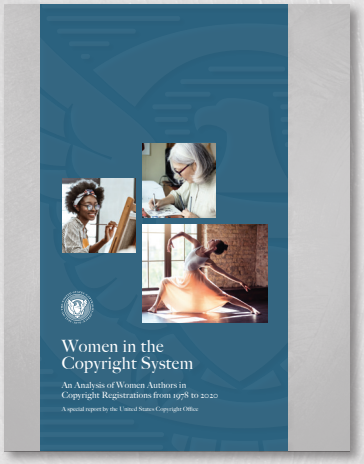

Women in the Copyright System

An Analysis of Women Authors in Copyright Registrations from 1978 to 2020

A special report by the United States Copyright Office

What is the Purpose of this Report?
There is a growing body of evidence of a gender gap in the use of intellectual property (IP) systems around the world. The purpose of this study is to evaluate and contextualize registration rates by women authors, and inform future Office efforts to address any potential underrepresentation uncovered.

How was the Study Conducted?
The Office's 2021 Kaminstein Scholar in Residence conducted extensive analysis on women authors identified in copyright registrations, as well as women's role in the copyright-based creative industries.

What Data was Analyzed?
Copyright registration records from 1978 to 2020 were analyzed. Of the 20 million records available, 13 million records, across twenty-nine different organizational categories contained sufficient information for analysis. The registration data set is available for scholarly use on copyright.gov.

What is the Kaminstein Program?
Through its Abraham L. Kaminstein Scholar in Residence Program, the Copyright Office invites leading academics with a demonstrated commitment to the study of copyright law and policy to spend time at the Copyright Office, conducting research and working on mutually beneficial projects.

Is Further Research Planned?
The Copyright Office is evaluating public use of Office services to help ensure that all authors have access to the tools and information necessary to understand and benefit from their rights.

Where is the full report available?
The U.S. Copyright Office released the report on June 9, 2022. The full report and reference data set are available **here**.

Key Findings

The share of copyright registrations overall listing women authors has risen over time.

- In 1978, the effective year of the current Copyright Act, women represented only 27.9 percent of authors of registered works. By 2012, this number rose to about 36 percent, and as of 2020, women represented 38.5 percent of authors of registered works.

Women's proportional share of authorship differs across copyright categories, but it has risen in most, and achieve gender parity in some categories.

- Women authors are listed in roughly 50 percent of registrations for *nondramatic literary works*.
- Since 1978, the proportional share of women authors in motion picture registrations has more than doubled, and it has nearly tripled for *machine-readable work or computer program* registrations.
- Women's share of authorship in performing arts registration categories demonstrates moderate but sustained growth, now at 20 to 30 percent of registered works.

Across nearly every category, women make up a smaller share of authors in registrations than they do of participants in corresponding creative occupations, but the gap is closing.

- Data from 2003 to 2020 show that on average women authors were 21.6 percent less prevalent among copyright registrations than among participants in associated copyright-related occupations.
- From 2003 to 2010, women authors were roughly 27.5 percent less prevalent in registration records than they were in the corresponding occupations, but from 2011 to 2020, the gap shrank to 14.5 percent.