



The great Indian box office divide

The growing chasm between big-ticket, event films driven by scale, franchise or spectacle, and smaller, story-led films, is the new normal at the Indian box office

Published on January 30, 2025

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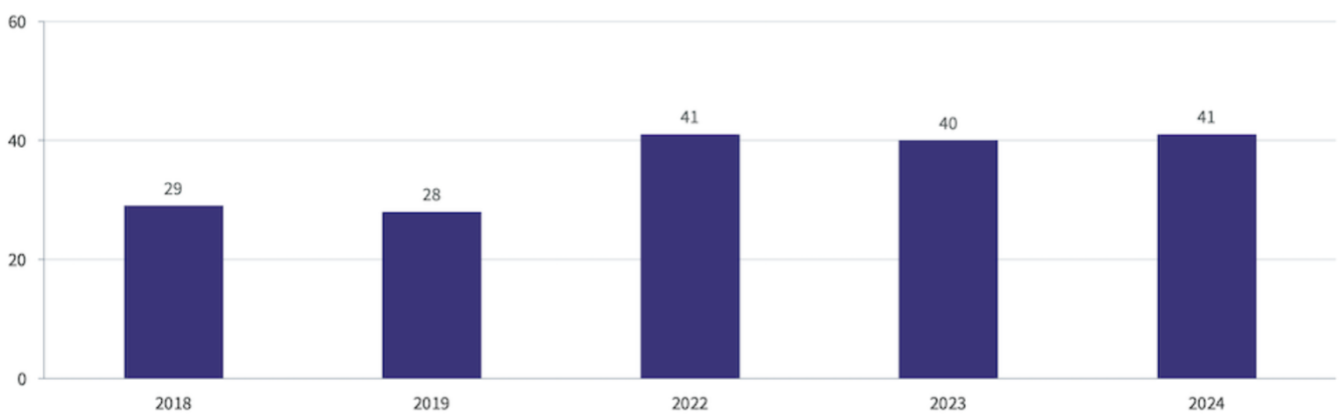
Summary

- The 10 films of 2024 contributed 41% to the Indian box office, solidifying the trend of higher contribution from the top films in the post-pandemic years
 - The trend is consistent across most languages, highlighting its universal nature
 - The growing polarisation between big-ticket cinema and smaller films has implications that the Indian film industry must consider
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In February 2024, we published [this year-end analysis](#) highlighting how the chasm between big-ticket films and smaller films is becoming a permanent feature of the Indian box office in the post-pandemic era. Box office data from 2024 solidified this reality, reinforcing the dominance of a select few films at the box office. Here's a deep-dive.

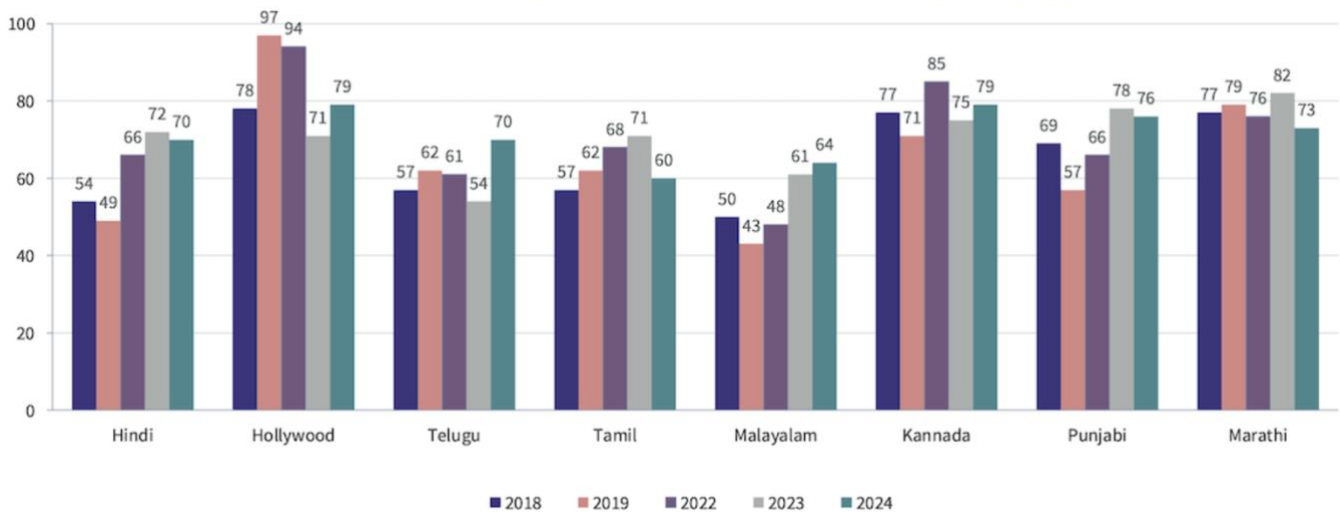
In 2022, when theatres resumed normalcy, the top 10 films contributed 41% to the Indian box office, compared to 28-29% in the pre-pandemic undisrupted years of 2018 and 2019. This trend continued in 2023 with top 10 films contributing 40%, confirming that the divide between big-ticket 'event' films, versus smaller story-driven films, in 2022 was not an aberration. 2024 confirms this yet again, as seen in the chart below. Of the ₹11,833 Cr gross box office in 2024 (read our annual box office report [here](#)), 41% (i.e., ₹4,878 Cr) came from the top 10 films of the year.

% Contribution of Top 10 Films to Indian Box Office: All Languages



Let's examine how this trend unfolded across different languages in 2024. The chart below captures the contribution of top 10 films to the Indian box office for key languages.

% Contribution of Top 10 Films to Indian Box Office by Language



For most major languages, the top 10 films account for over 70% of their total box office in 2024. Malayalam, while being at 64%, has seen increased polarisation over the last three years, from 48% to 61% to 64%. This increase is particularly striking for an industry which had multiple hit films during the year, and witnessed an exceptional 104% growth in the box office.

Telugu also touched its highest-ever mark on this parameter in 2024, at 70%. Hindi, Hollywood, Kannada, Punjabi, and Marathi continue to be highly dependent on the top 10 films, similar to 2023. Tamil is the only exception, where the share of the top 10 films has dropped from 71% to 60%.

Box office trends from the past three years indicate that big-ticket films will continue to become bigger, while smaller films across languages will face increasing challenges in attracting theatrical audiences. A distinct divide has emerged in audience behaviour: they are selective about which films merit a trip to the theatre, and which ones can be watched on streaming 4-8 weeks later.

Like it or not, this is the new normal. This shift is now slowly becoming evident on the supply side too, with only 70 Hindi films of notable scale releasing in theatres in 2024, compared to 87 and 83 in 2022 and 2023 respectively. Many producers are pausing projects and re-evaluating their slate strategy to align with the evolving preferences of audiences in the wake of this new normal.

This analysis underscores the importance of strategic usage of the release calendar to drive footfalls and boost box office growth in India. A focused approach, with fewer but high-quality releases, presents a compelling path for sustainable box office expansion. Films like *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, which transcend language barriers and resonate with audiences across multiple markets, also become increasingly critical. Additionally, success of films like *Shaitaan* and *Munjya* is an encouraging sign, as they are not over-reliant on star power or the action genre to deliver their numbers.

But the question remains: Is this trend impeding the growth of the box office in the long run? Because there can only be so many big-ticket films releasing every year, given the paucity of stars. Franchises can be the alternative, as is strongly suggested by their contribution to the top 10 films in 2024 (4 of the top 10 Indian films in 2024 were franchise films. The number increases to 5 for Hindi cinema). Perhaps that's the way to unlock box office growth, amidst the polarised audience behaviour.