

WOMEN IN VIEW

ON SCREEN

2010-11 FILM REPORT

OCTOBER 2012

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This report examines the representation of women among directors and screenwriters of 130 Canadian feature films released in 2010 & 2011. All 130 films captured in this review (like the great majority of Canadian productions) were produced with the assistance of public investment through Telefilm Canada.

Although cinema is a highly collaborative medium whose final product reflects the decisions and contributions of several key contributors (actors, cinematographers, editors, executive producers chief among them), in this initial survey we examine two creative positions that are the key determinants of on-screen content. It is our intention to build on this base of information, adding additional employment categories in future reports. Within a few weeks, we will be incorporating two additional employment categories: lead actors and cinematographer.

RATIONALE

According to the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), in 2011 the value of our media industries to our GDP was tagged at \$5.49 Billion, representing 128,000 full-time jobs. More than simply an important economic engine, however, our media industries constitute one of the most significant forces shaping our national culture, as well as our individual identities and values.

The digital revolution of the last decade brought about unprecedented changes in our media landscape. In the digital universe, consumers of media products are as likely to be found in the furthest corner of the globe as in your local neighbourhood. To remain innovative and competitive, today's media organizations need a talent pool as diverse and demanding as its increasingly global public. Endowed with one of the most culturally diverse, educated, and talented populations on the planet, Canada is in an ideal position to become a global media force.

WOMEN IN VIEW is a national non-profit organization dedicated to revitalizing the Canadian media industry by strengthening gender and cultural diversity both on screen and behind the scenes. We do this through a range of initiatives that seek to generate awareness, promote talent and spark dialogue across the full spectrum of production, policy and artistic arenas.

Women in View is part of a working group, led by ACTRA National, with the goal of creating practical resources for media professionals committed to building a vibrant and innovative industry through the increased participation of women in guild and union memberships, and all aspects of film production.

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(NOT QUITE) CALLING THE SHOTS

Canadian women represent more than half the population, and close to half the labour pool. Furthermore, in 2009 in both the US and Canada, women purchased a higher percentage of movie tickets (55%) than they represent of the population (51%).

Yet women remain vastly under-represented in Canadian feature film production, particularly in content-determining positions. This disparity is far more pronounced for racialized minority women. While women's participation in the general workforce increased by 10% between 2001 & 2006, the participation rate of women in the motion picture and video industries declined during the same period.

The absence of consistent, transparent, accessible, annual data on the subject makes it difficult to address this disconnect. While there have been several important studies examining the representation of women in different regions and sectors over the last decade, Canada has not had national year-after-year data allowing us to track the patterns of employment over time in this critical sector.

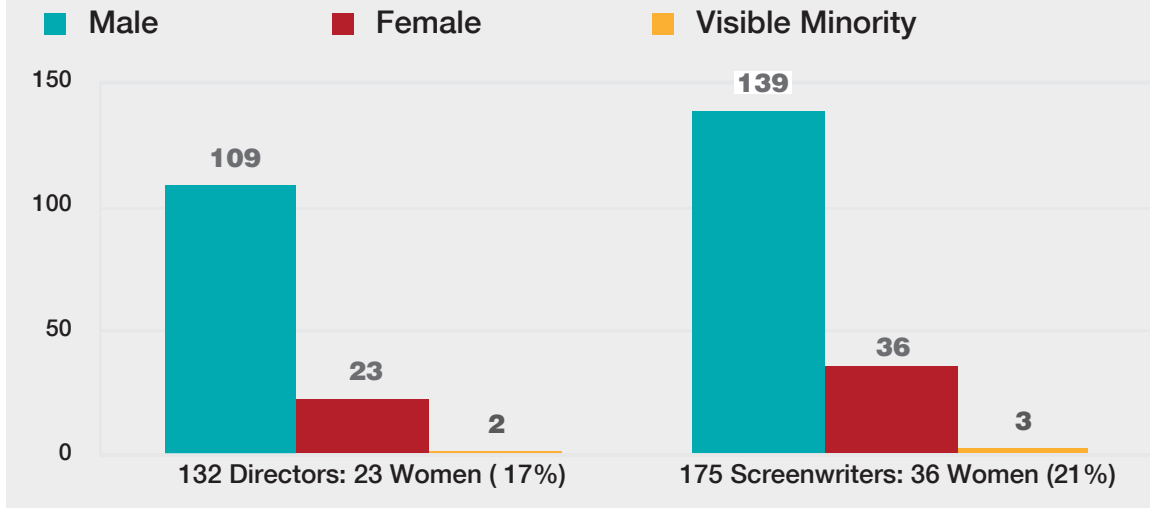
For years, Canadian researchers have looked to Dr. Martha Lauzen, UC San Diego (*The Celluloid Ceiling Report*; <http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/research.html>) or Dr. Stacey Smith, USC Annenberg (http://www.seejane.org/downloads/FullStudy_GenderDisparityFamilyFilms.pdf), for reliable, consistent data reporting on annual trends in the employment and representation of women in media.

Women in View on Screen represents an important first step in addressing this information gap in Canada. It is our intention to build on this data foundation with annual updates as well as intermittent reports on particular sectors and links to pertinent websites. *Women in View* will become a hub for information about Canadian women in media.

Women in View on Screen will be followed in spring 2013 by *Women in View on Screen/TV*, examining the representation of women on Canadian television during the same period: 2010-2011.

This study was undertaken by *Women in View* with guidance from Dr. Charles H. Davis, professor at Ryerson University in the RTA School of Media (Faculty of Communication and Design) and the Entrepreneurship and Strategy Department in the Ted Rogers School of Management, with research assistance from Ms. Siobhan Ozege as part of a research project supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

DIRECTORS AND SCREENWRITERS BY GENDER AND RACE 2010 & 2011



EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

An overview of 139 films released in 2010 & 2011 tells a pretty straightforward story. More than a generation after the feminist wave of the 60's and 70's, thirty-two years after the UN Year of the Woman, thirty-eight years after the founding of Studio D, and forty years after Canada's first international women's film festival, the under-representation of women in key, content-determining positions in this ever-more influential industry is remarkable. Women comprise less than 20% of directors and 21% of screenwriters of Canadian feature films.

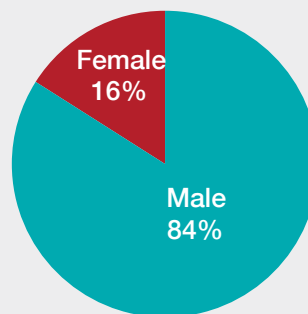
Of 132 directors in the two year period covered in this report, only 23 (17%) were women; and of these 23, two were First Nations or racialized minority women.

The situation for screenwriters is only slightly better. Of 175 screenwriters, 36 (21%) were women, and again 2 of these were First Nations or racialized minority women.

Another important story that follows on the heels of these figures is the relationship between the writer and director. Not a single woman directed a film written by a man. Every female director directed screenplays written by women. In fact, in 22 of these 23 films, the same women wrote and directed the film.

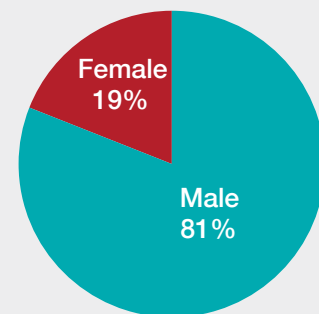
DIRECTORS AND WRITERS - 2010

Directors



Total No. of Women = 14
Total No. of Men = 71

Writers



Total No. of Women = 20
Total No. of Men = 84

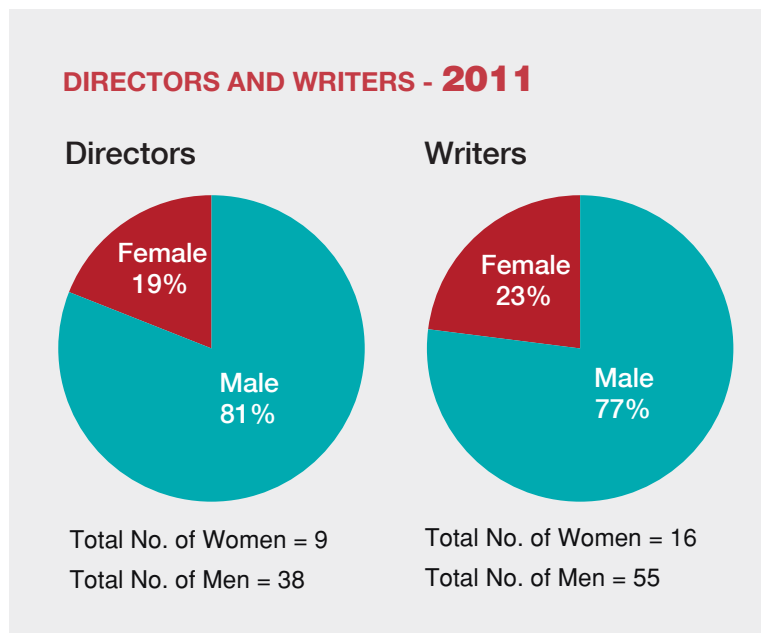
The implications are clear: if a woman wants to direct a feature film, she had better start by writing it herself. Based on this 2-year sample, the chances of a woman being hired to direct a screenplay written by a man are nonexistent.

The odds of a female screenwriter having her script directed by a man are only slightly better, with 6 of the 36 screenwriters having their screenplays directed by a man. Put another way, six of 139 (4%) male directors directed screenplays written by a woman.

These findings about the connections between the gender of the director and that of the writer are very much in keeping with the findings of Quebec's directors' association, Realisatrices Equitables (<http://realisatrices-equitables.com>). In association with Women in View, RE looked at the relationship between the gender of the film directors, and that of the lead actors in 32 feature films released in Quebec in 2010. They found that in the 27 films directed by a man, male actors had the leading role 90% of the time. In the 5 of these 32 films directed by women, the leading role was played by a woman 80% of the time.

Moreover, we know from other research that this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the impact of a writer's and director's gender on other employment opportunities. A study by Dr. Stacey Smith found that the percentage of female characters on-screen was significantly higher when one or more women were involved in the writing process compared to scripts penned by all-male writing teams.

Given the pronounced tendency of both men and women to direct screenplays with characters of their own sex in leading roles, a key route to bringing the population of feature film characters (and the actors portraying them) into line with the diversity of our population would seem to be ensuring greater balance in the population of working directors.



CONCLUSION

The stellar achievements of individual women in media creation and production stand in stark contrast to their statistical presence in the media labour force. The media products we consume are still overwhelmingly written, produced, programmed and owned by white men.

While labour disparity is an issue in other fields and industries, the impact of gender and racial inequities in media production extends far beyond limiting employment opportunities for individual women or restricting the economic potential of this significant sector.

Stereotypes behind the camera are writ large and perpetuated on the influential screens which increasingly inform every aspect of our waking lives.

We know that creative enterprises thrive on innovation; and innovation thrives on diversity. And diversity behind the camera — particularly in content-producing positions — is a key determinant of diversity on-screen. Ryerson University's Diversity Institute reports a direct link between gender and racial diversity on creative teams, and larger and more diverse audiences.

Media industries are undergoing massive transformation, affecting economic models, technological infrastructures, production models, workplace culture and labour practices. The current moment of media transformation from analog to digital — what some have called our 'Gutenberg moment' — provides the ideal time to engender a media culture that is more inclusive and innovative.

WHAT GETS COUNTED GETS DONE

This picture is far from complete. It is a single snapshot over a two-year period of a small slice of our cinema culture. In order to gain a better understanding of the situation, a precondition to forming effective strategies for response, we need to see how these trends play out not only over time, but across a wider swath of influential roles.

- In addition to tracking who is given the opportunity to direct and write, shoot and perform in feature films, we need to examine differences in the size of budgets male and female directors and writers get to work with to realize and promote their cinematic vision.

For example, US research examining the relationship between production costs and the involvement of women directors, writers, producers, and actors in close to 1000 films found "that as the percentage of females involved in a project increases the size of the budget decreases."

- We need to maintain this annual database in order to be able to track the actual situation year after year.
- Finally, key stakeholders need to identify gender and racial equity as a social, economic and cultural priority.

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— with thanks to Kay Armatage and Marsha Newbery