

THE REP PROJECT

#AllBodies Report

REPRESENTATIONS OF
FAT WOMEN & GIRLS
IN HOLLYWOOD



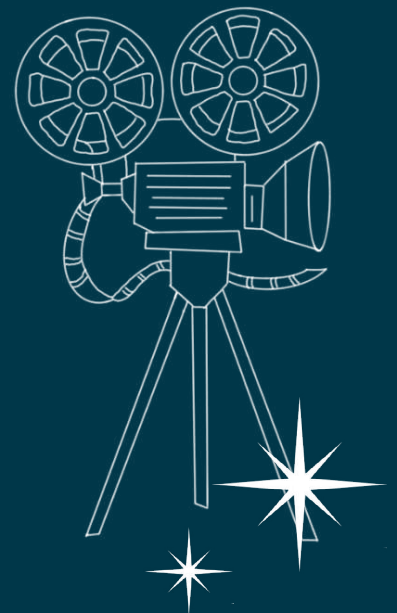
2022

MAJOR FINDINGS

This study examines representations of fat¹ women and girls in entertainment media. Few studies exist that analyze women of size in entertainment media, and what little research has been done typically analyzes women and fat people separately. This study is path breaking in that it is the first quantitative study of fat women's representations in entertainment media over time. We analyze leading, supporting, and minor fat women characters in the most popular films and television shows of the last decade. We employ an intersectional approach to analyze how representations of fat women vary by race, age, disability status, and sexuality.

FILM FINDINGS

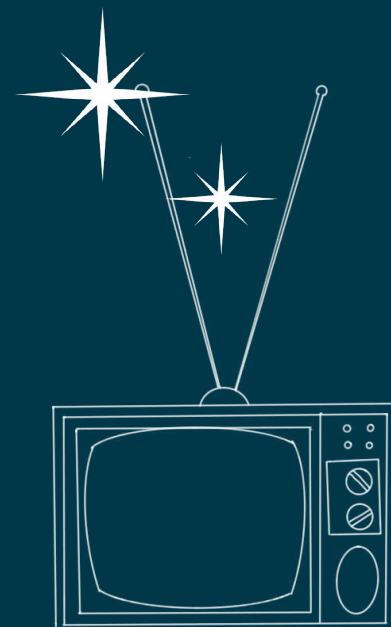
- Despite 42.5% of US women having large body types, no popular films from the past decade center around the life of a fat woman or girl.
- Fat women are also vastly underrepresented when it comes to overall characters in the most popular films (6.7%).
- We find large gaps in representation for all fat BIPOC² women characters except Black women (14.9%) and Asian women (8.5%) who are well-represented compared to the US population.
- No fat women in film are shown as LGBTQ+, a stark finding given LGBTQ+ people make up 7.1% of the US population.³
- Fat women characters 50+ are well-represented compared to the US population (37.9% compared to 34.2%).⁴
- There are no fat women characters in popular films who are depicted with a disability (compared to 26% of the US population who has a disability).⁵
- Non-fat women characters are nearly twice as likely as fat women characters to be depicted as "fashionable" (17.6% compared to 9.5%) and six times as likely to be portrayed as "better than average looking" (52.6% compared to 6.7%).
- Fat women are more likely than non-fat women characters to be depicted as "stupid" (4.8% compared to 2.9%).
- Fat women characters are twice as likely to be portrayed as funny than non-fat women characters in film (52.4% compared to 26.5%).
- Fat women characters are far more likely to be shown in a relationship than non-fat women characters (38.1% compared to 26%), but are less likely to be shown with one or more sexual partners (9.5% compared to 18.8%) or engaging in sexual activity (9.5% compared to 12.6%).
- Nearly one-in-three fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist stereotype (30%).
- One-in-ten popular films contain a sizeist slur (10.5%).



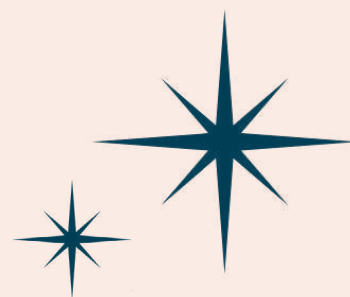
1. We are intentionally using the word "fat" because it is not an insult. We are part of a growing number of organizations and individuals reclaiming the word "fat." We celebrate bodies in whatever form they come, with bumps, stretch marks, and curves.
2. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
3. Jones, J. (2022). LGBT Identification in U.S. Ticks Up to 7.1%. Gallup, April 13, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>
4. 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
5. Centers for Disease Control (2020). Disability Impacts All of Us. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/documents/disabilities_impacts_all_of_us.pdf

TELEVISION FINDINGS

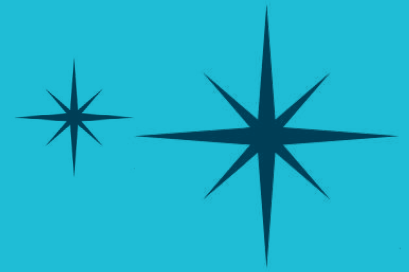
- Non-fat women leads in popular television outnumber fat women leads fourteen-to-one (93.7% compared to 6.3%).
- When it comes to overall characters, non-fat women also outnumber fat women fourteen-to-one in the top TV shows (93.4% compared to 6.6%).
- Fat Asian (0.9%), Latine (6.3%), Middle Eastern/North African (0%), and Native American/Pacific Islander (0%) women characters are vastly underrepresented compared to the US population.⁶
- Fat Black women are well-represented (34.2% compared to 13.4% of the population), and fat South Asian women are well-represented (0.9% compared to 0.1% of the population).⁷
- Only 2.7% of fat girls and women are shown as LGBTQ+, much lower than the 7.1% of LGBTQ+ women in the US.
- One-in-four (24.5%) fat women characters are ages 50+, which is well below the population figure of 34.2%.
- Only 0.9% of fat women characters in TV are depicted with a disability.
- Non-fat women characters are twice as likely as fat women characters to be depicted as “fashionable” (55% compared to 28%) and nearly eight times as likely to be portrayed as “better than average looking” (52.6% compared to 6.7%).
- Fat women are twice as likely as non-fat women characters to be depicted as “stupid” (4% compared to 1.7%).
- Fat women are more likely to be portrayed as funny than non-fat women (44% compared to 33.6%).
- Fat women characters are more likely to be shown in a relationship than non-fat women characters (28% compared to 25.5%), but are less likely to be shown with one or more sexual partners (6.7% compared to 10.6%) or engaging in sexual activity (4% compared to 7.7%).
- One-in-five fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist stereotype (21.3%).
- 2.6% of popular TV shows contain a sizeist slur.



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



FULL REPORT



INTRODUCTION

This study examines representations of fat women and girls in entertainment media over the last decade. It is the first quantitative, longitudinal study of representations of fat women and girls in entertainment media.

We begin this report with a summary of previous research on sizeism and representations of fat women and girls. We then describe the methodology, present our findings, and make recommendations for improving media representations for women and girls of size.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

People of size face fat stigma in numerous aspects of everyday life. US society glorifies “the thin ideal and denigration of its opposite,”⁸ and this “othering” of fat people is a social justice issue because it has profoundly negative effects on people of size. Sixty percent of fat women and 40% of fat men report employment discrimination,⁹ and fat people earn less on average than their non-fat colleagues.¹⁰ At school, eight-in-ten fat children are bullied for their size.¹¹ Fat stigma also runs rampant in the medical industry where one-in-four nurses report being “repulsed” by fat people, and people of size receive sub-par health care due to discrimination.¹²

The fight to eliminate fat stigma is critically important as nearly half of people in the US (42.5%) have large body types and are directly impacted by size discrimination.¹³ In addition to the financial cost of being fat, research finds that fatphobia leads to negative psychosocial consequences.¹⁴ Numerous studies have linked experiences of size discrimination to higher rates of substance abuse, anxiety, mood disorders, increased body hatred, struggles regulating emotions, maladaptive coping mechanisms, lower self-esteem, disordered eating, and psychological distress.¹⁵

Fatphobia impacts all people of size, but many scholars have unpacked the gendered nature of fat hatred by linking the denigration of fat men’s bodies with a fear of the feminine. Katariina Kyrölä explains that the “fat male body is coded as dangerously bordering on femininity, with visible breasts and a protruding belly. The loss of rigid bodily boundaries would mean the loss of rigid, naturalized gender differences.”¹⁶ Research also reveals that fat stigma disproportionately impacts fat women and girls. Using the workplace as an example, researchers find that fat women are sixteen times more likely to report sizeist employment discrimination than men,¹⁷ and they face wage penalties at much lower sizes than their male colleagues.¹⁸

8. Neumark-Sztainer, D. & Haines, J. (2004). Psychosocial and behavioral consequences of obesity. In J.K. Thompson (Ed.), *Handbook of Eating Disorders and Obesity* (pp.349-371). Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
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11. Chalker, A. E. (2014). *Weight Bias and Anti-Fat Attitudes: Sources, Impacts, and Prevention Methods*.
12. Chastain, R. (2014). *Are Fat People Really Oppressed?*, <https://danceswithfat.org/2014/05/09/are-fat-people-really-oppressed-2/>
13. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). *FastStats: Obesity and Overweight*, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>
14. Neumark-Sztainer, D. & Haines, J. (2004). Psychosocial and behavioral consequences of obesity. In J.K. Thompson (Ed.), *Handbook of Eating Disorders and Obesity* (pp.349-371). Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
15. Center for Discovery, (2022). *The Impact of Weight Stigma on Mental Health*, <https://centerfordiscovery.com/blog/the-impact-of-weight-stigma-on-our-mental-health/>
16. Kyrölä, K. (2021). *Fat in the Media*. In C. Pausé, & S. R. Taylor (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Fat Studies* (pp. 105-116). Routledge.
17. King, K., & Puhl, R., (2013). *Weight Bias: Does it Affect Men and Women Differently?* OAC, <https://www.obesityaction.org/resources/weight-bias-does-it-affect-men-and-women-differently/>
18. Spahlholz J, Baer N, König HH, Riedel-Heller SG, Luck-Sikorski C. Obesity and discrimination – a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Obes Rev*. 2016 Jan;17(1):43-55.

Media representations are a major driver of fatphobia in the US. Media has the power to create and perpetuate sizeist stereotypes that reinforce harmful societal values and conventional beauty standards. Studies find that consuming just thirty minutes of entertainment media can alter girls' and women's perception of their bodies,¹⁹ and that there is a link between media consumption and the desire to be thin.²⁰

The field of Fatness Studies emerged in the late 20th century in response to harmful media depictions of fat people, especially in reality television. This field has produced a body of scholarly work on representations of fatness in entertainment media. Scholars find that fat girls and women have a history of being erased in film and TV. A study from 1986 found that only 5% of women TV characters had large body types, while 69% of women TV characters were "thin."²¹ A follow-up study from 1999 found that only 7% of women TV characters had large body types.²² Fat women and girls face further erasure when it comes to actual screen time, accounting for only 1.7% of primetime viewing hours.²³ Our study updates these findings to see whether progress has been made when it comes to inclusion of fat characters.

When fat women and girls are represented in media, they are often verbally degraded and depicted in stereotypical ways. A content analysis of prime time situation comedies from 2000 found that the larger a woman character's body is, the more negative comments she receives from men characters.²⁴ Further, men characters are three times as likely as women characters to make fatphobic comments on screen (75% compared to 25%).²⁵ Fat women characters are rarely portrayed as romantic interests and are frequently treated as "sexually unappealing."²⁶ They are often depicted as "sidekicks," and are used as "props against which thinner women are compared, judged, and valued."²⁷ Additionally, fat women characters are depicted as "laughable" and "unintelligent."²⁸

In this study, we are interested in exploring whether media representations play a role in reinforcing harmful stereotypes of fat women and girls. Previous studies on this topic find that entertainment media perpetuates fat stigma by erasing fat women and presenting them with harmful stereotypes. We present findings for both forms of fat stigma below.

19. Myers, P. N., & Biocca, F. A. (1992). The elastic body image: The effect of television advertising and programming on body image distortions in young women. *Journal of Communication*, 42, 108-133.
20. Levine, M. P., Smolak, L., & Hayden, H. (1994). The relation of socio-cultural factors to eating attitudes and behaviours among middle school girls. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14, 471-490.
21. Silverstein, B., Perdue, L., Peterson, B., & Kelly, I. (1986). The role of mass media in promoting a thin standard of bodily attractiveness for women. *Sex Roles*, 14, 519-532.
22. Fouts, G., & Burggraf, K. (1999). Television Situation Comedies: Female Body Images and Verbal Reinforcements. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 40, Nos. 5/6.
23. Giovanelli, D., & Ostertag, O. (2009). Controlling the Body: Media Representations, Body Size and Self-Discipline. *The Fat Studies Reader*, NYU Press.
24. Fouts, G., & Burggraf, K. (2000). Television Situation Comedies: Female Weight, Male Negative Comments, and Audience Reactions. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 42, Nos. 9/10.
25. Himes, S., (2005). Fat Commentary and Fat Humor Presented in Visual Media: A Content Analysis. *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*, University of South Florida.
26. Giovanelli, D., & Ostertag, O. (2009). Controlling the Body: Media Representations, Body Size and Self-Discipline. *The Fat Studies Reader*, NYU Press.
27. Ibid.
28. Kyrölä, K. (2021). Fat in the Media. In C. Pausé, & S. R. Taylor (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Fat Studies* (pp. 105-116). Routledge.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology we used to produce the data in this report is content analysis, an approach that is ideal for systematically analyzing the content of communications. We generated a film dataset and a television dataset.

Our film dataset includes 1,008 women characters from the top grossing films from 2011 to 2021. The top ten films from each year were identified using data from Box Office Mojo and include both live-action and animated films.

Our TV dataset includes 1,693 women characters in the most watched television programs from the 2010-2011 season to the 2020-2021 season. The top ten most popular shows from each year were identified using Nielsen rankings, as reported by *Variety*, and include both live-action and animation.

All reported differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. We generated the data in this report using a team of six researchers who systematically evaluated the films and television shows. Prior to initiating the work, the research team engaged in a total of 20 hours of training and codebook development, for a total of 120 training hours. The team also performed tests to measure inter-rater reliability. Inter-rater reliability was achieved in terms of both absolute agreement and Fleiss' Kappa measures.

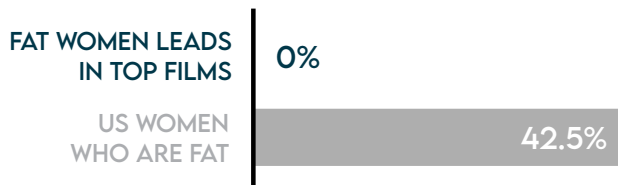
FILM ANALYSIS

In this section, we present the findings on representations of fat women and girls in the most popular films from 2011 to 2021. We present findings for quantity of representation, intersectional representation, and quality of representation.

QUANTITY OF REPRESENTATION

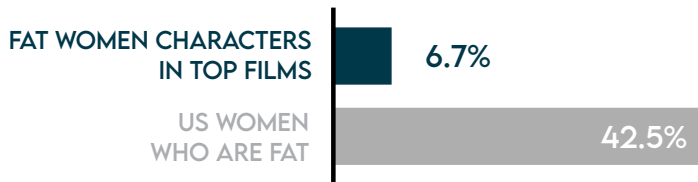
42.5% of girls and women in the US are fat, but there are no fat women leads in the top films of the last decade. This means that the most popular films with women leads consistently center the lives of non-fat women.

FIGURE 1: FAT WOMEN LEADS IN TOP FILMS



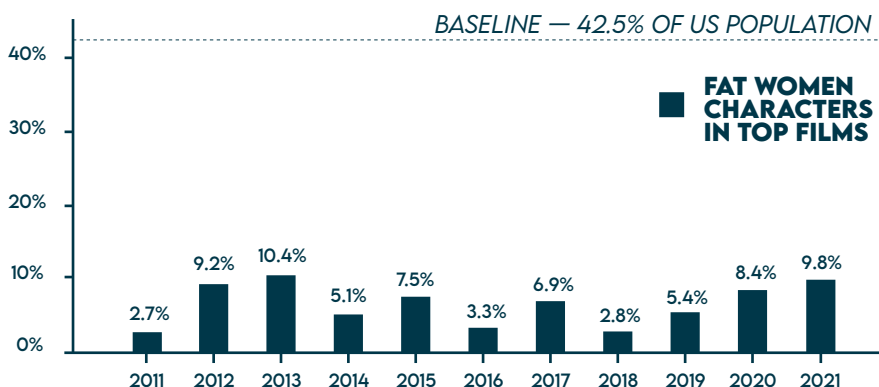
Fat women and girls are also vastly underrepresented when it comes to overall characters in the most popular films (6.7% compared to 42.5%).

FIGURE 2: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS



Despite women characters in popular films being overwhelmingly non-fat, when we take a closer look at the last decade by year, we observe that the decade ended with three times as many fat characters than it started with (9.8% in 2021 compared to 2.7% in 2011). It is important to note that the number of fat women characters has fluctuated in the past decade rather than showing a steady increase.

FIGURE 3: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2011-2021, BY YEAR

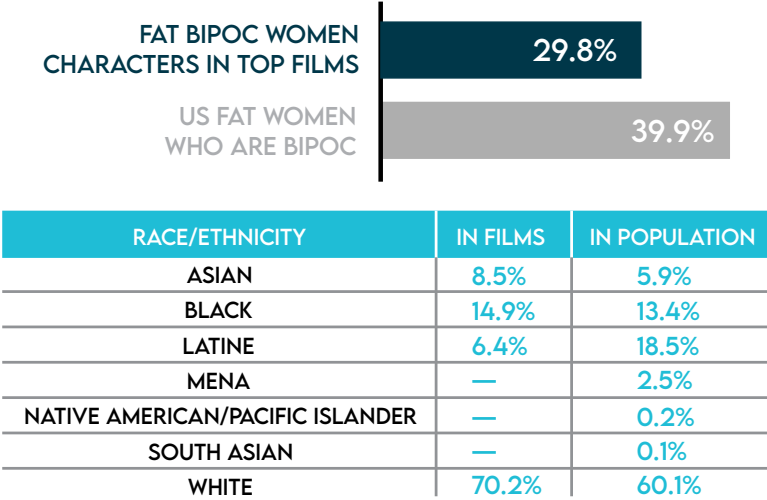


INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

While few studies have sought to explore the specific representations of fat women and girls in Hollywood, very little quantitative research has gone beyond the intersections of body size and gender to measure portrayals of fat women and girls with additional marginalized identities. We find some intersectional diversity when it comes to depictions of fat girls and women in film.

Fat BIPOC girls and women are underrepresented in the top films compared to the US population (29.8% compared with 39.9%). When it comes to the details of how fat BIPOC women are erased in film, we find large gaps in representation for all fat BIPOC women characters except Black women (14.9%) and Asian women (8.5%) who are well-represented compared to the US population (13.4% and 5.9% respectively).

FIGURE 4: FAT BIPOC WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS



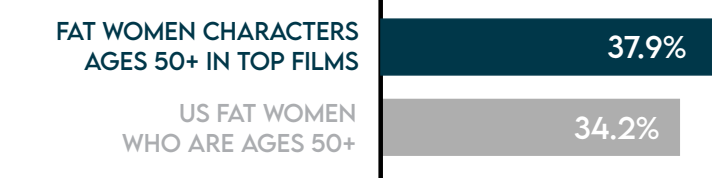
When it comes to sexuality, no fat women characters in film are shown as LGBTQ+, a stark finding given LGBTQ+ people make up 7.1% of the US population.

FIGURE 5: FAT LGBTQ+ WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS

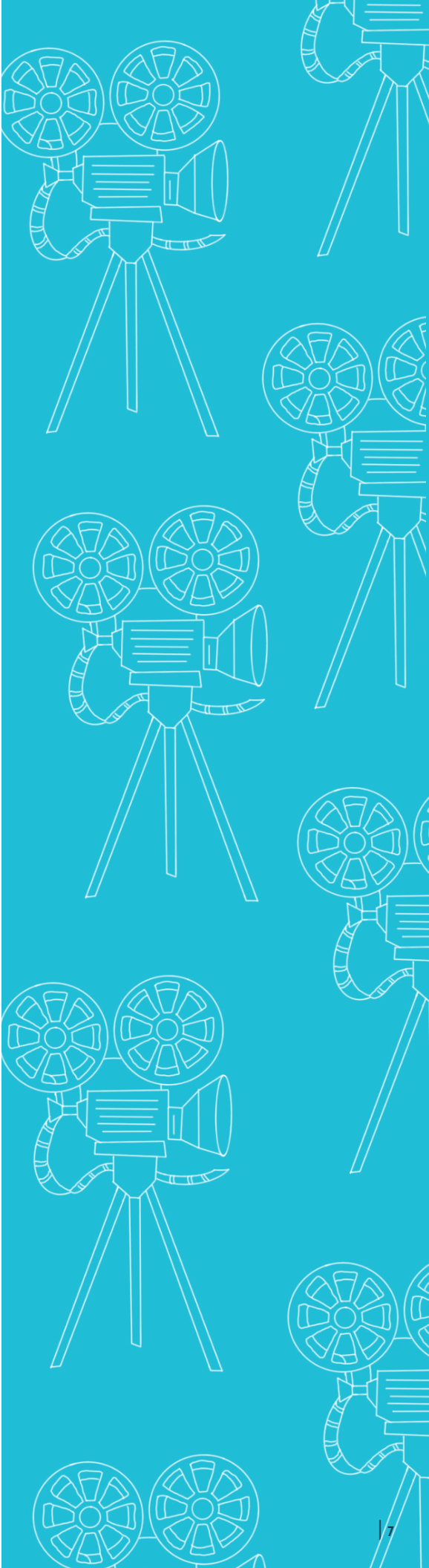


When it comes to age, fat women characters ages 50+ are well-represented in popular films compared to the US population (37.9% compared to 34.2%)

FIGURE 6: FAT WOMEN 50+ CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS



Just over one-in-four people in the US have a disability (26%), but there are no fat women characters in the most popular films of the



last decade who are depicted with a cognitive, communication, physical, or mental health disability.

FIGURE 7: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP FILMS



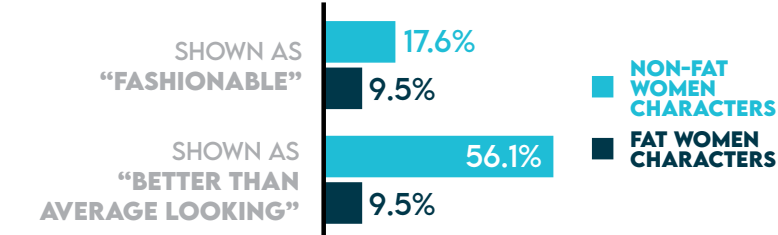
QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

Another way of understanding how entertainment media signals the importance of various groups is by the quality of their representation. In this section, we summarize findings pertaining to appearance, character traits, romance and sex, as well as sizeist tropes, stereotypes, and fatphobic slurs. We compare fat women character representations to non-fat women characters to highlight differences in portrayals that are specific to fat women and girls.

Appearance

We analyzed differences in appearance by body size and gender, with a focus on attire and attractiveness. Non-fat women characters are nearly twice as likely as fat women characters to be depicted as “fashionable” (17.6% compared to 9.5%). Non-fat women characters are nearly six times as likely as fat women characters to be portrayed as “better than average looking” (52.6% compared to 6.7%). These findings mean that fat women characters are not presented as physically attractive as often as other women characters, which reinforces the stereotype of fat women as less feminine or desirable by societal standards.

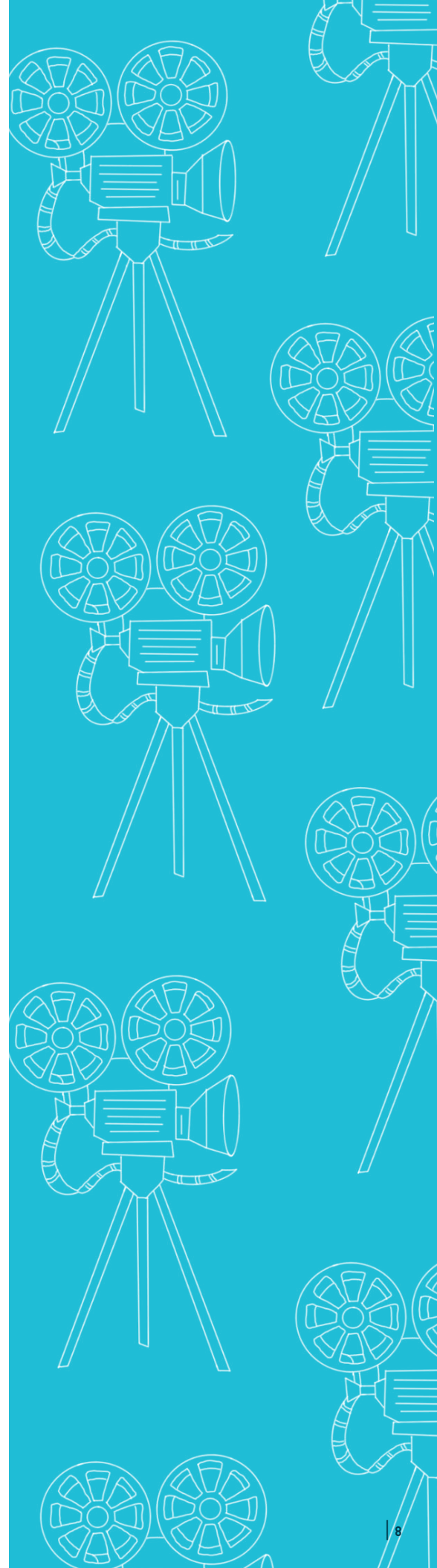
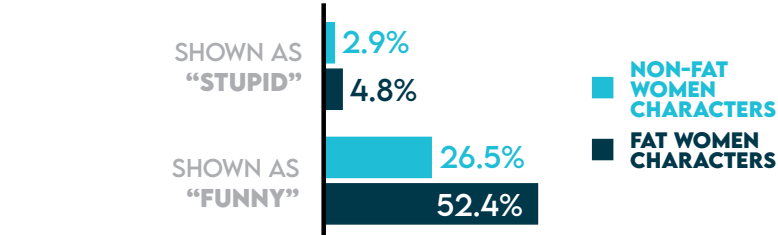
FIGURE 8: WOMEN’S APPEARANCE BY BODY SIZE IN TOP FILMS



Character Traits

We also analyzed differences in character traits by body size and gender, with a focus on intelligence and humor. Fat women are more likely than non-fat women characters to be depicted as “stupid” (4.8% compared to 2.9%). This finding reinforces the sizeist “Loser” trope which portrays fat people as unintelligent. Fat women characters are twice as likely to be portrayed as funny than non-fat women characters in film (52.4% compared to 26.5%). This finding reinforces the common “Comic Relief” trope of fat people in media.

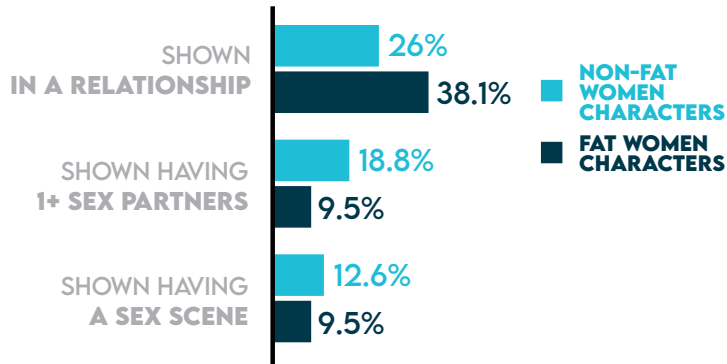
FIGURE 9: WOMEN’S CHARACTER TRAITS BY BODY SIZE IN TOP FILMS



Relationships & Sex

When it comes to romantic relationships and sex, we find that fat women are more likely to be shown in a relationship, but less likely to be depicted as sexual beings. Fat women characters are far more likely to be shown in a marriage or committed relationship than non-fat women characters (38.1% compared to 26%), but are less likely to be shown with one or more sexual partners (9.5% compared to 18.8%) or engaging in sexual activity (9.5% compared to 12.6%).

FIGURE 10: WOMEN'S ROMANCE & SEX BY BODY SIZE IN TOP FILMS



Tropes, Stereotypes, & Slurs

In this section we summarize the findings of an extensive analysis of tropes, stereotypes, and slurs. One-in-four fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist trope. The most common sizeist tropes are the "Comic Relief" trope (20% of fat women characters), the "Mamma Hen" trope (10% of fat women characters), the "Sidekick" trope (5% of fat women characters), and the "Loser" trope (5%).

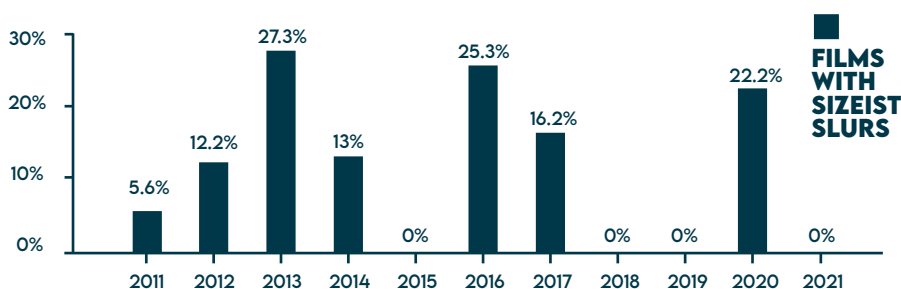
Nearly one-in-three fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist stereotype (30%). The most common sizeist stereotypes are the "Funny" stereotype (10%), the "Jolly" stereotype (10%), and the "Clumsy" stereotype (5%).

FIGURE 11: FAT WOMEN TROPES & STEREOTYPES IN TOP FILMS

SIZEIST DEPICTION	% FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS
SHOWN WITH A SIZEIST TROPE	25%
SHOWN WITH A SIZEIST STEREOTYPE	30%

Even with fat women characters largely missing from the top films of the last decade, sizeist language is still used to put down characters of all body sizes. We find that one-in-ten films contain at least one sizeist slur (e.g., "fatass," "fatso," "fatty," etc.). We observe positive progress when we take a closer look each year, with films three of the past five years being completely free of sizeist slurs.

FIGURE 12: SIZEIST SLURS IN TOP FILMS, 2011-2021, BY YEAR



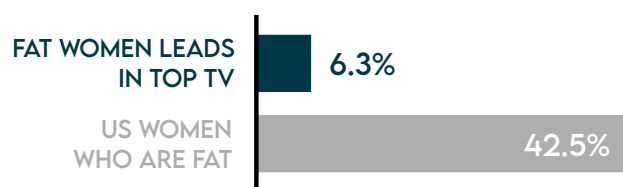
TELEVISION ANALYSIS

In this section, we present the findings of the same analysis using the most popular TV shows from the 2010-2011 season to the 2020-2021 season. We present findings for quantity of representation, intersectional representation, and quality of representation.

QUANTITY OF REPRESENTATION

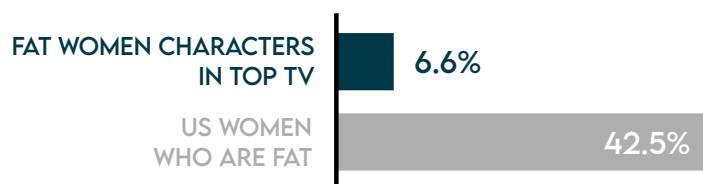
Figure 13 shows that fat women are vastly underrepresented when it comes to leading roles in popular television. Despite 42.5% of women in the US having large body types, non-fat women outnumbered fat women leads fourteen-to-one over the last decade (6.3% compared to 42.5%).

FIGURE 13: FAT WOMEN LEADS IN TOP TV



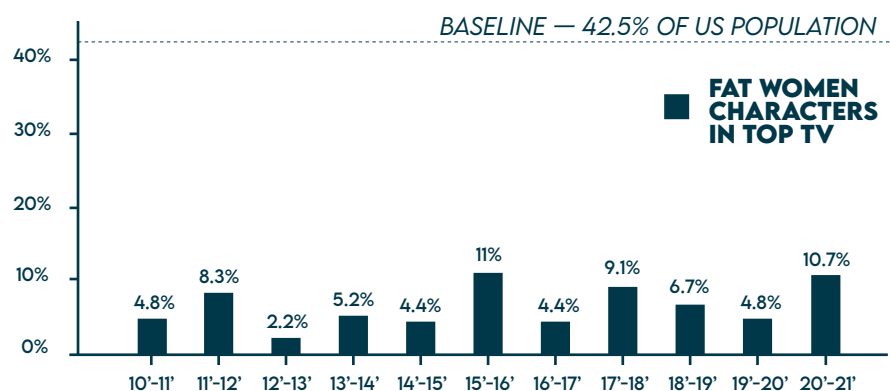
Non-fat women outnumber fat women fourteen-to-one when it comes to overall characters in the most popular television series (93.4% compared to 6.6%).

FIGURE 14: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV



Despite women TV characters being overwhelmingly non-fat, when we take a closer look at the last decade by year we observe that the 2020-2021 TV season had twice as many fat women characters as the 2010-2011 TV season (10.7% compared to 4.8%). It is important to note that the number of fat women characters has fluctuated in the past decade rather than showing a steady increase.

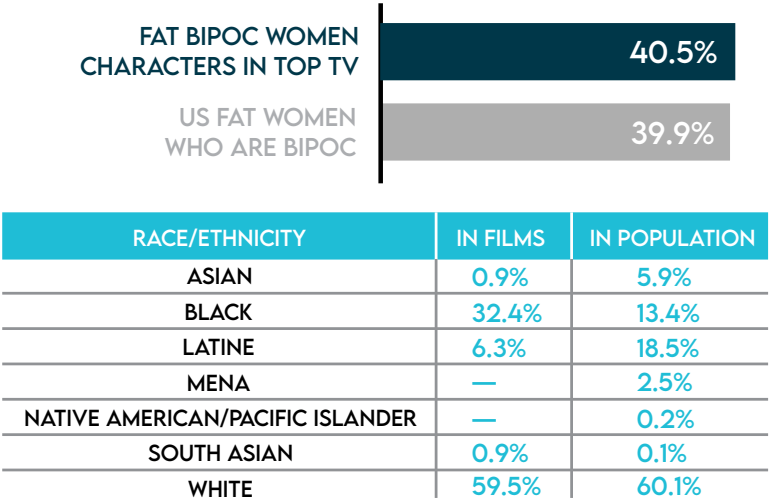
FIGURE 15: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2011-2021, BY YEAR



INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

The percentage of fat BIPOC girls and women in TV matches the US population (40.5% compared with 39.9%). When it comes to the details of how fat BIPOC women are depicted on TV, we find large gaps in representation for all BIPOC women characters except fat Black women, who show up at more than double the rate of the US population (32.4% compared to 13.4%), and South Asian women (0.9% compared to 0.1%).

FIGURE 16: FAT BIPOC WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV



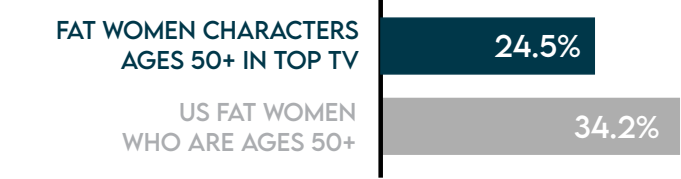
When it comes to sexuality, only 2.7% of fat girls and women are shown as LGBTQ+ (much lower than the 7.1% of LGBTQ+ women in the population).

FIGURE 17: FAT LGBTQ+ WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV



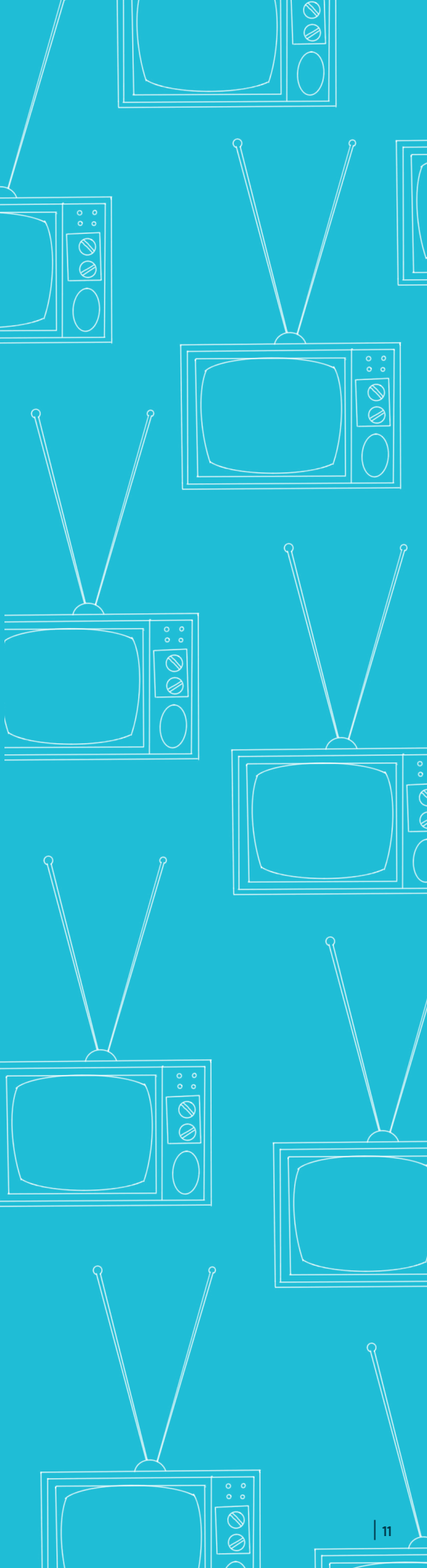
About one-in-four (24.5%) fat women characters are ages 50+, which is also well below the population figure of 34.2%.

FIGURE 18: FAT WOMEN 50+ CHARACTERS IN TOP TV



Just over one-in-four people in the US have a disability (26%), but only 0.9% of fat women characters in TV are depicted with a cognitive, communication, physical, or mental health disability.

FIGURE 19: FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP TV



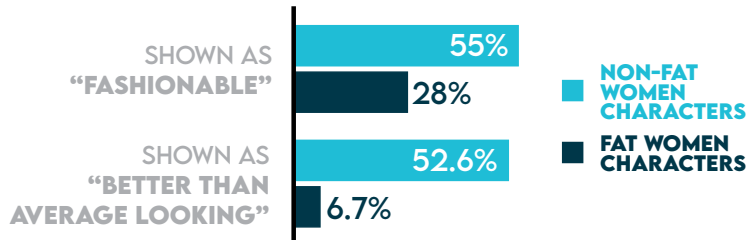
QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

In this section, we report findings from the most-watched TV shows from the 2010-2011 season to the 2020-2021 season in terms of character traits, romance and sex, tropes and stereotypes, and slurs.

Appearance

When it comes to differences in appearance by body size and gender, non-fat women characters are twice as likely as fat women characters to be depicted as “fashionable” (55% compared to 28%) and nearly eight times as likely as fat women characters to be portrayed as “better than average looking” (52.6% compared to 6.7%).

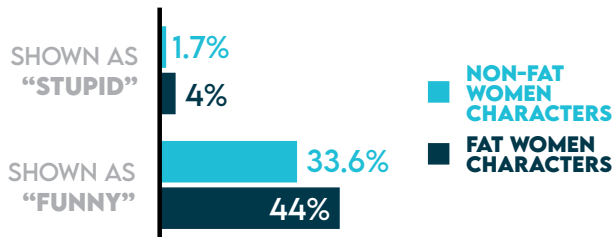
FIGURE 20: WOMEN’S APPEARANCE BY BODY SIZE IN TOP TV



Character Traits

We find that when it comes to differences in character traits by body size and gender, fat women are twice as likely as non-fat women characters to be depicted as “stupid” (4% compared to 1.7%), and are more likely to be portrayed as funny than non-fat women characters (44% compared to 33.6%).

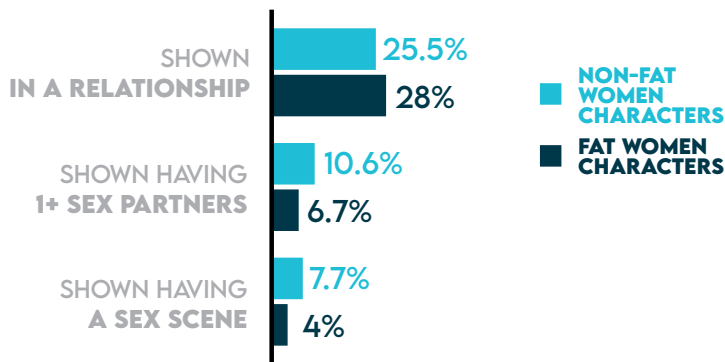
FIGURE 21: WOMEN’S CHARACTER TRAITS BY BODY SIZE IN TOP TV



Relationships & Sex

Similar to the film findings, we find that in popular TV fat women are more likely to be shown in a relationship and less likely to be depicted as sexual beings. Fat women characters are more likely to be shown in a marriage or committed relationship than non-fat women characters (28% compared to 25.5%), but are less likely to be shown with one or more sexual partners (6.7% compared to 10.6%) or engaging in sexual activity (4% compared to 7.7%).

FIGURE 22: WOMEN’S ROMANCE & SEX BY BODY SIZE IN TOP TV



Tropes, Stereotypes, & Slurs

In this section we summarize the findings of an extensive analysis of tropes, stereotypes, and slurs. One-in-five (18.7%) fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist trope. The most common sizeist tropes are the “Comic Relief” trope (16% of fat women characters), the “Mamma Hen” trope (4% of fat women characters), and the “Nympho” trope (1.3% of fat women characters).

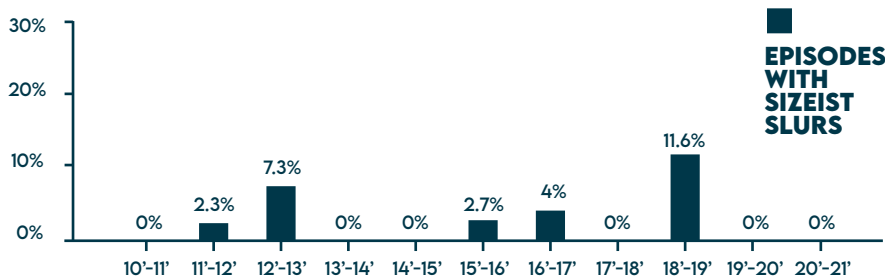
One-in-five fat women characters are depicted with at least one sizeist stereotype (21.3%). The most common sizeist stereotypes are the “Funny” stereotype (14.7%), the “Loser” stereotype (4% of fat women characters), the “Jolly” stereotype (1.3%), and the “Poorly Dressed” stereotype (1.3%).

FIGURE 23: FAT WOMEN TROPES & STEREOTYPES IN TOP TV

SIZEIST DEPICTION	% FAT WOMEN CHARACTERS
SHOWN WITH A SIZEIST TROPE	18.7%
SHOWN WITH A SIZEIST STEREOTYPE	21.3%

Although fat characters are largely erased and portrayed in problematic ways, we find that only 2.6% of the top television episodes from the last decade contain a sizeist slur (e.g., “fatass,” “fatso,” “fatty,” etc.). It is important to note that in some years, sizeist slurs are far more common.

FIGURE 24: SIZEIST SLURS IN TOP TV, 2011-2021, BY YEAR



CONCLUSION

Our analysis demonstrates that entertainment media reinforces fat stigma and sexism by erasing and stereotyping fat women and girls. Our findings are remarkably consistent across film and television. Even though 42.5% of US women have large body types, no popular films and only 6% of popular TV shows center the life of a fat woman or girl. Overall, fat women account for only 6.7% of film characters and 6.6% of TV show characters.

While fat Black women are well-represented in both film and television compared to the US population, we find large gaps in representation for other fat BIPOC women, fat LGBTQ+ women, and fat women with disabilities. Fat women characters ages 50+ are well-represented in film (37.9%), but underrepresented in television (24.5% compared to 34.2% of the US population).

When it comes to the quality of representation, fat women characters in both film and television are far less likely than non-fat women characters to be portrayed as “fashionable” or “better than average looking,” and far more likely than non-fat women characters to be portrayed as “stupid” or “funny.” While fat women characters in both film and television are more likely to be shown in a committed relationship, they are less likely to be shown with sexual partners or engaging in sexual activity. Nearly one-in-three fat women film characters and one-in-five fat women TV characters are depicted with at least one sizeist stereotype (30% and 21.3%, respectively). While we observe progress over the last decade, one-in-ten popular films contain a sizeist slur (10.5%). Just under 3% of popular TV shows contain a sizeist slur.

ACTION STEPS FOR CONTENT CREATORS

- **Don't** use fat stereotypes and tropes (e.g., the "Loser," the "Mamma Hen," the "Comic Relief," etc.) in writing, casting, and content production.
- **Don't** depict fat women and girls as sidekicks to non-fat characters.
- **Don't** depict fat women as frumpy and unattractive.
- **Don't** depict fat women as stupid.
- **Don't** reduce fat women and girls to comedic relief.
- **Don't** use sizeist language and fat slurs, whether or not a fat character is on screen.
- **Do** write and produce stories that center the lives of fat women and girls.
- **Do** depict fat women and girls with meaningful character development and storylines that are taken seriously.
- **Do** depict fat women as sexual beings.

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Representation Project is a leading global gender justice non-profit organization. We use films, education, research, and activism to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes. In 2011, Jennifer Siebel Newsom founded The Rep Project in response to the overwhelming public demand for ongoing education and social action in support of her first film, *Miss Representation*. Since then, Siebel Newsom has released two more acclaimed films, *The Mask You Live In* (2015) and *The Great American Lie* (2019). Her latest film, *Fair Play*, premiered earlier this year. The organization also runs a global youth filmmaker program to train the next generation of change agents. The Rep Project is also known for its impactful social activism campaigns, including #NotBuyingIt, #AskHerMore, and #RepresentHer.

FOR MORE, VISIT WWW.THEREPPROJECT.ORG