

Opening our eyes

How film contributes to the culture of the UK

A report for the BFI by Northern Alliance and Ipsos MediaCT

July 2011

What's inside:

How and where we watch films

The sorts of films we watch

What films do

The cultural contribution
of individual films



What's inside:



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Foreword

Film is arguably the most popular art form today and the attention around its awards, stories and stars gives it a profile greater than its industrial size. Nevertheless, it is worth a respectable £4.5 billion per year to the British economy and generated an overseas trade surplus of more than £900 million in 2009.

From the point of view of public policy, however, it is the cultural contribution of film that matters most. Under European Union competition law, government financial support is permitted primarily so that 'national and regional cultures and creative potential are expressed.'¹ As a consequence British films which access film tax relief must pass a Cultural Test covering cultural content, cultural contribution, cultural hubs and cultural practitioners. Selective funding, for example Lottery funding, for film production and distribution must also be directed to cultural purposes.

How do we capture the cultural contribution of film? It is embedded in the UK's way of life and not easily reducible to a single number, financial or otherwise. Nevertheless, understanding, appreciating and assessing cultural contribution is essential for forward-looking public policy.

This report describes how we conducted a UK-wide survey of public attitudes to, and appreciation of, film – both British and international – viewed in the UK on any platform, from cinema, to television, to digital.

I think you will agree the results are fascinating. They describe how film moves and inspires the UK public, how it excites the emotions and the intellect, how it influences the shape of our lives. People are not fussy whether a film is a blockbuster, a British comedy or a foreign language hit. Whether it is *Avatar*, *Alfie* or *Amélie*, if a film is well made, tells a meaningful story and engages the feelings, it is celebrated by the public.

Many survey respondents spoke of films 'opening their eyes' to issues, lives and places they hadn't known before. This report should do the same for any who may doubt that film makes a vital contribution to the culture of the UK.

T. S. Eliot observed: 'To understand the culture is to understand the people.'² The findings presented here – many expressed in people's own words – begin to describe the ways in which film helps us understand our society, our history, our place in the world, our humanity and, ultimately, ourselves.

Amanda Nevill
Director, BFI



1 European Commission 2001, *Communication on Certain Legal Aspects Relating to Cinematographic and Other Audiovisual Works*, paragraph 2.

2 Eliot, T. S. 1948, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, page 31, cited in Richard Howells 2003, *Visual Culture*, Cambridge, Polity Press, page 116.

Key points

Watching films is one of the UK's most popular leisure activities. Interest in film correlates with a higher than average interest in other arts and entertainments and with an active interest in the world. When asked about its artistic value, people place film on a par with literature and classical music.

Films, including mainstream popular films, carry powerful personal and political messages for people and many consider films seen in childhood or young adulthood as influential on their lives.

Film can give new insights into other cultures and other ways of life. Two-thirds of people responding to the survey had seen films which had that effect.

Film is valued highly relative to other activities; people were significantly more interested in film than in pubs and clubs or watching or playing sport, and more than twice as many people are interested in films than religion.

People see value and meaning in all kinds of films. The films most often mentioned by people in our survey as 'significant', and those they consider represent the UK best, often do not appear in box-office, critical or industry rankings. This points to the many more personal ways of valuing film, which need to be considered alongside 'critically-approved' lists and those compiled as a result of 'film enthusiast' nomination for example on IMDb.

Three-quarters of the survey respondents thought that films can be a good way of making people think about difficult or sensitive issues, usually by initially triggering a strong emotional reaction. A clear majority believe films are a great way of learning about people from different backgrounds.

The potential for film to make a cultural contribution is further increased by the growth of digital access (broadband in the home and mobile) which is expanding the means and ways by which films are viewed.

There is strong public support for British filmmaking and people have a high regard for the quality of British films, higher than Hollywood films. People like the humanity, honesty and humour of British films.

Respondents were interested in the international success of British films and a clear majority agreed with National Lottery support for British filmmaking.

Film has the capacity to make a significant contribution to current debates on national identity (British, English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish identity in particular).

UK-wide the public would like to see more British films telling stories situated outside London and the South of England, and more films featuring disabled people. This is the view of the population as a whole, not just disabled people.

People from minority ethnic groups have above-average involvement and interest in film. Film is a source of role models, especially for younger people and members of minority ethnic groups.

People recognise films dating back many decades, often choosing films released many years ago as significant for them or for UK society.



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Opening our eyes
Executive summary

Executive SUMM

Below:
The King's Speech.
Courtesy The Weinstein Company

mary

This is a report on the UK public's views on the cultural contribution of film. It was commissioned following the UK Film Council/BFI study *Stories We Tell Ourselves: the cultural impact of UK film (1946–2006)* and involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research, the main elements of which were:

- Paired depth interviews to explore themes and language.
- An online survey of 2,036 respondents, representative of the UK population aged 15 to 74 years.
- Seven case studies featuring films named by respondents as having a significant effect on UK society or attitudes.
- Supplementary telephone interviews exploring the themes of Britishness and artistic value.

Opening our eyes looks at how films are consumed and the factors which affect people's viewing choices. It also covers the relationships audiences report between film and other activities. It goes on to explore the sorts of effects which film has upon people, their sense of identity and relationship with the world. Finally it looks at the various effects which individual films have had on those surveyed and reaches a number of conclusions.

The principal findings are as follows:

What people told us – how and where we watch films

How much film viewing do we do?

- From the survey responses we estimate a UK total of over five billion film viewing occasions per year across all platforms.

Where do we watch films?

- The home is the most frequent location for film viewing. 86% watch a film on television at least once a month and 63% watch a film on DVD or Blu-ray at least once a month.
- Three in 10 people watch a film in the cinema at least once a month.
- Online and mobile viewing is significant with 23% watching a film downloaded or streamed from the Internet at least once a month.
- 11% reported watching a film on a mobile device at least monthly.

- Older people (55+) are significantly less likely to watch films on newer platforms – including online, download, mobile and even DVD and Blu-ray.
- People from minority ethnic groups tend to be more avid consumers of film at the cinema and on digital platforms.

How interested are we in films compared with other activities?

- People are strongly interested in film. It is one of the most popular entertainment and leisure interests.
- Interest in film correlates with a stronger than average interest in other arts, forms of entertainment and with an active interest in the world.

What people told us – the sorts of films we watch

What films do we like watching?

- Blockbusters are the most often watched type of film.
- Fewer people over age 55 prefer big budget, effects-driven films.
- Comedy, drama, action/adventure and suspense/thrillers are the most popular genres.
- There are significant differences in film preferences by ethnic group.

How do we decide what to watch?

- Although two-thirds of people say that on the whole they watch films purely for entertainment, three-quarters say that films can be a good way of making people think about difficult or sensitive issues.
- Story, genre and cast are the most important factors when deciding which films to watch.
- Talking to family and friends is the most common way of communicating information about films.
- Print media, radio and television are important, with online film reviews also being used by many.
- Respondents from minority ethnic groups were more active in seeking out information about films.

What people told us – what we think films do

What effects do films have on us?

- People most commonly associate film with entertainment and emotional reactions – but half think film has artistic value and over a third think film is educational.
- 85% of respondents had seen a film recently that had provoked them to do something – even if only to talk about it to friends and family.
- Two-thirds of people had seen a film they found educational or which gave them an insight into other cultures.
- Substantial minorities have followed up a film by taking action such as joining a club, writing a letter or otherwise becoming involved.

What do we see as the value of film?

- People value individual films for their emotional impact.
- Mainstream films that prioritise entertainment can have profound effects on people.
- A substantial minority of people still consider films they saw in childhood or young adulthood to be powerful and influential.

Do we appreciate the aesthetic aspects of films?

- Half our respondents thought that film in general has artistic value.
- Further qualitative research indicated strong support for the view that films can be works of art.
- Music, design and cinematography are all recognised as being important parts of a film's quality and effect.
- For some people the aesthetic quality of a film is important in making the choice to view.

Do films contribute to our identity, sense of community and place in the world?

- There is strong support for British film and filmmaking.
- Most people agree that British film is an important part of British culture.
- Over half of people feel there are too few British films shown.
- Seven out of 10 people are interested in the international success of British films and British stars.
- The technical and acting quality of British films is held in high regard.

Most people agree that British film is an important part of British culture. There is strong support for British film and filmmaking.

Do British films reflect British life?

- Two-thirds think that British films should be true to life.
- Significant numbers of people think there are too few films featuring disabled people, and too many about rich and privileged people living in London and the home counties.

Do films help define our British identity?

- People value British film for showing a 'warts and all' picture of Britain and its constituent nations.
- People think that British films tend to be realistic, honest and display a dark, unique sense of humour.
- Cast and story are the most important factors in defining whether a film is perceived as genuinely British.
- Big budgets and elaborate special effects can make films seem less British.
- In considering what makes a film British, many people instinctively make comparisons between British films and those from the USA.

Do films give particular expression to the nations and regions of the UK?

- People want to see films that are representative of all the Nations and Regions of the UK.
- There is a stronger sense of national (especially Scottish, Welsh and Irish) than regional identity in film, though respondents in the North, North West and East Midlands regions of England in particular feel there are too few British films set where they live.
- Significant numbers of respondents from across the UK believe there should be more films set outside London and the South of England.

Do films help us build our individual identity?

- Film has the ability to contribute to people's sense of their personal identity.
- Film is a source of role models, especially for younger people and members of minority ethnic groups.

The cultural contribution of individual films

Which films do we recognise?

- The ubiquitous availability of films allows their effects on individuals to build over time.
- Survey respondents had a high level of recognition of key films going back over 50 years.
- Many films are recognised by far more people than the number who have actually seen them.

Contesting canons

- The list of films named as significant by our respondents differs significantly from critical and expert film rankings.
- The public see serious and life-changing issues in blockbuster films as well as in specialised films (documentary, art house, world cinema).
- The long-term popularity and appeal of individual films can vary substantially from their initial box office performance.

What makes us value films?

- People value individual films for their emotional impact, the stories they tell and the message or information they convey.
- Often people value a film for carrying both an emotional and educational punch.
- Foreign language films appear to be valued for the same kinds of reasons as mainstream films in English.

How do individual films affect us?

- Respondents favoured 'serious' films when asked what has had an effect on them while preferring less challenging material for regular viewing.
- People are adept at appreciating and analysing issues presented even as subtext of films including racism, colonialism, genocide, the horrors of war, poverty, injustice and environmental destruction.
- Personal themes and ideals such as self-realisation, survival against the odds, 'showing humanity' and overcoming disability and illness are recognised and valued.
- There is evidence that individuals have their attitudes, and even long-term behaviour, changed as a result of encountering specific films.
- A number of films gave respondents 'metaphysical' experiences.

Background

In 2008, the UK Film Council in partnership with the BFI commissioned a study of the cultural impact of UK films from 1946–2006. Published as *Stories we tell ourselves*,³ this report reviewed half a century of British film and found that:

- Cultural impact occurs via censorship and notoriety, quotations in other media, zeitgeist moments and cumulatively changed perceptions.
- Films regarded by cultural commentators as culturally significant tend to challenge or satirise the status quo, while randomly selected UK films tend to be more reflective of the cultural assumptions of the day.
- Under-represented diverse communities, Nations and Regions of the UK now have better representation on screen.
- Web-based indicators such as IMDb ratings, messages and numbers of YouTube clips may serve as proxy measures of cultural impact.
- New digital media have broadened the possibilities of cultural impact, making appreciation more democratic and disrupting the hierarchical modes of distribution of the past.

Beginning in November 2009 with a seminar in London for the UK academic community, the study was presented to and debated with the public and film communities in Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh and York. It was also discussed at the 2010 San Sebastián Film Festival and at the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education in Brussels.

Participants were positive about the report and enthusiastic in discussing the ways in which the cultural value or impact of film is produced and communicated. But two persistent questions were: 'what about films from other countries?' and 'what do the people think?'⁴ *Stories we tell ourselves* was deliberately an 'expert' view. Drawing on documentary evidence, cultural theory and film scholarship, it left unspoken the views of the British people, the ultimate funders and beneficiaries of UK film policy. What do the people think?

To find out, the UK Film Council and the BFI⁵ commissioned the present piece of research in early 2011, a survey of the attitudes and opinions of the UK public on a range of questions related to the cultural contribution of film in the UK. By cultural contribution we mean both cultural impact in the sense used in *Stories we tell ourselves* (contributing to social and/or cultural change) and cultural value in the sense of providing meaning, explanation and identity to society, social groups and individual citizens. The purpose was to find out how highly people value film – whether UK or internationally-made – and how they express the meaning film has for them.⁶



³ http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/f/i/CIReport_010709.pdf

⁴ Barratt, J 2009, *The Cultural Impact of UK Film: Questions and Evidence – a Report of the Seminar held at Birkbeck College, 27 November 2009*, UK Film Council, page 22.

⁵ The project was transferred to the BFI on 1 April 2011, following the closure of the UK Film Council.

⁶ A copy of the brief can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Below:
Precious.
Courtesy of Icon UK.
With thanks to Sophie Scott.

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Opening our eyes
Study method

Study

met



Food

Preparatory work

Stories we tell ourselves provided a basis for the design of the qualitative interviews (see below). This was supplemented by a review of relevant literature including UK Film Council and industry research on audience behaviour and attitudes. In parallel with the literature review, a focused stakeholder consultation with industry/academic specialists was undertaken in order to build on discussion of the issues raised in *Stories we tell ourselves* and inform the qualitative interviews.

Qualitative 'paired depth' interviews

Prior to conducting the quantitative survey, Ipsos MORI conducted a series of qualitative 'paired depth' interviews.

Ten paired interviews (covering 20 individuals) with participants aged 15 to 64 years were conducted face-to-face between 18 and 22 January 2011 in Glasgow, London and Manchester. Interviews were conducted as follows:

- Glasgow: Males aged 35 to 54; Males aged 25 to 34; Females aged 55 to 64.
- Manchester: Females aged 15 to 17; Males aged 18 to 24; Females aged 25 to 34.
- London: Males aged 15 to 17; Females aged 18 to 24; Males aged 55 to 64; Females aged 35 to 54.

For the paired depth interviews, all individuals participating fulfilled both of the following criteria:

- Had watched films on TV, DVD, online or at the cinema in the past 12 months.
- Had done at least four of the following in the past 12 months: watched TV; listened to music; listened to the radio; gone to museums; gone to art galleries; gone to the theatre; gone to concerts; read books; read magazines; read newspapers; surfed the internet; played video games.

A combination of telephone and face-to-face recruitment was used. By telephone, potential participants were contacted from a database of people who had agreed to be contacted for research. Face-to-face recruitment was conducted in-street, approaching members of the public and asking screener questions to find those meeting the survey eligibility criteria. Eligible respondents then suggested a friend who was screened on the same criteria. For both members of the pair, those who had taken part in a market research group discussion or depth interview in the past six months were excluded from taking part.

Case study one

The experience of disability – *Iris*, *My Left Foot* and *The King's Speech*

Iris – the 2001 film about novelist Iris Murdoch's struggle with Alzheimer's disease – was raised in the paired depth interviews (see above) and served as an early indicator of the nature of the contribution films can make.

The interviewee had nursed her mother through a long period of Alzheimer's disease, and told how, on seeing *Iris*, she was transported back to that period of her life. Despite the pain of remembering the decline and death of her mother and how, for her personally, it had been an exhausting and emotionally draining time, she enjoyed the poignancy of being brought closer to more positive memories of her relationship with and love for her mother.

Film is able to make an impact in a personal, very intimate way and the nature of the engagement allows audiences to gain insight into a subject at different levels, rational and emotional, and to be able to genuinely empathise with people, eg one respondent found that *My Left Foot*, a film about a chronically disabled Dubliner, **'made me realise that disabled people who can't speak aren't stupid'**.

The survey was undertaken in the midst of the success of *The King's Speech* so it may be unsurprising that this was the most frequent choice of film that 'had an effect'. Its topicality notwithstanding, *The King's Speech* clearly touched people with its portrayal of George VI's struggle with his stutter and may continue to have a significant impact in the future, with one respondent commenting, **'I felt moved that the King had problems that ordinary people face every day'** and another:

'The film made me think of the difficulties that other people have.'

As with *Iris*, it also helped one respondent, a woman in the South East of England, to bring perspective on her own life:

'I never really thought how hard life can be when you have a stutter until I saw this film, even though my grandad and uncle stutter.'

This ability to make deep, personal connections, prompt reflection and draw meaning – often by films ostensibly designed as entertainment and provided for commercial reasons – characterised many of the responses to the survey.

7 17,260 invitations were sent to achieve 2,036 completed surveys. This is a typical response rate for a survey of this kind, given the length of the survey and the fieldwork period. The survey invite used Ipsos' standard wording, which avoids reference to the subject of the survey in order to avoid bias towards the subject amongst respondents.

The paired depth interviews were used to explore the themes to be pursued and the language to be used in the quantitative survey, as well as being referenced directly within this report. The interviews showed how people engaged with (and expressed their engagement with) film. This ranged from film as entertainment through to film raising awareness of difficult and emotional issues. Specifically, these interviews led us to avoid the use of words such as 'culture' and 'impact' as these were not terms respondents generally used or understood or interpreted consistently.

Quantitative survey

Ipsos MORI conducted 2,036 online self-completion surveys with a sample of UK adults aged 15 to 74 years, between 17 February and 1 March 2011.

Surveys were conducted with members of the Ipsos online panel (Great Britain) and the Research Now online panel (Northern Ireland). Surveys took an average of approximately 30 minutes for respondents to complete.

Invitations to participate in the online survey were sent to a selection of Ipsos online panel members. The profile of invitations was designed to take into account known response rate differences, with a greater proportion of invites sent to groups known generally to have lower response rates to online surveys (in order to achieve a representative profile of respondents completing the survey). The overall response rate for the survey was 11.8%.⁷

The respondents represent around 46 million UK individuals aged 15 to 74. Whilst conducted using an online interviewing method, data have been weighted to be representative of the UK total population aged 15 to 74 based on region, gender and age. In addition to this weighting, the online sample has been compared to offline UK samples of the same age group and is comparable in terms of working status, income, marital status, children in household and urban/rural location. We note that our respondents are somewhat more educated than the UK average, but as the key survey results do not vary significantly by education this has not been weighted.

For the subject covered by this survey, which is not directly related to the internet or technology, we consider it appropriate to treat the results from an online survey to be representative of the broader population.

The survey was not introduced as being specifically related to film, and there was no requirement that those completing the survey should necessarily watch or be interested in films. Therefore, opinions relating to film versus other forms of art and entertainment may be regarded as representing the general UK population (aged 15 to 74) without any specific bias towards those favourable towards films.

For the panel, a range of recruitment methods was used, with diverse sources utilised to ensure recruitment of a broad audience including recruitment of people who have completed a face-to-face or telephone survey (in order to avoid recruitment being entirely through online methods). The panel recruitment process included the completion of a recruitment questionnaire, with potential panel members providing details about themselves and their households.

The Ipsos online panel features a comprehensive set of procedures designed to protect its surveys against potentially fraudulent responses (contradictory answers, straight-lining responses,⁸ speeding) in addition to panel quality methods of de-duplication, non-responder removal and address validation.

Ipsos carefully controls the frequency with which panel members are invited to take part in surveys, and avoids them completing two surveys on similar subjects within a set period of time.

Case studies

The seven case studies included in the report reflect the frequency with which films were mentioned by respondents and the extent to which they illustrate key themes emerging from the report's key findings.⁹ Where possible, preference has been given to films released some time ago, on the basis that these are more likely to indicate cultural contribution over time. The case studies chosen are the following:

- *Iris, My Left Foot* and *The King's Speech* (The experience of disability).
- *The Full Monty, Brassed Off* and *East is East* (Making the best of it: the successes of British social comedy).
- *Slumdog Millionaire*.
- *Trainspotting*.
- *This Is England, Braveheart*.
- *Avatar*.
- *Schindler's List, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, Life Is Beautiful* (The Holocaust and film).

Supplementary interviews

Following the completion of the survey, Northern Alliance undertook 20 telephone interviews, in which survey respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted were questioned on two themes emerging from the survey results: defining Britishness and the artistic value of film. Responses from these interviews are referred to at appropriate places in this report.

⁸ Choosing the same point on a scale for a long list of questions.

⁹ The first case study, 'Experience of disability' *Iris, My Left Foot* and *The King's Speech* was also chosen to illustrate the results of the paired interviews.

Below:
Slumdog Millionaire

14

Opening our eyes
How and where we watch films



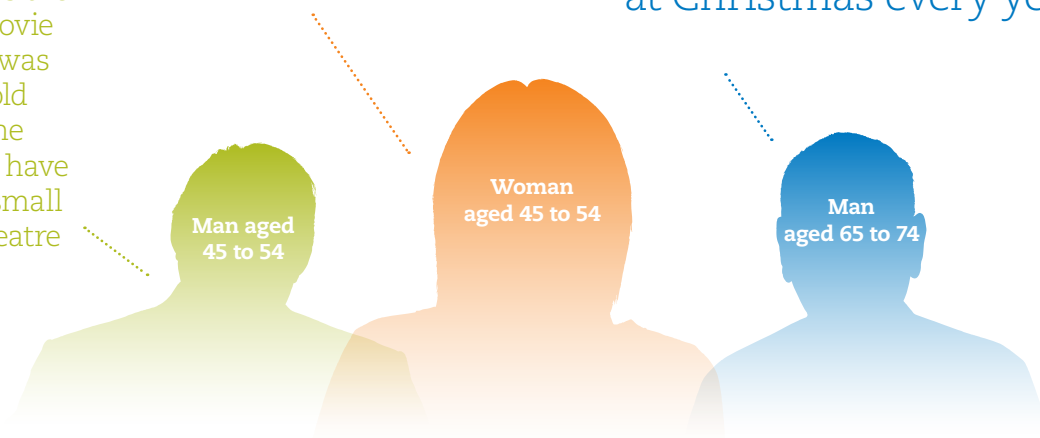
What people told us:

How and where we watch films

'I first watched *Diamonds Are Forever*, when I was a teenager, so watching it on TV recently it brought back memories of my trips to the cinema years ago.'

'*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is part of our family life. We watch it at Christmas every year.'

'*Goldfinger* was the first Bond movie I ever saw, I was eight years old and it was the only movie I have seen at the small Mowlem Theatre in Swanage.'



How much film viewing do we do?

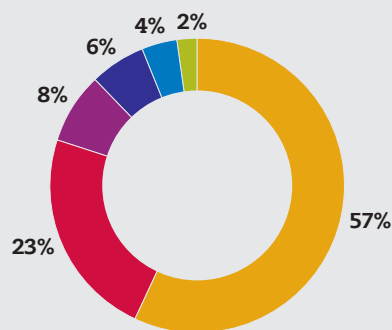
Based on the responses to our survey we estimate a UK total of over five billion film viewing occasions per year, with cinema attendance accounting for a relatively small proportion¹⁰ of these. Watching films remains a significant activity in the UK, involving a wide range of viewing 'platforms'. Each year there appears to be over four and a half billion viewings of feature films in the homes of UK citizens, with viewings in cinemas, on mobile devices and on planes and other places outside cinemas/at home amounting to around an additional 700 million viewings.

In comparison to other sources of information regarding film viewing, the respondents appear to be reporting less film viewing on television and more viewing in cinemas and on other media, notably mobile devices and via the internet.¹¹

Figure 1:
Estimated proportions of annual total film viewing based on survey responses (Survey question B2)

Platform used to view films

- On television
- On DVD/Blu-ray
- Downloaded/streamed
- At the cinema
- On a mobile device
- On a plane

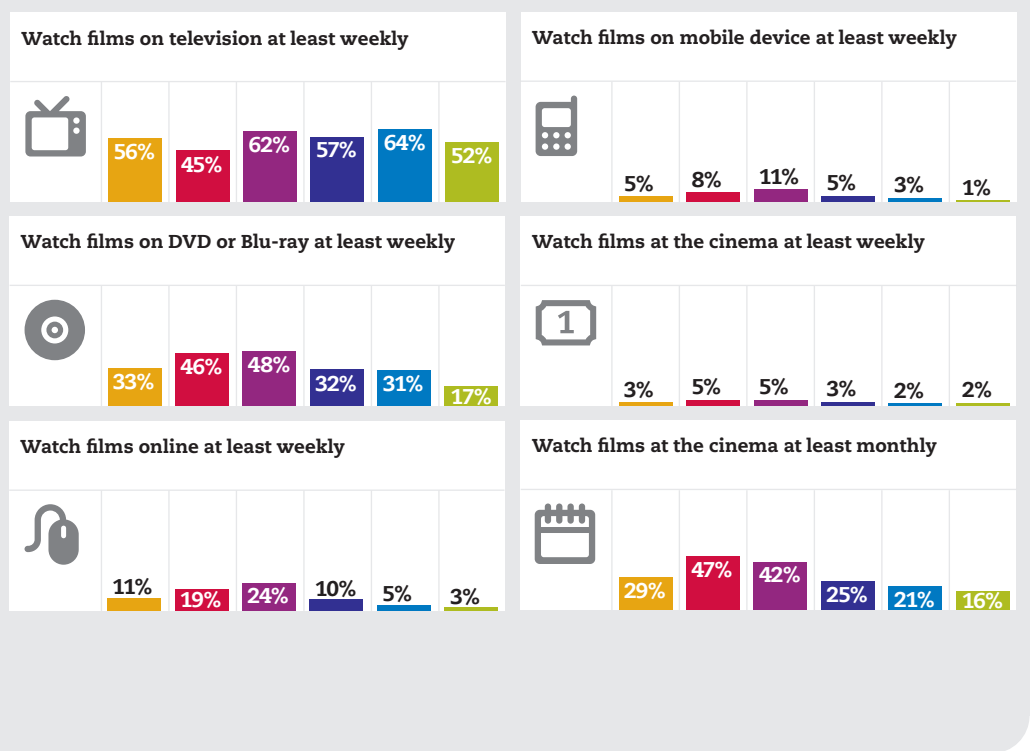


¹⁰ Independent of the survey, the Cinema Exhibitors Association reported total cinema admissions of 173.5 million in 2009, whereas in comparison the UK Film Council estimated the number of film viewings on UK television were around 20 times higher at 3.4 billion. (See UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook 2010).

¹¹ Care should be taken in extrapolating the data to draw conclusions regarding total film viewing in the UK as a whole. The survey was designed primarily to research the nature of the response of individual people to films and film as a medium rather than to estimate the total market, though the implied level of film viewing via the internet and mobile devices appears to underline recent evidence of the continued growth of new means of consuming audiovisual media both in the UK and globally (see for example the recent report from the Digital Entertainment Group of 33% year-on-year growth in spending on streaming and subscription services in the USA).

Figure 2:
Frequency of film
viewing on different
platforms (Survey
question B2)

- All
- 15–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- Over 55



Where do we watch films?

- **The home is the most frequent location for film viewing. 86% watch a film on television at least once a month and 63% watch a film on DVD or Blu-ray at least once a month.**
- **Three in 10 people watch a film in the cinema at least once a month.**
- **Online and mobile viewing is significant with 23% watching a film downloaded or streamed from the internet at least once a month.**
- **11% reported watching a film on a mobile device at least monthly.**
- **Older people (55+) are significantly less likely to watch films on newer platforms – including online, download, mobile and even DVD and Blu-ray.**
- **People from minority ethnic groups tend to be more avid consumers of film at the cinema and on digital platforms.**

Figure 2 shows the primacy of ‘at home’ film viewing. Just over half the respondents (56%) watched a film on television at least once a week, and 86% did so at least once a month. A third (33%) watched a film on DVD or Blu-ray at least once a week, and two-thirds (63%) did so at least once a month.

A minority of the sample were weekly cinemagoers. Only 3% watched a film at the cinema every week. About three in 10 (29%) say they do so at least once a month.¹²

Most cinema-going respondents generally went to large multiplex cinemas (65%). 14% tended to go to high street or local cinemas, and 5% to smaller cinemas that show independent, specialised or ‘art house’ films. A further 14% went to a variety of cinema types.¹³

In general, cinema preference appeared to be conditioned by the choice available, with for example people living in cities more likely than those in suburbs, towns or rural locations to go to small cinemas specialising in independent or art house films (10% compared with 3%), reflecting the fact that many independent cinemas are located in larger towns and cities.

The survey also showed significant penetration of online platforms. One in 10 respondents watched a film downloaded or streamed from the internet at least once a week, 23% did so at least once a month – although the fact that the survey was carried out online may lead to an over-estimate of activities carried out online. 5% reported watching a film on a mobile device at least once a week, and 11% at least monthly. Film viewing via streaming and on mobile devices is strongly affected by age with over 55s significantly less likely to do either and also less likely to view films on DVD and Blu-ray.

¹² The monthly attendance figure is higher than industry estimates, eg the UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook 2010 had 18% of the population attending the cinema at least once a month – although that figure was for the whole population aged 7+ whilst the current survey did not sample those under 15 or over 74.

¹³ ie responded that they didn’t just go to one type of cinema. See responses to survey question C2.

People from minority ethnic groups¹⁴ tend to be more avid consumers of film.¹⁵ Ethnic minority respondents were more likely than white respondents to download or stream films from the internet at least once a week (23% compared with 11%) and more likely to view films at a cinema at least once a month (50% compared with 27%) and on a mobile device (25% compared with 10%).

The very large numbers of films watched on television – the most popular platform for film viewing across the board and for all age groups other than 15 to 24 year-olds – points to the strong influence of broadcasters on the cultural contribution of film.

How interested are we in films compared with other activities?

- **People are strongly interested in film: it is one of the most popular entertainment and leisure interests.**
- **Interest in film correlates with a stronger than average interest in other arts, forms of entertainment and with an active interest in the world.**

Film occupies a high position in people's leisure time and interests (Figure 3). 84% of people said that they were interested in film. Only news about the UK and television were rated as being of more interest.

This high level of interest was fairly consistent across gender and geography although older people were slightly less likely to be interested in film: 72% of people over 55 thought film interesting, but more were interested in the countryside (91%) and UK history (87%).

A strong interest in film correlates with a stronger than average interest in many other forms of leisure and cultural pursuit. When analysed by people's strength of interest in film, other subjects in the list received a 'bump' of several percentage points, as shown in Figure 4. This seems to place film enthusiasts amongst the group in society most culturally and socially engaged.

This higher interest in a range of other social and cultural activities tends to follow through into higher levels of activity (Figure 5), with more people very interested in film also going more often to the theatre, concerts, pubs and clubs than those with no interest in film.

'On Any Sunday makes me realise why I love motorcycle sport.'

'Terminator 2: Judgment Day... constantly reminded of it by so many video games that I play. It seems to have an influence on most of the big budget third person action adventures I've seen.'

'Far From the Madding Crowd underlines the glory of living in the countryside.'



¹⁴ Throughout this report references to the percentage of respondents from 'minority ethnic groups' refers to non-white ethnic groups. Respondents describing themselves as Irish or belonging to any other White background are included within the proportion of 'White' respondents.

¹⁵ Logistic regression indicated that age and ethnic group have independent effect on weekly online viewing, monthly cinema going and mobile device viewing, ie the ethnic group effect does not appear to be attributable to differences in the age profile of respondents from different groups.

Figure 3:
Interest in film and other activities
(Survey question B4)

Very interested
Fairly interested


























Television		39%	49%	88%
News about the UK		39%	49%	88%
Film		37%	47%	84%
News about the world		29%	52%	81%
The countryside/landscape		34%	46%	80%
Restaurants and eating out		33%	47%	80%
UK history		28%	48%	76%
Knowing or finding out about different ways of life or groups around the world		23%	48%	71%
World history		25%	46%	71%
Pop or rock music		28%	41%	69%
Literature		28%	39%	67%
UK politics		22%	40%	62%
Knowing or finding out about different ways of life or groups in UK society		17%	45%	62%
World politics		19%	41%	60%
Museums		13%	46%	59%
Watching sport		27%	25%	52%
Pubs and clubs		16%	37%	53%
Taking part in sport		21%	30%	51%
Theatre/dance		13%	37%	50%
Art		13%	33%	46%
Videogames or computer games		18%	28%	46%
Classical music		12%	31%	43%
Different languages		10%	31%	41%
Religion		11%	21%	32%
News about celebrities or famous people		7%	25%	32%

Figure 4:
Strength of interest
in entertainment
and other activities
(ie percentage
of respondents
expressing an
interest) on the part
of those interested
in films (Survey
question B4)

- Very interested in film
- Fairly interested in film
- Not interested in film



‘I first saw *Fantasia* over 50 years ago. It defined my taste in music ever since.’

Man aged
55 to 64

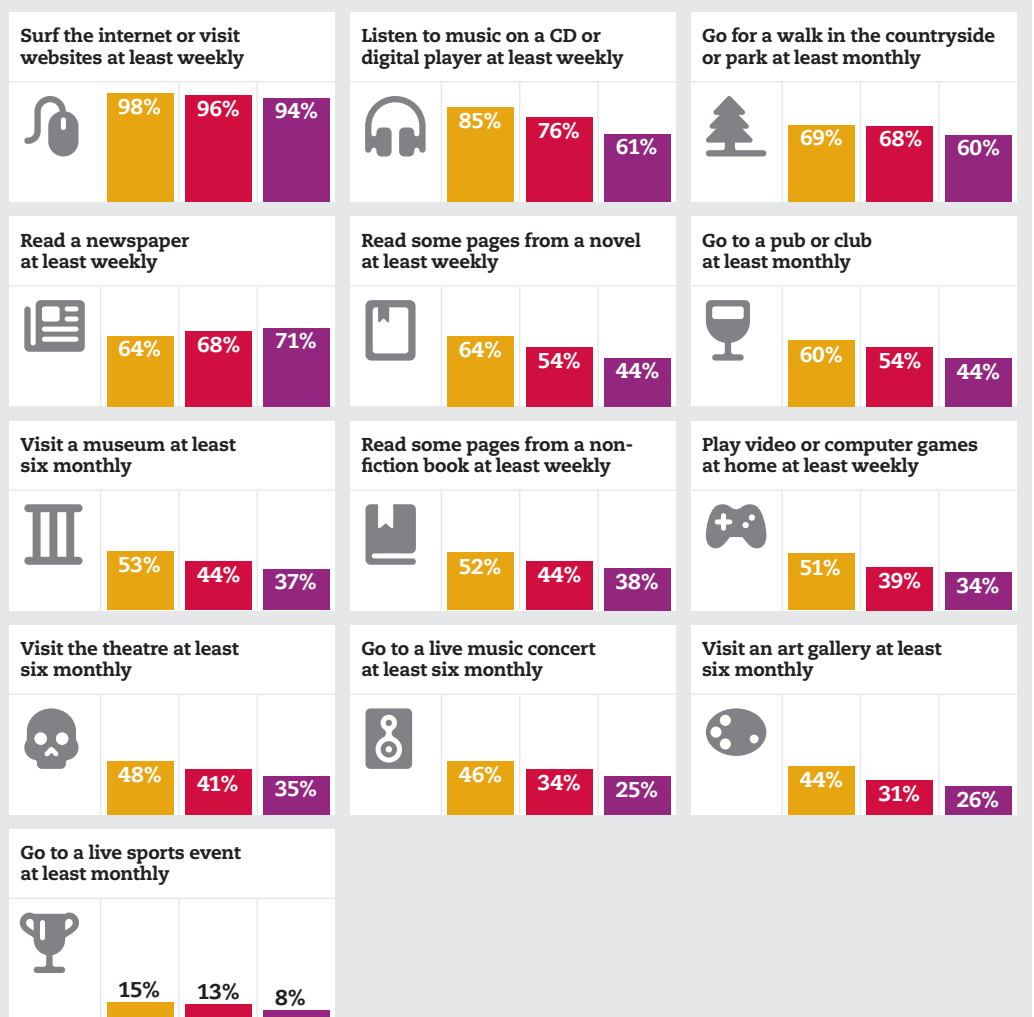
'Grease got me interested in 50s/60s music.'

'Black Swan made me look at the effect of dancing in a different way to which I usually do.'



Figure 5: Frequency of participation in entertainment and other activities on the part of those interested in film (Survey question B1)

- Very interested in film
- Fairly interested in film
- Not interested in film



Case study two

Making the best of it: the successes of British social comedy – *The Full Monty*, *Brassed Off*, *East Is East*

*Stories We Tell Ourselves*¹⁶ noted that one of the genres of UK film most widely appreciated abroad is British social comedy, including those films in which ordinary people are seen coping resourcefully with problems that many can identify with. Our survey respondents placed three such films high among those that have 'had a significant effect on UK society or attitudes' (Figure 18): *The Full Monty*¹⁷ was the second most often cited (by 101 respondents), *East is East* was third (81 respondents) and *Brassed Off* was eighth (31 respondents). These films were domestic box-office successes and performed well internationally in spite of their modest budgets, regional accents and unglamorous settings. For 10 to 15 years, they appear to have stood the test of time and – like *Trainspotting* (see case study four) – are seen as wry expressions of modern Britishness.

For an East Midlands woman of 55 to 64, the unemployment faced by steelworkers in *The Full Monty* was all too close to home, but provided welcome relief:

'I had just been made redundant and this film is about the problems people face when out of work and the lengths they will go to in order to generate money. Also, it is done with a great sense of humour, which made me laugh out loud.'

A 65 to 74 year-old woman in the North West recalled similarly: **'I laughed all the way through – never seen a film that has such a feel good factor.'** Vivid memories such as these suggest how this film has become a key part of modern British culture, with its title becoming a catchphrase and its climactic scene of defiance – the men's striptease – a much copied form of derisory protest.

The Full Monty



¹⁶ *Stories we tell ourselves*, page 39–40.

¹⁷ For example, the 'Full Monty Protest' at the 2003 Labour Party conference by steel shelving workers who had lost their pensions (see *The Mail on Sunday*, 28.09.03) and a recent study by Silvia Angrisani (University of Naples) reporting instances of men in Italy stripping in public to make a political point, summarised at http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/p/3/Final_Euro_Parl_Brussels_notes-02Dec10.pdf



Mark Herman's *Brassed Off* (1996) attracted comparison due to the similar theme of a community fighting back against unemployment. Despite the threat of their colliery closing, the miners' brass band is determined to have its moment of glory at a competition in London. Meanwhile a romance flourishes between Andy (Ewan McGregor) and the newly arrived Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald), who is suspected of being on the side of management. Although the presence of McGregor, fresh from his success in *Trainspotting*, played a part in the film's success – especially in the United States, where it was successfully marketed as a romantic comedy by co-producers Miramax – what stayed in the minds of our respondents was the film's political message. For a 55 to 64 year-old man in Yorkshire and Humberside, **'It brought out how unfair the Thatcher Government policies against the mining communities were, and how apathetic the British people were in not reacting against the Thatcher Government at the time.'** While for a younger viewer, a 20 to 24 year-old North West of England man:

'Brassed Off is just so moving and heart breaking, to see the lives of people fall apart but then brought back together through the power of music.'

East is East (1999), based on a play by Pakistani writer Ayub Khan-Din and directed by Irish-born Damien O'Donnell, was a Film4 production about a mixed-race family in Salford in the 1970s, which became a box-office success and an important focus of discussion about multiracial Britain – much as *My Beautiful Laundrette* had a decade earlier. The family shown by Khan-Din is headed by a traditional Pakistani father, George Khan (Om Puri), who is married to

an English woman Ella (Linda Bassett), and their family of six sons and one daughter has to navigate between the father's expectations of a Muslim upbringing and their mother's efforts to accommodate English expectations.

As with the other social realist comedies, this brought back personal memories of the period: a 45 to 54 year-old woman in the South East of England:

'I found it very interesting because it is based in the era in which I grew up. It was an interesting insight into another culture and the difficulties that can occur when two cultures meet.'

A 25 to 34 year-old Greater London man had **'Never really thought about different lives'** before seeing the film, **'despite living in a multicultural area'**. A woman of 55 to 64, also in Greater London, summed up what most audiences seem to have taken from the film: **'it showed we are all human no matter where we come from'**, while also appreciating its humour and the contribution of **'an excellent cast'**.

Despite its popular success and the praise of mainstream critics – **'Fresh, frank, impudent and self-mocking, it marks a giant leap over the threshold of multicultural casting and ethnic British cinema'** *Evening Standard* – *East Is East* was criticised by some commentators from the Asian community for licensing audiences to laugh at the negative aspects of traditional Pakistani culture. This was not the view of those of our respondents who chose it as a film of special significance for them, who were moved by its warm and humorous portrayal of growing up in a multicultural Britain they recognise.

Below:
Trainspotting





What people told us:

The sorts of films we watch

What films do we like watching?

'It made me question how I look at film genres in a different way. Before seeing this I was never interested in films unless they were blockbusters.'

- **Blockbusters are the most often watched type of film.**
- **Fewer people over age 55 prefer big budget, effects-driven films.**
- **Comedy, drama, action/adventure and suspense/thrillers are the most popular genres.**
- **There are significant differences in film preferences by ethnic group.**

Blockbusters were the type of film watched most often by the largest group of people (Figure 6). Almost half of respondents said they most frequently watched blockbuster films with big budget special effects and star casts, with men slightly more likely to favour blockbuster films than women.

The over 55s were less enthusiastic than younger people about blockbuster films with only 39% giving them as their preferred option.

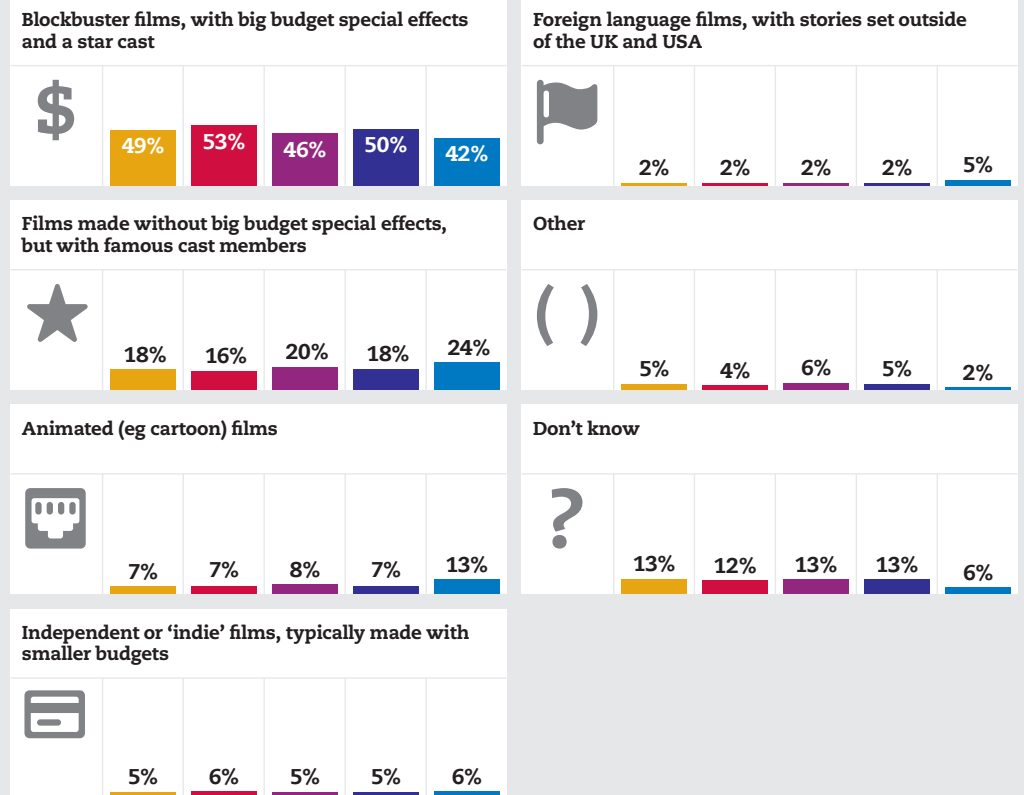
Films made without big budget special effects, but with famous cast members were the most frequent choice for almost one in five respondents, and independent films with smaller budgets were selected by 5%. Animation was the most frequent choice for 7%, but with a higher proportion of people aged 25 to 44 opting for animation (perhaps indicating they were viewed with children). People from minority ethnic group backgrounds were almost twice as likely to prefer animation as those from the white community.

Though a later question found that over one in three respondents were of the opinion that there were too few non-English language films shown in the UK (see Figure 16 on page 42), only 2% of the survey gave foreign language films as their primary choice, again with a slight peak in the age group 25 to 44. People from minority ethnic groups were twice as likely to prefer films not in English (5% compared to 2% of white people).

Woman aged 45 to 54, on the experience of watching *Memento*.

Figure 6:
Type of film watched most often, all platforms¹⁸
(Survey question C4)

- Total
- Male
- Female
- White
- Minority ethnic group



¹⁸ ie at the cinema, on TV, DVD/Blu-ray, online or on a mobile device, or shown on a plane.

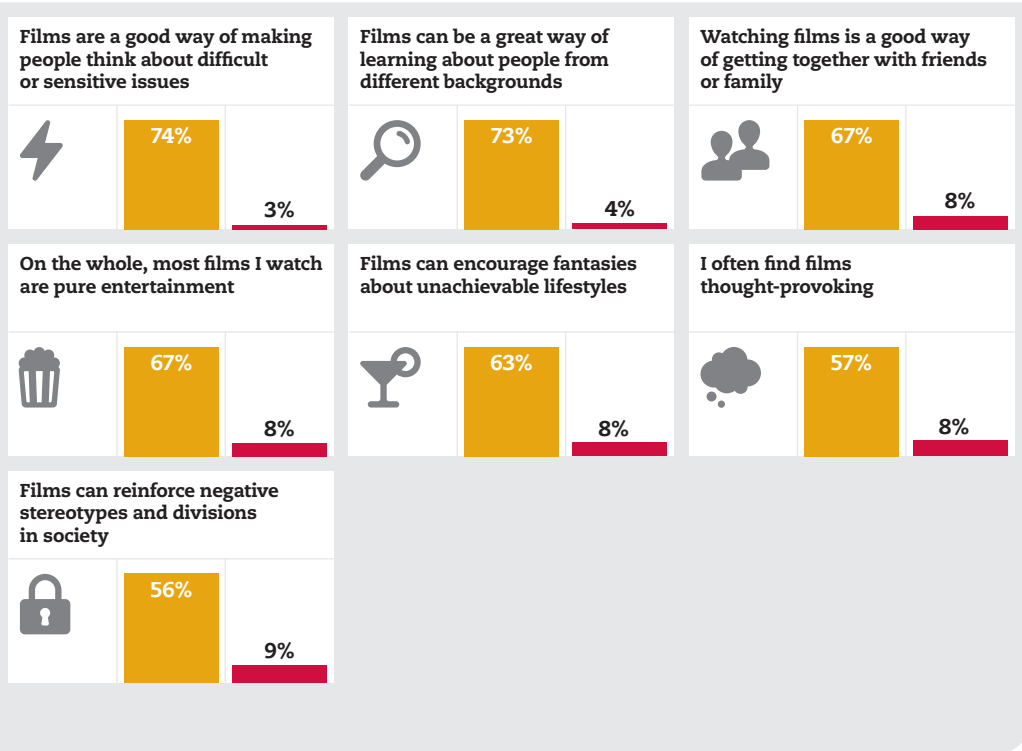
Figure 7:
All preferred film
types/genres
(Survey question C1)

- Total
- Male
- Female
- White
- Minority ethnic group



Figure 8:
Views on the entertainment, educational and other effects of films on individuals (Survey question D7)

■ Agree
■ Disagree



Questioned about ALL favoured genres or types of film (not just a single most frequent preference) respondents indicated a wider taste (Figure 7).

Comedy, drama, action/adventure and suspense/thrillers were all favoured by over half of respondents. Women preferred romantic comedies, family films, romances and musicals. Men had stronger preferences for sci-fi, action/adventure and horror films.

Foreign language films were selected by 14% of respondents, as were art house films.

People from minority ethnic backgrounds favoured romantic comedies (54% against 39% of white people), romances (45% against 29%), comic book movies (25% against 16%) and suspense/thriller films (67% against 58%).

How do we decide what to watch?

- Two-thirds of people say they watch films purely for entertainment.
- Three-quarters say that films can be a good way of making people think about difficult or sensitive issues.
- Story, genre and cast are the most important factors when deciding which films to watch.
- Talking to family and friends is the most common way of communicating information about films.
- Print media, radio and television are important, with online film reviews also being used by many.
- People from minority ethnic groups were more active in seeking out information about films.

'Juno presents a positive minority viewpoint in a low budget film with upcoming young actors. It struck a chord and made me hope it struck the same chord with many more.'

Man aged 35 to 44

'Avatar made me realise I needed to do more environmentally.'

Woman aged 35 to 44

Two-thirds of people agreed with the statement that on the whole, most films they watched were pure entertainment, with only 9% disagreeing. The same proportion agreed that watching films was a good way of getting together with friends or family.

There was stronger agreement with statements about the empathic or intellectual aspects of films: three-quarters of respondents agreed with the statement that films are a good way of making people think about difficult or sensitive issues. A similar proportion agreed that films can be a great way of learning about people from different backgrounds.

A majority (57%) agreed that films could be thought-provoking. These opinions were more strongly held by those with a general interest in film, and by people whose primary choice of film was independent titles. Demographically, there was relatively little variation in geography and gender. People from minority ethnic groups were more likely to agree that films were a good way of making people think about difficult or sensitive issues (85% compared with 73%), or learning about people from different backgrounds (82% compared with 72%).

Many people recognised that films could have negative effects as well – over half agreed with the statement that films can reinforce negative stereotypes and divisions in society (14% strongly agree, 42% tend to agree), and almost two-thirds agreed that films can encourage fantasies about unachievable lifestyles (20% strongly agree, 43% tend to agree).

The most commonly identified aspect of a film that was important in the decision whether or not to watch a film, on any media, was the story (68%) followed by the genre or type of film (62%) and the actors (58%) (Figure 9).

For cinema-goers, the desire to see newly released films as soon as possible (48% of respondents) and the spectacular visual and audio experience (39%) were key factors in the decision to watch a film at the cinema, alongside story and cast. Cinema was also seen as being a social activity with 39% including watching with family and friends in their decisions.

Being with friends and family was considered important when watching films in the home on television and DVD. Ease of availability or convenience was important in decisions about watching particular films on television, on DVD or Blu-ray and downloading/streaming films.

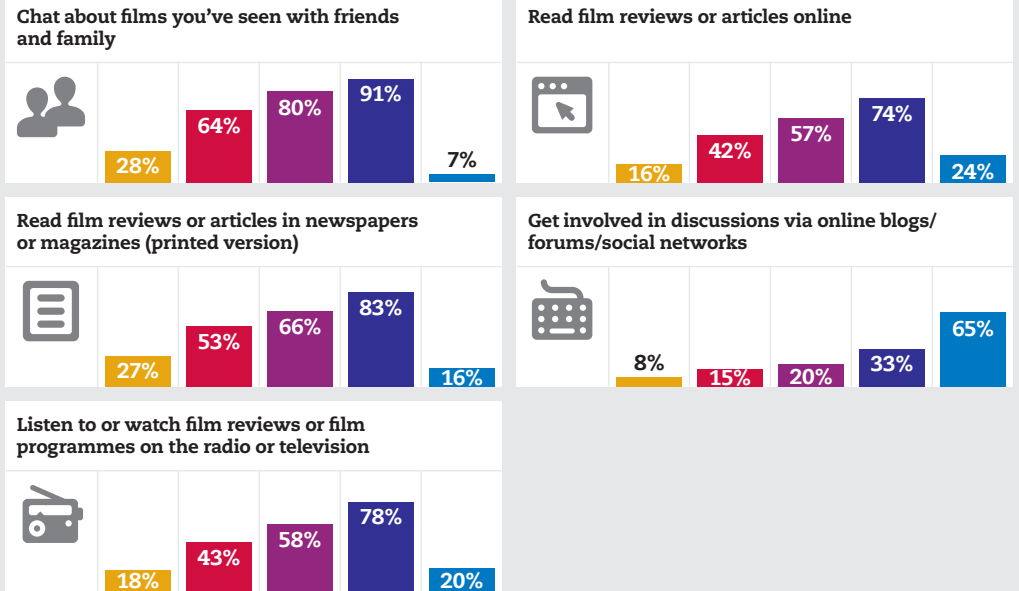
Figure 9:
Aspects important in the decision to view a particular film, all platforms¹⁹
(Survey question C5)



¹⁹ Percentages exclude 'don't know' and 'none of the above'. Together with non-responses these account for 14% of the weighted survey base.

Figure 10:
Sources of information on films (Survey question C7)

- At least weekly
- At least monthly
- At least six monthly
- At all
- Never



How then do people find the information about films in order to make their choices? While online and digital information sources have made an impact on how people find out about films, there is still a strong tendency to look to traditional sources of information, in particular word of mouth (Figure 10).

Almost all those surveyed (91%) sometimes chatted about films with friends and family – just over a quarter do so at least once a week, and almost two-thirds do so at least once a month.

Compared to that, the potential for influence from people's 'virtual families' appears weak with only a third of people getting involved in discussions about films via online blogs, forums or social networks and only a very small proportion (8%) doing so at least once a week.

More traditional media are also important sources of information about films. Just over eight in 10 respondents read film reviews or articles in newspapers or magazines and just over three-quarters listen to or watch film reviews or film programmes on the radio or television. Almost as many sometimes read film reviews or articles online.

The relatively low position of online media as channels for getting information on films – in particular blogs and other discussion forums – is particularly interesting in light of the very high frequency of internet use in the sample with 98% surfing the internet at least monthly. Younger people were far more likely to use online resources.²⁰ The proportion declined with age with only 27% of over 55s doing so at least monthly.

People from minority ethnic groups were more active and enthusiastic in seeking out information and conversation about film. They were more frequent consumers of film reviews, articles and programmes than people from white backgrounds with 68% reading printed reviews at least once a month, 60% reading online reviews and articles at least monthly and 57% listening to or watching film reviews or programmes on radio or television, compared with 52%, 41% and 42% respectively of white respondents. They were also more likely to chat about films with friends or family at least once a month (78% compared with 63% of white respondents) and get involved in online discussions about film (37% at least monthly compared with 14%).

'Slumdog Millionaire made me realise what conditions the slum children lived in.'

Woman aged 35 to 44

²⁰ 25 to 34 year-olds were the group most likely to regularly read film reviews and articles online; 61% did so at least once a month, compared with 49% of 15 to 24 year-olds.

Case study three

Slumdog Millionaire

The fourth most selected title having affected people personally (Figure 27), *Slumdog Millionaire* has almost certainly benefited from its recent wide release and transmission on Film4 by its co-producers Channel 4. The film presented an exhilarating journey through the slums and shadows of Mumbai, with its violence and squalor effectively revealed by kinetic camerawork and a powerful score by the leading Bollywood composer A. R. Rahman. Widely awarded, it is the only other film alongside *Schindler's List* to have won Best Picture, Director and Screenplay at the Golden Globes, BAFTAs and Academy Awards® (where it also won five more Oscars®), and this scale of recognition has undoubtedly multiplied audiences.

Slumdog Millionaire showed a 55 to 64 year-old woman in East Anglia **'poverty in India and the way the children had to live'**. A 45 to 54 year-old Scottish woman **'did not realise the country it was set in was so poor'**. Even a 25 to 34 year-old Indian man in Greater London found it valuable to **'know about a culture'**, while it made another Indian man of the same age in Yorkshire and Humberside **'appreciate my life'**. This theme was echoed by a number of respondents, as they reflected on their own relative good fortune. An 18 to 19 year-old woman in Yorkshire and Humberside thought **'about how much I take for granted and that not everyone has the same opportunities in life'**; and a 17 to 18 year-old Scottish man became **'aware that there is serious poverty out there... and thankful for all that I have'**.

However, the film may not have been so popular without the presence of other elements. For a 15 to 17 year-old from Yorkshire and Humberside, **'It managed to show the poverty taking place in India and the struggles children often go through while being romantic and interesting,'** while a 65 to 74 year-old Northern woman admitted frankly: **'I hated the poverty and corruption but loved the romance and the music.'** And for a 45 to 54 year-old Indian woman in Greater London, it was **'very moving and entertaining'**. A 25 to 34 year-old woman in the South East of England summed up the emotional rollercoaster the film was for many viewers, while hinting that its impact may continue in the future:

'I had heard how good this film was, but it was not at all what I expected. I thought it was a comedy and not a reflection on poverty/slavery and abuse abroad. It provoked strong emotions in me and I found myself sobbing through parts of it. It was very well acted and directed and I still think about the film now, even though I saw it a year ago.'

The film seems to have appealed more to women than to men, with three times more women choosing it as a film which had affected them than men, although responses were recorded across the age spectrum and *Slumdog Millionaire* seems to have the capacity to affect all types of viewers.

Slumdog Millionaire



What people told us:

What films do

32

Opening our eyes
What films do

Above:
Avatar



‘Uplifting. Emotional.
Inspired. Entertained.’

‘*Au Revoir Les Enfants*
was moving, made
me go and read
about the plight of
the Jews in World
War II France.’



What effects do films have on us?

- **People most commonly associate film with entertainment and emotional reactions – but half of the respondents think it has artistic value and over a third think film is educational.**
- **85% of people had seen a film recently that had provoked them to do something – even if only to talk about it to friends and family.**
- **Two-thirds of people had seen a film they found educational or which gave them an insight into other cultures.**
- **Substantial minorities have followed up a film by taking action such as joining a club, writing a letter or otherwise becoming involved.**

In order to explore the effects produced by film, respondents were asked which of a list of words and phrases they associated with different activities and art forms. The results (Figure 11) show a strong bias toward emotional responses. Film was commonly associated with the words entertaining (87%), good at providing escapism (68%), emotional or moving (60%) and exciting (59%). It was the form of entertainment most commonly associated with those words.

Respondents viewed television as very slightly more relaxing and thought-provoking than film, and literature as more thought-provoking or inspirational. News, art galleries, television and literature were regarded as more informative or educational than film, but in other respects film seems to be more highly appreciated relative to alternative art forms and activities.

Just over half the sample thought that film was thought-provoking and half viewed film as having artistic value.²¹ 39% thought film to be informative/educational (as later sections²² of this report will show, the depth of impact and types of learning from certain films on individuals can be profound).

Presented with a range of less positive connotations, very few thought that film had a negative effect on people or society (6%) or was boring (5%) whereas religion, video games and television were most commonly seen as having a negative effect on people or society (32%, 31% and 23% respectively).²³

Overwhelmingly people reported that the films they had seen caused them to follow up on the experience, if only to the extent of talking about it to their friends and family (Figure 12).

Over two-thirds of respondents had seen films in the last few years that they found particularly thought-provoking and just under two-thirds said they had seen films in the last few years that made them think afterwards about some difficult or sensitive issues. Many reported engaging in activities sparked by films:

- **69% had seen films which they had then talked about to friends or family.**
- **48% had seen films that encouraged them to go and find out more about a subject raised by the film.**
- **14% had seen films that led them to take action directly related to the situation shown in the film, eg joined a group, donated money, wrote a letter.**

²¹ See Figure 15 on page 40.

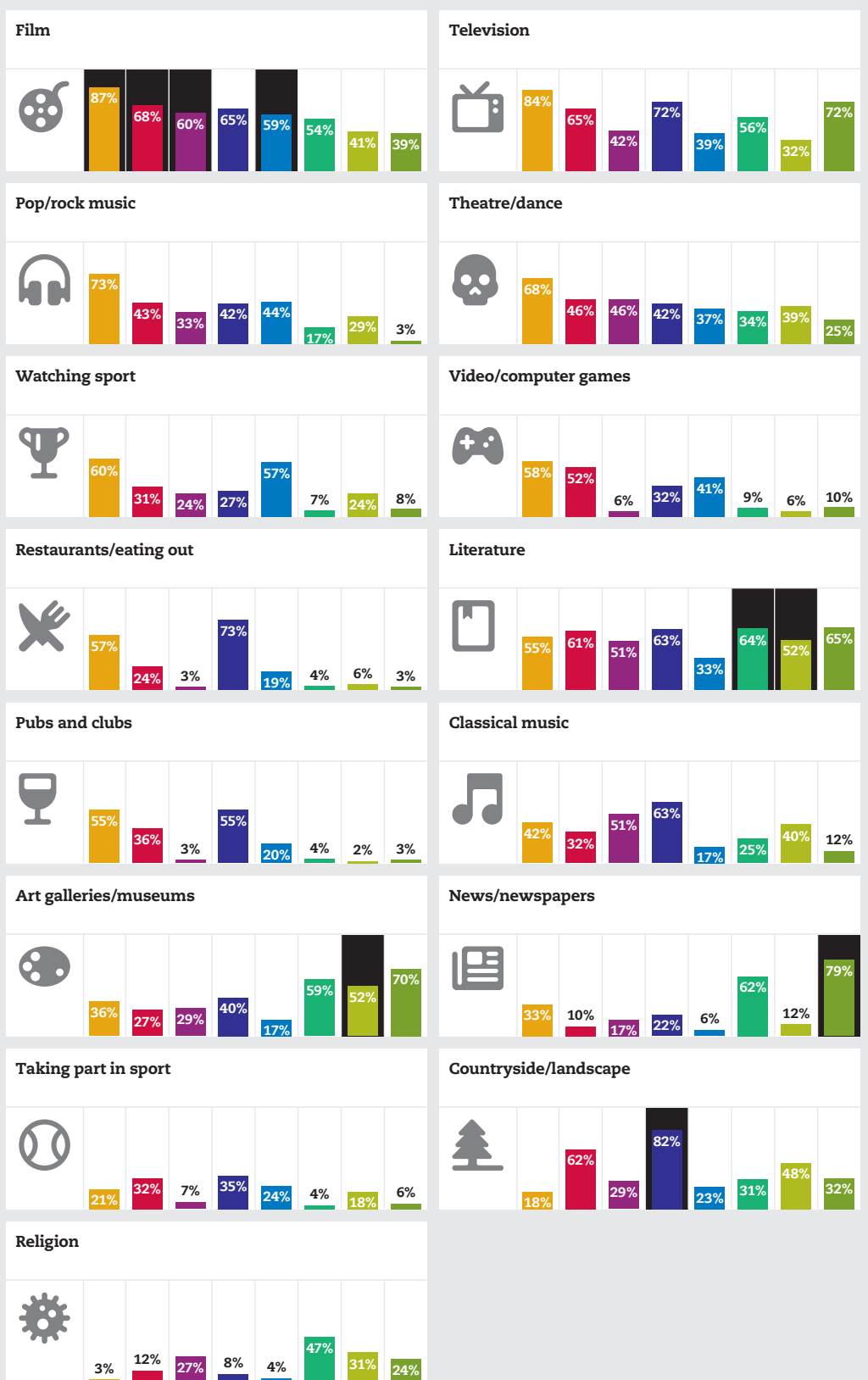
²² In particular, see pages 62–65.

²³ See the detailed analysis of survey question B5 at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Figure 11:
Words associated with a range of art forms and activities (Survey question B5. Top activity for each adjective highlighted)

- Entertaining
- Good at providing escapism
- Emotional or moving
- Relaxing
- Exciting
- Thought-provoking
- Inspirational
- Informative/educational

Top activity for each adjective



24 See pages 58–60 for a more detailed discussion of people's re-viewing habits.

25 Extrapolating from the responses indicates up to nine million people in the UK have taken action in at least one of these ways.

Similarly, many people agreed that some films they watched had internal but still significant effects on them.

- **63% had seen films that were educational in some way.**
- **63% had seen films that gave them new insights into other cultures or other types of people.**
- **36% had seen films that made them feel proud about who they are, or where they come from.**
- **25% had seen films that made them feel more self-confident.**

In demographic terms, the reported impact of films appears to decline with age. For example over 55s were less likely than younger people to have seen films recently that led them to take action directly related to the situation shown in the film (6%, compared with 11% of 45 to 54 year-olds, 17% of 35 to 44 year-olds and 22% of those under 35).

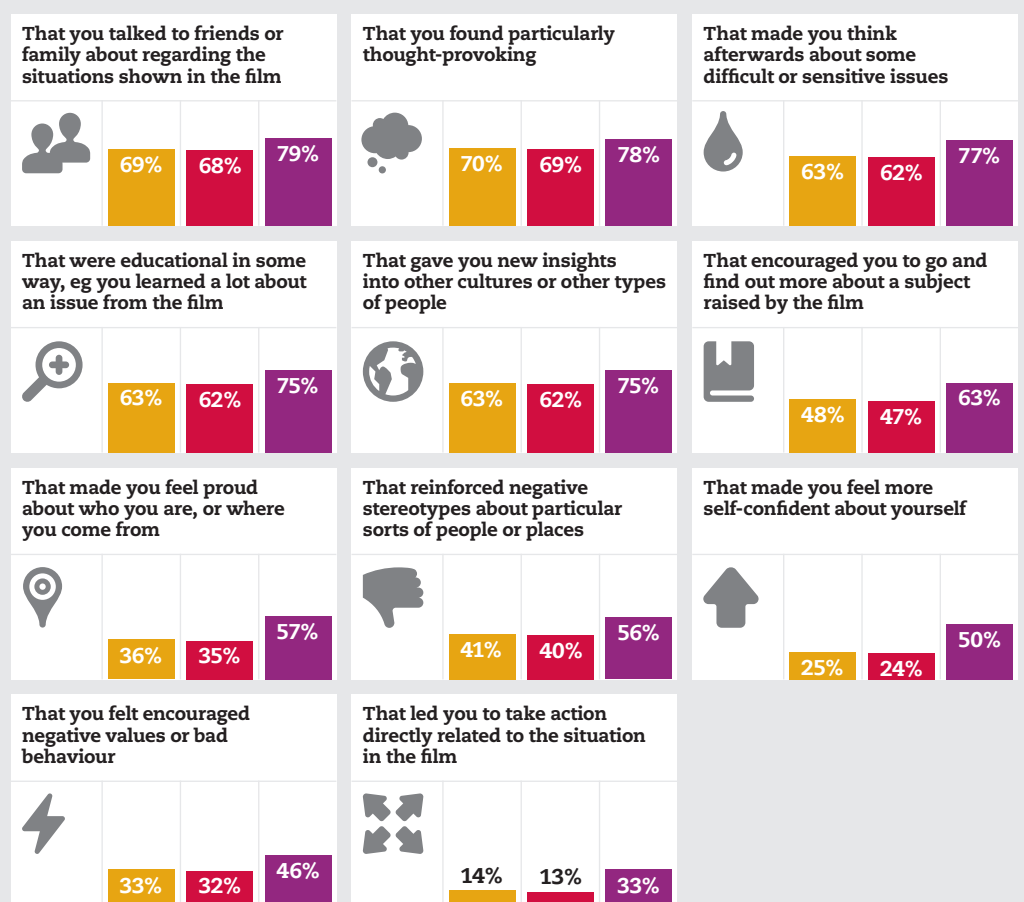
People from minority ethnic groups reported stronger engagement with the films they see, being more likely than people from white backgrounds to experience the effects shown in Figure 12.

Respondents were asked about active responses to films, including buying film merchandise, joining fan clubs and sites, even seeking work in film and television. 81% watched films they had first seen in the cinema on television.²⁴ Just under two-thirds bought DVDs or soundtrack CDs of films they had seen in the cinema. A quarter made a special trip to visit a film location (Figure 13).

As Figures 12 and 13 show, only the most dedicated make the more substantial investments of time needed to join film clubs (8%), film fan clubs and networks (19%) or take action directly related to the situation in the film (14%). However, these still represent substantial numbers²⁵ of people called into action by film and, at a personal level, can lead to substantial and life-changing effects.

Figure 12:
Proportion reporting that films watched had one or more of a range of effects, by broad ethnic group (Survey question D6)

- All
- White
- Minority ethnic group



'Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark is the BEST film ever! Completely captivated me from the moment I saw it, exciting, funny, action packed, adventurous, even the theme music prickles the hairs on the back of my neck. I've got the DVDs, T-shirt, posters, hat and whip, even Mr Potato Indiana Jones. It re-ignited my passion for history and archaeology – I even wear the hat when I'm on digs! I watch it every chance I get – I wanna be Indiana Jones!!!'

'Despite this being a blockbuster movie which obviously played up the drama – I do feel that the base message of this film was important and relevant. Especially bearing in mind our need for oil and reliance on countries currently in the grip of violent social change.'

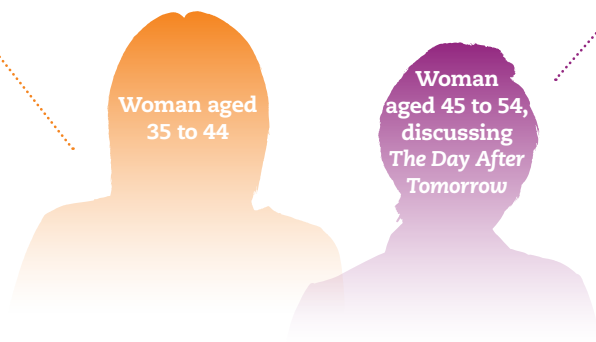
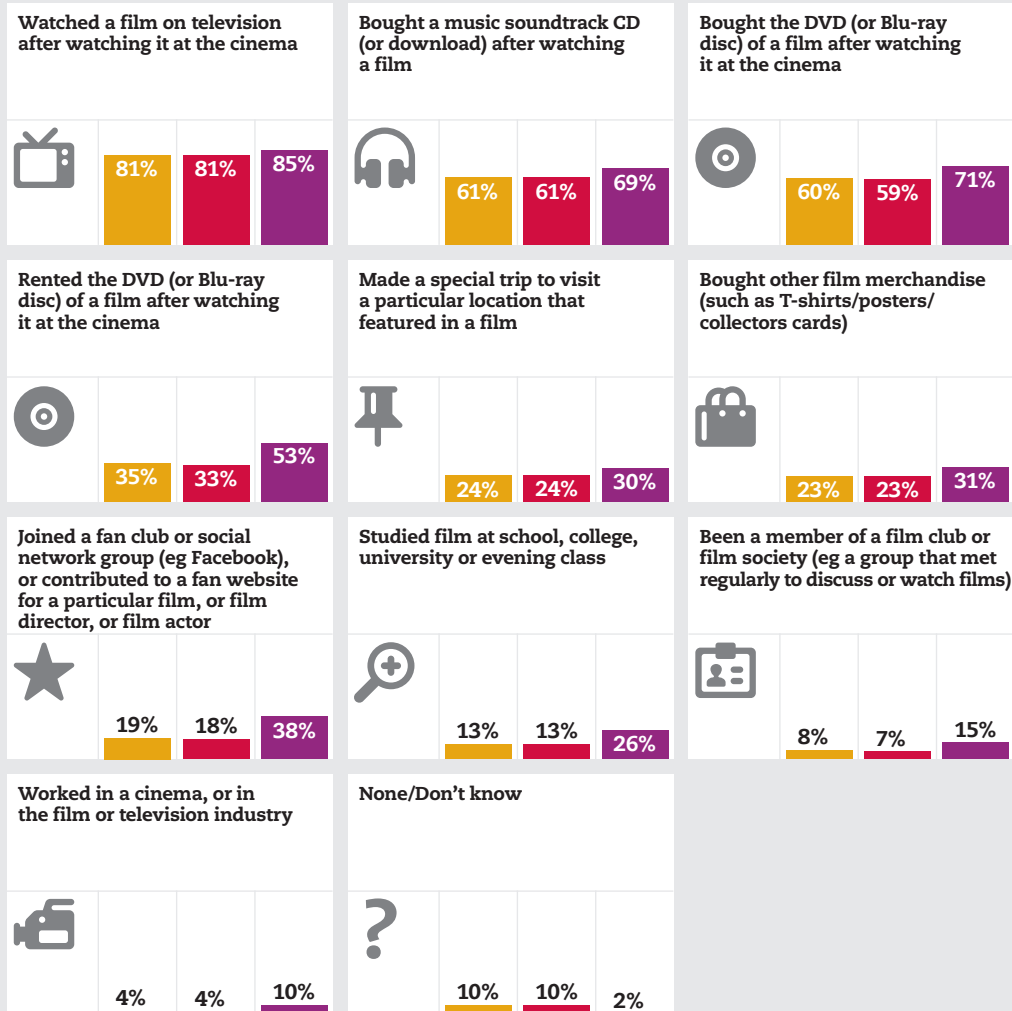


Figure 13:
Proportion of people who have done one or more of a range of activities after watching a film (Survey question C6)

- All
- White
- Minority ethnic group



What do we see as the value of film?

- **People value individual films for their emotional impact.**
- **Mainstream films that prioritise entertainment can have profound effects on people.**
- **A substantial minority of people consider films they saw in childhood or young adulthood to still be powerful and influential.**

Respondents highlighted the emotional and entertaining effects of film, but also reported long-lasting impacts that go beyond entertainment and escapism.

Asked for unprompted reasons for selecting a particular film as having an effect on them, 41% of respondents described the film as having an emotional impact in one way or another – for example, finding the film upsetting or frightening, ‘feel-good’, moving, or uplifting – the most common type of response.

People also identified other effects that could be broadly categorised as emotional reactions. For example, 12% gave responses that indicated a degree of self-reflection (identifying with characters from the film, giving them insight into life, relationships, family and friends). About half the respondents (49%) described how their significant film had been thought-provoking or educational in some way, in that it had made them think about particular subjects covered by the film, or had given them new insights into particular situations in life. About one in five respondents (22%) said that the film had made them reflect on the lives of others, for instance people’s lives in history, in wartime, in other countries or other social groups, the difficulties experienced by people with particular conditions or living in particular situations. A common theme picked up within this group (by 11%) was the film’s memorable portrayal of human cruelty and injustice, in particular the horrors of war.

The effects can last for many years. 38% of people could name a film which reminded them of their childhood and 40% one that reminded them of their teenage/early adult years. For some the emotional impact of a film can last a lifetime.

‘As a mother myself I could not imagine treating my children in such a way and it made me wonder what drives people to do such awful things to the children they brought into this world. I watched most of the film in tears and there was a scene where a baby was thrown and that really upset me. This film had an effect on me for quite some time.’

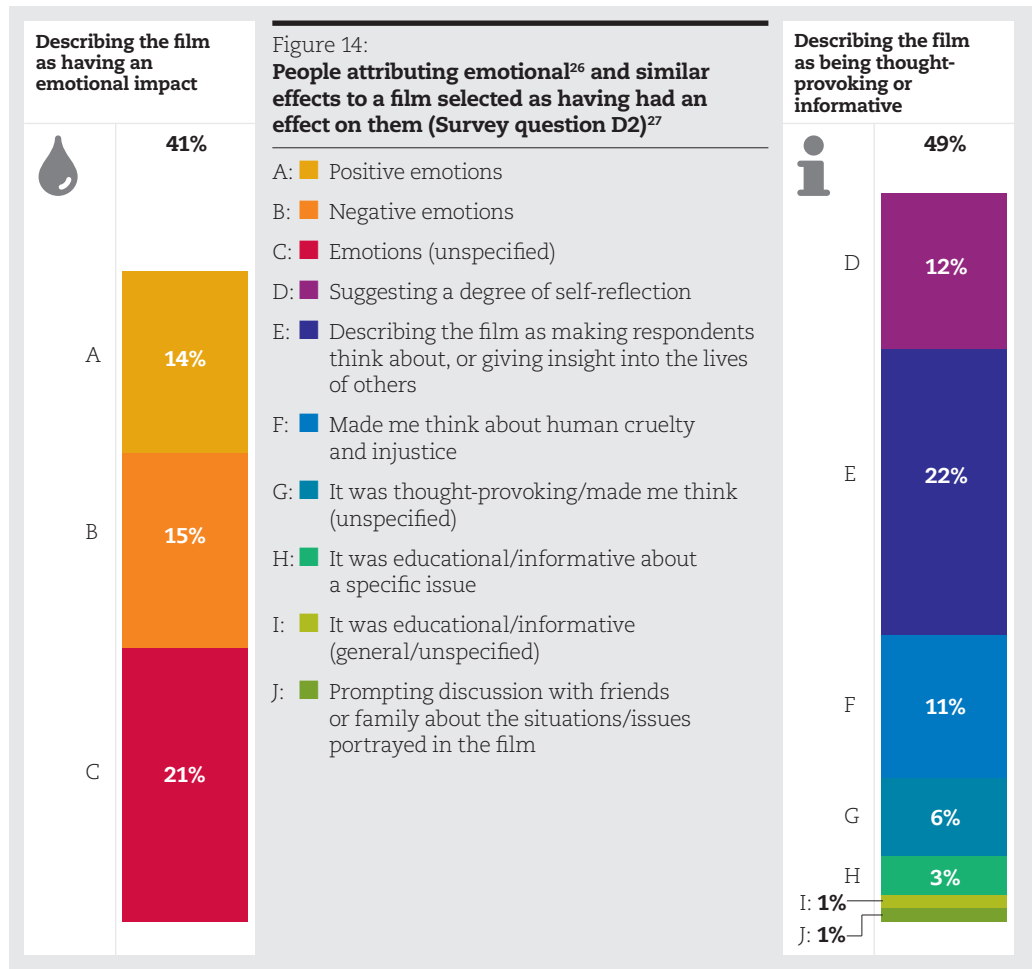
‘This film has made me change my spending habits. I now choose what companies I buy products from to ensure they are ethically responsible.’

Woman
aged 45 to 54 on
Precious

Man aged
20 to 24, talking
about the
environmental
documentary
Green

26 At question D2, respondents were asked to describe in their own words the effect their selected film had upon them. These verbatim responses were analysed and coded using a code frame determined by the survey team and these codes were then grouped to give the summaries shown in this figure. This figure only analyses responses that referred to emotional or similar responses. Pages 56-58 discuss a broader range of responses to question D2 and more detailed analysis of these verbatim responses can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

27 Question D2 was an open question and many responses covered a number of categories; the percentages represent the proportion of respondents including that type of response in their answer and so the percentages are not intended to add to 100%.



'Random Harvest – seen as a child and it still makes me think/cry/smile. I watch it once a year. It's sad but uplifting and has resonances with me.'

'Bridge on the River Kwai encouraged me to visit Sri Lanka (where the film was shot) and Thailand (where the action was supposed to have taken place).'

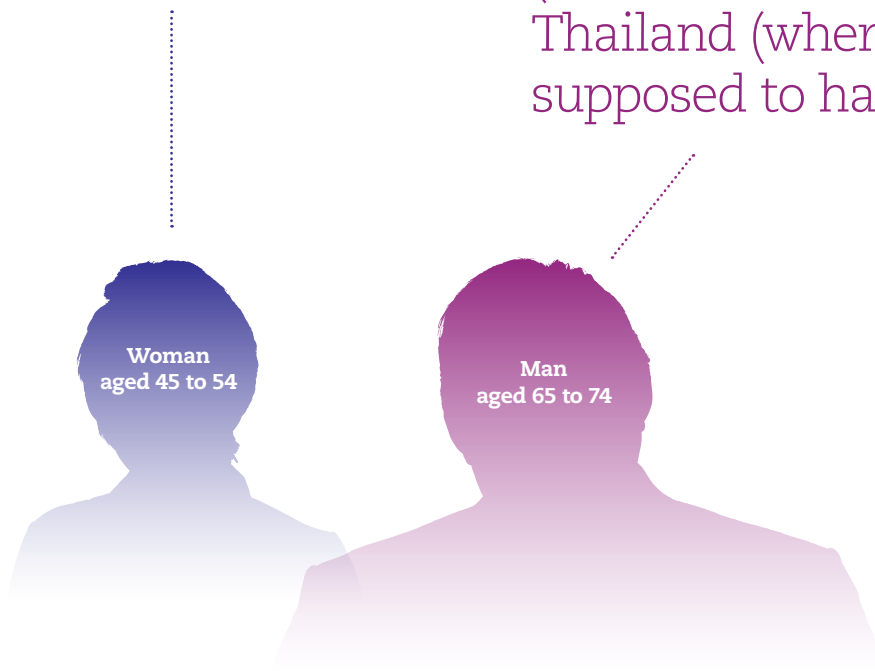
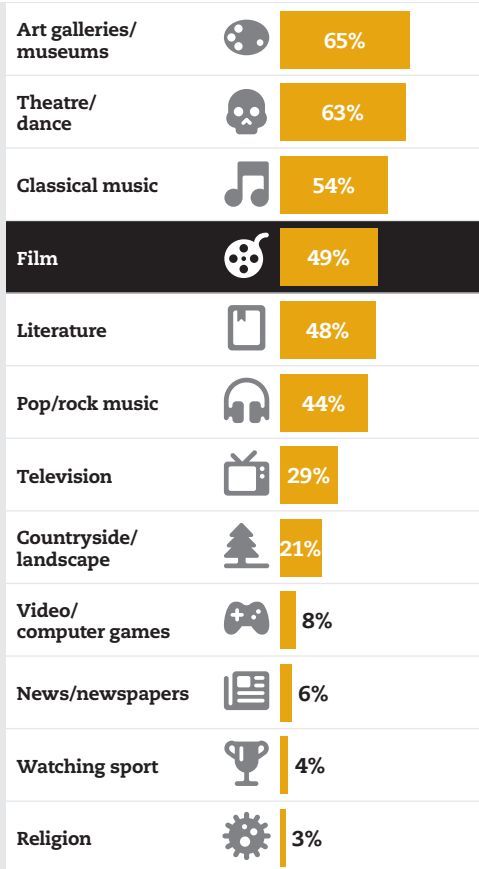


Figure 15:
Art/entertainment/
media forms
associated with
artistic value
(survey question B5)



Do we appreciate the aesthetic aspects of films?

- Half our respondents think that films can have artistic value.
- Music, design and cinematography are all recognised as being important parts of a film's quality and effect.
- For some respondents the aesthetic quality of a film is important in making the choice to view.

Half the respondents thought film had artistic value (Figure 15).

People are aware of and value the art and craft of film, pointing to the visual style and other aesthetic elements when talking about memorable aspects of a film that had an effect on them.²⁸ Half pointed to the way it looked or the way it was shot and 38% the music or sound track. Just under two-thirds pointed to particular images or scenes from the film. Despite the popularity of blockbusters as a type of film (Figure 6), less than 1% selected special effects as the most memorable aspect.

It appears that aesthetic aspects of film are considered strongest in the cinema and, to a lesser extent, on television/DVD. Music is noted as important in making a choice to view by 17% in the cinema, 14% on DVD and 18% on television. When downloading/streaming (8%) or watching on a mobile device (4%) music is far less important. Similarly a spectacular visual and audio experience is a strong driver in the cinema (39%) but much weaker on all other platforms.²⁹

Directors are a significant, if not dominant, element in individuals' choices of film with 37% citing³⁰ the director as an important aspect in their decision.

Supplementary interviews provided additional evidence on film as art. Interviewees expressed near-unanimity that all genres and styles of films could either be works of art in their own right, or contain strong artistic elements. Films mentioned by those interviewed as being works of art formed a very diverse group, including *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Zulu*, *Titanic* and *Trainspotting* as well as the films of Peter Greenaway. Echoing responses to the survey discussed above, a common view of interviewees was that excellence in story and cinematography were important characteristics of any film which aspired to be art. There was, however, a distinct sub-current of thought that art film was by its very nature serious, avant-garde and hard to understand.

²⁸ See the detailed analysis of survey question C5 at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

²⁹ DVD 16%, TV 14%, downloading/streaming, 7% and on a mobile device 4%.

³⁰ Across all media, including TV. The percentage in respect of TV is 17%, underlining the influence of a film's director in influencing viewing by other means.

‘It made me think about the various artistic elements in filmmaking, especially with regard to writing, acting, directing and cinematography.’

‘It is beautifully shot... it’s the story and interplay of the characters that is most effective. Ruined lives, pointless existences but still somehow beautiful, touching and meaningful.’

‘Cinematography. Style and language. It must break new ground. Be thought-provoking.’

Woman
aged 55 to 64
from Yorkshire,
discussing
American Beauty

Woman
aged 25 to 34
discussing
The Usual Suspects

Woman
aged 35 to 44
on what makes
a film art³¹

³¹ During a post-survey qualitative interview.

Figure 16:
Support for British
films and filmmaking
(Survey question F5)

■ Agree
■ Disagree

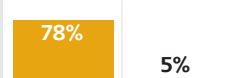
It's important for
Britain to be able to
make British films



British films are an
important part of
British culture



National Lottery
funding of British-made
films should continue



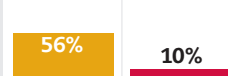
When British films
or film stars win
international awards,
it helps to foster a
sense of national pride



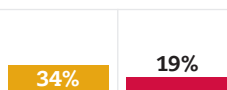
Too few of the films
shown in the UK
are British



Too many of the films
shown in the UK
are American



There are too few non-
English language films
shown in the UK



Do films contribute to our identity, sense of community and place in the world?

- There is strong support for British film and filmmaking.
- Most people agree that British film is an important part of British culture.
- Many people feel there are too few British films shown.
- Most people are interested in the international success of British films and British stars.
- The technical and acting quality of British films is held in high regard.

The survey asked a number of questions about attitudes to British film and the related notion of Britishness in film. The responses indicate high levels of support for British films with only comparatively minor variations across age, gender and ethnicity. For example, 88% agreed that it is important for Britain to be able to make British films and 78% agreed that National Lottery funding of British-made films should continue.

Respondents were asked if they had seen a British film in the previous 12 months (on all platforms) with 86% having done so. Just under half (48%) had watched a British film at the cinema in the last 12 months. Higher proportions had done so on television (81%) or on DVD or Blu-ray (60%).

Half the respondents said that they were more likely to watch a film if it were British. 70% said that they were personally interested when British film stars or films won awards.³² Over three-quarters agreed that when British films or film stars win international awards, it helps to foster a sense of national pride.

Almost across the board on these measures, women were more likely than men to be interested in film successes as well as those of television and music. Respondents from minority ethnic groups were more likely to say they were very interested in the success of British stars (in all disciplines) although the overall levels of interest were relatively consistent (ie including those 'fairly interested'). However, respondents from minority ethnic groups were much more likely to be interested in the success of American films and film stars (62% compared with 39%).

Respondents rated the technical and aesthetic qualities of British films highly. Asked about the production qualities of films of different nationalities, those of British films were rated good by 95% of respondents,³³ Hollywood films by 93%, 80% for other English language films and 58% for non-English language films. Asked a similar question about the quality of acting, 17% of respondents felt that it depended entirely on the film or actor. Of the remainder, whilst 87% felt that acting in Hollywood films was good,³⁴ significantly more respondents (94%) felt the same of the quality of acting in British films.

32 This compares to only 41% saying they were interested when American films or film stars were successful or won awards. However, the survey was undertaken during the 2011 Oscars' season when interest in the prospects of *The King's Speech* was intense.

33 The percentages relate to respondents who expressed an opinion.

34 Either fairly or very good.

Case study four

Trainspotting

Respondents to our survey confirmed the high reputation of *Trainspotting* with almost one in 10 of them choosing it as a 'British film that has had a significant effect on UK society'.

Trainspotting ranked highest as the choice of 25 to 34 year-olds (16%) and 35 to 44 year-olds (13%) who could recall its initial impact. But it also remains the first choice for 15 to 24 year-olds (7%) and 45 to 54 year-olds (9%), indicating a remarkable degree of cross-generational consensus for such an avowedly transgressive film.

Adapted from a cult 1993 novel by Irvine Welsh, set in the underworld of Edinburgh drug users, *Trainspotting* became one of the biggest critical and commercial successes of British cinema in the 1990s. Developed by Figment Films after the commercial breakthrough of their debut, the black comedy *Shallow Grave* (1994), *Trainspotting* used many of the earlier film's personnel, notably director Danny Boyle and Ewan McGregor. The latter emerged as an international star with the film's wide release.

Trainspotting shocked as well as engaged viewers with its aimless, seedy characters, seemingly non-judgemental acceptance of their heroin addiction and Scots-accented profanity. What impressed even disapproving critics and drew massive audiences were the film's manic energy and dynamic music, featuring Iggy Pop, Primal Scream, Blur, New Order and others (which made the soundtrack album a hit in its own right). Estimates of its earnings include some £12.5 million from the UK box office and \$16.5 million in the USA, with substantial attendances in Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands for what one UK critic called 'transnational *Trainspotting*'. Since 1996, it has secured a firm place in international rankings, scoring 8.2 with 165,345 votes on IMDb, coming tenth in the BFI poll of Top 100 British Films (1999) and voted 'the best Scottish film of all time' (in the Scottish magazine, *The List*, 2004).

Both book and film were important for their 'insider' portrayal of heroin culture, and comments from two of our respondents attest to this aspect of *Trainspotting*'s continued impact, with one remarking:

'Trainspotting made me aware of drug culture in Scotland.'

Another said:

'It made me think about drug addicts and their lives.'

There is plentiful evidence from other sources of how the film continues to provoke debate about drug use and its potential glamorisation. A messageboard thread on IMDb began in February 2010 with the observation: **'While I love *Trainspotting* and don't think it glamorises drug use in any way I think it shows a bit more of the 'fun' elements of drug culture.'**³⁵ A year later, the discussion was continuing, with a post comparing the merits of *Requiem for a Dream* and *Trainspotting* as 'deterrents' to drug use: **'I don't think *Trainspotting* was as in-your-face as *Requiem* was.'**³⁶

But the reputation of *Trainspotting* goes far beyond its candid portrayal of drug culture, and seems to reflect a very specific attitude towards 'Britishness' and how it should be portrayed. A *Guardian* blog,³⁷ commenting on the film's place in the Top 25 British films, says:

'Britain is such a miserable place... which is why *Trainspotting* deserves to be top: it takes that subject and makes it truly cinematic. It's joyful, funny and tragic and is one of those films you can't stop watching when it comes on.'

Another *Guardian* blogger relishes the film's lack of pretension:

'Refreshing to see a populist movie at number one, and not an art house worthy.'

This echoes the lead 'user review' on IMDb (at 10/5/11):

'RATING: 10 out of 10. Never patronising and completely unpretentious, *Trainspotting* is one of the most daring, unconventional films ever made. It inspires a level of discomfort rivalled by very few movies, because, even at its most graphic, Boyle never insults the viewer with mere shock tactics.'³⁸

In our survey the film appeals to both men and women more or less equally and there is little noticeable difference between respondents of different family status or between those who lived in urban or rural locations. *Trainspotting* seems to hold particular appeal for respondents who are very interested in film, particularly independent film, and are relatively affluent, working and white.³⁹

Despite the film's most famous line – 'it's shite being Scottish' – both book and film have always been cherished in Scotland, perhaps because they present a truthful image of life in Scotland at that moment and challenge sentimental images of Scottishness. 17% of Scots chose it as their 'significant film' compared with 9% elsewhere in the UK. This contribution to the UK's contemporary culture owed much to Film4, which funded the film's £1.6 million budget in its entirety.

35 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117951/board/nest/157423781?p=1>

36 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117951/board/nest/157423781?d=180093146&p=4#180093146>

37 This refers to a poll by *The Observer*: Top 25 British Films of the Last 25 Years, September 1, 2009, which was an 'expert' poll by a number of invited voters. As noted elsewhere (see in particular pages 58–60) the list of films named as significant by our respondents differs significantly from critical and expert film rankings. In this case only three films are included in both Figure 18 and *The Observer*'s list, *Trainspotting*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *This Is England*. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2009/sep/06/observer-top-25-films>).

38 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117951/>

39 Within its overall frequency of reference by respondents of 9%, there was a higher incidence of reference amongst respondents who described themselves as White (10%), as distinct from other descriptions of ethnicity (6%), earning over £20k per annum (12%), employed (12%), very interested in film (14%) and expressing a preference for independent film (19%).

Do British films reflect British life?

- **Most think that British films should be true to life.**
- **Significant numbers of people think there are too few films featuring disabled people, and too many about rich and privileged people living in London and the home counties.**

When asked⁴⁰ if they could name the last British film they had seen, seven out of 10 could either name the film or give a description. Less than half of these felt that the film was 'true to life' and around one in five felt that film did not present a picture of Britain that was 'true to life',⁴¹ while about two-thirds of respondents⁴² thought it was important that British films generally *should* give a picture of life in Britain that is true to life. This view was relatively consistent across gender or ethnic group. However, there were differences by age: 15 to 24 year-olds were the least likely to feel this way (56% compared with 66% of over 25s).

The survey then questioned respondents about more specific aspects of the subjects and settings of British films, with the answers shown in Figure 17.

Younger respondents were slightly more likely than older ones to think there are too many British films telling stories about the past⁴³ but ethnicity was a more significant factor, with respondents from minority ethnic groups more than twice⁴⁴ as likely to feel there are too many British films set in the past than white respondents.

Over 40% of respondents resident in Scotland, Wales and Northern England think there are too many British films about rich and privileged people living in London and the home counties and a similar proportion of all respondents feel there are too few films featuring disabled people. Although age and gender appear to influence this response most,⁴⁵ a significant minority among all the principal demographic groups hold this view, with one in three respondents even in the group least likely to support this view⁴⁶ believing that disabled people do not feature sufficiently in British films.



40 In question F8 of the survey.

41 18% thought that it portrayed a 'very true to life' picture of Britain, 31% thought it was 'fairly true to life', 15% 'not very true to life' and 7% 'not at all true to life'. A further 28% could not answer this question in relation to the particular film they had watched.

42 65%.

43 13% of 15 to 34 year-olds, compared with 9% of 35 to 54 year-olds and 6% of over 55s.

44 22% compared with 9%.

45 The male/female response split 36/45%. There were also significant proportions of respondents from minority ethnic groups (55%) and from those whose preference was for foreign language films (53%) who agreed with the view that too few British films featured disabled people.

46 Males aged 15 to 24.

Do films help define our British identity?

- People value British film for showing a ‘warts and all’ picture of Britain and its constituent nations.
- People think that British films tend to be realistic, honest and display a dark, unique sense of humour.
- Cast and story are the most important factors in defining whether a film is genuinely British.
- Big budgets and elaborate special effects can make films seem less British.
- In considering what makes a film British, many people instinctively make comparisons between British films and those from the USA.

In supplementary interviews respondents described what in their view makes a film British. Two elements were dominant: cast (‘actors are the thing that make it most British’) and story. Interviewees also highlighted British humour (‘a sort of dark humour’) and authenticity (‘gritty,⁴⁷ more like real life’) as British values.

Some interviewees⁴⁹ felt that location was crucial:

**‘... a typical British film would be set in a big English city, like London or Manchester. It would be heavy on British actors. The theme would be about working life – real themes.’
Man aged 25 to 34.**

However, others felt that location was not important, noting they regarded films such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Shirley Valentine*⁵⁰ and *Slumdog Millionaire* as typically British.

There was a strand of thought that bigger budgets tended to make films less British:

**‘Films that are made to be glossy or big budget... don’t feel like British stories.’
Woman aged 35 to 44.**

Bond movies were mentioned by two interviewees⁵¹ as having their Britishness compromised by big budgets and expensive effects. However, three interviewees out of 20 quoted Bond as being quintessentially British.

Figure 18:
British films mentioned as having a significant effect on society or attitudes in the UK. All films mentioned by respondents ten or more times. (Survey question F11)

Film	Number of mentions
Trainspotting	189
The Full Monty	102
East Is East	82
Billy Elliot	52
The King’s Speech	45
This Is England	36
Cathy Come Home ⁵²	34
Brassed Off	32
Slumdog Millionaire	26
Kidulthood	25
Harry Potter (all mentioned)	23
Calendar Girls	21
Bridget Jones’s Diary	20
A Clockwork Orange	19
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning	18
Kes	17
The Queen	14
Green Street	13
Bend it Like Beckham	12
The Football Factory	11
Quadrophenia	10

‘Our stories are more honest, more real than US films. The themes we choose are more rounded. Budgets are not big but the quality of filmmaking can be higher than the USA.’

47 In the main survey three films were specifically referenced as ‘gritty’ by respondents: *The Ipswich File* and two Shane Meadows films: *Room for Romeo Brass* and *This Is England*.

48 In the post-survey qualitative work.

49 Ibid.

50 Set largely in Greece.

51 In the post-survey qualitative work.

52 *Cathy Come Home* was made as a film for television (first transmitted by the BBC in 1966). It has since been distributed as a stand-alone feature and, as Figure 18 suggests, is frequently referred to as a film rather than a television programme.



53 Perhaps surprisingly, classic war films were not heavily referenced as British films having a significant effect. The most frequently referenced such film, *The Dam Busters*, was the 46th most often referenced film. The age of respondents who referenced this film ranged from 15 to over 55, but were exclusively male.

54 Michael Caine appears to have made a significant individual cultural contribution. He appears in several films identified by respondents, for example *Harry Brown*, *Get Carter*, *The Italian Job*.

In both interviews and the survey results there was appreciation that British film was valuable for dealing with all aspects of British society and history. Asked to name British films that had a significant effect on society or attitudes in the UK (Figure 18), films identified covered a wide range of topics and themes: social issues (*Brassed Off*, *East Is East*, *Trainspotting*); British history (*Chariots of Fire*, *The Queen*, *Made In Dagenham*); World War II (*633 Squadron*, *Battle of Britain*);⁵³ dramas (*Billy Liar*, *Alfie*, *Get Carter*)⁵⁴ which caught the mood of certain locations and times. It is films like these that define for many people important elements of the national character and national archetypes.

It seems that significant numbers of people value British film for showing a 'warts and all' picture of Britain and its component nations, as this selection of quotes illustrates:

'Rob Roy gave a graphic display of a small part of our history, and helped explain our somewhat tortured relationship with our neighbour, Scotland.'
Man aged 55 to 64.

'Feelings of revulsion at some of the characters depicted, who indulge in racially-motivated verbal abuse and violence.'
Man aged 20 to 24 on *This Is England*.

'Gritty and at times brutal reality of suburban Britain, my childhood was represented with uncanny realism, both good and bad aspects were unflinchingly laid bare.'
Man aged 45 to 54 on *This Is England*.

'It showed the determination of the British people.'
Man aged 65 to 74 on *The Dam Busters*.

'It made me proud to be British and inspired me.'
Man 65 to 74 on *Henry V*.

This appreciation of British films that 'tell it like it is' also manifested itself in the post-survey qualitative work where a woman aged 35 to 44 referenced *Trainspotting*:

'I thought that was a really British film. Not really a bit of Britain that you want to see but it was very British.'

People used sophisticated and complex judgements when thinking about which films were British, making assessments which at times contradict legal definitions of British film used by the industry in the context of tax relief for Culturally British film. The survey asked two related questions about the perceived nationality of different films, one asking respondents to rate on a sliding scale whether each of a list of films was British or of any other nationality, the other whether films were British or American.

Respondents saw films with British stories set in the UK as close to 'entirely British', even if they were partly produced or financed from the USA. Films about non-British people set outside the UK were seen as being mainly of another nationality. This is illustrated at the borderline by *Slumdog Millionaire* which, though an independent British film, was seen as being slightly more of 'another nationality' (Figure 19). Some interviewees saw it as a British film set in a non-UK location.

In the supplementary interviews, interviewees instinctively made comparisons between British and American film styles. No unprompted comparisons were made with other national film cultures. The survey asked respondents to assess how British or American they felt a list of films to be and the results are shown in Figure 20.

Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit, rated the most British film on this list, if not displaying the grittiness that for many was one defining factor of Britishness, certainly eschews glitz and glamour in plot and scenario in favour of a more down-to-earth picture of life (no superhero saving the world, instead the rescue of a local vegetable show). It can also be taken as a type study of quirky British humour.

Many of the titles, however, seem to indicate a fluid set of judgements, balancing British stories/themes with what, from interview evidence, appears to be a feeling that high budget, big special effects and, perhaps, international casting render even very British content less uniquely British. *Lawrence of Arabia*, which one respondent said 'taught me the history of the British', was seen by many as having American (or Hollywood) influences, as was the 2006 Bond film *Casino Royale*. *Braveheart*, seen by more than one respondent as a film which spoke powerfully of Scottishness and the historical relationship between England and Scotland, rates almost exactly as equally British and American. Conversely, *The Da Vinci Code*, based on a novel by an American author and an international Hollywood production, was not considered whole-bloodedly American, perhaps because of its UK locations and high-profile British cast members.



Right:
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.
 Courtesy of Columbia Pictures© 2000 United China Vision Incorporated. All Rights Reserved. With thanks to Margarita Diaz.

Opposite:
Wallace and Gromit.
 Courtesy of Aardman Animations Ltd. With thanks to David Sproxton & Neil Warwick.



Figure 19:
Views on whether selected films are British or another nationality (Survey question F2)

Film	Average position on scale	Official nationality	Don't know (%)
The Full Monty (1997)	1.31	UK/USA	6
Billy Elliot (2000)	1.41	UK/France	6
Trainspotting (1996)	1.46	UK	9
St Trinian's (2007)	2.03	UK	11
Shaun of the Dead (2004)	2.24	UK/USA	20
East Is East (1999)	2.41	UK	23
Slumdog Millionaire (2008)	4.51	UK	8
The Lives of Others (2006)	5.14	Germany	67
Saving Private Ryan (1998)	5.86	USA	8
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)	6.11	China/HK/Taiwan/USA	24

Films were rated on a seven point scale with one being 'entirely British', seven being 'entirely of another nationality' and four being 'equally British and another nationality'.

Figure 20:
Views on how British or American selected films are thought to be (Survey question F1)

Film	Average position on scale	Official nationality	Don't know (%)
Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005)	1.68	UK/USA	7
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001)	2.12	UK/USA	4
Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)	2.70	UK/USA	4
Lawrence of Arabia (1962)	3.05	UK/USA	17
Mary Poppins (1964)	3.06	USA	4
Casino Royale (2006)	3.24	UK/USA/Cze/Ger	5
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (2010)	3.40	UK/USA	11
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003)	3.43	USA/NZ	8
Braveheart (1995)	3.90	USA	6
The Da Vinci Code (2006)	5.55	UK/USA	8

Films were rated on a seven point scale with one being 'entirely British', seven being 'entirely American' and four being 'equally British and American'.

Case study five

This Is England, Braveheart

Two films of very different production scale reveal aspects of what gives a film national and regional appeal within the UK. *Braveheart* (1995), a major studio production starring and directed by Mel Gibson, was the joint 14th most cited 'significant' film (See Figure 27), but was third among Scottish respondents, indicating a difference in value and perception.

This Is England (2006) a low-budget semi-autobiographical feature by the Midlands filmmaker Shane Meadows, was the sixth most frequently mentioned film in Figure 18 (British films that have had a significant effect on UK society or attitudes), and fourth among selections from the North/North West/East and West Midlands, with no mention at all outside England, which underlines how much its appeal is to Central and Northern England as distinct from the wider UK, even allowing for its much smaller scale and breadth of distribution compared with *Braveheart* (budgets: circa £20 million as against £1.5 million; full circuit release for *Braveheart* with 306 UK screens at its widest extent, 151 screens in the UK for *This Is England*).

Both films deal, in different ways, with the power of belief and with contentious history. *Braveheart* tells the story of William Wallace, the 13th century Scots leader who united his unruly countrymen in revolt against English rule, and Gibson created a stirring romantic tale in which noble Scots battle bravely against their own effete aristocracy and the English oppressors. *This Is England* shows a youngster in the mid-1980s, befriended by a Nottingham skinhead group who introduce him to adolescent pleasures, before the group falls under the

influence of a sinister neo-Nazi figure, and young Shaun is faced with some serious choices. Both films have strong, emotive soundtracks, and charismatic central performances, making the ideologies they respectively promote and criticise highly attractive.

Two 25 to 34 year-old Scottish respondents, male and female, convey the local impact of *Braveheart*: **'it brought an emotional response from a lot of people in the cinema when I saw it for the first time'**; and **'It had historical significance for Scotland and made history much clearer – a very emotional and thought-provoking film, I imagine for Scottish people in particular.'** For some older Scots, the film prompted reflection about their forebears: **'This film brought home to me how our ancestors lived and had to fight for their country – it made me feel very proud to be Scottish,'** wrote a 55 to 64 year-old woman; and it made a 65 to 74 year-old man **'realise how my ancestors lived!'**

Braveheart has been widely and plausibly linked to the campaign that led to Scottish devolution in 1997, having apparently boosted a tide of nationalist feeling by its depiction of early Scottish revolt against English dominance. Even the unhistorical blue face-paint worn by Gibson's warriors found its way into popular lore and behaviour, becoming common among Scottish sports fans. The effect of the film was not confined to audiences within Scotland. It made a 35 to 44 year-old man living in Greater London, whose grandparents were Scottish, **'think about my allegiance to this country and I came away thinking that the Catholic-Protestant troubles were historically justified'**

This Is England.
Courtesy of Optimum Releasing



55 Colin McArthur, *Brigadoon, Braveheart and the Scots: Distortions of Scotland in Hollywood Cinema*, I. B. Tauris, 2003. See also: *The 20th Century tartan monster: the cultural politics of Scottish national identity*, Richard Cook, Miami University, 2000.

56 Meadows continued his story of Midlands working-class culture in the 1980s in a sequel, *This Is England '86*, made as a four-part series for Channel 4 in 2009, and a further sequel has been spoken about.

because of the English treatment of the Irish and the Scots'. Non-Scottish spectators were also influenced: a 55 to 64 year-old woman in the West Midlands was encouraged to study English history and **'the fights between the two countries'**, while it made a 55 to 64 year-old man **'want to come and visit Scotland'** (which is where, apparently, he now lives).

Those who were stirred by the film to study the period may well have discovered how far the film strayed from the historical record. *Braveheart* has been roundly criticised by some Scottish historians, and the critic Colin McArthur attacked its **'appropriation by political, touristic and sporting figures'** while analysing its **'sinister appeal to the proto-fascist psyche'**.⁵⁵ But even McArthur admits its **'enormous resonance within Scottish culture'** especially among the Scots diaspora.

This Is England tackles a narrower and more recent phenomenon: the rise of neo-Nazi ideology among disenchanted youth, which was especially marked among skinheads during the recession and social tension of the 1980s. Like all of Meadows' films, *This Is England* reflects his experience of growing up in the East Midlands, and this authenticity strongly impressed some of our respondents. A 25 to 34 year-old Northern man had **'a very emotional response, as it reminded me of growing up on a council estate in the 1980s. The whole storyline and the soundtrack were very evocative.'** A 45 to 54 year-old man in the North West of England was struck by the film's **'gritty and at times brutal reality of suburban Britain'** and felt that his own childhood **'was represented with uncanny realism. Both good and bad aspects were unflinchingly laid bare'**.

Two 25 to 34 year-old Scottish respondents, male and female, convey the local impact of *Braveheart*: **'it brought an emotional response from a lot of people in the cinema when I saw it for the first time'**; and **'It had historical significance for Scotland and made history much clearer – a very emotional and thought-provoking film, I imagine for Scottish people in particular.'**

Meadows has been accused of pandering to BNP attitudes through his sympathetic portrayal of the skinheads' treatment of Shaun – a charge he vigorously denies – but it is clearly this dangerous realism that made the film significant for some respondents living far from the Midlands. A 45 to 54 woman in the South East was particularly shocked **'that children can be drawn so easily into gangs and violence'**, because she also **'grew up in the 70s–80s, when the film was set'**. A younger man of 20 to 24 in the South East experienced **'feelings of revulsion at some of the characters depicted, who indulge in racially-motivated verbal abuse and violence'**.

Our respondents provide support for the view that these films were received as powerful, highly emotive statements on the politics of national and regional identity. One rhetorical, romantic – a call to arms through an appeal to mythic history; the other looking candidly at the appeal of far right attitudes, as seen through the eyes of a vulnerable child in Midlands Britain during the Thatcher era.⁵⁶

57 See analysis of responses to question D6 in Figure 12 on page 36.

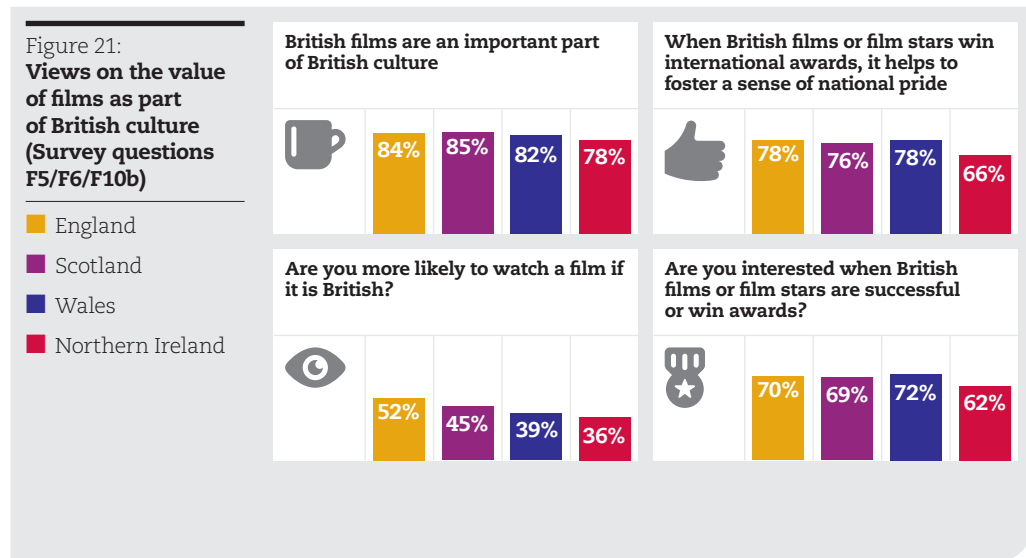
Do films give particular expression to the Nations and Regions of the UK?

- People want to see films that are representative of all the Nations and Regions of the UK.
- There is a stronger sense of national (especially Scottish, Welsh and Irish) than regional identity in film, though respondents in the North, North West and East Midlands regions of England in particular feel there are too few British films set where they live.
- Significant numbers believe there should be more films set outside London and the South of England.

The survey reveals a consistent interest in seeing films which are representative of all of the nations and regions of the UK. Views on film in general are remarkably consistent across the country with few outstanding differences. There is some evidence that people in Northern Ireland are less enthusiastic about and engaged with British film and notions of Britishness – though this is far from clear-cut.

For example, only 36% of people in Northern Ireland are more likely to watch a film if it is British, as against 52% of those in England, and 62% of people in Northern Ireland say that they are interested when British films or film stars win awards as compared to 70% in England (Figure 21). However, when asked whether they had watched a British film in the last 12 months, people from Northern Ireland were just as likely to have done so (83%) as those in England (86%).

There is some evidence that film is part of that complex and debated set of factors that make up regional and local identity. 40% of respondents across all nations and regions believe there are too few films set in the part of the country where they live (Figure 22), and 36% had seen films that made them feel proud about who they are and where they come from.⁵⁷ When asked about the number of films set in individual nations and regions, there was a balance between those who feel there are too few films from a given nation or region and those selecting the 'don't know' option, though across the UK as a whole a significant minority thought that too many films are set in London.



'The Quiet Man was made in Ireland and full of local type characters, that you would find in almost any community.'

Man from Northern Ireland aged 55 to 64

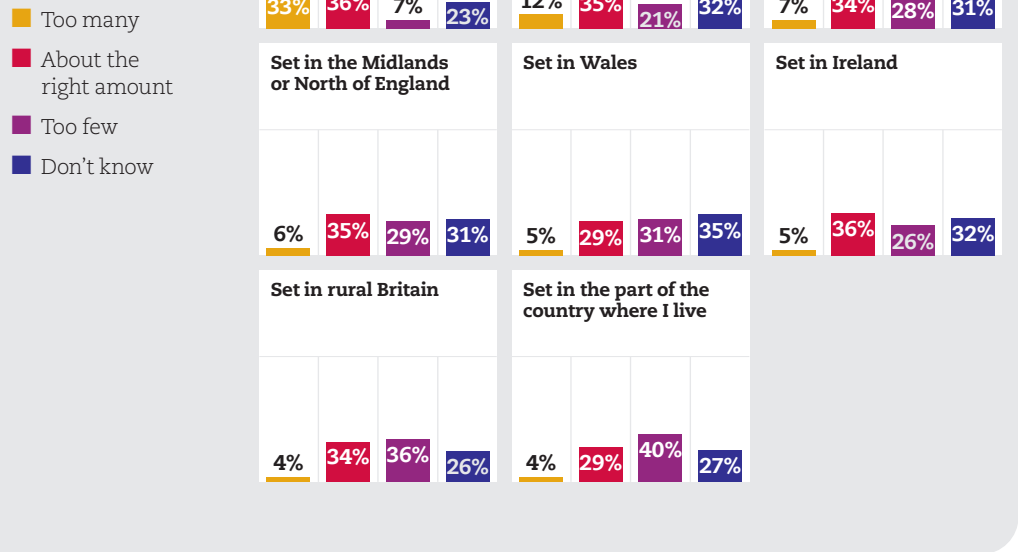
Man aged 65 to 74

'I always see *A Taste of Honey* as part of my historical social background, it was filmed at locations near to where I lived at the time... being also from a working-class family... I still see this film could be a film about part of today's society in the UK.'

58 65% of Welsh residents feel there are too few British films set in Wales; 53% of Scottish residents feel that there are too few British films set in Scotland; 52% of Northern Ireland residents feel that there are too few British films set in Ireland or Northern Ireland.

59 50% of residents in the North of England feel there are too few British films set in the Midlands or North of England. The feeling there are too few British films set in the Midlands or North of England appears to be particularly acute in the North of England (defined as the area encompassed by the local authorities in the North East and Cumbria). Fewer respondents in the North West (42%), the East and West Midlands (37% and 36% respectively) and Yorkshire and Humber (34%) gave this response to question F10c. The feeling there are too few films set in the South/South West/East of England is more muted with the South West accounting for the highest incidence of such responses (33%).

Figure 22:
Views on the number of films set in different parts of the UK (Survey question F10c)



When Figure 22 is analysed by nation and region there are larger numbers who believe there are too few films representative of the nation or region in which they live (although Londoners are ambivalent about the prevalence of films set in and around the capital, with 19% feeling there are too many and 18% feeling there are too few). Excluding residents of Greater London and the South, 42% of respondents living elsewhere in the UK agreed there are too many British films set in London.

People in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are most positive about the desirability of more films from their home nation – in particular in Wales where 65% feel there are too few films set in Wales – and no respondents feeling that there are too many.

In both Scotland and Northern Ireland just over 50%⁵⁸ feel that there are too few films set in those nations. In comparison only in the North of England⁵⁹ did as many as half of respondents think that there were too few films from their region.

‘... I enjoyed *Hobson’s Choice*’s tongue-in-cheek look at the social history in Lancashire.’

‘*The Football Factory* was filmed near where I live. Illustrated some issues in that area of London well.’



Figure 23:
Views on the number of films set in the part of the country where respondents live (Survey question F10c:8)

- Too few
- About the right amount
- Too many
- Don't know

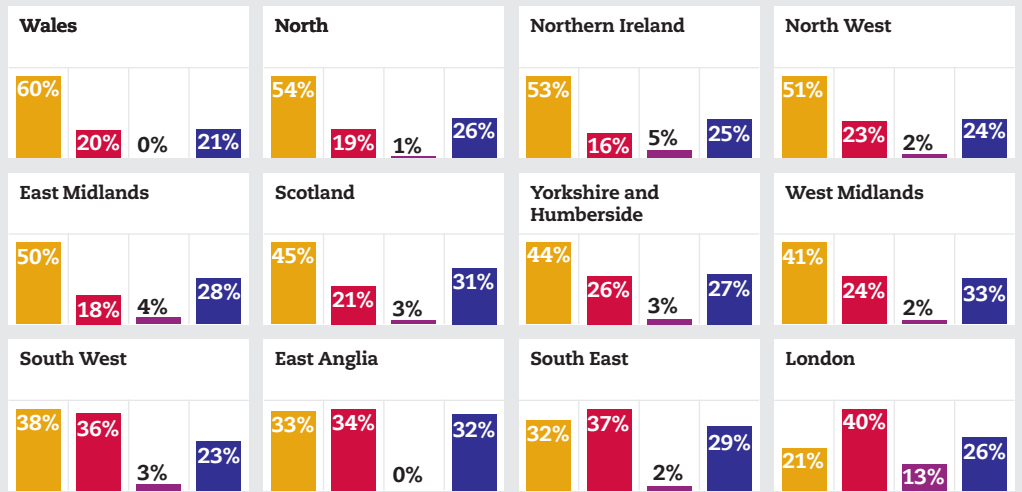


Figure 24:
National/regional character of British films mentioned as having a significant effect on society or attitudes in the UK. All films mentioned by 10 or more respondents⁶⁰ (Survey question F11)

Film	Number of mentions	Local/regional/national relevance
Trainspotting	189	Edinburgh, Scotland
The Full Monty	102	Yorkshire
East Is East	82	Manchester, the North West
Billy Elliot	52	North East
The King's Speech	45	–
This Is England	36	East Midlands
Cathy Come Home	34	London
Brassed Off	32	Yorkshire
Slumdog Millionaire	26	–
Kidulthood	25	London
Harry Potter (all mentioned)	24	–
Calendar Girls	21	rural England, Yorkshire
Bridget Jones's Diary	19	–
A Clockwork Orange	19	–
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning	18	East Midlands, Nottingham
Kes	17	Yorkshire
The Queen	14	–
Green Street	13	London
Bend it Like Beckham	12	London
The Football Factory	11	London
Quadrophenia	10	London/Brighton

'In *Bruges* made me think about how other people choose to lead their lives... made me realise that life can be short and needs to be enjoyed more. Also made me think about mental ill-health, eg depression.'

'*East Is East* made me aware of different cultures – I lived in a multicultural area but never really thought about different lives.'

'*Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* just made me appreciate my memories, even the depressing ones that I hate, so much more.'



Analysing the response to the question regarding films set in the part of the country where I live (Figure 23) reveals further evidence of a feeling of under-representation on screen, particularly in Wales, Northern Ireland and the North, North West and East Midlands regions of England.

Looking at individual films identified as British films with a significant effect on society or attitudes in the UK, a significant proportion have a strong sense of place, representative of a wide range of the UK's nations and regions. They include some strongly regionally/nationally inflected titles such as *Trainspotting*, *The Full Monty*, *East Is East* and *Billy Elliot* (the four most frequently cited titles) and also older films such as *Kes* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Do films help us build our individual identity?

- **Film has the ability to contribute to people's changing personal identity.**
- **Film is a source of role models, especially for younger people and members of minority ethnic groups.**

For many people individual films have contributed to the development of their sense of self – how they think about society and themselves in it. Responding to a question about the effects on them of a chosen film, substantial numbers selected options closely linked to personal identity (Figure 25).

Figure 25:
Effects of a chosen film on individuals (Survey question D4)

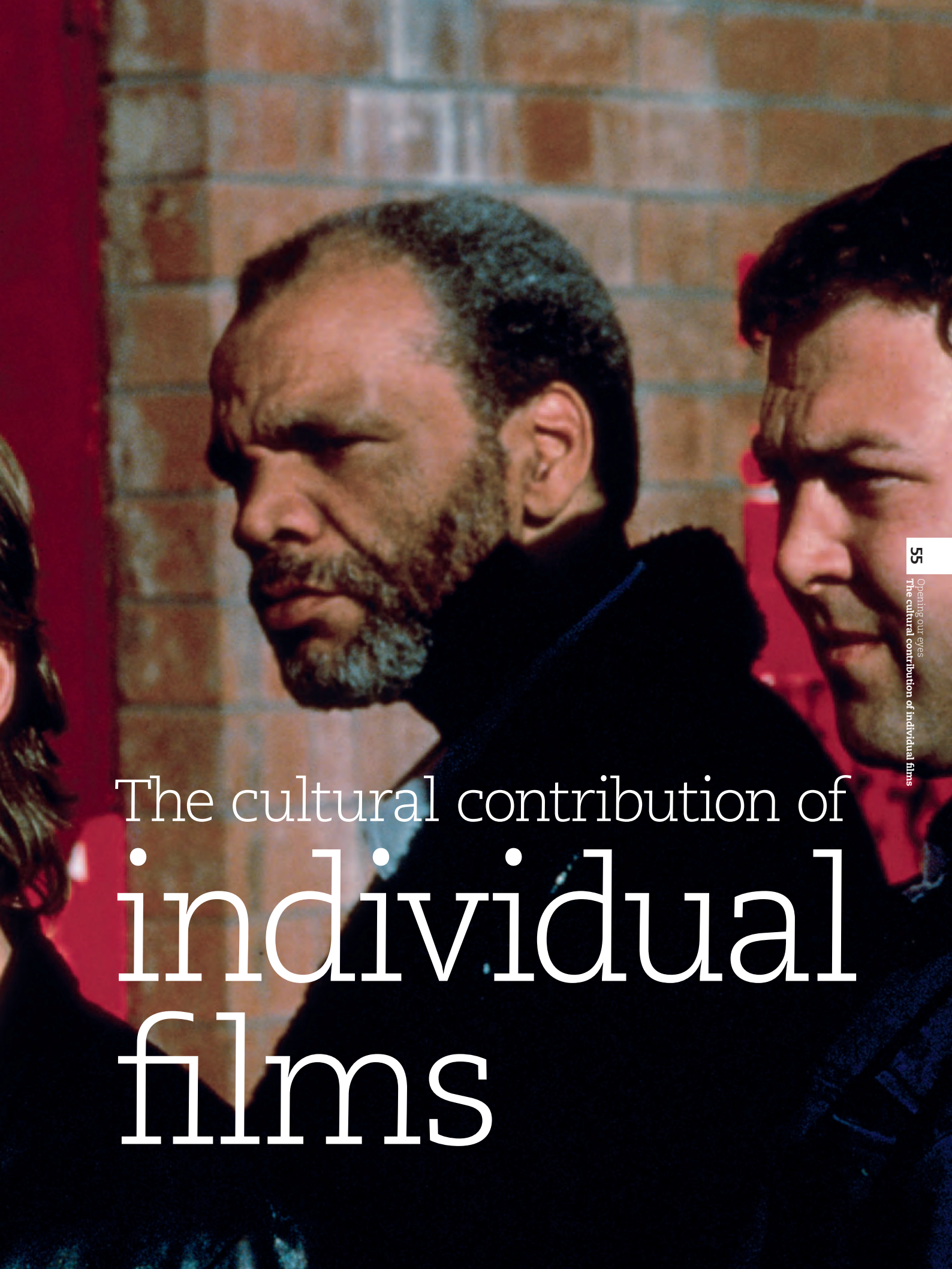
Type of effect	%
It changed the way I think about certain things	29
I identified with some of the characters or experiences in the film	21
It reminded me of a particular period or occasion in my life, or particular people in my life	16
It inspired me to change something in my life	13
I felt the film represented part of who I am, or where I come from	11
It gave me a role model to follow	7

People aged 15 to 24 were most likely to find role models in films (11%). Respondents from minority ethnic groups were more likely than white respondents to say that a film had changed the way they think about certain things (40% compared with 29%), or inspired them to change something in their life (26% compared with 12%), or that the film had given them a role model to follow (15% compared with 6%) – once again perhaps indicating that people from minority ethnic groups tend to have a deeper engagement with films.⁶¹

⁶¹ Logistic regression indicates that age and ethnic group have independent effects, ie differences in age profile do not account for the ethnic group effect.

Below:
The Full Monty





The cultural contribution of
individual
films

Which films do we recognise?

- **The continuous availability of films allows their effects on individuals to build over time.**
- **Survey respondents had a high level of recognition of films going back over 50 years.**
- **Many films are recognised by far more people than the number who have actually seen them.**

Since the 1960s, television has shown films that could not otherwise be seen, and enabled popular favourites to become established with viewers through familiarity.⁶² Since the mid-1980s it has been possible to rent or own a copy of a film and to form a personal collection of videos or DVDs. Our survey indicates that this has allowed people to develop strong attachments to particular films, which may be independent of either their box office or critical standing.

Films may be encountered outside the home in schools and colleges, where they have been shown in different contexts for over 40 years.⁶³ More recently, specialist film channels on cable television and video/DVD holdings in public libraries, schools and colleges offer more access to 'curated' selections of films, allowing people to discover films for themselves and make recommendations to others. Personal collections on video and DVD allow long-term relationships to develop with films.

A man, 35 to 44 year-olds in the South West of England, recalls how *Star Wars* inspired him as a child to **'dress up as Princess Leia, and now my children enjoy the film and relate to the characters too'**.

82% of those in the age bracket 25 to 44 are likely to repeatedly view films three or more times, suggesting that they have special meaning or appeal for them.

With such increased access to film comes the issue of knowledge, or recognition. Initial recognition of a film will depend substantially on the scale of its marketing and release, which are of course related to expectations of its popularity. Titles widely advertised and available in cinemas and other media will inevitably be more familiar, whether or not they have been seen. Films launched on low budgets are correspondingly less likely to be widely recognised, unless they are lauded by critics, or benefit from word-of-mouth recommendation.

In order to discover how closely recognition is driven by economic success, we showed our survey respondents 25 images of film posters and asked whether they had heard of and/or seen the film. The titles chosen covered a spectrum, from the most widely marketed and viewed to smaller-scale successes and non-English language films. They included older films that might be considered 'cult' or 'classic' and several off-beat British independent films to test for the visibility of this sector.

Overall, a third of respondents (32%) recognised 20 or more of the 25 films. Slightly under half (46%) had heard of between 15 and 19 films and one in five had heard of 10–14.⁶⁴

That *Shrek* should be both the most-recognised and most-seen (Figure 26) is a reminder that animated fantasy films, with star casts voicing the characters, have become a major force within mainstream film during the last decade – even though animation does not appear to be identified as the most popular film type or genre.⁶⁵ It seems that many respondents may not regard *Shrek*, *Madagascar*, *Ice Age* and their like as primarily 'animation'.

'The Wages of Fear is one of the most exciting films I have ever seen and without big effects or budget. It's black and white and old but I watch it again even now.'

'I found Gallipoli to be the most moving film I have ever seen. I saw it while at school as part of my history lessons, purchased it on DVD as an adult and watch it at least three times a year. A very, very powerful film.'

62 For example, seasonal films, such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, the twentieth most often referenced film that had an effect on respondents.

63 First organised film teaching began in schools and colleges in the late 1960s.

64 The places of two recent UK films in this series might best be explained by circumstantial factors. Our survey took place during a period of intensive media interest in *The King's Speech* and its Oscar® prospects, in addition to the film's wide release, which must have boosted its recognition even though only 19% of the sample had actually seen it. Conversely, *Another Year*, the latest film by Mike Leigh had only received a limited 'art house' release and may not yet have been screened in many cinemas in smaller towns and cities of the UK, which may partly explain its low recognition and minimal viewing figures.

65 See Figure 6.

Figure 26:
Recognition of
selected film titles
(Survey question E1)

- Seen or heard of it
- Seen it
- Heard of it, but not seen it
- Never heard of it



Figure 27:
Most frequently mentioned films as having had an effect on respondents personally (Survey question D1, all films mentioned ten or more times)

Film	Number of mentions
The King's Speech	100
Schindler's List	75
Avatar	42
Slumdog Millionaire	41
Titanic	28
The Shawshank Redemption	28
Inception	27
Saving Private Ryan	24
The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas	20
Black Swan	19
The Sound of Music	19
The Green Mile	18
The Lord of the Rings (all mentioned)	18
Braveheart	15
Star Wars (all mentioned)	15
Harry Potter (all mentioned)	15
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	14
The Matrix	13
Mamma Mia!	12
It's a Wonderful Life	12
The Godfather (all mentioned)	11
The Blind Side	10
Ghost	10

The high recognition of *Calendar Girls* (although with a low 'viewed' score) reflects the film's origins in a widely publicised 1999 news story, when middle-aged members of a North Yorkshire Women's Institute branch posed for a 'tasteful' nude calendar to raise money for cancer research. Like the earlier fame of the (fictitious) ex-steelworkers' striptease in *The Full Monty* (1996), this caught the national imagination, amplified by press and broadcasting interest, and has ensured that the phrase and associated images are likely to be known to most of the UK adult population. Like *The Full Monty*, *Calendar Girls* has also generated behavioural spin-offs, with similar stunts being widely performed for charity, and a stage version touring nationally as well as running in London's West End.⁶⁶ Additionally, although not without controversy, it has been cited as evidence of anti-ageism and the potential success of older women on screen.⁶⁷

Shaun of the Dead gained high recognition for a genre film, in this case 'zombie horror' (albeit spoof). The other results in Figure 26 show awareness of some cinema classics – 93% had heard of *Casablanca* (1942), 82% of *Citizen Kane* (1941), and 36% of *The Red Shoes* (1948, but recently restored and re-issued) as well as of a range of European 'modern classics' such as *Cinema Paradiso* (39%), *Amélie* (63%) and *Pan's Labyrinth* (58%). However, the non-English language film that achieved most recognition, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (80%), was Chinese, which may evidence a continuation of the interest in martial arts stimulated by 1970s 'kung fu' films.⁶⁸

However, one title seems to encapsulate how a film can maintain a high level of recognition over a long period of time: *The Italian Job*, a 1969 'caper' film starring Michael Caine.⁶⁹ The fact that this 40-year-old film has the second highest 'viewed' score among our respondents (73%) underlines the importance of television and DVD in reinforcing certain films' continued and continuing presence in our film culture and in our broader cultural life.

Contesting canons

- The list of films named as significant by our respondents differs significantly from critical and expert film rankings.
- The public see serious and life-changing issues in blockbuster films as well as in specialised films (documentary, art house, world cinema).
- The long-term popularity and appeal of individual films can vary substantially from their initial box office performance.

Respondents were asked to name a film that had had an effect on them, in the sense of 'making them think about things', 'opening their eyes to different cultures or historical events', 'reminding them of particular aspects of their own life' or just making 'some sort of big impression'. The most frequently mentioned films are shown in Figure 27.

66 In *Stories we tell ourselves*, these were termed 'cumulative impacts' and proposed as an important measure of cultural impact (page 28). On *Calendar Girls* in the theatre, see 'Calendar Girls: the stage show', *Daily Telegraph* 17.3.09, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/5005649/Calendar-Girls-the-stage-show.html>; and on the continuing tour, see <http://www.seecalendargirls.com/>

67 *Portrayal vs. Betrayal*, UK Film Council, 2011.

68 The films starring Bruce Lee in the early 1970s made a deep impression in the UK (two respondents cite Lee's 1973 *Enter the Dragon* as a much-viewed film) and helped make martial arts a popular interest, both as a sport and in films.

69 A phenomenon well explained by an IMDb user review from 2004, at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064505/>



The Shawshank Redemption

Figure 28:
Top 10 films watched more than three times by respondents (Survey question D8)

Film	Number of mentions
Star Wars	135
The Lord of the Rings	101
Dirty Dancing	88
The Sound of Music	87
Harry Potter	77
Titanic	53
The Shawshank Redemption	49
Grease	47
Alien	44
The Godfather	42

The high score by *The King's Speech* may have been assisted by the extensive publicity surrounding this film in the run-up to the 2011 Academy Awards®, which coincided with the period of our survey. *Black Swan* probably also benefited disproportionately from being a recent, heavily promoted release but the reasons given for its selection are revealing. In addition to its 'scary effect' (woman aged 15 to 17) and 'amazing visuals' (man aged 24 to 34), it gave two respondents a dramatically 'different' view of dance and ballet, provoked another to compare 'friends' views with media reviews', and enabled a man aged 65 to 74 to 'visualise the torment the dancer went through'. Some British critics may have found the film exaggerated,⁷⁰ but for 19 respondents (including five males) it made for compulsive viewing.

If we set aside films likely to have had an inflated impact due to their recent release, the three most-cited titles are: *Schindler's List*, *Titanic* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. All more than 10 years old, these have clearly remained potent films (see *Schindler's List* case study).

In addition, we asked respondents which films they had viewed three or more times. This produced a ranking that duplicated only two titles in the 'personal effect' list:⁷¹

One film in particular deserves further comment. *The Shawshank Redemption* won no Academy Awards® and does not appear to have figured in any critics' top 10, but clearly means a great deal to many people, especially men.⁷² Respondents appreciated 'the twist at the end' of this prison drama, which some found 'uplifting' and one 'inspiring', while others enjoyed its 'complex mixture of emotions'. One responded strongly to the central character 'who kept his humanity despite monstrous surroundings', while others were moved to reflect on 'injustice in the world' and on the 'institutionalisation effect of long prison sentences'.

Two other critically ignored films in Figure 28 are favourites of women:⁷³ *Dirty Dancing*^{74/75} and *Grease*.⁷⁶ Both have a romantic theme, of finding love as a teenager, and both seem to be associated with nostalgia for one's youth, which would explain why they score so highly as films re-viewed.

Although *Grease* was a popular stage show before it was filmed, *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Dirty Dancing* are good examples of 'stand-alone' films that exemplify important emotional and psychological effects produced by film. Owing to ever-increasing opportunities for re-viewing they have become perennial favourites outside the canons of industry and criticism.⁷⁷

Typically, however, the films most re-viewed by our respondents are widely popular across gender, ethnic group and region, and across age groups. They are also mostly films that have received multiple industry awards, if not always critical acclaim. *Titanic*, for instance, won eleven Oscars®. Respondents from both genders referenced the film: female (16) and male (12), with a similarly wide age and geographical distribution. Two women of aged 65 to 74 found it 'moving' and 'very emotional' – as did male respondents. This evidence of broad reaching appeal across gender and age helps to explain the film's phenomenal success.

The other film that stands out among those repeatedly viewed is *Avatar*, mentioned as having an effect by 42 respondents, and already seen at least three times by 30, despite the fact that it was only released 12 months before our survey. The recent release of *Avatar* means that we cannot make unqualified predictions about its long-term cultural contribution, but we can note the exceptional range and depth of responses, recalling the kind of impact six older respondents say 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) had for them.

70 As they once did an earlier ballet film, *The Red Shoes*.

71 Figure 28 needs to be interpreted with care. *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* almost certainly refer to more than one of the films within these franchises, while *The Lord of the Rings*, *Alien* and *The Godfather* also refer to multi-film series, so may be benefiting from aggregation.

72 Ten out of 13 who had watched it more than three times were male, four of these in the 35 to 44 age bracket.

73 When asked to name a film that had an effect on them (Question D1), all respondents mentioning *Dirty Dancing* or *Grease* were female.

74 Five comments, all female; in other survey questions 50 respondents were reminded of their teenage years by it (survey question D10), 10 of their childhood (survey question D9).

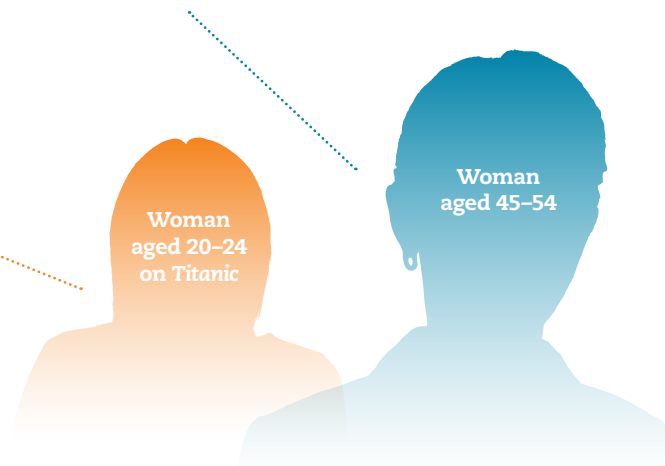
75 The journalist Zoe Williams writing in the *Guardian* on 7 May 2011 stresses the abiding female appeal of *Dirty Dancing*: see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/may/07/dirty-dancing-musical-not-just-about-sex>

76 Four comments, all female; again in another survey question 68 respondents reminded of their teenage years (survey question D10), and 34 of childhood (survey question D9).

77 Comments on both films continue to be posted almost daily on the message boards of IMDb, indicating that enthusiasm for them continues.

‘Grease made me realise how much I enjoyed and missed my time with friends in my teenage years.’

‘It doesn’t matter how many times I watch it, it still makes me cry.’



What is also striking is that many of our respondents were more impressed by *Avatar*'s environmental and political 'message' than some critics who viewed this cynically.⁷⁸ They were also less prone than many critics to separate the 3D experience from the film's overarching appeal, recording a 'holistic' response that a 55 to 64 year-old Northern Irish woman summed up as 'a new idea that worked brilliantly'. The potential long-term contribution of *Avatar* and the revival of 3D films is discussed further in case study six.

What makes us value individual films?

- **People value individual films for their emotional impact, the stories they tell and the message or information they convey.**
- **Often people value a film for carrying both an emotional and educational punch.**
- **Foreign language films appear to be valued for the same kinds of reasons as mainstream films in English.**

The reasons given by respondents for choosing their significant film give further insight into how films affect people, emotionally and intellectually. Figure 29 sets out the main types of response⁷⁹ that seem to have motivated respondents' choices.

Some of our respondents suggested a distinction between 'quality' and 'personal appeal'. A 33 to 44 aged man noted of his choice of *Avatar*: 'probably could've picked a deeper film, but for the cinema experience this film really nailed it'. References to the experience of viewing a film – where it was seen, with whom, and how often – recur often in the survey.

Although foreign-language films do not figure largely in the responses to the questions asking for specific film titles, they do seem to produce broadly similar types of reaction. For instance, *La Haine*, an abrasive French film about gang culture and clashes with the police in the ethnically mixed Paris suburbs, was chosen by three young women. One, in Northern Ireland, said it 'made her more aware of tensions in France'; it allowed another, in Greater London, 'to see what life is like for people in the poor areas of France'; and for a third, in the North East of England, 'it was very emotive and urban'.

A more recent specialised film success in the UK, *The Lives of Others*, which dealt with the sinister role of the Stasi secret police in Communist East Germany, was also cited by three respondents as significant for them. A 35 to 44 year-old man from the South West found it 'very emotional and moving; a 25 to 34 year-old woman, also in the South West of England, was struck by 'the effect the Stasi had on people on both sides', referring to the film dealing with both the police and their victims; and a 35 to 44 year-old man in Greater London felt 'a sense of sadness that this could happen in my lifetime'.

Academic and media discussions of films such as these are often dominated by evaluation of the director and of the film's stylistic approach to its subject – which is certainly striking in the case of both *La Haine* and *The Lives of Others*. But the responses from our survey confirm that these films have perhaps greater significance because of what they portray and how this relates to the viewer. Being shown in different and fewer cinemas than equivalent US or British films may have reduced the scale of their impact, but not its nature or quality – which is strikingly similar to the significance attached to more frequently-cited films such as *Schindler's List* and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.

⁷⁸ Such as Peter Bradshaw, in *The Guardian*, describing *Avatar* as an 'uncompromisingly ridiculous sci-fi spectacular', see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2009/dec/17/avatar-james-cameron-film-review>

⁷⁹ At question D2, respondents were asked to describe in their own words the effect their selected film had upon them. These verbatim responses were analysed and coded using a code frame determined by the survey team and the coded responses were then grouped to give the summaries shown in this report. More detailed analysis of these verbatim responses can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Case study six

Avatar

Avatar ranked third overall in terms of films that affected respondents (Figure 27). Many people responded to the film's 'message', interpreted as environmental or humanitarian. Two respondents found it 'inspiring' and three spoke of it 'opening their eyes' to what man is doing to the environment, while one of these was reminded **'that there are people that still live off the land like the natives in the film, and it is important to protect their way of life'**. One woman saw it in the cinema with her fiancé **'and it made us cry... reminding us of all the horrid things humanity is doing.'**

There were generational and gender differences amongst respondents. *Avatar* was the most frequently mentioned film among 15 to 24 year-old males, but only sixth most frequently mentioned among 15 to 24 year-old females. It was ninth among women as a whole, but in joint second place (with *The King's Speech*) among men. Excluding 15 to 24 year-olds it fell to fourth place (with *The Shawshank Redemption* in third place).

All types of viewers were enthusiastic about the film's spectacular visual effects and use of 3D, described as 'beautiful' and 'a visual feast', with several respondents commenting on how the 3D intensified their emotional engagement. A Scottish woman aged between 55 to 64 thought **'it took animation to a whole new level'** and an East Anglian man aged 35 to 44 recalled everyone in the group he had gone with not talking throughout the whole film and at the end **'picking our jaws up off the floor'**, before **'not being able to stop talking about it'**. Above all, *Avatar* was perceived as delivering a new and seemingly addictive sense of realistic fantasy. Among all the films mentioned in our survey, 30 respondents saw it three times or more during one year.

In short, *Avatar* seems to have had a strong appeal in terms of both its idealism and its spectacle, especially amongst younger male viewers, pioneering the new era of 3D.

The enthusiastic response to the rejuvenated medium is not confined to the young: a white male 33 to 44 from the South East **'couldn't take his eyes off the screen'** and now 'loves to go and see other 3D films'.

Avatar was released UK-wide on 11/17 December 2009 in the UK, after unprecedented advance publicity that stressed the track record of the director, James Cameron (*Terminator*, *Titanic*), the enormous cost of the film, and its pioneering use of a new 3D system. Distributed on film and digital (many cinemas having installed 2k digital projectors specially for the release), it achieved what is currently the highest ever UK box office gross of £94 million, some £20 million ahead of its nearest rival, *Toy Story 3* (2010). Much of this came from the higher prices charged at cinemas showing the film in 3D, since *Avatar* ranks only 49th on ticket sales, with 10.99 million, considerably below *Star Wars*' 20.76 million in 1977 and even *Titanic*'s 19.81 million in 1998.

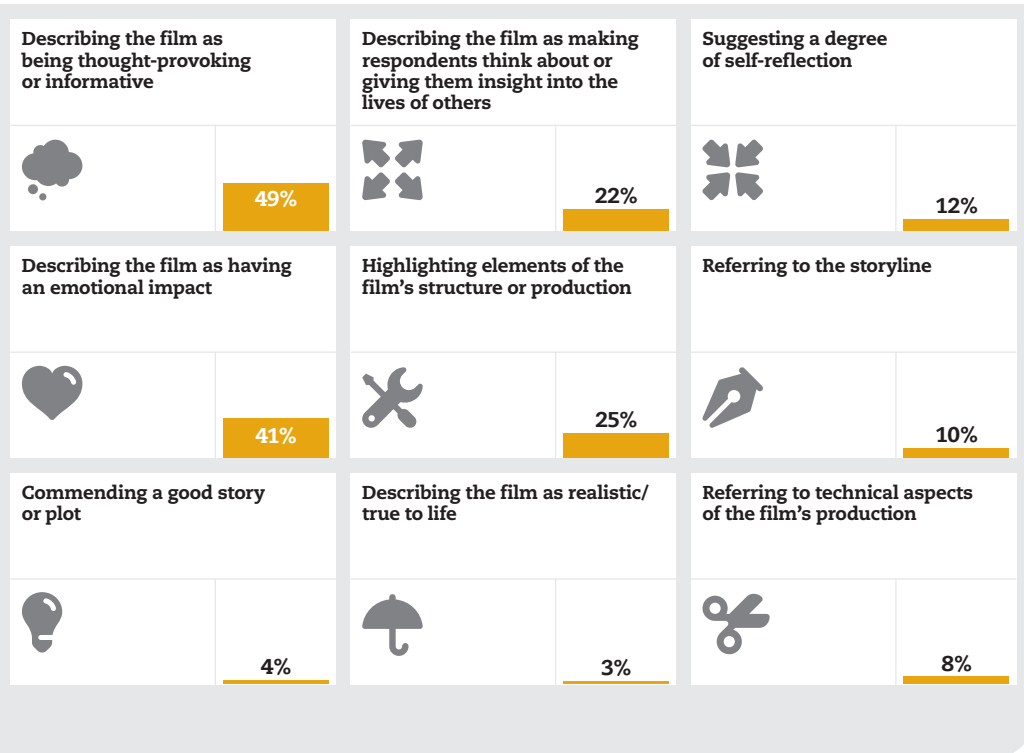
A smaller release of a 'special edition' helped to publicise the Blu-ray and DVD publication in November 2010, although the film has so far failed to set any records in these formats (and several respondents said they would not expect to watch it on a smaller screen in 2D). On IMDb it has had a massive number of user reviews (2,769) and an exceptionally high average rating of 8.2 based on 305,845 votes. These scores are likely to have been influenced by *Avatar*'s high-profile cinema launch. However, the film also benefited from its ambition and novelty, including Cameron's creation of a special language for his 'Na'vi' humanoids and peopling the planet of Pandora with exotic flora and fauna.

Does *Avatar* herald a new epoch for film populated by a post-*Avatar* generation of film viewers, or does its impact depend on a novelty that will soon dissipate? It is too soon to tell, but it has made a strong start.



Figure 29:
Factors influencing
the selection of an
individual film as
having had an effect
on them (Survey
question D2)

■ Respondents
reporting



How individual films affect us

- Respondents favoured 'serious' films when asked what has had an effect on them while preferring less challenging material for regular viewing.
- People are adept at appreciating and analysing issues presented even as subtext of films including racism, colonialism, genocide, the horrors of war, poverty, injustice, and environmental destruction.
- Personal themes and ideals such as self-realisation, survival against the odds, 'showing humanity' and overcoming disability and illness are recognised and valued.
- There is evidence that individuals have their attitudes, and even long-term behaviour, changed as a result of encountering specific films.
- A number of films gave respondents metaphysical experiences.

Respondents favoured 'serious' titles when asked which films had an effect on them, while preferring less challenging material for regular viewing. This might suggest a crude distinction between education and entertainment, but comments accompanying film choices point to a more complex set of reactions. For example, a comment on the film *Australia*, by a 25 to 34 year-old woman in the South East: 'I thought it was a bit of an eye opener to what used to go on years ago with racism. I found the film very emotional and moving.' Many comments involve information/stimulation following from an emotional or aesthetic response.

In three contrasting responses to *Apocalypto*, a film about the Mayan empire, a 25 to 34 year-old woman in the South West of England had 'never realised how brutal native tribes could be' before seeing the film (which she enjoyed in spite of it being subtitled). A 45 to 54 year-old woman in the South East of England 'realised there are still different cultures out in the big wide world we know nothing about'. And it made a 15 to 17 year-old African woman in Greater London 'more interested in the history of the Mayan culture'.

By identifying with groups and individuals, our respondents report that they have been moved, informed, and in some cases stirred to further action.

Two films relating to the Nazi Holocaust had a major effect: *Schindler's List* and, more recently, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (see Case study seven). But they are not the only films that made our respondents think about the Nazi persecution of the Jews. A Northern man aged 45 to 54 was so moved by Louis Malle's *Au Revoir Les Enfants* that he reports 'it made me go and read about the plight of the Jews in France during World War II'. Nor are historical films the only reminder of the horror of genocide: a Scottish man aged 25 to 34 found 'the depiction of genocide' in the second film of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Two Towers*, 'moving'. Many viewers report how Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* adaptation allowed them to become deeply involved in the world of Middle Earth, with its epic struggles reminding them of two world wars that helped shape Tolkien's vision.⁸⁰ Similarly, another fantasy film, *Avatar* reminded one man aged 65 to 74 of 'the persecution of the native Americans', and an African man aged 35 to 44 interpreted *Avatar*'s fictional planet Pandora as 'a civilisation invaded because of their minerals'.

80 See Martin Barker's study of responses to Tolkien's books and the films based on them.

Case study seven

The Holocaust and film – *Schindler's List*/ *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*/*Life Is Beautiful*

Schindler's List and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* were among the 10 films most frequently cited by respondents as having affected them personally (Figure 27), with *Schindler's List* second after *The King's Speech*, and the reasons given for their choice speak eloquently of their emotional and moral impact. Although *Schindler's List* is now over 15 years old, its portrayal of Auschwitz continues to resonate. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, a UK film part-financed by BBC Films (with Miramax/Disney) and based on a 2006 bestselling novel by the Irish writer John Boyne, has emerged as a new narrative capable of acquainting younger viewers with the Holocaust, here seen through the eyes of a concentration camp commandant's young son, rather than through the rescue operation run by Oskar Schindler in Spielberg's film.

Schindler's List has been widely used in teaching, so many may have first encountered it in an educational setting, and apart from substantial testimony about its emotional impact – many recall the atmosphere in the cinema when they first saw it – there is strong evidence of its educative value. A 15 to 17 year-old male in the South West of England felt it made **'more real'** what he had **'read about in school'**; and a 20 to 24 year-old man in the South East of England admits that it **'made me think seriously about the Holocaust for the first time'**. A 25 to 34 year-old man in Wales thought that it **'gave a sense of reality to something we all know about but often forget the impact it had on people during the time'**. A 25 to 34 year-old man in Yorkshire and Humberside who had not previously been moved by this subject, having seen **'too many WW2 documentaries'**, found he was **'somewhat moved'** by the film. The film's basis in a 'true story' is important to many, notwithstanding the creative licence taken by the author of the original novel, Thomas Keneally, and Spielberg.⁸¹

A proportion of our respondents also found the film ultimately **'uplifting'** or **'inspiring'**, because of Schindler's bravery in rescuing some of the Auschwitz victims. **'It made me realise there are some decent human beings in the world'**, said a 45 to 54 year-old Welsh woman.

A national variation is apparent, with both Scottish (8%) and Welsh (9%) people more likely than English respondents (4%) to select *Schindler's List*.

Although much more recent, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* has already deeply impressed many viewers by providing a microcosm of the Holocaust in the relationship between the privileged German boy and the Jewish friend whose situation he cannot understand. As a 25 to 34 year-old woman in the South East of England noted, it contrasts **'the obscenity of war'** with **'the innocent friendship of children'**. 'Innocence' is the theme noted by three of our respondents, with a 35 to 44 year-old Yorkshire and Humberside woman attracted to the theme of 'friendship crossing barriers'.

The fact that *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is wholly fictional, and that its plausibility has been attacked by some historians and religious figures, may ultimately tell against the film's acceptance, but currently it seems to complement *Schindler's List*, and one respondent recommends it as **'a film for all this young generation to see and learn about man's inhumanity to man'**.

Another film that showed a concentration camp through child's eyes, Roberto Benigni's 1997 *Life Is Beautiful*, was criticised on release for daring to introduce childish humour into this setting, but one of our respondents, a 20 to 24 year-old East Anglian man, found that film a **'moving story, well handled; funny and sad'**.



⁸¹ It is worth noting that there was an IMDb message board discussion about the film's historical accuracy as recently as April 2010.

‘Saving Private Ryan made me realise that the people who fought in the war were young men (not old men as we see at the memorials) that they were just like my friends and how lucky we are not to have to face that.’



War has been a staple theme or genre within cinema from its earliest years, and many in our survey recorded how their attitude to especially 20th century war has been powerfully shaped by film. Responses range from memories of the savagely satirical account of the First World War in *Oh! What a Lovely War*, which three male filmgoers aged 55 to 64 all recall having a powerful impact and giving ‘a different view of war’, to the more recent *Saving Private Ryan*, which has had a powerful effect on younger generations, figuring in the top 10 personally affecting films (Figure 27) and the top 30 repeatedly viewed (Figure 28). The response of a West Midlands man aged 55 to 64 is typical: ‘horror of war and its wider impacts’. But among many comments, there are also revealing variations of response. A man aged 45 to 54 in the North West was ‘initially shaken. The first time any film ever got the sound of incoming fire right. Later, reflective – damned glad it wasn’t me’. An older man aged 65 to 74 found it created a bond between him and the younger generation: ‘my son watched it with me and was moved by the horror of war’. In this way, film can create intergenerational dialogue and understanding. It can also challenge gender stereotypes. Around a quarter of responses to *Saving Private Ryan* were by women.

More recent conflicts, including civil wars, have also been brought home to viewers by a range of films. Three white women, aged 35 to 54, were ‘shocked’ by the genocidal civil war shown in *Hotel Rwanda*, one adding how grateful it made her to be living ‘in this country and not there’. A similar awareness of the precariousness of life in conflict zones runs through responses to Afghanistan as shown in *The Kite Runner* – ‘how lucky I am to live in the country I do’, wrote a 45 to 54 aged man in the South West of England. And for a Northern Irish woman aged 45 to 54, Juanita Wilson’s *As If I Am Not There* ‘showed the horror of the Bosnian war on women’. What is apparent in these and other responses

is a reflection on the viewer’s own situation in comparison to what is portrayed – a ‘bridging’ effect between the known and the new.

Another important issue film has portrayed in recent decades is racism, and this is emphasised by a number of our respondents. A 25 to 34 year-old woman in Northern Ireland writes that Tony Kaye’s controversial *American History X* ‘opened my eyes about how racism can be bred into children with devastating consequences’. The American independent film *Crash* also prompted several respondents to ‘think about racist attitudes’ (25 to 34 year-old man), about ‘what effect you can have on other people’ (25 to 34 aged woman) and about ‘prejudiced behaviour and attitudes across society’ (25 to 34 aged woman). No less emphatically, Richard Attenborough’s epic portrayal of liberation struggles in *Gandhi* and *Cry Freedom* had a considerable impact on viewers. The former helped a woman, aged 45 to 54, ‘realise the effect of colonialism in Africa and India and that peaceful protest can work’; while a 45 to 54 aged man wrote that the story of Steve Biko in *Cry Freedom* ‘made me realise how cruel this world can be, having been born and lived through Rhodesia myself (as a black person)’. Racist treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia, as portrayed in *Australia* and more pointedly in *Rabbit Proof Fence* also disturbed a number of respondents. A 20 to 24 year-old woman was ‘shocked that this could happen in such recent history (within my dad’s life time)’.

Other issues raised include climate change (*The Day after Tomorrow*, 2012) and animal conservation (*Gorillas in the Mist*), but one recent film above all has clearly had a major impact on attitudes towards poverty in the developing world, inequality and the plight of neglected children: *Slumdog Millionaire*. This was selected by 41 of our respondents as a film that had a significant impact on them, and the range of responses is summarised in Case study three.

A different dimension of film experience is the sense of being transported to 'another world'. A number of films gave respondents metaphysical experiences, among them Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), which made a 55 to 64 year-old woman in Greater London 'think differently about the afterlife and what Heaven is really like'.

The psychological thriller *Inception* was summed up by an 18 to 19 year-old woman in Greater London as having 'an incredible impact on the nation'. She felt that 'the quality and content was higher than most films released today' and enjoyed 'the storyline and complexity in detail and ideas'. Other comments on this film, which was the seventh most often mentioned as having affected respondents personally (with 27 comments), referred to it being 'thought-provoking', 'leading to deep discussion with friends' and how 'it made me contemplate life in general, but also my personal life and the way we perceive reality and fiction'.

The ability of viewers to find such deep meaning in films is not confined to those that deliberately create a problematic 'reality'. Many other examples emerge from the survey, including a 20 to 24 year-old woman living in the East Midlands saying that *Fight Club* 'made me think about the world we live in and the fight we have with our inner demons'. A 35 to 44 aged Indian man in the South East responded to Richard Attenborough's *Shadowlands* because 'it is about love, God and human loss. I became kinder and more giving after this film.' What these point to is the ability of many kinds of film to provoke far-reaching reflection and self-examination. The American critic Parker Tyler noted that there is no close correlation between 'the excellence or triteness of a movie' and its ability to move and satisfy us.⁸² The immersive nature of the medium can work on many levels of its audience's psyche or sensibility.

63% of our respondents had seen films which made them think afterwards about some difficult or sensitive issue' (Figure 12), and 48% had been encouraged by a film to find out more about the subject it dealt with. A smaller proportion (14%) reported that a film had led them to take some form of action. This form of 'impact' is intriguing, as it challenges the common idea of film as a 'passive' form of entertainment – where 'entertainment' is understood as something like the opposite of 'engagement'.

There is evidence from our survey results that individuals have their attitudes, and even long-term behaviour, changed as a result of encountering specific films. A man aged 35 to 44 who first saw *Gallipoli* as part of a school history lesson, was so moved by this 'very, very powerful film' that he 'purchased it on DVD as an adult' and continues to watch it regularly. A 25 to 34 year-old woman recalls how seeing Penny Marshall's film *Awakenings*, based on Oliver Sacks's book about the treatment of long-term coma patients, 'made me re-evaluate my life'.

The films that trigger such deep responses vary greatly, as do the forms of response: Bette Middler's *Beaches*, about single-parenthood, meant a great deal to a 35 to 44 aged woman; a 'reminder to mothers that life is short and every moment spent with children is to be valued'. For a 55 to 64 year-old woman, Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* 'made you realise what some people's lives are like, if you just see them on the street you would have no idea of the problems they have.' The phrases 'made me rethink my life', 'opened my eyes to...', 'made me decide to...' recur through hundreds of responses in our survey. What they point to is the degree to which the 'significance' of a film is not only something encoded in the film's narrative, characters or style, but is produced by a transaction between film and spectator. Films are, to a great extent, what we bring to them, as well as what they dramatise and portray. They do not simply 'influence' behaviour,⁸³ instead, they tend to stimulate or trigger what is already latent – and they can produce, as our respondents testify, quite unpredictable 'effects' on those predisposed to respond.

A 15 to 17 year-old woman in the North West of England reported that *Blind Side*, the story of the American footballer Michael Oher:

'... had a big impact on me as it made me really think about how lucky I am and how humans really are capable of large acts of kindness. Since watching that film, I have made sure that each and every day I perform one random act of kindness in order to benefit everyone. I believe that one random act of kindness can benefit the whole world, this is the impact that film had on me.'

82 Parker Tyler, *The Hollywood Hallucination*, 1944.

83 See, for instance, the research tradition that started with the Payne Fund Studies in America in the 1930s, and the pioneering work of Herbert Blumer in *Movies and Conduct* (1933) and J. P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film* (1946). For a recent overview of conflicting views on media research, see Martin Barker and Julian Petley, eds., *Ill Effects: the media/violence debate* (2001).

Below:
Slumdog Millionaire

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Opening our eyes
Conclusions

Conclu



VISIONS

Stories We Tell Ourselves (2009) was an expert view of the cultural impact of British films from 1946–2006, drawing on documentary evidence, cultural theory and film scholarship. In contrast, the present research broadens the field to consider all film (not just British film) and the views of ordinary members of the public. Some of the hypotheses from *Stories We Tell Ourselves* receive support in the findings presented in this report, in particular:

- The cumulative effect over time of the cultural contribution of films.
- The ability of film to capture ‘zeitgeist moments’.
- The importance of the national and regional dimensions of film culture.
- The significance of film for members of minority ethnic groups.
- The growing importance of digital means of access to films.

At the same time, *Opening our eyes* extends our understanding of the cultural contribution of film in several important respects.

Film is central to the cultural life of the UK

People rated film highly relative to most other leisure pursuits, forms of entertainment and art forms; there is far more interest in film than playing or watching sport, going to a pub, a restaurant, a museum or a theatre. People are also able to distinguish between the art of film, the entertainment it provides and the reflection and insight it prompts.

People find meaning in blockbuster films

People repeatedly mentioned mainstream popular films as being significant for them and for UK society and for carrying meaning. For the broad public, there is no distinction between ‘meaningful’ and entertaining films. The medium and the message are two sides of the same coin and people are able to appreciate the value of both.

Why the emotional ‘hit’ is important

In the survey, people repeatedly spoke about the emotional effect of films. Both the entertaining and the intellectually stimulating aspects of film begin with the emotional ‘hit’ delivered by the story.

Film has a far-reaching range of impacts on the individual

Films are seen as entertaining, thought-provoking, moving, aesthetically pleasing, prompting action, expressing identity and even triggering metaphysical experiences. This ‘all round’ ability makes film a particularly powerful cultural medium.

The international nature of film culture

While people in our survey supported and were enthusiastic about British films, their choices were not constrained by nationality. Many international films, particularly American ones, were mentioned as conveying significant meaning and emotional impact. The films mentioned have international recognition and many have received awards, illustrating the international cultural currency provided by film. Most readers of this report will recognise most of the films mentioned by people in our survey, highlighting the ability of film to communicate culturally in a near-universal fashion.

Broadening the film 'canon'

A key conclusion of this research is that the 'canon' of significant films derived from population research is different and broader than the 'canons' derived from expert, critical and industry polls. In this sense our report conveys a more democratic assessment of the cultural contribution of film. This is not to critique the other rankings, but to point out there is a different and more popular basis on which films can be culturally assessed.

Finally, four points of particular relevance for film policymakers:

The contribution of film to National and Regional identity

Film has the ability to express National and Regional identities, and people want to see more films reflecting such identities and telling stories from a National and Regional perspective. However across the whole population, but particularly for people living in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the North of England, there is a feeling that too many British films are located in London and the South of England.

The continuing importance of television for film

The dominance of television in the aggregate amount of annual UK film viewing underlines the influence of television (terrestrial, cable and satellite) on the cultural contribution of film. It is clear that television executives' film investment, acquisition and programming choices continue to be hugely important in influencing the opportunities for the cultural contribution of film across the UK.

The implications of the growth of digital access to film

People reported high levels of film viewing on mobile devices and through downloading/streaming via the Internet. This is consistent with other recent evidence of a surge in digital access to film,⁸⁴ challenging the traditional distribution systems of the film industry and broadening the potential for film to make a cultural contribution. The heyday of cinema-going may have been in the 1930s and 1940s, but given the volume and growing variety of viewing outside the movie theatre, we may now be at the beginning of a golden age for film.

The positive contribution film makes to well-being

With strong connections made by people between film and adjectives indicating pleasure and stimulation ('entertaining', 'good at providing escapism', 'emotional or moving', 'exciting') film appears to contribute significantly to people's subjective sense of happiness and well-being. Future research into the cultural contribution of film could learn from and contribute to the growing literature on well-being from a variety of research disciplines in the UK and overseas.

Films are seen as entertaining, thought-provoking, moving, aesthetically pleasing, prompting action, expressing identity and even triggering metaphysical experiences. This 'all round' ability makes film a particularly powerful cultural medium.

⁸⁴ See, for example, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/may/03/us-dvd-sales-online-tv>



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Opening our eyes
Appendices

Appendices

Below:
East Is East

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Appendices

Indices

The following online appendices to this report are available.

Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

A copy of the survey questionnaire can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Appendix 2: Result tables

A full set of result tables (1,400 pages) prepared by Ipsos can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Appendix 3: Detailed survey findings

A more detailed presentation of the results with commentary (109 pages) can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Appendix 4: Downloads survey data in SPSS format

A full copy (anonymised) of the survey data in SPSS format can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes. This is to enable researchers to explore the dataset further in conjunction with their own research into film audiences, film reception and the cultural contribution of film.

Appendix 5: Research brief

A copy of the original research brief can be found at www.bfi.org.uk/publications/openingoureyes

Appendix 6: Films cited in *Opening our eyes*

12 Angry Men (1957)
Writer: Reginald Rose;
Director: Sidney Lumet

633 Squadron (1964)
Writers: James Clavell, Howard Koch;
Director: Walter Grauman

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
Writer: Stanley Kubrick;
Director: Stanley Kubrick

2012 (2009)
Writers: Roland Emmerich,
Harald Kloser;
Director: Roland Emmerich

A

Alien (1979)
Writer: Dan O'Bannon;
Director: Ridley Scott

Amélie (2001)
Writers: Guillaume Laurant,
Jean-Pierre Jeunet;
Director: Jean-Pierre Jeunet

American Beauty (1999)
Writer: Alan Ball;
Director: Sam Mendes

American Gangster (2007)
Writers: Steven Zaillian, Mark Jacobson;
Director: Ridley Scott

American History X (1998)
Writer: David McKenna;
Director: Tony Kaye

Another Year (2010)
Writer: Mike Leigh;
Director: Mike Leigh

Apocalypto (2006)
Writers: Mel Gibson, Farhad Safinia;
Director: Mel Gibson

As If I Am Not There (2010)
Writer: Juanita Wilson;
Director: Juanita Wilson

Au Revoir Les Enfants (1987)
Writer: Louis Malle;
Director: Louis Malle

Australia (2008)
Writers: Stuart Beattie, Baz Luhrmann;
Director: Baz Luhrmann

Avatar (2009)
Writer: James Cameron;
Director: James Cameron

Awakenings (1990)
Writer: Steven Zaillian;
Director: Penny Marshall

B

Battle of Britain (1969)
Writer: James Kennaway;
Director: Guy Hamilton

Beaches (1988)
Writer: Mary Agnes Donoghue;
Director: Garry Marshall

Bend it Like Beckham (2002)
Writer: Gurinder Chadha;
Director: Gurinder Chadha

Billy Elliot (2000)
Writer: Lee Hall;
Director: Stephen Daldry

Black Swan (2010)
Writers: Mark Heyman, Andres Heinz;
Director: Darren Aronofsky

The Blind Side (2009)
Writers: John Lee Hancock,
Michael Lewis;
Director: John Lee Hancock

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (2008)
Writer: Mark Herman;
Director: Mark Herman

Brassed Off (1996)
Writer: Andy Collins;
Director: Mark Herman

Braveheart (1995)
Writer: Randall Wallace;
Director: Mel Gibson

The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957)
Writers: Carl Foreman, Michael Wilson;
Director: David Lean

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)
Writers: Helen Fielding,
Andrew Davies, Richard Curtis;
Director: Sharon Maguire

C

Calendar Girls (2003)
Writers: Juliet Towhidi, Tim Firth;
Director: Nigel Cole

Casablanca (1942)
Writers: Julius J Epstein,
Philip G Epstein, Howard Koch;
Director: Michael Curtiz

Cathy Come Home (1966)
Writer: Jeremy Sandford;
Director: Ken Loach

Cinema Paradiso (1988)
Writer: Giuseppe Tornatore;
Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Citizen Kane (1941)
Writers: Herman J Mankiewicz,
Orson Welles;
Director: Orson Welles

Chariots of Fire (1981)
Writer: Colin Welland;
Director: Hugh Hudson

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)
Writer: John August;
Director: Tim Burton

A Clockwork Orange (1971)
Writer: Stanley Kubrick;
Director: Stanley Kubrick

Crash (2004)
Writer: Paul Haggis;
Director: Paul Haggis

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)
Writers: James Schamus,
Wang Hui-Ling, Tsai Kuo-Jung;
Director: Ang Lee

Cry Freedom (1987)
Writer: John Briley;
Director: Richard Attenborough

D

The Dam Busters (1954)
Writer: RC Sherriff;
Director: Michael Anderson

The Dark Knight (2008)
Writer: Christopher Nolan;
Director: Christopher Nolan

The Day After Tomorrow (2004)
Writer: Roland Emmerich;
Director: Roland Emmerich

Diamonds Are Forever (1971)
Writers: Richard Maibaum,
Tom Mankiewicz;
Director: Guy Hamilton

Dirty Dancing (1987)
Writer: Eleanor Bergstein;
Director: Emile Ardolino

Dirty Pretty Things (2002)
Writer: Steven Knight;
Director: Stephen Frears

E

East Is East (1999)
Writer: Ayub Khan-Din;
Director: Damien O'Donnell

The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
Writers: Leigh Brackett,
Lawrence Kasdan;
Director: Irvin Kershner

Erin Brockovich (2000)
Writer: Susannah Grant;
Director: Steven Soderberg

F

Fantasia (1940)
Writers: Joe Grant, Dick Huemer;
Director: Ben Sharpsteen

Far From the Madding Crowd (1967)
Writer: Frederic Raphael;
Director: John Schlesinger

Fish Tank (2009)
Writer: Andrea Arnold;
Director: Andrea Arnold

The Football Factory (2004)
Writers: Nick Love, John King;
Director: Nick Love

The Full Monty (1997)
Writer: Simon Beaufoy;
Director: Peter Cattaneo

G

Gallipoli (1981)
Writer: David Williamson;
Director: Peter Weir

Gandhi (1982)
Writer: John Briley;
Director: Richard Attenborough

Get Carter (1971)
Writer: Mike Hodges;
Director: Mike Hodges

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo
(*Män Som Hatar Kvinnor*) (2009)
Writers: Nicolaj Arcel,
Rasmus Heisterberg;
Director: Niels Arden Oplev

The Godfather (1972)
Writers: Mario Puzo,
Francis Ford Coppola;
Director: Francis Ford Coppola

The Godfather: Part II (1974)
Writers: Francis Ford Coppola,
Mario Puzo;
Director: Francis Ford Coppola

Goldfinger (1964)
Writers: Richard Maibaum, Paul Dehn;
Director: Guy Hamilton

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
(*Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo*) (1966)
Writers: Age, Scarpelli, Luciano
Vincenzoni, Sergio Leone;
Director: Sergio Leone

Gorillas in the Mist (1988)
Writer: Anna Hamilton Phelan;
Director: Michael Apted

Grease (1978)
Writer: Bronte Woodward;
Director: Randal Kleiser

Green (2009)
Writer: Patrick Rouxel;
Director: Patrick Rouxel

Green Street (2005)
Writers: Dougie Brimson,
Lexi Alexander;
Director: Lexi Alexander

H

La Haine (1995)
Writer: Mathieu Kassovitz;
Director: Mathieu Kassovitz

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002)
Writer: Steve Kloves;
Director: Chris Columbus

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 (2010)
Writer: Steve Kloves;
Director: David Yates

Henry V (1944)
Writers: Laurence Olivier, Alan Dent;
Director: Laurence Olivier

Hobson's Choice (1953)
Writers: David Lean,
Norman Spencer, Wynyard Brown;
Director: David Lean

Hotel Rwanda (2004)
Writers: Keir Pearson, Terry George;
Director: Terry George

I

In Bruges (2008)
Writer: Martin McDonagh;
Director: Martin McDonagh

Inception (2010)
Writer: Christopher Nolan;
Director: Christopher Nolan

The Italian Job (1969)
Writer: Troy Kennedy Martin;
Director: Peter Collinson

J

Juno (2007)
Writer: Diablo Cody;
Director: Jason Reitman

K

Kes (1969)
Writer: Barry Hines;
Director: Ken Loach

Kidulthood (2006)
Writer: Noel Clarke;
Director: Menhaj Huda

The King's Speech (2010)
Writer: David Seidler;
Director: Tom Hooper

The Kite Runner (2007)
Writer: David Benioff;
Director: Marc Forster

L

The Lavender Hill Mob (1951)
 Writer: T.E.B. Clarke;
 Director: Charles Crichton

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
 Writer: Robert Bolt;
 Director: David Lean

The Lives of Others
(Das Leben der Anderen) (2006)
 Writer: Florian Henckel
 von Donnersmarck;
 Director: Florian Henckel
 von Donnersmarck

*The Lord of the Rings:
 The Return of the King* (2003)
 Writers: Fran Walsh,
 Phillipa Boyens, Peter Jackson;
 Director: Peter Jackson

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)
 Writers: Fran Walsh, Phillipa Boyens,
 Stephen Sinclair, Peter Jackson;
 Director: Peter Jackson

M

Mamma Mia! (2008)
 Writer: Catherine Johnson;
 Director: Phyllida Lloyd

A Matter of Life and Death (1946)
 Writers: Michael Powell,
 Emeric Pressburger;
 Directors: Michael Powell,
 Emeric Pressburger

Made in Dagenham (2010)
 Writer: William Ivory;
 Director: Nigel Cole

Memento (2000)
 Writer: Christopher Nolan;
 Director: Christopher Nolan

O

Oh! What a Lovely War (1969)
 Writer: Len Deighton;
 Director: Richard Attenborough

On Any Sunday (1971)
 Writer: Bruce Brown;
 Director: Bruce Brown

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)
 Writers: Lawrence Hauben, Bo Goldman;
 Director: Milos Forman

P

Pan's Labyrinth
(El Laberinto del Fauno) (2006)
 Writer: Guillermo del Toro;
 Director: Guillermo del Toro

Paris, Texas (1984)
 Writers: Wim Wenders, Sam Shepard;
 Director: Wim Wenders

Precious (2009)
 Writer: Geoffrey Fletcher;
 Director: Lee Daniels

Pulp Fiction (1994)
 Writer: Quentin Tarantino;
 Director: Quentin Tarantino

Q

Quadrophenia (1976)
 Writers: Dave Humphries,
 Martin Stellman, Franc Roddam;
 Director: Franc Roddam

Quantum of Solace (2008)
 Writers: Paul Haggis, Neal Purvis;
 Director: Marc Forster

The Queen (2006)
 Writer: Peter Morgan;
 Director: Stephen Frears

The Quiet Man (1952)
 Writer: Frank S. Nugent;
 Director: John Ford

R

Rabbit Proof Fence (2002)
 Writer: Christine Olsen;
 Director: Phillip Noyce

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)
 Writer: Lawrence Kasdan;
 Director: Steven Spielberg

Random Harvest (1942)
 Writers: Claudine West,
 George Froeschel, Authur Wimperis;
 Director: Mervyn LeRoy

The Red Shoes (1948)
 Writers: Michael Powell,
 Emeric Pressburger;
 Directors: Michael Powell,
 Emeric Pressburger

Requiem for a Dream (2000)
 Writer: Hubert Selby, Jr;
 Director: Darren Aronofsky

Rob Roy (1994)
 Writer: Alan Sharp;
 Director: Michael Caton-Jones

S

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960)
 Writer: Alan Sillitoe;
 Director: Karel Reisz

Saving Private Ryan (1998)
 Writer: Robert Rodat;
 Director: Steven Spielberg

Schindler's List (1993)
 Writer: Steven Zaillian;
 Director: Steven Spielberg

Shadowlands (1993)
 Writer: William Nicholson;
 Director: Richard Attenborough

Shaun of the Dead (2004)
 Writers: Simon Pegg, Edgar Wright;
 Director: Edgar Wright

The Shawshank Redemption (1994)
 Writer: Frank Darabont;
 Director: Frank Darabont

Shirley Valentine (1989)
 Writer: Willy Russell;
 Director: Lewis Gilbert

Shrek (2001)
 Writers: Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio,
 Joe Stillman, Roger SH Shulman;
 Directors: Andrew Adamson,
 Vicky Jensen

Sister Act (1992)
 Writers: Jim Cash, Jack Epps Jr,
 Paul Rudnick, Joseph Howard;
 Director: Emile Ardolino

Slumdog Millionaire (2008)
 Writer: Simon Beaufoy;
 Directors: Danny Boyle, Loveleen Tandan

The Sound of Music (1965)
 Writer: Ernest Lehman;
 Director: Robert Wise

Star Wars (1977)
 Writer: George Lucas;
 Director: George Lucas

T

A Taste of Honey (1961)
 Writers: Shelagh Delaney,
 Tony Richardson;
 Director: Tony Richardson

Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)
 Writers: James Cameron,
 William Wisher;
 Director: James Cameron

The Usual Suspects (1995)
 Writer: Christopher McQuarrie;
 Director: Bryan Singer

This Is England (2006)
 Writer: Shane Meadows;
 Director: Shane Meadows

Titanic (1997)
 Writer: James Cameron;
 Director: James Cameron

Trainspotting (1995)
 Writer: John Hodge;
 Director: Danny Boyle

W

The Wages of Fear
(Le Salaire de la Peur) (1953)
 Writer: Henri-Georges Clouzot;
 Director: Henri-Georges Clouzot

Z

Zulu (1963)
 Writers: John Prebble, Cy Endfield;
 Director: Cy Endfield

About the study team

The study was carried out for UK Film Council/BFI by Northern Alliance in association with Ipsos MediaCT.

Northern Alliance is a Chartered Accountancy firm that provides accounting, tax, financial, management and business consulting services to private and public sector organisations and individuals, especially to those operating in the media, entertainment and creative industries. Northern Alliance staff and associates engaged in the report were Catherine O'Shea, Chris Chandler, Ian Christie, Mike Kelly and Sarah Beinart.

Ipsos is one of the UK's leading market research organisations, ranking fifth amongst global research companies. Its specialist division Ipsos MediaCT helps clients make connections in the digital age. It is a leader in providing research solutions for companies in the fast-moving and rapidly converging worlds of media, content, telecoms and technology. Its research activities include measurement of behaviour amongst consumers and advanced analytics for media audience data. Ipsos MediaCT personnel engaged in the study included Adam Sheridan, Eduardo Mena Bahos and Paul Maskell.

The UK Film Council/BFI steering group comprised Carol Comley, David Steele, Nigel Algar, Sarah Schafer-Peek and Sean Perkins.

All the study team are grateful for the assistance provided by Bertrand Moullier of Narval Media and the other companies and individuals who provided advice and information during the stakeholder consultation, David Ettridge for his assistance in sourcing still images and to Mark Errington and Philip Metson of Radley Yeldar for their help in designing the published report. Grateful thanks are also given to all of the rights holders who directly or indirectly provided the images used in the report.



