

Norwegian Film Diversity Report Reveals Gaps and Opportunities in Representation

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A comprehensive new report commissioned by the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) sheds light on the state of diversity in Norwegian films and series, revealing persistent gaps in representation across gender, ethnicity, geography, and other dimensions. The study, conducted by Telemarkforskning, analyzes 100 productions from 2012, 2017, and 2022, and includes a qualitative review of 14 high-profile titles.

Key Findings

- **Gender Imbalance:** Nearly two-thirds (64%) of characters in Norwegian films are male. While TV series show more balanced gender representation, films remain heavily male-dominated. No characters with non-binary gender identities were identified.
- **Ethnic Representation:** Only 4% of Norwegian characters were portrayed by actors with multicultural backgrounds, compared to 20% of the national population. Samis and national minorities were virtually absent.
- **Sexual Diversity:** LGBTQ+ representation remains low, with only 4% of characters in queer relationships. Series outperform films in this area, and there is a slight upward trend since 2012.
- **Geographical and Linguistic Bias:** Oslo dominates as a setting, and 70% of characters speak East Norwegian dialects—far exceeding the region's population share.
- **Socioeconomic Representation:** Characters in academic and elite professions are overrepresented, while working-class roles are underrepresented. Films in 2022 showed a modest shift toward broader occupational diversity.
- **Disability Representation:** Only 3.3% of characters had visible disabilities, far below the estimated 15–18% of the population.

Impact of Funding Models

The report highlights that films receiving artistic (consulentvurdert) funding from NFI tend to be more diverse than those funded based on market potential (markedsvurdert). For example, 'Hva vil folk si' and 'Thelma' offered nuanced portrayals of ethnic and queer

identities, while blockbuster war films like 'Kon-Tiki' and 'Den 12. mann' leaned heavily on traditional male hero narratives.

NRK-produced series such as 'Skam' and 'Rådebank' were praised for their complex characters and inclusive storytelling, demonstrating the potential of public broadcasters to drive diversity.

Children's Films: A Mixed Picture

While some children's films like 'Ekspedisjon Knerten' and 'Teddybjørnens jul' challenge gender norms and include minority actors, the genre remains dominated by nostalgic, East Norwegian-centric narratives. Critics call for more original content that reflects contemporary Norway's multicultural reality.

Policy Implications

The report urges cultural policymakers to consider how funding structures and risk-averse production strategies may limit innovation and diversity. It recommends expanding support for original, inclusive storytelling and reevaluating the balance between commercial viability and cultural representation.

For European film institutes, the Norwegian case offers valuable insights into how funding mechanisms, broadcaster mandates, and cultural policy can shape the diversity of national screen content. The findings underscore the importance of sustained, systemic efforts to ensure that film and television reflect the full spectrum of society.