



BLACK
STAR



**BFI LONDON
FILM
FESTIVAL**

5 – 16 October 2016 in partnership with



**NEW BFI RESEARCH REVEALS REPRESENTATION OF BLACK ACTORS IN
UK FILM OVER LAST 10 YEARS**

- *13% of UK films have a black actor in a leading role; 59% have no black actors in any role*
- *Noel Clarke is most prolific black actor in UK film, followed by Ashley Walters, Naomie Harris and Thandie Newton*
- *Decade sees little change in the number of roles for black actors; only 4 black actors feature in the list of the 100 most prolific actors*
- *50% of all lead roles played by black actors are clustered in 47 films, potentially limiting opportunities for audiences to see diverse representation; these 47 films represent LESS than 5% of the total number of films*
- *Horror, drama and comedy films LEAST likely to cast black actors*
- *Crime, sci-fi and fantasy films MOST likely to cast black actors*

LONDON – Thursday 6 October, 2016: The BFI today announced ground-breaking new research that explores the representation of black actors in UK films over the last 10 years (January 2006 - August 2016) and reveals that out of the **1,172 UK films made and released in that period, 59% (691 films) did not feature any black actors** in either lead or named roles¹. The proportion of UK films^{2,3} which credited at least one black actor⁴ in a lead role was **13%, or 157 films** in total. The new research

provides an early indicator of what is set to be the most comprehensive set of data about UK films from 1911 to the present day – the **BFI Filmography**, launching in 2017.

BFI Creative Director Heather Stewart who presented the research this morning at the **Black Star Symposium at the BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express®**, said:

“Whilst we feel from what we see on screen that most UK films do not cast black actors in them, and that black actors are playing the same types of roles over and over again we now have the data to support this. The number of lead roles for black actors has not really changed over ten years and the types of films in which they have had leading roles suggests stereotyping. Colour-blind casting across genres does not really exist on the big screen, ultimately limiting representation. Diversity is one of the biggest issues facing film - audiences want to see the world in which we live reflected back at them.”

“The findings we are sharing today at the BFI Black Star Symposium are just the beginning of work my BFI colleagues are undertaking to help us understand what has actually been happening in UK film. I would like for us to be able to reconstruct past data, to give us longitudinal insights. Going forward, we will now champion the collection of accurate and meaningful data that will help the sector understand accurately what is being offered to audiences, and what we need to change.”

ACTORS AND LEADING ROLES

The headline conclusion presented by the research is that there has been **little change in the number of films with roles for black actors** (leading and named) over ten years, even in years in which more films were released and which logically could be assumed to have offered more opportunities for black actors. In addition, there are only **4 black actors**, leading and/or named, **in the list of the 100 most prolific actors** in UK films.

Another of the most significant observations from the research is the clustering of lead roles for black actors within a relatively small number of films released. **More than half of all leading roles for black actors are in 47 films**, which means that **less than 5%** have cast a black actor in a lead or named role at all.

Only **15 black actors, of whom 5 are women**, have played two or more lead roles in UK films since 2006. Leading the rankings on actors who have performed leading roles is Noel Clarke, who has had 8 leading roles in UK films including *Storage 24*, *Anomaly* and *Brotherhood* followed by Ashley Walters

with 7 roles (*Tuesday*, *Sket*, *Life and Lyrics*), Naomie Harris with 6 roles (*Mandela Long Walk to Freedom*, *First Grader*), Thandie Newton with 5 roles (*Retreat*, *Rocknrolla*), Idris Elba with 4 (*Legacy*, *Mandela Long Walk to Freedom*) and Chiwetel Ejiofor with 3 leading roles (*12 Years a Slave*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*). The following actors all had 2 leading roles apiece: Femi Oyeniran, Colin Salmon, Ashley ‘Bashy’ Thomas, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Lucien Laviscount, Sophie Okonedo, Carmen Ejogo, Roger Nsengiyuma and John Boyega.

The data shows that a total of **897 black actors** featured in lead and/or named roles in the 1,172 films over the ten years. The gender balance of roles given to black actors reflects the overall balance in the film industry of **2 male to 1 female roles** (lead and named roles); across lead roles for black actors men account for 64% and women for 35%.

British black actors who have played the most leading roles in the UK since 2006

Actor	Gender	Number of lead roles in UK films released
1 Noel Clarke	Male	8
2 Ashley Walters	Male	7
3 Naomie Harris	Female	6
4 Thandie Newton	Female	5
5 Idris Elba	Male	4
6 Chiwetel Ejiofor	Male	3
7 Femi Oyeniran	Male	2
= Colin Salmon	Male	2
= Ashley ‘Bashy’ Thomas	Male	2
= Gugu Mbatha-Raw	Female	2
= Lucien Laviscount	Male	2
= Sophie Okonedo	Female	2
= Carmen Ejogo	Female	2
= Roger Nsengiyuma	Male	2
= John Boyega	Male	2

GENRES

The genres less likely to feature black actors in lead or named roles are **horror** with 81 out of 121 films or **67%** failing to cast any black actors; **drama** with 255 out of 387 films or **66%**; **comedy** with 178 out of 287 films or **62%**; and **thrillers** with 100 out of 169 films or **59%**.

The genres which **are more likely to feature black actors** in leading or named roles are **crime** with 69 out of 107 films or **65%**; **science fiction** with 38 out of 60 films or **63%**; **fantasy** with 24 out of 39 films or **61%**; and **musicals** with 8 out of 15 films or **53%**.

The subjects that recur most frequently where a film has a cast with more black actors are slavery, racism, colonialism, crime and gangs. This suggests a pattern in which black actors are being cast mainly in stereotypical stories, limiting the range and depth of possible representation.

Looking at specific films that have the most roles with black actors, Ava de Vernay's *Selma* (2014) with David Oyelowo and Carmen Ejogo, leads the field with 23 lead and named actor roles. Other films which have cast a number of roles for black actors include *Son of Man* (2006), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013), *Honeytrap* (2014), *It's a Lot* (2013), *1 Day* (2009), *Brotherhood* (2016), *Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), *Fast Girls* (2012) and *Adulthood* (2008).

UK films with the most roles for black actors since 2006

Film	Year	Subject	Lead/named black actor roles
Selma	2014	Martin Luther King /civil rights	23
12 Years a Slave	2013	Slavery	21
Son of Man (aka Jezile)	2006	Religion	20
Half of a Yellow Sun	2012	Nigerian civil war	19
Baggage Claim	2013	Engagement/weddings	16
Honeytrap	2014	Teenagers/homicide	16
American Gangster	2007	Gangsters	16
It's a Lot	2013	Teenagers	15
1 Day	2009	Hip Hop	15
Brotherhood	2016	Organised crime	14
Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom	2013	Nelson Mandela/South Africa	14
Fast Girls	2012	Athletics/competition	13
Adulthood	2008	Prisons/crime	13

THE LFF BLACK STAR SYMPOSIUM

The data was presented at the **LFF Black Star Symposium** which started with a headline speech by actor and producer **David Oyelowo** who has played many award-winning and nominated lead and supporting roles in US films including *Selma*, *Lincoln*, *Jack Reacher* and *Lee Daniels' The Butler* and stars in *A United Kingdom* and *Queen of Katwe* in this year's LFF. David also participated in a panel session delving into the issues that the industry faces in black on-screen representation. He was joined by **Noel Clarke** (*Kidulthood*, *Adulthood* and *Brotherhood*), **Trevante Rhodes** (*Moonlight*), **Julie Dash**

(*Daughters of the Dust*) and **Ramy El-Bergamy** (On-Screen Diversity Executive, Channel 4) in a discussion about the opportunities available to, and obstacles faced by black actors in the US and the UK, the types of roles and kinds of stories being told, the politics vs the reality of 'colour-blind' casting and the big differences between the film and TV sectors in the US and the UK. The session was chaired by **Ashley Clark**, a programmer for BFI BLACK STAR.

Amma Asante (*A United Kingdom, Belle*), **Barry Jenkins** (*Moonlight, Medicine for Melancholy*), **Ije Nwokorie** (CEO of design and brand agency Wolff Olins); **Tunde Ogungbesan** (Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Succession, BBC) and **Ben Roberts** (Director of the Film Fund, BFI) took part in a panel discussion looking at how we can tell more representative stories on-screen, the development and greenlighting barriers, how change can be stimulated within media agencies, funding bodies and production companies, and if more diverse and inclusive creative and management teams lead to a wider variety of productions. The session was chaired by writer and producer **Gaylene Gould**.

How the commercial sector approaches diversity and what it means for the bottom-line was discussed in conversation between **Karen Blackett OBE**, Chairwoman, MediaCom UK, who has been instrumental in championing diversity throughout the advertising and media industry and **Heather Stewart**, BFI Creative Director.

BFI Diversity Standards

Representing a contemporary UK, in the films we fund and show, the audiences that watch them and the filmmakers, actors and crew who make them is a priority for the BFI, as the lead body for film in the UK, a public funder and a Lottery distributor. In 2015 BFI Diversity Standards (succeeding the ground-breaking BFI 'Three Ticks' initiative) were introduced across all BFI Lottery funding schemes including film development, production, distribution and audience development with the pledge that the projects we fund should reflect the society we live in, both in terms of the people employed and the stories they tell.

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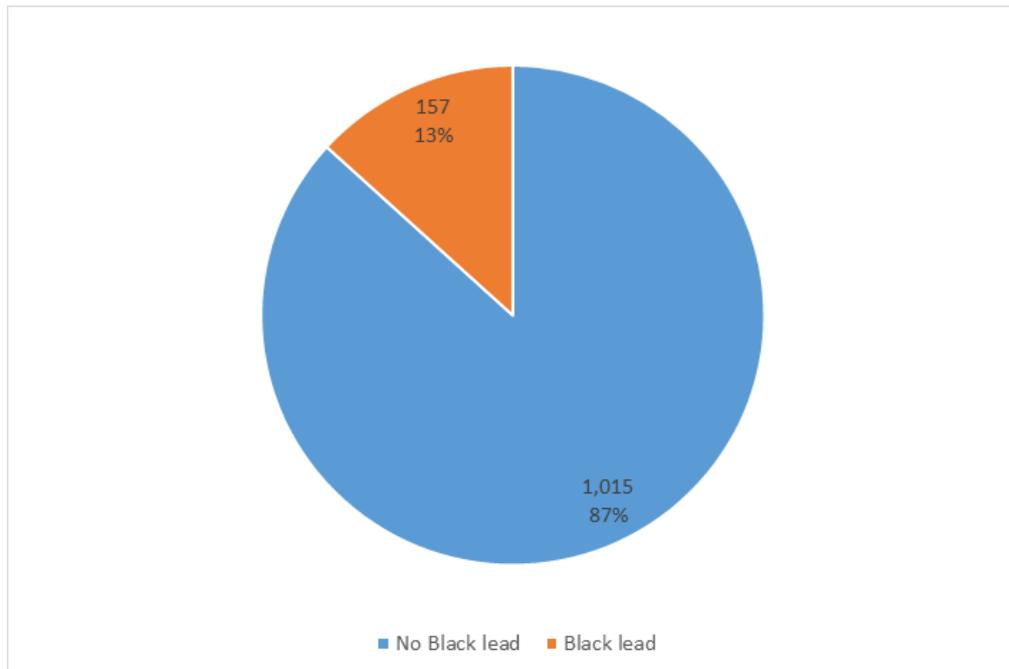
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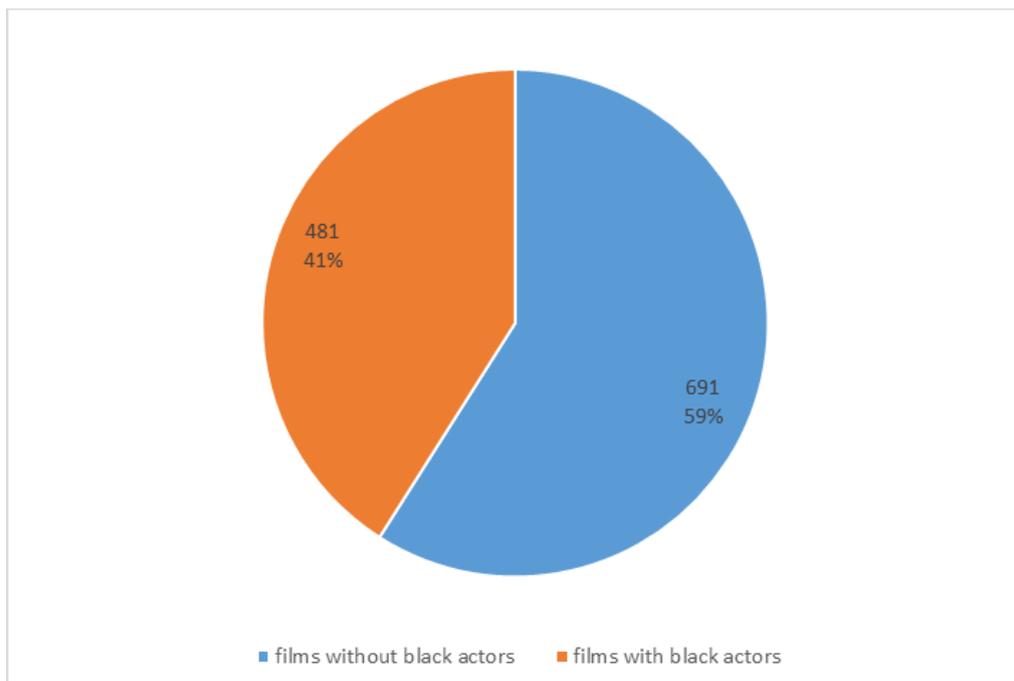
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Films with at least one black actor in a leading role



UK films which do not feature a single black actor in any named role



Research definitions

¹Lead/named roles have been analysed based on industry definitions and applied judgements based on knowledge of the film, trailers, billing and synopses. Leading roles: whether a role had significant impact on, or drives the narrative/appeared in almost every frame for a lead, is part of the story the audience invests in. Named roles: a named character in the credits. Not included: 'crowd' artists/extras and 'bit' parts were not considered.

²UK films – an inclusive definition including the BFI's Cultural Test as well as those films crediting one or more UK-based production or funding companies.

³A film is defined as being feature length when 40 minutes or longer and theatrically released.

⁴Black actors in lead or named roles – guided by the Census, identified ethnicity and nationality of actors with black African/Caribbean heritage alongside other information that supports their own identification of their ethnicity and heritage.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

BFI London Film Festival

BFI London Film Festival is Britain's leading film event and one of the world's best film festivals. It introduces the finest new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience and attracts significant international film industry participation. LFF is a compelling combination of red carpet glamour, friendly audiences and vibrant exchange. LFF provides an essential profiling opportunity for films seeking global success; promotes the careers of British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes and positions London as the world's leading creative city.

BFI BLACK STAR

BLACK STAR is the UK's biggest ever season of film and television dedicated to celebrating the range, versatility and power of black actors. BLACK STAR celebrates the relationship between stars and the audiences who love them, spotlighting great performances by black actors on screen from the earliest years of cinema through to the present day, whilst exploring why opportunities to shine on screen have been historically limited for black actors. BLACK STAR celebrates films that feature

black actors in central roles, bringing their work to a new generation of UK audiences and helping to reposition them and their performances in our collective memory. BLACK STAR launches across the UK, at BFI Southbank, on BFI Player and on DVD from October 17th 2015.

Clare Stewart biography

Clare Stewart's 20 year programming career has encompassed leadership roles as Festival Director, Sydney Film Festival (2006-2011) and the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (2002-2006) as well as various roles at the Australian Film Institute (1996-2001), including Exhibition Manager, and programmer and Committee Member of the Melbourne Cinémathèque (1995-2002). She has been BFI Head of Festivals and BFI London Film Festival Director since October 2011.

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