



Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity

WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

All women and girls: transgender, non-binary, gender expansive*, intersex, and cisgender women and girls across the intersections of race, class, ability, sexuality, culture, education, religion, nation, body type, age, incarceration history, immigration status, etc.

HERE'S WHY AUTHENTICITY MATTERS

While tremendous strides have been made in achieving onscreen parity, women and girls are still less likely to appear, speak, and have starring roles than men, and they're more often relegated to gendered stereotypes. This creates harmful views of women and girls across the world, leading to violence against them *and* to a lack of rights, protections, and opportunities for them. This is especially true for BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and migrant women, who are at higher risk of victimization, poverty, and incarceration and who are less represented onscreen than their counterparts. However, as the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media has shown, when depictions model aspirational behavior and break the restrictive gender binary*, women are more likely to strive for gender equality, empowerment, and leadership in their careers, relationships, and communities, and society is more likely to foster the same.

OVERREPRESENTED STORIES & HARMFUL STEREOTYPES

• **Gendered Traits:** Characters who *only* conform to stereotypical traits and behaviors (e.g., gentle, emotional, trying to “have it all,” defined by desire for kids). This upholds the harmful belief that people must fit into binary boxes, risking viewers of all genders

WOMEN AND GIRLS

internalizing that falsehood.

- **Cis, Het, & White:** Mostly depicted as cisgender, heterosexual, non-disabled, and/or white, particularly in leading roles. Underrepresented women (e.g., BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled) are used as props to hold up white counterparts, thus devaluing their real-world existence.
- **The Feminine Beauty Ideal:** Characters who conform to the rigid, Eurocentric definition of “beauty” (thin, “pretty,” and white or light-skinned), often through the male gaze lens. This ignores the infinite other body types, sizes, and colors and the real-life challenges women and girls face when they don't fit into this promoted “norm.”
- **Here for Men:** Only onscreen to benefit a man, as a romantic interest or other prop for his story (e.g., damsel in distress he needs to save, victim of violence he must avenge, more competent sidekick to his superhero).
- **Hidden Jobs:** Portrayed as “just” wives, mothers, and sisters, without paid work or jobs. Even characters with careers aren't always *shown* working, erasing women from the workforce.
- **Sex Pots and Sex Notes:** Shown either young and hypersexualized (especially true of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ women) or disabled and/or older (falsely shown as undesirable). This fuels the real-life practice of valuing women only for “desirability” and not for who they are or what they do.

THINGS WE'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF

- **Reframed POV:** Well-developed protagonists of all kinds driving their own arcs (not just supporting men and/or white characters).
- **Gender Inequality*:** Depict how sexism hinders advancement and equal access to education, jobs, healthcare, and rights for women and girls everywhere (e.g., the wage gap*). Explore how this affects women differently relative to class, race, age, etc.
- **Underrepresented Experiences:** Nuanced portrayals of different kinds of women and girls (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, older, incarcerated, migrant), allowing their identities to shape their beliefs and behaviors. It's

important to depict the hardships of racial and socioeconomic disparities, but it's just as vital to tell stories beyond oppression (e.g., joy, love, ambition, accomplishments).

- **Unpaid Labor:** Explore and center the invisible labor and disproportionate burden placed on women at home (e.g., division of chores, caregiving) and at work (e.g., emotional labor).
- **Role Models:** Characters of all ages modeling strong, ambitious, and brave behavior (e.g., asking for raises, demanding respect for boundaries). Depict political leaders, activists, CEOs, athletes, STEM participants, etc., without always depicting them in relation to men.
- **Friendships:** Characters of all ages in healthy platonic relationships (e.g., supporting each other and not cold, bossy, “mean girls;” women and men who don't look to each other for sex; older women mentoring younger women).
- **Respected Workers:** Spotlight women and girls in society's many caregiving and domestic work* jobs (e.g., nurses, health aides, nannies). Show their importance to our communities and the hard work and skill they require.
- **Reframed Violence:** Without exploiting as trauma porn, address violence against women and girls through their own POVs (e.g., most often attacked by someone they know; long-term physical, mental, sexual, social, economic effects). Especially with respect to underrepresented women (e.g., missing and murdered Indigenous and Black women, anti-transgender attacks).
- **Birth & Family:** Nuanced storylines about pregnancy, infertility, and parenthood. Address incredibly diverse parenting and reproductive health realities (e.g., Black maternal mortality, LGBTQIA+ healthcare and adoption rights, miscarriage).
- **Autonomy:** Women and girls in control of their bodies (e.g., giving consent, right to gender expression, sex and intimacy without shame, abortion without regret or trauma).

*Denotes a term in the glossary

QUICK FACTS

- ➔ If women earned minimum wage for their unpaid work at home, they would've made \$1.5 trillion in the U.S. and \$10.9 trillion globally in 2019.
- ➔ In 2018, U.S. women held 51.5% of all management jobs but only 5% as CEOs. In 2019, only 1 BIPOC woman was a Fortune 500 CEO.
- ➔ Women's global political representation doubled in the last 25 years, but they still hold only 1 in 4 parliamentary seats.
- ➔ Globally, women and girls are 4% more likely than men and boys to live in deep poverty. U.S. women experience higher rates of poverty than men, with 10 million in deep poverty in 2018.
- ➔ In the U.S., nearly 60% of maids and housekeepers, 50% of nursing assistants, and 46% of personal care aides are BIPOC women.
- ➔ Women comprised 23% of all directors, writers, producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top films of 2020. This represents a historic high but is also only a 6% increase since 1998.

ONLINE REFERENCES & RESOURCES:

- Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance: [“Challenging Patriarchy and Sexism”](#)
- Center for American Progress: [“An Unequal Division of Labor”](#)
[“The Basic Facts About Women in Poverty”](#)
- [Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film](#)
- Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media: [“Frail, Frumpy, and Forgotten: A Report on the Movie Roles of Women of Age”](#)
[“Gender Roles & Occupations”](#)
[“Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Film and TV”](#)
- Global Citizen: Girls & Women: [“9 key issues affecting girls and women around the world”](#)
- Healthline: [“99% of Women Say They Feel Relief, Not Regret, 5 Years After Having an Abortion”](#)
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: [“Domestic Violence”](#)
- Time's Up: [“Memo: The Care Election”](#)
- United Nations: [“Visualizing the data: Women's representation in society”](#)
[“Women: Facts & Figures”](#)
- World Health Organization: [“Violence Against Women”](#)

GLOSSARY

Domestic Worker:

Hired to perform household and caregiving duties in an employer's private home or residence (e.g., housekeeper, nanny, gardener, au pair, chauffeur, in-home aide, babysitter). These professionals (majority women, mostly immigrants and BIPOC) do difficult, skilled work, often without basic labor rights and protections.

Gender Binary:

The false, long-held societal and cultural categorization of gender into just two distinct and opposite terms: masculine or feminine, male or female, man or woman. Attached to this classification are expected traits, behaviors, and appearances (e.g., men should be strong, aggressive, and wear masculine clothes; women should be kind, domestic, and wear make-up and feminine clothes). The binary often assumes someone's gender identity and pronouns all align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expansive:

An umbrella term describing people who expand notions of gender expression (e.g., clothing, appearance, mannerisms) and identity beyond expected societal norms. They might identify along the binary (i.e., “man” or “woman”), outside the binary, as a mix of genders, or as no gender. It's key to remember that gender is fluid, and people can exist in any gender no matter their pronouns or expression.

Gender Inequality:

How society treats men, women, and non-binary people unequally based on perceived biological, psychological, or cultural differences. It's prevalent in issues of life expectancy, education, careers, etc.

Wage Gap:

Refers to the difference in wages earned between men and women and non-binary people in the workforce. Women consistently make less than men (and Black, Indigenous, and Latinx women earn less than their white and Asian counterparts, with disabled women earning less than non-disabled women). Also known as the “gender pay gap.”

For in-depth definitions of the above terms and definitions of additional terms (biological clock, damsel in distress, deep poverty, emotional labor, mean girls, misogyny, patriarchy, STEM, TERFs, toxic masculinity, trauma porn, unnecessary intersex surgeries, WASH inequality, womxn), please visit our [Expanded Glossary](#).

In-kind support and materials for this factsheet were provided by the following partner organizations. Please contact them for additional information, story guidance, and in-room consultations.



[CaringAcross.org](#)



[SeeJane.org](#)



[DomesticWorkers.org](#)



[RAINN.org](#)



[StorylinePartners.com](#)



A list of the most up-to-date contact information for all of our partner organizations can be found on our website:
[WriteInclusion.org/factsheets](#)

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