

# WGAW INCLUSION REPORT 2020

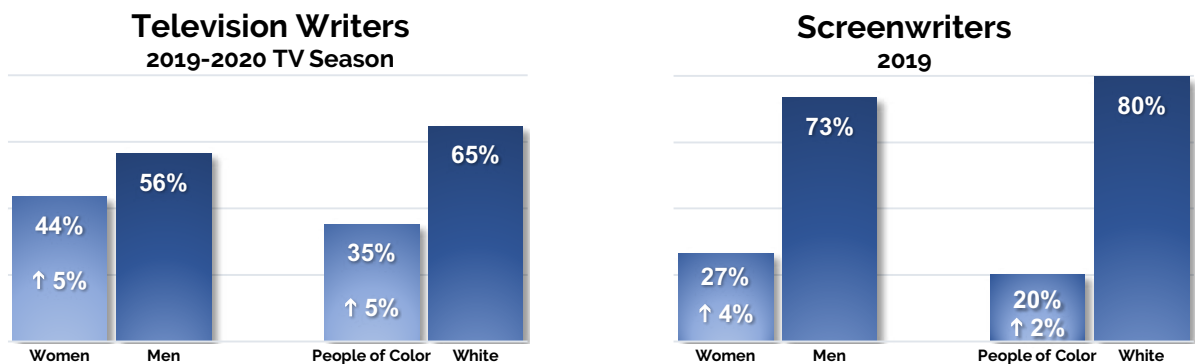
For years, the Writers Guild of America has called attention to the lack of inclusion and equity in the entertainment industry. As part of that effort, the Writers Guild of America West (WGAW) is releasing its third Inclusion Report, detailed data on the status of writers from historically underrepresented groups.

## OVERVIEW

This year's Inclusion Report expands significantly on the information provided in previous reports. In addition to **up-to-date data on the 2019-2020 T.V. season**,<sup>1</sup> this report includes data on the motion picture industry, documenting experiences of **screenwriters from underrepresented groups**. This year's report also includes an **examination of credits** received by writers from underrepresented groups and an evaluation of **how various studios compare** in the inclusive hiring of writers.

Except where otherwise noted, U.S. population data comes from the [U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimate v2019](#). All writer employment and credits data are derived from WGA-covered projects and are based on WGA writers for whom demographic info is known. From this year's data, two major conclusions are clear:

- **Writers from underrepresented groups continue to make gains. In T.V., women and people of color held 5% more jobs than in the previous year. In motion pictures, women gained 4% and people of color gained 2%.**
- **In spite of this progress, systemic discrimination against writers from underrepresented groups remains pervasive in the entertainment industry.**



These summary charts provide a general snapshot of the status of writers from underrepresented groups over the last year. More detailed data and analysis follow.

<sup>1</sup> The 2019-2020 T.V. Season runs from September 1, 2019 to August 30, 2020 and thus is not complete or final at the time of this writing. All references to the 2019-2020 season reflect current available data.

## DEFINING DIVERSITY

The entertainment industry's problems with underrepresentation, stereotyping, and bias are well-documented. For years, UCLA's [Hollywood Diversity Report](#) has chronicled the lack of inclusion, both in front of the camera and behind the scenes.

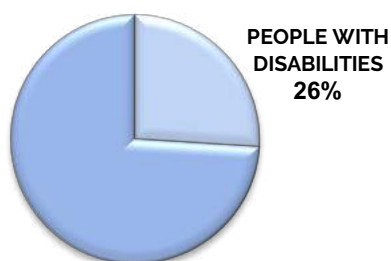
This report focuses on writers, providing up-to-date facts and figures in an effort to help drive positive change for writers from underrepresented groups. The WGAW currently identifies five major groups of underrepresented writers:

- Women
- People of Color
- People with Disabilities
- People Over 55 – specifically those working at the middle and lower levels
- People in the LGBTQ+ Community

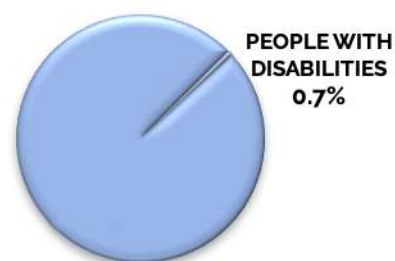
Most of the data in this report will focus on the first two groups – Women and People of Color – since the WGAW's information on gender and ethnicity is sufficiently complete to allow comprehensive analysis within work fields, credits, and job titles.<sup>2</sup> **Members who wish to ensure that their diversity status is included in future reports may do so by logging into [my.wga.org](http://my.wga.org), selecting 'Update my diversity attributes' under the 'Find a Writer Profile' header, and selecting 'Ok to publish.'** The Guild's data does enable an overview of overall representation of People with Disabilities, People Over 55, and People in the LGBTQ+ Community within the WGAW.

According to the CDC, 26% of adults in the U.S. have some type of disability<sup>3</sup> – yet self-identified **Writers with Disabilities** make up only 0.7% of Current Active WGAW members.

**U.S. Population**



**WGAW Members**



This disparity may partially result from under-reporting, since disability status is based on self-identification, but still suggests severe employment discrimination. This is reinforced by reports from WGAW members that some facilities where

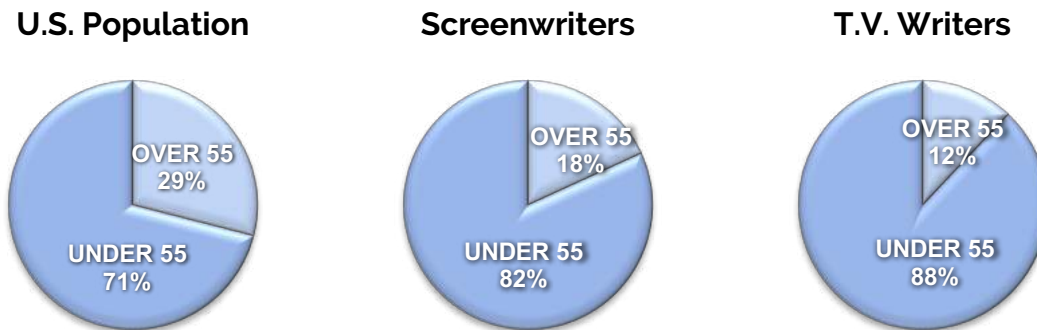
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<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of the report, "underrepresented writers" will indicate writers who are women or people of color.

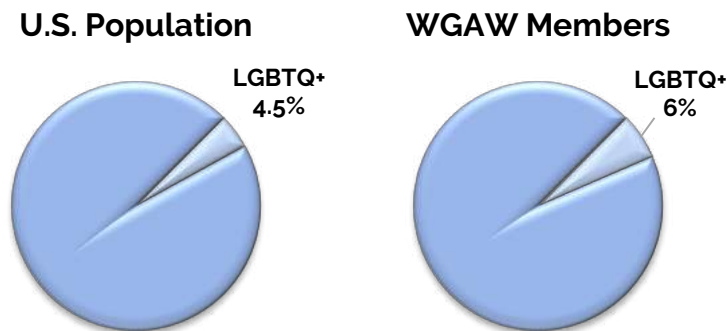
<sup>3</sup> source: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>

writers work and pitch are not ADA-compliant, creating literal barriers to entry for people with disabilities.

**Writers Over 55** are subject to the same ageism that pervades all of Hollywood. Despite making up 29% of the total U.S. population and roughly 22% of the U.S. labor force,<sup>4</sup> people over 55 accounted for only 18% of screenwriters employed in 2019 and just 12% of T.V. writers employed in the 2019-2020 T.V. season. Ageism in T.V. increases at the middle and lower levels. Of writers at the level of Supervising Producer or below in the 2019-2020 season, just 1% were over 55.



**LGBTQ+ Writers** have achieved representation on par with their numbers in the overall U.S. population.<sup>5</sup>



Adequate representation, however, does not mean LGBTQ+ writers no longer face discrimination. The Think Tank for Inclusion and Equity's [2020 "Behind-the-Scenes" report](#) provides evidence that LGBTQ+ writers experience the same forms of bias and harassment faced by other underrepresented groups.<sup>6</sup>

**Showrunners, non-writing producers, P.O.D. executives, and studio executives should keep all of these underrepresented groups in mind when hiring writers.**

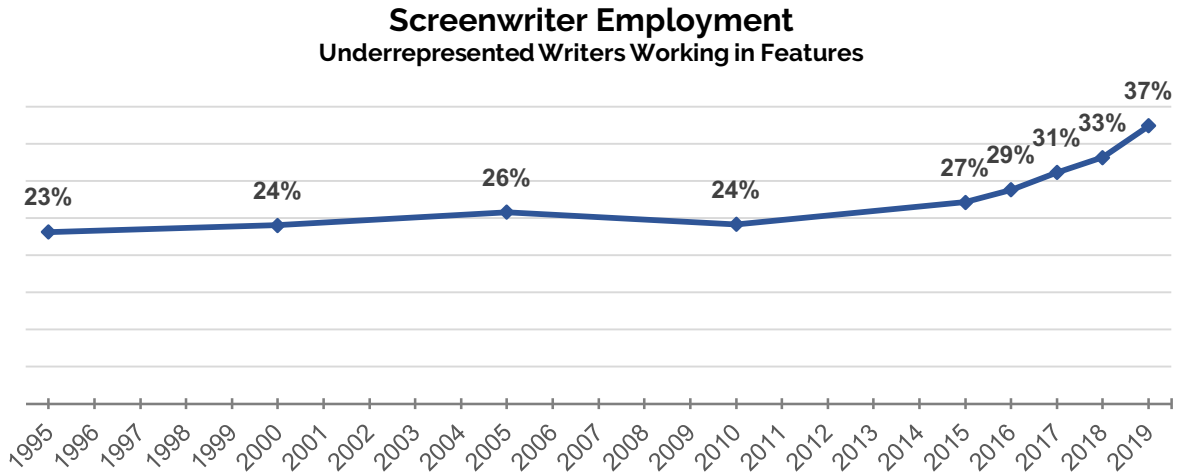
<sup>4</sup> source: <https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Aging%20Workforce%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> source: [https://womeninfilm.org/think-tank-for-inclusion-equity-ttie/?mc\\_cid=63cdda6e13&mc\\_eid=13a3dacdeb](https://womeninfilm.org/think-tank-for-inclusion-equity-ttie/?mc_cid=63cdda6e13&mc_eid=13a3dacdeb)

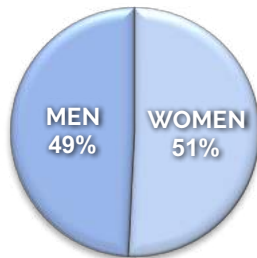
## SCREENWRITER EMPLOYMENT

As the chart on page 1 makes clear, the motion picture business lags behind the T.V. business in the hiring of writers from underrepresented groups. A look at data from the last 25 years reveals that, after decades of little or no improvement, underrepresented writers have achieved steady gains over the last five years.

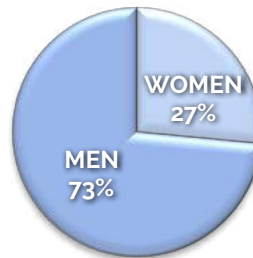


However, the evolving nature of the entertainment industry means that not all jobs are created equal; writers in all areas of work are increasingly confronted with shorter periods of employment and downward pressure on above-scale earnings. In addition, both women and people of color remain underrepresented relative to their share of the overall U.S. population, despite the recent gains.

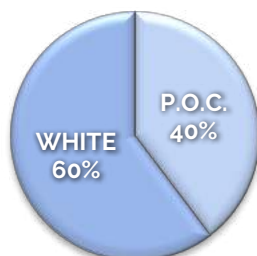
**U.S. Population**



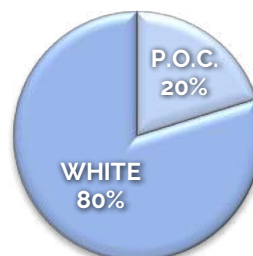
**Screenwriters**



**U.S. Population**

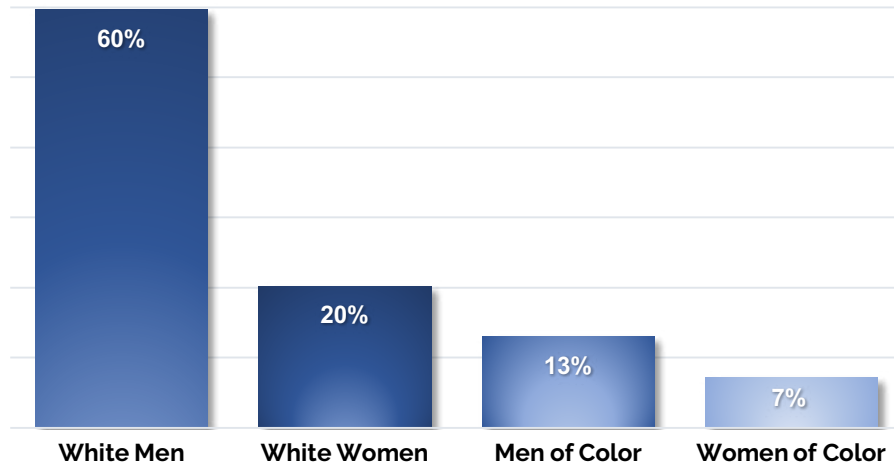


**Screenwriters**



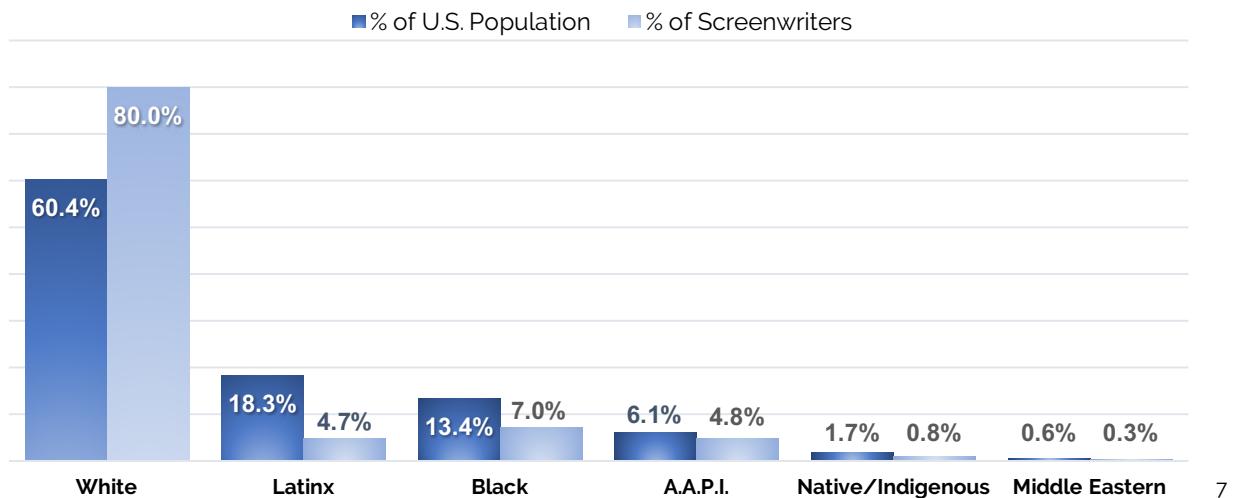
Of more than 2,000 screenwriters employed in 2019, only 27% were women and just 20% were people of color. A breakdown by ethnicity and gender reveals that women of color accounted for only 7% of employed screenwriters last year.

### Screenwriters by Gender and Ethnicity



When the data is broken down by major ethnicities, other disparities become evident, with Latinx, Black, and Asian-American Pacific Islander screenwriters having less representation relative to their share of the overall U.S. population – and Native/Indigenous and Middle Eastern screenwriters having almost no representation at all.

### Screenwriters by Ethnic Group

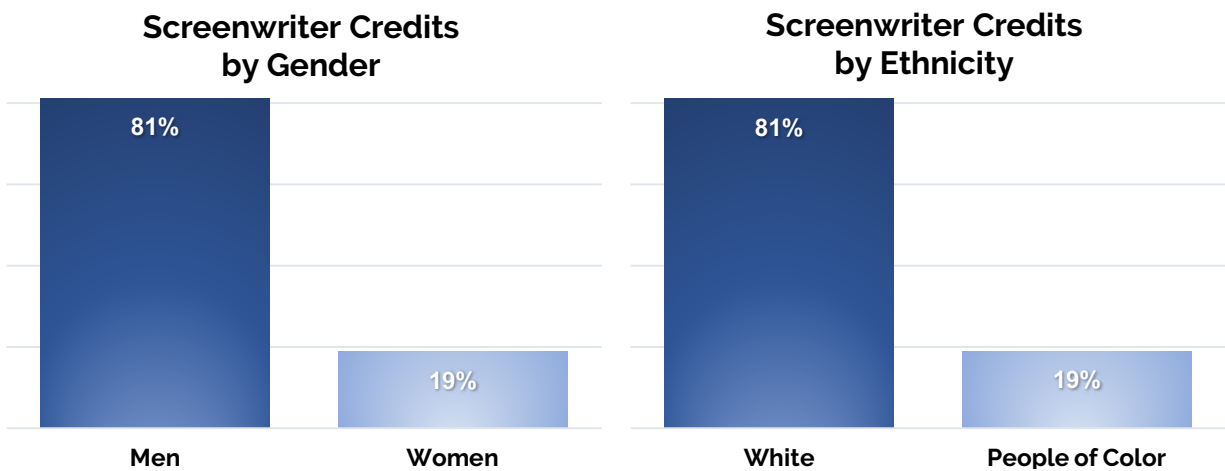


<sup>7</sup> Figures in this chart are derived from the 1,831 screenwriters employed in 2019 for whom ethnicity data is available. A.A.P.I. denotes Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islanders. "Native/Indigenous" denotes Native American, Indigenous, and First Nations. U.S. Population data for the Native/Indigenous group comes from the [U.S. Census 2018 A.C.S. 1-Year Estimate](#), and has been revised upward from a prior version of this report to include Native Americans who may be mixed race or Afro-Indigenous. U.S. Population data on Middle Eastern Americans also comes from the [U.S. Census 2018 A.C.S. 1-Year Estimate](#), rather than U.S. Census Bureau Estimate v2019.

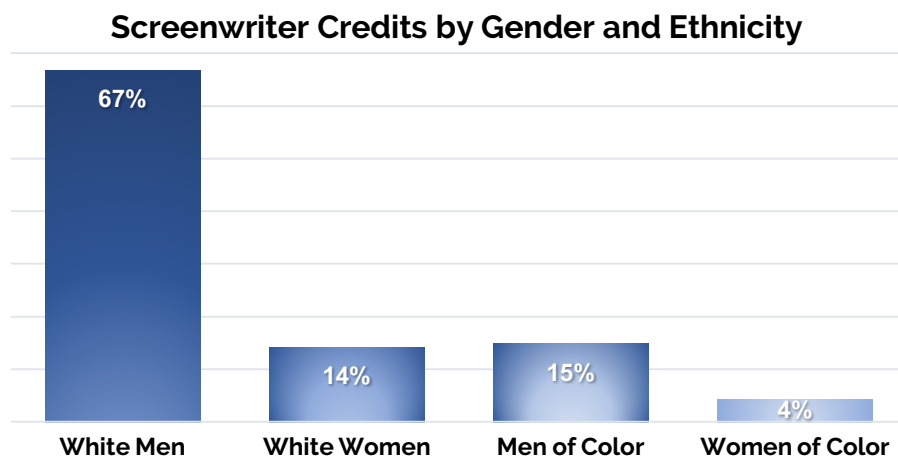
## SCREEN CREDITS

A writer's credits play a crucial role in determining status in the industry and are another important measure of inclusion and equity. It is important to note, however, that comparing employment data from the previous section with the screen credits data in this section is an inexact process. Screen credits are rarely determined in the same year that a screenwriter is employed to write a film; thus, the comparison numbers for 2019 are largely drawn from two different sets of film projects. Moreover, many screenwriters are employed on projects that are never produced and thus do not receive screen credit.

With that in mind, an examination of screen credits in 2019 reveals similar inequities to those documented in the screenwriter employment data.<sup>8</sup>



In 2019, women and people of color both received 19% of screen credits compared to 81% each for men and white writers. When the gender and ethnicity data is combined, even more severe forms of underrepresentation become apparent, with women of color receiving only 4% of screen credits.



<sup>8</sup> Throughout this report, writers with multiple credits on a script were only counted once.

Increasing inclusion in screen means not merely hiring more women and people of color to write on screen projects, but also increasing their participation for first drafts and rewrites in order to support their representation among credited writers.

## SCREENWRITER INCLUSION BY STUDIO

At the root of the disparities are the acquisition and hiring decisions made by producers and executives at the studios. The following charts break down the hiring of women and people of color in screen by major studio for 2019.

### Screenwriters – Women by Studio

Rank	Studio	Features Released in 2019	Screenwriters Hired in 2019 <sup>9</sup>	Women Screenwriters Hired in 2019	% of Women Screenwriters
1	MGM	4	64	22	34%
2	Walt Disney Studios	19	367	118	32%
3	Lionsgate Films	15	72	21	29%
4	Netflix	36	207	56	27%
5	Universal Pictures	14	222	60	27%
6	Viacom Paramount	8	240	58	24%
7	Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group	17	216	51	24%
8	Warner Media	16	238	55	23%

### Screenwriters – People of Color by Studio

Rank	Studio	Features Released in 2019	Screenwriters Hired in 2019 <sup>10</sup>	P.O.C. Screenwriters Hired in 2019	% of P.O.C. Screenwriters
1	Universal Pictures	14	189	51	27%
2	Warner Media	16	204	49	24%
3	Lionsgate Films	15	63	14	22%
4	Netflix	36	188	40	21%
5	Walt Disney Studios	19	312	60	19%
6	Viacom Paramount	8	209	40	19%
7	Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group	17	178	32	18%
8	MGM	4	56	8	14%

<sup>9</sup> In this chart, "Screenwriters Hired" refers to the total number of writers hired for whom the WGAW has a gender identified. The number of writers with no gender identified was less than 1% of the total.

<sup>10</sup> In this chart, "Screenwriters Hired" refers to the total number of writers hired for whom the WGAW has an ethnicity identified. The number of writers with no ethnicity identified was 15% of the total.

## **SCREENWRITER SUMMARY**

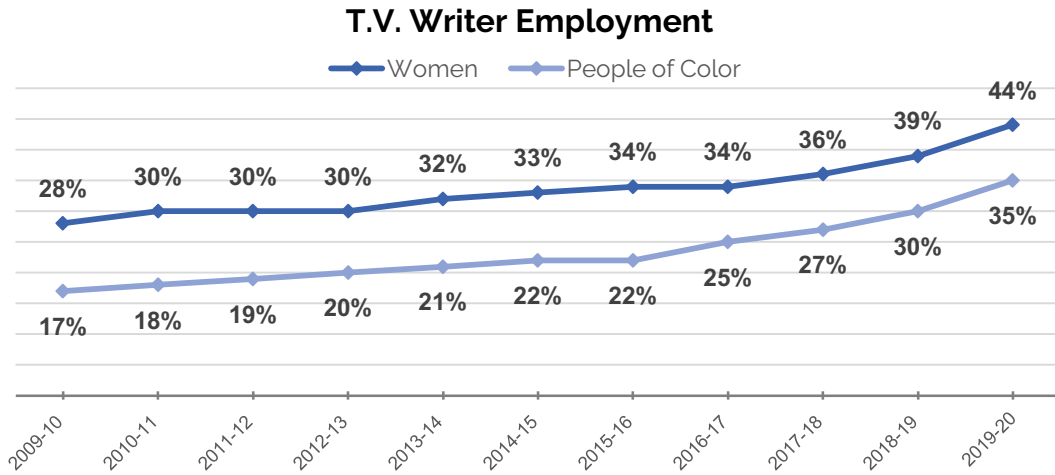
While screenwriters from underrepresented groups have made progress over the last five years, they continue to face significant obstacles in obtaining employment and building their careers.

**The WGAW urges all producers, executives, and studios to use this data to better inform their hiring and buying practices in an effort to improve inclusion and equity and end discrimination in the motion picture business.**



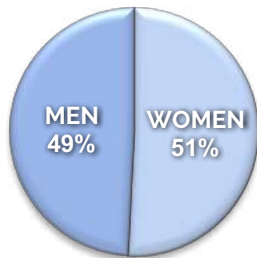
## TELEVISION WRITERS

In the 2019-2020 T.V. season, writers were hired for 2,717 jobs in television, across network, cable, and streaming platforms. A look at hiring over the last 10 years reveals a trend of steady gains made by women and people of color. In each of the last four T.V. seasons, both groups increased their share of T.V. writing jobs, gaining 2% in the 2017-18 season, 3% in the 2018-19 season, and 5% in the 2019-20 season.

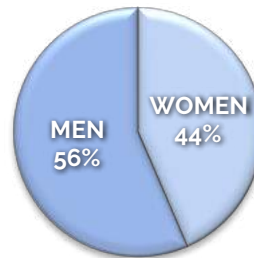


If these trends continue, women and people of color could achieve parity in T.V. employment within the next two years. At present, however, both groups remain underrepresented relative to their share of the overall U.S. population.

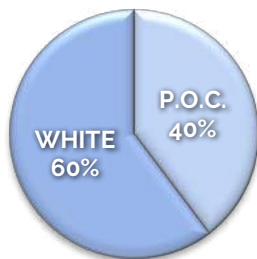
**U.S. Population**



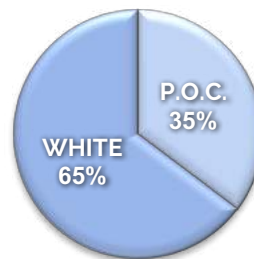
**T.V. Writers**



**U.S. Population**

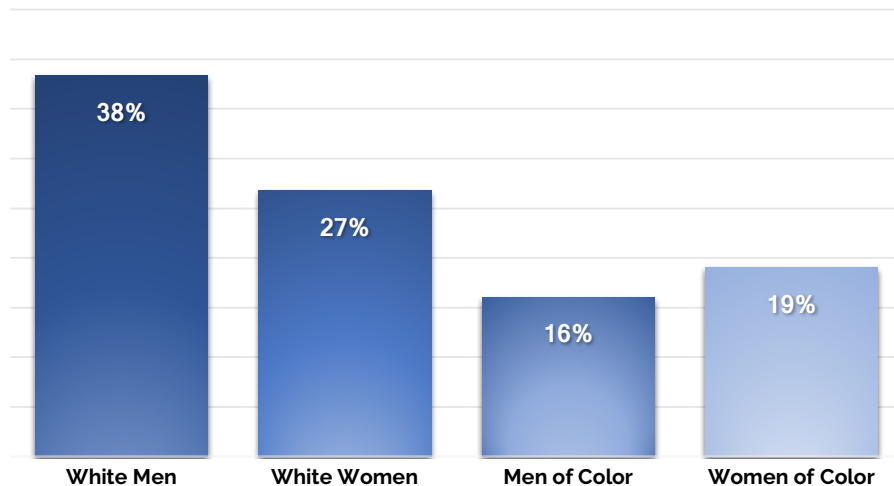


**T.V. Writers**



A breakdown by gender and ethnicity reveals a slight reversal of the trends observed in the feature sector, with men of color holding 3% fewer T.V. writing jobs than women of color.

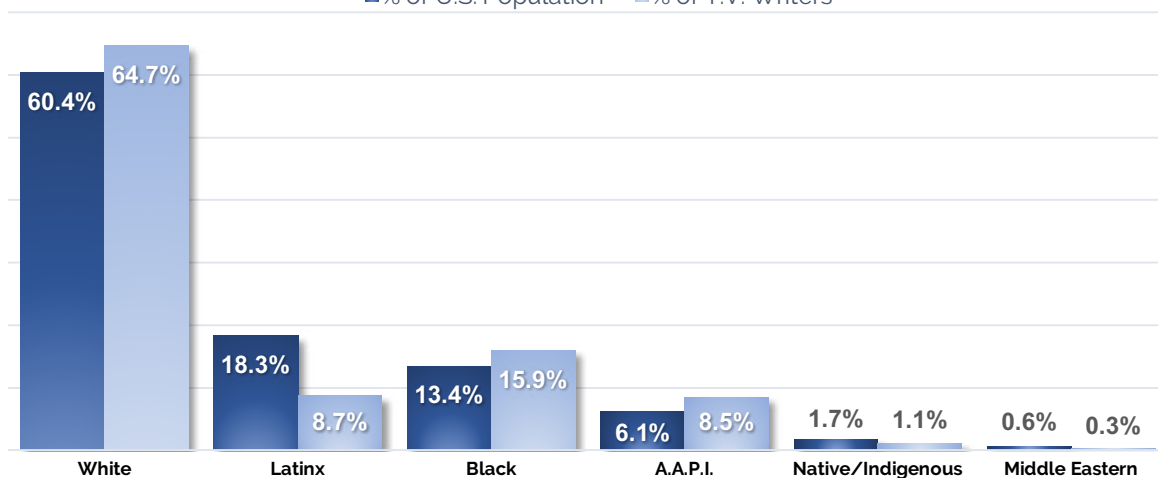
### T.V. Writers by Gender and Ethnicity



Breaking the data down by major ethnicities, it becomes apparent that Latinx writers are the most significantly underrepresented relative to their share of the overall U.S. population. The fact that Black and A.A.P.I. writers' representation in T.V. employment is greater than those ethnicities' share of the U.S. population should not be interpreted as evidence that Black and A.A.P.I. writers face no bias, as will be evident in the data on T.V. writers by level and T.V. script credits.

### T.V. Writers by Ethnic Group

■ % of U.S. Population   ■ % of T.V. Writers



11

<sup>11</sup> Figures in this chart are derived from the 2,362 writers employed in the 2019-2020 T.V. Season for whom ethnicity data is available. A.A.P.I. denotes Asian, South Asian, and Pacific Islanders. "Native/Indigenous" denotes Native American, Indigenous, and First Nations. U.S. Population data for the Native/Indigenous group comes from the [U.S. Census 2018 A.C.S. 1-Year Estimate](#), and has been revised upward from a prior version of this report to include Native Americans who may be mixed race or Afro-Indigenous. U.S. Population data on Middle Eastern Americans also comes from the [U.S. Census 2018 A.C.S. 1-Year Estimate](#).

On the majority of T.V. writing staffs, job title or “level” can have a significant impact on the role an individual plays in the writers' room. It can also affect how much writers are paid, how many scripts they are assigned to write, as well as the content of what is written – what kind of stories are told and what kind of characters are represented in those stories.

### T.V. Writers by Level

Title Level	MEN	WOMEN	% Change from 2017-18 T.V. Season <sup>12</sup>	WHITE	P.O.C.	% Change from 2017-18 T.V. Season
Showrunner	70%	30%	+6%	82%	18%	+6%
Executive Producer <sup>13</sup>	76%	24%	+7%	81%	19%	+7%
Co-Executive Producer	53%	47%	+13%	67%	33%	+10%
Consulting Producer	69%	31%	-7%	73%	28%	+8%
Supervising Producer	49%	51%	0%	54%	46%	+13%
Producer	44%	56%	+15%	49%	51%	+24%
Co-Producer	50%	50%	+8%	52%	48%	+11%
Executive Story Editor	48%	52%	+3%	38%	62%	+15%
Story Editor	36%	64%	+11%	46%	54%	+16%
Staff Writer	43%	57%	+7%	51%	49%	+4%

Despite the gains for women and people of color in overall T.V. writer employment documented on page 10, a breakdown of T.V. writers by level reveals that, while both women and people of color made overall gains in the 2019-2020 T.V. season, these writers remain concentrated at the middle and lower levels with white men continuing to hold most of the high level positions.

These disparities in status can play a major role in determining which writers will go on to become showrunners and which will not.

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<sup>12</sup> The 2019 Inclusion Report presented data on the 2017-2018 T.V. season. In an effort to share the most current data available, this report focuses on figures from the 2019-2020 season, which is why the increase noted here covers a two-year period.

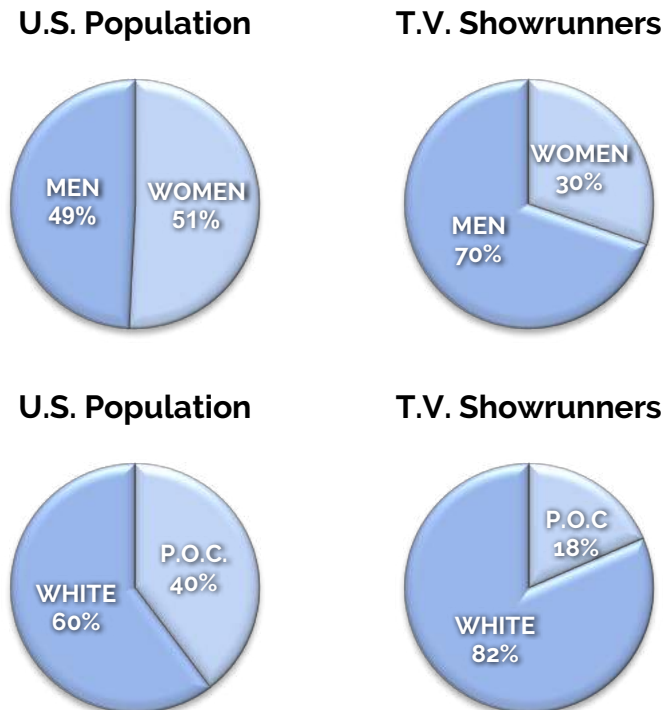
<sup>13</sup> In this chart, the titles Executive Producer, Co-Executive Producer, and Consulting Producer refer only to non-Showrunner writers holding these titles.

## TELEVISION SHOWRUNNERS

The term “showrunner” refers to the Executive Producer-level writer who oversees the writing, production, and creative direction of a T.V. series. In most production models, showrunners exercise enormous control over which stories their shows tell and which writers get to tell them.

**Both women and people of color have increased their representation among T.V. showrunners by 6% over the last two years.**<sup>14</sup>

In the 2019-2020 T.V. season, women held 30% of showrunner roles while 18% were held by people of color. Both groups remain underrepresented relative to their share of the overall U.S. population.



Discrimination in the hiring of T.V. showrunners is not only wrong in and of itself – it also has a significant impact on inclusion and equity for the writers they supervise, as will become evident from the data on T.V. script credits.

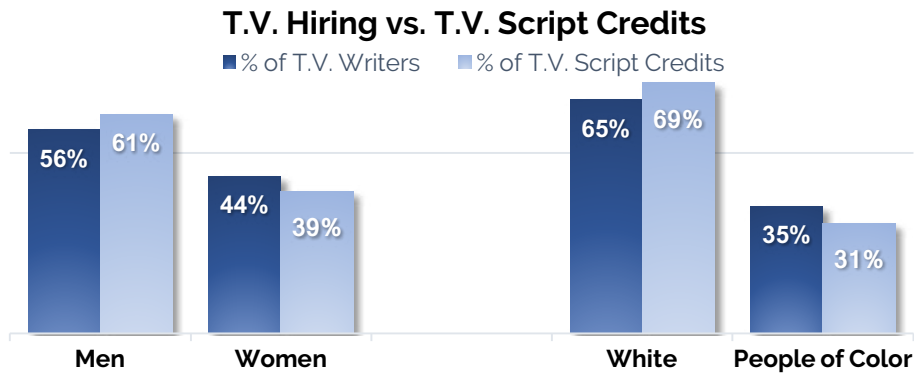
<sup>14</sup> The 2019 Inclusion Report presented data on the 2017-2018 T.V. season. In an effort to share the most current data available, this report focuses on figures from the 2019-2020 season, which is why the increase noted here covers a two-year period.

## T.V. SCRIPT CREDITS

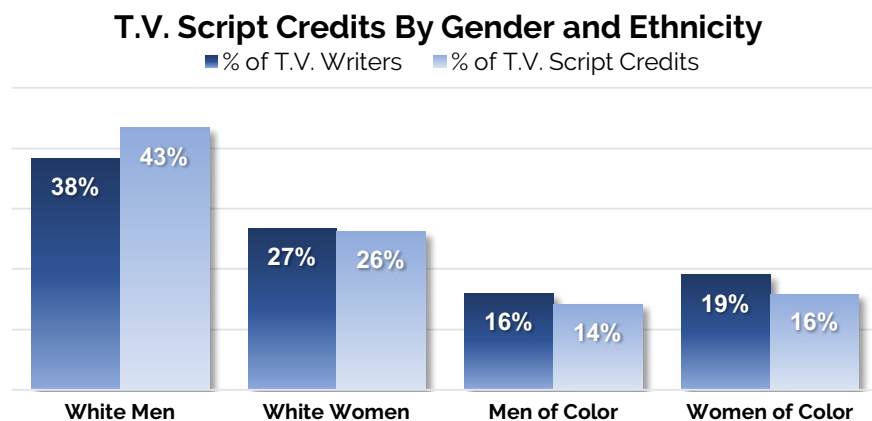
On most scripted series, episodic script assignments are made by showrunners, subject to approval by the studio. The number of scripts a writer is assigned plays an important role in determining the trajectory of her career. Thus, T.V. script credits are another important measure of inclusion and equity.

Unlike the corresponding data in the Screenwriter section, T.V. credits data provides a closer, though still imperfect, match to T.V. employment data, since the majority of credits are determined within the same season in which writers are employed. This allows for a meaningful comparison between the two.

In the 2019-2020 T.V. season, women held 44% of T.V. writing jobs, yet only received 39% of the episodic credits, while people of color held 35% of T.V. writing jobs, but received only 31% of the episodic credits.<sup>15</sup>



A breakdown by gender and ethnicity reveals how these inequities affect different groups, with women of color facing the largest disparity between hiring and credits.



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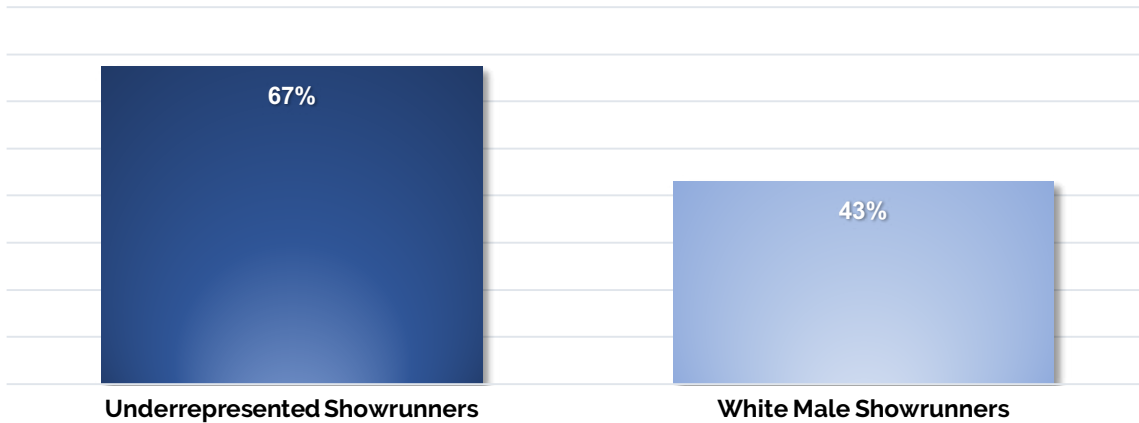
<sup>15</sup> Throughout this report, writers with multiple credits on a script were only counted once.

<sup>16</sup> The difference between the total for people of color in this chart (30%) and the total in the "T.V. Hiring vs. T.V. Script Credits" chart immediately above it (31%) is a result of a slight difference in the data analyzed. The figures in this chart are based only on those members for whom the WGAW has information on both gender and ethnicity, while the percentage of people of color in the above chart is based on those members for whom the WGAW has ethnicity information only.

Among individual ethnic groups, Latinx, Black, A.A.P.I., Native/Indigenous, and Middle Eastern writers all received a smaller percentage of script assignments relative to their share of T.V. employment, though this divergence was particularly pronounced for Black writers. In the 2019-2020 T.V. Season, Latinx writers held 8.7% of T.V. jobs but received 7.6% of T.V. script credits, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders held 8.5% of T.V. jobs but received 7.3% of T.V. script credits, and Black writers held 15.9% of T.V. jobs but received just 12.8% of T.V. script credits.

By correlating data on script credits with showrunner data, the broad impact of hiring underrepresented showrunners becomes clear. In the 2019-2020 season, T.V. writers from underrepresented groups received 24% more script credits from underrepresented showrunners than from their white male counterparts.

**T.V. Script Credits by Showrunner**  
Percentage of Script Credits for Underrepresented Writers



**It is important that all showrunners, non-writing producers, P.O.D. executives, and studio executives be aware of these issues when making decisions about hiring and script assignments.**

## T.V. WRITER INCLUSION BY STUDIO

The following charts break down the hiring of women and people of color in television by major studio.

### T.V. Writers – Women by Studio

Rank	Studio	T.V. Writers Hired, 2019-2020 <sup>17</sup>	Women T.V. Writers Hired, 2019-2020	% of Women T.V. Writers
1	ABC Studios	248	121	49%
2	NBC Universal Television	255	120	47%
3	CBS Television Studios	285	128	45%
4	Warner Bros. Television	410	184	45%
5	Sony Pictures Television	176	67	38%
6	20th Century Fox Television	333	113	34%

### T.V. Writers – People of Color by Studio

Rank	Studio	T.V. Writers Hired, 2019-2020 <sup>18</sup>	P.O.C. T.V. Writers Hired, 2019-2020	% of P.O.C. T.V. Writers
1	Warner Bros. Television	359	149	42%
2	ABC Studios	228	88	39%
3	NBC Universal Television	223	75	34%
4	CBS Television Studios	249	81	33%
5	20th Century Fox Television	294	91	31%
6	Sony Pictures Television	162	47	29%

## T.V. WRITER SUMMARY

While there is evidence of continuing progress by T.V. writers from historically underrepresented groups, there is also evidence that these writers face ongoing obstacles to employment and advancement.

**The WGAW urges all showrunners, non-writing producers, P.O.D. executives, and studios to use this data to better inform their hiring, script assignment, and pilot purchases in an effort to improve inclusion and equity and end discrimination in the T.V. business.**

<sup>17</sup> In this chart, "Total Writers Hired" refers to the total number of unique writers hired for whom the WGAW has a gender identified.

<sup>18</sup> In this chart, "Total Writers Hired" refers to the total number of unique writers hired for whom the WGAW has a gender identified.

## CONCLUSION

The Writers Guild of America West exists to protect the wages and working conditions of all writers. This report has been created in an effort to fulfill those responsibilities and to inform the dialogue and actions within our industry surrounding these issues. For all writers who wish to be judged on the content of their storytelling and the quality of their writing, the status quo is unacceptable – and more work must be done to change it.

While doing this work, it is also important to remember that **inclusion and equity efforts do not end with hiring**. This report deals primarily with the WGAW's data on employment and credits, but there is ample evidence that, once employed, writers from underrepresented groups encounter ongoing obstacles. Surveys by the [Think Tank for Inclusion and Equity](#) and a WGAW-commissioned study by UCLA's Professor and Dean of Social Sciences Darnell Hunt entitled "[The State of Career Advancement for Diverse Hollywood Writers: Surveying Pitfalls and Best Practices](#)" document various types of bias, tokenism, and harassment that writers from underrepresented groups face in the workplace.

While it will take work from individuals and companies across our industry to change the status quo, credit for the progress that has been made belongs, first and foremost, to the writers from underrepresented groups who work not only to write excellent scripts and tell great stories, but also to open doors for themselves and the writers who will come after them.

To help underrepresented writers drive meaningful change, the WGAW's Inclusion & Equity Department provides staff and support for a number of programs and committees, including the [TV Writer Access Project](#) and [Feature Writer Access Project](#), the [Asian American Writers Committee](#), the [Career Longevity Committee](#), the [Committee of Black Writers](#), the [Committee of Women Writers](#), the [Latino Writers Committee](#), the [LGBTQ+ Writers Committee](#), the [Native American & Indigenous Writers Committee](#), and the [Writers with Disabilities Committee](#). These committees work to solve problems faced by their members and hold events to help underrepresented writers connect with important contacts in our industry. Anyone in a position to hire writers or help advance their careers is welcome to contact these committees to inquire about attending one of their events.

**The WGAW urges all studios, showrunners, producers, executives, agents, and managers to use the information provided in this report to adjust their business practices to work toward solutions.**

With transparency, accountability, and continued effort, we can end discrimination against underrepresented writers and increase inclusion and equity across our industry.