

How radio supports older adults' well-being

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It may be a technology developed in the 19th century, but James Cook University researchers have found radio still offers a surprising range and depth of experience to listeners today.

JCU psychology lecturer Dr. Amanda Krause led a study investigating

how radio personnel and listeners regard the purpose of radio and how radio can influence the well-being of older listeners.

She said the medium still has a vast reach in Australia—especially among [older people](#).

"Figures from 2022 indicate community radio reaches over 5.1 million Australians weekly and commercial radio reaches 68% of Australians 65 years of age and older."

"Average weekly listening hours are 15 hours and nearly 13 hours for community and [commercial radio](#) respectively," said Dr. Krause.

She said both listeners and radio personnel regarded radio's purpose as offering news and information, entertainment, and social exchange opportunities.

Listeners said radio managed to offer all three of these things whenever they were needed—simultaneously informing, entertaining, and stimulating [social needs](#) without them being mutually exclusive.

"Participants indicated that radio acts as a surrogate friend in their home; someone to keep them company and encourage connection to their greater community."

"Relationships with radio programs and individual presenters, built and sustained over time through repeated listening, underpin radio's ability to support listener well-being," said Dr. Krause.

She said researchers knew audience participation was key to radio engagement, but it seemed radio's ability to create community has benefits beyond promoting engagement, including those related to well-being.

"Researchers understand the media landscape has become increasingly individualized—with [digital music](#) tailored exactly to an individual's taste, for instance. However, [radio](#)'s perceived social purpose—its ability to draw people together—underpins its continued relevance as a media technology."

The research is published in the journal *Frontiers in Computer Science*.

More information: Amanda E. Krause et al, The purpose of radio and how it supports older adults' wellbeing, *Frontiers in Computer Science* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/fcomp.2023.1111806](https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomp.2023.1111806)

Provided by James Cook University

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