

### Women in front of and behind the camera: Still struggling with inequality

#### GENDER BIAS IN FILM DIRECTION

Even though the past 50 years have seen a significant advance in women's living conditions and status in society as a whole, their depiction on screen has continued to reflect patriarchal stereotypes. Accordingly, female characters are in general younger than their male counterparts and more likely to be reduced to the role of wife, mother or girlfriend.

One way to help guarantee that stories and perspectives portrayed on the screen are more true to life would be to encourage and support the presence of women in key positions in the film industry.

However, even though almost as many female (44 %) as male (56 %) directors graduate from film schools, the average proportion of female directors in the industry is just around 20 %, with results varying from 5 % in Latvia to 30 % in Sweden, thus leaving gender equality still a long way off.

#### Share of female film directors at cinema schools and in the film industry

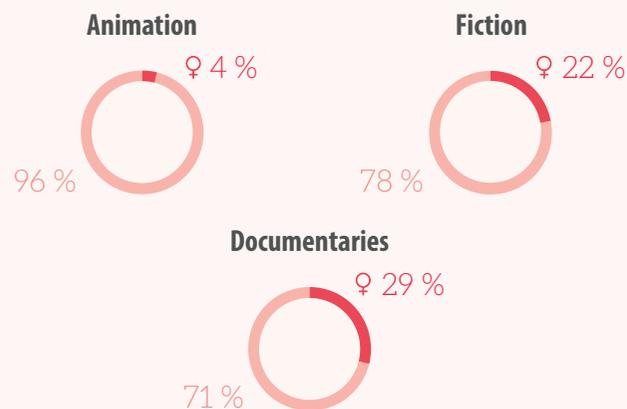


Source: European Women's Audiovisual Network, *Where are the women directors in European films?*, 2015.

Data released by the European Audiovisual Observatory covering the 2003-2017 period, show that on average, films by female directors generated only 8 % of total admissions. A possible explanation for this modest result could be that women directors are less likely to be entrusted with the direction of high-budget films.

Low funding, in turn, perpetuates the scarcity of female-directed films in circulation, thus affecting the markets' willingness to invest and creating a vicious circle. Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that documentary is the genre with the highest prevalence of women, attracting on average 29 % of female directors, compared to 22 % in fiction and 4 % in animation.

#### Male and female directors in animation, fiction and documentaries



Source: Le Collectif 50/50.

Similarly, data from Eurimages – the cultural support fund of the Council of Europe – demonstrate a clear under-representation of women (30 %) in the main film production roles – scriptwriter, director, producer – with fluctuating rates for documentaries (36 %), fiction (31 %) and animation (13 %).

Worryingly, the figures also confirm that the various positions in the film industry seem to be associated with one of the two genders. Thus, it appears that women are over-represented in professions traditionally considered feminine – such as script supervisor, costume designer, hair stylist/make-up artist – and under-represented in others viewed as more technical, such as those dealing with sound, music and image.

#### A very unequal distribution of jobs



Source: Le Collectif 50/50.

### Gender bias in scripts



Source: New York Film Academy, *Gender inequality in film*, 2018.

### GENDER BIAS IN PORTRAYAL AND SCRIPTS

Research based on a sample of 855 top box-office films, released from 1950 to 2006 showed that male characters outnumbered female characters by more than two to one. More worryingly, the authors also found that although women continue to be under-represented in films, their disproportionate portrayal in more explicit sexual content has grown over time, with female characters being twice as likely to be involved in sex as male characters. Gender bias also extends to scripts. A 2018 New York Film Academy analysis shows that in a sample of 1 000 films, male characters had over 37 000 dialogues whereas female characters had just 15 000. Men also had a wider choice of characters – some 4 900 – while women had just over 2 000. Similarly, male scriptwriters outnumbered female scriptwriters by 7 to 1.

### GENDER PAY GAP

Under-representation and misrepresentation of women is accompanied by a substantial pay gap between male and female actors and audiovisual authors. A 2019 study shows that at the peak of their career – between the age of 45 and 54 – female film directors earn 37 % less than their male counterparts. Similarly, research demonstrates that female actors in their twenties tend to outpace their male counterparts in terms of pay. However, after the age of 34, their earnings quickly decline, unlike those of male actors, which peak at the age of 51 and remain stable after that. More worryingly, the study suggests that roles for older female actors are limited, creating more pressure on them to maintain a youthful appearance. According to the study: 'Men's well-worn faces are thought to convey maturity, character and experience. A woman's face, on the other hand, is valued for appearing young'.

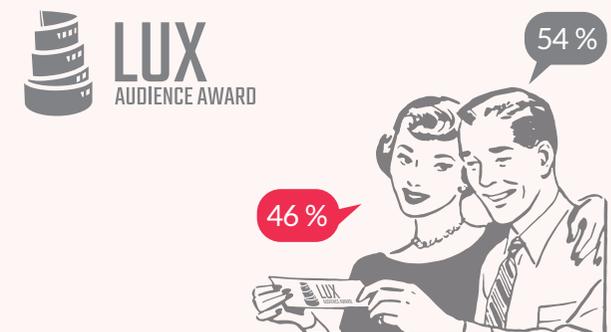
### GENDER BIAS IN AWARDS

Increasing the number of women in decision-making roles at major film festivals seems key to increasing inclusion, since the higher the number of women programmers, the more likely festivals are to feature films directed by women. These are the findings of a 2020 study, which also revealed that 75 % of competition directors at the top five international festivals (Berlin, Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and Venice) were men. Indeed, in the 92-year history of the Academy Awards, only one woman – Kathryn Bigelow – has been awarded the Oscar for best director (2009). The track record of the 73-year-old Cannes Film Festival does not look any better: only one female director – Jane Campion – has won the

Palme d'Or (1993). The two other major European film festivals exhibit slightly better statistics. From 1951 to 2020, the Berlin International Film Festival honoured five female directors. Over a slightly longer period, from 1932 to 2020, five Golden Lions went to female directors at the Venice Film Festival. In 2018, French group *50/50 by 2020* initiated a programming pledge for parity and inclusion in cinema festivals. So far, the pledge has been signed by over 100 festivals globally, including major film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Locarno, San Sebastian and Toronto.

Turning political discourse into action, the European Parliament has been steadily supporting the dissemination of film productions directed by women or portraying strong and inspiring female characters through its LUX Audience Award. Six women have received the prize since its creation 13 years ago. In 2019, the prize went to a feminist satire by Teona Strugar Mitevska – *God exists, her name is Petrunya*.

### Gender share of winning film directors



Data source: European Parliament, 2020.