

THE REP PROJECT'S

2024 OSCAR REPORT

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Academy Awards have made progress in terms of diversity and inclusion. To this end, we analyze representations of gender, race, disability, and LGBTQ+ status for leading characters and directors of Best Picture nominees and winners from nearly a century—95 years—of the Oscars. We examine Best Picture winners because this is the most prestigious award of the evening, and as such, has the most significance in signaling whose inclusion matters the most. We find substantial progress when it comes to race and gender inclusion in Best Picture winners.

First, some context. In 2015, the #OscarsSoWhite movement pushed for greater racial diversity in the awards. Lawyer, editor, and activist April Reign launched the campaign with a tweet on January 15, 2015, right after the Oscars were announced: “#OscarsSoWhite they asked to touch my hair.” This tweet went viral, as did a later tweet Reign posted that linked this campaign to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Shortly after the #OscarsSoWhite viral phenomenon, the hashtag #OscarsSoMale was trending, calling for more gender inclusion. In 2017, the #MeToo movement was also launched with a tweet, and in 2018, women in Hollywood created the #TimesUp campaign to demand greater gender inclusion.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences responded to pressure from outside organizers and industry insiders. They increased their female membership from 25% in 2015 to 34% today, and members of color from 8% to 18% today.¹ This year is the first year of the Academy’s new inclusion standards for Best Picture mandating that films must meet basic diversity requirements on the screen and behind the scenes to even be nominated.²

Our analysis finds this push for inclusion has generated more diversity in terms of race and gender, a testament to what can happen when Hollywood prioritizes inclusion *and* excellence.



IN 95 YEARS OF BEST PICTURE WINNERS

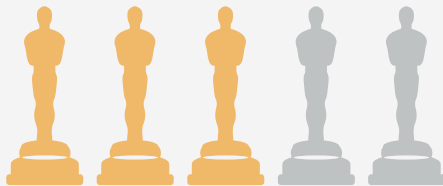
27.6%
FEATURE WOMEN LEADS

9.4%
FEATURE BIPOC LEADS

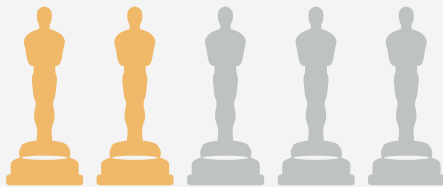
0.8%
FEATURE LGBTQ+ LEADS

4.7%
FEATURE DISABLED LEADS

IN THE PAST 5 YEARS OF BEST PICTURE WINNERS



THREE FEATURE WOMEN LEADS



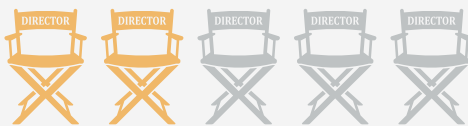
TWO FEATURE BIPOC LEADS

IN 95 YEARS OF BEST PICTURE WINNERS

4.2%
HAVE WOMEN DIRECTORS

8.4%
HAVE BIPOC DIRECTORS

IN THE PAST 5 YEARS OF BEST PICTURE WINNERS



TWO HAVE WOMEN DIRECTORS



TWO HAVE BIPOC DIRECTORS

KEY FINDINGS

- To date, only one-in-four Best Picture nominees (28.7%) and winners (27.6%) revolve around the life of a woman.
- Gender representations have greatly improved in the past five years, with the last three winning films centering the lives of women characters (*Nomadland*, 2021, *CODA*, 2022, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023).
- In Oscar history, only 6.9% of all Best Picture nominees and 9.4% of Best Picture winners feature stories about the lives of BIPOC.
- Representations of race have improved in the past five years, with two films centering the lives of BIPOC characters (*Parasite*, 2020 and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2024).
- Only 2% of Best Picture nominees feature an LGBTQ+ lead. Only one Best Picture winner has ever featured an LGBTQ+ lead (*Moonlight*, 2017).³
- Only 4.7% of nominated and winning films feature a lead with a disability.
- Every Best Picture winner of the 20th century was directed by a white man.
- Major progress has been made for BIPOC directors with three of the last five winning films being directed by BIPOC directors (*Parasite*, 2020, *Nomadland*, 2021, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023).
- We see progress in the past five years for women directors, who directed two out of the five most recent winning films (*Nomadland*, 2021, and *CODA*, 2022).

FULL REPORT

Lead Analysis

Women make up over half the US population,⁴ but just over one-in-four leads/co-leads (hereafter referred to as “leads”) in Best Picture nominees (28.7%) and winners (27.6%). This means the Oscar for Best Picture is almost always awarded to films that tell stories of men’s lives and their experiences.

When we look at the percentage of women in leading roles, we find an underrepresentation of women for nine decades, but rapid progress in the last five years. Three of the last five Best Picture winners center the stories of women (*Nomadland*, 2021, *CODA*, 2022, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023). These wins are especially notable given that they came from a limited nominee pool with only one-in-four (26.5%) films featuring women leads in the past five years.

When it comes to race/ethnicity, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) are nearly 40% of the US population but only 6.9% of leads in films nominated for the Best Picture category. Only 9.4% of winning films feature a BIPOC leading character. This means that nine times out of ten, the Academy gives the Best Picture Oscar to a film that centers the lives of white people.

We find large gaps in films featuring Asian (1.6%), Black (3.2%), and Latine (1.1%) leads compared to the US population (5.7%, 13.3%, and 18.3% respectively). Characters who are Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) and Native American/Pacific Islander are completely missing as leads in Best Picture winners.

Historically, BIPOC leads have been mostly missing when it comes to Best Picture nominees and winners, but we see stark progress in the last five years. Two of the Best Picture winners featured a BIPOC lead (*Parasite*, 2020, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*,

FIGURE 1: WOMEN LEADS

WOMEN LEADS IN BEST PICTURE NOMINEES
WOMEN LEADS IN BEST PICTURE WINNERS
WOMEN IN THE US

28.7%

27.6%

50.8%



FIGURE 2: WOMEN LEADS BY DECADE

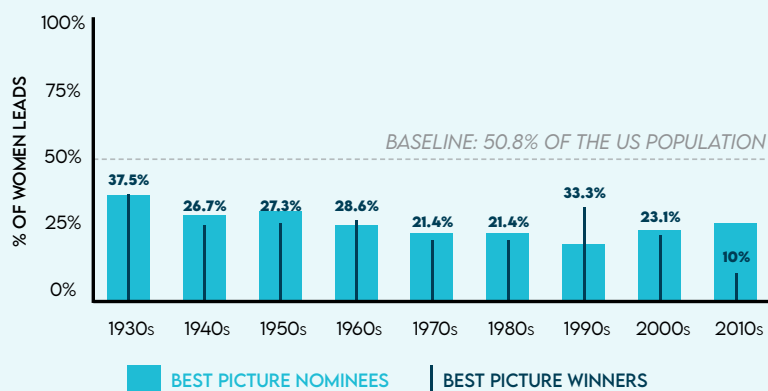


FIGURE 3: BIPOC LEADS

BIPOC LEADS IN BEST PICTURE NOMINEES

BIPOC LEADS IN BEST PICTURE WINNERS

BIPOC IN THE US

6.9%

9.4%

39.9%



FIGURE 4: RACE/ETHNICITY OF LEADS

RACE/ETHNICITY	NOMINATED FILMS	WINNING FILMS	POPULATION ⁵
ASIAN	1.6%	2.4%	5.7%
BLACK	3.2%	3.9%	13.3%
LATINE	1.1%	1.6%	18.3%
MENA	0.3%	—	2.3%
NATIVE AMERICAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER	—	—	0.2%
SOUTH ASIAN	0.8%	1.6%	0.1%
WHITE	93%	90.5%	60.1%

2023), and if this trend holds, we will have achieved racial parity in Oscar winners.

Seven percent of people identify as LGBTQ+,⁷ but only 2% of films nominated for Best Picture center the life of an LGBTQ+ person. In 95 years of Oscar history, only one Best Picture winner (*Moonlight*, 2017) has ever featured an LGBTQ+ lead. Although the most recent winner (*Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023) involved themes of queerness, the story was told from the perspective of the leading character, the heterosexual mother of an LGBTQ+ daughter.

When it comes to disability representations, six Best Picture films have featured leading characters with disabilities: *Rain Man* (1989), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1990), *Forrest Gump* (1995), *A Beautiful Mind* (2002), *The King's Speech* (2011), and *The Shape of Water* (2018). At 4.7% of nominated and winning films, this representation falls far short of the one-in-four Americans with a physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disability.⁸ Although a recent winner (*CODA*, 2022) involved themes of disability, the story was told from the perspective of a non-disabled teenager who is the child of deaf parents.

Intersectional Analysis

As an organization dedicated to intersectional gender justice, The Representation Project is especially interested in how women of different backgrounds are represented.

As noted above, only one-in-four Best Picture winners tell the stories of women's lives. In the Academy Awards' 94-year history, only twelve films centering the story of a BIPOC woman have ever been nominated for Best Picture. No film featuring a MENA, Native American/ Pacific Islander, or South Asian woman has ever been nominated for Best Picture.

Only two films centering the life of a BIPOC woman have won Best Picture, *West Side Story* (1962) and *Everything*

FIGURE 5: BIPOC LEADS BY DECADE

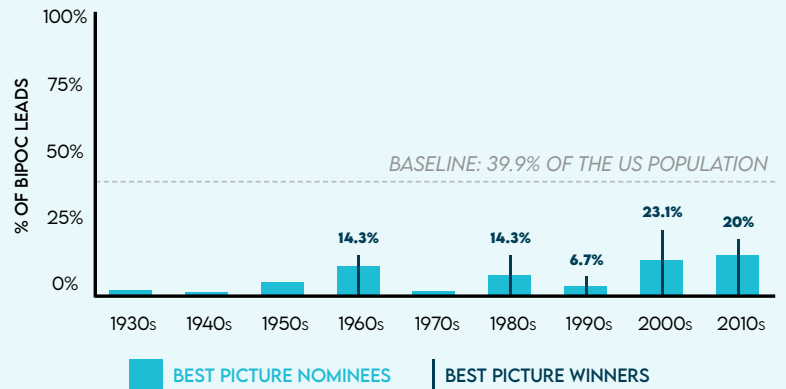


FIGURE 6: LGBTQ+ LEADS



FIGURE 7: LEADS WITH DISABILITIES

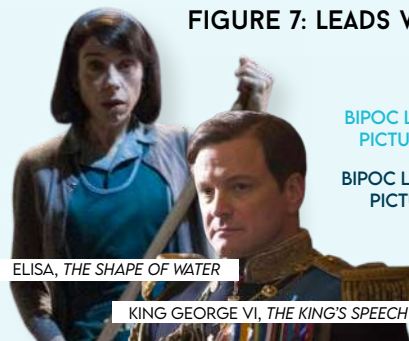


FIGURE 8: WOMEN LEADS BY RACE

RACE/ETHNICITY	NOMINATED FILMS	WINNING FILMS	POPULATION
ASIAN WOMEN	1.4%	2.9%	5.7%
BLACK WOMEN	1.8%	—	13.3%
LATINE WOMEN	2.3%	2.9%	18.3%
MENA WOMEN	—	—	2.3%
NATIVE AMERICAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN	—	—	0.2%
SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN	—	—	0.1%
WHITE WOMEN	94.5%	94.2%	60.1%

Everywhere All At Once (2023). *West Side Story* features a Latine woman lead (Maria) played by a white actor (Natalie Wood).

In terms of sexuality, only three films with an LGBTQ+ woman lead have ever been nominated for Best Picture (*The Color Purple*, 1986, *The Kids Are Alright*, 2011, and *Tär*, 2023), and none have won.

Only eleven films centering the life of a disabled woman have been nominated for Best Picture, and only two of those films (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1990, and *The Shape of Water*, 2018), have ever won.

Only 8.3% of nominated films with women leads centered the stories of women ages 50+. Among films with women protagonists that have won for Best Picture, only three (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1990, *Nomadland*, 2021, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023) feature women ages 50+, even though 34.2% of women are 50 or older in the US.⁹

Only one film centering the life of a fat woman has ever been nominated for Best Picture (*Precious*, 2010), and the film did not win the award.¹⁰ This is an important finding because it reinforces the idea that the lives of fat women matter little in US society, despite the fact that 42% of Americans are classified as people of size.¹¹

Director Analysis

Another way of understanding whose voices are deemed valuable by society is by analyzing who is elevated for their storytelling. Since 1929, only 3.2% of films nominated for Best Picture have had women directors. Only four films with women directors have won for Best Picture in Oscar history (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 2009, *The Hurt Locker*, 2010, *Nomadland*, 2021, and *CODA*, 2022).

When we look at the percentage of women directors by decade, we find that men directed every single Best Picture winner in the 20th century. While we

FIGURE 9: BEST PICTURE NOMINEES WITH WOMEN LEADS, BY INTERSECTING IDENTITY

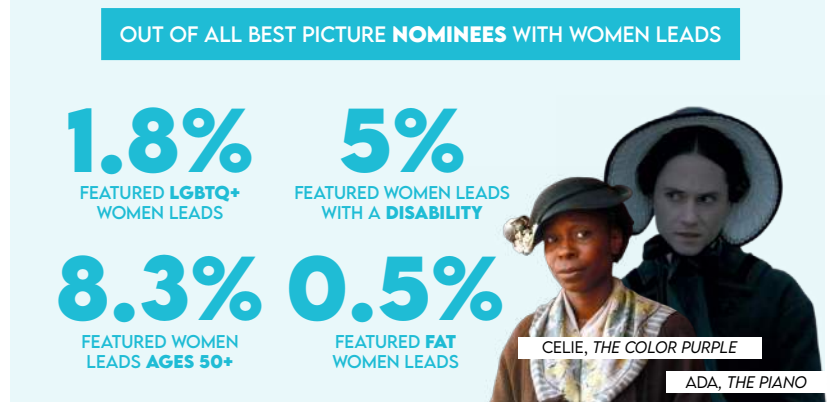


FIGURE 10: BEST PICTURE WINNERS WITH WOMEN LEADS, BY INTERSECTING IDENTITY

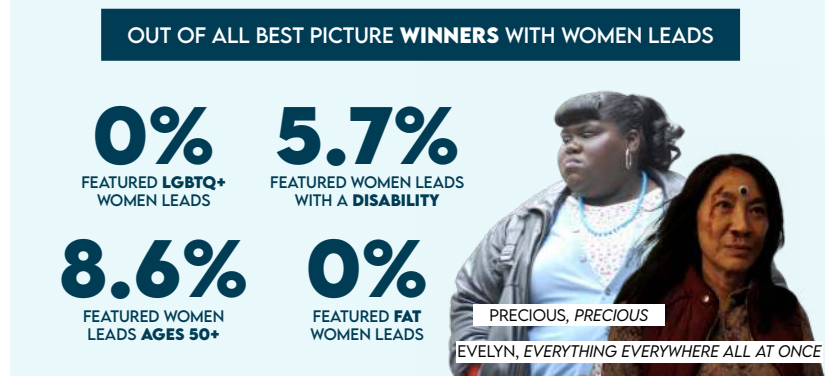


FIGURE 11: WOMEN DIRECTORS

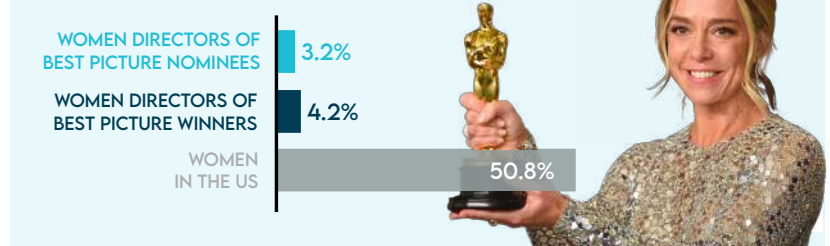
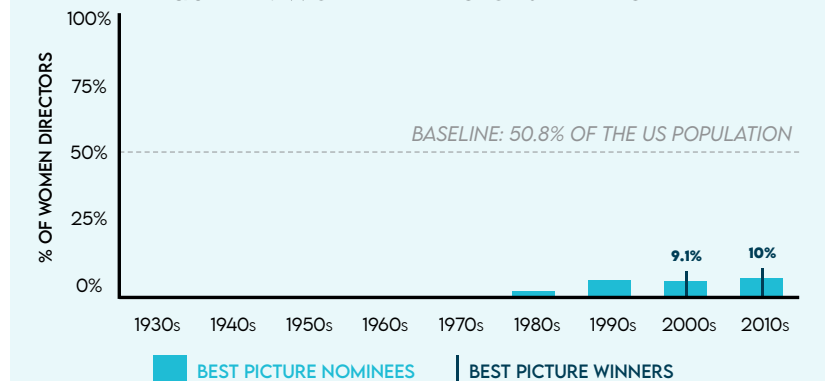


FIGURE 12: WOMEN DIRECTORS BY DECADE



have made progress since this time, only one-in-ten Best Picture winners were directed by women from 2000 - 2019. Despite a long history of snubbing women directors at the Oscars, we see substantial progress in the last five years. Two Best Picture winners were directed by women (*Nomadland*, 2021, and *CODA*, 2022).

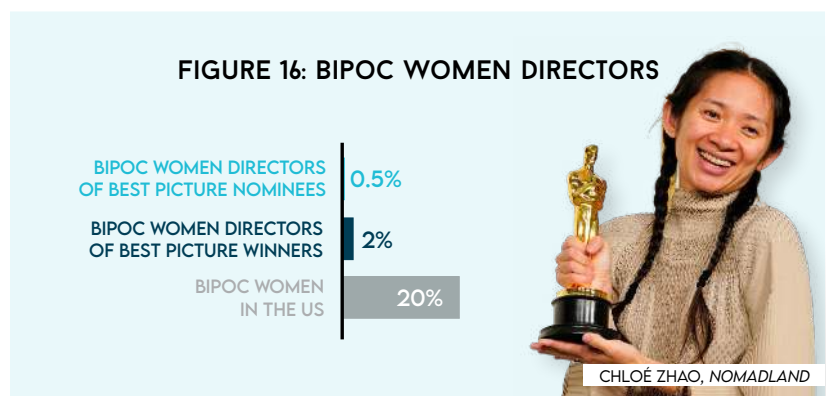
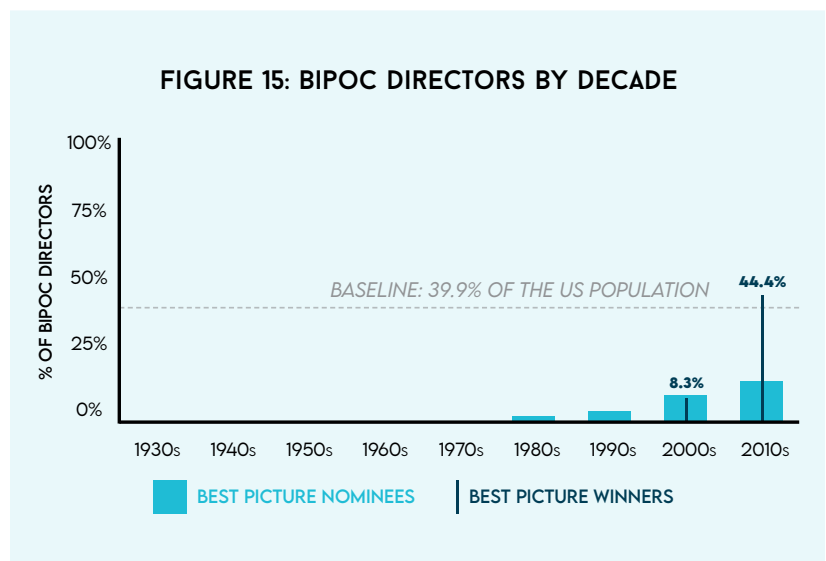
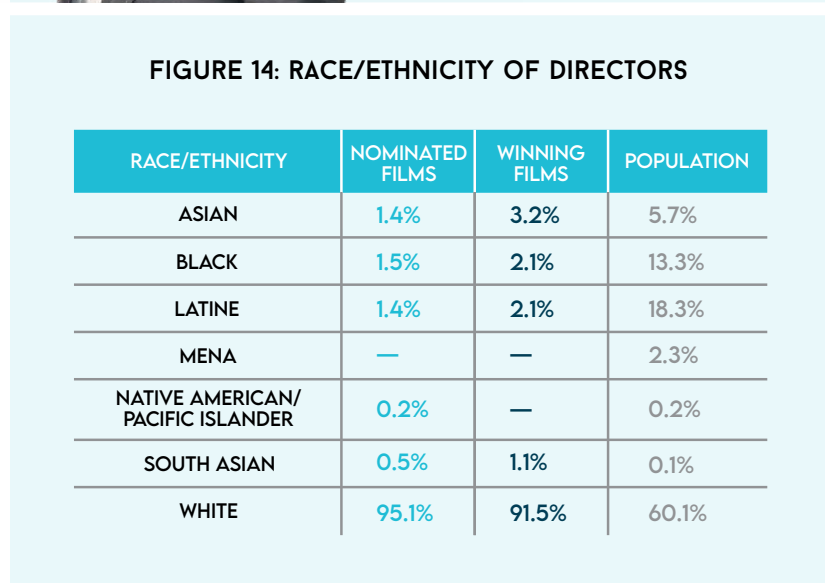
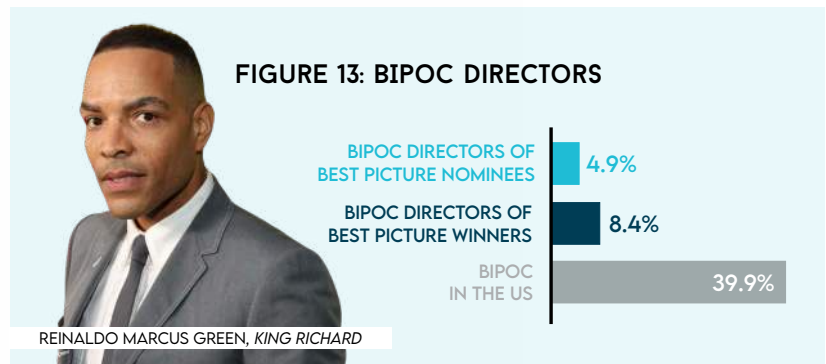
BIPOC Directors have also historically been underrepresented when it comes to Best Picture winners (8.4% compared to 39.9% of the US population), but we see progress in the past five years.

When it comes to the details of how BIPOC directors are erased in the most honored films in Hollywood, we find large gaps in representations of all people of color, but MENA and Native American/Pacific Islander people are completely missing as directors of Best Picture winners.

When we look at BIPOC directors by decade, we find that 100% of 20th century Best Picture winners were directed by white people. While we saw small progress from 2000-2009, we found a major improvement between 2010-2019, with BIPOC accounting for 44.4% of winning directors. The trend continues in the 2020s, with one-in-four nominees, and three of the five most recent winners (*Parasite*, 2020, *Nomadland*, 2021, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023) having BIPOC directors.

Intersectional Analysis

Turning now to an intersectional analysis, in Oscar history, less than 1% of Best Picture nominees were directed by BIPOC women. Only two films with BIPOC women directors have ever been won for Best Picture (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 2009, and *Nomadland*, 2021). No film featuring a Black, Latine, Native American/Pacific Islander, or MENA woman director has ever won an Academy Award for Best Picture.





Recent Best Picture Oscars

As noted above, the #OscarsSoWhite, #OscarsSoMale, and #TimesUp campaigns launched in the past decade, and we are seeing the effects. The Academy has acknowledged widespread issues with representation, and some progress has been made in the the past five years:

- Representations of race have improved in the past five years, with two films centering the lives of BIPOC characters (*Parasite*, 2020 and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2024).
- Gender representations have greatly improved in the past five years, with the last three winners centering the lives of women (*Nomadland*, 2021, *CODA*, 2022, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023).

We see no progress for representations of older adults, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and people of size in the past five years. Perhaps targeted campaigns for each of these marginalized identities could net similar results to the #OscarsSoWhite, #OscarsSoMale, and #TimesUp campaigns.

FIGURE 17: RECENT BEST PICTURE LEADS/CO-LEADS REPRESENTATIONS

YEAR	FILM	WOMAN LEAD	BIPOC LEAD	LGBTQ+ LEAD	LEAD WITH DISABILITY
2023	<i>EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE</i>	YES	YES	NO	NO
2022	<i>CODA</i>	YES	NO	NO	NO
2021	<i>NOMADLAND</i>	YES	NO	NO	NO
2020	<i>PARASITE</i>	NO	YES	NO	NO
2019	<i>GREEN BOOK</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO

When it comes to who gets to tell the Best Picture stories from the last five years, we see progress:

- Major progress has been made for BIPOC directors with three of the last five winning films being directed by BIPOC directors (*Parasite*, 2020, *Nomadland*, 2021, and *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2023).
- We see progress in the past five years for women directors, who directed two out of the five most recent winning films (*Nomadland*, 2021, and *CODA*, 2022).

FIGURE 18: RECENT BEST PICTURE DIRECTOR REPRESENTATIONS

YEAR	FILM	WOMAN DIRECTOR	BIPOC DIRECTOR
2023	<i>EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE</i>	NO	YES
2022	<i>CODA</i>	YES	NO
2021	<i>NOMADLAND</i>	YES	YES
2020	<i>PARASITE</i>	NO	YES
2019	<i>GREEN BOOK</i>	NO	NO



METHODOLOGY

The data in this report was produced through a content analysis conducted by trained researchers with 30+ years of combined professional experience. Our final dataset included 760 leading and co-leading characters and 622 directors from the 94 Best Picture nominees and winners from 1929 through 2023.¹² For this analysis, leading characters are coded as characters that drive the story. Co-leads are defined as two characters who drive the storyline equally. For ensemble casts, the leading character is the character who is most driving the story. Characters nominated in the Best Actor/Actress in a Leading Role categories were automatically considered leads/co-leads for the Best Picture films in which they appeared.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Representation Project is a leading global gender justice non-profit organization. We use films and education to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes. In 2011, Jennifer Siebel Newsom founded The Representation 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 three more acclaimed films, *The Mask You Live In* (2015), *The Great American Lie* (2019), and *Fair Play* (2022). The organization also runs a global youth empowerment program and is known for its impactful social activism campaigns, including #NotBuyingIt, #AskHerMore, #RepresentHer, #RespectHerGame, #ChangeIcons, and #EndRape.



ENDNOTES

1. Bahr, L. (2024). An Oscars comeback? How the film academy went global and found its footing again. *The Associated Press*, March 1, <https://6abc.com/oscars-voters-academy-awards-award-voting-oscar-nominees/14484115/#:~:text=Now%20there%20are%20more%20than,underrepresented%20ethnic%20and%20racial%20communities>.
2. Mandell, A. (2020). Best picture race to get a shake-up in 2024: Academy announces new diversity and inclusion standards. *USA Today*, March 12, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/movies/2020/09/08/oscar-best-picture-hopefuls-must-meet-new-inclusion-standards-2024/5753230002/>
3. Throughout this report, we reference the year the film won Best Picture (a year after the film was released).
4. 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>
5. United States Census (2019). Quick Facts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>
6. We are measuring representations of race in the Best Picture winners for this report. It is important to note that one of the leading characters depicted as Latine was played by a white actor— Natalie Wood as “Maria” in *West Side Story* (1962).
7. 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>
8. Centers for Disease Control (2020). Disability Impacts All of Us. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/documents/disabilities_impacts_all_of_us.pdf
9. 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
10. 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.
11. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). FastStats: Obesity and Overweight, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>
12. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences started the Academy Awards in 1929, honoring the best film of 1928.