

The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2017

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

Copyright © 2018 – All rights reserved.

The Celluloid Ceiling has tracked women's employment on top grossing films for the last 20 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 2017, women comprised 18% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 17% in 2016 and is virtually unchanged from the percentage achieved in 1998 (see Figure 1).

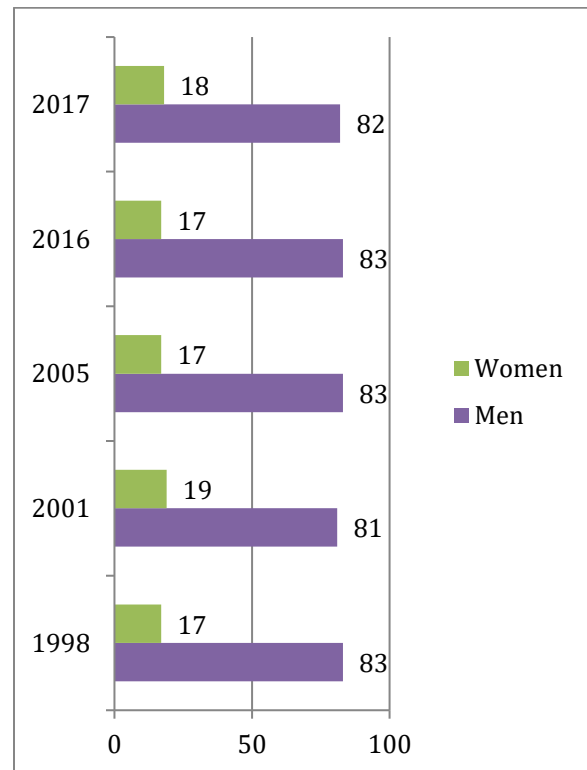
Last year, only 1% of films employed 10 or more women in the above roles. In contrast, 70% of films employed 10 or more men.

Women accounted for 11% of directors working on the top 250 films in 2017, up 4 percentage points from 7% in 2016 and even with the percentage achieved in 2000.

For the last 20 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 females 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 2017 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 2016. 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 and editors.

*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 3,011 individuals working on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2017.

- Women fared best as producers (25%), followed by executive producers (19%), editors (16%), writers (11%), directors (11%), and cinematographers (4%).

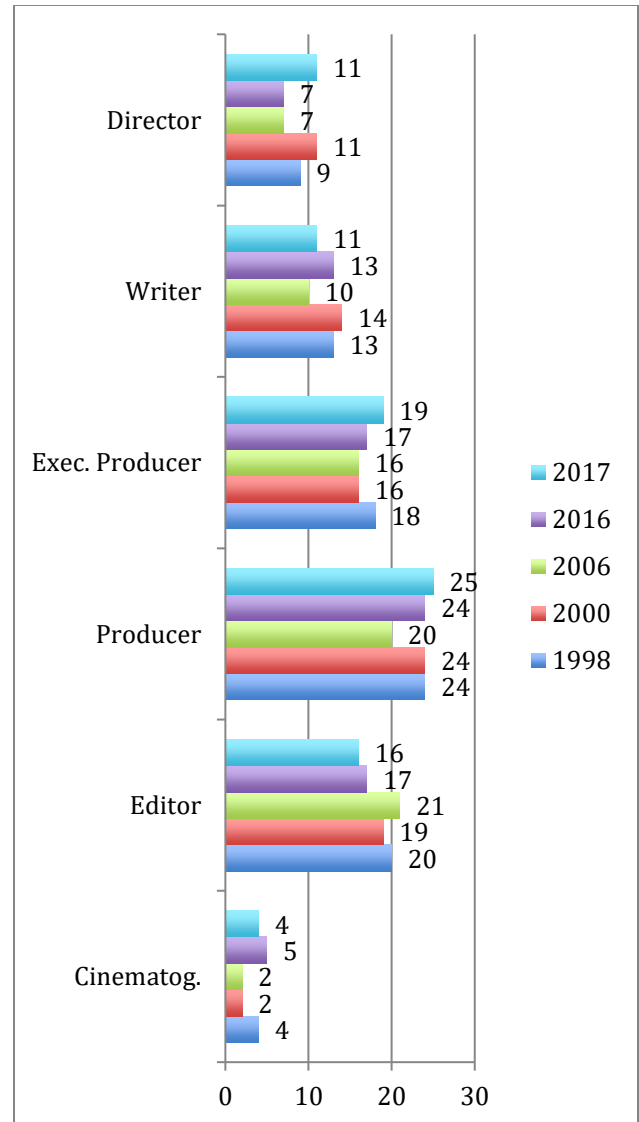
- In 2017, slightly less than one-third or 30% of films employed 0 or 1 woman in the roles considered. 59% of films employed 2 to 5 women, 10% employed 6 to 9 women, and 1% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 0% of films employed 0 or 1 man in the roles considered, 8% employed 2 to 5 men, 22% employed 6 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (70%) employed 10 or more men.

- A historical comparison of women’s employment in the top 250 films in 2017 and 1998 reveals that the percentages of directors, executive producers, and producers have increased. The percentages of writers and editors have 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 2017 and 2016 reveals that the percentages of women directors, producers, and executive producers increased, while the percentages of women working as writers, editors, and cinematographers declined.

- Women comprised 11% of all directors working on the top 250 films of 2017.

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



This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 2016, and is even with the percentage achieved in 2000. Eighty eight percent (88%) of the films had no female directors (see Figure 3).

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

88% had no women directors
 83% had no women writers
 45% had no women exec. producers
 28% had no women producers
 80% had no women editors
 96% had no women cinematographers

Slightly less than one-third or 30% of films had no or 1 woman in the above roles

- Women accounted for 11% of writers working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 2016 and from the figure achieved in 1998. Eighty three percent (83%) of the films had no female writers.

- Women comprised 19% of all executive producers working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 2016 and an increase of 1 percentage point from 1998. Forty five percent (45%) of the films had no female executive producers.

- Women accounted for 25% of all producers working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2016 and an increase of 1 percentage point from 1998. Twenty eight percent (28%) of the films had no female producers.

- Women comprised 16% of all editors working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 2016 and a decrease of 4 percentage points from 1998. Eighty percent (80%) of the films had no female editors.

- Women accounted for 4% of all cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 2016 and is even with the percentage achieved in 1998. Ninety six percent (96%) of the films had no female cinematographers.

Composers, Supervising Sound Editors, and Sound Designers

- This section reports employment figures for 517 individuals working as composers, supervising sound editors, and sound designers on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2017.

- Women comprised 3% of composers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2017. This represents no change from 2016 (see Figure 4). Ninety eight percent (98%) of films had no female composers in 2017.

- Women accounted for 8% of supervising sound editors working on the top 250 films of 2017. This represents no change from 2016. Ninety two percent (92%) of films had no female supervising sound editors.

- Women comprised 5% of sound designers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2017. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point from 2015. Ninety six percent (96%) 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 1,564 individuals working on the top 100 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2017.

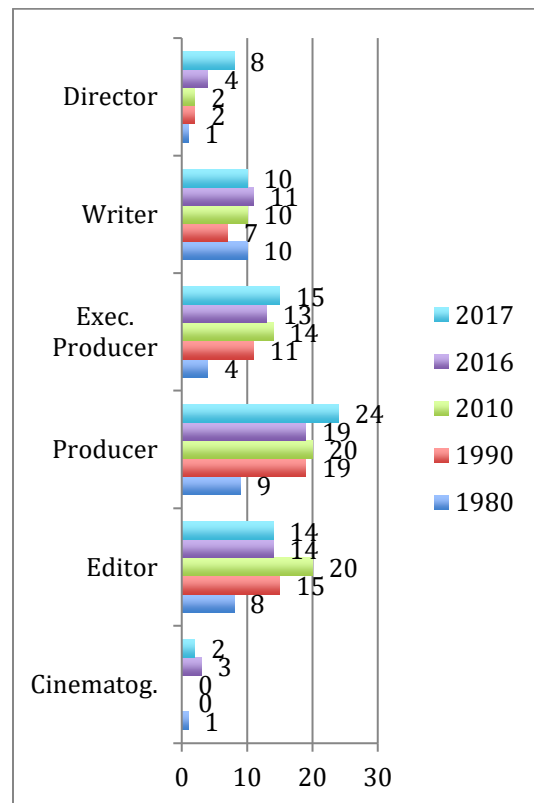
•Overall, women accounted for 16% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 films. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 14% in 2016, and is even with the percentage achieved in 2015.

•Women fared best as producers (24%), followed by executive producers (15%),

editors (14%), writers (10%), directors (8%), and cinematographers (2%).

•Figure 5 provides a historical comparison of the 2017 figures with those from 1980, 1990, 2010, and 2016. When comparing the most recent figures for 2017 with 2016, the percentages of women directors, producers, and executive producers have increased, while the percentages of women writers and cinematographers 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 8% of directors working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 4% in 2016.

- Women accounted for 10% of writers working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents a slight decline from 11% in 2016.

- Women comprised 15% of executive producers working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 13% in 2016.

- Women accounted for 24% of producers working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points from 19% in 2016.

- Women comprised 14% of editors working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents no change from 2016.

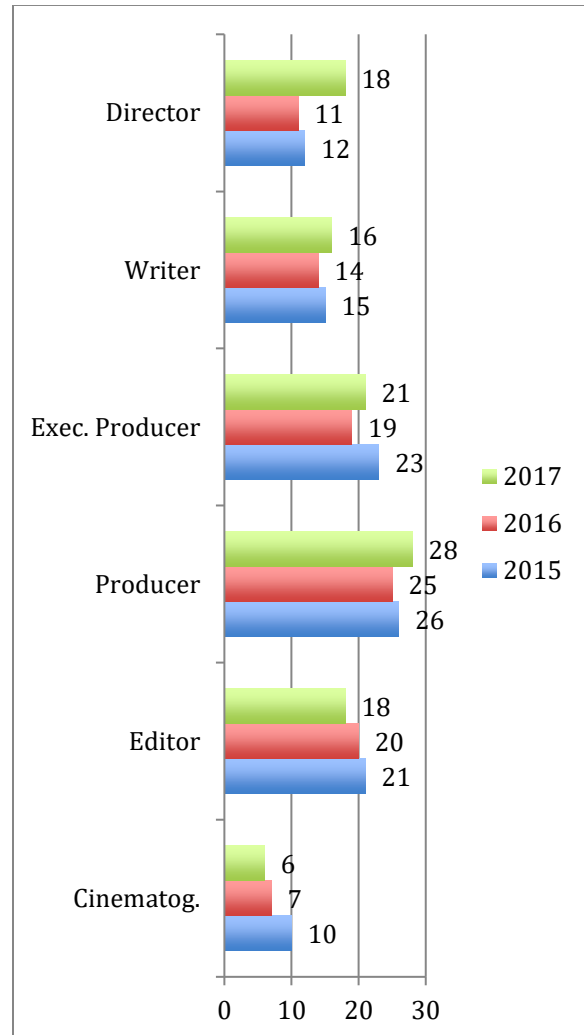
- Women accounted for 2% of cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2017. This represents a decline of 1 percentage point from 3% in 2016.

Findings / Top 500 Films

- This section analyzes the behind-the-scenes employment of 4,633 individuals working on the top 500 domestic grossing films (foreign films and reissues omitted) of 2017.

- Overall, women accounted for 21% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 500 films. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 2016, but

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



is even with the percentage achieved in 2015.

- By genre, the largest percentage of women, relative to men, worked in documentaries (30%), followed by comedies (23%), dramas (22%), sci-fi features (20%), animated features (19%), horror features (18%), and action features (13%).

- Women fared best as producers (28%), followed by executive producers (21%), directors (18%), editors (18%), writers (16%), and cinematographers (6%).

- Women comprised 18% of directors working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 7 percentage points from 11% in 2016, and 6 points from 12% in 2015 (see Figure 6).

- Women accounted for 16% of writers working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 14% in 2016, and 1 point from 15% in 2015.

- Women comprised 21% of executive producers working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 19% in 2016, but a decline of 2 points from 23% in 2015.

- Women accounted for 28% of producers working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 25% in 2016, and an increase of 2 points from 26% in 2015.

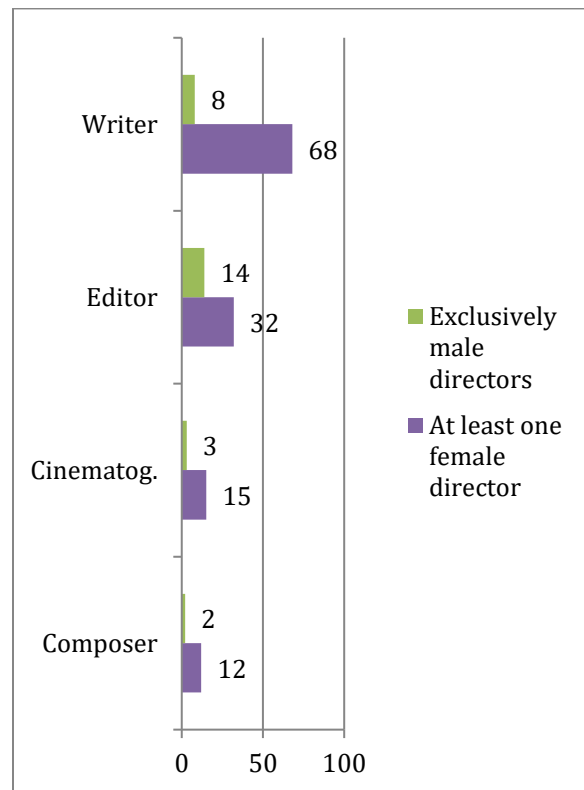
- Women comprised 18% of editors working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 20% in 2016, and a decline of 3 points from 21% in 2015.

- Women accounted for 6% of cinematographers working on the top 500 films of 2017. This represents a decrease of 1 percentage point from 7% in 2016, and a decline of 4 points from 10% in 2015.

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 greater percentages of women working as writers, editors, cinematographers, and composers than films with exclusively male directors (see Figure 7).

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



- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 68% of writers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 8% of writers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 32% of editors. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 14% of editors.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 15% of cinematographers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 3% of cinematographers.

- On films with at least one female director, women comprised 12% of composers. On films with exclusively male directors, women accounted for 2% of composers.