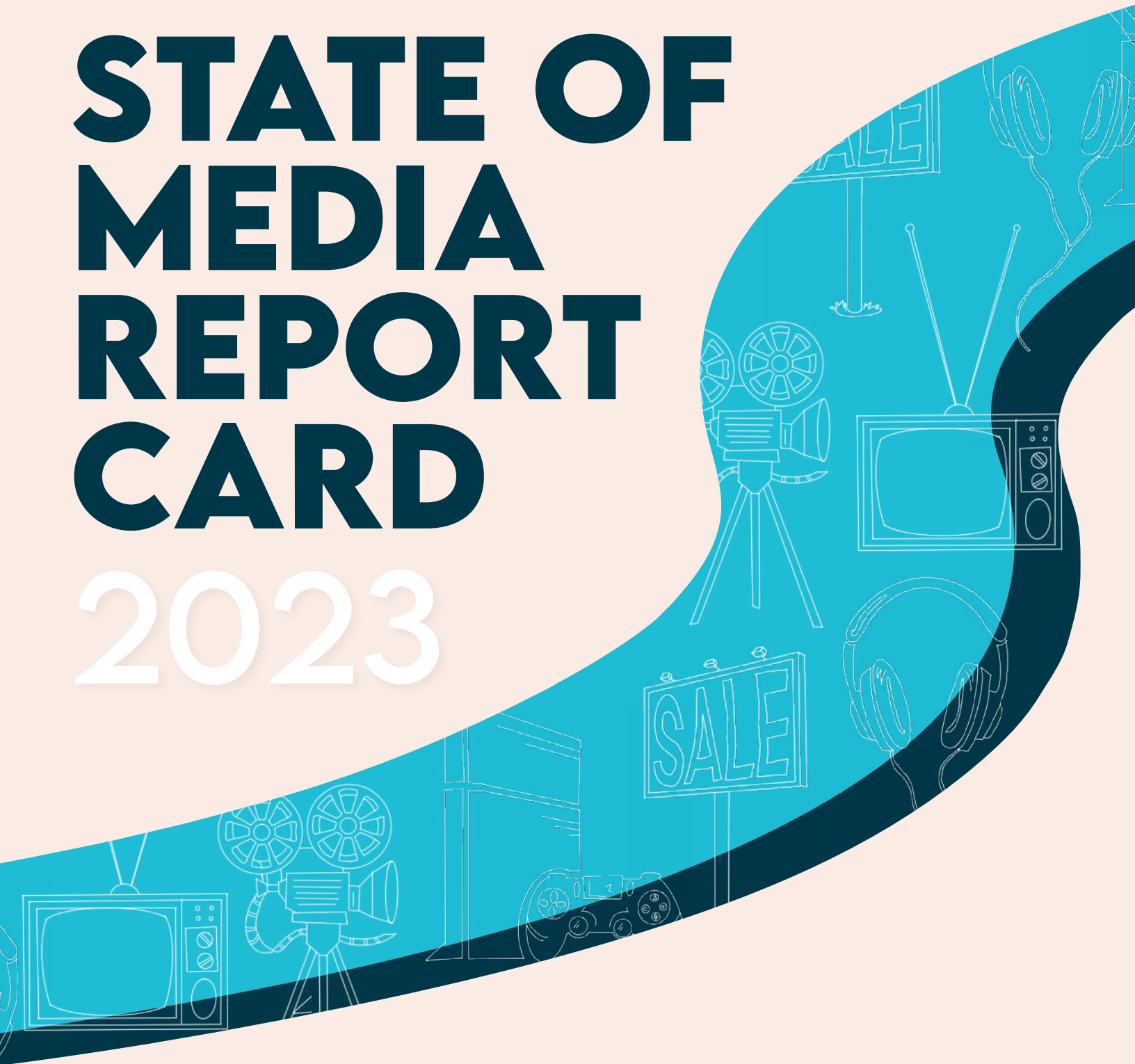


THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT

STATE OF MEDIA REPORT CARD

2023





INTRODUCTION

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

This report was produced for the seventh annual State of Media Summit, co-sponsored by The Representation Project, the Center for Intersectional Media and Entertainment (CIME), and Mount St. Mary's University. Participants of the first Summit¹ in 2017 generated a [White Paper on Gender Inequality in Film and Television](#), and our studies build on these initial findings each year.

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**
- **GAY & LESBIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST DEFAMATION (GLAAD)**
- **THE REPRESENTATION PROJECT**
- **DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA**

Drawing data from all of 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 film, followed by sections on television, advertising, video games, and popular 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

Women make up 50.8% of the US population,³ but men characters outnumber women characters two-to-one in the top grossing films. This imbalance has not shown improvement in the last decade.

When it comes to actual second-by-second time received on screen (i.e., “face time”), women characters account for only 30.9% of screen time in the top grossing films. This sizeable gender gap has persisted for the past decade.

Another way to measure representation in film is to analyze whose stories are elevated and rewarded by the Academy at the annual Oscar awards. In 94 years of ceremonies, women make up only one-in-four (27%) leads⁴ in Best Picture winners. This means the Oscar for Best Picture is almost always awarded to films that tell stories of men’s lives and experiences.

FIGURE 1: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

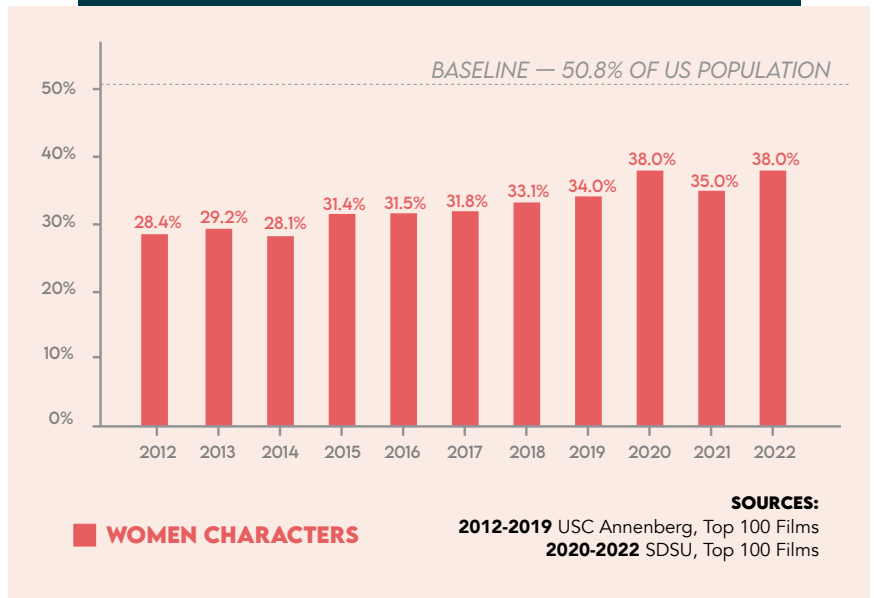


FIGURE 2: SCREEN TIME BY GENDER IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

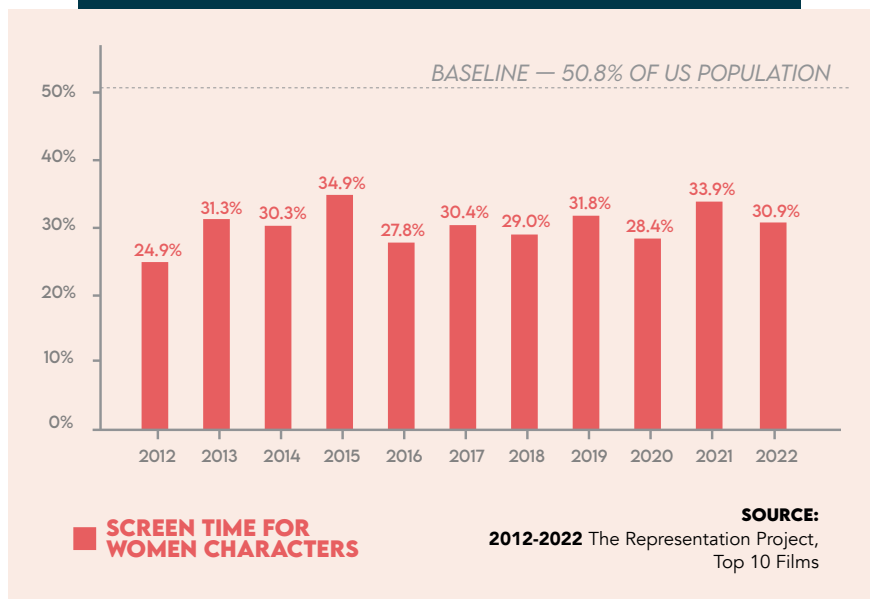
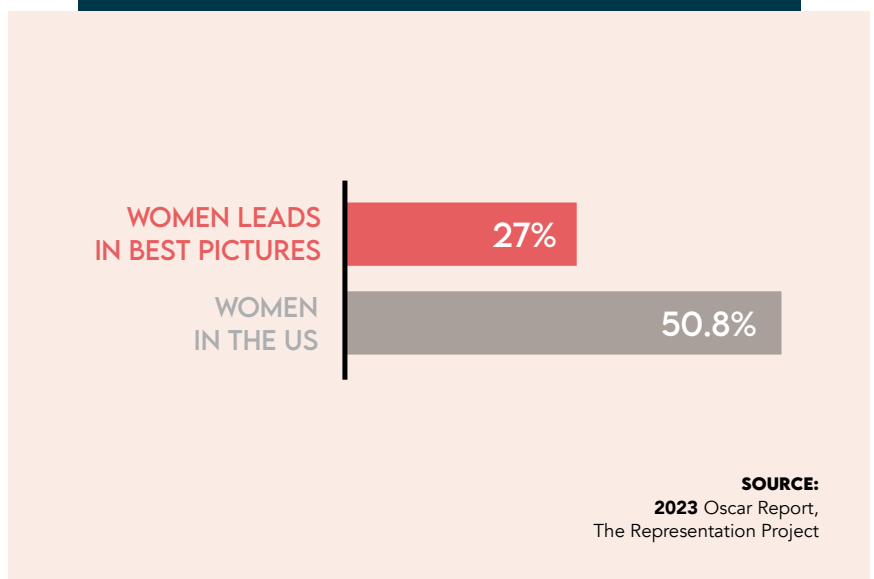


FIGURE 3: WOMEN LEADS IN OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS



- 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>
- When we use the term “leads,” we are including both leading and co-leading characters.



FIGURE 4: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

For the past decade, Black Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) characters have been underrepresented in the top grossing films. We saw significant progress starting in 2018, and in 2021, BIPOC characters achieved parity in film compared to the US population (45.8% compared with 39.9% of the US population⁵).

For the past decade, characters with light skin tones have received more than twice as much screen time in the top-grossing films than characters with medium or dark skin tones. We see significant progress in closing the colorism gap beginning in 2022, with 43% of screen time going to characters with medium or dark skin tones.

When it comes to Oscar Best Picture winners, only 8.7% of winning films have BIPOC leads. This means that nine times out of ten, the Academy gives the Best Picture Oscar to a film that centers the story of white people.

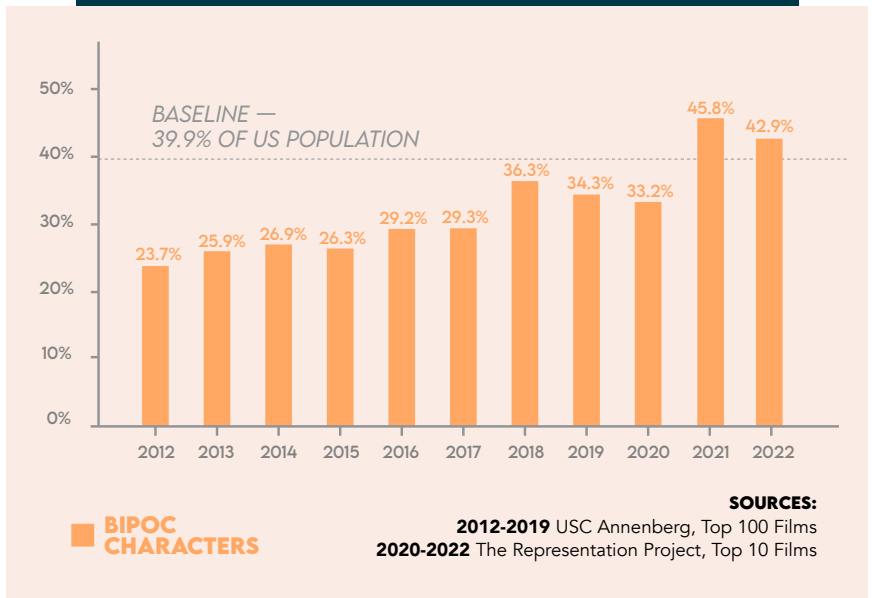


FIGURE 5: SCREEN TIME BY SKIN TONE IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

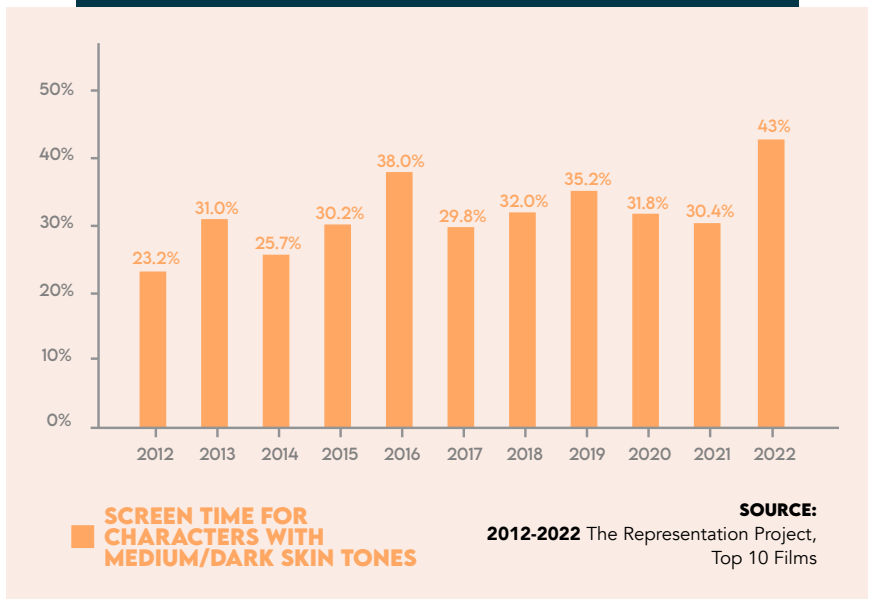
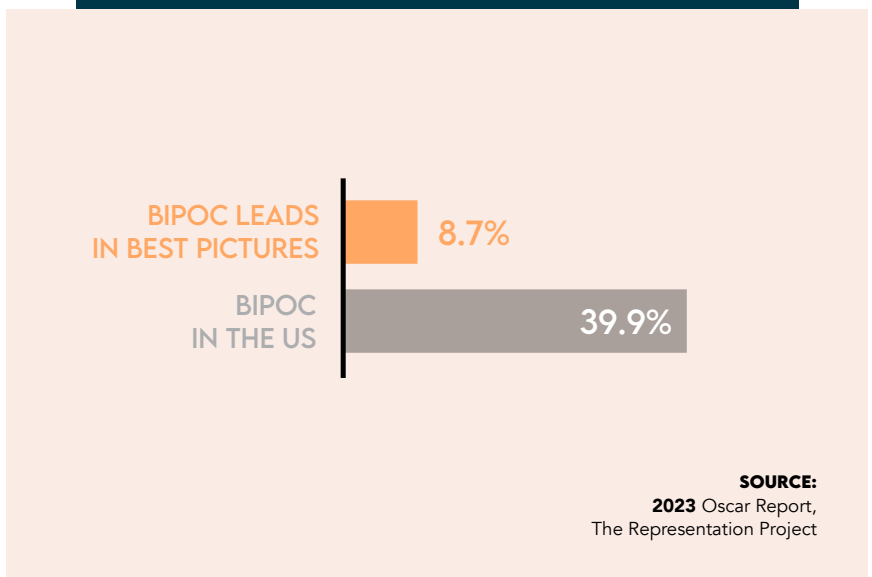


FIGURE 6: BIPOC LEADS IN OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS



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



FIGURE 7: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

LGBTQ+ people are 7.1% of the US population,⁶ and while progress has been made in the last four years in film, LGBTQ+ characters remain vastly underrepresented in 2022 (2.6%).

When it comes to the Academy Awards, the stories of LGBTQ+ are further erased. Only one Best Picture winner (*Moonlight*, 2017) has ever featured the story of an LGBTQ+ person.

Although one-in-four Americans have a physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disability, characters with disabilities have been virtually erased from film for the past decade.⁷ Characters with disabilities have made no progress in the past decade when it comes to how often they are represented (2.8% in 2012 compared to 2.1% in 2022).

People with disabilities are also underrepresented when it comes to Oscar winners for Best Picture. Only 4.8% of winning films have featured a lead with a disability in the 94 years of the Academy Awards.

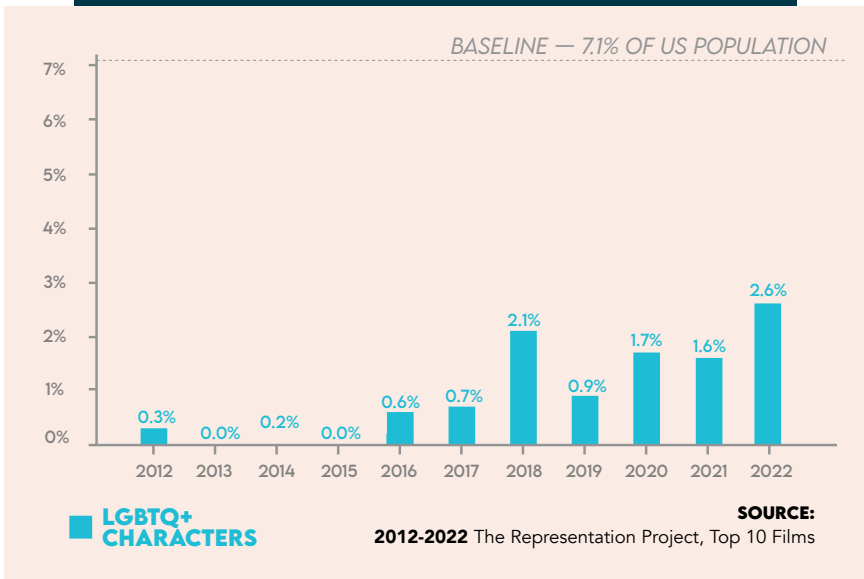


FIGURE 8: LGBTQ+ LEADS IN OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS

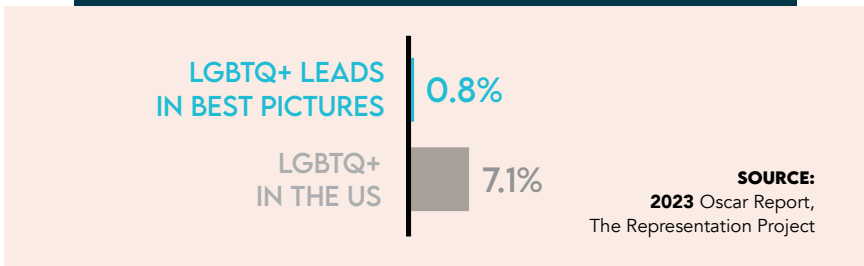


FIGURE 9: CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

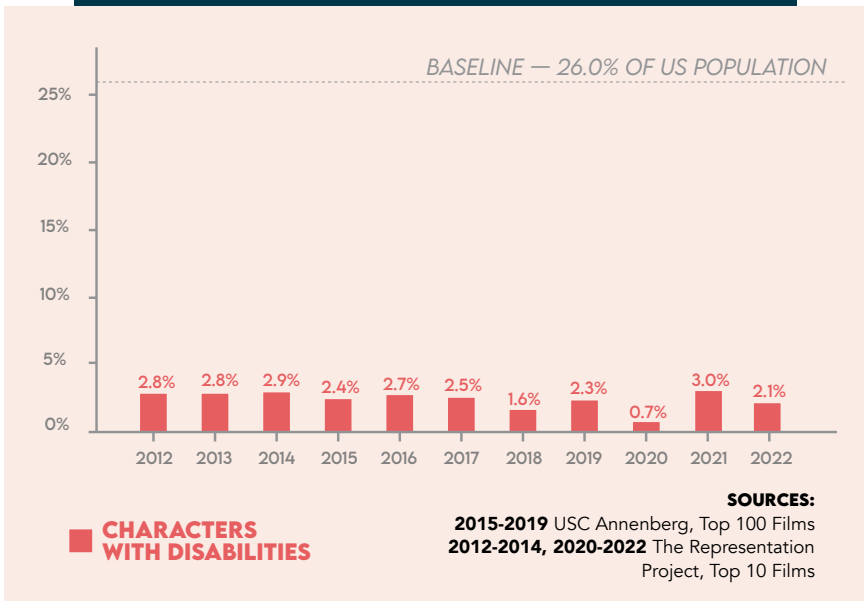
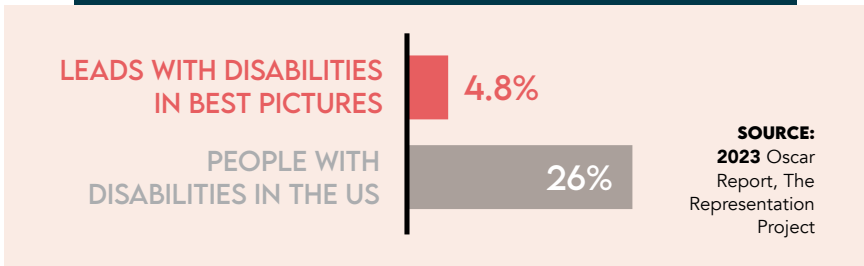


FIGURE 10: LEADS W/ DISABILITIES IN OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS



6. 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>

7. Centers for Disease Control (2020). Disability Impacts All of Us. https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/documents/disabilities_impacts_all_of_us.pdf



FIGURE 11: CHARACTERS AGES 50+ IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

People ages 50+ make up 34.2% of the US population,⁸ but remain underrepresented in the top films.

Characters ages 50+ face even more erasure when it comes to screen time in the last decade. In 2022, people ages 50+ accounted for 16.4% of characters but only 9.6% of total screen time. In other words, older adult characters are rarely featured, and when they are included, their characters are less prominent in the content.

Despite the fact that over 40% of Americans are classified as fat,⁹ characters of size remain vastly underrepresented in film (13.1%).¹⁰ We have seen no real improvement when it comes to body size representation in the last decade.

Fat characters are further erased when it comes to actual screen time in the top films of the last decade. While 13.1% of characters in the top films of 2022 were people of size, these characters received only 3.3% of actual screen time.

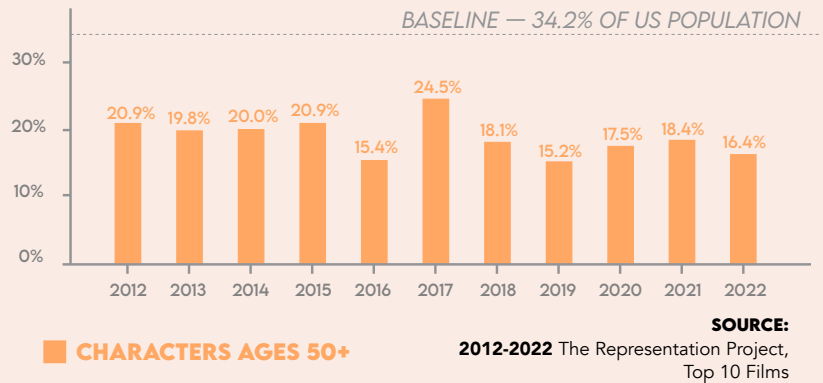


FIGURE 12: SCREEN TIME BY AGE IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

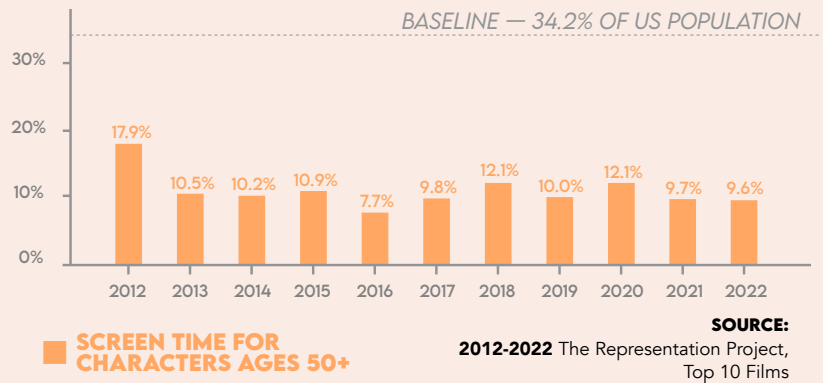


FIGURE 13: FAT CHARACTERS IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022

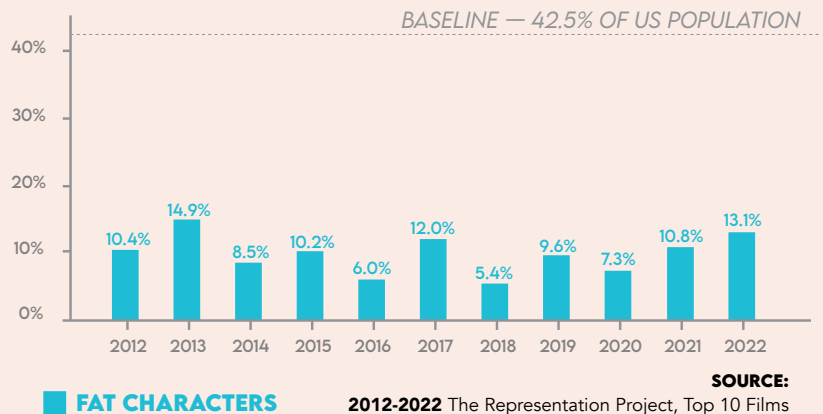
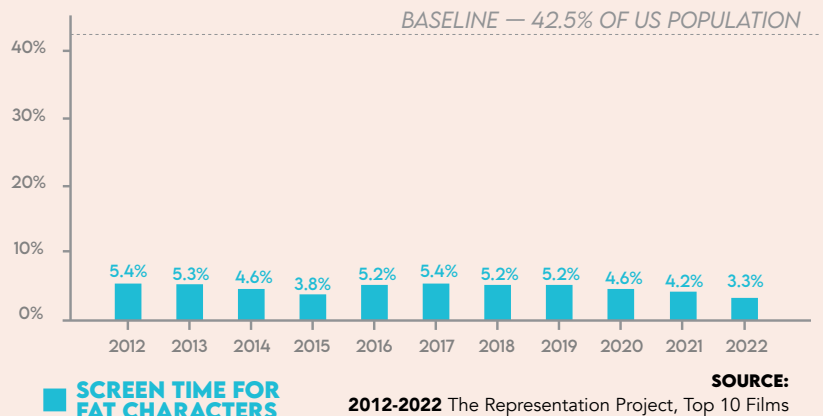


FIGURE 14: SCREEN TIME BY BODY SIZE IN TOP FILMS, 2012-2022



8. 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

9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). FastStats: Obesity and Overweight, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>

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, stretch marks, and curves.



FIGURE 15: WOMEN FILM DIRECTORS, 2012-2022

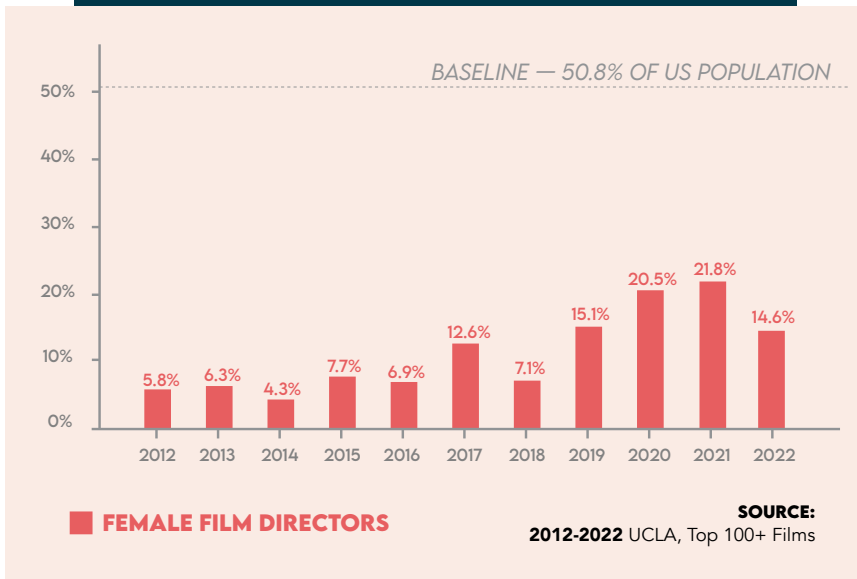


FIGURE 16: WOMEN DIRECTORS OF OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS

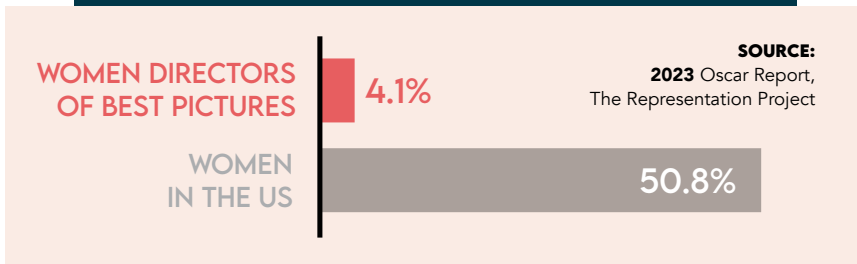


FIGURE 17: BIPOC FILM DIRECTORS, 2012-2022

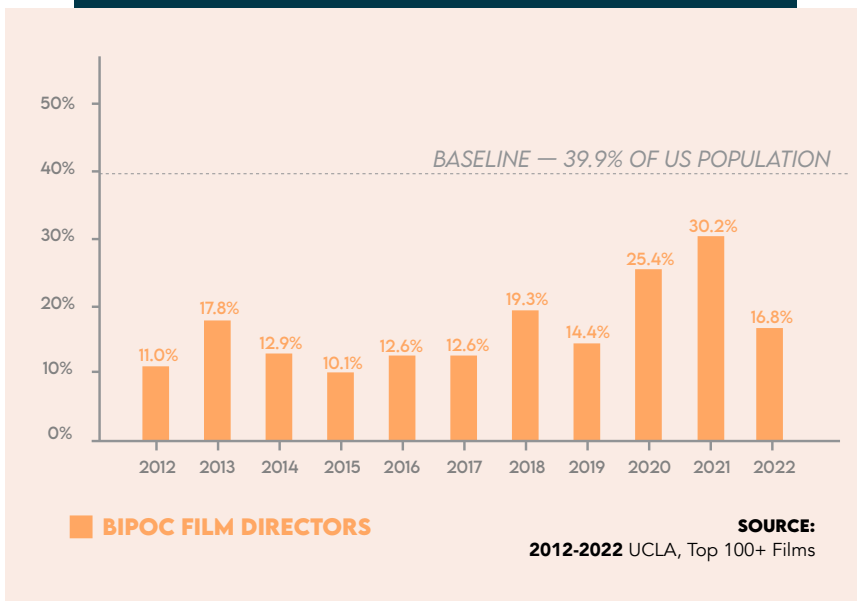
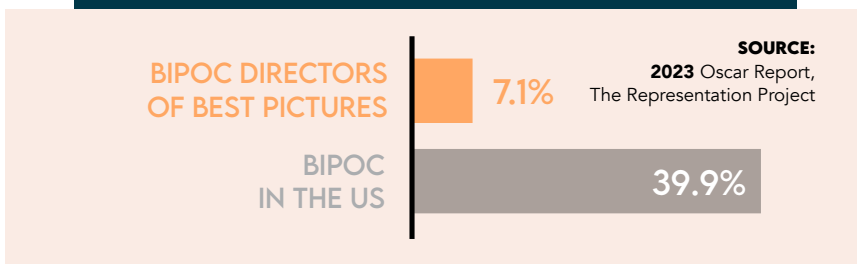


FIGURE 18: BIPOC DIRECTORS OF OSCAR BEST PICTURE WINNERS



BEHIND THE SCENES

The vast majority of top films from the past decade were directed by men. While we have seen some progress over the last decade, men directors outnumbered women directors nearly five-to-one in 2022 (85.4% compared with 14.6%).

Despite progress for women directors in the last decade, only 4.1% of Oscar Best Picture winners have been directed by a woman in 94 years of the Academy Awards.

BIPOC film directors remain underrepresented compared to the US population. While we have seen some progress in the past decade, half as many films in 2022 were directed by BIPOC compared to the previous year (16.8% in 2022 compared to 30.2% in 2021).

Although we've seen some progress for BIPOC directors in the last decade, only 7.1% of Oscar Best Picture winners were directed by a BIPOC.

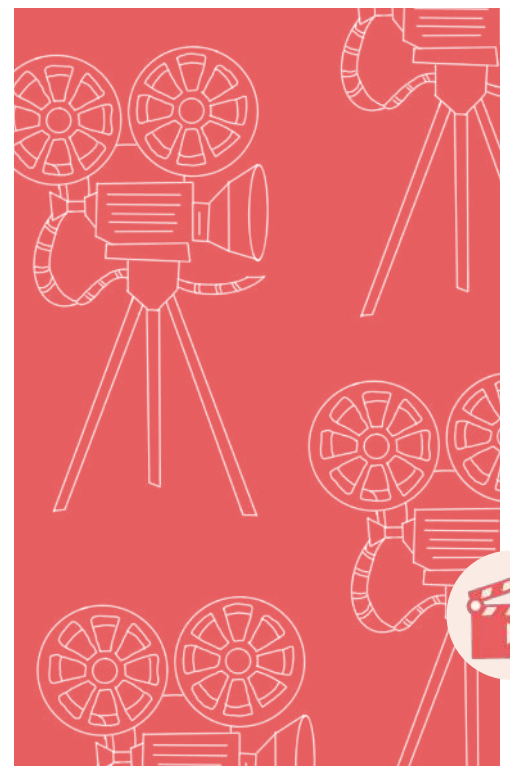
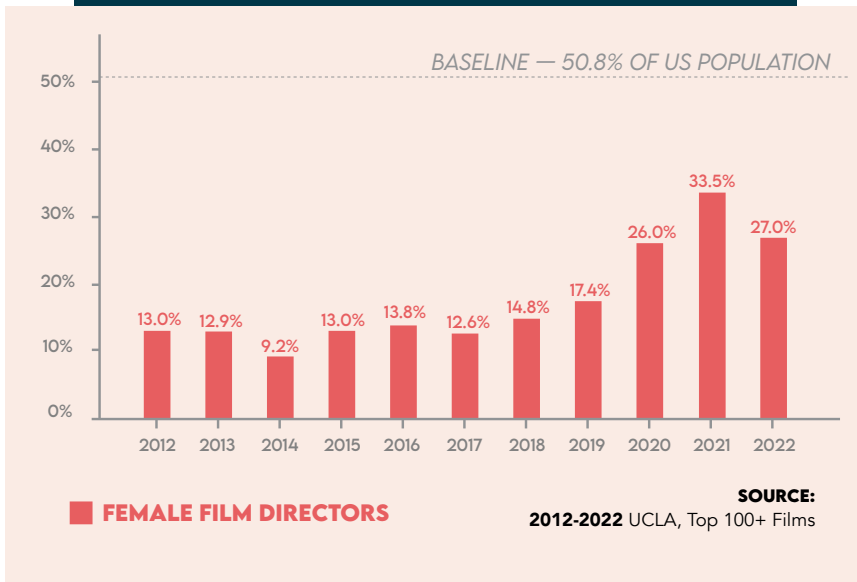


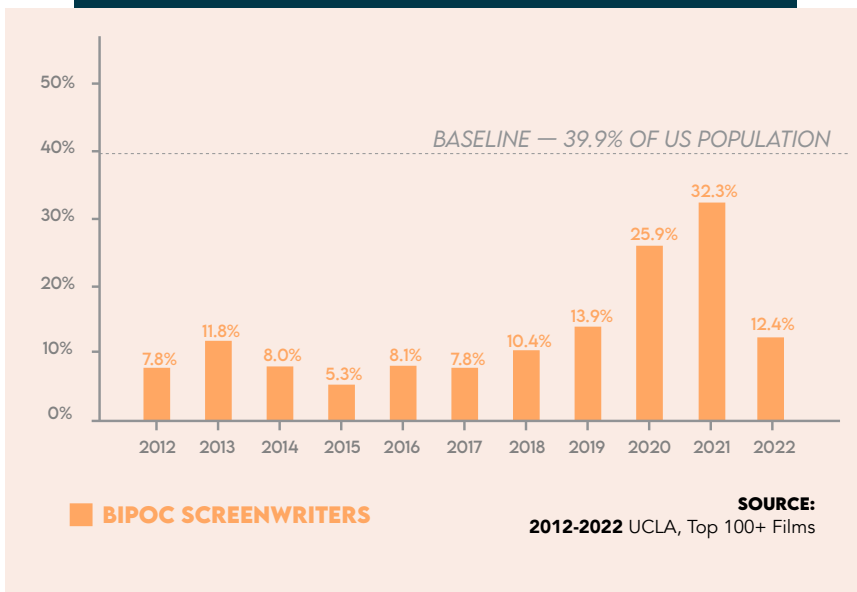
FIGURE 19: WOMEN SCREENWRITERS, 2012-2022



When it comes to today's top films, women screenwriters are outnumbered three-to-one by men— 27% compared to 73% of men. It is worth noting that the percentage of women writers has increased dramatically in the last three years.

The vast majority of films from the past decade have been written by white screenwriters, and opportunities for BIPOC writers on major release films declined sharply last year.

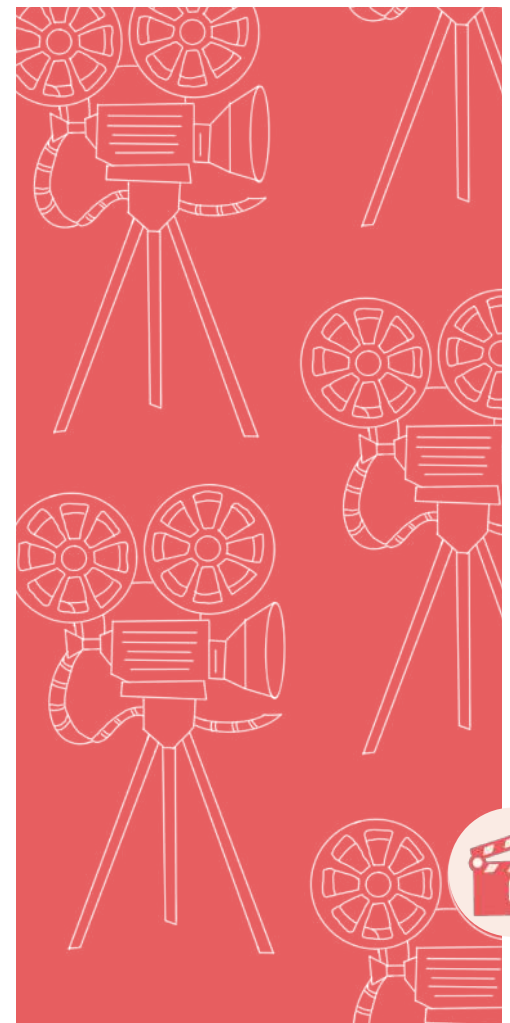
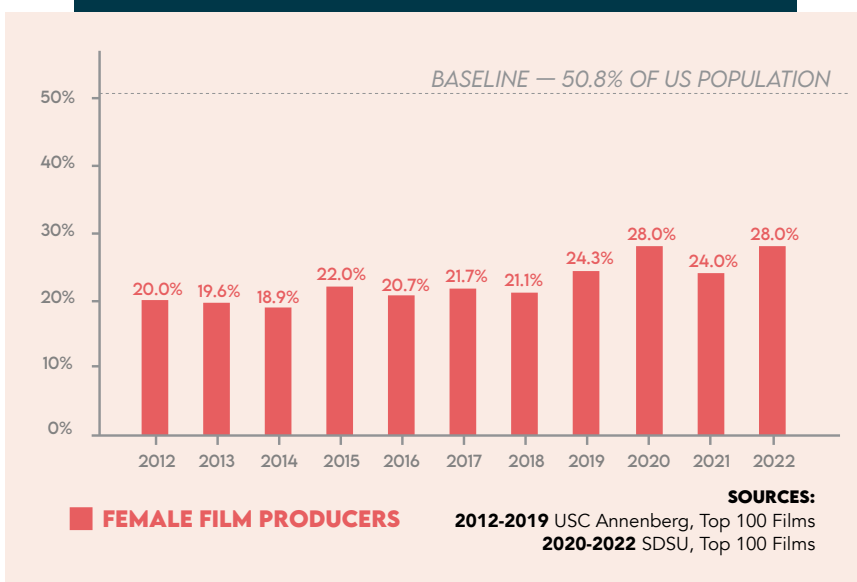
FIGURE 20: BIPOC SCREENWRITERS, 2012-2022



We see some progress in the last decade when it comes to who produces the top films, but women producers remain highly underrepresented. In 2022, men producers outnumber women producers nearly three-to-one.

No data is available on BIPOC producers over the past decade.

FIGURE 21: WOMEN FILM PRODUCERS, 2012-2022



TV

ON SCREEN

We see much higher rates of representation for women characters in television compared to film over the past decade. Even so, women characters remain underrepresented in the most popular television programs (45.0% compared to 50.8% in the US population).

Women characters face more erasure when it comes to actual second-by-second screen time. In 2022, 45% of characters in the top TV programs were women, but accounted for only 36.1% of screen time.

Another way to measure representation in TV is to analyze whose stories are elevated and rewarded by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (ATAS) at their annual Emmy awards. In 74 years of ceremonies, only 42.4% of Best Comedy Series and 36.3% of Best Drama Series winners center on the life of a woman.

FIGURE 22: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

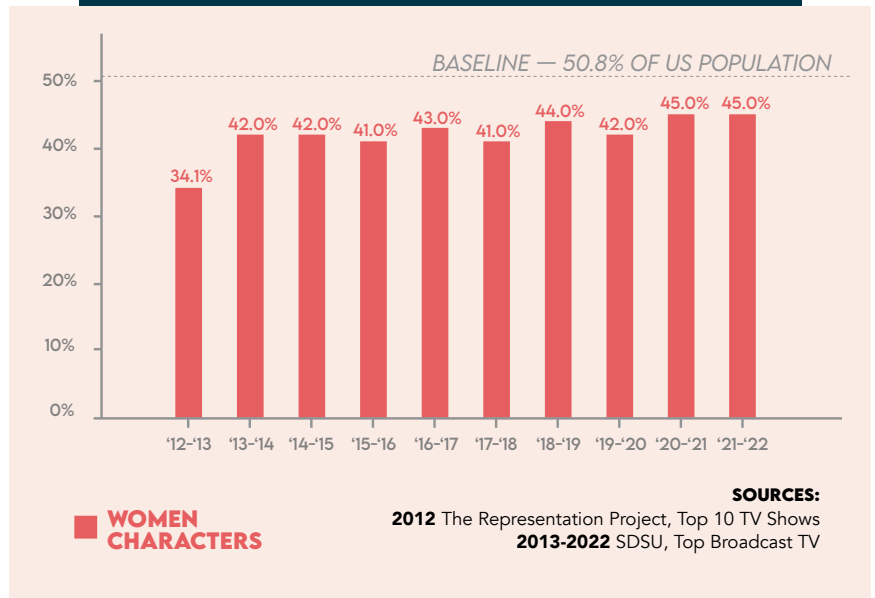


FIGURE 23: SCREEN TIME BY GENDER IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

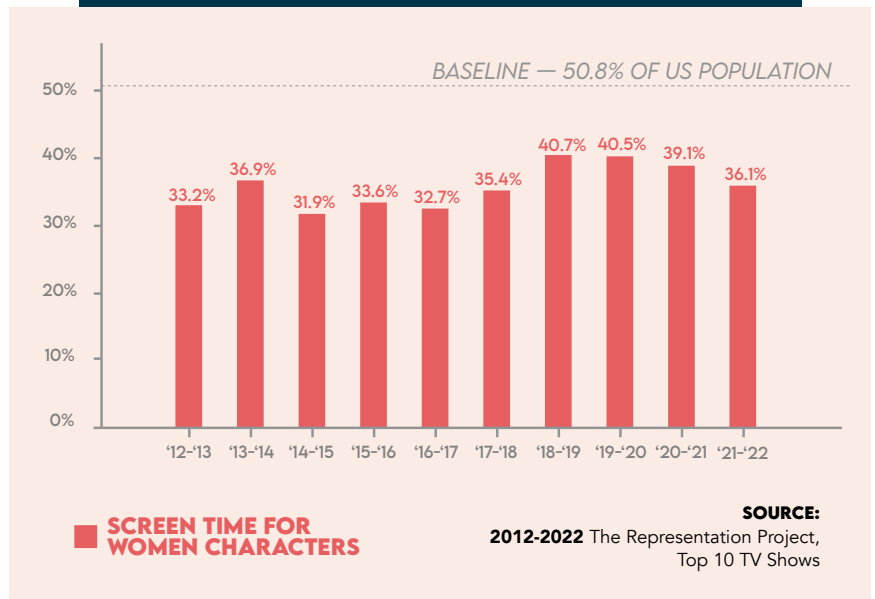


FIGURE 24: WOMEN LEADS IN EMMY BEST SERIES WINNERS

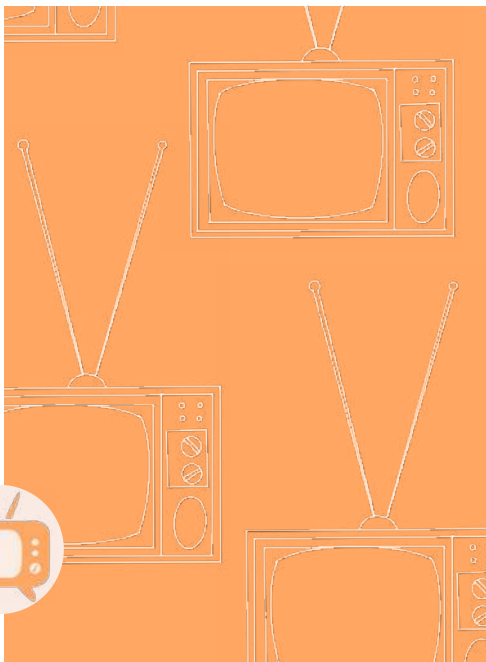
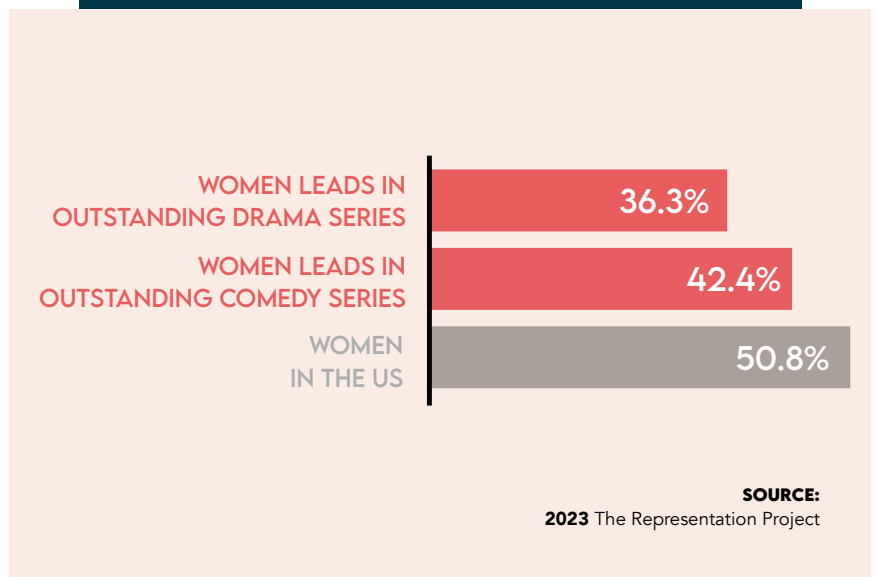
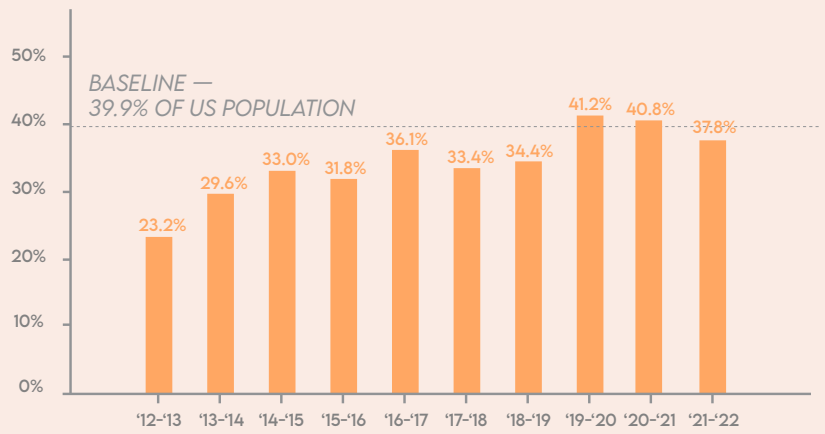


FIGURE 25: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

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).

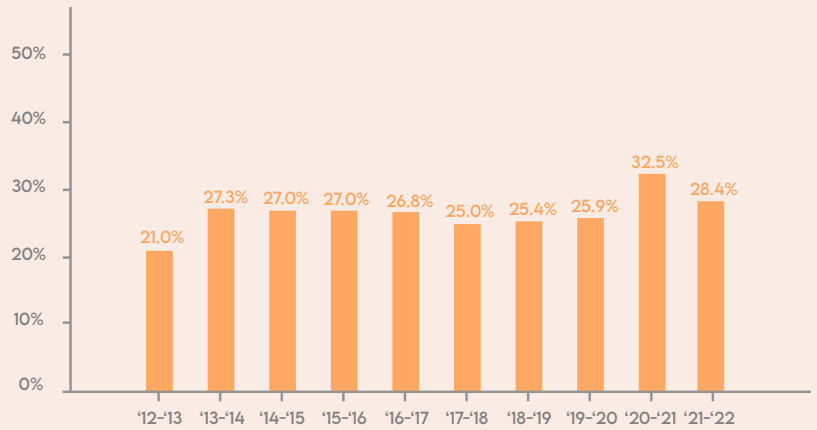
Although we have seen steady progress in the past decade for BIPOC TV characters, characters with light skin tones receive nearly four times as much screen time as characters with medium/dark skin tones. This confirms that colorism is persistent in Hollywood.

TV shows centering the lives of BIPOC characters are rarely awarded Emmys for Best Comedy or Best Drama Series. Only 2.2% of leads in the Best Drama Series winners and 3.2% of leads in the Best Comedy Series winners are BIPOC characters (compared to 39.9% of the US population).



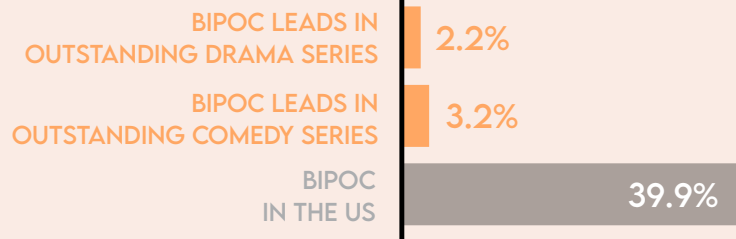
SOURCE:
2012-2022 The Representation Project, Top 10 TV Shows

FIGURE 26: SCREEN TIME BY SKIN TONE IN TOP TV, 2012-2022



SOURCE:
2012-2022 The Representation Project, Top 10 TV Shows

FIGURE 27: BIPOC LEADS IN EMMY BEST SERIES WINNERS



SOURCE:
2023 The Representation Project

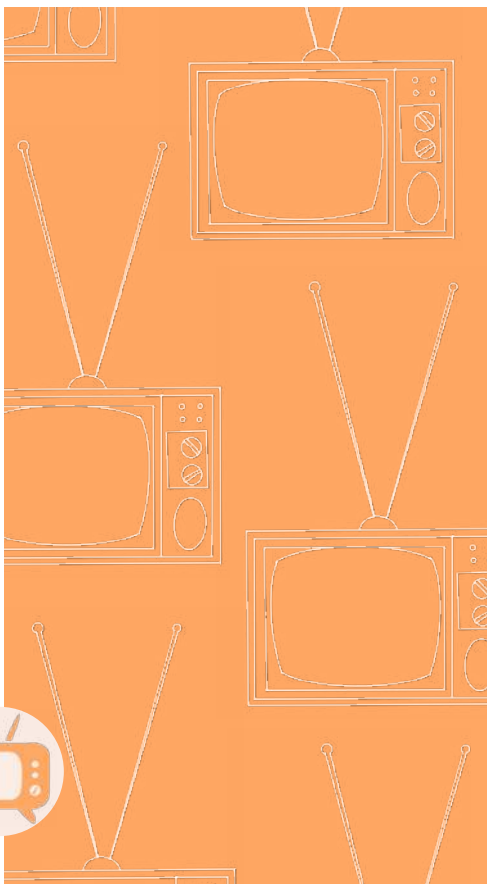


FIGURE 28: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

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 statistically significant increases every year since.

LGBTQ+ characters in TV have made substantial progress in the past decade, but no Emmy winner for Best Drama Series has ever centered the story of an LGBTQ+ lead. In contrast, LGBTQ+ leads are much better represented compared to the US population when it comes to Emmy winners for Best Comedy series (6.4% compared to 7.1%).

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 1.5% in the 2010/2011 season to 0.7% in the 2021/2022 season.

People with disabilities make up 26% of the US population, yet leads with disabilities are vastly underrepresented among Emmy winners. When it comes to the Best Drama Series category, only 5.2% center the life of a character with a disability. No winner of the Best Comedy Series award has ever featured a lead with a disability.

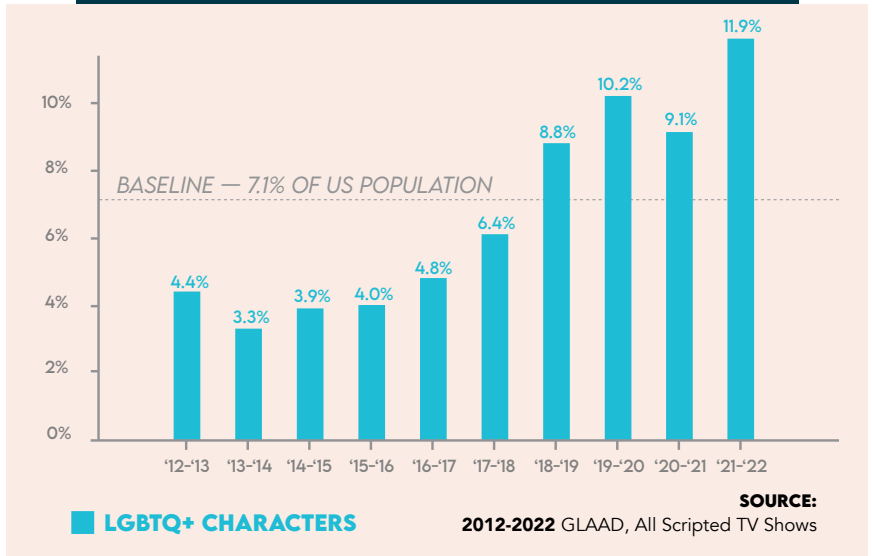


FIGURE 29: LGBTQ+ LEADS IN EMMY BEST SERIES WINNERS

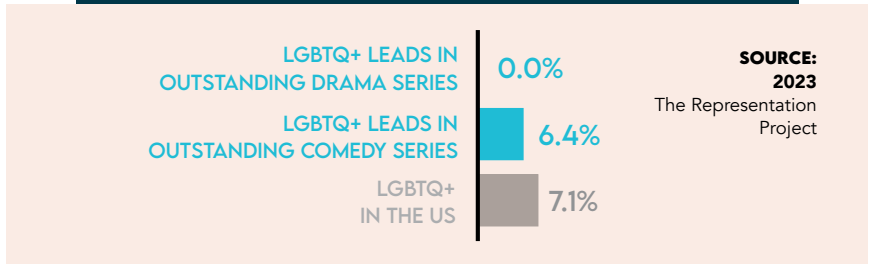


FIGURE 30: CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

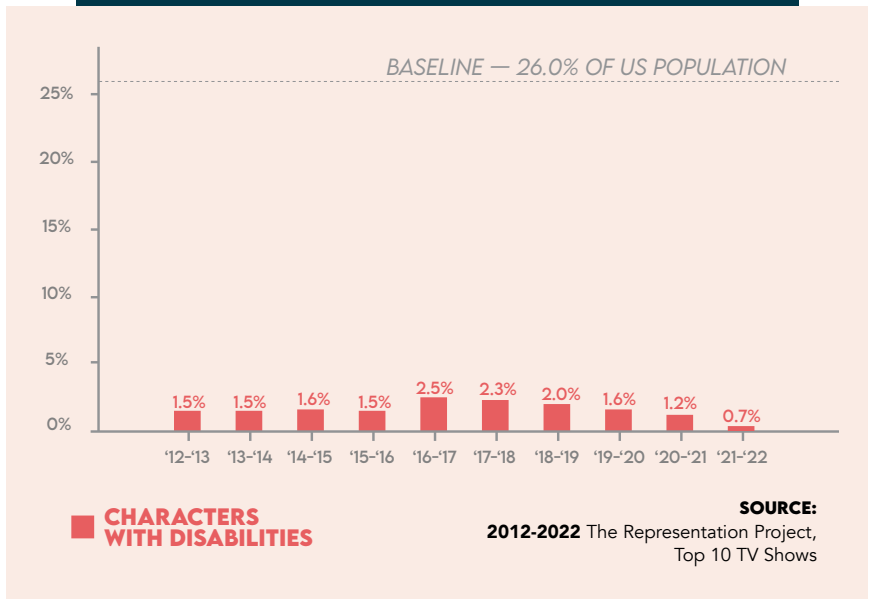


FIGURE 31: LEADS W/ DISABILITIES IN EMMY BEST SERIES WINNERS

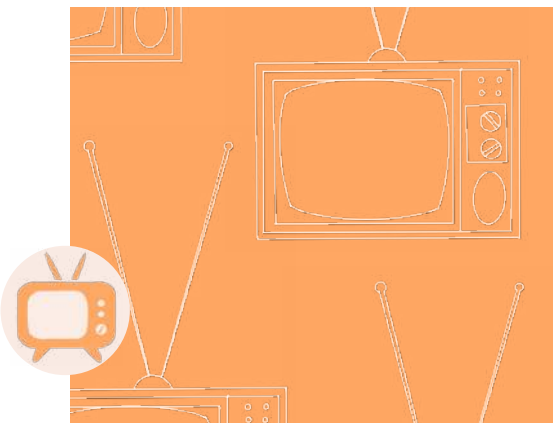
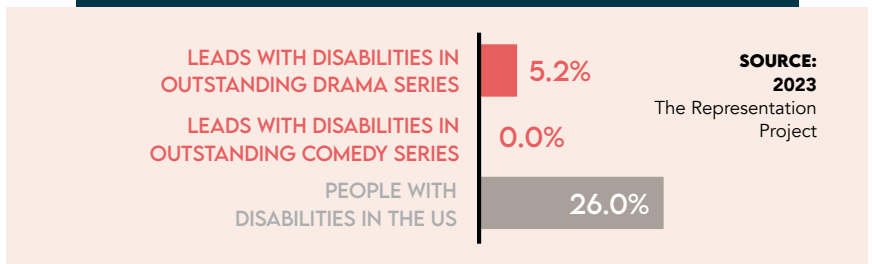
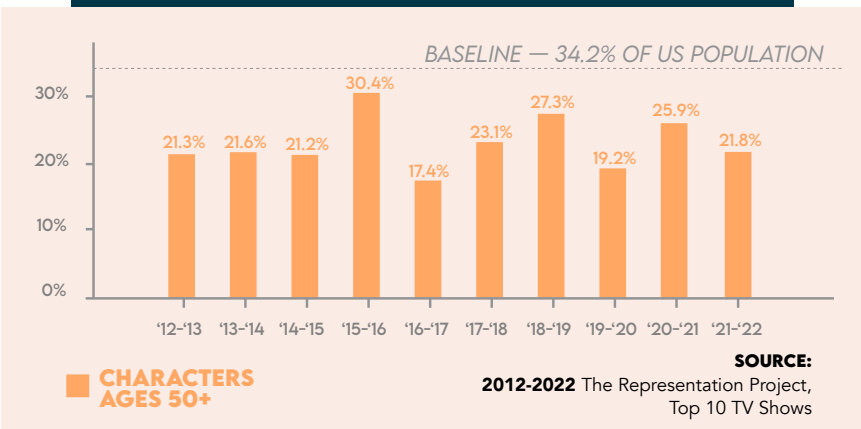


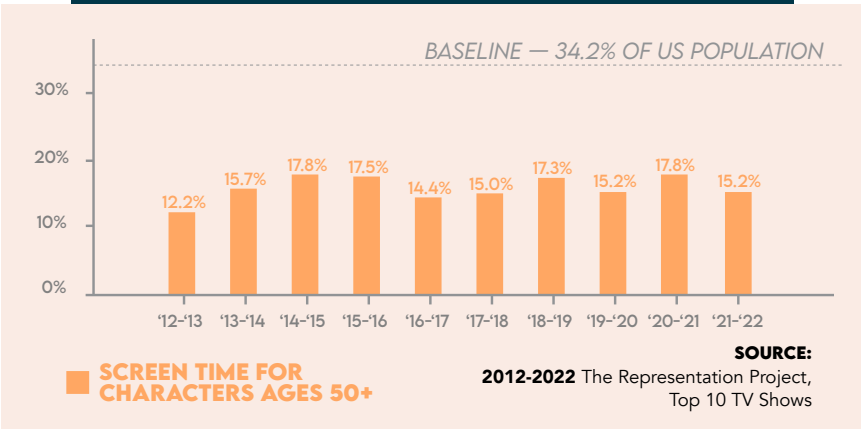
FIGURE 32: CHARACTERS AGES 50+ IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

For the past decade, characters ages 50+ have been underrepresented in popular television. We saw significant progress in age representations for overall characters starting in 2015, but in the 2021/2022 season, characters 50+ were still only 21.8% of total characters (compared to 34.2% in the US population).



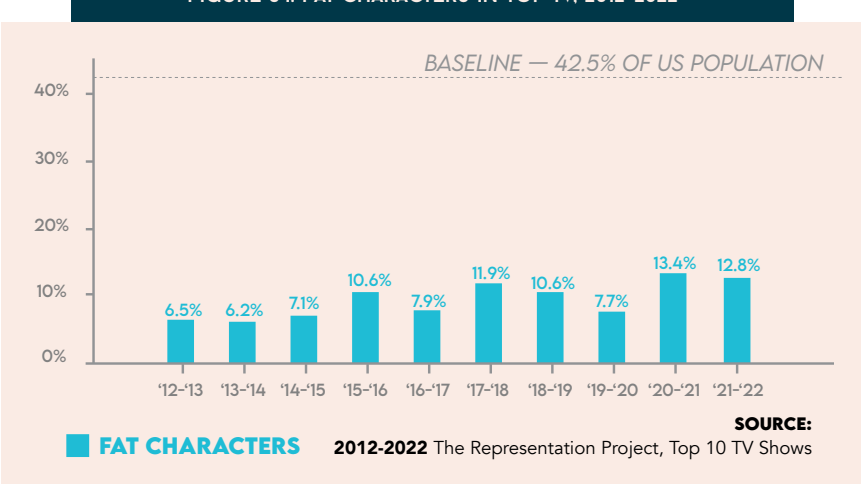
Characters ages 50+ are even more erased from popular TV when it comes to screen time in the last decade. In the 2021/2022 season, 21.8% of characters in top TV programs were ages 50+, but those characters only accounted for 15.2% of overall screen time.

FIGURE 33: SCREEN TIME BY AGE IN TOP TV, 2012-2022



Fat people are vastly underrepresented when it comes to overall characters in popular television. Despite being 42.5% of the US population, straight-sized characters outnumber fat characters six-to-one in the 2021/2022 TV season (87.2% compared to 12.8%).

FIGURE 34: FAT CHARACTERS IN TOP TV, 2012-2022



Fat characters face even more erasure when it comes to actual screen time received in the top TV shows. While 12.8% of characters in the top TV shows of 2022 were people of size, those characters received only 3.5% of actual screen time.

FIGURE 35: SCREEN TIME BY BODY SIZE IN TOP TV, 2012-2022

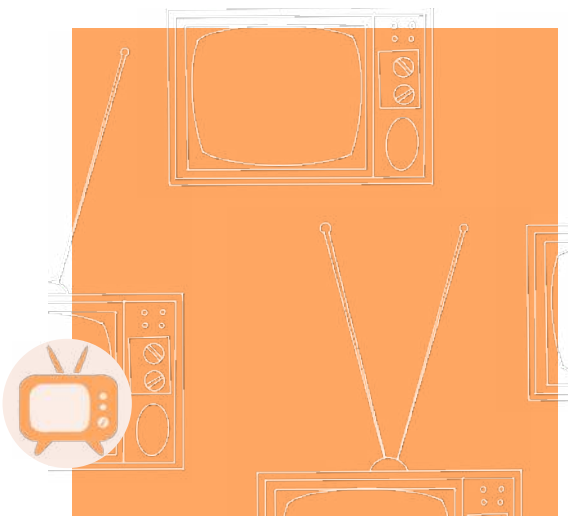
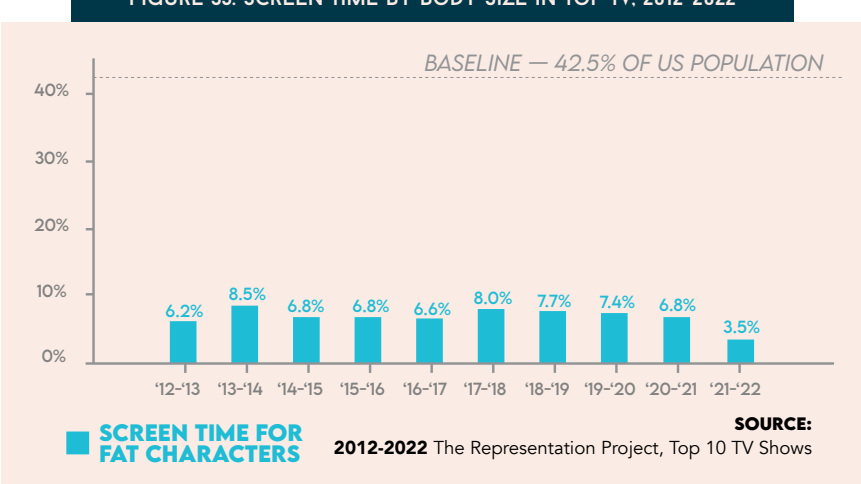
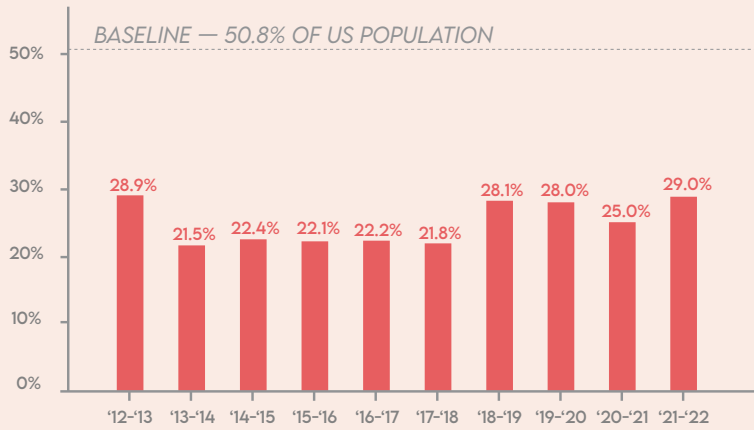


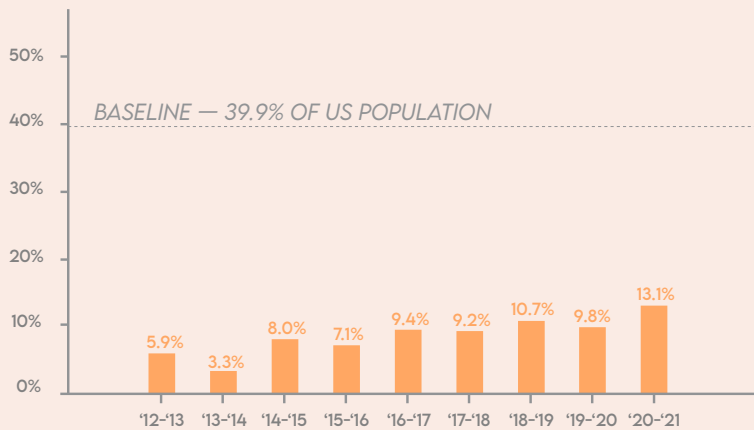
FIGURE 36: WOMEN TV SHOW CREATORS, 2012-2022



WOMEN TV CREATORS

SOURCES:
 2012-2019 UCLA, Top Broadcast TV
 2019-2022 SDSU, Top Broadcast, Cable & Streaming TV

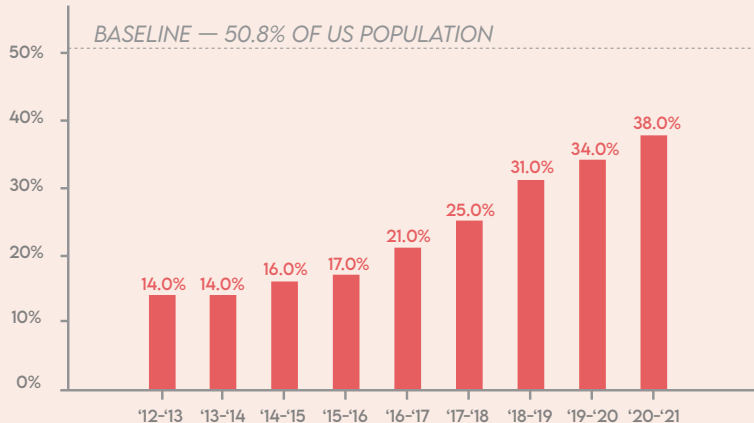
FIGURE 37: BIPOC TV SHOW CREATORS, 2012-2021



BIPOC TV CREATORS

SOURCE:
 2012-2021 UCLA, Top Broadcast TV

FIGURE 38: WOMEN TV SHOW DIRECTORS, 2012-2021



WOMEN TV DIRECTORS

SOURCE:
 2012-2021 Directors Guild of America, All Episodes in Season

BEHIND THE SCENES

For the past decade, the top television creators have been overwhelmingly men. From 2012 to 2022 we see little progress, with men show creators still outnumbering women show creators three-to-one (71.0% compared with 29.0%).

Popular television from 2012 to 2021 has largely been made by white TV show creators. We observed a steady trend toward better BIPOC representation over the decade, but BIPOC TV show creators remain underrepresented in 2021 (13.1% compared to 39.9% of the US population).

Although women TV directors remain underrepresented compared to the US population, we see steady gains for women TV directors across the decade.

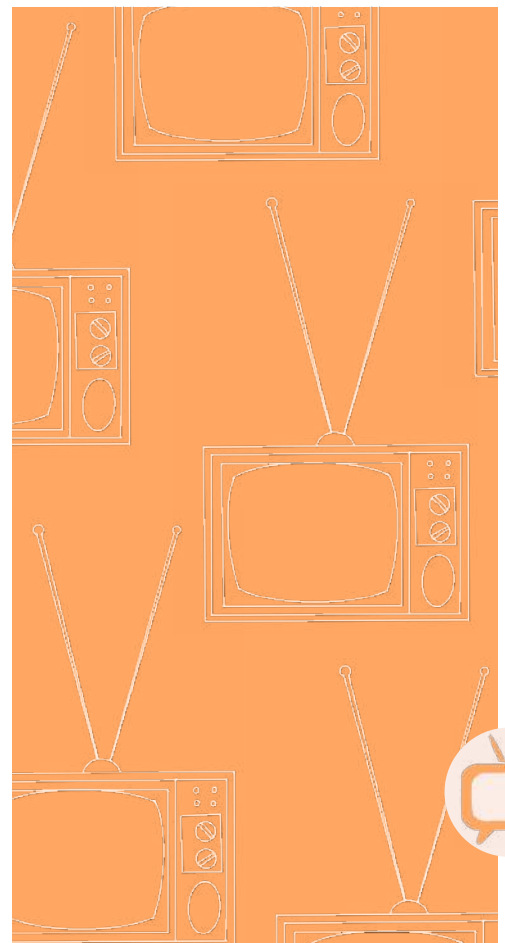
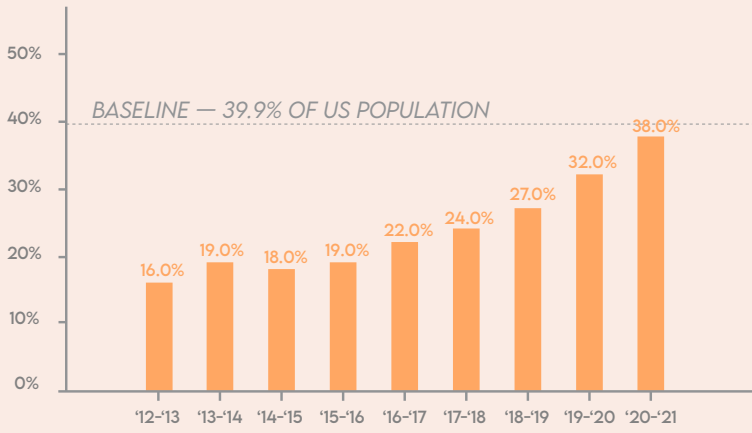


FIGURE 39: BIPOC TV SHOW DIRECTORS, 2012-2021



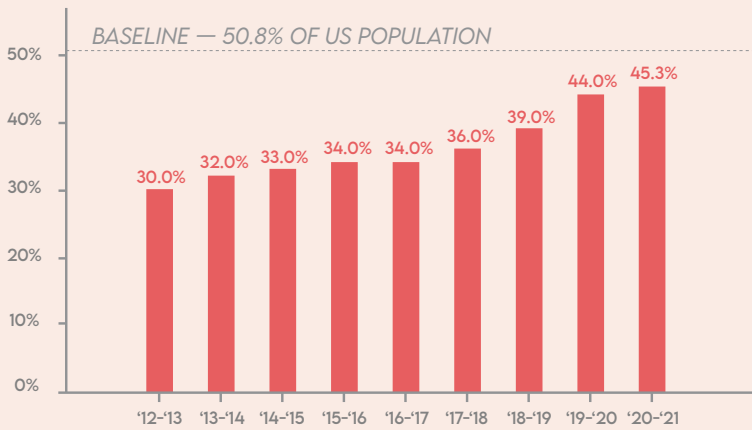
BIPOC TV DIRECTORS

SOURCE: 2012-2021 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, coming close to achieving equity in racial representation. In the 2020/2021 season, over twice as many episodes were directed by BIPOC than in 2012/2013 (38% compared to 16%).

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 2020/2021 season (45.3%).

FIGURE 40: WOMEN TV SHOW WRITERS, 2012-2021

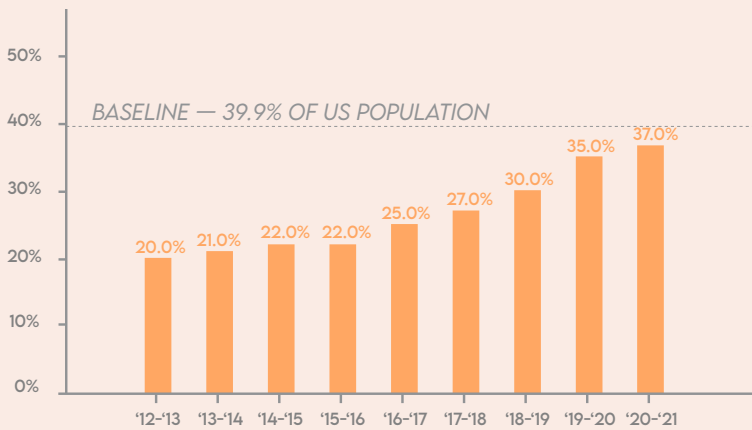


WOMEN TV WRITERS

SOURCE: 2012-2021 WGAW, Employed TV Writers

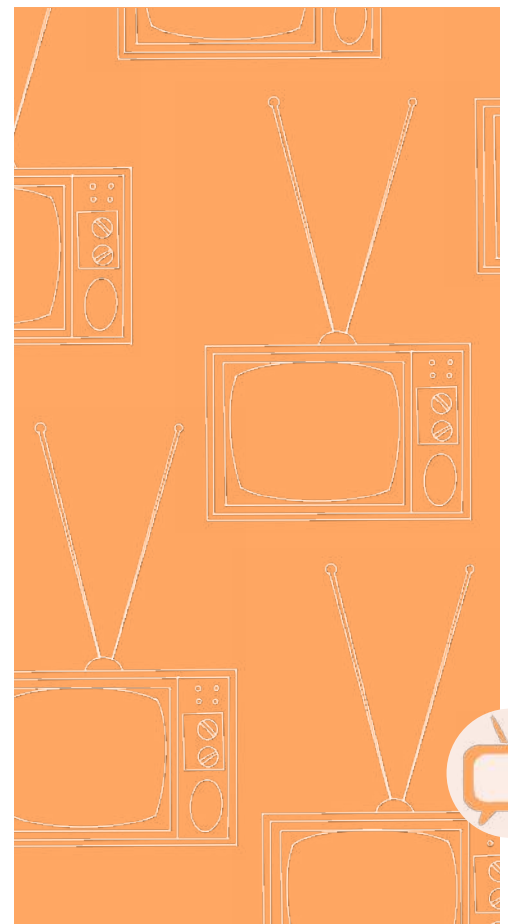
The TV industry has also seen significant progress when it comes to the number of BIPOC writers in the past decade. The percentage of BIPOC writers jumped from 20.0% in the 2012/2013 season to 37.0% in the 2020/2021 season.

FIGURE 41: BIPOC TV SHOW WRITERS, 2012-2021



BIPOC TV WRITERS

SOURCE: 2012-2021 WGAW, Employed TV Writers



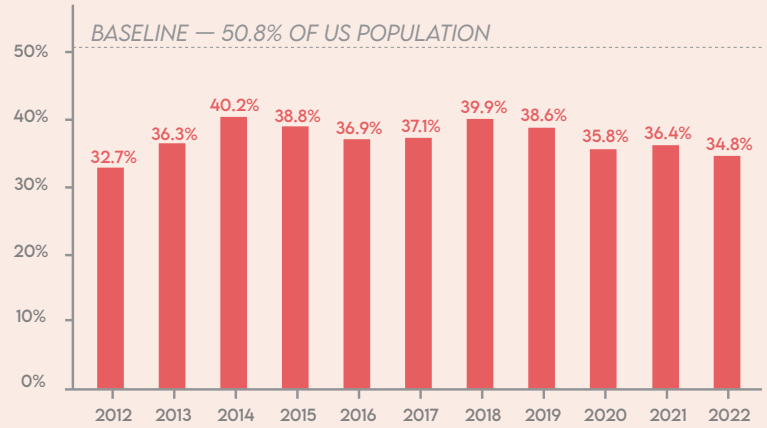
ADS

Men characters in advertising outnumber women characters two-to-one (65.2% compared with 34.8%), and this gender imbalance has not seen improvement in the past decade.

BIPOC characters achieved equitable representation in 2017 (41.4% compared to 39.9% of the US population), however, the trend reversed beginning in 2019. The percentage of BIPOC characters in ads dropped to 27.5% in 2022 (compared to 39.9% of the US population).

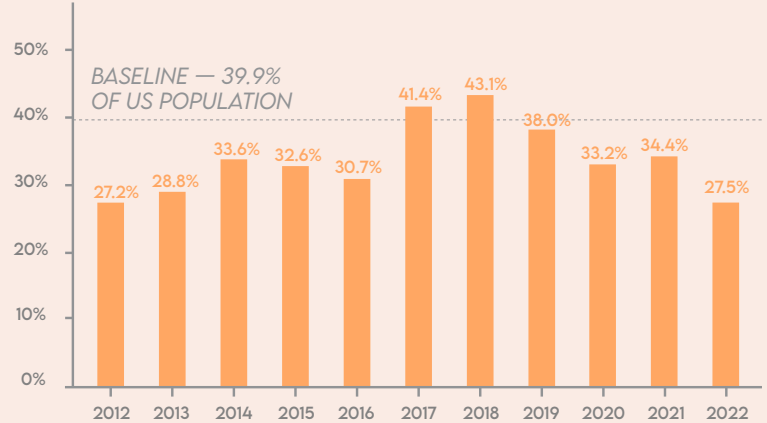
As the tables below indicate, we have little reputable research on representations of sexuality, ability, and body size in advertising. One study analyzing advertisements from 2019 finds that only 1.8% of characters were LGBTQ+, 2.2% of characters were shown with a disability, 7.0% of characters were ages 60+, and 7.2% of characters were fat.

FIGURE 42: WOMEN CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISING, 2012-2022



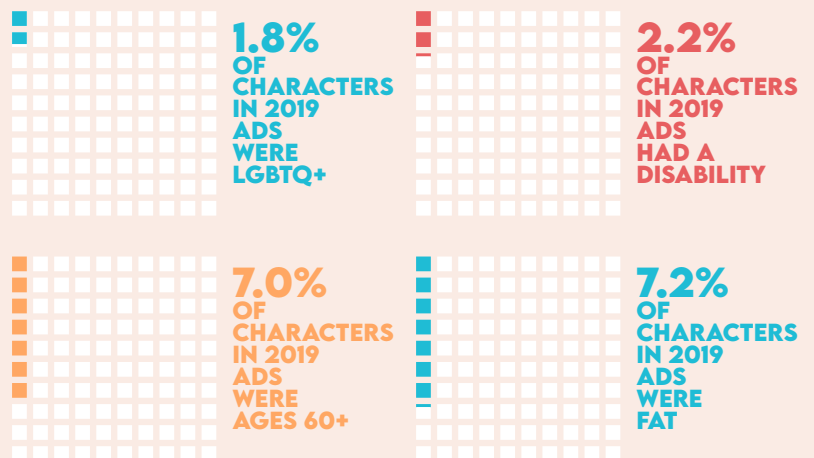
■ WOMEN CHARACTERS
SOURCES:
 2012-2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions
 2020-2022 Extreme Research

FIGURE 43: BIPOC CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISING, 2012-2022



■ BIPOC CHARACTERS
SOURCES:
 2012-2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions
 2020-2022 Extreme Research

FIGURE 44: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS, CHARACTERS 60+, CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES, & FAT CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISING, 2019



SOURCE:
 2019 GDIGM, Cannes Lions



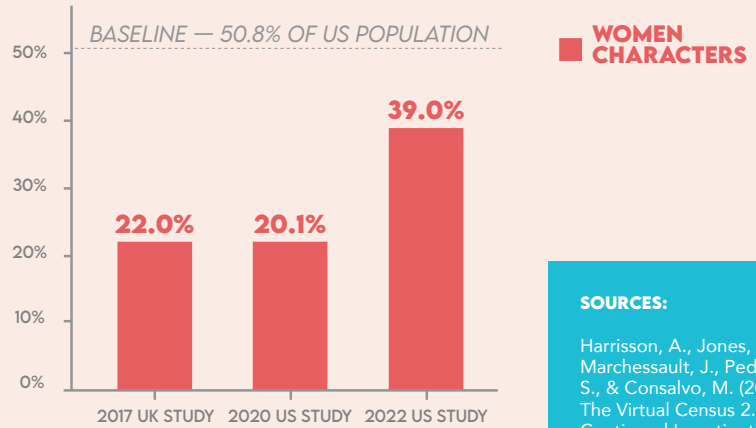
VIDEO GAMES

When it comes to gender representation in video games, studies from 2017, 2020, and 2022 all find that men characters vastly outnumber women characters. While we see some progress, in 2022 women characters are still underrepresented in popular video games compared to the US population (39.0% compared to 50.8%).

BIPOC characters are underrepresented in the most popular games in the US compared to their numbers in the population. In 2020, white characters outnumbered BIPOC characters three-to-one (75.3% compared to 24.7%).

As the tables below indicate, we have little reputable research on representations of sexuality, ability, age, and body size in video games. One study analyzing video games from 2020 finds that only .03% of characters were LGBTQ+, 0.1% of characters were shown with a disability, 3.2% of characters were ages 50+, and 1.5% of characters were fat.

FIGURE 45: WOMEN VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS



SOURCES:

Harrison, A., Jones, S., Marchessault, J., Pedraza, 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.

2020 GDIGM, *The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming*

2022 Diamond Lobby, *Diversity in Video Games Study*

FIGURE 46: BIPOC VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS

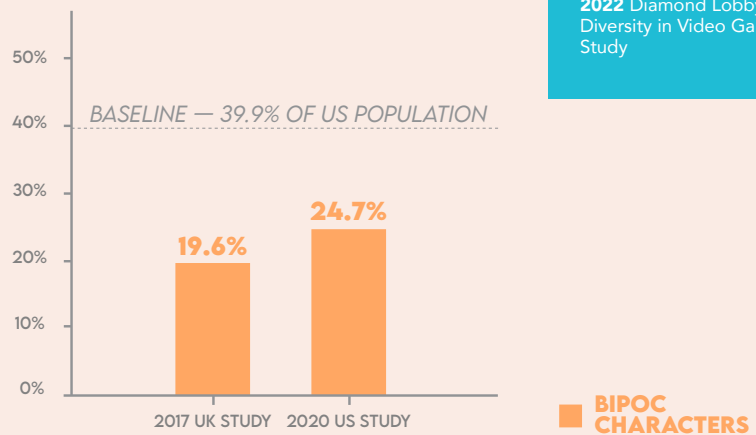
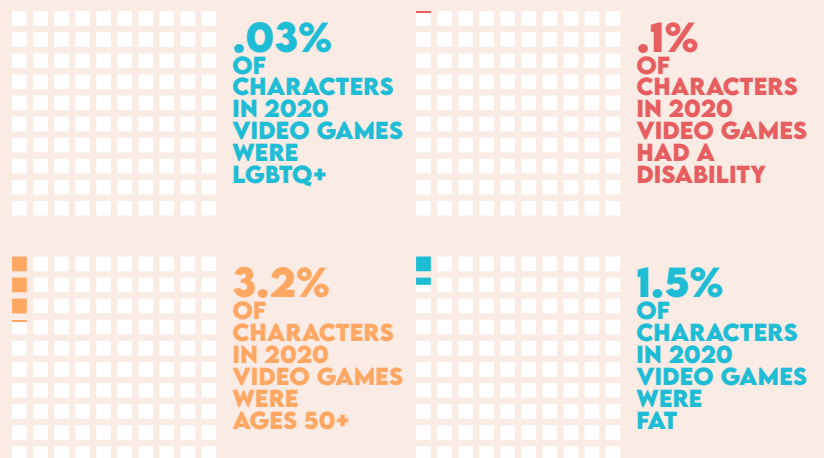
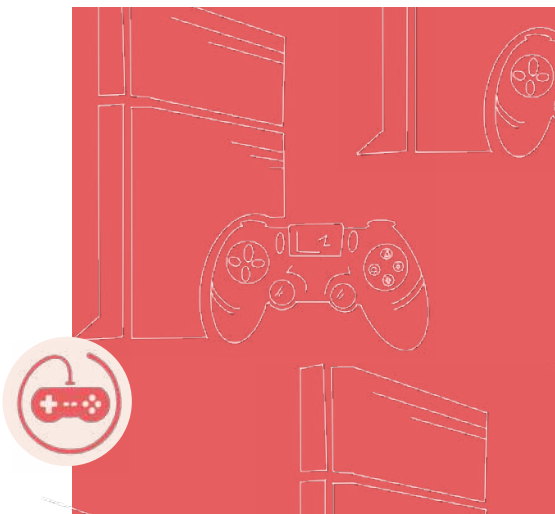


FIGURE 47: LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS, CHARACTERS 50+, CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES, & FAT CHARACTERS IN 2020 VIDEO GAMES



SOURCE:

2020 GDIGM, *The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming*



MUSIC

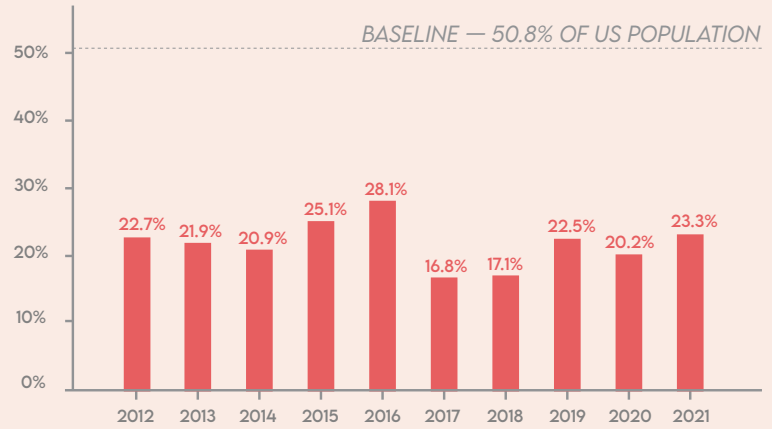
PERFORMERS

Although women make up half of the US population, women artists are woefully underrepresented on the annual Billboard Hot 100 chart, and we have seen no progress in the past decade. Men artists on the Hot 100 outnumber women artists about three-to-one.

Another way to measure representation in music is to analyze whose music is elevated and rewarded at the annual Grammy awards. Between 2013 and 2020, only 9.7% of Album of the Year nominees were women. This means the Grammy's most prestigious award is almost always awarded to men.

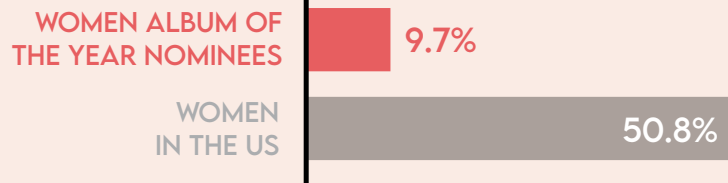
BIPOC musical artists have seen equitable representations on the Billboard Hot 100 chart for the majority of the past decade. BIPOC artist representation on the Hot 100 nearly doubled in the past decade.

FIGURE 48: WOMEN ARTISTS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2021



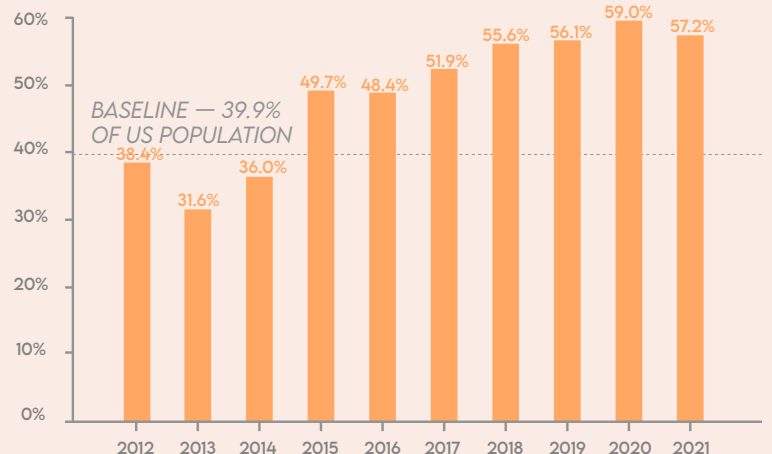
WOMEN ARTISTS
SOURCE:
 2012-2021 USC Annenberg, Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

FIGURE 49: WOMEN ALBUM OF THE YEAR GRAMMY NOMINEES



SOURCE:
 2013-2020 USC Annenberg

FIGURE 50: BIPOC ARTISTS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2021



BIPOC ARTISTS
SOURCE:
 2012-2021 USC Annenberg, Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

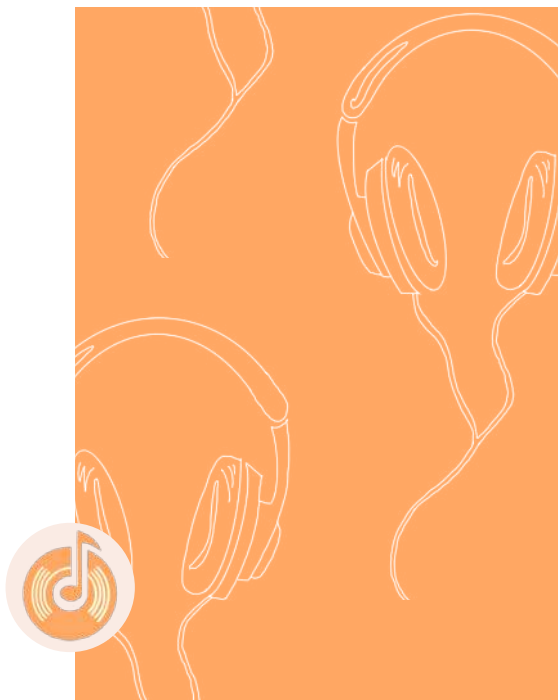
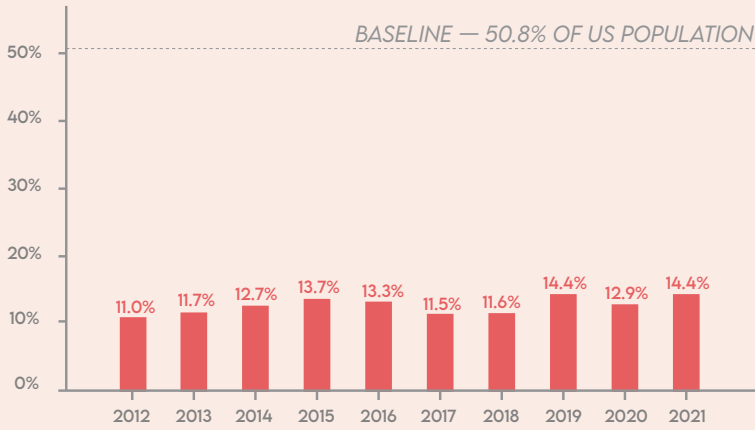


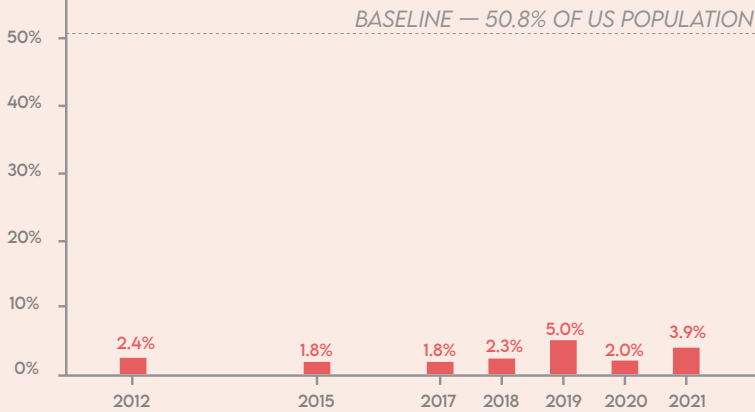
FIGURE 51: WOMEN SONGWRITERS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2021



■ **WOMEN SONGWRITERS**

SOURCE:
2012-2021 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

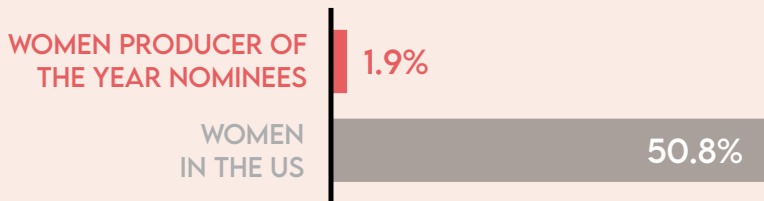
FIGURE 52: WOMEN MUSIC PRODUCERS IN TOP 100 CHART, 2012-2021



■ **WOMEN MUSIC PRODUCERS**

SOURCE:
2012-2021 USC Annenberg,
Billboard Hot 100 Year-End Chart

FIGURE 53: WOMEN PRODUCER OF THE YEAR GRAMMY NOMINEES



SOURCE:
2013-2022 USC Annenberg

BEHIND THE SCENES

Women songwriters are mostly missing in top Billboard songs, and have seen little to no progress over the course of the decade. Men songwriters outnumber women songwriters nearly six-to-one (85.6% compared to 14.4%).

The majority of top Billboard songs from 2012 to 2021 were produced by men. In 2021, only 3.9% of music producers were women, which means they are virtually erased from this key decision-making role in music.

Between 2013 and 2020, only one Grammy nominee for Producer of the Year went to a woman (Linda Perry in 2019).



ACTION STEPS

Panelists and participants from previous State of Media Summits have come up with the following action steps to improve media representations:

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

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