



FESTIVALS

## Locarno Film Festival Releases Gender Stats for the First Time

BY Kelsey Moore August 13, 2019 [🐦](#) | [f](#)

Last year’s Locarno Film Festival saw [the signing of](#) the Programming Pledge for Parity in Inclusion in Cinema Festivals. Supported by the Swiss Women’s Audiovisual Network (SWAN), this pledge includes a commitment “to compile statistics according to gender” as well as “the list of the appointed members of selection committees and programmers.” Now – for the first time in the festival’s history – the official numbers are in.

Though Locarno welcomed both new artistic director Lili Hinstin and equally balanced programming committees, its board remains heavily male at 77 percent. Only one woman joined the board over the past year.

Per [SWAN’s website](#), female directors made up 27 percent of feature film submissions and 37 percent of this year’s submitted shorts. But women directors (short and features) ultimately make up around 30 % of 2019’s selected filmmakers. Italian filmmaker Ginevra Elkann’s feature directorial debut, “If Only” (“Magari”), [opened the festival](#) last week.

Films screened in Locarno’s Piazza Grande feature five films out of the section’s 14 total. “Greener Grass,” directed by Jocelyn Debour and Dawn Luebbe, bring the total Piazza Grande-featured female directors to six.

In Locarno’s “Filmmakers of the Present” section, which include first, second, and third features, the percentage of female directors increase to 42 percent with eight women competing.


Locarno’s biggest strides arguably lie in this year’s International Competition lineup, which includes five films directed by six women, bringing the total percentage of female-led films to around 29 percent. [As previously reported](#), that’s over a 10 percent jump from last year’s numbers. Furthermore, Locarno’s international numbers are higher than this year’s previous festivals, including Cannes and Venice which only featured four and two females directors in the same category, respectively.

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"When the issue of the lack of women comes up, the word 'quality' is often brandished like a firewall," say SWAN Co-Presidents Gabriel Baur, Laura Kaehr, and Stéphane Mitchell. "But 'quality' is not only extremely subjective, it also has been historically molded by a specific culture, the one in power. It is past time that the quality criteria and canons of cinema be shaken to let our films in."

Obviously, there is a still a long road road ahead. However, having these numbers readily available across festivals is making all the difference. The SWAN co-presidents seemingly agree. "When women are not allowed the same opportunities as their male colleagues to compete and gain visibility and notoriety, they are plain and simple discriminated. Today, to make-up for the past exclusion of women filmmakers in film festivals, we argue that Gender must be a top of the list criterion."

The 72nd Locarno Film Fest is currently in its second week. Screenings will continue through August 17. Check out SWAN's full parity breakdown on its [website](#).

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