

Monday, 26 April 2021

## AFL grows TV viewership during 2020 to stretch lead over NRL

The latest data from Roy Morgan shows over 7.5 million Australians aged 14+ (36%) watched AFL matches on TV at least occasionally in 2020 including AFL pre-season games, AFL Home & Away games, AFL Finals, the AFL Women's competition or the show-piece AFL Grand Final.

Overall TV viewership of the AFL was up slightly in 2020, by 15,000 (+0.2%) to 7,540,000, and the growth was powered by increasing male viewership, up 74,000 (+1.8%) to 4,246,000. Viewership amongst women was down slightly by 59,000 (-1.8%) to 3,294,000.

The most popular TV product for the AFL is the Grand Final which had TV viewership of 6,363,000 in 2020, up 77,000 (+1.2%) on 2019.

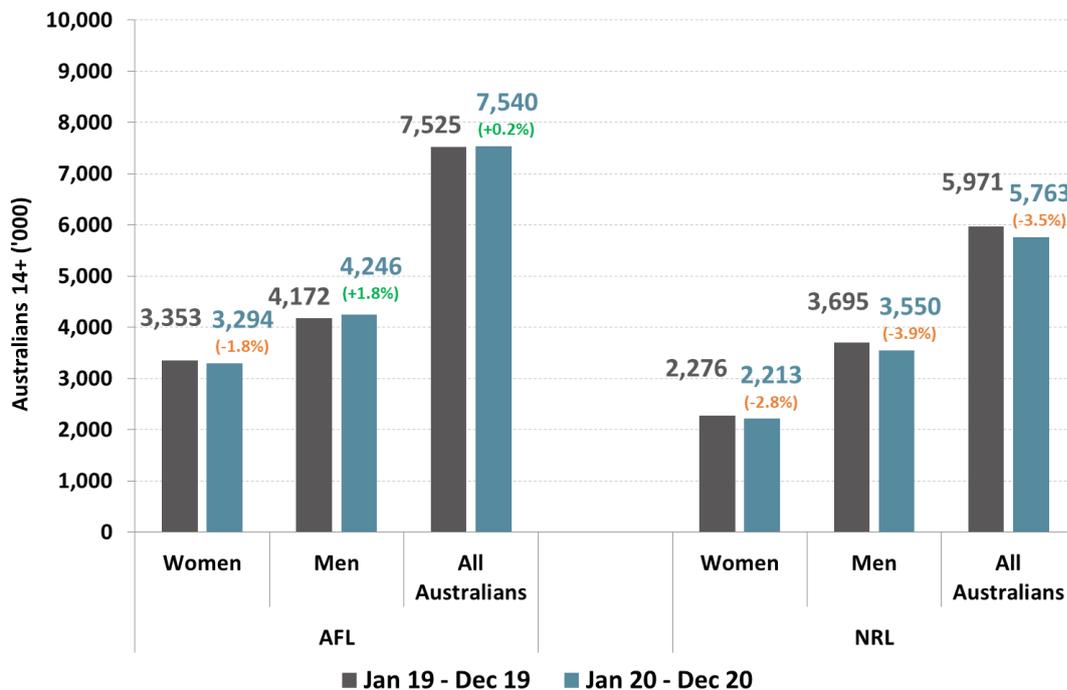
The AFL increased its lead over northern rival the NRL in 2020 with overall TV viewership of the NRL including the NRL Regular Season, NRL Finals, NRL Grand Final and the showpiece NRL State of Origin down 208,000 (-3.5%) to 5,763,000.

There were declines in TV viewership of the NRL for both genders with 3,550,000 watching the NRL in 2020, down 145,000 (-3.9%) and 2,213,000 women watching the NRL, down 63,000 (-2.8%).

The NRL State of Origin remains the most important TV product for the NRL with 4,862,000 watching any of the three matches on TV compared to around 4,486,000 watching the NRL Grand Final.

The findings are from the Roy Morgan Single Source survey, Australia's most trusted and comprehensive consumer survey, derived from in-depth interviews with 50,000 Australians each year.

### TV Viewership of the AFL vs. NRL by Gender: 2019 vs. 2020



**Source:** Roy Morgan Single Source, January – December 2019, n=23,652, January – December 2020, n=61,294.  
**Base:** Australians 14+.

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**AFL’s largest audience is people aged under 35, whilst it is 50-64 year olds for the NRL**

TV viewership of the AFL is largest amongst younger Australians with 1,962,000 viewers aged under 35 in 2020, though this is down 81,000 (-3.9%) on 2019. The second largest viewer group of the AFL is people aged 50-64 at 1,918,000, also down slightly by 41,000 (-2.1%) on a year earlier.

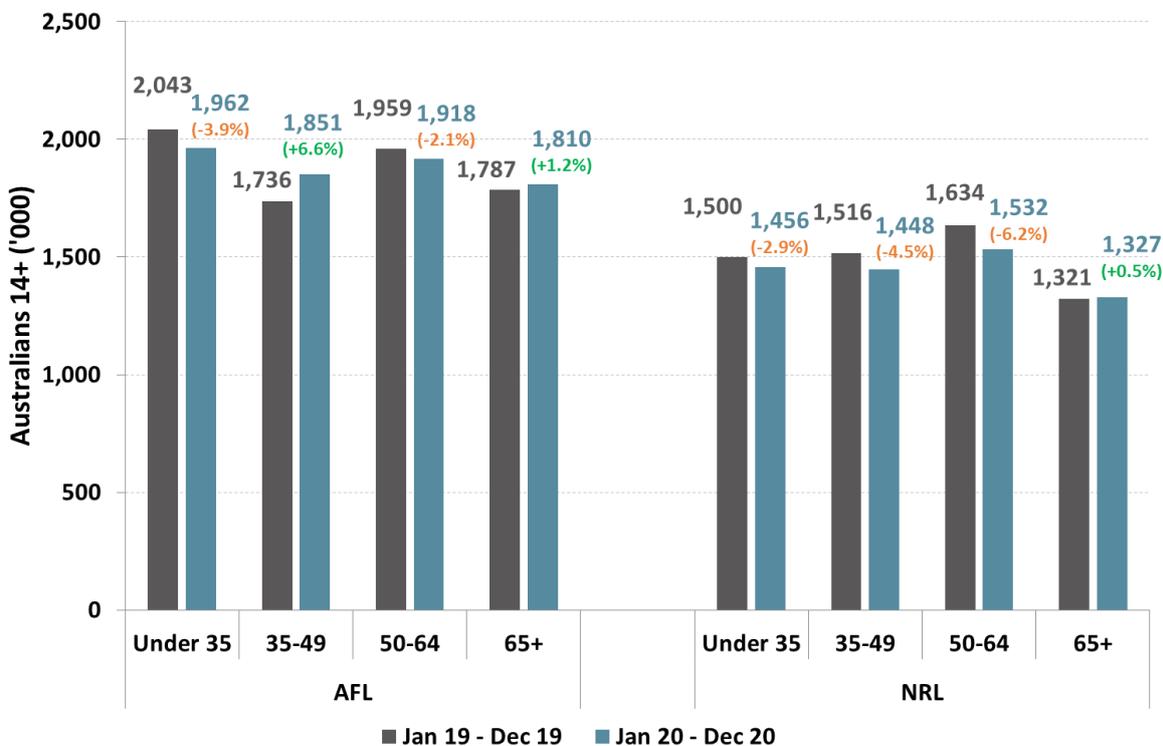
The two age groups to drive the overall increase in TV viewership of the AFL were people aged 35-49, up 115,000 (+6.6%) to 1,851,000 and those aged 65+, up 23,000 (+1.2%) to 1,810,000.

In contrast to the AFL the largest viewing audience for the NRL is people aged 50-64 at 1,532,000, although this was down 102,000 (-6.2%) on a year ago.

There are 1,456,000 TV viewers of the NRL aged under 35 and 1,448,000 aged 35-49, although both were down on a year ago.

The positive news for the NRL is the growing TV viewership for people aged 65+ which increased 6,000 (+0.5%) to 1,327,000.

**TV Viewership of the AFL vs. NRL by Age: 2019 vs. 2020**



**Source:** Roy Morgan Single Source, January – December 2019, n=23,652, January – December 2020, n=61,294.  
**Base:** Australians 14+.

**Industry Communications Director Julian McCrann says the AFL and NRL have welcomed back crowds in large numbers at games in 2021 but will be looking to retain the gains in TV viewership made during the COVID-19 impacted season of 2020:**

*“Australians were ‘locked down’ during March, April and May of 2020 as the nation dealt with the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the AFL’s key Victorian audience the lockdown returned in early July and continued until late October – encompassing the large majority of the AFL season including all the finals and the AFL Grand Final – held outside Victoria for the first time ever.*

*“These conditions meant Victorians in particular were ‘glued to their TV’ during the winter months of 2020 and the AFL was the beneficiary of this – growing total TV viewership of its products such as the AFL Grand Final, AFL Finals and AFL Home & Away matches to 7,540,000, up 15,000 on a year earlier. The increase in overall TV viewership was the first recorded for the AFL since 2015.*

*“The AFL grew their TV viewership amongst key demographics including men (up 1.8%), people aged 35-49 (up 6.6%) and those aged 65+ (up 1.2%). In contrast overall TV viewership of the NRL was down on a year earlier by 208,000 (down 5.3%) to 5,763,000. However, the NRL did manage to grow TV viewership for those aged 65+ (up 0.5%).*

*“In the NRL’s key markets of NSW and Queensland there was obviously no long second lockdown to deal with meaning residents of these States weren’t stuck at home on the couch watching TV during the NRL season. The drop in the NRL’s TV viewership was no surprise though as it continues the trend of recent years since TV viewership for the sport peaked in 2016 at 6,858,000.*

*“Comparing the TV viewership of the two sports shows where the AFL’s greatest advantages lie and the most prominent is the edge the AFL enjoys with women. 3,294,000 women watch the AFL on TV compared to 2,213,000 watching the NRL – a gap of over 1 million viewers (+48.9%) in this key demographic in the AFL’s favour. The AFL also has a significant advantage for people aged under 35: AFL (1,962,000) cf. NRL (1,456,000) – a difference of 506,000 (+34.8%).”*

**For comments or more information about Roy Morgan’s AFL & NRL Supporter profiles and other Sporting profiles data, please contact:**

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### **About Roy Morgan**

Roy Morgan is Australia’s largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years’ experience 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.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2