



**SCREEN SECTOR  
CERTIFICATION**

# CONTENTS

Facts in focus	03
Qualifying as an official UK production	04
Films with final certification, 2012-2021	05
Budget distribution of films with final certification, 2012-2021	07
High-end television (HETV) programme final certifications, 2017-2021	08
Animation television programme final certifications, 2017-2021	11
Children's television programme final certifications, 2017-2021	11
Video games final certifications, 2017-2021	12

---



# FACTS IN FOCUS

**In 2021, 909 projects with a total production value of £4.3 billion were certified as British under the UK's screen sector cultural tests and co-production treaties. The UK spend associated with these projects was £3.2 billion.**

- 
- A total of 396 feature films received final certification as British in 2021, up from 382 in 2020. Of these, 378 were films which passed the cultural test and 18 were official co-productions.
  - The combined production budget of cultural test films with final certification was £1.6 billion (£2.4 billion in 2020); the combined budget of co-productions with final certification was £60 million (£73 million in 2020).
  - Twenty-four cultural test films had budgets of £10 million or over, down from 29 in 2020; 304 cultural test films had budgets of under £2 million, up from 300 in 2020.
  - The median budget for cultural test films was £200,000; the median budget for co-productions was £3.3 million.
  - A total of 116 high-end television (HETV) productions received final certification under the cultural test (118 in 2020), with a combined budget of £2.0 billion (£1.7 billion in 2020).
  - A total of 47 animation productions received final certification under the cultural test (65 in 2020), with a combined budget of £87 million (£72 million in 2020).
  - A total of 107 children's television productions received final certification under the cultural test (89 in 2020), with a combined budget of £73 million (£102.5 million in 2020).
  - A total of 242 video games projects received final certification under the cultural test (262 in 2020), with a combined budget of £400 million (£455 million in 2020).
-

# Screen sector certification

## Qualifying as an official UK production

### Film

To access UK film tax relief or be eligible for other public support, such as National Lottery funding, a film must be certified as British. To qualify as British, a production must pass the cultural test for film (under Schedule 1 of the Films Act 1985) or be certified as an official co-production under one of the UK's bilateral co-production agreements or the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production. The cultural test has been in place since 2007 but was revised in 2014 to bring it in line with the more recent creative sector cultural tests.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for approving the issuing of interim and final certificates on the basis of recommendations made by the BFI Certification Unit. Projects seeking qualification under the cultural test may apply for interim certification either during production or when the project is complete, or may apply directly for final certification once the production has been completed and final documents submitted. Projects seeking qualification as official co-productions must apply for interim approval at least four weeks before principal photography begins and for final certification once the project is complete.

To qualify as British under the cultural test, films have to receive a requisite number of points based on UK or European Economic Area (EEA) cultural elements for content, contribution, hubs and practitioners. (Cultural tests for the creative sector continue to recognise EEA content and personnel following the UK's exit from the European Union.) A wide range of films qualified as British under the cultural test in 2021, including *Belfast*, *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* and *Fast & Furious 9*.

To qualify as British under one of the UK's official co-production agreements, films must be jointly certified by the appropriate authorities in each co-producing country. Each party co-producer is required to meet the criteria of the specific co-production agreement, which includes the creative, technical, artistic and financial input from each co-producer. Once certified, a film counts as a national film in each of the territories and may qualify for public support in that territory.

At the end of 2021, the UK had 12 active bilateral treaties in place, with Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, India, Israel, Jamaica, Morocco, New Zealand, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and South Africa. Official UK co-productions can also be certified under the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production which allows for both bilateral and multilateral film co-productions. (The convention is governed by the Council of Europe, so is unaffected by the UK's exit from the European Union.) Films which received final co-production certification in 2021 included *Boys from County Hell*, *The Father* and *Rose Plays Julie*.

### Television programmes

In 2013, the UK Government introduced tax reliefs for high-end television (HETV) and animation programmes with the aim of boosting production investment in these creative sectors. (The cultural test for HETV programmes was revised in 2015.) Tax relief for children's television production was introduced in April 2015. To qualify as an official British HETV, animation or children's television production, projects must pass either the relevant cultural test (under Part 15A of the Corporation Tax Act 2009, as amended) or be certified as an official co-production under one of the UK's bilateral co-production agreements which allow television co-production. At the end of 2021, these were with Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Israel, New Zealand, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and South Africa.

HETV projects receiving final certification in 2021 included *Anne Boleyn*, *The Crown* (Series 3) and *The Old Guard*. Animation and children's television programmes qualifying as officially British in the year included *The Adventures of Paddington* (Series 1), *Mallory Towers* (Series 1) and *Moon and Me* (Series 1).

### Video games

In 2014, the UK Government extended creative sector tax reliefs to include video games development. To qualify as officially British, a video game must pass the relevant cultural test (under Schedules 17 and 18 of the Finance Act 2013). Official co-production treaties do not apply to the video games sector.

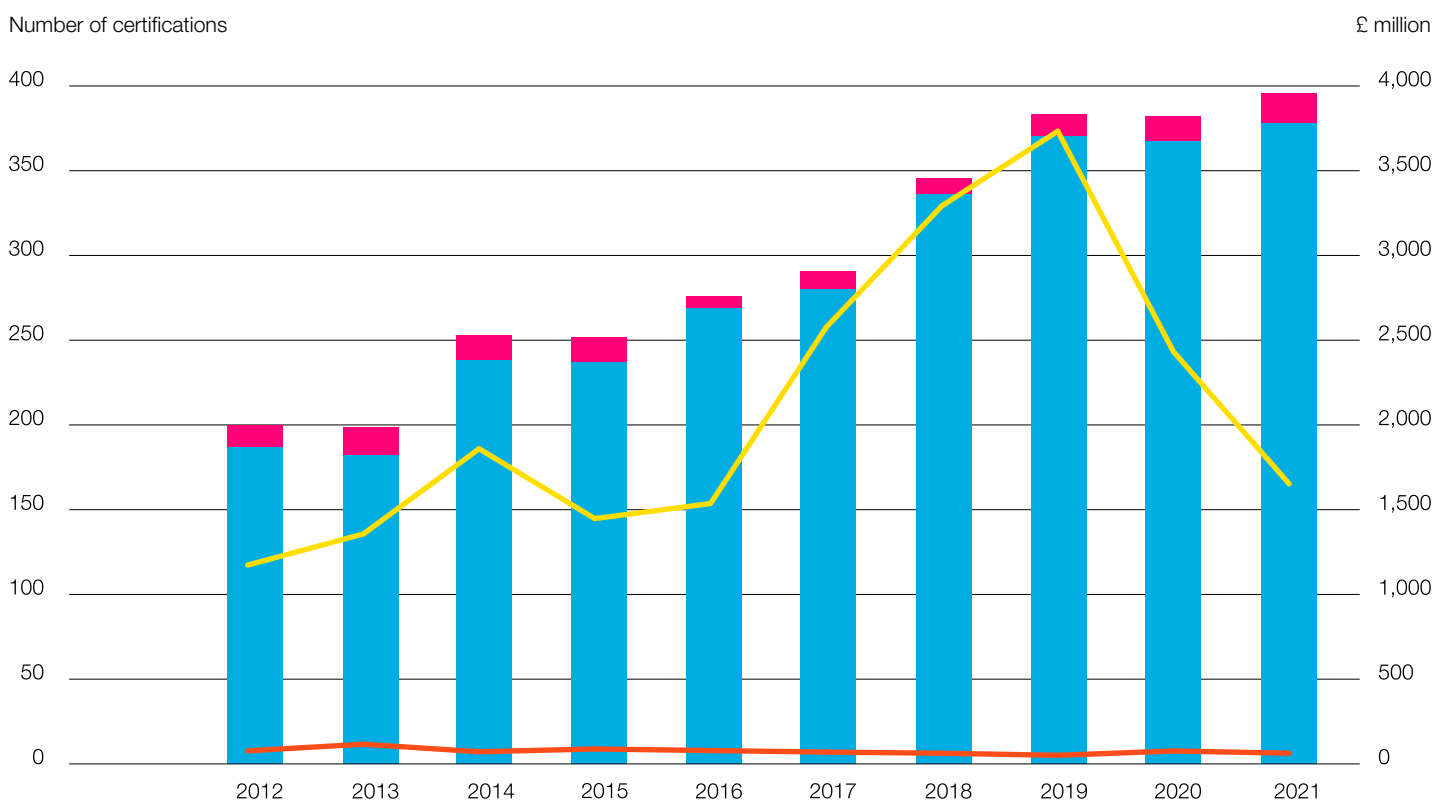
Video games awarded final certification in 2021 included *Fall Guys*, *Forza Horizon 4* and *Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair*.

# Films with final certification, 2012-2021

As Figure 1 shows, while there was an upward trend in the numbers of feature films receiving final certification as British between 2012 and 2021, the total budget associated with these films was more variable. In 2021, 396 films received final certification, up from 382 in 2020, and the highest figure since our records began. The aggregate production budget for these films was £1.7 billion, down from £2.5 billion in 2020, and the lowest figure since 2016.

Cultural test films accounted for the majority of certifications throughout the period. In 2021, these films accounted for 95% of total certifications and 96.5% of the total budget.

**Figure 1 Number and total budget of films with final certification, 2012-2021**



## Number of final certifications

Co-production	13	17	15	15	7	11	10	13	15	18
Cultural test	187	182	238	237	269	280	336	370	367	378
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>396</b>

## Total budget (£ million)

Co-production	73.5	112.7	68.2	84.6	75.4	66.2	59.4	47.2	72.7	59.8
Cultural test	1,169.7	1,353.3	1,855.9	1,443.9	1,532.7	2,573.4	3,289.7	3,729.6	2,428.9	1,648.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,243.2</b>	<b>1,466.0</b>	<b>1,924.2</b>	<b>1,528.5</b>	<b>1,608.1</b>	<b>2,639.5</b>	<b>3,349.1</b>	<b>3,776.8</b>	<b>2,501.6</b>	<b>1,708.7</b>

Source: DCMS, BFI

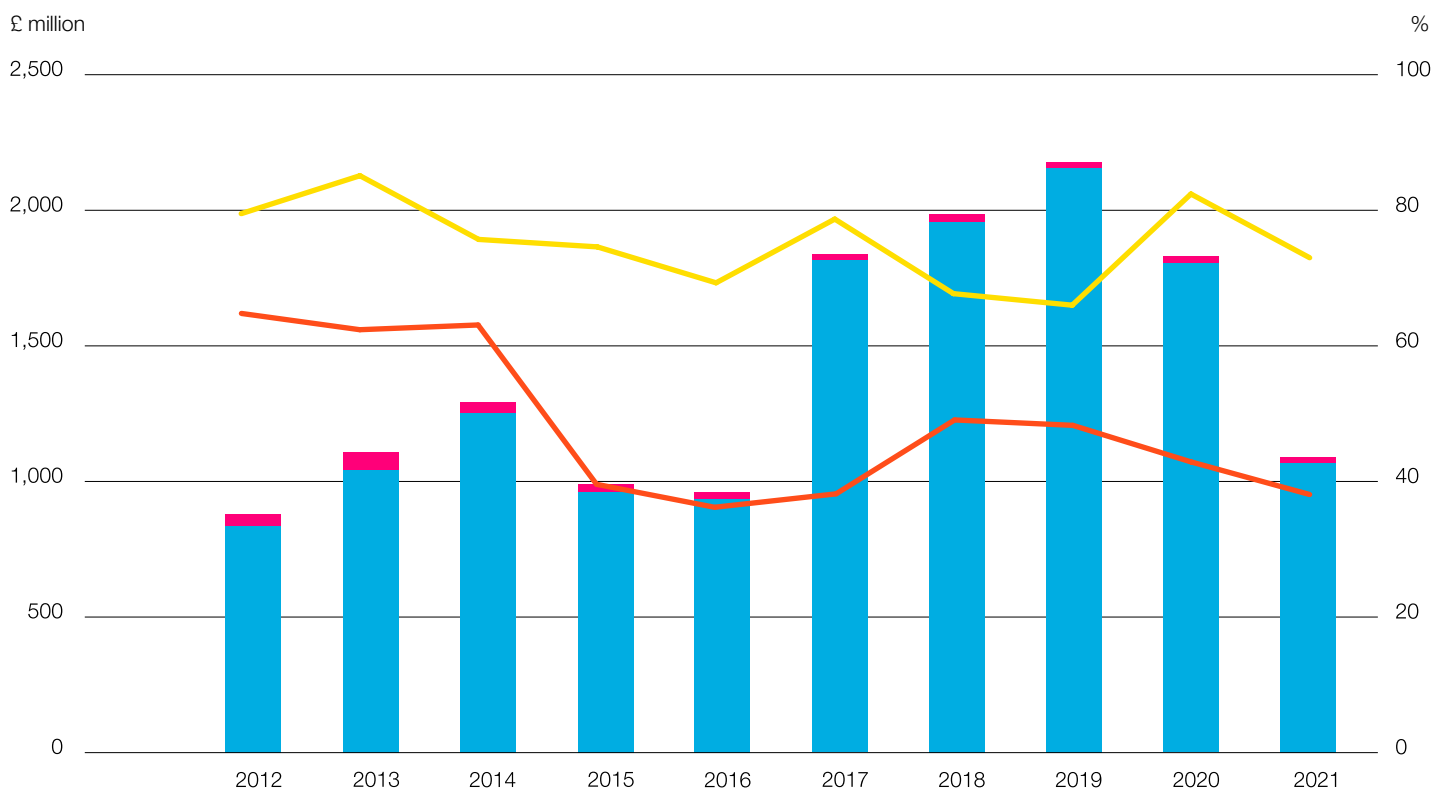
Notes:

Total budget is the sum of production activity in the UK and production activity outside the UK for cultural test films and total investment for co-productions.

Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.

**Figure 2 UK spend of films with final certification and UK spend as % of total budget, 2012-2021**



**UK spend (£ million)**

Co-production	44.3	65.3	40.0	29.7	23.9	22.2	26.4	20.6	27.8	20.0
Cultural test	834.2	1,041.2	1,252.8	959.0	936.3	1,813.6	1,957.0	2,156.0	1,802.7	1,067.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>878.5</b>	<b>1,106.5</b>	<b>1,292.8</b>	<b>988.7</b>	<b>960.2</b>	<b>1,835.8</b>	<b>1,983.4</b>	<b>2,176.6</b>	<b>1,830.5</b>	<b>1,087.8</b>

**UK spend as % of total production budget**

Co-production	60.3	57.9	58.6	35.1	31.7	33.6	44.5	43.7	38.3	33.5
Cultural test	71.3	76.9	67.5	66.4	61.1	70.5	59.5	57.8	74.2	64.8

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

See notes to Figure 1.

'UK spend' is the 'value of the production activities in the UK' for cultural test films and 'UK expenditure' for co-productions (bilateral and European Convention). UK spend for co-productions may include some expenditure on UK goods and services which took place outside the UK.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.

The UK spend associated with films receiving final certification in 2021, at £1.1 billion, was lower than in 2020 (£1.8 billion) and 2019 (£2.2 billion). As Figure 2 shows, however, the level of UK spend associated with finally certified films has been variable over time. Between 2012 and 2021, the UK spend of cultural test films as a share of total budget ranged from 58% (2019) to 77% (2013), and for co-productions it ranged from 32% (2016) to 60% (2012). While cultural test films accounted for the majority of overall UK spend throughout the period, their share has slowly increased. Cultural test films were responsible for 98% of the UK production value associated with final certifications in 2021 compared with 95% in 2012.

# Budget distribution of films with final certification, 2012-2021

Table 1 shows the median budgets of films receiving final certification between 2012 and 2021. At the start of the period, the median budget for cultural test films was £400,000 which dropped, as the numbers of these films

increased, to £300,000. In 2020 and 2021, however, the median budget was lower at £100,000 and £200,000 respectively. This is most likely due to a downturn in the number of higher budget projects being finally certified during the two years most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The median budget for co-productions has been more varied over the period, peaking in 2017 at £5.7 million and with a low of £2.4 million in 2019. This fluctuation is a result of the relatively small volume of co-production activity, as with low numbers the median is more susceptible to the effects of individual budgets.

**Table 1 Median budgets of films with final certification, 2012-2021**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cultural test (£ million)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2
Co-production (£ million)	2.8	3.7	4.0	3.8	4.8	5.7	4.1	2.4	2.8	3.3

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

The median is the middle value, i.e. there are equal numbers of productions above and below the median.

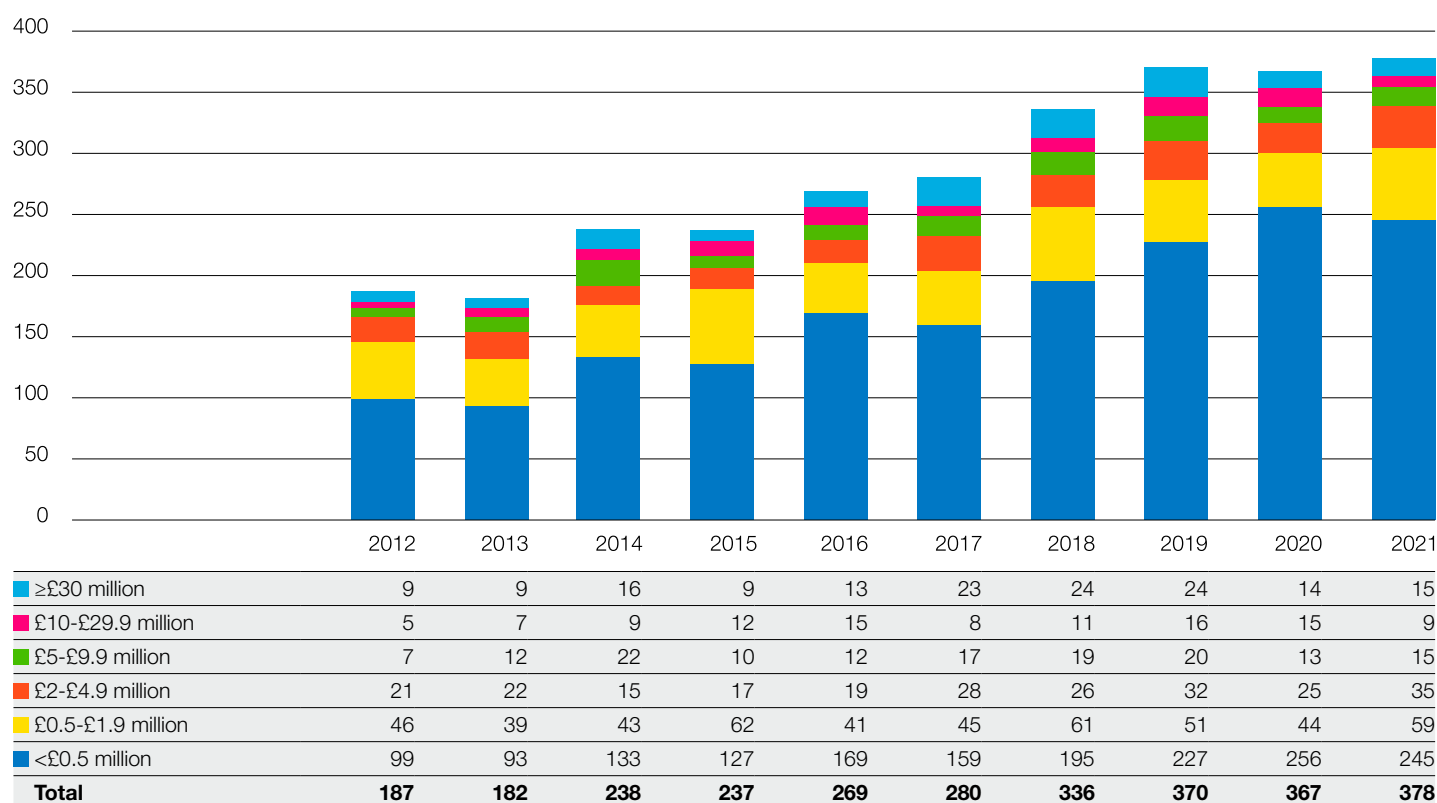
See notes to Figure 1.

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of cultural test films receiving final certification by budget band between 2012 and 2021. While the annual numbers of certifications within each budget category have fluctuated, most recently as a result of the pandemic, there was an overall upward trend across all budget bands over the period. The greatest increase was seen in final certifications for films with budgets of less than £500,000 which rose from 99 in 2012 to 245 in 2021.

As the annual numbers of film productions certified under the UK's co-production treaties during the period were low, figures are not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.

**Figure 3 Films with final cultural test certification by budget band, 2012-2021**

Number of certifications



Source: DCMS, BFI

Table 2 shows the distribution of budgets for all films certified under the cultural test between 2012 and 2021. The 5.5% of films with budgets of £30 million or over accounted for 79% of the aggregate budget, while the 77% of films with budgets of under £2 million accounted for only 3.5% of the aggregate budget.

**Table 2 Films with final cultural test certification, distribution by budget band, 2012-2021**

Budget band	Number	% number	Total budget (£ million)	% budget
≥£30 million	156	5.5	16,700.3	79.4
£10-£29.9 million	107	3.8	1,747.4	8.3
£5-£9.9 million	147	5.2	1,071.3	5.1
£2-£4.9 million	240	8.4	780.4	3.7
£0.5-£1.9 million	491	17.3	494.9	2.4
<£0.5 million	1,703	59.9	231.8	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,844</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>21,026.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: DCMS, BFI

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

Table 3 shows that the budgets for co-productions with final certifications between 2012 and 2021 were more evenly distributed than for cultural test films. The table also highlights the small proportion of films with budgets of less than £500,000 (8%) compared with cultural test films (60%).

**Table 3 Films with final co-production certification, distribution by budget band, 2012-2021**

Budget band	Number	% number	Total budget (£ million)	% budget
≥£30 million	18	13.4	308.8	42.9
£10-£29.9 million	30	22.4	213.8	29.7
£5-£9.9 million	47	35.1	160.2	22.3
£2-£4.9 million	28	20.9	34.0	4.7
£0.5-£1.9 million	11	8.2	2.8	0.4
<£0.5 million				
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>719.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

As the number of higher budget co-productions certified during the period were low, figures have been aggregated to maintain confidentiality.

Percentages may not sum to totals due to rounding.

## High-end television (HETV) programme final certifications, 2017-2021

Figure 4 shows the number and overall budget of HETV productions receiving final certification as British under the cultural test between 2017 and 2021. Certifications reached a record high of 135 in 2019 but were lower in the two years most impacted by pandemic restrictions: 118 in 2020 and 116 in 2021. However, the production value associated with these projects reached a high in 2021 with a total budget of just over £2 billion (up from £1.7 billion in 2020 and £1.8 billion in 2019). The increase in total budget partly reflects the growing investment made by streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime in single feature-length productions which are certified as HETV projects rather than feature films for the purposes of UK tax relief.

As the annual numbers of HETV productions certified under the UK's co-production treaties were low over the period, figures are not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.



Figure 4 Number and total budget of HETV productions with final cultural test certifications, 2017-2021

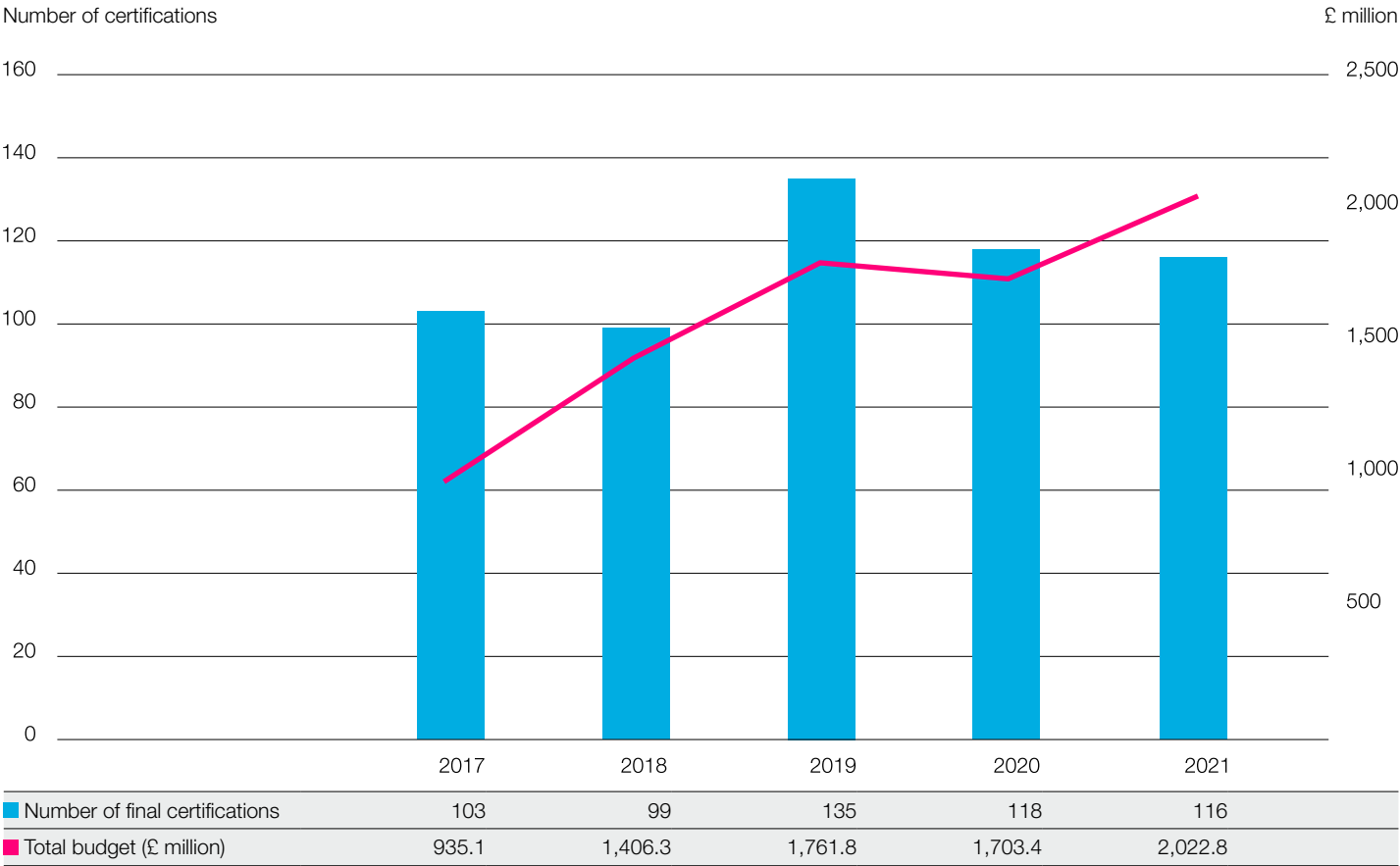
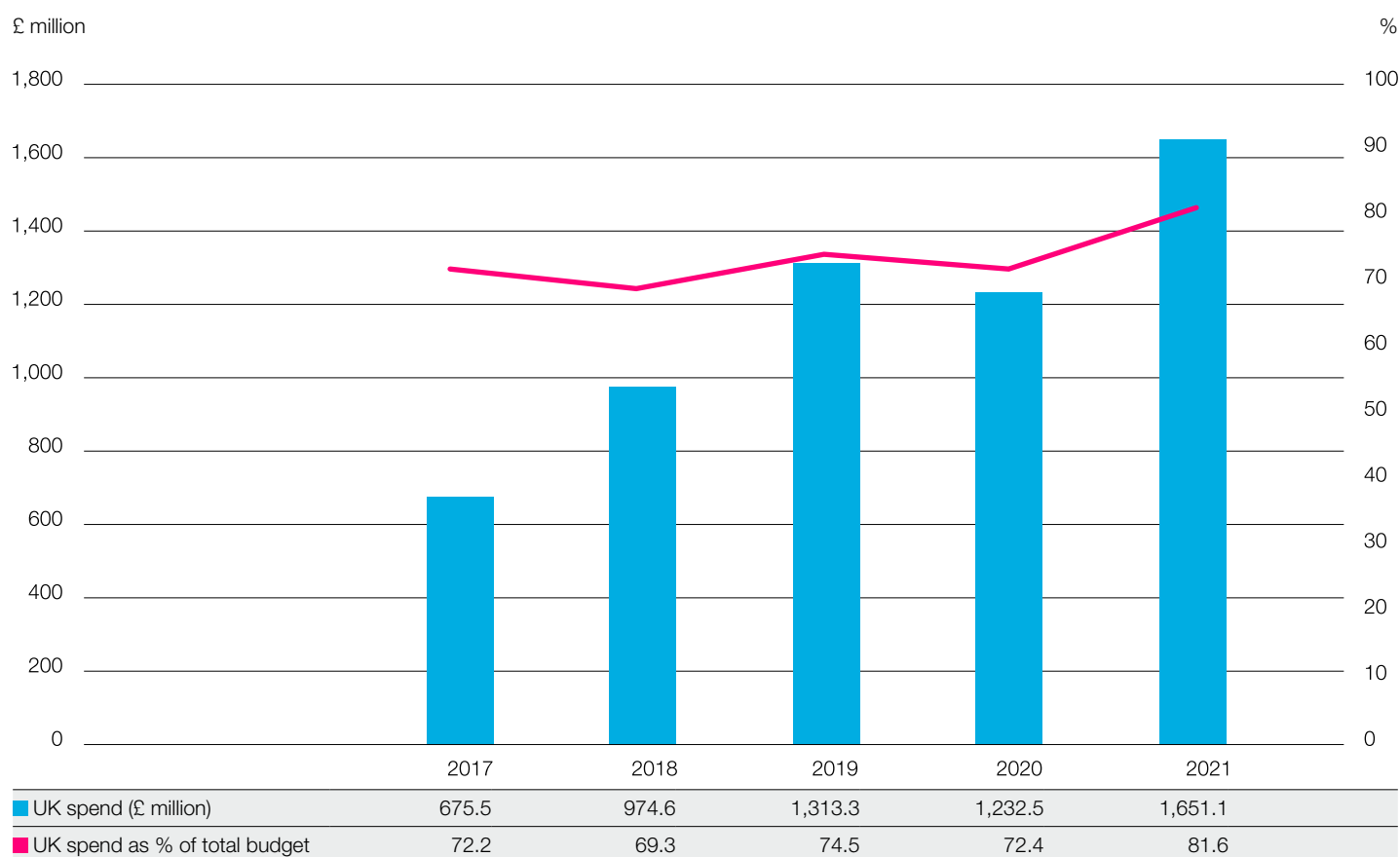


Image: Anne Boleyn Parisa Taghizadeh/Fable Pictures Ltd/The Falen Falcon Ltd/Sony Pictures Inc

There was an overall upward trend in the UK production value associated with HETV projects certified under the cultural test between 2017 and 2021 (Figure 5). The UK spend of finally certified projects increased from £675.5 million in 2017 to a record £1.65 billion in 2021. As a percentage of total budget, UK spend was generally between 70% and 75% but was as high as 82% in 2021.

**Figure 5 UK spend of HETV productions with final cultural test certifications and UK spend as % of total budget, 2017-2021**



Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

A production can be a single programme or a television series.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.

Table 4 shows the increase in the median budget per minute of HETV productions receiving final certification under the cultural test between 2017 and 2021. For the first few years of the period (2017-2019), the median budget per minute ranged between £22,000 and £26,000. However, in 2020 the cost per minute was over £30,000 and in 2021 it was almost £35,000.

**Table 4 Median budgets of HETV productions with final cultural test certification, 2017-2021**

Year	Median budget per minute (£)
2017	22,764
2018	25,721
2019	24,808
2020	30,563
2021	34,713

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

The median is the middle value, i.e. there are equal numbers of productions above and below the median.

A production can be a single programme or a television series.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.

## Animation television programme final certifications, 2017-2021

As Table 5 shows, 47 animation television productions received final certification as British under the cultural test in 2021, down from 65 in 2020, and the second lowest number of the period, 2017-2021. The total budget for animations certified under the cultural test in 2021 was £75 million (down from £111 million in 2020), while the associated UK production value decreased from

£81 million in 2020 to £66 million. In 2021, the UK spend as a percentage of the total production budget was 87%, the highest share of the period.

As the annual numbers of animation television productions receiving final certification under the UK's co-production treaties were low throughout the period, figures are not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.

The median budget per minute for animation television projects certified under the cultural test has averaged around £7,000 over the period. In 2021, the median cost per minute was £6,462.

**Table 5 Animation television productions with final cultural test certifications, 2017-2021**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number	39	57	59	65	47
Total budget (£ million)	50.2	76.0	122.6	111.4	75.8
UK spend (£ million)	42.8	52.5	86.7	80.6	65.9
UK spend as % of total budget	85.4	69.1	70.7	72.4	86.9
Median budget per minute (£)	3,836	7,426	7,037	7,556	6,462

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

The median is the middle value, i.e. there are equal numbers of productions above and below the median.

A production can be a single programme or a television series.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook

## Children's television programme final certifications, 2017-2021

In 2021, 107 children's television projects received final certification as British under the cultural test, up from 89 in 2020, and the highest number since tax relief for this production category was introduced in 2015. However, at £73 million, the aggregate budget of these projects and their associated UK spend (£54 million) were the lowest since 2017 (Table 6). UK spend as a percentage of total budget has typically been higher for children's television projects than the other production categories in this

analysis, generally ranging from 93% to 99%. In 2021, however, this share was as low as 74% but this was due to a substantial use of foreign locations and facilities by a small number of high budget projects.

As the annual numbers of children's television projects certified under the UK's co-production treaties in the period were low, figures are not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.

The median budget per minute for children's television projects certified under the cultural test has averaged around £2,100. In 2021, the median cost per minute was £1,960.

**Table 6 Children's television productions with final cultural test certifications, 2016-2020**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number	65	87	82	89	107
Total budget (£ million)	49.9	89.1	84.9	102.5	72.9
UK spend (£ million)	46.2	86.2	83.9	101.2	54.1
UK spend as % of total budget	92.6	96.8	98.9	98.8	74.2
Median budget per minute (£)	1,793	2,028	2,336	2,532	1,960

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

The median is the middle value, i.e. there are equal numbers of productions above and below the median.

A production can be a single programme or a television series.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.

## Video games final certifications, 2017-2021

A total of 242 video games received final certification as British in 2021, compared with 262 in 2020 (Table 7). The aggregate budget for these projects was £400 million, down from £455 million in 2020, and the associated UK production value was £337 million, down from £419 million in 2020. While the value of finally

certified video games developments in both 2020 and 2021 was lower than the record achieved in 2019 (which was due to a small number of very high budget international projects receiving certification in that year), both years represent a significant increase on 2017 and 2018. The UK spend as a percentage of total budget for qualifying video games projects in 2021 was 84%, down from 92% in 2020.

The median budget for video games with final certification in 2021 was just under £207,000.

**Table 7 Video games with final certification, 2017-2021**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number	212	195	248	262	242
Total budget (£ million)	277.5	263.9	1,206.4	454.6	400.1
UK spend (£ million)	248.8	201.9	623.8	418.7	337.0
UK spend as % of total budget	89.7	76.5	51.7	92.1	84.2
Median budget (£)	142,425	180,490	149,666	97,784	206,959

Source: DCMS, BFI

Notes:

The median is the middle value, i.e. there are equal numbers of video game projects above and below the median.

Video games can only qualify as British for the purpose of the relief through the cultural test.

Data updated since publication of the 2021 Statistical Yearbook.





**Research & Statistics Unit**

21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN

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