



Female Leads Reach Record High in Shows Made for Children

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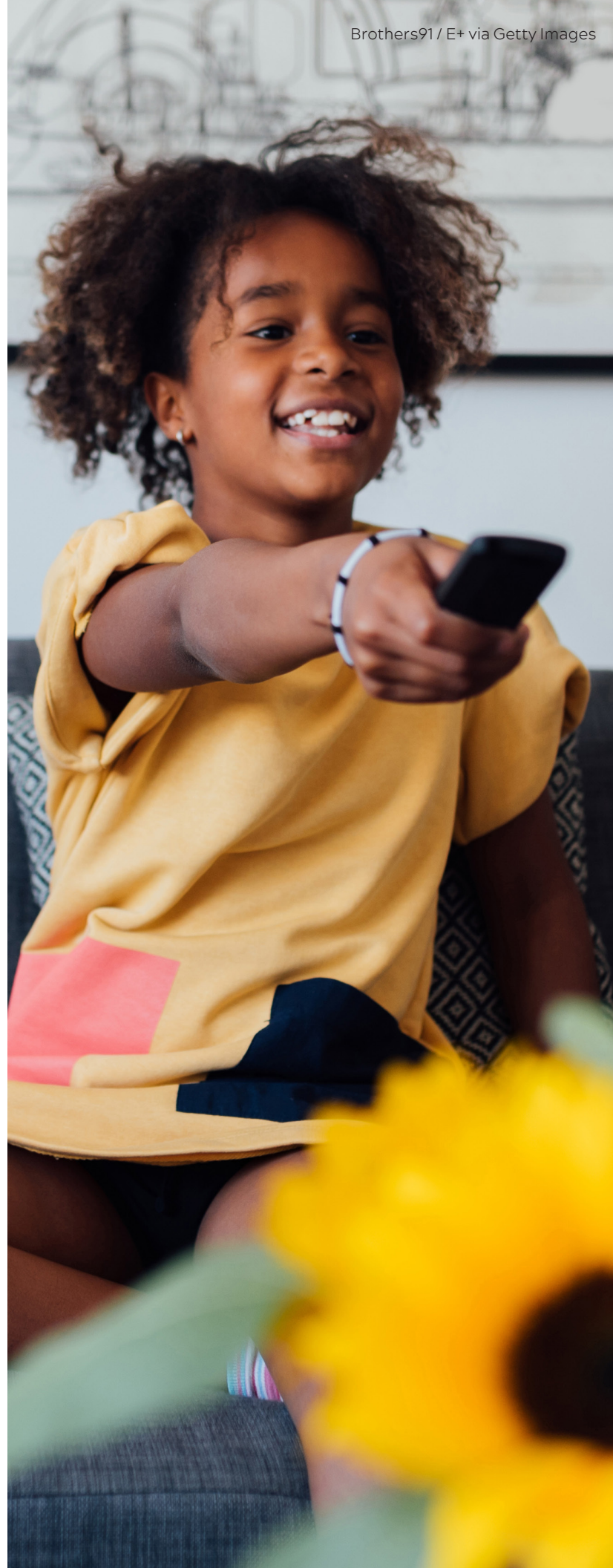
See Jane 2024

How Has On-Screen Representation
in Children's Television Changed from
2018 to 2023?



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Executive Summary

At the Geena Davis Institute, we regard television as a potent socializing agent that imparts norms and expectations to its audience, especially shaping perceptions of younger viewers. This is why it is our mission to diversify on-screen representation in media so that it reflects many cultures and identities, particularly in media that children consume. We fulfill our mission through a research-driven approach that underpins our advocacy initiatives. To assess the state of representation and inclusion in television programming, we conduct our annual “See Jane” TV study, which analyzes kids’ TV shows for their gender, race, LGBTQIA+ identity, disability, age, and body-size representation.

In the present report, we investigated inclusion and representation of the aforementioned identities in programming **popular** with children ages two to 11 in the U.S., according to Nielsen data; this includes the 10 most popular broadcast, cable, and streaming shows inclusive of all languages, from 2018 to 2023.¹ Second, we also investigated inclusion and representation in **new** children’s programming from 2018 to 2023; this includes TV shows actively being made for children.²

Why do we investigate **popular** and **new** programming? First, we focus on **popular** programming because it gives us a sense of what children are watching. Children are frequent consumers of TV,³ and media effects on children have immense developmental consequences.⁴ Children learn about the world, including its norms and expectations, through what they see on screen. Second, we focus on **new** programming because it gives us a broader sense of what is being made for children and whether the industry is green-lighting diverse content.

Diverse representation on screen is beneficial not only for children but also for the entertainment industry. Studies illustrate that shows with diverse casts attract higher audience ratings than programs with casts that aren't as diverse.⁵ The evidence is clear: We need more diverse storytelling and characters. We believe that this report is one way to continue to drive this change.

Below are the key findings. Key findings include the level of group representation on screen and in leading roles, as well as compelling statistically significant differences between groups for the following portrayals: objectification, revealing clothing, shown dating or in a committed relationship, kissing, sexual activity, with a job, STEM occupation, and leadership.

Key Findings

2023 Popular Programming for Children

GENDER REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 all popular programming, male characters outnumber female characters by 13.4 percentage points (56.7% male characters compared with 43.3% female characters). This is nearly identical to 2022, when 56.9% of all characters were male and 43.1% were female.
- ◆ The gap widens when looking at only English-only popular programming (57.5% male characters compared with 42.5% female characters). In 2022 English-only popular programming, 57.7% of all characters were male and 42.3% were female.
- ◆ Among leading roles, female characters are 43.8% of leading roles. This is a 7.3-percentage-point decrease from 2022 (51.1%), and a 5-percentage-point decrease from 2021 (48.8%).
- ◆ The biggest gender gap across roles is for minor characters. In all popular programming, male characters make up 60.7% of minor characters whereas female characters make up 39.3% — a 21.4 percentage point difference. In 2022, male characters made up 61.3% of minor roles, while female characters made up 38.7% — a 22.6-percentage-point difference.
- ◆ Female characters are significantly more likely than male characters to be LGBTQIA+ (1.6% compared with 0.2%).
- ◆ Male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job (42.9% compared with 33.4%).

RACE/ETHNICITY REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 popular programming, characters of color make up 52.0% of all characters, compared with 71.9% in 2022.

- ◆ In English-only popular programming, characters of color make up 40.5% of characters, compared with 52.7% in 2022.
- ◆ Among leading roles, 59.3% are white characters and 40.7% are people of color. In 2022, 29.8% of leading roles were white characters and 70.2% were people of color.
- ◆ In English-only popular programming, 68.3% of leading roles are white characters and 31.7% are characters of color. In 2022, 47.2% of leading roles were white characters and 52.8% were characters of color.
- ◆ In all popular programming, characters of color are more likely than white characters to have a job (50.2% compared with 37.4%). In 2022, characters of color and white characters are equally shown with a job.
- ◆ In English-only popular programs, characters of color are more likely than white characters to have a job (50.5% compared with 32.2%). In 2022, characters of color and white characters are equally shown with a job.

LGBTQIA+ REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 popular programming, LGBTQIA+ characters comprise only 0.8% of all characters, compared with 1.0% in 2022.
- ◆ In English-only popular programming, 1.0% of all characters are LGBTQIA+ , compared with 1.5% in 2022.
- ◆ In all popular programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are not represented in any leading or minor roles. In 2022, no LGBTQIA+ characters were represented in any leading roles, but 0.6% were cast in minor roles.
- ◆ LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be married or in a committed partnership (71.4% compared with 11.6%). When limiting the sample to English-only popular programs, these findings remain statistically significant.

DISABILITY REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 popular programming, only 0.9% of characters are disabled, compared with 1.9% in 2022.
- ◆ In English-only popular programming, 1.0% of characters are disabled, compared with 1.6% in 2022.
- ◆ Disabled characters are most represented in supporting roles, at 1.4%.
- ◆ There are no disabled leads in popular programming from 2023. In 2022, 1.1% of leading roles were disabled characters.

BODY-SIZE REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 popular programming, fat characters make up 6.1% of all characters, compared with 7.1% in 2022.
- ◆ Fat characters are significantly more likely than characters who are not fat to be male (73.1% compared with 26.9%), and this finding remains statistically significant when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming.
- ◆ Fat characters are significantly more likely than characters who are not fat to be wearing revealing clothing (10.0% compared with 2.5%). In 2022, the difference was not statistically significant.
- ◆ The representation of leading fat characters decreased in 2023, even when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming. In 2023 popular programming, fat leads decreased by 0.9 percentage points (2.1% in 2022 compared with 1.2% in 2023). And in 2023 English-only popular programming, fat leads decreased by 1.2 percentage points (2.7% in 2022 compared with 1.5% in 2023).

AGE REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 all popular programming, 50-plus characters make up 15.7% of all characters, compared with 16.9% in 2022.
- ◆ In English-only popular programming, 50-plus representation is 9.8% of all characters, compared with 11.8% in 2022.
- ◆ Characters who are 50-plus are significantly more likely than characters under 50 to be LGBTQIA+ (3.3% compared with 0.5%). And this finding remains statistically significant when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming.
- ◆ Characters who are 50-plus are significantly more likely than younger characters to be married or in a committed partnership (34.1% compared with 9.1%). And this finding remains statistically significant when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming.
- ◆ Characters who are 50-plus are more likely than characters under 50 to have a job (53.4% compared with 40.3%), but this finding turns nonsignificant when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming.

2023 New Children's Programming

GENDER REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming and among leading roles, female characters hit a record-breaking high of 47.8%. This is a 3.5-percentage-point increase from 2022 (44.3%), and a 7.4-percentage-point increase from 2019 (40.4%).

- ◆ In all roles, 55.5% of all characters are male, compared with 44.4% female and 0.1% nonbinary. This is nearly identical to 2022, when 55.5% of all characters were male.
- ◆ Among minor roles, 41.7% are female characters, up slightly from 38.9% in 2022.
- ◆ Female characters are significantly more likely than male characters to be married or in a committed partnership (6.9% compared with 4.3%).

RACE/ETHNICITY REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming, characters of color hold 63.4% of leading roles, an increase of 7.3 percentage points from 2022 (56.1%).
- ◆ In total, 56.9% of all characters are people of color, an increase of 5.6 percentage points from 2022 (51.3%).
- ◆ Among characters of color, 26.8% of all characters are Black, 14.6% are Asian, 8.2% are Latinx, 1.6% are multiracial, 1.1% are Native, and 0.6% are Middle Eastern or North African. In 2022 new programming, 23.8% were Black, 14.8% were Asian, 7.4% were Latinx, 2.5% were multiracial, 1.9% were Middle Eastern or North African, and 0.9% were Native. In 2022, among characters of color, 23.8% of all characters are Black, 14.8% are Asian, 7.4% are Latinx, 2.5% are multiracial, 1.9% are Middle Eastern or North African, and 0.9% are Native.
- ◆ White characters are significantly more likely than characters of color to be married or in a committed partnership (10.2% compared with 5.2%).

LGBTQIA+ REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming, no LGBTQIA+ characters have a leading role, a decline from 2022, when 2.4% of leads were LGBTQIA+.
- ◆ Only 1.6% of all characters are LGBTQIA+, a slight decline from 2022, when 2.3% of all characters were LGBTQIA+.
- ◆ LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be married or in a committed partnership (25.8% compared with 5.2%) and to be kissing (16.1% compared with 0.2%).

DISABILITY REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming, only 1.1% of all characters have a disability, similar to 2022, when 1.2% of all characters had a disability.
- ◆ Among leads, 0.8% are disabled, compared with 1.3% in 2022.
- ◆ No disabled characters are shown dating or kissing. The lack of romantic storylines for disabled representation can contribute to harmful stereotypes that disabled individuals are asexual or aromantic.

BODY-SIZE REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming, 7.9% of all characters are fat, compared with 6.3% in 2022.
- ◆ Among leads, 6.9% of leads are fat, compared with 2.7% in 2022.
- ◆ Fat characters are significantly more likely to be male than female (65.1% compared with 34.9%).

AGE REPRESENTATION

- ◆ In 2023 new programming, characters who are ages 50 and old make up 9.4% of all characters, compared with 8.8% in 2022.
- ◆ No characters who are 50-plus are cast in leading roles.
- ◆ Characters who are 50-plus are significantly more likely than characters under 50 to be fat (12.9% compared with 7.2%) and disabled (3.4% compared with 0.8%).



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Data Collection and Methodology

For data collection, this study employs content analysis, where researchers operationalize complex concepts into quantifiable markers and systematically identify every occurrence of those markers in media. This process is conducted by a team of experts who have all met training standards to ensure consistent and reliable data collection. Chi-square tests were applied for data analyses to determine statistical significance of findings, with p-values of 0.05 or less. This report presents findings for two types of programming: television shows *popular* among children (ages two to 11), and television shows actively being *made* for children in the years specified.

Programming Popular with Children: This dataset includes the series that children ages two to 11 watched from 2018 to 2023, excluding 2020 due to COVID-19 interruptions. For each year, we include the 10 most popular scripted series in the U.S. on broadcast, cable, and streaming, according to audience measurement data that Nielsen provided to the Institute. Broadcast and cable data were based on audiences for the broadcast season (e.g., 2023–2024), and popular streaming data were based on gross minutes for each year. Like the 2021 and 2022 “See Jane” reports, this dataset is not limited to English-language programming. Many of the most popular series among children in the U.S. on broadcast television are Spanish-language telenovelas. Thus, in this dataset, we find high percentages of Latinx characters.

New Children’s Programming: This dataset samples from every series made for children that released a new episode for the years 2018 to 2023, according to the trade database Luminate by Variety.⁶ These series were identified by searching for series tagged as “childrens,” “children’s animation,” and “preschool” on Luminate. The search included all U.S. broadcast and cable networks, in addition to the following streaming services: Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, Disney+, HBO Max, Hulu, Netflix, Paramount+, and Peacock.⁷

TABLE 1

Sample of episodes and characters in popular children’s programming, 2018–2023

	Episodes	Characters
2023	60	852
2022	67	1,154
2021	60	946
2019	362	4,631
2018	397	3,810

Note: Popular programming is the most-watched scripted programming by audiences ages 2 through 11, based on Nielsen rankings. Data was not analyzed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming. For 2018 and 2019, the sample is the top 25 shows for audiences ages two to six, and seven to 13, for a total of 50 series per year. Of all those series, a representative number of episodes was selected. From 2021 to 2023, we look at the top 10 streaming, top 10 cable, and top 10 broadcast shows among audiences two to 11. For those years, we analyze two episodes per series (i.e., the second and penultimate episodes). In 2022, some streaming series aired more than one season, in which case we sampled two episodes from each season. Some shows aired only one episode in 2022, in which case we included just that one episode.

TABLE 2

Sample of episodes and characters in new children’s programming, 2018–2023

	Episodes	Characters
2023	224	2,196
2022	253	2,656
2021	224	2,493
2020	211	2,293
2019	175	2,099
2018	180	2,118

Note: New programming is programming that is currently in production, and made for children according to the Luminate Film & Television database. For content from 2018 to 2022, we took a representative sample of all children’s series airing new episodes in the respective years, and analyzed two episodes per series (the second and penultimate episodes from each season). In 2023, we include all series (no sampling).

TABLE 3

Sample of episodes and characters for popular and new programming, 2023

	New Children’s Programming in 2023	Popular Children’s Programming in 2023 (Ages 2 to 11)
Episodes	224	60
Total Characters	2,196	852
Lead Characters	245	80
Notable Supporting Characters	640	228
Supporting Characters	960	360
Minor Characters	351	184

Note: For 2023, three series are excluded from our dataset: one series did not include prominent speaking characters (only narration), one series has not yet aired, and one series could not be purchased or streamed in the U.S. Popular children’s programming includes programming in any language.

We identify a character’s level of prominence as one of the following:

- ◆ Lead (which includes coleads)
- ◆ Notable Supporting
- ◆ Supporting
- ◆ Minor

Leads (including coleads) refer to the protagonist of the “A” story in the episode. Notable supporting characters are usually nonlead 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 appear only briefly but communicate in some way relevant to the plot.



Jose Luis Pelaez Inc / DigitalVision via Getty Images

All Findings

Gender Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

Male characters outnumber female characters in **new** and **popular** programs as well as English-only popular programs for children. In 2023 **new** children’s programming, 55.5% of characters are male and 44.4% are female, a gap of 11.2 percentage points. Only 0.1% of characters are nonbinary. In 2023 **popular** programming, we identify a similar gap — 56.7% of all characters are male, while 43.3% are female, a gap of 13.4 points. Finally, when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming, 57.5% of characters are male and 42.5% are female, a gap of 15.4 points. There are no nonbinary characters in programming **popular** with children in 2023.

TABLE 4

Gender inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

	New	Popular	English-Only Popular
Male	55.5%	56.7%	57.5%
Female	44.4%	43.3%	42.5%
Nonbinary	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In **new** and **popular** programming from 2023, female characters are more likely than male characters to be people of color and LGBTQIA+, while male characters are more likely to be fat. There are no statistically significant gender differences among disabled characters or those ages 50 and older (See Table 5). This gender difference in body size suggests that TV programs targeting children portray a narrower view of idealized body types among girls and women. Contrarily, male characters are more diverse in terms of body size.

TABLE 5

Gender at the intersection of other identities in 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
White	46.9%*	39.2%*	51.6%*	43.5%*	63.9%	54.1%
Person of Color	53.1%*	60.8%*	48.4%*	56.5%*	36.1%	45.9%
LGBTQIA+	1.0%*	2.1%*	0.2%*	1.6%*	0.3%	2.0%
Disabled	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	0.8%
Fat	9.2%*	6.2%*	7.9%*	3.8%*	8.6%*	3.6%*
Age 50-Plus	9.8%	9.1%	17.4%	13.5%	10.9%	8.4%

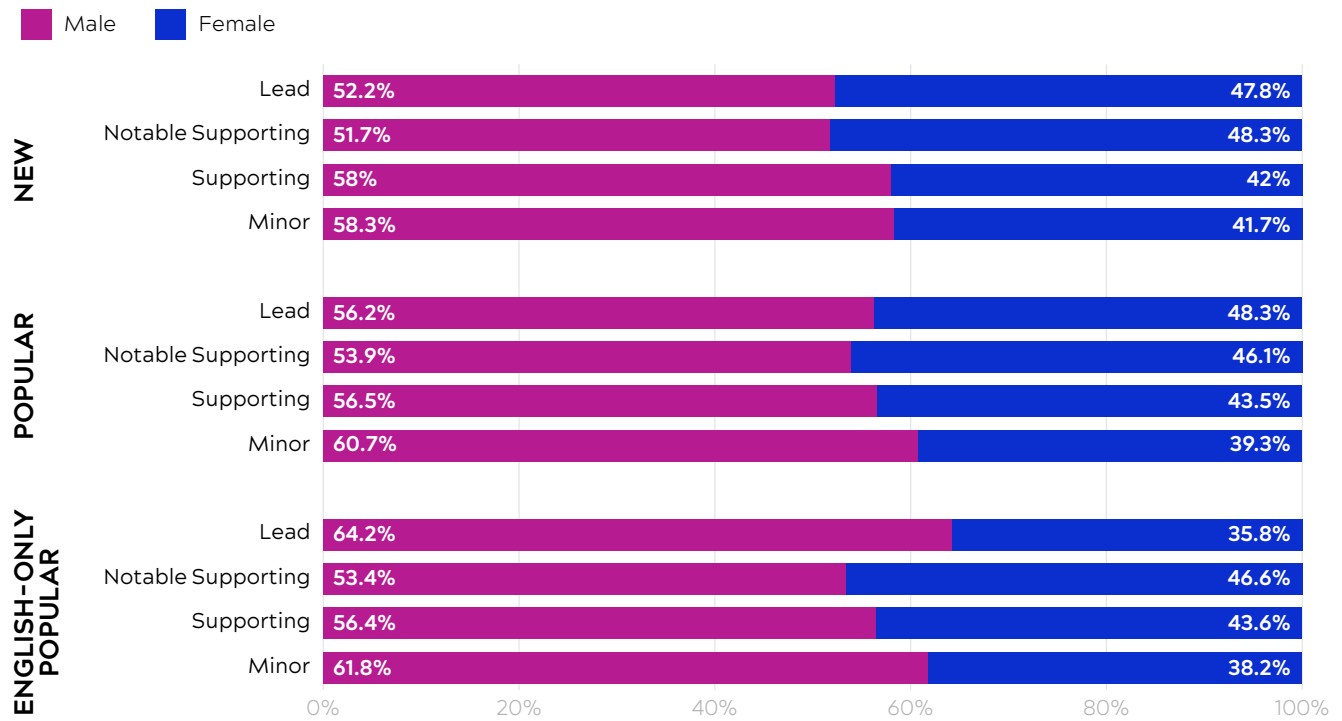
Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference between male and female characters at the specified intersection. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming, 0.0% in popular programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in this table.

We also look at gender and role prominence. Male characters outnumber female characters in leading, notable supporting, supporting, and minor roles in both **new** and **popular** programs. Male characters are 52.2% of leads in **new** programming and 56.2% in all **popular** programming. Male characters make up 64.2% of leads in **English-only popular programming**.

There are also large gender gaps among minor characters. In **popular** programming, 60.7% of minor characters are male. In **new** programming, 58.3% of minor characters are male. In **English-only popular programming**, 61.8% of minor characters are male. Although minor characters are not central to the plot, it is important for children to see female representation in these roles, too. These roles include students in a classroom, colleagues in an office, or fans in a stadium, where female representation should be visible.

CHART 1

Gender prominence for all characters in new and popular programming for children in 2023

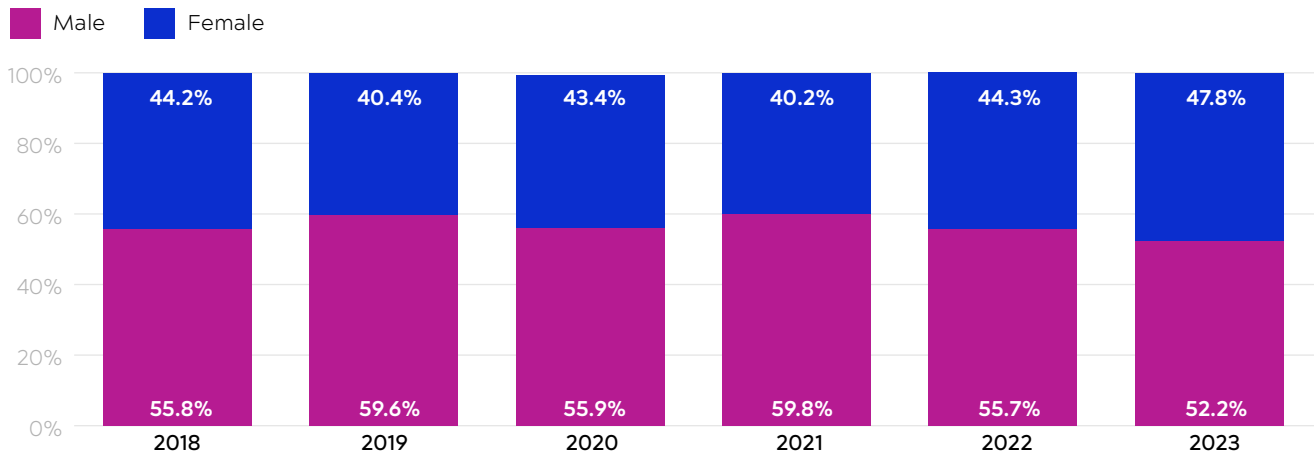


Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming. Due to a small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in this table.

How has gender representation changed over time? In 2023 **new** programming, the proportion of female leads reached a high of 47.8%, which is a 3.5-point increase from 2022 (44.3%). This suggests that studios are green-lighting more series with female-centered stories.

CHART 2

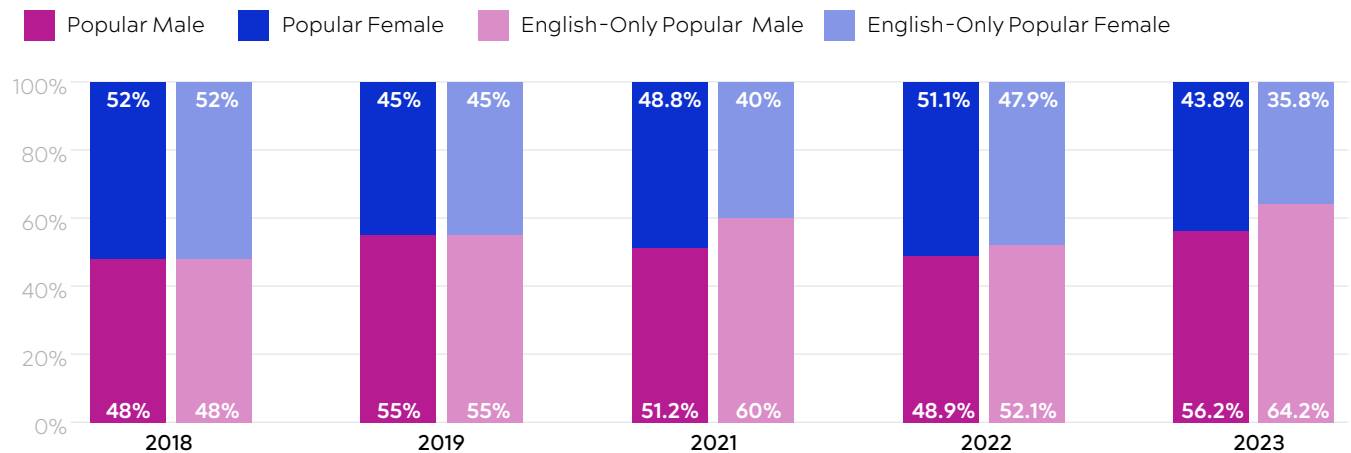
Leads in new programming for children by gender, 2018–2023



Note. Due to a small sample size (just 0.1% of characters in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in this table.

In 2023 **popular** programming, however, female representation in lead roles hit a low of 43.8%, which is a 7.3-point decline from 2022 (51.1%). Female representation in 2023 **English-only popular** programming also hit a low of 35.8%, which is a 12.1-point decline from 2022.

CHART 3

Leads in popular programming for children by gender, 2018–2023

Note. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in this table.

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In the next section, we analyze portrayal differences between male and female characters across both programming types in 2023.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

There are very few instances of objectification, revealing clothing, or romantic or sexual activity in 2023 **new** and **popular** programming, and there are no statistically significant gender differences in these variables in the episodes reviewed. However, female characters are significantly more likely than male characters to be married or in a committed partnership in **new** programming (6.9% of female characters compared with 4.3% of male characters). (See Table A2 in Appendix A.)

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

In **new** programming, there are no statistically significant gender differences in characters that hold jobs or are in leadership positions. However, in **popular** programming, male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job (42.9% compared with 33.4%) and to be a leader (19.4% compared with 14.2%). In English-only popular programming, male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job (39.5% compared with 26.2%). (See Table A3 in Appendix A.)

In **new** programming, the most common type of occupation is a STEM job, such as a doctor or engineer (15.9%), followed by blue-collar jobs, such as a construction worker, delivery driver, or mechanic (15.0%). However, there are no statistically gender differences in characters’ jobs in **new** programming.

In **popular** programming, the most common type of occupations are jobs in the armed forces, security, and law enforcement (21.3%), and when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming, the most common type of occupation remains the same (23.1%). In **popular** programming, male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job in the armed forces, security, or law enforcement (25.8% compared with 14.1%). In English-only popular programming, male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job in the business field, such as a business owner or a CEO (10.7% compared with 0.0%), but female characters are significantly more likely to have a job in education fields, such as a teacher or school principal (9.4% compared with 1.0%).

TABLE 6

Types of occupations in new and popular programming for children, 2018–2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Business	9.2%	5.8%	12.6%	12.1%	10.7%*	0.0%*
Blue Collar	15.9%	13.7%	15.7%	12.1%	13.6%	13.2%
Education	4.9%	7.6%	1.3%	6.1%	1.0%*	9.4%*
Art/Creatives	10.5%	10.5%	3.8%	3.0%	5.8%	3.8%
Armed Forces, Security, Law Enforcement	14.6%	10.5%	25.8%*	14.1%*	25.2%	18.9%
Government, Royalty	6.5%	6.1%	13.2%	8.1%	12.6%	15.1%
Sports	1.6%	0.7%	1.3%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%
STEM	15.9%	15.9%	12.6%	9.1%	14.6%	11.3%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference in the share of male and female characters in the specified occupation. Numbers do not add up to 100% because we exclude jobs characterized as “miscellaneous” due to rare occurrences. The denominator is all characters who had a job.



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Race/Ethnicity Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

In 2021, we expanded our sampling of **popular** programming among children in the U.S. to include non-English-language television shows so long as they were among the 10 most watched series. Thus, the percentage of leads of color has jumped significantly in our analysis. However, we also present the findings for racial and ethnic representation for English-only popular programming in order to compare to previous years' findings.

Starting with an analysis of all characters in 2023 **popular** programming, 48.0% of characters are white and 52.0% are characters of color, which is due in large part to a number of popular shows that are Spanish-language programming (largely telenovelas), which feature primarily Latinx characters (33.9% of all characters in popular programming). If we exclude non-English **popular** programming, 59.5% of characters are white and 40.5% are characters of color. In 2023 **new** programming for children, 56.9% of all characters are people of color.

As shown in Table 5., 26.8% of characters in 2023 **new** programming are Black, while 14.6% are Asian and Pacific Islander and 8.2% are Latinx. These numbers suggest racially diverse shows are being made, but Latinx communities are underrepresented, given that 19.5% of the U.S. is Latinx, according to the latest U.S. census data.⁸ In 2023 **popular** programming (all languages), 33.9% of characters are Latinx.

In 2023 new programming for children, 56.9% of all characters are people of color.

TABLE 7

Racial inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

	New	Popular	Popular, English Only
White	43.1%	48.0%	59.5%
Characters of Color	56.9%	52.0%	40.5%
Black	26.8%	12.3%	21.5%
Asian and Pacific Islander	14.6%	3.4%	5.9%
Latinx	8.2%	33.9%	8.8%
Middle Eastern/North African	0.6%	1.9%	3.4%
Native	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	1.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Ambiguous, Nonwhite Race	4.0%	0.3%	0.6%

Note. Percentages are out of all characters with a discernible race. Characters without a race (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors) are excluded. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

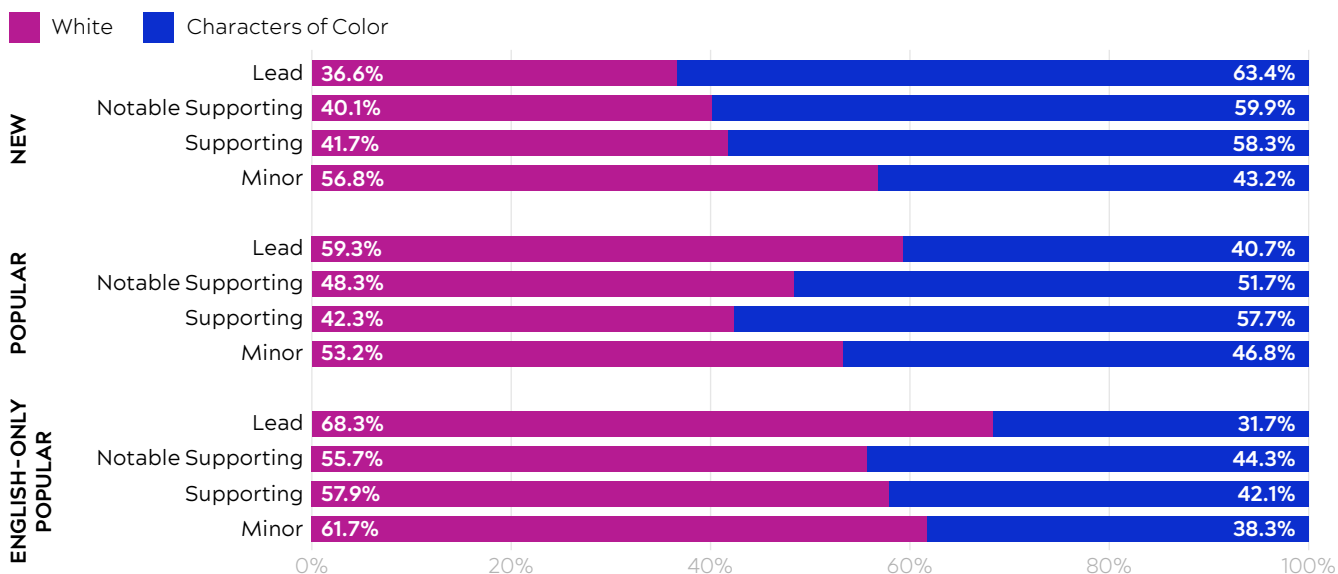
In **new** programming, white characters and characters of color are LGBTQIA+, disabled, and fat at a similar rate. However, characters of color are significantly more likely than white characters to be female (53.5% compared with 45.7%). Contrarily, white characters are significantly more likely than characters of color to be ages 50 and older (12.0% compared with 7.9%). In **popular** programming, characters of color are also significantly more likely than white characters to be female (48.9% compared with 40.9%). White characters and characters of color are LGBTQIA+, disabled, fat, and 50 or older at similar rates. (see Table A4, A5, and A6 in Appendix A for racial intersectional analysis).

When it comes to leading roles, characters of color outnumber white characters in **new** programming (63.4% compared with 36.6%). In **popular** programming, white characters outnumber characters of color (59.3% compared with 40.7%). When looking at English-only popular programs, white characters outnumber characters of color (68.3% compared with 31.7%).

When it comes to leading roles, characters of color outnumber white characters in new programming (63.4% compared with 36.6%).

CHART 4

Racial prominence in new and popular programming for children in 2023

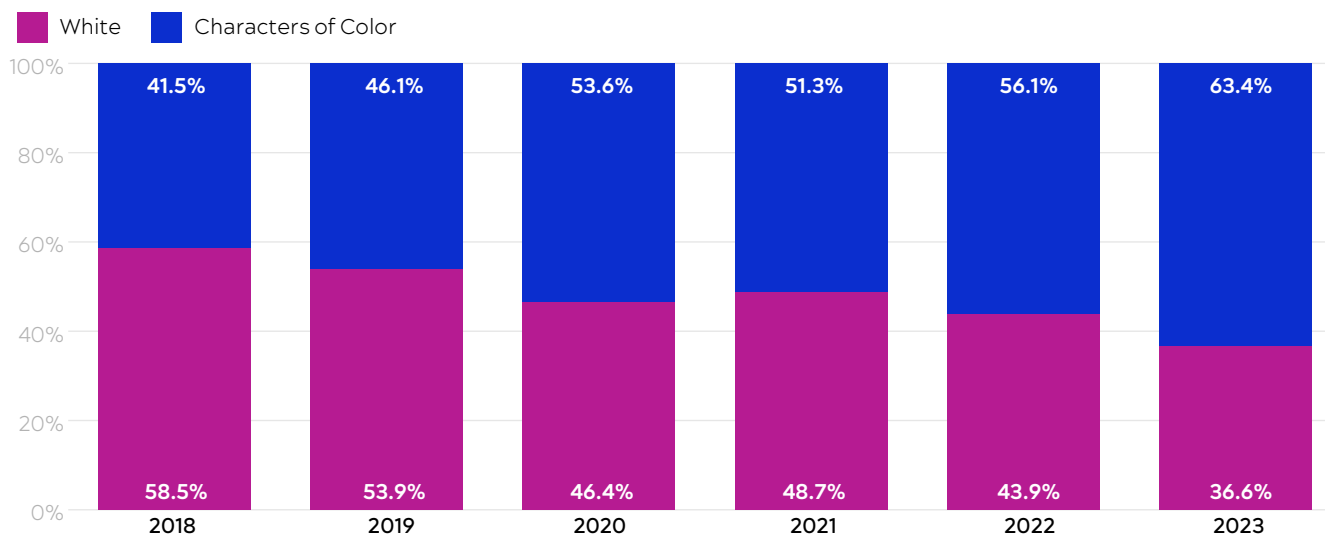


Note. Percentages exclude characters without a discernible race. Characters without races (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors) are excluded. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

How has representation of characters of color in leading roles changed over time? Since 2018, there has been a steady increase of leads of color in **new** programming. Leads of color have outnumbered white leads since 2020. In 2023, 63.4% of leads are characters of color, an increase of 7.1 percentage points from 2022.

CHART 5

Leads in new programming for children, by race, 2018–2023



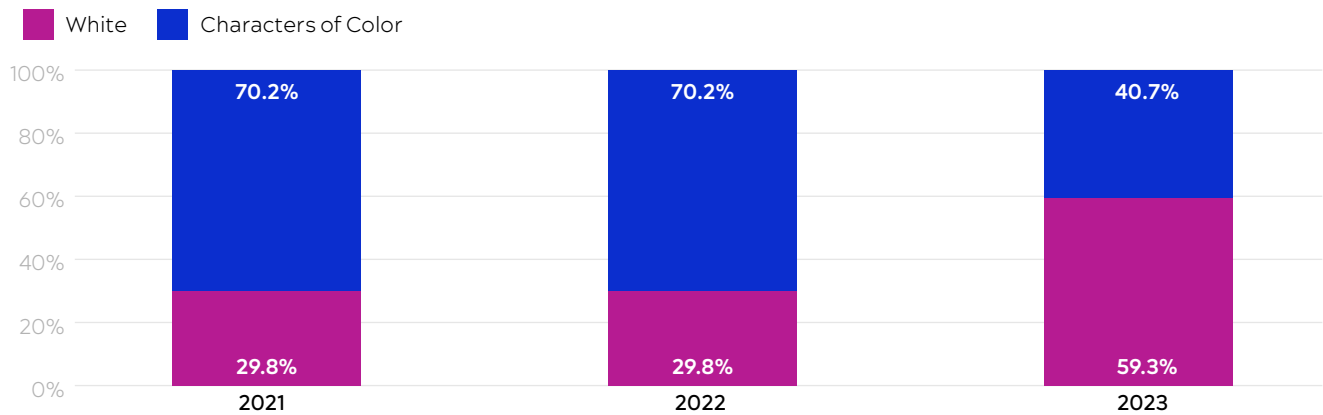
Note. Percentages exclude characters without a discernible race. Characters without races (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors) are excluded.

Since 2018, there has been a steady increase of leads of color in new programming.

In **popular** programming, including non-English-only popular programming, the percentage of leads played by people of color in 2023 decreased by 29.5 points from 2022 (70.2% in 2022 and 40.7% in 2023).

CHART 6

Leads in popular programming for children, by race, 2021–2023

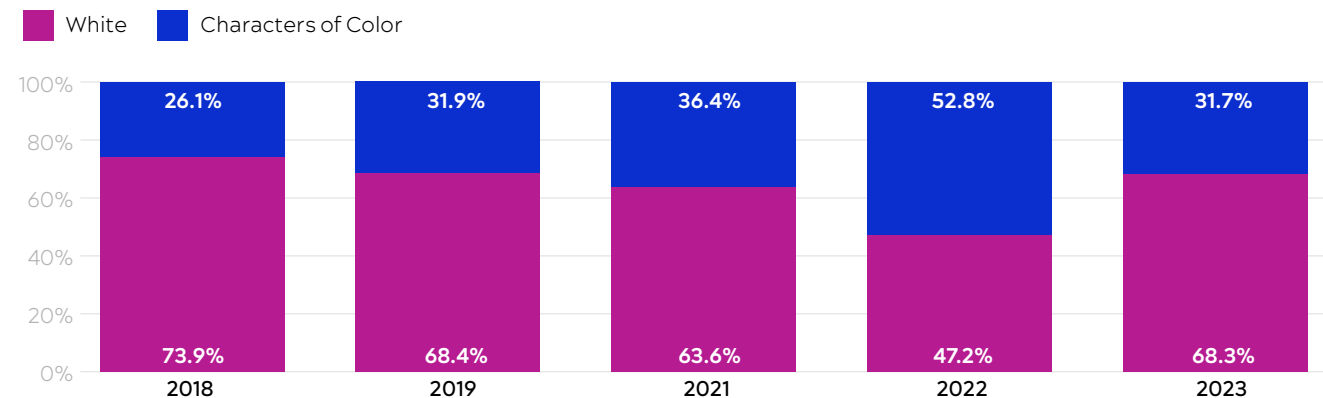


Note: Percentages exclude characters without a discernible race. Characters without races (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors) are excluded. For 2021 and 2022, the sample is inclusive of Spanish-language programming. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In **popular** programming, excluding non-English programming, the percentage of leads played by people of color decreased from 52.8% in 2022 to 31.7% in 2023 — closer to the share of leads of color in 2021 and 2019.

CHART 7

Leads in English-only popular programming for children, by race, 2018–2023



Note: Percentages exclude characters without a discernible race. Characters without races (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors) are excluded. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In the next section, we analyze differences between how white characters and characters of color in 2023 programming.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

In **popular** programming, there are no differences between white characters and characters of color when it comes to characters’ objectification, revealing clothing, and sexual activity. However, characters of color are significantly more likely than white characters to be in a relationship or dating (12.9% compared with 5.6%) and to be shown kissing (10.8% compared with 1.4%). These findings are largely due to the content in telenovelas, which are typically about romantic relationships and feature primarily people of color. When looking at English-only popular programming, racial differences in these portrayals are not statistically significant. Finally, in **new** programming, we find no racial differences in portrayals of objectification, revealing clothing, in a relationship/dating, kissing, and sexual activity. But white characters are significantly more likely than characters of color to be married or in a committed partnership (10.2% compared with 5.2%). (See Table A7, A8, and A9 in Appendix A.)

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

In **new** programming, there is no difference in the portrayal of white characters and characters of other races in terms of having jobs or as leaders or in STEM fields. However, in **popular** programming, characters of color are more likely than white characters to have jobs (50.2% compared with 37.4%). Similarly, for English-only popular programs, characters of color are more likely than white characters to have a job (50.5% compared with 32.2%) (See Table A10, A11, and A12 in Appendix A.)

TABLE 8

Careers, STEM, and leadership by race in new and popular programming for children in 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	White	Characters of Color	White	Characters of Color	White	Characters of Color
Has a Job	38.5%	39.0%	37.4%*	50.2%*	32.2%*	50.5%*
STEM	8.4%	6.6%	5.10%	4.80%	5.3%	6.50%
Leader	21.8%	17.5%	17.3%	22.5%	19.7%	22.4%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference between white characters and characters of color for the specified variable. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.



10'000 Hours / DigitalVision via Getty Images

LGBTQIA+ Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

In **new** and **popular** programming, the visibility of LGBTQIA+ characters is low. Just 1.6% of characters in **new** children’s programming and 0.8% in **popular** programming are LGBTQIA+.

TABLE 9

LGBTQIA+ inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

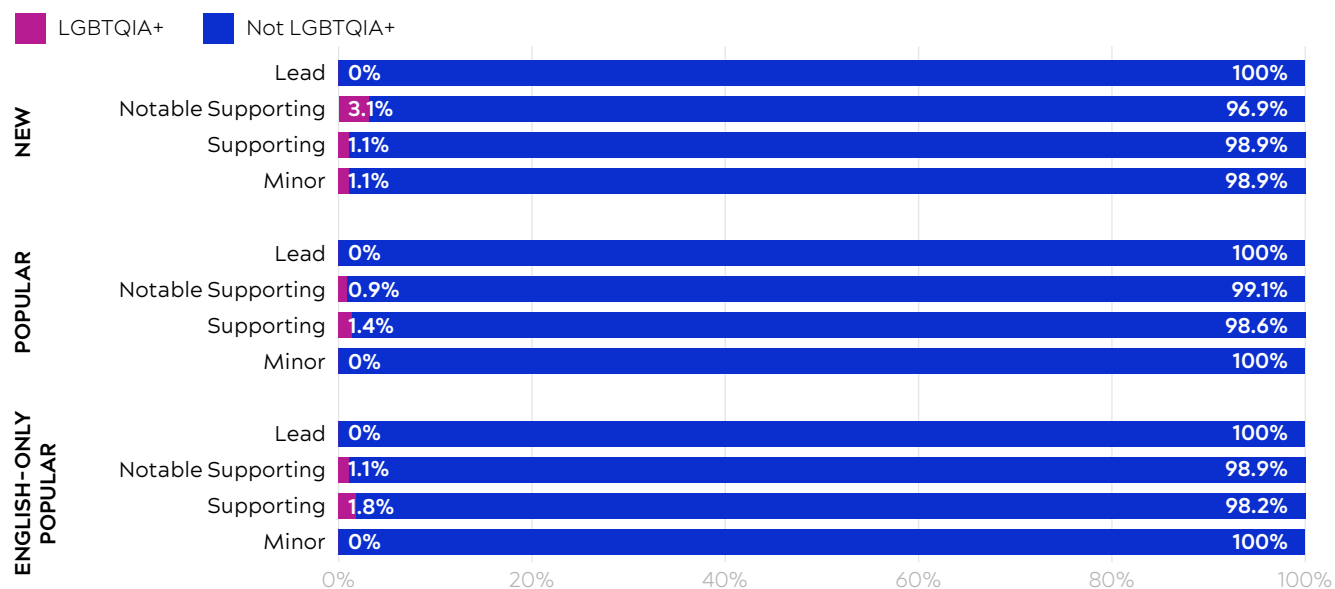
	New	Popular	English-Only Popular
LGBTQIA+	1.6%	0.8%	1.0%
Not LGBTQIA+	98.4%	99.2%	99.0%

Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In **new** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be female (62.5% compared with 44.1%). (See Table A13 in Appendix A.) In **popular** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are also significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be female (85.7% compared with 42.9%) and ages 50-plus (57.1% compared with 15.3%). (See Table A13 in Appendix A.)

In 2020, there were no LGBTQIA+ leads in **new** programming or **popular** programming for children. In 2023 **new** programming, 3.1% of notable supporting roles are LGBTQIA+, but just 0.9% of notable supporting roles in **popular** programming are LGBTQIA+.

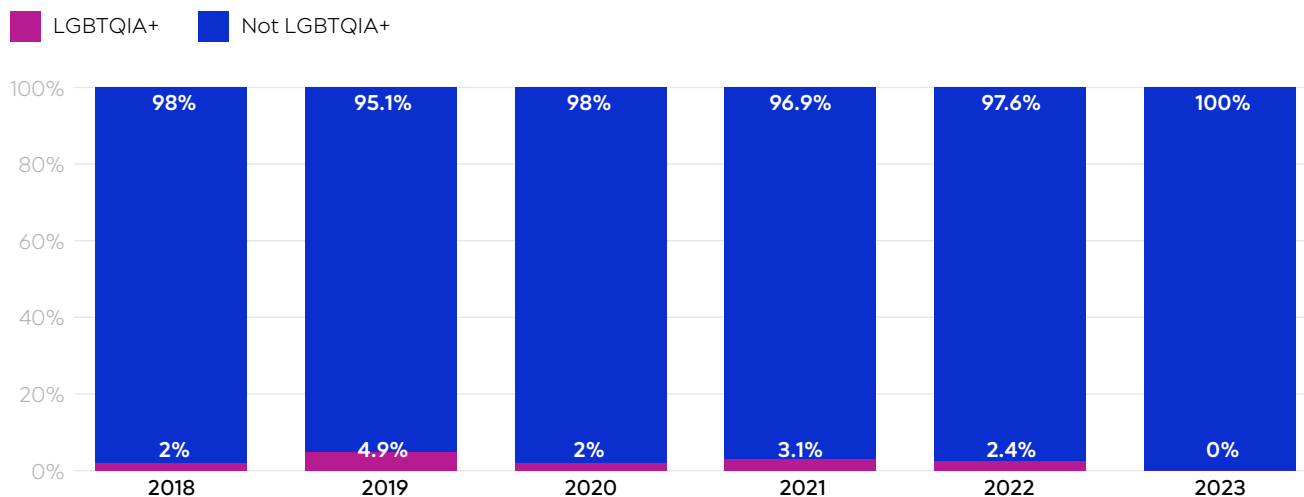
CHART 8

LGBTQIA+ prominence in new and popular programming for children in 2023

Note. In new programming, notable supporting roles are significantly more likely than leading roles and supporting roles to be LGBTQIA+. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

LGBTQIA+ leads in **new** programming for children has declined from 2.4% in 2022 to 0.0% in 2023. In 2019, 4.9% of leads in **new** programming were LGBTQIA+.

CHART 9

LGBTQIA+ leads in new programming for children, 2018–2023

As in 2022, there are no LGBTQIA+ leads in 2023 **popular** programming.

CHART 10

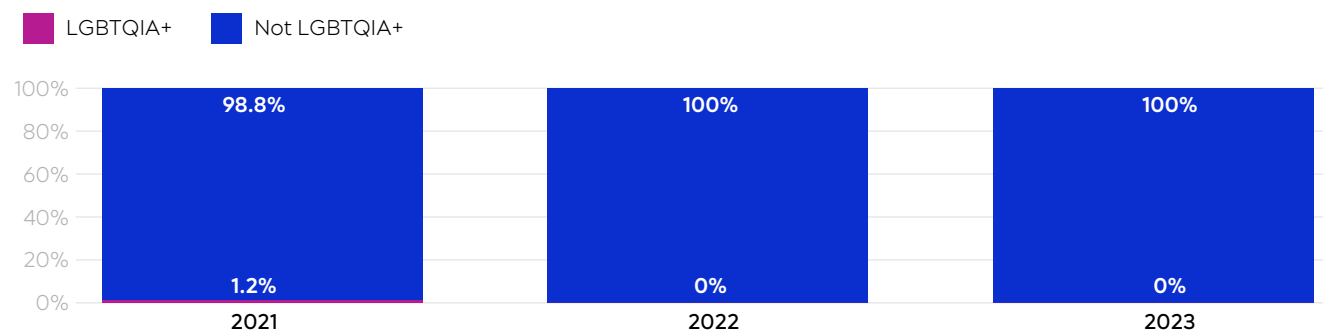
LGBTQIA+ leads in popular programming for children, 2021–2023

TABLE 10

LGBTQIA+ leads in English-only popular programming for children, 2018–2022

	English-Only Popular				
	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
LGBTQIA+	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not LGBTQIA+	99.8%	99.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In the next section, we analyze portrayal differences between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ characters in 2023 programming.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

In **new** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to wear revealing clothing (9.7% compared with 0.5%), to be married or in a committed partnership (25.8% compared with 5.2%), and to be kissing (16.1% compared with 0.2%). In **popular** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be married or in a committed partnership (71.4% compared with 11.6%). When limiting the sample to English-only popular programs, these findings remain statistically significant: LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to be married or in a committed partnership (66.7% compared with 7.0%). Romantic attachment is a key tactic for identifying LGBTQIA+ characters, and therefore, it should be interpreted with this context. (See Table A14 in Appendix A.)

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

There are no statistically significant differences between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ characters being shown in jobs or as leaders in **new** programming. However, in **popular** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to have a job (100.0% compared with 38.0%). In English-only popular programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely than non-LGBTQIA+ characters to have a job (100.0% compared with 32.8%). (See Table A15 in Appendix A.)



FG Trade / E+ via Getty Images

Disability Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

In **new** and **popular** programming for children, the visibility of characters with physical, cognitive, or communication disabilities or mental health conditions is low. Around 1% of all characters in **new** and **popular** programming are disabled — 1.1% of characters in **new** programming, 0.9% in **popular** programming, and 1.0% of characters in English-only popular programming.

TABLE 11

Disability inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

	New	Popular	English-Only Popular
Disabled	1.1%	0.9%	1.0%
Not Disabled	98.9%	99.1%	99.0%

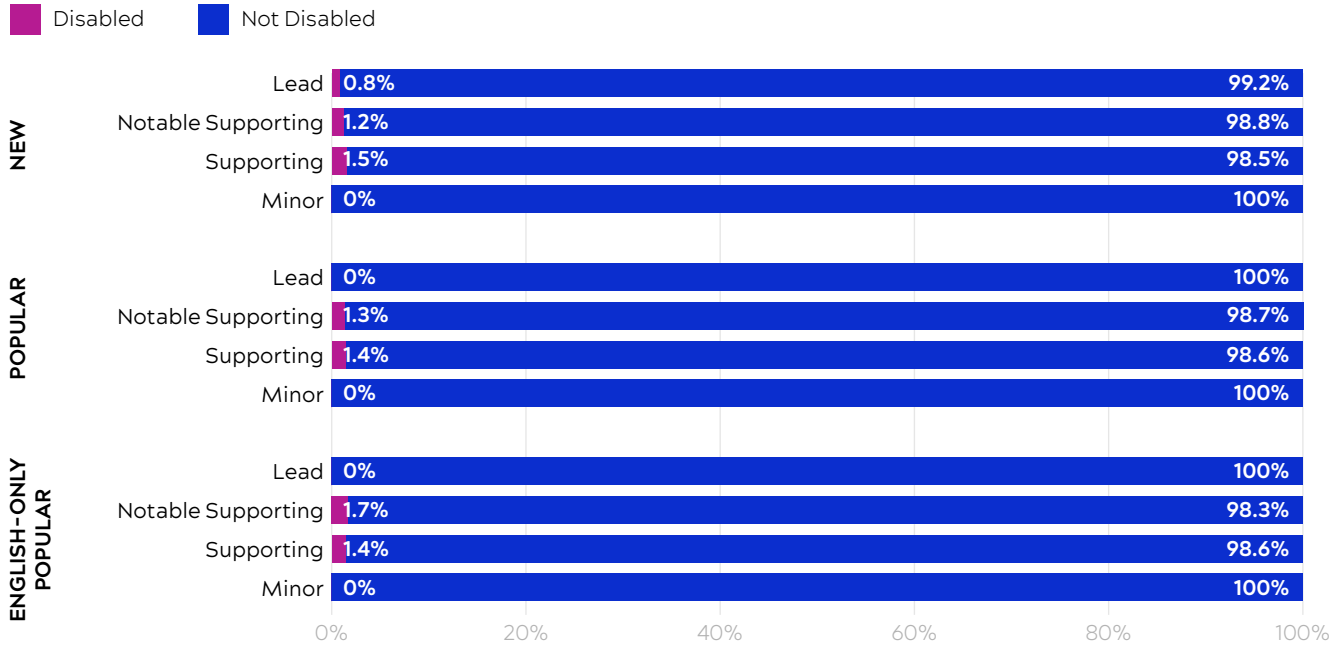
Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In **new** and **popular** programming, there are no statistically significant differences among disabled and nondisabled characters at the intersection of gender, race, LGBTQIA+ identity, body type, and age. (See Table A16 in Appendix A.) This tells us that disabled characters are as diverse along these intersections as nondisabled characters.

Among leading characters, only 0.8% in 2023 **new** programming are disabled. There are no leading disabled characters in 2023 **popular** programming. In 2023 **new** and **popular** programming, disabled characters are most visible in supporting roles (1.5% and 1.4% respectively).

CHART 11

Disability prominence in new and popular programming for children in 2023

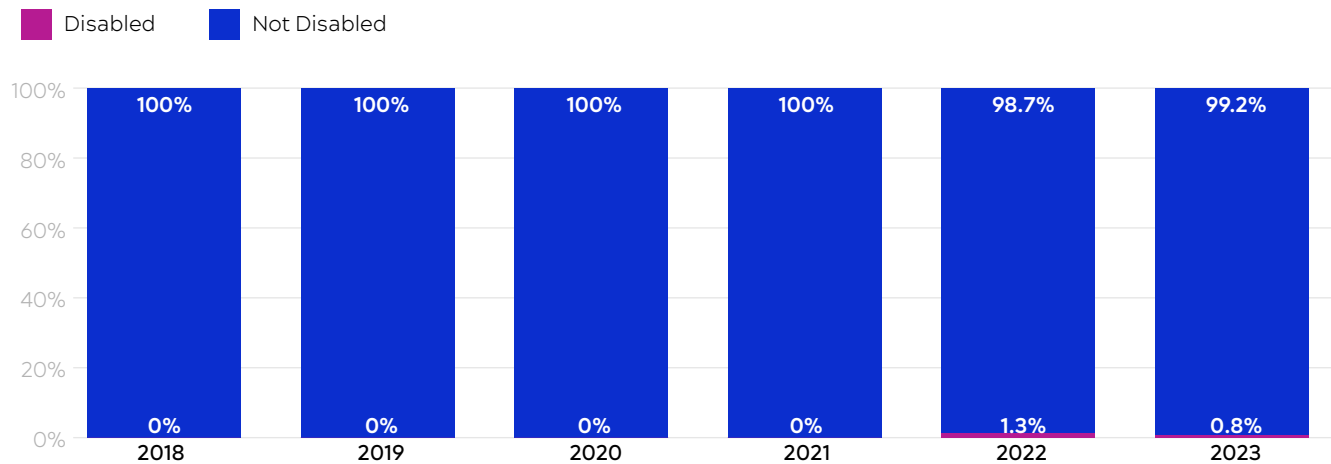


Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In 2023 **new** programming, disabled leads have decreased by 0.5 percentage points, from 1.3% in 2022 to 0.8% in 2023.

CHART 12

Disabled leads in new programming for children, 2018–2023



In **popular** programming, we do not identify any disabled leads. This is a 1.1-percentage-point decrease from 2022 (1.1%).

CHART 13

Disabled leads in popular programming for children, 2018–2023

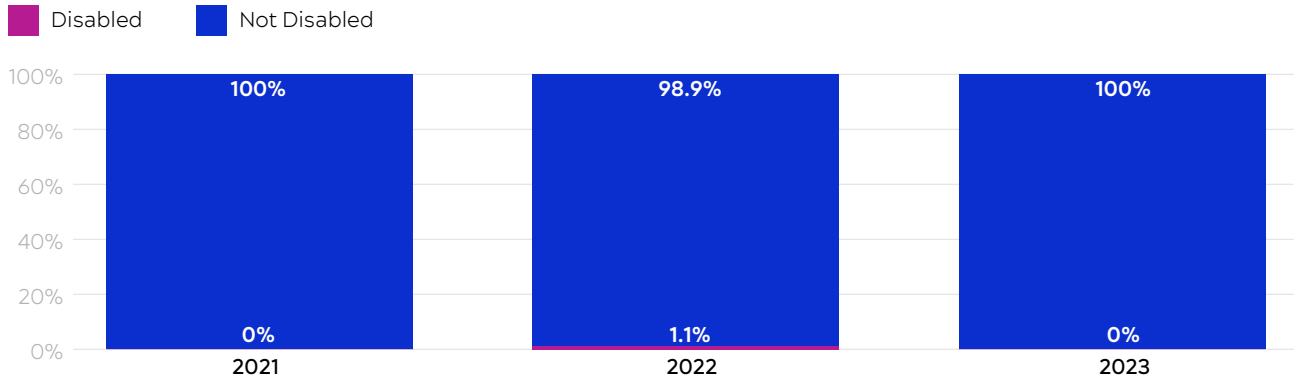


TABLE 12

Disabled leads in English-only popular programming for children, 2018–2023

	English-Only Popular				
	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
Disabled	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Not Disabled	99.5%	99.7%	100.0%	98.6%	100.0%

Note. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In the next section, we analyze differences between how disabled and nondisabled characters are portrayed in 2023 programming.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

In **new** programming, no disabled characters are objectified, shown in revealing clothing, shown dating, kissing, or sexual activity. This lack of romantic behaviors among disabled characters may contribute to harmful stereotypes that assume disabled people are asexual and/or aromantic. (See Table A17 in Appendix A.) But in **popular** programming, there are portrayals of disabled characters dating, being married, and kissing. The findings do not statistically vary by disabled and nondisabled characters, meaning there are no inequalities in these portrayals. (See Table A17 in Appendix A.)

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

In **new** programming, disabled and nondisabled characters are equally shown with a job, in the STEM field, and as leaders. But in **popular** programming, disabled characters are significantly more likely than nondisabled characters to have a job in STEM (25.0% compared with 4.1%). This finding remains statistically significant when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming. (See Table A18 in Appendix A.)



Juanmonino / E+ via Getty Images

Body-Size Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

In 2023 **new** children’s programming, 7.9% of all characters are fat, and in 2023 **popular** programming, 6.1% of all characters are fat (6.5% in English-only popular programming).

TABLE 13

Fat inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

	New	Popular	English-Only Popular
Fat	7.9%	6.1%	6.5%
Not Fat	92.1%	93.9%	93.5%

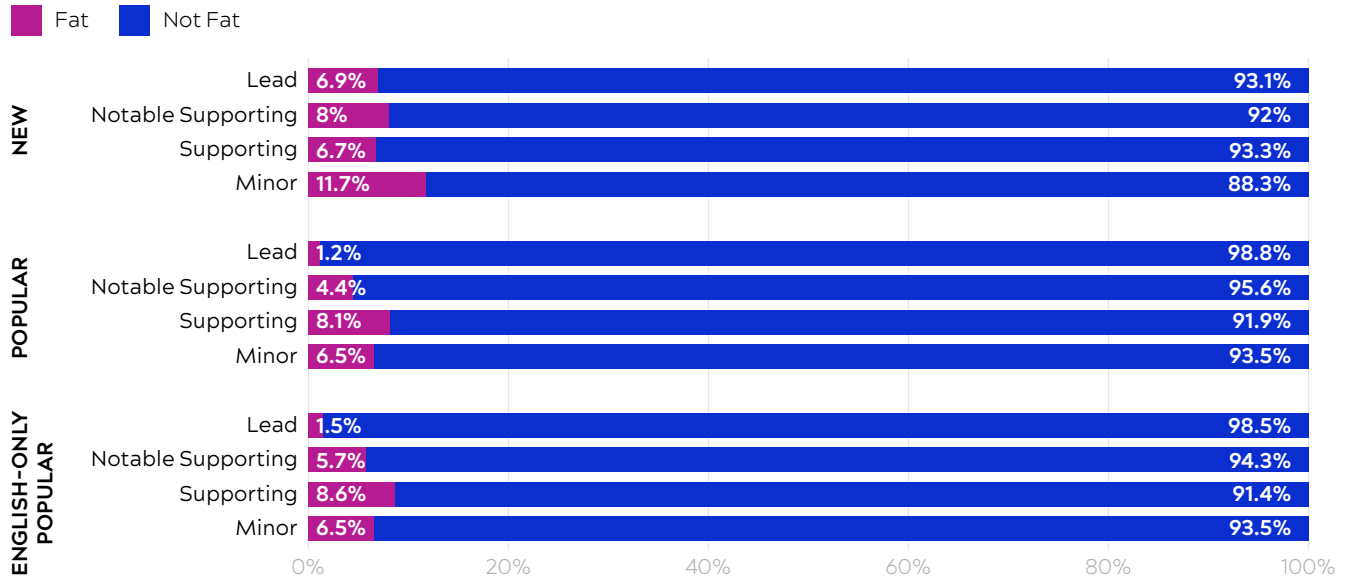
Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In **new** and **popular** programming, fat characters are significantly more likely than characters who are not fat to be male than female (65.1% male compared with 34.9% female for **new** programming; 73.1% male compared with 26.9% female for **popular** programming; 76.3% male compared with 23.7% female for English-only popular). In **new** programming, fat characters are more likely than characters who are not fat to be ages 50 or older (15.9% compared with 8.9%). In both **popular** programming (all languages) and English-only popular programming, fat characters are also more likely than characters who are not fat to be 50-plus (39.1% compared with 14.2%; 28.1% compared with 8.5% English-only). (See Table A19 in Appendix A.)

A total of 6.9% of leads are fat in **new** programming. In **popular** programming, only 1.2% of leads are fat, and in English-only popular programs, 1.5% of leads are fat.

CHART 14

Prominence of fat characters in new and popular programming for children in 2023

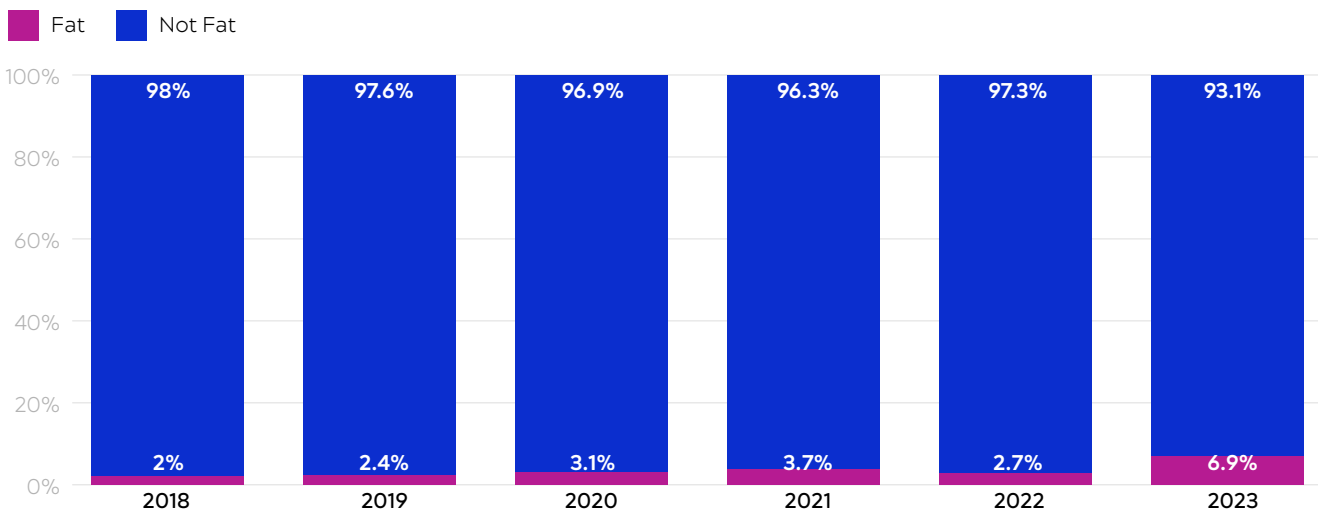


Note. In new programming, minor roles are significantly more likely than supporting roles to be fat. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

The percentage of fat leads in **new** programming has increased by 4.2 percentage points (6.9%) since 2022.

CHART 15

Fat leads/coleads in new programming for children, 2018–2023



The percentage of fat leads in **popular** programming for children continues to decline. It was 3.8% in 2021, 2.1% in 2022, but only 1.2% in 2023.

CHART 16

Fat leads/coleads in popular programming for children, 2019–2023

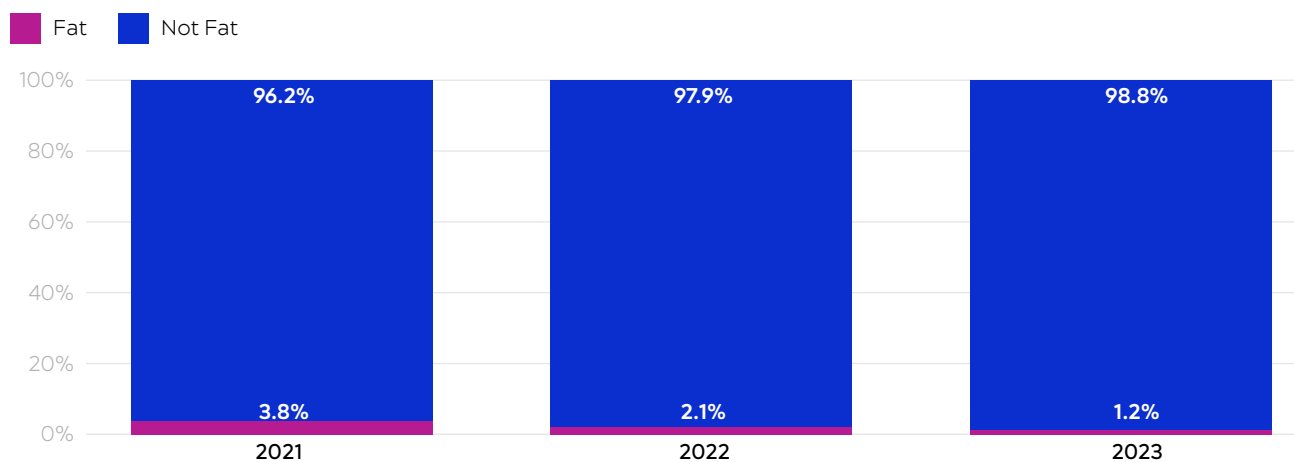


TABLE 14

Fat leads/coleads in English-only popular programming for children, 2019–2023

	English-Only Popular			
	2019	2021	2022	2023
Fat	5.9%	5.5%	2.7%	1.5%
Not Fat	94.1%	94.5%	97.3%	98.5%

Note. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In the next section, we analyze portrayal differences between fat characters and characters who are not fat in 2023 programming.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

We find no statistically significant differences in romantic and sexual activity and experiences between fat characters and characters who are not fat in 2023 **new** programming. (See Table A20 in Appendix A.) In 2023 **popular** programming, fat characters are significantly more likely than characters who are not fat to be wearing revealing clothing (10.0% compared with 2.5%).

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

Fat characters are more likely than characters who are not fat to be shown with a job in 2023 **new** programming (44.7% compared with 34.3%), but there were no observed differences in leadership portrayals. In **popular** programming, we do not identify any statistically significant differences between fat characters and characters who are not fat with respect to careers and leadership. (See Table A21 in Appendix A.)



Halfpoint Images / Moment via Getty Images

Age 50-Plus Representation

PROMINENCE AND INTERSECTIONS

Characters who are ages 50 and older are 9.4% of characters in 2023 **new** programming, and 15.7% of all characters in 2023 **popular** programming (9.8% in 2023 English-only popular programs).

TABLE 15

Age inclusion in new and popular programming for children (all characters) in 2023

	New	Popular	English-Only Popular
50 and Older	9.4%	15.7%	9.8%
Under 50	90.6%	84.3%	90.2%

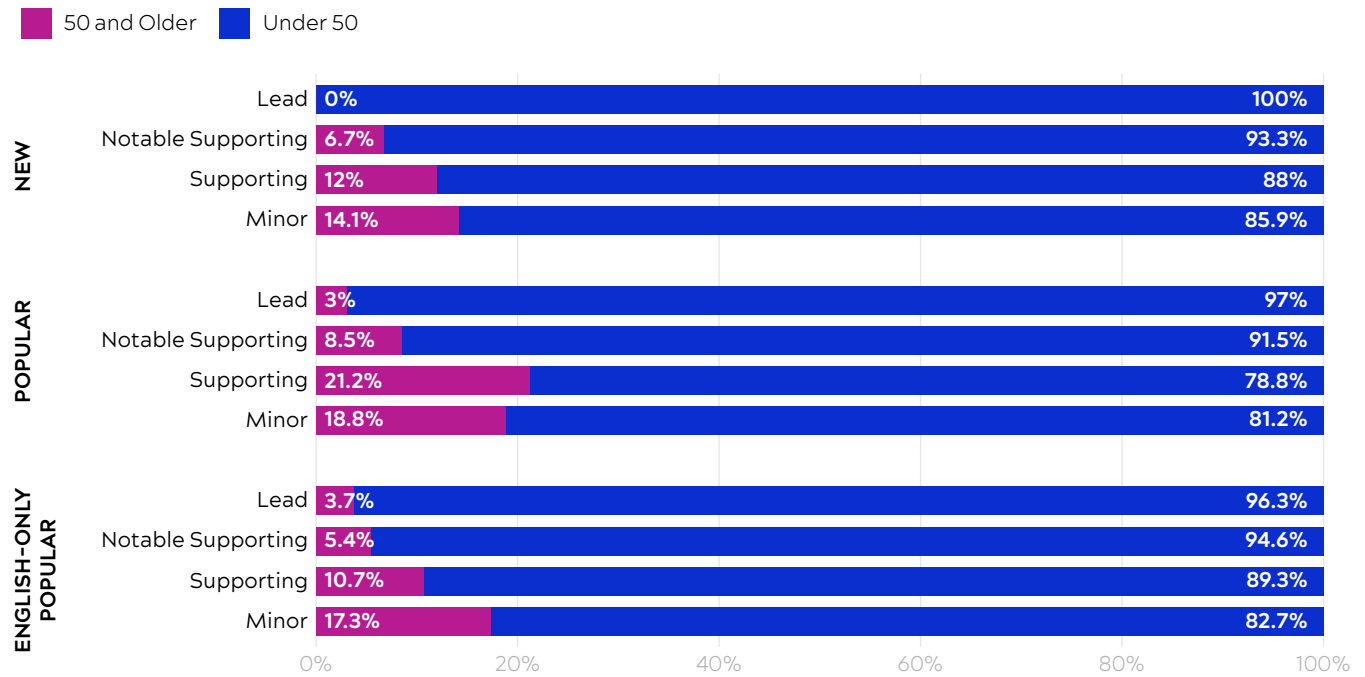
Note. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In 2023 **new** programming, 50-plus characters are more likely than their younger counterparts to be white (53.5% compared with 42.0%), fat (12.9% compared with 7.2%), and disabled (3.4% compared with 0.8%). In 2023 **popular** programming, 50-plus characters are significantly more likely than characters under age 50 to be LGBTQIA+ (3.3% compared with 0.5%) and fat (15.0% compared with 4.3%). In English-only popular programming, 50-plus characters are significantly more likely than younger characters to be LGBTQIA+ (8.2% compared with 0.4%). (See Table A22 in Appendix A.)

In **new** children’s programming, no leads are ages 50-plus. In **popular** programming, 50-plus characters made up 3.0% of leads (3.7% in English-only popular programming).

CHART 17

Age prominence in new, and popular programming for children in 2023

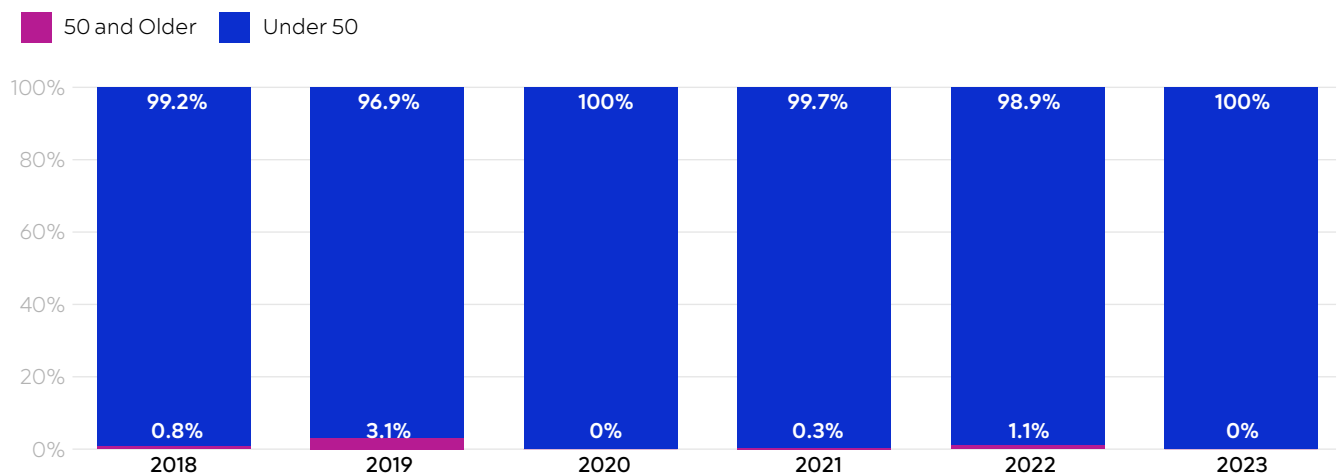


Note. In new programming, minor roles are significantly more likely than leading, notable supporting, and supporting roles to be 50-plus; supporting roles are significantly more likely than leading, and notable supporting roles to be 50-plus; and notable supporting roles are significantly more likely than leading roles to be 50-plus. In English-only popular programming, minor roles are significantly more likely than supporting roles to be 50-plus. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

The percentage of 50-plus leads in **new** programming has fluctuated, with a high of 3.1% in 2019 and a low of 0.0% in 2020. In 2023, no leads are 50-plus.

CHART 18

Age inclusion for leads in new programming for children, 2018–2023



The percentage of 50-plus leads in **popular** programming decreased 1.8 percentage points from 2022 (4.8%) to 2023 (3.0%).

CHART 19

Age inclusion for leads in popular programming for children, 2019–2023

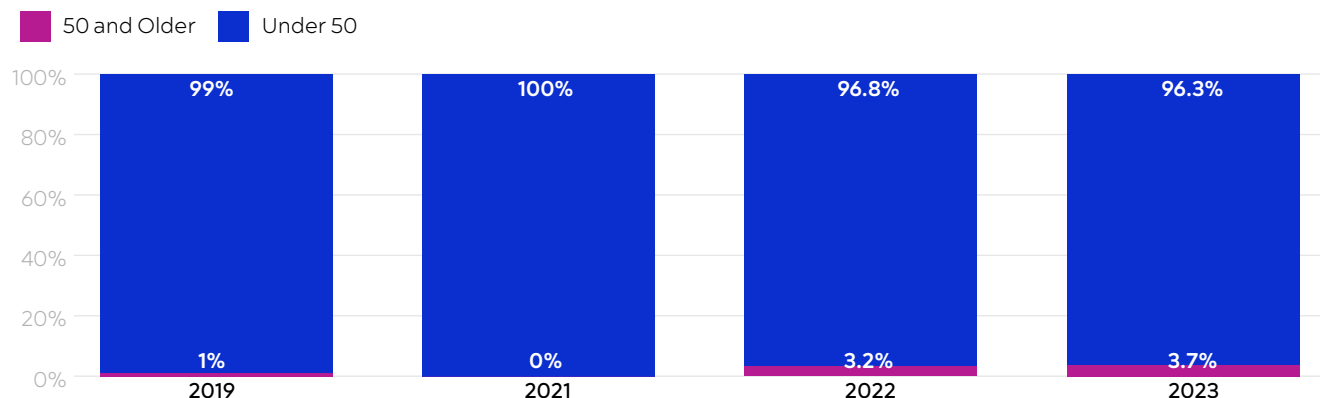


TABLE 16

Age inclusion for leads in English-only popular programming for children, 2019–2023

	English-Only Popular			
	2019	2021	2022	2023
50 and Older	1.0%	0.0%	3.2%	3.7%
Under 50	99.0%	100.0%	96.8%	96.3%

Note. Popular programming was not measured in 2020 due to the COVID-19 interruptions in programming.

In the next section, we analyze portrayal differences between 50-plus and characters under 50 in 2023 programming.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALIZATION

In 2023 **popular** programming, 50-plus characters are more likely than those under 50 to be married or in a committed partnership (34.1% compared with 9.1%). In 2023 English-only popular programming, 50-plus characters are also significantly more likely than those under 50 to be married or in a committed partnership (33.3% compared with 5.6%). We find no statistically significant differences regarding romance and sexualization among 50-plus characters in 2023 **new** programming. (See Table A23 in Appendix A.)

CAREERS AND LEADERSHIP

In **new** and **popular** programming, 50-plus characters are more likely than younger characters to be shown with a job (new: 46.7% compared with 34.1%; popular: 53.4% compared with 40.3%). In English-only popular programming, there is no significant difference. In **new** programming, 50-plus characters are significantly more likely than under 50 characters to be a leader (27.0% compared with 18.7%). (See Table A24 in Appendix A.)

Animation vs. Live Action

Given the dominance of animation in children’s programming, it is important to evaluate the diversity and inclusion within it. Distinguishing between representations in animated and live-action characters, we have a better sense of where scripted TV shows are making progress and where that progress might be stalled.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In both **new** and **popular** programming, female characters are less likely than male characters to be animated, although the difference is not statistically significant. In 2023 **new** children’s programming, 55.8% of animated characters are male and 44.2% are female. In 2023 **popular** programming (regardless of language), 57.7% of animated characters are male and 42.3% are female. Among all 2023 **new** programming, live-action characters are majority male characters (54.4% male compared with 45.6% female), although this difference is not statistically significant. In **popular** programming (regardless of language), live-action characters are also majority male (55.4% male compared with 44.6% female), but again, these differences are not statistically significant.

TABLE 17

Gender representation for animated and live-action characters in new and popular programming for children in 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action
Male	55.8%	54.4%	57.7%	55.4%	57.7%	55.4%
Female	44.2%	45.6%	42.3%	44.6%	42.3%	44.6%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming. Due to a small sample size (0.1% of all characters in 2023 new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters.

In **new** programming, the gender of animated characters has become increasingly more balanced over the past six years, from only 36.5% female in 2018 to 44.2% female in 2023. Live-action characters have had fairly steady gender parity. But in 2023, most characters are male (54.4% male, 45.6% female).

In new programming, the gender of animated characters has become increasingly more balanced over the past six years, from only 36.5% female in 2018 to 44.2% female in 2023.

TABLE 18

Gender representation for animated and live-action characters in new programming for children, 2018–2023

	New											
	Animated						Live-Action					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male	63.5%	60.6%	59.3%	58.1%	56.5%	55.8%	50.0%	47.6%	51.5%	54.0%	49.0%	54.4%
Female	36.5%	39.2%	40.6%	41.5%	43.2%	44.2%	50.0%	52.4%	48.5%	46.0%	51.0%	45.6%

Note. Due to a small sample size (0.1% in 2023 new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters.

However, in **new** programming, animated *nonhuman* characters are significantly more likely than animated human characters to be male (61.5% compared with 50.0%), but animated *human* characters are significantly more likely than animated *nonhuman* characters to be female characters (50.0% compared with 38.5%). In 2022 new programming, we found nearly identical results: Animated *nonhuman* characters are significantly more likely than animated human characters to be male (61.9% compared with 49.9%), but animated *human* characters are significantly more likely than animated *nonhuman* characters to be female characters (49.9% compared with 37.7%). In 2023 **popular** programming, animated *nonhuman* characters are more likely than animated human characters to be male (62.3% compared with 53.9%), and animated human characters are more likely than animated *nonhuman* characters to be female (46.1% compared with 37.7%); however, these comparisons in popular programming are not statistically significant. Again, in 2022 popular programming, results were nearly identical: Animated *nonhuman* characters are more likely than animated human characters to be male (61.8% compared with 53.0%), and animated human characters are more likely than animated *nonhuman* characters to be female (47.0% compared with 38.2%).

The gender discrepancy in nonhuman versus human animated characters may be due to creators making more deliberate choices about gender representation when the characters are human than when they are nonhuman. It may also be related to the gender breakdown among voice actors on the show, as those already on the show may provide additional voices for smaller characters.

TABLE 19

Gender inclusion for animated nonhuman roles in new programming for children in 2023

	2022	2023
Male	61.9%	61.5%
Female	37.7%	38.5%
Nonbinary	0.4%	0.0%

Note. Animated nonhuman roles include animals, monsters, aliens, or anthropomorphized objects. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

In 2023 **new** programming, live-action characters are significantly more likely than animated characters to be white (49.0% compared with 41.5%), Latinx (15.4% compared with 6.2%), but animated characters are significantly more likely to be Black (28.4% compared with 20.9%) and Asian (16.3% compared with 8.3%). Native, Middle Eastern and North African, multiracial, and characters with an ambiguous nonwhite race are represented similarly among animated and live-action characters in new programming. (See Table 20 below.) In 2022 new programming, live-action characters are significantly more likely than animated characters to be white (55.2% compared with 46.4%) and multiracial (4.9% compared with 1.7%), but animated characters are significantly more likely than live-action characters to be Asian (17.2% compared with 7.7%), and Middle Eastern and North African (2.5% compared with 0.0%).

In 2023 **popular** programming, animated characters are significantly more likely than live-action characters to be white (58.6% compared with 40.4%), Black (25.0% compared with 3.3%), and Middle Eastern and North African (3.5% compared with 0.8%). Due to the popularity of telenovelas, the difference between animated and live-action characters is pronounced among Latinx characters: Live-action characters are significantly more likely than animated characters to be Latinx (53.2% compared with 6.6%). This comparison remained statistically significant in English-only popular programming, though to a lesser extent: Live-action characters are still significantly more likely than animated characters to be Latinx (14.4% compared with 6.6%). And animated characters are significantly more likely than live-action characters to be Black (25.0% compared with 12.4%). In 2022 popular programming, animated characters are significantly more likely than live-action characters to be white (48.1% compared with 20.5%), Black (18.9% compared with 4.3%), Asian (14.6% compared with 1.2%), and Middle Eastern and North African (4.2% compared with 0.0%), but live-action characters were significantly more likely than animated characters to be Latinx (72.2% compared with 13.2%). In 2022 English-only popular programming, live-action characters are significantly more likely than animated characters to be white (69.3% compared with 48.1%) and multiracial (6.1% compared with 0.5%), but animated characters are significantly more likely than live-action characters to be Asian (14.6% compared with 4.3%), Latinx (13.2% compared with 5.5%), and Middle Eastern and North African (4.2% compared with 0.0%).

However, in new programming, animated *nonhuman* characters are significantly more likely than animated human characters to be male (61.5% compared with 50.0%).

TABLE 20

Race/ethnicity representation for animated and live-action characters in new and popular programming in 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action
White	41.5%*	49.0%*	58.6%*	40.4%*	58.6%	61.9%
Black	28.4%*	20.9%*	25.0%*	3.3%*	25.0%*	12.4%*
Asian and Pacific Islander	16.3%*	8.3%*	5.1%	2.2%	5.10%	8.2%
Latinx	6.2%*	15.4%*	6.6%*	53.2%*	6.6%*	14.4%*
Native	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern and North African	0.3%	1.6%	3.5%*	0.8%*	3.5%	3.1%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	4.1%	4.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
Multiracial	1.8%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference in live-action and animated representation for the specified identities. Percentages exclude characters without a discernible race (e.g., animals, aliens, personified objects, and humans with atypical skin colors). “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

In 2023 **new** programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely to appear as in live action than animation (3.3% compared with 1.3%). In 2023 **popular** programming, LGBTQIA+, disabled, fat, and 50-plus characters are represented equally as animated or live-action characters. But when limiting the sample to English-only popular programming, live-action characters are significantly more likely to be LGBTQIA+ (4.1% compared with 0.4%), fat (12.2% compared with 5.3%), and 50-plus (19.6% compared with 7.4%).

TABLE 21

Representation of animated and live-action characters by identity groups in new and popular programming in 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action	Animated	Live-Action
LGBTQIA+	1.3%*	3.3%*	0.4%	1.4%	0.4%*	4.1%*
Disabled	1.2%	0.7%	0.6%	1.4%	0.6%	3.1%
Fat	8.3%	5.2%	5.3%	7.2%	5.3%*	12.2%*
Age 50 and older	9.6%	8.3%	7.4%	24.9%	7.4%*	19.6%*

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference in animated and live-action representation for the specified identity. For example, LGBTQIA+ representation is more frequent in live-action than animation. “Popular” programming includes shows in English and non-English. “English-Only Popular” excludes non-English programming.

Implied Race

Given the prevalence of nonhuman characters (e.g., animals and aliens) in children's programming, a noteworthy proportion of characters did not have an explicitly identified race. But while many characters did not have an explicit race, plenty had characteristics or traits that *implied* a race. A character's race is implied when they are styled, written, and/or performed with racialized affectations, or when cultural cues are suggestive of individual races or ethnicities. For example, a character may be suggested to be German by wearing lederhosen or Chinese by practicing martial arts and making bao.

While race can certainly be implied with stereotypical portrayals or reductive cultural cues, it is not inherently harmful to show nonhuman characters embodying different racial, ethnic, or cultural norms. Many creators give their characters racial and ethnic cues to expand the representation of those groups. We refer to characters who have no implicit or explicit racial cues as "non-raced" characters.

These characters are especially common in animated content. In **new** children's programming, just under half of the characters are nonhuman (45.6%), but only about one-quarter of characters in **popular** programming are nonhuman (26.1%). In **new** children's programming, 3.5% of characters without an explicit race have an implied race, compared with 0.2% in **popular** programming.

In **new** children's programming, the most common implied race is white (34.2%), followed by Black (26.3%) and Asian (19.7%). In **popular** programming, characters are equally implied to be white and Black at the same rate (50.0%).

In 2023 new programming, LGBTQIA+ characters are significantly more likely to appear as in live action than animation (3.3% compared with 1.3%)



Halfpoint Images / Moment via Getty Images

Recommendations for Improving On-Screen Representation

Based on these findings about representation and portrayals in children’s programming, we make the following recommendations:

Prioritize achieving gender parity in leading roles. Continue to write stories with female leads in new programming made for kids. Since 2018, male characters have consistently held the majority of leading roles, with 52.2% in new programming and 56.2% in popular programming in 2023. This trend indicates that narratives are predominantly from a male perspective. To ensure that television reflects a diverse range of viewpoints, it is essential to balance the gender representation of leading characters. Doing so will help viewers better understand and value both female and male experiences, ultimately contributing to more inclusive storytelling.

Show variation in the types of jobs characters have. Characters’ jobs and occupations are an opportunity to showcase leadership, skills, and ambition. It’s also an opportunity to challenge existing stereotypes that certain groups dominate certain occupations. For example, in popular programming, male characters are more likely than female characters to have jobs in the armed forces, security, or law enforcement. Similarly, in English-only popular programming, male characters are significantly more likely than female characters to have a job in the business field, such as a business owner or a CEO, but

female characters are significantly more likely to have a job in education fields, such as a teacher or school principal. Subverting these occupational stereotypes in storytelling can change how children see themselves and others.

Develop more nonhuman female characters. Currently, nonhuman characters—such as monsters, goblins, or ghosts—are predominantly portrayed as male. This contributes to the overall gender imbalance in children's programming, while also reinforcing the idea that boys and men are the default gender. Featuring more nonhuman female characters will bring more gender diversity to nonhuman worlds and their stories. This approach will promote a more balanced representation of both genders, expanding the range of what masculine and feminine characters can look like.

Diversify female characters' body types. In both new and popular programming, female characters are less likely than male characters to be fat. This means that girls and women on screen are likely reinforcing for viewers the notion that the ideal feminine body type is thin. Unrealistic body types in the media lead adolescent girls to struggle with body-image concerns as early as five years old.⁹ We need more diversity in the types of bodies on screen for more balanced representation.

Write stories that reflect the diverse experiences of nonwhite racial groups. While this report finds a large share of characters of color on screen, some racial groups are less visible: There is little representation of Native and Middle Eastern or North African groups, and Latinx representation is low in **new** programming being made for children. Greenlight stories that authentically represent the diverse experiences of various communities of color so that people from all racial groups see themselves on screen.

Increase the representation of disabled characters. A total of 27.2% of the U.S. population has a disability,¹⁰ yet only 1.1% of characters in new programming and 0.9% of characters in popular programming had a physical, cognitive, or communication disability, or a mental health condition. Not showing disabled characters on screen stigmatizes disability by rendering it invisible. When disabled characters are shown—with nuance and accuracy—disabled viewers feel validated, and disability is destigmatized.

Appendix A: Tables

TABLE A1. GENDER INTERSECTIONS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
White	46.9%*	39.2%*	51.6%*	43.5%*	63.9%	54.1%
Black	24.9%	28.8%	12.4%	12.2%	21.6%	21.4%
Asian and Pacific Islander	14.6%	14.6%	1.8%*	5.4%*	3.1%*	9.4%*
Latinx	6.8%	9.6%	30.7%	37.8%	5.2%*	13.2%*
Native	1.2%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern and North African	1.0%	0.2%	2.7%	1.1%	4.6%	1.9%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	3.4%	4.7%	0.6%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
Multiracial	1.4%	1.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%
LGBTQIA+	1.0%*	2.1%*	0.2%*	1.6%*	0.3%	2.0%
Disabled	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	0.8%
Fat	9.2%*	6.2%*	7.9%*	3.8%*	8.6%*	3.6%*
Age 50 and Older	9.8%	9.1%	17.4%	13.5%	10.9%	8.4%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Popular programming is inclusive of shows in any language. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A2. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY GENDER IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Objectified	0.5%	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%	2.3%	0.5%
Revealing Clothing	0.4%	1.0%	1.9%	4.4%	2.7%	2.5%
In a Relationship/ Dating	3.0%	3.4%	6.2%	8.4%	4.2%	5.4%
Married/Committed Partnership	4.3%*	6.9%*	10.2%	14.9%	6.1%	9.9%
Kissing	0.3%	0.6%	4.0%	5.7%	1.1%	1.5%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A3. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY GENDER IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Has a Job	36.5%	33.5%	42.9%*	33.4%*	39.5%*	26.2%*
STEM	5.8%	5.3%	5.4%	3.0%	5.7%	3.0%
Leader	16.7%	19.1%	19.4%*	14.2%*	19.2%	12.4%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A4. RACE INTERSECTIONS IN NEW CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMING IN 2023

	New							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern/ North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Male	54.3%	46.2%	49.7%	41.2%	53.8%	85.7%	41.7%	42.1%
Female	45.7%	53.8%	50.3%	58.8%	46.2%	14.3%	58.3%	57.9%
LGBTQIA+	2.0%	2.8%	0.6%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
Disabled	1.0%	2.2%	0.6%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Fat	8.4%	10.1%	6.4%	5.2%	7.7%	14.3%	10.4%	0.0%
Age 50 and Older	12.0%	8.5%	6.9%	10.3%	7.7%	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A5. RACE INTERSECTIONS IN POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern/ North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Male	59.1%	55.3%	28.6%	49.8%	0.0%	75.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Female	40.9%	44.7%	71.4%	50.2%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
LGBTQIA+	1.7%	0.0%	4.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Disabled	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Fat	6.8%	5.3%	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Age 50 and Older	19.9%	7.9%	9.5%	20.6%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A6. RACE INTERSECTIONS IN ENGLISH-ONLY POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	English-Only Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern/ North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Male	59.0%	55.3%	28.6%	32.3%	0.0%	75.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Female	41.0%	44.7%	71.4%	67.7%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
LGBTQIA+	2.4%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Disabled	0.0%	3.90%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Fat	7.6%	5.3%	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Age 50 and Older	13.8%	7.9%	9.5%	6.5%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A7. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY RACE IN NEW PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Objectified	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Revealing Clothing	1.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
In a Relationship/ Dating	5.7%	6.1%	3.9%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Married/ Committed Partnership	10.2%	5.8%	3.3	7.8%	16.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Kissing	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A8. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY RACE IN POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Objectified	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Revealing Clothing	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
In a Relationship/ Dating	5.6%*	0.0%*	5.3%	16.9%*	0.0%	33.3%*	0.0%	0.0%
Married/ Committed Partnership	14.0%	7.5%	21.1%	18.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kissing	1.4%*	3.8%	0.0%	14.5%*	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Latinx and MENA characters are significantly more likely than Black characters to be in a relationship/dating; Latinx characters are significantly more likely than white characters to be in a relationship/dating. Asian characters, MENA characters.

TABLE A9. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY RACE IN ENGLISH-ONLY POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	English-Only Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Multiracial	Ambiguous, Non-White Race
Objectified	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Revealing Clothing	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
In a Relationship/ Dating	7.9%	0.0%	5.3%	8.3%	0.0%	33.3	0.0%	0.0%
Married/ Committed Partnership	8.6%	7.5%	21.1%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kissing	0.7%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A10. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY RACE IN NEW PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Has a Job	38.5%	37.9%	49.3%*	27.8%*	25.0%	42.9%	41.7%	26.3%
STEM	8.4%	10.1%	5.9%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Leader	21.8%	22.0%	13.8%	13.3%	16.7%	0.0%	8.3%	26.3%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A11. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY RACE IN POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Ambiguous, Non-White Race	Multiracial
Has a Job	37.4%	45.3%	52.6%	49.4%	0.0%	88.9%	100.0%	0.0%
STEM	5.10%	5.7%	21.1%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Leader	17.3%*	15.1%*	5.3%*	22.9%*	0.0%	88.9%*	100.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. MENA characters are significantly more likely than Asian, Black, Latinx, and white characters to be a leader. MENA characters are significantly more likely than Asian, Black, Latinx, and white characters to be a leader.

TABLE A12. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY RACE IN ENGLISH-ONLY POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	English-Only Popular							
	White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Latinx	Native	Middle Eastern and North African	Multiracial	Ambiguous, Non-White Race
Has a Job	32.2%*	45.3%	52.6%	45.8%	0.0%	88.9%*	0.0%	100.0%
STEM	5.3%	5.7%	21.1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Leader	19.7%*	15.1%*	5.3%*	25.0%	0.0%	88.9%*	0.0%	100.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. MENA characters are significantly more likely than Asian, Black, and white characters to be a leader.

TABLE A13. LGBTQIA+ INTERSECTIONS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+
Male	37.5%*	55.9%*	14.3%*	57.1%*	16.7%	57.9%
Female	62.5%*	44.1%*	85.7%*	42.9%*	83.3%	42.1%
White	40.00%	43.2%	71.4%	47.7%	83.3%	59.1%
Black	36.00%	26.6%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	21.9%
Asian and Pacific Islander	4.00%	14.8%	14.3%	3.3%	16.7%	5.8%
Latinx	16.00%	8.0%	14.3%	34.1%	0.0%	8.9%
Native	0.00%	1.1%	0.0%	0.00%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern/ North African	0.00%	0.6%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	4.00%	4.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Multiracial	0.00%	1.6%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
Disabled	2.9%	1.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.0%
Fat	8.6%	7.9%	14.3%	6.0%	16.7%	6.4%
Age 50 and Older	9.4%	9.4%	57.1%*	15.3%*	66.7%	9.1%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A14. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY QUEERNESS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+
Objectified	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.5%
Revealing Clothing	9.7%*	0.5%*	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	2.6%
In a Relationship/ Dating	6.5%	3.1%	14.3%	7.1%	16.7%	4.6%
Married/Committed Partnership	25.8%*	5.2%*	71.4%*	11.6%*	66.7%*	7.0%*
Kissing	16.1%*	0.2%*	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	1.3%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A15. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY QUEERNESS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+	Not LGBTQIA+
Has a Job	41.9%	35.0%	100.0%*	38.0%*	100.0%*	32.8%*
STEM	3.2%	5.6%	0.0%	4.4%	0.0%	4.6%
Leader	29.0%	17.6%	14.3%	17.1%	16.7%	16.2%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A16. DISABILITY INTERSECTIONS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled
Male	54.2%	55.6%	50.0%	56.8%	66.7%	57.4%
Female	45.8%	44.4%	50.0%	43.2%	33.3%	42.6%
White	35.7%	43.2%	0.0%	48.4%	0.0%	60.0%
Black	50.0%	26.5%	60.0%	11.9%	100.0%	20.9%
Asian and Pacific Islander	7.1%	14.7%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	6.0%
Latinx	0.0%	8.3%	40.0%	33.8%	0.0%	8.9%
Native	7.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern/ North African	0.0%	0.60%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Multiracial	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
LGBTQIA+	4.2%	1.6%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	1.0%
Fat	12.5%	7.8%	0.0%	6.2%	0.0%	6.5%
Age 50 and Older	30.0%	9.2%	12.5%	15.7%	16.7%	9.7%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A17. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY DISABILITY STATUS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled
Objectified	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.5%
Revealing Clothing	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	2.6%
In a Relationship/ Dating	0.0%	3.2%	25.0%	7.0%	0.0%	4.8%
Married/Committed Partnership	8.3%	5.5%	12.5%	12.3%	16.7%	7.6%
Kissing	0.0%	0.4%	12.5%	4.7%	16.7%	1.1%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A18. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY DISABILITY STATUS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled	Disabled	Not Disabled
Has a Job	41.7%	35.0%	50.0%	38.5%	66.7%	33.2%
STEM	20.8%	5.4%	25.0%*	4.1%*	33.3%*	4.1%*
Leader	20.8%	17.7%	0.0%	17.3%	0.0%	16.4%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A19. BODY-TYPE INTERSECTIONS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat
Male	65.1%*	54.8%*	73.1%*	55.6%*	76.3%*	56.2%*
Female	34.9%*	45.2%*	26.9%*	44.4%*	23.7%*	43.8%*
White	43.9%	43.0%	54.1%	47.6%	69.6%	58.8%
Black	32.7%	26.3%	10.8%	12.4%	17.4%	21.8%
Asian and Pacific Islander	11.2%	14.9%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	6.4%
Latinx	5.1%	8.5%	32.4%	34.0%	8.7%	8.8%
Native	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern/ North African	1.0%	0.6%	2.7%	1.9%	4.3%	3.3%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	5.1%	4.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Multiracial	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
LGBTQIA+	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	0.8%	2.6%	0.9%
Disabled	1.7%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Age 50 and Older	15.9%*	8.9%*	39.1%*	14.2%*	28.1%*	8.5%*

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A20. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY BODY TYPE IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat
Objectified	0.0%	0.3%	5.0%	1.3%	6.7%	1.2%
Revealing Clothing	0.0%	0.7%	10.0%*	2.5%*	13.3%	1.8%
In a Relationship/ Dating	0.0%	3.4%	10.0%	7.0%	13.3%	4.1%
Married/Committed Partnership	6.8%	5.4%	17.5%	11.9%	10.0%	7.6%
Kissing	0.0%	0.5%	5.0%	4.8%	6.7%	0.9%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A21. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY BODY TYPE IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat	Fat	Not Fat
Has a Job	44.7%*	34.3%*	40.0%	38.5%	40.0%	33.2%
STEM	7.6%	5.4%	2.5%	4.5%	0.0%	4.8%
Leader	20.5%	17.6%	27.5%	16.4%	30.0%	15.2%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A22. AGE INTERSECTIONS IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50
Male	56.2%	54.0%	62.5%	55.1%	63.3%	56.3%
Female	43.8%	46.0%	37.5%	44.9%	36.7%	43.7%
White	53.5%*	42.0%*	52.7%	46.9%	70.7%	58.0%
Black	23.7%	27.2%	5.4%	13.90%	14.6%	22.4%
Asian and Pacific Islander	10.5%	15.1%	1.80%	3.80%	4.9%	6.1%
Latinx	8.8%	8.1%	38.40%	32.90%	4.9%	9.3%
Native	0.9%	1.1%	0.0%	0.00%	0.0%	0.0%
Middle Eastern/ North African	0.0%	0.7%	1.8%	2.0%	4.9%	3.2%
Ambiguous, Non-White Race	2.6%	4.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.6%
Multiracial	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
LGBTQIA+	1.7%	1.7%	3.3%*	0.5%*	8.2%*	0.4%*
Fat	12.9%*	7.2%*	15.0%*	4.3%*	18.4%	5.1%
Disabled	3.4%*	0.8%*	0.8%	1.1%	2.0%	1.1%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference. Due to small sample size (0.1% only in new programming), we do not include nonbinary characters in statistical analyses.

TABLE A23. ROMANTIC ATTACHMENTS AND SEXUALIZATION BY AGE IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		English-Only Popular	
	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50
Objectified	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Revealing Clothing	0.0%	0.8%	1.1%	3.8%	0.0%	3.3%
In a Relationship/ Dating	2.9%	3.6%	6.8%	8.3%	13.3%	5.0%
Married/Committed Partnership	10.9%	5.9%	34.1%*	9.1%*	33.3%*	5.6%*
Kissing	0.0%	0.5%	4.5%	5.5%	0.0%	1.7%
Sexual Activity	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

TABLE A24. CAREERS, STEM, AND LEADERSHIP BY AGE IN NEW AND POPULAR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN 2023

	New		Popular		Popular	
	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50	50 and Older	Under 50
Has a Job	46.7%*	34.1%*	53.4%*	40.3%*	43.3%	37.8%
STEM	6.6%	5.4%	4.5%	4.9%	3.3%	5.6%
Leader	27.0%*	18.7%*	20.5%	18.4%	16.7%	18.6%

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates a statistically significant difference.

Appendix B: Variables

Identities

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.

Gender: Character gender is determined by identification, attire, hairstyle, pronouns, and other context cues. This report assesses differences between men, women, boys, girls, and nonbinary people.

- ◆ **Nonbinary:** Characters are categorized as nonbinary only when confirmed through openly identifying as such, through pronouns, or through canonically verifiable character information online.
- ◆ **Trans:** Transgender characters are coded as their appropriate gender (e.g., a trans woman would be coded as female). All trans and nonbinary characters are also coded as LGBTQIA+.

Race/Ethnicity: Character race can be determined from skin color, maxillofacial 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.

- ◆ **Implicit Race:** A character's race is implied when they are styled, written, and/or performed with racialized affectations, or when cultural cues are suggestive of individual races or ethnicities.
- ◆ **Non-Raced:** Characters are categorized as non-raced when they are not human and/or do not have human skin tones and also have no implied race.

LGBTQIA+: LGBTQIA+ 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. Includes: gay, lesbian, queer/ambiguous, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, intersex, and asexual.

- ◆ Characters who are implied to be LGBTQIA+ but are not explicitly stated as such are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- ◆ **Disability:** This research is inclusive of mental health issues, physical, cognitive, and communication disabilities. Disabilities that are not visible are coded only when confirmed through dialogue or visual contexts (e.g., a character visiting a support group).

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

Fat: We prefer to use the term "fat" as a value-neutral descriptor that is not rooted in harmful medical practices (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").

Prominence

We identify the prominence of every character, assigning them to one of four levels: lead/colead, notable supporting, supporting, and minor.

Leads and coleads: The protagonist(s) of the “A” story in the episode is designated as the lead/colead.

Notable supporting: Characters are categorized as “notable supporting” if they make significant contributions to the story and/or are prominently featured but are not the lead. In television, notable supporting actors are usually non-lead members of the cast, recurring characters, and noteworthy guest stars.

Supporting: Supporting characters are those who appear in more than one scene but are not heavily featured.

Minor: Minor characters are those who have speaking roles but appear only briefly.

Endnotes

1. In 2018 and 2019, analysis of shows popular with children excluded non-English programming and did not include shows from streaming platforms. Additionally, the age range was two to 13 years old. Beginning in 2022, we’ve included all shows that are popular with kids ages two to 11, in any language, and we began including popular streaming shows, in addition to broadcast and cable. This time frame does not include findings for 2020.
2. These shows were identified by searching for series tagged as “childrens,” “children’s animation,” and “preschool” on the trade database Luminate by Variety. The search included all broadcast and cable networks, in addition to the following streaming services: Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, Disney+, HBO Max, Hulu, Netflix, Paramount+, and Peacock.
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4. Strasberger, Victor C., Amy B. Jordan, and Ed Donnerstein. 2010. “Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents.” *Pediatrics* 125 (4): 756–67.
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6. For programming on broadcast and cable, this refers to the 2023–2024 season, etc. On streaming services, this refers to the calendar year.
7. AMC+ and BET+ were included in the search but did not yield results for children’s programming.
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About the Geena Davis Institute

Since 2004, the Geena Davis Institute has worked to mitigate unconscious bias while creating equality, fostering inclusion, and reducing negative stereotyping in entertainment and media. As a global research-based organization, the Institute provides research, direct guidance, and thought leadership aimed at increasing representation of marginalized groups within six identities: gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQIA+, disability, age, and body type. Because of its unique history and position, the Institute can help achieve true on-screen equity in a way that few organizations can. Learn more at geenadavisinstitute.org.

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