Webcomics are Winning Over the Gen Z Scroll

September 21, 2026

New study from WEBTOON Entertainment and National Research Group (NRG) goes *inside the fandom powered by webcomics—the mobile (vertical scroll) format WEBTOON pioneered—as it has grown into a global habit for approximately 155 million users, and is the source material behind several leading K-dramas.*

Webcomic fans' love runs deep, as they spend more time reading webcomics than engaging with other entertainment, rank them as their most-loved fandom, and want to bring that fandom to life across formats.

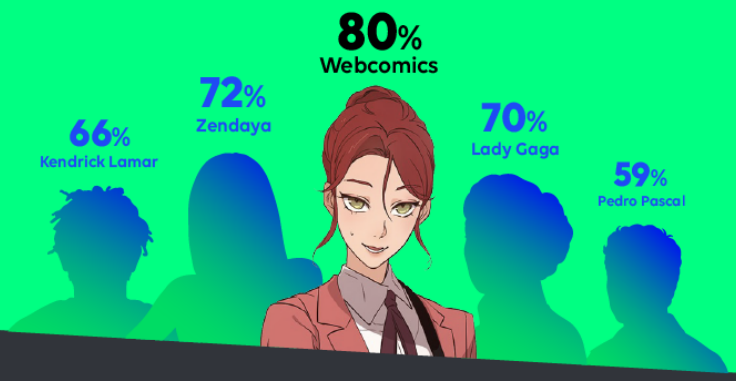
WEBCOMICS:

POP CULTURE'S NEXT OBSESSION IS ALREADY HERE

THE #1 FANDOM

Shares of webcomic readers who say they like or love the following

When people read webcomics, they fall hard for the format.
It's their single most-loved fandom, ahead of the celebrities, shows, and stars they follow everywhere else.





The Anti-Doomscroll

Shares of webcomic readers who say they spend less time on each activity when reading webcomics

While the average attention span has shrunk to 47 seconds, webcomics pull fans in and keep them focused. 90% of readers say they often read webcomics over other entertainment activities in their free time.



APPOINTMENT READING

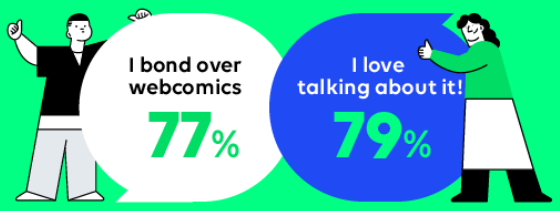
Streaming taught us to binge, webcomics taught teens to wait again, and to love the wait.

Top 5 reactions to weekly releases from teen webcomic readers

1. I check the app to see if a new episode has been released
2. It feels like more of an event when a new episode drops
3. The wait between episodes builds suspense
4. I feel more excited to read because I had to wait for the next episode
5. I look forward to new episodes being released each week

BETTER TOGETHER

Webcomics turn a private scroll into a shared obsession, the same social glue that powered the rise of anime.



CAN'T GET ENOUGH

Webcomic fans are eager to see stories in new formats and dive deeper into their favorite universes.



Download images HERE

LOS ANGELES – Webcomics, the mobile-native, vertical scroll format built for serialized storytelling, are turning scrolling into something more powerful: a moment of focus. The same motion that fuels mindless scrolling becomes immersive and intentional when readers dive into a webcomic, capturing their attention and keeping them engaged.

A new study from WEBTOON Entertainment (Nasdaq: WBTN) and National Research Group (NRG) reveals that webcomics are doing what few forms of entertainment can: getting Gen Z to focus. The research also dives into how the format has evolved into a global cultural phenomenon, its growing influence on pop culture, and the behaviors that define its deeply passionate fandom.

What began as a Korean storytelling innovation has grown into a global force across pop culture and the creator economy. With approximately 155 million monthly active users, WEBTOON Entertainment has built a vast and deeply engaged global audience, and its on-platform stories are increasingly becoming the source material for hit adaptations across film, television, animation, and more.

Some of the insights revealed by the study include:

The No. 1 Fandom

When readers dive into webcomics, they fall hard. Among monthly readers surveyed, 80% say they love or like webcomics—emerging as their most-loved fandom, ahead of the likes of Zendaya (72%), Lady Gaga (70%), or Pedro Pascal (59%).

From Fleeting Attention to Focused Engagement

Attention is becoming scarcer than ever, as the average person's attention span has slipped to around 47 seconds, down from about 75 seconds a decade ago.* Yet, webcomics command attention in two important ways: sustained focus and repeated engagement. A notable 90% of readers often choose to read webcomics over other entertainment activities. In fact, half of webcomic readers (50%) browse social media less while reading webcomics—the biggest drop of any activity measured, comfortably ahead of watching YouTube (46%), gaming (42%), and TV streaming (41%).

The Return of Appointment Viewing

Streaming spent a decade teaching audiences to binge, but webcomics got Gen Z to wait for the next episode again and to enjoy it. Readers aged 13-17 rank *"It feels like an event when a new episode drops"* and *"The wait builds suspense"* among their favorite parts of a weekly release. Appointment reading but in an on-demand world, webcomic fans are choosing to return to the platform for their favorite stories.

From Page to Screen

Webcomic fans don't want to stop at the last panel. More than 80% are excited to watch animated adaptations of the webcomics they love, 78% want to play video games based on them, and 75% plan to buy merchandise from the stories they love. For WEBTOON, that appetite starts with an original story from a Creator on the platform and grows as fans follow the story into K-Dramas, anime, and beyond.

Better Together

Webcomics turn a solo read into a shared fandom: 79% of readers enjoy talking about webcomics with others and 77% say the format gives them something to bond over—arguably the same connection and community that helped the rise of trends like anime. Younger readers are the most likely to connect over it.

"Webcomics have built one of the most engaged fandoms in entertainment," said Yongsoo Kim, President of WEBTOON Entertainment. "These insights show that when readers find a story they love, they give it their full attention, stay engaged, and want to come along for the journey. The deep connection that fans form with the stories they love is what sets webcomics apart, turning the format into a powerful force in pop culture."

"Our research shows that webcomics are poised to be the next artistic import that becomes a cultural phenomenon, like anime and K-pop," said Fergus Navaratnam-Blair, Vice President, Trends and Futures, NRG. "Based on our new research, webcomics fans are a clearly meaningful entertainment demographic. The creativity, format, and release cadence unique to the medium are all helping drive the next big wave of fandom."

Explore the full findings and Creator stories here, or download the complete report here.

Methodology

The findings are drawn from Inside Webcomic Fandom, a study conducted by National Research Group (NRG). NRG fielded a US online quantitative survey during April and May 2026 among 500+ respondents ages 13 to 49 who read webcomics at least monthly. An additional qualitative layer of interviews with webcomic creators around the globe were conducted in tandem to supplement quantitative results.

About WEBTOON Entertainment

WEBTOON Entertainment is a leading global entertainment company and home to some of the world's largest storytelling platforms. As the global leader and pioneer of the mobile webcomic format, WEBTOON Entertainment has transformed comics and visual storytelling for fans and creators.

With its CANVAS UGC platform empowering anyone to become a creator, and a growing roster of superstar WEBTOON Originals creators and series, WEBTOON Entertainment's passionate fandoms are the new face of pop culture. WEBTOON Entertainment adaptations are available on Netflix, Prime Video, Crunchyroll, and other screens around the world, and the company's content partners have included Warner Bros. Animation, Discord, HYBE, and Duolingo, among many others.

With approximately 155 million monthly active users, WEBTOON Entertainment's IP & Creator Ecosystem of aligned brands and platforms include WEBTOON, Wattpad--the world's leading webnovel platform--WEBTOON Productions, Studio N, Studio LICO, WEBTOON Unscrolled, LINE MANGA, and eBookJapan, among others.

About NRG (National Research Group)

National Research Group is a leading global insights and strategy firm at the intersection of content, culture, and technology.

The world's most innovative brands turn to us for insights into growth and strategy for any content, anywhere, on any device. For more on trends shaping the entertainment sector, explore our previous reports or reach out to us directly at inquiry@nrgmr.com.

* "Why our attention spans are shrinking, with Gloria Mark, PhD," American Psychological Association, February 2023