

## Why the Hollywood Diversity Report focuses on race, ethnicity and gender data

In 2014, we launched the Hollywood Diversity Report through the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA to examine issues of race, ethnic and gender representation in top films and TV shows and how those issues relate to the bottom line. As experts in race, gender and media, we had worked for years with advocacy organizations that sought to hold the studios accountable for non-representative hiring practices. We saw a need to provide an independent, annual accounting of key positions in front of and behind the camera in film and television. Further, we set out to examine how audiences responded to the content.

Our thinking from the outset was to draw a bright line between the changing demographics of American audiences and the much slower, if not stagnant (at least at the time we began tracking), progress for women and people of color when it comes to acting, directing, writing and show creator roles in film and TV.

It was a priority for us not only to make the moral argument about increasing the representation of women and people of color in Hollywood, but also to illuminate what audiences wanted to see on screen. We have consistently found that the appetites and spending power of women and people of color in America truly uphold the economies of the industry.

We consider American consumers to be investors in Hollywood studio content, and we think women and consumers of color who invest in popular film and television by paying to watch it should see themselves portrayed authentically onscreen. This happens only by way of the rich and honest storytelling that comes when women and people of color hold critical jobs, behind the camera.

Our report draws attention to the racial, ethnic and gender (including transgender and non-binary) identity of those working in the previously mentioned above-the-line jobs on Hollywood's top films and TV shows in any given year. We also track how that data relate to what U.S. audiences are watching on television, discussing on social media, and purchasing tickets to see in theaters.

We collect identity data through a labor-intensive research process that starts by examining reliable third-party databases that use independent methods of documenting the race, ethnicity and gender of individuals working on top films and TV shows. These sources are Gracenote's Studio System, Variety Insight, and IMDb(Pro). The benefit of using independent sources means that we can standardize the data collection. We don't rely on data from Hollywood employers — individuals, studios, companies or industry guilds — all of which might involve different kinds of information tracked in different ways.

Separately, we study data from Nielsen, Comscore and Talkwalker that show how households and individuals from different races/ethnicities experience and consume Hollywood content.

These consistent and reliable data are the foundation the report is built upon.

We recognize that the word “diversity” does and should encompass so much more than race, ethnicity and gender, including disability, age, sexual orientation and religion. In particular, Hollywood has a tremendous amount of work to do to increase representation for those who have disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ.

Currently, however, there are no independently verifiable, consistently updated databases that track information about the disability or LGBTQ status of every credited actor, writer, director and show creator in Hollywood. Disability and sexual orientation are not always publicly known or necessarily visible. If data are collected about these particular identities, the data are often collected anonymously and reported at an aggregate level by a company or a guild. But, we need the identity data to be at the individual level in order to conduct the analysis in our annual report.

We are open to starting a dialogue with studios, industry guilds and advocacy groups to begin finding new sources of reliable information related to the disability and LGBTQ status of those working in top Hollywood films and television shows.

We hope to create partnerships with other researchers and advocacy groups that will help us explore ways that we can examine disability and LGBTQ representation of those employed in Hollywood in a meaningful way. We want to amplify the work already being done by the experts in disability and LGBTQ research. Research that is substantive and high-quality takes considerable time and resources to conduct, but this investment ensures that the findings will be useful to those advocating for workers’ rights.

As we seek to move forward on these fronts, we are reconsidering how we talk about our report, and how our language about diversity might better reflect the specificity of our expertise.

We know the story is incomplete without additional diversity metrics. We encourage the organizations that manage these large databases, as well as the industry guilds, studios and networks to find ways to gather more identity data about those working in Hollywood, which would allow researchers like us to broaden the scope of this important work.