

Streamers want in on anime's growing global audience

Article

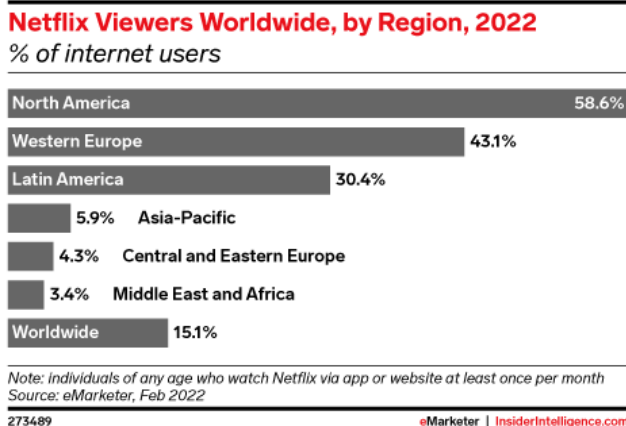
The news: In an [interview](#) with The Hollywood Reporter, **Netflix** anime head **Kohei Obara** revealed that **half of Netflix's 222 million worldwide subscribers** watched "some" anime on the platform in 2021, and that time spent watching anime **increased 20%** globally.

- Netflix also revealed that it is doubling down on its investment in Japanese animation, disclosing last week that it will release **40** anime series in 2022 alone.

How we got here: Netflix dipped its toes into anime in 2016, and since then, the format has become a global phenomenon and another major battleground for streaming services.

- Like many markets targeted by media giants, anime has experienced some consolidation. Last August, **Sony** completed its **\$1.18 billion** acquisition of anime streaming service **Crunchyroll**, which is being merged with its existing anime production company **Funimation**.
- In 2019, **HBO Max** secured a deal to exclusively stream Japanese film animation company **Studio Ghibli**'s catalog, which contains internationally successful films like “Ponyo,” “Spirited Away,” and others by famed director **Hayao Miyazaki**.
- **Amazon Prime Video** also has a catalog of critically acclaimed anime exclusive to the platform, and **Disney+** has announced plans to release new anime series.

It's not just TV and streaming that have benefitted from the global rise of Japanese animation. Spinoff films of popular series have gone toe-to-toe with superhero blockbusters, with “**Jujutsu Kaisen 0**” earning **\$30 million** since opening in North America last month.



Why anime, why now? Anime's surge in popularity isn't happening in isolation, but overlaps with several global media trends and streamer interests.

- Animated series are generally known for their cheaper production costs compared with most live-action media—even for companies like Netflix that are known for making shows on the cheap. But despite the lower production costs, Netflix has become a major player in the global animation industry with critical successes like “**Devilman Crybaby**.”

- There's also overlap with streamers' growing interest in video game adaptations. One of Netflix's most popular anime is an adaptation of the "Castlevania" series, and it has commissioned shows based on [other popular Japanese game series](#).

Looking forward: As streamers fight tooth and nail to gain ground in key markets, expanding into anime allows them to capture a global audience, access a massive backlog of content, and produce critical hits at relatively lower cost.