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JULY 2024

# Behind the Scenes:

Women's Representation in Unscripted  
Television in the U.S., U.K., Brazil, and France





# Table of Contents

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III	Letter from the Banijay Launch Team
1	Introduction
1	Key Findings
2	Background
1	Gender Representation in the Reality TV Industry
2	Why We Need Diverse Voices Making Reality TV
3	Methodology
5	Findings
9	Recommendations
11	Acknowledgements



# Letter from the Banijay Launch Team

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Banijay is honored to have partnered with Everywoman Studios and the Geena Davis Institute on this groundbreaking study: "Behind the Scenes: Women's Representation in Unscripted Television in the US, UK, Brazil, and France." For years there has been a concentration on research regarding women in the scripted space, and while we recognized there was most certainly gender disparity in non-scripted, we did not have the data to validate those assumptions.

In 2023, equipped with these assumptions and the view that more could be done to strike an even footing for women in non-scripted creation, Banijay Entertainment, in partnership with Everywoman Studios, unveiled Banijay Launch, a global search for women creators with compelling format creations. A bridge for women creators to gain greater access to our industry, the initiative was designed to discover, promote, and incubate untapped talent. While we knew there would be a demand for a program like this, we were surprised by the outpouring of interest and support – very quickly our applications rose to 500+ as women across more than 30 territories submitted their ideas for consideration. With support from Banijay's Creative Networks, we narrowed those results to five finalists who were then mentored by local territory creative executives to further develop and refine their pitches. On International Women's Day, we welcomed the finalists into Banijay's UK offices, where they pitched their ideas to a panel of experts. After a dynamic deliberation, we identified not one, but two winners, whose formats are now in development in Australia and the UK respectively.

While we are immensely proud of Banijay Launch, as well as the efforts of so many in the industry who support, mentor, and sponsor women, as we review the data within this report, we know we must redouble our efforts to create equal opportunity for women in our field. We are emboldened by the increase of women executive producers between 2021 and 2023 and are committed to continuing to support women and rebalance the historic run of formats attributed to men. Seemingly the market has improved in ensuring near-gender parity in supervising producer roles, but it is evident non-scripted IP creation remains problematic, with men dominating "creator" roles across years and countries – 73.7% men vs 25.7% women. This was even more pronounced in the U.S. where the split shifted to 80.6% men compared with 16.1% women. And while investigating the differential opportunity and outcomes in connection to intersectional identities was beyond the scope of the current study, we know from our own observational data that the pathway to leadership for non-white non-cis-gendered disabled women is even harder.

Simply put, we must all do more! We at Banijay Entertainment and Everywoman Studios remain committed to continuing to widen the field of perspectives in our creative, production and corporate teams to remain as competitive as possible in this increasingly diverse marketplace.

Our thanks once again to the Geena Davis Institute for bringing these vital findings to the fore, and for paving the way generally for women in entertainment.

Sincerely,

## The Banijay Launch Team

Marco Bassetti, CEO, Banijay Entertainment

Abby Greensfelder, Founder & CEO, Everywoman Studios

Kate Humphreys, Chief Communications Officer, Banijay Entertainment

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# Introduction

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This report analyzes the representation of women behind the scenes in decision-making roles in reality television in the following four countries over three years (2021 to 2023): the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and France.

The Geena Davis Institute, an authority on the underrepresentation of women on screen, leverages data and insights to measure the presence and portrayal of women across entertainment and media. While many factors contribute to women's underrepresentation broadly, there's little doubt that gender imbalances in the reality TV industry behind the scenes play a role.

Armed with the insights from this report, industry leaders can draw attention to gender inequality and target interventions to foster greater inclusion behind the scenes in reality TV.

# Key Findings

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- ◆ Across all countries and years, men outnumber women in reality television production: Men make up 58.4% of executive producers, supervising producers, and show creators, while women make up 41.5%.
- ◆ Across all four countries, the percentage of women executive producers has increased nearly 10 percentage points from 36.6% in 2021 to 46.0% in 2023.
- ◆ Despite the gender imbalance among executive producers, we find close to gender parity among supervising producers (50.9% men and 49.1% women) across all countries and all years.
- ◆ Across all countries and years, 3 in 4 reality TV creators are men (73.7% compared with 25.7% women). This gender difference among creators is most pronounced in the U.S. (80.6% men compared with 16.1% women).

# Background

## Gender Representation in the Reality TV Industry

Existing analysis of the reality TV industry paints a complicated terrain for women navigating their way to leadership roles. Women in the field regard the problems they face (such as under-promotion, sexual harassment, and barriers to entry) as endemic. In general, a homogenous group of white men dominate key positions in television production, a consequence of systemic inequality across the sector. In the industry, hiring men is seen as more financially stable, so men work more often and with larger production budgets, whereas women storytellers are seen as too risky to invest in. As is the case in many industries where interpersonal networks are central, men tend to hire men.<sup>1</sup>

But even as women in the industry have fewer work opportunities and smaller budgets, one study found that work produced, written by, or starring women yields higher returns on investments on average. In short, women's exclusion is bad business.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, for women to fully make a mark on the industry, they need to not only be elevated to lead in the space as it currently exists, but also they need to be given the resources to reimagine and redesign it. Many of the environments of reality television have become so deeply entrenched in gendered norms — e.g., the mean streets of crime shows, rugged outdoor settings for survival tests, or the men gaze inherent in reality dating — that the few women storytellers who do manage to secure an opportunity in these men-dominated spheres are often expected to maintain norms.<sup>3</sup>

## Why We Need Diverse Voices Making Reality TV

What makes reality TV unique? Reality TV features (typically nonprofessional) actors portraying themselves in a real-world setting, with spontaneous dialogue and their actions sometimes edited to fit a narrative context. Although reality television generally refers to shows that are unscripted, most have a specific structure with set tasks and events for each episode that have been designed by the project's producers.<sup>4</sup>

Audiences are generally aware of the artifices of reality television but take delight in the programming choices, especially when invited to influence the action themselves by voting for, sending messages to, or designing activities for their favorite contestants. Reality TV stars can even be role models for viewers.<sup>5</sup>

The role of producers in reality TV is crucial. These storylines are constructed by producers, who organize schedules and determine “where to point the camera, whom to talk to, what footage to use (and in what order), [and] what to leave out.”<sup>6,7</sup> In short, producers, particularly executive producers, are the most dominant voices within reality television, and their intentions, both creative and commercial, shape what we see on screen.



Some reality TV choices that producers make can have negative repercussions. For example, to create personalities that will appeal to as many viewers as possible, producers may invoke identity-based stereotypes or clichés.<sup>8,9</sup> Historically, programs marketed specifically for women promoted traditional, heterogendered, and conservative views of femininity, rewarding women whose actions uphold traditional gender roles and eliminating those who do not.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, an examination of the specific portrayals of women of color in reality TV are even more concerning: Black women are often portrayed as coarse and angry, and Asian women are exoticized in their depictions or shown as assimilated to whiteness. Indigenous women are rarely represented on screen. Dating shows, in particular, present a minefield of intersectional issues. White women and white men are given more screen time and more chances to emerge as victorious, which often entails a financial prize. According to research, the few women of color on screen exist as on the margins, and are typically voted out before the finale, reinforcing the normative centering of white heterosexual romance.<sup>11</sup>

The types of reality shows produced reflect and affect values in society. For example, an abundance of makeover shows signals to audiences the primacy of women's physical beauty, whereas numerous crime shows that feature young, white women as victims can lead to societal panic and anxiety as well as paternalistic responses.<sup>12</sup> But the types of shows produced — and how they are made — can be disrupted and reimaged as new voices are brought to the table.

To encourage change, it is important to establish a baseline of how women are faring behind the scenes in reality television. Only then can we understand what work needs to be done.

## Methodology

This report presents data on reality TV shows produced over three years (2021–2023) from four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and France. Given that reality TV includes a wide range of content, the shows in this study are limited to those that have either 1) consistent stars or contestants throughout the season or series, or 2) a consistent story told over the course of several episodes. This includes the following categories of programming: reality series (e.g., *Real Housewives*, *Below Deck*), documentary series (e.g., *Surviving R. Kelly*), and competition shows (e.g., *Lego Masters*, *MasterChef*). Daytime television programming is excluded from the dataset. To create this dataset, we began with a list of all reality TV shows released in the U.S., U.K., and Brazil from 2021–2023 according to Luminate, an industry database by *Variety*. Television from France is not indexed on Luminate, thus, we worked from a list of all reality programming from 2021–2023 provided by the research team out of Banijay Entertainment in France. A team of trained experts researched each show, using any available information including fan wikis, professional reviews, or episodes of the show itself, to determine whether the series fit in the three categories described above. Of the remaining series, we took a random sample of 30 shows per country per year, for a total of 360 shows.

For each series, we identified all executive producers, supervising producers, creators, and showrunners (as well as their equivalent roles abroad) for the first episode of the season released in the appropriate year. To do so, we used the episode credits, IMDb and IMDb Pro, Luminate, official information released by networks (e.g., websites, press releases), industry articles and reviews, and LinkedIn. In Brazil, executive producers were not always credited on the shows themselves; instead, they were often listed as such on the studio or network's website. In those cases, they were included in the dataset, provided that it could be verified that they were in that position in the appropriate year.

**Executive producers.** In the U.S., we include all people credited as “executive producer” and “executive in charge of production.” Abroad, we include “series producer” in the U.K.; “produtor/a executivo/a” (executive producer) and “diretor/a de produção” (director of production) in Brazil; and “producteur/productrice délégué” and “producteur/productrice exécutif” (executive producer) as well as “directeur/directrice de production” (director of production) in France. All showrunners are coded as executive producers.

**Supervising producers.** In the U.S. and U.K., we include all people credited as “supervising producer,” “senior producer,” and “co-executive producer.” In Brazil, we include “produtor/a supervisor” (supervising producer). We found no equivalent position in France, so we include those credited as “producteur/productrice” (producer). Unlike productions in the U.S., there was typically only one credited producer on French shows.

**Creators.** We include only creators who are given explicit creator credit. Many series do not have listed creators. Further, we credit the creators of original series for spin-offs and international versions of existing intellectual property. Therefore, while some creators also serve as executive producers, others are credited only as creators, with no other active role in the show.

After identifying all major decision-makers for each series, we determined the gender of each person in the dataset. Researchers used all available information to determine gender, including photographs and pronouns from reputable sources (e.g., industry publications, personal social media, LinkedIn profiles), gendered job titles in French and Portuguese (e.g., “producteur/productrice,” “executivo/a”), as well as Luminate's database, which has representative-confirmed identity information for many industry workers. Gender was assumed by name alone only when no other information was available, which occurred in only six instances.

In total, there were 1,674 people across all four countries (750 from the U.S., 349 from the U.K., 297 from Brazil, and 278 from France).

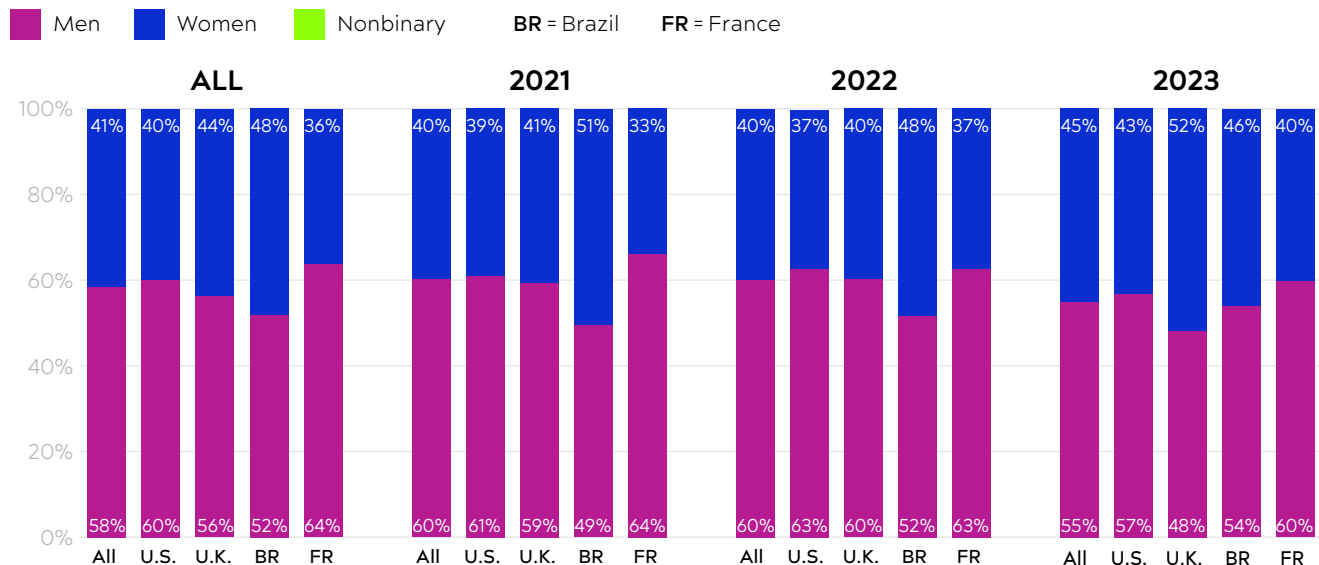
## Findings

Overall — across all roles, years, and countries — men outnumber women, 58.4% to 41.5% (the total does not add up to 100%, because of one nonbinary person in the dataset). However, the difference between men and women has declined slowly over time, with men making up 60.1% of the dataset in 2021 and 54.9% in 2023 (a difference of 5.2 percentage points). When looking at differences between countries across all three years, we find that the gender difference is most stark in France (63.7% men and 36.3% women), whereas Brazil is the closest to gender parity (51.9% men and 48.1% women).

When looking at each country over time, we find inconsistent change. In the U.S., the percentage of women decreased from 2021 to 2022 (39.0% to 36.9%) but then increased in 2023 (43.2%). The U.K. followed a similar pattern (40.7% in 2021, 39.8% in 2022, and 51.9% in 2023). Brazil, on the other hand, has steadily decreased its percentage of women behind the scenes (from 50.6% in 2021 to 46.2% in 2023), whereas France has steadily increased from 2021 to 2023.

FIGURE 1

### Overall gender diversity among all executive producers, supervising producers, and creators in the U.S., U.K., Brazil, and France, 2021–2023



Notes: Gender differences were not statistically significant. The total of men and women percentages may not add up to 100% due to the presence of one nonbinary creator/executive producer in the U.S. in 2022.

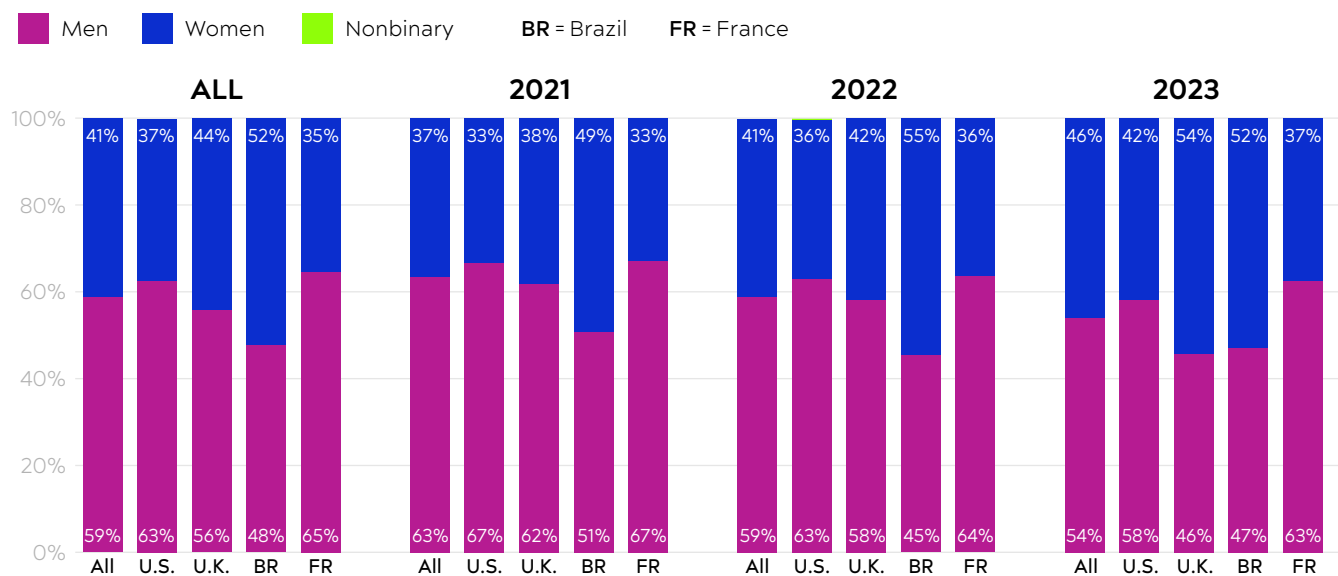


Executive producers hold significant decision-making power in television production. Across all countries analyzed, we find that executive producers are predominantly men (58.7% compared with 41.2% women). The difference between men and women executive producers is the most pronounced in France (64.6% men and 35.4% women), followed by the U.S. (62.5% men and 37.3% women). In Brazil, there are slightly more women executive producers than men executive producers (52.4% women and 47.6% men).

Across all countries, the percentage of women executive producers has increased over time, from 36.6% in 2021 to 46.0% in 2023. The pattern of increased women's representation is present in all countries except Brazil, which saw an increase in the percentage of women executive producers between 2021 and 2022 (49.2% to 54.7%) but then a slight decrease in 2023 (52.9%).

FIGURE 2

### Gender diversity among executive producers in the U.S., U.K., Brazil, and France, 2021–2023



Notes: Gender differences were statistically significant for all countries in 2021, and in the U.S. and Brazil across all years. The total of men and women percentages may not add up to 100% due to the presence of one nonbinary creator/executive producer in the U.S. in 2022.

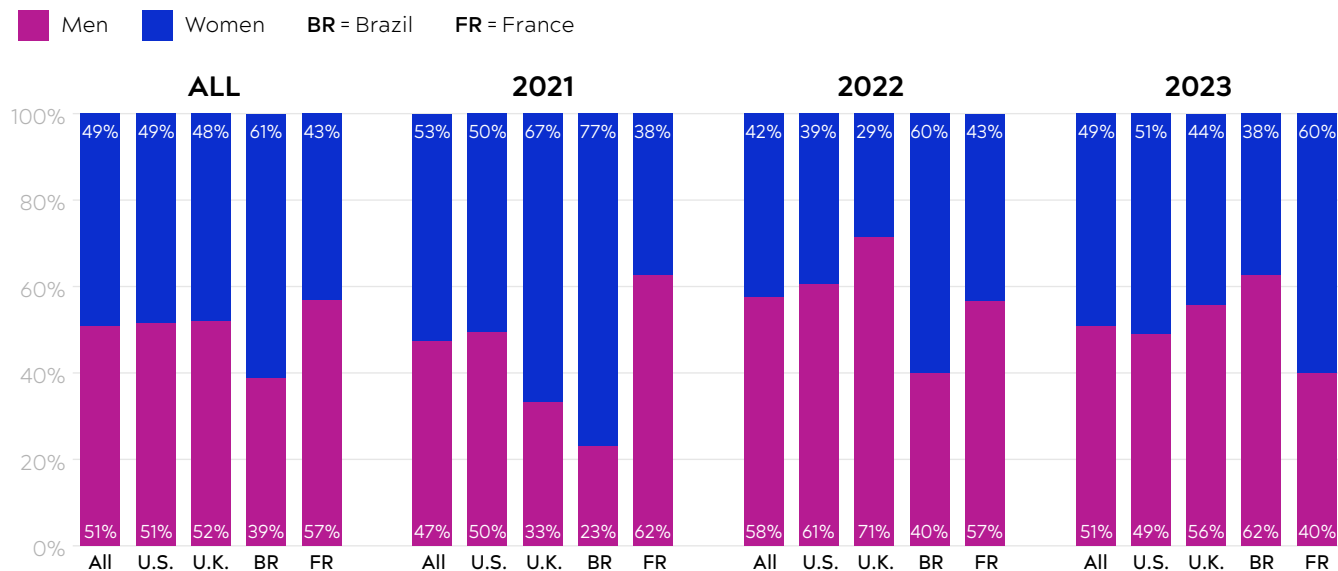
Despite the gender imbalance among executive producers, we find near-perfect gender parity among supervising producers (50.9% men and 49.1% women) across all countries. In the U.S. and U.K., men and women supervising producers are nearly even, with men only slightly outnumbering women (51.4% for men in the U.S., 52.0% in the U.K.). In France, the percentage of men supervising producers is slightly higher (56.9%), but in Brazil, there are more women supervising producers than men (61.3% women compared with 38.7% men).

When breaking the data down by year, the appearance of parity becomes more complicated. The U.S. had parity in 2021 (49.5% men and 50.5% women) and 2023 (49.0% men and 51.0% women) but had more men supervising producers in 2022 (60.6% compared with 39.4% women). In the U.K., two-thirds of all supervising producers were women in 2021, but this dropped to just over one-quarter (28.6%) in 2022 before approaching parity in 2023 (44.4%). In Brazil, the percentage of women supervising producers has steadily decreased over time (from 76.9% in 2021 down to 37.5% in 2023), whereas it has steadily increased in France (from 37.5% in 2021 to 60.0% in 2023).

The overall gender parity among supervising producers, when compared with the dominance of men among executive producers, may suggest roadblocks in career development for women producers. This is consistent with industry narratives that suggest opportunities for advancement disproportionately favor men.

FIGURE 3

### Gender diversity among supervising producers in the U.S., U.K., Brazil, and France, 2021–2023



Note: Gender differences between supervising producers were not statistically significant.

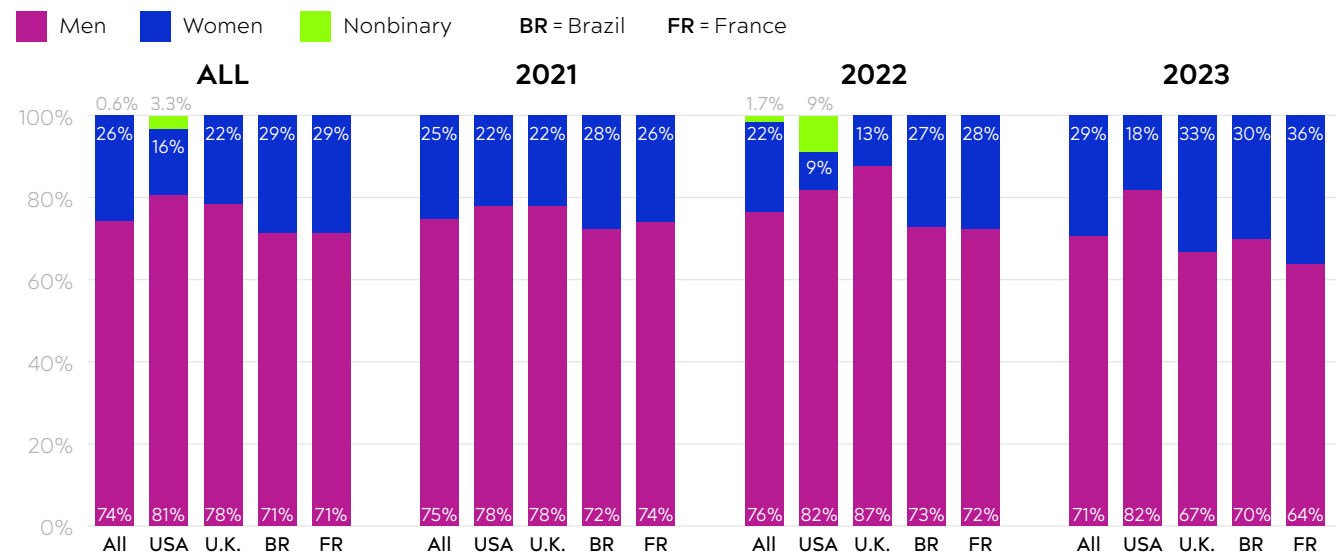
Creators were coded only when explicitly identifiable — data that was inconsistently available. Thus, the data presented here is likely an incomplete picture of the overall landscape of people in these positions. With the available data, however, we find more men than women creators (73.7% men compared with 25.7% women).

Reality TV creators are overwhelmingly men (73.7% compared with 25.7% women), and this difference is most pronounced in the U.S. (80.6% men compared with 16.1% women). In the U.S., the percentage of men creators has increased from 77.8% in 2021 to 81.8% in 2023. France is the only country where women creators have become more prevalent over time (from 26.1% in 2021 to 36.4% in 2023), though there were only 52 creators identified in France at all.

The gender difference among creators is stark, which suggests that the highest decision-making roles — such as the ownership and creative control over the ideas of the shows — are going to men. However, given the lack of sufficient data surrounding creators, we cannot say definitively whether women's shows are not being made or if they are just less likely to receive public credit for their ideas.

FIGURE 4

### Gender diversity among creators in the U.S., U.K., Brazil, and France, 2021–2023



Notes: Differences between men and women across all years were statistically significant in the U.S., U.K., and Brazil. The sample size for each individual year is too small for statistical significance. The total of male and female percentages may not add up to 100% due to the presence of one nonbinary creator/executive producer in the U.S. in 2022.



Jasmin Merdan/Moment via Getty Images

## Recommendations

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This research suggests the need to reimagine reality TV, who is involved, and how. The data finds that as behind-the-scenes roles gain more decision-making power, the percentage of women in the role decreases. And while there is some evidence of improvement over time, this change is slow and inconsistent.

Progress does not happen on its own. Not only do women need more opportunities within the industry, but also they need the resources, support, and trust to carve new paths and drive new stories. Therefore, we provide the following recommendations:

**Create mentorship programs.** There is a much wider gender gap at the executive-producer level than at the supervising-producer level. Provide learning and networking opportunities for mid-level producers so that they can obtain the skills and connections they need to advance in their careers. Crucially, do not put the onus on only women to mentor other women — successful men should invest in new women talent as well.

**Prioritize equity in salaries and opportunities.** Ensure that there are no pay or opportunity disparities among existing staff (or correct any that do exist), and establish practices to prevent them in the future.

**Foster a culture of communication.** Provide opportunities for lower-level staff to share their ideas and see them come to fruition. Similarly, provide options (such as anonymous check-ins) where they can report problems or obstacles in a way that does not threaten their potential success.

**Offer paid leave.** Often, parenting and household responsibilities fall disproportionately to women. Provide the flexibility and stability that caregivers need so that they do not fall behind in their careers when caring for their families.



## Endnotes

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Suggested Citation: Meyer, M., van Houten, S., Pérez, R., & Conroy, M. (2024). Behind the Scenes: Women's Representation in Unscripted Television in the US, UK, Brazil, and France. The Geena Davis Institute.

## Acknowledgements

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The authors would like to thank Dr. Tegan Bratcher, Sofie Christensen, Dr. Gina Gayle, Dr. Alexis Romero Walker, Lena Schofield, Dr. Sarah Trinh, and Jenna Virgo for contributing to the data collection. We would also like to thank Getty Images for the images featured in this report.

## About the Geena Davis Institute

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Founded in 2004 by two-time Academy Award Winning Actor Geena Davis, the Geena Davis Institute is the only global research-based organization working collaboratively within entertainment media to systemically increase diverse representation on screen, focusing on six identities: gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQIA+, disability, age, and body type. If they can see it, they can be it. For more information visit: [www.geenadavisinstitute.org](http://www.geenadavisinstitute.org).

## About Banijay Entertainment

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Launched in 2008, content powerhouse Banijay Entertainment is home to over 130 production companies across 21 territories and a multi-genre catalog boasting almost 190,000-hours of original standout programming. An innovative creative leader, in 2023, it launched 70+ new scripted titles and 200+ new non-scripted shows and produced 33 formats in more than 3+ territories, making it K7's Distributor of the Year.

Imagining and delivering high-quality, multi-genre IP that was born locally and travels globally, the business offers the best stories told the best way, and represents some of the biggest global brands in the market including *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Peaky Blinders*, *MasterChef*, *Good Luck Guys*, *Rogue Heroes*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Mr Bean*, *The Summit*, *Black Mirror*, *Deal or No Deal Island*, and *The Fifty* among others.

Built on independence, creative freedom, collaborative entrepreneurialism, and commercial acumen, Banijay Entertainment and sister live events business, Banijay Live, operate under the direction of Chief Executive Officer, Marco Bassetti. It is under his leadership the collective businesses have grown to reach €3.3bn in revenues and €494m in EBITDA for 2023.

## About Everywoman Studios

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Everywoman Studios is a full-service media company, dedicated to women-fueled content that can create positive cultural impact. Founded in 2019 by veteran producer Abby Greensfelder – creator of global hits such as “Say Yes to the Dress” and “The Last Alaskans,” among others – Everywoman Studios currently has a range of non-fiction series and features in development and production across multiple networks and streamers. The company's first feature documentary, LFG – which chronicles the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team's fight for equal pay – premiered in 2021 at The Tribeca Film Festival before launching on HBO Max. The Emmy-nominated film is credited with helping the players achieve equal pay. Uncharted – Everywoman Studios' second feature documentary highlighting Alicia Keys' organization, She Is The Music, and its mission to uplift women in the music industry, also had its global premiere at Tribeca in 2023. Greensfelder and Everywoman also founded “Propelle,” a content accelerator program for women producers and filmmakers. The first year's winning project, “Prisoner of the Prophet,” is streaming now on Discovery+. For more information, please visit Everywoman Studios' website.