

# **Inclusion in the Director's Chair:** **Analysis of Director Gender &** **Race/Ethnicity Across 1,500 Top Films** **from 2007 to 2021**

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**ANNENBERG**  
FOUNDATION

**USC** Annenberg  
*Inclusion Initiative*

# INCLUSION IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR? ANALYSIS OF DIRECTOR GENDER & RACE/ETHNICITY ACROSS 1,500 TOP FILMS FROM 2007 TO 2021

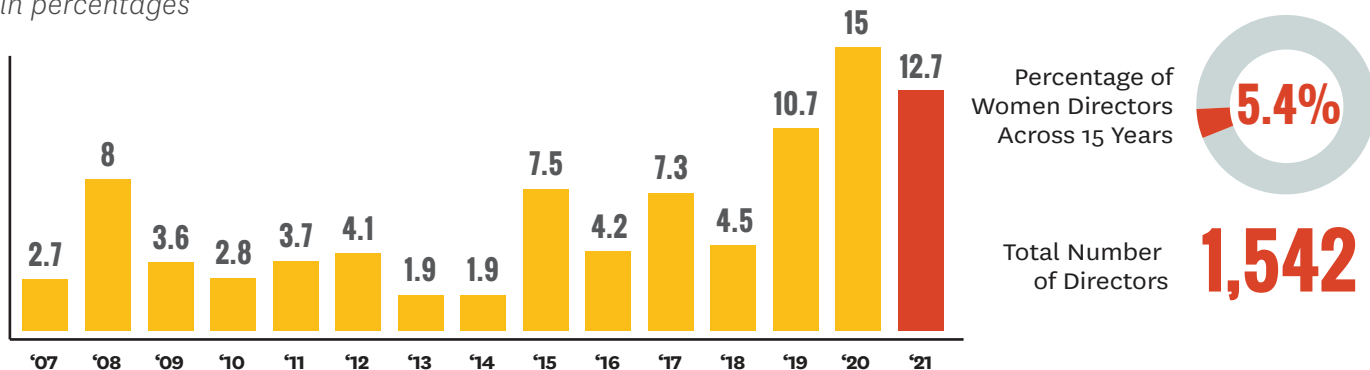
USC ANNEBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE



## DESPITE A PANDEMIC, WOMEN DIRECTORS SEE GAINS

### PREVALENCE OF WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,388 FILMS

in percentages



Sample sizes for 2020 (37 films) and 2021 (51 films) reflect the average market share of top-grossing films each year from 2007 to 2019. Data on the full 100 top films each year along with other samples are presented in the complete report and are not significantly different from what is reported here.

## RATIO OF INDIVIDUAL MEN TO WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 15 YEARS

**11 TO 1**

## NO DIFFERENCE IN METACRITIC SCORES BY FILM DIRECTOR GENDER

Median and average Metacritic score across 1,388 films from 2007 to 2021

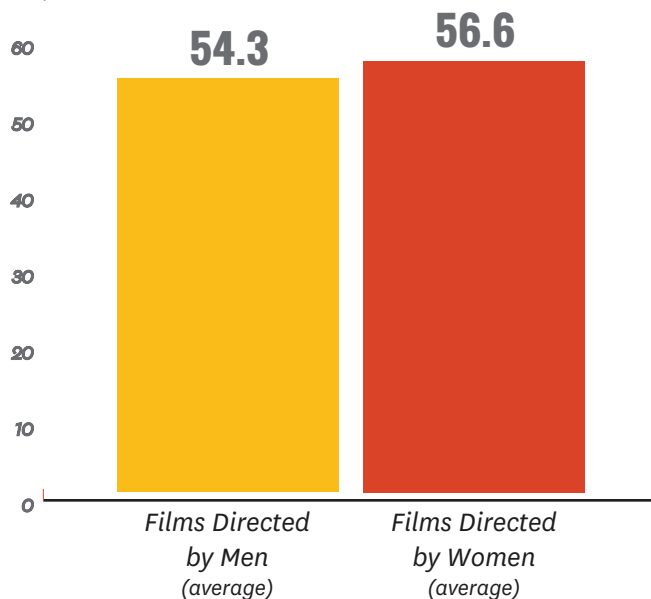
**55**

VS.

**57**

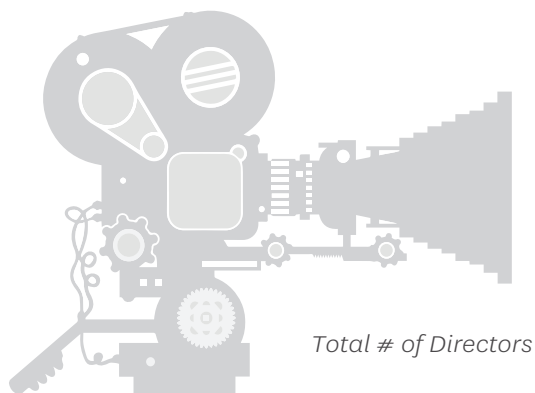
**FILMS DIRECTED BY MEN**  
(midpoint)

**FILMS DIRECTED BY WOMEN**  
(midpoint)



## WOMEN DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

Number of women directors across 1,388 films by distributor



20th Century	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Lionsgate	STX Entertainment	Other
9	3	11	21	10	16	4	3	6
203	158	224	241	174	254	127	23	138

**83** OUT OF **1,542** DIRECTORS

## WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,388 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

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



THERE ARE

**66**

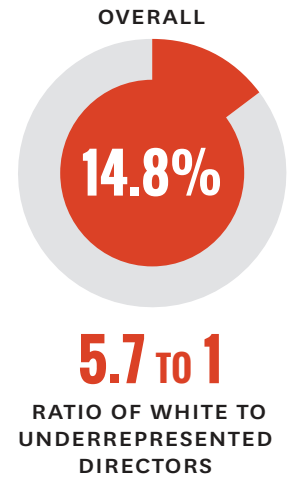
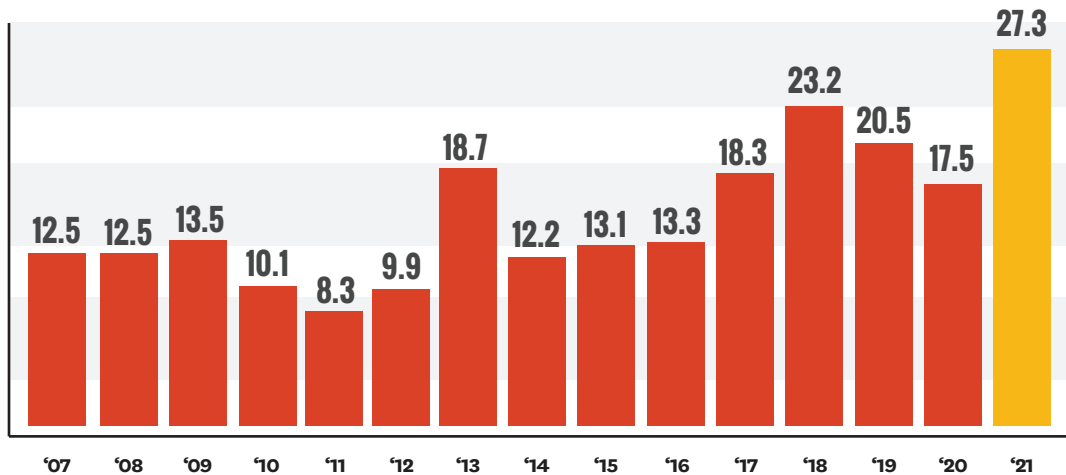
INDIVIDUAL  
WOMEN  
DIRECTORS  
BETWEEN

**2007  
AND  
2021**

\*An asterisk denotes an underrepresented woman director.

## UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS BY YEAR

Percentage of underrepresented directors across 1,388 films



Sample sizes for 2020 (37 films) and 2021 (51 films) reflect the average market share of top-grossing films each year from 2007 to 2019. Data on the full 100 top films each year along with other samples are presented in the complete report and are not significantly different from what is reported here.

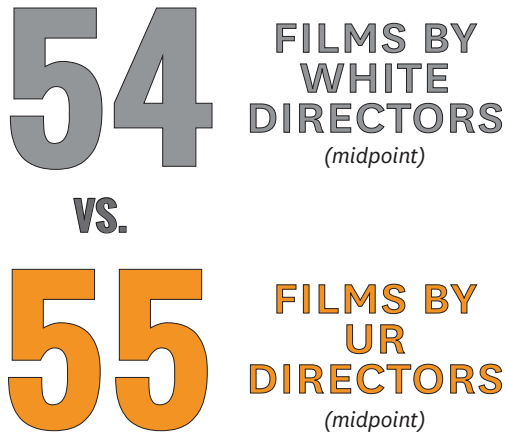
## UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

Number and percentage of underrepresented directors across 1,388 films by distributor

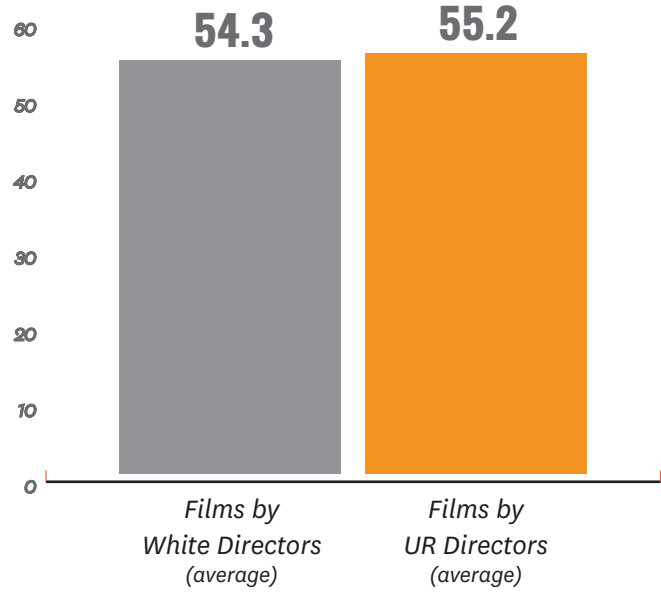
DISTRIBUTION COMPANY	# OF UR DIRECTORS	% OF UR DIRECTORS	TOTAL # OF DIRECTORS
20TH CENTURY	29	14.3	203
PARAMOUNT PICTURES	16	10.1	158
SONY PICTURES	37	16.5	224
UNIVERSAL PICTURES	48	19.9	241
WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	14	8	174
WARNER BROS.	30	11.8	254
LIONSGATE	28	22	127
STX ENTERTAINMENT	1	4.4	23
OTHER	26	18.8	138
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>1,542</b>

## METACRITIC SCORES FOR UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS

Median and average Metacritic score across 1,388 films from 2007 to 2021

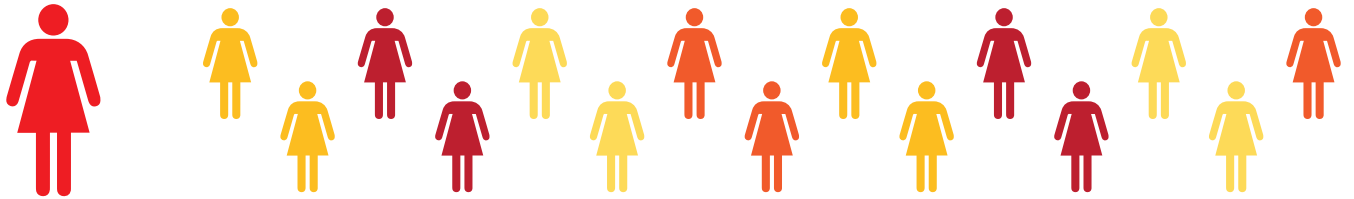


UR=Underrepresented



## HOLLYWOOD'S IMAGE OF A WOMAN DIRECTOR IS WHITE

Race/ethnicity of 66 individual women directors across 1,388 films



**51 WOMEN**  
ARE WHITE

**15 WOMEN**  
ARE FROM UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS

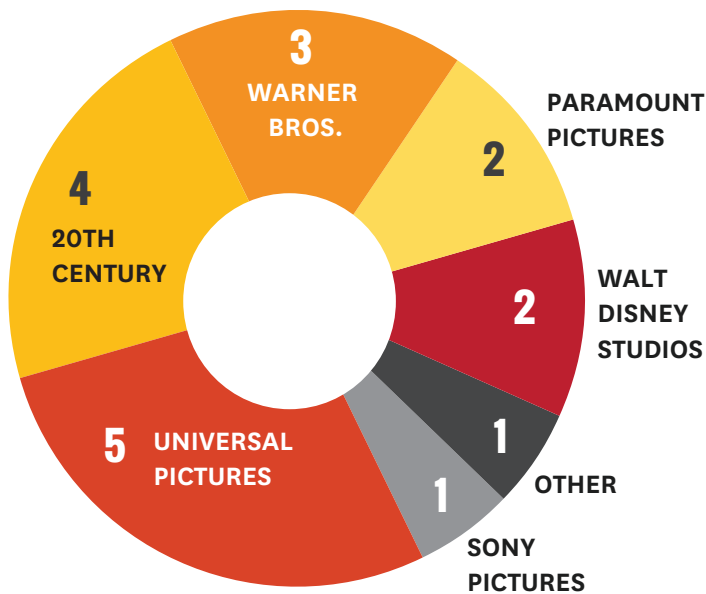
## GENDER & UNDERREPRESENTED STATUS OF FILM DIRECTORS

Percentage and number of directors by gender and underrepresented status across 1,388 films from 2007 to 2021

INDICATOR	WHITE MEN	WHITE WOMEN	UR MEN	UR WOMEN
TOTAL %	80.9%	4.2%	13.7%	<2%
TOTAL #	1,248	65	211	18
U.S. POPULATION	29.6%	30.5%	19.6%	20.3%

## UNDERREPRESENTED WOMEN DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

Number of underrepresented women directors of top-grossing films per distributor from 2007-2021



**15** years:  
2007-2021.  
1,388 movies.

**ONLY**

**18** films directed by  
underrepresented  
women.

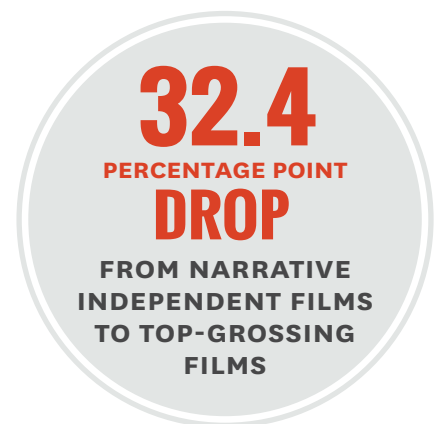
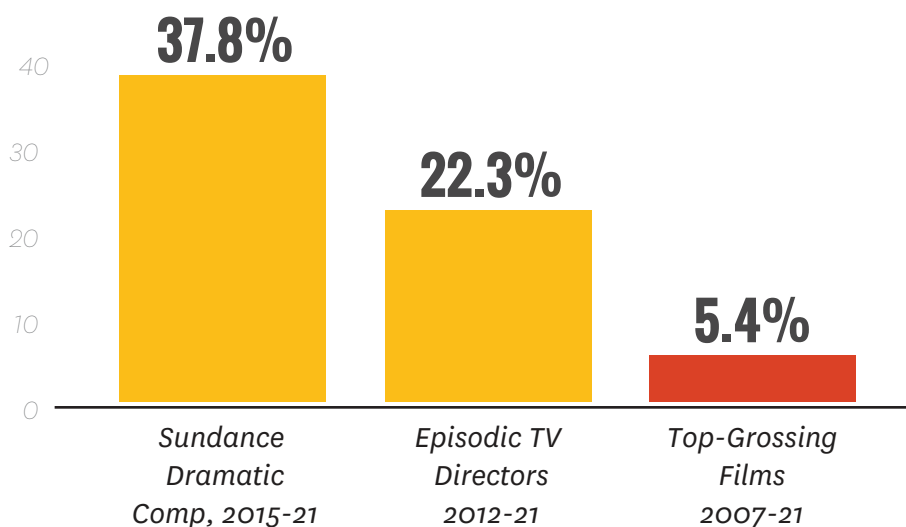
**Zero** underrepresented women directors worked on top-grossing films from Lionsgate or STX Entertainment. Other reflects films distributed by independent companies.

## RATIO OF WHITE MEN TO UNDERREPRESENTED WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 15 YEARS

**69.3 TO 1**

## PIPELINE PROBLEMS: CAREER PROGRESS STALLS FOR WOMEN

Percentage of women directors by media platform



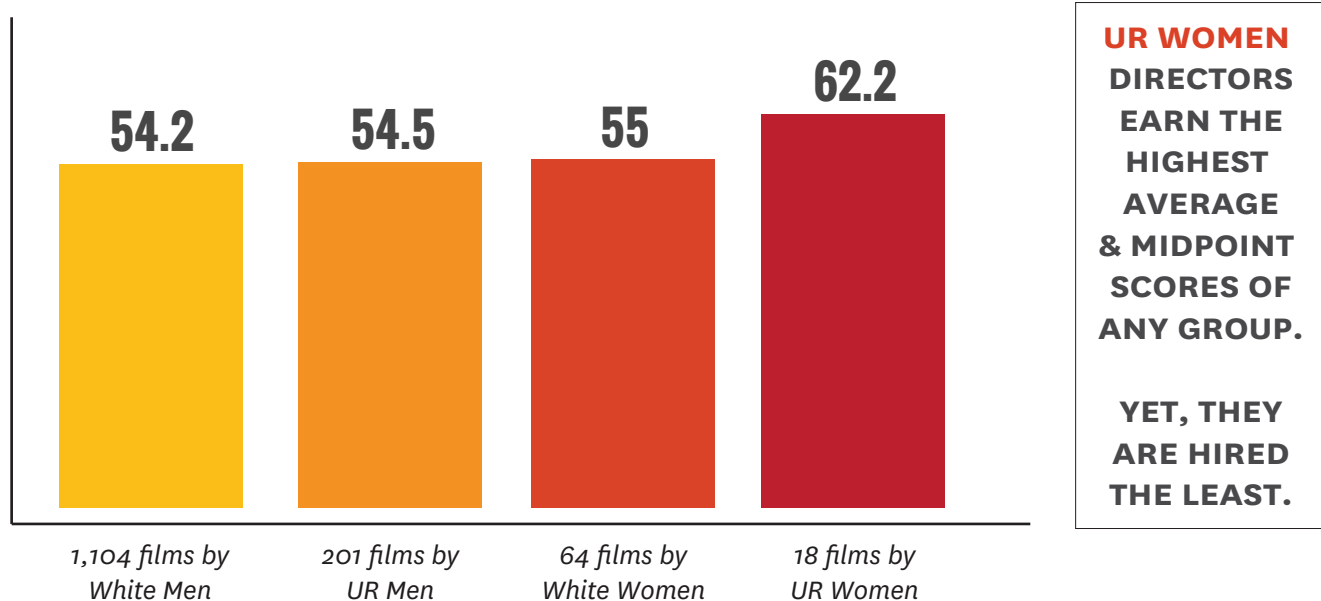
## WOMEN DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR SLATE & YEAR

Percentage of women directors per distributor slate, 2015-2021

YEAR	20TH CENTURY	PARAMOUNT PICTURES	SONY PICTURES	UNIVERSAL PICTURES	WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	WARNER BROS.	LIONSGATE	STX ENTERTAINMENT
2015	0	0	10.7%	12.1%	9.1%	17.9%	4.4%	0
2016	8.3%	0	17.9%	8.6%	5%	5%	4.2%	14.3%
2017	8%	0	17.2%	13%	0	15%	0	22.2%
2018	13.3%	0	11.1%	10.7%	7.7%	0	5.6%	11.1%
2019	5.9%	0	17.4%	25.9%	16.7%	15.8%	5.9%	25%
2020	0	14.3%	20%	36.8%	0	50%	0	0
2021	16.7%	0	9.5%	20%	22.2%	11.1%	0	25%
TOTAL	7.3%	1.4%	14.8%	16.8%	9.3%	12%	3.7%	17.1%

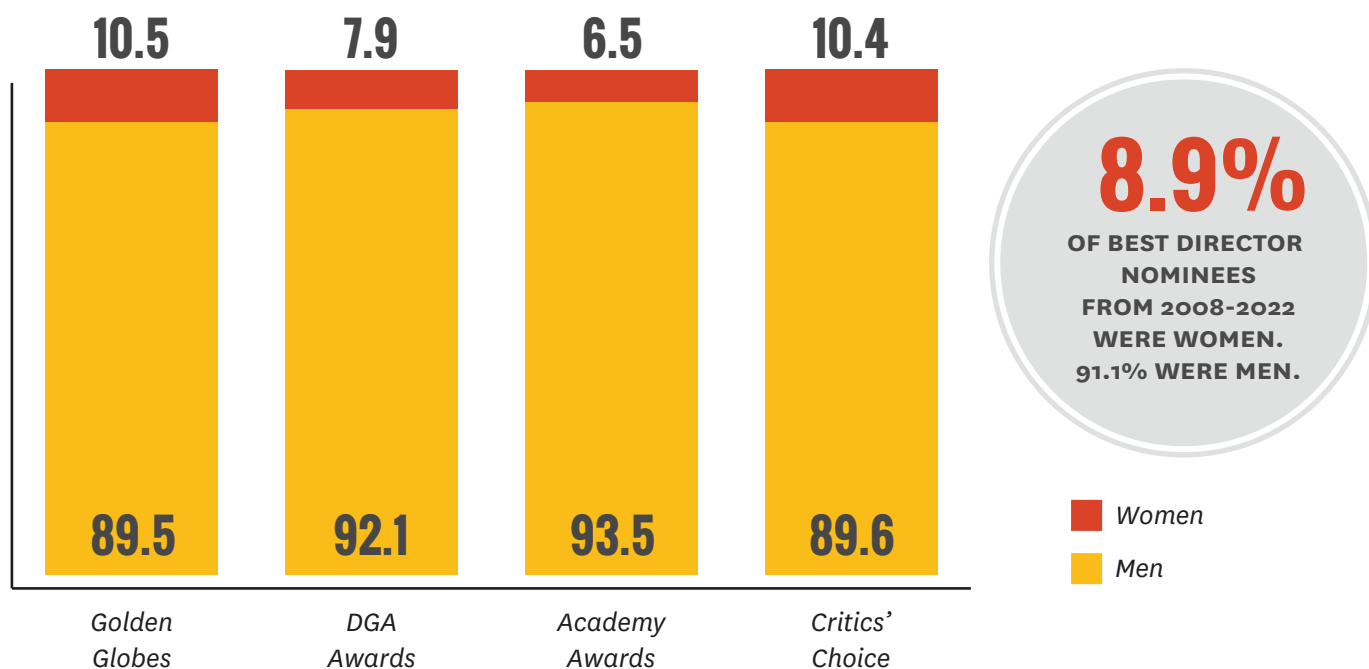
## METACRITIC SCORES BY GENDER AND UNDERREPRESENTED STATUS

Average metacritic score by gender and race/ethnicity of directors, 2007-2021



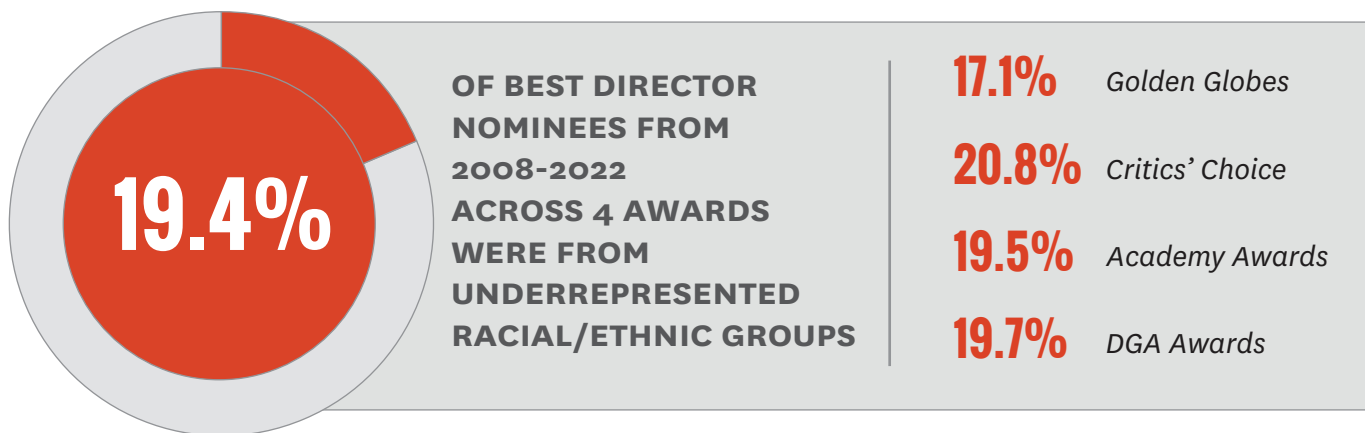
## THE GENDER GAP IN AWARDS

Percentage of Women Directors by Award Type across 4 Awards Organizations, 2008-2022



## NOMINATIONS ARE RARE FOR UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS

Percentage of Underrepresented Directors by Award Type across 4 Awards Organizations, 2008-2022



**ONLY 3 WOMEN OF COLOR HAVE BEEN NOMINATED FOR ONE OF FOUR TOP DIRECTING AWARDS FROM 2008 TO 2022**

Academy Awards and DGA Awards winners in 2022 were not announced prior to publication of the study and are not included in the analysis.



# WOMEN DIRECTORS RECEIVING AWARD NOMINATIONS

Women directors and films nominated for Best Directing awards from 2008-2022

DIRECTOR NAME	FILM TITLE	YEAR	GOLDEN GLOBES	DGA AWARDS	ACADEMY AWARDS	CRITICS' CHOICE
Angelina Jolie	UNBROKEN	2015				✓
Ava Duvernay	SELMA	2015	✓			✓
Greta Gerwig	LADY BIRD	2018		✓	✓	✓
Greta Gerwig	LITTLE WOMEN	2020				✓
Kathryn Bigelow	THE HURT LOCKER	2010	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kathryn Bigelow	ZERO DARK THIRTY	2013	✓	✓		✓
Emerald Fennell	PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN	2021	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chloe Zhao	NOMADLAND	2021	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regina King	ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI	2021	✓			✓
Jane Campion	THE POWER OF THE DOG	2022	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maggie Gyllenhaal	THE LOST DAUGHTER	2022	✓			

A black check mark indicates a nomination; a red check indicates a nomination and win.  
Nominations include those for best directing categories, including DGA Award for Best Feature.  
DGA Awards and Academy Awards winners were not announced prior to study publication and are not included here.

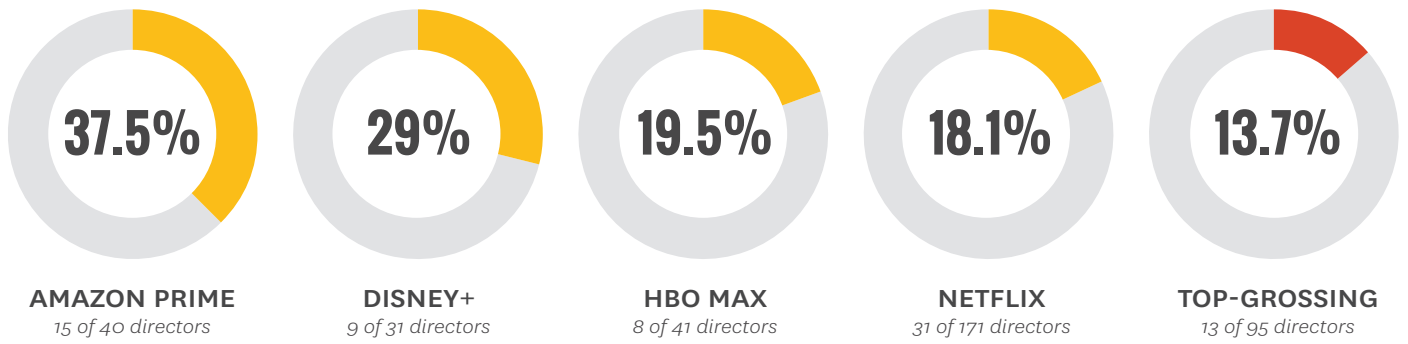
**34 OUT OF 56 FILM SLATES FROM 8 COMPANIES (2015-2021) DID NOT INCLUDE EVEN ONE UNDERREPRESENTED WOMAN DIRECTOR.**

**TOP PERFORMER IN 2020 & 2021: UNIVERSAL PICTURES**

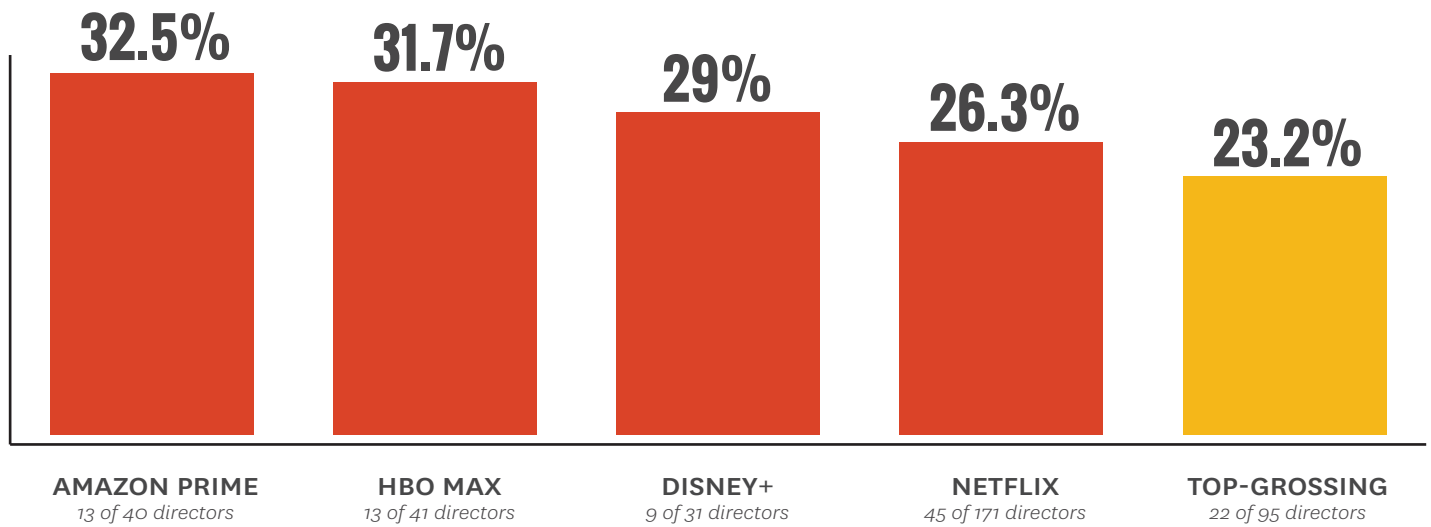
Of legacy studios, Universal Pictures distributed the most films by women directors in 2020 & 2021.

# STREAMING PLATFORMS REFLECT THE FUTURE OF INCLUSION

Percentage of women directors of original films across 4 streaming platforms & top-grossing movies, 2020-21



Percentage of underrepresented directors of original films across 4 streaming platforms & top-grossing movies, 2020-21



Gender & race/ethnicity of directors of original films across 4 streaming platforms & top-grossing movies, 2020-21



	White Men	White Women	UR Men	UR Women	Total Directors
NETFLIX	60.8%	12.9%	21%	5.3%	171
AMAZON PRIME	45%	22.5%	17.5%	15%	40
DISNEY+	51.6%	19.4%	19.4%	9.7%	31
HBO MAX	53.7%	14.6%	26.8%	4.9%	41
TOP-GROSSING	68.4%	8.4%	17.9%	5.3%	95

# SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE INCLUSION IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

*Actions for companies and individuals to create change*



**Inclusion in the Director's Chair:  
Analysis of Director Gender and Race/Ethnicity Across the 1,500 Top Films from 2007 to 2021**

Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper, & Al-Baab Khan  
USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

### Key Findings

The purpose of this report was to examine the 100 top films each year from 2007 to 2021. Our analysis spans 1,500 movies and presents the most comprehensive picture surrounding employment practices of the top leadership position in film production. There are four major elements to this report. First, the prevalence of directors by gender and race/ethnicity – as well as the intersection of these two identity measures – was examined. We assess not only the frequency of employment but how hiring directors from marginalized communities varies by year, distributor, and Metacritic score. Second, we evaluate the broader ecosystem of work for directors by gender and underrepresented status. Our analysis included a look at each studio and mini majors' hiring practices across their entire film slates for the last 7 years. The pipeline of directors in narrative competition at Sundance Film Festival (2015-2021) was also assessed as well as those working on original fiction films distributed across four streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBO Max). Third, we examine the frequency of nominations and awards for women and underrepresented directors across our entire sample time frame (2008 to 2022) -- at the Academy Awards, Golden Globes, Critics' Choice, and DGA Awards.

#### *Top-Grossing Films*

Given the impact of COVID-19 on theatrical exhibition, we had to approach this project differently than we have in the past. We considered three options to achieve a sample characteristic of previous years. First, we could examine films earned an amount comparable to the 100 top-grossing films of the past (i.e., at least \$20 million) for a sample of 18 films in 2020 and 45 movies in 2021. Second, we could assess films that met a lower box office threshold to account for the reported 40% decline in box office in 2021, with a resulting sample of 28 films in 2020 and 58 films 2021.

Our third approach was to focus on films that represent the typical market share of the entire U.S. box office for the year. Over 13 years, the average box office share of the 100 top films is roughly 91% of all the movies released during a particular 12-month time frame. If we look at movies capturing this percentage of box office dollars in the U.S., our sample size increases to 37 in 2020 and 51 in 2021. We chose this third option for our analysis, though report data from all three approaches in the footnotes.

**Gender.** A total of 55 directors were attached to the 51 top movies of 2021, with 12.7% ( $n=7$ ) women and 87.3% ( $n=48$ ) men. This is a gender ratio of 6.8 to 1.

Overall, 5.4% of directors across the 15-year sample were women. The percentage of women helmers in 2021 (12.7%,  $n=7$ ) was *not* meaningfully different from 2020 (15%,  $n=6$ ) or 2019 (10.7%,  $n=12$ ). Thus, the gains achieved from the 4% challenge and other advocacy efforts have held even in the pandemic. Further, the current percentage of women directors in 2021 was substantially higher than 2018 (4.5%) or 2007 (2.7%).

There was little variability by distributor. In terms of percentages, STX Entertainment (13%,  $n=3$ ) has worked with the highest proportion of women directors followed by Universal Pictures (8.7%) and

Warner Bros. (6.3%). In terms of sheer number, Universal Pictures ( $n=21$ ) and Warner Bros. ( $n=16$ ) were far more inclusive of attaching women directors to their films than were the other studios or mini-majors.

We assessed the critical reception of movies using Metacritic scores. There was very little difference in critical reception by director gender. Films with women directors ( $Mean=56.6$ ,  $range=22-95$ ) have slightly higher – on average – Metacritic scores than those films with only men at the helm ( $Mean=54.3$ ,  $range=9-100$ ). Looking at the midpoint or median, women directors (57) have slightly stronger movies than their male peers (55).

**Race/Ethnicity.** A full 27.3% ( $n=15$ ) of the 51 top-grossing films of 2021 were directed by underrepresented filmmakers. Five of these directors were Asian, 3 Black or African American, 4 Hispanic/Latino and 3 were multiracial/multiethnic. Twelve of these directors were men and only three were women.

The percentage of underrepresented filmmakers has changed over time. 2021 (27.3%) featured a significantly higher percentage of underrepresented directors than did 2020 (17.5%) or 2007 (12.5%). Despite the uptick in 2021, the percentage of underrepresented directors was still well below U.S. census (39.9%).

Lionsgate distributed the highest percentage of films with underrepresented directors at the helm across the 15-year sample. Universal Pictures (19.9%,  $n=48$ ) also consistently worked with non-white directors. In contrast, The Walt Disney Company (8%,  $n=14$ ) and STX Entertainment (4.4%,  $n=1$ ) have the worst track record when it comes to working with underrepresented content creators across the 15-year sample.

There was no relationship between race/ethnicity of director and critical reception of movies. The average Metacritic scores did not differ between the stories helmed by White 54.3,  $range=9-100$ ) and underrepresented directors 55.2,  $range=11-99$ ). The medians also follow the same pattern (UR directors=55, White directors=54).

**Women of Color.** Of the 55 directors of 2021, only 3 were women of color. Those three individuals include Chloe Zhao (*Eternals*), Liesl Tommy (*Respect*), and Nia Costa (*Candyman*).

Only 18 women of color were attached to the top films from 2007 to 2021. This represents less than 2% of all directing jobs (1.2%). Yet women of color are roughly 20% of the U.S. population. The ratio of White male directors to women of color is 69.3 to 1.

Of the 18 films with a woman of color attached to direct, 5 (27.8%) were distributed by Universal Pictures and 4 by 20<sup>th</sup> Century (22.2%). Lionsgate and STX Entertainment have not worked with a woman of color director on a top-grossing film across the 15-year sample time frame.

Women of color direct movies that have significantly higher Metacritic scores (62.2,  $range=44-89$ ) than films by white (54.2,  $range=9-100$ ) or underrepresented men (54.5,  $range=11-99$ ) or white women (55,  $range=22-99$ ). The medians follow the same pattern as the averages: White men (54), underrepresented men (54), White women (55), underrepresented women (61.5).

### ***Slate Analysis***

A total of 837 films were released across 8 studio and mini-major companies. Only new fictional, feature-length films with domestic theatrical releases were included provided that the stories were presented in English or the U.S. was listed as a country of origin (whole or part).

913 directors were attached to the 837 movies. 13.7% ( $n=13$ ; 61.5% white, 38.5% underrepresented) of all helmers were women in 2021 and 86.3% were men ( $n=82$ ). This is a gender ratio 6.3 male directors to every 1 female.

The percentage of women directors in 2021 (13.7%) was significantly lower than 2020 (22.2%), but not 2019 (15%). However, 2021 was still significantly higher than the percentage in 2018 (7.6%). Thus, the gains achieved in 2019 have held into 2020 and 2021.

Universal Pictures (16.8%,  $n=31$ ) and Sony (14.8%,  $n=26$ ) have the highest percentages of women directors across their slates from 2015 to 2021 and are the only companies that have worked with female helmers every year evaluated. STX Entertainment (17.1%,  $n=7$ ) was also among those with the highest percentage of women directors. Paramount Pictures has the worst track record for working with women helmers over the sample time frame. There has *still* not been one year where every distributor has a woman director on their slate of films.

Of the 913 directors analyzed, only 3.1% ( $n=28$ ) were women of color. Sony Pictures distributed the most films with a woman of color at the helm ( $n=8$ ). The worst offenders were Paramount Pictures and Lionsgate. These companies did not distribute one movie directed by a woman of color in 7 years. Across 56 film slates (8 per year for 7 years), 34 did not feature even one director who was a woman of color.

Overall, 17.8% of the 913 directors were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Only 3 companies had at least one film with an underrepresented director every year since 2015: Sony Pictures, Universal Pictures, and Warner Bros. Overall, Universal Pictures had the highest percentage of underrepresented directors (23.2%,  $n=43$ ), while STX Entertainment featured the lowest (7.3%,  $n=3$ ).

### ***Pipeline Analysis***

We assessed 7 years of U.S. Dramatic Competition directors (2015-2021) at Sundance Film Festival. Across these 111 directors (106 movies), 37.8% ( $n=42$ ) were women. Additionally, 37.8% ( $n=42$ ) of directors were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Of the 42 women directors between 2015 and 2021, 16 were women of color, representing 14.4% of all Sundance U.S. Dramatic Competition directors in this time frame.

Notably, there has been change over time for both women and underrepresented directors. The percentage of women directors increased from 2015 (29.4%) to 2021 (50%), despite a significant decline from 2019 (52.9%) to 2020 (47.1%).

For underrepresented directors, 2021 (50%) was not meaningfully different than 2020 (52.9%), but both years were significantly higher than 2015 (23.5%).

We examined the percentage of women and underrepresented episodic directors from 2012-13 to 2019-20 according to reports from the Directors Guild of America. Across all 8 seasons evaluated, 22.3% of

episodes were directed by women and 22.4% by people of color. Overall, 5.2% of episodes had a woman of color in a directing role.

### ***Streaming Platform Analysis***

We considered directors of U.S. original, feature-length films released on Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBO Max, and Netflix in 2020 and 2021 as a comparison to the percentage of directors of theatrically-released films in our top-grossing analysis in 2020 and 2021.

Streaming platforms offered more opportunities to women directors in 2020 and 2021 than did top-grossing films. More than one-third of directors (37.5%) were women at Amazon, more than one-quarter (29%) on Disney+, 19.5% at HBO Max, and 18.1% at Netflix, compared to 13.7% in popular movies.

In 2020 and 2021, 23.2% of all top-grossing directors were underrepresented, which was lower than but not significantly different than Netflix (26.3%). HBO Max (31.7%), Amazon Prime (32.5%), and Disney+ (29%) had significantly more underrepresented directors across these two years.

We considered the percentage of women of color directors on streaming platforms. While top-grossing films (5.3%) were on par with Netflix (5.3%), HBO Max (4.9%), and Disney+ (9.7%), Amazon Prime (15%) had a significantly higher percentage of directors who were women of color on its platform in 2020 and 2021.

### ***Award Recognition***

We evaluated the gender and race/ethnicity of directors nominated over 15 years (2008-2022) across 4 award shows: Golden Globe Awards, Academy Awards, the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Awards, and Critics' Choice Awards.

325 nominations were presented across the 4 award shows, of which 91.1% were given to male directors ( $n=296$ ) and 8.9% were given to female directors ( $n=29$ ).

Nine women accounted for the 29 nominations over 15 years and only 3 women directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds received awards recognition.

Across 15 years, the Academy Awards (6.5%,  $n=5$ ) and the DGA Awards (7.9%,  $n=6$ ) were the least likely to recognize women helmers. The Golden Globes featured 10.5% ( $n=8$ ) women directors while the Critics' Choice Awards gave 10.4% ( $n=10$ ) of its nominations to women since 2008.

Across all 4 award shows, 19.4% of nominations ( $n=63$ ) went to underrepresented helmers, whereas 80.6% ( $n=262$ ) were given to their White counterparts. Although the percentage differences between award shows were not significant, the Golden Globes gave out the fewest number of nominations (17.1%,  $n=13$ ) and the Critics' Choice Awards the most (20.8%,  $n=20$ ).

### ***Solutions***

To address the gap for women of color directors, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative is offering one particular solution to increase the pipeline of women of color entering the industry. The Initiative is launching the AI<sup>2</sup> Accelerator. The Accelerator will award a \$25,000 scholarship to a minimum of one

woman of color during her senior year in a four-year college or university film program. The funds awarded can be used to support the creation of a short thesis film. In addition to financial support, the Accelerator will surround this director with high-profile Advisors who will provide insight and introductions. The goal is for the director to have multiple conversations while creating their film and to be introduced to a network of thought leaders and knowledgeable industry members who can create access and opportunity for the future.



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The purpose of this report was to examine the 100 top films each year from 2007 to 2021. Our analysis spans 1,500 movies and presents the most comprehensive picture surrounding employment practices of the top leadership position in film production. Like our previous reports, this analysis takes a deep dive into the prevalence of women and people of color working as directors on live action and animated movies. We also take an intersectional look at hiring and greenlighting practices involving women of color across the 15-year sample.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on theatrical exhibition, we had to approach this project differently than we have in the past. Previously, we would simply assess the identity of helmers across the 100 top fictional films in the U.S. (excluding documentaries) listed on [boxofficemojo.com](https://www.boxofficemojo.com). By examining the theatrical releases of 2020 and 2021, it was clear that this approach would yield a set of films that were qualitatively dissimilar from the typical 100 top movies each year. This could impact the study's findings.

To illustrate, the 100 top films of 2020 featured 15 re-releases (e.g., *Hocus Pocus*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, *Star Wars*, *The Goonies*). This was problematic as the number of re-releases was not only substantially higher than a typical year (e.g., 1-5 movies) but these films do not reflect *current* hiring or greenlighting decisions. Rather, these films reflect studio's choices to move money-making films to later dates (e.g., *Wonder Woman 1984*, *No Time to Die*, *Black Widow*) and fill theaters with content *not* originally intended to be released during the calendar year.

Additionally, many of the 100 top films across 2020 and 2021 made very little money in comparison to previous top-performing movies. As our analyses have shown, the 100 top movies typically yield \$20 million or more domestically at the box office.<sup>1</sup> The 100<sup>th</sup> films of 2020 and 2021 only made \$516,521 and \$2,170,750, respectively. Surely, many of these movies were not characteristic of the choices moviegoers would typically have access to at the multiplex and thus were stories more likely to come from a different population of films in terms of budget, marketing costs, distribution density, and other factors.

As a result of these issues, we had to pivot and select a set of films "typical" or from the same population as the 100 top films from 2007 to 2019. There were at least three options we explored to achieve a characteristic sample. The first was to only examine those films meeting a minimum threshold in terms of box office performance representative of the 100 top films of the past (i.e., at least \$20 million). This criterion would yield only 18 films in 2020 and 45 movies in 2021. The second approach was to reduce the bottom threshold of the 100<sup>th</sup> fictional film by 40% to account for the reported decline in box office in 2021.<sup>2</sup> This would reduce our cut-off point by \$8 million, to include films which grossed \$12 million or more, with a resulting sample of 28 films in 2020 and 58 films 2021.

A third approach was to focus on those films that represent the typical market share of the entire U.S. box office for the year. Over 13 years, the average box office share of the 100 top films is roughly 91% of all the movies released during a particular 12-month time frame.<sup>3</sup> If we look at movies capturing this percentage of box office dollars in the U.S., our sample size increases to 37 in 2020 and 51 in 2021.

While each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, we chose the third option for our analysis. For interested readers, we report data from all three approaches in footnotes as well as a focus on the 100 top fictional films within the last two years. This will allow us to examine not only current hiring practices but enable over time comparisons of similar and dissimilar sampling units used from 2007 to 2019.

The report is divided into 4 major sections. First, the prevalence of directors by gender and race/ethnicity – as well as the intersection of these two identity measures -- was examined. We assess not only the frequency of employment but how hiring directors from marginalized communities varies by year, distributor, and Metacritic score. Second, we evaluate the broader ecosystem of work for directors by gender and underrepresented status. Our analysis included a look at each studio and mini majors' hiring practices across their entire film slates for the last 7 years. The pipeline of directors in narrative competition at Sundance Film Festival (2015-2021) was also assessed as well as those working on original fiction films distributed across four streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBO Max). Third, we examine the frequency of nominations and awards for women and underrepresented directors across our entire sample time frame (2008 to 2022) -- at the Academy Awards, Golden Globes, Critics' Choice, and DGA Awards. The report concludes with a section summarizing the findings and offering solutions for change.

As with all our work, only 5% or greater differences will be noted. This standard was used to ensure we focus on substantive differences and not trivial deviations of 1-2 percent. For each analysis, 2021 trends will be presented first followed by an over time comparison to 2020 and 2007 on select measures.

### Identity of Directors in Top Films

Earlier, we noted that the sample for 2020 and 2021 included the total number of movies capturing roughly 91% of the market share within year. Thus, our total sample size was 37 films for 2020 and 51 films for 2021. See Footnote 4 for a complete breakdown of findings for the 100 top films as well as those only meeting a minimum threshold (i.e., \$12 million, \$20 million).

#### **Gender**

A total of 55 directors were attached to the top movies of 2021, with 12.7% ( $n=7$ ) women and 87.3% ( $n=48$ ) men. This is a gender ratio of 6.8 to 1. In order of box office revenue, the 7 women directors were: Cate Shortland (*Black Widow*), Chloe Zhao (*Eternals*), Nia DaCosta (*Candyman*), Lana Wachowski (*The Matrix Resurrections*), Liesl Tommy (*Respect*), Sarah Smith (*Ron's Gone Wrong*), and Elaine Bogan (*Spirit Untamed*).

Has the percentage of women directors changed over time? Yes and no. Overall (see Table 1), 5.4% of directors across the 15-year sample were women. In the short term, the percentage of women helmers in 2021 (12.7%,  $n=7$ ) was *not* meaningfully different from 2020 (15%,  $n=6$ ) or 2019 (10.7%,  $n=12$ ). Thus, the gains achieved from the 4% challenge and other advocacy efforts have held even in the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> Further, the current percentage of women directors in 2021 was substantially higher than 2018 (4.5%) or 2007 (2.7%). A list of all of the women directors sample wide can be found in Table 2.

**Table 1**  
**Director Gender of Fictional Films by Year**

Year	Males	Females	Total
2007	97.3% (n=109)	2.7% (n=3)	112
2008	92% (n=103)	8% (n=9)	112
2009	96.4% (n=107)	3.6% (n=4)	111
2010	97.2% (n=106)	2.8% (n=3)	109
2011	96.3% (n=104)	3.7% (n=4)	108
2012	95.9% (n=116)	4.1% (n=5)	121
2013	98.1% (n=105)	1.9% (n=2)	107
2014	98.1% (n=105)	1.9% (n=2)	107
2015	92.5% (n=99)	7.5% (n=8)	107
2016	95.8% (n=115)	4.2% (n=5)	120
2017	92.7% (n=101)	7.3% (n=8)	109
2018	95.5% (n=107)	4.5% (n=5)	112
2019	89.3% (n=100)	10.7% (n=12)	112
2020	85% (n=34)	15% (n=6)	40
2021	87.3% (n=48)	12.7% (n=7)	55
<b>Overall</b>	<b>94.6% (n=1,459)</b>	<b>5.4% (n=83)</b>	<b>1,542</b>

Given that some directors worked more than once in our sample time frame, we were interested in how many *unique* or individuals helmers were attached to the 1,388 movies. A total of 66 women and 724 men were responsible for directing the films in our sample. This is a gender ratio of 11 to 1. The top performers (i.e., Anne Fletcher, Lana Wachowski) each directed 4 movies and 11 women helmed 2 films: Ava DuVernay, Catherine Hardwicke, Greta Gerwig, Jennifer Lee, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Julie Anne Robinson, Nancy Meyers, Patty Jenkins, Phyllida Lloyd, Sarah Smith, and Stella Meghie.

**Table 2**  
**Women Directors 2007 to 2021**

Abby Kohn	Hallie Meyers-Shyer	Mimi Leder
Angelina Jolie	Jennifer Flackett	Nancy Meyers
Anna Boden	Jennifer Lee	Nia DaCosta
Anna Foerster	Jennifer Yuh Nelson	Niki Caro
Anne Fletcher	Jessie Nelson	Nora Ephron
Autumn de Wilde	Jill Culton	Olivia Wilde
Ava DuVernay	Jodie Foster	Patricia Riggen
Betty Thomas	Julie Anne Robinson	Patty Jenkins
Brenda Chapman	Julie Taymor	Phyllida Lloyd
Cate Shortland	Kasi Lemmons	Roxann Dawson
Catherine Hardwicke	Kathryn Bigelow	Sam Taylor-Johnson
Cathy Yan	Kay Cannon	Sanaa Hamri
Chloe Zhao	Kimberly Peirce	Sarah Smith
Diane English	Kirsten Sheridan	Shari Springer Berman
Elaine Bogan	Lana Wachowski	Sharon Maguire

Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum	Liesl Tommy	Stacy Title
Elizabeth Banks	Lilly Wachowski	Stella Meghie
Emerald Fennel	Lorene Scafaria	Susanna Fogel
Floria Sigismundi	Loveleen Tandan	Susanna White
Gail Mancuso	Lucia Aniello	Thea Sharrock
Gina Prince-Bythewood	Marielle Heller	Tina Gordon
Greta Gerwig	Melina Matsoukas	Trish Sie

In contrast, the top performing male directors were Tyler Perry (18 movies), Clint Eastwood (11 movies), Steven Spielberg (10 movies), and Ridley Scott (9 movies). Eleven men each directed 7 movies (Antoine Fuqua, David Yates, Guy Ritchie, Jaume Collett-Serra, Malcolm D. Lee, M. Night Shyamalan, Michael Bay, Peter Berg, Shawn Levy, Tim Story, Zack Snyder). Clearly, the men in the sample are getting far more “at bats” than women directors. Looking at studio deals may provide one indication of why this is the case. Eight of the 15 men who work most often had a confirmed film deal at a major studio. None of the women did, though 3 had TV deals. Additionally, the difference in deals may be due to the number of women working in animation. Three of the women who have directed 2 or more films directed animated content. Two of these women serve or served as studio heads. In contrast, 3 of the top men have directed an animated film in addition to live action fare.<sup>6</sup>

Turning to distributors, we were interested in companies exhibiting films with women directors attached. As shown in Table 3, there was little variability by distributor. In terms of percentages, STX Entertainment (13%,  $n=3$ ) has worked with the highest proportion of women directors followed by Universal Pictures (8.7%) and Warner Bros. (6.3%). Because percentages fail to show the complete picture, we also present the findings by frequency counts. In terms of sheer number, Universal Pictures ( $n=21$ ) and Warner Bros. ( $n=16$ ) were far more inclusive of attaching women directors to their films than were the other studios or mini-majors.

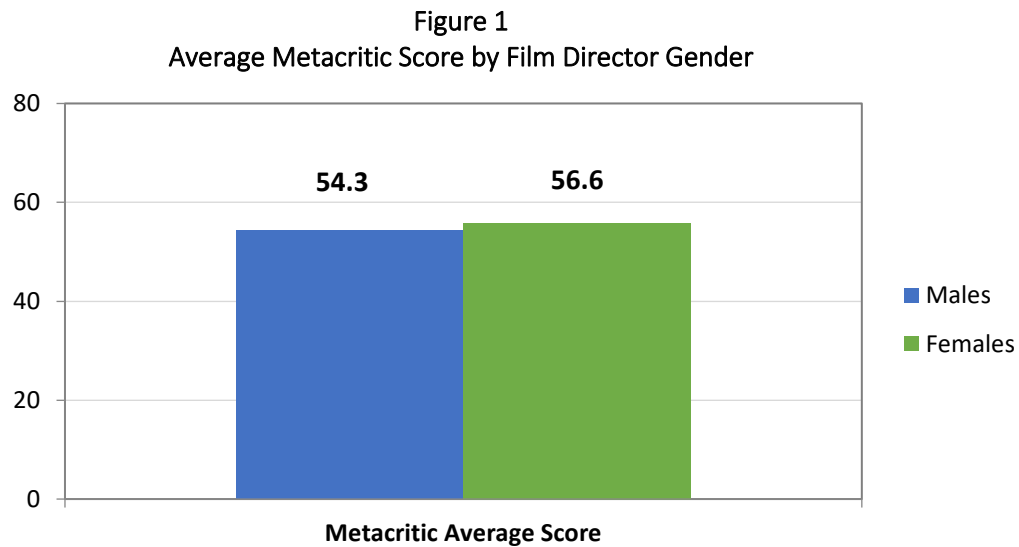
**Table 3**  
**# of Women Directors Across Fictional Films by Distributor**

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of Women Directors	4	3	11	3	9	21	10	16	6
% of Women Directors	3.2%	1.9%	4.9%	13%	4.4%	8.7%	5.7%	6.3%	4.4%
# of Directors Overall	127	158	224	23	203	241	174	254	138

The above analytics are important as they illuminate who was getting access and opportunity by gender. What these findings fail to reveal, however, is anything about the *quality* of the stories being told by men and women. To see if story strength varied by gender, we assessed the critical reception of movies using Metacritic scores or weighted averages of film reviews.<sup>7</sup> Toward this end, the sample was bifurcated into

two silos: those movies with at least one woman director attached ( $n=82$ ) and those without ( $n=1,385$ ).<sup>8</sup> After splitting the sample, we examined the mean (average), median (midpoint) and range of Metacritic scores for movies in these two groups.

As shown in Figure 1, there was very little difference in critical reception by director gender. Films with women directors ( $Mean=56.6$ ,  $range=22-95$ ) have slightly higher – on average – Metacritic scores than those films with only men at the helm ( $Mean=54.3$ ,  $range=9-100$ ). Looking at the midpoint or median, women directors (57) have slightly stronger movies than their male peers (55).



Summing up, the percentage of women directors has remained in the double digits since 2019. No meaningful changes have emerged during the pandemic, though the percentages deviate substantially from the U.S. population, of which women and girls comprise 51%.<sup>9</sup> This is surprising given that the critical reception of films with women directors attached continues to slightly outperform those by their male peers. Clearly, women helmers have to work twice as hard to get half as far in the film business. This is true of another marginalized community as well, people of color. As such, we now turn our attention to underrepresented directors in the next section of this report.

### ***Race/Ethnicity***

Focusing on race/ethnicity, a full 27.3% ( $n=15$ ) of the 51 top-grossing films of 2021 were directed by underrepresented filmmakers. Five of these directors were Asian, 3 Black or African American, 4 Hispanic/Latino and 3 were multiracial/multiethnic. Twelve of these directors were men and only three were women.

The percentage of underrepresented filmmakers has changed over time. As shown in Table 5, 2021 (27.3%) featured a significantly higher percentage of underrepresented directors than did 2020 (17.5%) or 2007 (12.5%). Despite the uptick in 2021, the percentage of underrepresented directors was still well below U.S. census (39.9%).<sup>10</sup>

**Table 5**  
**Director Underrepresented Status of Fictional Films by Year**

Year	White	Underrepresented	Total
2007	87.5% (n=98)	12.5% (n=14)	112
2008	87.5% (n=98)	12.5% (n=14)	112
2009	86.5% (n=96)	13.5% (n=15)	111
2010	89.9% (n=98)	10.1% (n=11)	109
2011	91.7% (n=99)	8.3% (n=9)	108
2012	90.1% (n=109)	9.9% (n=12)	121
2013	81.3% (n=87)	18.7% (n=20)	107
2014	87.9% (n=94)	12.2% (n=13)	107
2015	86.9% (n=93)	13.1% (n=14)	107
2016	86.7% (n=104)	13.3% (n=16)	120
2017	81.7% (n=89)	18.3% (n=20)	109
2018	76.8% (n=86)	23.2% (n=26)	112
2019	79.5% (n=89)	20.5% (n=23)	112
2020	82.5% (n=33)	17.5% (n=7)	40
2021	72.7% (n=40)	27.3% (n=15)	55
<b>Overall</b>	<b>85.2% (n=1,313)</b>	<b>14.8% (n=229)</b>	<b>1,542</b>

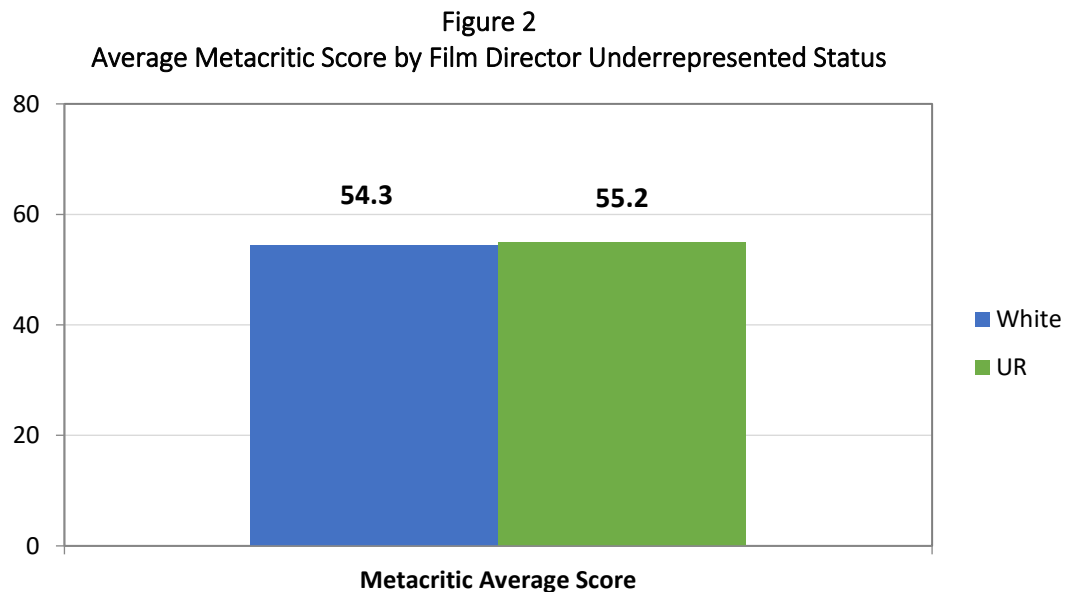
Similar to gender, we were interested in the total number of unique underrepresented filmmakers working across the 15-year sample. Out of 790 directors, 118 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and 672 were white. This is racial/ethnic ratio of 5.7 White directors to every 1 underrepresented director. As noted earlier, the director working the most frequently across the sample was Terry Perry with 18 movies. Five additional underrepresented directors (Antoine Fuqua, Jaume Collet-Serra, Malcolm D. Lee, M. Night Shyamalan, Tim Story) each made 7 films. This distribution was similar to White male directors, where the top performers made 11 (Clint Eastwood), 10 (Steven Spielberg), and 9 (Ridley Scott) films and 6 (David Yates, Guy Ritchie, Michael Bay, Peter Berg, Shawn Levy, Zack Snyder) additional White directors helmed 7 movies each. Of the six most-often working underrepresented directors, 3 had a film deal with a major studio, compared to 5 of the 9 most-often working White directors. Thus, there is little difference between film deals for White and underrepresented *men*. None of the underrepresented women had a film deal with a major studio.<sup>11</sup>

What companies were most likely to work with underrepresented filmmakers? As shown in Table 6, Lionsgate has been the top performer of films with underrepresented directors at the helm. This is likely due to the fact that Lionsgate has distributed Tyler Perry's movies, the most frequently working director across the entire sample of films. Following Lionsgate, Universal Pictures (19.9%, n=48) also consistently worked with non white directors. In contrast, The Walt Disney Company (8%, n=14) and STX Entertainment (4.4%, n=1) have the worst track record when it comes to working with underrepresented content creators across the 15-year sample.

**Table 6**  
**# of Underrepresented Directors Across Fictional Films by Distributor**

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of UR Directors	28	16	37	1	29	48	14	30	26
% of UR Directors	22%	10.1%	16.5%	4.4%	14.3%	19.9%	8%	11.8%	18.8%
# of Directors Overall	127	158	224	23	203	241	174	254	138

As we move to critical reception, another common pattern emerges. There was no relationship between race/ethnicity of director and critical reception of movies. As shown in Figure 2, the average Metacritic scores do not differ between the stories helmed by White and underrepresented directors. In fact, the mean Metacritic score for movies with an underrepresented director (55.2, *range*=11-99) was slightly higher than the mean for movies with White directors (54.3, *range*=9-100). The medians also follow the same pattern (UR directors=55, White directors=54).



Overall, the percentage of underrepresented directors reached its peak in 2021. Lionsgate and Universal Pictures continue to lead the way in greenlighting or hiring underrepresented directors to helm their movies. While story strength does not differ by race/ethnicity, it is important to note that films with underrepresented directors were still a far cry from the U.S. Census benchmark of 39.9%.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Women of Color***

While the previous analyses represent a univariate approach to analytics, it was important to cross gender and race/ethnicity to examine access and opportunity for women of color behind the camera. Of the 55 directors of 2021, only 3 were women of color. Those three individuals include Chloe Zhao (*Eternals*), Liesl Tommy (*Respect*), and Nia Costa (*Candyman*).

Only 18 women of color were attached to the top films from 2007 to 2021. This represents less than 2% of all directing jobs (1.2%). Yet women of color are roughly 20% of the U.S. population.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that the ratio of White male directors to women of color is 69.3 to 1. A list of every woman of color directing a top-grossing film over the last 15 years is shown in Table 8.

**Table 7**  
**Gender & Underrepresented Status of Directors from 2007-2021**

Directors	White Males	White Females	UR Males	UR Females
Total %	80.9%	4.2%	13.7%	<2%
Total #	1,248	65	211	18
U.S. Census	29.7%	30.5%	19.6%	20.3%

**Table 8**  
**Women of Color Directors From 2007 to 2021**

Ava DuVernay (2)	Melina Matsoukas (1)
Cathy Yan (1)	Nia DaCosta (1)
Chloe Zhao (1)	Patricia Riggen (2)
Gina Prince-Bythewood (1)	Roxann Dawson (1)
Jennifer Yuh Nelson (2)	Sanaa Hamri (1)
Kasi Lemmons (1)	Stella Meghie (2)
Liesl Tommy (1)	Tina Gordon (1)
Loveleen Tandan (1)	

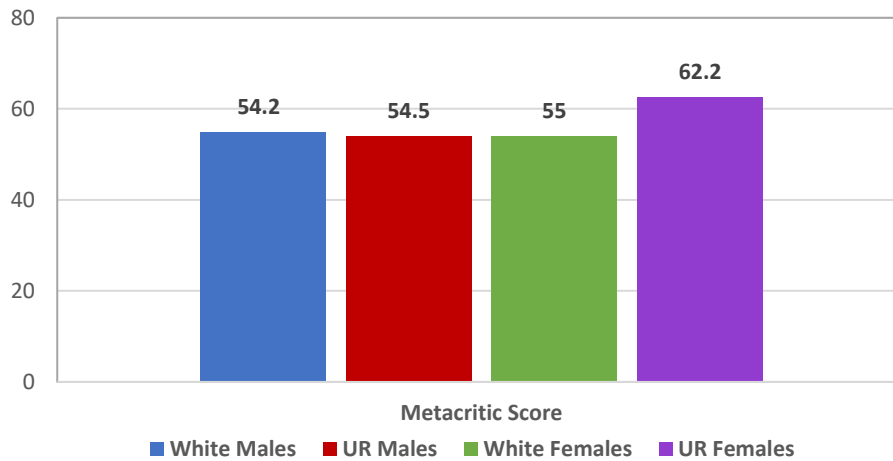
Of the 18 films with a woman of color attached to direct, 5 (27.8%) were distributed by Universal Pictures and 4 by 20<sup>th</sup> Century (22.2%). It is important to point out that Lionsgate and STX Entertainment are both companies that have not worked with a woman of color director across the 15-year sample time frame. This floor effect is surprising (see Figure 3), given that women of color direct movies that have significantly higher Metacritic scores (62.2, *range*=44-89) than films by white (54.2, *range*=9-100) or underrepresented men (54.5, *range*=11-99) or white women (55, *range*=22-99). The medians follow the same pattern as the averages: White men (54), underrepresented men (54), White women (55), underrepresented women (61.5).

**Table 9**  
**# of Underrepresented Women Directors Across Top Films from 2007-2021 by Distributor**

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of UR Women Directors	0	2	1	0	4	5	2	3	1
# of Directors Overall	127	158	224	23	203	241	174	254	138



**Figure 3**  
**Average Metacritic Score by Gender and Underrepresented Status of Director**



Clearly, focusing on the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity reveals a common bias. When Hollywood thinks about underrepresented directors, they think male. And when they conceptualize a women director, they think White. Yet, the one group that outperforms both of these groups – and White men -- in terms of critical reception is women of color.

### **Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Directors: A Deeper Dive**

The above analysis focuses on inclusion in the director's chair across the top films from 2007 to 2021. Now, we step back and address the larger ecosystem that directors work within and where they receive recognition. In this section, we move beyond the 100 top films to assess directors working across slates (2015-2021) at 6 major movie companies and 2 mini majors. This way, we can see the full set of hiring and greenlighting choices per year by company.

We then turn our attention to the pipeline and broader opportunities outside of top-grossing fare. To this end, we examine the percentage of women and people of color directing films in U.S. Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival (2015-2021) and directing original films in 2020 and 2021 at Netflix, Amazon, Disney+, and HBO Max. We also look at data from 2018 and 2019 for Netflix and Amazon. The analyses are rounded out by focusing on award recognition, which is important given the findings on critical reception outlined above.

#### ***Slate Analysis***

A total of 837 films were released across the 8 companies evaluated (see Table 10). Only new fictional, feature-length films with domestic theatrical releases were included provided that the stories were presented in English or the U.S. was listed as a country of origin (whole or part).<sup>14</sup>

**Table 10**  
**Director Gender Across 7 Years of Distributed Films**

Director Gender	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
% of men directors	91.4% (n=149)	92% (n=161)	89.3% (n=125)	92.4% (n=133)	85% (n=113)	77.8% (n=49)	86.3% (n=82)	88.9% (n=812)
% of women directors	8.6% (n=14)	8% (n=14)	10.7% (n=15)	7.6% (n=11)	15% (n=20)	22.2% (n=14)	13.7% (n=13)	11.1% (n=101)
<b>Total # of Directors</b>	163	175	140	144	133	63	95	913

*Note:* the percentages are within column and the number of directors by gender per calendar year are in parentheses.

913 directors were attached to the 837 movies. As shown in Table 10, 13.7% ( $n=13$ ; 61.5% white, 38.5% underrepresented) of all helmers were women in 2021 and 86.3% were men ( $n=82$ ). This is a gender ratio 6.3 male directors to every 1 female. The percentage of women directors in 2021 was lower than 2020, but not 2019. However, 2021 was still significantly higher than the percentage in 2018 (7.6%). Thus, the gains achieved in 2019 have held into 2020 and 2021.

The breakdown of women directors by distribution company can be found in Table 11. Three trends are immediately apparent. First, Universal Pictures (16.8%,  $n=31$ ) and Sony (14.8%,  $n=26$ ) have the highest percentages of women directors across their slates from 2015 to 2021 **and** are the only companies that have worked with female helmers every year evaluated. It is not surprising that Universal Pictures outpaced its peers, as the Chairperson of the company is a woman (Donna Langley). STX Entertainment (17.1%,  $n=7$ ) was also among those with the highest percentage of women directors. Second, Paramount Pictures has the worst track record for working with women helmers over the sample time frame. Third, there has **still** not been one year where every distributor has a woman director on their slate of films.

**Table 11**  
**Women Directors by Distributor Slate & Year**

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.
2015	4.4% (n=1)	0	10.7% (n=3)	0	0	12.1% (n=4)	9.1% (n=1)	17.9% (n=5)
2016	4.2% (n=1)	0	17.9% (n=5)	14.3% (n=1)	8.3% (n=2)	8.6% (n=3)	5% (n=1)	5% (n=1)
2017	0	0	17.2% (n=5)	22.2% (n=2)	8% (n=2)	13% (n=3)	0	15% (n=3)
2018	5.6% (n=1)	0	11.1% (n=3)	11.1% (n=1)	13.3% (n=2)	10.7% (n=3)	7.7% (n=1)	0
2019	5.9% (n=1)	0	17.4% (n=4)	25% (n=2)	5.9% (n=1)	25.9% (n=7)	16.7% (n=2)	15.8% (n=3)
2020	0	14.3% (n=1)	20% (n=4)	0	0	36.8% (n=7)	0	50% (n=2)
2021	0	0	9.5% (n=2)	25% (n=1)	16.7% (n=2)	20% (n=4)	22.2% (n=2)	11.1% (n=2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.7%</b> <b>(n=4)</b>	<b>1.4%</b> <b>(n=1)</b>	<b>14.8%</b> <b>(n=26)</b>	<b>17.1%</b> <b>(n=7)</b>	<b>7.3%</b> <b>(n=9)</b>	<b>16.8%</b> <b>(n=31)</b>	<b>9.3%</b> <b>(n=7)</b>	<b>12%</b> <b>(n=16)</b>

*Note:* The parentheses contain the actual number of women directors per calendar year. The percentage of men working as directors can be calculated by subtracting each cell from 100%.

The above analyses include all women directors. Yet the findings earlier in the report reveal that women's experiences differ by race/ethnicity. So, our next analysis focused *only* on women of color directors working across the 8 companies. Of the 913 directors analyzed, only 3.1% (n=28) were women of color.

The distributors of movies helmed by women of color are depicted in Table 12. The mode or most frequent number depicted in the table is 0. Sony Pictures distributed the most films with a woman of color at the helm (n=8). The worst offenders were Paramount Pictures and Lionsgate. These companies did not distribute one movie directed by a woman of color in 7 years.

Table 12  
Frequency of Women of Color Directors by Distributor Slate & Year

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.
2015	0	0	7.1% (n=2)	0	0	0	0	3.6% (n=1)
2016	0	0	7.1% (n=2)	0	4.2% (n=1)	0	5% (n=1)	0
2017	0	0	3.5% (n=1)	0	4% (n=1)	0	0	5% (n=1)
2018	0	0	7.4% (n=2)	0	6.7% (n=1)	0	7.7% (n=1)	0
2019	0	0	0	0	5.9% (n=1)	11.1% (n=3)	0	5.3% (n=1)
2020	0	0	5% (n=1)	0	0	10.5% (n=2)	0	25% (n=1)
2021	0	0	0	25% (n=1)	8.3% (n=1)	5% (n=1)	11.1% (n=1)	5.6% (n=1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4.6% (n=8)</b>	<b>2.4% (n=1)</b>	<b>4% (n=5)</b>	<b>3.2% (n=6)</b>	<b>4% (n=3)</b>	<b>3.8% (n=5)</b>

Note: Each cell represents a slate of distributed films per company and year.

Turning to underrepresented directors overall, Table 13 outlines the prevalence of directors of color by 8 distribution companies over 7 years. Only 3 companies had at least one film with an underrepresented director every year since 2015: Sony Pictures, Universal Pictures, and Warner Bros. Overall, Universal Pictures had the highest percentage of underrepresented directors (23.2%,  $n=43$ ), while STX Entertainment featured the lowest (7.3%,  $n=3$ ).

**Table 13**  
**Underrepresented Directors by Distribution Slate & Year**

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.
2015	17.4% (n=4)	7.1% (n=1)	10.7% (n=3)	0	12.5% (n=3)	27.3% (n=9)	18.2% (n=2)	10.7% (n=3)
2016	12.5% (n=3)	11.8% (n=2)	28.6% (n=8)	14.3% (n=1)	16.7% (n=4)	22.9% (n=8)	5% (n=1)	10% (n=2)
2017	26.7% (n=4)	10% (n=1)	6.9% (n=2)	0	16% (n=4)	26.1% (n=6)	22.2% (n=2)	15% (n=3)
2018	33.3% (n=6)	10% (n=1)	33.3% (n=9)	11.1% (n=1)	26.7% (n=4)	21.4% (n=6)	15.4% (n=2)	16.7% (n=4)
2019	11.8% (n=2)	20% (n=2)	13% (n=3)	0	17.7% (n=3)	22.2% (n=6)	0	26.3% (n=5)
2020	33.3% (n=1)	28.6% (n=2)	20% (n=4)	0	0	10.5% (n=2)	0	25% (n=1)
2021	0	0	14.3% (n=3)	25% (n=1)	16.7% (n=2)	30% (n=6)	44.4% (n=4)	38.9% (n=7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.7%</b> <b>(n=20)</b>	<b>12.5%</b> <b>(n=9)</b>	<b>18.2%</b> <b>(n=32)</b>	<b>7.3%</b> <b>(n=3)</b>	<b>16.1%</b> <b>(n=20)</b>	<b>23.2%</b> <b>(n=43)</b>	<b>14.7%</b> <b>(n=11)</b>	<b>18.8%</b> <b>(n=25)</b>

Note: Each cell represents a slate of distributed films per company and year. The parentheses contain the actual number of underrepresented directors within year. The percentage of White directors can be calculated by subtracting each cell from 100%.

The results of this analysis demonstrate that despite gains overall for women and people of color as directors, the slates of major motion picture distributors do not consistently reflect those trends. Distributors have not consistently hired women from year-to-year, and the percentage of underrepresented directors fluctuates each year as well. For underrepresented women directors, most distributors have worked with only 1 woman of color each year, and in most years have not hired any woman of color director. Thus, there is room for significant improvement in hiring and greenlighting. To further understand the pathways that women and underrepresented directors may take to top-grossing theatrical releases, we next turn to examine the pipeline and streaming platforms that may facilitate career progress.

### *Pipeline & Streaming Platform Analysis*

To contextualize the presence of women and underrepresented directors of top films within the broader entertainment industry, we examined several other areas of work and visibility. First, we assessed the percentage of directors screening a feature film in U.S. Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival. Then, we looked to data on who has directed scripted episodic television. Finally, we assessed helmers of original films released on major streaming platforms.

**Pipeline.** We assessed 7 years of U.S. Dramatic Competition directors (2015-2021) at Sundance Film Festival. Across these 111 directors (106 movies), 37.8% ( $n=42$ ) were women. Additionally, 37.8% ( $n=42$ ) of U.S. Dramatic Competition directors were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Of the 42 women directors between 2015 and 2021, 16 were women of color, representing 14.4% of all Sundance U.S. Dramatic Competition directors in this time frame. It is important to note that U.S. Dramatic Competition exceeded the U.S. Census in 2019 and 2021 in the selection of women helmers.

Notably, there has been change over time for both women and underrepresented directors. As shown in Table 14, the percentage of women directors increased from 2015 to 2021. Although there was a significant decline from 2019 to 2020, the percentage increased slightly to 50% in 2021. For underrepresented directors, 2021 was not meaningfully different than 2020, but both years were significantly higher than 2015.

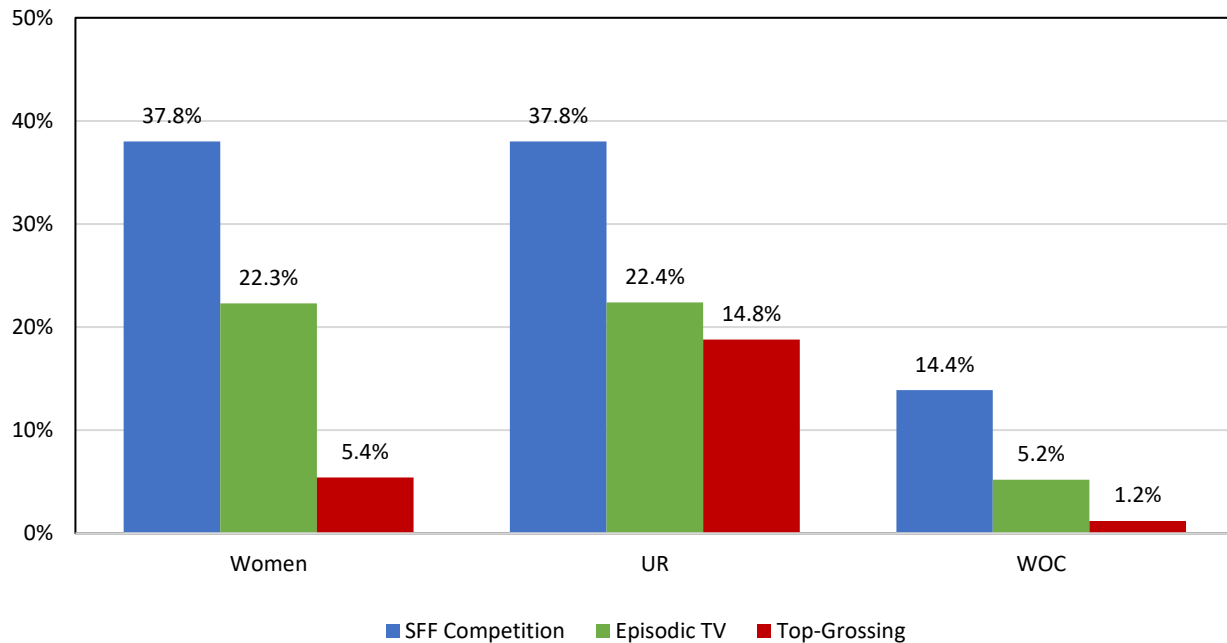
**Table 14**  
**Director Gender & Underrepresented Status in U.S. Dramatic Competition, 2015-2021**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% Women Directors	29.4% ( $n=5$ )	29.4% ( $n=5$ )	29.4% ( $n=5$ )	31.2% ( $n=5$ )	52.9% ( $n=9$ )	47.1% ( $n=8$ )	50% ( $n=5$ )
% UR Directors	23.5% ( $n=4$ )	41.2% ( $n=7$ )	17.7% ( $n=3$ )	43.8% ( $n=7$ )	41.2% ( $n=7$ )	52.9% ( $n=9$ )	50% ( $n=5$ )
Total Directors	17	17	17	16	17	17	10

Turning to series directors, we examined the percentage of women and underrepresented episodic directors from 2012-13 to 2019-20 according to reports from the Directors Guild of America. Across all 8 seasons evaluated, 22.3% of episodes were directed by women and 22.4% by people of color. Overall, 5.2% of episodes had a woman of color in a directing role.<sup>15</sup> However, these figures may slightly obscure progress, as in the 2019-20 season (the last for which data was available), women comprised 34% of directors (23% white women, 10% women of color), while 32% were directors of color.<sup>16</sup>

What these figures demonstrate is that the pipeline to top-grossing fare for women and underrepresented directors exists in independent film **and** episodic television. Yet there remains a steep drop off for women and people of color as they move from early-career festival directing to television series and finally top-grossing fare (see Figure 4). Addressing this “fiscal cliff” as we have previously termed it, is imperative for continued growth in the number of women and underrepresented directors of top-grossing films.

**Figure 4**  
Directors by Pipeline Platform



Another area where directors have opportunities is across streaming platforms. In this section, we compare top-grossing films to those released on major streaming platforms. Here, we considered directors of U.S. original, feature-length films released on Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBO Max, and Netflix. We used films released in 2020 and 2021 across these platforms and compared to the percentage of directors of theatrically-released films in our top-grossing analysis in 2020 and 2021.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning with gender, streaming platforms offered more opportunities to women directors in 2020 and 2021 than did top-grossing films. More than one-third of directors were women at Amazon, more than one-quarter on Disney+, 19.5% at HBO Max, and 18.1% at Netflix, compared to 13.7% in popular movies. See Table 15. In 2020 and 2021, Netflix fell slightly off pace from its previous record of hiring women directors (2018=25%; 2019=20.7%) while Amazon Prime continued to increase women helmers for its films (2018=12.5%; 2019=25%). Of note, Netflix released more than 4 times as many films across the two-year sample as any other streaming platform, and more than one and a half times as many as were included in the top-grossing film sample. This means that while Netflix surpasses top-grossing films in the *percentage* of women directors, this is also true for the *number* of women directors hired across this two-year period.

**Table 15**  
Director Gender & Underrepresented Status by Platform 2020-21

	Netflix	Amazon	Disney+	HBOMax	Top-Grossing
Women Directors	18.1%	37.5%	29%	19.5%	13.7%
UR Directors	26.3%	32.5%	29%	31.7%	23.2%
Total Directors	171	40	31	41	95

*Note:* Percentages reflect women and underrepresented directors out of all directors of fictional, feature-length, and U.S. original films on each streaming platform from 2020 and 2021.

Looking to underrepresented status, there was some difference between top movies and streaming platforms in the percentage of underrepresented directors. In 2020 and 2021, slightly less than one-fourth of all top-grossing directors were underrepresented, which was lower than but not significantly different than Netflix. HBO Max, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ had significantly more underrepresented directors across these two years. Netflix (2018=16.7%; 2019=17.2%) increased its percentage of underrepresented directors from 2019, while Amazon (2018=25%; 2019=37.5%) evidenced a decrease over time.

Finally, we crossed gender and race/ethnicity to understand the opportunities available to women of color on streaming platforms vis a vis top-grossing films. While top-grossing films were on par with Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+, Amazon Prime had a significantly higher percentage of directors who were women of color on its platform in 2020 and 2021. The percentage of women of color directing Netflix films is on par with 2018-19 (6.2%), as was Amazon Studios (12.5%).

**Table 16**  
**Director Gender & Underrepresented Status by Platform 2020-21**

	<b>Netflix</b>	<b>Amazon</b>	<b>Disney+</b>	<b>HBOMax</b>	<b>Top-Grossing</b>
White Men	60.8%	45%	51.6%	53.7%	68.4%
White Women	12.9%	22.5%	19.4%	14.6%	8.4%
UR Men	21%	17.5%	19.4%	26.8%	17.9%
UR Women	5.3%	15%	9.7%	4.9%	5.3%
Total Directors	171	40	31	41	95

The results of this analysis demonstrate that streaming platforms both diverge from industry trends in some areas while mirroring top movies in others. White men continue to hold the largest share of directing opportunities across platforms. Bright spots do exist, though. Amazon, Disney+, and HBO Max outperformed top-grossing films when it comes to white women directors. HBO Max led in hiring underrepresented men. Amazon outpaced all other companies and top-grossing movies in the percentage of women of color directing films. Netflix exceeded top-grossing films across all three metrics in the number of women, underrepresented and women of color directors of films from 2020 and 2021. For women, especially women of color, however, streaming platforms still fall below population norms. These findings also demonstrate how far top theatrical releases are from the inclusion present on other platforms. Directors who want to create films for theatrical release—particularly those who are women or from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups—may have few chances to see their work in theaters. Next, we turn to another type of recognition that directors may hope to gain during their careers: top awards.

### ***Award Recognition***

Critical reception does not differ by gender or race/ethnicity, but women and people of color perennially face a lack of recognition from major awards bodies for their work. We evaluated the gender and race/ethnicity of directors nominated over 15 years (2008-2022) across 4 award shows: Golden Globe Awards, Academy Awards, the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Awards, and Critics' Choice Awards.<sup>18</sup> Information was pulled from online sources or by receiving a list directly from the industry organization.



In total, 325 nominations were presented across the 4 award shows, of which 91.1% were given to male directors ( $n=296$ ) and 8.9% were given to female directors ( $n=29$ ). Nine women accounted for the 29 nominations over 15 years, an improvement since our previous report, when only four women had received nominations. However, only 3 women directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds received awards recognition, with 2 women of color nominated in 2021 (Chloe Zhao, Regina King).

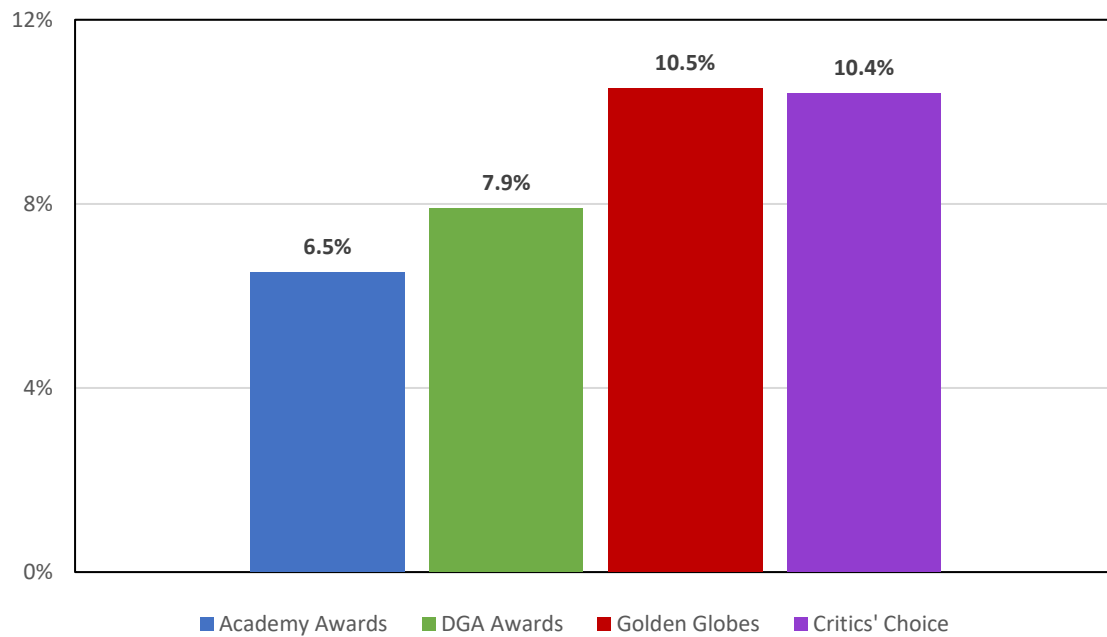
**Table 17**  
**Directors Nominated from 2008-2022**

Director Name	Title	Golden Globes	DGA Awards	Academy Awards	Critics' Choice Awards
Angelina Jolie	<i>Unbroken</i>				X
Ava DuVernay	<i>Selma</i>	X			X
Greta Gerwig	<i>Lady Bird</i>		X	X	X
Greta Gerwig	<i>Little Women</i>				X
Kathryn Bigelow	<i>The Hurt Locker</i>	X	X	X	X
Kathryn Bigelow	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i>	X	X		X
Emerald Fennell	<i>Promising Young Woman</i>	X	X	X	X
Chloe Zhao	<i>Nomadland</i>	X	X	X	X
Regina King	<i>One Night in Miami</i>	X			X
Jane Campion	<i>The Power of the Dog</i>	X	X	X	X
Maggie Gyllenhaal	<i>The Lost Daughter</i>	X			

*Note:* Academy Award and DGA Award winners for 2022 were not included in this analysis as they were not announced at the time of analysis.

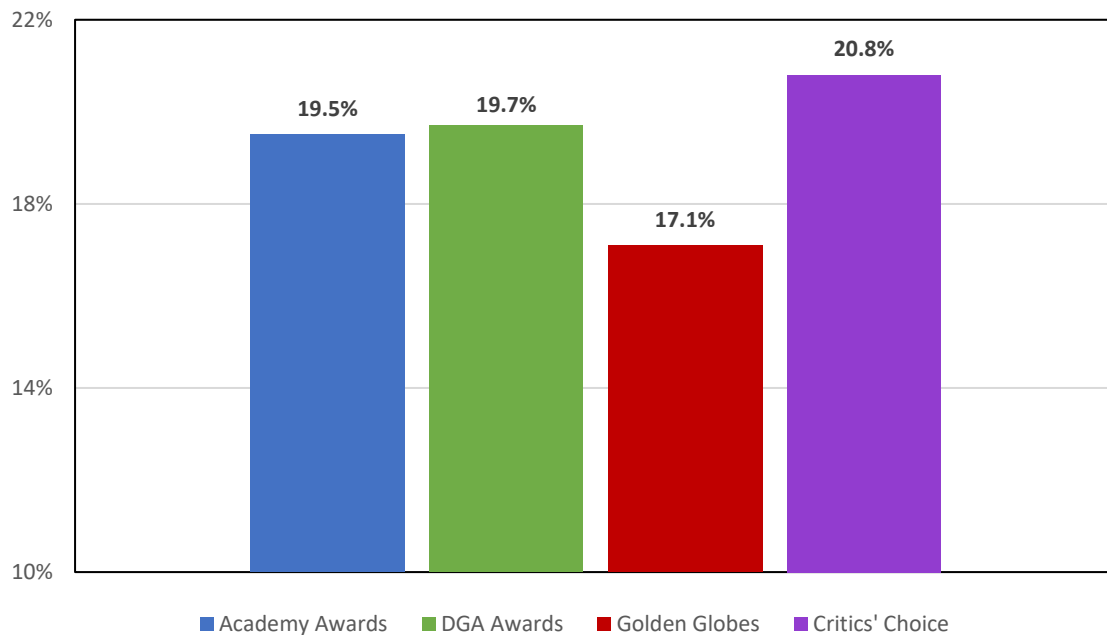
Across 15 years, the Academy Awards (6.5%,  $n=5$ ) and the DGA Awards (7.9%,  $n=6$ ) were the least likely to recognize women helmers. The Golden Globes featured 10.5% ( $n=8$ ) women directors while the Critics' Choice Awards gave 10.4% ( $n=10$ ) of its nominations to women since 2008 (See Figure 5).

Figure 5  
Percentage of Women Directors by Award Shows from 2008-2022



How often are directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds nominated for prestigious awards? Not often. Across all 4 award shows, 19.4% of nominations ( $n=63$ ) went to underrepresented helmers, whereas 80.6% ( $n=262$ ) were given to their White counterparts. Although the percentage differences between award shows were not significant, the Golden Globes gave out the fewest number of nominations (17.1%,  $n=13$ ) and the Critics' Choice Awards the most (20.8%,  $n=20$ ).

**Figure 6**  
**Percentage of UR Directors Nominated for Awards from 2008-2022**



This section reveals that recognition of directors from their industry peers remains low. Only a handful of women—and very few women of color—have received nominations for the films they made from some of the most prestigious awarding bodies in the world. While directors of color fare slightly better, there remains a gap between the percentage of directors working and those who receive nominations for that work. Because awards may signal to audiences that films are meaningful, well-made, or worth watching, the lack of recognition for women and underrepresented directors may serve to hamper their long-term careers and the success of their movies.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the prevalence of women and underrepresented directors across popular films, and whether there has been change over time. From the sample of top films across 2007 to 2021, an examination of film slates from major companies and an assessment of popular streaming platforms, and an evaluation of awards recognition, several conclusions are apparent. Below, four major findings from the study are detailed, and a set of solutions are presented.

#### *#1 Women Directors See Consistent Gains in Popular Film*

The overall percentage of women directors stubbornly held at 4% over 13 years, despite ongoing advocacy for change. A new decade has brought an increase in women directors, lifting the overall percentage to 5.4% for the first time. The significant increase in the percentage of women directors from 2018 to 2019 was maintained in 2020 and 2021, despite two years of disrupted box office and release plans due to the coronavirus pandemic. Notably, we see this gain no matter how we examine the data: across 100 top movies, with a set of films that match historical benchmarks (e.g., earning \$20 million or

more; earning \$12 million or more), or by looking at films that meet a market share threshold. This suggests that the finding is robust and not a function of sampling bias.

Yet, even with improvements, the annual percentage of women directors has only reached a high of 15% in 2020. This is a far cry from the percentage of women directing independent features at Sundance Film Festival (37.8%) or directing for episodic series (22.3%) using DGA figures. ***And, as the slate analysis shows, there is still not one year in which every major studio has hired at least one woman director.***

Yet, studios and distributors *can* and *do* hire women in greater numbers. The evidence for this is found in the streaming platform analysis, where companies—including at least two included in the slate analysis—were more likely to have women behind the camera than across top-grossing films. The bias, then, is clearly a financial one, as we have found in our other research.<sup>19</sup> The view of women directors is still largely one that links them to small, personal stories in specific genres rather than worthy of consideration for any type of film. Although some women directors may be able to escape this limiting categorization, the phenomenon must occur on a larger scale. Moving beyond stereotypes about women directors and the idea that a single woman on a slate is “sufficiently diverse” is imperative if further change is to occur.

### *#2 Prevalence of Underrepresented Directors Increases in 2021*

The percentage of underrepresented directors hit an all-time high in 2021—27.3% of the highest grossing films that year had a director from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This change was significantly higher than 2020 and, while not significant, more than the previous high point in 2018. This brings the overall percentage of underrepresented directors to 14.8%. However, the percentage of underrepresented directors still falls below pipeline metrics (Sundance, DGA Episodic Directors), and is not balanced across distributor film slates. Looking to streaming platforms once again reveals just how possible it is to reach a much higher threshold of underrepresented directors.

Some readers also might interpret the change from 2020 to 2021 to the commitments studios made to increase opportunities for underrepresented communities following George Floyd’s murder and ongoing protests. However, only 5 films with an underrepresented director in 2021 began filming after May 2020. One of those movies had a Black director (*A Journal for Jordan*) and only 2 were included in the analysis reported in the text above, as three made less than \$10 million at the conclusion of 2021.<sup>20</sup> ***In other words, most of the films with underrepresented directors were already in development or in production before companies made these commitments.*** The real impact of the demands for greater inclusivity may be revealed in top films from 2022 and beyond.

### *#3 The Percentage of Women of Color Directors Remains Unchanged*

Although the results of this study point to increases for women and underrepresented directors, an intersectional examination of the data reveals that not everyone has reason to celebrate. White women and men of color have seen increased opportunities, but ***this did not extend to women of color.*** Only 5 women of color directed a top-grossing film between 2020 and 2021, and fewer than 2% of all directors across 15 years were women of color. The slate analysis reveals that the most frequent number of women of color hired to direct a film each year is zero. Yet, women of color earned the highest average and median Metacritic scores for their work, suggesting that the quality that women of color bring to filmmaking is not an explanation for their lack of participation in top-grossing films.

Instead, the findings make it clear that the industry's perception of a woman director continues to be that of a *white* woman, while *underrepresented* means *underrepresented man*. Until hiring decisions are made with intersectional inclusion in mind, the percentage of women of color working behind the camera will remain stagnant. Looking to the pipeline that exists at Sundance, or for episodic storytelling is one way for companies to understand just how many underrepresented women are ready for studio-based work. Moreover, the streaming analysis also indicates that women of color are finding directing opportunities with digital distribution. If studios, distributors, and production companies want to see real and lasting change, increasing the prevalence of women of color working behind the camera is critical.

#### *#4 Streaming Platforms Represent the Future of Inclusion*

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted box office operations in 2020 and 2021 and continues to serve as a force of consternation into 2022. Audience behavior is difficult to predict at the best of times, and more so now. Ahead of the pandemic it was clear that streaming platforms were poised to (and did) challenge traditional distribution models. Changing the way we consume films was not the only impact that streamers have had. These companies outperformed top-grossing films across each of the metrics in this study, either because they achieved the same results across a larger sample of movies (Netflix) or because they hired a significantly larger percentage of women or people of color to work behind the camera (Amazon, Disney+, HBO Max).

Clearly, the streaming services included in this investigation have recognized that they reach a diverse audience. The choices made to reflect that audience diversity behind the camera should also translate to inclusion on screen—as one of our recent reports regarding Netflix content shows.<sup>21</sup> These companies have demonstrated that it is possible to create an inclusive slate of films, and this includes employing women of color in significant numbers or percentages. Given this, it is little surprise that audiences continue to seek out content that is convenient and that reflects a greater diversity of perspectives. Streaming platforms have shown that films by a wide array of content creators can find audiences and have done so in a way that leaves theatrical distributors behind. For years, theatrical distributors had the opportunity to diversify their hiring slates but instead, chose to maintain the status quo. Streaming platforms stepped into this gap and as such, are the future of inclusive storytelling.

#### *Solutions*

While this report provides an update on the state of directors in top-grossing film, it also offers a window into where progress has occurred and where it has stalled. Namely, studios, distributors, and production companies are hiring women and people of color to direct, but still too few, and too rarely are these directors women of color.

To address the gap for women of color directors, the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative is offering one particular solution to increase the pipeline of women of color entering the industry. While there are women of color who are talented and available to hire now, increasing the size of the hiring pool remains imperative. For that reason, the Initiative is launching the AI<sup>2</sup> Accelerator. The Accelerator will award a grant to a minimum of one woman of color during her senior year in a four-year college or university film program. The funds awarded can be used to support the creation of a short thesis film.

The goal of the Accelerator is to support a filmmaker who desires to tell stories similar to the highest-grossing movies: those that are genre-based, have visual effects, and for large audiences. Through the

Accelerator, we hope to provide opportunities for this director to grow her talent, expand her knowledge, and develop a film that can serve as a testament to her ambition.

In addition to financial support, the Accelerator will surround this director with high-profile Advisors who will provide insight and introductions. The goal is for the director to have multiple conversations while creating their film and to be introduced to a network of thought leaders and knowledgeable industry members who can create access and opportunity for the future. Through these connections, the director can gain valuable relationships and learn more about the entertainment industry.

This program is built on what we know is important for learning and development—often talented, driven, and capable students are overlooked because they lack resources or connections. Our experiences individually and at the Initiative demonstrate that sometimes it takes a bit of money and a few powerful connections to build a lasting legacy and influence in a chosen field. We hope to offer a director the same opportunity and in doing so, to increase the pool of candidates that studios and production companies can hire for major films.

Beyond the Accelerator, additional solutions must also be considered to address the pipeline to top-grossing film gap. For companies engaged in hiring processes, looking to the Sundance roster should be a process that involves going beyond the directors with “heat” to assess the full scope of new talent represented at the Festival. Moreover, looking to who is working on episodic storytelling and whether those directors have additional qualifications to work in features is important. Finally, given the strong performance by most of the streamers, considering the directors tapped to tell stories on these platforms for theatrically-released work is another avenue for identifying talent. Given the pivots necessitated by the past two years of pandemic filmmaking, the hiring process must move to one that is platform agnostic—that is, hiring a director who can create a compelling film no matter the means of distribution.

Lastly, as we have previously noted, hiring practices for open directing assignments may be driven by the identity of leading characters. For instance, when the story centers on a Black character, the director is likely to identify as Black. This is also true for women directors, whose opportunities largely center on stories about girls and women. The corollary, however, is not always true. White men direct stories that center on people from every background. Moreover, this practice of linking lead character identity to director identity disproportionately reduces opportunities for women of color—as we have previously indicated, from 2007 to 2018 films starring women of color were least likely to be produced and received lower median production and marketing budgets.<sup>22</sup> Ensuring that men of color and women of all backgrounds are considered and hired for stories focused on white male protagonists is a necessary and important pathway to increasing inclusion in the director’s chair.

### *Limitations*

As with all reports, the present has a few limitations that must be noted. First, the coronavirus pandemic fundamentally shifted industry norms in 2020 and 2021, as well as box office performance in these years. The films released theatrically may represent a different population of releases than movies in prior years and analyses. We have tried to approach our sampling procedures and analyses with this limitation in mind, creating several ways to think about popular films in 2020 and 2021. We have also supplemented our top-grossing analyses by examining films released on distributor slates and across streaming platforms. We believe that these analyses offer a triangulated picture of director prevalence by gender and race/ethnicity. Second, as we have stated previously, popularity is one metric by which to examine a sample of films. Taking a different approach—as we offer by looking at narrative independent movies or

streaming films—might result in different results. However, given that box office performance can still play a role in career opportunities, thinking about how often women and people of color have the chance to tell stories released widely is important.

Overall, this study demonstrates the progress that has been made but also how much farther there is to go. Helping companies move from one woman director to multiple, or from a handful of underrepresented directors to a slate that is representative is essential. As the industry looks toward an uncertain future, it should be clear that inclusion must be part of what comes next.

## Footnotes

1. The previous Inclusion in the Director's Chair report by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative used Box Office Mojo to gather gross domestic box office revenue for each in-year release. From 2007 to 2019, the 100th film of each year earned around \$20 million or more in gross domestic revenue. Box office data for 2020 and 2021 in-year releases was retrieved from

[https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/?ref=bo\\_nb\\_hm\\_secondarytab](https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/?ref=bo_nb_hm_secondarytab)

2. McClintock, P. (2022). Box Office Ends Year 60 Percent Behind 2019 With \$4.5B Domestically. Retrieved on January 2nd, 2022 from <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/2021-box-office-revenue-stormy-year-1235067966/>

3. To calculate market share, we first pulled a list of total domestic gross reported by Box Office Mojo for each sample year from 2007 to 2019. Then, we calculated the total domestic gross for films from 1 to 100 each year, again using totals from Box Office Mojo for in-year releases. For each year, we determined the percentage of total domestic gross accounted for by the top 100 films (range: 87.8% to 93.5%). Taking the average of this yielded 91.1%, which represents the average market share of the 100 top films each year from 2007 to 2019. We then applied this calculation to the total domestic gross for 2020 and 2021, to yield a dollar amount for each year. We determined the total number of films in each year whose box office domestic gross summed to that figure (91.1% of the year's total domestic gross) without exceeding it. This resulted in a sample of 37 films in 2020 and 51 films in 2021.

4. Below, the percentage of women and underrepresented directors are presented per year and overall across 15 years for each sample composition, as well as the total number of directors included for each sample type. For women directors, the 15-year total varies little by sample, and in both 2020 and 2021 there is no significant difference in the percentage of women directors based on sample construction.

**Footnote Table 1**  
**Percentage of Women Directors by Sample Type**

Year	100 Top Films	Across Films \$12M+	Across Films \$20M+	91% of Market Share
2020	13.9% ( <i>n</i> =15)	13.8% ( <i>n</i> =4)	15.8% ( <i>n</i> =3)	15% ( <i>n</i> =6)
2021	11.4% ( <i>n</i> =12)	11.3% ( <i>n</i> =7)	12.2% ( <i>n</i> =6)	12.7% ( <i>n</i> =7)
<b>15 Year Sample</b>	5.8% ( <i>n</i> =97)	5.3% ( <i>n</i> =81)	5.2% ( <i>n</i> =79)	5.4% ( <i>n</i> =83)

Turning to underrepresented directors, there is consistency in the 15-year overall percentage across sample types. However, examining only those films earning \$20M or more in 2020 yields a significantly higher percentage of underrepresented directors. This does not hold for 2021, where there is once again small, non-meaningful differences between sample types.



**Footnote Table 2**  
**Percentage of Underrepresented Directors by Sample Type**

Year	100 Top Films	Across Films \$12M+	Across Films \$20M+	91% of Market Share
2020	21.3% (n=23)	20.7% (n=6)	26.3% (n=5)	17.5% (n=7)
2021	28.6% (n=30)	27.4% (n=17)	30.6% (n=15)	27.3% (n=15)
<b>15 Year Sample</b>	15.7% (n=260)	15% (n=230)	15% (n=227)	14.8% (n=229)

Finally, we present the number of directors who appear across sample type and overall across 15 years as a result of sampling choices.

**Footnote Table 3**  
**Number of Directors by Sample Type**

Year	100 Top Films	Across Films \$12M+	Across Films \$20M+	91% of Market Share
2020	108	29	19	40
2021	105	62	49	55
<b>15 Year Sample</b>	1,660	1,538	1,515	1,542

5. According to one of our previous Inclusion in the Director's Chair reports, women made up 4% of directors across 1,000 top grossing films from 2007 to 2018. This launched a 4% challenge (commitment to work with at least one women director in an 18-month time frame) by Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Nina Jacobson, Angela Robinson, Paul Feig, Amy Schumer, and Franklin Leonard at the Sundance Film Festival in 2019 which later was amplified by TIME'S UP. The goal of the challenge was to increase representation of women directors working across distributors and production companies. See Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2017). *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Gender, Race, & Age of Directors Across 1,200 Films from 2007-2018*. Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved on January 18th, 2022 from <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inclusion-in-the-directors-chair-2019.pdf>.

6. Information on director deals was obtained via online sources. Only confirmed deals that were active in 2020 and 2021 were included in the analysis, and popular press descriptions were used to determine whether deals were for film, TV, or both. Previous deals that could not be confirmed as currently active were not included. Additionally, employment at a studio was not considered a deal. For example, Stella Meghie signed on to develop an animated series with Disney Animation.

7. According to Metacritic, "a METAScore is a weighted average of reviews from top critics and publications for a given movie" (see FAQ section, How do you compute METAScores, P1). Retrieved on January 10th, 2022 from <https://www.metacritic.com/faq#:~:text=To%20put%20it%20simply%2C%20a,%2C%20video%20game%2C%20or%20album.>

8. Metacritic scores were collected for 1,299 films from 2007 to 2019. 1 film in 2007 did not have a Metacritic score available, therefore was not included in this analysis. For the method used in the report, Metacritic scores were collected for the 88 films across 2020 and 2021. No films in this sample were

missing Metacritic scores. Of the 100 top grossing films in 2020 and 2021, 12 films and 6 films were missing Metacritic scores, respectively.

9. U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Quick Facts. Retrieved on January 11th, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI625219#RHI625219>.

10. U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Quick Facts. Retrieved on January 11th, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI625219#RHI625219>.

11. Television deals were excluded, as such Ava DuVernay's deal with Warner Brothers Television is not counted here. Only deals with major studios or streaming platforms were counted, which removed entertainmentOne and Range Media Partners.

12. U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Quick Facts. Retrieved on January 11th, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI625219#RHI625219>.

13. U.S. Census Bureau (2020, June 25). Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019 (Table SC-EST2019-SR11H-) [Data set]. Retrieved February 4, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2020/population-estimates-detailed.html>

14. The slate analysis included an additional 34 films and 39 directors across 2020 and 2021 from major distribution companies and their wholly-owned subsidiaries. Films that did not meet the criteria listed were excluded from the analysis. Companies were contacted to confirm the films on their slates. All but one studio we contacted confirmed their 2020 and 2021 releases.

15. Gender and race/ethnicity data was collected from *Episodic Television Director Reports* published by the Directors Guild of America (DGA) from 2012 to 2020. Retrieved on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from <https://www.dga.org/The-Guild/Diversity/Industry-Reports.aspx>.

16. Directors Guild of America (DGA). (2021). *New DGA Inclusion Report Reveals Gains in 2019-20 TV Season, But Disparities Remain*. Retrieved on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from <https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2021/210223-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx>.

17. Variety Insight and IMDbPro, along with other online sources, including streaming platforms, were consulted to determine the list of films released to each streaming platform in 2020 and 2021. Lists were confirmed with each company. Films were included if they were feature-length, original, fictional films partly or wholly produced in the U.S. or in English and considered an "original" to the streaming platform. 97 films had a domestic theatrical release (limited or wide) either simultaneous to their release on the streaming platform or prior to appearing exclusively on the streaming platform. Animated films were included in the analysis presented in the text. Examining only live action films would change the results slightly (see Tables below).

**Footnote Table 4**  
**Director Gender & Underrepresented Status by Platform 2020-21**

	Netflix	Amazon	Disney+	HBOMax	Top-Grossing
Women Directors	22.7%	37.5%	42.9%	20.5%	14.3%
UR Directors	26.6%	32.5%	28.6%	30.8%	22.1%
Total Directors	128	40	21	39	77

**Footnote Table 5**  
**Director Gender & Underrepresented Status by Platform 2020-21**

	Netflix	Amazon	Disney+	HBOMax	Top-Grossing
White Men	57.8%	45%	42.9%	53.9%	70.1%
White Women	15.6%	22.5%	28.6%	15.4%	7.8%
UR Men	19.5%	17.5%	14.3%	25.6%	15.6%
UR Women	7%	15%	14.3%	5.1%	6.5%
Total Directors	128	40	21	39	77

18. Information on nominees for the Golden Globe Award for Best Director (Motion Picture), Academy Award for Directing, and DGA Award for Feature Film were obtained online at each organization's website, for the years 2008 to 2022. The list of nominees for the Critics' Choice Awards from 2008 to 2020 was obtained by contacting the Critics' Choice Association. Each nominee was assessed for gender and race/ethnicity using information in online databases (e.g., Variety Insight, Studio System). Academy Award and DGA Award winners in 2022 were not announced prior to this study release. Thus, these were not included in the analysis.

19. Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015). *Exploring the Careers of Female Directors: Phase III*. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles. Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative. Retrieved from

[https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/MDSCI\\_2015Female\\_Filmmakers.pdf](https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/MDSCI_2015Female_Filmmakers.pdf)

20. Information on production was obtained from IMDbPro. Four films did not have production dates, three were released in 2020 and one in 2021. Of those four films, 2 were animated.

21. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., Choueiti, M., Yao, K., Case, A., Hernandez, K., & Moore, Z. (2021). *Inclusion in Netflix Original U.S. Scripted Series & Films*. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Retrieved from:

<https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-netflix-executive-summary.pdf>.

22. Smith, S.L., Weber, R. Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Case, A., Yao, K., & Lee, C. (2020, February). *The Ticket to Inclusion: Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Leads and Financial Performance Across 1,200 Popular Films*. Report prepared for ReFrame. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Retrieved from:

<https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-2020-02-05-ticket-to-inclusion.pdf>

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