

***Streaming Women:  
Representation and Employment in Original U.S. Films  
Released by Streaming Services in 2022***

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The entry of streaming services into the film industry was well under way when the seismic changes prompted by the pandemic disrupted and in some ways accelerated the possible impact of the new players on the business. Dire predictions that streamers would cause the death of the theatrical market have subsided, and even the most stalwart cinephiles and filmmakers have surrendered to the inevitability of the streaming platform. Recognizing the value of exposure in the theatrical marketplace, many original films by streaming services now enjoy at least brief theatrical runs. The likely outcome of the upheaval of the last few years is that the theatrical and streaming markets will find ways to peacefully co-exist and capitalize on the strengths of the other.

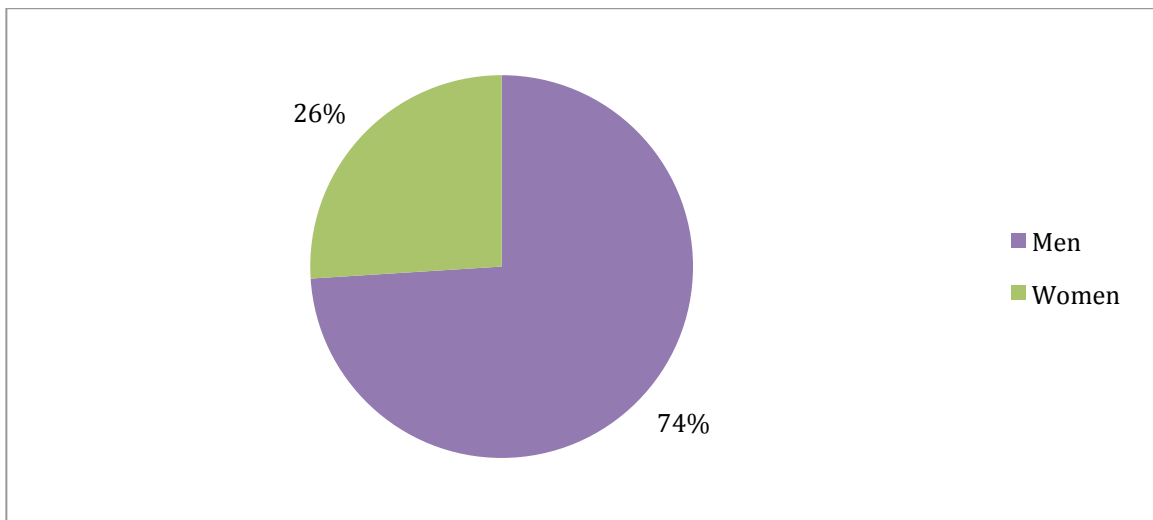
How do women fare on screen and behind the scenes in original films released by major streamers? Does this altered marketplace make more room for this traditionally marginalized group or do traditional ways of doing business in the mainstream film industry override the possibility of expanding the population of filmmakers and characters to include more women? This study considers women's behind-the-scenes employment and on-screen representation in original U.S. films released by Amazon Prime, Disney+, Hulu, HBO Max and Netflix. *Streaming Women* is the only study currently available to provide 2022 data for the major streaming companies.

## ***Key Findings***

•In 2022, women comprised 26% of directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on original U.S. films released by streaming services (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1.*

*Percentage of Women and Men in Behind-the-Scenes Roles on Original U.S. Films by Streaming Services*



•Women accounted for 22% of directors. 77% of the original films by streamers had no women directors.

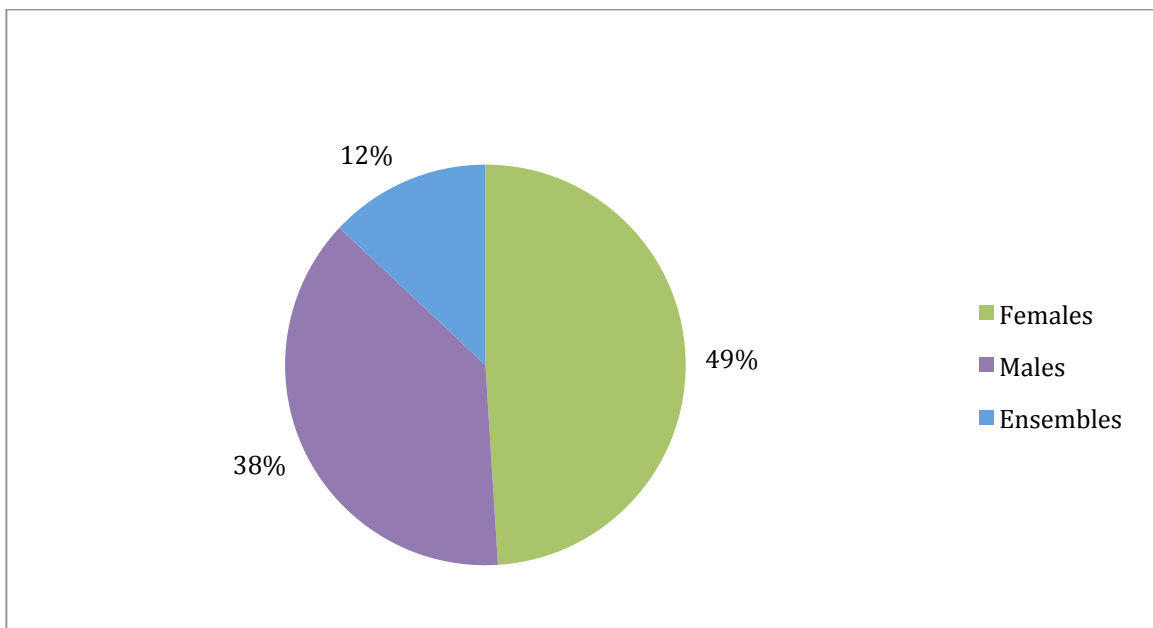
•In 2022, women made up just 8% of cinematographers. 93% of films had no women cinematographers.

•Last year, the majority of films (72%) employed 0 to 4 women in the behind-the-scenes roles considered, 26% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 3% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 7% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the behind-the-scenes roles considered, 49% employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining 43% employed 10 or more men.

•More original films on streaming services featured sole female than sole male protagonists in 2022. 49% (49.4%) of original U.S. films by streaming services had female protagonists. 38% (38.3%) of films featured male protagonists, and 12% (12.3%) of films had ensembles or a combination of male and female protagonists (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

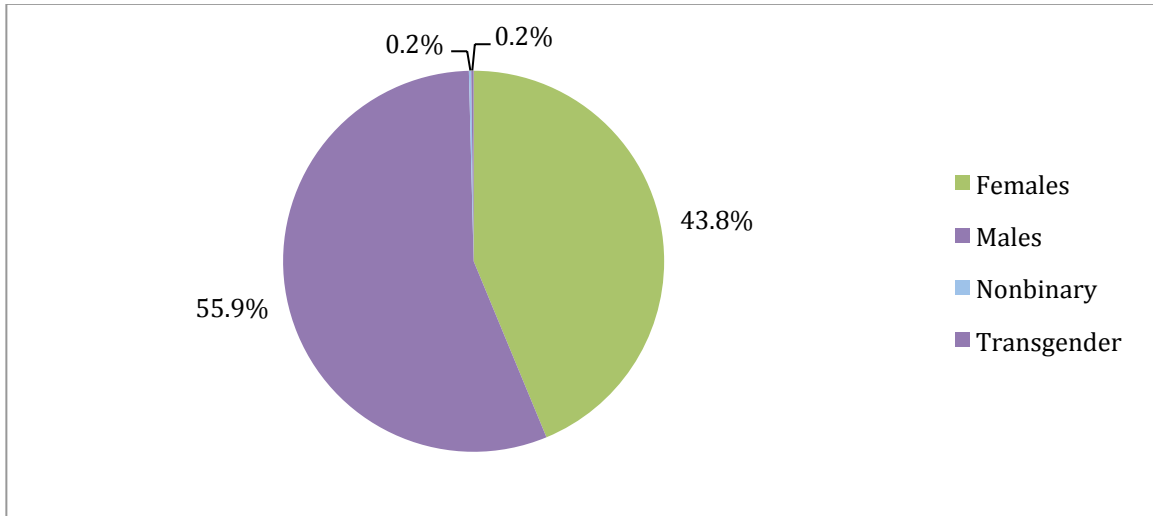
*Percentages of Streaming Films Featuring Female, Males, and Ensembles as Protagonists*



•In 2022, females accounted for 43.8%, males 55.9%, nonbinary characters 0.2%, and transgender characters 0.2% of *major characters*.

Figure 3.

Percentages of Major Characters by Gender on Original Films by Streaming Services

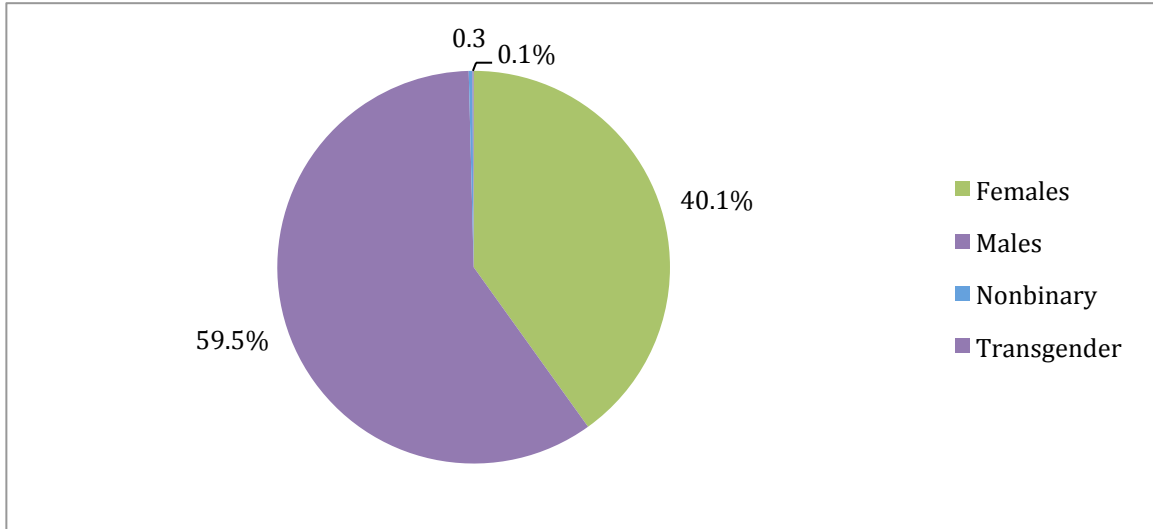


- Females made up 40.1%, males 59.5%, nonbinary characters 0.3%, and transgender characters 0.1% of all *speaking characters*.

- Interestingly, 49% of films featured female protagonists, and females comprised 44% of major characters and 40% of all characters. As such, original films from streamers appear to foreground female protagonists.

Figure 4.

Percentages of All Speaking Characters by Gender on Original Films by Streaming Services



- The majority (70%) of films featured more male than female characters. 21% of films had more female than male characters. 9% of films featured equal numbers of female and male characters.

- Films with women directors featured higher percentages of female characters in major roles and in speaking roles than films with exclusively male directors. For example, in films with at least one woman director, females comprised 52% of major characters. In films with exclusively male directors, females accounted for 41% of major characters.

- While the percentage of female characters in *speaking roles* declined precipitously from their 30s (32%) to their 40s (18%), the percentage of male characters stayed the same (25%). Few male or female characters aged into their 60s (males, 7% vs. females, 5%).

- Among *major* characters, female characters outnumbered males through their 30s. Male characters 40 and older outnumbered females, with slightly more than twice as many male characters as female characters in their 50s. This age difference reinforces the stereotypes that females are valued for their youth and beauty and

males are valued for their accomplishments. Interestingly, binary and transgender characters in major roles do not age past 20, suggesting that they have no future or live truncated lives.

- 6.0% of all speaking characters were Latina and 5.6% were Latino, making them the most underrepresented ethnic group in film when compared to their representation in the U.S. population.

- Basic gender stereotypes apply to both speaking and major characters. All speaking and major female characters were more likely than male characters to have an identifiable marital status. All speaking and major male characters were more likely than female characters to have an identifiable occupation.

## *Background*

*Streaming Women* reports the findings of a content analysis of over 1,100 behind-the-scenes credits and more than 1,800 on-screen characters. The behind-the-scenes credits considered include directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, cinematographers, and composers. The study also reports the percentage of films with female protagonists, as well as the percentages of females portrayed as major and speaking characters. In addition, the project provides the demographic traits of characters, including race/ethnicity, age, marital status, and occupational status. The study also considers the goals and roles held by characters. Finally, *Streaming Women* examines important relationships between on-screen representations of female characters and the behind-the-scenes employment of women as directors.

For the purposes of this study, protagonists are the characters from whose perspective the story is told. Major characters appear in more than one scene and are instrumental to the narrative of the story. Speaking characters include all major and minor characters.

Every film in the sample was viewed one or more time(s) in its entirety. Every character who was seen speaking at least one line was included. The study considered all original (narrative) U.S. films released by Amazon Prime, Disney+, Hulu, HBO Max and Netflix in 2022.

## ***Findings / Behind-the-Scenes Employment***

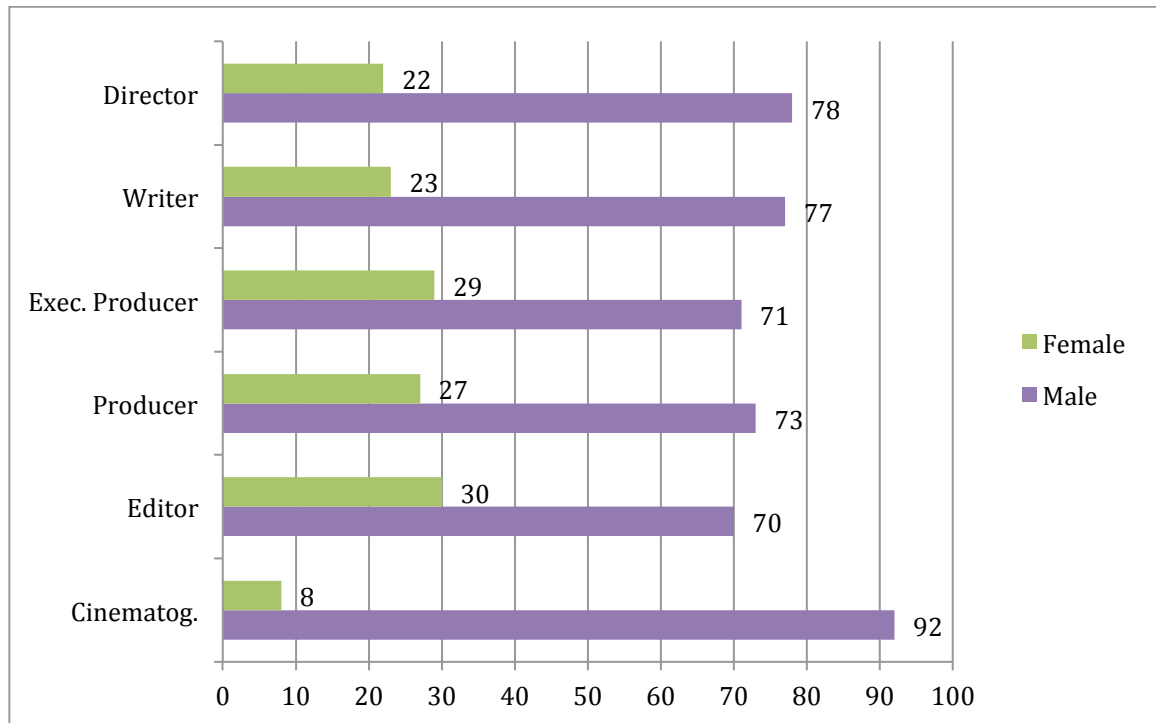
Women comprised 26% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on original films by streaming services in 2022.

Women fared best as editors (30%), followed by executive producers (29%), producers (27%), writers (23%), directors (22%), and cinematographers (8%) (see Figure 5).

In 2022, the majority of films (72%) employed 0 to 4 women in the behind-the-scenes roles considered, 26% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 3% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 7% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the behind-the-scenes roles considered, 49% employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining 43% employed 10 or more men.

*Figure 5.*

*Comparison of Percentages of Women and Men Employed Behind the Scenes on Original U.S. Streaming Films by Role*





### *Additional Role / Composers*

Women comprised 12% of composers working on original films released by streaming services. 86% of films had no women composers in 2022.

### *Important Relationships*

Films with at least one woman director were more likely than films with no women in this role to feature higher percentages of females in other key behind-the-scenes roles.

On films with at least one woman director, females comprised 54% of writers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 13% of writers.

On films with at least one woman director, females made up 42% of editors. On films with male directors only, women comprised 26% of editors.

On films with at least one woman director, females comprised 22% of cinematographers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 3% of cinematographers.

On films with at least one woman director, females made up 17% of composers. On films with male directors only, women comprised 10% of composers.

## ***Findings / On-Screen Portrayals***

### *Female and Male Characters*

49% (49.4%) of original U.S. films by streaming services featured *sole female protagonists* in 2022. 38% (38.3%) of films featured male protagonists, and 12% (12.3%) of films had ensembles or a combination of male and female protagonists (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this study, protagonists are the characters from whose perspective the story is told.

In 2022, females accounted for 43.8%, males 55.9%, nonbinary characters 0.2%, and transgender characters 0.2% of *major characters* (see Figure 3). For the purposes of this study, major characters appear in more than one scene and are instrumental to the action of the story.

Females made up 40.1%, males 59.5%, nonbinary characters 0.3%, and transgender characters 0.1% of all *speaking characters* (see Figure 4).

Interestingly, 49% of films feature female protagonists, and women comprise 44% of major characters and 40% of all characters. As such, original films from streamers appear to foreground female protagonists.

70% of films featured more male than female characters. 21% of films had more female than male characters. 9% of films featured equal numbers of female and male characters.

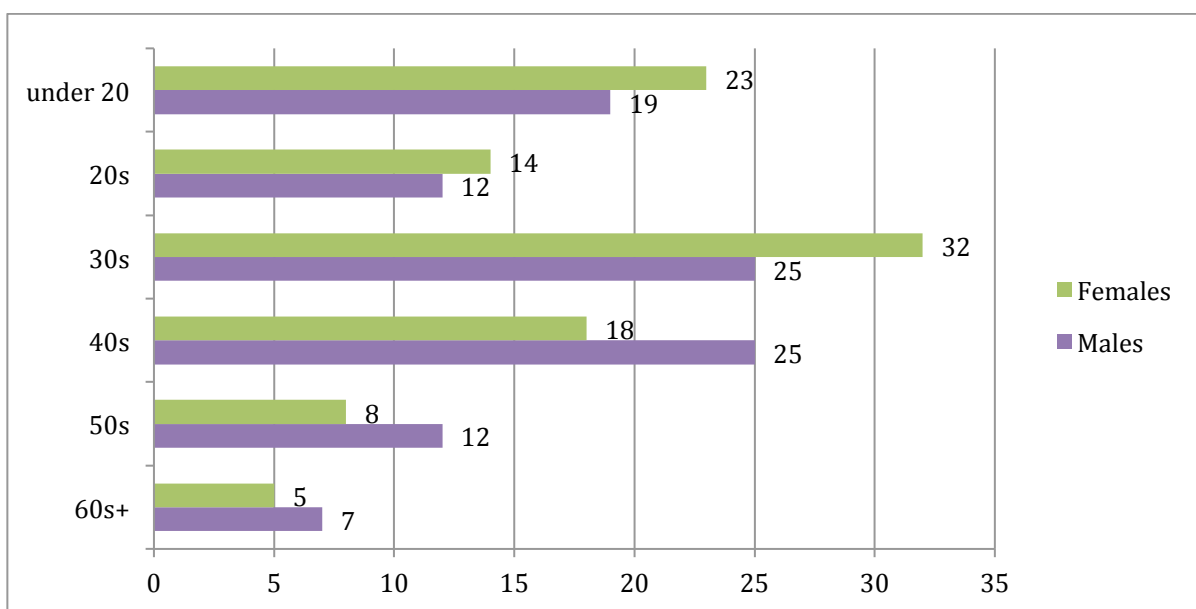
16% of films featured 1 to 4 female characters in speaking roles, 42% had 5 to 9 females, and 42% had 10 or more females. In contrast, 5% of films featured 1 to 4 male characters in speaking roles, 24% had 5 to 9 males, and 72% had 10 or more males.

### Demographic Characteristics

Films featured more female than male characters in their 30s (32% vs. 25%), but more male than female characters in their 40s (25% vs. 18%). While the percentage of female characters in *speaking roles* declined precipitously from their 30s (32%) to their 40s (18%), the percentage of male characters stayed the same (25%). Few male or female characters aged into their 60s (7% vs. 5%) (see Figure 6). 50% of nonbinary characters were under 20, 25% were in their 20s, and 25% were in their 50s. 100% of transgender characters were under 20.

Figure 6.

Comparison of Ages for All Speaking Female and Male Characters on Original Films by Streaming Services



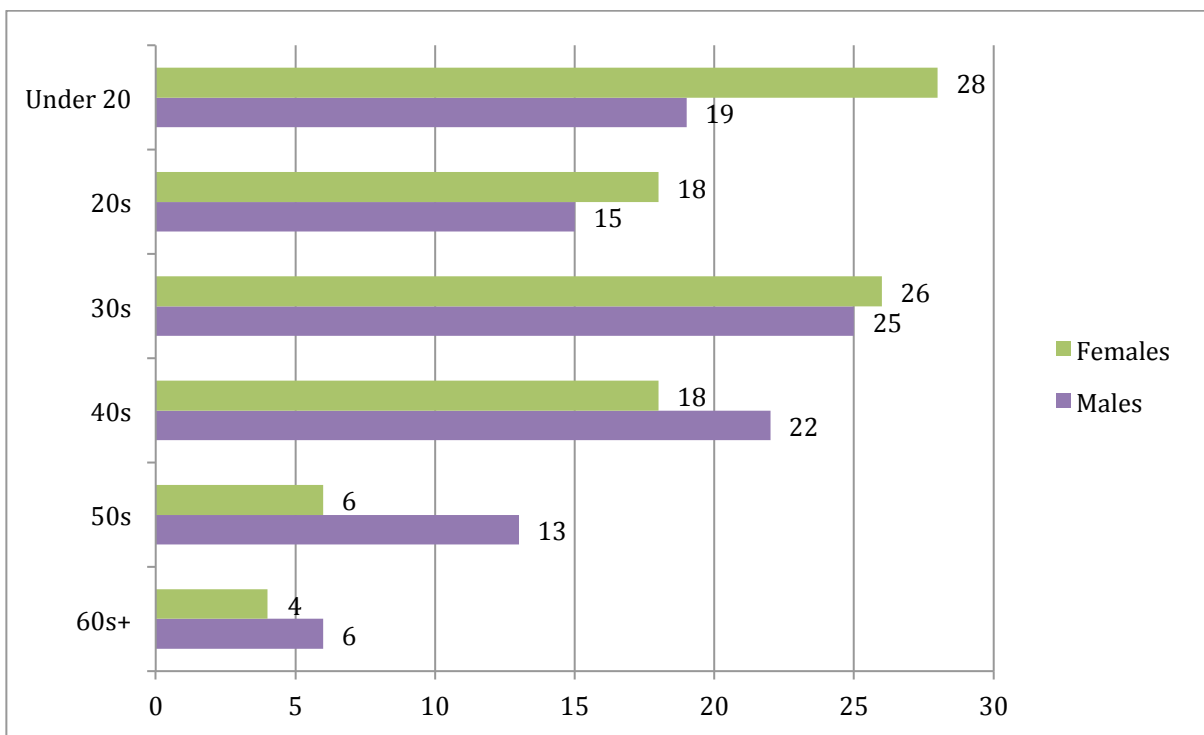
28% of *major female characters* were under 20 years old, 18% were in their 20s, 26% were in their 30s, 18% were in in their 40s, 6% were in their 50s, and 4% were in their 60s. 19% of *major male characters* were under 20, 15% were in their 20s, 25% were in their 30s, 22% were in their 40s, 13% were in their 50s, and 6%

were in their 60s (see Figure 7). All nonbinary and transgender characters in major roles were under the age of 20.

Among *major characters*, female characters outnumbered males through their 30s. Male characters 40 and older outnumbered females, with slightly more than twice as many male characters in their 50s as female characters. This age difference reinforces the stereotype that females are valued for their youth and beauty. Interestingly, nonbinary and transgender characters do not age past 20, suggesting that they have no futures or live truncated lives.

Figure 7.

Comparison of Ages for Major Female and Male Characters in Original Films by Streaming Services

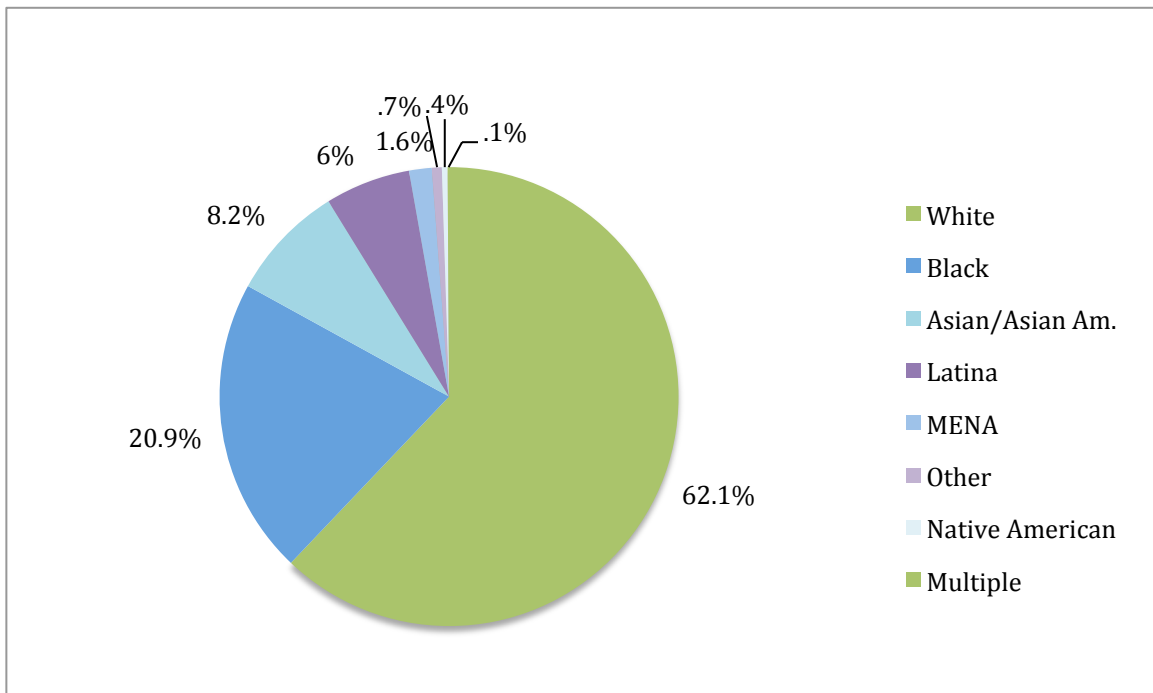


In 2022, 62.1% of female characters in *speaking roles* were White, 20.9% were Black, 8.2% were Asian or Asian American, 6.0% were Latina, 1.6% were MENA, 0.7% were of some other race or ethnicity, 0.4% were Native American, 0.1% were of multiple races or ethnicities (see Figure 8). 67.3% of male characters in *speaking roles* were White, 14.9% were Black, 7.6% were Asian or Asian American,

5.6% were Latino, 2.3% were MENA, 1.7% were of some other race or ethnicity, 0.4% were of multiple races or ethnicities, 0.3% were Native American. 40% of nonbinary characters were White, 40% were Asian or Asian American, and 20% were Latinx. 100% of transgender characters were Black.

Figure 8.

Comparison of Race/Ethnicity for All Speaking Female Characters in Original U.S. Films by Streaming Services



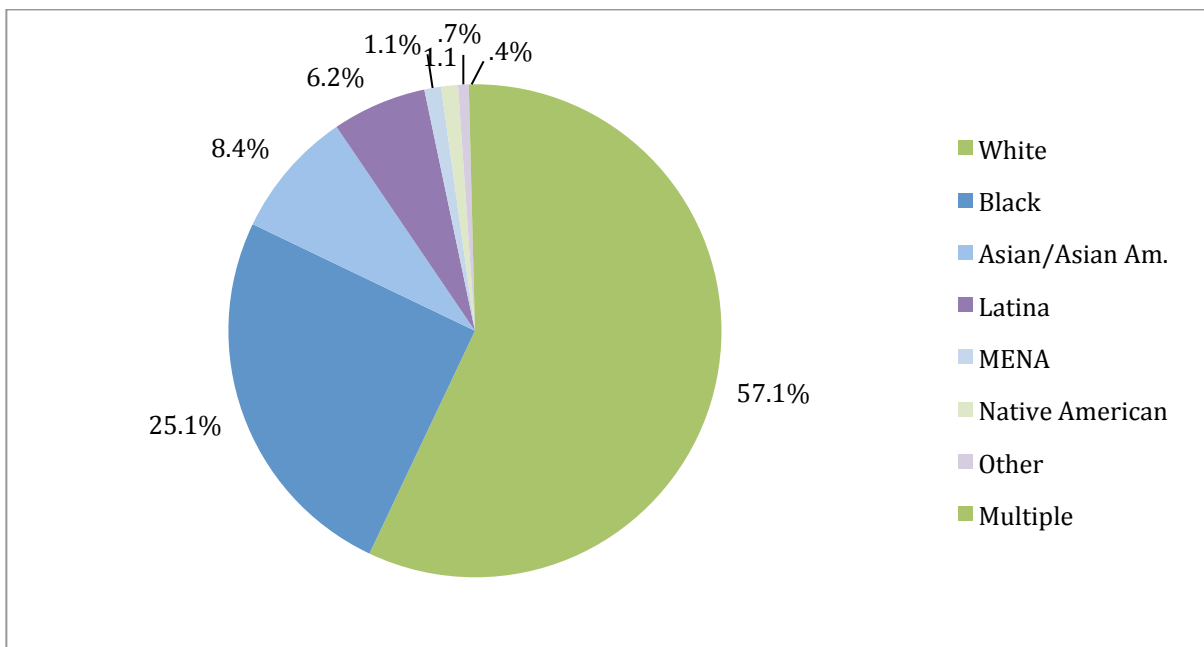
\*MENA or Middle Eastern/North African characters are from the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

In 2022, 57.1% of *major female characters* were White, 25.1% were Black, 8.4% were Asian or Asian American, 6.2% were Latina, 1.1% were MENA, 1.1% were Native American, 0.7% were of some other race or ethnicity, and 0.4% were of multiple races or ethnicities (see Figure 9). 67.6% of *major male characters* were White, 14.6% were Black, 7.4% were Asian or Asian American, 4.8% were Latino,

2.7% were MENA, 2.1% were of some other race or ethnicity, 0.6% were of multiple races or ethnicities, and 0.3% were Native American. 100% of *major* nonbinary characters were Asian or Asian American, and 100% of *major* transgender characters were Black.

Figure 9.

Comparison of Race/Ethnicity for Major Female Characters in Original U.S. Films by Streaming Services



Female characters in *speaking roles* were more likely than male characters to have a known marital status. 51% of female characters but 43% of male characters had a known marital status. Similarly, *major* female characters were more likely than males to have a known marital status (79% vs. 72%).

A larger percentage of male than female characters in *speaking roles* had an identifiable occupation. 74% of male characters but 64% of female characters had an identifiable job or occupation. Similarly, *major* male characters were more likely than major females to have an identifiable occupation (77% vs. 66%).

A larger percentage of male than female characters in *speaking roles* were seen at work, actually working (54% vs. 44%). Similarly, a larger percentage of *major* male than female characters were seen at work, actually working (54% vs. 42%).

### *Goals and Roles*

*Major* male characters were more likely than major females to have primarily work-related goals (25% vs. 16%). Female characters were more likely than males to have primarily personal life-related goals (50% vs. 31%).

*Major* male characters were more likely than females to be seen in primarily work-related roles (40% vs. 26%). Female characters were more likely than males to be seen in primarily personal life-related roles (56% vs. 41%).

### *Behind-the-Scenes Employment and On-Screen Representation*

Films with at least one woman director were more likely than films with no women in this role to feature higher percentages of females as protagonists, in major roles, and as speaking characters.

In films with at least one woman director, females comprised 68% of *protagonists*. In films with exclusively male directors, females accounted for 44% of protagonists.

In films with at least one woman director, females comprised 52% of *major* characters. In films with exclusively male directors, females accounted for 41% of major characters.

In films with at least one woman director, females comprised 47% of all *speaking* characters. In films with exclusively male directors, females accounted for 38% of all speaking characters.

## ***Tentative Comparisons between Top Grossing Films and All Original Streaming Films***

Comparisons of the numbers contained in this report to those in other reports are inevitable as we try to make sense of where streaming films fall on the spectrum of gender employment and representation. However, it is important to recognize that this data set of all original films by streamers is not directly equivalent to prior studies examining the representation and employment of women on top grossing films. Generally speaking, top grossing films enjoy the largest budgets of the film studios. The data set in this report is best compared to the largest data set of top grossing films available. This year, that would be the top 250 films. Again, any and all comparisons should be made with caution and recognize that the data sets differ in kind.

Regarding women working behind the scenes, it appears that the percentages of women working on the top 250 (domestic) grossing films of 2022 and those considered in this report are quite similar. Women comprised 24% of those working on top grossing films, according to the latest *Celluloid Ceiling* study, and 26% of those working on streaming films.

Women accounted for 22% of directors working on streaming films and 18% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.

Women comprised 23% of writers working on streaming films and 19% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.

Women made up 27% of producers working on streaming films and 31% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.

Women accounted for 29% of executive producers working on streaming films and 25% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.

Women comprised 30% of editors working on streaming films and 21% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.



Women made up 8% of cinematographers working on streaming films and 7% working on the top 250 grossing films in 2022.

On screen, 49% of streaming films and 33% of the top 100 grossing films featured female protagonists in 2022.

Women accounted for 44% of major characters on streaming films and 38% on the top 100 grossing films in 2022.

Women made up 40% of all speaking characters on streaming films and 37% on the top 100 grossing films in 2022.

Interestingly, in streaming films, 49% of films featured female protagonists, and women comprised 44% of major characters and 40% of all characters. In contrast, the latest *It's a Man's (Celluloid) World* examining the top 100 (domestic) grossing films, reveals 33% of films featured female protagonists but females comprised 38% of major characters and 37% of all speaking characters in 2022. While these two data sets are not directly comparable, the findings suggest that streamers may make a more deliberate decision than the top grossing films to foreground females as protagonists.