PARITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE SERIES: WHERE DO WE STAND?

SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING DATA
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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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« How do I know what New-York looks like ? Is it because I've been to New York? Is it because I've watched documentaries about New York? Or is it because I've watched films and series [set in] New York? I think it's more the third answer that counts. »[1] F.R.I.E.N.D.S.; GOSSIP GIRL; SEX AND THE CITY; THE SOPRANOS; BROOKLYN 99; GIRLS[2]; are examples of series that immerse us in the heart of New York City through its streets, its buildings and its parks. Many of us can picture this city in our minds without having seen it with our own eyes or without having walked through it with our own feet. Sarah Sepulchre explains that we discover places, but above all, social dynamics, daily life situations and social relations, through the cultural representations that we watch regularly[3]. **These series shape a collective imaginary and influence the way in which viewers of series perceive the world**.

Series are indeed part of the daily life of a growing number of people around the world. To take the example of France, where this note is written, **in 2019 66% of the French population declares watching at least one series episode a week**[4]. At the Lab Femmes de Cinéma, a think tank that works on the place of women and diversity in cinema, we have the intuition that series represent one of the key spaces where diversity issues will play out in the years to come.

Our intention is therefore to bring together all the information that exists on the subject of the place of women and any « under-represented » group in series and in audiovisual sector, to present a sort of inventory, a summary, of the data, the key figures, the major trends that run through series on a global and French scale. **Our goal is to question what exists and what is still missing in the world of series**. Who are the people behind the camera, from the original idea, to the writing of the scenario, to directing and producing? But also, who are the characters on screen and how are they portrayed? To what extent are series really a space for diversity?

For this sate of play, we have tried to cross-check as much information as possible between French and international series. **International comparisons are difficult to make** for several reasons: on the one hand, the methods of producing series are not the same in different regions of the world, but also not all countries provide the same data and statistics. To take the example of France, ethnic statistics do not exist on the perceived racial affiliation of people in front of and behind the camera. Therefore, we propose in this note attempts to compare and contrasts the data found, although we are aware that these comparisons will be imperfect.

Moreover, it is important to specify that **this note is neither exhaustive nor objective**. There are so many studies, articles, interviews, data, that we had to orient our research and make choices. According to Haraway, all the knowledge and content we consume is « situated knowledge »[5]. Even though we have tried to present facts and figures, absolute objectivity cannot exist. As a think tank concerned with issues of representation and the desire to change the industry's lines so that the world of cinema and series is more inclusive and representative, this necessarily influences the choices made in the selection of the data presented in this note.

The methodology used was to study a large number of data, studies, articles and interviews that deal with the place of women in the series and of anyone suffering from discrimination, with **an intersectional prism** (race, gender, sexual orientation, disability situation, etc.). The data have been grouped by common themes in order to obtain several figures that intersect and complement each other on the same theme. As a reminder, this note is a synthesis of a set of data that was not produced by the Lab, it is a summary of existing information produced by other organisations. You will find all our sources in the endnotes of the document.

So follow us on this journey, we'll take you into the world of series, starting with their societal power, we'll take you behind the scenes, we'll make you discover the creative teams, to finally end up on the other side of the camera, on the side of what you see on the screen as a viewer.

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I - The powerful societal power of series

1) Series are a popular cultural asset with a global reach

It is complex to quantify the percentage of the population that watches series. The studies that exist on a global scale are on screen time, which does not allow us to obtain an order of magnitude of the time allocated to watching series alone.

In France, **66% of the population** watched at least one episode of a series a week **in 2019**[6] and **92% say they watch series « regularly »**[7]. Due to the multiplicity of media for watching series (terrestrial channels, cable channels and streaming platforms), their viewing is largely transversal to the different age groups and social categories[8].

In addition, a study conducted in 10 countries **in 2019** showed that among people over 18 who watch series, more than 82% say they « binge-watch », i.e. watch several episodes of series in a row[9]. This figure is even higher for 18-25 year olds, more than 92% binge-watching series. In fact the average time spent watching series is 2.5 hours[10].

Not only are series watched by a large percentage of the population, and particularly among the youngest, but also watching a series is associated with the practice of "binge-watching", i.e. consuming a lot of content in a short time. Viewers therefore spend a lot of time with the characters in a series over a short period of time and thus come into contact with a wide range of stories and characters.

2) The series are « an important way of approaching the world »

In the introduction, a quote from Sarah Sepulchre on the representation of New York City served as an example of how series shape our collective imagination. She extended the pedagogical role of the series to all social relationships and to the way we perceive everything we do not know directly[11]. To take an example, when she was a teenager she learned about seduction through the prism of the series, through the way the characters interact with each other[12]. The series can in fact become a place of learning and projection. As the Afro-feminist author bell hooks[13] points out: « **my students learned more about race, [gender], and class from the movies than from all the theoretical literature I encouraged them to read**. »[14] Cultural representations, like series, can reinforce or even create stereotypes: viewers integrate, even partially, the representations they are shown.

To take the example of transgender people, the documentary DISCLOSURE on Netflix gives voice to transgender people who comment on scenes from cultural productions that present violent transphobic stereotypes and explain what violence these productions have caused in their daily lives[15]. Their relatives and the people they meet have an imaginary world filled with stereotypes about their identities and experiences. In France, for example, « transgender characters in TV series still seem to be relegated to the roles of victims of violent murders, caricatured [sex workers] or, worse, murderers and monsters. »[16]. To quote the association REPRESENTRANS, which works for better representations of transgender people in film, « we are not sad subjects, dramatic stories, tragic lives. We are many, happy, alive and it is up to us to tell it. »[17].

Indeed, when a story is about the experience of a discriminated and under-represented person, it is necessary, at the very least, to seek the views of people who experience this discrimination to ensure that the way the character is written or filmed does not convey violent stereotypes; or better still, to have these people on the creative teams. This is what Joey Soloway, who created the series TRANSPARENT did: transgender writer Our Lady J joined the writers' room when the character's first sex scenes were being filmed[18]. She paid particular attention to the way the heroine's body was filmed, in order to avoid any overly sexualizing or oppressive representation as transgender bodies are usually filmed in cultural productions[19].

3) Cultural productions, and therefore series, have a concrete and quantifiable impact on the world

This « important way of approaching the world »[20] can lead to concrete changes in the public opinion. On the subject of same-gender marriage, the 1996 series F.R.I.E.N.D.S featured a lesbian wedding between Susan and Carol[21]. NBC expected thousands of complaint calls and provided receptionists to answer them[22]. During the broadcast of the episode, watched live by over 31 million people, only two people called the network's switchboard[23]. By the time this episode aired, 34 episodes had been broadcast, and viewers had already spent around 12.5 hours with the characters. In 2013, an episode of MODERN FAMILY celebrated a same-gender marriage[24]. After its broadcast, the polls in favor of marriage for all marked a positive development in the US[25]. It would be hasty to conclude that these two events are correlated, but it is a possibility, at least to some extent.

Accurate representations can also serve as role models, in which spectators can project themselves and allow themselves to dream of futures they would never have thought of. As throughout this note, this proposal is valid for all people experiencing discrimination. Let us take the example of gender. Actress Gillian Anderson played Agent Dana Scully in the series X-FILES. There seemed to be a link between the airing of the series and the number of women enrolling in studies to work in the scientific field in the United States[26]. This « **Scully Effect** » was then quantified by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, which showed that women who watched the series were indeed 50% more likely to work in STEM (science, technology, engineering)[27]. This has a significant impact on the real lives of the audience.

Series have a societal power over the viewers' experience. It is therefore necessary to understand who invents, writes, directs and produces the series we watch. Who has the power to tell stories that have a concrete impact on reality?

II - Behind the screens of the series, mainly white men

The **showrunner** ensures the coherence of a series as a whole, both in terms of the script and in terms of the entire production and post-production process. The metaphor of « orchestra conductor » is commonly used to describe this dual role, which has an artistic and creative aspect on the one hand and a practical aspect on the other, involving the selection, management and direction of the team members[28]. **In the United States**, this model of the showrunner prevails to a large extent: at the heart of the « writer's room » different scriptwriters divide up the writing of the episodes and the coherence of the whole is ensured by the showrunner[29]. This certainly implies shorter production times, but a much higher writing cost[30]. **In France**, this model is marginal[31] although it is beginning to develop[32]: on average in France, a 52-minute episode is written by 2.8 scriptwriters, while in the United States, this figure is between 6 and 12 people[33]. **The budget allocated to writing a series is about 4% of the overall production budget in France, compared with 10% in the United States**[34]. These differences complicate international comparisons: the framework and context of the creation and production of a series are not the same depending on the geographical area considered and the key positions are also different. But in concrete terms, who are the showrunners?

1) In the US, showrunners are mostly white men

Indeed, **in the 2016-2017 season, 80% of showrunners were men and 90% were white**[35]. In fact, 72% of showrunners are white men, 18% are white women, 6% are non-white men and 4% of are non-white women. Yet this position is absolutely key in the Anglo-Saxon model, both for the creative and the management aspects. It is also they who hire those who will have strategic roles, which amounts to a form of « mentoring that gives the next generation of creators a chance to rise »[36]. These figures are indicative of a lack of gender balance in the most important position in the development of a series. This job is both a position of power, and a position that has a direct influence on the teams, on the tone, on the shape of a given series.

However, there are some inspiring female and non-binary showrunners who are revolutionising the world of series : Jenji Kohan (ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK), Lena Dunham (GIRLS), Susannah Grant (UNBELIEVABLE), Phoebe Waller-Bridge (FLEABAG), Shonda Rhimes (GREY'S ANATOMY), Ilene Chaiken (THE L WORD) or the non-binary showrunneur Joey Soloway (TRANSPARENT et I LOVE DICK)[37]. French showrunners include Fanny Herrero (CALL MY AGENT and more recently STANDING UP) and the director Rebecca Zlotowski, showrunner of the series SAVAGES.

If showrunners are overwhelmingly white men, what about other strategic positions in series creation and the composition of teams in general?

2) In the US, few women and non-white people are employed in key positions

In **the 2019-2020 season** in the US, 63% of programmes employed five or fewer women in the production teams (creators, directors, producers, writers, editors, directors of photography, etc.), while only 16% of programmes employed five or fewer men[38]. In other words, more than one in two series employed 5 or fewer women behind the scenes, while less than one in six series employed 5 or fewer than 5 men.

This is reflected in the percentage of women working behind the scenes in the various positions: **in the 2020-2021 season, an average of 33% of women are working on series in the United States**[39], which represents one person in three, a figure that is far from parity behind the camera. This figure is only slightly changing: they represented 32% of employees **in the 2016-2017 season**[40].

In **the 2020-2021 season**, parity has not been achieved in any of the main creative and management functions: women represent **40% of producers, 35% of writers and 31% of series directors**. In the director category, however, there has been a real evolution compared to **the 2017-2018 season** when women represented 10% of the workforce[41].

As for the racial identity of series directors, during **the period 2014-2015**, on public channels, non-white people represent less than 10% of the total number of directors, 11.5% on streaming platforms and under 17% on cable channels[42]. In fact, regardless of the format considered, **white people represent at least 83% of series directors**, a figure closer to 90% for public channels and for streaming platforms[43]. However, the figures are improving: of all series directors in **the period 2019-2020**, non-white people represent **28% of the workforce**[44].

These figures show that in the series industry women and non-white people are few, not only regarding the composition of the teams, but they are also few in the key positions. These figures are the number of people employed in the development of a series over a given period of time. Let's see what this means by looking at it from another perspective and looking at what happens at the episode level: what percentage of

episodes are directed by women and what percentage are directed by non-white people? Is there a significant difference and what would that imply?

3) Imbalances are reflected in the episodes: series episodes are mainly written and directed by white men in the US

In the **2014-2015 season**, 16% of episodes were directed by a woman, i.e. about 1 in 6 episodes[45]. On average over the period **from the 2012-2013 season to the 2019-2020 season**, 22.3% of episodes are directed by women, or just over 1 in 5 episodes[46]. In the more recent **2019-2020 season**, these figures increase: 34% of episodes are directed by women, i.e. 1 in 3 episodes[47].

As for non-whites, the statistics are comparable, with 22.4% of episodes led by a non-white person on average over the period **from the 2012-2013 season to the 2019-2020 season**[48] and 33% of episodes in **the 2019-2020 season**[49].

While there has been an increase, it should be noted that the majority of episodes, 66%, are led by men and 67% by white people: on average, one in three episodes is led by a woman, one in three is led by a non-white person. 43% of episodes are directed by white men, 23% by white women, 22% by non-white men, and 10% by non-white women[50].

If we look for examples among the most watched series in the world **in 2020**[51], we are very far from parity, even in series created in 2016 or in 2017. 95% of the episodes of THE OFFICE are directed by men, as are 68.8% of the episodes of LUCIFER (2016), 82.5% of the episodes of THE CROWN (2016) and 78.4% of the episodes of OZARK (2017)[52]. In fact, only the series LUCIFER in these few examples is close to the statistics presented above, with 31.2% of episodes directed by women.

The figures for episodes directed by women are comparable with the overall percentage of female directors: they are 31% of series directors and direct about 1/3 of the episodes. These figures are slightly higher for non-white people, who are less than one in four directors and who direct on average one in three episodes. These figures are improving, they show that things are starting to move, but once again, they are far from equity or parity in the backstage of series creation and direction.

4) In France too, men are over-represented in positions of power

In France **in 2019**, women represent 38% of the workers behind the camera in series[53], a figure that is slightly higher, but comparable, to the proportion of women in the creation and production teams of series in the United States (33% **in the 2020-2021 season**[54]).

To get into more precise statistics detailing the positions held by each person, the studies take into account all French fiction broadcast on television **in 2019**, i.e. series, but also TV films. In fact, the following figures do not only concern series, but nevertheless give an idea of the gendered distribution of positions in this sector.

In 2019, the majority of power and creative positions were held by men: they represent 65% of the authors of the original idea for a series, 72% of production managers, 92% of chief operators and 96% of sound engineers[55].

In writing and directing, the disparities are also significant. Speaking of the low number of women in positions of power and creativity in this industry, Agnès Chauveau, the deputy director general of the INA, said that « there is a real problem of discrimination in hiring »[56]. To give just one example, let's take the statistics from the CNC: **in 2018**, of all the companies that called on directors for new episodes, 72% called on male directors only, compared to 7% who called on female directors only[57].

In terms of writing stories and screenplays, **in 2019, 22% of sole authors are women**, a figure that rises to **43% if co-authors are added**. Television fiction, including series, is therefore mostly written by men[58].

As far as directing is concerned, according to the CNC, **in 2018** women represent **8% of directors alone and 18% of directors if we add co-directors**[59]. If television dramas are mostly written by men in France, they are also mostly directed by men.

This results in considerable discrepancies in the weight of men and women in the writing and directing of episodes: **in 2018, 2% of the episodes broadcast were written and directed by women only, while 48% of the episodes, i.e. almost half, were written and directed by men only**[60].

In series this time, the number of female directors has increased in recent years, particularly on private channels: they account for 9% of series directors on public channels and 15% on private channels[61]. The director of original creation at CANAL+, Arielle Saracco, even declared that « 50% of the series broadcast **in 2019** [on CANAL+] were directed by women »[62].

As mentioned in the introduction concerning skin colour, since ethnic statistics are prohibited in France, it is impossible to have figures on the proportion of non-white people behind the camera, which makes it more difficult to highlight the discrimination suffered in hiring, the importance of reflecting on these issues and finding solutions to change the lines[63].

5) This leads to discrimination within the creative teams

To recall some of the figures seen above, in the United States, only 20% of showrunners are women and they represent 33% of employees[64]. Yet women represent 50.8% of the US population **in 2018**[65]. 10% of showrunners[66] and less than 20% of series directors are non-white[67]. However, they represent 23.7% of the population **in 2021**[68]; a figure that rises to over 40% if we consider the Hispanic population perceived as white[69].

Similarly in France, women are 50% of film students[70] and 51.6% of the population **in 2019**[71]. Yet they represent 18% of directors or co-directors of television fiction **in 2018**[72].

These disparities have an impact on the culture of the industry, making it more difficult for people who are subject to discrimination to have a place and to be fully recognised in the industry. Female directors testified that getting a position of power in the world of series is only part of the way, and that it is then necessary to make a place for yourself, to be respected by teams that are more than used to working exclusively with male directors[73].

For other people subject to discrimination, i.e. LGBTQIA+ people, people in a situation of disability, or fat people, it is very difficult to find statistics on their percentage of presence behind the camera.

This low gender mix leads to hostile working environments for people who are subject to discrimination: the think tank « for Inclusion and Equity » conducted a survey of series writers in the United States: it turns out that 74% of women respondents had experienced discrimination or harassment at work and 60% of « underrepresented » people had been discriminated against or harassed at work[74]. **Furthermore, 12% of the writers who identified as « underrepresented » who reported incidents of discrimination or harassment were fired**[75].

The same survey focuses on people who are absent or not very present in the « writer's room », whose role is central to the writing of the series. In the writer's room, there are different levels of hierarchy[76]: 93% declare that in the lowest levels of hierarchy, there are no disabled people and 25% that there are no LGBTQIA+ people[77]. At the top of the hierarchy, the discrepancies are even more striking: 98% of respondents say that there is not a single disabled person and 56% that there is not a single LGBTQIA+ person in these positions of power[78].

The think tank also recommends a number of solutions to overcome the lack of gender diversity in positions of power as well as the violence and discrimination suffered by those who are not white, heterosexual, able-bodied men: produce and monitor statistics on people in the writer's room, increase the number of people suffering discrimination in key positions who are in charge of recruiting the rest of the team (showrunners, scriptwriters, etc.) or making anti-bias training compulsory for showrunners and all those involved in writing series[79].

This low level of gender diversity behind the screen has a more or less significant impact on the people represented on screen. What would be the consequences of having more gender diversity in the creative teams?

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III - Tell me who is behind the camera, I'll tell you who is in front…

1) More women behind the camera leads to an overall increase in the number of women in the teams

Several American studies agree that having women in key positions would result in teams with a higher percentage of women behind the camera overall.

Statistically in the US, if at least one woman is behind the creation of a series, the number of women in key positions increase: teams will have on average a higher number of women directors, writers and editors[80]. **Indeed, when at least one woman is at the origin of the creation of the series, the teams have an average of 69% of women employed behind the scenes, against 20% of women employed in teams where no woman is at the origin of the creation of the series**[81]. Similarly for directing: if at least one woman is the creator of the series, women directors represent 35% of the episode directors, compared to 19% if no women are part of the creative team[82].

These statistics do not only concern women creators or co-creators of series: if at least one of the producers is a woman, the percentage of women in the production teams of the series is increased[83].

2) The presence of women in key positions leads to more speaking time for female characters

A study by the USC Annenberg Institute for Diversity shared by Variety shows that women are more likely to be given speaking character roles if the creators include women in fact, « a lack of inclusion behind the scenes also affects storytelling »[84].

A study commissioned by Netflix to quantify the diversity in front of and behind the camera actually showed a direct correlation between the presence of women behind the camera and the place of women in front of

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the camera: in series with at least one female creator 74.6% of the lead roles are female characters; this figure drops to 41% if there are no women on the creative team[85]. « When a female director is attached to a film, there are more lead and supporting roles that are girls and women, more main cast members identified as women and more women as speaking characters on screen. [...]. We found exactly the same patterns when women were involved as series creators »[86]. This observation can also be verified for all series, whether they are created for public or private channels or for streaming platforms: **in the 2020-2021 season**, when **at least one woman is behind the creation of a series**, **women represent 49% of the speaking roles and 53% of the main roles, figures that drop to 43% and 46% when the series are created exclusively by men**[87].

This correlation is also valid for other people subject to discrimination: on Netflix programmes, **when at least one creator is non-white, 53.8% of the series have a main character from a minority background, whereas when the creators are all white, this number drops to 24.8%**[88].

« Inclusion happens when women are given keys to the kingdom and drive storylines »[89].

3) The presence of diverse female characters in front of the camera is directly related to the number of women behind the camera

Fanny Herrero explained in her series CALL MY AGENT, she had a desire to create strong and independent female characters, according to her « a woman screenwriter is more sensitive to this issue »[90].

In addition to having more women behind the camera, with female characters having more speaking time, having women behind the camera also implies new typologies of characters that are more diverse and less stereotyped. **Indeed, new types of characters are emerging on screen**, women are no longer confined to the usual triptych « housewife », « mother » or « desirable woman »; mothers with problems are appearing, women who are not perfect and are not necessarily trying to be, a growing diversity of women's bodies are represented on screen and we notice the rise of LGBTQIA+ characters[91]... **The composition of the creative, writing and directing teams strongly influences the characters portrayed on screen**.

To take just one example, according to Ava Cahen, film critic and author of *Game Of Thrones Decoded*, in the American series GAME OF THRONES, the typology of female characters is twofold in this series: on the one hand, there are strong female characters, warriors who fight, and on the other hand, the princesses, who are more frail and superficial and very often victims of sexist or sexual violence: « the characters who are not sexualised are the characters who wear the armour »[92]. In fact, this series, 95% of whose episodes were written and directed by men[93], presents an undeniable form of « male gaze » in the way it films the female characters and the scenes of sexist and sexual violence[94].

There is a correlation between those who write and direct a series and the characters on screen, both in terms of speaking time and in terms of the quality and diversity of the characters portrayed. Yet the vast majority of people behind the scenes in the cinema are white men: who are the characters we see on screen? Two approaches will be presented: a first quantitative approach where the types of characters represented on screen will be counted. The second approach will be more qualitative: what are the roles of these characters?

IV - Increasing gender diversity on the screen, but stereotypes are resisting

The importance of characters in a series. According to French showrunner Éric Rochant, since a series is a long-term project, « a good story is not enough [...] it must be based on very good characters »[95]. According to Rochant, the pillars of a film are the writing, directing and editing, while the pillars of a series are the writing and the actors[96]. A viewer who follows a series will be able to follow the story of characters for « 5 or 7 years or more »[97]. To take a few examples of successful series: the series F.R.I.E.N.D.S has been on the air for ten years[98]; GREY'S ANATOMY has been on the air for 17 years[99]; in France PLUS BELLE LA VIE started in 2004[100].

Following characters over a long period of time allows on the one hand to develop empathy towards them, but also allows the scriptwriters to write complex characters and make them evolve over time.

1) A beginning of diversity among TV characters in the United States, although the majority of main characters remain white, cisgender and heterosexual

The gender identity of the characters
In the **2019-2020 season**, 29% of the series have a woman as their main character, 37% a man and 33% several people, including at least one man and one woman[101]. This means that the majority of series have a single male protagonist, followed closely by a mixed group and in third place a single woman. In terms of speaking time, **45% of the speaking characters in all the series are women**, which is close to parity, without reaching it[102]. We note an evolution: they represented 40% of speaking characters **in 2017**[103]. The majority of these characters are cisgender: transgender people (binary or non-binary) represent 0.4% of the speaking characters in the series in the **2020-2021 season**[104].

Age of the characters
Most female characters are in their twenties: 58% of female characters are between 20 and 30; while male characters are mostly older: 53% are between 30 and 40[105]. **Women over 60 are very largely under-represented: they represent 3% of the female characters**[106]. Male characters over 60 represent 7% of male characters[107]. However, it is slightly more likely to see women over 40 in series than in films[108].

The perceived racial identity of the characters
In 2014-2015, out of a set of 305 series covering the different modes of broadcasting (on terrestrial channels, cable channels and streaming platforms), non-white characters represent 29% of the characters[109]. **In the 2018-2019 season**, 65% of characters are white[110]. In fact, **in the 2019-2020** period and on all platforms, apart from black Americans, **all non-white racial categories are quantitatively under-represented compared to their percentage in the American population**[111]. This includes Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans[112]. To take Netflix as an example, less than 4% of the main characters are Asian American[113]. To focus on the female characters, the majority of women are 66% white, 20% black, 8% Asian, 5% Hispanic and 1% other[114]. However, in American society, whites represent 60% of the population if we take into account Hispanics who are perceived as white[115]. Therefore, 40% of the characters in the series universe should be non-white in order to approach quantitative accuracy[116].

LGBTQIA+ characters
LGBTQIA+ characters have never been so present on screen: **in the 2021-2022** season **they represent 12% of regular series characters**. This is a real increase on **the 2020-2021 season** this figure was of 9%[117]. While LGBTQIA+ characters are present on screen, they are rarely the protagonists of episodes. In Netflix series, out of 180 scripts studied **only 1.1% of the main characters are identified as LGBTQIA+**[118]. Like non-white people, they often have secondary roles and are for example a friend of the white heterosexual protagonist[119]. The proportion of LGBTQIA+ people will be around 8% of the US

population **in 2021**[120]. This figure is much higher when considering younger generations: among Generation Z (people born after 2000), almost 20% of young people in the US identify as LGBTQIA%[121].

Characters in situation of disability

Characters in situation of disability represent **2.8% of the characters in the 2021-2022 season**[122]. As for the main characters, less than 1% are disabled[123]. Some series feature characters with motor and visible disabilities, such as characters in SUPERSTORE, MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE, HOW TO SELL DRUGS ONLINE or 1 LITRE OF TEARS. Other series deal with invisible disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorders, such as ATYPICAL or AS WE SEE IT. It is difficult to make a comparison here with the number of people with disabilities in the United States, because 80% of disabilities are invisible. By definition, the world of series is a world of images, and if the subject does not deal directly with disability, it is difficult to quantify precisely the number of characters who could be in a situation of invisible disability.

After having seen quantitatively who are the characters of series in the United States, quantitatively, who are the characters who populate French serial stories?

> ## 2) In France, women are in a slight majority in leading roles but with less speaking time than men, and few characters are perceived as non-white

Gender identity of characters

The following figures take into account all French fiction broadcast on television, so this includes TV films as well as series. Once again, the figures do not correspond exactly to the series, but give an order of magnitude. **In 2019**, women represent 56% of the leading roles on screen[124]. However, if we take into account all the characters in TV dramas, they represent only 38% of the characters[125]. The distribution of speaking time is very unequal **between 2008 and 2018, with men holding two thirds of the speaking time**: 35.4% of the speaking time is allocated to female characters and 64.6% to male characters[126]. This implies that, although they represent most of the main characters, they are in the minority if we take the totality of series characters and the distribution of speaking time is far from being parity.

The perceived racial identity of the characters

According to the CSA, in French television programmes **in 2019, only 13% of fictional characters are perceived by viewers as non-white**[127]. In a focus on French series, The Observatoire Des Images notes, however, an effort made by several channels to highlight more diversity in series, with more inclusive casts and with non-white main characters: IL A DÉJÀ TES YEUX (FRANCE 2); VALIDÉ (CANAL+) and NARVALO (CANAL+)[128].

LGBTQIA+ characters

In France, no large-scale survey has been conducted to quantify the number of LGBTQIA+ characters in series[129]. Indeed, the CSA's annual diversity barometer does not take into account either sexual orientation or gender identity[130]. However, it is estimated that **each year, of the more than 140 roles offered in French series, only 5 characters are LGBTQIA+**[131]. In recent years, however, LGBTQ+ representations are gaining in quality, think for example of the romance between Eliott and Lucas in SKAM FRANCE, the transgender character Dimitri in PLUS BELLE LA VIE, who was in fact **in 2018** the first representation of a transgender man in a French series, or the lesbian agent Andréa Martel in CALL MY AGENT. Think also of the characters of Slim Nerrouche or Marion in the CANAL+ series SAVAGES written and directed by Rebecca Zlotowski[132]. According to Têtu, the arrival of American platforms in the French media space will have an impact on this low representation and will most likely change the lines: if French series want to remain competitive and attractive, they will indeed have to integrate more diverse stories in their stories. Of the 5 French series produced by Netflix between 2014 and 2020, 2 had LGBTQ+ characters (OSMOSIS and FAMILY BUSINESS)[133].

3) Characters have different and stereotyped roles according to their gender and perceived racial identity

Several studies show a significant qualitative difference in the roles given to different characters according to their gender, racial identity and age. Whether it is a question of character, activities of daily life, work or place in the family unit, the vast majority of roles are compartmentalized according to the identity and appearance of the character.

Roles differentiated according to the gender of the character:

Working men

In US series 75% of male characters have a clearly identifiable job **in the 2019-2020 season** series and 57% are filmed in their work environment[134]. For female characters: 65% have an identifiable job and 47% appear in their workspace[135].

To qualify the differences in the treatment of characters according to their gender, <u>a CSA study</u> mixes French and American series and takes into account the 40 series that had the highest ratings in France **in 2014**, on private and public channels[136]. This corpus thus includes a large panel of series, ranging from GAME OF TRHONES, A FRENCH VILLAGE, GREY'S ANATOMY to PLUS BELLE LA VIE. According to this study, the most common stereotype shared in the series is that of a woman who has a lesser career and professional fulfillment than her male partner. Fewer women have positions of responsibility in companies: 39% compared to 46% of male roles; they earn lower salaries; they are more likely to work in so-called « feminine » jobs. Of the jobs perceived as male (« scientific, technical or managerial jobs »), 52% are held by men and 35% by women; of the jobs perceived as female (« health and social sector jobs, teaching or secretarial jobs »), 20% are held by women and 13% by men[137].

Women taking care of the home

In American series, female characters are statistically more likely to have roles that are oriented towards their personal lives and private sphere than their male counterparts, who are more likely to have career and work-oriented roles. **In the 2019-2020 season**, 52% of female characters are filmed in the context of their home, compared to 38% of male characters[138].

According to the CSA study which cross-referenced the most viewed French and foreign series **in 2014**, 13% of female characters are involved in domestic tasks compared to 3% of male characters[139]. Within the framework of the home, the injunction for women to be in a couple, heterosexual, is very prevalent: « marital happiness is particularly associated with female leads »: 35% of female leads talk about their fidelity in love relationships, without any of them being unfaithful, on the contrary 15% of male leads affirm their fidelity, against 10% their unfaithfulness. It is a way of differentiating the treatment of love in couples, that no female lead can be unfaithful, compared to 10% of male leads who display their unfaithfulness[140].

Psychic and physical distinctions

As far as character is concerned, there are also differences in the way characters are written according to their gender: 56% of female characters have a « soft » personality compared to 37% of male characters[141]. The treatment of the body is also very different: female characters are much more sexualized than male characters. To take just one example, 9% of the main female characters are filmed naked, compared to 0% of their male counterparts[142].

Role differentiation based on perceived racial identity:

An absence of non-white main characters

In many popular series, non-white characters are simply absent or are used as extras: think of the series SEX AND THE CITY or THE L WORD, acclaimed as feminist series that have had a very important impact on the representation of women, but decried for their lack of mixity: they only represent white, able-bodied, slim women from well-to-do socio-professional categories[143]. The two « reboot » of these series, AND JUST LIKE THAT and THE L WORD GENERATION Q, have both incorporated more diverse profiles and gender diversity[144]. The series GIRLS has also been criticized for its lack of gender diversity, but director Lena Dunham has adapted her scripts and incorporated more gender diversity in the second season[145]. If we think of series such as FRIENDS or HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER, there are also very few non-white characters and they are not part of the core group of friends to whom viewers are attached[146].

Stereotypical non-white characters

Non-white characters were present from the very first series, but for a long time they were confined to stereotypical roles. Think of the character of Apu in THE SIMPSONS: for a long time, he was more or less the only representation of an Indian-American person in the series. This character is present only for the purpose of caricature and reinforcing stereotypes[147]. The documentary THE PROBLEM WITH APU aims to give a voice to those affected[148].

Non-white characters used to highlight the main white character

In most series, white characters still have the most important roles and non-white characters are secondary, to support or highlight the white protagonist, the example of the « black best friend » can be given[149]. This presence of non-white people to showcase the hero or the heroine has been much criticized on social media.

Another, even more problematic, type of character also exists in many series. This is the figure of the « white savior » who comes to the aid of non-white people. This is particularly the case in GAME OF THRONES: in the last episode of season 3, Daenerys stands out from a uniform crowd of non-white characters that she has just « delivered »[150]. In an article that denounces the racism of many Western series, this aerial shot, in which a white spot is identifiable in the middle of the crowd of non-white characters, perfectly illustrates this very problematic notion of « white savior »[151], and a series like GAME OF THRONES is watched by more than 30 million people worldwide[152].

To sum up, non-white characters are often absent, when present they are stereotyped or have a secondary role[153].

In fact, the relative presence of diversity does not imply interesting roles, and on-screen presence is not necessarily synonymous with good representation. The presence of characters written in a certain way can even contribute to the reinforcement and transmission of stereotypes.

However, things are gradually changing and evolving. People are beginning to occupy positions of power - although the change is still gradual and creative teams are far from being parity or mixed. GREY'S ANATOMY creator Shonda Rhimes, for example, wanted to give black women interesting and diverse roles: « against all odds, I bravely paved the way for writing for people of colour […] »[154]. The scene in HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER where Annalise Keating's character, a black woman law professor, takes off her wig at the end of the day was acclaimed on social media: many black women had never seen such a scene on screen that many could relate to[155]. The scene was suggested to the show's director by the African-American actress Viola Davis herself and was written by a black writer Erika Green Swafford[156]. Series are also a place where, as diversity begins to emerge, and when underrepresented characters are written by concerned people, new representations and characters can emerge and, who knows, begin to renew the collective imagination.

4) A growing diversity of characters in the world of series

Compared to films, series can take more freedom and feature more diverse characters than has traditionally dominated Western cultural productions (white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender, thin...), partly because the financial risks of failure are much lower. As series are cheaper to make than films, they need fewer views to be profitable[157]. In Europe the average budget for a series episode is between 800,000 and 1 million euros[158], the average budget for a feature film **in 2018** is 1.9 million euros in Europe[159] and 4 million euros in France[160]. While the difference in average cost between a series episode and a feature film is not obvious for Europe, it is for the United States: the budget per episode is on average 3 million euros[161], for a feature film the average budget is between 60 and 80 million euros[162]. For blockbusters, the budgets are generally between 90 and 180 million euros[163]. Some state leaders are still very LGBTQ+phobic, think of China for example where homosexuality is perceived as a mental disorder and same-gender marriage is still illegal[164]: taking the risk of a film being censored in a country with so many people is a problem for many production companies aiming for global releases. **In 2017**, of the 109 films released by major US production studios, only 14 featured an LGBTQIA+ character, and 7 of these had less than five minutes on screen[165]. In other words, **in 2017**, less than 6.5% of films had an LGBTQIA+ character on screen for more than five minutes.

« With television and streaming, [production studios] can take risks because the budget is lower, or because they have a pre-selected audience »[166]. The question of audience is key to understanding the opportunity for gender diversity in series. Today, the modes of broadcasting are diverse, between those who watch series on terrestrial channels (NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, TF1, France 2, M6...), on cable channels (HBO, Showtime, AMC, CANAL+) or by streaming on platforms (Netflix, Amazon prime, AppleTV...)[167]. In addition to this large number of broadcasting channels, each channel offers a very wide range of different series. Netflix, for example, has produced more than 1500 original series[168]. There is therefore **a real dispersion effect**: there is so much content that a certain number of viewers are targeted for each content. **In 2017** in France, the three most cited series in a survey carried out by the sociologist Clément Combes were GREY'S ANATOMY, GAME OF THRONES and PLUS BELLE LA VIE; however, the « dispersion effect » is such that they only have 10% of viewers in common[169]. This multiplicity of series results in a multiplicity of content: « **series are a very heterogeneous world** »[170].

The objective is not to convince all subscribers to watch each series, but to build loyalty and reach a maximum of niche audiences. This model is particularly true for streaming platforms. For channels that are more dependent on advertising, the production of diverse content is a response to the competition from the big American streaming platforms that have changed the industry[171]. On Netflix there are very specific categories, to take the example of LGBTQIA+ characters, there are many categories « LGBTQ romance series », « LGBTQ teen series », « award-winning LGBTQ series », « LGBTQ teen drama series »[172]... According to Anne Crémieux, a lecturer at Paris Nanterre, « when Netflix produces a series like SENSE8, for example, I'm sure [the company] knows it won't get big audiences; [it] is just trying to develop a niche market and register subscriptions from LGBT+ people. »[173]. **In 2017**, 20% of 18-34 year olds identify as LGBTQ+ in the US, these young people have purchasing power and are looking for more accurate representations, which production studios and platforms are increasingly tending to offer[174].

The stories proposed involving more diversity and better representation are not confined to niche series. When the story is well written and a series has diverse and interesting characters, many people can enjoy the series. Series expert Iris Brey uses the example of ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, which was a big hit, and says that « **series about women and their sexuality are not niche products** »[175]. Viewers who are used to identifying with the white, able-bodied, heterosexual hero are gradually becoming accustomed to identifying with and empathizing with a whole range of other characters.

Series that can reach a large audience while offering more interesting representations are therefore a very profitable object for production companies and platforms. Indeed, it appears that showing gender diversity on screen is profitable: **Netflix has invested 100 million dollars to study all their programmes and quantify the diversity in front of and behind the camera** in order to improve and offer programmes with more inclusion of « minorities » at all levels[176]. Pascale Thumerelle, Vivendi's Director of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also explained in 2015 that « the indicators put in place have been able to establish a link between investment in content diversity and profitability. This gives us a competitive advantage. »[177]. Indeed, the group's channels are seeking to promote more diversity and original content[178]. According to an

INA article on women in French serial fiction, « the most remarkable innovations in the register of social [gender] relations are to be found in certain series produced by Canal+ » the example cited is that of the series SPIRAL (Alexandra Clert and Guy-Patrick Sainderichin, since 2005): among the four main characters, two are women, a police lieutenant and a criminal lawyer. Other French channels also offer progressive series such as France 2 with the series CALL MY AGENT (Fanny Herrero, 2015), which features among the main quartet an older woman and **a lesbian woman whose sexual orientation is never treated as a subject in itself, but simply as one of the character's characteristics**, which is still new in the fictional universe[179].

5) There are still some barriers to more diverse characters in the series

If better and more mixed representations is not only a necessity for more accuracy in fiction but is also a real financial and strategic opportunity to be seized, why does diversity struggle to be effective in front of the camera? Why is it that even today characters who are not white, cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual men still have less interesting and more stereotyped roles?

There are several reasons for this lack of diversity in front of the camera. The first and probably most important reason has already been mentioned, and that is **the correlation between the people behind and in front of the camera**. A low level of diversity behind the camera means a lower level of diversity in front of the camera. To take just one example: when a series has at least one woman in the creative team, 49% of the speaking characters are women and they represent 53% of the main characters[180]. When there is no woman on the creative team, these figures drop to 43% and 46% respectively[181].

Three other explanations are given by series specialist Sarah Lécossais. Firstly, the fact that episodes are written by a large number of writers can lead to a **« smoothing effect »** of the characters, who may lose some of their characteristics initially thought up by one or a few writers[182]. Another cause may be **writers' self-censorship**: for fear of upsetting a network or producers, some writers will not propose certain ideas they may have[183]. Finally, even though many scriptwriters are aware of the importance of these issues and of the presence of gender diversity in series, they may be refused scripts: « Indeed, the desire to appeal to the greatest number of people or to the 'general public' leads to the fear that by going beyond stereotypes, these fictions will not find their audience and will be too risky economically », some broadcasters perceive gender diversity as a risk and prefer to continue with the traditional schemes that work financially[184].

Series are an important part of the daily lives of many people around the world and their impact on society is very significant. There are societal issues at stake, beyond the financial considerations mentioned below. Before we look at why it is so important to have good representations, let's take a diversion to the movies: are series more inclusive than movies over a given period of time?

V - Are series more inclusive than movies ?

It is interesting to compare the above figures with those of people behind and in front of the camera in the film industry. This is a purely quantitative comparison, not a qualitative one: the aim is to count, over a given period of time, the differences between films and series in terms of the identity and representation of people behind and in front of the camera.

1) In the United States, the teams behind the camera are more mixed in the series universe than in the film universe

The two main studies used in this section are from USC Annenberg, they consider the 100 most successful films per year. The first study focuses on the creative teams behind these films and the second on the characters featured on screen.

Gender

In films in the US, the proportion of female directors was 7.3% **in 2017** and 4.7% **in 2018**[185]. **In the 2017-2018** season, they accounted for 10% of female series directors[186]. For both films and series, the number of female directors has increased significantly since then, reaching 15% for films **in 2020**, 12.7% **in 2021**[187] and 35% for series **in the 2020-2021 season**[188].

As for screenwriting, of the 294 screenwriters who worked on the 100 most successful films **in 2019**, 80.6% are men and only 19.4% are women[189]. On the series side, the figure is higher, with a total of 35% female screenwriters **in the period 2020-2021**[190].

Over the same periods, series therefore employ more women than films in the key positions of directing and writing.

The perceived racial identity of the characters

Non-white directors represented 18.7% of film directors **in 2014** and 13.1% **in 2015**[191]. Over the same period, **2014-2015**, in the world of series they represented between 10% and 17% of directors depending on the broadcasting channel considered[192]. **In 2020**, 17.5% of film directors were non-white, and **in 2021**, 27.3%[193]. These figures are lower than those for non-white series directors **in the period 2020-2021**, who represented 28% of the total number of directors[194]. Interestingly, according to the USC Annenberg study, women and non-white people are statistically more likely to have directing positions on streaming platforms (Amazon Prime, Disney+, HBO Max and Netflix) than on so-called mainstream channels[195].

Thus, in the US, it appears that the number of non-white people behind the camera is proportionally greater in the world of series than in the world of films **in the period 2020-2021**.

2) In the US, series characters are more diverse than film characters

Gender

In 2019, 34% of speaking characters in US films are female[196], a figure that is significantly lower than the proportion of female speaking characters in series, which represent 45% of the total **in the 2019-2020 season**[197]. For lead roles, in films **in 2019**, 42% of lead or co-lead characters are women[198]. In series i**n the 2019-2020 season**, this figure rises to 62%[199].

In terms of gender identity, **in 2019** across all films studied, only 3 speaking characters are transgender[200]. According to the USC Annenberg study, films have an average of 44 speaking characters[201]: if we consider 3 characters among the 4400 supposed characters of the 100 films considered in this study, 0.07% of the characters are transgender **in 2019**. According to the same study, these transgender characters had « unimportant » roles and less than two minutes of screen time[202]. In the series universe **in the period 2020-2021**, transgender characters represent 0.4% of speaking characters, which is higher than those in the film universe[203].

In the US series, proportionally more speaking characters are women and they are also more likely to have a lead or co-lead role than in the film universe. In terms of gender identity, although this comparison is imperfect, the series have more transgender characters than the films.

The perceived racial identity
In movies non-white characters make up 32% of total lead or co-lead characters **in 2019**[204] and in those same roles they make up 35% of the total in the series universe over **the 2019-2020 season**[205].

Non-white characters in key roles are more numerous proportionally over the recent period in the series universe than in the film universe.

LGBTQIA+ Characters
Over the 2014 - 2019 period, of the 26,500 speaking characters studied, across more than 600 films, only 250 are non-heterosexual, that represents less than 1% of speaking characters[206]. In the series universe, **in the 2020-2021 season**, 9% of regular characters were LGBTQIA+, a figure that increases to 12% in **the 2021-2022 season**[207].

While the number of LGBTQIA+ characters is certainly higher in series, the number of main characters in series remains very low and comparable to that of films: **in 2019**, 2 films had an LGBTQIA+ person as a main or co-main character, that is to say LGBTQIA+ characters represent 2% of the main characters at most (this figure should probably be lower because many films must have more than a single main character)[208]. For series, this figure is about 1.1% on Netflix for example[209].

People in situation of disability
In movies **in 2019**, only 2.3% of speaking characters are in situation of disability[210]. In the world of series **in the 2021-2022 season**, they represent 2.8% of speaking characters[211]. In this category, the numbers are comparable in terms of proportionality.

Comparatively, in the United States, series are therefore more inclusive than films in almost all categories: behind the camera, we find more women and non-white people; in front of the camera, we find in series more speaking female characters, more non-white characters in lead roles, more LGBTQIA+ characters and finally slightly more people with disabilities. What about France: are French series also more mixed than French films?

3) In France, a cinema that is cruelly lacking in diversity, but which is still more inclusive than the world of series

In this section, we mainly use the figures from the Collectif 5050's « Cinégalités » study. Indeed, the CSA does not take into account sexual orientation or gender identity in its annual diversity barometer, and it is precisely to compensate for this lack of precise and necessary statistics that the Collectif 5050 has carried out its study[212]. This study focuses on the 100 French films with the biggest budgets **in 2019** and on the 100 films with the highest number of admissions in cinemas: this represents a total of 115 films. The study analyzes the representations in front of and behind the camera in terms of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability…

Behind the camera
In the corpus studied by the Collective 5050, **in 2019** 80% of the films were directed by male directors and only 20% by female directors[213]. Of the fifteen films that had the most funding, all were directed by men and only 4 women are present among the 45 creative positions listed (directing, script, production)[214]. In the French fictional universe **in 2018** according to the CNC, 8% of fiction was directed by women only, a figure that rises to 18% if we add co-directions[215]. As for film scripts **in 2019**, 88% were written by at least one man, 42% by at least one woman[216]. In the series this same year, the scripts are written by at least one man at 78% and by at least one woman at 43%[217].

The proportion of female directors and screenwriters behind the camera is therefore largely comparable between the film and French television fiction worlds.

Gender

In films **in 2019**, women represent 39.8% of the characters and 38% of the main characters[218]. The Collective 5050 notes, however, that the higher the budget, the fewer women are in the main roles: for films with more than 10 million euros, female characters represent only 20% of the main roles[219]. Also **in 2019** in French television fiction, women are 56% of the main characters, but represent only 38% of the total characters[220]. French series and TV movies offer more leading roles to female characters, however, the overall percentage of female characters remains the same in both media.

In terms of gender identity, transgender people are largely absent from French cinema: **in 2019** no French film had a transgender man as a character and only 2 characters, or 0.1% of the total number of characters in the films studied, were transgender women. In the series, there are no precise statistics on transgender characters[221]. However, we saw in the Têtu article that French series offer about 150 roles per year and they cite the very first transgender character in a French series, Antoine Bommel, who appeared in PLUS BELLE LA VIE **in 2018**[222]. If we take one role out of 150, this represents a proportion of 0.6% of the characters. A very low proportion indeed, but higher than that of transgender characters in films over the same period.

Female characters occupy more leading roles in French television fictions than in French films, however the overall proportion of women remains the same between these two media. As for transgender people, their proportion is very low in both films and series, but it would seem that since the appearance of the first transgender character **in 2018** in a French series, the latter have statistically a larger share of transgender characters.

The perceived racial identity

According to Cinégalités, 22% of characters are perceived as non-white in French films **in 2019**[223]. The figure is to 19% for the main characters[224]. The logic is the same as presented above for female characters, the higher the film's budget, the fewer we found non-white characters in the lead roles: they represent only 12% of the main characters in films with the highest budgets[225]. We strongly encourage you to consult the Collectif 5050 study in its entirety, which qualitatively and quantitatively maps the different roles and stereotypes associated with characters according to their gender and perceived racial identity. Regarding series, the CSA notes that **in 2019**, 13% of characters are perceived as non-white in French TV dramas[226].

LGBTQIA+ characters

In films released **in 2019**, 95% of characters whose sexual orientation is known are heterosexual[227]. In series, the estimated number of LGBTQIA+ characters is 5 roles per year on average out of a total of 150 roles[228]. We do not know the number of characters whose sexual orientation is known, so it is complicated to compare these two figures. It should be noted, however, that in both cases these figures are very low.

People in situation of disability

The share of characters with disabilities in French films **in 2019** is 3% of characters and 6% of main characters[229]. Again, we do not have precise figures for series. The only figure that could be used as a comparison is a figure from the CSA **in 2019** which quantifies the share of people with disabilities represented on television at 0.7%[230]. However, this figure does not only concern television fiction and only gives an imprecise idea of the low representation of people with disabilities in French television fiction.

To conclude this comparative parenthesis between the worlds of films and series, American series are statistically more diverse than American films. As for France, the figures on series characters are less precise and the comparison is therefore more complex. It would seem that films, although not very mixed and not very representative of French society, are slightly more representative than the universe of series, which is still very much behind.

CONCLUSION

« Rather than assuming that popular culture is a distorting mirror, we need to accept that people form their worldviews partly on the basis of popular culture, and that reality sometimes changes to look more like that mirror »[231]. Cultural productions in general and series in particular represent society and at the same time have a real influence on it. The series are part of the daily life, of the habits of many people and therefore have, to a certain extent, a form of responsibility.

In the creative world of series there is a lack of representation and diversity behind the camera, the figures show it, 33% of the employees are women[232], less than 17% are non-white people[233]. This leads to questions about the representations of the characters on the screen.

Quantitatively, non-white people are still vastly underrepresented in the series. According to a Nielsen study, aside from Black Americans, all other non-White people are underrepresented in terms of screen time, from Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans for instance are underrepresented on screen[234]. Even as the presence of LGBTQIA+ characters increases, the number of non-cisgender and non-heterosexual main characters is still very low. On Netflix, for example, only 1.1% of main characters are LGBTQIA+[235]. In French fiction, women have less than a third of the speaking time[236]... **The numbers are improving, but slowly.**

The numerical presence of characters is not enough, it is also necessary that the representation is fair and that they are good characters. **Too often, people who are subject to discrimination are relegated to the background and are the hero's or heroine's friend or sidekick[237]**. Better representations require more diversity in the creative, writing, directing and production teams.

Some channels and platforms are starting to think about these issues and are actively seeking to improve, to show more diversity and good representation. Whether the reason is moral or financial doesn't matter, as long as the consequences involve more diverse and interesting characters in the shows we watch.

The fact that channels and platforms are taking these issues into account is a good thing in terms of representation. Characters in series are going to be more representative of the real population, **everyone will be able to identify with a wider range of characters** and not just, as is it largely the case now, to white, thin, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual heroes. But this realization is also good news because it's **an unprecedented artistic renewal**. How many people with original ideas have not yet been given access to creative and directing positions on series? How many characters are still underrepresented and waiting to populate our collective imaginations? **For any serial fan, the dizzying potential of stories yet to be told is more than exciting and promising for the future of series**.

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