

Writers and directors of film and TV/SVOD fiction 2015-2022 figures

Gilles Fontaine
February 2024

A publication of the European Audiovisual Observatory



- **Introduction and methodology** 3
- **Key findings** 5
- **Writers of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction** 9
 - Active writers 10
 - Assignments 14
 - Writing teams 17
- **Directors of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction** 19
 - Active directors 20
 - Assignments 24
 - Directing teams 26

Introduction and methodology

This report provides an analysis of writers and directors of European theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction produced in Europe* between 2015-2022.

The data

The underlying data used in this report come from different sources:

- In a first step, a list of works produced between 2015 and 2022 was built using the Observatory LUMIERE database (for theatrical films) and the annual survey of the Observatory (for TV/SVOD fiction).
- In a second step, the directors and writers of each individual work were identified using the Observatory LUMIERE database (for directors of theatrical films) and IMDb (for the other positions).
- In total, close to 30 000 different creators were identified. The graph on the next page provides details on how these creators have been active in the writing and/or directing of theatrical films and/or TV/SVOD fiction.

Limits

- The identification rate of directors and writers varies; in particular, for TV/SVOD fiction, the sample is less representative with regard to daily telenovelas/soaps.
- The data relies on films and TV/SVOD fiction works which were actually released. Directing or writing assignments for the development of works which were ultimately not released are therefore not included.

The structure of the report

- The report successively reviews theatrical film and TV/SVOD fiction writers and theatrical film and TV/SVOD fiction directors.
- In each section, details are provided regarding the overlap between positions (e.g. writers also credited as directors) or between types of works (e.g. directors involved both in theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction).

Key findings

The strong growth in the production of European TV/SVOD series since 2015 logically led them overtaking theatrical films in terms of writing and directing assignments*. This trend seems to have been confirmed by the COVID-19 crisis which hit theatrical films much harder.

Against this background, writers and directors seem to be migrating from theatrical films to TV/SVOD fiction. About half of TV/SVOD directors have indeed directed a theatrical film at some point, but directors rarely return to directing theatrical film:

- Because of the high turnover in theatrical film directing (only 1.4 films directed by director between 2015 and 2022; about 40% of theatrical films produced each year are debut films) and therefore the work opportunities are rare;
- and because TV/SVOD series offer more recurring work (several episodes and sometimes several seasons).

The move to TV/SVOD series also offers screenwriters several advantages:

- on the one hand TV/SVOD series provide more work (several episodes and sometimes several seasons) and there are more screenwriters per project;
- on the other hand, while almost half of the writing assignments for theatrical film are captured by the director of the work, screenwriting is much more decoupled from directing for TV/SVOD series, with many more screenwriting-only assignments.

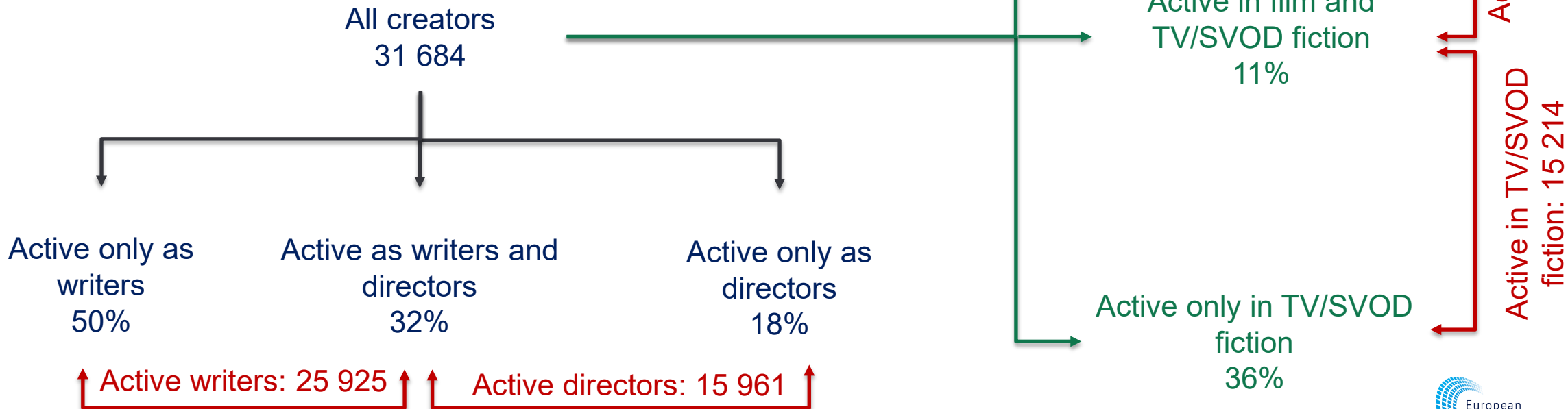
Overall, however, the boom in TV/SVOD series production has not led to less precariousness, as the number of active screenwriters and directors in this segment has grown faster than the number of assignments; in other words, theatrical films assignments are quite stable and TV/SVOD series assignments are competitive as film directors and screen writers move into the segment.

*For TV/SVOD series: 1 assignment = 1 season, no matter the number of episodes written or directed.

Key findings: Overview of writers' and directors' activities

The sample includes close to 32 000 creators active in writing and/or directing theatrical films and/or TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2022.

The graph illustrates the overlaps between positions and type of works: strong between writers and directors; limited between theatrical and TV/SVOD fiction.



FILM WRITERS

Between 2015 and 2022:

- 16 600 active writers
- 49% wrote only films they directed
- 1.4 films (co)written
- 1.8 writers per film including writers also directors; 0.9 “stand-alone” writers

TV/SVOD FICTION WRITERS

Between 2015 and 2022:

- 11 900 active writers
- 1.7 projects (co)written, representing 14.2 episodes or TV films*
- 4 writers per project

FILM DIRECTORS

Between 2015 and 2022:

- 13 200 active directors
- 40% director debuts each year
- 1.4 films (co)directed
- 1.2 writers per film

TV/SVOD FICTION DIRECTORS

Between 2015 and 2022:

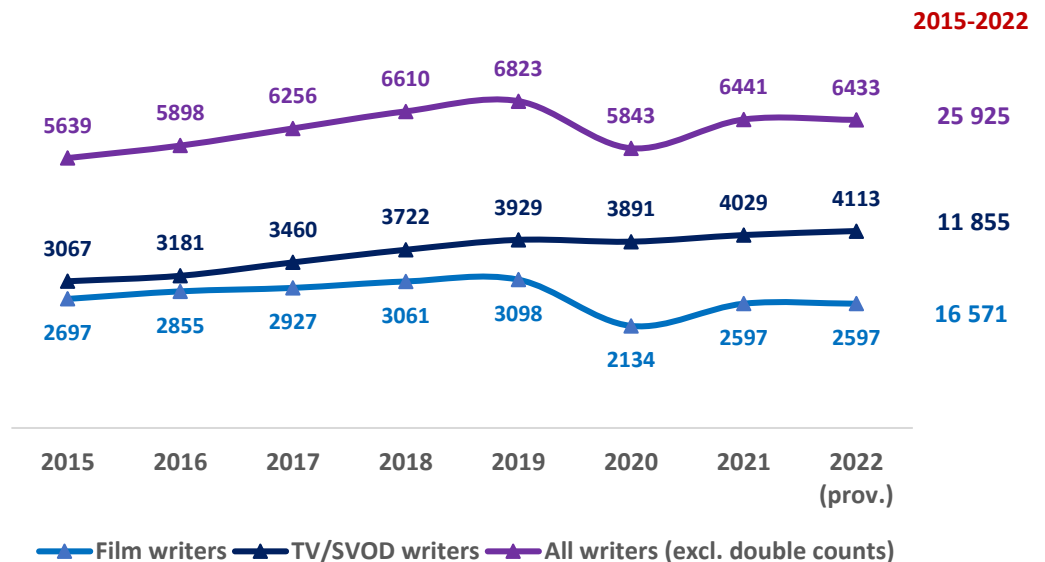
- 5 300 active directors
- 2.2 projects (co)directed, representing 14 episodes or TV films*
- 2.1 directors per project

* Excluding seasons with more than 52 episodes.

Writers of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction

- Close to 26 000 writers (co)wrote at least one theatrical film or one TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2022.
- The COVID-19 crisis impacted significantly more film writers than TV/SVOD fiction writers.

Active theatrical film and TV/SVOD writers (2015-2022)

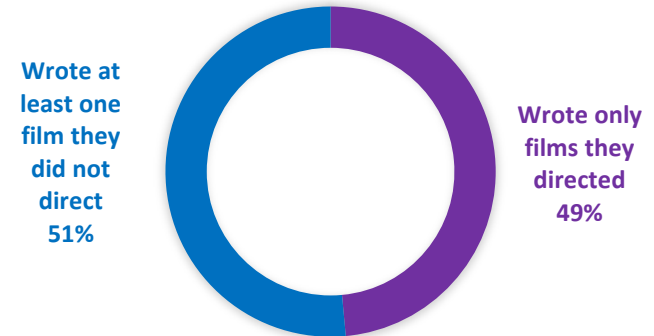


Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2022

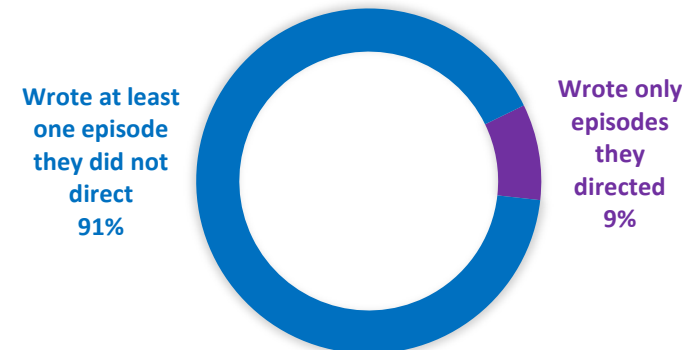
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- About half of theatrical film writers active between 2015 and 2022 only (co)wrote films they also (co)directed.
- Conversely, active TV/SVOD fiction writers mainly write works they do not direct.

Active theatrical film writers (2015-2022)



Active TV/SVOD fiction writers (2015-2022)



Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2022

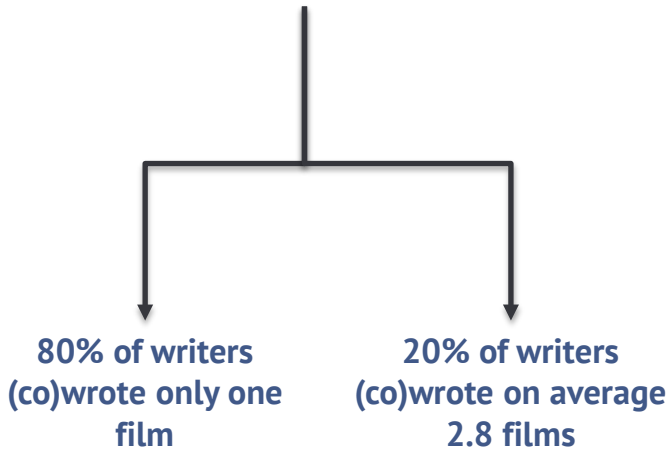
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

Active writers: How many films or TV/SVOD fiction written?

- 78% of theatrical films writers active between 2015 and 2022 only wrote one film.
- Active TV/SVOD fiction writers took part in close to 2 projects representing about 3 TV seasons.

Activity of theatrical film writers (2015-2022)

On average 1.4 films (co)written between 2015 and 2022



Activity of TV/SVOD fiction writers (2015-2022)

All TV/SVOD fiction

On average involved in 1.8 TV/SVOD film or series between 2015 and 2022



Representing 3.0 TV/SVOD films or TV seasons



Representing 38.1 TV/SVOD films or episodes

Excl. seasons with more than 52 episodes

On average involved in 1.7 TV/SVOD films or series between 2015 and 2022



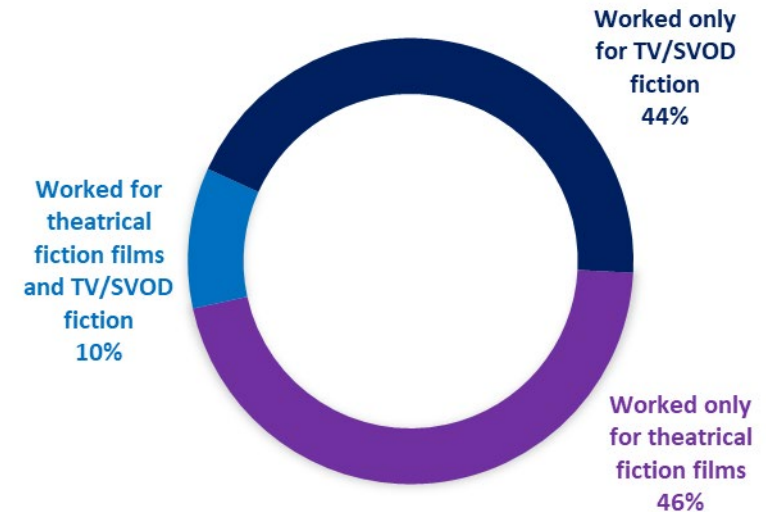
Representing 3.0 TV/SVOD films or TV seasons



Representing 14.2 TV/SVOD films or episodes

- Most writers are active either only in theatrical films, or only in TV/SVOD fiction: only 10% of writers active between 2015 and 2022 worked for film and TV/SVOD fiction.

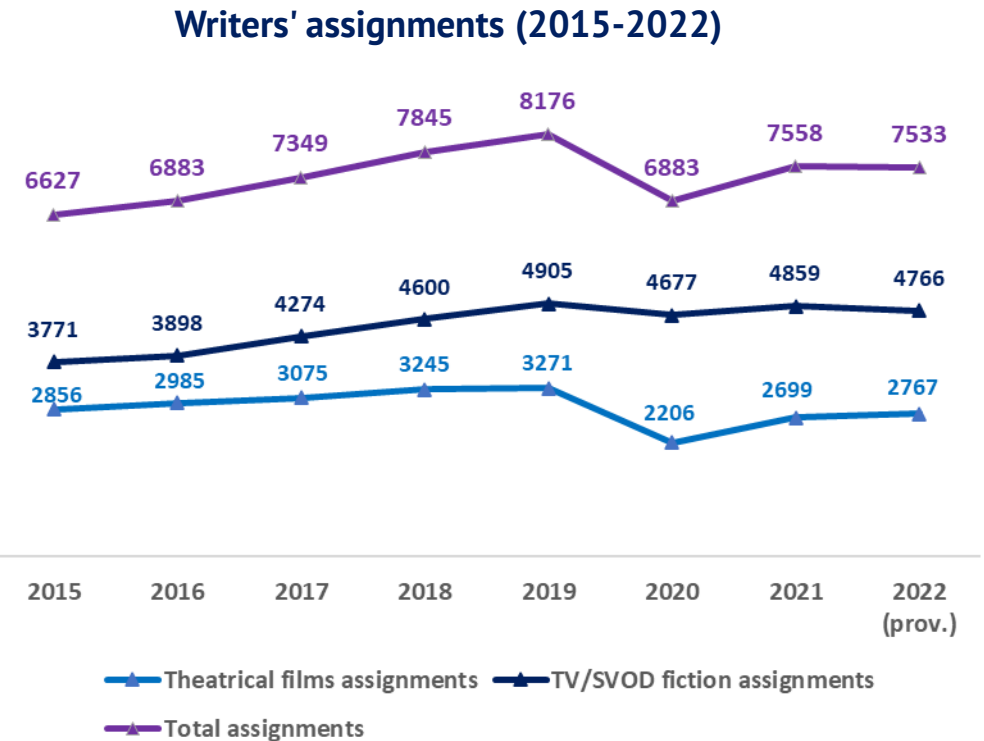
Active theatrical film fiction and TV/SVOD fiction writers (2015-2022)



Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2022

Theatrical films: includes only fiction feature films

- Two-thirds of writing assignments originate from TV/SVOD fiction.
- The number of assignments rebounded after the COVID-19 crisis, but without reaching yet the pre-crisis levels.

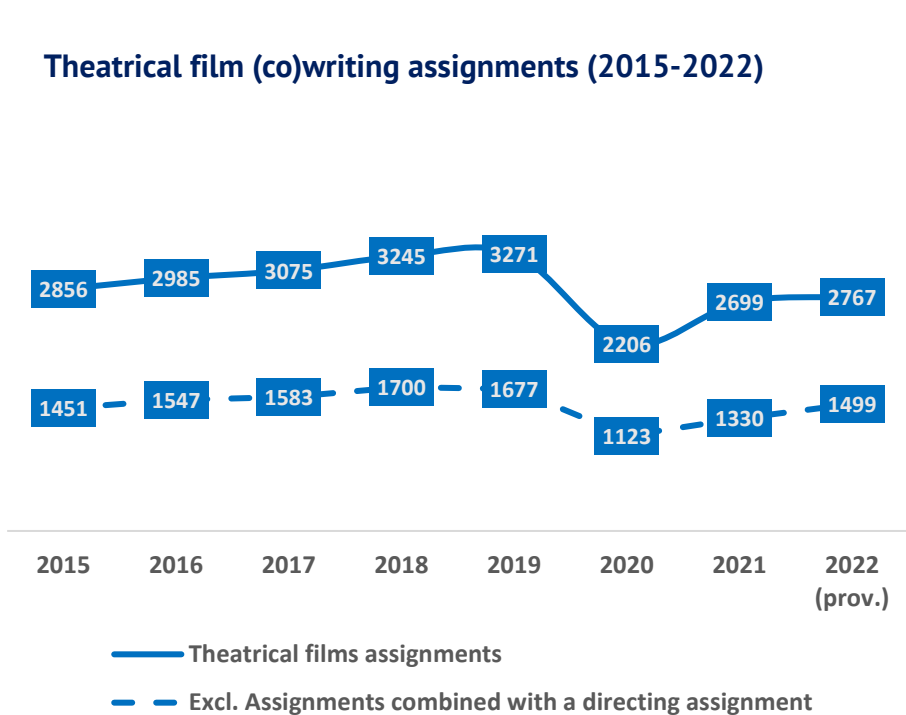


Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV film or a TV season

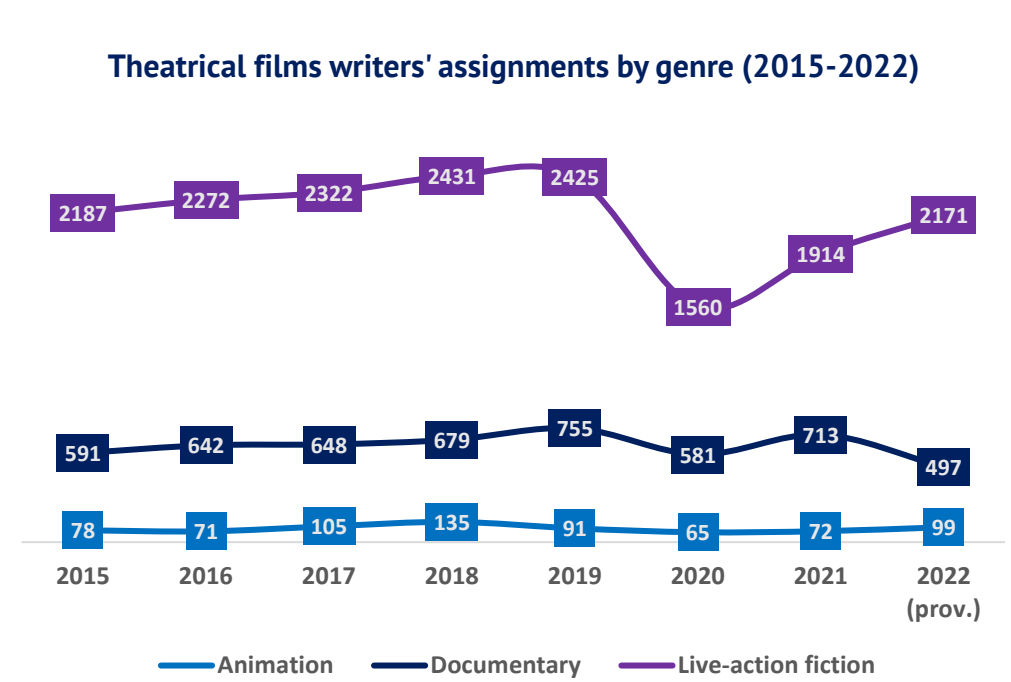
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- About 48% of writing assignments were combined with a directing assignment for the same film.
- Most of theatrical film writing assignments correspond to fiction films.

Theatrical film (co)writing assignments (2015-2022)



Theatrical films writers' assignments by genre (2015-2022)

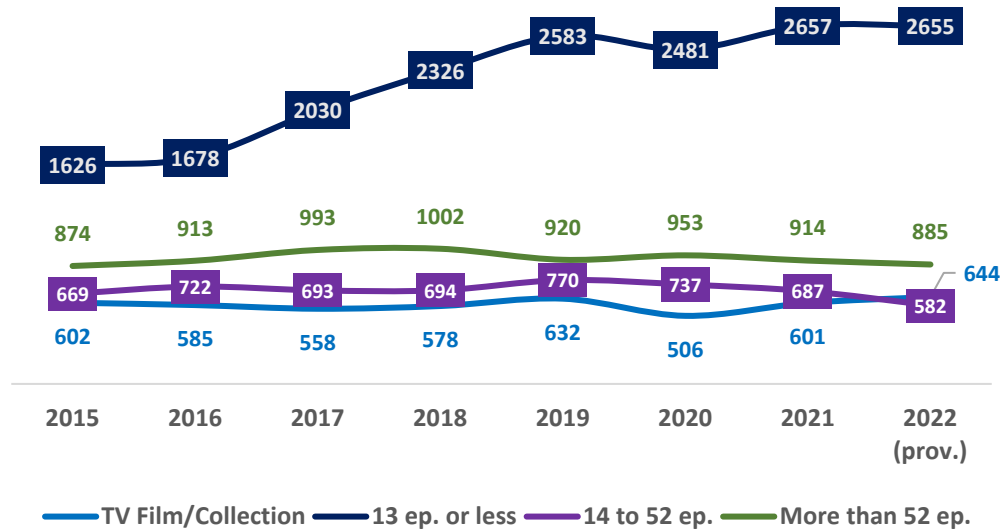


Assignment: writing credit for a theatrical film

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- Most of TV/SVOD fiction writing assignments correspond to TV series seasons with 13 episodes or less.

TV/SVOD writers' assignments by format (2015-2022)

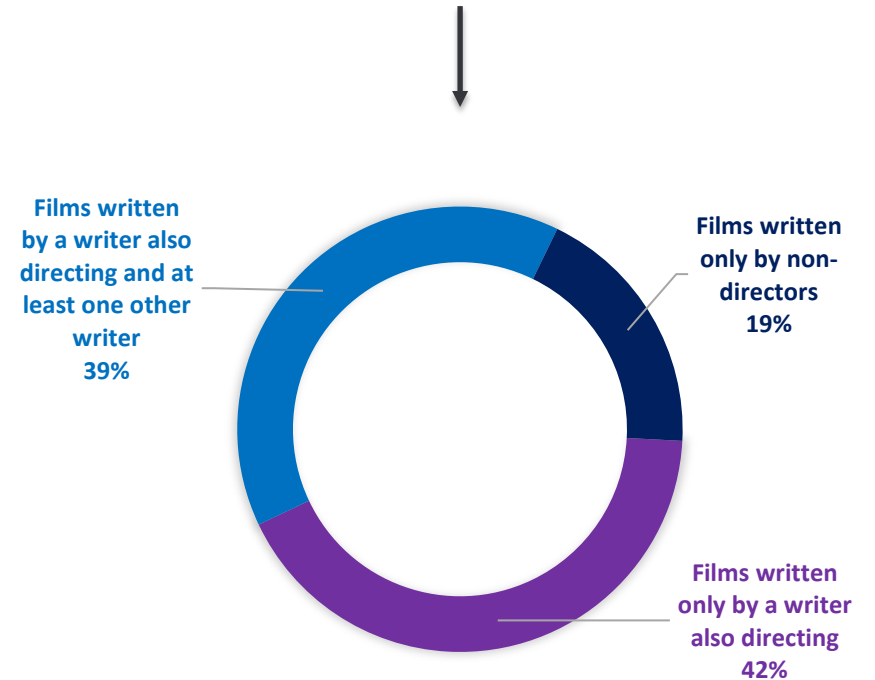


Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV film or a TV season

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

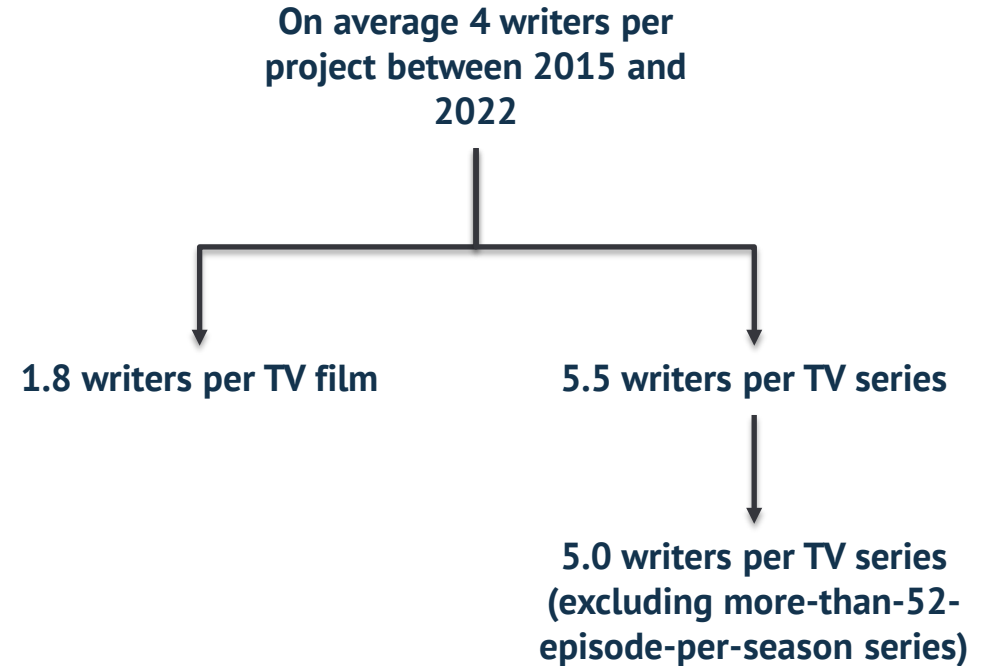
- On average, there were 1.8 writers per film between 2015 and 2022.
- The writing team of 81% of films included a director-writer.
- The writing team of 61% of films included at least one non-directing writer.

On average 1.8 writers per film
between 2015 and 2022



Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- On average, there were 4 writers per TV/SVOD fiction project between 2015 and 2022.
- The figure was only 1.8 for TV films, in other words, similar to theatrical films but with many fewer cases of writers also operating as director.
- 5.5 writers participated in the writing of a TV series.



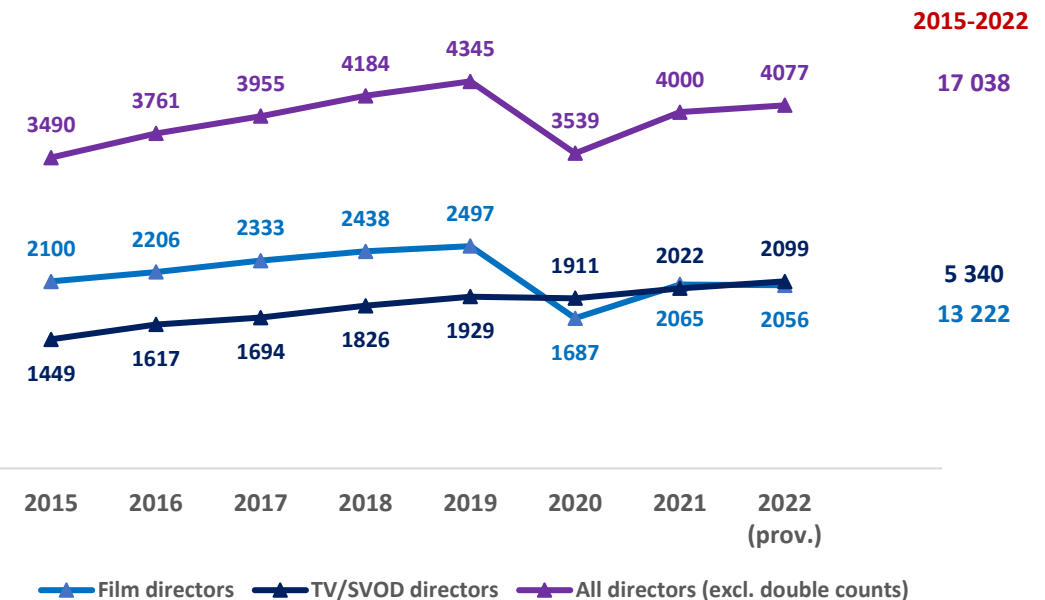
Project: a TV film or TV series

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

Directors of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction

- About 17 000 directors (co)directed at least one theatrical film or a one TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2022.
- The number of active TV/SVOD fiction directors has caught-up with the number of active theatrical film directors.
- But the total number of active TV/SVOD directors between 2015 and 2022 remains significantly lower, as TV/SVOD directors work far more often than theatrical film directors.

Active theatrical film and TV/SVOD directors (2015-2022)

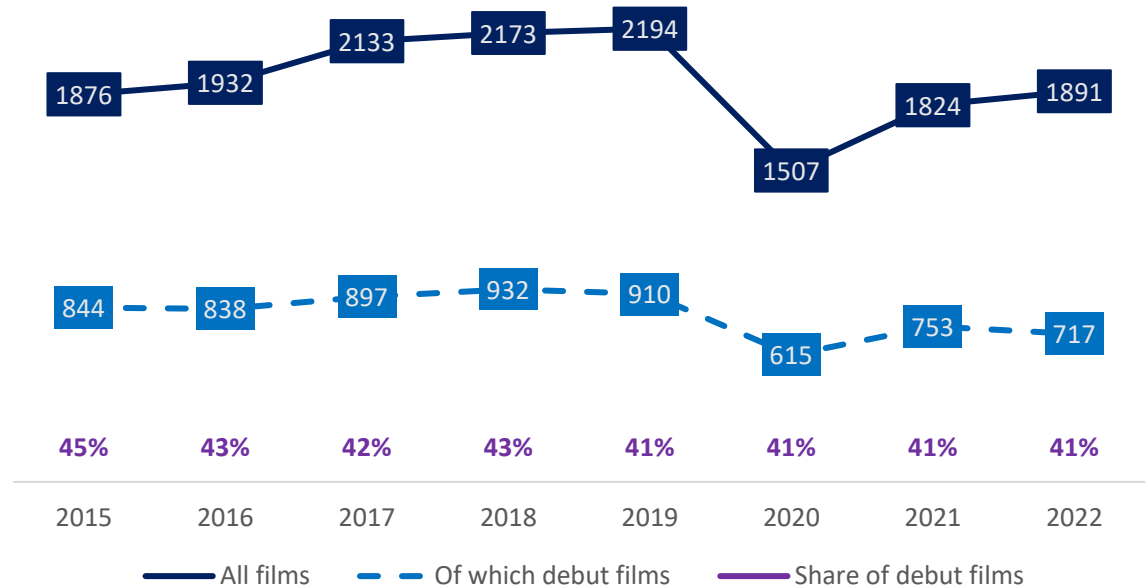


Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2022

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- 41% of European films produced each year are debut films for at least one of the directors.
- This significant renewal partly explains the relatively low level of activity of directors.

Theatrical films: share of debut films (2015-2022)



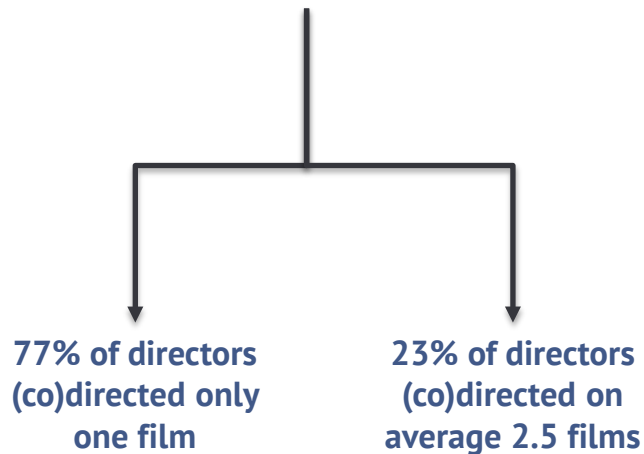
Debut film: first film of at least one of the directors

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- 78% of theatrical films writers active between 2015 and 2022 only wrote one film.
- Active TV/SVOD fiction writers took part in close to 2 projects representing about 3 TV seasons.

Activity of theatrical film directors (2015-2022)

On average 1.4 films (co)directed between 2015 and 2022



Activity of TV/SVOD fiction directors (2015-2022)

All TV/SVOD fiction

On average involved in 2.3 TV/SVOD film or series between 2015 and 2022



Representing 3.4 TV/SVOD films or TV seasons



Representing 38.7 TV/SVOD films or episodes

Excl. seasons with more than 52 episodes

On average involved in 2.2 TV/SVOD films or series between 2015 and 2022



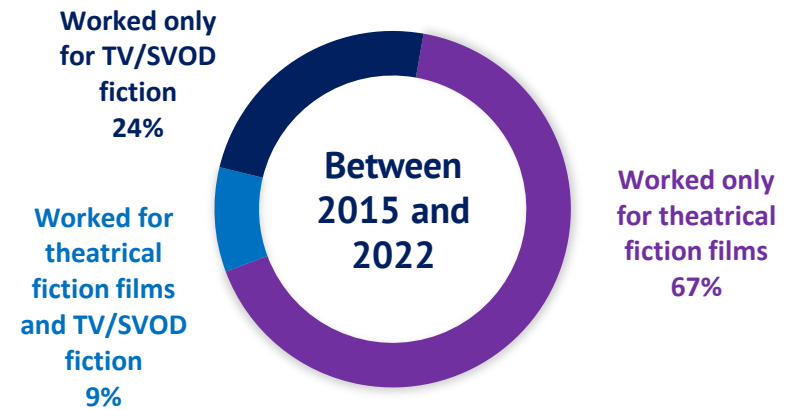
Representing 3.0 TV/SVOD films or TV seasons



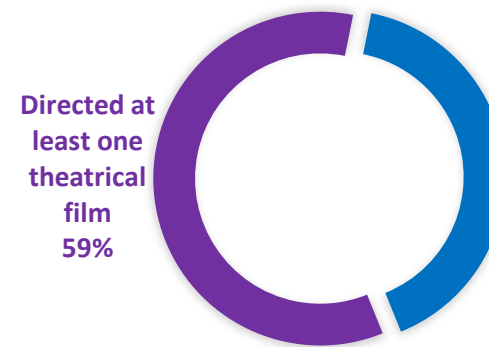
Representing 14.0 TV/SVOD films or episodes

Active theatrical film fiction and TV/SVOD fiction directors (2015-2022)

- Between 2015 and 2022, most directors were active either only in theatrical films, or only in TV/SVOD fiction: only 9% of directors active between 2015 and 2022 worked for film and TV/SVOD fiction.
- However, most of TV/SVOD fiction directors have a background of directing theatrical films.



Share of active 2015-2022 TV/SVOD fiction directors having also directed theatrical films

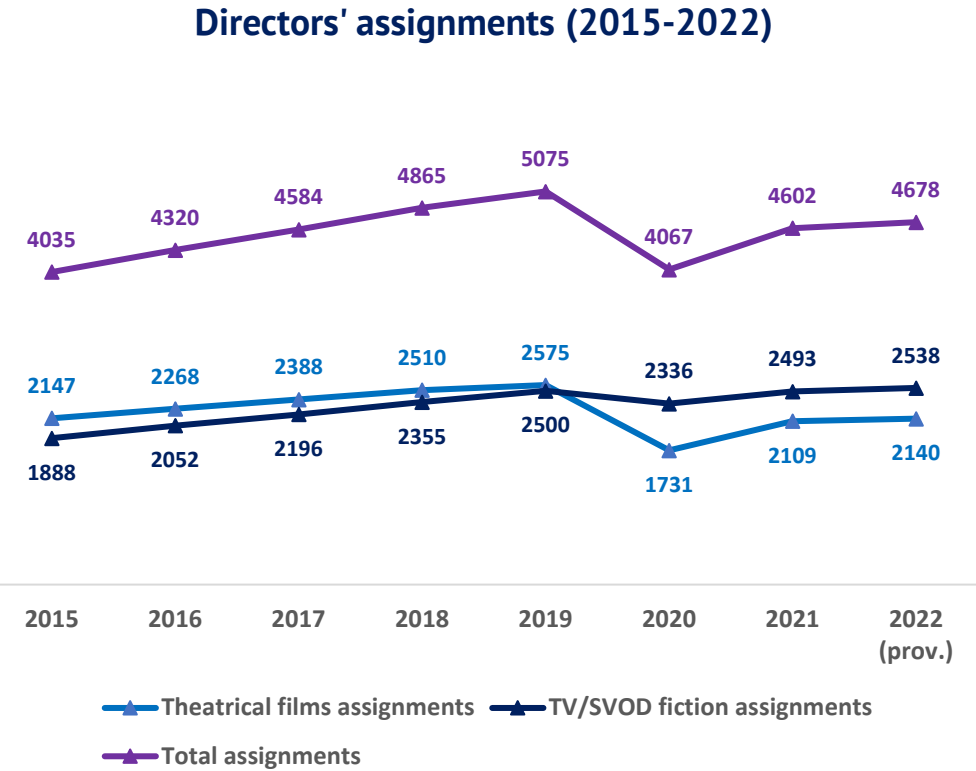


Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2022

Theatrical films: includes only fiction feature films

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- Since the COVID-19 crisis, the majority of directing assignments originate from TV/SVOD fiction.

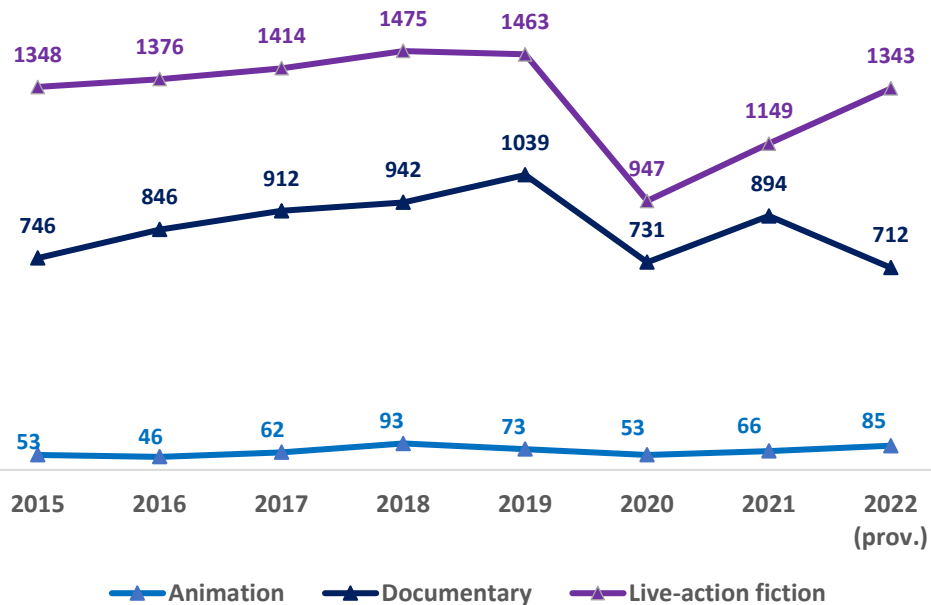


Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV film or a TV season

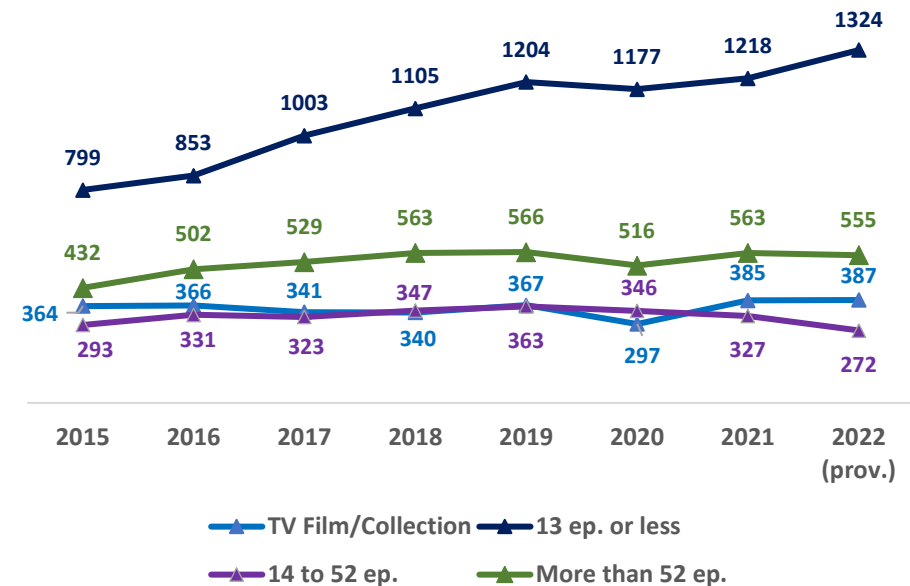
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- Most of theatrical film writing assignments correspond to fiction films.
- Most of TV/SVOD fiction writing assignments correspond to TV series seasons with 13 episodes or less.

Theatrical film (co)directing assignments by genre (2015-2022)



TV/SVOD directing assignments by format (2015-2022)



Assignment: directing credit for a theatrical film, a TV/SVOD film or season

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- On average, there were 1.2 directors per film between 2015 and 2022.
- A small minority of films are co-directed.
- Animation films are more often co-directed.

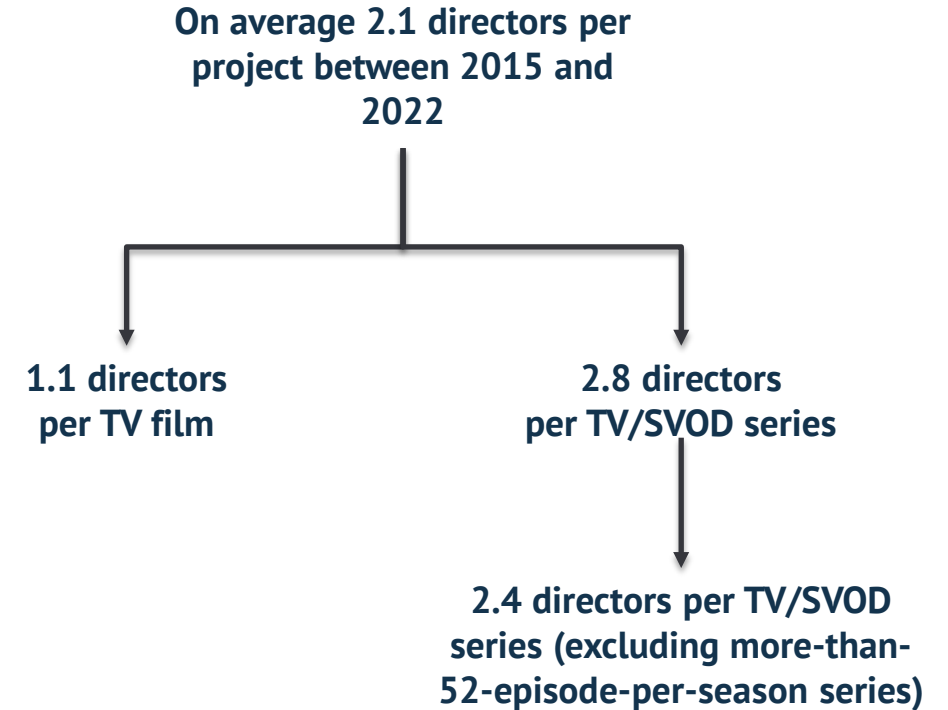
On average 1.2 directors per film between 2015 and 2022



13% of films were directed by at least 2 directors between 2015 and 2022

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- On average, there were 2.1 writers per TV/SVOD fiction project between 2015 and 2022.
- The figure was only 1.1 for TV films, in other words, similar to theatrical films.
- 2.8 writers participated in the directing of a TV series.



Project: a TV film or TV series

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

More information:
www.obs.coe.int
gilles.fontaine@coe.int

