

The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2018

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The Celluloid Ceiling has tracked women's employment on top grossing films for the last 21 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 2018, women comprised 20% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 18% in 2017 (see Figure 1).

Last year, only 1% of films employed 10 or more women in the above roles. In contrast, 74% of films employed 10 or more men.

Women accounted for 8% of directors working on the top 250 films in 2018, down 3 percentage points from 11% in 2017. This is 1 percentage point below the 9% achieved in 1998.

For the last 21 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 2018 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, and 2017. 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.

*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 3,076 individuals working on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2018.

- Women fared best as producers (26%), followed by executive producers (21%), editors (21%), writers (16%), directors (8%), and cinematographers (4%).

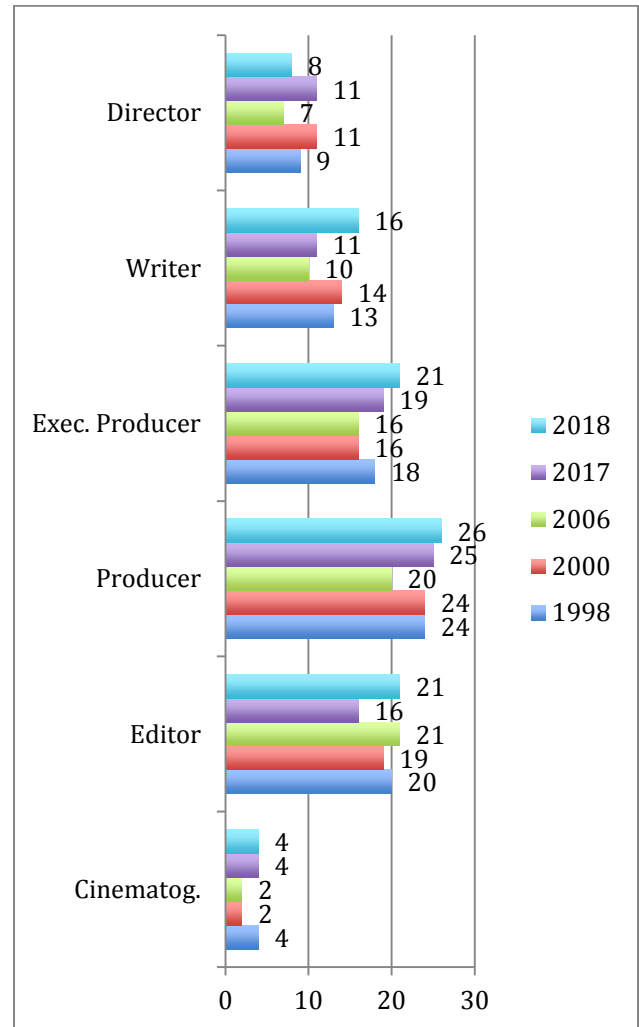
- In 2018, one quarter or 25% of films employed 0 or 1 woman in the roles considered. 58% of films employed 2 to 5 women, 16% employed 6 to 9 women, and 1% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 1% of films employed 0 or 1 man in the roles considered, 4% employed 2 to 5 men, 21% employed 6 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (74%) employed 10 or more men.

- A historical comparison of women’s employment in the top 250 films of 2018 and 1998 reveals that the percentages of writers, producers, executive producers, and editors have increased. The percentage of directors has declined, and the percentage of women cinematographers has remained the same (see Figure 2).

- A comparison of women’s employment on the top 250 films in 2018 and 2017 reveals that the percentages of women writers, producers, executive producers, and editors increased, while the percentage of women working as directors declined. The percentage of women cinematographers remained the same.

- Women comprised 8% of all directors working on the top 250 films of 2018.

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



This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 11% in 2017, and is 1 percentage point below that achieved in 1998. Ninety two percent (92%) of the films had no female directors (see Figure 3).

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

92% had no women directors
73% had no women writers
42% had no women exec. producers
27% had no women producers
74% had no women editors
96% had no women cinematographers

One quarter or 25% of films had no or
1 woman in the above roles

•Women accounted for 16% of writers working on the 250 top films of 2018. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 11% in 2017. Seventy three percent (73%) of the films had no female writers.

•Women comprised 21% of all executive producers working on the top 250 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 19% in 2017. Forty two percent (42%) of the films had no female executive producers.

•Women accounted for 26% of all producers working on the top 250 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 25% in 2017, and is even with the percentage achieved in 2015. Twenty seven percent (27%) of the films had no female producers.

•Women comprised 21% of all editors working on the top 250 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 16% in 2017, however it is below the 26% achieved in 2015. Seventy four percent (74%) of the films had no female editors.

•Women accounted for 4% of all cinematographers working on the top

250 films of 2018. This represents no change from 2017. Ninety six percent (96%) of the films had no female cinematographers.

Composers, Supervising Sound Editors, and Sound Designers

•This section reports employment figures for 572 individuals working as composers, supervising sound editors, and sound designers on the 250 top domestic grossing films of 2018.

•Women comprised 6% of composers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2018. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 3% in 2017 (see Figure 4). Ninety four percent (94%) of films had no female composers in 2018.

•Women accounted for 10% of supervising sound editors working on the top 250 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 8% in 2017. Eighty nine percent (89%) of films had no female supervising sound editors.

•Women comprised 6% of sound designers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2018. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 5% in 2017. Ninety five percent (95%) of films had no female sound designers.

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



Findings / Top 100 Films

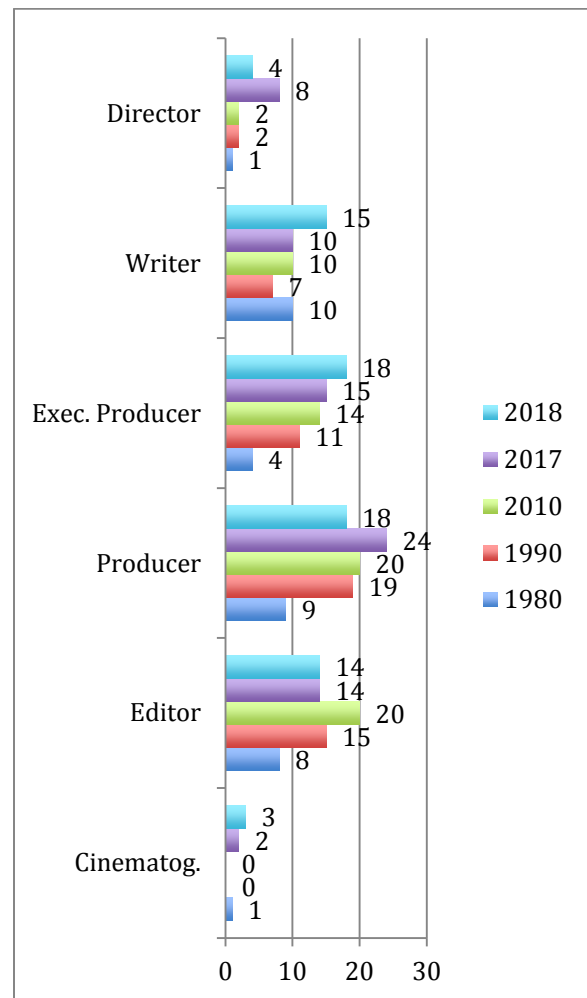
•This section considers the behind-the-scenes employment of 1,606 individuals working on the top 100 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2018.

•Overall, women accounted for 16% of directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 films. This represents no change from 2017.

•Women fared best as producers (18%), and executive producers (18%), followed by writers (15%), editors (14%), directors (4%), and cinematographers (3%).

•Figure 5 provides a historical comparison of the 2018 figures with those from 1980, 1990, 2010, and 2017. When comparing the most recent figures for 2018 with 2017, the percentages of women writers, executive producers, and cinematographers increased, while the percentages of women directors and producers declined. The percentage of women editors 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 2018. This represents a decline of 4 percentage points from 8% in 2017.

- Women accounted for 15% of writers working on the top 100 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 10% in 2017.

- Women comprised 18% of executive producers working on the top 100 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 15% in 2017.

- Women accounted for 18% of producers working on the top 100 films of 2018. This represents a decline of 6 percentage points from 24% in 2017.

- Women comprised 14% of editors working on the top 100 films of 2018. This represents no change from 2017.

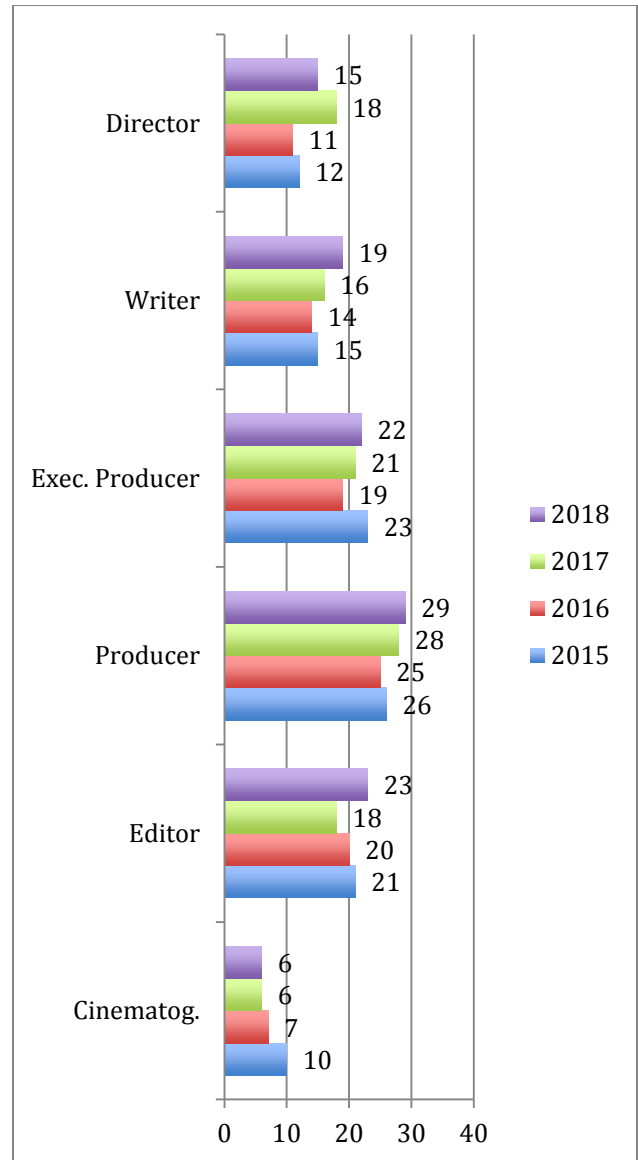
- Women accounted for 3% of cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2% in 2017.

Findings / Top 500 Films

- This section analyzes the behind-the-scenes employment of 4,300 individuals working on the top 500 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2018.

- Overall, women accounted for 23% of directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 500 films. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 21% in 2017.

Figure 6.
Comparison of Percentages of Women Employed Behind the Scenes in Top 500 Films by Role



- By genre, the largest percentage of women, relative to men, worked on documentaries (33%), followed by action features (27%), dramas (26%), comedies and sci-fi features (20%), animated features (18%), and horror features (11%).

- Women fared best as producers (29%), followed by editors (23%), executive producers (22%), writers (19%), directors (15%), and cinematographers (6%).

- Women comprised 15% of directors working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents a decline of 3 percentage points from 18% in 2017 (see Figure 6).

- Women accounted for 19% of writers working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 16% in 2017.

- Women comprised 22% of executive producers working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 21% in 2017.

- Women accounted for 29% of producers working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 28% in 2017.

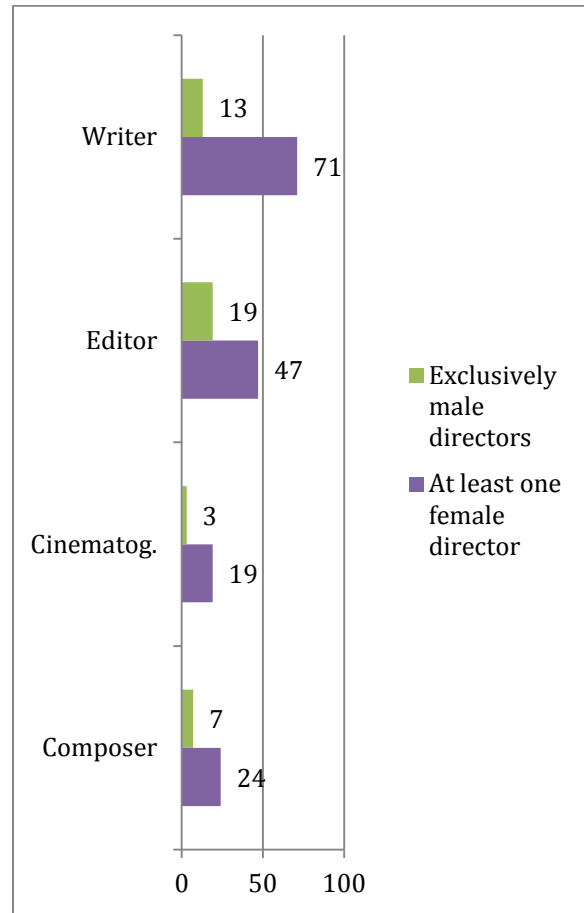
- Women comprised 23% of editors working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 18% in 2017.

- Women accounted for 6% of cinematographers working on the top 500 films of 2018. This represents no change from 2017.

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 working

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



as writers, editors, cinematographers, and composers than films with exclusively male directors (see Figure 7).

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 71% of writers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 13% of writers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 47% of editors. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 19% of editors.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 19% of cinematographers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 3% of cinematographers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 24% of composers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 7% of composers.

Figures are based on numbers obtained from Box Office Mojo on January 1, 2019.