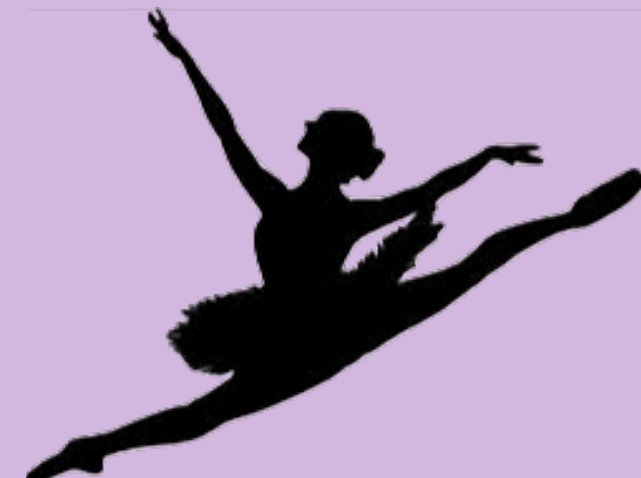
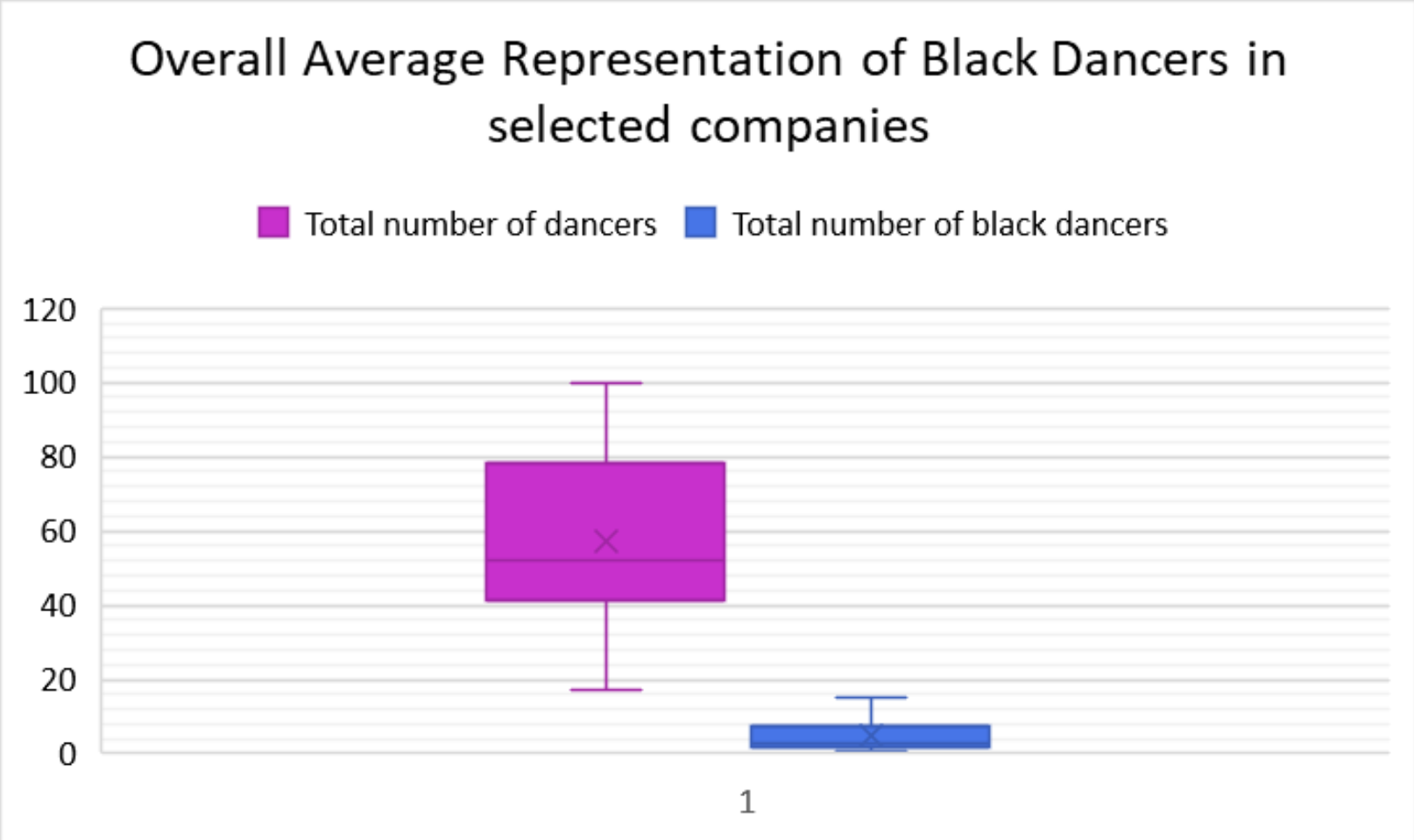




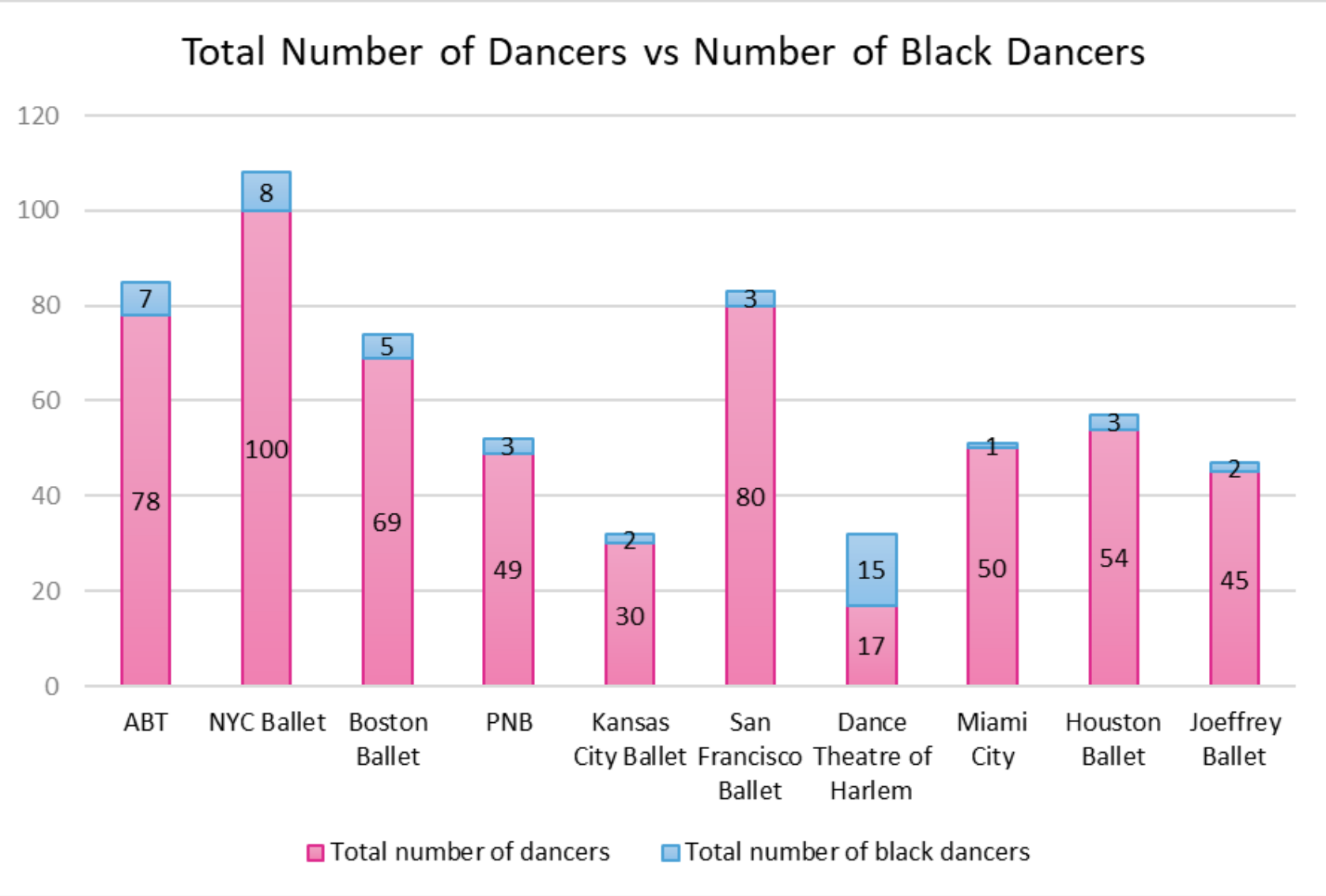
Blacks in Ballet: How Inclusive are Top U.S Ballet Companies?



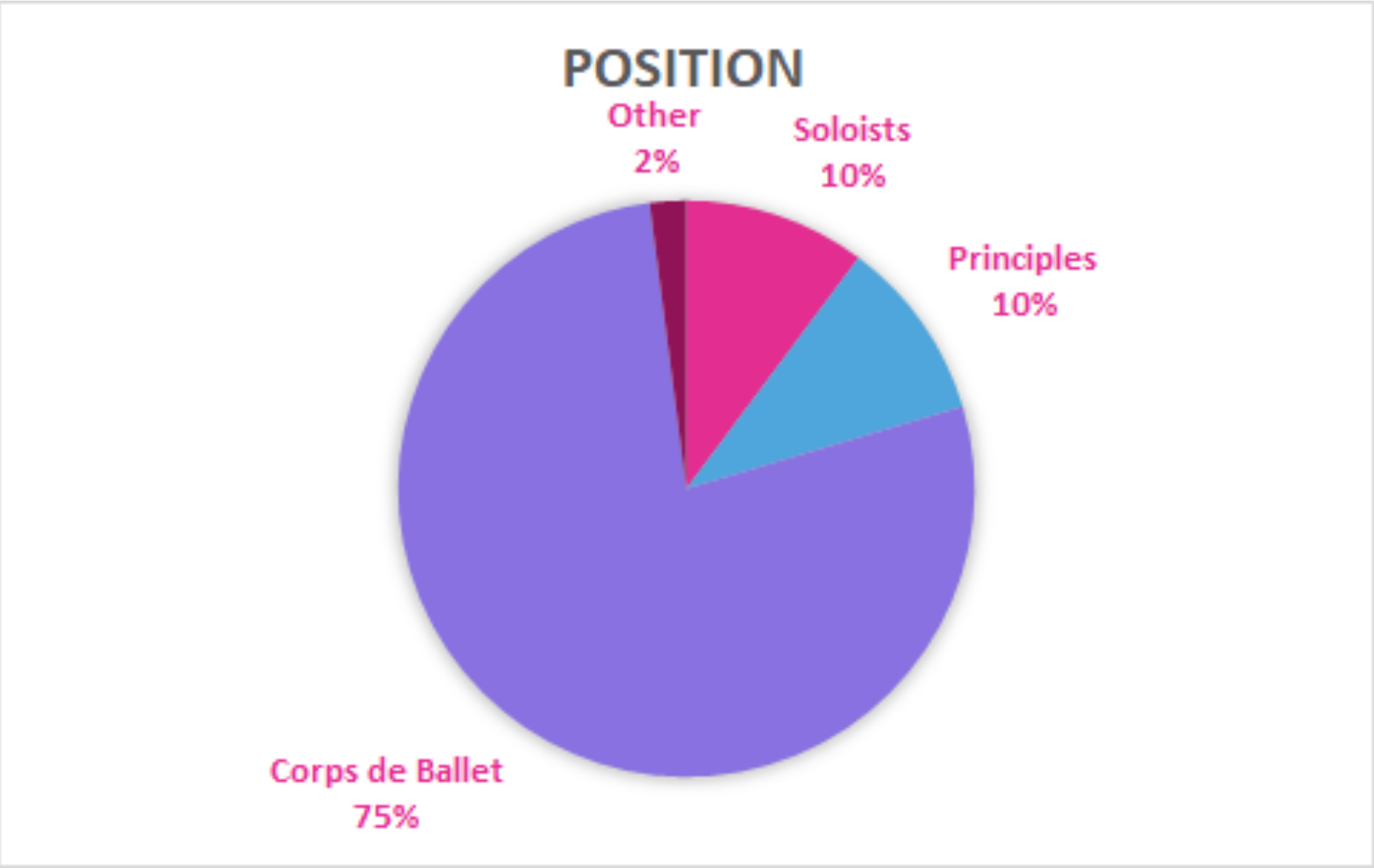
This project is motivated by my experiences as a ballet student for the past several years. In most of my classes, I would be one of the only black students. I began to wonder how many black ballet dancers there are. This project explores this question by focusing on the top ten ballet companies in the US, by Dance Magazine, totaling over 500 dancers.



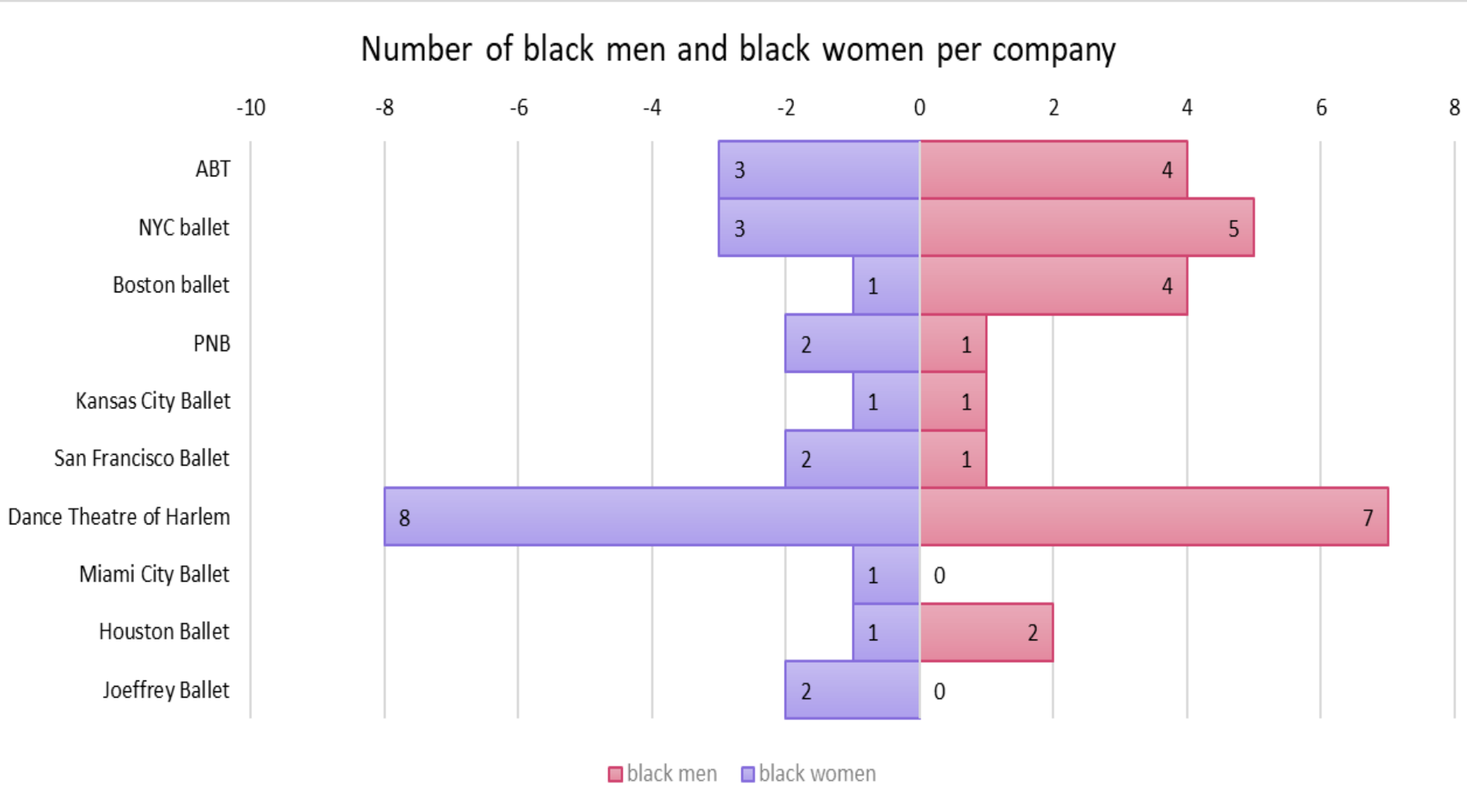
Finding demographic data on dancers was one of the most challenging aspects of this project. Census data was not available because of the small number of dancers, and the small percentage of dancers in the different demographic categories. Data were collected from Memories of Blacks in Dance which contains self-reported rosters of current black dancers by company. I verified the listing against each company's roster of dancers.



This graph shows the total number of dancers in the ten dance companies of interest. As shown, black representation ranges from 15 black dancers at Dance Theatre of Harlem, to 1 black dancer at Miami City Ballet. Overall, blacks represent 5.5% of company dancers—while blacks are 13.4% of the US population.

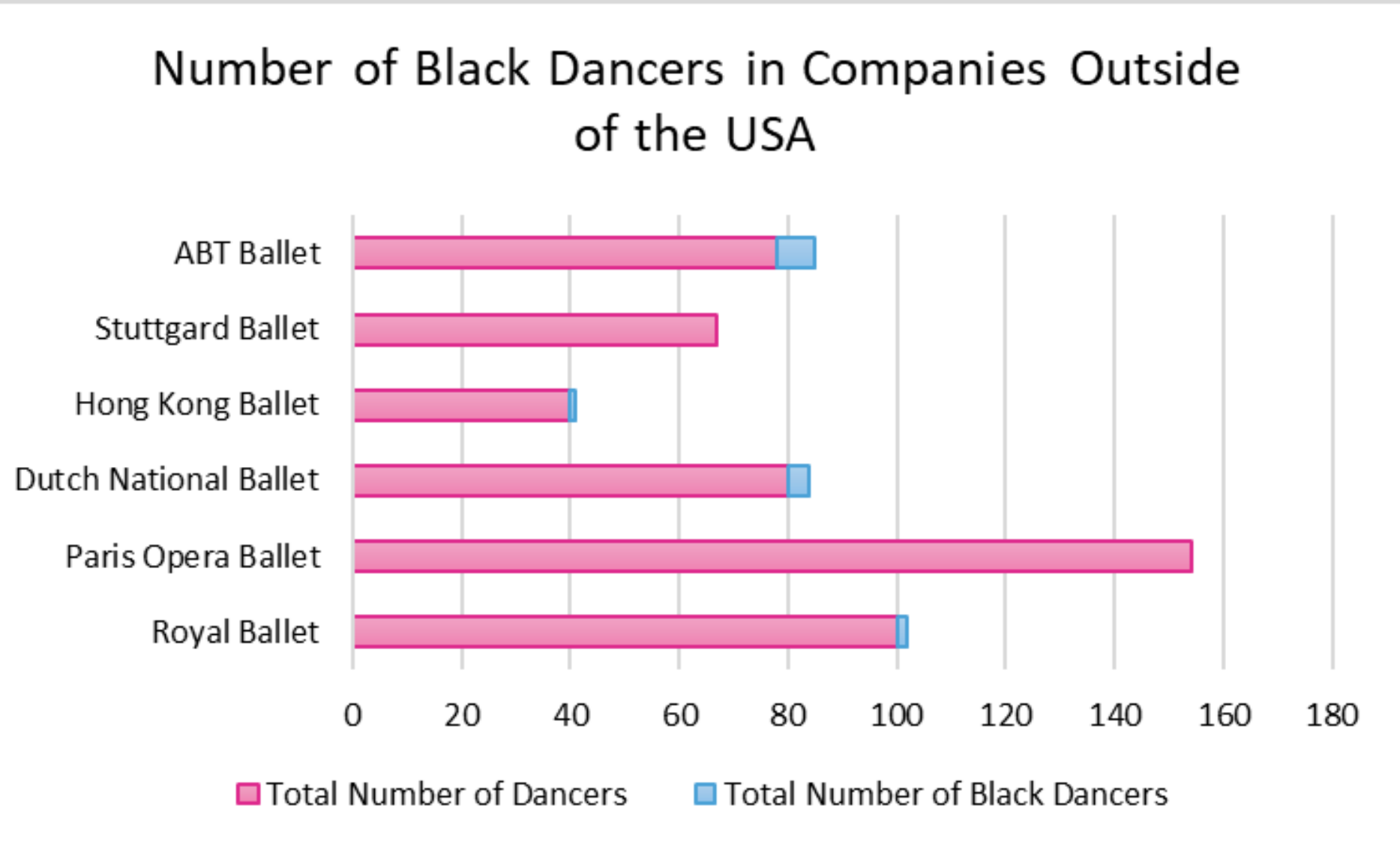


I examined whether there was more black dancers in the Corps de Ballet (lowest professional level), Soloists (2nd highest professional level), Principles (highest professional level), or other (which may include apprentices, etc.). I found that they majority of black dancers were in the Corps de Ballet, with a few exceptions.



Ballet is generally perceived as a female profession or activity. Major data I collected was on whether the black dancers in the top US companies were male or female. I found that the number was almost exactly equal.

One famous ballerina - Michaela DePrince has found more acceptance in European companies. So I compared ABT to 5 other international ballet companies. I mainly chose companies in Western Europe, because those countries have more black people living in them. I found that there are on average fewer black dancers in international companies.



Gaining a place in a top ballet company is extremely competitive. This project suggests that achieving success as a dancer in a top company is especially challenging for blacks. While some dancers choose to try their luck in other countries, they will still find a challenging environment. It is not clear why there are so few black ballerinas - it may be due to the pipeline, or people's perceptions of what a ballerina should look like. But as we examine representation in other areas, we should also do so in the world of ballet.