

Peggy Thompson: How audiences can become more aware of sexism against women in film and TV

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By Peggy Thompson

In almost every mainstream feature film and television program women and girls onscreen are outnumbered by men and boys by at least three to one and that number is even higher behind the camera.

The percentage of women working behind the camera in Canada has not changed dramatically since the 1980s. (Female directors of photography worldwide? Three percent.)

See also

[Study reveals Hollywood still sexualizes, underrepresents women.](#)

And yet 47 percent of film school students are women and women receive 50 percent of peer-juried media arts funding (i.e. BC Arts Council and Canada Council). In Telefilm Canada's self-commissioned *Burgess Report* the agency is heavily criticized for its seriously inequitable funding for women.

What does this tell us? This tells us that change is long overdue given the effect that screen based media has on how we think and feel about the world around us.

When I began my writing career working in theatre for children I was told that girls will watch stories about boys but boys won't watch stories about girls. Thirty years later, it's time for that to finally change. And women are the highest film-watching demographic. So the system—and it is a system—is broken.

As with all change awareness is the first step. Try and imagine *No Country For Old Men* with an all-female cast. Start counting the number of meaningful roles for women in front of and behind the camera in the films and television programs you watch and then wonder how that's affecting the world that your mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters live in.

Check out the Genie and Gemini breakdowns on our [Please Adjust Your Set](#) website. You'll be horrified.

Read Telefilm Canada's *The Burgess Report: Need Assessment For Gender Based Impact Analysis of the Canadian Feature Film Policy* and wonder why they can't fix themselves when it's public money they're working with.

Visit the [Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media](#) and prepare to be amazed by the work Geena Davis is doing.

Check out the Montreal-based [Réalisateurices Équitable de Film du Québec](#) and understand what political pressure can do to bring about change.

Visit [Women and Film and Television Vancouver](#) and understand why volunteers work hard to advocate for women filmmakers.

And check out [Women and Hollywood](#) for the latest news about Hollywood from a feminist perspective.

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