

ReFrame Report
on the

Top 100 Films of 2021

March 1, 2022



ReFrame

Introduction

Since 2017, ReFrame, the gender equity coalition founded by the Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles (WIF), has published an annual list in collaboration with IMDbPro that highlights the year’s most popular films that earn the ReFrame Stamp for gender-balanced hiring.

In preparing the 2021 list, ReFrame reviewed data on all films listed on IMDbPro’s ‘Top 100’ list of narrative fiction films released in 2021, which includes both live action and animated films. The Top 100 list is based on the actual page views of more than 200 million monthly visitors to IMDb worldwide, and includes films that were released theatrically as well as those that were released exclusively to streamers between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021.

This Top 100 list formed the data set for ReFrame’s analysis in both 2020 and 2021. For the prior ReFrame Film Stamp analyses (2017–2019), the organization reviewed annual lists of the top box office grossing films. The decision to move to analyzing the ‘most popular’ films was motivated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the box office, and also created the opportunity to review projects from all major studios and distributors, including those without a traditional theatrical release.

With data from IMDbPro, ReFrame assessed all 100 films on the list against the criteria for the **ReFrame Stamp, a mark of distinction for projects that achieve gender-balanced hiring**. The Stamp criteria were developed in consultation with ReFrame Ambassadors, producers, and other industry experts.

Criteria

ReFrame analyzed whether qualifying candidates **(women, non-binary and gender non-conforming people)** were hired in the following key roles:

Phase 1

1. **Writer** screenplay by, written by, co-written by
2. **Director**
3. **Lead Actor**

Phase 2

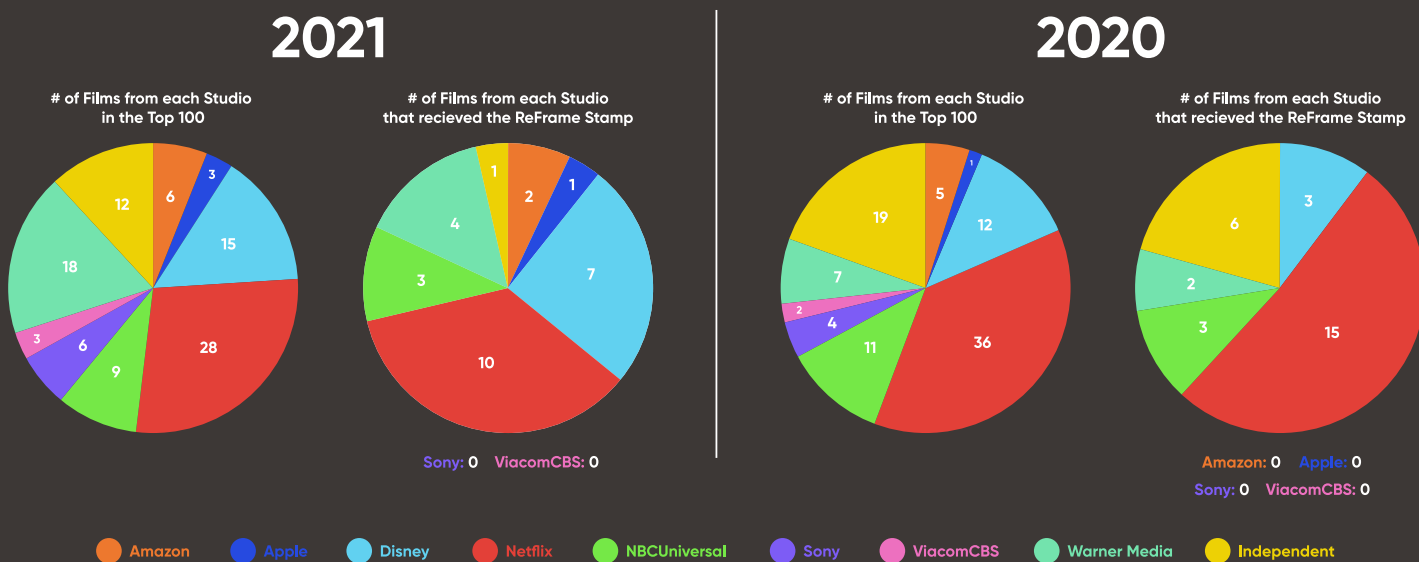
4. **Co-Leads** after the lead, the next 2-5 cast members
5. **Producer** does not include Executive Producer, Associate Producer, Co-Producer or Line Producer
6. **Department Heads**
 - Director of Photography
 - Production Designer
 - Costume Designer
 - Editor
 - Composer (includes Music By)
 - Music Supervisor
 - Visual Effects Supervisor
 - Casting Director
7. **Where sufficient self-identification data was available, ReFrame reviewed the overall crew list of a production to assess if at least 50% of the crew were qualifying candidates.**

ReFrame uses a scoring system to assess whether a production earns the Stamp, based on who is hired for the roles above. A point is awarded if a qualifying candidate is hired in a key role, and an additional point is awarded if that individual is a person of color. A film must earn a minimum of 4 points, with at least 2 coming from Phase 1 categories. A project needs to achieve at least 2 points from the Phase 1 categories of WRITER, DIRECTOR and LEAD to move to the next phase.

From the Phase 2 categories, a project needs to achieve at least 2 points to earn the Stamp. Points can be earned for qualifying candidates in the role of Producer as well as co-leading cast. In analyzing department heads, a point is earned if 50% of the listed department heads are qualifying candidates, and an additional point is awarded if 25% of department heads are qualifying candidates of color. A point can also be awarded if more than 50% of a film’s screen time is held by qualifying candidates.

The Top 100: Studio-by-Studio

In addition to analyzing the individual films, ReFrame also examined how each of the major studios was represented in the Top 100 list.



Key Findings in the Top 100

Films that	2020	2021	Change
Earned the ReFrame Stamp	29	28	3.4% ↓
Were Directed by Women	17	14	17.6% ↓
Were Directed by Women of Color	6	4	33.3% ↓
Were Written by Women	21	31	47.6% ↑
Were Written by Women of Color	4	9	125% ↑
Were Written or Directed by Non-Binary People	0	0	0%
Had Women Cinematographers	7	6	14.3% ↓
Had Women Composers	6	3	50% ↓
Had Women VFX Supervisors	10	9	10% ↓

*** of the 10 titles on the list with budgets over \$50M, 3 earned the Stamp**

Further to the 17.6% decrease in women directors on Top 100 films and 33.3% decrease in women of color directors – because 2 directors on the list (Chloe Zhao and Leigh Janiak) helmed 2 films each, there are actually only 12 women directors included, with 3 of those being women of color. The women of color directors on the list held some of the year’s highest achievements, with Chloe Zhao winning the Academy Awards for Best Director and Best Picture for *Nomadland* and Nia DaCosta becoming the first Black female director to have a #1 film at the box office with *Candyman*. Because

of the shift in the Academy Awards timeline for eligibility in 2020–21, Academy Award nominees and winners at both the 2021 and 2022 Oscars are included on this list, including Jane Campion for *The Power of the Dog*, the first woman to ever be nominated for 2 Best Director Oscars.

There are 6 films on the list with women cinematographers, and 94 films with male cinematographers. 2 were shot by Alice Brooks (*In the Heights* and *tick, tick...BOOM!*), meaning there are only 5 individual women cinematographers on the list.

Of the 6 films on the list with women cinematographers, 2 were also directed by women – *The Power of the Dog* (Dir. Jane Campion, DP Ari Wegner) and *CODA* (Dir. Sian Heder, DP Paula Huidobro). In a recent interview with CNN, Academy Award Nominee Campion shared that she intentionally committed to hiring a woman cinematographer for the project, “I know it’s harder for women to be given a chance as a DOP, even when they are very talented.” DP Ari Wegner is the second woman in history to earn an Academy Award nomination for Best Cinematography, and the first to earn a BAFTA nomination.

The number of women hired increased in only one key role over the prior year – writers. 31 of the films on the list were written by women, and 9 of those by women of color – meaning roughly 70% of the women with writing credits on Top 100 features were white, despite a marked increase in women of color on the list over the prior year.

“The ReFrame Stamp is a measure of who is being hired in key roles across a production, and reviewing each year’s most popular films through this lens gives us a snapshot of how much further we need to go to reach gender parity,” said Andria Wilson Mirza, ReFrame Director. “In the past five years, increased research, investment and industry initiatives have contributed to sustained growth opportunities for women directors, but women cinematographers, composers, and those in the VFX field remain seriously underrepresented. Consider reframing the findings this way: of the 100 most

popular films last year, 94 had male cinematographers, 97 had male composers, and 91 had male VFX supervisors.”

While 36 films met the ‘50% female department heads’ requirement for the Stamp, the analysis revealed decreases in the roles of composer and VFX supervisor from the prior year. 2020 marked a record high of 10 women VFX supervisors, which dropped to 9 in 2021, and 6 women composers, which dropped to 3 in 2021.

41 films on the list had a lead female character, and 22 of those received the ReFrame Stamp for gender-balanced hiring overall. This represents a 7% decrease from 2020, where 44 films had a lead character who was female.

In addition to the base data set provided by IMDbPro, ReFrame used additional sources, including Variety Insight, to verify information related to gender and race/ethnicity of the individuals hired on the Top 100 films. Where possible, ReFrame confirmed two data sources for each individual and used any self-identification data as the primary source.

In addition to identifying where women were hired, ReFrame also aimed to include any non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals hired in key roles. Based on the information available, no non-binary or gender non-conforming people were hired in the roles of director, writer, lead cast, producer, or department heads in the Top 100 films of 2021. One trans woman was represented in the list, writer/director Lana Wachowski (*The Matrix Resurrections*).

Top 10 films by Budget Level

Films that received the ReFrame Stamp

2021

No Time To Die \$250M

Black Widow \$200M

Eternals \$200M

Spider-Man: No Way Home \$200M

The Suicide Squad \$185M

Dune \$165M

Godzilla vs. Kong \$160M

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings \$150M

Cruella \$100M

Mortal Kombat \$55M

2020

Tenet \$200M

Wonder Woman 1984 \$200M

Soul \$150M+

Project Power \$85.1M

The Old Guard \$70M

Extraction \$65M

Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga \$35M

The Devil All the Time \$20M – <30M

Enola Holmes \$20M

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm... \$18M

2019

Avengers: Endgame \$356M

Star Wars: Episode IX – The Rise of Skywalker \$275M

The Lion King \$260M

Alita: Battle Angel \$170M

Captain Marvel \$160M

Spider-Man: Far From Home \$160M

The Irishman \$159M

Shazam! \$100M

Once Upon a Time In... Hollywood \$90M

Joker \$55M

Where Do We Go From Here

While we are encouraged by the increases in films written by women, and sustained growth for some women directors, the consistently low numbers of women in key roles of cinematographer, composer, and VFX supervisor tell us that efforts to change hiring practices need to be renewed, and studios must commit to improving their year-over-year numbers outside of the most visible, above-the-line hires. Clear targets must be set, and a commitment made to transforming practices if they are not yielding the necessary results.

In 2022, ReFrame will launch the ReFrame ReSource, a hub of actionable tools, research-based best practices, and inspirational insights to advance equity in the screen industries. An expansion of ReFrame's Culture Change Handbook and its 14-point Production Roadmap to mitigate

bias at key decision-making points in a project's lifecycle, the ReSource includes more than 100 individual resources and tools. Designed to be iterative, it will be frequently updated as new best practices are developed and research released.

In 2022, ReFrame is also launching the new cohort of their ReFrame Rise program, a unique sponsorship program for mid-career women directors. For the next iteration of this program, the cohort will expand to include both directors and cinematographers, matching them with dedicated teams of industry sponsors to help take their careers to the next level.

Please contact ReFrame to learn more about signing the ReFrame Partner Company Pledge and committing to advancing intersectional gender equity in Hollywood.

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Reframeproject.org

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2021 ReFrame Stamp – IMDbPro Top 100 Narrative & Feature Recipients

Black Widow / USA 2021 (Director: Cate Shortland, Screenwriter: Eric Pearson, Producer: Kevin Feige, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

Eternals / USA 2021 (Director: Chloé Zhao, Screenwriters: Patrick Burleigh, Ryan Firpo, Kaz Firpo, Producers: Kevin Feige, Nate Moore, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

Cruella / USA 2021 (Director: Craig Gillespie, Screenwriters: Dana Fox, Tony McNamara, Producers: Kristin Burr, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

The Matrix Resurrections / USA 2021 (Director: Lana Wachowski, Screenwriters: Lana Wachowski, David Mitchell, Aleksandar Hemon, Producers: Lana Wachowski, James McTeigue, Distributor: WarnerMedia)

In the Heights / USA 2021 (Director: Jon M. Chu, Screenwriters: Quiara Alegría Hudes, Producers: Anthony Bregman, Mara Jacobs, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Scott Sanders, Distributor: WarnerMedia)

Fear Street: 1994 / USA 2021 (Director: Leigh Janiak, Screenwriters: Phil Graziadei, Leigh Janiak, Producers: Peter Chernin, David Ready, Jenno Topping, Distributor: Netflix)

Nomadland / USA 2021 (Director: Chloé Zhao, Screenwriters: Chloé Zhao, Producers: Peter Spears, Chloé Zhao, Mollye Asher, Frances McDormand, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

Raya and the Last Dragon / USA 2021 (Director: Carlos López Estrada, Don Hall, Screenwriters: Qui Nguyen, Adele Lim, Producers: Peter Del Vecho, Osnat Shurer, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

The Power of the Dog / USA 2021 (Director: Jane Campion, Screenwriters: Jane Campion, Producers: Jane Campion, Iain Canning, Roger Frappier, Tanya Seghatchian, Emile Sherman, Distributor: Netflix)

House of Gucci / USA 2021 (Director: Ridley Scott, Screenwriters: Becky Johnston, Roberto Bentivegna, Producers: Giannina Facio, Mark Huffam, Ridley Scott, Kevin J. Walsh, Distributor: United Artists Releasing)

Malignant / USA 2021 (Director: James Wan, Screenwriters: Akela Cooper, Producers: Michael Clear, James Wan, Distributor: WarnerMedia)

The Dig / USA 2021 (Director: Simon Stone, Screenwriters: Moira Buffini, Producers: Gabrielle Tana, Distributor: Netflix)

Last Night in Soho / USA 2021 (Director: Edgar Wright, Screenwriters: Krysty Wilson-Cairns, Producers: Edgar Wright, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Nira Park, Distributor: NBCUniversal)

Encanto / USA 2021 (Director: Byron Howard, Jared Bush, Screenwriters: Charise Castro Smith, Jared Bush, Producers: Yvett Merino, Clark Spencer, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

The Unforgivable / USA 2021 (Director: Nora Fingscheidt, Screenwriters: Peter Craig, Hillary Seitz, Courtenay Miles, Producers: Sandra Bullock, Graham King, Distributor: Netflix)

West Side Story / USA 2021 (Director: Steven Spielberg, Screenwriters: Tony Kushner, Producers: Kristie Macosko Krieger, Steven Spielberg, Distributor: Walt Disney Studios)

Candyman / USA 2021 (Director: Nia DaCosta, Screenwriters: Jordan Peele, Win Rosenfeld, Nia DaCosta, Producers: Ian Coope, Jordan Peele, Win Rosenfeld, Distributor: NBCUniversal)

Fear Street: 1978 / USA 2021 (Director: Leigh Janiak, Screenwriters: Zak Olkewicz, Leigh Janiak, Producers: Peter Chernin, David Ready, Jenno Topping, Distributor: Netflix)

Cinderella / USA 2021 (Director: Kay Cannon, Screenwriters: Kay Cannon, Producers: James Corden, Jonathan Kadin, Shannon McIntosh, Leo Pearlman, Distributor: Amazon Studios)

Reminiscence / USA 2021 (Director: Lisa Joy, Screenwriters: Lisa Joy, Producers: Michael De Luca, Lisa Joy, Jonathan Nolan, Aaron Ryder, Distributor: WarnerMedia)

Jolt / USA 2021 (Director: Tanya Wexler, Screenwriters: Scott Wascha, Producers: David Bernardi, Sheryl Clark, Yariv Lerner, Robert Van Norden, Les Weldon, Distributor: Amazon)

Malcolm & Marie / USA 2021 (Director: Sam Levinson, Screenwriters: Sam Levinson, Producers: Ashley Levinson, Kevin Turen, Distributor: Netflix)

Things Heard & Seen / USA 2021 (Director: Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini, Screenwriters: Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini, Producers: Stefanie Azpiazu, Anthony Bregman, Julie Cohen, Peter Cron, Distributor: Netflix)

Intrusion / USA 2021 (Director: Adam Salky, Screenwriters: Chris Sparling, Producers: Kyle Benn, Russell Hollander, Alexandra Milchan, Matthew Myers, Chris Sparling, Josh Weinstock, Distributor: Netflix)

The Forever Purge / USA 2021 (Director: Everardo Gout, Screenwriters: James DeMonaco, Producers: James DeMonaco, Sébastien K. Lemerrier, Distributor: NBCUniversal)

CODA / USA 2021 (Director: Sian Heder, Screenwriters: Sian Heder, Producers: Fabrice Gianfermi, Philippe Rousselet, Jérôme Seydoux, Patrick Wachsberger, Distributor: Apple)

Love Hard / USA 2021 (Director: Hernan Jimenez, Screenwriters: Daniel Mackey, Rebecca Ewing, Producers: McG, Mary Viola, Distributor: Netflix)

Vivo / USA 2021 (Director: Kirk DeMico, Brandon Jeffords, Screenwriters: Kirk DeMico, Quiara Alegría Hudes, Producers: Rich Moore, Lisa Stewart, Michelle Wong, Distributor: Netflix)