Nicolas Edmery
Film Analyst
European Audiovisual Observatory

Key figures on the documentary market

theatrical!

VOD!

IDFA | International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

16 November 2026

Theatrical	Worldwide	Since 2016
VOD Catalogues	Europe	Since 2022
SVOD Usage	EU 9	2024-2025

Related sources:

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LUMIERE VOD

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Key figures on

01 State of theatrical documentaries worldwide

02 Focus: European market

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01 State of theatrical documentaries worldwide

- Theatrical documentaries account for a small share of the global theatrical market
- Europe is a global documentary powerhouse
- Documentaries are mostly destined to their domestic market
- International audiences favour politics, culture, and nature themes

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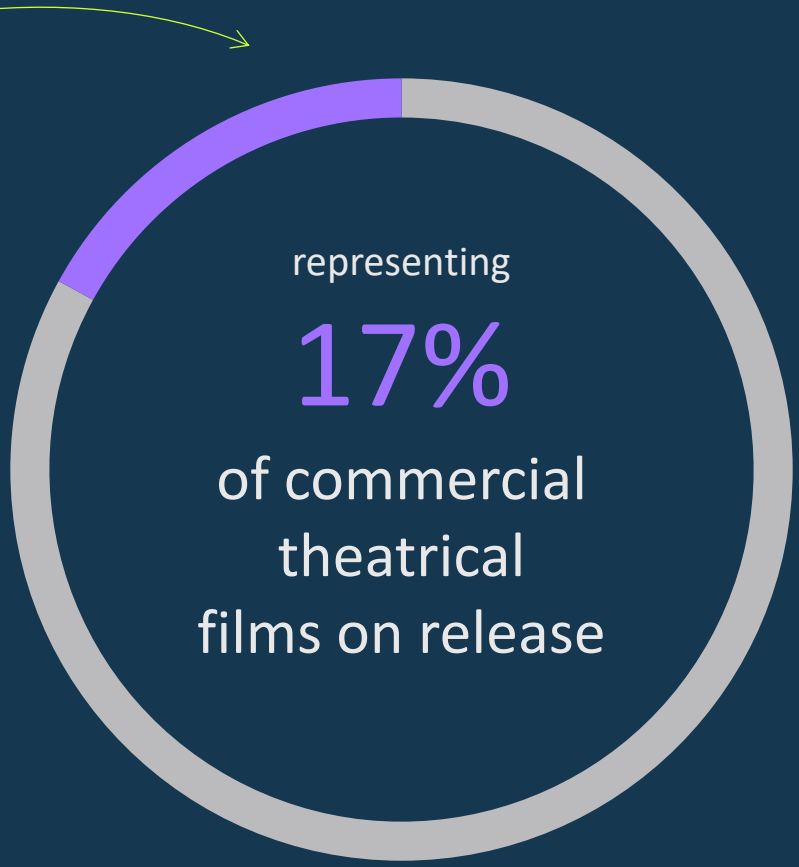
About **900**

Theatrical documentaries on commercial release per year worldwide



Methodology remarks:

- Only films on commercial release, i.e. selling at least 1000 admissions
- Covers 50 markets worldwide
- As registered in LUMIERE

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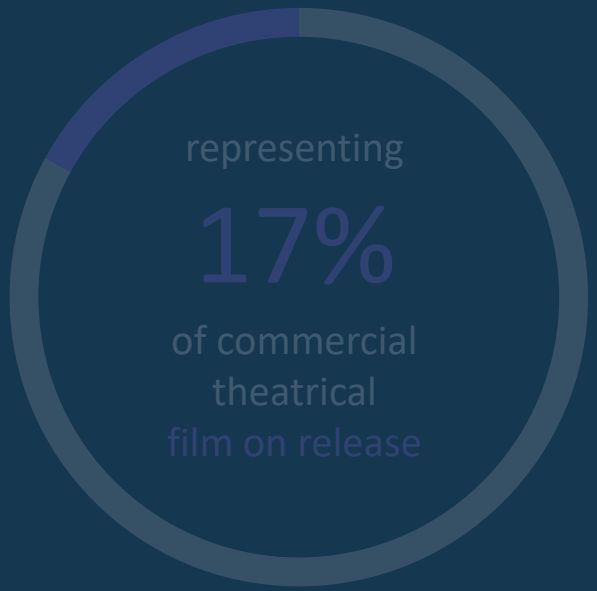
About 900

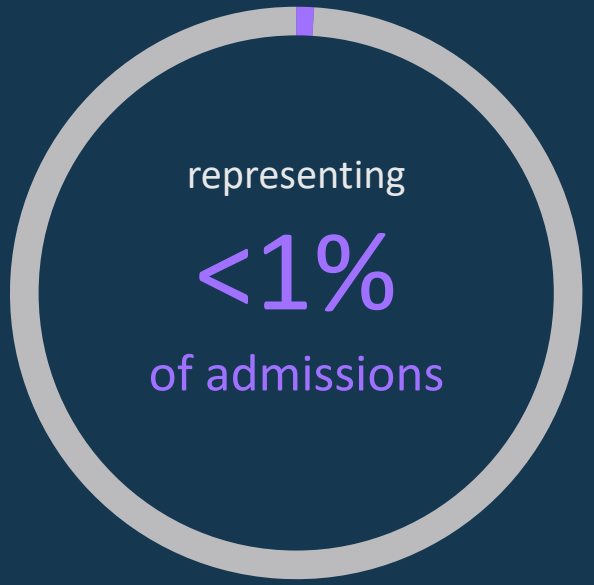
Theatrical documentaries on commercial release per year worldwide



selling

19 m

tickets per year worldwide



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Share of theatrical films with less than 100 000 admissions

Methodology remarks:

- Covers 50 markets worldwide
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Share of theatrical films with less than 100 000 admissions



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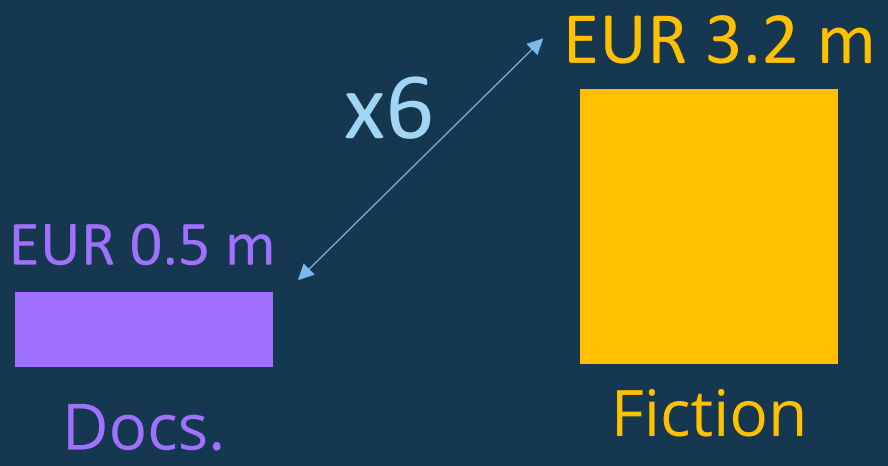
Average budget for theatrical films



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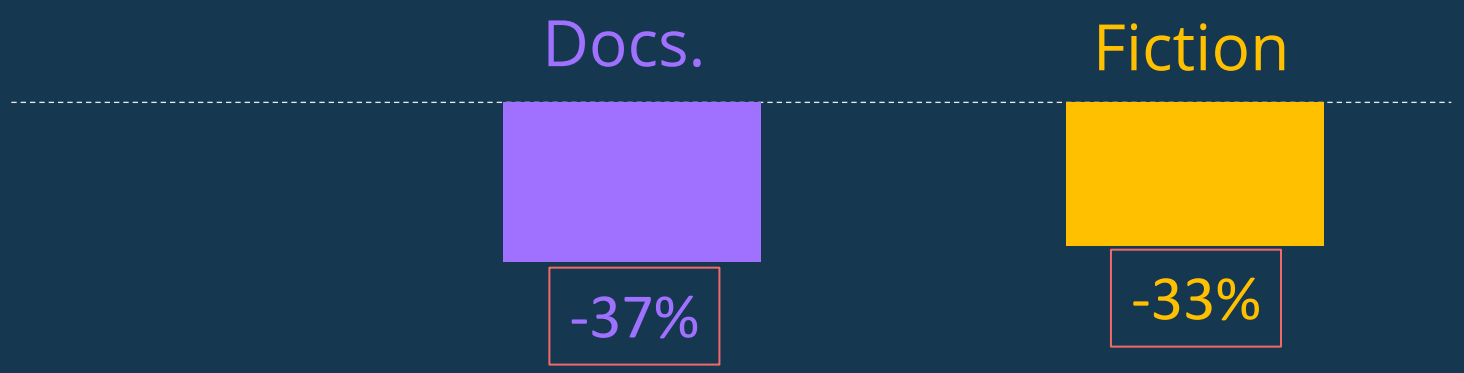
Documentaries worldwide are lagging behind their pre-pandemic results

Evolution 2022-2025 vs 2016 vs 2019



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2022-2025 Market shares



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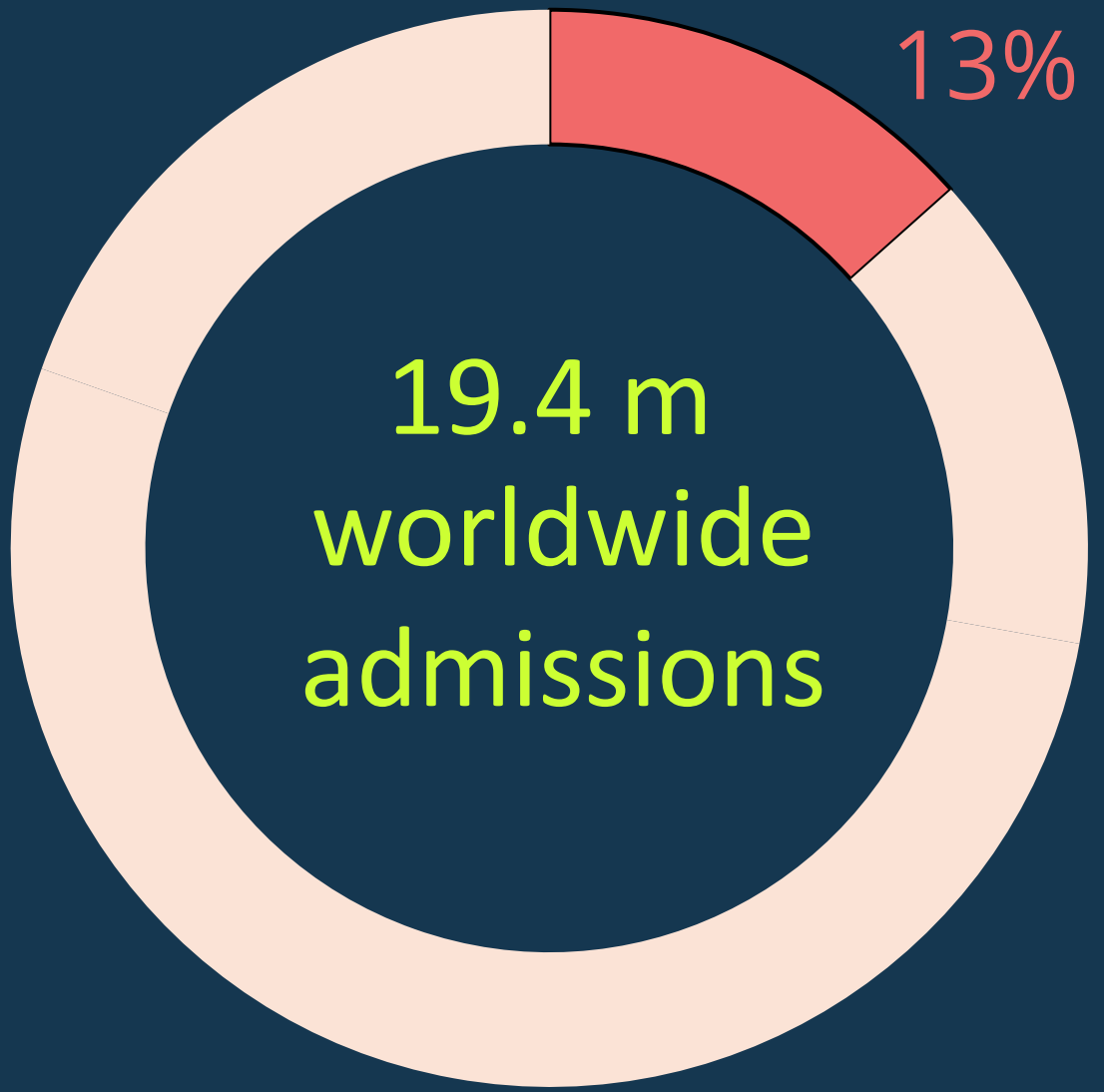

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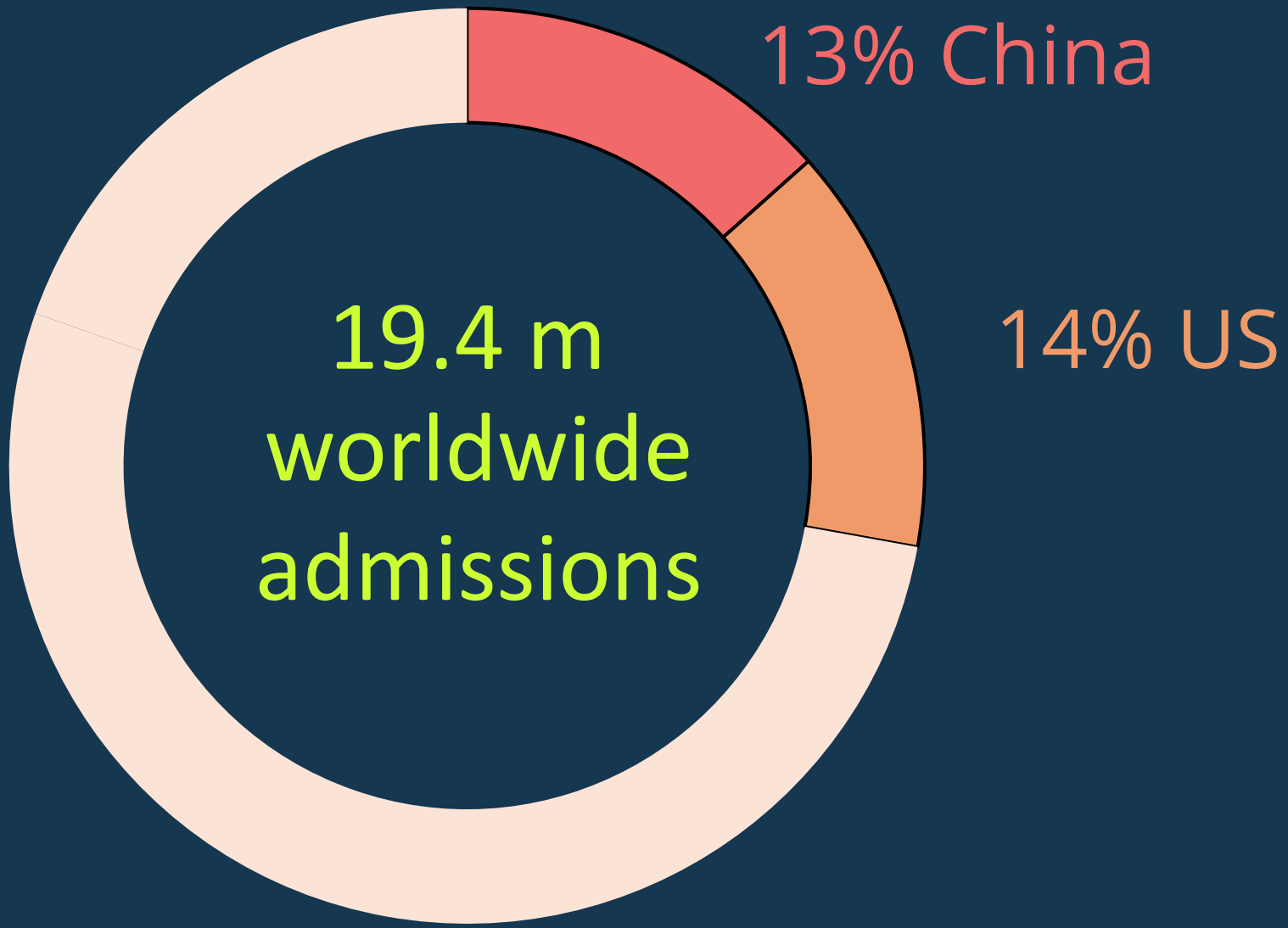
2022-2025 Market shares



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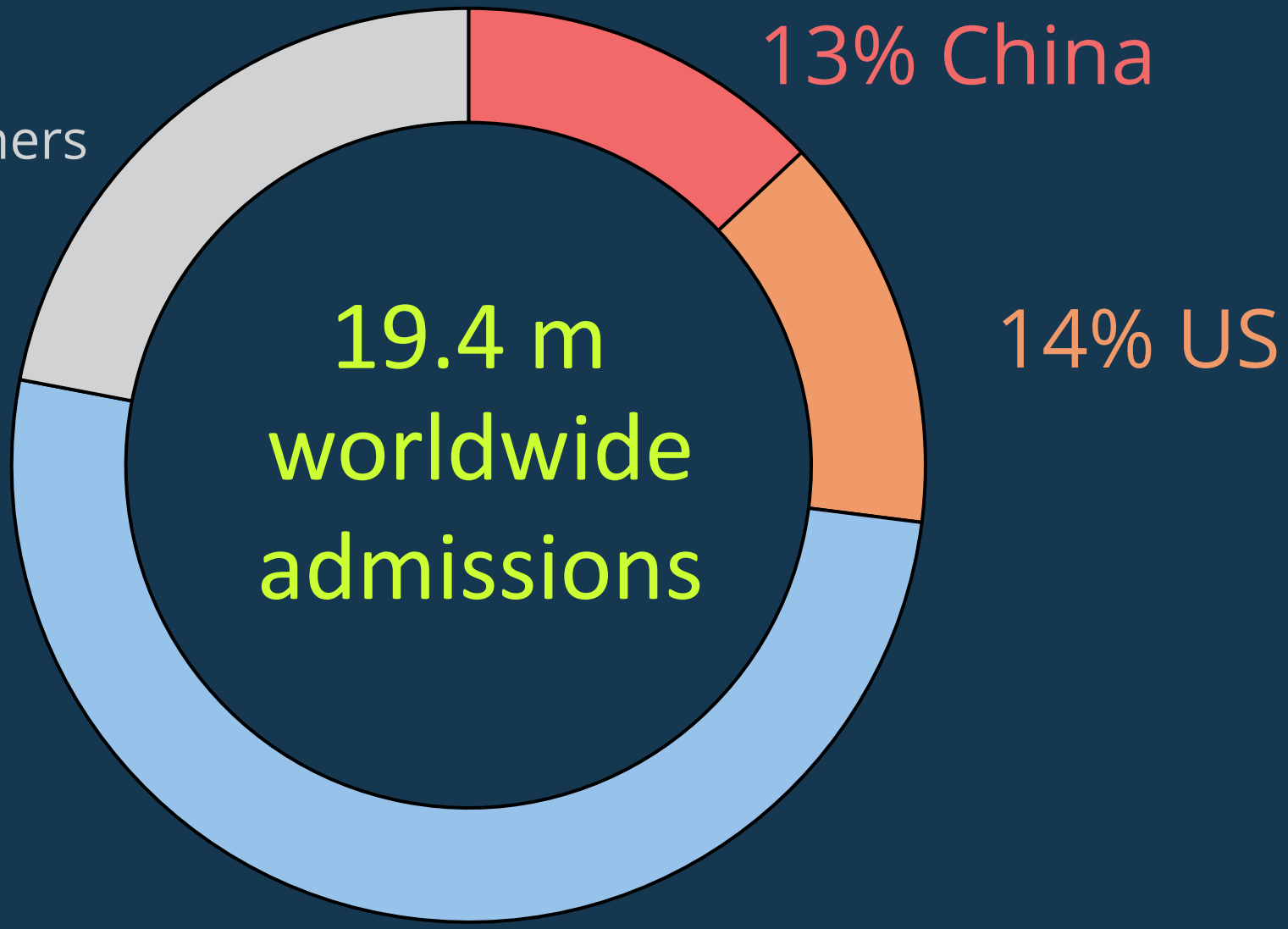
2022-2025 Market shares



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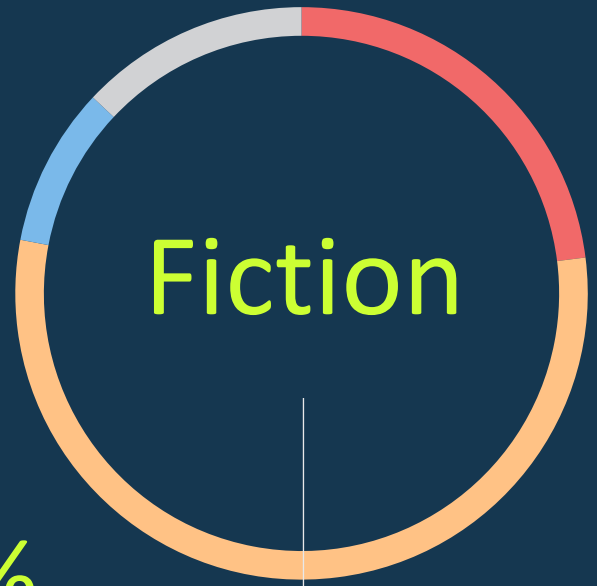
2022-2025 Market shares



51%





55%



Methodology remarks:

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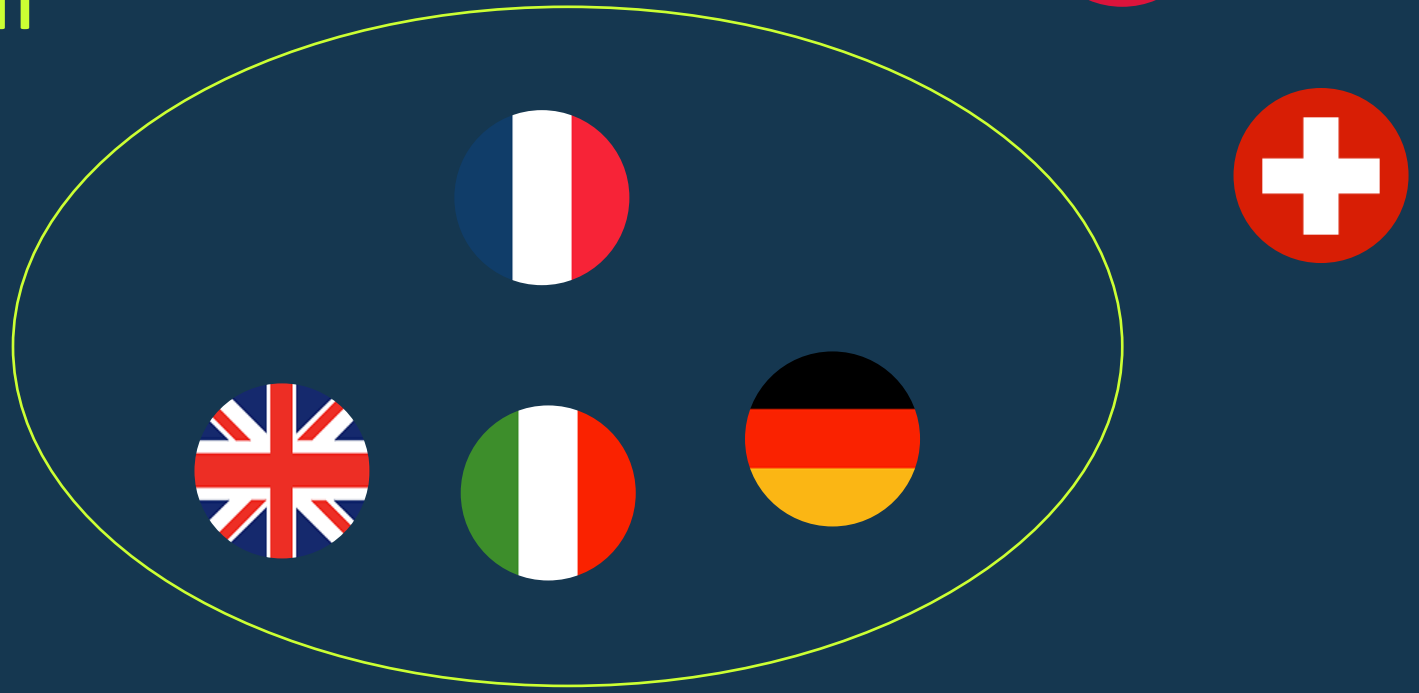
2022-2025 Main producers



10 m / year



Methodology remarks:

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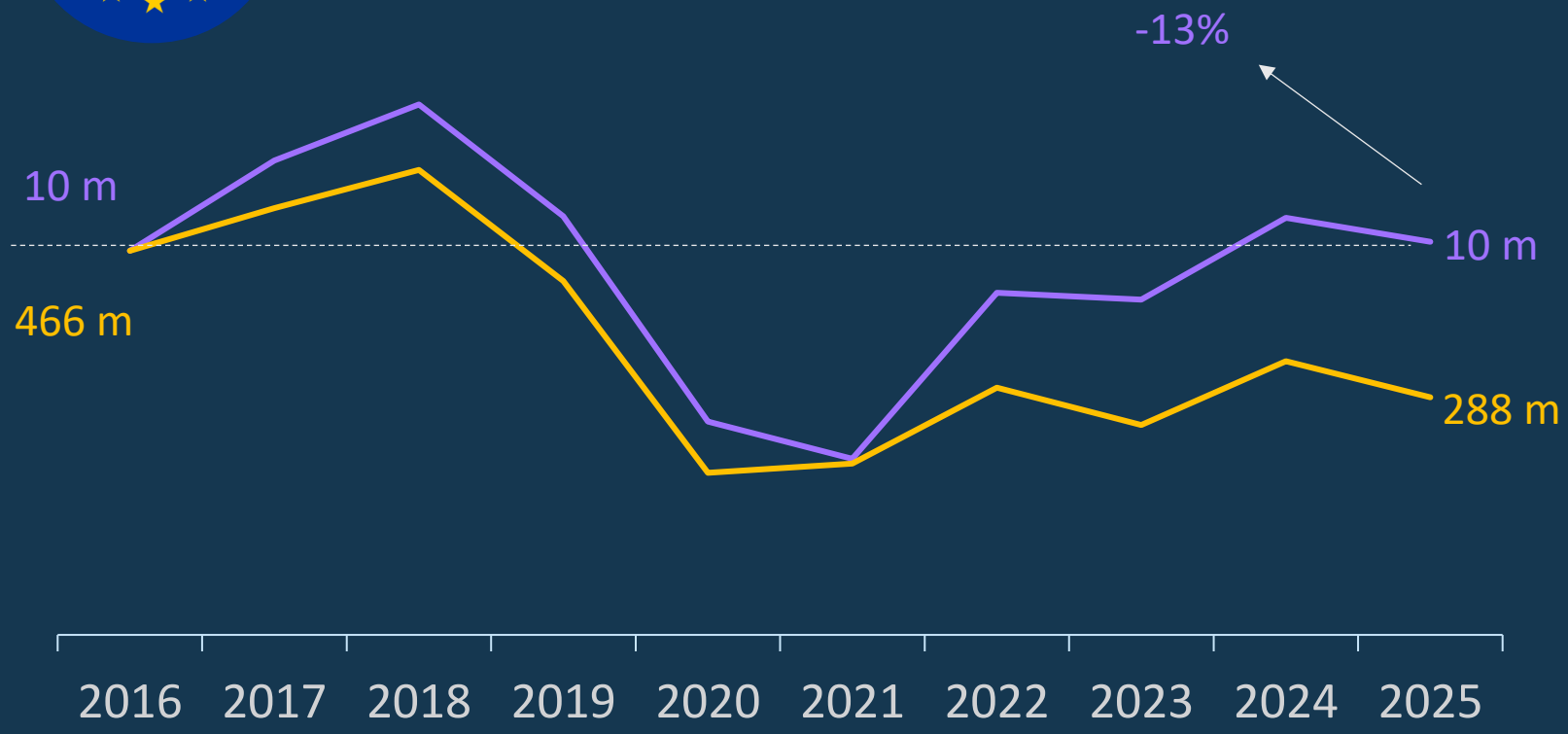
European documentaries recovered better than other nationalities



Index 100 = 2016



In stark contrast to fiction films' decline

Methodology remarks:

- Covers 50 markets worldwide
- As registered in LUMIERE

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2022-2025

Doc. Exports

55%



21%



Methodology remarks:

- Covers 50 markets worldwide
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2022-2025

Doc. Admissions

83%



9%



Methodology remarks:

- Covers 50 markets worldwide
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2016-2025



Themes

Culture

Politics

Nature

Science

Sport

Social

Spirituality

Crime and Disasters

Methodology remarks:

- Covers 50 markets worldwide
- As registered in LUMIERE

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2016-2025

Themes



Methodology remarks:

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2016-2025

Themes









Mostly portraits

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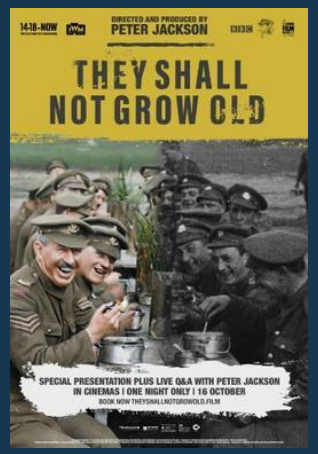
TOP 5 European documentaries worldwide between 2016-2025, by admissions





1

7.2 m





2

7.2 m





3

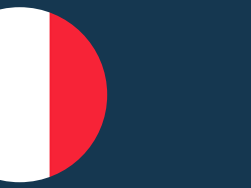
2.5 m

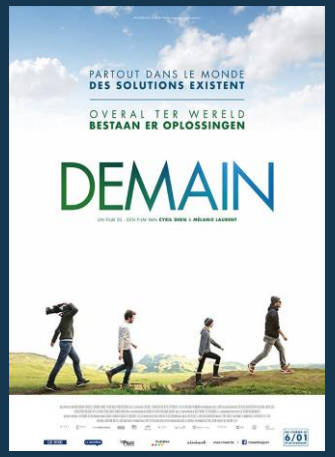




4

2.0 m





5

2.0 m

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01 State of theatrical documentaries worldwide

02 Focus: European market

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02 Focus: European market

- The European documentary market is close to full recovery
- Documentary films represent a larger share of VOD catalogues than documentary series
- European works are a large share of VOD catalogues and widely watched on SVOD
- Crime & Disasters are the preferred themes in SVOD

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About 706

Theatrical documentaries on commercial release per year in Europe

80%

being European works

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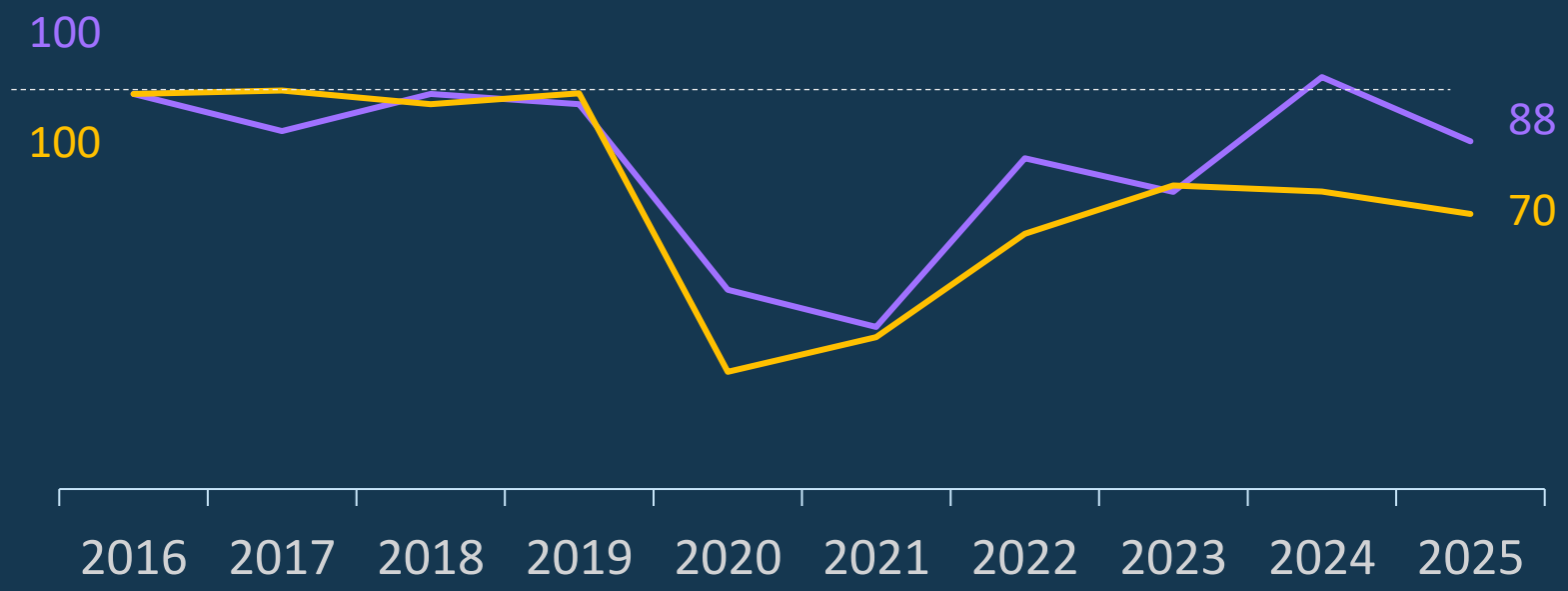
Documentaries are close to recovery in Europe

Index 100 = 2016



In stark contrast to fiction films' decline

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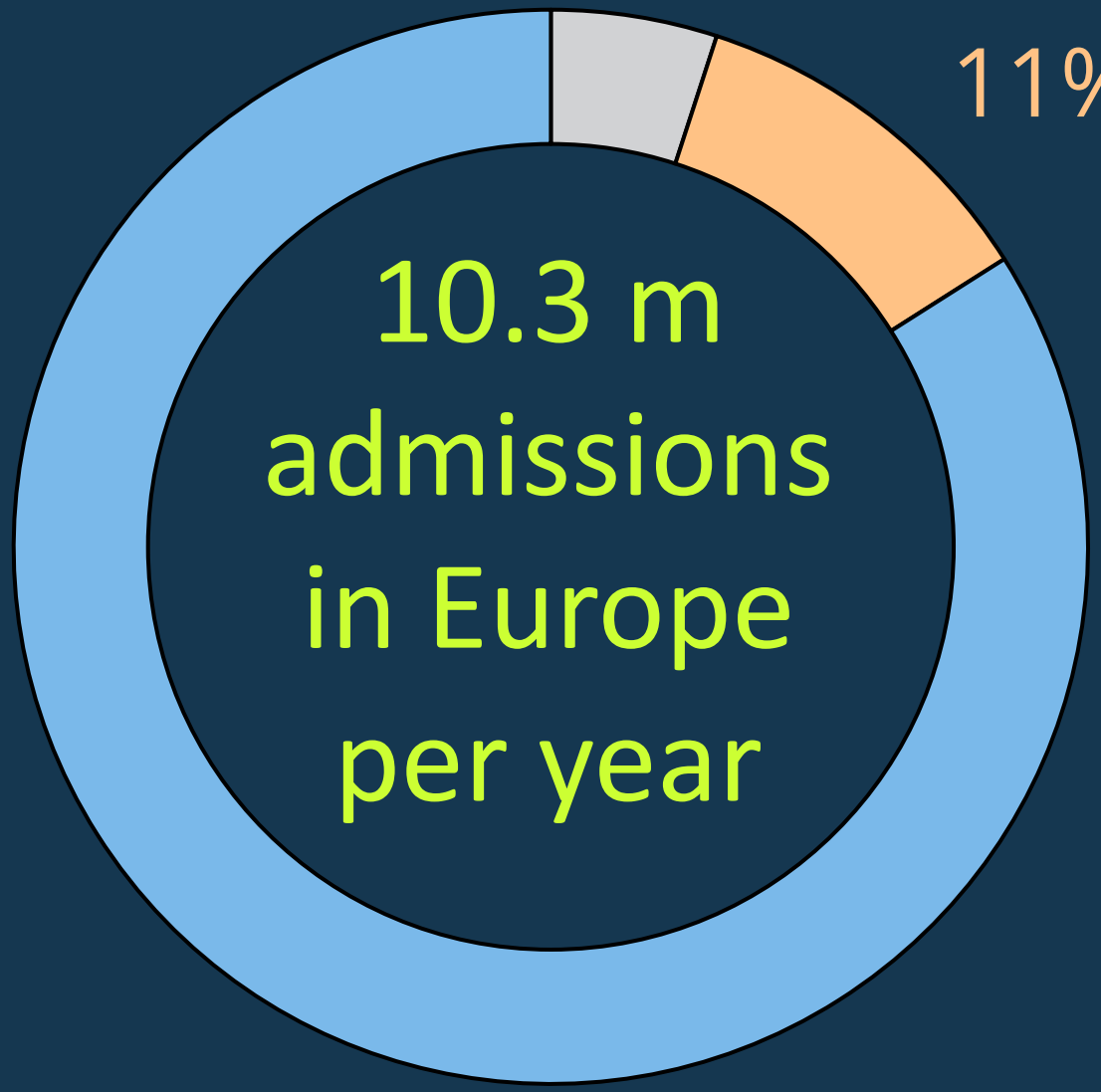
2022-2025 Europe Market shares



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VOD – Documentary unique works and presence 2022-2025

One title in at least one catalogue

Total number of occurrences

Unique works

Presence

Related sources:

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VOD – Documentary unique works and presence 2022-2025



Unique works



Presence

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Average number of catalogues per work 2022-2025



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Average number of catalogues per film 2022-2025



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Average number of catalogues per series 2022-2025



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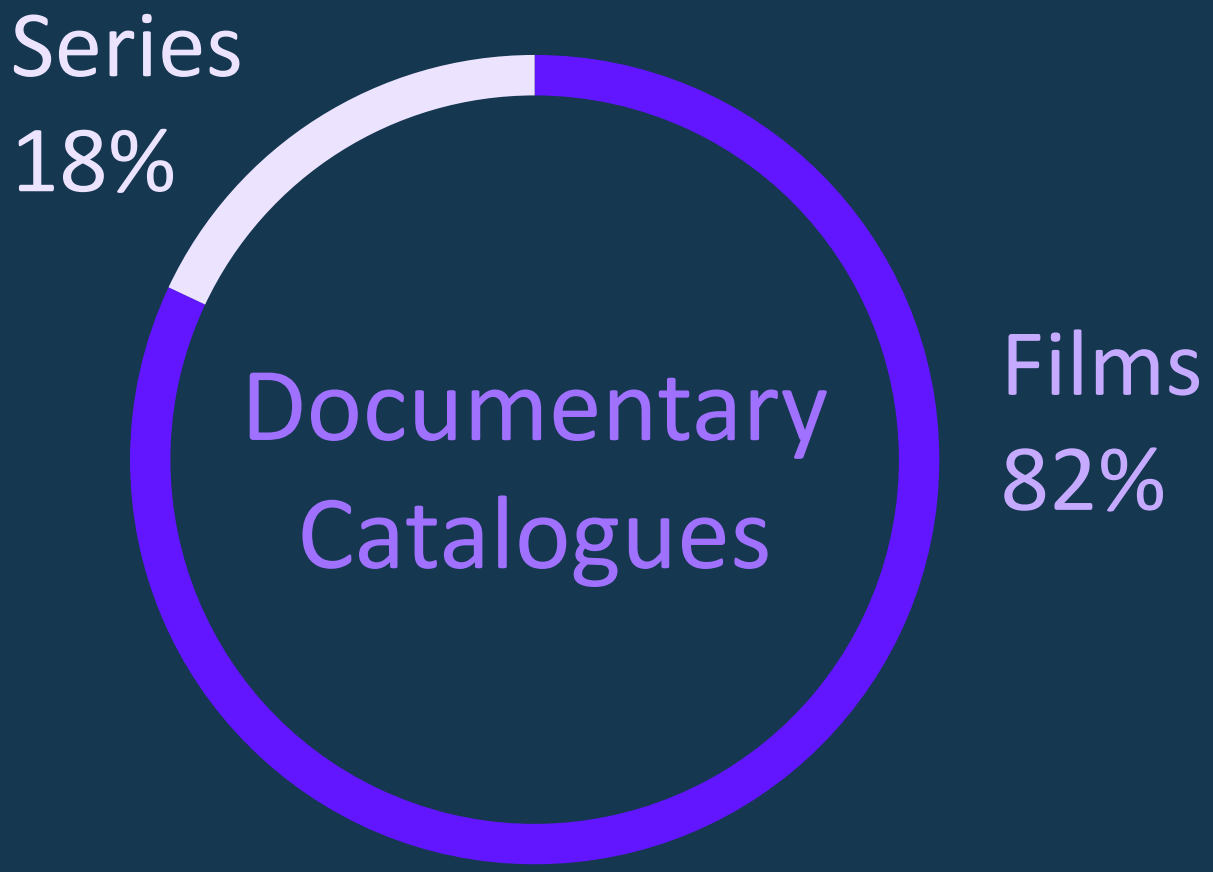

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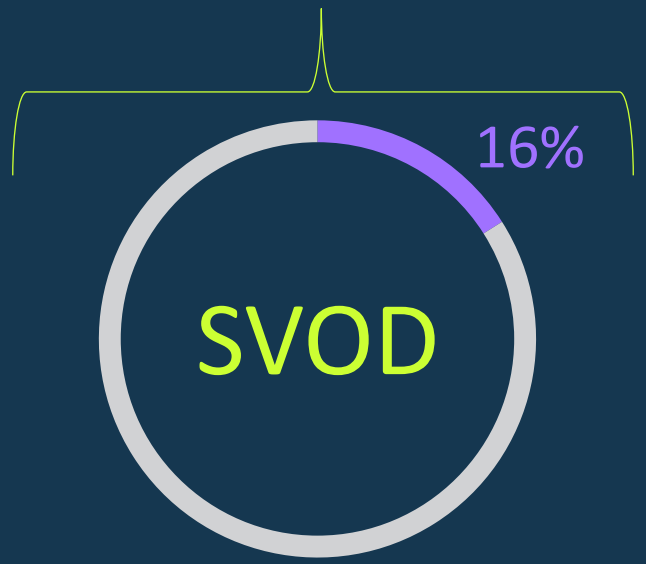
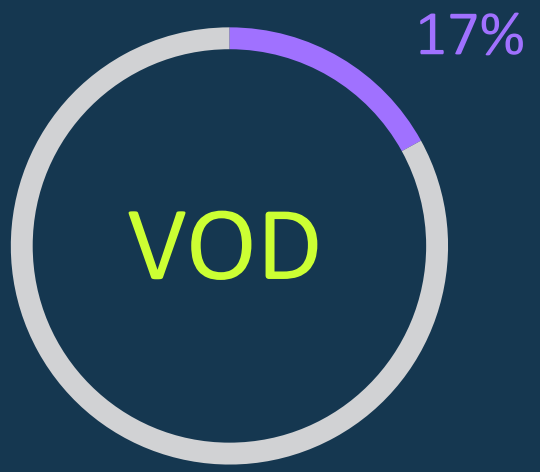
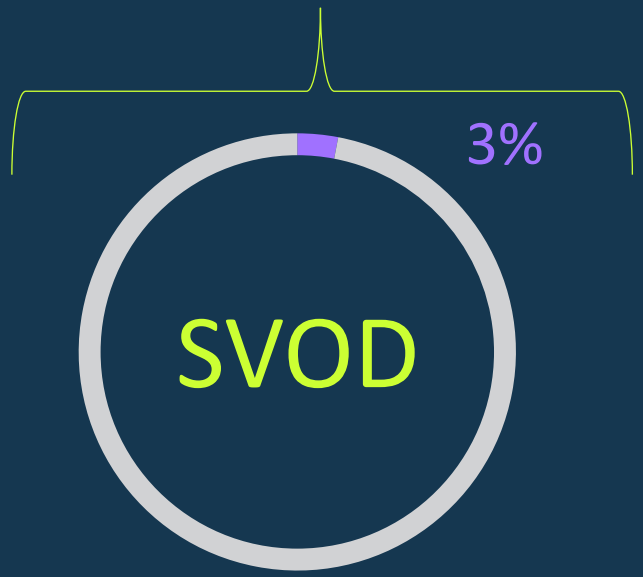
Docs. Presence





Docs. Viewing Time



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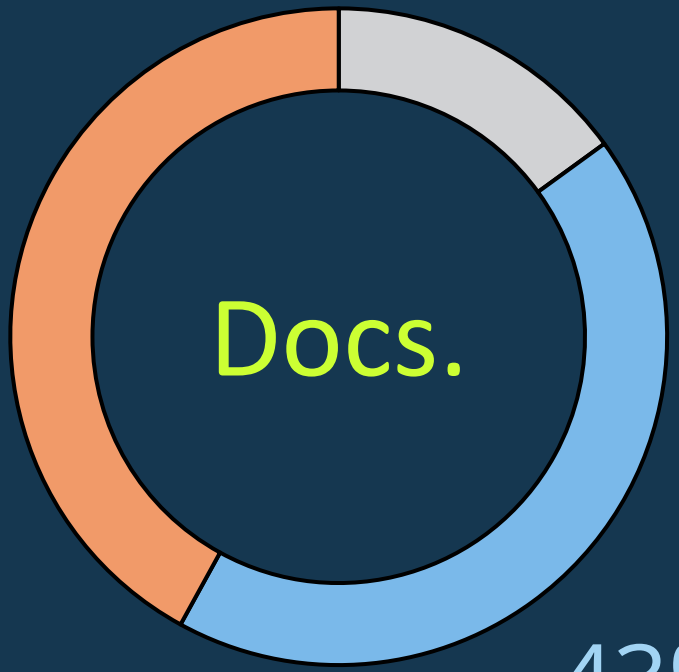
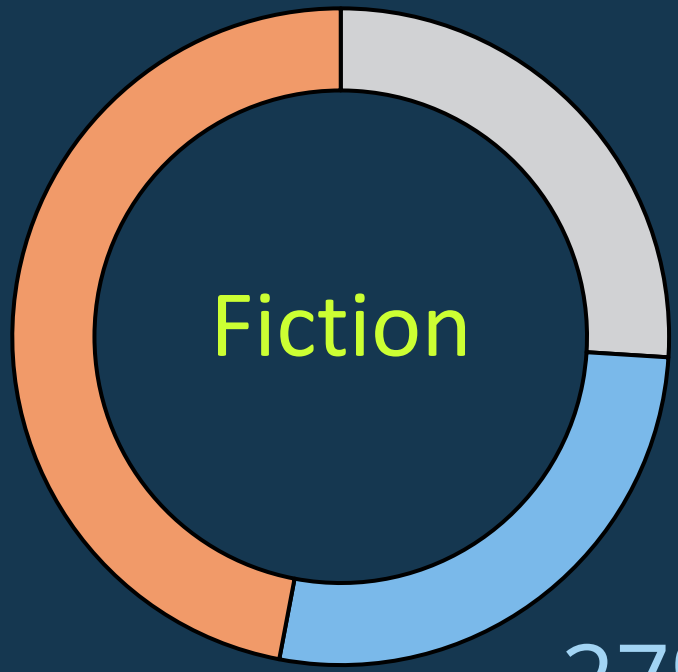
2022-2025 Presence



43%
Europe



27%
Europe

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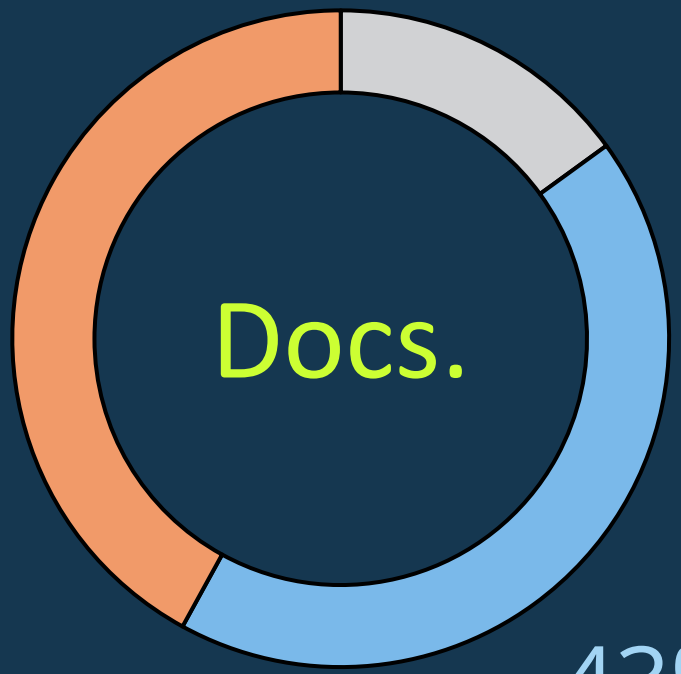
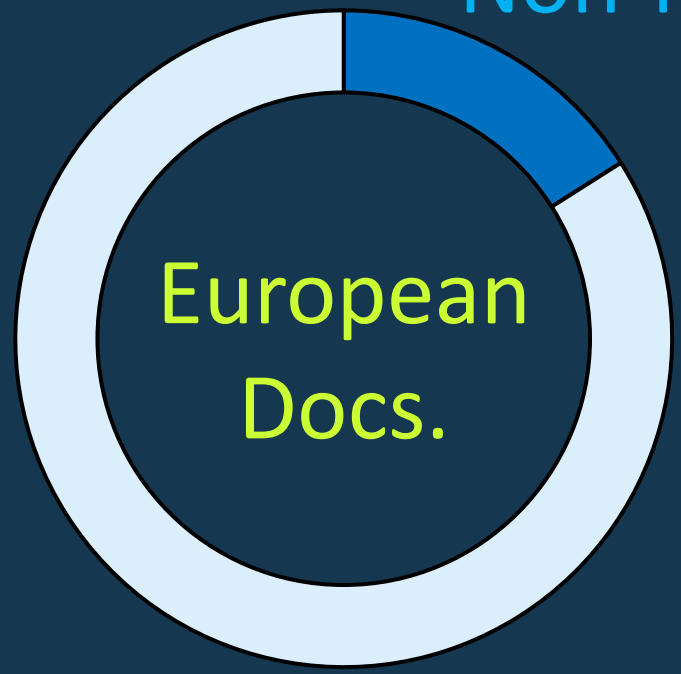


43%
Europe

16%
Non-National



National
84%

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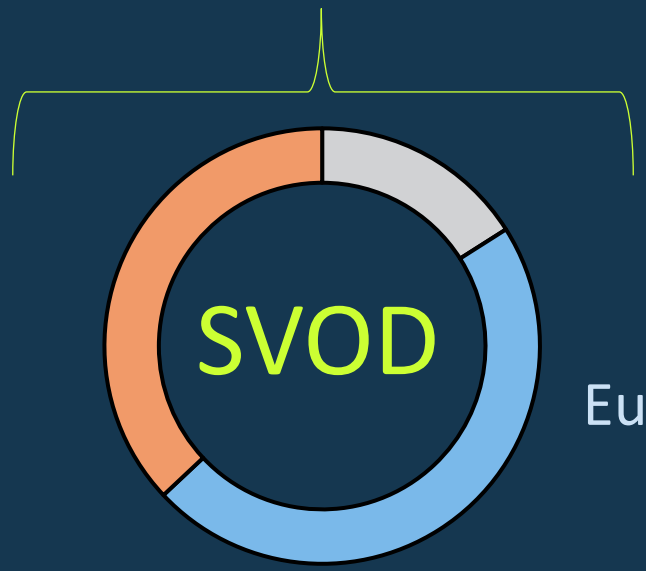
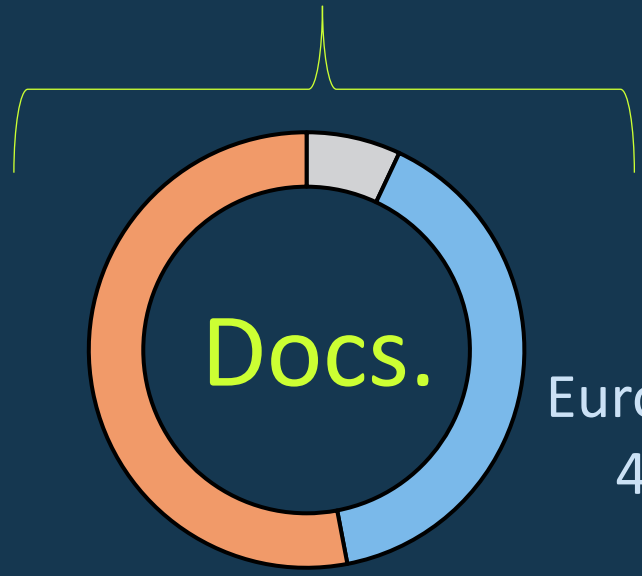
Docs. Presence



European
47%



SVOD Viewing Time



European
40%



European
21%

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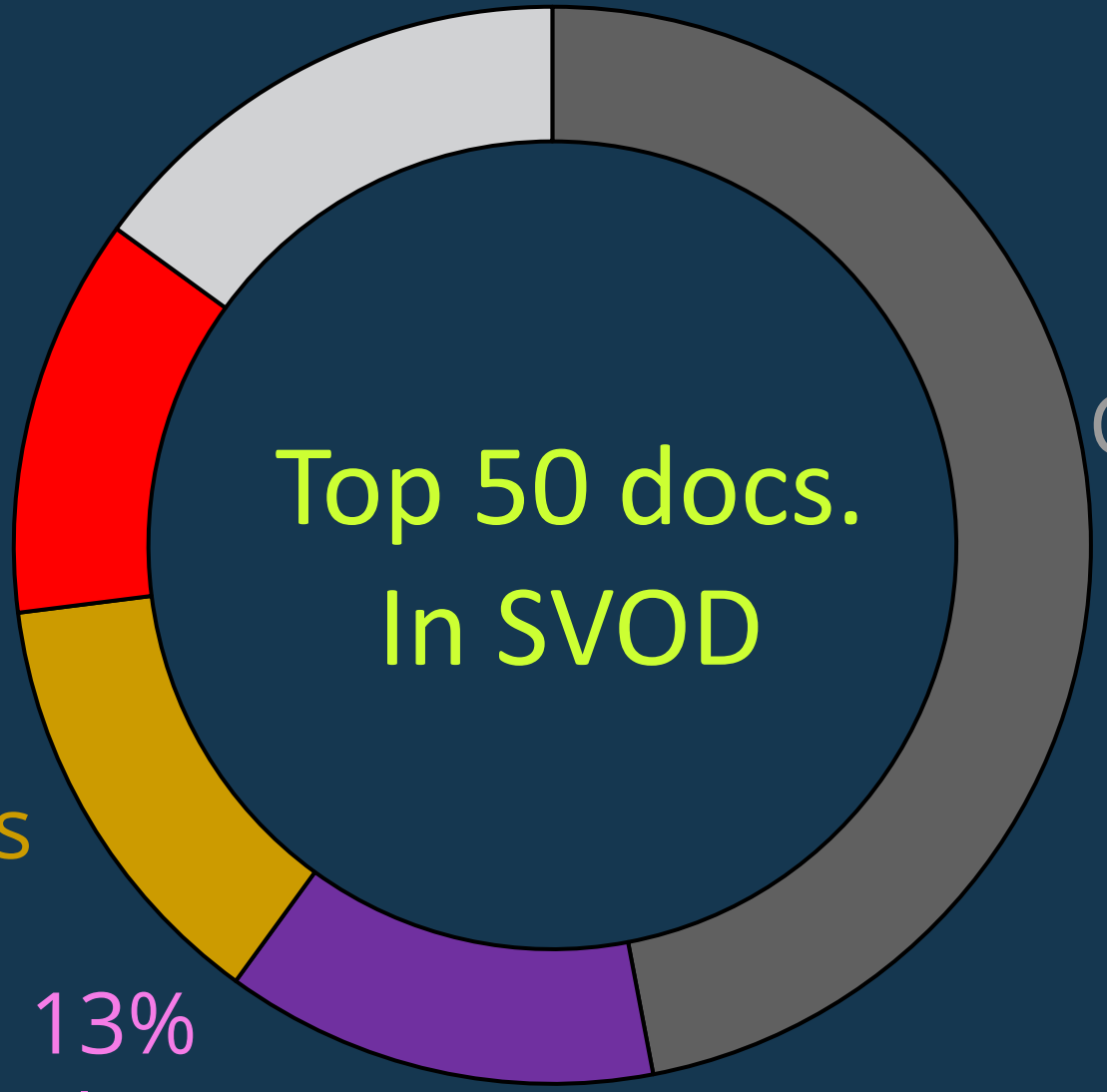
2024-2025

Themes



12%
Sports

47%
Crime / Disasters

13%
Politics

13%
Culture

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Themes







Close to recovery



Mostly films



Theatrical European nature documentaries



Target national markets



High European presence and viewing time



SVOD audience favours crime & disasters

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