

Inclusion in the Director's Chair: **Analysis of Director Gender &** **Race/Ethnicity Across 1,300 Top Films** **from 2007 to 2019**

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January 2020



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INCLUSION IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR? ANALYSIS OF DIRECTOR GENDER & RACE/ETHNICITY ACROSS 1,300 TOP FILMS FROM 2007 TO 2019

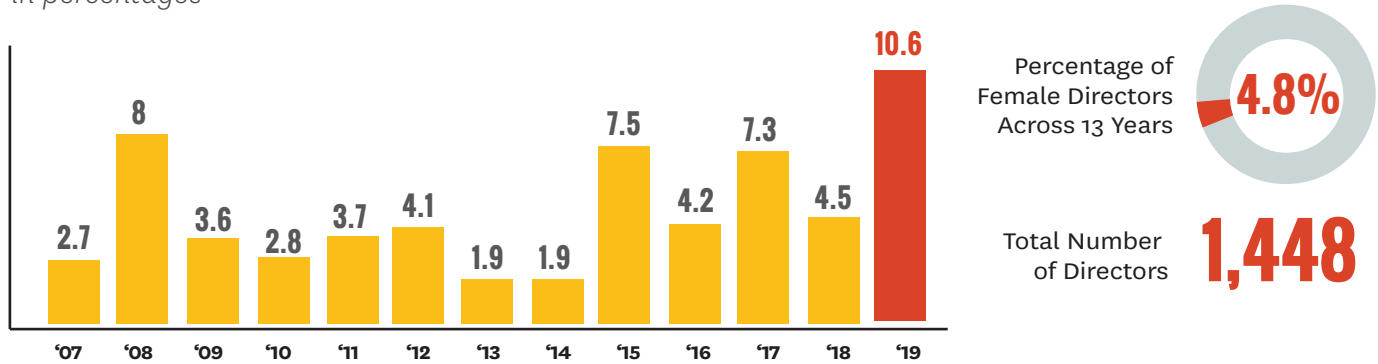
USC ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE

 @Inclusionists

FEMALES ARE OUTNUMBERED IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

PREVALENCE OF FEMALE DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,300 FILMS

in percentages



RATIO OF MALE TO FEMALE DIRECTORS ACROSS 13 YEARS

20 TO 1

NO DIFFERENCE IN METACRITIC SCORES BY FILM DIRECTOR GENDER

Median and average Metacritic score across 1,300 films from 2007 to 2019

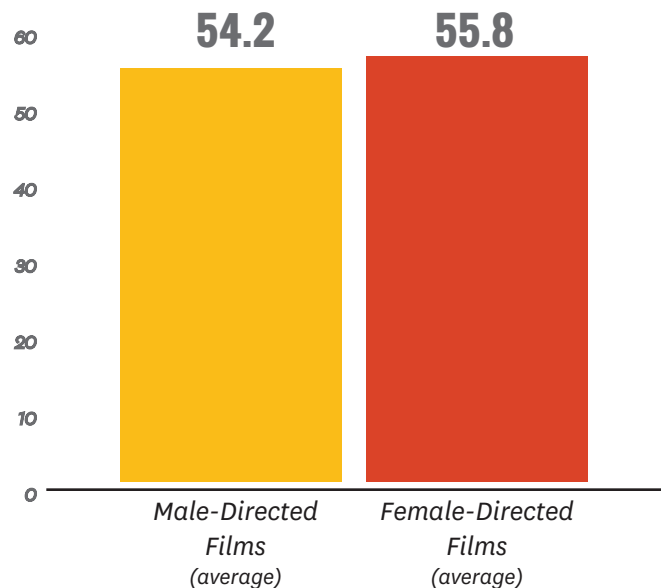
54

vs.

55

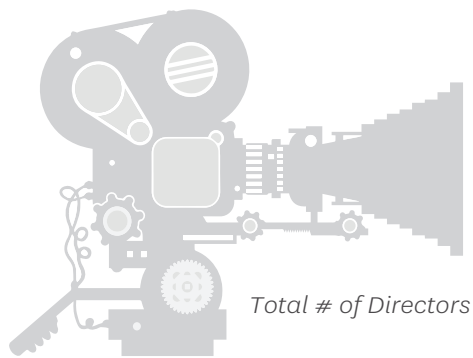
MALE-DIRECTED FILMS
(midpoint)

FEMALE-DIRECTED FILMS
(midpoint)



FEMALE DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

Number of female directors across 1,300 films by distributor



20th Cent. Fox	Paramount	Sony Pictures	Universal	Walt Disney	Warner Bros.	Lionsgate	STX Ent.	Other
8	3	11	15	8	13	4	3	5
192	152	211	220	164	240	123	22	124

70 OUT OF 1,448 DIRECTORS

FEMALE DIRECTORS ACROSS 1,300 TOP-GROSSING FILMS

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



THERE ARE

57

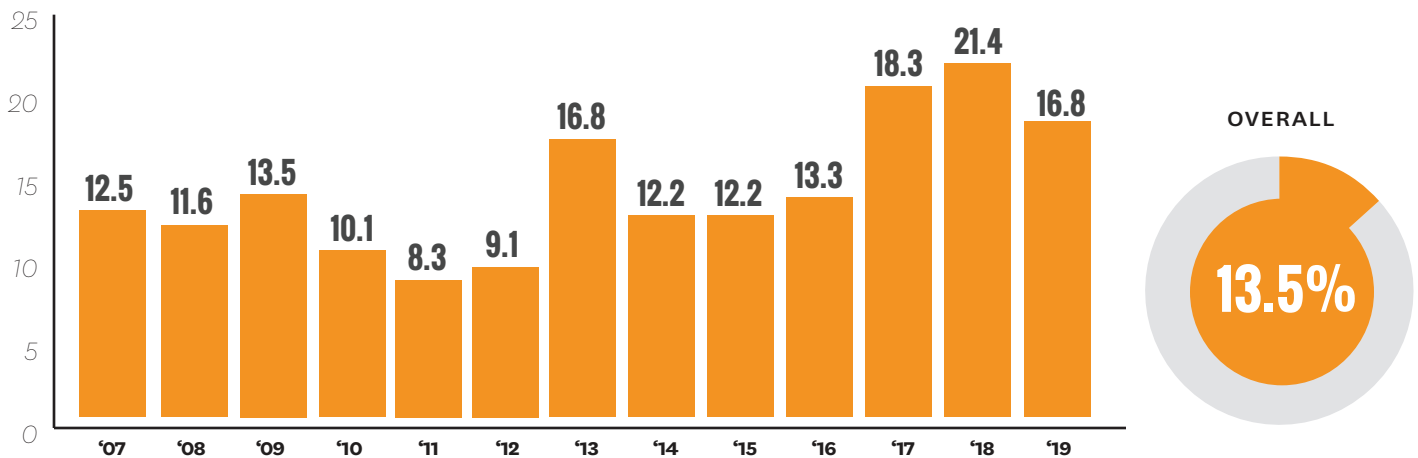
INDIVIDUAL
FEMALE
DIRECTORS
BETWEEN

2007
AND
2019

*An asterisk denotes
an underrepresented
female director.

UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS BY YEAR

Number of underrepresented directors across 1,300 films



UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

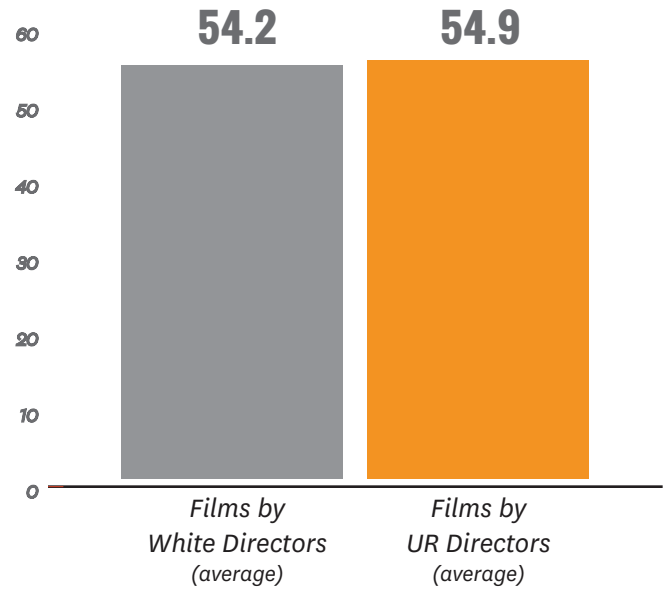
Number of underrepresented directors across 1,300 films

DISTRIBUTION COMPANY	NUMBER OF UR DIRECTORS	PERCENTAGE OF UR DIRECTORS	TOTAL NUMBER OF DIRECTORS
20TH CENTURY FOX	29	15%	192
PARAMOUNT PICTURES	14	9%	152
SONY PICTURES	34	16%	211
UNIVERSAL PICTURES	39	18%	220
WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	10	6%	164
WARNER BROS. PICTURES	25	10%	240
LIONSGATE	26	21%	123
STX ENTERTAINMENT	0	0	22
OTHER	19	15%	124
TOTAL	196	13.5%	1,448

METACRITIC SCORES FOR UNDERREPRESENTED DIRECTORS

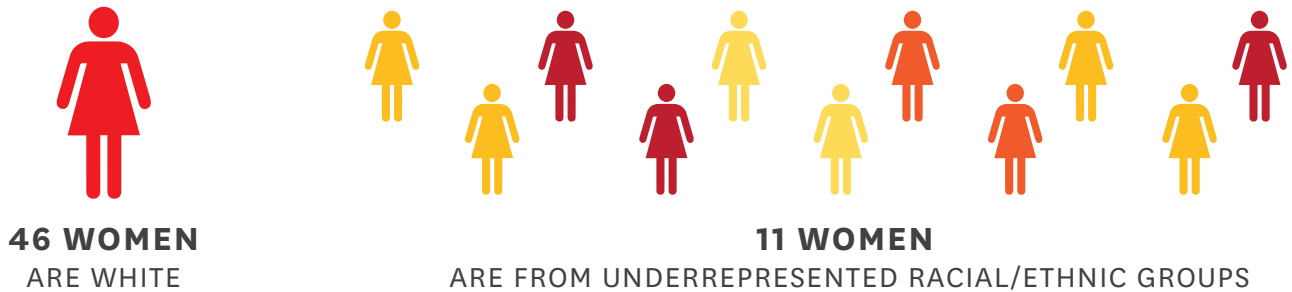
Median and average Metacritic score across 1,300 films from 2007 to 2019

54
 THE MIDPOINT SCORE IS
 THE SAME FOR FILMS BY
 WHITE AND
 UNDERREPRESENTED
 DIRECTORS



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

Race/ethnicity of 57 individual female directors across 1,300 films



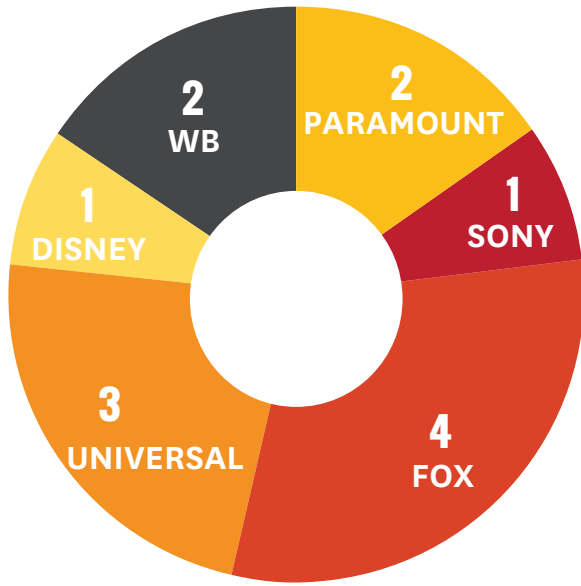
GENDER & UNDERREPRESENTED STATUS OF FILM DIRECTORS

Percentage and number of directors by gender and underrepresented status across 1,300 films from 2007 to 2019

INDICATOR	WHITE MALES	WHITE FEMALES	UR MALES	UR FEMALES
TOTAL %	82.5%	3.9%	12.6%	<1%
TOTAL #	1,195	57	183	13
U.S. POPULATION	30%	30%	20%	20%

UNDERREPRESENTED WOMEN DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR

Number of underrepresented women directors per distributor from 2007-2019



13 years:
2007-2019.
1,300
movies.

ONLY

13 under-
represented
women
directors.

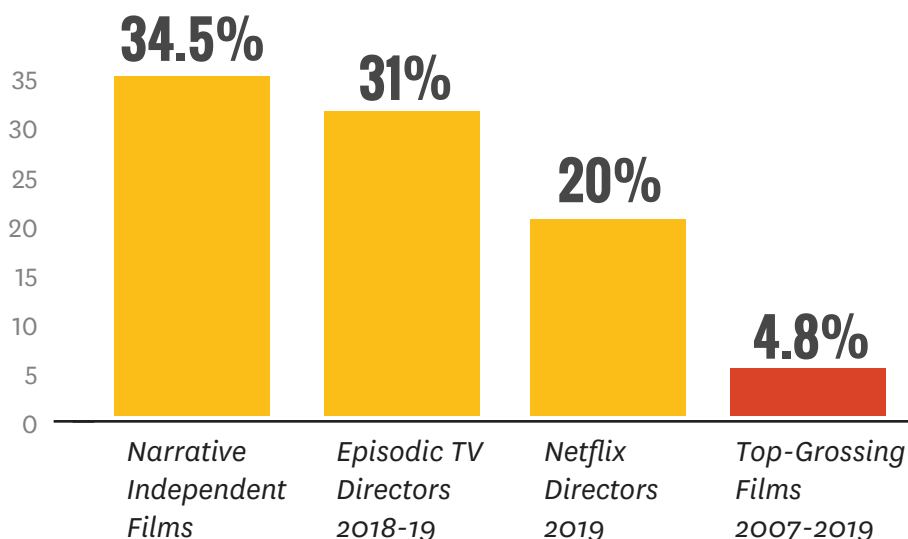
Zero underrepresented women directors worked on top films from Lionsgate, STX, or other distributors.

RATIO OF WHITE MEN TO UNDERREPRESENTED WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS 13 YEARS

92 TO 1

PIPELINE PROBLEMS: CAREER PROGRESS STALLS FOR FEMALES

Percentage of female directors by media platform



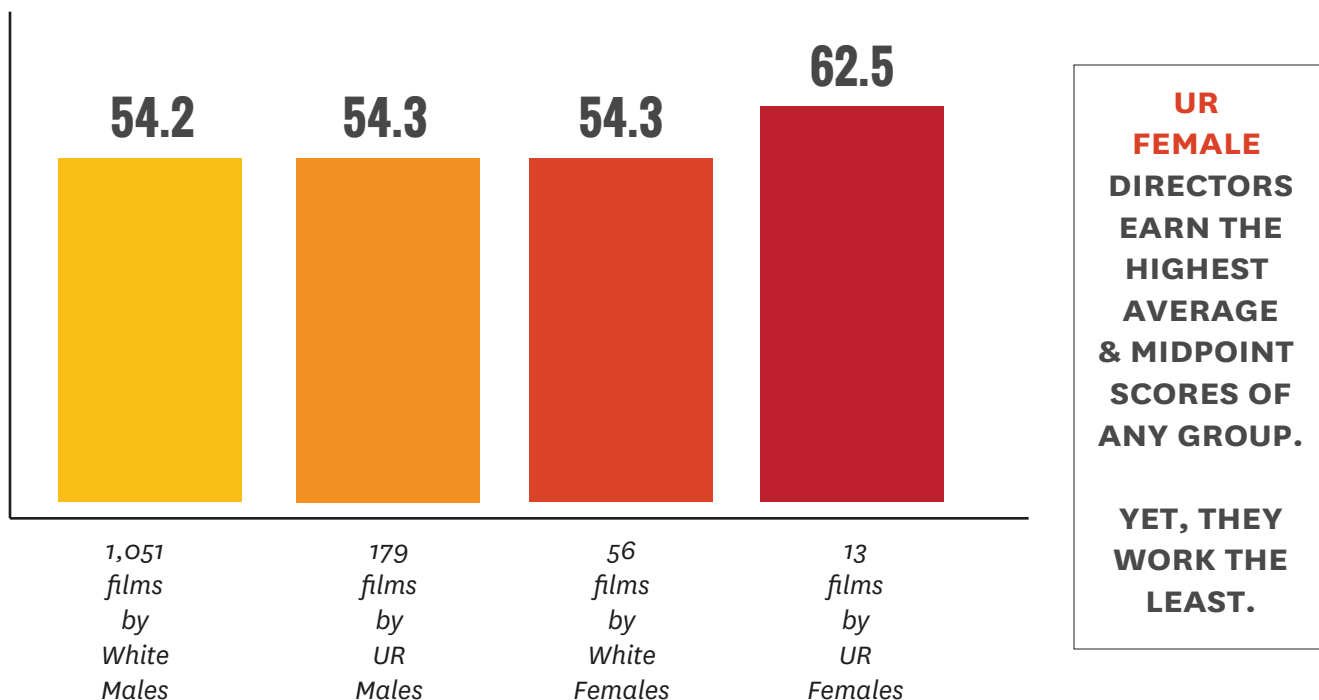
FEMALE DIRECTORS BY DISTRIBUTOR SLATE & YEAR

Percentage of female directors per distributor slate, 2015-2019

YEAR	20TH C. FOX	PARAMOUNT	SONY PICTURES	UNIVERSAL	WALT DISNEY	WARNER BROS.	LIONSGATE	STX ENT.
2015	0	0	11%	12%	9%	18%	4%	0
2016	8%	0	18%	9%	5%	5%	4%	14%
2017	8%	0	17%	13%	0	15%	0	22%
2018	13%	0	11%	11%	8%	0	6%	11%
2019	6%	0	17%	26%	17%	16%	6%	25%
TOTAL	7%	0	15%	14%	8%	11%	4%	17%

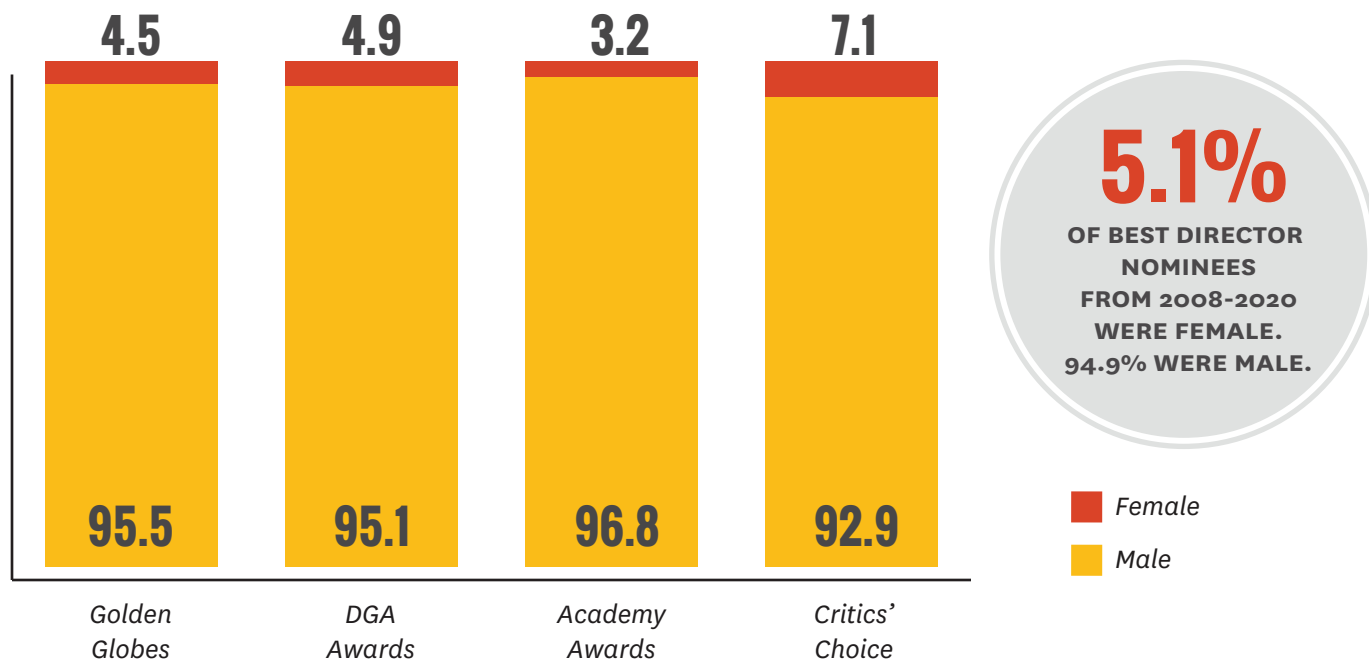
METACRITIC SCORES BY GENDER AND UNDERREPRESENTED STATUS

Average metacritic score by gender and race/ethnicity of directors, 2007-2019



THE GENDER GAP IN AWARDS

Percentage of Female Directors by Award Type, 2008-2020



TOP PERFORMER IN 2019: UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Universal distributed the most films by women directors in 2019.

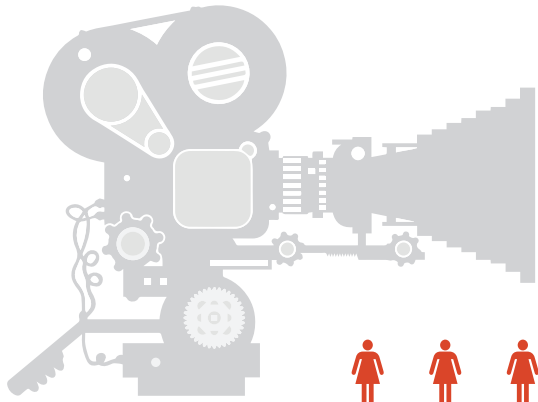
FEMALE DIRECTORS RECEIVING AWARD NOMINATIONS

Female directors and films nominated for Best Directing awards from 2008-2020

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	✓	✓		✓

A black check mark indicates a nomination; a red check indicates a nomination and win.

FOR FEMALE DIRECTORS, 2019 WAS A BANNER YEAR



12

**FEMALE DIRECTORS
WORKED ACROSS
THE 100 TOP-GROSSING
FILMS OF 2019.**



4 OF THOSE WOMEN WERE WOMEN OF COLOR.

**26 OUT OF 40 FILM SLATES FROM 8 COMPANIES
(2015-2019) DID NOT INCLUDE EVEN ONE
UNDERREPRESENTED WOMAN DIRECTOR.**

**Inclusion in the Director's Chair:
Analysis of Director Gender and Race/Ethnicity Across 1,300 Top Films from 2007 to 2019**

Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

Each year, we examine the gender and race/ethnicity of directors working across the 100 top fictional films theatrically released in the U.S. A total of 1,300 of the most popular movies were included in the analysis, from 2007 to 2019. Put differently, 1,448 directors were assessed across two inclusion metrics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity). Given the recent conversation surrounding women directors in the press, we conducted 3 additional analyses: a slate analysis of director inclusion across all the movies distributed by 8 major companies from 2015-2019; a pipeline analysis of female directors in entertainment (e.g., Sundance Film Festival, episodic television, Netflix movies), and an examination of female directors' award nominations across the last 13 years at 4 organizations (Golden Globes, Academy Awards, DGA, Critics' Choice). Findings are presented below for each section of the report.

**Key Findings:
1,300 Top Grossing Movies from 2007-2019**

Female Directors

A total of 113 directors were attached across the 100 top movies of 2019. A full 89.4% ($n=101$) were male and 10.6% ($n=12$) were female. This calculates into a gender ratio of 8.4 males to every 1 female.

Across 1,300 films and 1,448 helmers, only 4.8% of directors were women. Has the prevalence of female directors changed over time? Yes. 2019 had a significantly higher percentage (10.6%) and number of female directors than 2018 (4.5%, $n=5$) or 2007 (2.7%, $n=3$).

Of the major studios, Universal Pictures had the most female directors attached to the films they distributed (15 women), followed by Warner Bros. (13 women) and Sony Pictures Entertainment (11 women). The company with the worst track record for distributing films helmed by female directors was Paramount Pictures, which had only 3 pictures out of 134 movies distributed from 2007-2019 directed by a woman.

Critical reception of male- and female-directed films was assessed using Metacritic scores. The average Metacritic score for films with only male directors attached (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100) was virtually identical to those with a female director attached (Mean=55.8, Range=22-95). The medians across these two groups were also evaluated, and revealed no difference between male- and female-directed films. Despite receiving the same average critical review, female directors were given substantially less access and opportunity than male directors to helm these highly visible films.

Underrepresented Directors

Of the 113 directors of 2019, a full 83.2% were white ($n=94$) and 16.8% ($n=19$) were underrepresented. This is substantially below U.S. Census, which is 39.6%. The ratio of white directors to underrepresented directors is 4.9 to 1.

Only 13.5% of all helmers across the 13-year sample were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. 2019 (16.8%) was not meaningfully different from 2018 (21.4%) for underrepresented directors nor was it

significantly higher than 2007 (12.5%). 2019 was practically different only from 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Of the major studios, Universal Pictures has the highest number of underrepresented directors attached to their distributed films (39 directors) followed by Sony Pictures Entertainment (34 directors) and 20th Century Fox (29 directors). Disney has the worst track record (10 directors) from 2007 to 2019.

No differences in average Metacritic scores were observed between white (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100) and underrepresented directors (Mean=54.9, Range=11-99). Medians also did not differ, with both groups having the same Metacritic mid-point in the distribution of their movies (54).

Women of Color Directors

Only 13 women from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups have directed any of the 1,300 top movies from 2007 to 2019. This is less than 1% of all directing jobs ($n=1,448$) whereas white males held 82.5% of jobs, underrepresented males 12.6% of jobs, and white females 3.9% of jobs. The ratio of white male directors to underrepresented female directors was 92 to 1. Yet, this group of women represents 20% of the U.S. population.

Only two underrepresented female directors - Ava DuVernay and Jennifer Yuh Nelson - have helmed more than one movie appearing across the 1,300 films and 13-year sample. Four of the women of color were added to the list in 2019 (i.e., Kasi Lemmons, Melina Matsoukas, Roxann Dawson, Tina Gordon). No company has distributed the stories of more than 4 underrepresented female directors across 13 years.

The average Metacritic score was higher for stories directed by women of color (Mean=62.5, Range=44-89) than those stories directed by white males (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100), white females (Mean=54.3, Range=22-95), or underrepresented males (Mean=54.3, Range=11-99). The medians in the distributions followed the same pattern. Clearly, there is a major disconnect between hiring practices in Hollywood and who has the cinematic heft to carry stories.

Slate Analysis: 2015-2019

All the films distributed by 8 companies and their wholly-owned subsidiaries were evaluated for director gender and race/ethnicity. The analysis only included U.S. theatrical releases, fictional films, new releases, and those movies presented either in English or with the U.S. listed as the country of origin (whole or part). Over 5 years, a full 688 movies met the criteria with 755 directors attached.

Of the 755 helmers across slates, 90.2% were male ($n=681$) and 9.8% were female ($n=74$). The 74 females were primarily Caucasian (74.3%, $n=55$); only 25.7% ($n=19$) were women of color. Over time, 2019 was the highest year across the 5 examined (15%, $n=20$ female directors). 2019 was higher than 2018 (7.6%, $n=11$) and 2015 (8.6%, $n=14$).

The most notable change was observed at Universal Pictures. In 2019, 7 female directors were attached to movies distributed by Universal Pictures and/or their wholly owned subsidiaries in comparison to 3-4 in the years prior. The remaining companies only increased or decreased by 1 film save Warner Bros., which decreased 2 movies from 2015 but showed a gain from 2018. Paramount Pictures did not distribute a single movie with a female director in 5 years.

Over the last five years, 26 of the 40 film slates distributed across the largest companies did not have a single woman of color attached to direct. Sony Pictures Entertainment was the anomaly, distributing movies made by 7 women of color over 5 years.

Pipeline Analysis

We examined three access points to the broader film industry: 1) taking a feature to U.S. Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival, 2) directing an episode of fictional television, and/or 3) helming a Netflix movie. Across 5 years (2015-2019) at the Sundance Film Festival, females comprised 34.5% ($n=29$) of all U.S. Dramatic Competition directors. Of the 29 female directors, 11 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates into 13.1% of the total pool of competition directors ($n=84$).

Pivoting to episodic storytelling, the Directors Guild of America (2019) recently released findings on working directors by gender and race/ethnicity across the 2018 – 2019 television season. According to their information, 31% of all directors during the last season were women, with 22% Caucasian and 8% from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. It is important to note that these findings are from the DGA report released in 2019 and are included here only for purposes of comparison.

Rounding out the pipeline, a full 20% of the 53 U.S. films ($n=55$ directors) streamed by Netflix in 2019 had a female director attached. Eight of those women (14.5%) were white and 3 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (5.5%). These findings from episodic television and Netflix movies illuminate just how out of step the studios and mini majors are in their hiring and acquisition practices when it comes to female directors.

Female Director Awards Recognition: 2007-2019

We examined the gender of director nominations across 13 years and 4 awards shows: Golden Globe Awards, The Directors Guild of America (DGA) Awards, Academy Awards/Oscars, and Critics' Choice Awards. Overall, a total of 273 nominations were given out across the 4 top award shows with 94.9% allocated to male directors ($n=259$) and 5.1% allocated to female directors ($n=14$). All 14 of these nominations were accounted for by 4 women (Angelina Jolie, Ava DuVernay, Kathryn Bigelow, Greta Gerwig). Only 1 director was a woman of color (Ava DuVernay).

Was there notable deviation by awards show over the last 13 years? All of the organizations were problematic in recognizing female talent, with the Critics' Choice Awards (7.1%, $n=6$) slightly more welcoming to female directors than the Golden Globes (4.5%, $n=3$), DGA Awards (4.9%, $n=3$), or the Oscars (3.2%, $n=2$).

Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Analysis of Director Gender and Race/Ethnicity Across the 1,300 Top Films from 2007 to 2019

A Research Brief

Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Marc Choueiti, Kevin Yao, Hannah Clark, & Dr. Katherine Pieper

Each year, we examine the gender and race/ethnicity of directors working across the 100 top fictional films theatrically released in the U.S.¹ A total of 1,300 of the most popular movies were included in the analysis, from 2007 to 2019.² We focused on the top leadership position in film production, as the director is involved in not only working with above the line talent (e.g., writers, producers, actors) but also unit heads employed below the line as crew. In the film industry, like many other sectors of employment, leadership can be both gendered and racialized in ways that limit access and opportunity for women and/or people of color.³

In this research brief, we overview the 2019 findings from the 100 top films first followed by a comparison to the 100 top films of 2018 and then 2007. Only 5 percentage point differences or greater were noted. This criterion was set to ensure making noise about substantive changes and not trivial deviations (1-2%). Detailed information about our methodology can be found in the footnotes or online in previous releases of our *Inclusion in the Director's Chair* report.⁴

One final caveat is worth noting. We pulled the final list of 2019 films on the morning of January 1st 2020. Because within year box office is still accumulating and we anticipated changes to the list by the first weekend in the new year, we used projected box office figures to determine the 99th and 100th film included in the sample. In addition to this, several movies are still in theaters and the 100 top films may continue to shift in rank over the next several weeks. Some films will be added to or fall off the list. As such, we present the report as a brief with the intent to release a longer manuscript later in the year.

Gender

A total of 113 directors were attached across the 100 top movies of 2019. A full 89.4% ($n=101$) were male and 10.6% ($n=12$) were female. This calculates into a gender ratio of 8.4 males to every 1 female. The 12 female directors include: Anna Boden, Gail Mancuso, Greta Gerwig, Jennifer Lee, Jill Culton, Kasi Lemmons, Lorene Scafaria, Marielle Heller, Melina Matsoukas, Olivia Wilde, Roxann Dawson, and Tina Gordon.

Sample wide, only 4.8% of directors were women. Has the prevalence of female directors changed over time? As shown in Table 1, 2019 has a significantly higher percentage and number of female directors than 2018 (4.5%, $n=5$) or 2007 (2.7%, $n=3$). Matter of fact, the number has more than doubled since 2018 and tripled from 2007. It must also be noted that 2019 is not practically different from 2008 (9 women), the previous high for women directors working across the 100 top films.

Table 1
Director Gender of Fictional Films by Year

Year	Males	Females	Total
2007	97.3% (<i>n</i> =109)	2.7% (<i>n</i> =3)	112
2008	92% (<i>n</i> =103)	8% (<i>n</i> =9)	112
2009	96.4% (<i>n</i> =107)	3.6% (<i>n</i> =4)	111
2010	97.2% (<i>n</i> =106)	2.8% (<i>n</i> =3)	109
2011	96.3% (<i>n</i> =104)	3.7% (<i>n</i> =4)	108
2012	95.9% (<i>n</i> =116)	4.1% (<i>n</i> =5)	121
2013	98.1% (<i>n</i> =105)	1.9% (<i>n</i> =2)	107
2014	98.1% (<i>n</i> =105)	1.9% (<i>n</i> =2)	107
2015	92.5% (<i>n</i> =99)	7.5% (<i>n</i> =8)	107
2016	95.8% (<i>n</i> =115)	4.2% (<i>n</i> =5)	120
2017	92.7% (<i>n</i> =101)	7.3% (<i>n</i> =8)	109
2018	95.5% (<i>n</i> =107)	4.5% (<i>n</i> =5)	112
2019	89.4% (<i>n</i> =101)	10.6% (<i>n</i> =12)	113
Overall	95.2% (<i>n</i>=1,378)	4.8% (<i>n</i>=70)	1,448

The female director working the most frequently over the sample time frame was Anne Fletcher, with 4 films followed by Lana Wachowski with 3. Ava DuVernay worked on two movies across the 100 top films from 2007 to 2019 as did Catherine Hardwicke, Greta Gerwig, Jennifer Lee, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Julie Anne Robinson, Nancy Meyers and Phyllida Lloyd.

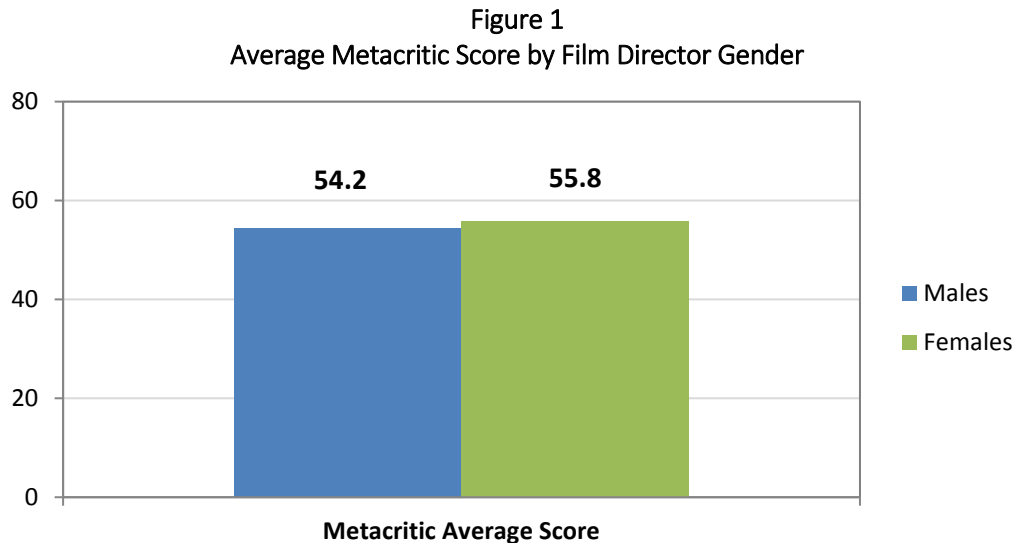
Next, we looked at the companies distributing female-directed films.⁵ To this end, each film was sorted by its distributor. Outside of the studios and mini majors, all other companies were collapsed into an “other” (e.g., A24, MGM, UA) category. As shown in Table 2, Universal Pictures (15 women) had the most female directors attached to the films they distributed, followed by Warner Bros. (13 women) and Sony Pictures Entertainment (11 women). The company with the worst track record for distributing films helmed by female directors was Paramount Pictures, which had only 3 pictures out of 134 movies distributed from 2007-2019 directed by a woman. STX also had 3 female directors, but only 19 films were in the 100 top movies starting in 2015.

Table 2
of Female Directors Across 1,300 Films by Distributor

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century Fox	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of Female Directors	4	3	11	3	8	15	8	13	5
# of Directors Overall	123	152	211	22	192	220	164	240	124

Examining the critical reception of films by director gender was the next focus of the report. All 1,300 movies were bifurcated into two silos: those with a female director attached (*n*=69) vs. those without a

female director attached ($n=1,230$). Then, we compared Metacritic scores -- an aggregate and weighted mean across reviews -- between these two groups.⁶



As shown in Figure 1, the average Metacritic score for films with only male directors attached (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100) was virtually identical to those with a female director attached (Mean=55.8, Range=22-95). The medians across these two groups were also evaluated, and revealed no difference between male-directed films (Median=54) and female-directed films (Median=55). Thus, the critical reception for these two groups of films was identical.

Overall, few female directors work across the 100 top-grossing films in Hollywood. Though 2019 was a high in terms of the percentage and number of women directors, it was still a far cry from girls and women comprising 51% of the U.S. population.⁷ Further, the results of this section show that there were no differences in the critical review of female-directed and male-directed films. Despite receiving the same average critical review, female directors were given substantially less access and opportunity than male directors to helm these highly visible films. We now turn our attention to another marginalized community in Hollywood, directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

Race/Ethnicity

Each director was coded for race/ethnicity using a modified scheme based on U.S. Census categories. This measure was then collapsed into one of two categories: white vs. underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Of the 113 directors of 2019, a full 83.2% were white ($n=94$) and 16.8% ($n=19$) were underrepresented. This is substantially below U.S. Census, which is 39.6%.⁸ The ratio of white directors to underrepresented directors is 4.9 to 1.

Table 3
Director Underrepresented Status of Fictional Films by Year

Year	White	Underrepresented	Total
2007	87.5% (n=98)	12.5% (n=14)	112
2008	88.4% (n=99)	11.6% (n=13)	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	90.9% (n=110)	9.1% (n=11)	121
2013	83.2% (n=89)	16.8% (n=18)	107
2014	87.9% (n=94)	12.2% (n=13)	107
2015	87.9% (n=94)	12.2% (n=13)	107
2016	86.7% (n=104)	13.3% (n=16)	120
2017	81.7% (n=89)	18.3% (n=20)	109
2018	78.6% (n=88)	21.4% (n=24)	112
2019	83.2% (n=94)	16.8% (n=19)	113
Overall	86.5% (n=1,252)	13.5% (n=196)	1,448

Only 13.5% of all helmers across the 13-year sample were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Over time trends can be found in Table 3. 2019 (16.8%) was not meaningfully different from 2018 (21.4%) for underrepresented directors nor was it significantly higher than 2007 (12.5%). 2019 was practically different only from 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

The underrepresented director working the most frequently across the 100 top movies from 2007 to 2019 was Tyler Perry (18 films). Antoine Fuqua directed 7 films and James Wan, Jaume Collet-Serra, M. Night Shyamalan, Malcolm D. Lee, and Tim Story each helmed 6.

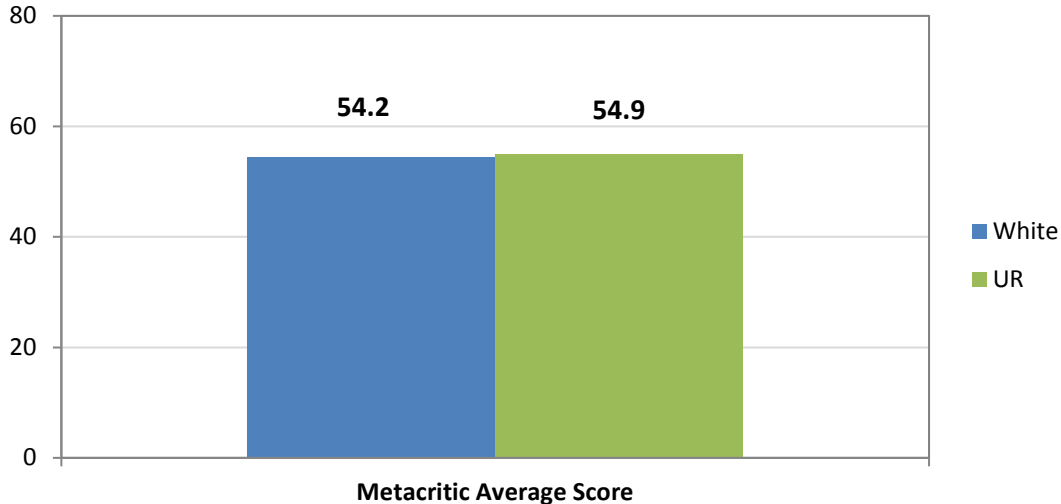
The breakdown of underrepresented directors by distributors can be found in Table 4. Again, Universal Pictures (39 directors) has the highest number of underrepresented directors attached to their distributed films followed by Sony Pictures Entertainment (34 directors) and 20th Century Fox (29 directors). The worst offender was STX Entertainment, with no movies distributed with an underrepresented director behind the lens.

Table 4
of Underrepresented Directors Across 1,300 Films by Distributor

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century Fox	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of UR Directors	26	14	34	0	29	39	10	25	19
# of Directors Overall	123	152	211	22	192	220	164	240	124

Does critical reception vary by director underrepresented status (yes, no)? To answer this query, we separated the films into two categories: those with only white directors ($n=1,107$) and those with at least one underrepresented director attached ($n=192$). As shown in Figure 2, no differences in average Metacritic scores were observed between white (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100) and underrepresented directors (Mean=54.9, Range=11-99). Medians also did not differ, with both groups having the same Metacritic mid-point in the distribution of their movies (54).

Figure 2
Average Metacritic Score by Film Director Underrepresented Status



Summing up, the percentage of films with an underrepresented director attached was far below U.S. Census. Similar to female directors, the movies made by directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups were just as strong as those from their white counterparts. Hollywood routinely shuts out women directors and helmers from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups from accessing the top leadership position on set. This is particularly true for women of color, which is the focus of the next section of the report.

Women of Color

Only 13 women from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups have directed any of the 1,300 top movies from 2007 to 2019. This is less than 1% of all directing jobs ($n=1,448$). The ratio of white male directors to underrepresented female directors was 92 to 1 (see Table 5). Yet, this group of women represents just over 20% of the U.S. population.⁹

Table 5
Gender & Underrepresented Status of Directors from 2007-2019

Directors	White Males	White Females	UR Males	UR Females
Total %	82.5%	3.9%	12.6%	<1%
Total #	1,195	57	183	13
U.S. Census (approximate)	29.8%	30.1%	19.5%	20.1%

Each of the underrepresented female directors across the 13-year sample are listed in Table 6. Only two directors - Ava DuVernay and Jennifer Yuh Nelson - have helmed more than one movie appearing across the 1,300 films and 13-year sample. Four of the women in Table 4 were added to the list in 2019 (i.e., Kasi Lemmons, Melina Matsoukas, Roxann Dawson, Tina Gordon). The companies distributing films by women of color can be found in Table 7. No company has distributed the stories of more than 4 underrepresented female directors across 13 years.

Table 6
Women of Color Directors From 2007 to 2019

Ava DuVernay (2)	Patricia Rikken (1)
Gina Prince-Bythewood (1)	Roxann Dawson (1)
Jennifer Yu Nelson (2)	Sanaa Hamri (1)
Kasi Lemmons (1)	Stella Meghie (1)
Loveleen Tandan (1)	Tina Gordon (1)
Melina Matsoukas (1)	

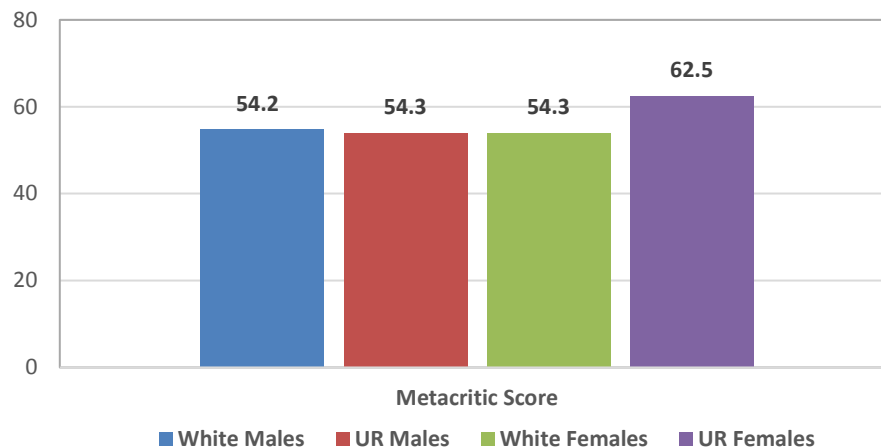
Table 7
of Underrepresented Female Directors Across 1,300 Films by Distributor

Company	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century Fox	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.	Other
# of UR Fem Directors	0	2	1	0	4	3	1	2	0
# of Directors Overall	123	152	211	22	192	220	164	240	124

Finally, the critical reception of films directed by women of color was evaluated. To this end, we coded each film by director to create four mutually exclusive categories: white male helmers only ($n=1,051$), white female helmer attached ($n=56$), underrepresented male helmer attached ($n=179$), or underrepresented female helmer attached ($n=13$). Then, average and median Metacritic scores were evaluated across groups.

As shown in Figure 3, the average Metacritic score was higher for stories directed by women of color (Mean=62.5, Range=44-89) than those stories directed by white males (Mean=54.2, Range=9-100), white females (Mean=54.3, Range=22-95), or underrepresented males (Mean=54.3, Range=11-99). The medians in the distributions followed the same pattern, with underrepresented female directors having a higher midpoint (63) than the three other groups (white males=54, white females=53.5, underrepresented males=54)! Due to the small number of films directed by women of color, these findings should be interpreted with caution and replicated in subsequent years.

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



Together, the findings suggest two problematic patterns. First, women of color were given substantially fewer opportunities than their white female, white male, or underrepresented male counterparts to direct major motion pictures. When they are given access, however, those films directed by women of color receive higher critics' reviews than those movies directed by individuals from the other identity groups. Clearly, there is a major disconnect between hiring practices in Hollywood and who has the cinematic heft to carry stories.

Female Directors: A Deeper Dive

The results from the previous section raise an additional set of questions about female directors: 1) What does hiring look like beyond the 100 top-grossing films per year? 2) How robust is the pipeline for female directors? 3) Does Netflix look similar to or different from the rest of the industry? 4) Given the equivalency in critics' reviews, how often are female directors nominated for their artistic prowess at the top awards shows in the U.S.? The answers to these questions will be addressed in this section where we take a deeper dive into access and opportunity in the film business.

Slate Analysis

For each of the major distributors as well as Lionsgate and STX Entertainment, we looked at the gender and race/ethnicity of all directors across 5 years of film content listed on Box Office Mojo from 2015-2019. The analysis only included U.S. theatrical releases, fictional films, new releases, and those movies presented either in English or with the U.S. listed as the country of origin (whole or part).¹⁰ A full 688 movies met the criteria with 755 directors attached.

Of the 755 helmers, 90.2% were male ($n=681$) and 9.8% were female ($n=74$). The 74 females were primarily Caucasian (74.3%, $n=55$); only 25.7% ($n=19$) were women of color. The over time trends are found in Table 8, which shows that 2019 was the highest year across the 5 examined.

Table 8
Director Gender Across 5 Years of Distributed Films

Director Gender	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
% of male directors	91.4%	92%	89.3%	92.4%	85%	90.2%
% of female directors	8.6% (n=14)	8% (n=14)	10.7% (n=15)	7.6% (n=11)	15% (n=20)	9.8% (n=74)
Total # of Directors	163	175	140	144	133	755

Note: The percentages are calculated within column. The parentheses contain the actual number of directors by gender per calendar year.

Next, we assessed the prevalence of female directors by distributor. As shown in Table 9, the most notable change was observed at Universal Pictures. In 2019, 7 female directors were attached to movies distributed by Universal Pictures in comparison to 3-4 in the years prior. The remaining companies only increased or decreased by 1 film save Warner Bros., which decreased 2 movies from 2015 but showed a gain from 2018. Lionsgate and Paramount Pictures remained fairly consistent over time, with the latter not distributing a single movie with a female director in 5 years.

Table 9
Female Directors by Distributor Slate & Year

% of Female Dirs	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century Fox	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.
2015	4.3% (1)	0	10.7% (3)	0	0	12.1% (4)	9.1% (1)	17.9% (5)
2016	4.2% (1)	0	17.9% (5)	14.3% (1)	8.3% (2)	8.6% (3)	5% (1)	5% (1)
2017	0	0	17.2% (5)	22.2% (2)	8% (2)	13% (3)	0	15% (3)
2018	5.6% (1)	0	11.1% (3)	11.1% (1)	13.3% (2)	10.7% (3)	7.7% (1)	0
2019	5.9% (1)	0	17.4% (4)	25% (2)	5.9% (1)	25.9% (7)	16.7% (2)	15.8% (3)
Total	4.1% (4)	0	14.8% (20)	17.1% (6)	6.7% (7)	13.7% (20)	7.7% (5)	10.8% (12)

Note: The percentages were calculated for each cell. The parentheses contain the actual number of female directors per calendar year. Male directors can be calculated by subtracting each cell from 100%.

The frequency of female directors of color can be found in Table 10. Over the last five years, 26 of the 40 film slates distributed across the largest companies did not have a single woman of color attached. Sony Pictures Entertainment was the anomaly, distributing movies made by 7 women of color over 5 years.

Table 10
Frequency of Women of Color Directors by Distributor Slate & Year

% of Female Dirs	Lionsgate	Paramount Pictures	Sony Pictures Entertainment	STX Entertainment	20th Century Fox	Universal Pictures	Walt Disney Studios	Warner Bros.
2015	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
2016	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0
2017	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
2018	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0
2019	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1
Total	0	0	7	0	4	3	2	3

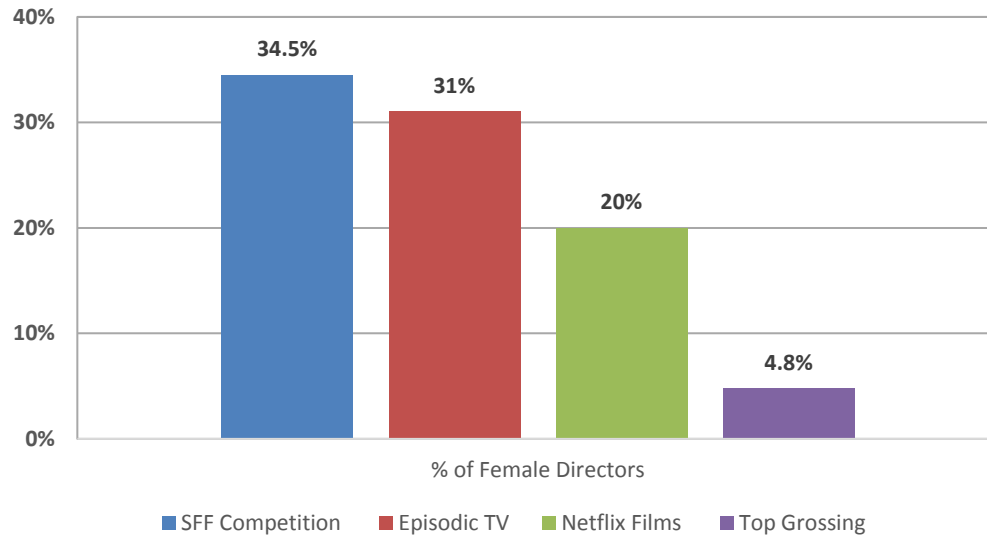
Note: Each cell represents a slate of distributed films per company and year.

While the slate analysis revealed a slightly better picture for female directors, the percentage overall was still quite low (9.8%). Because of this, it becomes important to examine the pipeline or points of entry into filmmaking at the studio or mini major level. While film school data on enrollment patterns in production classes is not publicly available, we can turn to three other sources of data that inform us about females' interest in directing as a career.

Pipeline Analysis

We examine three access points to the broader film industry, 1) taking a feature to U.S. Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival, 2) directing an episode of fictional television, and/or 3) helming a Netflix movie.¹¹ Across 5 years (2015-2019) at the Sundance Film Festival, females comprised 34.5% ($n=29$) of all U.S. Dramatic Competition directors. This section of the festival is important, as it typically represents filmmakers with three or fewer narrative features under their belts. Of the 29 female directors, 11 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This calculates into 13.1% of the total pool of competition directors ($n=84$).

Figure 4
Female Directors by Pipeline Platform



Pivoting to episodic storytelling, the Directors Guild of America (2019) recently released findings on working directors by gender and race/ethnicity across the 2018 – 2019 television season. According to their information, 31% of all directors during the last season were women, with 22% Caucasian and 8% from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Rounding out the pipeline, a full 20% of the 53 U.S. films ($n=55$ directors) distributed by Netflix in 2019 had a female director attached. Eight of those women (14.5%) were white and 3 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (5.5%). These findings from episodic television and Netflix movies illuminate just how out of step the studios and mini majors are in their hiring and acquisition practices when it comes to female directors.

Clearly, female directors face a steep fiscal cliff as they move into feature film storytelling. The drop from U.S. competition at the Sundance Film Festival to working on a top-grossing film is 29.7 percentage points, which severely limits -- if not halts -- career sustainability. The playing field in film is clearly gendered, with male directors gaining far more access and opportunity than female directors in general and women of color in specific as they move from independent movies to more lucrative forms of storytelling.

Awards Nominations

Another aspect of the ecosystem that is important to examine is nominations for key awards. Recognition from peers and other industry members can provide a critical boost to a director's career. The public prominence that can result from a high-profile nomination can also create new role models for aspiring filmmakers or students. Although award recognition comes at the end of a film's production, the decisions made by notable organizations offer insight into the mental models these groups hold about what it means to be successful, talented, or excellent as a director.

We examined the gender of director nominations across 13 years (2008-2020) and 4 awards shows: Golden Globe Awards, The Directors Guild of America (DGA) Awards, Academy Awards/Oscars, and Critics' Choice Awards.¹² All information was pulled from websites or by receiving a complete list directly from the industry organization. Overall, a total of 273 nominations were given out across the 4 top award shows with 94.9% allocated to male directors ($n=259$) and 5.1% allocated to female directors ($n=14$). All

14 of these nominations were accounted for by 4 women (see Table 11). Only 1 director was a woman of color (Ava DuVernay).

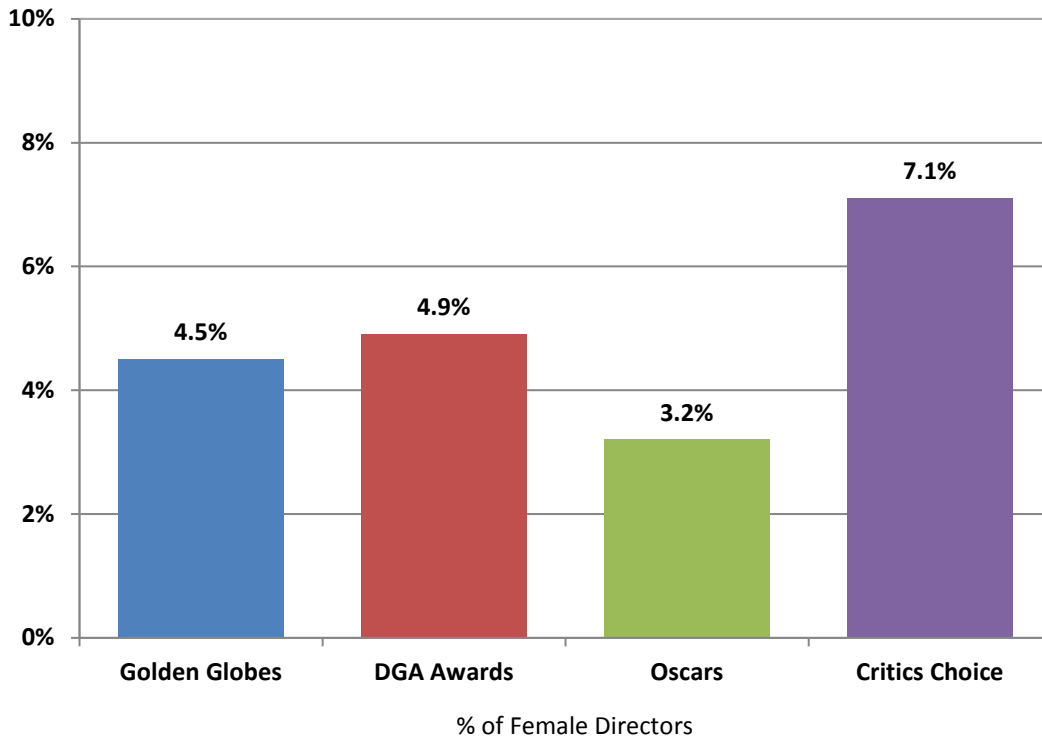
Table 11
Female Directors Nominated from 2008-2020

Filmmaker	Film	Golden Globes	DGA Awards	Academy Awards	Critics' Choice
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

Note: The years selected correspond to the awards' seasons for films in the top-grossing sample from 2007-2019. As such, Academy Awards and DGA Awards nominations were not included for 2019 as those lists are not publicly announced until January 2020.

Was there notable deviation by awards show over the last 13 years? All of the organizations were problematic in recognizing female talent, with the Critics' Choice Awards (7.1%, $n=6$) more welcoming to female directors than the Golden Globes (4.5%, $n=3$), DGA Awards (4.9%, $n=3$), or the Oscars (3.2%, $n=2$).

Figure 5
Percentage of Female Directors by Award Shows from 2008-2020



Summing up, this section reveals three important trends. First, the percentage of female directors across company slates beyond the 100 top films each year was just shy of 10%. Second, this overall statistic was still substantially below the percentage of female directors competing at the Sundance Film Festival, helming episodic television shows, or directing 2019 Netflix movies. Third, only 4 individual female directors have been acknowledged for their directing achievement over the last 13 years at the top awards shows in the film industry.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research brief was to catalog the gender and underrepresented status of directors across the 100 top-grossing movies of 2019, and to add to our ongoing research on directors working from 2007 to 2018. The results of this study indicate that 2019 was a year of change for female directors. The percentage of female directors was significantly higher than both 2018 and 2007. When considering underrepresented directors, 2019 evidenced a slight decline from 2018, and the percentage of underrepresented directors has not meaningfully increased since 2007. Overall, these findings reveal that hiring practices have started to shift behind the camera in important ways for women.

Where more work is needed, however, is to increase access and opportunity for women of color. Only 13 underrepresented female directors have worked across the 100 top movies of the last 13 years, with 4 of these jobs held in 2019 alone. Moreover, looking to Metacritic scores reveals that when women of color do step behind the camera, the critical reviews of their films were more favorable than their white male, white female, or underrepresented male counterparts. Given this finding, it is clear that the barrier to seeing more women of color directing is not due to the quality of their filmmaking but rather a biased hiring system.

Finally, the report provides a deeper dive into the ecosystem surrounding popular films. Examining the slates of major companies reveals a slightly higher percentage of female directors. However, as some of these films do not earn a sufficient box office gross to place them in the top 100 each year, one question that persists is whether female-directed films are given similar marketing and other support as those by their male counterparts. The lack of value and perceptions of female-helmed content are important to consider, particularly when it is clear from the lack of award nominations that women's perspectives and talent are rarely recognized by major entertainment industry voting bodies. Lastly, looking to the pipeline provides one hopeful indication that as studios engage processes to consider and hire female directors, more talent is moving through the ranks to fill these roles in the future.

Overall, while it is clear that there has been some progress for female directors in 2019, it is imperative that the advocacy and activism—both internal and external to studios—that contributed to this change be continued. To build upon the successes in 2019 in the years ahead, individuals must continue to challenge the idea that leadership, particularly that embodied by film directors, fits a masculine profile. Expanding the notion of what a director can look like, and how talent is judged will ensure that true and lasting change can be accomplished so that *all* women have access and opportunity to these jobs.

Footnotes

1. Box office data was retrieved for 2019 films using within-year release grosses on January 1, 2020 from <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>
2. For our 2019 report, see Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Choi, A., & Pieper, K. (2019). *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, & Age of Directors Across 1,200 Top Films from 2007-2018*. Los Angeles, CA: Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inclusion-in-the-directors-chair-2019.pdf>
3. Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015). *Exploring the Careers of Female Directors: Phase III*. Retrieved from Los Angeles, CA: <https://www.sundance.org/pdf/artist-programs/wfi/phase-iii-research---female-filmmakers-initiative.pdf> Pieper, K., Choueiti, M., & Smith, S.L. (2014). *Race & Ethnicity in Independent Film: Prevalence of Underrepresented Directors and the Barriers They Face*. Los Angeles, CA: Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Research-Art-Works-Sundance.pdf>. See also, Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573; Sy, T., Shore, L.M., Strauss, J., Shore, T.H., Tram, S., Whiteley, P., & Ikeda-Muromachi, K. (2010). Leadership perceptions as a function of race–occupation fit: The case of Asian Americans. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(5), 902.
4. see Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Choi, A., & Pieper, K. (2019).
5. The distributors were retrieved from Box Office Mojo and sorted by parent company name, when applicable. For instance, any Fox Searchlight film was categorized under the Twentieth Century Fox moniker and Screen Gems was classified as Sony Pictures Entertainment.
6. Metacritic defined “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 12/17/19 from: <https://www.metacritic.com/faq#item11>. It must be noted that one film in 2007 did not feature a Metascore. This film was directed by a white male, and thus the numbers presented in text add to 1,299.
7. U.S. Census Bureau (2019). Quick Facts. Retrieved December 16, 2019 from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218>
8. U.S. Census Bureau (2019).
9. U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Fact Finder. Retrieved December 17, 2019 from: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2018_PEPALL5N&prodType=table
10. The slate analysis also did not include any distributed films by companies that did not list a box office total (e.g., *Nancy Drew*) as well as those television shows that were screened in theatres (i.e., *Game of Thrones Season Finale*). Only major distribution companies and their wholly-owned subsidiaries were included in the slate analysis. Warner Bros., Universal, Disney, and Lionsgate all provided information regarding subsidiaries and/or sample titles.
11. Gender of directors in U.S. Dramatic Competition at the Sundance Film Festival for the years 2015-2019 was determined using festival programs. DGA numbers were taken from the recent report: Directors Guild of America (2019, November). 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>. A list of U.S. original films from 2019 was provided by Netflix. This list excluded documentaries, international Netflix Originals, and foreign language films. The identity of each director(s) was confirmed for each film using IMDbPro. Demographic information was ascertained using industry databases such as Variety Insight and Studio System.

12. 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. The list of nominees for the Critics Choice Awards was obtained by contacting the Critics' Choice Association. The sample included the years 2008 to 2020, to reflect awards for work made between 2007 and 2019 (our top-grossing sample). Each nominee was assessed for gender and race/ethnicity using information in online databases (e.g., Variety Insight, Studio System). For two awards shows (i.e., Oscars, DGA Awards) the nominations were not released prior to this study release. Thus, these nominations were not included in the analysis.