

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

---

## Executive Summary

Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper,  
Katherine Neff & Sam Wheeler

May 2025

**USC**Annenberg  
*Inclusion Initiative*

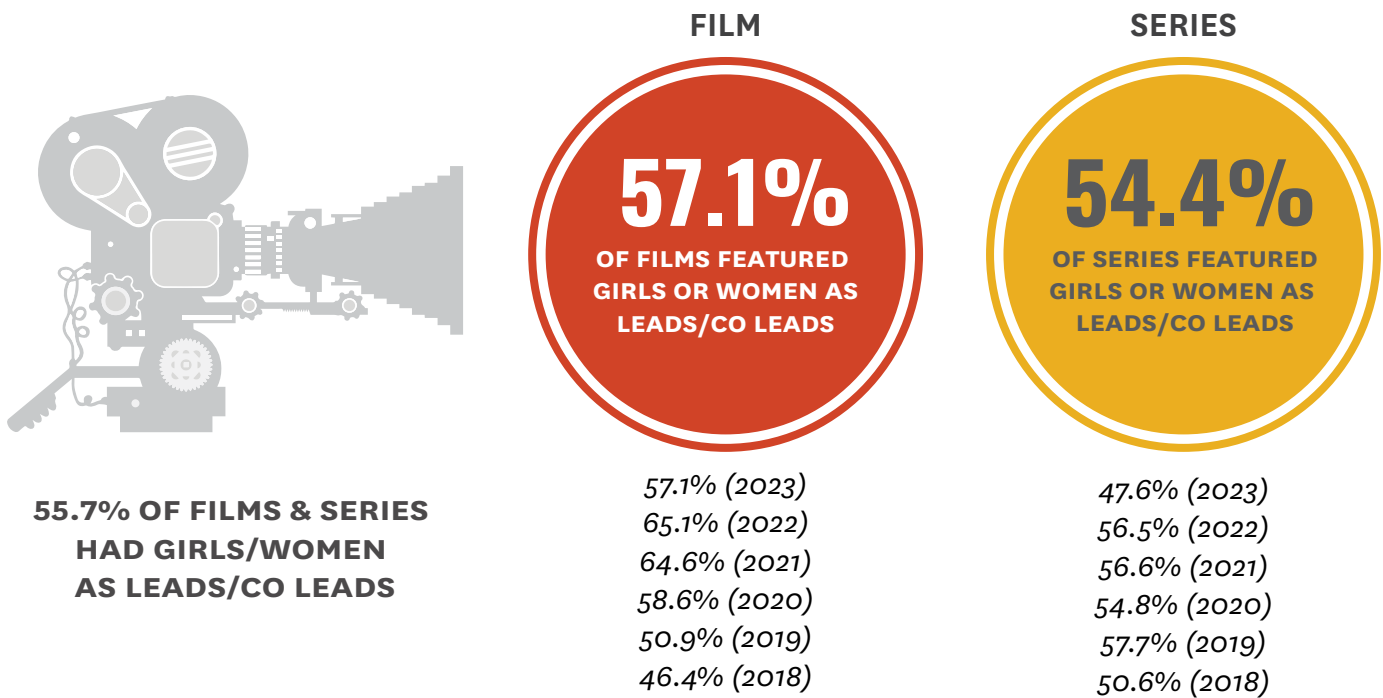
# INCLUSION IN NETFLIX ORIGINAL U.S. SCRIPTED FILMS & SERIES

USC ANNENBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE

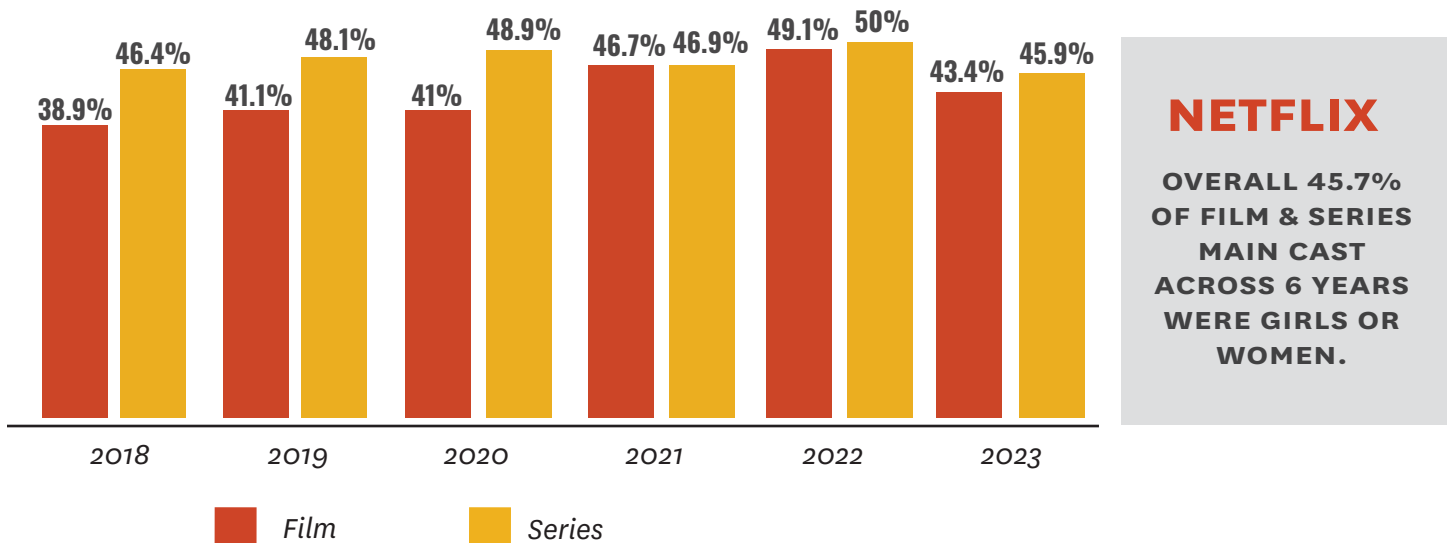


## #1 GENDER IS NOT A PROBLEM IN MAJOR ROLES AT NETFLIX

*Girls and women as leads/co leads across Netflix films & series, 2018-2023*

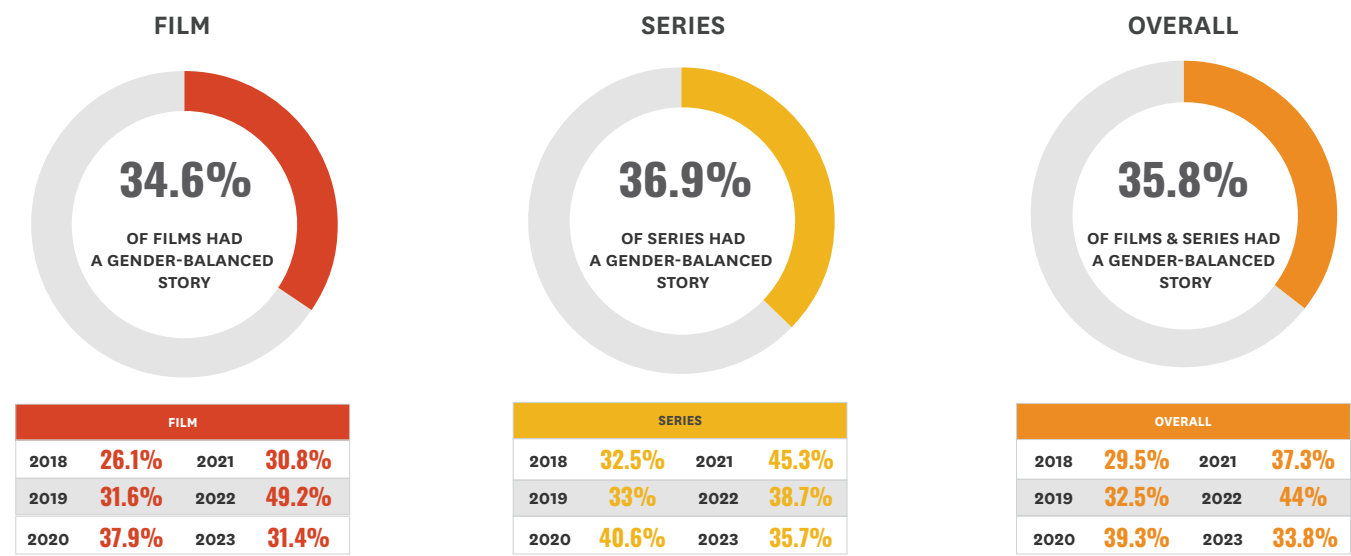


## MAIN CAST ROLES APPROACH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR GENDER

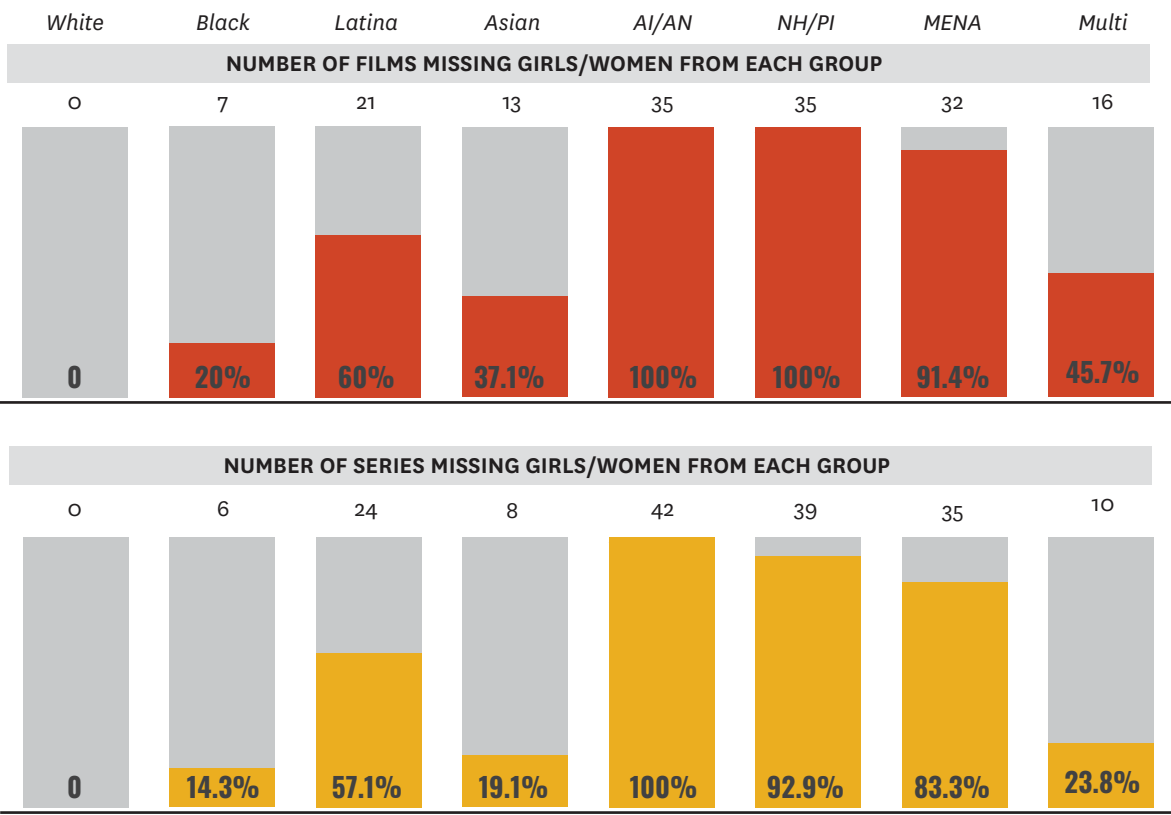


## #2 GENDER IMBALANCE STILL EXISTS IN NETFLIX CONTENT

Percentage of Netflix films & series that met or exceeded proportional gender representation



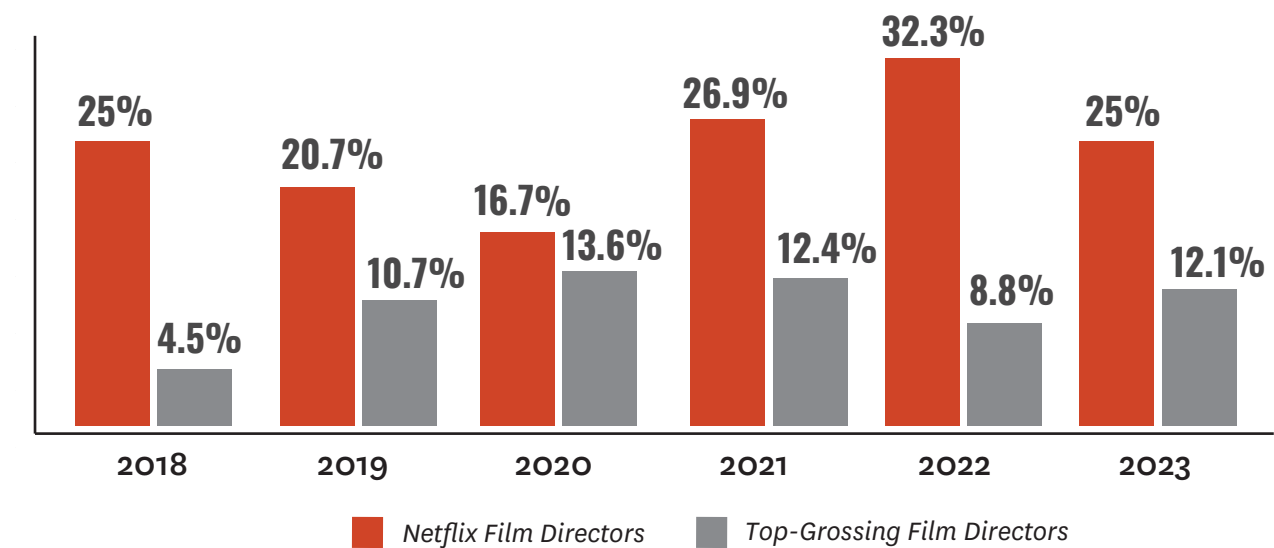
## INVISIBILITY PERSISTS FOR GIRLS & WOMEN OF COLOR IN NETFLIX CONTENT



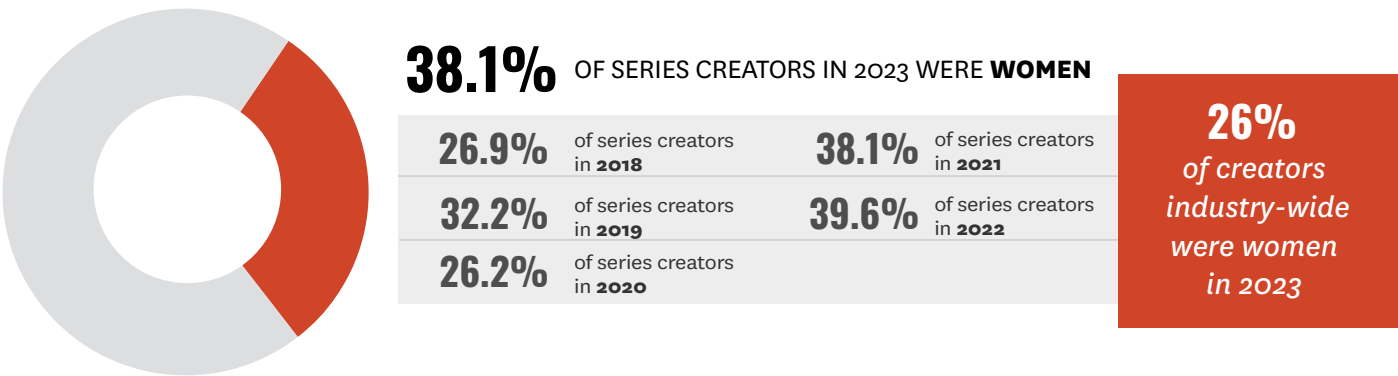
AI/AN=American Indian/Alaska Native; NH/PI=Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; MENA=Middle Eastern/North African; Multi=Multiracial/Multiethnic  
Data in this chart reflect 2023 films & series

#3 NETFLIX SHOWS TOP MOVIES HOW TO HIRE WOMEN

Women directors of Netflix and top-grossing films, 2018-23



WOMEN IN KEY CREATIVE POSITIONS ACROSS NETFLIX AND ALL SERIES

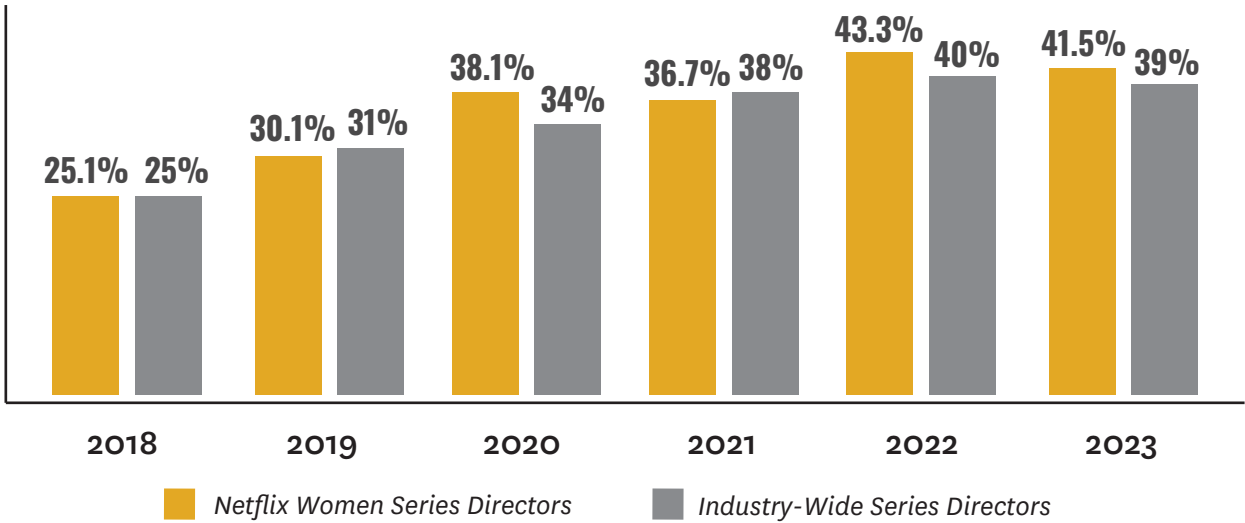


Data on industry-wide show creators are from the UCLA Hollywood Diversity report.

WOMEN PRODUCERS AND WRITERS ACROSS NETFLIX AND ALL SERIES

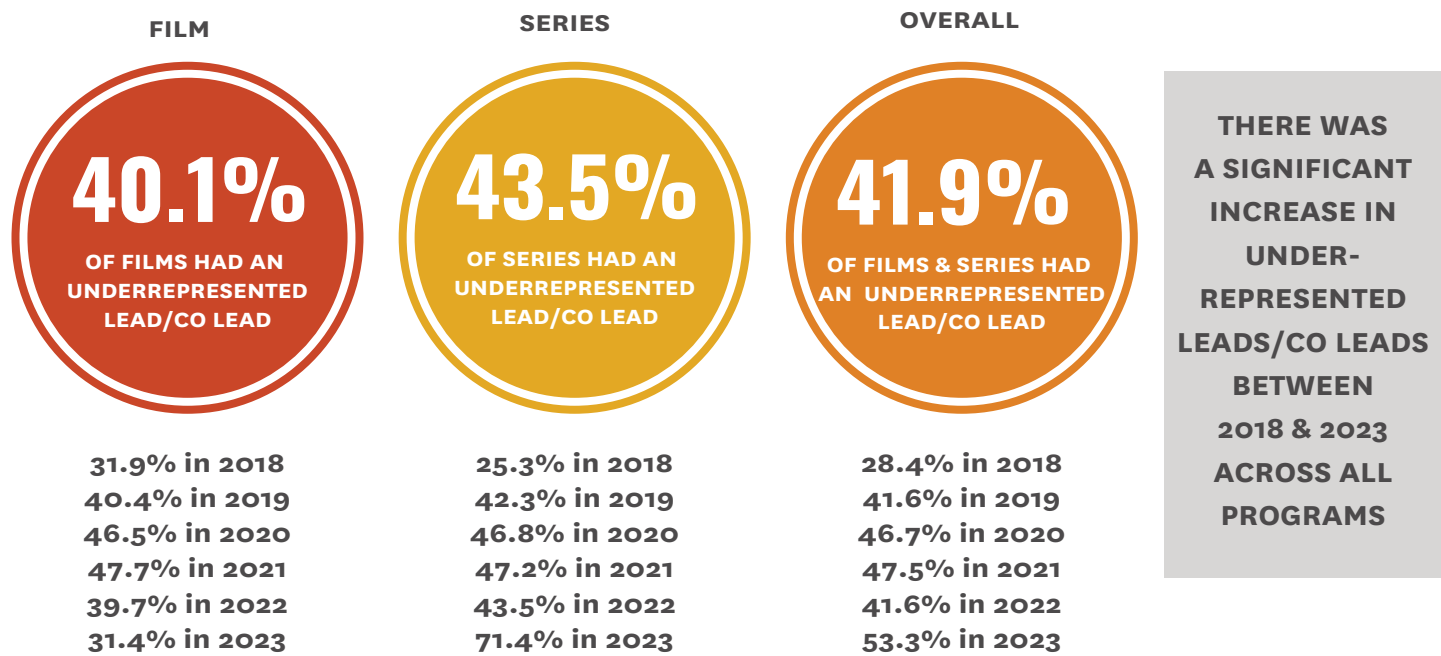
% OF WOMEN	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NETFLIX PRODUCERS	33.6%	40%	38.1%	38.2%	40.6%	39.6%
INDUSTRY-WIDE PRODUCERS	40%	40%	39%	42%	44%	43%
NETFLIX WRITERS	30.6%	41.4%	40.4%	41.6%	44.9%	46.6%
INDUSTRY-WIDE WRITERS	25%	35%	36%	34%	33%	30%

WOMEN DIRECTORS ACROSS NETFLIX SERIES AND INDUSTRY-WIDE



#4 NETFLIX FILMS AND SERIES FOCUS ON PEOPLE OF COLOR

Percentage of leads/co leads in Netflix content, 2018-23



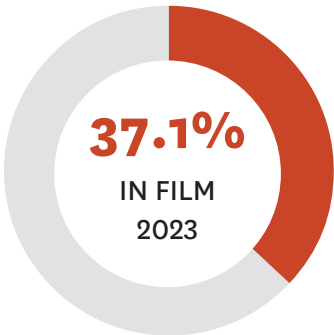
#5 RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS REACH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Underrepresented main cast across Netflix films & series, 2018-21

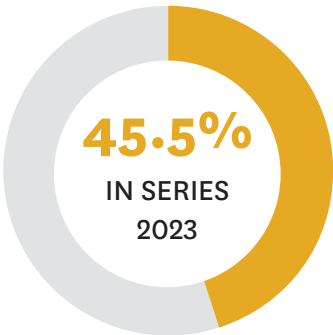
% OF UR MAIN CAST IN	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
FILM	32.3%	38.9%	42.4%	40.1%	42.4%	41.7%
SERIES	27.1%	38.4%	39.5%	40.9%	35.5%	50.8%
TOTAL	29.4%	38.6%	41.1%	40.4%	39%	46.1%

\*Main cast refers to series regulars as defined by Variety Insight or listing on Netflix platform.

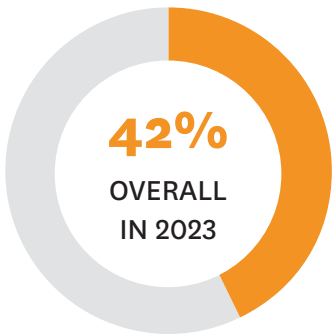
UNDERREPRESENTED SPEAKING CHARACTERS IN NETFLIX FILMS & SERIES



NETFLIX REACHED PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (40.2%) IN 2019 AND DID NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASE IN 2022 (39.1%) OR 2023 (37.1%)



UNDERREPRESENTED CHARACTERS INCREASED FROM 2018 (32%) TO 2023 (45.5%), ABOVE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION



NETFLIX SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THE PERCENTAGE OF UNDERREPRESENTED CHARACTERS FROM 2018 (33.6%) TO 2023 (42%)

WOMEN OF COLOR INCREASE IN NETFLIX FILM & SERIES CONTENT

NETFLIX FILMS

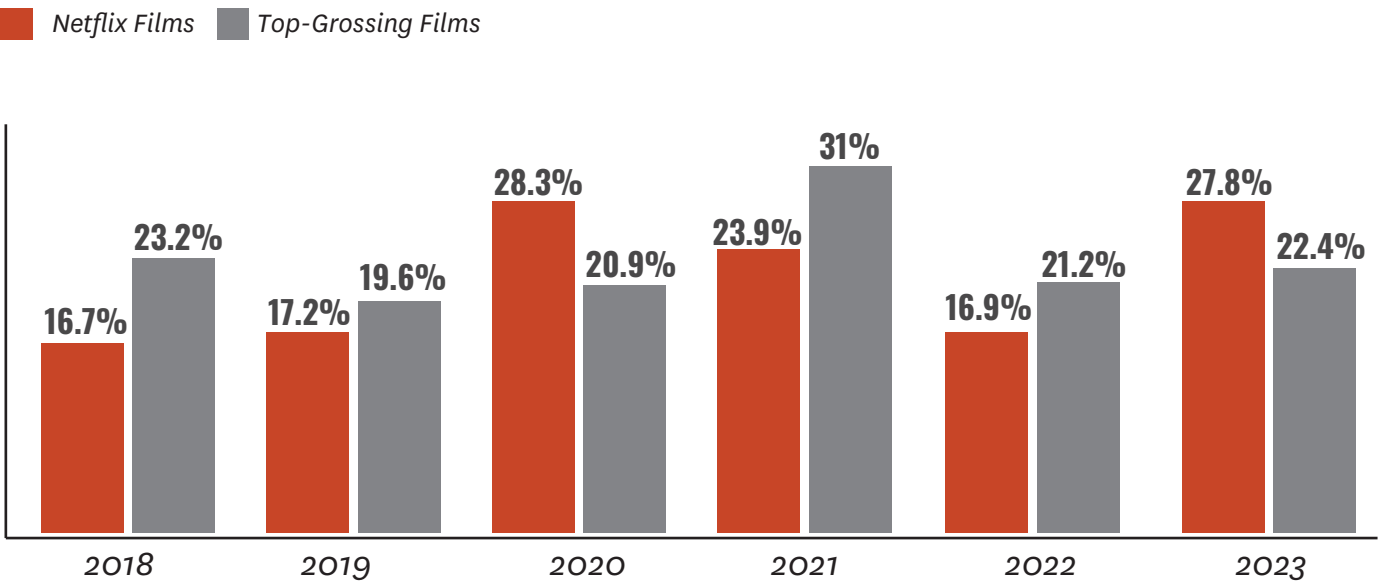
	LEADS/CO LEADS	MAIN CAST	SPEAKING CHARACTERS
2018	15.9%	11.8%	14.2%
2019	22.8%	17.1%	15.6%
2020	27.6%	17.7%	16%
2021	27.7%	17.9%	15.9%
2022	30.2%	22.8%	18.2%
2023	14.3%	20.3%	17.7%

NETFLIX SERIES

	LEADS/CO LEADS	MAIN CAST	SPEAKING CHARACTERS
2018	35.4%	13.8%	13.2%
2019	47.4%	19.1%	17.1%
2020	43.5%	18.2%	19.4%
2021	54.7%	19.6%	18.4%
2022	56.5%	21.2%	17.9%
2023	73.8%	27.4%	21.1%

## #6 INCREASES IN INCLUSION FOR UNDERREPRESENTED CREATIVES

Percentage of underrepresented directors across Netflix and top-grossing films, 2018-23

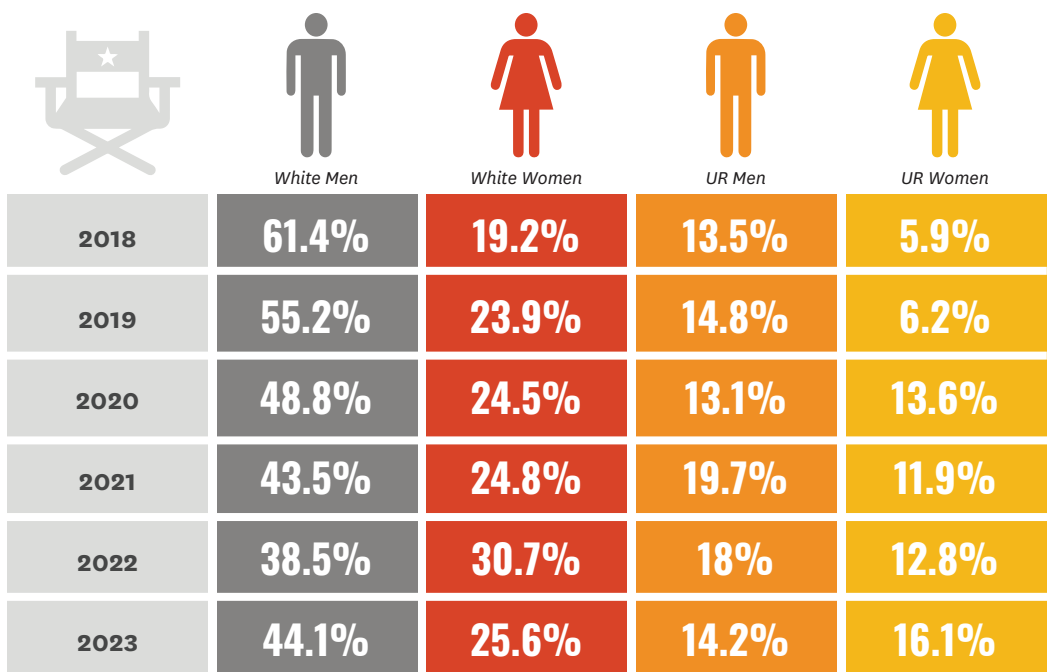


The percentage of underrepresented writers increased from 13.9% in 2018 to 24% in 2020, then declined to 19.1% in 2023. There was no change for underrepresented producers over time. 16.7% of producers in 2023 were underrepresented.

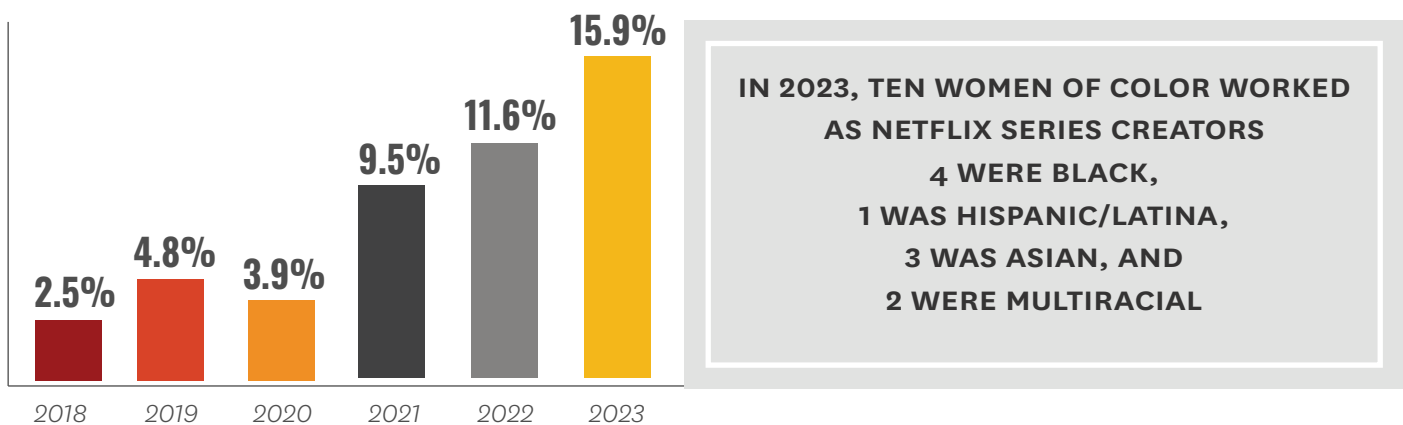
## UNDERREPRESENTED KEY CREATIVES ACROSS NETFLIX SERIES

	CREATORS	PRODUCERS	WRITERS	DIRECTORS
2018	8.4%	12.9%	14%	19.4%
2019	15.9%	17.1%	20.4%	21%
2020	13.6%	14.6%	20.1%	26.7%
2021	22.6%	19.6%	27.4%	31.6%
2022	16.8%	18.2%	25.2%	30.8%
2023	27%	19.1%	34.1%	30.1%
	vs. 22% of creators industry-wide in 2023		vs. 34% of writers industry-wide in 2023	vs. 37% of directors industry-wide in 2023

DIRECTOR RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER ACROSS NETFLIX SERIES, 2018-23

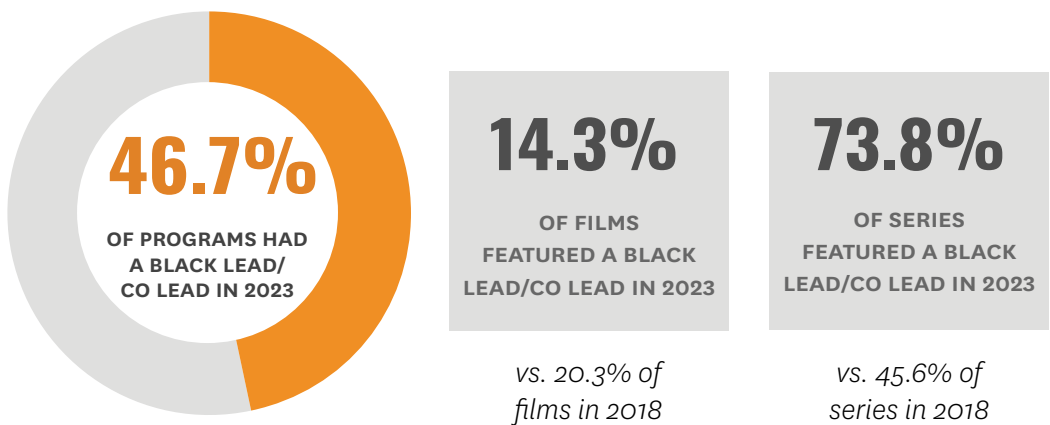


WOMEN OF COLOR AS NETFLIX SERIES CREATORS, 2018-23



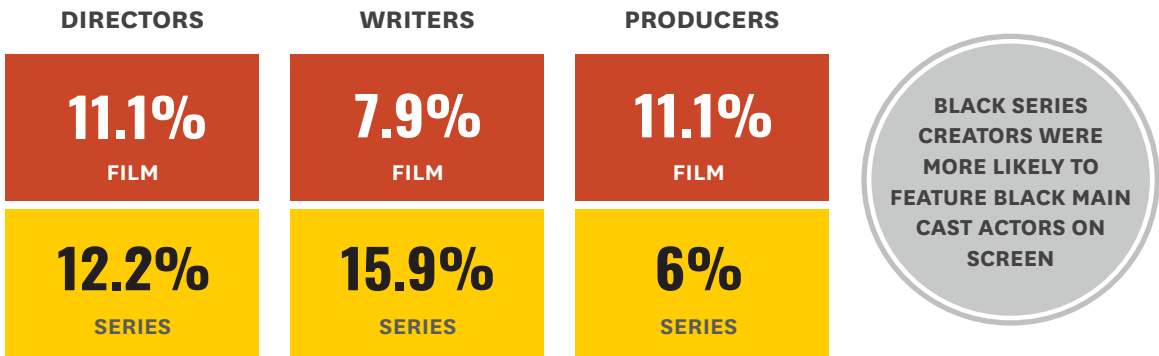
#7 RACIAL/ETHNIC REPRESENTATION OF SPECIFIC GROUPS VARIES

Percentage of Netflix film & series with a Black leads/co leads, 2023





BLACK CREATIVES BEHIND THE SCENES IN NETFLIX CONTENT IN 2023



12.7% of series creators in 2023 were Black.  
Since 2018, there has been significant increase in the percentage of Black film producers, Black series creators, Black series writers, and Black series directors.

LEADS/CO LEADS & MAIN CAST BY SPECIFIC RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP, 2018-23

	MEASURES	BLACK	ASIAN	LATINX
FILM	LEADS/CO LEADS	24.5%	9.2%	6.6% ↑
	MAIN CAST	22.6%	9.8%	5.3%
SERIES	LEADS/CO LEADS	54.4% ↑	45.6% ↑	21.3% ↑
	MAIN CAST	19.7% ↑	8.9% ↑	6%
	U.S. POPULATION	13.7%	6.4%	12%

Arrows depict significant increases on this measure since 2018.

LATINX CREATIVES BEHIND THE SCENES IN NETFLIX FILMS AND SERIES, 2023



Latinx refers to Latinos not of Spanish origin born in the U.S. or its territories

FILM	SERIES
3.5% DIRECTORS	6.3% DIRECTORS
5.1% WRITERS	8.1% WRITERS
	4.4% PRODUCERS
3% PRODUCERS	6.3% CREATORS

ASIAN LEADS/CO LEADS AND MAIN CAST IN NETFLIX CONTENT, 2023



7.6% OF MAIN CAST ACTORS IN 2023 NETFLIX FILMS WERE ASIAN



16.9% OF MAIN CAST ACTORS IN 2023 NETFLIX SERIES WERE ASIAN

THE PERCENTAGE OF ASIAN LEADS/CO LEADS & MAIN CAST INCREASED FROM 2018 TO 2023 ACROSS NETFLIX SERIES

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF ASIAN MAIN CAST IN NETFLIX FILM AND SERIES, 2018-23

THERE WERE

**18**

ASIAN COMMUNITIES REPRESENTED IN NETFLIX FILMS & SERIES

*The ethnic heritage or descent of Asian main cast was assessed and includes individuals of any nationality.*

COMMUNITY	FILM	SERIES
Indian	31.1%	25.9%
Chinese	15.7%	14.3%
Korean	10.4%	18.9%
Japanese	11%	10.1%
Filipino	9%	11.2%

## #8 NETFLIX SHOWCASES LGBTQ+ LEADS, BUT LACKS MINOR ROLES

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender characters across Netflix films & series, 2018-23

5.5% OF LEADS/CO LEADS WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX FILMS			4.9% OF MAIN CAST WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX FILMS			2.2% OF SPEAKING CHARACTERS WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX FILMS		
2018 2.9%	2019 5.3%	2020 5.2%	2018 3.8%	2019 4.9%	2020 5.3%	2018 1.9%	2019 2.1%	2020 2.1%
2021 7.7%	2022 4.8%	2023 8.6%	2021 5.1%	2022 5.3%	2023 5.2%	2021 2.4%	2022 2.4%	2023 2.4%

33.4% OF LEADS/CO LEADS WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX SERIES			7.6% OF MAIN CAST WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX SERIES			3.9% OF SPEAKING CHARACTERS WERE LGBTQ+ IN NETFLIX SERIES		
2018 19%	2019 28.9%	2020 43.5%	2018 4.6%	2019 7.4%	2020 10.3%	2018 2.5%	2019 4.1%	2020 4.8%
2021 35.9%	2022 33.9%	2023 52.4%	2021 6.7%	2022 6.2%	2023 13.4%	2021 4%	2022 4.4%	2023 4.6%

## #9 CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES ARE RARELY DEPICTED

Characters with Disabilities across Netflix content, 2023

MEASURES	FILM	SERIES	COMPARISON
LEADS/CO LEADS	8.6%	2.4%	IN 2023, 5.2% OF FILMS & SERIES HAD A LEAD/CO LEAD WITH A DISABILITY.
MAIN CAST	4.6%	4.6%	THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE OVER TIME FOR FILMS OR SERIES.
SPEAKING CHARACTERS	2.5%	2.6%	2.5% OF ALL CHARACTERS IN FILMS & SERIES HAD A DISABILITY IN 2023.

27.2% OF THE U.S. POPULATION IDENTIFIES AS HAVING A DISABILITY

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

USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

### Executive Summary

This executive summary will provide an update on inclusion in Netflix scripted films and series. To build upon our existing investigation of content from 2018-2021, we examined additional titles released in 2022 (63 fictional films, 62 series) and 2023 (35 fictional films, 42 series). A total of 748 scripted narratives (347 films, 401 series) were part of this six-year research sample. English language, Netflix original, live-action scripted programs were assessed for several inclusion metrics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the gender and race/ethnicity of behind the camera personnel was investigated as well.

Below we highlight key findings presented by identity group and storytelling format. We provide an update on the findings between 2022 and 2023 before comparing the first year of this study (2018) to the most recent report (2023). Significant differences were defined as changes of 5 percentage points or more. Where possible, we provide comparisons to the wider industry using top-grossing films or other episodic formats.

### Gender

In this section, gender (male-identified, female-identified, non-binary) was evaluated for every on screen character. We also present information on the gender of leads/co leads (e.g., the character(s) driving the action and story)<sup>2</sup> and main cast/series regulars (e.g. recurring or major characters).<sup>3</sup> The percentage of women working in specific behind-the-camera positions is also discussed.

### *Leads/Co Leads*

In 2023, 51.9% of stories across both storytelling formats featured female leads/co leads. While this is slightly below the findings in 2022 (60.8%) this is still above proportional representation of girls/women in the U.S. population (50.5%).<sup>4</sup> Separating the two media, it becomes apparent that films outpace series. The percentage of female protagonists in movies increased 10.7 percentage points from 2018 (46.4%) to 2023 (57.1%). However, 2022 (65.1%) was the year with the highest number of girls/women in a lead/co lead role in film. Pivoting to series, a similar story unfolds. The number of female leads/co leads in episodic content in 2023 (47.6%) was on par with 2018 (50.6%) but was significantly below the findings in 2022 (56.5%).

In 2023, female leads/co leads in Netflix films (57.1%) dramatically outpaced female leads/co leads in theatrically-released top-grossing movies (30%).<sup>5</sup>

### *Main Cast*

In 2023, across both scripted film and series content, 44.6% of the *main cast/series regulars* were female-identified. 2023 was the midpoint between what was observed in 2022 (49.5%) and 2018 (42.9%). Separating the two formats, the percentage of female main cast in film fell significantly from 2022 (49.1%) to 2023 (43.4%). However, 2023 films (43.4%) featured more girls/women in main

cast/series regular positions than 2018 films (38.9%). In series, the year to year decline was not significant (2022=50%, 2023=45.9%), and 2023 did not differ from 2018 (46.4%).

When compared to the wider industry, Netflix content continued to hold its own. In 2023, Netflix films had girls and women in 43.4% of their main cast roles as opposed to only 38% of major characters in top-grossing films.<sup>6</sup> Within series, girls and women comprised 45.9% of the main cast which was on par with the percentage of major female characters (48%) in broadcast and streaming series in 2022-23.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Speaking Characters***

In 2023, 41.3% of ***speaking or named characters*** in Netflix content were girls and women. This was similar to 2022 (42.8%) and 2018 (38.2%). Separating both formats, the overall percentage in 2023 was nearly identical (film=41.2%, series=41.3%). This was similar to 2022, where 42.3% of film and 43.1% of series speaking characters were female. Within film, there was a meaningful increase in female-identified speaking characters from 2018 (35.8%) to 2023 (41.2%). There was no difference observed between the first and most recent year of this study for series (2018=39.9%, 2023=41.3%). Across all six years, only 17 speaking or named characters were identified as non-binary.

In 2023, Netflix films had more female-identified speaking characters than the wider industry (Netflix=41.2% vs TG=31.7%).<sup>8</sup> Pivoting to series, the percentage of speaking characters that were girls or women did not differ significantly in 2023 (41.3%). When compared to the broader industry, across the 2022-2023 broadcast and cable season, 44% of speaking characters were girls and women.<sup>9</sup>

Of the Netflix films and series analyzed in 2023, 33.8% met or exceeded proportional representation of females in the U.S. population (50.5%).<sup>10</sup> While a significant increase from 2018 (29.5%), 2022 was the standout year where just under half (44%) of stories were at or above gender balance.

Separating the two mediums, films in 2023 (31.4%) had a significantly higher percentage of gender-balanced stories than 2018 (26.1%) but fell behind gains observed in 2022 (49.2%). Meanwhile, series has remained consistent. 2023 (35.7%) remained on par with both 2018 (32.5%) and 2022 (38.7%). In terms of ***invisibility***, across the 6 years of Netflix content evaluated, only 1 of the 748 scripted stories evaluated did not depict at least one female speaking or named character.

***To summarize the on screen observations, around a third of Netflix films and series depicted female-identified leads/co leads consistently at or just below U.S. population norms. Since 2018, the percentage of females in the main cast and speaking characters has increased significantly in film, demonstrating a commitment to match their series counterparts. In series, however, results have remained consistent across all six years.***

### ***Behind the Camera: Film***

In 2023, 25% or 9 ***directors*** in the film sample were women. This percentage was a decrease from 2022 (32.3%), and reflects the findings in 2018 (25%).<sup>11</sup> Netflix continues to consistently stay ahead of the curve and features a higher percentage of women directors than those top films released at the box office. ***In 2023, the percentage of women directors of Netflix films (25%) was significantly higher than top-grossing movies (12.1%).***<sup>12</sup>

31.3% of **screenwriters** were women in 2023, similar to both 2022 (27.2%) and 2018 (27.5%). As with directors, Netflix continues to feature more women writers than the wider industry. **Netflix films featured more female writers (31.3%) than top-grossing films (15.2%).**<sup>13</sup>

In 2023, a total of 144 **producers** were credited across 35 films and 31.3% were women. While this was significantly more than 2022 (25.8%), it remains on par with 2018 (28.6%). Put differently, there have been no differences revealed by year. **Netflix films featured more women producers (31.3%) than top-grossing movies (24.4%) in 2023.**<sup>14</sup>

Films in 2023 with at least one woman director attached had significantly more girls and women on screen as leads/co leads (81.8% vs 36.7%), main cast (49.3% vs 41.9%), and speaking characters (47.9% vs 39.5%) than films without one. When we shift attention to female screenwriters this trend continued, but occurred to a lesser extent with women producers.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Behind the Camera: Series***

In 2023, over a third of **series creators** were women (38.1%). While on par with 2022 (39.6%) both recent years demonstrate a substantial increase from 2018 (26.9%). **Netflix has continued to outpace the industry in putting women show creators behind the scenes in its 2023 series (industry=22%).**<sup>16</sup>

Shifting to **producers**, of the 475 identified positions across 2023 series, 39.6% were women. This remained consistent with 2022 (40.6%) but was a meaningful increase since 2018 (33.6%). **Overall, Netflix paralleled the industry across five of the six years evaluated, including 2023 (43%).**<sup>17</sup>

Just under half, 46.6%, of **screenwriters** were women in 2023. This was similar to 2022 (44.9%) and was a substantial increase from 2018 (30.6%). Netflix was significantly above the industry norm (30%) in terms of hiring women writers in 2023.<sup>18</sup>

The percentage of women credited as a **director** of an episode of a Netflix series in both 2023 (41.5%) and 2022 (43.3%) increased significantly from 2018 (25.1%). **Netflix continues to remain on par with overall industry patterns in employing women directors in 2023 (39%).**<sup>19</sup>

In 2023, the percentage of women featured as series regulars in scripted content did not differ by creator gender.<sup>20</sup> When a woman creator was present, 48.3% of the series regulars were female. Similarly, male creators featured women in 43.9% of series regular roles. The difference becomes more pronounced when analyzing speaking characters. Female creators ensured that 46.5% of these roles were filled by girls and women. In comparison, male show creators depicted girls and women in 37.1% of all speaking roles.

**Overall, this section highlights the value Netflix places on storytelling by women. Particularly for directors, writers, and series creators, Netflix's growth has remained steady. The presence of women behind the camera in these roles has clearly been one reason for the percentage of women in on screen roles as well.**

### **Race/Ethnicity**

Each speaking or named character was evaluated for race/ethnicity using distinctions that were consistent with the U.S. Census.<sup>21</sup> In this section we present findings on underrepresented (e.g., non-

white) characters while later sections and the full report provide additional detail on specific racial/ethnic groups.

### ***Leads/Co Leads***

More than half (53.3%) of Netflix films and series in 2023 featured underrepresented ***leads/co leads***. This overall figure is above proportional representation with the U.S. population (40.7%).<sup>22</sup> It is also significantly higher than 2022 (41.6%) and 24.9 percentage points above 2018 (28.4%). Within film, the percentage of underrepresented leads/co leads in 2023 (31.4%) was a decrease from 2022 (39.7%) and consistent with 2018 (31.9%). ***Nearly three-quarters (71.4%) of Netflix series in 2023 featured underrepresented leads. This is significantly higher than 2022 (43.5%) and more than double the percentage in 2018 (25.3%).***

In 2023, Netflix films (31.4%) featured significantly fewer leads/co leads from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group than top-grossing movies (37%).<sup>23</sup> This was the first year since 2018 that Netflix has not outpaced top-grossing movies on this metric.

### ***Main Cast***

In 2023, 46.1% of ***series regular/main cast characters*** were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This is a 6-year high for Netflix films and series, and significantly higher than 2022 (39%) and 2018 (29.4%). For film, while 2023 (41.7%) was similar to 2022 (42.4%) it was significantly higher than 2018 (32.3%). Within series, 2023 is a high point, with the percentage of underrepresented main cast/series regulars (50.8%) significantly greater than 2022 (35.5%) and 2018 (27.1%).

How does Netflix compare to the broader industry? Industry-wide, 47.2% of all series regulars across broadcast, cable, and streaming series in 2023 were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Netflix (50.8%) is consistent with this figure in its series offerings.

### ***Speaking Characters***

Across all ***speaking characters***, 42% were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group in 2023. Once again, this was a 6-year high point, and was significantly greater than 2022 (38.4%) and 2018 (33.6%). Additionally, Netflix content reflects the U.S. population (40.7%) in its depiction of underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.<sup>25</sup> For film, there was no difference in the percentage of underrepresented speaking characters over time. For series, however, 2023 (45.5%) was significantly higher than 2022 (37.9%) and 2018 (32%).

Netflix movies have closely tracked (and in some cases exceeded) the percentage of underrepresented speaking characters in top-grossing films. However, in 2023, Netflix fell significantly below top-grossing movies (37.1% vs. 44.3%) on this metric.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Netflix series has tracked with the wider entertainment industry in terms of underrepresented speaking characters, including in 2023 (45.5% vs. 41.5%).<sup>27</sup>

Overall, 46.9% of films and series from 2018 to 2023 were at or above ***proportional representation***.<sup>28</sup> 2023 (58.4%) was the high point across all 6 years, with no change from 2022 (54.4%) but a significant increase from 2018 (30.2%). In film, the 48.6% of titles at proportional representation in 2023 reflected



a significant decrease from 2022 (55.6%) but a meaningful change from 2018 (37.7%). Two-thirds of series reached proportional representation in 2023, compared to 53.2% in 2022 and 23.7% in 2018.

The *invisibility* of racial/ethnic groups was evaluated.<sup>29</sup> There were no films or series missing White characters in 2023, 3.9% were missing Black/African American characters, and 18.2% were missing Asian characters. A quarter (26%) were missing Multiracial/Multiethnic characters, one-third (33.8%) did not include a Hispanic/Latino character, and two-thirds (66.2%) were missing Middle Eastern/North African characters. The majority of films and series were missing Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (89.6%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (97.4%) characters.

***The on screen findings for race/ethnicity demonstrate that Netflix has achieved proportional representation overall across leads, main cast, and speaking characters. This level of representation is largely driven by series, which surpasses proportional representation across every metric. Additionally, across both program formats, Netflix has improved considerably since 2018 and on multiple indicators since 2022. We next turn to behind the camera analyses to understand if the personnel creating stories for Netflix resemble who is featured on screen.***

#### ***Behind the Camera: Film***

Across Netflix films in 2023, 27.8% of the 36 **directors** were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This is significantly higher than 2022 (16.9%) and 2018 (16.7%). The high point for underrepresented directors occurred in 2020 (28.3%). ***Netflix had significantly more underrepresented directors in 2023 (27.8%) compared to the 100 most popular theatrically released films (21.6%) that year.***<sup>30</sup>

In 2023, 19.1% of 63 credited **writers** were underrepresented and 80.9% were White. This represents a significant gain for Netflix from 2022 (13.2%) and 2018 (13.9%). In comparison to top-grossing films (20.3%), Netflix had a similar percentage of writers in 2023 (19.1%).<sup>31</sup>

Of Netflix film producers in 2023, 83.3% were White and 16.7% were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This percentage has not meaningfully changed from 2022 (12.7%) or 2018 (15.1%). While the difference was not significant, Netflix fell below the percentage of underrepresented producers of top-grossing movies in 2023 (20.6%).<sup>32</sup>

When a film had an underrepresented director, it was more likely to feature an underrepresented lead/co lead (58.3% vs. 20.7%), main cast (62.2% vs. 33.6%) and speaking characters (61.3% vs. 30.3%) than films with only white directors. The same trends were observed for underrepresented writers and producers.<sup>33</sup>

***The results in this section demonstrate that Netflix has increased the percentage of underrepresented directors and writers across its films. While the percentage of underrepresented producers has not meaningfully increased, it also has not decreased. Lastly, underrepresented creatives were more likely to showcase underrepresented talent on screen.***

#### ***Behind the Camera: Series***

In 2023, of the 63 series **creators** of Netflix programs, 73% were White and 27% were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Compared to 2022 (16.8%) and 2018 (8.4%), Netflix featured



significantly more underrepresented creators in 2023. The percentage of underrepresented creators of Netflix series in 2023 (27%) outpaced the rest of the entertainment industry (22%).<sup>34</sup>

Looking at **producers**, of the 470 identified in 2023, 80.9% were White and 19.1% were from an underrepresented group. There was no significant difference between 2023 and 2022 (18.2%), but there were significantly more underrepresented producers in 2023 than in 2018 (12.9%). There were no industry comparisons available for underrepresented producers in series and thus are not reported.

Turning to **writers**, of the 530 episodic series writers credited in 2023, 65.9% were White and 34.1% were underrepresented. 2023 is 8.9 percentage points higher than 2022 (25.2%) and 20.1 percentage points greater than 2018 (14%). Netflix was not different from the wider industry in 2023 when it comes to writers of episodic content (Netflix=34%; Industry=34%).<sup>35</sup>

Finally, of the 369 episodic **directors** in 2023, 69.9% were White and 30.1% were underrepresented. While the percentage of underrepresented directors remained consistent between 2022 (30.8%) and 2023 (30.1%), it significantly improved from 2018 (19.4%). Netflix content fell significantly below the broader industry in 2023 (Netflix=30%; Industry=37%).<sup>36</sup> The gains made by Netflix mirror a wider push across the industry when it comes to hiring underrepresented directors.

Series with an underrepresented creator had significantly more underrepresented main cast/series regulars (75.6% vs. 41.4%) and speaking characters (69.7% vs. 36.1%) than series without an underrepresented creator.

***This section demonstrates that across each position evaluated, Netflix has shown improvement over the past 6 years. This is critical, as having an underrepresented creator was associated with having more underrepresented characters on screen, particularly in main cast/series regular roles.***

### Gender & Race/Ethnicity: An Intersectional Analysis

#### ***Leads/Co Leads***

In 2023, nearly half of all films and series (46.7%) had girls/women of color in a **lead/co lead** role. While 2023 was not different from 2022 (43.2%), Netflix has made significant progress over time, as 2023 featured more underrepresented female leads than 2018 (26.3%).

A full 14.3% of Netflix movies featured an underrepresented female lead/co lead. This was a significant downturn from 2022 (30.2%) and similar to films from 2018 (15.9%). Netflix is also on pace with top-grossing movies. In 2023, 14% of the 100 top-grossing films had an underrepresented female protagonist.<sup>37</sup>

Netflix series, however, have increased the percentage of women of color leads/co leads over time. 2023 (73.8%) was a significant improvement over both 2022 (56.5%) and 2018 (35.4%).

#### ***Main Cast/Series Regulars***

Roughly one-third (32.9%) of all **series regular/main cast** members were white males, followed by 23.7% who were underrepresented females, 22.4% who were underrepresented males, and 20.9% who were white females. The percentage of underrepresented female main cast in film has changed

significantly over time. In 2023, 20.3% of main cast members were girls/women of color, compared to 11.8% in 2018. There was no difference between 2022 (22.8%) and 2023, however. The percentage of underrepresented female main cast in series has also increased significantly over 6 years. In 2023, 27.4% of series regulars were girls/women of color compared to 2022 (21.2%) or 2018 (13.8%).

### ***Speaking Characters***

The percentage of underrepresented female ***speaking characters*** has increased from 2018 (13.6%) to 2023 (19.7%), while 2022 (18%) did not differ from 2023. Looking at film, there was no significant change in the percentage of girls/women of color as speaking characters since 2018 (2023=17.7%; 2022=18.2%; 2018=14.2%). Netflix (17.7%) is consistent with top-grossing films (15.9%) when it comes to the percentage of underrepresented female speaking characters on screen in 2023.<sup>38</sup>

The percentage of underrepresented female speaking characters has increased significantly from 2018 (13.2%) to 2023 (21.1%) in Netflix series, with 2022 holding a midpoint (17.9%). Netflix did not significantly outperform the wider industry (18.5%) in 2023 for its depiction of underrepresented female speaking characters in series.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of ***invisibility***, there were no films or series missing White girls/women in 2023. Black girls/women were not depicted in 16.9% of films and series and Asian females were missing in 27.3% of stories. More than half of films and series (58.4%) did not show a Hispanic/Latina and 87% were missing Middle Eastern/North African girls/women. There were no films or series that showed an American Indian/Alaska Native girl/woman and 96.1% erased Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander females. One-third (33.8%) of stories were missing Multiracial/Multiethnic girls/women.

***This section demonstrates that there have been gains for underrepresented female leads/co leads, main cast, and speaking characters over time. Progress has primarily occurred in Netflix series. Additionally, there are still a significant number of programs that erase women of color from specific racial/ethnic groups.***

### ***Behind the Camera: Film***

Of the film ***directors*** identified in 2023, 5.7% were underrepresented women. There has been no meaningful change over time in the percentage of women of color directors of Netflix films (2022=9.2%; 2018=5.6%). Over the 6 years evaluated, Netflix outpaced top-grossing movies, though the difference was non-significant in 2023 (5.7% vs. 3.5%).<sup>40</sup>

Of the 63 Netflix film ***writers*** in 2023, 4.8% were underrepresented women. Netflix films in 2023 did not significantly differ from 2022 (3.5%) or 2018 (3%).

Out of 144 Netflix film ***producers*** in 2023, 6.3% were underrepresented women. In comparison to 2022 (4.3%) and 2018 (6.7%), there has been no change in the percentage of underrepresented women producers over time.

***The findings in this section show that behind the camera, little has changed for women of color working in film. Though Netflix is keeping pace with the wider industry, there is undisputedly room to grow in this area.***

### ***Behind the Scenes: Series***

Beginning with series **creators**, in 2023, 15.9% were underrepresented women. While the percentage of women of color creators has not changed from 2022 (11.6%), it is significantly higher than 2018 (2.5%).

Of the 470 series **producers** in 2023, 8.3% were underrepresented women. Over time, this figure increased significantly from 2018 (5.2%) to 2022 (10.2%), but ultimately 2023 (8.3%) was not different from either of those years.

There were 529 **writers** of Netflix series in 2023, and underrepresented women held 21.7% of writing roles. For women of color, 2023 was significantly greater than 2022 (16.4%) and 2018 (8.1%). Netflix had a similar percentage of underrepresented women writers as the broader industry in 2023 (21.7% vs. 18%).<sup>41</sup>

Of the 367 **directors** of episodic content in 2023, 16.1% were underrepresented women. For women of color directors, 2023 was not significantly different from 2022 (12.8%) but was 10.2 percentage points higher than 2018 (5.9%). In 2023, Netflix and the wider industry did not significantly differ in the percentage of underrepresented women directors of episodic content (16.1% vs. 14%).<sup>42</sup>

***This section demonstrates that the percentage of women of color working behind the camera in Netflix series has increased over the past 6 years. Netflix has largely kept pace with the wider industry when it comes to employment of women of color. While there remains room to improve, this section suggests that for Netflix series, the gaps that still exist can be expected to narrow over time.***

### **Specific Racial/Ethnic Groups**

The previous sections focused on the prevalence of characters from all underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This portion of the analysis will highlight specific racial/ethnic groups and explore cast and crew from each community. This approach allows us to draw comparisons to the U.S. population as a whole while also identifying areas of employment where representation is lacking. The following analysis includes leads/co leads and main cast actors (rather than on screen characters). Multiracial/Multiethnic individuals were included in all groups with which they identify, yielding an analysis of individuals who are 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). We also examine key crew positions across film and series.

***Black Cast & Crew.*** A film or series had a **Black lead/co lead** when it featured a Black protagonist/co protagonist or 13% (or above) of series regular roles were filled by Black actors.<sup>43</sup> In 2023, 46.7% of stories featured a Black lead/co lead. This is consistent with 2022 (44%) but a significant increase from 2018 (33.8%). Progress in film and series was not equivalent. In film, 2023 (14.3%) was a significant decline from both 2022 (28.6%) and 2018 (20.3%). ***Series, however, capped a six-year increase as 73.8% of series had Black leads, compared to 59.7% in 2022 and 45.6% in 2018.***

We also examined the percentage of Black **main cast/series regulars** across films and series. In 2023, 23.1% of all main cast/series regulars across film and series were Black. This is higher than the percentage of Black/African American people in the U.S. population.<sup>44</sup> There was no difference between the percentage of main cast/series regulars in film or series. For film, there was no significant change from 2022 (24.9%) to 2023 (21.2%), and no significant improvement from 2018 (17.9%). In series, the

24.9% of series regular/main cast members who were Black was a significant increase from both 2022 (18.9%) and 2018 (15.1%).

Behind the camera, we assessed the number and percentage of Black **directors**, **writers**, and **producers** in film. In 2023, 11.1% of directors, 7.9% of writers, and 11.1% of producers were Black. The only significant change over time occurred for producers. 2023 (11.1%) featured significantly more Black producers than 2022 (6.1%) or 2018 (5.2%).

Films with a Black director were significantly more likely to feature Black leads/co leads than non-Black directors. The same was true for main cast. When a Black director was at the helm, 65% of main cast actors were Black, versus 13% when a non-Black director was behind the camera.

Looking to series, 12.7% of **creators**, 6% of **producers**, 15.9% of **writers**, and 12.2% of **directors** were Black in 2023. There were three areas where there has been significant over time change: creators, writers, and directors. For creators, 2023 (12.7%) reflects both a one-year increase (2022=6.3%) and a 10.2 percentage point gain from 2018 (2.5%). 2023 featured the highest percentage of Black writers (15.9%). Finally, among directors, the increase from 2018 (7.1%) to 2023 (12.2%) was significant.

As with film, we examined whether the presence of a Black creator influenced on screen representation for main cast actors. Series with a Black creator featured Black main cast/series regular actors in 53.2% of all roles. For series that did not have a Black creator, 20.3% of main cast were Black.

***The results in this section point to the inclusion of Black stories in Netflix content. Across leads and main cast, Netflix has exceeded proportional representation for both films and series. Behind the camera, there is still room to grow the participation of Black content creators.***

**Asian Cast & Crew.** Asian actors in a **lead/co lead** role were evaluated across films and series. For film, this was if the story had at least one Asian protagonist central to the plot. For series, at least 6% or more of the series regulars had to be identified as Asian. This threshold reflects the percentage of Asians in the U.S. population.<sup>45</sup> Across both films and series in 2023, 36.4% of leads/co leads were Asian. While there was no difference between 2023 and 2022 (34.4%), there was a significant increase from 2018 (22.3%) to 2023. Few of 2023 films (2.9%) were led by an Asian identified actor, which is a decline from 2022 (14.3%) but consistent with 2018 (5.8%). Pivoting to series, the percentage of Asian leads/co leads was at an all-time high in 2023 (64.3%). 2023 had significantly more Asian leads/co leads than 2022 (54.8%) and 2018 (36.7%).

Shifting focus to **main cast** trends, in 2023 12.2% of main cast actors across all stories were Asian. While similar to 2022 (10.6%), this did increase significantly from 2018 (6.7%). An interesting story emerged by format. The percentage of Asian main cast remained consistent across all 6 years of film data. However, 2023 series was a highlight for the community as 16.9% of the main cast actors were Asian, a significant increase in visibility from 2022 (9.5%) and 2018 (6.1%). Across both film and series, Netflix has continued to consistently reach proportional representation with the U.S. population (6.4%) for Asian main cast actors.<sup>46</sup>

Behind the camera in film, 8.3% of **directors**, 3.2% of **writers**, and 1.4% of **producers** were Asian in 2023. There were significantly more Asian directors in 2023 than 2022 (1.5%) and a similar percentage when looking at 2018 (4.2%). Writers and producers did not differ significantly across the 6 years.

Shifting focus to series, 7.9% of **creators**, 8.3% of **producers**, 12.3% of **writers** and 7.9% of **directors** were Asian in 2023. While the number of Asian creators in 2023 was on par with 2022 (5.3%), there was a significant increase when compared to 2018 (1.7%). For producers, there was a significant increase from 2018 (2.9%) to 2023 (8.3%). Writers also increased from 2018 (4%) to 2023 (12.3%). For both positions there was no change from 2022 (producers=4.9%, writers=9%) to 2023. There was no significant increase over time for Asian series directors.

**Latinx Cast & Crew.** This section details insights regarding Latinx cast and crew. As in previous reports, we first evaluated Hispanic/Latinos from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. We then focused specifically on Latinos born in the U.S. or its territories who were not of Spanish origin or who had no other Latino identity. Our population reference for this group is 12%, which was used to determine whether a series had Latinx lead/co lead actors.<sup>47</sup>

Across films and series in 2023, 14.3% featured **lead/co leads** who were Latinx. This figure is not different from the 11.2% of leads/co leads who were Latinx in 2022, but is significantly greater than 2018 (6.8%). In film, 2023 (8.6%) had significantly more Latinx leads/co leads than 2018 (1.5%) but not 2022 (6.3%). Series showed an overall gain, however, from 11.4% in 2018 to 19.1% in 2023, while 16.1% of series had Latinx leads/co leads in 2022 (16.1%).

Examining **main cast**, 6.1% of roles went to Latinx actors in 2023. Over time, there has been no significant change in Latinx main cast/series regular roles overall. There were also no differences between films (7.9%) and series (4.4%) in 2023, nor did either format change from 2018 (film=3.3%; series=3.7%).

Behind the camera, 3.5% of film **directors**, 5.1% of **writers**, and 3% of **producers** in film were Latinx in 2023. There has been no significant change over time for directors (2023=3.5%; 2018=1.4%) or producers (2023=3%; 2018=1.2%), but 2023 (5.1%) does represent a gain from 2018 when there were zero Latinx film writers.

In 2023, 6.3% of series **creators**, 4.4% of **producers**, 8.1% of **writers**, and 6.3% of **directors** were Latinx. Over time, the only significant change for Latinx personnel was for writers. 2023 (8.1%) featured significantly more Latinx writers than 2022 (2.7%) or 2018 (2.6%).

**Middle Eastern/North African Cast and Crew.** To determine Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) leads/co leads, we examined the protagonist of each film and whether 1% (or more) of series regulars/main cast were MENA in series.<sup>48</sup> In 2023, 11.7% of films and series featured a MENA lead. There was a significant difference between films (2.9%) and series (19.1%), however. Over time, there has been no change for film, but a significant increase for series from 2018 (5.1%) to 2023 (19.1%) for MENA leads/co leads.

Turning to **main cast/series regulars**, in 2023, 2.3% of all series regulars/main cast members were MENA. There has been no over time change since 2018 and there was no difference between films and series in the percentage of MENA main cast.

Behind the camera, there were few MENA individuals who worked on Netflix films in 2023: 2.8% of **directors**, 3.2% of **writers**, and <1% of **producers** were MENA. In Netflix series, 1.6% of **creators**, <1% of **producers**, <1% of **writers**, and <1% of **directors** were MENA. There has been no change over time for MENA personnel behind the scenes in film or series.

**American Indian/Alaska Native Cast & Crew.** The percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) **leads/co leads** was examined. This involved assessing whether films had an AIAN protagonist and any series featured AIAN main cast/series regulars in 1% or more of roles.<sup>49</sup> In 2023, 6.5% of all lead/co leads were AIAN. All of these leads appeared in series. There has been a significant increase from 2018 (6.3%) and 2022 (1.6%) to 2023 (11.9%) for AIAN leads/co leads in series. However, there was no corresponding increase for film.

Looking to **main cast**, in 2023 <1% main cast roles went to AIAN actors. All of these roles occurred in Netflix series. There has been no change over time in the percentage of AIAN main cast in Netflix films and series.

Behind the camera, there were no AIAN **directors, writers, or producers** in Netflix films in 2023. In series, <1% of **producers**, <1% of **writers**, and <1% of **directors** were AIAN in 2023. No **creators** were part of this community in 2023. There has been no change over time behind the camera for AIAN personnel.

**Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Cast & Crew.** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI) leads/co leads included films with an NHPI protagonist or series in which 1% or more of the main cast/series regular roles were held by an NHPI actor.<sup>50</sup> In 2023, 3.9% of **leads/co leads** were NHPI. Series (7.1%) featured all of the leads/co leads while film featured none. There has been no change over time for NHPI leads/co leads across either format.

Turning to **main cast**, 1% of all roles were held by NHPI actors in 2023. This did not differ by film (1.2%) or series (<1%). There have been no meaningful changes over time for NHPI main cast since 2018.

Behind the camera, Netflix films did not have any NHPI **directors, writers, or producers** in 2023. In Netflix series, less than 1% of **producers**, 1.3% of **writers**, and <1% of **directors** were NHPI. No **creators** in 2023 were from this community. There has been no change over time for NHPI behind-the-camera personnel in film or series.

***The results in this section demonstrate that Netflix has improved in its portrayal of Black and Asian characters, and in certain roles behind the camera for these groups. For Latinx, MENA, AIAN, and NHPI communities, there has been little change over time on screen or behind the camera. Thus, while the overall increase in underrepresented communities in Netflix films and series is important, there is room to grow for these specific groups.***

## LGBTQ+

This section will examine the prevalence of LGBTQ+ identified characters lead/co leads, main cast/series regulars, and overall speaking characters. When it comes to leads/co leads, we were interested in the percentage of shows that depicted an LGBTQ+ character driving the plot. For film, the title was coded as having a LGBTQ+ lead/co lead if the protagonist was part of this community. For series, we stipulated that 10% or more of the main cast/series regulars characters had to be identified as LGBTQ+ to qualify. This criteria was used to reflect population norms of LGBTQ+ individuals living in the U.S.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Leads/Co Leads***



In 2023, just under a third (32.5%) of all Netflix films and series **leads/co leads** were LGBTQ+ characters.<sup>49</sup> This was a significant increase from both 2022 (19.2%) and 2018 (11.5%). ***Put differently, 2023 had the highest representation of LGBTQ+ protagonists across the 6-year sample.***

Within film, LGBTQ+ character representation in lead/co leading roles in 2023 was at 8.6%. While not meaningfully different from 2022 (4.8%), this is more than double the percentage from 2018 (2.9%). Across the 3 LGBTQ+-led films in 2023, 2 leads/co leads were men and 1 was a woman. Of those individuals, there was only 1 man of color. All 3 were identified as middle aged and only 1 was depicted as a parent. The number of film titles throughout the years with an LGBTQ+ lead/co lead has never exceeded more than 5 films. In comparison to the wider entertainment industry, Netflix remained in line with theatrically-released top-grossing films in terms of LGBTQ+ characters in a leading role.<sup>52</sup>

Series has remained well ahead of its film counterpart across all six years. 2023 was a standout year as over **half** (52.4%) of all episodic programs featured LGBTQ+ characters as 10% or more of series regulars. While not only a significant increase from 2022 (33.9%), this metric more than doubled since 2018 (19%). In 2023, of the 22 shows examined, there were 43 unique LGBTQ+ characters identified as part of the series regular/main cast. A little over half (53.5%) of the characters were male and 46.5% were female. More than 60% of the LGBTQ+ series regulars were people of color.

### ***Main Cast/Series Regulars***

In 2023, across both film and series 9.2% of titles featured an LGBTQ+ character in the **main cast/series regulars**. While not different from 2022 (5.7%), this is the first time in the 6 years of this study that there was a meaningful increase from 2018 (4.3%). When we separate the 2 storytelling formats, it becomes apparent which program format is primarily driving this change.

The percentage of LGBTQ+ main cast/series regulars in film remained consistent across the past 6 years; 2023 (5.2%) and 2022 (5.3%) did not differ meaningfully from 2018 (3.8%). Within film, over half of the LGBTQ+ main cast/series regulars were male (55.6%) and (44.4%) were female. A majority (61.1%) of the LGBTQ+ characters in film were White while 19.3% were Black, 9.2% were Hispanic/Latino, 6.1% were Asian, 5.5% were Multiracial/Multiethnic, and less than 1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern/North African. There were no American Indian/Alaska Native LGBTQ+ series regulars in 2023. Over half (55.6%) of the characters were depicted as adults and 44.4% were middle-aged. Of the LGBTQ+ characters who could be assessed for parental status, half were shown as a parent.

While historically there has been no difference in the number of LGBTQ+ cast between film and series, 2023 marks a highlight for episodic content. In 2023 series, 13.4% of main cast/series regulars were LGBTQ+. Not only does this finding double what was found in 2022 (6.2%), but it was a meaningful increase from 2018 (4.6%). As a point of comparison, according to GLAAD, 10.6% of primetime broadcast series regulars in the 2022/23 season were LGBTQ+.<sup>53</sup> Over half of main cast/series regulars identified were male (52.3%) and 47.7% were female. Less than one-third (29.5%) of all LGBTQ+ main cast/series regulars were White, with 22.7% Black, 27.3% Multiracial/Multiethnic, 11.4% Asian, 6.8% Hispanic/Latino, and 2.3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. There were no Middle Eastern/North African or American Indian/Alaska Native LGBTQ+ series regulars/main cast in 2023. More than half (45.5%) of LGBTQ+ characters were teens followed by adults (43.2%), and then middle-aged cast (9.1%). Only one (2.3%) LGBTQ+ series regular/main cast was elderly. A full 4.8% of the LGBTQ+ series regulars/main cast were depicted as caregivers or parents.

### ***All Speaking Characters***

Across all identified ***speaking or named characters*** in 2023 Netflix scripted content, 3.7% were LGBTQ+ with no differences observed between film (2.4%) and series (4.6%). Overall, the percentage of all characters identified in Netflix scripted content as LGBTQ+ remains in line with both 2022 (3.5%) and 2018 (2.2%). Put differently, there was no meaningful difference in the percentage of LGBTQ+ speaking characters across the six year sample. In 2023, 47% of LGBTQ+ characters were gay, 33% were lesbian, 15.7% were bisexual, 2.6% were another sexuality, and 1.7% were transgender.<sup>54</sup> Since there were no differences observed between format, we present the demographic profiles together.

The majority of all identified LGBTQ+ speaking or named characters were male (56.5%). Over forty percent were female (42.6%) and <1% were gender non-binary. Most (40.3%) LGBTQ+ characters were White, 27.2% were Black, 13.2% were Multiracial/Multiethnic, 11.4% were Asian, 7% were Hispanic/Latino, and less than 1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Focusing on age, a majority of the LGBTQ+ speaking characters were portrayed as adults (54.8%) or teenagers (25.2%). Only 27% were depicted as parents or caregivers.

Pivoting to ***invisibility***, in 2023 44.2% of all fictional stories were missing the LGBTQ+ community on screen. This was significantly lower than both 2022 (52.8%) and 2018 (61.1%). For the first time in 6 years, less than half of stories erased the LGBTQ+ community on screen. In film, 60% did not have a single LGBTQ+ character. While similar to the findings in 2022 (63.5%) this was still an improvement from 2018 (66.7%). Less than a third of series (30.9%) were missing LGBTQ+ characters. This was a meaningful decrease from both 2022 (41.9%) and 2018 (56.3%).

***Netflix content has continued to show gains when it comes to LGBTQ+ representation over the past 6 years. This is evident in the fluctuation of leads/co leads and series regulars/main cast. The number of stories without an LGBTQ+ character has continued to decline.***

### **CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES**

This section will examine how characters with disabilities were depicted in Netflix scripted films and series. In our conceptualization of the definition, we referenced the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).<sup>55</sup> When a character met the definition, the nature of the disability was categorized into U.S. Census designations as communicative, cognitive, and/or physical.<sup>56</sup> Below we highlight the prevalence of disabilities among leads/co leads, main cast/series regulars, and all speaking or named characters.

#### ***Leads/Co Leads***

In 2023, 5.2% of all stories featured a ***lead/co lead*** with a disability. Lead/co lead designations were made when the protagonist(s) in a film or 27% or more of series regulars within episodic content had a disability.<sup>57</sup> The percentage of leads/co leads across all scripted content in 2023 was nearly equivalent to that in 2022 (5.6%) and did not differ significantly from 2018 (4.1%). Between formats, a familiar story unfolded. Films featuring a lead/co lead with a disability in 2023 (8.6%) did not differ meaningfully from 2022 (9.5%) and were nearly identical to 2018 (8.7%). In contrast, 2.4% of episodic stories in 2023 had a lead/co lead with a disability, similar to 2022 (1.6%) and 2018 (0). Across the sample there has been no change in the percentage of protagonists with a disability.



Compared to the wider industry, Netflix films kept pace with top-grossing movies (8%) in 2023 in terms of leads/co leads with a disability.<sup>58</sup>

### **Main Cast/Series Regulars**

A total of 4.6% of **main cast/series regulars** in all 2023 content were depicted with a disability, with no difference between 2023 and 2022 (3.7%) or 2018 (4.4%). There was no difference in the percentage of main cast characters with disabilities by format: film 4.6%; series 4.6%. In fact, across the 6 years evaluated, there was no variation in the percentage of main cast/series regulars with a disability. Despite this, Netflix is not different than the broader industry on this measure. While we do not have a point of comparison for top grossing films, across traditional broadcast and cable shows in 2023, 4.4% of main cast/series regulars were shown with a disability.<sup>59</sup>

### **All Speaking Characters**

In 2023, 2.5% of all **speaking characters** across film and series were shown with a disability. 2023 did not differ from 2022 (1.5%) or 2018 (1.9%). When we separate films (2.5%) and series (2.6%), both platforms featured a similar percentage of characters with disabilities in 2023, with no change over time.

Characters with disabilities were **invisible** in less than half (42.9%) of films and series in 2023, which is a meaningful decrease from both 2022 (62.4%) and 2018 (55.7%). This is the first time that more than half of Netflix scripted content had at least one speaking or named character with a disability. By format, 42.9% of films were without a character with a disability, significantly less than both 2022 (61.9%) and 2018 (66.7%). Within series, 42.9% of stories did not have a character with a disability which is a decrease from 2022 (62.9%) but not meaningfully different from 2018 (46.3%).

Overwhelmingly in 2023, characters were most likely to experience a physical disability (75%) compared to all other domains. The percentage of characters with a physical disability was similar across both storytelling formats (film=72.7%; series=76.6%). Examples of characters with physical disabilities included those who faced mobility restrictions, were missing limbs, or had a condition that limited activity. Communicative disabilities were experienced by a quarter of all characters with disabilities (25%) and occurred almost equally in film (24.2%) and series (25.5%). Examples of communicative disabilities include conditions impacting vision, hearing, and/or speech. Finally, 13.7% of characters with disabilities had a cognitive condition. Across both formats, the number of characters with a cognitive disability were similar (film=15.1%; series=12.8%). Examples of cognitive disabilities include dyslexia, PTSD, and Alzheimer's disease.

***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 6 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.***

### **Conclusion**

This report covers 6 years of Netflix film and series content. From this evaluation, it is clear that Netflix has continued to program entertainment that reflects its audience— particularly women and people of color. There have been notable gains across metrics on screen and behind the camera, and Netflix leads its industry peers in several areas. This does not mean that there are no areas for improvement; for specific racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern/North African characters) and for LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities there is room to grow. However, the trajectory demonstrated in this analysis suggests that progress is possible.

A few limitations to this analysis must be noted. First, the evaluation included only scripted U.S. original films and series. Other program formats or genres (e.g., animation, unscripted, international) might provide different data or insights on the metrics presented here. Second, throughout the report there are a few industry benchmarks offered as a comparison to Netflix content. In some cases, these statistics are derived from studies whose methodology may diverge from what was used in this evaluation. As a result, they are provided as an estimation of industry performance. Finally, some data analytic or methodological practices have been adjusted from prior iterations of this report. Where necessary, the figures from previous years have been updated to reflect these changes with information provided in the endnotes to explain differences.

This ongoing evaluation allows for a clear window into what has changed and what has remained consistent in Netflix content over time. This is critical, as it allows for variations in representation and hiring practices to be noted, and it showcases when progress is consistent. In the future, this analysis will be complemented by other insights into why the choices made at Netflix are important for the career sustainability of creative personnel and how audiences are impacted by the stories told. Overall, the consistent assessment of content allows for transparency and accountability to both the industry and audiences.

## Footnotes

1. As part of a longitudinal study established in 2018, the methodology for this report mirrors that used by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative to conduct content analysis on Netflix original scripted film and series. As with previous studies, the samples (2022, 2023) were determined by Netflix calendar-year releases of scripted, fictional, live-action content. While this included both scripted films, series, and tv specials, animation and unscripted content was not part of this evaluation. Further information regarding the evaluation process and including unitizing and variables reliability data can be obtained from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.
2. As is consistent with our annual top-grossing lead/co lead report, ensemble movies were excluded. Put differently, ensemble films (with three or more leading characters) were automatically coded as "0" or not featuring a female lead or co lead. The purpose of this approach is to draw comparisons found within Netflix content to domestic top-grossing box office films. Across the 6 year sample, only 14 films were defined as ensembles (2=2018, 4=2019, 1=2020, 2=2021, 4=2022, 1=2023). Of these, 7 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), 2022 (60.3%, n=38), 2023 (60%, n=21).

Throughout this report, we use U.S. centric population metrics to set a threshold for series leads/co leads. The table below indicates each threshold that was set per group. Across the sample, a series had a lead from each group if the percentage of series regulars/main casts reached or exceeded the defined threshold. For example, if 40% of the series regulars were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group, that series was considered to have an underrepresented lead/co lead.

Threshold per Group		
Group	Population	Leads Threshold
Girls/Women	50.5%	50%
Underrepresented	40.7%	40%
Girls/Women of Color	20%	20%
Black/African American	13.6%	13%
Asian	6.1%	6%
Latinx	12%	12%
Middle Eastern/North African	1.1%	1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3%	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1%	1%
LGBTQ+	10%	10%
Characters with Disabilities	27.2%	27%

3. Series regulars were determined using external databases in IMDbPro and Variety Insight/Luminate. Series regulars refer to recurring characters who appear throughout the story. When information was not available via

these sites, the Netflix platform was used to identify main cast/series regulars based on the actors listed for each film/series examined.

4. U.S. Census Bureau (2023). Quick Facts. Retrieved April 11, 2024 from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/SEX255219#SEX255219>.
5. Neff, K., Smith, S.L., & Pieper, K. (2024, February). Inequality across 1,700 popular films: Examining gender and race/ethnicity of leads/co leads from 2007 to 2024. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Los Angeles, CA.
6. Lauzen, M.M., (2024). It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in Top Grossing U.S. Films of 2023. San Diego State University, CA. <https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-Its-a-Mans-Celluloid-World-Report.pdf>.
7. Lauzen, M.M., (2024). Boxed In: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes on Broadcast and Streaming Television in 2023-24. San Diego State University, CA. <https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2023-24-Boxed-In-Report.pdf>.
8. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Wheeler, S. (2024, August). Inequality in 1,700 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & Disability from 2007 to 2023. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Los Angeles, CA. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-popular-films-2024-08-02.pdf>.
9. Lauzen (2024).
10. U.S. Census (2023).
11. In 2023, there was only one film director who was identified as non-binary.
12. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
13. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
14. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
15. 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 (77.8% vs. 26.1%), main cast (49.7% vs. 39%), and speaking characters (45.3% vs. 38.2%). When at least one female producer was present we continued to see more on screen female representation. This was true for leads/co leads (56% vs. 35.7%) and main cast (45.9% vs. 38.8%). The percentage of speaking characters who were girls and women did not differ by producer gender, however.
16. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
17. Lauzen (2024).
18. Lauzen (2024).
19. Data on directors from 2018 to 2021 is taken from Directors Guild of America reports. See <https://www.dga.org/The-Guild/Diversity/Industry-Reports.aspx>. Data on directors from 2022 and 2023 is compiled from unpublished data from the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.
20. 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.
21. To ascertain character race/ethnicity, information presented in the story was used. These insights included explicit cues and implicitly presented information.

22. U.S. Census Quickfacts. Data on leads/co leads is in line with our previous report released in 2023. If films with ensemble casts featuring underrepresented performers in 40% or more of lead roles were included, the new totals would be: 2018=31.9%, 2019=42.1%, 2020=46.5%, 2021=50.8%, 2022=44.4%, 2023=31.4%.
23. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
24. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
25. US Census Quickfacts.
26. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
27. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative Data.
28. Similar to gender balance, proportional representation was calculated as the percentage of underrepresented characters identified across all speaking characters in each individual program. We examined whether each program featured underrepresented characters within +/- 10 percentage points of the U.S. population. Because the study began in 2018, we used population values at that time (39.9%) to calculate the range for proportional representation. Films and series that were 5 percentage points below (35.9%) or exceeded the U.S. Census metric of 39.9% were deemed to be at or above proportional representation. Though the current population benchmark is 40.7%, using the value from 2018 ensures that programs from the earlier years of the sample are evaluated consistently with population figures at the time of their release.
29. We examined whether any speaking or named characters from specific racial/ethnic groups appeared on screen in each film or series evaluated.
30. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
31. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
32. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
33. Films with an underrepresented writer were more likely to feature underrepresented leads/co-leads (64.3% vs. 14.8%), main cast members (59.4% vs. 33.9%), and speaking characters (58.6% vs. 30.3%). Netflix films with an underrepresented producer attached followed this pattern as well (leads/co-leads, 61.5% vs. 15.4%; main cast, 56.7% vs. 34.7%; speaking characters, 54.9% vs. 30.4%).
34. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
35. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
36. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
37. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
38. Smith, Pieper & Wheeler (2024).
39. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
40. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
41. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
42. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative data.
43. U.S. Census (2023).

44. U.S. Census (2023).
45. U.S. Census (2023).
46. U.S. Census (2023).
47. 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/>.
48. Arab American Institute Foundation (2018). Arab American Demographics Factsheet. Retrieved January 20th, 2020 from: <https://censuscounts.org/whats-at-stake/arab-american-demographics-factsheet/>.
49. U.S. Census (2023).
50. U.S. Census (2023).
51. We relied on several different resources to determine population estimates of the LGBTQ+ community in the United States. According to a Gallup poll, 7.6% of U.S. adults identify as LGBTQ+ while a GLAAD report puts the percentage at 12%. The midpoint of 10% was chosen so as not to over or undercount the percentage of the population that identifies as LGBTQ+. Sources: Alfonseca, K. (2024). Who makes up the LGBTQ+ community? A look at the growing population. ABC News. Retrieved from: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/makes-lgbtq-community-growing-population/story?id=110435387#:~:text=These%20are%20just%20some%20of%20the%20at,as%20recorded%20by%20a%20recent%20Gallup%20survey>. GLAAD (2017). Accelerating Acceptance. <https://assets.glaad.org/m/1dbaf27e1f7baa32/original/2017-GLAAD-Accelerating-Acceptance.pdf>.
52. If films with ensemble casts in which 10% or more of the ensemble characters were LGBTQ+ were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In film, the new totals for leads/co leads would be as follows: 2023=8.6%, n=3, 2022=6.3%, n=4, 2021=7.7%, n=5; 2020=5.2%, n=3; 2019=8.8%, n=5; 2018=4.3%, n=3.
53. GLAAD (2023). Where We Are on TV. Retrieved November 8, 2023 from <https://assets.glaad.org/m/114d72edf8a779a6/original/GLAAD-2022-23-Where-We-Are-on-TV.pdf>.
54. In the past, our studies have specifically focused on the portrayals of lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships. In 2023, we expanded our definition to encompass characters who were depicted with another sexuality (e.g., asexual, pansexual, queer, demisexual, etc.). In 2022 there was one character in the show *The Imperfects* identified as another sexuality. In 2023 there were three characters, one in the show *Fatal Seduction* and two in *The Fall of The House of Usher*.
55. Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). <https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/>. 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](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' longer than six months.
56. 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>.
57. If films with ensemble casts in which 27% or more of the ensemble characters were shown with a disability were included in the analysis, the findings would change slightly. In film, the new totals for leads/co leads

would be as follows: 2023=8.6%, n=3; 2022=9.5%, n=6; 2021=7.7%, n=5; 2020=6.9%, n=4; 2019=17.5%, n=10; 2018=8.7%, n=6.

58. Smith, Pieper, & Wheeler (2024).

59. Unpublished Annenberg Inclusion Initiative Data.