

BBFC Classification Guidelines Research Report 2024





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At the BBFC, we're dedicated to ensuring what we do is responsive to the ever-evolving world around us. Since we last asked people across the country what they thought about our standards, society has changed, and opinions have followed – it's fascinating how this vast body of new research reflects this.

This is the first Classification Guidelines update I have overseen as President. Not only am I proud and thrilled to launch these findings, but as someone who has always looked to the BBFC for guidance for myself and my family, seeing first-hand the level of dedication and insight that went into this process has been eye-opening and inspiring. Without a doubt, we are truly shaped by you.

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President,

Natasha Kaplinsky OBE



“

The effectiveness of what we do relies entirely on trust. To ensure we have that trust, and to get to the heart of what audiences think and feel, we go directly to them. Only by doing this can we ensure we are classifying content in line with the expectations of families across the UK. This is essential to maintaining the extraordinarily high levels of public trust that the BBFC is privileged to enjoy.

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**Chief Executive,
David Austin OBE**

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Methodology
3. Main Findings
4. Classification: Findings and Recommendations
5. Appendix

Executive Summary

We spoke to 12,000 people across the UK, revealing positive results for the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and its place in a rapidly evolving media landscape. 97% of people surveyed still believe that assigning an age rating to content has value to some or all audiences, especially parents and children. While the cinema remains a vital place of exhibition, streaming services – of which the BBFC now works with over 30 – are the most popular format by which people in the UK watch films. This research also found that 81% of participants want a consistent age rating system across cinema, physical media (DVD/Blu-ray) and online.

BBFC age ratings have high levels of trust and recognition for UK audiences. 99% of respondents recognised at least one age rating symbol, with 78% recognising them all. Since 2019, there has been a 16% increase, to 60%, in awareness that the BBFC is the organisation responsible for assigning its widely-recognised age rating symbols. People also have high levels of trust in what those age rating symbols represent: 85% of those surveyed trust BBFC ratings 'all' or 'most of' the time to accurately reflect whether content is suitable for them or their family. The numbers are even stronger among key demographics: 88% of 16-19 year olds and 91% of teachers say they trust BBFC age ratings 'all' or 'most of' the time. Among parents/caregivers, there has been a 7% increase in trust from 2019, rising to 90%.

Looking back on the films they have watched over the past year, 83% of people surveyed said that they agree with BBFC age ratings 'all' or 'most of' the time. This number also rises among key groups, with 85% of 16-19 year olds and 87% of parents and teachers agreeing with BBFC classification decisions 'all' or 'most of' the time.

Most people know the BBFC's age ratings and content advice from the cinema-going experience; whether from the cinema itself, the cinema's website, or the BBFC black card shown before the film begins. For BBFC age rating symbols, physical media (DVD/Blu-ray) was the second highest-rated site of recognition, but over half (57%) of respondents also recognise the age rating symbols from Netflix and almost half (44%) say they know them from Amazon Prime Video. Netflix is also the second biggest site of recognition (45%) for BBFC content advice, after the cinema-going experience. These statistics reflect the successful partnerships the BBFC has forged with these platforms, and the value of having trusted age ratings online.

Executive Summary continued

Fewer people are aware of BBFC extended content advice (47%), which is available on their website and app and provides a detailed breakdown of the type of material a film or series contains. Awareness of extended content advice is higher among older teens (68%) and teachers (67%), which appears to reflect the impact of the BBFC's Education and Outreach programmes with schools, universities and film festivals.

The core purpose of the research was to assess whether the BBFC's current Classification Guidelines accurately reflect the views and expectations of people across the UK, including what type of content may be permitted at each category level. While there was broad support for current BBFC standards across the age rating categories and its approach to classifying a range of subjects and types of content, there were certain areas that required changes to bring BBFC standards in line with shifts in popular opinion.

Violence was a core area of concern across the categories. While people generally supported the BBFC's standards, a number of clips and two features used in the research received higher ratings from participants. These examples featured scenes of violence that bordered on two categories but had received the lower of the two ratings from the BBFC. Respondents, however, often found the violence to be too intense or impactful for that rating, and would prefer to see similar content rated more cautiously in future. A key indicator for people that a higher rating may be required, or the content is appropriately placed on the higher end of a borderline between two age ratings, is if the violence is tonally dark, disturbing or realistic, such as focussing on a victim's suffering. These traits can heighten the impact of a scene of violence, even if it does not feature blood or strong gore.

People were also concerned about sex scenes on the 12A/12 / 15 borderline. Respondents felt the duration, nudity and sexual detail present in the 12A/12-rated examples used were too strong, and should be placed at 15 instead. By contrast, people were more comfortable allowing slightly stronger verbal and visual sex references at 15, although content relating to pornography is still of concern and an indicator that an 18 may be required.

Executive Summary continued

Language is also an area of change. Parents are concerned about the normalisation of bad language, especially terms with sexual or misogynistic connotations. For example, terms such as 'son of a bitch', 'bitch', 'dick'. The worry is that young viewers may hear and repeat such language. Language such as this may now require a higher age rating. However, people are willing to accept isolated use of strong language at 12A/12 in trailers.

There was widespread agreement with the BBFC's approach to classifying drugs across the categories, but greater acceptance of scenes of cannabis misuse at 12A/12. People also felt that the BBFC's current policy towards classifying solvent misuse was overly cautious, and could therefore be made less restrictive while still being responsible. People were supportive of the BBFC's approach to classifying complex topics, including mental health, suicide, self-harm, and sexually abusive behaviour. In content where these subjects are handled sensitively with useful messaging for younger audiences, people saw value in it being accessible to age-appropriate audiences, whether at 12A/12 or 15.

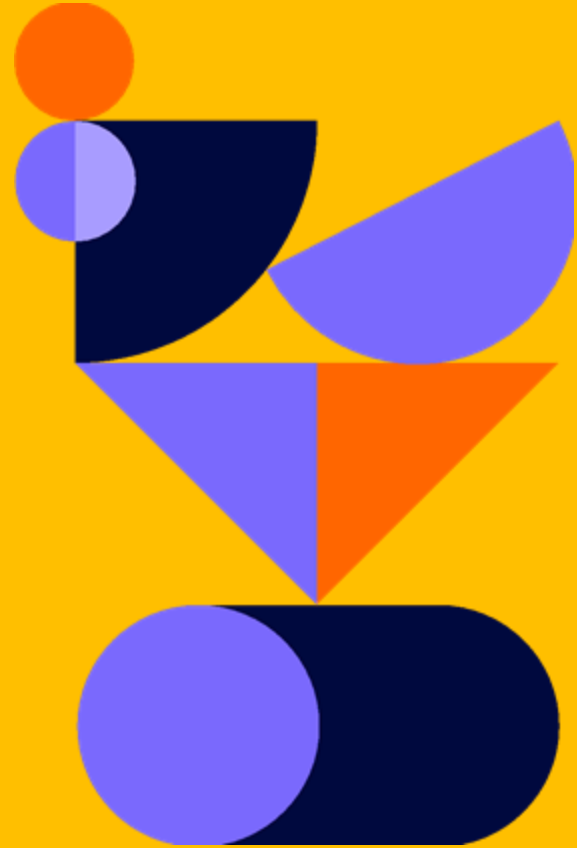
Respondents do not want to see a relaxation of BBFC standards on the 12A/12 / 15 borderline for threat and horror, and are in agreement with how the BBFC is classifying threat and horror across the categories. People do, however, see a clear difference between threat and horror and would like to be alerted in BBFC content advice as to whether content contains 'threat', 'horror' or both. As 'horror' may suggest content that is unsuitable for young children, audiences would prefer the term 'scary scenes' to be used for horror-like content at U and PG.

The BBFC's age ratings are widely recognised, trusted and valued by audiences across the UK. Overall, participants were supportive of the BBFC's current standards, with high levels of agreement with classification decisions and only minor changes recommended.

Research Objectives

- **Ensure current BBFC Classification Guidelines are appropriate and fit for purpose**
- **Ascertain whether current BBFC Classification Guidelines reflect the views, standards and expectations of people in the UK**

Methodology



Focus Groups

31 2-hour focus groups, with up to 7 participants.

189 participants were given a pre-task to watch 3-4 films before the session.

They then watched between 5-18 clips or trailers in the session, dependent on the focus group and module split.

All sessions moderated and 'live observed' by two senior moderators.

Different areas within central / suburban / rural London, Manchester, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh.

All groups were recorded for further analysis.

We oversubscribed on minority groups to ensure the range of diverse voices in the UK today were heard.

Among the focus groups were...

- 97 parents
- 19 grandparents
- 29 teachers
- 25 teens

The research used 152 clips, 31 trailers, 1 TV episode and 33 full features

Teen Film Parties

6 film parties with participants aged between 13-19 years old.

Lead teens were recruited and invited friends over to their home for a film viewing party.

Lead teens received pre-briefing and training from senior moderators, as well as a question discussion guide to follow in the session.

Participants recorded themselves and their friends answering set questions.

Senior moderators then had a debrief call with the lead teen so they could discuss the insights.

33

teenagers participated in the film parties

6

films and issues were tested

2

BBFC Youth Panel members hosted

1

5 x 13–15-year-olds

- *The House With A Clock In Its Walls* (12A/12)
- Threat PG / 12A/12 borderline

2

5 x 15–16-year-olds

- *The Woman King* (15)
- Violence 12A/12 / 15 borderline

3

6 x 15–16-year-olds

- X+Y (12A/12)
- Mental Health 12A/12 / 15 borderline

4

6 x 17–18-year-olds

- *Scary Stories To Tell In The Dark* (15)
- Threat 12A/12 / 15 borderline

5

6 x 17–18-year-olds

- *Beautiful Boy* (15)
- Drugs 15 / 18 borderline

6

5 x 18–19-year-olds

- *Barbarian* (18)
- Violence 15 / 18 borderline

Cinema Screenings

Cinema screenings were hosted in Belfast, London, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

Each audience saw a selection of trailers and a feature film.

Before the screening, participants completed an online survey providing basic information and current film viewing habits.

The main survey after the screening asked rating, content advice and trailer/film-specific questions.

We used slido to host the survey, which also helped facilitate a group discussion post-screening on the challenging issues in the film.

4 films, modules and locations were tested

327 people participated in the cinema screenings

13 trailers were shown to the audiences

Belfast

Audience = 83

Venom: Let There Be Carnage (15)

Trailers

Hong Kong: City On Fire (15)
John Wick: Chapter 4 (12A)
Mothering Sunday (15)

Cardiff

Audience = 123

M3GAN (15)

Trailers

The Batman (15)
She Said (15)
Morbius (15)
Candyman (15)
The Road Dance (15)

Edinburgh

Audience = 71

Turning Red (PG)

Trailers

The Super Mario Bros Movie (PG)
Wolfwalkers (U)
Strange World (PG)
Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (PG)

London

Audience = 50

Cocaine Bear (15)

Trailers

The Batman (15)
She Said (15)
Riders of Justice (15)

Online Community

To create a safe environment for more detailed and open conversation, we set up an online community to test content depicting sexual violence and sexually abusive behaviour.

Participants logged onto a dedicated site in which only they could see the content and questions and could answer in their own time, from home. No other participants could see their answers, ensuring they could be honest about their thoughts.

There were 18 participants in the community

- Mix of women aged 20-30, teachers of 10–18-year-olds, parents of 10–17-year-olds and teens aged 18-19
- 75% / 25% female / male split across the 18 participants

The community required participants to take part in one 20–25-minute task per day across 5 days, watching a range of clips and trailers, as well as watching *Alan Bennett's Talking Heads* 'An Ordinary Woman' and either *Tár* or *The Assistant* as a pre-task.

Online Survey

We spoke to 11,434 participants in total, with 1,272 directly engaged through the BBFC website.

Core sample of 10,162 was nationally representative, reflecting a diverse set of demographics.

A specific subset included

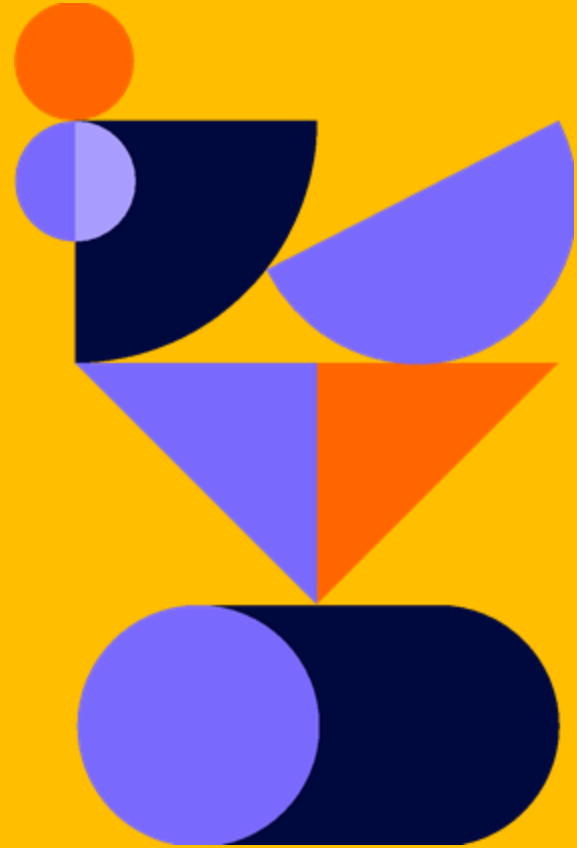
- 1,078 teachers
- 1,683 teenagers (16- to 19-year-olds)

Questions ranged from recognition, agreement and trust in the BBFC, to viewing habits, issues of concern and content-specific questions.

All aspects of the survey were conducted online through survey tool QuestionPro.

**60 different clips
and trailers were
evaluated, with
each clip or trailer
assessed by at least
173 people.**

Main Findings

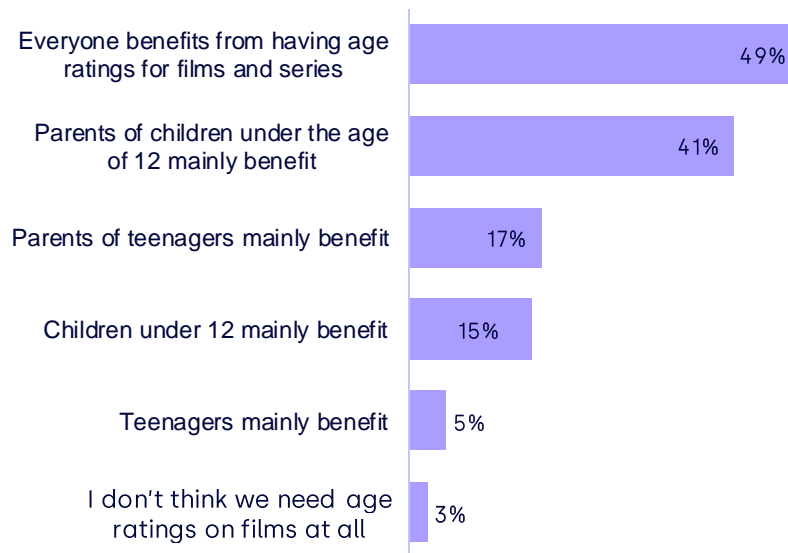


BBFC Audience

97% of people in the UK see value in content being assigned an age rating for key groups or everyone.

Almost half (49%) of our sample think that everyone benefits from content carrying an age rating. Even those who don't think it benefits everyone respect that age ratings do benefit parents and children.

Which of the following audiences, if any, do you feel most benefit from having age ratings on films and series?



BBFC Audience

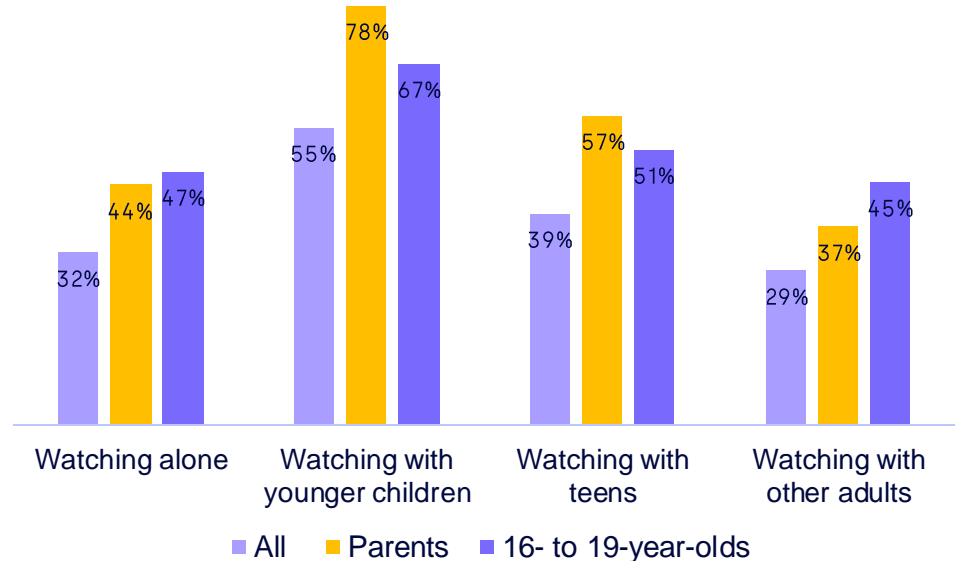
Everyone benefits from the BBFC

BBFC age ratings are seen as having the most value when people are watching with younger children.

Almost half of 16-19-year-olds say BBFC age ratings have influenced their viewing choices when watching alone, with 67% considering the age rating when viewing with people younger than them, such as younger siblings.

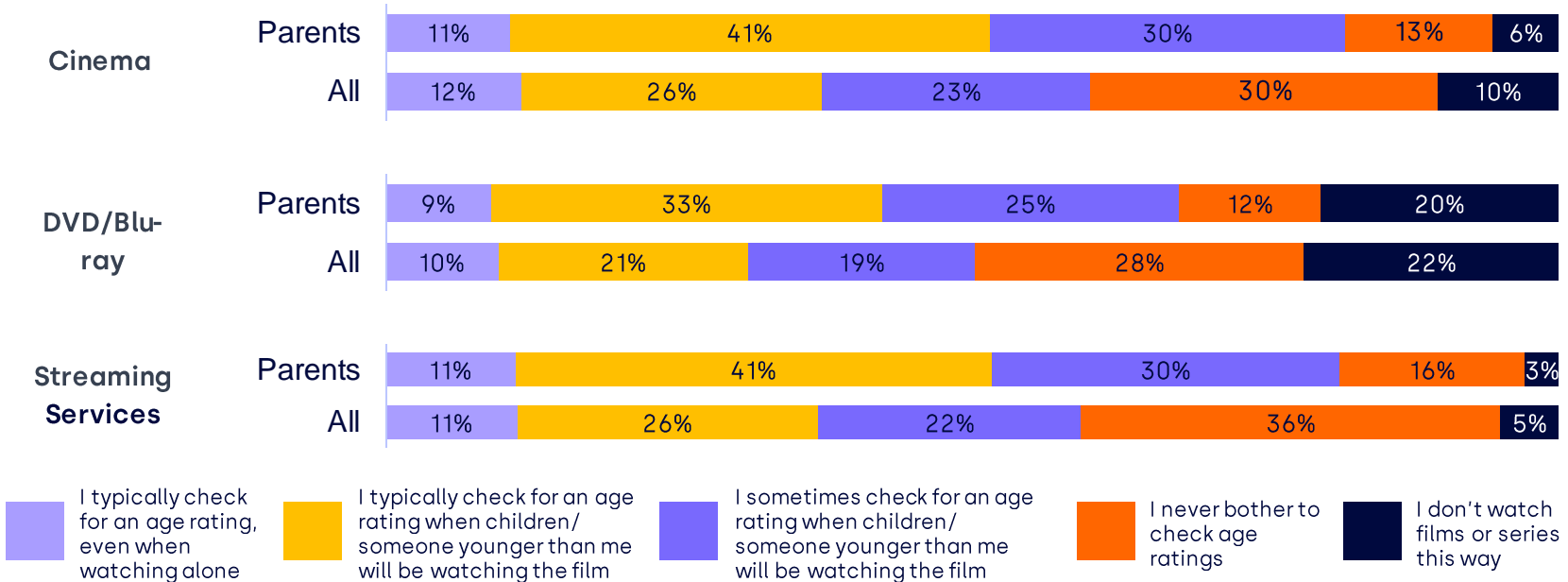
Parents demonstrate the most vigilance in monitoring content, with a substantial 78% saying BBFC age ratings have influenced or helped their viewing choices when watching with children and 57% when viewing with teenagers.

Thinking back over the past few months, how often has a BBFC age rating influenced or helped your decision to watch (or not to watch) a piece of content – either alone or with others? [Very often + Occasionally]



When Ratings Are Checked

We asked: "When you're selecting a film or series to watch, for yourself or your family, how often do you consider the age rating?"



Recognition

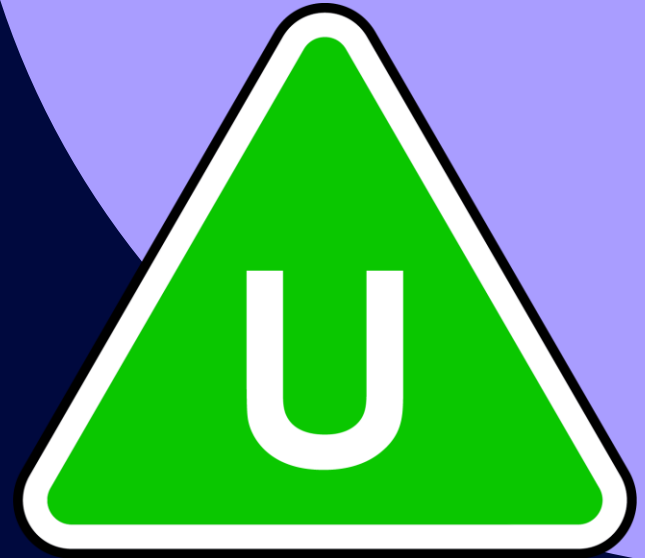
BBFC age ratings widely recognised throughout UK

99% of our sample recognised at least one BBFC age rating symbol, with 78% recognising all the age rating symbols from U through to 18.

The majority of this recognition is attributed to the cinema-going experience, from being at the cinema or checking the cinema's website (81%) to seeing the BBFC Black Card before a film begins (39%).

Outside of the cinema, people also recognised BBFC age rating symbols on DVD/Blu-ray packaging (61%), via Netflix (57%) and Amazon Prime Video (44%).

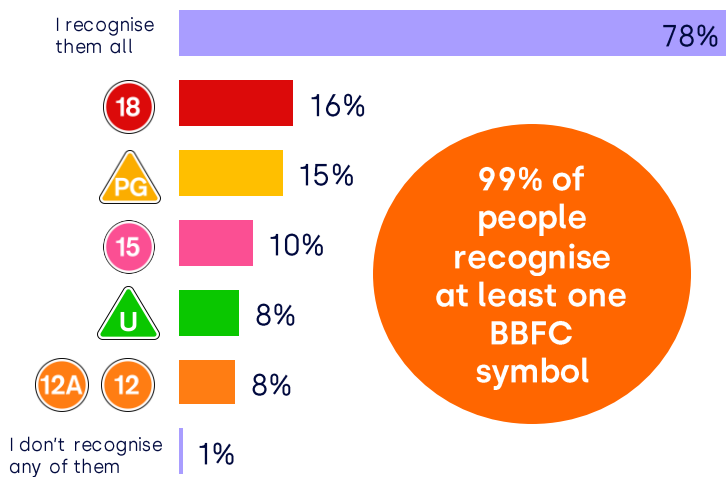
60% of participants identified the BBFC as the body responsible for age ratings in the UK.



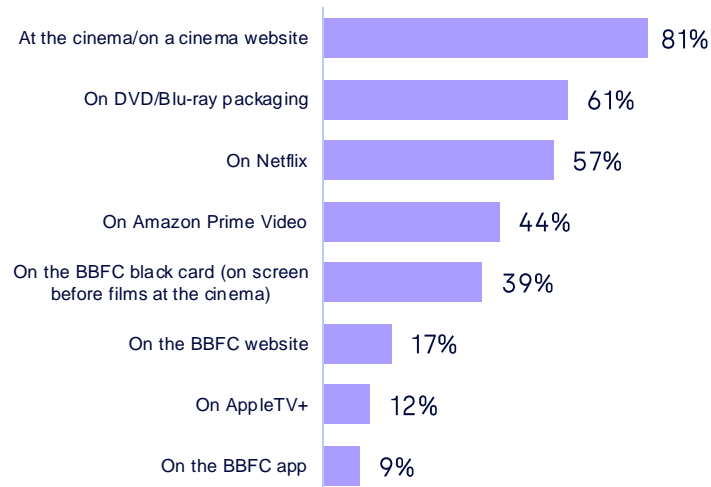
Recognition

Nearly all respondents recognised BBFC age rating symbols, primarily through the cinema experience, DVD/Blu-ray packaging, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.

Which of the following age rating symbols do you recognise



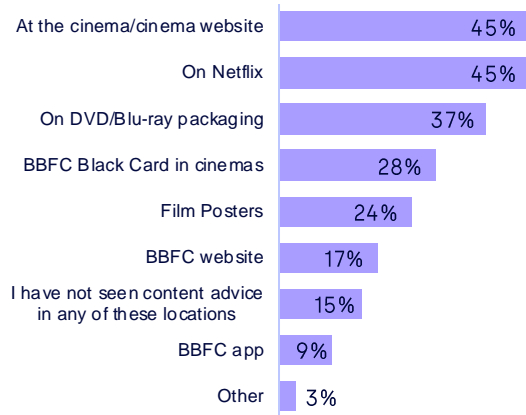
Where have you seen these symbols?



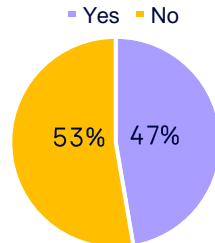
BBFC content advice is primarily recognised through the cinema going experience (45% at the cinema or on cinema websites and 28% via the BBFC Black Card), with Netflix being the second biggest single source of recognition (45%).

While a large proportion of people in the UK know that the BBFC also provides extended content advice (47%) on its website and app, the majority are not aware of it (53%).

Alongside their age ratings, the BBFC provides content advice (e.g. "strong violence, language, sex") for films and series. Have you seen this in any of the below locations?



On their website and app, the BBFC also produces detailed information on what a film or series contains to help audiences - particularly parents and families - make informed viewing decisions (see example above). Is this something you're aware of?



FILM



Godzilla Minus One

moderate threat, violence, brief bloody images

In the wake of WWII, a pilot struggling with survivor's guilt faces a new terror when a giant monster attacks Japan. Scenes of devastation are intense and spectacular, while the emotional human drama alludes to suicide.

Content Advice (May contain spoilers)

[Overview](#) [More Info](#)



Violence

A giant monster bites, claws and treads on people, although injury detail is minimal. Sequences of devastation evoke the detonation of atomic bombs, with city-wide destruction.



Threat and horror

There are scenes in which a giant monster attacks an airfield, ships and cities. Sequences include buildings being demolished, vehicles being destroyed, and scared people fleeing in panic.



Language

There is infrequent mild bad language ('bugger') and milder terms ('damn', 'hell', 'screwed').



Sex

A woman defensively states that she is not a 'harlot', and some questions are raised about the parentage of a child, who is later revealed to be an orphan.



Injury detail

Following an explosion a man is seen bleeding from a head wound, and in the aftermath of an attack a number of dead bodies are laid out on the ground, some slightly bloodied. A large monster sustains a gory head wound, which quickly heals.



Suicide

A Japanese pilot who did not complete a 'kamikaze' mission is chastised and mocked by others as being a coward. He becomes intent on taking his own life in the context of a 'suicide mission' to battle a creature, but ultimately learns the value of living.



Theme

There are upsetting scenes in which people grieve lost loved ones.

Flashing/flickering lights

This work contains flashing images which may affect viewers who are susceptible to photosensitive epilepsy.

Trust

A clear majority of people in the UK (85%) trust BBFC age ratings to give a good indication of whether that content is suitable for them or their family 'all' or 'most of' the time

This number increases for key groups:

Teachers - 91%

Parents - 90%

16-19-year-olds - 88%

Parental trust in BBFC age ratings has risen by 7% since 2019

When you go to the cinema or select a film or series to watch at home, do you trust the BBFC age ratings to give a good indication of whether the content is suitable for you or your family?



- I trust them all the time
- I trust them most of the time
- I can't say/have no view on this
- I don't trust them most of the time
- I don't trust them at all

Agreement

Participants trust the BBFC to make the right decision

When asked to think back on the films they watched over the last year, 83% of participants agreed with the assigned BBFC age ratings 'all' or 'most of' the time

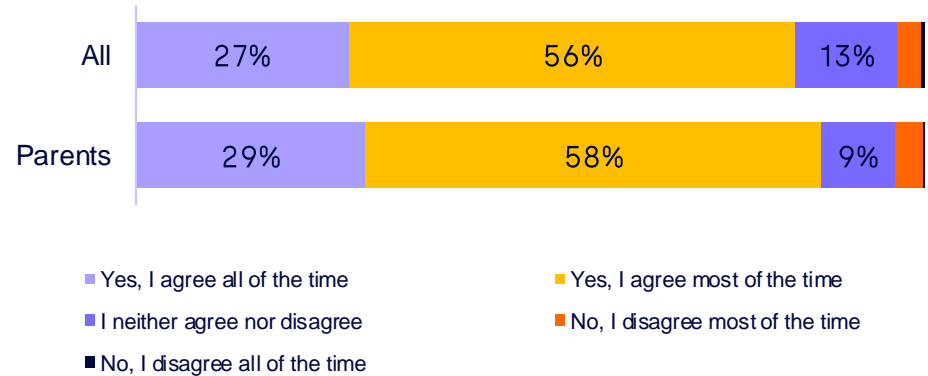
Similar to trust, this number is even higher for key groups:

Teachers - 87%

Parents - 87%

16-19-year-olds - 85%

Thinking back on the films you have watched over the last year, do you typically agree with the BBFC age rating?



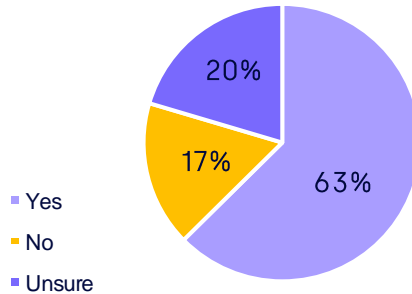
Online

The UK wants consistency in ratings

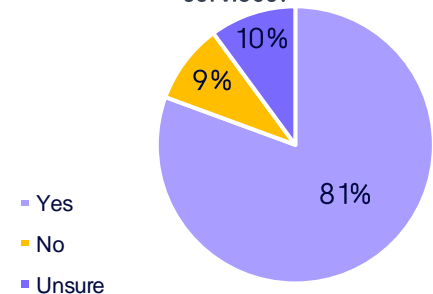
Our survey showed that people are more confident when seeing BBFC age ratings than they are in other ratings systems.

81% of the sample said it would be better to have a consistent age rating system across cinema, DVD/Blu-ray and streaming services.

On streaming services, do you feel more confident deciding if something is right for you and/or your family to watch when you see BBFC ratings rather than another age rating system?



Do you think it would be better to have a consistent age rating system across cinema, DVD/Blu-ray and on streaming services?



UK Viewing Habits

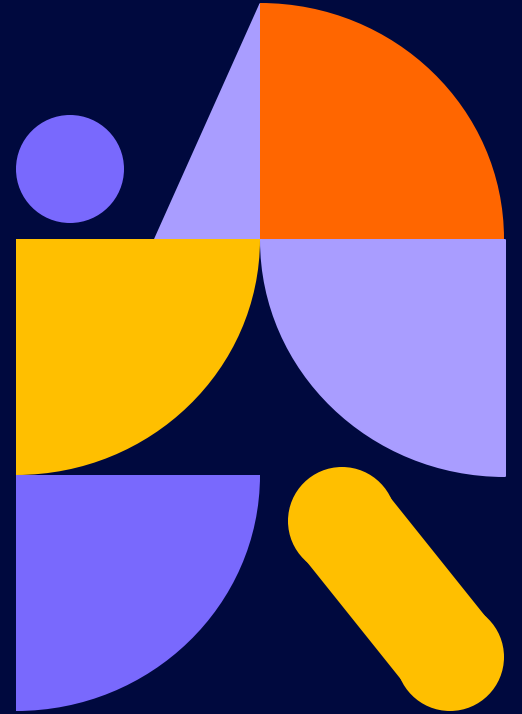
Since the BBFC's last guidelines research in 2019, there has been a global pandemic and the continued expansion of online Video on Demand (VoD) / streaming services.

More people are viewing films by streaming or downloading content from services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video than watching films in the cinema or on DVD and Blu-ray.

In discussing content and viewing habits, people saw a difference between the cinema experience and viewing content at home or on-the-go.

- **People felt content can have more impact when seen in the cinema**
- **Cinemas give the 'big screen experience' of viewing with an audience, a powerful sound system and big screen**
- **This can be more intense than viewing content at home**
- **At home, people – including parents – have more control over content if it becomes distressing for themselves or their families**
- **The home environment is more casual; people may have second screens, lights on, talk during the content etc. – behaviour that is not accepted in the cinema**

Classification: Findings and Recommendations



What Issues Are Of Most Concern?

We presented respondents with a list of key classification issues and ask them to select which five areas are of most concern

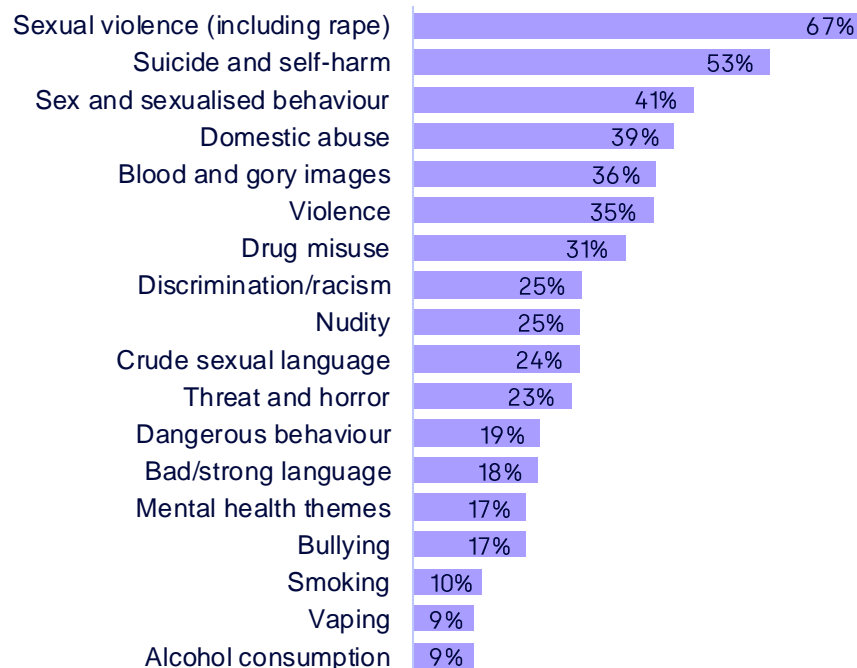
As with 2019, sexual violence remains the issue of most concern for UK audiences.

Since the 2019 research, suicide and self-harm has risen to the second biggest area of concern.

Sex and sexualised behaviour has also risen as an area of concern, which corresponds to specific findings relating to sex on the 12A/12 / 15 borderline.

Another key area of concern is violence, which is reflected in how people ranked domestic abuse, blood and gore, and violence itself in the list.

As with previous years, lifestyle choices – such as smoking, vaping and alcohol consumption – are the areas of least concern.



Violence Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish what is appropriate and acceptable at each category level, identifying factors that may influence whether a borderline decision should receive the higher or lower rating.

Discover if people would permit greater levels of violence at each category than currently permitted.

Ascertain what factors enable violent content to be containable at 15, and what indicates that an 18 is required.

Summary of Findings

Of the 51 features and clips tested for violence, 16 of them saw participants vote for a higher rating.

People are more sensitive to violence than many other issues, particularly if the violence feels gratuitous or there is malicious or sadistic intent to harm another person.

For scenes of violence on the U / PG borderline, parents often veered towards PG so they have more opportunity to explain what's happening to their children or to be there if they become distressed. This does not mean all content that depicts violence needs to be a PG or higher, but there is generally less acceptance of violence at U.

Most of the clips that people voted for higher ratings on were on the borderline of two categories, and contained elements of realism or were notably dark, intense or impactful. Other factors that indicate a higher rating may be required in borderline cases include frequency and consistency of violence throughout the content, the duration of the violence, the realism of weapons or the use of easily-accessible improvised weapons, and when injury detail is particularly graphic.

Summary of Findings continued

Participants tended to increase the rating for older content that featured blood (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Spartacus*) or was particularly impactful (*From Russia With Love*). Across the modules, there was strong support for older content to be reclassified in line with modern standards.

On the 15 / 18 borderline, factors which may support keeping content at 15 include when the violence is infrequent, implied, fantastical or comedic in nature. For example, the fantasy and comedy contained in *The Suicide Squad* and *Violent Night* meant participants supported the 15 ratings the BBFC had assigned to both films.

Real world violence, including domestic abuse, was particularly distressing, along with sequences that dwell on the suffering of a victim of violence. In some cases, these factors may contribute to content being rated 18. For example, participants agreed with the 18 ratings for *The Undoing* and *The Staircase*.

Sequences featuring sadistic violence, repeated blows, strong bloody detail and a dark, gritty tone were also of concern. Participants supported the 18 ratings for *Last Night in Soho* and *Barbarian*, but also thought clips from *Joker* and *The Many Saints of Newark* would be better placed at 18. This does not necessarily mean the films should be reclassified, but suggest key areas of concern in depictions of violence.

Overall, people do not want to see a relaxation of BBFC standards towards violence at any level, and where certain factors are present in borderline decisions would prefer the BBFC to err on the side of caution.

Sexually Abusive Behaviour

Objectives & Findings

Objectives

To expand the BBFC's 2019 research into sexual violence by exploring attitudes towards depictions of sexually abusive behaviour, assault, coercion and harassment in a variety of contexts.

Achieve greater clarity around people's preferred terminology in content advice. Do people appreciate the range of terms currently in use, or would they prefer the umbrella term 'sexual violence'?

Summary of Findings

Of the 28 clips/films tested in this module, 20 have stayed consistent with the BBFC's current ratings.

People are supportive of the BBFC's current approach to classifying scenes of sexual violence and abusive behaviour in all its forms.

People are also supportive of the BBFC using a range of terms in content advice, such as 'sexual violence', 'sexual violence references', 'sexual coercion', 'sexual threat', 'sexual assault', 'sexually abusive behaviour' etc. to distinguish the type of material featured in a given piece of content.

Older content should be rated higher if it contains clear sexual assault, threat or violence. This was evident in the response to a clip from *Goldfinger*, which the majority of participants felt should be classified 12A/12 today.

Summary of Findings continued

People think content dealing with issues of sexual violence or abusive behaviour in a careful, sensitive and informative manner can be of value for audiences at 12A/12. In some cases, limiting conversations around certain themes, such as consent, to those 15 and over can be seen as 'too late'. People therefore approved of how content like *Heartstopper*, *Eighth Grade* and *Ackley Bridge* handled sexually abusive behaviour at 12A/12.

We also tested trailers for *She Said* and *The Road Dance*, which had been classified 15 for material related to sexual violence. However, participants felt the material was brief, discreet and handled with care, and could therefore have been rated 12A/12 instead.

People were accepting of slightly stronger references to sexual violence, including visual references, at 15. We tested an episode of *Alan Bennett's Talking Heads 'An Ordinary Woman'*, which the BBFC had rated 18. Participants felt that as sexual violence was not depicted and only referred to verbally, without graphic detail, it could have been contained at 15.

Overall, people appreciated the BBFC's approach to classifying sexual violence.

Mental Health, Suicide and Self-Harm

Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish what people feel is acceptable at the different categories – especially on the 12A/12 / 15 border – for content exploring issues of mental health, suicide and self-harm (including eating disorders).

Summary of Findings

Suicide and self-harm is the second biggest area of concern for people in the UK.

Of the 11 clips/films tested in the mental health module, 10 have stayed consistent with the BBFC's current ratings.

This indicates that people are supportive of the BBFC's current approach to classifying these issues, especially on the 12A/12 / 15 borderline.

We predominantly placed the films *Words On Bathroom Walls*, *X+Y*, *Dear Evan Hansen* and *A Man Called Otto* with teachers, parents and teens, where appropriate. Responses were overwhelmingly supportive of the established BBFC rating for each film.

People saw value in how a lot of the stimulus material handled issues of mental health, mental illness, suicide and self-harm in an empathetic and informative manner that may have value in helping younger audiences process emotions and understand others.

Visual depictions of self-harm and suicide were generally more impactful and distressing than verbal references.

A clip from *The Novice* was used in focus groups. A small majority voted in favour of 18, as opposed to the BBFC's 15, due to the bloody detail, duration and distressing nature of a scene of self-harm.

Support for calling out suicide and self-harm in content advice – as the BBFC currently does – was particularly prevalent among teenage groups, noting that such material is triggering and they appreciate being warned.

"Dangerous behaviour could be anything, but then suicide is the result of bad mental health and means you don't want to be alive anymore." Teen 13-15

"I think as much as you can specify what you're getting into it is probably the best." Teen 16-18

"I believe suicide and self-harm is significant enough to have the same value as dangerous behaviour." Teen 13-15

"I think mental health would be too broad to describe [suicide and self-harm] because that could be anxiety or something. Whereas self-harm is... Suicide should be a completely different one." Teen 13-15

Threat and Horror

Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish through the features and clips whether the BBFC's current approach to threat and horror reflects audience expectations, and what factors help decide whether something should receive a higher or lower rating when content is on the borderline or two categories.

Assess whether there is a majority desire from people in the UK to allow slightly stronger threat or horror content at 12A/12.

In content advice, establish when the BBFC should use 'threat' and when it should use 'horror', and whether people see a difference between these terms.

Summary of Findings

People see a clear difference between 'threat' and 'horror' in terms of classification issues and would like them to be signalled separately in content advice. The term 'horror' suggests material that is too strong for young children, and so the term 'scary scenes' would be preferred at U and PG.

People did not want to see a relaxation of current standards on the PG / 12A/12 borderline, agreeing with current BBFC ratings. For example, there was majority support for *Turning Red* and a clip from *Puss In Boots: The Last Wish* at PG. Similarly, a clip from *Night Books* and the feature *The House With A Clock In Its Walls* were seen by participants as appropriately rated 12A/12.

Summary of Findings continued

Examples of most concern were cases in which the threat was realistic or the tone was notably dark, gritty and intense, especially in the case of horror content. Live action was seen as more impactful than animation in content aimed at young audiences.

There is no appetite for the BBFC to relax its current standards at 12A/12 and permit stronger examples of threat and horror at that category.

This includes superhero films that contain elements of threat and horror. While *Shazam!* was deemed appropriately placed at 12A/12, *Venom*, *Morbius* and *The Batman* were regarded as too strong for 12A/12 and all required a 15.

The sci-fi horror thriller *M3GAN* was one of the features tested in a cinema screening environment. Moments of violence were highlighted as key areas of concern, with an overwhelming majority of responses favouring the film's 15 rating over a 12A/12.

Across the threat and horror content, a darkness of tone was one of the key aspects that pushed content from 12A/12 to 15.

The main factors that may enable content to be passed 12A/12 rather than 15 are humour and fantasy, with any threat or horror being brief and infrequent.

Sex Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish whether references to 'porn' are ever acceptable at PG: either as actual references to pornography or use of the term 'porn' in other contexts.

Establish how much detail is permissible in sex scenes at 12A/12 before a 15 is required, and what factors affect the rating of these scenes.

Ascertain what factors enable sex scenes and sex references to be contained at 15, and when an 18 rating is required.

Summary of Findings

The majority of people would be surprised and concerned to hear references to 'porn' at PG, although there is some allowance if the word is not actually referring to pornography itself (for example, a chef referring to a photograph of food as 'food porn').

On the 12A/12 / 15 borderline, people were concerned by the level of sexual detail, nudity and the duration of the sex scenes in the clips from 12A/12-rated content (for example, *Vita & Virginia* and *After*) as well as sex that appears 'rough' (*A Promise*). The majority of people across the focus groups and quant survey felt such content should be rated 15.

People did not want to see a relaxation of current standards to allow more nudity or sexual content at 12A/12. However, people felt the BBFC was correctly classifying comic sex references at 12A/12.

Summary of Findings continued

People are supportive of the current standards towards sex scenes at 15, especially in cases in which the material affirms positive messaging around consent, communication and healthy sexual relationships. For example, people supported the 15 rating of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

People were accepting of strong verbal sex references at 15, especially in comic contexts, as well as visuals of certain sexual material (for example, clips from *Girls, You and Raindogs*).

Material which contained frequent sex scenes or more complex depictions of sexual relationships, such as *Paris 13th District* and *Simple Passion*, were seen as appropriately rated at 18.

Another indicator that an 18 may be required are particularly prolonged sex scenes, those which include graphic detail, or more unusual sexual practices including BDSM.

Content which focused on pornography, including a clip from *Queer As Folk* and a trailer for *Pleasure*, were regarded as correctly rated at 18, as there were concerns about exposing younger audiences to pornography.

Language Objectives & Findings

Objective

To understand whether certain terms and gestures are acceptable at PG, or if they should be rated 12A/12.

Should the rating of certain words be context dependant, such as self-referential uses being less offensive than angry or directed uses?

Summary of Findings

People, especially parents and teachers, are concerned about bad language and rude gestures being normalised among young children, who may hear and repeat words even if they do not understand how offensive they may be.

Terms which have misogynistic or sexualised meanings, such as 'son of a bitch', 'bitch', 'whore', 'dick', 'dickhead', 'pussy', should be rated 12A/12, regardless of context.

Rude gestures with a sexualised meaning (for example, the 'wanker' gesture) should also be rated 12A/12 - as is current BBFC practice.

Drug and Solvent Misuse

Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish people's expectations of what drug, alcohol and smoking content can appear at U, PG, 12A/12, 15 and 18.

On the 15 / 18 borderline, understand when instructional detail, glamorisation and endorsement of drug misuse requires an 18 rating.

Summary of Findings

Of the 33 clips/films tested in this module, 24 have stayed consistent with the BBFC's current ratings. While the BBFC's approach to classifying drugs, alcohol and smoking (including vaping) is largely in line with the views of people in the UK, attitudes towards cannabis misuse in content rated 12A/12 are more relaxed and accepting today, especially in scenes in which the misuse is incidental and could be missed or mistaken for smoking a cigarette. For example, clips from *Ocean's 8* and *The Upside* were seen as well-contained at 12A/12.

The full feature *Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody* was regarded as being at the upper end of 12A/12 for the range and strength of drug content, but the aversive messaging of Houston's addiction and its effect on her health and career meant people supported the BBFC's 12A/12.

Beautiful Boy contained some challenging instructional detail in its presentation of drug misuse, but the harrowing portrait of addiction meant people agreed with the BBFC's 15 rating. *Loro*, however, sexualised and glamorised drug misuse, and was therefore correctly placed at 18.

Objectives

Understand if the BBFC's current policy towards solvent misuse is in line with the expectations of people in the UK.

Summary of Findings

Of the 8 clips tested in the module, participants rated 5 lower than the current rating, and 3 the same as the BBFC.

Most of the lower ratings were for content that was regarded as over-classified at 18 (for example, *Russian Doll* and *The Forgiven*).

Key factors for lowering ratings across the categories include inclusion comedy, brevity, the act/substance being unclear to viewers, and there being a negative outcome for the user.

Examples in which a higher rating was favoured included peer pressure, realism, and the young age of the users, as seen in *Dolphins*.

The BBFC also sought advice from experts in the prevention of drug and solvent misuse. Their advice supported these research findings.

Trailers Objectives & Findings

Objectives

Establish what content is acceptable in trailer contexts at each category level, especially around violence, threat, horror and sex.

Summary of Findings

Of the 31 trailers tested, participants rated 10 of them lower than the current BBFC rating.

There was less caution around the lower classifications (U, PG 12A/12), where factors such as animation, fantasy or comedy were present. For example, a trailer for *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* was felt to be containable at U rather than the current PG rating, and a trailer for *Cruella* was rated PG by participants rather than the BBFC's 12A/12.

Many of the trailers tested that are currently rated 15 could be reduced to 12A/12 according to our respondents. These featured different classification issues, including threat and violence (*The Batman*), sex (*Mothering Sunday*), references to sexual violence (*She Said*) and discrimination (*Blinded By The Light*). What they had in common was a lack of visual or graphic detail.

Isolated instances of strong language ('f**k') can occur in trailers at 12A/12 in special circumstances, such as an absence of aggression or sexualised meaning, or the use is brief, comic or implied. This corresponds to the relaxation towards strong language in trailers at 15 in the 2019 guidelines research, in which there was also more openness to very strong language ('c**t') in trailers at 15.

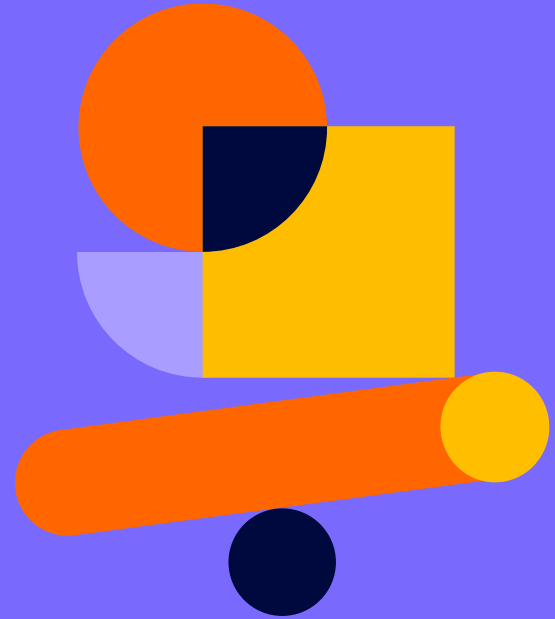
The BBFC is largely in line with participants' opinions on classifying trailers at the 15 / 18 borderline, although some stronger or more intense scenes of violence – such as in the *Scream* trailer – indicate that an 18 rating may be more appropriate.

"Even the wee bits that you saw, they were very fleeting and there wasn't context in them enough for me to push them up." Teacher of 4-7yos on a trailer for Cruella

"I think as a bare minimum the 12A/12 classification is acceptable, certain shots depicting abuse in flashbacks and verbal descriptions I could see being problematic for some at this level, however at the top end of a 12A/12 I can justify this classification even if on the borderline." London film screening participant on a trailer for She Said

"There isn't anything other than implied sexual suggestion." Belfast film screening participant on a trailer for Mothering Sunday

Appendix



Stimulus Material - Full Features and Trailers

Full Features:

A Man Called Otto (Marc Forster, 2023)
Barbarian (Zach Cregger, 2022)
Beautiful Boy (Felix Van Groeningen, 2019)
Bumblebee (Travis Knight, 2018)
Cocaine Bear (Elizabeth Banks, 2023)
Dear Evan Hansen (Stephen Chbosky, 2021)
Fall (Scott Mann, 2022)
Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Kasi Lemmons, 2022)
Insidious (James Wan, 2011)
Judy (Rupert Goold, 2019)
Lady Chatterley's Lover (Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre, 2022)
Last Night In Soho (Edgar Wright, 2021)
M3GAN (Gerard Johnstone, 2023)
Minions: The Rise Of Gru (Kyle Balda, 2022)
Morbius (Daniel Espinosa, 2022)
Mulan (Niki Caro, 2020)
Paris, 13th District (Jacques Audiard, 2021)
Pinocchio (Robert Zemeckis, 2022)
Scary Stories To Tell In The Dark (André Øvredal, 2019)
Simple Passion (Danielle Arbid, 2021)
Tár (Todd Field, 2022)
The Assistant (Kitty Green, 2020)
The Batman (Matt Reeves, 2022)
The Gray Man (Anthony Russo & Joe Russo, 2022)

The House With A Clock In Its Walls (Eli Roth, 2018)
The Mitchells Vs The Machines (Michael Rianda & Jeff Rowe, 2021)
The Suicide Squad (James Gunn, 2021)
The Woman King (Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2022)
Turning Red (Domee Shi, 2022)
Venom (Ruben Fleischer, 2018)
Venom: Let There Be Carnage (Andy Serkis, 2021)
Words On The Bathroom Walls (Thor Greudenthal, 2020)
X+Y (Morgan Matthews, 2014)

TV Episode:

Alan Bennett's Talking Heads 'An Ordinary Woman'
(Nicholas Hytner, 2020)

Trailers:

Beast (Baltasar Kormákur, 2022)
Blinded By The Light (Gurinder Chadha, 2019)
Bros (Nicholas Stoller, 2022)
Candyman (Nia DaCosta, 2021)
Casablanca Beats (Nabil Ayouch, 2021)
Cruella (Craig Gillespie, 2021)
Don't Worry Darling (Olivia Wilde, 2022)
Good Luck To You, Leo Grande (Sophie Hyde, 2022)
Halloween Kills (David Gordon Green, 2021)
Hong Kong: City On Fire (Choi Ka Yan, Lee Hiu Ling, 2022)
John Wick: Chapter 4 (Chad Stahelski, 2023)
Julia (Julie Cohen, Betsy West, 2021)

Knock At The Cabin (M. Night Shyamalan, 2023)
Morbius (Daniel Espinosa, 2022)
Mothering Sunday (Eva Husson, 2021)
Neptune Frost (Anisia Uzeyman & Saul Williams, 2021)
Paris 13th District (Jacques Audiard, 2021)
Pearl (Ti West, 2022)
Pleasure (Ninja Thyberg, 2021)
Riders Of Justice (Anders Thomas Jensen, 2020)
Scream (Tyler Gillett & Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, 2022)
She Said (Maria Schrader, 2022)
Sonic The Hedgehog 2 (Jeff Fowler, 2022)
Strange World (Don Hall, 2022)
The Batman (Matt Reeves, 2022)
The Black Phone (Scott Derrickson, 2022)
The House With A Clock In Its Walls (Eli Roth, 2018)
The Road Dance (Richie Adams, 2022)
The Super Mario Bros. Movie (Aaron Horvath & Michael Jelenic, 2023)
Venom: Let There Be Carnage (Andy Serkis, 2021)
Wolfwalkers (Ross Stewart, Tomm Moore, 2020)

Stimulus Material - Source of Clips*

*More than one clip may have been used from a given source

76 Days (Weixi Chen & Hao Wu, 2021)
A Bullet Is Waiting (John Farrow, 1954)
A Promise (Patrice Leconte, 2014)
Ackley Bridge (Season 3, Multiple Episodes) (2021)
Ackley Bridge (Season 5, Multiple Episodes) (2021)
Adult Material (Season 1, Episode 1) (Dawn Shadforth, 2020)
After (Jenny Gage, 2019)
Airplane! (David Zucker, Jim Abrahams & Jerry Zucker, 1980)
Amanda (Mikhael Hers, 2018)
Archer (Season 2, Episode 10) (Adam Reed, 2011)
At Last the 1948 Show (Season 2, Episode 6) (Ian Fordyce, 1967)
Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration (2022)
Basketball or Nothing (Season 1, Episode 2) (Michael P. Lucas, 2019)
Batman: Mask Of The Phantasm (Eric Radomski & Bruce Timm, 1994)
Batman: Under The Red Hood (Brandon Vietti, 2010)
Beast Beast (Danny Madden, 2021)
Billie Eilish: The World's A Little Blurry (R.J. Cutler, 2021)
Blockbuster (Season 1, Episode 10) (Jackie Clarke, 2022)
Bones And All (Luca Guadagnino, 2022)
Brave New World (Season 1, Episode 1) (Owen Harris, 2020)
Bumblebee (Travis Knight, 2018)
Chicago Fire (Season 5, Episode 6) (Dan Lerner, 2016)
Chicago Fire (Season 5, Episode 21) (Sanford Bookstaver, 2017)
Chicago Med (Season 7, Episode 7) (Olivia Newman, 2018)
Colette (Wash Westmoreland, 2018)
Crash Course (Season 1, Episode 7) (Vijay Maurya, 2022)
Cruella (Craig Gillespie, 2021)
The Curse of Bridge Hollow (Jeff Wadlow, 2022)
Doctor Who (Season 9, Episode 4) (Daniel O'Hara, 2015)
Dog (Channing Tatum & Reid Carolin, 2022)
Dolphins (Mark Jay & Ian McIntyre, 2007)
Dope (Season 2, Episode 1) (Nonuk Walter, 2018)
Dumplin' (Anne Fletcher, 2018)
The Edge Of Seventeen (Kelly Fremon Craig, 2016)
Eighth Grade (Bo Burnham, 2019)
Everything Sucks (Season 1, Episode 7) (Ry Russo-Young, 2018)
Family Guy (Season 19, Episode 17) (Jerry Langford, 2021)
Family Guy (Season 15, Episode 6) (John Holmquist, 2016)
Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets Of Dumbledore (David Yates, 2022)
Foodies (Thomas Jackson, 2014)
From Russia With Love (Terence Young, 1963)
Girls (Season 4, Episode 1) (Lena Dunham, 2015)
Goat (Andrew Neel, 2016)
Goldfinger (Guy Hamilton, 1964)
Grange Hill (Season 9, Episode 2) (Edward Pugh, 1986)
Gunpowder Milkshake (Navot Papushado, 2021)
Halloween (David Gordon Green, 2018)
Heartstopper (Season 1, Episode 1) (Euros Lyn, 2022)
The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies - Extended Edition (Peter Jackson, 2014)
Holidate (John Whitesell, 2020)
Horrible Histories: The Movie - Rotten Romans (Dominic Brigstocke, 2019)
Hostile Territory (Brian Presley, 2022)
I Hate Suzie (Season 1, Episode 8) (Georgi Banks-Davies, 2020)
I May Destroy You (Season 1, Episode 1) (Sam Miller, 2020)
Joker (Todd Phillips, 2019)
Jumanji: The Next Level (Jake Kasdan, 2019)
L'Amant Double (François Ozon, 2017)
Lights Out (David F. Sandberg, 2016)
Like A Rolling Stone: The Life & Times Of Ben Fong-Torres (Suzanne Joe Kai, 2021)
Long Shot (Jonathan Levine, 2019)
Looney Tunes (Hollywood Steps Out) (Tex Avery, 1941)
Loro (Paolo Sorrentino, 2018)
Louis Theroux: Dark States (Season 1, Episode 1) (Dan Child, 2017)
Love On The Spectrum (Season 1, Episode 1) (Cian O'Clery, 2019)
Luca (Enrico Casarosa, 2021)
Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile (Will Speck & Josh Gordon, 2022)
The Magnificent Seven (Antoine Fuqua, 2016)
The Many Saints Of Newark (Alan Taylor, 2021)
Midnight Sun (Scott Speer, 2018)
Minion Scouts (Frank Baradat, Guy Bar'ely, 2019)
Minions: The Rise Of Gru (Kyle Balda, 2022)
Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation (Christopher McQuarrie, 2015)

Stimulus Material - Source of Clips*

*More than one clip may have been used from a given source

Mood (Season 1, Episode 1) (Michael Rianda, Jeff Rowe, 2021)
Mood (Season 1, Episode 5) (Dawn Shadforth, 2022)
Morbius (Daniel Espinosa, 2022)
Mulan (Niki Caro, 2020)
Murdoch Mysteries (Season 9, Episode 8) (Don McBrearty, 2015)
Nailed It! (Season 3, Episode 1) (Steve Hryniewicz, 2019)
Nailed It! Mexico (Season 1, Episode 6) (Jose Rodriguez, 2019)
Nightbooks (David Yarovesky, 2021)
No Hard Feelings (Faraz Shariat, 2020)
Normal People (Season 1, Episode 9) (Hettie Macdonald, 2020)
Northern Rescue (Season 1, Episode 1) (Bradley Walsh, 2019)
Nutcracker Massacre (Rebecca Matthews, 2022)
Ocean's 8 (Gary Ross, 2018)
Once Upon A Time in Hollywood (Quentin Tarantino, 2019)
One Way to Moscow (Micha Lewinsky, 2020)
Origins of Hip Hop (Season 1, Episode 7) (Evan Bernard, 2022)
Pam and Tommy (Season 1, Episode 2) (Craig Gillespie, 2022)
Playmobil: The Movie (Lino DiSalvo, 2019)
Poldark (Season 2, Episode 8) (Will Sinclair, 2016)
Portrait Of A Lady On Fire (Céline Sciamma, 2020)
Pure Grit (Kim Bartley, 2021)
Puss in Boots: The Last Wish (Joel Crawford, 2023)
Quantum Of Solace (Marc Forster, 2008)
Queer As Folk (Season 1, Episode 2) (Satya Bhabha, 2022)
Raindogs (Season 1, Episode 6) (Ciara McIlvenny, 2023)
Ready Player One (Steven Spielberg, 2018)
Reply 1988 (Season 1, Episode 12) (Shin Won-Ho, 2015)
Rhod Gilbert: Book Of John (Brian Klein, 2022)
Ricky Gervais: Supernature (2022)
Ride Upon The Storm (Season 1, Episode 1) (Kaspar Munk, 2017)
Rosé All Day (Marla Sokoloff, 2022)
Russian Doll (Season 1, Episode 6) (Jamie Babbit, 2019)
Scream (Tyler Gillett & Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, 2022)
Shane (George Stevens, 1953)
Sharp Stick (Lena Dunham, 2022)
Shazam! (David F. Sandberg, 2019)
She Said (Maria Schrader, 2022)
The Son Of The Sheik (George Fitzmaurice, 1926)
Spartacus (Stanley Kubrick, 1960)
Spencer (Pablo Larrain, 2021)
Star Wars: The Rise Of Skywalker (J.J. Abrams, 2019)
Star Wars: The Force Awakens (J.J. Abrams, 2015)
Teen Titans Go! (Season 1, Episode 37) (Luke Cormican, 2014)
Tenet (Christopher Nolan, 2020)
That '90s Show (Season 1, Episode 2) (Gail Mancuso, 2023)
The Adventures Of Robin Hood (Michael Curtiz & William Keighley, 1938)
The Affair (Season 2, Episode 1) (Jeffrey Reiner, 2015)
The Batman (Matt Reeves, 2022)
The Boss Baby 2: Family Business (Tom McGrath, 2021)
The Cleaner [Season 2, Episode 2] (Tom Marshall, 2023)
The Conjuring (James Wan, 2013)
The Eyes Of Tammy Faye (Michael Showalter, 2021)
The Forgiven (John Michael McDonagh, 2021)
The Good Wife (Season 6, Episode 8) (Michelle King, 2015)
The Lost City (Aaron Nee, 2022)
The Mitchells Vs The Machines (Michael Rianda & Jeff Rowe, 2021)
The Novice (Lauren Hadaway, 2021)
The Quiet Ones (John Pogue, 2014)
The Staircase (Season 1, Episode 4) (Antonio Campos, 2022)
The Swimmer (Adam Kalderon, 2021)
The Undoing (Season 1, Episode 6) (Susanne Bier, 2020)
The Upside (Neil Burger, 2017)
The Vietnam War (Season 1, Episode 6) (Ken Burns & Lynn Novick, 2017)
They Shall Not Grow Old (Peter Jackson, 2018)
Three Floors (Nanni Moretti, 2021)
Treasures of Ancient Greece (Season 1, Episode 2) (David Vincent, 2018)
Turning Red (Domee Shi, 2022)
Venom (Ruben Fleischer, 2018)
Venom: Let There Be Carnage (Andy Serkis, 2021)
Violent Night (Tommy Wirkola, 2022)
Vita & Virginia (Chanya Button, 2018)
West Side Story (Steven Spielberg, 2021)
White Lines (Season 1, Episode 1) (Luis Prieto, Nick Hamm, 2020)
Wings Of The Morning (Harold Schuster, Glenn Tryon, 1937)
Yellowstone (Season 2, Episode 7) (Ben Richardson, 2019)
You (Season 4, Episode 2) (John Scott, 2023)

Online Survey Participants

10,162 Nationally Representative Panel



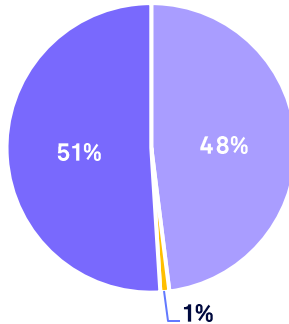
1,272 BBFC Website



11,434 Participants in Total

Gender

- Female
- Genderqueer / Non-binary
- Male



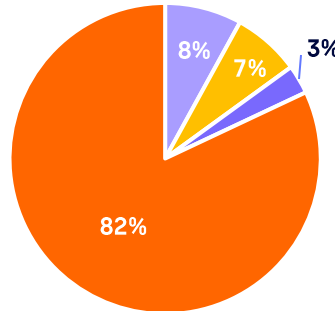
1,078 Teachers

3,688 Parents

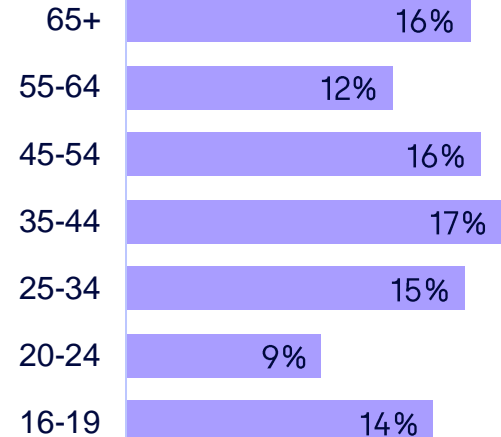
2,106 Grandparents

Ethnicity

- Asian / Asian British
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
- Other ethnic group
- White / White Irish / Any other white background



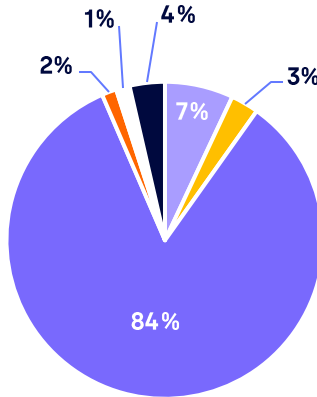
Age



Online Survey Participants

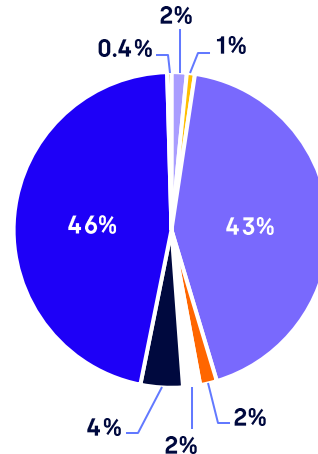
Sexuality

- Bisexual / pansexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Other
- Prefer not to say

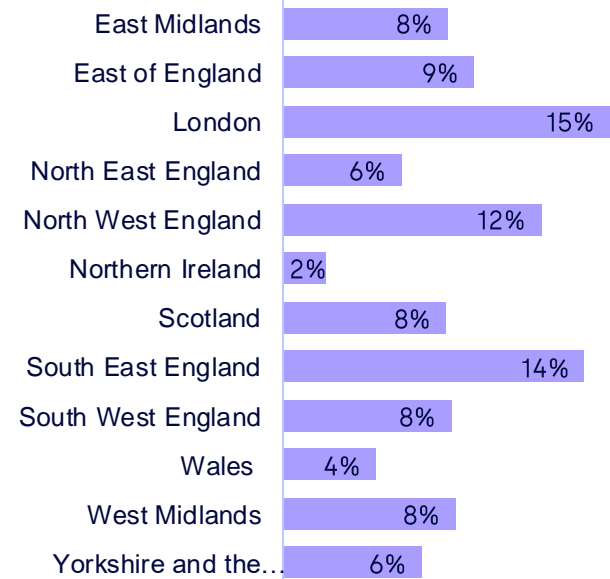


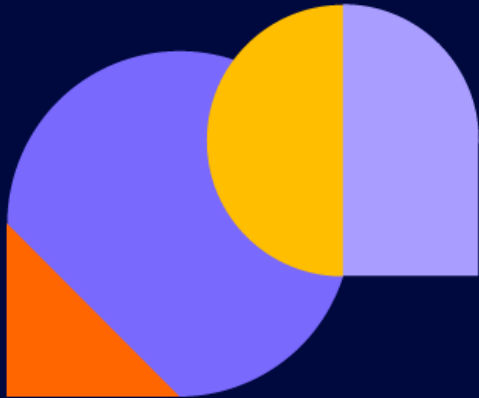
Religion

- Any other religion, write in
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- No religion
- Sikh



Location





we are family

We are Family is the world's biggest full-service agency group specialising in kids, teens, and families. The agency group offers a variety of services covering research & strategy, creative, and marketing activations.

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