Inequality in 1,800 Popular Films:
Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & Characters with Disabilities from 2007 to 2024

Dr. Stacy L. Smith
&
The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

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USCAnnenberg
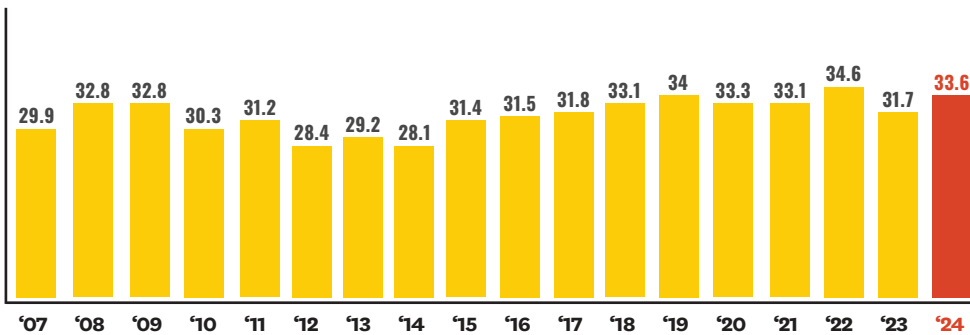*Inclusion Initiative*

In Tribute to
Wallis Annenberg

INEQUALITY IN 1,800 POPULAR FILMS

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

@Inclusionists

NO PROGRESS FOR GIRLS & WOMEN ON SCREEN

Prevalence of girls and women as speaking characters across 1,800 films, in percentages

'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24
29.9	32.8	32.8	30.3	31.2	28.4	29.2	28.1	31.4	31.5	31.8	33.1	34	33.3	33.1	34.6	31.7	33.6

Percentage of 1,800 films with Balanced Casts **18%**
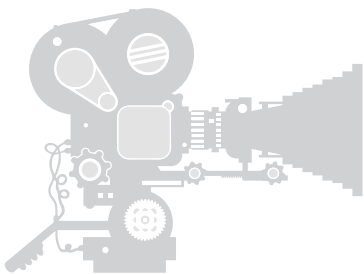
Ratio of males to females **2:1**

Total number of speaking characters **79,385**

HISTORIC HIGHS: MORE FILMS WITH FEMALE THAN MALE PROTAGONISTS

Of the 100 top films in 2024…

55 Depicted a **Girl or Woman** as a **Lead** or **Co Lead**

30 films in 2023 and 20 in 2007 depicted a girl or woman as a lead or co lead.
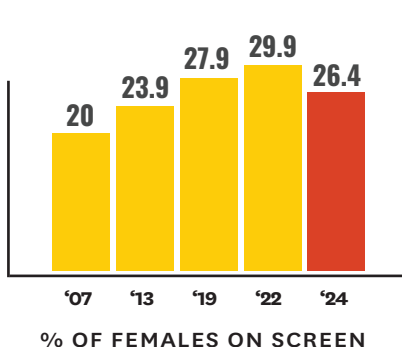
And of those 55 films…

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

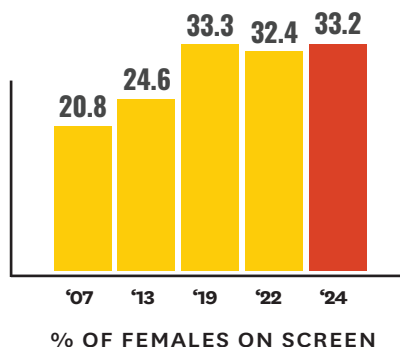**8** had a female lead/co lead **45 years of age or older**

Excludes films w/ensemble casts

GENRE GAPS PERSIST FOR GIRLS & WOMEN

'07	'13	'19	'22	'24
20	23.9	27.9	29.9	26.4

% OF FEMALES ON SCREEN

ACTION

'07	'13	'19	'22	'24
20.8	24.6	33.3	32.4	33.2

% OF FEMALES ON SCREEN

ANIMATION

'07	'13	'19	'22	'24
36	36.5	38.7	34.5	38.7

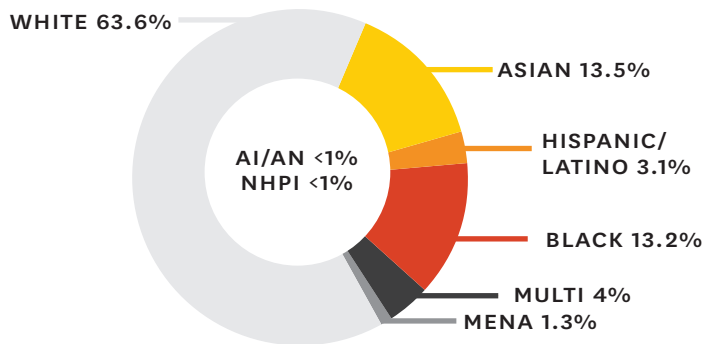% OF FEMALES ON SCREEN
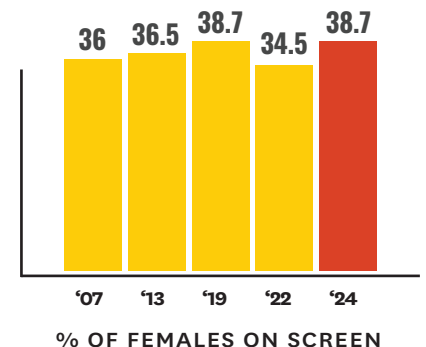
COMEDY

NO PROGRESS FOR PROTAGANISTS OF COLOR IN FILM
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	OVERALL
ALL UR LEADS	13	13	17	12	9	13	17	17	15	14	22	27	32	29	35	31	37	25	21%
FEMALE UR LEADS	1	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	11	17	9	14	18	14	14	7.6%

INCLUSION OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS ON SCREEN IN 2024
Percentage of all speaking characters by racial/ethnic group

WHITE 63.6%
ASIAN 13.5%
AI/AN <1%
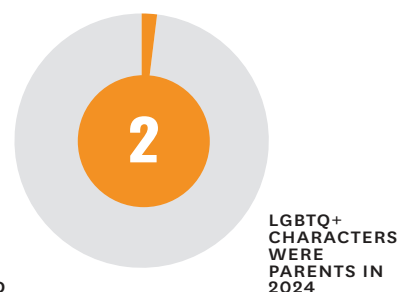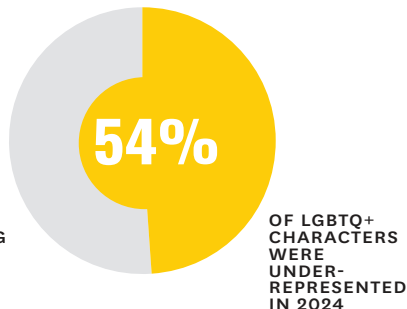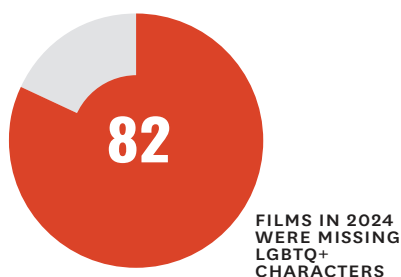NHPI <1%
HISPANIC/ LATINO 3.1%
BLACK 13.2%
MULTI 4%
MENA 1.3%

Since 2007, the percentage of White speaking characters decreased by 14 percentage points and the percentage of Asian characters increased by 10.1 percentage points

percentage of **under-represented characters**: **36.4%**

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

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

29 films had **NO Asian** speaking characters

LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS ARE LEFT BEHIND IN FILM
Of 48,171 speaking characters across 1,100 films...

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

One character in 2023 was coded as having another sexuality. This brings the total of LGBTQ+ characters to 60.

82 FILMS IN 2024 WERE MISSING LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS

54% OF LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS WERE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN 2024

2 LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS WERE PARENTS IN 2024

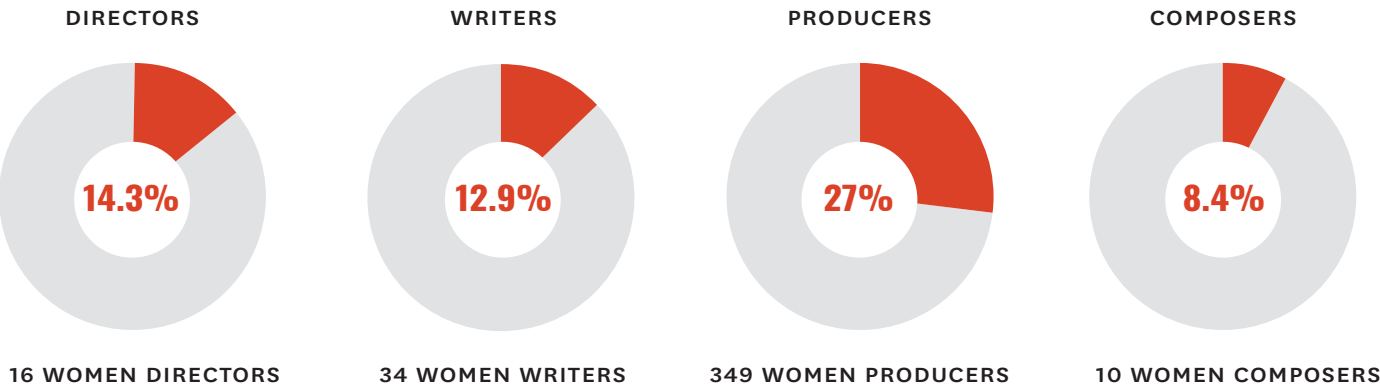# CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITY FACE A DEFICIT ON SCREEN IN FILM

2.4%
of all speaking characters were depicted with a disability in 2024

65% PHYSICAL*

24% COGNITIVE*

32% COMMUNICATIVE*

Based on U.S. Census domains

44
FILMS MISSING CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN 2024

71
FILMS MISSING GIRLS & WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN 2024
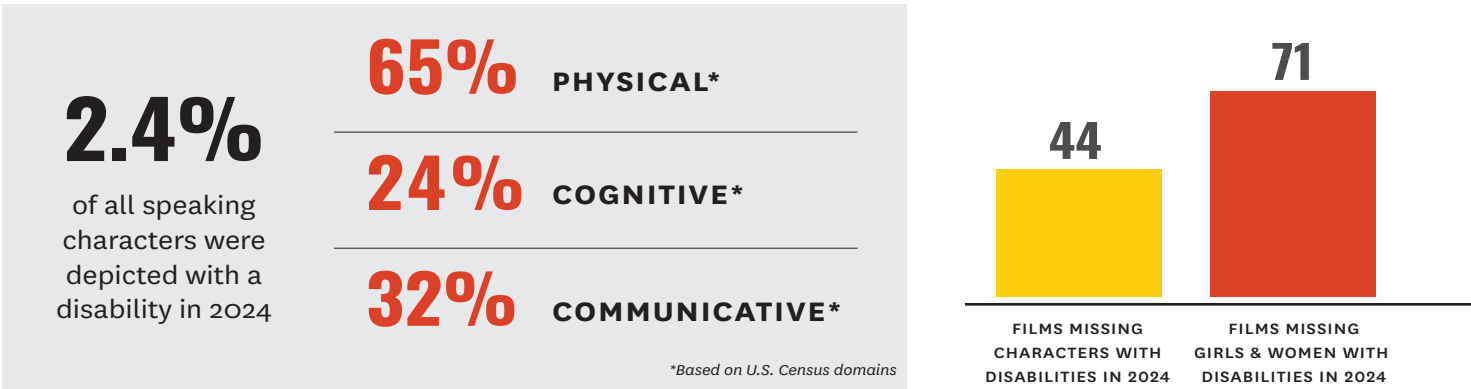
WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA IN 2024

Across 1,789 content creators....

● MEN   ● WOMEN

DIRECTORS
14.3%
16 WOMEN DIRECTORS

WRITERS
12.9%
34 WOMEN WRITERS

PRODUCERS
27%
349 WOMEN PRODUCERS

COMPOSERS
8.4%
10 WOMEN COMPOSERS

GENDER FLUIDITY IS HARDLY REPRESENTED IN ENTERTAINMENT

ONLY ONE composer was *non binary* in 2021

ONLY EIGHT speaking characters were *non binary* in 2024

DIRECTORS AND COMPOSERS: FEW WOMEN FILL THESE ROLES

	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	OVERALL
139 WOMEN OUT OF **2,011** DIRECTORS	3	9	4	3	4	5	2	2	8	5	8	5	12	15	14	10	14	16	**6.9%**
	112	112	111	109	108	121	107	107	107	120	109	112	112	110	113	113	116	112	
71 WOMEN/NB OUT OF **2,075** COMPOSERS	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	3	6	9	5*	10	12	10	**3.4%**
	107	108	109	115	109	105	114	105	114	121	113	108	118	130	131	121	128	119	

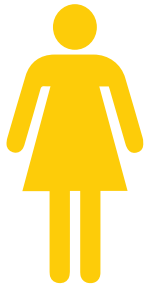*includes one gender non binary composer*

MOST CASTING DIRECTORS ARE WHITE WOMEN

Across 1,800 films the demographic breakdown of casting directors...

17.8%
ARE
WHITE
MEN

69.8%
ARE
WHITE
WOMEN

2.6%
ARE
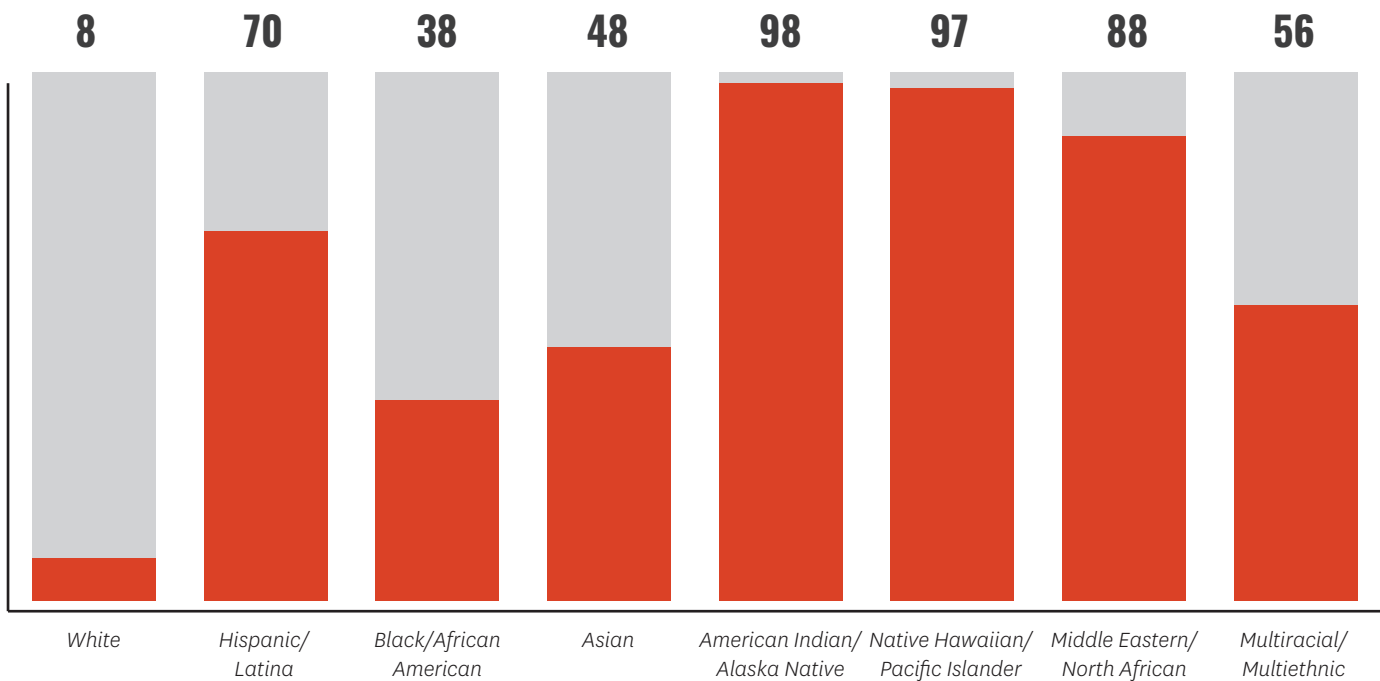UNDERREPRESENTED
MEN

9.8%
ARE
UNDERREPRESENTED
WOMEN

STORYTELLERS ARE STILL PRIMARILY WHITE AND MALE

Across 1,800 films and 2,100 directors...

6%
120 DIRECTORS
WERE BLACK

103
DIRECTORS
WERE MEN

17
DIRECTORS
WERE WOMEN

4.6%
93 DIRECTORS
WERE HISPANIC/
LATINO

87
DIRECTORS
WERE MEN

6
DIRECTORS
WERE WOMEN

5.6%
113 DIRECTORS
WERE ASIAN

97
DIRECTORS
WERE MEN

16
DIRECTORS
WERE WOMEN

ERASURE OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Of the 100 top films in 2024, the number missing girls and women on screen that were…

| 8 | 70 | 38 | 48 | 98 | 97 | 88 | 56 |

White | Hispanic/Latina | Black/African American | Asian | American Indian/Alaska Native | Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | Middle Eastern/North African | Multiracial/Multiethnic

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

Inequality in 1,800 Popular Films:
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The purpose of this longitudinal investigation was to examine inclusion in popular movies. To this end, we content analyzed the 100 top-grossing domestic narrative films (all documentaries, tv shows, shorts, and music videos were excluded) theatrically released in North America from 2007 to 2024. Inclusion metrics focused on gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ and characters with disabilities. We also report on behind-the-camera inclusion among directors, writers, producers, composers, and casting directors. In total, 1,800 movies have been analyzed, over 79,000 speaking characters, and more than 30,000 film personnel. Below are the key findings grouped by inclusion metric.

Key Findings

Gender. 4,401 speaking or named characters were coded across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2024. Of these characters, 66.2% were male, 33.6% were female, and <1% (.18) were non-binary. This a gender ratio of 1.97 males to every 1 female. The percentage of girls/women in 2024 (33.6%) was not different from 2023 (31.7%) or 2007 (29.9%).

Only 18% of the 100 top films of 2024 featured a gender-balanced cast (45-54.9% of all speaking characters were female). This percentage was significantly higher than in 2023 (11%) and 2007 (12%). It should be noted that the number of movies with gender-balanced casts in 2024 was identical to the number in 2015.

The percentage of films with a female protagonist (lead/co lead) was at a historic high in 2024 (55%). This percentage was substantially higher than the percentage in 2023 (30%) or the percentage in 2007 (20%). Woman of color were leads/co leads in only 14% of movies in 2024, which was identical to 2023 (14%) but an increase from 2007 (1%). There were more films with women 45 years of age or older as leads/co leads in 2024 (8%) than in 2023 (3%) or 2007 (1%). Only 1 film depicted a woman of color 45 years of age or older in 2024, which was not different from 2023 or 2007.

In terms of speaking characters' age, gender balance was observed in 2024 with 0-to 12-year-olds (males=54.9%, females=45.1%) and 13- to 20-year-olds (females=54.6%, males=44.8%). Turning to 21- to 39-year-olds, women only accounted for 37.6% of all speaking roles. The results were even more problematic for women 40 years of age or older. Here, women only accounted for 23.8% of older characters. Further, the percentage of women 40-years of age or older on screen has not changed since 2007!

Behind the camera, only 21.7% of all directors, writers and producers (*n*=1,669) in 2024 were women. This calculates into a gender ratio of 3.2 males to every 1 female. In terms of directors, only 14.3% were women and 85.7% were men. The percentage in 2024 (14.3%) did not differ from 2023 (12.1%) but was higher than 2007 (2.7%).

Across the sample time frame, the top performing women directors were Lana Wachowski and Anne Fletcher. Both of these women helmed 4 movies across 18 years. Greta Gerwig has directed 3 films and 19 women have helmed 2 movies from 2007 to 2024. In stark contrast, the top performing male director was Tyler Perry with 18 movies followed by Steven Spielberg (14 films), Ridley Scott (12 films), and Clint Eastwood (12 films).

Only 12.9% of screenwriters were women in 2024. The percentage of women writers in 2024 was not different from the percentage of women writers in 2023 (15.2%) or 2007 (11.2%). No differences emerged in the percentage of women producers from 2023 (24.4%) to 2024 (27%). However, the percentage of women producers in 2024 (27%) was significantly higher than the percentage in 2007 (19.7%).

In 2024, only 8.4% (n=10) of composers were women. The number and percentage of women composers in 2024 were not different from the number and percentage in 2023. It is important to note that 2024 was substantially higher than 2007, when there were no women or non-binary composers working across the 100 most popular movies.

In 2024, 78.4% of casters were women which was not different from 2023 (73.9%). However, the percentage of women casting directors has decreased from 2007 (86.1%).

Female directors were roughly twice as likely (87.5%) as male directors (43.8%) to helm stories about girls/women. Women directors were also more likely to have gender equality across all speaking roles (48.2%) in films than were their male counterparts (31.2%).

Race/Ethnicity. Of the 3,803 speaking or named characters that were coded for apparent race/ethnicity, 63.6% were white, 13.2% Black, 3.1% Hispanic/Latino, <1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 13.5% Asian, <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), and 4% multiracial/multiethnic. Summing across non-white groups, a total of 36.4% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups which is 5.2 percentage points lower than U.S. census (41.6%).

Little deviation on race/ethnicity occurred between 2023 and 2024, save one finding. There were significantly more white characters on screen in 2024 (63.6%) than in 2023 (55.7%). The gains made by Asian characters in 2023 (18.4%) were wiped out in 2024 (13.5%). When we compare 2024 to 2007, only two findings have changed: the percentage of white characters overall has *decreased* and the percentage of Asian characters has *increased*.

A full 18 films erased Black speaking or named characters completely in 2024. This number did not differ from 2023 (18 films) but was higher than 2018 (13 films). Fifteen movies were at proportional representation of Black characters with U.S. population in 2024, which is higher than 2023 (4 films) but not different than 2018 (17 films).

A total of 48 movies erased Hispanic/Latinos on screen in 2024. The number was larger in 2024 than 2023 (42 films) but was on par with 2018 (47 films). Not one movie in 2024 depicted Hispanic/Latinos at proportional representation, which did not differ from the other years evaluated.

For Asian characters, 29 movies erased this group altogether on screen in 2024 which was not different than 2023 (31 movies) or 2018 (32 movies). However, 2024 was a banner year for depicting Asian

characters at proportional representation. A full 31 movies depicted Asians close to their percentage in the U.S. (6.3%). This result was substantially higher than 2023 (16 films) and 2018 (20 films).

Few movies erase Caucasian (8 out of 100) girls and women whereas almost every movie erases females that were American Indian/Alaskan Native (98 out of 100) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (97 out of 100). Most films erase Middle Eastern/North African girls and women (88 out of 100) and Latinas (70 out of 100). More than half of all films feature Asian (52 of 100) and Black (62 out of 100) girls and women and almost half depict females who were multiracial/multiethnic (44 out of 100).

Only 25% of all leads/co leads were from underrepresented backgrounds in 2024. Those 25 movies translate into 27 different underrepresented leads/co leads. Of the 27 protagonists, 10 were Black, 1 Hispanic/Latino, 4 Asian, and 12 multiracial/multiethnic. The percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads in 2024 (25%) was significantly lower than in 2023 (37%) but higher than in 2007 (13%).

Focusing specifically on underrepresented women, only 14 films were centered on females of color. Of these 14 movies, there were 6 Black female protagonists, 1 Latina and 7 multiracial/multiethnic girls/women. No differences emerged in the percentage of leads/co leads that were women of color between 2024 (14%) and 2023 (14%). However, 2024 was substantially higher than 2007 when only 1% of all protagonists were women of color.

In 2024, a total of 112 directors were responsible for helming the most popular films. Of these helmers, 76.8% were white and 23.2% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates into 3.3 white directors to every 1 underrepresented director. The percentage of non-white directors was substantially below U.S. Census (41.6%).

The percentage of underrepresented directors did not change from 2023 (22.4%) to 2024 (23.2%). There has been meaningful change since 2007 when only 12.5% of directors were not white. Across the 340 jobs filled by underrepresented directors from 2007 to 2024, 88.8% were occupied by men and 11.2% were occupied by women.

The top performing underrepresented male director was Tyler Perry, with 18 movies from 2007 to 2024. Perry was followed by M. Night Shyamalan with 9 movies and James Wan, Antoine Fuqua, Tim Story, and Jaume Collet-Serra each had 8. Among women directors, 7 were top performers with 2 movies each (Stella Meghie, Gina Prince-Bythewood, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Nia DaCosta, Ava DuVernay, Kasi Lemmons, Chloé Zhao).

Only 3 Black directors (2 men, 1 woman) worked across the 100 top films of 2024. This number was notably lower than in 2023 (*n*=10) or 2007 (*n*=8). Seven Hispanic/Latino helmers (6 men, 1 woman) worked across the most popular movies of 2024. The findings for 2024 were not different from 2023 when 4 Hispanic/Latinos worked as helmers or 2007 when 3 did.

The last group we assessed was Asian directors. Thirteen directors (10 men, 3 women) worked in 2024, which was on par with the 13 helmers that worked in 2023. The number of Asian directors working in 2024 was significantly higher than in 2007 (3 men). Asian directors were more likely to depict films with Asian leads/co leads (33.3%) in comparison to directors who were not Asian (2.2%). The same pattern held with speaking or named characters. This analysis was not able to be performed with Black or Hispanic/Latino directors due to the small number working in 2024.

Most casting director jobs in 2024 were held by white women (64%) and white men (20.9%). Few casting directors were underrepresented women (14.4%) or underrepresented men (<1%). 2024 was identical to 2023 for white women, white men and underrepresented women. Underrepresented men worked less as casting directors in 2024 (.72%) than they did in 2023 (5.1%).

In comparison to 2024, white women are working less as casters than they did in 2007 (2007=79.1%, 2024=64%) and underrepresented women (2007=7%, 2024=14.4%) and white men (2007=13.3%, 2024=20.9) are working more.

LGBTQ+. A total of 39 speaking or named characters were coded as LGBTQ+ in 2024. This represents <1% (.89%) of all speaking characters across the 100 top films of 2024. The number of LGBTQ+ characters in 2024 was lower than in 2023 (60 characters) but higher than in 2014 (21 characters). The percentage of all LGBTQ+ characters was significantly below proportional representation with the U.S. population (10%).

Seventeen of the LGBTQ+ characters in 2024 were Lesbian, 12 Gay, 9 Bisexual and 1 Transgender. These numbers were relatively stable in comparison to 2023 save one: there were 19 fewer gay characters than in 2023 (31). In comparison to 2014, only the number of Lesbian characters (2014=4, 2024=17) has increased across the four groups. Most of the LGBTQ+ characters were in supporting roles (35.9%, n=14) or were completely inconsequential (35.9%, n=14) to the plot.

Out of 100 top movies, a full 82 did not feature one LGBTQ+ speaking or named character. The number was significantly higher than in 2023 (76 movies) and no different from 2014 (86 movies). Only 2 of 100 top movies of 2024 depicted the LGBTQ+ community at proportional representation with the U.S., which did not differ from 2023 or 2014. It is important to note that 5 films showcased LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters above proportional representation, which was an 11-year high.

5 of the 100 top-grossing films of 2024 featured LGTBQ+ leads/co leads. This number did not differ from 2023 (5 films) or 2014 (2 films).

Of the 39 LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters coded, a full 46.2% were white, 15.4% were Black, 12.8% were Hispanic/Latino, 10.3% were Asian, 12.8% were multiracial/multiethnic, and 2.6% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Zero were MENA or American Indican/Alaskan Native. 53.8% of the LGBTQ+ characters shown were not white. Only 2 LGBTQ+ speaking characters were depicted as parents or caregivers across 100 top films.

Disability. Across 100 top films of 2024, only 2.4% (n=105) of speaking or named characters were shown with a disability. This percentage is far below U.S. census which reports that 27.2% of Americans have a disability.

No change has occurred over time. Matter of fact, the number and percentage of characters with a disability on screen in 2024 was identical to the number and percentage in 2015. Nearly two-thirds of characters with a disability were depicted with a physical disability (64.8%, n=68). Just under a third of all characters with a disability (32%, n=33) were portrayed with a communicative disability. A total of 25 characters with a disability (24%, n=25) were shown with a cognitive disability.

44 movies across the 100 top films of 2024 were missing characters with disabilities. This number was not different from findings in 2023 (42 films) or 2015 (45 films). Not one movie showed characters within striking distance of proportional representation.

Most of the characters with disabilities were male (61%, *n*=64) and white (70.8%, *n*=68). Few were Black (12.5%, *n*=12), Asian (11.5%, *n*=11), or multiracial/multiethnic (5.2%, *n*=5). Not one character with a disability was Hispanic/Latino, MENA, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Of those characters with a disability with enough information to code parental status, 41.5% (*n*=22) were caregivers or parents. Only 1 character with a disability across the 100 top films of 2024 was LGTBQ+. Most characters with disabilities were depicted in supporting roles (47.6%) or inconsequential to the plot (29.5%).

While little change has occurred at the speaking or named character level, progress did occur for leading/co leading characters. In 2024, 20 of the 100 top films featured a lead or co lead with a disability. This number was substantially higher than in 2023 (8 films) or in 2015 (10 films). Further, the number was the highest since we have been measuring (2015) characters with disabilities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate little progress towards inclusion in 2024. As such, the paper concludes with solutions and recommendations for change.

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The purpose of this longitudinal investigation was to examine inclusion in popular theatrically-released movies. To this end, we content analyzed the 100 top-grossing domestic narrative films (all documentaries, tv shows, shorts, and music videos were excluded) in North America from 2007 to 2024. Inclusion metrics focused on gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ and characters with disabilities. We also report on behind the camera inclusion among directors, writers, producers, composers, and casting directors. To date, we have analyzed more than 79,000 speaking characters across 1,800 motion pictures.[1] Clearly, ***this is the largest and most comprehensive longitudinal analysis of inclusion in film in the history of social science research.***

Below, we will report on each inclusion area separately. We will focus on 2024 patterns first and then compare those findings to 2023 and 2007. Only 5 percentage point differences were noted to avoid small and meaningless deviations. It is important to note that one movie across the 100 top films was not available to stream or purchase: *Megalopolis*. As such, it was not sampled and the next film on the list was chosen.

Gender

On Screen Prevalence. As shown in Table 1, 4,401 speaking or named characters were coded across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2024. Of these characters, 66.2% were male (*n*=2,915), 33.6% were female (*n*=1,478), and <1% (.18%) were non-binary (*n*=8). This a gender ratio of 1.97 males to every 1 female.

Has the percentage of on screen girls and women changed over time? No. As depicted in Table 1, 2024 (33.6%) did not differ from 2023 (31.7%) or 2007 (29.9%) by 5 percentage points or more. Clearly, the efforts to be more inclusive of girls and women in popular films are not working. While much has been written and discussed on the topic, the numbers reveal no real change.

The percentage of all speaking or named characters does not take into account fluctuations that might exist from film to film. As such, we also measured the number of movies that were "gender balanced." A gender-balanced movie was defined as a story where girls and women are cast within 45%-54.9% of all roles. As illustrated in Table 1, only 18% of the 100 top films of 2024 featured a gender-balanced cast. This percentage was significantly higher than in 2023 (11%) and 2007 (12%). It should be noted that the number of movies with gender-balanced casts in 2024 was identical to the number in 2015.

Each year we examine how prevalent girls and women were in movies from three stereotypically masculine genres: action/adventure, animation, and comedy. As shown in Table 2, the percentage of female speaking or named characters in 2024 was no different than the 2023 percentage in action/adventure or animation. Both genres have increased the percentage of females on screen since 2007 (see Table 2), however. For comedy, the percentage of girls and women ticked up from 2023 (32.6%) to 2024 (38.7%). The percentage of females in comedy in 2024 was not meaningfully different

from the percentage of females in comedy in 2007 (36%). Thus, little inclusive change has taken place *recently* in these traditionally male-oriented genres.

Table 1
Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Year: 2007 to 2024

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	5,078	100
2024	33.6%	18%	1.97 to 1	4,401	100
Total	**31.7%**	**13.1%**	**2.16 to 1**	**79,385**	**1,800**

Table 2
Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Genre and Year: 2007-2024

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	26.4%	33.2%	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.

While the above analyses focused on speaking or named characters, we now turn our attention to protagonists or those leads/co leads that drive the storyline. Out of the 100 top films of 2024, 83 depicted a single lead, 14 centered on a lead/co lead, and only 3 were driven by ensemble casts. As shown in Table 3, the percentage of films centered on girls and women was at a historic high in 2024 (55%). This percentage was substantially higher than the percentage in 2023 (30%) or the percentage in 2007 (20%).

No change was observed in the percentage of movies with women of color at the center in 2024, in comparison to 2023 (14%). But, the number of films with women of color protagonists was higher in 2024 (14%) than in 2007 (1%). A 5-percentage point increase was revealed in movies with women 45 years of age or older as protagonists in 2024 (8%) when compared to 2023 (3%). And, a 7-percentage point increase when compared to 2007 (1%). No differences over time were observed in films focusing on women of color 45-years of age or older.

Table 3
Prevalence of Female-Identified Leads & Co Leads by Year: 2007-2024

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%

Total	32.5%	7.6%	5%	1.2%

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.

Only 3 movies (*Kalki 2898 AD, Challengers, Horizon*) featured an ensemble cast (*n*=10) in 2024. Sixty percent of the ensemble leads were male and 40% were female. The percentage of women ensemble leads decreased from the percentage in 2023 (61.1%) but increased from the percentage in 2007 (31.1%). Not one non-binary character has been part of an ensemble cast across the 18-year sample time frame.

Overall, the progress for women and girls in 2024 was limited to leads and co leads. We reported on this in our annual "leads" report in February of this year.[2] Progress has stalled for the percentage of female speaking characters, non-white female leads/co leads and women 65 years of age or older. Further, these trends represent a vast disconnect between what people *perceive* is happening with inclusion in Hollywood and the current status quo.

On Screen Portrayal. Next, we assessed the ways in which characters were gendered by age and domesticity (parental status). The results of the age by gender analysis appears in Table 4. Three trends are immediately apparent. First, as age increases from the teen years forward, the percentage of women on screen drops precipitously. Second, young women were more prevalent on screen during their teen years than young men though the opposite was true for child characters. And finally, less than a quarter of all older characters were women!

Table 4
Character Age by Gender in Top-Grossing Films: 2024

Gender	Children 0-12 yrs	Teens 13-20 yrs	Young Adult 21-39 yrs	Adults 40 yrs or Older
Males	54.9%	44.8%	62.1%	76.1%
Females	45.1%	54.6%	37.6%	23.8%
Ratio	1.22 to 1	.82 to 1	1.65 to 1	3.2 to 1

Note: If the columns do not add to 100%, it is because of non binary characters. There were 2 teens, 5 adults and 1 middle aged character that were non binary in 2024.

Given the historic lack of equality for women 40 years of age and older on screen, we examined how this age bracket fared across the 18-year sample. As shown in Table 5, the findings were highly consistent from year to year. Further, there has been no change over the entire 18-year duration of this longitudinal study.

Table 5
Gender of Characters 40 years of Age and Older: 2007 to 2024

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%
Total	**76%**	**24%**

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

Finally, we examined the parental status (no, yes) of each character. As shown in Table 6, women were more likely to be shown as parents and caregivers on screen than their male counterparts in 2024. However, the findings do not differ from 2023 or 2007. Over time, male characters in 2024 were less likely to be shown as parents than were male characters in 2007.

Table 6
Gender and Parental Status: 2007 to 2024

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	35.7%	44.5%
2021	36.4%	44.1%
2022	32.6%	43.8%
2023	40.8%	46.4%
2024	37.7%	47.6%

Total	38.6%	46.7%

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.

Overall, there has been very little change over time on screen for girls and women in top-grossing films. Of course, the one major finding pertains to the historic increase in females as leads/co leads. Past that, no other indicators are shifting towards equality.

Behind the Camera. A total of 1,669 above-the-line personnel worked across the 100 top films of 2024. Only 14.3% were women directors, 12.9% were women writers and 27% were women producers (see Table 7). Across all three positions, only 23.9% of all behind-the-camera jobs were filled with women. This calculates into a gender ratio of 3.2 males to every 1 female.

Table 7
Content Creators by Gender: 2024

Position	Men	Women	Gender Ratio
Directors	85.7% (*n*=96)	14.3% (*n*=16)	6 to 1
Writers	87.1% (*n*=229)	12.9% (*n*=34)	6.7 to 1
Producers	73% (*n*=945)	27% (*n*=349)	2.7 to 1
Total	**76.1% (*n*=1,270)**	**23.9% (*n*=399)**	**3.2 to 1**

We examined over time trends for each of these occupational posts. Starting with directors (see Table 8), the percentage of females working in this top leadership position across the last 18 years was 6.9%. The percentage in 2024 was not different from the percentage in 2023 (12.3%) but was significantly higher than the percentage in 2007 (2.7%). The gender ratio of men to women directors is 14.1 to 1. A list of all the women directors working across the 18-year sample can be found in Table 9.

Table 8
Women Directors: 2007 to 2024

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
Total	**6.9%**	**139**	**2,011**

Across the sample time frame, the top performing women directors were Lana Wachowski and Anne Fletcher. Both of these women helmed 4 movies across 18 years. Greta Gerwig has directed 3 films and 19 women have helmed two movies from 2007 to 2024. In stark contrast, the top performing male director was Tyler Perry who has helmed 18 movies followed by Steven Spielberg (14 films), Ridley Scott (12 films), and Clint Eastwood (12 films).

Table 9
Women Directors Working Across the 1,800 Top-Grossing Films: 2007-2024

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

Gail Mancuso	Mimi Leder	Zoë Kravitz
Gina Prince-Bythewood*	Miranda July	
Greta Gerwig*	Nancy Meyers*	

Note: The asterisk illuminates those directors working at least 2 or more times from 2007 to 2024.

Focusing on writers, 12.9% were women in 2024 (see Table 10). The percentage of writers in 2024 was not different from the percentage of women writers in 2023 (15.2%) or 2007 (11.2%). No differences emerged in the percentage of women producers from 2023 to 2024. However, the percentage of women producers in 2024 (27%) was significantly higher than the percentage in 2007 (19.7%).

Table 10
Women Writers: 2007 to 2024

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	263
Total	**13%**	**674**	**5,186**

Table 11
Women Producers: 2007 to 2024

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%	349	1,295
Total	**22.5%**	**4,211**	**18,737**

One of the most problematic areas for women and non-binary creatives is the field of composing. In 2024, only 8.4% (*n*=10) of all composers were women. The number and percentage in 2024 were not different from the number and percentage in 2023. It is important to note that 2024 was substantially higher than 2007, when there were no women or non-binary composers working across the 100 most popular movies. A list of all the women and non-binary composers across the 18-year time frame can be found in Table 13.

Table 12
Women and Non Binary Composers: 2007 to 2024

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
Total	**3.4%**	**71**	**2,075**

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 1,800 Top-Grossing Films: 2007-2024

Alisa Okehazama	Jeanine Tesori
Amie Doherty	Jessica Rose Weiss
Andrea Datzman	Karen O
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	Nami Melumad
Claudia Sarne	Natalie Holt
Dara Taylor*	Niklie
Deborah Lurie*	Parampara Thakur
Eiko Ishibashi	Pinar Toprak*
Este Haim	Rachel Portman*
Genevieve Vincent	Sarah Schachner
Germaine Franco*	Stephanie Economou*
Herdís Stefãnsdõttir	Tachibana Ayaka
Hildur Guðnadóttir*	Tamar-kali*
Isabella Summers	Tierney Sutton
Isobel Waller-Bridge	Yuki Kajiura

Note: The asterisk illuminates those composers working at least two or more times from 2007 to 2024.

Our final behind the scenes role we evaluated was casting directors. In 2024, 78.4% of casters were women which was not different from 2023 (73.9%). However, the percentage of women casting directors has decreased since 2007 (86.1%). Even though this area is stereotypically female, a high percentage of the casters are Caucasian. As such, we will disaggregate these numbers by race/ethnicity in a later section in the paper.

Table 14
Women Casting Directors: 2007 to 2024

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
Total	**79.5%**	**2,200**	**2,767**

Lastly, we were interested in the relationship between director gender and the gender of on screen roles (i.e., leads/co leads, speaking characters). The results are shown in Figure 1. Female directors were roughly twice as likely as male directors to helm a story about a girl/woman. Women directors were also more likely to have gender equality across all speaking roles than were their male counterparts. While these findings are encouraging, it may be the case that women were more likely to be offered directing jobs because of the identity of the leading character. If this is the case, women directors' employment opportunities in a given year are contingent on the number of scripts green lit with a female lead/co lead. The same could not be said for male directors.

Figure 1
Percentage of Female Leads/Co Leads and Speaking Characters On Screen by Director Gender: 2024
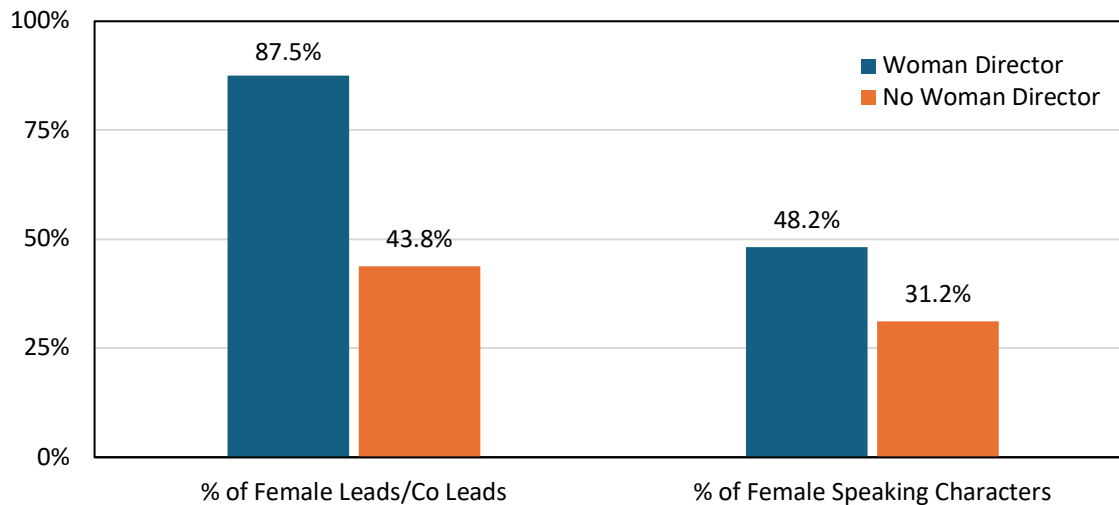
In sum, 2024 was not different than 2023 in the percentage of women working as directors, writers, producers, composers or casters. As such, it is not surprising that most of the on screen prevalence and portrayal results did not budge. While it was a banner year for girls and women as leads and co leads of

popular films, effort must be taken to level the employment playing field across the jobs reported on in this paper.

Race/Ethnicity

On Screen Prevalence. Of the 3,803 speaking or named characters that were coded for apparent race/ethnicity, 63.6% were white, 13.2% Black, 3.1% Hispanic/Latino, <1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 13.5% Asian, <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% MENA, and 4% multiracial/multiethnic. Summing across non white groups, a total of 36.4% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups which is 5.2 percentage points lower than U.S. census (41.6%).[3]

Table 15
Prevalence of Character Race/Ethnicity On Screen by Year: 2007-2024

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%	5.6%	.2%	19.5%	.2%	3.4%	3.2%	3,318
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%	4,474
2024	63.6%	13.2%	3.1%	.4	13.5%	.8%	1.3%	4%	3,803
Total	**69.3%**	**12.9%**	**4.8%**	**.3%**	**8.2%**	**.3%**	**2%**	**2.3%**	**70,501**

Looking at change over time, little deviation occurred between 2023 and 2024 save one finding. There were significantly more white characters on screen in 2024 (63.6%) than in 2023 (55.7%). It is also interesting to note that the gains made by Asian characters in 2023 were wiped out in 2024. When we compare 2024 to 2007, only two findings have changed: the percentage of white characters has *decreased* and the percentage of Asian characters has *increased*.

Table 16
Prevalence of Underrepresented Characters On Screen by Film Genre by Year: 2007-2024

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	47%	56.2%	26.8%
2021	45%	59.4%	22.5%
2022	46.8%	59.2%	36.7%
2023	57.6%	68.1%	36.5%
2024	49.9%	41.4%	25.3%
Total	**36.2%**	**36.4%**	**28.8%**

Note: All non-white characters were collapsed into an "UR" or underrepresented level.

The percentage of underrepresented speaking or named characters also varied by genre. In particular, non white characters in 2024 action/adventure *stories* decreased in comparison to 2023 but increased from 2007. The same pattern emerged with animation (see Table 16). While the percentage of underrepresented characters increased from 2007 in comedy, the percentage decreased from 2023 (36.5%) to 2024 (25.3%).

Yearly, we disaggregate our data to see how films are preforming on three additional prevalence indicators for three specific racial/ethnic groups.[4] The first is erasure or storylines that fail to depict a single speaking or named character from a distinct racial/ethnic group. The second is proportional representation, or the share of films that come within ±2 percentage points of the U.S. census figure.

For Black characters (see Table 17), a full 18 films erased this community from all speaking or named roles in 2024. This number did not differ from 2023 (18 films) but was higher than 2018 (13 films). Fifteen movies were at proportional representation in 2024, which is higher than 2023 (4 films) but not different than 2018 (17 films). Thirty-one movies depicted above proportional representation in 2024 which was not different than 2023 (34 movies) or 2018 (31 movies).

Table 17
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Black Characters Across 700 Films: 2018-2024

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# of films w/out any Black spk chars	13	15	24	20	15	18	18
# of films w/proportional rep	17	20	15	14	16	4	15
# of films above proportional rep	31	30	20	31	24	34	31
U.S. Census	13.7%						
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Pivoting to the Hispanic/Latinos (see Table 18), a total of 48 movies erased this community on screen in 2024. The number was larger in 2024 than 2023 (42 films) but was on par with 2018 (47 films). Not one movie in 2024 was depicted with proportional representation, which did not differ from the other years evaluated (see Table 18). Few movies were above proportional representation in 2024 (2 films), which was significantly lower than 2023 (7 films) but not different from 2018 (4 films).

Table 18
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Hispanic/Latino Chars Across 700 Films: 2018-2024

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# of films w/out H/L speaking chars	47	44	51	38	46	42	48
# of films w/proportional rep	2	2	0	2	3	0	0
# of films above proportional rep	4	5	6	10	6	7	2
U.S. Census	19.1%						
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

For Asian characters, 29 movies erased this group altogether in 2024 which was not different than 2023 (31 movies) or 2018 (32 movies). However, 2024 was a banner year for depicting Asian characters at proportional representation. A full 31 movies depicted Asians close to their percentage in the U.S. (6.3%). This result was substantially higher than 2023 (17 films) and 2018 (20 films). 2024 (24) did not differ from 2023 (26) or 2018 (27) in the number of films above proportional representation.

Table 19
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Asian Characters Across 700 Films: 2018-2024

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# of films w/out Asian speaking chars	32	36	46	28	34	31	29
# of films w/proportional rep	20	18	16	21	17	17	31
# of films above proportional rep	27	27	27	32	31	26	24
U.S. Census	6.3%						
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The above analyses focused on three specific racial/ethnic groups. Here, we turn our attention to the erasure of girls/women as the numbers in the gender section reveal the vast disparity that still exists between male and female characters. It was important to be intersectional with this analysis. So, the number of films erasing girls/women from every racial/ethnic group was evaluated (see Table 20). Table 20 reveals a few notable trends. First, few movies erase Caucasian (n=8) girls and women where almost every movie erases American Indian/Alaskan Native (n=98) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (n=97). Second, few films depict Middle Eastern/North African girls and women (n=88) and Latinas (n=70). More than half of all films feature Asian (n=52) and Black (n=62) girls and women.

Table 20
Epidemic of Invisibility Facing Girls/Women On Screen by Race/Ethnicity: 2018-2024

Racial/ Ethnic Group	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total Across 1,800 Movies
White	4	7	9	6	7	12	8	101
Hisp/Latinas	70	71	69	57	61	62	70	1,218
Black	33	33	52	37	32	39	38	762

Asian	54	55	61	52	44	49	48	1,079
AI/AN	99	97	97	98	100	99	98	1,775
NH/PI	97	99	99	98	99	99	97	1,775
MENA	93	92	89	94	95	81	88	1,660
MR/ME	51	45	68	66	70	56	56	1,312

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.

The previous results were focused on all speaking characters. Now, we turn our attention to leads/co leads. As shown in Table 21, only 25% of all leads/co leads were from underrepresented backgrounds in 2024. Those 25 movies translate into 27 different underrepresented leads/co leads. Of the 27, 10 were Black, 1 Hispanic/Latino, 4 Asian, and 12 multiracial/multiethnic. The percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads in 2024 (25%) was significantly lower than 2023 (37%) but significantly higher than 2007 (13%).

Focusing specifically on underrepresented women, only 14 films were centered on women of color. Of these 14 movies, there were 6 Black females, 1 Latina and 7 multiracial/multiethnic girls/women. No differences emerged in the percentage of leads/co leads that were women of color between 2024 (14%) and 2023 (14%). However, 2024 was substantially higher than 2007 when only 1% of all protagonists were women of color.

Table 21
Percentage of Underrepresented Leads/Co Leads Across 1,700 Films: 2007-2024

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	25%	14%
Total	**21%**	**7.6%**

On Screen Portrayal. As shown in Table 22, most characters, independent of their race/ethnicity were men. However, there was some deviation in gender by race/ethnicity. When compared to White characters, Asians were more likely to be males and Black characters were less likely. Other races/ethnicities were the most egalitarian, almost evenly split between male and female characters.

Table 22
Percentage of Men & Women Characters by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2024

Gender	White	Black	Hisp/Latino	Asian	Other
% males	66.4%	60.2%	62.4%	72.5%	52.4%
% females	33.6%	39.8%	37.6%	27.5%	47.6%
Ratio	2 to 1	1.5 to 1	1.7 to 1	2.6 to 1	1.1 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.

We also assessed the relationship between parental status and race/ethnicity for male and female characters. When compared to White (41.8%) and Latino (45.4%) males, Black males (52.3%) were more likely to be parents and all "other" (35.3%) and Asian (31.1%) males were less likely.

Table 23
Percentage of Men & Women Parents by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2024

Gender	White	Black	Hisp/Latino	Asian	Other
% men who are parents	41.8%	52.3%	45.4%	31.1%	35.3%
% women who are parents	50.2%	60.7%	30%	41.2%	30%

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 summary, very little progress was made in 2024 towards an inclusive picture of storytelling in film. Multiple racial/ethnic groups have witnessed decreases on screen, with Asian characters seeing significantly fewer opportunities than last year. Now, we take a look at who was working behind the camera as on screen patterns are often a function of the above the line leadership team.

Behind the Camera. In 2024, a total of 112 directors were responsible for helming the most popular films. Of these helmers, 76.8% were white and 23.2% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates to 3.3 white directors to every 1 underrepresented director. The percentage of non-white directors was substantially below U.S. Census (41.6%).[5]

The percentage of underrepresented directors has not changed from 2023 (22.4%) to 2024 (23.2%). However, there has been meaningful change since 2007 when only 12.5% of directors were not white. Across the 340 jobs filled by underrepresented directors from 2007 to 2024, 88.8% were occupied by men and 11.1% were occupied by women. The top performing underrepresented male director was Tyler Perry, with 18 movies in 18 years. Perry was followed by M. Night Shyamalan with 9 movies and James Wan, Antoine Fuqua, Tim Story, and Jaume Collet-Serra each had 8. Among women directors, 7

women were top performers all with 2 movies each (Ava DuVernay, Chloé Zhao, Gina Prince-Bythewood, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Kasi Lemmons, Nia DaCosta, Stella Meghie).

Table 24
Number of Black, Hispanic/Latino, & Asian Directors by Gender & Year: 2007-2024

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**
Total	5.1% (*n*=103)	<1% (*n*=17)	4.3% (*n*=87)	<1% (*n*=6)	4.8% (*n*=97)	<1% (*n*=16)	**2,011**

Yearly, the report highlights the employment patterns of directors (see Table 24) from the three largest non-white groups (Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian). Consult previous reports if you are interested in how we go about this process. Focusing first on Black directors, only 3 (2 men, 1 woman) worked in 2024. This number is notably lower than 2023 (*n*=10) and 2007 (*n*=8). Those 3 directors include: Barry Jenkins (*Mufasa: The Lion King*), Reinaldo Marcus Green (*Bob Marley: One Love*), and Zoë Kravitz (*Blink Twice*). We typically examine the relationship between director identity and character identity, but there were too few Black directors (*n*=3, <5) to conduct the analysis.

Turning to Hispanic/Latinos, only 7 helmers (6 men, 1 woman) worked in 2024. The findings for 2024 were not different from 2023 when 4 Hispanic/Latinos worked as helmers or 2007 when 3 did. The seven directors in 2024 include Alejandro Monteverde (*Cabrini*), Arturo Perez Jr. (*Mean Girls*), Carlos Saldanha (*Harold and the Purple Crayon*), Chris Weitz (*Afraid*), Fede Alvarez (*Alien: Romulus*), Gabriela Cowperthwaithe (I.S.S.), and Reinaldo Marcus Green (*Bob Marley: One Love*). The small sample size of Hispanic/Latino leads/co leads (*n*=1) prevents us from conducting meaningful analyses on the relationship between director race/ethnicity and on screen roles.

The last group we assessed was Asian directors. Thirteen directors (10 men, 3 women) worked in 2024, which was on par with the 13 helmers that worked in 2023. The number of Asian directors working in

2024 was significantly higher than in 2007 (see Table 24). The 13 directors include Dev Patel (*Monkey Man*), Ishana Shyamalan (*The Watchers*), Jon M. Chu (*Wicked*), Kazuhiro Furuhashi (*Spy X Family Code: White)*, Kenji Kamiyama (*The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim*), Lee Isaac Chung (*Twisters*), M Night Shyamalan (*Trap*), Nag Ashwin (*Kalki 2898 AD*), Stephanie Stine (*Kung Fu Panda 4*), Sukumar (*Pushpa: The Rule – Part 2*), Susumu Mitsunaka (*Haikyu!! The Dumpster Battle*), Takashi Katagiri (*Spy X Family Code: White*), Zelda Williams (*Lisa Frankenstein*).

Due to the larger number of Asian directors in 2024, we were able to examine the relationship between helmer identity (Asian no vs yes) and onscreen roles (Asian leads/co leads, Asian speaking or named characters). Asian directors were more likely to depict films with Asian leads/co leads (33.3%) in comparison to directors who were not Asian (2.2%). The same pattern held with speaking or named characters. In Asian directed movies, 54.1% of speaking characters were Asian but in non Asian directed movies that percentage falls to 5.5%. Thus, the relationship between identity-based content patterns and hiring practices was upheld once again.

Table 25
Underrepresented Status & Gender of Casting Directors by Year: 2007-2024

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%	.72%	64%	14.4%
Total	**17.8%**	**2.6%**	**69.8%**	**9.8%**

We closed out this section by looking at the opportunity afforded to casting directors by underrepresented status and gender. As shown in Table 25, the vast majority of casting director jobs in 2024 were held by white women (64%) and then white men (20.9%). Few underrepresented women (14.4%) and underrepresented men (<1%) cast the 100 most popular films of 2024. Further, very little change has occurred over time. 2024 is identical to 2023 for white women, white men and underrepresented women. Underrepresented men worked less as casting directors in 2024 (.72%) than they did in 2023 (5.1%). Overtime, the numbers have deviated a bit more since 2007. In comparison to

2024, white women are working less than they did in 2007 (2007=79.1%, 2024=64%) and underrepresented women (2007=7%, 2024=14.4%) and white men (2007=13.3%, 2024=20.9) are working more (see Table 25).

Behind the camera, the findings for 2024 do not suggest a banner year for racial/ethnic inclusion. Rather the results demonstrate a reversal or holding pattern of trends when compared to 2023.

LGBTQ+

A total of 39 speaking or named characters were coded as LGBTQ+ in 2024. This represents <1% (.89%) of all speaking characters across the 100 top films of 2024. The number of LGBTQ+ characters in 2024 was lower than in 2023 (60 characters) but higher than in 2014 (21 characters). The percentage of all LGBTQ+ characters was significantly below proportional representation with the U.S. population (10%).[6]

Seventeen of the LGBTQ+ characters in 2024 were Lesbian, 12 Gay, 9 Bisexual and 1 Transgender. These numbers were relatively stable in comparison to 2023 save one: there were 19 fewer gay characters than in 2023 (31). In comparison to 2014, only the number of Lesbian characters (2014=4, 2024=17) has increased across the four groups. Most of the LGBTQ+ characters were in supporting roles (35.9%, *n*=14) or were completely inconsequential (35.9%, *n*=14) to the plot.

Table 26
Prevalence of LGBTQ+ Speaking Characters Across 1,100 Top-Grossing Films: 2014-2024

	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	17	12	9	1	39
Total	**141**	**283**	**72**	**12**	**508**

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 LGTBQ+ characters for 2023.

Table 27 illuminates the degree of erasure of the LGBTQ+ community from top-grossing movies. Out of 100 top movies, a full 82 did not feature one LGBTQ+ speaking or named character. The number was significantly higher than in 2023 (76 movies) and not different from 2014 (86 movies). Only 2 of 100 top movies of 2024 depicted the LGBTQ+ community at proportional representation with the U.S., which did not differ from 2023 or 2014. It is important to note that 5 films showcased LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters above proportional representation, which was an 11-year high.

Table 27
Proportional Representation & Invisibility of LGBTQ Characters Across 1,100 Films: 2014-2024

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

Pivoting to protagonists, 5 of the 100 top-grossing films of 2024 featured LGTBQ+ leads/co leads. This number did not differ from 2023 (5 films) or 2014 (2 films). The five films featured 5 characters that were LGBTQ+: *I.S.S.* (Dr. Kira Foster, actor Ariana DeBose), *We Live in Time* (Almut, actor Florence Pugh), Ghostbusters: *Frozen Empire* (Phoebe Spengler, actor McKenna Grace), *Cuckoo* (Gretchen, actor Hunter Schafer), and *Loves Lies Bleeding* (Lou, Kristen Stewart).

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
Total	**32**	**2.9%**	**1,100**

Now, we turn our attention to the context surrounding LGBTQ+ characters of 2024. Of the 39 coded, a full 46.2% (n=18) were white, 15.4% were Black (n=6), 12.8% were Hispanic/Latino (n=5), 10.3% (n=4) were Asian, 12.8% (n=5) were multiracial/multiethnic, and 2.6% (n=1) were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Zero were MENA or American Indian/Alaskan Native. Put differently, 53.8% of the LGBTQ+ characters shown were not white.

Of the Lesbian characters, 9 were teens and 8 were adults (21-39 years of age). Only 1 Lesbian speaking character was a parent. That adult Latina character was in the movie *Borderlands* and was inconsequential to the plot. Gay characters had a slightly longer age span, with 25% (n=3) teens, 41.7% (n=5) adults, and 33.3% (n=4) middle aged. No gay characters were depicted as parents. Only 1 bisexual character was a teenager, 6 were adults, and 2 were elderly. Only 1 bisexual character was a parent and she appeared as a co lead in the movie *We Live in Time*. The one trans character was an inconsequential Latina.

Taken together, there were three major trends across all the LGBTQ+ findings. The first was that the number of gay characters has decreased in 2024. The second was that 2024 was a rinse and repeat of 2023. Third, a total of 5 films featured LGBTQ+ characters above proportional representation.

Disability

Across 100 top films of 2024, only 2.4% (*n*=105) of speaking or named characters were shown with a disability. This percentage is far below U.S. census which reports 27.2% of Americans identify having a disability.[7] No change has occurred over time. Matter of fact, the number and percentage of characters with a disability on screen is identical to the number and percentage in 2015.

Table 29
Prevalence of Characters w/Disabilities Across 1,000 Top-Grossing Films: 2015-2024

Measure	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
% of spking chars	2.4%	2.7%	2.5%	1.6%	2.2%	1.8%	2.1%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.2%
# of spking chars	105	124	112	69	101	68	93	81	117	105	975

Each year we quantify the types of disabilities shown in popular movies. We code the presence or absence of physical, cognitive, and/or communicative disabilities for each speaking and/or named character. Characters may have one or more disabilities, so these percentages do not total to 100%. Just over two thirds of all characters were depicted with a physical disability (64.8%, *n*=68). Some of the manifest cues associated with physical disabilities were missing extremities, having mobility restrictions, using prosthetics or a wheelchair, and asthma-based symptoms.

The next most frequent type of disability was communicative. Just under a third of all characters with a disability (32%, *n*=33) were portrayed with a communicative disability. Examples of communicative disabilities in films include blindness and impaired vision, inability to speak, stutter, and deafness. And finally, a total of 25 characters (24.3%, *n*=25) were shown with cognitive impairment in top films. Cognitive disabilities manifested on screen in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, memory loss, and intellectual disability.

Table 30
Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Characters w/Disabilities
Across 1,000 Films: 2015-2024

Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# films w/o disability	45	38	41	58	48	62	48	54	42	44
# films w/prop rep	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Disability in the U.S.					27.2%					
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

When we conducted our erasure analysis, a total of 44 movies across the 100 top films of 2024 were missing characters with disabilities. This number was not different from findings in 2023 (42 films) or 2015 (45 films). Further, not one movie showed characters within striking distance of proportional representation (see Table 30). Despite all of the activism and press attention on the lack of characters with disabilities in film, no meaningful change has been realized.

To understand the nature of the portrayals surrounding characters with disabilities, we analyzed their gender, age, race/ethnicity, parental status and whether they were part of the LGBTQ+ community. The majority of these characters were male (61%, *n*=64) and white (70.8%, *n*=68). Few were Black (12.5%, *n*=12), Asian (11.5%, *n*=11), or multiracial/multiethnic (5.2%, *n*=5). Not one character with a disability was Hispanic/Latino, MENA, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native. Of those characters with enough information to code parental status, 41.5% (*n*=22) were caregivers or parents. Only 1 character with a disability across the 100 top films of 2024 was LGTBQ+. The majority of characters with disabilities were depicted in supporting roles (47.6%) or inconsequential to the plot (29.5%).

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
Total	**129**	**12.9%**	**1,000**

While little change has occurred at the speaking or named character level, progress did occur for leading/co leading characters. In 2024, 20 of the 100 top films featured a lead or co lead with a disability. This number was substantially higher than in 2023 (8 films) or in 2015 (10 films). Further, the number was the highest since we have been conducting this study. Examples of leading/co leading characters' disabilities include but are not limited to portrayals of the consequences of cancer (*We Live in Time, A Quiet Place: Day One*), dismemberment (*Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*), facial scarring and/or disfigurement (*Deadpool & Wolverine*), blindness (*Madame Web*), chronic pain (*Smile 2*), mobility restriction (*Thelma*, *The Brutalist*), multiple sclerosis (*Night Swim*), and amnesia (*Argylle*).

Overall, 2024 was a good year for leads/co leads with a disability. It was also a problematic year for speaking or named characters. In terms of the latter, the findings mirror the previous years we have been studying and coding characters with a disability. Given these opposing trends, 2024 is probably an anomaly for leading characters with disability and 2025 will reveal a reversal or downturn of the trend.

Conclusion

Each year, this report provides data on representation of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identification, and characters with disabilities across the 100 top-grossing films of the previous year. To date, 1,800 movies have been analyzed, encompassing more than 79,000 speaking characters. In this section, we

overview the findings on top-grossing films from 2024 and link those to the overall longitudinal trends witnessed across the 18-year sample. Finally, we offer recommendations for industry change.

Girls and Women May Lead, but They Lag in All Speaking Roles

While 2024 was an historic year for female-driven films, it was an average year for women in all speaking roles. This does not minimize the significance of the change for girls/women in leading roles. More than half of the highest-grossing films last year (55%) had a girl or woman in the lead—more than 30 percentage points higher than 2007 and 25 percentage points above 2023. This is an important step for an industry that questioned the box office prowess of women for decades. Yet, even as top stories have changed to be about women, they still lack worlds in which women make up half the cast. Despite an increase from 2023, less than one-fifth of stories feature a gender-balanced cast. And, girls/women only comprise 33.6% of all speaking characters. Other indicators related to girls/women on screen also remained stagnant in 2024—less than a quarter of characters age 40 and older were women, and women were more likely to be shown as parental figures than men were.

Behind the camera, a slightly different pattern unfolded. There were three areas where women's participation has changed over time. The percentage of women directors reached its highest point in 18 years in 2024 (14.3%). The percentage of women producers also increased significantly from 2007 to reach 27% in 2024. Lastly, the percentage of women composers rose from 0 in 2007 to 8.4% in 2024. However, across each of these metrics, enthusiasm over great change should be tempered. While there was significant improvement over 18 years, there was no significant increase from 2023 to 2024. In other words, the entertainment industry has found ways to grow their efforts to inclusion, but only to a plateau that still remains significantly below equality.

Results on Race/Ethnicity Reveal Regression

For characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, 2024 was not a banner year. Overall, the percentage of underrepresented characters fell from 44.3% in 2023 to 36.4% in 2024. This was true for leads/co leads as well, from more than one-third in 2023 to 25% in 2024. Stories still erased Black, Latino, and Asian characters entirely. Only 1 racial/ethnic group has increased meaningfully over time: Asian characters. However, the significant gains made in 2023 reversed course in 2024. These data overwhelmingly reveal that the concerns over Hollywood's "wokeness" are overblown—top-grossing movies still do not reflect reality when it comes to underrepresented characters on screen.

Behind the camera, less than a quarter of directors in 2024 were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic background. While this is significant improvement for the industry since 2007, it is no different than what was achieved in 2023. Only 3 Black directors, 7 Hispanic/Latino directors, and 13 Asian directors worked behind the camera in 2024's highest-grossing movies. The lack of underrepresented directors speaks directly to beliefs in Hollywood about what types of stories directors from underrepresented backgrounds can tell.

Women of Color are Still Waiting for Change

Given the lack of change for people of color overall and for girls and women on screen, it is no surprise that for girls and women of color there is little to celebrate in 2024. Only 14% of films showcased girls/women of color as leads/co leads, and 1 film featured a woman of color 45 years of age or older at the center. While the overall percentage of women of color in leading roles has increased since 2007, it

has not changed from 2023 nor has it surpassed the previous high of 18% in 2022. Across all roles, the majority of underrepresented characters were male-identified, and the epidemic of invisibility still faces women from nearly all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. For example, 98 films did not feature one American Indian/Alaska Native woman, and 97 were missing girls/women who were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. On this metric, too little change has occurred since 2018 and 2023—many women from specific racial/ethnic groups are still missing completely from storytelling.

Behind the camera, women of color are still far less likely than their male or white female counterparts to direct a top-grossing movie. In 2024, 1 Black woman, 1 Latina, and 3 Asian women were credited as top-grossing directors—virtually unchanged compared to 2023, and little different than 2007. In fact, there have not been more than 10 women of color directors of top-grossing movies in any of the 18 years examined. The lack of progress for women of color speaks volumes about the priorities and promises of the entertainment industry.

The LGBTQ+ Community is Limited in Top-Grossing Films

The representation of the LGBTQ+ community in top-grossing movies remains far below population statistics. Less than 1% of all speaking characters were LGBTQ-identified, a figure which has not changed in percentage or number since 2014. Only one indicator related to LGBTQ+ representation has increased in the last decade—the number of Lesbian characters on screen. While it may seem like this portends progress, in reality this increase merely substitutes for a decrease in gay characters from 2014. There was only 1 transgender speaking or named character who appeared across 100 top movies. A mere 5 films featured LGBTQ+ leads/co leads—all were women.

More than three-quarters of the top films in 2024 did not feature even one LGBTQ+ character. This figure has not changed since 2014 and even increased from 2023. Moreover, the representation of LGBTQ+ characters is skewed. There were only 2 LGBTQ+ parents in 2024 across the 100 top films. While there were more non-white LGBTQ+ characters than white characters, most LGBTQ+ characters were teens or adults 21-39 years of age. Viewers are not only encountering few portrayals of LGBTQ+ characters in top films, they are unlikely to see characters who reflect the diversity of this community.

Characters with Disabilities Take the Spotlight, but are Still Rare in Small Roles

In 2024, there was a significant increase in the percentage of leading/co leading characters with a disability. A total of 20% of the top-grossing films evaluated featured a leading character with a disability, compared to 8% the year before and 10% in 2015. This change reveals that films and filmmakers were finding more ways to incorporate characters with disabilities into the central storyline of a movie. This may be one way to improve identification with and learning about people with disabilities to impact off-screen inclusion.

Despite these encouraging findings for leading characters, there was no change in the depiction of characters with disabilities in all speaking roles. In 2024, 2.4% of characters had a disability, which was identical to the percentage in 2015. The stability of these findings was reflected in other metrics-- 44 films were completely missing characters with disabilities in 2024, no different than 2015. Characters were most likely to be shown with physical disabilities, and to be white and male. Only 1 character with a disability was LGBTQ+. In other words, in the few instances when characters with disabilities appear on screen, they fit a narrow profile.

Recommendations for Change

Annually, this report offers interested entertainment practitioners ways to improve inclusion on screen and behind the camera. Given the lack of overall change across the data in this report, these recommendations are either overlooked completely or adopted rarely. Yet, even at a time when much of the industry remains antagonistic (at worst) or apathetic (at best) to issues of inclusion, we once again provide ways that executives, and filmmakers can work to ensure that the movies they make reflect the audience who sees them.

Inclusion Requires Innovation in the Process. Using the same formula for storytelling will not result in a different outcome. In the writing, pre-production, casting, production, and post-production processes there is room for the industry to innovate with inclusion in mind. This primarily involves invoking decision-making processes that do not rely on outdated methods of evaluating talent. For example, since we began studying top-grossing movies in 2007, 31 women of color have directed a top-grossing movie. Yet only 7 of these women have directed more than one top-grossing movie. This means that the talent and aptitude these women have shown has been virtually ignored by executives when open directing positions become available. One means of achieving a different process is to set target inclusion goals. This allows companies to set inclusion goals across a slate of films, measure progress, and adjust the process of achieving those goals and the targets themselves, as needed. Creating a hiring process that values the experience and vision of people from all backgrounds in the consideration process is an essential part of changing the nature of who works in film.

Use Objective Criteria in Decision-Making. For several years, we have advocated for the use of objective evaluation criteria in the decision-making process. For companies, this means that the use of "gut feelings," "hunches," or familiarity is replaced by a process that uses objective metrics to assess qualifications or suitability for a role. Using criteria allows each candidate to have an equal opportunity to be hired, based on their prior work, experience, and skill sets. It also overcomes psychological constraints that can impede progress by encouraging hiring managers (or executives) to choose the best candidate.

These solutions, while overviewed briefly, are merely two ways that companies and filmmakers can embrace strategies that change the status quo. Over the years we have offered other solutions—and those are still viable and legal ways to improve inclusion—but at the core, change requires rethinking the way "business is done" and using measurable criteria to make decisions.

Limitations

This report also includes a note on the limitations of the research. The basis for this report and the longitudinal investigation it is part of is the annual list of top-grossing movies. Films that are less popular or released outside of theaters may provide a different set of conclusions. However, the goal with this research is to examine agenda-setting content seen by the largest audience. While our other research does investigate different areas of content (e.g., streaming films, television, awards), this study provides a critical understanding of which movies are deemed to have theatrical potential and therefore receive significant production, marketing, and exhibition support. These reasons make it essential to continue this decade-spanning project and to provide regular updates to the public on the industry's progress.

It is a critical time for the entertainment industry to find its way forward on inclusion, particularly when pressures to abandon DEI efforts are ever more noticeable. The data in this report reveal, however, that

DEI efforts had either inconsistent or ineffective impact on the most popular film content created across 18 years. Perhaps a new way forward is needed—one that embraces talent, regardless of background, that recognizes opportunity, and that acknowledges that what has been attempted has not accomplished what is needed. If inclusion efforts are at a crossroads, then a pivot *towards* new ways of thinking are needed, and the time for fresh approaches is now.

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Annenberg Inclusion Initiative Students

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Footnotes

1.This report has tracked inclusion in popular film longitudinally from 2007 to 2024. The 100 top films are determined each year by information provided on boxofficemojo.com. Our early reports (first 10+ years) detail our methodology, unitizing and variable definitions, sampling and reliability. Please consult earlier versions of this paper for a meticulous explanation of how we conduct our research. While we write the report every year, the tables and notes are templates that we use repeatedly from year to year to maintain consistency in language and presentation of information.

2. Neff, K., Smith, S., & Pieper, K. (2025). *Inequality Across 1,800 Popular Films: Examining Gender, Race/Ethnicity, & Age of Leads/Co Leads from 2007 to 2024*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Los Angeles, CA. https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-popular-films-20250211.pdf

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

4. 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.

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

6. 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%.

7. 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