



Who Directs German Feature Films? Gender Report 2009–2013

by Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Prommer & Skadi Loist

with assistance by Heike Hausmann, Julia Natusch,
Pauline Raabe, Tina Rudolf

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Who Directs German Feature Films?

Gender Report: 2009–2013

1. Preface

Female and male careers in the media develop differently. Executive positions are still dominated by men. This is also true for creative professions in audiovisual media. In summer 2014, a group of female directors came together – similar to female journalists in the Pro-Quote group – in order to highlight the dramatic underrepresentation of projects realized by female directors when it comes to the allocation of funding. Among the renowned signatories of a petition for gender balanced allocation of film funding are Dories Dörrie and Connie Walther.¹ This becomes apparent: Although nearly half of film school alumni are women, they only receive 10 percent of the film funds. A study conducted by the Berufsverband Regie (Director's Guild) showed that only 11 percent of prime-time television productions have been realized by women.² It seems that hardly anything has changed in the last few years, professional roles and career opportunities of the involved parties have largely stayed the same.

In the USA; women also only make up less than 10 percent in the so-called above-the-line positions in film. Above-the-line positions include those professionals in film production which get mentioned in the opening credits, i.e. producers, directors, script authors and directors of photography. Below-the-line positions are often filled by female assistants, e.g. in continuity, directing and casting in film and television.

The present study analyses the participation of women in German film production. This raises questions regarding similarities, differences, and specifics in terms of gender of film production.

Based on the publicly accessible data from the annual reports of the German Federal Film Board (Filmförderungsanstalt – FFA), we calculated how many films have been realized by women in the last five years. We looked at the differences between female- and male-directed films in terms of financing, funding, box office as well as festival run.

Studies on film school alumni – Jenke (2013) for the HHF-Potsdam, now Filmuniversität Babelsberg and Slansky (2011) for the HFF-München³ – show that about half of the alumni are female. Slansky reports a share of 48 percent women at the HFF München. Since most students are enrolled in the directing program there it can be inferred that only slightly less women than men leave the HFF München as directors. At the HFF Potsdam the distribution per program is very unequal. While in the editing program mostly women are enrolled, there are far less women in the camera and sound classes. In directing and production there are also more men than women, with a 60:40 ratio.

¹ www.proquote-regie.de

² Bundesverband Regie e.V. (ed.) (2014): Erster Regie-Diversitätsbericht des BVR 2010-2013. Analysen zur Regievergabepaxis in den fiktionalen Primetime-Programmen von ARD und ZDF sowie Genderreport zum deutschen Kinofilm. Berlin. p. 6.

³ Jenke, Marion (2013): *Berufswegen von Alumni einer Filmhochschule. Arbeitsmarktsituation und Spezifika des Studiums*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS; Slansky, Peter C. (2011): *Filmhochschulen in Deutschland. Geschichte – Typologie – Architektur*. München: edition text + kritik.

These alumni data suggest that there is a potential for 40-50 percent of films being realized by women.

Research Question

How do films realized by women or men differ in terms of amount of funding, budgets, box office and success on the festival circuit?

2. Executive Summary

Underrepresented but of high quality: Films by female directors

The Report „Who produces German films? Gender Report 2009–2013“ analyzes how films directed by women differ from films directed by men. Analyzed are differences in terms of funding and budget but also box office and festival success.

The results: only every fifth film (22 %) in the years 2009-2013 has been directed by a woman. These films obviously impress with their high standard of aesthetic quality as films by women receive film awards more often and have a more successful festival run. This success is remarkable considering – in addition to the underrepresentation of women in film production – their films usually have to be realized with smaller budgets.

Men receive notably more money for their films than women. If one considers the projects that received funding, a blatant inequity between the films by male and female directors becomes apparent. Women-directed feature films receive in sum only 65 percent of the funding that films with a male director received. On average a film directed by a woman received 660.000 Euro film funding while a film with male director received 1.000.000 Euro.

The funding institutions distribute their money differently. The German Federal Film Fund (DFFF) is the most gender unequal funding agency. This quasi-automatic funding based on budget size clearly disadvantages women. They receive only about half of the funds per film. While the amount of funding through the German Federal Film Board (FFA) and the Minister of State for Culture and the Media (BKM) do not show great differences, the discrepancy for the DFFF is the most obvious.

Along with the low film funding for women-directed projects, these also have a smaller overall budget to realize a film. This lower budget seems to translate into a smaller commercial potential expected from distributors as films directed by women start with lower numbers of prints.

At the same time, films by women show other qualities: women-directed films more often win awards and have a more successful festival run. A film by a woman often screens at three to five festivals, among the festival hits, i.e. films that have screened at more than five festivals, many films were directed by women.

The results of the study in brief: women are markedly underrepresented in German film production as only every fifth film was directed by a woman, they receive less film funding and work with smaller budgets. However, women-directed films are appreciated by critics and jurors. They receive more film awards and screen at more festivals.

Analyzed were all German feature films which premiered in the years 2009–2013. As data basis served the annual reports of the German Federal Film Board (FFA). In addition to the data used by the first directing diversity report of the Director's Guild (Erster Regie-Diversitätsbericht des Bundesverbandes Regie (BVR)), we collected data on funding, audience attendance, box office and festival run.

3. Data Basis and Method

For the present analysis all feature films which premiered in the years 2009–2013 have been considered and data was collected on funding (according to FFA Annual Reports), box office, attendance and co-production status. In addition, the gender for director, producer, DOP and screenplay have been collected, as well as number of prints on the release date, co-production with television and success of the festival run. The budget was extrapolated based on data from the First Directing Diversity Report of the Professional Association of Directors (*Erster Regie-Diversitätsbericht des Bundesverbandes Regie* (BVR)). Further data were collected from mediabiz.de, filmportal.de and german-films.de.

Data basis were, thus, 687 in the analyzed time period, of which 627 can be distinctly be assigned to a male or female director. 60 films have been realized with directing teams. The following analysis is based on the 627 films with unambiguous assignment.

Die present study does *not* work with the commonly used percentage based on the overall number of films when considering the analysis of women-directed films. In such a calculation the known inequalities and gender-specific injustices distort the results regarding qualitative and financial success. If women direct less films they accordingly will receive less funding.

In order to compare the quality of films by men and women objectively the percentages refer to the total amount of films made by men and women respectively. That is, unless otherwise stated, the represented numbers refer to the basis of 100 percent of films in the time period 2009–2013 that have been realized by women or alternatively to 100 percent of films which have been realized by men in the same period. Only this way allows to identify differences and similarities in films directed by men or women.

This analysis provides an inventory for the gender distribution in German film production. The reasons for the present disparities cannot be identified this way. For this, further in-depth studies are necessary.

4. Results

4.1. Films and Film Professionals

A comprehensive survey of all films listed in the FFA Annual Reports between 2009 and 2013 (5 years) has been conducted. Therefore, 687 films were analyzed. The number of films fluctuates between 150 films in 2013 and 199 films in 2010.

Of the 687 films, 140 films were directed by a woman individually, 487 films were directed by a man individually and 60 films were directed by teams (of which 23 films were directed by a team that included a woman). Most of the films directed in teams are animation or cartoon films. In the following analysis only films with a single male or female director are considered. The following results thus rest on a sample of 627 films.

In the years 2009–2013, only 22 percent of the films were directed by women. This number fluctuates in the individual years. Most women-directed films appeared in 2012 (28 %) and the least amount appeared in 2010 (15 %).⁴

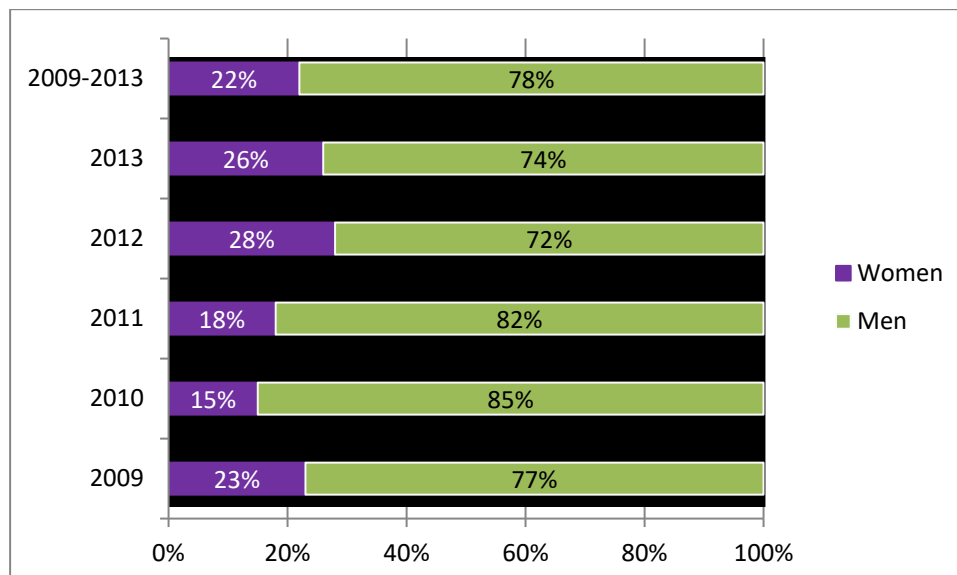


Table: Percentage of female directors, feature films 2009–2013

For the other positions of the films released 2009–2013 there is only a small share of women to be detected. Only 14 percent of the screenplays have been written solely by a woman, 12 percent of the films were shot by female DOPs and less than every tenth film (9 %) of the films was produced by a woman. If teams are taken into account, a share of 41 percent of the projects has been realized by producer teams which included women. For screenplays it was one third (34 %) of the projects.

In all positions, women are clearly underrepresented. This is also true in view of the potential from alumnae of film schools and universities.

⁴ Direct comparison with the analyses of the First Directing Diversity Report of the Professional Association of Directors (Erster Regie-Diversitätsbericht des Bundesverbandes Regie (BVR)) is not possible since it is not discernible how directing teams were handled. The numbers, thus, vary slightly by a few percentage points, the general tendency is the same.

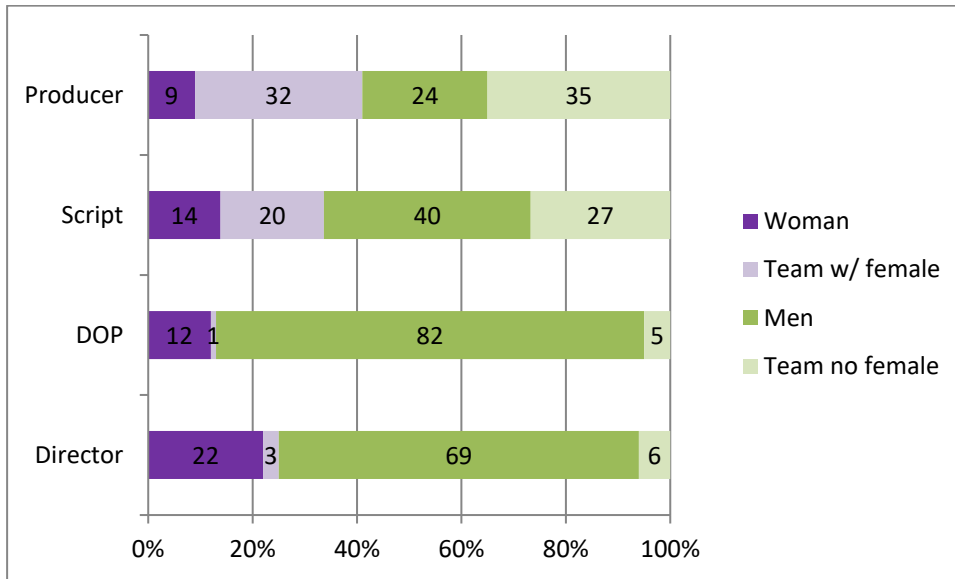


Table: Percentage of women in above-the-line functions, films 2009–2013

What kind of films are realized by women, which by men? Most of the films directed and produced are dramas. Women are far more likely to direct a drama. Three of four films that women direct are categorized by the FFA as drama. Only 12 percent of the women-directed films are comedies. This looks different for men. Most films directed by men are also dramas (57%), but a lot more comedies, which account for one fourth of men-directed films.

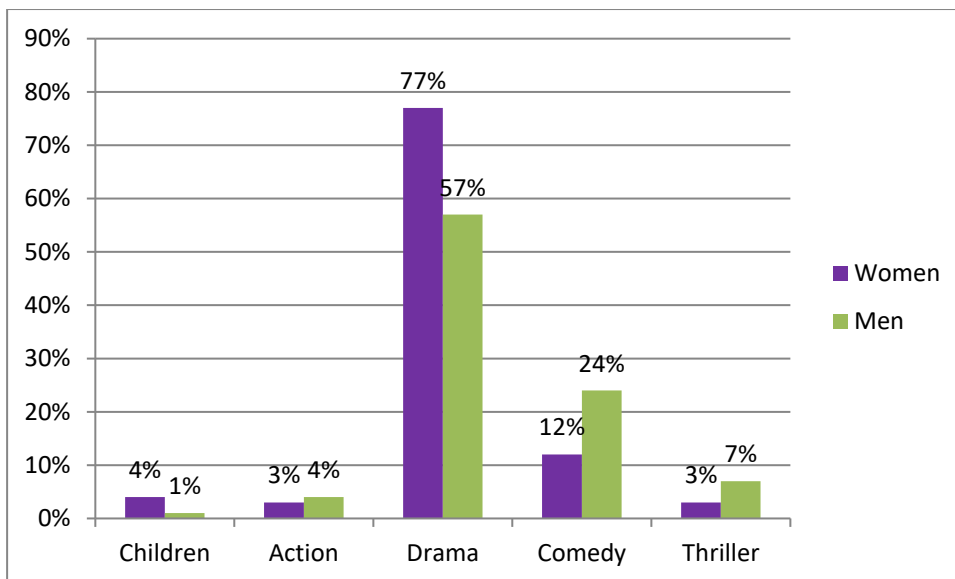


Table: Genre of film according to gender (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men)

Women work more often in international co-productions and work in equal share in projects that are TV-co-productions. This means that although there is a smaller number of overall projects by directed by women, those projects receive the same amount of trust from co-producers.

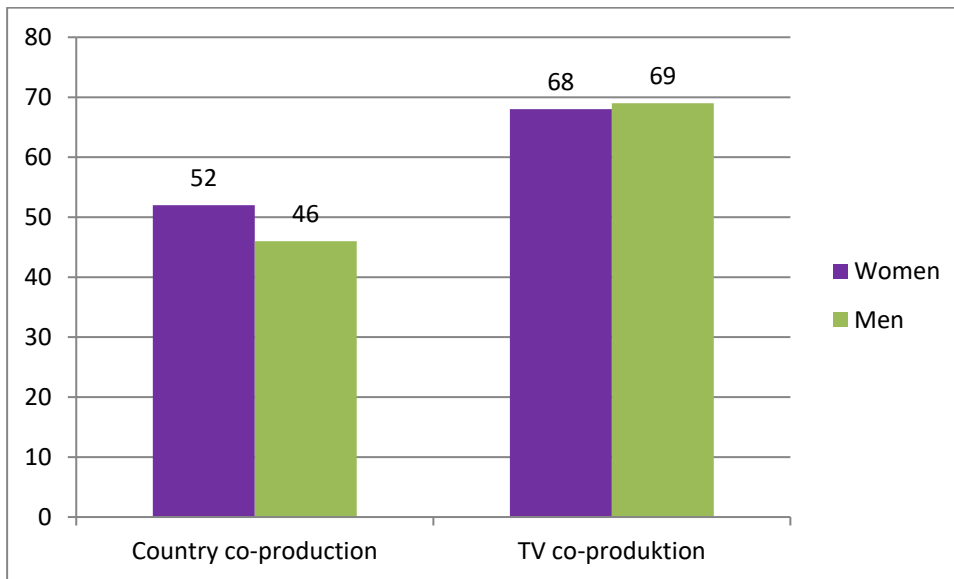


Table: Co-production and gender (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men.)

4.2. Budget of the Films

The budgets of films for cinema are hard to estimate since those numbers are not publicly available. The extrapolation and estimate follow the Diversity Study of the BVR and uses the same categories:

„LB (low budget) designates films with a low budget up to two million Euro, MB a medium budget ranging between two and five million Euro and HB a high budget above five million Euro. In single cases the international financial share or the money of private investors could not be determined und considered for the extrapolation.” (Erster Regie-Diversitätsbericht der BVR, 2014)

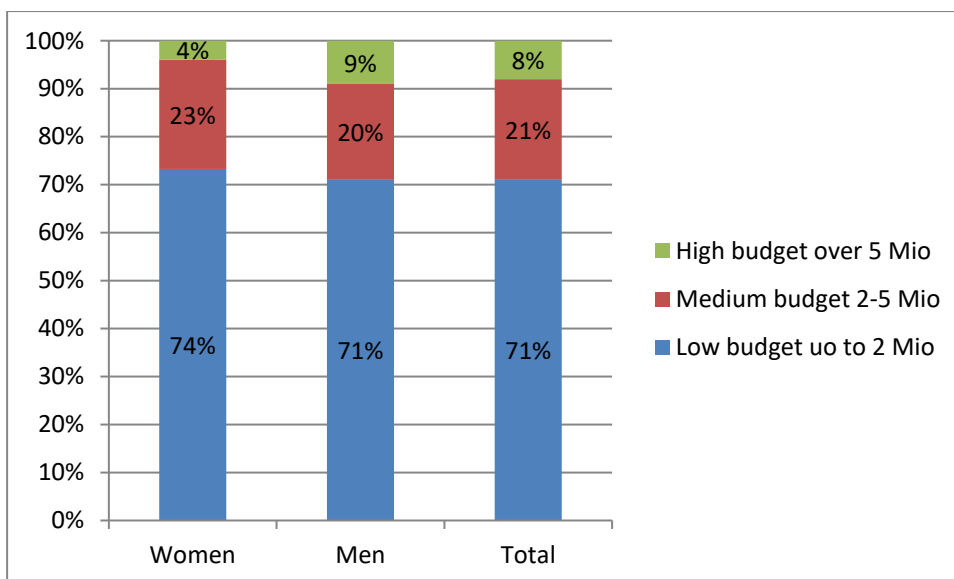


Table: Budget of films by gender (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men.)

Only few films (8 %), realized by either by men and women, have an estimated budget exceeding 5 Mio. Euro. But if we compare films by women with those by men, it become apparent that women are further underrepresented. Only 4 percent of all films directed by women have such a budget, while twice as many men (9 %) could work with a high budget. Accordingly, the share of women who need to work with a low budget is higher. Women not only direct only a fifth of the films, in addition they are significantly underrepresented in the high-budget segment.

4.3. Number of Prints

Films directed by women do not only on average have a smaller budget but their films are also released with a smaller number of prints. This is only to a small degree related to the fact that women more seldom direct potential box-office hits, since their films have a smaller budget, less funding and accordingly less commercial potential and therefore often a smaller number of prints. Even in the category of low-budget films with a budget below 2 million Euro the amount of prints is significantly smaller than those for films directed by men. Similarly, in the high-budget category the percentage of prints for women-directed films is a lower than for films directed by men. For low-budget projects the number of prints only reaches 52 percent of those for films directed by men, that is about half; in the medium budget range it is 15 percent less, i.e. 85 percent.

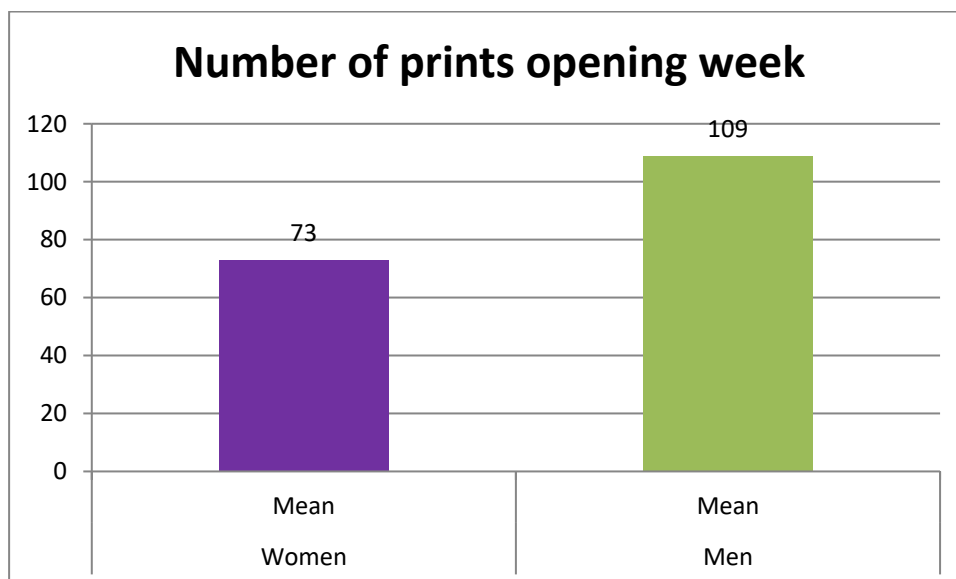


Table: Number of prints by gender

4.4. Film Funding for Films Directed by Men and Women

Films directed by men and women receive approximately equally often film funding, women even a little more often. 79 percent of women-directed films and 73 percent of films directed by men receive funding. However, men receive significantly more money than women. Considering all paid-out funds, 83 percent of Euros are spent on men.

If one considers only those projects that received funding, further discrepancies and inequalities between films directed by men and women become apparent. In sum, films directed by women receive only about 65 percent of the funding that films by men receive. On average, considering only funded projects, a film directed by a woman receives 660.000 Euro film funding, while a film directed by a man received 1.000.000 Euro.

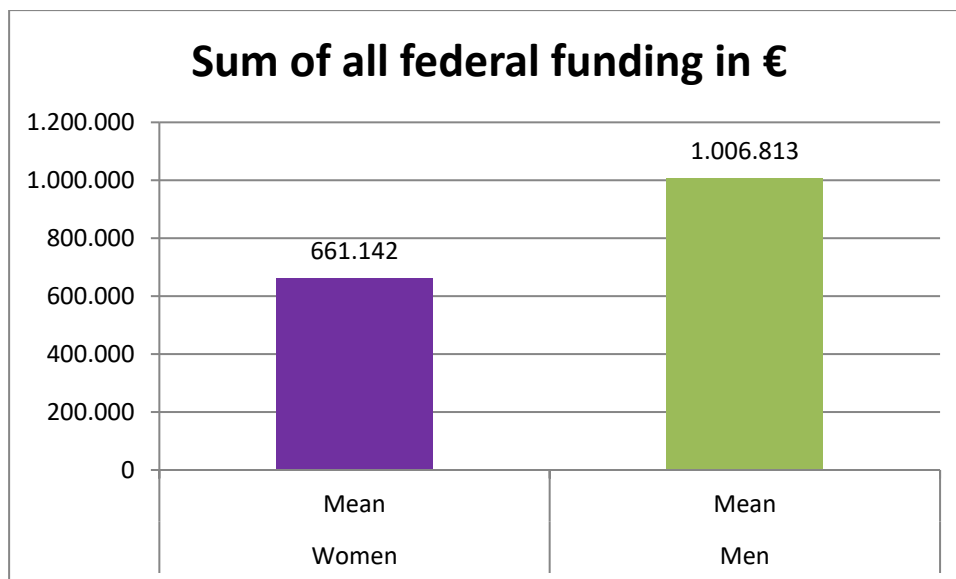


Table: Average funding of films by gender (FFA; BKM and DFFF)

Here, the German Federal Film Fund (DFFF) is the funding agency with the most obvious gender inequality. Women-directed films receive about half of the sum that films directed by men receive. While the FFA-Production funding shows less differences, the DFFF disburses overproportionally more funds to projects directed by men than by women. Marketing and distribution funding show similar inequalities. Projects with male directors received markedly more money.

The German Federal Film Fund (DFFF) is the most gender unequal funding agency. This quasi-automatic funding based on budget size clearly disadvantages women. While the amount of funding through the German Federal Film Board (FFA) and the Minister of State for Culture and the Media (BKM) do not show great differences, the discrepancy for the DFFF is the most obvious.

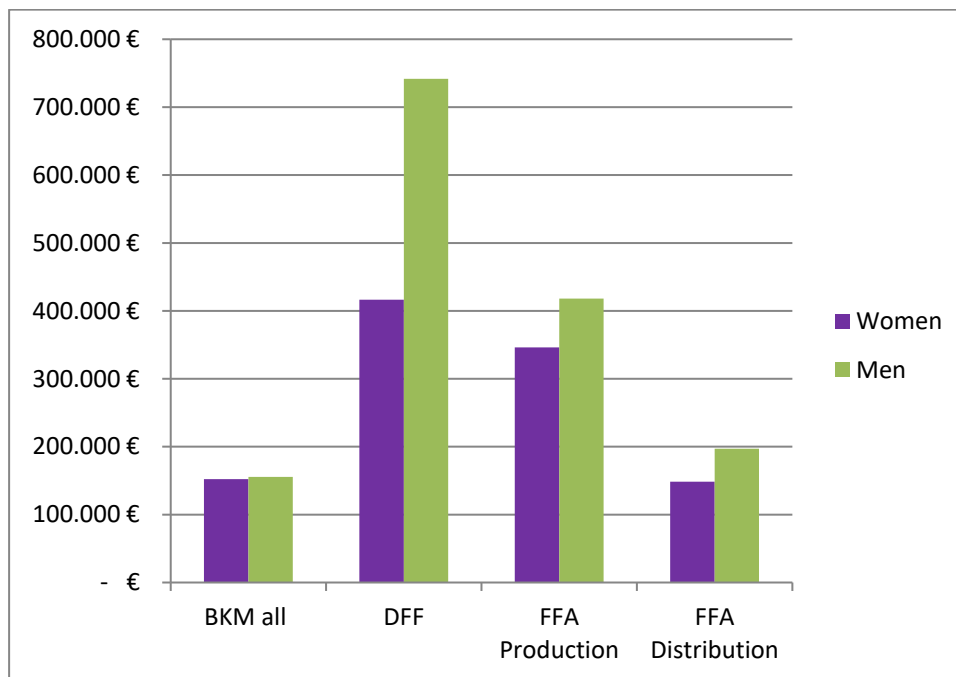


Table: Average federal funding by institution and gender

Accordingly, this means that a project directed by a woman compared to a project directed by a man only receives 65 percent of the funding; the funding by the BKM is nearly equal (98 %). The FFA funds a woman-led project by 83 percent and only 75 percent of the means provided by FFA-distribution funding to a man-led project. The DFFF funds women with 56 percent of its sum.

Summary: Percentage of the sum that films directed by women receive in comparison to films by men.

- Sum of overall film funding: women receive 65 percent of the sum that men receive
- BKM: women receive 98 percent of the sum that men receive
- DFFF: women receive about half (56 %) the sum that men receive
- FFA Production funding: women receive 83 percent of the sum that men receive
- FFA distribution funding: women receive three quarters (75 %) of the sum that men receive

If one analyses the other positions, further overproportional gendered differences become apparent. As producers women receive more rarely funding than men. Projects by female producers only receive in 57 percent of cases funding, projects by men however are awarded funding in 66 percent of cases. Here also, women only receive a fragment of the sum that men receive with 75 percent of the amount. This is a smaller difference than for directing.

It does not seem to matter who writes the screenplay, projects with a male DOP however also receive funding in more cases.

In respect to producers, the BKM is again the funding agency with most gender equity. Here, projects with female producers receive more money than projects where no women are involved. Overall all projects with male producers and production teams receive the most money.

4.5. Success of Films: Audience

Films directed by men have approximately twice as many spectators as films directed by women. This corresponds with twice the amount of box-office intake. However, this is mostly due to the highly successful outlier films, such as *Der Medicus*, *Fack ju Göthe*, *Männerherzen* and *Kokowääh*.

Not a single woman directed one of the films that made more than 10 million Euro at the box office. All of those had been directed by men or male teams. When considering as successful films those films that had more than 1 million spectators, in the five years covered in this report (2009–2013) this applies to only 35 films. Among those only two women have been directed by a woman: „Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland“ by Yasemin Samdereli (2011) and „Wüstenblume“ by Sherry Hormann (2009).

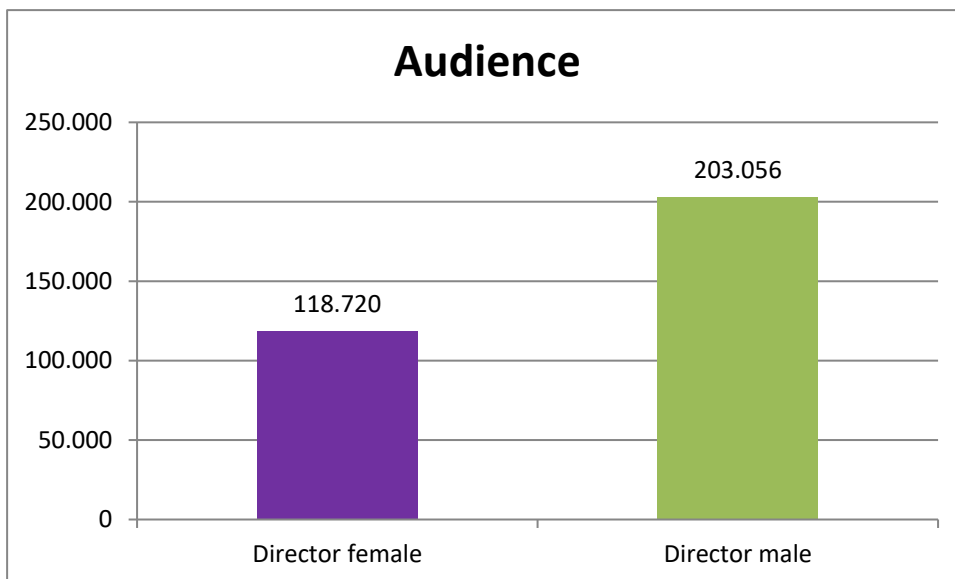


Table: Average number of tickets sold by gender

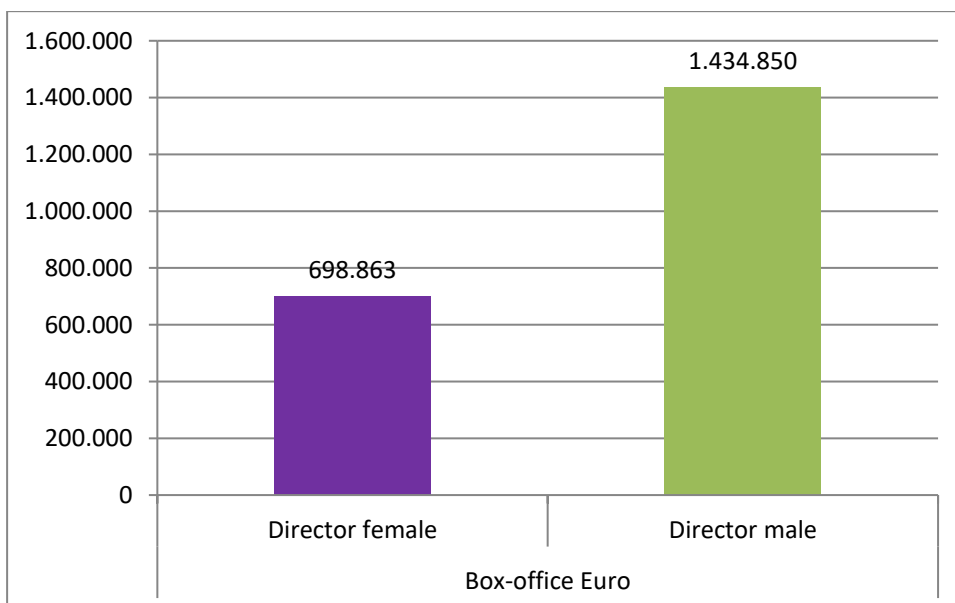


Table: Average box-office by gender

It is evident that especially the 35 films which had an audience of over one million and a corresponding box-office income of over 4 million Euro are responsible for the significant differences in audience and box-office numbers by gender. When neglecting those films, which only account for 5 percent of all films, for the calculation of averages, films directed by men and women only differ slightly in terms of absolute figures of audience, while women directors make approximately 20 percent less at the box office. A possible explanation for this difference in box-office income in relation to audience numbers is that women more often direct children's films, for which tickets are cheaper.

It is especially the top films directed by men which are successful at the box office. These are also the films with a high budget and high amount of funding. The top films received on average 2,7 million Euro funding while the other films received ca. 800.000 Euro. These successful films, furthermore, have an average budget of more than 7 million Euro. Half of these films are comedies, which are seldom directed by women.

These films result in the distortion of the differences.

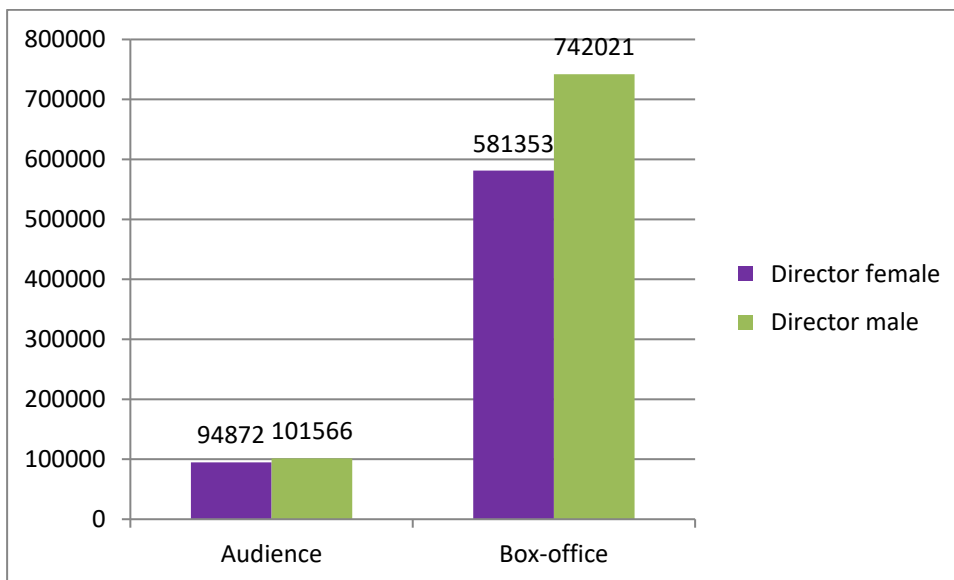


Table: Average Box-office and audience without the exceptional top-movies.

4.6. Success of Films: Awards

Films directed by women more often win film awards. In contrast to the bigger commercial success of films directed by men, women-directed films are better received by critics and jurors. This is a clear indication for the high artistic quality of films directed by women.

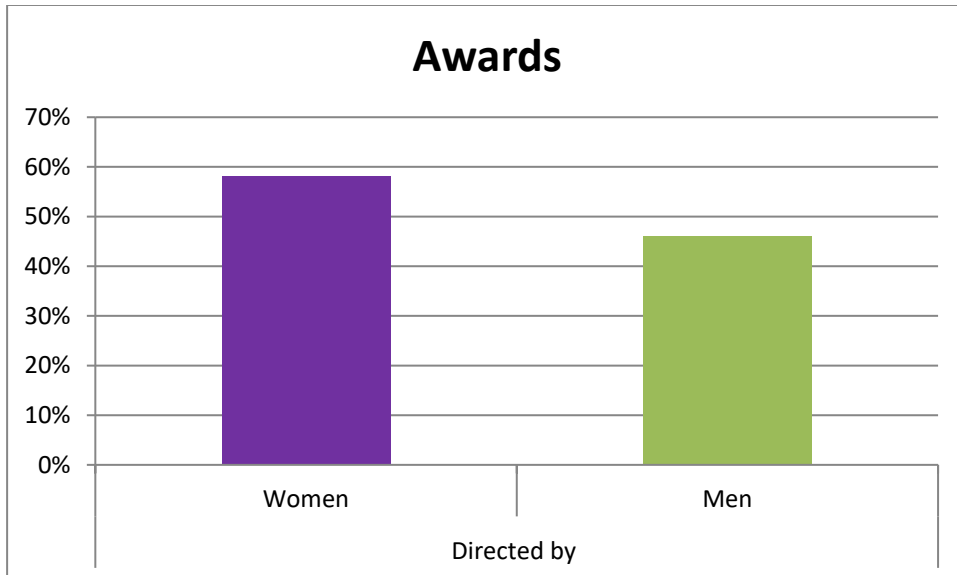


Table: Film awards by gender. (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men.)

4.7. Festival Run

The basis for the analysis of the festival run are data about festival participation derived from film records available at filmportal.de, german-films.de and mediabiz.de, which list screenings at major festivals on the circuit.

Films directed by women are more often screened at film festivals. More than two thirds (68 %) of the films are shown at festivals. On average a film directed by a woman is screened at 3,3 festivals while a film directed by a man is screened at 2,7 festivals.

Films directed by women screen at a significantly higher diversity of festivals. The big German film festivals Berlinale, München, Hamburg, Saarbrücken and Hof screen films by men and women in equal share. For women-directed films a higher diversity of festivals and higher international dissemination can be noted.

Film festivals traditionally represent a wider range of film production since the commercial exploitation of films is not the foremost goal, instead they aim for an overview of quality and innovation in filmmaking in its full range. Here, small films, arthouse and art cinema as well as other thematic films find a platform. Festivals are especially important for small films with a small marketing budget in order to gain attention and visibility. The selection processes, positive film criticism and awards at film festivals help films to gain awareness for further commercial exploitation and international distribution.

At festivals smaller films, which received less funding, are screened. Although films directed by women have a smaller budget they have a more successful festival run

More than two thirds of the films were screened at a festival. Half of these go on to further festivals, i.e. slightly more than one third (37 %) of the films screen at two festivals; 20 percent screen at three to four festivals; only 10 percent screen at six or more festivals. Only 33 films (5 %) can be seen as festival hits which screen at 10 or more festivals.

Films directed by women screen significantly more often at film festivals and are more successful on the festival circuit.

This can be explained by specificities of women-directed films, such as low-budget and genre (drama, children's films) which predestine these films as festival films. Nearly 70 percent of films shown at film festivals are categorized as dramas.

Especially the so-called A-list festivals such as Cannes, Berlin and Venice or internationally acclaimed survey festivals such as Toronto, Vienna are important platforms for film awareness. In recent years, increasing discussions have highlighted and criticized the lack of films directed by women in prestigious competition sections, e.g. at the Cannes film festival. This criticism was met with the argument of lacking quality of women-directed films. The higher success-rate of films directed by women compared to films directed by men regarding festival run and winning awards, however, seems to debunk that argument.

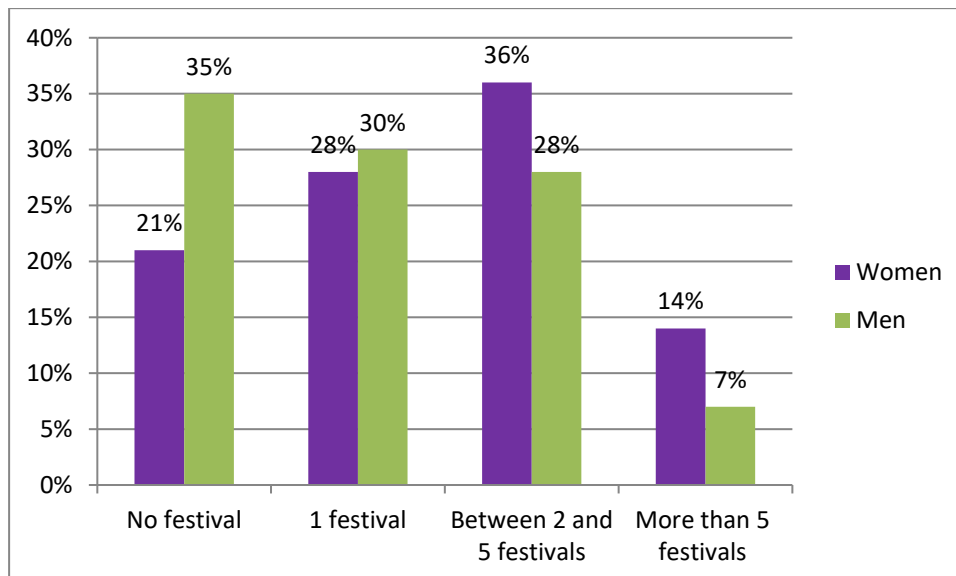


Table: Festival run by gender (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men.)

| | Films by women | Films by men |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Berlinale | 21% | 19% |
| Filmfest München | 13% | 13% |
| Filmfest Hamburg | 5% | 6% |
| Hof | 10% | 9% |
| Saarbrücken Max Ophüls | 10% | 8% |
| Cannes | 6% | 6% |
| Venedig | 3% | 3% |
| Toronto | 9% | 3% |
| Locarno | 5% | 4% |
| Karlovy Vary | 1% | 4% |
| Göteborg | 4% | 1% |
| Istanbul | 2% | 2% |
| Montreal | 8% | 4% |
| Sao Paulo | 6% | 4% |
| Shanghai | 6% | 3% |
| Sundance | 2% | 0% |
| Tallin | 5% | 3% |
| Thessaloniki | 2% | 2% |
| Zürich | 4% | 6% |
| Diverse international festivals | 15% | 11% |
| Other small film festivals | 47% | 37% |
| No festival | 21% | 35% |

Table: List of festivals by gender (The percentage refers to the total of all films either directed by women or all films directed by men.)