



Peak Play: Trends in East Asian Videogame Streaming H1 2023

Niko Partners and Streams Charts Joint Bulletin

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Livestreaming Trends in East Asia	4
Korean Game Streaming Landscape	5
Japanese Game Streaming Landscape	10
Chinese Game Streaming Landscape	15
Methodology	20
About Niko Partners	22
About Streams Charts	23

Introduction

Livestreaming is a cornerstone of the games industry in Asia. It is a leading avenue for game marketing and discovery, for community building, and for highlighting competition and esports. This bulletin explains the high-level trends in game and esports livestreaming in **China**, **Japan**, and **Korea**, and is intended to be a tool for anyone hoping to understand differences and similarities between these three Asian markets.

With thirteen platforms, both international and regional, covered by the data in this bulletin, this report reflects the maturity of streaming in East Asia. Each of the markets covered here have developed their own unique streaming ecosystem, with roots in broader trends in gaming and culture. Whether it's Korea's history as the global center of esports, Japan's legacy as a console gaming powerhouse, or China's careful regulation of content, cultural legacies clearly shape streaming ecosystems. Today, competition between platforms for content and talent is at an all-time high, and international powerhouses **Twitch** and **YouTube** as well as domestic standouts, like **Afreeca TV** and **Huya**, and are looking to maximize their footprints. Platforms have long sought content exclusivity around events, but increasingly, retaining and developing the right opinion leaders and their corresponding audiences is also key to success. As livestreaming in East Asia demonstrates maturity, platforms and creators are evolving to find their edge over the competition.

Read on to learn about the titles and influencers making waves in East Asia.

Livestreaming Trends in East Asia

This bulletin is the first in a partnership between **Streams Charts** and **Niko Partners**, building on both companies' expertise in gaming and livestreaming trends in Asia. **The trends this bulletin highlights include:**

- **Esports ongoing relevance to gamers in Asia.** Competitive gaming remains a strong motivator for Asian viewers. Over half of the top streamed games are esports titles. **MOBAs**, **FPS**, and **Battle Royale** are the leading esports genres. **League of Legends** is the only title to appear on all there top-10 lists, demonstrating ongoing relevance to gamers in Asia.
- **Key opinion leaders (KOL) shape trends.** In all three markets, the leading channels for top games regularly account for between 2-15% of all viewership for that title. This means top KOLs have the power to lead the way in each market. In H1 for example, **VTubers** and **Broadcast Jockeys** played a key role in pushing **Minecraft** into the top 10 rankings in Japan and Korea.
- **It takes a lot to reach the top.** Only three titles released in 2023 have managed to break into the H1 top 10 rankings. These are, **Diablo IV** in Korea, **Honkai: Star Rail** in China, and **Street Fighter 6** in Japan. Viewership trends take time to change, but blockbuster releases still make waves.
- **Titles to pay attention to.** **PUBG** and **Apex Legends** are two battle royale titles that popular across the three markets. **Genshin Impact** is a multi-platform MMO, popular in both China and Japan. **VALORANT** is a leading title in Japan and Korea, it also just received its official release in China at the start of H2 2023, where it is quickly rising in the rankings. **Escape From Tarkov** is a tactical multiplayer FPS that saw explosive growth in popularity in Korea and Japan.



Korean Game Streaming Landscape

H1 2023 Livestreaming in Korea Overview



Korean Livestreaming Ecosystem

- Korea is a mature streaming market with healthy competition between homegrown **Afreeca TV** and international platforms like **Twitch** and **YouTube**.
- Korea's pedigree as an esports powerhouse remains apparent in its streaming landscape, where **many top Korean KOLs are former esports professionals**. This esports legacy also made Korea one of the first markets globally to integrate gaming and live streaming. The predominance of PC gaming is still apparent in looking at the leading titles in the market.
- **Gaming** shares **38.4% of total watch time** for YouTube Live's Korean segment in H1 2023. Top-3 segments also includes Music (14.3%) and Entertainment (11%).
- **League of Legends** (including AfreecaTV's LCK broadcasts) was the most watched video game. It has a **16.8%** share of total watch time for gaming streams.
- **Diablo IV** is the only game released in 2023 to rank among the top 10 in hours watched. This is particularly impressive as it was released in Q2, and has accumulated these over the span of only one month.

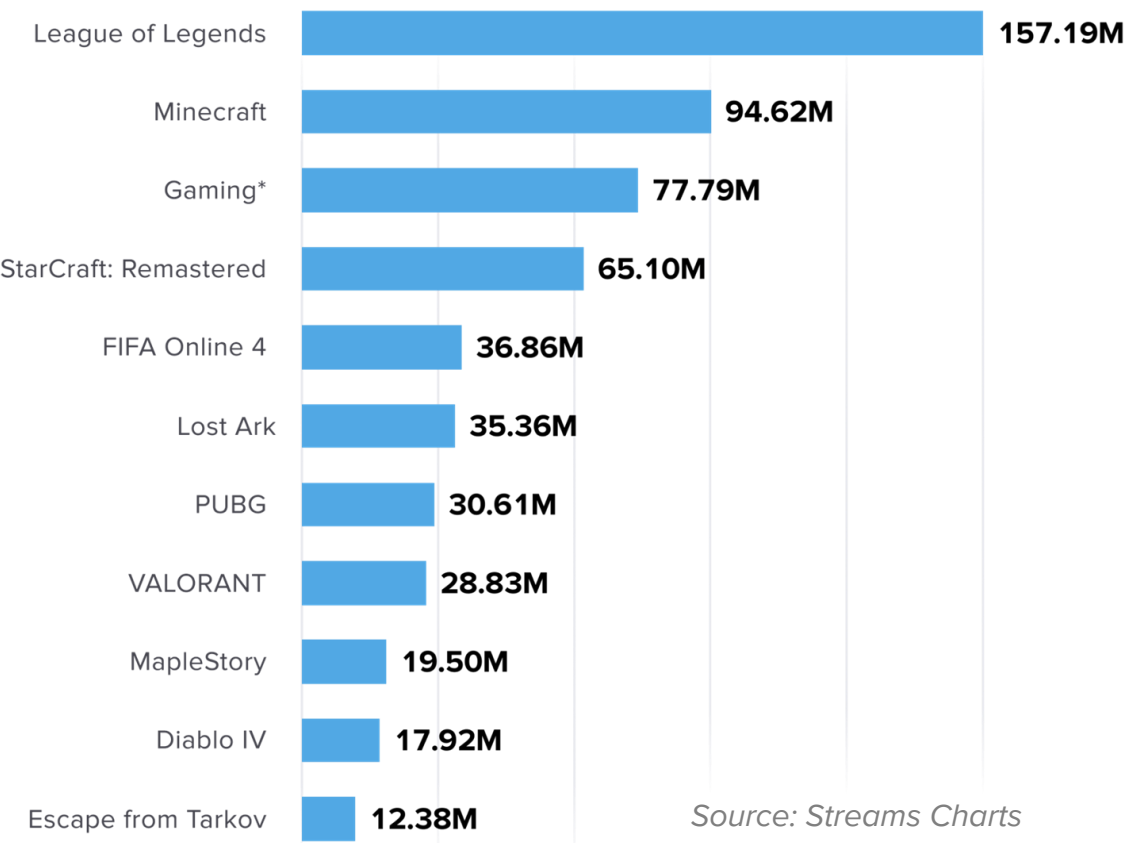
Korean Game Streaming Trends

- *Minecraft* (+401.5%), *Escape from Tarkov* (+288.2%), *FIFA Online 4* (+148.3%) and *MapleStory* (+120.1%) are the only games to more than double in total watch time during H1.
- ***Minecraft***'s total watch time on AfreecaTV grew (+**1340%**), and the number of active streamers grew (+**228.7%**).
- ***Escape from Tarkov***'s January's activities in the game (particularly a patch, Christmas gifts and Twitch Drops) influenced its boost in popularity.
- ***FIFA Online 4***'s total watch time skyrocketed on all major live streaming platforms, including AfreecaTV (+73.1%), Twitch (+3209.3%), and YouTube (+228.7%). Twitch content creator **handongsuk** become the #1 Korean streamer of the game, covering 35.4% of its entire watch time for the platform. Similarly, **갠스트****GAMST** became the top YouTube channel (48.4% of the platform's HW). The FIFA World Cup was also a major factor in this growth.
- ***PUBG*** has the largest drop in watch time among the top 10 video games: - **26.4%** compared to H2 2022. In quantitative terms, the drop was 11 million hours of watch time, of which 10.4 million is a decrease of AfreecaTV stats.

Korean Streaming Landscape — H1 2023



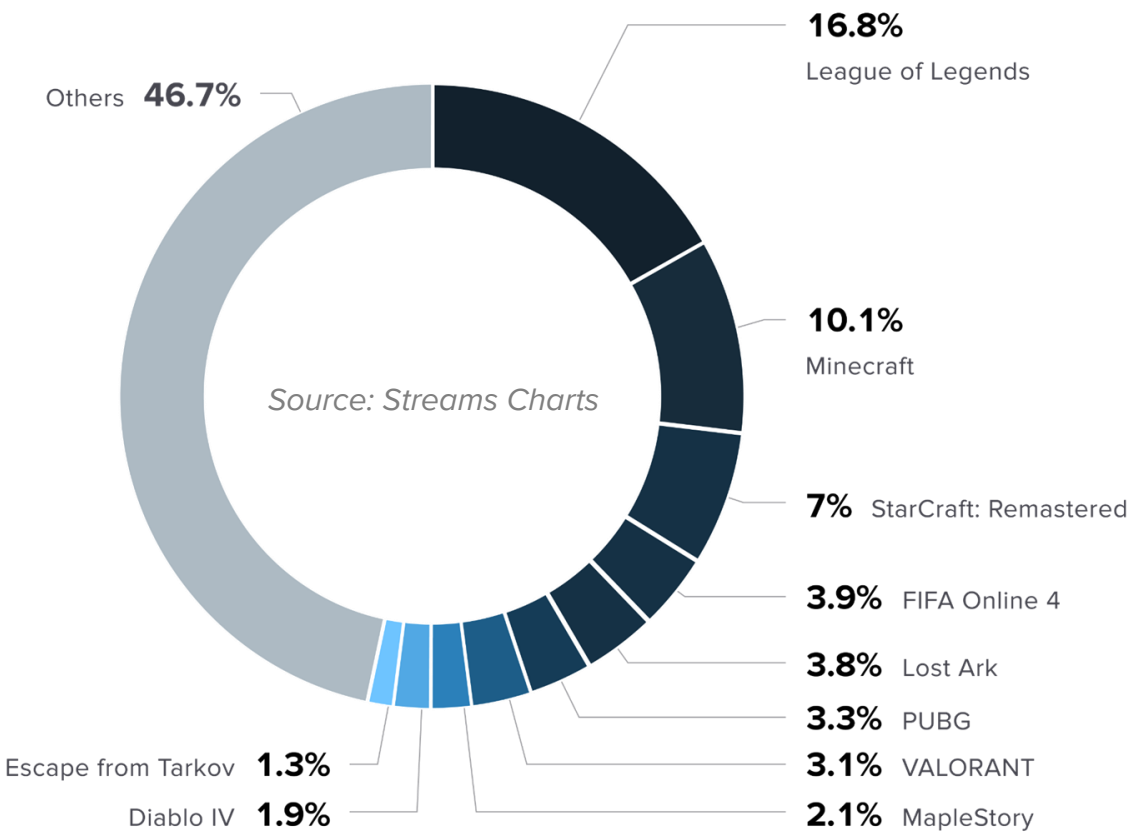
Most Popular Gaming Titles by Hours Watched



Source: Streams Charts

* - YouTube and Kick gaming category

Viewership Share Among Leading Game Titles



Source: Streams Charts

Korean Top Titles by Hours Watched — H1 2023























Title	Platforms	Hours Watched	Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Top Channel Hours Watched	Top Channel % of Total
League of Legends		157 190 061	김민교	Afreeca TV	19 422 983	12.36%
Minecraft		94 621 837	항상#김성태	Afreeca TV	8 363 454	8.84%
Gaming*		77 794 305	RYG Game Animation	YouTube	1 428 946	1.84%
StarCraft: Remastered		65 100 392	Bisu김택용	Afreeca TV	8 229 882	12.64%
FIFA Online 4		36 864 898	BJ두치와뿌꾸	Afreeca TV	5 103 728	13.84%
Lost Ark		35 359 587	한동숙	Twitch	3 202 104	9.06%
PUBG		30 610 791	항상#김성태	Afreeca TV	2 414 894	7.89%
VALORANT		28 830 228	김된모	Twitch	2 110 092	7.32%
MapleStory		19 499 293	명훈	Twitch	2 847 470	14.60%
Diablo IV		17 923 290	풍월량	Twitch	2 109 087	11.77%

* - includes streams that are not in the top live-streams of specific game categories

Source: Streams Charts

Korean Top Streamers Per Leading Title — H1 2023



Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Title	Overview of Channel
 김민교	 Afreeca TV	League of Legends	Kim Min Gyo is a League of Legends broadcaster and Afreeca TV partner, also known for replays and commenting on LCK events.
 항상#김성태	 Afreeca TV	Minecraft	“Always #Kim Seongtae” is a former esports pro known for Sudden Attack and Overwatch, he is now an Afreeca TV Broadcast Jockey and variety streamer.
 RYG Game Animation	 YouTube	Gaming	RYG Game Animation is a small animation studio that makes short animations about popular games for the YouTube platform.
 Bisu 김택용	 Afreeca TV	StarCraft: Remastered	“Bisu” or Kim Taek Yong is a former StarCraft esports pro, considered one of the best Protoss players ever. He is now retired and streams StarCraft as an Afreeca TV partner.
 BJ 두치와뿌꾸	 Afreeca TV	FIFA Online 4	Duchiwa Puku / Doochi and Pooki were a broadcast duo, only Pooki remains active as a broadcast affiliate with Afreeca TV.
 한동숙	 Twitch	Lost Ark	Handongsuk was originally an Afreeca TV partner/affiliate who moved to Twitch and gained popularity in Lost Ark alongside his club/clan “Mountain Club”.
 김원모	 Twitch	VALORANT	Doenmo is an esports professional currently signed to Gen.G as part of their content creator roster. He participated in VALORANT Challengers Korea with FQ4 in 2021.
 항상#김성태	 Afreeca TV	PUBG	“Always #Kim Seongtae” is a former esports pro known for Sudden Attack and Overwatch, he is now an Afreeca TV partner and variety streamer.
 명훈	 Twitch	MapleStory	“Medal of Honor,” Seongmin Cho is a former Overwatch and Bubble Fighter pro who also plays MapleStory.
 풍월량	 Twitch	Diablo IV	Kim Young-tae is a variety streamer who was formerly affiliated with Afreeca TV, in 2016 he departed Afreeca TV for Twitch.

Source: Streams Charts

Japanese Game Streaming Landscape

H1 2023 Livestreaming in Japan Overview



Japanese Livestreaming Ecosystem

- Japan's livestreaming ecosystem is dominated by international platforms, **YouTube** and **Twitch**. Game streaming popularity in Japan is developing compared to East Asia's more mature markets, Korea and China.
- Japan was historically a console-first gaming market and was slower to develop a domestic esports ecosystem. As a result, game streaming in Japan has been slower to catch on compared to Korea and China. As it has grown in popularity, we are seeing a **higher than average representation of console titles**, as well as the influence of Japanese anime subculture at play.
- Japanese excitement for **VALORANT** has exploded this year, it has become the most watched video game in Japanese with 10.7% share in all gaming streams. The game's total increased by 14.5% compared to H2 2022. The official **VALORANT** channel was the most watched in H1, indicating the importance of official esports broadcasts in this growth.
- A leading trend in Japan is **VTuber** content. This popular format uses motion capture software to bring to life Anime-inspired avatars. Several agencies, most notably **Hololive Productions**, exist to manage these content creators. This brings together gaming and anime subcultures.

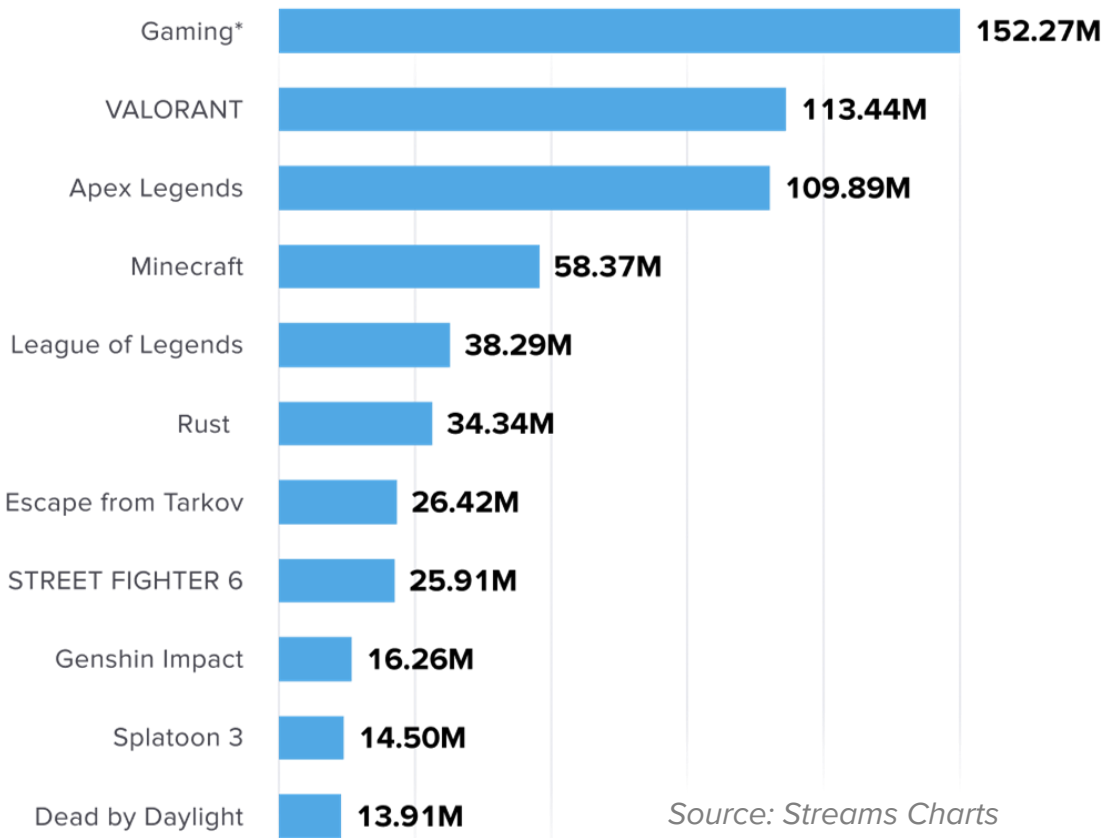
Japanese Game Streaming Trends

- **Gaming** accounted for 66.9% of all Japanese livestreaming watch time over the period. The top 3 also includes **Entertainment** (10.8%) and **News & Politics** (8.2%).
- The popularity of VTubers contributed the most to the rise of **Minecraft**, with top VTubers such as **Pekora, Watame, Miko**, and others becoming the biggest streamers of the game. The title's watch time increased by 177.9% compared to H2 2022.
- The top-10 games rating includes a single title released in 2023: **Street Fighter 6**. SF6 was also the only fighting game to make any of the East Asian top 10 lists. Reflecting Japan's long history with the genre.
- **Escape from Tarkov** and **Rust** also showed an impressive growth at 75.9% and 73.7%, respectively. The increase in stats is due to various streamer activities that included Twitch Drops, a big factor for statistics growth.
- **Splatoon 3** had the biggest drop in watch time among the top 10 video games: (-68.5%) compared to H2 2022. This is due to the general decline in interest in the title since its release in Q3 2022.

Japan Streaming Landscape — H1 2023

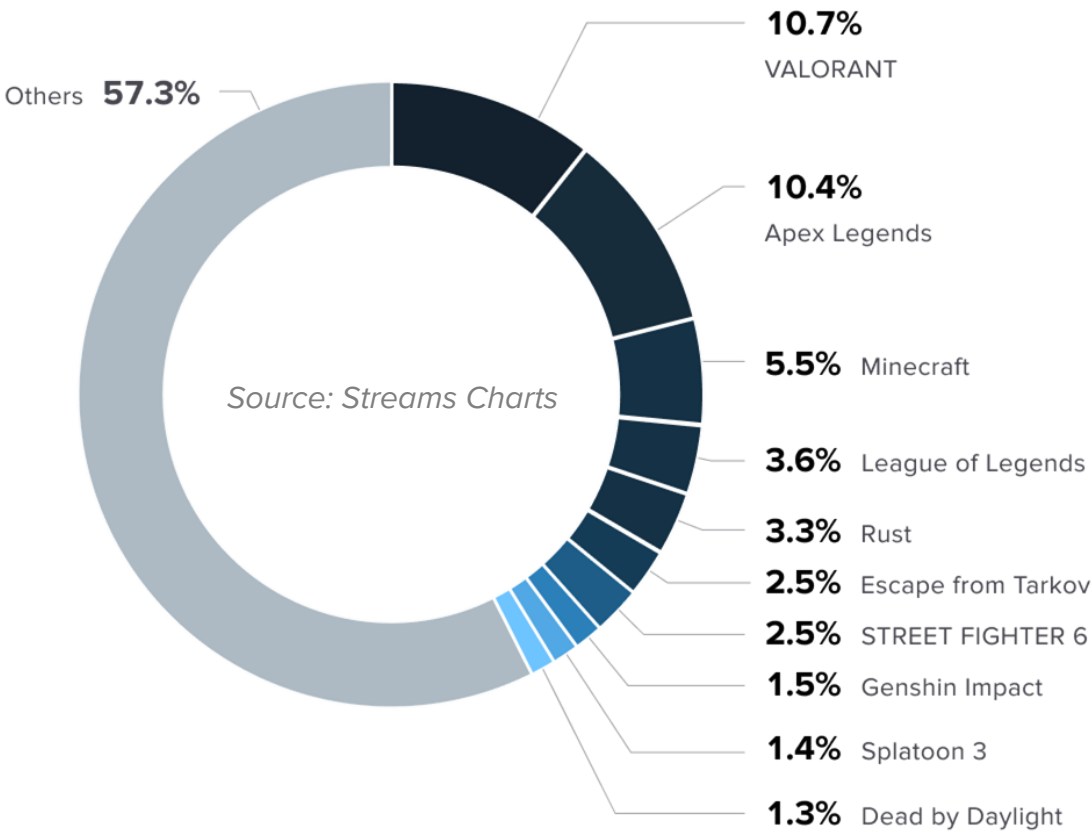


Most Popular Gaming Titles by Hours Watched


















































































* - YouTube and Kick gaming category

Viewership Share Among Leading Game Titles























Japanese Top Titles by Hours Watched — H1 2023



Title	Platforms	Hours Watched	Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Top Channel Hours Watched	Top Channel % of Total
VALORANT	      	113 437 379	 VALORANT_jpn	 Twitch	14 048 532	12.38%
Apex Legends	      	109 892 015	 tttcheekyttl	 YouTube	6 138 758	5.59%
Minecraft	     	58 374 973	 Pekora Ch, 兎田ぺこら	 YouTube	2 684 089	4.60%
League of Legends	      	38 285 417	 fps_shaka	 Twitch	6 324 380	16.52%
Rust	    	34 335 825	 fps_shaka	 Twitch	5 841 451	17.01%
Escape from Tarkov	      	26 418 514	 stylishnoob4	 Twitch	6 347 844	24.03%
STREET FIGHTER 6	   	25 908 458	 stylishnoob4	 Twitch	2 901 553	11.20%
Genshin Impact	    	16 260 715	 ねるめろ / Nerumero	 YouTube	3 375 977	20.76%
Splatoon 3	    	13 912 133	 けんしろ / サーモンラ	 YouTube	1 454 048	10.03%
Dead by Daylight	     	13 912 133	 りぜる	 YouTube	1 096 246	7.88%

Source: Streams Charts

Japanese Top Streamers Per Leading Title — H1 2023

Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Title	Overview of Channel
 VALORANT_jpn	 Twitch	Valorant	The official Japanese broadcast platforms for Valorant. It's popularity is largely due to hosting esports content
 tttcheekyttt	 YouTube	Apex Legends	Cheeky is a Japanese esports player and streamer who is currently playing for SBI e-Sports.
 Pekora Ch, 兎田ぺこら	 YouTube	Minecraft	Pekora is a Japanese vtuber who appears as an anime character with rabbit ears. She is associated with Hololive Production, a vtuber talent agency.
 fps_shaka	 Twitch	League of Legends	Chikara "SHAKA" Kawakami is a variety streamer and commentator, most strongly associated with FPS titles like PUBG, Apex, and Escape from Tarkov.
 fps_shaka	 Twitch	Rust	
 stylishnoob4	 Twitch	Escape from Tarkov	Yuta Seki is a variety streamer and former professional overwatch player best known for playing FPS titles on twitch.
 stylishnoob4	 Twitch	STREET FIGHTER 6	
 ねるめろ / Nerumero	 YouTube	Genshin Impact	Numero is an independent vtuber who debuted in 2019. He appears as an androgynous anime-style character with long white hair.
 けんしろ / サーモンラン	 YouTube	Splatoon 3	Kenshiro SalmonRun is a Japanese Splatoon player who primarily plays the Salmon Run Game mode.
 りぜる	 YouTube	Dead by Daylight	Rizeru/R1zel is a Dead by Daylight streamer and commentator

Source: Streams Charts

Chinese Game Streaming Landscape

H1 2023 Livestreaming in China Overview



Chinese Livestreaming Ecosystem

- **Bilibili, Huya, and Douyu** are the leading game streaming platforms in China, all three have strong ties to **Tencent**. In 2021, a merger between Huya and Douyu was blocked by Chinese regulators.
- Streaming platforms in China technically do not allow broadcasts of games that have not received official licenses in the Chinese market, but this is often rarely enforced and many streamers find workarounds. **VALORANT**, for example, has taken off more strongly on streaming platforms after receiving license approval and as more esports teams have begun fielding **VALORANT** rosters.
- Chinese game live streaming platforms compete for license exclusivity for top leagues and events. In 2023 DouYu secured non-exclusive broadcasting rights for the 2023 League of Legends Professional League (LPL). Former and current esports professionals are also highly represented among China's leading KOLs.
- In April of 2023, top Bilibili streamers protested changes on the platform that affected payouts for streamers.

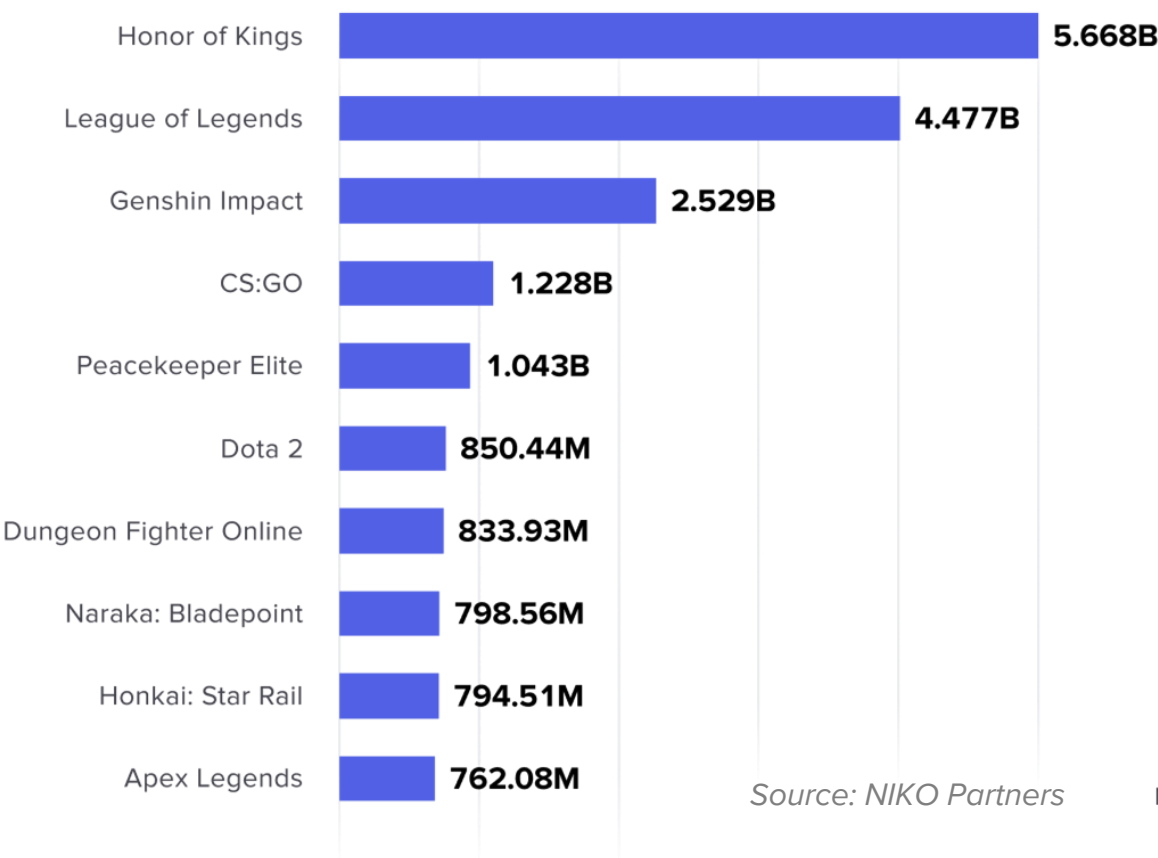
Chinese Game Streaming Trends

- **Honkai: Star Rail** was released in China in late April of 2023, it quickly became one of the most popular streaming titles in the market, it was the third most viewed title in May and dropping to fourth in June.
- Over the course of H1 2023, viewership for **Genshin Impact**, also published by miHoYo and set in the same universe as **Star Rail**, declined by 31%. Anticipation for the release of **Star Rail** did produce a 23% increase in views in March of 2023.
- **Honor of Kings** and **League of Legends** are the two most popular streamed titles in the Chinese market, remaining consistently in the first and second positions for monthly views for the entirety of H1 2023.
- MOBAs still perform strongly in China. **Honor of Kings**, saw no major change in monthly views over H1 overall, but did see a slight (7%) increase between January and April, which returned to normal by June. **League of Legends** views grew by 15% in H1 while **League of Legends: Wild Rift** viewership saw a decline of 26%
- **Naraka: Bladepoint** saw the highest growth among top titles in H1 2023, with monthly views up 41% between January and June.

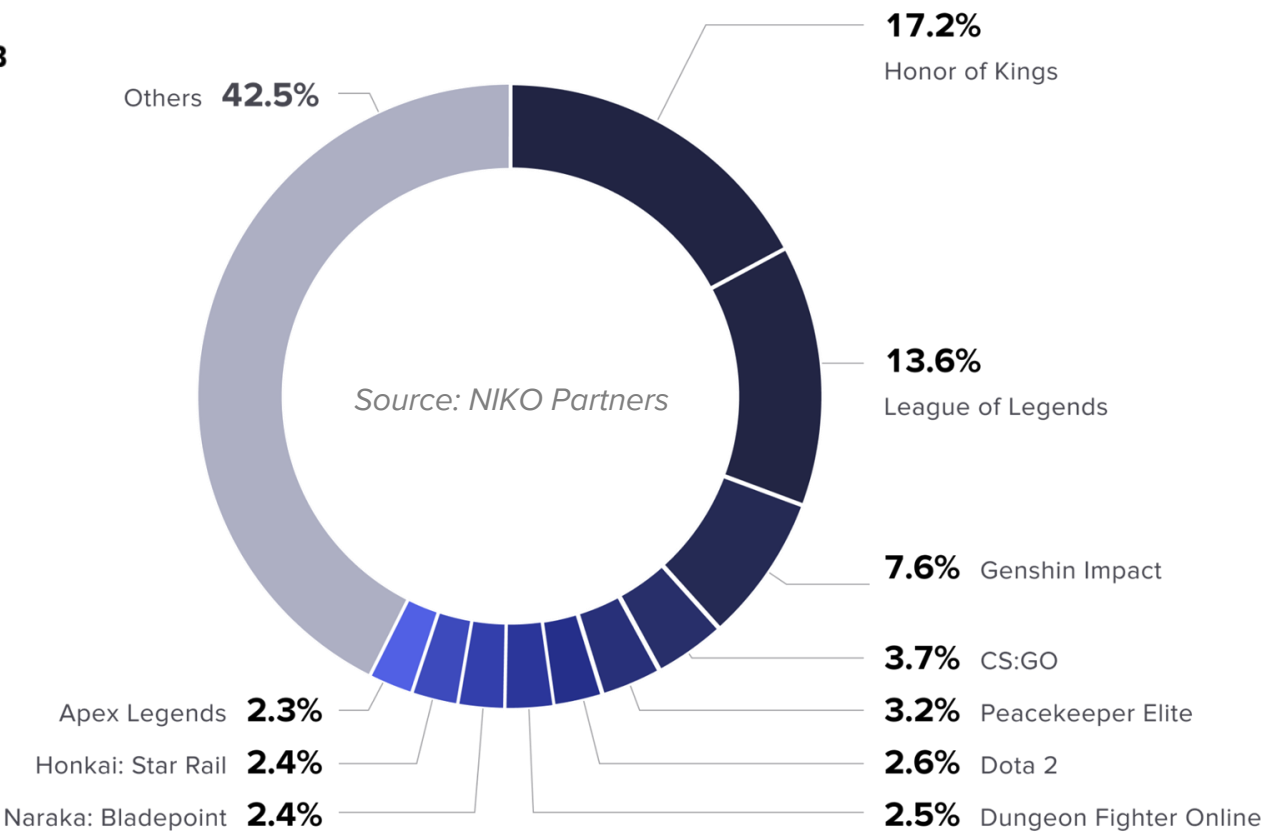
Chinese Streaming Landscape — H1 2023



Most Popular Gaming Titles by Total Views



Viewership Share Among Leading Game Titles



Chinese Top Titles by Total Views — H1 2023



Title	Platforms	Total Views	Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Top Channel Views	Top Channel % of Total
Honor of Kings		5 668 533 892	狂魔哥解说	Bilibili	61 511 287	1.09%
League of Legends		4 477 373 103	老实憨厚的笑笑	Bilibili	98 879 722	2.21%
Genshin Impact		2 529 214 233	原神	Bilibili	65 145 086	2.58%
CS:GO		1 228 505 127	废物弟弟汉堡包	Bilibili	28 018 777	2.28%
Peacekeeper Elite		1 043 241 440	若若跑的贼快	Douyu	27 628 489	2.65%
Dota 2		850 440 619	longdd黄翔	Bilibili	54 659 472	6.43%
Dungeon Fighter Online		833 930 900	旭旭宝宝	Douyu	44 160 892	5.30%
Naraka: Bladepoint		798 560 174	小铭XiaoMing阿	Douyu	12 835 204	1.61%
Honkai: Star Rail		794 509 475	棉花大哥哥	Bilibili	13 333 478	1.68%
APEX Legends		762 084 025	飞天狙想要努力变胖	Bilibili	45 966 896	6.03%

Source: NIKO Partners

Chinese Top Streamers Per Leading Title — H1 2023



Top Channel	Top Channel Platform	Title	Overview of Channel
狂魔哥解说	Bilibili	Honor of Kings	Kuang Mo Ge Jie Shuo, whose real name is Liu Wei, is a Bilibili streamer who became famous for playing against the Honor of Kings professional players.
老实憨厚的笑笑	Bilibili	League of Legends	Lao Shi Han Hou De Xiao Xiao, whose actual name is Sun Ya Long, was a popular League of Legends streamer on Tencent's now-defunct Penguin Esports live streaming platform. He is a former League of Legends professional player and former support for the IG team.
原神	Bilibili	Genshin Impact	原神 is the official channel of Chinese version Genshin Impact on Huya, DouYu and Bilibili.
废物弟弟汉堡包	Bilibili	CS:GO	Known as 汉堡 (Burger), he is popular with young audience, because of his funny comments and fast reactions. He primarily uploads CS:GO content.
若若跑的贼快	Douyu	Peacekeeper Elite	Her real name is Liu Dalong, one of the most popular female streamers, she is famous for her nice voice, very popular on Douyin. Peacekeeper elite created a voice pack for her.
longdd黄翔	Bilibili	Dota 2	Longdd, whose real name is Huang Xiang, is a professional DOTA player and former coach at LGD. He was inducted into the People's Esports China Esports Players Hall of Fame in 2020.
旭旭宝宝	Douyu	Dungeon Fighter Online	Xu Xu Bao Bao, also known as Ren Yixu, is an esports player for Dungeons and Warriors. On July 16, 2018, Xuxu Baobao became an official member of Douyu TV. He is a co-founder of Shanghai Wufeng Network Technology.
小铭XiaoMing阿	Douyu	Naraka: Bladepoint	Popular for playing national style games.
棉花大哥哥	Bilibili	Honkai: Star Rail	Mian Hua Da Ge Ge, also known as Cotton is a well-known console game streamer on Bilibili. He has released over a thousand videos on Bilibili, covering titles such as Blue Archive, Honkai Impact 3rd, Honkai: Star Rail, and more.
飞天狙想要努力变胖	Bilibili	APEX	Known as Apex FtJ, popular for playing Apex Legends professionally and with random fans online.

Source: NIKO Partners

Methodology and Context

- This bulletin covers livestreaming in East Asia, including Japan, Korea, and China, in the first half of 2023, a period from January to June 2023.
- Data in this bulletin is collected using public APIs from 13 platforms used to stream game content in East Asia. This data is further refined and analyzed by Niko Partners and Streams Charts, using proprietary tools.
- Japan and Korean streaming data is provided by Streams Charts while Chinese livestreaming data is provided by Niko Partners through their China Games Streaming Tracker.
- The Korean and Japanese audience stats are based on Twitch, Bigo Live, Facebook, Kick, Nimo TV, Nonolive, Trovo, YouTube, Mildom, and Afreeca TV viewership data.
- Chinese audience stats are based on Huya, Douyu, and Bilibili viewership data.
- Japanese and Korean title rankings for are based on 'Hours-Watched' while Chinese Data is based on 'Total Monthly Views'. The choice of different metrics is the result of differences in the public APIs and data available for streaming platforms in each market.
- This bulletin demonstrates title popularity and market share across the three markets as a market share ratios. Our goal is to present market overviews based on available data to best allow comparisons between the three markets, despite different metrics for Korean and Japanese livestreaming markets versus the Chinese market.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Livestreaming	The act of broadcasting video or audio content in real-time over the internet, allowing viewers to watch or listen as it happens. This report focuses specifically on game livestreaming and uses streaming, game streaming, and livestreaming interchangeably.
Channel	The dedicated online space where a content creator broadcasts their content. A channel is tied to and hosted by a livestreaming platform.
Platform	Platform refers to the specific website, application, or service where livestreamers host and broadcast their content to an audience.
Viewers / Audience	The collective group of individual viewers who watch and engage with a livestream.
KOL (Key Opinion Leader)	A term referring to individuals who have a significant and engaged following in a specific niche or industry.
Hours Watched	A metric used to measure the total amount of time viewers have spent watching livestreams or video content on a livestreaming platform. It reflects the combined duration of all viewership across multiple streams or videos.
Total Views	A metric used to measure the total number of views (not unique) a channel or broadcast receives over a designated period of time.
Partner / Broadcast Jockey	Content creators who have reached a certain level of recognition and engagement on the platform. Becoming a partner often comes with various benefits, which may include revenue-sharing options, access to premium features, additional support from the platform, and in some cases may be tied to contractual obligations. Broadcast Jockey is a term used specifically on Afreeca TV.
Vtuber (Virtual YouTuber)	A content creator who uses an animated or computer-generated avatar, often with a distinctive persona and voice, to represent themselves in livestreams and online content. Many VTubers use anime inspired avatars.
Twitch Drops / Drops	A feature on the Twitch platform that allows game developers and content creators to reward viewers with in-game items. It incentivises viewer participation and engagement.
Esports	Organized, competitive video gaming that is often conducted in a professional or competitive setting.

About Niko Partners



Leveraging unmatched local expertise with a global perspective, Niko Partners delivers the most in-depth video game market intelligence for Asia and MENA, the world's fastest-growing regions. With our deeper understanding of these complex markets, game developers, publishers, investors, and suppliers can make smarter business decisions with the utmost confidence.

- **Focus groups**
- **Gamer surveys**
- **Market reports**
- **IPO and market opportunity analysis**
- **Market entry strategy**
- **Partner selection**
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- **News analysis service**
- **China games database**
- **China games streaming tracker**
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About Streams Charts



Streams Charts enables the analysis of all key metrics for channels, streams, games, communities, and even clips. Streams Charts collects data from the most popular broadcasting platforms, providing an insight into detailed and relevant streaming analytics.

Unique data and functions provided by Streams Charts, such as audience retention rate, custom time filters, and personal lists, make it easy to identify market opportunities based on activity, reach, and audience demographics. Today Streams Charts supports active platforms: Twitch, Trovo, YouTube, Kick, NimoTV, BIGO LIVE, Mildom, Rumble, Nonolive, and AfreecaTV.

As the streaming market develops and changes, Streams Charts' data will assist you in staying informed and prepared for complex decisions.

  **/StreamsCharts**

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