

# GLAAD's 'Where We Are on TV' report shows TV is telling more LGBTQ stories than ever

By Megan Townsend, Director of Entertainment Research & Analysis | November 7, 2019



GLAAD

This morning, GLAAD released its annual *Where We Are on TV* report; a comprehensive forecast of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) characters expected in primetime scripted programming in the 2019-20 television season. This is the 24th year GLAAD has tracked the presence of LGBTQ characters on broadcast and cable television, and the 15th *Where We Are on TV* report. Four years ago, GLAAD expanded its count to additionally quantify LGBTQ characters on original series that premiere on the streaming content providers Amazon, Hulu, and Netflix.

Of the 879 series regular characters expected to appear on broadcast primetime scripted programming in the coming year, 90 (10.2 percent) were counted as LGBTQ. This is the highest percentage of LGBTQ regular characters GLAAD has counted on primetime scripted broadcast programming, and up from the previous year's 8.8 percent. Last year, GLAAD called on the broadcast networks to ensure that 10 percent of primetime broadcast scripted series regulars were LGBTQ by 2020. In just one year, the networks met and exceeded this call.



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There were an additional 30 recurring LGBTQ characters on broadcast. This is 120 total LGBTQ regular and recurring characters on primetime scripted broadcast TV, up from the previous year's 113. The five broadcast networks are ABC, CBS, The CW, FOX, and NBC. The CW counts the highest percentage of LGBTQ series regulars of all series regulars at 15.4 percent.



Notably for the first time this year, LGBTQ women on primetime broadcast scripted series outnumber LGBTQ men on those programs. Of the 120 LGBTQ characters on broadcast, 53 percent are women and 47 percent are men. There is one non-binary character on broadcast. Additionally, this is the second year in a row on broadcast where LGBTQ people of color outnumber white LGBTQ people, 52 percent to 48 percent.

GLAAD is calling on the industry to make sure that 20 percent of series regular characters on primetime scripted broadcast series are LGBTQ by 2025. Further, we would challenge all platforms – broadcast, cable, and streaming – that within the next two years, at least half of LGBTQ characters on each platform are also people of color. This is an important next step towards ensuring that our entertainment reflects the world in which it is created and the audience consuming it.

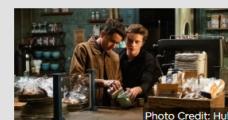
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our entertainment reflects the world in which it is created and the audience consuming it.

GLAAD and Harris Poll's *Accelerating Acceptance* study shows that 20 percent of Americans aged 18-34 are LGBTQ. And this applies across demographics – the *General Social Survey* from NORC at the University of Chicago this summer found that 23 percent of Black women in America 18-34 identify as bisexual, and the *University's GenForward* survey reports that 1 in 5 Latinx Millennials are LGBTQ.

"Last year, GLAAD called on the television industry to increase the number of LGBTQ characters and more accurately reflect the world we live in, and they responded by exceeding this challenge," said Sarah Kate Ellis, President & CEO of GLAAD. "At a time when the cultural climate is growing increasingly divisive, increased representation of LGBTQ stories and characters on television is especially critical to advance LGBTQ acceptance. Shows like *Pose*, *Schitt's Creek*, *Batwoman*, and *Billions* demonstrate that not only are LGBTQ stories and characters on TV becoming more diverse, but that viewers everywhere continue to respond with extreme positivity."

The number of LGBTQ regular characters counted on cable increased from 120 last year to 121 this year, while recurring LGBTQ characters is up from 88 to 94. This is 215 regular and recurring LGBTQ characters, though it should be noted that 48 of these characters are not expected to return for the 2020-21 season due to series cancellations, announced finales, or characters being written off but who appeared as a regular or recurring character during the research period.

On cable, Showtime is the most LGBTQ-inclusive network with 38 regular and recurring LGBTQ characters expected on the network's primetime scripted series. The majority of those characters will appear on the upcoming *The L Word: Generation Q*. FX is next at 31 LGBTQ characters, and Freeform following with 26. These three networks together account for 44 percent (95 characters) of all LGBTQ representation in primetime scripted cable, and 15 of the 20 transgender characters (75 percent) on cable.



On scripted streaming originals on Amazon, Hulu, and Netflix, LGBTQ regular characters are up with 109 (from 75) and an additional 44 recurring. This is 153 total LGBTQ characters expected on scripted streaming originals.



The number of transgender characters is up this year, from 26 to 38 characters across broadcast, cable, and streaming. Of those 38 characters, 21 are transgender women, 12 are transgender men, and five are non-binary characters. This reporting season also notes a historic first: Brian Michael Smith has become the first Black transgender man to be cast as a series regular in primetime scripted broadcast for his role on the upcoming 9-1-1: *Lone Star*. His character, firefighter Paul Strickland, will also be primetime scripted broadcast TV's first series regular Black trans man character.

While the number of bisexual+ characters totaled across broadcast, cable, and streaming is slightly up this year (to 128 from 117), the overall percentage actually dropped one point to 26 percent of the total 488 LGBTQ characters. GLAAD counted 90 women, 36 men, and two non-binary people as bisexual+. Bisexual+ people (an umbrella term which can include those who identify as bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer, and more) actually make up the majority of the community. UCLA's Williams Institute reports that bisexual people make up 52 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in America.



There is only one asexual character counted in this year's report, Todd Chavez on Netflix's *BoJack Horseman*. The show will air its final episodes within this reporting season, so we hope to see other networks and streaming services step up in this area.

Other encouraging findings include a record-high percentage of series regulars on broadcast television who are people of color (47 percent, 409 out of 879), a record-high percentage of women who are series regulars on broadcast television (46 percent, 402 of 879), as well as a record-high percentage of regular characters with disabilities on broadcast television (3.1 percent).

"This year's Where We Are on TV study found great progress towards a more LGBTQ-inclusive television landscape, and highlighted welcome increases of transgender men and queer women in upcoming programming," said Megan Townsend, Director of Entertainment Research & Analysis at GLAAD. "However, it is also



important to note that there is still work to be done. On cable TV, just three networks account for 44 percent of all LGBTQ representation on primetime scripted series. Similarly, programming from four dedicated producers and creators who prioritize inclusion, Greg Berlanti, Lena Waithe, Ryan Murphy, and Shonda Rhimes, accounts for 14 percent of total LGBTQ characters across broadcast, cable, and streaming originals. We hope to see all networks follow their lead, and work towards reflecting the reality of their audience and the culture.”

Key findings include:

- The report found a record-high percentage of Latinx series regulars (up to 9% from 8%), as well as a record-tying number of Black (held steady at 22%), and Asian Pacific Islander series regulars (held steady at 8%) across broadcast television regular characters.
- Of the 879 series regular characters scheduled to appear on broadcast scripted primetime television this season, 90 (10.2%) are LGBTQ. There are an additional 30 LGBTQ recurring characters.
- Of the 488 total regular and recurring LGBTQ characters on scripted primetime broadcast, cable, and streaming programs, only 38 (8%) are transgender, and they appear on only 28 shows.
- Bisexual+ characters make up 26% of all LGBTQ characters across all three platforms. This is a one percent decrease from last year, and far from the reality that bisexual+ people make up the majority of the community.
- Netflix again counts the highest number of LGBTQ regular and recurring characters on their scripted originals among streaming services tallied, while Showtime is the most LGBTQ-inclusive network on cable. The CW is again the most LGBTQ-inclusive broadcast network, with 15.4% of series regulars counted as LGBTQ.
- GLAAD found 109 regular LGBTQ characters on original scripted series on the streaming services Amazon, Hulu, and Netflix, an increase of 34 from last year's tally. There are an additional 44 recurring LGBTQ characters, an increase of seven from last year. This is a total of 153 LGBTQ characters.
- GLAAD found 121 regular LGBTQ characters on primetime scripted cable series, an increase of one from the previous year. There are an additional 94 recurring LGBTQ characters, up from 88 in last year's report. This is 215 regular and recurring LGBTQ characters expected on primetime scripted cable series.
- Broadcast hits a new record high percentage: 46% of regular characters counted on broadcast primetime television were women. This is up three percentage points from last year and a record high, but still underrepresents the reality that women make up 51% of the U.S. population.
- This year, there is only one asexual character counted across all platforms, (Todd Chavez on Netflix's *Bojack Horseman*). This is a drop from two asexual characters last year.
- The percentage of regular characters with a disability on broadcast is up to 27 characters or 3.1 percent. This is the highest percentage GLAAD has found, but still falls short of the U.S. population of people with disabilities.

GLAAD's annual *Where We Are On TV* report not only propels national conversations about LGBTQ representation, but informs GLAAD's own advocacy within the television industry. GLAAD uses this yearly data to create a clearer picture of the stories and images being presented by television networks, and to work alongside the networks and content creators to tell fair, accurate, and inclusive LGBTQ stories on screen.

Join the conversation by following @glaad on Twitter, and using the hashtag #RepresentationMatters. [Read the full 2019-20 Where We Are on TV report at   
glaad.org/whereweareontv.](#)

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