

A publication of the European Audiovisual Observatory





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Methodology and Key Facts

Purpose

How did the offer and exploitation of theatrical animation films develop between 2017 and 2024?

This report delivers the latest insights into the development of the offer and exploitation of theatrical animation films worldwide up until 2024. Published by the European Audiovisual Observatory, the study analyses the performance of animation between 2017 and 2024, thereby allowing for a comparison between pre- and post-pandemic situation. The study furthermore aims to highlight specific characteristics of animation films in comparison to live-action films. While the report covers animation films worldwide, it puts a special emphasis on Europe. This study highlights key market trends, differences to live-action films, examines the most active animation film production countries, and showcases the top animation films.

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

Theatrical films only

Due to data availability, this report covers only theatrical films. While TV and streaming are of major importance for the animation industry, no exploitation data were available for these type of animation works. In contrast, there is comprehensive data coverage on the theatrical distribution of animation films in 49 markets worldwide, which allows for interesting insights into the development and characteristics of animation films in the theatrical market segment.

Fiction films only

As the vast majority of theatrical animation films falls in the category of fiction films which generally have very different characteristics from feature documentary films, this report focuses on the former. In this report characteristics of animation films are hence compared to the characteristics of live-action fiction films.

Commercially released films only

The insights in this report are based on a data sample that is restricted to films generating at least 1 000 admissions worldwide in at least one calendar year. The 1 000 admissions benchmark is used as a proxy to identify films with a proper commercial release and exclude films which had a single or sporadic screenings only. Including the latter could diffuse the meaningfulness of data related to the volume of films on offer

Time period

The report covers the time period 2017 to 2024.

Geographical scope

The report includes admissions data from 49 markets worldwide (35 European and 14 non-European). However, for time series analyses, markets without continuous admissions data between 2017 and 2024 were excluded from the analysis (2 markets, in bold in the table below).

Market region	Countries covered
Europe (35)	Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia , 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

Data sources

The insights in this report are based on an analysis of title-by-title annual admissions data provided by European national data sources (for European markets) and Comscore (for non-European markets). The data for European markets is publicly available in the <u>LUMIERE database</u>.

Data sources for budget data

Average budgets were estimated on the basis of a sample of 1 081 European fiction films produced in 2021 and 2022, including 50 animation films and 1 031 live-action fiction films. .

Definitions

Animation films

In the context of this report, a film was considered as an animation film when it was tagged as 'animation' in the LUMIERE database, which in turn is based on a film being tagged as 'animation' in IMDB excluding films with a significant amount of live-action content. Further qualification of individual films was beyond the scope of this report.

Films produced vs 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.

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.

European films

European films are those considered of European origin, meaning they are produced and 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 European minority co-productions are not considered European films in the context of this report.

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), including co-producing countries with minority shares, are considered export admissions.

Methodology remarks

Market for theatrical and audiovisual animation works differ

When interpreting the results of this report, it is important to keep in mind that the theatrical market for animation films only represents a partial segment of the animation industry and that the comparatively good results for theatrical animation films do not mirror the situation in the wider animation sector, which reportedly has recently been suffering from declining orders particularly by US streaming platforms.

Limited coverage

Since this report relies solely on LUMIERE data, covering only 49 markets globally (with 47 tracked consistently from 2017 to 2024), the results may show some bias. Relative figures could be higher than actual ones, given the stronger representation of European markets where European film admissions are concentrated. Conversely, absolute figures will fall short due to missing admissions data from a range of global markets. The sample is estimated to cover 69% of total global admissions in 2024. In the context of this report, any remarks on global figures refer exclusively to the markets covered in the sample. Market coverage can vary between countries and years.

Annual outliers due to exceptional success of individual films

It is important to keep in mind that aggregate admissions figures can be highly influenced by the weight of a handful of extremely successful blockbusters. Notably, in 2019, a handful of US and Chinese films, namely *The Lion King, Frozen 2, Toy Story 4, Ne Zha, How to Train your Dragon: The Hidden World* and *The Secret Life of Pets 2* generated extraordinary admissions to animation films and made 2019 an extreme outlier in terms of market share of animation films.



Summary of key findings

185 theatrical animation films were **produced*** worldwide on average **per year** between 2017 and 2024 and an average of 404 animation films were on commercial release each year in at least one of the 49 markets covered in this report. Cumulatively, animation films generated an average of 800 million admissions per year.

In contrast to live-action films, admissions for animation films have fully recovered after the pandemic, reaching over 880 million admissions in 2024 which equals the pre-pandemic average. This is however not true for European animation films, which have been selling only 33 million tickets per year between 2022 and 2024, compared to a pre-pandemic average of 42 million tickets per year.

European films account for about 25% of worldwide theatrical animation film production and for 36% of animation films on commercial release, but account only for 5% of global admissions to animation films. In contrast, US animation films accounted for about 10% of global animation production volume but captured generally over 70% of worldwide admissions to animation films.

Co-productions are much more important for animation films than for live-action films. 42% of European animation films were international co-productions compared to 27% of live-action films.

* with commercial release

European animation films have on average significantly higher production budgets than live-action films and seem to be more homogenous in their budget ranges: A sample analysis of fiction films released in 2021 and 2022 suggests that the average budget of a European animation film amounted to EUR 5.9 million (median EUR 5.7 million) compared to an average budget of EUR 3.6 million (median EUR 2.7 million) in the case of live-action films.

Animation films travel better than live-action films. In the case of European animation films, this is illustrated by the fact that they were released on average in eleven markets compared to four markets in case of live-action films. Also, about 67% of their admissions stem from export admissions, compared to less than 40% in case of live-action films.

Animation films also outperform live-action films in terms of admissions. This is particularly true for US animation films, but also holds true – in a more limited manner – for European animation films: Between 2022 and 2024 average admissions *per* European animation films were 38% higher than those *per* live-action films. European animation films featured also a significantly higher recovery rate (80%) than live-action films (54%).

The European animation market is dominated by US animation films which accounted for 84% of total admissions in 2024, compared to 11% for European films. This is a significantly low share, compared to the European live-action market, where the market share of European films is twice as high.

185

Animation films produced* worldwide per year 7% of the total number of fiction films produced

2 m

Average admissions *per* animation film per year 2 times more than per live-action film

9

Average release markets for animation films per year 2 times more than live-action films

404

Animation films* on commercial release worldwide per year 10% of the total number of fiction films on-release

794 m

Average annual admissions for animation films 19% of the total number of admissions for fiction films

179 m

Average admissions for animation films in Europe per year 23% share of global admission to animation films

144

European animation fiction films on commercial release per year 36% of the total of animation films on commercial release

0.3 m

Average admissions *per* animation film per year 1.5 times more than per live-action film

11

Average release markets for **European** animation films
5 for live-action films

EUR 5.9 m

Average budget for a **European** animation fiction film compared to EUR 3.6 m for live-action films

38 m

Average annual admissions for **European** animation films per year 5% of the total number of admissions for animation films

67%

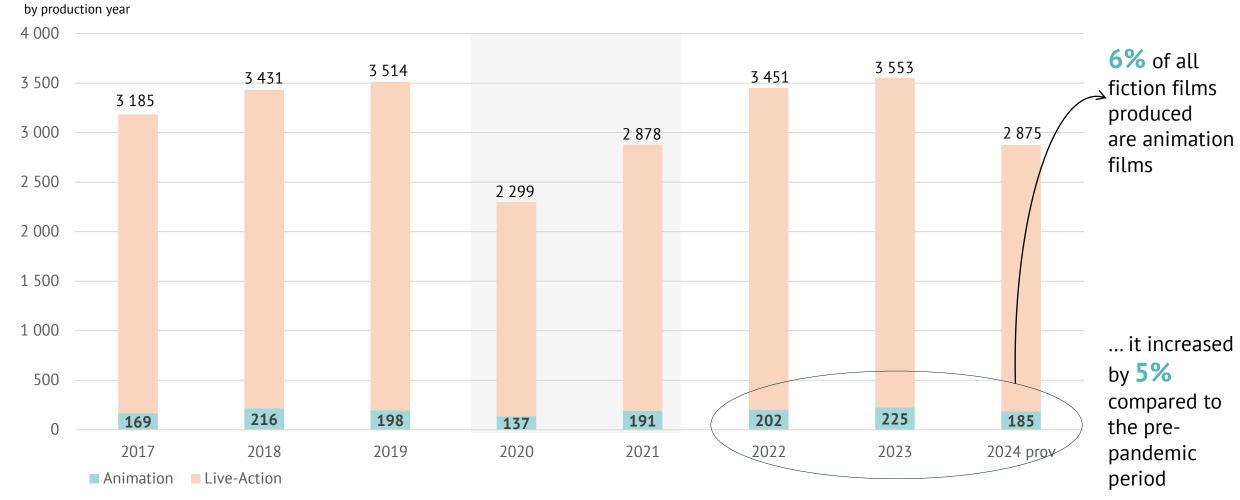
Average export admissions for **European** animation fiction films per year +22 pp compared to live action films



O₃ Volume of theatrical animation films

An average of 199 animation films was produced per year, accounting for 6% of the total number of fiction films produced worldwide.

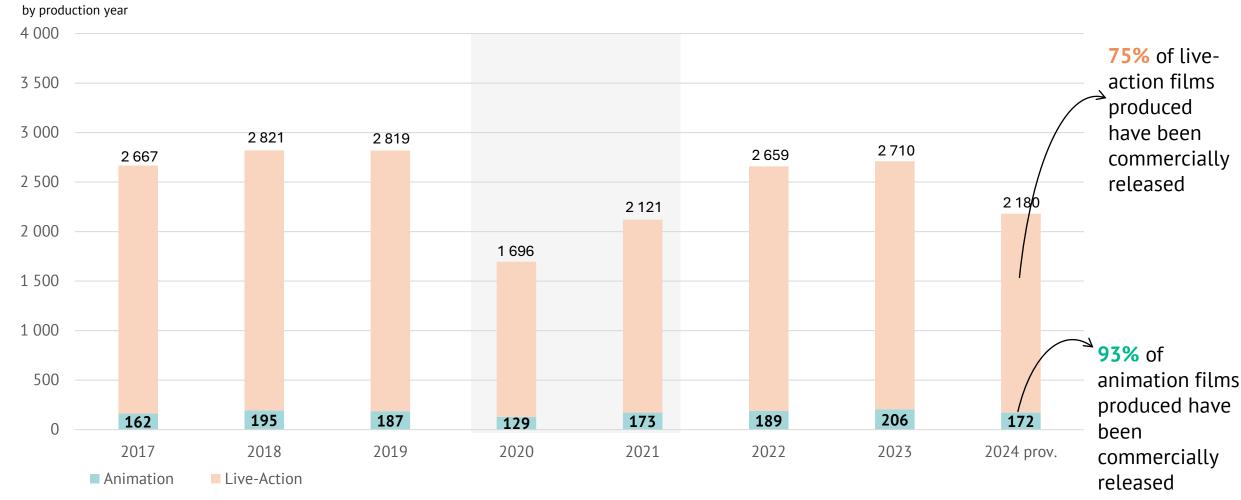
Number of fiction films produced worldwide: animation vs. live-action films



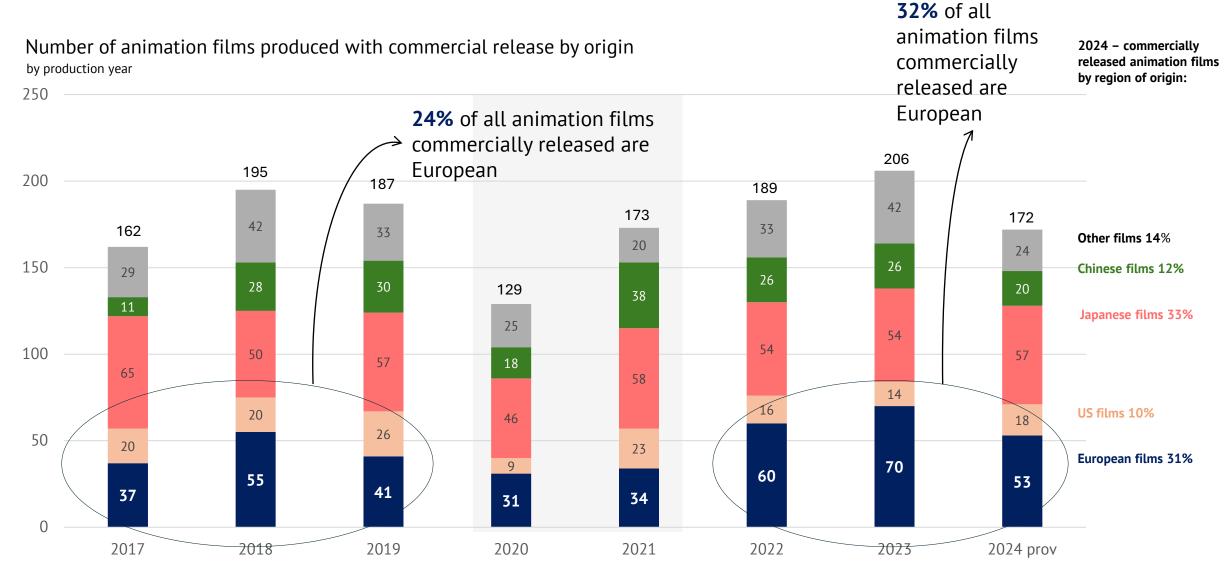
Films produced in 2024 have not all been released yet, this figure is underestimated. Source: LUMIERE/EAO

In contrast to live-action films, the vast majority of animation films produced were also commercially released: 93% compared to 75%.

Number of fiction films produced with commercial release: animation vs. live-action films



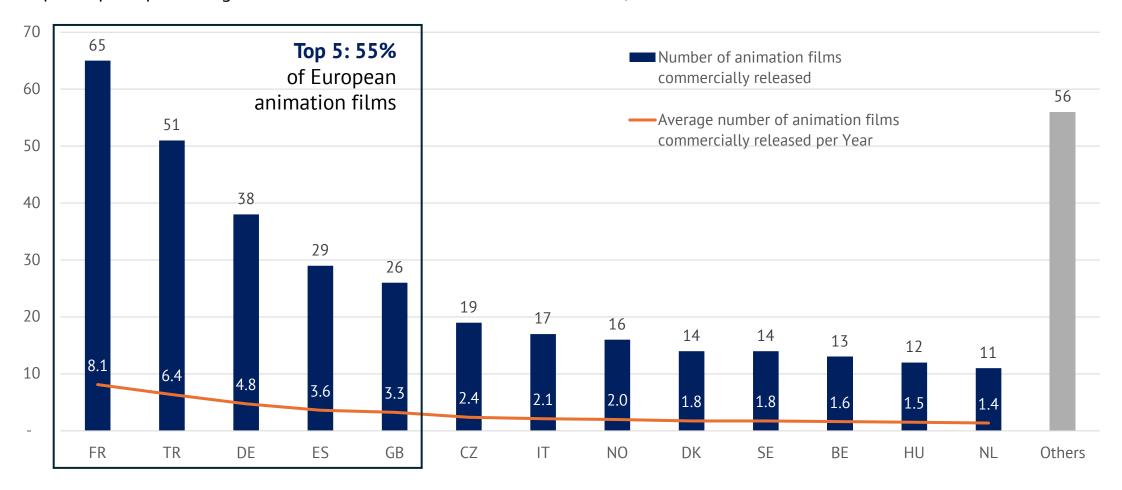
The average share of European films among worldwide animation titles with a commercial release has increased from 24% to 32%.



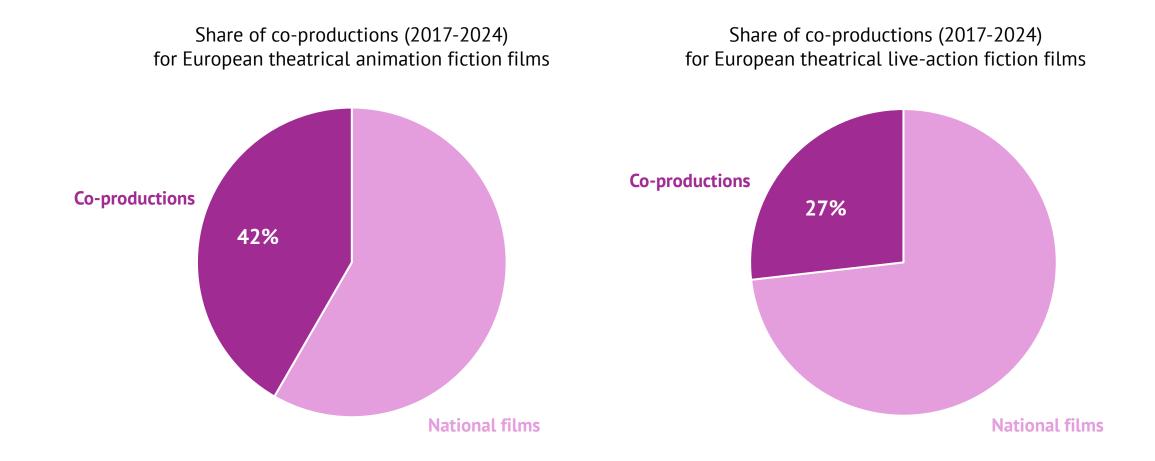
For data on the number of films commercially released, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included. Source: LUMIERE/EAO

Türkiye and France stand out in terms of animation film production volume, as the majority of European countries produced at most 2 animation films per year.

Top European producing countries of theatrical animation fiction films, 2017-2024

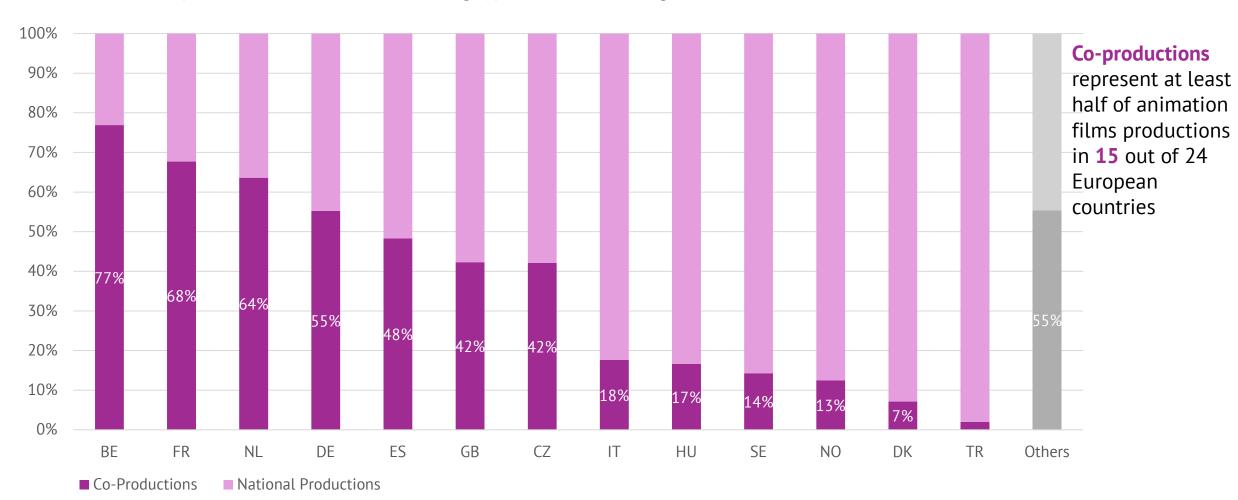


The role of co-production is significantly more pronounced for animation film production, with 42% of European animation films being co-produced, compared to 27% of live-action films.



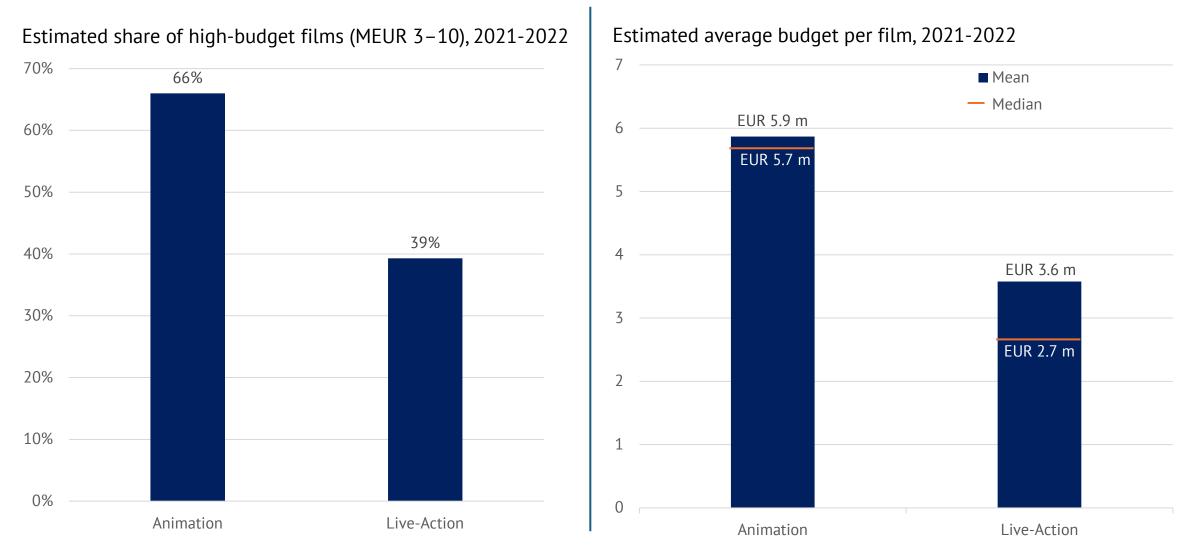
Co-productions in the animation sector are particularly important in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

Breakdown of European animation films by financing type by country of origin – 2017 to 2024



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

European animation films have on average significantly higher production costs than live-action films and seem to be more homogenous in their budget ranges.

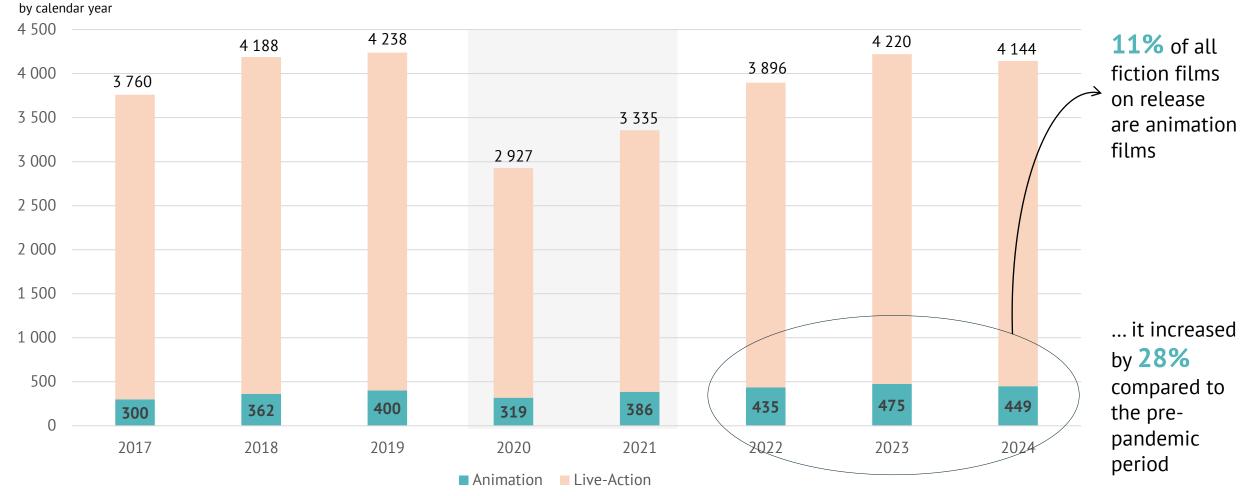


Budget data are based on a sample of 1 081 films produced in 2021 and 2022, including 50 animation films, and 1 031 live-action fiction films. Source: European Audiovisual Observatory



Theatrical exploitation of animation films

Number of fiction films on commercial release: animation vs. live-action films

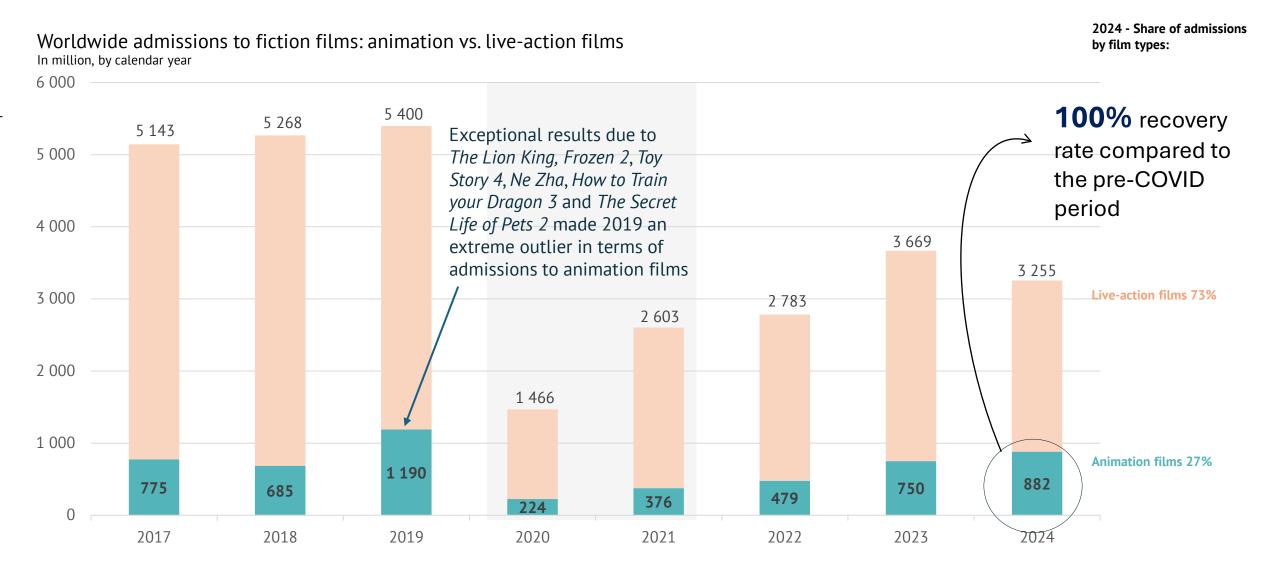


For data on the number of films on-release, only films that achieved at least 1 000 admissions, as captured in LUMIERE, were included. Source: LUMIERE/EAO

European and Asian productions account for the majority of animation fiction films, cumulatively accounting for over 71% of films on release worldwide.

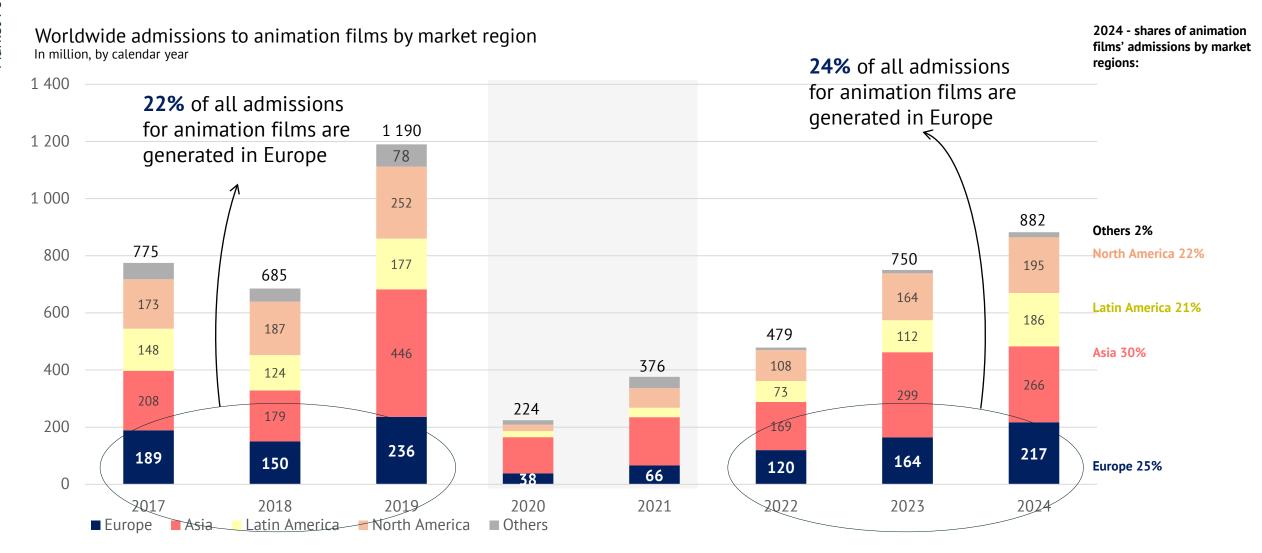


In contrast to live-action films, animation fiction films have fully recovered from the pandemic, selling over 880 million admissions in 2024.

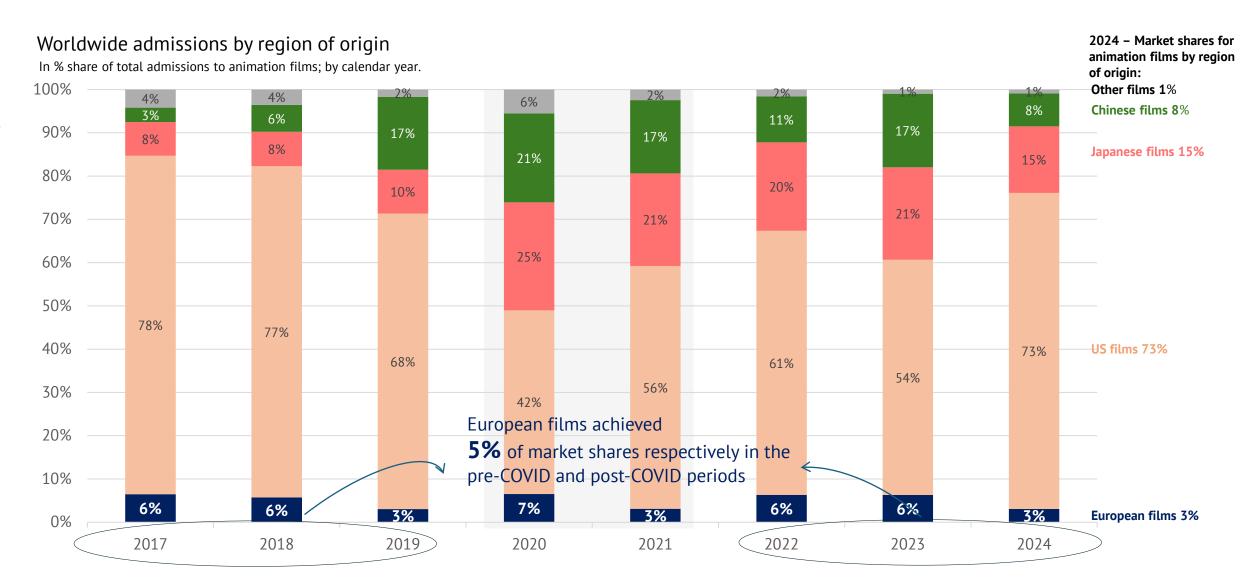


Source: LUMIERE/EAO 26

Asia is the largest theatrical market for animation films, followed by Europe which accounted for a quarter of worldwide admissions post pandemic.



US animation films dominate the global animation market, generally accounting for over 70% of worldwide admissions to animation films, followed by Japanese films.



Source: LUMIERE/EAO 28

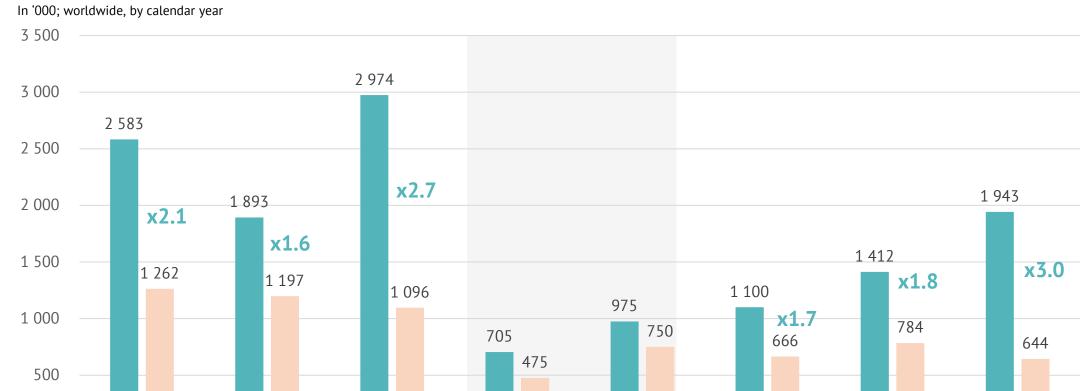
Animation films sell on average twice as many tickets as live-action films, but were not immune to average admissions declining during and after the pandemic.

Average admissions per film: animation vs. live-action films

2018

2017

■ Animation ■ Live-Action



2020

2021

2022

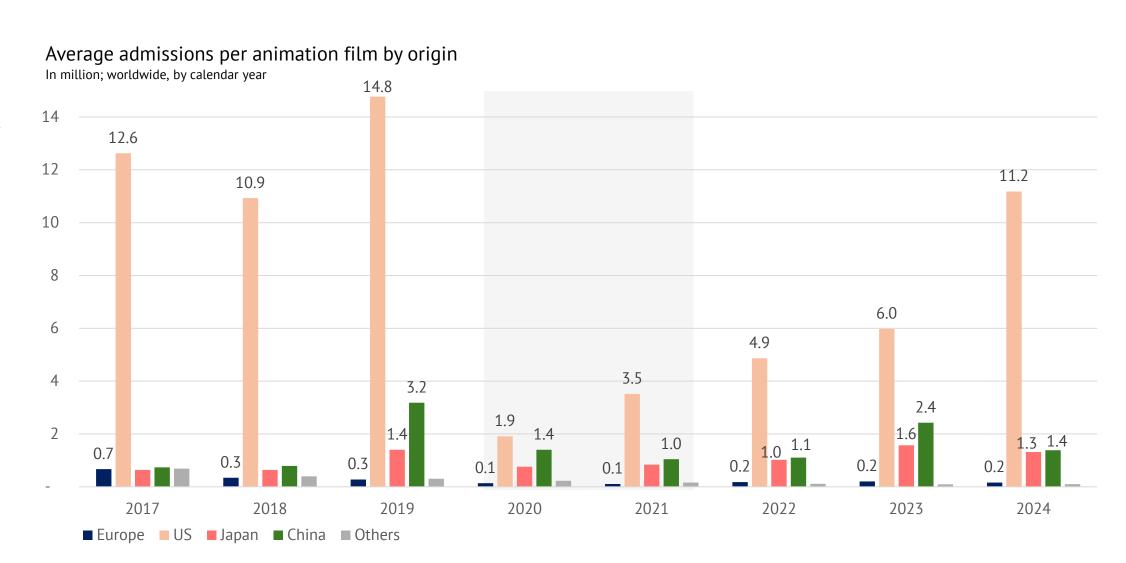
2023

2024

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

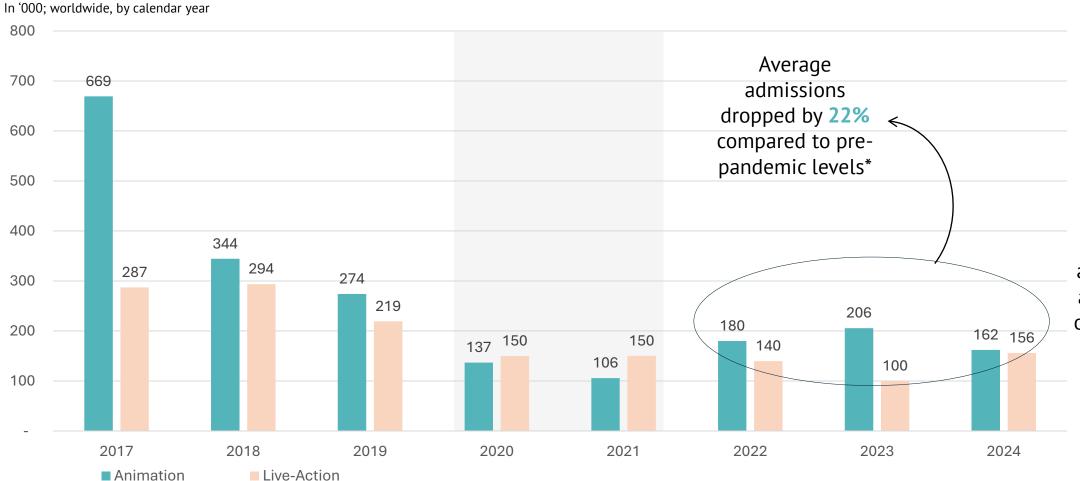
2019

In terms of admissions per title, US animation films stand out, generating multiple times the number of admissions of animation films from other parts of the world.



In contrast to in particular US animation films, European animation films outperform their liveaction counterparts only by a factor of x0.3 on average.

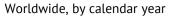
Average admissions per European film: animation vs. live-action films

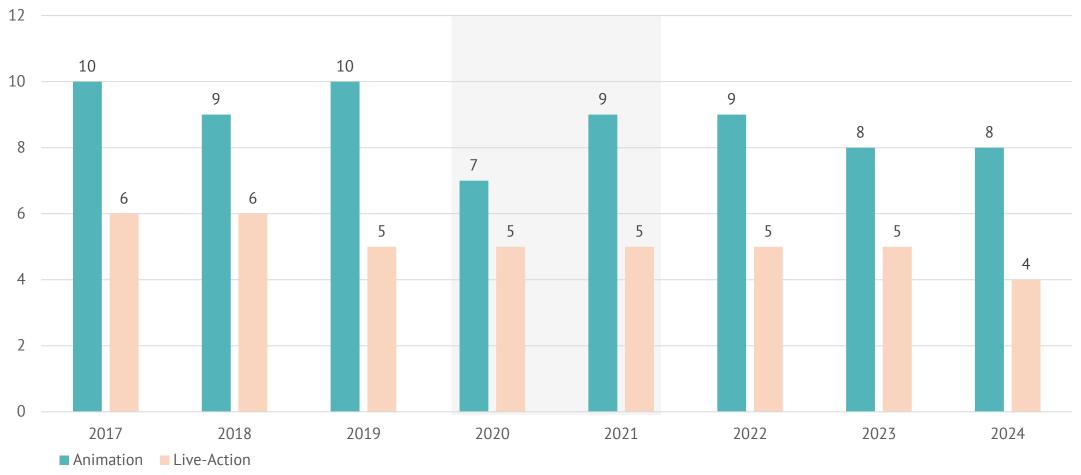


Average admissions per animation film on average* 0.3 times higher than for liveaction films

Animation films travel significantly better than live-action films, being released in twice as many markets.

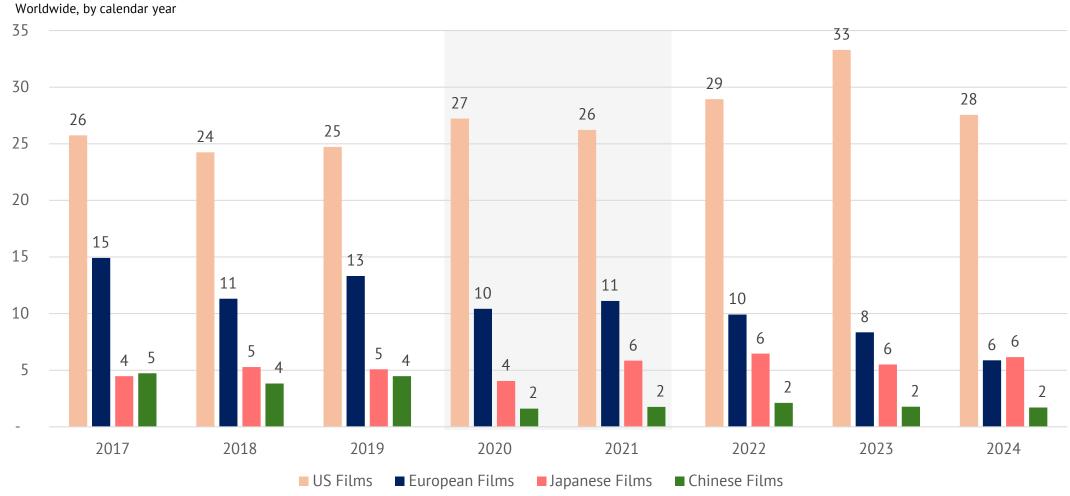
Average number of release markets: animation vs. live-action films





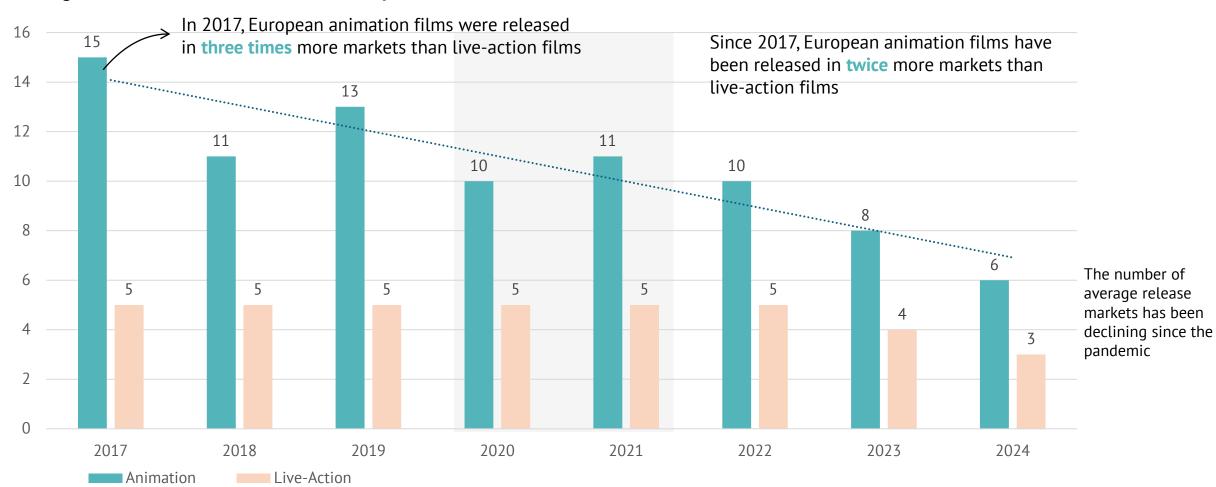
US animation films stand out in terms of international reach, being released on average in 27 markets worldwide, followed at a distance by European animation films with an average of 11 release markets.





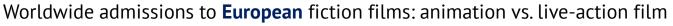
Despite a decrease of the average number of release markets since 2017, European animation films continue to travel better than live-action films.

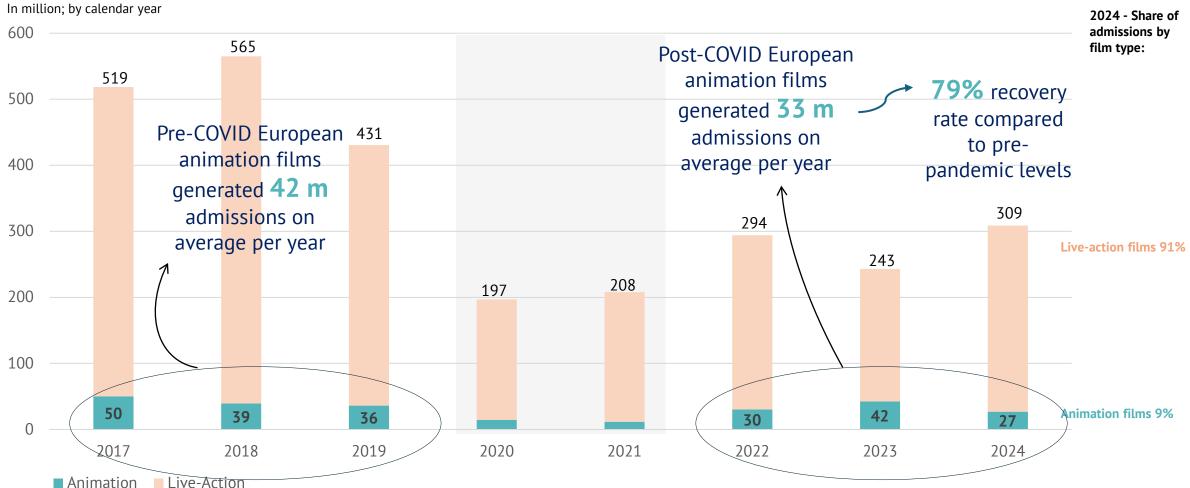
Average number of release markets of **European** fiction films: animation vs. live-action films



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.

In contrast to US animation films for instance, European animation films recovered only about 80% of their pre-pandemic levels, still outperforming European live-action films with only 54%.

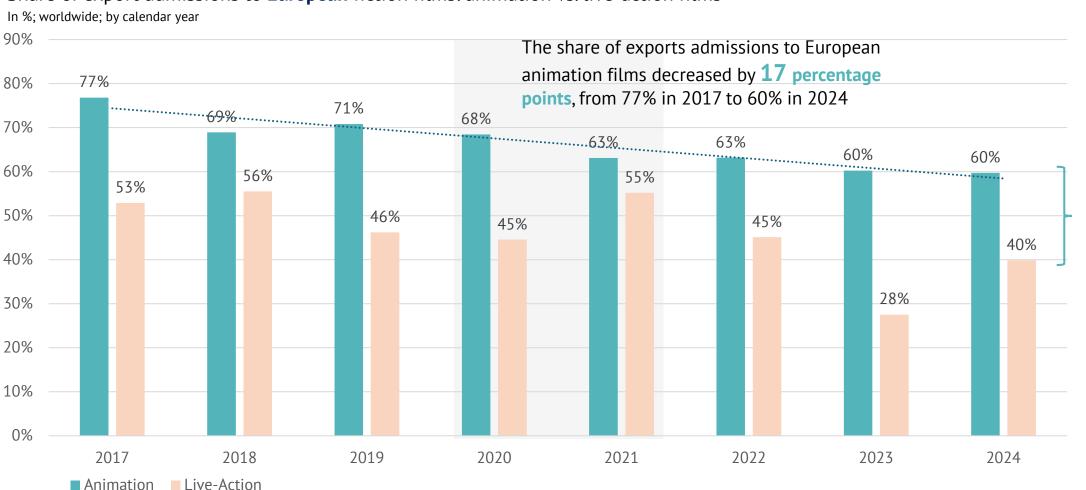




Source: LUMIERE/EAO 35

European animation films manage to generate a significantly higher share of their admissions on non-national markets, compared to live-action films.

Share of export admissions to **European** fiction films: animation vs. live-action films

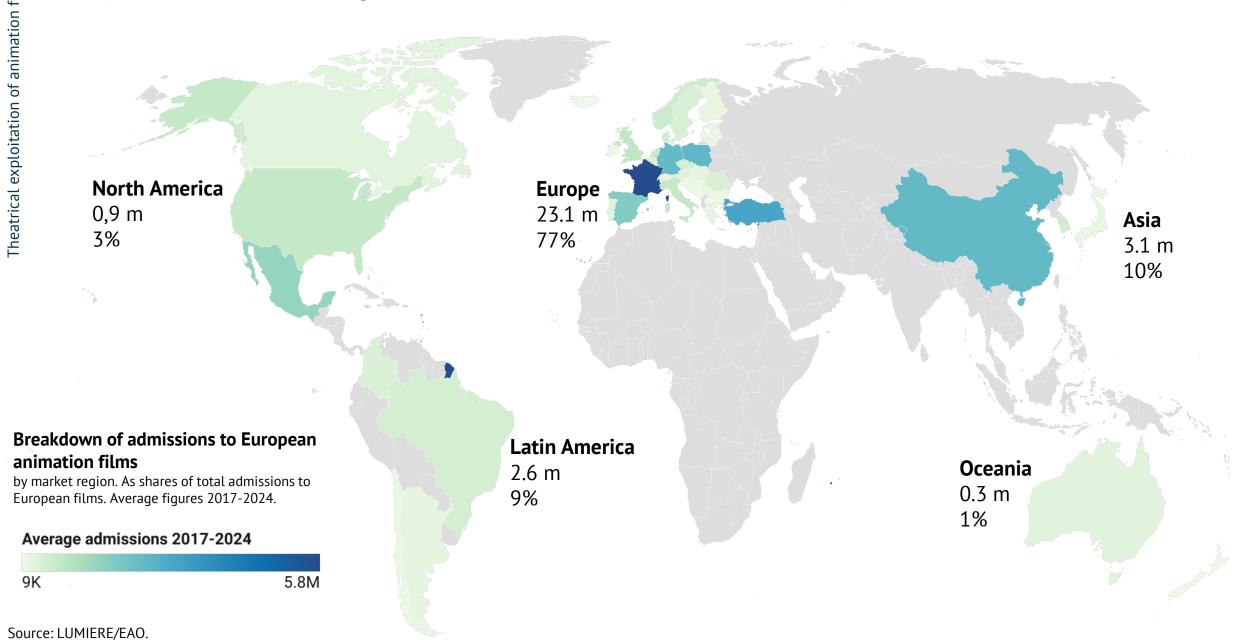


Export
admissions for
animation films
exceed those of
live-action
films by more
than 20
percentage
points

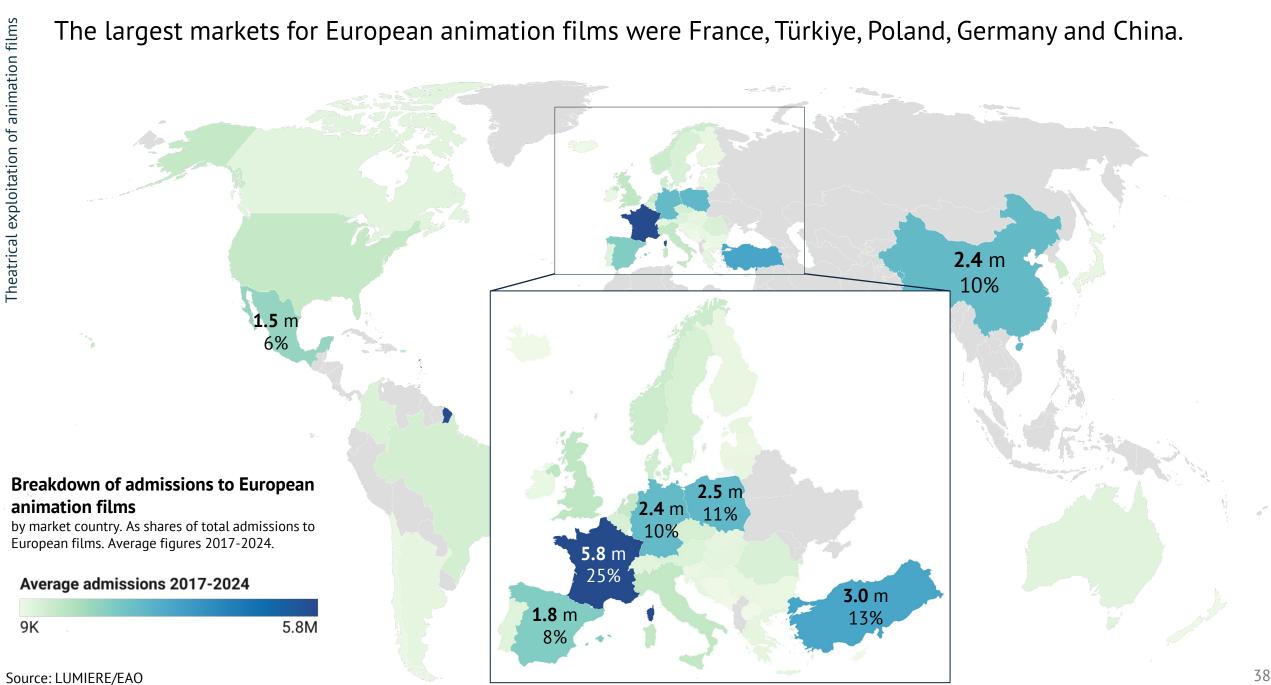
Source: LUMIERE/EAO



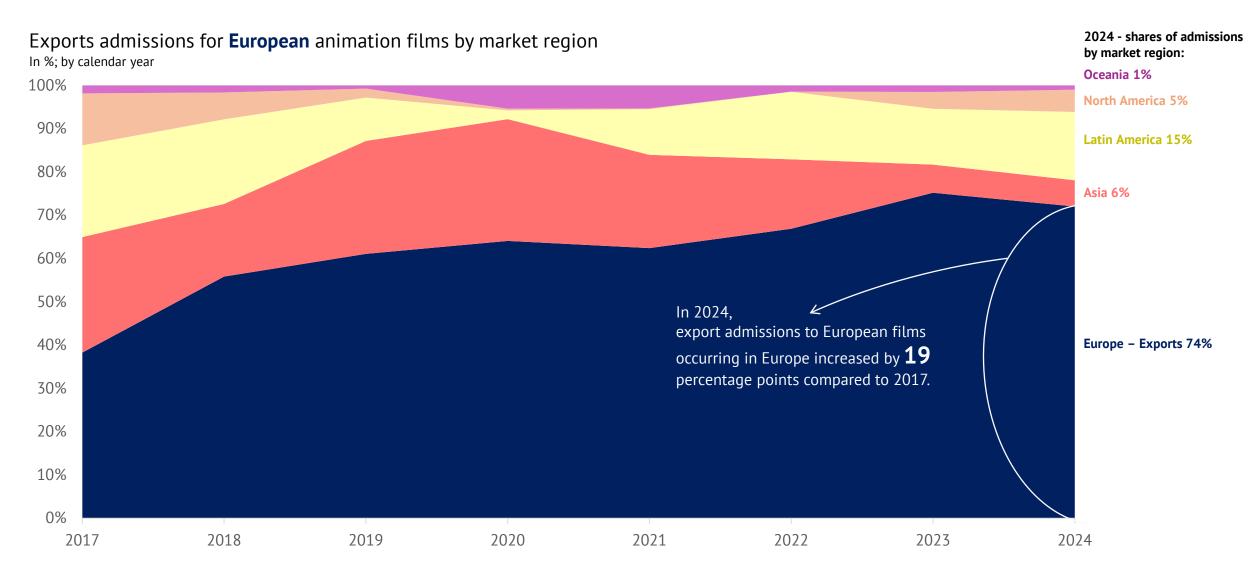
European animation films generated 77% of their admissions in Europe.



37

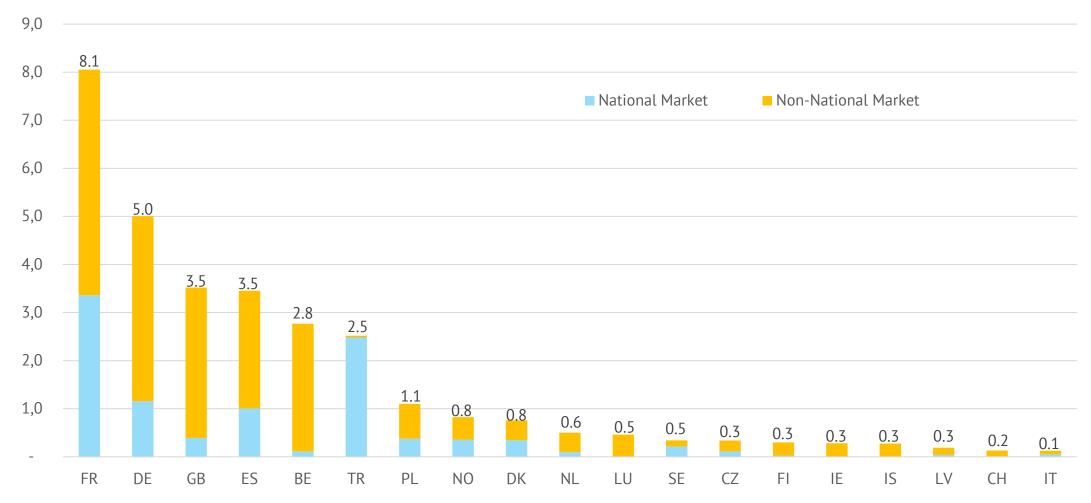


Europe represents the main export region for European animation films, accounting for three in four export admissions.



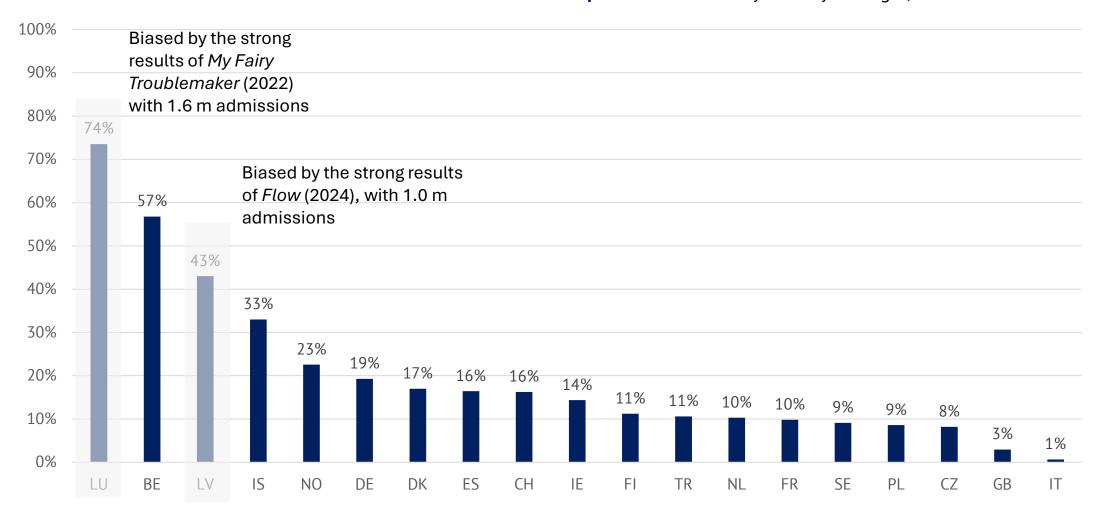
Among European animation films, French films stand out selling on average more than 8 million tickets, followed by Germany, the UK and Spain.

Average annual admissions to **European** animation films by country of origin, 2017 -2024



Proportionally speaking, animation films seem to be particularly important for Belgium and Iceland, where they accounted for 57% and 33% of total admissions to fiction films, respectively.

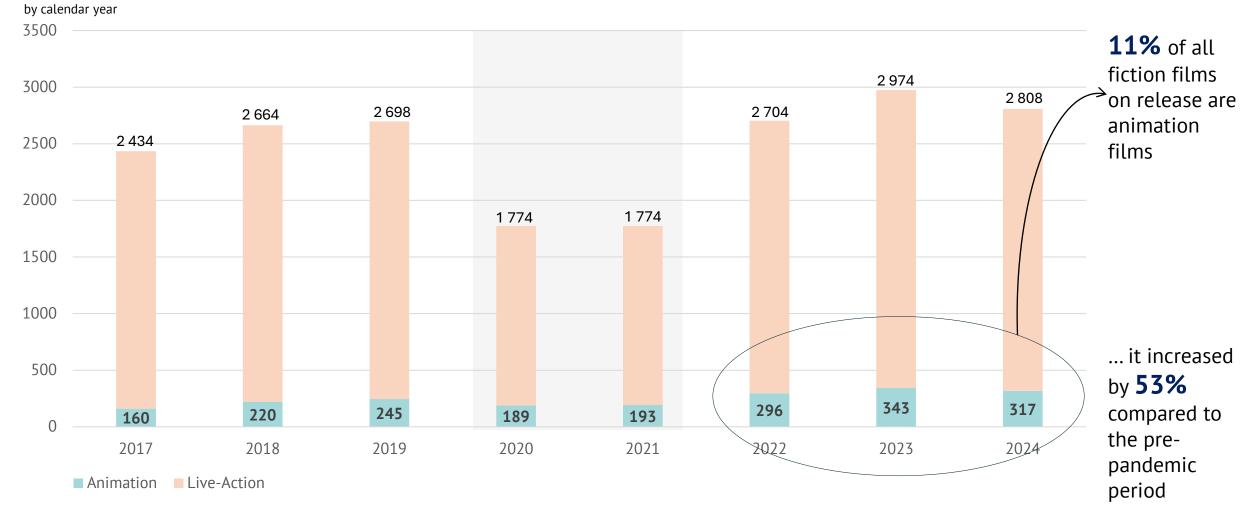
Share of admissions to animation films in total admissions to **European** fiction films by country of origin, 2017–2024





The number of animation films on commercial release in Europe averaged 319 titles during the post-pandemic period, a significant increase compared to pre-pandemic levels.

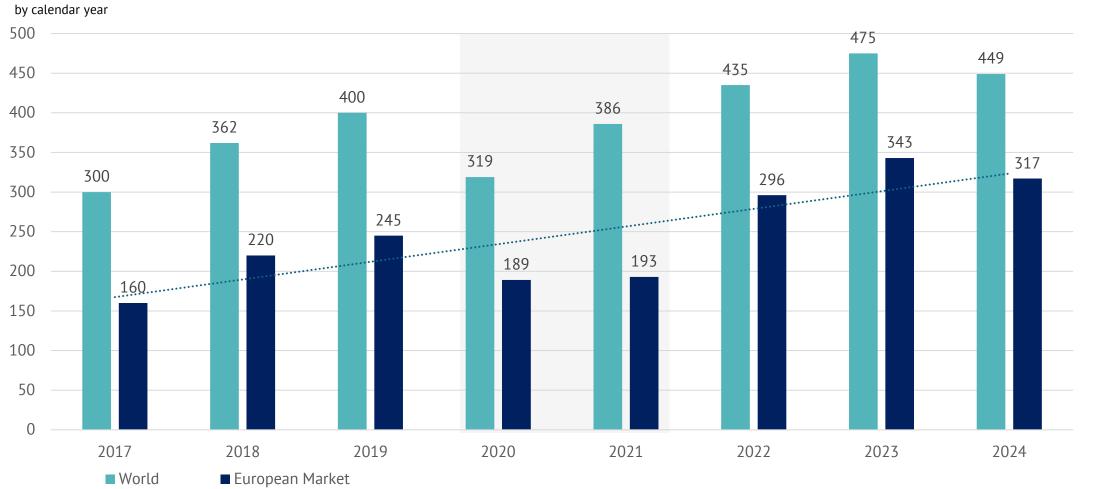
Number of fiction films on commercial release in Europe



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.

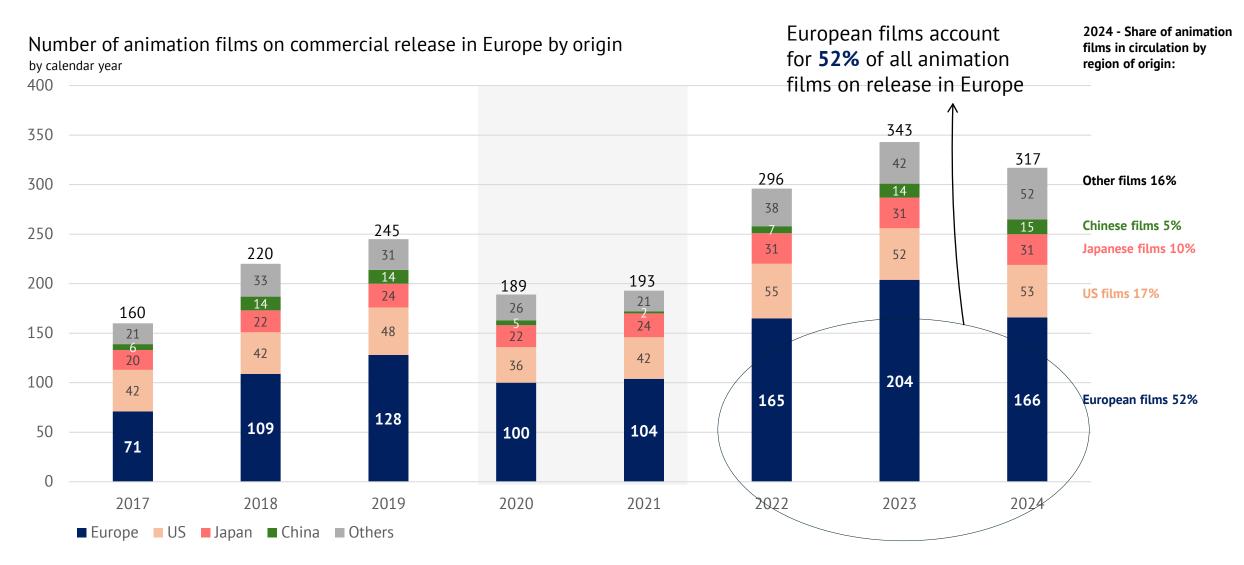
In 2023 and 2024, more than 70% of all animation films released in the world were also released in Europe, the highest share in past years.

Number of animation films on commercial release

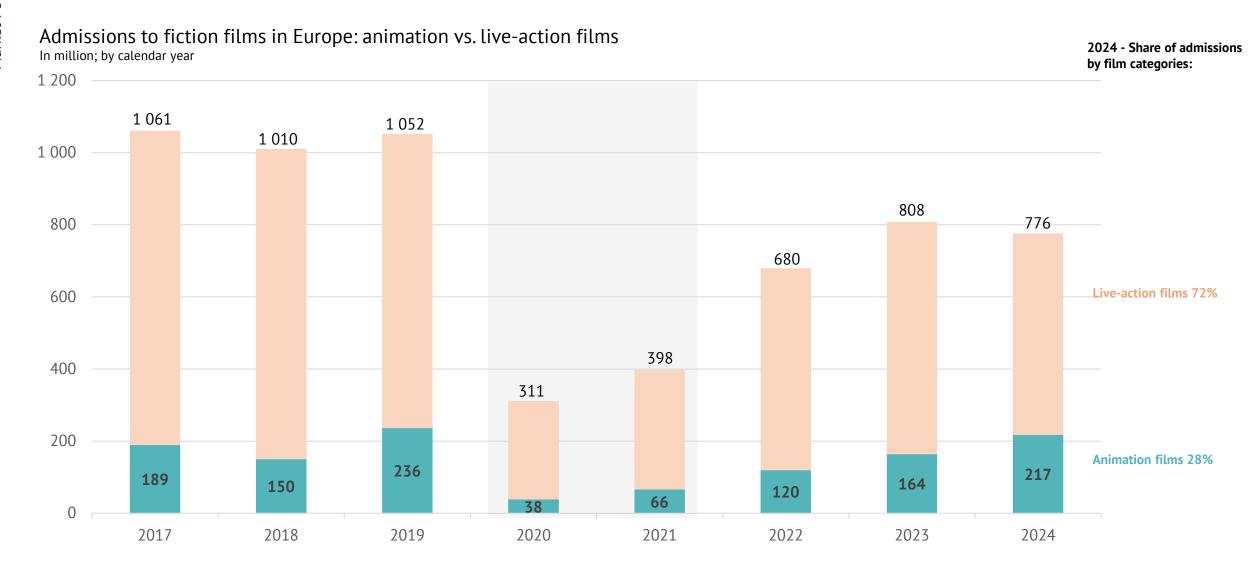


Since 2017, the proportion of animation films released in Europe relative to the release in the world has increased by 17 percentage points.

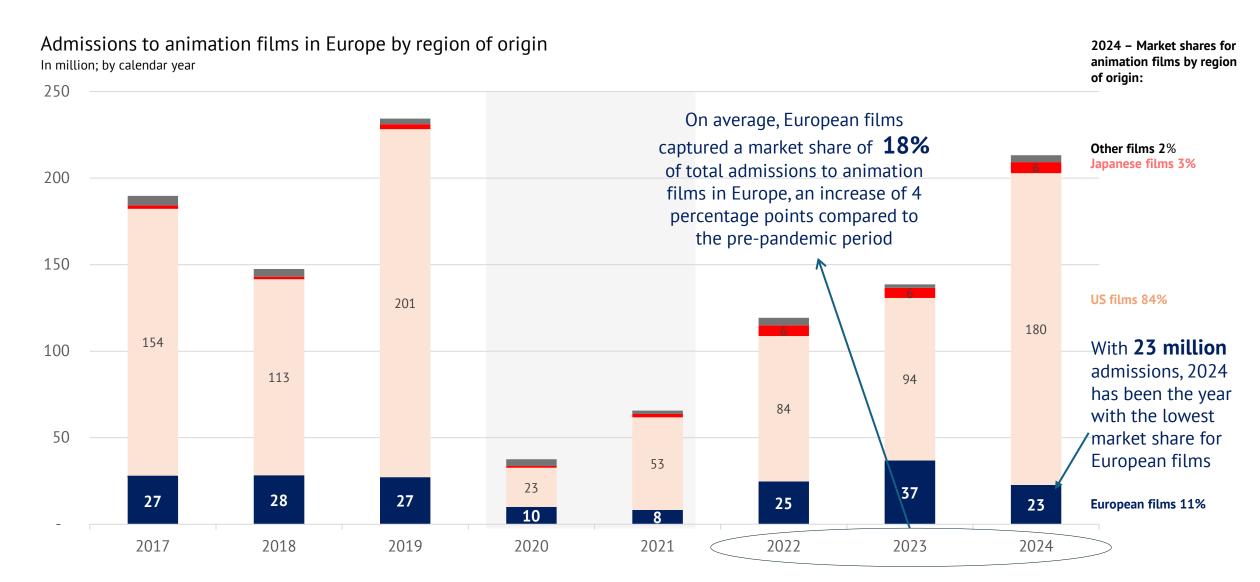
European films represent the majority of animation fiction films on release in Europe, as China and Japan represent a smaller share compared to their importance worldwide



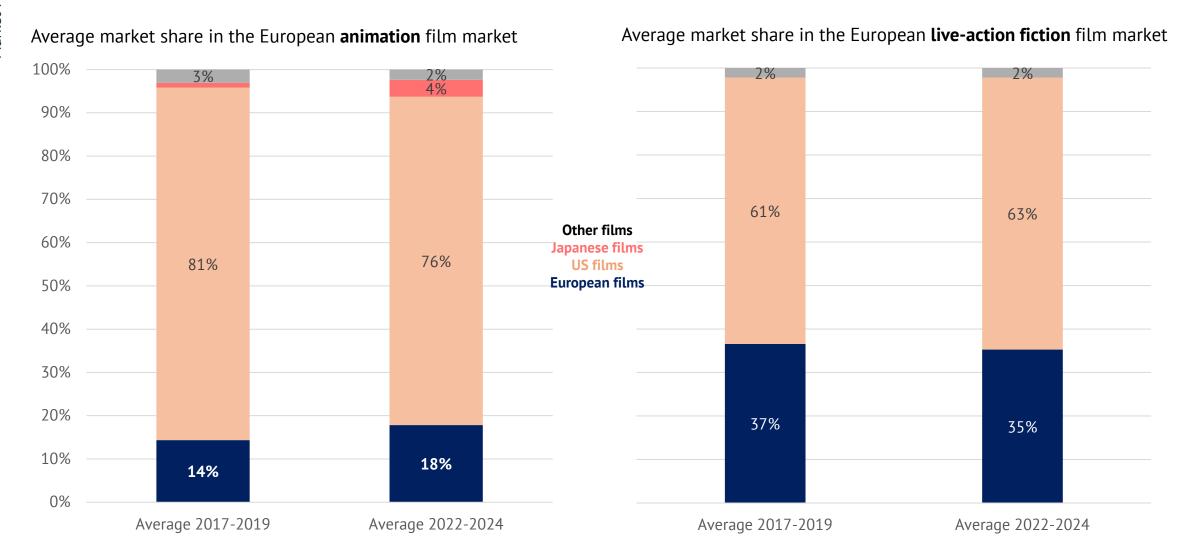
In 2024, a total of 217 million tickets were sold for animation films in Europe, which exceeds the pre-pandemic average, contrasting with a 66% recovery rate in case of live-action films.



The European market for animation film is dominated by US films which accounted for 84% of total admissions in 2024, compared to 11% for European films.



Compared to live-action fiction films, European animation films account for a significantly smaller market share in Europe.

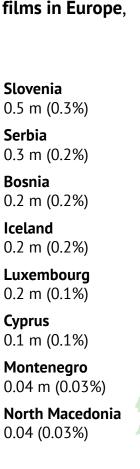


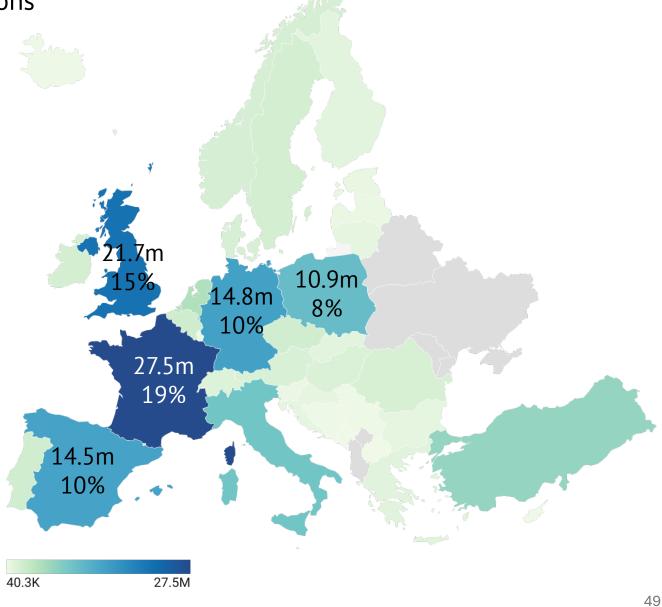
France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Poland are the 5 biggest European markets for animation films and represent 62% of all admissions

Breakdown of admissions to European animation fiction films in Europe,

by market. As shares of total admissions in Europe. Average figures 2017-2024.

France 27.5 m (19.1%) United Kingdom 21.7 m (15.1%)	Czechia 2.5 m (1.8%) Portugal 2.5 m (1.7%)	Switzerland 1.6 m (1.1%) Greece 1.2 m (0.9%)
Germany 14.8 m (10.3%)	Sweden 2.4 m (1.6%)	Slovakia 1.2 m (0.8%)
Spain 14.5 m (10.1%)	Ireland 2.3 m (1.6%)	Finland 1.1 m (0.8%)
Poland 10.9 m (7.5%)	Norway 2.1 m (1.4%)	Bulgaria 0.9 m (0.6%)
Italy 9.6 m (6.7%)	Denmark 2.1 m (1.4%)	Croatia 0.9 m (0.6%)
Türkiye 7.1 m (4.9%)	Romania 2.0 m (1.4%)	Lithuania 0.9 m (0.6%)
Netherlands 5.1 m (3.5%)	Austria 2.0 m (1.4%)	Estonia 0.7 m (0.5%)
Belgium 2.6 m (1.8%)	Hungary 1.8 m (1.2%)	Latvia 0.5 m (0.4%)





20.8%

Serbia, Türkiye, Norway, Denmark and Poland are the five markets where animation films represent the

biggest share of admissions.

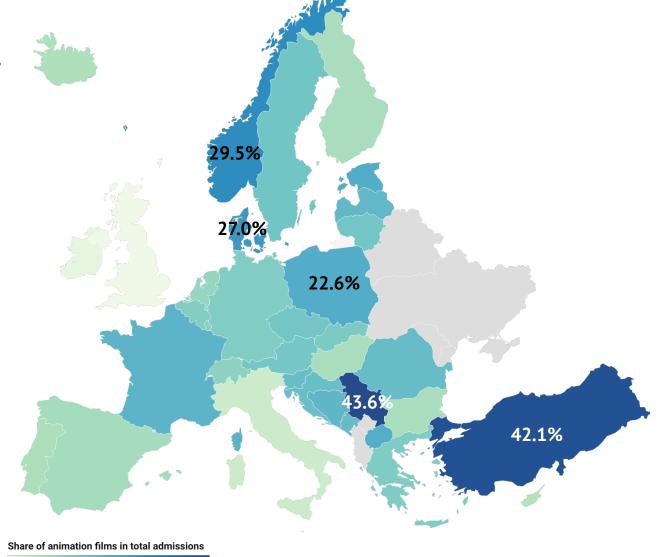
17.2%

Breakdown of admissions to European animation fiction films in Europe,

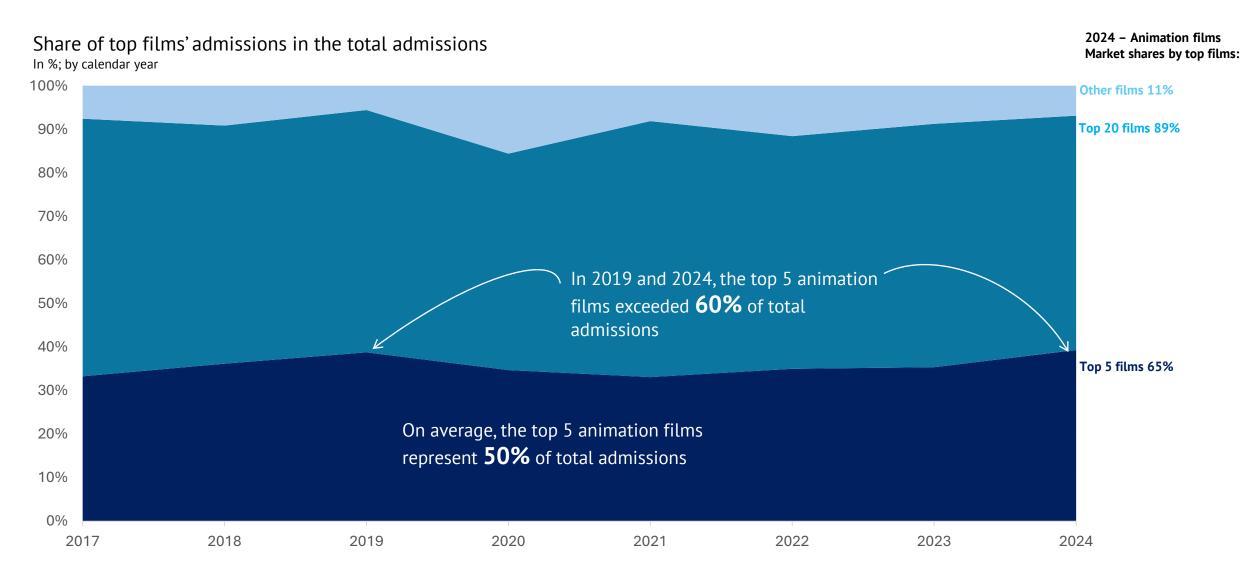
by market. As shares of total admissions in a specific country.

Average figures 2017	-2024.		
Serbia 43.6%	Latvia	Slovakia	Bulgaria
	20.2%	16.5%	11.8%
Türkiye 42.1%	Montenegro 19.6%	Greece 16.1%	Finland 11.7%
Norway	Romania	Germany	Portugal
29.5%	19.4%	15.9%	11.4%
Denmark	Slovenia	Belgium	Iceland
27.0%	19.2%	15.7%	11.2%
Poland	Croatia	Luxembourg	Cyprus 10.6%
22.6%	19.0%	14.7%	
Estonia 22.5%	Sweden 17.6%	Switzerland 14.7%	Italy 8.0%
North Macedonia	Lithuania	Netherlands 13.8%	Ireland
22.3%	17.4%		4.8%
France 21.1%	Czechia 17.4%	Spain 12.1%	United Kingdom 3.7%
Bosnia Herzegovina	Austria	Hungary	

11.8%



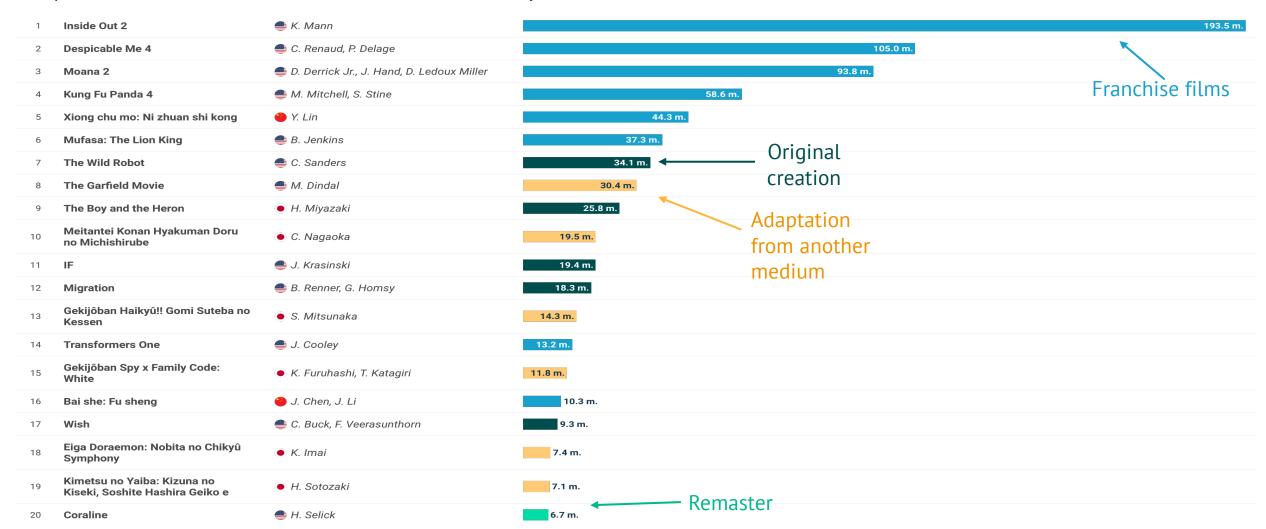
The concentration of admissions has remained stable within the last seven years, with peaks when strong US films were released.





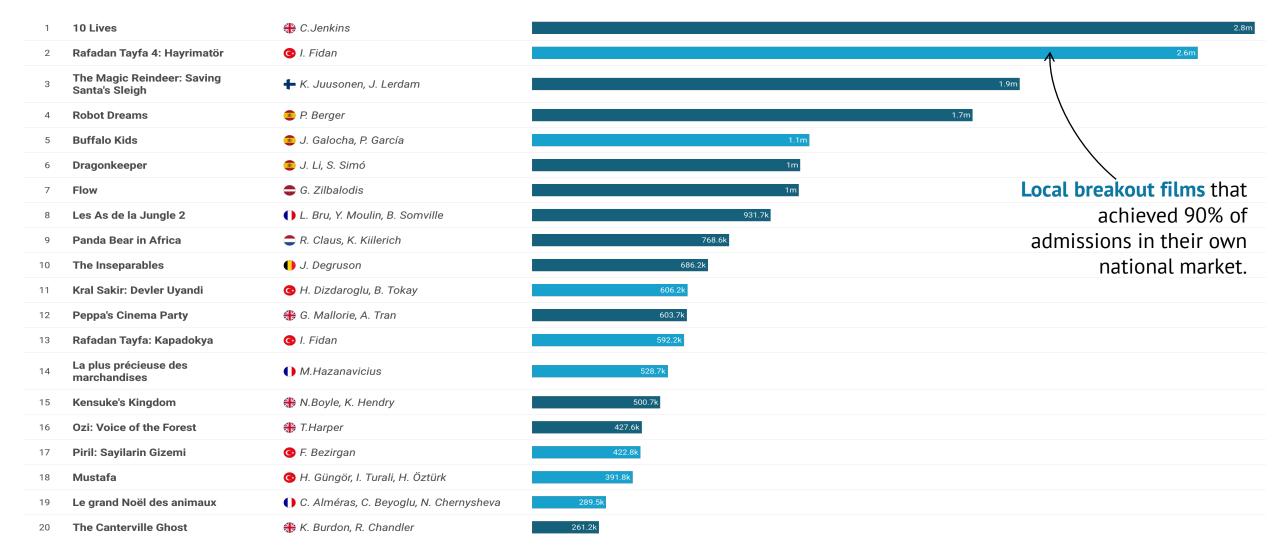
Following US films, most of the top 20 films in the global market are represented by Chinese and Japanese films.

Top 20 theatrical animation fiction films in 2024 worldwide, by total admissions. Ranked by 2024 admissions.



Top European films make most of their admissions in other European markets, except for Turkish films, which are mostly local breakout films.

Top 20 European animation films in 2024 worldwide, by total admissions. Ranked by 2024 admissions.



The top 10 animation films in Europe is trusted by US films. The top 20 is more varied, with 6 films from other nationalities (5 European, 1 Japanese).

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