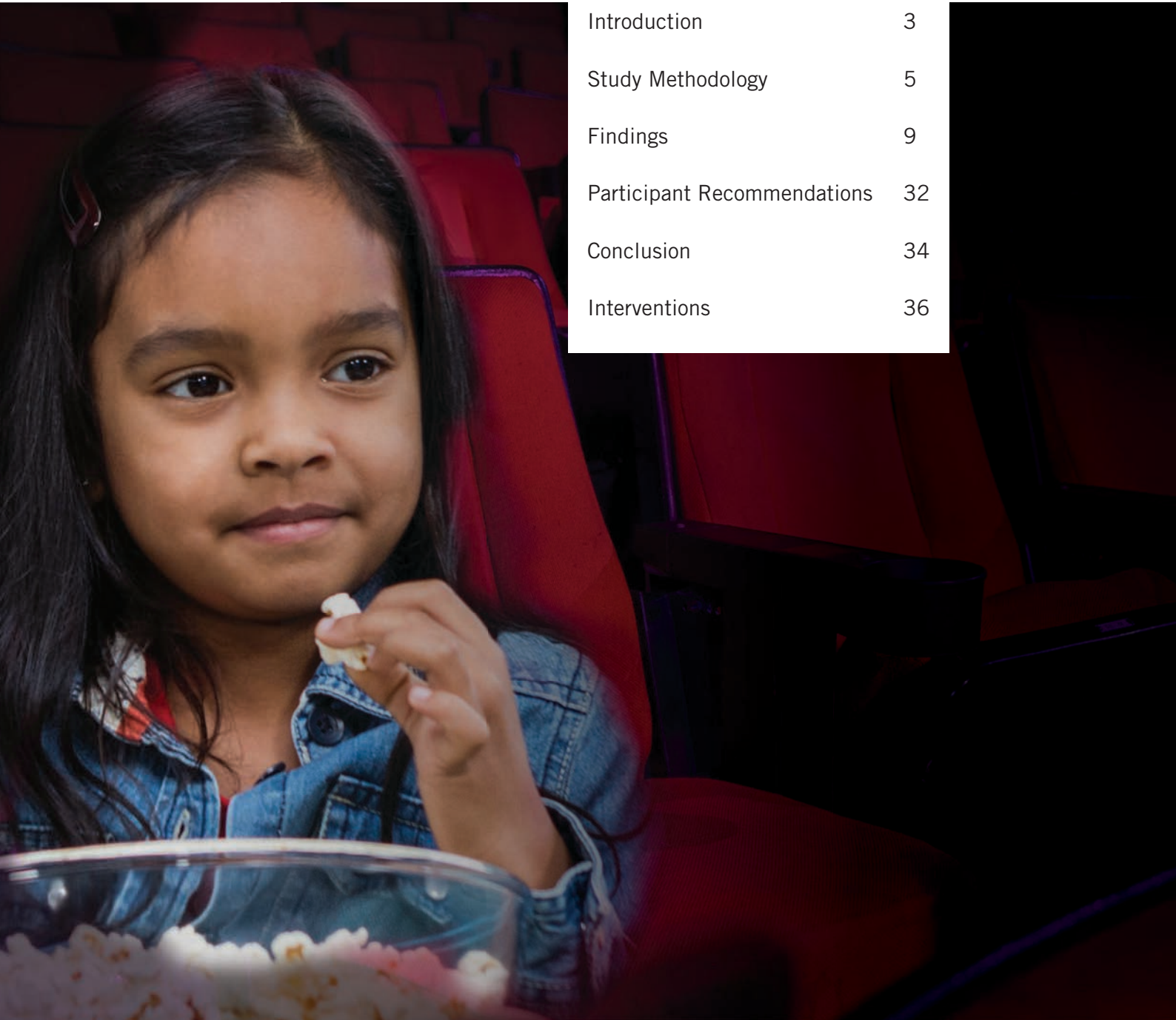# Cinema and Society:
Shaping our Worldview Beyond the Lens

Investigation on the Impact
of Gender Representation
in Brazilian Films

If she can see it, she can be it™

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

OAK FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

This research is driven by three primary questions. First, what do Brazilian people of different backgrounds think about the influence of entertainment media in everyday life? Secondly, what do Brazilians think of gender and race representations in Brazilian media? Thirdly, should entertainment media address pressing social issues? Previous studies have documented media effects as well as gender and race bias in Brazilian media, but our study is the first to assess whether Brazilians are aware of these biases.

Across the globe, gender gaps in health, finance, education, and politics persist, impeding economic growth and social progress.[1] Despite a push by the United Nations to champion gender equality, progress remains stagnant in media content worldwide. Gender representation in entertainment media matters. Previous research indicates that while media does not tell people what to think, it does tell us what to think about and how to think about it.[2] Brazilian media powerfully influences what issues people focus on[3] and what options they think are available for social change.[4]

In our groundbreaking 2014 research study Gender Bias Without Borders, we analyzed gender representations in popular film across the ten largest theatrical territories and found that filmmakers perpetuate negative attitudes toward women and girls in both developed and developing countries.[5] In general, we found that women are vastly underrepresented in film and, when they are featured, their characters tend to reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. In Brazil, only 9.1% of directors and 30.8% of screenwriters are women. Despite this low number of female directors, Brazil is comparatively better than every country except the U.K. and China when it comes to female directors. Brazil is also comparatively better than most countries when it comes to female film writers. One-in-three (30.8%) writers is female, putting the country third in line behind the U.K. (58.8%) and Australia (33.3%). Brazil has more female film producers (47.2%) than any other country in the study. Out of eleven countries in our study, Brazil has the most positive gender ratio for women behind the camera: 1.7 men for every woman in the film industry.

Of the eleven territories in the study, Brazil is second only to the U.K. when it comes to the percentage of films that feature female characters. Women comprise 37.1% of all film characters in Brazilian film and one-in-five films feature a female lead or co-lead. Just under 20% of films present a gender balanced cast. When women are included in Brazilian films, they are rarely shown in positions of power. Only 25.4% of women in Brazilian films are portrayed as working, compared to 72.8% of men. Fewer than
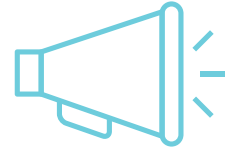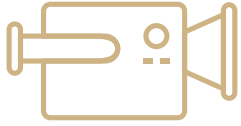
20% of all female roles depict women as business executives, political figures, or other professionals. Female characters are most commonly presented in traditionally feminine professions, such as teaching and nursing.

Women and girls in Brazilian cinema are often hyper-sexualized. Women are nearly three times more likely to appear in sexually revealing clothing or be nude onscreen than male characters (28.7% compared to 11.5%) and twice as likely to be very thin (42.0% compared to 18.6%). Previous research indicates that girls and women who grow up with hyper-sexualized media culture are at a higher risk of developing body image issues and eating disorders.[6]

For this follow up study, we explore how Brazilians of different backgrounds perceive the content of entertainment media and how they believe it affects their lives. We asked boys, girls, men, and women to name their role models within the entertainment world and explain why they look up to these people – what is it about their behavior, qualities, lifestyle, and attitude that they admire? What do viewers think of the levels of violence and sexuality in entertainment content? Do they think entertainment media should feature social issues? We honed in on specific movie scenes and asked how participants relate to the characters and situations presented.

The findings from this study provide a rich picture of public perceptions of film/television in Brazil. Our findings shed light on what changes viewers want in their media that can be used by the entertainment industry and non-profit organizations working to improve media representations in terms of gender and race.

*If she can see it,
she can be it*™

STUDY METHODOLOGY

We used two different methodologies for this study in order to comprehensively assess public opinion about Brazilian media. First, we conducted a series of qualitative focus groups in 2014 to identify themes of interest. Secondly, we administered a quantitative survey in 2015 to test whether our focus group findings applied to the public more broadly. Each method is described below.

2014 Focus Groups

From October 27 – 30, 2014, we conducted ten focus groups in the city of São Paulo (SP), Brazil at a professional market research facility. These focus groups allowed us to examine our topics in great detail. Researchers posed the same questions in each focus group, but participants often took the discussion in new directions that furnished a rich understanding of the research question and generated new themes.

All the focus groups were audio and video recorded and transcribed in Portuguese and English for data analysis and reporting. Each focus group was led by a professionally trained moderator, who was matched by gender for each group to control for potential gender moderator effects. The female moderator had over thirty years experience in market and social science research and the male moderator had over twenty years experience in market research.

Each of the ten focus groups included eight participants. Half of the focus groups included only male participants, while the other half included only female participants. They were selected by age group, gender, and parental status in order to compare how different groups perceive of gender representations in media and their effects. The following focus groups were recruited for this study:

CHILDREN	TEENS	YOUNG ADULTS	ADULTS	PARENTS
Girls, ages 9 – 11	Teen girls, ages 13 – 16	Women, ages 18 – 24	Women, ages 30 – 44	Mothers of children ages 6 – 9
Boys, ages 9 – 11	Teen boys, ages 13 – 16	Men, ages 18 – 24	Men, ages 30 – 44	Fathers of children ages 6 – 9

Focus group participants were diverse in terms of age, occupation, and socioeconomic level. All participants belonged to the A, B, and C1 classes based on the ABIPEME Brazil criterion. Participants under 18 were selected based on the diversity of their parent's education, employment, and household income.

Focus group participants only included Brazilians that frequently consume movies and television programs. Participants were also screened for their level of comfort discussing the personal impact of their most recent movie viewing experience to ensure that they would be active contributors in their focus group. People who work in media or market research were excluded from the study given their professional proximity to the research question.

Each focus group started with background questions to get the group talking. Next, the moderators asked about societal gender roles and how they are represented in media. During the session, participants were shown two short clips of scenes from the films "*Os Homens São de Marte... E é pra Lá que Eu Vou*" (Men are from Mars and That's Where I'm Going) and "*Antes Que o Mundo Acabe*" (Before the World Ends) to spark discussions of gender roles. The first clip shows a male senator trying to pick up a female event planner. The second clip shows a family where the father takes care of the home and children and the mother works outside the home. These films were selected based on their popularity and their clear depiction of gender roles. Participants were also asked a series of questions about media influence, race, and social issues. The moderators' script can be found in Appendix A.

These focus groups had some limitations. First, we focused on entertainment media (television and film) rather than a full array of media (e.g., video games, online videos, books, magazines, etc.) in order to test the effects of mediums that are popular in every age group. Secondly, 80 focus group participants cannot possibly represent the diverse opinions and interests of 200 million Brazilians. Focus group findings provide rich insight into a topic, but they are not intended to be representative of the broader population from which they are drawn. Thirdly, study findings are limited by social desirability, a tendency for participants to respond to questions in a manner that reflects desirable or "good" behavior. Although focus group moderators did their best to minimize this phenomenon, some participants may have given socially desirable answers instead of their honest opinions in order to avoid appearing sexist or racist.

2015 Public Opinion Survey

We conducted a nationally representative poll of 2,002 Brazilians in collaboration with Gallup affiliate IBOPE Inteligência from December 3 – 8, 2015, to see whether the major findings of our focus groups were more broadly representative. The sample of respondents who completed this survey was representative of Brazil's population distribution. Our sample was 47% male and 53% female, a proportion very close to that of the actual population (49% and 51%, respectively). The sample was distributed relatively evenly across age groups: ages 16 – 24 (17%); ages 25 – 34 (23%); ages 35-44 (21%); ages 45-54 (16%); and ages 55 and older (22%).

The survey sample was also representative of the educational distribution of the Brazilian population. One-in-five (22%) respondents had completed up to 4th grade, 22% finished 5th – 8th grade, 39% graduated from middle school, and 17% held a college degree. In terms of income, 25% of respondents were Class A/B, 50% were class C, and 24% were class D/E. Our sample was also representative in terms of the racial/ethnic make-up of Brazil with 37% of respondents identifying as White, 59% identifying as Black, Brown, or Mulatto, and 4% identifying as another race/ethnicity.

The sample also represented the larger Brazilian population in terms of region within the country. One-third (31%) of the sample live in areas with a population of 50,000 or less, while 34% live in cities with 50,000 – 500,000 residents and 35% live in cities with greater than 500,000 residents. The sample was also diverse in terms of where respondents live in Brazil. Fifteen percent live in the North/Middle West part of Brazil, 26% live in the Northeast, 44% live in the Southeast, 15% live in the South of Brazil, 29% live in the capital, and 13% live in the cities around the capital.

Throughout this report, we combine the findings from our focus groups and survey to provide a comprehensive picture of Brazilian opinions about entertainment media.

BRAZILIAN MEDIA

The Brazilian government has long promoted Brazilian cinema. In 1969, government officials created EMBRAFILME (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes S.A.), a federal company tasked with producing, promoting, and distributing Brazilian films. In 2001, another government agency, ANCINE (Agência Nacional do Cinema), took on many of EMBRAFILME's functions, as well as oversight and regulation of the film industry. Today, Brazil enjoys the 11th largest box office returns in the world.[11] The country is producing more films than ever before in its history. Until recently, foreign movies shown in theaters were subtitled, but now copies dubbed in Portuguese are being offered to audiences and are becoming increasingly popular.

Brazil manages to accomplish relatively large box office returns, despite the fact that the country has fewer per capita cinema screens compared to other countries.[12] Nearly 60% of screens are located in cities with populations of 500,000 or more people, which means that half of Brazil's population lives in a municipality without a movie screen. When it comes to film preferences, Brazilian filmgoers enjoy a variety of genres, with a pronounced taste for social and political criticism.

Although the movie industry is on the rise, television continues to be the most popular form of media consumed in Brazil. Over 97% of Brazilians have a television in their home and most people access free channels, although pay TV is gaining popularity.[13] As of 2015, 72% of all households only had access to broadcast free channels, while 26% had pay TV. Seven-in-ten (73%) Brazilians report watching TV every day. Brazilians watch on average more than 30 hours of television per week, and women watch more television than men. The intensity of television watching increases with age and the size of the municipality where the person lives and decreases with family income and the number of years of formal education.

The way Brazilians watch film/television has changed dramatically in the past decade. Over half of the population has online access,[14] and Brazilians rank second globally in spending on electronics.[15] It is no surprise then that middle- and upper-class Brazilians are increasingly using cell phones, tablets, video games consoles, and personal computers to view films and TV programs.
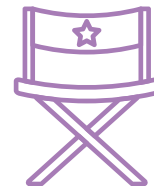
FINDINGS

This section is organized around findings for seven key themes that emerged in the focus groups:

• **Media Consumption**

• **Media Influence**

• **Media Preferences**

• **Male Characters**

• **Female Characters**

• **Racial Representations**

• **Social Injustice**

For each theme, we describe the most common opinions using verbatim quotes from focus group participants. We only include findings that surfaced in half or more of the ten groups and we highlight disagreements or differences of opinion within and across groups. Our quantitative survey findings confirm our major qualitative focus group findings. We weave in survey findings throughout this report to provide a broader context for the more in-depth findings.

Media Consumption: Addiction and Isolation

Brazilians of all ages report that they watch television together on a regular basis and the TV is often on in the background, even when no one is watching. Mothers and fathers say that the TV is sometimes a "nanny" for children and teens while they are at work and no other caregiver is available. Those accounts cohere with other nationwide surveys that indicate that Brazilians tend to have the TV on while doing other activities at home, such as eating, having a conversation, doing domestic chores, using the cell phone, or surfing the internet.[16]

The internet is already the second most popular media source in Brazil, and children have the highest usage rates.[17] According to mothers and fathers, children have dramatically increased their media consumption compared to previous generations due to easy online access through computers, tablets, and smartphones.[18] Girls (ages 9 – 11) mostly watch television/films and interact with social media, while boys (ages 9 – 11) mostly play video games. The isolating effects of new technology on familial relationships are a key concern of parents and children who say that social media cuts into family bonding time.
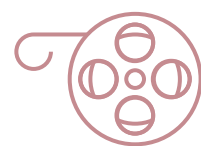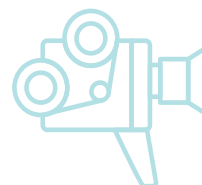
FINDING: Boys Play Video Games

Boys (ages 9 – 11) spend a lot of time playing video games, and teenage boys report that they spend most of their free time playing video games. Boys and male teens prefer to play games with violence and many are proud of their video game binging. Young male participants and parents say there are few restrictions on the type and amount of videos games they are allowed to play.

"[My friends] become addicted to playing." – Carlos, age 9

"Two weeks ago I played the whole week." – Pedro, age 11

Participants in the fathers' focus group are concerned about the addictive and isolating effects of video games for their sons.

"They are more into computers, video games, they don't have much contact with the streets, with those street smarts. It is a very different thing." – João Ricardo, 36, father of 3

"I think we should also try to be part of our children's world, like play video games with him, participate. Otherwise, he will isolate himself from you completely." – Cleber, 38, father of 1

FINDING: Girls Lead in TV and Social Media Consumption

Girls (9-11) and female teenagers play few video games, but they consume a lot of film and television on tablets and smartphones. Parents say that Netflix, Telecine, and Sky (satellite TV) are popular viewing sites for films and television. (These media services are too costly for many Brazilians, so these responses reflect the higher socioeconomic status of participants in our qualitative study.) Teenage girls are also copious consumers of social media, mostly through WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. Some female teen participants are concerned that their media and social media use negatively affects their relationships with their families.

"In 24 hours, I'm on my cell phone for like 23 hours." – Paula, age 14

"My day is very busy. I have a lot to do. The evening is the only time I can actually check my Instagram, Facebook, text messages. So I spend one hour on my cell phone and then one hour watching TV." – Isadora, age 15

"I think you're asking us about the relationships between the daughter and her parents. I think today we are losing it because of cell phones." – Isadora, age 15

Media Influence: A Powerful Teaching Tool

Increasing media consumption matters to most Brazilians because they believe media influences everyday life. A vast majority of survey respondents believe that Brazilian TV and movies have "much influence on how people think and act." 75% of respondents agree with this sentiment, while 16% disagree and 9% remain neutral on the subject.

Brazilian TV and movies have much influence on how people think and act

| Category	Percentage
Agree	75%
Neutral	9%
Disagree	16%
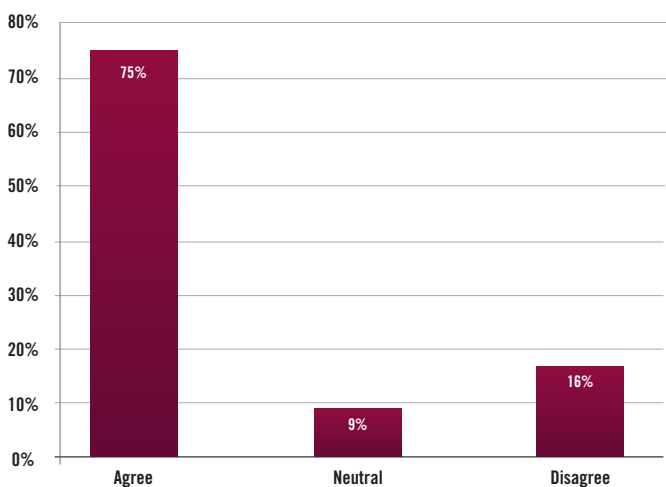
Respondents with higher levels of education are more likely to agree with this statement than Brazilians with less education. For example, 81% of college graduates think that TV and movies have a great impact, compared to 64% of respondents who have completed up to 4th grade. Additionally, respondents with higher levels of income are more likely to think media is influential compared to Brazilians with lower income levels.

Respondents in different regions of Brazil have different opinions about media influence. Respondents from the North, Middle West, and Northeastern parts of Brazil are less likely than Brazilians elsewhere to think that media is influential. Brazilians in medium-sized and larger cities are more likely to think that Brazilian TV and movies are influential than respondents in more rural areas.

When asked about specific ways in which media influences people, three-in-four (74%) Brazilians believe that the violence shown in TV and movies influences the way people behave in real life, while 17% do not think it has an effect and 1% are neutral on the subject.

11

The violence portrayed in Brazilian movies and TV influence the way people behave in real life

Agree: 74%
Neutral: 9%
Disagree: 17%
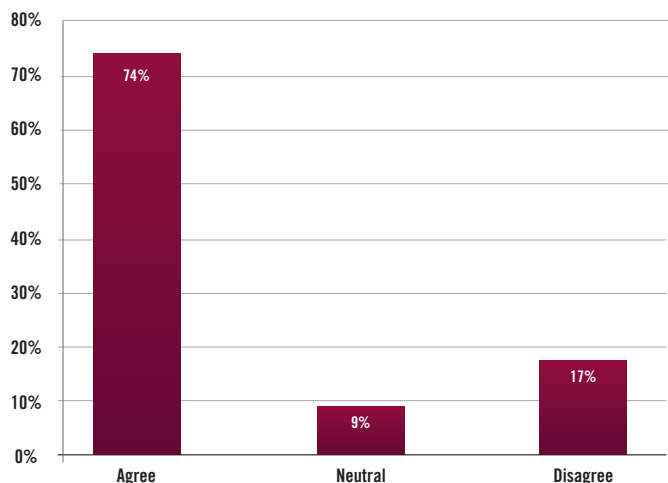
The perception of an association between violence portrayed in the media and violent behavior consistently decreases with age. About 80% of people ages 16-54 believe there is a connection, while less than 70% of respondents who are 55 or older hold the same perception. Respondents with higher levels of education are more likely to think that screen violence increases real world violence than those with less education. Three-in-four college graduates think this compared to 65% of respondents with up to a 4th grade education. White respondents (77%) are more likely than Black, Mulatto, or Brown Brazilians (72%) to think that screen violence leads to real life violence. Brazilians in the South are more likely to believe this than people in other parts of the country. Brazilians in urban areas are more likely to think that media violence leads to real world violence than those living in rural areas.

Focus group participants agree that media is influential and are concerned about the racy content and sexism in Brazilian television, but they are optimistic that media can also be used to challenge gender stereotypes. Participants of different ages talked about how young people in particular are influenced by what they see because they imitate entertainment media.

"I think it's a lot stronger on youth." – Virginia, age 22

"They do imitate what they see, and this I know for a fact." – Érica, age 35

"There is a girl in my classroom who thinks she's a woman. She even wears a padded bra, she is imitating women she sees in soap operas. All those women have fake breasts." – Eduarda, age 10

"Everybody wants to go to school wearing those earrings that the actress had on. That girl had something in her hair and I want it, too." – Thiago, age 36, father of 2

"[Media] is influencing how girls dress. They even want make-up so they can look like the characters. My daughter wants to straighten her hair with the hot flat iron all the time. I always say no, I tell her that her hair is already straight, that she does not need to straighten it more." – Luciana, age 41

Adult participants, including parents, note that television is more influential than film in everyday life because Brazilians watch it more frequently and for longer periods of time. They express concern about the influence of television because of negative gender stereotypes and sexism.

"There is no way I can keep it from happening, the TV is always on." – Cláudia, 39, mother of 4

"Sometimes you are not even really paying attention to what is on, but it's on and the child is sitting there soaking all that in." – Marcel, 37, father of 2

"Especially on TV, which reaches a greater part of the population." – Caique, age 18

"Yes. Especially soap operas. There's machismo." – Luan, age 22

"Because of soap operas my daughter thinks she has to be thin to be accepted by society,"
– Valeria, age 40

Many participants across age groups noted the positive potential for media. While adult women (ages 30 – 44) acknowledged that media presents women as gender stereotypes, they also point out that when they were younger female characters in films gave them confidence and opened their eyes to career possibilities. Other adult participants discussed how TV and film storylines help address bias and stereotypes in society.

"They are opinion makers. If all soap operas and all films only started showing women who were presidents of companies and started showing all the benefits that a woman brings to the table, people would start to value it because it's a starting point for a whole chain reaction." – Larissa, age 20

"I think I'm even going to use 'Carrossel,' the soap opera, as an example. There were many children characters in it, and they learned a great deal with their situations, and it was not only the abuse situation that they would often portray, but also discrimination, a bunch of things."
– João Ricardo, 36, father of 3

Media Preferences: Tone Down the Content

When asked whether they observe a gender difference in movie and television leading roles, participants say they do not notice a gender gap. But when asked about their favorite movie and television characters, girls and women of all ages say they prefer a mix of male and female protagonists, while boys, male teens, and men unanimously mention male protagonists as their favorites.

When asked about favorite or inspiring characters, boys (ages 9-11) like American superheroes (e.g., "*Spiderman*," "*Batman*," "*Ironman*"), while teens and young men prefer action heroes and gangster characters (e.g., those played by Al Pacino, Will Smith, Bruce Lee, Vin Diesel). Girls and female teens find female action characters inspiring (e.g., "*Red Riding Hood*," "*Divergent*"). Adults across age groups and genders admire Capitão Nascimento from "*Tropa de Elite*" (The Elite Squad) because of his style.

FINDING: Content Too Racy

Participants across age groups complain that the content of Brazilian films and television is too racy. They express specific concern about bad language and sexual content.

"There is only one thing that worries me about Brazilian movies. They have too much swearing, cursing. There are too many 'fucks' and things like that. I don't like this, so I'm careful." – Érica, age 35

"Brazilian channels show too much nudity." – Tânia, age 28, mother of 3

"Most of them have nudity." – Carlos, age 9

"Brazilian TV nowadays has become something very futile. I don't watch it. Cheating, homosexuality, promiscuity." – Lérica, age 41

"There are many sex scenes, too much dark humor, too much swearing. I think movies can be funny without all these shocking scenes." – Juliana, age 16

"Brazilian movies talk about three things: violence, comedy, or too much sex." – Ana, age 15

Survey respondents also think that the content of Brazilian TV and movies is too racy. Three-quarters (74%) think that there is too much nudity and sex in media, while 16% disagree and 9% are neutral on the subject.

Brazilian TV and movies show too much nudity and sex

Agree: 74%
Neutral: 9%
Disagree: 16%
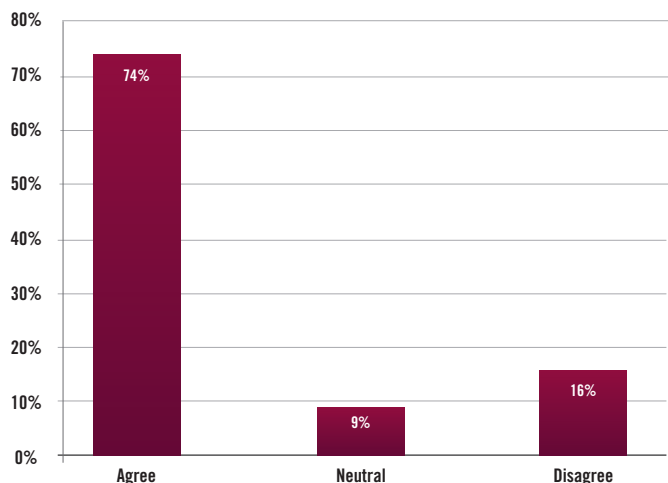
Perceptions that there is too much sex and nudity in Brazilian entertainment media vary by age, education, region, city size, and social class. Brazilians ages 55 and older are less likely than younger respondents to think that there is too much nudity and sex. Far more respondents with a college degree agree with this sentiment than those with less education (82% compared to 63% with a 4th grade education or less). Brazilians of higher social classes are more likely than other Brazilians to believe that there is too much nudity and sex in TV and movies. White Brazilians (77%) are more likely to think this than Black, Brown, or Mulatto Brazilians (72%). Respondents in the South are more likely to think there is too much sex and nudity in Brazilian TV and film than respondents in other parts of Brazil, particularly the Northern part of the country. Respondents in medium and large cities are more likely to think there is too much sex and nudity than respondents in less populated areas.

Despite widespread concern about the content of Brazilian entertainment media, participants across focus groups think that media content is getting better in many ways, especially in terms of representing life in Brazil.

"Today Brazilian movies have a superior quality than before. They used to go to extremes, try just anything, and there's none of that nowadays." – Ana Cláudia, age 39

"Brazilian movies are what we live, we see what we are, it portrays that." – Viviane, age 33

"If you ignore some of the comedies that I think are pretty stupid, I think that the majority of the national movies always show things about life here." – Caique, age 18

Male Characters: Hyper-Masculine

Adult focus group participants agree that while Brazilian society is changing in terms of gender roles, Brazilian television and films continue to present more traditional gender roles where men are hyper-masculine and unequal gender roles are expected. Two-thirds of Brazilians (69%) believe that Brazilian film and TV "mostly show men in charge," while one-quarter of Brazilians (24%) disagree and 13% are neutral on the subject.

**Brazilian movies and TV
mostly show men in charge**
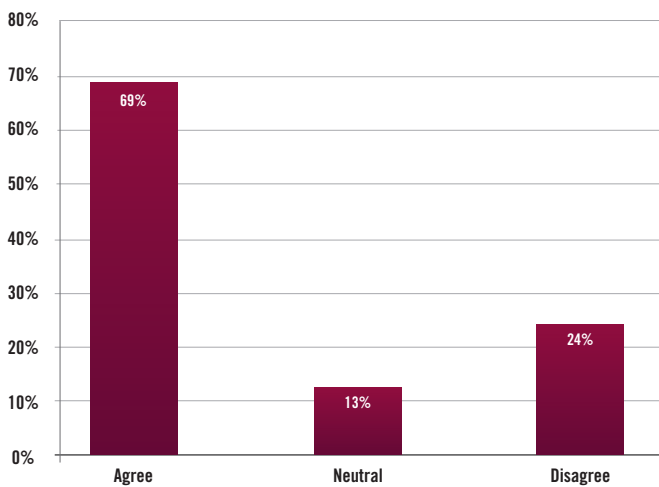
Men are more likely to think that Brazilian movies and TV mostly show men in charge (66% compared to 61%). Respondents with higher levels of education and income are also more likely to think men are shown as being in charge. Additionally, residents of Southern Brazil are significantly more likely to think this than people living in other parts of the country, as are residents of urban areas.

Focus group participants of both genders and across age groups are very critical of the narrow, traditional portrayals of boys and men in Brazilian entertainment media. Young focus group participants of both genders say that Brazilian films and TV programs glorify hyper-masculinity. This caricature of masculinity depicted in media gives Brazilian boys and men the message that they should suppress their emotions and act aggressively. They say that films and television almost always portray men as in charge and women as deferential to male authority.

"There are a lot of movies where the wives have to obey their husbands." – César, age 16

"Men are the only ones who get what they want." – Júlia, age 10

"The wives have to obey them." – Alexandre, age 14

"In Brazilian movies, the man is the father and the woman is the housewife." – David, age 20

Adult women point out that Brazilian media also promotes a caricature of masculinity by showing male characters as "players" or womanizers.

"What type of characters do men play? 'The womanizer.'" – Adriana, age 37

[Male movie characters] "are all scumbags." – Ana Cláudia, age 39

Male teenagers in the study feel that parents treat their sons and daughters differently, putting enormous pressure on boys to "man up" by being sexual and aggressive. Teen boys were particularly vocal in their rejection of hyper-masculinity in media.

"It's a machismo thing, the men who pick up lots of girls are macho; the women who pick up lots of guys are whores." – Arthur, age 15
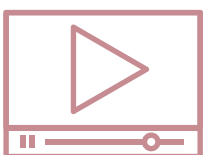
"My mother says: Honor what you have between your legs … Act like a man." – Christian, age 14

"My aunt says: 'I want to see you with a hot girl.'" – Henrique, age 13

Moderator: "What do you think of machismo?"
"It's garbage." – Arthur, age 15

"Both genders should be portrayed equally." – Leonardo, age 13

Female Characters: Sidelined and Sexy

Participants across focus groups are highly critical of the ways in which girls and women are represented in Brazilian film and television. They think media presents mostly very rich or very poor female characters in racialized ways and that women are hyper-sexualized across the board. Participants are vocal about their dislike of the depictions of female characters in Brazilian entertainment media, but they do think the situation is improving.

FINDING: Party Girls or Poor Victims

Participants notice that girls in Brazilian films and television are either represented as spoiled, rich, party girls or portrayed as dark-skinned, usually impoverished children from the slums who are involved in drugs and prostitution. The lighter the skin, the higher the character's social class. Women of all age groups report that their friends and family are neither rich party girls nor poor victims, but they don't see themselves represented realistically onscreen. They spend their time doing commonplace activities like studying, reading, and even just riding the bus. Yet, realistic depictions of their lives and on-screen role models are few and far between.

"Media does not portray girls like us." – Ana, age 13

"They only show the rich woman or the poor one." – Jailson, age 23

"The 'ass' woman is beautiful and rich or the woman who fights and strives is poor. Real poor. There's no one in between." – Nelson, age 19

"There's a movie with a call girl and, because she comes from a slum, she's shown a certain way, all deprecated to stereotype." – Viviane, age 33

"In movies the children are blond and White if they are rich. There's always stereotyping in the movies. You never see a rich Black family in a Brazilian movie." – Alan, age 20

"In soap operas, poor women are usually the troublemakers. Rich women are always mean." – Lea, age 11

"Whenever a woman on TV is pretty, we know she will play one of two roles: evil or sweet and kind." – Eunice, age 14

FINDING: Hyper-Sexualized

Three-quarters (73%) of Brazilians believe that women are shown in ways that are too sexual in Brazilian film and TV, while one-in-five (19%) disagree and 8% are neutral.

Brazilian movies and TV mostly show men in charge

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
	69%	13%	24%
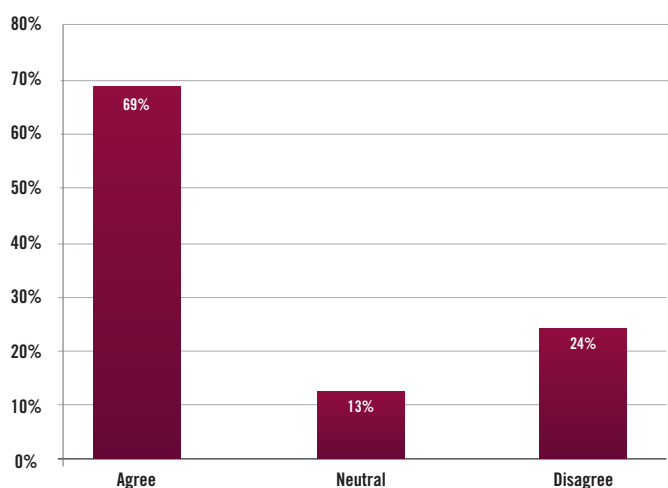
Men and women are about equally likely to think female film and TV characters are shown in ways that are too sexual. Brazilians ages 25 – 44 are more likely to think this than any other age group. Brazilians with a college degree (83%) are far more likely to think this than those with a mid-school degree (77%), 5th – 8th grade education (73%), or less education (61%). White Brazilians (77%) are more likely to think this than Black, Brown, or Mulatto Brazilians (72%). Brazilians in the South and Southeast are far more likely to think women are too sexualized in entertainment media than other Brazilians, as are residents of more urban areas. This belief increases with income level as well, with 81% of Brazilians from Class A/B believing this compared to 63% of Brazilians from Class D/E.

Focus group participants across ages are critical of the hyper-sexualization of female characters in Brazilian TV and film. They point out that the typical female character is scantily clad, sexually available, reduced to "breasts and butts," and portrayed as stupid. We present quotes from participants on each of these themes.

Scantily Clad

"They already show up in a bra." – Pablo, age 10

"Pretty, but always wearing short clothes, always trying to look sexy." – Michele, age 32

"On 'Pânico,' for example, women are completely exposed. I think this is ridiculous." – Siena, age 16

Sexually Available

"Most of them are prostitutes in Brazilian movies." – Pedro, age 11

"For the women it's prostitutes; for the girls is 'Patricinha' (a girly-girl)." – Leonardo, age 13

"Women feel like their body is theirs and they can show it off if they want. But there is also the issue that Brazilian women are seen as prostitutes abroad." – Luiza, age 15

"Breasts and Butts"

"TV shows like 'Pânico,' 'Teste de Fidelidade,' those are shows that portray breasts and butts, women are breasts and butts." – Rafaela, age 32

"My dad went to Spain and he said that there they think Brazilian women are prostitutes. Foreigners come to Brazil and expect to see girls in bikinis, at the beach, all pretty, with boobs and butts." – Heloisa, age 11

"I can't stand how Brazilian TV shows portray women. It is like 'I'm gorgeous, look at my body.' … They always talk about Brazilian women's butts. This is deprecating to our women." – Lúcia, age 16

Shallow and Stupid

"Ass women – It's a beautiful woman with a beautiful body. It's an empty person who is all about appearance." – Nelson, age 19

"[The message is] that their ass is more important than their brain." – Victor, age 16

"TV presents women as objects, as products, as shallow." – Christian, age 38

Parents feel overwhelmed by the hyper-sexualized images of women they see on television—in sitcoms, soap operas, news reports, and reality TV—and powerless when it comes to limiting what their children consume. Viewers of both genders feel that the emphasis on looks and sexuality undermines women in Brazilian society, giving the impression that they are "bimbos" (a word that was frequently used in the focus groups) who are always available for sex and are not as smart as their male counterparts.

FINDING: Unrealistic Standards of Beauty

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Brazilians think that the standard of beauty in Brazilian films and TV shows is far from the reality of Brazilian women, while 27% think they present Brazilian women realistically and 11% are neutral on the subject.

The standard of beauty shown in Brazilian movies and TV is far from the reality of Brazilian women
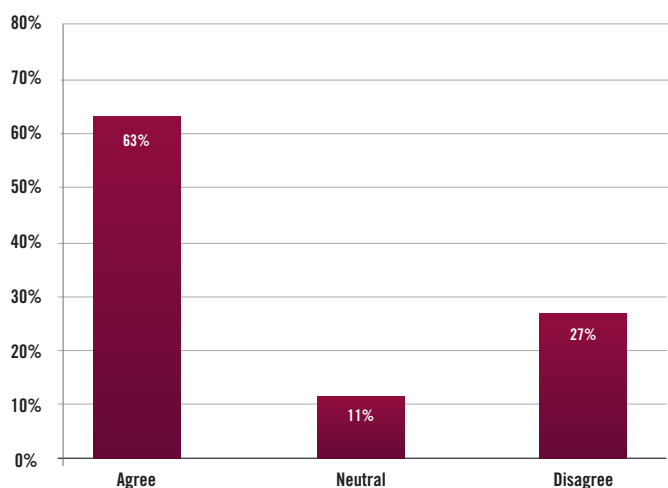
Respondents with higher levels of education and income are more likely than other Brazilians to think that the standard of beauty in TV and movies is unrealistic. Also, nearly three-fourths (73%) of residents in the South believe this compared to just over 60% of residents in other parts of Brazil.

FINDING: Making Progress

While adult male and female participants find women in Brazilian film and television to be too sexualized, they report that women's roles are improving in other ways. For example, they notice that women are less likely to be shown as traditional housewives in Brazilian films and television programs.

"Back in the day the woman was the housewife, from the movies we saw it was reality. Nowadays you don't see movies where the woman stays at home anymore, it's very rare, only those featuring the past, really." – Lérica, age 41

"I think today there isn't the traditional housewife anymore. The woman in the Brazilian movies is a modern woman, with it, that can talk, eloquent; it isn't the housewife that just cooked, cleaned, and took care of the house." – Rogério, 36, father of 3

"I see women being portrayed in different segments, especially in the past five years, you see architects, doctors, nurses, you see several professions besides the dancer, stripper." – Cleber, 38, father of 1

Despite this progress, a majority of Brazilians think that women are still shown in mostly traditional roles in media. Seven-in-ten Brazilians (69%) believe that women are mostly still shown in traditional gender roles in media, while 20% disagree with this and 11% are neutral on the subject.

Brazilian movies and TV mostly show women in traditional roles

Chart showing responses: Agree 69%, Neutral 11%, Disagree 20%
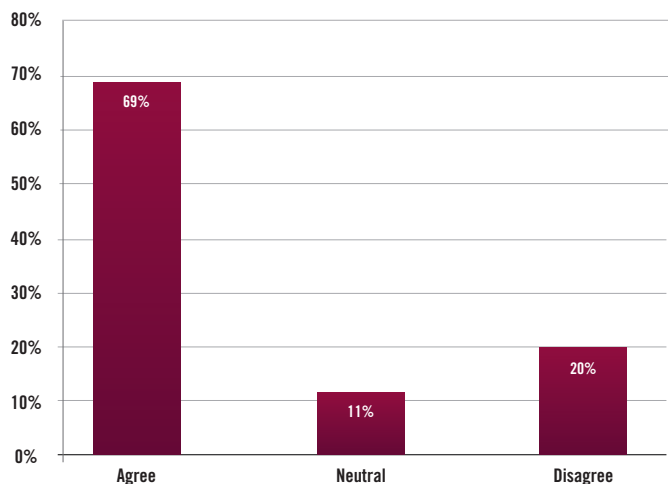
Younger Brazilians are more likely than older Brazilians to think that women are still shown in traditional roles in entertainment media. The higher a respondent's educational level and income level, the more likely they are to believe that women are still represented in traditional ways in film and TV.

Participants also say that while women are still hyper-sexualized in Brazilian entertainment media, they are typically no longer presented as mere sexual props or portrayed as the butt of sexist jokes.

"In the past, Brazilian movies were synonymous with pornography, but not today. Today women are different, but before the 90s it was just porn." – Cleiton, age 34

"Today the movies don't show women as sex objects, women do other things. Before it used to be only that, the movie didn't even have a story, nowadays she's independent." – Rafaela, age 30

"Those comedy ones, in which women were objects, the jokes were sexist, chauvinistic, things that can't be broadcast nowadays." – Christian, age 38

Racial Representations: Diverse But Stereotypical

When asked whether Brazilian film and TV accurately represent the racial diversity of Brazilian society, the vast majority (70%) of respondents think that media representations are sufficiently diverse. One-in-five Brazilians thinks that film and TV is not racially diverse, while one-in-ten is neutral on the subject.

The people shown in Brazilian movies and TV represent the colors and races of Brazilian society
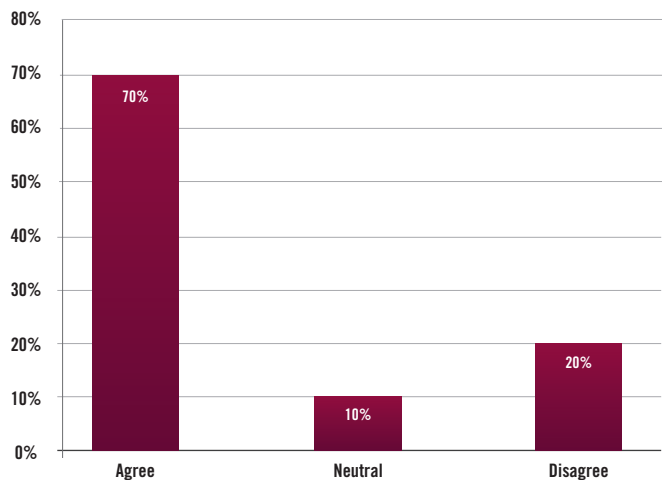
Young Brazilians are more satisfied with the racial diversity in Brazilian film and TV than older respondents, and people with higher levels of education and income are more likely to think that Brazilian media is racially diverse. Respondents in the South are far more likely than others to think that films and TV accurately reflect the racial diversity of Brazil.[19] Opinions on the diversity of Brazilian entertainment media do not vary significantly by respondent race.

While most Brazilians believe that TV and movies are racially representative, two-thirds (64%) think that people of color are mostly depicted as racial stereotypes. Nearly one-in-three (27%) disagrees with the statement that "Brazilian movies and TV still mostly show people of color as racial stereotypes," and one-in-ten (9%) respondents are neutral on this issue.

The people shown in Brazilian movies and TV represent the colors and races of Brazilian society

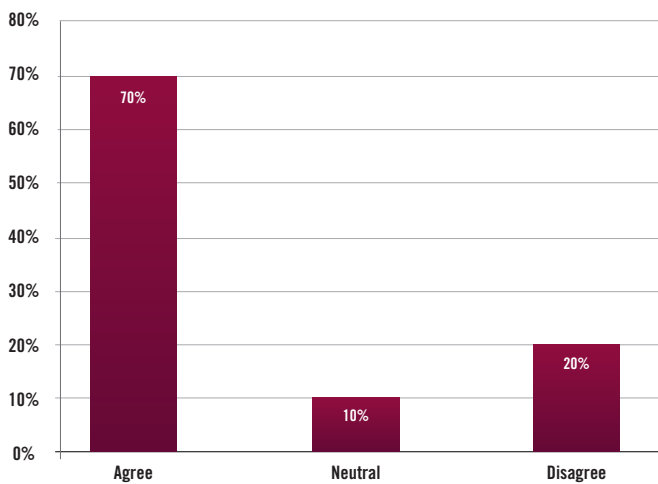Older Brazilians are less likely than other respondents to think that people of color are shown as racial stereotypes in media. Respondents with higher levels of education, income, and social class are more likely to believe that racial stereotypes in entertainment media are common. Residents of the North, Middle West, and Northeast parts of Brazil are less likely to think that TV and film presents people of color as racial stereotypes. Residents of medium and large cities in Brazil are more likely to think this than rural residents. White Brazilians are as likely as Black, Brown, and Mulatto Brazilians to think that entertainment media mostly shows people of color as racial stereotypes.

Social Injustice: Media is a Tool for Social Change

Study participants were asked their opinions about the media representation of three social injustice issues: workplace harassment, domestic violence, and child abuse. Most survey respondents and focus group participants agree that media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness of these issues.

Brazilian movies and TV show that it is okay for men to mistreat and harass women in the workplace
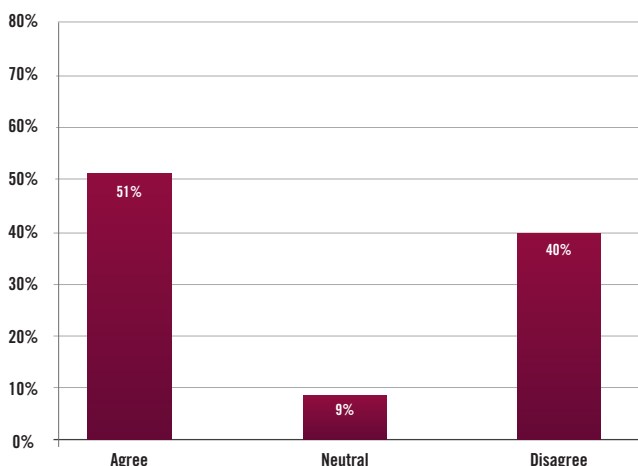
FINDING: Workplace Harassment

A slight majority of Brazilians think that Brazilian movies and TV show that it is okay for men to mistreat and harass women in the workplace. Just over half of all Brazilians think that this is how media portrays the workplace, while 40% disagree and 9% are neutral on the subject.

Men and women are equally likely to believe this, while Brazilians with higher levels of education and income are more likely to think that media content sanctions workplace mistreatment and harassment of women. This perception also increases with the respondents' level of education. Two-in-five (59%)
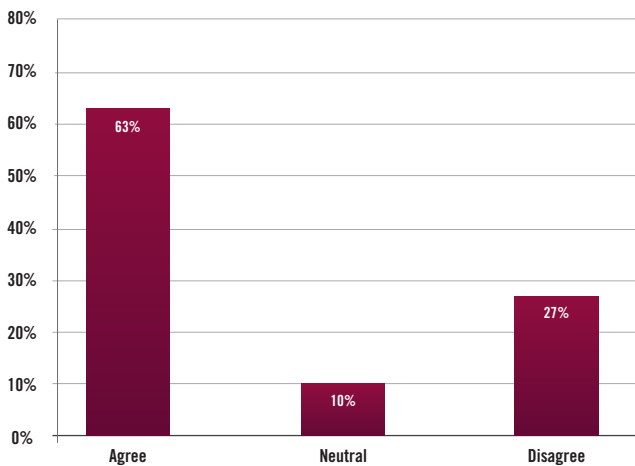
Brazilians with a college education believe this compared to 43% of those with a 4th grade education or less. Income also seems to influence the perception that media okays the mistreatment of women. While 41% of respondents belonging to classes D and E agree with that evaluation, 57% of respondents belonging to classes A and B believe the same. White Brazilians (56%) are more likely than Black, Brown, or Mulatto Brazilians (48%) to think that media sanctions gender harassment in the workplace.

Brazilians in the South are more likely than other regions in Brazil to think that entertainment media portrays it as okay to harass and mistreat women in the workplace. Two-in-five Southerners (62%) think this compared to just over 50% of respondents in the Southeast, capital, and cities around the capital, and 39% of those in the Northeast. Residents in large (53%) and medium (52%) urban areas are more likely to believe this than residents in rural areas (46%).

FINDING: Violence Against Women
Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Brazilian survey respondents agree that showing domestic violence in a bad light in movies and TV can reduce the practice of domestic violence in real life, while 27% disagree and 10% are neutral on the subject.

The treatment of domestic violence in movies and on television can contribute to reducing the practice of domestic violence in society at large

Younger respondents are more likely to believe that entertainment media can reduce rates of domestic violence than older respondents, and Brazilians with higher levels of education, income, and social class are more likely to think media can have a positive influence. Brazilians who live in the South and in larger cities are more likely than residents elsewhere to think that showing situations of domestic violence in film and TV can reduce rates in real life.

Almost all participants across the adult focus groups agreed that it is important so show domestic violence in Brazilian film/television in order to raise awareness of the issue.

"I think it would be very good to have a movie like that because I think that the subject is never dealt with in a movie that way; directly." – Bruna, age 21

"It's important to make people aware of the problem and show that it exists, that it's a reality, and that things can't continue like that." – Nelson, age 19

"Yes, if it brings awareness to people, then yes." – Alan, age 20

"It has to be exposed." – Gabriela, age 24

"I think it would be good to show it because a lot of women suffer domestic violence…I think it's very good that it be in movies to show what shouldn't happen." – Virginia, age 22

"It has a positive side. It should make people courageous enough to press charges." – Jailson, age 23

"Cinema could be a positive thing to stimulate women to report violence. There could be a positive effect if the plot of the movie stimulated women to do it." – Cleiton, age 34

"Sometimes you simply cannot see your problems, but if you listen to someone talking about them or if you watch a movie about them, you may say 'damn, how can that woman stand that?' And then you stop and think about your own life and say 'gosh, I do that sometimes, I go through this, why am I still here?'" – Rafaela, age 30

Some participants point out that domestic violence can be both physical and psychological and that Brazilian media should show both. They notice that in Brazilian society, these issues are mostly considered a family issue that is handled within the home instead of as a public health issue.

"Brazilian society is violent, but there are a lot of things that are not made public, that remain inside the family." – Pablo, age 44

"I think that it shouldn't be only physical violence. It should include verbal violence." – Gabriela, age 24

"Yes, [show] psychological violence." – Julia, age 18
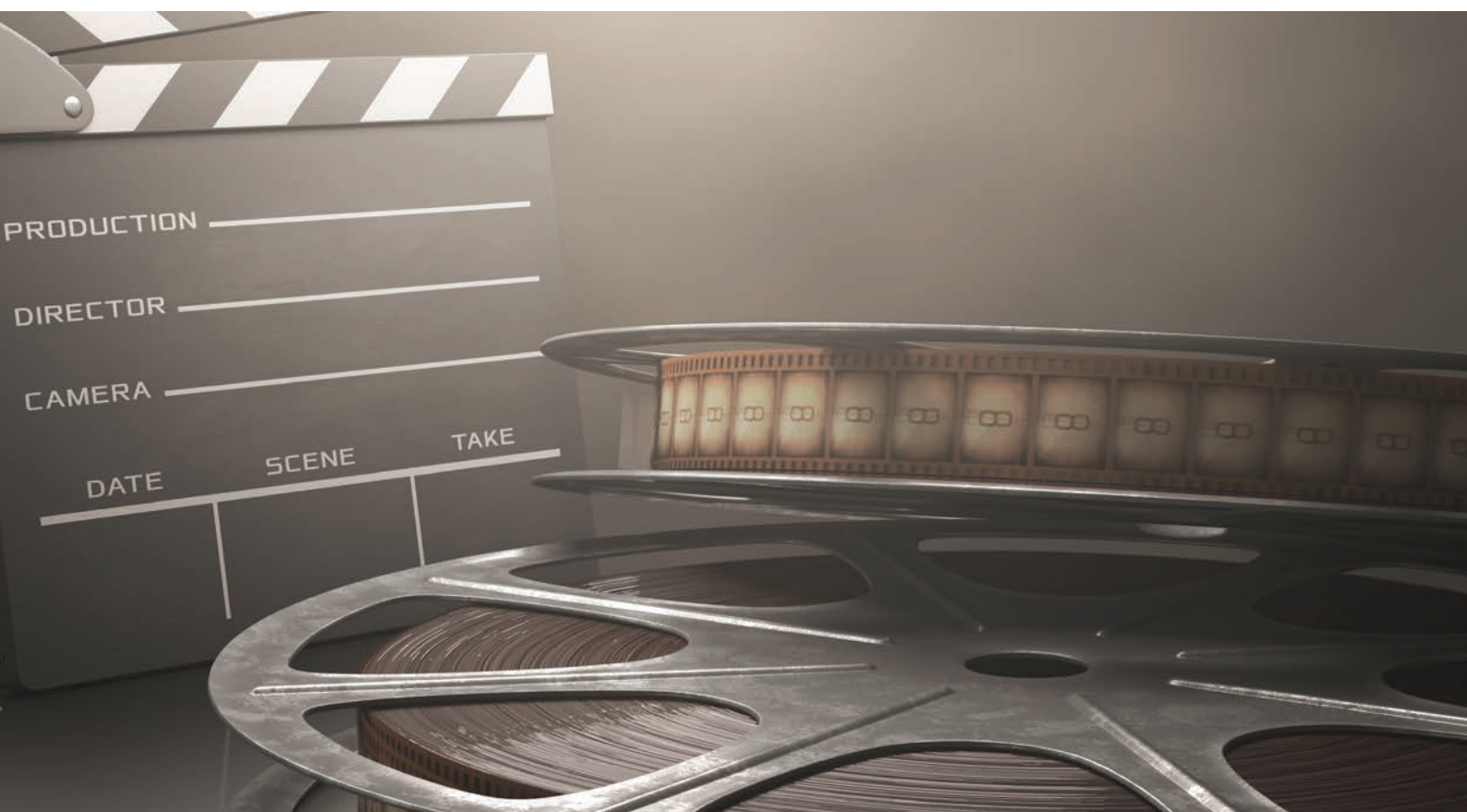
Many participants are concerned about the way in which domestic violence is currently shown in films/TV. They stress that it should be presented with a punishment for the abuser to avoid the impression that violence against women is okay. Young men in particular are concerned that if domestic violence goes unpunished in films/television, men will imitate it in real life.

"It can have a negative effect also. If there's a guy who hits his wife he might think it's normal."
– Fábio, age 21

"It can give some guy the idea to do it, too." – Luan, age 22

"This might make people think it is normal, that it is just something that happens every day."
– Cida, age 33

"It's good because you tend to think that it only happens to the neighbor. It happens a lot and close to home. You have to show that it can't go on unpunished." – Pablo, age 20

"As long as the movie showed that this is wrong, I would let [my kids] watch it." – Rita, age 36

Adult women emphasize the need to show victims of domestic violence as strong and seeking justice against their abusers. They worry that showing passive victims of domestic violence sends the wrong message – that this behavior is to be expected and that there is little she can do about it.

"I think they should show the woman not being so submissive, though most who suffer violence are submissive, they take the husband back, they don't press charges, they get beaten again and things stay in this vicious circle. I think they should show violence in a different way, let's say that the woman were assaulted and she'll press charges." – Ana Amélia, age 34

"Don't let it be another case of violence, but let it show there is a penalty, that the woman should be strong, uphold it." – Isis, age 38

Sixty percent of Brazilians think that Brazilian movies and TV do a good job of showing negative consequences for people who abuse women, while 29% disagree and 11% are neutral on the subject.

Brazilian movies and TV do a good job showing negative consequences for people who abuse women

College-educated Brazilians are far less likely than other Brazilians to think TV and film show the proper consequences for domestic violence. Respondents with higher incomes and social class are also less likely to think that media shows negative consequences for domestic violence.

FINDING: Child Abuse

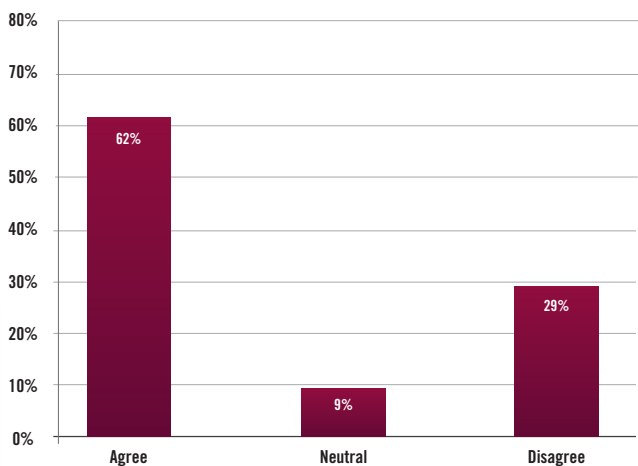Six-in-ten (62%) Brazilians believe entertainment media that addresses the issue of child abuse can reduce the incident of child abuse in real life, while 29% do not believe that media has this sort of influence and 9% are neutral on the issue.

Brazilians with higher levels of education, income, and social class are more likely to think that media portrayals of child abuse can reduce rates of child abuse in real life. Residents of large cities are more likely to think this than residents of smaller cities or rural areas. Men are significantly more likely to believe this than women (64% compared to 60%).

Focus group participants were mixed on whether Brazilian film/television should depict child abuse. Some participants worry that it is too shocking for entertainment media and creates a culture of fear for children.

The treatment of child abuse in films and on television can contribute to the reduction of child abuse practice in society at large

"It doesn't need to be in the movies, it's all over the news." – Regis, 37, father of 2

"We don't need to know that. There is so much cruelty against children. I don't want to see that." – Júlia, age 10

"These are not pleasant things. If I'm looking for entertainment, I'll look for something that makes me leave the theater feeling lighter, right? I want it to make me feel happy, not shocked, like 'OMG, that was shocking!'" – Tânia, age 28, mother of 3

"Am I going to pick up my daughter to take her to the movies knowing that the film's theme would be violent? I want to see a cool movie." – Michele, age 32, mother of 2

"I would feel very shocked to see a father hitting his child. I wouldn't like it. The subject has to be brought up but you have to be very careful as to how it is brought up." – Alex, age 20

"It creates a culture of fear." – Jailson, age 23

Other participants saw the benefit of showing child abuse in films/television in order to raise awareness of the issue and empower children who might be victimized.

> "It would raise awareness. I think it is more about increasing our knowledge." – Maria Antônia, age 13
>
> "I think it's important for [violence against children to be part of the story in Brazilian media] because there are a lot of people who don't know about a subject and then the movie would be like a wake-up call for them to pay more attention." – Marcel, age 37, father of 2
>
> "I think it's important, because it has to be reported, if you see it happening, I think it encourages reporting." – Lérica, age 41
>
> "It would be interesting for the child to watch it so that she's able to identify what happens to her." – Isis, age 38
>
> "You are a victim of abuse in the house, and you see on TV that it's okay to report it." – Arthur, age 15

Many participants talked about the importance of showing child abuse in an appropriate way that does not glorify it or make it seem normal.

> "It's useful as prevention, but it depends on the plot. I think it's valid as prevention, as long as they don't show any scenes." – Christian, age 38
>
> "If it is a moral lesson at the end of the film, then it would be okay. But you shouldn't show the actual scene to the child." – Cida, age 33
>
> "The problem is not what you show, the problem is how you show it." – Luciana, age 41
>
> "In school, they don't see much about this, so a movie would actually be a great idea. But the approach cannot be very aggressive or shocking. The attack or the abuse itself cannot be depicted in a very shocking way." – Rafaela, age 30

Two-thirds (64%) of Brazilian respondents think that Brazilian TV and movies do a good job of showing negative consequences for people who abuse children, while one-third disagree (26%) or are neutral on the subject (10%). The only statistically significant difference of opinion on this question is that men are more likely to think Brazilian media does a good job showing consequences for child abuse.

Brazilian movies and TV do a good job showing negative consequences for people who abuse children
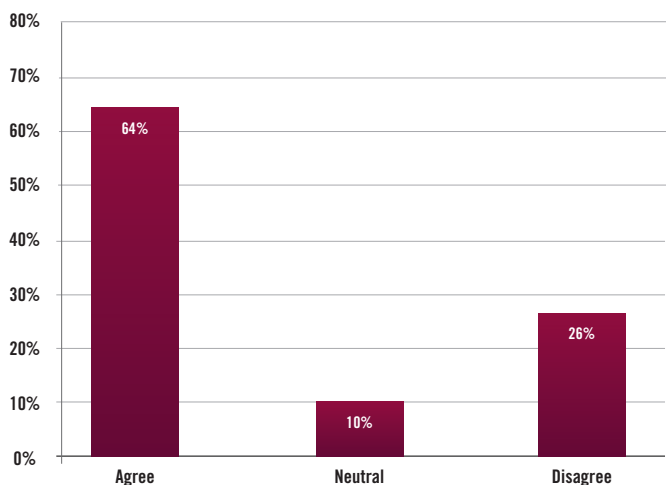
The topic of child abuse was personal for some participants. Most of the participants in the boy's (9-11) focus group say they are physically punished when they do something wrong in a way their sisters are not. Teenage boys confirm that they were physically punished with violence when they were younger, but are now punished with grounding and video game restrictions.

"I get spanked with a flip-flop... they don't spank my sister." – Carlos, age 10

"Spanking, I get spanked with a belt." – Pedro, age 11

"With a belt." – Nicholas, age 11

"My dad says that if I get beat up on the street I'm going to get beat up even more when I get home." – Juan, age 16

"I don't think it's right to spank a girl, only if it's the mother, then it's ok. When I was little my dad would hit me but it was just a few smacks." – Pedro, age 15

Entertainment is an Educational Tool

The vast majority (86%) of respondents think that Brazilian TV and film should show more social issues, while 7% disagree and 7% are neutral on the issue.

Brazilian movies and TV should include more social issues
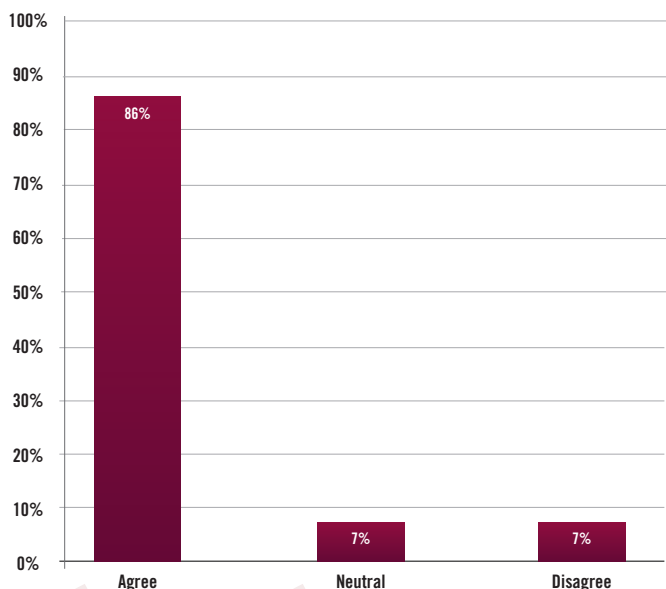
Respondents with higher levels of education, income, and social class are more likely than others to think that Brazilian entertainment media should tackle more social issues. Additionally, residents of medium and large cities are more likely to think this than residents of more rural parts of Brazil.

Beyond issues of domestic violence and child abuse, participants across age groups overwhelmingly support the idea that entertainment media in Brazil can and should be used as a tool to educate people about public problems. Younger participants report that telenovelas (short-lived soap operas) have already opened their eyes to social issues and other programs and films should strive to do the same.

"Any controversial topic in our society should be portrayed in movies, based on real stories. I miss that in Brazilian cinema." – Vitor, age 41

"For me it's much more about entertainment, seeing something that will bring me information or add to my knowledge, rather than watching a woman chasing a man." – Julia, age 18

"Gloria Perez [a telenovela writer] addresses controversial topics, like women trafficking … There is always some hot topic, and it shows the way not to do it, to shield yourself from that." – Viviane, age 42

"We cannot close our eyes. We have to be ready, because this can happen to us. We cannot think that the world is perfect." – Eduarda, age 10

"I much prefer to see films that add something good to me rather than those films where you only go to laugh. It's good for you and it's even better for society." – Karina, age 23

"My mom says that we are the new generation, that we should try to change the world. My teacher says that in order to talk about a subject, we must know this subject. Like politics, we have to know a little bit about it. I think this is interesting." – Júlia, age 10

Participants mentioned many social problems they would like to see more of in films/television, including domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism, child labor, missing children, human trafficking, homosexuality, organ donation, health issues, racial injustice, homelessness, sexual violence, children's health, breast cancer, elder abuse, the dangers of youth auto racing, and social inequalities.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the focus group discussions, participants offered direct recommendations to improve Brazilian film/television. They would like to see less stereotypical roles for women and men, better roles for Black and dark-skinned Brazilians, less racy content, and more social issues in media content. We summarize each recommendation in turn.

Less Stereotypical Roles for Women

Brazilian viewers of all ages want more diverse, realistic roles for both women and men. Brazilian women want to see themselves in Brazilian film and television as heroines, successful career women, and people with complex emotions and multi-layered personalities. Adult participants across age groups note the importance of media and film in portraying self-assured, capable, independent women.

"In Brazilian movies there are always women that are desperate for men... it seems as if you'll only be happy if you have a man in your life." – Adrian, age 19

"There is no female role model. Only male. Children don't see any role model that tells them that women can be heroines, that women can play important roles." – Marina, age 36

"'Vidas Opostas' [a Brazilian soap opera] shows a hard-working, activist girl … it shows the poor side, the rich side, the prejudice, the violence." – Lérica, age 39

"A woman who fights and struggles. She can be poor or middle class, but she's more real." – Alan, age 20

Less Stereotypical Roles for Men

Brazilians of all ages feel that stereotypically machismo images of masculinity limit boys' ability to be more caring and thoughtful, encouraging and validating violence and generally aggressive behavior. Instead of stereotyped depictions of men and women, they would like to see less divisive portrayals of gender onscreen.

Less Racial Stereotyping

Participants would like to see better portrayals of diversity in Brazilian entertainment media. They report that Black people are typically shown as racial stereotypes, and as the social status of the character increases, his or her skin gets lighter.

"Representation is always important. For example, Will Smith. If you're Black you want to see someone else Black, more in line with your reality because we mirror them." – Pablo, age 20

"Even today I suffer prejudice. But not only because of that, but because it shows the perils we face." – Wagner, age 35

Less Racy Content

Focus group participants of all ages would like to see less racy content in Brazilian films and television. Participants in every group say that while media content has improved in the last decade, it is still too racy when it comes to sex scenes and lewdness. Brazilian men and women would like to see less hyper-sexualized women in films and television. Many participants commented on how the rest of the world views Brazilian women because of their reduction to "boobs and butts" in Brazilian media. Viewers would like to see less on-screen emphasis on nudity and appearance and more female characters valued for their careers, achievements, families, and values.

More Social Issues

Most Brazilian participants want more social issues addressed in entertainment media in Brazil. When asked about specific issues, adult participants supported storylines about domestic violence, as long as it shows the victim fighting for justice and the perpetrator being held accountable. When asked about depicting child abuse, adult participants are divided within groups on this idea. Some say that showing child abuse will empower children in situations of abuse to recognize it and take action, while others worry that it is too shocking and will scare young viewers. In general, however, Brazilian participants want to see social issues tackled in film and television shows in a realistic way to help stimulate a national conversation.

"Most Brazilian people get together in front of the TV, so the TV should show more controversial scenes, more important scenes." – Hilda, age 15

"TV and movies can improve children's lives if there is a nice moral lesson." – Henri, age 11
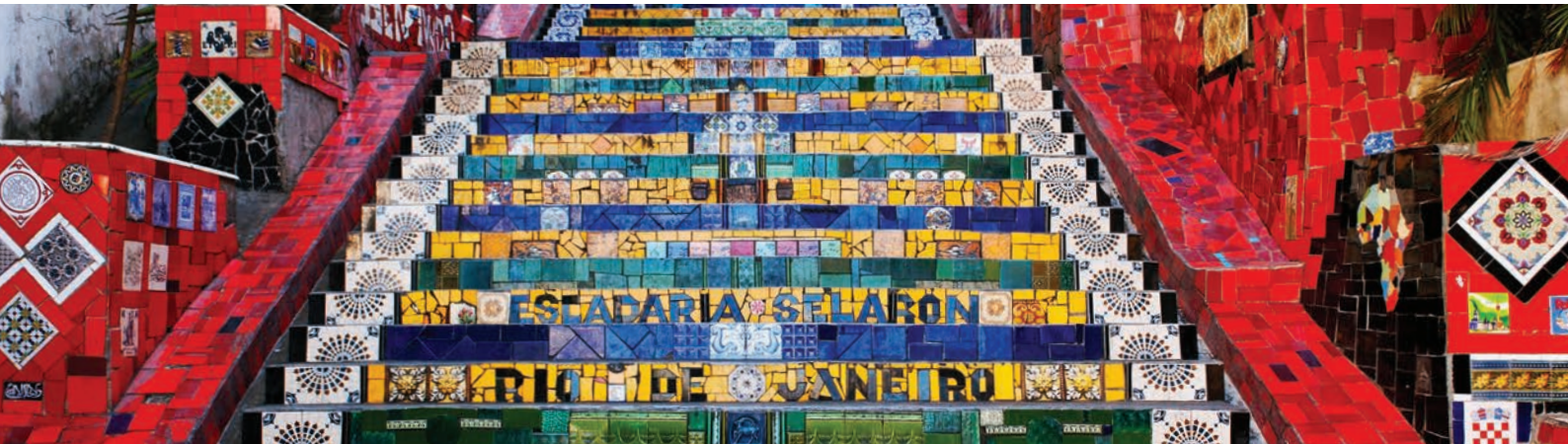
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Brazilian people of different backgrounds view gender and race representations in entertainment media and to get Brazilians' perspectives on the social effects of these representations. This section summarizes the major findings that emerged from the study.

Media Consumption: Addiction and Isolation

Mothers and fathers report that the interests and activities of their children have drastically changed from previous generations. Brazilian children today consume a lot of media because of easy, constant, online access through computers, tablets, and smartphones. Although first restricted to the upper and middle classes, this pattern of media consumption is becoming more and more widespread. Gender differences are noticeable. Boys mostly play video games, while girls mostly watch television/films and interact with social media. Children and parents worry about the isolating effects of new technology on their family relationships.

Media Influence: A Powerful Teaching Tool

Study participants agree that film/television is influential in shaping aspirations, stereotypes, and social roles. Television viewing is popular in Brazil and, as such, participants see it as more influential than film. Participants are mostly concerned about the racy content and stereotypes in Brazilian media, but acknowledge that it can also be useful for pushing back against gender stereotypes.

Media Preferences: Tone Down the Content

Survey respondents and focus group participants prefer less racy content. Participants do not notice a gender gap in the number of male and female leads in television and cinema. Female participants across focus groups prefer a mix of films with male and female protagonists, while men across focus groups unanimously mention films with male protagonists as their favorites. Participants across focus groups think that Brazilian content is getting better in terms of representing life in Brazil.

Male Characters: Hyper-Masculine

Gender roles are changing in Brazilian society, but adult focus group participants say that Brazilian television/film continues to present more traditional gender roles where men are in charge and machismo rules. Participants are very critical of the narrow, traditional portrayals of boys and men in Brazilian entertainment media. Young focus group participants of both genders say that Brazilian films and TV programs glorify machismo, and they do not like this pressure in their lives.

Female Characters: Sidelined and Sexy

Participants across focus groups are highly critical of the ways in which girls and women are represented in Brazilian film and television. They report that media presents mostly very rich or very poor female characters in racialized ways and that women are hyper-sexualized across the board. However, both male and female adult participants think that women's roles in Brazilian film and television have improved in recent years. For example, women are less likely to be shown in traditional housewife roles and are less openly sexist and hyper-sexualized than they were a decade ago.

Racial Representations: Diverse but Stereotypical

Most study participants believe that Brazilian film and TV accurately represents the racial diversity of Brazilian society. However, Brazilians say that when Black, Brown, Mulatto, or other racial minorities are shown in films and television shows, they are often depicted as racial stereotypes. Brazilians would like to see more realistic portrayals of people of color in entertainment media.

Social Injustice: Media is a Tool for Social Change

Study participants agree that it is important to show domestic violence in Brazilian film/television in order to raise awareness of the issue. They emphasize that it is best to show the victim seeking justice and the perpetrator getting punished to avoid normalizing or glorifying this behavior. Participants were more mixed on whether Brazilian film/television should depict child abuse. Some participants worry that it is too shocking and creates a culture of fear for children. Other participants saw the benefit of showing child abuse in films/television in order to raise awareness of the issue and empower children who might be victimized. In general, participants across age groups overwhelmingly support the idea that entertainment media in Brazil can and should be used as a tool to educate people about social problems.

INTERVENTIONS

These are recommendations for interventions from João Feres, a leading Brazilian scholar on gender and race in Brazilian Media.

Brazil is one of the largest and most populated countries in the world, with a vibrant civil society and a stable democratic regime that features a complex array of institutions. A multi-pronged strategy is necessary to improve gender representations in popular media. To be effective, this strategy has to include the government and public policy, civil society organizations, media companies, and academics.

Government and Public Policy

Political leaders in Brazil hold the power to influence media content since government in all levels (federal, state, and municipal) is involved in the production and promotion of media. The federal government alone is the second largest advertiser in the country, thus it can enact standards of gender fairness to be followed by the media it contracts. Regulatory standards of that sort can be also created at the state and municipal levels. Another strategy for improving women's representations in media is to identify and lobby politicians who are most attuned to this issue.

Brazil's governmental agencies produce a large amount of statistics about the country's population. It is worthwhile to try and bring these agencies, particularly IBGE (Brazil's Federal Bureau of Statistics) and agencies dedicated to producing data on education, to discuss gender inequality and introduce this topic among their research concerns. Academic research relies heavily on public funding in Brazil. It is important to put pressure on the chief funding agencies, at the federal and state levels, to include gender equality concerns in their procedures and also to create special grants and scholarships focused on the topic.

Education policy should also be seen as a potential instrument of change. In Brazil, the basic curricula for elementary, middle, and highschool are regulated by federal law. The Ministry of Education has a nation-wide program that provides textbooks to all children attending public schools. This program alone has created a large and very competitive editorial market. Introducing standards of gender equality both in school curricula and in the Ministry's contracts with publishers would effect a major change in the social construction of gender in the long run.

Brazil's public investment bank (BNDES), the third largest of that sort in the world, finances most of mid-size and large companies in the country. It could become a major inducer of gender equality practices in the private sector by creating regulatory standards attuned to this goal.

The success of these strategies depend on the efficacy of advocacy groups and on the overall political and opinion climate regarding gender equality.

Civil Associations and Non-Profits

These organizations are natural partners in furthering the goal of gender equality and recognition in the media. Another strategy for improving media representations is to identify and work with non-profit organizations to put pressure on policymakers and media corporations.

Advertising and Marketing Communication

Advertising and brand communications have a powerful role in influencing attitudes and behavior in terms of the images pushed out into culture. Equally, given the broadcast and reach of such communication many consider that the industry has not just permission but also a responsibility to influence culture. Brand advertisers and marketers are also ideally placed as an industry to enact change rapidly given the relatively short production process – in contrast to say TV shows, games, or film.

Few brand advertisers will be ignorant of the fact that women account for over two thirds of all consumer spend globally. According to Ernst & Young, they are set to be the largest global 'emerging market,' highlighting the importance of engaging this powerful audience.

There is an increasing awareness for the issue of brands promoting traditional gender stereotypes. Global companies such as Unilever are working towards a commitment to move away from such stereotypes, perhaps unsurprisingly given that only 9% of women feel that marketers are reaching them effectively.

J Walter Thompson, through its research on "Female Tribes," is vocal within the industry about promoting the importance and significance of women and their diversity – dramatizing the way in which the de facto classification of women as 'Busy working Moms' is redundant and driving brand narratives that truly reflect women's status within society. Its research highlights the fact that, on the one hand, 76% of women globally perceive it's never been a better time to be a woman and 93% of Brazilian women feel their femininity is a strength not a weakness. Whilst globally, 56% of women feel that they are more ambitious than their spouse, this spikes to 73% for women in Brazil and 85% of Brazilian women claim to make the majority of financial decisions in the household. However, popular culture still has some way to catch up and reflect women's new cultural and economic status: 90% of women in Brazil – the highest figure for any country in the survey – want women to have a stronger voice when it comes to cultural influence.

J Walter Thompson's proprietary study, "The Women's Index," highlights the persuasive power of the moving image, not just in shaping women's career aspirations, but also their life decisions.

The global study revealed that 58% of women said that strong on-screen female role models inspired them to be either more ambitious or more assertive, and one–in–four women in Brazil were inspired to leave an abusive relationship purely through the influence of onscreen female role models. For a country in which one–in–three women experience domestic violence, this serves to underline the significant and persuasive power of the moving image: it doesn't just sell products, it can change lives.

Engaging women as a diverse and powerful audience not only has the power to change lives but pragmatically creates a more sustainable business model for brands.

Media Corporations

Brazilian big media is a promising and problematic entity that should be taken into account in efforts to improve the representations of women in media. Given the relative lack of media regulation, Brazil's mass communication is dominated by a handful of family-owned companies. Thus, getting issues related to gender equality affecting movies and TV on the public agenda is not easy. The same companies that would have to change their practices are the ones that sustain the present level of gender inequality and female stereotyping in Brazilian movies and TV.

A growing sector of the Brazilian media (TV, radio, publishing houses, etc.) is in the hands of Evangelical Churches, which have been staunch adversaries of gender equality and minority rights in general. These media operations cater preferably to the low-income sectors of Brazilian society but they are increasingly conquering the middle classes, particularly the so-called "new middle class." The fast growth of the Evangelical media in recent decades has created fierce competition for viewers/listeners/readers in the Brazilian media market. Although that cannot be considered a positive development, this divide between "secular" and religious media companies can be exploited for the benefit of the gender equality agenda. That being said, we recommend the following strategies for shifting gender representations in media:

- Identify sympathetic journalists to provide the latest statistics and reports on gender equality in Brazilian media.

- Work with sympathetic politicians to put pressure on media companies to create internal criteria and procedures for gender fairness.

- Work with civil society organizations to put pressure on the media companies to create internal criteria and procedures for gender fairness.

- Work directly with the companies and try to persuade them to promote events that bring together executives, journalists, entertainment media producers, activists, and academics to debate gender equality issues and the improvement of gender representation from what it is now.

Academic Research

Academic institutions, both private and public, should incentivize critical studies on gender inequality and stereotypes in order to document these problems. This research should be done in accordance with sound academic standards in order to allow for two outcomes: the consolidation of critical gender studies in the Brazilian academia and the dissemination of critical works in language that is accessible to general readers. Academic research is crucial for gaining political support, for civil society advocacy, and for getting this issue on the agenda of the big media companies.
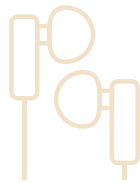
Politics

After decades of legal and institutional improvements in minority rights and gender equality, Brazil is now crossing a rather turbulent period, with serious risks of regression in the terms of gender equality. The current Federal Chamber of Deputies, elected in 2014, is the most conservative since the return of democracy in the 1980s. This administration has proposed or sponsored bills criminalizing abortion, instituting the heterosexual family as a legal standard, forbidding gay marriage and adoption by gay parents, instituting the Day of Heterosexual Pride, and making religious education mandatory in public schools. Above all, evangelical representatives have been very active in fighting what they call "gender ideology," which is the basically the inclusion of the gender equality concerns in law making and public policy.

Given this harsh reality, the strategy for reversing or at least mitigating this conservative reaction must include domestic pressure from organized civil society and international pressure coming from foreign civil society organizations and foundations and governments concerned with the advancement of the gender equality agenda.

These are recommendations for interventions from Deborah Calla, Writer/Producer, Chair of the Producer's Guild of America Diversity Committee, and Chair of the Producer's Guild of America Women's Impact Network.

Media is both a reflection of an influence in society. It can be a powerful tool for reinforcing implicit biases or challenging them. These four interventions are recommended to get the media industry, government agencies, and NGOs more focused on this important issue.

- Government and public policy should reflect an unwavering commitment to gender balance by supporting industry initiatives and NGOs to diversify representations of women and people of color in entertainment media.

- Media industry leaders should organize seminars and discussions for content creators on bias, unconscious bias, and the power media holds to shape attitudes and perceptions.

- Schools should implement media literacy as a standard part of the curriculum.

- NGOs should help create community-based discussions of media literacy and women's roles in the family.

A Insights in Marketing 2012
B JWT Women's Index 2015
C JWT Women's Index 2015
D World Bank Brazil

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE
GLOBAL GENDER IN MEDIA IMPACT STUDY
Discussion Guide

WARM UP   10 MINS

EXPLAIN THE PROCESS:
Moderator introduction. Explain two-way mirror, recording, etc. There are no right or wrong answers. We want your honest opinions. Very important to be open/honest with your feelings.

FOR PARENTS GROUPS ONLY:
What are the ages and genders of your children? (Each parent should consider their child(ren) when answering questions, with the focus being on their daughters.)

RESPONDENT WARMUP:
I'd like to find out everyone's name, age and what are some of the things you like to do for fun! (movies, television, games, books, live shows, etc.)

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR/MOVIES   40 MINS

Rotate order of questions across the different groups

What do you feel is expected of you in different roles in your life? (As a student, in your family, in your community, religion, etc.) Are expectations different depending on the role?

SAMPLE OF QUESTIONS TO PROBE:

Do you have chores? What types of chores do you do?

Do you read books? What types of books do you read?

What are some of the characters like in those books?

How important is education? Is it important for everyone to receive an education?

If not, who is education not important for?

What occupation would you ideally like to have?

(CHILDREN: What do you want to be/do when you grow up?)

Do you feel there are any obstacles to having that career/job? What are they?

Are only certain people suited for certain jobs?
For example, when you think of a nurse, who do you picture? What does that person look like?
How about for a police officer? For a teacher?

Where do you get the idea of what a nurse, police officer, teacher looks like
– experience, books, movies, TV shows?

FOR PARENTS, GENERAL ONLY:

Do you feel there are any obstacles to goals or dreams that you want to achieve?
If so, what are those obstacles and are they able to be overcome?

PROBE

Thinking over the course of your lifetime, how have gender roles changed?

How have they remained the same?

Has the fact that you are a [man/boy, woman/girl] impacted your life positively and/or negatively?

In what ways?

MOVIE SCENES   40 MINS

Moderator NOTE:

These scenes are meant to open up a discussion about gender roles. The focus of this section is to get the respondents to discuss their feelings about the characters' behavior and if/how the situation the characters are in relates to their own lives.

I'd now like to show you a scene from a movie. It doesn't matter if you've seen the movie before or not. Make sure you watch carefully because we'll be talking about what you thought afterwards.

Scene #1- MALE/FEMALE INTERACTION SCENE

How do you feel about the characters in the scene?

PROBE

What specifically did you like/not like about the interaction the characters had?

Do you relate to any of the characters?

What do you think about their appearances?

Do you think that any of the characters should have responded differently in the situation?

Why?

I'd now like to show you another scene from a movie. Again, it doesn't matter if you've seen the movie before or not. Make sure you watch carefully because we'll be talking about what you thought afterwards.

Scene #2- DOMESTIC RELATIONS SCENE

What are your thoughts/feelings about this scene?

Describe the relationship between the characters.

PROBE

Are the characters/relationships believable?

Do you relate to any of the characters?

How do you feel about the situation they are in?

Did you find anything in either of the scenes you just saw disturbing?

Did anything in either scene make you uncomfortable?

What do you think about each character's behavior in these scenes?

MOVIE SCENES CONTINUED   40 MINS

PROBE FOR EACH CHARACTER:

Is it clear why they are responding in the way in which they are?

Are their reactions appropriate given the situation they are in?

In what ways are they appropriate/not appropriate?

What would be a more appropriate response?

IMPACT OF MEDIA   30 MINS

For General and Parents ONLY

What is the role, if any, of local media - specifically movies and television - in shaping attitudes and ideas about gender roles within your society?

What should their role be?

What is the impact of locally-made entertainment?

Is it generally positive/negative?

How does locally-made entertainment (movies and television) impact men and women in society?

Is it different based on whether they are a man or a woman? If so, in what ways?

In what ways, if any, do you think that locally-made entertainment has an impact on children?

On their ideals of the world? Is it typically a positive or negative impact?

In what ways?

Now we want to talk about local media's impact on health issues.
Are there any movies or television shows you've seen that discussed a health issue that you found particularly interesting or informative?

What are your general thoughts about these types of issues being included in movies or television shows?

Have you ever sought out more information for a health issue based on something you saw in a movie or television show?

Have you ever shared information you saw in a movie or television show on a health related topic with others?

Have you viewed a movie or show specifically because it dealt with a health issue that was important to you?

WRAP UP   5 MINS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX B: GENDER INEQUALITY IN BRAZIL

Brazil has made significant improvements in addressing gender inequality in the past three decades. These improvements correspond with the return of democratic elections in the late 1980s after two decades of rule by an authoritarian military dictatorship. Brazil has achieved or exceeded gender parity for literacy and educational attainment and women make up 44% of the Brazilian workforce.[21] More women have been able to work in paid employment outside the home as a result of Brazil's generous parental leave policy.[22]

Despite great strides in gender equality in education and the workforce, Brazilian women still experience a significant wage gap. Women make only 84% of what men make for comparable work, a disparity that increases as educational level goes up.[23] Professional women with advanced degrees earn only 58% of what men make. Additionally, women who work full time continue to do the majority of unpaid household labor and working mothers earn 20% less than working women without children.[24]

The picture of progress for equality in Brazilian politics is also mixed. Women comprise 52% of the electorate and the country elected its first female president in 2011 (Dilma Rouseff). A record number of over 600 women now serve as mayors, but this accounts for only 12% of mayoral posts overall.[25] The greatest gender disparity is in the parliament where men outnumber women ten-to-one.[26] The country has a gender quota system in place, but it continues to lag behind most other Latin American countries it terms of the number of women in public office.

Brazil also lags behind many other countries in widely held beliefs about gender roles. Activists, citizens, and government officials have prioritized gender discrimination in the past decade, but the country remains steeped in patriarchal beliefs. Men and boys are valued more than girls and women when it comes to jobs, leadership, and social standing. Cultural lag is especially apparent in attitudes about sexual and domestic violence. Women's groups have called for a redefinition of rape as a crime, rather than an act of social dishonor for male family members of survivors, but cultural attitudes are slow to change.[27] One-in-four Brazilian men and women believe that women who wear provocative clothing deserve to be raped, while 58.5% think that rape is the result of a woman's behavior.[28] Similarly, a majority of Brazilians (58.4%) believe that domestic violence is a private matter that should be resolved by the family rather than a crime to be addressed by law enforcement.[29] Brazil is just beginning to have public conversations about gender and discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and sexual violence.

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If she can see it, she can be it™