

# Writers and directors of film and TV/SVOD fiction 2015-2023 figures

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# Introduction and methodology

**This report provides an analysis of the writers and directors of European theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction produced in Europe\* between 2015 and 2023.**

## The data

The underlying data used in this report comes from several sources:

- In a first step, the Observatory's LUMIERE database (for theatrical films) and the Observatory's annual survey (for TV/SVOD fiction) were used to compile a list of works produced between 2015 and 2023.
- In a second step, the directors and writers of each work were identified using the Observatory's LUMIERE database (for cinema directors) and IMDb (for other positions). In total, almost 36 000 different authors were identified. The graphs on page 7 shows how these creators were involved in writing and/or directing theatrical films and/or TV/SVOD fiction.
- In total, almost 36 000 different authors were identified.

## Limits

- The identification rate of directors and writers varies; in particular, for TV/SVOD fiction, the sample is less representative for daily telenovelas/soaps.
- The data are based on films and TV/SVOD fiction works actually released. They therefore do not include directing or writing assignments for the development of works that were ultimately not released.

## Why is the 2023 data ‘provisional’?

Even though our list of films and TV/SVOD fiction films and TV series is updated up to 2023, there is a delay they are properly reflected in the IMDb database we use to identify writers and directors. Therefore, we believe that the 2023 data is still provisional, and that more attention should be paid to trends over the past few years than to short-term developments between 2022 and 2023.

## Important definitions

- Throughout the report, the term ‘**professionals**’ is used when providing cumulative data for screenwriters and directors.
- Unless otherwise indicated, the term ‘**theatrical films**’ includes both fiction and documentary films. In some cases, specific data are provided excluding theatrical documentary films or specific to documentary theatrical films.
- Otherwise indicated, the term ‘**assignment for a TV/SVOD series**’ refers to a writing or directing credit in at least one episode of a TV season. In other words, different seasons are counted as different assignments but the number of episodes in each season is not taken into account. In some cases, however, we refer to a TV/SVOD series project, taking into account all seasons of the TV/SVOD series.

## Structure of the report

There are several ways of approaching the analysis of the population of writers and directors of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction. The report mainly follows a role-based approach:

- Section B covers screenwriters working in theatrical film and TV/SVOD fiction.
- Section C deals with directors working in theatrical film and TV/SVOD fiction.
- However, a different perspective is provided in Section A, which provides an overview following an approach by **category of work** (film and TV/SVOD).

## Key findings

## **Nearly 36 000 professionals active between 2015 and 2023**

The Observatory's data show that, between 2015 and 2023, almost 36 000 professionals were active in the writing or directing of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction. Three main groups cumulatively account for around 70% of active professionals: writers who work exclusively for either theatrical film or for TV/SVOD fiction but do not direct and professionals who both write and direct for films only.

## **Persistence of the (theatrical) 'film d'auteur' model**

77% of European theatrical films involved a writer acting also as director. Consequently, between 2015 and 2023, 44% of all professionals involved in writing or directing theatrical films made at least one film that they both wrote and directed. This means, on the one hand, that 48% of screenwriters between 2015 and 2023 only wrote one or more films that they also directed and, on the other hand, that only 55% of screenwriting jobs are allocated to screenwriters who are not also directors.

## **Writing and directing largely separate in TV/SVOD fiction**

Conversely, in TV/SVOD fiction, the roles of writer and director are almost always distinct: only 11% of professionals who have made at least one TV/SVOD fiction film or episode of a series only made a fiction film that they both wrote and co-directed.

## TV/SVOD directors are also active in theatrical films

A significant proportion (43%) of all TV/SVOD fiction directors active between 2015 and 2023 have directed at least one theatrical film at some point, including 30% between 2015 and 2023.

Conversely, as there are many more directors active in theatrical films than in TV/SVOD fiction, only a small proportion of theatrical film directors have also worked for TV/SVOD fiction.

## Impressive turnover in theatrical films

Looking back, 44% of the film writers of 2015 and 42% of the films directors of 2015 never worked again since, either as writer or director, be it in theatrical film or in TV/SVOD fiction. The picture is very different for TV/SVOD fiction, where 85% of 2015 TV/SVOD writers and 90% of 2015 TV/SVOD directors continued to work, by far only in TV/SVOD fiction and in the same role.

## More films produced but more assignments in TV/SVOD fiction

Around 15 000 European theatrical films and around 10 000 European TV/SVOD films and TV/SVOD seasons are included in our sample for 2015-2023. However, TV/SVOD fiction provides for more assignments\*, as more writers and more directors are involved in a TV/SVOD fiction series *season* (4.3 and 2.1, respectively) than in a theatrical film (1.8 and 1.1, respectively).

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



## **More assignments in TV/SVOD for a smaller number of professionals**

TV/VOD assignments are proportionally distributed between fewer active professionals than film assignments. Working in TV/SVOD fiction implies more recurrence, with certain series running for several seasons. Conversely, theatrical film seems structurally open to newcomers (on average, between 2015 and 2023, 51% of the theatrical film directors active in a given year directed their first theatrical film).

This translates into a very different level of activity between the two content categories: between 2015 and 2023, theatrical film writers wrote 1.4 films vs. 3.3 TV/fiction films or seasons for TV/SVOD writers; theatrical film directors directed 1.4 films vs. 3.6 TV/fiction film or seasons for TV/SVOD directors.

## **Made for TV/SVOD films more similar to theatrical films**

Within made-for-TV/SVOD fiction, films are closer to the theatrical film model: 1.8 writers for theatrical films vs. 2.1 for TV/SVOD films; 1.1 directors for theatrical films vs. 1.3 for TV/SVOD films.

## **Theatrical documentaries are a silo**

Within theatrical films, fiction and documentaries are two almost independent segments: out of all theatrical film writers active between 2015 and 2023, only 3% wrote both for fiction and documentary films (4% for directors). Documentary writers are more likely than fiction writers to have both written and directed their works, and professionals who wrote or directed a documentary in 2015 are more likely to have subsequently left the sector.

## FILM WRITERS

Between 2015 and 2023:

- 18 600 active writers
- 48% wrote only films they directed
- 1.4 films (co)written
- 1.8 writers per film including writers also directors; 0.9 'stand-alone' writers
- 44% of 2015 film writers were inactive between 2016 and 2023

## TV/SVOD FICTION WRITERS

Between 2015 and 2023:

- 12 900 active writers
- 2 projects (co)written, representing 14.2 episodes or TV films\*
- 4.3 writer per season or TV film
- 15% of 2015 TV/SVOD writers were inactive between 2016 and 2023

## FILM DIRECTORS

Between 2015 and 2023:

- 13 600 active directors
- 63% only directed only films they wrote
- 1.4 films (co)directed
- 1.1 director per film
- 42% of 2015 film directors were inactive between 2016 and 2023

## TV/SVOD FICTION DIRECTORS

Between 2015 and 2023:

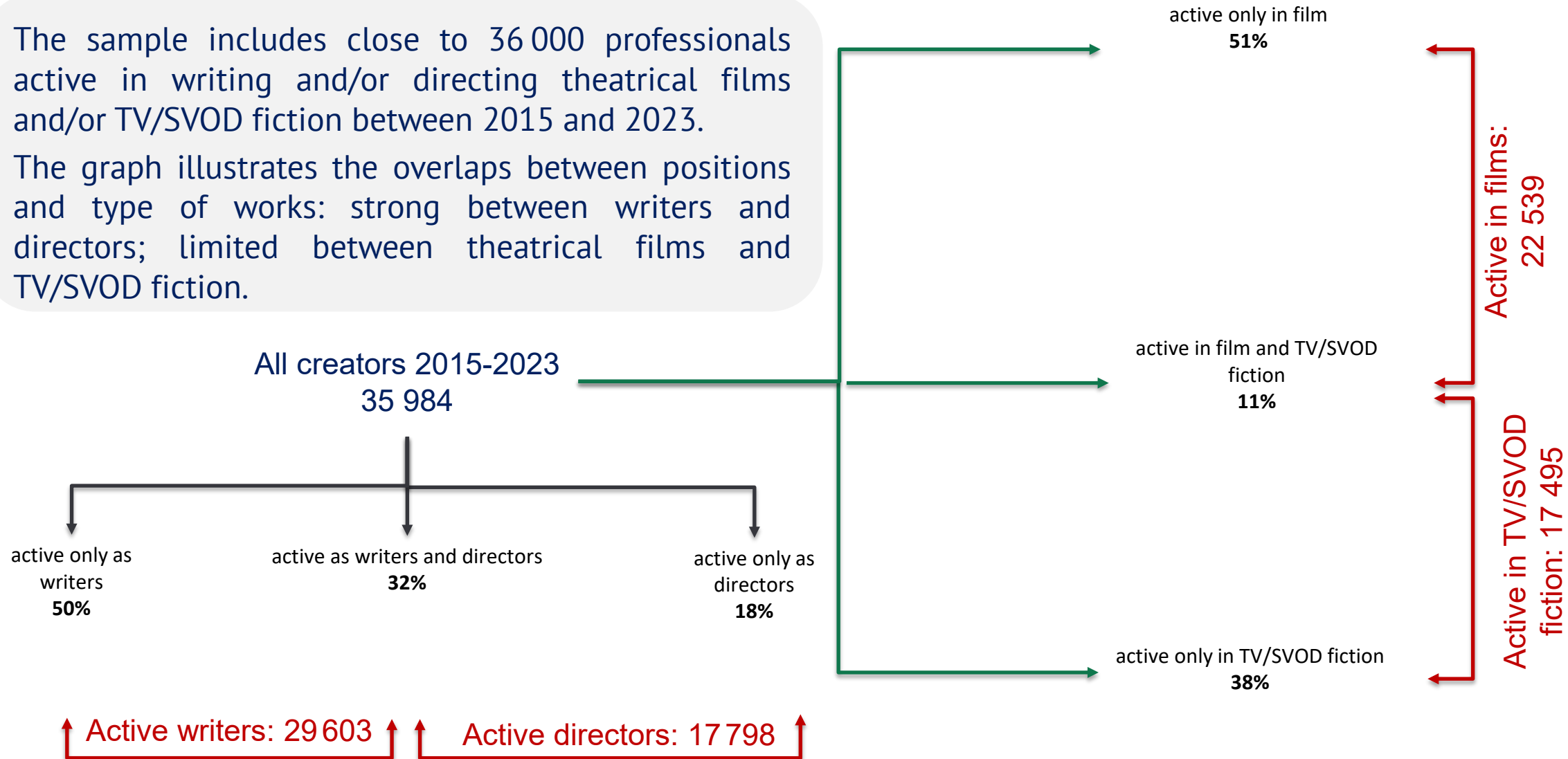
- 6 000 active directors
- 2.4 projects (co)directed, representing 14 episodes or TV films\*
- 2.1 directors per season or TV film
- 43% also directed a theatrical film
- 10% of 2015 TV/SVOD directors were inactive between 2016 and 2023

\* Excluding seasons with more than 52 episodes.

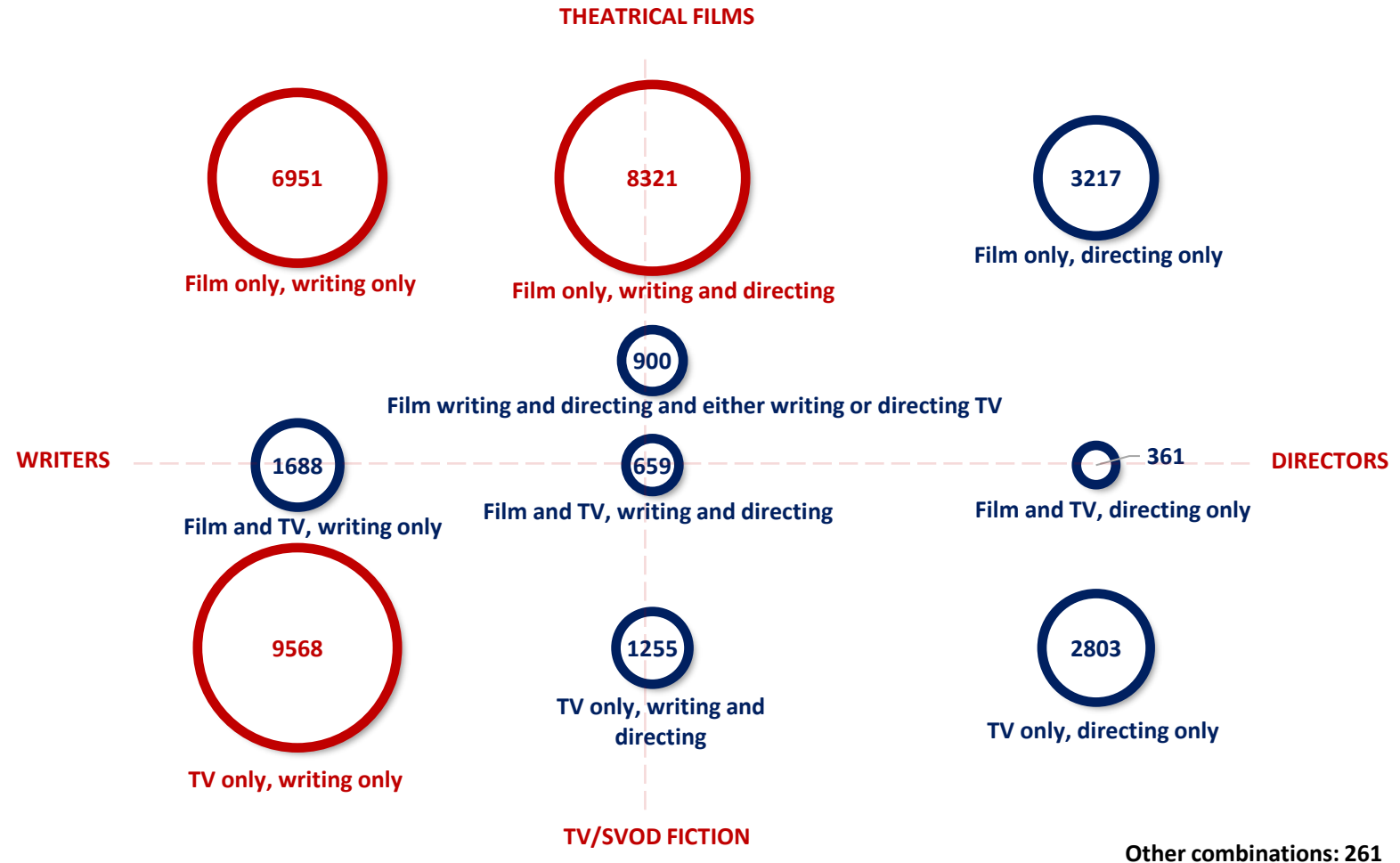
## **A. Overview of all active professionals**

The sample includes close to 36 000 professionals active in writing and/or directing theatrical films and/or TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2023.

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



3 main groups comprise close to 70% of the around 36 000 professionals active in theatrical films and/or TV fiction between 2015 and 2023: writers working exclusively either for film or for TV/SVOD fiction, but who do not direct, and professionals both writing and directing for films only.

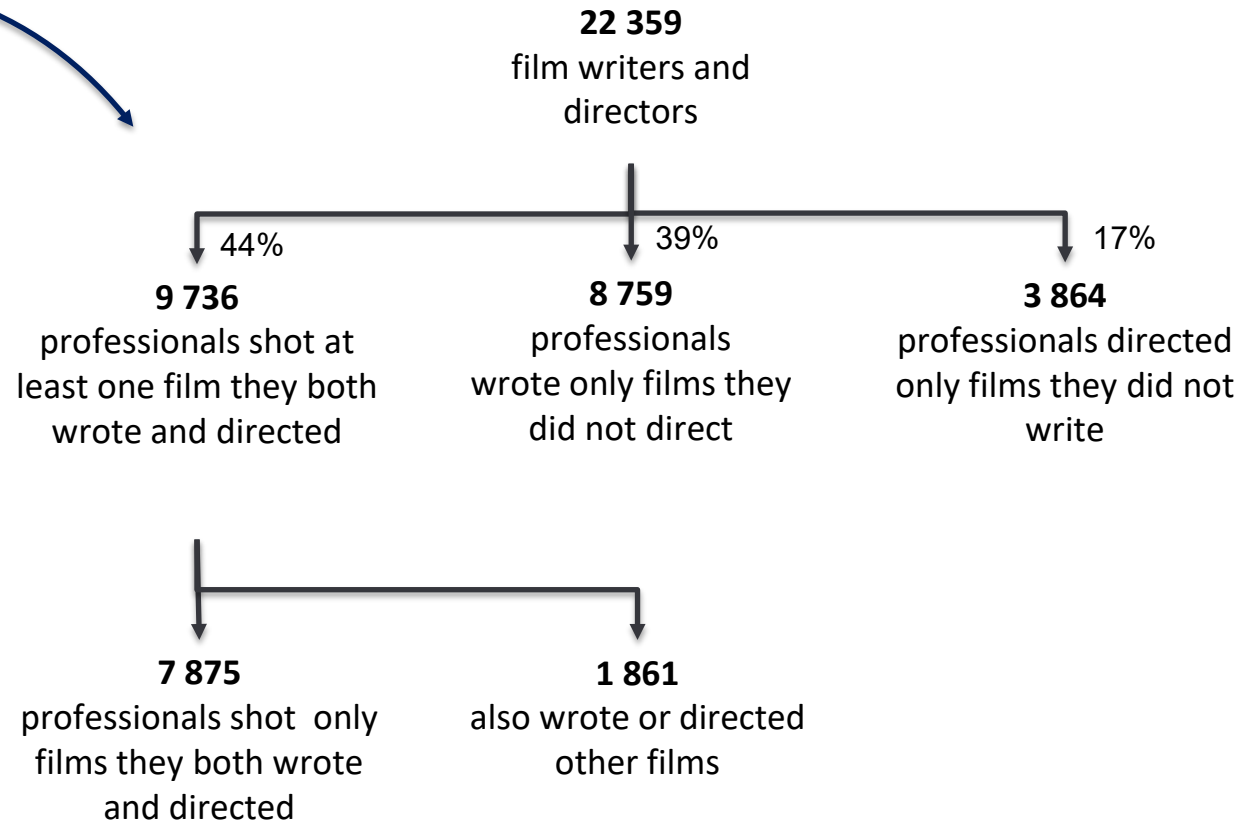


The data includes all **screenwriters and directors** active in **theatrical films**.

Over 22 000 professionals (co)wrote and/or (co)directed at least one theatrical film between 2015 and 2023.

44% of them shot films they both (co)wrote and (co)directed.

## ACTIVE THEATRICAL FILMS DIRECTORS AND WRITERS (2015-2023)



Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2023

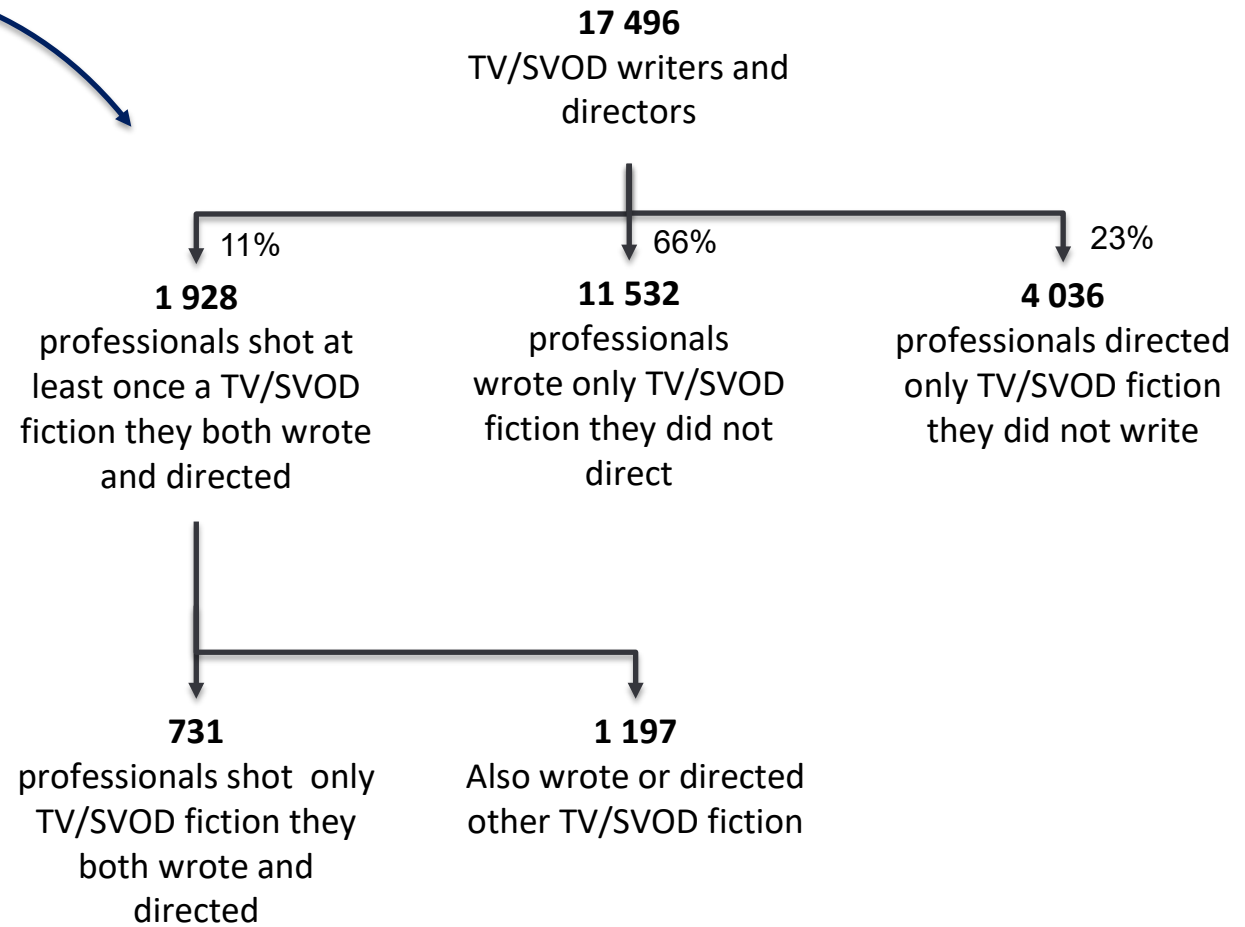
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

## ACTIVE TV/SVOD FICTION DIRECTORS AND WRITERS (2015-2023)

The data includes all **screenwriters and directors** active in **TV/SVOD fiction**.

Over 17 000 professionals (co)wrote and/or (co)directed at least one TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2023.

Only 11% of them shot TV/SVOD fiction they both (co)wrote and (co)directed.



Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2023

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

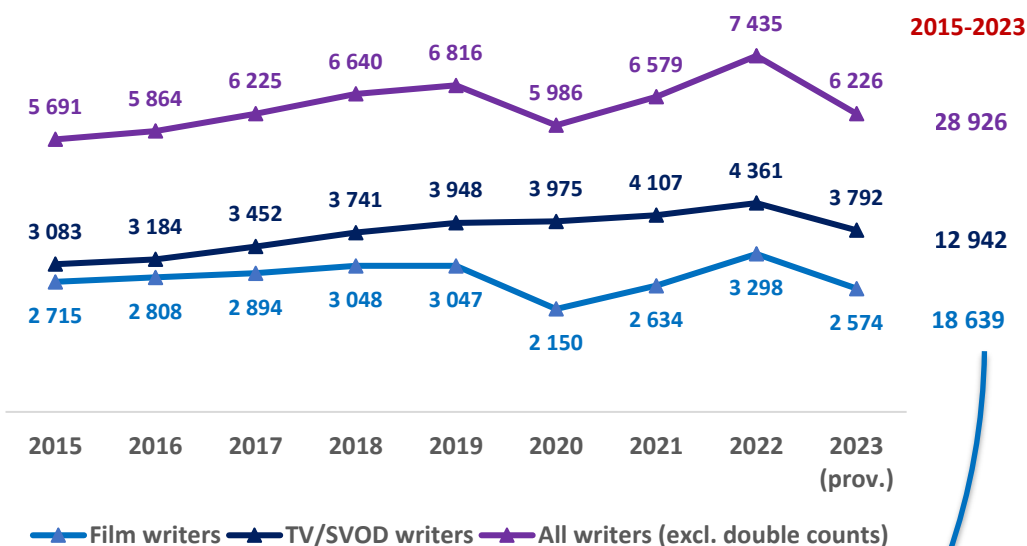
## **B. Writers of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction**



More than 29 000 writers (co-)wrote at least one theatrical film or one TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2023.

Although more writers were active in theatrical films than in TV/SVOD fiction each year, when looking at the period 2015-2023, fewer different writers were involved in TV/SVOD fiction than in theatrical films, suggesting that TV/SVOD writers worked more frequently.

ACTIVE THEATRICAL FILM AND TV/SVOD WRITERS (2015-2023)



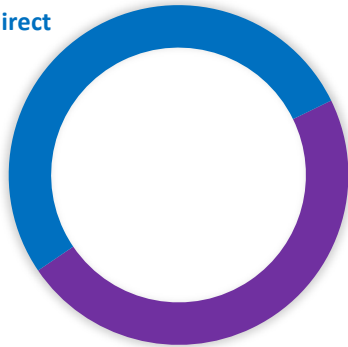
Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2023

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

- Out of 18 639 film writers:
- 24% wrote only documentaries
  - 73% wrote only fiction
  - 3% wrote both

Almost half of theatrical film writers active between 2015 and 2023 only (co-)wrote films they also (co-)directed...

Wrote at least one film they did not direct  
52%

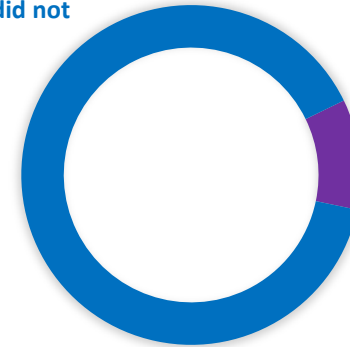


Wrote only films they directed  
48%

ACTIVE THEATRICAL FILM WRITERS (2015-2023)

...conversely, active TV/SVOD fiction writers mainly wrote works they did not direct.

Wrote at least one episode they did not direct  
89%



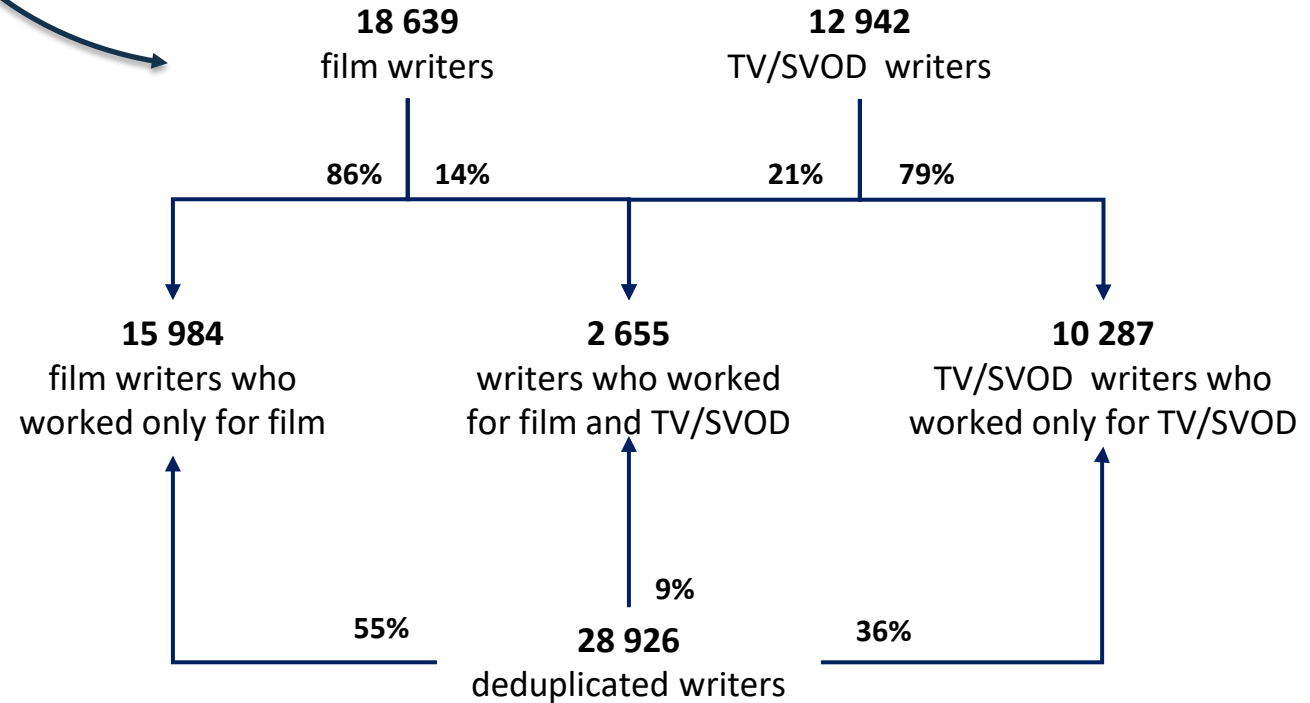
Wrote only episodes they directed  
11%

ACTIVE TV/SVOD FILM WRITERS (2015-2023)

67% for writers who were only active in documentaries

All film writers are considered, including documentary film writers

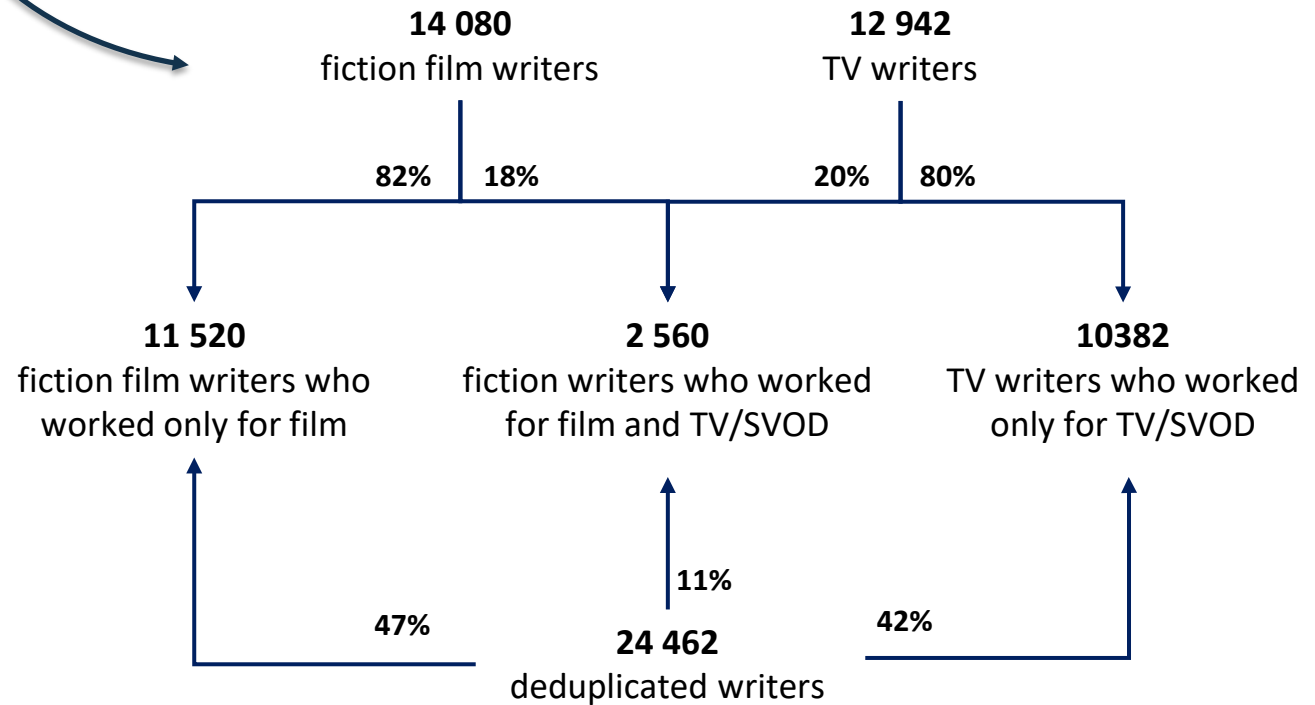
## ACTIVE WRITERS (2015-2023)



Only 9% of all active writers between 2015 and 2023 worked both for film and TV/SVOD.

Only writers of fiction films are considered

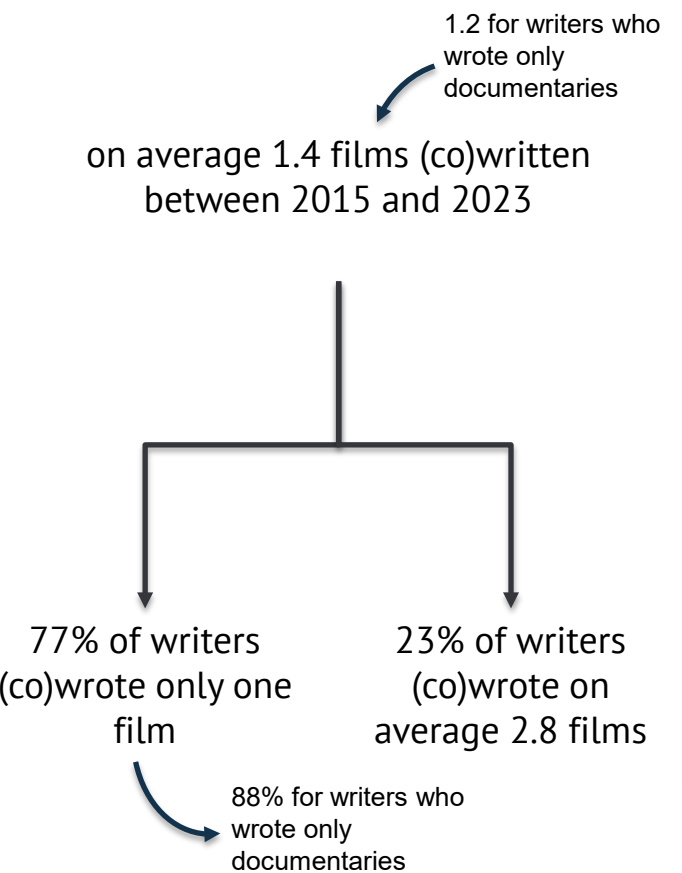
## ACTIVE FICTION WRITERS (2015-2023)



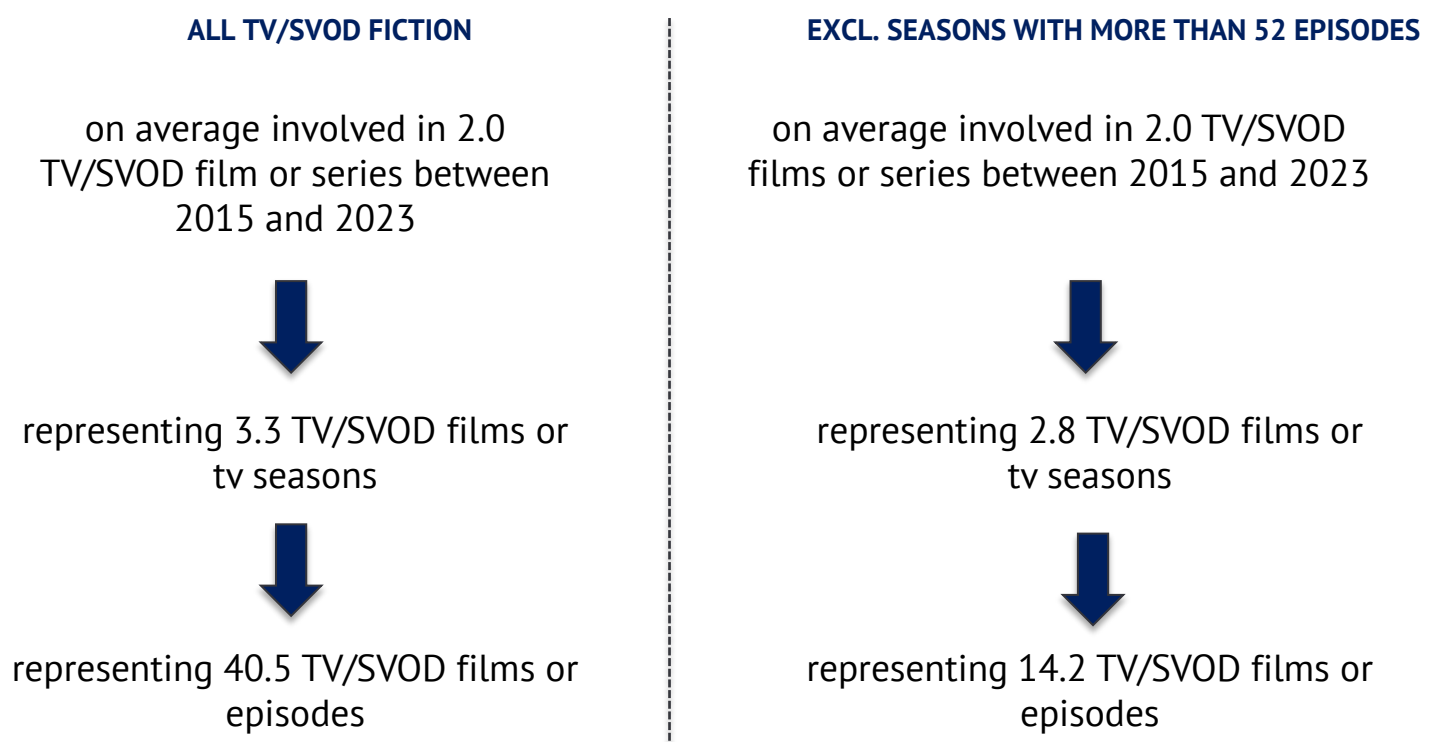
Looking only at active fiction writers, the results are similar: only 11% of all active fiction writers between 2015 and 2023 worked for both film and TV/SVOD.

77% of theatrical films writers active between 2015 and 2023 only wrote one film.  
Active TV/SVOD fiction writers took part in 2 projects representing about 3 TV seasons.

### ACTIVITY OF THEATRICAL FILM WRITERS (2015-2023)

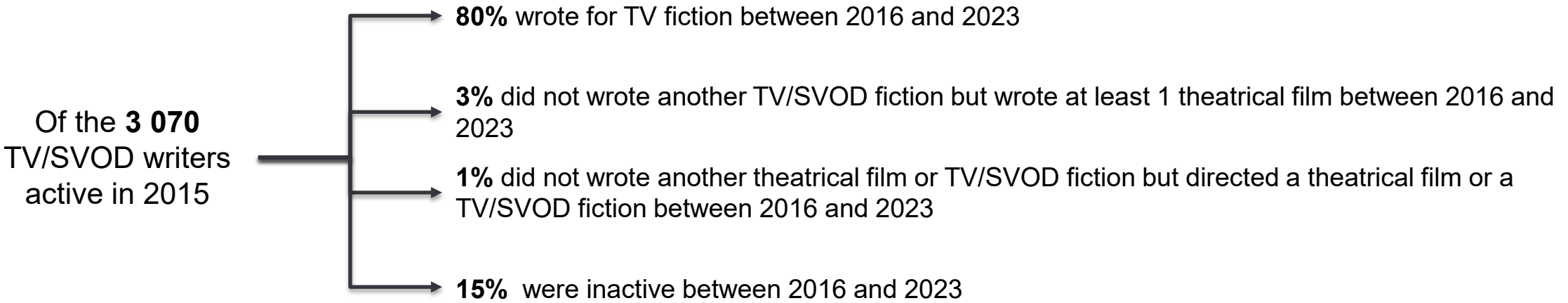
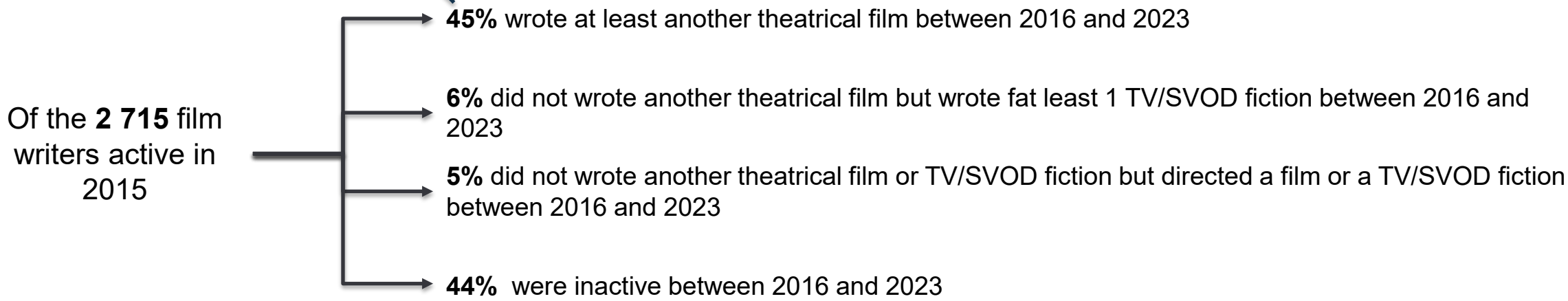


### ACTIVITY OF TV/SVOD FICTION WRITERS (2015-2023)



Looking at the activity between 2016 and 2023 of writers active in 2015 shows a very contrasting situation between writing for film and writing for TV/SVOD fiction: only 15% of 2015 TV/SVOD fiction writers were inactive between 2016 and 2023, vs. 44% for 2015 film writers.

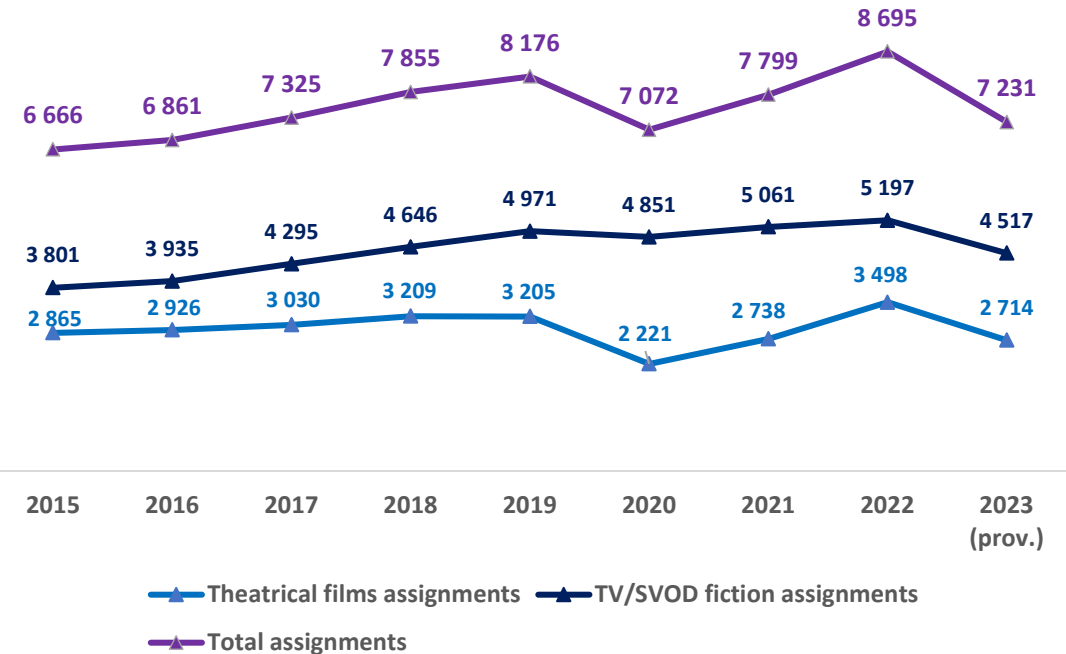
Only 29% for documentary films writers



Nearly two-thirds of writing assignments come from TV/SVOD fiction.

Excluding 2023 provisional figures, TV/SVOD writing assignments have grown significantly faster than theatrical film assignments.

### WRITERS' ASSIGNMENTS (2015-2023)

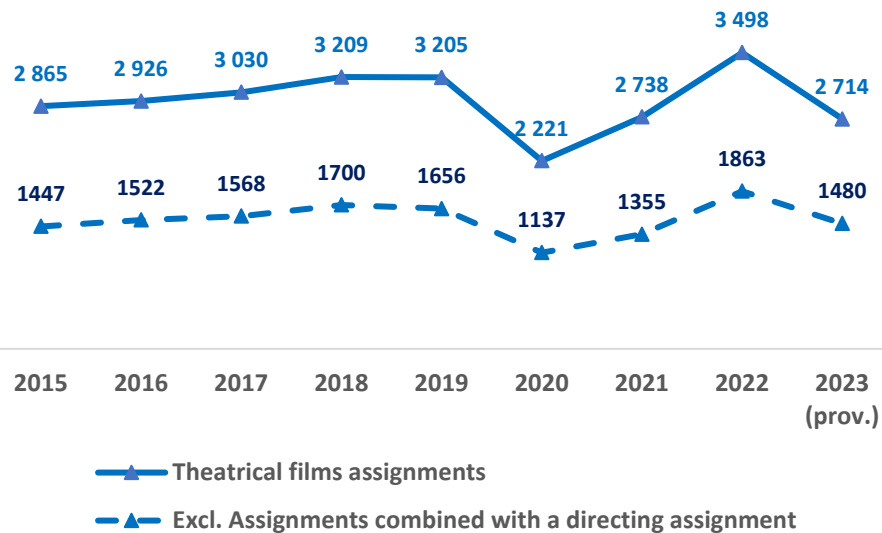


Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV/SVOD film or a TV/SVOD season, no matter the number of episodes for which the writer was credited

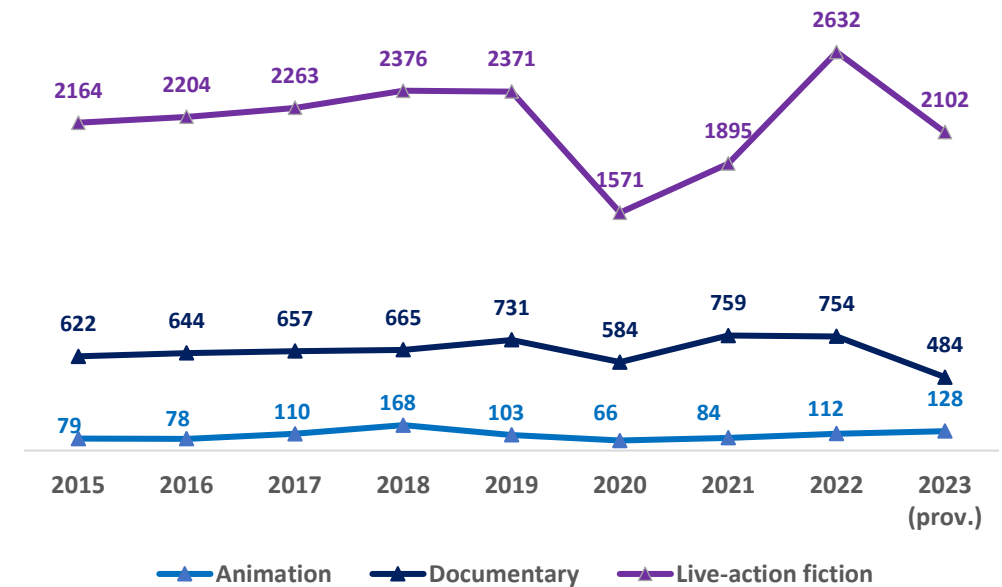
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

About 45% of the 2023 writing assignments were combined with a directing assignment for the same film. Most scriptwriting assignments for theatrical films correspond to fiction films.

## THEATRICAL FILM (CO)WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (2015-2023)



## THEATRICAL FILMS WRITERS' ASSIGNMENTS BY GENRE (2015-2023)

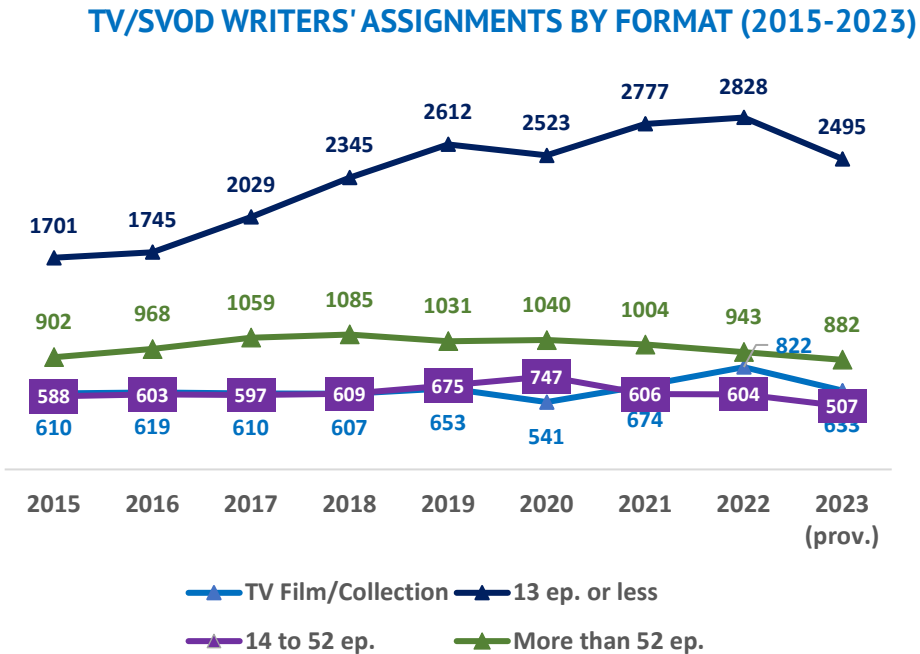


Assignment: writing credit for a theatrical film

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory



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



Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV/SVOD film or a TV/SVOD season, no matter the number of episodes for which the writer was credited

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

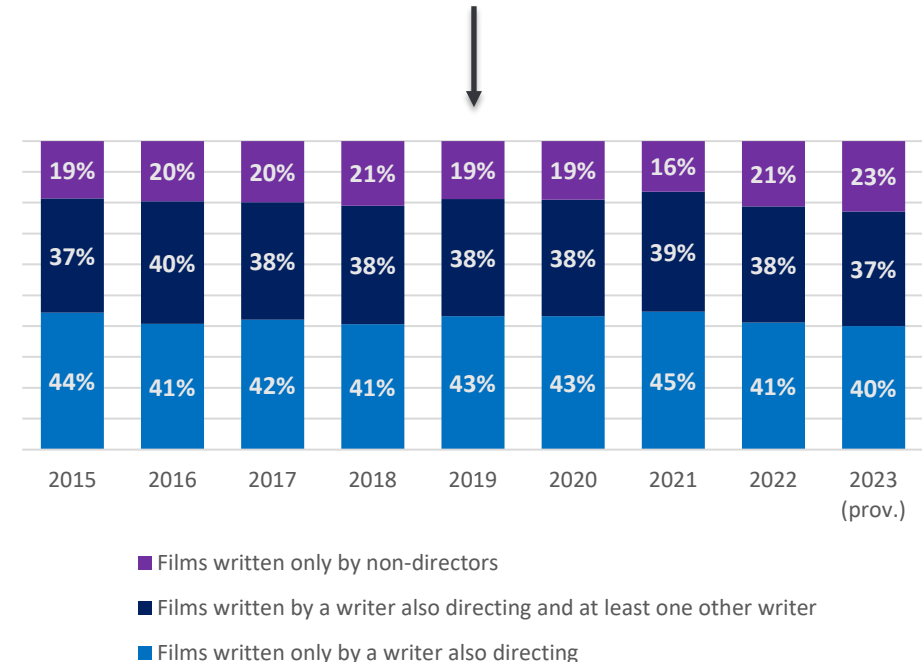
On average, there were 1.8 writers per film between 2015 and 2023, and 0.9 writers excluding writers also directing.

In 2023, the writing team of 77% of films included a director-writer.

In 2023, the writing team of 60% of films included at least one non-directing writer.

1.6 for documentary films

On average 1.8 writers per film between 2015 and 2023

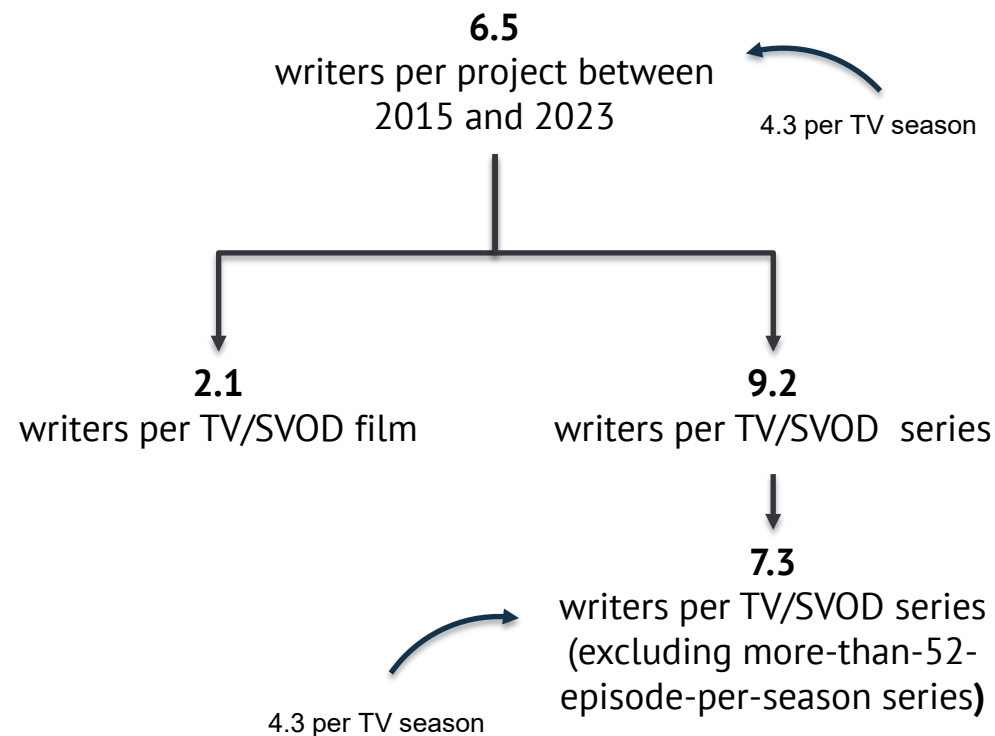


51% of films with at least 2 writers

On average, there were 6.5 writers per TV/SVOD fiction project between 2015 and 2023.

The figure was only 2.1 for TV films, in other words, similar to theatrical films but with many fewer cases of writers also acting as director.

9.2 writers participated in the writing of a TV series.



Project: a TV film or a TV series, whatever the number of seasons

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

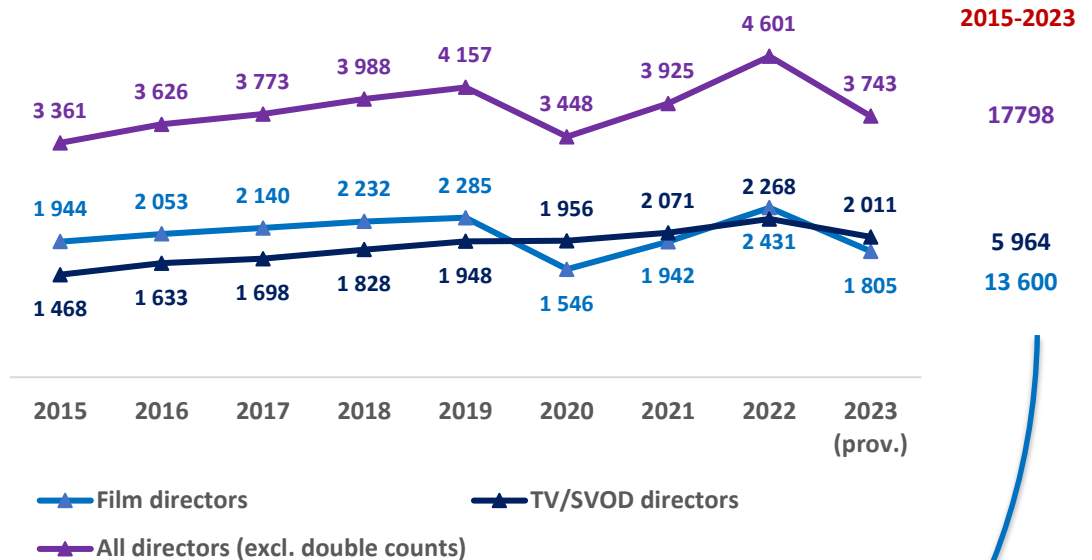
## **C. Directors of theatrical films and TV/SVOD fiction**

About 18 000 directors (co)directed at least one theatrical film or a one TV/SVOD fiction between 2015 and 2023.

The number of active TV/SVOD fiction directors has caught-up with the number of active theatrical film directors.

But the total number of active TV/SVOD directors between 2015 and 2023 remains significantly lower, as TV/SVOD directors work far more often than theatrical film directors.

### ACTIVE THEATRICAL FILM AND TV/SVOD DIRECTORS (2015-2023)



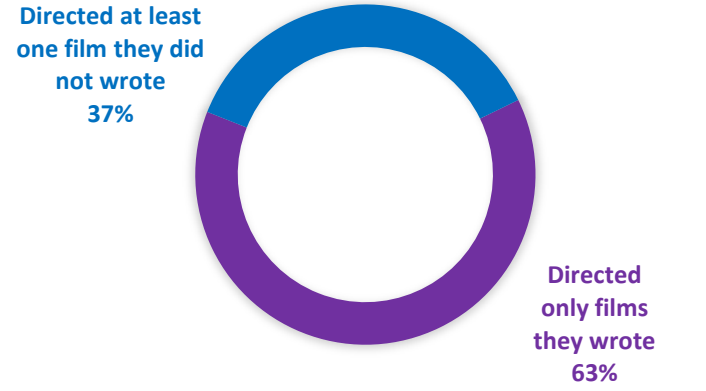
Active: credited for at least one work between 2015 and 2023

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

Out of 13 600 film directors:

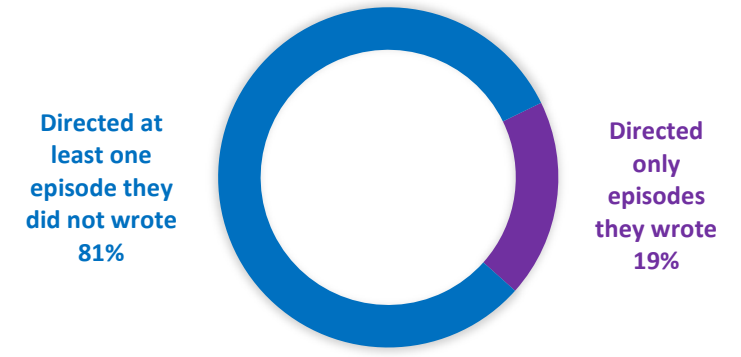
- 36% directed only documentaries
- 60% directed only fiction
- 4% wrote both

About two-thirds of theatrical film directors active between 2015 and 2023 only (co)directed films they also (co)wrote...



ACTIVE THEATRICAL FILM DIRECTORS (2015-2023)

...conversely, active TV/SVOD fiction directors mainly directed works they did not write.



ACTIVE TV/SVOD FILM DIRECTORS (2015-2023)

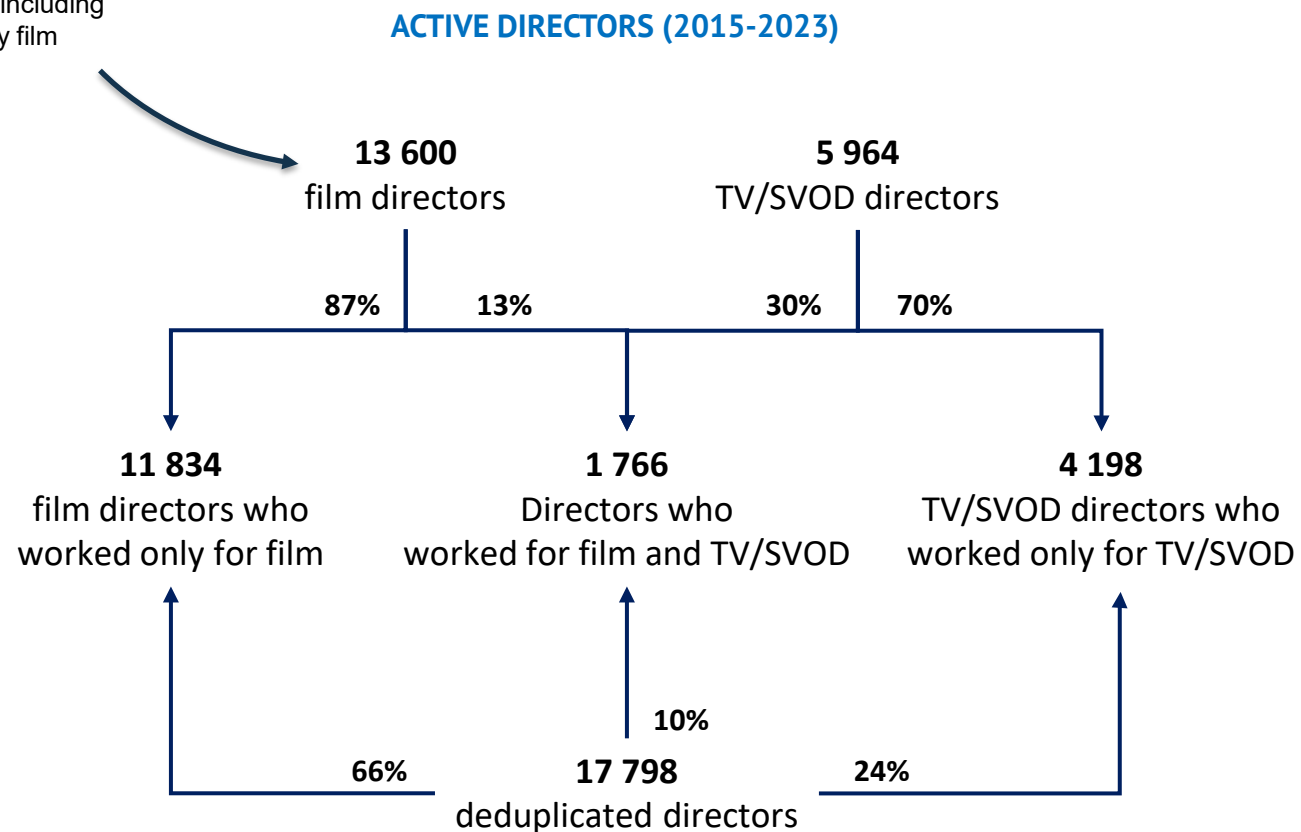
58% for directors who were only active in documentaries

All film directors are considered, including documentary film directors

Only 10% of all active directors between 2015 and 2023 have worked for both film and TV/SVOD.

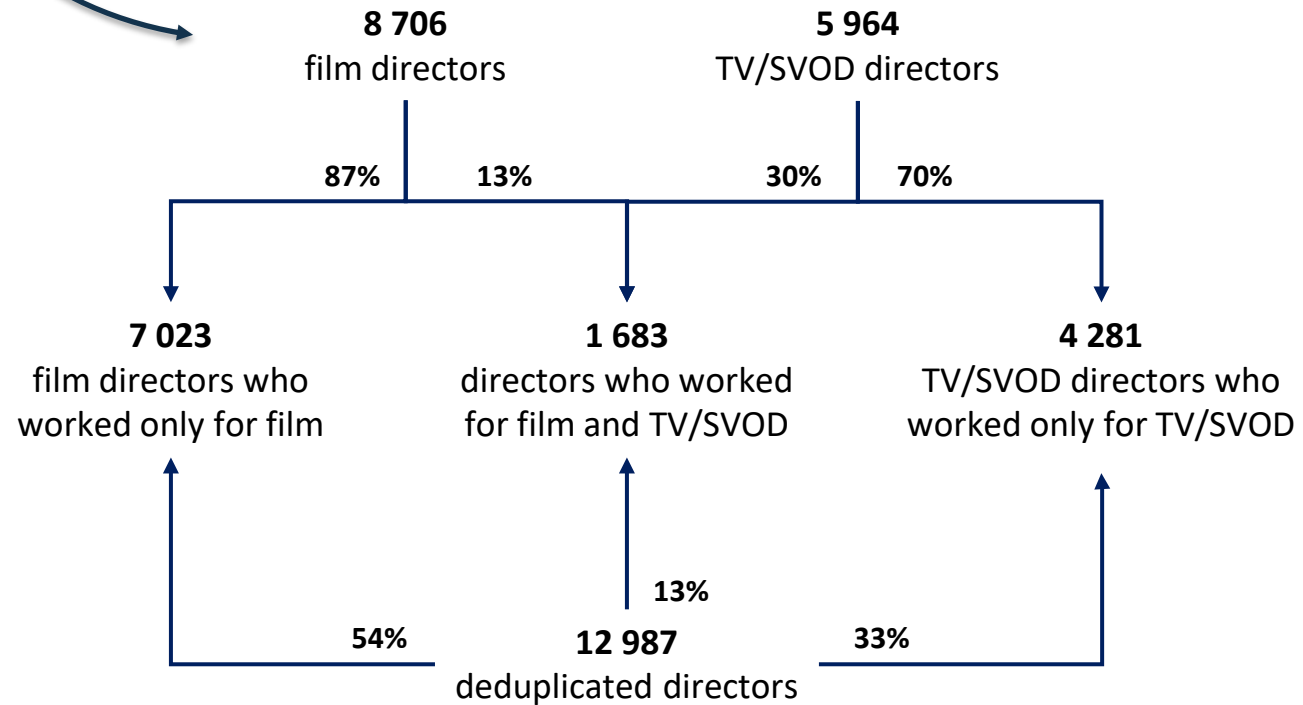
However, as film directors outnumber TV/SVOD directors, TV directors are much more likely to have also worked for film than film directors to have also worked for TV/SVOD.

Among all TV/SVOD 2015-2023 directors, 43% also directed at least one theatrical film at some point, 30% of which between 2015 and 2023.



Only directors of fiction films are considered

## ACTIVE DIRECTORS (2015-2023)



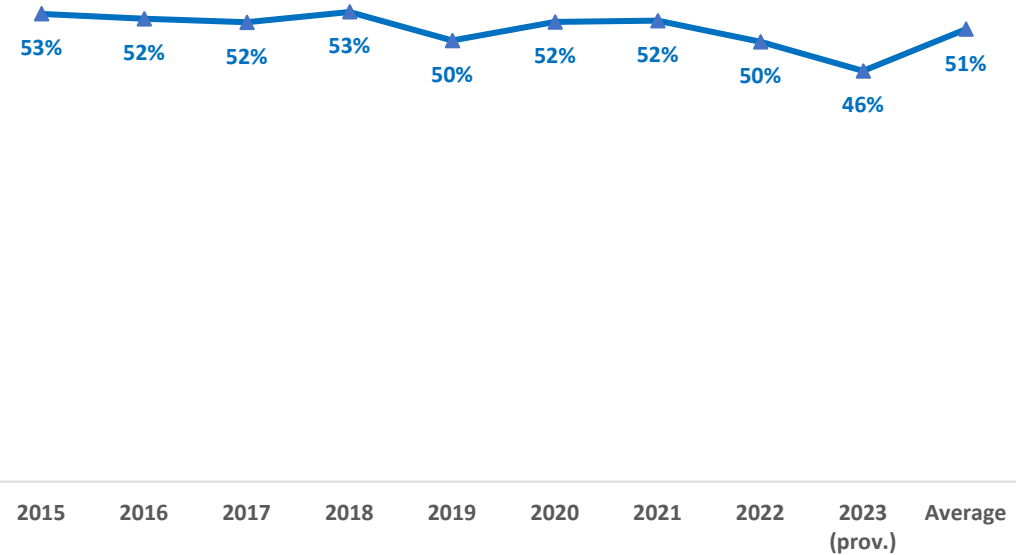
When looking only at active fiction directors, the results are similar: only 13% of all active fiction directors between 2015 and 2023 worked for both film and TV/SVOD.



On average, between 2015 and 2023, 51% of the theatrical film directors active in a given year directed their first theatrical film.

This significant renewal partly explains the relatively low level of activity of film directors.

THEATRICAL FILMS: SHARE OF DEBUT FILMS IN ACTIVE DIRECTORS (2015-2023)



Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

76% of theatrical films writers active between 2015 and 2023 only wrote one film.  
Active TV/SVOD fiction writers took part in 2.4 projects representing about 3.6 TV seasons.

## ACTIVITY OF THEATRICAL FILM DIRECTORS (2015-2023)

## ACTIVITY OF TV/SVOD FICTION DIRECTORS (2015-2023)

1.2 for directors who  
directed only  
documentaries

on average 1.4 films  
(co)directed between 2015 and  
2023

### All TV/SVOD fiction

on average involved in 2.4  
TV/SVOD film or series between  
2015 and 2023

### Excl. seasons with more than 52 episodes

on average involved in 2.3 TV/SVOD  
films or series between 2015 and  
2023

76% of directors  
(co)directed only  
one film

24% of directors  
(co)directed on  
average 2.6 films

representing 3.6 TV/SVOD films or  
seasons

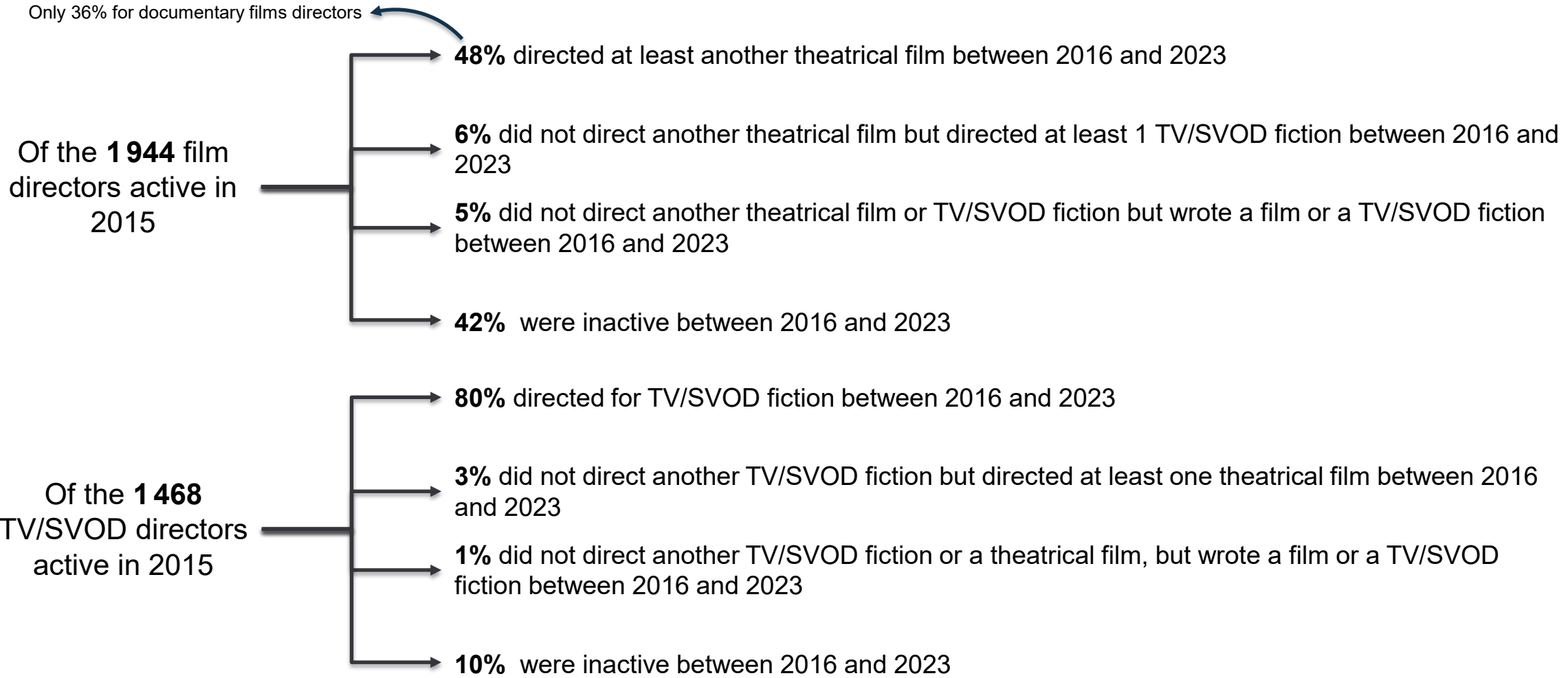
representing 39.4 TV/SVOD films or  
episodes

representing 3.1 TV/SVOD films or  
seasons

representing 13.7 TV/SVOD films or  
episodes

# Active directors: What happened to 2015 directors?

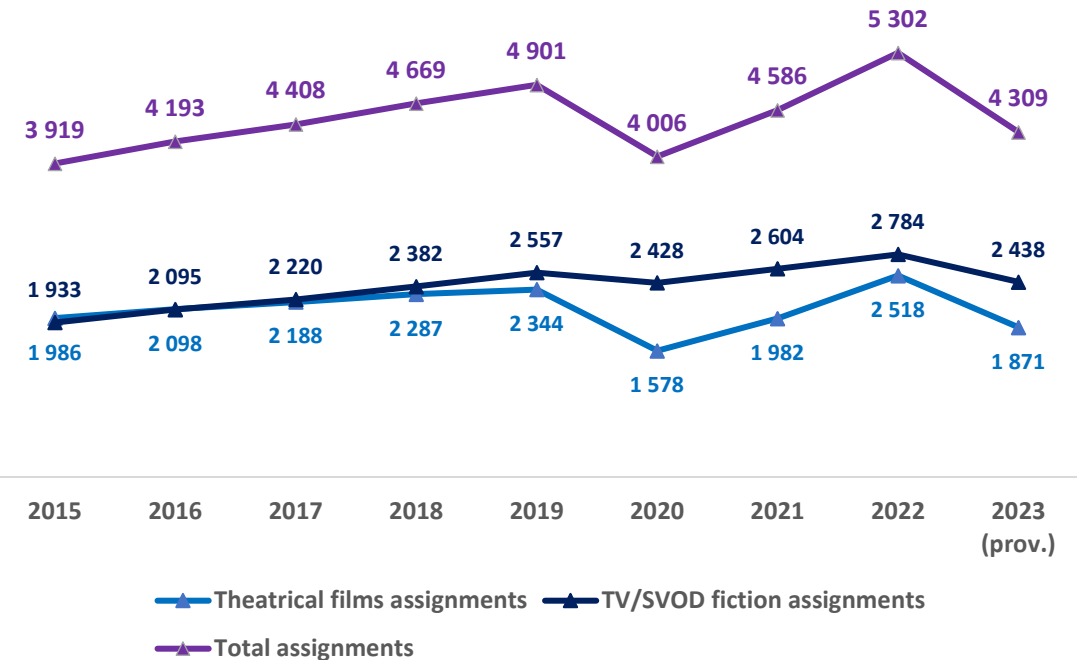
Looking at the activity between 2016 and 2023 of directors active in 2015 shows a very contrasting situation between directing for film and directing for TV/SVOD fiction: only 10% of TV/SVOD fiction 2015 directors were inactive between 2016 and 2023, vs. 42% for film directors.



More than 50% of directing assignments originate from TV/SVOD fiction.

Excluding 2023 provisional figures, TV/SVOD directing assignments have been growing faster than theatrical film assignments.

### DIRECTORS' ASSIGNMENTS (2015-2023)

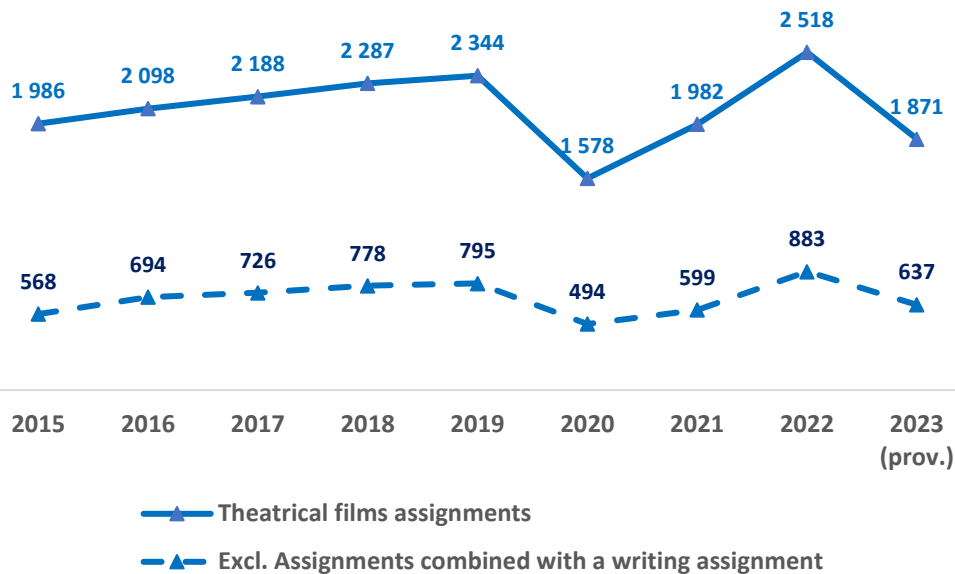


Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV/SVOD film or a TV/SVOD season, no matter the number of episodes for which the writer was credited

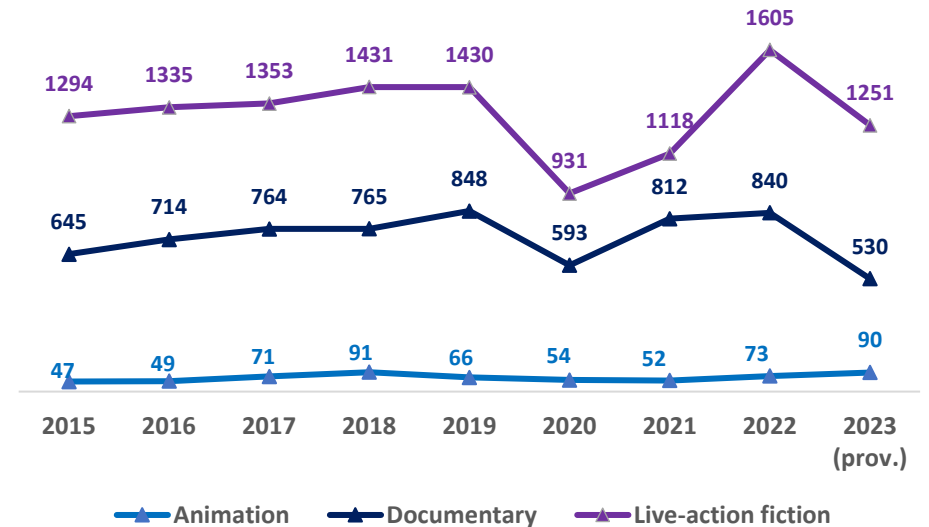
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

About 66% of 2023 directing assignments were combined with a writing assignment for the same film. Fiction films account for most of theatrical film directing assignments.

THEATRICAL FILM (CO)DIRECTING ASSIGNMENTS (2015-2023)



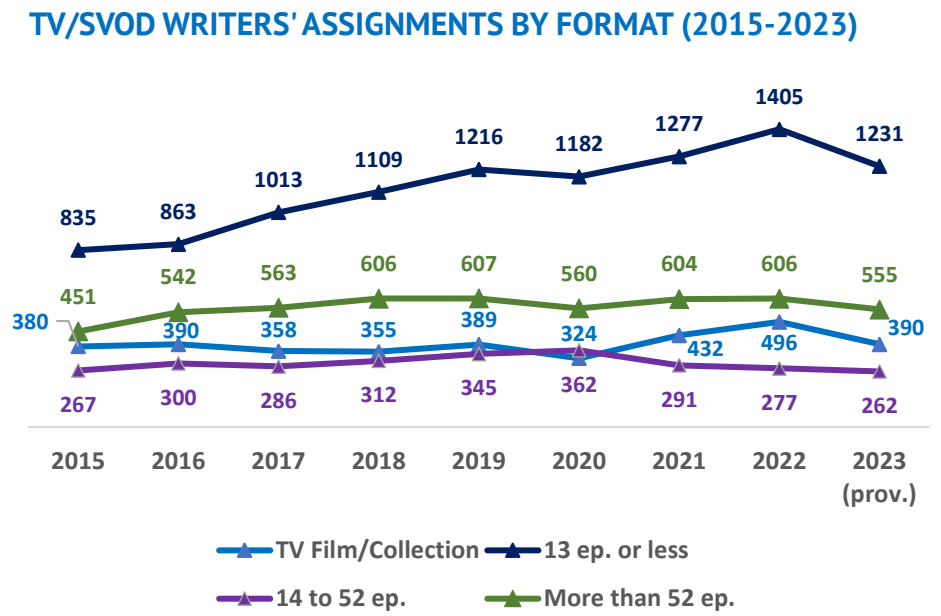
THEATRICAL FILMS WRITERS' ASSIGNMENTS BY GENRE (2015-2023)



Assignment: writing credit for a theatrical film

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

TV series seasons with 13 episodes or less account for most of TV/SVOD fiction directing assignments.



Assignment: writing credit for a film, a TV/SVOD film or a TV/SVOD season, no matter the number of episodes for which the writer was credited

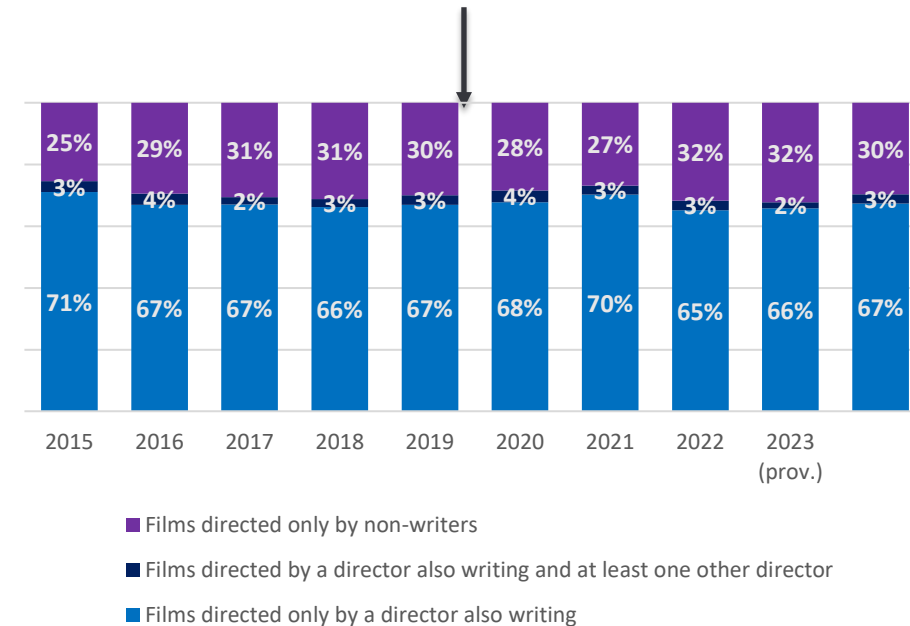
Source: European Audiovisual Observatory

On average, there were 1.1 director per film between 2015 and 2023.

In 2023, the directing team of 70% of films included a director-writer.

In 2023, the directing team of 33% of films included at least one non-writing director.

On average 1.1 director per film  
between 2015 and 2023

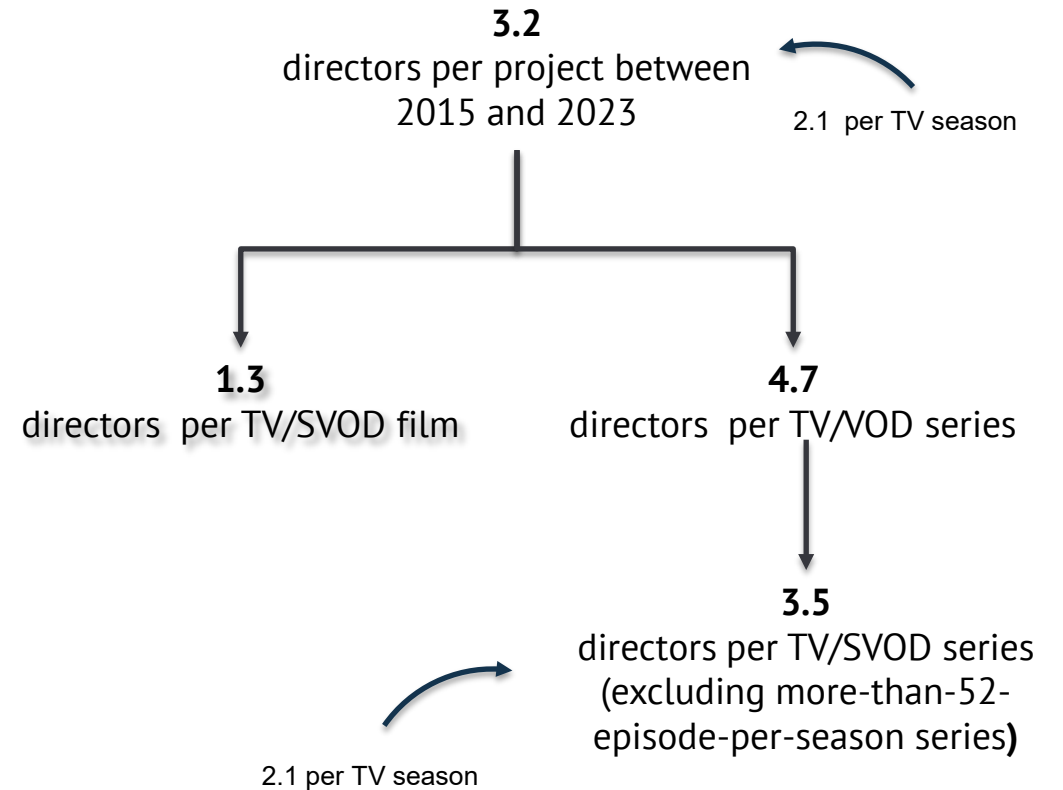


12% of films with at least 2 directors

On average, there were 3.2 directors per TV/SVOD fiction project between 2015 and 2023.

The figure was only 1.3 for TV films, similar to theatrical films.

4.7 directors participated in the directing of a TV series.



Project: a TV film or TV series, whatever the number of seasons

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory



**More information:**  
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**[gilles.fontaine@coe.int](mailto:gilles.fontaine@coe.int)**

