

# ON SCREEN REPORT 2023

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

WOMEN  
IN VIEW

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## On Screen 2023

Research conducted by  
Quilin

**Quilin**  
See the whole picture

### Advisory

Ophira Calof, Ravidia Din, Sharon McGowan,  
Jan Miller, Brigitte Monneau, Kaya Wheeler, Mahalia Verna

The authors acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm Canada, Inspirit Foundation and CMPA BC.



Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Canada Media Fund, the Inspirit Foundation, Telefilm Canada, CMPA BC or the Government of Canada.

The Canada Media Fund, the Inspirit Foundation, Telefilm Canada, CMPA BC and the Government of Canada are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

Women in View is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening gender representation and diversity in Canadian media both on screen and behind the scenes.

Women in View Board of Directors: Ophira Calof, Carolyn Combs, Joan Jenkinson, Doreen Manuel, Sharon McGowan, Jan Miller, Tash Naveau, Anik Salas, Michelle Wong

[info@womeninview.ca](mailto:info@womeninview.ca) • [www.womeninview.ca](http://www.womeninview.ca)

# INTRODUCTION

## **The On Screen Report examines the employment of women-identifying and non-binary key creatives in Canadian publicly-funded English-language live action and documentary television series and feature films.**

This report includes 234 English-language television projects: 127 drama series and, new for this report, 107 documentary series, funded by CMF for production in 2019-2020 (referred to as 2020) and 2020-2021 (referred to as 2021). This report also includes 653 English-language film development projects and 127 English-language film production projects that received Telefilm Canada funding in 2019-2020 (referred to as 2020) and 2020-2021 (referred to as 2021). In total, 5,919 credits were reviewed, 1,721 of which went to women and gender diverse creatives.

**The researchers would like to acknowledge the industry-leading collaboration demonstrated by the CMF and Telefilm that has enabled this report.**

The screen sector continues to suffer from a lack of consistent data collection, access, and transparency, which significantly inhibits our collective ability to identify and address the structural barriers affecting underrepresented creatives. The CMF and Telefilm continue to demonstrate industry leadership by implementing standardized, equitable data collection practices, being transparent about their data collection processes and reporting,

and collaborating to enable access to these data. **Without this leadership, the On Screen report would not be possible.**

Both the CMF and Telefilm report annually on their investments and progress toward parity in both their internal organizational composition and their distribution of funding. The On Screen report reflects a *sample* of the data contained within these reports, and therefore should not be viewed as a re-analysis of their transparent reporting. Indeed, differences in the number of projects analyzed are likely to produce small variances between the On Screen report and the funders' annual reporting.

*The original scope of this study sought to include a selection of specialized and private funds, both to explore the extent to which women and gender diverse people are accessing that funding and to consider the relationships between different types of funding/funding sources. Researchers contacted funders representing 19 additional funds to produce a cross-sectional analysis of the sector's investments. Unfortunately, this additional data could not be made available, either because the data was not collected or because the funder was unable to share this information due to privacy commitments.*

The On Screen report should therefore be read as a temperature check; a consideration of the way funding distribution has changed across multiple genres and sources, and where there is still room to improve as an industry.

## **The ongoing, necessary work**

This report looks at the quantitative distribution of funding and work on drama and documentary projects supported by the CMF and Telefilm Canada. These numbers, however, do not convey the sector context necessary to explain how these distributions of investment and work are produced, or why they follow these patterns.

Without this context, statistics obscure the structural inequalities and systemic barriers faced by women and gender diverse creatives, and especially by women and gender diverse Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour that result in the numbers summarized here. This lack of context risks delivering a misleading impression of the sector's progress and has allowed the sector to settle for EDI-related activities built on top of the sector's current structure, rather than driving the transformation needed to create permanent, sustainable change. Throughout this report, therefore, we refer to the important research more recently undertaken by equity-deserving organizations to provide some of this missing context.

## Introduction (continued)

### Methodology

The funding years considered for this study directly overlapped the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and restrictions about in-person work were implemented throughout the country. Generally, this led to an overall decrease in the number of projects produced in 2020 (compared to 2019) and with a small rebound in 2021.

The television data used in this study is from the CMF's production database. The project information in this database includes the project name, series season, the number of episodes, funding allocation, and the broadcasters for each fiscal year. The information provided by the CMF *does not include the names or identities of key creatives on these projects*. Key creative credits were obtained by the researchers by viewing on-screen credits (at least twice) for each television episode studied.

The film data used in this study was provided by Telefilm Canada. The raw data provided included the project name, language, funding allocation, location of the applicant, and the names of key creatives assigned to the project.

Once the names of key creatives assigned to all television and film projects were confirmed, the researchers used publicly-available contact information to share a confidential, online survey inviting creatives to self-identify using a variety of identity markers, including race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. The online survey was shared with 1022 creatives, 601 of whom responded by providing identity information and consent to participate.

**If self-identification information could not be obtained, or if someone declined participation, their data was removed from the analysis. All data was destroyed upon publication of the report.**

Researchers acknowledge the sensitivity and complexity of self-identification and the construct of gender in many communities, particularly within Indigenous communities. This report follows the practices regarding identity put forth by the Indigenous Screen Office, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, the Black Screen Office, and the work undertaken by the Equity and Inclusion in Data Collection roundtable led by the CMF, as they relate to the scope and purpose of this report. Practices and ideas about identification are continuously evolving. For example, as of this report's publication, the ISO no longer calls its process "self-identification", and instead invites individuals to describe the places, names, living connections that place them in their communities. Future versions of the On Screen report will continue adapting the methodology in accordance with these evolving practices.

### Reporting

The dataset studied for WIVOS23, which now includes documentary projects, has grown considerably from previous reports. Accordingly, this report focuses on *share of projects and investments* more than changes in absolute numbers to provide a more reliable view of year-over-year changes and to draw comparisons across genres.

To protect the privacy, confidentiality, and safety of creatives included in this study, not all identity data collected could be reported on in the analysis. If a subgroup contained fewer than 4 creatives, this intersectional group was not reported on separately. For example, the race/ethnicity of non-binary creatives is not reported on at the individual level in this report.

### Key Terms

**Gender diverse** is used in this report to describe people who do not identify as cisgender men or women. This includes non-binary people, transgender women, transgender men, and genderfluid people. When the term "women" is used in this report, it means the data referred to contain only creatives who self-identify as women. The use of gender diverse did not change the number of creatives included in the dataset; it is a shift in language to better represent the experiences of creatives who encounter systemic barriers to access related to their gender.

**Intersectional/Intersectionality** is an analytical framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw<sup>1</sup> for understanding how aspects of a person's identities intersect to create different modes of discrimination, access, and privilege. WIVOS23 expanded to collect self-identification on several identity markers, including

1 Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

## Introduction (continued)

race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. The intersectional analysis undertaken in WIVOS23 recognizes that a person's lived experience is shaped by the way their identities intersect, and the way the sector perceives and interacts with those intersections. Based on the data available and a commitment to preserving the privacy and confidentiality of key creatives contained in the dataset, WIVOS23 focuses on the intersection of gender identity and race/ethnicity. For the first time, Black women and Women of Colour were reported on separately. The representation of women and gender diverse identities within racial/ethnic groups is also reported on whenever possible.

**Parity** refers to the proportional representation of men and women in a group; it is a ratio of two genders.

**Equity** refers to the elimination of disparities between groups based on identity; it refers to the elimination of disparities between groups based on identity; the process of fairly allocating resources, programs, and decision-making.

WIVOS23 adopts a lens of equity in its consideration of how work is distributed to and amongst women and gender diverse creatives. Since parity remains the industry's benchmark, both terms are used in this report but should not be understood as the same; rather, to accurately consider parity, it must include equity.

**Credit** is used to refer to per episode employment. Each series employs one or more writers, directors, and cinematographers. Each instance of employment on an episode is referred to here as a credit. In some cases, credit and episode are used interchangeably.

**Key creative** is used to refer to writing, directing, producing, cinematography, and showrunning collectively.

## Limitations

**Identity.** While WIVOS23 endeavoured to apply a comprehensive, intersectional lens to the data, many groups were too small to report on separately while protecting the privacy and identities of individuals involved. Identities that were particularly affected by a lack of representation in the data include:

- Women and gender diverse people with disabilities
- Non-binary people
- Black women
- Indigenous gender diverse people

**Funds.** The funding examined for both past and current On Screen reports has been core funding from the CMF and Telefilm Canada. While these funds represent much of the funding available in Canada, several other private and specialized funds are also available.

**Language.** This study includes only English-language programming.

## Disclosure Statement

The research firm that produced the On Screen report (Quilin) has been engaged in several equity-based research projects in the sector over the last five years. A number of these research projects are referenced in this report, as their findings provide useful context and insight to the On Screen analysis. Only publicly-available information from these studies has been incorporated into the On Screen report.

# 2020 & 2021 REVEALED FRAGILE PROGRESS, WITH PARITY GAINS AND LOSSES

Canada's Screen Media Sector is in a period of transition. The intersecting crises of COVID-19, civil rights, and the social justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, #StopAsianHate) continue to amplify demands for change and sector accountability.

This period has given rise to several pioneering research projects that have provided new insights about how sector infrastructure, culture and practices contribute to the system of barriers to access faced by underrepresented creatives. During this same time, screen sector gatekeepers have reinforced their commitments to increasing equity through updated DEI strategies, the introduction of new specialized funds, and moves toward more consistent data practices (e.g., the introduction of Persona-ID and other self-identification methods for 2022 reporting). Collaboration between sector gatekeepers and equity groups (e.g., the Equity and Inclusion in Data Collection (EIDC) round table) continues to build, informing anticipated changes to sector practices.

**Overall, there is hopeful momentum forward.**

The funding years examined for WIVOS23, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, bridged the most intense periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, which directly impacted production, development, and funding. These losses tended to impact women and non-binary creatives more than men, especially in English-language television.

In film, women and gender diverse producers experienced reductions in 2020 and 2021, but women and gender diverse writers and directors maintained or improved upon parity gains from 2019. These varied results imply that public commitments to parity are making encouraging progress. And, the sector is not yet where it needs to be.

## English-language Television

Women and non-binary creatives experienced an overall decrease in share of work on English-language television projects in 2020 and 2021.

	2020	2021
Percentage of women and gender diverse key creatives employed	33%	39%
Share of key creative work in television (% credits)	28%	31%

## Writers

- Women and gender diverse writers **received less work** in 2020 (38%) and 2021 (42%) compared to 2019.

## Directors

- Women and gender diverse directors received less work on English-language drama series in 2020 (41%) and 2021 (42%) versus 2019 (50%).
- On documentary series, women and gender diverse directors received even fewer credits in 2020 (22%) and 2021 (17%).

## Cinematographers

- Women and gender diverse cinematographers continue to have the least share of work of all key creative roles, which decreased in 2020 (6%) and 2021 (10%) versus 2019 (17%).

## English-language Film

### Producers

- English-language film projects produced by women and gender diverse producers reduced from over 50% in 2019 to 43% in 2020 and 2021.
- Funding decreased for women and gender diverse producers from 48% of the total investment in 2019, to 42% in 2020 and 2021.
- Meanwhile, men gained share of investment from 2019 (52%) to 58% in 2020 and 2021.

### Writers

- Women and gender diverse writers **retained parity** in 2020 and 2021 receiving 51% of the English-language writing credits.
- Representation among women and gender diverse creatives also improved, with Indigenous women, Black women, and Women of Colour writers gaining share in 2020 & 2021.

### Directors

- Women and gender diverse people directed 54% of English-language films produced in 2020 and 2021, with 51% of Telefilm Canada's investment.

# DIFFERENTIATING THE DATA OF WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE INDIGENOUS, BLACK, & PEOPLE OF COLOUR REVEAL INEQUALITIES *WITHIN* PARITY

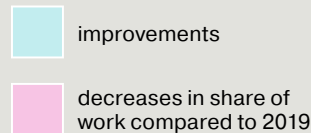
## Indigenous Women and Gender Diverse Creatives

Indigenous women and gender diverse creators have featured strongly in recent calls for support and representation (e.g., WIVOS19 & 21), with losses in share of work in television.

### Percent of work in key creative roles for Indigenous women and gender diverse creatives (television & film)

Television	2019	2020-21	Total Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	1.7%	1.0%	42.0%
Writing	0.8%	0.5%	43.0%
Cinematography	—	0.0%	13.0%

Film	2020-21	Total Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	9.0%	54.0%
Writing	8.0%	50.0%
Producing	6.0%	46.0%



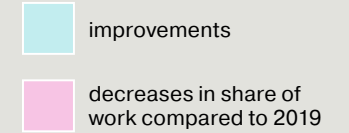
## Women and Gender Diverse People of Colour Creatives

Women of Colour lost many of the gains they reported in 2019, in both television and film.

### Percent of work in key creative roles for Women of Colour (television & film)

Television	2019	2020-21	Total Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	12.0%	14.0%	42.0%
Writing	4.6%	3.0%	43.0%
Cinematography	2.8%	7.0%	13.0%

Film	2020-21	Total Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	9.0%	54.0%
Writing	7.0%	50.0%
Producing	6.0%	46.0%

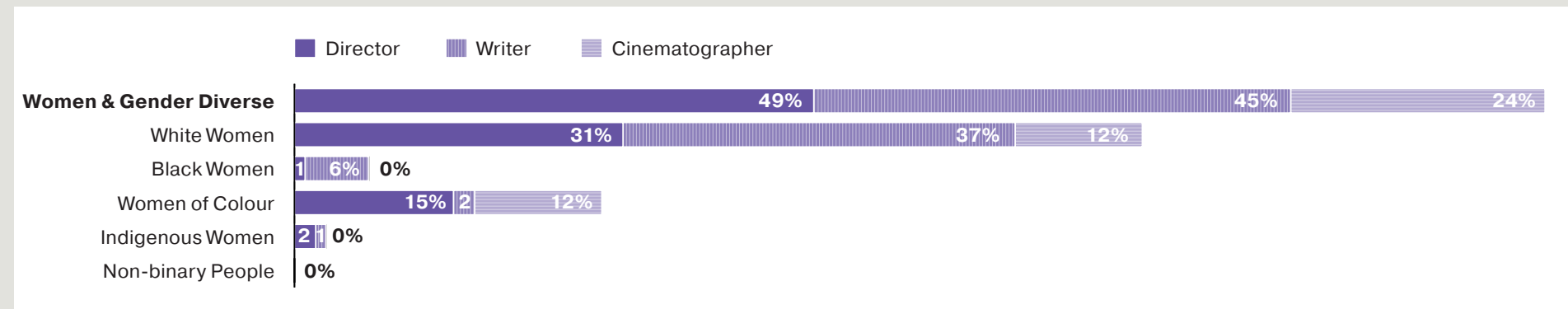


Differentiating the data of women and gender diverse Indigenous, Black, & People of Colour reveal inequalities *within* parity (continued)

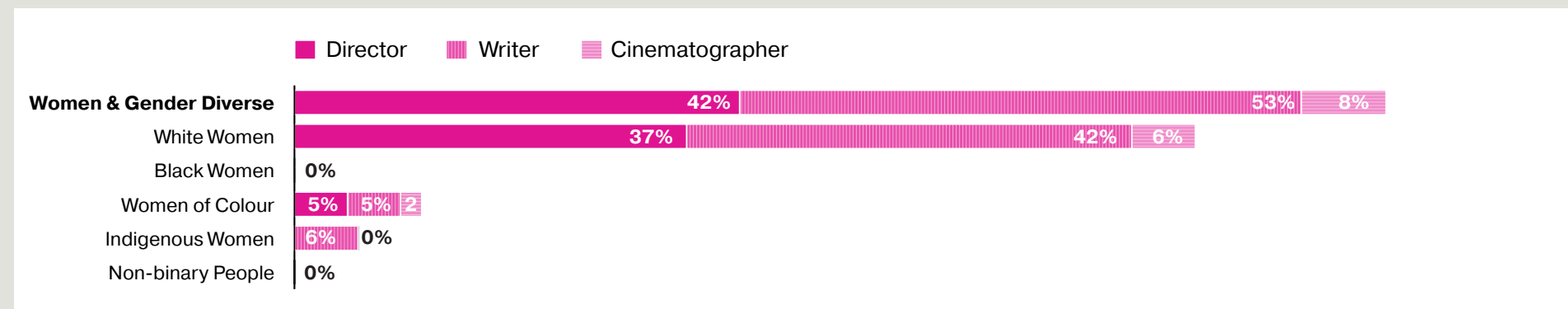
Broadcasters who maintained their parity commitments through 2020 and 2021 did so by employing white women.

**CBC**

**Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Credits in Drama Series (N= 2060 key creative credits)**



**Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Credits in Documentary Series (N= 308 total key creative credits)**



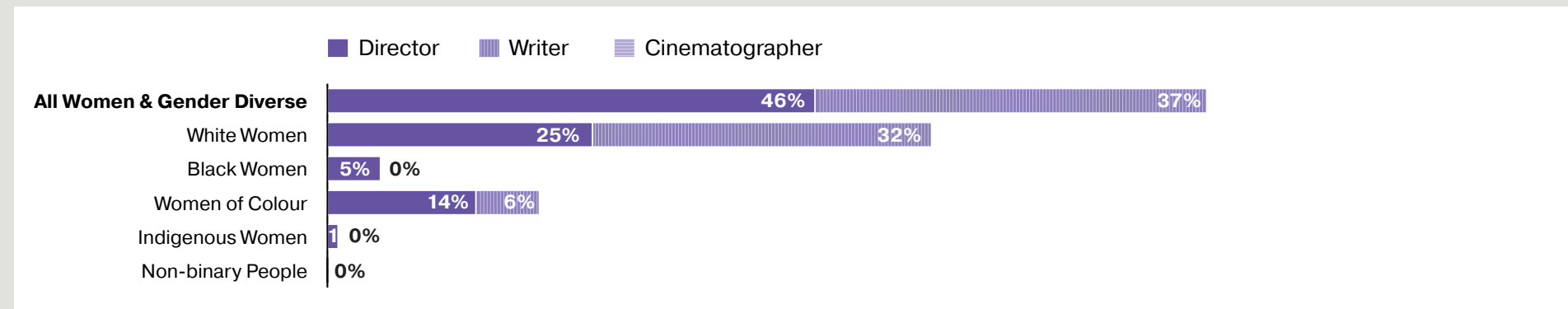


Differentiating the data of women and gender diverse Indigenous, Black, & People of Colour reveal inequalities *within* parity (continued)

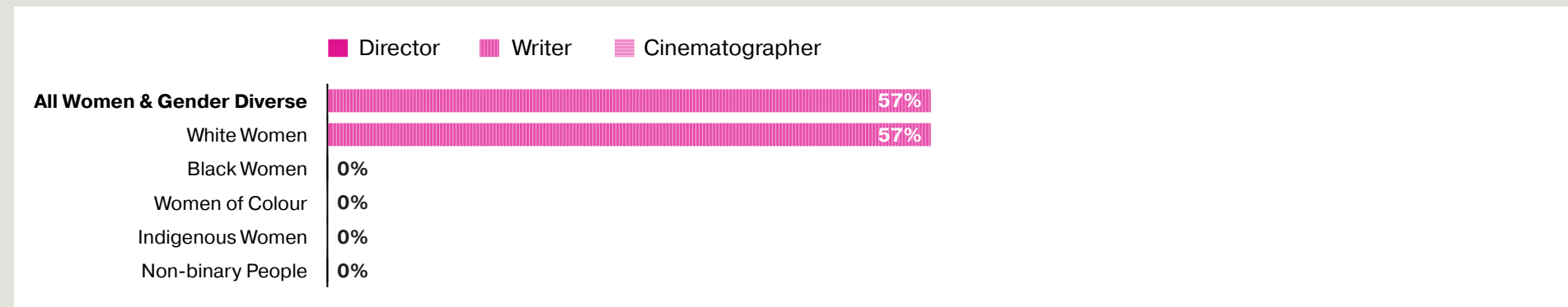
Women and gender diverse creatives did not receive any cinematography credits on any English-language series (drama and documentary) commissioned by Rogers in 2020 and 2021. Women and gender diverse creatives also did not receive any director credits on English-language documentary series commissioned by Rogers in 2020 and 2021.

Rogers

Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Work in Drama Series (N=353 key creative credits)



Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Work in Documentary Series (N=94 total key creative credits)

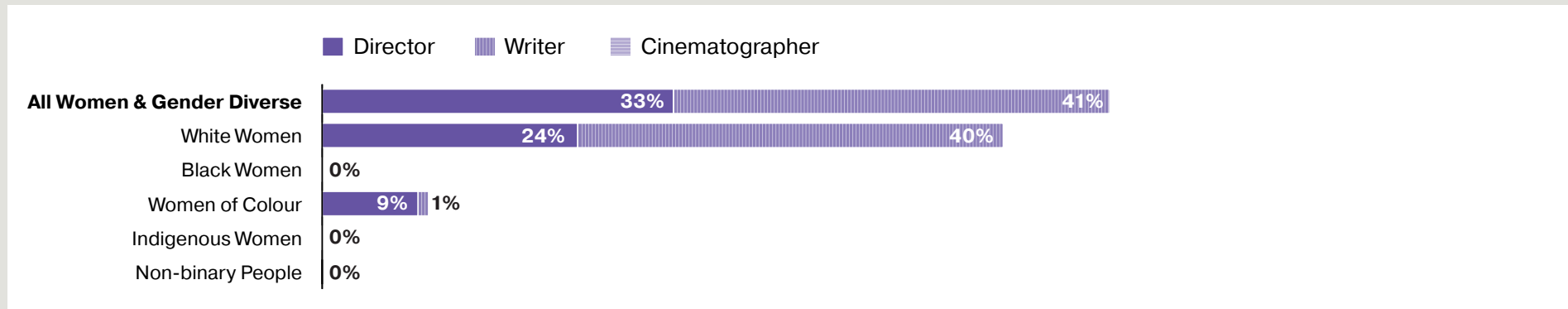


Differentiating the data of women and gender diverse Indigenous, Black, & People of Colour reveal inequalities *within* parity (continued)

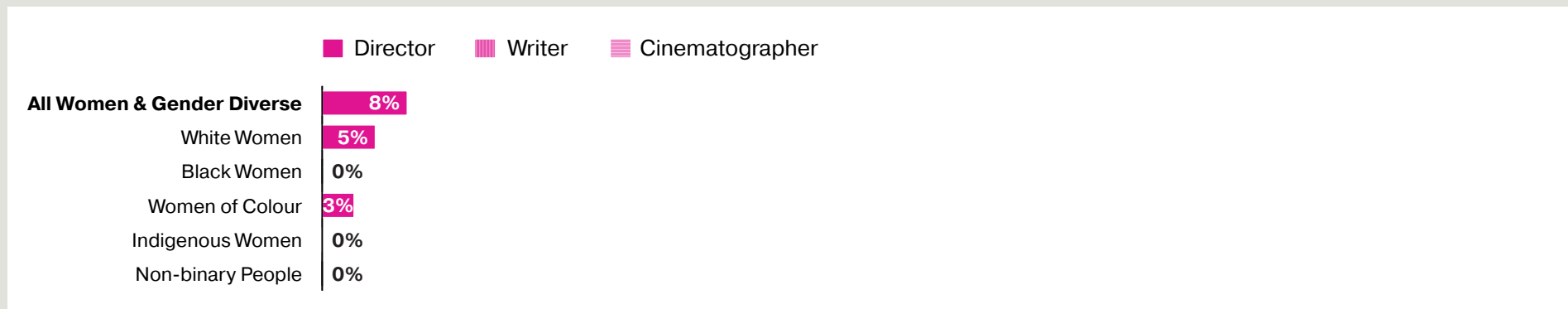
Women and gender diverse creatives did not receive cinematography credits on any series (drama or documentary) commissioned by Corus in 2020 and 2021.  
 Women and gender diverse creatives did not receive any writing credits on documentary series commissioned by Corus in 2020 and 2021.

**Corus**

**Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Credits in Drama Series (N=195 total key creative credits)**



**Women and Gender Diverse Share of Key Creative Credits in Documentary Series (N=235 total key creative credits)**



# BLACK WOMEN CREATIVES ARE THE LEAST SUPPORTED BY A SIGNIFICANT MARGIN

**Black women creatives have the lowest representation across all key creative roles, lead the fewest projects, and receive the least funding.**

Black women are also the most isolated, as the least likely creatives to occupy key creative roles on projects that were *not* led by Black women.

The stark differences in the experiences of Black women creatives have, in previous years, been hidden in the data representing Women of Colour, underscoring the necessity of distinguishing the experiences of Black women through data.

These results reinforce the findings reported extensively in recent studies by the Black Screen Office and WIFT Alberta, detailing the ways Black women encounter both gender bias and anti-Black racism that create systematic barriers to access at every level throughout the sector.

## Television

**Percentage of key creative credits to Black women on English-language drama series**

Drama	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	1%	42%
Writing	5%	43%
Cinematography	0%	13%

**Percentage of key creative credits to Black women on English-language documentary series**

Documentary	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Directing	0%	20%
Writing	0%	35%
Cinematography	0%	5%

**Employment of Black women in key creative roles by showrunner in English-language television**

Employment by Showrunner	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Men-led	1%	11%
Women-led	3%	51%
Mixed-team	0%	40%

## Film

**Share of producing credits to Black women on English-language films**

Producing	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Share of Producing credits	2%	46%
Share of investment	1%	33%
Average investment/project	\$155K	\$390K

**Share of directing credits to Black women on English-language films**

Directing	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Share of Directing credits	2%	54%
Share of investment	1%	51%
Average investment/project	\$208K	\$501K

None of the projects produced or directed by Black women were funded for more than \$500K in 2020 & 2021.

**Share of writing credits to Black women on English-language films**

Writing	Black Women	All Women & Gender Diverse
Share of Drama Film Writing credits	2%	50%
Share of Documentary Film Writing credits	5%	76%

**Share of key creative credits to Black women by producer on English-language films**

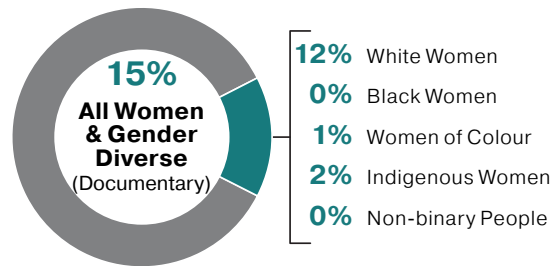
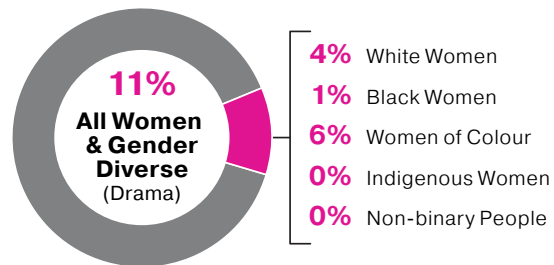
	% Black Women hired		All Women & Gender Diverse	
	writing	directing	writing	directing
Men producers	0%	0%	78%	78%
Black women producers	100%	100%	100%	100%
Indigenous women & gender diverse producers	0%	0%	85%	100%
Women & gender diverse People of Colour producers	0%	0%	100%	100%
White women producers	3%	3%	55%	48%

# WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE CREATIVES IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

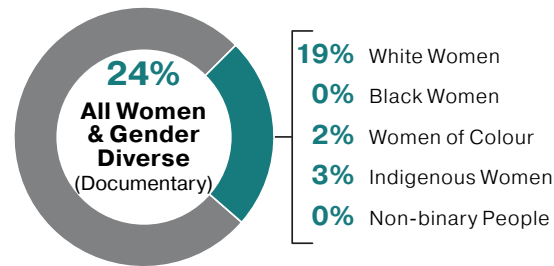
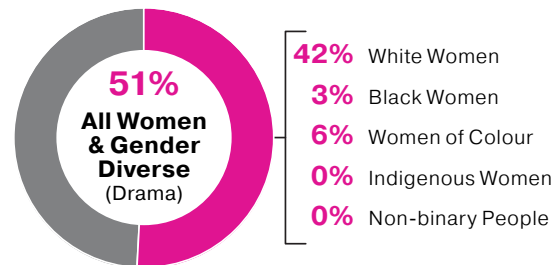
Gender representation in decision-making roles, even in mixed gender environments, significantly increases the share of credits awarded to women and gender diverse creatives across all key creative roles.

## Television

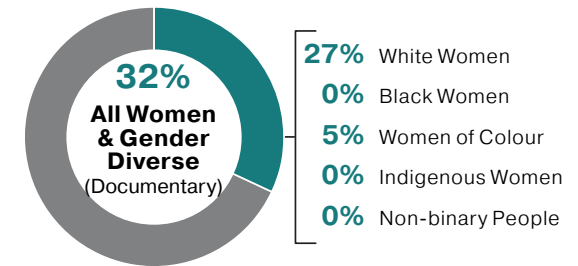
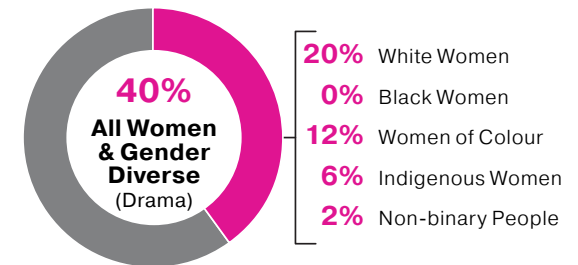
### Women and Gender Diverse Share of Work: Men-Led Series



### Women and Gender Diverse Share of Work: Women-Led Series



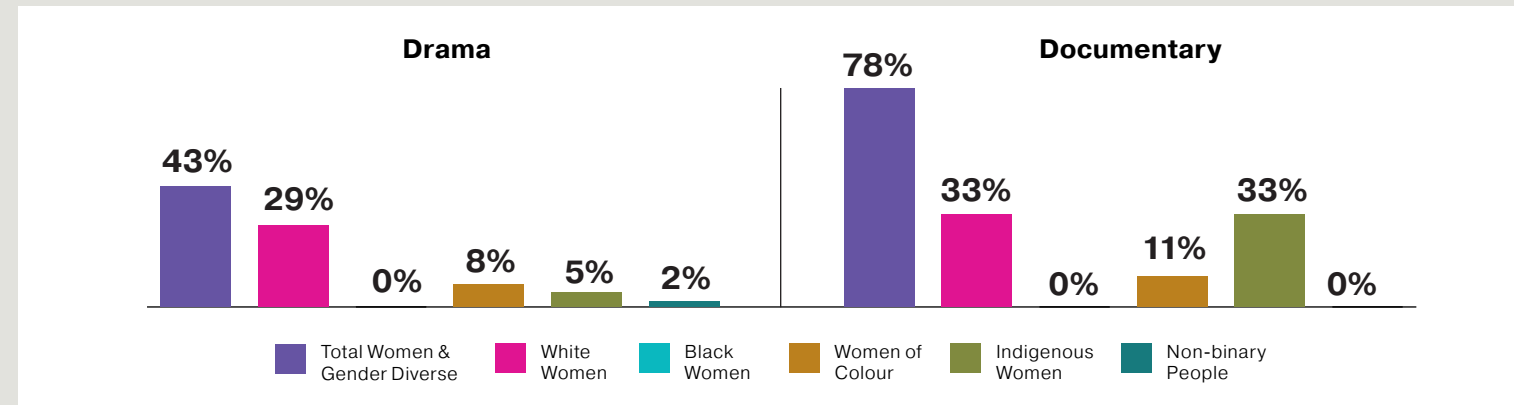
### Women and Gender Diverse Share of Work: Mixed-Led Series



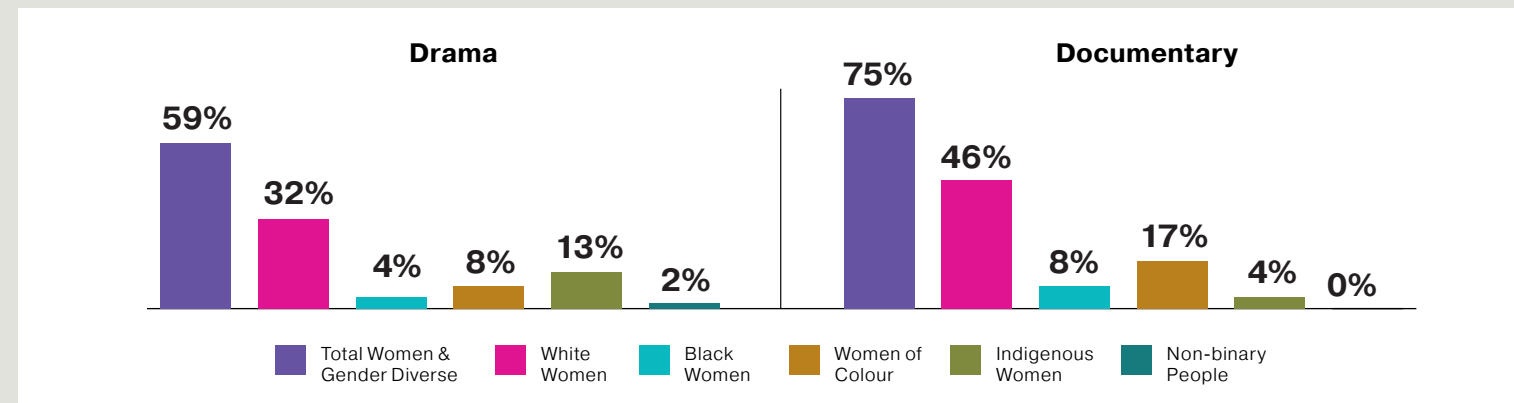
Women and gender diverse creatives in decision-making roles make a big difference (continued)

Film

Women and Gender Diverse Share of Work on Men-Produced Films



Women and Gender Diverse Share of Work on Women-Produced Films



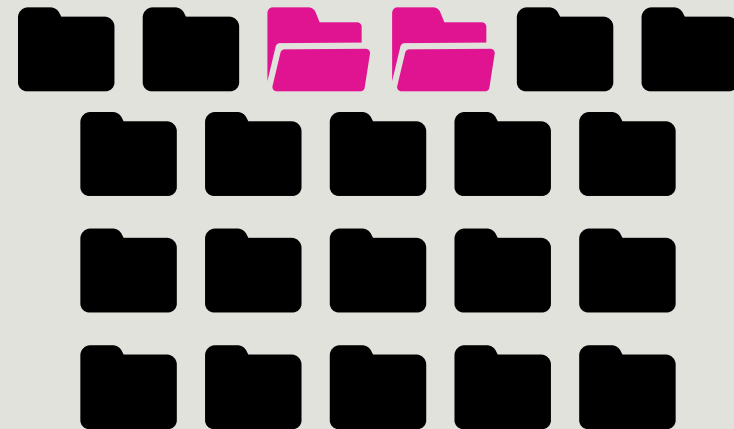
# LACK OF DATA COLLECTION & TRANSPARENCY IS DETRIMENTAL TO PROGRESS

Out of **21** funds examined for this project, only **two** funders could make their data available.

Research studies conducted between 2020 and 2022 by several equity organizations, including the Black Screen Office, the Indigenous Screen Office, and The Racial Equity Media Collective continue to underscore the way traditional research and measurement practices limit the creation of authentic and representative<sup>2</sup> screen content and how larger gaps in data collection and transparency<sup>3</sup> work against Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour creatives in the sector.

The absence of transparent, consistent data collection and sharing practices across the sector is inhibiting our shared understanding of the sector’s progress toward gender equity, and the ability to make evidence-based investments in structural interventions that create lasting change.

As of 2022, Telefilm and the CMF are demonstrating increased leadership in data collection, transparency and collaboration. Ontario Creates and Creative BC have also introduced greater transparency and access to their funding data.



WOMEN IN VIEW

PAGE 14

---

2 Black Screen Office.(2022).[Being Counted: Canadian Race-Based Audience Survey.](#)

3 REMC (2021). [Evaluating Racial equity in Canada’s Screen Sector.](#)

# CONCLUSIONS

## Parity commitments are not being met consistently.

While some stakeholders seemed to remain steadfast in their commitments to parity throughout 2020 and 2021, the overall momentum that appeared to be building in 2019 was significantly compromised in 2020 and 2021.

In our last report, we hypothesized that women's participation in the screen sector workforce would be most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (compared to men). This hypothesis was confirmed, with the share of work and investments received by women and gender diverse creatives reducing markedly, from 48% of the total investment in 2019 to 35% (in 2020) and 31% (in 2021).

Indigenous women, Black women, and Women of Colour were the most significantly impacted. In fact, most of the losses documented for women and gender diverse creatives were experienced by Black women and Women of Colour.

**These findings suggest that the hard-earned progress that began to pick up speed in 2019, is fragile, and that more sustainable infrastructure is required to assure that parity – and importantly, equity – gains withstand external market pressures.**

## Parity is not the same as equity

While all women and gender diverse people face barriers to equality (relative to men), the distribution of access among women and gender diverse creatives tells a very different story.

Parity statistics tend to reflect the experiences of white women, who, in this report, had between two and ten times the share of work of other women and gender diverse creatives.

When parity statistics are reported as an aggregate (i.e., all women and gender diverse creatives together), the gains enjoyed by white women mask the markedly slower progress, and in some cases, the losses, faced by Indigenous women, Black women, and Women of Colour. In turn, this reporting may perpetuate the systemic oppressions faced by Indigenous women, Black women, Women of Colour, and other gender diverse people.

Equity-deserving organizations have consistently expressed concerns about the sustainability of the sector's interests in DEI efforts that seem heralded by the intersecting social pressures of 2020 and 2021. The differential experiences of Black women and Women of Colour relative to white women outlined in this study, especially as they relate to the pandemic, should be viewed as indicators of where current commitments remain vulnerable and insufficient.

## Binary definitions of gender are not inclusive

Although the data in this report still did not have sufficient representation among non-binary creatives to permit a complete, intersectional analysis, the research process surfaced the pressing importance of re-examining definitions of gender used by the sector, and its role in the way diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are conceived, implemented, and evaluated. The sector continues to engage a binary understanding of gender – men and women – which inherently excludes non-binary and other gender diverse creatives from being fully represented by the data.

**This includes feminized language used around parity discussions, which we have learned can lead individuals to exclude themselves from the analysis because this framing might not reflect their experience of gender and identity.**

## Conclusions (continued)

### Representation in data is critical

These findings add to the mounting evidence that umbrella terms (e.g., BIPOC, “racialized”) that collapse distinct groups of creatives together are harmful when they make communities of creatives invisible to the sector. Collecting and reporting on data using higher order groupings risks building a narrative of equity that does not match the lived experiences of many creatives. Without these insights, the efforts made to build a more equitable sector will inevitably be inadequate and threaten to further entrench systemic barriers to access faced by Indigenous women and gender diverse creatives, Black women, Women of Colour, and other gender diverse people.

Identity data for Black creatives, and People of Colour creatives must be represented distinctly at every stage, from self-identification and collection, through to analysis and reporting.

Although this practice has been adopted by some funders and stakeholders, the lack of data available for this study suggests an opportunity for standardization.

This is true for the identity data representing all underrepresented communities (i.e., avoid umbrella terms in the collection and analysis of data).

### Numbers, alone, can hide structural inequalities

Numbers without context can hide structural inequalities and risk misleading assessments of progress toward equity.

Statistics, alone, do not reveal structural barriers (obstacles that collectively affect a group disproportionately and perpetuate or maintain stark disparities in outcomes) and cannot direct structural interventions (interventions that change behaviours and practices, policies, organizational structures, service systems, and power structures).