



# 2021 U.S. DANCE FESTIVALS REPORT

March 2022

## Report Summary

This Report is Dance Data Project® (DDP)'s third annual Report on gender equity in dance festivals, analyzing performance programming and artistic directors at dance festivals and comparing year-to-year results.

Dance festivals provide a platform for commissioning new creative voices as well as for sharing beloved works with new audiences. Festivals often present dance in community-oriented ways: bringing together a wide range of companies and choreographers, providing outdoor performances and kid-friendly events, offering opportunities for submissions from emerging and young choreographers, and bringing esteemed artists to new locales.

In this Report, DDP has included only dance festivals occurring in the U.S., ensuring a more specific sample to better measure trends of gender equity. Previous DDP festival research has also included several non-U.S. festivals, and going forward, DDP will examine these in a separate study.

In this Report, DDP has also included dance film festivals and captured the methods of presentation for all festivals, live, virtual, hybrid, or film, as dance on screen becomes an increasingly significant part of the industry.

Festivals can offer a key stepping stone for female choreographers, whose work may be seen by new audiences and critics. An analysis of gender equity at festivals can provide a glimpse of the industry as a whole.

### Key Findings include:

- 48% of the works recorded were choreographed by women.
- 36% of the world premieres recorded were choreographed by women.
- 62% of virtual works recorded were choreographed by women, compared to only 38% of live works.
- 69% of the festivals studied were led by women, compared to 31% led by men.
- The average gender equity score, calculated by dividing the number of women-choreographed works by the number of total works for each festival, was 0.45, indicating that on average, a festival programmed 45% works by women.
- The festivals led by women had an average gender equity score of 0.49, compared to 0.38 at the festivals led by men, indicating that women-led festivals program a higher percentage of women-choreographed works.
- The average festival gender equity score increased by 0.15 between 2019 and 2021, indicating that the festivals sampled in 2021 programmed 15% more choreographic work by women than the festivals sampled in 2019.

**This report contains the following sections:**

- I. Festivals Analyzed
- II. Performance Programming Analysis
- III. Leadership Analysis
- IV. Year-to-Year Comparison
- V. Conclusions and Opportunity for Future Research
- VI. Operational Definitions, Limitations, and Methodology

## Section I: Festivals Analyzed

The following festivals were examined in DDP's research and calculations for this Report. These festivals were selected from a larger list, which was then filtered down to include only festivals which had dance programming in 2021, occurred in the U.S., and had information publicly available on performance programming and choreographers. Please note that this sample does not encompass every U.S. dance festival which occurred in 2021.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. American Dance Festival                              | 18. Hamptons Dance Project                      |
| 2. Austin Dance Festival*                               | 19. Harvest Chicago Contemporary Dance Festival |
| 3. BAAND Together Dance Festival*                       | 20. HH11 Dance Festival*                        |
| 4. Ballet Sun Valley                                    | 21. Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival               |
| 5. Ballet West's Choreographic Festival                 | 22. Kaatsbaan Spring and Summer Festival        |
| 6. Bates Dance Festival                                 | 23. Laguna Dance Festival                       |
| 7. CHOP SHOP  | 24. Lake Tahoe Dance Festival                   |
| 8. Contemporary Dance Choreography Festival (CDCFest)*  | 25. Little Island Dance Festival*               |
| 9. Dance Camera West OVID.tv Virtual Festival*          | 26. Little Island NYC FREE*                     |
| 10. The Dance Gallery Festival*                         | 27. Los Angeles Dance Shorts Film Festival*     |
| 11. Dance on Camera Festival*                           | 28. Nantucket Atheneum Dance Festival           |
| 12. Dance Salad Festival                                | 29. Oklahoma International Dance Festival*      |
| 13. Dance St. Louis - Emerson SPRING TO DANCE® Festival | 30. San Francisco Dance Film Festival*          |
| 14. DanceAfrica*  | 31. Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema*        |
| 15. Detroit Dance City Festival*                        | 32. Screen Dance International*                 |
| 16. DUMBO Dance Festival*                               | 33. Seattle International Dance Festival        |
| 17. Fall For Dance Festival                             | 34. Traverse City Dance Project                 |
|   | 35. Vail Dance Festival                         |
|   | 36. Virtual Pathways Dance Festival             |

\*Festivals with an asterisk were analyzed by DDP for the first time in this Report and were not included in calculations for 2020 or 2019 dance festivals.

The festivals included in this Report had various types of dance performance programming in 2021. DDP has categorized programming as either live, virtual, film, or hybrid.<sup>1</sup> The lists below show which type of performance programming each festival offered in 2021. Note that some festivals offered more than one, and are thus included in more than one category.

<sup>1</sup> **Live** - performed in-person for an in-person audience.  
**Virtual** - created as in-person works for the stage, but videoed and presented virtually.  
**Film** - created with the intention of being shown on a screen rather than stage.  
**Hybrid** - presented as both live and virtual.

### **Live Programming**

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- American Dance Festival
- Austin Dance Festival
- BAAND Together Dance Festival
- Ballet Sun Valley
- Ballet West's Choreographic Festival
- Bates Dance Festival
- Contemporary Dance Choreography Festival (CDCFest)
- The Dance Gallery Festival
- Dance St. Louis - Emerson SPRING TO DANCE® Festival
- DanceAfrica
- Fall For Dance Festival
- Hamptons Dance Project
- Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
- Kaatsbaan Spring and Summer Festivals
- Laguna Dance Festival
- Lake Tahoe Dance Festival
- Little Island Dance Festival
- Little Island NYC FREE
- Nantucket Atheneum Dance Festival
- Oklahoma International Dance Festival
- Seattle International Dance Festival
- Traverse City Dance Project
- Vail Dance Festival

### **Virtual Programming**

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- Bates Dance Festival
- CHOP SHOP
- Dance Salad Festival
- Detroit Dance City Festival
- DUMBO Dance Festival
- HH11 Dance Festival
- Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
- Lake Tahoe Dance Festival
- Virtual Pathways Dance Festival

### **Film Programming**

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- Dance Camera West OVID.tv Virtual Festival
- The Dance Gallery Festival
- Dance on Camera Festival
- Detroit Dance City Festival
- Los Angeles Dance Shorts Film Festival
- San Francisco Dance Film Festival
- Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema
- Screen Dance International

### **Hybrid Programming**

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- Harvest Chicago Contemporary Dance Festival
- Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

The following festivals, which were included by DDP in previous festival reports, were excluded from this Report due to one or more of the following reasons: no dance festival programming in 2021, not based in the U.S., insufficient information for data analysis publicly available. They are listed alphabetically below, color-coded by reason for exclusion.

- Ballet Across America
- Cannes Dance Festival
- Cape Dance Festival
- Co•Lab Dance
- Collective Thread Dance Festival
- Edinburgh Fringe Festival
- Festival Internacional de Música y Danza de Granada
- Fire Island Dance Festival
- The Grange Festival
- International Ballet Festival of Miami
- International Festival of Ballet and Music – Nervi
- Los Angeles Dance Festival
- Los Angeles International Dance Festival
- MixMatch Dance Festival
- Panama Ballet Festival
- Southern Vermont Dance Festival
- Spoleto Festival Italy
- Spoleto Festival USA
- Stern Grove Festival
- Vineyard Arts Project

**Key:**

No dance festival programming in 2021

Not based in the U.S.

Insufficient information available

## Section II: Performance Programming Analysis

From the sample of 36 festivals, DDP’s research team recorded all individual works programmed in festival performances. The works were then classified by gender of choreographer into the following categories: choreographed by women, choreographed by men, choreographed by co-choreographers of different genders, choreographed by gender expansive individuals.<sup>2</sup> In the cases of works that were created by more than one choreographer of the same gender, the work was classified under that gender category.

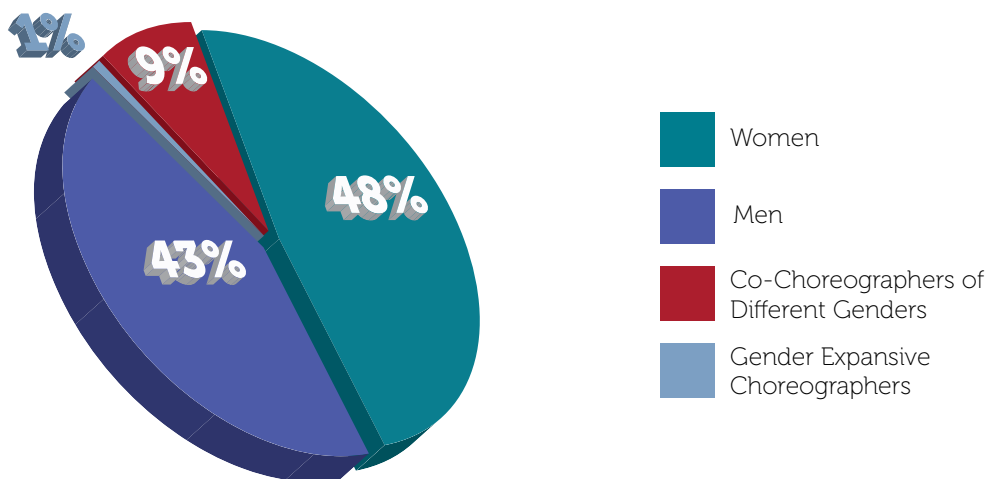
Within this section, the works are also analyzed by additional variables: mode of performance, premiere, and length of work.

### Gender Distribution of Choreographers

At the 36 total festivals, 879 choreographic works were recorded. Of these, 48% were choreographed by women.<sup>3</sup>

| All Choreographic Works<br>(choreographed by) |     |  |                                 |
|---|-----|--|---------------------------------|
| Women   | Men | Co-Choreographers of Different Genders | Gender Expansive Choreographers |
| 48%   | 43% | 9%                                     | 1%                              |

### All Choreographic Works (choreographed by)



<sup>2</sup> For the full operational definition of gender used, refer to **Section VI. Operational Definitions.**

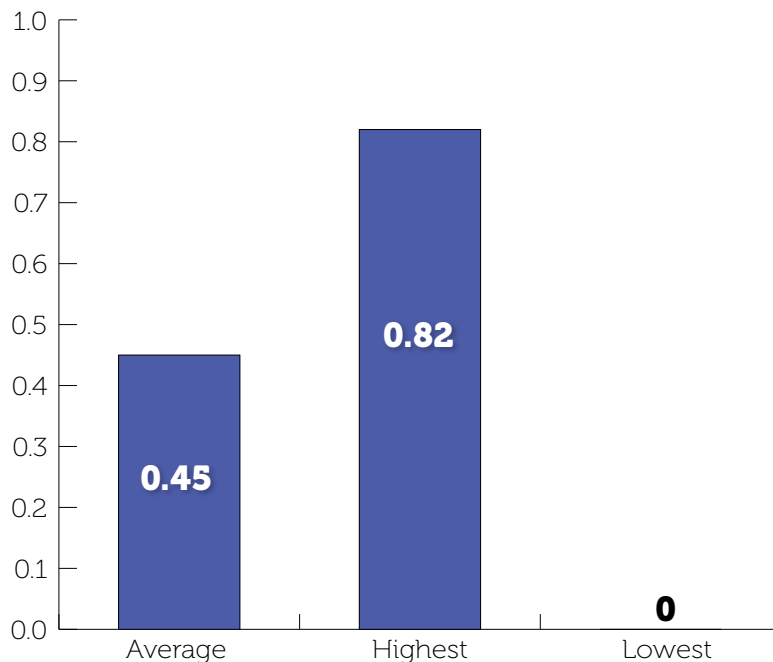
<sup>3</sup> Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number throughout this study. Because of this, percentages may appear to add to slightly more or less than 100%.

## Average Gender Equity Scores

Within the sample of festivals, the number of works recorded per festival varies greatly, from as few as four works to as many as 120. To better analyze the average gender equity in festival performance programming, a gender equity score was calculated for each festival.<sup>4</sup> To learn how this score was calculated, please refer to **Section VI. Methodology**.

In this study, the average gender equity score was 0.45, indicating that when each festival was given equal weight, on average 45% of works were choreographed by women. The highest score was 0.82 (one festival) which contained 82% works by women. The lowest score was 0.00 (two festivals), which had no works by women.

### Gender Equity Scores in Performance Programming



**Note:** Festivals which programmed a higher number of works contributed more heavily to the overall percentages, as given in the other findings of this section. The gender equity scores are calculated by festival, meaning that every festival contributes equally to those scores. Gender equity scores refer only to the percentage of works choreographed by women: no other equity factors were included.

<sup>4</sup> Three festivals were excluded from calculations for gender equity scores: Austin Dance Festival, DanceAfrica, Harvest Chicago Contemporary Dance Festival. For further details, please refer to **Section VI. Limitations**.

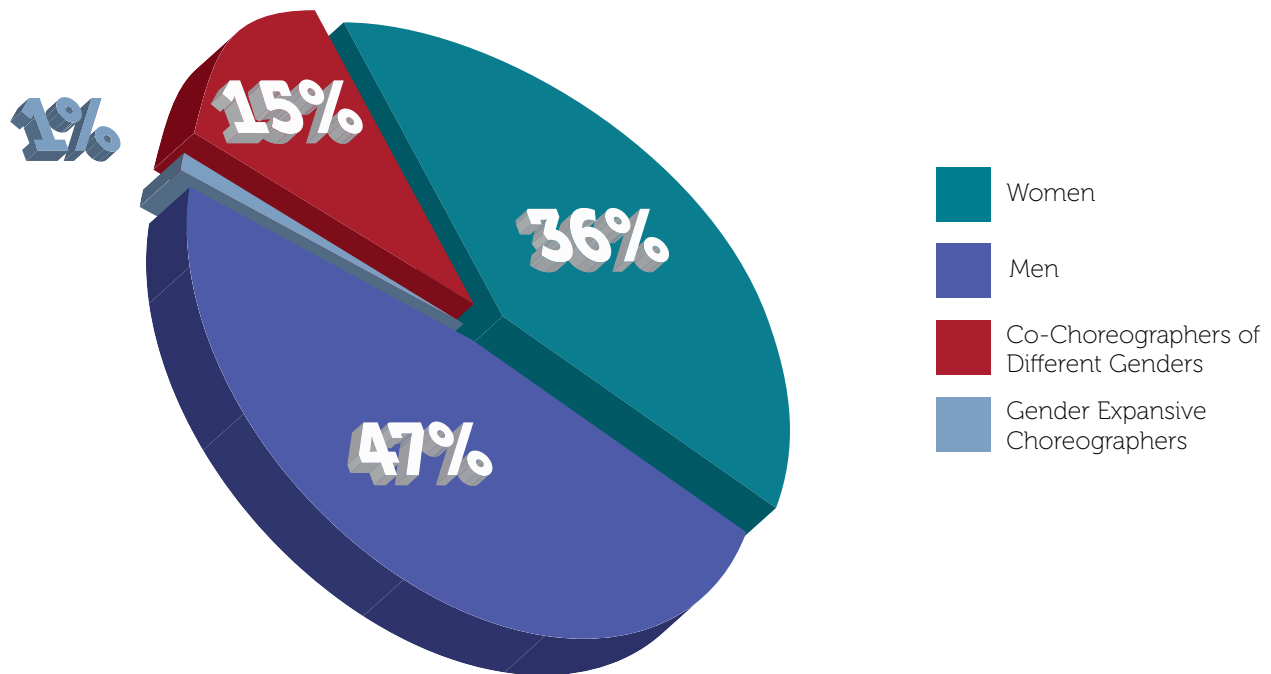


## World Premieres

118 works were identified as world premieres.<sup>5</sup> Of these, 36% were choreographed by women.

| World Premieres (choreographed by) |     |  |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-----|--|---------------------------------|
| Women                              | Men | Co-Choreographers of Different Genders | Gender Expansive Choreographers |
| 36%                                | 47% | 15%                                    | 1%                              |

### World Premieres (choreographed by)



#### Further Analysis:

- Of the 118 premieres, 87 works, or 74%, were presented live.
- 15 live premieres were full-length works, and 9 (60%) of them were choreographed by women.
- 72 live premieres were mixed-bill works, and 24 (33%) of them were choreographed by women.

<sup>5</sup> It is likely that the actual number of world premieres was higher than 118. Works which were not explicitly identified or verified as world premieres were not included in this calculation.

## Mode of Presentation

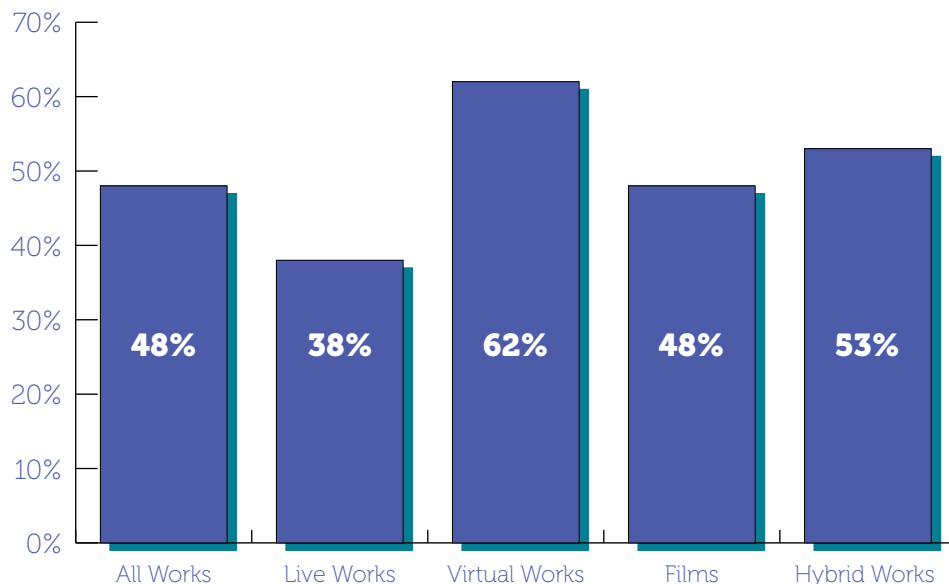
The works were classified by the following modes of presentation: live, virtual, film, hybrid.

- 369 works were performed **live** - performed in-person for an in-person audience.
- 203 works were performed **virtually** - created as in-person works for the stage, but videoed and presented virtually.
- 264 works were presented as **films** - created with the intention of being shown on a screen rather than stage.
- 43 works were presented in a **hybrid** mode - available both live and virtual.

| Mode of Presentation | (choreographed by) Women | Men | Co-Choreographers of Different Genders | Gender Expansive Choreographers |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----|--|---------------------------------|
| Live                 | 38%                      | 52% | 9%                                     | 1%                              |
| Virtual              | 62%                      | 33% | 5%                                     | 0%                              |
| Films                | 48%                      | 37% | 13%                                    | 1%                              |
| Hybrid               | 53%                      | 42% | 5%                                     | 0%                              |

The following chart compares the percentage of works that were choreographed by women between the four modes of presentation.

### Percentage of Women-Choreographed Works



## Type of Work

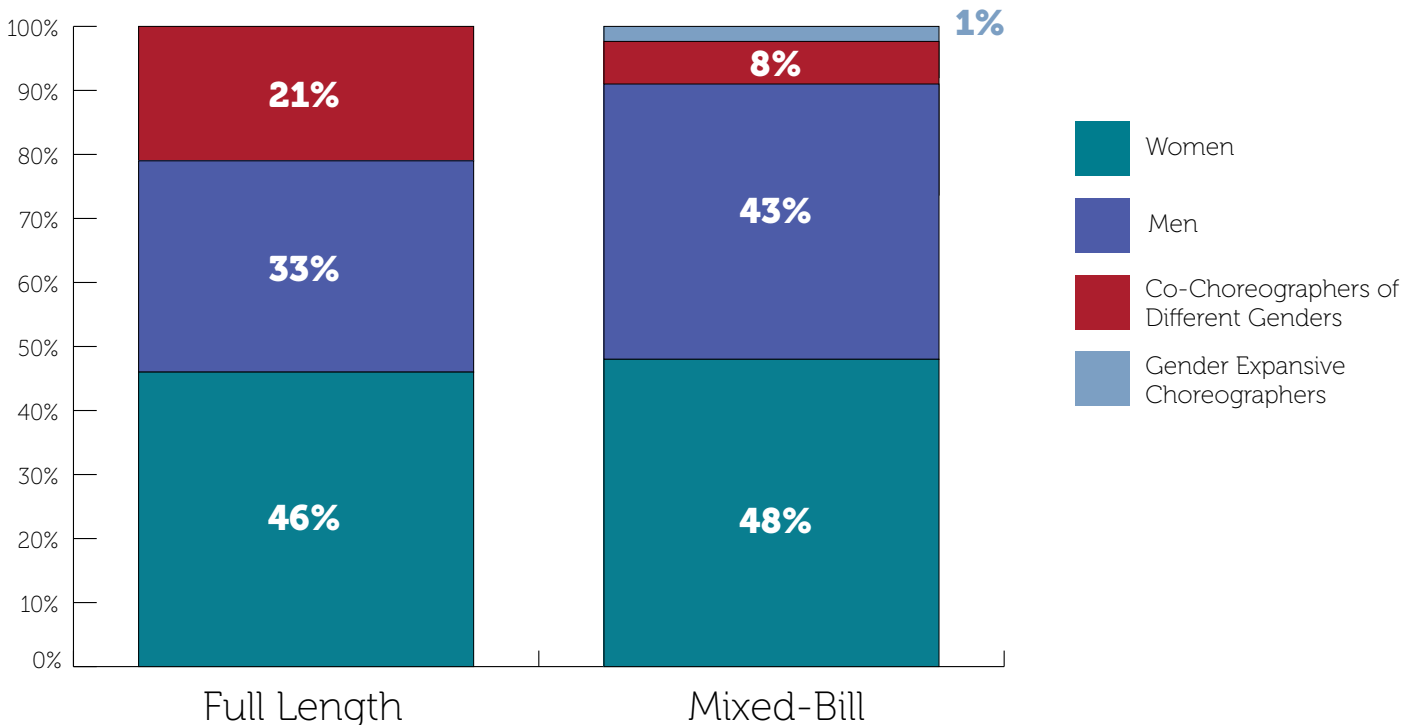
The works were also categorized either as mixed-bill or full-length, depending respectively if they appeared in a performance or presentation with other works or alone.<sup>6</sup>

831 works were presented as mixed-bill, i.e. alongside other works. As this makes up 95% of the total, the gender distribution of choreographers closely mirrors the overall total (48% women-choreographed works).

48 works, 5% of the total, were presented as full-length works, ie. comprising an entire program, presented alone.

| Full Length Works (choreographed by) |     |  |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--|---------------------------------|
| Women                                | Men | Co-Choreographers of Different Genders | Gender Expansive Choreographers |
| 46%                                  | 33% | 21%                                    | 0%                              |

## Full-Length and Mixed-Bill Works (choreographed by)



<sup>6</sup> Full-Length works - comprised an entire program, presented alone.

Mixed Bill works - comprised part of a program, presented alongside other works of similar length.

## Section III: Leadership Analysis

For each festival, the DDP research team recorded the gender of the artistic director(s), or the person(s) whose titles most closely aligned with the role. As the festivals varied in structure, the titles of the recorded leaders also varied, including artistic director, director, producer, executive director, founder, and other similar titles.<sup>7</sup>

Three festivals were recorded as being led by co-artistic directors. At all three festivals, all directors recorded were women, and the festivals were accordingly classified as led by women.

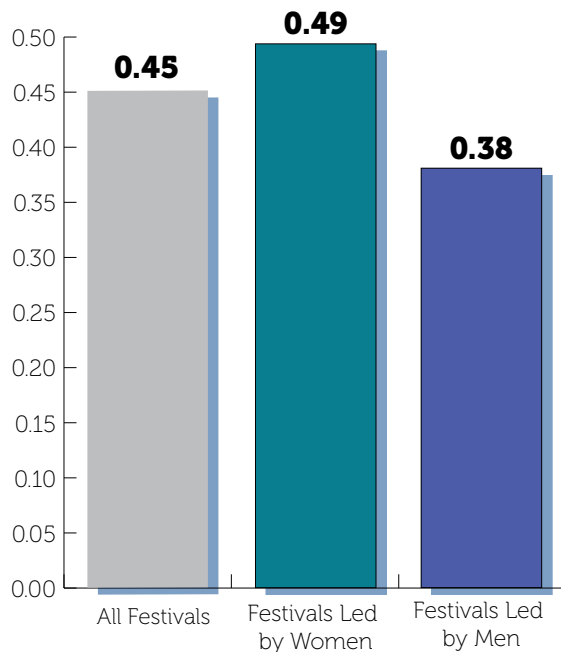
Of the 35 festivals:

- 24 were led by women (69%)
- 11 were led by men (31%)

At the festivals led by women, the average gender equity score was 0.49.

At the festivals led by men, the average gender equity score was 0.38.

### Average Gender Equity Scores



<sup>7</sup> For one festival, BAAND Together Dance Festival, no artistic director was recorded. This festival was held at Lincoln Center and was a collaboration between five companies: Ballet Hispánico, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem.

## Section IV: Year-to-Year Comparison

As this Report is DDP’s third annual report on dance festivals, the following section compares DDP’s findings between years. To better understand the context surrounding these findings and the limitations, such as difference in size and qualifying factors of samples, please refer to **Section VI. Limitations**.

To more accurately compare DDP’s findings between years, all calculations for 2021 used in this section were adjusted to exclude film festivals, since this was the first year in which dance film festivals were included. Additionally, all calculations for 2020 were adjusted to remove non-U.S. festivals.

Note: 13 festivals were included in all three years, and an additional six festivals were included in both 2020 and 2021 analysis.

### Average Festival Gender Equity Scores

The average festival gender equity scores show an increase of 0.15 between 2019 and 2021, indicating that the festivals sampled in 2021 programmed 15% more choreographic work by women than the festivals sampled in 2019.

| <i>Festival Year</i> | <i>Average Gender Equity Score</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>2019</b>          | <b>0.30</b>                        |
| <b>2020</b>          | <b>0.40</b>                        |
| <b>2021</b>          | <b>0.45</b>                        |

### All Works

The overall percentage of works choreographed by women also increased between 2019 and 2021, from 26% to 47%.

| <i>Festival Year</i> | <i>Number of Works Studied</i> | <i>Women Choreographed</i> | <i>Men Choreographed</i> | <i>Other<sup>8</sup></i> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>2019</b>          | <b>230</b>                     | <b>26%</b>                 | <b>69%</b>               | <b>5%</b>                |
| <b>2020</b>          | <b>184</b>                     | <b>38%</b>                 | <b>56%</b>               | <b>7%</b>                |
| <b>2021</b>          | <b>615</b>                     | <b>47%</b>                 | <b>45%</b>               | <b>8%</b>                |

<sup>8</sup> The category of “Other” encompasses the following: works by choreographers of uncategorized genders, works by gender expansive choreographers, and works by co-choreographers of different genders.

## World Premieres

The percentage of premieres choreographed by women varies between years, with the highest percentage in 2020 at 49%.

| <i>Festival Year</i> | <i>Total Premieres Studied</i> | <i>Women Choreographed</i> | <i>Men Choreographed</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>2019</b>          | <b>37</b>                      | <b>35%</b>                 | <b>59%</b>               | <b>5%</b>    |
| <b>2020</b>          | <b>59</b>                      | <b>49%</b>                 | <b>44%</b>               | <b>7%</b>    |
| <b>2021</b>          | <b>116</b>                     | <b>36%</b>                 | <b>47%</b>               | <b>16%</b>   |

## Section V: Conclusions and Opportunities for Future Research

This Report shows that women choreographed 48% of the works programmed at the dance festivals sampled. The percentages of live works and world premieres choreographed by women, however, are both lower, 38% and 36% respectively, indicating that women remain less likely to receive the most coveted types of commissions.

The Report also shows that 69% of the sampled festivals were led by women in the role of artistic director or equivalent, and that the festivals led by women had on average a higher gender equity score in performance programming than the festivals led by men (0.49 compared to 0.38), meaning that festivals led by women are more likely to program works choreographed by women.

This, DDP's third annual report on dance festivals, examined an increased number of dance festivals and included, for the first time, dance film festivals. The adjusted year-to-year comparisons of 2019, 2020, and 2021 festivals show an increasing number of works choreographed by women. However, it should also be noted that the 2020 and 2021 years were marred by the COVID-19 pandemic, and included virtual programming, which is typically less costly to produce. Virtual programming, compared in this Report to live, hybrid, and film programming, showed the highest percentage of women-choreographed work of any category, at 62%.

For women to achieve parity in dance, and particularly in ballet and choreographic commissions, they must both continue to be given opportunities to present work at dance festivals, and also receive increased choreographic commissions at the largest dance companies which hold the most resources.

Future research should be conducted to:

- Analyze running times of works, providing insight into the number of programmed minutes and types of commissions women receive.
- Study the gender distribution of videographers, directors, and editors of dance films.
- Compare compensation to artists and curators involved in festivals.
- Interrogate how and if festival performance opportunities do or do not lead to other choreographic commissions for choreographers.

DDP also intends to conduct a separate study on dance festivals occurring outside of the U.S. at a later date.

# Section VI: Operational Definitions, Methodology, and Limitations

## Operational Definitions

### Choreographic Works

Choreographic works, or works, defined as individual pieces of choreography, were classified by the following: live, virtual, film, or hybrid; full-length or mixed bill; premiere or not premiere.

Live works - performed in-person for an in-person audience.

Virtual works - created as in-person works for the stage, but videoed and presented virtually.

Film works - created with the intention of being shown on a screen rather than stage.

Hybrid works - presented as both live and virtual.

Full-Length works - comprised an entire program, presented alone.

Mixed Bill works - comprised part of a program, presented alongside other works of similar length.

Premieres - refers to world premieres, works which were presented for the first time.

### Dance Festival

Dance-focused festivals, or festivals whose programming consisted of multiple (more than one) professional (i.e. non-student) dance performances or presentations, including films and virtual works, particularly in the styles of ballet, contemporary, and/or modern dance.

### Gender

For this study, choreographers and artistic directors were categorized into three gender identity categories: women, men, and gender expansive. The term gender expansive is used to encompass those who identify as nonbinary or otherwise outside of the gender binary. DDP respects and affirms the gender identities of individuals - in all cases gender given represents the gender identity of the individual to DDP's best ability.

In this research, pronouns were used as an indicator of gender identity. Pronoun data was sourced from biographical information provided on the festival website. Each festival was contacted with the opportunity to verify or correct gender identities of choreographers and artistic directors.

### Gender Equity Scores

A gender equity score was calculated for each festival as the ratio of women-choreographed works to total works. This equity score only refers to the percentage of works that were choreographed by women: no other equity factors are included.



## Methodology

For this Report, DDP gathered a wide sample of dance-focused festivals, or festivals whose programming consisted of multiple dance performances or presentations particularly in the styles of ballet, contemporary, and/or modern dance. The list of festivals was then filtered down to include only festivals that were U.S.-based and which occurred in 2021, a year when many were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The list was filtered further to include only festivals which had programming details available on their websites.

From the remaining festivals, performance programming and festival leadership details were gathered through festival websites and promotional materials. Other dance programming, such as panels, seminars, discussions, workshops, and classes, were not included in this report.

In several cases, the research team made decisions about whether to include festivals together or separately. DDP chose to include Kaatsbaan’s spring and summer festivals together, as they are curated by the same organization and directors. Little Island NYC and Little Island Free, however, were counted as two distinct festivals for this report, because although they occurred in the same location, they were curated by different organizers.

Each festival was then contacted with the opportunity to correct and/or verify the data collected. DDP received a 56% participation rate from this outreach.

We extend our gratitude to the organizers of the following festivals, who participated in the data verification:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. American Dance Festival                            | 11. Laguna Dance Festival                 |
| 2. Ballet Sun Valley                                  | 12. Lake Tahoe Dance Festival             |
| 3. Bates Dance Festival                               | 13. Nantucket Atheneum Dance Festival     |
| 4. Contemporary Dance Choreography Festival (CDCFest) | 14. Oklahoma International Dance Festival |
| 5. Dance Camera West OVID.tv Virtual Festival         | 15. San Francisco Dance Film Festival     |
| 6. Dance on Camera Festival                           | 16. Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema   |
| 7. Dance Salad Festival                               | 17. Screen Dance International            |
| 8. Fall For Dance Festival                            | 18. Seattle International Dance Festival  |
| 9. HH11 Dance Festival                                | 19. Traverse City Dance Project           |
| 10. Kaatsbaan Spring and Summer Festivals             | 20. Vail Dance Festival                   |

Gender equity scores were calculated for each festival, reflecting the ratio of women-choreographed works to total works. For each festival, the score was calculated by dividing the number of women-choreographed works by the number of total works. A score of 1.0 would indicate all works by women, a score of 0.0 indicates no works by women, and a score of 0.5 indicates half of the works were by women. This equity score only refers to the percentage of works that were choreographed by women: no other equity factors are included, including length of works, mode of presentation, or leadership of the festival.

Throughout this Report percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Because of this, percentages may appear to add to slightly more or less than 100%.

## Limitations

### Data Availability

Data was sourced primarily from festival websites. While DDP's outreach to festivals received a 56% participation rate, the data for the other 44% of festivals is dependent on the accuracy of their websites. In some cases, data was not available for all programmed choreographic works. Works with incomplete information were excluded from calculations.

Three festivals were excluded from calculations of gender equity scores: Austin Dance Festival, DanceAfrica, Harvest Chicago Contemporary Dance Festival. These festivals were excluded from this portion because for each, more than half of their programming data was unavailable.

One festival, BAAND Together Dance Festival, was excluded from calculations regarding festival artistic directors. This festival was held at Lincoln Center and was a collaboration between five companies: Ballet Hispánico, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem. No festival artistic director or person holding an equivalent title was recorded.

The 36 festivals sampled were included in all calculations except as specifically detailed above and in the adjusted year-to-year comparison, where 2021 dance films were removed.

### Pandemic Effects

This Report captured festivals which occurred throughout 2021 and throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Like the year before, in 2021 many dance festivals were planned and had to be either canceled or significantly changed to comply with public safety guidelines. It is possible that these cancellations and change of plans affected the gender equity of works actually presented, i.e., that had the pandemic not affected festivals, the gender equity may have been different.

### Year-to-Year Comparisons

The year-to-year comparisons provided in **Section IV.** compare DDP's findings on dance festivals which occurred in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Between years, DDP's sample of dance festivals was changed and expanded. In particular, the earliest samples focused on classical ballet festivals occurring in spring or summer, while this Report includes a wide variety of festivals, which not only focus on a variety of dance forms, but also include dance film festivals, and occurred throughout the year.

As noted in the Report, the year-to-year findings were adjusted to accurately compare years by excluding both film festivals and dance festivals occurring outside of the US.

*With any inquiries or comments, we invite you to contact DDP Research and Special Projects Lead Michayla Kelly at [mkelly@dancedataproject.com](mailto:mkelly@dancedataproject.com).*