

# Boxed In: Employment of Behind-the-Scenes and On-Screen Women in 2012-13 Prime-time Television

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

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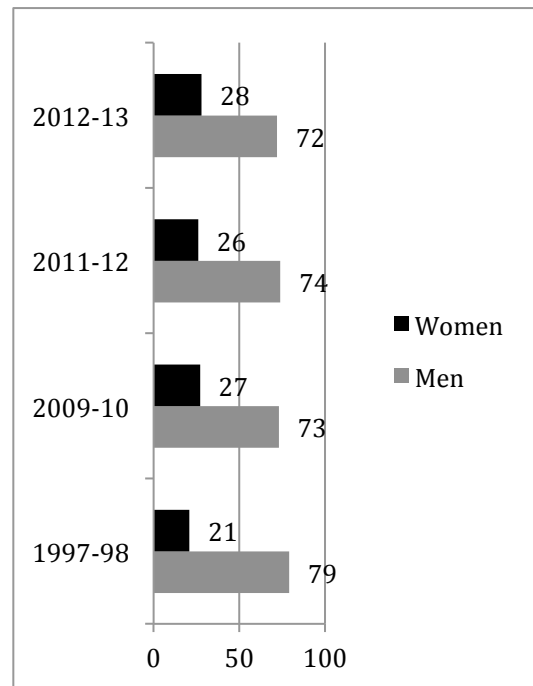
For the last 16 years, this study has tracked women’s behind-the-scenes employment on prime-time television programs airing on the broadcast networks. Every few years, the study has also monitored the on-screen representation of female characters. This year the sample has been expanded to include original programming on basic cable channels (A&E, AMC, FX, History, TNT, USA), pay cable channels (HBO, Showtime), and Netflix programs.

The findings of the study are divided into two major sections. The first section reports the behind-the-scenes and on-screen findings for the broadcast networks, offering historical comparisons from 2012-13 with figures dating from 1997-98. The second section reports the behind-the-scenes and on-screen findings for the total sample of programs airing on the broadcast networks, cable, and Netflix. The study examined one randomly selected episode of every series. Random selection is a frequently used and widely accepted method of sampling programs from the universe of television programming.

## Findings for Broadcast Networks

•During 2012-13, women continued their slow but incremental growth in key behind-the-scenes roles. Women comprised 28% of all individuals working as creators, directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and directors of photography. This represents an increase of two percentage points from 2011-2012 and an increase of 7 percentage points since 1997-98 (see Figure 1). This is a recent historical high.

Figure 1.  
*Historical Comparison of Women Working Behind the Scenes on Broadcast Network Programs*



Overall, women fared best as producers (38%), followed by writers (34%), executive producers (27%), creators (24%), editors (16%), directors (12%), and directors of photography (3%) (see Figure 2).

Women comprised 24% of creators. This represents a decrease of 2 percentage points from 2011-12 but an increase of 6 percentage points from 1997-98.

Women accounted for 27% of executive producers. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 2011-12 and an increase of 8 percentage points since 1997-98.

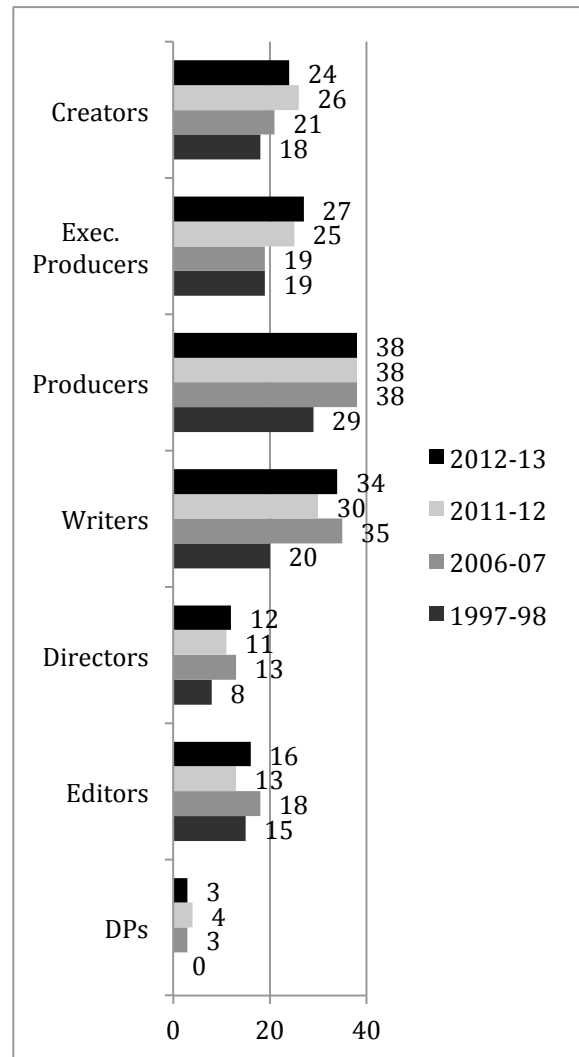
Women comprised 38% of producers. This is even with women's representation as producers in 2011-12, and represents an increase of 9 percentage points since 1997-98.

Women accounted for 34% of writers. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 2011-12 and an increase of 14 percentage points since 1997-98.

Women comprised 12% of directors. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2011-12, and 4 percentage points since 1997-98.

Women accounted for 16% of editors. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 2011-12, and an increase of 1 percentage point since 1997-98.

Figure 2.  
Historical Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women by Role on Broadcast Network Programs



Women comprised 3% of directors of photography. This represents a decrease of 1 percentage point from 2011-12 and an increase of 3 percentage points since 1997-98.

- 43% of all speaking characters and 43% of major characters were female in 2012-13. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 2010-11, and is even with the historical high set in 2007-08 (see Figure 3).

- Programs airing on the CW featured the highest percentage of female characters (51%), followed by Fox and ABC (44%), NBC (41%), and CBS (39%). The CW was the only network featuring female characters in accurate numerical proportion to their representation in the U.S. population.

*Figure 3.  
Historical Comparison of Percentages of  
Female Characters on Broadcast  
Network Programs*



- Reality programs were more likely to feature female characters than programs in other genres. Females comprised 48% of characters on reality programs, 43% of characters on situation comedies, and 40% of characters on dramas.

- Female characters tended to be younger than their male counterparts. 30% of female characters but only 19% of male characters were in their 20s. 22% of male characters but only 14% of female characters were in their 40s.

- 78% of female characters were white, 12% were African-American, 5% were Latina, 3% were Asian, and 2% were of some other race or ethnicity.

- Viewers were less likely to know the occupational status of female characters than male characters. 37% of female characters but only 30% of male characters had an unknown occupational status.

- Viewers were more likely to know the marital status of female characters than male characters. 47% of male characters but only 38% of female characters had an unknown marital status.

- When programs had no women writers, females accounted for 40% of all characters. When programs had at least one woman writer, females comprised 43% of all characters.

- When programs had no women creators, females accounted for 41% of all characters. When programs had at least one woman creator, females comprised 47% of all characters.

***Findings for Broadcast Networks, Cable & Netflix Programs***

- Women comprised 26% of individuals in key behind-the-scenes roles on programs airing on the broadcast networks and cable channels, and available through Netflix in 2012-2013.

- Women fared best as producers (38%), followed by writers (30%), executive producers (24%), creators (23%), editors (16%), directors (11%), and directors of photography (2%) (see Figure 4).

- Female accounted for 42% of all speaking characters and 41% of major characters.

- Female characters were most likely to appear on reality programs. Females comprised 44% of all characters on reality programs, 42% on situation comedies, and 40% on dramas.

- 79% of female characters were white, 12% were African American, 5% were Latina, 2% were Asian, and 2% were of some other race or ethnicity.

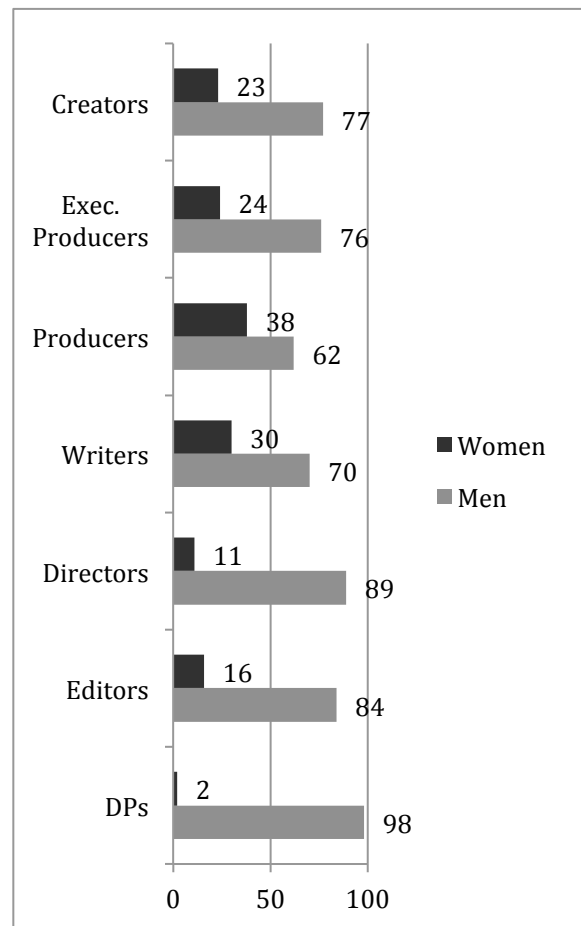
- The majority of female characters (62%) were in their 20s and 30s. The majority of male characters (58%) were in their 30s and 40s. The percentage of female characters dropped precipitously from their 30s to their 40s. 34% of female characters were in their 30s but only 16% of female characters were in their 40s.

- Male characters were much more likely than female characters to be seen at work. Of those characters seen at work, 39% were female and 61% were male.

- Male characters were much more likely

than female characters to be seen working. Of those characters actually seen engaging in work, 37% were female and 63% were male.

*Figure 4.  
Percentages of Women and Men Working Behind the Scenes on Broadcast, Cable and Netflix Programs in 2012-13*



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