WOMEN’S MEDIA CENTER INVESTIGATION:
2017 REVIEW OF GENDER & EMMY PRIMETIME NOMINATIONS

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WOMEN “NOWHERE NEAR PARITY” IN BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLES FOR THIS YEAR’S PRIMETIME EMMY NOMINATIONS

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS NO CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN NOMINATED IN 2017

Despite modest gains for women in a few categories, the 2017 Primetime Emmy Award nominations reflect the ongoing deficit of behind-the-camera opportunities for women in television, according to a Women’s Media Center analysis. In the combined categories of writing, directing, editing, and producing, women gained one percentage point, standing at 26 percent compared to 25 percent last year.

Overall, there was no change in the percentage of women nominated in all 89 non-acting categories for the 69th Primetime Emmy Awards, to be broadcast Sunday, Sept. 17.

“Women still lag behind their male counterparts in these influential behind-the-scenes roles,” said Julie Burton, WMC president. “Women represent only 28 percent of all non-acting nominations, and there are no women nominees in 18 of the non-acting categories. This is unacceptable. These numbers do not reflect the tremendous talent, experience, and impact of female writers, producers, editors and directors. While the slight uptick in some categories is encouraging, women still are nowhere near parity and men continue their dominance. Executives must do better in addressing the disparity of women behind the camera.”

The research showed that women lost ground in writing and editing, but improved in directing and producing. Women writers dropped to 21 percent from 23 percent; editors dropped one percentage point, from 21 to 20 percent. Women directing nominees gained one percentage point over last year. The producing categories show improvement across the board for female nominees, rising from 29 to 31 percent.

The reason for the rise in female producers is unclear, though some of the increase is due to actresses who are producing their own material.

Several women producers are nominated for projects they spearheaded and also starred in, like Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman for “Big Little Lies,” Jessica Lange and Susan Sarandon for “Feud: Bette and Joan,” and Oprah Winfrey with Harpo Films for “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.” Ava DuVernay was nominated in the Outstanding Directing For A Nonfiction Program category for “13th,” her Netflix documentary about the history of oppression and mass incarceration of African Americans. “13th” earned eight Emmy nominations overall, including three for DuVernay in writing, directing, and producing. “13th” also was nominated for an Oscar.

Samantha Bee broke the glass ceiling for female comedians in late-night comedy with “Full Frontal with Samantha Bee,” which earned seven nominations overall. Last year it was nominated only for writing.
Female-driven programming like “The Crown,” “The Handmaid’s Tale,” “Big Little Lies,” “Feud: Bette and Joan,” “Veep,” and “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt” earned multiple nominations for Primetime Emmy Awards. The Women’s March received two nominations: one for “Viceland at the Women’s March” (Outstanding Short Form Nonfiction Or Reality Series) and another for Outstanding Commercial.

Here are the highlights in the 43 directing, producing, writing, and editing categories:

**DIRECTING (Eight categories)**

Women directors lag behind their male counterparts, snagging only 10 percent of the nominations while men dominate with 90 percent, according to the WMC research. Women gained a percentage point from last year. The most nominations for women went to nominees in the category of Outstanding Directing For A Drama Series, with three. Hulu’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” earned nominations in 13 categories, including directing nominations for Reed Morano and Kate Dennis. Lesli Linka Glatter was nominated for “Homeland.” At 38 percent, this category has a higher percentage of women than the other directing categories except Nonfiction Program, with three women nominated for female-driven programs. That is a slight rise from 2016, when only one woman was nominated along with five male directors.

Women fared better in the Outstanding Technical Direction, Camerawork, Video Control For A Series category with seven nominations — or 12 percent — up from five nominations last year.

Women maintained their 50 percent of nominations in Outstanding Directing For A Nonfiction Program, with three women being nominated for the second consecutive year. Ava DuVernay received her first Emmy nomination, for “13th,” and is joined by Elizabeth White, who directed “Planet Earth II” for BBC America, and Alexis Bloom, who co-directed “Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds.”
Of the six nominees in the Outstanding Directing For A Comedy Series category, only one was female — Jamie Babbit, of the male-driven comedy “Silicon Valley.” Female-driven “Veep” had the most nominations in that category, with three.

Women took a hit in Outstanding Directing For A Limited Series, Movie Or Dramatic Special, with no nominees in that category. Last year, one woman was nominated. “Big Little Lies” and “Feud: Bette and Joan” revolved around female characters but were written and directed by men.

For the second year in a row, women were locked out of the Outstanding Directing For A Variety Series category. Outstanding Directing For A Variety Special also saw none of the nominations going to women. In 2016, two women were nominated.

**PRODUCING (21 categories)**

The biggest gains for women in the 2017 Primetime Emmy nominations were made in the producing categories, the WMC research shows. Projects produced by women and starring women helped account for the jump from 29 to 31 percent, with 284 women nominated as producers, up from 263 last year. This increase is particularly significant considering that there was a drop from 2015 to 2016. **Clearly, women are making gains, as more actresses become producers to showcase their own work.**

“Black Mirror,” “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,” “Dolly Parton’s Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love,” “The Wizard of Lies,” and “Sherlock: The Lying Detective” all earned producing nominations for women in the Outstanding Television Movie category. The overall percentage of women nominated jumped from 33 percent to 52 percent, or 14 nominations. By contrast, last year there were 20 men and 10 women in the category.

Female producers accounted for 48 percent of Exceptional Merit In Documentary Filmmaking nominees; the category had 10 female and 11 male nominees. “Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds,” “OJ: Made in America,” “Oklahoma City,” and “The White Helmets” all were produced or co-produced by women.

Women producers made up just 26 percent of the nominees for Outstanding Comedy Series, up slightly from 25 percent last year. “Atlanta,” “Black-ish,” “Modern Family,” “Silicon Valley,” “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt,” and “Veep” all had women producers who were nominated. The only series in the category that didn’t have any women nominated was “Master of None.”

In the Outstanding Drama Series category, all of the slates of nominees had at least one woman alongside their male counterparts; women climbed to 31 percent from last year’s 24 percent. Netflix’s “House of Cards” had only one female producing nominee last year, Robin Wright. This year, there are three, alongside 15 men. AMC’s “Better Call Saul” did better, with five female producing nominees and seven men.
In the writing categories overall, women lost ground compared to last year. While 36 women were nominated this year, up from 31, they still made up only 21 percent overall, compared to 23 percent last year. There were more total nominations, with 170 this year, up from 134 last year.

Women did make some gains in a few writing categories, however. In Outstanding Writing For A Variety Special, women made up 22 percent of the nominees, compared with 12 percent last year. Nine women earned writing nominations, while only three earned them last year. Sarah Silverman was nominated for her special “Sarah Silverman: A Speck of Dust” and Samantha Bee for “Full Frontal with Samantha Bee.

“Full Frontal with Samantha Bee” broke through in the Outstanding Variety Talk Series category, with Bee nominated as executive producer. This marks the first time a female host has been nominated in the category, which began in 2010. Overall representation of female nominees was up from 28 to 32 percent.

The Outstanding Variety Sketch Series category saw no change in numbers from last year. Female nominees in 2016 and in 2017 represented 31 percent of the total. Carrie Brownstein was nominated for executive producing and writing “Portlandia,” the show she helped create and stars in. “Saturday Night Live,” “Drunk History,” “Documentary Now!” and “Billy on the Street” all had female nominees in the category.

Outstanding Children’s Program, Outstanding Short Form Variety Series, and Outstanding Short Form Comedy Or Drama Series saw relatively significant gains for women producers, with six women nominated for Short Form Variety, up from three last year, for a total of 32 percent this year. “Brown Girls,” a web series about the lives of two women of color, was nominated in the Short Form Comedy Or Drama Series category, with nominations for its two producers, Fatimah Asghar and Sam Bailey.

Women’s producing nominations for Outstanding Informational Series Or Special rose sharply from 14 percent last year to 31 percent this year, with “Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown,” “Inside the Actors Studio,” “Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath,” “StarTalk with Neil deGrasse Tyson,” and “Vice” all with female nominees.

Outstanding Special Class Program had two women producing nominees, including Lady Gaga’s nomination for the “Super Bowl LI Halftime Show Starring Lady Gaga.” Since there was just one woman nominated in the category last year, this one additional nomination brought the number up from 5 percent to 12 percent.

Both Reality Programming categories saw an uptick in female nominees, from 35 percent last year to 46 percent this year in Structured, and for Unstructured, a smaller jump from 28 to 31 percent. However, Outstanding Reality-Competition saw a drop from 41 to 39 percent.

**WRITING (Six categories)**

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There was a slight drop in female editing nominations, from 21 percent to 20 percent since last year. Although 20 women were nominated compared to 16 last year, there was an overall increase in the number of nominees. Some editing categories showed gains, while others did not.

Jennifer Lilly (“Master of None”) earned a nomination for Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing For A Comedy Series, bringing this year’s percentage up to 17 percent from 0 percent last year. In Outstanding Multi-Camera Picture Editing For A Comedy Series, one woman was nominated this year, Pat Barnett for “One Day at a Time.” This is the same number as last year, but the percentage jumped from 14 to 20 percent because of a drop in the total number of nominees.

For the second year in a row, Outstanding Writing For A Limited Series, Movie Or Dramatic Special saw no nominations for women, despite the female-centered scripts for “Big Little Lies,” “Black Mirror: San Junipero,” and “Feud: Bette and Joan.”

EDITING (Eight categories)
In Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing For A Drama Series, only one woman was nominated this year, Kelley Dixon for “Better Call Saul,” down from two last year. Only 20 percent of the nominations in the category went to women, while 80 percent went to men.

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The Emmy analysis was drawn using information from Emmys.com. An individual was counted only once per category even if they were nominated multiple times in the same year for the same award.

The Primetime Emmy Awards do not include a producing category. The WMC report includes 21 categories in which producers are nominated.

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, including the “Status of Women in U.S. Media 2017”; and features women’s voices and stories on our radio program “Women’s Media Center Live with Robin Morgan” and through WMC Features, WMC FBomb, WMC Speech Project, and WMC Women Under Siege.

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