

*Parental Usage & Attitudes Survey
Of Film Classification*

A Presentation to

IFCO

By



PM/MN/RA
41102572

Parental Usage & Attitudes Survey Of Film Classifications

Background

- Lansdowne was commissioned by IFCO to carry out research among parents of children attending secondary school. A random sample of 12 schools was selected by Dr Carol McKeogh from a listing of secondary schools provided by the Department of Education. The selection process was designed to provide a representative sample of schools (in terms of area, socio-economic grouping, gender and religious composition).
- Just over 250 questionnaires were completed and returned to Lansdowne Market Research.

Research Methodology

- The research design encompassed two inter-related phases:
 - Phase One took the form of 4 focus groups, which provided a qualitative framework of understanding of the context and reasoning behind opinions and views about film classification for young people.
 - Phase Two was conducted among a representative group of parents with children at post primary schools. The aim was to measure the strength of views and opinions, and determine (quantitatively) issues of concern to parents in relation to films and classification.

Areas Of Interest

- The survey covered the following areas of interest:
 - Overview of current behaviour, opinions and views in respect of cinema attendance and video/DVD viewing habits.
 - Extent to which parents use and seek information on films.
 - Awareness of sources of information available. Parental concerns about categories of 'harm' and their views on sources of harm (including review of general media – TV, internet, magazines, newspapers).
 - Attitudes towards and understanding of the IFCO and the current classifications used in Ireland.

Further Contact

For further information please contact IFCO, 16 Harcourt Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland; Telephone 00353 17996100; www.ifco.ie email: info@ifco.gov.ie

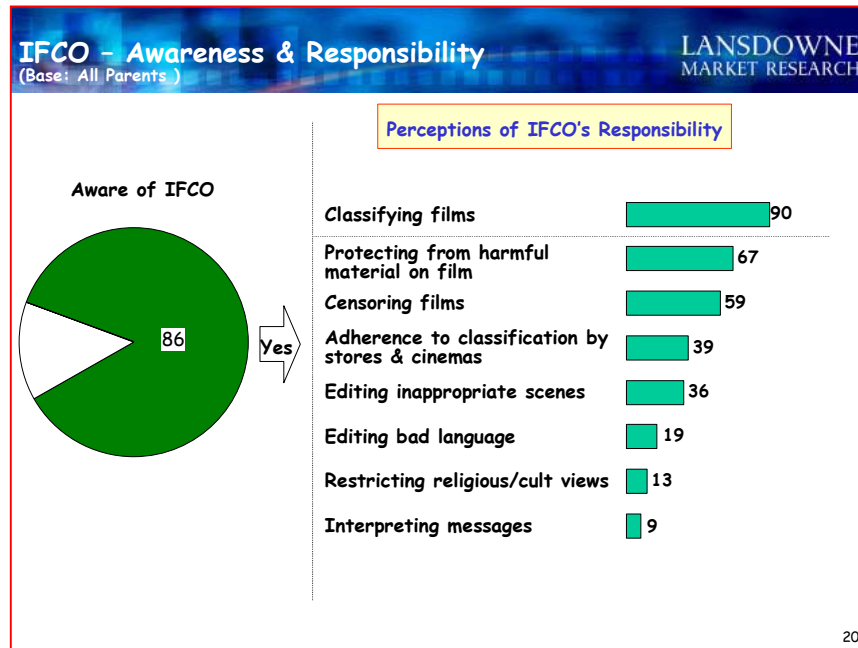
Summary Of Findings

- Among the main findings of the survey are:
 - The majority of parents are aware of IFCO and of what they do.
 - 93% of all parents regularly check the classification rating before allowing their children to watch films.
 - 86% of parents believe they should have the final say on what their children can and cannot watch.
 - On the whole, parents are happy with the current IFCO classifications (G, PG, 12PG, 15PG and 18). They are seen as one of the main sources of useful information about film content and are an important reference when deciding what their children should be allowed to watch.
 - There is however some confusion about the definition of PG, which on its own denotes 'parental guidance', whereas in the context of 12PG or 15PG it denotes 'parent or guardian accompanied'.
 - Two out of three parents say that they regularly agree with IFCO's classification decisions. Of the one in three who said that they sometimes disagree with IFCO's film classifications, a majority felt that they are too strict.
 - For the PG classification, around 1 in 4 believe the classification are often or sometimes too strict (versus 17% who feel it is not strict enough).
 - Just over 40% of parents believe that some 12 PG rated films have been 'too strictly' classified, on occasion (this is counterbalanced by a quarter who felt these types of films were not strict enough classified).
 - 45% of parents feel 15PG rated films are often or sometimes seen as too strictly rated, while 38% feel that, on occasions, they were too lenient.
 - The primary content concern of most parents is drugs/drug taking and violence, followed by racial references and underage drinking of alcohol.
 - Sexual activity/dialogue is a cause of less concern today, and most parents comfortably distinguish between sexual content and nudity. Swearing and strong language is very low down on concern priorities.

- A majority of parents believe that it is 'the overall context and underlying messages' of a film that should be the basis for classification not individual scenes.
- Where older adolescents are concerned, parents see the internet and television as potentially more harmful influences than films and video/DVDs.
- Parents would welcome more information about the content of films – almost half said they would visit the IFCO web-site, which goes live today.

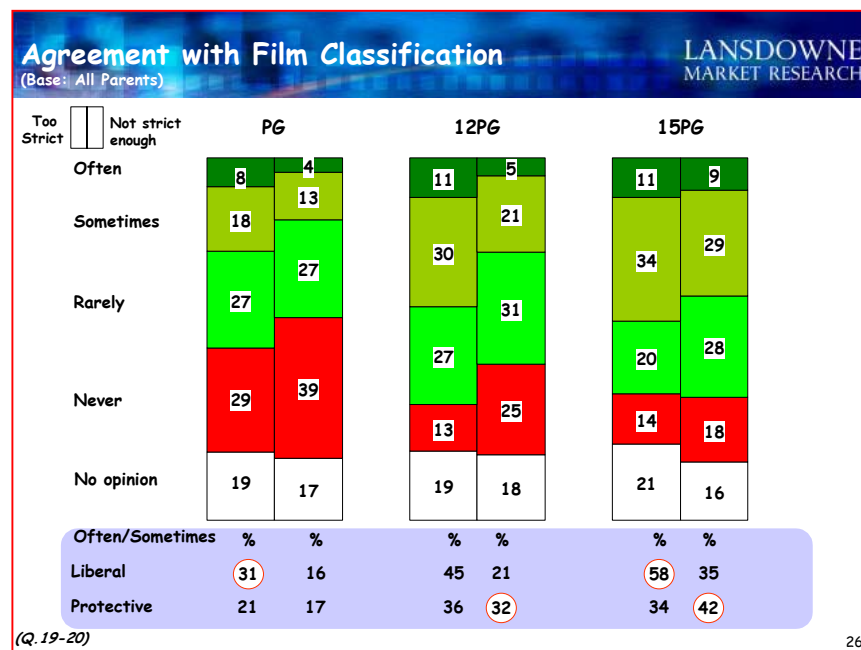
Main Findings

- The majority of parents are aware of the IFCO and the role it plays in classifying films. A significant proportion (39%) also believe that IFCO's responsibility extends to ensuring the adherence to classification guidelines by cinemas and outlets renting videos/DVDs (in terms of admission and rental to young people).



- On the whole, parents are generally happy with the current IFCO classifications (G, PG, 12PG, 15PG and 18). IFCO's classification ratings are seen as one of the main sources of useful information about film content and are an important reference when deciding what their children should be allowed to watch.
- On balance, it would seem that parents are in agreement with IFCO with regards to the specific ratings (vis-à-vis film content). Overall they are accepted as being 'about right'. Some variation by classification category is however evident – these are outlined on the next page.

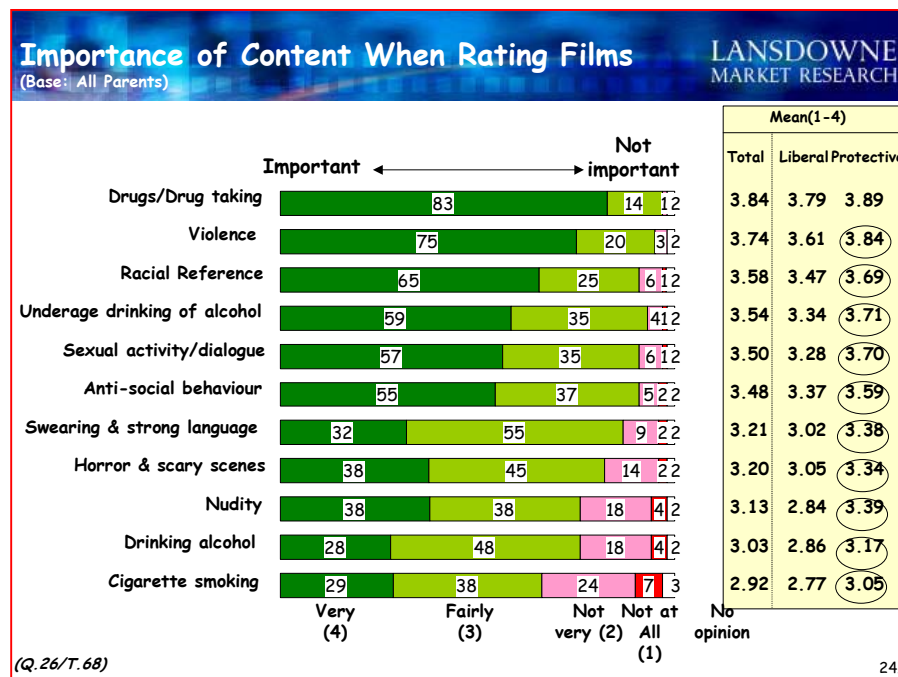
- For the PG classification, around 1 in 4 believe the classification is too strict (versus 17% who feel it is not strict enough).
- 12PG is seen as 'too strict' on occasion by more than 4 in 10 parents (this is counterbalanced by the quarter of parents who felt these types of film were not strict enough).
- 15PG rated films are often or sometimes seen as being too strictly rated by almost half of all parents (45%) compared with just under 4 in 10 (or 38%) who, on occasion, felt that the classification is not strict enough.



- Staying with classification ratings, there exists a considerable amount of confusion about the definition of PG (and hence when combined with 12 and 15). Parents debated the meaning of PG – Parental Guidance or is it Parental Accompaniment or a combination of the two? Or is 'Older' adult accompaniment (and if so what age should this person be?) Is accompaniment compulsory or discretionary? Who is there to enforce 'guidelines' – the cinema owners or rental outlet?
- Some parents presumed that 12PG and 15PG were 'steps up' from PG but, on the whole, the more they thought about it the less obvious and easy was the interpretation of this category.
- Overall, parents felt that more information about film content is required to better assist them in making decisions about what their children should be allowed to watch.

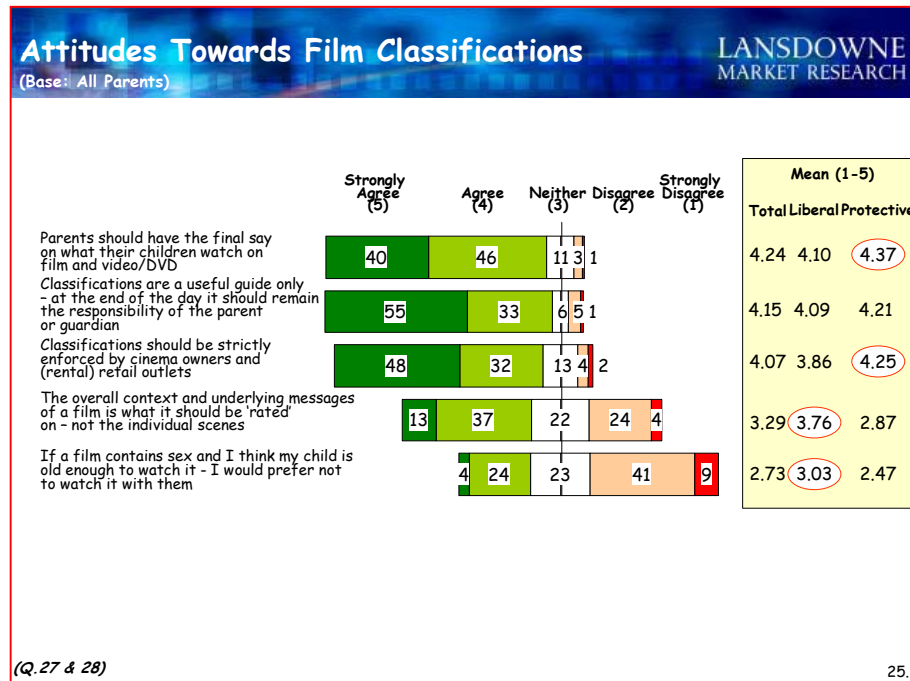
- The type of relevant information that parents would like to see included an indication of the levels of specific material (such as violence, sex, bad language). Also mentioned was information explaining the reasons for a specific classification rating, guidelines on content and contact details (for more information or for raising concerns or other queries).IFCO's planned web site received an enthusiastic welcome from parents with almost half, with Internet access, saying that they would visit such a site. This endorsement of IFCO's planned development would provide an ideal forum for parents to communicate with the office and allow a central location for film reference.
- Watching films is an important leisure activity for young people with 2 in 3 watching a rented film on a monthly+ basis and half visiting the cinema during the same time period.
- Parents' involvement in accompanying their children to the cinema falls off after 12 years of age (from almost 90% for under 12s to around half among 12-14 year olds); a further significant fall off is evident among 15+ year olds - only 1 in 5 parents claim that they ever accompany their 15+ year old to the cinema.

- Most parents (70%) 'always' check the classification rating on video/DVD before allowing their children to watch it. Perhaps an expected perception of the parent: child relationship, is that 4 in 10 believe that their children are not that happy about the 'nanny-check' of their film viewing. In general though, dialogue between parents and children about films is evident among at least half of this audience.



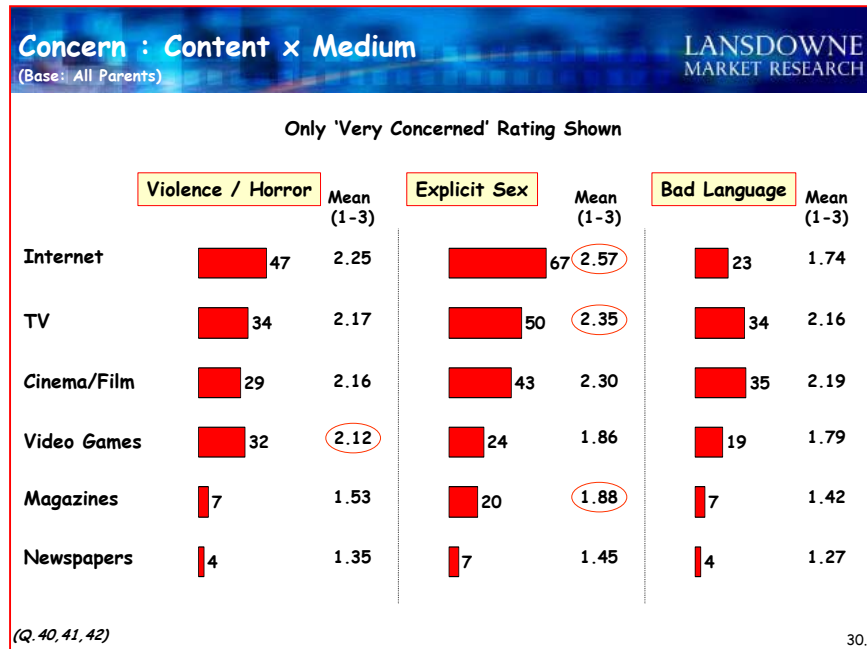
- In this context, it is perhaps not too surprising that the majority of parents are happy to allow their children to view some films with a higher/older classification rating. There is a strong sense that parents fully accept responsibility for this decision and are happy to do so. In fact, the majority of parents (86%) believe that they should have the final say on what their children can and cannot watch on film and video/DVD. Parents readily acknowledge that the current classification rating is an important guide but that ultimately the final decision is theirs.
- Parents believe that drugs/drug-taking and violence, followed by racial references and underage drinking of alcohol, contained in films, are of greatest importance when IFCO are rating a film.
- Parents comfortably made the distinction between sexual activity/dialogue and nudity when it comes to rating films - sexual activity is considered to be of far greater relevance.

- More insightful for IFCO, is the acknowledgement (made by the majority of parents) the it is 'the overall context and underlying messages of a film that should be the basis for classification – not individual scenes'.



- There is a significant proportion of parents who believe that the media in general can cause potential harm to young people – harm as defined by imitability, loss of innocence, nightmares, 'immature interpretations' and 'foistering' of so-called accepted norms of behaviour and views.
- In this context (i.e. general source of potential harm) television is considered to be the most potentially harmful medium particularly for children under 12 year olds. Parents acknowledge that they are reliant on the 'watershed' and schedule in general to help them 'monitor' what their children are exposed to. Overall there is a sense of invasiveness with this medium, which is increasingly showing 'inappropriate' material for young people.
- Films are next seen as a medium that can cause potential harm to young people especially those aged over 12 years. Parents, however, believe that they have a reasonable amount of 'control' over this medium with film reviews, classification ratings and word of mouth being the primary reference sources for information about films.

- Overall film is seen as less invasive than television but, similar to this medium, violence and imitability, loss of innocence and bad language are all perceived to be sources of potential harm.



- The internet is ranked just behind television and films and is seen as a source of potential harm particularly in relation to children aged 15 years and over. 'Net nanny' software is acknowledged as providing some level of control over what young people might be exposed to. Probed further about their specific concerns – the internet moves ahead of television and films as the medium of most concern with regards to 'explicit sex', violence and horror.