

The Next Generation of Voters Talk Arts, Culture and Creativity

What are Australian arts and culture? And what value do they have to individuals and communities across Australia? These are questions we asked young undecided voters of low to middle income backgrounds from marginal electorates in outer suburban and regional areas. **They all agreed, arts and culture are embedded in and inseparable from everyday life.**

This research provides insights into the priorities and preferences of young middle Australians, and how these would hope to influence their expectations of governments into the future. It also highlights a belief that arts and culture can be tools to heal our communities and help them recover from challenges like Covid-19.

Ultimately, it's all about people. Art is one of the most uniquely human things that we do.

(FEMALE, 26, SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

What do young middle Australians think about arts and culture?

Young Australians are engaged and influential arts and culture creators, participators and consumers. It is clear that arts and culture both informs and influences the thinking, behaviours and decisions of young Australians, including young middle Australians.

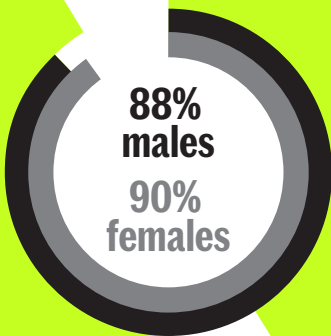
If we didn't have arts or culture, I don't think we'd really live in what you would describe as civilisation. Because I don't think you would have the people who are capable of driving societies forward.

(MALE, 24, SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

When interviewed, **young middle Australians reported using arts and culture as tools to understand themselves and their changing world, to connect with their community online and in real life, and to improve their health and wellbeing.** Young middle Australians cannot imagine a world in which arts and culture doesn't exist, and reported strongly that access to arts and cultural experiences shouldn't be dependent on where you live.

[Without arts and culture], I think it would feel quite isolated and lonely. I guess for me, culture is community and experience. And without that, I don't think you'd be able to express creativity at all without some form of art or culture. So I think it would be a very lonely, sad place.

(FEMALE, 29, QUEENSLAND)



Younger Australians are great at 'turning up' to cultural events and venues and are more likely to attend than their older counterparts. More than 88% of male 18-34 year olds and more than 90% of females in the same age group attended a cultural event or venue in 2017-18. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019. Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia)

In reflecting on access to arts and cultural experiences, **young middle Australians were concerned about younger children having access to these experiences growing up**, reporting a belief that arts and culture have cognitive, social and emotional benefits and should be taught in schools across Australia.

Education is, for me, the biggest one, because education is this phase of secondary socialisation; people are learning who they are and learning to be themselves in society. And so, at this key stage, they need arts and culture to build up that identity and figure out what cultures they fit into and who they identify with.

(MALE, 18, TASMANIA)

How do young middle Australians define arts and culture?

Young middle Australians define arts and culture as objects and activities that have substance, allow for self-expression, tell a story and can be engaged in the company of others. This broad definition meant that everything from attending opera to viewing a street performance, writing a novel or filming a TikTok video could be included. While digital technology has increased access to arts and cultural experiences, young middle Australians still place equal value on digital and physical experiences, with experiences that allow for both the most engaging.

Importantly, **young middle Australians reported that they don't associate arts and culture with elitism and are comfortable engaging with high arts**, expecting to have opportunities to access these in the same way they do to other artforms.

If there were free tickets or something, I'd go and experience it; yeah; why not?

(MALE, 22, SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

They also had clear views on **Australian arts and cultural content, reporting that it should reflect the diversity of contemporary society and the stories of our First Nations peoples**. Young middle Australians believe arts and culture help deepen Australians' understanding of different people and perspectives, and also help tell Australia's diverse range of stories to the world.

I think there's so many different experiences of being Australian. It's not one shared, unified thing. It's this whole different range of how people express being Australian, and I think art is a way to express that and build their understanding of what that looks like for people outside of Australia coming into Australia, to get an idea that there's a really diverse range of people here.

(FEMALE, 26, NORTHERN TERRITORY)

How do the perspectives of young middle Australians compare with middle-aged middle Australians?

The Next Generation research followed the comprehensive report into middle Australia published in 2020. Comparing the two it is clear that while there are similarities, young middle Australians are comfortable holding divergent views from their parents.

The area in which their views were most strongly divergent was digital engagement with arts and culture. Young middle Australians reported that digital is integrated in all activities and experiences, including in face-to-face, and is a normal part of daily life. This was in contrast to most middle-aged middle Australians who didn't include these activities and experiences, like Tik Tok or online games, in their definition of arts and culture.

I feel like older generations couldn't express themselves as much as we can, and so we are able to make digital art. And then, to someone that is older, like, for example, my mum, I don't think she would see art like that. I think she'd think of classical Indian dancing or singing or movies. But for people our age, it's more than just that, it's everything on social media and much more.

(FEMALE, 20, WESTERN AUSTRALIA)

What are the opportunities for leaders, investors and creative organisations?

Understanding the priorities and preferences of young middle Australians, and how these would hope to influence their expectations of governments into the future, can assist leaders, investors and creative organisations anticipate and respond to the future changes they will drive. Opportunities to do this include:

- **Prepare and implement a National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan to inform policy and investments and clarify responsibilities across all three levels of government** noting digital disruption, shifting demographics and a global cultural market are changing opportunities and preferences and a National Plan would help Australia to anticipate and respond to these changes.
- **Update policy, regulatory and legislative settings to reflect the values of young middle Australians** including ensuring arts and cultural experiences and infrastructure are accessible to all people no matter where they live and prioritising interactive engagement.

- **Prioritise using arts and cultural activities in existing and new initiatives to mitigate loneliness, social exclusion and social isolation** especially in place-making and community-building initiatives for young middle Australians.
- **Consistently teach arts and culture and the benefits of engagement in schools across Australia** in particular ensuring that it is taught to students from lower to middle-income families and those living in outer suburban and regional areas and consider subsidy programs for activities and/or tuition to ensure cost is not a barrier to access.
- **Prioritise schemes, incentives and requirements that support production and distribution of diverse Australian content and iconography** including drawing on Australia's cultural inheritance to create international public diplomacy initiatives that celebrate Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture and the diverse stories of Australia's multicultural communities.
- **Adopt an industry transformation approach to support arts and cultural organisations' pivot to digital**, taking into consideration the changing opportunities and preferences of Australians but especially young middle Australians.

About A New Approach (ANA)

Australians from every walk of life participate in and benefit from arts, culture and creativity. Australia's leading arts and culture think tank, A New Approach (ANA) makes this evident through independent research and analysis. ANA's work informs discussion, inspires public policy and brings together decision makers and industry leaders around evidence-led ideas and pathways for pragmatic action. ANA's staff, board, expert advisory and philanthropic partners are driven by a shared vision of a cultural life that emboldens Australia. ANA is supported by 11 philanthropic partners: The Myer Foundation; Sidney Myer Fund; Tim Fairfax Family Foundation; The Ian Potter Foundation; Neilson Foundation; Minderoo Foundation; Besen Family Foundation; Spinifex Trust; The Keir Foundation; Aranday Foundation; and The Yulgilbar Foundation.



The Next Generation report is the sixth insight report produced by ANA and follows the comprehensive **A View from Middle Australia** report released in 2020. In producing the Next Generation report, the primary research and analysis which underpins it was completed by the Social Research Centre led by Dr Stephen Cuttriss. Expert advice was provided by Professor Gerry Redmond, Associate Professor Hernan Cuervo and Dr Emma Felton as well as by Ben Au who sits on the ANA Reference Group.

More information

For more information about the work of ANA visit www.newapproach.org.au

To request a briefing on the Next Generation research contact hello@newapproach.org.au