

Kids' TV Memories: Audience Perspectives on the Roles and Long-term Value of Australian Children's Television

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Snapshot of: Kids' TV Memories: Audience Perspectives on the Roles and Long-term Value of Australian Children's Television



1.

Australian Children's TV is Fundamental and Favourite

- Almost 80% of respondents watched children's television daily from age five
- 88% reported that all, most, or at least some of what they watched was Australian children's content
- 9 out of 10 of those who watched Australian content included Australian shows amongst their favourites
- Those in their 30s were most likely to report that "most" of their favourite children's shows were Australian



2.

A Unique Tradition in Australian Children's TV

- The most memorable and loved Australian children's shows combine the "ordinary" with the "strange"
- Top 3 reasons Australian children's shows are remembered and loved:
 - Australian relatability: including accents, locations, and people
 - Quirkiness/strangeness: uniquely Australian blend of surreal elements in "ordinary" settings
 - Cheeky "Aussie" humour compared to "sanitised" overseas content



3.

Revisiting Childhood Favourites

- 7 out of 10 adult respondents have revisited Australian children's content in recent years
- The most common means of revisiting:
 - Online clips (e.g. YouTube)
 - Streaming services (e.g. Netflix)
 - Social media (e.g. Facebook)
- Top 3 reasons for revisiting children's shows as an adult:
 - Nostalgia
 - Sharing with own children
 - Curiosity



4.

Millennials and Zoomers Lead Rewatch Trend

- Revisiting children's shows is popular with all age groups, but Millennials and Zoomers are most likely to revisit:
 - 18-30: 74%
 - 31-40: 74%
 - 41-50: 68%
 - 51 and older: 54%
- Streaming and social media make nostalgic content easy to locate and recommend
- *Round the Twist* and *Play School* were the most popular shows to rewatch
- Respondents were especially likely to revisit Australian children's shows made in the 1990s and 2000s



5.

Remembering, Sharing, Bonding

- 2 out of 3 respondents have shared Australian children's content with someone else in recent years
- Most common sharing practices:
 - Online clips (e.g. sending YouTube links)
 - Recommendations
 - Watching together
- 58% have shared children's content remembered from childhood with family members:
 - To give partners and younger relatives insight into their childhood
 - To bond and reminisce with relatives of a similar age (e.g. siblings)
- 52% have shared children's content with friends and colleagues to remember old favourites or introduce others (especially younger people) to certain shows



7.

Then and Now

- 66% of all respondents feel Australian children's content has changed significantly since they were young (especially those 51 and older: 77%)
- More diversity was the change most frequently identified – a third of respondents felt Australian children's television now depicts a more inclusive range of people
- Second most cited change was that Australian children's television has become more sanitised and less imaginative (10%)
- Respondents also noted social media and streaming services have overhauled children's experience of television



6.

Sharing "Australian-ness" through Children's TV

- Almost a third of respondents have shared Australian children's shows with friends and family who did not grow up in Australia
- This sharing is for the purpose of showcasing Australian content, interests, and values
- Top reasons for this sharing:
 - To recommend Australian children's shows to Australian parents living overseas or to parents from overseas now living in Australia so their young children can watch them
 - To show off Australian children's content to friends and partners who moved to Australia as adults (often due to pride in its "strangeness")
 - To remind Australians living overseas of "home"



8.

Investment in Australian Children's TV Has Lasting Impacts

- Almost half of respondents felt Australian children's shows accurately reflect Australian culture, people, and traditions
- Respondents believe the positive movement toward Australian children's television becoming more diverse and relatable has been largely driven by the ABC
- Respondents observed Australian children's television reflects and influences how children understand themselves as Australian
- However, outside of a few stand-out shows, respondents felt there is now a general shortage of Australian children's content

Top 10 Aussie Kids' TV Favourites

1. *Round the Twist*
2. *Play School*
3. *Mr Squiggle*
4. *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*
5. *Blinky Bill*
6. *The Ferals*
7. *Lift Off!*
8. *Ship to Shore*
9. *Bananas in Pyjamas*
10. *The Genie from Down Under*



Introduction

Australian Children’s Television Cultures (ACTC) is a research group based at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, in collaboration with RMIT University, Melbourne. In partnership with the Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF), ACTC is undertaking a four-year project to investigate the roles of Australian children’s television and other children’s screen entertainment in people’s lives, memories, families, and education. This project’s research activities include audience research, industry, media and platform analysis, and social impact studies. The findings and outcomes of this project are designed to inform the Australian children’s television sector as it navigates an era of increased viewing options, policy changes, and new viewing practices.

This report presents findings from research that sought to better understand the ways adult audiences in the streaming era experience, express, and channel nostalgia for children’s television from their childhoods, particularly Australian children’s television. This report locates and investigates intersections between nostalgia, creative industries, and screen technology. It offers unprecedented insight into how and why Australian adults have accessed Australian children’s television from the past, and the deep and lasting impacts of Australian children’s television on multiple generations of adults.

Quantitative and qualitative data and findings from a nationwide survey and semi-structured interviews form the basis of this report. ACTC gathered unique, robust data through an online survey that targeted adults who grew up watching children’s television. The survey was titled “Children’s TV Shows from Your Childhood” (hereafter referred to as the TV Memories Survey) and ran for six weeks from August 23–October 3, 2021.

The TV Memories Survey was primarily distributed in Australia though it was open to adults (aged 18 years and above) from anywhere in the world who had watched children’s television when they were young. Survey respondents were asked to reflect and comment on the children’s television they remembered from their childhood, and ways they have re-engaged with this content as an adult. In this survey, children’s television was defined as “visual content aimed at children and teenagers up to 14 years.”

Using snowball sampling, this survey was initially circulated through a variety of professional networks, including earned media, with respondents encouraged to share the survey among their own networks.

In its distribution, the TV Memories Survey was paired with another survey, the “Parent Survey,” which focused on how parents in Australia discover, consume, and value local children’s content. This survey provided the basis of the ACTC report “Parents’ Perspectives on Australian Children’s Television in the Streaming Era” (2022). The Parent Survey and the TV Memories survey were carefully linked to increase the number of respondents of each, with the sample size boosted by 19%.

At the end of the six weeks, the TV Memories Survey received 577 completions. Of those who completed the survey, 542 (97%) had spent most of their childhood in Australia, and 35 (3%) had grown up overseas.

This sample was primarily grouped based on the proportion of Australian children’s television watched as a child. The key sample comprised 508 respondents who had watched “some,” “most,” or “all” Australian children’s content when growing up. The remaining 69 respondents watched primarily non-Australian children’s content when growing up (“little” or “no” Australian children’s television). Of the primary sample of 508 respondents who watched at least “some” Australian children’s content as children, there was sufficient representation of all adult age ranges, although those 51 years and older were less likely to have watched Australian television growing up:

51 years and older: 15%
41–50 years: 26%
31–40 years: 37%
30 years and younger: 22%

The data collected is statistically robust enough for the authors to be confident the conclusions made are likely to mirror the relevant populations at large.

Following the survey, extended, video-recorded semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 21 participants from a range of age groups and different regions of Australia. These interviews were analysed to gain more nuanced qualitative detail to complement the quantitative and qualitative survey findings.

This report covers a range of key considerations, including what audiences value most about Australian children’s television, the variety and nature of nostalgic screen practices, and the influence of digital technologies on revisiting and sharing children’s content. It also illuminates the significance of Australian children’s television to personal and collective memories, cultural identity development, and community and nation building.

About the Authors

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Joanna McIntyre is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Swinburne University of Technology. Joanna has published widely on the topics of Australian screen history, Australian screen cultures, gender, celebrity, queer and trans screen representation, and Australian “national identity.” Her research interests include children’s media and its intersections with issues of gender and celebrity. Joanna has been published in leading international journals in her field, including *Journal of Children and Media*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Celebrity Studies Journal*, and *The European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Her edited collections include *Gender and Australian Celebrity Culture* (Routledge, 2021) and *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Celebrity* (Routledge, forthcoming). She is the author of the book *Transgender Celebrity* (Routledge, forthcoming). Joanna’s news articles in *The Conversation* have over 1.3 million readers.

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Dr Jessica Balanzategui

Jessica Balanzategui is Senior Lecturer in Media at RMIT University. Her research speciality is the interface between technological and industrial change and entertainment cultures, particularly in relation to children’s media, streaming video platforms, and digital cultures. Jessica has been widely published in the leading international journals in her field, including *New Media and Society*, *Convergence*, *The Journal of Visual Culture*, and *Television and New Media*. Her books include *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema* (AUP, 2018) and *Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres, and Intergenerational Viewing: Family Watch Together TV* (with Baker and Sandars, Routledge 2023). She received the 2020 Australian Film Institute Fellowship for her archival project on the history of Australian children’s television policy. Jessica is the founding editor of Amsterdam University of Press’s Horror and Gothic Media Cultures Series.

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1. Australian children's TV is fundamental and favourite

Seventy-eight per cent of all survey respondents reported that watching children's television was a daily activity during childhood from age five.

The large majority (88%) reported that at least "some" of the children's television they watched growing up was Australian. Almost half (42%) reported that "all" or "most" of the children's television they watched was Australian.

"Australian children's shows are fun, educational and entertaining. They have a unique Australian character which always made it enjoyable watching them. I was immersed into different worlds by these shows as a child." – Survey response from 18–24 year old man, NSW

Respondents in their 30s watched the highest proportion of Australian children's content when growing up. They were also significantly more likely to report that "most" of their favourite children's shows were Australian:

- 18–30 years: 43%
- 31–40 years: 51%
- 41–50 years: 37%
- 51 years and older: 35%

These findings suggest the impact of Australian children's television increased over the decades and experienced a peak in the 1990s [see Addendum for further findings regarding this age group and era].

"I actually think that at least in the '90s, when I grew up as a kid, the quality of Australian children's television was excellent because it didn't stuff around. It really just got to the point of what kids were trying to learn." – Interview with Blake, 37, grew up in SA

Of those respondents who grew up in Australia and watched at least "some" Australian content, nine out of 10 reported that at least "some" of their favourite shows were Australian. Notably, of these respondents, almost half (49%) reported that "all" or "most" of their favourite childhood shows were Australian.

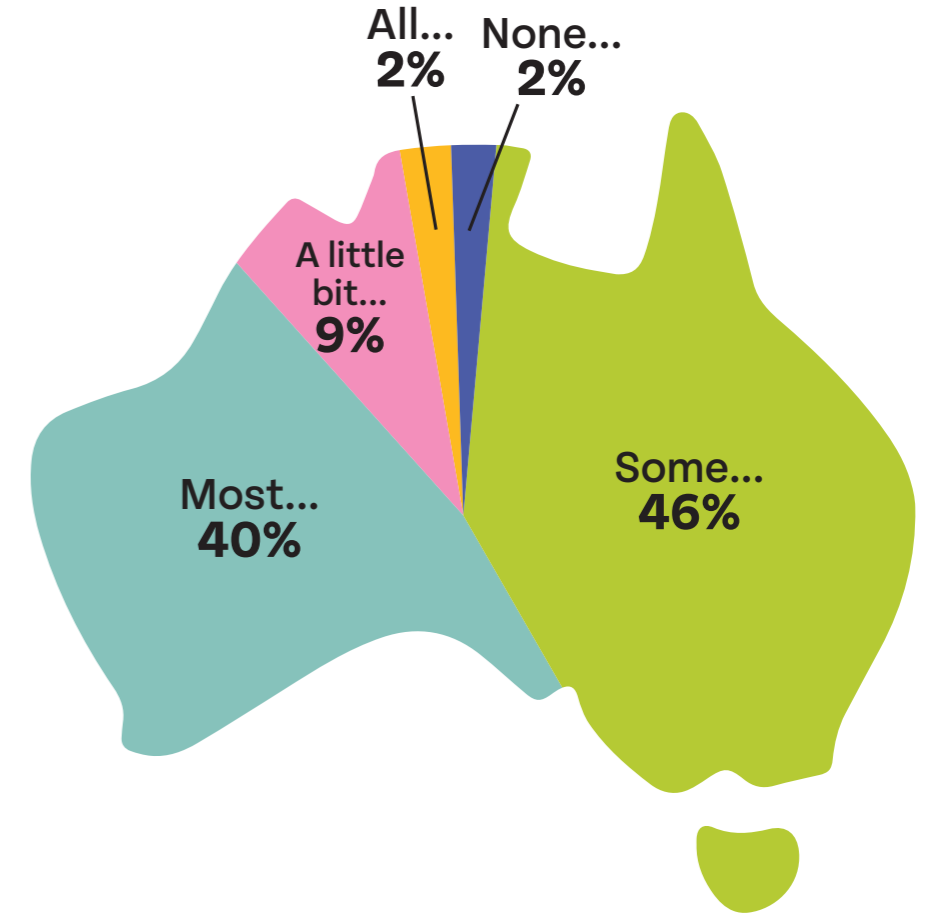
"I liked seeing and hearing stories of Australia. With so much content being from overseas, even on the ABC, it was wonderful to hear people talking in my accent and telling our stories." – Survey response from 41–45 year old woman, VIC

These findings indicate Australian children across generations have had a substantial quantity of Australian children's television available to them. Importantly, this Australian television content is also understood to have been good quality and has remained meaningful to these audiences into adulthood.

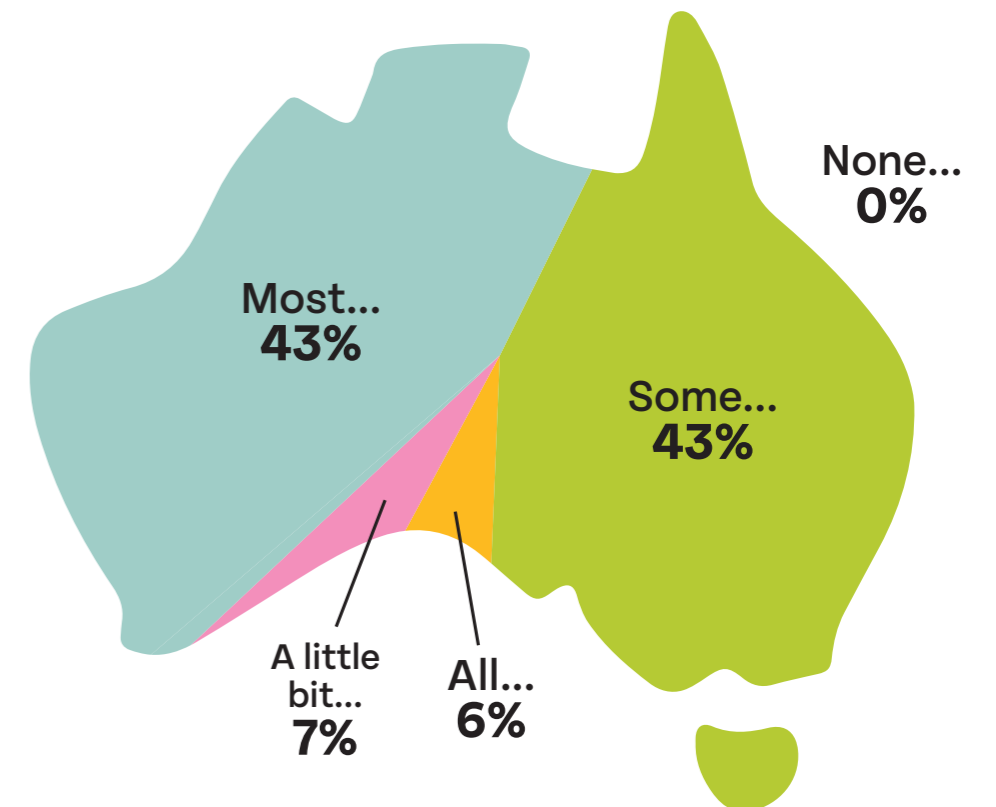


The Genie from Down Under

What proportion of the children's content you watched was Australian?



What proportion of your favourite children's content was Australian?



2. A unique tradition in Australian children's TV

This research has established that an important, longstanding tradition exists in Australian children's television, which audiences value deeply. Throughout several decades, the most memorable and loved Australian children's shows have tended to confidently combine the "ordinary" with the "strange." Their narratives, characters, and/or aesthetics are understood to purposefully mix relatable, everyday "Australian-ness" with bizarre or quirky elements.

"They were all particularly quirky, scary, funny, and took you through the emotional roller coaster of being a kid (even though sometimes in a fictionalised setting). With all the quirks removed, it was relatable and just reflected an Australian childhood." – Survey response from 25–30 year old woman, VIC

Research participants repeatedly distinguished this convention of combining the grounded with the surreal as a unique feature of Australian children's television and one of its greatest attractions.

"Even [Australian children's] shows that are fantasy-based or high concept usually have a grounding in relatable characters and experiences." – Survey response from 41–45 year old man, VIC

The survey's open responses expanded on the significance of this formula. Aggregating key terms across hundreds of open responses revealed recurring themes. The top three reasons respondents remembered and loved certain Australian children's shows were:

- Australian Relatability (19%),
- Quirkiness/Strangeness (19%)
- Humour (17%)

"I could relate to the characters seen in the show because they looked and sounded just like me. They went to school like me and had disagreements with their parents like me. I enjoyed the unusual adventures all the characters got into in bush and beach locations that were familiar to me." – Survey response from 31–35 year old woman, VIC

Relatability for children was ranked as an important factor (15%). Although relatability was also a feature associated with favourite children's shows from overseas, respondents recognised local favourites as having a distinctively Australian mode of relatability delivered via Australian accents, settings, people, and cultural dynamics.

"I guess one of the things that I liked – and I can say this looking backwards now – is that I feel like Australian TV seemed somehow better, than particularly US TV, at tapping into that idea of the misfit, which is kind of how you feel when you're a kid – you're a bit awkward and you don't know where you belong, and I feel like Australian TV really embraced that idea it was okay to be on the outside or to be a bit weird or a bit quirky." – Interview with Eleanor, 34, grew up in TAS

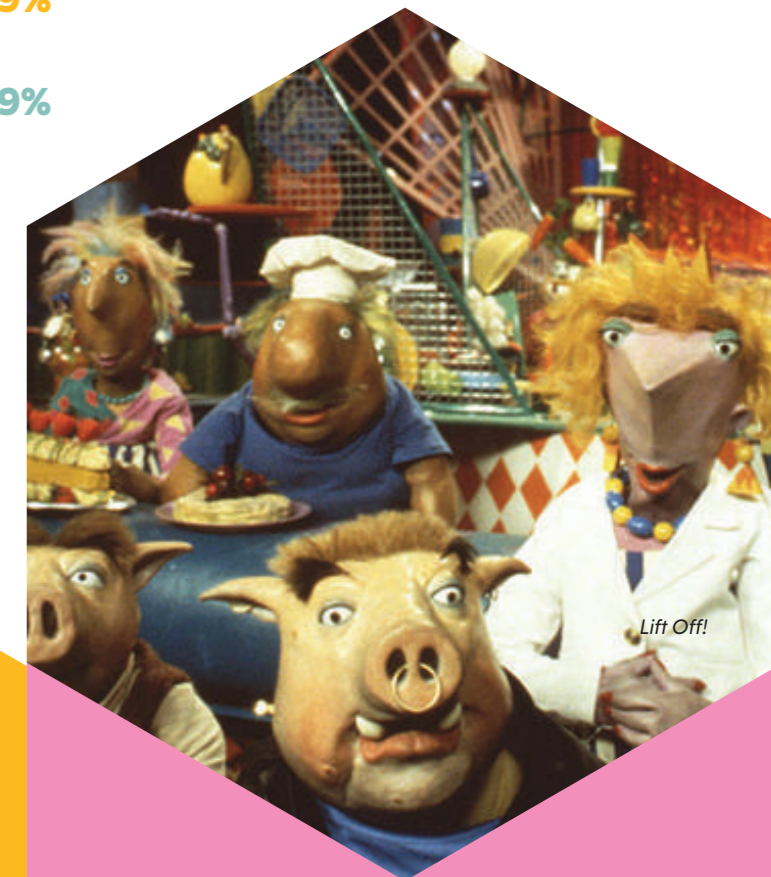
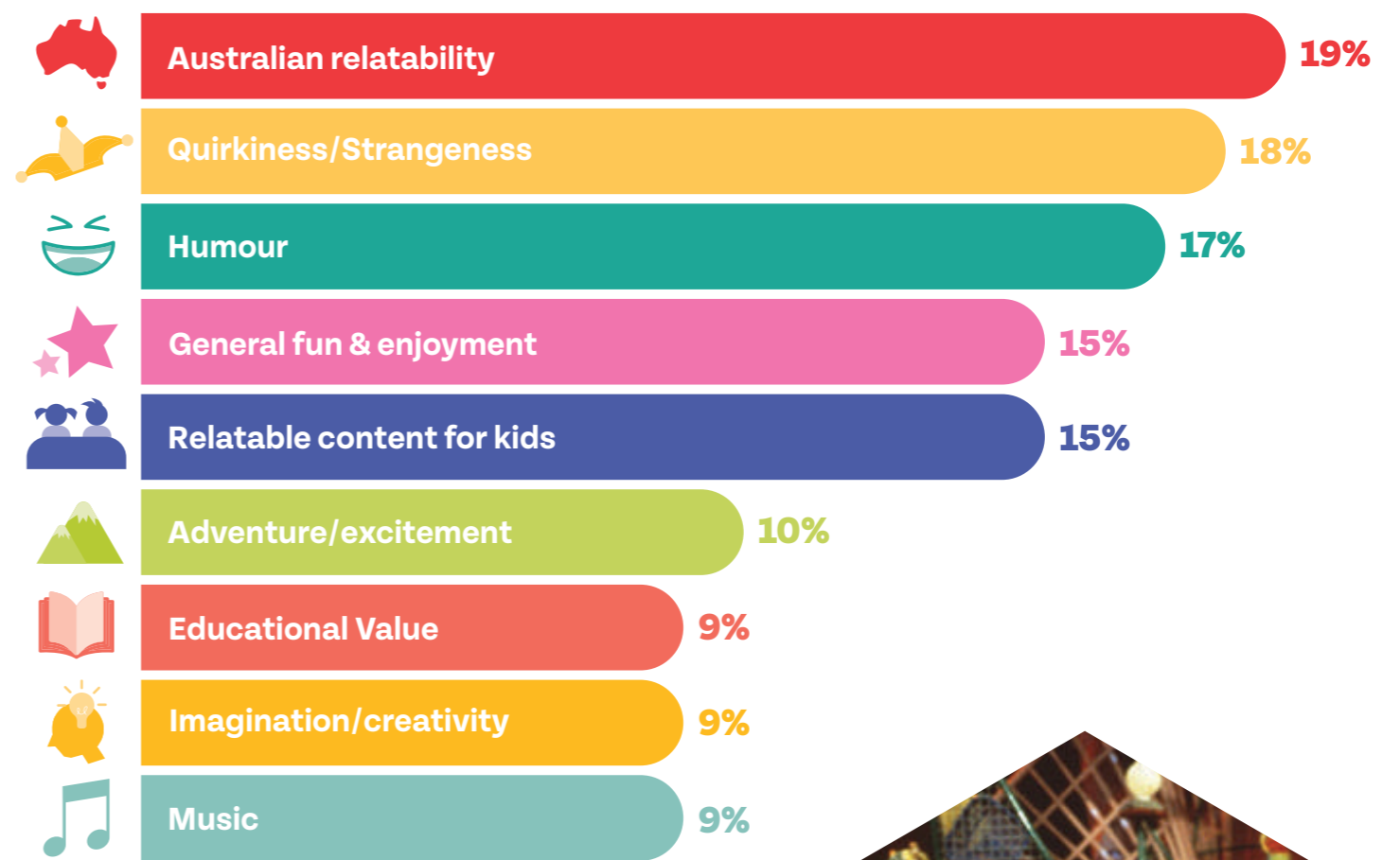
"Analysing these shows, there are strong themes of belonging and being the odd one out, which may mean something! Feeling like you belong to a community and the people around you I think is a very human need, at any age!" – Survey response from 25–30 year old woman, NSW

Noteworthy Australian children's television was often perceived to include a specifically "Aussie" sense of humour that is "cheeky" or "out-there," especially compared to "sanitised" overseas counterparts.

Respondents tended to remember US children's shows, for example, for their colour and "epic-ness," whereas Australian shows were treasured for being fresher, less sterile, and more imaginative.



What made respondents fall in love with their favourite shows?



3. Revisiting childhood favourites

The digital age, in particular the prevalence of streaming, has facilitated a surge in adult audiences nostalgically re-engaging with children's content they remember from bygone eras.

Seven out of 10 survey respondents have revisited Australian children's shows in recent years.

"Just needed to remember the feeling it gave me. Loved the music and the characters and the sense of place."
 - Survey response from 31-35 year old woman, NSW

Media platforms were the main avenues used to access screen content from decades past. The most common means of rewatching old children's shows were:

- Clips and excerpts on video sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube): 74%
- Rewatching episodes on streaming services (e.g. Netflix): 52%
- Social media posts (e.g. Facebook) : 30%

"I look on YouTube at kids' shows that I used to watch more than I should, I reckon. I feel like sometimes it just pops into my head and then I'm like, 'What was the theme song to that?', and I Google it. And then I end up watching it. And I don't even know if I'm enjoying it or it's just a nostalgic factor." - Interview with Lucy, 27, grew up in regional VIC

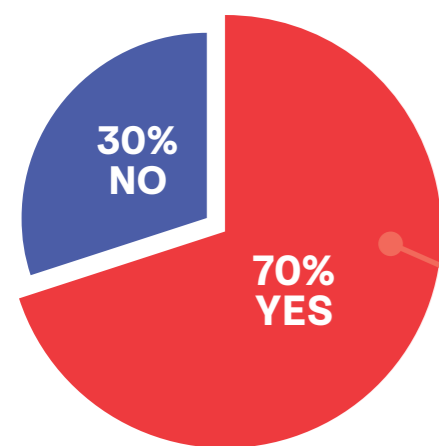
Thematic analysis of the hundreds of survey responses found that the top three intersecting reasons for revisiting children's content as an adult were:

- "Nostalgia"
- "Sharing with Children"
- "Curiosity"

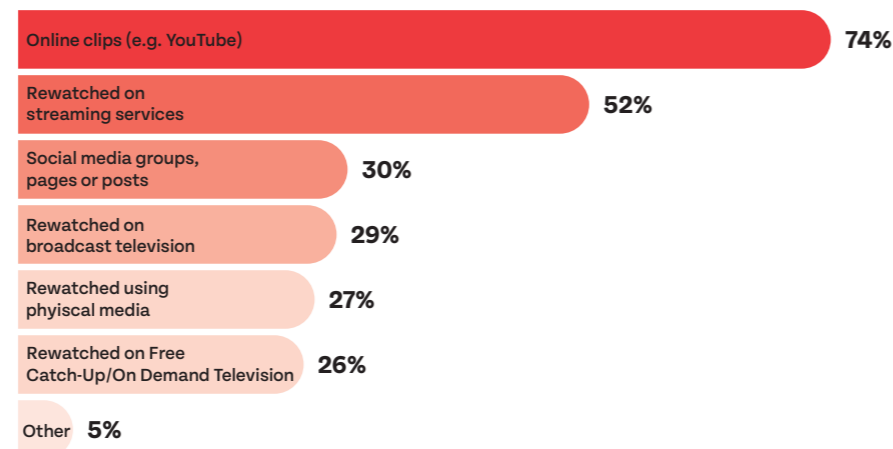
Interview participants reiterated and expanded upon these same themes.

"I can't tell you anything about the plot, but watching the trailer on YouTube was this explosion of nostalgia. I could taste the cheese and vegemite toasties that I would eat while watching this show." - Interview with Steph, 28, grew up in VIC

Percentage of those who have revisited Australian children's television in recent years



How They Revisited



Nostalgia

As well as research participants referencing broad or general feelings of nostalgia as the reason for revisiting children's content, responses also identified a more detailed range of nostalgic sentiments, impulses, and emotions. The most prominent of these nostalgic attachments were:

- A sense of comfort / yearning for simpler times
- Recapturing fond or important memories
- Content "staying with" audiences for many years
- Sheer enjoyment / appreciation of the quality of content

"It's almost like you want to go back, you want to watch a little bit of it, you get that nostalgia hit, and then okay, I've got my hit. That's all I needed."
 - Interview with Max, 29, grew up in VIC

"Wanted to reconnect to my childhood, time of difficulty in my life. Reconnecting with a person I was when I was a child helped me to find a grounding and a safe place to return to."
 - Survey response from 41-45 year old man, NSW

Sharing with children

The survey showed a key driver for adults sharing nostalgic children's content is co-viewing with children, including respondents' own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and children who they babysit.

"The one I terrorised my kids with was Captain Pugwash because I used to like that, for some reason it appealed to me. The cartooning in it was pretty primitive, but in later years I did actually buy some videos I think and subjected our kids to it."
 - Interview with Peter, 62, grew up in North QLD

Many survey respondents who are parents stated they wanted their own children to enjoy shows they used to watch in the same way they did. In this context, sharing

screen content involved parents actively curating what their children watch based on what they remember from their own youth.

Individual responses of this type often expressed parents' personal nostalgia and the urge to share those nostalgic feelings as the basis for sharing.

"We have kids now and we like to share the nostalgia of our own childhoods with them. Mainly to demonstrate how different life was for us growing up with regards to the schools and how they looked and also to share some good laughs at the larrikin characters in the programs." - Survey response from 36-40 year old woman, VIC

Curiosity

Many research participants explained they revisited children's television from childhood because they were curious to compare old content to contemporary standards. They also sought to discover if their lasting memories and fondness were justified - the majority expressed they found those sentiments were warranted.

Respondents tended to have revisited shows after a significant time gap. In most cases the content was first viewed when respondents were children in the terrestrial television era and more recently digital and streaming platforms provided the access and opportunity to return to childhood favourites.

"I was curious to watch the show now to see what it was that I loved about it when I was a young kid." - Survey response from 55+ year old man, VIC

"I was trying to recall a particular episode and then was delighted to find whole episodes online. Very satisfying." - Survey response from 36-40 year old



4. Millennials and Zoomers lead rewatch trend

Revisiting Australian children's shows from the past was popular with all age groups surveyed.

More than half of those 51 years and older (Baby Boomers and Gen X), and more than two thirds of those 41–50 years (Gen X) have revisited children's shows in recent years.

"[I showed] *Play School* from the 1980s on YouTube to my little grand-nieces and grand-nephews (aged 2–4)."
– Survey response from 55+ year old woman, VIC

Nevertheless, the likelihood of revisiting Australian children's content declined with age. Those 18–40 years (Millennials and Zoomers) were most likely to revisit childhood favourites:

- 18–30 years: 74%
- 31–40 years: 74%
- 41–50 years: 68%
- 51 years and older: 54%

Round the Twist and *Play School* were the most popular shows to revisit. These shows were also the two top nostalgic favourites [see Top 10 Favourites page] – however, overall, a wider variety of shows were revisited than those identified as favourites.

"I definitely watched *Round the Twist* when I hit Netflix by myself, before I had kids." – Interview with Ash, 34, grew up in TAS

Digital accessibility has been critical to Millennials and Gen Z revisiting shows from their childhood. This trend aligns with quantitative and qualitative survey findings that these younger generations were more likely to rewatch content via streaming services (especially Netflix and ABC iView) and social media platforms (especially YouTube and Facebook).

Research participants observed streaming services and social media platforms not only made nostalgic content easy to locate but also recommended it.

"Mostly prompted [to revisit] through social media or reminiscing with friends then pulling up clips at the pub."
– Survey response from 18–24 year old woman, VIC

Social media has also facilitated peer-to-peer distribution and recommendations of nostalgic children's content via fan pages, social media posts, and sharing clips [see pp. 5–6].

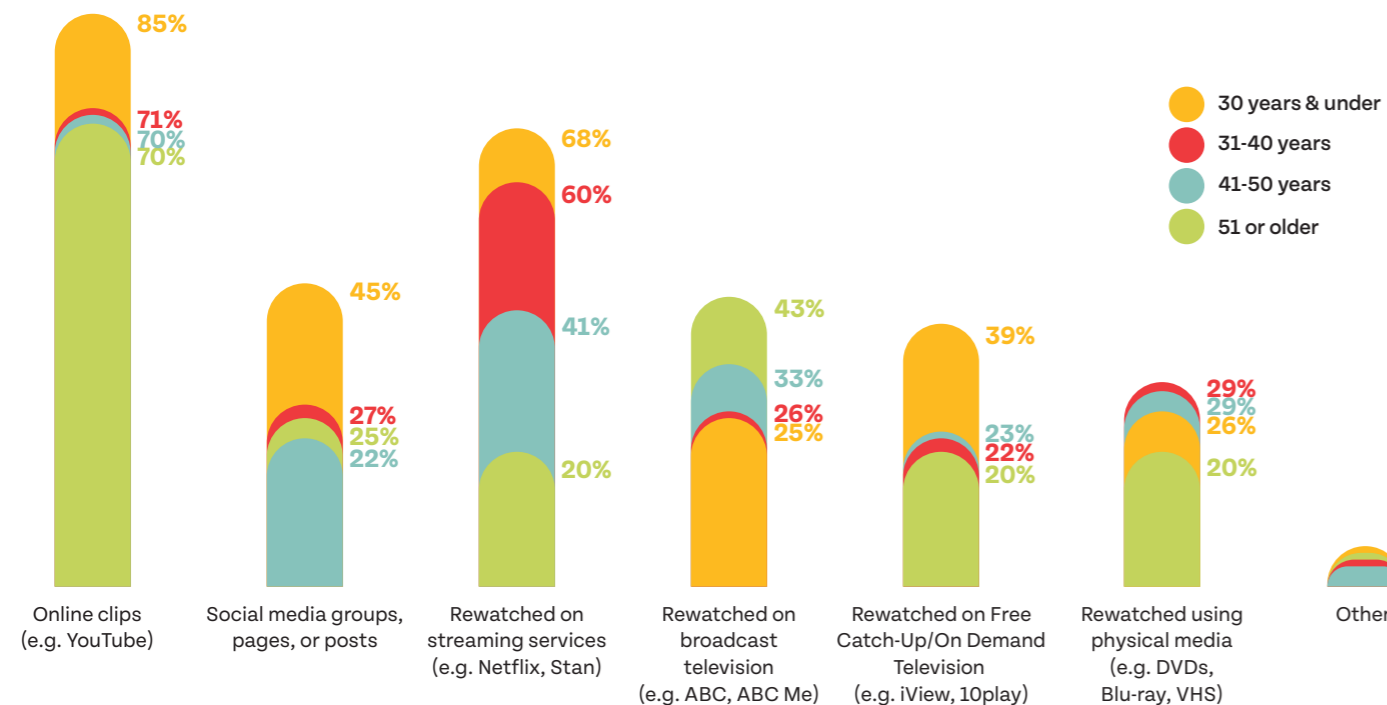
"That's the good thing about those online communities, where it's not necessarily people you grew up with, but it's people who are around the same age, watching those same shows, and you can connect with them in a different way." – Interview with Max, 29, grew up in VIC

Generations Code

Aged 41 years and older at time of data collection:
Baby Boomers: Born 1946–1964
Gen X: Born 1965–1980

Aged 40 years and younger at time of data collection:
Millennials (also known as Gen Y): Born 1981–1996
Zoomers (also known as Gen Z): Born 1997– ...

How different age groups revisited Australian children's television



In the top 20 shows revisited, there were three classic Australian children's shows that each spanned more than four decades and multiple generations: *Mr Squiggle* (1959–1999); *Here's Humphrey* (1965–2008); and *Play School* (1966–). There was also a selection of shows that aired between the late 1960s and 1990: *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo* (1968–1970); *The Curiosity Show* (1972–1990); *Simon Townsend's Wonder World* (1979–1987); and *Young Talent Time* (1971–1988).

However, overall, the Australian children's shows revisited skew towards content from the 1990s onwards.

Some key demographic factors are likely to have influenced this tendency.

Notably, 59% of survey respondents were aged 18–40 years, and 26% were aged 41–50 years [see p. IV], meaning more than half of respondents were children during the 1990s and/or 2000s and thus these were the eras of childhood television to which they returned. As adults, these are also the generations most likely to revisit nostalgic content [see p. 7].

Furthermore, some respondents aged 51 and older (15%) were parents of young children during the 1990s and/or 2000s,

and survey responses revealed many have revisited children's shows they watched with their children during these eras.

However, the enduring popularity of Australian children's shows from the 1990s/2000s is more than a question of audience age. Indeed, those aged 18–40 years were more likely to report that "most" of all their favourite children's shows were Australian [see p. 1].

The number, nature, and availability of Australian children's shows during the 1990s and 2000s are understood to have influenced the trend towards participants remembering and revisiting shows from these eras [see also pp. 17–21].

Importantly, the 1990s saw an increase in the volume and quality of local children's programming due to a range of regulatory, industrial, and economic contexts that led to the creation of "specialised content that would speak directly to the Australian child audience" (Potter, 2015, p. 38).

Between 2001–2014 the transition to digital saw a proliferation of channels and new platforms of delivery, including the introduction of the national broadcaster's dedicated children's channel, ABC3, and its online catchup service, iView (Potter, 2015).*

Favourite and most revisited shows:



Show	Favourite	Revisited
<i>Skippy the Bush Kangaroo</i>	4th	6th
<i>Blinky Bill</i>	5th	9th
<i>The Ferals</i>	6th	11th
<i>Lift Off!</i>	7th	5th
<i>Ship to Shore</i>	8th	14th
<i>Bananas in Pyjamas</i>	9th	17th
<i>The Genie from Down Under</i>	10th	13th
<i>The Saddle Club</i>	11th	20th
<i>Young Talent Time</i>	12th	20th
<i>Simon Townsend's Wonder World</i>	13th	–
<i>The Curiosity Show</i>	14th	16th
<i>Here's Humphrey</i>	15th	–
<i>Agro's Cartoon Connection</i>	16th	–
<i>Spellbinder</i>	17th	4th
<i>The Wiggles</i>	18th	8th
<i>Blue Water High</i>	19th	12th
<i>Mortified</i>	20th	10th

*For an in-depth discussion of how the transition to a digital regime overhauled the production and distribution of Australian children's television see: Potter, Anna. (2015) *Creativity, Culture and Commerce: Producing Australian Children's Television with Public Value*. Intellect Books: Bristol.

Top 10 Aussie Kids' TV Favourites

“...full of weird and wonderful moments, but more than that, a story about a family and sibling relationships”

“Mr Squiggle, everyone watched Mr Squiggle”

“I was always B1, my younger brother was B2”

“...kids spoke with Australian accents”

“...kids got the better of adults and had adventures of their own”

“I remember watching with the siblings, singing the song together and laughing”

“Loved the quirky humor and wacky stories”

“I totally wanted to live in a lighthouse”

“Lift Off! probably played a role in my emotional development”

“You never knew what he was gonna make. It seemed like magic”

“...it definitely felt more Australian”

1. *Round the Twist*
2. *Play School*
3. *Mr Squiggle*
4. *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*
5. *Blinky Bill*
6. *The Ferals*
7. *Lift Off!*
8. *Ship to Shore*
9. *Bananas in Pyjamas*
10. *The Genie from Down Under*

“Americans thought all Australians had a pet roo”

“I shared photos on social media of a trip to the lighthouse”

“I loved the cheekiness in *Ship to Shore*”

“I’m sure my love for art stems from *Play School*”

5. Remembering, sharing, bonding

Two thirds of respondents have shared Australian children's shows or introduced them to audiences unfamiliar with them.

"I have sent links to my older brother to see if he also remembers the programs. He's 12 years older than me and sometimes he remembers them and sometimes he doesn't. I also share them with my sister but she always remembers them because we watched them together."
 – Survey response from 55+ year old woman, QLD

"Sometimes nice to find old clips of people or songs from Play School and share with mum as a reminder or so she can share with the grandkids." – Survey response from 41-45 year old man, QLD

The three most common sharing practices were:

- Sending individuals links to online clips from a show (56%)
- Recommending a show during interpersonal (online or face-to-face) communication (56%)
- Watching a show or clips from a show together (50%)

Respondents had also shared content by posting links to clips on social media (30%) and lending or gifting products related to a show, such as DVDs (18%).

Those aged 51 years and older were slightly less likely to share overall, but they were significantly more likely to lend or gift merchandise relating to shows, such as DVDs, clothing, or books.

Of those who have shared Australian children's content, the majority (58%) have done so with family members. Survey open responses and interviews revealed two main motivations for sharing content among relatives.

Firstly, respondents shared content from their childhoods with family members who did not know them when they were young. Respondents often introduced partners or younger relatives to childhood favourites to share an aspect of their personal history.

"I had my little cousin, who was 13 at the time, who was visiting me and I – and my idea of bonding with him was being, like, 'Here's this show that I liked when I was your age. Watch it with me'." – Interview with Sam, 28, grew up in WA

Secondly, people shared favourite childhood content with other adults they grew up with, particularly siblings. Respondents explained they associate particular children's shows with certain childhood memories or time periods, and they shared content with relatives who would also remember so as to reminisce and bond.

"If I'm talking with friends from that time, if I'm talking with my sister in particular, it's remembering shows that we watched and quoting lines back and forth to each other. Because you just remember things straight away."
 – Interview with Max, 29, grew up in VIC

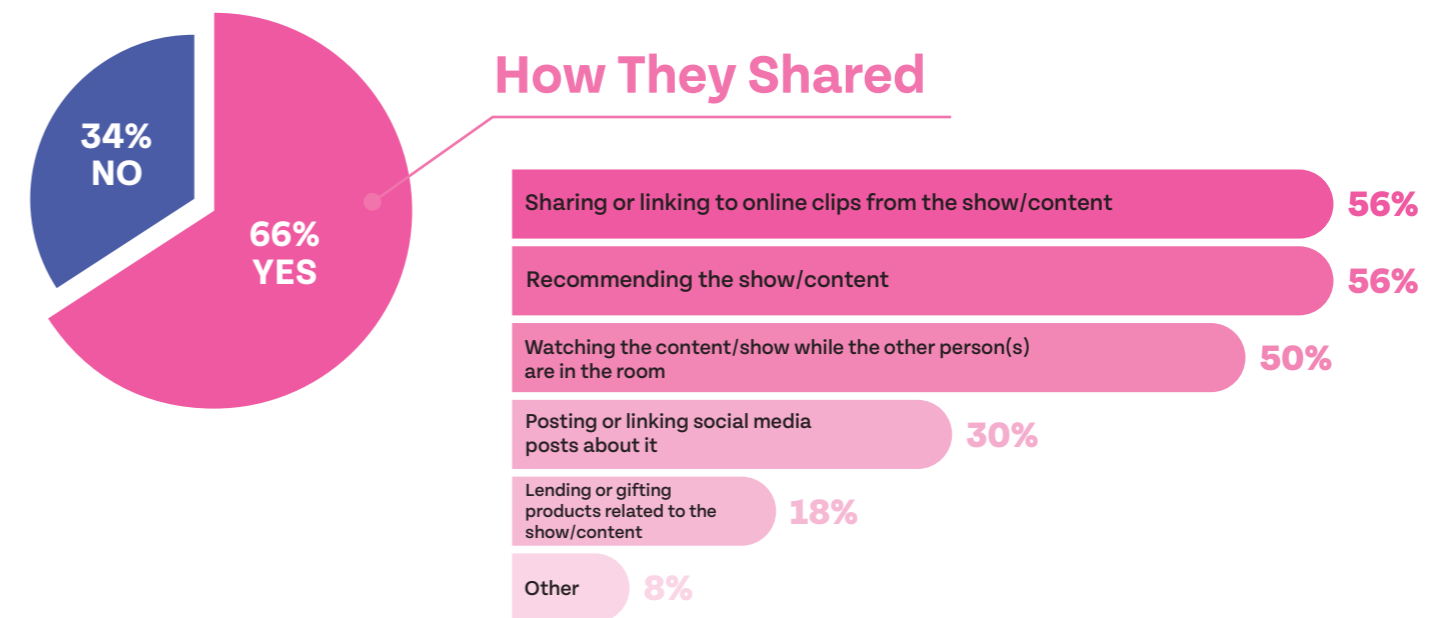
Sharing Australian children's content was also common outside family units. Just over half (52%) of survey respondents have shared Australian children's content with friends and colleagues. Two main reasons emerged for sharing in wider social circles:

- To reminisce about old favourites and bond with others who grew up in the same era and watched the same shows.
- To introduce others, especially younger people, to older Australian shows that were particularly memorable or considered quirky/strange with hindsight [see pp. 3-4].

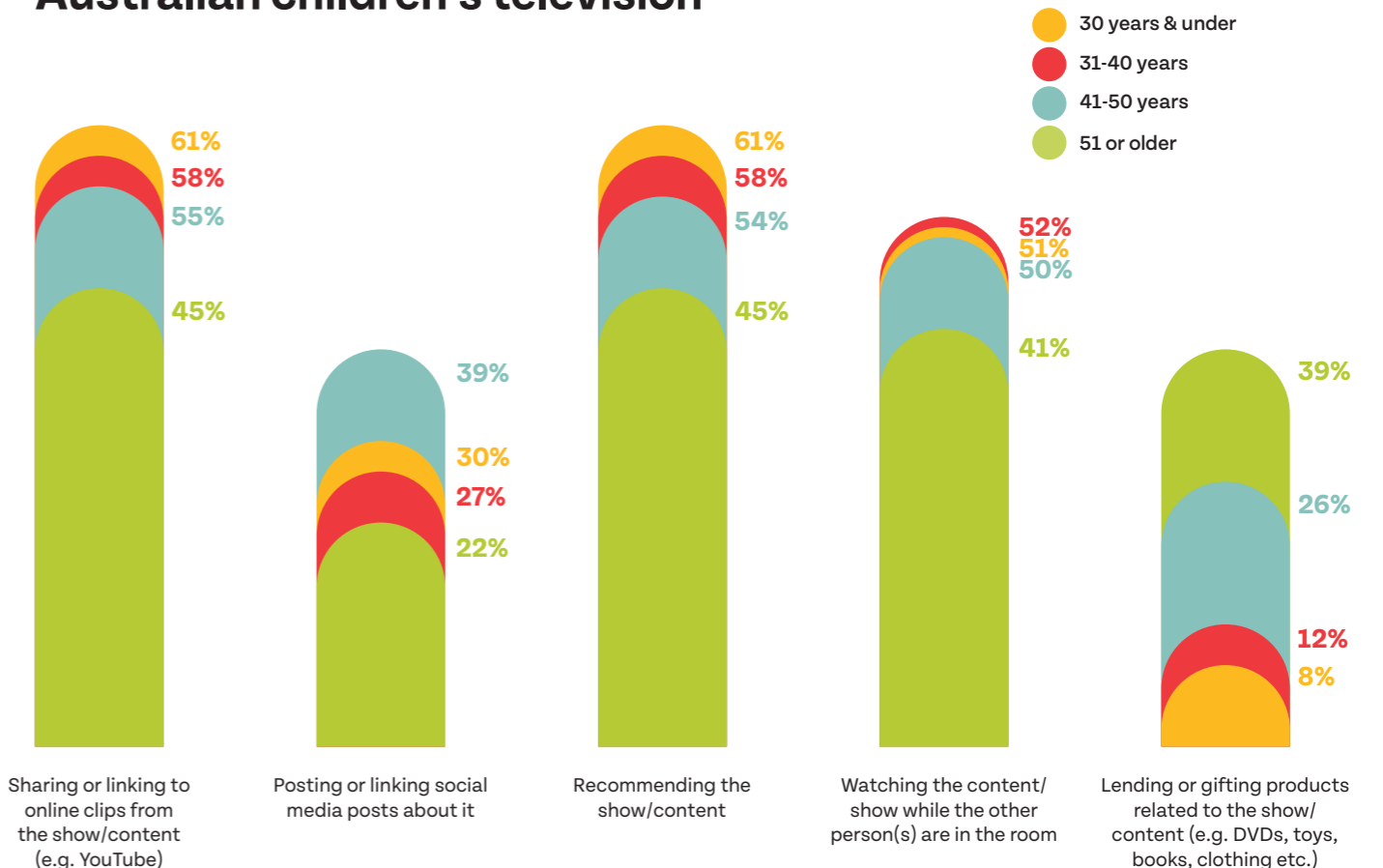
"When I was mid-20s, working with younger dudes and other dudes in their mid-20s and we'd be talking in the lunchroom about, like, Round the Twist, and someone would go, 'Oh, man, what are you guys talking about?' Like, 'Oh, mate, you didn't see Round the Twist? What are you doing? We need to watch this. It's great. It's a classic'." – Interview with Chandler, 36, grew up in SA



Have you shared Australian children's television with anyone in recent years?




How different age groups shared Australian children's television




6. Sharing "Australian-ness" through children's TV

Almost a third (30%) of respondents have shared Australian children's shows with international friends and family. Survey open responses and interviews revealed that sharing content with those outside Australia is most often done to showcase specifically Australian content, interests, and values.

 **"My partner is English and in the past I have had conversations with friends about the Aussie TV shows we watched as kids and trying to explain Round the Twist to my partner was very funny (the whirling willie episode, anyone?)"** – Survey response from 25–30 year old woman, NSW

Open responses and interviews brought to light three key reasons people shared Australian children's television with those from or currently overseas.

 **"Made new friends as an adult with people from other countries who did not grow up here, shared relevant shows as part of building their Australian cultural capital and to make sense of in-jokes and cultural references. Shows like Skippy."** – Survey response from 46–50 year old man, NSW

Firstly, respondents have recommended old and new Australian children's shows to parents who live internationally, suggesting that their children should watch them. This mode of sharing indicates pride in Australian children's content and belief in its quality, even compared to overseas counterparts.




Lockie Leonard

 **"After living [in] the UK, lots of my friends there got into Australian content. I send them DVDs each Christmas of all our weird TV."** – Survey response from 41–45 year old woman, VIC

Secondly, respondents have shared local children's shows with other adults who: live overseas and have never been to Australia; are visiting Australia; or moved to Australia as an adult and therefore did not grow up with Australian children's television. They did so because they believe this content exemplifies and "explains" something essential about Australian culture, and to display proudly the uniquely Australian qualities of these shows, especially regarding their perceived quirkiness/strangeness [see pp. 3–4].

 **"Showing those [Australian children's] shows to other people from other countries is a source of pride so much as a 'Here's a way to help you understand Australia and it's very unique culture'...It's just good texture to understand Australia."** – Interview with Matt, 38, grew up in North QLD

 **"In uni we would often tell international students about shows like Round the Twist as an example of weird Australian culture."** – Survey response from 18–24 year old woman, VIC

Thirdly, respondents shared Australian children's content with Australians who are living overseas to remind them of "home." As with the above reasons for sharing, this motivation indicates a core belief that Australian children's television captures and communicates Australian sensibilities, experiences, and values [see pp. 3–4].



Lift Off!

7. Then and now

Two thirds of respondents believe that Australian children’s content has changed significantly since they were young. This opinion was prominent across all age groups but was especially prevalent among respondents 51 years and older (77%). The most frequently identified change – by an overwhelming margin – was that there has been a positive shift to Australian children’s television featuring better diversity of representation (33%). A third of respondents believe Australian children’s shows now depict a more inclusive range of people, ethnicities, cultures, abilities, sexualities, and/or genders, as well as including a greater amount of more respectful representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples [see pp. 17–18 for further discussion regarding greater diversity in Australian children’s shows].

“It’s better than it was when I was a kid. There were a lot of people speaking like English folks, and there was no representation of Aboriginal people or gender diverse people (I’m both) and yeah, now there is!”
 – Survey response from 55+ year old non-binary person, QLD

“I love the way that children’s television is getting better at representing diverse cultures and experiences. Especially how there is more acknowledgement of the importance First Nations Peoples and their culture in shows like Play School – so that this is just part of life for the next generation of Australians.” – Survey response from 41–45 year old woman, VIC

The second most cited change was there has been what was seen as a negative turn towards Australian children’s television being “safer,” more sanitised, or less imaginative (10%).

Respondents with this perspective found that contemporary Australian shows tend to lack the distinctive quirkiness/strangeness that was loved in earlier Australian content [see pp. 3–4] and have become less “edgy,” avoiding darker subject matter.

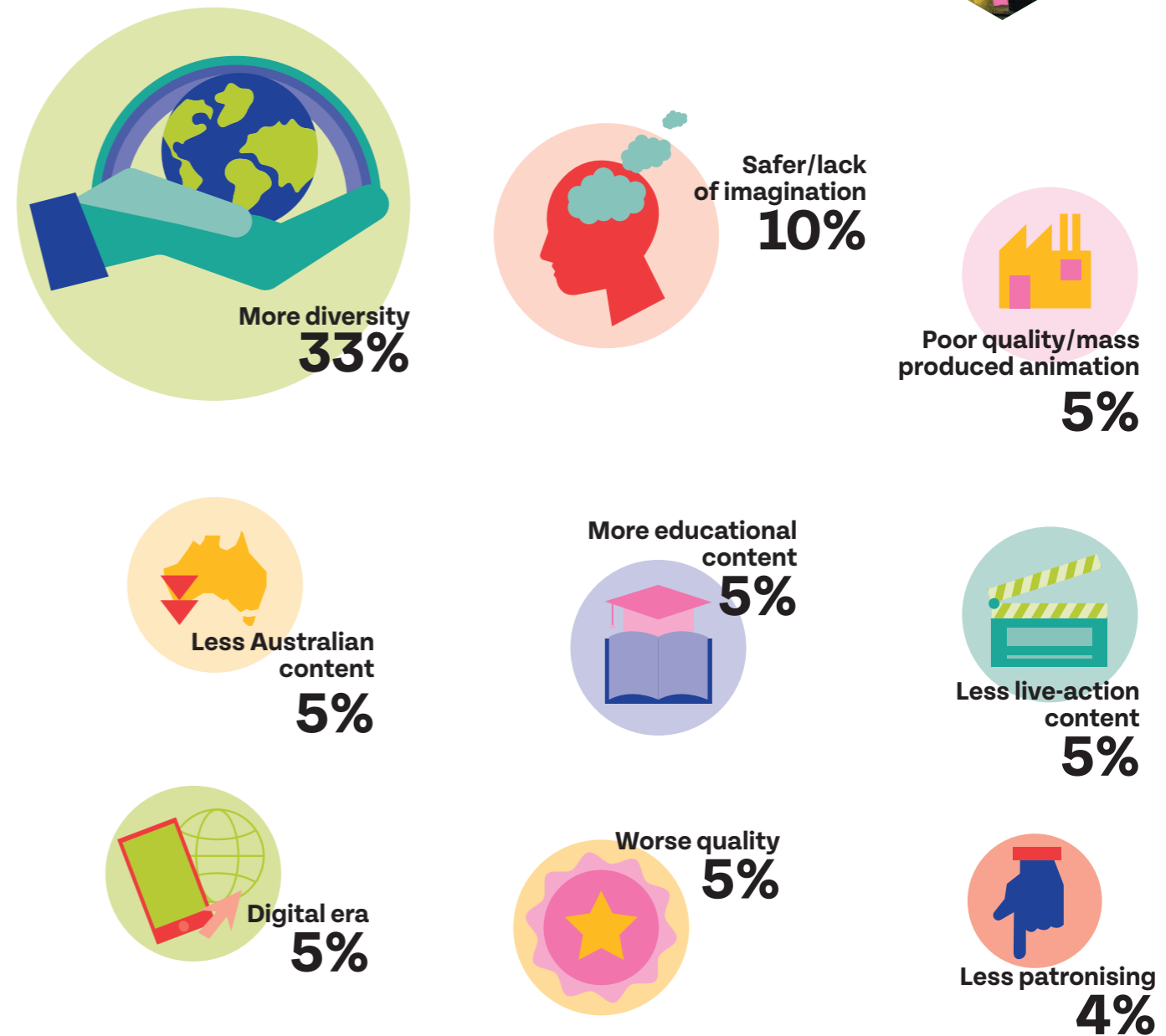
Other notable perceptions of change included that, compared to previous eras, there is now:

- More educational content
- Less live action shows
- More animation
- Generally poorer quality children’s television

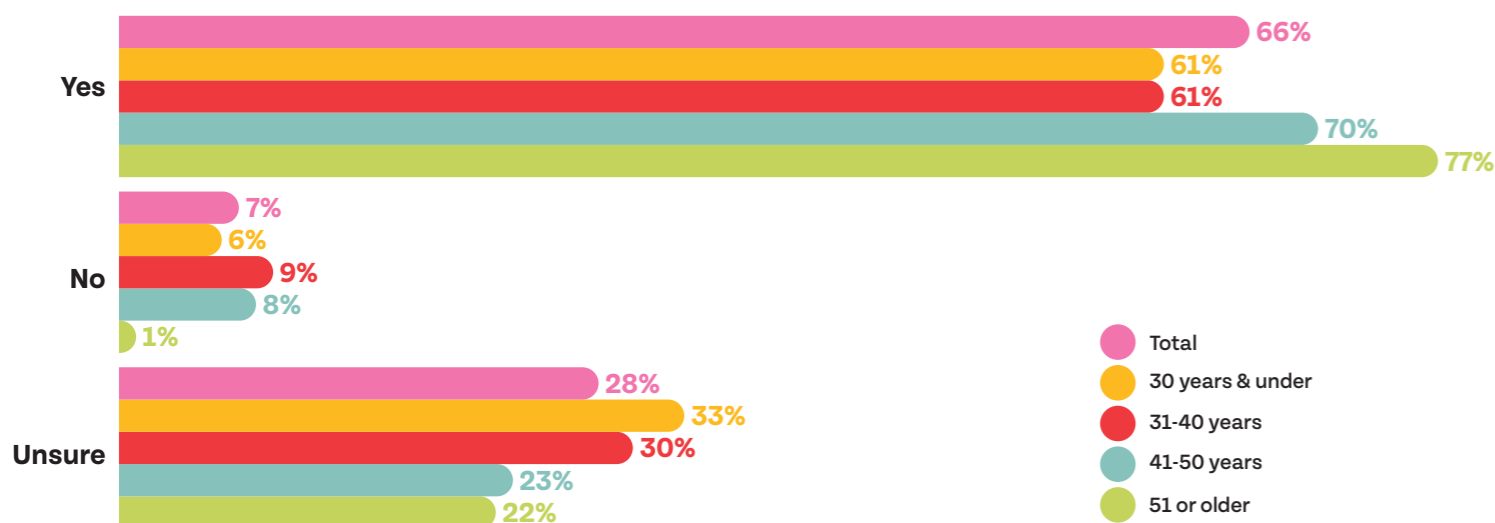
Some respondents also observed the digital era has overhauled children’s experience of television, especially in relation to streaming services and online platforms, such as YouTube and TikTok (5%).



How has Australian children’s television changed?



Has Australian children’s television changed significantly since you were young?



8. Reflecting and affecting what it means to be "Australian"

Almost half of respondents who watched Australian shows growing up felt Australian children's television accurately reflects Australian culture, people, and traditions.

Of respondents with a definitive opinion – that is, respondents who felt strongly enough to record a definitive "yes"/"no" response rather than "unsure" – 75% consider that Australian children's shows do accurately reflect Australian culture [see pp 13–14].

"The different backgrounds of modern Australia are strongly reflected in today's children's TV." – Survey response from 31–35 year old man, VIC

Expanding on this perception in open responses, research participants expressed the sense that there is more work to be done but Australian children's television has, overall, moved towards more relatable and diverse representation over the past few decades [see pp. 3–4 and pp. 15–16].

"[They] show the diversity of Australian life, show the ways that people live today and let kids see themselves in the entertainment that we see." – Survey response from 41–45 year old man, TAS

Relatable representation here referred to Australian children being able to "see themselves" in children's media through inclusions of "everyday" Australian elements, notably locations and language (i.e. Australian accents, speech patterns, idioms), and circumstances (e.g. Christmas in summer).

Survey responses discussed diverse representation in terms of Australia's multiculturalism and with a sense that the most progress has been made in relation to representations of location, race, culture, and religion. A balance between representations of girls and boys was also observed to have improved, but there were fewer mentions of other genders or marginalised sexualities.

"More so than ever before the Australian-made kids shows we see today are realistic. The humour is uniquely Australian and the shows reflect the multicultural society that Australia truly is." – Survey response from 55+ year old man, VIC

In interviews, participants expanded on these themes and observed that Australian children's television not only reflected to them what it means to be "Australian," it also affected how they came to understand themselves as Australian.

"I really feel like so much of my understanding of Australia and Australian culture, especially at an early age, was very much informed by those [Australian children's] shows."
– Interview with Chris, 25, grew up in VIC

The movement towards a more inclusive reflection of Australia was largely understood as positive, and driven by the ABC/public service broadcasting rather than commercial networks. A few stand-out shows were repeatedly identified as leading the charge of depicting a more diverse Australia.

Earlier "stand-out" shows: *Round the Twist, Play School, The Wiggles, Lift Off!*

More recent "stand-out" shows: *Bluey, Play School, The Wiggles, Little J & Big Cuz, Little Lunch, The InBESTigators*

"If I hadn't grown up with TV, I would be a completely different person because TV is a massive part of my identity. It forms so many of the memories that I have and also the experiences that I shared with my sister growing up and watching TV together." – Interview with Sarah, 24, grew up in VIC

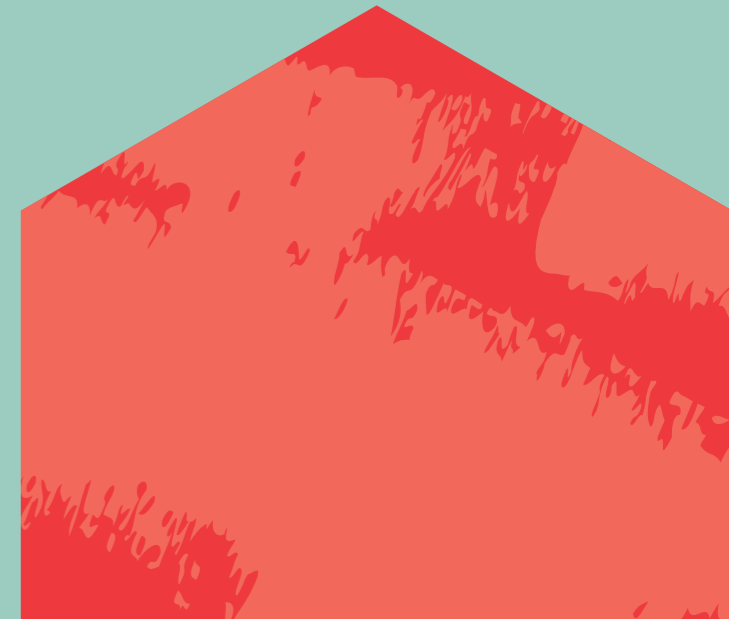
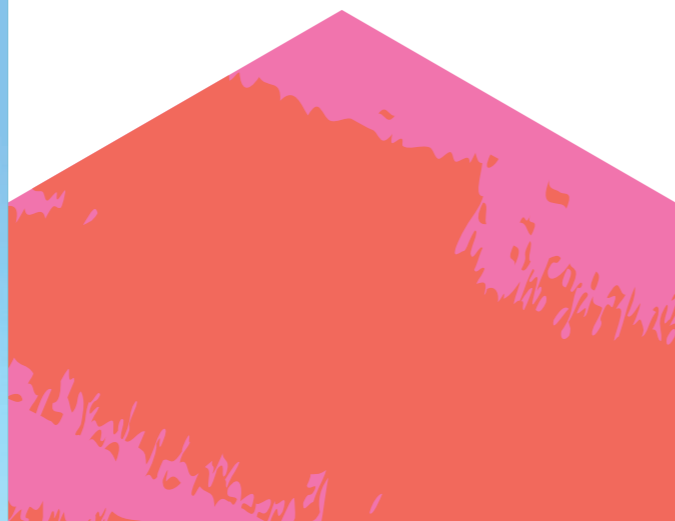
Respondents believed these shows captured a "laid back," fun, "warts-and-all," authentic representation of Australian life. Diversity in these shows was understood to feel incidental rather than "preachy" – often contrasted against a more aspirational, glossy and heavy-handed approach of US content.

However, outside of these stand-out shows, respondents felt there is now a general shortage of Australian children's content relative to the past [see pp. 15–16].

"I like some of the shows that are being produced currently. Shows like *Bluey*, which my nieces and nephews absolutely love are not only engaging but they teach kids some great themes. But I have to say that shows like *Bluey* are few and far between – we need more of them!"
– Survey response from 41–45yr old man, VIC



Bluey



Round the Twist



Nostalgia in bloom: Long-term impacts of Aussie kids' TV flourish for those in their 30s

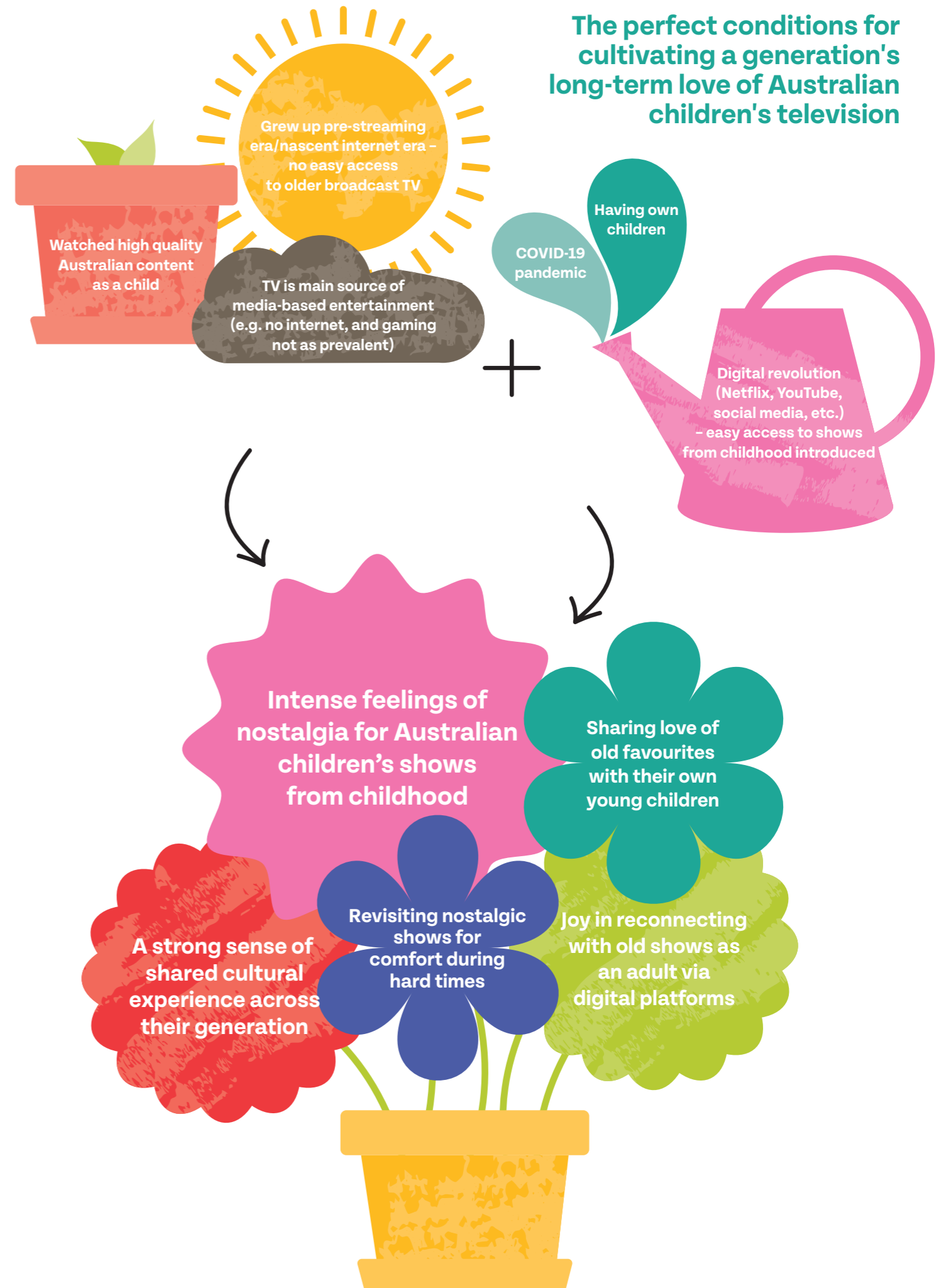
Analysis of this project's data revealed it was collected during a particularly opportune period to investigate long-term impacts of Australian children's television – especially regarding research participants aged 31–40. The timing of data collection, beginning late 2021, meant this group of participants (born 1981–1990) were especially well placed to illuminate the lasting influence of Australian children's content and associated nostalgic screen practices.

All age groups in this study were sufficiently represented and provided valuable insights, though the 31–40 age bracket had the most survey respondents (37%) [see p. IV]. More than just being the largest single age group, however, these respondents also watched the highest proportion of Australian children's content when growing up [see p. 1]. Further still, thematic analysis of survey and interview responses revealed that those aged 31–40 years were exceptionally passionate about Australian children's content from their childhoods and enthusiastic about revisiting and sharing it [see p. 8].

Across survey and interview responses, participants in this age bracket repeatedly articulated intense feelings of joy, excitement, contentment, and comfort in relation to revisiting and sharing these shows as adults. This research determined that for many growing up in the 1980s and 1990s, Australian children's shows were more than light afternoon entertainment or Saturday morning fun, and instead became treasured childhood memories and meaningful shared cultural experience across a generation.

While these findings relate to a particular generation, this research establishes that Australian children's content facilitates memory making and community building in a post-terrestrial era – despite television audiences now being more fractured, nostalgic screen practices can flourish via the on-demand access and sharing capabilities that digital platforms offer. These findings also more broadly demonstrate the decades-long impacts that can bloom from tending to the development of quality Australian children's television.

Reference: O'Regan, Tom and Potter, Anna. (2013) Globalisation from within? The de-nationalising of Australian film and television production. *Media International Australia* (149), 5–14.



When they were children

Research participants aged 31–40 years grew up in the 1980s and 1990s during the terrestrial era when television was the main source of media-based entertainment for children. This was a key period of strong investment in, and government support for, Australian children’s television – notably, children’s content quotas for commercial broadcasters and the work of the ACTF supported a dynamic Australian children’s television sector. In this period, free-to-air television in Australia consisted of two public service broadcasters and three commercial networks (many regional areas had limited television reception). Pay TV was introduced in Australia in 1995 but did not expand significantly until the mid-2000s (O’Regan and Potter, 2013).

As such, during the 1980s and 1990s large percentages of the Australian child audience watched the same Australian children’s shows, which were often of high quality [see pp. 1–2 and pp. 15–16]. Furthermore, research participants also reflected that watching “whatever was on” often meant watching multiple repeat broadcasts of the same show.

After this time of concentrated engagement as children, however, this group could not easily rewatch favourite childhood shows until they were adults and the technology became available for them to do so on demand.

As adults in their 30s

For those aged 31–40, their childhood television viewing experience combined with three intersecting factors in their adulthoods, giving them the means, motivation, and opportunity to actively re-engage with Australian children’s shows from their early years.

1. The advent of digital technologies:

This group of participants came of age as digital technologies became widely available. They were adults when social media and streaming services began providing the ability to easily revisit and share children’s shows from past decades [see pp. 7–8 and pp. 11–12]. The time gap between these participants being a terrestrial child audience and a digital adult audience – a product of age, era and technology – fostered their curiosity and nostalgia for television from their childhood [see pp. 5–6].

2. Having their own young children:

Given their age and life stage, many in this group have their own young children – almost half (44%) of survey respondents in this age bracket were parents. Sharing nostalgic shows with their young children was identified as a prominent reason for locating and re-visiting Australian children’s content from their childhood [see pp. 5–6].

3. COVID-19 lockdowns:

This project’s data was gathered as the major social restrictions in Australia relating the COVID-19 pandemic were coming to an end. For all who participated in this research, COVID-19 lockdowns were a very recent memory if not a current reality.

Survey and interview responses revealed that among all age groups, lockdowns gave participants the time and inclination to return to, and share, children’s television from childhood. This timing meant the research captured an important common theme – that revisiting children’s television during uncertain or stressful times provided a sense of security and comfort.

For research participants aged 31–40 years, the background setting of lockdowns worked with the factors discussed above to make this group especially attuned to the nature, motives and gratifications of nostalgic screen practices, particularly those relating to Australian children’s television.

Summary: Memorable and meaningful, bonding and belonging

This audience research provides evidence-based insights into the ways Australian children’s television is integrated into the national and personal frameworks of Australian culture, and the reasons generations of audiences continue to value Australian children’s television long into adulthood.

It illuminates that over many decades Australian children’s television has had powerful and lasting impacts on Australian child audiences, and provides

new details about the ongoing socio-cultural impacts of this content. It highlights the value audiences place on distinctive Australian children’s television and, therefore, the ongoing need for high-quality Australian children’s television in the streaming era.

These findings show how important Australian children’s television is to Australia’s cultural life and that the availability of overseas content does not diminish interest in local children’s content or dilute its enduring cultural influence.

This research:

1. Evidences that Australian children’s television has been significant in the lives and memories of Australians for more than 60 years.
2. Verifies that Australians have strong nostalgic associations between children’s television and childhood memories.
3. Clarifies that those aged 51 years and older understand Australian children’s as fundamental and favourite, and that this sentiment is even stronger in younger generations.
4. Confirms that children’s shows with identifiably Australian narratives, characters and aesthetics are highly valued and often understood as offering something important and special compared to their overseas counterparts.
5. Establishes that there is a prized tradition in Australian children’s television of blending strange, quirky and/or surreal elements with relatable, “ordinary” Australian characters and settings.
6. Identifies that Australian children’s shows have helped child audiences form their cultural identity, bond with family and peers, and, in many cases, feel connected to their fellow Australians.
7. Substantiates that Australian children’s television is understood to not only reflect Australian culture back to itself but also as shaping conceptions of Australian nationhood and national character.
8. Clarifies that the popularity of using digital technologies to revisit children’s television of the past – and that sharing and connecting with others is a major motivation for this revisiting.
9. Evidences that diverse representations in Australian television are valued – and though this diversity is understood to have increased over time, audiences perceive there are still further improvements to be made.
10. Indicates that although digital technologies have fractured television audiences, digital platforms can be used to counter isolating viewing practices and instead facilitate bonding via sharing children’s television.

Authors and Institutions



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Strategy and Insight Specialist Daniel McIntyre of The Human Project

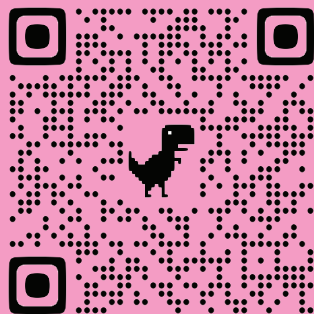


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