

IS HONG KONG'S FILM INDUSTRY SHRINKING? FACTORS BEHIND CINEMA SHUTDOWNS IN HONG KONG.

COMP2501 Project

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INTRODUCTION



WHY THIS TOPIC

- Johnnie To, a famous director of Hong Kong, went on a few interviews recently



To criticized **new HK films** for being **too close to reality**, while lacking in details and tension (HK01, March 2025)

香港導演杜琪峯接受BBC中文專訪，談論在當前香港政治氣候下的創作自由、電檢紅線、「港產片」新出路以及兩岸華語影壇爭議。

To discussed artistic freedom, **government support** and regulations, as well as future for HK films (BBC, November 2024)



WHY THIS TOPIC

- I was a regular filmgoer for over 10 years
- News of cinema shutdowns is all over the place
- I don't go to cinema as often now
- What caused them?



SOME BRIEF HISTORY...

- “HK studios were making more than 100 films per year by 1939”
- “Number of film exports of HK was once second only to the US” (in the 80s)

(Parkes, 2020)



BEFORE PANDEMIC

“Overall speaking, from 2015 to 2017, the number of cinemas had increased by 12.8 per cent from 47 to 53; the number of seats by 3.2 per cent from 37 779 to 38 976; and the number of screens by 13.4 per cent from 209 to 237.

Out of the 18 District Council districts, all of them now have cinemas except Tai Po, which will also see the opening of a cinema in 2019. In the past three years, the number of cinemas had increased in six districts, reduced in two districts and stood the same in the remaining nine districts.”

said then-Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development in June 2018.



DURING PANDEMIC

A major cinema chain (UA) in HK
was shut down in March 2021

UA院線正式宣佈全線結業

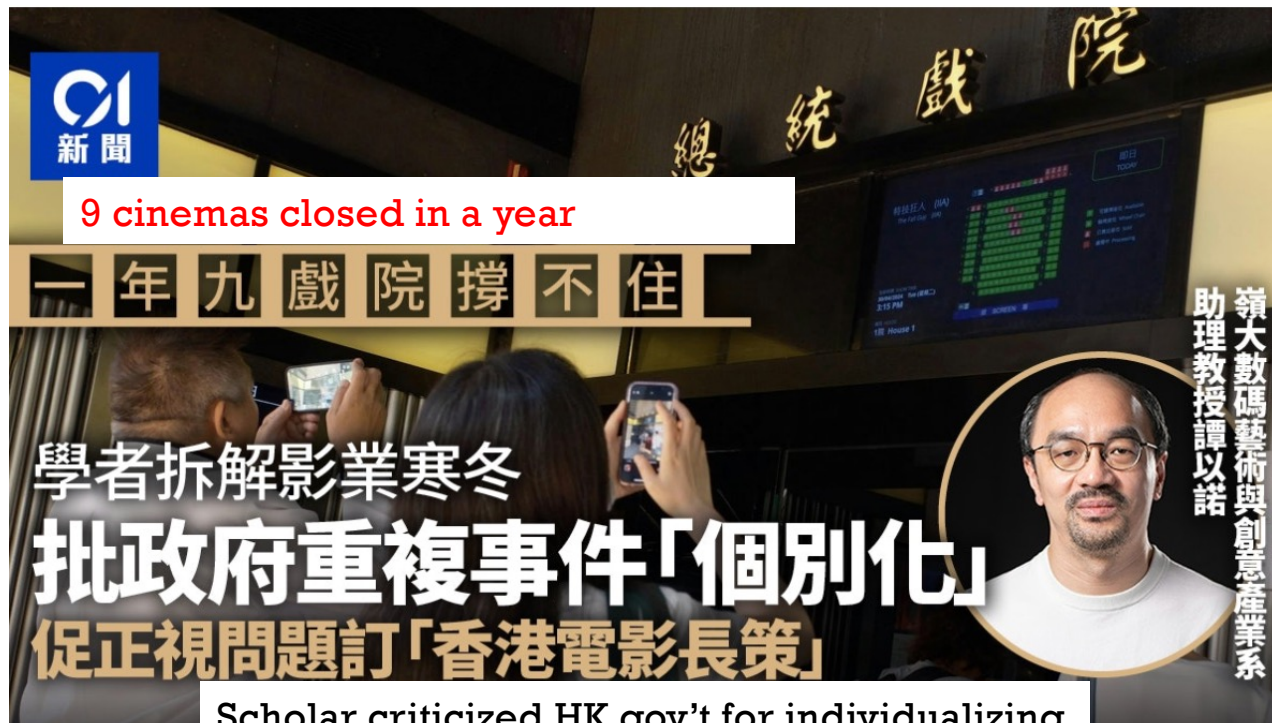
撰文：洪曉璇

出版：2021-03-08 09:31 更新：2021-03-31 05:09

Before its closure, there were
6 UA cinemas, with the peak
at 12 branches in earlier
times.



2024



(HK01, January 2025)

Scholar criticized HK gov't for individualizing repeated pattern and urged for a long-term plan for HK films



2025

生活

週五 2025-01-10 獨媒報導

4 branches of a cinema chain
(Golden Harvest) in HK are
rumoured to close

嘉禾旗下4間戲院傳結業 有市民嘆可惜：想支持本地消費都難

This news did not come true, but

易發睇樓團
2025年4月1日

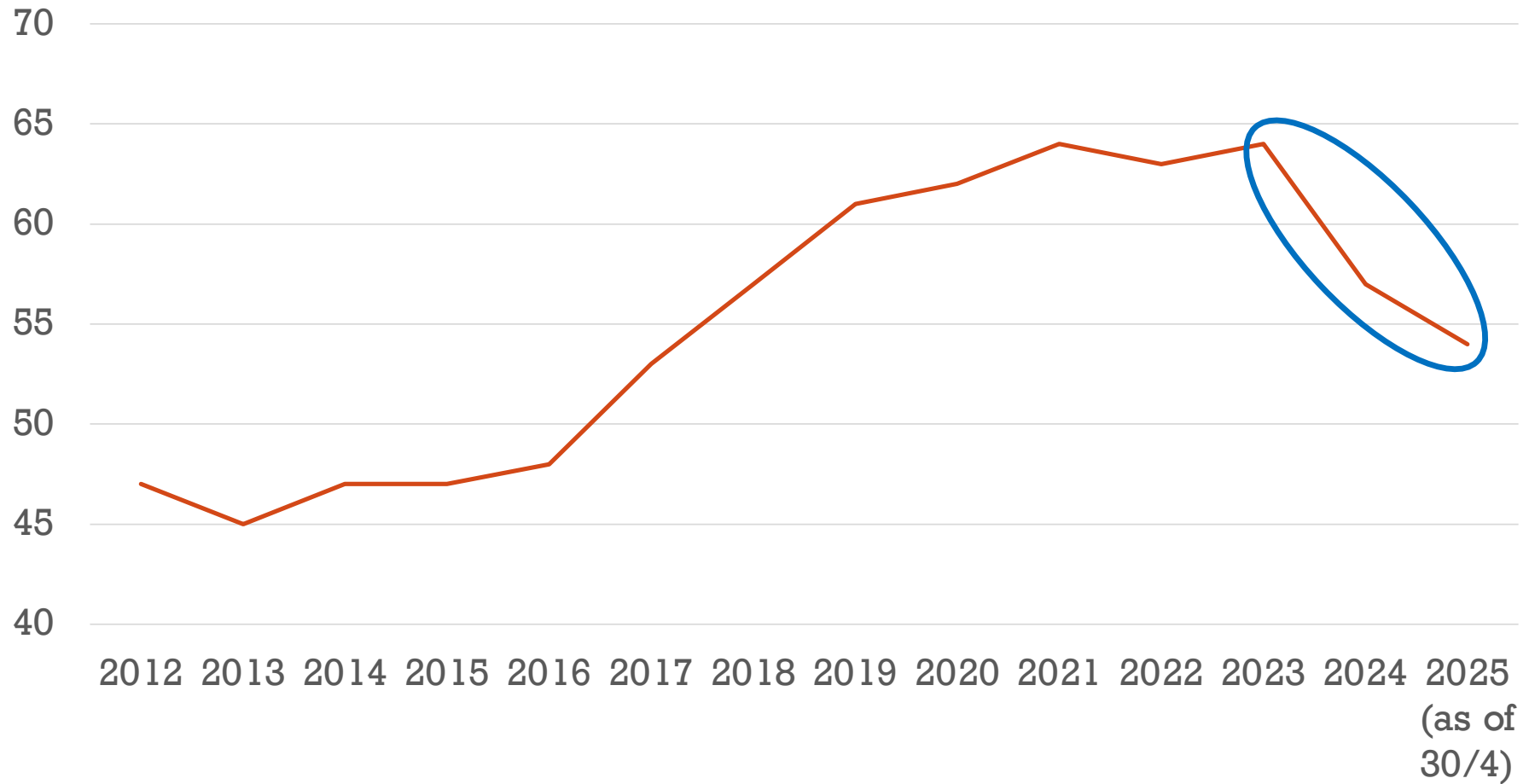
One of the cinemas of the same chain was shut down in April, becoming **the third cinema closed this year** (including Sunbeam Theatre, a theatre mainly for Cantonese Opera)

戲院結業潮持續，2025年迄今已有3間戲院宣布結業。嘉禾院線旗下的嘉禾黃埔戲院於昨日（3月31日）宣布，將於4月10日「完成近16年任務」，為答謝戲迷一直以來的支持，將於最後一晚（4月9日）舉行經典

(Hong Kong Inmedia, January 2025; 28Hse, April 2025)



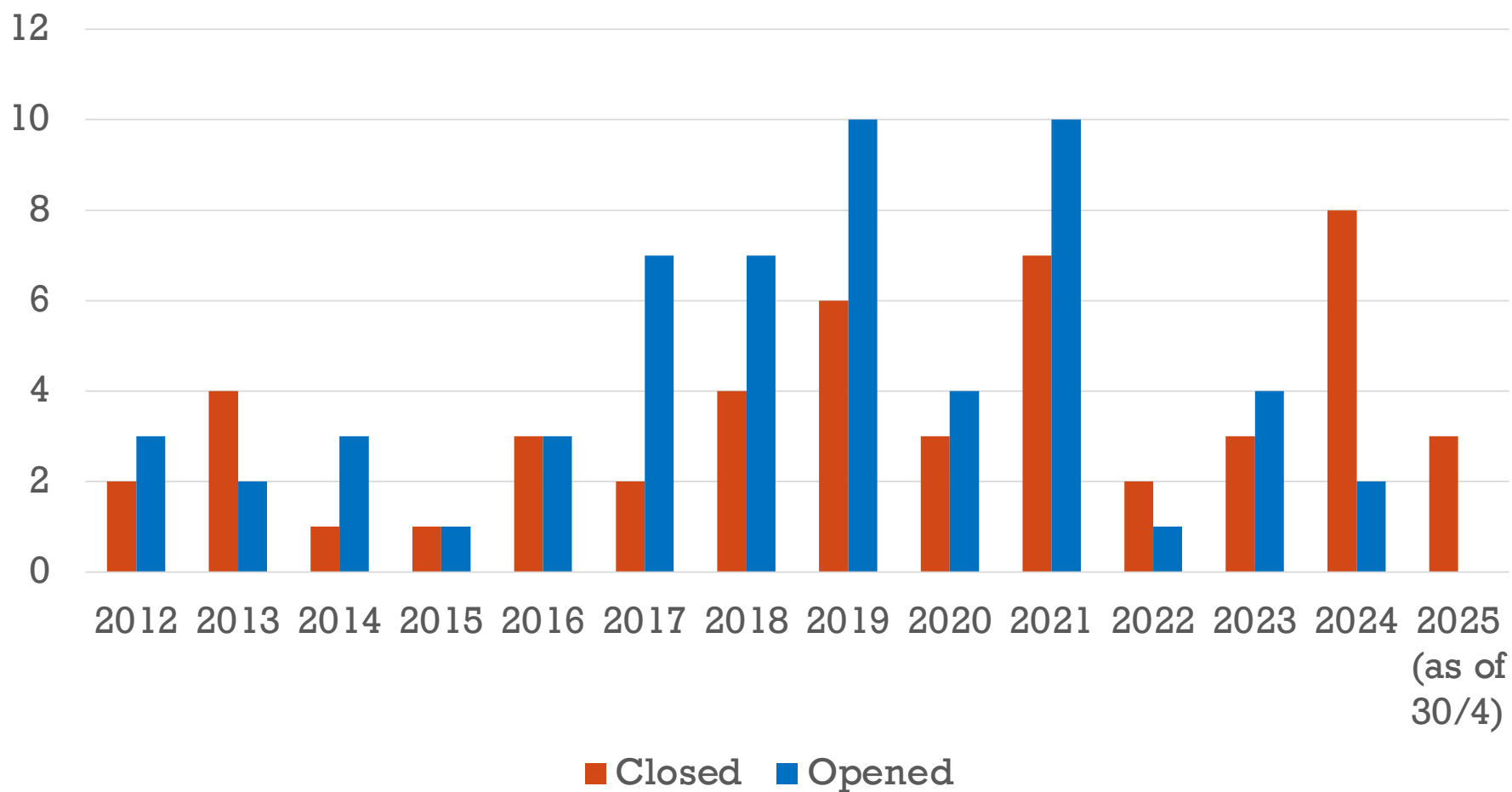
Number of cinemas in Hong Kong at year end



(data.gov.hk, April 2025; Film Development Council, May 2025)



Ratio of new cinemas and closing cinemas by year



(data.gov.hk, April 2025; Film Development Council, May 2025)



RELATED ARTICLES/REPORTS

- Related topics:
 - Rise and fall of HK's film industry (Shin, 2010)
 - Influence of politics to HK's movie industry (Chugani, 2016)
- Most of them are done before the pandemic & their discoveries are not new to us in 2025
- What causes the latest surge of shutdowns?
- Is Hong Kong's film industry in demise?



FOCUS OF TODAY

- Box office
- Ratio of local films
- Government support
- Trend of film genres
- Number of films released in a year
- Ticket price
- Cinema admission





METHODOLOGY





開放數據平台
DATA.GOV.HK



Census and Statistics Department

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region



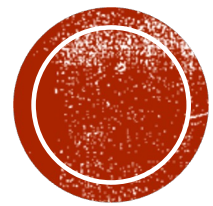
香港電影發展局
HONG KONG FILM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



ANALYSIS

- Focus on trends since 2017
 - Before pandemic (2017-2019)
 - Pandemic (2020-2022)
 - After pandemic (2023-)
- Top 10 films in box office often takes up a significant portion in total, will be used as benchmark



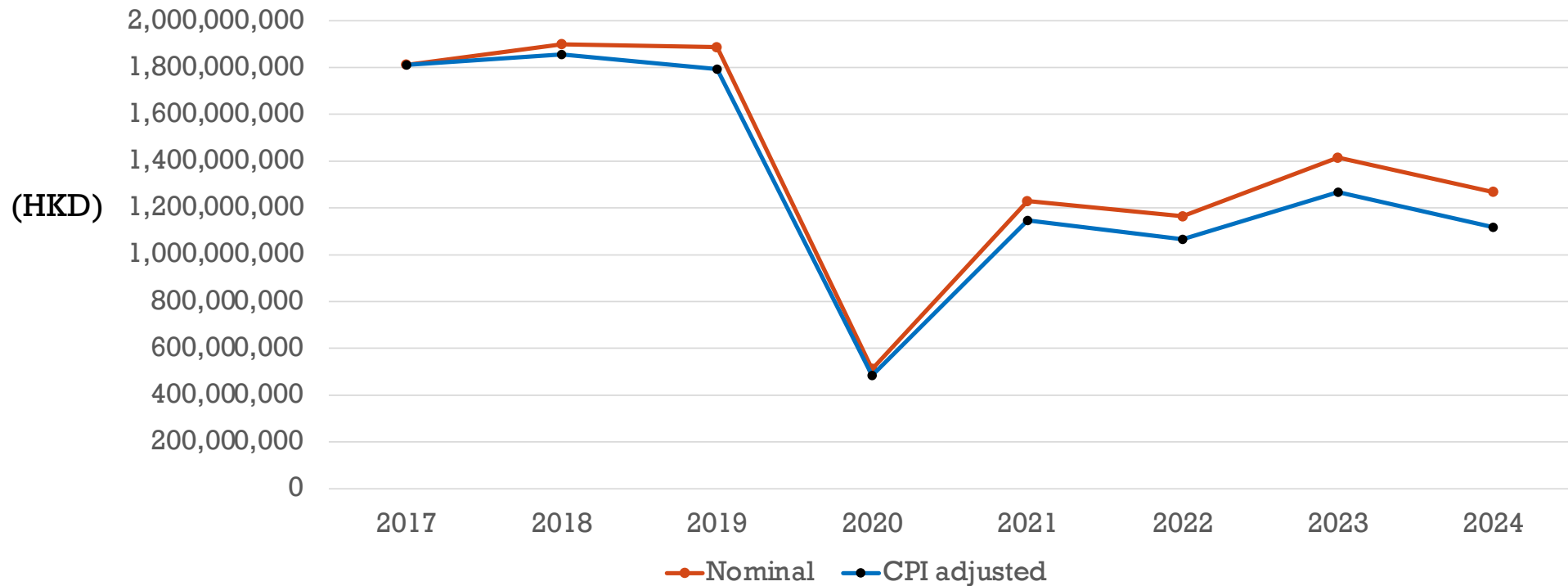


RESULT



BOX OFFICE

Hong Kong annual box office (total)

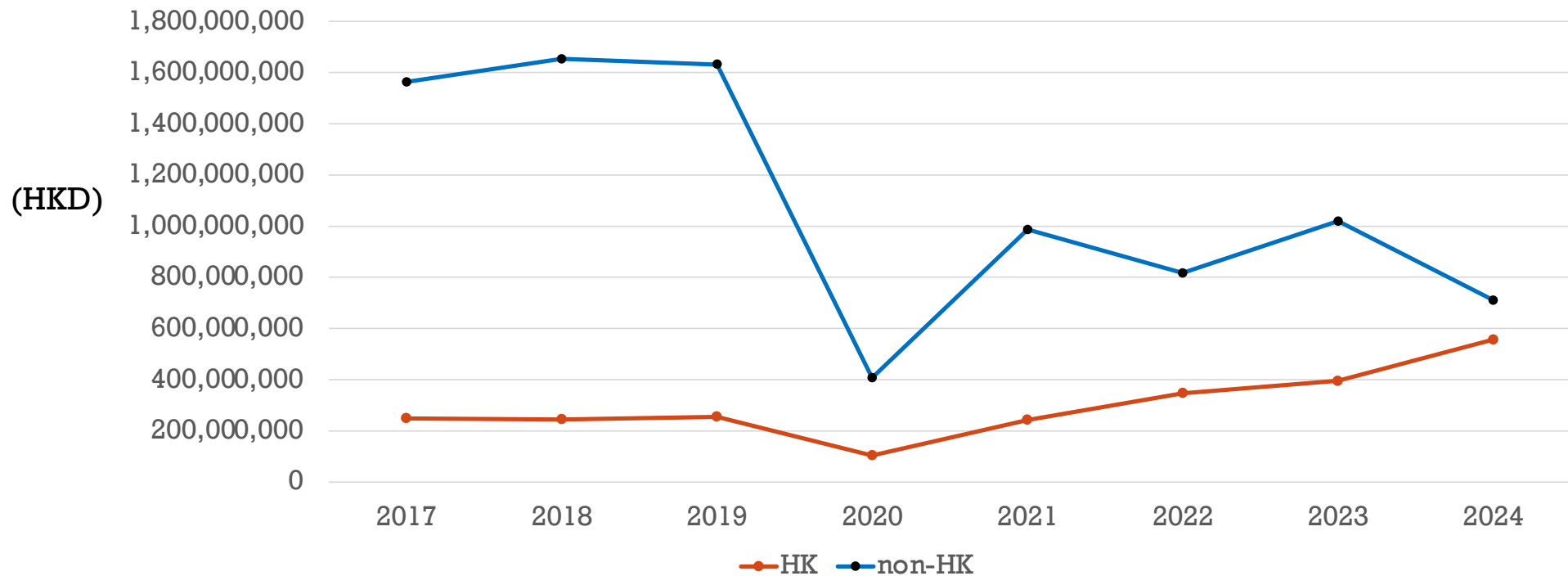


(Ho, April 2025; Census and Statistics Department, May 2025)



BOX OFFICE

Hong Kong annual box office (by origin)

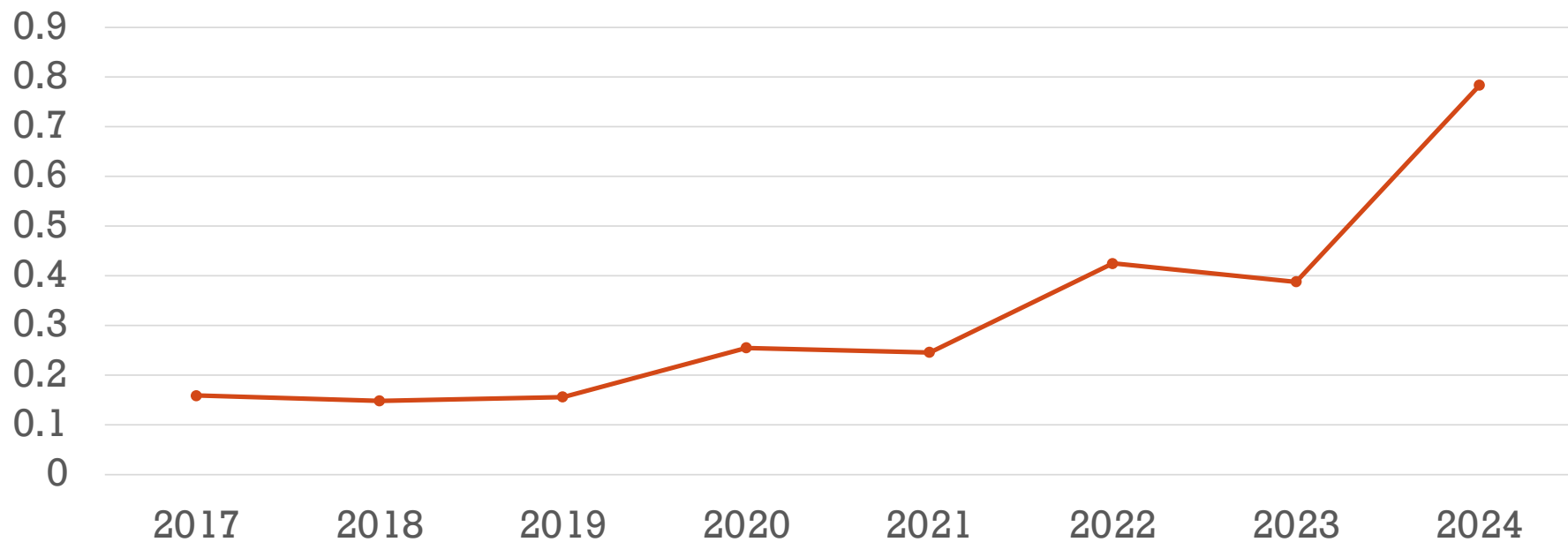


(Ho, April 2025; Census and Statistics Department, May 2025)



BOX OFFICE

Ratio of box office of local films to foreign films



(Film Development Council, May 2025)

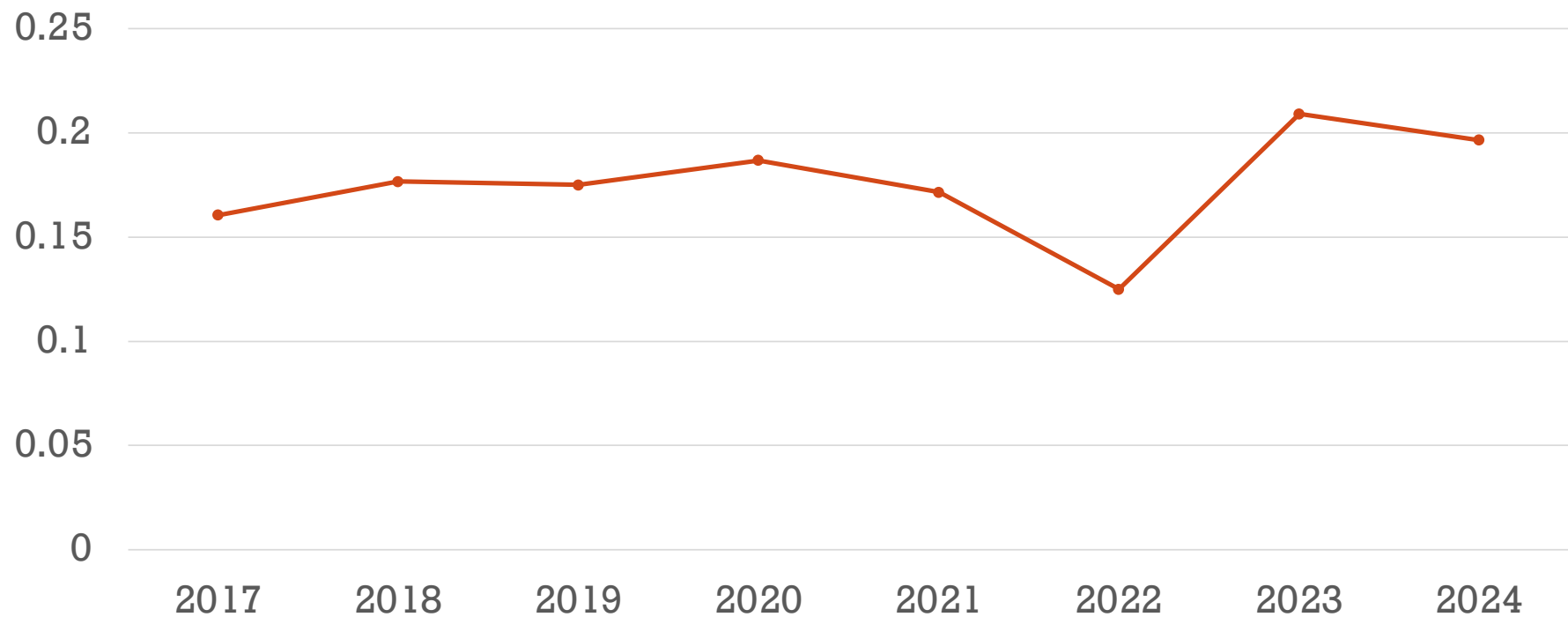


BOX OFFICE

- Proportion of local films has been increasing rapidly, while that of foreign films has been dropping → importance of local films is greater than before
- Overall box office sees a drop of over 30% → a general decline in global cinema industry



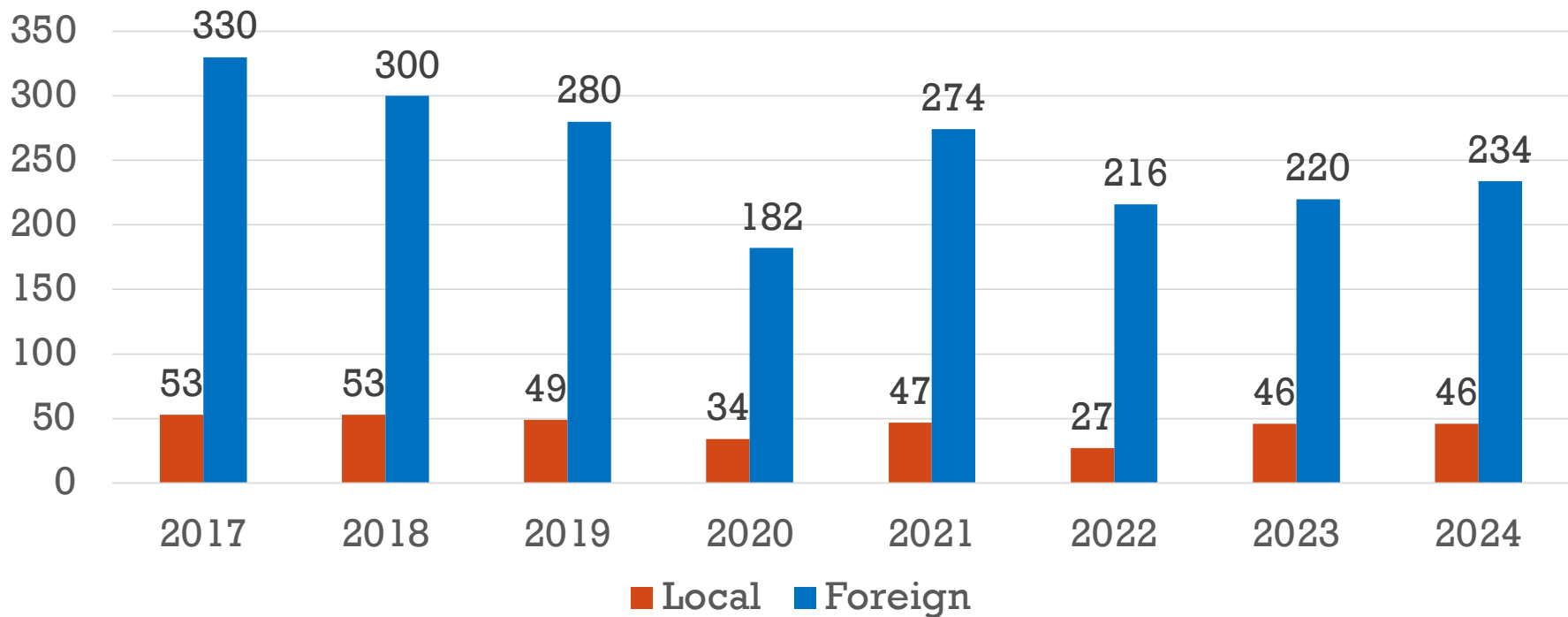
RATIO OF LOCAL FILMS TO FOREIGN FILMS



(Film Development Council, May 2025)



RATIO OF LOCAL FILMS TO FOREIGN FILMS

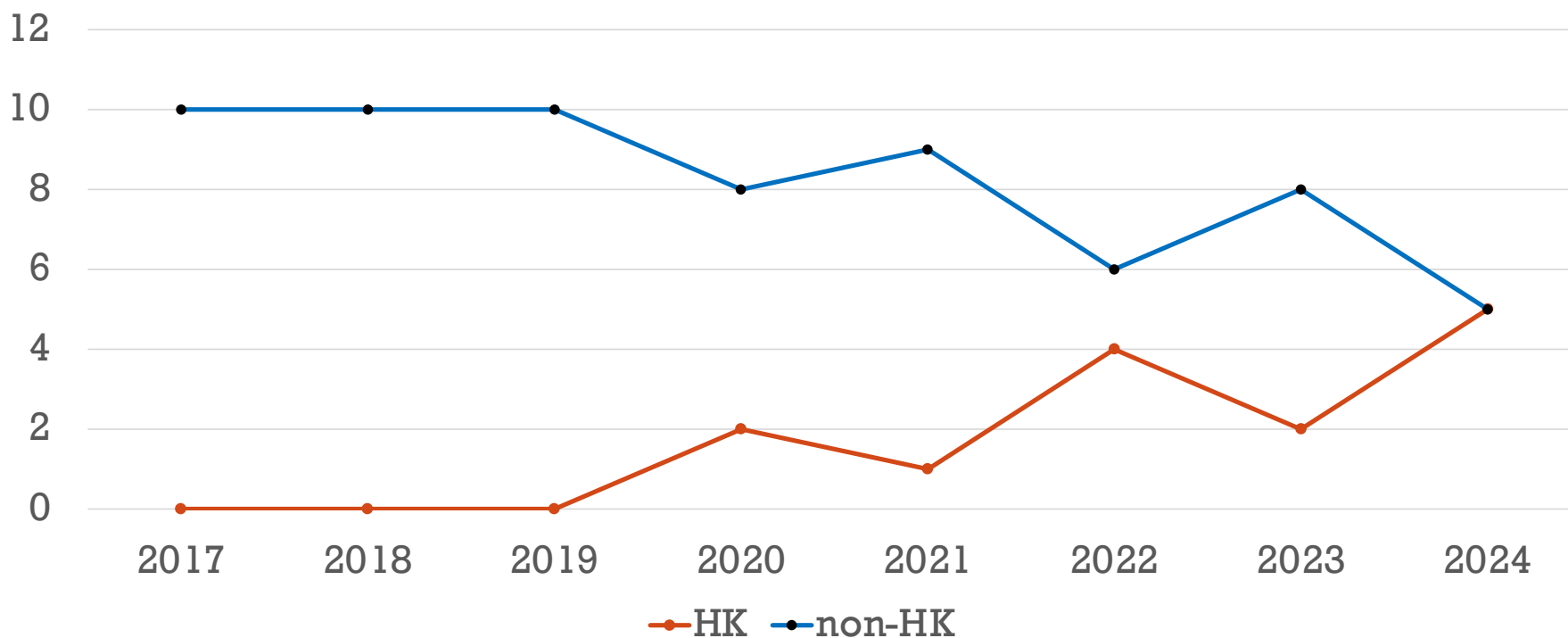


(Film Development Council, May 2025)



RATIO OF LOCAL FILMS TO FOREIGN FILMS

Origin of top 10 films in box office



(Film Development Council, May 2025)



RATIO OF LOCAL FILMS TO FOREIGN FILMS

- A significant bump at the end of pandemic, but overall is consistently low at around 1:6
- **Number of local films is stable** (~50 a year),
- **Number of foreign films has decreased** for about 30%
- Top 10 films shows 1:1 in 2024



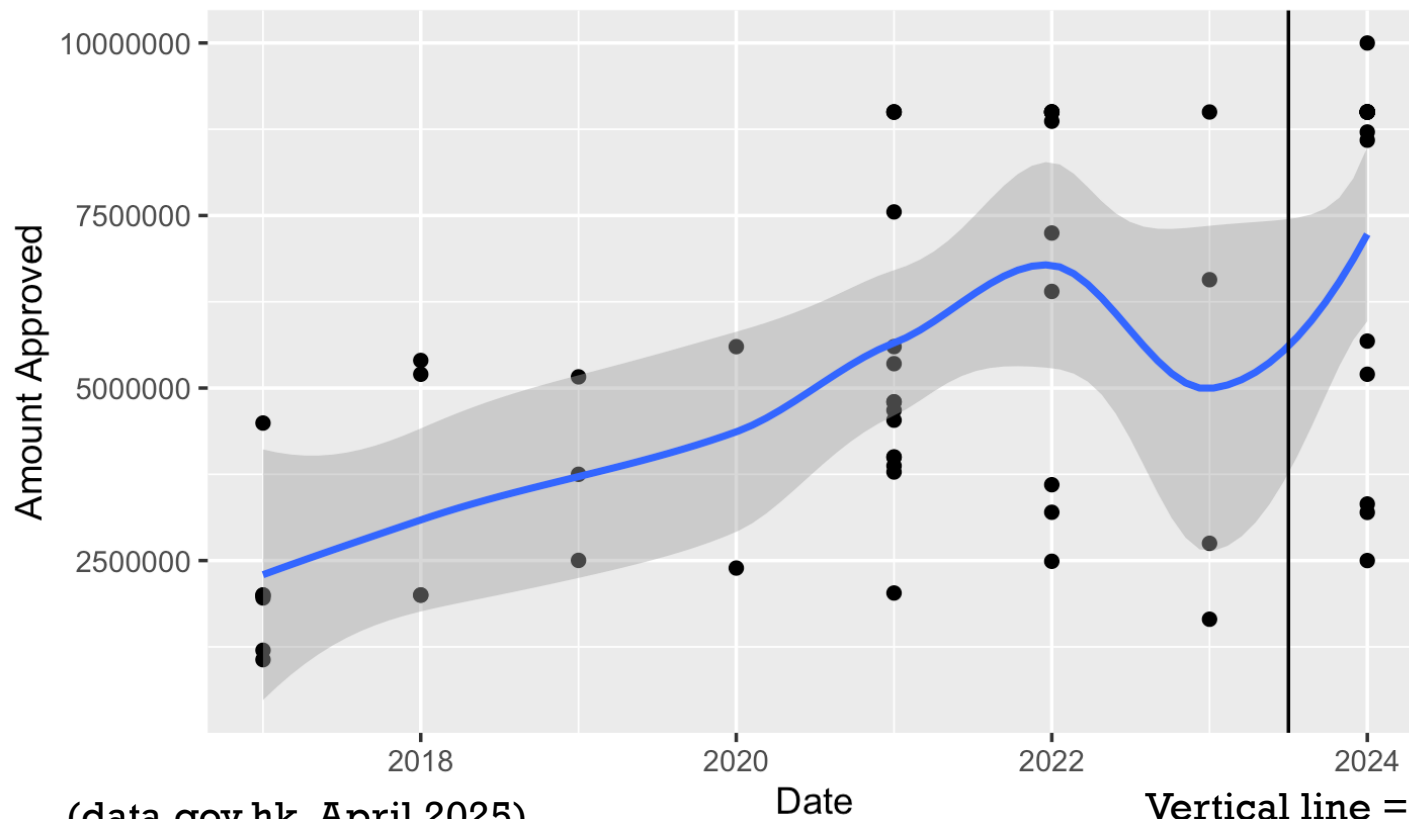
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- **Film Development Fund** since 1999
 - For **supporting film making**, participation in **international competitions**, and related events like **Hong Kong Film Awards**
- **“Cinema day”** (all tickets are priced at HKD 30 that day, funded by Film Development Fund)



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Amount Approved for each film under Film Development Fund



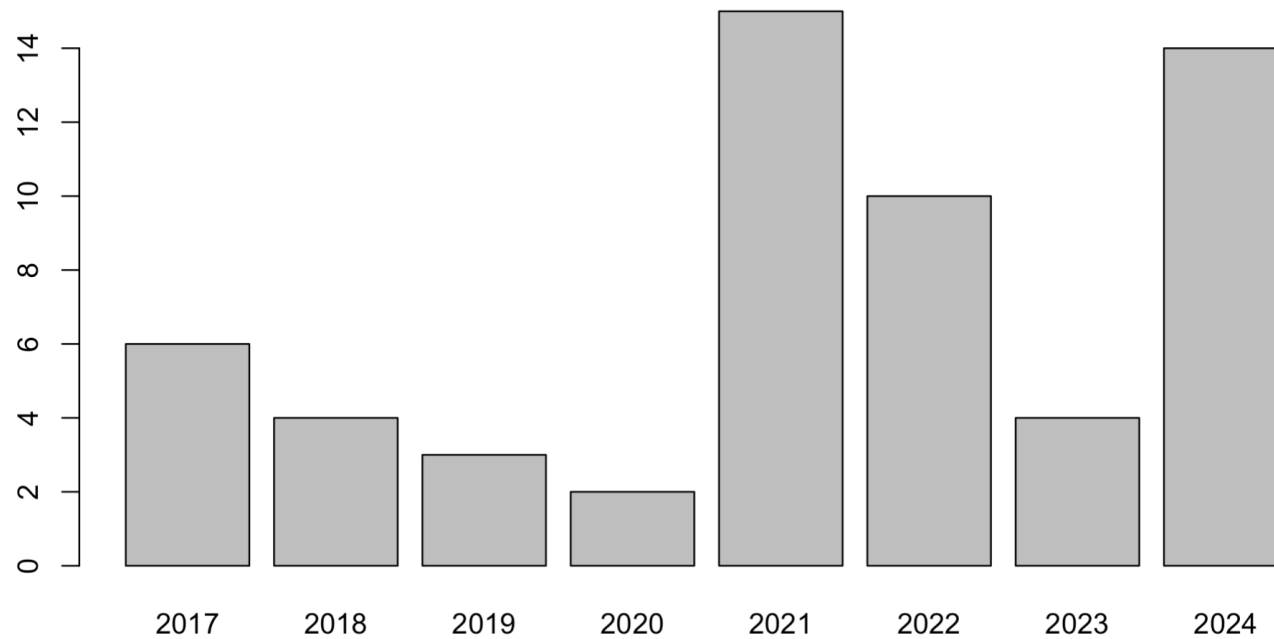
(data.gov.hk, April 2025)

Vertical line = the first "Cinema Day"



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Number of Films Approved by Year



(data.gov.hk, April 2025)



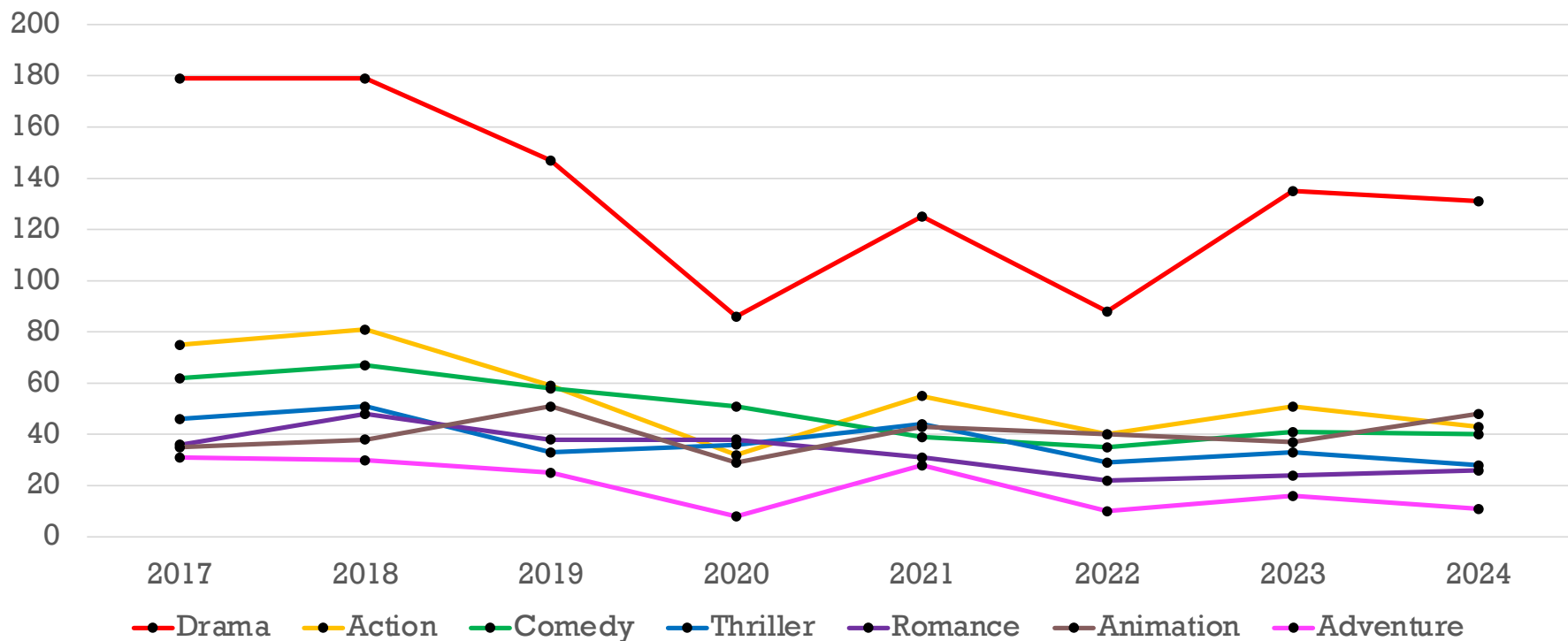
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Approved fund for each film has increased significantly except 2023 (could be due to Cinema Day)
- Number of films approved peaked in 2021 and 2024
- Funding for Fresh Wave Festival (a film expo supporting new filmmakers) from another fund was cut in 2024 (first time since establishment in 2005)



TREND OF FILM GENRES

Number of films released in Hong Kong (by genre)

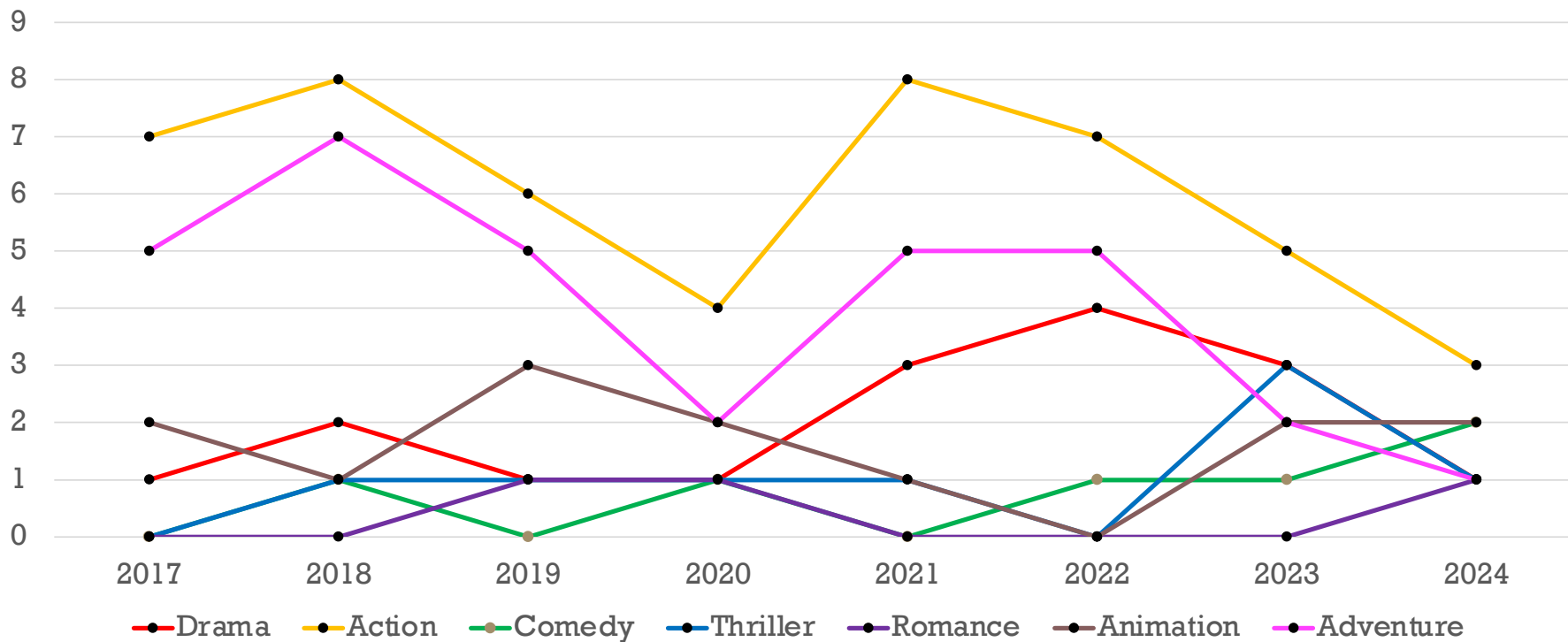


(Film Development Council, May 2025)



TREND OF FILM GENRES

Genres of top 10 films in box office



(Film Development Council, May 2025)

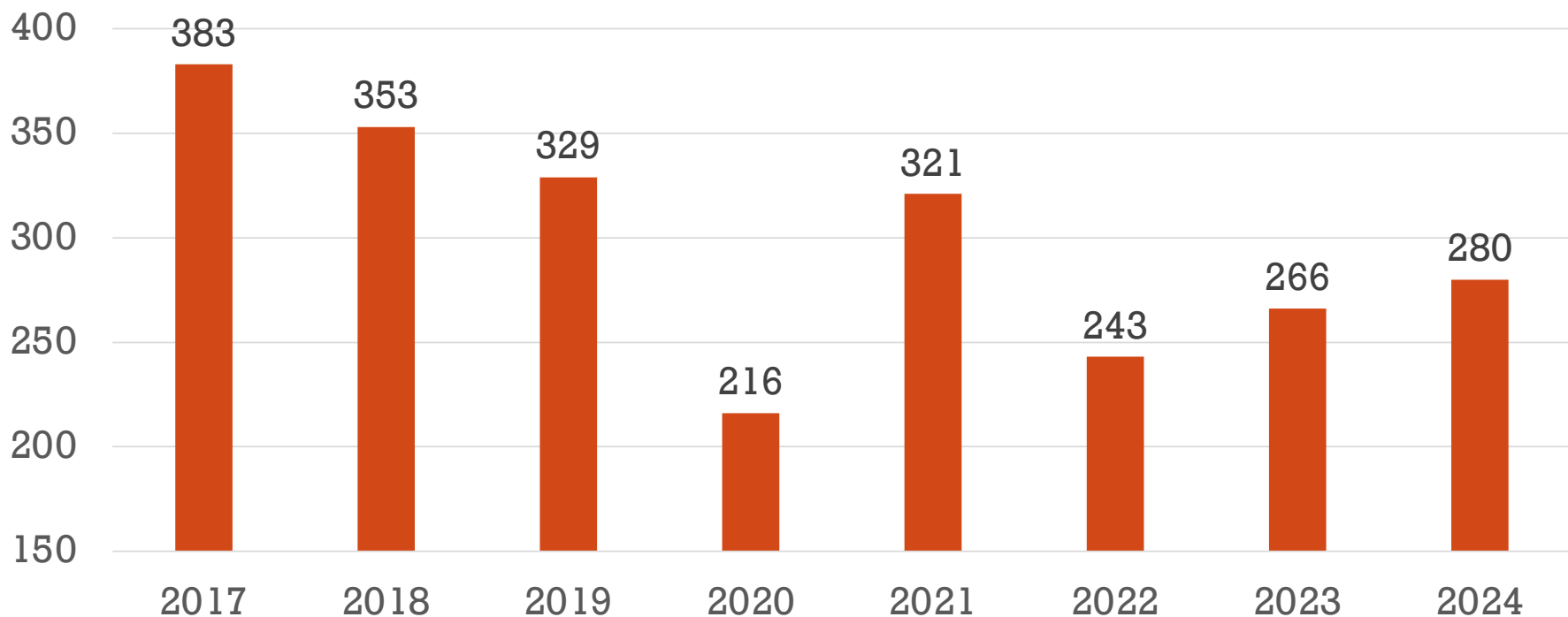


TREND OF FILM GENRES

- Drama films are consistently outnumbering other genres
- **Box office-wise, drama films do not appear as dominant as they seem**
- Drama films peaked in 2022 for their box office, contradicts with the trend of their number



NUMBER OF FILMS RELEASED IN A YEAR

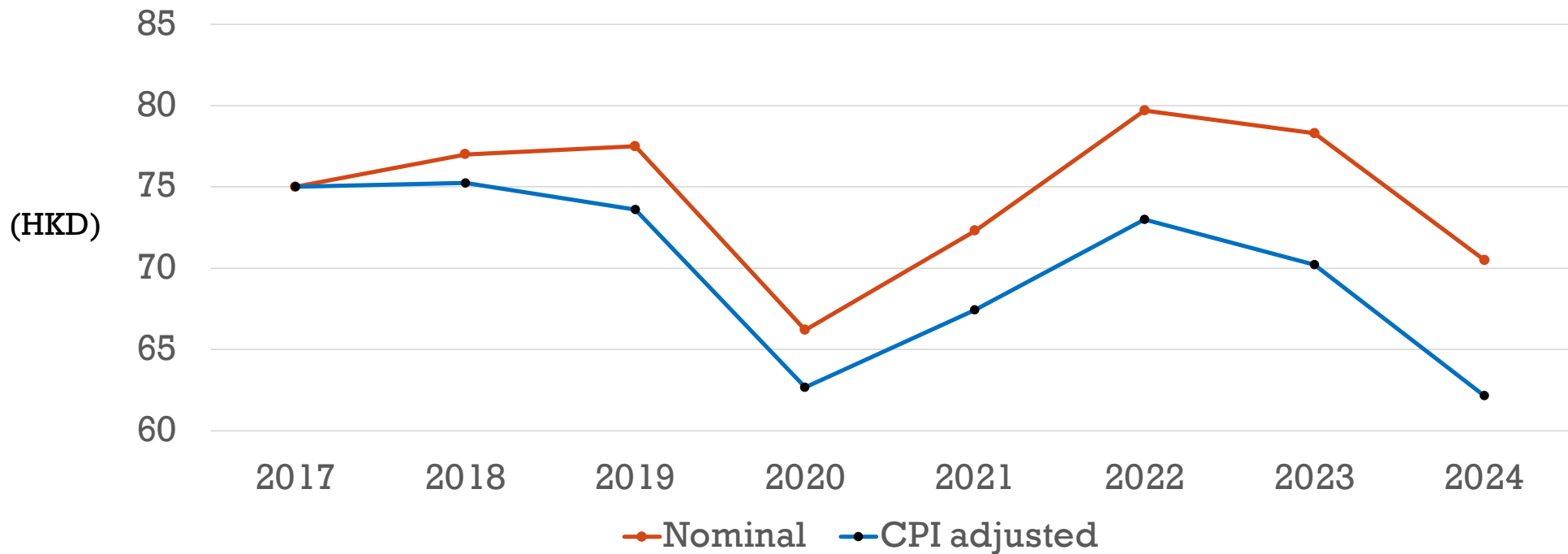


(Film Development Council, May 2025)



TICKET PRICE

Average Film Ticket Price

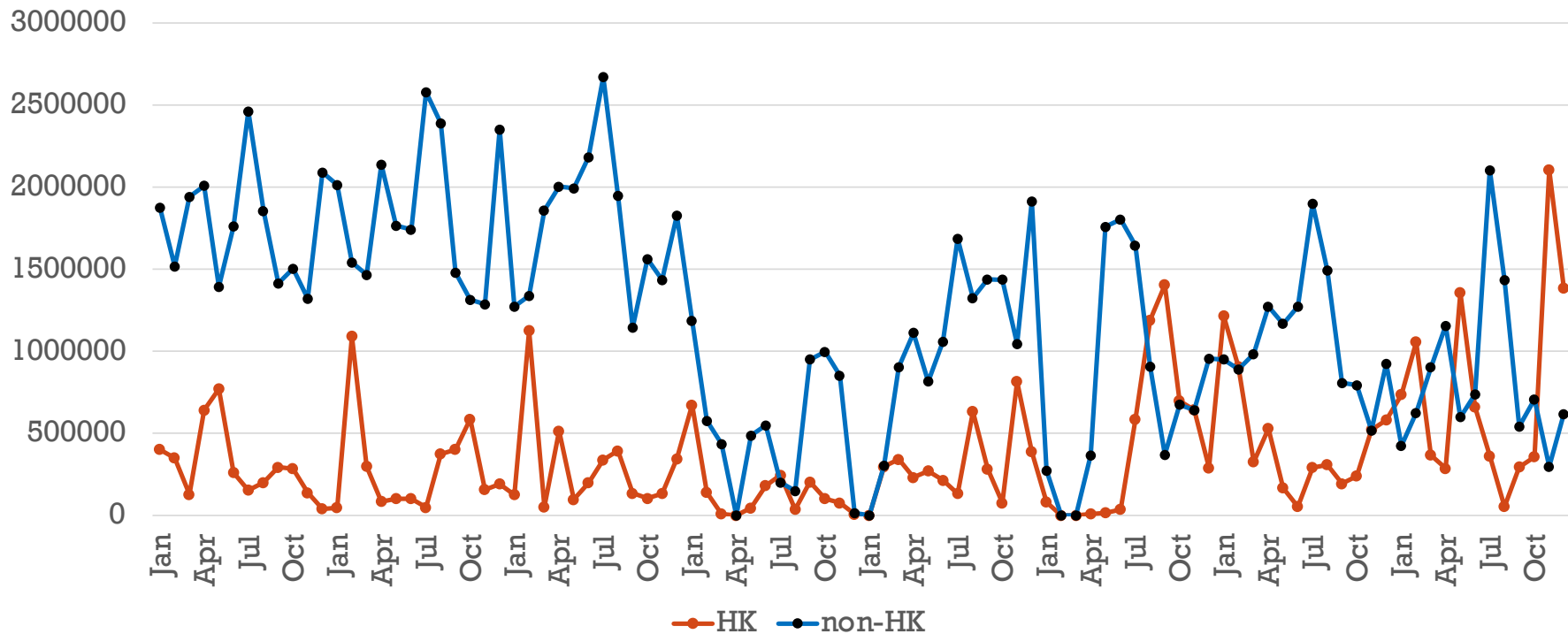


(Film Development Council, May 2025; Census and Statistics Department, May 2025)



CINEMA ADMISSION

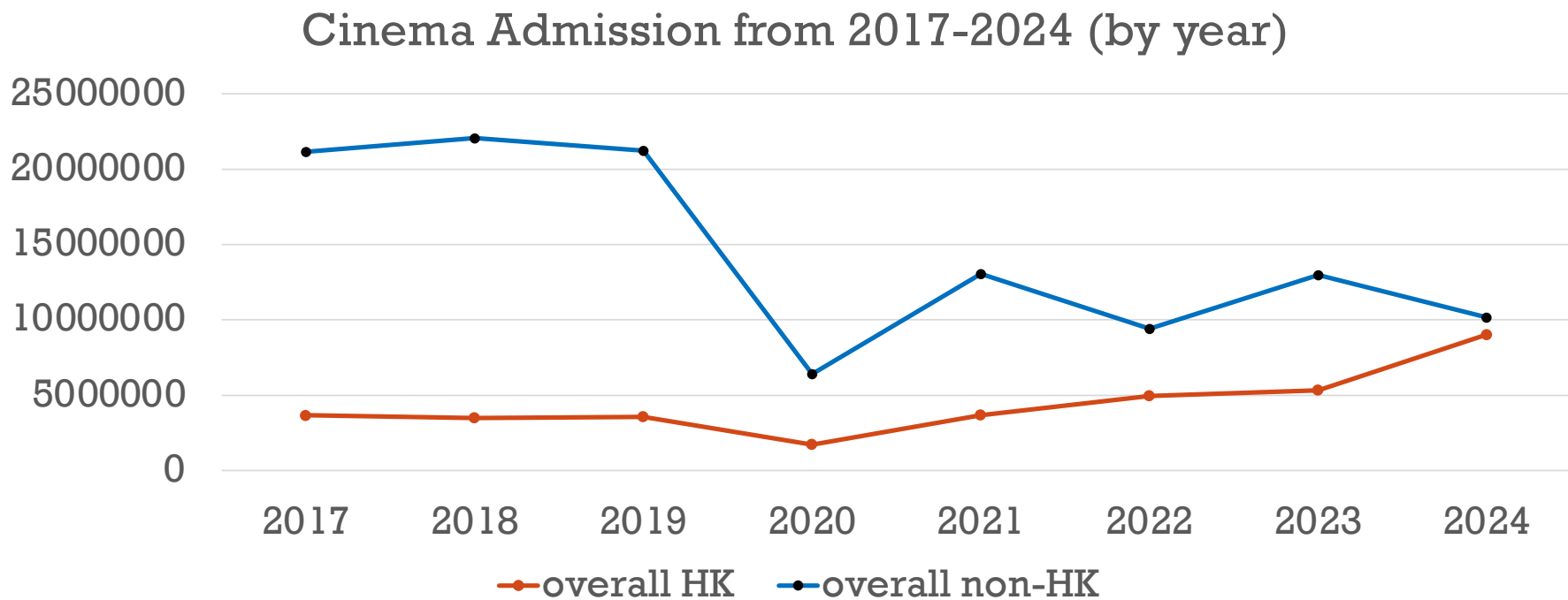
Cinema Admission from 2017-2024 (by month)



(Film Development Council, May 2025)

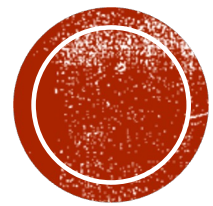


CINEMA ADMISSION



(Film Development Council, May 2025)





CONCLUSION



WHAT CAUSES THE LATEST SURGE OF SHUTDOWNS?

- Decrease in the number of new films
 - Decrease in admission (>20% in total)
 - Decrease in box office (unable to recover after pandemic)
- Performance of specific genres
 - Rapid drop for drama films
 - Action & adventure films had an underwhelming performance after pandemic
- Reliance on foreign films
- Instead of “a surge of cinema shutdowns”, it is more like the number of new cinemas each year is decreasing



IS HONG KONG'S FILM INDUSTRY IN DEMISE?

- Not exactly
 - Government support: **more films are funded** and with a higher amount
 - Cinema admission: ratio of local films is increasing consistently since the beginning of pandemic despite the drop in number of local films → **people are more willing to watch HK films than before**
 - Box office has doubled since 2017



IS HONG KONG'S FILM INDUSTRY IN DEMISE?

- However
 - Government support: Fund for events like Fresh Wave Festival was cut → seen as **a signal that gov't is unwilling to support the future of HK films**
 - Gov't fund used on new events like "Cinema Day" → **not helping the film industry** as the ticket price now is even lower than that in 2017
 - Number of new films: 10% drop from 2017 to 2024 → **ongoing decreasing trend**



LIMITATION

- Investors' attitude
- Time range may not reflect the whole story
- Only Hong Kong is included
- Limited source for older data
- Monthly rent for cinemas



FUTURE WORKS

- Trend in rent
- Influence of streaming services
- Comparison with overseas box office
- Film reviews → sentiment analysis
- Include budget for each film





THANK YOU!



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