
**Case Study I: WOMEN IN THE AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY: A
PANORAMA OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND SPAIN**

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1. Introduction: gender in the audiovisual industry

This study aims to discuss female participation in the audiovisual industry in some Latin American countries and Spain. For this purpose, we have sketched a panorama of the current situation of gender diversity, highlighting the proportion of women in creative leadership roles, i.e. the credits in direction, scriptwriting and production. Whenever possible, we have included information on other technical-artistic roles, as well as on the sector's workforce as a whole and on the cast of film narratives. This last set of data is not available for all countries and therefore is not comparable; it contributes, however, to the understanding of the different scenarios and was, thus, included in the sections pertaining to each country.

This work gathers the data available for Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico – three of the largest content producers in Latin America – as well as Uruguay and Spain. The inclusion of Spain is justified due to the country's importance in the circulation of works in the Spanish language. The text is divided in three parts. The first presents a conceptual discussion on the issue of gender diversity in the audiovisual sector and its importance from a social and economic point of view. The second part discusses the specific data pertaining to each national context. Finally, the conclusion systematizes the study's findings, compares each reality, and provides reflections on the causes of the imbalances found and the possible paths towards overcoming them.

1.1 An issue of social responsibility

Why talk about gender in audiovisual production? Gender inequality is a global problem that plagues several sectors but is particularly concerning in the audiovisual industry. In all its formats, from advertisement to electronic games, from the *telenovelas* to feature films, the audiovisual conveys values and establishes beliefs that mark individual identities and the representations present in our collective imaginations.

Due to its power to reproduce and shape norms and patterns of social relations, the audiovisual has a wide reach and a decisive role in perpetuating – or changing – the perceptions and attitudes towards the diverse groups present in society. What is on the screens does not just reflect reality, but also influences it deeply. To a large extent, we can only become what we can see: the models we see on the screens inform our worldview, our view on what is our place and

our possibilities for belonging in the world¹. The contents that are currently being diffused – be it on cellphones or in movie theaters – spread narratives that represent women unequally. Women have too small a presence in the industry's creative leadership and this unbalance – right at the level that creates the narratives – restricts perspectives and perpetuates behaviors and prejudices.

Furthermore, when female characters are systematically less present and are stereotyped in audiovisual works, we are legitimating and passing on to new generations – often unconsciously – certain views and practices where women are not worth the same as men, nor can they strive for the same opportunities. It is worth noting that the consumption of films and series has been growing exponentially, especially among younger generations. The audiovisual industry has been speeding up its production to meet the demands of this audience, eager for new stories; as a result, the audiovisual industry is among the fastest growing industries worldwide. In the last few years content producers such as Disney, Amazon and Netflix have gone to the top of the rankings for most profitable companies worldwide².

The images and narratives offered by the audiovisual industry, therefore, have a broad reach and influence society greatly. In a world marked by deep inequalities, it is necessary to use the power of audiovisual for change: influencing positively social perceptions by promoting equity in narratives and be creating plural characters, rich as a whole and complex in their individualities – and to transform the reality on screen it is necessary to start by changing the reality behind it.

1.2 A matter of economic opportunity

Beyond the social dimension, it is important to highlight that female participation in the job market – especially in decision-making positions – promotes higher economic development and corporate performance. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for instance, estimates that, in the most unequal countries, overcoming this asymmetry could increase their gross domestic product (GDP) by 35% on average. According to this study, the gains come not only from the increase in workforce: one fifth would come from the increase in productivity caused by greater gender diversity. The International Labour Organization (ILO) notes how much the GDP of each country could increase if gender inequality were reduced by 25% in their respective job markets: in the case of the countries pertaining to this study, the growth estimates were of 4% for Argentina; 3% for Brazil and Uruguay; 5% for Mexico and 2% for Spain³.

¹ On the influence of audiovisual consumption in the perception of gender roles see, for instance, the studies by the *Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media*: [See Jane](#). Accessed in 01/12/2021.

² FORBES (2020)

³ IMF (2019) and ILO (2017).

In terms of corporate growth, different studies have shown that companies with higher female presence in their boards and leadership positions also have higher financial performance. Studies made since 2015 by the consultancy firm McKinsey have shown that gender diversity in executive roles is correlated to higher profits, measured by EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes). The most recent study, which includes over 1,000 companies from 15 countries – 13% of them from the media, telecommunications and technology sector –, has shown that when there is higher female presence in leadership roles, the likelihood of higher-than-average profitability is 25% higher. The data has shown that the higher the female representation is, the higher the likelihood of superior financial performance: companies with executive teams with over 30% women have a higher likelihood of better performance than those with female participation between 10% and 30%. These, in turn, are more likely to have better performance than those with few or no women in executive positions. In terms of likelihood of reaching higher performance levels, the difference between companies with high and low gender diversity in leadership amounted to 48%⁴.

1.3 Promoting gender equality in the audiovisual sector: state and corporate initiatives

The social and economic importance of female participation in the audiovisual industry can also be seen through the actions of governments and companies to promote greater gender balance. In the private sector, Netflix is an example of a company who has been paying growing attention to the economic potential of diversity for its business. The company has a vice-president for inclusion strategy and has introduced affirmative action on several fronts of its corporate environment; among them are recruitment and selection, benefits, inclusive language, and transparency regarding its workforce demographic data. In its first report on the topic, Netflix declared that diversity is key for its innovative capacity and showed the evolution of gender and race composition of its workforce between 2017 and 2020. Currently, 47% of its workforce is female, including leadership roles: women comprise 47% of the directing roles, 43% of vice-presidencies and 47% of senior leadership⁵.

Public policy also plays a fundamental role since public financing is an essential part of the investment in audiovisual works in almost all the countries with a relevant audiovisual production – with the exception of the USA, with Hollywood's global dominance. Several countries have implemented policy for gender balance in the audiovisual sector through direct and indirect subsidies. Sweden, through the *Swedish Film Institute* (SFI), pioneered in establishing a policy of

⁴ MCKINSEY (2020).

⁵ See Netflix's website: [Netflix Inclusion Report 2021](#). Accessed in 01/12/2021.

equality of public investment according to the gender of the film makers. In the United Kingdom and France, the *British Film Institute* (BFI) and the *Centre National du Cinéma* (CNC), respectively, have established a similar policy for its own financings, favoring works with higher team leadership diversity.

In the countries considered by this study, public policy initiatives are still underdeveloped. In Brazil, for instance, at the federal level, there was the introduction of race and gender quotas in one of the calls for applications of the Audiovisual Sector Fund⁶ (FSA) and in the batch of calls for applications made by the then Ministry of Culture in 2018, but it is too early to talk about any form of consolidated policy. The benchmark in Brazil is the city of São Paulo, whose public company for cinema and audiovisual, Spcine⁷, has put in place a plan for affirmative action inspired by the BFI's experience. All call for applications made by the company in 2019 and 2020 had inclusion mechanisms⁸.

Among Spanish speaking countries, Spain is unique. The legal instruments that regulate state financing of film production have mechanisms to encourage gender parity since 2009. Current regulation also foresees that projects receive a different scoring in the selection processes when there are women occupying leadership roles. There is also a mandated parity for the selection and financing committees of the Institute of Cinematography and the Visual Arts⁹ (ICAA)¹⁰. The country created a seal, which can be added to finished works during the content rating stage. This certification as a film "specially recommended for gender equality" is issued based on a series of criteria, such as non-sexist language and equal representation of both genders¹¹.

Both in public policy and in companies, one of the main lessons in promoting gender equality has been the importance of data collection and of analysis geared towards mapping diversity, especially in leadership positions, which are often even more unequal when it comes to female presence. Releasing information on these asymmetries is a simple measure with a profound impact on the public debate since it is a pre-requisite for the development and evaluation of any policy for diversity and inclusion. The absence or scarcity of official statistics in several Latin American countries speaks volumes about the lack of attention given to this topic in the region.

⁶ *Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual*.

⁷ *Spicine - empresa de cinema e audiovisual de São Paulo*. Website at: [Spicine](#) (Accessed in 01/12/2021).

⁸ See: [Spicine lança plano de políticas afirmativas para o audiovisual](#) (Accessed in 01/12/2021).

⁹ *Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales*

¹⁰ ESPAÑA (2020a)

¹¹ EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL OBSERVATORY (2019^a). In the original: "*Especialmente recomendada para la igualdad de género*".

2. Data about gender in the audiovisual industry in Latin American countries and Spain

In this section, we will present and discuss the main pieces of data available on female participation in the audiovisual industry of five countries: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Spain. As we will see, there is no general pattern among the selected countries in terms of the available indicators regarding gender diversity. Information is scarce and a result of specific data collection actions made by government agencies, civil society organizations or academic research. The data, for the most part, does not belong to official statistics. As such, considering possible variations such as the nature of the source, the year the study was conducted, among others, we opted to gather for each country the most relevant references available – if published and accessible to the public – in order to draw up the broadest panorama possible. The analysis of female participation in direction, writing and production roles were prioritized in all cases, and other aspects were discussed according to the information available for each country.

2.1 Argentina

Argentina is the fifteenth film industry in the world in terms of profitability¹². There are different sources of information on gender diversity in filmmaking, all of them recent. The Observatory of the Argentinian Audiovisual Industry¹³ (OAVA), tied to the National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts¹⁴ (INCAA), released its first report on gender equality in 2019. Furthermore, there is research conducted by civil society organizations and data from the Union of the Argentinian Cinematography Industry¹⁵ (SICA).

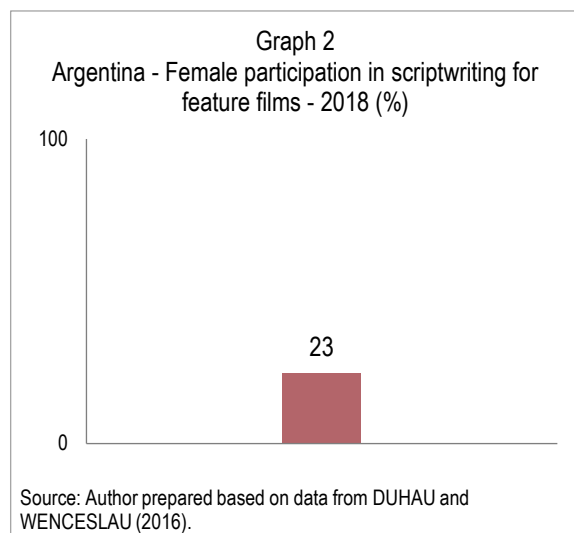
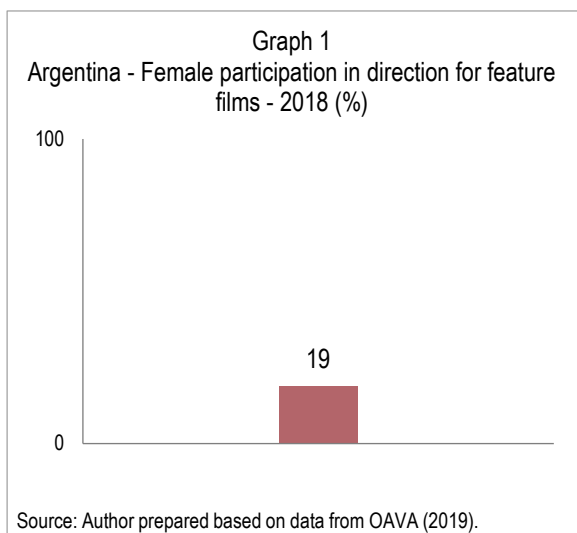
Graph 1 shows the gender ratio for the directors of feature films which had a commercial and national release in 2018. Women are severely in the minority, representing 18% against 81% of men directing the narratives. With a very specific focus, Duhau and Wenceslau (2016) selected the highest grossing films between 2010 and 2013 and presented data on scriptwriting roles. In these roles the panorama is slightly better, with women present in 23%, as shown in **Graph 2**. Men, however, remain dominant in the power hierarchies surrounding the plot (77%).

¹² DUHAU and WENCESLAU (2016)

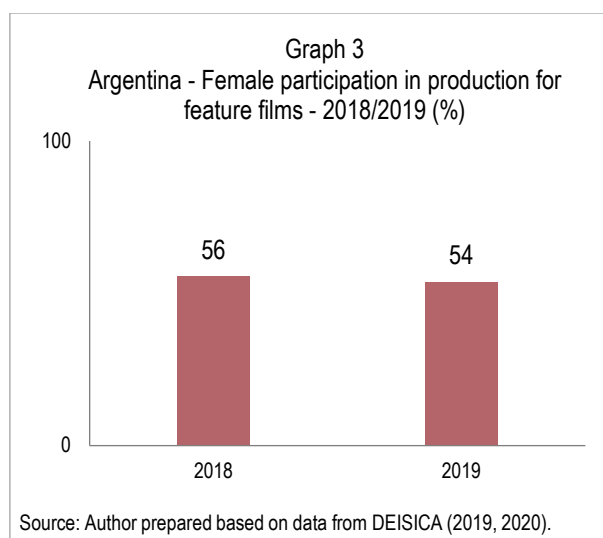
¹³ *Observatorio de la Industria Audiovisual Argentina*.

¹⁴ *Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales*.

¹⁵ *Sindicato de la Industria Cinematográfica Argentina*.



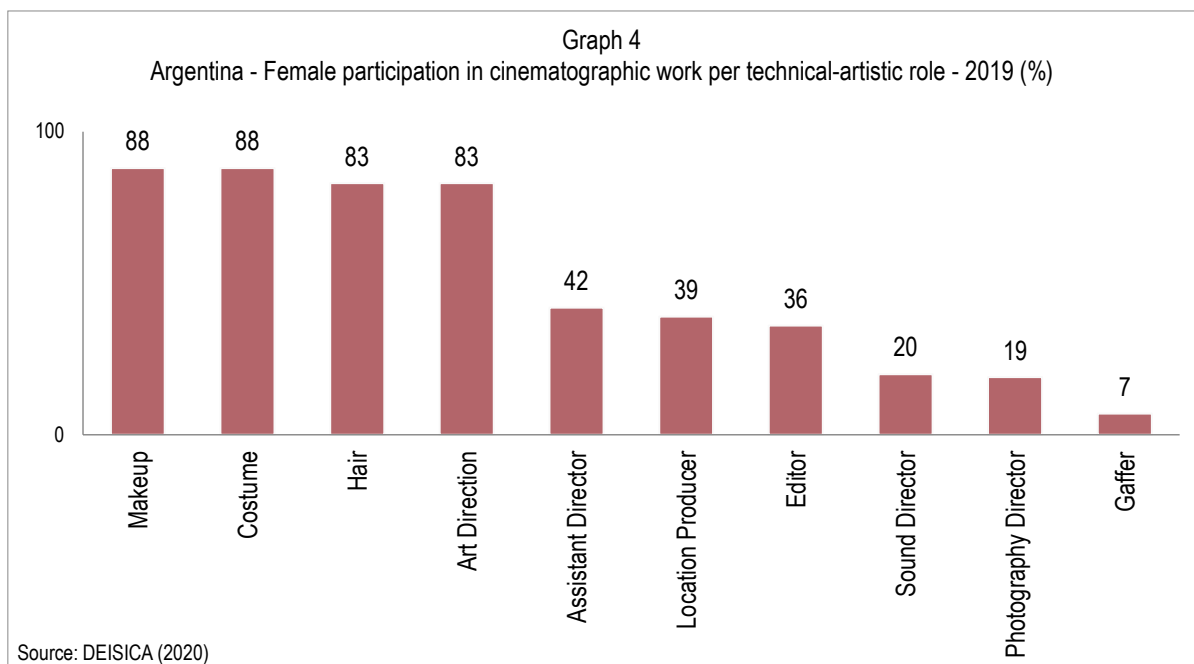
Production is one of the leadership roles where women have reached higher inclusion. The SICA figures shown in **Graph 3** attest to this fact and also show a slight decrease in female presence between 2018 and 2019, from 56% to 54%¹⁶.



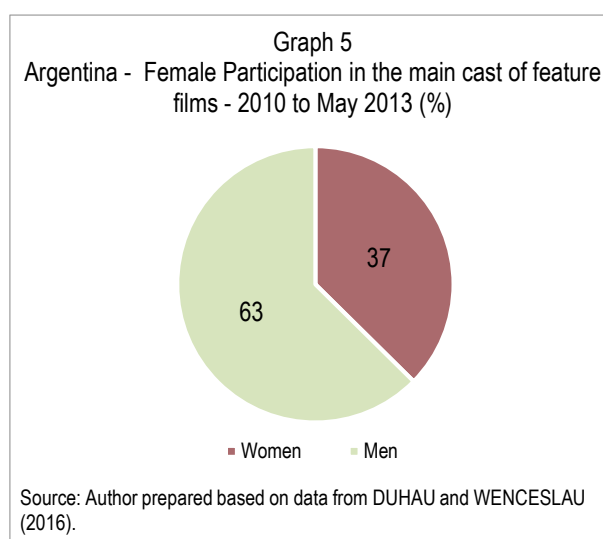
The data from SICA also show a clear gender division of labour in the audiovisual work in Argentina¹⁷. Women have negligible insertion in roles of direction and scriptwriting, achieve a relative equilibrium in production roles, but are the majority in roles that correspond to the stereotypes of femininity; such as those related to makeup, where they are 88%; costume, where the ratio of 88% is repeated; or hairdressing, where they make up 83% (**Graph 4**).

¹⁶ It is worth noting that SICA reports distinguish between the overall gender ratio in the team from gender ratio in the leadership. The data shown here corresponds to the leadership ratio.

¹⁷ Three reports contain information on gender division of labour: OAVA (2019), SICA (2019) and SICA (2020). There is a slight variation in the data from each institution.



Another space that reproduces female stereotypes is narrative construction in feature films. Using as a criterion that the character must be named or be in any dialogue, Duhau and Wenceslau (2016) analyzed the casts of Argentinian films that saw a broad theatrical release and concluded that for every female character there is at least 1.7 male character. Women are only 37% of representations, as shown in **Graph 5**. This ratio is reduced even further when only main characters are selected (30%). Furthermore, only 20% of the narratives are balanced between actors and actresses. Women also tend to receive more comments on their appearance and to be subject to sexualization, while not being associated with professional careers¹⁸.



¹⁸ DUHAU and WENCESLAU (2016). The character selection parameter is the same in research carried out in Brazil by the *Grupo de Estudos Multidisciplinares da Ação Afirmativa* (GEMAA) from the *Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* (UERJ) and in the USA by the Geena Davis Institute on gender in Media.

The disadvantages women suffer from in certain fields of the Argentinian film industry cannot be explained by a lack qualified personnel. The female gender is prevalent among holders of bachelor (61%) and graduate (62%) degrees in audiovisual arts¹⁹. In addition, women tend to have a higher average of workdays – 23 in comparison with 19 for the male gender²⁰. Even so, the female gender is a minority in overall job positions (38% in 2019; 42% in 2020)²¹.

2.2 Brazil

In Brazil, the main source of public and official information on gender diversity in audiovisual production is the Brazilian Film Agency²² (Ancine), while gender diversity in the casts of audiovisual works has received more attention from academic research.

Female participation in the total jobs of the country's audiovisual sector between 2011 and 2016 (the last year for which there is data available) oscillated between 40% and 41% throughout this period. Nevertheless, the insertion of this part of the workforce in the different activities of the industry is quite uneven²³.

In 2015, in the first publication to present data about gender in Brazilian audiovisual production, Ancine summarized women's participation in film production as follows: "works directed by women are in the minority of released films. Most of the titles directed exclusively by women were documentaries"²⁴. This outline is still true – in 2018, the last year for which there is data from the agency, women directed 22% of Brazilian films that saw a commercial release. Since 2009 the largest share of commercially released films directed by women was of 24% in 2012. In the available dataset, the presence of films made by female directors in Brazilian movie theaters usually oscillates between 15 and 17% or, if we take into account female co-directors, between 20% and 28%, as can be seen in **Graph 6**.

¹⁹ OAVA (2019).

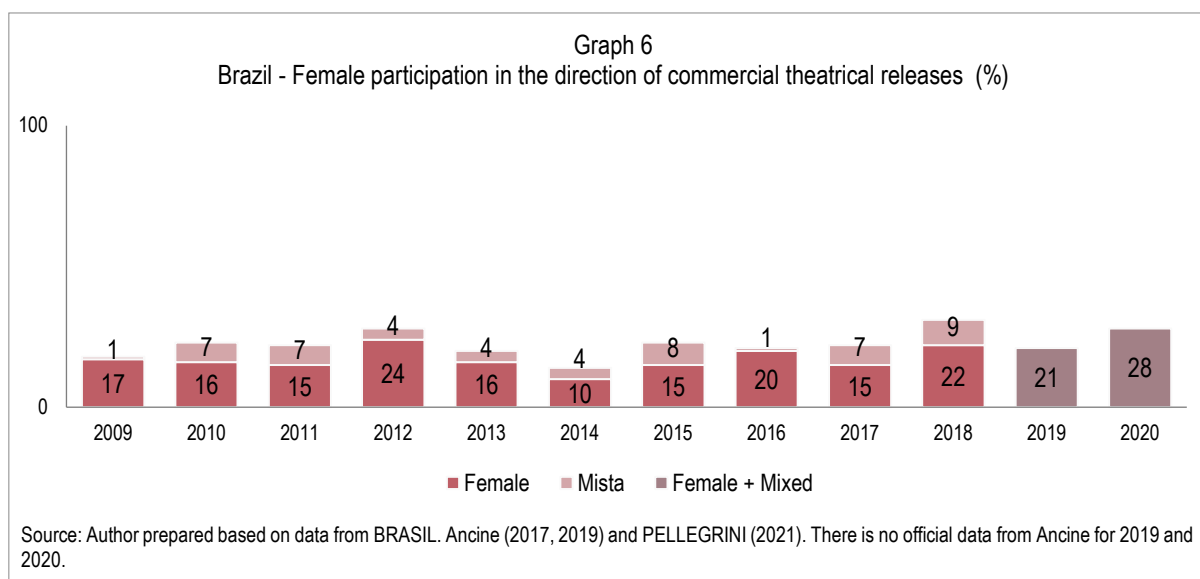
²⁰ SICA (2020).

²¹ SICA (2019, 2020).

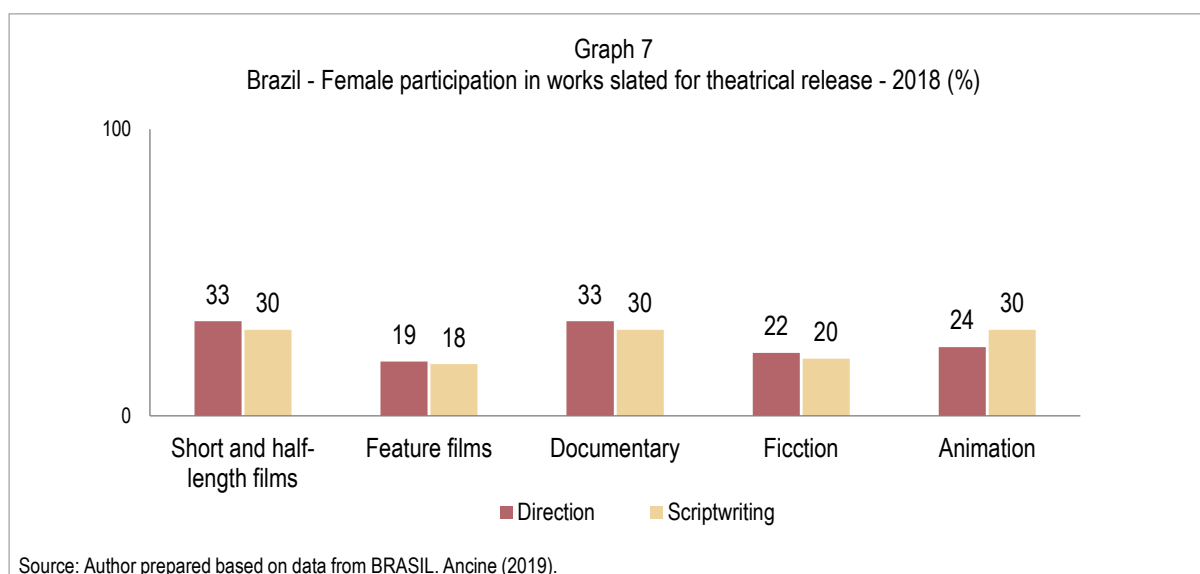
²² *Agência Nacional do Cinema (Ancine)* is the federal agency responsible for implementing audiovisual policy in Brazil

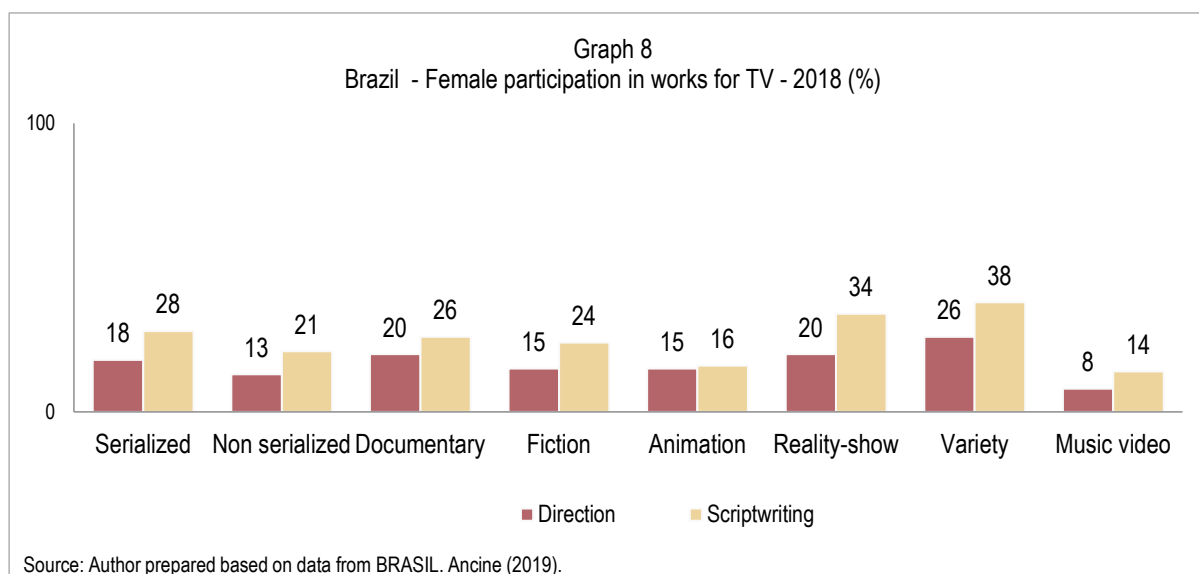
²³ BRASIL (2018).

²⁴ BRASIL (2015).

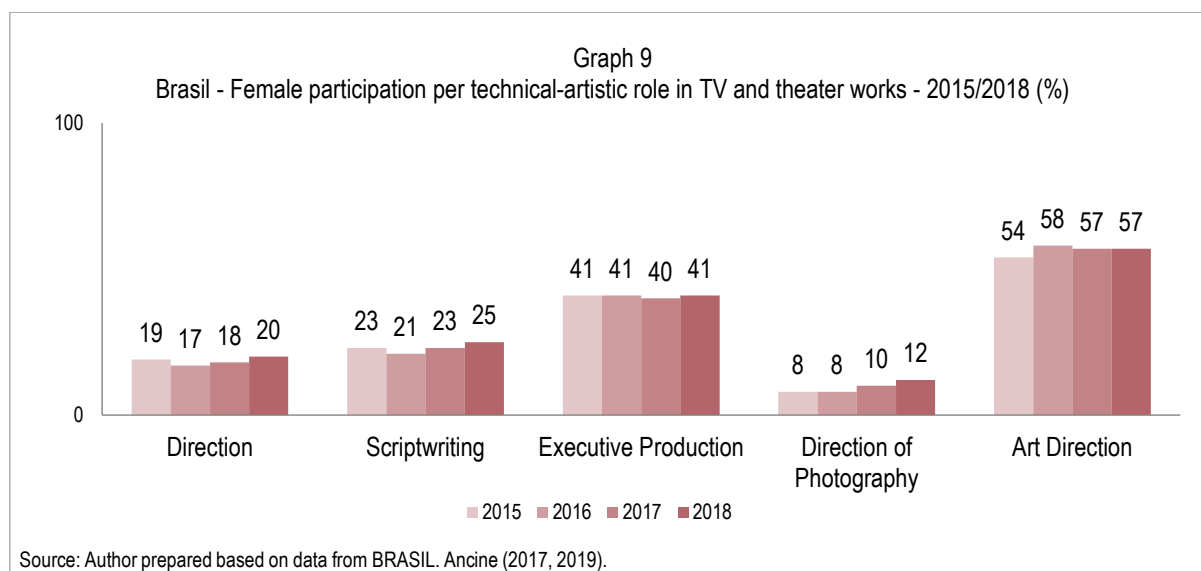


In terms of the type of work, female presence continues to be higher in documentaries (in contrast with fiction and animation), and in short and half-length films (in comparison with feature films). Yet even in these lower cost categories participation is not equal. **Graphs 7 and 8** illustrate the situation, taking into account both films released to movie theaters and TV productions in 2018. Female participation in writing and direction roles did not break 35% in none of the analyzed segments, except for writing for TV variety shows, which had a female participation of 38%.





Taking other artistic roles into consideration, there is gender balance only in art direction and executive production²⁵. In 2018 women represented, respectively, 57% and 41% of the workers in these roles. Cinematography is the most male dominated artistic role, with only 12% female participation. **Graph 9** shows the evolution of female participation per technical/artistic role for cinema or TV productions between 2015 and 2018.

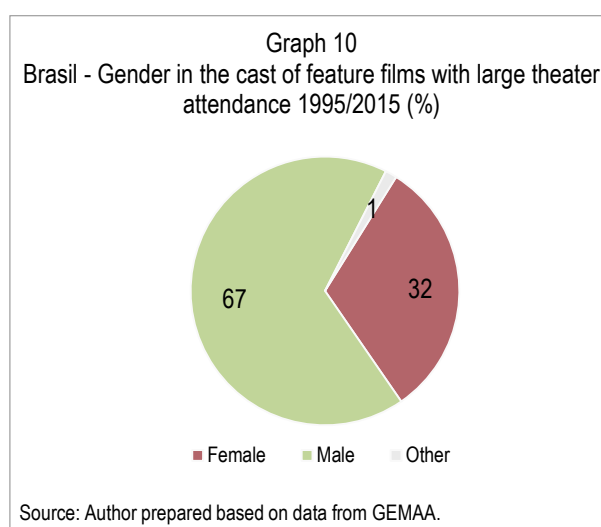


It is interesting to note that, like Argentina, the scant female presence in leadership roles cannot be attributed to lack of female professional qualification. According to Ancine, women held 53% of the bachelor degrees awarded by the colleges in this field.²⁶

²⁵ We consider a certain segment gender balanced when the ratio of men and women is between 40% and 60%, and female dominated or male dominated if outside these numbers.

²⁶ BRAZIL (2018b).

When it comes to diversity on the screens, i. e. the gender representations found within Brazilian audiovisual works, it is worth highlighting the pioneering studies of the Multidisciplinary Studies Group for Affirmative Action²⁷ (GEMAA), from the Institute of Social and Political Studies of the State University of Rio de Janeiro²⁸ (IESP-UERJ). They have conducted several surveys on minority presence both in front of and behind the cameras, looking at broad audience feature films made by the Brazilian industry. These surveys concluded that women – especially black women – are underrepresented not only in film production leadership roles but also in the main casts. **Graph 10** shows the gender distribution of 6450 characters between 1995 and 2015, demonstrating that women are a minority²⁹. The “other” category refers to the few cases where it was not possible to identify the characters’ gender or to trans persons.

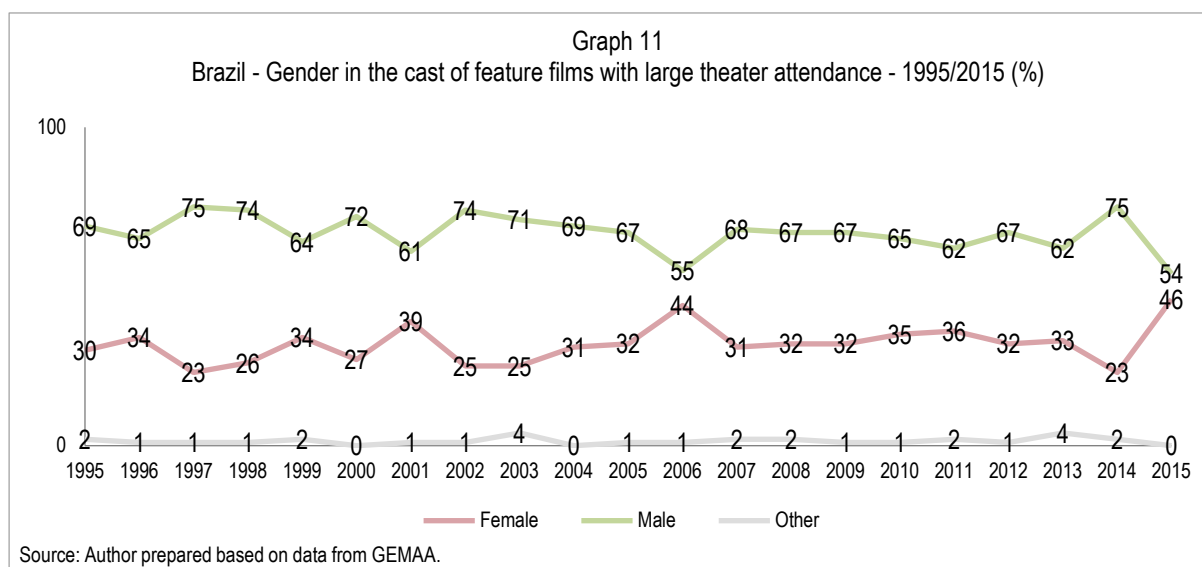


The production conditions in the audiovisual sector - as well as the whole national context - underwent several changes over the decades that were examined in GEMAA’s studies. In order to verify if these transformations affected the inequalities in representation in any way, the group also worked with disaggregated data relating to characters and year. **Graph 11** shows that female cast participation has never equaled male participation in wide release films. In the years of highest inequality, 1997 and 2014, female characters equaled 23% of the total and in the years with lowest inequality, 2006 and 2015, they equaled 44% and 46%, respectively.

²⁷ Grupo de Estudos Multidisciplinares da Ação Afirmativa.

²⁸ Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

²⁹ See GEMAA’s website: [GEMAA](http://GEMAA.org.br) (accessed in 01/12/2021), as well as the references of the studies by CANDIDO et al., cited at the end of the text.



The attributes that are associated with the characters highlight another element of gender discrimination: women are not only underrepresented in Brazilian cinema but they also are cast in stereotyped or sexualized roles more often. When it comes to professional representation, for instance, women are the group that is less often associated with formal labour or in roles associated with high social status. In terms of the apparent age of characters, women achieve higher representation in younger roles. We might suggest that this occurs because that is the age where the female body better meets the dominant beauty standards. Furthermore, it is more common for female characters to appear in scenes with little or no clothes than it is for white male characters. This brief outline of data supports a double criticism to the state of the audiovisual industry in the country: while it is less open to actor diversity; it also tends to represent them reductively and unequally³⁰.

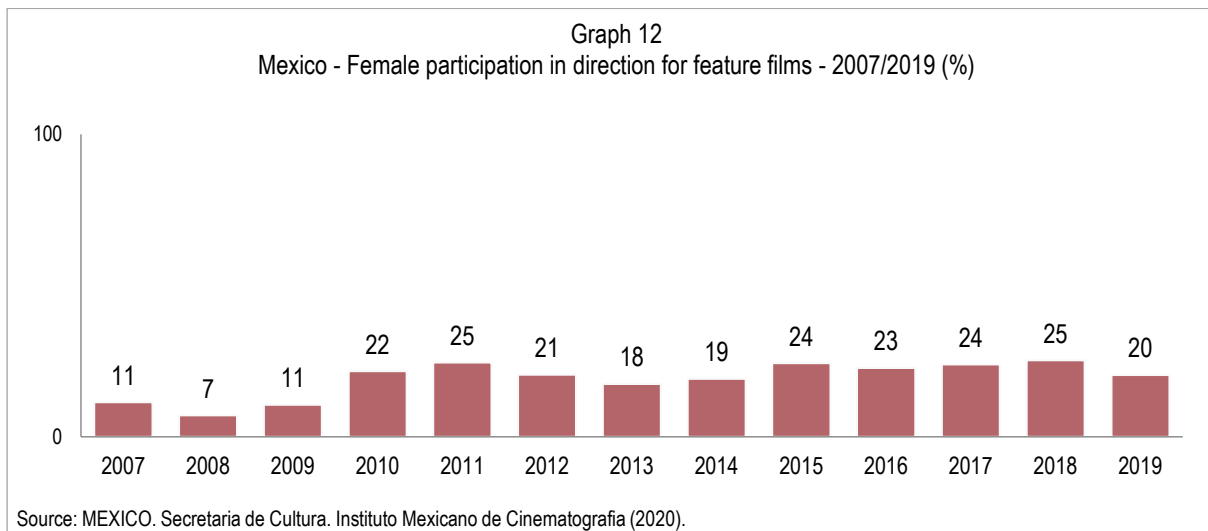
Finally, while observing the available data, one's attention is drawn to the fact that in all the technical-artistic roles analyzed and even in the casts, female participation is not trending upwards or showing any sign of a change in status. The passage of time, by itself, has not secured a greater gender equity in Brazilian audiovisual production.

2.3 Mexico

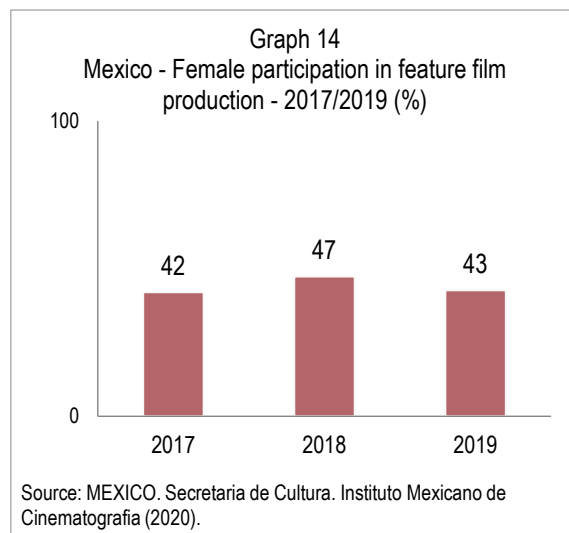
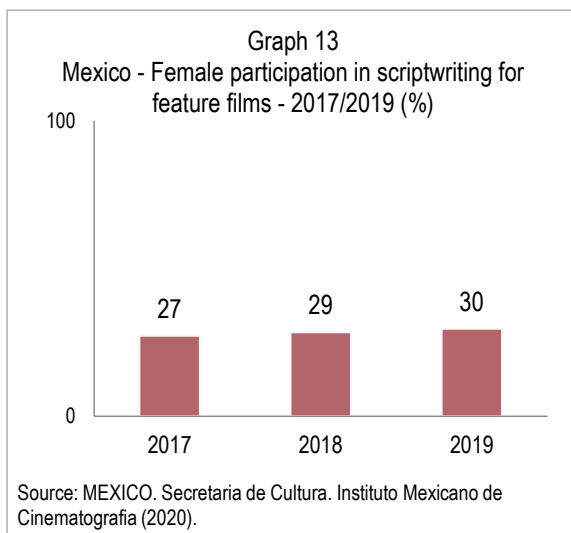
In Mexico, data on gender are part of the Statistical Yearbook of Mexican Cinema, published by the Secretary of Culture and the Mexican Institute of Cinematography. Its last edition (2020) provides data from 2019 and all the time series available thus far. In 2019, women directed 20% of Mexican feature films. If we take only documentaries into consideration, female participation rises, reaching 25%. The same happens if we observe first-time directors in this year, where

³⁰ See CANDIDO et. al. (2021)

women comprise 27% of the total. The time series (**Graph 12**) shows that starting in 2010 female participation rises from 11% to between 18% and 25% with the highest number, 25%, being in 2018.



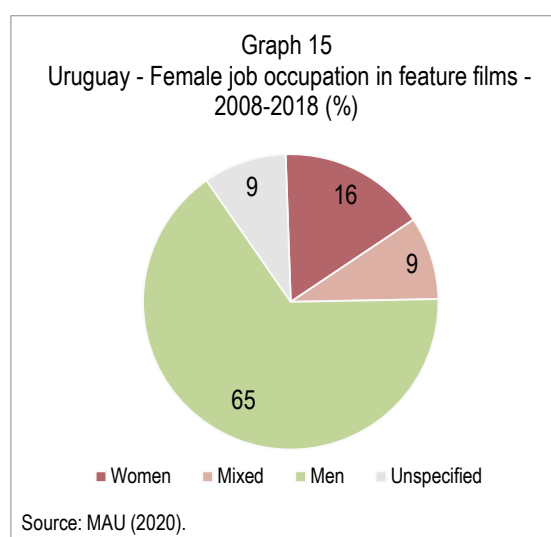
Regarding female participation in scriptwriting and production roles (**Graphs 13 and 14**), the data collection took place during the 2017/2019 triennium. The proportion of female writers grew slightly, going from 27% to 29% during this period. In production, female participation sits at 40%, reaching its highest point in 2018 (47%).



2.4 Uruguay

The most important data source in Uruguay is the study made by the organization Audiovisual Women of Uruguay³¹ (MAU)³², a civil society organization that has collected and systematized gender-oriented data on access to public financing and to technical-artistic production roles in national films released between 2008 and 2018³³. The publication was released in 2020 and shows that during these ten years female participation never broke 20% in the country.

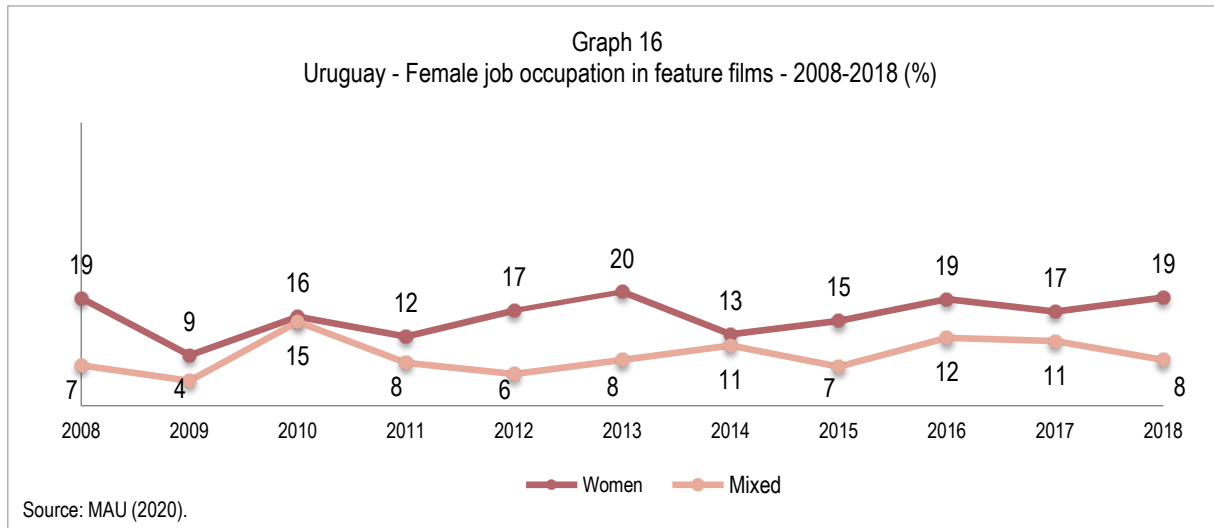
Taking into account job occupation in feature films released during this period, in both documentary and fiction features female participation was of 16% (**Graph 15**). **Graph 16**, with information shown by year, attests to the lack of significant change to diversity levels over time.



³¹ *Mujeres Audiovisuales Uruguay*

³² See MAU's website: [Mujeres Audiovisuales Uruguay](#)

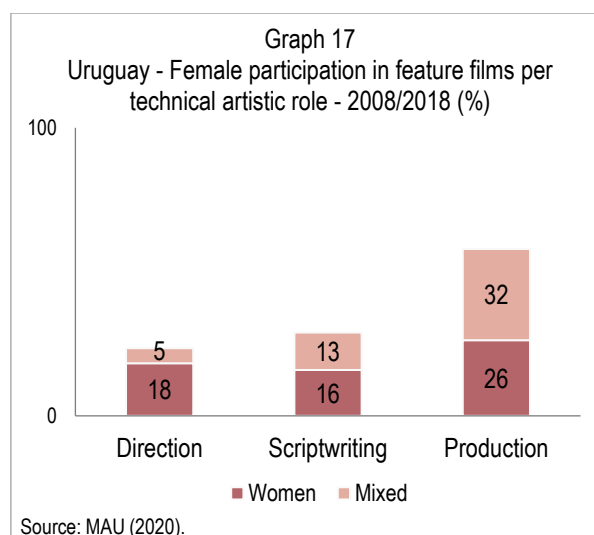
³³ The time series starts with Act 18,284/2008, known as the Cinema Act, which created the Uruguayan Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual (ICAU) and the Cinema and Audiovisual Development Fund.

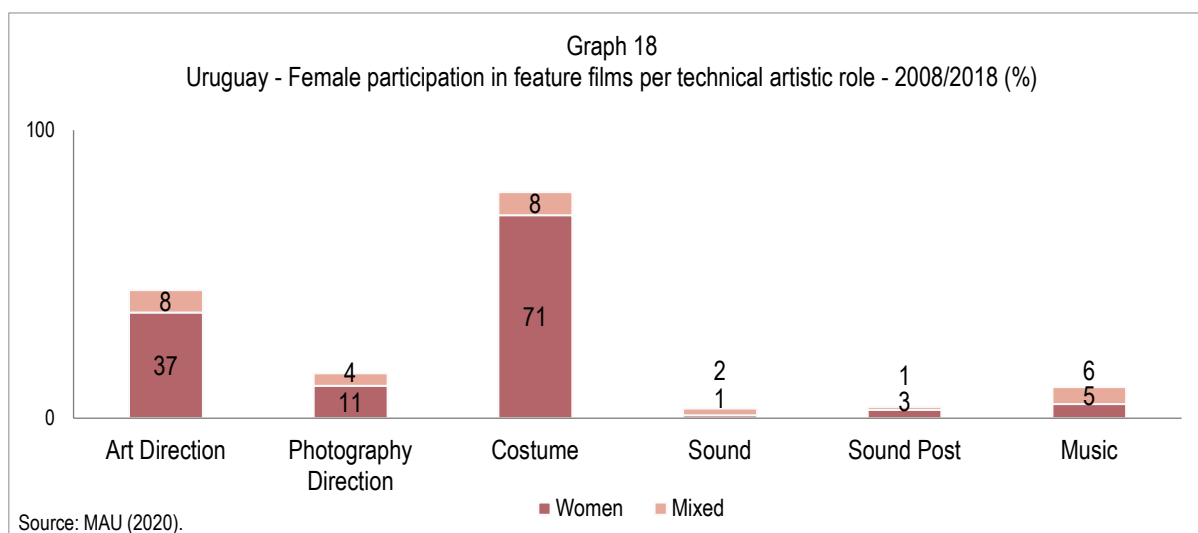


Gendered data analysis on creative leadership roles shows that women were a minority in directorial roles (18% in exclusively female direction and 23% in total if co-directed films are also counted). The production role is the one that shows the highest levels of mixed participation over the ten-year period (32%). If mixed co-productions are taken into account, female participation reaches 58%. Exclusively female productions, however, amounted to 26%.

In other technical-artistic roles, costume is the one with highest female participation (71% of exclusive female participation), while sound, audio post-production and music are the most exclusionary roles with only 1%, 3% and 5% of female participation, respectively. Cinematography is also male dominated: women performed this role exclusively only in 11% of cases. Mixed cinematography represented only 4% of cases.

Gender distribution in the professional roles analyzed by the study show a clear relationship with the gender roles traditionally attributed to women and men. **Graphs 17** and **18** below summarize this division of labour.





An interesting and ongoing initiative in Uruguay is the gathering of data on gender from the projects submitted to the Cinema and Audiovisual Development Fund. A comparison between the submitted and approved projects revealed that 17% of submitted projects have women as directors, while 21% of those approved have female directors. Projects by men are 69% of those submitted and 73% of those approved³⁴.

2.5 Spain

In Spain, the Ministry of Culture collects statistical indicators about cinema, including data relating to gender. These data belong to the national statistical plan and are gathered on a continuous basis³⁵. Besides the official data, the Association of Women Filmmakers and of Audiovisual Media³⁶ (Cima) publishes studies that incorporate a larger set of technical-artistic roles.

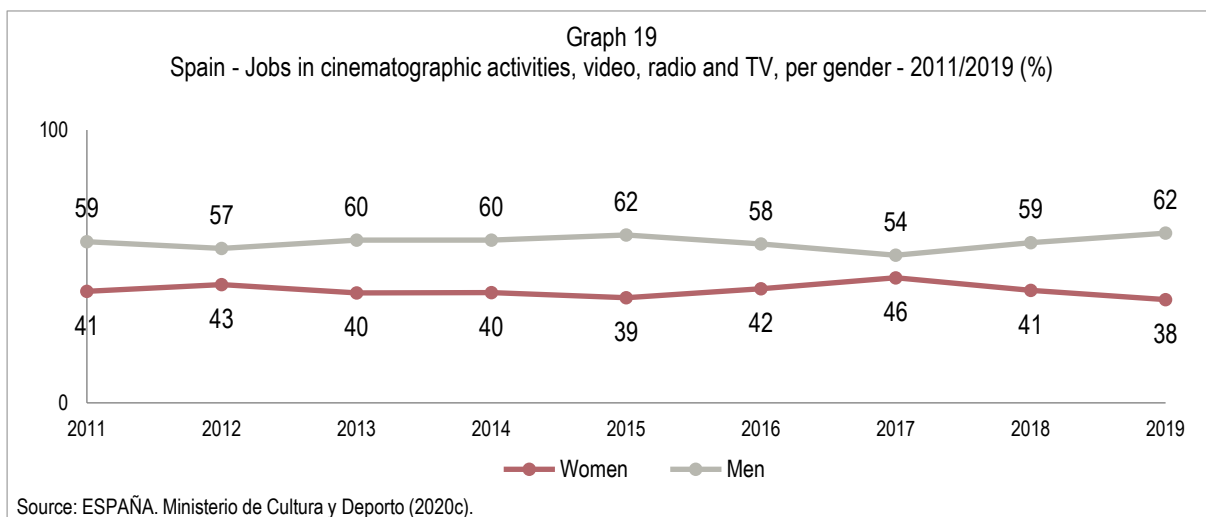
Female participation in Spain's audiovisual employment between 2011 and 2019 is shown on **graph 19**. Women occupied 38% of the sector's jobs in 2019, their smallest share since 2011. The largest, in 2017, was of 46%³⁷.

³⁴ MAU (2020).

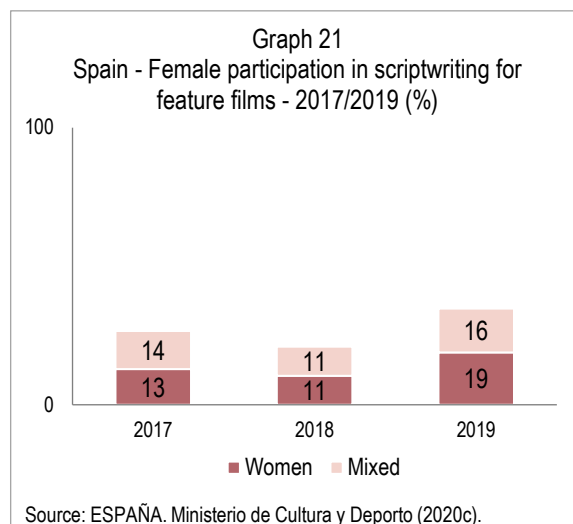
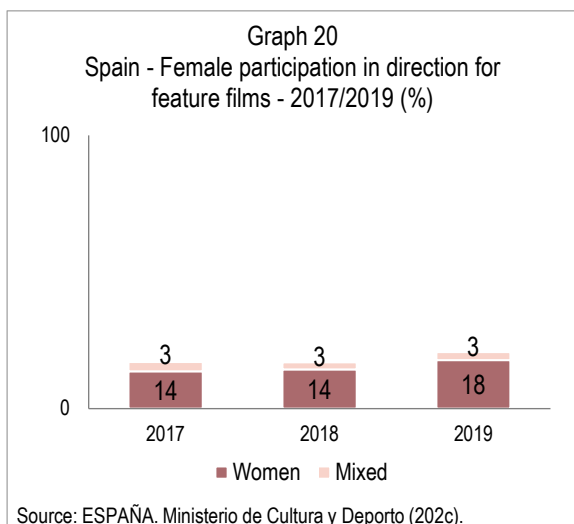
³⁵ SPAIN (2020b)

³⁶ *Asociación de Mujeres Cineastas y de Medios Audiovisuales*

³⁷ SPAIN (2020c). These data take into account the CNAEs (National Classification of Economic Activities, or *Classificação Nacional de Atividades Econômicas*) of 59 activities related to cinema, video, television shows, sound recording and music editing.

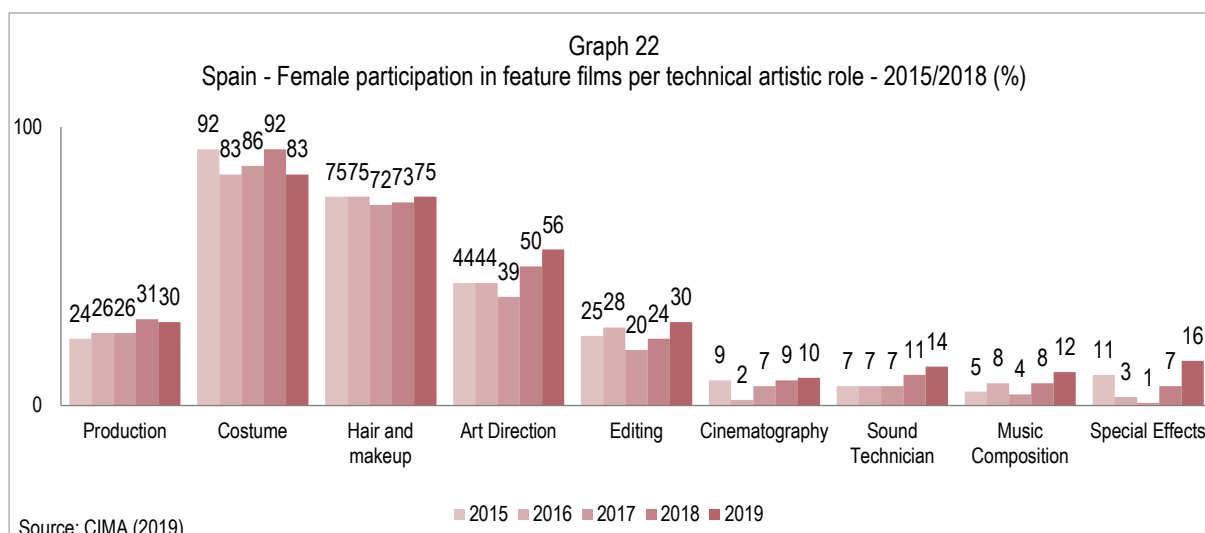


Regarding female participation in creative leadership roles, official Spanish statistics include direction and scriptwriting data for the feature films produced in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (**Graphs 20 and 21**). During this time period, female direction of non co-directed films varied between 14% and 18%. In scriptwriting, co-writing contributed significantly to female participation: only in 2019 was exclusive female authorship of scripts (19%) higher than mixed gender authorship (16%) – 2019 was, in fact, the best year for female participation in scriptwriting.



The evolution of female participation in other technical-artistic roles between 2015 and 2019 is presented in Cima’s most recent study (**Graph 22**)³⁸.

³⁸ CIMA (2019). Study based on nomination categories for Goya Prizes, reflecting a mix of the feature films released each year.



In production, female participation varied between 24% and 31%. Art direction is the most balanced field, with a female participation that varies between 44% and 56%. In cinematography, on the other hand, female participation never broke the 10% mark during this period. The technical areas of sound, music composition and special effects are also heavily male dominated, although female participation has grown somewhat during this period. On the other hand, costume, hair and make-up are functions performed mostly by women. These data, taken together, show that gender inequality in the Spanish audiovisual sector is both numerical and qualitative.

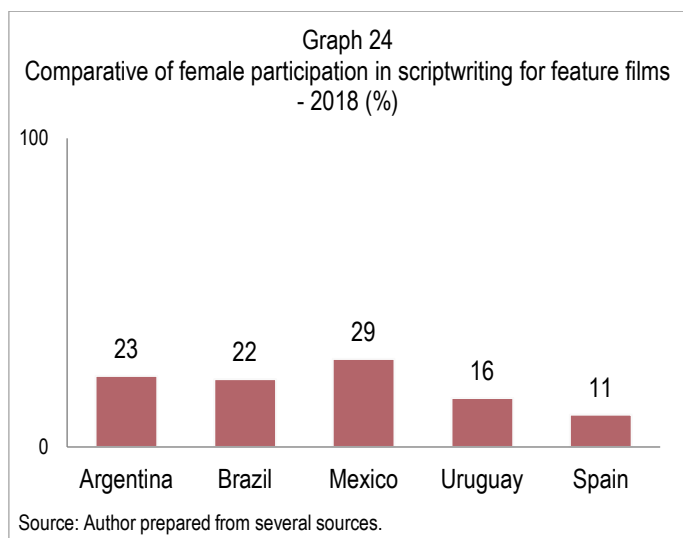
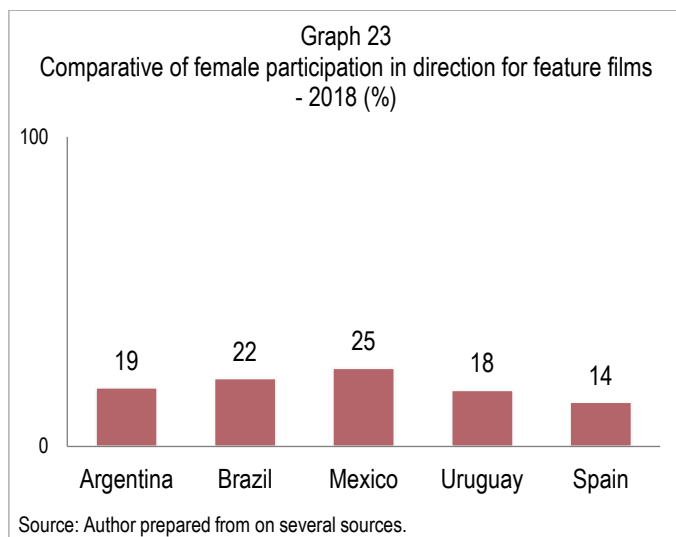
Lastly, a piece of data only available in Spanish datasets concerns rights holders in the audiovisual sector: in 2019, 245 of the 747 registers for intellectual property rights related to the audiovisual sector were held by women – 32% of the total³⁹.

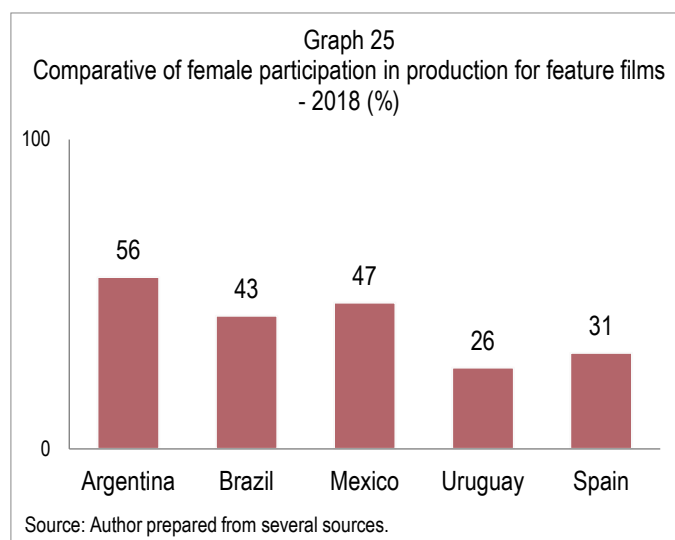
3. Final considerations: the gender (in)equality in the Latin American audiovisual industry

Comparing female participation in the audiovisual sectors of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Spain reveals striking similarities both in terms of the proportion of female participation and of the way women are present in the industry. In all these countries, women are the minority in exercising creative leadership roles such as direction and scriptwriting, are even more underrepresented in technical roles (such as photography, sound and special effects), and are significantly overrepresented in costume, hair and make-up. In most of these countries, the only two roles where there is relative gender balance – or at least smaller imbalance – are production and art direction.

³⁹ SPAIN (2020c).

The share of representation also does not vary drastically between countries. Analyzing female participation in the production of feature films in 2018 – the only piece of data that can be compared between all countries – shows that in no cases women directed more than 25% of films or wrote more than 30% of them. In most of these countries, female and male participation in production is slightly more balanced. **Graphs 23 to 25** show the female participation percentages for these roles in each country.



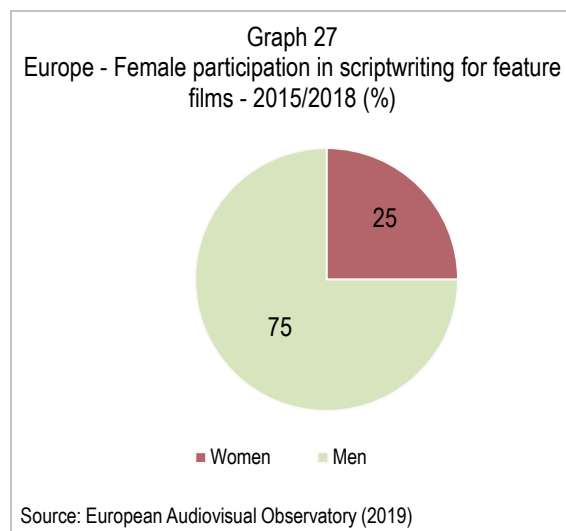
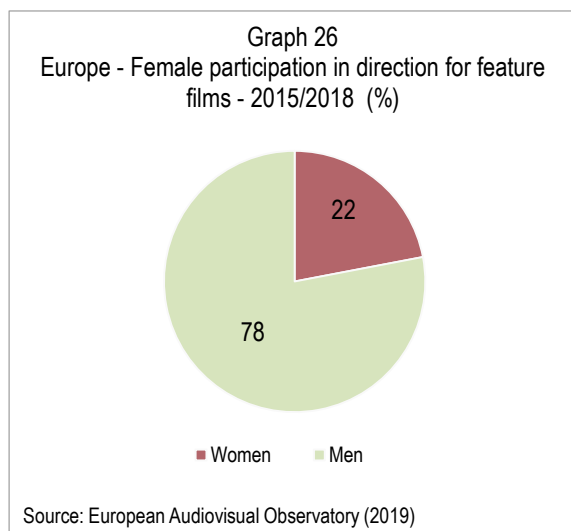


We know that women's underrepresentation in creative leadership roles is not due to a lack of qualified professionals. In general, female presence in cinema schools is fairly balanced vis-à-vis their male counterparts, as we saw in the data available for Argentina and Brazil.

Entering the audiovisual market is not easy for women, having a career in it is even less so. Regarding the occupation of leadership roles, we observe that female participation in direction and scriptwriting – besides currently being minimal and concentrated in lower budgeted projects – is not trending towards equality in the future. In the cases where the data allowed the analysis of a time series, we noted that evolution – when it does exist – has been small. In roles such as production and art direction, participation is more balanced. Female overrepresentation in costume, hair and make-up demonstrates how the audiovisual sector reproduces existing societal stereotypes on the role of women. When it comes to roles such as sound, editing, photography and musical production, any growth in female participation has an exceedingly small starting point and advances very slowly.

What is shown here is, unfortunately, not exclusive to Latin American countries. A recent study by the European Audiovisual Observatory⁴⁰ has shown that the situation in Europe is remarkably similar. In feature films produced between 2015 and 2018 that saw release into the movie theaters of at least one European country between 2015 and 2019, women represented 22% of all directors and 25% of writers (**Graphs 26** and **27**). Gender inequality in the audiovisual sector is, therefore, broad numerically, qualitatively, and geographically.

⁴⁰ European Audiovisual Observatory (2020). *Female directors and screenwriters in European film and audiovisual fiction production*. Available at [CoE Female directors and screenwriters July 2020](#)



Although this issue has been increasingly noticed all over the world, effective change has been ponderous. According to the estimates of the World Economic Forum,⁴¹ at the current rate it will take us one century to eliminate gender inequality in the globe. This slow rate of change works to maintain the current structures of segregation between men and women. It is necessary to accelerate the rate of change towards gender equality and the audiovisual industry might have an important part to play in these efforts, not only for the benefit of the industry itself but also for the benefit and development that diversity might bring to economies and societies worldwide.

In order to encourage this change, some actions from the government, private sector and civil society might make a difference. It is worth noting, first of all, the centrality of public policy both due to the access to information and to the scale of public financing. Data gathering and analysis is important to raise awareness about this issue among society as a whole; among the agents inside the audiovisual space; and among the policymakers themselves.

The first step towards progress in gender equality inside the audiovisual industries is to ensure that statistical data with information on gender is collected regularly and made a part of the decision making of all national agencies on filmmaking. Such efforts must raise and systematize – among others – data on the projects presented for calls for applications and funds, on the national registries of finished works, on the rights holders of the works. This type of information is fundamental in understanding the dynamics that underlie female participation in the industry and following its evolution.

Ensuring that the distribution of public resources through direct and indirect funding policies for audiovisual activity is equitable and that it offers incentives to the qualified participation of women is another facet of governments' actions that may contribute directly and immediately

⁴¹ World Economic Forum (2020).

to greater gender equality in the industry. In terms of public resources, the adoption of pro-parity mechanisms is essential for the State to fulfill its social goals and not just become a mere reproducer of the already existing discriminatory dynamics.

The acknowledgement of the value of gender equality and diversity and inclusion in a profoundly unequal society such as ours, however, will not be built solely through State action. On the one hand, public policy does not occur on its own: the mobilization of the market and of civil society is what drives governments' agendas. On the other hand, there are so many more initiatives to be implemented – with much more immediate results – in the corporate arena. The major companies of the sector could change much through their policies for recruitment, hiring, training and promotion. Decision makers on all levels – investors, curators, professors who decide on the curriculum of TV and cinema courses – could internalize perspectives on gender and race into their decision criteria. Creative professionals of all areas could question if their own narratives and approaches are free of stereotypes.

It is in the day to day of companies that gender equality is built or brushed aside. It is the companies – big and small – that can make sure that each new initiative, project or creative enterprise has a diverse team. It is they, too, that can ensure that audiovisual narratives do not contribute to the maintenance of systemic inequality, aspects that are too often left unseen due to unconscious bias but that are fundamental to building a more diverse social imaginary. It is inside companies that concrete practices may be built which improve the cooperation between teams and which discourage violence or any disrespectful behavior – so that equality in rights and dignity among all persons may materialize within all processes of audiovisual production. It is in the business decisions of the players of the audiovisual industry that the development of projects written, directed and produced by women may be strategically stimulated; that gender parity within evaluating committees may be enforced; that the participation of women in leadership roles may be encouraged.

And last, but not least, the attention of the civil society – from opinion leaders to social movements – is essential to drive companies and governments towards promoting gender equality. An increased focus on the audiovisual industry, given its multiplying effect, will certainly provide dividends for the development of equality in several different sectors.

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