Inclusion in Netflix Original U.S. Scripted Series & Films

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FULL REPORT

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Inclusion in Netflix Fictional Films & Scripted Series:
2018-2021
Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

The purpose of this research is to provide an update on inclusion in Netflix films and scripted series. To complement our previous investigation of content from 2018 (69 fictional films, 80 series) and 2019 (57 fictional films, 100 series), we examined stories from 2020 (58 fictional films, 64 series) and 2021 (65 fictional films, 53 series).[1] Thus, a total of 546 fictional narratives (249 fictional films, 297 series) were assessed for this investigation.

These English-language, Netflix original, live action programs were assessed for several inclusion metrics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability). Below, the findings are presented by identity group. As in previous reports, we specify that a meaningful difference is one that reaches a minimum of 5 percentage points between groups. Where possible, we provide comparisons to our own top-grossing box office film data as well as other relevant reports on scripted or episodic content to provide industry benchmarking.

GENDER

In this section, we present results related to gender distribution both on screen and behind the camera across four years of Netflix scripted films and series. First, we examine current trends in 2021 and then assess how this year compared to 2018. For some indicators, we look at gender differences across time (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) and format (film vs. scripted series).

On Screen: Film & Series

Gender was assessed on screen in multiple ways. First, we focused on who drove the plot or storyline as the *lead/co-lead*. For film, this was the number of movies that centered on a female-identified protagonist.[2] For series, leads/co leads were established by examining the number of shows where girls and women filled 50% or more of series regular roles.[3]

In 2021, 61% (*n*=72) of all stories evaluated (film and series) were driven by girls and women (see Table 1), which was substantially above the proportion of females in the U.S. population (50.5%).[4] By format, a full 64.6% (*n*=42) of Netflix films in 2021 had a female lead/co lead and 56.6% (*n*=30) of Netflix series.

Netflix also has demonstrated a substantial increase in the number of female leads/co leads in their scripted storytelling (film and tv) overtime, rising 12.4 percentage points from 2018 (48.6%) to 2021 (61%). However, the largest jump was observed from 2018 to 2019 and incremental gains were noted in the years following (2020=56.7%, 2021=61%).

Looking within format, the increase overall in female leads/co leads was largely accounted for in film. The percentage of female protagonists increased 18.2 percentage points from 2018 (46.4%) to 2021 (64.6%). Pivoting to scripted series, there was an increase of 6 percentage points from 2018 (50.6%) to 2021 (56.6%). Only one of the female-led series had a non-binary series regular character.

Table 1
Percentage of Female-Identified Lead/Co-Leads by Storytelling Format And Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	46.4% (n=32)	50.9% (n=29)	58.6% (n=34)	64.6% (n=42)	55% (n=137)
Scripted Series	50.6% (n=40)	57.7% (n=56)	54.8% (n=34)	56.6% (n=30)	55% (n=160)
Overall	48.6% (n=72)	55.2% (n=85)	56.7% (n=68)	61% (n=72)	55% (n=297)

Note: Leads represent the central figure(s) across a story's plot. In film, two equal protagonists sharing the central journey of the story were counted as co-leads. Scripted series with 50% or more female-identified series regulars were included as having female leads/co-leads. Not one lead/co lead character was gender non-binary across the shows and movies evaluated.

While Netflix is exceeding population norms for female-driven fare, how do they compare to the rest of the entertainment industry? In 2021, female leads/co leads in Netflix films (64.6%) *dramatically* outpaced female leads/co leads in top-grossing films (41%).[5] Focusing on Netflix series data, 56.6% (n=30) of programs were female-led as opposed to 44.8% of leads across the 2020/21 broadcast, cable, and digital television season.[6] Based on these findings, Netflix is outperforming the competition on this indicator.

Besides lead/co leads, we also examined the *main cast* in Netflix films and scripted series. Main cast consisted of primary *and* secondary roles that drive the plot in movies, which increases our sample size from the previous leads analysis. For movies, the main cast was retrieved from the landing page of each film on the Netflix website. In episodic content, series regulars were those recurring roles across a show's season as defined by Luminate (formerly Variety Insight).

In 2021, the overall percentage of female main cast/series regulars in film and scripted content was 46.8%.[7] No differences were observed in 2021 by format (film=46.7%; scripted series=46.9%). However, a significant jump was observed within film by year. To illustrate, girls and women accounted for 38.9% of main cast in 2018 films and 40.9% in 2020 films but 46.7% of the main cast in 2021. This represents a 7.8 percentage point increase over the 4-year time frame of the sample. There were no differences in the percentage of female series regulars by year in scripted series (see Table 2). However, this is likely because scripted content has been close to proportional representation across 3 of the 4 years evaluated.

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Table 2
Percentage of Female-Identified Main Cast By Storytelling Format And Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	38.9% (*n*=215)	41.1% (*n*=195)	40.9% (*n*=224)	46.7% (*n*=287)	42.1% (*n*=921)
Scripted Series	46.4% (*n*=301)	48% (*n*=357)	48.9% (*n*=234)	46.9% (*n*=183)	47.5% (*n*=1,075)
Total	42.9% (*n*=516)	45.4% (*n*=552)	44.6% (*n*=458)	46.8% (*n*=470)	44.9% (*n*=1,996)

Note: A total of 3 nonbinary main cast/series regulars were observed across the entire 4-year sample

When compared to the wider industry, both Netflix program types held strong. In 2021, Netflix films had girls and women in 46.7% (*n*=287) of main cast roles as opposed to only 35% of major characters in top-grossing films.[8] Girls and women comprised 46.9% (*n*=183) of main cast in Netflix scripted series, which is on par with the percentage of female major characters 48.9% in broadcast and streaming series in 2020-21.[9] It is important to note that only 3 nonbinary characters were series regulars/main cast across the entire sample time frame. Three of these nonbinary characters were in scripted content (*Another Life*, Season 1 & 2; *Feel Good*, Season 2) and one was in film (*There's Someone Inside Your House*).

Table 3
Percentage of Female-Identified Speaking Characters By Storytelling Format And Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	35.8% (*n*=898)	36.5% (*n*=799)	38.9% (*n*=875)	40.8% (*n*=811)	37.9% (*n*=3,383)
Scripted Series	39.9% (*n*=1,364)	41.1% (*n*=1,663)	41% (*n*=1,033)	42.1% (*n*=827)	40.9% (*n*=4,887)
Total	38.2% (*n*=2,262)	39.5% (*n*=2,462)	40% (*n*=1,908)	41.4% (*n*=1,638)	39.6% (*n*=8,270)

Note: A total of 5 nonbinary speaking characters were observed across the entire 4-year sample

Lastly, we looked at the percentage of *speaking and/or named characters* by gender. In 2021, 41.4% of all speaking characters assessed were girls or women, a percentage that did not vary by format (film=40.8%, series=42.1%). An interaction between format and year emerged, however. For film, a 5-percentage point

increase in female speaking characters from 2018 to 2021 was observed. No difference was revealed for series. Beyond main cast/series regulars (*n*=3), only two additional speaking or named characters (*One Day at a Time*, Season 2) across the entire 4-year sample were coded as nonbinary.

How did Netflix compare with the broader entertainment ecosystem of female-identified speaking characters? Netflix films have had slightly more female-identified speaking characters than the wider industry, with 2021 being a standout year (see Table 4). Meanwhile, scripted series have remained slightly behind but not significantly different from their industry peers.

Table 4
Percentage of Female-Identified Speaking Characters in Netflix & Industry Films and Series by Year

Year	Film				Series			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of female-identified speaking characters, Netflix	35.8%	36.5%	38.9%	40.8%	39.9%	41.1%	41%	42.1%
% of female-identified speaking characters, industry	33.1%	34%	36%	32.9%	40%	45%	43%	45%

Note: The film industry comparisons for 2018, 2019, and 2021 are from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative report. For 2020 film and scripted series, the percentages are from San Diego State University (SDSU). Using the SDSU research, the 2018 cell is from the 2017/18 season, the 2019 cell is from 2018/19, the 2020 cell is from 2019/20, and the 2021 cell is from 2020/21. From 2018-2020, Lauzen reports the percentage of female speaking characters across broadcast, cable, and streaming. For 2021, only the average for broadcast and streaming was reported.[9]

We asked an additional question at the film and scripted series level: how many stories featured a gender-balanced cast? This allowed us to disaggregate the data and gauge the distribution of girls and women on screen on a story-by-story basis. We evaluated this at the program level and took into consideration how many films and series met or exceeded proportional representation of females according to the U.S. Census (50.8%).

A *gender-balanced* story was defined as featuring girls and women in 45.7% to 55.8% of all speaking or named roles.[10] In 2021, 37.3% or 44 of the 118 Netflix films and series analyzed met or exceeded proportional representation (see Table 5). Series (45.3%) had a significantly higher percentage of gender-balanced stories than did film (30.8%). While the proportion of stories with a gender-balanced cast increased across both formats, only series demonstrated a meaningful change from 2018 to 2021.

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Table 5
At Or Above Gender Balance By Storytelling Format & Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	26.1% (*n*=18)	31.6% (*n*=18)	37.9% (*n*=22)	30.8% (*n*=20)	31.3% (*n*=78)
Scripted Series	32.5% (*n*=26)	33% (*n*=33)	40.6% (*n*=26)	45.3% (*n*=24)	36.7% (*n*=109)
Total	29.5% (*n*=44)	32.5% (*n*=51)	39.3% (*n*=48)	37.3% (*n*=44)	34.2% (*n*=187)

For our last analysis of this section, we examined how many stories rendered female speaking characters completely invisible. That is, were there stories with no women or girls speaking at all across the unfolding narrative. Only 1 film met this criterion in 2020. Put differently, 545 of the 546 stories evaluated depicted at least one female speaking or named character.

To summarize, over half of Netflix films and series depicted female-identified leads/co leads consistently at or above U.S. population norms. Since 2018, the percentage of females in the main cast and speaking characters for film has increased significantly, demonstrating a commitment to match their series counterparts. In series, however, a substantial increase in the percentage of gender balanced stories was observed. Now, we turn to the gender profile of content creators working behind the camera in Netflix films and series.

Behind the Scenes: Film

While the above findings illuminate on-screen data, this section will explore representation of women working behind the camera across Netflix films and series. For this section, analytics were handled differently for each format. Above-the-line personnel were assessed for each movie (i.e., director, writer, producer). For series, some indicators were evaluated per episode as writers and directors often change throughout the season. As such, the scripted series personnel are substantially larger than the film personnel. Given that these differences can mask and skew overall findings, we reported on behind-the-camera personnel separately by storytelling format.

Film. Who is Netflix hiring to work behind the scenes in film? In 2021, a total of 414 above-the-line personnel (i.e., directors, writers, producers) were evaluated across 65 Netflix films (see Table 6).[11] Focusing on specific positions, a total of 67 *directors* were in the movie sample with 73.1% of helmers men (*n*=49) and 26.9% women (*n*=18). It is important to note there were no directors who were identified as gender nonbinary. While the percentage of women directors increased from 2020 (16.7%, *n*=10), there has been little change when compared 2018 (see Table 6).

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Table 6
Percentage of Women Above-the-Line in Film By Year

| Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Directors	25% (*n*=18)	20.7% (*n*=12)	16.7% (*n*=10)	26.9% (*n*=18)	22.6% (*n*=58)
Writers	27.5% (*n*=28)	23% (*n*=23)	22% (*n*=22)	33% (*n*=35)	26.5% (*n*=108)
Producers	28.6% (*n*=72)	29.6% (*n*=53)	29.7% (*n*=60)	29% (*n*=70)	29.2% (*n*=255)
Total	27.7% (*n*=118)	26.1% (*n*=88)	25.4% (*n*=92)	29.7% (*n*=123)	27.4% (*n*=421)

We compared Netflix employment statistics of women directors to those found across the 100 top-grossing domestic films. As shown in Figure 1, Netflix films consistently featured a higher percentage of women directors than those top films released at the box office. This year was no exception. The number of Netflix female directors in 2021 (26.9%) was 14.2 percentage points higher than the top-grossing films (12.7%).

Figure 1
Percentage of Women Directors by Type of Distributor & Year


Netflix ■   Industry ■
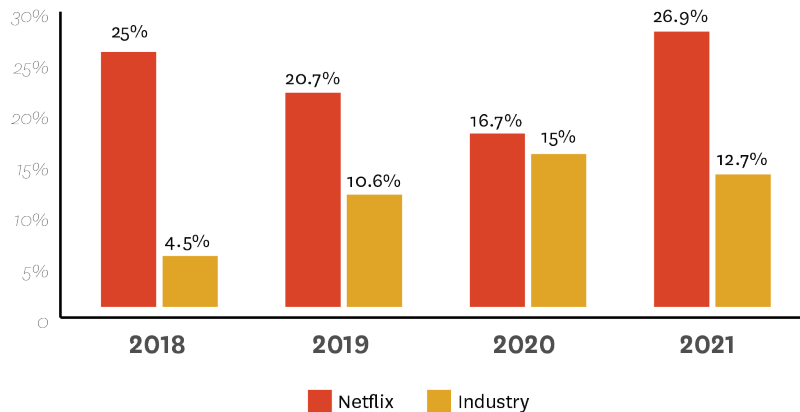
Shifting focus to **screenwriters**, 67% (*n*=71) were men and 33% (*n*=35) were women in 2021 (see Table 6). When compared to the past 4 years, 2021 is the strongest year for women writers, increasing 5.5 percentage points from 2018 (27.5%). Netflix films have continued their trend of representing more women screenwriters than top-grossing fare across all four years evaluated (see Figure 2). To illustrate, 33% (*n*=35) of screenwriters were women in Netflix 2021 films but only 17.1% of writers were female in 2021's top-grossing movies.[12]

Figure 2
Percentage of Women Screenwriters by Type of Distributor & Year
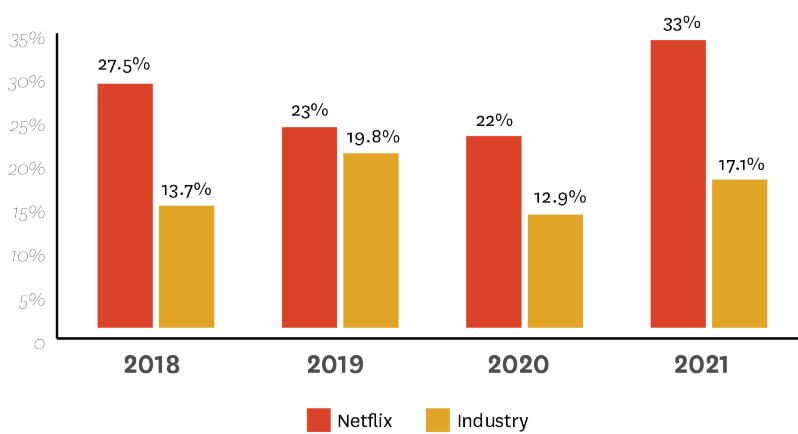
To finish out the behind-the-camera positions in film, we assessed producing credits for gender. Only creatives credited as *producers* (e.g., Produced by) without any modifiers (e.g., Executive, Co, Associate) were included in the analysis. This narrow approach was taken to ensure the focus was on those individuals responsible for films being finished on time and within budget.

Figure 3
Percentage of Women Producers by Type of Distributor & Year
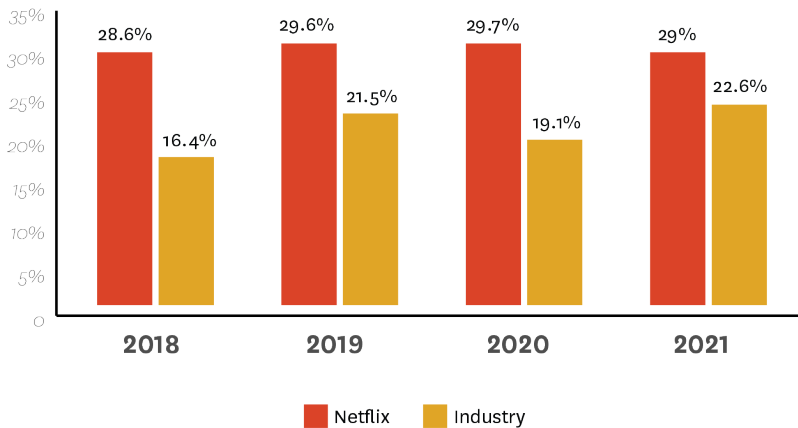
In 2021, a total of 241 producers were credited across 65 movies, with 71% men (n=171) and 29% women (n=70). Since 2018, no differences have emerged by year (see Table 6). However, when we compare the number of women producers in Netflix movies to the 100 top-grossing films in 2021 a meaningful difference emerged. In 2021, Netflix films featured more women producers (29%, n=70) than did top-grossing films (22.6%). Across 4 years, Netflix featured more women producers than top-grossing films each year.

Was there a relationship between gender prevalence on screen and the presence of women working behind the camera? To answer this question, we divided the sample into two groups. Starting with directors, we took into consideration every film that had at least one-woman director attached. We then created a second group of films with only male directors. Next, we examined the percentage of female-identified film leads/co leads, main cast, and speaking characters across these two groups. The same process was repeated for screenwriters and producers.

Table 7
Percentage Of Female-Identified Leads, Main Cast, & Speaking Characters
by Content Creator Gender in 2021 Films

Measures	Directors		Writers		Producers	
	Woman Director Attached	No Woman Director Attached	Woman Writer Attached	No Woman Writer Attached	Woman Producer Attached	No Woman Producer Attached
Leads/Co Leads	79.3% (*n*=23)	54.9% (*n*=39)	71.1% (*n*=32)	54.5% (*n*=30)	68.8% (*n*=44)	50% (*n*=18)
Main Cast	54% (*n*=102)	43.5% (*n*=185)	51.6% (*n*=145)	42.6% (*n*=142)	48.2% (*n*=185)	44.3% (*n*=102)
Speaking Characters	43.8% (*n*=244)	39.7% (*n*=567)	46.1% (*n*=364)	37.3% (*n*=447)	39.9% (*n*=466)	42.2% (*n*=345)

Note: To be categorized as "woman director attached," one or more women were credited as a helmer on the film. The same process was applied for screenwriters and producers.

Unsurprisingly, the data revealed the importance of having a woman in a leadership role behind the camera (see Table 7). Films with at least one woman director attached had significantly more girls and women on screen as leads/co leads (79.3% vs. 54.9%), main cast (54% vs. 43.5%), and speaking characters (43.8% vs. 39.7%) than did those films without at least one woman director attached.

This trend continued when we focused on women screenwriters. Stories with at least one woman writer had more girls and women than did those stories without a woman writer attached: leading/co leading roles (71.1% vs. 54.5%), main cast (51.6% vs. 42.6%), and speaking characters (46.1% vs. 37.3%).

Finally, when at least one female producer was present we continued to see more on-screen female representation. This was true for leads/co leads (68.8% vs. 50%). The number of and main cast (48.2% vs. 44.3%) or speaking characters who were girls and women did not differ by producer gender, however (see Table 7).

The findings in this section continue to highlight that Netflix hired or green lit stories with women behind the camera at or above film industry norms. Hiring practices matter, as content with a woman behind the camera leads to more girls and women on screen in the center of storytelling. The evidence also reveals that men's casting decisions were less likely to be gender inclusive compared to women's casting decisions.

Behind the Scenes: Scripted Series

Within the Netflix series sample, we accounted for every creator, producer, writer, and director that worked on each individual episode. In 2021, a total of 2,108 above-the-line personnel were credited. Overall, 60.8%

of these jobs were held by men (n=1,281) and 39.2% were held by women (n=826), while one person was gender non-binary. Table 8 reveals the distribution of gender within position by year.

Table 8
Percentage Of Women Above-the-Line in Scripted Series By Year

| Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Creators	26.9% (n=32)	32.2% (n=47)	25.2% (n=26)	38.1% (n=32)	30.3% (n=137)
Producers	33.3% (n=246)	39.6% (n=349)	38.6% (n=261)	38.3% (n=203)	37.5% (n=1,059)
Writers	30.6% (n=372)	41.3% (n=590)	39.6% (n=312)	41.1% (n=404)	38% (n=1,678)
Directors	25.1% (n=191)	30% (n=271)	38.1% (n=204)	36.7% (n=187)	31.5% (n=853)
Total	29.7% (n=841)	37.4% (n=1,257)	38.2% (n=803)	39.2% (n=826)	35.8% (n=3,727)

Series creators hold the top leadership position in scripted fare. In 2021 (see Table 8), over a third of these prestigious posts were held by women (38.1%) which was a substantial increase from 2018 (26.9%). As shown in Figure 4. Netflix has outpaced the industry in putting women show creators behind the scenes in 2019 and 2021 series.[13]

Figure 4
Percentage of Women Creators of Series by Type of Distributor & Year
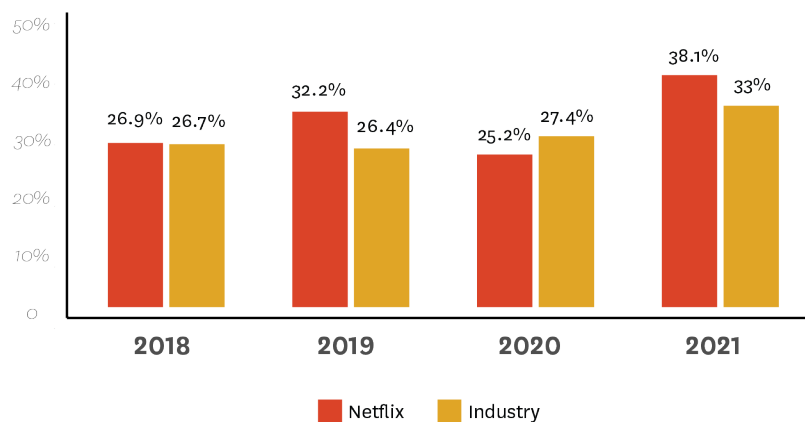
Shifting focus to *producers*, we examined credited individuals with the producer moniker in their title working across the majority of the season. Of the 530 producers identified in 2021 series, 61.7% were men (*n*=327) and 38.3% were women (*n*=203). While this was a meaningful increase from 2018 (33.3%), women in the producer role have not changed significantly since 2019. In terms of the industry (see Figure 5), Netflix has not been different from overall industry patterns in employing women producers across the entire sample time frame.[14]

Figure 5
Percentage of Women Producers in Series by Type of Distributor & Year
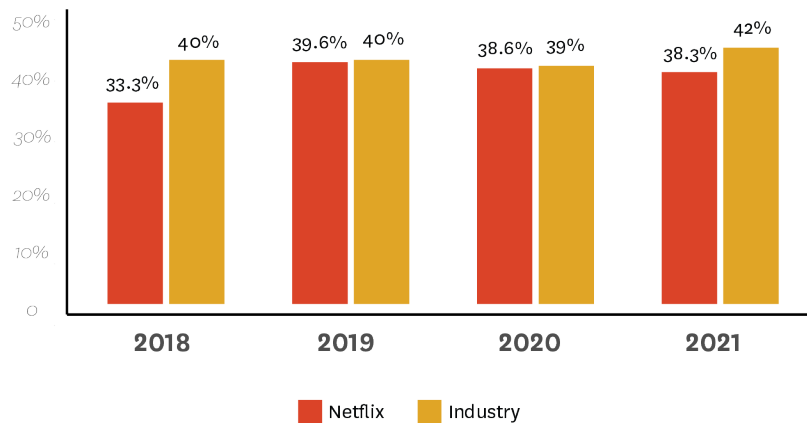
The next behind-the-camera position we focused on were credited writers (*n*=984). In total, 58.8% (*n*=579) of writers were male, 41.1% (*n*=404) were female, and <1% (*n*=1) were gender nonbinary. As shown in Table 8, there was a substantial increase in women writers in 2021 (41.1%) when compared to 2018 (30.6%). Netflix (41.1%, *n*=404) was significantly above the industry norm (34%) in terms of hiring women writers in 2021, as well as in 2018 and 2019.[15]

Figure 6
Percentage of Women Writers in Series by Type of Distributor & Year
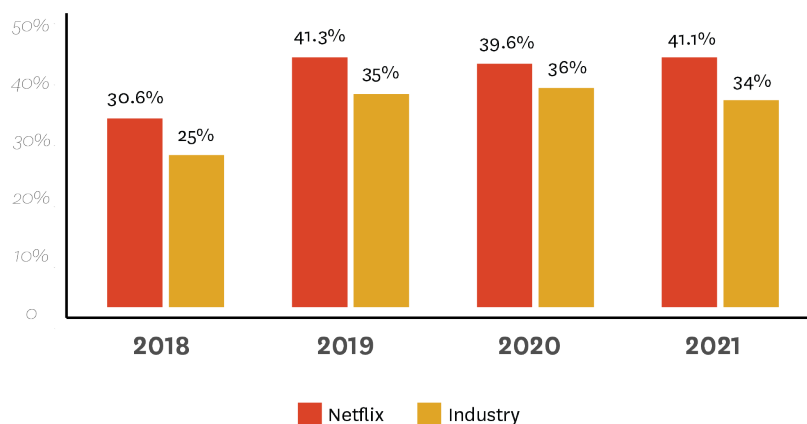
The final position evaluated was directors. Each series episode was examined with a total of 510 directors included in this year's analysis. Males (63.3%, *n*=323) were more likely to direct an episode of a Netflix series

than females (36.7%, *n*=187). When compared to 2018, there was a significant increase of 11.6 percentage points for women directors. Overall, Netflix was on par with the industry in three of the four years evaluated (see Figure 7).[16]

Figure 7
Percentage of Women Directors in Series by Type of Distributor & Year

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Netflix	25.1%	30%	38.1%	36.7%
Industry	25.4%	31%	34.2%	38%
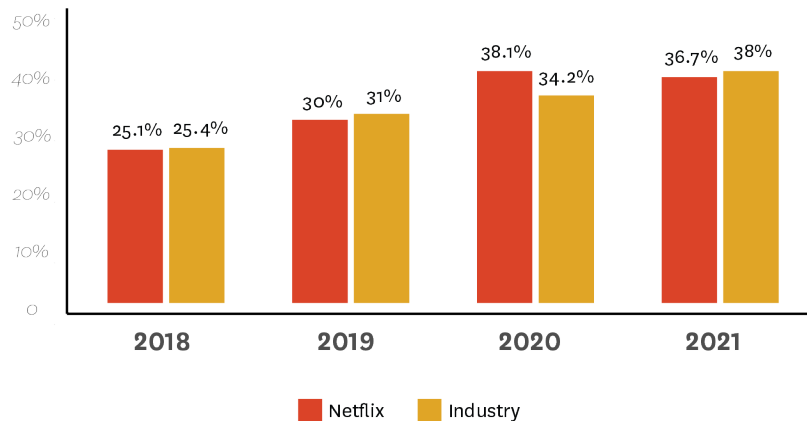
The final analysis conducted in this section focused on the relationship between the gender of show creators and character gender. To do this, we placed series into one of two categories: those with at least one-woman creator and those without any women creators. From there, we analyzed the percentages of female-identifying characters and series regulars.

As shown in Figure 8, scripted series with at least one-woman creator featured more female series regulars and speaking characters than those shows without a woman creator. More than half (55.9%, *n*=100) of series regulars were female when a woman creator was present, versus only 38% (*n*=73) of series with solely male creators.[17] When it comes to on-screen speaking characters, we found that female show creators ensured that 47.7% (*n*=457) of these roles were filled by girls and women. In comparison, male show creators depicted girls and women on screen in only 35.9% (*n*=320) of all speaking roles. The data demonstrates the clear influence women in creative roles have on achieving gender equality on screen. Put differently, the presence of woman series creators was associated with an increase of girls and women on screen.

Figure 8
Percentage Of Female-Identified Series Regulars & Speaking Characters
In 2021 By Content Creators' Gender

	Series Regulars	Speaking Characters
Woman Creator	55.9%	47.7%
No Woman Creator	38%	35.9%
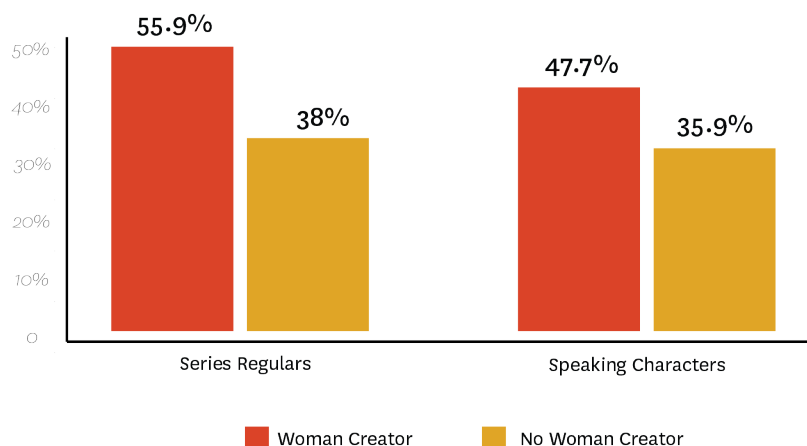
Overall, this section reveals the value Netflix places on storytelling by and about girls and women. While Netflix has some room to improve around inclusion of female-identified main cast members and speaking characters, as the behind-the-camera analysis shows, men in positions of influence can do more to include girls and women on screen. While these findings demonstrate Netflix's ongoing commitment to stories centered on and by women, there were still pieces of the picture missing. To fill in those pieces we intersected gender and race/ethnicity to illuminate where bias and hiring gaps continue to exist. As a result, the next section addresses how underrepresented racial/ethnic groups fare both on screen and behind the camera.

<div style="background-color:#d94f2a; color:white; text-align:center; font-weight:bold;">RACE/ETHNICITY</div>

This section provides an overview of results related to the prevalence of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups on screen and behind the camera across Netflix films and series. As above, results from 2021 are compared to 2018. For some measures, we examine differences across all four years evaluated and by format.

On Screen: Film & Series

On-screen prevalence of race/ethnicity for leads/co-leads, main cast/series regulars, and speaking characters was examined. A modified version of the U.S. Census categorization (i.e., White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Multiracial/Multiethnic) was used for our measure of race/ethnicity.[18] For analysis, this metric was collapsed into two categories (White vs. Underrepresented). Information by racial/ethnic group is presented briefly here and with more detail later in the report.

Table 9
Percentage of Underrepresented Leads/Co-Leads By Storytelling Format and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	31.9% (*n*=22)	40.4% (*n*=23)	46.6% (*n*=27)	47.7% (*n*=31)	41.4% (*n*=103)
Series	25.3% (*n*=20)	42.7% (*n*=41)	46.8% (*n*=29)	47.2% (*n*=25)	39.7% (*n*=115)
Total	28.4% (*n*=42)	41.8% (*n*=64)	46.7% (*n*=56)	47.5% (*n*=56)	40.4% (*n*=218)

Note: Leads represent the central figure(s) across a story's plot. In film, two equal protagonists sharing the central journey of the story were counted as co-leads. Scripted series with 40% or more underrepresented-identified series regulars were included as having underrepresented leads/co-leads.

First, the presence of an underrepresented *lead/co lead* was explored. This program-level measure indicates whether a film had at least one lead/co lead character from an underrepresented racial/ethnic

group. In series, a program had an underrepresented lead/co lead when at least 40% of series regular characters were underrepresented[19] which is on par with proportional representation in the U.S.

As shown in Table 9, 47.5% (*n*=56) of Netflix's 2021 stories had an underrepresented *lead/co lead* which did not differ for film (47.7%) or series (47.2%). Thus, the percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads was significantly above the U.S. population estimate (40.7%)[20] Over the past four years, Netflix has demonstrated a substantial increase in the number of underrepresented leads/co leads in all scripted content. In fact, there was a 19.1 percentage point gain from 2018 to 2021. The largest increase was observed from 2018 to 2019 with the following years building upon these gains.

The percentage of lead/co lead characters in 2021 by specific racial/ethnic group was evaluated for film and series collectively. Of all leads, 38.9% of leads/co leads were White, 21.8% were Black/African American, 12.9% were Hispanic/Latino, 8.9% were Asian, 1.4% Middle Eastern/North African, 1.4% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 14.6% were Multiracial/Multiethnic.

Focusing on each individual format, both film and series increased the percentage of stories with underrepresented leads/co leads over time. The number of protagonists of color in film has increased from 2018 (31.9%) to 2021 (47.7%). Focusing on series, there was a gain of 21.9 percentage points from 2018 to 2021. No matter the format, Netflix clearly has a commitment to casting underrepresented actors in main roles.

Table 10
Underrepresented Leads/Co-Leads In Netflix & Top-Grossing Films By Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of Netflix films w/an underrepresented lead/co-lead	31.9% (*n*=22)	40.4% (*n*=23)	46.6% (*n*=27)	47.7% (*n*=31)
% of top-grossing films w/an underrepresented lead/co-lead	28% (*n*=28)	31% (*n*=31)	28% (*n*=28)	32% (*n*=32)

Note: Data on top-grossing films are from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.[21]

Not only is Netflix above demographic norms according to the U.S. Census, they have also outpaced top-grossing movies in the percentage of stories showcasing protagonists of color. In 2021 specifically, Netflix films (47.7%) had significantly more underrepresented lead/co leads than top movies (32%).[22]

Table 11
Underrepresented Leads/Co-Leads In Netflix & Industry Series By Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of Netflix series w/an underrepresented lead/co-lead	25.3% (n=20)	42.7% (n=41)	46.8% (n=29)	47.2% (n=25)
% of series industry-wide w/an underrepresented lead/co-lead	22.3%	27.7%	29.3%	34.9%

Note: Data on series are from the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Reports.[23] Because UCLA defines the lead as the first listed individual on IMDbPro.com, these measures are not directly comparable and thus should be interpreted cautiously.

In terms of series, Netflix significantly outperformed the wider industry across three of the four years studied. In 2021, 47.2% of Netflix series showcased underrepresented leads/co leads compared to 34.9% industry-wide.[24] See Table 11.

Beyond leads, we identified every *main cast/series regular character* across Netflix content. As noted earlier, main cast characters were those who held a primary or secondary role in a program. In 2021, there were 1,003 main cast/series regular characters in film and series. Overall, 40.4% (n=405) of the main cast/series regulars in 2021 were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group, which is a substantial increase from 2018 (29.4%). Notably, the greatest increase can be seen from 2018 (29.4%) to 2019 (38.6%) while subsequent years have shown more modest gains. In 2020 and 2021, Netflix main cast achieved proportional representation with the U.S. population.[25]

There was no difference in the percentage of underrepresented main cast characters by format in 2021 (film= 40.1%; series=40.9%). However, across 4 years, the percentage of underrepresented main cast increased significantly across both formats. Slightly less than one-third (32.3%) of main cast characters were underrepresented in 2018 films compared to 40.1% in 2021. Series followed a similar pattern, with an increase of 13.9 percentage points since 2018, from 27% to 40.9%. See Table 12.

Table 12
Percentage of Underrepresented Main Cast By Storytelling Format and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Films	32.3% (n=175)	38.9% (n=184)	42.2% (n=232)	40.1% (n=246)
Series	27% (n=175)	38.4% (n=284)	39.5% (n=189)	40.9% (n=159)
Total	29.4% (n=350)	38.6% (n=468)	41% (n=421)	40.4% (n=405)

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Table 13 illustrates the distribution of main cast by racial/ethnic group overall, and for film and series separately. In 2021, 59.6% of main cast were White, 16.8% were Black, 7.7% were Hispanic, 6.9% were Asian, 1.1% were Middle Eastern/North African, <1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, <1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 6.9% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. Comparing Netflix underrepresented main cast with the 2021 U.S. Census, Netflix under indexes on Hispanic/Latino (7.7% vs. 18.9%) main cast representation and over indexes for Multiracial/Multiethnic (6.9% vs. 2.9%) main cast portrayal. No other meaningful differences were observed.

Table 13
Race/Ethnicity of Main Cast in Netflix Films and Series

Measure	Film	Series	Total	U.S. Census
White	59.9% (*n*=368)	59.1% (*n*=230)	59.6% (*n*=598)	59.3%
Black/African American	17.1% (*n*=105)	16.5% (*n*=64)	16.8% (*n*=169)	13.6%
Hispanic/Latino	6.2% (*n*=38)	10% (*n*=39)	7.7% (*n*=77)	18.9%
Asian	7.7% (*n*=47)	5.7% (*n*=22)	6.9% (*n*=69)	6.1%
Middle Eastern/ North African	0.5% (*n*=3)	2.1% (*n*=8)	1.1% (*n*=11)	1.1%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.3% (*n*=2)	0	0.2% (*n*=2)	1.3%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1.3% (*n*=8)	0	0.8% (*n*=8)	0.3%
Multiracial/ Multiethnic	7% (*n*=43)	6.7% (*n*=26)	6.9% (*n*=69)	2.9%

Moving from primary and secondary characters to all characters, a total of 3,857 ***speaking characters*** were evaluated for race/ethnicity across Netflix films and scripted series in 2021.[26] Overall, 39.8% of all speaking characters in 2021 were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (see Table 14). This is consistent with U.S. Census figures (40.7%).[27] From 2018 (33.6%) to 2021 (39.8%), the percentage of underrepresented

speaking characters in Netflix films and series increased by 6.2 percentage points. The strongest year for underrepresented speaking characters was 2020 (40.4%).

Table 14
Percentage of Underrepresented Speaking Characters By Storytelling Format and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Films	35.8% (*n*=857)	40.2% (*n*=855)	38.3% (*n*=827)	38.5% (*n*=748)
Series	32% (*n*=1,053)	38% (*n*=1,468)	42.3% (*n*=1,031)	41.1% (*n*=786)
Total	33.6% (*n*=1,910)	38.8% (*n*=2,323)	40.4% (*n*=1,858)	39.8% (*n*=1,534)

Table 15 features a complete breakdown of characters from each racial/ethnic group by storytelling format. The majority (60.2%) of the speaking or named characters assessed were White, while 17.3% were Black, 6.5% were Hispanic/Latino, 9.6% were Asian, 1.7% were Middle Eastern/North African, <1% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, <1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 4% were Multiracial/Multiethnic.

Table 15
Race/Ethnicity of Speaking Characters by Storytelling Format and Year

Measures	Film	Series	Overall	U.S. Census
White	61.5% (n=1,196)	58.9% (n=1,127)	60.2% (n=2,323)	59.3%
Black/African American	16.5% (n=320)	18.1% (n=346)	17.3% (n=666)	13.6%
Hispanic/Latino	5.2% (n=102)	7.8% (n=149)	6.5% (n=251)	18.9%
Asian	11.4% (n=221)	7.9% (n=151)	9.6% (n=372)	6.1%
Middle Eastern/North African	0.4% (n=8)	3% (n=57)	1.7% (n=65)	1.1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2% (n=3)	0.1% (n=1)	0.1% (n=4)	1.3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.8% (n=15)	0.3% (n=6)	0.5% (n=21)	0.3%
Multiracial/Multiethnic	4.1% (n=79)	4% (n=76)	4% (n=155)	2.9%

Turning to each format, no difference was observed for film in the representation of underrepresented speaking characters from 2018 to 2021. See Table 16. Series, however, had significantly more underrepresented characters in 2021 than in 2018. Netflix gains are similar to an overall upward industry trajectory for underrepresented characters in episodic series. As shown in Table 16, Netflix has kept pace with its peers across the four years studied.

Table 16
Percentage of Underrepresented Speaking Characters in Netflix & Industry Films and Series by Year

Year	Film				Series			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of underrepresented speaking characters, Netflix	35.8%	40.2%	38.3%	38.5%	32%	38%	42.3%	41.1%
% of underrepresented speaking characters, industry	36.3%	34.3%	42%	39.7%	33.9%	36.9%	40.8%	45.3%

Note: The film industry comparisons in 2018, 2019, and 2021 are from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.[28] Series comparisons and film data from 2020 are from the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Reports.[29]

Another way to examine the prevalence of underrepresented characters is to assess how many stories achieved *proportional representation*. For this metric, we defined proportional representation as 36.6% or more underrepresented characters in a program. This percentage is calculated to be 10% below the U.S. population metric of 40.7%.[30] In 2021, the overall percentage of scripted Netflix content that was at or above proportional representation was 46.6%. This is a substantial increase from 2018 where only 30.2% of all scripted content reached or exceeded proportional representation. Notably, in 2020 more than half of Netflix films and series (53.3%) were at proportional representation.

Pivoting to focus on each format, there was little difference between film (46.2%) and series (47.2%) in 2021. Over time, both formats significantly increased the percentage of stories meeting proportional representation. See Table 17.

Table 17
Stories At or Above Proportional Representation by Storytelling Medium and Year

Medium	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	37.7% (*n*=26)	49.1% (*n*=28)	55.2% (*n*=32)	46.2% (*n*=30)	46.6% (*n*=116)
Scripted Series	23.8% (*n*=19)	45% (*n*=45)	51.6% (*n*=33)	47.2% (*n*=25)	41.1% (*n*=122)
Overall	30.2% (*n*=45)	46.5% (*n*=73)	53.3% (*n*=65)	46.6% (*n*=55)	43.6% (*n*=238)

The final metric that provides insight into the presence of underrepresented characters is *invisibility*. As shown in Table 18, we examined the percentage of stories without any characters from each racial/ethnic group by medium. Overall, only 3 stories (2.5%) were missing any White characters while 98.3% and 94.9% were without American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander characters, respectively. Asian characters were absent in just under a third of films and series while Hispanic/Latino characters were absent in slightly less than half of Netflix stories. Of 118 Netflix stories, 9 stories were missing Black/African American characters.

Table 18
Stories Erasing Speaking Characters of Specific Racial/Ethnic Groups

Measures	White	Black	H/L	Asian	MENA	AI/AN	NH/PI	Multi
Films without speaking characters	3.1% (*n*=2)	10.8% (*n*=7)	47.7% (*n*=31)	33.8% (*n*=22)	90.8% (*n*=59)	98.5% (*n*=64)	93.8% (*n*=61)	47.7% (*n*=31)
Series without speaking characters	1.9% (*n*=1)	3.8% (*n*=2)	41.5% (*n*=22)	24.5% (*n*=13)	73.6% (*n*=39)	98.1% (*n*=52)	96.2% (*n*=51)	34% (*n*=18)
Total	2.5% (*n*=3)	7.6% (*n*=9)	44.9% (*n*=53)	29.7% (*n*=35)	83.1% (*n*=98)	98.3% (*n*=116)	94.9% (*n*=112)	41.5% (*n*=49)

Note: H/L refers to Hispanic/Latino; AI/AN refers to American Indian/Alaskan Native; NHPI refers to Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; MENA refers to Middle Eastern/North African; and Multi refers to Multiracial/Multiethnic.

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Summarizing the on-screen findings for race/ethnicity Netflix has reached proportional representation overall for leads/co leads, main cast/series regulars, and all speaking characters. Despite these findings, there are still stories where individuals from specific racial/ethnic groups are missing on screen. Given the increases observed on screen for underrepresented characters, it is important to explore whether those are accompanied by changes behind the camera. In the next section, we examine the race/ethnicity of creatives working behind the scenes.

Behind the Camera: Film

A total of 413 behind-the-camera personnel across 65 Netflix films were evaluated for race/ethnicity in 2021.[31] Overall, 82.6% (*n*=341) were White and 17.4% (*n*=72) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (see Table 19).

Of 67 film *directors* in 2021, 77.6% (*n*=52) were White and 22.4% (*n*=15) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. In other words, there were 3.5 White directors for every 1 underrepresented director. Table 19 features the percentage of underrepresented personnel above the line in Netflix films by year. There were significantly more underrepresented directors in 2021 than in 2018, although the highest percentage of underrepresented directors occurred in 2020.

Table 19
Percentage Of Underrepresented Personnel Above the Line in Film By Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Directors	16.7% (*n*=12)	17.2% (*n*=10)	30% (*n*=18)	22.4% (*n*=15)
Writers	13.9% (*n*=14)	19% (*n*=19)	24.2% (*n*=24)	17% (*n*=18)
Producers	14.7% (*n*=37)	10.6% (*n*=19)	18.5% (*n*=37)	16.2% (*n*=39)
Total	14.8% (*n*=63)	14.2% (*n*=48)	22% (*n*=79)	17.4% (*n*=72)

Breaking down the percentage of 2021 film directors by race/ethnicity, 77.6% were White, 4.5% were Black/African American, 7.5% were Hispanic/Latino, 3% were Asian, 1.5% were Middle Eastern/North African, and 6% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. No film directors in 2021 were American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

In comparison to top-grossing films, Netflix has had both significantly more (2020) and significantly less (2018) underrepresented directors over time.[32] In 2021, the difference between Netflix and top movies did not reach a meaningful difference of 5 percentage points or greater. See Figure 9.

Figure 9
Percentage of Underrepresented Directors by Type of Distributor and Year
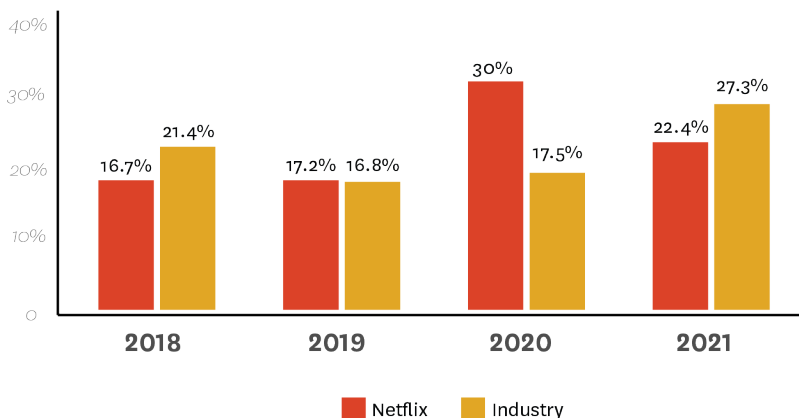
Of 106 credited film *writers* in 2021, 83% (*n*=88) were White and 17% (*n*=18) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. The percentage of underrepresented writers did not change from 2018 to 2021, though the high point occurred in 2020 (24.2%).

Figure 10 compares the percentage of underrepresented writers between Netflix films and top-grossing films.[33] In 2021, there was no difference between the percentage of underrepresented writers of Netflix films and those of top-grossing movies.

Figure 10
Percentage of Underrepresented Writers by Type of Distributor and Year
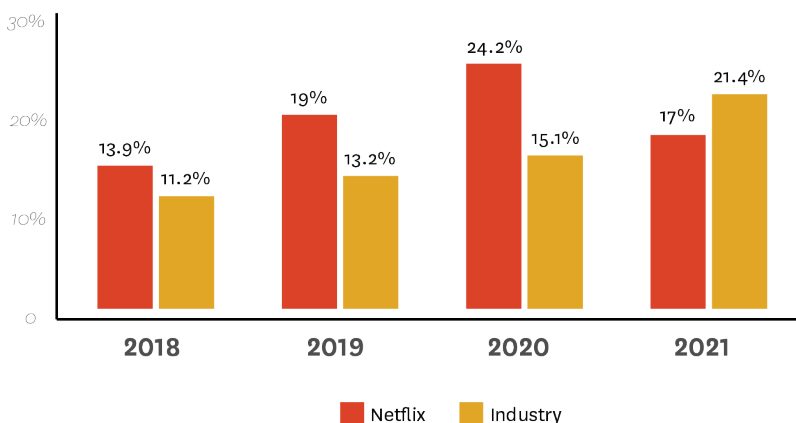

Looking at the specific racial/ethnic breakdown of writers in 2021, 83% were White, 3.8% were Black/African American, 2.8% were Hispanic/Latino, 2.8% were Asian, ‹1% were Middle Eastern/North African, and 6.6% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. There were no writers identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Turning to Netflix film *producers*, 240 producers were examined across the sample of 2021 content. The majority (83.8%, *n*=201) were White while 16.2% (*n*=39) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. The percentage of underrepresented producers in 2021 was not meaningfully different from 2018. As shown

in Figure 11, the percentage of underrepresented producers in top-grossing films and in Netflix content reached similar levels in 2021.[34]

Figure 11
Percentage of Underrepresented Producers by Type of Distributor and Year
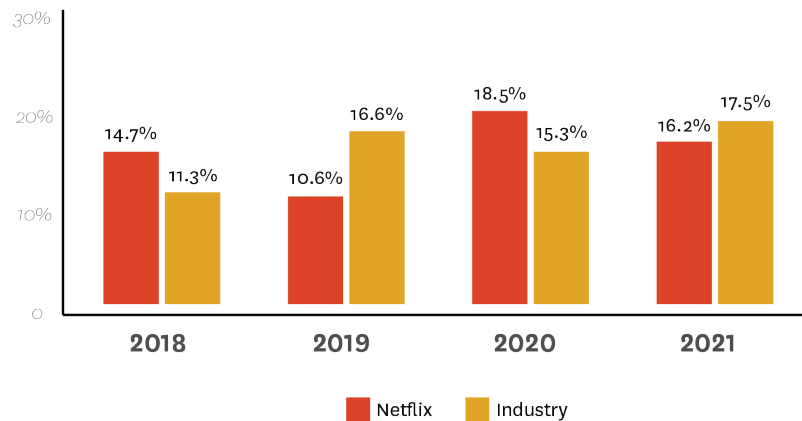
Of the producers of Netflix films, 83.8% were White, 6.2% were Black/African American, 2.1% were Hispanic/Latino, 3.3% were Asian, <1% were Middle Eastern/North African, and 4.2% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander producers did not work on Netflix films in 2021.

We also examined whether having an underrepresented creative behind the scenes was related to who appears on-screen in Netflix films. We divided the sample into two categories: films with at least one underrepresented director and films with only White directors. Then we assessed the percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads, main cast, and speaking characters for the films in each group. We repeated the process for writers and producers.

See Table 20 for a complete breakdown. Films with an underrepresented director attached were significantly more likely to feature underrepresented leads/co-leads (86.4% vs. 39.7%), underrepresented main cast (75.2% vs. 31.4%), and underrepresented speaking characters (61.9% vs. 30.6%).

Table 20
Percentage of Underrepresented Leads/Co-Leads, Main Cast & Speaking Characters in Film by Underrepresented Status

Underrepresented Role	Directors		Writers		Producers	
	UR Director	No UR Director	UR Writer	No UR Writer	UR Producer	No UR Producer
Leads/Co-Leads	86.4% (*n*=19)	39.7% (*n*=31)	85.7% (*n*=18)	40.5% (*n*=32)	83.3% (*n*=30)	31.2% (*n*=20)
Main Cast	75.2% (*n*=91)	31.4% (*n*=155)	72.3% (*n*=73)	33.7% (*n*=173)	65.4% (*n*=125)	28.6% (*n*=121)
Speaking Characters	61.9% (*n*=302)	30.6% (*n*=446)	65.8% (*n*=269)	31.2% (*n*=479)	53.7% (*n*=369)	30.2% (*n*=379)

Similarly, films with an underrepresented writer were associated with more underrepresented leads/co-leads (85.7% vs. 40.5%), main cast members (72.3% vs. 33.7%), and speaking characters (65.8% vs. 31.2%). Furthermore, Netflix films were more likely to be inclusive in terms of casting when an underrepresented producer was attached (leads/co-leads, 83.3% vs. 31.2%; main cast, 65.4% vs. 28.6%; speaking characters, 53.7% vs. 30.2%).

In summary, while the percentage of underrepresented directors has increased over time across Netflix movies, this trend was not seen for writers and producers. However, underrepresented creatives were responsible for the bulk of on-screen racial/ethnic inclusion seen in Netflix films. This suggests that there is still more room for White content creators to improve casting to reach proportional representation, particularly for main cast and speaking characters.

Behind the Camera: Series

Next, we assessed the creators, producers, writers, and directors across every episode of Netflix series in the sample. A total of 2,093 personnel behind the camera across 53 Netflix series in 2021 were evaluated for race/ethnicity. Overall, 74% (*n*=1,548) were White and 26% (*n*=545) were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (see Table 21). There was a significant increase in underrepresented content creators in Netflix series in from 2018 (14.9%) to 2021 (26%).

Table 21
Percentage Of Underrepresented Personnel Above-The-Line In Series By Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Creators	7.6% (n=9)	15.9% (n=23)	12.6% (n=13)	21.4% (n=18)
Producers	12.9% (n=93)	16.9% (n=147)	15.1% (n=100)	18.6% (n=97)
Writers	13.9% (n=168)	20.3% (n=290)	19.3% (n=151)	27.6% (n=270)
Directors	19.6% (n=149)	21.2% (n=192)	26.5% (n=142)	31.4% (n=160)
Total	14.9% (n=420)	19.5% (n=652)	19.5% (n=406)	26% (n=545)

Of 84 series creators in 2021, 78.6% (n=66) were White and 21.4% (n=18) were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This is a ratio of 3.7 White creators for every 1 underrepresented creator. Table 21 illustrates the percentage of underrepresented series creators over time. There was a substantial increase in underrepresented creators across the four years. The broader entertainment industry has also seen an increase in underrepresented creators over time. As shown in Figure 12, Netflix is not significantly different from its industry peers on this measure.[35]

Figure 12
Percentage of Underrepresented Series Creators by Type of Distributor and Year
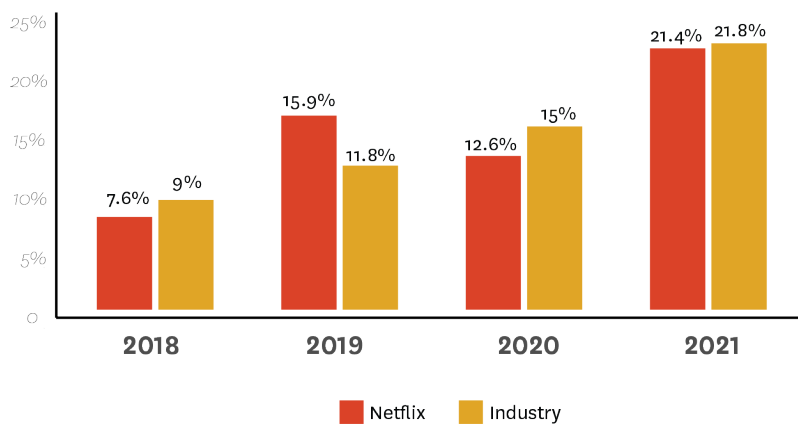
The specific racial/ethnic breakdown for creators in 2021 was: 78.6% White, 8.3% Black/African American, 2.4% Hispanic/Latino, 4.8% Asian, 2.4% Middle Eastern/North African, and 3.6% Multiracial/Multiethnic. There were no series creators of American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander heritage.

Across all Netflix series producers in 2021, 81.4% (n=425) were White and 18.6% (n=97) were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. There was a meaningful increase for underrepresented producers over time (Table 21), with 2021 (18.6%) significantly higher than 2018 (12.9%). Of 522 series producers, 81.4% (n=425) were White, 6.9% were Black/African American, 3.1% were Hispanic/Latino, 4% were Asian, 1% were Middle Eastern/North African and 3.6% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. There were no producers who were American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Moving to *writers*, 72.4% (n=707) were White and 27.6% (n=270) were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Since 2018, there have been significantly more underrepresented Netflix series writers, including an increase from 2020 (19.3%) to 2021 (27.6%). Compared to the wider industry (see Figure 13), Netflix has generally worked with a lower percentage of underrepresented writers during the time period examined.[36]
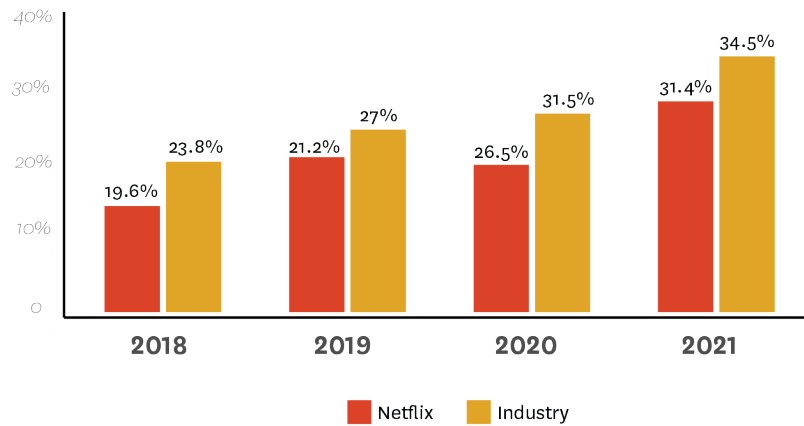
Figure 13
Percentage of Underrepresented Writers by Type of Distributor and Year
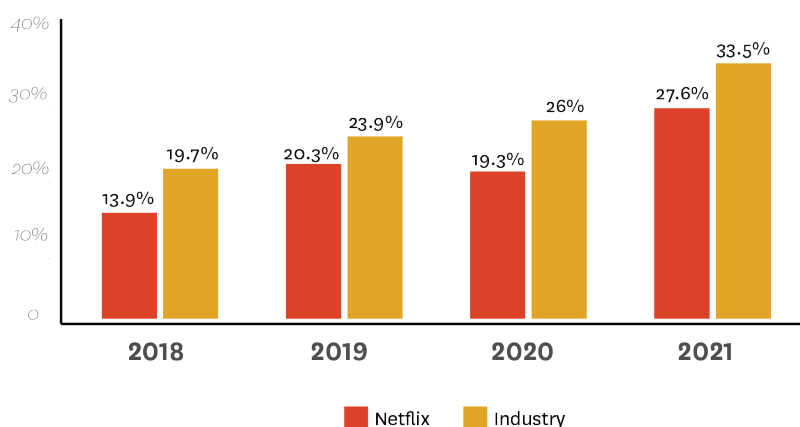
Breaking down the percentage of series writers by race/ethnicity, 72.4% were White, 11.6% were Black/African American, 4.4% were Hispanic/Latino, 5% were Asian, <1% were Middle Eastern/North African, and 6% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. As with creators and producers, no American Indian/Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander writers worked in the 2021 sample, though 1 Indigenous writer was credited in 2020.

Finally, we examined 510 *directors* across Netflix series. The majority 68.6% (n=350) were White and 31.4% (n=160) were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Netflix was on a positive trajectory in terms of hiring directors of color from 2018 (19.6%) to 2021 (31.4%).

DGA data on all episodic directors was used to compare Netflix to its industry counterparts. From 2018 to 2020, Netflix fell significantly below overall industry figures in 2 years (2019, 2020). However, in 2021, Netflix was not meaningfully different from the wider industry.[37] See Figure 14.

Looking at the specific racial/ethnic breakdown of directors, 68.6% were White, 13.1% were Black/African American, 5.9% were Hispanic/Latino, 4.9% were Asian, 1.2% were Middle Eastern/North African and 6.3% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. The only American Indian/Alaskan Native directors across Netflix series worked on episodes in 2019.

As with Netflix films, we examined the relationship between underrepresented creatives behind the scenes across the first three episodes of Netflix series and the on-screen inclusion profile. We created two categories: series with at least one underrepresented creator attached and series with no underrepresented creator attached. Then, we compared the percentage of underrepresented main cast members and speaking characters on screen across these two groups.

Table 22
Percentage of Underrepresented Main Cast & Speaking Characters in Series
by Underrepresented Status of Creator

Underrepresented Role	UR Creator Attached	No UR Creator Attached
Main Cast/Series Regulars	79% (*n*=64)	32.5% (*n*=94)
Speaking Characters	63.5% (*n*=292)	36.1% (*n*=484)

As Table 22 shows, when at least one underrepresented creator was attached to a story, it was more likely to feature underrepresented series regular members (79% vs. 32.5%) and underrepresented speaking

characters (63.5% vs. 36.1%). Once again, creators of color were primarily responsible for more underrepresented series regulars and characters.

Overall, Netflix demonstrated gains for underrepresented creators, producers, writers, and directors across its series. These gains allowed Netflix to keep pace with larger industry hiring practices, though not outstrip them. As in film, underrepresented creatives were largely responsible for the presence of underrepresented main cast and speaking characters. Given the findings throughout this section, one remaining question is whether the gains for underrepresented individuals in Netflix content have benefitted both underrepresented men and women. In the next section, we shift our focus to examine girls and women of color in Netflix films and series.

<div style="background-color:#d9461f; color:white; text-align:center; padding:8px; font-weight:bold;">WOMEN OF COLOR</div>

In addition to examining gender and underrepresented status independently across Netflix content, it is essential to look at patterns through a lens of intersectionality. Given the historical underrepresentation and marginalization of women of color, the next section focuses on underrepresented females across Netflix programs.

On Screen: Film & Series

The percentage of underrepresented female *leads/co leads* was examined. Films with at least one underrepresented female protagonist and series with a minimum of 20% underrepresented female series regulars were considered to have an underrepresented female lead/co lead. This benchmark was chosen as it reflects the U.S. population, of which 20% are underrepresented girls/women.[38]

Table 23
Percentage of UR Female-Led/Co Led Programs by Storytelling Format and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	15.9% (*n*=11)	22.8% (*n*=13)	27.6% (*n*=16)	27.7% (*n*=18)	23.3% (*n*=58)
Series	35.4% (*n*=28)	47.9% (*n*=46)	43.5% (*n*=27)	54.7% (*n*=29)	44.8% (*n*=130)
Overall	26.4% (*n*=39)	38.6% (*n*=59)	35.8% (*n*=43)	39.8% (*n*=47)	34.9% (*n*=188)

Across all Netflix films and scripted series in 2021, 39.8% (*n*=47) depicted underrepresented female leads/co leads. As shown in Table 23, 2021 had significantly more stories with an underrepresented female lead/co lead than 2018 (26.4%).

An overall increase for underrepresented female leads/co leads occurred across film and series. In 2021, 27.7% of films had a girl or woman of color as the lead/co lead, significantly more than 2018 (15.9%). In

2021, Netflix films also featured more underrepresented female leads/co leads than top-grossing films (11%).[39]

Turning to series, more than half in 2021 (54.7%) had underrepresented female leads/co leads, whereas just over one-third of series were led by girls/women of color in 2018 (35.4%). See Table 23. With the increases observed across films and series, Netflix content featured underrepresented female leads/co leads at a greater percentage than U.S. population figures for underrepresented girls and women. [40]

Across film and series in 2021, there were 91 underrepresented female lead/co lead characters. Of those characters, 38.5% were Black/African American, 14.3% were Hispanic/Latina, 16.5% were Asian, 1.1% were Middle Eastern/North African, 2.2% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 27.5% were Multiracial/Multiethnic. No underrepresented female lead/co lead characters were American Indian/Alaska Native.

We also examined *main cast/series regulars*, or the extent to which women/girls of color filled leading and supporting roles in the plot of films and series. Slightly less than one-third (31.2%) of 1,000 main cast/series regular characters in 2021 were White males, 28.4% were White females, 21.8% were underrepresented males, and 18.6% were underrepresented females. As shown in Table 24, girls and women of color comprise 20% of the U.S. population.[41] Thus, in 2021, Netflix content approached proportional representation in its casting of underrepresented females in key roles.

Table 24
Percentage of Main Cast by Underrepresented Status and Storytelling format: 2021

Measures	Film	Series	Overall	U.S. Census
White Males	31% (*n*=190)	31.5% (*n*=122)	31.2% (*n*=312)	30%
White Females	28.9% (*n*=177)	27.6% (*n*=107)	28.4% (*n*=284)	30%
UR Males	22.2% (*n*=136)	21.2% (*n*=82)	21.8% (*n*=218)	20%
UR Females	17.9% (*n*=110)	19.6% (*n*=76)	18.6% (*n*=186)	20%
Total	613	387	1,000	~330 million

Note: There were 3 nonbinary main cast actors in 2021, 1 of whom was underrepresented and appeared in series. These actors were not included in the analysis above.

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There was no significant difference between film and series in 2021 in the percentage of underrepresented female main cast characters. Across both formats, there was an increase in underrepresented female main cast characters from 2018 to 2019. These gains held into 2021. See Table 25. In 2021, the percentage of underrepresented female main cast in Netflix content aligned with both top-grossing films (14.8%) and the wider industry for episodic series (20%).[42]

<div align="center">

Table 25
Percentage of Main Cast by Underrepresented Status, Storytelling format, and Year

</div>

Measures	Film				Series			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of White Male Main Cast	40.2% (*n*=218)	37.2% (*n*=176)	34.3% (*n*=188)	31% (*n*=190)	40.2% (*n*=260)	32.8% (*n*=242)	29.7% (*n*=142)	31.5% (*n*=122)
% of White Female Main Cast	27.5% (*n*=149)	23.9% (*n*=113)	23.4% (*n*=128)	28.9% (*n*=177)	32.8% (*n*=212)	28.9% (*n*=213)	30.8% (*n*=147)	27.6% (*n*=107)
% of UR Male Main Cast	20.5% (*n*=111)	21.8% (*n*=103)	24.8% (*n*=136)	22.2% (*n*=136)	13.3% (*n*=86)	19.2% (*n*=142)	21.3% (*n*=102)	21.2% (*n*=82)
% of UR Female Main Cast	11.8% (*n*=64)	17.1% (*n*=81)	17.5% (*n*=96)	17.9% (*n*=110)	13.8% (*n*=89)	19.1% (*n*=141)	18.2% (*n*=87)	19.6% (*n*=76)

Across all Netflix programs in 2021, 35.5% of **_speaking characters_** were White males, 24.7% were White females, 22.6% were underrepresented males, and 17.2% were underrepresented females (see Table 26). There was no change over time in the percentage of underrepresented female speaking characters.

Table 26
Percentage of Overall Speaking Characters by Underrepresented Status by Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of White Male Speaking Characters	41.3% (n=2,350)	38.1% (n=2,285)	36.8% (n=1,690)	35.5% (n=1,370)
% of White Female Speaking Characters	25.1% (n=1,424)	23.1% (n=1,384)	22.8% (n=1,047)	24.7% (n=951)
% of UR Male Speaking Characters	20% (n=1,137)	22.2% (n=1,328)	22.6% (n=1,039)	22.6% (n=871)
% of UR Female Speaking Characters	13.6% (n=773)	16.6% (n=994)	17.8% (n=819)	17.2% (n=662)

By format, film (16%) and series (18.4%) in 2021 did not differ in the proportion of underrepresented female speaking characters (see Table 27). Across both films and series, the percentage of underrepresented females approached 20%, or proportional representation to the U.S. population.[43]

There was no significant change over time for underrepresented female film characters. In 2021, the percentage of underrepresented female speaking characters in Netflix films (16%) was similar to top-grossing movies (14.6%).[44] For Netflix series, there was a significant increase from 2018 (13.2%) to 2021 (18.4%) in the percentage of underrepresented female speaking characters. Looking to the wider industry, 19.4% of speaking characters in episodic series in 2020/21 were girls/women of color, which is not different than the percentage in Netflix content.[45]

Table 27
Percentage of Speaking Characters by Underrepresented Status, Storytelling Format, and Year

Measure	Film				Series			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of White Male Speaking Characters	41.8% (n=999)	38.8% (n=824)	38.3% (n=826)	36.4% (n=708)	41% (n=1,351)	37.8% (n=1,461)	35.5% (n=864)	34.6% (n=662)
% of White Female Speaking Characters	22.4% (n=536)	21% (n=446)	23.4% (n=505)	25.1% (n=487)	27% (n=888)	24.3% (n=938)	22.2% (n=542)	24.3% (n=464)
% of UR Male Speaking Characters	21.7% (n=518)	24.7% (n=524)	22.3% (n=481)	22.5% (n=438)	18.8% (n=619)	20.8% (n=804)	22.9% (n=558)	22.7% (n=433)
% of UR Female Speaking Characters	14.2% (n=339)	15.6% (n=331)	16% (n=346)	16% (n=310)	13.2% (n=434)	17.1% (n=663)	19.4% (n=473)	18.4% (n=352)

Another indicator of inclusive storytelling is *invisibility*, or the absence of underrepresented female speaking characters from specific racial/ethnic groups. Table 28 depicts the number and percentage of Netflix films and scripted series in 2021 without even one speaking/named female character from each specific racial/ethnic group. In other words, this measure reveals how often girls and women from specific racial/ethnic groups are rendered invisible in Netflix programs.

Table 28
Table 28
Percentage & Number of Stories Missing Females by Racial/Ethnic Group: 2021

Measures	White	Black	H/L	Asian	AI/AN	NH/PI	ME/NA	Multi
Films	9.2% (*n*=6)	27.7% (*n*=18)	66.2% (*n*=43)	55.4% (*n*=36)	98.5% (*n*=64)	95.4% (*n*=62)	96.9% (*n*=63)	60% (*n*=39)
Series	5.7% (*n*=3)	13.2% (*n*=7)	56.6% (*n*=30)	37.7% (*n*=20)	100% (*n*=53)	98.1% (*n*=52)	90.6% (*n*=48)	56.6% (*n*=30)
Total	7.6% (*n*=9)	21.2% (*n*=25)	61.9% (*n*=73)	47.5% (*n*=56)	99.2% (*n*=117)	96.6% (*n*=114)	94.1% (*n*=111)	58.5% (*n*=69)

Nearly all programs failed to include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern/North African girls and women. Nearly two-thirds were missing Latinas, and more than half of films and series were missing Multiracial/Multiethnic female characters. Slightly less than half of stories failed to include an Asian female, while 21.2% were missing Black girls/women. Only 7.6% of stories were missing White female characters. There were some differences between films and series. A higher percentage of films than series were missing Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern/North African female characters.

Overall, Netflix has increased representation of girls and women of color as leads/co leads and main cast since 2018. Gains for underrepresented female speaking characters were observed in series, though not in film. In addition, across leads/co leads, main cast, and speaking characters, the proportion of underrepresented females reflects the U.S. population. Despite these findings, for women from some racial/ethnic groups, invisibility remains an issue.

Behind the Scenes: Film

It is important to look at intersectional representation both on screen and behind the scenes. Thus, we examined the prevalence of underrepresented women as directors, writers, and producers in film and across creators, producers, writers, and directors in series.

Beginning with film *directors*, in 2021, 6% or 4 directors were underrepresented women. Two of these women were Asian and two were Multiracial. The percentage of underrepresented women directors in Netflix films has not changed over time.

Table 29
Netflix Film Directors by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	63.9% (*n*=46)	69% (*n*=40)	60% (*n*=36)	56.7% (*n*=38)
White Females	19.4% (*n*=14)	13.8% (*n*=8)	10% (*n*=6)	20.9% (*n*=14)
UR Males	11.1% (*n*=8)	10.3% (*n*=6)	23.3% (*n*=14)	16.4% (*n*=11)
UR Females	5.6% (*n*=4)	6.9% (*n*=4)	6.7% (*n*=4)	6% (*n*=4)

Figure 15 presents a comparison between Netflix films and top-grossing movies in terms of underrepresented women directors.[46] Across the four years, Netflix and top-grossing movies had a similar percentage of underrepresented women directors.

Figure 15
Percentage of Underrepresented Women Directors by Type of Distributor and Year
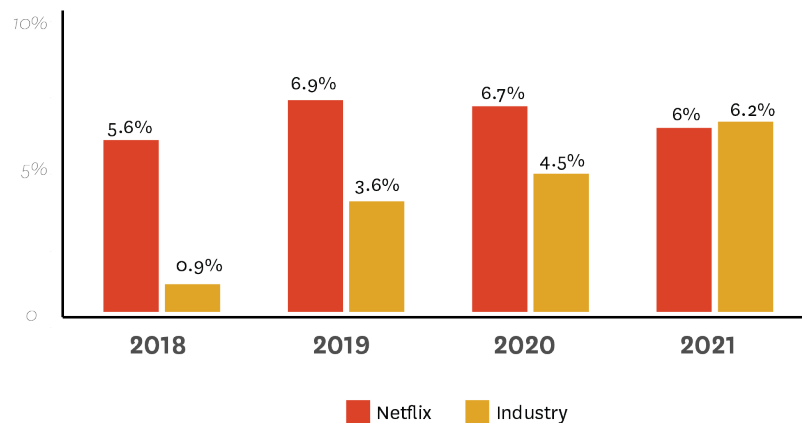
Turning to film *writers*, 5.7% were underrepresented women in 2021. The percentage of underrepresented women writers in Netflix films did not change over time (Table 30). In 2021, 4.6% of top-grossing film writers were women of color, which is comparable to Netflix films in the same year.[47]

Table 30
Netflix Film Writers by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	61.4% (*n*=62)	63% (*n*=63)	59.6% (*n*=59)	55.7% (*n*=59)
White Females	24.8% (*n*=25)	18% (*n*=18)	16.2% (*n*=16)	27.4% (*n*=29)
UR Males	10.9% (*n*=11)	14% (*n*=14)	18.2% (*n*=18)	11.3% (*n*=12)
UR Females	3% (*n*=3)	5% (*n*=5)	6.1% (*n*=6)	5.7% (*n*=6)

Lastly, across Netflix film *producers* in 2021, 5.8% were underrepresented women. As shown in Table 31, there was no change for underrepresented women producers over time. As with directors and writers, the percentage of underrepresented women producers in Netflix content in 2021 was similar to top-grossing movies (4.6%).[48]

Table 31
Netflix Film Producers by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	63.1% (*n*=159)	64.2% (*n*=115)	58.5% (*n*=117)	60.4% (*n*=145)
White Females	22.2% (*n*=56)	25.1% (*n*=45)	23% (*n*=46)	23.3% (*n*=56)
UR Males	8.3% (*n*=21)	6.1% (*n*=11)	11.5% (*n*=23)	10.4% (*n*=25)
UR Females	6.3% (*n*=16)	4.5% (*n*=8)	7% (*n*=14)	5.8% (*n*=14)

Behind the Scenes: Series

For series, we examined *creators* through an intersectional lens. In 2021, 9.5% of series creators were underrepresented women. Five of these women were Black, 1 was Hispanic/Latina, 1 was Asian, and 1 was Multiracial. The percentage of underrepresented women creators in 2021 was significantly greater than in 2018. These underrepresented women were affiliated with 8 series in 2021, compared to just 3 series in 2018. There were no available industry comparisons for women of color working as creators in episodic series.

Table 32
Netflix Series Creators by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	68.6% (*n*=81)	56.6% (*n*=82)	65.7% (*n*=67)	50% (*n*=42)
White Females	23.7% (*n*=28)	27.6% (*n*=40)	21.6% (*n*=22)	28.6% (*n*=24)
UR Males	5.1% (*n*=6)	11% (*n*=16)	8.8% (*n*=9)	11.9% (*n*=10)
UR Females	2.5% (*n*=3)	4.8% (*n*=7)	3.9% (*n*=4)	9.5% (*n*=8)

Less than 10% of series *producers* in 2021 were underrepresented women (7.9%), a percentage which did not vary over time (see Table 33). There were no available industry comparisons for women of color as series producers in 2021.

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Table 33
Netflix Series Producers by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

| Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	58.9% (*n*=424)	50.2% (*n*=437)	53.8% (*n*=357)	51.1% (*n*=267)
White Females	28.2% (*n*=203)	32.9% (*n*=286)	31.1% (*n*=206)	30.3% (*n*=158)
UR Males	7.6% (*n*=55)	10.1% (*n*=88)	7.7% (*n*=51)	10.7% (*n*=56)
UR Females	5.3% (*n*=38)	6.8% (*n*=59)	7.4% (*n*=49)	7.9% (*n*=41)

Turning to series *writers*, 13.8% were underrepresented women in 2021. There was a steady gain from 2018 that culminated in a significant increase in 2021. See Table 34.

Table 34
Netflix Series Writers by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	63.6% (*n*=768)	47.5% (*n*=678)	53.3% (*n*=415)	45.2% (*n*=441)
White Females	22.5% (*n*=271)	32.2% (*n*=459)	27.2% (*n*=212)	27.2% (*n*=265)
UR Males	5.8% (*n*=70)	11.2% (*n*=160)	6.8% (*n*=53)	13.8% (*n*=135)
UR Females	8.1% (*n*=98)	9.1% (*n*=130)	12.6% (n=98)	13.8% (n=135)

In comparison to the broader industry (14.3%), Netflix employed a similar percentage of women of color writers on its series in 2021.[49] Over the past 4 years, Netflix has not varied significantly from the industry. See Figure 16.

Figure 16
Figure 16
Percentage of Underrepresented Women Writers by Type of Distributor and Year
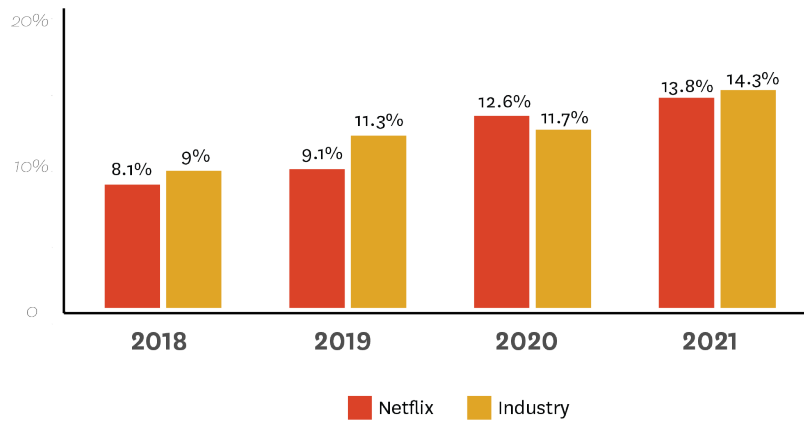

Turning to *directors* in 2021, 11.8% were underrepresented women. The percentage of underrepresented women directors increased between 2018 and 2021 from 5.6% to 11.8%. However, the high point was reached in 2020 when 13.5% of directors were underrepresented women.

Table 35
Netflix Series Directors by Underrepresented Status, Gender, and Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
White Males	61% (*n*=465)	54.9% (*n*=496)	48.8% (*n*=261)	43.7% (*n*=223)
White Females	19.4% (*n*=148)	23.9% (*n*=216)	24.7% (*n*=132)	24.9% (*n*=127)
UR Males	13.9% (*n*=106)	15.2% (*n*=137)	13.1% (*n*=70)	19.6% (*n*=100)
UR Females	5.6% (*n*=43)	6.1% (*n*=55)	13.5% (*n*=72)	11.8% (*n*=60)

As a point of comparison, 13% of directors in the 2020/21 season were underrepresented women, according to the DGA.[50] Across 3 of the last 4 years, Netflix has not differed from its industry counterparts when it comes to hiring underrepresented women directors (see Figure 17).

Figure 17
Percentage of Underrepresented Women Directors by Type of Distributor and Year
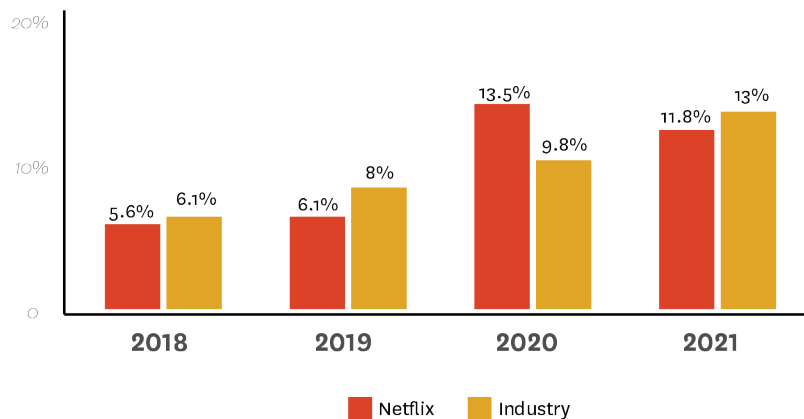
In summary, in 2021, women of color working behind the scenes on Netflix series saw significant gains as creators, writers, and directors. On the film side, while there was little change at Netflix for women of color, this was also true of the broader film industry. These changes behind the camera provide an important context for the on screen increases reported earlier for underrepresented females.

SPECIFIC RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS

In the previous sections, we explored the overall prevalence of characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Now, we look to understand more deeply the prevalence of cast and crew from each specific racial/ethnic group. This allows for comparisons to U.S. population data—which was used to determine leads/co leads across series—and identifies gaps in representation and employment.

In the analysis that follows, we examined leads/co leads and main cast actors who were Black/African American (yes, no), Asian (yes, no), Latinx (yes, no), Middle Eastern/North African (yes, no), American Indian/Alaskan Native (yes, no), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (yes, no). Leads/co leads and main cast actors[51] who were Multiracial/Multiethnic were recategorized into all groups with which they identified.

Black Cast & Crew. To determine if a program had a Black lead/co lead, we examined whether one or more film protagonists was Black or whether at least 13% of series regular actors were Black, in line with population data.[52] In 2021, 39% of all Netflix films and series featured a Black *lead/co lead*, significantly more than the percentage of programs in 2018. In 2021, more than a quarter of films and more than half of series had a Black lead/co lead. These figures represent a meaningful increase from 2018 for both films[53] and series.

Table 36
Black Leads/Co Leads by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	20.3% (*n*=14)	22.8% (*n*=13)	27.6% (*n*=16)	26.2% (*n*=17)	24.1% (*n*=60)
Series	45.6% (*n*=36)	48.5% (*n*=47)	56.5% (*n*=35)	54.7% (*n*=29)	50.5% (*n*=147)
Total	33.8% (*n*=50)	39% (*n*=60)	42.5% (*n*=51)	39% (*n*=46)	38.3% (*n*=207)

Turning to *series regular/main cast* actors, 20.3% of all main cast were Black in 2021. There was no difference over time in the percentage of Black main cast; after a high point in 2019, there was a non-meaningful decline each year to 2021.

Although there was no sustained change over time for film, Netflix movies in 2020 had significantly more Black cast than 2018 or 2021. In series, 21.1% of main cast actors were Black in 2021 compared to 14.8% in 2018, though 2021 was on par with 2019. See Table 37.

Table 37
Black Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	17.9% (*n*=99)	24.2% (*n*=115)	25% (*n*=137)	19.8% (*n*=123)
Series	14.8% (*n*=100)	21.8% (*n*=171)	17.9% (*n*=88)	21.1% (*n*=87)
Total	16.2% (*n*=199)	22.7% (*n*=286)	21.6% (*n*=225)	20.3% (*n*=210)

Behind the camera, in 2021, 7.5% of Netflix film *directors* were Black, as were 5.7% of *writers*, and 8.8% of *producers*. The Black directors in 2021 were: David Oyelowo, Antoine Fuqua, Jeymes Samuel, Rebecca Hall, and Halle Berry. There was no significant change from 2018 to 2021 across any of these positions. However, 2020 was the high water-mark across all four years; films in 2020 had significantly more Black directors, writers, and producers than movies in 2018. See Table 38.

Table 38
Percentage of Black Above-the-Line Film Personnel by Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Directors	6.9% (n=5)	12.1% (n=7)	16.7% (n=10)	7.5% (n=5)
Writers	5% (n=5)	11% (n=11)	12.1% (n=12)	5.7% (n=6)
Producers	5.2% (n=13)	5% (n=9)	10.5% (n=21)	8.8% (n=21)

Did having Black individuals in creative positions influence on screen casting patterns? The evidence suggests that it did. Across the full 4-year sample, we created two categories: films with at least one Black director and films with no Black directors. Films with at least one Black director had significantly more Black leads/co leads and main cast actors. See Figure 18.

This pattern also held when a Black screenwriter worked on a film: 83.3% of films with a Black writer had a Black lead/co lead compared to 15.8% of films when no Black writers were attached. Similarly, 64% of main cast actors were Black in films with one or more Black screenwriters compared to 17.6% in films without a Black screenwriter. The pattern also held for Black producers.[54]

Figure 18
Relationship between Black Directors and Black Leads/Co Leads and Main Cast
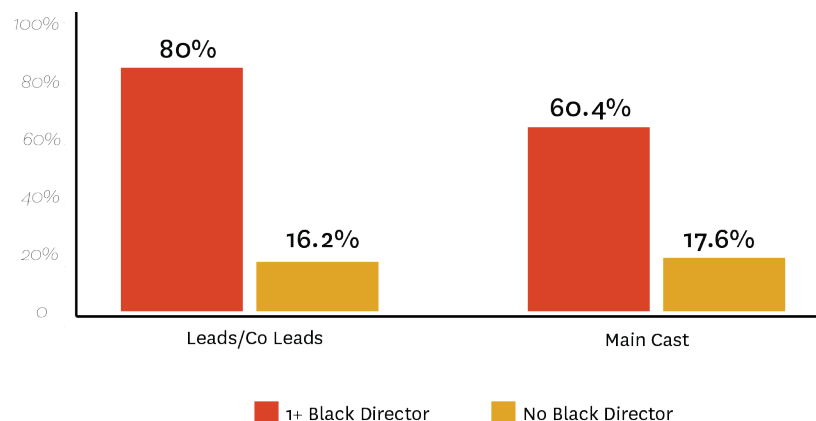
Turning to Netflix series, 9.5% of *creators* in 2021 were Black, a 4-year high and significantly greater than the 2.5% of creators who were Black in 2018. These Black creators were Jamie Foxx, Regina Y. Hicks, Wanda Sykes, Meg DeLoatch, Justin Simien, Rheeqrheeq Chainey, Ava DuVernay, and Colin Kaepernick. They were responsible for a total of 6 series. A total of 7.5% of *producers* in Netflix series were Black, which did not

change meaningfully over time. Of all *writers* in 2021, 13.7% were Black. This was a sample-wide high point and a significant increase from 2018. Finally, 16.3% of Netflix series *directors* in 2021 were Black, the culmination of a 4-year increase from 2018. See Table 39.

Table 39
Percentage of Black Above-the-Line Series Personnel by Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Creators	2.5% (*n*=3)	9.7% (*n*=14)	3.9% (*n*=4)	9.5% (*n*=8)
Producers	3.9% (*n*=28)	7% (*n*=61)	6.4% (*n*=42)	7.5% (*n*=39)
Writers	5.7% (*n*=69)	11% (*n*=157)	8.3% (*n*=65)	13.7% (*n*=134)
Directors	7.1% (*n*=54)	11.2% (*n*=101)	12.7% (*n*=68)	16.3% (*n*=83)

Similar to the analysis for film, Black series creators were more likely to feature Black main cast actors on screen. Across all four years evaluated, 73.8% of main cast actors were Black in series with one or more Black creators, compared to 15.4% in series with no Black creators. As was the case in film, when Black individuals were responsible for developing Netflix series, they ensured these stories reflected their community. However, even when no Black creator was present, representation of Black cast still exceeded proportional representation.

Asian Cast & Crew. Asian *lead/co leads* were evaluated. This included films with at least one Asian protagonist and series in which 6% or more of the series regulars were Asian. The percentage for series was chosen to align with the percentage of Asians in the U.S. population.[55] Across Netflix films and series in 2021, 25.4% of leads/co leads were Asian. There was no longitudinal change from 2018 to 2021.

There was a significant and linear increase in the percentage of Asian film leads/co leads, from 5.8% in 2018 to 12.3% in 2021.[56] In series, the percentage of Asian leads/co leads grew between 2018 (35.4%) and 2021 (41.5%), though it was highest in 2020 (45.2%).

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Table 40
Asian Leads/Co Leads by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	5.8% (*n*=4)	8.8% (*n*=5)	10.3% (*n*=6)	12.3% (*n*=8)	9.2% (*n*=23)
Series	35.4% (*n*=28)	40.2% (*n*=39)	45.2% (*n*=28)	41.5% (*n*=22)	40.2% (*n*=117)
Total	21.6% (*n*=32)	28.6% (*n*=44)	28.3% (*n*=34)	25.4% (*n*=30)	25.9% (*n*=140)

Looking to main cast trends, 10% of **main cast** actors in 2021 were Asian. This was not significantly different from 2018. Films (10.9%) and series (8.5%) were not significantly different from each other, and neither increased significantly from 2018. See Table 41. Across both film and series, Netflix content has reached proportional representation with the U.S. population (6.1%)[57] for Asian main cast actors.

Table 41
Asian Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	7.2% (*n*=40)	8.2% (*n*=39)	10.8% (*n*=59)	10.9% (*n*=68)
Series	5.9% (*n*=40)	7.1% (*n*=56)	8.9% (*n*=44)	8.5% (*n*=35)
Total	6.5% (*n*=80)	7.5% (*n*=95)	9.9% (*n*=103)	10% (*n*=103)

We also explored the ethnic identity or background of main cast actors across the 4-year sample. The goal was to understand whether Netflix stories encompass an array of Asian communities. Overall, the largest share of main cast actors were Indian, followed by Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Japanese actors. See Table 42.

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Table 42
Asian Main Cast Actors by Storytelling Medium

Community	Film	Series	Total
Chinese	17% (*n*=35)	16.7% (*n*=29)	16.8% (*n*=64)
Filipino	11.7% (*n*=24)	12.1% (*n*=21)	11.8% (*n*=45)
Indian	29.1% (*n*=60)	27.6% (*n*=48)	28.4% (*n*=108)
Indonesian	4.4% (*n*=9)	<1% (*n*=1)	2.6% (*n*=10)
Japanese	13.6% (*n*=28)	7.5% (*n*=13)	10.8% (*n*=41)
Korean	9.7% (*n*=20)	17.8% (*n*=31)	13.4% (*n*=51)
Laotian	0	<1% (*n*=1)	<1% (*n*=1)
Nepali	0	<1% (*n*=1)	<1% (*n*=1)
Pakistani	1.9% (*n*=4)	3.4% (*n*=6)	2.6% (*n*=10)
Singaporean	<1% (*n*=1)	1.1% (*n*=2)	<1% (*n*=3)
Sri Lankan	<1% (*n*=1)	1.1% (*n*=2)	<1% (*n*=3)
Taiwanese	1.9% (*n*=4)	0	1.1% (*n*=4)
Thai	1% (*n*=2)	<1% (*n*=1)	<1% (*n*=3)
Vietnamese	2.4% (*n*=5)	2.9% (*n*=5)	2.6% (*n*=10)
Multicultural	6.3% (*n*=13)	7.5% (*n*=13)	6.8% (*n*=26)

Behind the camera, 6% of *directors* in 2021 were Asian, as were 5.7% of *writers*, and 4.2% of *producers*. The percentage of Asian individuals across each of these positions has not meaningfully increased over time. See Table 43.

Table 43
Percentage of Asian Above-the-Line Film Personnel by Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Directors	4.2% (n=3)	1.7% (n=1)	3.3% (n=2)	6% (n=4)
Writers	4% (n=4)	5% (n=5)	3% (n=3)	5.7% (n=6)
Producers	5.6% (n=14)	2.2% (n=4)	3.5% (n=7)	4.2% (n=10)

Turning to series, 6% of *creators* were Asian in 2021, as were, 5.4% of *producers*, 8.2% of *writers* and 6.1% of *directors*. The creators were: Aziz Ansari, Alan Yang, Robia Rashid, Mindy Kaling, and Tony Ayres. These creators were responsible for 4 different series. There was no change over time in the percentage of Asian creators, producers, writers, and directors of Netflix series.

Table 44
Percentage of Asian Above-the-Line Series Personnel by Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Creators	1.7% (n=2)	1.4% (n=2)	1% (n=1)	6% (n=5)
Producers	2.9% (n=21)	3.9% (n=34)	3.3% (n=22)	5.4% (n=28)
Writers	4.1% (n=49)	4.6% (n=66)	4.8% (n=38)	8.2% (n=80)
Directors	6% (n=46)	3.8% (n=34)	5.8% (n=31)	6.1% (n=31)

Latinx Cast & Crew. In this section, we report on Latinx cast and crew. For this measure, we began by assessing the presence of Hispanic/Latinos from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. Then, to identify Latinx cast

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and crew, we focused more narrowly on those who were born in the U.S. or its territories, excluding those with Spanish origin and no other Latino identification.

Films had a Latinx *lead/co lead* when at least one protagonist was Latinx, while series had a Latinx lead/co lead when a minimum of 12% of series regulars were Latinx, which is in line with population metrics for this community. [58] As shown in Table 45, 18.6% of Netflix films and series in 2021 had Latinx leads/co leads. This is significantly more than in 2018 (6.8%), though less than the high reached in 2020 (20.8%).

For Netflix films, there was linear increase from 2018 (1.4%) to 2021 (10.8%) in the percentage of movies with a Latinx lead/co lead. For series, an overall gain occurred from 2018 to 2021. Latinx leads/co leads were at their highest point in Netflix series content in 2020 (32.3%).

Table 45
Latinx Leads/Co Leads by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	1.4% (*n*=1)	7% (*n*=4)	8.6% (*n*=5)	10.8% (*n*=7)	6.8% (*n*=17)
Series	11.4% (*n*=9)	20.6% (*n*=20)	32.3% (*n*=20)	28.3% (*n*=15)	22% (*n*=64)
Total	6.8% (*n*=10)	15.6% (*n*=24)	20.8% (*n*=25)	18.6% (*n*=22)	15% (*n*=81)

Looking to *main cast* actors, 6.4% of those in this role were Latinx across 2021 Netflix films and series. This figure has not meaningfully improved since 2018. Given that the percentage of Latinx people in the U.S. is roughly 12%,[59] this figure falls below proportional representation. There was no difference between film and series in the percentage of Latinx main cast. Additionally, neither has changed significantly from 2018 to 2021. Only in series was there any notable increase, from 2018 to 2020. See Table 46.

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Table 46
Latinx Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	3.2% (*n*=18)	4% (*n*=19)	7.1% (*n*=39)	5.8% (*n*=36)
Series	3.4% (*n*=23)	6.5% (*n*=51)	8.9% (*n*=44)	7.3% (*n*=30)
Total	3.3% (*n*=41)	5.6% (*n*=70)	8% (*n*=83)	6.4% (*n*=66)

Behind the camera in film, 4.5% of *directors* in 2021 were Latinx, as were 1.9% of *writers* and 2.5% of *producers*. There has been no significant improvement for Latinx directors or producers in film since 2018. For writers, 2020 was a high point, as 6% of writers were Latinx that year, but this was not sustained into 2021.

Table 47
Percentage of Latinx Above-the-Line Film Personnel by Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Directors	1.4% (*n*=1)	0	3.3% (*n*=2)	4.5% (*n*=3)
Writers	0	1% (*n*=1)	6% (*n*=6)	1.9% (*n*=2)
Producers	1.2% (*n*=3)	1.1% (*n*=2)	2.5% (*n*=5)	2.5% (*n*=6)

Across Netflix series, 3.6% of *creators* were Latinx in 2021. Similarly, 3% of *producers*, 3.7% of *writers*, and 2.7% of *directors* were Latinx in 2021. The 3 creators were responsible for 2 series and were: Eddie Gonzalez, Linda Yvette Chávez, Marvin Lemus. There was no change over time across any of these above-the-line positions.

Table 48
Percentage of Latinx Above-the-Line Series Personnel by Year

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Creators	2.5% (n=3)	2.7% (n=4)	6.8% (n=7)	3.6% (n=3)
Producers	2.6% (n=19)	2.6% (n=23)	2.7% (n=18)	3% (n=16)
Writers	2.5% (n=31)	2.4% (n=35)	4.7% (n=37)	3.7% (n=36)
Directors	2.6% (n=20)	2.4% (n=22)	4.3% (n=23)	2.7% (n=14)

Middle Eastern/North African Cast & Crew. A Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) *lead/co lead* included films with a MENA protagonist and series in which at least 1% of series regulars were MENA. Few Netflix films or series had MENA leads/co leads in 2021, with no observed change over time.

While no film leads/co leads were MENA in 2021, 7.5% of series had a *lead/co lead* MENA actor.[60] However, neither format increased significantly over time. Turning to *main cast*, 2.1% of main cast actors in 2021 were MENA, with no change since 2018. The percentage of MENA main cast did not differ across films (2.6%) or series (1.5%) in 2021, and neither varied over the four years evaluated.

Table 49
MENA Leads/Co Leads & Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	Leads/Co Leads				Main Cast			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	3% (n=2)	0	3.5% (n=2)	0	<1% (n=2)	0	1.6% (n=9)	2.6% (n=16)
Series	3.8% (n=3)	5.2% (n=5)	3.2% (n=2)	7.5% (n=4)	<1% (n=3)	1% (n=8)	1% (n=5)	1.5% (n=6)
Total	3.4% (n=5)	3.3% (n=5)	3.4% (n=4)	3.4% (n=4)	<1% (n=5)	<1% (n=8)	1.3% (n=14)	2.1% (n=22)

Behind the camera, few MENA creatives worked above the line in 2021 Netflix films. This included 1.5% of *directors*, 1.9% of *writers*, and less than 1% of *producers*. In Netflix series from 2021, 2.4% of series *creators*, 1.5% of *producers*, <1% of *writers*, and 1.6% of *directors* were MENA. There has been no increase over time for MENA creatives in Netflix films or series.

American Indian/Alaskan Native Cast & Crew. Only 6% of programs had a *lead/co lead* that was American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) in 2021.[61] By definition, films with an AIAN lead/co lead had at least one AIAN protagonist and series had a minimum of 1% of series regulars who identified with this racial/ethnic group. Overall, 2021 was not significantly different than 2018, and neither film nor series evidenced an increase over time. Looking to *main cast* actors, 1.6% were AIAN, on par with the U.S. population.[62] As with leads/co leads, there was no difference by program format and no change over time. See Table 50

Table 50
AIAN Leads/Co Leads & Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	Leads/Co Leads				Main Cast			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	1.5% (*n*=1)	1.9% (*n*=1)	0	6.3% (*n*=4)	<1% (*n*=1)	<1% (*n*=1)	<1% (*n*=1)	2.3% (*n*=14)
Series	5.1% (*n*=4)	7.2% (*n*=7)	6.5% (*n*=4)	5.7% (*n*=3)	<1% (*n*=4)	1.3% (*n*=10)	1% (*n*=5)	<1% (*n*=3)
Total	3.4% (*n*=5)	5.3% (*n*=8)	3.4% (*n*=4)	6% (*n*=7)	<1% (*n*=5)	<1% (*n*=11)	<1% (*n*=6)	1.6% (*n*=17)

Behind the camera, there were no AIAN film *directors* or *writers* in 2020 or 2021, and 3 *producers* (2020=1; 2021=2). In series, no AIAN *creators* were responsible for Netflix series, though 1 *producer*, 2 *writers*, and 5 *directors* were affiliated with Netflix content in 2020 and 2021.

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Cast & Crew. Of Netflix films and series in 2021, 2.6% had a Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI) *lead/co lead*. This was defined as films with a NHPI protagonist and series in which 1% or more of series regulars were NHPI.[63] Overall, the percentage of NHPI leads/co leads did not change over time or in film. However, the percentage of series with a NHPI lead/co lead declined from 2018 to 2021. Only 1% of *main cast* actors were NHPI, which did not vary by year or by format.

Table 51
NHPI Leads/Co Leads & Main Cast by Storytelling Medium and Year

Format	Leads/Co Leads				Main Cast			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	0	3.8% (*n*=2)	1.8% (*n*=1)	4.8% (*n*=3)	0	<1% (*n*=2)	<1% (*n*=3)	1.6% (*n*=10)
Series	6.3% (*n*=5)	3.1% (*n*=3)	3.2% (*n*=2)	0	1.2% (*n*=8)	<1% (*n*=4)	<1% (*n*=3)	0
Total	3.4% (*n*=5)	3.3% (*n*=5)	2.5% (*n*=3)	2.6% (*n*=3)	<1% (*n*=8)	<1% (*n*=6)	<1% (*n*=6)	1% (*n*=10)

Behind the camera in film, only 2 *producers* in 2021 were NHPI, with no *directors* or *writers* affiliated with this community. In series, all NHPI creatives appeared in 2020, including 2 *directors*, 2 *writers*, and 1 *producer*.

The results in this section reveal that while Netflix has demonstrated gains for underrepresented characters in its content, this was primarily true for Black and Asian cast and Latinx leads/co leads. Behind the camera, the largest improvements were seen among Black creatives. Moving forward, the investment and intention that Netflix has made to increase the prevalence of Black and Asian cast and crew can be extended to other racial/ethnic groups.

<div style="background-color:#E8472B; color:white; text-align:center; font-weight:bold;">LGBTQ+</div>

In this section, we examine the prevalence of LGBTQ+-identified characters as leads/co leads, within main cast/series regulars, and overall speaking characters. Focusing on leads/co leads, we were interested in the percentage of shows that depicted an LGBTQ+ character driving the plot. For film, a movie was coded as LGBTQ+ lead/co lead if either protagonist was part of this community. For series, however, we stipulated that only 10% of the series regulars had to be coded as LGBTQ for a show to qualify. The 10% criterion was used to reflect population norms of LGBTQ+ individuals living in the U.S.[64]

Table 52
Percentage of LGBTQ Leads/Co Leads by Year and Storytelling format

Measure	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series
% of LGBTQ leads/co leads	2.9% (n=2)	19% (n=15)	5.3% (n=3)	28.9% (n=28)	5.2% (n=3)	43.5% (n=27)	7.7% (n=5)	35.8% (n=19)
Total	11.5% (n=17)		20.1% (n=31)		25% (n=30)		20.3% (n=24)	

In 2021, 20.3% (n=24) of Netflix films and series were led/co led by LGBTQ+ characters. As shown in Table 52, this is less than the percentage in 2020 (25%) but greater than 2018 (11.5%). Format was related to these patterns, however.

For film, no changes were observed in LGBTQ+ leads/co leads across the 4-year sample. The 5 movies in 2021 accounted for 6 LGBTQ+ characters, with most identifying as female (83%, n=5) and lesbian (67%, n=4). Only 1 of these leads/co leads was gay and 1 was bisexual. Half of the characters were white (n=3) and half were multiracial (n=3). Fifty percent of LGBTQ+ leads/co leads were teens (n=3), 33% were young adults and 17% were middle aged. Only 1 of the six LGBTQ leads/co leads was a parent.

Pivoting to series content, a different pattern emerged. Over a third (35.8%) of all programs featured LGBTQ+ characters as 10% or more of series regulars, which was less than 2020 (43.5%) but substantially higher than 2019 (28.9%) and 2018 (19%). The 19 shows accounted for 25 unique LGBTQ+ characters. Forty-eight percent of the characters were male and 48% were female. One character (4%) was coded as gender nonbinary. Sixty percent were White, 16% were Black and 16% were Hispanic/Latino. Only 1 LGBTQ+ lead/co lead was Asian and one was multiracial. In terms of age, 64% were adults, 16% were teens, and 12% were middle aged. Few (16%, n=4) of the LGBTQ+ series regulars who were leads/co leads were parents.

All *main cast and series regulars* were coded for LGBTQ+. This set of analyses differs from the one before as the focus was on all main cast/series regulars rather than just those appearing in shows where leads/co leads represent 10% or more of the cast. Of all the main cast/series regulars, 5.7% in 2021 were LGBTQ+ (see Table 53). No meaningful differences emerged from 2018 to 2021. The highest percentage of LGBTQ+ main cast/series regulars was observed in 2020 in episodic content, but there were no other over time differences by format. As a point of comparison, 9.1% of primetime broadcast series regulars in the 2020/21 season were LGBTQ+, according to GLAAD.[65]

Given that there were no differences overall in main cast/series regulars across film and series, we present the demographic profile of LGBTQ+ characters together. In 2021, the majority of main cast/series regulars was female (54.4%, male=43.9%, nonbinary=1.8%). Just over half (50.9%) of all LGBTQ+ main cast/series regulars were White, with 15.8% Black, 12.3% Hispanic/Latino, 8.8% Asian, 10.5% Multiracial/Multiethnic, and 1.8% Middle Eastern/North African. The majority (50.9%) of LGBTQ+ characters in 2021 were adult in age followed by teens (29.8%) and then middle agers (15.8%). Only 3.5% or 2 LGBTQ+ series regulars/main cast were elderly. Six or 10.6% of the LGBTQ+ series regulars/main cast were caregivers or parents.

Table 53
Percentage of LGBTQ Main Cast by Year and Storytelling Format

Measure	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series
% of LGBTQ main cast	3.8% (n=21)	4.6% (n=30)	4.9% (n=23)	7.4% (n=55)	5.3% (n=29)	10.3% (n=49)	5% (n=31)	6.7% (n=26)
Total	4.2% (n=51)		6.4% (n=78)		7.6% (n=78)		5.7% (n=57)	

Out of all *speaking or named characters* in 2021 Netflix content, 3.2% (n=127) were LGBTQ+ with no differences observed between film (2.4%) and series (4%) (See Table 54). 2021 did not deviate meaningfully from 2020 or 2018. The majority of LGBTQ+ speaking characters in 2021 were gay (52.8%, n=67), 35.4% (n=45) were lesbian, 8.7% (n=11) were bisexual, and 3.2% (n=4) transgender.

Table 54
Percentage of LGBTQ Speaking Characters by Year and Storytelling Format

Measures	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series	Film	Series
% of LGBTQ speaking characters	1.9% (n=47)	2.5% (n=83)	2.1% (n=46)	4.1% (n=162)	2.1% (n=46)	4.8% (n=120)	2.4% (n=48)	4% (n=79)
Total	2.2% (n=130)		3.4% (n=208)		3.5% (n=166)		3.2% (n=127)	

Most LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters were male (56.7%). Over forty percent were female (42.5%) and ‹1% were gender nonbinary. In terms of race/ethnicity, 46.5% of LGBTQ+ speaking characters were White, 22.8% were Black, 11.8% were Multiracial/Multiethnic, 9.4% were Hispanic/Latino, 7.1% were Asian, and 2.4% were MENA. The vast majority of LGBTQ+ speaking characters were portrayed as adults (59.8%) or teens (21.3%). Fewer middle aged (17.3%) or elderly (1.6%) LGBTQ+ speaking characters were shown across Netflix content in 2021. Eleven (8.7%) of the 127 LGBTQ+ speaking characters were depicted as parents or caregivers.

Finally, we were interested in the prevalence of shows that failed to depict any LGBTQ+ characters across the plot. The results are shown in Table 55. Fifty-five percent of all fictional stories in 2021 (55.1%) were missing the LGBTQ+ community on screen, which is no different from 2020 (58.2%) but significantly lower than 2018 (61.1%). Differences emerged by medium, however. Series decreased significantly in the number

and percentage of shows that erased the LGBTQ+ community on screen from 2018 (56.2%) to 2021 (41.5%). For film, 2021 (66.2%) was lower than 2020 (74.1%) but not different from 2018 (66.7%).

Table 55
Number of Stories Missing LGBTQ+ Representation

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	66.7% (*n*=46)	70.2% (*n*=40)	74.1% (*n*=43)	66.2% (*n*=43)	69.1% (*n*=172)
Series	56.2% (*n*=45)	53% (*n*=53)	43.8% (*n*=28)	41.5% (*n*=22)	49.8% (*n*=148)
Total	61.1% (*n*=91)	59.2% (*n*=93)	58.2% (*n*=71)	55.1% (*n*=65)	58.6% (*n*=320)
Sample Size	149	157	122	118	546

Netflix content has shown some gains when it comes to LGBTQ+ representation over the past four years. This is evident in the fluctuation of leads/co leads and series regulars/main cast, while the percentage of series without an LGBTQ+ character has declined. However, more than half of films and series did not feature an LGBTQ+ speaking character. Incorporating more characters across series is a key way to increase LGBTQ+ representation overall. After exploring on-screen representation for the LGBTQ+ community, we were also curious about how another marginalized community is represented in Netflix content. In the next section, we turn our attention to characters with disabilities in Netflix content.

CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES

This section examines how characters with disabilities were represented in Netflix films and series. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)'s definition was referenced in our conceptualization of characters with disabilities.[66] Once a character fit the definition, the nature of the disability was then categorized into U.S. Census designations as communicative, cognitive, and/or physical.[67] Below, we describe the prevalence of disabilities among leads/co leads, main cast/series regular characters, and all speaking or named characters.

In 2021, 4.2% (*n*=5) of programs featured a *lead/co lead* with a disability. Lead/co lead designations were made when the protagonist(s) in a film or when 27% or more of series regulars within an episodic show had a disability. The percentage of leads/co leads in 2021 was nearly equivalent to that in 2018 (4.1%). See Table 56. Films (7.7%) in 2021 were also similar to 2018 (8.7%), though the high-water mark for movies showcasing a lead/co lead with a disability occurred in 2019 (15.8%). No series in 2021 had a lead/co lead with a disability, the same as in 2018. Netflix was on pace with top-grossing films (5%) in 2021 in terms of leads/co leads with a disability.[68]

Table 56
Percentage of Leads/Co-Leads with a Disability By Storytelling Format and Year

Format	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	8.7% (*n*=6)	15.8% (*n*=9)	6.9% (*n*=4)	7.7% (*n*=5)
Series	0	2.1% (*n*=2)	3.2% (*n*=2)	0
Total	4.1% (*n*=6)	7.1% (*n*=11)	5% (*n*=6)	4.2% (*n*=5)

Of the 5 lead/co lead characters with a disability in Netflix's 2021 films, 1 was male and 4 were female. In terms of race/ethnicity, 4 leading characters with a disability were white while 1 was Hispanic/Latino. Three lead characters were middle aged, 1 was a young adult, and 1 was a teen. Only one leading character with a disability was identified as LGBTQ+ and 2 were parents.

Turning to *series regulars/main cast*, 1.8% (*n*=18) of these characters in 2021 programming were depicted with a disability. This is not meaningfully different from the percentage in 2018 (4.4%). There were similar percentages of main cast characters with disabilities across films (1.6%,) and series (2%), and neither varied over time. Looking to the broader entertainment industry, GLAAD reports that 3.5% of series regular characters in primetime broadcast were shown with a disability in the 2020-21 season.[69]

Table 57
Main Cast Characters with Disabilities in Netflix Films and Series

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	3.4% (*n*=19)	4.9% (*n*=23)	4.9% (*n*=27)	1.6% (*n*=10)
Series	5.2% (*n*=34)	5% (*n*=37)	4% (*n*=19)	2% (*n*=8)
Total	4.4% (*n*=53)	4.9% (*n*=60)	4.5% (*n*=46)	1.8% (*n*=18)

Of the 18 main cast characters with a disability, half (*n*=9) were female and 44.4% (*n*=8) were male, while one was gender non-binary. Nearly two-thirds (61.1%, *n*=11) of the 18 main cast characters with a disability were White, while 38.9% (*n*=7) were underrepresented. Few main cast characters with a disability were LGBTQ+ (11.1%, *n*=2). Most of the main cast characters with a disability were middle aged (44.4%, *n*=8) or

young adults (21-39 years of age; 33.3%, *n*=6), while 16.7% (*n*=3) were teens (13-20 years of age) and 5.6% (*n*=1) were elderly (65+ years of age). Of the main cast characters who could be evaluated for parental status, 41.7% (*n*=5) were parents while 58.3% (*n*=7) were not parents.

The prevalence of ***speaking characters*** with disabilities was evaluated. In 2021, 1.1% (*n*=43) of all speaking characters were shown with a disability. This was on par with 2018 (1.9%). Films (1%) and series (1.2%) featured a similar percentage of characters with disabilities in 2021, with neither evidencing any change over time. As a point of comparison, top-grossing films from 2021 featured of 1.4% speaking characters with a disability.[70]

Table 58
Speaking Characters with Disabilities in Netflix Films and Series

Measures	2018	2019	2020	2021
Film	1.3% (*n*=33)	1.7% (*n*=37)	2.1% (*n*=48)	1% (*n*=20)
Series	2.4% (*n*=83)	2.5% (*n*=100)	1.9% (*n*=48)	1.2% (*n*=23)
Total	1.9% (*n*=116)	2.2% (*n*=137)	2% (*n*=96)	1.1% (*n*=43)

Of the characters with disabilities in 2021 across both films and series, 53.5% were male, 44.2% were female, and 2.3% (*n*=1) were gender nonbinary. Nearly three-quarters of the characters with disabilities were White (74.4%) and 25.6% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Few were LGBTQ+ (14%). In terms of age, 34.9% of characters with a disability were middle aged, 25.6% were teens, 20.9% were young adults (age 21-39), while 16.3% were elderly, and 2.3% were children. Only 7 characters with a disability were parents.

We further explored the percentage of films and series that rendered characters with disabilities ***invisible***, or failed to depict even one speaking or named character with a disability. This was the case for nearly three-quarters (72%) of films and series in 2021, which was an increase from 2018 (55.7%) and from 2020 (50%). By format, 75.4% of Netflix movies were without a character with a disability, significantly more than 2018 (66.7%) or 2020 (51.7%). In series, two-thirds (67.9%) of series did not have a speaking role for a character with a disability, a jump from 2018 (46.2%) and 2020 (50%).

Table 59
Number of Stories Missing Representation of Characters with Disabilities

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Film	66.7% (*n*=46)	57.9% (*n*=33)	51.7% (*n*=30)	75.4% (*n*=49)	63.5% (*n*=158)
Series	46.2% (*n*=37)	59% (*n*=59)	48.4% (*n*=31)	67.9% (*n*=36)	54.9% (*n*=163)
Total	55.7% (*n*=83)	58.6% (*n*=92)	50% (*n*=61)	72% (*n*=85)	58.8% (*n*=321)
Sample Size	149	157	122	118	546

In addition to overall prevalence, we were also curious about the nature of disabilities presented on screen. Once a character was identified as having a disability, they were evaluated for whether the disability occurred in the physical, cognitive, or communicative domain. Characters could experience more than one disability, and thus could be categorized in more than one domain.

Table 60
Domain of Disability in 2021 Netflix Films and Series

Measures	Physical	Cognitive	Communicative
Film	65% (*n*=13)	20% (*n*=4)	25% (*n*=5)
Series	56.5% (*n*=13)	26.1% (*n*=6)	26.1% (*n*=6)
Total	60.5% (*n*=26)	23.2% (*n*=10)	25.6% (*n*=11)

As shown in Table 60, characters in 2021 Netflix programming were most likely to experience physical disabilities (60.5%). The percentage of characters with physical disabilities was higher in film (65%) than in series (56.5%). Examples of characters with physical disabilities included those who had mobility issues, were missing limbs, or were depicted in a wheelchair. Communicative disabilities were experienced by a quarter of all characters with disabilities (25.6%), and occurred almost equally in film (25%) and series (26.1%). Examples of communicative disabilities include blind characters, deaf characters, and those experiencing speech issues. Finally, 23.2% of characters with disabilities had cognitive disabilities. Series

(26.1%) were more likely to depict cognitive disabilities than film (20%). Examples of cognitive disabilities include depression, anxiety, Down Syndrome, PTSD, and dyslexia.

In summary, characters with disabilities as leads/co leads, main cast/series regulars, and all speaking characters remained below proportional representation with the U.S. population. Moreover, these percentages have not changed across the four years examined. The profile of characters with disabilities was also limited; the majority of characters with disabilities had a physical disability, and most were still White and male. Looking ahead, this community represents an opportunity for greater inclusion in the future.

<div style="background-color:#E8522C; color:white; text-align:center; font-weight:bold; padding:6px;">CONCLUSION</div>

The purpose of this analysis was to provide an update to our findings on Netflix scripted U.S. films and series from 2018 and 2019. We evaluated 123 films and 117 series across two additional years (2020, 2021) and paired those with our investigation of 126 films and 180 series from 2018 and 2019. In total, 546 films and series were examined over a four-year period. Results from 2021 were compared to findings from our initial analysis. Below, major findings across the study are provided.

Gender is Not a Problem in Major Roles across Netflix Content

For decades, the entertainment industry has struggled to represent girls/women equally on screen. At Netflix, however, female characters filled more than half of all lead/co lead roles, and close to 50% of main cast/series regular character positions in 2021. Behind the scenes, Netflix outpaced the wider industry in its hiring practices across directors, writers, and producers in film and for series creators and writers. While advocacy and activism has moved the needle incrementally in top-grossing movies, decision-making at Netflix appears to privilege a quicker pace to ensuring that girls and women share the screen and have a place behind the camera.

Given these values, there are two places to that merit ongoing improvement. The first is the arena of female speaking characters. Netflix is on an upward trajectory in this area, but still falls below the population metric of 50%. Targeting smaller roles on screen for the inclusion of female characters will also address the second area: stories that are gender-balanced. By working to place female characters across the spectrum of its storytelling, Netflix content will even more closely resemble the world in which we live.

Netflix Achieves Proportional Representation for Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Groups

Across leads/co leads, main cast, and all speaking characters, Netflix films and series in 2020 and 2021 have included individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups at or above proportional representation to the U.S. population. The gains noted across these measures since 2018 reflect an ongoing commitment to telling stories that spotlight underrepresented groups.

With the results regarding gender and race/ethnicity, it is not a surprise that Netflix content also focuses on girls/women of color in near proportion to the population. In fact, films and series in 2020 and 2021 featured underrepresented female protagonists *beyond* proportional representation—more than half of series in 2021 featured women of color in leading/co leading roles. Behind the camera, Netflix employed more women of color as series creators, writers, and directors in 2021 than in 2018. These findings are notable given the widespread and historical lack of representation for women of color in entertainment.

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Netflix Content Needs Improvement in Specific Areas Related to Racial/Ethnic Representation

Despite the gains for women and people of color overall, there are areas for improvement when it comes to underrepresented girls/women. Invisibility is the norm for women from some racial/ethnic groups. Ensuring that storytelling is inclusive of Indigenous girls/women, as well as those from other marginalized communities is imperative.

Additionally, behind the camera, there are still gaps for underrepresented creatives and particularly women of color in key roles. Overall increases for underrepresented content creators across the entertainment industry mean that Netflix's choices are in line with its peers. In film, however, increasing the number of women of color working across decision-making positions behind the scenes are an important way for Netflix to take a leadership role in entertainment.

Beyond these areas, improving representation for the Latinx community is one place to focus. Overall Hispanic/Latino representation in Netflix content lags when compared to population norms, and for the Latinx (U.S.-born Latino) community, the disparity widens, particularly behind the camera. Additionally, representation and employment of people from Indigenous and Middle Eastern/North African communities are areas where Netflix can target its efforts.

Netflix Content Showcases LGBTQ+ Leads but Lacks More Minor Roles

Between 2018 and 2021, the percentage of Netflix series with LGBTQ+ leads increased significantly, while film leads trended upward but did not improve meaningfully. The increase in LGBTQ+ protagonists suggests that Netflix has worked to identify ways to tell more stories centered on the LGBTQ+ community. In film, this includes an intersectional lens as most of the LGBTQ+ leads were women, and half were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group.

Yet, when it comes to main cast roles and all speaking characters, Netflix has not yet reached proportional representation for LGBTQ+ individuals. Portrayals still tend to focus on gay characters rather than the entire spectrum of LGBTQ+ identity. However, there are bright spots, including the percentage of underrepresented LGBTQ+ main cast and speaking characters. For the LGBTQ+ community, then, Netflix can continue its existing work to spotlight LGBTQ+ storytelling while diversifying the perspective from which these stories are told.

Characters with Disabilities Are Consistently Underrepresented in Netflix Content

Industry-wide, characters with disabilities remain marginalized in entertainment content. The trends described in this report reveal that Netflix has not deviated from its peers and competitors in the prevalence of leads, main cast, or speaking characters with disabilities. Overall, there has been little change over time for this community, and Netflix content remains far below proportional representation.

In addition to the lack of characters with disabilities, when these characters do appear on screen, they often fit a narrow profile. Across all speaking characters, those with disabilities were primarily white and male, often with physical disabilities. There is room for Netflix to represent the broader array of experiences within the community. Ensuring that storytelling encompasses a multitude of identity groups is one way that Netflix can immediately bolster its numbers.

Limitations

A few limitations must be noted, as with any research investigation. First, only U.S. original scripted films and series were evaluated for this report. Looking to other types of Netflix content (e.g., unscripted, animation) could provide additional insight into where the company is showcasing inclusive content beyond one format. Second, across the report we have endeavored to provide industry benchmarking. Differences in methodological approach, a lack of data, and the process of creating single comparison statistics warrant caution in interpretation of some of these metrics. These figures are provided as an estimation for interested readers. Lastly, some methods and data analytic practices have been updated since our previous study, and figures in this report may vary from those initially reported. Endnotes provide insight into which analyses may differ and why.

Final Note

Across four years of evaluation, Netflix has demonstrated that its content continues to move toward greater inclusivity for women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community. Given the findings in this report, it is clear that the company has been reflective and intentional regarding how its content can serve its audience and how its practices can ensure access and opportunity. At a time of industry flux and transformation, ensuring that these practices continue to be in place will be important to establishing Netflix as a champion for inclusion.

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Endnotes

1. The methodology for this report mirrors that used by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative in its study of Netflix fictional films and series from 2018 and 2019. As in the previous study, the samples (2020, 2021) were determined by Netflix calendar-year releases of scripted, fictional, live-action content considered an original to the company. This included films and scripted series, along with TV specials, which were included in the series sample. Information on the evaluation process, including unitizing and variable reliability can be obtained from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.

2. Only films driven by a lead/co lead were able to be evaluated for the presence of a female in either of these roles. Put differently, ensemble movies (with three or more leading characters) were automatically coded as "0" or not featuring a female lead or co lead. This approach was taken so that we can compare Netflix findings to leads/co leads in domestic top-grossing box office movies. Across the 4-year sample, only 9 films were defined as ensembles (2=2018, 4=2019, 1=2020, 2=2021). Of these, 5 featured girls and women in 50% or more of the ensemble cast. If we were to recalculate the percentage of films with a female lead/co leads with these movies included, the percentages by year were as follows: 2018 (46.4%, n=32), 2019 (56.1%, n=32), 2020 (58.6%, n=34), 2021 (67.7%, n=44).

3. Series regulars were determined using IMDbPro and Luminate (formerly Variety Insight). Series regulars reflect recurring characters who appear throughout content. When information was not available via online database, the Netflix platform was used to identify main cast/series regulars.

4. U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Quick Facts. Retrieved December 03, 2021 from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/SEX255219#SEX255219.

5. Neff, K., Smith, S.L., & Pieper, K. (2022, March). Inequality across 1,500 popular films: Examining gender and race/ethnicity of leads/co leads from 2007 to 2021. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Los Angeles, CA.

6. For comparison purposes, we relied on the leads as determined by the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report. See https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2022-Television-10-27-2022.pdf. There are two limitations to using the UCLA findings for comparison purposes. In that report, leads are "the first credited actor/performer for a given project's list of cast members" (p. 66). Put differently, the authors of that report did not actually view the storylines and render a judgment about inclusion. Given that character order listing on sites like IMDbPro, Variety Insight, and/or even credits can be influenced by notoriety, contractual agreements, and/or marketing, this approach to measurement is only a crude indicator of who carries a story line. Further, the UCLA study does not report the percentage across all television evaluated. As such, we took the average of three percentages from broadcast (44.3%), cable (49.1%), and digital (40.9%) series.

7. Of the total main cast members evaluated in both Netflix films and series, we found that less than 1% (n=6 or 4,567) were gender non-binary. Those 6 characters include (2018=2, 2019=1, 2021=3). All but one of these characters were featured in scripted content. Due to the small sample size, these characters were removed prior to analysis.

8. Lauzen, M.M., (2020). It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in Top Grossing U.S. Films of 2020. San Diego State University, CA. https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2020_Its_a_Mans_World_Report_v2.pdf.

9. Lauzen, M. (2021). Boxed In: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes on Broadcast and Streaming Television in 2020/21. Retrieved from: https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2020-21_Boxed_In_Report.pdf. Lauzen, M. (2020). Boxed In 2019-20: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes in Television. Retrieved from https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2019-2020_Boxed_In_Report.pdf.

10. The number of female characters within each individual program was calculated to determine whether a film or series was gender balanced. A program was considered to have gender balance if the percentage of female-identifying characters or main cast fell within a range of 10% above or below

the U.S. Census Bureau (2020) statistic of females in the population. In this case, the range was 45.72% to 55.88%.

11. For film, behind-the-camera positions were compiled based on information available on IMDbPro.com. The gender and race/ethnicity of each individual was ascertained using the same procedure outlined for main cast, as described above, with a notable exception. When possible, confirmation of race/ethnicity was sought from the individual's representation (e.g., agents, managers, etc.). Information obtained from other Annenberg Inclusion Initiative studies was also used to provide race/ethnicity and gender information for behind-the-camera personnel.

12. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

13. Ramon, A.C., Tran, M., & Hunt, D. (2022). Hollywood Diversity Report 2022: A New Post Pandemic Normal? Retrieved from: https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2022-Television-10-27-2022.pdf. For comparison purposes, the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2022 was used. We averaged the percentage of female show creators across broadcast, cable, and digital series.

14. Comparison data were taken from Lauzen's Boxed In reports. See https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2021-22-Boxed-In-Report.pdf and https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2019-2020_Boxed_In_Report.pdf. For 2020/21, only the averages of broadcast and streaming were calculated for comparison purposes. For the three earlier years, we averaged across broadcast, cable, and streaming.

15. Lauzen (2021).

16. Directors Guild of America reports on the inclusion of women directors yearly. Percentages retrieved from the following online reports: https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2021/210223-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx. https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2022/220505-Episodic-TV-Inclusion-Report.aspx https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2019/191119-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx.

17. As in our prior report, only the relationship between series creators and the presence of female main cast and speaking characters was examined. The contributions of directors and producers in series content to on screen casting are more ambiguous and thus this relationship was not evaluated.

18. Information on character race/ethnicity is derived from the story plot and incorporates both explicit and implicitly-provided information.

19. This definition of leads/co leads was employed for series as 40% is in line with the percentage of underrepresented individuals in the U.S. population. This definition has been updated from our previous report. If films with ensemble casts in which 40% or more of the ensemble characters were underrepresented were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In film, the new totals for leads/co leads would be as follows: 2021=50.8%, n=33; 2020=46.6%, n=27; 2019=45.6%, n=26; 2018=31.9%, n=22.

20. U.S. Census (2021). Quick facts. Retrieved December 7, 2022 from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PSTO45221.

21. Neff, Smith, & Pieper (2022).

22. Neff, Smith, & Pieper (2022).

23. Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022).

24. Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022).

25. U.S. Census (2021).

26. Certain characters (e.g., robots, supernatural creatures, non-human entities) are not capable of possessing a race/ethnicity. Additionally, some characters have a race/ethnicity that is not able to be ascertained. Characters who fit either of these designations were coded as not applicable or can't tell for this measure and excluded from analysis. Thus, the sample size for this analysis deviates from what is reported above for gender.

27. U.S. Census (2021).

28. Data are from Annenberg Inclusion Initiative reports.

29. Series data are found in Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022). Data on characters from 2020 films can be found in: Hunt, D. & Ramon, A-C. (2021). UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2021: Pandemic in Progress Part 1: Film. UCLA Entertainment & Media Research Initiative. https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2021-Film-4-22-2021.pdf

30. Proportional representation was calculated as the percentage of underrepresented characters per program out of the total number of characters per program. In our initial analysis, we used 35.9% as the lower bound for proportional representation. Due to U.S. population changes, that number was altered in this replication. The change affects 1 series in 2019 which no longer reaches proportional representation.

31. As noted earlier, information on behind-the-camera personnel's racial/ethnic background was obtained in the same method described above. This included using data obtained for other research at the Initiative, seeking information from industry databases and publicly available sources, and confirming with representatives and individuals when possible.

32. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Khan, A. (2022). Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Analysis of Director Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across 1,500 Top Films from 2007 to 2021. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-directors-chair-2022.pdf.

33. Data are from published and unpublished studies by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.

34. Data are from published and unpublished studies by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.

35. Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022).

36. Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022).

37. Directors Guild of America reports on the inclusion of underrepresented directors yearly. Percentages retrieved from the following online reports: https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2021/2102 23-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx. https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2022/220 505-Episodic-TV-Inclusion-Report.aspx

https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2019/19111 9-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx.

38. U.S. Census (2021).

39. Neff, Smith, & Pieper (2022).

40. U.S. Census (2021).

41. U.S. Census (2021).

42. Lauzen (2022); Lauzen (2021).

43. U.S. Census (2021).

44. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

45. Lauzen (2021).

46. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

47. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

48. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

49. Ramon, Tran, & Hunt (2022).

50. Directors Guild of America reports on the inclusion of underrepresented directors yearly. Percentages retrieved from the following online reports: https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2021/2102 23-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx. https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2022/220 505-Episodic-TV-Inclusion-Report.aspx https://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2019/19111 9-Episodic-Television-Director-Diversity-Report.aspx.

51. This analysis focuses on main cast and lead/co lead actors rather than characters. While characters may provide some information on their racial/ethnic background, additional detail was available for actors, including identification with specific racial/ethnic groups, particularly for Latinx identity. Across each racial/ethnic group, the definition of leads/co leads was updated from how it was determined in our previous report.

52. U.S. Census (2021).

53. If films with ensemble casts in which 13% or more of the ensemble characters were Black were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In

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film, the new totals for leads/co leads would be as follows: 2021=27.7%, n=18; 2020=27.6%, n=16; 2019=28.1%, n=16; 2018=20.3%, n=14.

54. When a Black producer worked on a film: 72.9% of films with a Black producer had a Black lead/co lead compared to 13% of films when no Black producers were attached. Similarly, 58.3% of main cast actors were Black in films with one or more Black producers compared to 15.7% in films without a Black producer.

55. U.S. Census (2021).

56. If films with ensemble casts in which 6% or more of the ensemble characters were Asian were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In film, the new totals for leads/co leads would be as follows: 2021=13.8%, n=9; 2020=10.3%, n=6; 2019=8.8%, n=5; 2018=5.8%, n=4.

57. U.S. Census (2021).

58. U.S. Census (2021). If films with ensemble casts in which 12% or more of the ensemble characters were Latinx were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In film, the new totals for leads/co leads would be as follows: 2021=10.8%, n=7; 2020=8.6%, n=5; 2019=8.8%, n=5; 2018=1.4%, n=1.

59. Noe-Bustamante, L. & Flores, A. (2019, September 16). Facts on Latinos in the U.S. Pew Research Center. Retrieved December 20, 2022 from: https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-u-s-fact-sheet/

60. If films with ensemble casts in which 1% or more of the ensemble characters were MENA were included in the analysis, the findings would not change.

61. U.S. Census (2021). If films with ensemble casts in which 1% or more of the ensemble characters were American Indian/Alaskan Native were included in the analysis, the findings would not change.

62. U.S. Census (2021).

63. U.S. Census (2021). If films with ensemble casts in which 1% or more of the ensemble characters were

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were included in the analysis, the findings would not change.

64. Powell, L. (2021). We Are Here: LGBTQ+ Adult Population in United States Reaches At Least 20 Million, According to Human Rights Campaign Foundation Report. Retrieved December 20, 2022 from https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/we-are-here-lgbtq-adult-population-in-united-states-reaches-at-least-20-million-according-to-human-rights-campaign-foundation-report

65. GLAAD (2021). Where We Are on TV. Retrieved December 20, 2022 from https://www.glaad.org/sites/default/files/GLAAD%20-%20202021%20WHERE%20WE%20ARE%20ON%20TV.pdf.

66. Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). https://www. ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm. The definition of disability can be found in Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., & Pieper, K. (2016). Inequality in 800 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007-2015. Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. Retrieved from: https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/2017/04/10/MDSCI_Inequality_in_800_Films_FINAL.pdf. Characters with a disability had a condition (based on the function, form, or structure of the character's mind and/or body), which created a limitation (including interference and/or non-functioning) related to a 'major life activity' or 'major bodily function' for longer than six months.

67. U.S. Census Bureau (2018). Americans with Disabilities: 2014. Retrieved December 20, 2022 from: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p70-152.pdf

68. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

69. GLAAD (2021).

70. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.

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