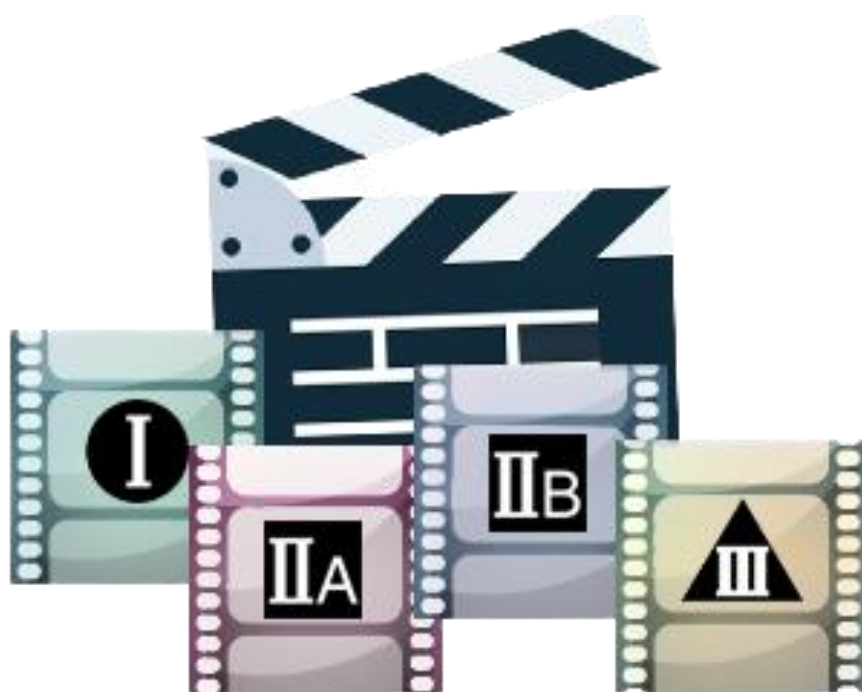


# **PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ON FILM CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM 2023-2024**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration**



**SYSTRA**  
MVA

**December 2024**

---

**LIST OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Background .....	2
1.2 Objectives of the Survey .....	2
1.3 Methodology .....	2
<b>2. Details of Major Findings .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Knowledge of and Opinions on the Three-tier Film Classification System .....	4
2.2 Comments on the Film Classification Standards.....	5
<b>3. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 General views on the Three-tier Film Classification System .....	10

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 In accordance with the Film Censorship Ordinance (Cap. 392) (“FCO”), films intended for public exhibition in Hong Kong have to be approved by the Film Censorship Authority (“FCA”), who shall be the public officer appointed by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development. Currently, the FCA is the Director of Film, Newspaper and Article Administration. Films intended for public exhibition in Hong Kong are either classified under a three-tier classification system (e.g. cinematograph films / movies) or exempted from classification (e.g. educational, cultural, religious and promotional films). In order to gauge public views on the film classification system and the film censorship standards, the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration (“OFNAA”) commissioned MVA Hong Kong Limited to conduct the Public Opinion Survey on Film Classification System 2023-2024 (the “Survey”).

### **1.2 Objectives of the Survey**

1.2.1 The Survey aimed at collecting public views on the film classification system and related standards. Specifically, the Survey covered the following issues –

i) Film classification system:

- Public awareness and acceptability of the three-tier film classification system; and
- Public views on the standards of the advisory categories (Categories I, IIA and IIB) and mandatory age restriction (Category III) in the existing film classification system, film titles, advertising material and packaging for Category III films.

ii) Film censorship standards:

- Public opinions on the film censorship standards, including the standards on the depiction of sex, violence, horror / shock, language, offensive behaviour and criminality and film titles, etc.; and
- Public opinions on censorship standards on film trailers and advertisements displayed in public places.

### **1.3 Methodology**

1.3.1 The Survey was conducted by way of face-to-face interviews with target respondents covering land-based non-institutional residents<sup>1</sup> in Hong Kong who were aged 13 or above.

1.3.2 A random sample of quarters was selected from the frame of quarters, which was maintained by the Census and Statistics Department (“C&SD”) and comprised the Register of Quarters (“RQ”) and the Register of Segments (“RS”). The RQ contains computerised records of all addresses of permanent quarters in built-up areas (including urban areas, new towns and other major developed areas). Each unit of quarters is identified by a unique address. The RS contains records of segments in non-built-up areas. The use of segments as the sampling unit in non-built-up areas is necessary since the quarters in these areas may not have clear addresses and cannot readily be identified individually. Household visits were

---

<sup>1</sup> “Land-based non-institutional residents” refers to the Hong Kong resident population excluding inmates of institution and persons living on board vessels.

made to the sampled quarters and an eligible respondent was randomly selected from each household by using the “Next birthday” method.

- 1.3.3 The fieldwork was conducted between 19 July 2024 and 12 September 2024. A total of 1 048 individuals aged 13 or above were successfully enumerated from 1 603 households. The overall response rate was 65.4%. The remaining households were mainly non-contact cases (at least five visits were paid)(100 households, or 6.2%) and refusal cases (436 households, or 27.2%).
- 1.3.4 The data collected through the Survey presented hereafter has been weighted according to the gender, age and housing type distribution<sup>2</sup> based on the results of the 2023 General Household Survey<sup>3</sup> such that the findings could represent the population aged 13 or above.

---

<sup>2</sup> Subsidised sale flats were classified as public housing for the purpose of the Survey.

<sup>3</sup> General Household Survey is conducted by C&SD, it is a continuous sample survey to collect information on the labour force, unemployment and underemployment. In addition, information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population is also collected. The latest issues can be found in: <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200>

## 2. Details of Major Findings

### 2.1 Knowledge of and Opinions on the Three-tier Film Classification System

#### Knowledge of the three-tier film classification system

- 2.1.1 The majority of the respondents (81.6%) were aware of the current three-tier film classification system. Among them, 69.3% could identify the four categories of the system and point out the corresponding meaning of each category<sup>4</sup>. However, 8.5% of them could only identify the categories but failed to point out the correct meaning of Category IIA and Category IIB. 22.2% of the respondents failed to identify the four categories of the classification system because they had either mistaken that there were three categories in the current film classification system or simply had no clear idea of the system.

#### Acceptance of the three-tier film classification system

- 2.1.2 The majority of the respondents (80.6%) considered the three-tier film classification system strongly acceptable / acceptable. Only very small number of them (1.4%) considered the system unacceptable / strongly unacceptable. Their views were expressed on a five-point scale, with "1" being "Strongly unacceptable" and "5" being "Strongly acceptable"<sup>5</sup>. The higher the score is, the greater the acceptance of the current film classification. The mean rating of the acceptance of the classification system was 3.94, indicating the system was generally acceptable among the respondents.
- 2.1.3 Despite of high awareness and high acceptance of the three-tier film classification system, only 25.5% of the respondents said that they would take film classification into consideration in making film choices while 74.5% said otherwise. The major reason for not taking into consideration film classification when making film choices was that the relevant respondents were 18 years old or above and were mature enough to make their own film choices (77.7%).

#### Views on the mandatory age restriction (i.e. only persons aged 18 or above are allowed to watch Category III films)

- 2.1.4 The vast majority of the respondents (91.1%) considered it appropriate to forbid persons aged below 18 to watch Category III films. Only 5.2% of the respondents found the 18-year-old watershed not appropriate. Among those who found the existing age restriction not appropriate, the mostly cited age was 16 years old (33.8%), followed by 21 years old (25.9%).

#### Requirements for outdoor screening of Category IIB or Category III films

- 2.1.5 Over two-thirds of respondents (68.2%) believed that complying with more stringent screening requirements for outdoor screenings of Category IIB or Category III films was appropriate. Among those who considered it appropriate, 47.9% felt that measures such as installing fences to prevent unauthorized entry, installing privacy barriers, posting warning notices and enhancing age verification measures should all be implemented.

---

<sup>4</sup> The three-tier film classification system comprises four categories - Category I, Suitable for all ages; Category IIA, Not Suitable for Children; Category IIB, Not Suitable for Young Persons and Children; and Category III, Persons Aged 18 or above only.

<sup>5</sup> The respondents were asked to express their views on a five-point scale: 1-"strongly unacceptable", 2-"unacceptable", 3-"average", 4-"acceptable", 5-"strongly acceptable".

### Whether parents would select films for their children

- 2.1.6 The majority of the respondents with children aged 12 or below would select films for their children (80.2%). Among them, 90.0% would take film classification into account when making film choices for their children. Among the parents who took film classification into consideration when selecting a film for their children aged 12 or below, 88.2% of these parents said that the film classification system was useful to them in avoiding film contents that could have adverse effect on the development of their children. 86.6% of them said that they would choose films suitable for their children due to their tender age and film classification provided relevant information to help them in their decision making.
- 2.1.7 The proportion of respondents who would select films for their children aged 13-17 (60.1%) was apparently lower than those with children aged 12 or below. Nevertheless, majority of them took the film classifications into account when selecting films for children aged between 13 and 17 (95.4%). The most commonly cited reason for this consideration was to prevent children from imitating undesirable behaviour (88.9%).

## **2.2 Comments on the Film Classification Standards**

### Views on factors that OFNAA takes into consideration when examining films

- 2.2.1 Nearly three quarters of respondents (72.6%) were able to identify that OFNAA would consider whether the film features offensive language, cruelty, disability, horror and sexuality in film examination. Nonetheless, less than half of the respondents (47.9%) correctly recognised that OFNAA would also consider whether the film insults any particular class of the public by reference to the race, national origins, religious belief or the gender of the members of that class and likely effect of the film on the audience (46.6%). One-third of respondents (33.6%) said that OFNAA would consider whether the exhibition of the film would be contrary to the interests of national security and one-fifth of respondents (20.0%) said OFNAA would also consider the artistic, educational, literary or scientific merits of the film and its importance or value for cultural or social reasons (such as promoting national education and national identity) in film classification.
- 2.2.2 One-fifth of the respondents (20.0%) got the impression that OFNAA would consider whether the film commits plagiarism, while 15.9% thought OFNAA would take into account whether the film contains product placement.

### Acceptance of film classification standards

- 2.2.3 Over two-thirds (68.2%) of the respondents found the current film classification standards strongly acceptable / acceptable, while only 1.1% found the current film classification standards unacceptable / strongly unacceptable.
- 2.2.4 Nearly three quarters of respondents (72.6%) opined that the current film classification standards were just right, while 4.2% considered the standards too strict / a bit strict and 10.8% considered the current standards too lenient / a bit lenient. The respondents were asked to express their views on a five-point scale, with "1" being "too lenient" and "5" being "too stringent"<sup>6</sup>. The closer the score is to "3-just right", the more the current classification standards align with public opinion. The mean rating was 2.91, indicating that the current standards were about just right.

<sup>6</sup> The five-point scale: 1- "too lenient", 2- "a bit lenient", 3- "just right", 4- "a bit stringent", 5- "too stringent".

- 2.2.5 The majority of the respondents (87.8%) considered that the current film classification symbols and their relevant notices provided sufficiently clear information on film classification to the viewers.

*Opinions towards classification standards of different categories under the film classification system*

- 2.2.6 Respondents who had watched films in cinemas or at home (VCD / DVD / Blu-ray) in the past 24 months were asked to give their overall opinions on the appropriateness of the current film classification standards in terms of different film contents: gore / violence, horror / shock, sex, nudity, language, subtitles, drug taking and torture / cruelty. Their views were expressed on a five-point scale, with “1” being “too lenient” and “5” being “too stringent”. The closer the score is to “3-just right”, the more the current classification standards align with public opinion.
- 2.2.7 For classification of different film contents in different film categories, the majority of the respondents (62.4% to 76.2%) considered that the current classification standards were “just right”.
- 2.2.8 The respondents’ standards on different types of scenes or depictions in Category I films were generally in line with OFNAA’s current film classification standards (62.4% to 69.1% of the respondents considered that the current standards were just right).
- 2.2.9 The respondents’ standards on Category IIA films and Category IIB films were more aligned with OFNAA’s current film classification standards comparing to Category I films (65.6% to 71.6% and 64.5% to 75.8% of the respondents pondered that the current standards of Category IIA films and Category IIB films were just right respectively).
- 2.2.10 The respondents’ standards on Category III films were better aligned with the current classification standards than those for other categories (70.1% to 76.2% of the respondents opined that the current classification standards were just right).
- 2.2.11 It was noted, in particular, from subgroup analyses on public acceptance level that -
- more respondents who were parents with children aged 12 or below but not aged 13-17 considered the current film classification standards “just right” than parents with children aged 13-17 but not aged 12 or below in Category I films.
  - more respondents who were not parents with children aged 17 or below viewed the current film classification standards “a bit stringent / too stringent” than respondents who were parents with children aged 17 or below in Category IIA and Category IIB films.
  - more respondents from the age group of 60-69 regarded the film classification standards “a bit lenient” / “too lenient” in Category IIA, Category IIB and Category III films.
  - more respondents graduated in college / university or above considered the current film classification standards “just right” in Category IIB and Category III films.
  - more male respondents considered the current film classification standards “just right” than female respondents in Category III films.

*Opinions towards depictions of specific contents**Gore / violence or cruelty / torture contents*

- 2.2.12 In terms of gore / violence of different categories of films, over two-thirds of the respondents (67.9% to 72.4%) considered that the standards were “just right”, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 2.2.13 In term of cruelty and torture of Category IIB and Category III films, the majority of the respondents (70.2% to 70.6%) regarded that the current standards were “just right”, suggesting that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with respondents’ standards.
- 2.2.14 79.6% of the respondents considered that detailed or gratuitous depiction of cruelty and extreme violence should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition.

*Horror / shock contents*

- 2.2.15 In terms of horror and shocking contents for different categories of films, over two-thirds of the respondents (69.1% to 73.4%) considered that the standards were “just right”, indicating that respondents considered OFNAA’s classification standards generally in line with their standards.

*Sexuality and nudity contents*

- 2.2.16 In terms of sexuality and nudity contents for different categories of films, over three-fifths of the respondents (62.4% to 72.5%) considered that the standards were “just right”, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.

*Sexual violence / perversion contents*

- 2.2.17 The majority of the respondents considered that the depictions of the following themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition:
- i. bestiality (91.3%);
  - ii. necrophilia (91.1%);
  - iii. explicit or gratuitous depiction of sexual violence or sexual acts under coercion (88.3%);
  - iv. unusual sexual interest (such as sadomasochism and fetishism) (85.5%);
  - v. detailed or gratuitous depiction of a child under the age of 16 years engaging in sexual activity (83.2%); and
  - vi. exploitative incestuous behaviours (82.9%).

*Offensive language*

- 2.2.18 Nearly a quarter of the respondents (24.8%) considered that Cantonese foul language should be a factor in making classification decision of a film, while 28.9% opined that it depended on the presentation of the contents. On the other hand, a quite some respondents (40.9%) considered that Cantonese foul language should not affect the classification of a film. Among those who considered that Cantonese foul language should be a factor in making classification decision of a film, 62.1% of them considered that the age of the character who



used foul language in the film was the most important factor in determining film classifications.

- 2.2.19 In terms of the acceptability of the current classification standards, language was given “just right” by over three-fifths of the respondents (65.0% to 76.2%), indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were generally in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 2.2.20 Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (66.0%) considered that proliferate use of genuine Cantonese foul language should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition. About a quarter of the respondents (23.2%), however, took a liberal view and considered it acceptable for Category IIA or IIB films.

#### *Drug taking contents*

- 2.2.21 Nearly half of the respondents (46.0%) considered that depictions of drug abuse should be taken into consideration when making classification decision of a film, while 24.0% opined that it depended on the actual depictions. Only 24.4% of the respondents considered that depictions of drug use should not affect the classification of a film. Among those who considered that depictions of drug use should be taken into consideration when making classification decision of a film, 61.0% expressed that the age of the drug taker in the film should be taken into account.
- 2.2.22 The majority of the respondents (70.7% and 71.0%) considered that the standards for Category IIB and Category III films in this respect were “just right”, indicating that OFNAA’s classification standards were mostly in line with the respondents’ standards.
- 2.2.23 About forth-fifths of the respondents (79.3%) considered that detailed promotion, incitement or instruction on the use of dangerous drugs should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition.

#### *Offensive / criminal behaviour*

- 2.2.24 Most of the respondents considered that the depictions of the following themes should either be restricted to viewers aged 18 or above or be banned from public exhibition:
- i. detailed instruction on or encouragement of dangerous actions or imitable criminal techniques (73.4%); and
  - ii. intentional denigration or insults to a particular class of the public by reference to the colour, race, religious beliefs, ethnic or national origins, or gender of the members of that class (68.6%).

#### *Opinions towards standards on film titles*

- 2.2.25 Respondents were asked about their general perception of the current standards for approving film titles without considering specific titles. About three-fifths of the respondents (58.2%) found the current standards on approving film titles strongly acceptable / acceptable, which showed that respondents generally found the OFNAA’s standards for film title approval acceptable.
- 2.2.26 Respondents aged 18 or above and were proficient in Chinese (comprising 96% of all respondents) were then shown a list of nine Chinese film titles and asked to provide their views. The respondents’ views on seven titles were generally in line with the OFNAA’s classification.

*Opinions towards standards on advertising materials for Category III films*

- 2.2.27 Respondents were asked about their perceptions in general of the current approving standards of advertising materials (e.g. posters, newspapers, magazines, film stills, materials displayed on public transport or exterior walls of buildings) for Category III films without providing specific materials. Approximately half of the respondents (52.1%) found the current standards strongly acceptable / acceptable. Meanwhile, 34.3% considered that the standards to be of averagely acceptable, and only 4.4% of the respondents found the current standards strongly unacceptable / unacceptable.
- 2.2.28 Respondents aged 18 or above were then shown ten film posters which contained various presentations such as violence, nudity, sexual depictions and sexual references, and were asked to provide their views. The respondents' views on six posters were generally in line with OFNAA's decisions. Specifically, the majority of them found nine out of ten film posters acceptable for public display while OFNAA had rejected four of these film posters.

*Opinions towards standards on packaging of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray of published Category III films*

- 2.2.29 The majority of the respondents (67.6%) were aware that films published in the form of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray discs on sale in Hong Kong were subject to the regulation of the FCO.
- 2.2.30 The majority of the respondents (79.7%) considered that the classification symbols and notices of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray publications were sufficiently clear for viewers' information.
- 2.2.31 Respondents were asked about their perceptions in general of the current approving standards of packaging of Category III films without providing specific materials. 59.3% of the respondents found the current approving standards of packaging of Category III films sold in VCD / DVD / Blu-ray format strongly acceptable / acceptable. 21.5% considered that the acceptability of approving standards was average. Only 0.7% of the respondents found the current standards strongly unacceptable / unacceptable.
- 2.2.32 Respondents aged 18 or above were then shown five packaging of published films which contained different graphic presentations such as horror and gruesome depictions, and portrayals of sex / nudity and were asked to provide their views on these packaging. Over four-fifths of the respondents found all five packaging acceptable, while OFNAA rejected one of them. It showed that respondents were more liberal than OFNAA in approving packaging.

*Opinions on whether Category III films for commercial exhibition should be relieved from excision requirement*

- 2.2.33 The majority of the respondents (63.1%) considered that there should be excision to films with extreme contents if they were to be exhibited to general adult viewers as Category III films. On the other hand, about a quarter (27.2%) considered that there should be no restriction on the contents of Category III films, i.e. no excision was required for commercially exhibited Category III films.

### **3. Conclusion**

#### **3.1 General views on the Three-tier Film Classification System**

- 3.1.1 The Survey revealed that the majority of respondents were aware of and generally accepted the three-tier classification system. Moreover, among respondents who were aware of the current film classification system, around 70% were able to identify the four categories.
- 3.1.2 The Survey showed that the current film classification system, regardless of film content, was generally aligned with the public opinion. For classification of different film contents in different film categories, the majority of the respondents considered that the current classification standards were “just right”. It showed that respondents’ standards were generally in line with OFNAA’s current film classification standards.
- 3.1.3 Regarding film titles, advertising materials and packaging of VCD / DVD / Blu-ray of published Category III films, the Survey indicated that the majority of respondents found the current standards were acceptable and that general public opinion were mostly in line with OFNAA’s decisions.