FilmDis Disability Representation on Television 2020-2022 – The Pandemic Years Study – Easy Language Version

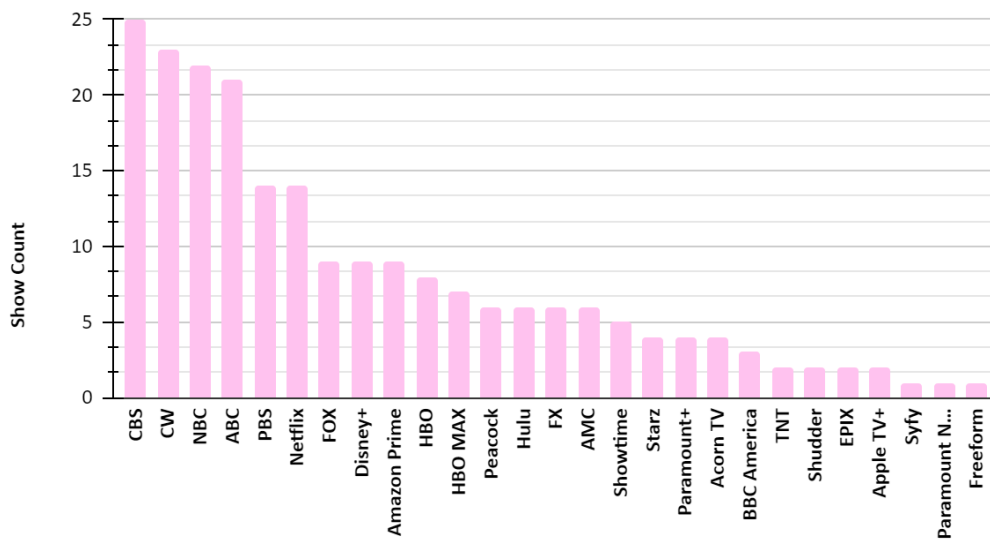FilmDis Is a small group that studies media.

FilmDis is run by two people, Dom Evans and Ashtyn Law.

Dom and Ash watch 250 TV shows per year and find every disabled character.

They then put out a study and write a paper about all the disabled characters on TV.

This study covers two years of TV – June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2022.

Disabled Shows by Network

Out of 250 shows, 216 had one or more disabled characters.

All of these shows were watched on 6 local networks, 10 cable channels, and 11 streaming services.

Local TV Networks by number

- NBC (300 disabled characters)
- ABC (206 disabled characters)
- CBS (177 disabled characters)
- CW (116 disabled characters)
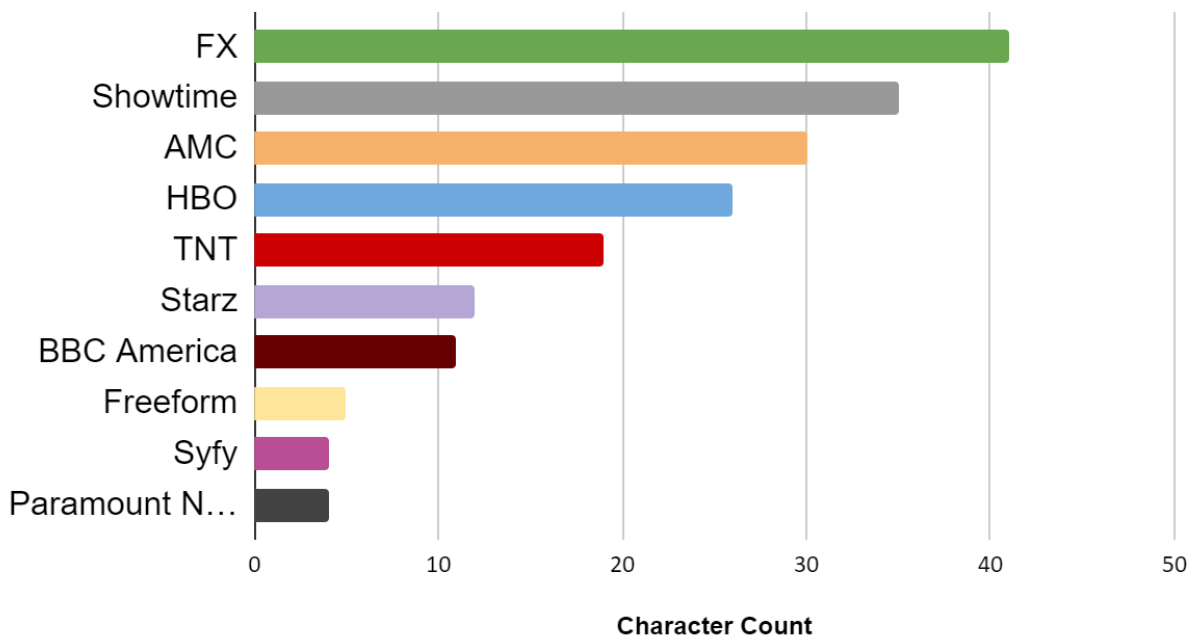- FOX (88 disabled characters)
- PBS (42 disabled characters)

Local Shows Character Count

- PBS 4.5%
- FOX 9.5%
- CW 12.5%
- CBS 19.1%
- NBC 32.3%
- ABC 22.2%
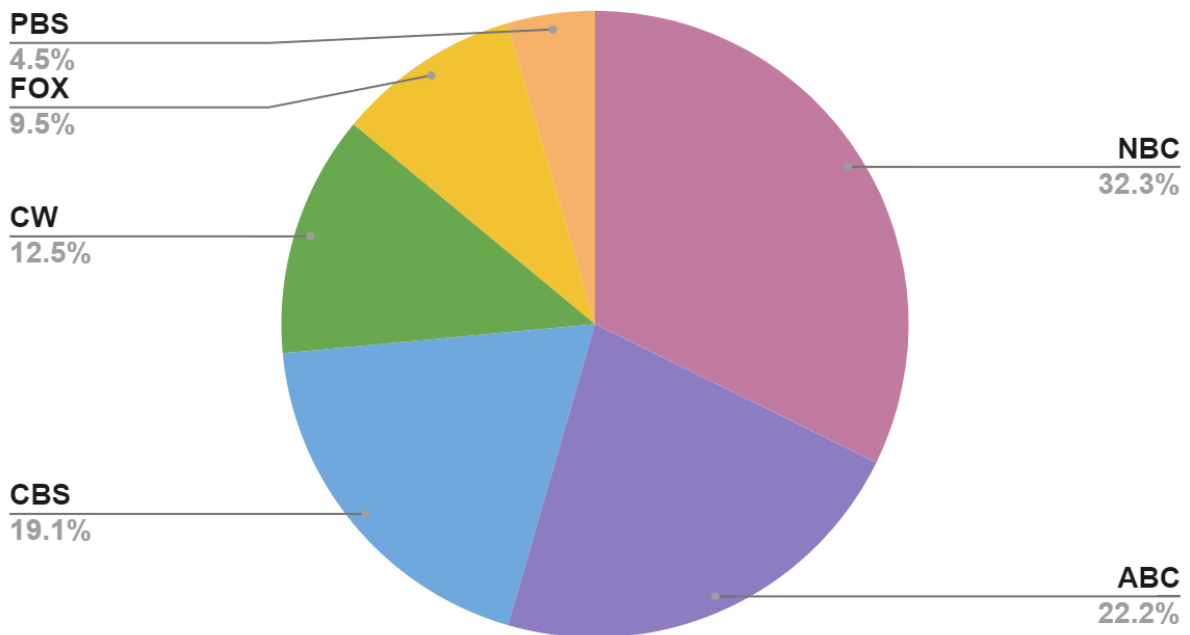
Cable Channels by number

- FX (41 disabled characters)
- SHOWTIME (35 disabled characters)
- AMC (30 disabled characters)
- HBO (26 disabled chara
- TNT (19 disabled characters)
- Starz (12 disabled characters)
- BBC America (11 disabled characters)
- Freeform (5 disabled characters)
- Syfy (4 disabled characters)
- Paramount Network (4 disabled characters)

Cable Channels Character Count

Channel	Character Count
FX	41
Showtime	35
AMC	30
HBO	26
TNT	19
Starz	12
BBC America	11
Freeform	5
Syfy	4
Paramount N…	4

Character Count

Streaming Services by number

- Netflix (51 disabled characters)
- HBO MAX (41 disabled characters)
- Amazon Prime (26 disabled characters)
- Hulu (22 disabled characters)
- Disney+ (20 disabled characters)
- Peacock (19 disabled characters)
- Paramount +/CBS ALL ACCESS (18 disabled characters)
- EPIX (11 disabled characters)
- Shudder (8 disabled characters)
- Acorn (7 disabled characters)
- Apple TV+ (3 disabled characters)

Streaming Character Count
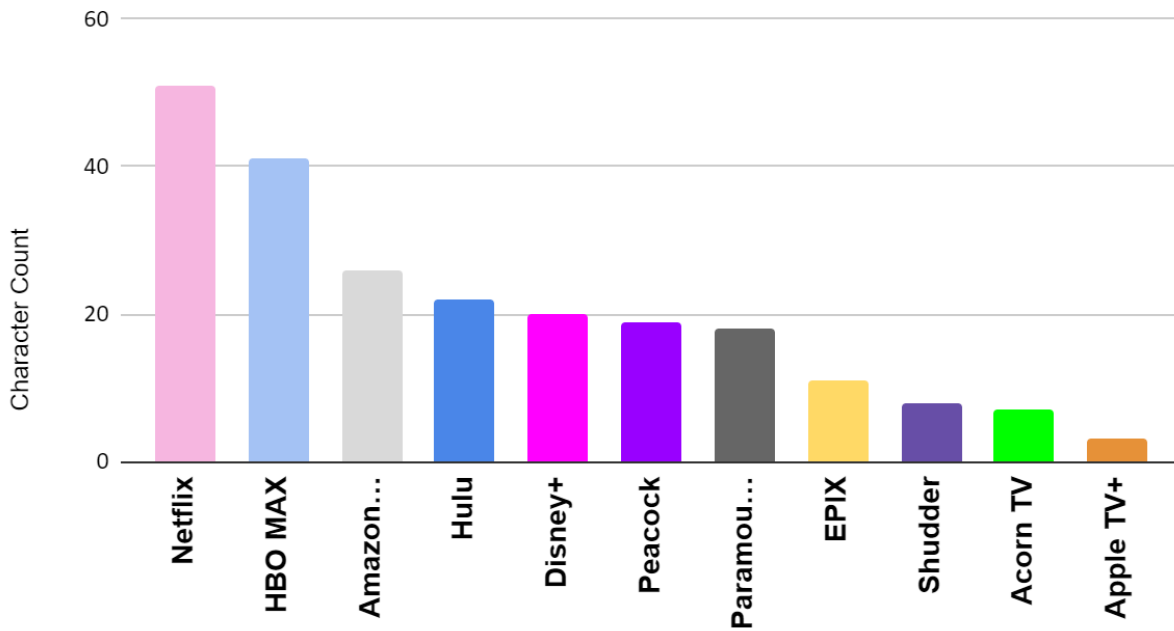
The 216 shows feature 1,342 disabled characters.

Disability Communities with the Most Characters

- Addiction (289 disabled characters)
- Chronic Health (250 disabled characters)
- Neurodivergent (240 disabled characters)
- Multiply Disabled (119 disabled characters)
- Cancer (98 disabled characters)

Most Represented Disabilities

Cancer
9.8%

Multiple
11.9%

Neurodivergent
24.1%

Addiction
29.0%

Chronic
25.1%
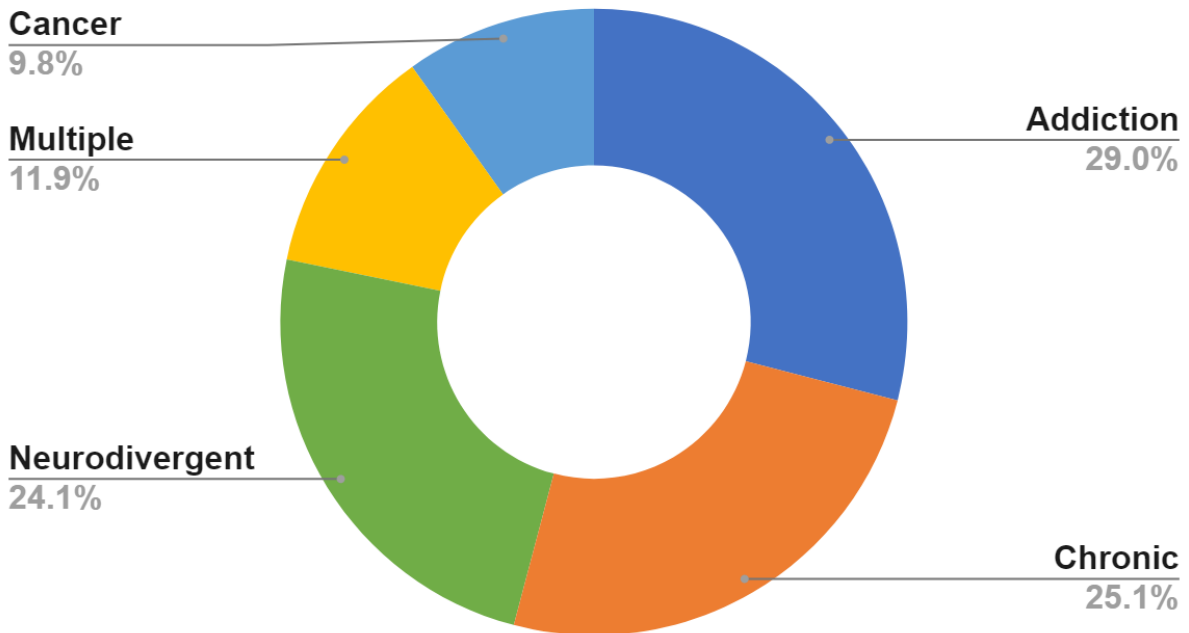
Disability Communities with the Least Characters

- Blind (20 disabled characters)
- Deaf/HoH (17 disabled characters)
- Dwarfism (11 disabled characters)
- Learning Disabilities (10 disabled characters)
- Intellectual Disability – Down Syndrome (6 disabled characters)

Least Represented Disabilities

Intellectual Di…
6.3%

Dwarfism
17.2%

Learning
17.2%

Blind/Low Vis…
32.8%

Deaf/HoH
26.6%
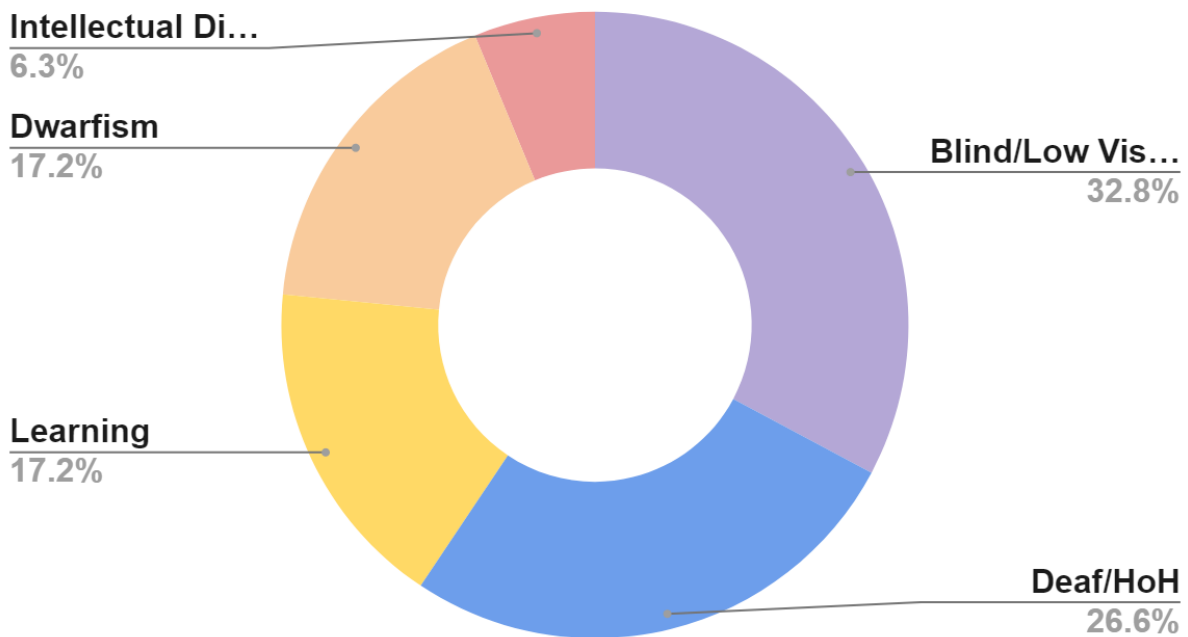
Gender Identity is how you feel about your gender. You can feel like a boy. You can feel like a girl. You can feel non-binary or neither. You decided how you feel.

Cisgender means a person who has the same gender identity they were given at birth.

Transgender means a person who has a different gender identity than the gender identity they were given at birth.

Sexuality means who you are attracted to. You can be attracted to someone with or without the same gender identity.

Your sexuality can be **Heterosexual** (attracted to the opposite gender), **Gay**/**Lesbian** (attracted to the same gender).

Your sexuality can mean you are attracted to people of multiple gender identities (**Bisexual** or **Pansexual**) or to no sexualities.

Asexuality is when you may have no sexual attraction at all or only with certain people.

Sexuality and gender are both spectrums. This means there are a lot of different options for genders and sexualities.

Gender Non-Conforming is when your gender identity doesn't follow traditional ideas of male or female.

Cisgender white male characters are the most represented disabled characters.

White Male Disabled Characters Facts

- Cisgender (522 disabled characters)
- Heterosexual (308 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (182 disabled characters)
- Gay (28 disabled characters)
- Bisexual/Pansexual (4 disabled characters)
- Gender Non-Conforming with Queer Sexuality (1 disabled character)
- Non-Binary with Unknown Sexuality (1 disabled character)
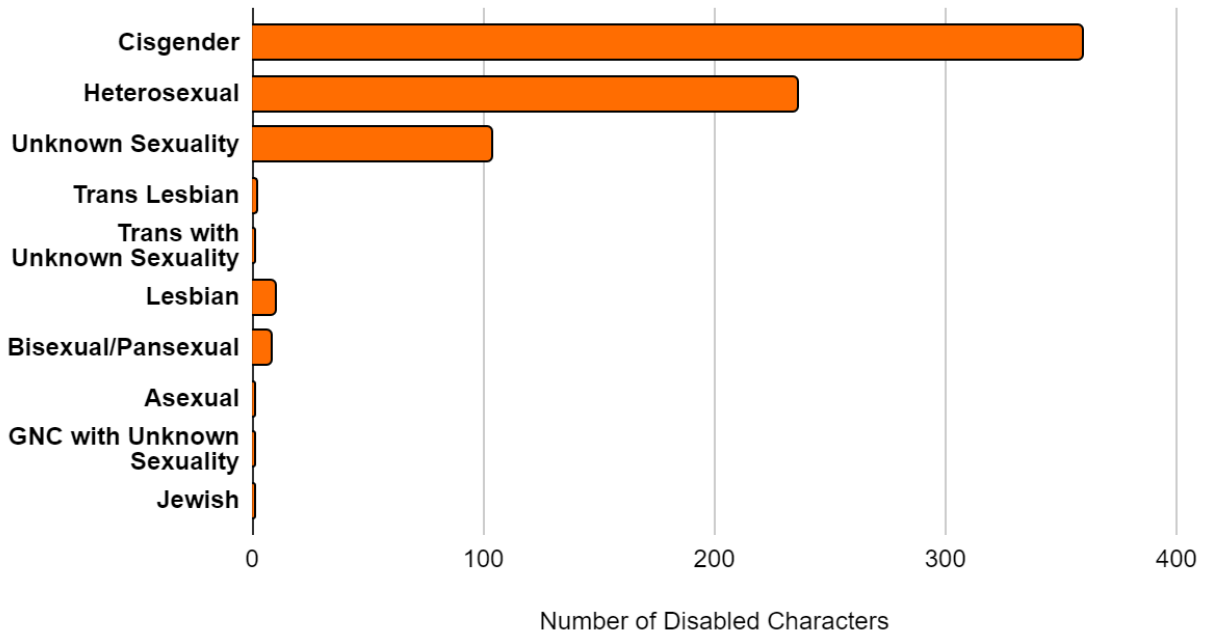- Jewish (3 disabled characters)

White Disabled Males Statistics

Number of Disabled Characters
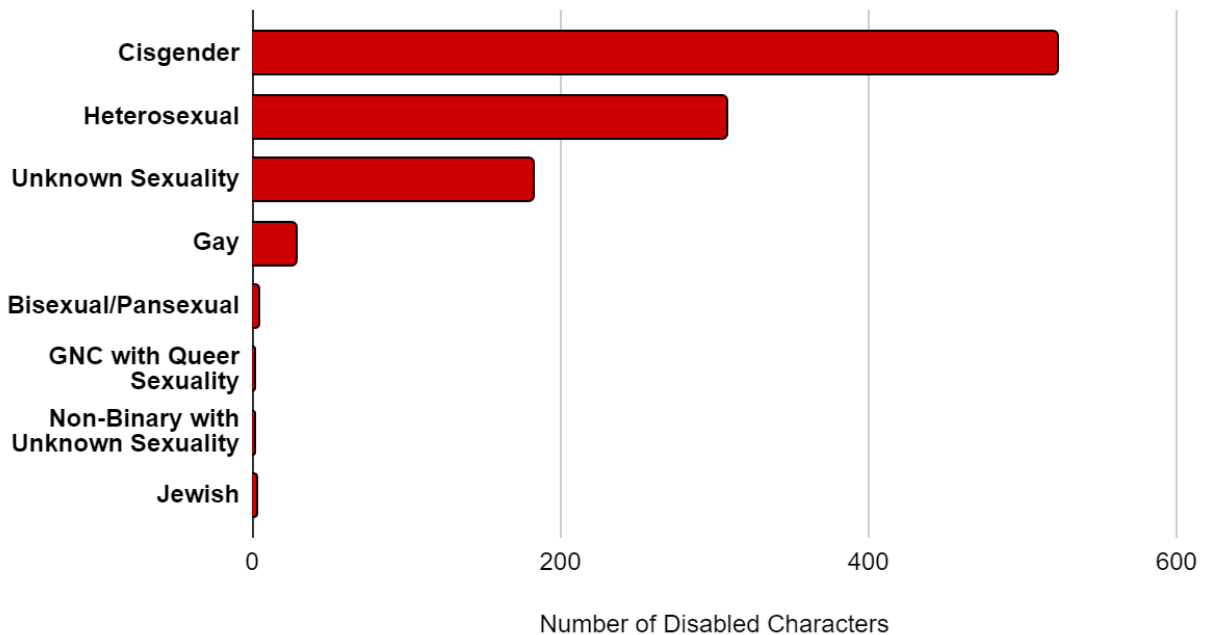
White Female Disabled Characters

- Cisgender (358 disabled characters)
- Trans Lesbian (2 characters)
- Trans with Unknown Sexuality (1 character)
- Heterosexual (236 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (103 disabled characters)
- Lesbian (10 disabled characters)
- Bisexual/Pansexual (8 disabled characters)
- Asexual (1 disabled character)
- Gender Non-Conforming with Unknown Sexuality (1 disabled character)
- Jewish (1 disabled characters)

White Disabled Females Statistics
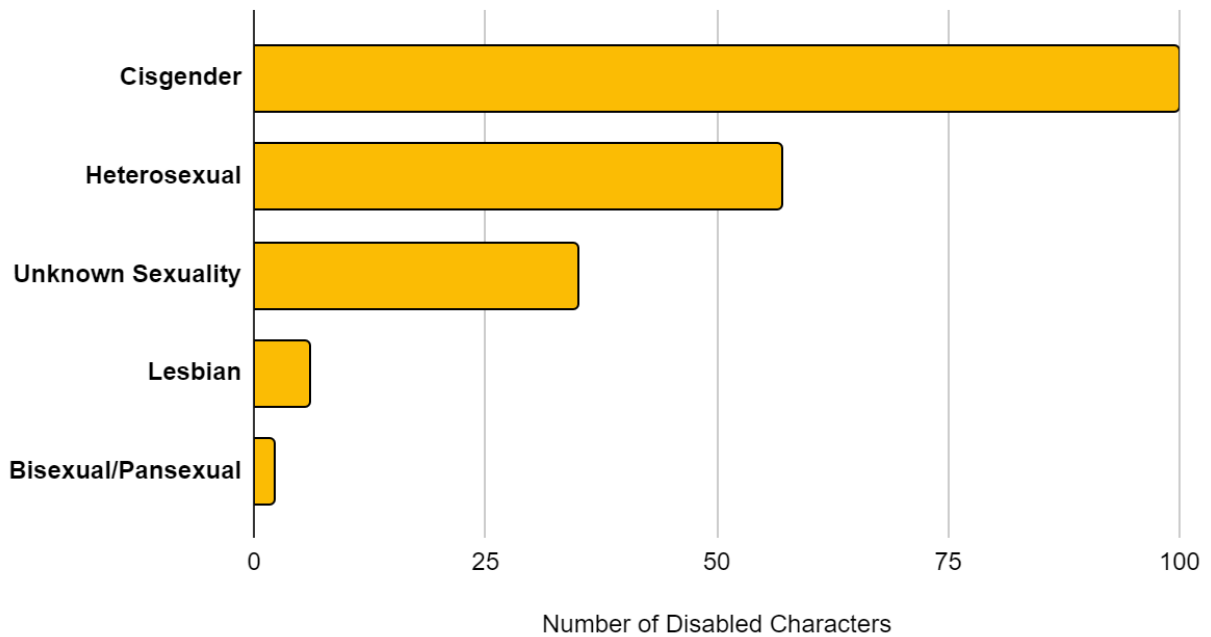

Number of Disabled Characters

There is 1 Trans Non-Binary Person.

FilmDis found 887 were white disabled characters.

Black Female Characters

- Cisgender Female (100 disabled characters)
- Heterosexual (57 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (35 disabled characters)
- Lesbian (6 disabled characters)
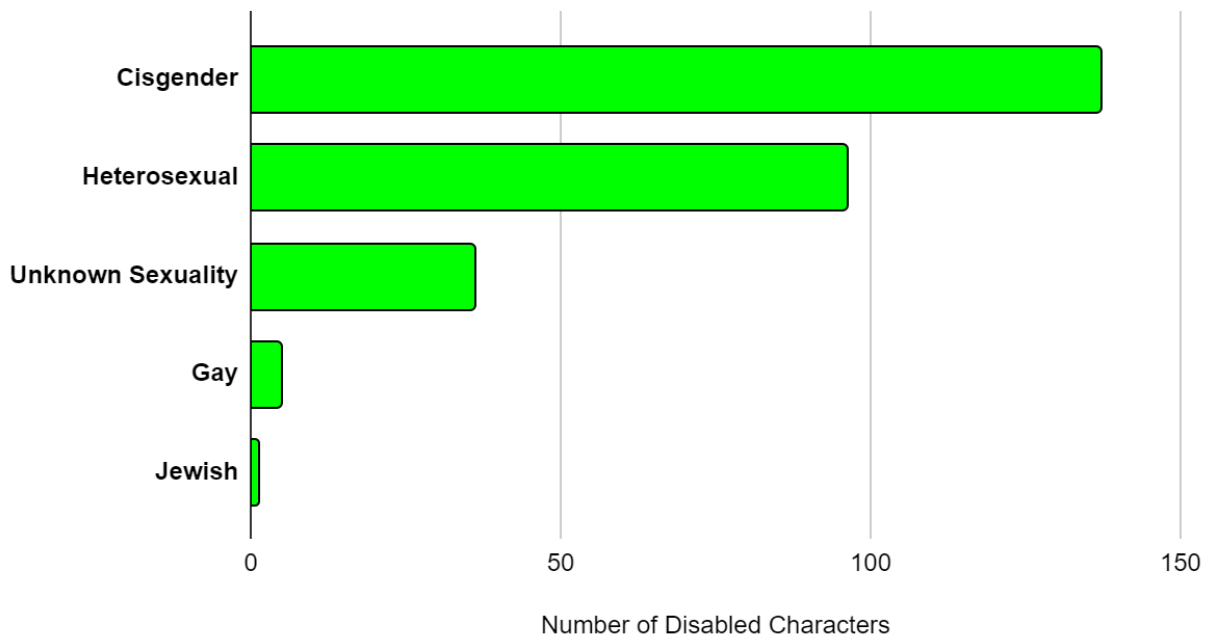- Bisexual/Pansexual (2 disabled characters)

Black Disabled Females Statistics

Number of Disabled Characters

Black Male Characters:

- Cisgender (137 disabled characters)
- Heterosexual (96 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (36 disabled characters)
- Gay (5 disabled characters)
- Jewish (1 disabled character)
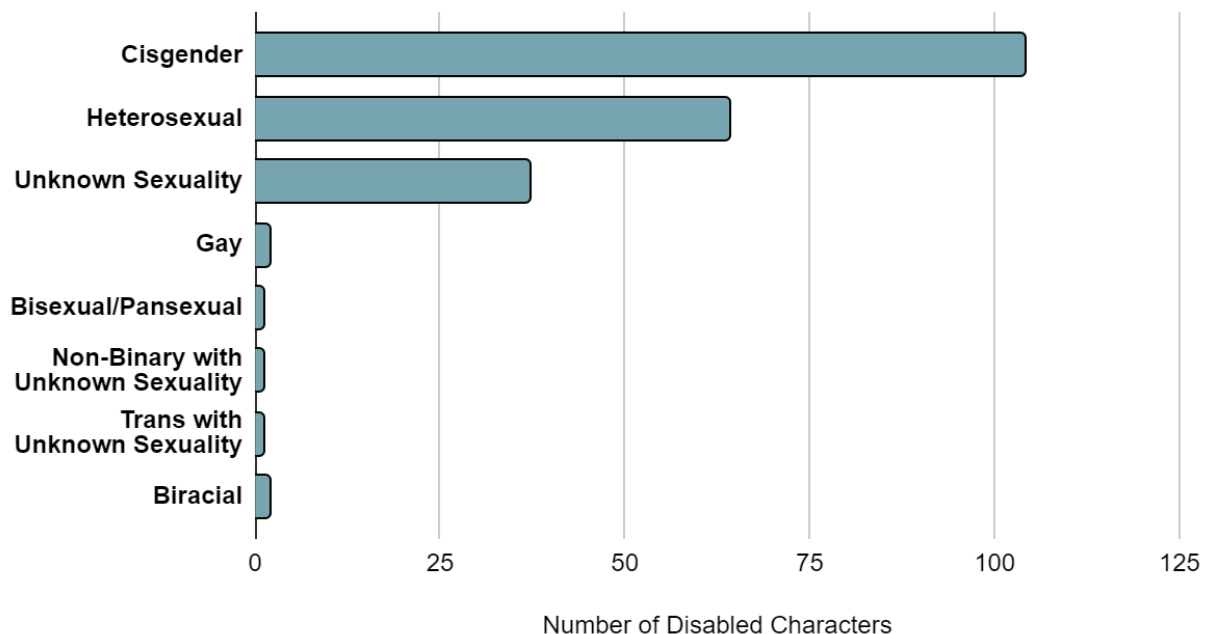

Black Disabled Males Statistics

FilmDis found 237 Black disabled characters.

10

IPOC is an abbreviation that represents Indigenous + POC (people of color).

IPOC Cisgender Males

- Cisgender (104 disabled characters)
- Heterosexual (64 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (37 disabled characters)
- Gay (2 disabled characters)
- Trans with Unknown Sexuality (1 disabled character)
- Bisexual/Pansexual (1 disabled character)
- Non-Binary with Unknown Sexuality (1 disabled character)
- Biracial (2 disabled characters)

IPOC Disabled Males Statistics

Number of Disabled Characters

11

- Latine (55 disabled characters)
- Asian (21 disabled characters)
- Indian (7 disabled characters)
- Unknown (7 disabled characters)
- Indigenous (7 disabled characters)
- Middle Eastern (5 disabled characters)

IPOC Disabled Males Statistics

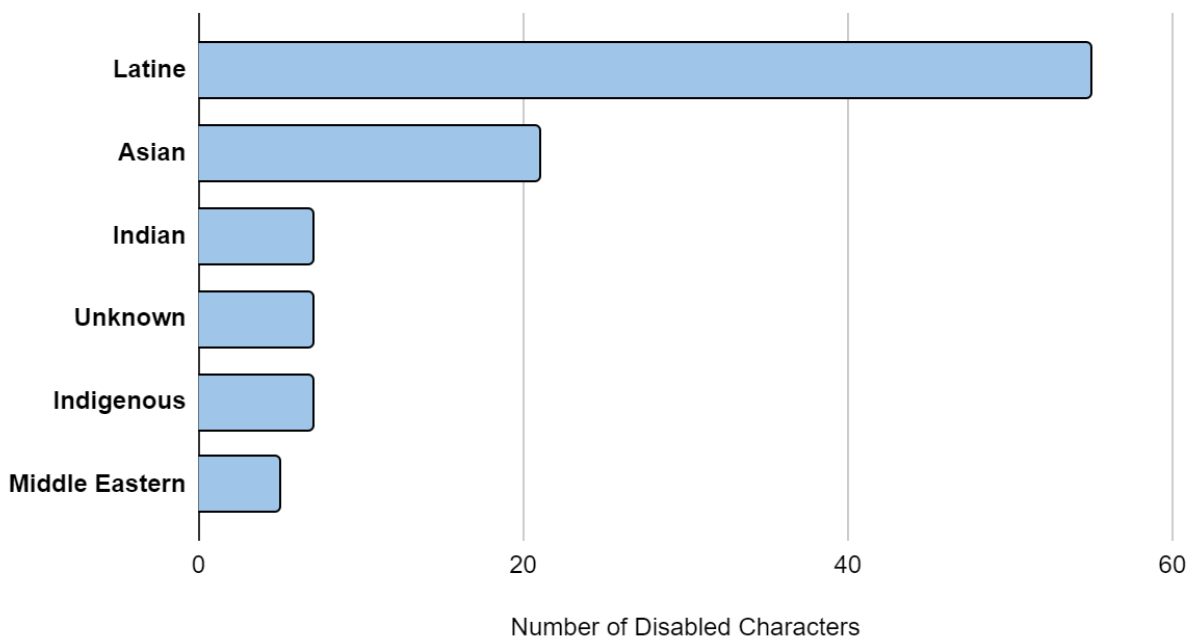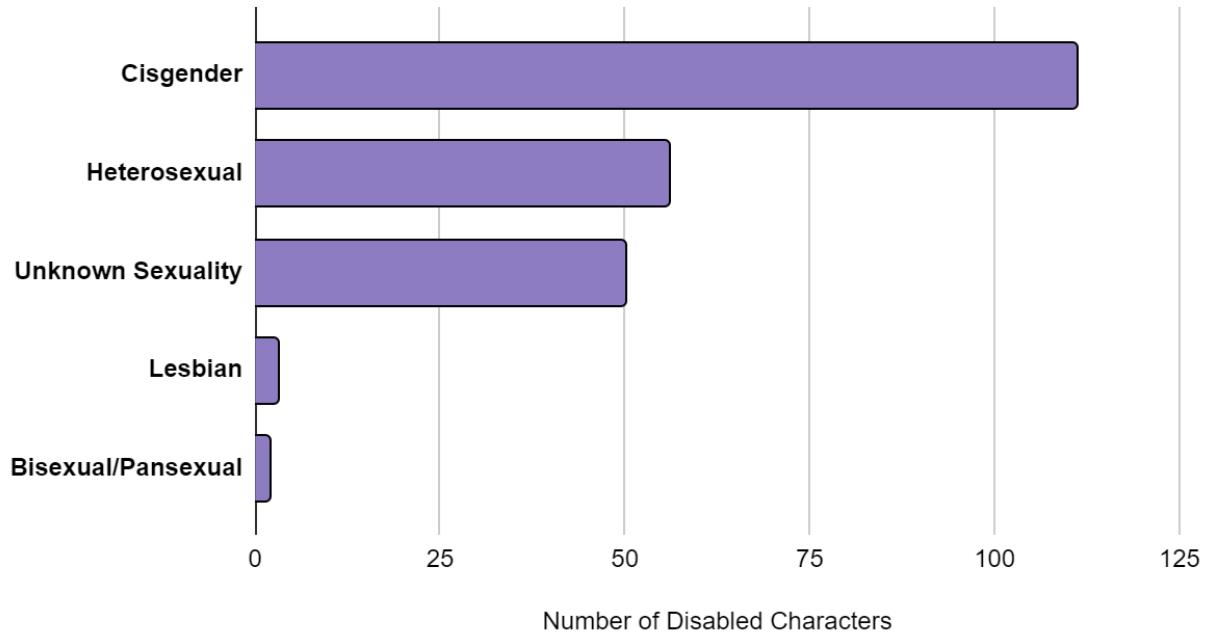Number of Disabled Characters

IPOC Females

- Cisgender (111 disabled characters)
- Heterosexual (56 disabled characters)
- Unknown Sexuality (50 disabled characters)
- Lesbian (3 disabled characters)
- Bisexual/Pansexual (2 disabled characters)

12

IPOC Disabled Females Statistics

- Latine (47 disabled characters)
- Asian (32 disabled characters)
- Indigenous (9 disabled characters)
- Indian (6 disabled characters)
- Biracial (6 disabled characters)
- Middle Eastern (6 disabled characters)
- Unknown (5 disabled characters)

IPOC Disabled Females Statistics
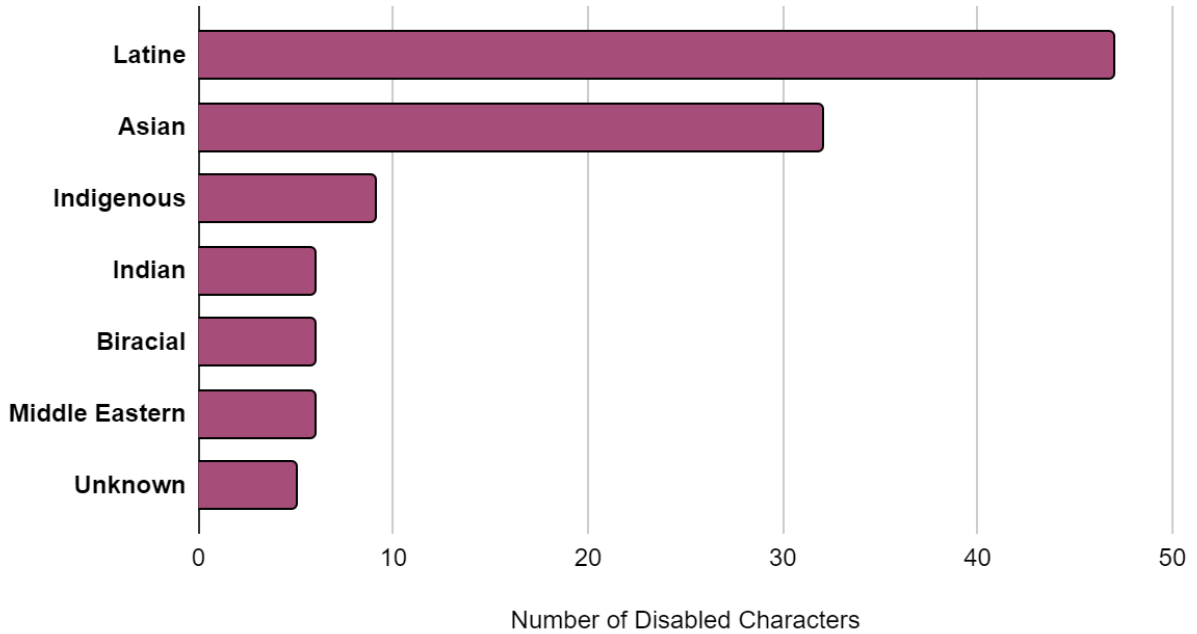
FilmDis found 217 IPOC characters.
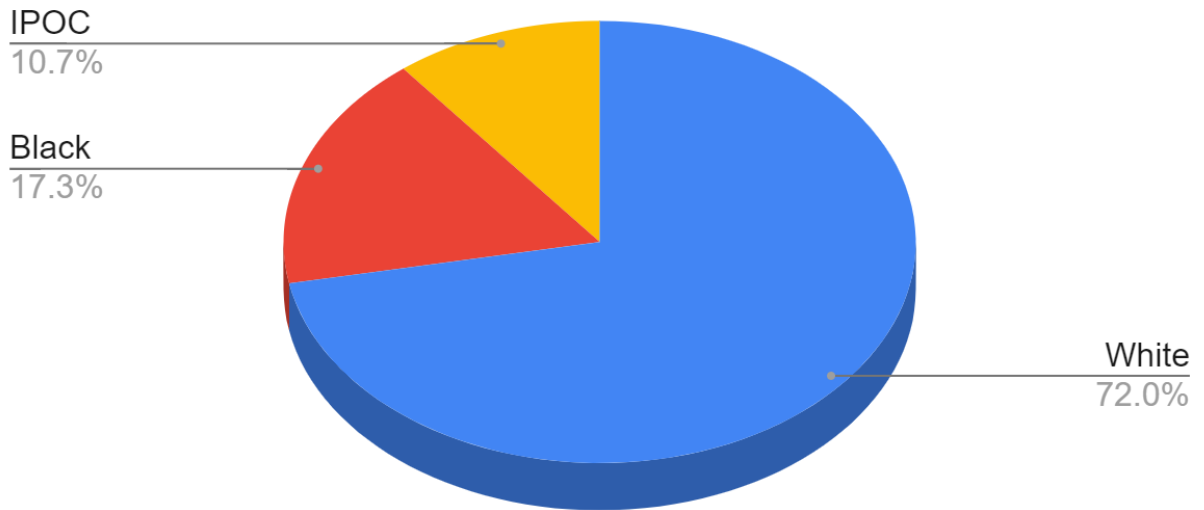
LGBTQIA Disabled Characters

FilmDis found LGBTQIA disabled characters.

LGBA Sexuality by Race:

- White (54 disabled characters)
- Black (13 disabled characters)
- IPOC. (8 disabled characters)

Sexuality by Race

IPOC
10.7%

Black
17.3%

White
72.0%

Gender Identity by Race:

- White (7 disabled characters)
- Black (1 disabled characters)
- IPOC (2 disabled characters)

Gender Identity by Race
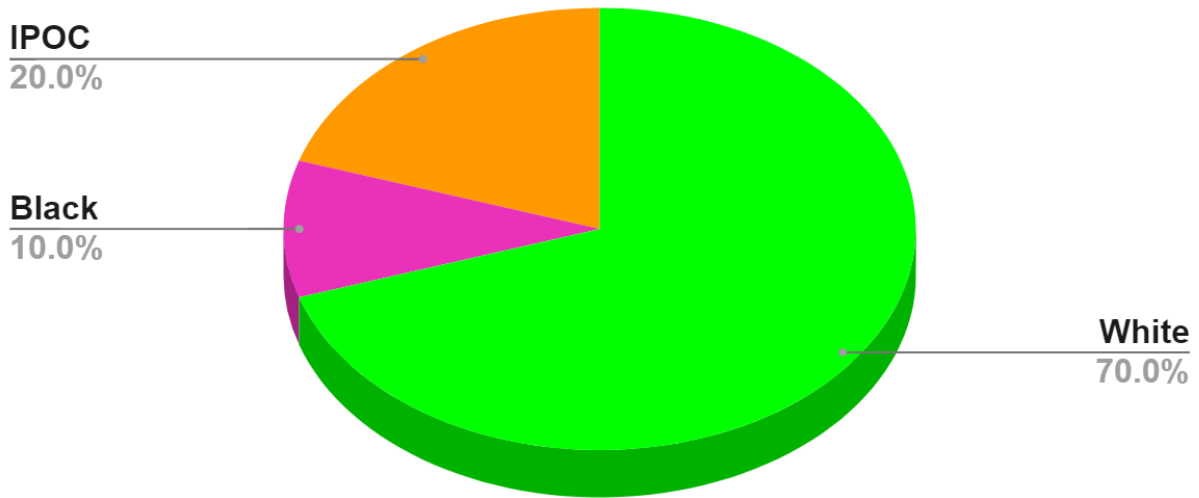
By gender identity and sexuality:

- Trans Female (3 disabled characters)
- Trans Male (2 disabled characters)
- Trans Non-Binary (1 disabled character)
- Non-Binary (2 disabled characters)
- Gender Non-Conforming (2 disabled characters)
- Gay (38 disabled characters)
- Lesbian (19 disabled characters)
- Bisexual (17 disabled characters)
- Asexual (1 disabled character)

LGBTQIA Disabled Characters
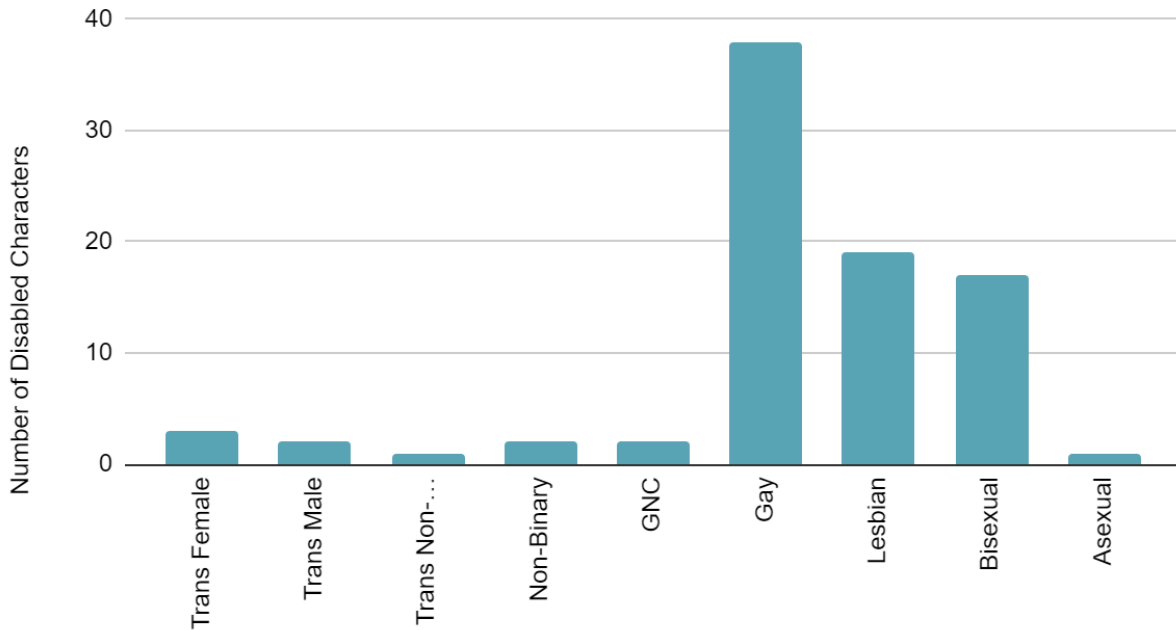
Trans Disabled Characters

- White Trans Female (3)
- White Trans Non-Binary (1)
- White Non-Binary Male (1)
- Gender Non-Conforming Female (1)
- Gender Non-Conforming Male (1)
- Black Trans Male (1)
- IPOC Non-Binary Male (1)

Trans Disabled Characters

Number of Disabled Characters

Disabled Characters by Nationality

Character Count

FilmDis found most disabled characters were from the US.

- American (1088 disabled characters)
- British (80 disabled characters)
- Canadian (40 disabled characters)
- Fantasy/Fictional (23 disabled characters)
- Unknown (10 disabled characters)
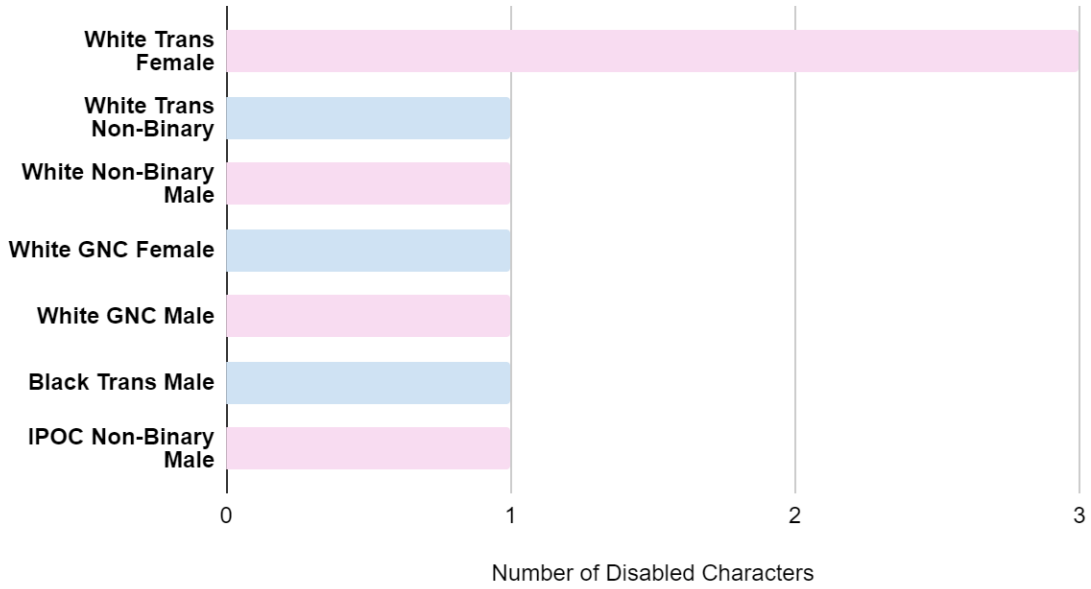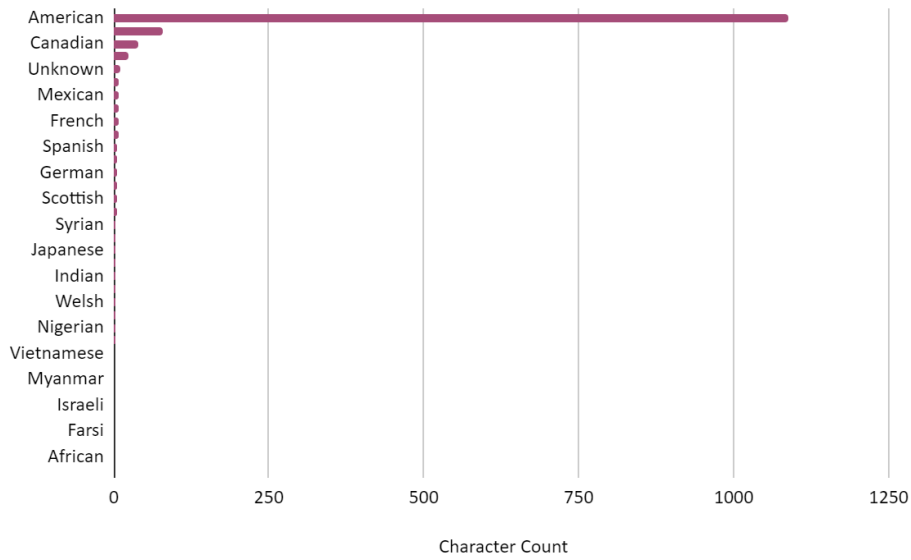- Australian (9 disabled characters)
- Mexican, Irish, French, Dutch (7 disabled characters each)
- Spanish, New Zealander, German, Chinese (5 disabled characters each)
- Scottish, Guatemalan (4 disabled characters each)
- Syrian, Russian, Japanese, Jamaican, Indian, European, (3 disabled characters each)
- Welsh, Norwegian, Nigerian, Italian (2 disabled characters)
- Vietnamese, Portuguese, Myanmar, Mohawk, Israeli, Haitian, Farrsi, Austrian, African, Afghanistan (1 disabled character each)

Age of Disabled Characters

Film Dis found most disabled characters were adults.

Baby is any age under 2.

Child is ages 2 to 12.

Teen is ages 13 to 19.

Adult is ages 20 to 60.

Elder is age 60+.

Disabled Characters by Age Group
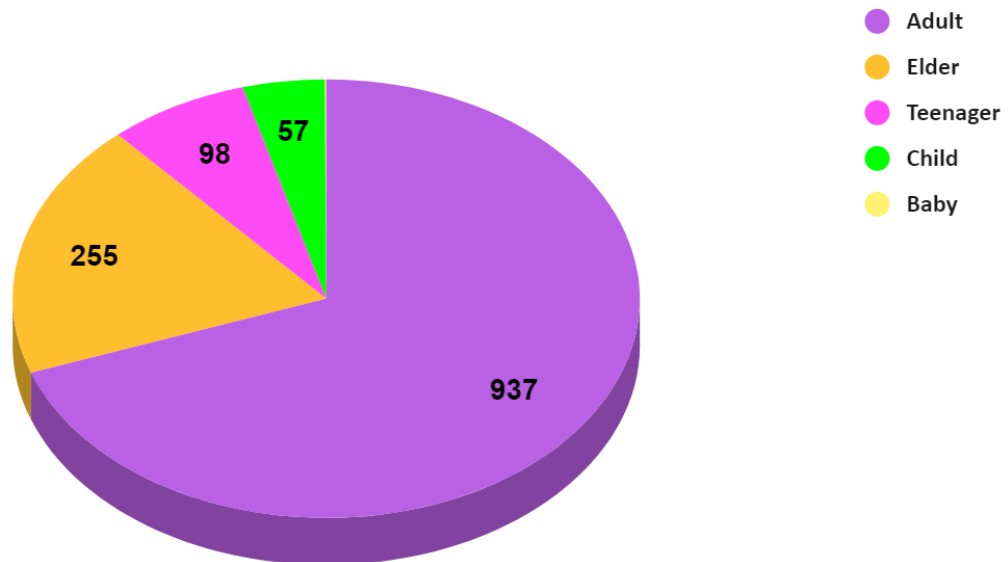
There are 1348 actors playing these 1342 roles, so the numbers are slightly off for Age Group, Part Types, and Disabled Mimicry.

Disabled Characters by Age

- Adult (937 disabled characters)
- Elder (255 disabled characters)
- Teen (98 disabled characters)
- Child (57 disabled characters)
- Babies (1 disabled characters)

Types of Disabled Characters

FilmDis found most disabled characters were Bit characters.

A **Bit** character Is a character that is in one episode or may have tiny parts across multiple episodes of television.

A bit role is considered a minor role. Minor means not as important to the story as Lead or supporting characters.

Many Bit characters have only one or two lines in a television show.

Lead characters are the main characters on a television show. They are sometimes also called protagonists. They are in every episode.

Supporting characters are characters that support the lead character. They are often in every episode or many episodes in aTelevision season.

Guest Stars are characters that have a lead role in one or a few episodes of a television show. They are not Regular characters.

Disabled Characters by Part Type

Legend:
- Bit
- Guest Star
- Lead
- Supporting

304 (22.6%)
229 (17.0%)
137 (10.2%)
678 (50.3%)
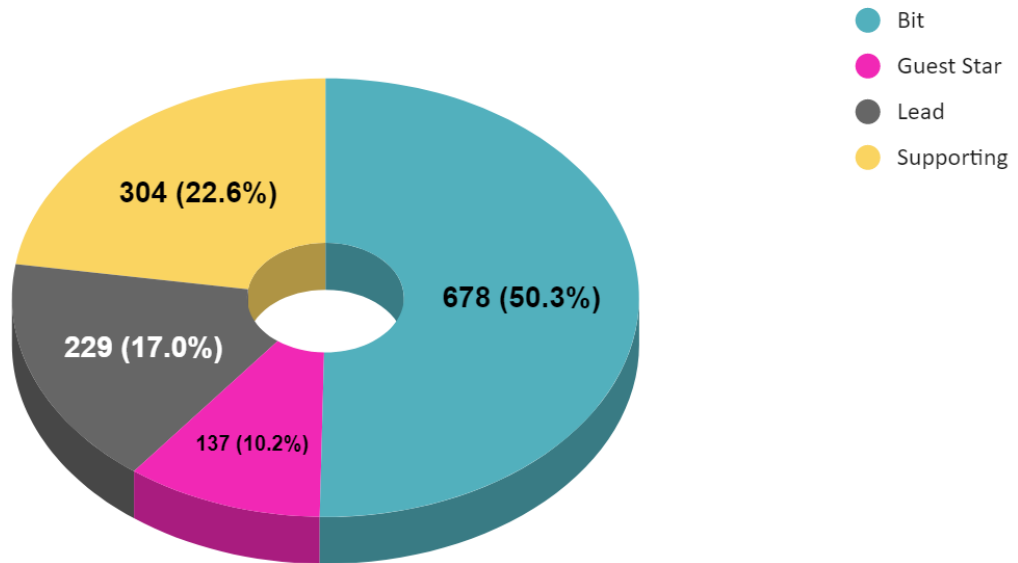
Disabled Characters by Type

- Bit (678 disabled characters)
- Supporting (304 disabled characters)
- Lead Characters (229 disabled characters)
- Guest Star (137 disabled characters)

Disabled Mimicry

Disabled mimicry is when a nondisabled actor plays a disabled character.

Are Actors Disabled?

Yes
8.2%

No
29.3%

Unknown
62.5%
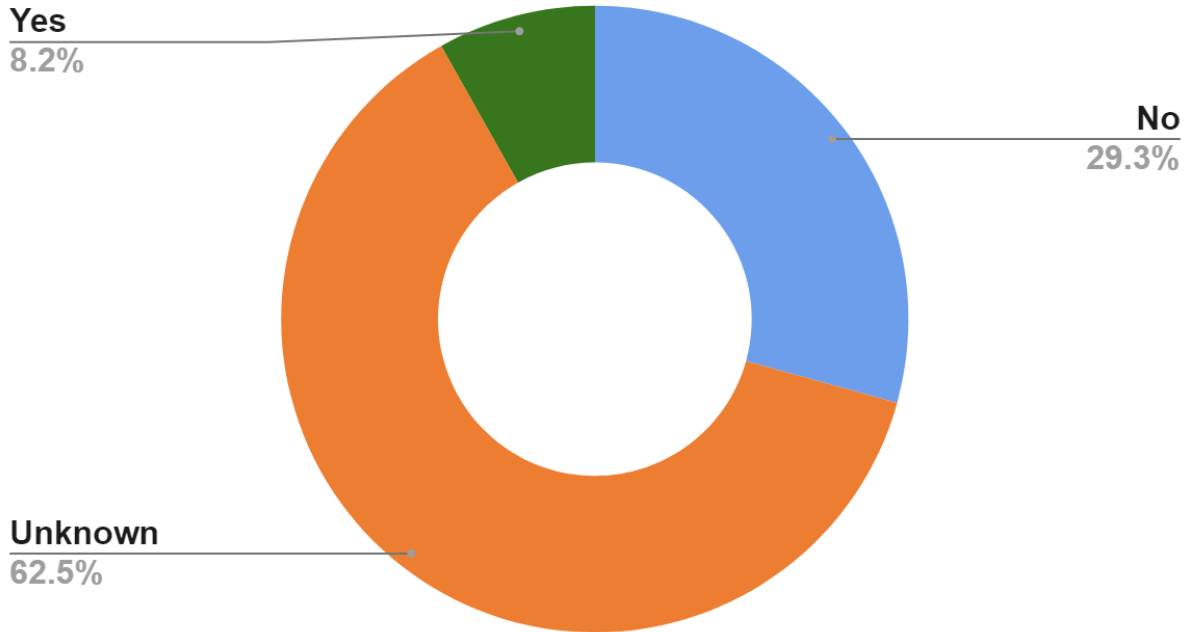
FilmDis found that only 110 disabled actors play disabled roles.

This is about 8% of disabled characters on television.

This is less than our last study.

Over 90% of disabled characters are played by people that are nondisabled or whether they are disabled is not known.

FilmDis found there were 1,348 actors playing 1,342 characters.

There are more actors than characters because some characters were played by more than one actor.

For example, 3 actors play the character of Randall on *This Is Us*. One is an adult. One is a child. One is a teenager.

Final Thoughts

Hollywood needs to audition disabled actors for any role.

Disabled actors face a lot of stigma, which is discrimination.

FilmDis wants Hollywood to know they need to be more diverse.

Diverse means including disabled characters from communities not often included.

Diverse means more disabled characters who are not white. It means more characters who are LGBTQIA, Black, and IPOC.

Hollywood needs to hire more disabled directors, writers, and other crew members, as well.

FilmDis wants Hollywood to change so disabled people are treated better.

FilmDis wants Hollywood to change so disabled actors can show off their talents.

This is FilmDis' third study on disability representation on TV.

FilmDis knows that disability representation is not getting better and the data is showing that.

Most of the disabled characters on television are cisgender white males.

Most other disabled people don't get to see themselves represented.

Patterns show most disabled characters have one line or throwaway roles.

FilmDis wants to change that.

You can support FilmDis by sharing this study, speaking out about disabled mimicry, and not watching media about/with disabled Characters that are not by or with disabled actors or creators.

Independent Links

Full Paper for the: FilmDis Disability Representation on Television 2020-2022 – The Pandemic Years Study

Fact Sheet for the: FilmDis Disability Representation on Television 2020-2022 – The Pandemic Years Study

Previous Fact Sheets:
2019-2020
2018-2019

Previous Studies:
2019-2020
2018-2019

Previous Easy Language Versions
2019-2020
2018-2019

All research studies plus PDF versions of each can be viewed here: FilmDis Research Projects

FILMDIS
NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US

Support Us

GADIM (Global Alliance of Disability in Media) sponsors this study.

Dom Evans watches 125 TV shows for this study on their own.

Ashtyn Law watches 125 TV shows for this study on her own.

All data collected and compiled by Dom and Ashtyn.

Data analyzed by William Neely. Image Descriptions by Jay Neely.

Support their work:

FilmDis Patreon:
https://www.patreon.com/FilmDis

Pay Ashtyn:
paypal.me/FilmDis

Pay William Neely, Data Analyst:
paypal.me/neew98

Buy Dom or Ash something from their Wishlists:

Ash:
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3GB3BBJ1AZ85Q?ref_=wl_share

Dom:
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/QDMJDRLAYO95?ref_=wl_share

Image Descriptions

ID Logo: Large text: Film (navy blue) Dis (black) is at top. Underneath in black text, "nothing about us, without us"

ID - Image 1.1: A graph showing the number of shows watched for the study. The graph is composed of pink bars. The bars list the number of shows. Options are: CBS (25), CW (23), NBC (22), ABC (21), PBS (14), Netflix (14), FOX (9), Disney+ (9), Amazon Prime (9), HBO (8), HBO Max (7), Peacock (6), Hulu (6), FX (6), AMC (6), Showtime (5), Starz (4), Paramount+ (4), Acorn TV (4), BBC America (3), TNT (2), Shudder (2), EPIX (2), Apple TV+ (2), Syfy (1), Paramount Network (1), and Freeform (1).

Image 1.2: A pie graph showing the percentage of disabled characters from local TV networks. Pink (NBC) with 32.3%, Purple (ABC) with 22.2%, Light Blue (CBS) with 19.1%, Green (CW) with 12.5%, Yellow (FOX) with 9.5%, and Light Orange (PBS) with 4.5%.

Image 1.3: A bar graph showing the number of disabled characters from Cable Channels. Green (FX) with 41 characters, Grey (SHOWTIME) with 35 characters, Orange (AMC) with 30 characters, Blue (HBO) with 26 characters, Red (TNT) with 19 characters, Light Purple (Starz) with 12 characters, Maroon (BBC America) with 11 characters, Light Yellow (Freeform) with 5 characters, Fuschia (Syfy) with 4 characters, and Dark Grey (Paramount Network) with 4 characters.

Image 1.4: A bar graph showing the number of disabled characters from Streaming Services. Pink (Netflix) with 51 characters, Light Blue (HBO Max) with 41 characters, Grey (Amazon Prime) with 26 characters, Blue (Hulu) with 22 characters, Hot Pink (Disney+) with 20 characters, Purple (Peacock) with 19 characters, Dark Grey (Paramount+ and CBS ALL

ACCESS) with 18 characters, Yellow (EPIX) with 11 characters, Dark Purple (Shudder) with 8 characters, Lime green (Acorn) with 7 characters, and Orange (Apple TV+) with 3 characters.

Image 1.5: A donut pie chart showing the percentage of disability communities with the most representation based on the amount of characters. Blue (Addiction) with 29.0%, Orange (Chronic) with 25.1%, Green (Neurodivergent) with 24.1%, Yellow (Multiple) with 11.9%, and Light Blue (Cancer) with 9.8%.

Image 1.6: A donut pie chart showing the percentage of disability communities with the least amount representation based on the amount of characters. Light Purple (Blind/Low Vision) with 32.8%, Blue (Deaf/Hard of Hearing) with 26.6%, Yellow (Dwarfism) with 17.2%, Orange (Learning) with 17.2%, and Red (Intellectual Disability - Down Syndrome) with 9.3%.

Image 1.7: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled White Male Characters. The bars are red. Options are Cisgender (523), Heterosexual (308), Unknown Sexuality (182), Gay (28), Bisexual/Pansexual (4) Gender Non Conforming with Queer Sexuality (1), Non-Binary with Unknown Sexuality (1), and Jewish (3).

Image 1.8: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled White Female Characters. The bars are orange. Options are Cisgender (358), Heterosexual (236), Unknown Sexuality (103), Trans-Lesbian (2), Trans with Unknown Sexuality (1), Lesbian (10), Bisexual/Pansexual (8), Asexual (1), Gender Non Conforming with Unknown Sexuality (1), and Jewish (1).

Image 1.9: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Black Female Characters. The bars are yellow. Options are Cisgender (100), Heterosexual (57), Unknown Sexuality (35), Lesbian (6), and Bisexual/Pansexual (2).

Image 1.10: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Black Male Characters. The bars are lime green. Options are Cisgender (137), Heterosexual (96), Unknown Sexuality (36), Gay (5), and Jewish (1).

Image 1.11: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Color Male Characters. The bars are teal. Options are Cisgender (104), Heterosexual (64), Unknown Sexuality (37), Gay (2), Bisexual/Pansexual (1) Non Binary with Unknown Sexuality (1), Trans with Unknown Sexuality (1), and Biracial (2).

Image 1.11: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Color Male Characters. The bars are teal. Options are Cisgender (104), Heterosexual (64), Unknown Sexuality (37), Gay (2), Bisexual/Pansexual (1) Non Binary with Unknown Sexuality (1), Trans with Unknown Sexuality (1), and Biracial (2).

Image 1.12: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Color Male Characters in different demographics. The bars are in Light Blue. Options are Latine (55), Asian (21), Indian (7), Unknown (7), Indigenous (7), and Middle Eastern (5).

Image 1.12: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Color Male Characters in different demographics. The bars are in Light Blue. Options are Latine (55), Asian (21), Indian (7), Unknown (7), Indigenous (7), and Middle Eastern (5).

Image 1.13: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Colors Female Characters. The bars are purple. Options are Cisgender (111), Heterosexual (56), Unknown Sexuality (50), Lesbian (3), and Bisexual/Pansexual (2).

Image 1.14: A bar graph showing the number of Disabled Indigenous and People of Color Female Characters in different demographics. The bars are

dark pink. Options are Latine (47), Asian (32), Indigenous (9), Indian (6), Biracial (6), Middle Eastern (6), and Unknown (5).

Image 1.15: A pie chart showing the percentage of LGBTQIA disabled characters' sexuality by race. Blue (White) 72.0%, Red (Black) 17.3%, and Yellow (IPOC) 10.7%.

Image 1.16: A pie chart of the percentage of LGBTQIA disabled characters' gender identity by race. Lime Green (White) 70.0%, Pink (Black) 10.0%, and Orange (IPOC) 20.0%.

Image 1.17: A bar graph showing the number of LGBTQIA disabled characters by gender identity and sexuality. The bars are teal. Options are Trans Female (3), Trans Male (2), Trans Non-Binary (1), Non-Binary (2), Gender Non-Conforming (2), Gay (38), Lesbian (19), Bisexual (17), and Asexual (1).

Image 1.18: A bar graph showing the number of Trans Disabled Characters. The bars are alternating in pink and blue. Options are White Trans Female (3), White Trans Non-Binary (1), White Non-Binary Male (1), White GNC Female (1), White GNC Male (1), Black Trans Male (1), and IPOC Non-Binary Male (1).

Image 1.19: A bar graph showing the number of disabled characters by nationality. The bars are dark pink. Options are American (1088), Canadian (40), Unknown (10), Mexican (7), French (7), Spanish (5), German (5), Scottish (4), Syrian (3), Japanese (3), Indian (3), Welsh (2), Nigerian (2), Vietnamese (1), Myanmar (1), Israeli (1), Farrsi (1), and African (1).

Image 1.20: A pie chart showing the number of characters, listed on the pie chart slices in black text, for the ages of disabled characters. Purple (Adult) 937, Green (Child) 57, Orange (Elder) 255, and Pink (Teenager) 98. There is a yellow pie sliver for Baby, but it is so small because there's only 1

character. You cannot even see the number one on the sliver to denote the character count.

Image 1.21: A donut pie chart showing the number and percentage of Disabled Characters by type. Teal (Bit) 678 (50.3%), Pink (Guest Star) 137 (10.2%), Dark Grey (Lead) 229 (17.0%) – with white text so it's visible, and Yellow (Supporting) 304 (22.6%).

Image 1.22: A donut pie chart showing the percentages of disabled actors playing disabled characters. Blue (No) 29.3%, Orange (Unknown) 62.5%, and Green (Yes) 8.2%.