Documentaries in cinema and on VOD

Insights into production and distribution trends 2016-2025

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November 2026

A publication of the European Audiovisual Observatory

Observatoire européen de l'audiovisuel
European Audiovisual Observatory
Europäische Audiovisuelle Informationsstelle

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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01 Methodology

Purpose

How did the offer and exploitation of documentaries available in cinema and on VOD develop between 2016 and 2025?

This report delivers the latest insights into the development of the offer and exploitation of documentaries worldwide up until 2025. Published by the European Audiovisual Observatory, the study analyses the performance of documentaries between 2016 and 2025 thereby allowing for a comparison between pre- and post-pandemic situation. While the report covers documentaries worldwide, it puts a special emphasis on Europe. This study highlights key market trends, differences to fiction works, examines presence and consumption on theatrical and on VOD platforms, and explores the main themes from the most successful documentaries.

About the European Audiovisual Observatory

The European Audiovisual Observatory is a European public service body that includes 41 member states and the European Union, represented by the European Commission. Operating under the Council of Europe, the Observatory collaborates with various partners and professional organisations across the audiovisual sector. Its mission is to collect, analyse, and publish information on Europe's film, TV, home entertainment, and on-demand industries.

Data scope

Geographical scope

Theatrical data, VOD presence and SVOD consumption vary in scope, due to the different sources used for data gathering. In consequence, the report includes admissions data and theatrical releases from 50 markets worldwide (35 European and 15 non-European), VOD presence from 31 European countries*, and SVOD usage from 9 EU countries.

**Excluding 2022, when only 13 EU countries were available.*

Market region	Countries covered (theatrical data)
Europe (35)	Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Türkiye
North America (2)	Canada, United States
Latin America (5)	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico
Asia (5)	China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore
Oceania (2)	Australia, New Zealand
Others (1)	Russia
Market region	**Countries covered (VOD catalogues)**
Europe (31)	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Türkiye
Market region	**Countries covered (SVOD consumption)**
Europe (9)	Germany, Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland

Time scope

As the data sources differ between theatrical and VOD data, the time scope varies from section to section. **Theatrical data** runs from 2016 to 2025, while **VOD catalogues data** focuses on the post-pandemic period (2022-2025). **SVOD usage** is limited to the years 2024 and 2025.

Data sources

Data sources

The insights in this report are based on an analysis of theatrical title-by-title admissions data, which is generally provided by national film institutes for European markets and by ComScore for non-European markets. Data for European markets is publicly available in the LUMIERE database.

The VOD catalogue data comes from *JustWatch,* a specialised company delivering data on works (films and series) availability on various platforms. The latest snapshot is available in the LUMIERE VOD database, which is managed by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO).

The SVOD usage data comes from *Digital I*, a TV analysis company. The data was gathered from four different SVOD platforms: Netflix, Amazon, Disney+ and HBO Max.

Definitions

Documentaries

For the purposes of this report, a work is considered as a documentary if it is tagged as such in the LUMIERE database, which in turn is based on a film being tagged as documentary in IMDb excluding reality TV, promotional concert films, and event streaming. Further qualification of individual films was beyond the scope of this report.

Countries of origin

The Observatory adopts a pragmatic approach to defining the country of origin for films, based on the origin of a film's financing sources. The country that is assumed to provide the majority of the financing for a film is considered to be the country of origin. Please note that the assignment of countries of origin may differ from the criteria used by national film agencies or other organisations, which may lead to variations in related statistics.

Co-productions

For international co-productions, the country that contributes the largest share of financing is considered the primary country of origin and is listed first among the co-producing countries. Please note that the assignment of countries of origin may differ from the criteria used by national film agencies or other organisations, which may lead to variations in related statistics.

Definitions

European films

European films are those considered of European origin, meaning they are predominantly financed by a European country. In this report, a European film is defined as a feature film produced and majority-financed by a member state of the Council of Europe. European minority co-productions are not considered as European films in the context of this report.

VOD (video on demand):

Services where consumers can watch works on demand. These services are divided between **FOD** (free on demand), **SVOD** (subscription on-demand) and **TVOD** (transaction on-demand) services. When the word **VOD** is used, it is implied to encompass these three services, unless specified otherwise.

Work

A work is defined as either a film or a series.

- ***Films:*** Documentary films feature a runtime of at least 60 minutes. In the theatrical **exploitation** sections, all films are defined as **theatrical films,** i.e. films that were released in cinemas (including festivals when included in general admission lists). In the VOD section, **films** are defined as either films previously released in theatres, or films only released in other audiovisual services (TV or streaming services).
- ***Series:*** A documentary series consists of various individual episodes, each of which can be less than 60 minutes long. Episodes are grouped by seasons. For the purposes of this report, each season is counted as one work. All analysis is therefore based on the series' seasons.

Definitions – Works availability

Films produced versus commercially released

In this report, the indicator 'films produced' refers to any film that is registered in the LUMIERE database and has sold at least one ticket within the specified time period. In contrast, the indicator 'films commercially released' refers only to films which generated at least 1 000 admissions worldwide in a given calendar year.

Catalogue

Full list of titles made available by an SVOD, TVOD or FOD service.

Unique works versus presence

Unique works

The number of distinct titles available in at least one VOD catalogue, counted only once per title, regardless of how many catalogues or countries include it.

Presence

The total number of occurrences of one unique work. Each time a title appears in a VOD catalogue in a given country counts as one presence. Thus, the same unique work may contribute multiple presences if it is available in several catalogues and/or countries.

Definitions – Works consumption

Admissions

Theatrical film consumption is measured by looking at the number of admissions or tickets sold in a given market.

National / export admissions

Throughout the report, admissions to European films are categorised into national and export admissions. National admissions refer to those occurring in the film's country of origin, as defined on page 7. Admissions in all other markets (i.e. non-national markets) are considered export admissions, including those from co-producing countries with minority shares.

SVOD usage: Viewing time

Viewing time is calculated in total number of hours spent on one specific work in SVOD services included in the sample, whether films or series' seasons.

Methodology remarks

Data scope for theme analysis

As it is not possible to automatically attribute a theme to the documentaries available in our databases, the theme analysis focused on the top 50 films by admissions or viewing time from a limited timeframe: 2016-2025 or 2025 only.

Themes refer to the main thematic topic covered by a documentary. This report uses the following eight main themes.

Culture: focus on a subject linked to any art form (non exhaustive: painting, sculpture, music, literature, films). As documentaries about former civilisations focus mainly on archaeology, art and architecture, they also are part of the culture theme. Does not include docu-concert, promotional documentaries, or live-screening

Science: focus on subjects linked to science matters (physics, biology, or other related subjects). Space-related subjects were also included in this category.

Social: related to human organisation and daily life, like health or education. Also includes documentaries on non-celebrities.

Politics: conflicts between countries, militantism, human rights fights, civil war, investigations with political effects (e.g.: corruption, firms misbehaving).

Sport: focuses on sports-related subjects. It does not include live-streaming of sporting events .

Spirituality: focuses on religion or religion-related subjects.

Nature: focuses on natural events and wildlife.

Crime / Disaster: focuses on true crime stories, or on disaster events seen through the lens of sensationalism.

Methodology remarks

Report covers only exploitation of documentaries in cinema and on VOD

When interpreting the results of this report, it is important to keep in mind that the theatrical market and the VOD market for documentaries represent only two market segments for documentaries. Exploitation on TV and festivals represent two other major market segments which could not be analysed due to lack of data.

Coverage bias

Since this report relies on different data sets varying in scope, the results may show some bias. VOD catalogue data may overestimate the share of European works. VOD consumption is only measured for the five largest European markets and the largest platforms. This may not be representative for smaller European markets.

Comparisons between different data sets are problematic

Direct comparisons between the theatrical and VOD data sets are problematic due to their different geographical and temporal scopes. Therefore, this report provides separate analyses for each market segment.

Partial data coverage

Data sets are partial which means that absolute figures may fall short. This is particularly relevant in the global context and the comparison between global market regions, as data coverage outside of Europe is often limited. For example, there is no data available on India. The sample is estimated to cover 72% of total global theatrical admissions in 2025. In the context of this report, global figures refer exclusively to the markets covered in the sample. Market coverage can vary between countries and years. VOD data are only available for selected European markets.

Annual outliers due to exceptional success of individual films

It is important to bear in mind that aggregate admissions figures can be greatly affected by a few extremely successful blockbusters. A notable example of this is the Chinese film *Amazing China*, which generated an exceptional number of admissions in 2018.



02 Key insights

Summary of key findings

598 theatrical documentaries were produced* worldwide on average per year between 2016 and 2025 and an average of 896 documentaries were on commercial release each year in at least one of the 49 markets covered in this report. Cumulatively, documentaries generated an average of 19 million admissions per year, 0.6% of the total theatrical market.

Admissions for documentaries are lagging behind their pre-pandemic results, falling to 22 million admissions in 2025, down by 37% compared to the pre-pandemic average. However, European documentaries fell by only 17% to 10 million, compared to the pre-pandemic average of 12 million tickets per year. This 'recovery' is significantly higher than for fiction.

Europe seems to be a global documentary powerhouse. European documentaries account for about 69% of worldwide theatrical **documentary production*** and for 71% of documentaries on commercial release. They also account for **more than half** of global admissions to documentaries, in stark contrast with the fiction film market where European films account for 9% of admissions.

Documentaries the type of film that relies least on co-productions. Between 2016 and 2025, 18% of European documentaries were international co-productions compared to 25% of live-action films and 36% of animation films.

* with commercial release

Summary of key findings (cont'd)

European documentaries have on average significantly lower production budgets than fiction films: A sample analysis of European films released in 2023 suggests that the average budget of a European documentary amounted to EUR 0.5 million (median EUR 0.4 million) compared to an average budget of EUR 3.2 million in the case of live-action films and EUR 3.5 million for animation films.

Documentaries are mostly destined to domestic markets. In the case of European documentaries, this is illustrated by the fact that they were released on average in three markets compared to four markets in the case of fiction films. Only 38% of their admissions stem from export admissions, with the majority of those made within Europe.

The European market is fully dominated by European theatrical documentaries, which accounted for around 87% of total admissions in 2025. This is the highest recorded share for a European film category. It is particularly notable when compared to the European fiction market, where the market share of European films is at only 33%, far behind US films.

While international audiences favour political documentaries, they tend to prefer nature subjects when watching European documentaries. Portraits of renowned artists also consistently attract audiences, regardless of their nationality. Documentaries with these themes achieve the highest ticket sales in Europe.

Summary of key findings (cont'd)

Documentaries account for a quarter of titles available on VOD catalogues, with their share being the highest on FOD platforms, while SVOD platforms have the lowest share. On average, a documentary is available in nine different catalogues, one less than fiction works. Feature documentaries have the widest presence, being available on 10 platforms against six for documentary series.

European documentaries are strongly represented in VOD catalogues across Europe and account for the majority of titles available, in contrast to fiction catalogues, which are dominated by US productions. **FOD catalogues**, in particular, offer the greatest diversity of nationalities. However, when the **total number of documentary titles available** across VOD platforms is considered, the numbers of European and US documentaries are broadly comparable. This apparent discrepancy is due to the limited circulation of many European documentaries: they are often available only in the catalogue of their country of origin, whereas US documentaries are distributed more widely across national catalogues.

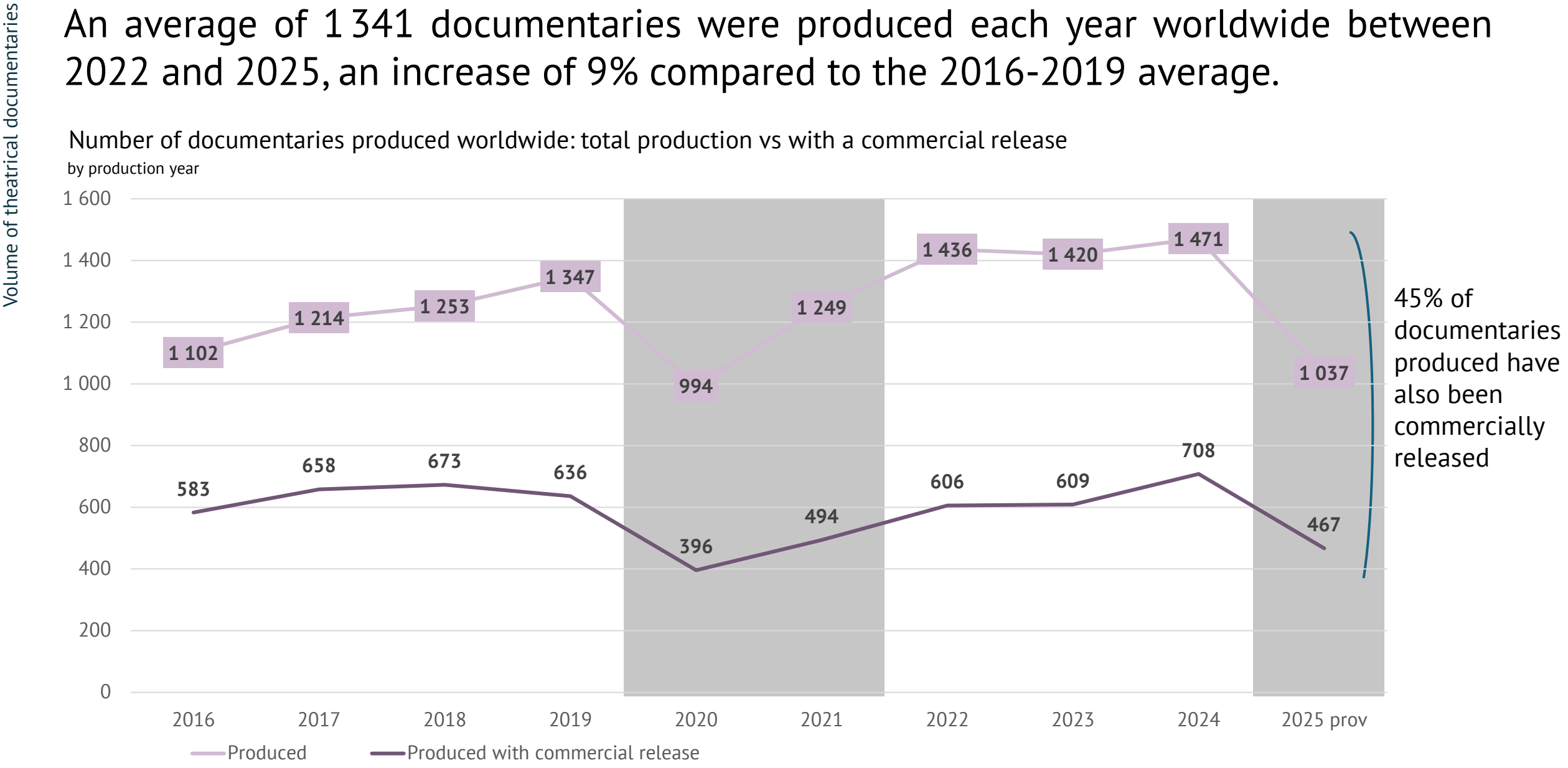
Documentaries represent a relatively small share of viewing time on SVOD compared to fiction works, with audiences showing a preference for documentary series. While most of the time spent watching documentaries on SVOD platforms goes to US productions, European documentaries are also widely watched, accounting for 40% of documentary viewing time, against 22% for European works in the fiction category. More than half of the viewing time for European documentaries are attributed to British works, followed by Spanish and French works.

Crime & disaster documentaries dominate SVOD viewing time. The most successful European documentaries available on VOD platforms also tend to be in the crime & disaster genre.



03 Volume of theatrical documentaries

An average of 1 341 documentaries were produced each year worldwide between 2022 and 2025, an increase of 9% compared to the 2016-2019 average.

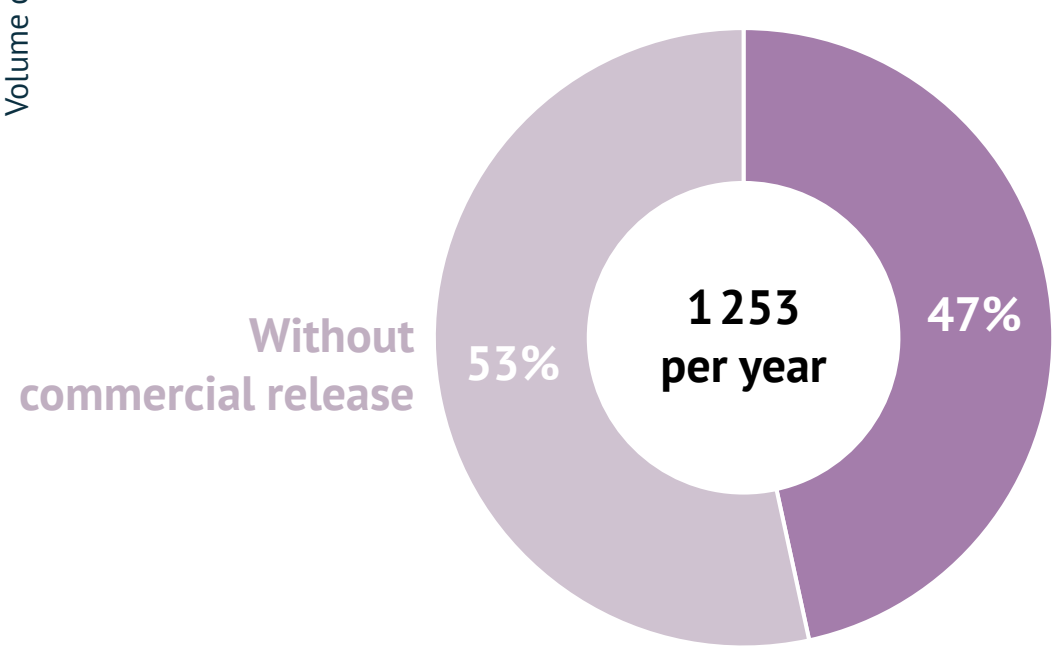


Not all films produced in 2025 have been released yet, so this figure is an underestimation.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

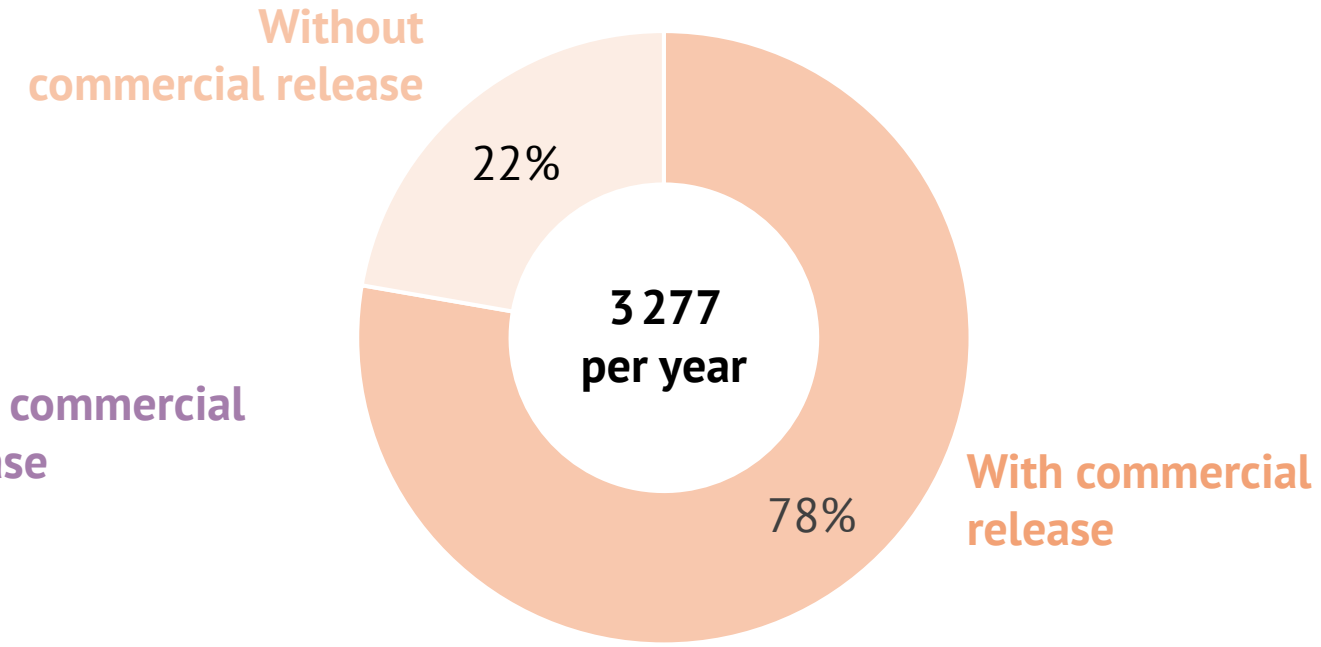
Volume of theatrical documentaries

Only 47% of produced documentaries received a commercial release, compared to 75% of live-action films.

Share of productions (2016-2025) for theatrical documentaries



Share of productions (2016-2025) for theatrical fiction films

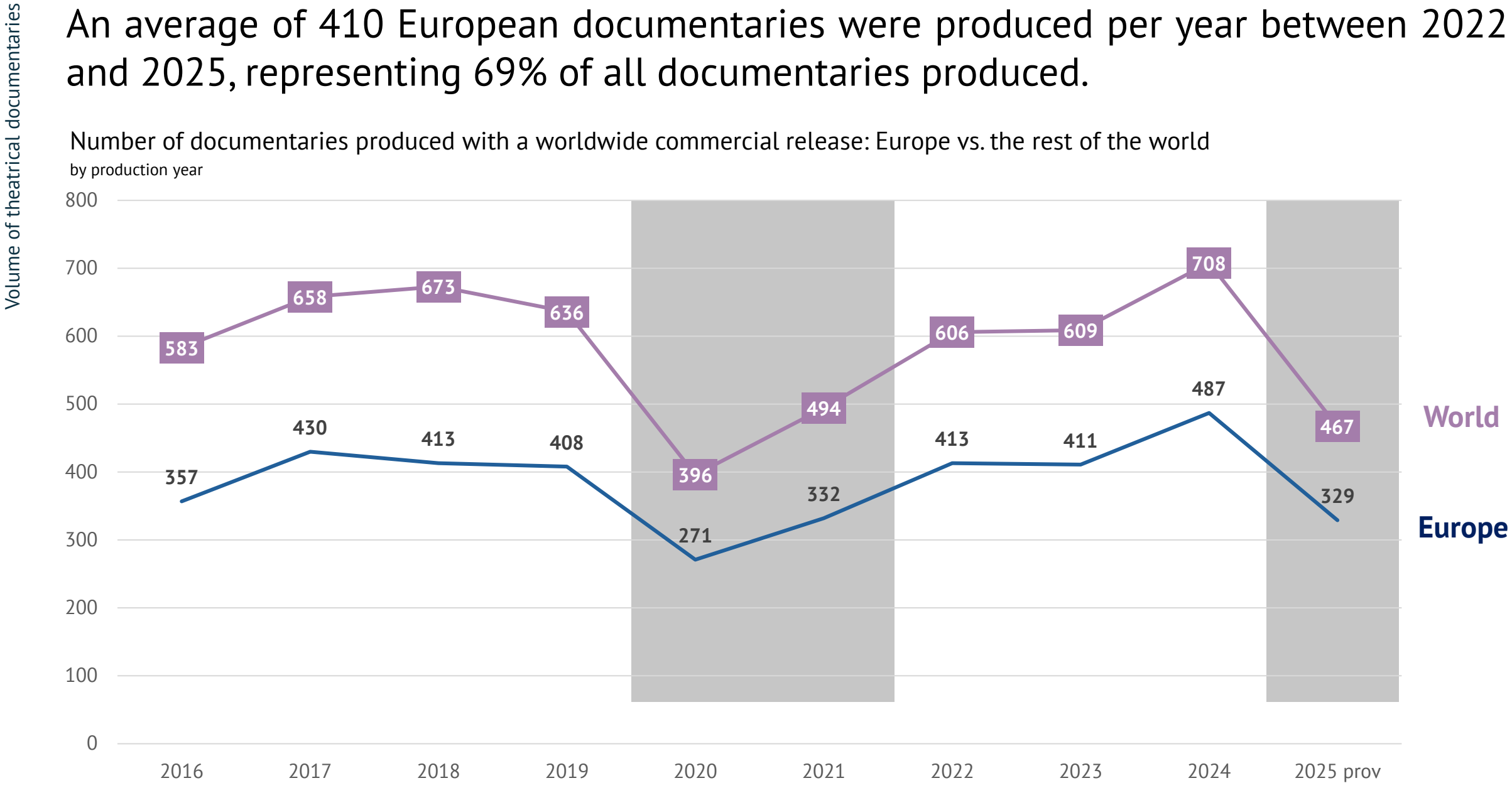


Not all films produced in 2025 have been released yet, so this figure is an underestimation.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

An average of 410 European documentaries were produced per year between 2022 and 2025, representing 69% of all documentaries produced.

Number of documentaries produced with a worldwide commercial release: Europe vs. the rest of the world

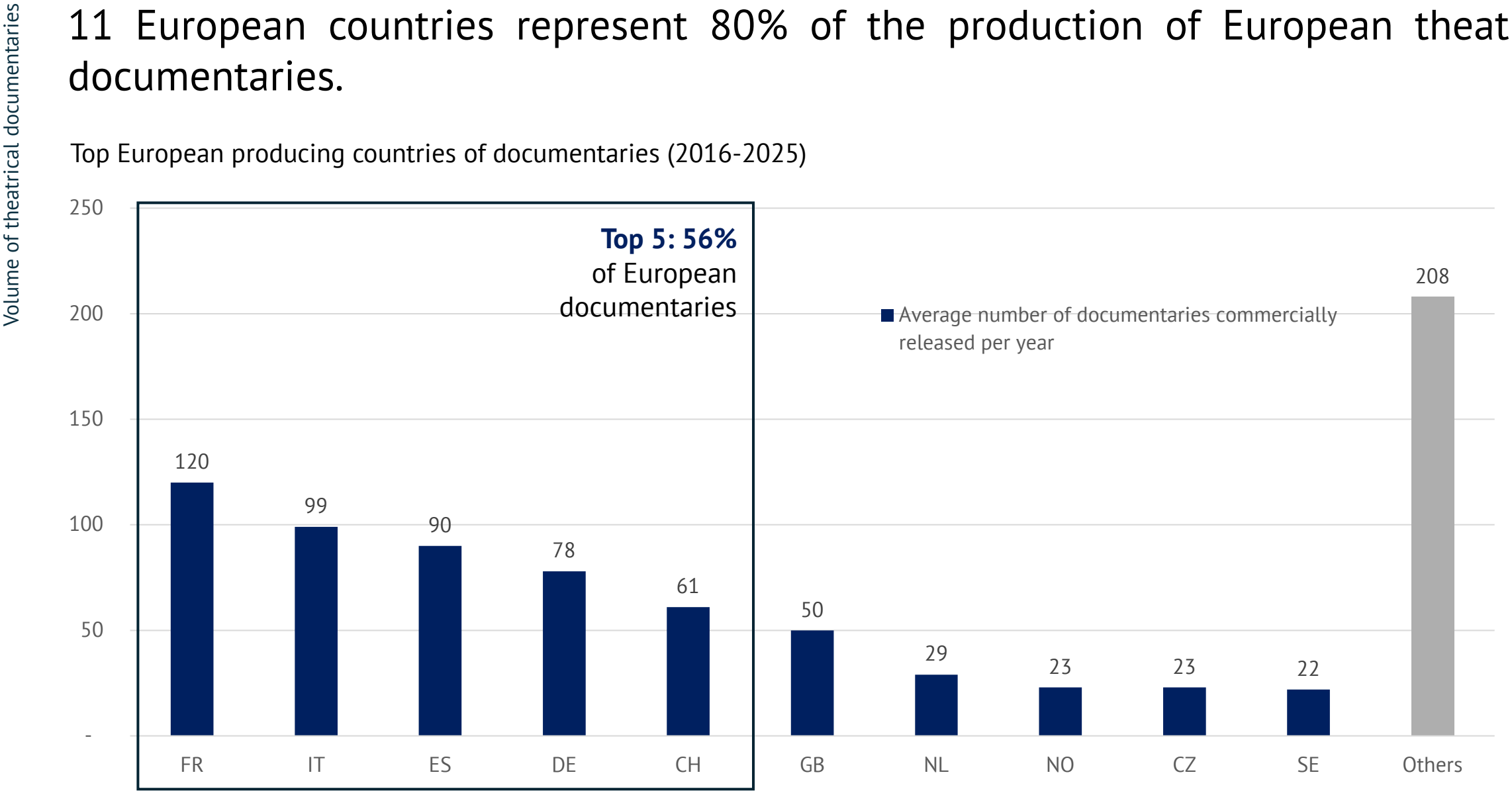
by production year



Not all films produced in 2025 have been released yet, so this figure is an underestimation.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

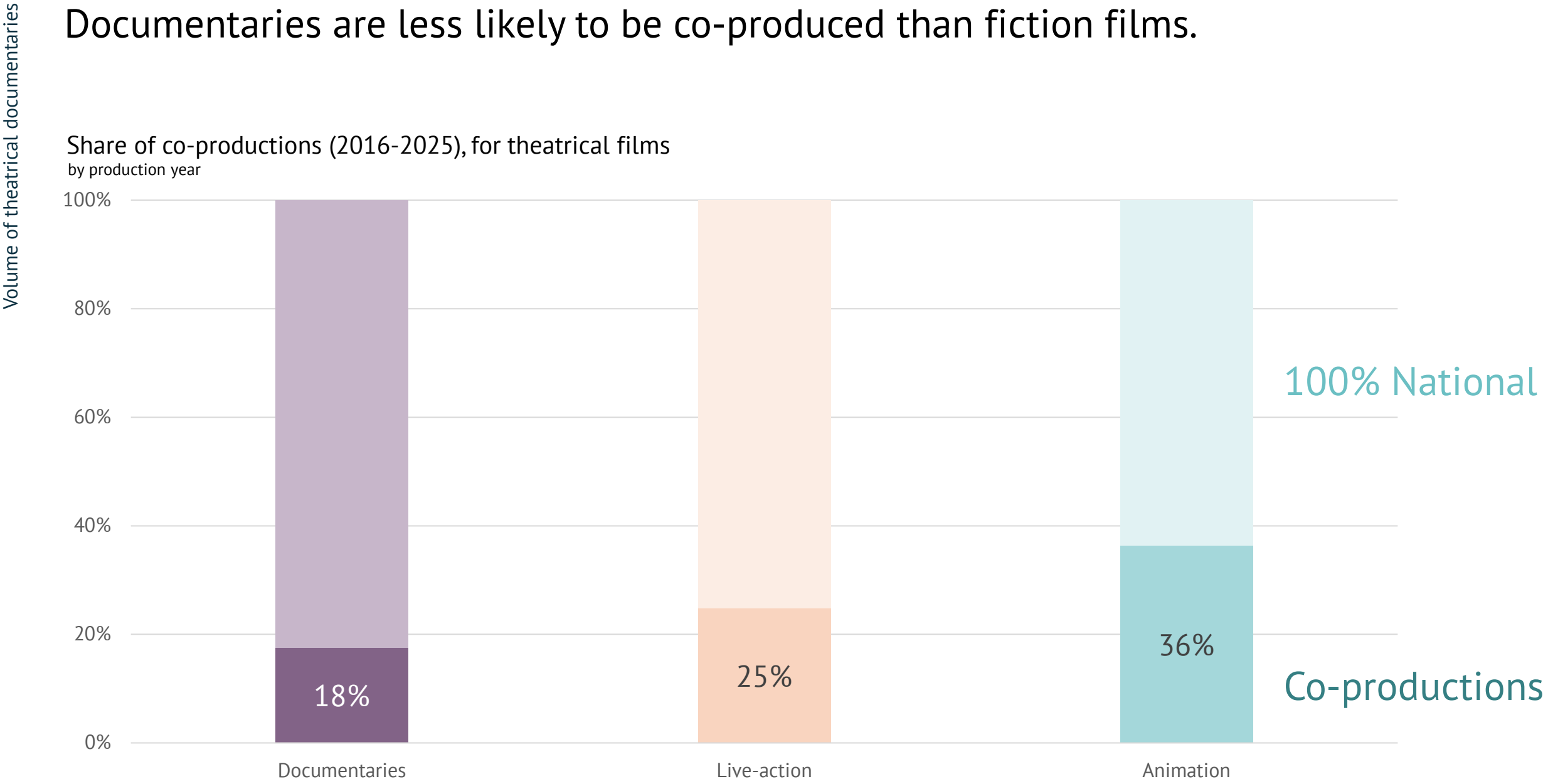
11 European countries represent 80% of the production of European theatrical documentaries.

Top European producing countries of documentaries (2016-2025)



Not all films produced in 2025 have been released yet, so this figure is an underestimation.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Documentaries are less likely to be co-produced than fiction films.

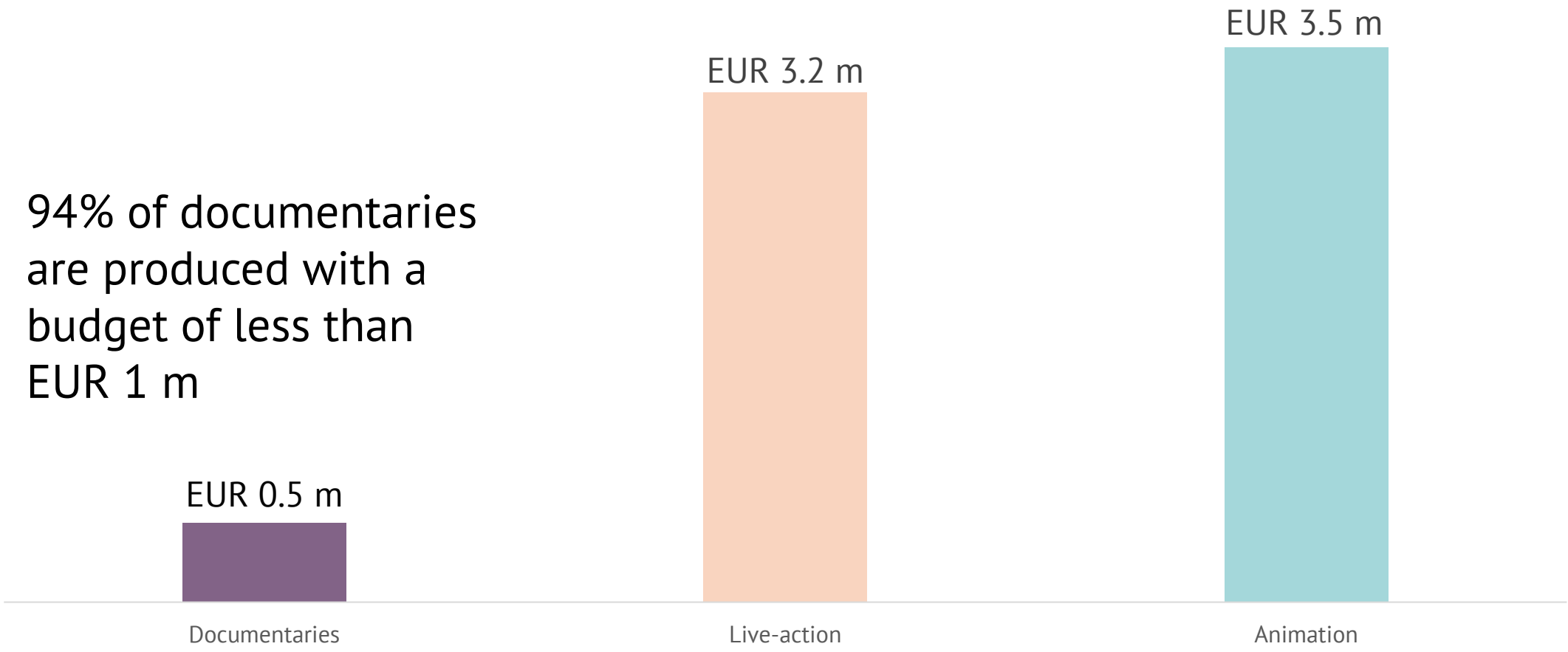


Not all films produced in 2025 have been released yet, so this figure is an underestimation.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Volume of theatrical documentaries

European documentaries have on average significantly lower production costs than fiction films.

Average budgets for theatrical films, in m EUR
Snapshot year: 2023



Source: European Audiovisual Observatory and national sources

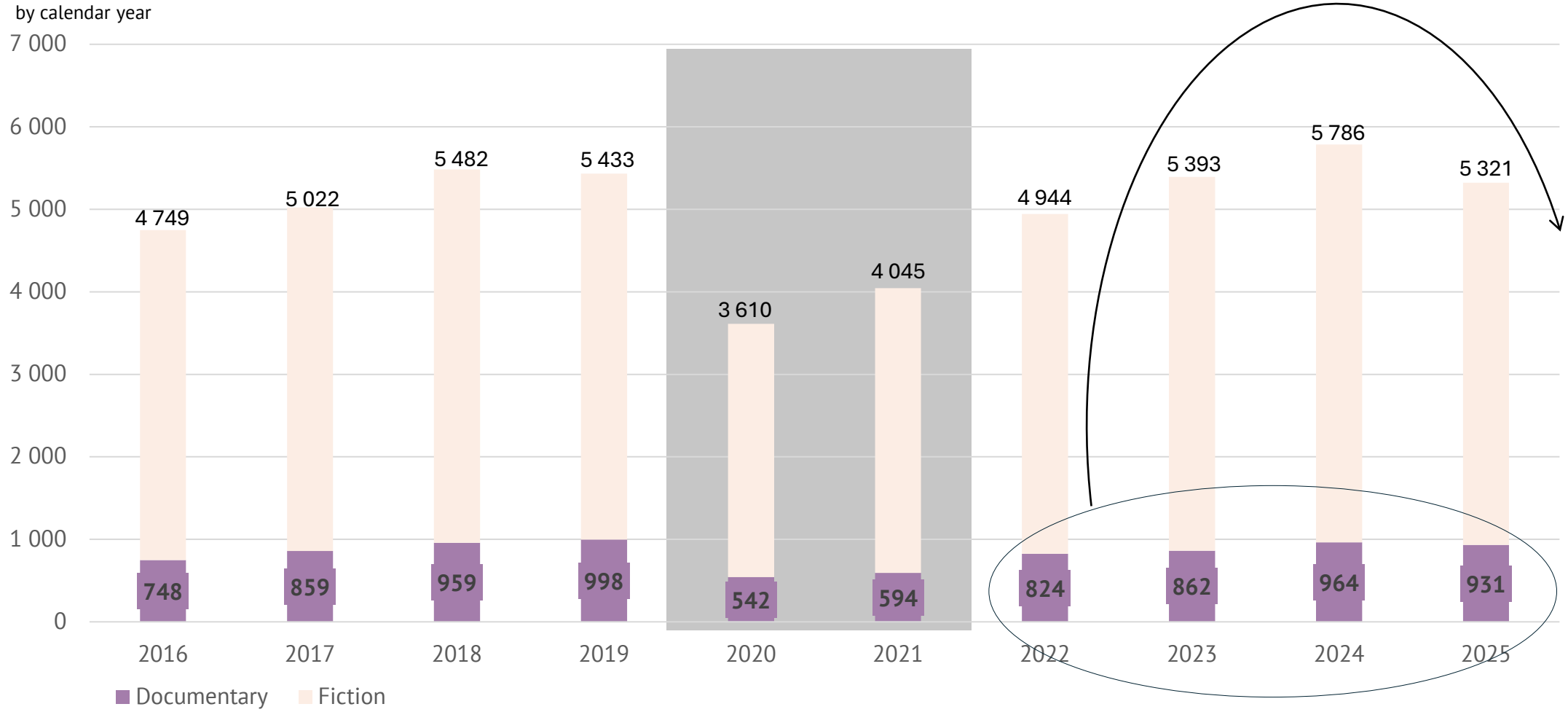
04 Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Since 2022, an average of 896 documentaries was on commercial release every year, a slight increase compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Number of theatrical films on commercial release: documentaries vs. fiction films

by calendar year



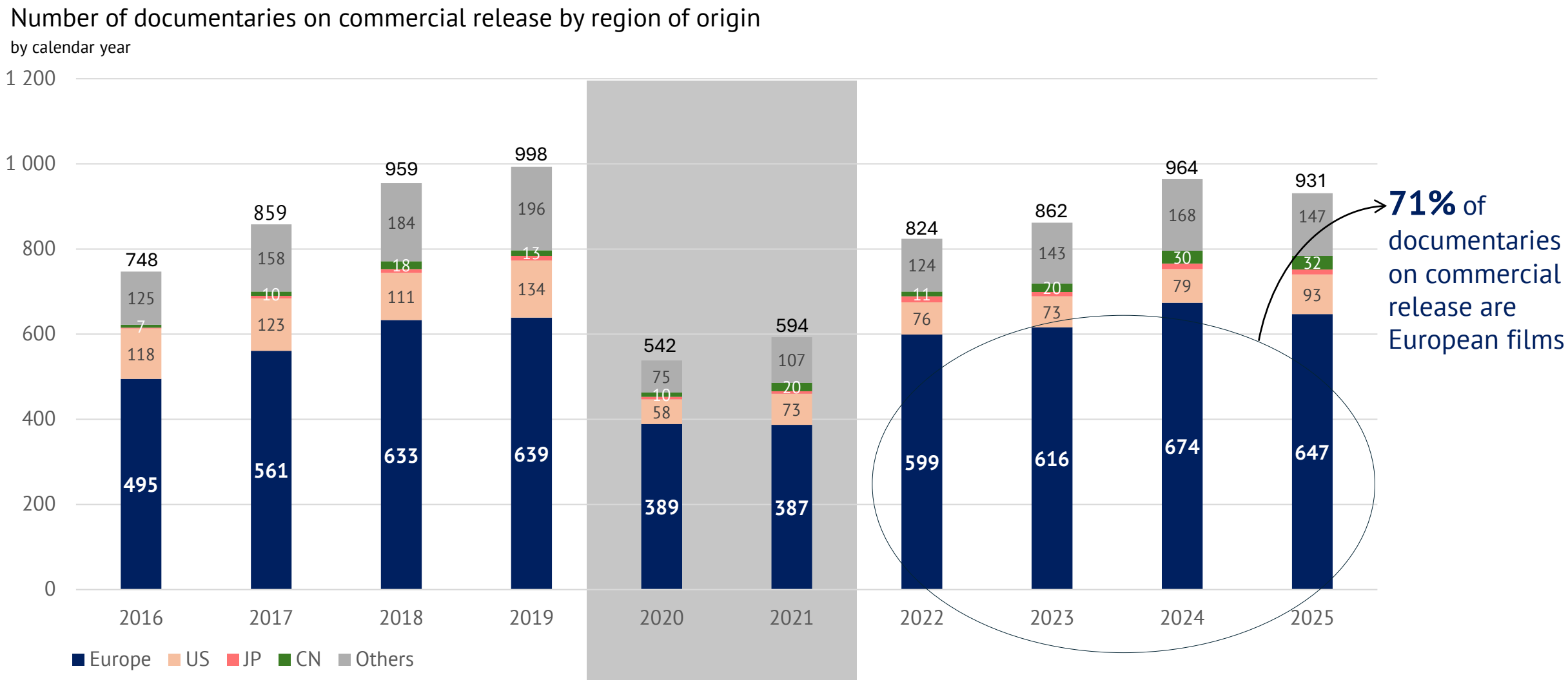
17% of all theatrical films on commercial release are documentaries

... it increased by **1%** compared to the pre-pandemic period

For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

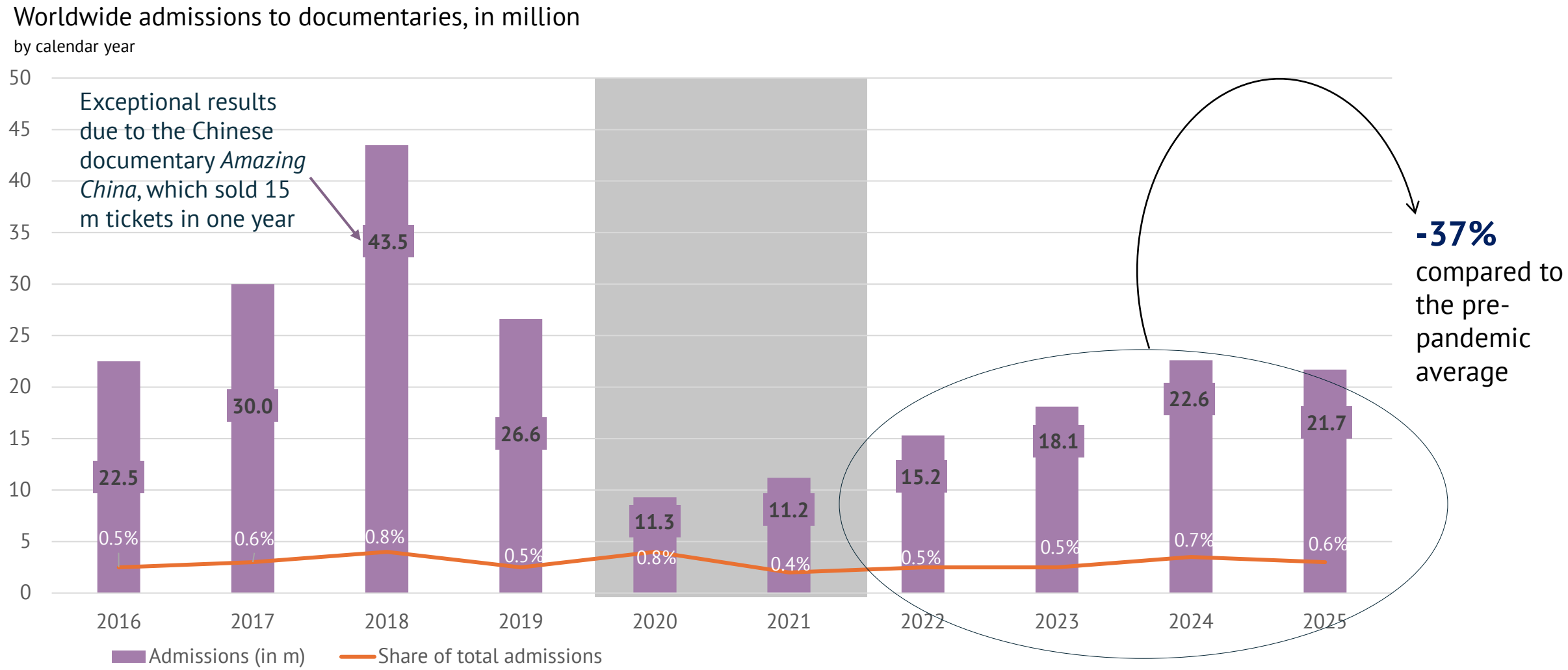
European films constitute the majority of theatrical documentaries on commercial release worldwide.



For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

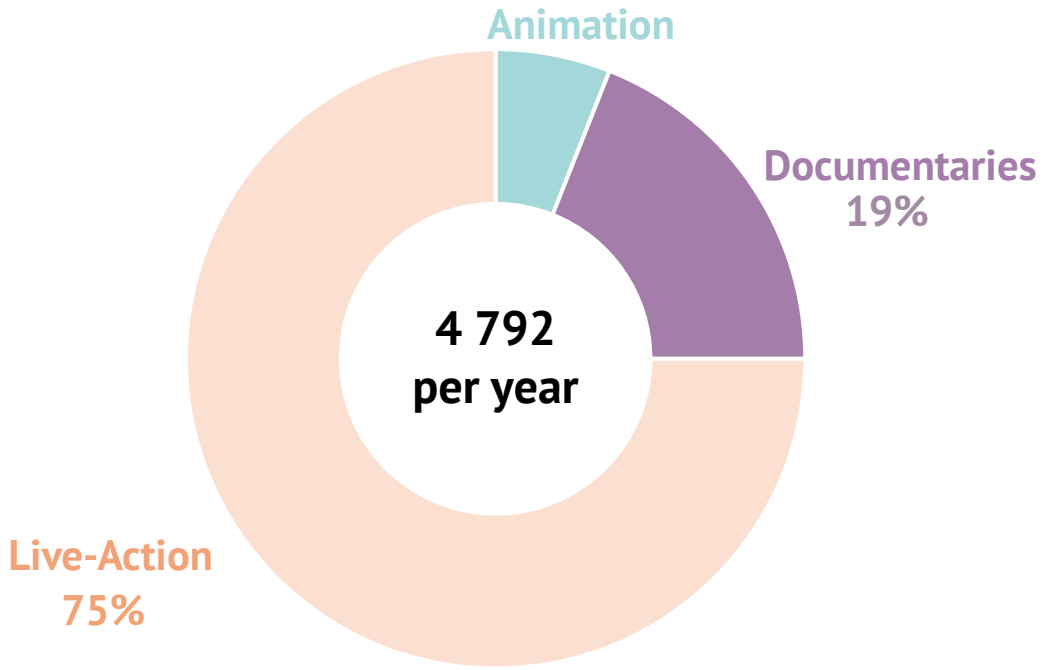
Theatrical documentaries did not recover from the pandemic, with an average of 11 million fewer tickets sold worldwide than in the pre-pandemic period.



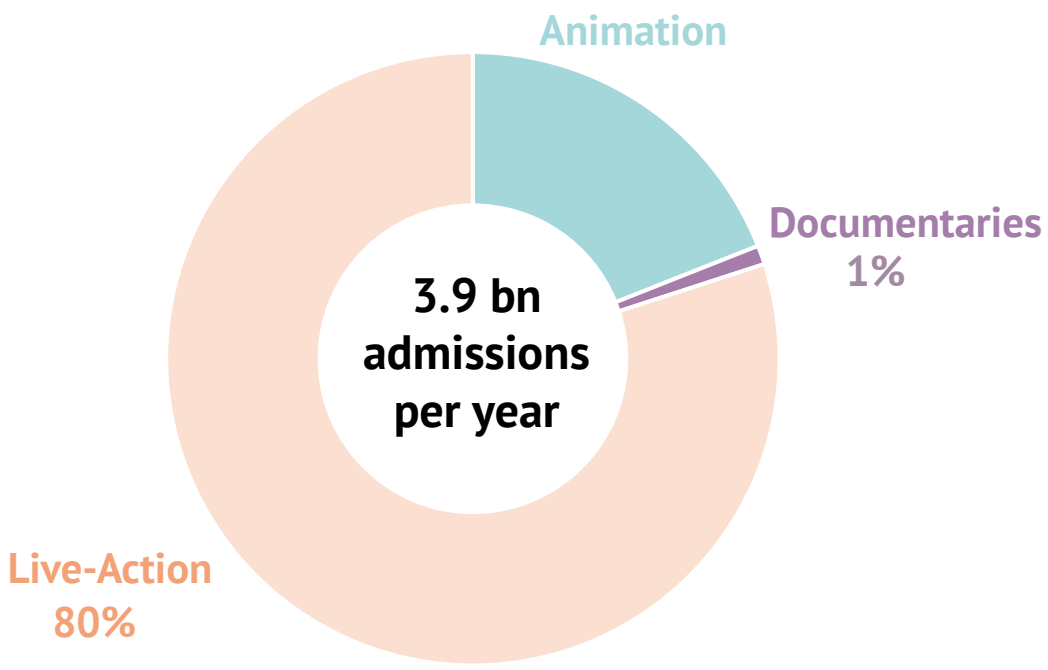
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Although documentaries comprise 19% of commercial theatrical releases worldwide, they account for less than 1% of global admissions.

Share of commercial releases (2016-2025) for theatrical films worldwide



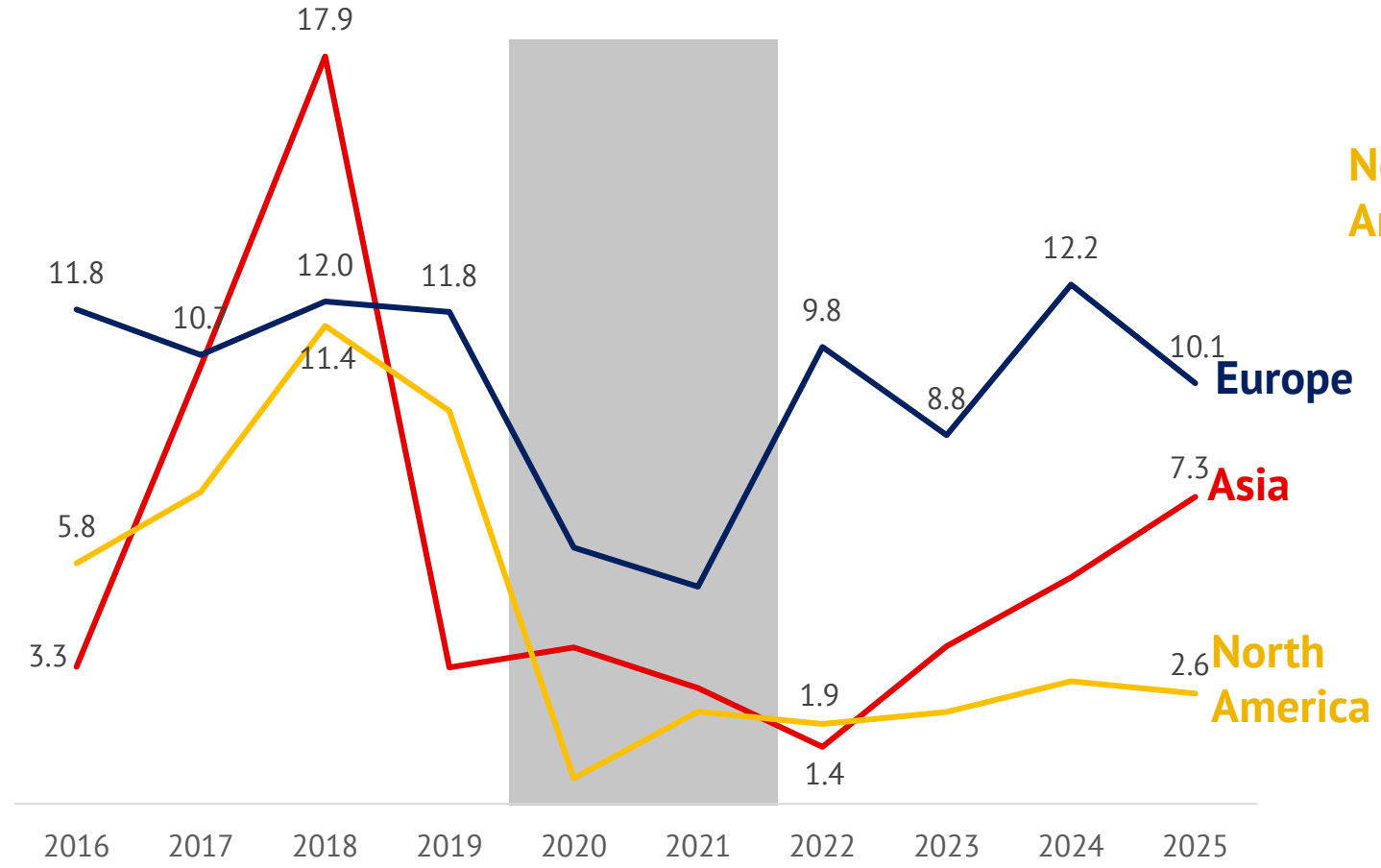
Share of admissions (2016-2025) for theatrical films worldwide



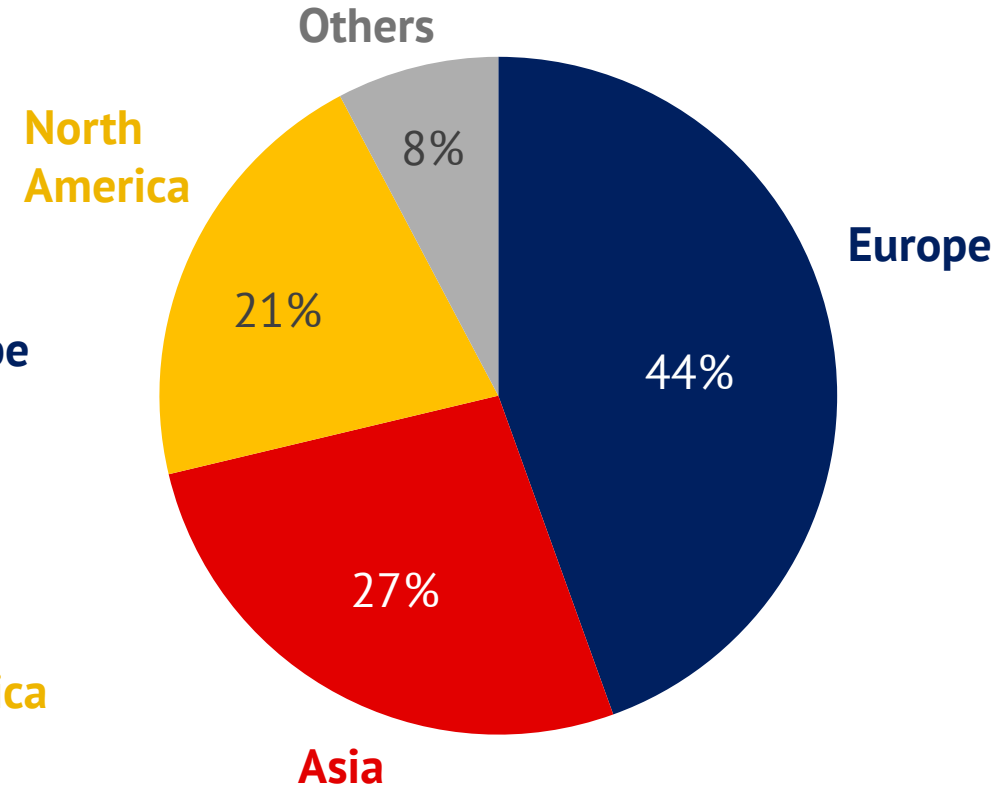
For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Europe is the largest regional market for documentaries, followed by Asia, where results fluctuate significantly from year to year.

Worldwide admissions to documentaries by **market region** - In million, by calendar year



Worldwide admissions to documentaries by **market region** – Market shares (2016-2025)



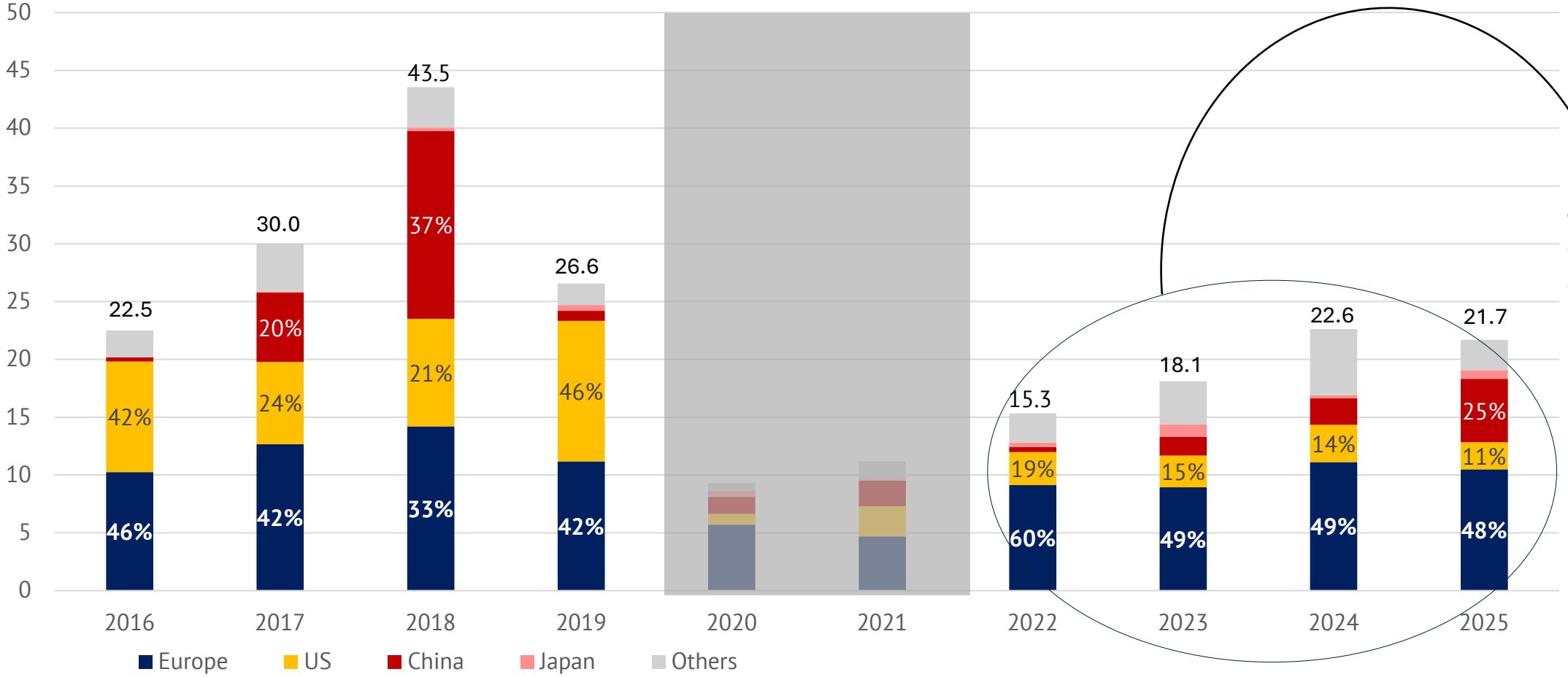
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Since 2022, European theatrical documentaries have made up the majority of worldwide admissions, representing more than half of tickets sold globally.

Worldwide admissions to documentaries by **region of origin** - In million

by calendar year



51% of admissions for documentaries come from European films

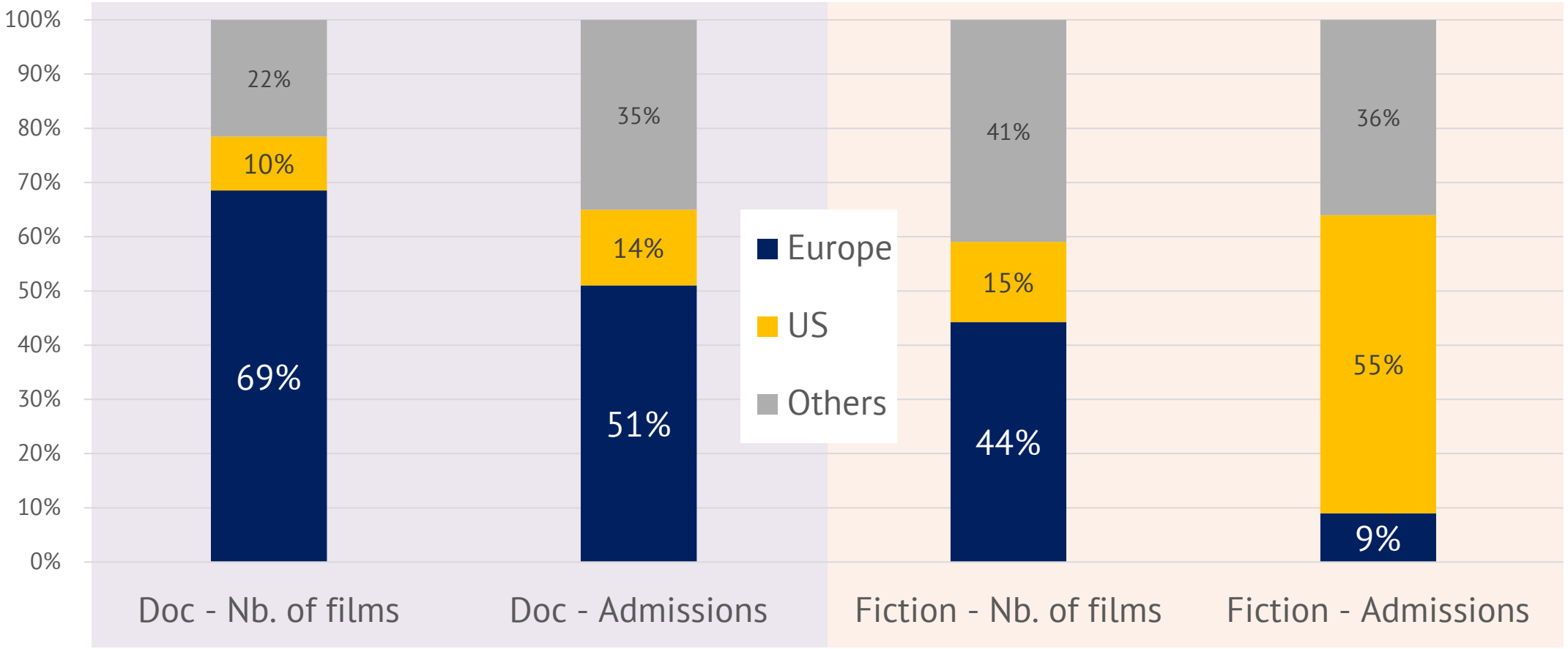
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

European market shares to documentaries are a singularity in a theatrical market usually dominated by US films.

Average market shares by region of origin, documentaries vs. fiction

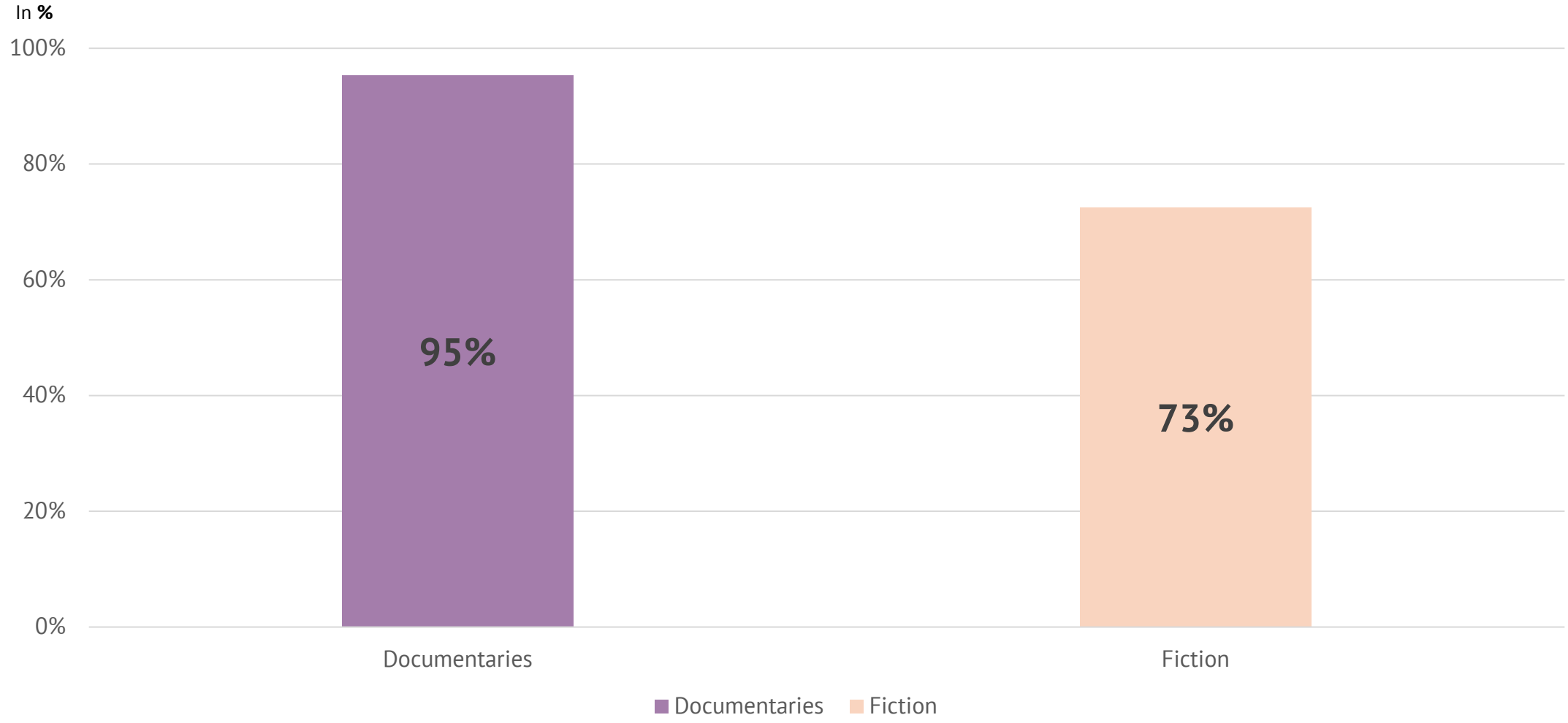
By number of films on commercial release and by admissions, 2022-2025



Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

More than 90% of documentaries gather less than 100 000 admissions, a higher share than fiction films.

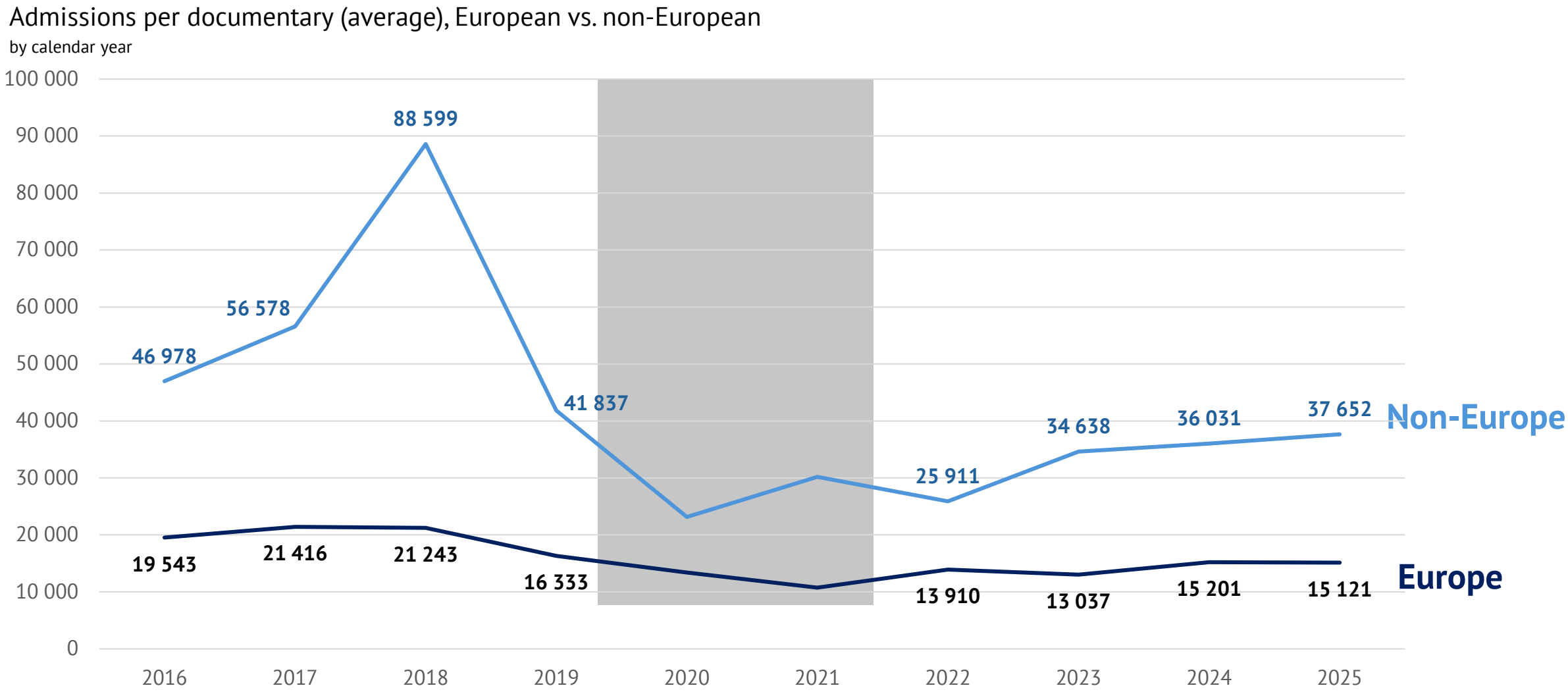
Share of films with less than 100 000 admissions: documentaries vs. fiction (2016-2025)



For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

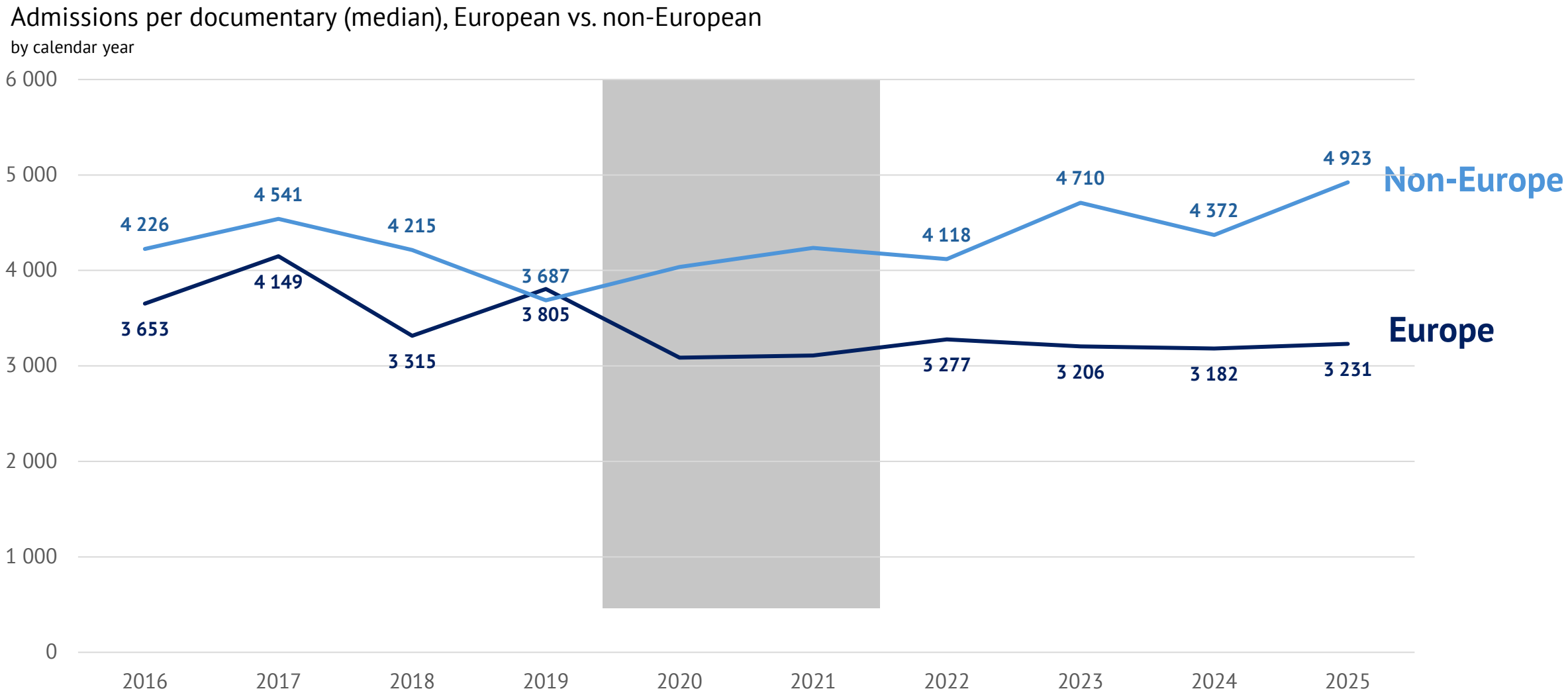
Since 2022, European documentaries have sold 27% fewer tickets compared to the average before the pandemic, a lesser decrease than for non-European documentaries.



For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Looking at the median, since 2022, non-European documentaries recovered better than European documentaries.

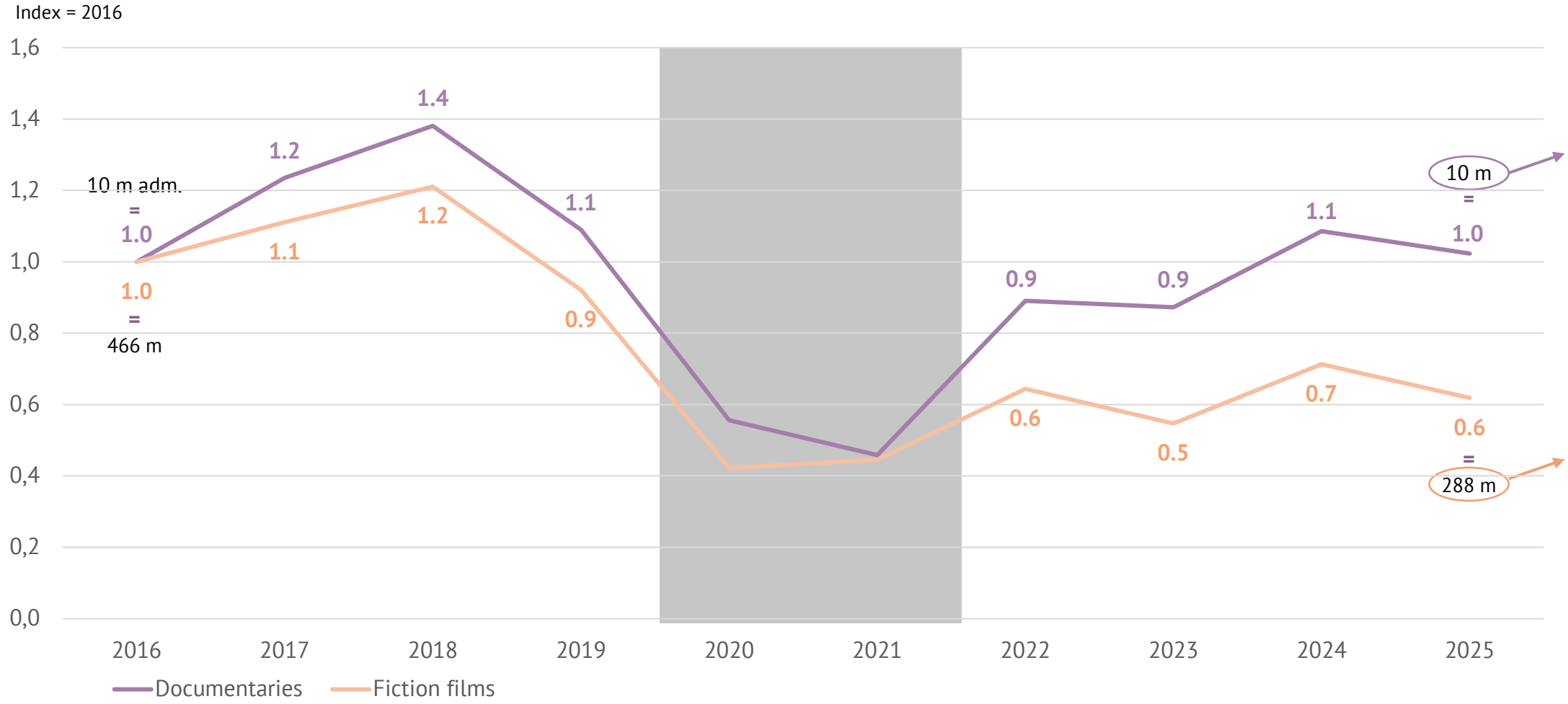


For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

European documentaries recovered better than European fiction films.

Evolution of worldwide admissions to **European** theatrical documentaries, indexed



-13% compared to the pre-pandemic average (2016-2019)

-42% when looking at fiction films

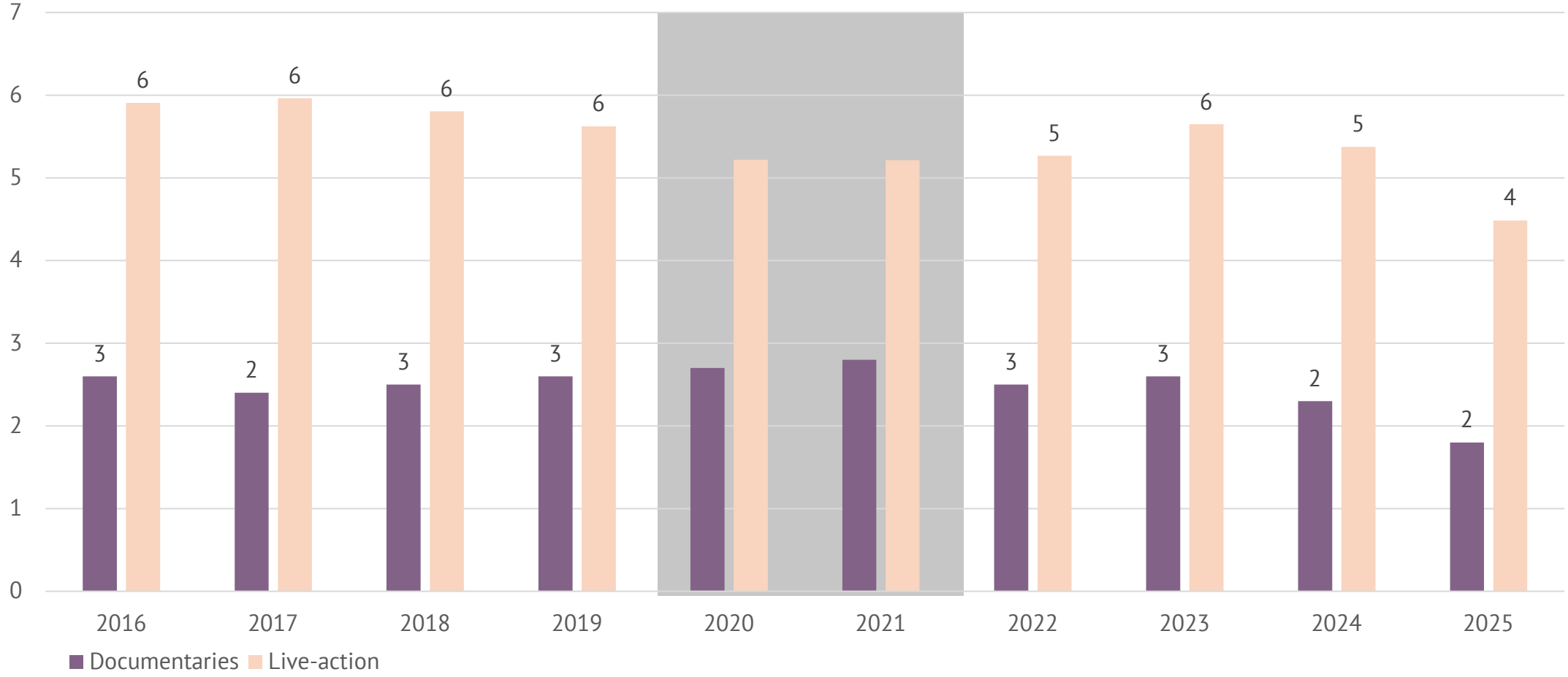
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Documentaries are released in significantly fewer markets than fiction films and travel to half as many territories.

Average number of release markets: documentary vs. fiction theatrical films (all nationalities)

Worldwide, by calendar year



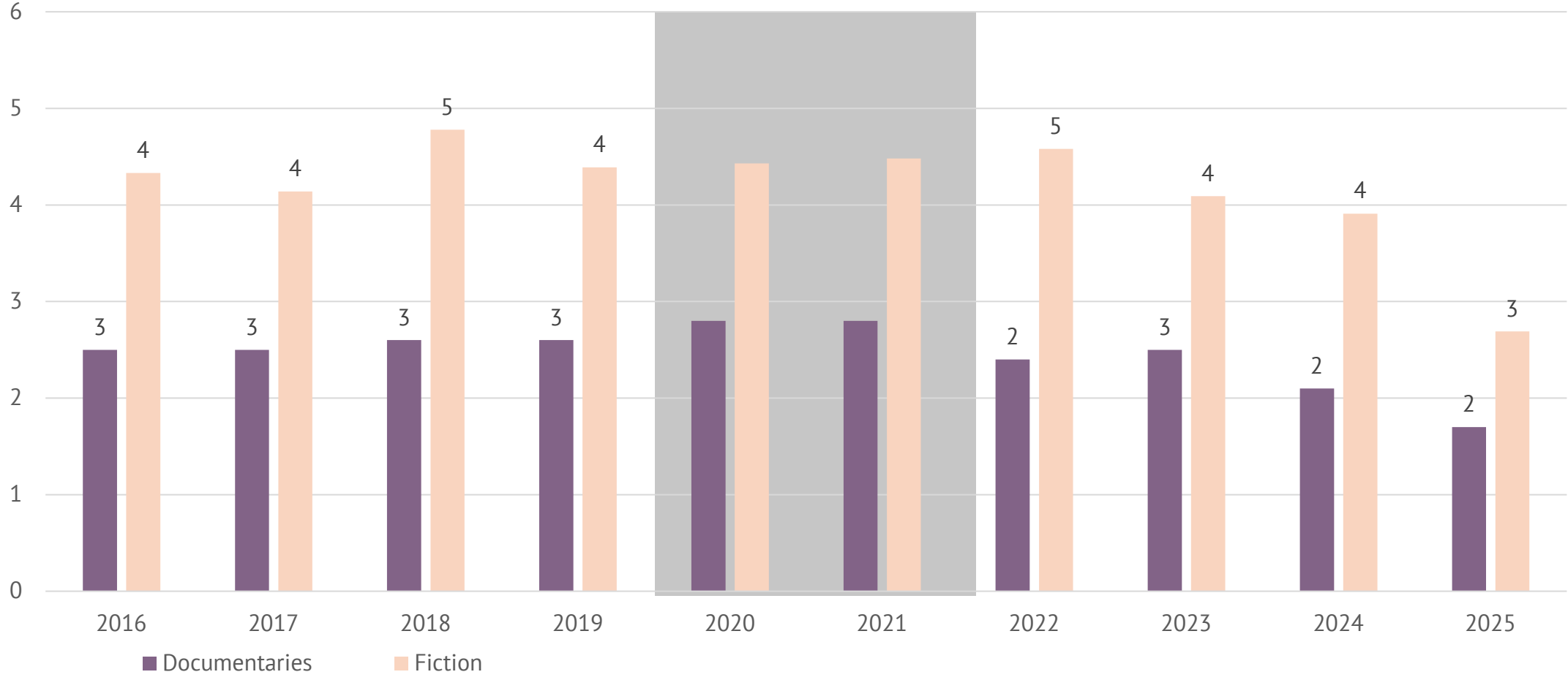
For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Since 2017, European documentaries have consistently been distributed in fewer markets than fiction films.

Average number of release markets of **European** theatrical films: documentaries vs. fiction films

Worldwide, by calendar year



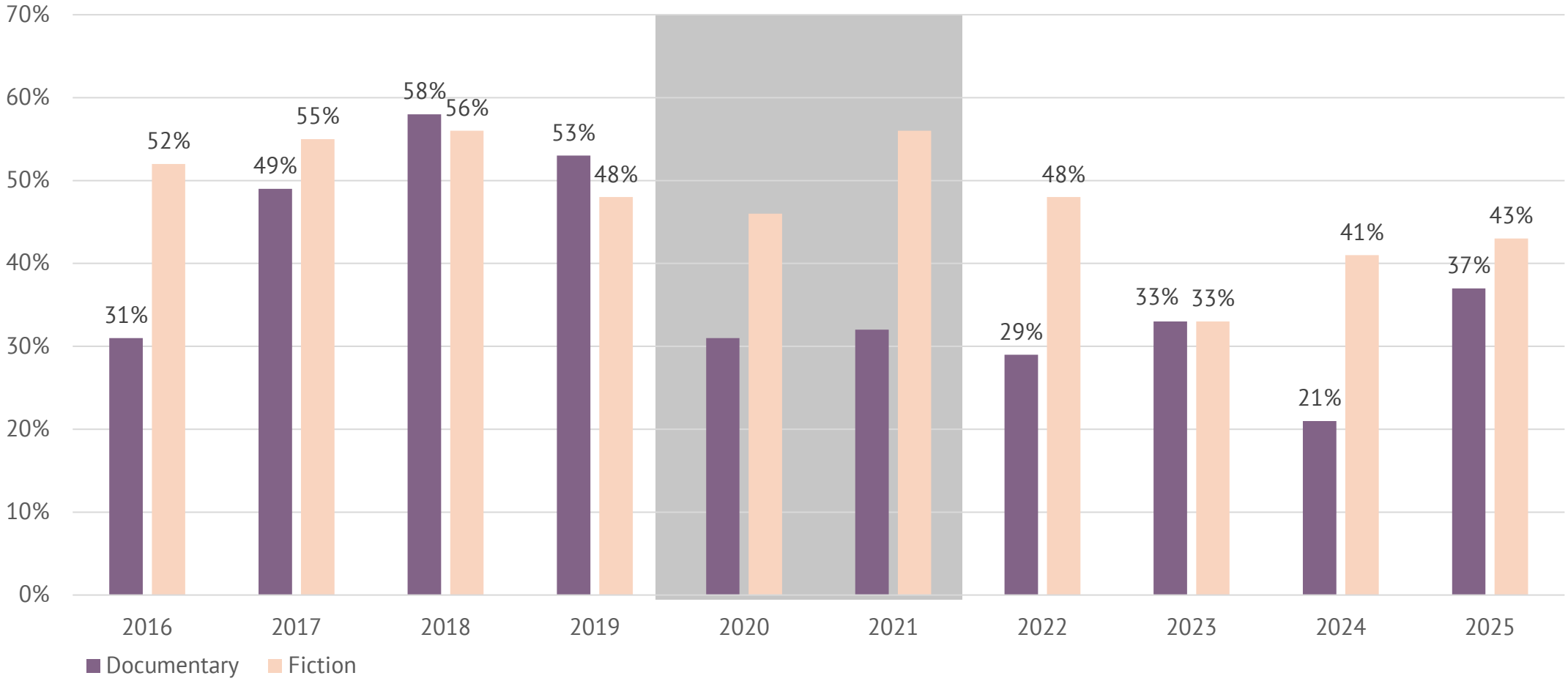
For data on the number of films commercially released, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

European documentaries are more likely to be released only in their home country

Share of export admissions to **European** theatrical films: documentaries vs. fiction films

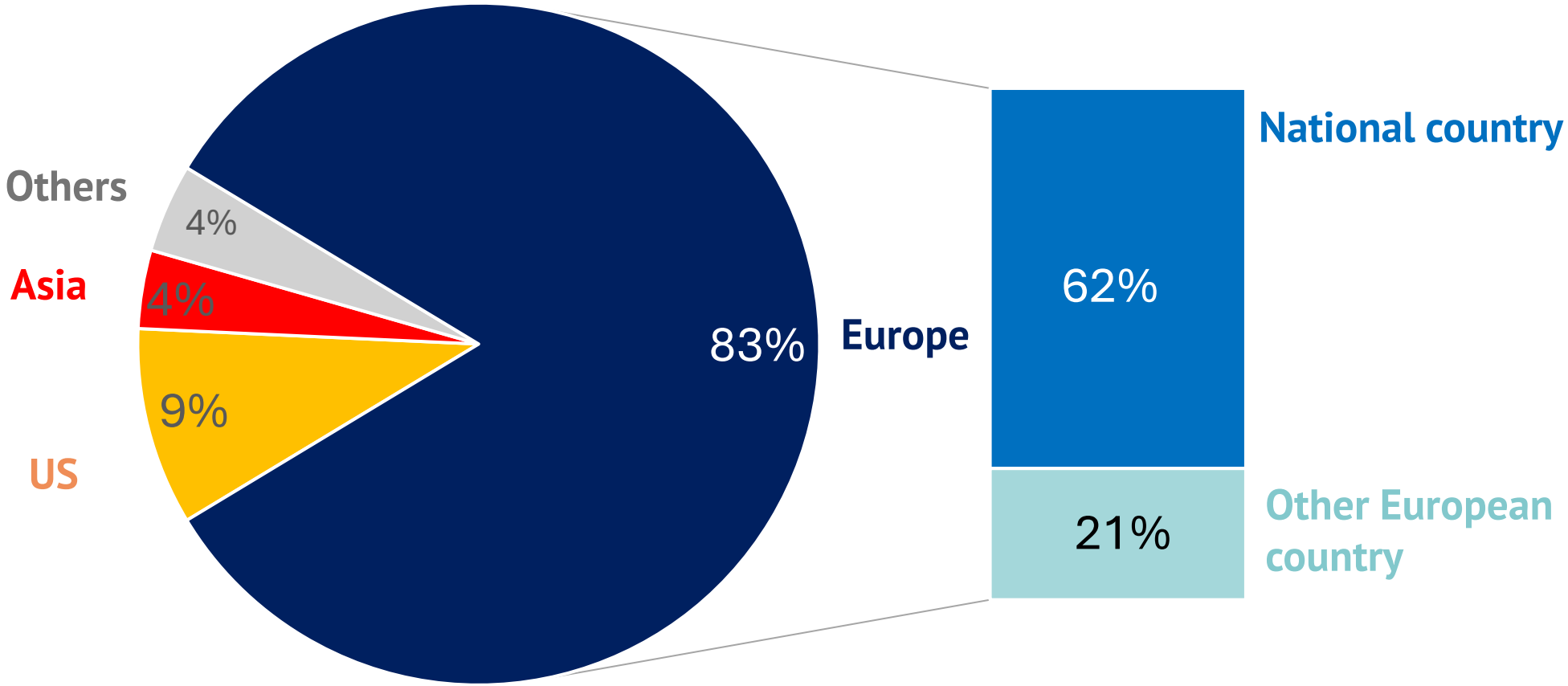
Worldwide, by calendar year



For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Most tickets for European documentaries are sold within Europe, mainly in their own domestic market.

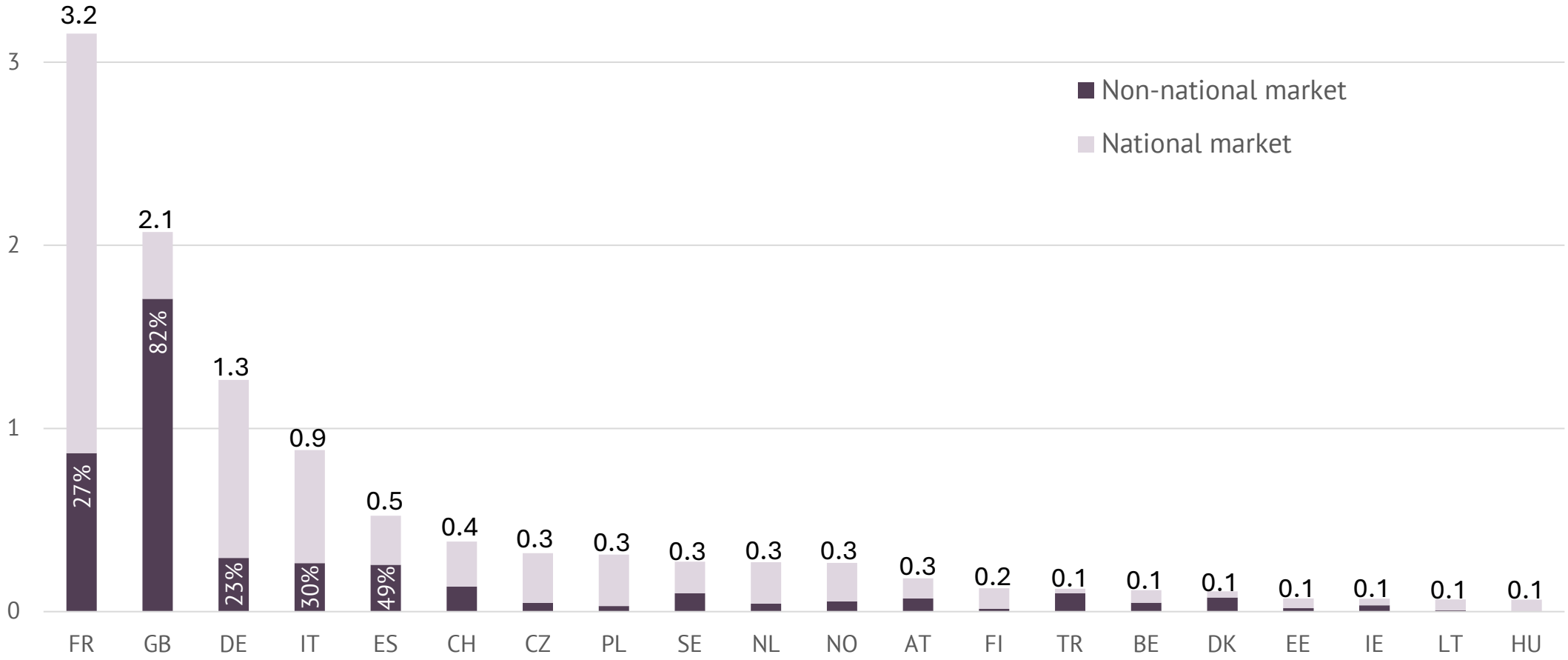
Average annual admissions to **European** documentaries by country of origin (2022-2025)



Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Among European documentaries, French films stand out selling on average more than 3 million tickets, followed by films from the UK, Germany, and Italy.

Average annual admissions to **European** documentaries by country of origin (2016 -2025)

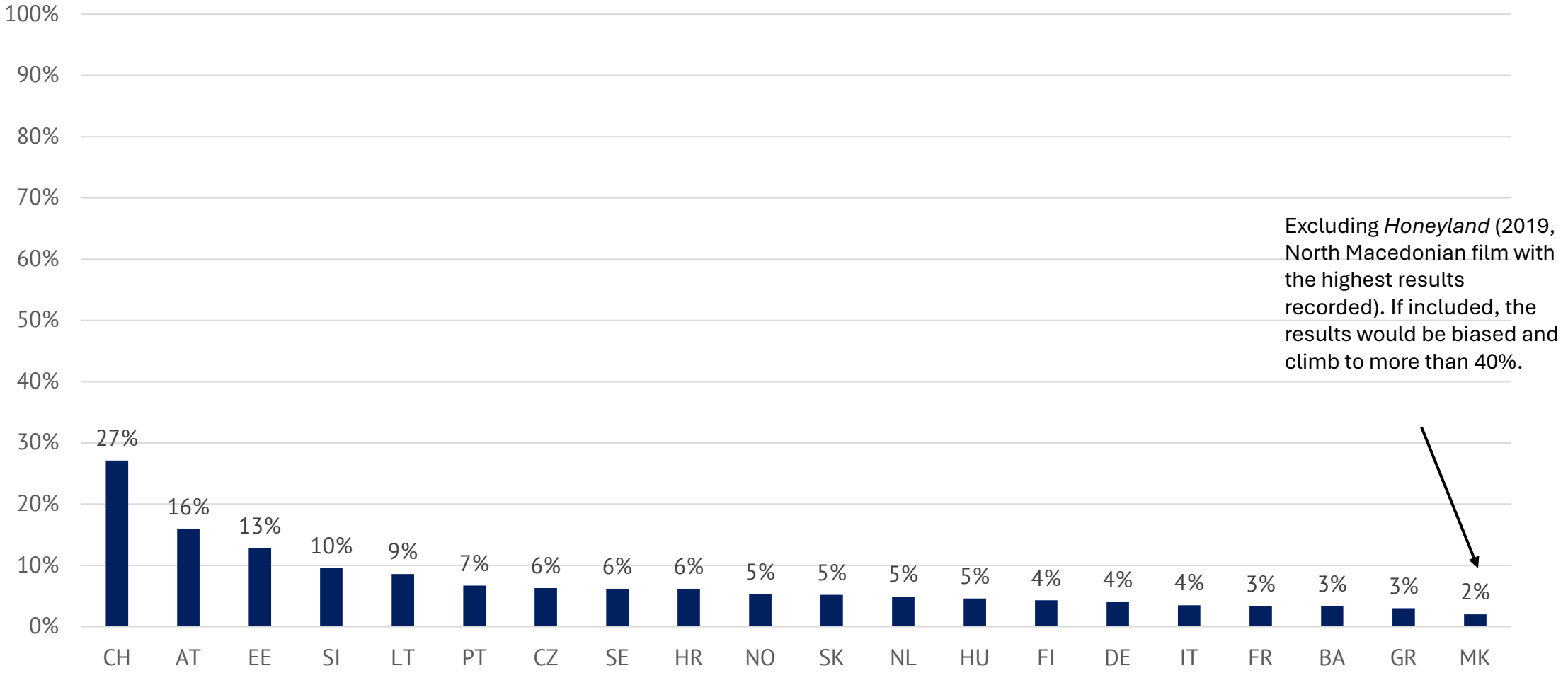


This report focuses on providing a broad overview of European film circulation, rather than examining admissions of individual European countries. As a result, the Observatory's methodology may differ from national approaches that aim to analyse film results specific to their countries. Consequently, data in this report may vary significantly from national sources. Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Theatrical exploitation of documentaries

Documentaries account for only a small proportion of admissions in each country.

Share of admissions to documentaries in total admissions to **European** theatrical films by country of origin (2016–2025)



Excluding *Honeyland* (2019, North Macedonian film with the highest results recorded). If included, the results would be biased and climb to more than 40%.

Source: LUMIERE/EAO

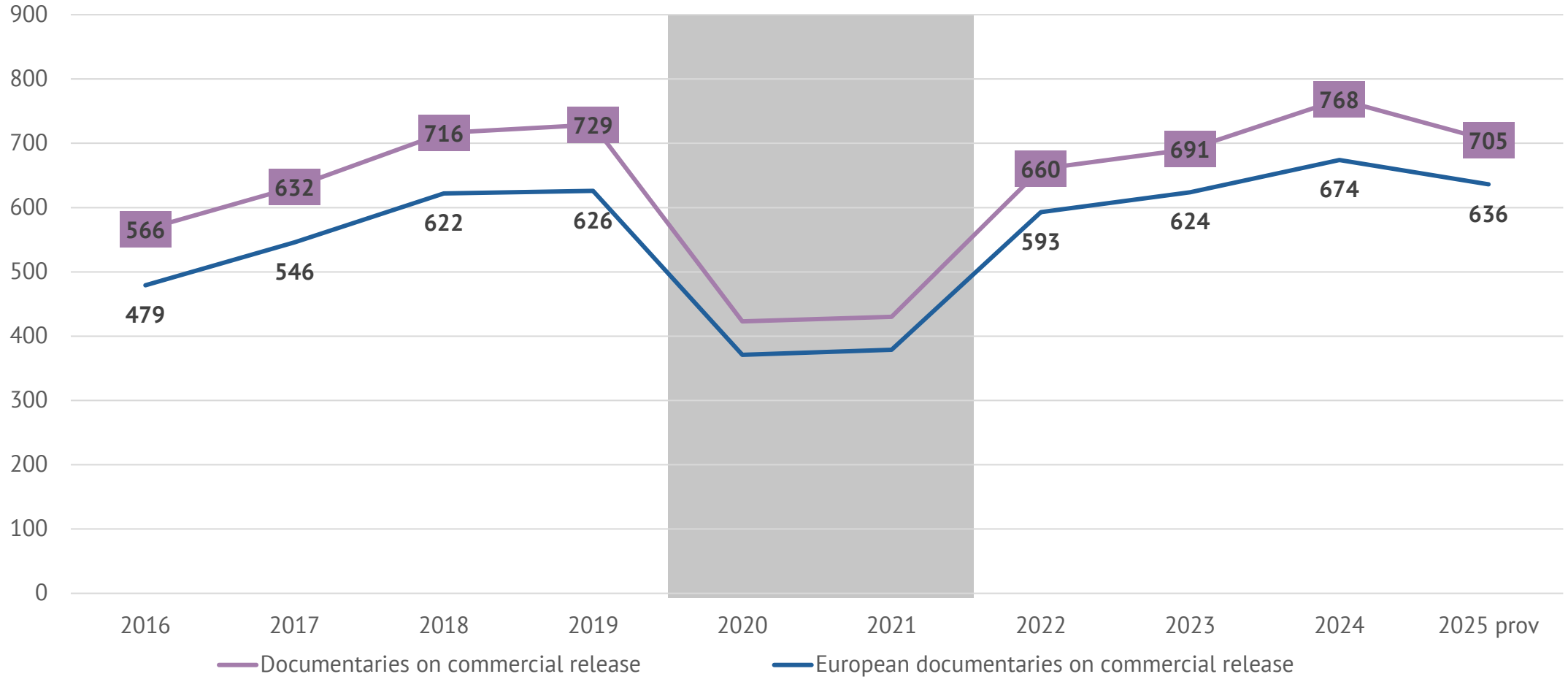


05 Market focus: Europe

An average of 632 European documentaries were commercially released per year between 2022 and 2025, representing 80% of all documentaries in Europe.

Number of documentaries on commercial release in Europe: European documentaries vs. total documentaries

by calendar year

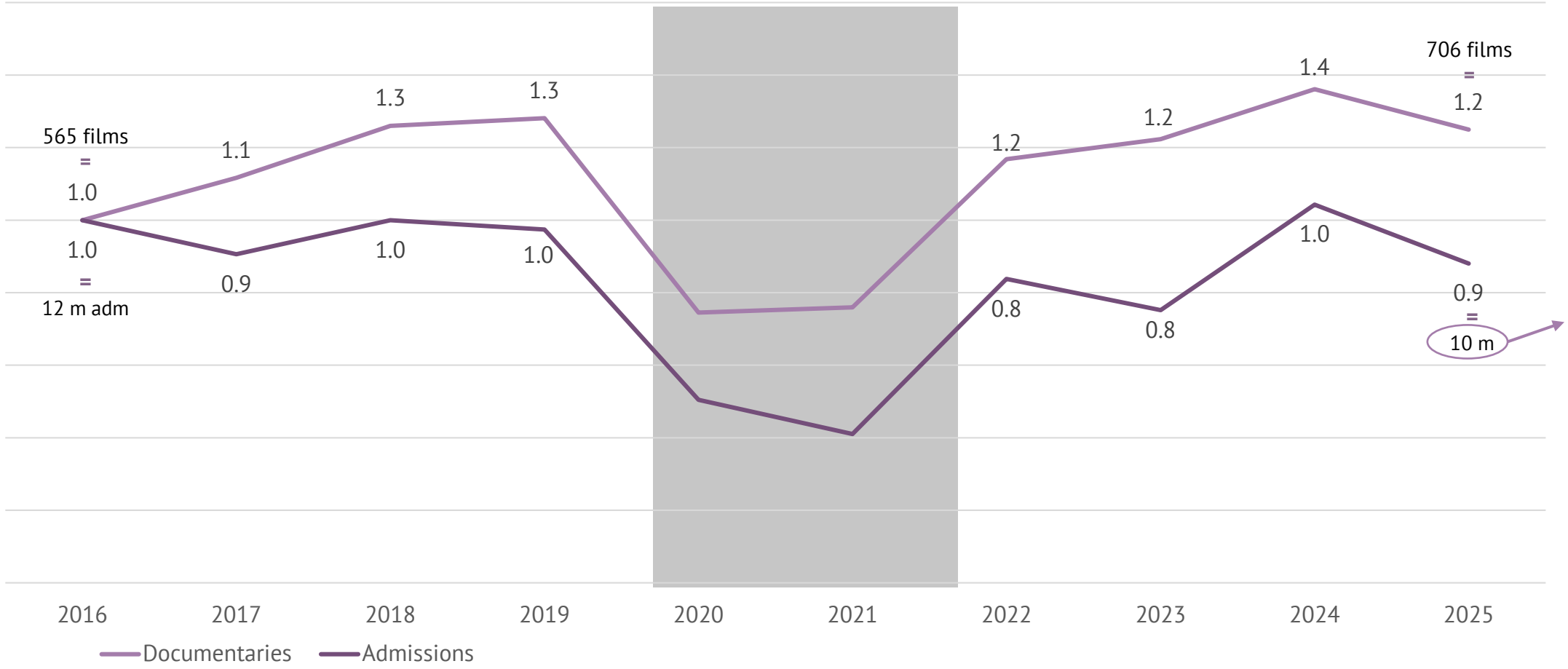


For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

The documentary market in Europe is close to full recovery as admissions were on average only 9% under the pre-pandemic average in 2025.

Evolution of documentaries in Europe, films on commercial release and admissions

Index = 2016

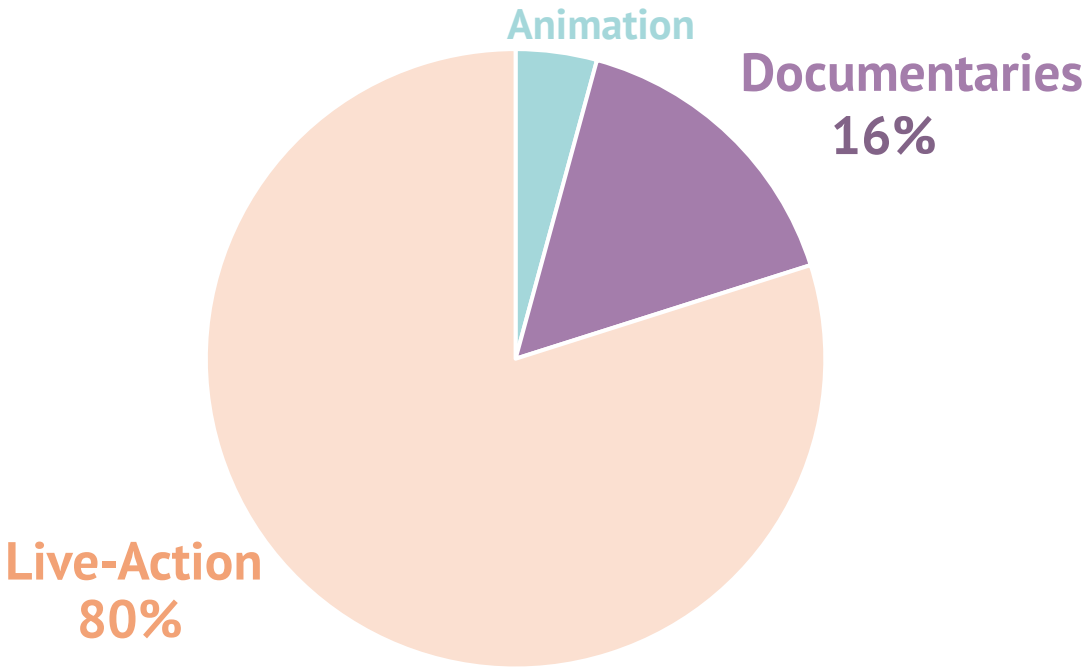


-9%
compared to the pre-pandemic average

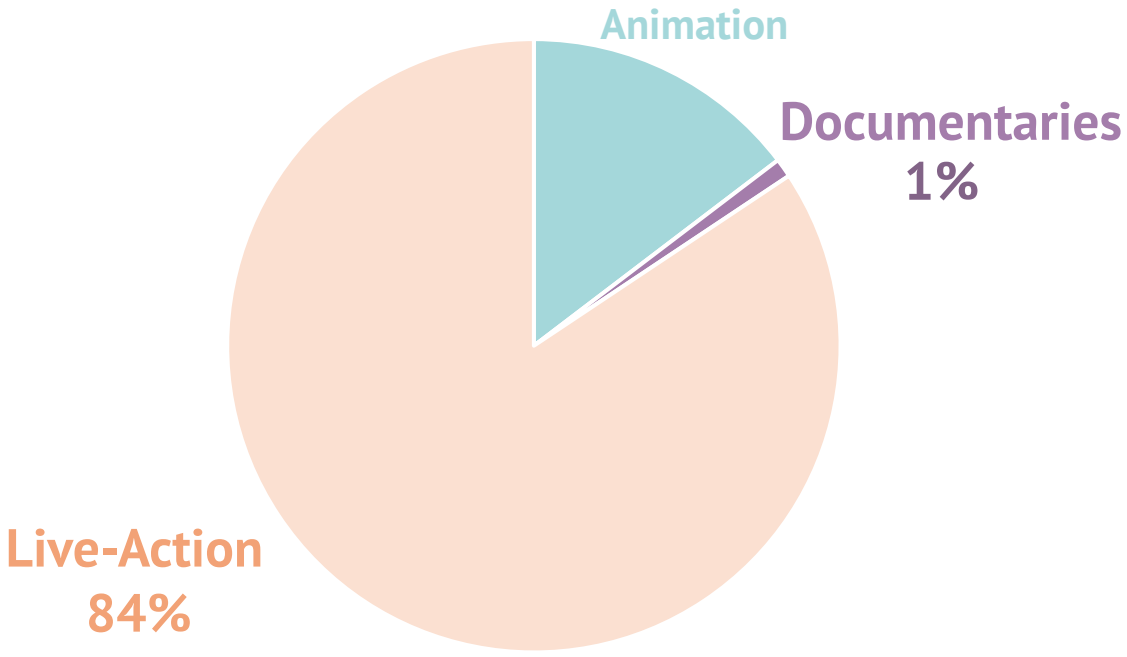
For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Documentaries make up a substantial portion of theatrical films on commercial release in Europe, but account for a much smaller share of tickets sold.

Share of commercial releases (2016-2025) for theatrical films in Europe



Share of admissions (2016-2025) for theatrical films in Europe

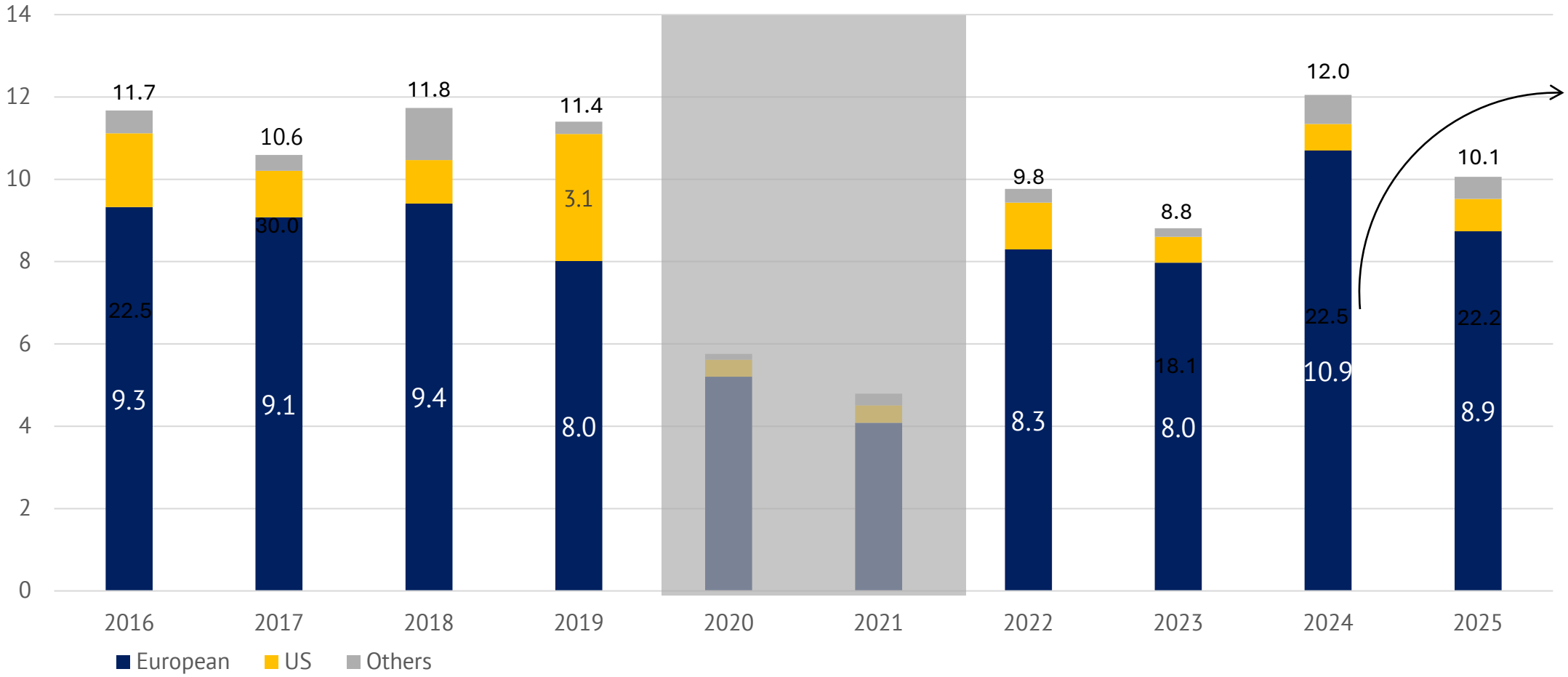


For data on the number of films on release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included.
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

On average, European documentaries recovered from the pandemic, reaching around the same number of admissions than before 2020.

European admissions to documentaries by region of origin - In million

by calendar year

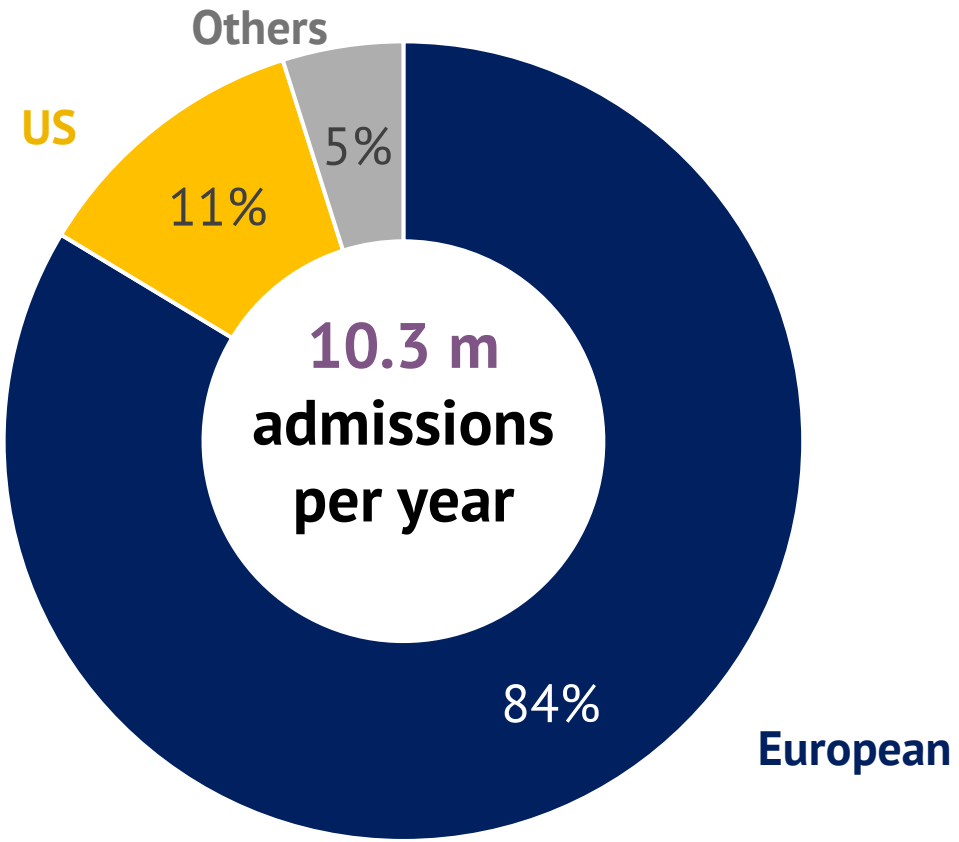


Highest result for European documentaries in Europe, surpassing 2005 (10.2 m) and 2010 (10.6 m)

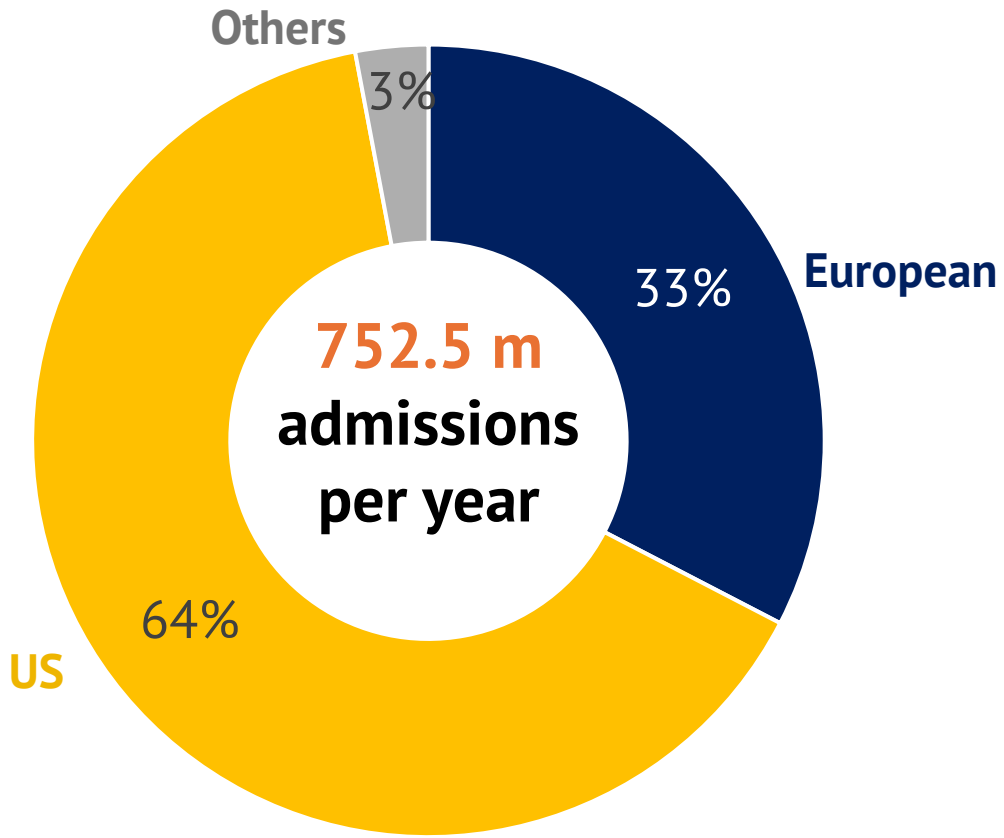
Source: LUMIERE/EAO

European documentaries dominate the European documentary market, in stark contrast with the fiction film market, dominated by US films.

Average market shares in the **documentary market** by region of origin (2022-2025)



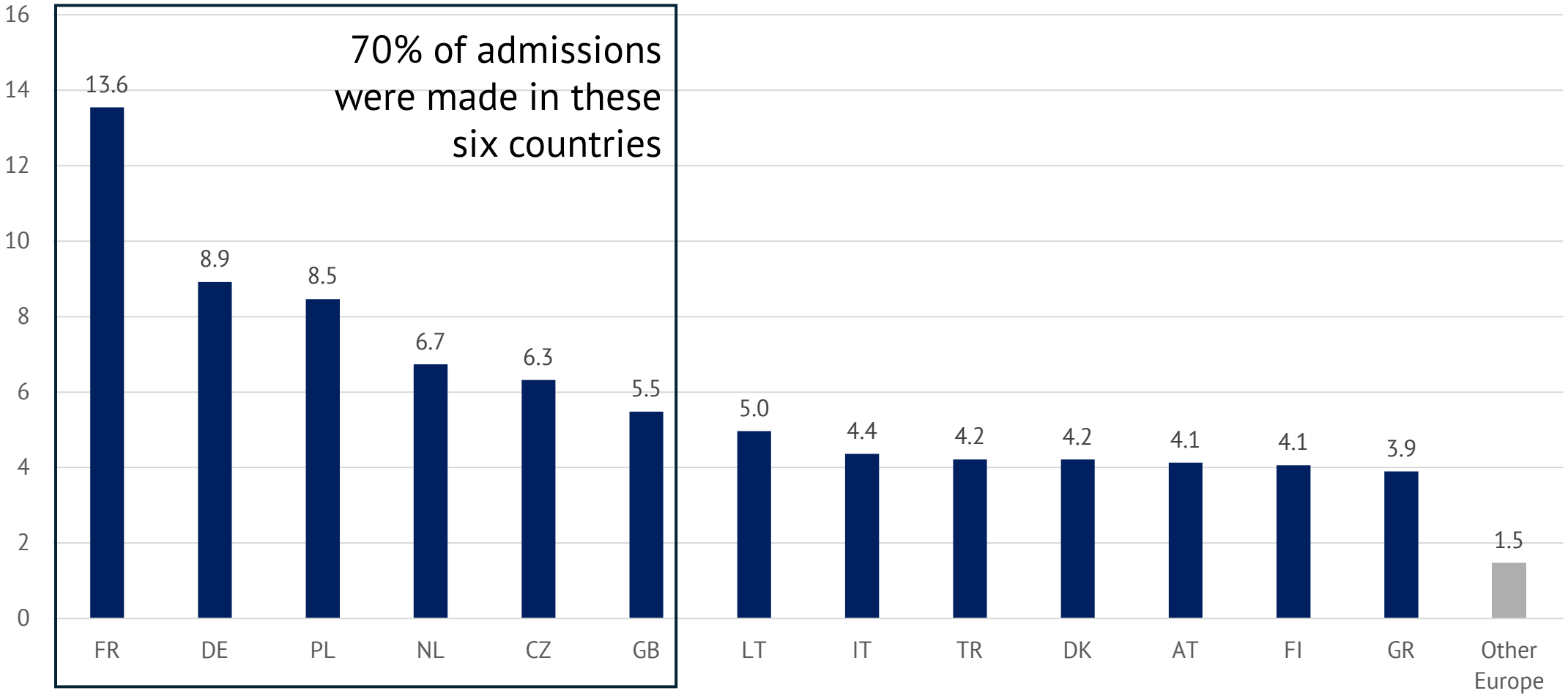
Average market shares in the **fiction market** by region of origin (2022-2025)



Source: LUMIERE/EAO

The largest European audiences for theatrical documentaries are primarily from thirteen markets.

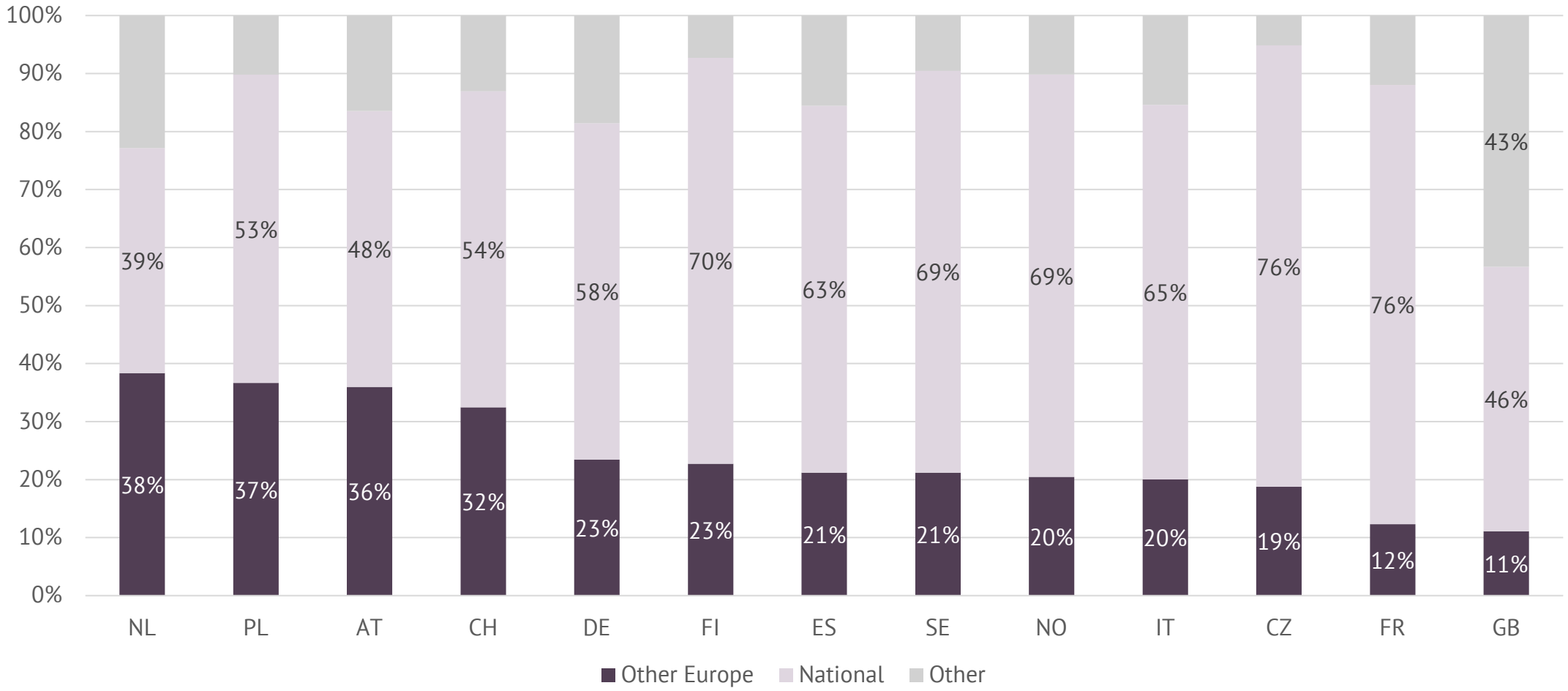
Average admissions to documentaries by **European** market country (2016–2025, in **thousands)**



Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Among the biggest European markets, the Netherlands, Poland and Austria have the highest share of non-national European theatrical documentaries watched in Europe.

Share of admissions to documentaries by **European** market country (2016 -2025)

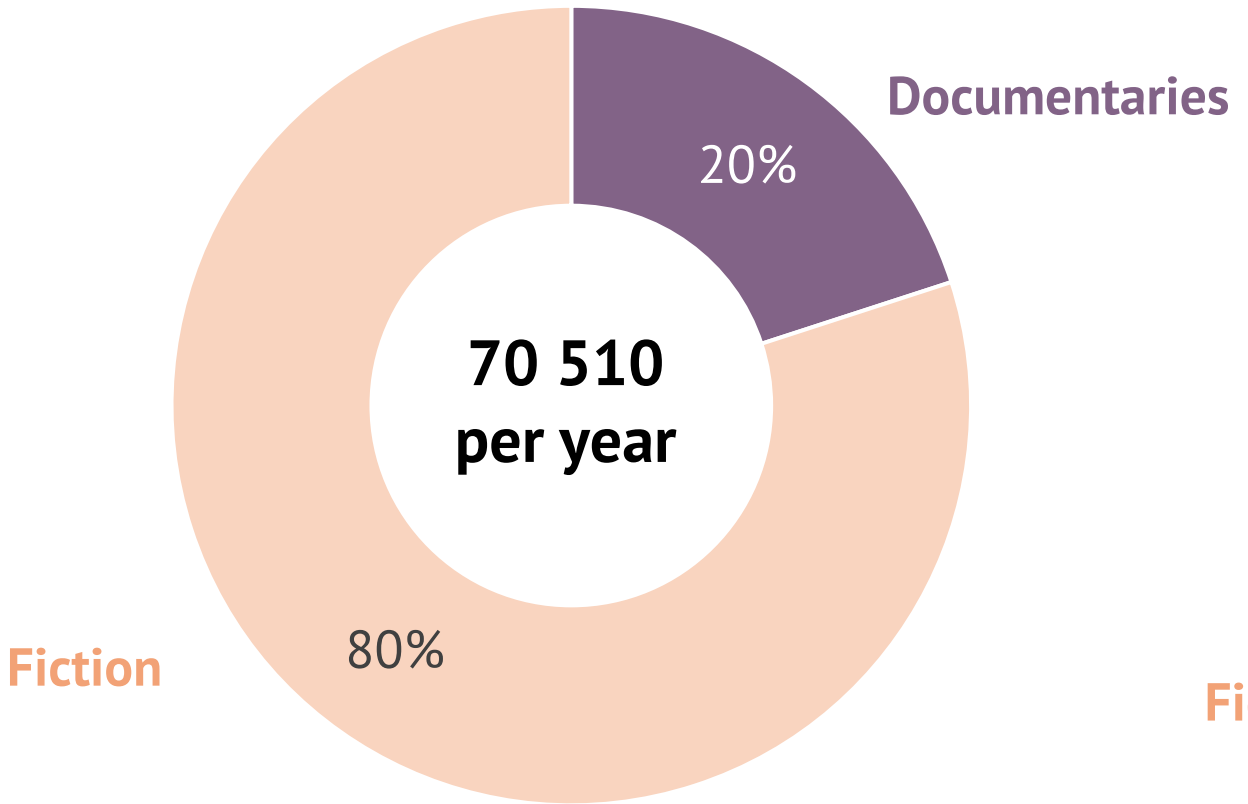


Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

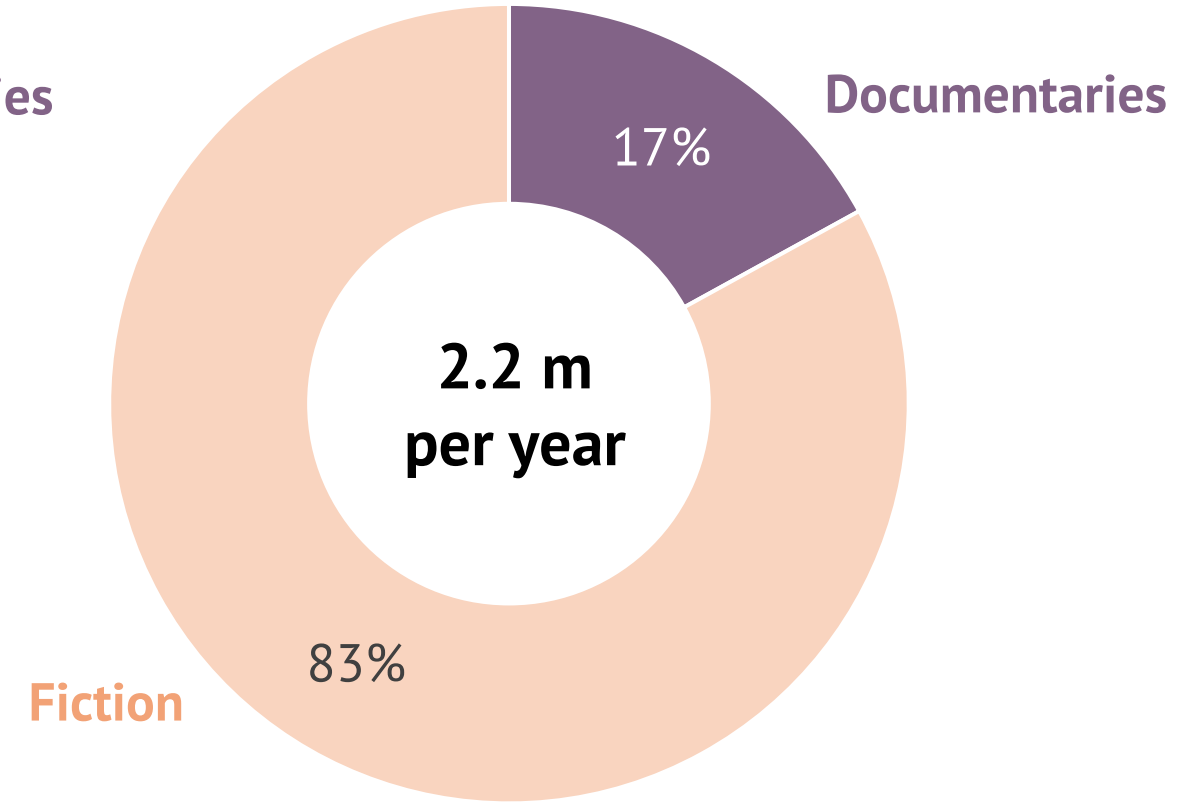
06 Documentaries in VOD: catalogues & usage

On average, documentaries represent a quarter of the works offered on VOD catalogues between 2022 and 2025, which is a similar share to that of theatrical releases.

Share of unique works in VOD catalogues in **Europe** (2022-2025): documentaries vs. fiction



Share of works presence in VOD catalogues in **Europe** (2022-2025): documentaries vs. fiction



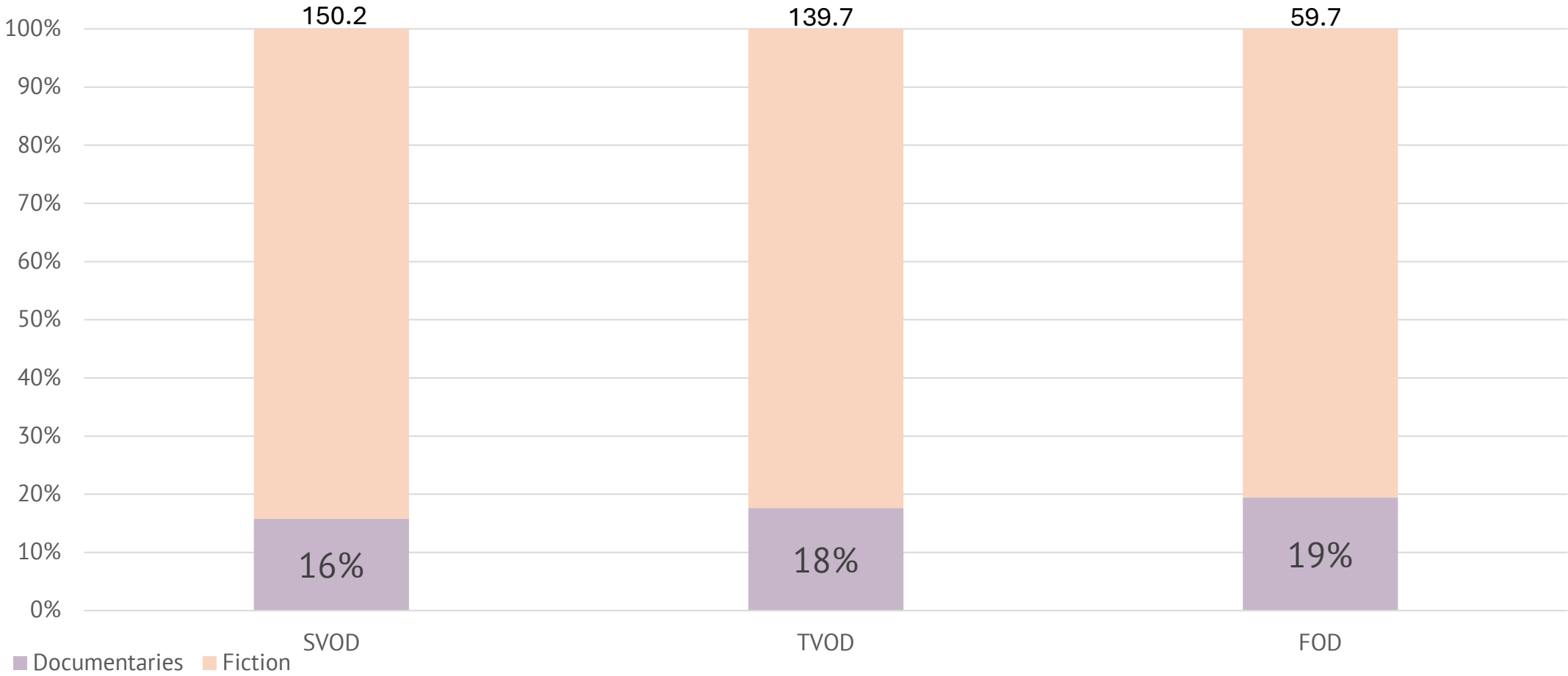
A unique work corresponds to a distinct title that is available in at least one VOD catalogue, regardless of how many catalogues or countries include it. Works presence, on the other hand, counts the total number of occurrences of a unique work. Thus, the same unique work may contribute multiple presences, if it is available in several catalogues and/or countries.

Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

The share of documentaries is comparable across VOD platforms, but SVOD platforms have a slightly lower share of documentaries.

Share of works presence in VOD catalogues (2022-2025): documentaries vs. fiction

by type of platform, total numbers in **thousands**

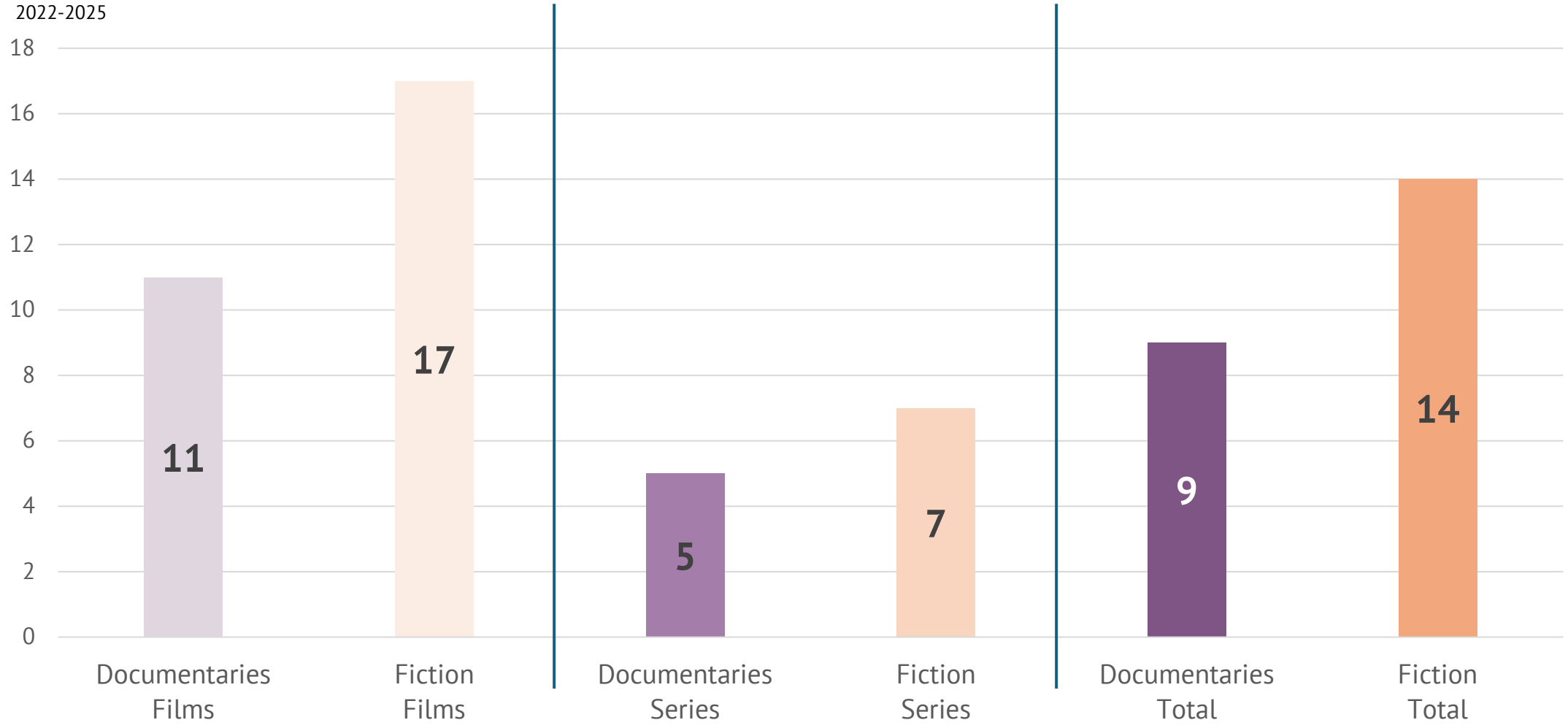


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Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

Documentary works are available, on average, on less platforms than fiction works.

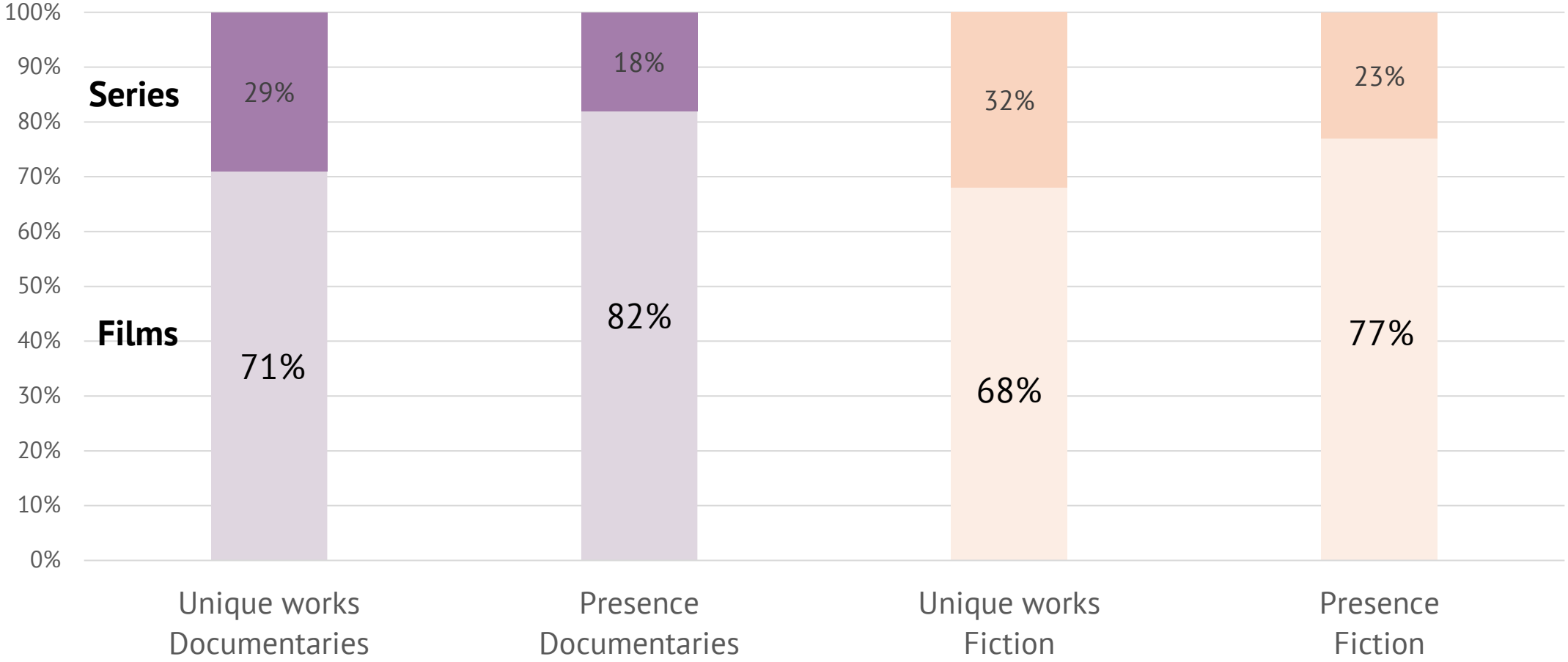
Average number of catalogues in Europe for each work: documentaries vs. fiction works



Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

Feature documentaries represent the majority of documentaries available on VOD platforms, accounting for a similar proportion to fiction works.

Average market shares by region of origin, docs. vs. fiction.
2022-2025



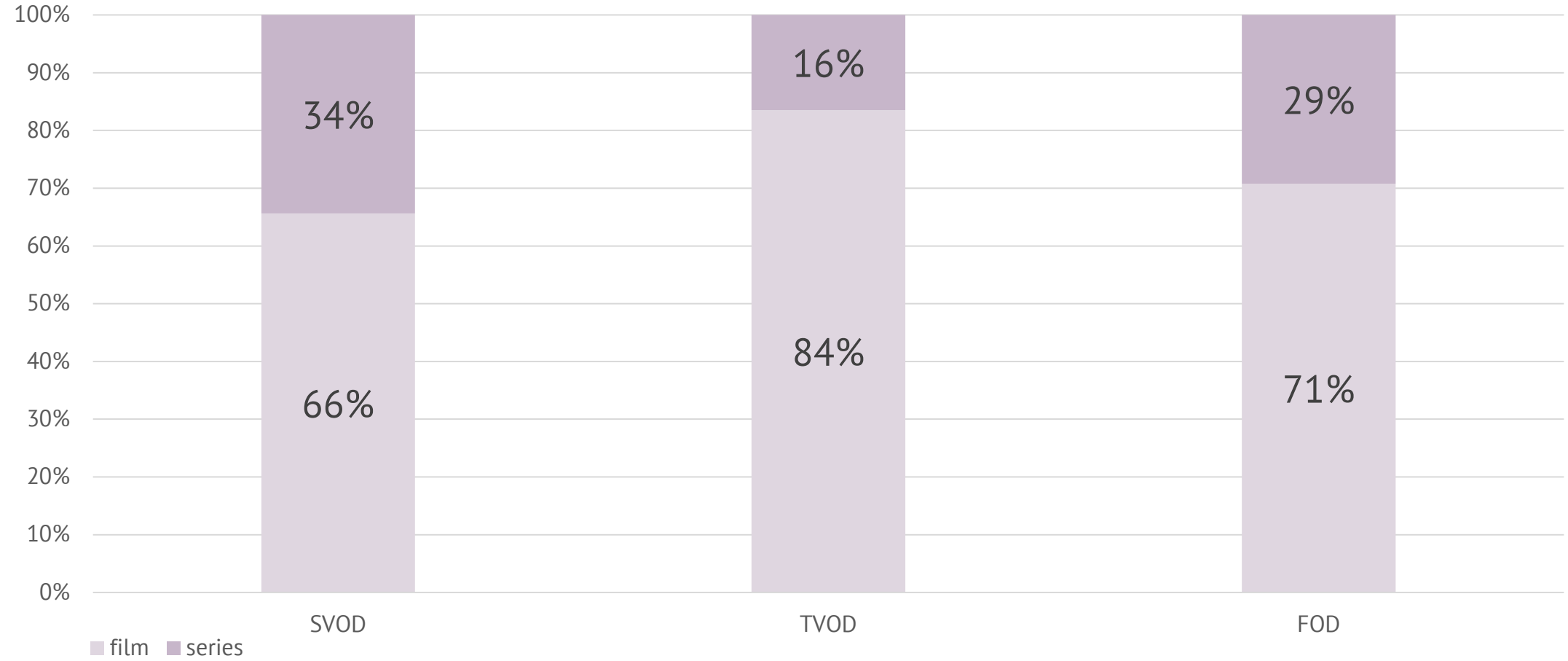
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Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

Feature films represent the highest shares of documentaries on all VOD platforms, but documentary series are more prominent on SVOD.

Share of documentary presence in VOD catalogues (2022-2025): films vs. series

by type of platform



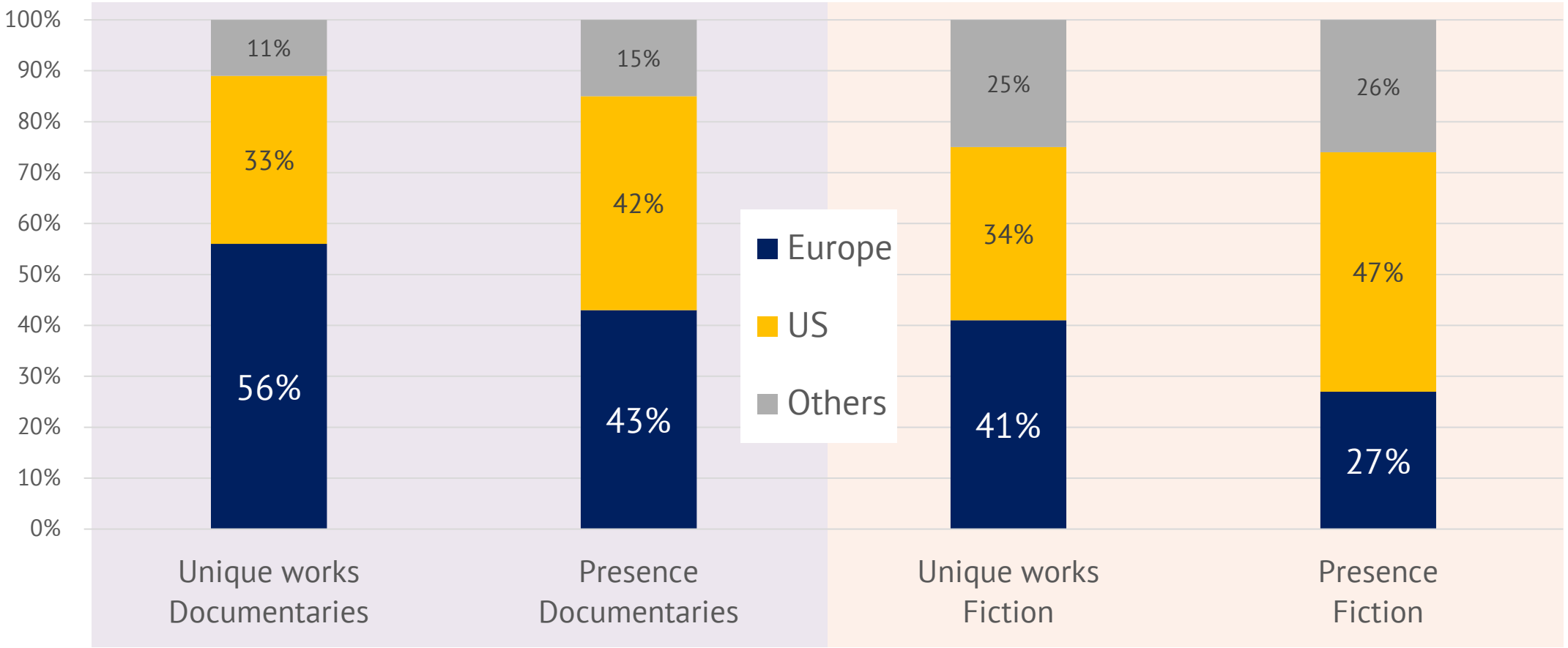
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Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

The offer of European works among documentary catalogues is more important than in fiction catalogues.

Share of works in VOD catalogues, by region of origin (2022-2025)

2022-2025

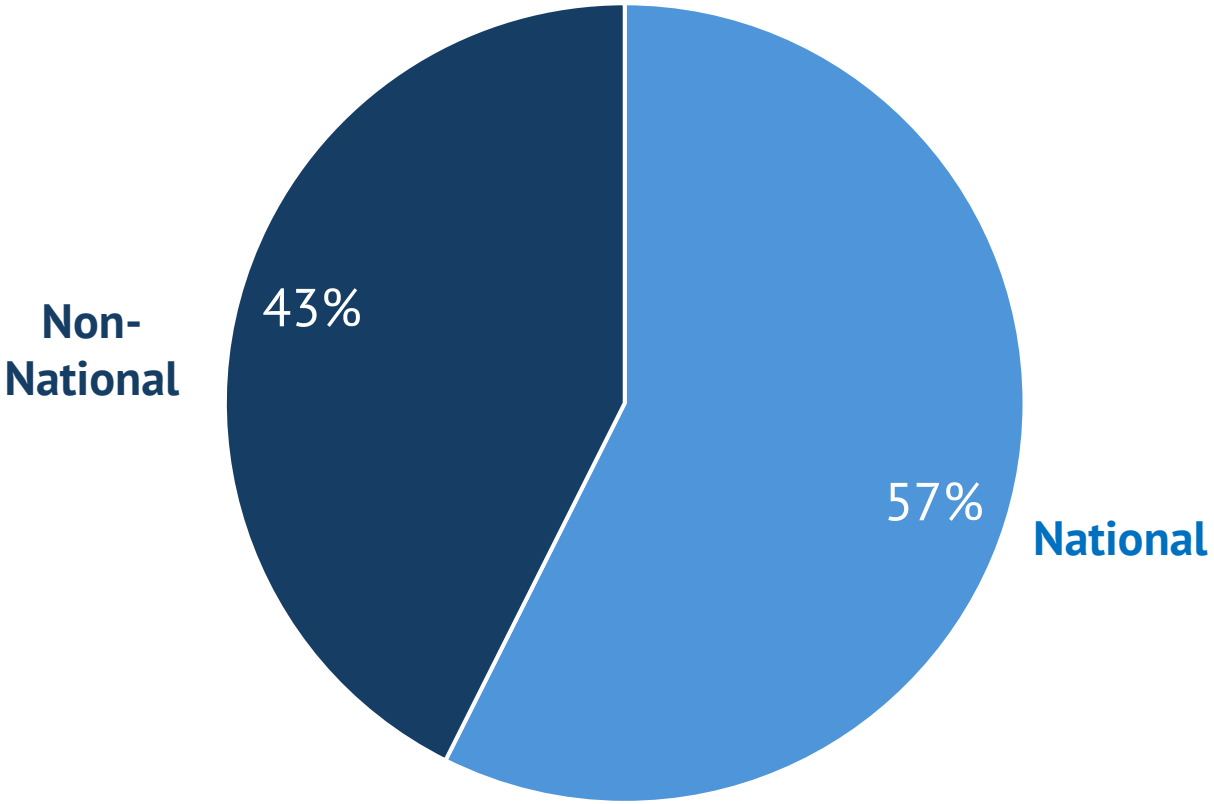


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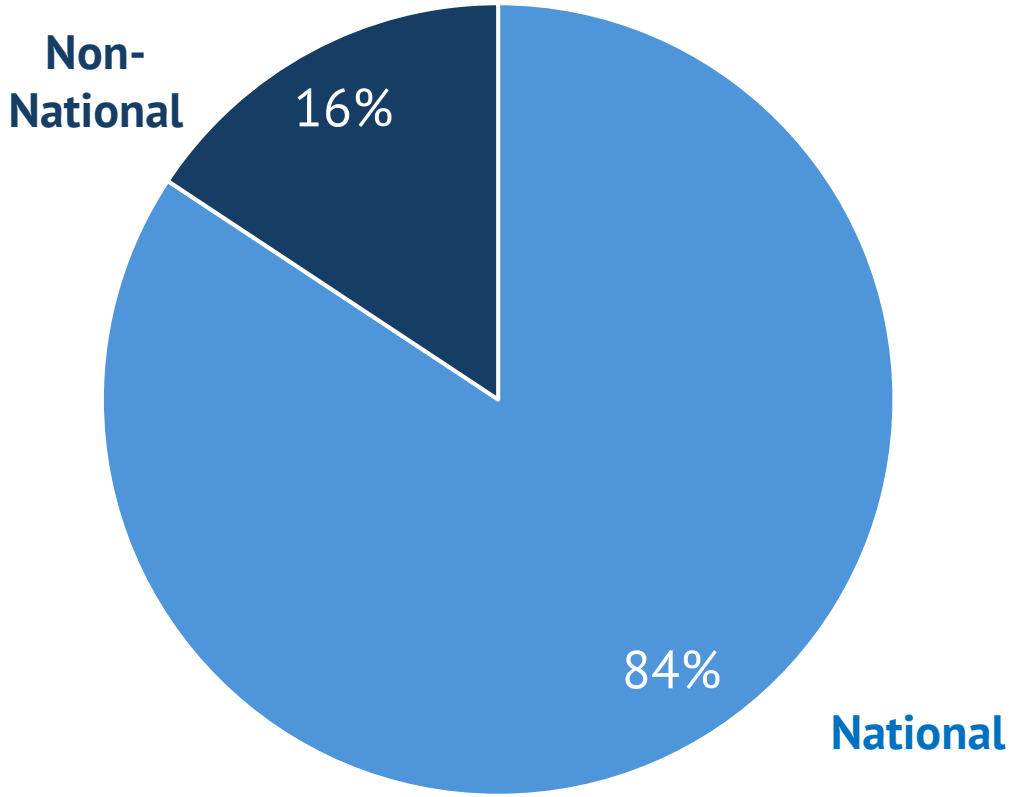
Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

Despite a diversity of European documentaries on VOD, they tend to be mostly present in their own country's catalogues.

Share of unique European **documentaries** in VOD catalogues in Europe (2022-2025)



Share of available European **documentaries** in VOD catalogues in Europe (2022-2025)



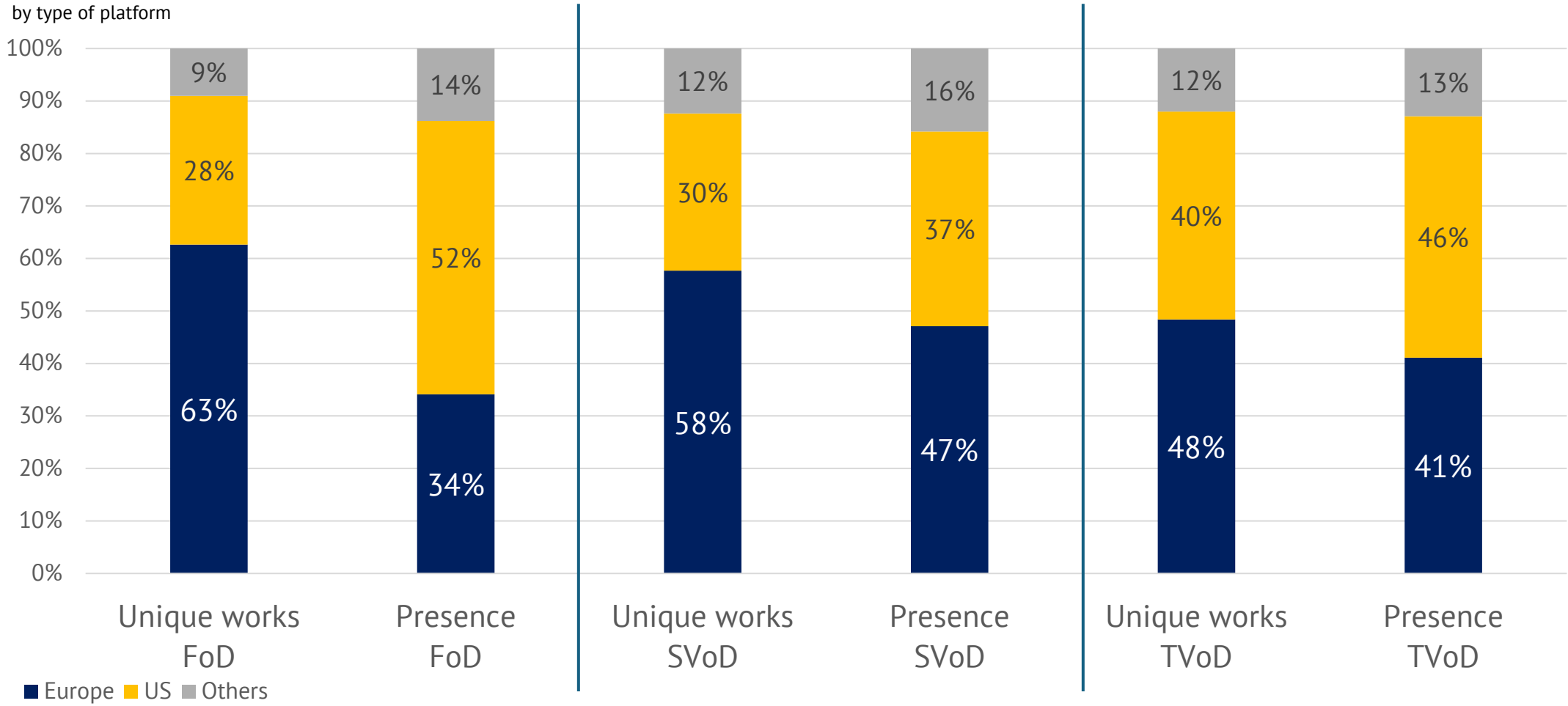
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Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

FOD services present the **highest** share of unique European documentaries but the **lowest** share of European presence compared to the other type of platforms.

Share of unique documentaries and presence in VOD catalogues in Europe (2022-2025), by region of origin

by type of platform



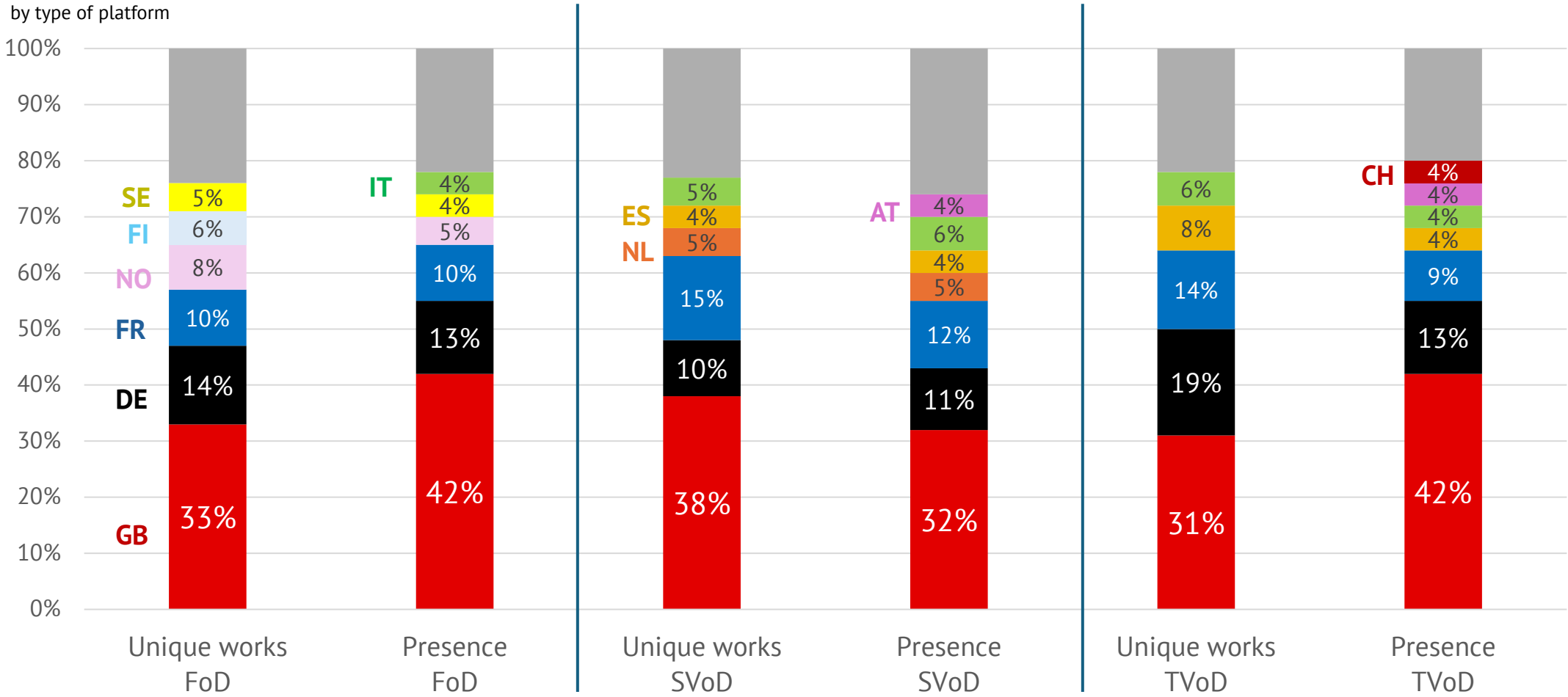
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Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

FOD services present the **highest** share of different European documentaries but the **lowest** share of European presence compared to the other type of platforms.

Share of unique documentaries and presence in VOD catalogues in Europe (2022-2025), by region of origin

by type of platform

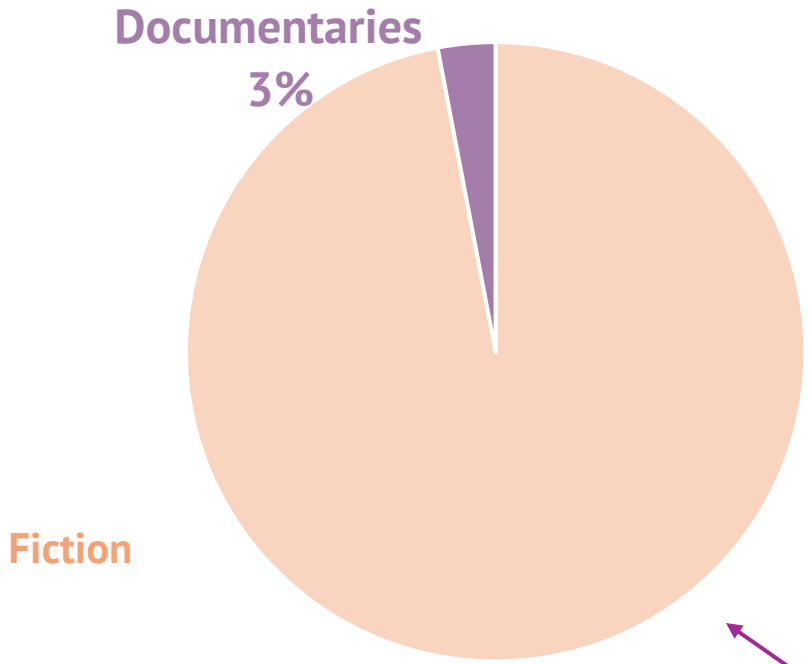


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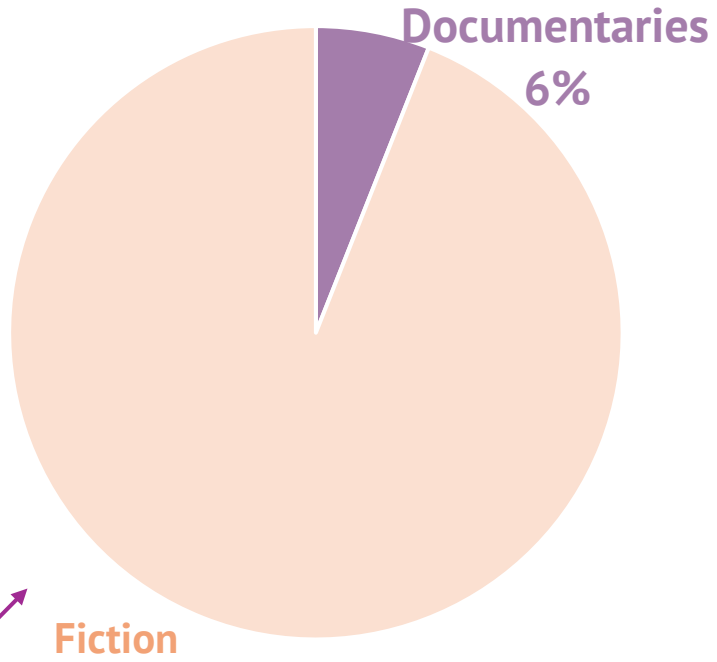
Source: LUMIEREVOD/EAO/JustWatch

Documentaries represent a very small share of viewing time on SVOD compared to fiction works.

Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025)
In Europe for audiovisual works



Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025)
In Europe for **European** audiovisual works

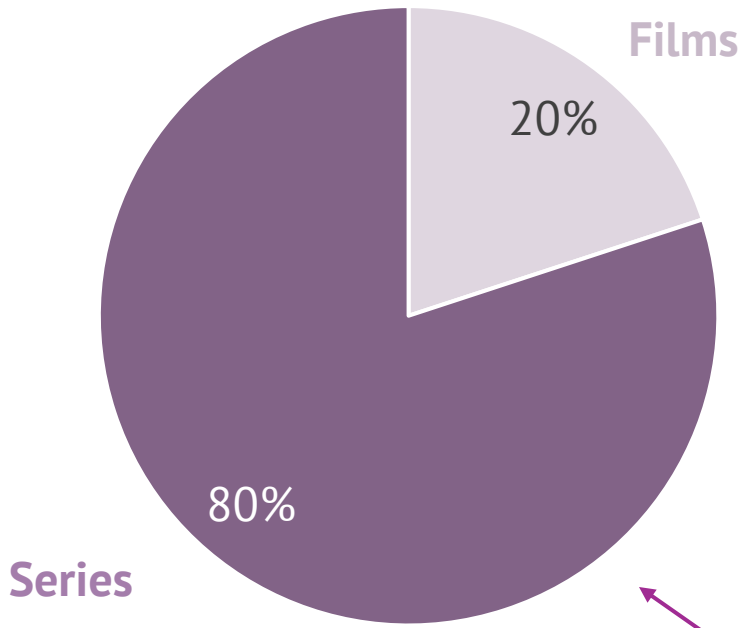


These results should be interpreted having in mind the data scope, focused on the largest SVOD platforms.

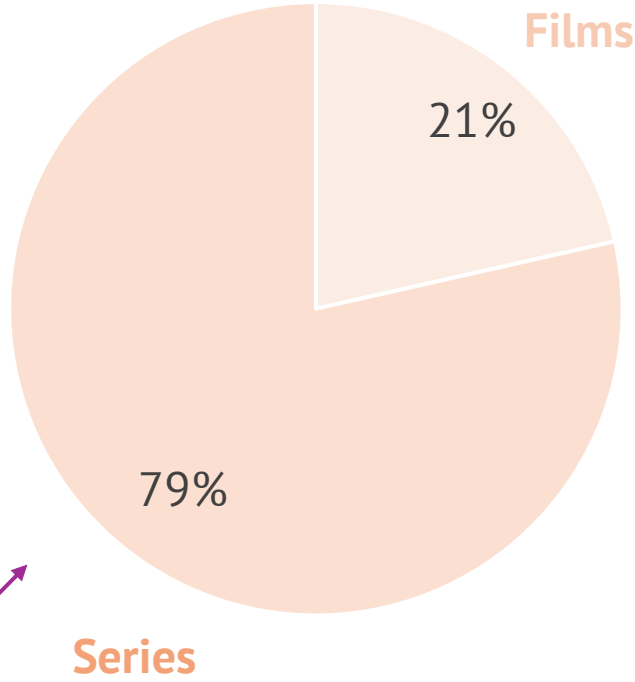
Source: Digital I/EAO

Most of SVOD usage for documentaries is spent on series, similar to SVOD usage for fiction works.

Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025)
In Europe for documentary works



Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025)
In Europe for fiction works

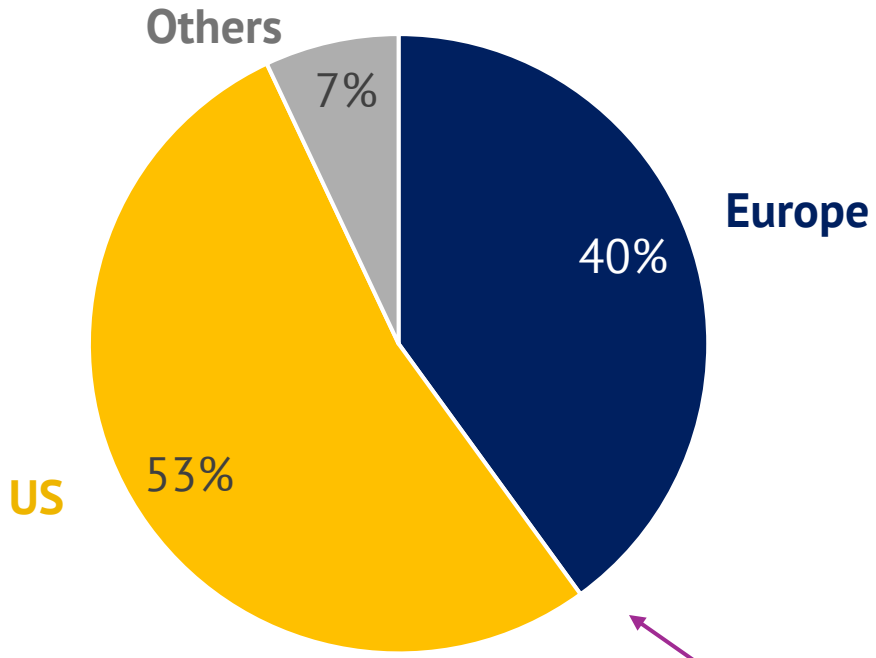


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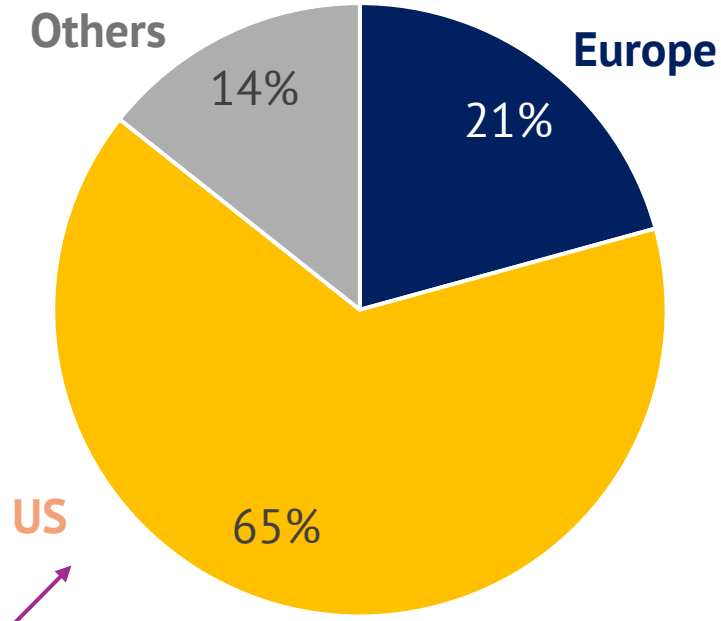
Source: Digital I/EAO

European works attract a bigger share of viewing time on the documentary SVOD market than on the fiction SVOD market.

Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025) in Europe for **documentary** works, by region of origin



Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025) in Europe For **fiction** works, by region of origin

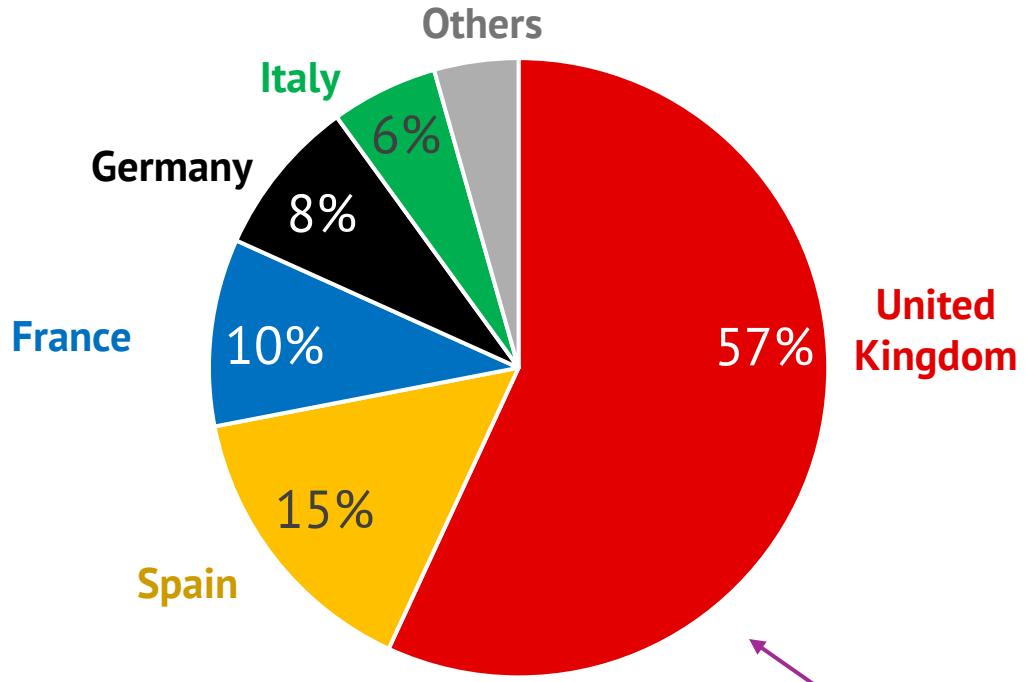


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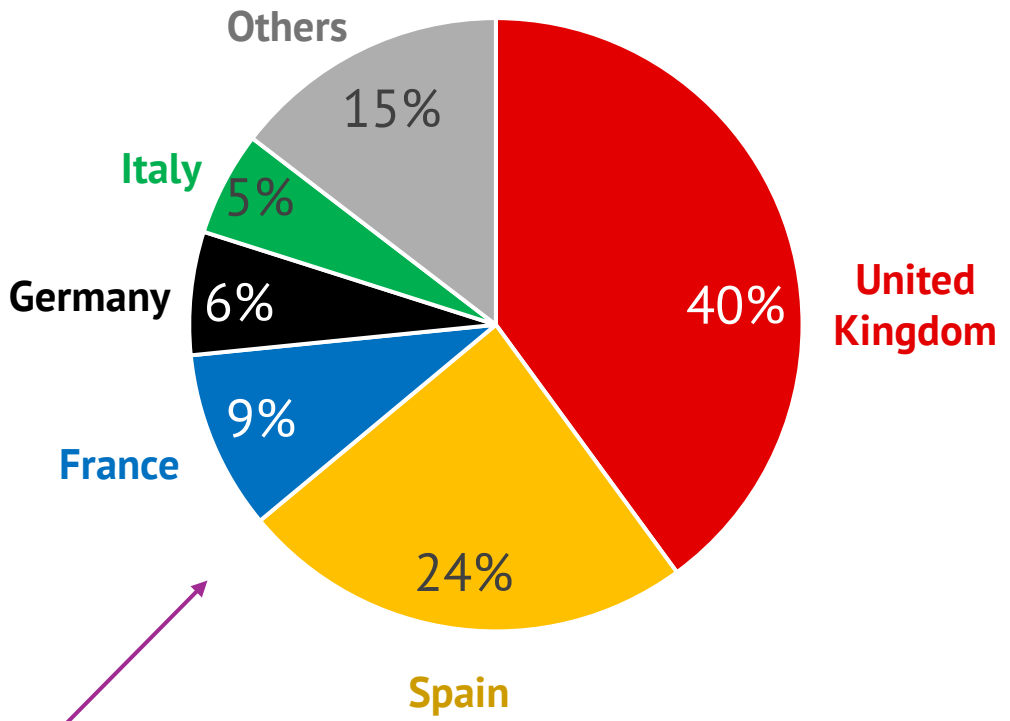
Source: Digital I/EAO

Most viewed European documentaries are British, attracting a bigger share of viewing time than British fiction in their respective markets.

Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025) in Europe for **European documentaries**, by country of origin



Share of SVOD usage (2024-2025) in Europe for **European fiction** works, by country of origin



These results should be interpreted having in mind the data scope, focused on the largest SVOD platforms.

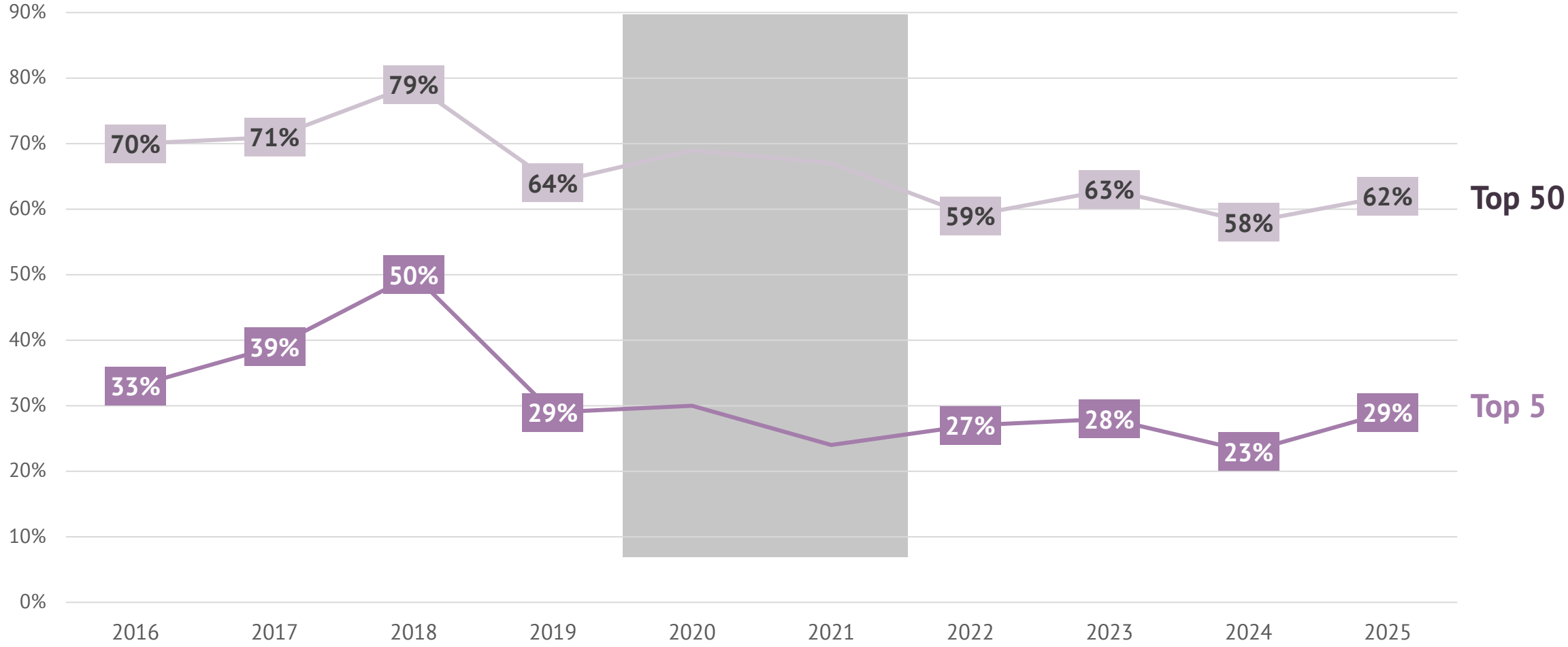
Source: Digital I/EAO

07 Top films & themes

Since the pandemic, the documentary market relies less on top films to attract audiences.

Share of top theatrical documentaries' admissions in the total admissions worldwide

by calendar year

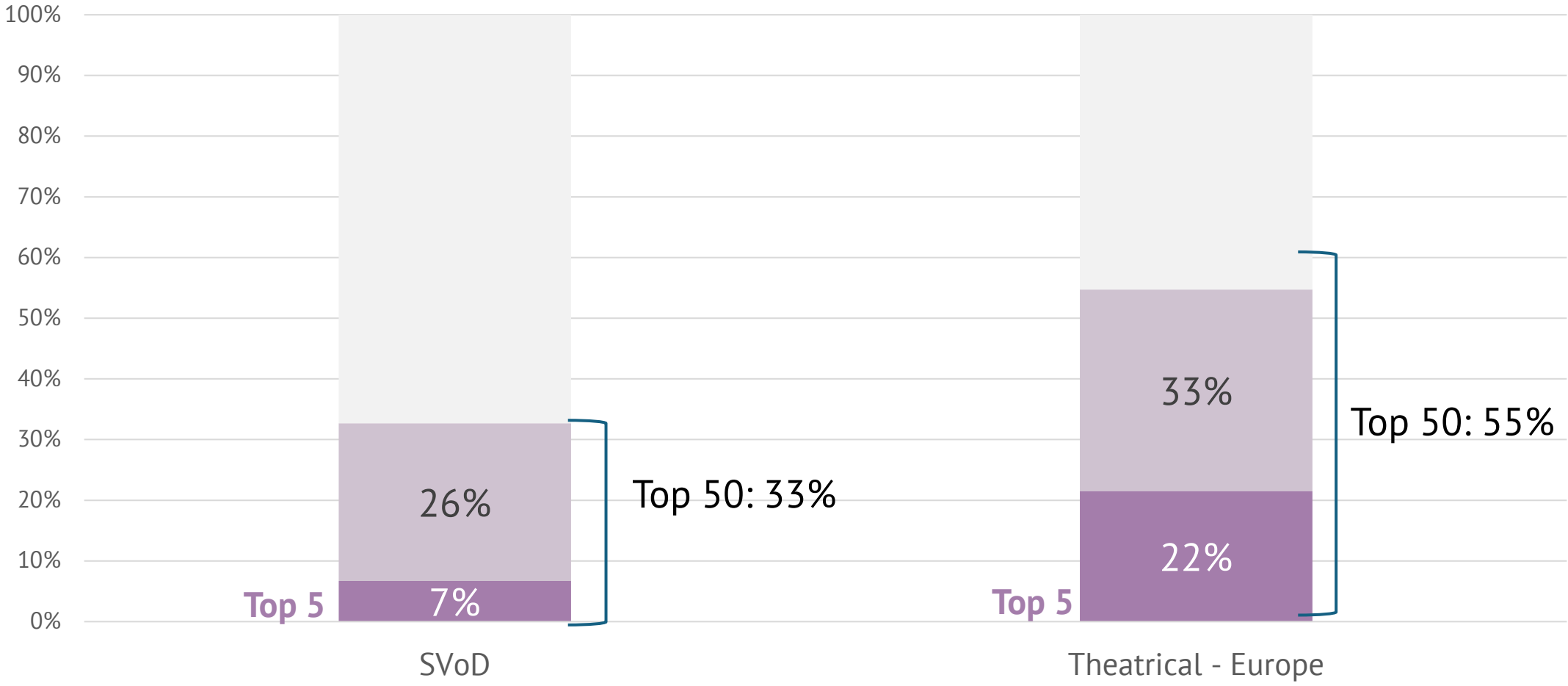


Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

The impact of the top works on ticket sales for theatrical documentaries is greater than its impact on SVOD viewing time.

Share of top documentary works' consumption in the total consumption: admissions (theatrical) vs. viewing time (SVOD)

In Europe, Year: 2025

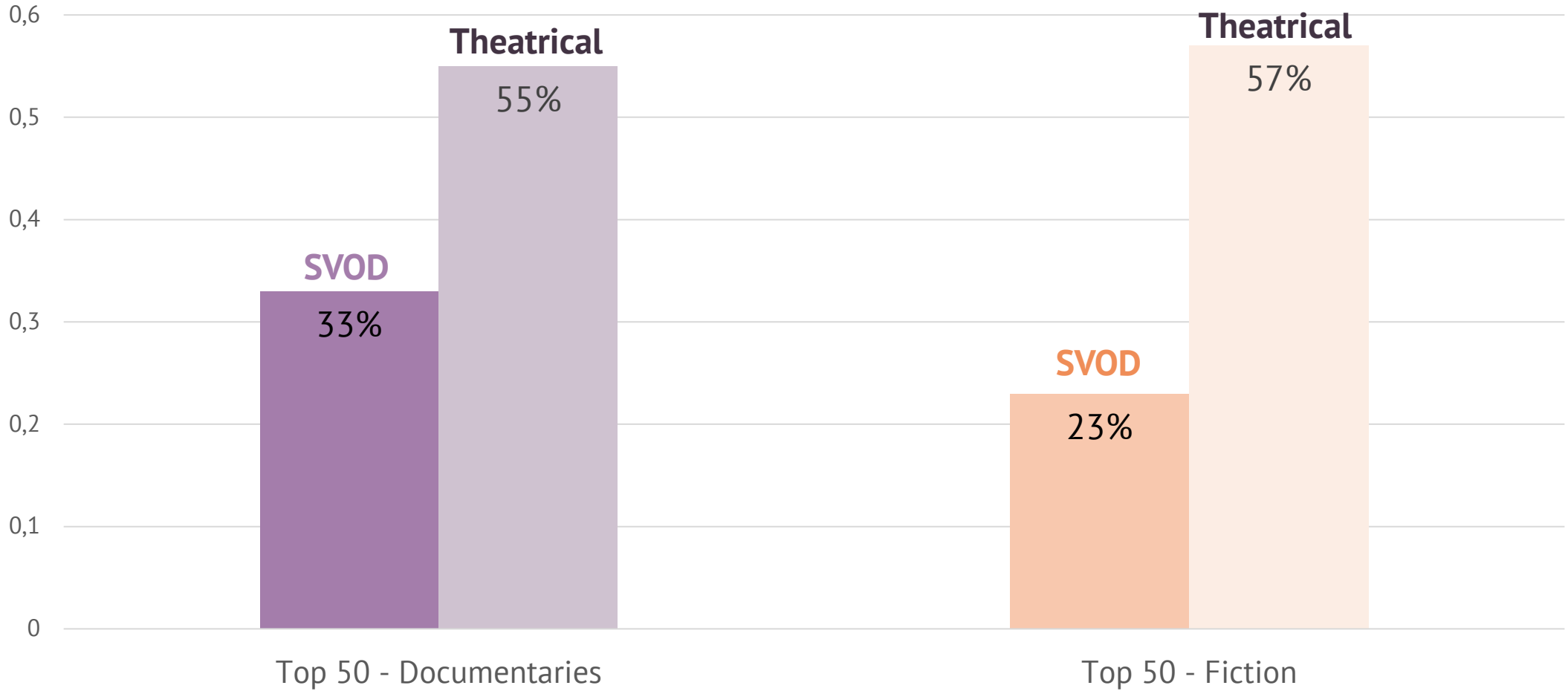


Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Though the consumption of theatrical documentaries is at the same level of concentration as that of fiction films, the viewing time for documentaries is more concentrated.

Share of top documentary works' consumption in the total consumption: admissions (theatrical) vs. viewing time (SVOD)

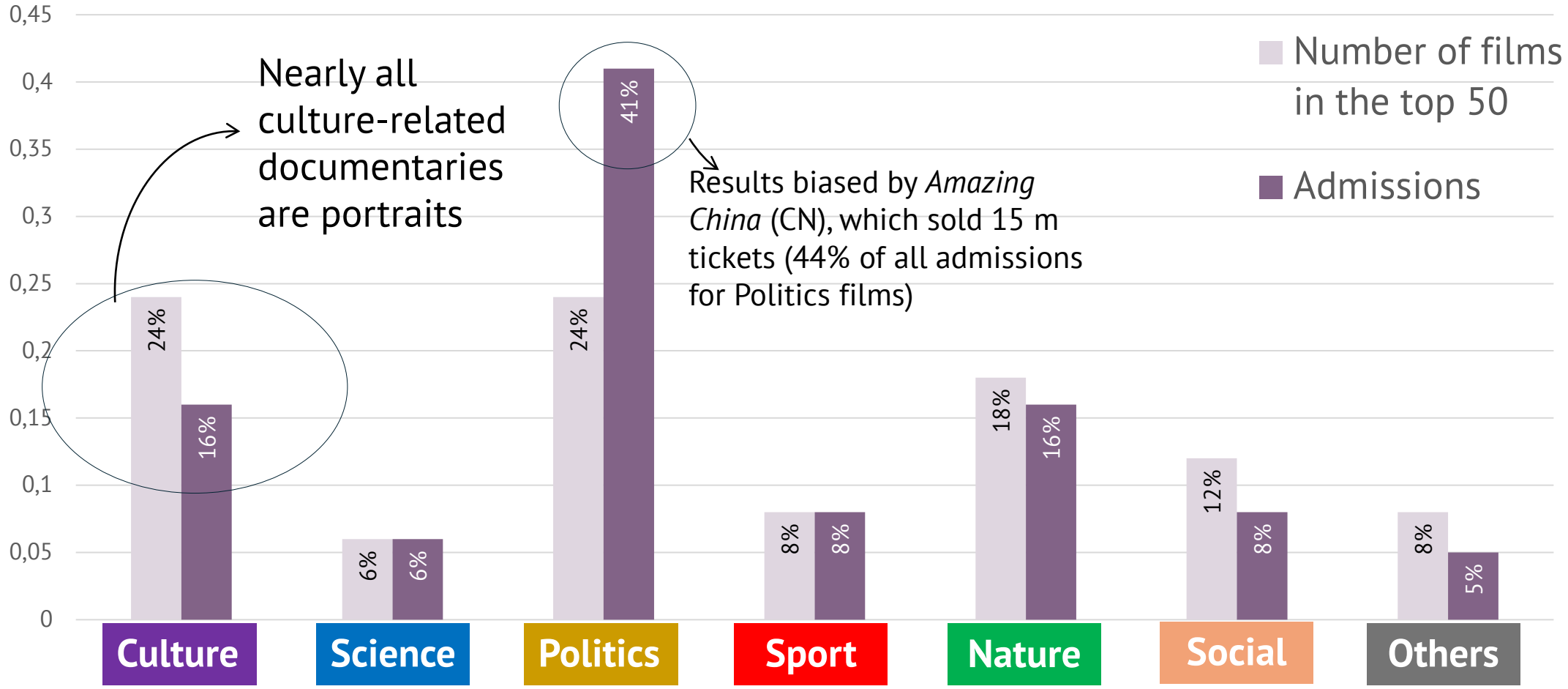
In Europe, Year: 2025



Source: Digital I/LUMIERE/EAO.

Politics is the most successful documentary theme among the top 50 worldwide, followed by (culture) portraits of famous artists and nature documentaries.

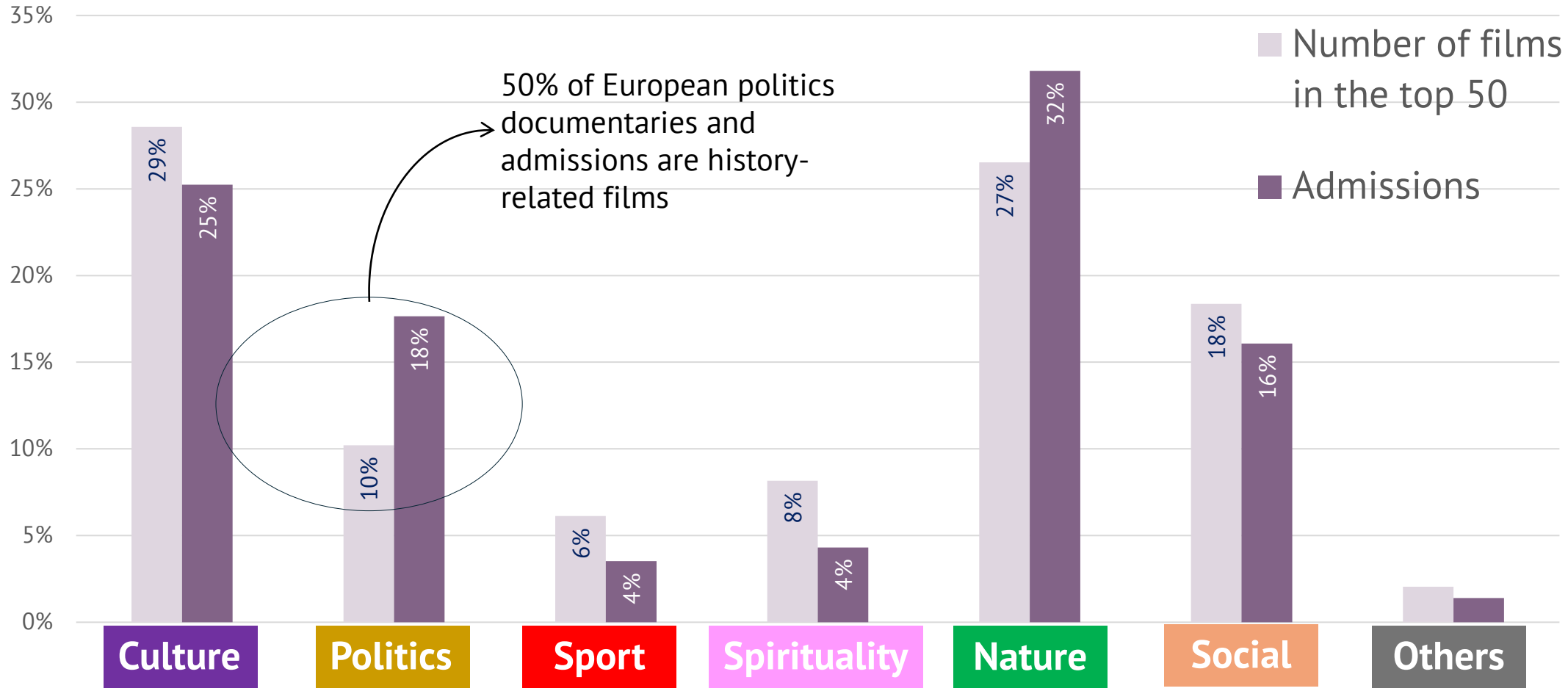
Share of films and admissions in the top 50 worldwide (2016-2025)
by themes



Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Between 2016 and 2025, the most successful European documentaries were those focusing on nature, culture and politics.

Share of films and admissions in the top 50 for **European** films worldwide (2016-2025)
by themes

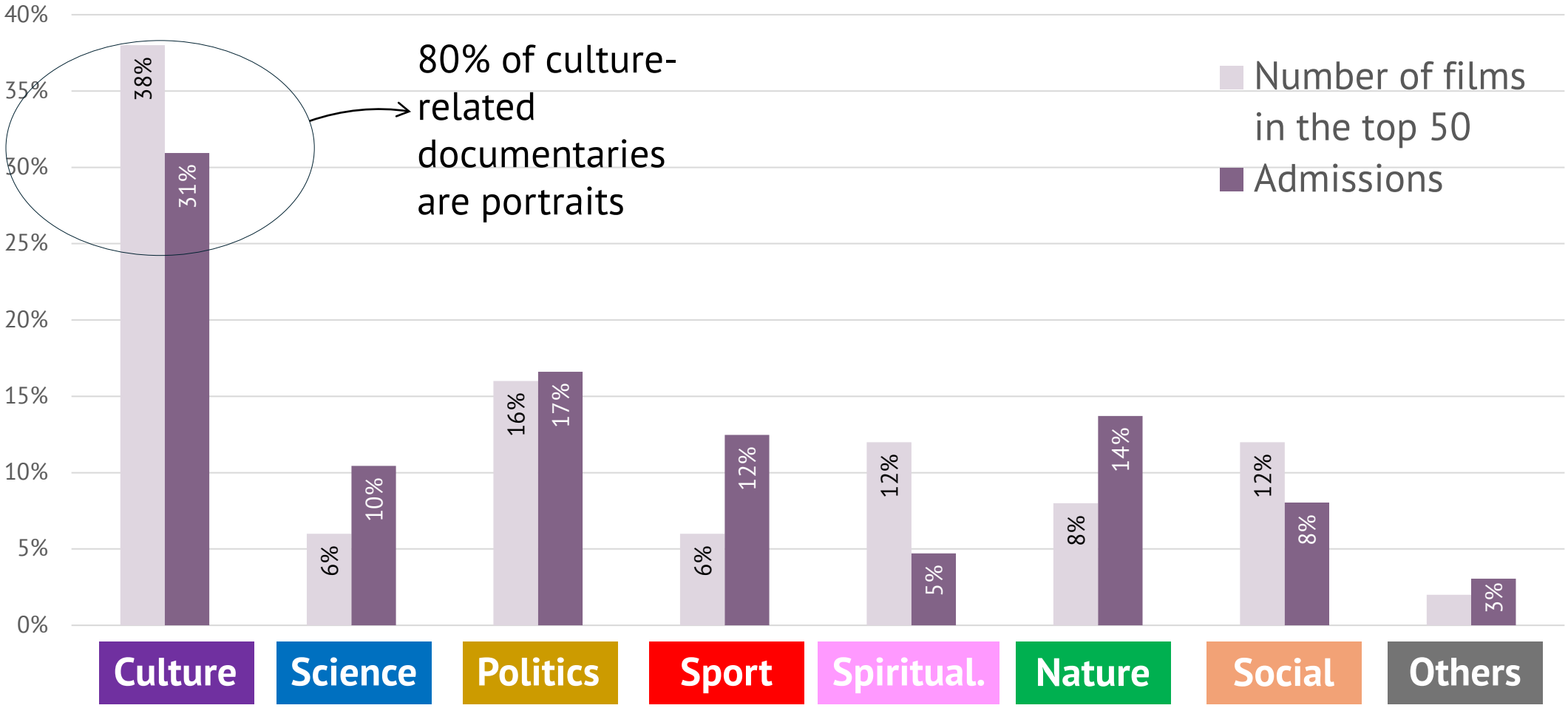


Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

US documentaries are dominated by culture documentaries, mostly biographies.

Share of films and admissions in the Top 50 for **US** films worldwide, by theme (2016-2025)

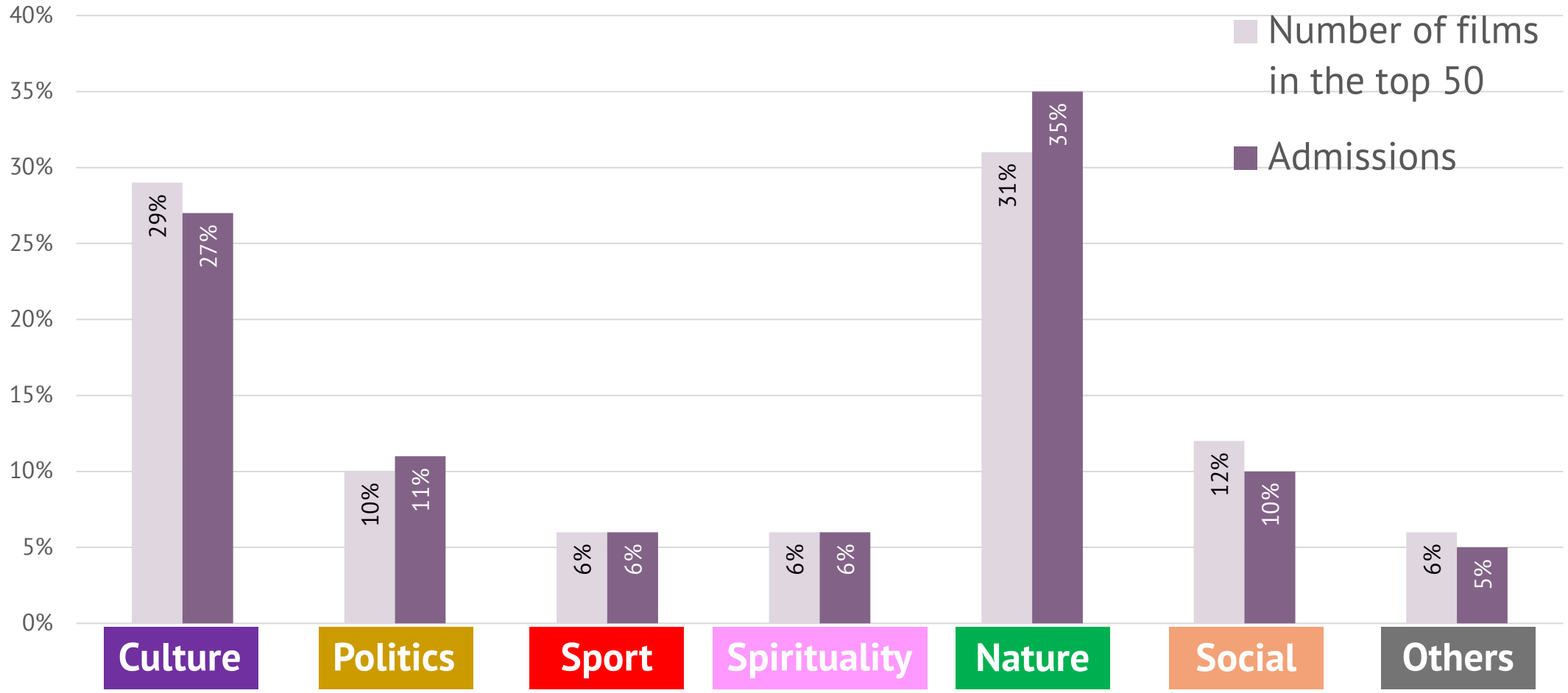
by themes



Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

The European audience for theatrical documentaries is mostly interested by nature documentaries, followed by culture topics.

Share of films and admissions in the top 50 in Europe (2016-2025)
by themes

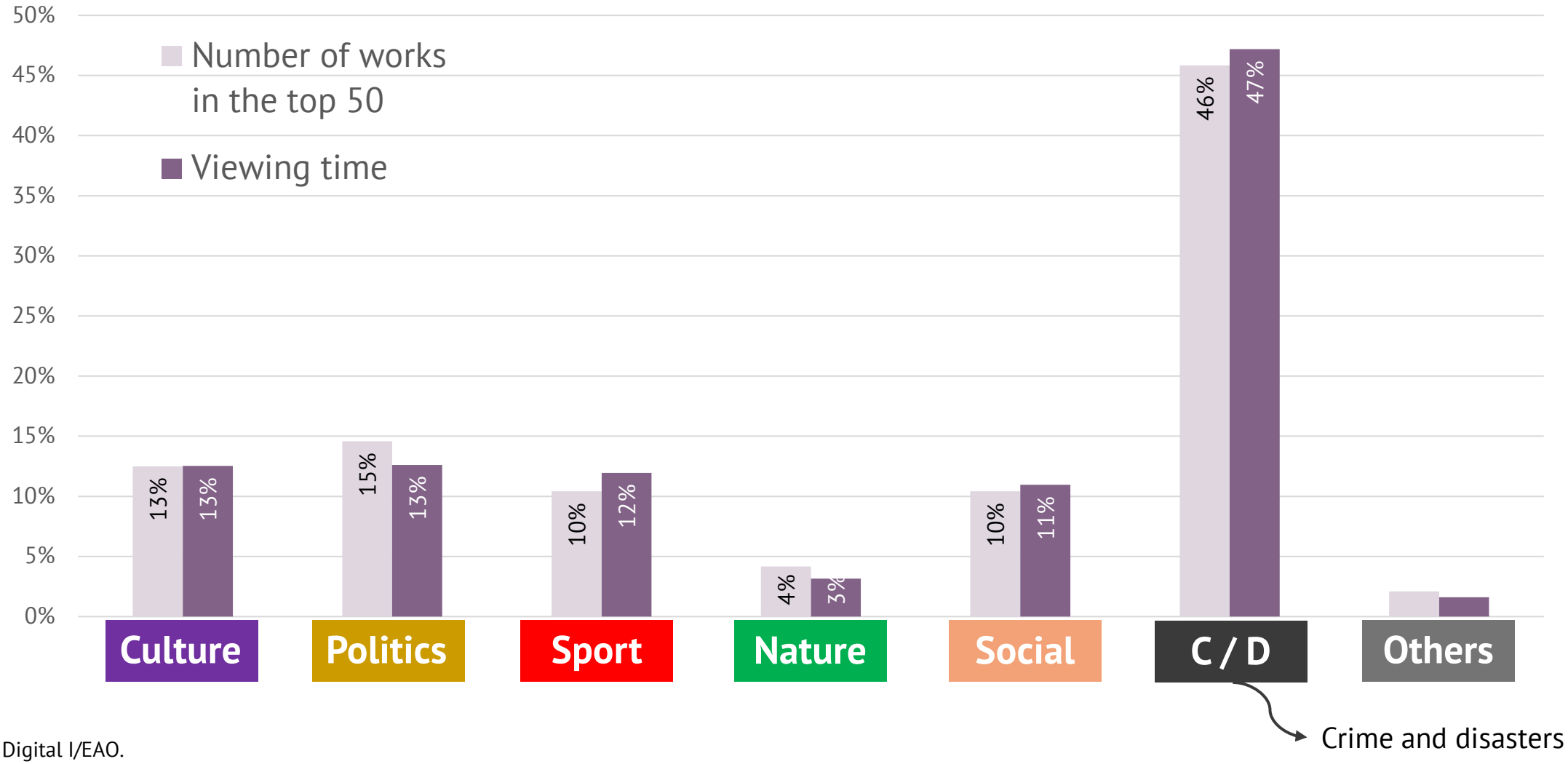


Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

In Europe, SVOD consumption is dominated by crime and disaster documentaries, which account for nearly half of the top 50 viewing time.

Share of works and viewing time in the SVOD top 50 in Europe (2025)

by themes

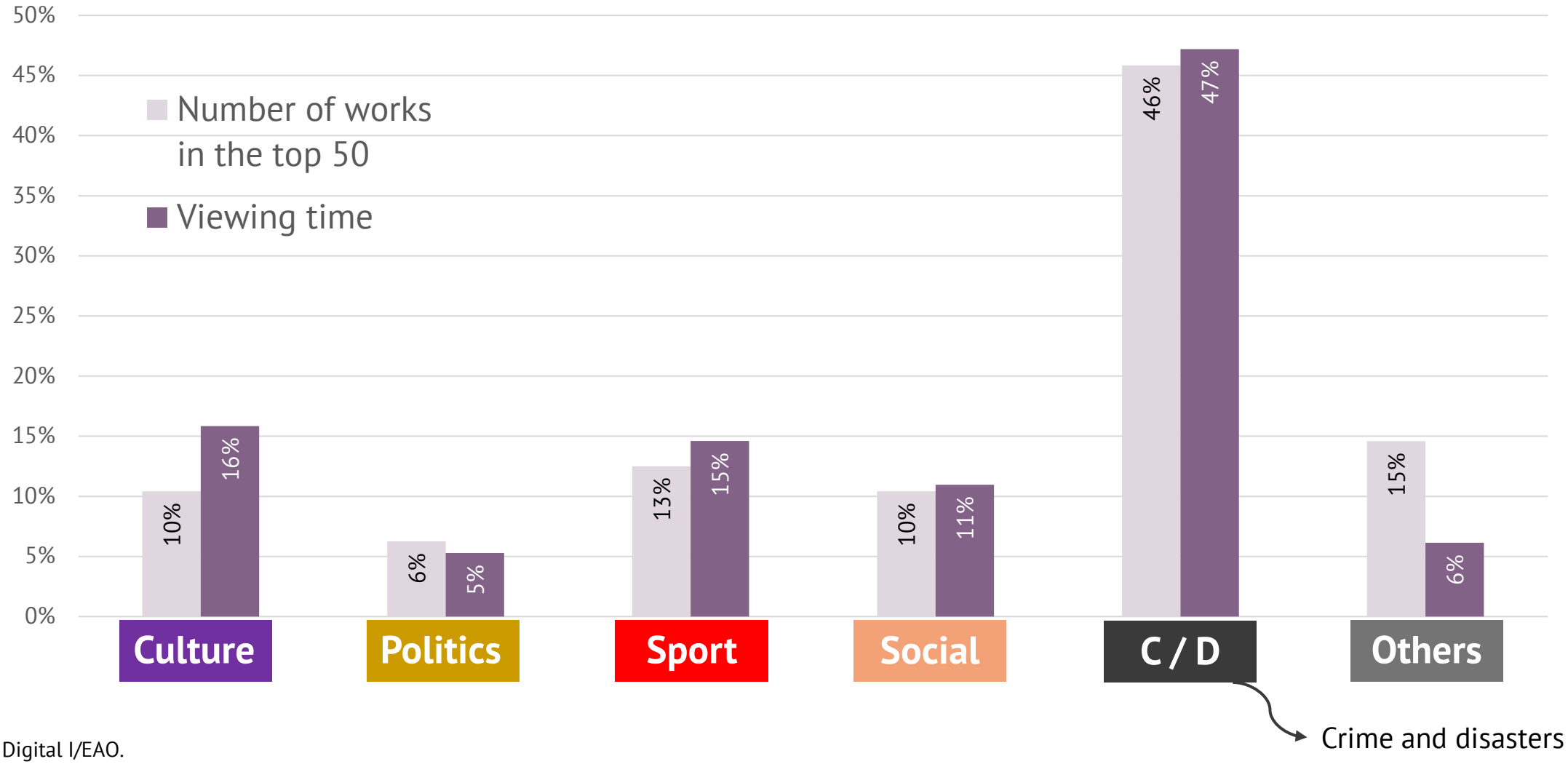


Source: Digital I/EAO.

Successful European documentaries on VOD platforms in Europe also tend to focus on crime and disaster themes.

Share of works and viewing time in the SVOD top 50 in Europe for **European** works, by theme (2025)

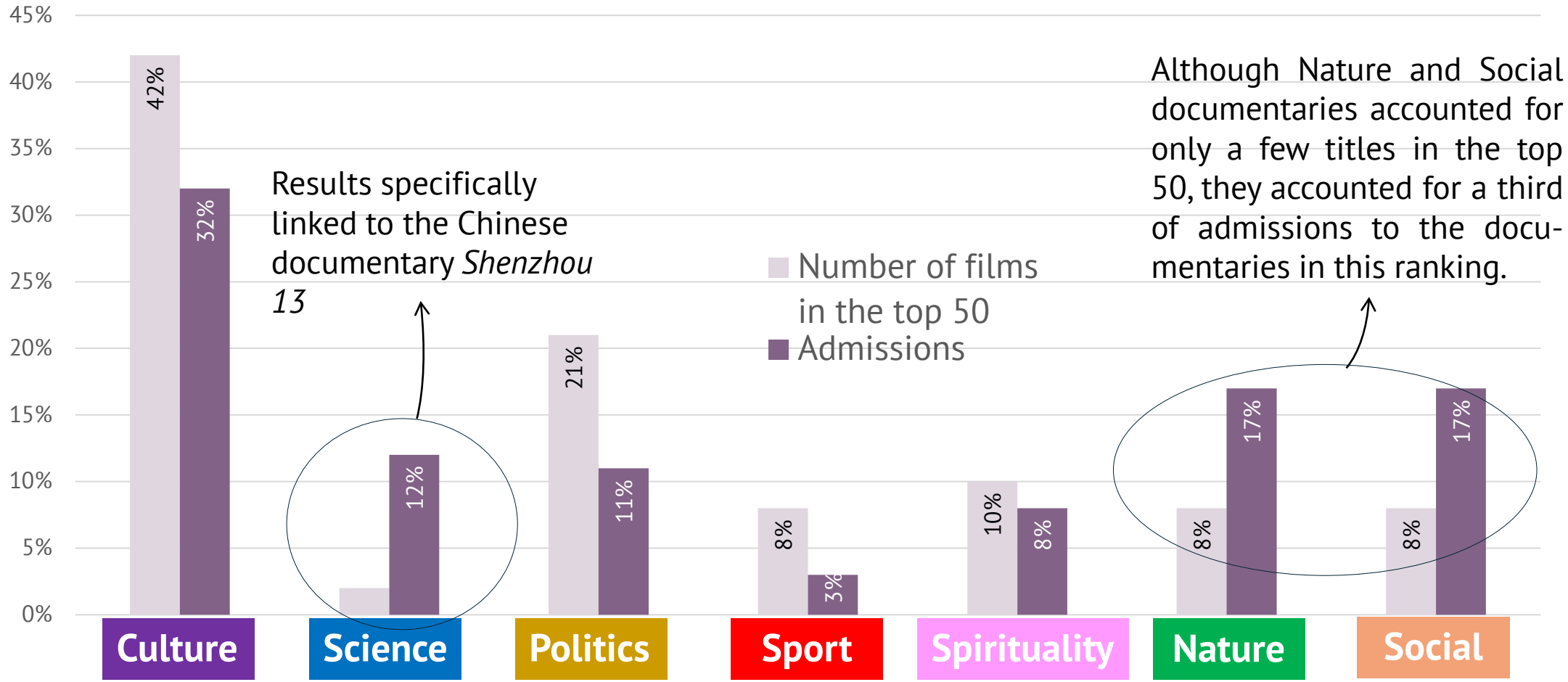
by themes



Source: Digital I/EAO.

In cinemas, culture documentaries cumulatively attracted most admissions, but science, nature & social documentaries had the best results per film in the top 50.

Share of films and admissions in the top 50 worldwide (**2025**)
by themes



Source: LUMIERE/EAO.

Documentaries in cinema and on VOD
Insights into production and distribution trends 2016-2025

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Cover layout — ALTRAN, France

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