

The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2016

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

Copyright © 2017 – All rights reserved.

The Celluloid Ceiling has tracked women's employment on top grossing films for the last 19 years. It is the longest-running and most comprehensive study of women's behind-the-scenes employment in film available. This annual study is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, <http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu>, lauzen@mail.sdsu.edu

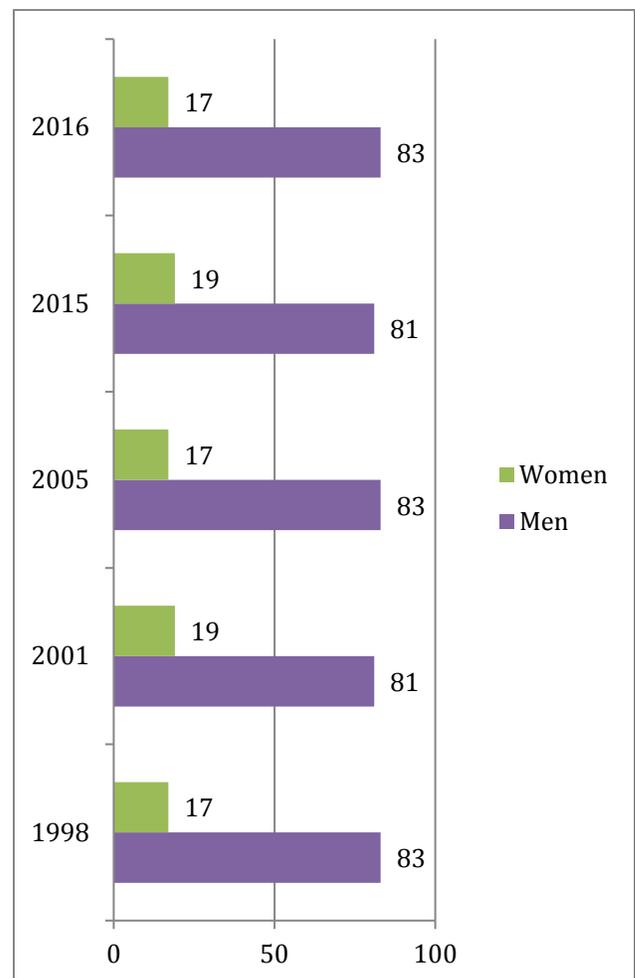
In 2016, women comprised 17% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from last year and is even with the percentage achieved in 1998 (see Figure 1).

Women accounted for 7% of directors, down 2 percentage points from 9% in 2015 and 1998. Last year, 92% of films had no female directors.

Traditionally, this study has tracked women's employment on the top 250 grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted). Last year, the study added analyses of females working on the top 100 and 500 films. The results are divided into three major sections. The first section reports the findings for the top 250 films, offering comparisons

of percentages from 2016 with figures dating from 1998. The second section provides the numbers for the top 100 films, comparing this year's figures with those from 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2015. The third section includes employment figures for the top 500 films, and offers analyses of important relationships between women directors and those working in other key behind-the-scenes roles, such as writers and editors.

*Figure 1.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of
Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top 250
Films*



Findings / Top 250 Films

- This section analyzes the behind-the-scenes employment of 3,212 individuals working on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2016.

- Women fared best as producers (24%), followed by editors (17%), executive producers (17%), writers (13%), directors (7%), and cinematographers (5%).

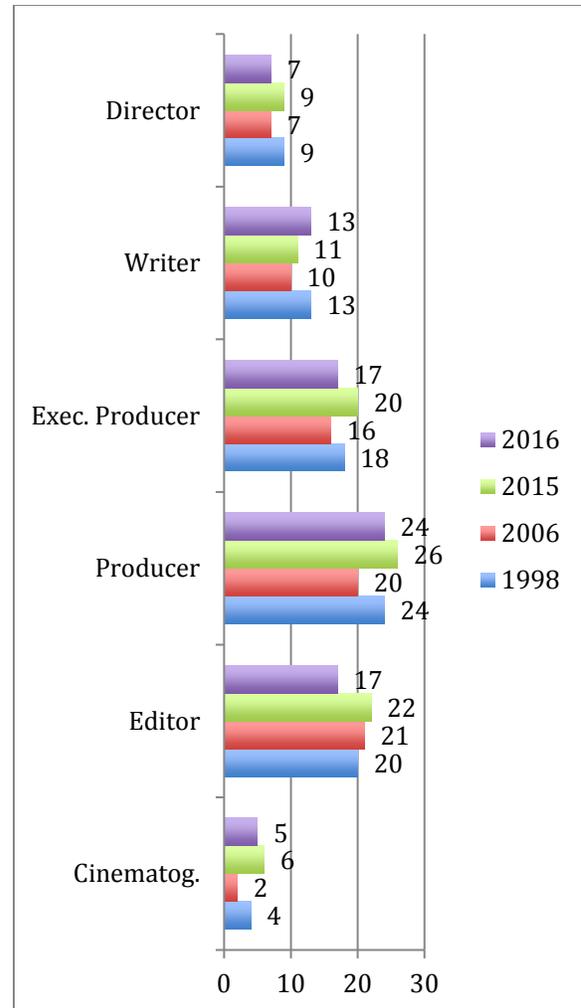
- In 2016, slightly over one-third or 35% of films employed 0 or 1 woman in the roles considered. 52% of films employed 2 to 5 women, 11% employed 6 to 9 women, and 2% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 2% of films employed 0 or 1 man in the roles considered, 3% employed 2 to 5 men, 19% employed 6 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (76%) employed 10 or more men.

- A historical comparison of women’s employment on the top 250 films in 2016 and 1998 reveals that the percentage of cinematographers has increased slightly. The percentages of writers and producers have remained the same, and the percentages of women directors, executive producers, and editors have declined (see Figure 2).

- A comparison of women’s employment on the top 250 films in 2016 and 2015 reveals that the percentage of women writers increased slightly. The percentages of women directors, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers declined.

- Women comprised 7% of all directors working on the top 250 films of 2016.

Figure 2.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of Women Employed Behind the Scenes on Top 250 Films by Role



This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 2015 and 1998. Ninety two percent (92%) of the films had no female directors (see Figure 3).

- Women accounted for 13% of writers working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 2015 and is even with the figure from 1998. Seventy seven percent (77%) of the films had no female writers.

*Figure 3.
Percentages of Top 250 Films with No
Women in Roles Considered*

92% had no women directors
 77% had no women writers
 58% had no women exec. producers
 34% had no women producers
 79% had no women editors
 96% had no women cinematographers

Over one-third or 35% of films had no or 1 woman in the above roles

- Women comprised 17% of all executive producers working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 2015 and a decline of 1 percentage point from 1998. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the films had no female executive producers.

- Women accounted for 24% of all producers working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 2015 and is even with the percentage from 1998. Thirty four percent (34%) of the films had no female producers.

- Women comprised 17% of all editors working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents a decrease of 5 percentage points from 2015 and a decrease of 3 percentage points from 1998. Seventy nine percent (79%) of the films had no female editors.

- Women accounted for 5% of all cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 2015 and an increase of 1 percentage point from 1998. Ninety six percent (96%) of the films had no female cinematographers.

- Women were most likely to work in the documentary and drama genres, accounting for 24% and 20% of individuals working on these films respectively. Women were least likely to work in the action and horror genres, accounting for 11% and 12% of those working on these films respectively.

Composers, Supervising Sound Editors, and Sound Designers

- This section reports employment figures for 535 individuals working as composers, supervising sound editors, and sound designers on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2016.

- Women comprised 3% of composers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2016. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2% in 2015 (see Figure 4). Ninety seven percent (97%) of films had no female composers in 2016.

- Women accounted for 8% of supervising sound editors working on the top 250 films of 2016. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 2014. Ninety three percent (93%) of films had no female supervising sound editors.

- Women comprised 4% of sound designers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2016. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 2014. Ninety seven percent (97%) of films had no female sound designers.

*Figure 4.
Recent Historical Representation of
Women and Men as Composers*



Findings / Top 100 Films

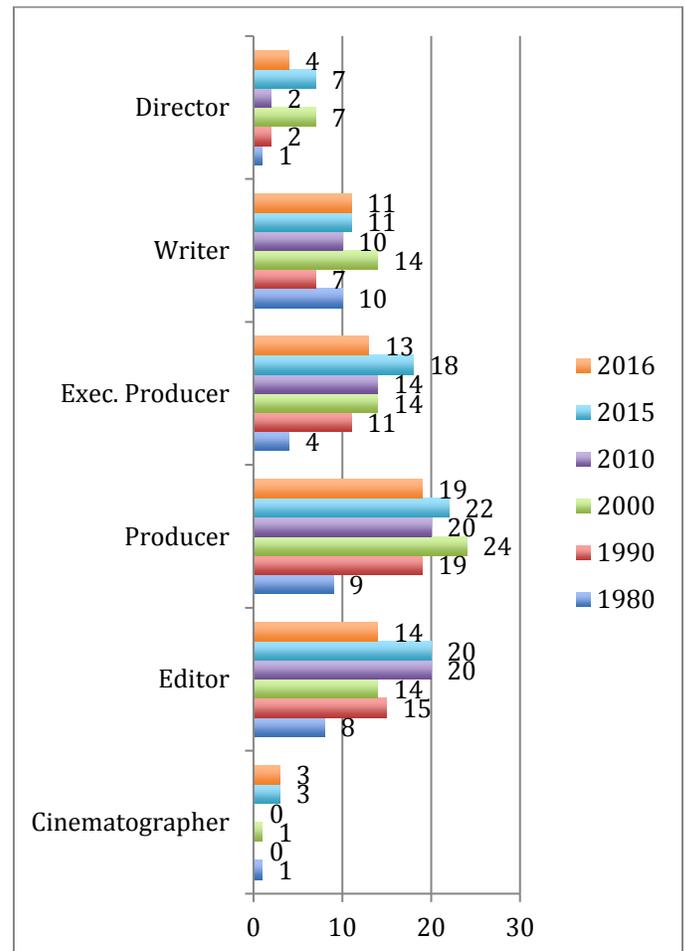
•This section considers the behind-the-scenes employment of 1,579 individuals working on the top 100 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2016.

•Overall, women accounted for 14% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 films. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 16% in 2015.

•Women fared best as producers (19%), followed by editors (14%), executive producers (13%), writers (11%), directors (4%), and cinematographers (3%).

•Figure 5 provides a historical comparison of the 2016 figures with those from 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2015. When comparing the most recent figures for 2016 with 2015, the percentages of women directors, producers, executive producers, and editors have declined, while the percentages of women writers and cinematographers have remained the same.

*Figure 5.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of
Women Employed Behind the Scenes on
Top 100 Films by Role**



*Note that relatively minor fluctuations in the numbers affect this sample to a greater extent than the other samples included in this report due to its smaller size.

- Women comprised 4% of directors working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 2015.

- Women accounted for 11% of writers working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents no change from 2015.

- Women comprised 13% of executive producers working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 5 percentage points from 2015.

- Women accounted for 19% of producers working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 2015.

- Women comprised 14% of editors working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents a decline of 6 percentage points from 2015.

- Women accounted for 3% of cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2016. This represents no change from 2015.

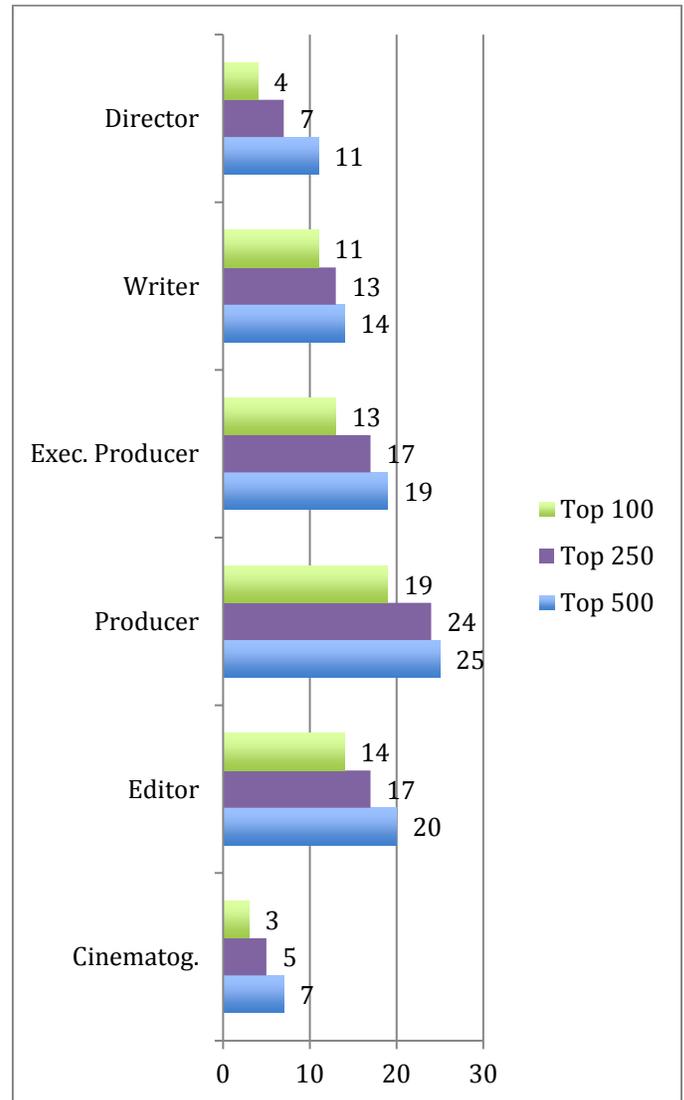
Findings / Top 500 Films

- This section analyzes behind-the-scenes employment of 4,638 individuals working on the top 500 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2016.

- Overall, women accounted for 19% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 500 films. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 2015.

- Women fared best as producers (25%), followed by editors (20%),

*Figure 6.
Comparison of Percentages of Women Working in Key Behind-the-Scenes Roles on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Domestic Grossing Films of 2016*



- executive producers (19%), writers (14%), directors (11%), and cinematographers (7%).

- Women comprised 11% of directors working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 7% on the top 250 and 4% on the top 100 films (see Figure 6).

- Women accounted for 14% of writers working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 13% on the top 250 and 11% on the top 100 films.

- Women comprised 19% of executive producers working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 17% on the top 250 and 13% on the top 100 films.

- Women accounted for 25% of producers working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 24% on the top 250 and 19% on the top 100 films.

- Women comprised 20% of editors working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 17% on the top 250 and 14% on the top 100 films.

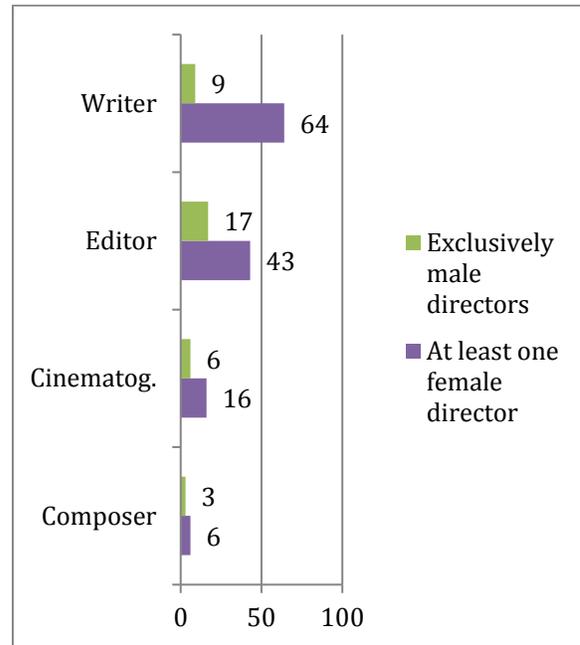
- Women accounted for 7% of cinematographers working on the top 500 films of 2016, compared with 5% on the top 250 and 3% on the top 100 films.

Top 500 Films/Comparison of Films with at Least One Female Director vs. Films with Exclusively Male Directors

- Films with at least one female director employed greater percentages of women working as writers, editors, cinematographers, and composers than films with exclusively male directors.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 64% of writers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 9% of writers (see Figure 7).

*Figure 7.
Comparison of Percentages of Women Working on Films with at Least One Female Director vs. with Exclusively Male Directors*



- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 43% of editors. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 17% of editors.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 16% of cinematographers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 6% of cinematographers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 6% of composers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 3% of composers.

Figures contained in this report are based on numbers obtained from Box Office Mojo, January 2, 2017.