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From Real to Reel

Representation and Inclusion in Film and
Television Produced in British Columbia

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media
If she can see it, she can be it.™

UBCP/ACTRA

Land Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the unceded ancestral territories of the 34 First Nations language and cultural groups upon whose homelands the province's film and television industry operates.

Further, this report was authored primarily on the unceded territory of the Aucocisco of the Wabanaki, which also includes the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot people. The film and television industry can play a crucial role in uplifting Indigenous people and, specifically, Indigenous voices, creators, companies, and creative content.

We prioritize actions that foster relationships and lasting partnerships, contribute to long-term value, ensure greater access, and deepen cultural understanding. You can learn about B.C.'s Indigenous territories, languages, and communities on the First Peoples' Map of B.C. (maps.fpcc. ca) and native-land.ca. You can learn about the Wabanaki alliance a wabanakialliance.com.

Contributors

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Introduction

UBCP/ACTRA partnered with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to do a study on equity and diversity in the film industry. The report provides data on the on-screen representation of gender, race, disability, fatness, age, and 2SLGBTQIA+ identity in B.C.'s film and television industry. It highlights both the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain in ensuring that all members of our society are accurately and fairly represented on screen. The film and television industry has a unique power to shape public perceptions and attitudes, and it is crucial that the stories we tell reflect the diversity of our communities.

One of the key findings of this report is that there is still an underrepresentation or misrepresentation of some marginalized groups in B.C.'s film and television industry.

As President of UBCP/ACTRA, I am committed to working towards a more inclusive and diverse entertainment industry, and I hope this report will help inform and inspire others to join us in this important endeavour.

ELLIE HARVIE
President, UBCP/ACTRA

Fly View Productions via Getty Images

Executive Summary

British Columbia (B.C.) hosts a thriving entertainment industry that fosters creative production, including feature films, TV shows, and TV movies. This provides actors with the prospect of landing acting gigs ranging from walk-on parts to leading roles. It is important to assess the diversity of these productions. For decades, research has demonstrated that media affect our perceptions of the world around us,[1] the issues we view as important,[2] our understanding of acceptable behaviors,[3] the norms we do (or do not) question,[4] and the lenses through which we view ourselves.[5,6] Powerful and persuasive media can inspire change, and everyday media can both inform and reflect our social values. Thus, it is crucial that they accurately reflect the diversity of our society. Further, assessing the diversity of characters in film and television productions is important because it helps to understand what work opportunities are available to performers from equity- and sovereignty-seeking groups. In this analysis, we present findings from feature films, TV shows, and TV movies shot in 2018, 2019, and 2021, based on the representations of six identities: gender, race/ethnicity, 2SLGBTQIA+, disability, fatness, and age. We also analyze characters based on prominence, billing, story role, and traits.

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Glossary

2SLGBTQIA+: A category that includes those who are gay, lesbian, queer/ambiguous, bisexual, transgender, gender-diverse, Two Spirit, intersex, and asexual, among others.

Antagonist: A story role referring to any character who plays an antagonistic role for the protagonist, ranging from villains and henchmen to disapproving parents or school bullies.

Billing: The order in which an actor's name appears in the credits.

Butt of the joke: A trait that refers to when someone serves as a punchline for the sake of the audience, regardless of whether other characters notice or engage in the joke. Inclusive of humor in sound/dialogue and with visual language (e.g. sight gags or reaction shots).

Credits: The sequence at the beginning or end of a movie or show that features the main actors' names prominently on screen.

Disability: Cognitive, physical, communication, and mental health disabilities.

Fatness: A body type that falls outside of the "accepted norm" of body size; refers to characters who would wear XXL clothing or larger.

Fellowship: A story role referring to any character who is heavily featured, narratively significant, and supports the protagonist.

Funny: A trait that refers to when someone makes other people laugh. Refers only to those whom others laugh *with,* not those whom others laugh *at.*

Gender-diverse: A descriptor for people who identify with a gender outside of the man/woman binary, or who do not identify with any gender at all. Includes, but is not limited to: nonbinary, Two Spirit, intersex, agender, genderqueer, and genderfluid people.

Last billing: An actor whose name is listed at the end of the credits with a distinguishing word, such as "with" or "and."

Lead/colead: A prominence level referring to the protagonist(s) of the movie or television episode. "Colead" refers to instances where a story has two protagonists (e.g. buddy comedies).

Leader: A trait that refers to when someone takes charge of a situation and others look to them for guidance. A character may be in a leadership position (e.g. a teacher), without showing any qualities of being a leader.

Minor: A prominence level referring to characters with small speaking roles, but who only appear in one scene.

Notable supporting: A prominence level referring to characters who are heavily featured in the story, but are not the lead.

Prominence: The degree to which a character is featured in a show or movie. Includes four levels: lead/colead, notable supporting, supporting, and minor.

Protagonist: A story role referring to the main character of the primary plot of the movie or television episode.

Put down by others: A trait that refers to when someone is insulted or bullied by other characters.

Sexy: A trait that refers to when someone is characterized as attractive to other characters or when the camera highlights their features or body to convey attractiveness to the audience.

Smart: A trait that refers to when someone is explicitly characterized as intelligent by the story, such as including details about their education or having them demonstrate their extensive knowledge. Refers to traditional definitions of intelligence (i.e. "book smarts"), rather than emotional intelligence or "street smarts."

Story role: A type of part a character may play in the movie or television episode. Includes four roles: protagonist, fellowship, villain, and antagonist.

Supporting: A prominence level referring to characters who appear more than once, but are not heavily featured.

Top billing: The first actor to be listed in the credits.

Traits: Several personality types or behaviors that may be attributed to a character *by the story*, even if other characters (or, potentially, the audience) might not agree. Includes: sexy, unattractive, put down by others, butt of the joke, undesirable, smart, unintelligent, funny, or a leader.

Unattractive: A trait that refers to when someone is characterized as unattractive to other characters or when the camera highlights their features or body to convey unattractiveness to the audience.

Undesirable: A trait that refers to when someone is characterized as undesirable to other characters or when the camera highlights their features or body to convey undesirability to the audience. Often overlaps with unattractive, but can include those who are physically attractive but still unlikeable.

Unintelligent: A trait that refers to when someone is explicitly characterized as unintelligent or ditzy.

Villain: A story role referring to the primary antagonist of the story, if applicable.

Key Findings

- Gender

  - Across all years, male characters outnumber female characters across all production types (55.0% male characters compared with 44.9% female characters). This difference is widest in film (61.2% male compared with 38.6% female), whereas male and female characters are nearly balanced in TV movies (50.7% compared with 49.3%). Across all production types, though, gender-diverse characters are nearly absent (0.1% of all characters).

  - The gap between the shares of male and female characters on screen decreases over time, changing from 58.3% male characters in 2018 (compared with 41.5% female), to 49.9% male in 2021 (compared with 50.1% female), across all production types.

  - Across all years, top billing goes to female characters slightly more often than to male characters (53.9% compared with 46.1%), whereas last billing goes to male characters more often (58.3% compared with 41.7%).

  - Across all years, a higher proportion of female characters than male characters are protagonists (10.5% compared with 5.7%) and members of the fellowship (25.4% compared with 20.8%). A higher proportion of male characters than female characters are villains (4.1% compared with 2.3%) and antagonists (19.3% compared with 13.3%).

  - Across all years, female characters are often given positive traits, whereas negative traits are frequently attributed to male characters. A higher proportion of female characters than male characters are portrayed as sexy (6.8% compared with 3.2%), smart (9.6% compared with 6.3%), funny (11.4% compared with 9.2%), and leaders (20.5% compared with 17.8%). A higher proportion of male characters than female characters are portrayed as unattractive (0.9% compared with 0.2%) and unintelligent (1.3% compared with 0.6%).

- Race

  - Across all years, white characters make up over two-thirds of all characters in productions shot in B.C. TV movies have the highest share of white characters (74.2%), whereas film has the lowest (63.0%).

  - Racial inclusion has increased over time. Across all production types, the proportion of white characters has decreased from 69.5% in 2018 to 58.6% in 2021.

  - Across all years, a higher percentage of Latinx (7.9%) and Black (7.3%) characters are 2SLGBTQIA+, whereas a lower percentage of Asian and Pacific Islander (2.2%) and white (3.0%) characters are 2SLGBTQIA+. A higher percentage of Middle Eastern and North African characters than characters of other races are fat (15.2%), have a disability (19.1%), and are ages 50 and older (36.2%).

  - Across all years, 73.2% of leading roles are white characters.

  - We find relative consistency among the percentage of characters in fellowship roles across races for all years, though multiracial (36.2%) and Black (27.4%) characters are more likely than other races to be fellowship members, suggesting the potential presence of the "Black best friend" and/or "Black mentor" tropes, across all years and production types.

- 2SLGBTQIA+

  ◦ Across all years, less than 5% of characters are 2SLGBTQIA+ in any production type. TV shows have the highest 2SLGBTQIA+ representation (4.7% of all characters), followed by film (2.2%). Less than 1% of characters in TV movies are 2SLGBTQIA+ (0.9%).

  ◦ Over time, we see a significant increase in the share of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters between 2018 (2.8%) and 2021 (6.2%). This change mostly happened in tv shows, where the percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters more than doubled, from 2018 (3.2%) to 2021 (7.9%).

  ◦ Across years and production types, 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are mostly female (66.3%), rather than male (30.3%) or gender-diverse (3.4%).

  ◦ There is more racial diversity among 2SLGBTQIA+ characters across all years and production types; however, a majority are white (52.3%).

  ◦ 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are more likely than non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters to have positive traits, and these differences are statistically significant for characters who are portrayed as sexy (10.9% of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters compared with 4.6% of non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters), funny (17.2% compared with 9.9%), and leaders (28.1% compared with 18.7%), across all years and production types.

- Disability

  ◦ Across all years and production types, 3.3% of all characters have physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disabilities.

  ◦ Across all production types, the percentage of characters with disabilities decreased from 2018 (4.0%) to 2021 (2.1%).

  ◦ Across all years and production types, a higher percentage of characters with disabilities are male (62.2%) compared with those who do not have disabilities (54.8%). In short, female representation is less among characters with disabilities than those without.

  ◦ Across all years and production types, characters with disabilities are given negative traits at higher rates than those without disabilities, including being characterized as unattractive (3.0% compared with 0.5%), undesirable (3.0% compared with 0.4%), or unintelligent (3.0% compared with 0.9%), as well as being put down by others (12.2% compared with 5.9%) or by the story (6.5% compared with 0.7%).

- Fatness

  ◦ Across all years and production types, fat characters make up just over 5% of all characters.

  ◦ The highest percentage of fat characters are found in film (7.3%), compared to TV shows, which have the lowest percentage (4.7%), across all years.

  ◦ We see no statistically significant changes over time in the representation of fatness, regardless of production type. This suggests that creators are not making active choices to change the presence of fat characters.

  ◦ Across all years and production types, the gender difference among fat characters (78.0% male and 21.7% female) is much wider than the gender difference among nonfat characters (53.6% male and 46.3% female). In other words, three in four fat characters are men. This aligns with gendered beauty standards that expect thinness from women in the media.

  ◦ Across all years and production types, fat characters appear at higher rates as the prominence of their roles get smaller. The highest percentage of fat characters is in minor roles (7.6%), and the lowest percentage is in lead/colead roles (0.7%).

  ◦ Fat characters make up a significantly smaller proportion of characters in title credits than those who are not in title credits (3.8% compared with 6.4%).

  ◦ Across all years and production types, a significantly lower percentage of fat characters than their nonfat counterparts are protagonists (2.6% compared with 8.2%) and members of the fellowship (15.7% compared with 23.3%). This suggests that fat characters are not given roles of narrative significance.

  ◦ Across all years and production types, fat characters have several negative traits attributed to them at higher rates than characters who are not fat, including being portrayed as unattractive (3.4% compared with 0.4%), undesirable (1.4% compared with 0.4%), and the butt of the joke (2.6% compared with 0.8%). They are also portrayed as sexy significantly less often than nonfat characters (1.1% compared with 5.1%).

- Age (Over and Under 50)

  ◦ Across all years and production types, characters ages 50 and older make up just under one-fifth of all characters. They make up the highest percentage of characters in TV shows (26.9%) and lowest percentage of characters in TV movies (17.7%).

  ◦ The proportion of characters ages 50 and older has not changed significantly over time in most production types. However, the percentage of older characters on TV shows dropped significantly from 2018 (19.1%) to 2019 (15.4%).

◦ Across all years and production types, the gender gap in characters ages 50 and older is much wider than the gap among characters under 50. Among characters 50 and older, two in three are men; among characters under 50, about half of characters are men. This reflects the entertainment industry's tendency to erase older female characters.

◦ Characters ages 50 and older are more likely than characters under 50 to be fat (9.4% compared with 4.1%) and have a disability (5.4% compared with 2.8%), across all years and production types.

◦ The percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters who are 50 and older is lower than the percentage for those under 50 (1.2% compared with 4.5%).

◦ Less than 5% of leading roles go to characters 50 and older, across production types and years.

◦ A higher percentage of characters 50 and older than those under 50 are villains (4.5% compared with 3.0%) and antagonists (18.6% compared with 16.0%). A lower percentage are protagonists (2.0% compared with 9.3%) or members of the fellowship (18.2% compared with 24.0%), across years and production types.

◦ Characters 50 and older are less likely than those under 50 to be shown as sexy (0.7% compared with 5.9%), smart (6.1% compared with 8.2%), and funny (6.0% compared with 11.0%). They are also more likely to be characterized as undesirable (1.2% compared with 0.3%).

  • Despite these negative characteristics, a higher percentage of characters 50 and older than those under 50 are shown as leaders (21.3% compared with 18.5%). They are also less likely to be put down by others (2.9% compared with 6.8%). This suggests that while characters 50 and older are given surface-level respect in the stories, they are characterized unfavorably in more subtle ways.

Methodology

To assess the representations of actors in productions shot in British Columbia (B.C.), we conducted a content analysis of feature films, episodes of TV shows, and TV movies that were shot in B.C. in 2018, 2019, and 2021.[7] In total, we analyzed 52 feature films, 303 episodes of TV shows, and 75 TV movies. The final sample yielded 6,977 characters.Starting from the full list of all content filmed in B.C. in 2018, 2019, and 2021, we eliminated all productions that have not yet been released to a wide audience.

- **Film:** We analyzed every film that had been released as of June 2022, resulting in 52 feature films and 876 characters.

- **Episodes of TV Shows:** Due to television's prominence in B.C., we treated each episode of a TV show as an individual production, resulting in a full population of 1,152 episodes. From that, we randomly sampled episodes from each season of a TV show that had been shot during our timeline (2018, 2019, 2021). The sampling was contingent on the standard deviation of the number of episodes in the seasons, ranging from two to four episodes sampled.[8] In total, we analyzed 303 episodes of TV shows and 5,075 characters.

- **TV Movies:** We randomly sampled 75 TV movies from the total population of 286. This resulted in 1,026 characters.

VARIABLES

In our analysis, we present findings on the representations of six identities: gender, race/ethnicity, 2SLGBTQIA+, disability, fatness, and age. We also analyze characters based on prominence, billing, story role, and traits. All variables are tested for reliability among our human expert coders, who undergo a rigorous training process and then run pilot tests on data outside of the sample. All variables included in the report have met standards of interrater reliability.

Identities

Character gender is determined by identification, attire, hairstyle, pronouns, and other context cues. This report assesses differences between men, women, boys, girls, and gender-diverse characters. Characters are categorized as gender-diverse only when confirmed through pronouns, openly identifying as such, or canonically verifiable character information online. Trans characters are coded as their appropriate gender (e.g., a trans woman would be coded as female). All trans and gender-diverse characters are also coded as 2SLGBTQIA+. Character race can be determined from skin color, facial features, and context markers within the show (e.g., the race of the character's family or cultural cues). Characters are coded as multiracial only when explicitly confirmed.

2SLGBTQIA+ characters include those who are gay, lesbian, queer/ambiguous, bisexual, transgender, gender-diverse, intersex, and asexual, among others. 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are identified through context clues such as romantic attachments, styling, props, and dialogue, or through canonically verifiable character information online. Characters in drag are coded as queer. Characters who are implied to be 2SLGBTQIA+ but are not explicitly stated to be so are evaluated on an individual basis.

This research is inclusive of physical, cognitive, and communication disabilities. Disabilities that are not visible were coded only when confirmed through dialogue or visual contexts (e.g., a character visiting a support group).

We prefer to use the term "fat" as a value-neutral descriptor that is not rooted in medical terminology (such as "obese" or "overweight"), nor is it suggestive of being outside of some sort of "norm" or "average" (such as "plus size" or "bigger"). Fatness is determined relative to waist size data from the Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification.[9]

A character's age is estimated by facial features, maturity, and context clues. This report assesses differences between characters 50 and older and those under 50.

Prominence

We identified the prominence of every character, assigning them to one of four levels: lead (which includes coleads), notable supporting, supporting, and minor. Leads refer to the protagonist of the "A" story in the episode or film. Next, we consider "notable supporting" roles, those in which a character is not the lead but still plays a vital role in the story. For example, in TV shows, notable supporting characters are usually non-lead members of the cast and can be recurring characters and noteworthy guest stars. Supporting characters are those who appear in more than one scene but are not heavily featured. Minor characters are those who have speaking roles but appear only briefly.

Credits and Billing

We measure when actors associated with a character are featured in the production's title sequence. This includes the first actor credited, which we designated as "top billed," as well as any actors credited at the end of the title sequence with distinctions (such as "and," "with," or "as"), which we designated as "last billed." Both top and last billing are negotiated in actors' contracts.[10] First billing typically goes to the star of the film but can go to a celebrity with more name recognition. Last billing often goes to actors who are not the star but bring prestige and recognition.

Story Role

We identified four roles that characters may play in a story: the protagonist, the fellowship, the villain, and antagonists. The protagonist is the leading character in the story. Members of the fellowship include characters who are heavily featured, narratively significant, and support the protagonist. In traditional literature, these characters would include the mentor, the love interest, the confidant, and/or the deuteragonists. The villain refers to the primary villain in the story, if applicable. Antagonists refer to any character who plays an antagonistic role for the protagonist, ranging from villains and henchmen to disapproving parents or school bullies.

Characters at the lead/colead or notable supporting levels were considered for protagonists, fellowship members, or villains; all characters were considered for antagonists.

Traits

We noted whether the story attributed several personality traits or dynamics to each character, including being: sexy, unattractive, put down by others, the butt of the joke, undesirable, smart, unintelligent, funny, or a leader. These traits are identified when they are intentionally included by the filmmakers. For example, a character would not be identified as "sexy" solely for being played by an attractive actor. However, they would be considered sexy if other characters find them attractive or if the camera shows off their body in slow motion. Similarly, a character is identified as unintelligent when they are characterized as ditzy or uneducated.

Those who are insulted by other characters are considered "put down by others," whereas a character is considered "the butt of the joke" when the movie or TV show derives humor at their expense, regardless of the involvement of other characters. This includes things like sight gags, sound cues, line reads, and reaction shots, among others.

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Findings

GENDER

Across all years and production types, male characters outnumber female characters (55.0% male characters compared with 44.9% female characters). However, this difference is widest in film (61.2% male compared with 38.6% female), whereas male and female characters are nearly balanced in TV movies (50.7% compared with 49.3%). Gender-diverse characters are nearly absent (0.1% of all characters).

TABLE 1

Gender inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021.

	ALL	**FILM**	**TV SHOWS**	**TV MOVIES**
Male	55.0%	61.2%	54.9%	50.7%
Female	44.9%	38.6%	45.0%	49.3%
Gender-Diverse	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

Across all production types, the gap between male and female characters decreases over time, changing from 58.3% male characters in 2018 (compared with 41.5% female), to 49.9% male in 2021 (compared with 50.1% female). In TV shows and TV movies, the share of female characters has increased each year.

FIGURE 1

Gender inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
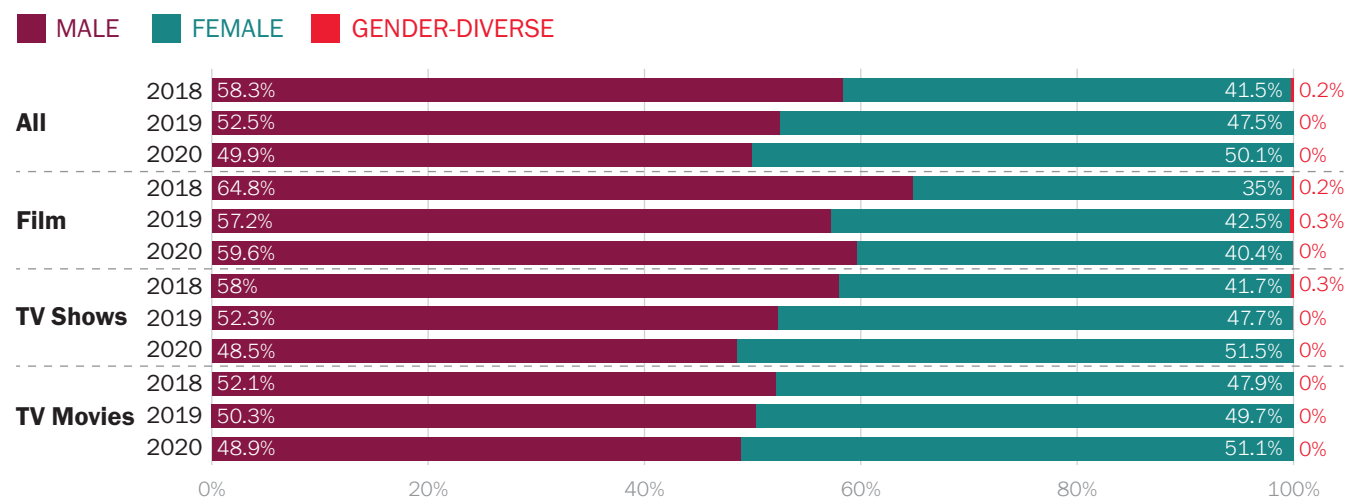
The inclusion of male and female characters is significantly different between years across all productions and in TV shows, but not in film or TV movies.

Looking at characters' intersectionality, a higher percentage of male characters than female characters are white (69.5% compared with 64.0%), whereas a higher percentage of female characters are Asian or Pacific Islander (11.7% compared with 8.8% of male characters). Additionally, a higher percentage of female characters are 2SLGBTQIA+ (5.7% compared with 2.1% of male characters).

Male characters skew older than female characters (23.8% of male characters are ages 50 or older, compared with 13.9% of female characters), and a higher proportion of male characters are fat (7.3% compared with 2.5% of female characters). These factors both indicate beauty standards that value youth and thinness from women.

TABLE 2

Gender intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

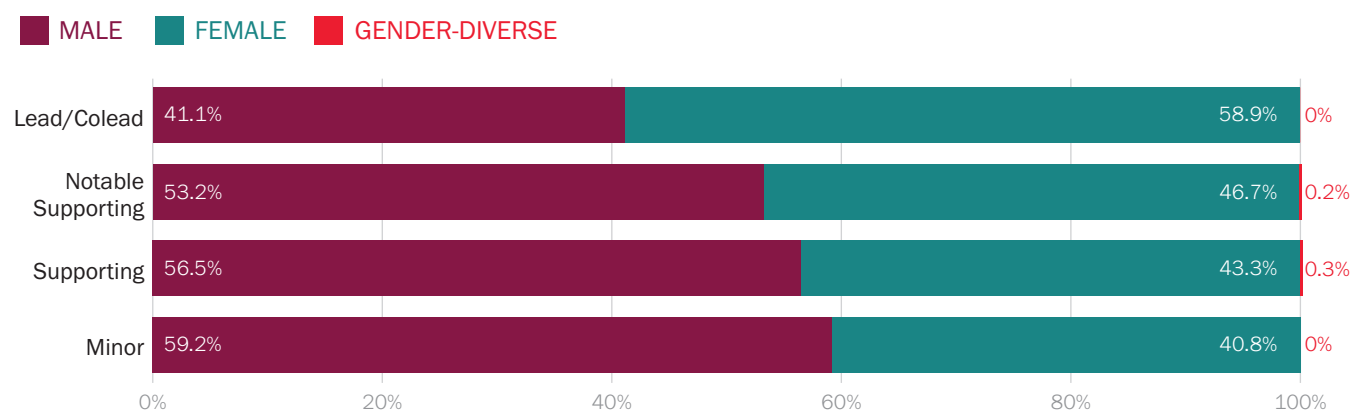|	MALE	FEMALE	GENDER-DIVERSE
White	69.5%	64.0%	66.7%
Black	13.7%	14.8%	0.0%
API	8.8%	11.7%	0.0%
Latinx	4.5%	5.0%	33.3%
Indigenous	1.3%	1.5%	0.0%
MENA	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%
Multiracial	1.5%	2.3%	0.0%
2SLGBTQIA+	2.1%	5.7%	100.0%
Has a Disability	3.7%	2.8%	0.0%
Fat	7.3%	2.5%	11.1%
Ages 50 and Older	23.8%	13.9%	0.0%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between genders.

Across all years and production types, leading roles go to female characters more often than to male characters (58.9% compared with 41.1%), whereas notable supporting (53.2% of male characters compared with 46.7% of female characters), supporting (56.5% compared with 43.3%), and minor (59.2% compared with 40.8%) roles all go to male characters more often than female characters.

This is largely due to the dominance of female leads in TV movies (80.0% female compared with 20.0% male). In film, 42.3% of leads are female, and in TV shows 57.5% of leads are female. There are no gender-diverse leads in any productions in the study.

FIGURE 2

Gender distribution of role prominence in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

The differences between prominence of roles are statistically significant for male and female characters, but not gender-diverse characters.

Across all years and production types, there is near-parity between male and female characters who appear in title-credit sequences. A higher percentage of female characters are in the title credits than those who are not in the title credits (48.8% compared with 41.0%).
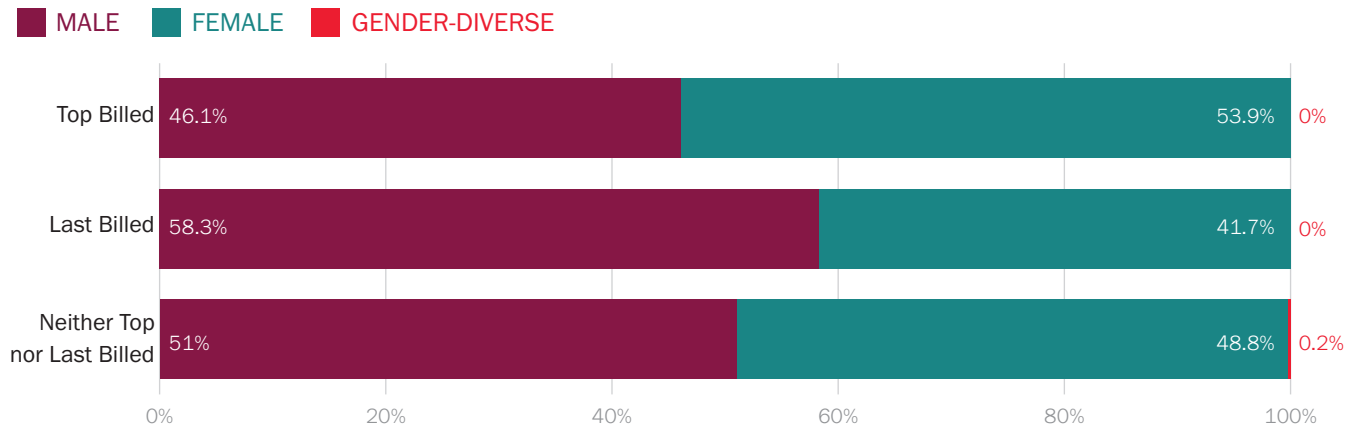
TABLE 3

Gender distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
Male	51.1%	58.9%
Female	48.8%	41.0%
Gender-Diverse	0.1%	0.1%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Top billing goes to female characters slightly more often than to male characters (53.9% compared with 46.1%), whereas last billing goes to male characters more often (58.3% compared with 41.7%), across all years and production types. Last billing is contractually negotiated and typically granted to actors who are not the leads but have significant name recognition and prestige. This finding is consistent with the long history of dominance of male characters in film and TV shows, resulting in an overrepresentation of male actors given prestigious credits.

FIGURE 3

Gender distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

■ MALE ■ FEMALE ■ GENDER-DIVERSE

Top Billed	46.1%	53.9%	0%
Last Billed	58.3%	41.7%	0%
Neither Top nor Last Billed	51%	48.8%	0.2%

The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not are statistically significant within male characters and within female characters, but not gender-diverse characters.

Across all years and production types, a higher proportion of female characters than male characters are protagonists (10.5% compared with 5.7%) and members of the fellowship (25.4% compared with 20.8%). A higher proportion of male characters than female characters are villains (4.1% compared with 2.3%) and antagonists (19.3% compared with 13.3%).

TABLE 4

Character types by gender for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	MALE	FEMALE	GENDER-DIVERSE
Protagonist	5.7%	10.5%	0.0%
Fellowship	20.8%	25.4%	44.4%
Villain	4.1%	2.3%	0.0%
Antagonist	19.3%	13.3%	0.0%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between genders within each level of role prominence.

Female characters are given positive traits, whereas negative traits are more often attributed to male characters. A higher proportion of female characters than male characters are portrayed as sexy (6.8% compared with 3.2%), smart (9.6% compared with 6.3%), funny (11.4% compared with 9.2%), and leaders (20.5% compared with 17.8%). A higher proportion of male characters than female characters are portrayed as unattractive (0.9% compared with 0.2%) and unintelligent (1.3% compared with 0.6%).

TABLE 5

Character traits by gender for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	MALE	**FEMALE**	**GENDER-DIVERSE**
Sexy	3.2%	6.8%	0.0%
Unattractive	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%
Put Down by Others	6.5%	5.5%	11.1%
Butt of the Joke	1.1%	0.6%	11.1%
Undesirable	0.6%	0.4%	0.0%
Smart	6.3%	9.6%	11.1%
Unintelligent	1.3%	0.6%	0.0%
Funny	9.2%	11.4%	11.1%
Leader	17.8%	20.5%	44.4%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between genders within each trait

Across all years and production types, the most prominent gendered stereotypes are: violent men, lovesick and/or relationship-focused women, mean girls, and career-obsessed women. While the stereotype of the "violent Black man" does appear, violent men are most often white. Women who are primarily focused on relationships are common, especially in TV movies. Teen TV shows and some TV movies feature many "mean girls." However, they are also frequently given deeper portrayals as storylines progress, thus subverting the trope. Finally, there are many instances of women who care only about their careers, often to the detriment of their own happiness (or others' happiness).

RACE

Across all years and production types, white characters make up over two-thirds of all characters. TV movies have the highest share of white characters (74.2%), whereas film has the lowest (63.0%). When comparing production types, TV movies have significantly fewer Asian or Pacific Islander (API) characters than film and TV shows (6.7% compared to 10.9% in film and 10.6% in TV shows). Similarly, Middle Eastern or North African characters (MENA) are significantly more present in film (2.2% of characters) than in TV shows (0.5%) and TV movies (0.1%).

TABLE 6

Race inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	ALL	**FILM**	**TV SHOWS**	**TV MOVIES**
White	67.0%	63.0%	66.4%	74.2%
Black	14.2%	16.3%	13.8%	14.2%
API	10.1%	10.9%	10.6%	6.7%
Latinx	4.8%	4.2%	5.2%	3.4%
MENA	0.7%	2.2%	0.5%	0.1%
Indigenous	1.4%	2.2%	1.3%	0.9%
Multiracial	1.8%	1.2%	2.2%	0.5%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

Across all production types, the proportion of white characters has decreased from nearly 69.5% in 2018 to less than 60% in 2021 (58.6%). The proportion of Asian or Pacific Islander characters was stable in 2018 (9.5%) and 2019 (8.4%) but increased significantly in 2021 (18.8%) due to the inclusion of the TV show *Pachinko,* which has a predominantly South Korean and Japanese cast.

FIGURE 4

Race inclusion for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
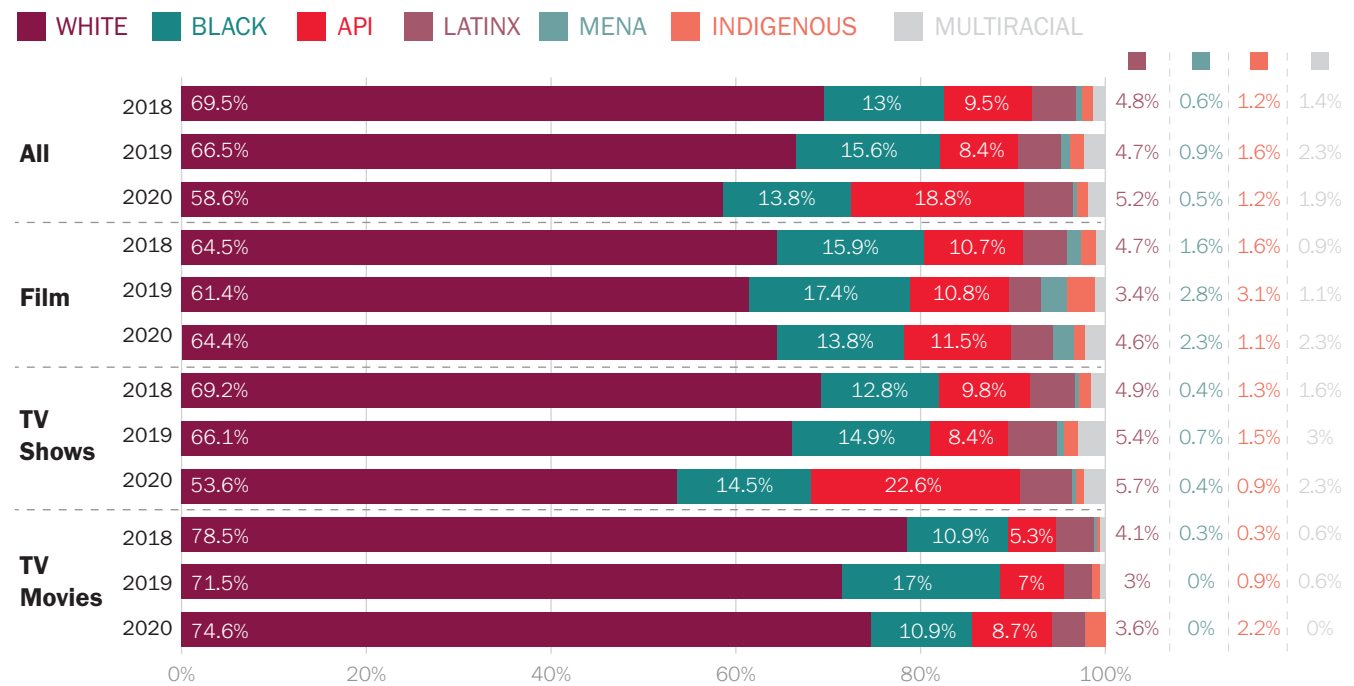
The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences within race between years.

Across all years and production types, a higher percentage of female characters are API (52.2%) than are of other racial groups, whereas a lower percentage of male characters are API (47.8%) than are of other racial groups.

A higher percentage of Latinx (7.9%) and Black (7.3%) characters are statistically significantly 2SLGBTQIA+, whereas a lower percentage of API (2.2%) and white (3.0%) characters are 2SLGBTQIA+. A higher percentage of MENA characters than characters of other races are fat (15.2%), have disabilities (19.1%), and are ages 50 and older (36.2%).

TABLE 7

Race intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	WHITE	BLACK	API	LATINX	MENA	INDIGENOUS	MULTIRACIAL
Male	56.9%	53.0%	47.8%	51.5%	55.3%	52.1%	44.9%
Female	43.0%	47.0%	52.2%	47.6%	44.7%	47.9%	55.1%
Gender-Diverse	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2SLGBTQIA+	3.0%	7.3%	2.2%	7.9%	8.5%	4.3%	5.5%
Fat	5.2%	5.9%	1.9%	5.5%	15.2%	4.3%	7.9%
Has a Disability	3.5%	3.3%	1.9%	2.1%	19.1%	1.1%	4.7%
Ages 50 and Older	22.8%	13.0%	12.3%	7.6%	36.2%	16.0%	3.9%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between races within that identity group.

Across all production types and years, nearly three in four leads are white (73.2%). This has decreased from 74.0% in 2018 and 73.6% in 2019 to 66.0% in 2021, though the difference is not statistically significant. For less prominent roles (notable supporting, supporting, and minor), white characters also make up the largest share, but they are about two-thirds of all characters in these roles.

API characters' share of minor roles (12.7%) is greater than their share of supporting roles (9.4%), notable supporting roles (9.6%), or leading roles. (4.1%). Indigenous characters are 2.0% of minor roles, but for more prominent roles, their share is less.

FIGURE 5

Race distribution of role prominence for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
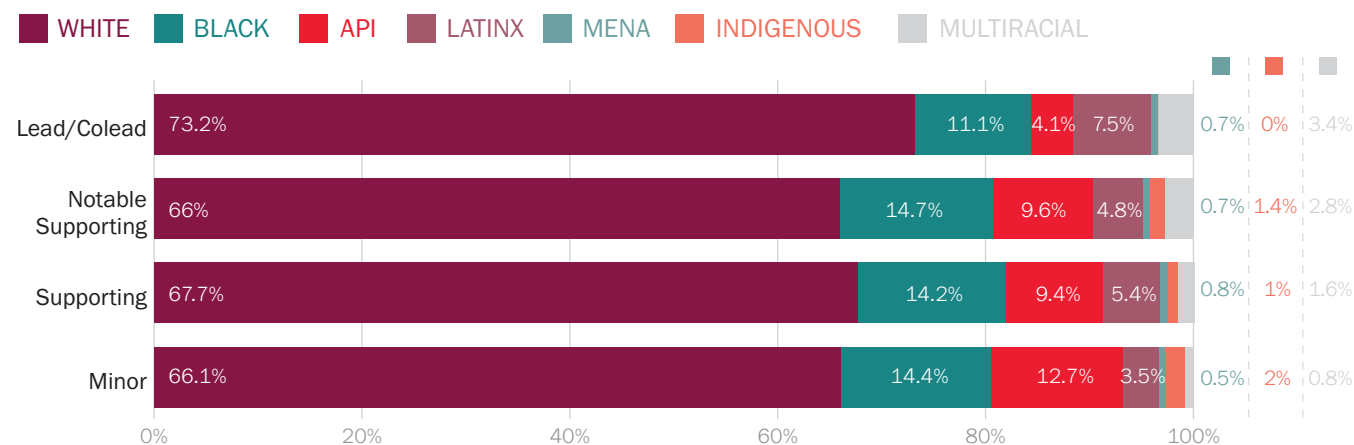
The differences between prominence of roles was statistically significant for white (lead/colead was different from all other roles), API (all roles were different from one another), Latinx (supporting was different from all other roles), Indigenous (minor was different from all other roles), and multiracial (all roles were different) characters.

Across all years and production types, Latinx (5.5%) and multiracial characters (2.5%) appear in title credits at slightly higher percentages than Latinx (4.0%) and multiracial characters (1.2%) who are not in title credits. On the other hand, a slightly lower percentage of API characters are in title credits than those who are not (8.0% compared with 12.1%).

TABLE 8

Race distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
White	68.2%	66.0%
Black	14.1%	14.2%
API	8.0%	12.1%
Latinx	5.5%	4.0%
MENA	0.6%	0.8%
Indigenous	1.1%	1.6%
Multiracial	2.5%	1.2%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Across all years and production types, white title-credit characters are given top (69.7%) or last (80.1%) billing at a higher rate than those who are not (64.7%). Black characters, on the other hand, are given top (11.2%) or last (11.4%) billing at lower rates than those who are not (15.7%). A lower percentage of API (3.9%) and Latinx (2.0%) characters are given last billing, whereas a lower percentage of multiracial characters are given top billing (0.8%).

FIGURE 6

Race distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

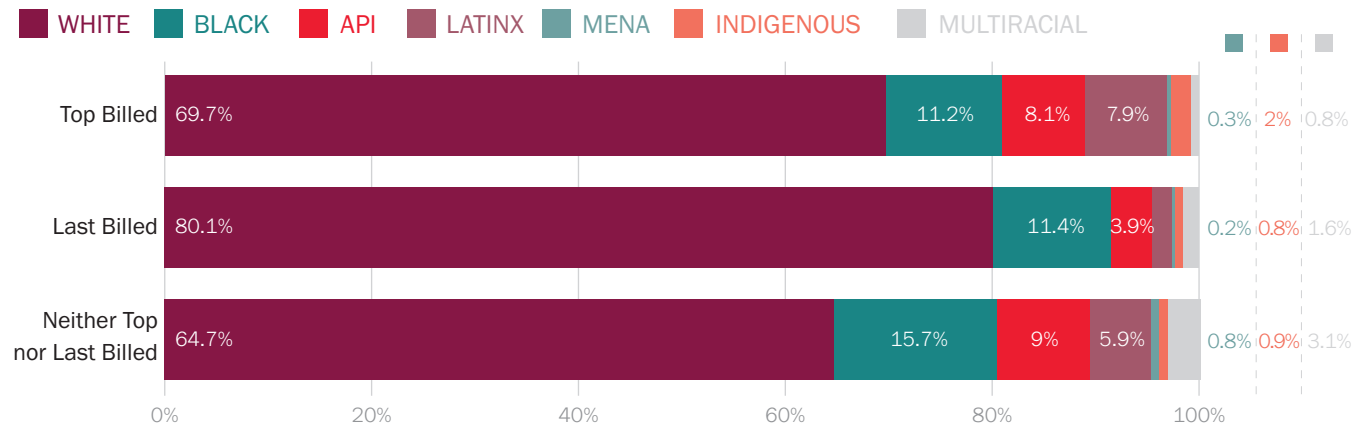The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not are statistically significant within white (all types of billing), Black (all types of billing), API (last billed is significantly lower than no billing), Latinx (last billed is significantly lower than no billing) and multiracial (top billed is significantly lower than last billed and no billing) characters

When looking at the percentage of lead/colead or notable supporting characters from each race who hold types of character roles, we find that multiracial (19.7%) and Latinx (12.8%) characters are protagonists at the highest rates across all years and production types. A lower percentage of white (8.4%), Black (6.4%), and API (3.3%) characters are protagonists. This suggests that there are higher numbers of characters from those races in smaller roles.

We find relative consistency among the percentage of characters in fellowship roles across races, though multiracial (36.2%) and Black (27.4%) characters are more likely than other races to be fellowship members, suggesting the potential presence of the "Black best friend" and/or "Black mentor" tropes. White lead/colead or notable supporting characters are villains (4.1%) at higher rates than characters of other races, but multiracial characters are villains (0.8%) at lower rates.

A higher percentage of white characters are antagonists (18.5%) when compared to all other races.

TABLE 9

Character types by race for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	WHITE	BLACK	API	LATINX	MENA	INDIGENOUS	MULTIRACIAL
Protagonist	8.4%	6.4%	3.3%	12.8%	10.6%	0.0%	19.7%
Fellowship	21.5%	27.4%	22.7%	24.4%	23.4%	26.6%	36.2%
Villain	4.1%	1.3%	1.9%	1.8%	0.0%	3.2%	0.8%
Antagonist	18.5%	12.1%	11.8%	14.0%	10.6%	14.9%	15.0%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between races within each level of role prominence.

Across all years and production types, we find very few statistically significant differences between races for character traits. However, we find that a higher percentage of multiracial characters than characters of other races are portrayed as smart (15.7%) and funny (20.5%).

TABLE 10

Character traits by race for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	WHITE	**BLACK**	**API**	**LATINX**	**MENA**	**INDIGENOUS**	**MULTIRACIAL**
Sexy	5.3%	4.3%	3.3%	5.5%	0.0%	2.1%	8.7%
Unattractive	0.7%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Put Down by Others	6.8%	4.6%	3.3%	4.6%	6.4%	6.4%	9.4%
Butt of the Joke	1.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.3%	2.1%	1.1%	0.0%
Undesirable	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
Smart	7.4%	9.1%	6.9%	9.5%	8.5%	3.2%	15.7%
Unintelligent	1.2%	0.8%	0.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Funny	10.2%	9.6%	7.2%	14.3%	2.1%	6.4%	20.5%
Leader	19.0%	20.8%	16.0%	21.3%	17.0%	9.6%	26.8%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between races within each trait.The most prominent racialized stereotypes were: criminals, Black mama bears and/or angry Black women, service workers, and Black sidekicks.

Several racialized gang members and criminals are featured, particularly Yakuza members. Black women are shown as both the "mama bear" and the "angry Black woman" stereotypes, reinforcing the belief that Black women are foreboding and volatile. Black and Latinx characters are often shown in service roles, especially in domestic spaces. Finally, Black and multiracial characters are fellowship members more often than they were protagonists, reinforcing the idea that characters of color should not be the center of the story.

2SLGBTQIA+

Across all years, less than 5% of characters are 2SLGBTQIA+ in any production type. TV shows have the most 2SLGBTQIA+ representation (4.7% of all characters), followed by film (2.2%). Less than 1% of characters in TV movies are 2SLGBTQIA+ (0.9%).

TABLE 11

2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	ALL	**FILM**	**TELEVISION**	**TV MOVIES**
2SLGBTQIA+	3.8%	2.2%	4.7%	0.9%
Not 2SLGBTQIA+	96.2%	97.8%	95.3%	99.1%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

Over time, we see a significant increase in 2SLGBTQIA+ characters between 2018 (2.8%) and 2021 (6.2%) across all production types. These changes mostly happen in TV shows, where the percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters more than doubled from 2018 (3.2%) to 2021 (7.9%).

FIGURE 7

2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
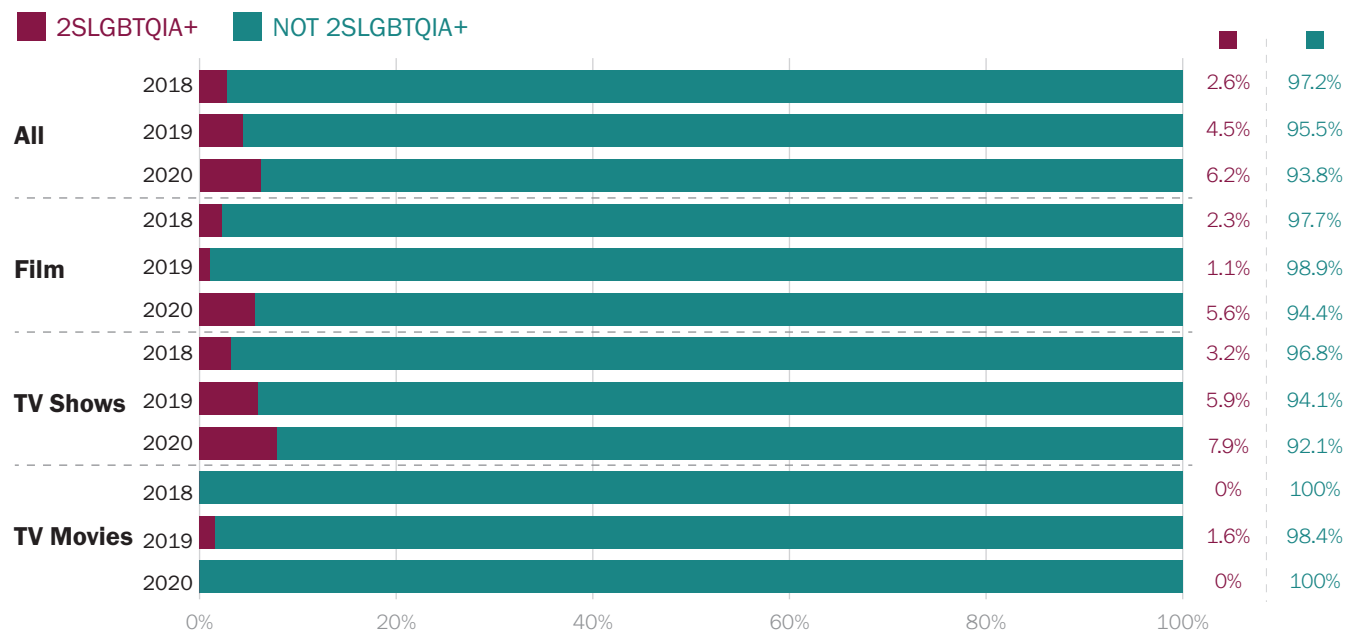
The inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters is significantly different between years across all productions combined and in TV shows, but not in film or TV movies.

Across all years and production types, when compared with non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters, a higher percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are female (66.3% compared with 44.0%) and a lower percentage are male (30.3% compared with 56.0%). There is more racial diversity among 2SLGBTQIA+ characters than among non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters, though most 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are white (52.3%), followed by Black (26.7%) and Latinx (9.8%).

TABLE 12

2SLGBTQIA+ intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

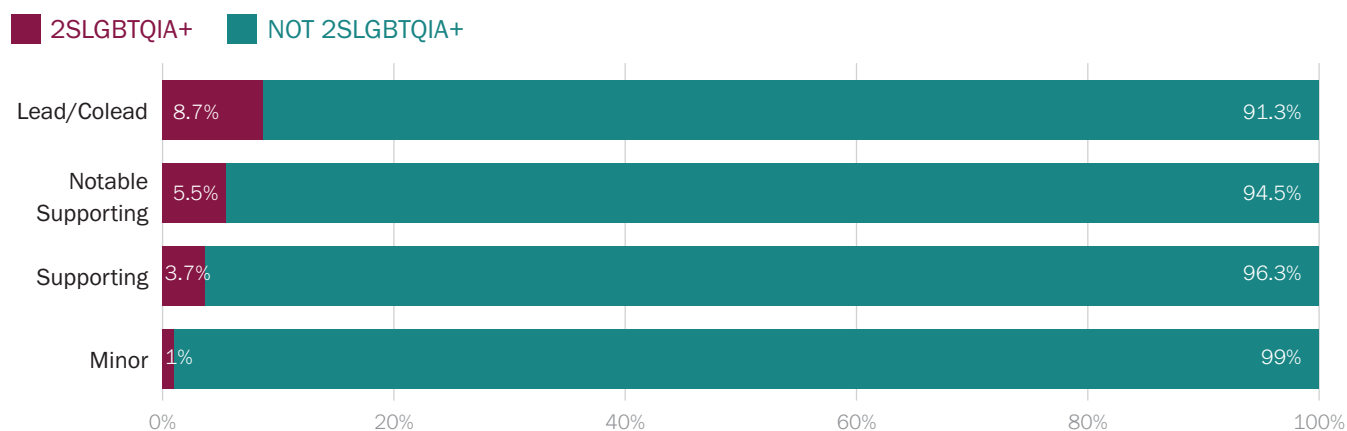|	2SLGBTQIA+	NOT 2SLGBTQIA+
Male	30.3%	56.0%
Female	66.3%	44.0%
Gender-Diverse	3.4%	0.0%
White	52.3%	67.7%
Black	26.7%	13.6%
API	5.6%	10.3%
Latinx	9.8%	4.6%
Indigenous	1.5%	1.4%
MENA	1.5%	0.7%
Multiracial	2.6%	1.8%

TABLE 12

2SLGBTQIA+ intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021 (Cont'd)

	2SLGBTQIA+	NOT 2SLGBTQIA+
Fat	3.4%	5.2%
Has a Disability	3.0%	3.3%
Ages 50 and Older	6.0%	19.8%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and those who are not.

Across all years and production types, the percentage of characters who are 2SLGBTQIA+ correlates with the prominence of a character's role, as the percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ who are leads/coleads (8.7%) is highest, followed by notable supporting (5.5%), supporting (3.7%), and minor (1.0%) roles. However, this may be because portraying 2SLGBTQIA+ identity is clearer with the more a character is developed.

FIGURE 8

2SLGBTQIA+ distribution of role prominence for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

The differences between prominence of roles were statistically significant among characters who were 2SLGBTQIA+ as well as those who were not.

Of all characters who appear in title credits, 5.2% are 2SLGBTQIA+, whereas 2.5% of characters not in title credits are 2SLGBTQIA+.
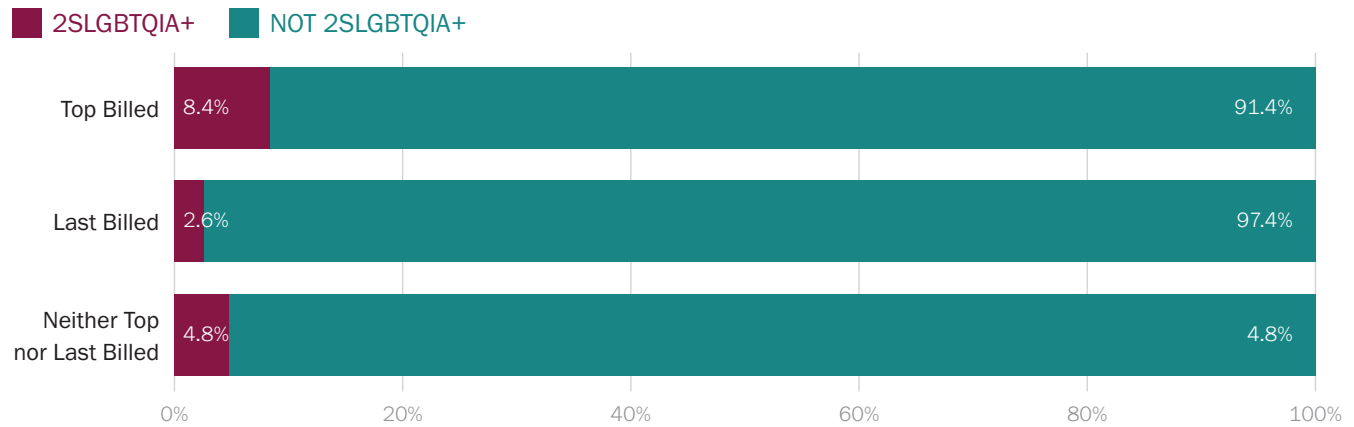
TABLE 13

2SLGBTQIA+ distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
2SLGBTQIA+	5.2%	2.5%
Not 2SLGBTQIA+	94.8%	97.5%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Across all years and production types, when they appear in the title credits, 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are given top billing (8.4%) at a higher percentage than 2SLGBTQIA+ characters who are not (4.8%), but they are given last billing (2.6%) at a lower percentage.

FIGURE 9

2SLGBTQIA+ distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

- 2SLGBTQIA+
- NOT 2SLGBTQIA+

Top Billed	8.4% — 91.4%
Last Billed	2.6% — 97.4%
Neither Top nor Last Billed	4.8% — 4.8%

The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not were significant, within both identity groups.

Compared with non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters, a higher percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ lead/colead or notable supporting characters are protagonists (18.4% compared with 7.4%) and members of the fellowship (37.8% compared with 22.3%). A lower percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ characters than those who are not 2SLGBTQIA+ are antagonists (10.1% compared with 16.9%).

TABLE 14

Character types by 2SLGBTQIA+ identity for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	2SLGBTQIA+	NOT 2SLGBTQIA+
Protagonist	18.4%	7.4%
Fellowship	37.8%	22.3%
Villain	3.4%	3.3%
Antagonist	10.1%	16.9%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and those who are not, within each level of role prominence.

Across all years and production types, 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are more likely than non-2SLGBTQIA+ characters to have positive traits, and these differences are statistically significant for characters who are portrayed as sexy (10.9% compared with 4.6%), funny (17.2% compared with 9.9%), and leaders (28.1% compared with 18.7%).

TABLE 15

Character traits by 2SLGBTQIA+ identity for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	2SLGBTQIA+	NOT 2SLGBTQIA+
Sexy	10.9%	4.6%
Unattractive	0.0%	0.6%
Put Down by Others	6.7%	6.1%
Butt of the Joke	1.5%	0.9%
Undesirable	0.4%	0.5%
Smart	10.5%	7.7%
Unintelligent	0.7%	1.0%
Funny	17.2%	9.9%
Leader	28.1%	18.7%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and those who are not, within each trait. There were no consistently-appearing 2SLGBTQIA+ stereotypes.

DISABILITY

Of all characters across all years and production types, 3.3% have physical, cognitive, communication, or mental health disabilities. The highest percentage of characters with disabilities appear on TV shows (3.9%), but the difference between TV shows and other production types is not statistically significant.

TABLE 16

Disability inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	ALL	FILM	TV SHOWS	TV MOVIES
Has a Disability	3.3%	2.7%	3.9%	0.7%
Does Not Have a Disability	96.7%	97.3%	96.1%	99.3%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

The percentage of characters with disabilities decreased from 2018 (4.0%) to 2021 (2.1%) across all production types.

FIGURE 10

Disability inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021.
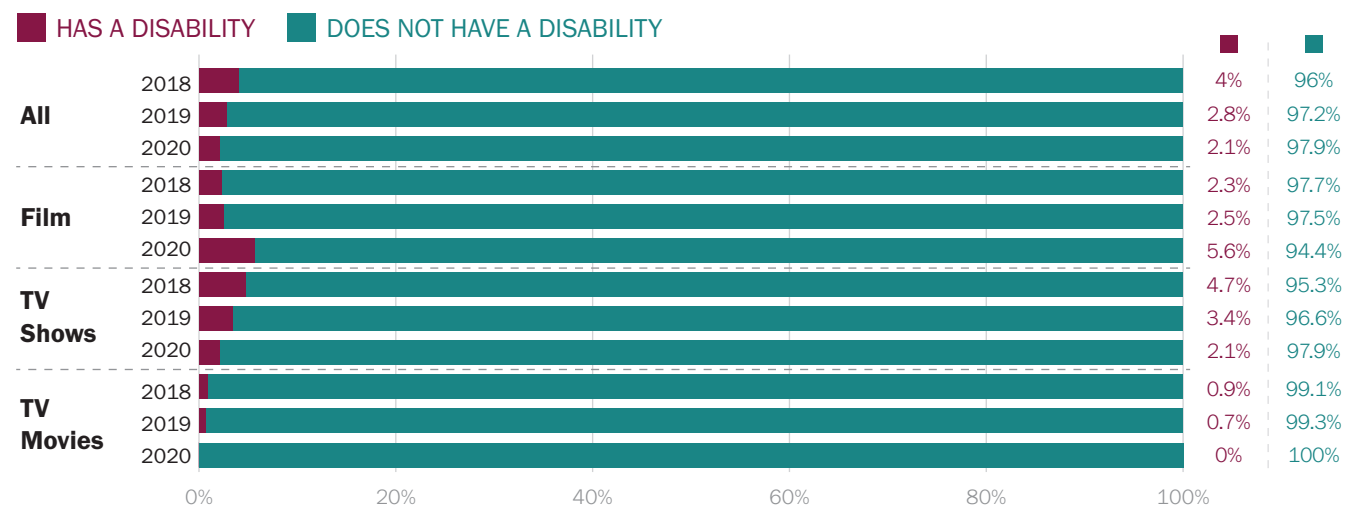
The inclusion of characters with disabilities were significantly different between years, when all production types were combined, but not for any individual type.

Across all years and production types, characters with disabilities are male (62.2%) at a higher rate than those without a disability (54.8%). Characters with disabilities are female at a lower rate than those without a disability (37.8% compared with 45.1%). A higher percentage of characters with disabilities than those without a disability are MENA (3.9% compared with 0.6%) and ages 50 or older (31.3 compared with 18.9%). A lower percentage of characters with disabilities than those without one are Asian or Pacific Islander (5.7% compared with 10.2%).

TABLE 17

Disability intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
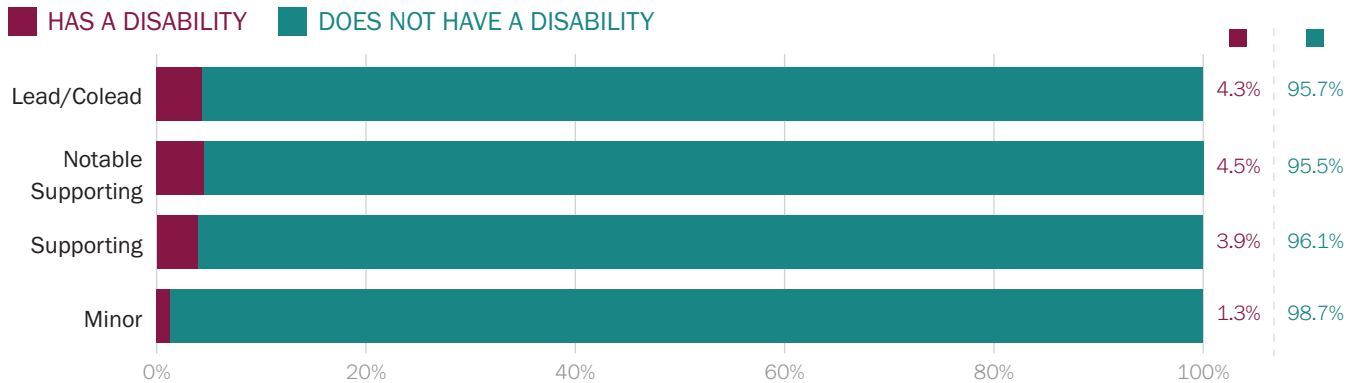
	HAS A DISABILITY	DOES NOT HAVE A DISABILITY
Male	62.2%	54.8%
Female	37.8%	45.1%
Gender-Diverse	0.0%	0.1%
White	70.5%	67.0%
Black	13.9%	14.2%
API	5.7%	10.2%
Latinx	3.0%	4.8%
Indigenous	0.4%	1.4%
MENA	3.9%	0.6%
Multiracial	2.6%	1.8%
2SLGBTQIA+	3.5%	3.8%
Fat	7.9%	5.0%
Ages 50 and Older	31.3%	18.9%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who have disabilities and those who do not.

Characters with disabilities appear in minor roles (1.3%) at lower rates than other levels of prominence across all years and production types.

FIGURE 11

Disability distribution of role prominence for all film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

■ HAS A DISABILITY   ■ DOES NOT HAVE A DISABILITY

	■	■
Lead/Colead	4.3%	95.7%
Notable Supporting	4.5%	95.5%
Supporting	3.9%	96.1%
Minor	1.3%	98.7%

The differences between prominence of roles was significantly lower for minor characters with a disability and significantly higher for minor characters without a disability.

Characters with disabilities appear in title credits (3.8%) at a higher rate than those who do not have a disability (2.8%).

TABLE 18

Disability distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
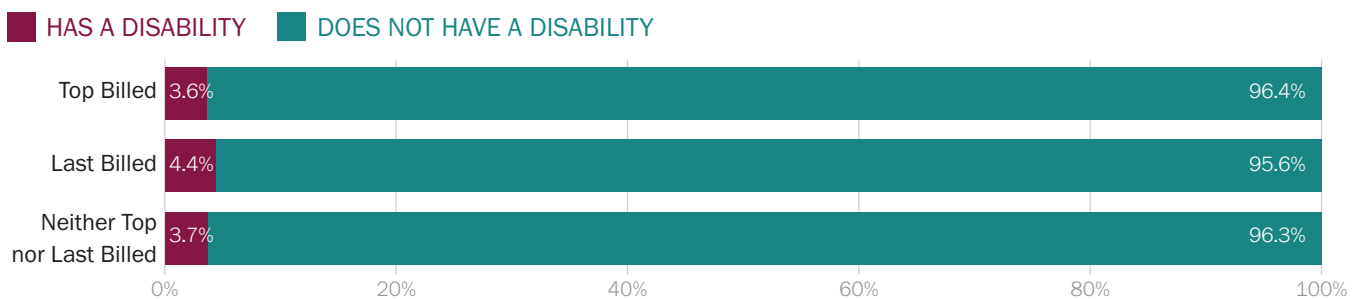
	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
Has a Disability	3.8%	2.8%
Does Not Have a Disability	96.2%	97.2%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Across all years and production types, there are no statistically significant differences between types of billing for characters with disabilities.

FIGURE 12

Disability distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

■ HAS A DISABILITY   ■ DOES NOT HAVE A DISABILITY

	■	■
Top Billed	3.6%	96.4%
Last Billed	4.4%	95.6%
Neither Top nor Last Billed	3.7%	96.3%

The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not were not significant.

Characters with disabilities are antagonists at lower rates than those without disabilities (10.9% compared with 16.8%).

TABLE 19

Character types by disability status for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	HAS A DISABILITY	DOES NOT HAVE A DISABILITY
Protagonist	10.0%	7.8%
Fellowship	27.4%	22.7%
Villain	2.6%	3.3%
Antagonist	10.9%	16.8%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who have disabilities and those who do not, within each level of role prominence.

Across all years and production types, characters with disabilities are given negative traits at higher rates than those without disabilities, including being characterized as unattractive (3.0% compared with 0.5%), undesirable (3.0% compared with 0.4%), or unintelligent (3.0% compared with 0.9%), as well as being put down by others (12.2% compared with 5.9%) or by the story (6.5% compared with 0.7%). However, characters with disabilities are also more likely to be shown as leaders (28.3% compared with 18.7%), which may suggest the presence of the "supercrip" trope, which fetishizes people with disabilities and uses them as sources of inspiration for those without disabilities.

TABLE 20

Character traits by disability status for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	HAS A DISABILITY	DOES NOT HAVE A DISABILITY
Sexy	3.9%	4.9%
Unattractive	3.0%	0.5%
Put Down by Others	12.2%	5.9%
Butt of the Joke	6.5%	0.7%
Undesirable	3.0%	0.4%
Smart	6.5%	7.8%
Unintelligent	3.0%	0.9%
Funny	13.0%	10.1%
Leader	28.3%	18.7%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who have disabilities and those who do not, within each trait.

The most common disability stereotypes are: the savant, the mute brute, and the cured. "The savant" stereotype refers to a character with autism who is a genius, in part because of their neurodivergence. "The mute brute" is a character with a cognitive disability who does not speak (or does not speak often) and is intimidating. Further, characters are sometimes shown "overcoming" their disabilities, thus framing disability as an obstacle.

FATNESS

Fat characters make up just over 5% of all characters across all years and production types. The highest percentage of fat characters are found in film (7.3%), with TV shows having the lowest percentage (4.7%).

TABLE 21

Fatness inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	ALL	FILM	TV SHOWS	TV MOVIES
Fat	5.1%	7.3%	4.7%	5.4%
Not Fat	94.9%	92.7%	95.3%	94.6%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

We see no statistically significant changes over time in the representation of fatness, regardless of production type. This suggests that creators are not making active choices to increase the presence of fat characters.

FIGURE 13

Fatness inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

The differences over time were not significant.

Across all years and production types, the gender difference among fat characters (78.0% male and 21.7% female) is much wider than the gender difference among nonfat characters (53.6% male and 46.3% female). This aligns with gendered beauty standards that expect thinness from women shown in the media. Fat characters are also MENA (2.0% compared with 0.6%) and ages 50 and older (35.2% compared with 18.2%) at higher rates than nonfat characters. A lower percentage of fat characters than nonfat characters are API (3.8% compared with 10.4%).

TABLE 22

Fatness intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	FAT	NOT FAT
Male	78.0%	53.6%
Female	21.7%	46.3%
Gender-Diverse	0.3%	0.1%
White	68.4%	67.1%
Black	16.5%	14.0%
API	3.8%	10.4%
Latinx	5.2%	4.7%
Indigenous	1.2%	1.4%
MENA	2.0%	0.6%
Multiracial	2.9%	1.8%
2SLGBTQIA+	2.6%	3.9%
Has a Disability	5.1%	3.2%
50 and Older	35.2%	18.2%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are fat and those who are not.

Fat characters appear at higher rates as the prominence of their roles gets smaller. Across all years and production types, the highest percentage of fat characters is in minor roles (7.6%) and the lowest is in lead/colead roles (0.7%).

FIGURE 14

Fatness distribution of role prominence for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
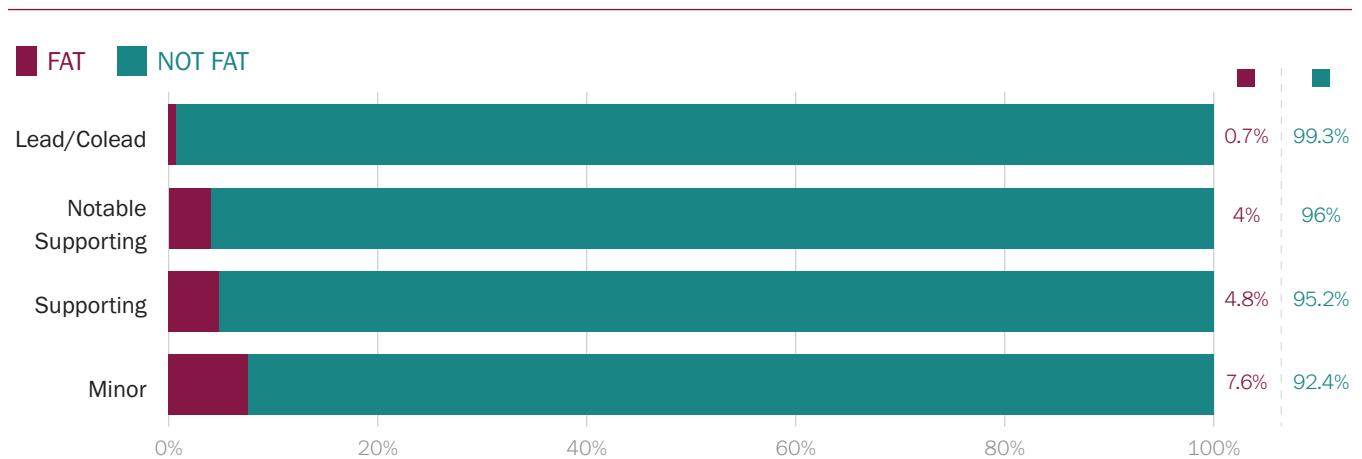
The differences between prominence of roles was statistically significant for both fat and nonfat characters.

Fat characters make up a significantly smaller proportion of characters in title credits than those who are not in title credits (3.8% compared with 6.4%).

TABLE 23

Fatness distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
Fat	3.8%	6.4%
Not Fat	96.2%	93.6%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Across all years and production types, fat characters who are in the title credits are given top billing (1.2%) at a lower rate than those who are not given distinction credits (3.9%). A higher percentage of fat characters are given last billing (6.6%).

FIGURE 15

Fatness distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
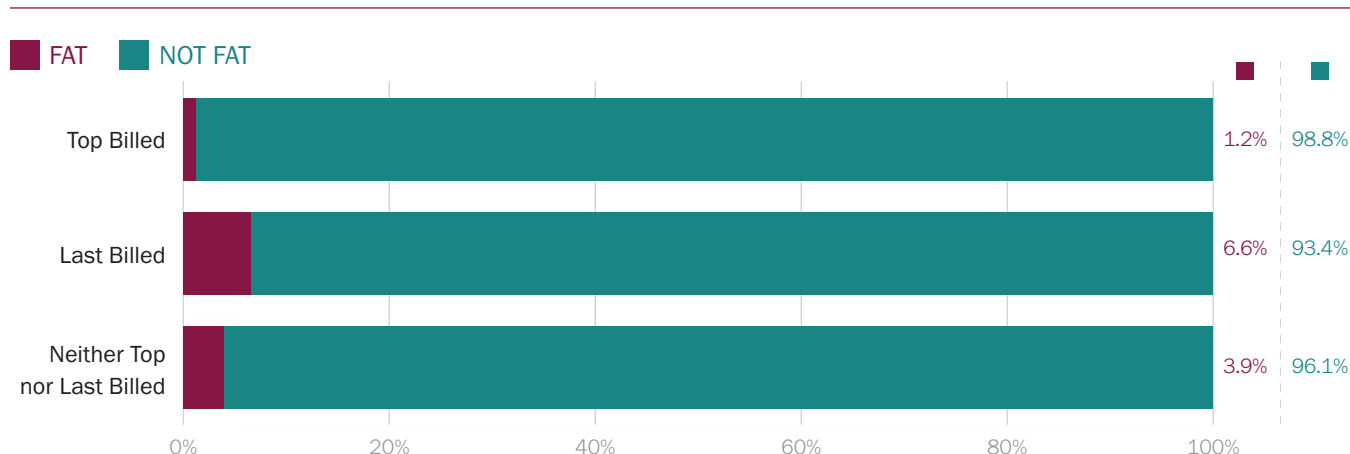
The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not were significant for both fat and non-fat characters.

A significantly lower percentage of fat characters are protagonists (2.6% compared with 8.2%) and members of the fellowship (15.7% compared with 23.3%) than their nonfat counterparts. This suggests that fat characters are not given roles of narrative significance.

TABLE 24

Character types by fatness for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	FAT	NOT FAT
Protagonist	2.6%	8.2%
Fellowship	15.7%	23.3%
Villain	2.6%	3.4%
Antagonist	16.6%	16.6%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are fat and those who are not, within each level of role prominence.

Across all years and production types, fat characters have several negative traits attributed to them at higher rates than characters who are not fat, including being unattractive (3.4% compared with 0.4%), undesirable (1.4% compared with 0.4%), and the butt of the joke (2.6% compared with 0.8%). They are also portrayed as sexy significantly less often than nonfat characters (1.1% compared with 5.1%).

TABLE 25

Character traits by fatness for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	FAT	**NOT FAT**
Sexy	1.1%	5.1%
Unattractive	3.4%	0.4%
Put Down by Others	6.6%	6.1%
Butt of the Joke	2.6%	0.8%
Undesirable	1.4%	0.4%
Smart	6.0%	8.0%
Unintelligent	2.0%	1.0%
Funny	11.4%	10.1%
Leader	17.1%	19.2%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are fat and those who are not, within each trait.

The most prominent stereotypes around fatness are the loser and the butt of the joke. The fat characters are regularly portrayed as unlikeable, unattractive, and lonely due to their size. They are also used as punchlines, often at their own expense.

AGE (UNDER AND OVER 50)

Characters ages 50 and older make up just under one-fifth of all characters across all years and production types. They make up the highest percentage of characters in TV shows (26.9%) and lowest percentage of characters in TV movies (17.7%).

TABLE 26

Age inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	ALL	**FILM**	**TV SHOWS**	**TV MOVIES**
50 and Older	19.3%	19.5%	26.9%	17.7%
Under 50	80.7%	80.5%	73.1%	82.3%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between production types.

Across the observed years, the proportion of characters ages 50 and older has not changed significantly in most production types. However, the percentage of older characters in TV shows dropped significantly from 2018 (19.1%) to 2019 (15.4%).

FIGURE 16

Age inclusion in film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
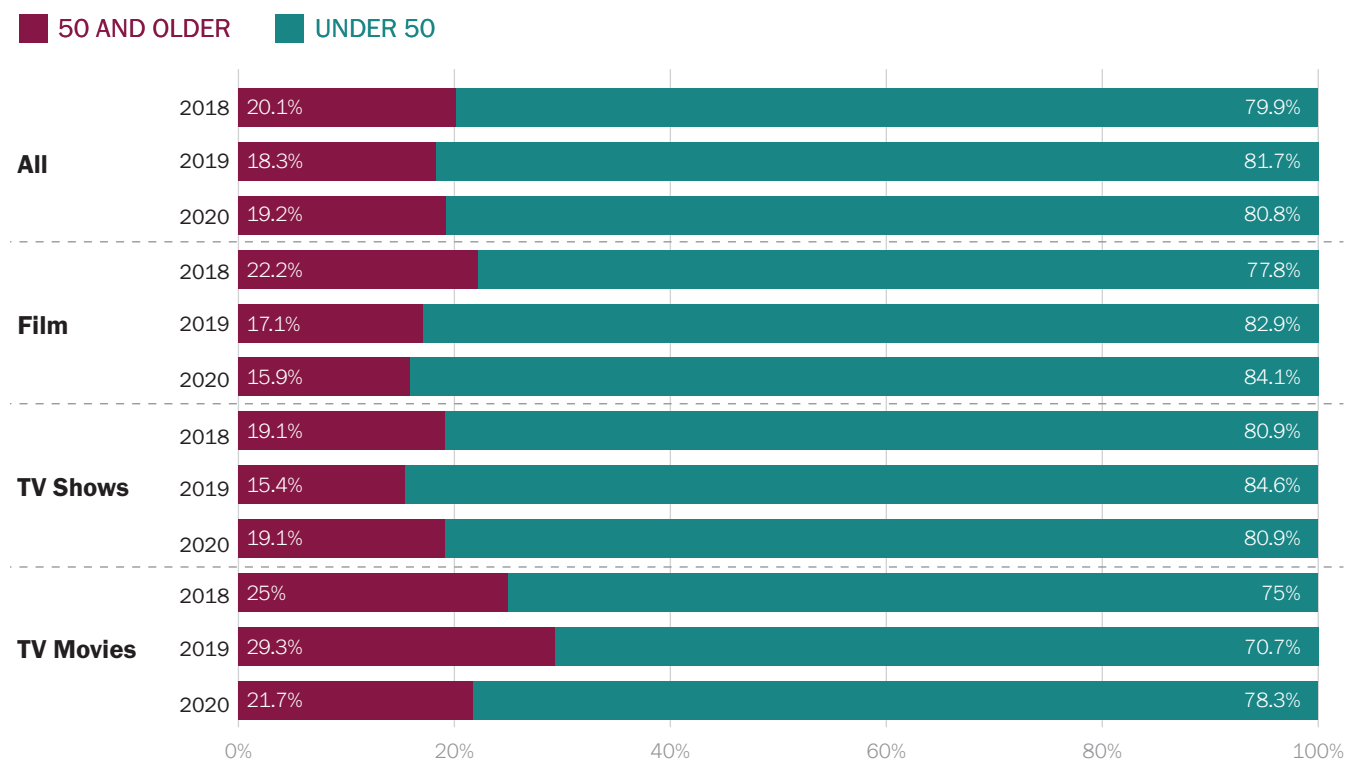
The change in inclusion of characters 50 and older was significant between 2018 and 2019 in TV shows, but for no other production types or years.

Across all years and production types, the gender gap in characters 50 and older (67.7% for male characters compared with 32.3% for female characters) is much wider than the gap among characters under 50 (51.8% compared with 48.0%). This reflects the entertainment industry's tendency to erase older female characters.

Characters 50 and older are white at a higher rate than those under 50 (79.4% compared with 64.1%). Because of this, characters of color who are 50 and older are seen at much lower rates than their under-50 counterparts. For instance, among Black characters, 9.5% were 50 and older, compared with 15.3% who were under 50. The same held true for API (6.4% were 50-plus compared with 11.0% who were under 50), Latinx (1.9% compared with 5.5%), and multiracial characters (0.4% compared with 2.2%).

The percentages of characters who are fat (9.4% compared with 4.1%) and have disabilities (5.4% compared with 2.8%) are higher among those 50 and older than those under 50. However, 2SLGBTQIA+ characters are 50 and older at a lower rate than their counterparts under 50 (1.2% compared with 4.5%). This perpetuates the perception that only young people are 2SLGBTQIA+.
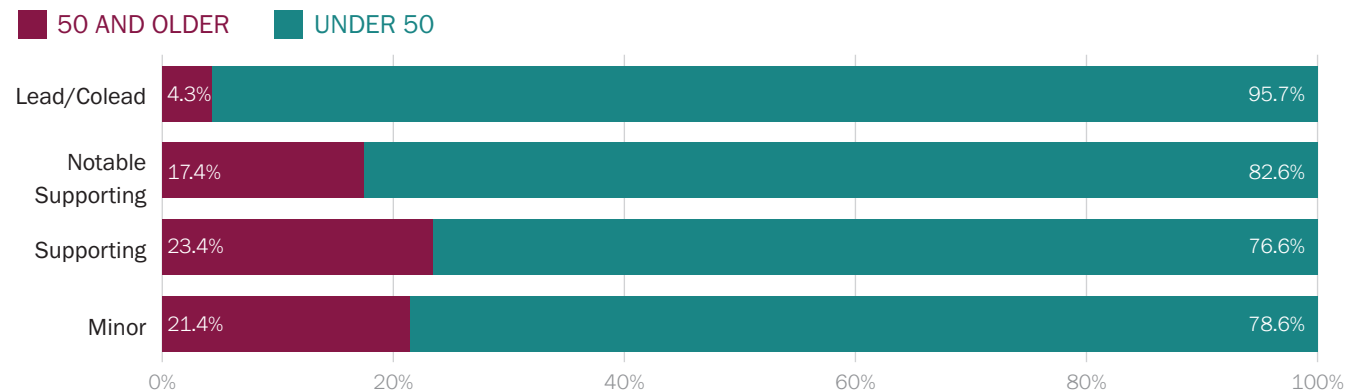
TABLE 27

Age intersections for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	50 AND OLDER	UNDER 50
Male	67.7%	51.8%
Female	32.3%	48.0%
Gender-Diverse	0.0%	0.2%
White	79.4%	64.1%
Black	9.5%	15.3%
API	6.4%	11.0%
Latinx	1.9%	5.5%
Indigenous	1.1%	1.4%
MENA	1.3%	0.5%
Multiracial	0.4%	2.2%
2SLGBTQIA+	1.2%	4.5%
Fat	9.4%	4.1%
Has a Disability	5.4%	2.8%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 50 and older and those who are under 50.

Across all years and production types, characters 50 and older are shown in smaller roles (minor: 21.4%; supporting: 23.4%) more often than notable supporting roles (17.4%). Less than 5% of leading roles go to characters 50 and older.

FIGURE 17

Age distribution of role prominence for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

- 50 AND OLDER
- UNDER 50

	50 AND OLDER	UNDER 50
Lead/Colead	4.3%	95.7%
Notable Supporting	17.4%	82.6%
Supporting	23.4%	76.6%
Minor	21.4%	78.6%

The differences between prominence of roles were statistically significant among characters who were 50 and older as well as those who were not.

Characters 50 and older appear in title credits at slightly lower rate than their counterparts not in title credits (17.7% compared with 20.8%).

TABLE 28

Age distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	TITLE CREDITS	NOT IN TITLE CREDITS
50 and Older	17.7%	20.8%
Under 50	82.3%	79.2%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between those featured in the title credits and those who are not.

Among those who do appear in credit sequences, a much higher percentage of characters given last billing (40.2%) are 50 and older, compared with the percentages of those given top billing (9.9%) or those who get neither top nor last billing (14.3%).

FIGURE 18

Age distribution of credits and billing for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021
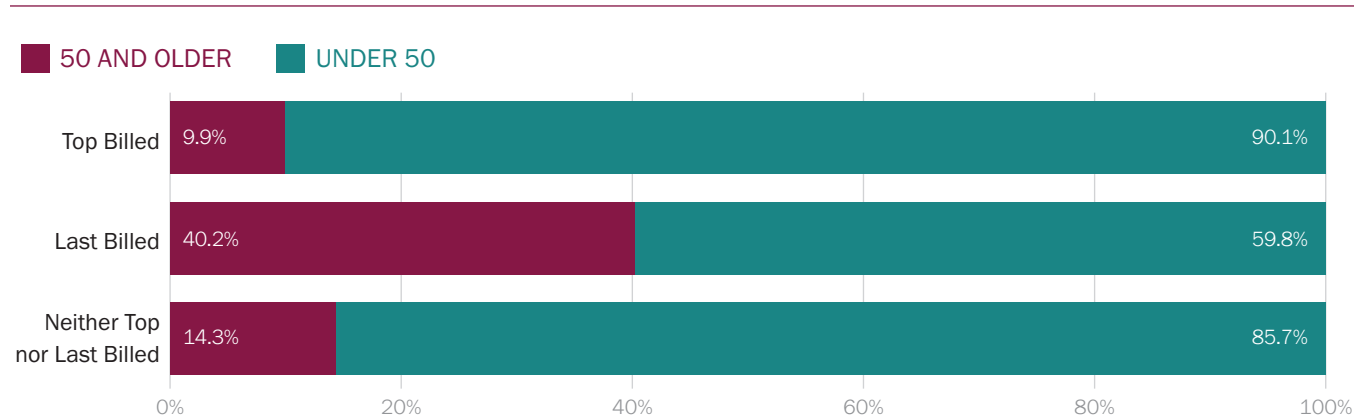
The differences between those who receive credit types and those who do not were statistically significant, within both age groups.

Compared with characters under 50, a higher percentage of characters 50 and older are villains (4.5% compared with 3.0%) and antagonists (18.6% compared with 16.0%) across all years and production types. A lower percentage are protagonists (2.0% for characters 50 and older, compared with 9.3% for characters under 50) or members of the fellowship (18.2% compared with 24.0%).

TABLE 29

Character types by age for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	50 AND OLDER	UNDER 50
Protagonist	2.0%	9.3%
Fellowship	18.2%	24.0%
Villain	4.5%	3.0%
Antagonist	18.6%	16.0%

Note: Protagonist, Fellowship, and Villain are among only lead, colead, and notable supporting characters. Antagonists are inclusive of characters of all levels of role prominence. The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 50 and older and those who are under 50, within each level of role prominence.

Across all years and production types, characters 50 and older are shown as sexy (0.7% compared with 5.9%), smart (6.1% compared with 8.2%), and funny (6.0% compared with 11.0%) at lower rates than those under 50. They are also more likely to be characterized as undesirable (1.2% compared with 0.3%).

Despite these negative characteristics, characters 50 and older are shown as leaders at a higher rate than those under 50 (21.3% compared with 18.5%). They are also less likely than their younger counterparts to be put down by others (2.9% compared with 6.8%). This suggests that while characters 50 and older are given surface-level respect in the stories, they are characterized unfavorably in more subtle ways.

TABLE 30

Character traits by age for film, TV shows, and TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021

	50 AND OLDER	UNDER 50
Sexy	0.7%	5.9%
Unattractive	0.8%	0.5%
Put Down by Others	2.9%	6.8%
Butt of the Joke	1.1%	0.8%
Undesirable	1.2%	0.3%
Smart	6.1%	8.2%
Unintelligent	0.5%	1.1%
Funny	6.0%	11.0%
Leader	21.3%	18.5%

The variables designated with shaded cells denote statistically significant differences between characters who are 50 and older and those who are under 50, within each trait. The most common age stereotypes were: the burden, the luddite, and the meddler.

Older characters are sometimes depicted as a drain on society and/or their loved ones. Also, they are often portrayed as grumpy. Some embody the stereotype of an older person who can't or won't learn about new technologies. Finally, there are several instances of older women who cannot help but meddle in other characters' personal lives. This is especially common in TV movies.

Recommendations

Avoid "perfect" female characters. Female characters were more likely than male characters to be portrayed with positive attributes, while male characters were more likely to be shown with negative attributes. In the spirit of empowering women, it can be tempting to make female characters smarter and more appealing. However, it is also unrealistic and damaging to show women as flawless. Ensure that characters of all genders are dynamic and complex.

Increase representations of characters of color — especially in TV movies. White characters were the overwhelming majority in all production types, but they were especially prominent in TV movies. Increase racial diversity to tell deeper stories and create opportunities for actors of color.

Show older 2SLGBTQIA+ characters. 2SLGBTQIA+ characters tended to skew younger, reflecting the stereotype that queerness is a "new fad" or only for younger generations. However, people of all ages are 2SLGBTQIA+, and both older and younger viewers can benefit from having more representations of queer elders.

Allow characters of all genders to be unapologetically fat. Male characters were more likely than female characters to be fat. Gender inequality in body-size diversity contributes to harmful double standards, with boys and men granted more leeway than girls and women in their physical stature and size. Anti-fat bias is incredibly harmful, and audiences can benefit significantly from seeing characters of all genders who are fat and also likable, attractive, funny, athletic, and dynamic, where their size is not the source of ridicule, motivation, or shame.

Show people with disabilities at all levels of role prominence. The inclusion of characters with disabilities has decreased over time. Further, characters with disabilities are particularly uncommon in minor roles. Increase their visibility in roles both big and small.

Avoid showing older characters as villains. Characters ages 50 and older were more likely than those under age 50 to be villains and antagonists. It is a common trope to show older characters as angry and out of touch, and thus they are prime candidates for villainy. Subvert this trope by showing them as progressive.

ENDNOTES

1.   Gerbner, George, and Larry Gross. "Living with television: The Violence Profile" *Journal of Communication* 26, no. 2 (1976): 173-199.

2.   McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The agenda-setting function of mass media." *Public opinion quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176-187.

3.   Bandura, Albert. "Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective." *Annual review of psychology* 52, no. 1 (2001): 1-26.

4.   Rumelhart, David E. "Notes on a schema for stories." In *Representation and understanding*, pp. 211-236. Morgan Kaufmann, 1975.

5.   Fredrickson, Barbara L., and Tomi Ann Roberts. "Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks." *Psychology of women quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1997): 173-206.

6.   Gerber, J. P., Ladd Wheeler, and Jerry Suls. "A social comparison theory meta-analysis 60+ years on." *Psychological bulletin* 144, no. 2 (2018): 177.

7.   The year 2020 was skipped due to industry disruptions during COVID-19 lockdowns.

8.   Seasons with 7 episodes or fewer garnered 2 episodes; those with 8 to 16 episodes garnered 3; those with more than 17 episodes garnered 4.

9   Health Canada. (2003). Canadian guidelines for body weight classification in adults. Ottawa: Health Canada, 9.

10. "What Do The Credits Before and After Movies Actually Mean?" Pfeiffer Law Corp. November 6, 2019. https://www.pfeifferlaw.com/entertainment-law-blog/credits-before-and-after-movies