

Thursday, 9 February 2017

Digital audience growth continued to drive newspaper readership higher in 2016

Roy Morgan Research today releases the latest Print Readership and Cross-Platform Audience results for Australian Newspapers for the 12 months to December 2016.

Alongside a number of success stories in print, just over half of mastheads increased their total cross-platform reach compared with the previous results to September 2016—and readership via websites and apps was again the driving force behind that growth.

Print Readership Highlights

8,153,000 million Australians aged 14+ (41 percent) read print newspapers in an average week in 2016. This is down 4.3 percent, or just over half a million readers, compared with 2015.

Appetite for print news continues to hold strongest on Saturdays. 4.9 million read Saturday print newspapers in an average week (down 2.7 percent). Sunday titles reach 4.4 million (down 4.3 percent), and Monday to Friday dailies reach a combined 5.7 million readers during the week (down 4.8 percent).

Readers return to weekday national titles

News Corp's and Fairfax's national titles have both gained weekday readers. *The Australian* is up 8.0 percent year-on-year, with 336,000 readers per average Monday to Friday issue in 2016—25,000 more than in 2015. The *Australian Financial Review* is up 3.1 percent to 201,000 readers.

Melbourne vs Sydney

The *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* each continued to post strong readership results in print on weekdays and Saturdays. The *Herald Sun* rose 1.0 percent to 850,000 readers for its average Monday to Friday issue, and 5.0 percent on Saturdays to 823,000. The *Daily Telegraph* was up 1.4 percent to 639,000 on weekdays, and was steady with 599,000 Saturday readers.

The Age is now once again more widely read in print than the *Sydney Morning Herald* from Monday to Friday. In 2016, the latter title fell 8.9 percent to 468,000 on weekdays, while its southern stablemate fell just 0.4 percent, holding 473,000 print readers.

Bright lights, small cities

The *Illawarra Mercury*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *Cairns Post* and *The Advocate* each gained readers for all their average Monday to Friday and Saturday editions, while the *Townsville Bulletin* and *Newcastle Herald* posted weekend gains to compensate for weekday declines.

However the *Gold Coast Bulletin* was far from golden, with double-digit percentage declines across the week—a fate also shared by two Tasmanian titles, *The Examiner* and the *Mercury*.

The West isn't best

Seven West Media's flagship newspaper masthead had the most weekday readers disappear between 2015 and 2016. 62,000 West Australians stopped reading the weekday issues of their only home-grown print newspaper (down 14.3 percent to 373,000). Meanwhile 56,000 fewer read the *Weekend West* (down 9.8 percent to 514,000). The *Sunday Times*, which was acquired from News Corp last year, didn't fare any better: down 12.7 percent to 370,000 readers.

Newspaper Average Issue Print Readership: 2015 vs 2016

	M-F	M-F	Sat	Sat	Sun	Sun
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
National						
The Australian	311	336	663	636	-	-
Aust. Financial Review	195	201	159	117	-	-
The Saturday Paper	-	-	112	114	-	-
NSW						
Daily Telegraph	630	639	599	599	-	-
Sydney Morning Herald	514	468	724	695	-	-
Sunday Telegraph	-	-	-	-	995	965
The Sun-Herald	-	-	-	-	656	634
Newcastle Herald	82	79	98	102	-	-
Illawarra Mercury	33	41	36	41	-	-
Canberra Times	65	52	79	69	51	47
VIC						
Herald Sun	842	850	784	823	-	-
The Age	475	473	588	660	-	-
Sunday Herald Sun	-	-	-	-	866	862
The Sunday Age	-	-	-	-	470	528
Geelong Advertiser	52	60	71	79	-	-
QLD						
Courier-Mail	410	369	517	479	-	-
The Sunday Mail	-	-	-	-	807	739
Cairns Post	49	51	73	75	-	-
Gold Coast Bulletin	78	61	88	68	-	-
Townsville Bulletin	48	43	53	55	-	-
SA						
Adelaide Advertiser	321	312	378	368	-	-
Sunday Mail	-	-	-	-	432	431
WA						
West Australian	435	373	-	-	-	-
Weekend West	-	-	570	514	-	-
Sunday Times	-	-	-	-	424	370
Tasmania						
The Mercury	78	53	108	76	-	-
The Examiner	48	34	55	43	-	-
The Advocate	34	36	39	44	-	-
Sunday Tasmanian	-	-	-	-	92	68
Sunday Examiner	-	-	-	-	54	48
Northern Territory						
Northern Territory News	33	34	42	42	-	-
Sunday Territorian	-	-	-	-	33	33

[View the full Newspaper Average Print Issue Readership Results](#)

Newspaper Inserted Magazines

4,823,000 Australians read one or more Newspaper Inserted Magazines in an average week (down 4.1 percent year-on-year).

The inaugural results for *Stellar* are fine—but not stellar. The new Sunday magazine from News Corp reached an average 878,000 readers per issue over its first few months. This is slightly below its predecessor *Sunday Style*'s final result of 900,000 readers—despite the benefit of a third host News Corp masthead, Queensland's *Sunday Mail*, joining the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Sunday Herald Sun*. It will be interesting to watch this space as Sunday newspaper readers discover this new title.

The country's most-read insert, *Good Weekend* has made a big comeback, up 10.9 percent to 1,332,000 readers per average issue in 2016—the title's best readership result since March 2015.

[View the full Newspaper Inserted Magazine Readership Results](#)

Cross-Platform Audience Highlights

The total cross-platform reach of Australian mastheads measured across both print and digital increased to 13.1 million in 2016. Two in three Australians now access these news mastheads across any platform and any device in an average week.

Eight of the 15 publications increased their cross-platform readership, compared with the previous quarterly results for the 12 months to September 2016.

Notably, the total growth for all eight of these mastheads was driven (in most cases entirely) by an increase in digital readership. Conversely, the seven that declined all posted a drop in digital readership as well as print.

Six mastheads reach over two million Australians in an average week, and all of these giants are among the winners. The *Sydney Morning Herald* continues to lead with 4,238,000 readers per week across print and digital—86 percent of which comes via its website and app. The *Daily Telegraph* reached 3,254,000 (67 percent digital), ahead of the *Herald Sun* (3,050,000, 64 percent digital), *The Age* (2,924,000, 84 percent digital), *The Australian* (2,474,000, 71 percent digital) and the *Courier-Mail* (2,153,000, 62 percent digital).

The two other winners were the *Canberra Times* (525,000, 86 percent digital), and the regional *Weekly Times* (310,000, 15 percent digital).

Newspaper Cross-Platform Audiences 2016

Publication	Print	Digital (web or app)	Total Cross- Platform
	Dec 2016 (000's)	Dec 2016 (000's)	Dec 2016 (000's)
Adelaide Advertiser	639	714	1156
The Age	959	2464	2924
The Australian	931	1756	2474
Canberra Times	105	449	525
Courier-Mail	1099	1344	2153
Daily Telegraph	1478	2188	3254
Financial Review	415	1048	1342
Herald Sun	1552	1951	3050
Mercury	116	140	229
Newcastle Herald	153	155	290
The Saturday Paper	114	162	265
Sunday Times	370	803	1050
Sydney Morning Herald	1132	3644	4238
Weekly Times	271	48	310
West Australian	749	703	1236

Print is net 7-day readership; digital is website visitation and app usage in an average 7 days.

[View the full Cross-Platform Audiences Results](#)

Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“The trustworthiness of media will be one of the defining issues of 2017. Amid all the talk about ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ are reports of erroneous reach figures from digital publishers. Just as audiences are seeking clarity about what and whom to believe, so too media agencies and advertisers need a reliable, independent measure of cross-platform reach. It is up to the publishers to prove themselves—to the public and the industry.”

“Roy Morgan’s latest Newspaper Readership results to the end of 2016 show that the big are getting bigger, and the small smaller. The most-read mastheads continue to grow, thanks to increasing numbers of website and app readers—while some including the Adelaide Advertiser, West Australian, Newcastle Herald and the Mercury, aren’t converting their print readers into online audiences.”

“Clearly, rather than make the transition to the digital version of their home newspaper, some print readers in Adelaide, Perth, Newcastle and Hobart instead read the national or ‘big city’ mastheads when going online.”

“As publishers continue to evaluate their paywall, metered and freemium revenue models, and the reach versus reward of distribution through Apple, Facebook and Google, the coming year may well prove to have long-term impacts on how readers value and use news media.”

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research Readership, please call: (+61) (3) 9224 5309 or email askroymorgan@roymorgan.com

About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in New Zealand, 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.

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