

THE REP PROJECT

2021

STATE OF MEDIA REPORT



PROVINCETOWN FILM
SOCIETY



INTRODUCTION

This report examines the current state of media representations in film, television, advertising, video games, and music. More specifically, we analyze data from the past decade on representations of gender, race, age, disability, body size, and sexuality in different media types. This report establishes benchmarks to measure progress and to promote collaboration in the media research space.

This report was produced for the fifth annual State of Media Summit, co-sponsored by the Provincetown Film Society, The Representation Project, and the Center for Intersectional Media and Entertainment (CIME). Participants of the first Summit¹ in 2017 generated a [White Paper on Gender Inequality in Film and Television](#), and we expand upon this earlier report.

This State of Media Report combines publicly available data from a number of excellent research organizations, including:

- **THE HOLLYWOOD DIVERSITY REPORT, UCLA**
- **THE GEENA DAVIS INSTITUTE ON GENDER IN MEDIA**
- **THE ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**
- **THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN IN TELEVISION & FILM, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY**
- **THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA WEST**
- **THE WHERE WE ARE ON TV REPORT, GAY & LESBIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST DEFAMATION (GLAAD)**
- **THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT**
- **DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA**

Combining data from these sources provides a more complete picture of the state of media in the US than any single organization or report. For each year, we present the most reliable and valid data point available.²

We begin this report with analysis of representations in content and key decision-making roles in film, followed by sections on television, advertising, video games, and music.

1. Formerly called the Women's Media Summit.

2. We recognize that combining reports with different denominators and methodologies into a single chart is not ideal, but given missing data, and a lack of universality in reports, this gives us the best overall snapshot.

FILM

ON SCREEN

Despite women making up 50.8% of the US population,³ male characters outnumber female characters two-to-one in the top grossing films. This has not improved in the last decade.

For the past decade, Black Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) characters have been underrepresented in the top films. We saw significant progress starting in 2018, but have yet to achieve equitable representation (33.2% in 2020 compared with 39.9% of the US population⁴).

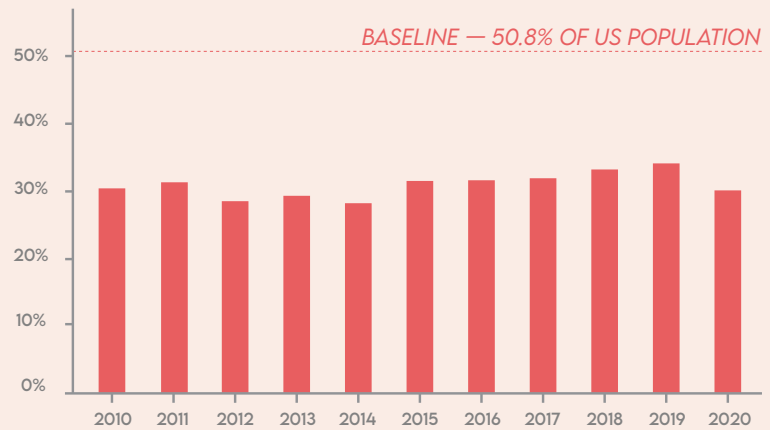
LGBTQ+ people are 4.5% of the US population⁵, and while progress has been made in the last three years in film, LGBTQ+ characters remain underrepresented at 1.7%.

3. Howden, L.M. and J.A. Meyer (2011). Age and Sex Composition: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>

4. United States Census (2019). Quick Facts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

5. Newport, F. (2018). In U.S., LGBT Rises to 4.5%. Gallup, May 22, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>

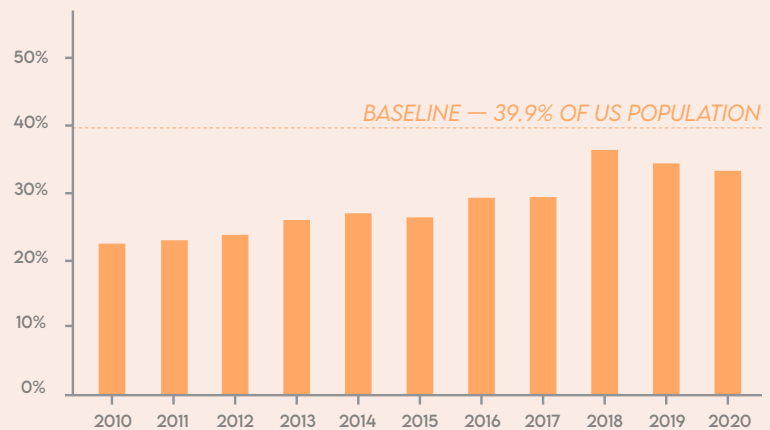
FIGURE 1: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020



■ FEMALE CHARACTERS

SOURCES:
2010-2019 USC Annenberg, Top 100 Films
2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 Films

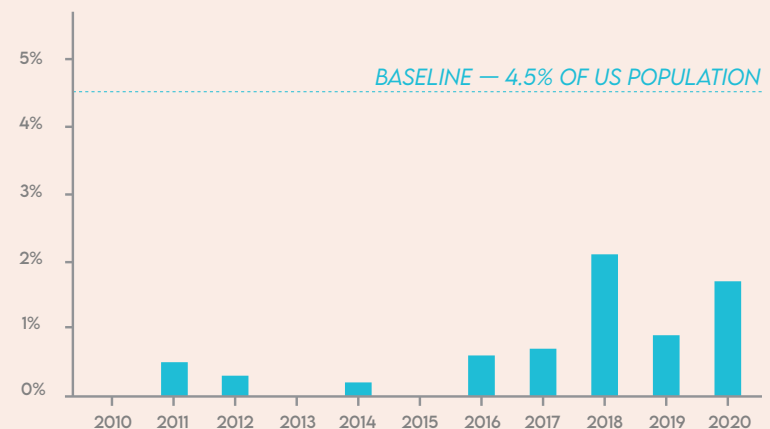
FIGURE 2: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020



■ BIPOC CHARACTERS

SOURCES:
2010-2019 USC Annenberg, Top 100 Films
2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 Films

FIGURE 3: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020



■ LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS

SOURCE:
2010-2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 Films

FIGURE 4: CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020

Characters with disabilities have remained virtually erased from film for the past decade, even though one-in-four Americans have a physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disability.⁶

People ages 50+ make up 34.2% of the US population,⁷ but characters over 50 are outnumbered three-to-one in top films. We have seen no real improvement in the last decade.

Despite the fact that over 40% of Americans are classified as fat,⁸ these characters remain vastly underrepresented.⁹ In fact, we see a decline with half as many fat characters in 2020 as we saw in 2010 (7.3% compared to 14.8%).

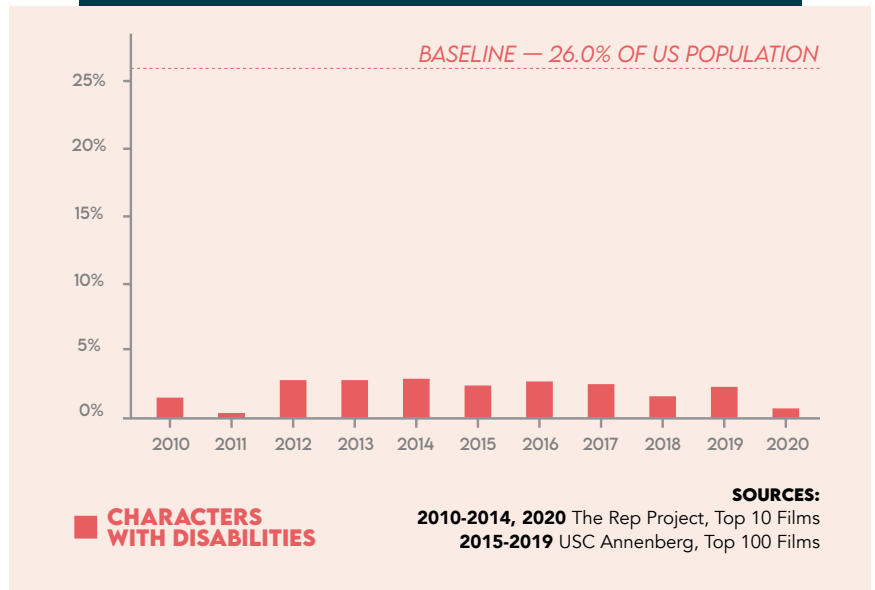


FIGURE 5: CHARACTERS AGES 50+ IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020

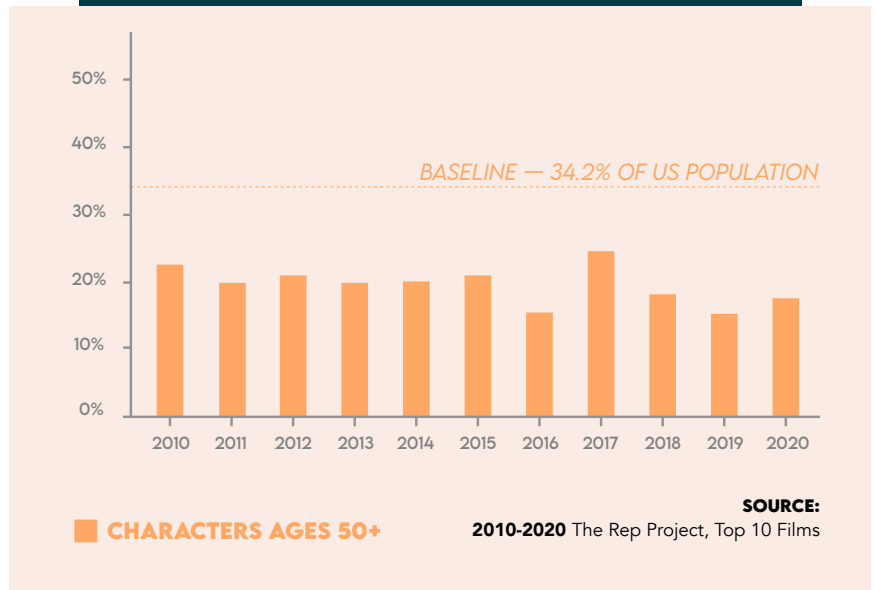
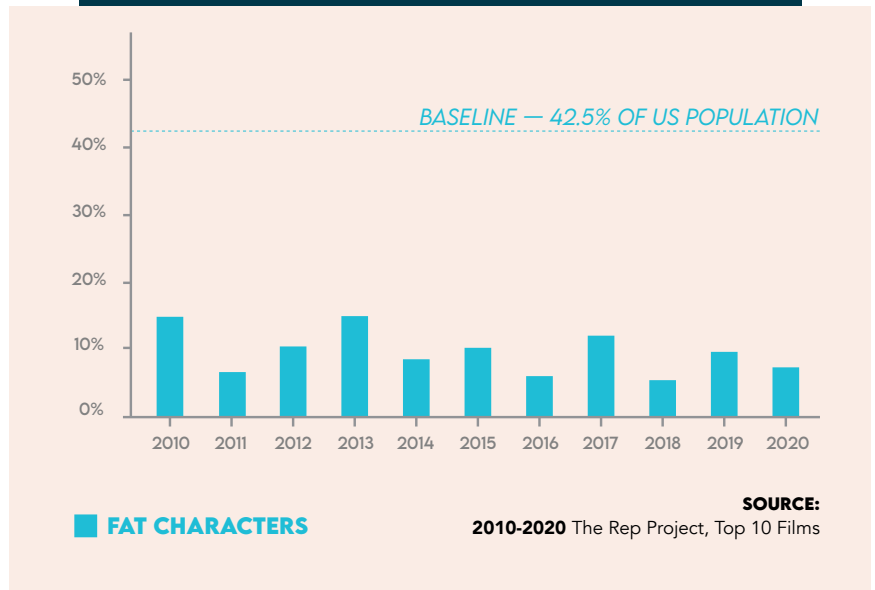


FIGURE 6: FAT CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2010-2020



- 6. Centers for Disease Control (2020). Disability Impacts All of Us. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/documents/disabilities_impacts_all_of_us.pdf
- 7. Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University (2014). Demographics of an Aging America, https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/jchs-housing_americas_older_adults_2014-ch2_0.pdf
- 8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). FastStats: Obesity and Overweight, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>
- 9. We are intentionally using the word "fat" because it is not an insult. We are part of a growing number of organizations and individuals reclaiming the word "fat." We celebrate bodies in whatever form they come, with bumps, lumps, stretch marks, and curves.

FIGURE 7: WOMEN FILM DIRECTORS, 2010-2020

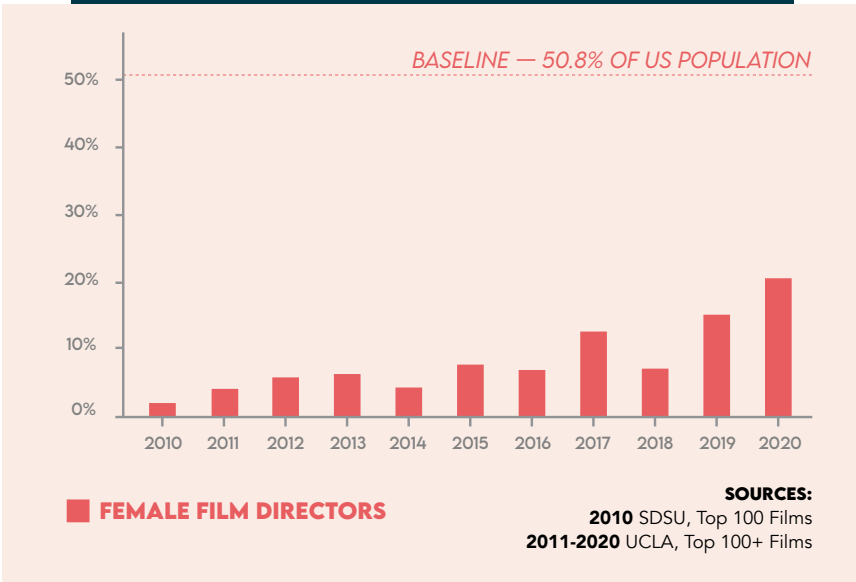


FIGURE 8: BIPOC FILM DIRECTORS, 2010-2020

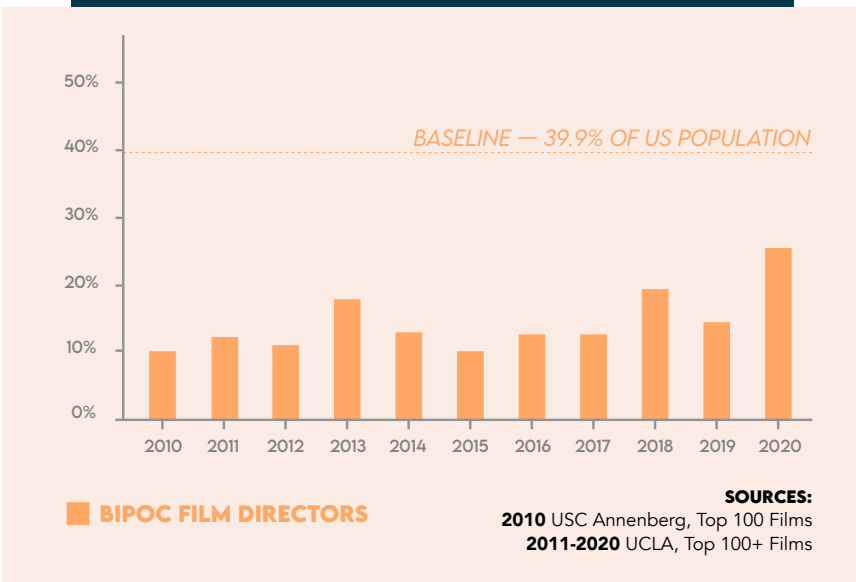
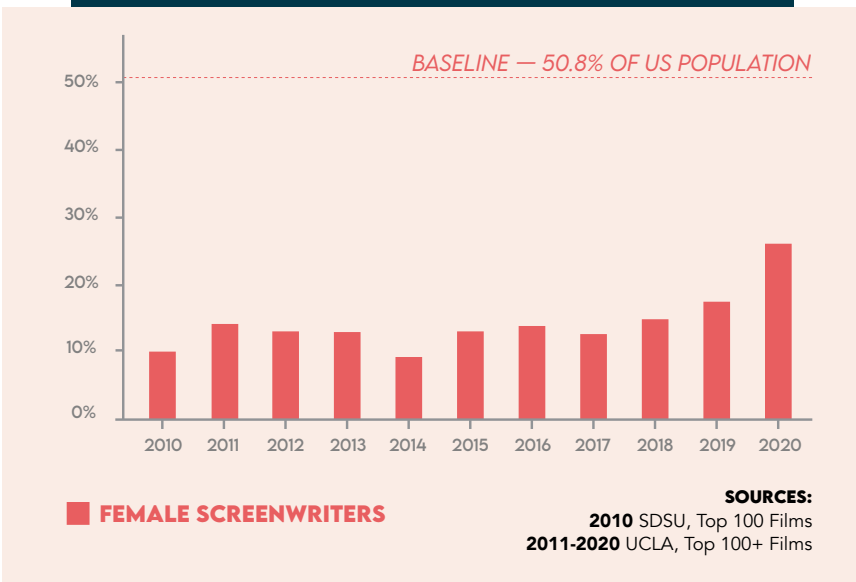


FIGURE 9: WOMEN SCREENWRITERS, 2010-2020



BEHIND THE SCENES

The vast majority of top films from the past decade were directed by men. While there are ten times as many women film directors today compared to the start of the decade, male directors still outnumber female directors four-to-one in 2020 (79.5% compared with 20.5%).

BIPOC film directors remain underrepresented compared to the US population, but we see progress over the past decade. Despite fluctuations, the trend is upward, meaning that more than twice as many films were directed by BIPOC at the end of the decade than the start of the decade (25.4% compared to 10.1%).

Despite making significant progress since the start of the decade, today's top films are still overwhelmingly written by men— 73.0% compared to 26.0% of women.

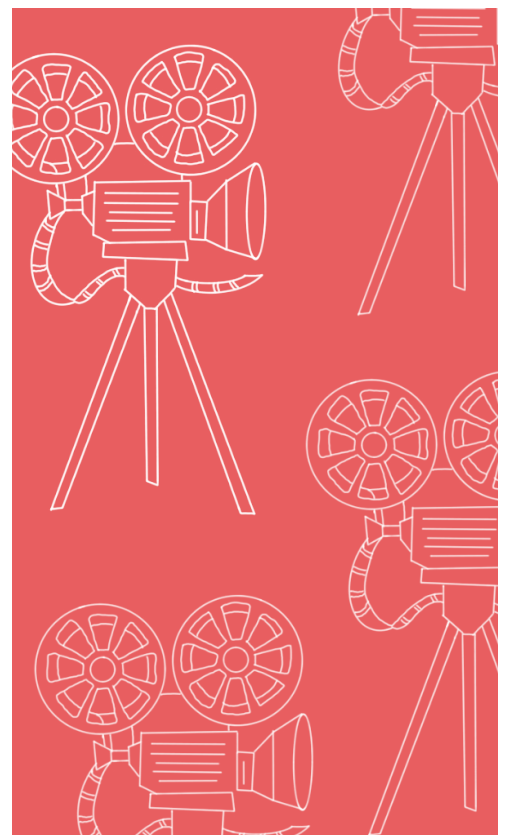
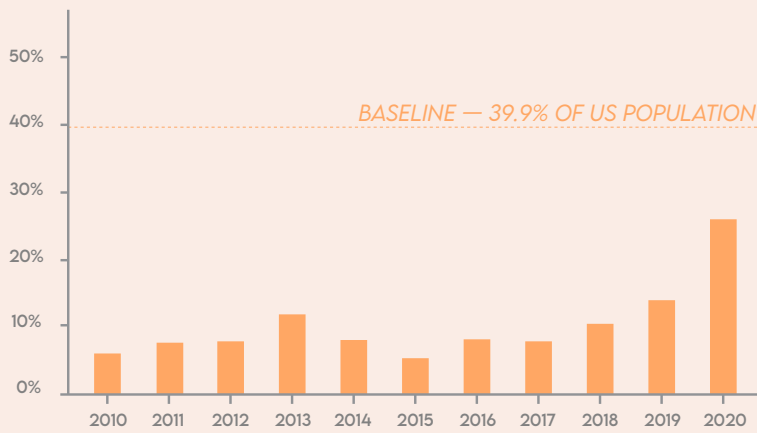


FIGURE 10: BIPOC SCREENWRITERS, 2010-2020



■ BIPOC SCREENWRITERS

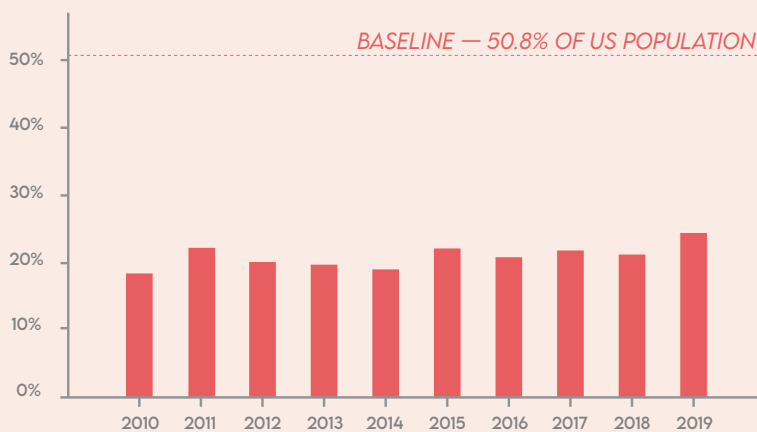
SOURCES:
 2010 WGAW, Employed Screenwriters
 2011-2020 UCLA, Top 100+ Films

The vast majority of films from the past decade have been written by white screenwriters, but in the past decade, BIPOC screenwriters increased from 6.0% to 25.9%. Notably, we see a significant increase in BIPOC screenwriters starting in 2018.

When it comes to who produces the top films, men outnumber women four-to-one in the past decade, with no clear trend of progress.

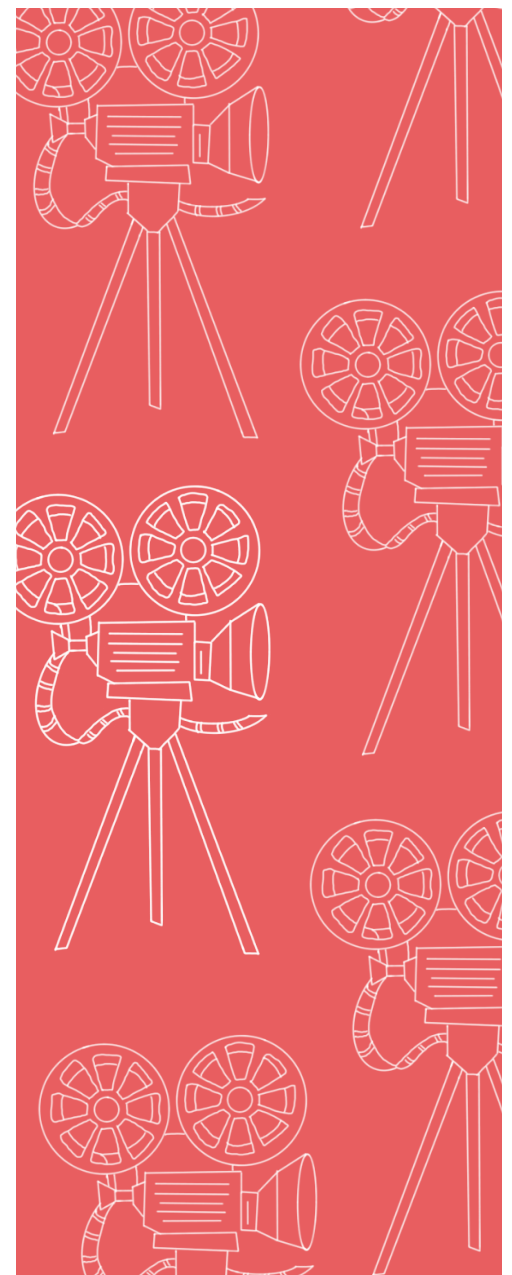
There is no available data on BIPOC producers over the past decade.

FIGURE 11: WOMEN FILM PRODUCERS, 2010-2019



■ FEMALE FILM PRODUCERS

SOURCE:
 2010-2019 USC Annenberg, Top 100 Films



TV

ON SCREEN

We see much higher rates of representation for female characters in television compared to film over the past decade. Even so, female characters remain underrepresented in the most popular television programs (42.0% compared to 50.8% in the US population).

Over the last decade, BIPOC characters have fared much better in television than in film. We see a steady upward trend for BIPOC TV characters in the past decade, and in the 2019/2020 season, we achieved parity (41.2% compared to 39.9% of the US population)! This finding is historic given years of BIPOC erasure in entertainment media, and gives hope that equitable representation can be achieved in film as well.

LGBTQ+ characters have made great gains in popular television in the past decade. We see equitable representation compared to the US population for the first time with the 2016/2017 season and significant increases every year since.

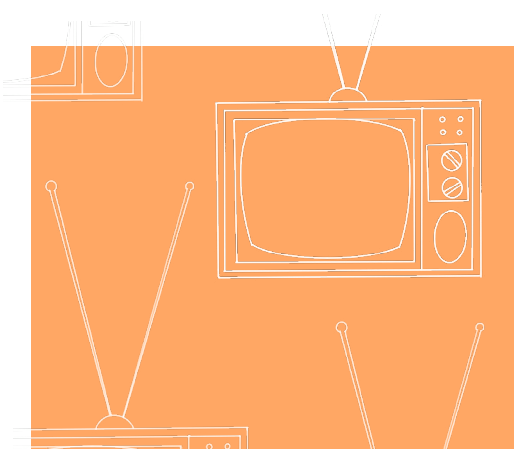
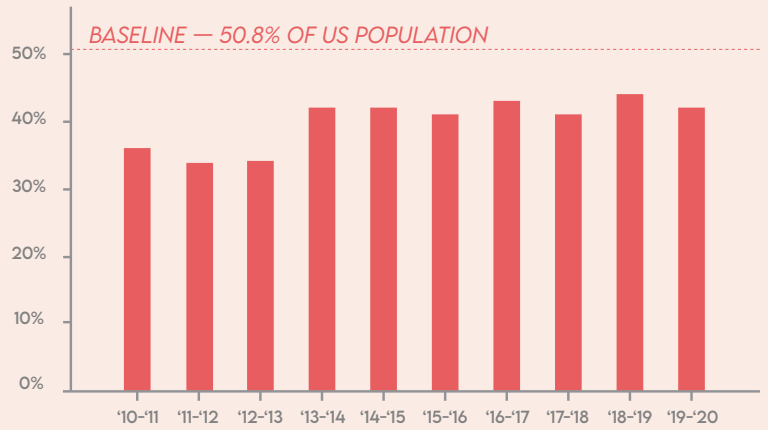


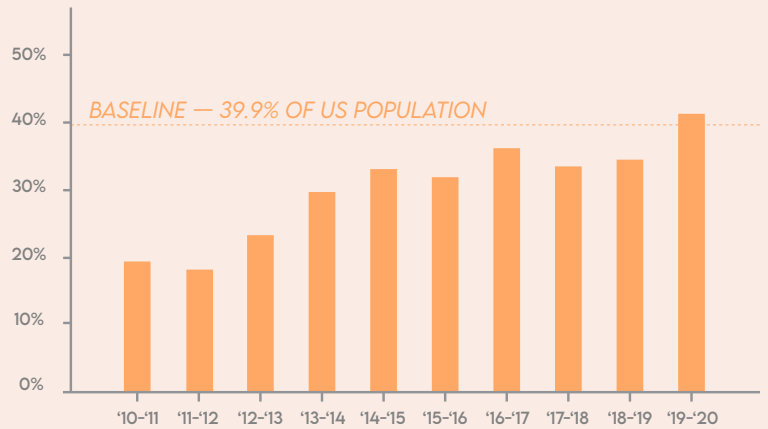
FIGURE 12: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2010-2020



FEMALE CHARACTERS

SOURCES:
2010-2013 The Rep Project, Top 10 TV Shows
2013-2020 SDSU, Top Broadcast TV

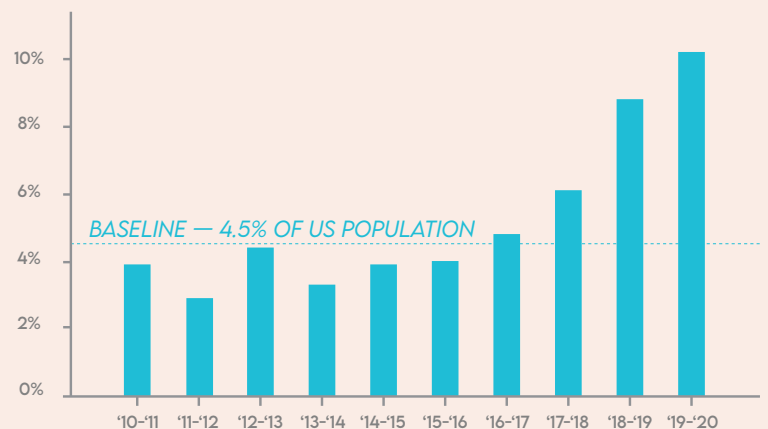
FIGURE 13: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2010-2020



BIPOC CHARACTERS

SOURCE:
2010-2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 TV Shows

FIGURE 14: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2010-2020



LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS

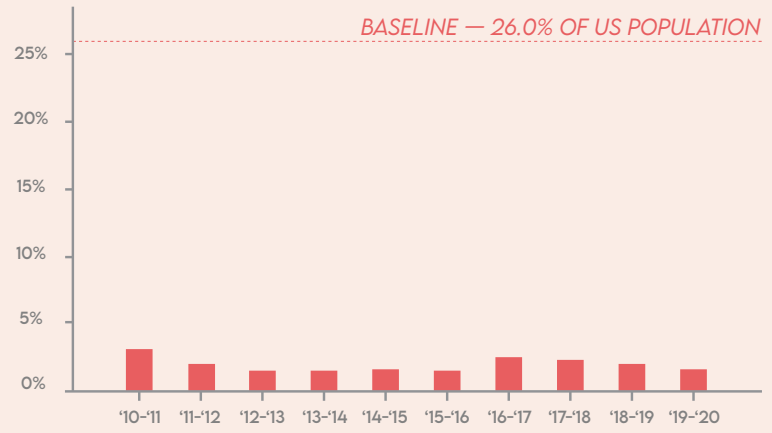
SOURCE:
2010-2020 GLAAD, All Scripted TV Shows

FIGURE 15: CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP TV, 2010-2020

Characters with a physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disability are virtually nonexistent in popular TV shows in the past decade. The number of characters with disabilities dropped from 3.1% in the 2010/2011 season to 1.6% in the 2019/2020.

For the past decade, characters ages 50+ have been underrepresented in popular television. We saw significant progress in age and representations for overall characters starting in 2015, but in the 2019/2020 season, characters 50+ were still only 19.2% of characters (compared to 34.2% in the US population).

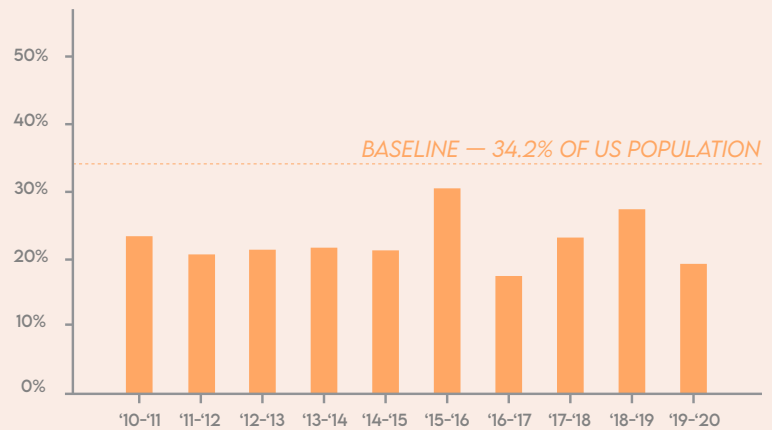
Fat people are vastly underrepresented when it comes to overall characters in popular television. Despite being 42.5% of the US population, non-fat characters outnumbered fat characters twelve-to-one in popular TV (92.3% compared to 7.7%).



CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES

SOURCE:
2010-2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 TV Shows

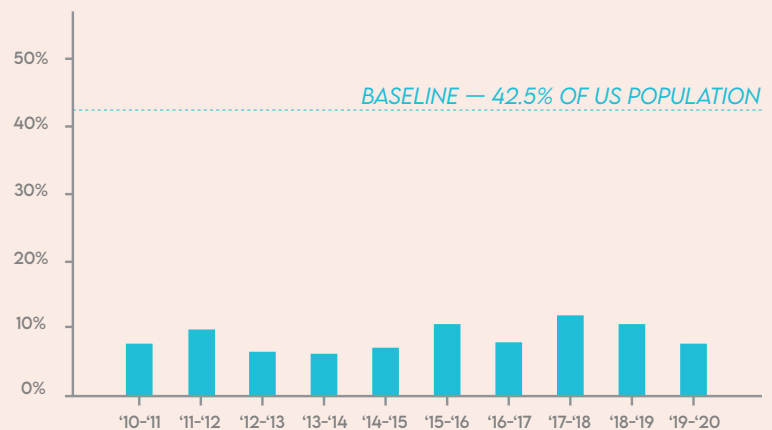
FIGURE 16: CHARACTERS AGES 50+ IN TOP TV, 2010-2020



CHARACTERS AGES 50+

SOURCE:
2010-2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 TV Shows

FIGURE 17: FAT CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2010-2020



FAT CHARACTERS

SOURCE:
2010-2020 The Rep Project, Top 10 TV Shows

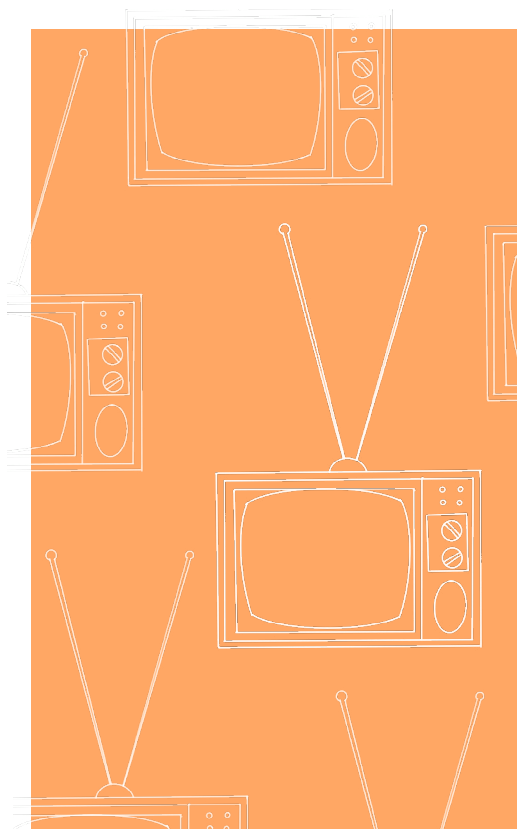
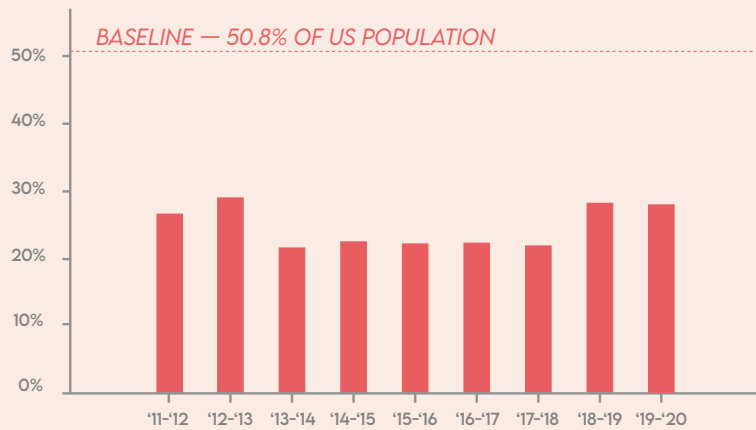


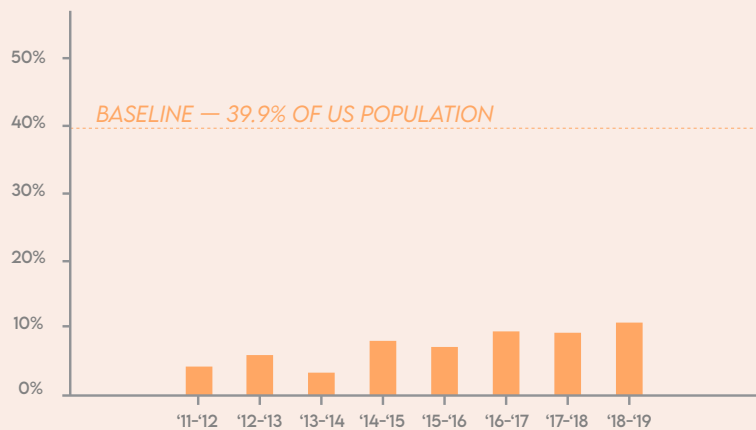
FIGURE 18: WOMEN TV SHOW CREATORS, 2012-2020



FEMALE TV CREATORS

SOURCE:
 2011-2019 UCLA, Top Broadcast TV
 2019-2020 SDSU, Top Broadcast, Cable & Streaming TV

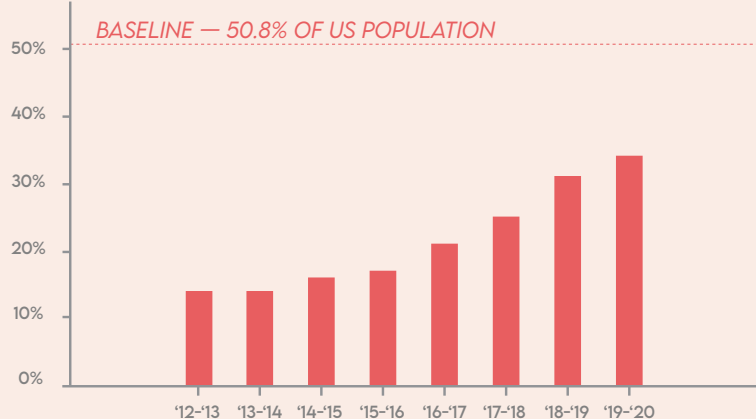
FIGURE 19: BIPOC TV SHOW CREATORS, 2012-2019



BIPOC TV CREATORS

SOURCE:
 2011-2019 UCLA, Top Broadcast TV

FIGURE 20: WOMEN TV SHOW DIRECTORS, 2012-2019



FEMALE TV DIRECTORS

SOURCE:
 2012-2020 Directors Guild of America, All Episodes in Season

BEHIND THE SCENES

For the past decade, the top television creators have been overwhelmingly male. From 2011 to 2020 we see little progress, with male TV show creators outnumbering female show creators three-to-one (72.0% compared with 28.0%).

Popular television from 2011 to 2019 has largely been made by white TV show creators, although we see a steady trend toward better BIPOC representation over time. In the past decade, the number of BIPOC writers increased from 4.2% to 10.7%.

The percentage of television episodes directed by women has more than doubled since the 2012/2013 season, but women remain underrepresented in this role compared to the US population. In the 2019/2020 season, male directors outnumbered female directors two-to-one (66.0% compared with 34.0%).

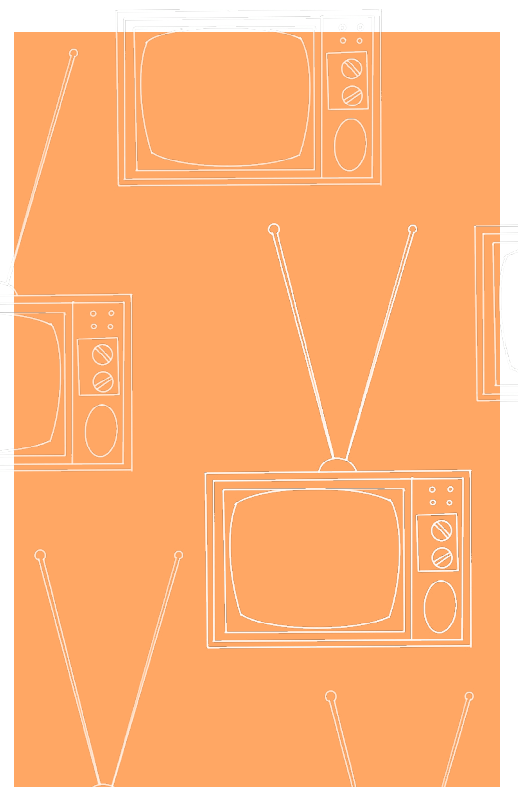
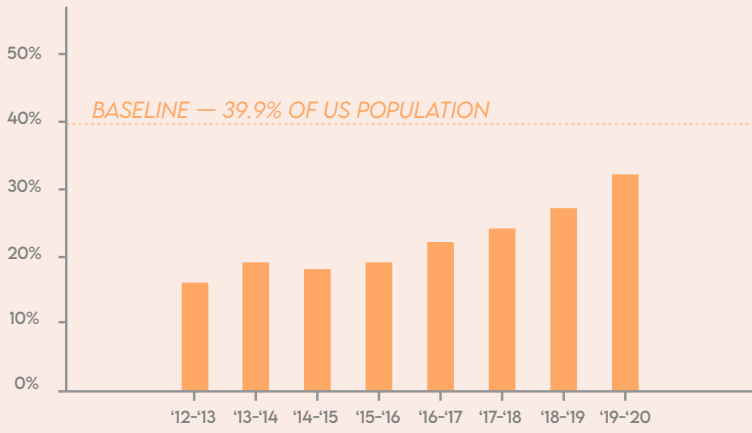


FIGURE 21: BIPOC TV SHOW DIRECTORS, 2012-2019

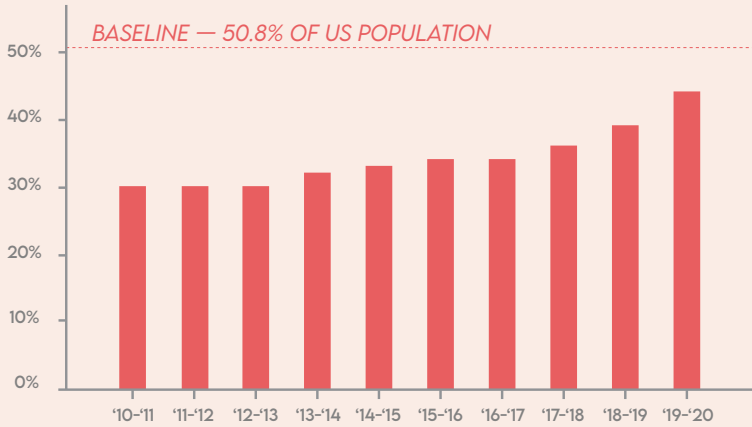


■ BIPOC TV DIRECTORS

SOURCE: 2012-2020 Directors Guild of America, All Episodes in Season

We have seen a steady increase in episodes directed by BIPOC directors since the 2012/2013 television season, bringing us closer to equitable representation. In the 2019/2020 season, twice as many episodes were directed by BIPOC people than in 2012/2013 (32.0% compared to 16.0%).

FIGURE 22: WOMEN TV SHOW WRITERS, 2010-2019

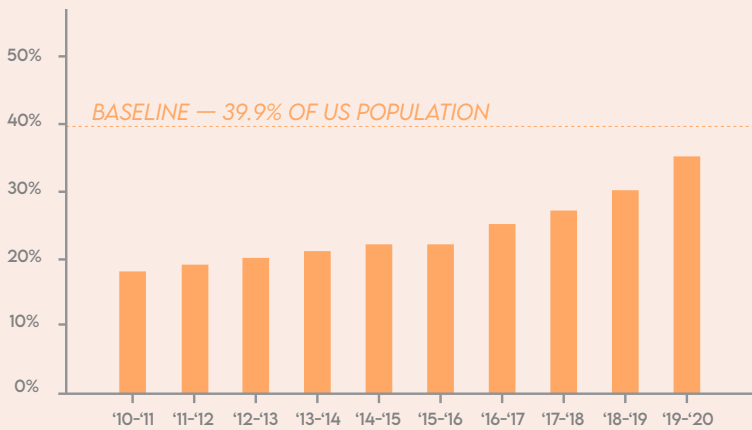


■ FEMALE TV WRITERS

SOURCE: 2010-2020 WGAW, Employed TV Writers

Over the past decade, the TV industry has seen a steady trend toward more women in the writer's room. While women writers remain underrepresented compared to the US population, they have made significant gains with the 2019/2020 season (44.0%).

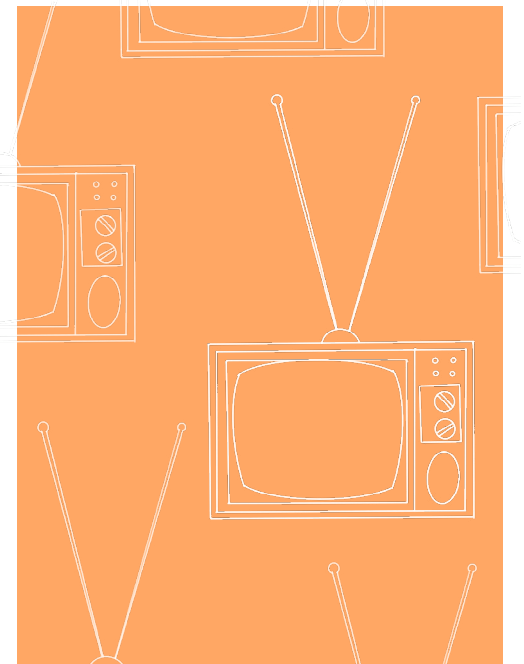
FIGURE 23: BIPOC TV SHOW WRITERS, 2010-2019



■ BIPOC TV WRITERS

SOURCE: 2010-2020 WGAW, Employed TV Writers

Similarly, the TV industry has seen significant progress when it comes to BIPOC writers. There are nearly double the number of BIPOC in the writer's room in the 2019/2020 season than there were at the start of the decade (35.0% compared to 18.0%). This steady upward trend foreshadows an equitable writer's room for BIPOC compared to the US population (39.9%) in the near future.



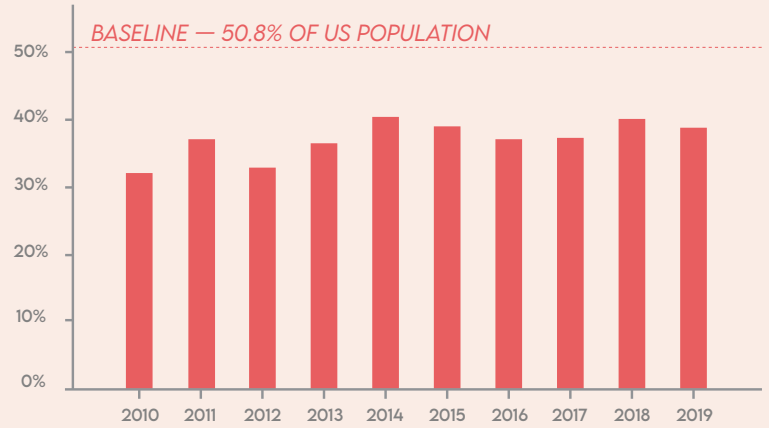
ADS

Male characters in advertising outnumber female characters two-to-one (61.4% compared with 38.6%), and this imbalance has not improved in the past decade.

Advertising has witnessed a significant increase in BIPOC character representation over time. BIPOC characters first achieved equitable representation in 2017 (41.4% compared to 39.9% of the US population).

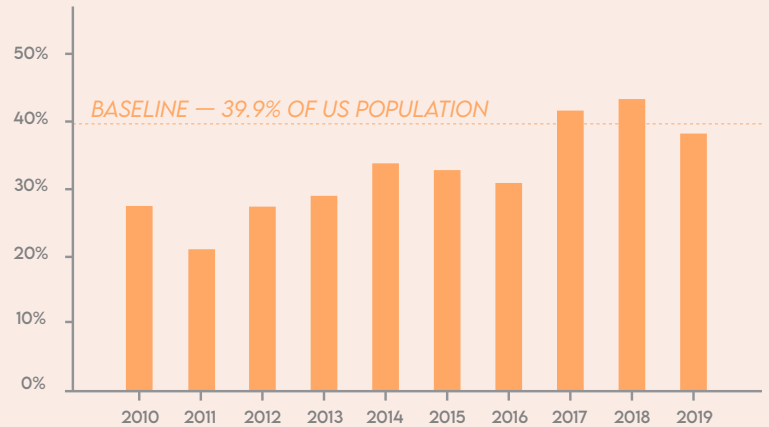
As the tables below indicate, we have little reputable research on representations of sexuality, ability, age, and body size in advertising. One study analyzing advertisements from 2019 finds that only 1.8% of characters were LGBTQ+, 2.2% of characters were shown with a disability, 7.0% of characters were ages 50+, and 7.2% of characters were fat.

FIGURE 24: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISING, 2010-2019



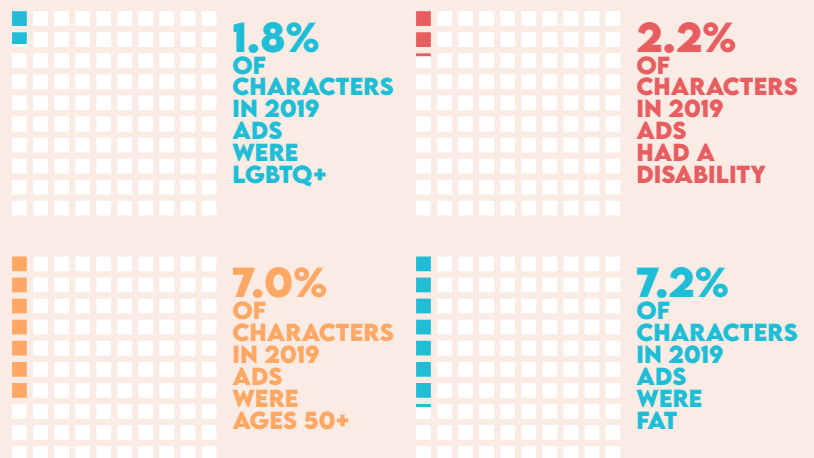
■ FEMALE CHARACTERS SOURCE: 2010-2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions Film/Film Craft Advertisements

FIGURE 25: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISING, 2010-2019



■ BIPOC CHARACTERS SOURCE: 2010-2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions Film/Film Craft Advertisements

FIGURE 26: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS, CHARACTERS 50+, CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES, & FAT CHARACTERS IN 2019 ADVERTISING



SOURCE: 2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions Film/Film Craft Advertisements



VIDEO GAMES

When it comes to gender representation in video games, a 2006 US study and a 2017 UK study both find that male characters vastly outnumber female characters.

White characters in video games outnumber BIPOC characters four-to-one in both the US and UK studies.

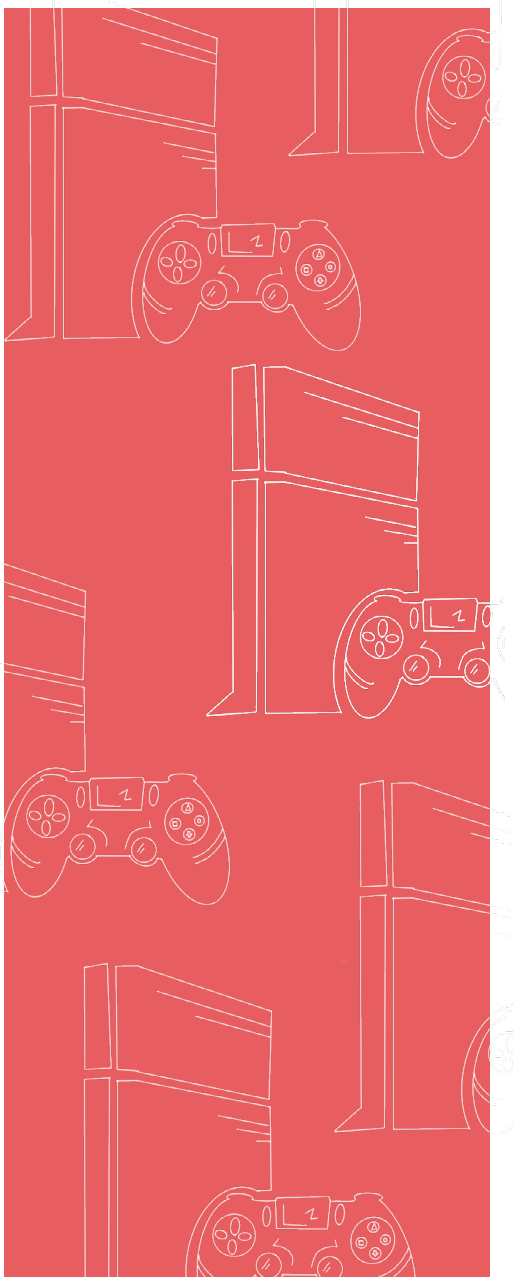
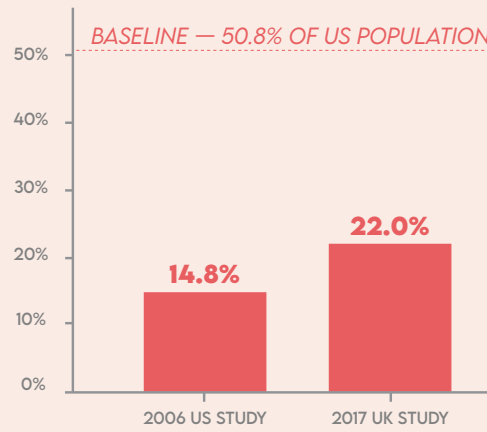


FIGURE 27: WOMEN VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS



■ FEMALE ARTISTS

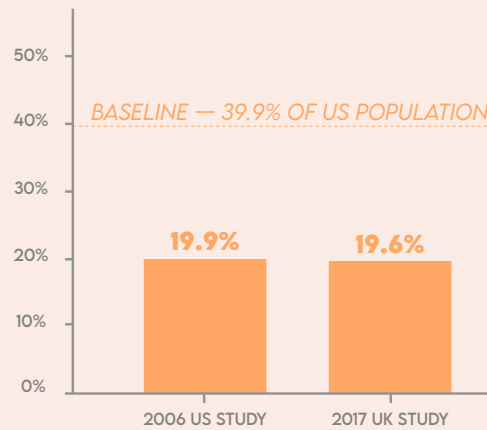
SOURCES:

Williams, D., Martins, N., Consalvo, M., & Ivory, J. D. (2009).

The virtual census: Representations of gender, race and age in video games. *New Media & Society*, 11(5), 815-834.

Harrison, A., Jones, S., Marchessault, J., Pedraça, S., & Consalvo, M. (2020). The Virtual Census 2.0: A Continued Investigation On The Representations of Gender, Race and Age in Videogames. *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, 2020.

FIGURE 28: BIPOC VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS



■ BIPOC CHARACTERS

SOURCES:

Williams, D., Martins, N., Consalvo, M., & Ivory, J. D. (2009).

The virtual census: Representations of gender, race and age in video games. *New Media & Society*, 11(5), 815-834.

Harrison, A., Jones, S., Marchessault, J., Pedraça, S., & Consalvo, M. (2020). The Virtual Census 2.0: A Continued Investigation On The Representations of Gender, Race and Age in Videogames. *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, 2020.

MUSIC

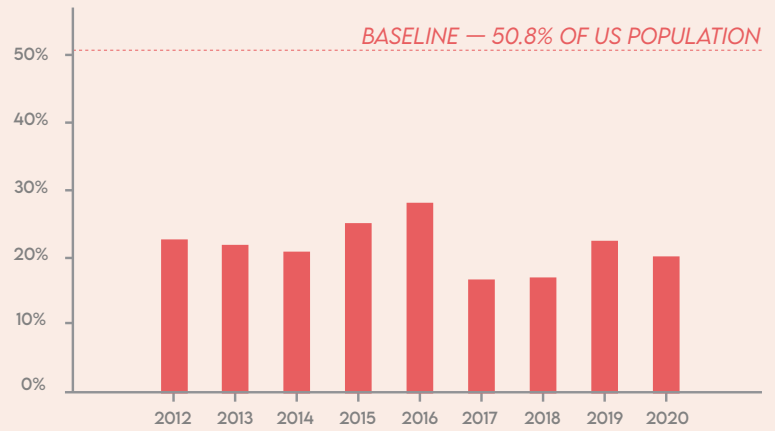
PERFORMERS

Although women make up half of the US population, female artists are underrepresented on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. We've seen no progress from 2012 to 2020 toward better gender representations.

BIPOC musical artists have seen equitable representations on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the majority of the past decade. Furthermore, BIPOC in the top Billboard hits have increased in the past decade.



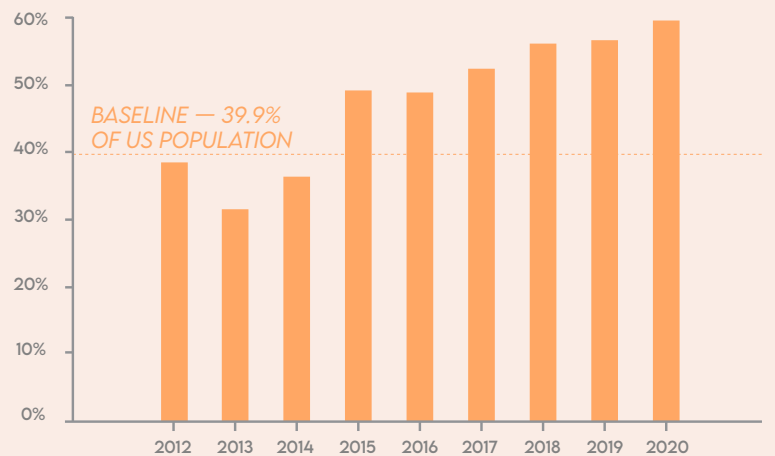
FIGURE 29: WOMEN ARTISTS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2020



■ FEMALE ARTISTS

SOURCE:
2012-2020 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

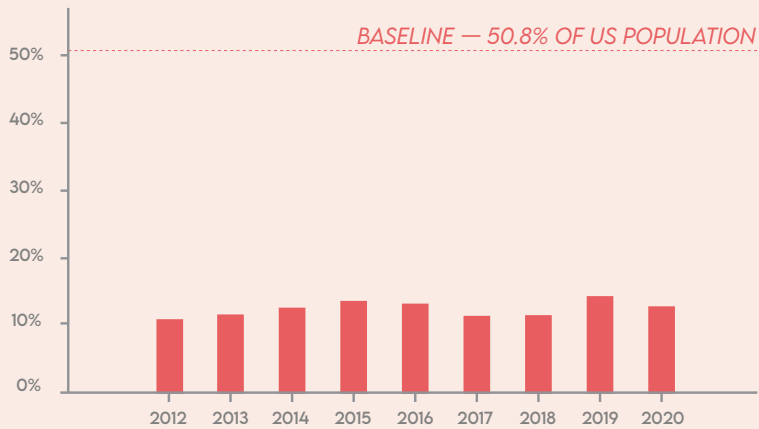
FIGURE 30: BIPOC ARTISTS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2020



■ BIPOC ARTISTS

SOURCE:
2012-2020 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

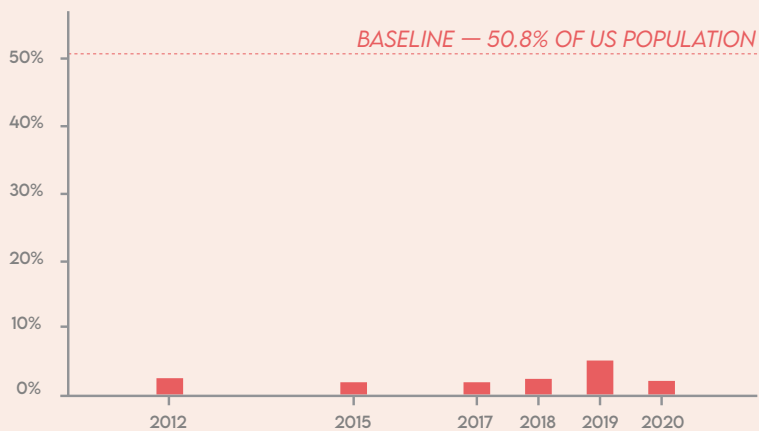
FIGURE 31: WOMEN SONGWRITERS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2020



FEMALE SONGWRITERS

SOURCE:
2012-2020 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

FIGURE 32: WOMEN MUSIC PRODUCERS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2020



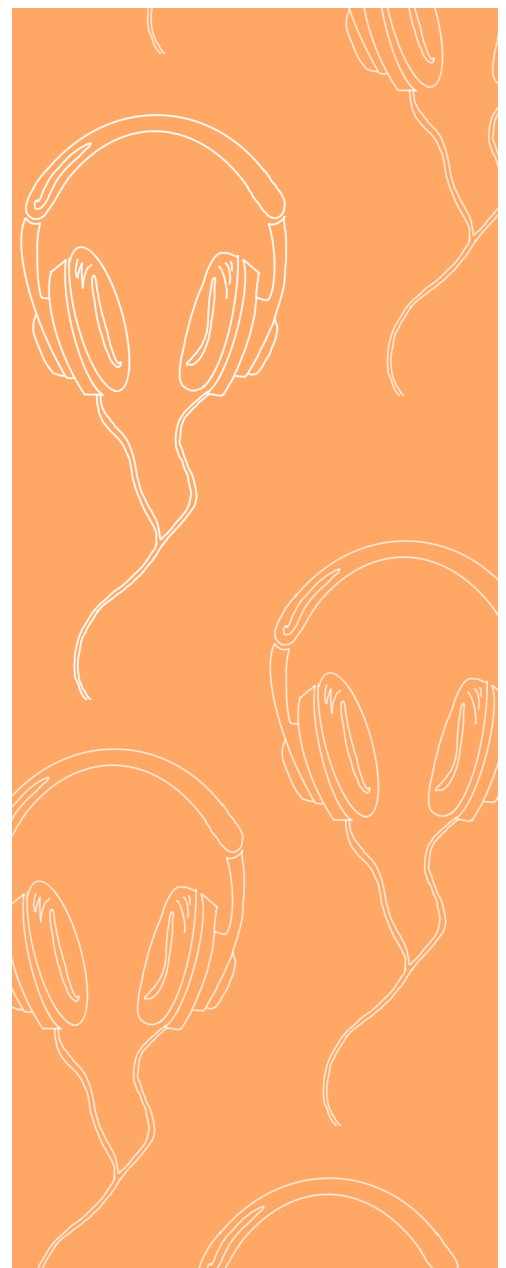
FEMALE MUSIC PRODUCERS

SOURCE:
2012-2020 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

BEHIND THE SCENES

Female songwriters are mostly missing in top Billboard songs, and have seen little to no progress over the course of the decade. In 2020, male songwriters outnumber female songwriters nearly seven-to-one (12.9% compared to 87.1%).

The majority of top Billboard songs from 2012 to 2020 were produced by men. In 2020, only 2.0% of music producers are women, which means they are virtually erased from this key decision-making role in music.



ACTION STEPS

Panelists and participants from the 2021 State of Media Summit came up with the following action steps to improve media representations:

- 1. PASS LEGISLATION AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL TO ADDRESS PERSISTENT DISCRIMINATION IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA HIRING PRACTICES.**
- 2. IMPLEMENT TAX CREDITS TO ENCOURAGE THE HIRING OF MORE DIVERSE CONTENT CREATORS.**
- 3. CREATE A CONSUMER ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN TO HOLD MEDIA COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR LACK OF DIVERSITY.**
- 4. LITIGATE TO HOLD MEDIA COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR DISCRIMINATORY HIRING AND PROJECT SELECTION PRACTICES.**
- 5. DEVELOP NEW FINANCING NETWORKS TO SUPPORT DIVERSE CONTENT CREATORS.**
- 6. DEVELOP A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE LACK OF DIVERSITY IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA.**