



New Study Reveals Shocking Statistics About Women in Hollywood

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If I asked you to name your favorite actress, I am sure you would have no shortage of names: Meryl Streep, Jennifer Lawrence, Sandra Bullock, Amy Adams, Judi Dench, Kate Winslet, or Cate Blanchett? What if I then told you that women are so marginalized in Hollywood that a recent study showed that they *only* had 30% of all speaking roles on-screen?

A little over a week ago, Cate Blanchett won an Oscar® (her second) for her role in the film *Blue Jasmine*. In her acceptance speech she waved her little golden man and bravely stated:

"Those of us in the industry who are still foolishly clinging to the idea that female films with women at the center are niche experiences - they are not. Audiences want to see them and, in fact, they earn money. The world is round, people."

This statement was met with cheers from the audience and whoops of delight - clearly a sentiment that the actresses in the auditorium shared.

Of the top 100 domestic US grossing films, females were only 15% of the main protagonists (in other words, the heroine, the main character we root for), 29% of the major characters, and 30% of all speaking characters. So over two thirds of all speaking roles were spoken by men. This figure remains virtually the same as the 1940s.

So while we may have thought that because Sandra Bullock carried the entire (brilliant) *Gravity* film on her back - because Jennifer Lawrence was the heroine of *The Hunger Games* films and everyone at last realized women could be funny after *Bridesmaids* - that women are now equal in Hollywood - think again. These types of roles are by far the minority. In truth, we haven't made much progress. No wonder the study is titled "It's a Man's (Celluloid) World." Depressingly, the San Diego study also found that female characters were younger than male counterparts (how predictable) and less likely to have clearly identifiable goals or be portrayed as leaders of any kind. Why? You think we can't lead a team of police officers? (Take a look at Helen Mirren in *Prime Suspect* and get back to me.) Or save that sinking ship/falling plane/building ablaze, or fight those aliens/army/enemy of your choosing? I'm guessing the roles of girlfriend/wife/side-kick/annoying boss/stressed mom/murder victim/femme fatale were all that they were given then.

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"It's gender inertia. We're seeing very little change in the number of female characters that we're seeing on screen," said the study's author, Martha Lauzen, executive director of the [Center for the Study of Women in Television, Film & New Media](#) at San Diego State University. She went on to say, "Many people think the number of female protagonists and characters must be increasing which is why it's important to look at the numbers. It's very easy to be misled by a few high-profile cases."

I don't get it myself. I am an avid movie-goer. In the good old pre-kids days, I would hit the movie theater on average twice a week. Usually three times. Plus I'd catch up on a DVD or two. My favorite type of films are the little indie dramas that are beautifully scripted and acted: *You Can Count on Me*, *Door in the Floor*, *Little Children*, and *In the Bedroom* are all my favorites - and all feature prominent female roles. I have no interest in the big-budget, sci-fi, CGI-filled, testosterone-pumped, action flicks. For me - and for most of my female friends - it is about the story. The journey. Which is why laddish *The Wolf of Wall Street* left me cold, but I loved *August Osage County*. I am far from alone - so why not cater to me? Why not have more emotionally led films that appeal to women? Or even better, more *Gravity*'s in the world of film - which appeal to both sexes?

Meanwhile behind the camera, it is just as bad: Kathryn Bigelow's Oscar® - the first woman to win the Best Director award for the 2009 drama *The Hurt Locker* - was seen as a major breakthrough for women. Hopes of the "Bigelow effect" - where new opportunities would be available for women - sadly came to nothing. "We now know that didn't materialize," said Lauzen.

In a separate study of the top 250 domestic grossing films in 2012, Lauzen calculated that women comprised 18% of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors - a 1% improvement since 1998. So in 14 years we have improved by a measly 1% - in ALL these areas.

Something has to change. And as great as it was to have Ellen presenting the Oscars®, that's just a start. We need equality in film - in front of and

behind the camera. We are every bit as talented as our male counterparts. What is seen in a man as drive, is often seen in a woman as cold ambition. Men are leaders, women are "bossy." So in the week that wants to "Ban Bossy," I'd say lets also begin to "Find Females in Film" - or even better - "Fund Females in Film." Catchy, isn't it?

Photo source: [Twitter](#)

-By Suzanne Cowie

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