

# **Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019**

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Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

September 2020

**USC** Annenberg  
*Inclusion Initiative*



# INEQUALITY IN 1,300 POPULAR FILMS

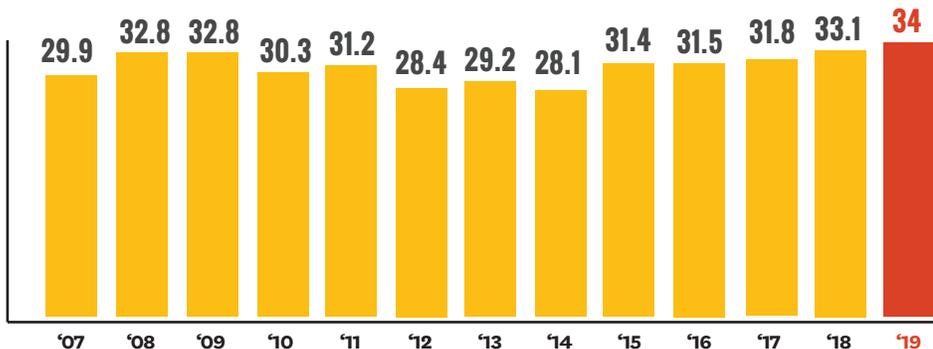
ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE

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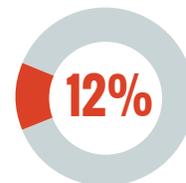
📷 🐦 @Inclusionists

## NEW YEAR, NO PROGRESS FOR GIRLS & WOMEN ON SCREEN

Prevalence of girls and women as speaking characters across 1,300 films, in percentages



Percentage of 1,300 films with Balanced Casts



Ratio of males to females  
**2.2:1**

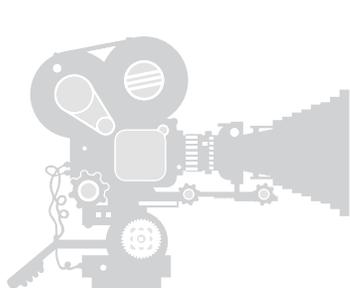


Total number of speaking characters

**57,629**

## PROGRESS TOWARD PARITY FOR GIRLS & WOMEN AS LEADS

Of the 100 top films in 2019...



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

39 films in 2018 and 20 in 2007 depicted a girl or woman as a lead or co lead.

And of those Leads and Co Leads\* ...

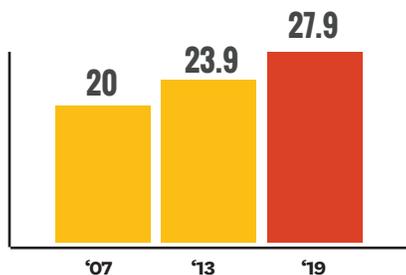
**17** Female actors were from **underrepresented racial / ethnic groups**

**3** Female actors were at least **45 years of age or older**

\*Excludes films w/ensemble casts

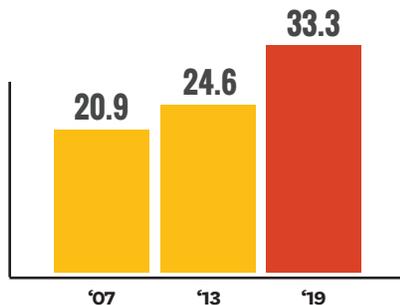
## FOR GIRLS & WOMEN, NOT ALL GENRES ARE CREATED EQUAL

ACTION AND/OR ADVENTURE



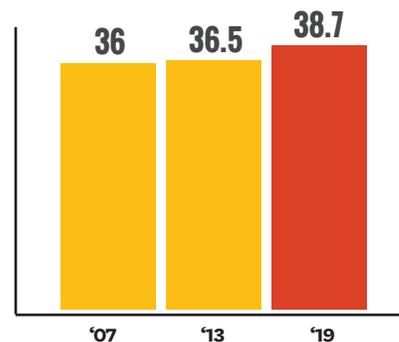
% OF GIRLS & WOMEN AS SPEAKING CHARACTERS

ANIMATION



% OF GIRLS & WOMEN AS SPEAKING CHARACTERS

COMEDY



% OF GIRLS & WOMEN AS SPEAKING CHARACTERS

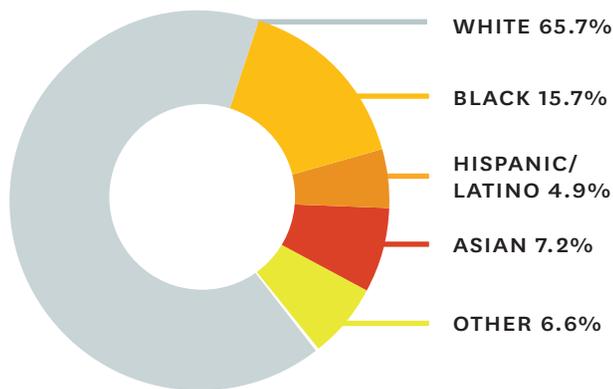
## ALL-TIME HIGH FOR UNDERREPRESENTED CHARACTERS AT THE CENTER OF STORYTELLING

Number of films with underrepresented leads or co leads by year

	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	OVERALL
ALL UR LEADS	13	13	17	12	9	12	16	18	13	14	21	27	32	17%
FEMALE UR LEADS	1	4	4	5	5	2	3	4	3	3	4	11	17	5%

## INCLUSION OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS ON SCREEN IN 2019

Percentage of all speaking characters by racial/ethnic group



percentage of **under-represented** characters: **34.3%**

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

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

**36** films had **NO Asian** speaking characters

*\*The percentage of White characters decreased 11.9 percentage points since 2007. There has been no significant increase in the percentage of characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in the same time frame.*

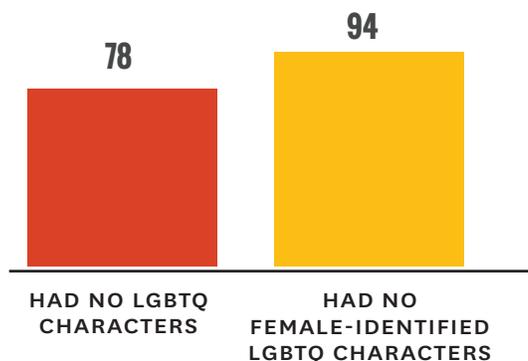
## LGBTQ CHARACTERS ARE LEFT BEHIND IN FILM

Of 26,618 speaking characters across 600 films...

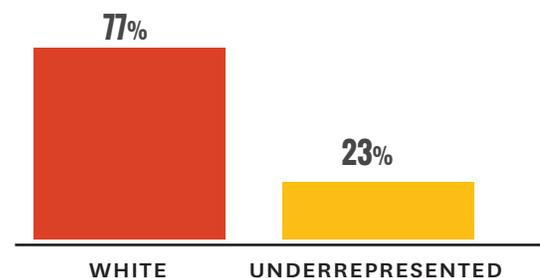
	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	
GAY	12	19	36	16	33	45	
BISEXUAL	5	5	6	6	8	3	
LESBIAN	4	7	9	9	17	10	
TRANSGENDER	0	1	0	0	0	3	

All 4 transgender characters appearing in top films were **inconsequential** to the story, and had a **total screentime of 2 minutes**.

of the 100 top films of 2019...



of the 61 LGBTQ characters in 2019...



## CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITY FACE A DEFICIT ON SCREEN IN FILM

**2.3%**

of all speaking characters were depicted with a disability

**65%** PHYSICAL\*

**29%** COGNITIVE\*

**28%** COMMUNICATIVE\*

\*Based on U.S. Census domains

**48**

movies did not include any characters with disabilities.

**77**

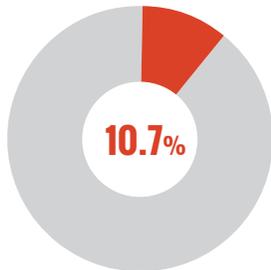
movies did not include any girls or women with disabilities.

## WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA IN 2019

Across 1,518 content creators....

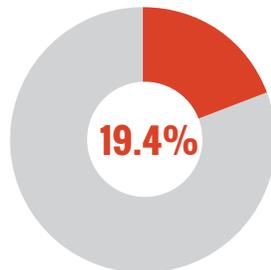
● MEN ● WOMEN

DIRECTORS



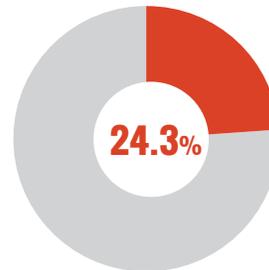
12 WOMEN DIRECTORS

WRITERS



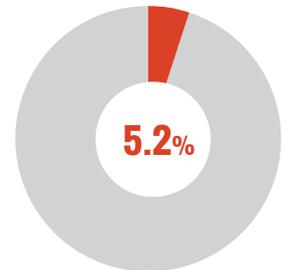
57 WOMEN WRITERS

PRODUCERS



270 WOMEN PRODUCERS

COMPOSERS



6 WOMEN COMPOSERS

## WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,300 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Abby Kohn	Hallie Meyers-Shyer	Lilly Wachowski	Sam Taylor-Johnson
Angelina Jolie	Jennifer Flackett	Lorene Scafaria	Sanaa Hamri*
Anna Boden	Jennifer Lee*	Loveleen Tandan*	Sarah Smith
Anna Foerster	Jennifer Yuh Nelson**	Lucia Aniello	Shari Springer Berman
Anne Fletcher*	Jessie Nelson	Marielle Heller	Sharon Maguire
Ava DuVernay**	Jill Culton	Melina Matsoukas*	Stacy Title
Betty Thomas	Jodie Foster	Mimi Leder	Stella Meghie*
Brenda Chapman	Julie Anne Robinson*	Nancy Meyers*	Susanna Fogel
Catherine Hardwicke*	Julie Taymor	Niki Caro	Susanna White
Diane English	Kasi Lemmons*	Nora Ephron	Thea Sharrock
Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum	Kathryn Bigelow	Olivia Wilde	Tina Gordon*
Elizabeth Banks	Kay Cannon	Patricia Riggen*	Trish Sie
Gail Mancuso	Kimberly Peirce	Patty Jenkins	
Gina Prince-Bythewood*	Kirsten Sheridan	Phyllida Lloyd	
Greta Gerwig*	Lana Wachowski*	Roxann Dawson*	



THERE WERE

**57**

INDIVIDUAL WOMAN DIRECTORS BETWEEN 2007 & 2019

\*=underrepresented woman director  
+=woman has worked more than once

## DIRECTORS AND COMPOSERS: FEW WOMEN FILL THESE ROLES



## MOST CASTING DIRECTORS ARE WHITE WOMEN

Across 1,300 films the demographic breakdown of casting directors...



**17.9%**  
ARE  
WHITE  
MEN



**71%**  
ARE  
WHITE  
WOMEN



**1.7%**  
ARE  
UNDERREPRESENTED  
MEN



**9.4%**  
ARE  
UNDERREPRESENTED  
WOMEN

## STORYTELLERS ARE STILL PRIMARILY WHITE AND MALE

Across 1,300 films and 1,447 directors...

**6.1%**

OR 88 BLACK OR AFRICAN  
AMERICAN DIRECTORS

**80** MEN **8** WOMEN

**3.7%**

OR 53 HISPANIC/LATINO  
DIRECTORS

**50** MEN **3** WOMEN

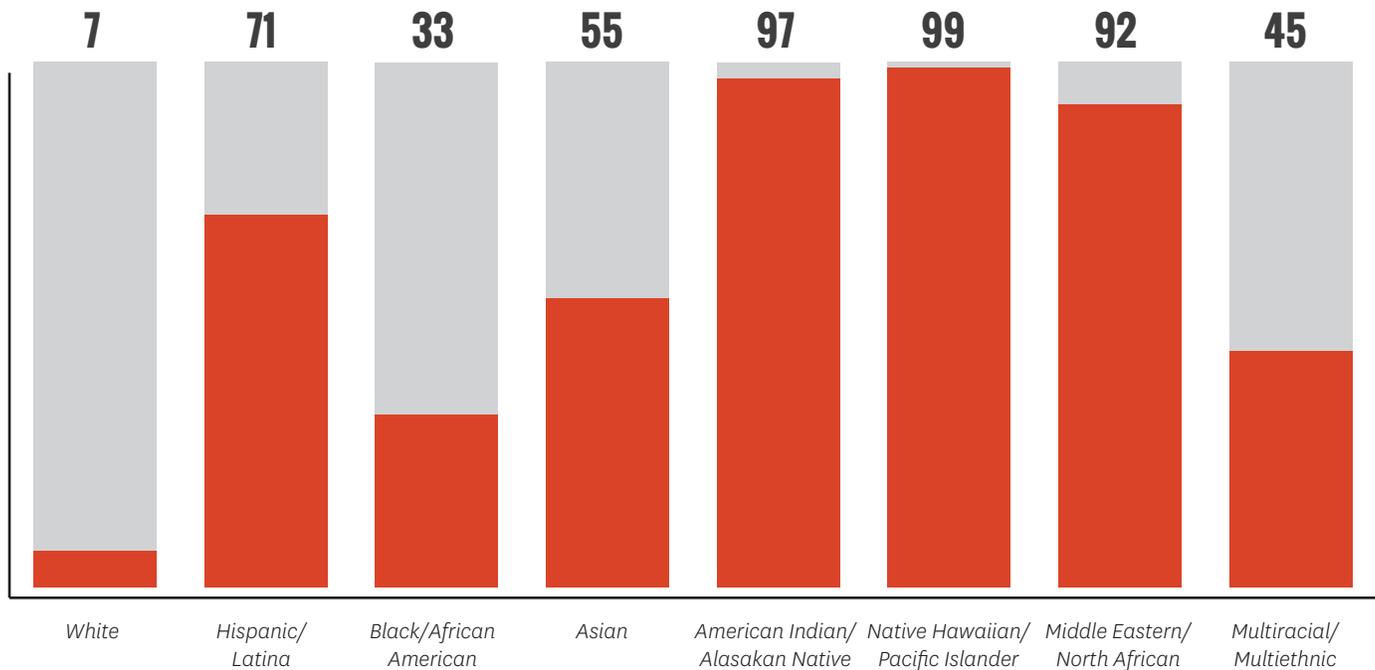
**3.3%**

OR 48 ASIAN OR ASIAN  
AMERICAN DIRECTORS

**45** MEN **3** WOMEN

## ERASURE OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN TOP-GROSSING FILMS

Of the 100 top films in 2019, the number missing girls and women on screen that were...



## STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS TO FOSTER SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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

# UNIVERSAL AND PARAMOUNT LEAD ACROSS 19 INCLUSION INDICATORS IN 2019 FILMS

Inclusion indicators by company for 2019

INCLUSION INDICATOR	WALT DISNEY	20TH C. FOX	UNIVERSAL	WARNER BROS.	LIONSGATE	PARAMOUNT	SONY PICTURES
Female Leads & Co Leads	44%	40%	50%	23%	42%	44%	46%
Female Speaking Characters	34%	30%	35%	31%	30%	37.0%	37.4%
Gender Proportional Representation	11%	10%	11%	8%	17%	22%	8%
Women Directors	17%	8%	25%	0%	0%	0%	14%
Women Writers	28%	18%	30%	12%	10%	18%	13%
Women Producers	27%	21%	31%	19%	19%	27%	26%
Underrepresented Leads & Co Leads*	22%	30%	44.4%	23%	25%	44.4%	31%
Underrepresented Female Leads & Co Leads*	0%	10%	33.3%	0%	8%	33.3%	31%
Underrepresented Speaking Characters	31%	28%	36%	37%	32%	44%	32%
Proportional Rep. of Underrepresented Characters	0%	0%	0%	15%	0%	11%	23%
Underrepresented Directors	0	25%	25%	31%	8%	20%	21%
Underrepresented Writers	6%	9%	21.6%	22.0%	10%	6%	3%
Underrepresented Producers	10%	16%	24%	25%	23%	17%	24%
LGBTQ Leads & Co Leads	0	0	0	0	0	11%	0
LGBTQ Speaking Characters	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%
LGBTQ Proportional Representation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leads & Co Leads w/a Disability	22%	40%	11%	8%	25%	22%	8%
Speaking Characters w/a Disability	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Proportional Rep. of Characters w/a Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# Where Company Leads	0	1	6	3	1	6	2
% Where Company Leads	0%	5%	32%	16%	5%	32%	11%
# of Films	9	10	18	13	12	9	13

\*For animated films, the race/ethnicity of the actor was used. For leads and co leads with a disability, this was assessed as an attribute that was present or absent for the character and does not reflect whether the disability was the focus of the story. The company with the highest percentage on an indicator was credited as leading on that metric. Numbers were rounded to a whole number, although when companies tied, we looked to the 10th decimal place to determine the leader.

## DISNEY IS BY FAR THE FRONTRUNNER AT THE BOX OFFICE FOR INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING

2019 global box office earnings by lead/co lead characters

FEMALE LEAD/CO LEAD					UNDERREPRESENTED LEAD/CO LEAD				
	DISTRIBUTOR	GLOBAL REVENUE	# OF FILMS	\$ PER FILM		DISTRIBUTOR	GLOBAL REVENUE	# OF FILMS	\$ PER FILM
1	WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	\$4.1B	4	\$1.0B	1	WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	\$2.7B	2	\$1.3B
2	UNIVERSAL PICTURES	\$896M	9	\$100M	2	UNIVERSAL PICTURES	\$1.6B	8	\$195M
3	20TH CENTURY FOX	\$765M	4	\$191M	3	LIONSGATE	\$711M	3	\$237M
4	SONY PICTURES	\$767M	6	\$128M	4	20TH CENTURY FOX	\$609M	3	\$203M
5	LIONSGATE	\$619M	5	\$124M	5	WARNER BROS.	\$505M	3	\$168M
6	PARAMOUNT PICTURES	\$403M	4	\$101M	6	SONY PICTURES	\$469M	4	\$117M
7	WARNER BROS.	\$403M	3	\$134M	7	PARAMOUNT PICTURES	\$457M	4	\$114M
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$8B</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>\$229M</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$7.0B</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>\$260M</b>

Films distributed by other companies are not included in this graphic.

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## Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019

### Annenberg Inclusion Initiative USC

Longitudinally, we have been documenting diversity and inclusion yearly in the 100 top films since 2007. In this annual report, we again examine gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ and people with disabilities on screen across 1,300 top-grossing films in the U.S. We also look behind the camera, with a focus on gender and race/ethnicity of content creators (i.e., directors, writers, producers, composers, casting directors). As such, this research continues to be the most comprehensive and rigorous analysis of inclusion in the film industry to date. Below, we present key findings from the report by inclusion indicator. Only 5 percentage point differences (or greater) were noted.

#### Key Findings

##### **Gender**

**On Screen.** A total of 4,451 characters were coded across the 100 top movies of 2019 in the U.S. A full 66% of **speaking or named characters** were male and 34% were female. This calculates into a gender ratio of 1.9 males to every 1 female. The percentage of female-identified speaking characters in 2019 was not different from 2018 (33.1%) or 2007 (29.9%). Clearly, strategies for inclusion in casting decisions, particularly in smaller roles, are not working.

Only 28% of all speaking characters in action films were girls and women, which was not meaningfully different from 2018 (29%) but was notably higher than 2007 (20%). A similar pattern emerged for female characters in animation (2019=33.3%, 2007=20.9%).

Only 14 of the 100 top movies in 2019 featured a gender-balanced (45%-54.9% of all speaking roles filled with girls/women) cast, which increased from 2018 (9 films) but was not different than in 2007 (12 films). These numbers illuminate that Hollywood continues to fail girls and women on screen by reducing their visibility across the entire ecosystem of stories year after year.

Women only filled 38.8% of speaking roles among 21-39 year olds. The findings were even more dire for women 40 years of age or older, as they only held a quarter of those roles cast within this age range. The percentage of women 40 years of age or older in 2019 (25.4%) does not practically differ from 2018 (25%) or 2007 (22.1%).

In 2019, women (41.6%) were more likely than men (31.3%) to be shown as parents. While not different from 2018 (41.3%), the percentage of males and females portrayed as parents was lower in 2019 than in 2007 (50%).

The percentage of girls/women as **leads and co leads** was at an all time high in 2019 (43% of films). Though this point statistic does not differ from 2018 (39% of films), it is fully 23 percentage points higher than 2007 (20% of films). 2019 was more likely to feature women and girls of color (17% of films) as leads and co leads driving the plot than 2018 (11% of films) or 2007 (1% of films). Few films depicted

women 45 years of age or older as leads/co leads in movies. The percentage of films with women 45 years of age or older in leading/co leading roles decreased from 2018 (11%) to 2019 (3%).

**Behind the Camera.** A total of 1,518 individuals worked above the line as directors, writers and producers across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019. Only 22.3% of all these top leadership positions were filled with women.

112 **directors** were attached to the 100 top-grossing movies of 2019. Only 12 of these directors were women (10.7%), which was significantly higher than 2018 (4.5%) and 2007 (2.7%). 2019 was the highest number and percentage of women directors across the 13-year sample. Ten of the 12 women directors in 2019 did not appear previously in our sample of top-grossing helmers.

Across 1,300 movies, only 70 directing jobs were filled by women. Some women worked more than once, bringing the total number of individual women directors to 57. In comparison, 696 unique male directors worked across the 13-year time frame. This computed to a gender ratio of 12.2 men hired to every 1 woman.

Is it really that hard to find a woman director to employ for these positions? No. And the pipeline illuminates that they were not only available but were shut out from being attached to these larger budget films. In 2018/19, 34% of narrative helmers were women at the Sundance Film Festival and 31% across all episodic storytelling. Importantly, Netflix alone attached 12 (20.7%) women directors to their U.S. based films in 2019. Thus, the legacy studios may want to take a note out of the streaming giant's playbook on how to hire more inclusively behind the camera.

The percentage of female speaking characters and leads/co leads increased significantly when a woman director was attached. Women-directed films featured stories with girls and women comprising 45.1% of all speaking roles and 83.3% of leading/co leading characters. For movies with only male directors, the respective percentages were 32.5% and 37.5%.

Pivoting to **screenwriters**, a total of 294 individuals penned the 100 top-grossing films of 2019. A full 80.6% of screenwriters were men and only 19.4% were women. The percentage of women screenwriters in 2019 was significantly higher (5 percentage points) than in 2018 (14.4%) or 2007 (11.2%).

Almost a quarter of all **producers** (24.3%) were women across the 100 top movies of 2019. No over time differences were observed (2018=21.1%, 2007=20.5%).

5.2% ( $n=6$ ) of all **composers** ( $n=116$ ) were women across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019. This percentage represents 6 women, twice as many as 2018 ( $n=3$ ) and significantly more than 2007 ( $n=0$ ). The gender ratio of men to women in 2019 was 18.3 to 1.

70.4% ( $n=95$ ) of all casting directors in 2019 ( $n=135$ ) were women and 29.6% ( $n=40$ ) were men. This was a notable decrease from 2018 and 2007, where 85.1% and 86.1% of casters were women respectively. In 2019, the percentage of girls and women on screen did not increase when a woman caster was attached to the film.

## ***Race/Ethnicity***

**On Screen.** A total of 3,891 ***speaking characters*** were evaluated for race/ethnicity. Nearly two-thirds of the speaking or named characters assessed were White (65.7%), 4.9% Hispanic/Latino, 15.7% Black, <1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 7.2% Asian, 1.6% Middle Eastern/North African, and 4.4% Multiracial/Multiethnic. In total, 34.3% of characters were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This point statistic was below the U.S. Census (39.9%).

There has been no meaningful increase in Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Asian characters in 2019 from 2018 or 2007. However, the percentage of White characters was lower in 2019 than in 2007 but not different from 2018.

The number of films erasing Black speaking characters altogether on screen in 2019 (15 movies) was not meaningfully different from the number of films erasing Black speaking characters on screen in 2018 (12 movies) or 2015 (17 movies).

Forty-four of the 100 top movies in 2019 erased Hispanic/Latino speaking characters entirely from on screen roles, which did not differ from 2018 (47 movies) or 2015 (40 movies).

Asian speaking or named characters were missing altogether from more than a third of all movies in the 2019 sample (36 films). While 2019 was not meaningfully different from 2018 (32 films), it was lower than 2015 (49 films).

The complete erasure of women of color on screen was far worse. Looking across all racial/ethnic groups measured, the number of films that erased girls/women from all speaking or named roles across the 100 top films of 2019 was as follows: Hispanic/Latinas (71 movies), Black (33 movies), American Indian/Alaskan Native (97 movies), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (99 movies), Asian (55 movies), Middle Eastern/North African (92 movies), Multiracial/Multiethnic (45 movies). In contrast, White girls and women were only erased from 7 movies.

In comparison to 2015, 2019 decreased the erasure of Black, Asian and Multiracial/Multiethnic girls and women on screen and increased erasure of Hispanic/Latino girls and women. Virtually all films erased Indigenous and MENA women and girls across the 5 years evaluated.

In terms of genre, action films were significantly more likely to feature characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in 2019 (42.3%) than in 2007 (21.5%). A similar jump was observed in animation (2019=41.1%, 2007=8.1%) and comedy (2019=37.5%, 2007=23.1%).

Seventeen percent of all 1,300 movies depicted an ***underrepresented lead/co lead***, with 2019 films (32%) over twice as likely as 2007 (13%). A 5 percentage point increase was also observed from 2018 (27%) to 2019 (32%).

For women and girls of color, a 16 percentage point increase was observed in leading/co leading roles from 2007 (1%) to 2019 (17%). Further, the percentage of underrepresented girls and women depicted as leads/co leads increased meaningfully from 2018 (11%) to 2019 (17%).

**Behind the Camera.** Of the 112 **directors** across 2019 movies, a full 80.4% were White and 19.6% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups ( $n=22$ ). Nine (8%) of the 22 helmers were Multiracial/Multiethnic, 7 were Black (6.3%), 4 were Asian (3.6%), and 2 were Hispanic/Latino (1.8%).

Only 88 (6%) of the 1,447 directors across the 13-year time frame were Black. Eighty were men (90.9%) and 8 were women (9.1%). The 8 directing jobs were held by 7 different women (Gina Prince-Bythewood, Kasi Lemmons, Melina Matsoukas, Sanaa Hamri, Stella Meghie, Tina Gordon) as Ava DuVernay worked twice over the sample time frame.

Fewer Black directors helmed movies in 2019 (9 films) than in 2018 (15 films). The number of Black directors working in 2019 (9 movies) was not different than in 2007 (8 movies).

A full 53.1% of all speaking characters were Black in films with Black directors. Only 12.1% of all speaking characters were Black when the director identified with another race/ethnicity. Applying a gender lens, 21.9% of speaking characters were Black girls/women when the top leadership job was held by Black directors. Only 4.4% of girls and women on screen were Black in films with directors from other racial/ethnic groups.

One hundred percent of the films ( $n=9$ ) with a Black director featured a Black lead/co lead whereas only 14.3% ( $n=13$ ) did with non Black directors attached. No directing jobs were held by Black directors with leads/co leads that were not Black.

53 (4%) Hispanic/Latino directors worked across the 13-year sample time frame. Fifty of these directors were men and only 3 were women. The number of Hispanic/Latino (4) directors in 2019 was not different from 2018 (3) or 2007 (3). In 2019, 2 of the directors were men and 2 were women. Given the small sample size of films with Hispanic/Latino helmers in 2019, we did not analyze the association between director and on screen ethnic identity. Our report on Latinos in film will provide a deeper dive quantitatively and qualitatively into the Latinx and Afro Latino communities working on top-grossing films. That report is due to release later in 2020.

Only 6 Asian directors were attached to movies in 2019. None of these helmers were women. Across the entire sample of 1,300 movies, 48 or 3% of directors were Asian. 2019 was not different from 2018 or 2007. Only 3 directing jobs have been filled by 2 Asian women across the 13-year time frame.

Asian directors were associated with a higher percentage of Asian speaking characters on screen (27.3%) as well as females from this racial group (7%) than non Asian directors (5.9% vs. 2%, respectively).

54.8% of casting directors across the 2019 films were white women, 27.4% were white men, 15.6% underrepresented women and 2.2% underrepresented men. Over time, the percentage of White women casting directors decreased in 2019 from 2018 (72.3%) and 2007 (78.9%) whereas White men increased (12.1%, 13.5% respectively). Underrepresented women in 2019 (15.6%) were not different from 2018 (12.8%), but the percentage was meaningfully higher than 2007 (7.1%).

Underrepresented female casters were associated with films that featured more underrepresented characters on screen (45.8%) than films without an underrepresented female caster attached (30.7%).

## **LGBTQ**

Only 1.4% ( $n=61$ ) of all **speaking characters** were LGBTQ across the 100 most popular U.S. movies of 2019. Ten characters were lesbian, 45 gay, 3 bisexual, and 3 transgender. Just over half of these speaking roles were ( $n=32$ ) inconsequential to the plot.

The number and percentage of LGBTQ speaking characters in 2019 was not meaningfully different than 2018. Yet, there were nearly three times as many LGBTQ speaking characters in 2019 than in 2014.

Three characters were transgender in the 100 top films of 2019, a 6-year high. However, across 600 movies, only 4 transgender speaking characters have been depicted on screen. All four roles were inconsequential to the plot and collectively only account for a total of 2 minutes of screen time. Two minutes of transgender portrayals on screen across 600 movies.

A full 78 out of the 100 top movies of 2019 did not depict a single LGBTQ speaking or named character on screen and 94 rendered girls and women from this community completely invisible. Only 4 films depicted proportional representation of the LGBTQ community between 2015 and 2018. No movies met this benchmark in 2019, nor in 2014 or 2016.

Nearly 80% of all LGBTQ characters were male-identified and only 21.3% or 13 were female-identified. Just over three-quarters of LGBTQ characters (77%,  $n=47$ ) were White, 3.3% Hispanic/Latino, 14.8% Black, 1.6% Asian, and 3.3% Multiracial/Multiethnic. Most (55.7%) of the LGBTQ characters were young adults (21-39 years old) or middle-aged (24.6%). None of the LGBTQ characters were parents or caregivers. None.

Only 2 films in 2019 featured an LGBTQ **lead or co lead** (*Rocketman*, *Booksmart*). Across the 6 years evaluated (2014-2019, 600 movies), only 9 leads or co leads were LGBTQ with little deviation from year to year. It is important to note that not one film across the 600 movie sample has been driven by a transgender leading or co leading character.

## **Disability**

Only 2.3% of all **speaking characters** across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019 were depicted with a disability. In terms of types of disabilities in 2019 films, the majority (64.7%) were physical in nature (e.g., missing limb, paraplegic) followed by cognitive (29.4%; e.g., PTSD, depression, psychosis, memory loss) or communicative disabilities (28.4%, e.g., stutterer, blind, deaf).

No meaningful change was observed in the percentage of speaking characters with disabilities across the 5-year sample (2015-2019).

In 2019, a full 48 movies erased the disability community on screen which was less than 2018 (58 movies) but no different than 2017 (45 movies). Additionally, 77 films failed to even feature one girl or woman speaking character with a disability. Not one of the 500 movies evaluated featured speaking characters in line with the percentage of individuals living with a disability in the U.S. population (27%).

The majority of characters with disabilities in 2019 were males (67.6%), White (66%), and 40 years of age or older (59.6%). Only 3 characters with a disability across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019 were part of the LGBTQ community as were only 7 spanning the 5-year, 500 movie sample. None of the speaking characters with a disability were transgender.

Nineteen movies in 2019 featured **a lead/co lead** with a disability. Eleven of these protagonists were boys/men and 8 were girls/women. Four of the leads/co leads with a disability were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and only 1 was LGBTQ. Over time, the number of movies with a lead or co lead with a disability was higher in 2019 (19 films) than 2018 (9 films) or 2015 (10 films).

### ***Studio Findings/Impact***

We assessed how 7 distributors were faring across inclusion indicators in two separate ways. First, we assessed which legacy studio had the biggest impact on inclusion using box office revenue globally for movies across the 100 top films of 2019 with **a female-identified or underrepresented lead or co lead**. By far, Disney was the frontrunner amassing roughly \$1 billion per film with a woman lead/co lead (\$4.1 billion total across 4 films) and north of \$1.3 billion per film with an underrepresented lead/co lead (\$2.7 billion total across 2 films). Universal Pictures came in next, followed by 20th Century Fox. It is important to note that animated movies were included in the analyses, using the leading actor's race/ethnicity rather than the character.

Second, we looked across **19 inclusion measures** in our study. Each studio was scored with a point when they were the highest percentage (to the tenth of a decimal place) on the variable of interest. Across 19 indicators, Universal Pictures and Paramount Pictures tied for the top two spots. Notably, fully half of the leads/co leads on Universal's 2019 slate featured girls/women in the leading or co leading roles. Both Universal and Paramount were over proportional representation for leads and co leads from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups as well as protagonists that were women of color.

**Inequality in 1,300 Popular Films:  
Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2019**

**Annenberg Inclusion Initiative  
USC**

Longitudinally, we have been documenting diversity and inclusion yearly in the 100 top films since 2007.<sup>1</sup> In this annual report, we again examine gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ and people with disabilities on screen across 1,300 top-grossing films in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> We also look behind the camera, with a focus on gender and race/ethnicity of content creators (i.e., directors, writers, producers, composers, casting directors). As such, this research continues to be the most comprehensive and rigorous analysis of inclusion in the film industry to date.

Below, we present findings by inclusion indicator. Only 5 percentage point or greater differences were noted. This approach was taken to avoid making noise about inconsequential deviation (1-2%). The findings from the 100 top films of 2019 are delineated first followed by a comparison to 2018 and then 2007. Results based on small cell totals are noted and thus should be interpreted with caution.

**Gender**

**On Screen Prevalence.** A total of 4,451 characters were coded across the 100 top movies of 2019 in the U.S. A full 66% of speaking or named characters were male and 34% were female (see Table 1). This calculates into a gender ratio of 1.9 males to every 1 female. The percentage of female-identified speaking characters in 2019 was not different from 2018 (33.1%) or 2007 (29.9%).

**Table 1  
Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Year: 2007 to 2019**

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	4,370	100
2009	32.8%	17%	2.05 to 1	4,342	100
2010	30.3%	4%	2.30 to 1	4,153	100
2011	31.2%	12%	2.21 to 1	4,508	100
2012	28.4%	6%	2.51 to 1	4,475	100
2013	29.2%	16%	2.43 to 1	4,506	100
2014	28.1%	9%	2.55 to 1	4,610	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	4,453	100
2018	33.1%	9%	2.02 to 1	4,422	100
2019	34%	14%	1.90 to 1	4,451	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>2.22 to 1</b>	<b>57,629</b>	<b>1,300</b>

*Note:* Each year a total of 100 movies were evaluated. In 2007 and 2009, two movies were released as double features bringing the total sample size to 101 for those years.

The breakdown of female-identified speaking characters on screen across three historically stereotypical genres (i.e., action, animation, comedy) can be found in Table 2.<sup>3</sup> Only 28% of all speaking characters in action films were girls and women, which was not meaningfully different from 2018 (29%) but was notably higher than 2007 (20%). A similar pattern emerged for female characters in animation. The percentage of female-identified speaking characters in comedy was no different than the percentage in 2018 or 2007.

**Table 2**  
**Prevalence of Female Characters On Screen by Genre and Year: 2007-2019**

Year	% of Female Characters in Action/Adventure	% of Female Characters in Animation	% of Female Characters in Comedy
2007	20%	20.9%	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	21.7%	23.3%	32%
2015	25.6%	26.8%	36.5%
2016	23.3%	30.8%	40.8%
2017	24.5%	30.7%	42.9%
2018	29%	31.3%	37.5%
2019	27.9%	33.3%	38.7%

*Note:* The percentage of males can be found by subtracting the percentage of females from 100%.

Each year, we document the number of films with a gender-balanced cast. A gender-balanced movie was one that features girls and women in roughly half of all speaking characters (45%-54.9%). Only 14 movies fit this criterion 2019, which increased from 2018 but was not different than 2007 (see Table 1). Six films depicted a cast with 56.5%-70% girls and women. Eighteen movies featured female-identified characters in less than 25% of the cast. These numbers illuminate that Hollywood continues to fail girls and women on screen by reducing their visibility in storytelling year after year.

In addition to all speaking characters, we assess the leads or co leads driving the plot of feature films. While a lead is defined as a single protagonist, there are usually a handful of films each year that feature two roughly equal main characters journeying together through the storyline. In these rare instances, we count both main characters as co leads. A few movies each year also depict ensemble casts, where a group of actors (3 or more) carry the storyline. Ensembles were excluded from the subsequent analyses in the report, but details around these characters can be found in Footnote 4. Overall, 72% of the 100 top-grossing films portrayed a single protagonist, 20% a lead and co lead, and 8% an ensemble cast.

Table 3 illuminates the breakdown of leads/co leads by 4 identity indicators across the 100 top films from 2007 to 2019. Three trends are revealed. First, the percentage of girls/women as leads and co leads was at an all time high in 2019. Though this point statistic does not differ from 2018 (39%), it is fully 23 percentage points higher than 2007 (20%). Second, 2019 was more likely to feature women and girls of color (17%) as leads and co leads than 2018 (11%) or 2007 (1%). Third and finally, few films depicted women 45 years of age or older as leads/co leads of movies. This is true for women of color as well as Caucasian women. Matter of fact, the percentage of films with women 45 years of age or older in leading/co leading roles *decreased* from 2018 (11%) to 2019 (3%).

**Table 3**  
**Prevalence of Female-Identified Leads & Co Leads Across 1,300 Films**

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%	2%	3%	1%
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%
<b>Total</b>	29.1%	5.1%	4.5%	1.1%

*Note:* Films with a female-identified lead, co lead, or both appear in each column by identity group. For determination of race/ethnicity and age, information pertaining to the *actor* not the character was utilized. Cells in the table refer to the number of movies that have the characteristic present.

Overall, two major trends appeared across gender prevalence in popular movies. First, the number and percentage of movies with girls and women at the center as leads/co leads was at a 13-year high in 2019. The numbers for women 45 years of age or older continued to lag, particularly for those from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Second, the percentage of girls/women as speaking characters remained far below proportional representation with the U.S. No matter how much research, public outcry, press attention, or implicit bias training, Hollywood films fail girls/women year after year in popular movies.

**On Screen Portrayals.** We looked at two stereotypical attributes of gender in storytelling: age and parental status. Studies show that there is typically a sell by date for women characters, where access to on screen roles declines after 40 years of age.<sup>5</sup> Given this, the relationship between gender and apparent age of speaking characters was explored.

While girls and female adolescents were at or near proportional representation in 2019 movies (44.4% and 49.2% respectively), a very different story emerged for young adult women and those 40 years of age or older. Among 21-39 year olds, women only filled 38.8% of speaking roles. The findings were even more dire for women 40 years of age or older, as they only held a quarter of those cast within this age range. Worse still, the percentage of women 40 years of age or older on screen shows very little deviation across the 13-year sample (see Table 5).

**Table 4**  
**Character Age by Gender in Top-Grossing Films: 2019**

Gender	Children 0-12 yrs	Teens 13-20 yrs	Young Adult 21-39 yrs	Adults 40 yrs or Older
Males	55.6%	50.8%	61.2%	74.6%
Females	44.4%	49.2%	38.8%	25.4%
Ratio	1.25 to 1	1.03 to 1	1.58 to 1	2.94 to 1

*Note:* Column percentages sum to 100%.

**Table 5**  
**Gender of Characters 40 years of Age and Older: 2007 to 2019**

Gender	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% of males	77.9%	72.8%	75.6%	78.2%	78.2%	79.2%	78.4%	79.3%	75.4%	74.3%	75.4%	75%	74.6%
% of females	22.1%	27.2%	24.4%	21.8%	21.8%	20.8%	21.6%	20.7%	24.6%	25.7%	24.6%	25%	25.4%

*Note:* The analysis includes only characters 40 years of age and older.

In addition to age, the association between gender and parental status was examined. Research reveals pronounced gender differences when it comes to parenting and other domestic roles in cinematic storytelling.<sup>6</sup> In 2019, women (41.6%) were more likely than men (31.3%) to be shown as parents. This is a common theme across films, as depicted in Table 6. It is important to note that 2019 does not differ from 2018. The percentage of males and females portrayed as parents was notably lower in 2019 than in 2007.

**Table 6**  
**Gender and Parental Status: 2007 to 2019**

Gender	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% of males	51.5%	40.9%	43%	42.6%	37.6%	45.2%	45.8%	41.9%	40.2%	33.9%	33%	34.6%	31.3%
% of females	50%	52.9%	50.5%	49.4%	42.4%	60.4%	51.9%	53.5%	44.4%	47.5%	40.3%	41.3%	41.6%

*Note:* The analysis only involves those characters with enough information to evaluate parental status. The columns do not add to 100% as the findings reflect within gender results. As such, the percentage of male or female characters not depicted as parents can be computed by subtracting a within gender cell for a particular year from 100%.

Summing up, the portrayal of gender roles still fall along stereotypical lines. Male actors can play characters across the life span, whereas roles for women drop off around 40 years of age. This has pronounced effects on career sustainability for women actors. Further, women were more likely to be depicted in roles featuring caregiving and parenting. To explore why these findings have persisted over time, one only has to look behind the camera. This is the focus of the next section of the report.

**Behind the Camera.** A total of 1,518 individuals worked above the line as directors, writers and producers across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019.<sup>7</sup> As shown in Table 7, only 22.3% of all these top leadership positions were filled with women. This calculates into a gender ratio of 3.5 males to every 1 female that worked above the line in these roles.

**Table 7**  
**Content Creators by Gender: 2019**

Position	Males	Females	Gender Ratio
Directors	89.3% (n=100)	10.7% (n=12)	8.3 to 1
Writers	80.6% (n=237)	19.4% (n=57)	4.2 to 1
Producers	75.7% (n=842)	24.3% (n=270)	3.1 to 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.7% (n=1,179)</b>	<b>22.3% (n=339)</b>	<b>3.5 to 1</b>

Turning to specific posts, 112 directors helmed the 100 top-grossing movies (see Table 8). Only 12 of the directors were women (10.7%), which was significantly higher than 2018 (4.5%) and 2007 (2.7%). Matter of fact, 2019 was the highest number and percentage of women directors across the 13-year sample. Ten of the 12 women directors in 2019 did not appear previously in our sample of helmers.

**Table 8**  
**Women Directors: 2007 to 2019**

Measure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of w dirs.	3	9	4	3	4	5	2	2	8	5	8	5	12
% of w dirs.	2.7%	8%	3.6%	2.75%	3.7%	4.1%	1.9%	1.9%	7.5%	4.2%	7.3%	4.5%	10.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>

A list of all the women directors working across the top 1,300 movies can be found in Table 9. The 70 different directing jobs were filled by 57 women. This is due to the fact that 10 women directed worked more than once across the sample of movies (i.e., Anne Fletcher, Ava DuVernay, Catherine Hardwicke, Greta Gerwig, Jennifer Lee, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Julie Anne Robinson, Lana Wachowski, Nancy Meyers, Phyllida Lloyd). While there were 57 unique women directors, it is important to note that during the same time frame there were 696 unique men directors. This computed to a gender ratio of 12.2 to 1.

**Table 9**  
**Women Directors Working Across the 1,300 Top Grossing U.S. Films: 2007-2019**

Abby Kohn	Hallie Meyers-Shyer	Lilly Wachowski	Sam Taylor-Johnson
Angelina Jolie	Jennifer Flackett	Lorene Scafaria	Sanaa Hamri
Anna Boden	Jennifer Lee*	Loveleen Tandan	Sarah Smith
Anna Foerster	Jennifer Yuh Nelson*	Lucia Aniello	Shari Springer Berman
Anne Fletcher*	Jessie Nelson	Marielle Heller	Sharon Maguire
Ava DuVernay*	Jill Culton	Melina Matsoukas	Stacy Title
Betty Thomas	Jodie Foster	Mimi Leder	Stella Meghie
Brenda Chapman	Julie Anne Robinson*	Nancy Meyers*	Susanna Fogel
Catherine Hardwicke*	Julie Taymor	Niki Caro	Susanna White
Diane English	Kasi Lemmons	Nora Ephron	Thea Sharrock
Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum	Kathryn Bigelow	Olivia Wilde	Tina Gordon
Elizabeth Banks	Kay Cannon	Patricia Riggen	Trish Sie
Gail Mancuso	Kimberly Peirce	Patty Jenkins	
Gina Prince-Bythewood	Kirsten Sheridan	Phyllida Lloyd*	
Greta Gerwig*	Lana Wachowski*	Roxann Dawson	

*Note:* An asterisk indicates that the director helmed more than one top-grossing film across the 13-year sample.

Pivoting to screenwriters, a total of 294 individuals penned the 100 top-grossing films of 2019. A full 80.6% of screenwriters were men and only 19.4% were women (see Table 10). The percentage of women screenwriters in 2019 was significantly higher (5 percentage points) than in 2018 (14.4%) or 2007 (11.2%). Interestingly, 2019 featured the highest number and percentage of women screenwriters of all the years examined.

**Table 10**  
**Women Writers: 2007 to 2019**

Measure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of women writers	35	35	38	29	38	34	20	33	30	38	34	46	57
% of women writers	11.2%	13.6%	13.5%	11.1%	12.3%	12.2%	7.4%	11.2%	11.8%	13.2%	10.1%	14.4%	19.4%
<b>Total</b>	313	258	281	262	310	278	269	295	255	287	337	319	294

*Note:* The percentage of men screenwriters each year can be found by subtracting the percentage of women screenwriters from 100%.

The gender distribution of producers was also examined. As shown in Table 11, almost a quarter of all producers were women across the 100 top movies of 2019. No over time differences were observed. More directly, the percentage of female producers in 2019 was not meaningfully different from the percentage in 2018 or 2007.

**Table 11**  
**Women Producers: 2007 to 2019**

Measure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of women prods	174	164	183	160	199	166	196	175	220	213	247	239	270
% of women prods	20.5%	19.1%	21.6%	18.3%	22.1%	20%	19.6%	18.9%	22%	20.7%	21.7%	21.1%	24.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>874</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>1003</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>1138</b>	<b>1135</b>	<b>1112</b>

Note: The percentage of men producers each year can be found by subtracting the percentage of women producers from 100%.

Another behind the scenes role explored was composing. As shown in Table 12, 5.2% ( $n=6$ ) of all composers were women across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019. This percentage represents 6 women, twice as many as 2018 ( $n=3$ ) and significantly more than 2007 ( $n=0$ ). The six women in 2019 were Pink Toprak (*Captain Marvel*), Hildur Guðnadóttir (*Joker*), Anna Drubich (*Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*), Germaine Franco (*Dora and the Lost City of Gold*), Germaine Franco (*Little*), and Anne Dudley (*The Hustle*). Only one of these women was from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group (Latina). The gender ratio of male composers to female composers is 18.3 to 1.

**Table 12**  
**Women Composers: 2007 to 2019**

Measures	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of w comp	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	3	6
% of w comp	0	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	<1%	1.9%	1.8%	<1%	<1%	1.7%	<1%	2.75%	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>116</b>

Finally, the gender of casting directors was examined.<sup>8</sup> In 2019, 135 casting directors were credited across the 100 top-grossing films. Of these, 70.4% ( $n=95$ ) were women and 29.6% ( $n=40$ ) were men (see Table 13). This was a notable decrease from 2018 and 2007, where 85.1% and 86.1% of casters were women respectively.

**Table 13**  
**Casting Directors by Gender: 2007 to 2019**

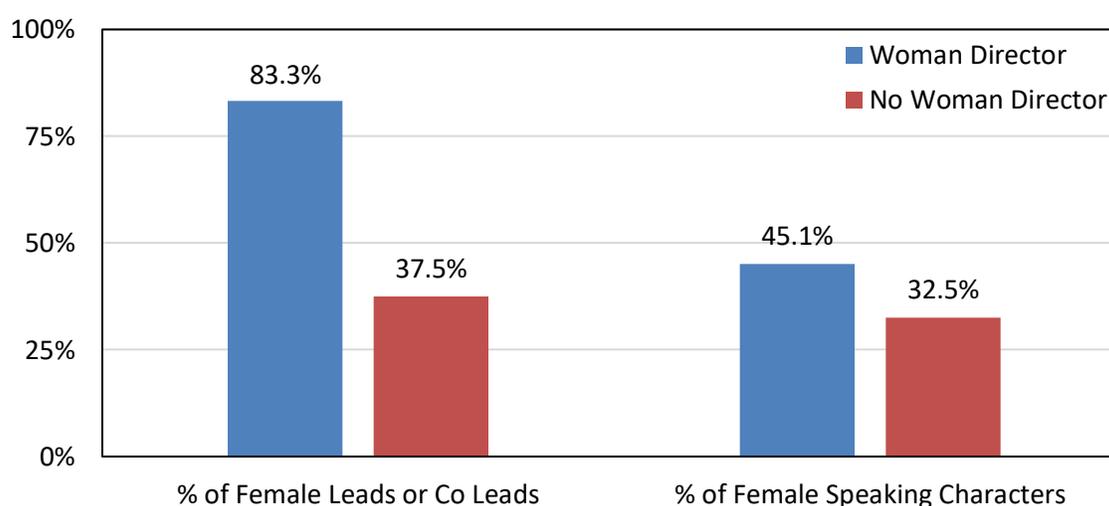
Gender	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% men	13.9%	19.8%	14.8%	18.3%	20.9%	23.9%	20.9%	20%	19.5%	16.4%	19.6%	14.9%	29.6%
% women	86.1%	80.2%	85.2%	81.7%	79.1%	76.1%	79.1%	80%	80.5%	83.6%	80.4%	85.1%	70.4%
Total n's	158	167	162	158	158	163	172	160	159	140	148	141	135

Together, 2019 was a better year for women directors, writers, and composers. However, the number and percentage of women holding these prestigious posts was still at the floor. Hollywood continues to deny women access to top film jobs above the line. This is particularly egregious, when the percentage of women narrative directors at the Sundance Film Festival (34%) and across episodic storytelling (31%) in 2018/19 was more than two times higher.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, Netflix alone attached 12 (20.7%) women directors to their U.S. based films in 2019.

Do women working behind the camera have an influence on what we see on screen? To answer this question, we looked at gender prevalence for women directed movies in comparison to those directed only by men. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of female speaking characters (45.1% vs. 32.5%) and leads/co leads (83.3% vs. 37.5%) increased significantly when a woman director was involved. A similar trend was observed with women screenwriters and leading characters in contrast to those stories penned by men only (see Footnote 10).

There are at least two explanations for these findings. First, women directors and writers may be more likely to write and populate stories with characters that align with their experiences. Very simply, they write and direct what they know. As a result, we see more girls and women in these storylines. Second, stories with females at the center are more likely to have women directors and writers attached by studio executives and producers in the hiring process. This latter view is far more problematic, as it suggests that women only get access to work when their gender matches attributes of the leading or co leading character. Clearly, male directors do not face a similar occupational restraint. Thus, this similarity bias between story lead and director or writer can prevent women from getting access to pitch films with male protagonists.

**Figure 1**  
**Percentage of Female Leads or Co Leads and Speaking Characters On Screen by Director Gender: 2019**



Given the proliferation of women casting directors above, it was also important to examine whether having a women caster attached to a film in 2019 was associated with more girls and women on screen. The results were not surprising. Attaching a woman casting director was *not* associated with gender on

screen. Only 34-35% of speaking characters were females in movies with and without a woman casting director attached.

Taken together, the results of the gender section reveal that access and opportunity were still tilted towards men across every indicator explored sans casting directors. While some gains were achieved for women (i.e., leads/co leads, directors, screenwriters, composers), other measures -- yet again -- failed to move in 2019. Clearly, inclusion in Hollywood is not a top priority among studio executives across their slate of films.

### Race/Ethnicity

Now, we turned our attention to the prevalence and nature of the race/ethnicity on screen. This section also focused on behind the camera employment patterns for directors from the three largest racial/ethnic minority groups in the U.S. (i.e., Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian).

**On Screen Prevalence.** A total of 3,891 characters were evaluated for race/ethnicity. Nearly two thirds of the speaking or named characters assessed were White (65.7%), 4.9% Hispanic/Latino, 15.7% Black, <1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 7.2% Asian, 1.6% Middle Eastern/North African, and 4.4% Multiracial/Multiethnic. In total, 34.3% of characters were underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This point statistic was significantly below U.S. Census (39.9%).<sup>11</sup>

**Table 14**  
**Prevalence of Character Race/Ethnicity On Screen by Year: 2007-2019**

Year	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
2007	77.6%	13.0%	3.3%	3.4%	2.5%
2008	71.2%	13.2%	4.9%	7.1%	3.5%
2009	76.2%	14.7%	2.8%	4.7%	1.5%
2010	77.6%	10.3%	3.9%	5.0%	3.3%
2011	77.1%	9.1%	5.9%	4.1%	3.8%
2012	76.3%	10.8%	4.2%	5.0%	3.6%
2013	74.1%	14.1%	4.9%	4.4%	2.5%
2014	73.1%	12.5%	4.9%	5.3%	4.2%
2015	73.7%	12.2%	5.3%	3.9%	4.9%
2016	70.8%	13.5%	3.1%	5.6%	6.9%
2017	70.7%	12.1%	6.2%	4.8%	6.3%
2018	63.7%	16.9%	5.3%	8.2%	5.9%
2019	65.7%	15.7%	4.9%	7.2%	6.6%

*Note:* Characters coded as Middle Eastern/North African, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial/multiethnic were included in the “other” column. Percentages sum to 100% in each row, with deviation due to rounding.

Has the percentage of underrepresented characters changed over time? To answer this question, we looked at the percentage of White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and all “other” speaking characters across the 13- year sample.<sup>12</sup> The remaining groups were collapsed into an “other” category due to the low frequency of speaking characters depicted. When compared to 2018 and 2017, there has been no

meaningful increase in Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Asian characters in 2019 (see Table 14). However, the percentage of White characters was lower in 2019 than in 2007 but not different from 2018.

Character race/ethnicity on screen by film genre was also evaluated. Prior to analyses, we collapsed all speaking or named characters into one of two categories: underrepresented vs. not. Then, the frequency and percentage of underrepresented speaking characters in action/adventure films, animation, and comedies was assessed.

As shown in Table 15, 2019 was a 13-year high for the percentage of underrepresented speaking characters in action films (42.3%). While 2019 was not different from 2018 (40.3%), it did differ notably from 2007 (21.5%). A similar but even more substantial gain was observed in animation. In 2007, only 8.1% of speaking characters were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. In 2018 and 2019, those percentages jumped to 35.6% and 41.1% respectively. While comedy did not differ over the last two years, the increase from 2007 (23.1%) to 2019 (37.5%) was significant.

**Table 15**  
**Prevalence of Underrepresented Characters On Screen by Film Genre by Year: 2007-2019**

Year	% of UR characters Action/Adventure	% of UR characters Animation	% of UR characters Comedy
2007	21.5%	8.1%	23.1%
2008	32.1%	10.5%	27.8%
2009	23.4%	12.3%	24.7%
2010	30%	1.5%	23.4%
2011	25.2%	27.5%	26.9%
2012	29.4%	5.3%	24.1%
2013	26.9%	12.4%	27.6%
2014	24.9%	33.5%	27.2%
2015	28.9%	13.2%	27.3%
2016	27.3%	48.5%	32.1%
2017	28.1%	34%	35.6%
2018	40.3%	35.6%	38%
2019	42.3%	41.1%	37.5%

*Note:* UR stands for characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (non White). The percentage of Caucasian speaking characters can be computed by subtracting each cell from 100%.

Similar to gender, we were interested in the number of films that featured proportional representation of speaking characters from specific racial/ethnic groups. Here, proportional representation was defined as  $\pm 2$  percentage points within the U.S. Census for a specific group.<sup>13</sup> We also examined how many films completely erased specific racial/ethnic groups on screen. To analyze proportional representation and the epidemic of invisibility, we focused on the 500 top films released from 2015 through 2019.

For Black characters, roughly a fifth (21) of the 100 top films depicted proportional representation in 2019 (see Table 16). This number did not differ from 2018 (18 films) but was significantly higher than

2015 (10 films). Fifteen films completely erased Black speaking characters on screen in 2019, a number that was not meaningfully different from 2018 (12 films) or 2015 (17 films).

**Table 16**  
**Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Black Characters Across 500 Films: 2015-2019**

Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of films w/out any Black speaking chars	17	25	20	12	15
# of films w/proportional representation	10	19	19	18	21
U.S. Census	13.4%				
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100

For Hispanic/Latino speaking characters, only 7 out of 500 films featured proportional representation with the U.S. Census (18.5%). The number of films meeting this criterion did not vary by year. Visibility also did not differ, with 44 out of the 100 top films of 2019 failing to depict a single Hispanic/Latino speaking or named character on screen (see Table 17).

**Table 17**  
**Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Hispanic/Latino Characters Across 500 Films: 2015-2019**

Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of films w/out Hispanic/Latino speaking chars	40	54	43	47	44
# of films w/proportional representation	2	1	0	2	2
U.S. Census	18.5%				
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100

For Asian speaking characters (see Table 18), less than a fifth (19%) of the 100 top-grossing films of 2019 portrayed proportional representation (5.9%). The number of films did not vary from 2018 (20 films) or 2015 (18 films). Thirty six movies erased Asian speaking characters altogether on screen in 2019, which was not different from the 2018 (32 movies). 2019 was lower on erasure than 2015 (49 movies), however.

**Table 18**  
**Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Asian Characters Across 500 Films: 2015-2019**

Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of films w/out Asian speaking chars	49	44	37	32	36
# of films w/proportional representation	18	21	26	20	19
U.S. Census	5.9%				
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100

Given the invisibility in film facing the three largest minority groups in the U.S. outlined above, we wanted to take a deeper dive into how women of color fared on the erasure indicator. In contrast to the above analyses, we looked at the visibility of girls and women across every racial/ethnic group in our study. The 500 film sub sample was used for this analysis.

As depicted in Table 19, the epidemic of invisibility on screen was rampant for girls and women of color. For 2019, the erasure of girls and women across specific racial/ethnic groups is as follows: Black (33 films), Hispanic/Latino (71 films), Asian (55 films), American Indian/Alaskan Native (97 films), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (99 films), Middle Eastern/North African (92 films), and Multiracial/Multiethnic (45 films). Only 7 movies erased White girls and women in 2019. Decreases in erasure from 2015 to 2019 were only observed with girls and women on screen from Black, Asian, and Multiracial/Multiethnic communities whereas increases were noted for Hispanic/Latino girls and women over the same time frame.

**Table 19**  
**Epidemic of Invisibility Facing Girls/Women On Screen by Race/Ethnicity: 2015-2018**

<b>Racial/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
White	3	11	7	4	7
Hispanic/Latinos	65	72	64	70	71
Black	48	47	43	33	33
Asian	70	66	65	54	55
American Indian/Alaskan Native	99	99	98	99	97
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	98	98	98	97	99
Middle Eastern/North African	96	92	89	92	92
Multiracial/Multiethnic	57	67	49	51	45

The above analyses focused on all speaking or named characters. Attention is now turned to leads/co leads from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (see Table 20). Only 32 of the 100 top movies of 2019 were driven by an underrepresented lead or co lead. These 32 films featured 37 leads/co leads, of which 20 were Black, 4 Asian, 2 Hispanic/Latino, 1 MENA and 10 Multiracial/Multiethnic. Seventeen of those leads/co leads (45.9%) were girls or women of color (8 Black, 2 Hispanic/Latina, 1 Asian, 6 Multiracial/Multiethnic).

The percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads across the entire 1,300 film sample is shown in Table 20. Seventeen percent of all movies depicted an underrepresented lead/co lead, with 2019 films (32%) over twice as likely as 2007 (13%). A 5 percentage point increase was also observed from 2018 to 2019.

**Table 20**  
**Percentage of Underrepresented Leads/Co Leads Across 1,300 Films: 2007-2019**

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	12%	2%
2013	16%	3%
2014	18%	4%
2015	13%	3%
2016	14%	3%
2017	21%	4%
2018	27%	11%
2019	32%	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

Also shown in Table 20 are the percentage of films driven by women of color. A 16 percentage point increase was observed from 2007 (1%) to 2019 (17%). Further, the percentage of girls and women depicted as leads/co leads increased meaningfully from 2018 (11%) to 2019 (17%).

Together, the results of this section reveal notable gains over the 13-year sample in terms of underrepresented leads/co leads. A different pattern emerged with underrepresented speaking characters, however. Proportional representation was rarely achieved in 2019 for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian speaking or named characters on screen and the complete erasure of girls and women of color was rampant.

**On Screen Portrayal.** Here, we look at the relationship of race/ethnicity to gender and parental status of all speaking or named characters.<sup>14</sup> Gender significantly deviated by racial/ethnic group, as shown in Table 21. When compared to Black characters (38%), Latinos (32.1%) and Asians (32.5%) were *less likely* to be girls and women and characters from “other” racial/ethnic groups (47.7%) were *more likely*. It must be noted that a full 59% of the female-identified speaking characters in the “other” category were Multiracial/Multiethnic girls and women.

**Table 21**  
**Percentage of Male & Female Characters by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2019**

Gender	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
% of males	66.4%	62%	67.9%	67.5%	52.3%
% of females	33.6%	38%	32.1%	32.5%	47.7%
Ratio	1.98 to 1	1.63 to 1	2.11 to 1	2.08 to 1	1.10 to 1

*Note:* The “other” category represents speaking characters that were Indigenous, Middle Eastern/North African, as well as Multiracial/Multiethnic.

The association between character race/ethnicity and parental status was also assessed. Prior to analyses we separated the file and examined male and female characters independently due to the pronounced gender differences in the previous section. Table 22 displays the percentage of parents by gender for 5 racial/ethnic groupings. Three trends are readily apparent in the table. First, men were far less likely than women to be shown as a caregiver on screen. Second, Hispanic/Latino men on screen were less likely than Black, White or Asian men to be shown as fathers. Third and when compared to Asian, White or Hispanic/Latino women, Black women were more likely to be depicted as parents and women from “other” races/ethnicities were less likely.

**Table 22**  
**Percentage of Male & Female Parents by Racial/Ethnic Grouping in Top-Grossing Films: 2019**

Age	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
% male parents	37.5%	36.2%	25%	33.3%	27.8%
% female parents	42.5%	53.3%	45.8%	48.1%	20.6%

**Behind the Camera.** Of the 112 directors across 2019 movies, a full 80.4% were White ( $n=90$ ) and 19.6% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups ( $n=22$ ). Nine (8%) of the 22 helmers were Multiracial/Multiethnic, 7 were Black (6.3%), 4 were Asian (3.6%), and 2 were Hispanic/Latino (1.8%). In Table 23, we breakdown the race/ethnicities of directors across 13 years for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian helmers. Directors were counted in every race/ethnicity applicable to their identity.

Only 88 (6%) of the 1,447 directors across the 13-year time frame were Black (see Table 23). Eighty were men (90.9%) and 8 were women (9.1%). The 8 women were reduced to 7 different helmers (Gina Prince-Bythewood, Kasi Lemmons, Melina Matsoukas, Sanaa Hamri, Stella Meghie, Tina Gordon) as Ava DuVernay worked twice over the sample time frame. Fewer Black directors helmed movies in 2019 (9 films) than in 2018 (15 films). The number of Black directors working in 2019 (9 movies) was not different than in 2007 (8 movies).

Is the presence of a Black director (no, yes) on a film associated with who was seen on screen? To answer this question, we split the sample by director identity and examined the presence of Black leads/co leads as well as Black speaking characters. As shown in Figure 2, a full 53.1% of all speaking characters were Black in films with Black directors. Only 12.1% of all speaking characters were Black when the director identified with another race/ethnicity.

Focusing only on females, 21.9% of speaking characters were Black girls/women when the top leadership job was held by black directors. Only 4.4% of girls and women on screen were Black in films with directors from other racial/ethnic groups. One hundred percent of the films ( $n=9$ ) with a Black director featured a Black lead/co lead whereas only 14.3% ( $n=13$ ) did with non Black directors attached. No directing jobs were held by Black directors with leads/co leads that were not Black.

**Table 23**  
**Number of Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian Directors by Gender & Year: 2007-2019**

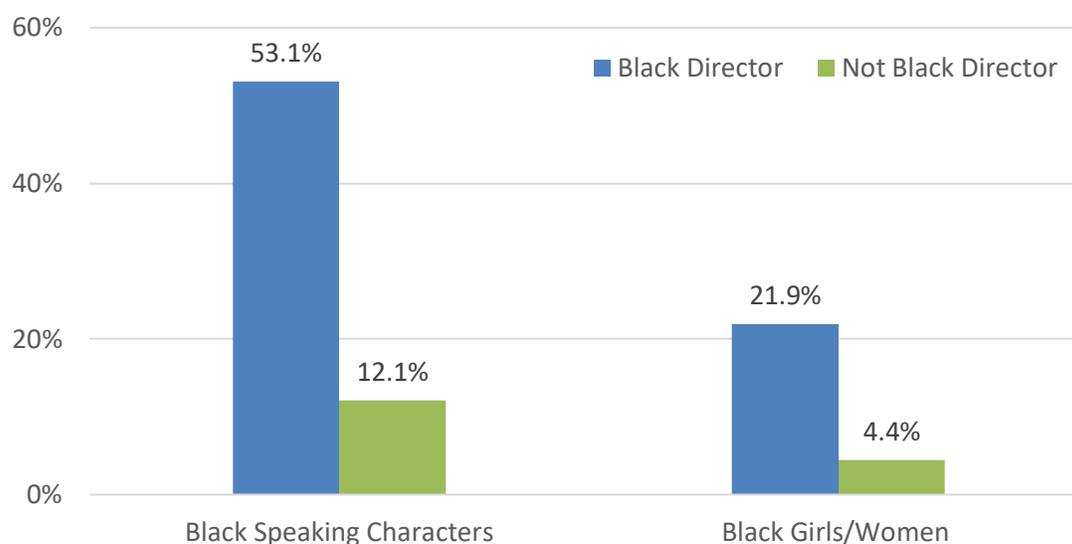
Year	Black Men	Black Women	H/L Men	H/L Women	Asian Men	Asian Women	Total
2007	8	0	3	0	3	0	112
2008	5	2	2	0	2	1	112
2009	7	0	7	0	1	0	111
2010	5	0	2	0	4	0	109
2011	2	0	3	0	3	1	108
2012	6	0	2	0	2	0	121
2013	7	0	5	0	6	0	107
2014	4	1	8	0	0	0	107
2015	4	0	3	0	6	0	107
2016	7	0	2	1	4	1	120
2017	5	1	8	0	4	0	109
2018	14	1	3	0	4	0	112
2019	6	3	2	2	6	0	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>5%</b> <b>(<math>n=80</math>)</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b> <b>(<math>n=8</math>)</b>	<b>3%</b> <b>(<math>n=50</math>)</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b> <b>(<math>n=3</math>)</b>	<b>3%</b> <b>(<math>n=45</math>)</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b> <b>(<math>n=3</math>)</b>	<b>1,447</b>

Table 23 also illuminates that 53 (4%) Hispanic/Latino directors worked across the 13-year sample time frame. Fifty of these directors were men and only 3 were women (i.e., Patricia Riggen, Melina Matsoukas, and Roxann Dawson). The number of Hispanic/Latino (4) directors in 2019 was not different from 2018 (3) or 2007 (3). In 2019, 2 of the directors were men and 2 were women. Given the small sample size of films with Hispanic/Latino helmers in 2019, we did not analyze the association between director and on screen ethnic identity.

Only 6 Asian directors were attached to movies in 2019. None of these helmers were women. Across the entire sample, 48 or 3% of directors were Asian. 2019 was not different than 2018 or 2007 in hiring Asians in this top leadership position. Only 3 directing jobs have been filled by Asian women across the 13-year time frame. Two of those helming gigs were filled by Jennifer Yuh Nelson (*Kung Fu Panda* Franchise). The remaining helmer was Loveleen Tandan (*Slumdog Millionaire*), a co director whose credit was contested.

Asian directors were associated with a higher percentage of Asian speaking characters on screen (27.3%) as well as females from this racial group (7%) than non Asian directors (5.9% vs. 2%, respectively). Only 1 film with an Asian director featured an Asian lead/co lead whereas 5 movies were about non Asian leading/co leading characters. Five films with Asian leads/co leads were directed by non Asian directors.

**Figure 2**  
**Percentage of Black Speaking Characters On Screen by Director Race: 2019**



Lastly, we were interested in the intersection of gender and underrepresented status (no vs. yes) of casting directors. As shown in Table 24, 54.8% of casting directors across the 2019 films were White women, 27.4% were White men, 15.6% were underrepresented women and 2.2% underrepresented men. These numbers deviated notably from U.S. Census for these four groups (White males make up approximately 30% of the population; White females, 30%; underrepresented males, 20%; and underrepresented females, 20%).<sup>15</sup>

Does the identity of casting directors deviate over time? Yes. Casting directors that were White women *decreased* in 2019 from 2018 (72.3%) and 2007 (78.9%) whereas White men *increased* (12.1%, 13.5% respectively). While underrepresented women in 2019 (15.6%) were not different from 2018 (12.8%), the percentage was meaningfully higher than 2007 (7.1%).

**Table 24**  
**Underrepresented Status & Gender of Casting Directors by Year: 2007-2019**

Year	White Men	UR Men	White Women	UR Women
2007	13.5%	<1%	78.9%	7.1%
2008	18.3%	1.8%	71.9%	7.9%
2009	14.8%	0	77.2%	8%
2010	16.6%	1.9%	76.4%	5.1%
2011	17.8%	3.2%	72%	7%
2012	23.6%	<1%	68.3%	7.5%
2013	18.7%	2.3%	70.2%	8.8%
2014	16.3%	3.8%	68.5%	11.3%
2015	18.9%	<1%	72.3%	8.2%
2016	15.3%	1.5%	70.8%	12.4%
2017	19.9%	0	67.1%	13%
2018	12.1%	2.8%	72.3%	12.8%
2019	27.4%	2.2%	54.8%	15.6%
Total	17.9%	1.7%	71%	9.4%

The identity of casting directors and identity of on screen characters was also assessed. Here, we focused specifically on the relationship between films with or without an underrepresented woman caster attached (no vs. yes) and underrepresented (no vs. yes) characters on screen across the 100 top grossing films of 2019. When an underrepresented woman caster was attached to a 2019 film, 45.8% of all speaking characters were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. In films without an underrepresented woman caster, only 30.7% of all speaking characters were underrepresented.

Together, the results illuminate that identity often plays a role in what we see on screen across multiple indicators in this section. Thus, diversifying behind the camera above and below the line is one crucial element to creating change on screen. Now, we focus on another identity group that has been historically marginalized in film, the LGBTQ community.

### LGBTQ

Since 2014, we have been measuring the prevalence and context surrounding LGBTQ characters. Only 1.4% ( $n=61$ ) of all speaking or named characters were LGBTQ across the 100 most popular U.S. movies of 2019. Ten characters were lesbian, 45 gay, 3 bisexual, and 3 transgender.<sup>16</sup> Just over half of these speaking roles were ( $n=32$ ) inconsequential to the plot.

The over time frequencies of LGBTQ speaking characters are depicted in Table 25. The number and percentage of LGBTQ speaking characters in 2019 was not meaningfully different than 2018. Yet, there were nearly three times as many LGBTQ speaking characters in 2019 than in 2014. However, the comparison did not yield a 5 percentage point difference due to the large number of speaking characters evaluated each year (>4,000).

**Table 25**  
**Prevalence of LGBTQ Speaking Characters Across 600 Top Grossing Films: 2014-2019**

Measure	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total	%
Lesbian	4	7	9	9	17	10	56	<.3%
Gay	12	19	36	16	33	45	161	<1%
Bisexual	5	5	6	6	8	3	33	<.2%
Transgender	0	1	0	0	0	3	4	<.01%
Total	21	32	51	31	58	61	254	1%

Yearly, we also examine the visibility and proportional representation of the LGBTQ community across the 100 most popular films. In terms of visibility (see Table 26), a full 78 out of the 100 top movies of 2019 did not depict a single LGBTQ speaking or named character on screen and 94 rendered girls and women from this community completely invisible. In terms of proportional representation (see Table 26), very few films were at or near ( $\pm 2$  percentage points) the percentage of LGBTQ people in the U.S. population (12%, *range*=10-14% characters in a movie).<sup>17</sup> Only 4 films depicted proportional representation of the LGBTQ community between 2015 and 2018. No movies met this benchmark in 2019, nor in 2014 or 2016.

The demographics and nature of LGBTQ portrayals in 2019 were also assessed. Nearly 80% of all LGBTQ characters were male-identified and only 21.3% or 13 were female-identified. Just over three-quarters of LGBTQ characters (77%,  $n=47$ ) were White, 3.3% Hispanic/Latino ( $n=2$ ), 14.8% ( $n=9$ ) Black, 1.6% ( $n=1$ ) Asian, and 3.3% ( $n=2$ ) Multiracial/Multiethnic. Most (55.7%) of the LGBTQ characters were young adults (21-39 years old) or middle-aged (24.6%,  $n=15$ ). Ten (16.4%) LGBTQ speaking characters in 2019 were teenagers, 1 was an elementary schooler and 1 was an elderly character. None of the LGBTQ characters were parents or caregivers.

**Table 26**  
**Proportional Representation and Invisibility of LGBTQ Characters Across 600 Films: 2014-2019**

Measures	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
# of films w/out LGBTQ speaking chars	86	82	76	81	76
# of films w/proportional representation	0	1	0	1	2
LGBTQ in U.S. Population	12%				
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100

Moving to protagonists, only 2 films in 2019 featured an LGBTQ lead or co lead (*Rocketman*, *Booksmart*). Across the 6 years evaluated, only 9 leads or co leads were LGBTQ with little deviation from year to year (see Table 27). It is important to note that not one film across the 600 movie sample has been driven by a transgender leading or co leading character.

**Table 27**  
**Number of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads by Year**

Measure	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Number of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads	2	0	1	2	2	2	9
# of films	100	100	100	100	100	100	600

Summing up, little progress was made in 2019 for the LGBTQ community in popular films. The number of LGBTQ leads/co leads was identical to 2014. Few movies have LGBTQ speaking characters on screen, with the vast majority erasing LGBTQ characters altogether from top-grossing narratives. No LGBTQ characters were shown as parents or caregivers, most were White and very few were women. One notable finding was that 3 characters were transgender in 2019, a 6-year high. However, across 600 movies, only 4 transgender speaking characters have been depicted on screen. All were inconsequential to the plot. How is this progress?

### Disability

In 2015, we started capturing the prevalence and nature of characters with disabilities. Only 2.3% of all speaking characters across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019 were depicted with a disability. In terms of types of disabilities, the majority (64.7%) were physical in nature (e.g., missing limb, paraplegic) followed by cognitive (29.4%) disabilities (e.g., PTSD, depression, psychosis, memory loss) or communicative (28.4%, e.g., stutterer, blind, deaf). The percentages do not add to 100% as characters could be portrayed with more than one disability across the plot.

**Table 28**  
**Prevalence of Characters w/Disabilities Across 500 Top Grossing Films: 2015-2019**

Measure	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
% of speaking chars	2.4%	2.7%	2.5%	1.6%	2.3%	2.3%
# of speaking chars	105	124	112	69	102	512

No meaningful change was observed in speaking characters with disabilities across the 5-year sample (see Table 28). As shown in Table 29, a full 48 movies erased the disability community on screen in 2019 which was less than 2018 (58 movies) but no different than 2017 (45 movies). Additionally, 77 films failed to even feature one girl or woman speaking character with a disability. Not one of the 500 movies evaluated (see Table 29) featured speaking characters in line with the percentage of individuals living with a disability in the U.S. population (27%).<sup>18</sup>

**Table 29**  
**Proportional Representation and Invisibility of Characters w/Disabilities**  
**Across 500 Films: 2015-2019**

Measures	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of films missing speaking chars w/disability	45	38	41	58	48
# of films w/proportional representation	0	0	0	0	0
Disability in the U.S. population	27%				
Total Films Per Year	100	100	100	100	100

The majority of characters with disabilities in 2019 were males (67.6%), White (66%), and 40 years of age or older (59.6%). Less than 10% of speaking characters with disabilities were 0- to 12-years of age (9.1%,  $n=9$ ) or 12- to 20-years of age (14.1%,  $n=14$ ). Almost a fourth of all speaking characters with a disability (17.2%) were 21- to 39-years of age. Only 3 characters with a disability across the 100 top-grossing films of 2019 were part of the LGBTQ community as were only 7 spanning the 5-year, 500 movie sample. None of the speaking characters with a disability were transgender.

**Table 30**  
**Number of Leads/Co Leads w/Disabilities by Year**

Measure	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Number of Leads/Co Leads w/a disability	10	15	14	9	19	67
# of films	100	100	100	100	100	500

Finally, the number of films with leads or co leads depicted with a disability was evaluated. As shown in Table 30, 19 movies in 2019 featured a protagonist with a disability. Eleven of these leads/co leads were boys/men and 8 were girls/women. Four or 21.1% of the leads/co leads with a disability were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and only 1 was depicted as LGBTQ. Over time, the number of movies with a lead or co lead with a disability was higher in 2019 (19 films) than 2018 (9 films) or 2015 (10 films).

### Conclusion

Annually, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative examines the 100 top-grossing domestic films across a series of indicators. The purpose of this study is to assess industry progress toward inclusion and to identify where improvement is needed. **After 13 years and 1,300 films, the study is the most comprehensive longitudinal study on inclusion in film content.** Below, we overview the major findings from this year's report and provide solutions to address the ongoing marginalization of different groups in film.

#### *Gains Made, but Gender Disparities Persist*

Across the 100 top films of 2019, there was a significant and historic increase in female leading and co leading characters. For the first time in more than a decade, the percentage of female leads rose to 43%. Additionally, 17% of films featured a girl or woman of color in a leading or co leading role. These gains are important as they reflect a change in the perspective of who can carry a film or story. As the percentage of female leads/co leads moves toward proportional representation, it becomes even more important to ensure that progress is made across the entire ecosystem of storytelling.

That progress must include the overall percentage of girls and women on screen. While in 2019 the percentage of female characters was the highest in 13 years, it still reached only 34%; roughly one-third of all speaking characters across 100 top-grossing films were girls or women. The persistent lack of inclusion for female-identified characters must be remedied. A key place for improvement is women in the 45+ age range. Only 3% of leading/co leading roles went to women who were forty-five years of age or older, and only 1% of those roles was held by a woman of color. In all speaking roles, merely a quarter

of characters aged forty or older were women—the lowest of all age groups. Adding women in this age range is an important step to increase the percentage of female characters overall, and also for depictions of occupational power and leadership. A second area of intervention for girls and women is genre. While all film genres could increase the percentage of female characters, action-adventure and animated movies lag behind comedies in the depiction of girls and women. Ensuring that all films feature proportional representation of girls and women is essential to creating equity on screen for female-identified characters.

Behind the camera, in 2019 there was a notable increase in the percentage of women directors and writers. These positions reached 13-year high points, as 10.7% of directors and 19.4% of writers across the top 100 films last year were women. **Of the 12 women directors in 2019, 10 had not previously directed a top-grossing film.** While the percentage of women composers increased non-significantly in 2019, it still remains at only 5.2%. There was also no increase in the percentage of women producers working across the sample. Overall, these gains reveal that progress exists, but there is more to be done to ensure that women have access and opportunity to roles behind the camera in film.

### *Racial/Ethnic Representation Requires Revolution*

Each year, this report charts the inclusion of race/ethnicity top films. The percentage of all underrepresented speaking characters in film (34.3%) still falls below proportional representation to the U.S. population. That statistic alone does not tell the full story, however. The data from 2019 reveal that no significant increase over time in the depiction of underrepresented characters has occurred, although since 2007 the percentage of White characters has declined meaningfully. Additionally, there was still erasure of different groups, particularly girls and women of color. Nearly every film in 2019 failed to include even one girl or woman who was American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Middle Eastern/North African. More than 70 movies did not feature a single Latina, and over half were missing Asian women or girls. One-third did not include any Black female-identified characters, and 45 were missing Multiracial/Multiethnic girls and women. The widespread lack of inclusion of girls and women of color reflects how far the film industry is from true and equitable representation.

In leading and co leading roles some gains emerged for underrepresented protagonists despite the overall figure remaining below U.S. Census proportions. Roughly one-third of all leads/co leads featured underrepresented characters, including 17% of leads and co leads who were girls and women of color. Both of these figures reflect meaningful increases from 2018 and from 2007. In contrast to the findings on gender, characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups were more likely to appear in action/adventure films and animated movies than in comedies. In fact, these genres featured characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups above proportional representation.

Looking to leadership positions behind the camera, nearly 20% of directors were from underrepresented racial ethnic groups in 2019. For Black directors, the 9 directors working in 2019 represented a decrease from the high of 15 directors in 2018. For Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian directors, work on top-grossing films continues to be rare. Only 4% of directors across the last 13 years were Hispanic/Latino, and only 3 Hispanic/Latina directors worked across the 1,300 films in the sample. The same is true of Asian female directors. There is much more progress to be made behind the camera for directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in top-grossing films.

### *The LGBTQ Community Continues to be Left Out of Film*

Once again in 2019 few characters across the 100 top-grossing movies were LGBTQ—only 1.4% of all speaking characters, which is not meaningfully different from previous years. While there has been a numeric increase over time in representation of LGBTQ characters—particularly transgender characters—there is much more room for improvement. This is especially the case when considering the number of films missing LGBTQ characters. Over three-fourths of the 100 films in the sample did not feature an LGBTQ character, and nearly all (94) did not include a female-identified LGBTQ character.

These overall findings extend to aspects of how the LGBTQ community was depicted. Nearly 80% of LGBTQ characters were male-identified and three-quarters were White. Over half of LGBTQ characters were young adults, and none were parents. **The picture of the LGBTQ community that film presents is one of young, White, and male characters rather than the diverse experiences and voices that are actually part of this community.** Moreover, only 2 LGBTQ leads or co leads were featured in 2019, limiting the depth and range of storytelling about this community.

### *Representation of Characters with Disabilities Remains Deficient*

In 2019, 2.3% of all characters in the 100 top-grossing movies were depicted with a disability. This percentage has not meaningfully changed since 2015. Not only were characters with disabilities rare in film, they were erased from half of the movies in the sample, and females with disabilities were missing from 77 movies. In terms of demographics, characters with disabilities also skewed male, White, and older. Few speaking characters with a disability were children or teens, which means that younger viewers rarely encounter characters with disabilities with whom they might identify.

One important area of change in the depiction of characters with disabilities was in leading/co leading characters. In 2019, 19 films had a lead or co lead with a disability, a significant increase from both 2018 and 2015. Notably, over forty percent of the leads were female-identified. However, only 4 were from the underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. These findings suggest that continuing to push forward on issues of disability is essential, but with an eye toward intersectionality.

### *Industry-Wide Inclusion is Still Stymied by Studio Practices*

In this report, we used two metrics to assess how studios fared with regard to inclusion. Looking at box office earnings by studio across the top 100 movies of 2019, we found that Disney was far and away the frontrunner. Though the company had only 6 movies with a female-identified or underrepresented lead or co lead, these films earned more than \$6 billion at the box office globally. Universal and 20th Century Fox followed on gender, while Lionsgate held a third position for underrepresented leads/co leads. Clearly, these findings-- along with our economic analysis published in partnership with ReFrame earlier in 2020<sup>19</sup>-- cast extreme doubt on the long-standing myths that female-identified or underrepresented leads/co leads lack bankability.

The second metric used to examine studio inclusion was the comparison of performance across 19 inclusion indicators. Here, Universal and Paramount jointly held the leadership position by scoring highest on 6 indicators each across the 19 total. Warner Bros. was third, followed by Sony, Lionsgate, and 20th Century Fox. Disney did not lead on any of the inclusion criteria used. The results in this

analysis demonstrate two important conclusions. First, it is possible for studio slates to achieve proportional representation for leading characters. Universal reached 50% in its depiction of female-identified leads and co leads. Both Universal and Paramount exceeded proportional representation of underrepresented leads/co leads, including those that were female-identified. In order to see continued gains on these indicators in future, other companies will need to improve their performance. This aligns with the second conclusion: not one studio leads across all indicators. Put differently, there is room for growth at all the legacy companies. Particularly in depictions of LGBTQ and disability communities, nearly every company can improve their numbers. This is especially important in the area of all speaking characters and proportional representation. These roles are crucial to strengthen the existing pipeline for actors from these communities who can fill leading roles. To increase overall industry inclusion, every company must examine its performance and identify where to improve.

### *Solutions for Change*

Each year in this report, we present a set of solutions that can be used to foster industry change. The limited progress made over time toward more inclusive on screen content and behind-the-camera hiring indicates that there is still more work to be done. We often wonder if those in positions of power and influence care and are listening, particularly in areas where we see no change in 13 years. Below, we summarize again two crucial components that must be addressed in order to see improvement for marginalized groups. Additional solutions can be found in our prior reports.

### *Change Processes that Result in Skewed Outcomes*

The lack of inclusion on screen and behind the camera in film does not change because the processes that perpetuate bias have not evolved. We have previously recommended creating target inclusion goals and to “Just Add Five” female characters. Each of these solutions represents an opportunity to revise the very procedures used by entertainment creators that result in the skewed outcomes seen in this study.

Inclusion goals take stock of where a company is at present and create an intent to change. They also lay out a pathway toward progress by distilling the intent of a company or production to be inclusive and providing a specific indication of where that change should occur and the time frame for accomplishing that goal. When films “Just Add Five” they address implicit biases in the casting process that impede progress toward inclusion. By strategically including additional female characters who reflect intersectional identities (e.g., racial/ethnic inclusion, the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities), productions can overcome failures to cast inclusively that result from relying on conventional processes. This thinking laid the groundwork for the inclusion rider--and we see little evidence of its use to change the ecosystem on screen for speaking characters in film.

Across all the solutions proposed by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, the core suggestion is to evaluate how processes like greenlighting, casting, crewing up productions, and marketing and distribution perpetuate exclusion. When decisions are made with little time and high-pressure, this can fuel bias. Moreover, relying on how things have always been done does little to create progress. Instead, the outcome simply replicates existing problems. Companies who finance productions and those who oversee hiring must do more to change the procedures and cultures that have existed in entertainment in order to create new opportunities and greater access.

### *Avoid Subjective Decision-Making by Relying on Criteria*

Reliance upon gut instinct or subjective feelings about who might be “right” for a job have resulted in decades of exclusion for talented individuals from marginalized communities. The lack of clear criteria in the hiring process for those working above and below the line in film is one area that must be addressed if progress is to be made. We have written extensively about how the use of criteria in the hiring process is key to objective decision-making. Again, we wonder why those in positions of influence are not listening.

By creating, agreeing upon, and using criteria for decision-making, companies and individuals can short-circuit the biases that so often perpetuate exclusion. Rather than relying on the familiarity of long-time collaborators, or the recommendations of others, using criteria allows executives, producers, and other decision-makers to ensure that the individual is truly the “best person for the job.” Criteria can subvert both implicit and explicit biases—a solution we have previously offered—by providing checks and balances and requiring people to define the qualities needed for success *a priori*.

These two ideas undergird the many solutions that our reports have provided over the years. What is important to note is that individuals must not only *intend* to change but *commit* to engaging in new processes, altering decision-making, and ultimately achieving new and inclusive outcomes. Unless these steps occur, we will continue to see little in the way of change.

### *Limitation*

As with all research studies, at least one limitation must be noted. Yearly, we remind readers that the sample of popular content used in this study provides one lens on inclusion in the industry. Examining less popular films might produce different results. However, the longitudinal nature of this sample as well as a desire to understand the inclusion profile of the most widely seen and exported movies requires that we continue to examine top-grossing films. Incorporating data on popular films from streaming platforms would offer additional insight into how movies viewed by large audiences are performing on inclusion.

This annual report serves as an indicator of progress and a warning of where more work is needed. In the current moment, the value of inclusion is clear. As audiences demand more storytelling that features new voices, the film industry must respond. Showcasing historically marginalized groups is no longer an option; in an era where entertainment reflects our values, captures our attention, and fills our time, inclusion is a necessity.

## Footnotes

1. The details of our methodology (sample, units of analysis, measures) can be found in our previous reports at the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative website: <https://annenberg.usc.edu/research/aii>. As a result, we only highlight in the footnotes new information germane to 2019. All other details, including conceptual and operational definitions can be located in previous published reports.
2. Each year our sample is pulled from Box Office Mojo. For 2019, we captured this information once box office was closed and no remaining films in theaters could impact domestic revenue (3/19/2020). Only fictional films were included in the analysis. Any deviation in this report from our *Inclusion in the Director's Chair* study was due to changes in the list of films pulled for that study and this one.

Our unitizing and reliability coefficients per measures are strong. Given that they replicate what we have found in the previous 12 years of doing this study, we have chosen to not report the statistics here. Please email us for information on unitizing reliability as well as variable reliability using the Potter & Levine Donnerstein (1999) formula.

3. Genre distinctions were made by using Box Office Mojo and IMDbPro descriptors.
4. 30 actors drove the storylines of 8 ensemble films. Nineteen (63.3%) actors were male and 11 (36.7%) were female.
5. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Yao, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2019). Inequality in 1,200 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2018. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-report-2019-09-03.pdf>
6. See Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2018). Inequality in 1,100 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT & Disability from 2007 to 2017. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inequality-in-1100-popular-films.pdf>
7. For measures examining positions behind the camera, all above the line information was pulled from IMDbPro.com per film. The information was gathered per person using database information from our previous studies as well as online sources (e.g., Variety Insight, Studio System). In cases where judgments were difficult or impossible to ascertain (i.e., no online information about identity), we contacted the individual in question or members of their creative team (e.g., agent).
8. Casting directors were obtained using IMDbPro.com. In situations where IMDbPro did not list a casting director, film credits were examined. Only individuals credited as 'casting director' or given the credit 'casting by' were included. Across 1,300 films, 17 movies did not credit a casting director and were excluded from analyses. Judgements for gender and race/ethnicity were gleaned from Annenberg Inclusion Initiative databases and online sources (e.g., Variety Insight, Studio System), as well as direct contact with casting directors or their teams. We were unable to confirm the racial/ethnic identity of 16 casting directors out of 2,021. These were excluded from analyses related to race/ethnicity.
9. Yearly, we pull the gender and race/ethnicity of all the narrative directors at the Sundance Film Festival for our industry reports. For 2018/19, more information can be found online in our

investigation with Times Up, *Inclusion at Film Festivals* (<http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-film-festivals-20200127.pdf>). The episodic findings come from the Directors Guild of America (2019, November 19). *DGA Reports New Inclusion Records in the 2018-19 TV Season*. Retrieved from <https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2019/191119-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx>.

10. Films with women screenwriters featured significantly more female leads and co leads (74.1%) than did those films with only men screenwriters (31.5%). The same trend emerged with female speaking or named characters in the cast, with movies written by women (35.9%) more inclusive than those written by men (33.3%). This trend was not meaningfully significant (<5 percentage point difference), however.
11. U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Quick Facts. Retrieved August 17, 2020 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/LFE046218>.
12. The percentage of each race/ethnicity across 13 years is presented in Table 31 below. Percentages sum to 100 in each row, with some deviation due to rounding.

**Table 31**  
**Prevalence of Character Race/Ethnicity On Screen by Year: 2007-2019**

Year	White	Black	Latino	Asian	AI/AN	NH/PI	MENA	Multiracial
2007	77.6%	13.0%	3.3%	3.4%	0.1%	0.1%	2.3%	<.01%
2008	71.2%	13.2%	4.9%	7.1%	0.2%	0.4%	2.8%	0.1%
2009	76.2%	14.7%	2.8%	4.7%	0.2%	0.1%	1.2%	<.01%
2010	77.6%	10.3%	3.9%	5.0%	0.4%	0.1%	2.6%	0.2%
2011	77.1%	9.1%	5.9%	4.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	2.4%
2012	76.3%	10.8%	4.2%	5.0%	0.2%	<.01%	3.3%	0.1%
2013	74.1%	14.1%	4.9%	4.4%	0.3%	0	1.1%	1.2%
2014	73.1%	12.5%	4.9%	5.3%	0.1%	<.01%	2.9%	1.2%
2015	73.7%	12.2%	5.3%	3.9%	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	3.6%
2016	70.8%	13.5%	3.1%	5.6%	0.1%	0.7%	3.4%	2.7%
2017	70.7%	12.1%	6.2%	4.8%	0.5%	0.1%	1.7%	3.9%
2018	63.7%	16.9%	5.3%	8.2%	<.01%	0.4%	1.5%	4.0%
2019	65.7%	15.7%	4.9%	7.2%	0.4%	0.2%	1.6%	4.4%

13. U.S. Census Bureau (2020).
14. Below is the apparent age of male (Table 32) and female (Table 33) characters by racial/ethnic grouping. Characters coded as Middle Eastern/North African, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial/Multiethnic were included in the “other” column.

**Table 32**  
**Male Characters' Race/Ethnicity by Age in Top-Grossing Films: 2019**

Age	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
% of 0-12 yr olds	5%	5.1%	4.7%	9.7%	7.6%
% of 13-20 yr olds	6.7%	5.9%	10.9%	5.4%	11.4%
% of 21-39 yr olds	38.7%	49.7%	45.3%	53.5%	46.2%
% of 40 yr olds & older	49.6%	39.2%	39.1%	31.4%	34.8%

**Table 33**  
**Female Characters' Race/Ethnicity by Age in Top-Grossing Films: 2019**

Age	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Other
% of 0-12 yr olds	8.7%	5.7%	3.4%	2.2%	13.2%
% of 13-20 yr olds	12.5%	10.4%	10.2%	13.3%	17.4%
% of 21-39 yr olds	48.2%	48.7%	57.6%	63.3%	58.7%
% of 40 yr olds & older	30.6%	35.2%	28.8%	21.1%	10.7%

15. U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019. Retrieved September 6th, 2020 from: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2020/population-estimates-detailed.html>
16. Information and context presented on screen led research assistants to identify three transgender characters. While there were at least two additional transgender actors across the sample, neither portrayal offered sufficient information for research assistants to regard the depictions as transgender characters.
17. GLAAD (2017). Accelerating Acceptance. Retrieved September 2nd, 2020 from: [https://www.glaad.org/files/aa/2017\\_GLAAD\\_Accelerating\\_Acceptance.pdf](https://www.glaad.org/files/aa/2017_GLAAD_Accelerating_Acceptance.pdf)
18. 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>
19. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2020). Inequality Across 1,300 Popular Films: Examining Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Leads/Co Leads From 2007 to 2019. Retrieved September 7th, 2020 from: <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-leads-co-leads-20200103.pdf>. See also Smith, S.L., Weber, R. Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Case, A., Yao, K., & Lee, C. (2020). The Ticket to Inclusion: Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Leads and Financial Performance Across 1,200 Popular Films. ReFrame & USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Retrieved September 7th, 2020 from: <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-2020-02-05-ticket-to-inclusion.pdf>

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