

**TOP FILMS  
IN 2020**

# CONTENTS

03	Facts in focus
04	The top 20 films
05	The top 20 UK films
07	The top 20 UK independent films
08	Best weekend performances of UK films
09	Specialised films at the UK box office
10	Trends in specialised film
10	Non-English language films
12	Documentaries
13	Releases and box office by genre
14	Releases and box office by BBFC classification

# FACTS IN FOCUS

The top 20 films released at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office in 2020 grossed £201 million, just over a quarter of the £767 million earned by the top 20 films in 2019.

- ▶ The biggest film of the year was *1917* with takings of £44 million.
- ▶ *1917* was the only film to earn more than £20 million at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office in 2020, down from 17 in 2019.
- ▶ Seven UK qualifying films featured in the top 20 films of the year, four of which were UK independent films.
- ▶ *The Gentlemen*, with takings of £12 million, was the highest earning independent UK film of the year.
- ▶ The top 20 UK films made £113 million (£527 million in 2019), 46% of the total box office.
- ▶ The top 20 UK independent films made £34 million (£145 million in 2019), 14% of the total box office.
- ▶ Six UK qualifying films spent a total of 17 weeks at the top of the UK and Republic of Ireland weekend box office charts.
- ▶ Action was the highest grossing genre of the year with takings of £48.5 million.
- ▶ Specialised film (foreign language films, documentaries, and re-releases) made £24 million at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office from 218 releases.



# Top Films in 2020

## The top 20 films

In a year dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sam Mendes's First World War drama *1917* was the biggest earner at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office in 2020 (Table 1). The UK/USA production grossed £44 million, the lowest take for an annual top film since 2014 when *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* earned £41 million. It was the only release to gross over £20 million in 2020, down from 17 releases in 2019.

The top 20 films had a combined gross of £201 million, which accounted for 80% of the total UK and Republic of Ireland box office for films released in the year. In 2019, the top 20 films earned £767 million (59% of the total box office).

The disruption caused by the pandemic in 2020 is illustrated by the fact that 17 films in the top 20 were released before the introduction of the first national lockdown in March and that three of the highest earning films in cinemas during the year were 2019 releases: *Little Women*, which earned £15.3 million in 2020, *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (£11.4 million in 2020) and *Jumanji: The Next Level* (£11.0 million in 2020). The only top 20 films of 2020 not released before March were *Tenet* (£17.5 million, released late August), *After We Collided* (£4 million, early September), and *Unhinged* (£2 million, late July).

For the first time since the release of *The Passion of the Christ* (£11 million) in 2004, the top 20 films feature a non-English language film. South Korean director Bong Joon-ho's Oscar® winning dark comedy *Parasite* earned £12 million to become the all-time highest grossing foreign language film at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office.

Seven of the top 20 releases in 2020 were UK qualifying films (down from nine in 2019), four of which were UK independent films (up from one in 2019).

**Table 1 Box office results for the top 20 films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

Rank	Title	Country of origin	Box office gross (£ million)	Widest point of release	Opening weekend gross (£ million)	Distributor
1	1917	UK/USA	44.1	751	7.5	Entertainment One
2	Sonic the Hedgehog	USA/Jpn/Kor	19.3	640	4.7	Paramount
3	Tenet	UK/USA	17.5	624	5.3	Warner Bros
4	Bad Boys for Life	USA	16.2	561	3.8	Sony
5	Dolittle	UK/USA	15.9	686	5.2	Universal
6	The Gentlemen	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	12.3	516	3.1	Entertainment Film Distributors
7	Parasite	Kor	12.1	592	1.4	StudioCanal
8	Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)	USA	8.8	633	2.7	Warner Bros
9	Jojo Rabbit	NZI/USA/Cze	8.1	542	2.4	Walt Disney
10	Onward	USA	7.7	636	3.4	Walt Disney
11	Emma	UK	7.5	654	1.6	Universal
12	The Invisible Man	USA/Aus	6.9	584	2.2	Universal
13	The Personal History of David Copperfield	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	6.4	680	1.5	Lionsgate
14	After We Collided	USA	4.0	492	0.3	Shear Entertainment
15	The Call of the Wild	USA	2.8	502	1.5	Walt Disney
16	Dark Waters	USA	2.5	448	0.9	Entertainment One
17	Military Wives	UK	2.5	671	1.0	Lionsgate
18	Bombshell	USA/Can	2.3	486	0.7	Lionsgate
19	Unhinged	USA	2.0	484	0.2	Altitude
20	Paw Patrol: Ready, Race, Rescue!	Can	1.9	531	0.5	Paramount

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

Box office gross = cumulative total up to 18 February 2021.

<sup>#</sup> Film made with independent (non-studio) US support or with the independent arm of a US studio.

## The top 20 UK films

The top 20 UK qualifying films of 2020, shown in Table 2, had a combined gross of £113 million, which was 46% of the total UK and Republic of Ireland box office for films released in the year. This was less than one quarter of the £527 million earned by the top 20 UK films released in 2019 (41% of the total box office) and is the lowest combined box office gross for the top 20 UK films of any year since we started publishing the yearbook in 2002.

Four UK films earned over £10 million in 2020, down from 16 in 2019. Fifteen of the top 20 titles were UK independent films, up from eight in 2019, and these films accounted for 30% of the total gross for the top 20 UK films, up from 19% in 2019. (This was the first year since 2009 to have 15 UK independent titles among the top 20 UK films.)

**Table 2 Box office results for the top 20 UK films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

Rank	Title	Country of origin	Box office gross (£ million)	Widest point of release	Opening weekend gross (£ million)	Distributor
1	1917	UK/USA	44.09	751	7.46	Entertainment One
2	Tenet	UK/USA	17.47	624	5.34	Warner Bros
3	Dolittle	UK/USA	15.95	686	5.16	Universal
4	The Gentlemen	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	12.27	516	3.09	Entertainment Film Distributors
5	Emma	UK	7.46	654	1.64	Universal
6	The Personal History of David Copperfield	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	6.41	680	1.53	Lionsgate
7	Military Wives	UK	2.52	671	0.97	Lionsgate
8	Wonder Woman 1984	UK/USA	1.53	216	0.89	Warner Bros
9	Saint Maud	UK	0.85	356	0.26	StudioCanal
10	Greed	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	0.81	404	0.37	Sony
11	The Secret Garden	UK/Fra	0.73	201	0.16	Sky Cinema
12	Inception: 10th Anniversary	UK/USA	0.50	440	0.21	Warner Bros
13	Misbehaviour	UK	0.46	511	0.35	Walt Disney
14	Pixie	UK	0.43	325	0.12	Paramount
15	The Rhythm Section	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	0.36	405	0.18	Paramount
16	Rocks	UK	0.28	125	0.08	Altitude
17	Hope Gap	UK	0.20	81	0.07	Curzon Artificial Eye
18	Street Dancer 3D	UK/Ind	0.18	60	0.09	Cinestaan AA
19	Summerland	UK	0.17	96	0.02	Lionsgate
20	23 Walks	UK	0.16	137	0.03	Parkland Entertainment

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

Box office gross = cumulative total up to 18 February 2021.

<sup>#</sup> Film made with independent (non-studio) US support or with the independent arm of a US studio.

## The top 20 UK independent films

The top 20 UK independent films of 2020, shown in Table 3, had a combined gross of £34 million (down from £145 million in 2019), and accounted for 96% of the total box office for all UK independent films released in 2020 (up from 87% in 2019). Over three quarters of this total was earned by just three releases, *The Gentlemen* (£12 million), *Emma* (£7.5 million) and *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (£6 million). The list includes a number of independent productions which qualified as British under the cultural test for film and are considered 'Inward Investment' productions. (Titles in this category include *Street Dancer 3D* and *Chal Mera Putt 2*.)

The top 20 UK independent films accounted for 14% of the overall UK and Republic of Ireland box office in 2020, up from 11% in 2019.

**Table 3 Box office results for the top 20 UK independent films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

Rank	Title	Country of origin	Box office gross (£ million)	Widest point of release	Opening weekend gross (£ million)	Distributor
1	The Gentlemen	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	12.27	516	3.09	Entertainment Film Distributors
2	Emma	UK	7.46	654	1.64	Universal
3	The Personal History of David Copperfield	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	6.41	680	1.53	Lionsgate
4	Military Wives	UK	2.52	671	0.97	Lionsgate
5	Saint Maud	UK	0.85	356	0.26	StudioCanal
6	Greed	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	0.81	404	0.37	Sony
7	The Secret Garden	UK/Fra	0.73	201	0.16	Sky Cinema
8	Misbehaviour	UK	0.46	511	0.35	Walt Disney
9	Pixie	UK	0.43	325	0.12	Paramount
10	The Rhythm Section	UK/USA <sup>#</sup>	0.36	405	0.18	Paramount
11	Rocks	UK	0.28	125	0.08	Altitude
12	Hope Gap	UK	0.20	81	0.07	Curzon Artificial Eye
13	Street Dancer 3D	UK/Ind	0.18	60	0.09	Cinestaan AA
14	Summerland	UK	0.17	96	0.02	Lionsgate
15	23 Walks	UK	0.16	137	0.03	Parkland Entertainment
16	Mr. Jones	UK/Pol/Ukr	0.13	18	0.02	Signature Entertainment
17	Chal Mera Putt 2	UK/Ind	0.11	58	0.09	Rhythm Boyz Entertainment
18	A Christmas Carol	UK/Ukr	0.10	172	0.02	Munro Film Services
19	Jawaani Jaaneman	UK/Ind	0.10	35	0.05	Hamsini Entertainment
20	Schemers	UK	0.10	210	0.03	Munro Film Services

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

Box office gross = cumulative total up to 18 February 2021.

<sup>#</sup> Film made with independent (non-studio) US support or with the independent arm of a US studio.

## Best weekend performances of UK films

There were only 31 weekends in 2020 when a majority of UK cinemas were open (this includes periods when cinemas were operating at reduced capacity due to rules on social distancing). A total of 12 different films topped the UK weekend box office charts over this period. Six of these were UK titles, which spent a combined total of 17 weeks at number one (Table 4). The table includes theatrical grosses generated over the three-day weekend plus revenues from any previews. (In 2019, 14 UK films achieved the number one slot in the weekend charts for a total of 25 weeks.)

Christopher Nolan's *Tenet*, the third highest grossing film of the year, spent eight weeks at the top of the box office charts in 2020, the longest run in the top spot since the release of *Avatar*, which topped the charts for nine weeks in 2009. *Tenet*'s lengthy run, however, is partly due to the lack of other major releases during the period. The espionage thriller took £5.3 million on its five-day opening (£3.3 million, Fri-Sun) but by its eighth weekend at number one it grossed only £0.2 million.

Additionally, UK independent titles *The Secret Garden* and *The Three Kings* also topped the weekend box office charts, albeit in November when only a minority of cinemas were open.

**Table 4 UK films at number one in the weekend box office charts, 2020**

Title	First week at top	Opening weekend gross (£ million)	Box office gross (£ million)	Distributor	Number of weeks at number one
Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker	03/01/2020*	20.9	58.3	Walt Disney	1
1917	10/01/2020	7.5	44.1	Entertainment One	4
Dolittle	07/02/2020	5.2	16.0	Universal	1
Inception: 10th Anniversary	14/08/2020	0.2	0.5	Warner Bros	1
Tenet	28/08/2020	5.3	17.5	Warner Bros	8
Wonder Woman 1984	18/12/2020	0.9	1.5	Warner Bros	2

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

Box office gross = cumulative total up to 18 February 2021.

Opening weekend gross includes revenues from previews.

Only includes films shown during periods when a majority of cinemas were open, even if under social distancing regulations.

\* *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* was released in 2019 when it topped the weekend chart for the last two weeks in December. Its opening weekend and box office grosses were included in last year's edition of the Statistical Yearbook.



## Specialised films at the UK box office in 2020

Specialised films offer audiences an experience of cinema that can be very different from the titles that dominate the overall box office charts. The definition of ‘specialised’ used here includes any documentary feature film, any film where the main language spoken is not English, and any film re-release. (Non-feature film releases, such as recorded live performances, are not considered to be specialised; they are categorised as event cinema. For more information, see the Exhibition chapter.)

In total, 218 documentaries, foreign language films and re-releases of archive/classic films were shown at UK cinemas in 2020, representing 57% of all theatrical releases in the year (Table 5). These films grossed £24 million, a 10% share of total box office earnings. These figures are down from 412 releases with a £35 million total gross in 2019, but an increase in box office share from 3%. However, more than half of the gross of specialised films in 2020 was generated by just one film – foreign language title *Parasite* (£12 million).

**Table 5 Documentaries, foreign language films and re-releases in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

Type	Number of releases	Share of releases (%)	Gross box office (£ million)	Share of gross box office (%)	Average widest point of release
Documentary	42	11.0	0.4	0.2	19
Foreign language	145	38.1	20.2	8.2	42
Re-release	48	12.6	4.1	1.7	105
All specialised films*	218	57.2	23.8	9.6	52
All films	381	100.0	246.9	100.0	110

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

\* Due to some overlap of categories (e.g. the re-release of foreign language title *Memories of Murder*) this total refers to the number of specialised films, not the sum total of the categories in the table. This total does not include the category of ‘other specialised films’ which has been used in previous Yearbooks.

Figures as at 18 February 2021.



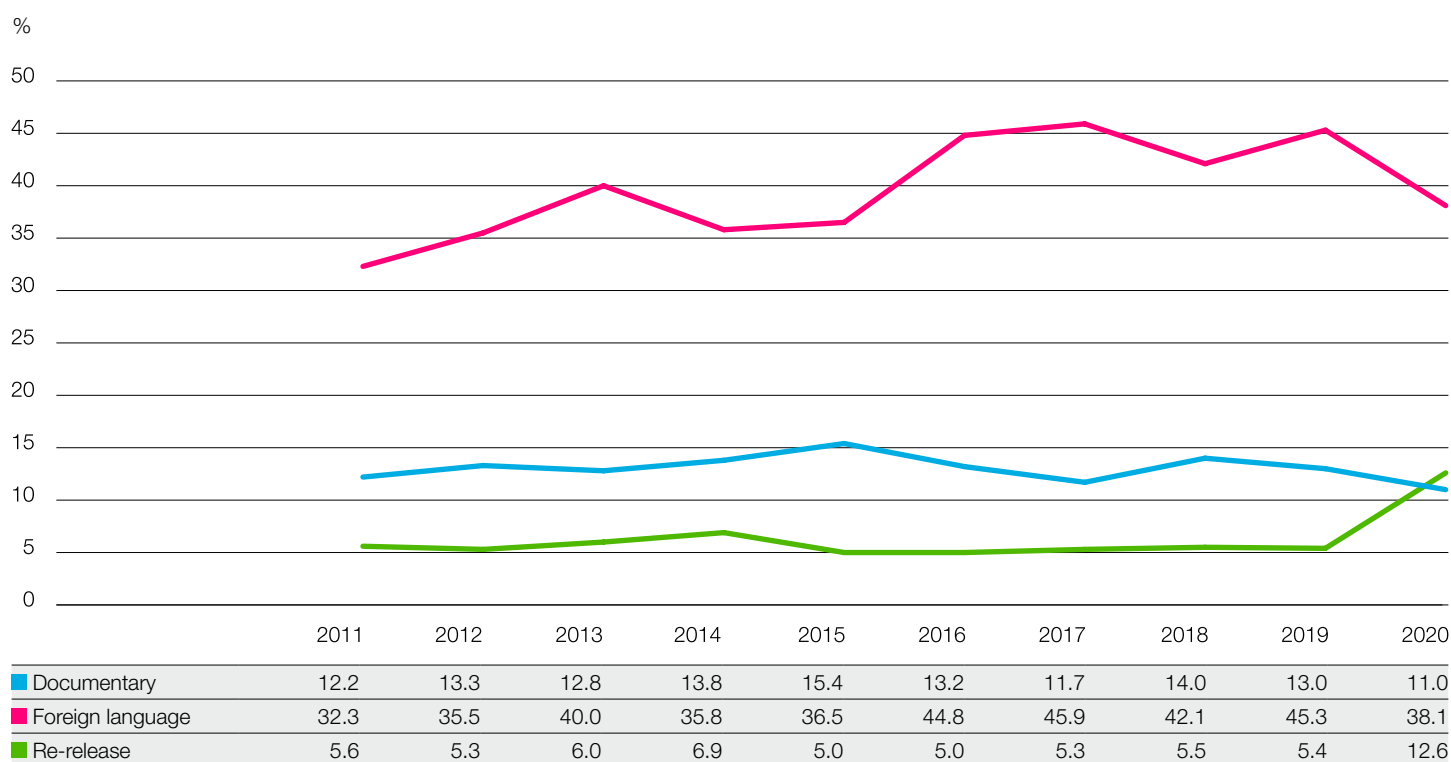
Image: *The Gentlemen* courtesy of Entertainment Film Distributors

## Trends in specialised film

Figure 1 shows the trend in specialised film releases from 2011-2020 by share of total releases. As a percentage of total in-year releases, foreign language releases have ranged from 32% (2011) to 46% (2017), and fell from 45% in 2019 to 38% in 2020. Documentary releases have increased from a 12% share in 2011 to 14% in 2018 before falling to 13% in 2019 and to 11% in 2020, the lowest value of the period.

Re-releases drastically increased as a proportion of total releases in 2020 to 13%, almost double the previous high of 7% in 2014. This increase is reflective of distributors, in the absence of new releases, organising new re-releases of classic films to tempt people back into the cinema.

**Figure 1 Documentaries, foreign language films and re-releases in the UK and Republic of Ireland, share of releases, 2011-2020**



Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Note: There is some overlap in these categories as a small number of films are assigned to more than one specialised film category.

## Non-English language films

Films in 33 different languages (including English) were released in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2020 (Table 6), down from 42 different languages in 2019.

There were 145 foreign language film releases in 2020, down from 346 in 2019. These films took £20 million at the UK box office, meaning that they account 38% of all films released, but just 8% of the total box office. Foreign language films were shown at an average of 42 sites at their widest point of release compared to an average of 152 for English language films. After English, the most common languages, in terms of numbers of releases, were Hindi, French and Polish (Table 6). Korean was the top non-English language at the box office by value, with £12.3 million from four releases (although just one – *Parasite* – accounted for £12.1 million), followed by Hindi (£1.5 million) and Polish (£1.1 million).

**Table 6 Languages of films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020 (ranked by gross box office)**

	Main language	Number of releases	Gross box office (£ million)	Box office share (%)
	English	236	226.7	91.83
1	Korean	4	12.3	4.99
2	Hindi	15	1.5	0.74
3	Polish	12	1.1	0.46
4	Italian	5	1.0	0.42
5	French	13	1.0	0.40
6	Japanese	5	0.9	0.36
7	Danish	2	0.5	0.20
8	Tamil	10	0.4	0.17
9	Telugu	6	0.3	0.12
10	Punjabi	8	0.3	0.12
	Other (22 languages)	65	0.8	0.32

Source: Comscore, IMDb, BFI RSU analysis

Notes:

Figures as at 18 February 2021.

Table 7 shows the top 10 non-Hindi foreign language films of 2020. The Oscar® Best Picture winner *Parasite* tops the list with £12 million, the highest grossing foreign language film at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office to date. Two animated films make the list, both from Japan: *Weathering With You* and the re-release of *Akira*.

**Table 7 Top 10 foreign language films (excluding Hindi\*) released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

	Title	Country of origin	Gross box office (£ million)	Distributor	Main language
1	Parasite	Kor	12.12	StudioCanal	Korean
2	Pinocchio	Ita/Fra/UK	0.86	Vertigo Releasing	Italian
3	Portrait Of A Lady On Fire	Fra	0.57	Curzon	French
4	Weathering With You	Jpn	0.55	National Amusements UK	Japanese
5	Dreambuilders	Dnk	0.50	Signature Entertainment	Danish
6	Psy 3: W Imie Zasad	Pol	0.46	Magnetes Pictures	Polish
7	Darbar	Ind	0.33	Sun Media	Tamil
8	Akira (re-release)	Jpn	0.31	National Amusements UK	Japanese
9	How I Became A Gangster. A True Story	Pol	0.27	Phoenix	Polish
10	Les Misérables	Fra	0.18	Altitude/Aerodrome	French

Source: Comscore, BBFC, IMDb, BFI RSU analysis, distributor websites

Notes:

\* For Hindi language titles, see Table 8.

Figures as at 18 February 2021.

In recent years Hindi language films frequently dominated amongst foreign language releases in terms of the number of releases and of their total box office grosses, so Table 8 breaks out the top 10 Hindi language film releases of 2020 to look at them in isolation. The list is headed by action sequel *Baaghi 3* (£0.25 million). Two UK qualifying films make the list, *Street Dancer* and *Jawaani Jaaneman*, both of which featured substantial UK location shooting.

**Table 8 Top 10 Hindi language films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

	Title	Country of origin	UK box office total (£ million)	Distributor
1	Baaghi 3	Ind/USA	0.25	Walt Disney
2	Chhapaak	Ind	0.18	Walt Disney
3	Street Dancer 3D	UK/Ind	0.18	Cinestaan AA Distributors
4	Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior	Ind	0.16	Cinestaan AA Distributors
5	Malang - Unleash The Madness	Ind	0.13	Yash Raj Films
6	Love Aaj Kal 2	Ind	0.13	Hamsini Entertainment
7	Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan	Ind	0.12	Hamsini Entertainment
8	Jawaani Jaaneman	UK/Ind	0.10	Hamsini Entertainment
9	Thappad	Ind	0.08	Cinestaan AA Distributors
10	Panga	Ind	0.07	Walt Disney

Source: Comscore, BBFC, IMDb, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

## Documentaries

A total of 42 feature documentaries (11% of theatrical releases) were released in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2020, down from 99 and 13% in 2019. These films earned £0.4 million, 0.2% of the overall box office gross (£7.8 million and 0.6% in 2019).

No documentaries earned more than £1 million at the UK and Republic of Ireland box office in 2020 (down from two in 2019), with top film *I Am Greta*, about climate activist Greta Thunberg, grossing £0.05 million (Table 9). Second highest grossing film, *White Riot* (£0.04 million), also dealt with activism in the form of the Rock Against Racism civil rights movement, and was one of three UK films to make the top ten, along with *Max Richter's Sleep* and *Everything: The Real Thing Story*.

**Table 9 Top 10 feature documentaries released in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 2020**

	Title	Country of origin	Box office gross (£ million)	Widest point of release (sites)	Distributor
1	I Am Greta	Swe	0.05	251	Dogwoof
2	White Riot	UK	0.04	50	Modern Films
3	Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am	USA	0.03	26	Republic Film
4	The Gift	Aus/USA	0.02	51	Altitude/Wildcard
5	Cunningham	Fra/Deu/Che/USA	0.02	21	Dogwoof
6	Max Richter's Sleep	UK	0.02	21	Dogwoof
7	Midnight Traveler	USA	0.02	9	Dogwoof
8	Midnight Family	USA/Mex	0.02	15	Dogwoof
9	Talking About Trees	Fra/Deu/Tcd/Sdn/Qat	0.02	7	New Wave Film
10	Everything: The Real Thing Story	UK	0.01	3	Music Film Network

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

## Genre in the Statistical Yearbook

For statistical purposes, the BFI Research and Statistics Unit assigns a primary genre to every film released in the UK. This is not meant to be prescriptive but helps gauge the relative popularity of different genres on a consistent basis from year to year. The list of genres is based on conventions commonly used within the industry and by published sources such as the BFI's Collections Information Database, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Comscore, and distributors' websites.

## Releases and box office by genre

Table 10 shows the relative popularity of different genres at the box office in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2020. The pattern of box office by genre each year is usually determined by a small number of high grossing releases. For the sixth consecutive year, action was the top earning genre with a combined gross of £48.5 million, followed by war with £44 million (99.6% of war's total gross was generated by *1917*), and then animation with £35 million. Drama has the highest number of releases (140) which is consistent with previous years. In 2020, over one third of releases (37%) were dramas and these films generated 13% of the overall box office.

Just six of the top performing titles by genre in 2020 were UK qualifying films, down from 12 in 2019. Two of the films were UK/USA studio titles (*1917* and *Tenet*), with four being UK qualifying independent titles (*Hope Gap*, *Mr Jones*, *The Gentlemen*, and *The Personal History of David Copperfield*).

**Table 10 Films released in the UK and Republic of Ireland by genre, 2020 (ranked by gross box office)**

Genre	Number of releases	% of releases	Gross box office (£ million)	% of total box office	Average number of sites at widest point of release	Top performing title
Action	36	9.4%	48.5	19.7%	167	Bad Boys For Life
War	3	0.8%	44.3	17.9%	296	1917
Animation	19	5.0%	34.8	14.1%	260	Sonic The Hedgehog
Thriller	15	3.9%	32.8	13.3%	192	Tenet
Drama	140	36.7%	31.4	12.7%	83	The Personal History of David Copperfield
Comedy	65	17.1%	24.0	9.7%	108	Jojo Rabbit
Crime	8	2.1%	12.5	5.1%	118	The Gentlemen
Horror	24	6.3%	12.1	4.9%	172	The Invisible Man
Adventure	9	2.4%	3.8	1.6%	152	The Call Of The Wild
Fantasy	2	0.5%	0.9	0.4%	315	Pinocchio
Romance	6	1.6%	0.4	0.2%	30	Hope Gap
Documentary	42	11.0%	0.4	0.2%	19	I Am Greta
Western	2	0.5%	0.3	0.1%	53	True History Of The Kelly Gang
Family	3	0.8%	0.3	0.1%	85	Max Winslow And The House Of Secrets
Biopic	3	0.8%	0.2	0.1%	16	Mr. Jones
Sci fi	4	1.0%	0.1	0.0%	18	Color Out Of Space
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>246.9</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>110</b>	

Source: Comscore, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures/percentages may not sum to totals due to rounding.



## BBFC classification

All films in the UK must carry a classification indicating their suitability for exhibition in premises licensed for cinematic exhibition by local authorities. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) provides age ratings for the majority of films aimed at theatrical release, although local authorities may grant their own classification if they decide to do so.

The symbols used by the BBFC, and their meanings, are given below.

U (Universal)	Suitable for all
PG (Parental Guidance)	General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children
12A	No-one younger than 12 may see a '12A' film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult
15	No-one younger than 15 may see a '15' film in a cinema
18	No-one younger than 18 may see an '18' film in a cinema

## Releases and box office by BBFC classification

Table 11 shows a breakdown of 2020 releases by BBFC film classification. It shows that, as in previous years, more '15' films (43%) were released than any other category, and this year they also had the largest share of box office gross (47%).

**Table 11 All releases in the UK and Republic of Ireland by BBFC film classification, 2020**

	Number of releases	% of all UK releases	Gross box office (£ million)	% of gross box office	Top performing title
U	19	5.0%	21.5	8.7%	Onward
PG	41	10.8%	53.7	21.8%	Sonic The Hedgehog
12A	134	35.2%	42.2	17.1%	Tenet
15	163	42.8%	115.8	46.9%	1917
18	24	6.3%	13.6	5.5%	The Gentlemen
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>246.9</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

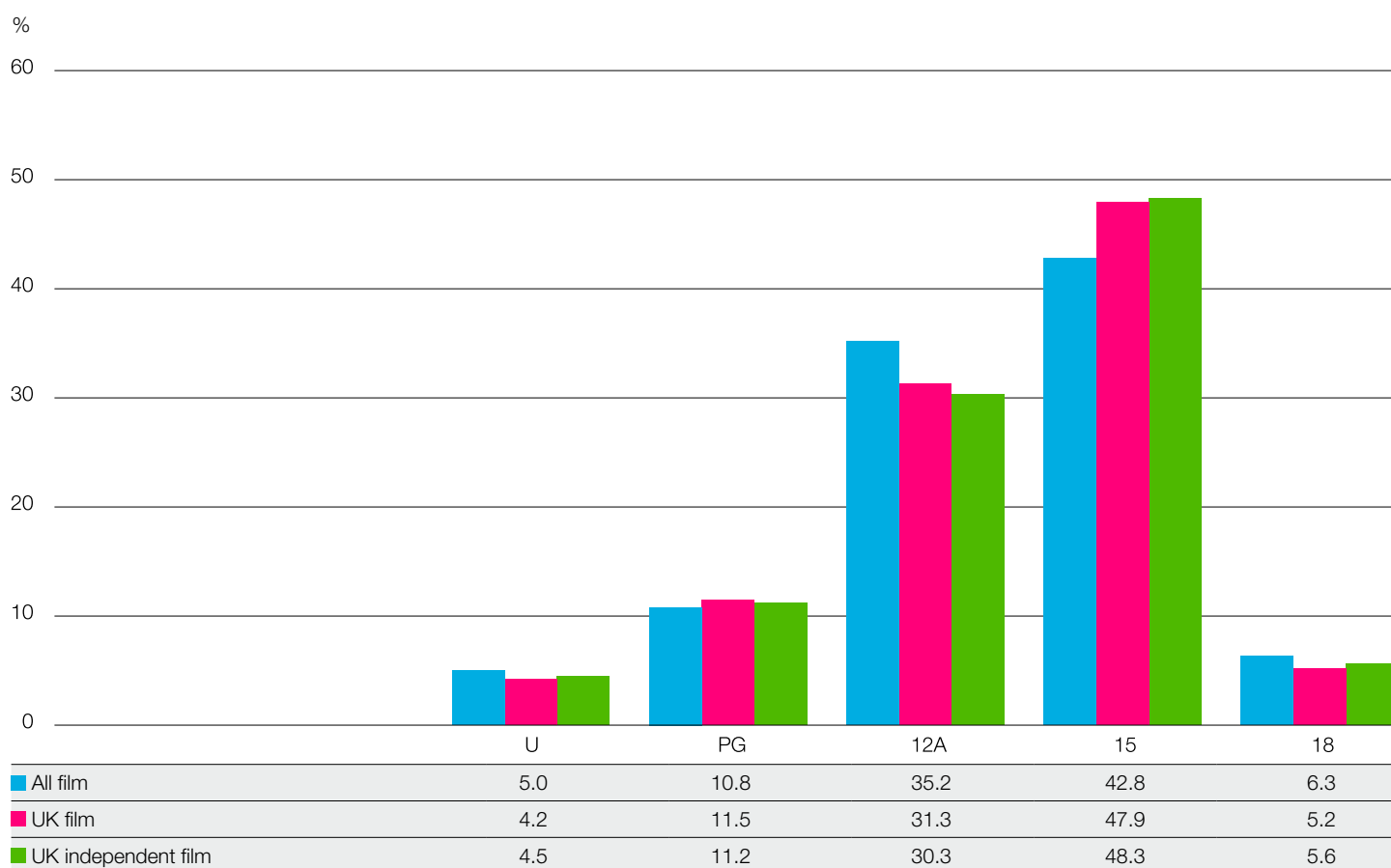
Source: Comscore, BBFC, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

Figures 2 and 3 show a comparison of the share of releases and gross box office by BBFC classification for all films, UK films and UK independent films in 2020. Titles with a '15' classification accounted for the highest proportion of releases in all categories, and the greatest box office share in the 'all films' and 'UK films' categories, aided substantially by top grossing film, the UK/USA 1917, being a '15' certificate and constituting 18% of the overall box office total. *The Gentlemen*, the top grossing UK independent film of the year, made 35% of the total UK independent film grosses, single-handedly making '18' certificate films the highest grossing film classification group for UK independent films.

Of the top ten grossing films of the year, only one was a 'U' (*Onward*), two were 'PG' (*Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *Dolittle*), two were '12A' (*Tenet* and *Jojo Rabbit*), four were '15' (*1917*, *Bad Boys for Life*, *Parasite*, and *Birds of Prey*), and one was '18' (*The Gentlemen*).

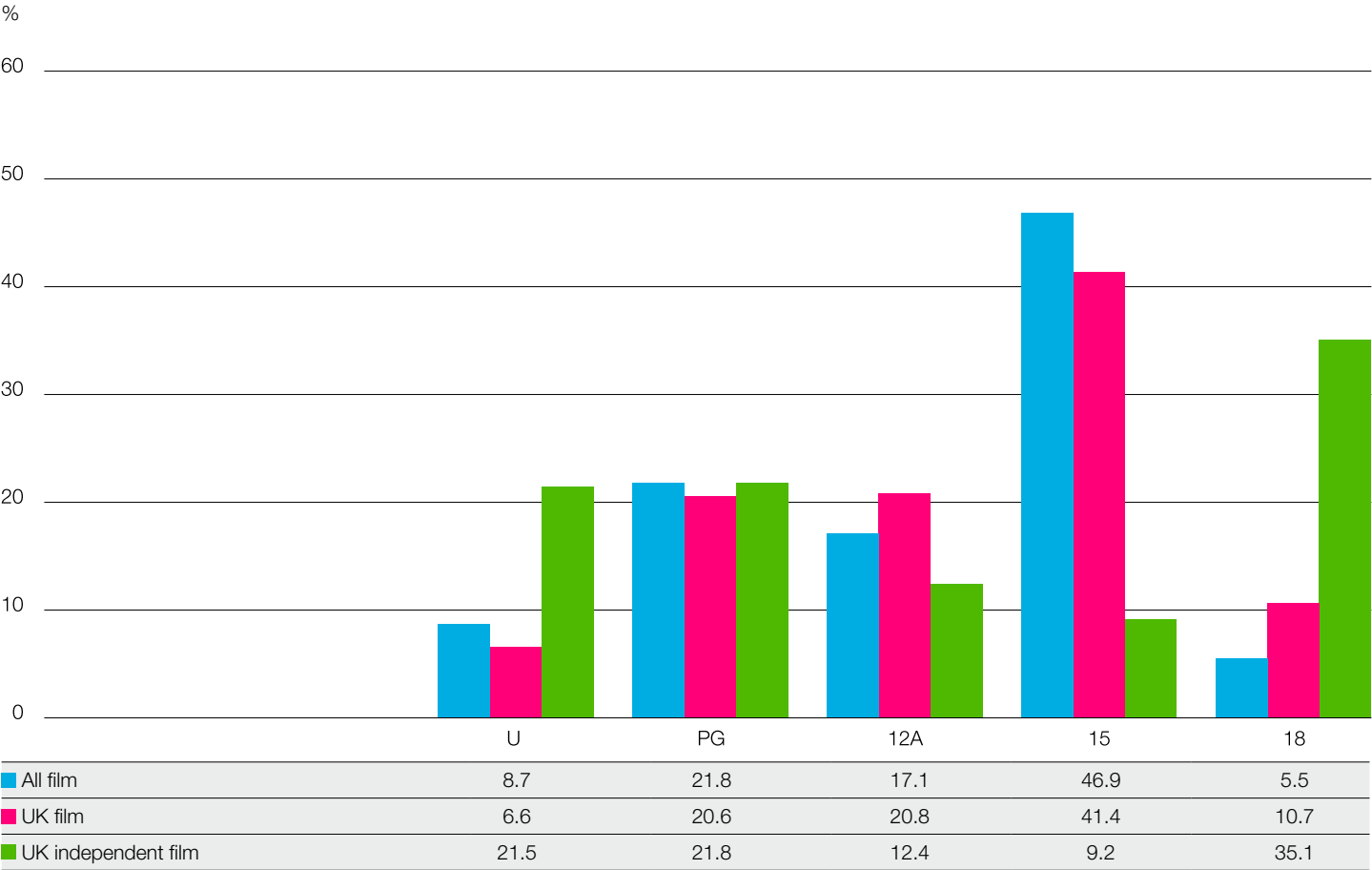
**Figure 2 Percentage of releases by BBFC film classification for all films, UK films and UK independent films, 2020**



Source: Comscore, BBFC, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

Figure 3 Percentage of gross box office by BBFC film classification for all films, UK films and UK independent films, 2020



Source: Comscore, BBFC, BFI RSU analysis  
Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

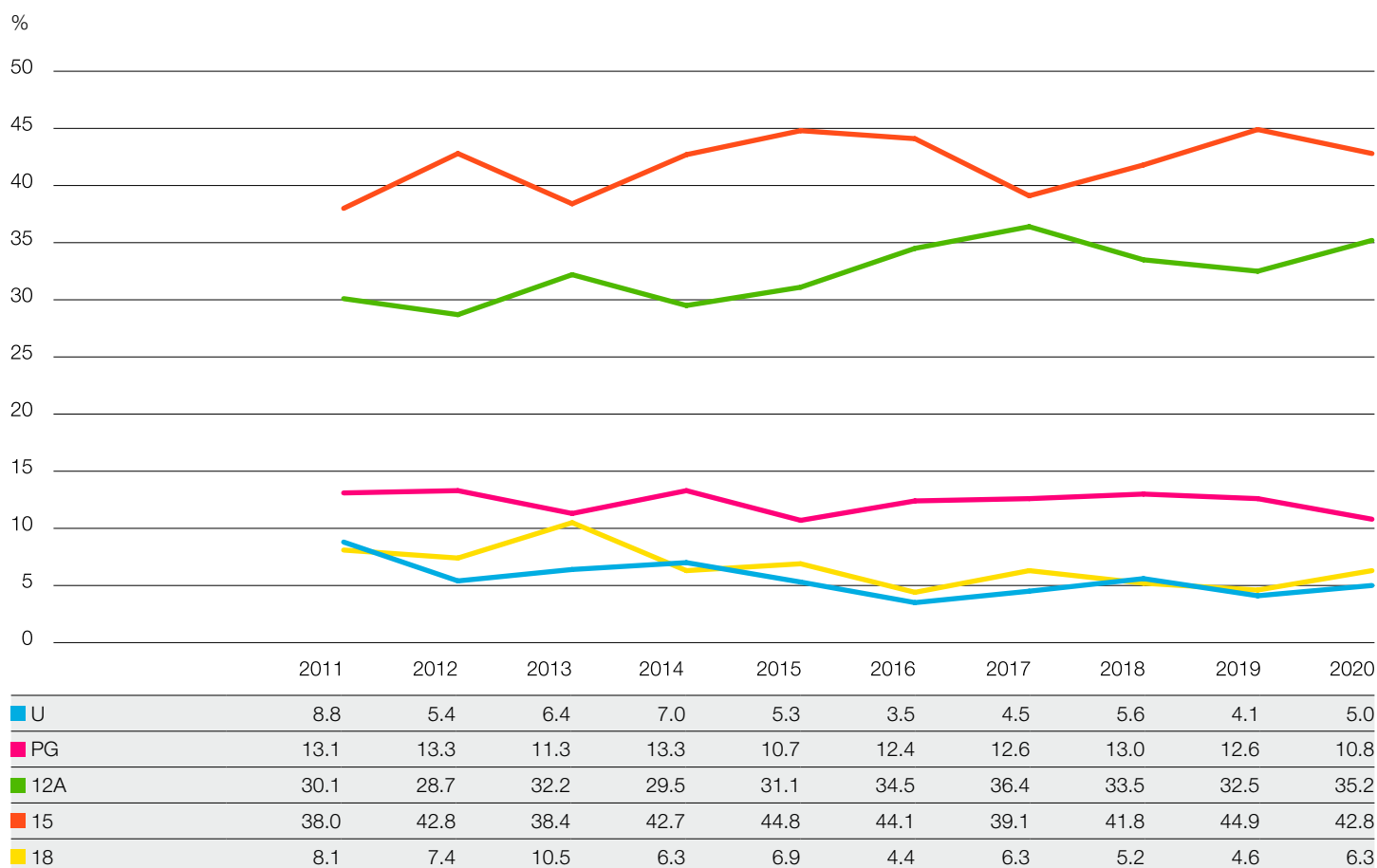


Image: Parasite courtesy of StudioCanal

Figures 4 and 5 look at the pattern of releases by classification between 2011 and 2020, in terms of share of releases and box office. Throughout the period the ranking of classifications by number of film releases has been consistent, with '15' certificates being the most common classification, followed by '12A' and 'PG', and then either 'U' or '18' which frequently see very similar numbers of releases.

While only representing between 29% and 36% of releases over the period, up until 2020 '12A' films consistently grossed the highest amount, with a box office share between 36% and 56%. While two of the highest grossing films of the year were certified '12A' (*Tenet* and *Jojo Rabbit*), the box office share in 2020 was substantially affected by the '15' certificate *1917* being the top grossing film by a large margin. Consequently, '15' certificates had a 43% share of the UK and Republic of Ireland box office (with *1917* making up 18 percentage points of this share).

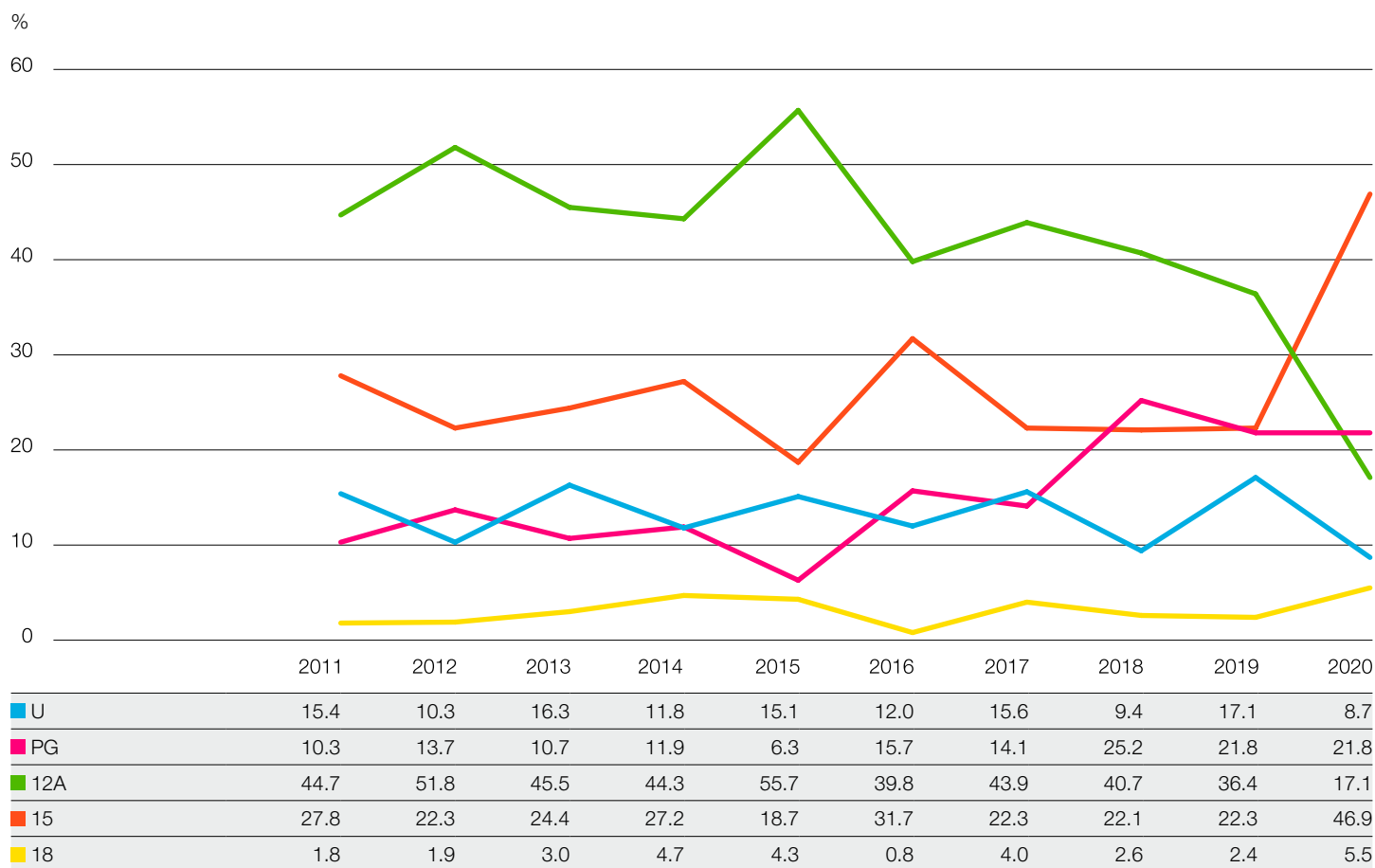
**Figure 4 Percentage of releases in the UK and Republic of Ireland by film classification, 2010-2020**



Source: Comscore, BBFC, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.

**Figure 5 Percentage of gross box office of releases in the UK and Republic of Ireland by film classification, 2011-2020**



Source: Comscore, BBFC, BFI RSU analysis

Note: Figures as at 18 February 2021.





**Research & Statistics Unit**

21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN

**[bfi.org.uk/statistics](http://bfi.org.uk/statistics)**