

# Australians choose streaming over free TV

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Paid streaming services now dominate how Australians watch scripted series and movies, with Netflix coming in as the most valued choice according to new research from QUT, which also finds free on-demand services lack extensive use.

Media scholar Professor Amanda Lotz and Dr. Marion McCutcheon, both from QUT's Digital Media Research Centre and School of Communication, surveyed more than 2,000 adults for their Australian Screen Stories Viewing Report, a four-part examination of Australians' attitudes and behaviors towards scripted series and movie viewing.

Funded by ARC Discovery Projects, part one of the report—"Watching Series and Movies in the 21st Century"—has just been published by QUT ePrints. The findings show 41% percent of those surveyed used paid streaming services "mostly every day" or "several days" a week, ahead of free-to air (FTA) channels at 36%.

"Australians' most valued service or channel is Netflix, followed by Seven and then ABC TV. Australians rarely use and do not significantly value free on-demand services (especially commercial ones) for viewing series and movies," Professor Lotz said.

"The most common place for people to turn first when they don't have a particular title in mind is to a paid streaming service (38%).

"We already know that Australians love screens in all their forms, our aim here was to get a better sense of the priorities of people in their viewing habits.

"Although Australians use many services and channels, focusing on frequency of use and value revealed how much norms have changed, though not for all. Importantly, use remains multi-faceted, and different norms exist for different groups of viewers."

Dr. McCutcheon said 8% of respondents watched both FTA and streamers at least several times a week.

"We found high FTA viewers are more likely to be high streaming

viewers, but high streaming viewers are not necessarily high FTA viewers—they are just as likely to watch less than a few times per month as they are every day," Dr. McCutcheon said.

"There are also strong differences in frequency of viewing by age, and a significant difference among men and women in paid streaming use. Age is particularly important in understanding use of paid streaming services and free-to-air channels. One in five viewers under age 34 do not report using free-to-air channels at all and even fewer use free on-demand services."

The researchers found people living in inner city areas, [outer suburbs](#) and in regional Australia used free and paid streaming services at very similar frequencies, and at higher levels than people in remote areas.

Professor Lotz said the paid streaming services are the most used and most often used by Australian viewers to view series and stories, a status she says can be explained by the 'distinctive content and experience' of these services.

"The diminishing amount of original scripted content offered by commercial free-to-air services has reduced their relevance to Australians," Professor Lotz said.

"The infrequent use of free on-demand services challenges assumptions about price sensitivity and that on-demand access uniformly offers a better experience.

"Frequency of use is a more meaningful indicator than general use or asking if different services/channels have been used in the last seven days. It aligns with the rise of commercial metrics such as Nielsen's The Gauge that focus on time spent viewing to better appreciate viewers' priorities in an increasingly fragmented marketplace of video sources."

Dr. McCutcheon said more Australians reported not using/not having access to free-on-demand services such as 10Play, 9Now, and iView (31%) than paid streaming services (28%) and report low levels of regular use of free on demand services (14%).

"Many analysts have focused on affordability as a crucial determinant of streaming use, but despite their lack of cost, Australian viewers clearly find limited value in these free on-demand services for watching scripted series and movies," she said.

"The fact that more viewers use paid streaming services than use free on-demand services suggests that the ad breaks, difficult interfaces and poor search capabilities often associated with the free services outweigh their monetary value for viewers."

**More information:** Australian Screen Stories Viewing Report: Part 1 : Watching Series and Movies in the 21st Century:  
[eprints.qut.edu.au/238930/](https://eprints.qut.edu.au/238930/)

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