

The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2019

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

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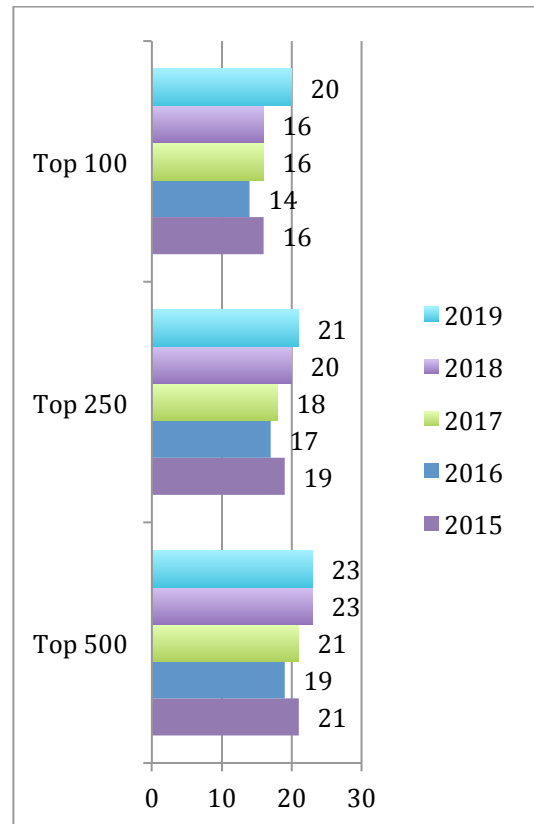
The Celluloid Ceiling has tracked women’s employment on top grossing films for the last 22 years. It is the longest-running and most comprehensive study of women’s behind-the-scenes employment in film available.

In addition to monitoring women’s employment as directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers, this year’s report also includes composers, music supervisors, supervising sound editors, sound designers, production designers, art directors, special effects supervisors, and visual effects supervisors.

•In 2019, the percentages of behind-the-scenes women working on the top 100 and 250 (domestic) grossing films increased, reaching recent historic highs, while women’s employment on the top 500 films remained stagnant (see Figure 1).

•Women comprised 20% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 grossing films in 2019, up from 16% in 2018. Women working in these roles on the top 250 grossing films experienced a slight increase from 20% in 2018 to 21% in 2019. The percentage of women working on the top 500 films remained steady at 23%.

Figure 1.
Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top 100, 250, and 500 Films (Last Five Years)*

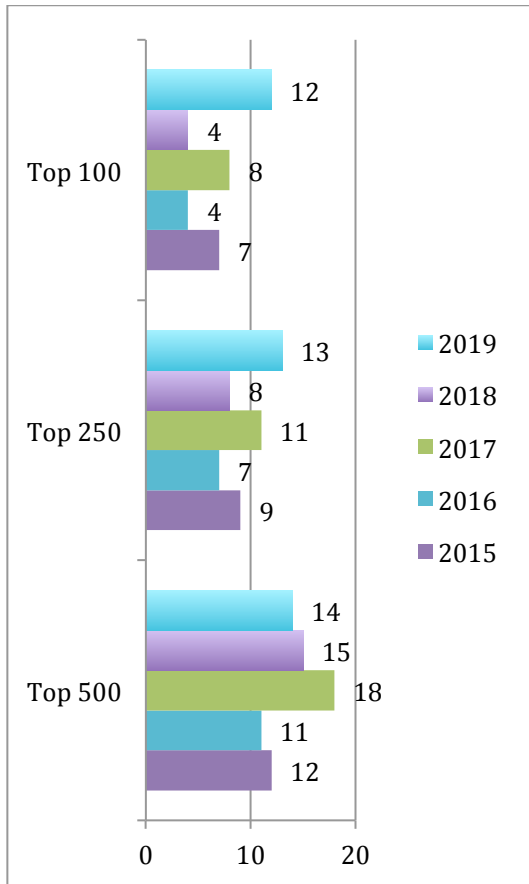


*includes directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, cinematographers

•Women accounted for 12% of directors working on the top 100 grossing films in 2019, up from 4% in 2018 and 8% in 2017. Women comprised 13% of directors working on the top 250 films in 2019, up from 8% in 2018, and up 2 percentage points from the previous high of 11% in 2017. The percentages of women directing top 100 and top 250 films reached recent historic highs in 2019.

In contrast, women made up 14% of directors working on the top 500 films, down 1 percentage point from 15% in 2018 (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2.
Comparison of Percentages of Women Directors Working on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films (Last Five Years)*



Background

For the last 22 years, this study has tracked women’s employment on the top 250 grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted). In 2015, the study added analyses of women 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 2019 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, 2010, 2017, and

2018. 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, editors, and cinematographers. This year’s report monitored over 6,700 credits. Since 1998, the study has tracked more than 70,000 credits.

Findings / Top 250 Films

•Women comprised 21% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2018 and a recent historic high. It also represents an increase of only 4 percentage points since 1998 (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top 250 Films*



- Women fared best as producers (27%), followed by editors (23%), executive producers (21%), writers (19%), directors (13%), and cinematographers (5%).

- In 2019, almost one third or 31% of films employed 0 or 1 woman in the roles considered. 45% of films employed 2 to 5 women, 22% employed 6 to 9 women, and 2% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 1% of films employed 0 or 1 man in the roles considered, 5% employed 2 to 5 men, 25% employed 6 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (69%) employed 10 or more men.

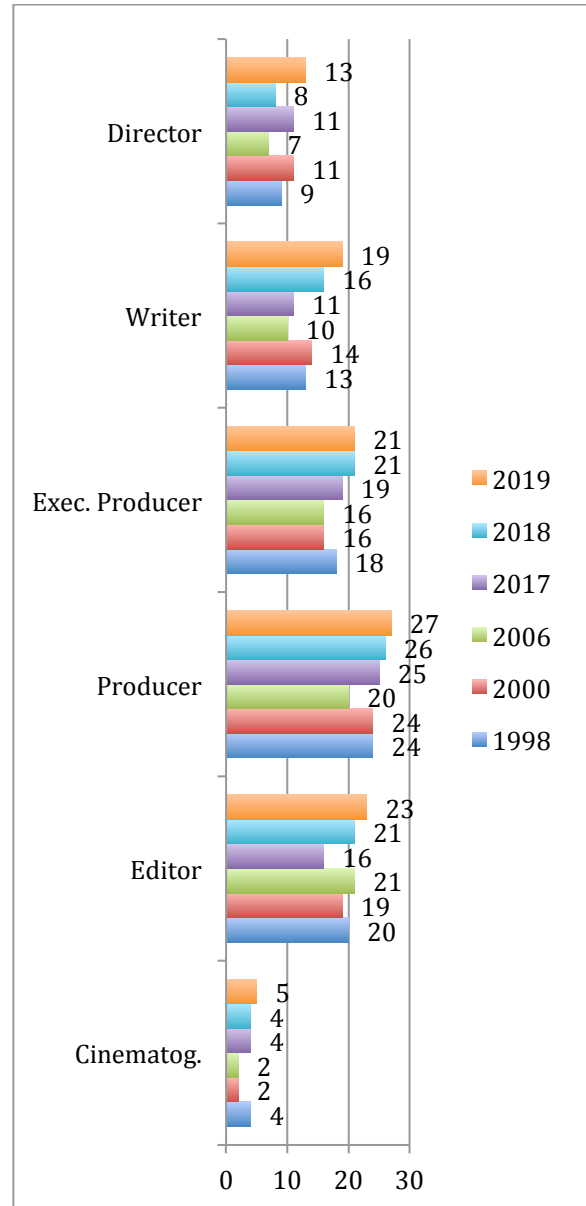
- Women comprised 13% of all directors working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 8% in 2018, and an increase of 2 percentage points from the previous high of 11% in 2017. This represents a recent historic high (see Figure 4).

- Women accounted for 19% of all writers working on the 250 top films of 2019. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 16% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women comprised 21% of all executive producers working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents no change from 2018.

- Women accounted for 27% of all producers working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 26% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

*Figure 4.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of Women Employed Behind the Scenes on Top 250 Films by Role*



- Women comprised 23% of all editors working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 21% in 2018.
- Women accounted for 5% of all cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 4% in 2018, and a recent historic high.
- 85% of the top 250 films had no women directors, 73% had no women writers, 44% had no women executive producers, 31% had no women producers, 72% had no women editors, and 95% had no women cinematographers (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5.
Percentages of Top 250 Films with No Women in Roles Considered*

85% had no women directors
 73% had no women writers
 44% had no women exec. producers
 31% had no women producers
 72% had no women editors
 95% had no women cinematographers

Almost one third or 31% of films had no or 1 woman in the above roles

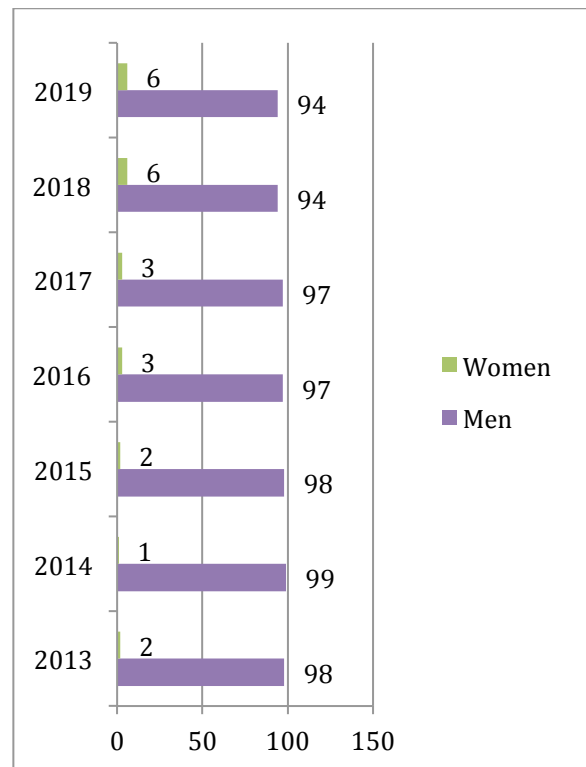
Additional Roles/ Music and Sound

- This section reports employment figures for individuals working as composers, music supervisors, supervising sound editors, and sound designers on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2019.
- Women comprised 6% of composers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2019. This represents no change from

2018 (see Figure 6). 94% of films had no female composers in 2019.

- Women accounted for 40% of music supervisors working on the top 250 grossing films of 2019. 74% of films had no female music supervisors.
- Women accounted for 9% of supervising sound editors working on the top 250 films of 2019. This represents a decrease of 1 percentage point from 10% in 2018. 92% of films had no female supervising sound editors.
- Women comprised 4% of sound designers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2019. This represents a decrease of 2 percentage points from 6% in 2018. 97% of films had no female sound designers.

*Figure 6.
Recent Historical Representation of Women and Men as Composers*



Additional Roles/Art

- Women accounted for 23% of production designers working on the top 250 films of 2019. 80% of films had no female production designers.

- Women comprised 31% of art directors working on the top 250 films of 2019. 71% of films had no female art directors.

Additional Roles/Effects

- Women accounted for 4% of special effects supervisors working on the top 250 films of 2019. 98% of films had no female special effects supervisors.

- Women comprised 6% of visual effects supervisors working on the top 250 films of 2019. 89% of films had no female visual effects supervisors.

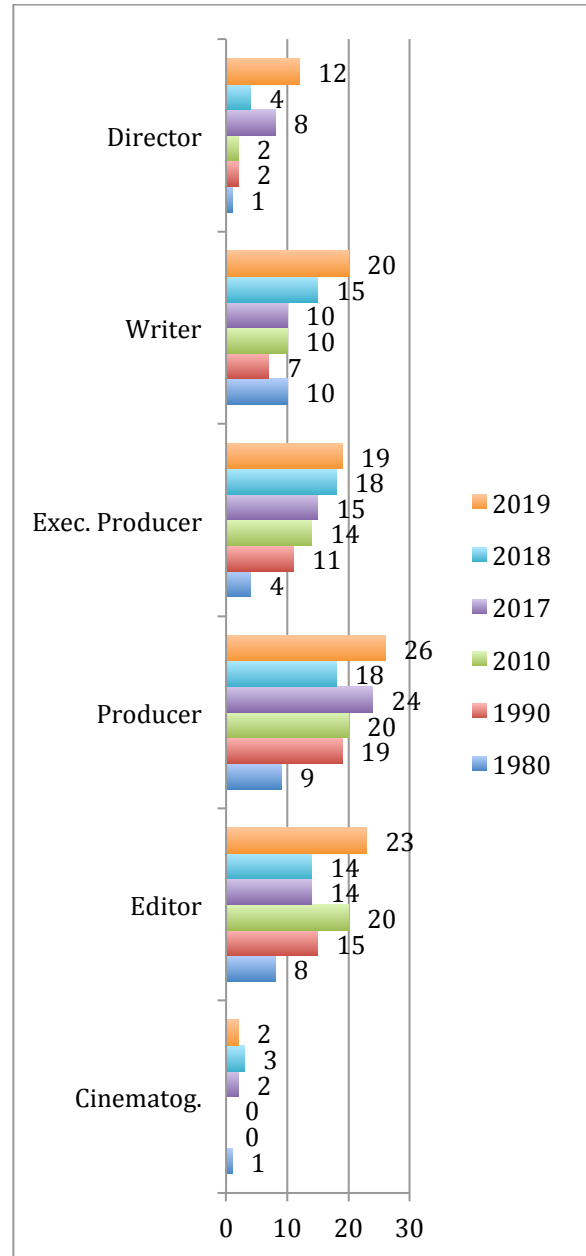
Findings / Top 100 Films

- Women comprised 20% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 16% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women fared best as producers (26%), followed by editors (23%), writers (20%), executive producers (19%), directors (12%), and cinematographers (2%).

- Women comprised 12% of directors working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 8 percentage points from 4% in 2018, and

*Figure 7.
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.*

an increase of 4 percentage points from 8% in 2017. It represents a recent historic high (see Figure 7).

- Women accounted for 20% of writers working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 15% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women comprised 19% of executive producers working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 18% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women accounted for 26% of producers working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 8 percentage points from 18% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women comprised 23% of editors working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 9 percentage points from 14% in 2018, and a recent historic high.

- Women accounted for 2% of cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2019. This represents a decrease of 1 percentage point from 3% in 2018.

Additional Roles/Music and Sound

- Women comprised 6% of composers working on the top 100 films of 2019. 94% of films had no female composers.

- Women accounted for 31% of music supervisors working on the top 100 films of 2019. 82% of films had no female music supervisors.

- Women comprised 3% of sound designers working on the top 100 films

of 2019. 97% of films had no female sound designers.

- Women accounted for 9% of supervising sound editors working on the top 100 films of 2019. 91% of films had no female supervising sound editors.

Additional Roles/Art

- Women comprised 15% of production designers working on the top 100 films of 2019. 85% of films had no female production designers.

- Women accounted for 34% of art directors working on the top 100 films of 2019. 66% of films had no female art directors.

Additional Roles/Effects

- Women accounted for 4% of special effects supervisors working on the top 100 films of 2019. 97% of films had no female special effects supervisors.

- Women comprised 5% of visual effects supervisors working on the top 100 films of 2019. 88% of films had no female visual effects supervisors.

Findings / Top 500 Films

- Women comprised 23% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 500 grossing films of 2019. This represents no change from 2018.

- In 2019, 31% of films employed no or 1 woman in the roles considered. 47% of films employed 2 to 5 women. 17% of films employed 6 to 9 women, and 5% employed 10 or more women. In

contrast, 1% of films employed no or 1 man. 8% of films employed 2 to 5 men. 28% employed 6 to 9 men, and the majority or 63% employed 10 or more men.

- By genre, the largest percentage of women, relative to men, worked on documentaries (27%), followed by comedies (25%), dramas (24%), animated features (23%), science fiction features (21%), horror features (17%), and action films (14%).

- Women fared best as producers (29%), followed by editors (22%), executive producers (22%), writers (20%), directors (14%), and cinematographers (6%).

- Women comprised 14% of directors working on the top 500 films of 2019. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 15% in 2018 (see Figure 8).

- Women accounted for 20% of writers working on the top 500 films of 2019. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 19% in 2018.

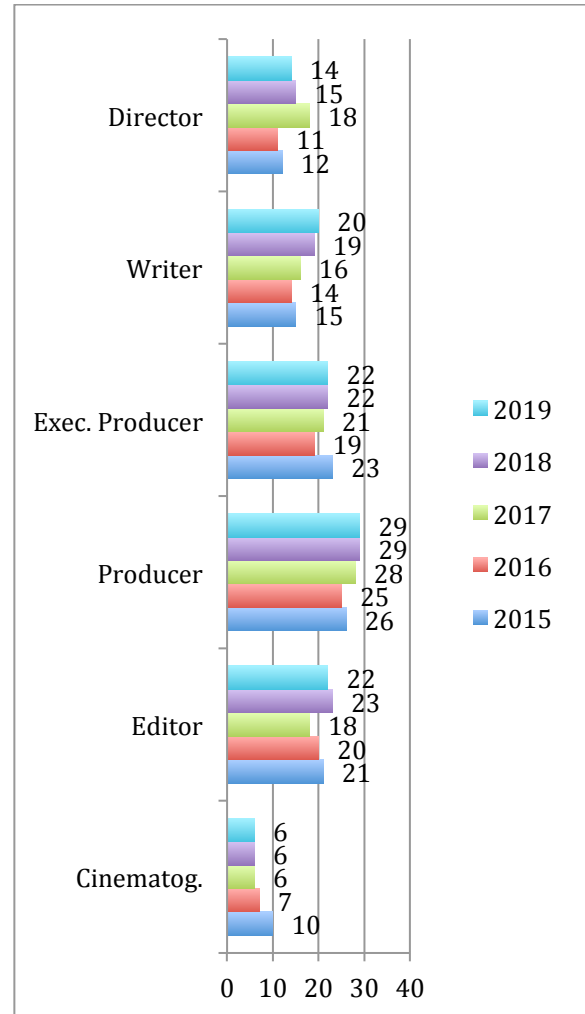
- Women comprised 22% of executive producers working on the top 500 films of 2019. This represents no change from 2018.

- Women accounted for 29% of producers working on the top 500 films of 2019. This represents no change from 2018.

- Women comprised 22% of editors working on the top 500 films of 2019. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 23% in 2018.

- Women accounted for 6% of cinematographers working on the top

*Figure 8.
Historical Comparison of Percentages of Women Employed Behind the Scenes in Top 500 Films by Role*



500 films of 2019. This represents no change from 2018.

Additional Roles/Music and Sound

- Women comprised 7% of composers working on the top 500 films of 2019. 93% of films had no female composers.

- Women accounted for 43% of music supervisors working on the top 500 films of 2019. 76% of films had no female music supervisors.

- Women comprised 5% of sound designers working on the top 500 films of 2019. 97% of films had no female sound designers.

- Women accounted for 10% of supervising sound editors working on the top 500 films of 2019. 92% of films had no female supervising sound editors.

Additional Roles/ Art

- Women comprised 25% of production designers working on the top 500 films in 2019. 81% of films had no female production designers.

- Women accounted for 32% of art directors working on the top 500 films of 2019. 76% of films had no female art directors.

Additional Roles/Effects

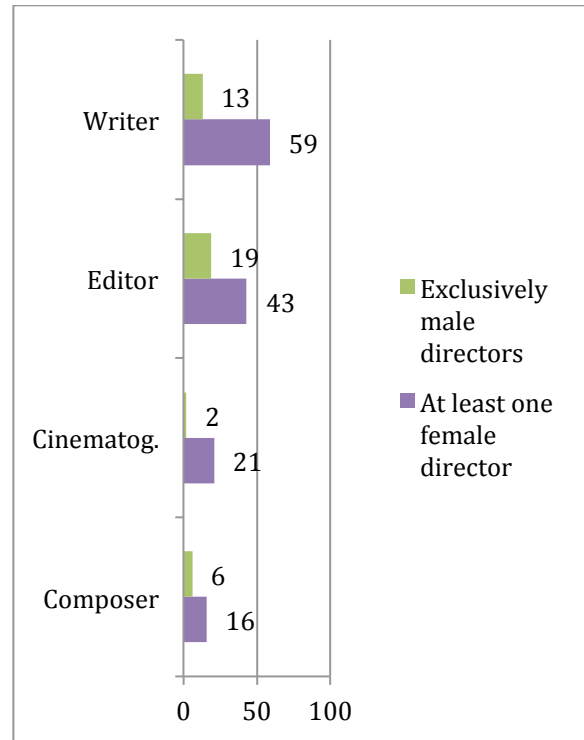
- Women comprised 3% of special effects supervisors working on the top 500 films of 2019. 99% of films had no female special effects supervisors.

- Women accounted for 6% of visual effects supervisors working on the top 500 films of 2019. 91% of films had no female visual effects supervisors.

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 substantially higher percentages of women in other key behind-the-scenes roles than films with

*Figure 9.
Comparison of Percentages of Women Working on Films with at Least One Female Director vs. with Exclusively Male Directors*



exclusively male directors (see Figure 9).

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 59% of writers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 13% of writers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 43% of editors. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 19% of editors.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 21% of cinematographers. On films with

exclusively male directors, women accounted for 2% of cinematographers.

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

Figures are based on numbers obtained from Box Office Mojo on January 1, 2020.