Women in the audiovisual industry. The case of Spain as the new hub of European production

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Abstract: The new public plans and the economic injection from international production companies have converted Spain into an important center of audiovisual creation. Taking advantage of this new scenario, an analysis is made which focuses on the current situation of this industry with respect to gender. Most of the research studies that associate gender and audiovisual production focus on the representation of women in plots and characters, but not their professional work in this sector. The present study seeks to address this matter with a triple methodology: first, a descriptive study is presented to contextualize the object of study; then, the European and Spanish sectoral studies are compared, and a catalogue of profiles is extracted which will be utilized in the third phase, which is based on the focus group technique. Twelve professionals participated in the third phase, representing the following categories: director, screenwriter, producer, composer, actress, cinematographer, sound engineer, editor, make-up artist-hairdresser, special effects, art director, and wardrobe. We observed that the gender gap is still present; most of the professions are still male-oriented, and only wardrobe, make-up, and hairdressing escape from this discrimination. The least female representation was detected in music composition, cinematography, sound, and direction. Also,

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Mercedes Herrero-De-la-Fuente and the other two authors are developing several lines of research related to innovations in Spanish audiovisual production and new professional profiles in the field of communication. They have recently published the book La nueva edad de oro de las series de ficción en España: Mercado, narrativas y públicos (The New Golden Age of Fiction Series in Spain: Market, Storytelling and Audiences), which traces the transformation of serialised fiction in our country from a multidimensional perspective: as a booming business, an artistic creation that has developed new storytelling and formats, and a cultural product with a great impact on public opinion. Rocio Gago and Marta Saavedra have coordinated this publication and both they and Mercedes Herrero have participated in the writing of same chapters. This paper is a further step in the study of the audiovisual industry in our country and in the progressive elaboration of an X-ray, that reveals the different aspects (economic, professional, social, artistic) involved in this sector.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Our paper shows the participation of women in the Spanish audiovisual industry, pointing out their weaknesses and strengths. It helps to make women’s contribution visible in different essential areas (production, screenwriting, directing, among others), where it is sometimes diluted by being part of teams led by men. It also serves to point out those professions that are still masculinised (especially cinematography, sound, musical composition), where it is necessary for women to begin to have a point of reference. Our work aims to raise awareness of the lack of parity in the Spanish audiovisual sector. At the same time, it attempts to highlight the progress made in recent years, in which the increase and internationalisation of Spanish creations have provided new opportunities for our professionals.
a vertical segregation was observed which removes women from decision making processes. The female experts demand opportunities and gender education, to promote the inclusion of women into the audiovisual sphere. The privileged situation that Spain is experiencing favors the women’s incorporation into new projects, and therefore this country could become an example of change.

**Subjects:** Gender Studies - Soc Sci; Filmmaking and Postproduction; Media Communication; Visual Art

**Keywords:** Woman; gender; gender divide; Spanish audiovisual industry; Spain audiovisual hub

1. Introduction

In the last edition of the Goya Awards (Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas de España), the composer Zelía Montes emotionally declared: “The history of music has never been very grateful to female composers. They have not had the opportunity”, when collecting her prize for best original score 1 (Europa Press, 2022).

This recognition was one of the nine (out of twenty-eight) obtained by female professionals in this cinematographic event, who also won the New Director, Editing, Special Effects, and Animated Film awards (Álvarez, 2022). The awards to the merits of women seem to be the general trend in the last European awards, as observed in the Berlinale, with five out of six main awards (Belinchón, 2022), or San Sebastián, with ten out of sixteen (Vanity Fair, 2021). Likewise, women have made history in Cannes and Venice, when young female directors won the Palm D’Or, and the Golden Lion, respectively (Martínez, 2021). Lastly, the BAFTA 2022 have also valued the work by Jane Campion in the director category (who was also awarded at the Oscars in the same year), Cindy Tolan for casting, and Sian Heder for the best adapted screenplay.

This is, however, a recent evolution. Women are still a minority in the audiovisual sphere, where stories are usually told by men, who have also occupied the professional positions associated with the making of decisions, which deserve a greater social prestige.

This phenomenon has not been sufficiently explored in the academic world. In the early years of this century, an increase in gender studies has been observed; however, “these types of analyses, in the area of communication, are still not frequent” (Galán, 2007, p. 229). This has also been stated by Simelio and Forga (2014), when specifically referring to television fiction.

Most of the studies on the audiovisual sphere are focused on the representation of women, through content and character analyses. Among the most important authors in the field, we must highlight Laura Mulvey, who, with her well known essay *Visual pleasure in narrative cinema*, addressed the way in which cinema reproduces “the straight, socially-established interpretation of sexual difference, which controls images, erotic ways of looking, and spectacle” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6). Mulvey begins with the discussion of Freud about scopophilia, to explain the pleasure of looking at bodies of other people as an erotic object. Cinematographic works promote the objectification of female characters, and feeds the narcissistic identification with the ideal version of the self, reflected in the male protagonists. Traditional movies present men as active and controlling subjects, and treat women as passive objects of desire. This is what Mulvey denominates “controlling male gaze” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 15), the result of a patriarchal society in which women due to their “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 11)
Despite the importance of this work for the feminist theory in cinema, it is essential to remember the numerous points of view that co-existed in the sixties. It must be underlined the contribution of Claire Johnston, who criticized that the debates on the oppression of women in the films are focused on corroborating the existence of a male one with a dominating character, forgetting a fundamental aspect: the construction of a discourse about women “from the perspective of a woman” (Johnston, 1976, p. 216). Therefore, her proposal is based not on analyzing the female characters (constructed from a patriarchal angle), but to enquire on their function in the cinematographic work, rewriting the discourse (Cook & Johnston, 1988). Haskell (1974) delves into this idea, advocating for the need to show women beyond their relationship with men.

Aside from these early studies, the contributions by Gerbner and Signorielli (1979), Greenberg (1980), and Gunter (1986) on the influence of these audiovisual products on the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, are especially representative. These and other studies describe how the evolution of the role of women has been reflected in our society, and detect numerous examples of gender representations that are loyal to the conventions (Galán, 2007), women without initiative and resigned when dealing with relationship problems (Arranz, 2008), and stories in which the hegemonic masculinity is the focus of the discourse (Arranz, 2010).

In the second decade of the present century, some of these aspects have been mitigated, with the introduction of female characters with professional responsibilities and independence for taking on projects that are not subordinate to the interests of others (Fernández-Viguera et al., 2012). However, women are still associated to the area of care and services, and when they are given high responsibility roles, they take on attributes associated to masculinity, or are presented as someone who compensates her lack of satisfaction in her personal life with work (Lacalle & Gómez, 2016).

In this sense, it is necessary to delve into these aspects and to work on the disappearance of the current gender disequilibrium among the different audiovisual professions in Europe, with respect to feature films, and audiovisual fiction series. Some of the most important initiatives come from the British Film Institute, which implemented measures in 2017, committing itself with specific objectives towards gender equality and diversity in key roles in film production, with the support from the Film Fund. Cobbs and Williams (2020) point out that before this decision, the audiovisual world had already requested funding, especially for women directors, once again bringing to light the gender inequality in the British industry.

Cobb and Horeck (2018) indicate that until now, government subsidies, the increase in the number of women in top positions, and the most inclusive corporation policies, are still limited by a post-feminist sensibility that “it’s not disruptive”, but instead focuses on “capitalism, neoliberalism, and patriarchy-friendly” (Gill, 2017, p. 618).

Our objectives are to explore the presence of women as professionals in the audiovisual industry, and cover three lines of research:

- The first is the impact of the female contribution on the final product, especially in the worldview offered by audiovisual works, and that become a focal point for understanding reality. Films and series are socializing agents, as they present models that are imitated, and promote specific stereotypes and behaviors (Harris, 2006; Galán, 2007; Belmonte & Guillamón, 2007; Fernández-Viguera et al., 2012; Simelio & Forga, 2014). Audiovisual productions have historically shown a male point of view, which implies “a distortion, a partiality, and a mental and moral impoverishment of our culture” (Arranz, 2008, p. 120). Pardo points out the need to include more women in positions of greater responsibility to visualize “the historical process of change of their gender and their own values that are not ascribed to the androcentric universe” (Pardo, 2010, p. 431).
• The second is to evaluate the road to parity in the case of Spain, with equality understood as an essential factor for the development of a democratic society (Andreu, 2021; Arranz, 2008).
• The third will try to elucidate the repercussion of Spain becoming a hub of European production on the women’s work sphere, after the establishment of the Netflix production center in 2019 in this continent, and the approval of an economic support plan for the audiovisual sector, with the support from the European Union (EU), in 2021.

2. Methods
The general objective of the study is to examine the presence of women in the Spanish audiovisual industry, and to analyze the evolution of their participation in different professional areas.

The case of Spain, as pointed out, has special relevance, as the audiovisual sector is currently experiencing a change in consumption habits and the dissolution of the frontiers of production and diffusion of contents, due to the appearance of new business models, a type of rebirth. In fact, the Spanish audiovisual market has become a sector of interest in the political agenda until 2025, and the intention is to convert the country into the main European hub.

This decision includes specific objectives, such as the promotion of audiovisual production, the attraction of investments, the strengthening of businesses in this sector, and most importantly, the support of talent to reduce the gender gap. The project envisions a public investment of 1.603 billion Euros for the 2021–2025 period, and intends to improve production by 30% (Gobierno de España, 2021).

This interest for Spain becoming a center of production is backed by economic data that must be considered. The Entertainment and Media Outlook 2020–2024 report (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2020) indicates that in the next five years, the growth of the audiovisual sector is expected to be 2.8% worldwide, but this is increased to 3.3% in the case of Spain. On the one hand, the linguistic-cultural proximity creates regional spaces of circulation of audiovisual products beyond the borders of the place they were created (Straubhaar, 2021). And here, the Spanish language is again fundamental for this country to become a nucleus of production for the Spanish-speaking markets. The large international production companies see economic opportunities in Spain, as costs are reduced with respect to dubbing, subtitling, and/or adaptation that are usually associated to the import of foreign-language productions (Álvarez-Mella & García-Delgado, 2022).

The present work is divided into three research phases. The first consists on a descriptive study based on primary and secondary sources that will help us to create a conceptual framework that contextualizes our object of study. The second phase will compare the sectoral audiovisual studies at the European and Spanish levels to find the similarities and differences of the markets with respect to the penetration of women in the industry. The third phase is based on the focus group methodology, and brings together the testimony of currently active women who are professionals in the audiovisual industry.

The focus group technique is a very valuable tool in social sciences studies, as it provides feedback on various subjects, and in particular, helps to discover and collect desires and needs, as stated by Kotler et al. (2001). Thus, we believe that it is very valuable in this study, as we can discover the feelings and aspirations of professionals within an industry that is rapidly changing. Also, as Gavin (2008) explains, this qualitative tool offers a greater amount of information as compared to quantitative techniques, as the interviewees not only have to deal with close-ended questions, but their interactions can create new connections. On her part, Edmunds (1999) states that a great advantage of the focus group is that it allows us to discover the meanings attributed by different people to specific subjects, ideas, or concepts.
Valles (2002) reminds us of the importance of a good selection of participants, considering a series of variables that justify their selection. In this way, in the present study, starting with the last report from the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO), six professional categories within the industry were established: director, screenwriter, producer, music composer, actress, and cinematographer. After a documentary review, the latest reports from the Association of Women cinematographers and Audiovisual Media (Asociación de Mujeres Cineastas y de Medios Audiovisuales, CIMA) were selected at the national level, as they contained more complete and current data, which included other categories such as sound engineer, editor, make-up and hairdresser, visual effects (VFX), art direction, and wardrobe. Twelve professional categories were created, which defined the first selection variable for the selection of the focus group participants, with the first objective being that every type of profession in the industry be represented.

Also, two concurrent variables are established:

- The participants must be women to be able to provide their testimony in first person, about the women’s participation in these industry positions.
- The interviewees must have a work experience of longer than five years to be able to describe the possible change in the national market after the stimulus plans.

We must also be add that the qualitative sample did not seek statistical representation, but a structural one instead, as the objective of the study was to understand the social sense and the relationships with the phenomenon studied, not the extrapolation of the data to the sample universe, as in the case of a quantitative sample (Rubio & Perlado, 2015).

The focus groups were organized in a structured manner, following a close-ended questionnaire created by the researchers based on the previous bibliographic review. The questions were organized based on five thematic axes, which will later help in the organization of the results:

- Women’s participation in the audiovisual industry: awareness, evolution, recognition, and professional trajectory.
- Difficulties in the incorporation of women in the industry and keys of the female talent.
- Differences in the incorporation of women according to formats, genders, and professional categories.
- New audiovisual legislation and feelings on the creation of professional quotas.
- National stimulus plans. Assessment of the Spanish market and its stage of consolidation.

Next, we present the experts who participated in the focus group. Next, we present the experts who participated in the focus group (Figure 1). Each of them was assigned an identification code to ease the transcription of the results.

3. Discussion and results

3.1. Women in the Spanish audiovisual industry and comparison with the European framework

Data on the women’s integration into the different professional categories related with audiovisual production in Spain are not abundant or complete. These are limited to collecting data on the panorama of this sector from the early years of the present century. The different studies not always coincide, although in every case and in general terms, we can come to the same conclusion: women are a minority, especially in the positions of greater responsibility and higher pay, with the professions that demand leadership, creativity, or digital and technological competences being completely masculinized.
| Professional category | Participant          | Description of professional profile                                                                 | Code |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Actress                | Arantxa de Juan      | Actress with extensive professional experience. She has participated in different series with fixed characters, such as A las 11 en casa, Amar en tiempos revueltos, or Señor alcalde. She has collaborated in international productions, such as Comisario Rex, Embassy, Paul Merton in Spain and Todos cambiamos, for which she received the award for best actress at the 2019 Los Angeles Film Awards. | E1   |
| Music composer         | Carmen Vela          | Composer and jazz flutist. She has created the soundtrack for audiovisual productions such as Las que faltaban. Composer and arranger of Quartetazo. Founder of the musical group Los Jazzintos. Creator and presenter of Las Noches Bárbaras, a program from Radio Círculo. | E2   |
| Director               | Juana Macías         | In 1999, she won the Goya Award for best fiction short film for Siete cafés por semana and in 2010, she was nominated as best new director for Planes para mañana. Her feature films Embarazados, Bajo el mismo techo or Fuimos canciones are stand out, as well as the television series Madres. Amor y vida. Presently, she is the vice-president of CIMA. | E3   |
| Art director           | Lorena Palomino      | Art director and photographic stylist for commercial and artistic projects. Among the first, those made for the companies Leroy Merlin, Carrefour, Ikea and La vieja fábrica stand out. Among the second, she has worked with numerous audiovisual production companies in the creation of advertising and fiction content. | E4   |
| Cinematographer        | Irene García         | Cinematographer and camera operator. Her filmography covers the world of fiction, advertising, documentaries or video clips. Her work has been recognized with nominations at the Festival de Málaga (2021), the Fila de Valladolid (2021), the Out Shine Film Festival (2019), or el Miami Fashion Film Fest (2018). | E5   |
| Costume designer       | Paola de Diego       | Responsible for set and costume design in theatrical and audiovisual productions. She has worked for the main Spanish dramatic centers, such as the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico, the Teatro María Guerrero, or the Teatro Español, among others. | E6   |
**Figure 1. Continued.**

| Role                        | Name                  | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Special effect              | Victoria Mora         | Videographer and director, she has worked in production companies such as Zeta Audiovisual and Baynet. She is an expert in animation, 3D and interactive environments. She is an instructor of Avid and After Effects systems. |
| Scriptwriter                | Diana Rojo            | Scriptwriter for different production companies such as Diagonal TV and Globomedia. Co-scriptwriter in the series *Amar es para siempre* and *El Ministerio del Tiempo*. She has written the feature film *L de Loli*, and has been a scriptwriter in the program *Los Viernes al Show*. Creator of the feature documentary film *Disney a través del espejo*, filmed between Spain and the United States. |
| Make-up and hairdressing   | Vanessa Martínez      | Responsible for makeup and hairdressing in television programs for Spanish networks TVE, Cuatro and La Sexta. She has also worked on fiction series such as *El internado*, *Aída* and *Los hombres de Paco*. She has experience in fields such as audiovisual events, advertising and video clips. |
| Editor                      | María Lara            | She has been working as an editor since 1994, on different film, television and advertising projects. She has been an editor for the feature films *La Tribu*, *Isla Bonita*, *La Banda Picasso*, and *El Próximo Oriente*, by Fernando Colomo; *Manzanas, pollos y quimeras*, by Inés Paris; *Sud Express*, by Chema de la Peña; *Cuidate de mí*, by Javier de la Torre or *Chueca: buscando una identidad*, by Juana Macías. |
| Producer                    | Aurora Martínez       | Production Manager for the main production companies in Spain such as Globomedia, Diagonal or Boca Boca. She is a member of the TV Academy. Her work in prime time television series such as *Vis a Vis*, *La que se asechina*, *Isabel*, *El Internado* or *Los Serrano* stand out. Founder of Sowing Media, an agency for the representation of audiovisual projects. |
| Sound engineer              | Eva Valiño            | Considered one of the first female sound designers in Spain, she has received numerous awards such as the 2004 Goya Award for best sound for *Te doy mis ojos*, by Icíar Bollaín, along with other nominations for *Canibal* in 2014 or *Yuli* in 2019. Other awards: award for best sound at the Festival de Cine Mediterráneo of Larissa, for *El equipaje abierto*, award for best sound at the Certamen Nacional de Cortometrajes at Medina del Campo, for *En camas separadas*. |
Among the pioneering studies in this field, we find those by Arranz (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013), which have served as the foundation for posterior investigations. In these, we find evidence of the scarce representation of women in key positions in audiovisual productions, and the resistance with which the positive action measures that intend to mitigate female discrimination, are received, in a context dominated by men. To briefly illustrate the situation described in these first studies, between the year 2000 and 2006, only 10.4% of the Spanish films were directed by women (2008). At that time, men occupied the largest number of director (84.9%), artistic (85.3%), and technical (80.1%) positions, while a clear feminization was observed in positions such as hairdresser, make-up, and wardrobe, with their representation exceeding 80%.

Guarinos (2008) makes a better assessment, and while the author acknowledges the association of women in positions such as script, wardrobe, or make-up, in the cinematographic industry, she insists on the advances made from the end of the 20th Century, especially in screenwriting and director positions. Núñez (2010) is less optimistic, and her research on female directors in Spain indicates that in 2006, only six films, from 140, were directed by women, with this figure increasing to nine in 2007.

When also referring to films and women directors, Martínez-Collado and Navarrete sustain that: “The boom came in the 90s, with more than thirty (directors), although it only meant 5% of the total number of directors that emerged in that period” (Martínez-Collado & Navarrete, 2011, p. 11). They also add: “(…) after 1997, the presence of women decreased. The consequences are nefarious: there were less women behind the camera, less female lead roles, less worry for the life of women” (Martínez-Collado & Navarrete, 2011, p. 11).

A great number of the works in the last twenty years pay close attention to female directors. To the samples above, we can add the works by Cami-Vela (2005a, 2005b, 2014), Núñez (2010), Caballero (2011), Rodríguez-Fernández and Viñuela (2011), and Núñez et al. (2012). This is why some researchers point to the need to broaden the focus to other essential categories; thus:

(...), limiting ourselves to the figure of director offers an incomplete view of the roles played by women in the contemporary audiovisual sphere, and this especially perpetuates an androcentric view that ignores the intense work performed by professional women in the areas of production and screenwriting (Cascajosa & Martínez, 2016, pp. 26-27).

For these authors, the presence of women has increased in the last two decades, especially as screenwriters for television. This affirmation comes from a study conducted in 2012 by the Fundación Autor-Sociedad General de Autores (General Society of Authors), ALMA-Sindicato de Guionistas (Screenwriters Guild), and Foro de Asociaciones de Guionistas Audiovisuales (Audiovisual Writers Partnership Forum), which found that from a total sample of 2,302 screenwriters, 24% were women, an increase of almost three points from the previous report from 2003. These professionals were younger than their male counterparts, and had taken a greater number of specific university studies (Cascajosa & Martínez, 2016, p. 28).

The work by Simelio and Forga (2014), referring to the Spanish series broadcasted in prime time in the 2013–2014 season, revealed that women constituted, at that time, 31.21% of the professionals found in the Spanish television industry, with this percentage reduced to 12.79% in the technical jobs, and 28.30% in the positions of greater responsibility.

Cuenc (2021), in the CIMA (2020) report, related to the area of fiction, documentary, and animation feature films, found figures of 33% of women and 67% of men, starting with a sample of 2,277 professionals. The position that was highly feminized was costume design (88%), followed by make-up and hairdressing (74%). In both work areas, we identified common characteristics from a gender perspective, as both were connected to the areas of aesthetics, which have been traditionally associated to the role of women.
With the lowest numbers of female representation, we find (Figure 2): musical composition (11%), cinematography (15%), sound (19%), and direction (19%). Other masculinized positions were: executive production (32% women), editing (2%), screenwriting (26%), and special effects (26%). All of these professions share aspects such as digitalization, creativity, and leadership, historically linked with the male stereotype, as pointed out by Cuenca (2021). The professions in which an equal presence of women were production director (59%), and art direction (55%).

To observe the distribution of women in a hierarchal order, we created a pyramid (Figure 3) with four different levels: at the base, we find the group associated with aesthetics; the second level from the bottom contains the organizational jobs; the third with the more creative professions, and lastly, the top with the management positions.

As we move up the hierarchy, the presence of women decreases. Therefore, a vertical segregation is produced, as the positions in which women are more common, are those lower in the pyramid. This disequilibrium is also due to horizontal segregation, through which the values that are socially assigned to a gender are transferred to the work environment, with the professions related with aesthetics or the organization of resources considered “feminine”. It is important to point out that the digital divide is more relevant in the gap created by the ranking of power, as there is a smaller percentage of women in the technical group (23%), than in the management one (28%). Another interesting finding provided by the report is that the work directed by women had a cost of production that was 51% lower than those led by men.
The second CIMA report (CIMA, 2020), centered on fiction series, offers results that are not very encouraging, with respect to the inclusion of women in this area. The presence of women is practically half that of men, 33% versus 67%.

This second CIMA report coincides with the previous study, with respect to the more feminized and masculinized professions. Among the first, we once again found make-up/hairdressing (81.7%), and wardrobe (81.2%). The second were once again cinematography, where we only found one woman, and musical composition (3.3%). The data on the creative jobs were low, as only three directors (6%) were found in the group of series analyzed, although they were part of the same team. Therefore, only one of the works was led by women. Male directors were 78%, while 16% of the professionals worked in mixed management teams.

This mixed model, in which both genders share functions, predominated among the main screenwriters (creators of an idea), rising to 43.5%. In this category, only 2.5% of women, and 53.8% of men, did not work together in mixed screenwriter teams. The same trend characterizes the production team, where it was interesting to find the scarce percentage of executive producers (2.7%).

The methodological guidelines adopted in this report, which adds the group formed by men and women to the masculine/feminine component, could explain the results obtained in the present study, which showed a lower participation of women as compared to previous studies (such as those by Cascajosa & Martínez, 2016, or Simeloa & Forga, 2014), with respect to direction, script-idea, and executive production, for the Spanish fiction series.

The presence of women has increased to almost equal levels in the jobs that provide support to the previous categories. Assistant directors, production assistants, and co-screenwriters, represent 42.8% of the total. Also, the art direction and casting direction positions were found very close to 50%. However, editing was very far behind (28.3%). Among the professions in this area with a lower number of women, we underline special effects (15%) and sound (6.5%).

The parameters of the European analyses, according to the EAO report from 2021, are different (Figure 4). This report analyzes the series and movies broadcasted by open television channels and streaming platforms between 215 and 2020. When including actresses, this category was stronger, with women obtaining 45% of the leading roles. Aside from this profession, which was not examined in the Spanish CIMA reports, the areas with the greatest representation were production director (43 USD), and scriptwriter (33%). Again, the categories with the least female representation were music composition (6%), cinematography (7%), and direction (15%).

As for the teams led by women, these were most frequently found in production (36%), and scriptwriting (24%). The latter exerted a role as co-scriptwriters more often than men, generally in
groups in which they were the minority. The collective work was also more common among female directors, but only in 15% of the cases, they led the work of directing. There was barely any women leadership in the collaborations within music composition (5%), and cinematography (7%).

This report examined the data from Spain in relation with the other European community members, with the addition of the United Kingdom. It revealed that the Spain figures for all the categories were slightly below the European mean (five points lower). It did not include any Spanish production whose original score was composed a female composer, a lack that was shared with most of the countries analyzed (except for the United Kingdom, Hungary, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria).

With the situation until 2020 described, it is important to now examine the scenario from 2021 to the present, when the strengthening policies from the Spanish audiovisual industry were implemented at the public -national and European- and private levels, with the establishment of production centers such as Netflix in Spain (Green, 2019). Since its arrival, this international player has launched fifty titles and announced its plans to double its filming infrastructures in 2022 (ABC, 2021a, 2021b). Gago, Molina and De la Rica affirm that according to the ICEX 2020 data, “Spain takes second place in Europe for the greatest number of fiction productions, and is sixth in the world with respect to the volume of exports of audiovisual products” (Gago et al., 2022, p. 39).

The so-called “golden age” (Arriaza & Novarro, 2022; Gago et al., 2022) of the Spanish series, should lead to the promotion of talent, offering new women opportunities that help reduce the gender gap.

3.2. Current situation of women in the Spanish audiovisual industry: evolution, professional categories, legislation, and policies for improvement

Next, we will examine the opinion of professionals through the focus group conducted for the present research study.

3.2.1. Women's participation: awareness, evolution, recognition, and trajectory

In the history of the audiovisual industry in Spain, we do not find many female movie directors, one of the most important and visible positions along with the cast. In spite of this, this minority is composed by great names such as Inés París, Chus Gutiérrez, Patricia Ferreira, Cristina Andreu, Ángeles González Sinde, Icíar Bollain, Isabel Coixet or Josefina Molina, among others. At present, the baton has been passed to cinematographers such as Carla Simón, Clara Roquet, Pilar Palomero or Irene Moray.

When CIMA was created in 2006, 9% of the total number of directors were women. By 2020, this figure increased to 19%, and as the cinematographer Juana Macías (E3) states: “The first objective we proposed ourselves was to see what the reality was, and to make the rest of society see it as well”. Writing a yearly report also helps to present this situation and visualize the problem. “Putting data on the table is how we can become aware”, explains the director.

In this sense, all the participants in our focus groups evinced the need to raise awareness in the general population about the historical discrimination to which this sector is subjected. The actress Arantxa de Juan (E1) emphasizes that measures are being implemented, and names appear such as “for example, Leticia Dolera, who is starting to create a series about women, telling the stories from the (point of view) of women, but much more needs to be done.

Along the same line, we find Vanessa Martinez (E9), make-up artist, who states this issue effectively, although awareness is being raised:
There are positions in teams such as sound or photography, which are exclusively created for men. In my case, in the department of hairdressing and make-up, it is the opposite: it has always been led by women, and now more men are starting to come, more than when I started.

In the opinion of wardrobe designer Paola de Diego (E6), there are certain professions that are monopolized by male profiles, while the worst paid are still in the hands of women:

In professions that are strongly associated with organization and forecasting, such as production, art assistants, characterization, or wardrobe, there is clearly a greater participation of women. These professions tend to be found at the base of the work hierarchy, either due to visibility or responsibility. Job positions with a specific qualification are not valued at the same level as others, despite the importance they have within the teams.

As stated by the editor Maria Lara (E10), in the area of editing, a marked discrimination is not found, “perhaps because there were women from the start”. However, Victoria Mora (E7), a digital special effects professional (extremely dependent on editing and post-production), observes: “In VFX, the OK is given by a man”. Although there are women as aids, using software, the final project is validated by a man, because women are not the bosses: “they say that we are more organized, that we treat the equipment better, but in the end, they receive all the credit”.

Diana Rojo (E8) highlights, as a scriptwriter: “the figures still show that there are less female creators than male creators, and this is, objectively, current data in the television industry”.

In agreement with her, the production director Aurora Martinez (E11), points out that this is more noticeable in the positions “that are higher, with more responsibility, management”.

There is a gap, and especially a ceiling at the level of salary. Executive positions are currently occupied by Arantxa Écija, Sonia Martínez, Montse García, etc., and others who have created their own companies, such as Geraldine Gonard, organizing important events such as Conecta Fiction, or Laura Fernandez Espeso, general manager of The Mediapro studio, but it is not representative percent wise.

But, according to E6, the evolution is positive in the last few years, given that “the little participation in the positions with the power to make decisions in the audiovisual industry are increasingly visualized, and awareness has been raised”. The wardrobe designer also declares that creating visibility and awareness is the first step towards increasing the presence of women.

The awareness raised and the work done, thanks to public help and help from the sector itself, have allowed society to echo the reality of the audiovisual area, evincing the gender gap and the lack of knowledge of the professionals within the industry itself. The photography director Irene García (E5) states that due to a meeting organized by CIMA in 2017, she had the opportunity to meet colleagues with the same position that until then she did not know: “the lack of knowledge is so great among us that we don’t even know about our work, and of course, our male colleagues don’t either”.

E3 points out: “We have heard many times that if there are not many women, it’s because they don’t have an interest, because they don’t want to, or dedicate their time to other things”. It is clear that this is not the case, and the first step has been taken, which is talking about it, and making the audiovisual sector aware that there are other circumstances and other obstacles that make it so that there are not many women as compared to men:

In this sector, you have the feeling that many advances have been many on many things, however, we have the same data or worse than the automobile industry, or in any other
sector. Now you don't discuss what the reality is, ensures E3.

3.2.2. Difficulties and keys of female talent
As observed from the data mentioned, there is an increase in the incorporation of women to the audiovisual sector, but the presence of women in management positions is still needed.

Lorena Palomino (E4), art director, ensures that “entering the audiovisual world is not easy”. In her department, something curious occurs, even though most are women, the manager is a man: “the gap is slightly open, but I go to build a set, and they ask if I'm going alone. And I can use a drill just as a man”. E11 confirms this, who, as a production director, is in charge of hiring the teams: “in assistance, I've seen many women, but what is true is that you can count female art directors with one hand”.

E5 also identifies with this situation. She felt under the spotlight when she was a gaffer, and became aware of the lack of confidence from the team: “I'm 1.6 m tall (5.25 feet), I’m a woman, and I've felt how they've stared to see if I could carry the equipment or not”.

However, E10 has been able to work perfectly well in the area of editing: “It's true that set building is strongly based on trust, and can prolong for many years”.

“Change is very slow”, says E8, who has tried to hire women when she coordinated scriptwriter teams and the team had to expand:

I've always thought that it is better for a creative team to have a variety of people in every sense, not only based on gender, but for many things, but it's difficult, because in the end we are always the same people, but it's also due to lack of knowledge, the lack of opportunities.

E4 considers the possibility that the slow change mentioned by E8 is precisely because the sector is endogamous: “It has been a mainly male-dominated world, as many others, and it is very difficult to open the door, and due to this, it is late to incorporate women”.

In any case, E11 points out that it is less and less a matter of gender, “it's a question of efficacy, curricular change, and also emotional and relational change with the teams”. E10 corroborates this: “In my case, it's true that I choose my team due to affinity, efficacy, quality, commitment, and hope. And curiously, the people that I tend to feel better with, are women”.

E12 tells that at the start of her professional career, it was unthinkable that her team be constituted by women, because “there were hardly any microphone technicians”. She attributes this with the lack of role models in the field, and with the need to view women in each professional category, so that young women can have role models in each field.

E2 points out: “When you are a small child and see that a woman cannot do one thing, it's hard to assimilate this”. E7, also given her experience as a professor, perceives that sometimes the students grant less professional credit to women who are educators. The male professor is automatically praised for his professional merit, but it is interpreted that women are teaching because she is not that good in their fields.

The education that women have received has led to insecurity and lack of confidence, which has derived, according to E8, in situations in which “we do not believe it” professionally. “We have received many stimuli due to our education in a male-dominated society, and this makes it difficult, in my case, for me to try to position myself and earn my space”, asserts.
The music composer Carmen Vela (E2) opines: “We need to believe that we can also be in those environments and that we are able, so that this is also something that must be done so that we believe that yes, it is possible”.

E9 says that “if a woman has aspirations and is ambitious, she is labeled as an upstart”. E4 also grants importance to this and broadens the idea, because “it has its roots in very profound aspects”. “It is about how you feel, the imposter syndrome, and for me, it is associated with the feeling of mistrust that creates insecurities, and does not allow you to behave as easily as you would otherwise”.

E6, in line with her colleagues, explains how she must, sometimes, and sadly, “suggest a solution to her filming colleagues” that she has thought of, to solve a problem that the scene demands for the sequence to move forward. “I provide the pieces of the puzzle, and make them think that the idea was theirs”.

Already ten years ago, Esperanza Roquero (2010) studied “natural modesty”, in which women were socialized so that they tended to remove merit from themselves, which is shown in films almost as a survival strategy. In association with this, E4 perceived that there is “a lack of confidence in women for large audiovisual projects with a large budget”. “The projects which I have been able to take part in as an art director were small projects, with small production companies and a scarce budget”.

E3 also affirms that women are not taught to think big: “We are masters in making the most of things and with good judgment, that is, they give you this, and you make wonders, but of course, this work is also about asking for a lot, thinking big, and women are not taught to think like this”. This experience connects with the research by Smith et al. (2013), in which the authors detected less support for projects presented by women, as they were considered less commercial, and because they were thought of as less confident when asking for funding.

3.2.3. Incorporation of women according to formats, genders, and categories
If we delve into the types of productions created by women, the interviewees felt pigeonholed into defined contents, aside from smaller productions. E8 ensures that there is a type of rejection that women write about defined genre:

There is a certain prejudice; the thriller is given to men more than women. Personally, they are still associating me with comedy series with female leads. But I’m writing projects that are from other genres, and they’ve called my male colleague with whom I tend to write, thinking that he is the one in charge, when we do this together, and we do the same work.

The same has occurred to E5, but she explains that it is a question of budget more than genre, as thrillers require more funding, and as we have pointed out, the industry still mistrusts women with large productions.

I have done genre, terror, and thriller films this year, and I’ve been a secondary cinematographer for aiding and constructing the aesthetic continuity; they’ve never called me to be the first. But for projects on immigration, social subjects, or feminist stories, I am first almost always.

According to the last CIMA report (CIMA, 2020), the differences in budgets between films directed by men and women is a million Euros on average. E3 agrees with E5: “in documentaries, which have smaller budgets, there tends to be more women. In feature films with medium or low budgets, there tends to be more women as compared to the large budget ones”. The director believes that in general, women are able to take much more advantage of a smaller budget, “it’s something that comes from the past, how we were educated”. “This work it’s about convincing
everyone else, to sell ideas, that they believe in you, and we have much to learn on these aspects”, she underlines.

Lastly, E3 claims that the fact that there are not too many women as men creating content means that “the contents they create are poorer, they are not as diverse as society”. “If there is a woman right now who directed a superhero movie, then, that’s that, you can give a superhero movie to a woman”, she states.

3.2.4. Legislation and quotas
Many international and European documents are committed to this, starting with the UN 2030 Agenda, up to the Gender Equality Strategic Plan 2020–2025, or the Next Generation Plan, approved by the EU in 2020. Next, we analyze if the equality and quota policies have helped make possible for women to become incorporated in the audiovisual industry.

E3 ensures, as a director, but also as the CIMA president, that to promote values such as equality, it is fair to distribute public funds: “For me, the quotas are some of the most efficient means to promote the incorporation of women”. Uncomfortable situations will be found in this sector with this policy, but if the intention is to have a more equilibrated audiovisual industry, we must give women opportunities. E3 supports positive discrimination: “I am completely in favor of quotas, it has been demonstrated in the past few years that it has been the main revolution for the current search for women to work”.

E12 affirms that with this policy, more women are able to work, but questions under what conditions:

Since the law was applied to grant subsidies according to the scores of women participation, we have found positions such as cinematographer that until now had not been filled by a woman. But I doubt if this increase in the presence of women is accompanied with an increase in pay, if they are paid the same as men, because there are film shootings in which we are invited to share the room with other women, as we are many, and I’m sure that this does not occur to men.

A topic to be debated in the focus group was if this means that to work more, we must accept worse conditions, which a man would not accept. E5 responds, effectively, that this happened to her: “they called me because they needed a cinematographer, and they played with everyone to see who asked for the lowest fees, even if we included equipment”. Due to this, the profession is taking steps, and E11 recognized that the situation is so severe, that “groups are beginning to be created in messaging apps where fees are shared (…) to establish a minimum amount, and to provide information about the projects”.

In this sense, E5 shares that:

I have just been invited to a director of photography chats to share fees, and one of the requisites for participation is to respect and not steal work from our colleagues. And there is awareness. The men are called because they want to work with that director, and for us, if we are not Rita Noriega or Juana Jimenez, we are called because we are women, and fall into the quota, and to see who the cheapest is.

This policy of parity, as affirmed by E3, “seeks to find ways to provide more opportunities to women”. E2 believes that “it is a tool for achieving equality”. “It’s not taking away, but we have to look for opportunities in some way, I mean, such as an artificial one, on the contrary, we can talk about this, but effective change will not happen”, she maintains.

Another matter which led to a debate is that mentioned by E10: “It’s true that there was a lot of discrimination, that this has to change, and that the matter is changing positively, but I don’t know
if the [quota] system is the best”. E9 resoundingly states: “I don’t think it’s the best, but I think that right now it’s the only thing we can hold on to”. “For me it’s ok if it serves to compensate for the advantages that other historical factors could have had, because it’s not a lack of talent, but of opportunity”, adds E8.

All the participants agreed in that the measures were still necessary, but the general hope is that “hopefully the day will arrive when we can forget about the quotas”.

3.2.5. Promotion of the Spanish market
We are currently in a very prolific period in the Spanish audiovisual sector, with the implementation of international production centers in the country, with an unfathomable growth of investment in production and with economic stimulus policies. But, is the Spanish industry also promoting labor changes at the level of gender?

“It’s not only because of Netflix”, answers E11, “it’s due to Netflix, Amazon, Buendia Estudios, and the great number of production companies that have been created to support them”. “Before there were three clients (TVE, Antena 3, and Telecinco), which are atomized into 15 base production companies”, she explains, “and now we must provide support to a business model that favors internationalization and which expands the display windows”.

E3 confirms that “the Spanish industry is going through its best period”. There have never been so many opportunities for funding a film or taking a documentary forward: “there is great demand for professionals, projects, production companies where you can knock on the door”.

To illustrate the situation, E10 indicates: “In one week, I got a call to work on three feature films and on the same day, I got a call about two movies”.

E4 sustains: “this moment offers more opportunities, so that when one is busy, she passes the baton to the one who is behind”. And it is because in this industry, ensures E11, “the most important thing for working is word of mouth; if you work with a boss, you will work your entire life if you do the work well”. “It’s that simple, male or female boss, and it’s not only a matter of gender, it is a question of efficacy”, she ensures.

All the members agreed in that the context of creation was very positive, and it is mirrored on the types of productions being created, diversifying contents and providing a breath of fresh air. E8 points out that now “it’s a good period for the industry that women must exploit so their productions are watched”.

E3 confirms that the establishment of major players in the Spanish territory is promoting the equilibrated presence of women in film and television, and that there is also a greater culture of support for new talents. For the interviewee, the mix of institutional demands, such as those fruit of the CIMA, along with the incorporation of international agents into the market, is key for the improvement of the situation from this moment onwards.

4. Conclusions
The gender gap is still very much present in film and television in Spain. According to more recent reports in this country, and studies by the EAO, most of the professions in the sector are masculinized. Only wardrobe and make-up and hairdressing escape from this discrimination, in part because these jobs are historically associated to women. With the lowest percentages of female representation, we find: musical composition, cinematography, sound, and director roles. The digital divide also stands out, with a lower presence of women in more technical professions. Among the areas where a more balanced distribution was found, we can point out production and art direction.
To the above, we can also add a clear vertical segregation, which separates women from roles associated to decision making. The number of assistant directors, production aids, or co-scriptwriters has increased, but to a great length, the positions of power are still occupied by men. The female salary is lower, and the budgets of projects led by them are also smaller.

In our focus group, the previous trends were confirmed, but a space for self-criticism was also opened. We can point out to the education received by women, as an essential factor that leads to the lack of confidence on themselves, and the fear of demanding a work situation that is more equal. Our experts placed stress on the need to receive gender education since childhood, and to view female role models in all the spheres in the industry. If the new generations do not know about the existence of female technicians, sound engineers, or cinematographers, they will not include these possibilities within their professional goals. These results corroborate the studies by Harris (2006), Galán (2007), and Belmonte and Guillamón (2007), Fernández-Viguera et al. (2012), and Simelio and Forga (2014), which stress the socializing impact of cinema and other audiovisual creations, when showing models that are imitated and which promote specific behaviors.

The participants in our study agreed that there is also a sexist tag for productions written and directed by women. They criticize the fact that they are characterized into intimist cinema, documents related with social protest, or romantic comedies, when they can also create and work on action, terror, animation, or other genres. This fact is closely related with the aforementioned inequality in the funding of productions. Finding funds for women-led projects is more difficult, and this is associated, again, to an educational factor, in that women tend to ask for a smaller budget for a production, so that they tend to be pigeonholed into smaller genres and medium-low cost proposals.

The scarce participation of women in the audiovisual industry has resulted in that their view of the world and the stories that could focus their interest also become relegated. What is desired, according to our focus group, would be a cinema that does not differentiate between men or women; what is ideal is that a certain content be associated to the sensibility of the creator, either a man or a woman. In relation to this, our study echoes previous research such as the one by Arranz (2008), who stated that audiovisual productions have historically reflected a male-centered point of view. This statement is connected with the first feminist analyses of the film discourse and the concept of “controlling male gaze” coined by Mulvey (1975).

When faced with the situation of inequality described, in Spain, public policies have been implemented based on mandatory quotas. The female professionals consulted recognized that although it is a measure with which they do not feel completely comfortable, in general it has been useful for providing women with real opportunities and for balancing the industry towards equality.

Beyond quotas, the promotion from public entities is needed. As an example, we can again cite the aid provided by the British Film Institute since 2017, demanded by the audiovisual sector in the United Kingdom to mitigate the obvious gender inequality.

Aside from the impact of quotas, the participants of the focus groups coincided in that the new situation in Spain at the level of audiovisual production is favoring their incorporation into new projects. First, because the increased need to support the major international players who have chosen Spain as the center of European production, has resulted in the greater rotation of professionals. Second, because the need of the platforms to have an extensive and varied catalogue of products to fuel subscriptions makes possible the need for female points of view and content for a diverse audience. Third, because the international companies have more sensible and advanced policies with respect to gender, and this propitiates the advancement in matters of equality in Spain.

Also, aside from supporting projects led by women, the initiatives proposed by Netflix Spain have been created to change the internal situation of the company and to facilitate the entry of
audiovisual professionals into this industry (Morillo, 2021). This partner collaborates with CIMA Impulsa, a program which promotes the development of projects written by female scriptwriters to ease their access into the audiovisual industry.

The focus group reiterates that this is the moment in time with the most work offers received, and in which more opportunities appear to present every type of project. The female collective now has the possibility to show their talent and demonstrate that their views are as broad as the world itself. For this, education and investment is necessary. Under these two dimensions, Spain could become not only the hub of European production, but also the watchtower of change.

As a last example, we mention the cinematographer Carla Simon, winner of the Golden Bear from the Berlínale awards in 2022 for Alcarras. When discussing her movie, the director reminds the analysis by Pardo (2010), for whom the arrival of women to management positions is key for making visible the values that are not ascribed to the androgenic universe. Simon is convinced that her award will make so that “those who are coming up do not doubt that they can make films” (Belinchón, 2022). “We have arrived to stay. If we are half of the world, we have to tell half of the stories”, she asserts (“Cadena SER,” 2022).

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