

**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FACT SHEET: A Project of Women Leaders Count**

Fall 2012

**WOMEN IN THE U.S. FILM INDUSTRY**

The Institute for Women's Leadership is committed to increasing the numbers of women in decision making and leadership positions across all sectors and professions. Our series of Women's Leadership Fact Sheets is designed to increase awareness of women's current progress and continued underrepresentation. This Fact Sheet spotlights feature and festival films, demonstrating the extremely low representation of women both on the screen and behind-the-scenes in the U.S. film industry. It is the first in a series on women and media produced in collaboration with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

In leadership positions and roles in the U.S. film industry, women represent 25 percent or less of the work force. In 2011, in the top 250 domestic grossing films, women were only 5 percent of directors. In 2011, women were 14 percent of writers, 18 percent of executive producers, 25 percent of producers, and 4 percent of cinematographers. Over time, the percentages of women in behind-the-scenes leadership roles in film stagnated, or increased minimally. For example, women producers increased only one percent between 1998 and 2011, while women cinematographers and executive producers remained at the same percentages.

Women's Leadership Behind-The-Scenes in U.S. Top 250 Films					
	1998		2011		Percentage
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
<b>Directors</b>	9 %	81 %	5 %	95 %	4 % Decrease
<b>Writers</b>	13 %	87 %	14 %	86 %	1 % Increase
<b>Executive Producers</b>	18 %	82 %	18 %	82 %	No Change
<b>Producers</b>	24 %	76 %	25 %	75 %	1 % Increase
<b>Cinematographers</b>	4 %	96%	4 %	96 %	No Change

Women hold more behind-the-scenes leadership roles working on documentary films than on high-grossing narrative feature films.<sup>1</sup> In general, the more money involved in the making of a film, the less women are likely to be represented. Documentaries involve smaller budgets and crews and therefore more opportunities for women to produce their films independently. For example, in 2011-2012, 39 percent of documentary directors were women, while only 5 percent of all top-

Women's Leadership Behind-The-Scenes in Documentary Films shown at Top Festivals					
	2008-2009		2011-2012		Percentage
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
<b>Directors</b>	28 %	72 %	39 %	61 %	11 % Increase
<b>Writers</b>	28 %	72 %	32 %	68 %	4 % Increase
<b>Executive Producers</b>	27 %	73 %	31 %	69 %	4 % Increase
<b>Producers</b>	39 %	61 %	35 %	65 %	3 % Decrease

grossing film directors were women (see above). Of all women directors working on festival films, 67 percent directed documentaries and 32 percent directed narrative films.



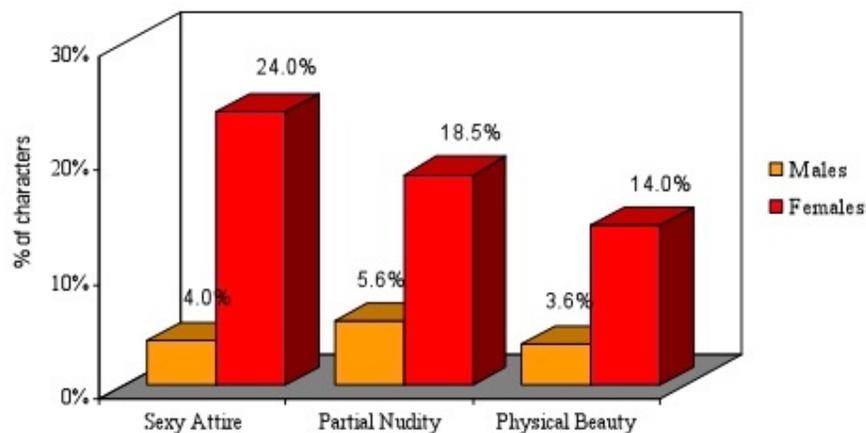
## WOMEN'S ON-SCREEN REPRESENTATION LINKED TO BEHIND-THE-SCENES LEADERSHIP

*Data compiled by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media*

Not only are women dramatically underrepresented behind the scenes in the U.S. film industry, they are also grossly underrepresented on the screen. Between 1977 and 2006, women made up only 27.3 percent of single speaking characters.<sup>ii</sup> In approximately three decades, gender imbalance of roles for females in best picture nominated films has not changed. Men have held approximately 75 percent of the roles, and women 25 percent.<sup>iii</sup> **Women directors make a difference. When there are one or more women directors, there is a 6.3 percent increase in on-screen representation of female characters. When there are one or more women as writers, there is a 10.4 percent increase.**<sup>iv</sup>

In addition, images of women on-screen are often problematic. For example, women in family films often serve as “eye candy.” A higher percentage of females (24%) than males (4%) are shown in sexy, tight, or alluring attire. Females are more likely than their male counterparts to be “beautiful” (14 % versus 3.6%) and portrayed with some exposed skin between the mid chest and upper thigh regions (18.5% versus 5.6%).<sup>v</sup>

**Appearance Indicators by Character Gender**



Source: Stacy L. Smith and Marc Choueiti, “Gender Disparity On Screen and Behind the Camera in Family Films.”

<sup>i</sup> Martha M. Lauzen, “Independent Women: Behind-the-Scenes Representation on Festival Films,” (2012). Available at [http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/Independent\\_Women\\_Exec\\_Summ.pdf](http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/Independent_Women_Exec_Summ.pdf). Some of the widely recognized festivals included in this sample of 23 are the Sundance Film Festival, the Tribeca Film Festival, the Los Angeles Film Festival, and the Chicago International Film Festival.

<sup>ii</sup> Stacy L. Smith, Marc Choueiti, Amy Granados, and Sarah Erickson, “Asymmetrical Academy Awards?: A Look at Gender Imbalance in Best Picture Nominated Films from 1977 to 2006,” 1. Available at <http://annenbergl.usc.edu/Faculty/Communication%20and%20Journalism/~media/1A4C785C6A42457282C1213466FE1C69.ashx>.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>iv</sup> Stacy L. Smith and Marc Choueiti, “Gender Disparity On Screen and Behind the Camera in Family Films: An Executive Summary,” 2.. Available at [http://www.seejane.org/downloads/KeyFindings\\_GenderDisparityFamilyFilms.pdf](http://www.seejane.org/downloads/KeyFindings_GenderDisparityFamilyFilms.pdf). This study examined 122 G, PG, PG-13 films released between September 6<sup>th</sup> 2006 and September 7<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid., 2.

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