

# Majority of households not yet watching digital free-to-air television

Recent ACMA research indicates that just over two out of five Australian households (42 per cent) are watching digital television over the airwaves. Since the introduction of digital free-to-air television in 2001, take-up has risen steadily—up from 13 per cent in 2005 and 29.6 per cent in 2006—but significant numbers have yet to make the switch from analog.

When viewers of digital subscription television services are combined with those watching over the airwaves, just over half of households (54 per cent) are receiving digital free-to-air television services. The research also indicates that digital-capable television sets now account for a quarter (25.7 per cent) of overall stock of televisions.

Despite the growth in digital take-up, more than half of Australian households still need to make the switch to digital free-to-air television, and close to a quarter (24 per cent) of households remain not interested in adopting. Many in this core group indicated they are not interested in television, while others see no compelling need to change or are put off by cost.

*Digital television in Australian homes 2007*, the third in a series of ACMA studies into digital television trends, gives an insight into the reasons for its adoption and non-adoption. This will help guide ACMA, the Australian Government and broadcasters to effectively manage the transition from analog to digital.

Digital television will replace analog television in Australia by 2013. Until then, it will operate alongside existing analog services. National awareness of the future analog switch-off was unchanged from 2006 at 67 per cent.

For the first time, differences in adoption rates by state and territory, and between metropolitan and regional areas have been measured, including two case studies in Mildura and Broken Hill. The highest adoption rates were in Mildura (70.3 per cent) and Tasmania (64 per cent), and the lowest rates were in South Australia (37.1 per cent) and Queensland (37.2 per cent).

ACMA Chairman Chris Chapman said that while better picture quality continues to be the key reason

Digital television uses a standard-definition television (SDTV) signal in a widescreen format to provide better picture quality than current analog services. A superior picture quality is also available from high-definition television (HDTV), provided the viewer has a receiver and display screen capable of processing HDTV signals.

It is estimated that 91 per cent of the Australian population has access to all local free-to-air television broadcasts in digital, and about 96 per cent has

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for digital uptake nationally, access to extra channels and new content has led the unusually strong growth in Tasmania and areas such as Mildura.

The benefits of digital television technology may include improved picture and sound quality, and a choice of new channels. To receive the benefits of digital television, a minimum of either a digital set-top box (attached to an analog set or monitor) or an integrated digital television set is needed.

access to at least one digital free-to-air television service.

ACMA is working with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy to manage the digital switchover. ACMA has particular responsibility for spectrum planning, digital signal and reception measurement, maintaining a program of technical research, and consulting with industry on codes and technical standards.

The research comprised a nationally representative telephone survey of 1,945 Australian households conducted in December 2007. The sample was supplemented by an additional 1,433 households to provide reliable state and territory estimates, and regional/metropolitan estimates for digital adoption and TV inventory numbers. The research, conducted for ACMA by Ipsos-Eureka Strategic Research, updates data collected in 2005 and 2006.

The final research report will be released later in 2008, together with the results from qualitative research undertaken earlier in 2007. Survey results are available from the ACMA website at <[www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)> (go to About ACMA: Publications & research > Research > Broadcasting research).

Top four reasons for DTTB* adoption nationally (unchanged across the three surveys)	Percentage of respondents
Better or clearer picture/picture quality	23.7
Improved reception/signal	20.1
Upgrading/replacing TV set	19.6
Extra channels/variety and choice	19.3
Top four reasons for non-adoption nationally (unchanged across the three surveys):	Percentage of respondents
Don't watch much free-to-air TV/don't want to watch more	29.1
Don't know much about it/haven't thought about it	18.8
Have to buy equipment/too expensive/not good value/lack money	18
Currently satisfied/no need	15.3

\*DTTB: Digital terrestrial television broadcasting