

# Film Permits in New York City

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March 2021

The data used to create this report was obtained from the New York City Open Data online portal. The link to this data set can be found [here](#). The data collected represents each permit issued to a film/television production crew and other entertainment fields. It includes all permits issued between January 2012 through December 2020.

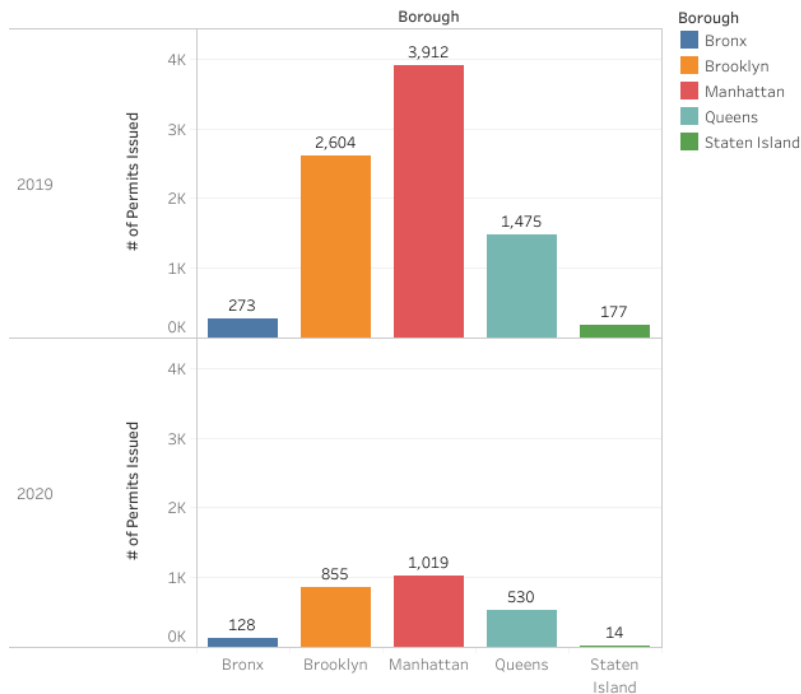
## Scope:

For this project I chose to look at data from January 2019 through December 2020. I was drawn to this data set because the film and entertainment sector was severely impacted by the global pandemic, and continues to be stymied. I wanted to look at the year prior to the pandemic (2019) to see what the filming industry looked like before the pandemic, what happened once all production ceased, and what the beginnings of the rebound taking shape now look like.

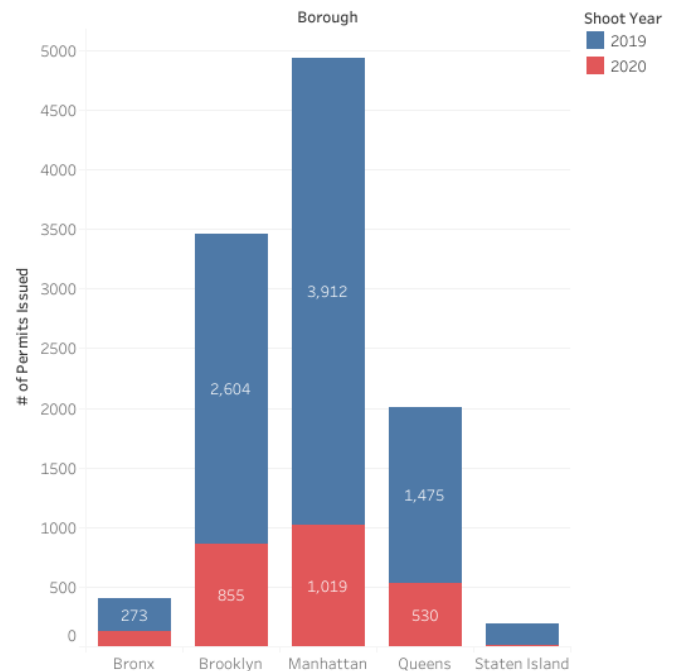
## Visualizations 1 & 2:

I wanted to get a feel for how many permits were being issued and in which boroughs. As expected, Manhattan and Brooklyn lead the other boroughs in permits issued in both 2019 and 2020. What was shocking to me was the overall change year to year. Permit issuance dropped 70% from 2019 to 2020. This data is visualized in two bar graphs: one side by side, the other stacked.

Permit Total by Borough side by side

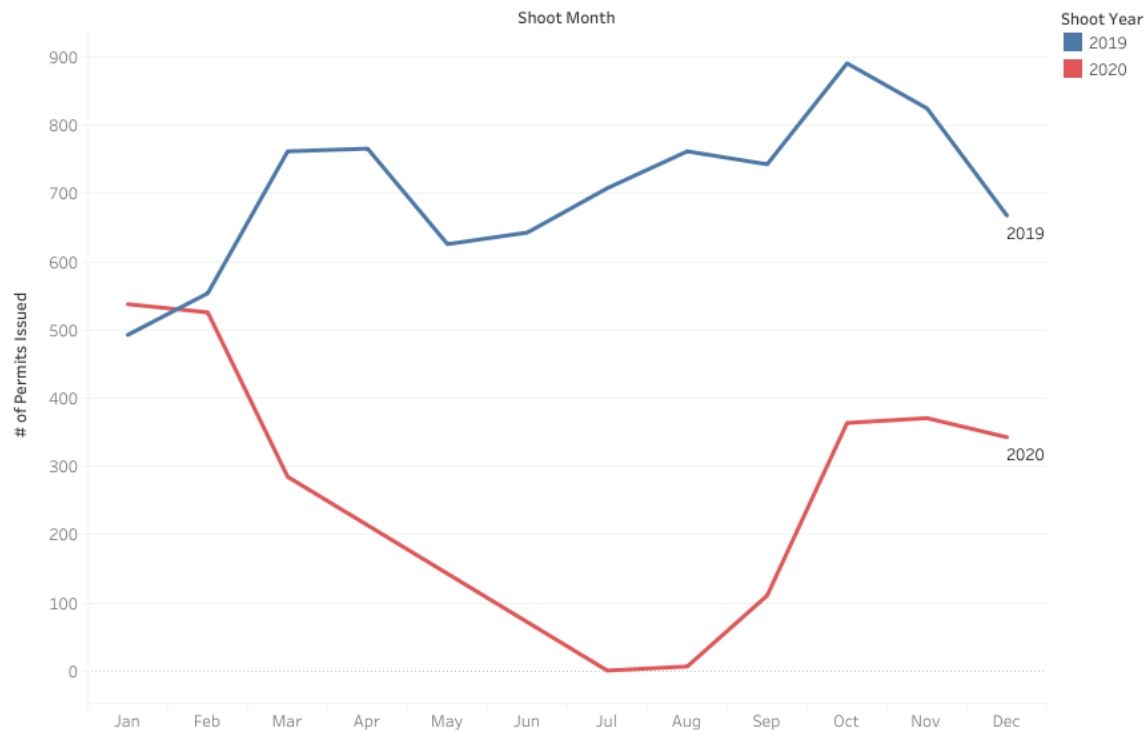


Permit Total by Borough



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Permits Issued per Month



## **Visualization 3:**

Next I wanted to gain more insights by looking at the broken down monthly. The line graph is a staggering image viewed in its entirety, but I gained a lot of insights looking at smaller data points.

First, it is noteworthy that the film industry was off to a great start in January 2020. More permits were issued in January 2020 than January 2019- 9% more- which tells me that the industry was growing year to year. This is noteworthy especially in the cold winter months, which is not usually amenable to filming outdoors.

This trend begins to dip in February- 5% fewer permits were issued in February 2020 than February 2019 year to year. This is likely related to news coverage picking up about the severity of the coronavirus, likely slowing potential shoots before the total shut down in mid March.

From April to July, we see a total shutdown with no permits granted. Only 7 permits were approved in August 2020, 111 in September 2020, and then a high of 364 in October 2020. October is typically the busiest month for issuing film permits, as seen in the 2019 peak.

The peak month after restrictions on production were lifted shifted slightly from October 2020 with 364 issued to 374 issued in November 2020. There are many possible factors as to why permit issuance dropped in December of 2020. First, production typically slows in winter months, as seen in the 2019 graph. Second, the city was entering into the second wave of the pandemic with rising numbers of cases.

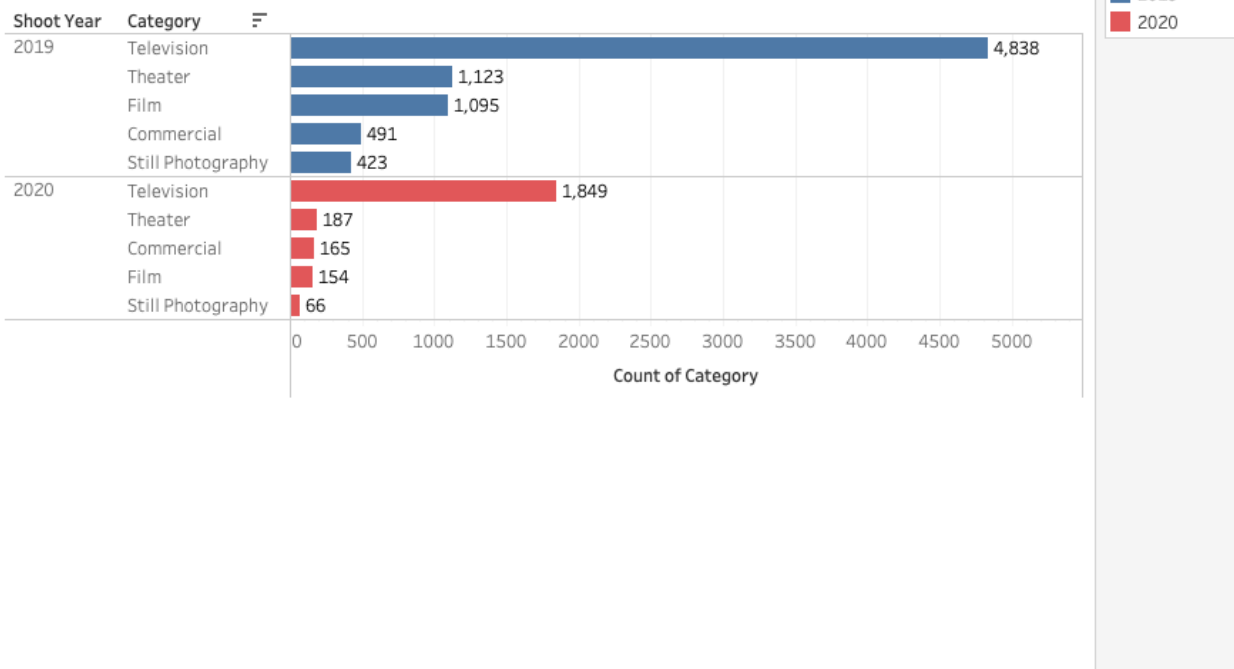
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Both of these could be contributing factors to the December dip, but without further data to see where the trend line moves, it is not possible to draw a firm conclusion.

### Visualization 4:

Next I wanted to look at the category of productions granted permits year to year. As is historically significant, television is the leading source of production granted permits in NYC, leading by 4x as many permits issued compared to the next place category. It is noteworthy that even in such an uncertain landscape, television production was still the most popular category granted permits. It is also noteworthy that overall film production was down compared to theater or commercial production.

Permits Issued by Category



### Key Takeaways:

- 9% more permits were issued in January of 2020 than January of 2019, signaling strong growth
- Although filming was shut down for 4 months, the number of permits issued dropped by 70% overall from 2019 to 2020
- Despite the slow recovery, late fall (October and November) was still a peak time for production
- Television is the largest industry granted permits in NYC
- 86% fewer film permits were issued for in 2020, suggesting the pandemic affected film more so than Theater or Commercial production

### Next Steps:

1. *More inclusive data collection*

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This data set was great for drawing quick insights, but it lacks sophistication in data collection. For example it does not include the permits that were rejected or resubmitted, only those that were issued. This is a selection bias and more information would paint a broader picture of the process for film and television personnel. It also does not collect address data in a way that is useful for parsing, which would be helpful to identify popular locations and create sophisticated visuals.

### 2. *Updated data*

Of course, data collection and updates take time. The City has not yet made available data for 2021 permits. I would be curious to see the figures for permits issued in Q1 of 2021 to see what recovery for such a hard hit industry looks like and its effect on reopening for the city at large. These analyses would also be helpful for the Mayor's Office and for film production professionals who are trying to film safely in New York.