WOMEN’S MEDIA CENTER INVESTIGATION:
2017 ANALYSIS OF GENDER & OSCAR NOMINATIONS AT A GLANCE

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The Women’s Media Center, co-founded by Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan, and Gloria Steinem, works to make women visible and powerful in media. The Women’s Media Center trains women leaders to be in the media; promotes women experts to the media through WMC SheSource; conducts groundbreaking research and reporting on media inclusion and accuracy; features women’s voices and stories on our radio program and podcast “Women’s Media Center Live with Robin Morgan” and through WMC Features, WMC FBomb, WMC Speech Project, and WMC Women Under Siege.
NUMBER OF FEMALE OSCAR NOMINEES FOR BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLES DROPS
80 Percent of All Nominees are Men

INTRODUCTION

Women represent only 20 percent of the non-acting categories in the 89th annual Academy Award nominations, according to a Women’s Media Center analysis. Despite an overhaul of membership last year, where hundreds of new members were invited, including many women and people of color, female Oscar nominees dipped two percentage points from last year’s nominations.

Overall, women were woefully underrepresented in the major categories, with no female directors nominated and only one writer. However, nine women were nominated as producers in Best Picture, the largest nominations count of any category. Ava DuVernay—who became the first woman of color to have a film she directed nominated for Best Picture, 2014’s “Selma”—is again represented in the Documentary Feature category for “13th,” a documentary about the history of African Americans and mass incarceration.

Julie Burton, President of the Women’s Media Center, said, “We have a saying, ‘If you can see it, you can be it,’ but in the crucial behind-the-scenes non-acting roles, our ‘Women’s Media Center Investigation’ shows that what you see is 80 percent of all nominees are men. Four out of five nominees are men—meaning male voices and perspectives are largely responsible for what we see on screen.”

Burton pointed out that the overall nomination numbers track to the overall employment numbers for 2016 recently documented by the Center for the Study of Women in Television & Film’s “The Celluloid Ceiling” report found that women represented only 17 percent of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films.

“Clearly, women cannot get through the door and if they cannot get through the door, they cannot be recognized—and rewarded—for their excellence and impact,” Burton said. “In the meantime, and with appreciation to Michelle Obama, we ask the studio and agency executives who are okay with making a bunch of deals that exclude women to ‘Be Better.’ The perspectives, experience and voices of more than half the population deserve an equal seat at the table.”

Last year, the Oscar nominations shut out actors of color in all four of its acting categories for the second year in a row, leading to a global protest and prompting some prominent names to boycott the Oscars. That helped motivate the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to make big changes to its membership, inviting a record 683 new members last summer, some of them women and people of color, with the hope of accelerating change that seems to be happening too slowly.
This year, there were more people of color nominated than in any other year in Oscar history, including a record-breaking three African American nominees for Actress in a Supporting Role. Unfortunately, the change does not seem to have impacted the non-acting categories to the same degree. In many cases, there was a downward shift in the number of women nominated per category.

There are still categories that exclude women 100 percent of the time, including cinematography, and many that do not represent women in their ranks overall, like the animation categories. But there is still some good news for women in producing, sound mixing, sound editing and costumes.

Despite the overall numbers, there were some breakthrough nominees this year, including Mica Levy who composed the score to “Jackie” and became the first woman nominated for original score since 2000. Joi McMillan, co-editor for “Moonlight,” also became the first African American woman ever nominated in editing.

Dede Gardner is on her fourth consecutive nomination for producing. She has been nominated five times since 2012. Three of the films she has produced deal with the African American experience: “12 Years a Slave,” “Selma” and this year’s nominee, “Moonlight.”

From 2005 to 2016, women account for just 19 percent of all non-acting Oscar nominations. The 2017 Oscars—which will broadcast on Sunday, Feb. 26—honors the best films of 2016.

“The documentary categories tend to be an arena where women flourish and we’re very pleased to see the brilliant Ava DuVernay nominated for her excellent documentary feature, ‘13th,’ ” said Pat Mitchell, WMC co-chair and chair of the Sundance Institute. “This documentary is powerful, compelling and a must-see.”

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![Academy Award Nominations for Directing, 2016](image)

**Academy Award Nominations for Directing, 2016**

- **Women:** 0%
- **Men:** 100%

![Academy Award Nominations for Best Picture, 2016](image)

**Academy Award Nominations for Best Picture, 2016**

- **Women:** 30%
- **Men:** 70%

Source: Oscars.org; Analysis Women’s Media Center
Here's a closer look at the 19 non-acting categories:

**Best Picture**

There were nine women nominated in the producing category this year—an 11-year high. The number of female producers nominated is up from seven last year. But, both genders saw an uptick: Twenty-one men are also nominated, up from 16 last year. The Academy chose nine Best Picture nominees this year, as opposed to eight last year. Once the Academy expanded the number of Best Picture nominees from five, the number of women represented rose significantly. Ten years ago, only two women were nominated. That number steadily grew, with this year breaking a more than decade-long record.

Despite many films about women this year, only two films that revolve solely around women are in the Best Picture race: “Arrival” and “Hidden Figures.” Of those two films, only “Hidden Figures” has female producers: Donna Gigliotti and Jenno Topping. That suggests that women might be producing more movies, but they aren’t necessarily producing films that revolve around women’s stories.

Still, the number of women producers represented in 2016 is significant.

**Writing (Original and Adapted Screenplay)**

In both writing categories, the number of female nominees dipped. In the adapted screenplay category, only one female writer was nominated this year, Allison Schroeder for “Hidden Figures.” Last year, two of the nominees were female: Phyllis Nagy for “Carol” and Emma Donoghue for “Room.” There are no female nominees in the original screenplay category, down from last year where one of the nominees was female, Meg LeFauve, a co-writer of Pixar’s “Inside Out.”

Schroeder has the distinction of being nominated as a screenwriter for a Best Picture nominee. In the period between 2006 and this year, only seven female writers have written or co-written scripts that were also nominated for Best Picture, compared with 69 male writers.

One of the biggest differences between male and female writers in the adapted and original screenplay categories is observing how many men go on to earn multiple nominations following their first nomination. Only one woman over an 11-year period, including this year, has ever been nominated twice: Julie Delpy for “Before Sunrise” and “Before Midnight.” By contrast, between 2006 and 2016, a total of 22 nominations in original screenplay and 23 nominations in adapted screenplay come from male writers who have had at least one other nomination. In other words, a combined total of 45 repeat nominees were men compared to just one female.

This year, in the original screenplay category, there are two writers who have been nominated before—Damien Chazelle, nominated for “La La Land,” was nominated for “Whiplash” just two years ago, and Kenneth Lonergan, on his third nomination for “Manchester by the Sea.”

**Directing**

Unfortunately, there are no female nominees in the directing category for the seventh consecutive year. The last female to be nominated for Best Director was Kathryn Bigelow, who also won the Oscar for “The Hurt Locker” in 2009. Despite the diversification efforts of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences, no woman came close to a directing nomination this year, despite the outstanding work of breakthrough filmmakers like Andrea Arnold for “American Honey” and Kelly Reichardt for “Certain Women.”

The Academy’s directors’ branch took the extraordinary step of expanding its membership to include between 40 and 45 new female members, many of them women of color. The membership expansion did not impact the directing category this year, but it does perhaps signal a shift that might be more evident in the years to come.
Film Editing
Women editors took another hit in the editing category, with just one female nominee, down from three last year. However, the one nominee is the first African American female editor to earn an Oscar nomination: Joi McMillon who co-edited “Moonlight” with Nat Sanders.

Cinematography
There was no change in the cinematography category. There never has been a woman nominated here and this year did not change that pattern, despite two Best Picture nominees with female cinematographers: Charlotte Bruus Christensen for “Fences” and Mandy Walker for “Hidden Figures.”

The Academy has noticed the disparity and part of their sweeping changes last year included adding roughly 11 new female cinematographers. Although it did not change the results for the category this year, the effort does show that the Academy recognizes there is a problem specifically within this category.

Music (Original Score)
The original score category saw its first female nominee in a decade, with Mica Levi’s first nomination for “Jackie.” The original score category has been dominated by males throughout its history, although two female composers have won before, Rachel Portman and Anne Dudley. But no female had been nominated since 2006 until this year.

Sound Editing and Sound Mixing
The sound categories saw the biggest increase overall for women throughout the entire Academy’s branches, with one female nominated in sound mixing and three nominated in the sound editing category: Renée Tondelli for “Deepwater Horizon” and Ai-Ling Lee and Mildred Iatrou Morgan for “La La Land.” Ai-Ling Lee is also nominated in sound mixing for “La La Land.” Still, women lag woefully behind overall in both sound categories: 15 males to one female in mixing, and six males to three females in sound editing.

However, it’s worth noting that—until this year—there has never been more than one female nominated in Sound Editing between 2006 and 2015. Both categories have only had a total of five female nominees over that same period. In other words, this year’s four nominees in the sound categories are almost equal to how many women have been nominated in these two categories in a decade.

Visual Effects
The visual effects category saw a drop from last year’s single female nomination in the category. This year, there are no women nominated for visual effects, compared to 20 males who received nominations. Last year’s nomination was the only female nominee in 11 years.

(Music) Original Song
The original song category saw a dramatic drop from last year’s three nominations to no nominations this year for women songwriters, despite the overwhelming number of women who were eligible. This year marks the first since 2009 that no women were nominated in the category.

Production Design
Female production designers and set decorators saw a slight dip this year, with only three women nominated, down from four last year. It is rare for a production designer to be female, though there have been women production designers nominated for Oscars. Set decorators are more often than not female and that holds true this year with all female nominees in the category set decorators—Nancy Haigh for “Hail, Caesar!,” Sandy Reynolds-Wasco for “La La Land,” and Anna Pinnock for “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.”
Costume Design

Women dominated the Costume Design category for the first time since 2010. All five nominees are women, an increase from three last year. Only one of the nominees designed a Best Picture nominee: Mary Zophres for “La La Land.” Most of the costume designs in this category are for films that revolve around women, or at least co-star a female lead, like “Jackie” with Madeline Fontaine dressing the famously fashionable first lady, Consolata Boyle designing Meryl Streep’s costumes in “Florence Foster Jenkins,” and Joanna Johnston designing Marion Cotillard’s costumes for “Allied.” Traditionally, the costume category does tend to be filled with female designers more than any other category.

Documentary (Short Subject and Feature)

The documentary categories illustrate an area where women filmmakers are thriving. The documentary feature category saw an increase from three nominees last year to four this year. That’s still down from the 11-year high in 2006, which saw five female nominees. But the number of male nominees this year is still twice that of female nominees. While the roles tend to split down gender lines with men directing and women producing, Ava DuVernay was nominated for director for “13th,” a documentary about mass incarceration. All of the other four nominees were directed by men. Last year, there was only one woman director nominated, but the year before, there were two and one of them won the Oscar: Laura Poitras for “CitizenFour.”

In the documentary short category, there are two women nominated: Daphne Matziaraki for the harrowing film about refugees “4.1 Miles,” and Raphaella Neihausen, who co-directed “Joe’s Violin.” The documentary short category tends to be more balanced between genders. This year, there are four women and four men nominated, just as there were last year, proving that when it comes to non-fiction filmmaking, women can dominate as directors, not just producers.

Short Film (Live Action) and Short Film (Animated)

This is in stark contrast to the two other short categories, Short Film (Live Action) and Short Film (Animated), where women are still mostly shut out. In both, the live action and animated short categories, only one woman is nominated, compared to seven men. This number hasn’t moved much in the past decade, but in the live action category there has been a slight uptick over an 11-year period overall, which is more than we see in the animated category.

Animated Feature

The gender disparities within the animated and live action short categories mirror the animated feature and Best Picture categories, where women are not represented in the same numbers as their male counterparts. The animated feature category this year saw a very minor increase from last year, with two women nominated compared to 10 men. Last year it was one woman compared to nine men. There have only been nine women nominated in the animated feature category in the past decade, although two of those films revolved around a female character, which is a noticeable shift in the past decade.

Makeup and Hairstyling

Women took a big hit in the makeup and hairstyling category this year, with only one woman represented, compared to six men. That is a drastic decrease from last year, where women and men shared the category equally with four nominations each. The last time only one woman was nominated in this category was 2010. Women went from 50 percent representation last year, down to just 14 percent this year.

Credits: Sasha Stone, writer and reporter; Tiffany Nguyen, researcher; Cristal Williams Chancellor, project director; Diahann Hill, designer and Shazdeh Omari, copy editor. The Oscar analysis was drawn using information from Oscars.org.