

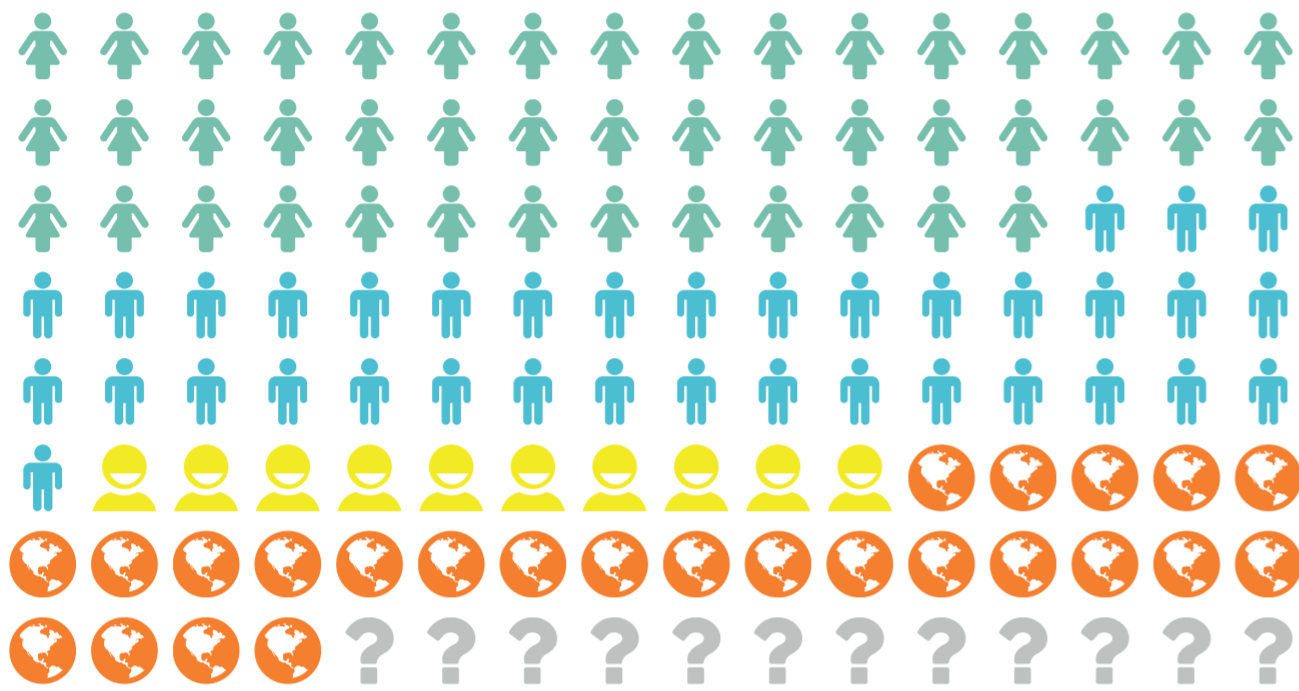
Profile: Gender diversity in US scripted commissioning



US commissioners invest heavily in female-led shows

From the beginning of November 2018 to the end of October 2019, US commissioners put more female-fronted scripted TV shows into development than male-fronted ones. Single-protagonist scripted show commissions (i.e. those with a single, identifiable lead character, or, series of separate, identifiable leads in the case of anthology series) were more likely to be fronted by women than men, with female protagonists outnumbering their male counterparts in five out of eight scripted genres.

US scripted TV commissions, Nov 2018 - Oct 2019



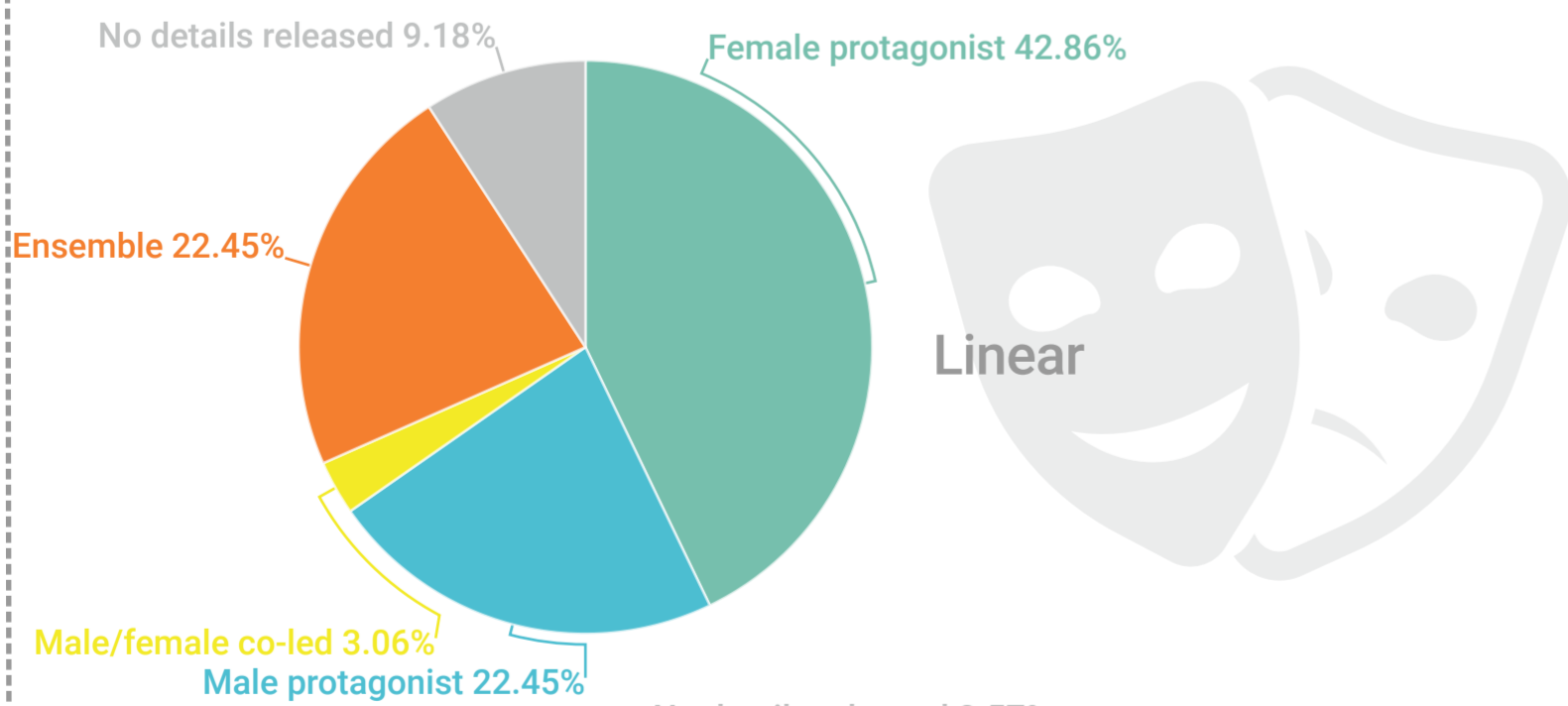
● Female protagonist
 ● Male protagonist
 ● Male/female co-led
 ● Ensemble
 ● No details released

[Download data](#)

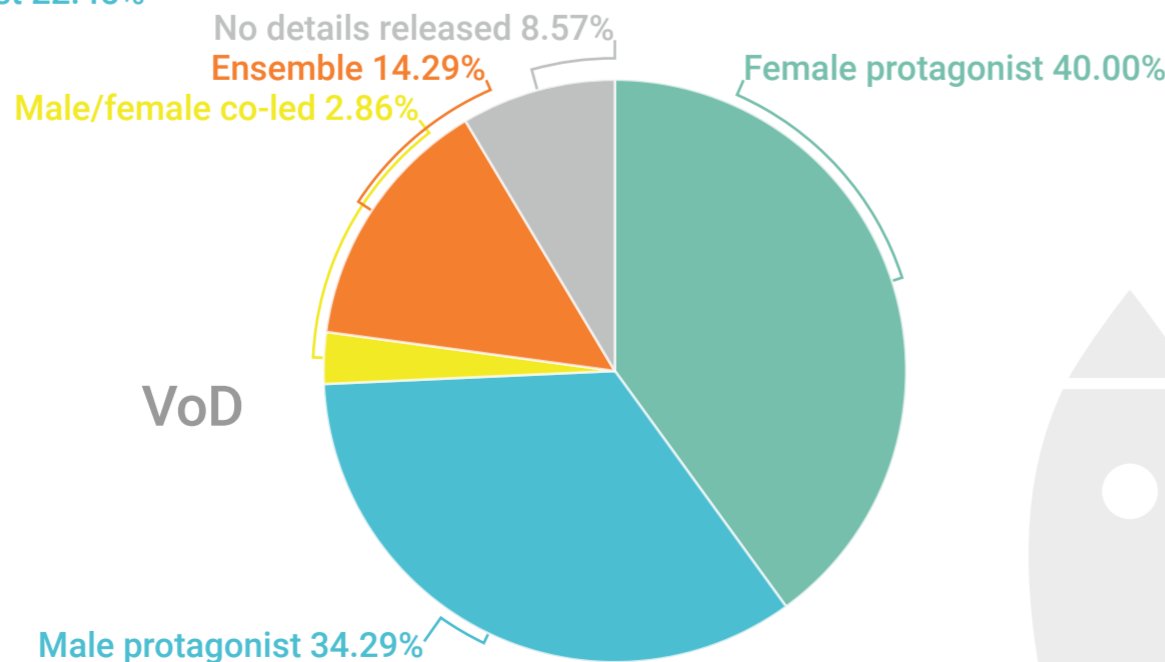
Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

Drama commissions show the greatest proportion of female representation with just over 42% of the past year's commissioned titles having a female protagonist. Those with male leads accounted for just over 25%. The traditional television networks were the key drivers here. Women-centric narratives accounted for almost 43% of drama commissions for the US networks from November 2018 to October 2019, compared to 23% male-centred. In comparison, the margin between the percentage of Video-on-Demand Drama commissions with female and with male protagonists was slimmer, at 40% of commissions female-centred and just over 34% male-centred.

US Drama commissions, Nov 2018 - Oct 2019



[Download data](#)



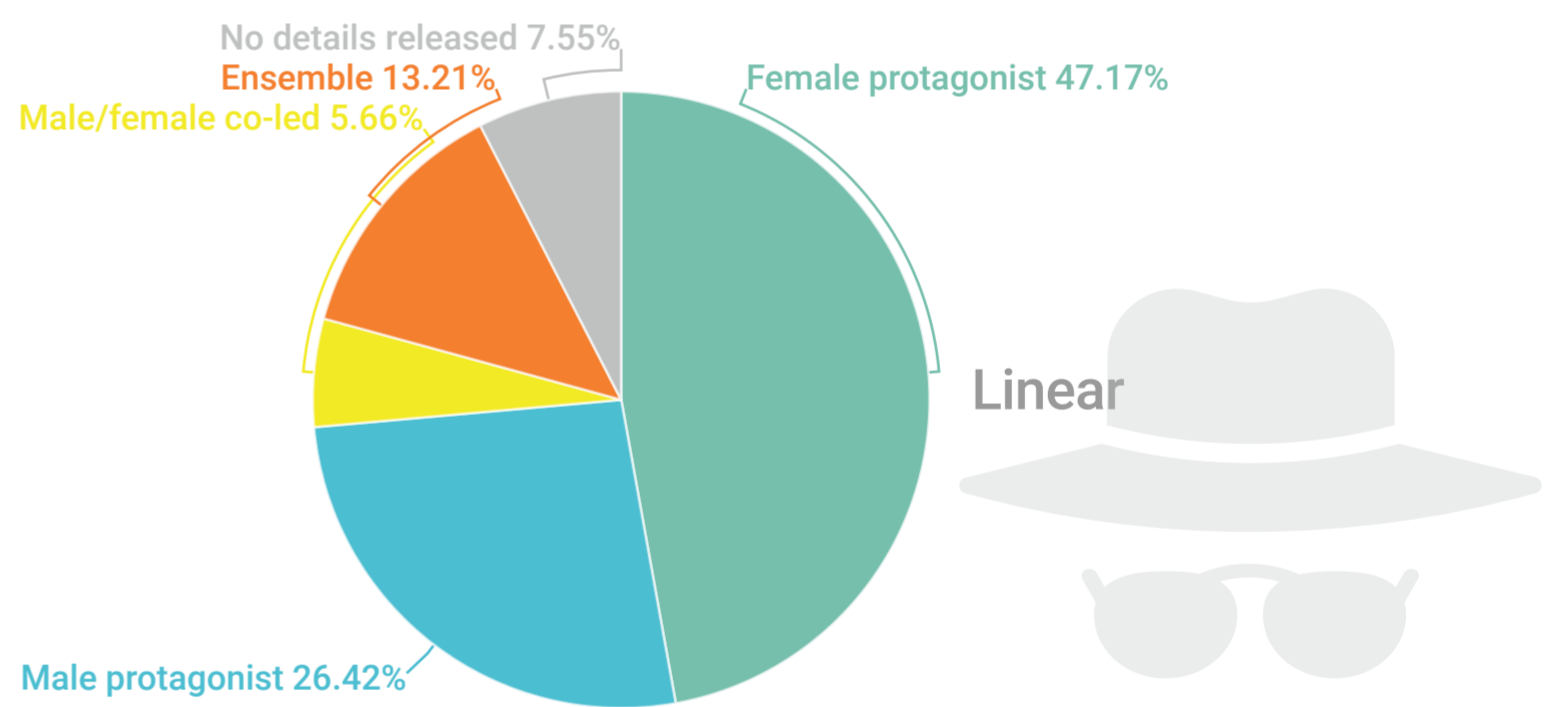
[Download data](#)

Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

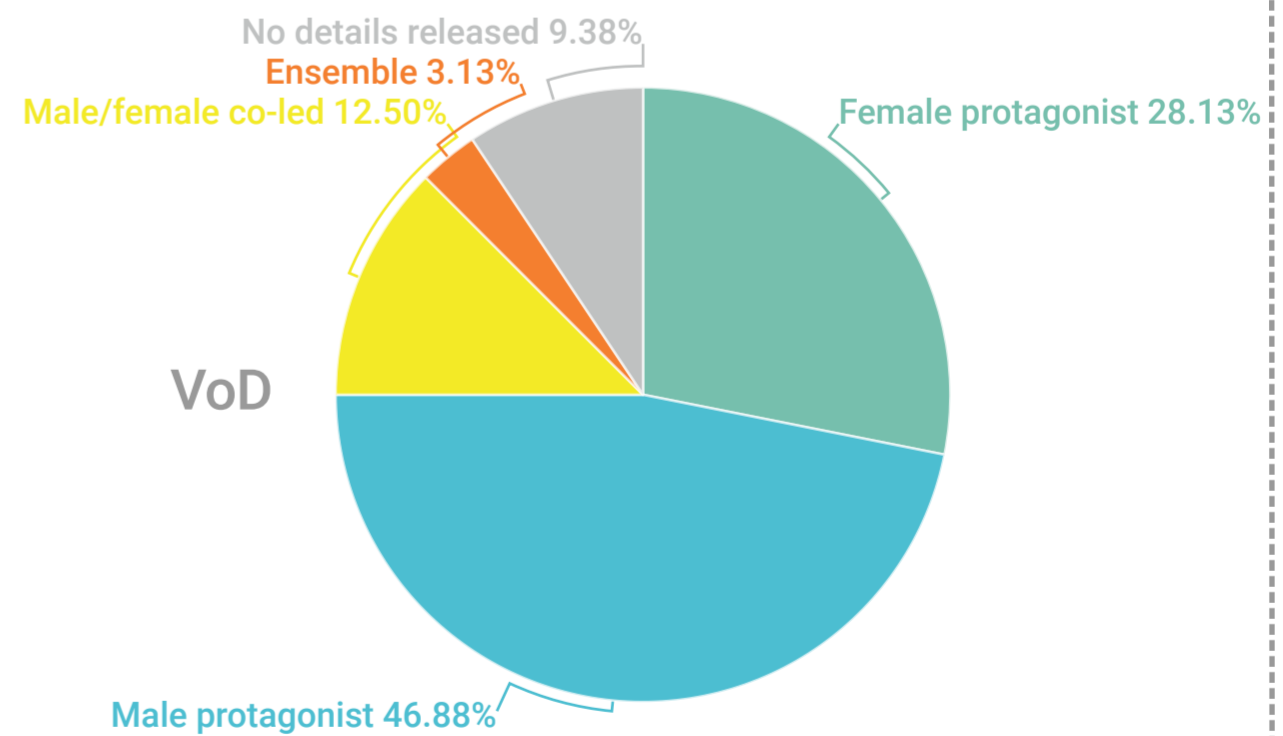
The reclamation of women's history emerged as a theme across the Drama commissioning slate, with four separate all-female-protagonist anthology series commissioned which focus on the overlooked heroines of history. ABC has two such projects in development: *Unsung Heroes* from Lucy Liu's Moonvision Entertainment, and the Jay-Z and Will Smith-produced *Women of the Movement* which dramatizes the lives of America's female civil rights pioneers. These are joined by political anthology drama *First Ladies* at Showtime, and Universal Content Productions' adaptation of Ann Shen's book *Bad Girls Throughout History*.

Other female protagonist-heavy genres included Crime & Thriller, with almost 43% of overall US commissions featuring a female protagonist, compared to 31% solely male-led. A quarter of the female-led crime shows commissioned were adaptations of existing source material—two thirds of which is female-authored. Here again, the networks commissioned a greater proportion of female-led shows, with female-protagonist titles accounting for around 47% of network Crime & Thriller commissions, and male-protagonist titles 26%. For the smaller number of VoD commissions announced in this genre, however, these percentages are more or less reversed (28% female leads versus almost 47% male).

US Crime & Thriller commissions, Nov 2018 - Oct 2019



[Download data](#)



[Download data](#)

Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

The third scripted genre with a notable wealth of female leads was Sci-Fi & Fantasy—a genre which is often stereotypically thought of as geared towards a male audience. From November 2018 to October 2019, shows with women at the helm accounted for 34% of overall US Sci-Fi & Fantasy commissions, compared to those with male protagonists which accounted for just over 24%. Female Sci-Fi & Fantasy leads outnumbered their male counterparts among both broadcast, and VoD commissions, with high-profile titles including HBO Max's upcoming adaptation of Madeline Miller's *Circe* and four female Marvel superheros getting their own shows on Disney+.

Profile: Gender diversity in US scripted commissioning

US commissioners invest heavily in female-led shows

Male leads still dominated in Action & Adventure, another genre often stereotyped as male-oriented. Male protagonists also outnumbered female protagonists in announced shows geared towards younger audiences, with 29% of US Children & Family commissions being led by a male character, compared to the 25% which had a female protagonist. **Male** protagonists were more likely to have clearly defined roles in Children & Family show synopses - an "inventor," a "samurai," etc. They were also more likely to be superheros and to appear in shows centred around 'adventure' themes.



Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

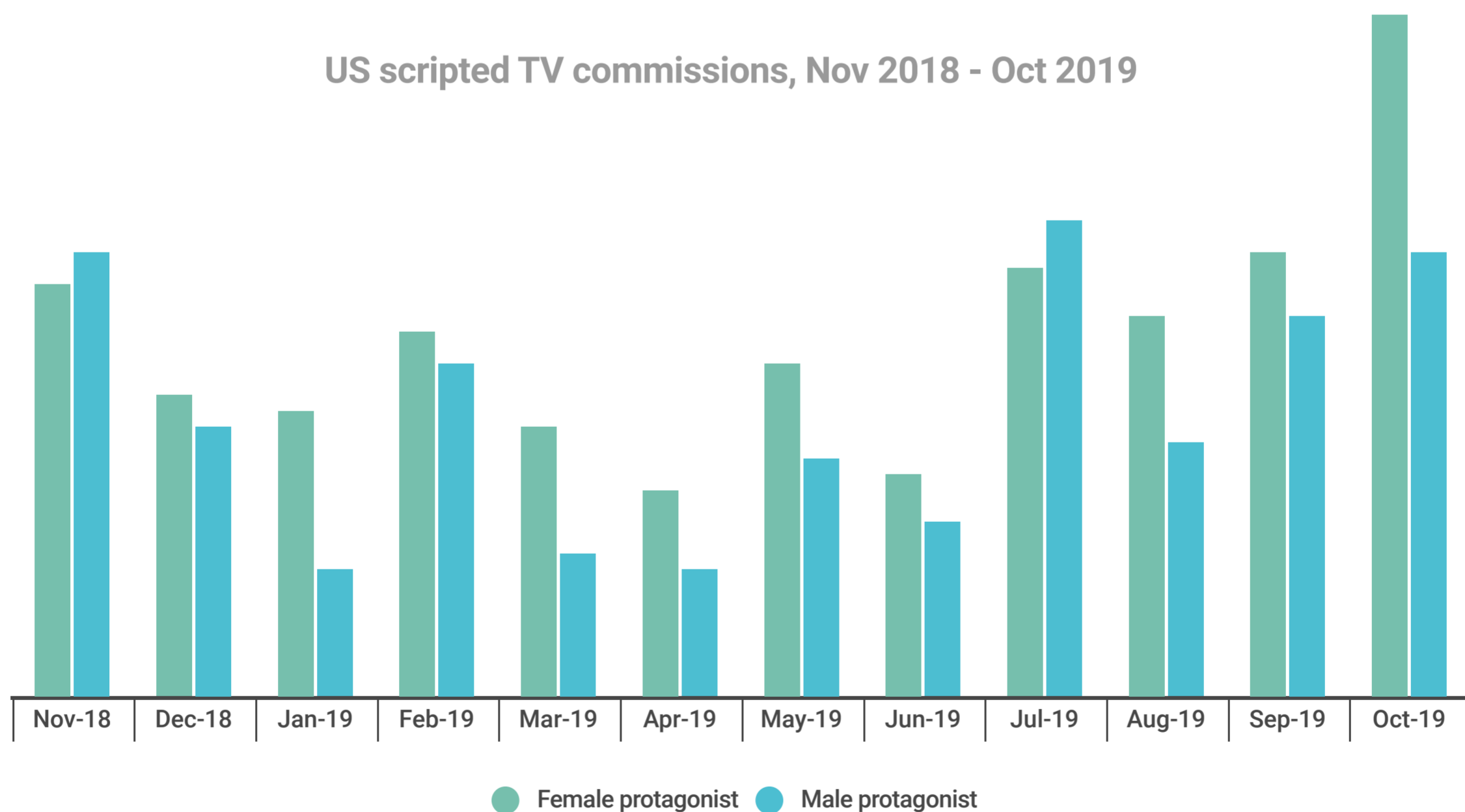
Female protagonists were less likely to be assigned such descriptors, and more likely to be defined via association with key themes such as "empathy" and "friendship," and to appear in shows about "magic." Nonetheless, there were a number of titles announced which bucked the trend on both sides—for example, Netflix has Latinx family show *The Expanding Universe of Ashley Garcia* in the works, which features a fifteen-year-old female robotics engineer, as well as single-camera comedy *The Healing Powers of Dude*, about the friendship between a young boy with social anxiety disorder and his sarcastic support dog.



Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

Notably, although there is a consistent trend of children's shows being fronted by anthropomorphic characters, these still tended to be gendered as male or female. Indeed, commissions across all genres continued to adhere to the gender binary as far as protagonists were concerned—with the possible exception of *R.E.D.*, a humorous, existential Sci-Fi show California's Duncan Studios has in the works, which focuses on a machine detective. Non-binary and gender-fluid characters have begun to appear in supporting roles on US television in recent years (predominantly in science-fiction shows, though there are notable exceptions such as Starz's *Vida*, and soon-to-be-revived sitcom *One Day at a Time*). However, a US network or SVoD platform has yet to commission a show with a non-binary lead.

US scripted TV commissions, Nov 2018 - Oct 2019



Download data

Source: Ampere Commissioning. Data correct to 22/11/2019

Amongst the small number of titles announced between November 2018 and October 2019 which have since been canned by their commissioners, there are twice as many male-protagonist shows as female-protagonist shows. This could be taken as another indication that the success of female-led shows with audiences has begun to hit home for commissioners; however as nearly two thirds of the canned male-protagonist shows were book or comic adaptations (and several of those either spin-offs from, or new takes on previously adapted material) a waning appetite for reinvented formats may also be a major contributing factor. Regardless, considering the consistency with which US networks and VoD platforms have announced, and remained committed to female-led projects over the past twelve months, there is every sign that the predominance of women in scripted genres on the small screen is more than a passing phase.