

AMERICAN PARENTS' VIEWS ON MOVIE RATINGS

April 2026

MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION
CLASSIFICATION AND RATING ADMINISTRATION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

INTRO | STUDY OVERVIEW
BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

5

SECTION V
RATINGS IN PRACTICE

2

INTRO
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6

APPENDIX

3

SECTION III
PERCEPTIONS OF THE FILM RATING SYSTEM

4

SECTION IV
CONTENT CONCERNS AND EVALUATION



P S
■ B

INTRO

STUDY OVERVIEW



STUDY OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The Classification and Rating Administration (CARA), a division of the Motion Picture Association (MPA), commissioned PSB Insights to conduct research to **develop a comprehensive, quantitative view of U.S. parents' perceptions, attitudes and expectations regarding movie content and the film rating system.**

CARA aims to ensure that their ratings framework reflects the views of parents regarding the presence of profane language, sex, nudity, violence, drug use, smoking, and other subjects that may be a source of concern for parents.

Please note that this research makes no assumptions about the rating system as it currently exists; rather, it seeks to understand parents' perceptions from an objective standpoint.

STUDY OVERVIEW

MPA MOVIE RATING EXPLAINED

Established in 1968, the film rating system provides parents with the information needed to determine if a film is appropriate for their children.

Ratings are determined by the Classification and Rating Administration (CARA), via a board comprised of an independent group of parents.

1 RATING

Every film is assigned a rating (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17) that indicates its level of content so parents may decide if the movie is suitable for their children

2 RATING DEFINITION

This language provides a more detailed explanation to parents of what the specific rating means






3 RATING DESCRIPTORS

This language is unique to each film and conveys the elements that caused its rating

The diagram shows a rectangular rating label with a white background and black text. At the top, it says "PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED". Below that, the rating "PG-13" is written in large, bold letters. To the right of the rating, there is a box containing the text: "Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi violence and action throughout, language and some crude references". At the bottom of the label, it says "Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13" followed by a film reel icon and a registered trademark symbol (®). Three blue brackets with numbers 1, 2, and 3 point to different parts of the label: 1 points to the rating "PG-13", 2 points to the bottom text and icons, and 3 points to the descriptive text box.

STUDY OVERVIEW

MPA MOVIE RATINGS

G	GENERAL AUDIENCES	Nothing that would offend parents for viewing by children	
PG	PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED	Parents urged to give "parental guidance." May contain some material parents might not like for their young children	
PG-13	PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED	Parents are urged to be cautious. Some material may be inappropriate for pre-teenagers	
R	RESTRICTED	Contains some adult material. Parents are urged to learn more about the film before taking their young children with them	
NC-17	NO ONE 17 AND UNDER ADMITTED	Clearly adult. Children are not admitted	

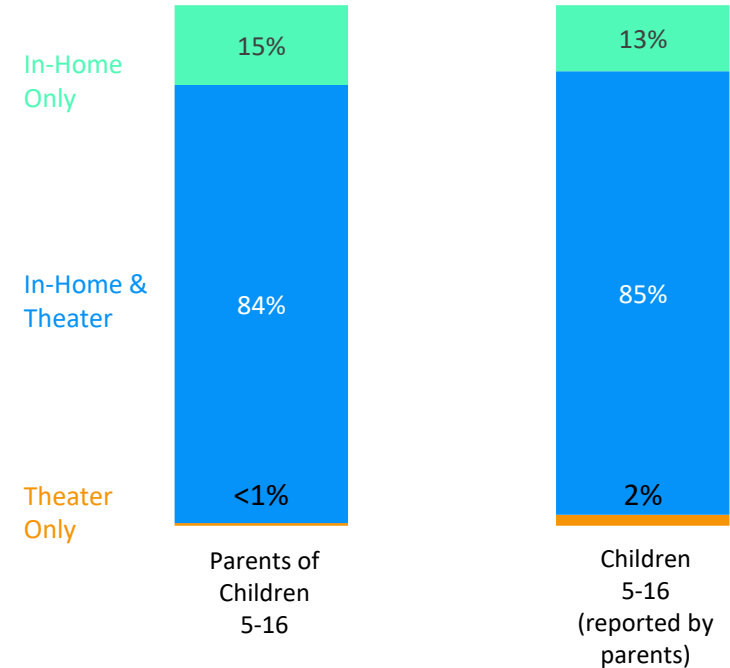


METHODOLOGY

- ▶ **Format:** 20-minute online survey, including an interactive rating scenario
- ▶ **Interviews Conducted:** November 12 – November 25, 2025
- ▶ **Market:** United States
- ▶ **Audience:** N=1,502 parents of children aged 5-16 (“Total Parents”) to align with sample from 2022 research. Both parent and child have watched a movie in the past 6 months, either in theater or in-home (any platform).
 - Nationally representative sample based on parental age, gender, race/ethnicity, and region
 - Natural fallout of household size and composition, including distribution of age/gender of child
 - Natural fallout of specific in-home movie consumption platform
 - No sensitive industry (advertising, market research)

**Disclaimer: Due to the rounding of data to whole numbers, the sum of individual figures may differ +/- 1% from the total shown (e.g., Top 2 Box, Total, Net).*

MOVIE VIEWERSHIP INCIDENCE | PAST 6 MONTHS



INTRO

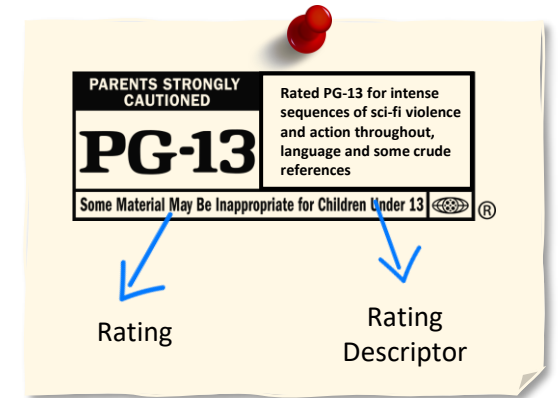
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PERCEPTIONS OF THE FILM RATING SYSTEM

- **Familiarity with the MPA rating and rating descriptors is high among parents - and they find them both helpful and accurate.**
 - Parents of children aged 5-6 are more likely to find ratings helpful than parents with older kids.
- **Parental use of ratings and rating descriptors is near universal when evaluating a movie for their child to see.**
 - Nearly three quarters report using online sources to find that information. Streaming services and movie trailers/previews are also commonly used.
- **Most parents feel that the current MPA rating system does a good job advising parents on all content categories, and does the best job advising them on the amount of violence, sexual content, and profane language.**
 - Roughly seven-in-eight parents felt that the movies they'd seen in the past year had the appropriate rating.
- **Parents are somewhat familiar with the approval process for trailers and previews and are satisfied with the process; very few have encountered a trailer or preview that was incompatible with the movie it preceded.**
 - Nine-in-ten parents report that they're satisfied with the approval process for trailers and previews.
 - Eight-in-ten parents say that the trailers or previews they've seen in the past 12 months were compatible with the movie they preceded.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTENT CONCERNS & EVALUATION

- **Sexual content, the use of hard drugs, and depictions of suicide are the areas of highest concern for parents regarding movies their children would see.**
 - Concerns around substance use shown in movies are most strongly related to depiction of hard drugs and depictions of underage use.

Focusing more closely on content as it relates to PG and PG-13 ratings:

- **Parents find sexual content, substance abuse, violence, smoking, and profane language inappropriate for PG movies. Toilet humor, and cartoon violence were deemed acceptable by half of parents.**
 - Context is also crucial for content parents find appropriate for the PG rating. Inclusion of fist fighting is seen as acceptable for a PG film, but if such fights are pervasive or appear in conjunction with blood, the perceived rating moves into PG-13 territory.
- **PG-13 films continue to be a grey area for American parents, with mixed opinions on some areas of content.**
 - Parents agree that extreme forms of violence, including sexual assault, suicide and graphic violence do not belong in films with a PG-13 rating. Less extreme forms of violence are considered more appropriate for a PG-13 rating.
 - Parents find underage tobacco use largely inappropriate for the PG-13 rating, while adult use is more acceptable.
 - Usage of the 'N-word' and (to a somewhat lesser extent) the 'F-word' is considered inappropriate for PG-13 films.

SECTION III

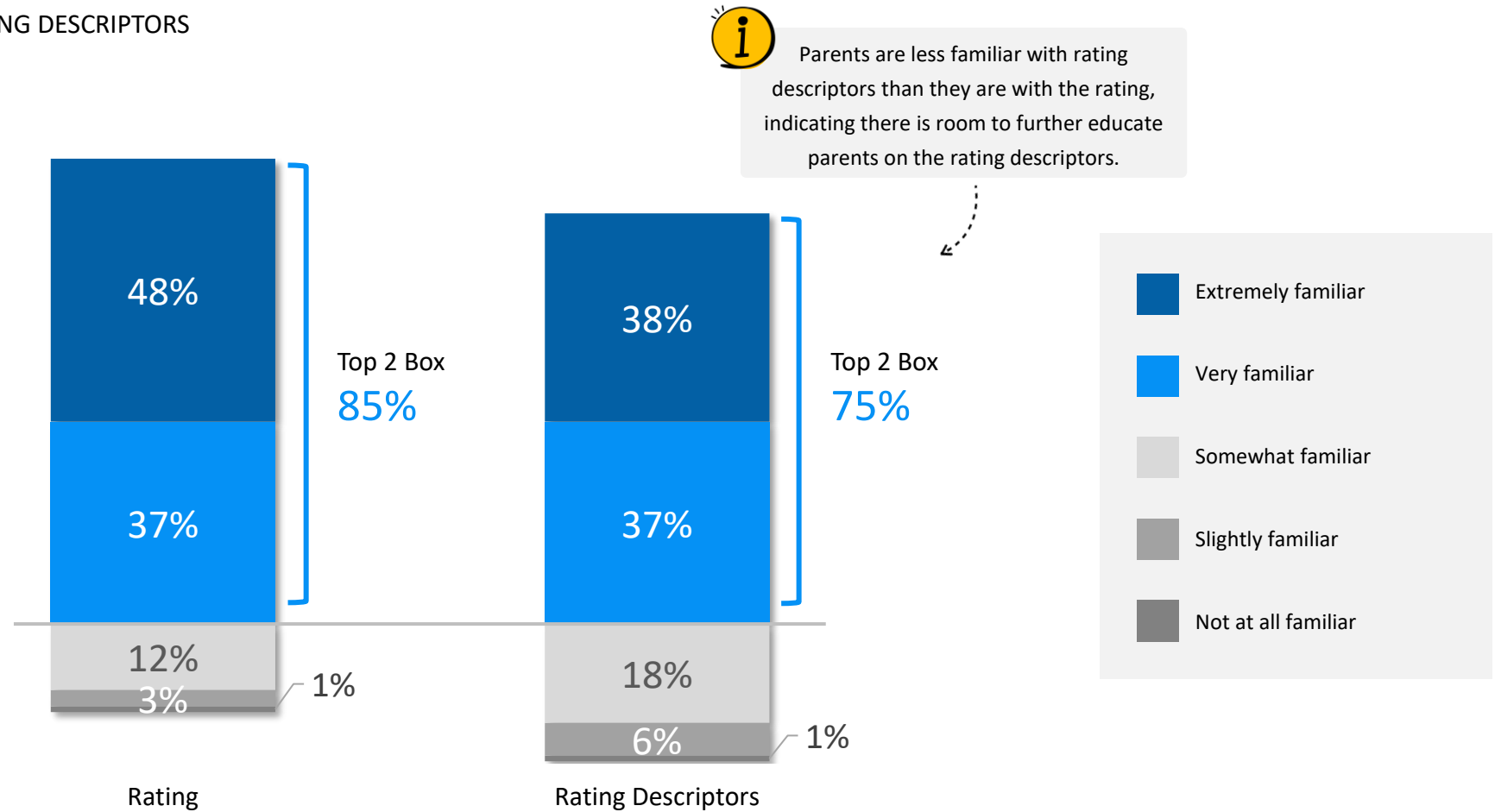
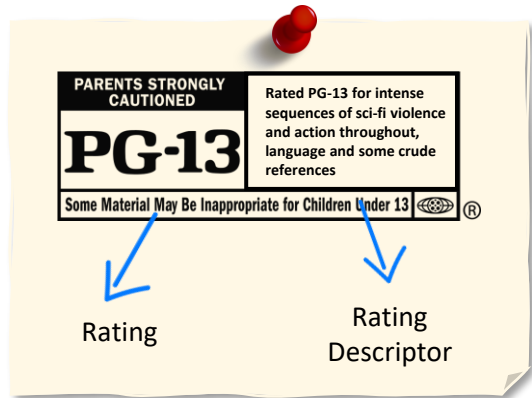
PERCEPTIONS OF THE FILM RATING SYSTEM



Familiarity with both the MPA rating and rating descriptors is high.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE MPA RATING AND RATING DESCRIPTORS

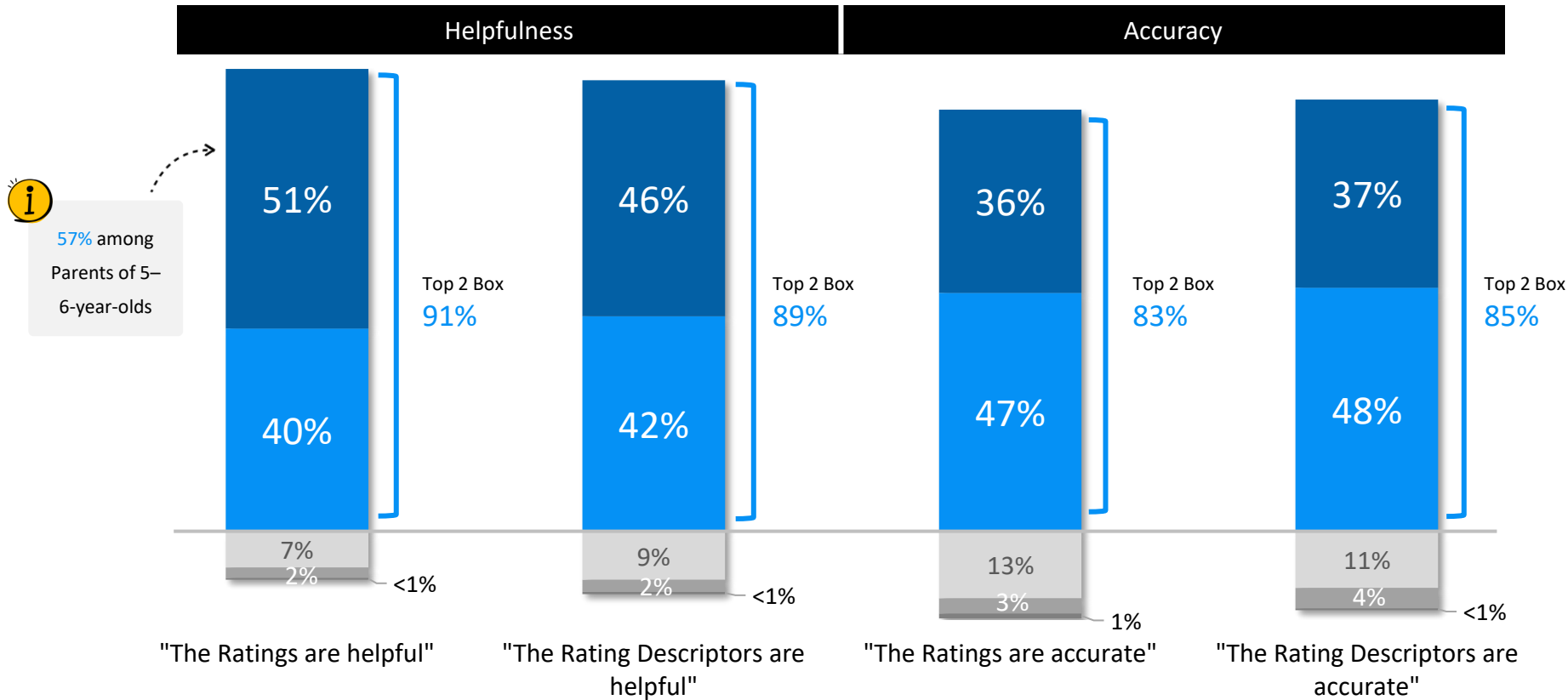
Base: Total Parents



A **strong majority** find ratings and the rating descriptors **helpful** and **accurate**.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE MPA RATING AND RATING DESCRIPTORS

Base: Total Parents



i
57% among Parents of 5–6-year-olds

i Those who lean toward watching movies in theaters agree more strongly than those who lean towards watching movies at home that ratings are helpful (95% vs. 90%) and accurate (89% vs. 82%).

- Agree strongly
- Agree somewhat
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree somewhat
- Disagree strongly

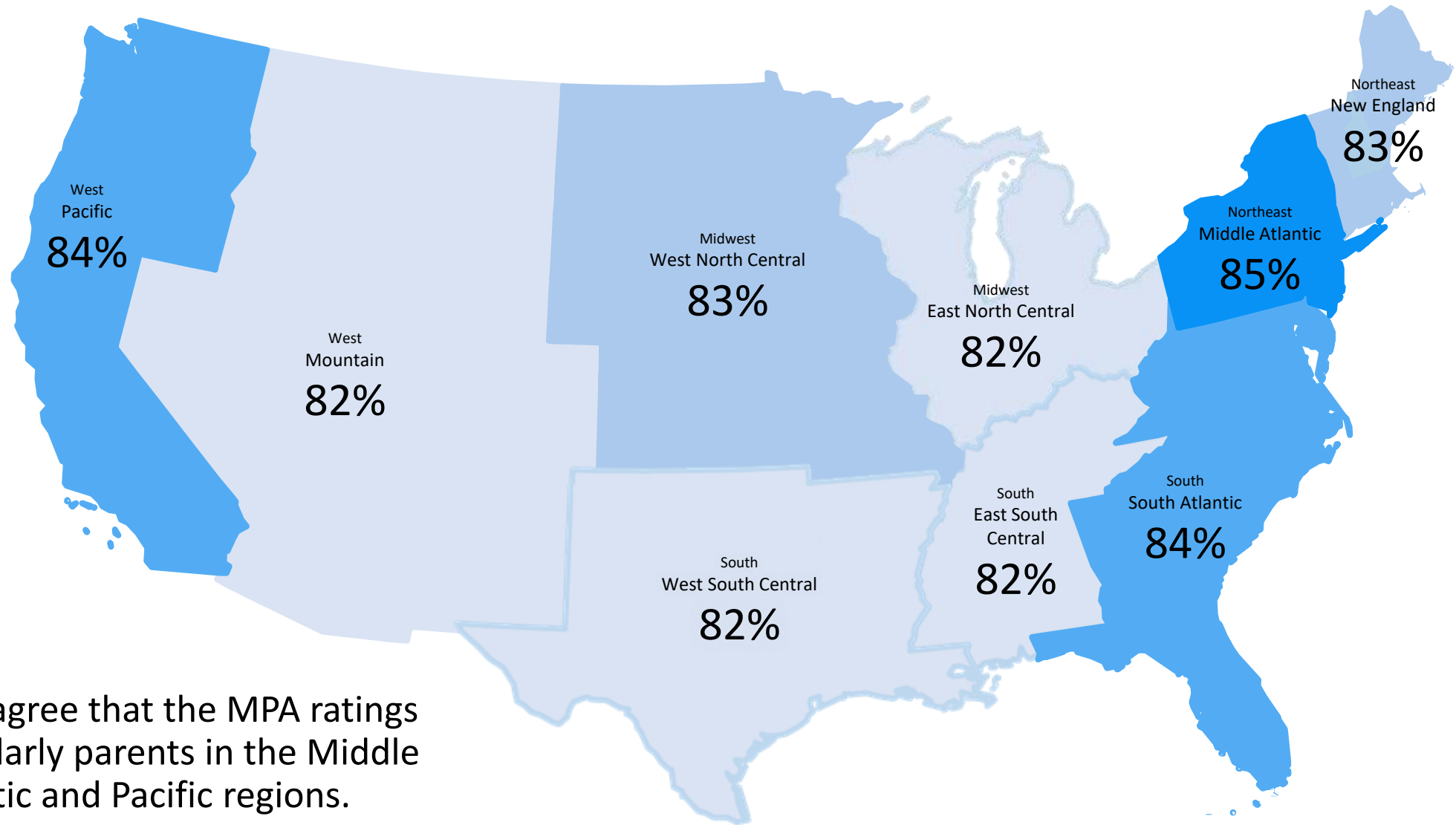
PERCEPTIONS OF THE FILM RATING SYSTEM

ACCURACY OF RATINGS | BY REGION

TOP 2 BOX (% AGREE SOMEWHAT/STRONGLY)

"THE RATINGS ARE ACCURATE"

Base: Total Parents



Most parents (83%) agree that the MPA ratings are accurate, particularly parents in the Middle Atlantic, South Atlantic and Pacific regions.

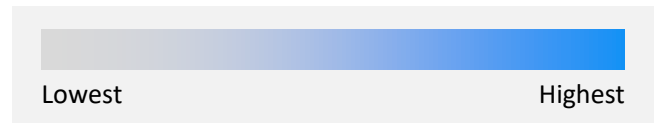


P S
■ B

Base

Question

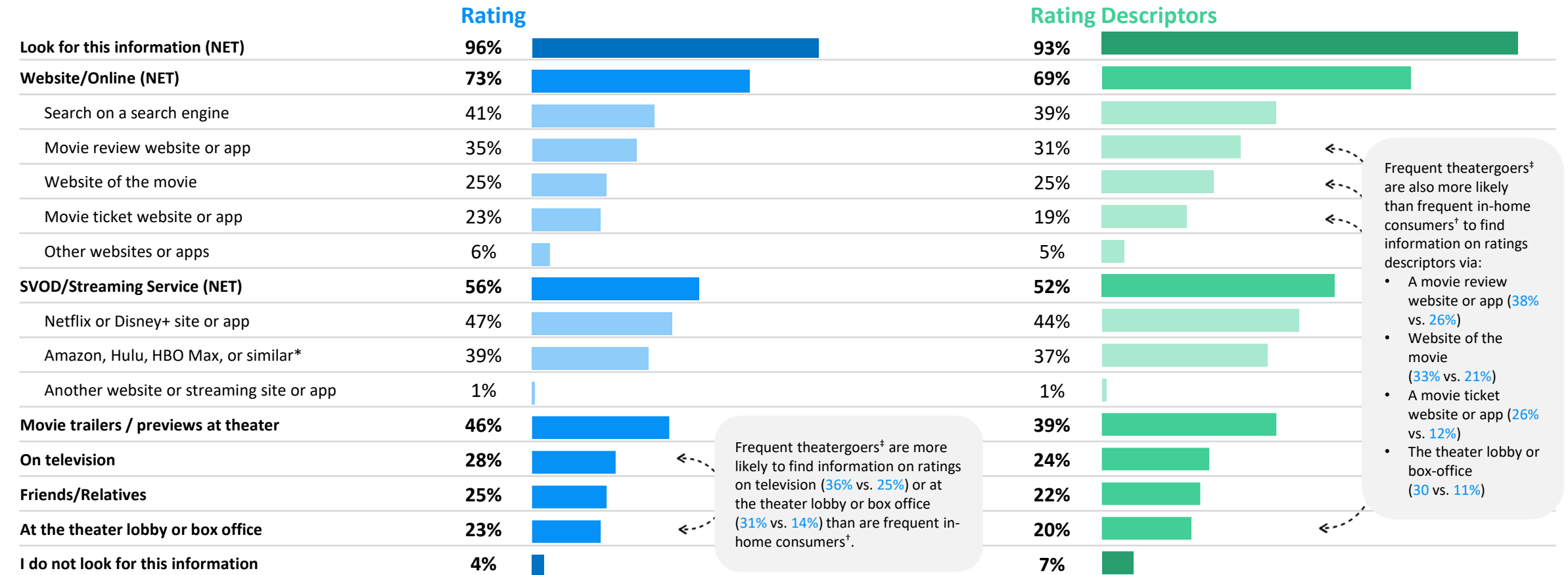
Total Parents (1,502); New England (55); Middle Atlantic (210); West North Central (96); East North Central (236); West South Central (209); East South Central (88); South Atlantic (281); Pacific (207); Mountain (120)
How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? ("The Ratings are accurate")



Nearly all parents look up information on ratings and descriptors when considering a movie for their child to see; most learn via online sources, streaming services or movie trailers.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE MPA RATING AND RATING DESCRIPTORS

Base: Total Parents

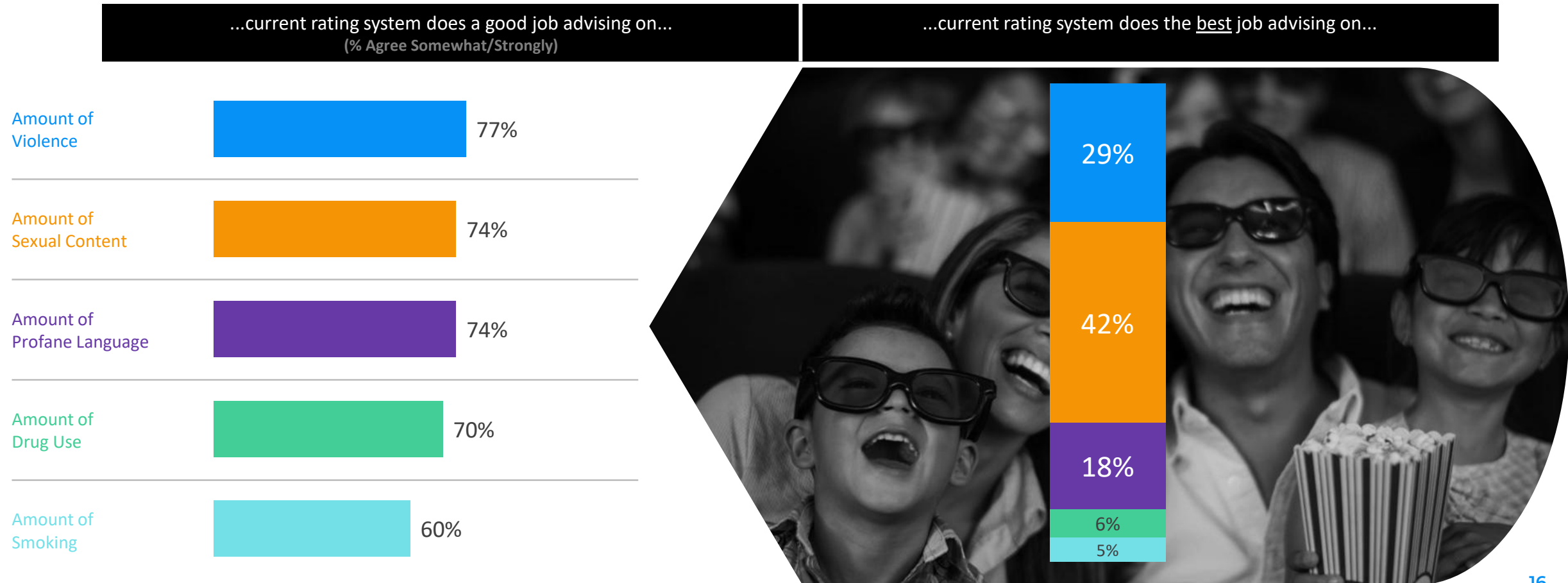


PERCEPTIONS OF THE FILM RATING SYSTEM

Parents feel the current rating system does **a good job advising them** on most areas of potentially objectionable content and is currently **best at advising parents on the amount of violence, sexual content, and profane language**.

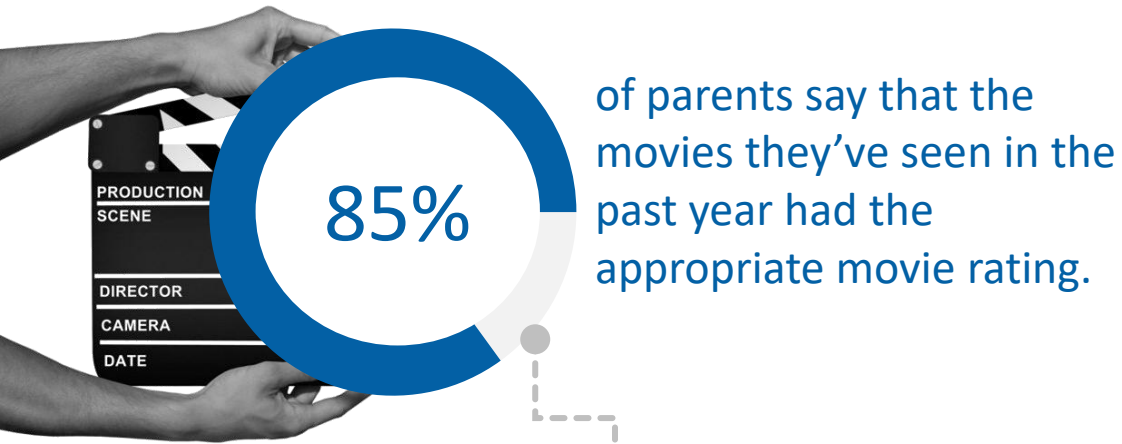
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT MPA RATING SYSTEM

Base: Total Parents

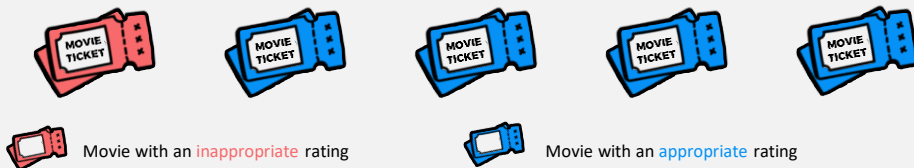


Base Questions

Total Parents (1,502)
 How much do you agree or disagree that the current rating system does a good job of advising you on...
 And which of the following content areas do you feel the current rating system does the best job of advising you on?



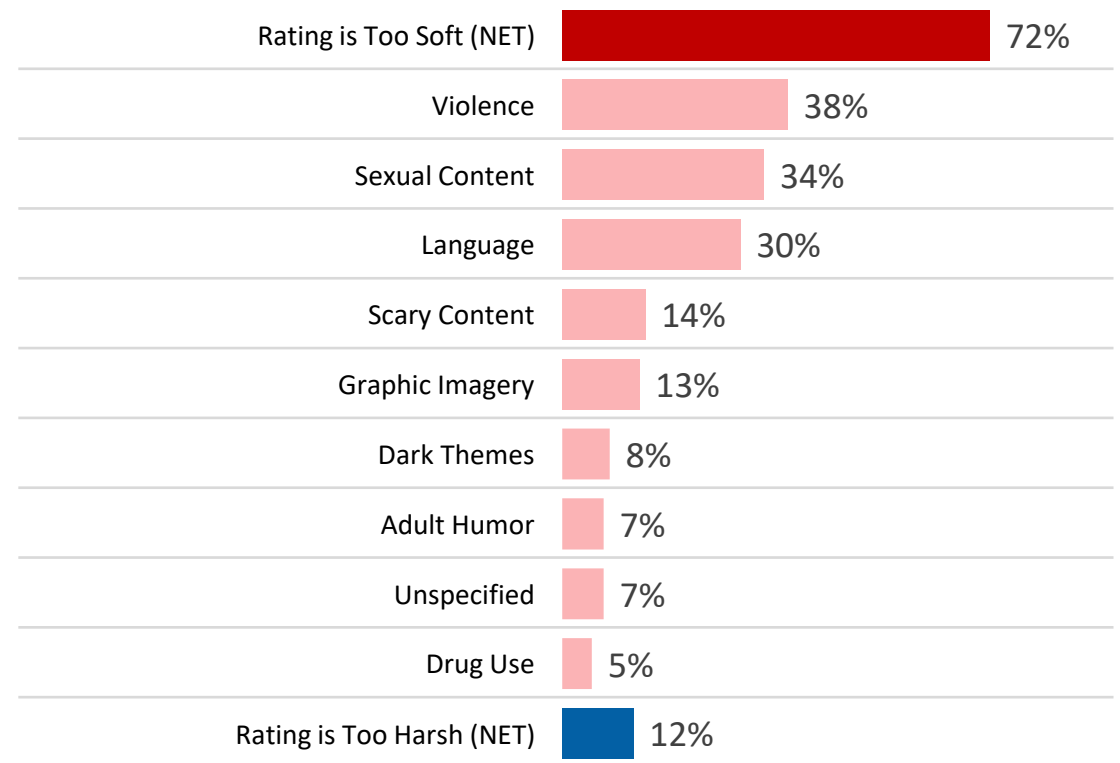
...but among the few who say otherwise, roughly 1 in every 5 movies they saw were not rated appropriately



For movies that parents feel were not rated appropriately, **most considered the rating too soft**. Parents predominantly cited violence, sexual content, and language as reasons.

REASONS FOR LACK OF APPROPRIATE MOVIE RATING

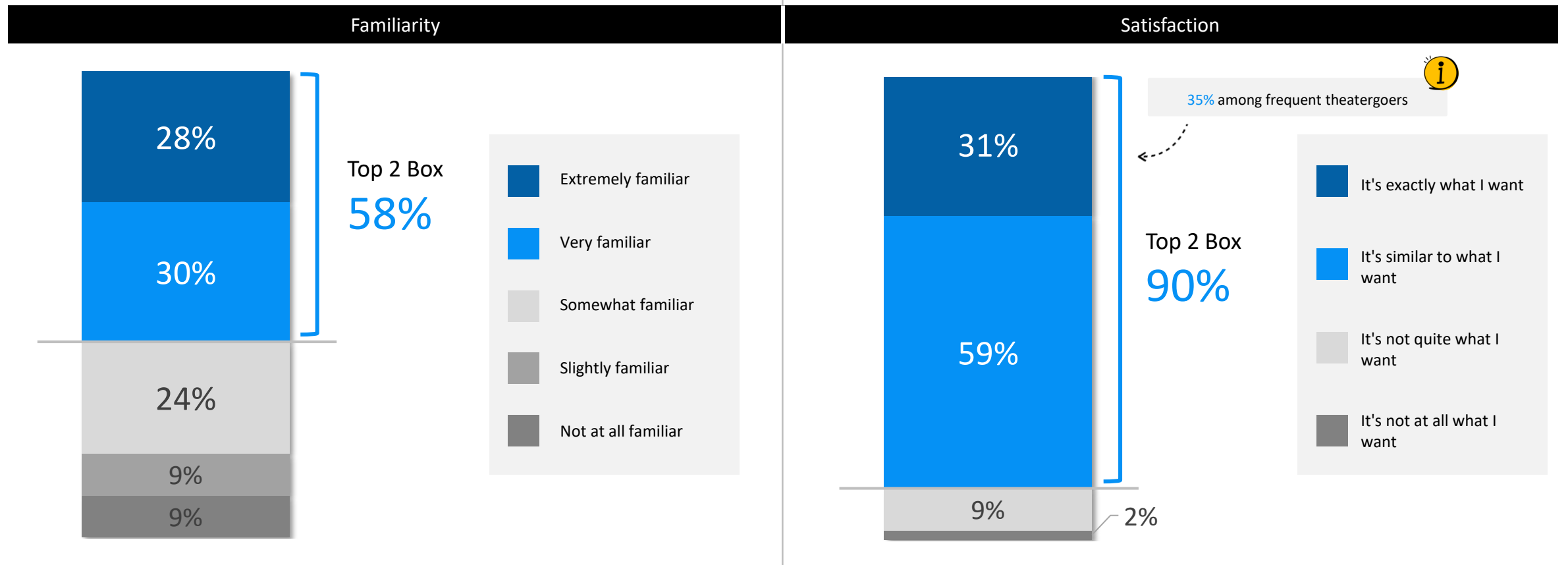
Base: Parents who have seen a movie that did not have the appropriate movie rating



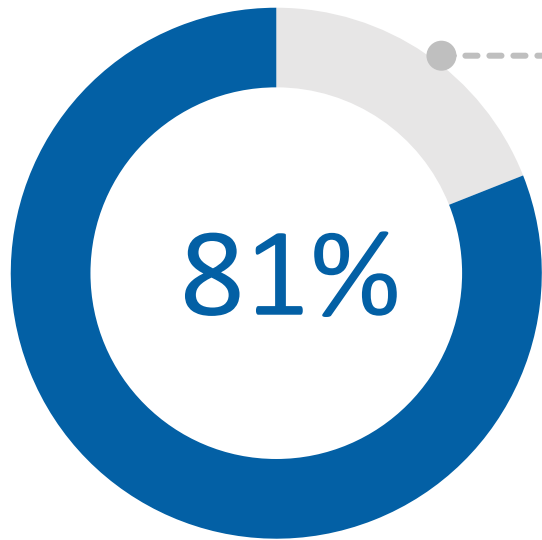
Most parents are generally familiar and satisfied with the current approval process for trailers and previews.

MPA APPROVAL PROCESS FOR TRAILERS & PREVIEWS BEFORE COMPATIBLE FEATURES

Base: Total Parents



Most parents report that the **previews and trailers preceding features are compatible.**

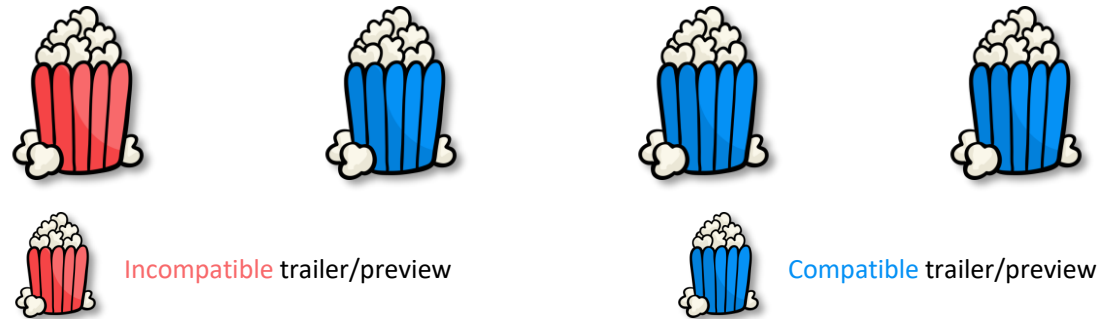


of parents say trailers or previews they have seen in the past 12 months were compatible with the movie they were preceding

... still, among the few who report having seen incompatible trailers or previews, most (about 3 in 4 trailers) were **compatible** with the movie they preceded

AVG. # OF TRAILERS/PREVIEWES SEEN | PAST 12 MONTHS

Base: Parents who report having seen incompatible trailers/previews



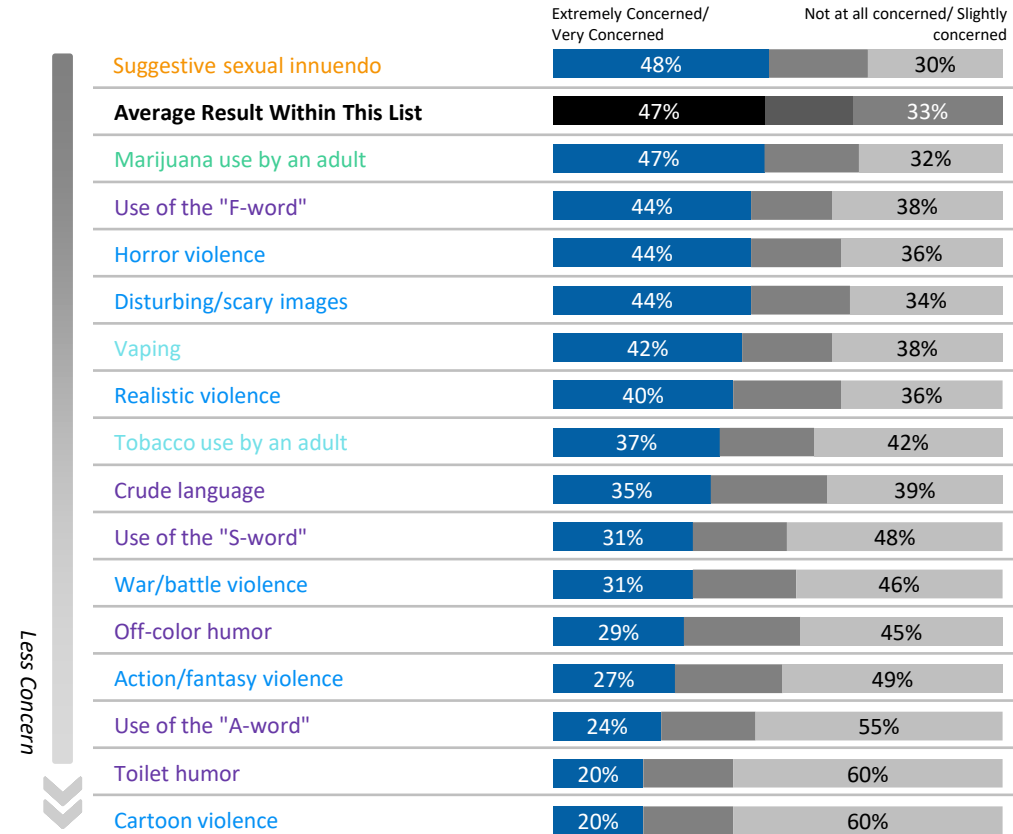
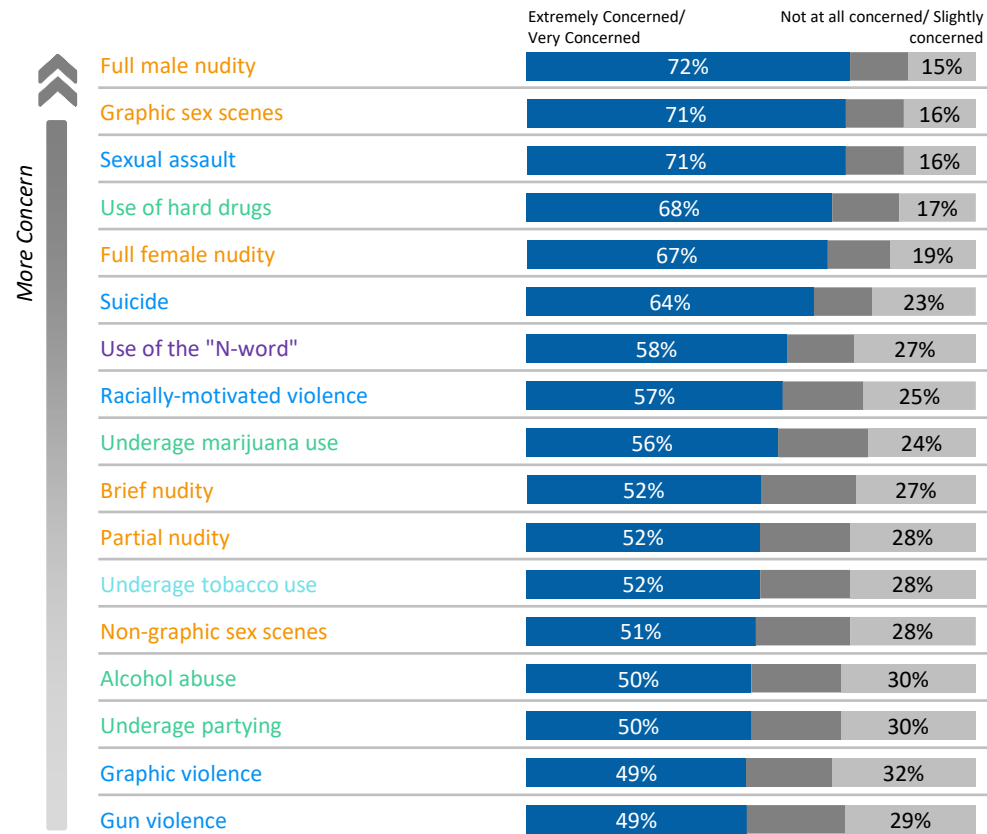
SECTION IV

CONTENT CONCERNS AND EVALUATION

CONTENT CONCERNS AND EVALUATION

American parents are most concerned with **full nudity, graphic sex scenes, sexual assault, use of hard drugs, and depictions of suicide.**

CONTENT CONCERN INDIVIDUAL CONTENT TYPES Base: Total Parents



Parents of children under 10 report the most concern around content in movies that their children would see.

- Sexual Content ■
- Substance Use ■
- Violence ■
- Smoking ■
- Profane Language ■
- Average Result ■

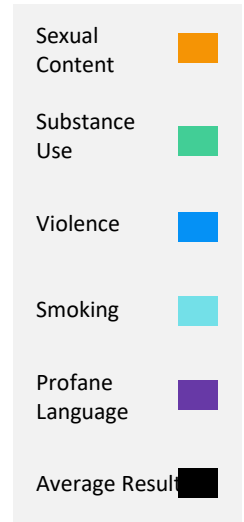
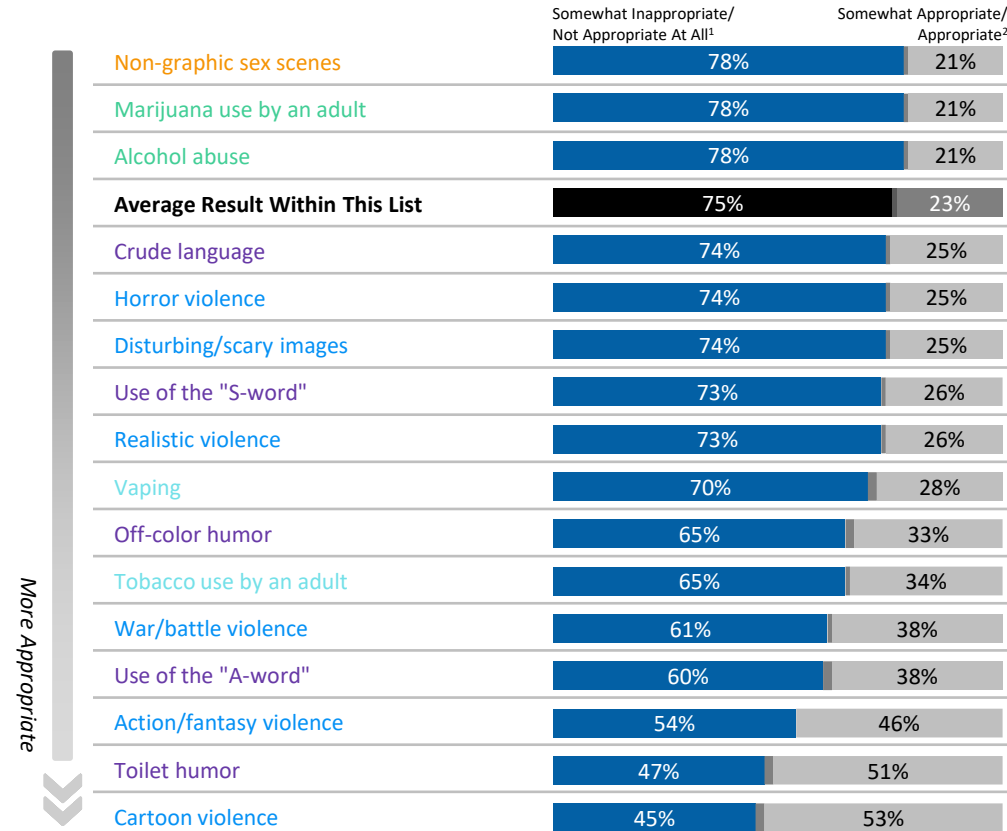
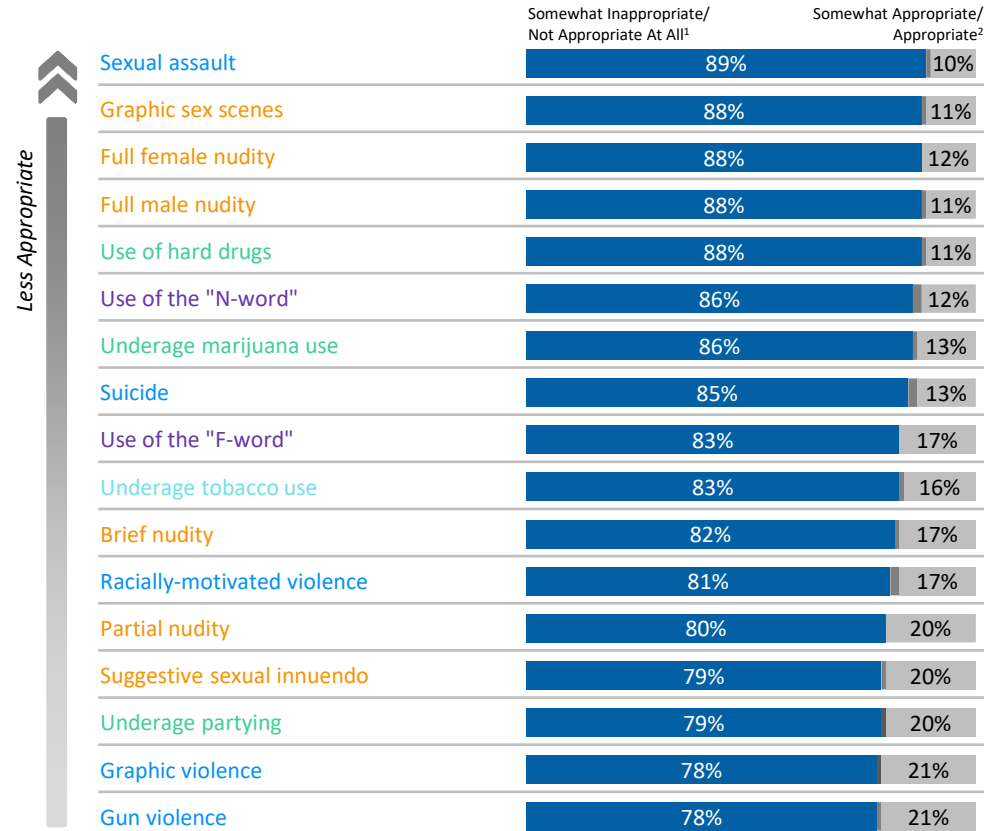
CONTENT CONCERNS AND EVALUATION – FOCUSING MORE CLOSELY ON CONTENT AS IT RELATES TO PG AND PG-13 RATINGS

While parents find most content types tested inappropriate for a PG rating, there is less consensus on toilet humor and cartoon violence.

CONTENT APPROPRIATENESS (PG RATING)

INDIVIDUAL CONTENT TYPES

Base: Total Parents



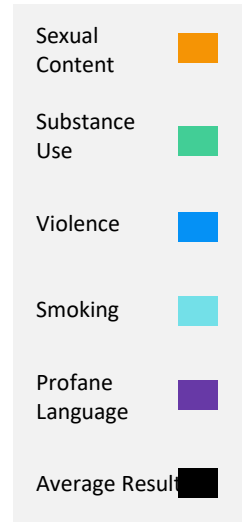
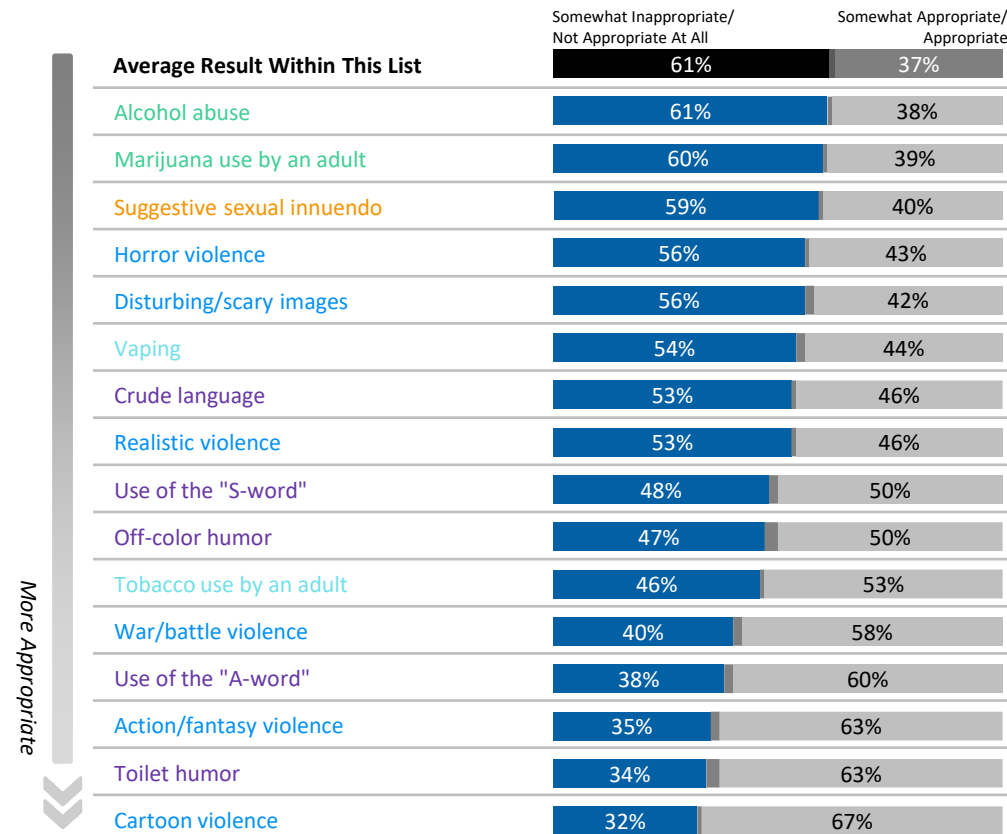
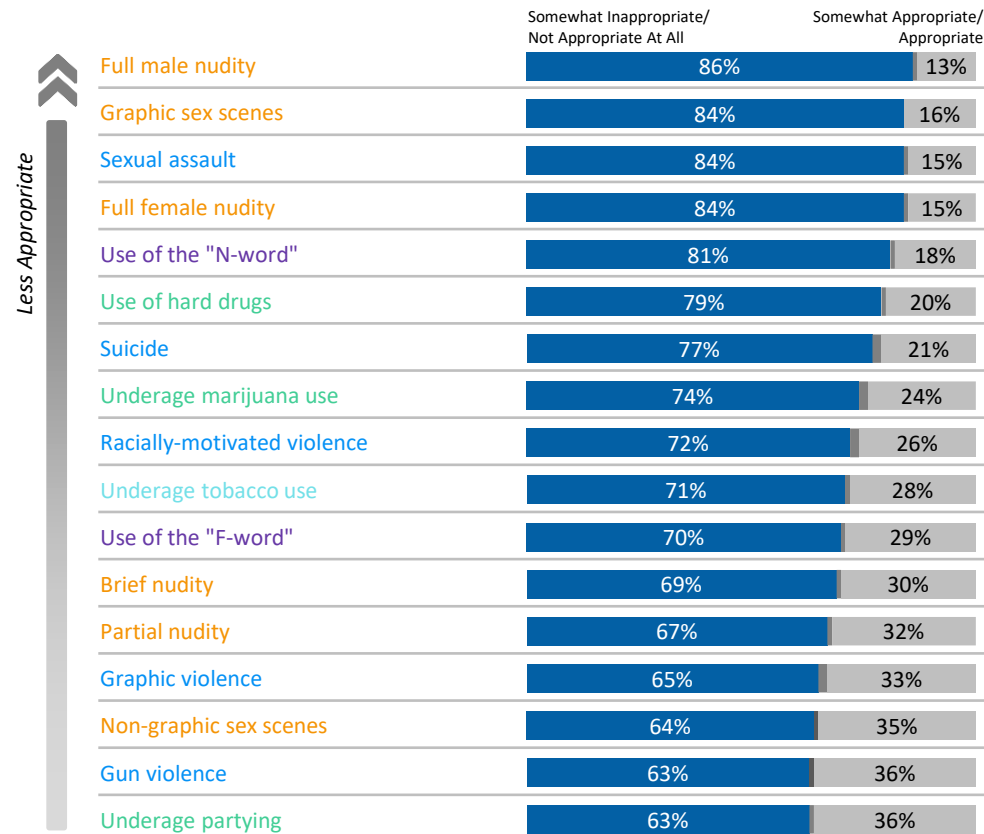
CONTENT CONCERNS AND EVALUATION – FOCUSING MORE CLOSELY ON CONTENT AS IT RELATES TO PG AND PG-13 RATINGS

American parents are most likely to consider **full nudity, graphic sex scenes, sexual assault, use of the “N-word” and use of hard drugs** inappropriate for PG-13 movies.

CONTENT APPROPRIATENESS (PG-13 RATING)

INDIVIDUAL CONTENT TYPES

Base: Total Parents













Concerns over content categories are relatively consistent across regions.

CONTENT CONCERNS | BY REGION

AVERAGE ACROSS CONTENT TYPES

TOP 2 BOX (% VERY/EXTREMELY CONCERNED)

Base: Total Parents

	 Total Parents	Northeast		Midwest		South			West	
		 New England	 Middle Atlantic	 West North Central	 East North Central	 West South Central	 East South Central	 South Atlantic	 Pacific	 Mountain
Sexual Content	59%	59%	59%	57%	58%	61%	56%	58%	61%	58%
Substance Use	54%	56%	53%	54%	51%	56%	54%	54%	54%	58%
Violence	45%	47%	44%	46%	44%	45%	45%	45%	47%	45%
Smoking	44%	47%	46%	44%	40%	45%	41%	44%	43%	45%
Profane Language	34%	32%	34%	32%	33%	36%	33%	35%	36%	35%

Base

Total Parents (1,502); New England (55); Middle Atlantic (210); West North Central (96); East North Central (236); West South Central (209); East South Central (88); South Atlantic (281); Pacific (207); Mountain (120)

Question

Thinking specifically about the movies that your child would see, how concerned are you with each of the following types of content appearing in movies they would see?

Most language terms tested, except for the “F-word” and “N-word”, are considered appropriate for PG-13 movies.

68% of parents selected PG or higher as an appropriate rating for “Crap!”

APPROPRIATE RATING FOR STRONG LANGUAGE | Ranked by PG-13
Base: Total Parents

	G	PG	PG-13	R	NC-17
"Crap!"	27%	68%	90%	98%	100%
"Suck"	22%	60%	87%	97%	100%
"Pissed off"	14%	48%	87%	97%	100%
"Screwed"	18%	54%	87%	97%	100%
"Damn!"	14%	51%	86%	98%	100%
"Hell"	15%	53%	86%	97%	100%
"Jesus Christ"	21%	52%	83%	95%	100%
"F-word" variation ("freaking"/"friggin')	14%	45%	79%	96%	100%
Middle finger	6%	28%	77%	96%	100%
"A-word"	7%	29%	75%	95%	100%
"Bastard"	6%	30%	75%	96%	100%
"S-word"	5%	24%	71%	95%	100%
"Goddamn!"	9%	32%	71%	95%	100%
"Son of a Bitch"	5%	19%	65%	96%	100%
"F-word"	3%	10%	43%	94%	100%
"N-word"	4%	10%	31%	83%	100%

At 83%, some still feel the “N-word” is inappropriate even for R-rated content (compared to 94-98% for all other strong language tested)



Base Question

Total Parents (1,502)
Which rating or ratings do you feel would be appropriate for a movie that contained the following words/expressions?

SECTION V

RATINGS IN PRACTICE



RATING-BASED EXERCISE EXPLAINED

- ▶ Over a series of screens, parents evaluated 16 hypothetical movies, with descriptions detailing the movie’s genre, violence, language and sexual content/nudity.
- ▶ Respondents evaluated each hypothetical movie description and assigned it a movie rating G through NC-17, where a 1- to 100-point scale corresponded to stronger intensity within each rating level.

An illustration of the online conjoint exercise



Results were analyzed to estimate ratings score and measure the impact of each attribute mentioned in the descriptions.

Rating		Point Scale
G		1-9
PG	Weak	10-18
	Middle	19-27
	Strong	28-36
PG-13	Weak	37-45
	Middle	46-54
	Strong	55-63
R	Weak	64-72
	Middle	73-81
	Strong	82-90
NC-17		91-100

CATEGORIES AND ATTRIBUTES TESTED

Category	Attribute	Level
Violence	Quantity	There are no scenes of violence.
		There is one scene of
		There are several sequences of
		There is frequent and pervasive
	Type	Domestic violence.
		Gun violence.
		Sword and/or knife violence.
		Fist fighting.
	Graphicality	It is not shown on-screen, but it is mentioned or discussed.
		It is not shown on-screen, but the aftermath is shown, without blood.
		It is not shown on-screen, but the aftermath is shown, with blood.
		It is shown on-screen, but is not bloody and/or graphic.
		It is shown on-screen, and some blood is shown.

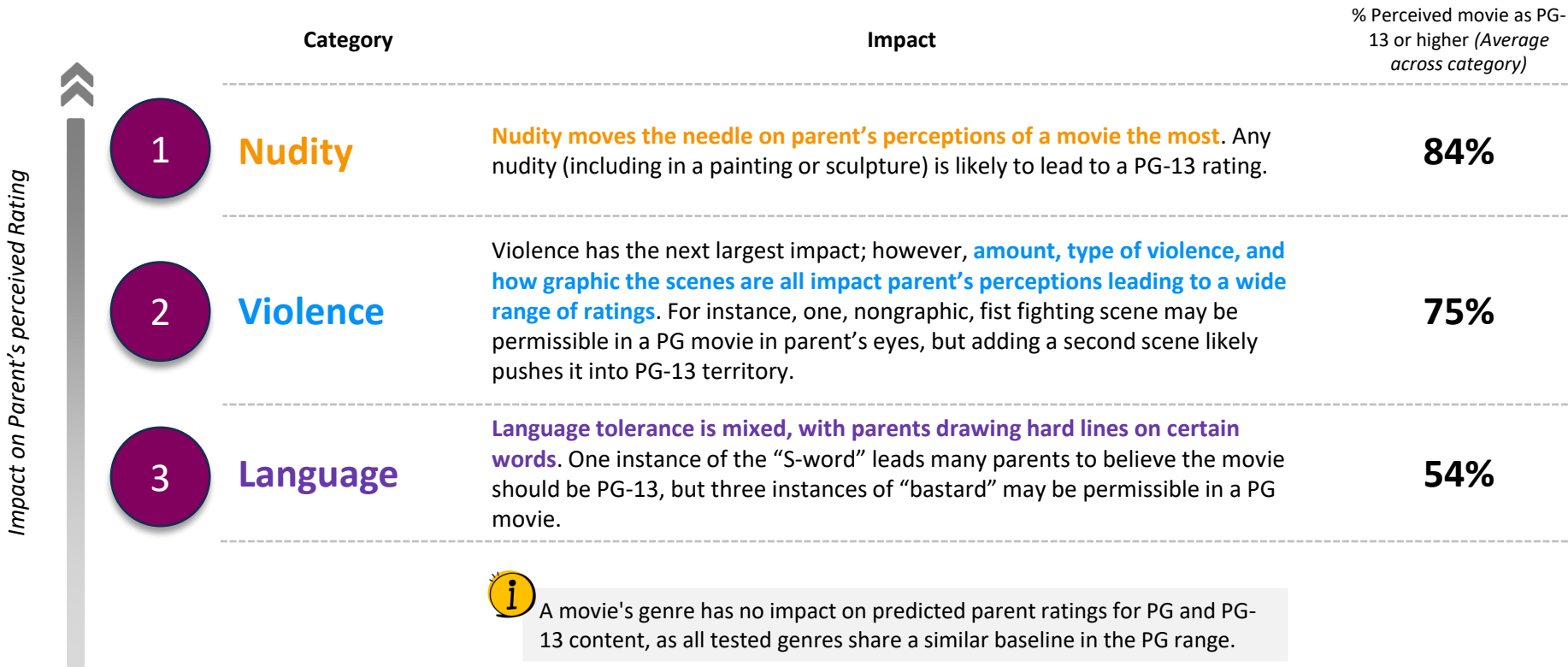
Category	Attribute	Level
Nudity	Content	This movie does not contain any nudity.
		This movie contains artwork depicting a nude figure (painting, sculpture, etc.).
		This movie contains partial nudity (e.g., nude backside).
		This movie contains brief nudity (e.g., woman's bare breasts).
Profane Language	Language	There is no use of explicit language.
		One use of [the A-Word / S-Word / Goddamn / Bastard]
		Two uses of the [the A-Word / S-Word / Goddamn / Bastard]
		Three uses of the [the A-Word / S-Word / Goddamn / Bastard]
		Five uses of the [the A-Word / S-Word / Goddamn / Bastard]
		Ten or more uses of the [the A-Word / S-Word / Goddamn / Bastard]
Movie Genre	Movie Genre	In this documentary or movie depicting real events:
		In this comedy:
		In this animated movie:
		In this action or super-hero movie:
		In this drama or coming-of-age movie:
		In this movie: (<i>genre was not shown</i>)

RATINGS IN PRACTICE

Parents see nudity and violence as content which elevates movies above a PG rating, while views on language are more nuanced.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF MOVIE RATINGS

Base: Total Parents



P S
■ B

Base
Question

Total Parents (1,502)

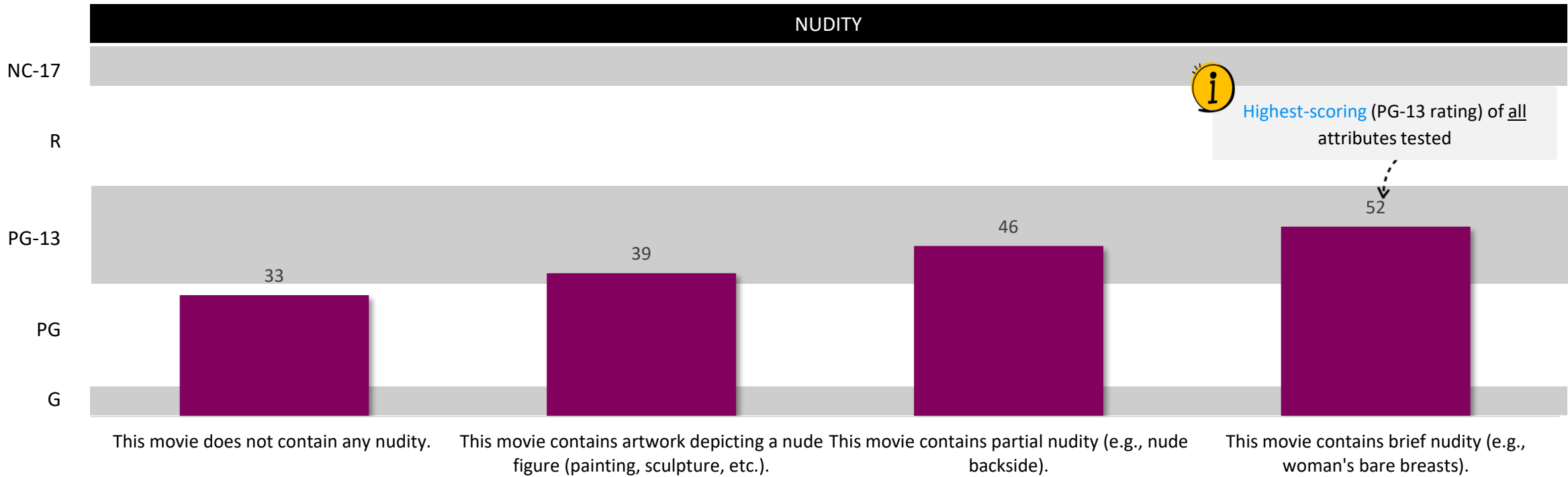
Please indicate on the above scale where you would rate this movie based on the below descriptions?

Note: Genre was also included in the rating exercise to set the context for respondents

Any form of nudity shifts a PG movie into the PG-13 category in the average parent's rating.

NUDITY MAIN EFFECT

Base: Total Parents



P S
■ B

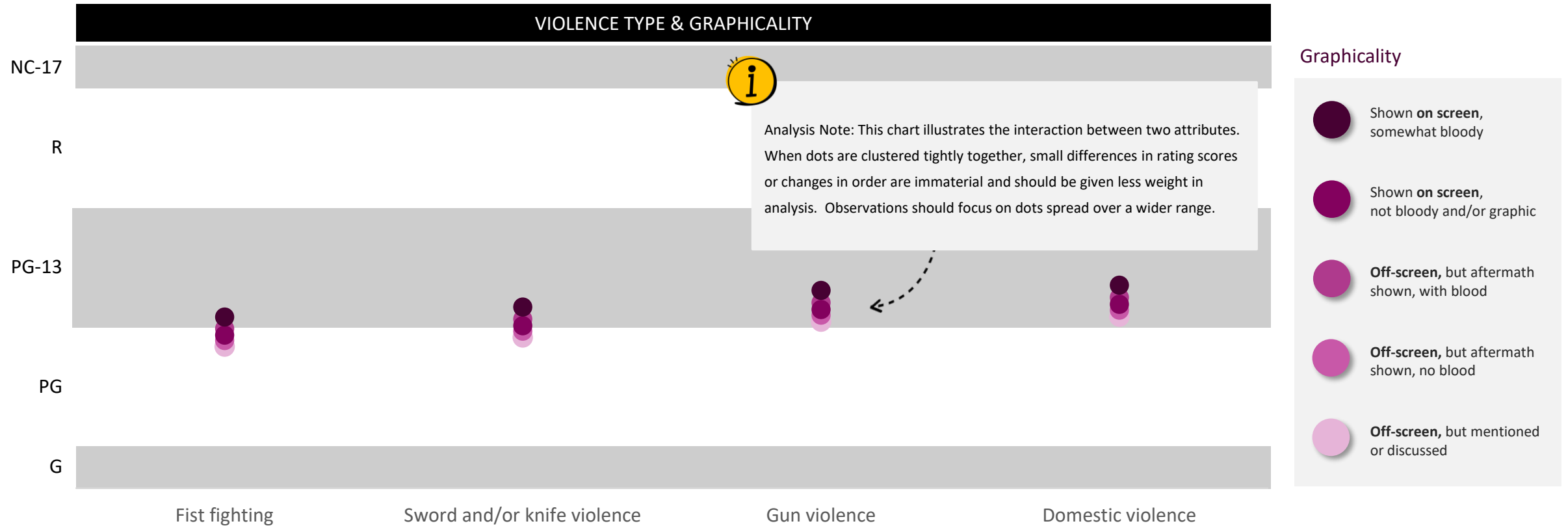
Base
Question
Model Assumptions
Ratings Score

Total Parents (1,502)
Please indicate on the above scale where you would rate this movie based on the below descriptions?
Movie genre not shown. All other attributes off.
Numerical values reflect the average given to an attribute on a 1-to-100 point scale, corresponding to ratings G through NC-17. A higher number reflects stronger intensity within each ratings level.

Higher levels of graphicality and blood push expected ratings from PG into PG-13. All levels of domestic and gun violence are expected to have a PG-13 rating.

INTERACTION BETWEEN VIOLENCE TYPE AND GRAPHICALITY

Base: Total Parents



Parents may permit several scenes of fist-fighting or a single sequence of blade violence in a PG movie. Single instances of other types of violence fall on the border of PG and PG-13, with all domestic violence viewed as PG-13 content.

INTERACTION BETWEEN VIOLENCE TYPE AND QUANTITY

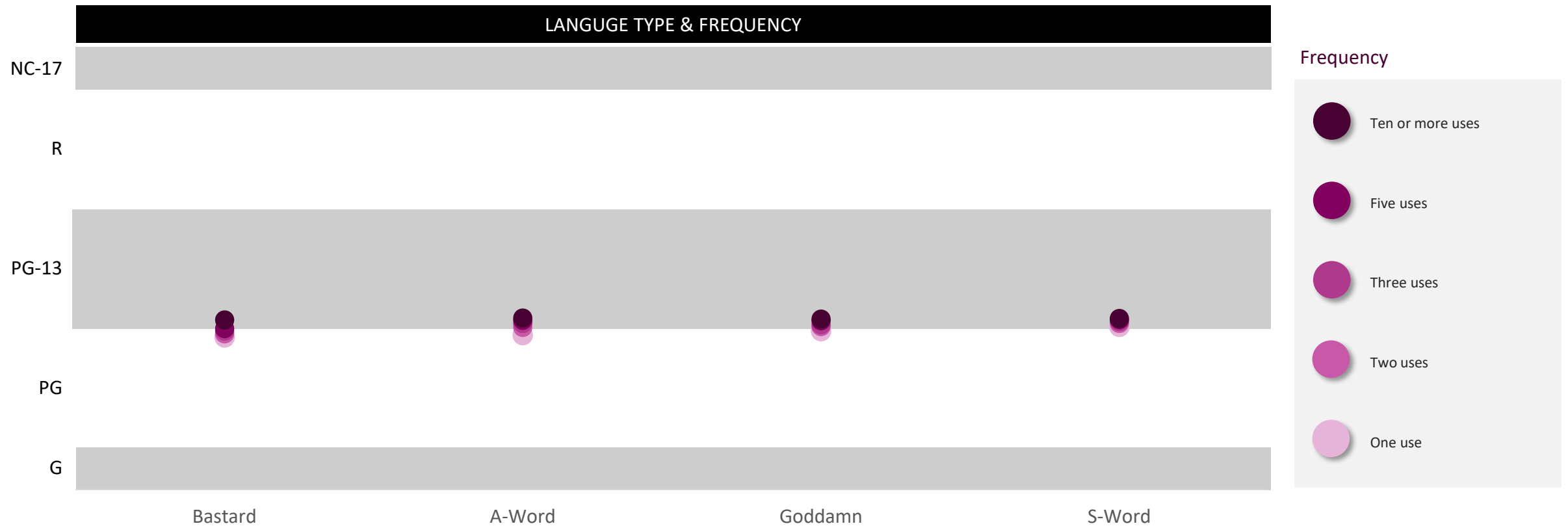
Base: Total Parents



Frequency of profane language matters to parents, and they are willing to tolerate single instances within PG films. The 's-word' is treated more severely and lies on the border between PG and PG-13, while parents are more permissive with the use of 'bastard,' which can be used up to three times in PG films.

INTERACTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE TYPE AND FREQUENCY

Base: Total Parents



APPENDIX



P S
■ B

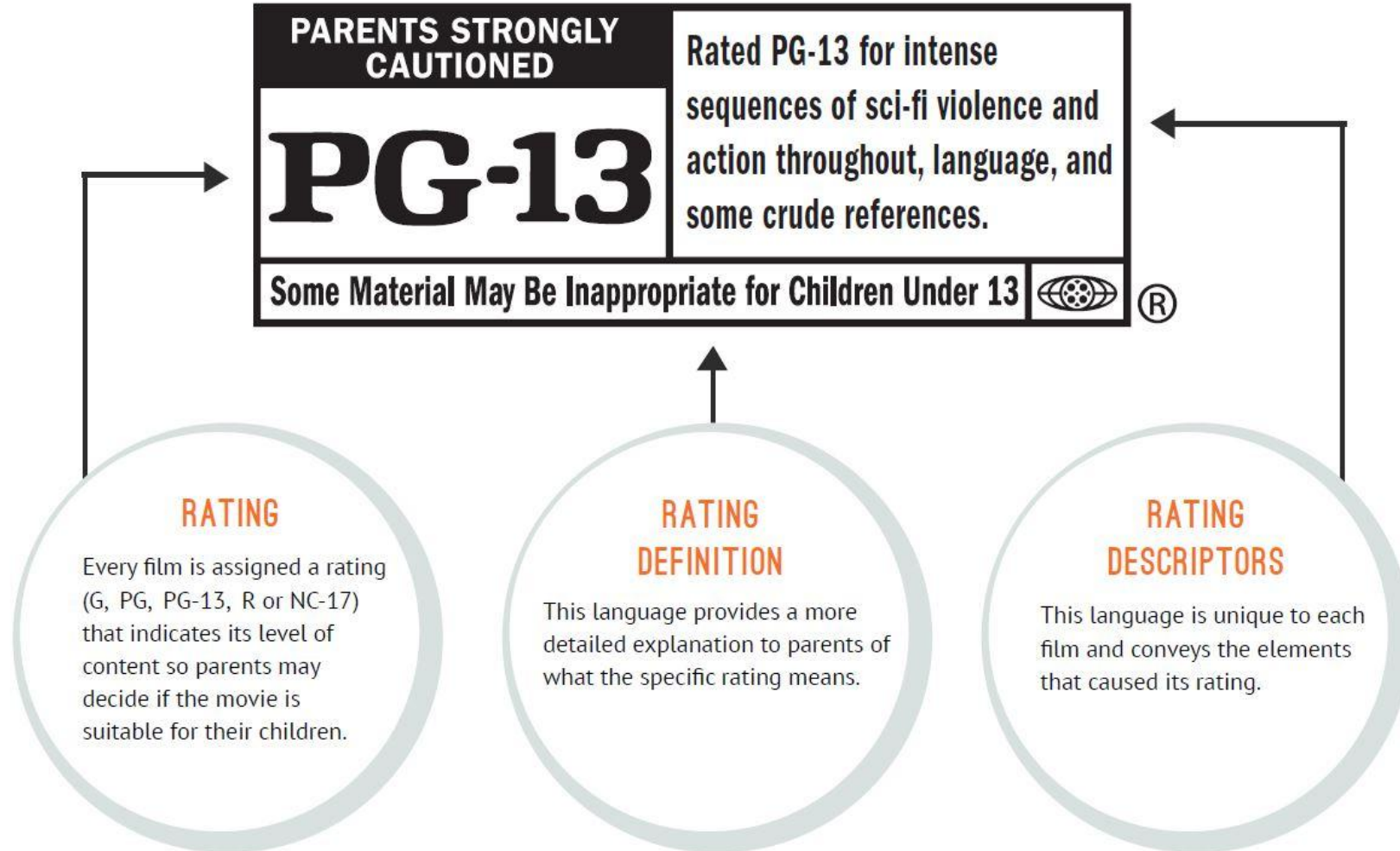


SAMPLE COMPOSITION

Gender	Parents of Children 5-16
Male	50%
Female	50%
Age	
18-24	1%
25-34	24%
35-44	43%
45-54	25%
55-64	5%
65+	2%
Region	
Northeast	17%
New England	3%
Middle Atlantic	14%
Midwest	21%
West North Central	6%
East North Central	15%
South	38%
West South Central	14%
East South Central	6%
South Atlantic	18%
West	24%
Pacific	15%
Mountain	9%

Ethnicity	Parents of Children 5-16
White / Caucasian	61%
Black or African-American	10%
Hispanic / Latino	20%
Asian / Other	9%
Education	
Secondary school / high school or lower	22%
Some college / university	31%
Bachelor's degree / university degree	32%
Graduate education (Master's, Ph.D., etc.)	15%
Employment	
Employed full-time (30+ hours per week)	69%
Employed part-time (less than 30 hours per week)	9%
Stay-at-home parent or caretaker	13%
Student	1%
Unemployed / not working	6%
Retired	3%
Income	
High (\$100K and over)	32%
Mid (\$60K-\$99K)	29%
Low (\$59K or under)	39%
Household Composition	
Parents of 1 Child	38%
Parents of 2 Children	42%
Parents of 3+ Children	20%

MPA RATING EXPLANATION AS SHOWN IN THE ONLINE SURVEY



MPA RATING DESCRIPTIONS AS SHOWN IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

GENERAL AUDIENCES



Nothing that would offend parents for viewing by children.

PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED



Parents urged to give "parental guidance." May contain some material parents might not like for their young children.

PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED



Parents are urged to be cautious. Some material may be inappropriate for pre-teenagers.

RESTRICTED



Contains some adult material. Parents are urged to learn more about the film before taking their young children with them.

NO ONE 17 AND UNDER ADMITTED



Clearly adult. Children are not admitted.

MPA PREVIEW APPROVAL EXAMPLE AS SHOWN IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

**THE FOLLOWING PREVIEW HAS BEEN APPROVED TO
ACCOMPANY THIS FEATURE
BY THE MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION, INC.**

www.motionpictures.org
www.filmratings.com



MPA