

Despite 'Barbie,' women not getting movie lead roles: Report

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Margot Robbie starred in the \$1.4 billion-grossing 'Barbie', which took the box office by storm, but a new report found only a third of top films had a female lead.

The share of Hollywood films with women in the lead role fell last year, new research showed Thursday, despite standout successes like "Barbie."

In the year that the feminist blockbuster starring Margot Robbie blew its competitors away at the [box office](#), just a third of movies had a woman at the top of the bill, according to the Hollywood Diversity Report.

Greta Gerwig's fun-packed feminist satire, which took more than \$1.4 billion at the global box office, also garnered eight nominations for this weekend's Oscars, including best picture.

"Even as 'Barbie' broke box office records, the industry demonstrated that it had continued to undervalue movies centering on and led by [women](#), as women lost ground when it came to representation for theatrical leads, writers and total actors," said the [report](#), produced by the University of California, Los Angeles.

The share of films with a woman as the lead character steadily increased over the decade to 2019, researchers said.

That year, 44 percent of films produced in Hollywood had a female lead.

But in the years since, the proportion has dropped, with just 32 percent of movies in 2023 having a woman as the main character.

"This is a wake-up call for Hollywood," said Ana-Christina Ramon, cofounder of the report and director of UCLA's Entertainment and Media Research Initiative.

"Studios need to invest in women and their stories. Women creators and moviegoers are integral to the industry's growth."

The report, which is now in its 12th year, also found that films with a more diverse cast, including a greater proportion of non-white actors, tend to do better at the box office.

Franchise movies whose casts are at least half people of color outperformed earlier iterations, the report said, citing best-in-series successes enjoyed by "Creed III," "Scream VI" and "John Wick: Chapter 4."

In line with previous years, the report found that audiences of color underwrote box office returns, with at least six out of ten tickets for those films' opening weekends purchased by non-white customers.

"When the [film industry](#) gives them what they want, people of color deliver at the box office year in and year out," said Ramon.

This year's Oscars are being held in Hollywood on Sunday.

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