



Cut Out Of The Picture

A study of gender inequality among film directors within the UK film industry

A study by Stephen Follows and Alexis Kreager with Eleanor Gomes

Commissioned by Directors UK

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PRESS INFORMATION PACK

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www.directors.uk.com

For enquiries contact:

Victoria Morris,
Head of Communications and Public Affairs,
Directors UK
Tel: 020 7240 0009 ext. 6
Direct line: 020 7845 9707
Mob: 07795 633 972
E-mail: commsandpublic@directors.uk.com

Tolu Akisanya,
Communications & Campaigns Officer,
Directors UK
Tel: 020 7240 0009 ext. 6
Direct line: 020 7845 9707
Mob: 07931 462 437
E-mail: takisanya@directors.uk.com

Background

Gender inequality in the film industry has long been acknowledged as a serious problem, but despite high profile discussions and debates progress has yet to be made on the disparity between the number of men and women working as film directors. Directors UK wanted to get behind the numbers and identify the root causes of why women directors are consistently disadvantaged when trying to become a director and in progressing their careers as a director.

Directors UK commissioned **“Cut Out of the Picture”** a study by Stephen Follows and Alexis Kreager to examine the career development of directors, and discovered how the industry culture leads to vastly different outcomes for men and women directing film. The report studied 2,591 UK films released between 2005 and 2014 to offer a comprehensive view of the industry over the last decade. The results revealed the systemic bias facing women directors trying to progress a career, and provides us with new insight and understanding as to what is causing this inequality.

Films command a great deal of influence on everyday society and the role of directors as storytellers is fundamental to this. This is why it is incredibly important that film directors reflect the audience they serve. By diversifying the pool of directors in the film industry, we open film up to a greater range of perspectives and stories. Both publicly funded and commercial film sectors have a role to play in ensuring a healthy and diverse set of voices in UK film.

Key Findings

- The study looked at 2,591 UK films released over 10 years, between 2005 and 2014.

Women Directors in the UK Film Industry

- Only **13.6%** of working film directors over the last decade have been women.
- Only **11.5%** of UK films over the last decade were directed exclusively by women.
- In the last decade the number of UK films directed by a woman has increased by only **0.6%**; from **11.3%** in 2005 to **11.9%** in 2014.
- UK films are **six times** more likely to be directed by a man than a woman.
- During their careers women directors tend to direct fewer films than male directors and are less likely to make a 2nd, 3rd, or 4th film.
- As budgets rise, fewer women directors are hired; **16.1%** of films budgeted under £500,000 have a woman director. That figure drops to just **12.8%** on a mid-budget film, and drops even further to just **3.3%** of films budgeted over £30 million.
- Women directors tend to be disproportionately **limited** to making certain genres, usually those that are viewed as “traditionally” female: Science fiction (2.9% female), action (3.6%), crime (4.3%), and horror (5.2%). Female directors are best represented within documentaries (24.8% female), music (21.1%), romance (18.1%), and biographical films (17.5%)
- Films by women directors get higher ratings from film audiences and film critics compared to films by men.

Becoming A director / The Disappearance of Women Film Directors

- At almost every stage of the process in becoming a film director - from studying, entering the industry to having a successful career – the growing disparity shows that women are **leaving** the industry.
- Despite women making up **50.1% of all film students** in the UK and **49.4% of new entrants** into the industry, the numbers decline and narrow down greatly as they try to progress in their careers and through the industry:
 - **27.2%** of short films are directed by women.
 - **25.4%** Short Films at Festivals are directed by women.
 - **16.1%** of low-budget films (under £500,000) are directed by women.
 - **12.8%** of mid-budget films (£1-10 million) are directed by women.
 - **3.3%** of big-budgeted feature films (over £30 million) are directed by women.
- The most common routes into directing are: studying a film-related course; working in television; making short-films; and/or working in other crew roles.
- All of the six most common proving grounds for future-directors have an under-representation of women (television, short films, working in other crew roles, writing, acting, theatre directing).
- Women make up 27.2% of the 4,388 short films in the British Council’s British Film Database.

The Role of Public Funding

- Public funding bodies play a significant role in UK film. **25%** of UK films between 2005-14 received some form of public funding. 43.3% of these were supported directly and indirectly by the BFI.
- Public funding support for films with women directors has **fallen dramatically** in the seven years up to 2014. In 2008, **32.9%** of films with UK-based public funding were directed by a woman whereas in 2014 it was just **17.0%**.
- **21.7%** of the films with UK-based public funding in the period studied had a woman director.
- Although publicly funded films are the best performing area of the industry, if this decline continues, they will be performing no better than the commercial sector on gender equality.
- The majority of UK film public bodies do not adequately track the gender of applicants and awardees.

Women Directors in Festivals

- Women at major international festivals are better represented in short films (25.4%) than within features (15.9%).
- Sundance had the highest women rep in feature films (32.6%) and Cannes had the worst (8.5%).
- Film festival juries with male majority are more likely to give awards to male directors.

Women Across the Industry

- Only 2 out of the 9 key creative roles had above 50% female representation.
- 30.9% of crew working on films directed by women are women, compared with 24.1% of crew on male-directed films.
- The difference is most stark for that of writers, where 65.4% of writers on projects directed by women are women compared with just 7.4% on male-directed films.
- There is no meaningful trend towards improvement in representation of women across the UK film industry.
- The issues identified for women in UK film are reflected across other areas of work that are allied to film directing e.g. TV, Theatre, and European Film.
- Female key creatives have a notably higher percentage of women in their departments and female directors hire a greater percentage of female key creatives.

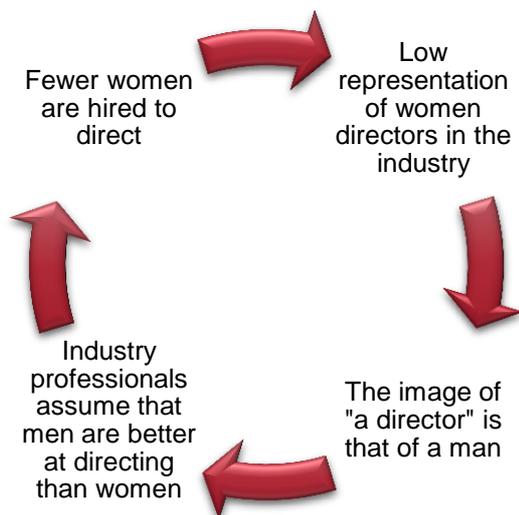
Why the Gender Disparity Exists

- The study found no evidence that fewer women want to become a director and no evidence of any organised, conscious or deliberate efforts to exclude women.
- The study concludes that **gender inequality is primarily due to unconscious bias** caused by **systemic issues** which are sustaining and creating these biases and resulting in fewer films being directed by women. It identifies four key systemic issues:
 1. There is **no effective regulatory system to monitor, report and enforce gender equality**. Reliant on informal and unstructured hiring and recruitment practices, with careers often resting on reputation.
 2. **Lack of certainty** in the industry leads to greater **risk-aversion** and greater reliance on the pre-conceived stereotype of the director as a man, rather than on an individuals abilities and talents.
 3. The **short-term nature** of projects discourages long-term thinking and prevents the use of positive HR practices.

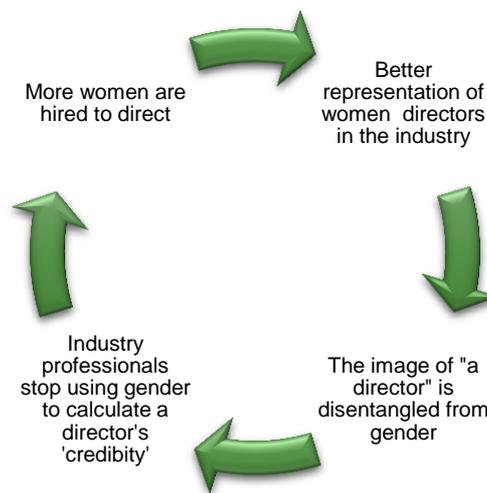
4. The gender inequality in the industry is symbiotic creating a **vicious cycle** of: A lack of women directors which creates a lack of role models and discourages talent, this results in a low number of working women directors, which in turn leads to low regard for women directors and reinforces the male stereotype, which in turn leads to fewer women being hired to direct.

- The report suggest that this vicious cycle could be used to drive change to become a virtuous cycle:

The current vicious cycle



The possible virtuous cycle



Analysis – What Does It Mean?

- There has been no improvement in the number of women directors making UK films in the last decade.
- The findings paint a picture of an industry where women directors are **limited** in their ability to become directors and are disadvantaged in their career progression and the opportunities available to them.
- Women directors direct fewer films in their career and are limited in the budget and genre of the films they make.
- Across the whole of the industry there is **no meaningful trend** towards greater representation of women or any real improvement in their career prospects – The number of women directors in the film industry will **not** get better without intervention.

Why Does It Matter?

- **The level of inequality the study has highlighted will not resolve itself, only large-scale, coordinated efforts to alter hiring practices industry-wide will bring the change needed.** The reasons to implement such change are numerous and extend far beyond simply the benefit to women within film itself.
- By expanding and diversifying the pool of working directors we increase the range and variety of the films we make and the stories we tell. **By shutting out entire segments of society we exclude unique voices and limit the scope of our culture reflected in film.** Audiences are limited in the films they can see and are being underserved.

- **Film occupies a unique position.** It has great influence over what we as a society believe, understand and feel. It not only responds to but shapes public opinion, and so **it has a cultural obligation to represent society as a whole and in all its diversity.**
- It matters because **an industry that systematically discriminates and limits an individual's opportunities because of their gender is patently unfair, unjust and unacceptable.**
- The issue of under-representation of women among directors is a **relevant issue** for everyone who works in the UK film industry.

Our Recommendations

Without serious, concerted effort to change the hiring practices in the industry this issue will not resolve itself; Directors UK is therefore calling for direct interventions to address gender inequality in the UK film industry:

- **50% of films backed by UK-based public funding bodies to be directed by women by 2020.** Public funded film offers one of the most direct opportunities to impact the gender inequality in the film industry. A realistic time-frame (4years) to put in place suitable schemes and initiatives to meet this target. And a requirement for public funders to monitor and report on gender.
- **Development of the Film Tax Credit Relief system to require all UK films to account for diversity.** This aspect of government support for the UK film industry touches all films produced in the UK, and therefore is the most powerful mechanism that can directly influence industry-wide change.
- **An industry wide campaign to inform and influence change to rebalance gender inequality within UK film.** Government, industry leaders, agencies, production companies and public organisations to take decisive action to tackle gender inequality, and to work together as one industry to support equal opportunity regardless of gender.

Directors UK campaign

We will continue our campaign calling on all parts of the UK film industry to make clear their commitments to tackling the causes of gender inequality among directors. We, Directors UK recognise the role we have to play in supporting women to become directors and progress their careers through our commitment: **By 2020 Directors UK members of working age will be 50:50 men and women.** Our campaign will develop support in the following areas:

- advocacy,
- career development
- information and advice
- collaboration and partnerships with industry
- events, skills training and networking opportunities.