

# COMPOSER REPRESENTATION REPORT

WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR IN FILM MUSIC

**Sandrine Rudaz**

February 2026

## About the Author



**Sandrine Rudaz** is a Swiss–French film and concert composer and a three-time Hollywood Music in Media Award winner. She is a member of the Recording Academy, World Soundtrack Academy, and European Film Academy, and serves on the board of the Alliance of Women Film Composers.

Learn more at [www.sandrinerudaz.com](http://www.sandrinerudaz.com)

---

### Contributions

Research design and statistical analysis: Frédéric Martenet, Ph.D.

### Acknowledgments

The early development of this project benefited from community discussions, shared reflections, and feedback on drafts by board members and affiliates of the Composers Diversity Collective and the Alliance of Women Film Composers.

### Independence and Conflict of Interest Statement

This publication is an independent work. The analysis, conclusions, and presentation of findings are the sole responsibility of the author and do not reflect the views of any other individual or organization. The author declares no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter, analysis, or conclusions of this report.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Brief.....	3
Introduction.....	11
Data.....	13
Gender Identity and PoC Status.....	13
Films and Music Department.....	15
Representation in u.s. film music.....	17
Demographic Reference Point.....	17
Composer Representation Over Time .....	19
Recognition Through Major Film Music Awards.....	23
Representation Across Music Department Roles .....	28
Correlates of Composer Representation .....	34
Conclusion.....	36
References.....	37
Appendix.....	38

# EXECUTIVE BRIEF.

## Purpose of This Report

This report documents long-term patterns in the **representation of women and People of Color (PoC) in the U.S. film music industry**. Using a comprehensive dataset covering the 300 top-grossing U.S. films released each year for a quarter century, it examines representation across composers and key music department roles, as well as recognition through major film music awards.

The objective of this report is descriptive. It does not seek to assign

individual responsibility, explain underlying causes, or propose specific policy solutions. Instead, it provides a **factual foundation** for informed discussion among industry stakeholders.

This report is intended for film studios, production companies, industry guilds, awarding institutions, researchers, journalists, and educators. It is designed to support **evidence-based reflection** on long-standing patterns within the U.S. film music industry.

## Data and Scope

- **Film sample:** Top 300 U.S. domestic box-office films per year (2000–2025).
- **Individuals:** 8,000+ credited professionals.
- **Roles:** Composers, conductors, engineers, music editors, music preparators, orchestrators, and orchestration teams.
- **Awards:** full history of Original Score or equivalent categories of the Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, and Grammy Awards.
- **Data sources:** Internet Movie Database (IMDb), publicly available information.

**For nearly 20 years**

**only**

**4%**

**of top-grossing films**

**were scored**

**by WOMEN.**

Source: Top 300 U.S. box-office films per year (2000-2017).

**For 3/4 of history**

**NO WOMAN**

**composer nominated for any**

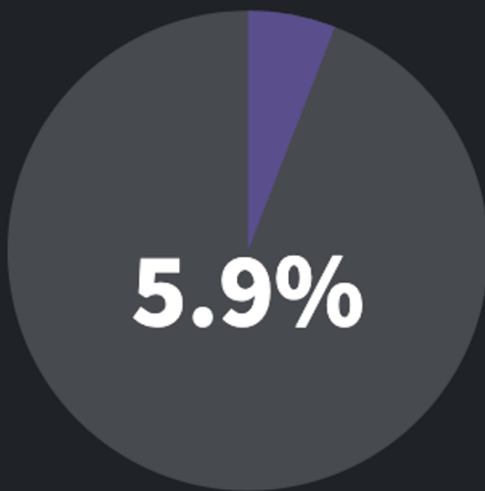
**Oscar,  
Grammy,  
or Golden Globe.**

Source: Complete history of Oscars, Grammy Awards and Golden Globes nomination for Best Score (or equivalent categories).

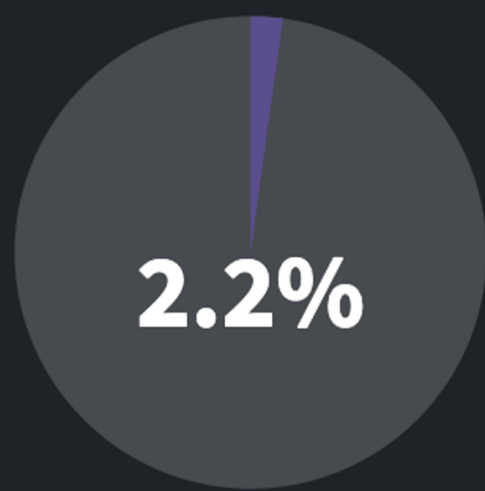
# High-budget films

are less likely  
to be scored by

**WOMEN.**



All films

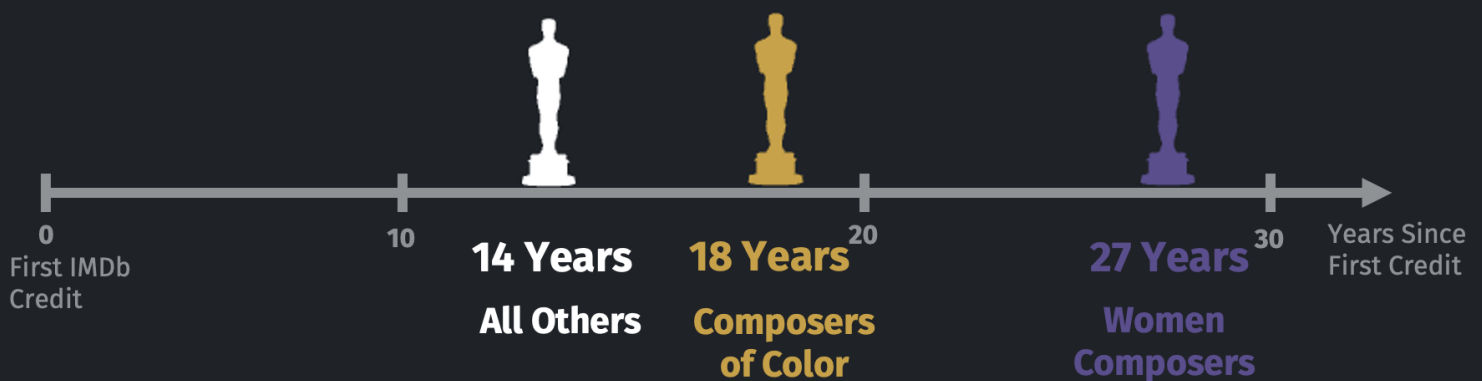


Over \$50MM

Source: Top 300 U.S. box-office films per year between 2000 and 2025.

**Women and PoC**  
composers must  
wait significantly

**LONGER**



**to receive their first  
OSCAR nomination.**

Source: Complete history of Oscar nomination for Best Score (or equivalent categories);  
average number of years from first credit to first Oscar nomination.

**A SINGLE COMPOSER**

**HAS MORE OSCAR NOMINATIONS**

**THAN ALL**

**WOMEN COMPOSERS**

**AND ALL**

**COMPOSERS OF COLOR**

**COMBINED.**

Source: Complete history of Oscar nominations for Best Score (or equivalent categories).

# Key Findings

## Composer Representation

- From 2000 through the late 2010s, **women composers accounted for about 4%** of composers scoring the top 300 films each year.
- The share of women composers increased after 2018 and exceeded 10% for the first time in 2022 and has since stagnated.
- The share of **composers of color hovered around 6%** until 2015, then rose sharply, reaching over 10% by 2020 and has since stagnated.

## Across the Music Department

- Women and PoC composers are **underrepresented across the entire music department**.
- Women are more represented in certain music department roles (e.g., music preparation, music editing) than in lead composer roles.
- Women conductors and conductors of color represent **less than 5%** of credited **conductors** on top-grossing films.
- Women orchestrators account for approximately 8% of orchestrators, while orchestrators of color remain at approximately 4%, with no clear upward trend.

## Film Budget and Genres

- **Films with larger budgets are less likely to be scored by women or composers of color.**
- Women composers are more likely to score **romance or documentaries**, and less likely to score **action films**.
- Composers of color are more likely to score films with social justice themes.

## Awards Recognition

- Across the full history of the Oscars, Golden Globes, and Grammys:
  - **No woman composer was nominated in 66 of the 92 total award years,**
  - Women have never represented more than **20% of nominees** in any year.
- Among all nominations at these awards:
  - **3%** went to women composers,
  - **5%** went to composers of color.
- A single composer has accumulated more Oscar nominations than all women and composers of color combined.
- On average, women and PoC composers had **more years of professional experience** at the time of their first Academy Award nomination than their men and white counterparts.



## Interpretation

Taken together, these findings show that **representation gaps have persisted for decades**, with only modest changes in recent years. While increased awareness and public discussion have coincided with some recent gains, these changes remain limited in magnitude.

# INTRODUCTION.

The underrepresentation of women and People of Color (PoC) in the U.S. film industry has been widely documented across acting, directing, and producing roles. Far less attention, however, has been paid to film music, which contributes to shaping a film's emotional and narrative identity. Despite its central creative role and its reliance on highly concentrated professional networks, film music remains one of the least examined domains in discussions of representation.

**This report provides the most comprehensive longitudinal analysis to date of gender and racial representation in U.S. theatrical film music.** Drawing on a large-scale dataset covering the 300 top-grossing U.S. films released annually between 2000 and 2025, it examines representation among composers and across key music department roles, including conductors, engineers, music editors, orchestrators, music preparation

teams, and music orchestration teams. The report also analyzes patterns of professional recognition through the full history of the Academy Awards (or Oscars), Golden Globe Awards, and Grammy Awards in original score or equivalent categories.

The findings document persistent and substantial disparities that have endured for decades. Representation remains extremely low for women and PoC composers, declines further among higher-budget films, and is especially limited in systems of professional recognition such as major awards. While some increases have occurred in recent years, these changes are recent and remain small relative to the scale of long-standing gaps.

The analysis presented in this report is strictly descriptive. It does not seek to assign individual responsibility, explain underlying causes, or propose specific policy interventions. Instead, it

establishes a factual baseline by documenting patterns of representation across roles, film characteristics, and recognition structures within the U.S. film music industry.

Although analytically neutral, the findings are institutionally relevant. The patterns observed are shaped by professional practices governing hiring, collaboration, budgeting, and recognition. As such, this report is intended to inform evidence-based

discussion and reflection among studios, production companies, industry guilds, awarding institutions, researchers, journalists, and educators.

By providing a rigorous empirical foundation, this report aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of long-standing inequities in film music and to support informed dialogue about representation within one of the film industry's most influential creative domains.

# DATA.

## Gender Identity and PoC Status

We recognize that any attempt to classify individuals by gender identity or People of Color (PoC) status is inherently imperfect and subject to multiple sources of bias. We do not claim that our methodology is free from such limitations. Rather, it represents a pragmatic and transparent approach designed to enable empirical analysis while minimizing harm and speculative assumptions. Importantly, we do not imply that individuals grouped under the same gender identity or PoC classification share homogeneous experiences; individual trajectories, opportunities, and challenges remain fundamentally diverse and shaped by intersecting personal and structural factors.

We further acknowledge that representation is multidimensional and extends well beyond gender identity and PoC status, encompassing dimensions

such as neurodiversity, disability, age, religion, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, and others. These dimensions are no less important; however, they fall outside the scope of the present report and are left for future research.

Gender identity and PoC status for over 8,000 credited professionals are based exclusively on publicly available information. Individuals for whom neither gender identity nor PoC status could be determined with sufficient confidence based on reliable public sources were not included from the analysis. We acknowledge that this may introduce selection bias if individuals with limited public information differ systematically from those included. Reliance on public records likely results in systematic undercounting of gender minority composers, whose identities may be less frequently disclosed,

inconsistently documented, or intentionally kept private in public-facing sources.

Gender identity was classified into three categories: men, women, and gender identities outside the man/woman binary. Classification relied solely on explicit public self-identification or consistently documented public information. Gender minority individuals are retained as a distinct analytical category, consistent with respect for self-identification. Due to the structural invisibility of gender minority identities in public credit databases, sample sizes for this group are very small relative to their likely true presence in the industry. As a result, gender minority composers are not subjected to separate comparative statistical analysis, as doing so would risk misleading inference, false precision, or potential re-identification. Importantly, the absence of statistical analysis should not be interpreted as evidence of absence, lack of relevance, or lack of contribution, but rather as a limitation of available data. This approach reflects an ethical choice to balance visibility with protection, prioritizing accuracy, non-speculation,

and harm minimization over statistical granularity.

PoC status was defined in accordance with U.S. Census classifications and includes individuals who do not identify as White, encompassing American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander identities. For analytical purposes, PoC status is treated as a binary variable throughout the report. This operationalization does not capture heterogeneity within or across groups and should be interpreted as a broad structural category rather than a proxy for cultural identity or lived experience.

Throughout this report, decisions regarding inclusion, aggregation, and reporting reflect a deliberate ethical framework guided by respect for self-identification, avoidance of speculative classification, and a commitment to minimizing potential harm.

Classifications should be understood as analytical groupings derived from public records, not as assertions of personal identity. As data availability and reporting norms evolve, future work may allow for more granular and inclusive approaches.

## Films and Music Department

Film-level data were collected from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) for the 300 highest-grossing theatrically released films produced in the United States in each calendar year from 2000 through 2025, yielding a sample of 7,800 films.<sup>1</sup> By design, this report focuses exclusively on the top-grossing theatrically released films in the United States. This scope does not aim to represent the full population of film music work, but rather to examine access to the most economically, symbolically, and institutionally powerful segment of the industry. As such, the findings speak specifically to patterns of representation in high-visibility, high-budget projects that disproportionately shape career trajectories, professional recognition, and industry norms. This report is intentionally limited in scope and does not measure for example film and television productions released exclusively on streaming platforms, television series, episodic content, interactive media, independent or non-

U.S. theatrical markets, uncredited, ghostwritten, or informally contributed music work. As a result, the findings should not be interpreted as estimates of overall participation in music composition, but rather as indicators of representation within the highest-grossing segment of U.S. theatrical film.

For each film, we recorded the year of release, domestic and worldwide box-office revenue, plot synopsis, and genre classifications as reported on IMDb. A film was assigned to a given year if its initial theatrical release date occurred between January 1 and December 31 of that year. Total box-office revenue was attributed to the year of release and was not distributed across multiple years.<sup>2</sup> For each film, we collected the names of the credited composer(s) and all personnel listed under the music department. Professional roles were classified strictly according to IMDb credit designations, without reinterpretation or

---

<sup>1</sup> We focused on the top 300 films by box-office revenue because analyzing the universe of films released in the United States would be a daunting task. Nonetheless, these top 300 films account for more than 80% of the total U.S. box-office revenue in any given year.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the film *Wonka* was released on December 15, 2023, and hence was considered in the 2023 data, including its total gross box-office revenue, even if part was generated in 2024.

reclassification beyond the credit language used.<sup>3</sup>

To support exploratory analysis, we identified whether a film's narrative centrally engaged with themes related to social justice or gender equality, and to characterize the film's primary target audience as men-oriented, women-oriented, or undetermined.<sup>4</sup> These classifications should be understood as probabilistic and approximate indicators rather than definitive or exhaustive characterizations of film content. Example films identified as engaging with social justice themes include *Killers of the Flower Moon* (score by Robbie Robertson), *The Long Game* (score by Hanan Townshend), and *Rustin* (score by Branford Marsalis). Films identified as engaging with gender equality themes include *The Color Purple* (score by Kris Bowers) and *Tár* (score by Hildur

Guðnadóttir). Films identified as primarily targeting men audiences include *Oppenheimer* (score by Ludwig Göransson) and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* (score by John Murphy), while films identified as primarily targeting women audiences include *Anyone But You* (score by Este Haim and Christopher Stracey), *Past Lives* (score by Christopher Bear and Daniel Rossen), and *No Hard Feelings* (score by Mychael Danna and Jessica Rose Weiss).

These thematic and audience classifications are inherently approximate and do not imply exclusive appeal, intent, or reception. They are used solely for descriptive and exploratory purposes and are not interpreted as definitive characterizations of film content, audience composition, or societal impact.

---

<sup>3</sup> See the Appendix for how we inferred the music department roles.

<sup>4</sup> We use automated text analysis to infer these film characteristics. A stratified random subsample of 200 films was independently manually classified, with agreement exceeding 90% across all inferred variables.

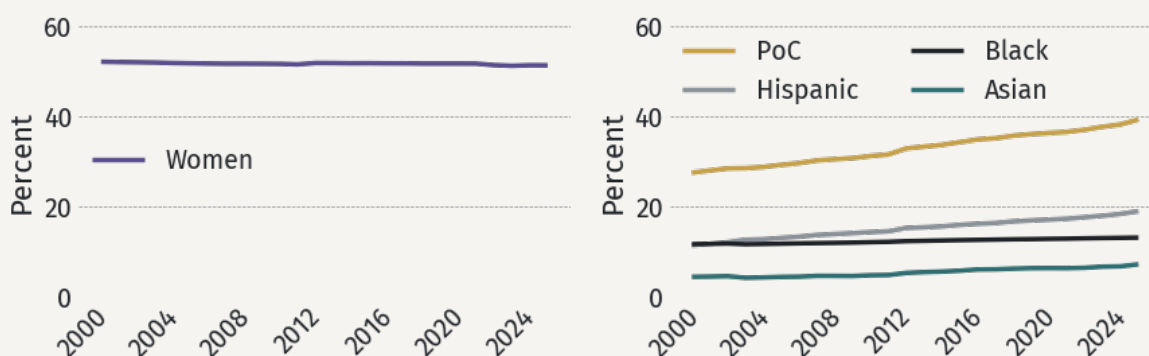
# REPRESENTATION IN U.S. FILM MUSIC.

## Demographic Reference Point

Assessing whether the observed share of women and People of Color (PoC) composers is relatively low or high requires comparison to an external benchmark. The broadest and most readily available reference point is the demographic composition of the United States population. **Figure 1** reports the share of women and major racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. population since 2000, based on data from the U.S. Census. The left panel shows that the proportion of women in the U.S.

population has remained relatively stable over this period, at approximately 52%, with only a modest downward trend. The right panel highlights the rise of the PoC share from 27% to 40%, driven most notably by the increase in the Hispanic population from roughly 11% to nearly 20% and the growth of the Asian population from approximately 4% to 7%, while the Black population remains comparatively stable, rising from about 12% to 13%.

**Figure 1 - Share of Women and Ethnic Groups in U.S. Population**





While population-level benchmarks provide a useful upper bound for representation, they are an imperfect comparator for film music composition, as not all demographic groups participate in or seek careers in this profession at equal rates. A more informative benchmark would ideally reflect the demographic composition of individuals active in, or entering, the U.S. film music industry. However, comprehensive and reliable data of this type do not currently exist.

One potential proxy would be the demographic composition of individuals enrolled in or graduating from music schools, film schools, or film music composition programs. Even this comparison has important limitations, as formal training in film music composition is neither necessary nor sufficient for a career as a film composer. Nevertheless, such data can offer partial insight into the pool of individuals expressing interest in pursuing film composition as a profession.

Existing survey-based evidence in this area is limited and often affected by

selection bias, as response rates are typically low, and respondents may differ systematically from non-respondents. An exception is the 2023 Berklee Graduating Student Survey, which collected responses from 1,555 graduates and achieved a response rate of approximately 85%, reducing concerns about non-response bias within that graduating cohort. Among respondents, 48% identified as women or another gender identity, 25% identified as Asian, 8% as Black, and 15% as Hispanic. **These shares are broadly comparable to aggregate U.S. population statistics**, with a higher representation of Asian students.

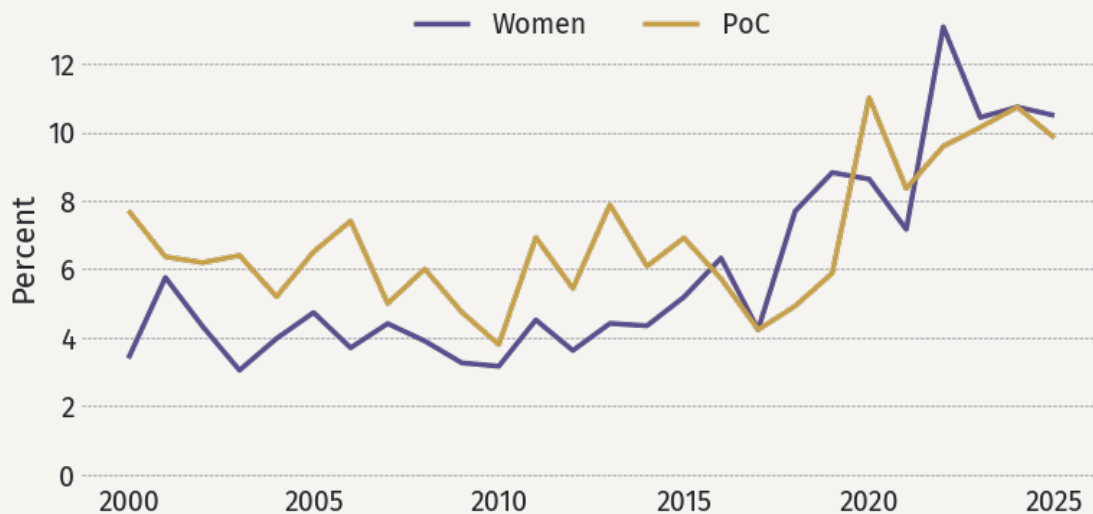
These comparisons are presented for contextualization only. They are not interpreted as normative targets, nor do they imply that population or educational benchmarks should be mechanically mirrored within the film music industry. Rather, they provide reference points that help situate observed representation patterns in the absence of industry-wide demographic data.

# Composer Representation Over Time

Figure 2 reports the annual share of women composers and PoC composers among all individuals credited as composers on the top 300 highest-grossing U.S. films in each year from 2000 to 2025. For much of the sample period, both shares remain relatively low and stable. **The share of women composers fluctuates around approximately 4% until 2018, after which it increases steadily, surpassing 10% for the first time in**

2022. **The share of PoC composers remains near 6% until approximately 2015, experiences a brief decline around 2017, and then increases sharply, exceeding 10% in 2020.** The share of women composers reaches its highest observed value in 2022, while the share of PoC composers peaks in 2020. By 2025, both shares converge to approximately 10%.

Figure 2 - Share of Women and PoC Composers in Top 300 Films

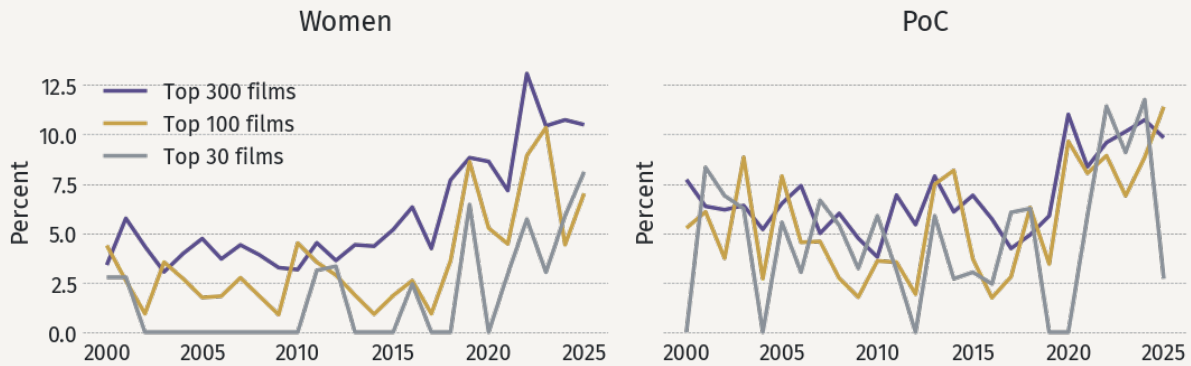


The analysis above includes all individuals credited as composers on the top 300 films each year. We next examine whether representation differs when attention is restricted to films with higher commercial prominence. Specifically, we separately **analyze the top 100 and top 30 films by box-office revenue** in each year. The share of women composers declines

markedly when focusing on these subsets.

**In many years, no woman composer is credited on any of the top 30 films.** The pattern for composers of color is less pronounced and exhibits greater year-to-year variability; nevertheless, on average, **representation of women and PoC remains lower among higher-ranked films** than in the broader top 300 sample.

**Figure 3 -Share of Women and PoC Composers by Film Box-office Rank**

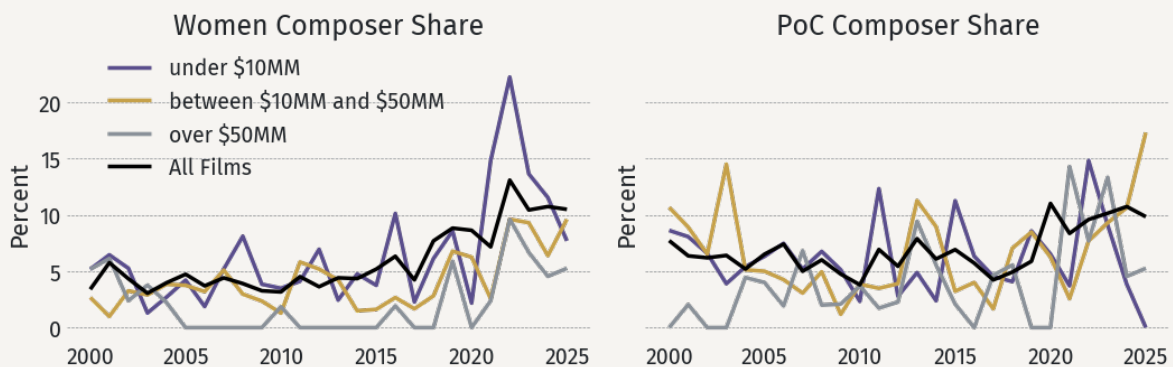


A comparable pattern emerges when films are grouped by production budget rather than revenue ranking. **The share of composers of color, and especially the share of women composers, is lower for higher-budget films.** These results are descriptive and do not imply that budget directly determines composer selection.

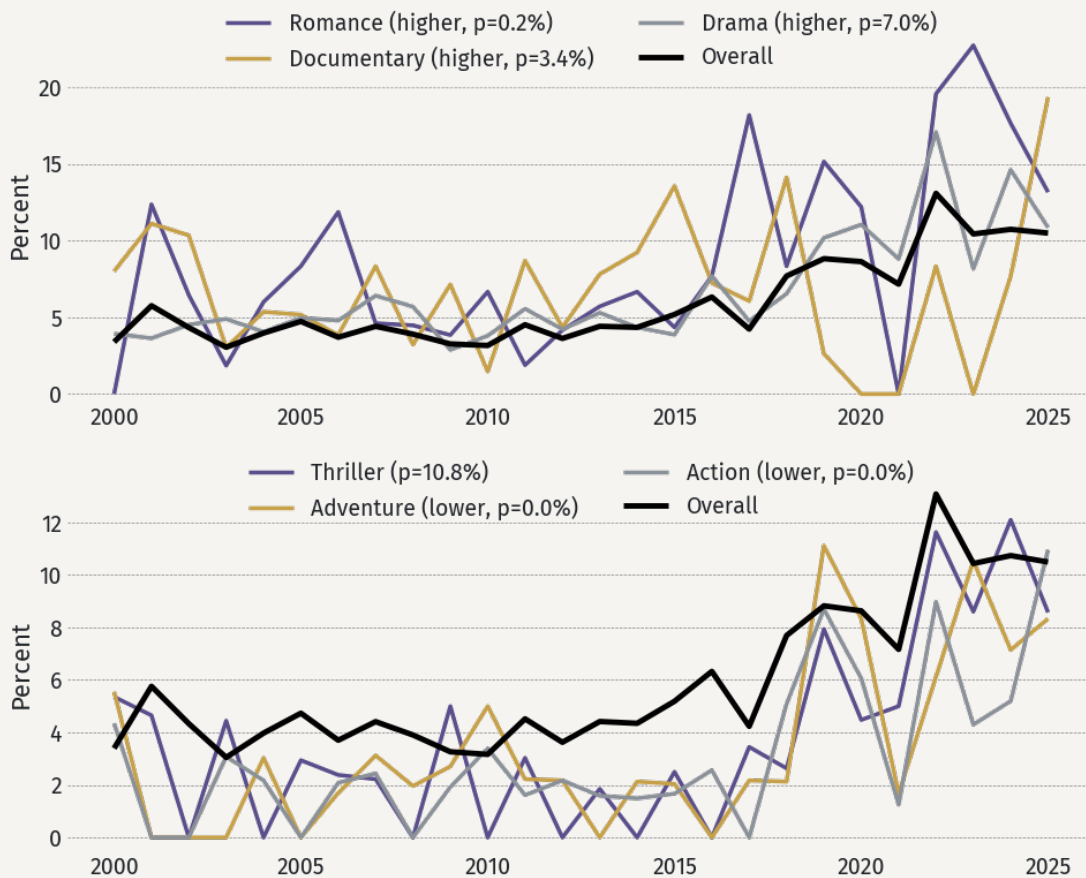
We next consider variation across film genres. **Figure 5** reports the share of women composers among the top 300 films associated with each genre tag. For

each genre, the legend reports the p-value from a test comparing the genre-specific share to the overall share of women composers. P-values below 5% are conventionally interpreted as indicating statistical significance. The results show that **women composers are, on average, more frequently credited on romance films and documentaries, and less frequently credited on adventure and action films.** No consistent or statistically robust genre-specific pattern emerges for PoC composers.

**Figure 4 -Share of Women and PoC Composers by Film Budget**



**Figure 5 - Share of Women Composers by Film Genre**

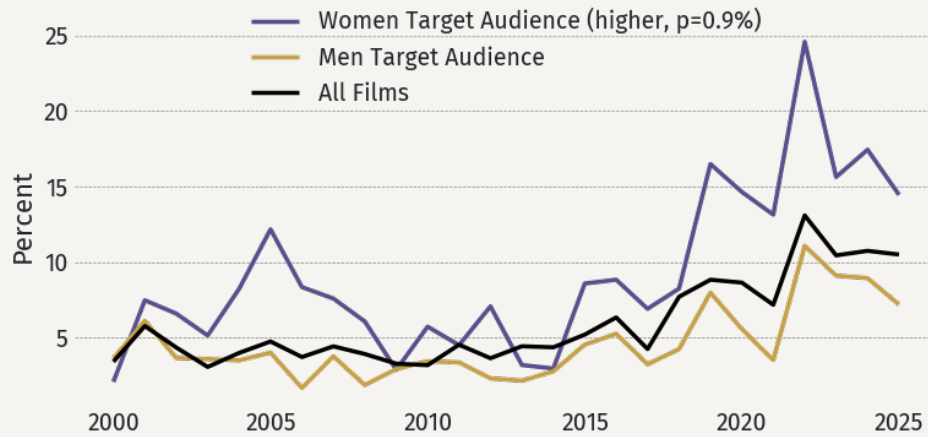


Finally, we examine film attributes inferred from plot synopses. **Figures 6, 7, and 8** show that **the share of women composers is substantially higher for films inferred to target women audiences** than for films overall, and correspondingly lower for films inferred to target men audiences. In addition, **films inferred to engage centrally with themes of gender equality exhibit a markedly higher share of women composers**, particularly in more recent years.

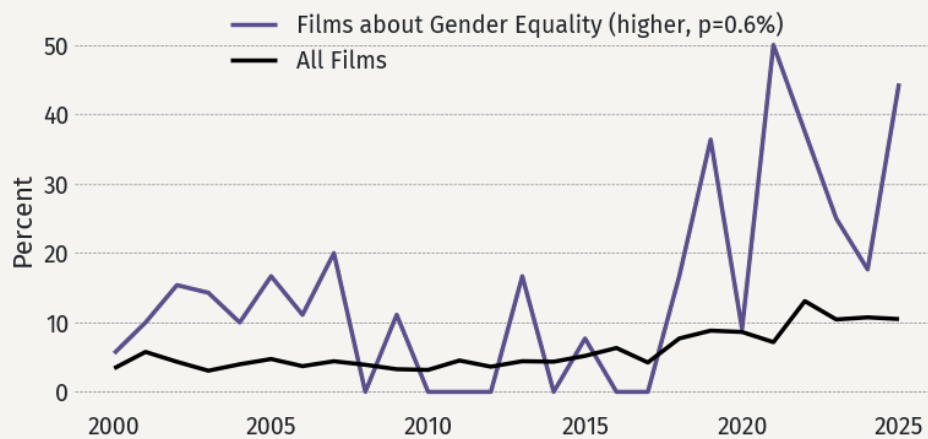
**Films inferred to engage with social justice themes display a significantly higher share of PoC composers.**

These findings should be interpreted with caution. The inferred film attributes are approximate, the analysis is descriptive, and the observed associations do not imply causality or intentional matching between film themes, audiences, and composer identities.

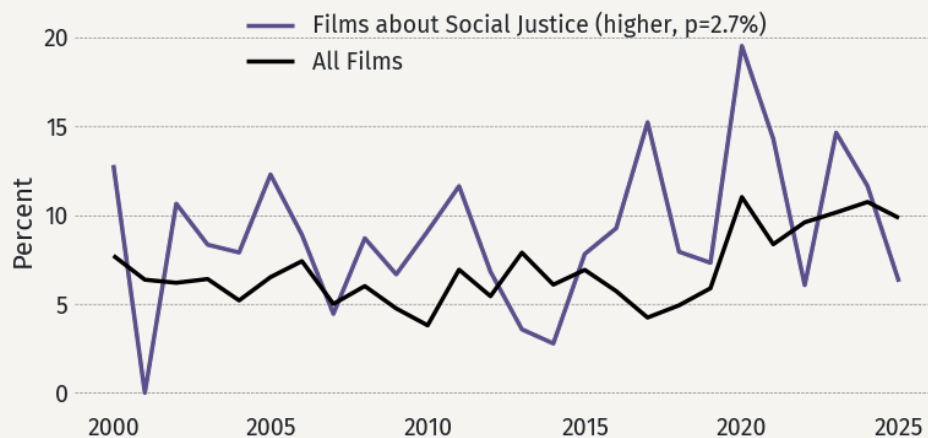
**Figure 6 - Share of Women Composers by Target Audience**



**Figure 7 - Share of Women Composers in Films about Gender Equality**



**Figure 8 - Share of PoC Composers in Films about Social Justice**



## Recognition Through Major Film Music Awards

Major film music awards play a significant role in shaping professional trajectories within the industry. **Award nominations and wins are associated with increased visibility, enhanced bargaining power, access to higher-budget projects, and long-term career sustainability.** Beyond their material consequences, awards also function as institutional signals of artistic excellence and legitimacy, influencing industry norms and public perceptions of whose work is valued and recognized. As such, patterns of recognition in major awards provide an informative—though necessarily incomplete—lens on status,

opportunity, and visibility within film music composition.

This section examines the representation of women and PoC composers among nominees for three major film music awards: the Academy Awards, the Golden Globe Awards, and the Grammy Awards. The analysis is descriptive in nature and is intended to document historical patterns of recognition rather than to assess artistic merit or to attribute causal mechanisms. The objective is to situate observed nomination outcomes within a broader discussion of representation in the field.

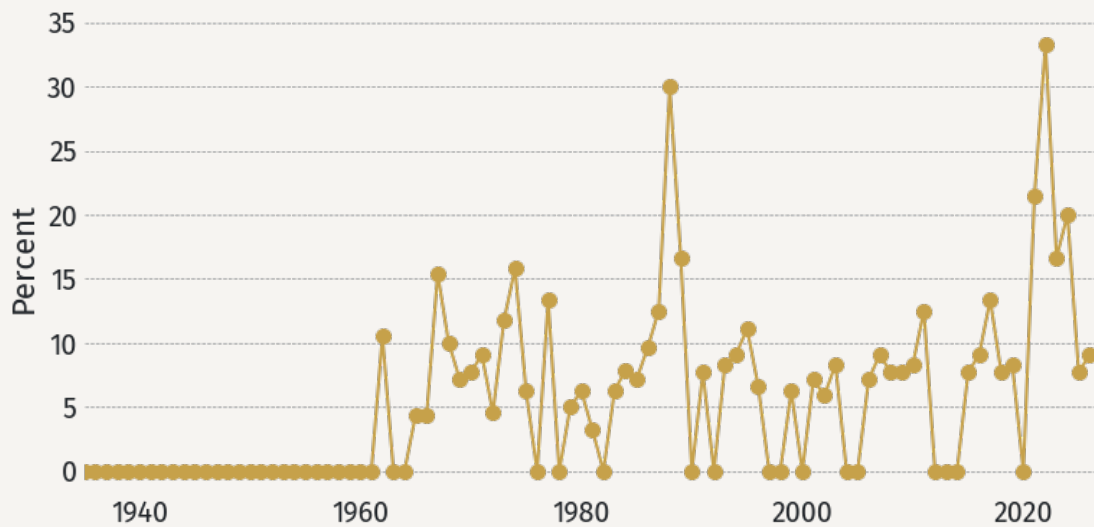
### Share of Women and PoC Composers Among Nominees

Considering nominations across all three award institutions jointly, we observe modest increases in the number of women and PoC nominees in recent years. However, over the full historical record, there is **no clear or sustained trend toward greater representation.** During a prolonged period spanning approximately 1990 to 2020, no more than one PoC composer was nominated

in any given year across the three major awards.

**Across the full sample of 1,916 nominations, 105 nominations, or 5%, were attributed to PoC composers, and 38 of 982 Academy Awards nominations, or 4%, were attributed to PoC composers.** The figures do not indicate a consistent increase in representation over time.

**Figure 9 - Share of PoC Nominees at Major Awards**



Patterns of representation are even more pronounced when focusing on women composers. **Over the 92-year history of the awards considered, there are 66 years in which no woman was nominated at any of the three major awards.** At no point does the share of women nominees exceed 20% in any single year.

**Among the 1,916 total nominations across all major awards, 61 nominations, or 3%, were attributed to women composers. At the Academy Awards specifically, 14 of 982 nominations, or 1%, were attributed to women.** Only one openly non-binary

composer has ever been nominated at the Oscars, and only one woman of color has ever been nominated at the Oscars.

As with PoC composers, the data do not reveal a clear or sustained upward trend in women's representation over time.

The distribution of nominations is also highly concentrated among a small number of individuals. **Notably, a single composer has accumulated more Academy Award nominations than the total number of nominations received by all women and PoC composers combined over the full history of the awards.**

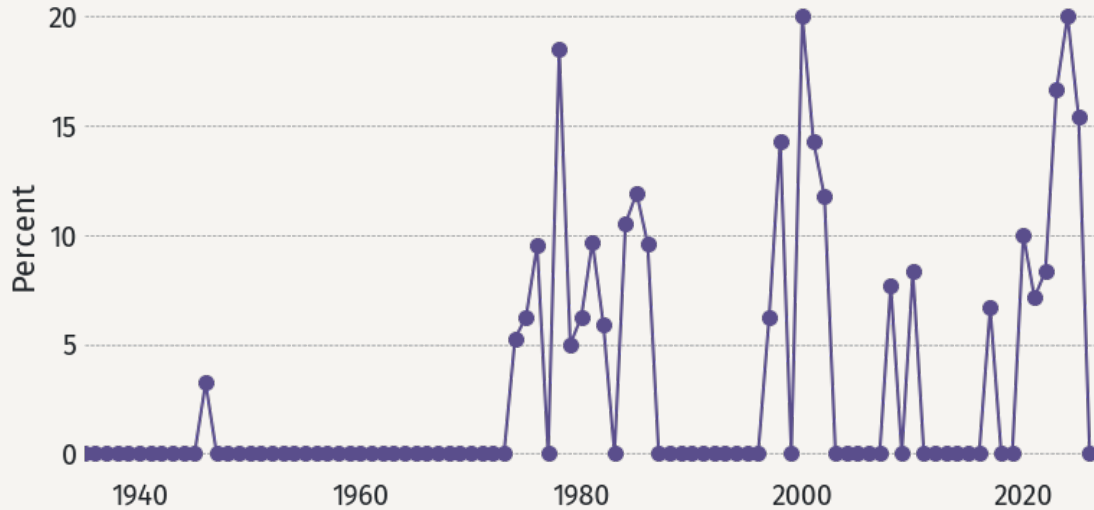


**ONLY 14 of 982**  
**OSCAR NOMINATIONS**  
**WENT TO**  
**WOMEN**  
**COMPOSERS.**

Source: Complete history of Oscar nomination for Best Score (or equivalent categories).



**Figure 10 - Share of Women Nominees at Major Awards**



## Experience at First Major Award Nomination

The preceding sections document very low levels of representation of women and PoC composers among nominees at the three major film music awards. In this section, we examine whether patterns differ in the amount of professional experience accumulated by composers at the time of their first nomination. Rather than attempting to measure difficulty directly, we focus on observable career characteristics at first recognition.

For each nominated composer, we measure professional experience using two indicators: 1) **years of experience**, defined as the difference between the year of first nomination and the year of the composer's first credited film score listed on IMDb; and 2) **number of credits**, defined as the total number of composer

credits listed on IMDb as of the year of the first nomination. These measures rely on publicly available credit information and serve as proxies for career duration and accumulated professional output. They do not capture differences in the scale, visibility, or nature of individual projects.

**Table 1** reports average years of experience and average number of credits at the time of first nomination, separately for women and men composers, as well as for PoC and other composers. Results are shown for all major awards combined and for each award institution separately. Differences between groups are reported alongside conventional significance indicators (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ ).

Given the small number of women and PoC composers receiving nominations, statistical power is limited, and estimates are sensitive to the inclusion of additional future nominees. For this reason, we do not place emphasis on precise point estimates and instead focus on the direction and consistency of observed differences.

Across all major awards combined, **PoC composers exhibit a statistically significant higher average number of years of experience at the time of their first nomination** relative to other composers. Both **women composers and PoC composers have significantly higher average years of experience at their first Academy Award**

**nomination** compared with their men and white counterparts. Differences in the number of credits at first nomination are more variable across awards and do not display a consistent pattern.

These findings are descriptive and do not establish causal mechanisms. They are consistent with the possibility that **women and PoC composers, on average, accumulate more years of professional experience before receiving their first major award nomination.**

However, alternative explanations—including cohort effects, differences in career trajectories, genre concentration, or crediting practices—cannot be ruled out.

**Table 1 - Average Years of Experience and Number of Credits at First Nomination**

Variable	Event	Women	Men	Diff.	PoC	Others	Diff.
Years of Experience at First Nomination	All Awards	16.2	14.8	1.4	19.3	14.4	<b>4.9***</b>
	Academy Awards	26.8	13.8	<b>13.0***</b>	19.4	13.8	<b>5.6**</b>
	Golden Globe Awards	15.1	19.5	-4.4	23.2	18.8	<b>4.4*</b>
	Grammy Awards	13.0	12.9	0.1	16.0	12.6	3.4
Number of Credits at First Nomination	All Awards	32.6	46.3	-13.6	49.9	44.9	5.0
	Academy Awards	53.3	44.6	8.7	43.5	45.0	-1.5
	Golden Globe Awards	33.7	61.5	-27.8	73.2	58.0	15.2
	Grammy Awards	25.0	38.7	-13.7	37.4	37.4	0.0

# Representation Across Music Department Roles

In addition to composers, film scores rely on a range of specialized roles within the music department. This section reports descriptive statistics for several of these roles, including conductors, engineers, music editors, music

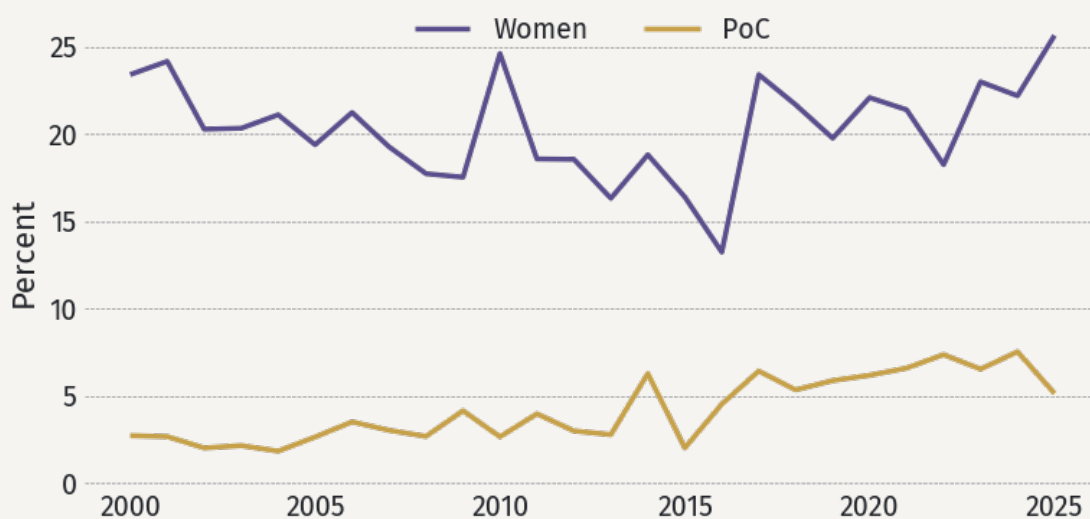
preparation personnel, orchestrators, and members of orchestration teams. All roles are defined based on credit designations, and analyses are restricted to individuals credited on the top 300 highest-grossing U.S. films released each year.

## Music Editors

Music editors are responsible for selecting, synchronizing, and editing music to align with a film's narrative and timing. Their responsibilities may include the selection and management of temporary music and coordination between the composer, director, and editorial departments. **Figure 11** reports the share of women and PoC music editors over time.

The share of women music editors remains relatively stable throughout the sample period, fluctuating between **approximately 20% and 25%**. While this share is higher than that observed for composers, no clear upward or downward trend is evident. The share of PoC music editors is substantially lower, **averaging around 5%**, with a gradual increase over time.

**Figure 11 - Share of Women and PoC Music Editors**

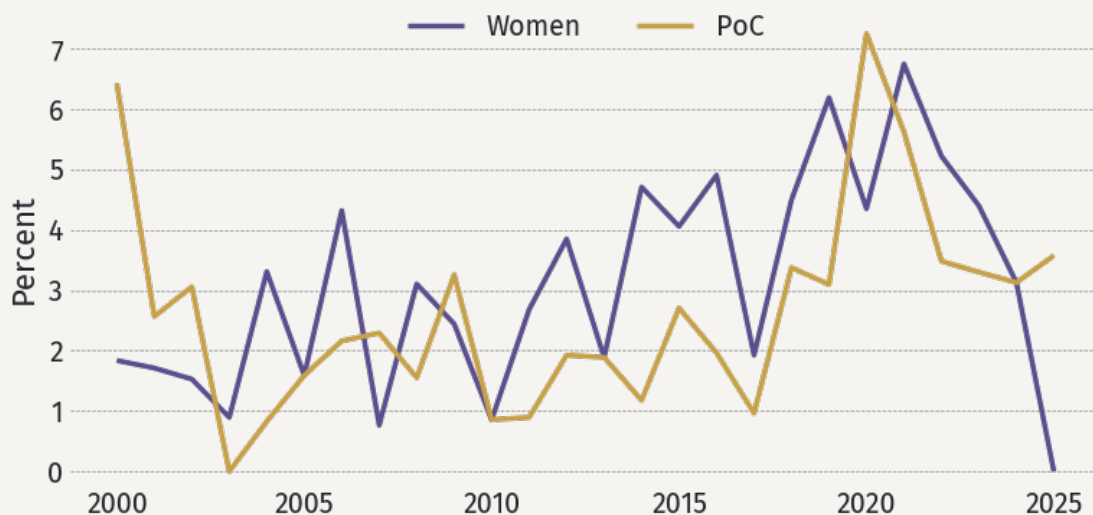


## Conductors

Not all films employ live orchestral recording and therefore not all films credit a conductor. Among the top 300 films released each year, approximately 100 films include a credited conductor. The conductors analyzed here are those engaged for studio recording sessions; results should not be generalized to conductors working in other musical contexts, such as concert performance or non-film recording environments. Sometimes the composer also serves as the conductor.

As shown in **Figure 12**, the share of both women and PoC conductors is consistently very low, remaining **below 5% on average** over the sample period. A modest increase is observed in recent years for both groups, broadly mirroring the timing of increases observed among composers, though at substantially lower levels. In 2025, no woman conductor was credited. Because only 30 conductors were reported for that year, this observation should be interpreted with caution, as it may reflect incomplete or delayed IMDb credit reporting.

**Figure 12 - Share of Women and PoC Conductors**



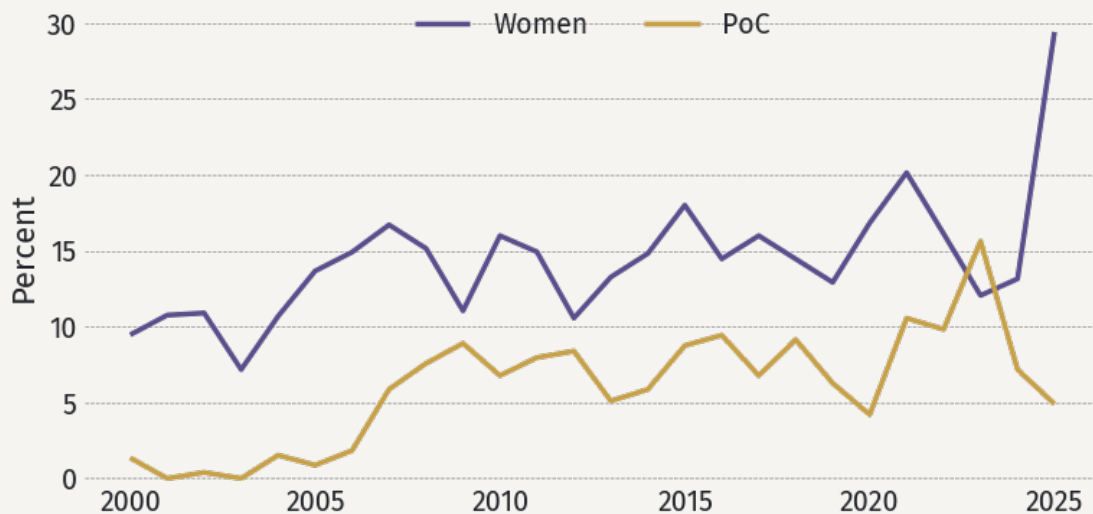
## Music Preparation

Music preparation personnel are responsible for ensuring that musicians have accurate and usable materials for recording sessions. Responsibilities may include scores and parts preparation, formatting, copying, arranging, orchestration support, and materials management. **Figure 13** presents the share of women and PoC individuals credited in music preparation roles.

The share of women in music preparation roles is consistently higher than the share observed among

composers. In 2000, women already accounted for approximately 10% of music preparation credits, compared with less than 4% among composers. This share increased over time, surpassing 20% in 2021, before declining in subsequent years. The share of PoC music preparation personnel was close to zero in the early 2000s, increased beginning around 2007, reached nearly 10% by 2009, and rose further to almost 20% in 2023 before declining toward approximately 10% in 2024.

**Figure 13 - Share of Women and PoC in Music Preparation**

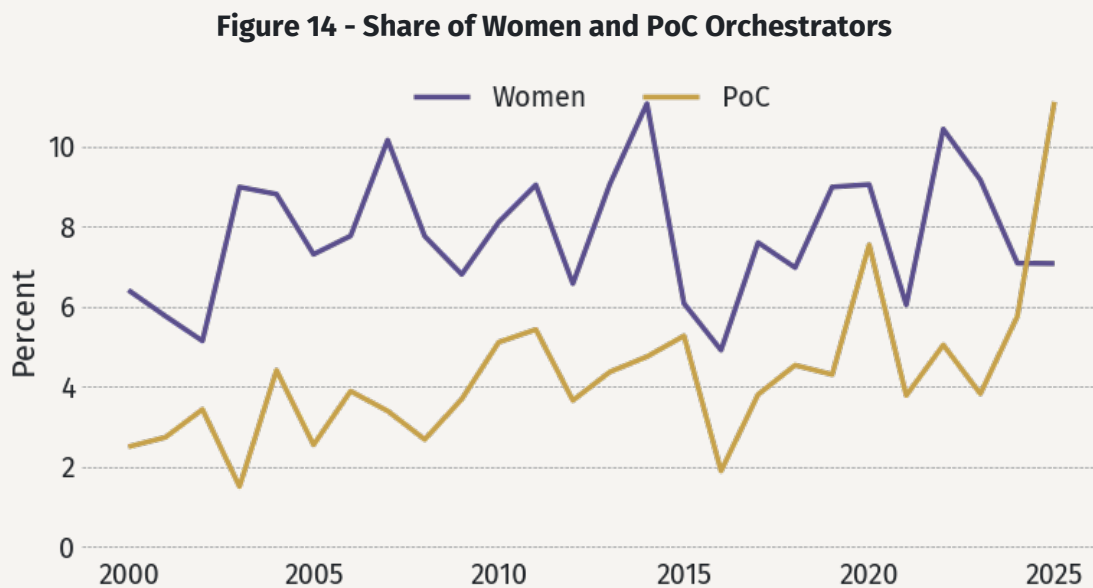


## Orchestrators

Orchestrators are responsible for translating compositional material into detailed arrangements suitable for specific ensembles or orchestral recordings. **Figure 14** reports representation patterns among orchestrators.

The share of women orchestrators remains relatively stable over time, fluctuating **around 8%**. This level is

higher than the corresponding share among composers, but unlike composers, no sustained upward trend is observed. The share of PoC orchestrators is lower, fluctuating around **approximately 4%**, with no clear evidence of long-term growth. In 2025, the shares of women and PoC orchestrators are both approximately 9%.



## Orchestration Team

Orchestration is typically carried out by teams rather than by individual orchestrators alone. These teams may include assistant orchestrators, additional orchestrators, and supervising orchestrators (see Appendix for detailed definitions). **Figure 15** reports representation patterns for the full orchestration team.

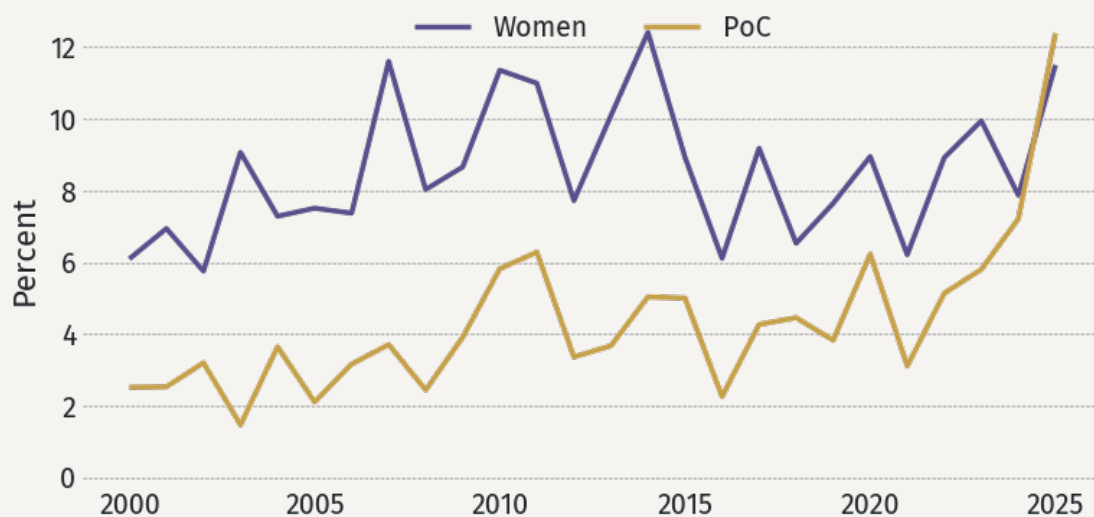
We do not observe meaningful differences between individual

orchestrators and orchestration teams in the share of PoC representation.

However, the **share of women is modestly higher within orchestration teams than among lead orchestrators.**

This pattern suggests that women are more frequently represented in supporting roles within orchestration teams than in primary orchestration positions.

**Figure 15 - Share of Women and PoC in the Orchestration Team**

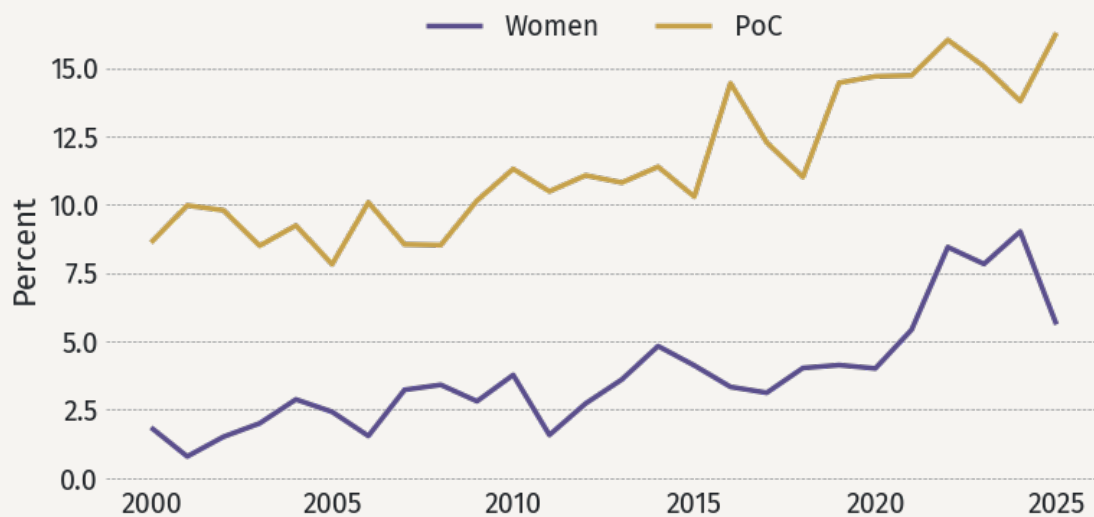


## Engineers

Engineering involves the technical capture, manipulation, and mixing of sound to support the creative and narrative goals of a project. Engineering work is typically carried out by teams rather than by a single engineer. These teams may include lead engineers, assistant engineers, additional engineers, Pro Tools operators, and supervising or re-recording engineers (see Appendix for detailed definitions). **Figure 16** reports representation patterns for the full engineering team.

The share of women engineers increases gradually over time, rising from low single-digit levels in the early 2000s to a peak of approximately 9% in the early 2020s, before declining slightly in the most recent years. While modest growth is observable, **women remain consistently underrepresented in engineering roles throughout the period.** The share of PoC engineers is higher and exhibits a clearer upward trajectory, increasing from roughly 9% in the early 2000s to above 15% by 2025.

**Figure 16 - Share of Women and PoC Engineers**





## Correlates of Composer Representation

The preceding sections present descriptive statistics and graphical evidence. In this section, we estimate regression models to **examine how observable film and music department characteristics are statistically associated with the presence of women and PoC composers**. The purpose of these models is to assess conditional correlations while accounting for multiple factors simultaneously; they are not intended to identify causal mechanisms.

We estimate both ordinary least squares (OLS) and logistic (logit) regression models. The OLS specification uses the proportion of women or PoC composers credited on a given film as the dependent variable. The logit specification uses a binary outcome indicating whether a film credits at least one woman or at least one PoC composer. Explanatory variables include the share of women or PoC music editors, genre indicators, budget categories, and year fixed effects.

The OLS model is specified as:

$$y_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta X_{i,t} + \sum_{t=2001}^{2025} D_t + \epsilon_i$$

where  $y_{i,t}$  denotes the share of women or PoC composers credited on film  $i$  in year  $t$ ,  $X_{i,t}$  is a vector of observed characteristics of the film (e.g. genre, budget, etc.), and  $D_t$  is a dummy variable equal to 1 in year  $t$  and 0 otherwise. The logistic regression model is specified as:

$$\log \left( \frac{p_{i,t}}{1 - p_{i,t}} \right) = \alpha + \beta X_{i,t} + \sum_{t=2001}^{2025} D_t + \epsilon_i$$

where  $p_{i,t}$  is the probability that film  $i$  features at least one woman or PoC composer. Including year fixed effects allows the models to account for time-specific factors common to all films each year. All regressions are estimated using film-level observations, and standard errors are reported in parentheses.

**Table 2** presents the estimated regression. The results reveal key findings. A higher proportion of women music editors significantly increases the probability of a film having a woman composer. Films with a higher share of women music editors are more likely to also credit at least one woman composer. Similarly, the odds of having a PoC composer increases when the music editor is also a PoC. Films in the romance and documentary genres are more likely

to feature women composers; for instance, documentaries are more likely to be scored by a woman composer. High-budget films (i.e., those with budgets above \$50 million) are less likely to feature women composers. Films

addressing social justice themes are more likely to feature a PoC composer. We also observed significant positive year effects in recent years, mostly for women composers.

**Table 2 - Regression Results**

	Women share		PoC share	
	OLS	Logit	OLS	Logit
Constant	0.030* (0.017)	-3.401*** (0.400)	0.075*** (0.018)	-2.507*** (0.294)
Women Music Editor Share	0.034*** (0.010)	0.540*** (0.172)	-0.022* (0.011)	-0.3336* (0.185)
PoC Music Editor Share	0.003 (0.020)	0.099 (0.356)	0.104*** (0.023)	1.101*** (0.256)
Genre: Romance	0.024** (0.010)	0.414** (0.171)		
Genre: Documentary	0.056*** (0.017)	0.946*** (0.262)		
Genre: Action	-0.019** (0.009)	-0.358* (0.210)		
Genre: Adventure	-0.011 (0.010)	-0.274 (0.249)		
Genre: Thriller	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.080 (0.202)		
Social Justice			0.032*** (0.013)	0.453*** (0.178)
Budget above \$50MM	-0.015 (0.010)	-0.462* (0.242)	0.004 (0.026)	0.058 (0.409)
2001	-0.007 (0.023)	-0.251 (0.597)	-0.008 (0.025)	-0.132 (0.416)
...	...	...	...	...
2020	0.089*** (0.024)	1.356*** (0.455)	0.063** (0.026)	0.677* (0.367)
2021	0.053** (0.024)	1.008** (0.480)	0.047* (0.026)	0.578 (0.376)
2022	0.136*** (0.023)	1.831*** (0.435)	0.036 (0.025)	0.455 (0.371)
2023	0.107*** (0.023)	1.578*** (0.446)	0.044* (0.026)	0.517 (0.372)
2024	0.091*** (0.025)	1.426*** (0.465)	0.054* (0.027)	0.573 (0.385)
2025	0.073*** (0.026)	1.162*** (0.491)	0.057* (0.029)	0.646 (0.396)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.043	0.091	0.023	0.05
Number of Observations	4580	4580	4579	4579

Note. The table presents coefficient estimates from OLS and logit regressions. The first two columns have the share of women composers as dependent variable. The two next columns have the share of PoC composers as the dependent variable. Significance levels are indicated by asterisks: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ,

# CONCLUSION.

This report documents persistent and deeply entrenched disparities in the representation and recognition of women and People of Color (PoC) within the U.S. film music industry. While some recent progress is observable, it remains limited in scope, uneven, and insufficient to offset decades of underrepresentation.

**Women and PoC continue to be underrepresented as composers, conductors, engineers, music editors, music preparation teams, orchestrators, members of the orchestration team, and especially in major film releases.**

Greater representation is not only about fairness, but also about ensuring diverse voices contribute to the creative

fabric of film music, enriching the storytelling process. Discussions about increasing representation often emphasize collaboration across the industry—from educational institutions to production companies—and a commitment to providing opportunities and recognition for underrepresented composers and music department members.

This report aims to serve as a foundation for industry stakeholders to reflect on current practices, spark dialogue, and inspire actionable change toward a more equitable and balanced film music landscape.

# References

- Bennett, D., MacArthur, S., Hope, C., Goh, T., & Hennekam, S. (2018). Creating a career as a woman composer: Implications for music in higher education. *British Journal of Music Education*, 35(3), 237–253. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051718000104>
- Berklee. (2023). *2023 Berklee Graduating Student Survey*. Berklee Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. <https://www.berklee.edu/institutional-research-assessment/berklee-graduating-student-survey>
- Cuyler, A., Linett, E., and McCain, J. (2023). *Racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the orchestra field in 2023*. League of American Orchestras. <https://americanorchestras.org/2023-orchestra-repertoire-report/>
- Deemer, R., & Meals, C. (2023). *2023 Orchestra Repertoire Report*. Institute for Composer Diversity.
- Grills, M. (2019). Creating a more inclusive industry: The Alliance for Women Film Composers. *Women Leading Change: Case Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism*, 4(1), 61–71. <https://journals.tulane.edu/ncs/article/view/2415>
- Lauzen, M. M. (2024). *The celluloid ceiling: Employment of behind-the-scenes women on top grossing U.S. films in 2023*. <https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023-celluloid-ceiling-report.pdf>
- Luminate. (2023). *Entertainment Diversity Progress Report*. Luminate Data.
- Ramón, A.-C., Tran, M., & Hunt, D. (2024). *Hollywood Diversity Report, Part 1: Theatrical*. UCLA Entertainment & Media Research Initiative. <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ucla-hollywood-diversity-report-2024-film-3-7-2024.pdf>
- Ramón, A.-C., Tran, M., & Hunt, D. (2024). *Hollywood Diversity Report, Part 2: Streaming*. UCLA Entertainment & Media Research Initiative. <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ucla-hollywood-diversity-report-2024-film-streaming-5-23-2024.pdf>
- Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., Hernandez, K., & Wheeler, S. (2024). *Inclusion in the recording studio? Gender & race/ethnicity of artists, songwriters & producers across 1,200 popular songs from 2012 to 2023*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aai-inclusion-recording-studio-20240130.pdf>
- Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Wheeler, S. (2023a). *Gender, race/ethnicity & box office performance: Do films with female and/or underrepresented protagonists make as much money as films with white male leads?* USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.
- Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Wheeler, S. (2023b). *Inequality in 1,600 popular films: Examining portrayals of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & disability from 2007 to 2022*. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aai-inequality-in-1600-popular-films-20230811.pdf>
- Strong, C., & Cannizzo, F. (2020). *Australian women screen composers: Career barriers and pathways*. RMIT University. <https://www.agec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/australia-women-screen-composers-career-barriers-and-pathways-2017.pdf>

# APPENDIX.

## Literature

The existing body of literature on gender and PoC disparities within the film music industry reveals a persistent underrepresentation among composers. Several initiatives have documented representation in Hollywood within different film departments and media platforms (Luminate, 2024; Ramón et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2023a, 2023b). Some studies have focused exclusively on women film composers (Lauzen, 2024; Strong & Cannizzo, 2020). These studies have demonstrated unambiguously that women and PoC in the film music industry are significantly underrepresented compared to their counterparts. This disparity reflects a broader pattern across the film industry, where women and PoC are frequently marginalized in creative roles. The music industry at large mirrors these disparities, with similar patterns of underrepresentation (Smith et al., 2024).

This lack of representation has also been documented in the classical music world in terms of the composition of the orchestras (Cuyler & Linett, 2023) and repertoire (Deemer & Meals, 2023). Some studies have documented the numerous obstacles underrepresented composers face, including discrimination, lack of mentorship, and significant discrepancies in earnings (e.g., Grills, 2019). The efforts of organizations like the Alliance for Women Film Composers (AWFC) and the Composers Diversity Collective (CDC) are crucial in addressing these disparities, aiming to create a more inclusive environment for women and PoC in film music through advocacy and community building. The present report contributes to this body of work by providing the most comprehensive data collection effort to date within the film music industry.

## U.S. Census Definitions

### *American Indian or Alaska Native:*

A person who has origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains a tribal affiliation or community attachment.

*Asian or Asian American:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of East Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

*Black or African American:* A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

### *Hispanic/Latinx:*

A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race, including all individuals who indicated Hispanic/Latinx AND any other race.

*Multiracial:* All individuals indicating Multiracial, excluding those who indicated Hispanic/Latinx.

*Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:* A person having origins in any of the peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

*White:* A person not included in any of the above groups.

## Data Description

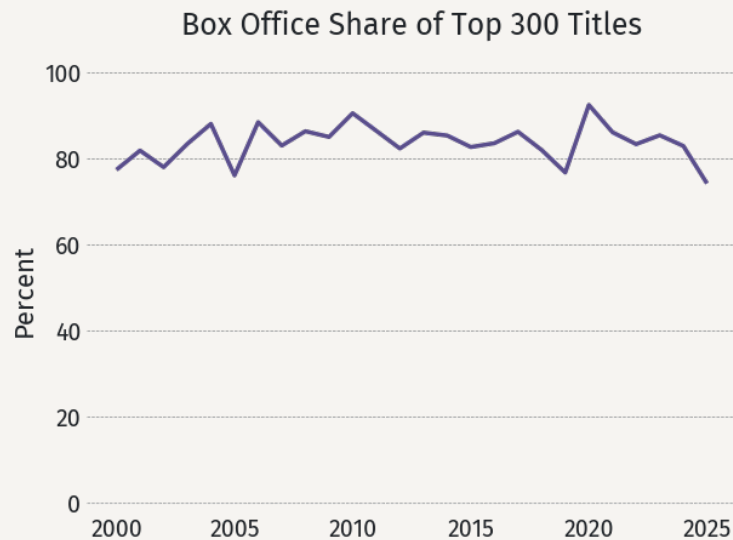
We gathered information on the top 300 grossing films each year as recorded on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), the most comprehensive publicly accessible credit database currently available. Known limitations would tend to undercount less visible contributors, which likely biases representation *downward* rather than upward. The top 300 titles covered, on average, 84% of the domestic gross box-office revenue in the United States, and a large fraction of the total number of releases each year, as

shown in the following figures. Given that box-office figures were not available for many films in our sample, this number is a lower bound, and we likely captured a much larger share of the total box-office revenue. The restrictions put in place during the COVID-19 global pandemic drastically reduced the number of releases, from 792 in 2019 to 333 in 2022. The pandemic also altered the composition of the releases, with a larger representation of smaller budget films in the top 300. Although our sample covers

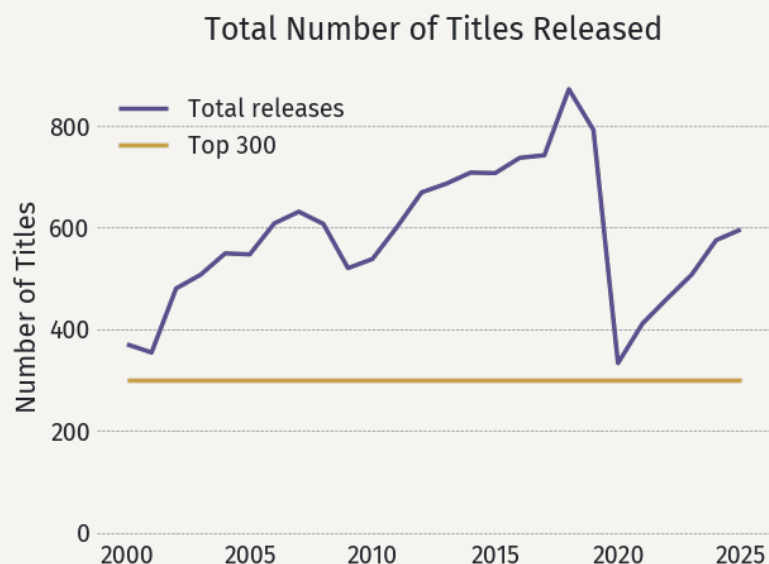
almost the universe of movies released in theaters in 2020, the data might not be representative. Not only might the types of movies released in 2020 be different from the movies in earlier years, but we

also considered a sample of 90% of all the released movies, much more than 50% on average over the pre-pandemic period. We hope to increase the number of titles covered in future research.

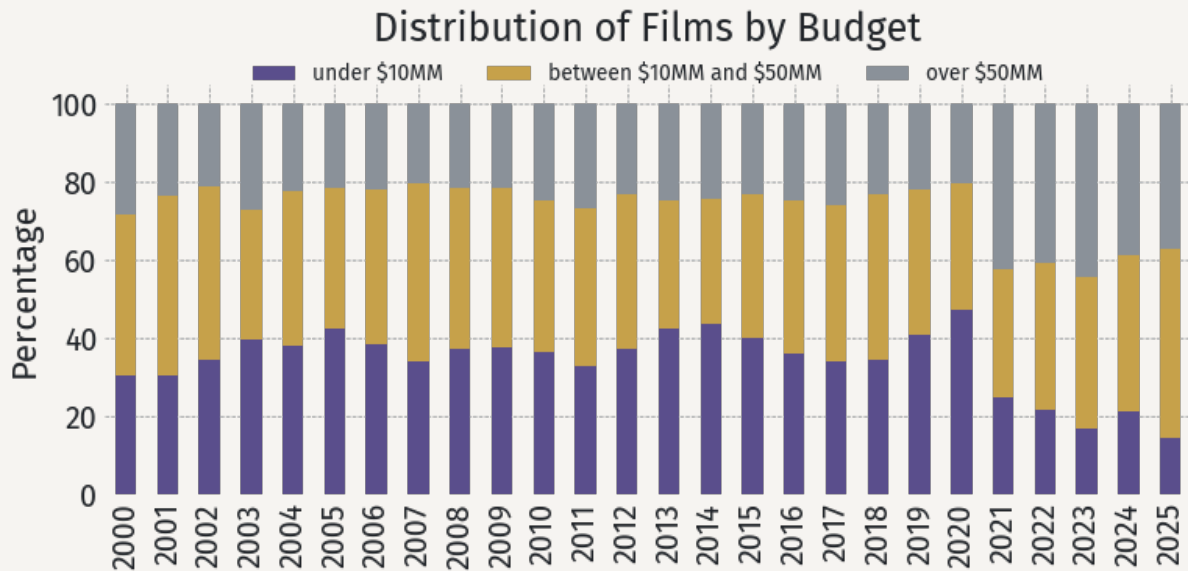
**Figure 17 – Box-Office Share of the 300 Top-Grossing Titles**



**Figure 18 - Total Number of Titles Released in U.S. Theaters**



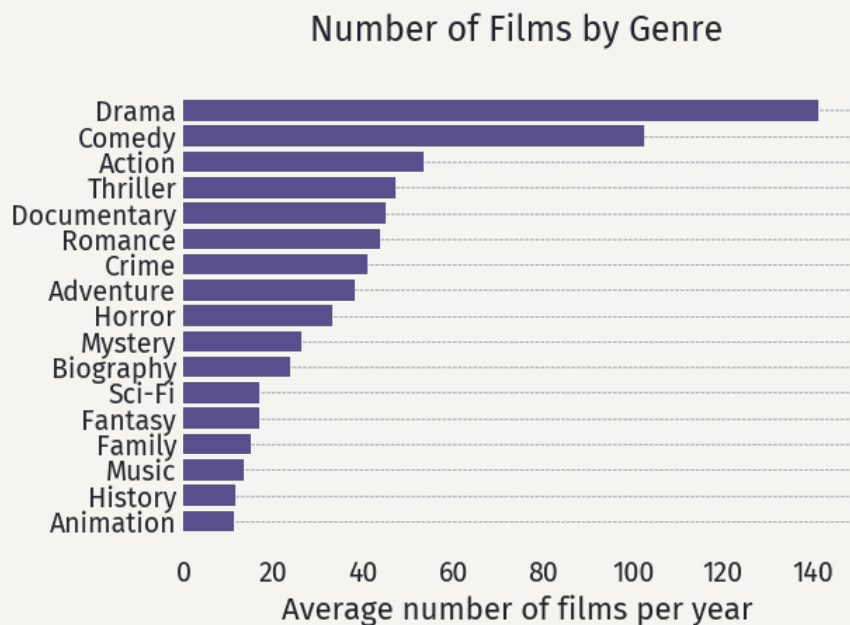
**Figure 19 - Distribution of Films by Budget**



The most represented genres in our sample are by far drama and comedy, with about 140 and 100 releases per year, on average, among the top 300. The distribution of the genres has been

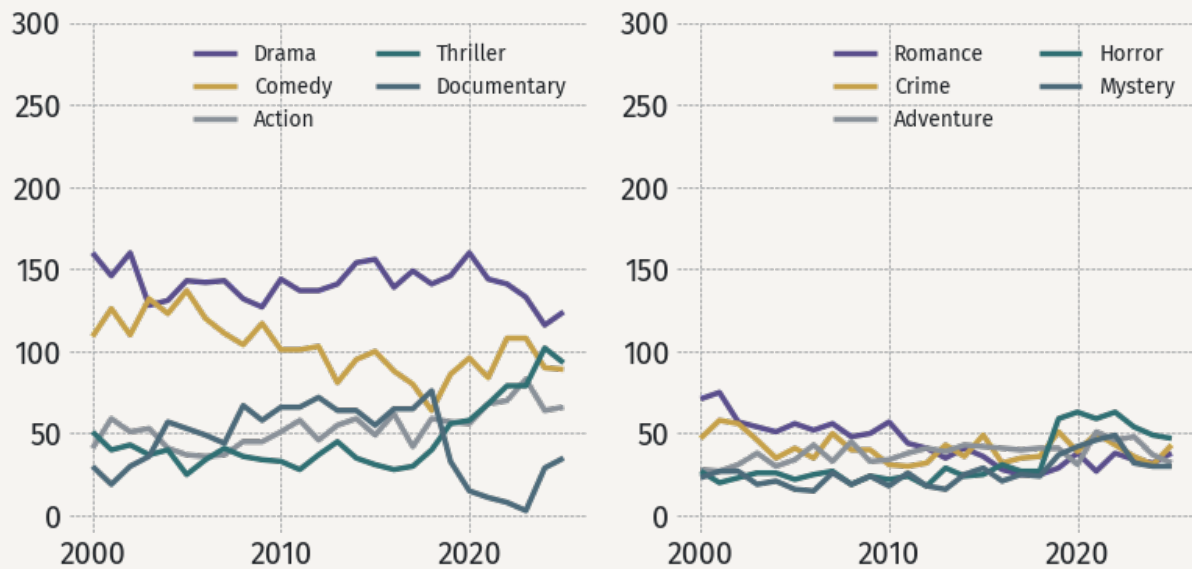
relatively stable over time, with fewer documentaries and more comedy, action, thriller, and horror since 2019. We also noted a steady decline in romance since 2000.

**Figure 20 - Average Number of Films per Year by Genre**





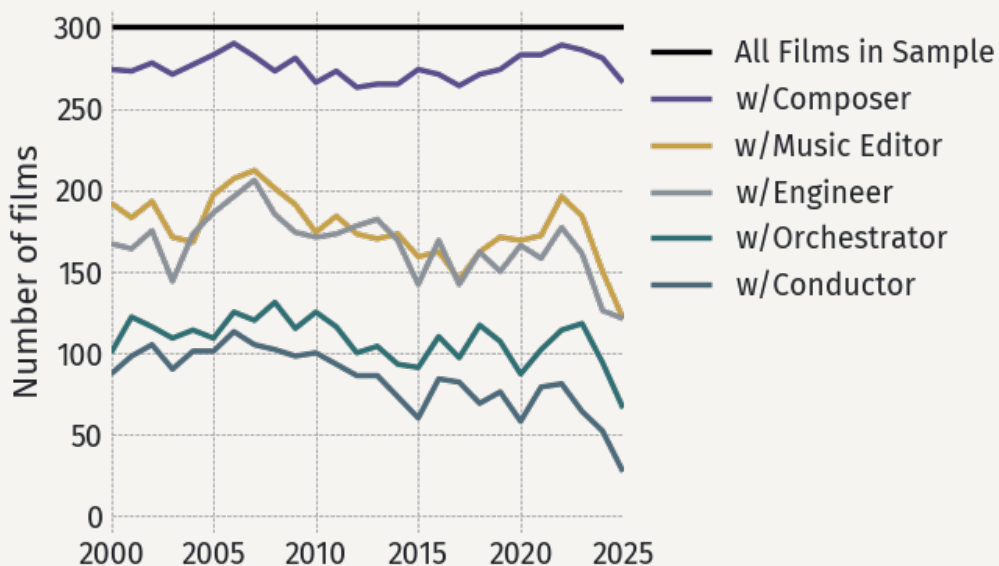
**Figure 21 - Total Number of Films with Genre Tags**



Not all films have a composer or other members of the music department attached to it. The following figure shows the total number of films every year that had a composer or other members of the

music department attached. To avoid misrepresenting the numbers, we excluded films with no composer credit. The following table provides a few examples of such films.

**Figure 22 – Number of Films with Credited Roles**



**Table 3 - Examples of Films with no Composer Credited**

Year	Box-office rank	Title	Genres
2023	17	<i>I Can</i>	Drama, Family, Sport
2023	22	<i>Big Shark</i>	Adventure, Mystery, Thriller
2023	98	<i>Air</i>	Drama, Sport
2023	127	<i>Coup de Chance</i>	Comedy, Crime, Drama
2023	172	<i>Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour</i>	Documentary, Music
2023	177	<i>Magic Mike's Last Dance</i>	Comedy, Drama
2023	227	<i>The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial</i>	Drama, War
2023	228	<i>Hell House LLC Origins: The Carmichael Manor</i>	Horror, Mystery
2023	235	<i>Impulse</i>	Thriller
2023	265	<i>Janet Planet</i>	Drama
2023	273	<i>Die Hart</i>	Action, Comedy

The following table presents descriptive statistics about all 6,147 individuals in our sample. Over the full sample, we identified 3,415 persons with a composer credit, 1,121 with an orchestrator credit, 581 with a conductor

credit, 1,305 with a music editor credit, 711 with a music preparation credit, and 1,368 credited as part of the orchestration team. Note that a unique person can appear in the data credited for multiple roles.

**Table 4 - Aggregate Statistics in the Sample of Individuals**

Role	Number	Percentage of women	Percentage of PoC
Composers	3,415	8.1%	9.3%
Orchestrators	1,121	11%	7.1%
Conductors	581	8.3%	6.3%
Music editors	1,305	17%	8.6%
Music preparators	711	23.9%	9.7%
Orchestration team	1,368	11.6%	8%
Engineers	2,452	5.3%	12%
Total	8,119	10.8%	10.2%

Although we did our best to construct a representative dataset of representation statistics, we acknowledge that it suffers from several limitations. The main limitation is that

the dataset exclusively focused on the films that generated the most revenue at the box-office, thereby excluding all major releases on streaming platforms that had not been released in theaters.

This issue was especially prevalent during the COVID-19 global pandemic when many films were not released in theaters. As a result, although the statistics presented in the following sections depict the true picture for the

top movies released in theaters, they may not be accurate representations of the population of movies as a whole (e.g. streaming, limited releases) or other forms within the industry (e.g. Television, interactive media).

## Music Department Roles Definition

We use the credited position to infer the role of each member of the music department. For composers, it was straightforward because they have their own role-specific credit. For members of the music department, it was much more challenging because many movies use different credited positions. We read the full label of the credited position and inferred the position using the rules below.

We identified conductors if the credited position included any capitalization of the words “conductor” or “conducted.”

We identified music editors if the credited position included any capitalization of the words “music editor,” “music editing,” or “music editorial.”

We identified music preparators if the credited position included any capitalization of the words “music

preparation,” “music preparations,” “librarian,” “copyist,” “music copying,” “music preparer,” “music preparator,” or “music prep.”

We identified members of the orchestration team if the credited position included any capitalization of the words “orchestrator,” “orchestration,” “orchestrations,” or “orchestrating.”

We identified orchestrators if the credited position included any capitalization of the words “orchestrator,” “orchestration,” “orchestrations,” or “orchestrating” but not any word from an exclusion list such as “assistant,” “supervising,” etc.

We identified engineers if the credited position included any of the words, engineering, engineer, premix, mixer, mixed by, recorded by, mixing, mastering, recordist, pro tools, protocols, pro-tools

## Awards Categories

The awards recognizing film music composers have evolved significantly over time. This section lists all the different names these awards have held across the three major award organizations we considered.

### **Academy Awards**

- Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures (Original Score)
- Best Music, Original Dramatic Score
- Best Music, Original Music Score
- Best Music, Original Musical or Comedy Score
- Best Music, Original Score
- Best Music, Original Score for a Motion Picture (not a Musical)
- Best Music, Original Song Score
- Best Music, Original Song Score and Its Adaptation or Best Adaptation Score
- Best Music, Score
- Best Music, Score – Substantially Original
- Best Music, Score; Best Music, Score of a Musical Picture (Original or Adaptation)
- Best Music, Scoring
- Best Music, Scoring Original Song Score and/or Adaptation
- Best Music, Scoring of Music, Adaptation or Treatment
- Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic Picture
- Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture
- Best Music, Scoring of a Musical Picture
- Best Music, Scoring Adaptation and Original Song Score
- Best Music, Substantially Original Score

### **Golden Globe Awards**

- Best Original Score
- Best Original Score – Motion Picture
- Best Original Score, Motion Picture

### **Grammy Awards**

- Album of Best Original Score Written for a Motion Picture or a Television Special
- Best Album of Original Instrumental Background Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television
- Best Album of Original Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television Special
- Best Instrumental Composition
- Best Instrumental Composition Written for a Motion Picture or for Television
- Best Instrumental Composition Written for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media
- Best Original Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television Show
- Best Original Score Written for a Motion Picture or a Television Special
- Best Original Score from a Motion Picture or Television Show
- Best Score Soundtrack Album for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media
- Best Score Soundtrack For Visual Media
- Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media
- Best Soundtrack Album or Recording of Music Score from Motion Picture or Television
- Best Soundtrack Album or Recording of Score from Motion Picture or Television

## Additional Figures Related to Individual Awards

### Academy Awards

Figure 23 - Share of Women Nominees at the Academy Awards

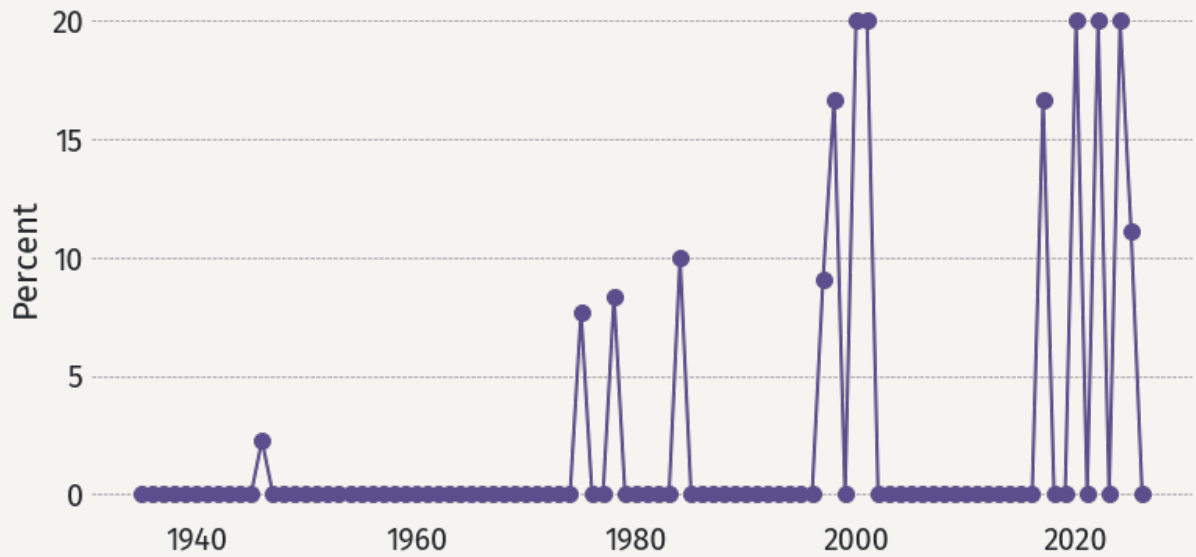
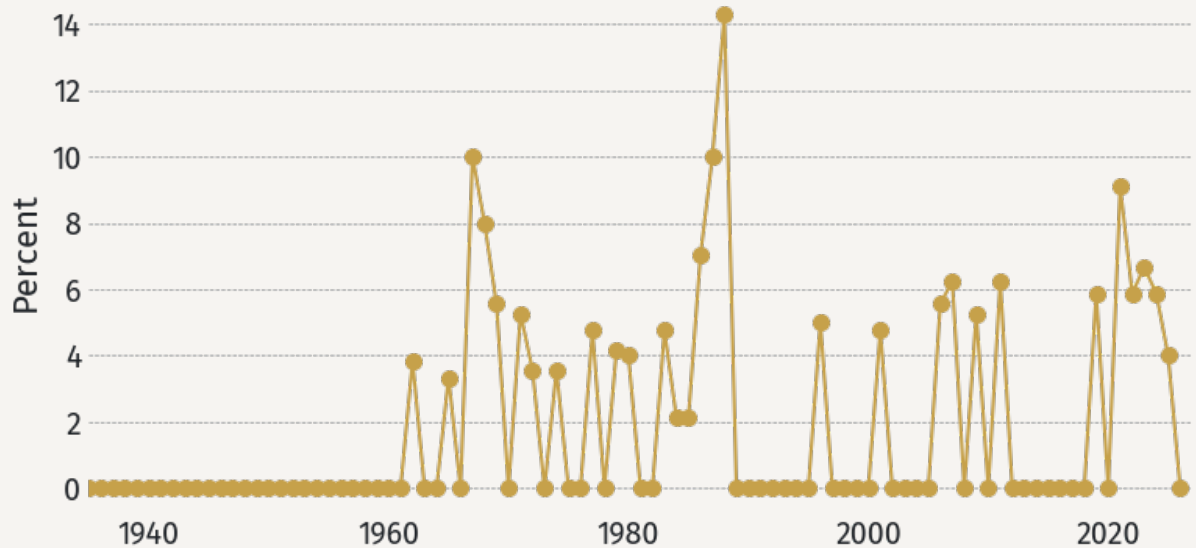


Figure 24 - Share of PoC Nominees at the Academy Awards



Grammy Awards

Figure 25 - Share of Women Nominees at the Grammy Awards

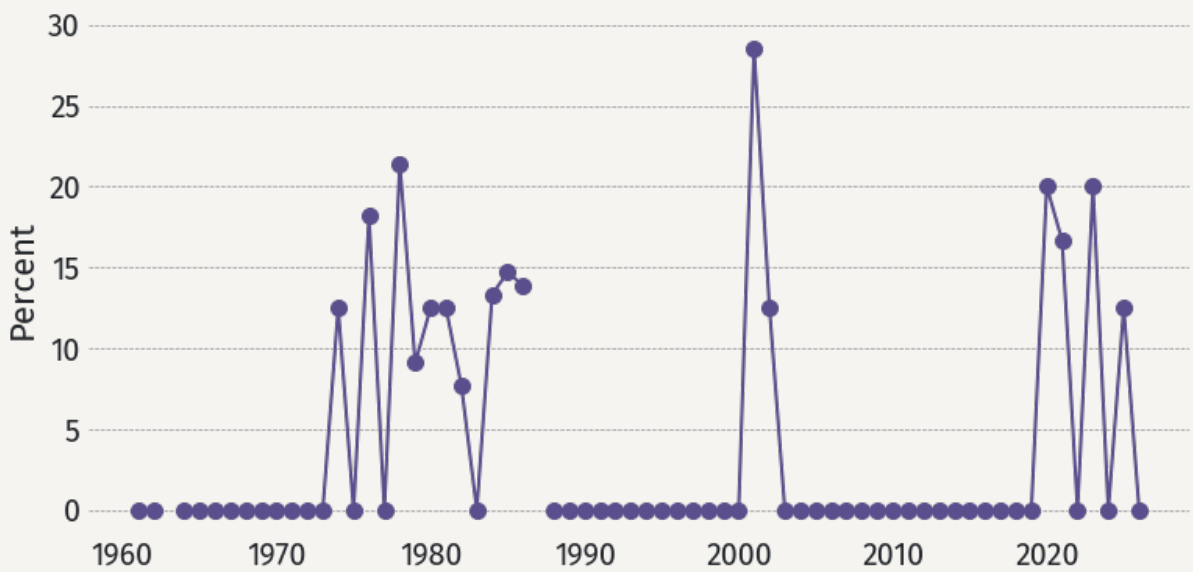
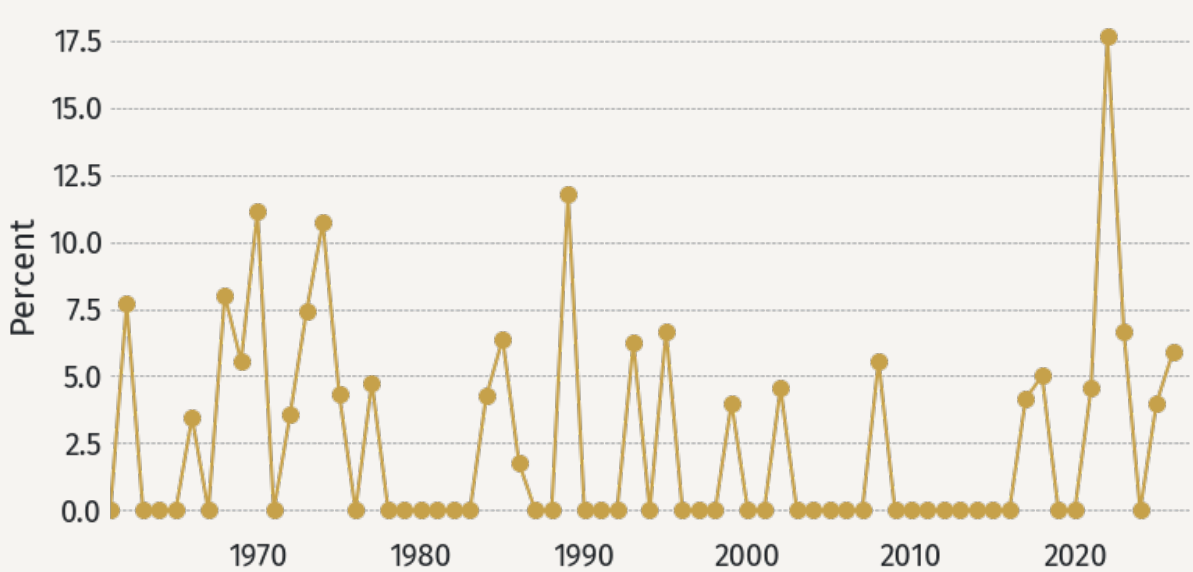


Figure 26 - Share of PoC Nominees at the Grammy Awards



Golden Globe Awards

Figure 27 - Share of Women Nominees at the Golden Globe Awards

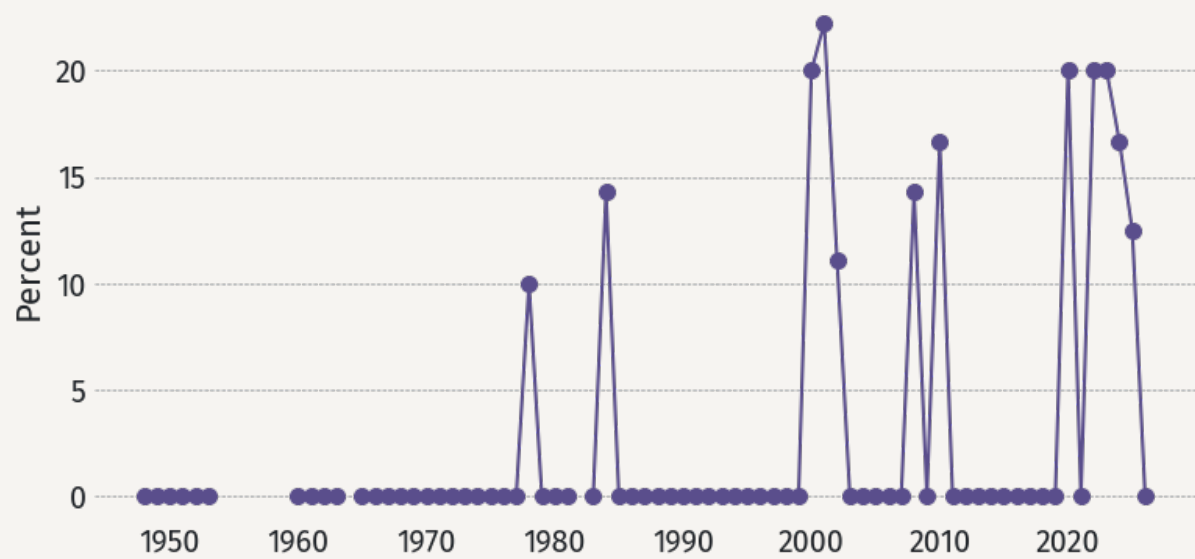


Figure 28 - Share of PoC Nominees at the Golden Globe Awards

