mobility restrictions, missing or prosthetic limbs, paralysis, and wheelchair use. 38% ($n=46$) of speaking or named characters displayed communicative disabilities. Examples of characters with communicative disabilities include blindness, selective mutism, and difficulty speaking. And finally, 32.2% ($n=39$) of characters were portrayed with some type of cognitive disability. The ways in which cognitive disabilities were shown on screen include autism spectrum disorder, memory loss, and PTSD.

Almost half of the sample (49 movies) did not depict a single speaking or named character with a disability. This number is significantly higher than 2024 (44 films) but not different from 2015 (45 films). 2020 was the year with the most erasure, with 62 movies failing to depict a single speaking character with a disability on screen. Only 1 movie portrayed characters with a disability at or near proportional representation in 2025, which did not differ from any year in the sample time frame.

In terms of characters with disability and gender, a full 69.4% ($n=84$) were male and 29.8% ($n=36$) were female. Nearly 70% of characters with disabilities were White, 8.8% Asian, 6.9% Black, 4.9% Hispanic/Latino, 7.8% Multiracial/Multiethnic, and 2% MENA. The age distribution for characters with disability was as follows: 44.9% middle aged (40-64 years of age) or elderly (65 years of age or older), 26.3% young adult (21-39 years of age), 19.5% children (0-12 years of age), and 9.3% teens (13-20 years of age).

44.6% of characters with disabilities were parents and none were part of the LGBTQ+ community. Fifteen characters with disabilities led or co led a film in 2025. The percentage of films with a lead/co lead with a disability in 2025 was lower than 2024 (20%) but higher than 2015 (10%). A full 42.2% of speaking or named characters with a disability were inconsequential to the storyline.

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This study examines inclusion across 1,900 of the top-performing theatrically-released films in the U.S. from 2007 to 2025.¹ Across 19 years, we have assessed every speaking or named character on screen for gender and race/ethnicity. LGBTQ+ coding was added in 2014 and characters with disability in 2015. No documentaries, music videos, or episodic TV shows were included in the sample, even if they were shown in theaters. Behind the camera, we examined the frequency and percentage of women and people of color employed as directors, writers, producers, composers and casting directors. The report is segmented by highlighting findings by identity group below. Given that we have released this report so many times, we only provide a cursory overview of our methods in the footnotes. See earlier versions of the report for complete details of our methodology.

Each year, we highlight trends for the 100 top films first (2025) and then compare those findings to the year before (2024) and 2007. Only differences of ± 5 percentage points were noted between years to avoid highlighting small deviations.

Gender

On Screen Prevalence. A total of 4,333 speaking or named characters were coded in 2025. Approximately two-thirds of these characters were men and boys (66.3%, $n=2,874$) and 33.6% ($n=1,455$) were women and girls.² This calculates into a gender ratio of 1.97 male characters to every 1 female character. Only 4 non binary speaking or named characters were coded across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2025.

The percentage of girls and women on screen has not changed over time (see Table 1). In fact, the percentage of girls and women on screen in 2025 was identical to 2024 (33.6%) and was not meaningfully different from 2007 (29.9%).

Another way to measure equality on screen is to assess how many films were “gender balanced.” This variable captured whether the film featured girls and women in 45%-54.9% of the cast. As shown in Table 1, only 14% of the 100 top movies of 2025 were gender balanced. This is a non-significant decrease of 4 percentage points from 2024 (18%) and an increase of 2 percentage points from 2007. Clearly, there has been no short- or long-term change on this measure in the last 19 years.

Table 1
Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Year: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Female Characters	% of Balanced Casts	Ratio of Males to Females	Total # of Characters	Total # of Films
2007	29.9%	12%	2.35 to 1	4,379	100
2008	32.8%	15%	2.05 to 1	4,371	100
2009	32.8%	17%	2.05 to 1	4,342	100
2010	30.3%	4%	2.30 to 1	4,154	100
2011	31.2%	12%	2.21 to 1	4,508	100
2012	28.4%	6%	2.52 to 1	4,476	100
2013	29.2%	16%	2.43 to 1	4,506	100
2014	28.1%	9%	2.56 to 1	4,611	100
2015	31.4%	18%	2.19 to 1	4,370	100
2016	31.5%	11%	2.18 to 1	4,590	100
2017	31.8%	19%	2.15 to 1	4,454	100
2018	33.1%	9%	2.02 to 1	4,422	100
2019	34%	14%	1.94 to 1	4,450	100
2020	33.3%	15%	2.00 to 1	3,754	100
2021	33.1%	15%	2.02 to 1	4,301	100
2022	34.6%	15%	1.89 to 1	4,218	100
2023	31.7%	11%	2.15 to 1	5,077	100
2024	33.6%	18%	1.97 to 1	4,403	100
2025	33.6%	14%	1.98 to 1	4,333	100
Total	31.8%	13.2%	2.15 to 1	83,720	1,900

The percentage of female speaking characters across three stereotypically male genres (action/adventure, animation, comedy) are presented in Table 2. Only 30.4% of all speaking characters on screen were girls and women in action/adventure, 28.6% in animation, and 38.7% in comedy. Across all three genres, no differences emerged for females from 2024 to 2025. The percentage of female speaking characters in action/adventure and animation in 2025 movies was significantly higher than in 2007 (20% action/adventure, 20.8% animation). No differences in the percentage of female speaking characters emerged for comedy over time, however (see Table 2).

Table 2
Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Genre and Year: 2007-2025

Year	% of Female Characters in Action/Adventure	% of Female Characters in Animation	% of Female Characters in Comedy
2007	20%	20.8%	36%
2008	21.6%	26.9%	40.2%
2009	21.6%	30.8%	39%
2010	23.5%	30.7%	35.6%
2011	25%	23.7%	37.2%
2012	22.7%	27.5%	36%
2013	23.9%	24.6%	36.5%
2014	21.8%	21.5%	33.1%
2015	25.6%	26.8%	36.5%
2016	23.3%	30.8%	40.8%
2017	24.4%	30.8%	42.9%
2018	29%	31.3%	37.5%
2019	27.9%	33.3%	38.7%
2020	24.7%	35.3%	39.2%
2021	29.2%	35.7%	34.4%
2022	29.9%	32.4%	34.5%
2023	27.2%	36.6%	32.6%
2024	26.3%	33.2%	38.7%
2025	30.4%	28.6%	38.7%

Note: Genre distinctions were made using Box Office Mojo and IMDbPro descriptors. Movies were categorized into one mutually exclusive genre type prior to analysis.

Leading characters were also evaluated for gender. Of the 100 top movies, 66% featured a single protagonist, 25% depicted a lead and roughly equal co lead, and 9% highlighted an ensemble cast driving the story. Focusing solely on films with single leads or leads/co leads as protagonists, only 38% were girls and/or women. This was a substantial decrease from 2024, when 55% of all films were centered on female leads/co leads. However, the 2025 percentage was higher than the 2007 percentage, when only 20% of all movies were led/co led by a girl and/or woman on screen.

Table 3
Prevalence of Female-Identified Leads & Co Leads by Year: 2007-2025

Year	% of films w/ Girls & Women	% of films w/ Women of Color	% of films w/ Women 45 Yrs & Older	% of films w/WOC 45 Yrs & Older
2007	20%	1%	1%	0
2008	27%	4%	4%	1%
2009	27%	4%	4%	0
2010	30%	5%	3%	0
2011	23%	5%	4%	2%
2012	24%	3%	3%	0
2013	28%	3%	7%	2%
2014	21%	4%	0	0
2015	32%	3%	5%	1%
2016	33%	3%	8%	1%
2017	32%	4%	5%	1%
2018	39%	11%	11%	4%
2019	43%	17%	3%	1%
2020	36%	9%	4%	0
2021	41%	14%	7%	1%
2022	44%	18%	10%	5%
2023	30%	14%	3%	1%
2024	55%	14%	8%	1%
2025	38%	15%	3%	0
Total	32.8%	8%	4.9%	1.1%

Note: To construct this table, the unit of analysis was the movie. Gender was determined at the character level, using presentational cues on screen. For race/ethnicity, however, the actor's background information was retrieved. Ensemble casts are not included in any column.

Of the nine films that depicted an ensemble cast in 2025, there were 30 lead characters. Fourteen were females (46.7%) and 16 were males (53.3%). The percentage of female leads in an ensemble was significantly higher than 2024 (40%) and substantially higher than 2007 (31.1%).

Clearly, the results from this section reveal that there has been no meaningful change in the prevalence of women on screen in 2025 in comparison to 2024. Rarely, if ever, have we documented meaningful changes in the frequency of women and girls as speaking or named characters on screen across the 100 top movies released in the U.S.

On Screen Portrayal. We assessed two attributes that are often stereotyped by gender in film: age and parental status. In terms of age, 2025 featured gender balance for characters 0-12 years of age and 13-20 years of age in top movies (see Table 4). However, gender imbalance started to emerge among young adults (21-39 years of age) and was substantially tilted for characters 40 years of age or older (see Table 4). Table 5 illuminates that roughly a quarter of all on screen roles for characters 40 years of age or older were filled with women. This finding has not budged in 19 years!

Table 4
Character Age by Gender in Top-Grossing Films: 2025

Gender	Children 0-12 yrs	Teens 13-20 yrs	Young Adult 21-39 yrs	Adults 40 yrs or Older
Males	52.4%	50.2%	61.6%	75.8%
Females	47.6%	49.8%	38.4%	24.2%
Ratio	1.1 to 1	1 to 1	1.6 to 1	3.1 to 1

Note: Non binary characters were not included in the table as there were only 4 coded in 2025. Of those 4 characters, 2 were teens and 2 were adults.

Table 5
Gender of Characters 40 years of Age and Older: 2007 to 2025

Year	Men	Women
2007	77.9%	22.1%
2008	72.8%	27.2%
2009	75.6%	24.4%
2010	78.2%	21.8%
2011	78.2%	21.8%
2012	79.2%	20.8%
2013	78.4%	21.6%
2014	79.4%	20.6%
2015	75.4%	24.6%
2016	74.3%	25.7%
2017	75.4%	24.6%
2018	75%	25%
2019	74.6%	25.4%
2020	73.2%	26.8%
2021	74.3%	25.7%
2022	74.2%	25.8%
2023	75.2%	24.8%
2024	76.1%	23.8%
2025	75.8%	24.2%
Total	76%	24%

Note: Only characters with an apparent age of 40 years or older were applicable for this analysis.

Pivoting to parental status (Table 6), 37.9% of male characters coded for this variable were parents. Put another way, 62.1% were not. The percentage of male characters that were parents has not changed from 2024 (37.7%) but was substantially down from 2007 (51.5%). For women, the percentage of characters that were depicted as parents in the top films of 2025 clocks in at 47.3%. This percentage has not changed since 2024 (47.6%) or 2007 (50%).

Table 6
Gender and Parental Status: 2007 to 2025

Year	Men	Women
2007	51.5%	50%
2008	41%	52.9%
2009	43%	50.5%
2010	42.6%	49.4%
2011	37.6%	42.4%
2012	45.2%	60.4%
2013	45.8%	51.9%
2014	42%	53.5%
2015	40.2%	44.4%
2016	33.9%	47.5%
2017	33%	40.3%
2018	34.6%	41.3%
2019	31.3%	41.6%
2020	35.6%	44.5%
2021	36.4%	44.1%
2022	32.6%	43.8%
2023	40.8%	46.3%
2024	37.7%	47.6%
2025	37.9%	47.3%
Total	38.5%	46.8%

Note: The presence or absence of parental status was evaluated for each character. Subtracting each cell from 100% yields the percentage of characters shown that were not a parent within gender.

In sum, gender representation in 2025 has not changed from 2024. The frequency of girls and women on screen as well as the context surrounding those portrayals were virtually identical. One of the reasons for the lack of inclusion may pertain to who calls the shots behind the camera, which is the focus of the next section of the report.

Behind the Camera. A total of 1,559 directors, writers, and producers were employed across the 100 top-grossing films of 2025 (see Table 7). Only 21.7% ($n=339$) of the workforce were women and 78.2% were men ($n=1,220$). Overall, this represents an above-the-line ratio of crew at 3.6 males to every 1 female.³

Unpacking each position, a total of 110 directors were credited across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2025. Only 8.2% or 9 of these directors were women. The nine directors were: Madeline Sharafian (*Elio*), Domee Shi (*Elio*), Celine Song (*Materialists*), Maggie Kang (*KPop Demon Hunters*), Nisha Ganatra (*Freaky Friday*), Jennifer Kaytin Robinson (*I Know What You Did Last Summer*), Emma Tammi (*Five Nights at Freddy's 2*), Chloé Zhao (*Hamnet*), and Hikari (*Rental Family*). The percentage and number of women directors has significantly decreased since 2024 but was identical to 2008.

Table 7
Content Creators by Gender: 2025

Position	Men	Women	Gender Ratio
Directors	91.8% (<i>n</i> =101)	8.2% (<i>n</i> =9)	11.2 to 1
Writers	83.6% (<i>n</i> =240)	16% (<i>n</i> =46)	5.2 to 1
Producers	75.4% (<i>n</i> =879)	24.4% (<i>n</i> =284)	3.1 to 1
Total	78.2% (<i>n</i>=1,220)	21.7% (<i>n</i>=339)	3.6 to 1

Table 8
Women Directors: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Women Directors	# of Women Directors	Total # of Directors
2007	2.7%	3	112
2008	8%	9	112
2009	3.6%	4	111
2010	2.8%	3	109
2011	3.7%	4	108
2012	4.1%	5	121
2013	1.9%	2	107
2014	1.9%	2	107
2015	7.5%	8	107
2016	4.2%	5	120
2017	7.3%	8	109
2018	4.5%	5	112
2019	10.7%	12	112
2020	13.6%	15	110
2021	12.4%	14	113
2022	8.8%	10	113
2023	12.1%	14	116
2024	14.3%	16	112
2025	8.2%	9	110
Total	7%	148	2,121

The sample-wide top-performing women directors were Anne Fletcher and Lana Wachowski, both with 4 films each. Chloé Zhao and Greta Gerwig both directed 3 movies across the 19-year sample time frame and 20 different women directed 2 movies. For comparison purposes, the top performing male director across 19 years was Tyler Perry (18 movies) followed by Steven Spielberg (15 films), Clint Eastwood (12 films) and Ridley Scott (12 films). Three male directors each helmed 9 movies (i.e., Jaume Collet-Serra, M Night Shyamalan, Guy Ritchie).

Table 9
Women Directors Working Across the 1,900 Top-Grossing Films: 2007-2025

Abby Kohn	Hallie Meyers-Shyer	Nancy Meyers*
Adele Lim	Hikari	Natalie Erika James
Angelina Jolie	Ishana Shyamalan	Natalie Krinsky
Anna Boden	Janicza Bravo	Nia DaCosta*
Anna Foerster	Jennifer Flackett	Nia Vardalos
Anna Halberg	Jennifer Kaytin Robinson	Niki Caro
Anne Fletcher*	Jennifer Lee*	Nisha Ganatra
Arkasha Stevenson	Jennifer Yuh Nelson*	Nora Ephron
Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari	Jessica M. Thompson	Olivia Newman
Autumn de Wilde	Jessie Nelson	Olivia Wilde*
Ava DuVernay*	Jill Culton	Patricia Riggen
Betty Thomas	Jodie Foster	Patty Jenkins*
Brenda Chapman	Julie Anne Robinson*	Phyllida Lloyd*
Castille Landon	Julie Taymor	Rachel Morrison
Cate Shortland	Kasi Lemmons*	Reed Morano
Catherine Hardwicke*	Kat Coiro	Robin Wright
Cathy Yan	Kathryn Bigelow	Rosalind Ross
Celine Song*	Kay Cannon	Rose Glass
Charise Castro Smith	Kelly Fremon Craig	Roxann Dawson
Chinonye Chukwu	Kelly Marcel	S.J. Clarkson
Chloé Zhao*	Kimberly Peirce	Sam Taylor-Johnson*
Christy Summerhays	Kirsten Sheridan	Samantha Jayne
Coralie Fargeat	Kitty Green	Sanaa Hamri
Dana Ledoux Miller	Lana Wachowski*	Sarah Smith*
Diane English	Laura Brousseau	Shari Springer Berman
Domee Shi	Laura Terruso	Sharon Maguire
Elaine Bogan	Liesl Tommy	Sofia Coppola
Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum	Lilly Wachowski	Stacy Title
Elizabeth Banks*	Lisa Joy	Stella Meghie*
Emerald Fennell*	Lorene Scafaria	Stephanie Stine
Emma Seligman	Loveleen Tandan	Susanna Fogel
Emma Tammi*	Lucia Aniello	Susanna White
Faryn Pearl	Madaline Sharafian	Thea Sharrock
Fawn Veerasunthorn	Maggie Kang	Tina Gordon
Floria Sigismondi	Maria Schrader	Trish Sie
Gabriela Cowperthwaite	Marielle Heller	Veronika Franz
Gail Mancuso	Meghna Gulzar	Zelda Williams
Gina Prince-Bythewood*	Melina Matsoukas	Zoë Kravitz
Greta Gerwig*	Mimi Leder	
Halina Reijn	Miranda July	

Note: The asterisk illuminates those directors working at least 2 or more times from 2007 to 2025.

In addition to directors, we examined the gender breakdown of writers across the 100 top-grossing films of 2025. As shown in Table 10, only 16% of credited screenwriters were women. This calculates to a gender ratio of 5.2 men working to every 1 woman. As shown in Table 10, the percentage of women writers in 2025 (16%) was not significantly different (± 5 percentage points) from 2024 (12.9%) or 2007 (11.2%). Focusing on producers, 24.4% were women across the 100 top movies of 2025 (see Table 7). Table 11 reveals that there has been no meaningful change in the percentage of female producers from 2025 to 2024 (27%) or 2007 (19.7%).

Table 10
Women Writers: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Women Writers	# of Women Writers	Total # of Writers
2007	11.2%	35	314
2008	14.1%	36	255
2009	13.3%	38	285
2010	11.3%	30	265
2011	12.2%	38	312
2012	11.7%	33	283
2013	7.4%	21	283
2014	11.4%	34	298
2015	11.4%	30	264
2016	12.4%	37	299
2017	10.4%	35	338
2018	14.8%	47	317
2019	19.1%	56	293
2020	12.3%	31	252
2021	16.8%	51	304
2022	16.3%	42	258
2023	15.2%	46	303
2024	12.9%	34	264
2025	16%	46	287
Total	13.2%	720	5,474

Table 11
Women Producers: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Women Producers	# of Women Producers	Total # of Producers
2007	19.7%	164	832
2008	19.7%	172	873
2009	22.3%	195	876
2010	18.6%	165	885
2011	21.7%	192	886
2012	20.3%	181	890
2013	20%	208	1,042
2014	20.2%	207	1,022
2015	21.9%	224	1,021
2016	21%	219	1,045
2017	21.8%	251	1,153
2018	21.2%	239	1,127
2019	24.4%	275	1,125
2020	24.3%	288	1,187
2021	24.9%	300	1,205
2022	26.8%	301	1,121
2023	24.4%	281	1,152
2024	27%	351	1,290
2025	24.4%	284	1,165
Total	22.6%	4,497	19,897

Besides directing, the number of women composers is typically at the floor. In 2025, only 10 or 8.5% of the 118 composers were women. This is a gender ratio of 10.8 male composers working to every 1 female composer. No change was observed from 2024 to 2025. See Table 12. Significant progress has been achieved if we compare 2025 to 2007, when no women composers worked across the 100 top-grossing films. All of the women and non binary composers across the 19-year sample are featured in Table 13.

Table 12
Women and Non Binary Composers: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Women Composers	# of Women Composers	Total # of Composers
2007	0	0	107
2008	1.8%	2	108
2009	1.8%	2	109
2010	1.7%	2	115
2011	0.9%	1	109
2012	1.9%	2	105
2013	1.8%	2	114
2014	1%	1	105
2015	0.9%	1	114
2016	1.6%	2	121
2017	0.9%	1	113
2018	2.8%	3	108
2019	5.1%	6	118
2020	6.9%	9	130
2021	3.8%	5*	131
2022	8.3%	10	121
2023	9.4%	12	128
2024	8.4%	10	119
2025	8.5%	10	118
Total	3.7%	81	2,193

Note: In 2021, the asterisk indicates that one of the composers was identified as gender non binary and four identified as women.

Table 13
Women & Non Binary Composers Working Across the 1,900 Top-Grossing Films: 2007-2025

Alisa Okehazama	Jessica Rose Weiss
Amie Doherty	Karen O
Andrea Datzman	Katherine Bostic
Anna Drubich*	Laura Karpman*
Anne Dudley*	Laurence Lafond-Beaulne
Anne Nikitin	Lesley Barber
Asami Tachibana	Lisbeth Scott
Camille Poliquin	Mica Levi
Chanda Dancy*	Miho Hazama
Charli XCX	Morgan Kibby
Chelsea Wolfe	Nala Sinephro
Claudia Sarne	Nami Melumad
Dara Taylor*	Natalie Holt
Deborah Lurie*	Nikiie
Eiko Ishibashi	Parampara Thakur
Este Haim	Pinar Toprak*
Genevieve Vincent	Rachel Portman*
Germaine Franco*	Rihanna
Herdís Stefánsdóttir*	Sarah Schachner*
Hildur Guðnadóttir*	Stephanie Economou*
Ice Spice	Tachibana Ayaka
Isabella Summers	Tamar-kali*
Isobel Waller-Bridge	Tierney Sutton
Jeanine Tesori	Yuki Kajiura

Note: The asterisk illuminates those composers working at least two or more times from 2007 to 2025.

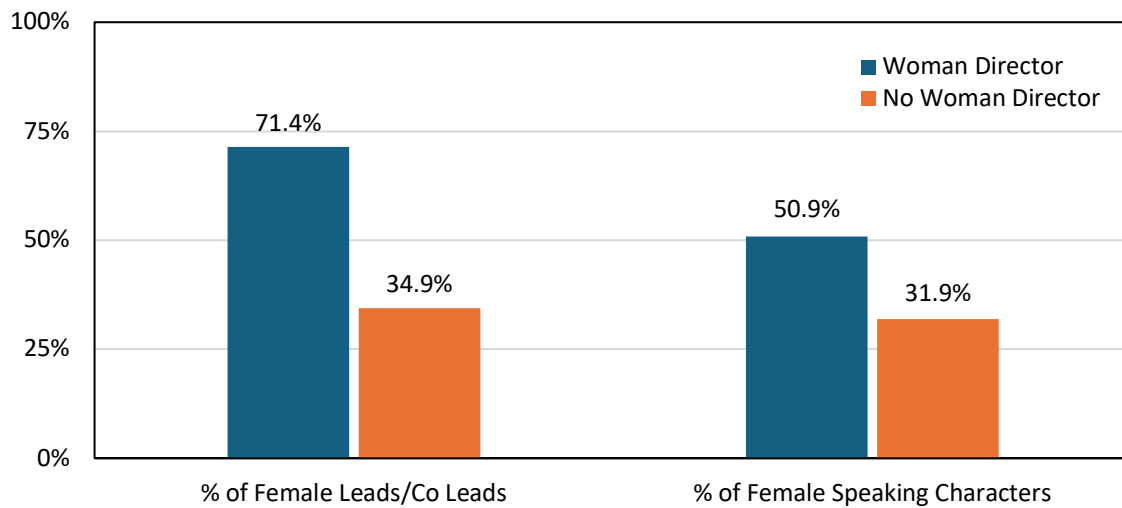
Finally, we examined the gender breakdown of casting directors across the 100 top films of 2025. A full 80.1% of all casting directors were women across the sample. No change emerged from 2024 (78.4%) to 2025. However, the percentage in 2025 was significantly lower than the percentage in 2007 (86.1%).

Table 14
Women Casting Directors: 2007 to 2025

Year	% of Women Casting Directors	# of Women Casting Directors	Total # of Casting Directors
2007	86.1%	136	158
2008	80.2%	134	167
2009	85.2%	138	162
2010	81.6%	129	158
2011	79.1%	125	158
2012	76.1%	124	163
2013	79.1%	136	172
2014	80%	128	160
2015	80.5%	128	159
2016	83.6%	117	140
2017	80.4%	119	148
2018	85.1%	120	141
2019	70.4%	95	135
2020	79.8%	126	158
2021	70.4%	107	152
2022	80.7%	113	140
2023	73.9%	116	157
2024	78.4%	109	139
2025	80.1%	117	146
Total	79.5%	2,317	2,913

Finally, we were curious about the relationship between director gender and character gender. To examine this, we separated all of the films in the sample into two silos. The first silo featured movies with at least one woman director attached. The second silo contained movies directed only by males. Then, we looked at the percentage of female leads/co leads and speaking or named characters within each silo. The results are revealed in Figure 1. The results from this simple analysis show that films with women directors attached have significantly more female leads/co leads and girls and women on screen than do films with only male directors attached.

Figure 1
Percentage of Female Leads/Co Leads and Speaking Characters On Screen by Director Gender: 2025



There are at least a few potential explanations for these findings. It may be the case that some women directors are drawn to and advocate for stories that resonate with their lived experience. This reason is consistent with the “write what you know” perspective in Hollywood and thus accounts for the higher percentage of female-driven stories. It may also be the case that studios and gatekeepers are more likely to attach women directors to films centered on or that tip female in terms of on-screen participation. From this perspective, women directors get opportunities when the material they’re helping matches their gender identity. This latter perspective, of course, is problematic and limits women directors’ opportunities based on the type of stories being told. Of course, these are correlational data and thus should be interpreted with caution.

Taken together, the results show that the prevalence of females on screen in 2025 was not different from 2024. Despite comprising just over 50% of the U.S. population,⁴ girls and women were only a third of all speaking roles on screen. These trends have been stable for the almost 20 years we have been working on this report. Further, the behind the camera trends revealed no progress for women from 2024 to 2025. While gains behind the camera for some women (i.e., directors, composers) are notable when compared to 2007, they still have a long way to go before they approximate participation of women directors across Netflix fare, in television, or in independent film making.⁵

Race/Ethnicity

On Screen Prevalence. A total of 3,729 speaking or named characters were coded with a discernible race/ethnicity. A total of 58.5% were White, 14.5% Asian, 10.5% Black, 5.8% Hispanic/Latino, 5.2% Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, <1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 4.5% Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic/Other. In total, 41.5% of all speaking characters were underrepresented or non-White, which is on point with U.S. Census (43.9%).⁶

Table 15
Prevalence of Character Race/Ethnicity On Screen by Year: 2007-2025

Year	White	Black	H/L	AI/AN	Asian	NHPI	MENA	Multi	# of Chars
2007	77.6%	13%	3.3%	.1%	3.4%	.1%	2.4%	0%	4,129
2008	71.2%	13.2%	4.9%	.2%	7.1%	.4%	2.8%	.2%	4,017
2009	76.2%	14.7%	2.8%	.2%	4.7%	.1%	1.2%	0%	4,014
2010	77.6%	10.3%	3.9%	.4%	5%	.1%	2.6%	.2%	3,848
2011	77.1%	9.1%	5.9%	.4%	4.1%	.4%	.7%	2.4%	3,941
2012	76.3%	10.8%	4.2%	.2%	5%	0%	3.3%	.2%	4,048
2013	74.1%	14.1%	4.9%	.2%	4.4%	0%	1.1%	1.2%	3,932
2014	73.1%	12.5%	4.9%	.1%	5.3%	0%	2.9%	1.2%	4,025
2015	73.7%	12.2%	5.3%	.3%	4%	.3%	.6%	3.6%	3,975
2016	70.8%	13.5%	3.1%	.1%	5.6%	.7%	3.4%	2.7%	3,758
2017	70.7%	12.1%	6.2%	.5%	4.8%	.1%	1.7%	3.9%	3,691
2018	63.7%	16.9%	5.3%	0%	8.2%	.4%	1.5%	4%	3,895
2019	65.6%	15.7%	4.9%	.4%	7.2%	.2%	1.6%	4.4%	3,890
2020	58.5%	9.6%	5.5%	.2%	19.5%	.2%	3.3%	3.2%	3,319
2021	58.8%	14.3%	8.6%	.1%	13%	.2%	1.3%	3.6%	3,941
2022	61.7%	13.4%	5.2%	.1%	15.9%	.1%	1.5%	2.1%	3,802
2023	55.7%	12.6%	5.2%	1%	18.4%	.3%	2.7%	4.1%	4,473
2024	63.6%	13.2%	3.1%	.4%	13.5%	.8%	1.3%	4.1%	3,805
2025	58.5%	10.5%	5.8%	.4%	14.5%	.7%	5.2%	4.5%	3,729
Total	68.7%	12.8%	4.9%	.3%	8.6%	.3%	2.2%	2.3%	74,232

When looking at each racial/ethnic group measured, there is little deviation between 2024 and 2025 in Table 15. One significant difference pertains to White characters. There was a lower percentage of White speaking or named characters in 2025 than in 2024. While not significant, the opposite pattern emerged for MENA characters. Matter of fact, 2025 records the highest percentage of MENA speaking characters across the 19-year study. When comparing 2025 to 2007, the percentage of Asian speaking characters on screen has dramatically *increased* (14.5% vs. 3.4%) whereas the percentage of White speaking characters has *decreased* (77.6% vs. 58.5%).

Table 16 reveals the prevalence of underrepresented speaking and/or named characters across 3 genres (action/adventure, animation, comedy) from 2007 to 2025. In 2025, the percentage of underrepresented characters in action/adventure *decreased* from 2024 (40.4%) whereas the percentage in animation (77.7%) and comedy (47.5%) *increased*. In animation, over three-quarters of the speaking or named characters who were applicable to be coded on this variable were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Both animation and comedy featured the highest percentage of underrepresented characters across the 19-year sample.

Table 16
Prevalence of Underrepresented Characters On Screen by Film Genre by Year: 2007-2025

Year	% of UR characters Action/Adventure	% of UR characters Animation	% of UR characters Comedy
2007	21.6%	8.1%	23.1%
2008	32.1%	10.5%	27.8%
2009	23.4%	12.4%	24.7%
2010	30%	1.5%	23.4%
2011	25.2%	27.5%	26.8%
2012	29.4%	5.3%	24.1%
2013	26.9%	12.4%	27.6%
2014	24.9%	27.8%	28.9%
2015	28.9%	13.2%	27.3%
2016	27.3%	48.5%	32.1%
2017	28.1%	34%	35.6%
2018	40.3%	35.2%	38%
2019	42.4%	41.1%	37.5%
2020	46.9%	56.2%	26.8%
2021	45%	59.4%	22.5%
2022	46.9%	59.2%	36.7%
2023	57.6%	68.1%	36.5%
2024	49.9%	41.4%	25.2%
2025	40.4%	77.7%	47.5%
Total	36.5%	39.6%	29.4%

Note: All non-white characters were collapsed into an “UR” or underrepresented category.

Now, we turn our attention to assessing how three different racial/ethnic groups (i.e., Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian) fare on screen across three different prevalence measures. First, we examined the number of films missing speaking or named characters from specific racial/ethnic groups on screen. This is a measure of erasure. Second, we examine the total number of films out of 100 achieving proportional representation. We define proportional representation as the number of movies depicting a similar percentage of a specific racial/ethnic group on screen to U.S. Census within ± 2 percentage points.⁷ Third, we assess the total number of films above proportional representation for a particular group. Only films with more than 2 percentage points above U.S. Census will be included.

For Black characters (see Table 17), a total of 30 movies did not feature any speaking or named characters from this community. 2025 (30 movies) was substantially higher in erasure than 2024 (18 movies) and 2018 (13 movies). The total number of films ± 2 percentage points within U.S. Census (13.5%) was 12 movies. This number was similar to 2024 (15 movies) but lower than 2018 (17 movies). Twenty-five movies were above proportional representation, a number lower than 2024 (31 films) and 2018 (31 films).

Table 17
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Black Characters Across 800 Films: 2018-2025

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
# of films w/out any Black spk chars	13	15	24	20	15	18	18	30
# of films w/proportional rep	17	20	15	14	16	4	15	12
# of films above proportional rep	31	30	20	31	24	34	31	25
U.S. Census	13.5%							
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The number of 100 top movies erasing Hispanic/Latino speaking or named characters was 46, which is not different from 2024 (49) or 2018 (47). Similarly, the number of films at or above proportional representation (20.5%) in 2025 does not differ from 2024 or 2018 (see Table 18).

Table 18
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Hispanic/Latino Chars Across 800 Films: 2018-2025

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
# of films w/out H/L speaking chars	47	44	51	38	46	42	49	46
# of films w/proportional rep	2	2	0	2	3	0	0	1
# of films above proportional rep	4	5	6	10	6	7	2	5
U.S. Census	20.5%							
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

For Asians, a different pattern emerges. While not different than 2024, there were fewer films missing Asians in 2025 compared to 2018. In terms of proportional representation, fewer films in 2025 (21 films) were within ± 2 percentage points than in 2024 (31 films). No difference was observed comparing 2025 to 2018 (20 films). For Asian characters with films above proportional representation, 2025 was a standout year. Greater than a third (35 films) depicted Asian characters above proportional representation, which was higher than 2024 (24 films) and 2018 (27 films).

Table 19
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Asian Characters Across 800 Films: 2018-2025

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
# of films w/out Asian speaking chars	32	36	46	28	34	31	29	26
# of films w/proportional rep	20	18	15	21	17	16	31	21
# of films above proportional rep	27	27	27	32	31	27	24	35
U.S. Census	6.9%							
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Each year we not only examine the number of films erasing particular communities, but we also extend this analysis to focus exclusively on the invisibility of girls and women from every racial/ethnic group we measure. Table 20 reveals four major results from the data.

First and to no surprise, White girls and women were the least likely to be erased across the 19-year sample. However, an uptick in films without any White girls and women was observed in 2025 (12 films) in comparison to 2018 (4 films). Second, there has been an increase in the erasure of Black girls and women across the 100 top films of 2025 (48) in comparison to 2024 (38) or 2018 (33). Third, American

Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and MENA girls and women were very rarely seen on screen in 2025, 2024, or 2018. Fourth and finally, more films erased Multiracial/Multiethnic girls and women in 2025 (57) than in 2018 (51).

Table 20
Epidemic of Invisibility Facing Girls/Women On Screen by Race/Ethnicity: 2018-2025

Racial/ Ethnic Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total Across 1,900 Movies
White	4	7	9	6	7	12	8	12	113
Hisp/Latinas	70	71	69	57	61	62	70	67	1,285
Black	33	33	52	37	32	39	38	48	810
Asian	54	55	61	52	44	49	48	47	1,126
AI/AN	99	97	97	98	100	99	98	96	1,871
NH/PI	97	99	99	98	99	99	97	98	1,873
MENA	93	92	89	94	95	81	88	89	1,749
MR/ME	51	45	68	66	70	56	56	57	1,369

Note: Each of the racial/ethnic groups are abbreviated for space reasons. Hisp/Latinas=Hispanic/Latinas, AI/AN=American Indian/Alaskan Native, NH/PI=Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, MENA=Middle Eastern/North African, MR/ME=Multiracial/Multiethnic.

Similar to gender, we examined the leads/co leads for whether their identity belonged to an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. As shown in Table 21, 34% of the 100 top films' leads/co leads of 2025 featured an underrepresented protagonist. 2025 movies were more inclusive than 2024 movies (26%) or 2007 movies (13%). The 34% of movies featured a total of 37 leads/co leads: 9 Black, 4 Hispanic/Latino, 11 Asian, 2 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2 MENA, and 9 Multiracial/Multiethnic. Also featured in Table 21 is the percentage of girls/women that were underrepresented leads/co leads. In 2025, 15% of all films depicted a story centered on a woman/girl of color. This percentage was equivalent to 2024 (14%) but substantially higher than 2007 (1%).

Table 21
Percentage of Underrepresented Leads/Co Leads Across 1,900 Films: 2007-2025

Year	% of UR Leads/ Co Leads	% of UR Female Leads/Co Leads
2007	13%	1%
2008	13%	4%
2009	17%	4%
2010	12%	5%
2011	9%	5%
2012	13%	3%
2013	17%	3%
2014	17%	4%
2015	15%	3%
2016	14%	3%
2017	22%	4%
2018	27%	11%
2019	32%	17%
2020	29%	9%
2021	35%	14%
2022	31%	18%
2023	37%	14%
2024	26%	14%
2025	34%	15%
Total	21.7%	8%

Summing up, a few notable trends emerged in 2025 in terms of the prevalence of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. First, the percentage of underrepresented speaking characters in action/adventure and animated films was at a 19-year high in 2025. Further, 2025 brought a higher number of films with Asian representation above U.S. Census. The highest percentage of MENA speaking characters was also observed in 2025. In contrast to these representational gains, 2025 brought more erasure of Black characters on screen in general and Black girls and women in particular.

On Screen Portrayal. Two additional attributes were assessed for speaking and/or named characters by race/ethnicity. The first was gender. Table 22 reveals that most characters across all races/ethnicities measured were men. The table reveals that girls and women of Asian descent were the most likely to be featured on screen and Hispanic/Latinas were the least likely. Table 23 captures the relationship between race/ethnicity and parental status. In 2025, Hispanic/Latino males were the most likely to be depicted as fathers whereas Black males were the least likely. Black women, however, were the most likely to be shown as a mother whereas women from “other” races/ethnicities were the least likely.

Table 22
Percentage of Men & Women Characters by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2025

Gender	White	Black	Hisp/Latino	Asian	Other
% males	66.6%	61.2%	68.5%	59.9%	67.9%
% females	33.4%	38.8%	31.5%	40.1%	32.1%
Ratio	2 to 1	1.6 to 1	2.2 to 1	1.5 to 1	2.1 to 1

Note: Due to small sample sizes, speaking characters coded as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Multiracial/Multiethnic were collapsed into an “other” category.

Table 23
Percentage of Men & Women Parents by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2025

Gender	White	Black	Hisp/Latino	Asian	Other
% men who are parents	40.1%	17.2%	46.2%	42.9%	31.7%
% women who are parents	49.8%	55.9%	44.4%	41.2%	37.5%

Note: Due to small sample sizes, speaking characters coded as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Multiracial/Multiethnic were collapsed into an “other” category.

In total, the parental status and gender of underrepresented characters in 2025 demonstrated a few differences. The most gender-balanced racial group on screen were Asians, with 40.1% of all on screen speaking or named characters girls and women. For parental status, few Black males were shown in a caregiving role in 2025 and few women from “other” races/ethnicities.

Behind the Camera. A total of 110 directors worked across the 100 most popular films of 2025. Of these directors, 75.4% ($n=83$) were White and 24.6% ($n=27$) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates into a ratio of 3.1 White directors to every 1 underrepresented director. The percentage of underrepresented directors in 2025 (24.6%) was not different from 2024 (23.2%) but was higher than 2007 (12.5%). The top-performing underrepresented directors were Tyler Perry (18 movies), M. Night Shyamalan (9 movies), Jaume Collet-Serra (9 movies), and Antoine Fuqua, Jon M. Chu, Tim Story, and James Wan each had 8 movies. The top-performing White directors were Steven Spielberg (15 movies), Clint Eastwood (12 movies) and Ridley Scott (12 movies).

Table 24
Number of Black, Hispanic/Latino, & Asian Directors by Gender & Year: 2007-2025

Year	Black Men	Black Women	H/L Men	H/L Women	Asian Men	Asian Women	Total
2007	8	0	3	0	3	0	112
2008	5	2	3	0	2	1	112
2009	7	0	7	0	1	0	111
2010	5	0	2	0	4	0	109
2011	2	0	3	0	3	1	108
2012	6	0	3	0	2	0	121
2013	7	0	7	0	6	0	107
2014	4	1	8	0	0	0	107
2015	4	0	4	0	6	0	107
2016	7	0	2	1	4	1	120
2017	5	1	8	0	4	0	109
2018	14	1	5	0	4	0	112
2019	6	3	3	2	6	0	112
2020	3	1	5	0	7	4	110
2021	6	3	10	2	13	3	113
2022	3	3	4	0	12	0	113
2023	9	1	4	0	10	3	116
2024	2	1	6	1	10	3	112
2025	4	0	4	0	11	6	110
Total	5% (n=107)	<1% (n=17)	4.3% (n=91)	<1% (n=6)	5.1% (n=108)	1% (n=22)	2,121

Table 24 breaks down how often individuals from three racial/ethnic groups work behind the camera as directors. In terms of Black directors, only 4 were attached to the 100 top-grossing films of 2025. This number is not different from 2024 ($n=3$) but was only half of the number working in 2007 ($n=8$). Across these 3 years (2007, 2024, 2025), only 1 of the directors was a Black woman. The four Black directors in 2025, none of which were women, were: Ryan Coogler (*Sinners*), Lawrence Lamont (*One of Them Days*), Justin Tipping (*Him*), and Julius Onah (*Captain America: Brave New World*).

Focusing on the Latino community, only 4 directors worked across the 100 top movies of 2025. All 4 directors were men and the findings did not differ from 2024 ($n=7$) or 2007 ($n=3$). The 4 Hispanic/Latino directors were: Adrian Molina (*Elio*), Jaume Collet-Serra (*The Women in the Yard*), JP Sans (*The Bad Guys 2*), and Ray Mendoza (*Warfare*). It is important to note that the modal number of films across the sample time frame for Latina directors was zero.

Finally, we examined Asian helmers working across the 100 top movies. As shown in Table 24, 11 males and 6 females worked across the 100 top films of 2025. For male directors, this number was on par with 2024 ($n=10$) but substantially higher than 2007 ($n=3$). The 2025 Asian male directors were Aditya Dhar (*Dhurandhar*), Aziz Ansari (*Good Fortune*), Bong Joon Ho (*Mickey 17*), Jonathan Eusebio (*Love Hurts*), Jon M. Chu (*Wicked: For Good*), Justin Tipping (*Him*), Park Chan-Wook (*No Other Choice*), Seong-ho Jang (*The King of Kings*), Tatsuya Yoshihara (*Chainsaw Man-The Movie: Reze Arc*), Timo Tjahjanto (*Nobody 2*), Yu Yang (*Ne Zha 2*). For women, the number in 2025 (6 females) has doubled from 2024 (3 females). 2025

was also substantially higher than 2007 (0 females). The 2025 Asian female directors include Celine Song (*Materialists*), Chloe Zhao (*Hamnet*), Domee Shi (*Elio*), Maggie Kang (*KPop Demon Hunters*), Hiroki (*Rental Family*) and Nisha Ganatra (*Freakier Friday*).

Finally, we examined the employment patterns of underrepresented vs White casting directors across the 100 top films of 2025. Prior to this analysis, every casting director was coded into one of four identity groups: White males, White females, underrepresented males (non White) and underrepresented Females (non White). In 2025, White women were most likely to work as casting directors followed by White men (19.3%) and underrepresented women (13.1%). No differences emerged from 2024 across the 4 groups, as shown in Table 25. Since 2007, White women (66.9% vs. 79.1%) have worked *less* whereas underrepresented women (13.1% vs. 7%) and White men (19.3% vs. 13.3%) have worked *more*. No change has been observed with underrepresented men, however, though some years (2021), underrepresented men reached as high as 8% of casting directors. See Table 25.

Table 25
Underrepresented Status & Gender of Casting Directors by Year: 2007-2025

Year	White Men	UR Men	White Women	UR Women
2007	13.3%	<1%	79.1%	7%
2008	18%	1.8%	72.5%	7.8%
2009	14.8%	0	77.8%	7.4%
2010	16.5%	1.9%	76.5%	5.1%
2011	17.7%	3.2%	72.2%	7%
2012	23.3%	<1%	68.7%	7.4%
2013	18.6%	2.3%	70.4%	8.7%
2014	16.2%	3.8%	68.8%	11.2%
2015	18.9%	<1%	72.3%	8.2%
2016	15%	1.4%	72.1%	11.4%
2017	19.6%	0	67.6%	12.8%
2018	12.1%	2.8%	72.3%	12.8%
2019	27.4%	2.2%	54.1%	16.3%
2020	14.6%	5.1%	72.6%	7.6%
2021	20.7%	8%	58%	13.3%
2022	12.2%	7.2%	70.5%	10.1%
2023	21.2%	5.1%	62.8%	10.9%
2024	20.9%	<1%	64%	14.4%
2025	19.3%	<1%	66.9%	13.1%
Total	17.9%	2.5%	69.6%	10%

In this section, we examined patterns of employment behind the camera across the 100 top-grossing movies from 2007 to 2025. While the overall number and percentage of underrepresented directors has not changed, one group did double in size from 2024. That group was Asian women directors! Past that, most of the findings for 2025 mirror 2024 in predictable ways.

LGBTQ+

As indicated earlier in the report, we began monitoring the prevalence and context of LGBTQ+ characters on screen across the 100 top movies in 2014 (see Table 26). The top films depicted 36 LGBTQ+ on screen speaking or named characters. This is <1% of the entire sample of characters. Of the 36 coded LGBTQ+ characters in 2025, 7 were lesbian, 22 were gay, 5 were bisexual, 0 were trans, and 2 were from “another sexuality.” The proportion of LGBTQ+ characters on screen was substantially below U.S. population estimates (10%).⁸

Has the percentage of LGBTQ+ characters changed over time? Yes and no. The sheer number of Lesbian characters was lower in 2025 (7 characters) than in 2024 (18 characters) but roughly the same as in 2007 (4 characters). The year with the highest frequency of lesbians on screen was 2022 (27 characters). In 2025, the number of gay characters was 22. This number was up from 2024 ($n=12$) and 2014 ($n=12$). 2019 featured the highest number of gay characters on screen across the 12-year sample. Bisexual characters in 2025 ($n=5$) were like those in 2024 ($n=8$) and 2007 ($n=5$). 2022 was the sample year where the most bisexual characters appeared on screen ($n=13$). Only 1 film depicted an LGBTQ+ lead/co lead across the 100 top films in 2025, which was not meaningfully different from 2024 (5 movies) or 2014 (2 movies).

Table 26
Prevalence of LGBTQ+ Speaking Characters Across 1,200 Top-Grossing Films: 2014-2025

	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Trans	Total
2014	4	12	5	0	21
2015	7	19	5	1	32
2016	9	36	6	0	51
2017	9	16	6	0	31
2018	17	33	8	0	58
2019	10	45	3	3	61
2020	15	12	2	0	29
2021	6	24	7	2	39
2022	27	43	13	5	87
2023	20	31	8	0	60
2024	18	12	8	1	39
2025	7	22	5	0	36
Total	149	305	76	12	544

Note: The 2023 row does not add up to 60. That is because one character was coded as having “another sexuality” not listed in the table. The character was included in the “total” of LGBTQ+ characters for 2023. The same occurred in 2025, where 2 characters were coded with “another sexuality.”

Table 27 highlights the number of films that erase and provide proportional representation of the LGBTQ+ on screen. A little more than three-fourths (78%) of the movies exclude LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters from the screen in 2025. This percentage was down 4 percentage points from 2024 (82%) and 8 percentage points from 2014 (86%). The percentage of films erasing the LGBTQ+ community on screen in 2025 was identical to 2019, however (see Table 27). Only 3 movies depicted the LGBTQ+ community at proportional representation in 2025, which did not differ from 2024 (2 movies) or 2014 (1 movie).

Table 27
Proportional Representation & Invisibility of LGBTQ Characters Across 1,200 Films: 2014-2025

Measures	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
# films w/o LGBTQ+ chars	86	82	76	81	76	78	86	77	72	76	82	78
# films w/prop rep	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	6	2	3
% of U.S. LGBTQ	10%											
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 28
Number and Percentage of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads in Film by Year

Year	# of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads	% of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads	# of Films
2014	2	2%	100
2015	0	0	100
2016	1	1%	100
2017	2	2%	100
2018	2	2%	100
2019	2	2%	100
2020	3	3%	100
2021	1	1%	100
2022	9	9%	100
2023	5	5%	100
2024	5	5%	100
2025	1	1%	100
Total	33	2.8%	1,200

Each year we document contextual variables surrounding the portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters on screen. Of the 36 characters, a full 69.4% were male ($n=25$) and 30.1% were female ($n=11$). In terms of race/ethnicity, 60% were White, 20% Asian, 8.6% Black, 8.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 2.9% Multiracial/Multiethnic. The vast majority (72.2%, $n=26$) of the LGBTQ+ characters were young adults (21-39 years), 22.2% ($n=8$) were middle aged (40-64 years), 2.8% ($n=1$) were elderly (65 and over) and 2.8% ($n=1$) were teenagers (13-20 years). Three (2 lesbians, 1 gay male) of the LGBTQ+ characters were parents or caregivers.

The frequency and context surrounding LGBTQ+ characters in 2025 was not meaningfully different from 2024. The LGBTQ+ community continues to be depicted below U.S. population norms. In the next section, we turn to another underrepresented community in storytelling: characters with disabilities.

Disability

Only 121 (2.8%) speaking or named characters with a disability were coded across the 100 top films of 2025. U.S. Census documents that 27.2% of Americans identify with a disability.⁹ As shown in Table 29, the percentage and number of people with disabilities in 2025 was similar to 2024 (2.4%) and 2015 (2.4%). By way of context, 2015 was the first year we coded for speaking or named character disability.

Table 29
Prevalence of Characters w/Disabilities Across 1,100 Top-Grossing Films: 2015-2025

Measure	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25	Total
% of spking char	2.4%	2.7%	2.5%	1.6%	2.2%	1.8%	2.1%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.8%	2.3%
# of spking char	105	124	112	69	101	68	93	81	117	105	121	1,096

Only characters with disabilities were coded for the presence or absence of three different types of disability: physical, communicative, and/or cognitive. These measures were binary (yes vs. no), to allow us to measure characters with 1 or more disability types in storytelling. The most frequent type of disability shown on screen was physical (59.5%, $n=72$). Examples of speaking or named characters with physical disabilities shown in storytelling include but are not limited to characters with mobility restrictions, missing or prosthetic limbs, paralysis, and wheelchair use.

38% ($n=46$) of speaking or named characters displayed communicative disabilities. Examples of characters with communicative disabilities include blindness, selective mutism, and difficulty speaking. And finally, 32.2% ($n=39$) of characters were portrayed with some type of cognitive disability. The ways in which cognitive disabilities were shown on screen include autism spectrum disorder, memory loss, and PTSD.

Table 30
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Characters w/Disabilities
Across 1,100 Films: 2015-2025

Measures	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
# films w/o disability	45	38	41	58	48	62	48	54	42	44	49
# films w/prop rep	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Disability in the U.S.	27.2%										
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Consistent with other identity groups in this report, we measured erasure of the disability community on screen. Almost half of the sample (49 movies) did not depict a single speaking or named character with a disability (see Table 30). This number is significantly higher than 2024 (44 films) but not different from 2015 (45 films). 2020 was the year with the most erasure, with 62 movies failing to depict a single speaking character with a disability on screen. Only 1 movie portrayed characters with a disability at or near proportional representation in 2025, which did not differ from any year in the sample time frame.

Beyond prevalence, we captured a few demographic and contextual variables surrounding characters with disabilities. In terms of gender, a full 69.4% ($n=84$) were male and 29.8% ($n=36$) were female. One character's gender could not be ascertained, however. Nearly 70% of characters with disabilities were White, 8.8% Asian, 6.9% Black, 4.9% Hispanic/Latino, 7.8% Multiracial/Multiethnic, and 2% MENA. The age distribution for characters with disability was as follows: 44.9% middle aged (40-64 years of age) or elderly (65 years of age or older), 26.3% young adult (21-39 years of age), 19.5% children (0-12 years of age), and 9.3% teens (13-20 years of age). 44.6% of characters with disabilities were parents and none were part of the LGBTQ+ community. Fifteen characters with disabilities led or co led a film in 2025. The percentage of films with a lead/co lead with a disability in 2025 was lower than 2024 (20%) but higher

than 2015 (10%). A full 42.2% of speaking or named characters with a disability were inconsequential to the storyline.

Table 31
Number of Leads/Co Leads w/Disabilities by Year

Year	# of Films w/Leads/Co Leads with a Disability	% of Leads/Co Leads with a Disability	# of Films
2015	10	10%	100
2016	15	15%	100
2017	14	14%	100
2018	9	9%	100
2019	19	19%	100
2020	11	11%	100
2021	9	9%	100
2022	14	14%	100
2023	8	8%	100
2024	20	20%	100
2025	15	15%	100
Total	144	13.1%	1,100

In total, the percentage and context surrounding speaking or named characters with disabilities across the 100 top films of 2025 was very similar to previous years. Given how many people in the U.S. identify as having a disability, it is surprising this group has been so vastly underrepresented in cinematic storytelling.

Conclusion

Each year, we examine the 100 top-grossing films based on theatrical box office performance. This longitudinal study thus serves as a barometer of representation across 19 years and 1,900 top movies. Below, we review the major trends across content from 2025, make recommendations for change, and identify the limitations of the analysis.

Women are Half the Population and Still One-Third of Speaking Roles On Screen

Across nearly two decades of popular film content, for the entertainment industry, one-third is clearly equivalent to one-half. That is, for nearly 20 years, women have filled roughly 33.3% of all speaking roles on screen in the highest-grossing films of the year. This figure underestimates girls and women in the population—and the actual and potential audience—significantly. With female characters clocking in at 33.6% in 2025, last year was not meaningfully different than 2007 (29.9%). Only 14% of the top films last year were gender-balanced, and women 40 and older filled only a quarter of roles on screen. Popular movies reflect a groundhog day for women. In other words, popular film remains another area of society with little representation and no change.

The lack of space for girls and women goes beyond all speaking roles. While girls and women in leading and co leading roles have increased since 2007, 2025 reflects a reversal from 2024, when more than half of leads/co leads were female. Similarly, women directors have progressed in 19 years such that they

held 8.2% of top directing jobs in 2025. Yet after reaching a high point of 14.3% in 2024, dropping below the 10% marker reveals that the gains were fleeting. Women writers and producers have also increased non-significantly since 2007. Only women composers have held onto progress from 2007—when there were no women composers—to the 8.5% who worked on a top-grossing movie in 2025. Whether in all speaking roles, major roles, or behind the camera, much of 2025 reveals that little has changed for girls and women in popular movies.

Progress on Racial/Ethnic Representation is Largely Restricted to Men

Turning to trends related to racial/ethnic representation, in 2025 popular films reflected the population as 41.5% of all speaking characters were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. While no single group saw a significant increase from last year or from 2007, this is only the fourth time since 2007 that proportional representation has been reached. There were also significantly more underrepresented leads/co leads in 2025 compared to 2024. Additionally, the percentage of underrepresented characters in animation and comedy films increased from 2024 and from 2007, suggesting that these genres are areas of progress. Behind the camera, roughly one-quarter of top-grossing directors were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group in 2025, on par with 2024 and significantly greater than 2007. Despite these indicators of progress, 30 films were missing any Black characters, which is an increase from 2024. There was no change in the number of movies that erased Hispanic/Latino characters, a figure which indicates that almost half of the most popular movies of the year were missing Hispanic/Latinos altogether.

Further, we looked specifically at the representation of women of color on screen and behind the camera in popular movies. On screen, women of color across all racial/ethnic groups filled fewer speaking roles than men, ranging from 31.5% of Hispanic/Latino characters to 40.1% of Asian characters. A substantial number of movies erased women of color as well. Native and Indigenous women in particular were missing on screen—98 movies erased Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women and 96 did not feature any American Indian/Alaska Native women. Eighty-nine films did not feature any Middle Eastern/North African women and 67—two-thirds of the movies examined in the analysis—were missing Latinas. Behind the camera, women of color were still outnumbered as directors. There were only 6 underrepresented women who helmed a top-grossing movie last year. All of them were Asian. While there have been significant gains on screen and behind the camera for people from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, these clearly have not equally benefitted women of color.

Popular Films Continue to Undercount the LGBTQ+ Community

Fewer than 1% of all speaking characters in 2025 were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Over time, there have been fluctuations in the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community on screen, but only 12 transgender characters have appeared in 12 years. Only 1 film had a lead/co lead from the LGBTQ+ community in 2025, roughly the same as in 2014. More than three-quarters of 2025's most popular movies were missing any LGBTQ+ representation. In addition to a lack of LGBTQ+ characters overall, those who did appear on screen were more likely to be male, White, young adult, and were rarely shown as parents or caregivers. These trends reveal that popular films do little to showcase the reality of the LGBTQ+ community off screen.

Characters with Disabilities are Deeply Underrepresented in Popular Film

In 2025, a mere 2.8% of all speaking characters were shown with a disability. Although around a quarter of the U.S. population lives with a disability, since 2015, this study has shown no movement on screen to represent this community. Characters with disabilities were most likely to experience physical disabilities, followed by communicative and cognitive disabilities. Most of the characters with disabilities in 2025 were White and male, and none were part of the LGBTQ+ community, suggesting that films portray a narrow view of how disability is experienced. Although there were 15 films with a lead/co lead character with a disability in 2025, more than 40% of characters with disabilities in 2025 were in inconsequential roles. Additionally, nearly half (49) of the films evaluated did not feature any characters with a disability. While many Americans may experience a disability at some point in their lives, they will not see this reality in popular movies.

Recommendations for Change

Each year, this report offers a set of findings related to how top-grossing films portray a series of demographic and identity groups on screen and behind the camera. While some years—such as 2024—have reflected the possibility for improvement and increased representation, 2025 shows that the more prevailing trend is one of little to no change. Yet, there are ways that writers, producers, directors, and executives can create greater opportunities for representation while still navigating a changing, contracting, and difficult moment for the industry.

Inclusion Criteria Create Change. We have argued before that when criteria are applied across hiring decisions, the outcome is likely to be greater opportunity for underrepresented groups. Criteria can be applied in several ways. Behind the camera, using objective metrics to determine who is qualified to write or direct a film is a means to ensure that those hired reflect the pool of talent. For example, most of the women who have directed a top-grossing movie between 2007 and 2025 have only directed 1 movie in the top 100 across these 19 years. This means that their qualifications to work again on a popular film are overlooked by those seeking directors for hire. On screen, using criteria in the writing and casting process can ensure that the array of characters in a film reflect the setting of the story, the population of the U.S., or other metrics to ensure that women, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities are not underrepresented.

To Change the Product, Change the Process. Year after year, this report provides data that indicate little has changed on screen or behind the camera. This clearly means that little has changed in the writing, casting, and hiring process. For companies and individuals who are serious about creating a different product, one that represents the audience it serves, the process must change. Whether this includes adopting criteria, setting target inclusion goals, or involving new voices in the process, there are ways to combat the psychological impediments that result in the same outcomes annually. Only by adjusting how things are done can the industry hope to change what the end product reflects.

Limitations

Each report also contains an overview of the study limitations—consistent with all empirical research. Notably, this study focuses on the most popular theatrically-released films of the year as the sample of content. Films that are less popular with audiences may be more inclusive, as may films on streaming platforms. Our work to evaluate Netflix movies demonstrates that those films do contain different patterns of representation. However, as the goal of this study is to examine the agenda-setting, theatrically-released films each year, the sample and our results reflect what the largest audiences are watching annually.

A second limitation relates to our presentation of data related to underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. When data on underrepresented racial/ethnic groups is presented as a whole, this crude metric can show that these characters hold a share of roles that is close to proportional representation. However, disaggregated data may show that there are differences by group that offer a more nuanced picture of representation. We present such disaggregated data where possible, and have authored other reports that examine Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Muslim representation to provide a more detailed evaluation of how groups are represented. We encourage other researchers to do the same.

Third, while we assess every speaking or named character who appears on screen, we exclude homogeneous groups where the identities of characters are not distinguishable. Counting these groups could impact the findings. As this has been our method since the initial analysis in 2007, we continue to exclude those groups to ensure the comparability of the findings from year to year.

Finally, a note on critique. We welcome thoughtful criticism of methodological and statistical decisions grounded in actionable, empirically-grounded thinking. Offering opinions but no concrete means of improving the methodology of a longitudinal study such as this report suggests a limited understanding of social science research processes. Moreover, while interpretations of data may differ, those grounded in knowledge of the actual work performed for this study will have greater credibility and impact. Simply challenging the findings and how they are framed, or moreover the reason for the study, for sport suggests bad-faith efforts to engage with this research and the underlying employment patterns it exposes.

The entertainment industry is facing a critical juncture, as pressures to consolidate, adapt, and abandon DEI efforts are all at the forefront. However, the trends in this report suggest that at other critical times for the industry, there has been a resistance to change. Rather than pursue the same playbook and achieve the same results, perhaps this is the very moment to identify opportunities to create change.

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Each year, our entire team works hard to complete this project by mid-summer. Our staff are relentless with checking, discussing, and calculating all the information contained herein. As such, we are extremely grateful for all their individual and collective efforts. A huge shout out to Ariana Case and Katherine Neff for their dedication to training and overseeing our student research assistants. Data entry, management, cleaning and analysis are handled by Sam Wheeler, who goes above and beyond with every project. Additionally, Aimee Christopher, Karla Hernandez, Terrell Schaffer, Zoily Mercado, and Zoe Moore provide incredible support with reliability, discussions, and behind the scenes coding. Our social channels and web-based content are due to Brooke Kong and Sarah Neff's artistry and talent in design, communication, and outreach. And special thanks to W. Michael Sayers, Braxton Albers, Matthew Davis, and Mackenzie Jaimes for pitching in on leads, quality checking and other data collection activities. Thank you, Team, for all your efforts on this yearly project. It really does take a village.

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Footnotes

1. Each year, we examine the 100 top-grossing movies theatrically released in North America based on boxofficemojo.com reporting. This year's sample was pulled on June, 28, 2026. Of the 100 top theatrically-released films, one was not available to rent or buy as of June 30th, 2026. As such, the movie (*Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba Infinity Castle*; number 18 on the list) was not included in the study. We then took the 101st movie (*Back to the Future 40th Anniversary Rerelease*) that met our sampling criteria. For 2025, our sample was therefore based on the 100 top films theatrically released and available to rent or own by the aforementioned date.

Once our top-grossing list was solidified, each film was watched independently by a minimum of 3 coders and the final file was quality checked by a fourth. Reliability for unitizing and variable coding was calculated per film. Because 2025 behaved like the other 18 years in the sample, the reliability results are not presented here. For a complete overview of our methodology including variable definitions, unitizing, and reliability, please see our earlier reports on the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative website. For ease of use and interpretation, our graphics, tables, notes, report headers, and presentational framework relies heavily on the same language and deviates very little year to year.

2. In this report, we often use the term “females” and “males” to capture the vast age range of speaking characters on screen. This way, the term can incorporate both young children and elderly characters. Using “females” and “males” is not intended to reference the biology of characters but rather their age range. As such, all of our behind the camera findings pertain only to “women” and “men.”

3. We are using the “above-the-line” terminology loosely in this section. We know other titles are included but were not a part of the analyses.

4. See U.S. Census figures: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045224>

5. Smith, S.L. & Pieper, K. (2026). *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Analysis of Director Gender and Race/Ethnicity Across the 1,900 Top Films from 2007 to 2025*. Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. [https://mcusercontent.com/62568938b3a09a6ef20bd8b14/files/606c81e1-ab89-e748-5b42-d45200cb79b7/Inclusion in the Director Chair 2025.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/62568938b3a09a6ef20bd8b14/files/606c81e1-ab89-e748-5b42-d45200cb79b7/Inclusion_in_the_Director_Chair_2025.pdf) In this report, we overview statistics of women's directing participation in other places in the industry such at Sundance Dramatic Competition (2026), episodic television (2023-2024) and Netflix features (2024).

6. See U.S. Census figures: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045224>

7. As stated in the 2025 paper, “We focus on the three largest underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian) as there are too few characters for this analysis within all of the other identity groups.” See page 33 and U.S. Census figures: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045224>

8. As stated in last year's report, “The rationale for the LGBTQ+ U.S. point estimate was discussed at length in last year's report. Please see that report for an explanation for how we arrived at 10%.” See page 33.

9. U.S. Census Bureau (2018). Americans with Disabilities: 2014. Retrieved August 27th, 2020 from:
<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2018/demo/p70-152.html>