

Calling the Shots:

Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Women working on UK-qualifying films 2003-2015

Report produced by AHRC-funded research project 'Calling the Shots: women and contemporary film culture in the UK, 2000-2015'. The source data for this report is the BFI's Research and Statistical Unit who provided a list of British-qualifying films from 2003-2015. The report analyses six key production roles: director, screenwriter, producer, executive producer, editor and cinematographer.

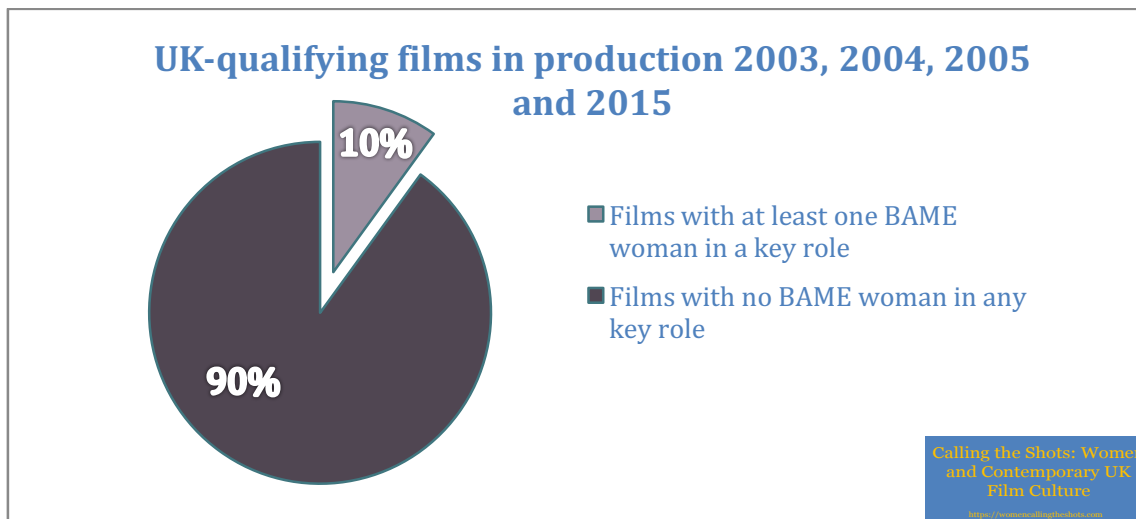
Report Authors: Dr Shelley Cobb, Prof Linda Ruth Williams, and Dr Natalie Wreyford (2019)

The inclusion of BAME women in key roles in UK film production has been distressingly low throughout the period of our research. It is a central goal of 'Calling the Shots' to highlight this inequality and to provide some of the evidence and tools to rectify the situation. A clear limitation of quantitative data is the difficulty in discussing the social constructions of race, but our primary concern is to **draw attention to this inequality** and benefit underrepresented individuals.¹

The **racial categories** that we have applied are defined by the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission. The small numbers of people in our dataset has made it necessary to aggregate the subcategories when presenting the data, even though this can lead to obscuring of important differences. As a result we employ four main racial categories. These are black, east Asian, south Asian and white. In order to get a clearer picture of racial inequality we also recorded nationality. This made possible distinctions between, for example, British people of Indian heritage and Indian people living and working outside the UK. It also allows for a complication of the category of 'white', since the white Caucasian category encompasses individuals who may be othered by sections of the British population (for example those of Middle Eastern origin). However, that is not the focus of this particular report.

The data drawn on for this report is from 4 years of UK qualifying films, a list of which was provided by the BFI. The years are 2003 (the earliest year for which we have data), 2004, 2005 and 2015 (the latest year for which we have data). In 4 years of data there were only 80 films out of 801 films with a BAME woman in a key role (director, screenwriter, editor, cinematographer, producer and executive producer). Across these 4 years, we found 60 BAME women working in 120 credited roles. This means that out of all 8784 credits, BAME women make up only 1.4% of these roles. This suggests that around **90% of UK qualifying films have no BAME women**.

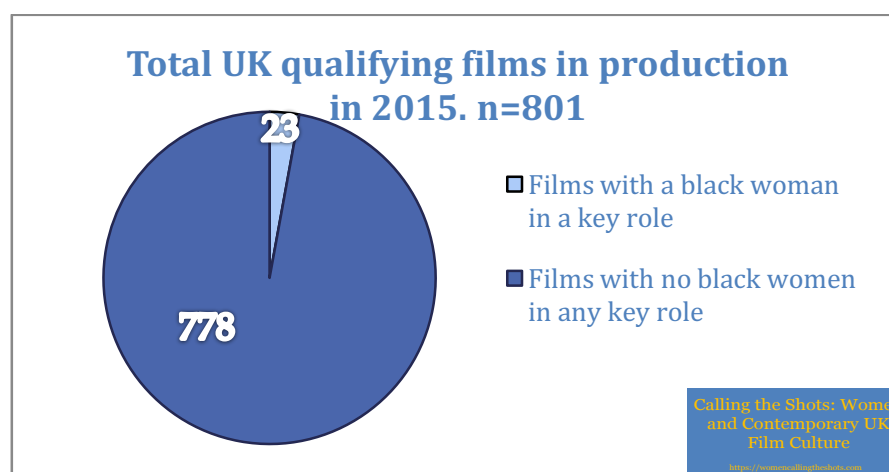
¹ For more on our methodology please see Natalie Wreyford and Shelley Cobb. "Data and Responsibility: Toward a Feminist Methodology for Producing Historical Data on Women in the Contemporary UK Film Industry" In *Feminist Media Histories* 3, no. 3 (2017): 107-132.



In 4 years we have only found **19 black women**. This includes black Britons, African Americans, African nationals and Afro-Caribbeans. They held these roles:

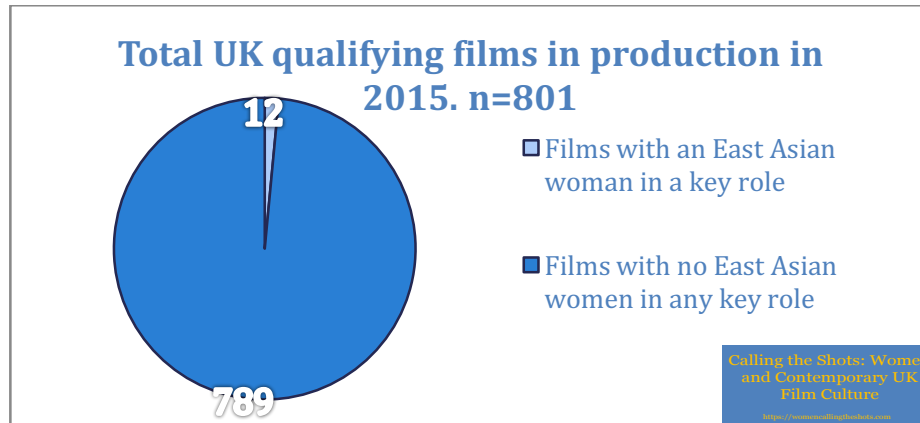
- 11 producers
- 2 executive producers
- 4 editors
- 6 directors
- 5 screenwriters
- 1 cinematographer

This is a total of 29 roles, which would show up in data graphs as being filled by black women. However, there are actually only 12 women being employed across these positions because several of them worked in multiple roles (such as director/producer). It is important to remember that when we look at the bigger numbers, as pitifully low as the numbers are, they actually reflect an even lower number of actual women being employed. Only 23 films have a black woman working in one of the six key roles out of 801.



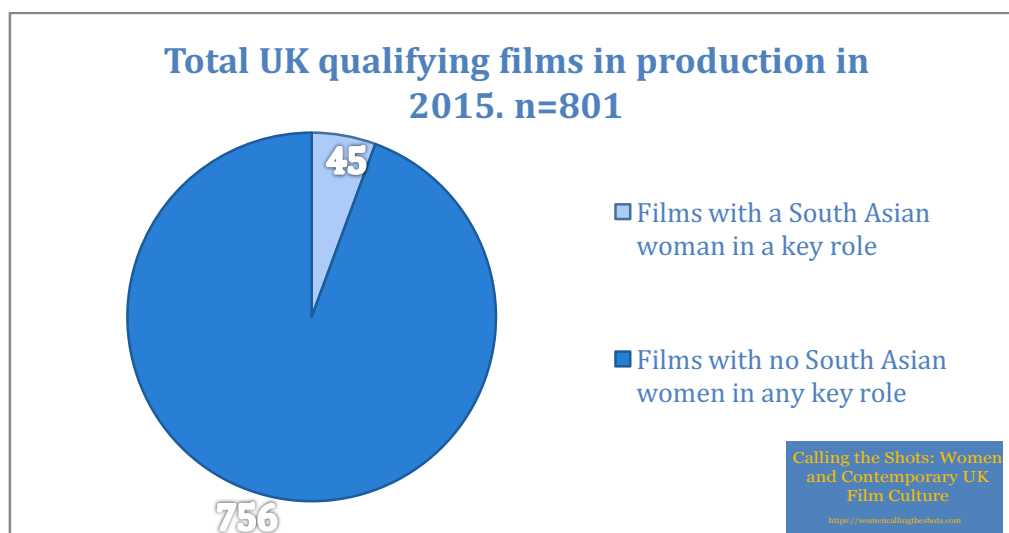
Just **15 East Asian women** worked on films in production, in 16 roles across 12 films. This includes Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean as well as East Asian Britons and Americans

- 7 producers
- 3 executive producers
- 1 editor
- 4 screenwriters
- 1 director
- 0 cinematographers

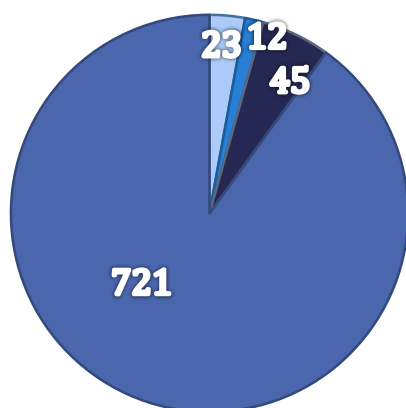


South Asian women worked on 45 films in 75 roles, but only 28 women were employed since many held multiple roles. This category includes British Indians, Indian nationals, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans.

- 49 producers
- 7 executive producers
- 2 editors
- 10 screenwriters
- 7 directors
- 0 cinematographers



Total UK qualifying films in production in 2015.
n=801



- Films with a black woman in a key role
- Films with an East Asian woman in a key role
- Films with a South Asian woman in a key role
- Films with no BAME women in any key role

Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary UK Film Culture
<https://womencallingtheshots.com>

