

MEDIA RELEASE:

Curiosity key to happiness, but undervalued

Canon Australia reveals that the nation undervalues curiosity, despite it being a powerful trait that supports a fuller, more meaningful life

Sydney, Australia, 28 May 2018 – New research shows the vast majority of Australians believe being curious is crucial for our mental health and wellbeing. But is exploring the unknown valued in Australia? A study released today by Canon Australia probing the state of curiosity across the country has found that two thirds agree the nation doesn't recognise or reward curiosity enough.

Less than half of more than 1,000 respondents surveyed nationwide believe a curious outlook is valued in their role in the workplace, calling into question Australia's commitment to promoting innovation and creativity to fuel our economy. Yet despite almost a third believing our nation as a whole doesn't value curiosity, three in five (63 per cent) view Australia as a nation of curious thinkers.

Associate Professor Maria Kangas of Macquarie University's Department of Psychology, who worked with Canon on the study, says the research affirms that curiosity has a positive impact on our lives.

"Being curious has a broad range of benefits; it enhances social bonding experiences, making us more empathic, and enables us to live more purposeful lives, while heightening our sense of well-being. It's clear from the data that curiosity is not a trait that some people have and some don't – it can be cultivated, facilitated, and encouraged, given the right stimuli," said Associate Professor Kangas. With most Australians perceiving curiosity as having an enquiring mind that seeks to understand the world around us, the research showed that four out of five Australians agreed with the idea that curiosity can be developed throughout our lives.

When did we stop asking 'why'?

According to the study, nearly half of Australians (48 per cent) consider themselves to have been most curious between the ages of 11 to 29 years. During these years, they, frequently asked 'why' to learn and explore the world around them. The transition into adulthood seems to limit the way we think and see, with 1 in 3 (33 per cent) believing we become less curious after turning 30. Interestingly, this is the same stage of life in which most feel that it is important to stay curious, to foster and nurture new skills.

That said, one in two Australians (50 per cent) believe that they are as curious now as ever, with seniors above 55 years feeling the most inquisitive of the lot (62 per cent believe they are most curious now). Comparatively, those under 34 feel they aren't as curious as they'd like (41 per cent believe they are most curious now), but are more interested in their career, relationships and sexuality than their elders.

What's gender got to do with it?

The battle of the sexes is alive and well over who is more curious. The study revealed that nearly 9 of 10 women (88 percent) believe they are the more inquiring gender. Men agreed, but delivered a much more evenly-weighted split. Women were found to be more curious about subjects such as culture, relationships, people, and their career, with men coming out on top on intrigue around technology, science, and the universe.

That curiosity might not have worked out so well for some women, however, as half wished they could ‘unsee’ or ‘unhear’ something they’d seen as a result of being curious, compared with just over one third of men (38 per cent).

In an age when gender boundaries are becoming ever more blurred, a stand out research finding was that seven out of ten millennials (71 per cent aged under 34) reported being curious about what it would be like to be the opposite gender for a day.

Canon Australia encourages you to Bring Your Curiosity

Encouraging Australians to put more of their authentic selves into the world, Canon discovered three self-confessed ‘uncurious’ individuals and sent them on an adventure beyond their comfort zones. The first of the three travellers was Irene Zagoridis, a 72 year old Sydney-based grandmother who has devoted her adult life to her family.

Travelling back home to Greece for the first time in more than six decades, Irene was assigned questionnaires and a daily mood diary by Associate Professor Kangas to assess her feelings throughout her journey. Comparing her outlook before, during and after her memorable trip, Kangas found that Irene’s ‘social curiosity’ and ‘joyous exploration’ markers had improved dramatically – leading to a measurable lift in her sense of well-being.

“When faced with a host of activities, the research showed over half of all Australians feel most curious when travelling or visiting new places, so we put this to the test. During her travels, it was heartening to see Irene use her camera to view the world differently, and unlock new and exciting experiences on the way. Her journey has been a truly inspiring one, and is testament to the fact that there is no age limit for becoming more curious and living a fuller life,” said Jason McLean, Director, Canon Consumer Imaging.

“I was born in Greece and came to Australia when I was four. I’ve hardly travelled overseas in my lifetime, and haven’t really been curious about what’s out there either. I guess it’s because everything in my life has been planned out, from my wedding and marriage, to my children and family. When Canon approached me, I decided to do something for myself for a change!” shared Irene Zagoridis.

“Travelling back to Greece was surreal for me. I didn’t really know how to feel, but I was given a camera to use for my trip, and it truly helped me develop an interest in what’s around me. One of the days, I photographed a couple dancing in a café, and before I knew it, one of them invited me to his 30th birthday gathering. Through them, I also discovered a poppy field not too far away – it made me feel like a little girl again, running through my grandmother’s farm. The whole experience was a special one for me, a dream come true. Using my camera also pushed me to see the world in a different way, something I had never done before,” said Irene.

For more information and to see Irene’s beautiful journey, visit bringyourcuriosity.com.au. Stay tuned for the stories of the next two travellers!

- ENDS -

APPENDIX

Key findings from the research include:

- 84% of all Australians believe curiosity is important to an individual's mental health and wellbeing, despite two-thirds (68%) agreeing we don't recognise or reward curiosity enough
- Four out of five Australians (81%) believe anyone can be curious – it's something that can be developed
- Three out of five Australians (63%) think Australia is a curious nation, despite almost a third believing our country doesn't value curiosity
- Over half (55%) of all Australians feel most curious when travelling or visiting new places

State-based findings:

- Victoria's workforce perceives itself to be Australia's most curious (55% agreed that they are)
- Over half (55%) of Victoria's workforce feels encouraged and inspired to be most curious throughout their day-to-day routine

Gender-based findings:

- 9 out of 10 women (88%) believe they are the more curious sex, but not according to men (men agreed, but placing the split at a more even 42%/58%)
- Women revealed as more curious about culture, relationships, people, and their career.
- Half of all women (49%) wish they could unsee or unhear something they've seen as a result of being curious, compared with just over one third of men (38%)

Age-based findings:

- 7 out of 10 Millennials (71% aged <34) are curious about what it would be like to be the opposite gender for a day
- Four out of five Australians aged <34 are curious to know what it would be like to be a child again in this modern world, compared with just half (52%) of those aged 55+