Gender within UK film crews

by

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Introduction

Thank you for reading my study of gender within UK film crews

On my blog I explore data and statistics within the film industry. This started as sharing existing public statistics but quickly grew to include the gathering of new data.

The film industry is heavily influenced by shifting opinions, so I find it useful to delve into the data to see what's true and what is conjecture.

Last month, I released a study into gender within film crews, based upon a dataset of the 100 highest grossing films at the US Box Office for each year between 1994 and 2013 (a total of 2,000 films). Additionally, in order to see how a film's genre affects gender employment I created a second dataset of the 100 highest grossing films of each genre.

As with all my research, my aim wasn't to prove a particular point but to see what interesting results the data provides. One of the outcomes was a number of people asking me how the UK compares with Hollywood. Therefore, I have re-run my research, focusing on UK films.

If you would like to know more, offer help/ advice on future research or to just drop me a line, I can be reached at www.stephenfollows.com/contact.

It's always nice to hear from people who enjoy or use my research. I am also open to new collaborations and commercial projects.

Enjoy the results,

Stephen Follows

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About The Author – Stephen Follows

Stephen is a writer and producer who runs the production company Catsnake Film from Ealing Studios. He has produced two feature films and over 100 short films, and his writing has won Virgin Media Shorts, was nominated for a British Independent Film Award and long-listed for a BAFTA.

In addition, Stephen also teaches producing at film schools (NFTS, The Met Film School, Nashville Film Institute), weekend courses (Practical Producer, 7 Step Producer, Guerrilla Filmmakers Masterclass) and bespoke events (BFI, British Council, London Screenwriters Festival).

He blogs about film data every Monday at www.stephenfollows.com

1. Gender split of UK film crews, 2009-2013

Key Findings

- 26.2% of the crew members on the British films released between 2009 and 2013 were female.
- When split by budget, the figure is 27.5% for films costing over £500,000 and 25.3% for films under £500,000.

Headline Result

Figure 1.1 Gender split of crew on British films, 2009-2013

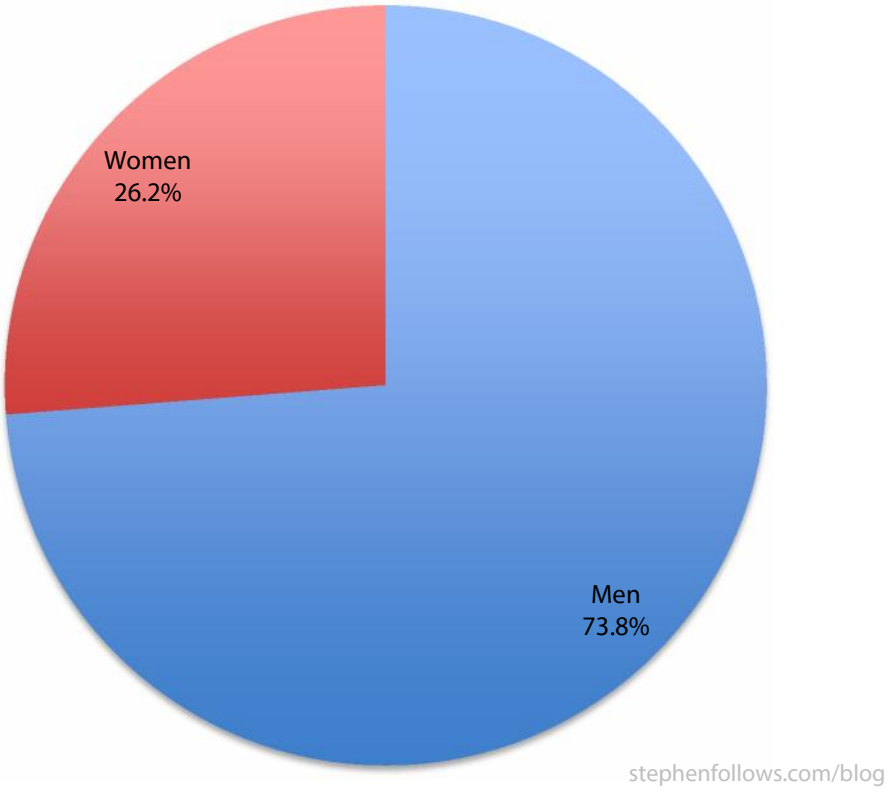


Figure 1.1 shows the gender split of crew members on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013.

Figure 1.2 Gender split of crew on British films budgeted over £0.5 million, 2009-2013

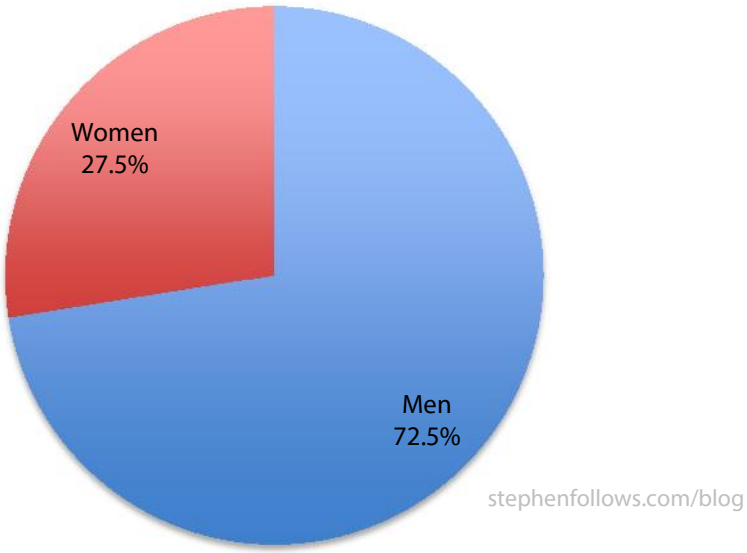


Figure 1.2 shows the gender split of crew members on the feature films budgeted over £500,000 shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013.

Figure 1.3 Gender split of crew on British films budgeted under £0.5 million, 2009-2013

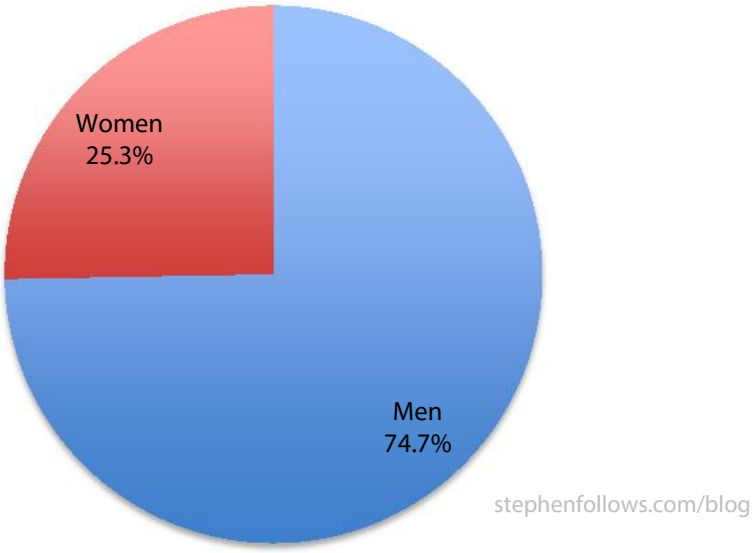


Figure 1.3 shows the gender split of crew members on the feature films budgeted under £500,000 shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013.

2. Gender split by filmmaking department

Key Findings

- Of all the departments, the Transportation department is the most male, with only 7.7% women.
- The only departments to have a majority of women are Make-up, Casting, Costume and Production.
- Visual Effects is the largest department on most major movies and yet only has 16.5% women

Headline Result

Figure 2.1 Gender split of departments on British films, 2009-2013

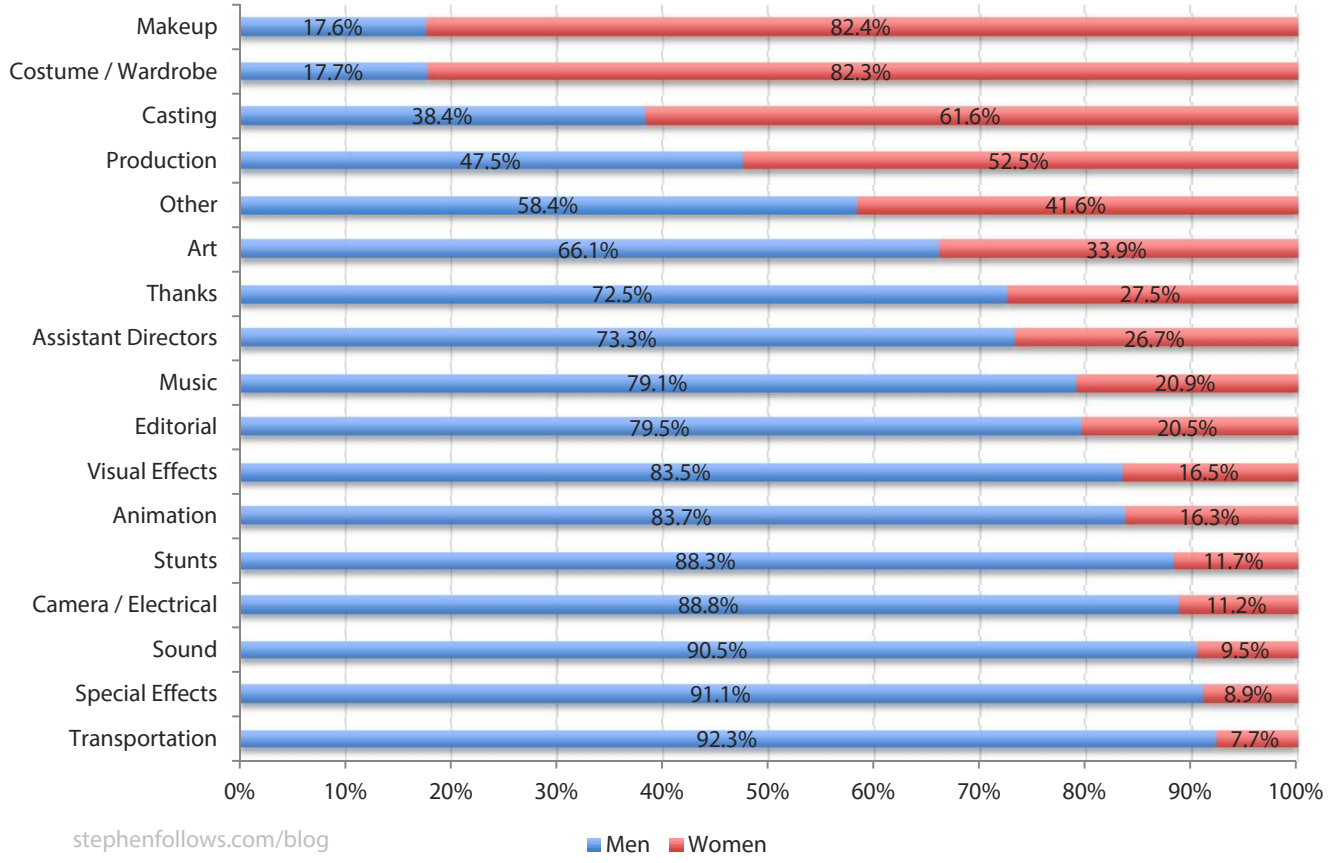


Figure 2.1 shows the gender split of crew members within the major departments on the features films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013. The Assistant Directors department includes additional directors such as 2nd unit directors. Heads of department have not been included as they are charted elsewhere in this report

3. Gender split in key creative roles

Key Findings

- Casting Directors and Costume Directors are mostly female, whereas all other key creative roles are overwhelmingly male.
- Only 6.4% of composers on British films released between 2009 and 2013 were women.

Headline Result

Figure 3.1 Gender of key creative roles on British films, 2009-2013

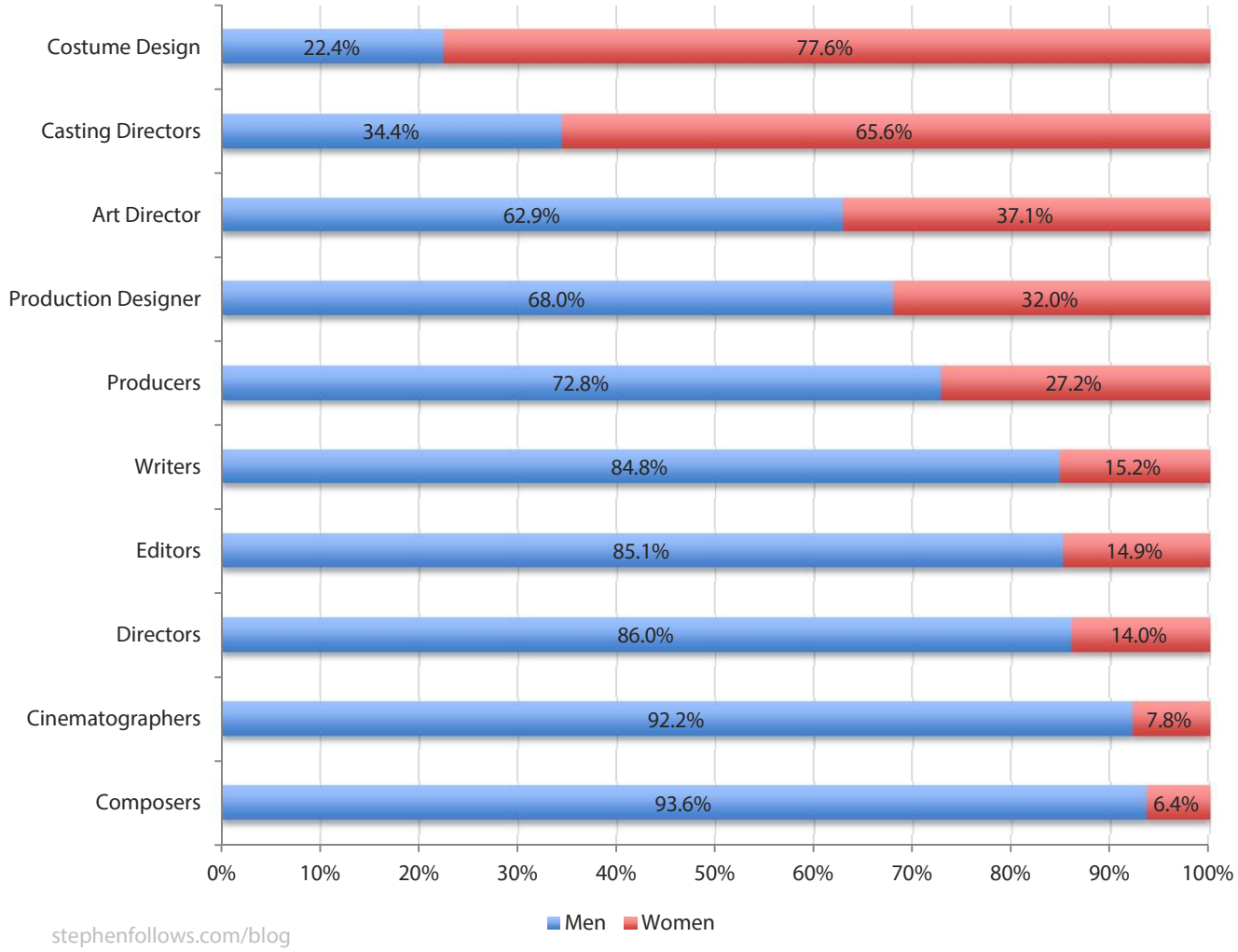


Figure 3.1 shows gender split of key creatives on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013.

4. Comparison between UK films and US box office

Key Findings

- By almost every measure, film crews on British films have a higher percentage of women than films crews of the highest grossing films in America.
- British films are much more likely to hire a female director than Hollywood films.
- Editors are the only under-represented role which have a higher percentage of women in America, compared with Britain.

Headline Result

Figure 4.1 Gender split of crew on British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

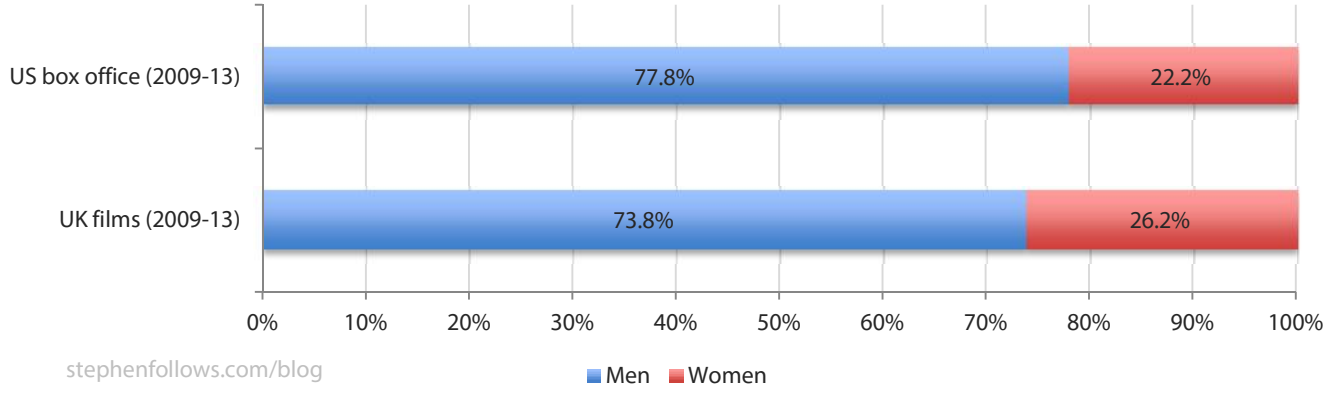


Figure 4.1 compares the gender split of crew members on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of crew members on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year).

Figure 4.2 Percentage of women as directors, writers and producers of British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

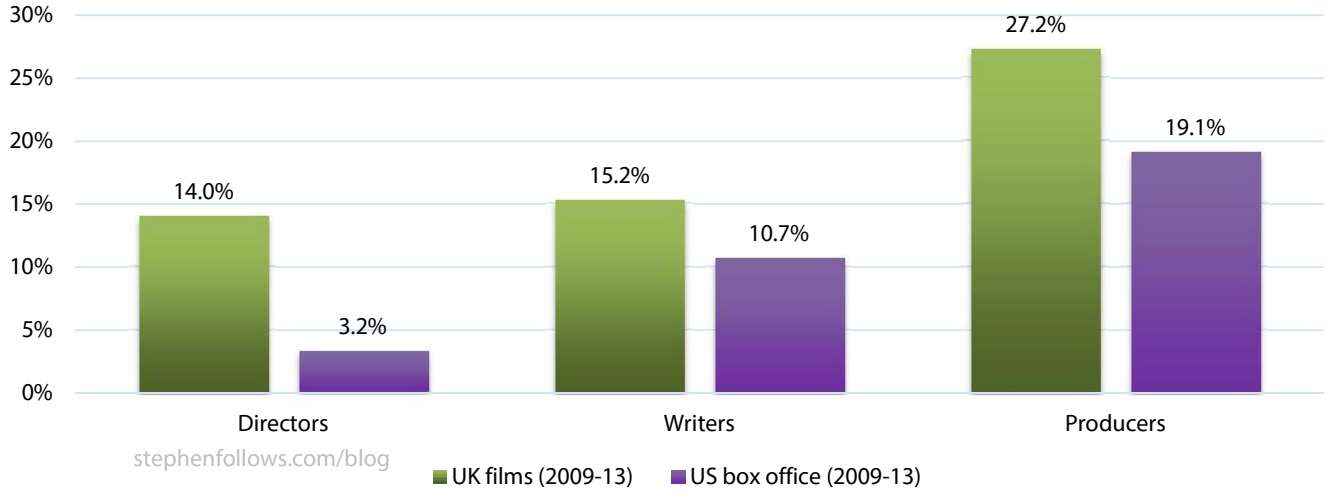


Figure 4.2 compares the percentage of women as directors, writers and producers on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of key creatives on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year)

Figure 4.3 Percentage of women in key creative roles on British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

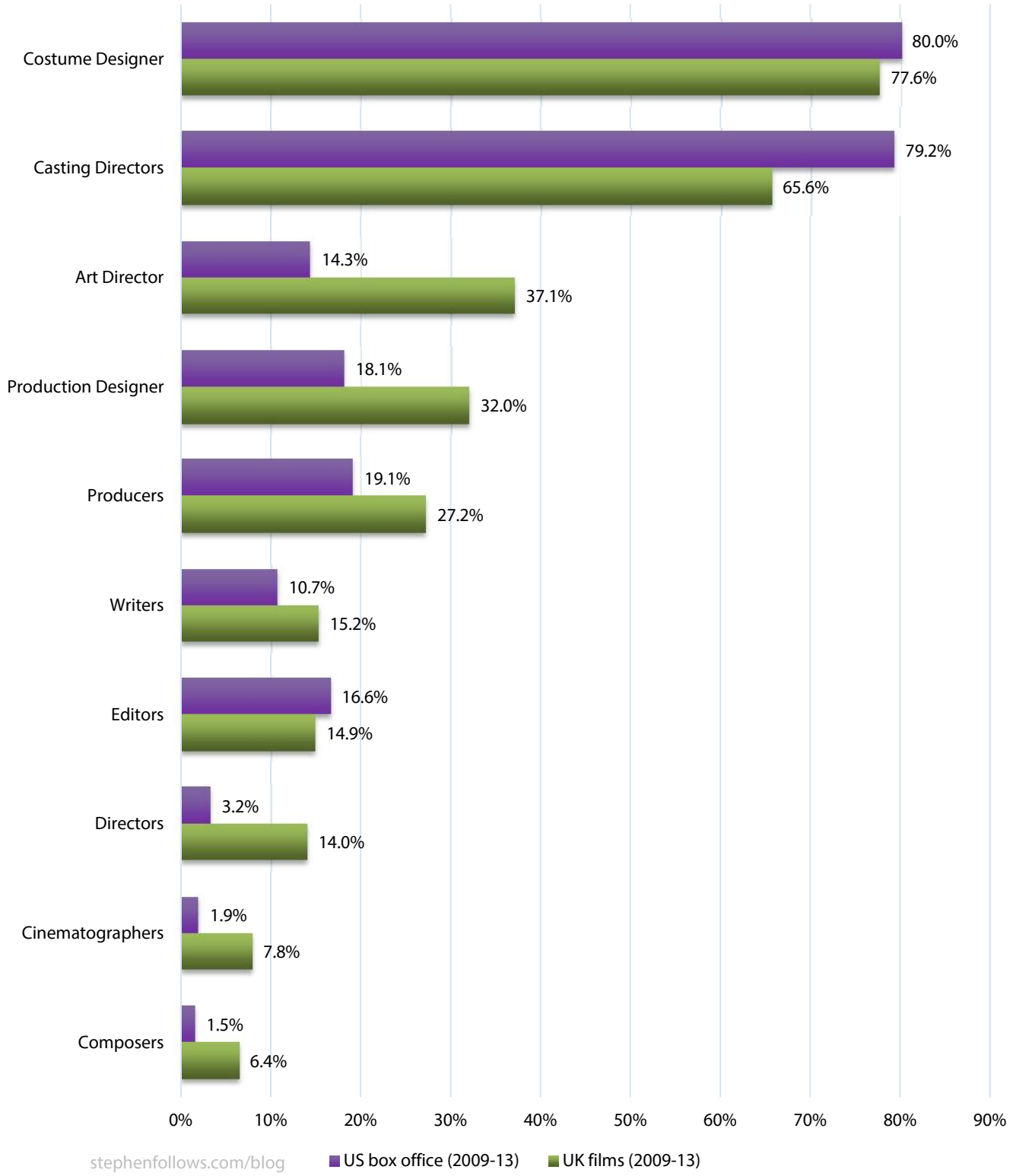


Figure 4.3 compares the percentage of women in key creative roles on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of crew members on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year).

Figure 4.4 Percentage of women in major of departments on British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

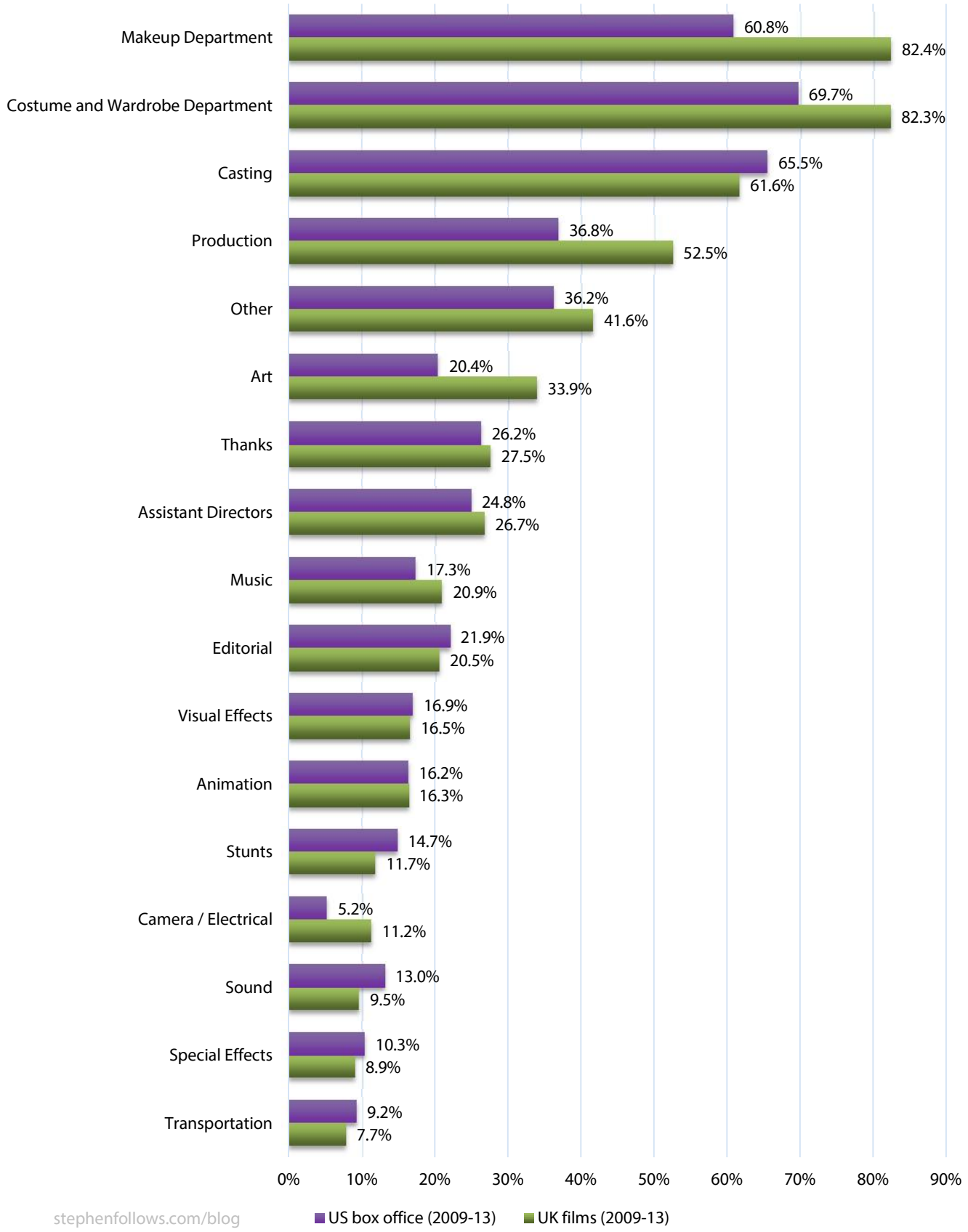


Figure 4.4 compares the percentage of women in major departments of the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of key creatives on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year

5. What has changed in the past five years?

Key Findings

- The percentage of women on British films has barely changed in the past five years.

Headline Result

Figure 5.1 Gender split of crew on British films, 2009-2013

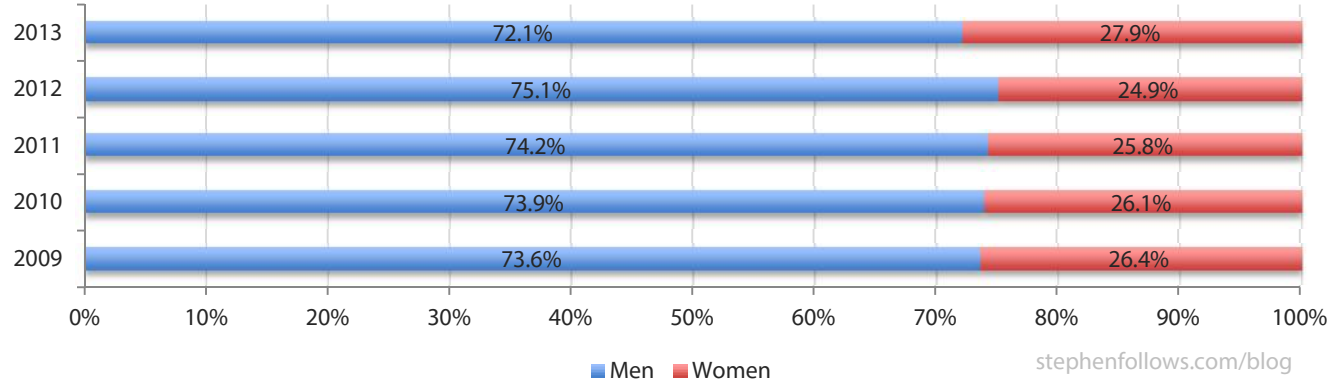


Figure 5.1 shows gender split of crew members on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013

Figure 5.2 Gender split of crew on British films budgeted over £1 million, 2003-2013

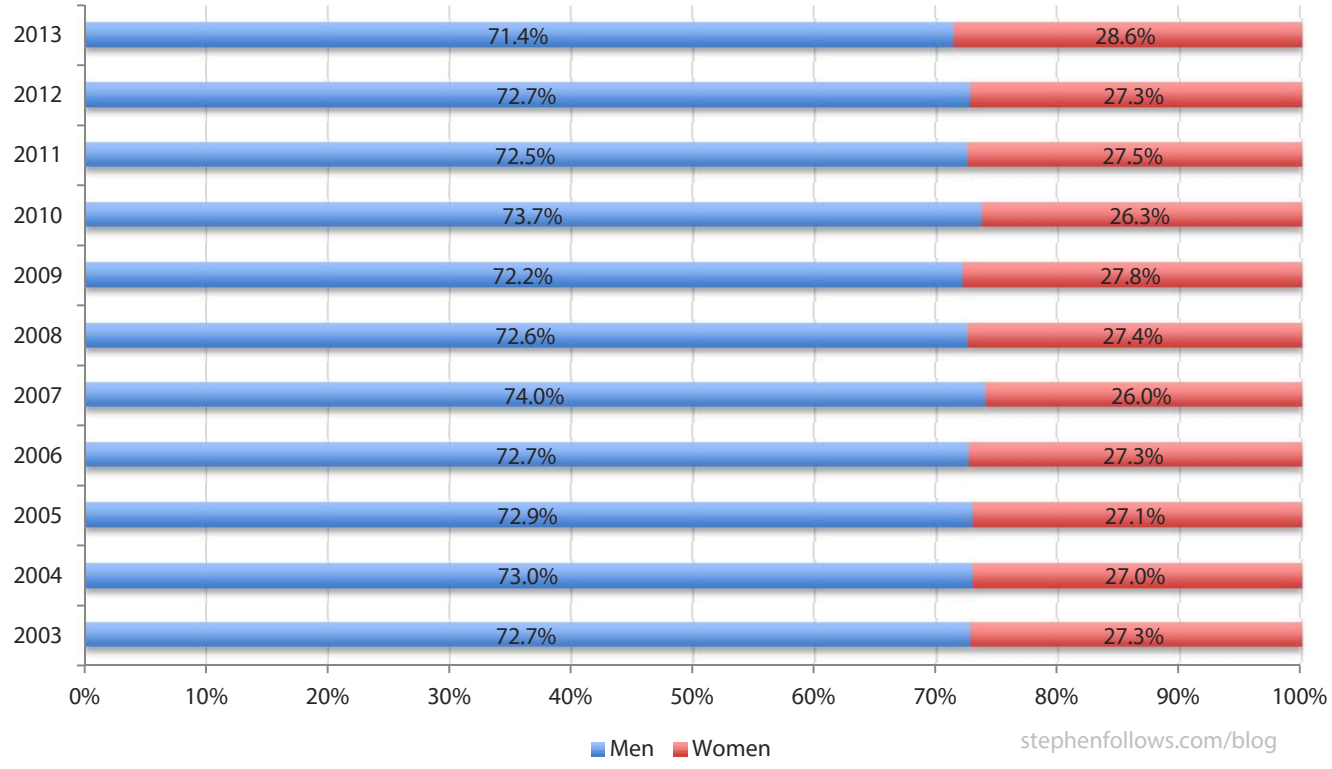


Figure 5.2 shows gender split of crew members on the feature films budgeted over £1,000,000, shot in the UK and released between 2003 and 2013. The budget level has not been adjusted for inflation.

Figure 5.3 Gender split of key creative roles on British films, 2009-13

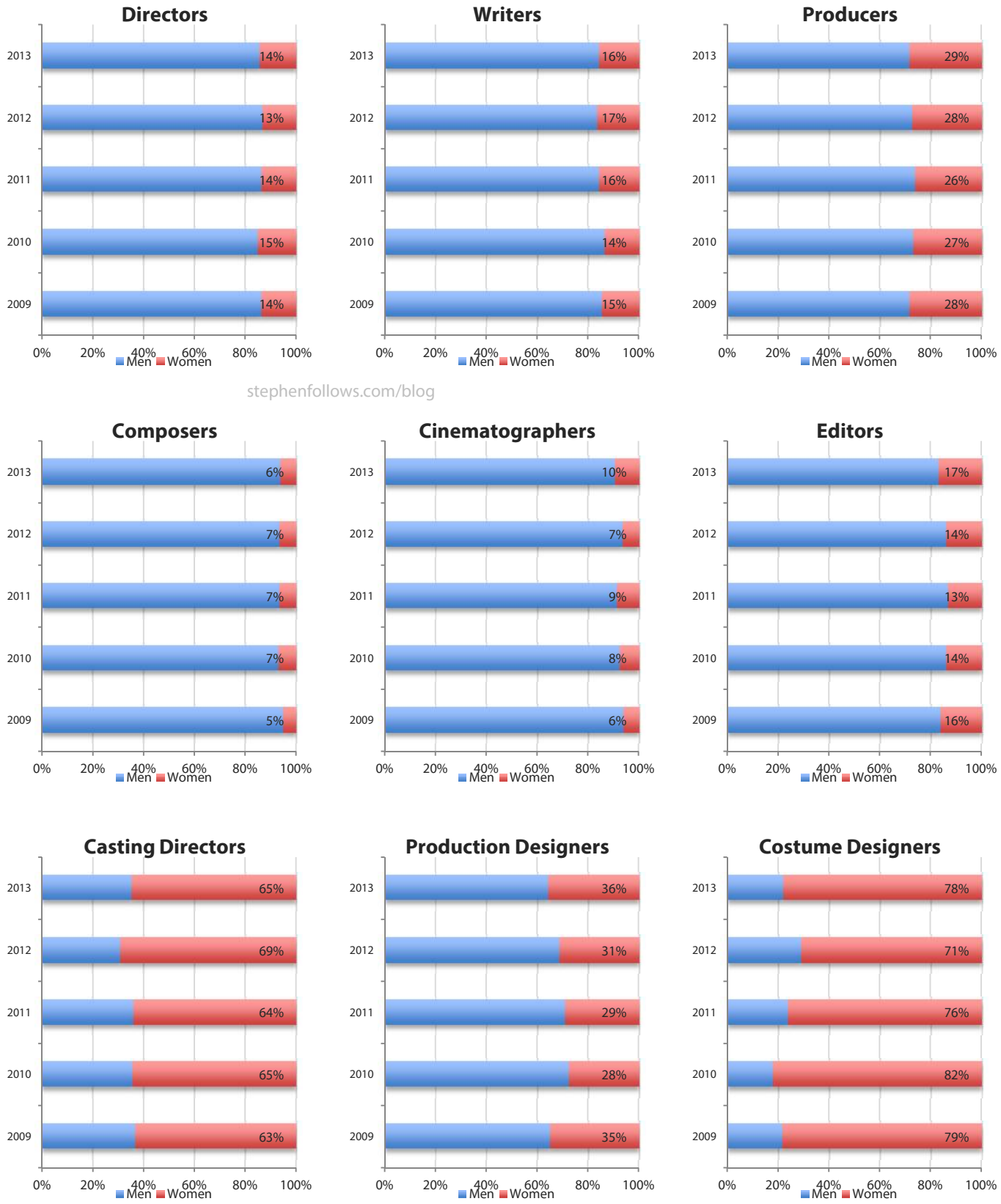


Figure 5.3 shows the gender split of key creatives on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013

Figure 5.4 Percentage of women in the crew of British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

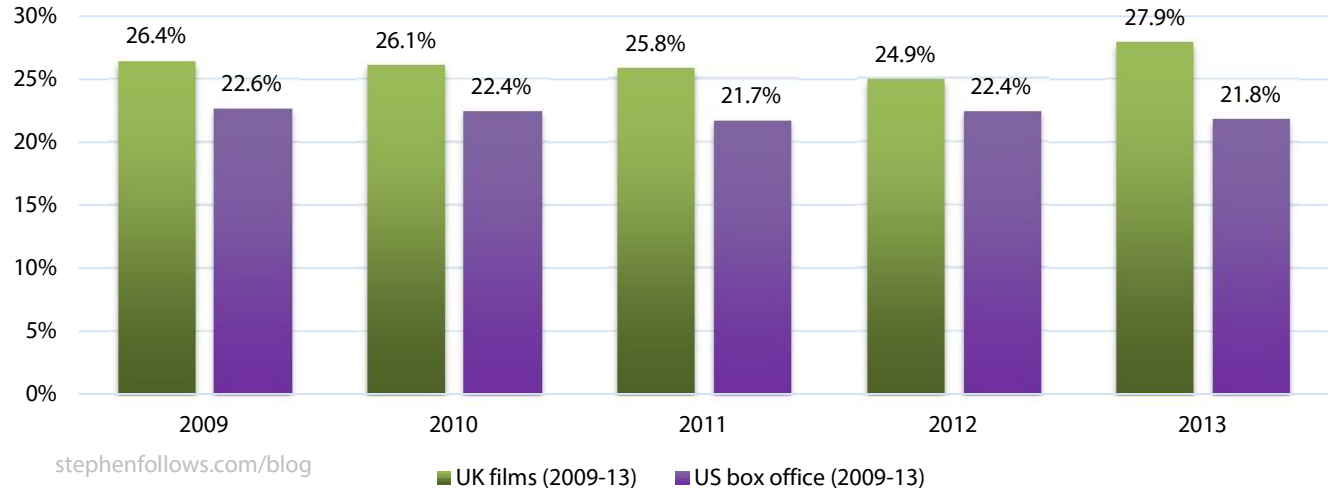


Figure 5.4 compares the percentage of women on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of key creatives on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year)

Figure 5.5 Percentage of women as directors, writers and producers of British films and top grossing films in America, 2009-13

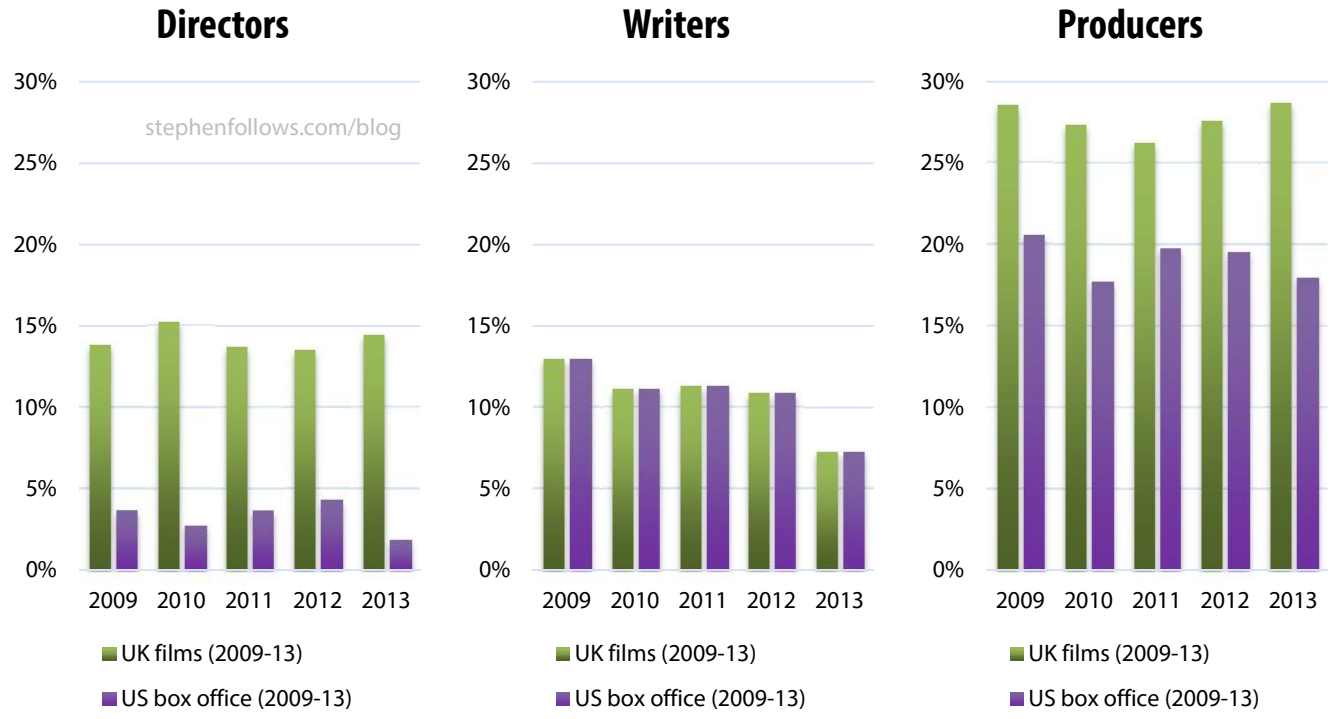


Figure 5.5 compares the percentage of women as directors, writers and producers on the feature films shot in the UK and released between 2009 and 2013 with that of key creatives on the 500 highest grossing films at the US Box Office between 2009-2013 (top 100 films of each year)

6. Does the gender of a crew matter for audiences?

Key Findings

- All of the films that were most popular with men were written and directed by men
- 42% of the films that were most popular with women were written by women
- The films with the highest proportion of men in the audience were Action films
- Over the past decade, the films with the highest percentage of men in the audience were United 93, V For Vendetta and Captain America.
- The films with the highest percentage of women in the audience were Penelope, Jane Eyre and Wild Child.

Do female audiences prefer to watch films made by female filmmakers?

There are many reasons why the under-representation of women in the film industry could be seen as a problem. These include female crew members finding it harder to get hired/paid, employers selecting workers from a pool that is half the size it should be, fewer female role models for aspiring creatives and, of course, justice / equality / fairness.

Another possible reason is a reduced female perspective in stories/characters, so I took on a side project to investigate the question "Do female audiences prefer to watch films made by female filmmakers?"

In order to answer this question we need to ask the following sub-questions…

1. Do men and women go to the cinema in equal numbers?
2. Do men and women watch the same films?
3. What gender are the filmmakers behind the films that each gender prefers?

Q1. Do men and women go to the cinema in equal numbers?

Roughly, yes. The UK population is 51% female and that the average person in the UK visits the cinema 2.7 times a year. There is no difference between the frequency of cinema visits between genders.

Figure 6.1 Percentage of UK population who visit a cinema at least once a year

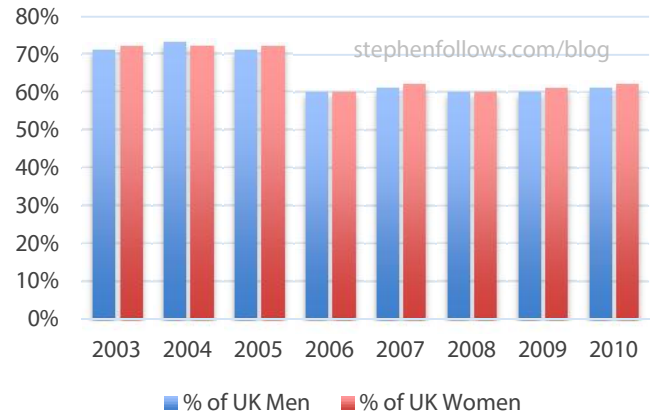
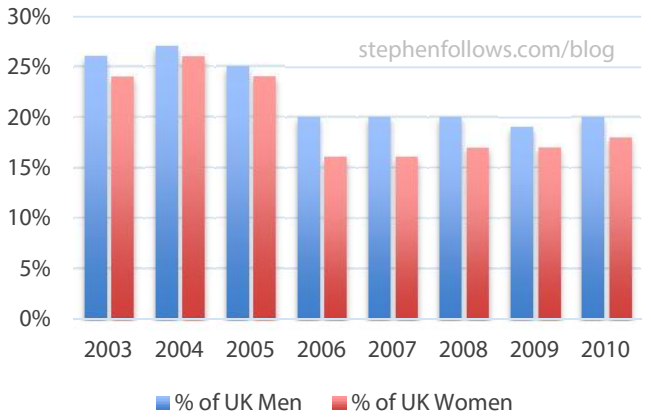


Figure 6.2 Percentage of UK population who visit a cinema at least once a month



Source: BFI/ UKFC Yearbooks, CAVIAR 23 and Quarterly Reports, CAA Film Monitor

Q2. Do men and women watch the same films?

The BFI regularly carry out exit polls on new film releases to discover more about who is watching films in UK cinemas. Taking this dataset for 251 films released between 2003-2012, I have been able to build up a list of the films with the highest proportion of men in the audience and the equivalent for women. This gives us a league table of sorts, revealing the 'Most Male' and 'Most Female' films of the past decade.

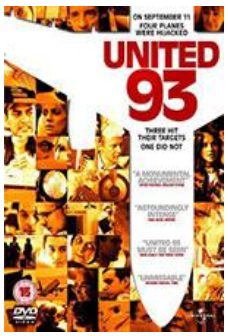
Figure 6.3 Films with the 'Most Female' Audience in UK cinemas 2003-12

Film	Male	Female
Penelope	10%	90%
Jane Eyre	14%	86%
Wild Child	15%	85%
Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging	16%	84%
Sex and the City	19%	81%
One Day	19%	81%
Bridesmaids	21%	79%
Hairspray	22%	78%
Miss Potter	22%	78%
The Other Boleyn Girl	22%	78%
Marley & Me	22%	78%
The Devil Wears Prada	22%	78%
The Queen	23%	77%
High School Musical 3	24%	76%
Mamma Mia!	25%	75%
Evelyn	26%	74%
Calendar Girls	27%	73%
Sex and the City 2	27%	73%
S Club Seeing Double	28%	72%
Enchanted	29%	71%

Figure 6.3 shows films with the highest percentage of women in the audience for the 251 films featured in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas between 2003-12.

Figure 6.4 Films with the 'Most Male' Audience in UK cinemas 2003-12

Film	Male	Female
United 93	89%	11%
V for Vendetta	82%	18%
Captain America: The First Avenger	78%	22%
Green Zone	76%	24%
Resident Evil: Apocalypse	75%	25%
Severance	74%	26%
Dredd	74%	26%
Alien Vs Predator	74%	27%
Layer Cake	73%	27%
Senna	73%	27%
Transformers: Dark of the Moon	73%	27%
Mission: Impossible Ghost Protocol	73%	27%
300	72%	28%
Terminator Salvation	72%	28%
Alexander	72%	28%
Iron Man	71%	29%
Match Point	71%	29%
Dodge Ball: A True Underdog Story	71%	29%
Wrath of the Titans	70%	30%
Shaun of the Dead	70%	31%



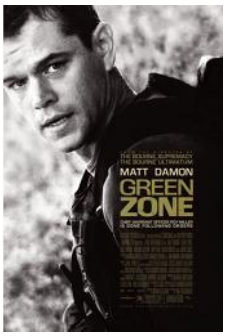


Figure 6.4 shows the films with the highest percentage of men in the audience for the 251 films featured in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas between 2003-12.

Q3. What gender are the filmmakers behind the films that each gender prefers?

Once I had complied these league tables I researched who were the key filmmakers behind these 40 movies. The results tell a clear story...

The 'Most Male' films are written and directed exclusively by men, four out of five of the producers are male and three-quarters of the principal cast (i.e. top seven names) are also men. In total, 83% of the people involved with these films were men.

However, the pattern is not the same for women. While there are far more female filmmakers in the 'Most Female' chart, men are still the majority at 54%.

The only place where women outnumber men is in the principal cast. It should be noted that 42% of the writers for the 'Most Female' chart are women, which is way above the UK average of 12% for all films.

Figure 6.5
Gender of the key creatives for the top 20 films with the 'Most Female' audiences in UK cinemas 2003-12

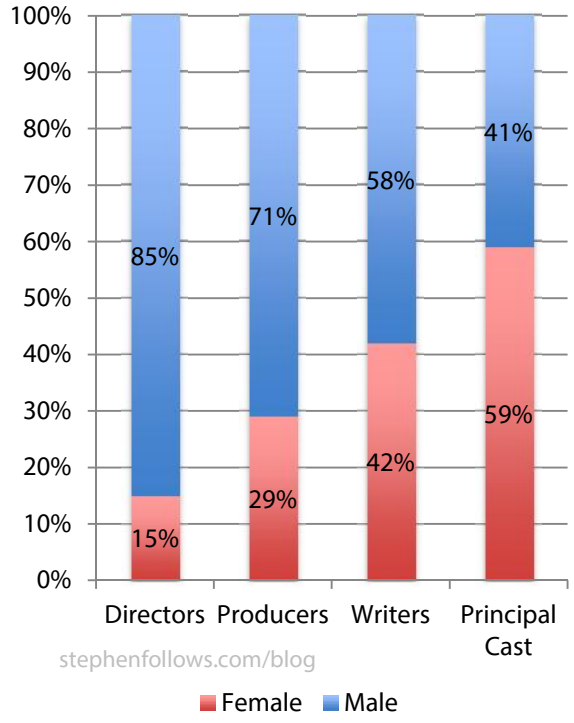


Figure 6.6
Gender of the key creatives for the top 20 films with the 'Most Male' audiences in UK cinemas 2003-12

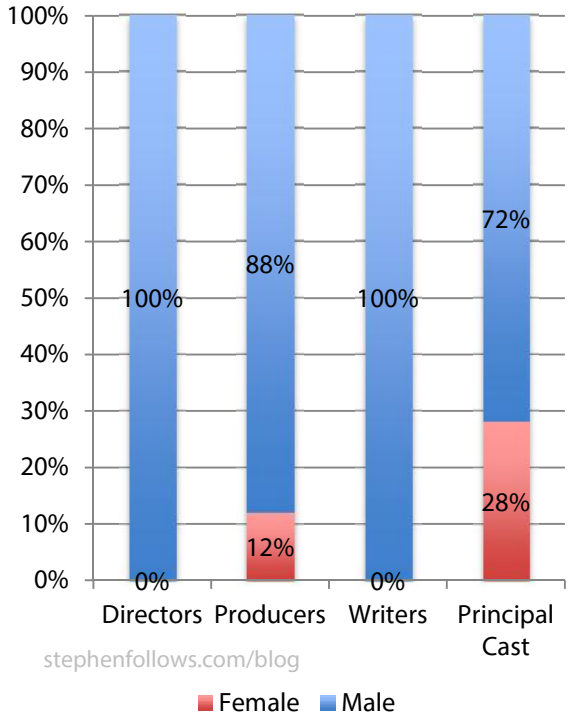


Figure 6.5 shows the gender of the writer, producer, director and principal cast (up to seven people) for the 20 films with the highest percentage of women in the audience (out of the 251 films featured in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas in 2003-12).

Figure 6.6 shows the gender of the writer, producer, director and principal cast (up to seven people) of the 20 films with the highest percentage of men in the audience (out of the 251 films featuring in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas in 2003-12).

Q4. Which genres do men and women prefer?

Using the audience data above we can see how popular different genres are with each gender.

Figure 6.7 Genres of the top 20 films with the 'Most Female' audiences in UK, 2003-12

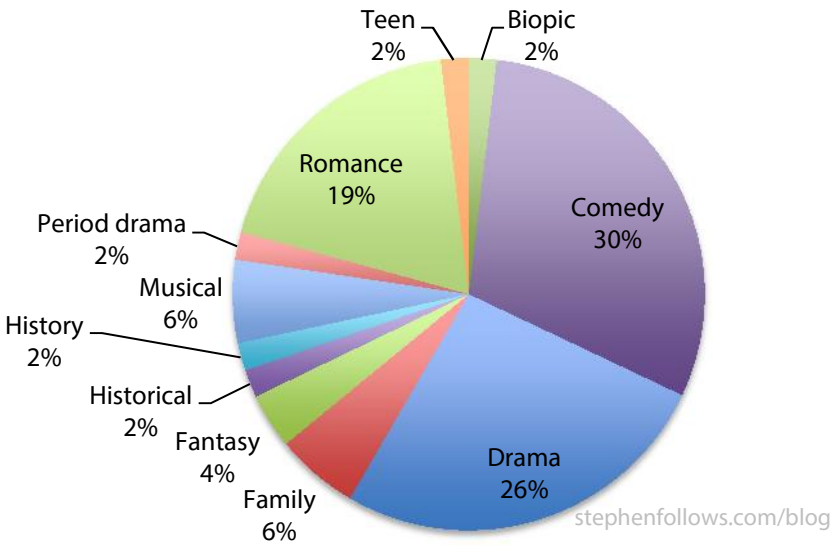


Figure 6.7 shows the genres of the 20 films with the highest percentage of women in the audience of the 251 films featured in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas between 2003-12

Figure 6.8 Genres of the top 20 films with the 'Most Male' audiences in the UK, 2003-12

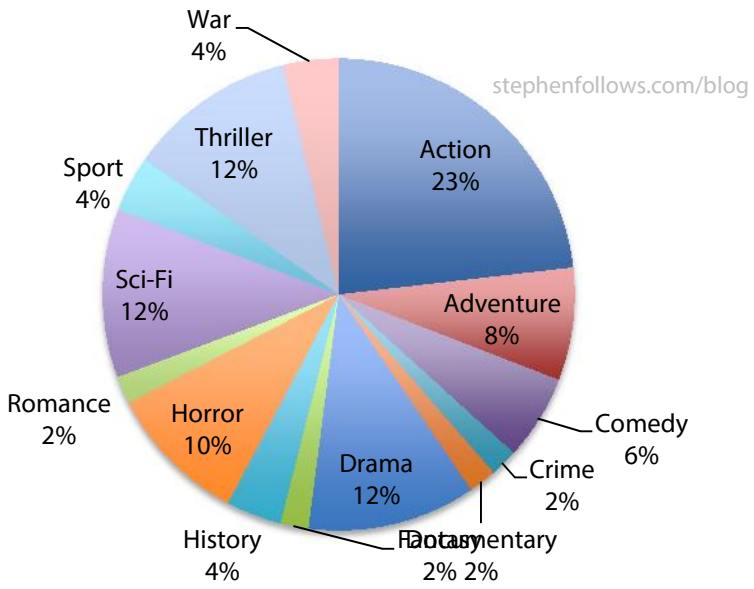


Figure 6.8 shows the genres of the 20 films with the highest percentage of men in the audience for the 251 films featured in BFI exit polls, released in UK cinemas between 2003-12

About This Research

Data Sources

The raw data came from industry sites (including IMDb and Opus), other publicly available data sites (including Wikipedia and official movie websites) and trade publications (including BFI Statistical Yearbooks and CAA Film Monitor).

It was not possible to rely on a single source, as I could not find one place that had accurate enough data. I spoke to IMDb about licencing their database but they were unwilling to do so as my plan was to raise the $15,000 annual fee via crowd-funding.

Methodology

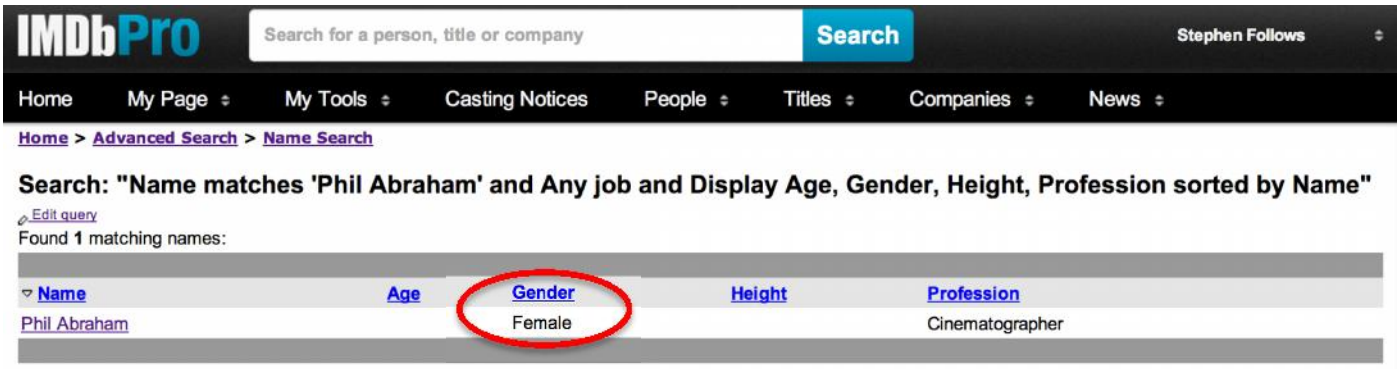
The principle lists of films shot in the UK from the BFI and the British Council.

For the avoidance of doubt, whenever I refer to 'the crew,' I do not include the cast. I have defined 'crew' as all the people it took to make a film, excluding actors, voice artists, extras and background artistes.

Assessing Gender

The size of this study meant that it would be impossible for me to manually inspect each person's biography and assess their gender. Therefore I found ways of automating this process. In about half of the cases I was able to find external, verifiable evidence of a person's gender using publicly available data.

In the past I have found that IMDb's 'gender' attribute is only set in some cases, and in a few cases is actually wrong. A case in point is Emmy-award winning director cinematographer of Mad Men and The Sopranos, Phil Abraham, who is listed as a woman.



For the remaining people I built a program to analyse the probability that they were a man or a woman. This used lists of names and genders as well as the data from the names for which I did know a gender. If at least 90% of people with a certain first name were a man then I assumed that all of the unknown people with that first name were also men. I spot-checked this method a number of times and feel satisfied that it produced suitable accuracy for my needs.

If all these methods failed to assess gender to a high enough degree of certainty then I listed them as 'Unknown gender' in my data. Across all my data, 3% of names were classified as 'Unknown' and I excluded this when calculating the male and female percentages. Given more time or resources I would like to go back and discover genders for the missing 3%, but even if I were to do so it couldn't affect the overall headline figures enough to be significant.

Limitations and Subjective Decisions

Below are some of the limitations to this research, as well as the subjective decisions I made along the way, which could have influenced the results.

- **Reported data** – To perform this kind of analysis I am reliant on the producers, studios and crew members taking the time to display their up-to-date credit details publicly. This means that if someone was uncredited on the film and had not taken to the time to add themselves to a site such as IMDb then I have no way of knowing that they should be included in that film's crew. I feel that this will be a very small number of people as such sites are used by industry professionals as evidence of experience. Furthermore, I see no reason to assume either gender have a higher propensity to under-report their professional credits, so I doubt this factor will affect my results in any significant way.
- **Film tracking** – In order to track all British films I relied upon data gathered by the BFI. This means that my dataset is of all films made, whereas my previous research into top grossing film in America used the top grossing 100 films of each year at the US Box Office. This means that some of the differences could be a result of these different criteria for selection.
- **British-ness** – A film is officially defined as 'British' if it passes the DCMS's Cultural Test or gains official co-production certification. This interpretation of a film's nationality may differ from some people's idea of which films are 'British'. For example, films passing the test (and therefore included in this research) include 'The Dark Knight', 'Fast and Furious 6' and 'John Carter'.

Thanks

This survey would not have been possible without the continued support of Sophie Lifschutz and Alyssa Thorne – thank you both :).

Find Out More

I publish all of my investigations and their findings at http://www.stephenfollows.com, where you can also see my previous surveys, research and data.