



# Hero<sub>♀</sub> Complex

How fictional heroines fare for

International Women's Day

Surveys conducted online in July - August 2024 among N=1472 men and N=1472 women aged 13-54 as part of a study around male role models in entertainment.

This is a supplementary look at female role models, in response to our **Hero Complex** white paper from October 2024. This original study focused on teens and young men aged 13-30. The insights in this document also include older Millennial women and Gen X women (up to age 54) to show trends in women's attitudes and preferences.



# While fiction can never replace real-world influences, it can inspire young audiences

Q: Who did you look up to as male role models growing up?

Q: Who did you look up to as female role models growing up?

MOST OF MY ROLE MODELS WERE...

...real people in my life  
**52%**

...fictional characters  
**26%**

Public figures and celebrities  
**21%**

...real people in my life  
**56%**

...fictional characters  
**27%**

...public figures and celebrities  
**18%**

Men 13-30

Women 13-30

# In fact, fictional heroines are becoming more important sources of inspiration in young women's lives

Q: Who did you look up to as female role models growing up?

Teens and Women, aged 13-54

MOST OF MY ROLE MODELS WERE  
FICTIONAL CHARACTERS



27% Gen Z  
13-26 y/o



20% Millennials  
27-42 y/o



13% Gen X  
42-54 y/o

In fiction, young women have both fantastical and real-world heroines to look up to, while young men focus on superhero and fantasy influences, lacking more grounded inspirations



SUPERHEROES

SCI-FI & FANTASY

ANIMATION

VIDEO GAMES

TOYS

DRAMAS & COMEDIES

TOP FICTIONAL ROLE MODELS  
FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

**Gen Z Heroines**

13-26 y/o

**Millennial Heroines**

27-42 y/o

**Gen X Heroines**

42-54 y/o

Characters that are especially resonant within a generation

Regardless of their generation, women identify many of the same female characters as good role models for girls

These characters are all women with brains, beauty and brawn (of sorts). They are resourceful and resilient, but with room for vulnerability – they don't always get things right and are allowed to fail in their journey to success.



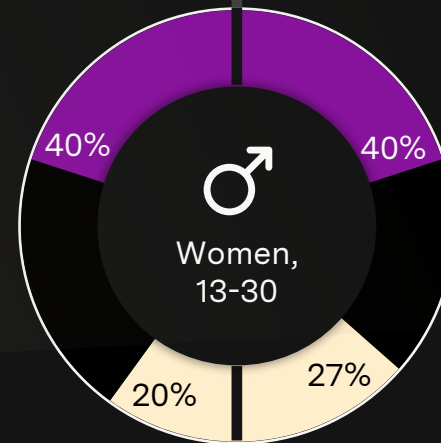
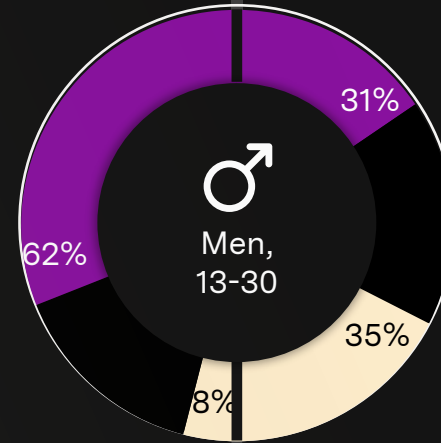
# Female views on Male Representation

Women's views on masculinity largely align with how they think society views it, while men feel increasingly disconnected

Q: Do **you** see masculinity as a positive or a negative force?

POSITIVE + GOOD THING  
NEGATIVE - BAD THING

Q: Do you think our **society** sees masculinity as a good thing or a bad thing?



Based on two surveys of 3,000 US streaming viewers, conducted in July 2024

For young women,  
**kindness is king**  
(along with a healthy  
dose of emotional  
literacy) when it  
comes to male  
characters on screen...

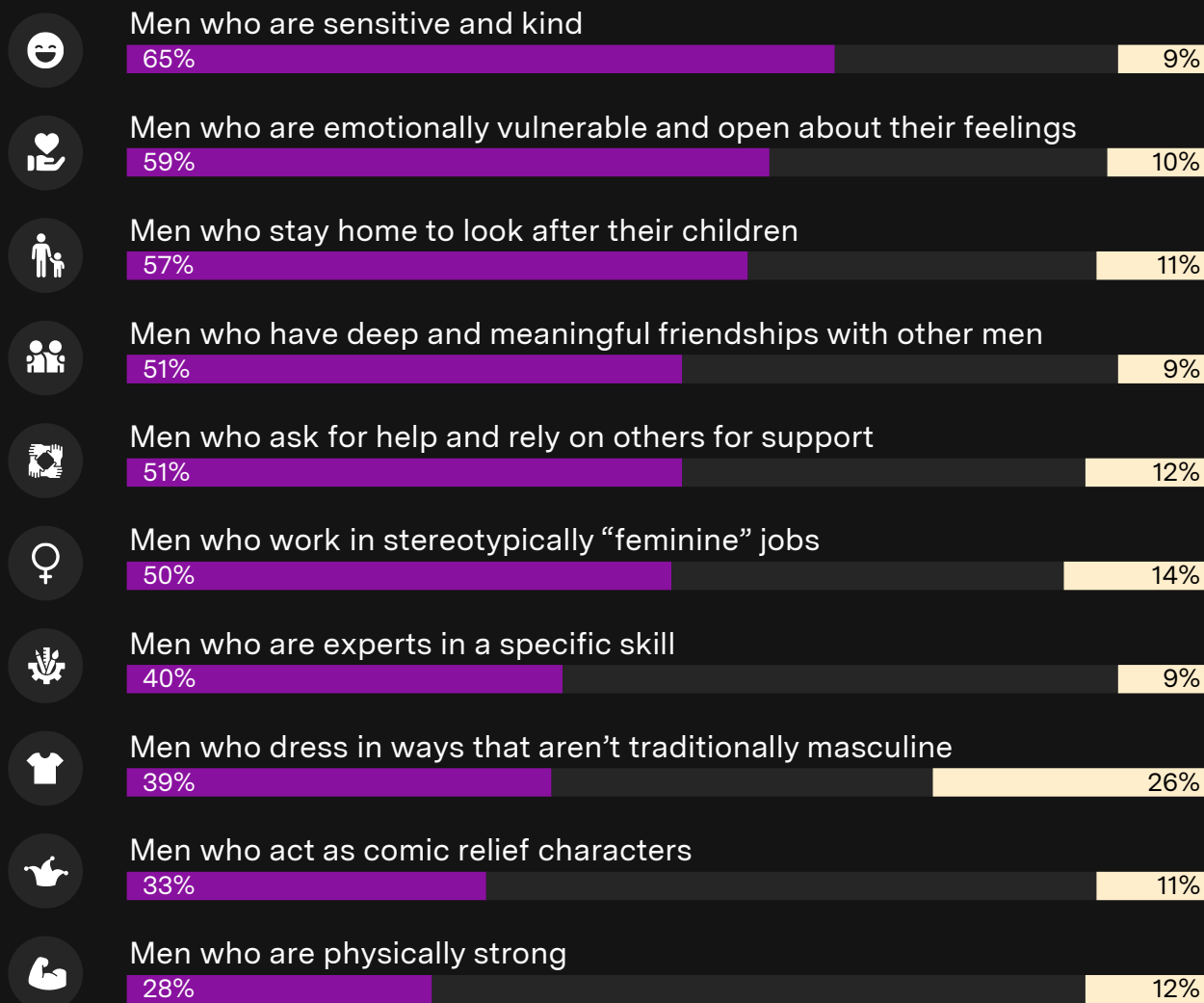


## Q: What types of male characters would you like to see more of in film & TV

Teens and young women, 13-30

+ MORE

LESS -





While young men want to see **men relating to each other** on screen, with skillsets they can emulate

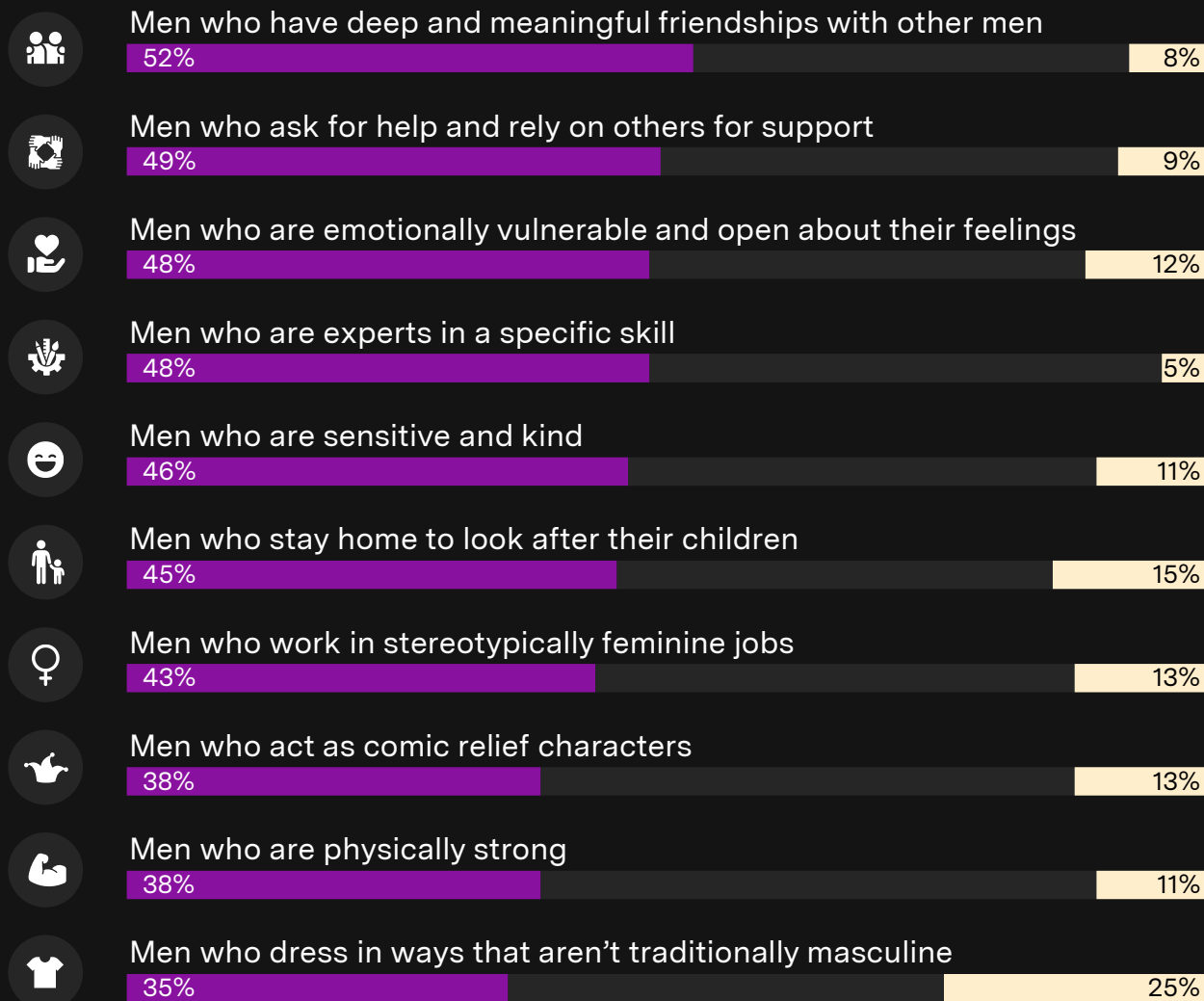


## Q: What types of male characters would you like to see more of in film & TV

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+ MORE

LESS -



# Thought starters for further exploration around Female Role Models

## COMPARING TO MALE AUDIENCES

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- How do women feel about femininity, and how do they think their younger male counterparts and society at large views it?
- What qualities do young women look for in a fictional female role model on screen and how does that compare to what men are looking for from male role models?
- How do young women's expectations for male role models differ from their expectations for female role models?

## REPRESENTATION & INFLUENCE

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- How do female role models in fiction shape real-world aspirations and behaviors?
- Do young women feel that today's fictional heroines accurately reflect their experiences and struggles?
- What traits make a good female role model? Why do the same fictional characters transcend generations as good role models for women?

## GROUNDED VS. FANTASTICAL OFFERINGS

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- Which traits make a fictional female character more "relatable" versus "aspirational"?
- What gaps exist in the representation of female characters across genres?
- Who are the grounded female characters that women are drawn to right now, what can we learn from them and what's missing for young women today on screen?

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# Thank you

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