

# ***The Celluloid Ceiling in a Pandemic Year: Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2021***

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The pandemic has altered business models governing the release of U.S. films, decreasing the length of the theatrical window and increasing viewing at home. These changes have accelerated the need to reimagine and redefine the measurement of the commercial success of movies. While box office grosses continue to provide a partial measure of viewership, the increasing popularity of streaming necessitates consideration of metrics that also assess performance at home and in other venues. As the effects of the pandemic linger for a second year, chances grow that these changes are more likely to permanently alter viewing habits. It is important to document and understand how women’s employment fares in this evolving environment.

In an effort to recognize and accommodate these changes, this year’s *Celluloid Ceiling* study employs an analysis of films ordered by traditional box office grosses, as well as an analysis considering films viewed at home.

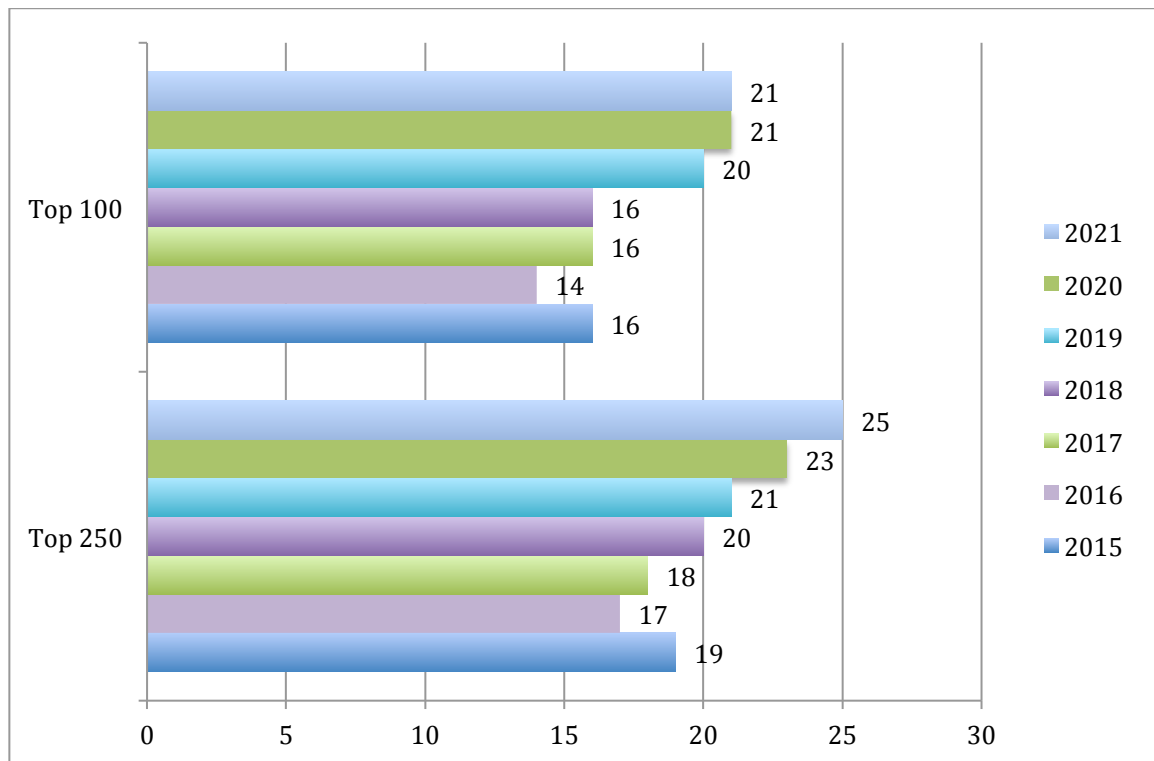
*The Celluloid Ceiling* has tracked women’s employment on the 250 top grossing films for the last 24 years. It is the longest-running and most comprehensive study of women’s behind-the-scenes employment in film available. This year’s study monitors women’s employment on the top 100 and 250 (domestic) grossing films of 2021. In addition, for the second consecutive year this report also considers women’s employment on recently released films included on the Digital Entertainment Group’s *Watched at Home* list. Taken together, these analyses document and inform our understanding of women’s continuing under-employment in key behind-the-scenes roles in film.

## Key Findings

•In 2021, women comprised 25% of directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 grossing films. This is up slightly from 23% in 2020. The percentage of women working on the top 100 films remained stable at 21% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top 100 and 250 Films\*

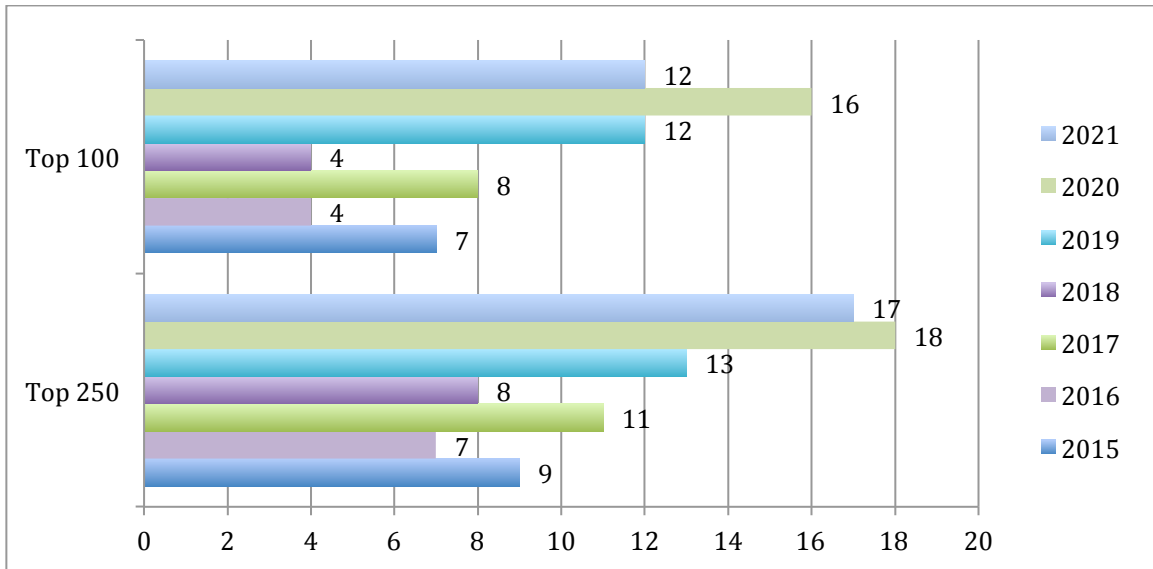


\*includes directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, cinematographers

•After reaching historic highs in 2020, the percentages of women working as directors on the top 250 and 100 films declined in 2021. Women accounted for 17% of directors working on the top 250 films, down from 18% in 2020. The percentage of women directors working on the top 100 films retreated from 16% in 2020 to 12% in 2021 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Comparison of Percentages of Women Directors Working on the Top 100 and 250 Films



- In 2021, 94% of the top 250 films had no women cinematographers, 92% had no women composers, 82% had no women directors, 73% had no women editors, and 72% had no women writers.

- In 2021, the majority of films (61%) employed 0 to 4 women in the roles considered, 32% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 8% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 4% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the roles considered, 25% employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (72%) employed 10 or more men.

- Taking the long view, the overall percentage of women in the behind-the-scenes roles considered has increased only 8 percentage points, from 17% in 1998 to 25% in 2021 (top 250 films).

- The percentage of women writers has increased only 4 percentage points from 13% in 1998 to 17% in 2021 (top 250 films).

- The percentage of women editors has increased only 2 percentage points from 20% in 1998 to 22% in 2021 (top 250 films).

- The percentage of women cinematographers has increased only 2 percentage points from 4% in 1998 to 6% in 2021 (top 250 films).
- The analysis of DEG's *Watched at Home* list reveals that women comprised 10% of directors, 13% of writers, 21% of executive producers, and 19% of editors on these films. These figures are slightly below those calculated using the top grossing films list. Based on the DEG's *Watched at Home* list, women accounted for 26% of producers and 8% of cinematographers. These figures are slightly above those calculated using the top grossing films list.

## ***Background***

For the last 24 years, *The Celluloid Ceiling* has tracked women's employment on the top 250 grossing films (international films and re-issues omitted). In later years, the study also considered the top 100 and 500 films.

The results of the study are divided into three major sections. The first section reports the findings for the top 250 (domestic) grossing films, offering comparisons of percentages from 2021 with figures dating from 1998. Due to the closure of many theaters over the last two years, comparisons between numbers from pandemic years -- 2021 and 2020 -- and previous years should be made with caution. This year's report monitored over 3,100 credits. Since 1998, the study has tracked more than 76,000 credits.

The second section provides the numbers for the top 100 (domestic) grossing films, comparing this year's figures with those from 1980, 1990, 2010, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. Figures for the top grossing films are based on numbers obtained from Box Office Mojo on January 1, 2022.

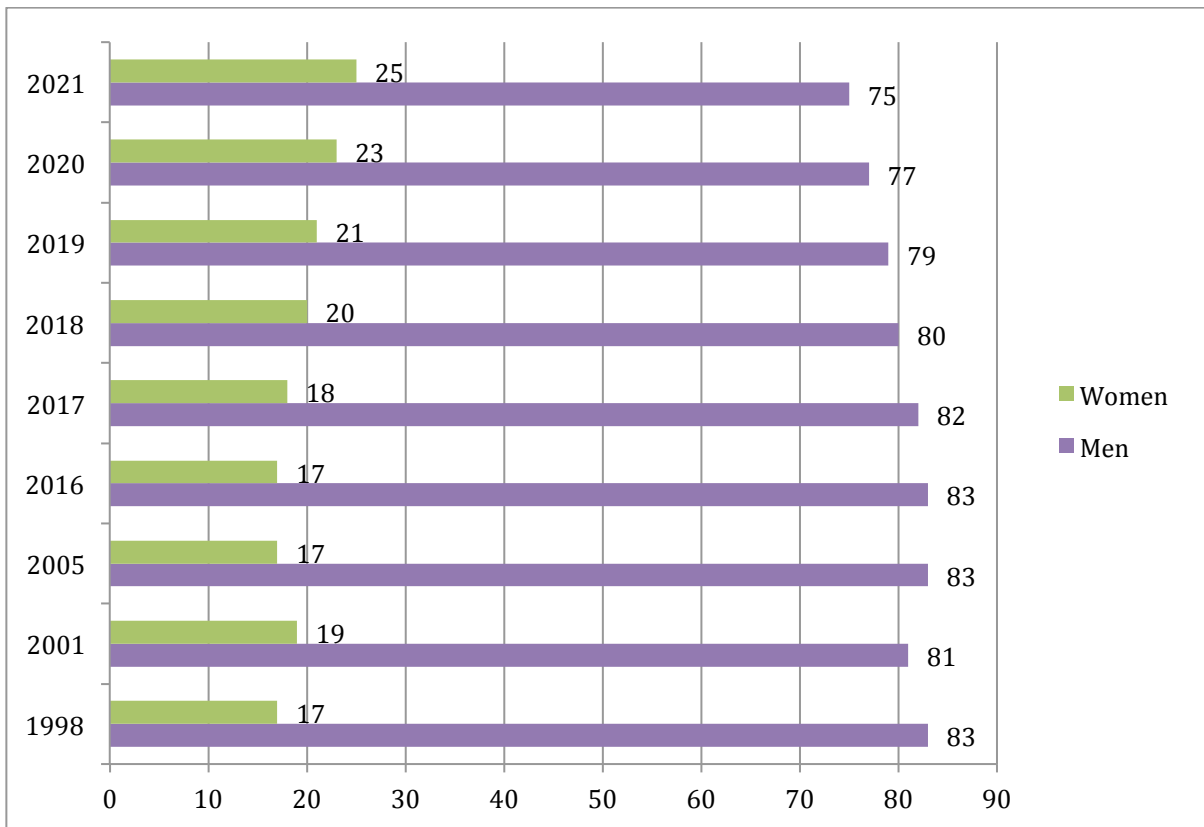
This year's study also analyzes women's employment on films included on the Digital Entertainment Group's *Top 20 Watched at Home* list from January through December 2021. The list includes U.S. digital sales, digital rentals (VOD), DVD and Blu-ray. This list does not include premium VOD. Every recently released (2020, 2021) U.S. film that appeared on the weekly list at least once was included. The third section discusses the findings of this analysis.

### ***Findings / Top 250 Films***

Women comprised 25% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2021. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 23% in 2020. It also represents a recent historic high (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3.*

*Historical Comparison of Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top 250 Films*



Women fared based as producers (32%), followed by executive producers (26%), editors (22%), writers (17%), directors (17%), and cinematographers (6%). Only two roles experienced increases in the percentages of women in 2021, executive producers and producers.

In 2021, the majority of films (61%) employed 0 to 4 women in the roles considered, 32% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 8% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 4% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the roles considered, 25% employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (72%) employed 10 or more men.

Women comprised 17% of all directors working on the top 250 films of 2021, down 1 percentage point from 18% in 2020. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 8 percentage points from 9% in 1998 (see Figure 4).

Women accounted for 17% of all writers working on the top 250 films of 2021, even with the figure achieved in 2020. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 13% in 1998.

Women made up 26% of all executive producers working on the top 250 films of 2021, up 5 percentage points from 21% in 2020. This is a recent historic high. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 8 percentage points from 18% in 1998.

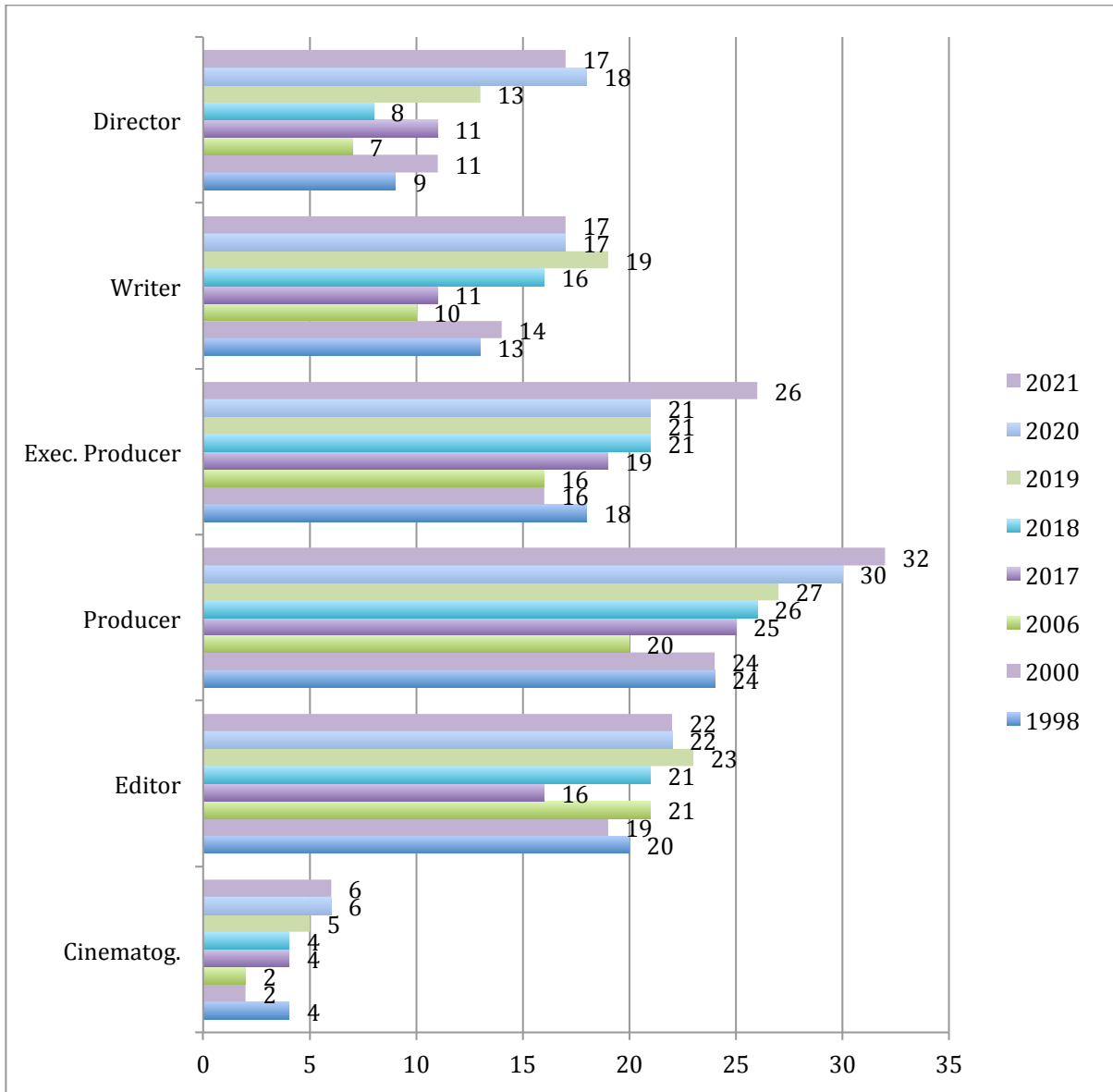
Women comprised 32% of all producers working on the top 250 films of 2021, an increase of 2 percentage points from 30% in 2020. This is a recent historic high. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 8 percentage points from 24% in 1998.

Women accounted for 22% of all editors working on the top 250 films of 2021, even with the figure achieved in 2020. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 20% in 1998.

Women made up 6% of all cinematographers working on the top 250 films of 2021, even with the percentage achieved in 2020. Taking the long view, this represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 4% in 1998.

Figure 4.

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



94% of the top 250 films had no women cinematographers, 82% had no women directors, 73% had no women editors, and 72% had no women writers.

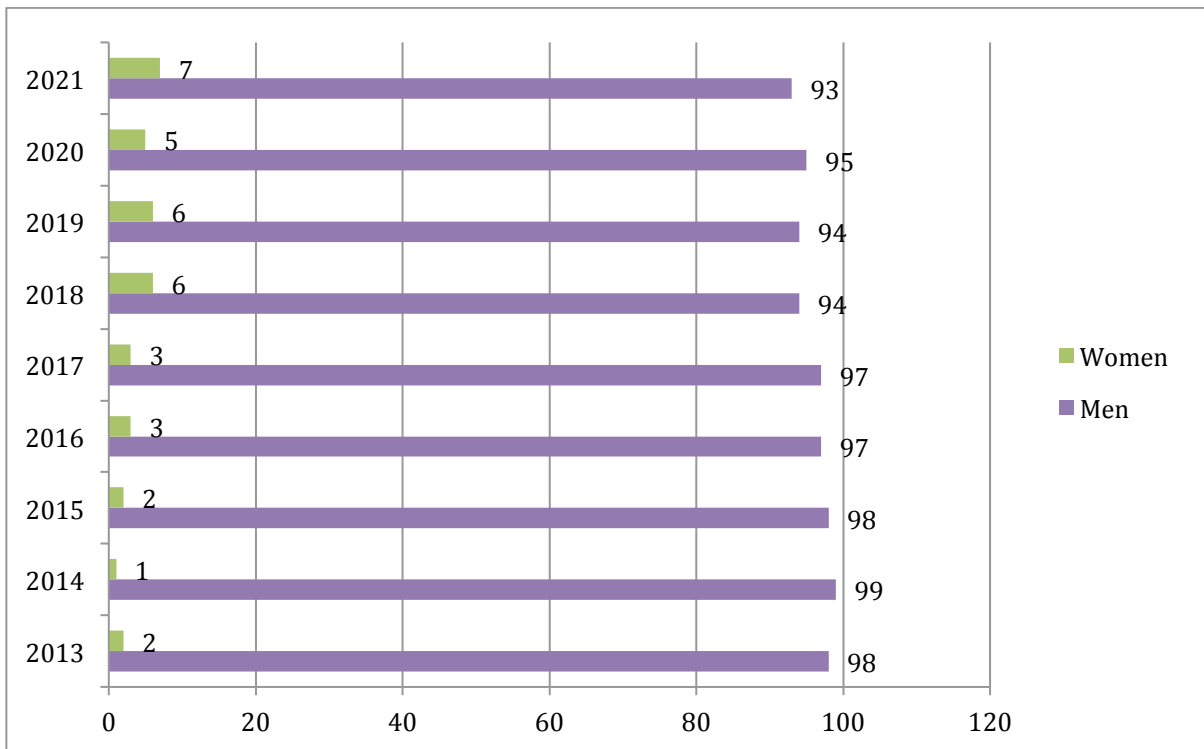


### *Additional Role / Composers*

Women comprised 7% of composers working on the top 250 grossing films of 2021 (see Figure 5). This represents an increase of 2 percentage points from 5% in 2020. 92% of films had no women composers in 2021.

*Figure 5.*

*Recent Historical Representation of Women and Men as Composers on the Top 250 Films*



### ***Findings/ Top 100 Films***

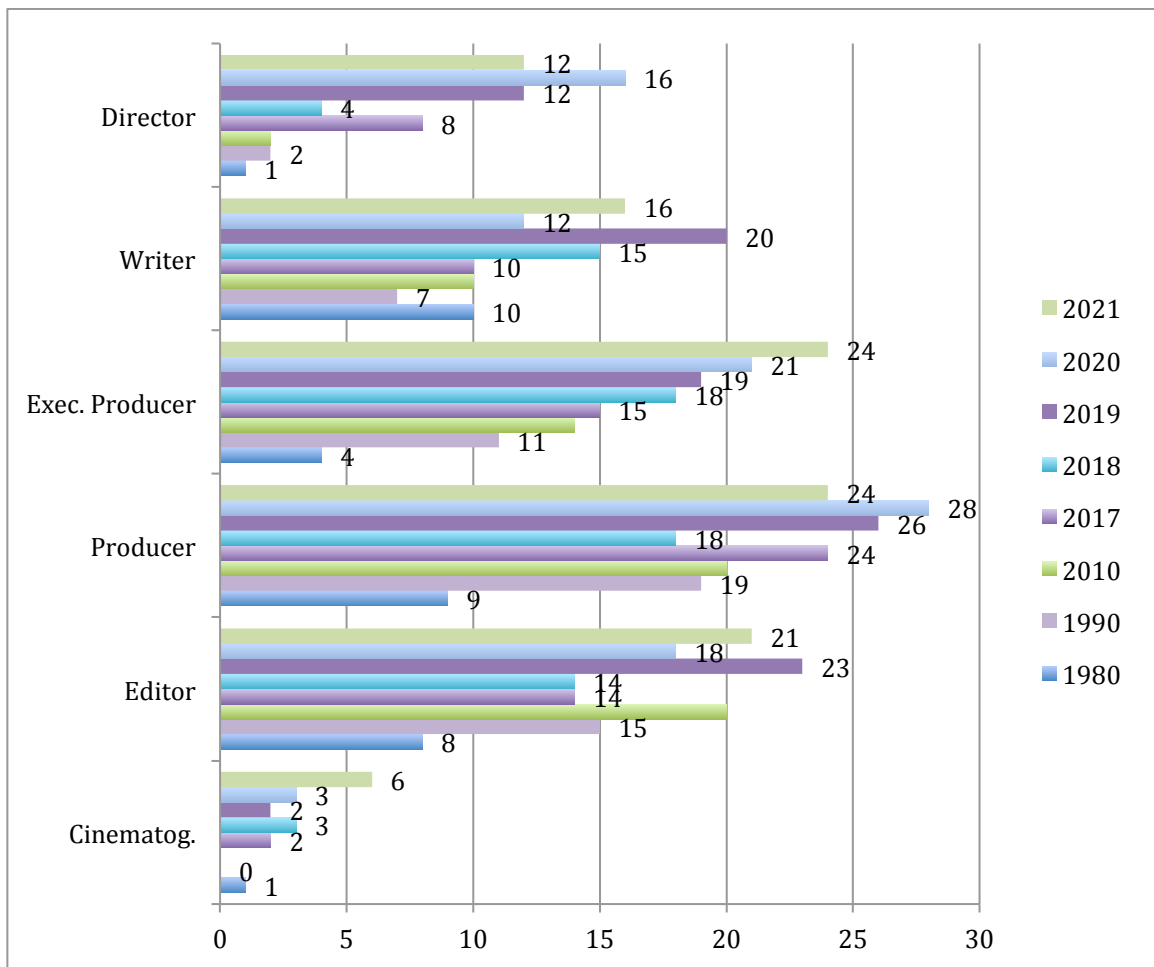
Women comprised 21% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents no change from the percentage achieved in 2020.

Women fared best as producers (24%) and executive producers (24%), followed by editors (21%), writers (16%), directors (12%), and cinematographers (6%).

Women comprised 12% of directors working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents a decline of 4 percentage points from 16% in 2020 (see Figure 6).

Women accounted for 16% of writers working of the top 100 films of 2021. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 12% in 2020.

*Figure 6.  
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 sample included in this report due to its smaller size.

Women made up 24% of executive producers working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 21% in 2020. It also represents a recent historic high.

Women comprised 24% of producers working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents a decline of 4 percentage points from 28% in 2020.

Women accounted for 21% of editors working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 18% in 2020.

Women made up 6% of cinematographers working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points from 3% in 2020. It also represents a recent historic high.

#### *Additional Role / Composers*

Women comprised 3% of composers working on the top 100 films of 2021. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from 5% in 2020. Fully 97% of films had no women composers in 2021.

#### ***Findings / Watched at Home Films***

Due to the changing business models governing the release of films and the resulting shifts in viewing habits, for the second consecutive year the study also tracked women's employment on films included on the Digital Entertainment Group's *Top 20 Watched at Home* list from January through December. The list includes U.S. digital sales, digital rentals (VOD), DVD and Blu-ray. This list does not include premium VOD. Every recently released (2020, 2021) U.S. film that appeared on the weekly list at least once was included for a total of 92 films.

Note, there is substantial overlap between the lists of the *Watched at Home* films and the top grossing films at the box office. 57% of the films on the *Watched at Home* list also appear on the list of the 100 top grossing films.

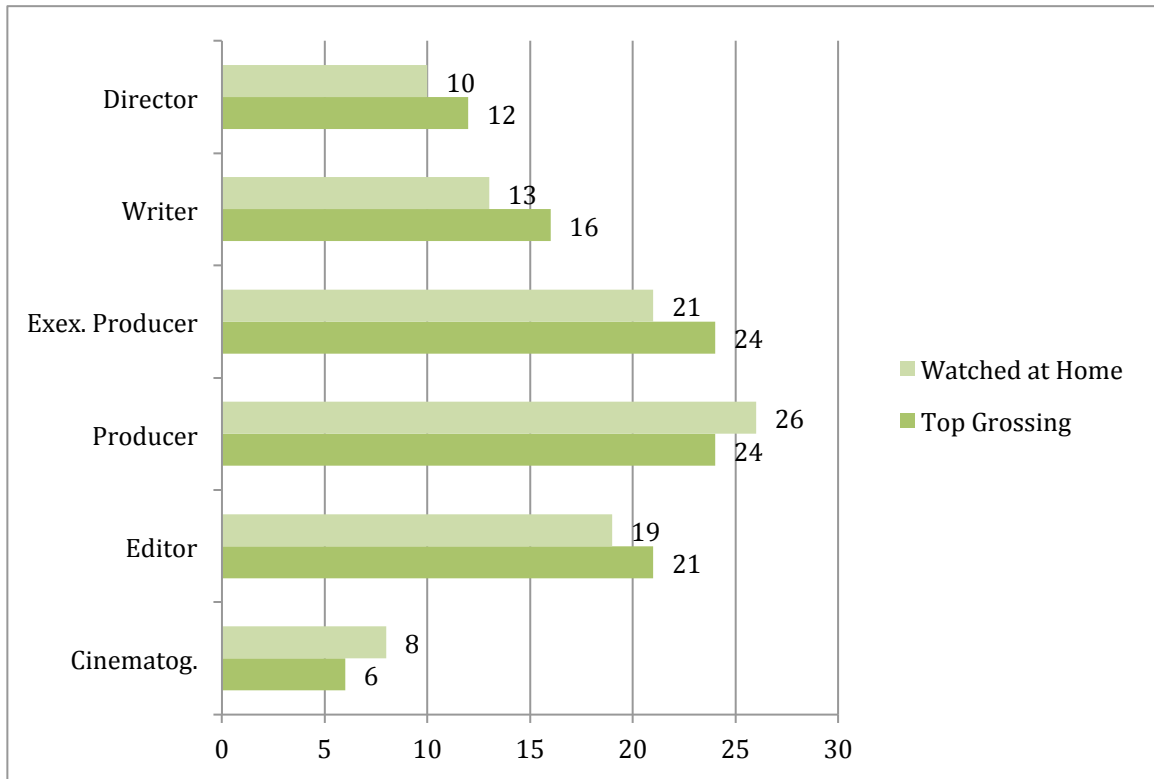
Women comprised 20% of all directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the watched at home films in 2021, up 1 percentage point from 19% in 2020. For comparison, women made up 21% of behind-the-scenes individuals on the 100 top grossing films.

Women accounted for 10% of directors working on the watched at home films in 2021, up 1 percentage point from 9% in 2020. For comparison, women comprised 12% of directors on the 100 top grossing films of 2021 (see Figure 7).

Women made up 13% of writers working on the watched at home films in 2021, up 1 percentage point from 12% in 2020. For comparison, women accounted for 16% of writers on the 100 top grossing films of 2021.

*Figure 7.*

*Comparison of Percentage of Women Working on Watched at Home and Top 100 Grossing Films*



Women comprised 21% of executive producers working on the watched at home films in 2021, up 6 percentage points from 15% in 2020. For comparison, women made up 24% of executive producers on the 100 top grossing films of 2021.

Women accounted for 26% of producers working on the watched at home films in 2021, down 5 percentage points from 31% in 2020. For comparison, women comprised 24% of producers on the 100 top grossing films of 2021.

Women comprised 19% of editors working on the watched at home films in 2021, even with the percentage achieved in 2020. For comparison, women made up 21% of editors on the top grossing films of 2021.

Women accounted for 8% of cinematographers working on the watched at home films in 2021, up 5 percentage points from 3% in 2020. For comparison, women comprised 6% of cinematographers working on the 100 top grossing films of 2021.