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## Australia's Top 20 most engaging TV shows

A period drama scored Australian commercial TV's most devoted audience in 2016—and no, it wasn't the final season about the Crawleys and their staff, Roy Morgan Research shows. When it comes to which program last year had the biggest share of viewers especially choosing to watch, SBS's *Versailles* just pipped *State of Origin* (and *Downton Abbey*).

Roy Morgan Research measured the audience engagement of over 400 shows broadcast on commercial free-to-air (FTA) television in 2016, including whether people 'especially choose to watch'.

*Versailles* on SBS took the crown for having the highest share of viewers in the audience especially choosing to watch (76 percent). Set in 17<sup>th</sup> century France, the drama edged out the *State of the Origin* rugby league matches (75 percent) for most highly engaging show of the year according to viewers. Of course, the total audience for *State of Origin XXXVI* was over four times that for *Louis XIV*, so the rugby had far more 'especially choosing' viewers overall.

In third was the *other* period piece *Downton Abbey* which, sadly for its highly engaged audience (74 percent) and Network Seven wrapped up in 2016.

Proving that nothing beats a good story, a number of other dramas made the Top 20. With around two-thirds of viewers especially choosing to watch, these engaging series include Nine's *Love Child* and *Hyde & Seek*, Ten's *NCIS*, *X-Files* and *The Strain*, Seven's *The Blacklist*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Secret Daughter* and *Winners & Losers*, and SBS's *Vikings*.

**Top 20 Commercial TV Shows by Share and Size of Viewers that 'Especially Choose to Watch'**

Highest share of viewers that 'especially choose to watch'			Highest number of viewers who 'especially choose to watch'	
SBS: <i>Versailles</i>	76%	1	Seven: <i>Seven News</i> (Weeknights)	3,683,000
Nine: <i>Rugby League: State of Origin</i>	75%	2	Nine: <i>Nine News</i> (Weeknights)	3,097,000
Seven: <i>Downton Abbey</i>	74%	3	Nine: <i>Rugby League: State of Origin</i>	2,830,000
Nine: <i>Love Child</i>	68%	4	Nine: <i>Big Bang Theory</i>	2,619,000
Nine: <i>Cricket</i>	68%	5	Ten: <i>David Attenborough's Documentaries</i>	2,600,000
Ten: <i>NCIS</i>	68%	6	Nine: <i>David Attenborough's Documentaries</i>	2,550,000
SBS: <i>Coast</i>	68%	7	Seven: <i>My Kitchen Rules</i>	2,434,000
Seven: <i>The Blacklist</i>	67%	9	Seven: <i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	2,378,000
Ten: <i>X-Files</i>	66%	10	Nine: <i>Cricket</i>	2,357,000
Seven: <i>Criminal Minds</i>	66%	11	Seven: <i>Downton Abbey</i>	2,109,000
Seven: <i>Secret Daughter</i>	66%	12	Seven: <i>Seven News</i> (Weekend Nights)	2,077,000
SBS: <i>Byzantium: A Tale of Three Cities</i>	66%	13	Seven: <i>Criminal Minds</i>	2,047,000
SBS: <i>Vikings</i>	66%	14	Seven: <i>Big Bang Theory</i> (from Oct15)	2,051,000
Nine: <i>Hyde &amp; Seek</i>	65%	15	Ten: <i>NCIS</i>	2,010,000
Ten: <i>The Strain</i>	65%	16	Ten: <i>MasterChef Australia</i>	1,997,000
SBS: <i>Who Do You Think You Are?</i>	65%	17	Ten: <i>Cricket</i>	1,891,000
SBS: <i>Grand Tours of Scotland</i>	65%	18	Nine: <i>Nine News</i> (Weekend Nights)	1,905,000
Ten: <i>Cricket</i>	64%	19	Seven: <i>Football AFL Friday Night</i>	1,897,000
Seven: <i>Winners &amp; Losers</i>	64%	20	Seven: <i>Football AFL Saturday Night</i>	1,893,000
Nine: <i>David Attenborough's Documentaries</i>	64%	21	Nine: <i>60 Minutes</i>	1,903,000

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia: January to December 2016, sample n = 50,144 Australians aged 14+

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### Most engaging programs by Audience Size

But thanks to their greater overall reach, news, sport, documentaries, reality TV and lifestyle programming dominate the Top 20 shows with the highest *numbers* of viewers especially choosing to watch. The weeknight news on Seven and Nine reach 3,683,000 and 3,097,000 viewers respectively who especially choose to watch (representing slightly less than 60 percent of all viewers).

Over 2.5 million Australians especially choose to watch David Attenborough documentaries, with little difference between episodes airing on Network Nine or Ten. Nine's brand new episodes of *Big Bang Theory* boast 2,619,000 viewers who consider it 'must-see TV', while 2,051,000 think the same way about the *re-runs* on Seven.

A few of the programs with the highest *share* of viewers who 'especially choose to watch' are also among the most TV's most popular shows: *State of Origin* (with 2,830,000 viewers especially choosing to watch), *Downton Abbey* (2,109,000), *Criminal Minds* (2,047,000), *NCIS* (2,010,000) and cricket (2,357,000 on Nine and 1,891,000 on Ten).

Friday and Saturday night AFL, weekend night news, *My Kitchen Rules* and *MasterChef*, all also reach around 1.9 million+ especially choosing viewers. *Better Homes & Gardens* and *60 Minutes* also make the Top 20—even though the majority of their audiences actually say they only watch when there's nothing better on or because a household member wants it on.

### Engagement and Audience Size

The below chart shows correlations between total audience size and the percent of viewers who especially choose to watch. Overall, the more popular show, the higher the level of audience engagement *tends* to be.

The 400 shows: Total Audience Size\* by Share who Especially Choose to Watch



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source Australia: January to December 2016, sample n = 50,144 Australians aged 14+. \* Total Audience is respondents who have any type of engagement with the show.

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There are some big gaps between shows with the most and least engaged viewers among equally sized total audiences: For example, *Versailles* and *Dating Naked* have a similar number of Australians involved with the program overall—but *Versailles* has almost half a million more viewers especially choosing to watch.

**Lisa Meunier, General Manager – Media, Roy Morgan Research, says:**

*“Television remains the dominant at-home media, however the increasing competition makes it vital that the market plays close attention to the levels of audience engagement.*

*“Almost half of all commercial TV viewership is by people who ‘especially choose to watch’. Another 35 percent is being watched because there’s ‘nothing better on’ and 16 percent because a ‘household member watches’.*

*“Dramas may not always rate as well as reality TV, broad comedies, news and sport, but their value to broadcasters and advertisers is enhanced by the level of dedication among those watching. *Hyde and Seek* and *The Secret Daughter* are two new Aussie dramas that premiered last year on commercial TV and quickly gained a strong following.*

*“Roy Morgan Research has been closely monitoring the trends in traditional television viewership alongside the rapid take-up of smartphones, tablets, Smart TVs, casting devices, and Subscription Video On Demand services, as well as the changing behaviours on multi-screening, downloading and streaming, recording and viewing catch-up TV.*

*“Australians have more at-home entertainment options than ever, and more personal viewing devices. Increasingly, audiences have less reason to watch anything they don’t especially choose to, and so monitoring audience using this metric is vital. By definition, viewers who aren’t watching by choice are more inclined to switch—whether to another free-to-air TV channel, an SVOD service, or YouTube.*

*“Audience that especially to choose to watch are more reliable, and potentially more valuable to advertisers seeking to maximise the ROI of their commercial TV budget.”*

**To learn more about Roy Morgan’s media research, call (+61) (3) 9224 5309 or email [askroymorgan@roymorgan.com](mailto:askroymorgan@roymorgan.com)**

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#### **About Roy Morgan Research**

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices throughout Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

#### **Margin of Error**

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

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Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2

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