



centre for alcohol  
policy research

# Alcohol in G and PG films – Do Classifications matter?

Emmanuel Kuntsche, Maree Patsouras, Paula O'Brien, Zhen He, Reiner Hanewinkel,  
Rutger C. M. E. Engels, Dan Anderson-Luxford, & Benjamin C. Riordan

APSAD Conference, Canberra, 31 October 2024

# Australian and US film classifications

## Australia – Classification and Definition

G (General audiences)

G rated material contain elements classified as 'very mild' in impact, suitable for any age.

There are no legal restrictions for this category as an 'advisory' category.

PG (Parental Guidance)

PG rated material is classified as 'mild' in impact. This content may be confusing or upsetting for children and require guidance from parents/guardians.

There are no legal restrictions for this category as an 'advisory' category. However, PG material is not recommended to children under 15 years old without guidance from parents/guardians.

# Australian and US film classifications

## United States (US) - Classification and Definition

G (General Audiences)

All ages admission - no content should 'offend' or be inappropriate for parents of young children who are viewing.

PG (Parental Guidance Suggested)

Contains some material that may be unsuitable for children.

May contain some content that parents do like their young children to view - 'urged' to give parental guidance.

PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned)

Some material may be considered inappropriate for pre-teenagers (children under 13) - 'urge' parents to be cautious

Australia	UK	US	Canada*
G	Unrestricted	G	G
PG	PG	PG	PG
M	12A	PG-13	14A
MA15+	15		
		18A	
R18+	18	NC17	R
X18+	R18		Adult

# International comparison of film classification

Australian Law Reform Commission, Australian Government, 2024

# Alcohol is common in films

- Previous Australian research (Patsouras et al., 2024) demonstrated that adults believed that alcohol/alcohol use should not be glorified in films, and alcohol use should not be shown in films recommended to children under 15 years of age.
- 57% of G/PG films contain alcohol use in the US (Dal Cin et al., 2008).
- ¼ of PG-rated films portrayed enough alcohol to rank them alongside the top 50% of R-rated films (Tickle, 2009).

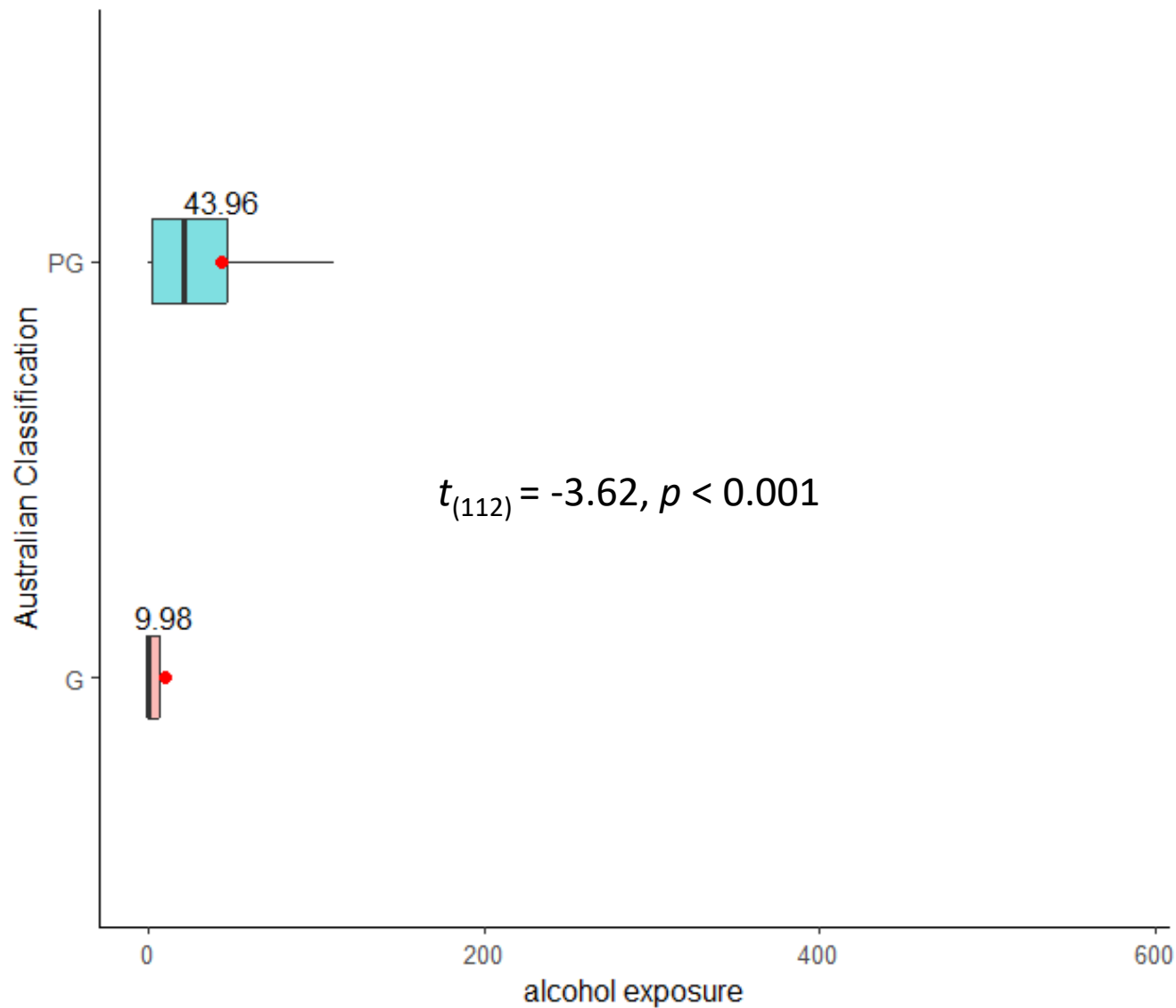


**How often is alcohol depicted in Alvin and the Chipmunks?**

# Aim

- We conducted a secondary analysis of Hanewinkel et al. (2014) original content analysis to determine how much alcohol is present using the Australian classification.
- Our research aims were to determine:
  1. Do Australian film classifications consider alcohol  
(e.g., do PG films include more alcohol than G films)?
  2. How does Australia compare to the US classification system in terms of alcohol exposure?

# Results: Do classifications consider alcohol?



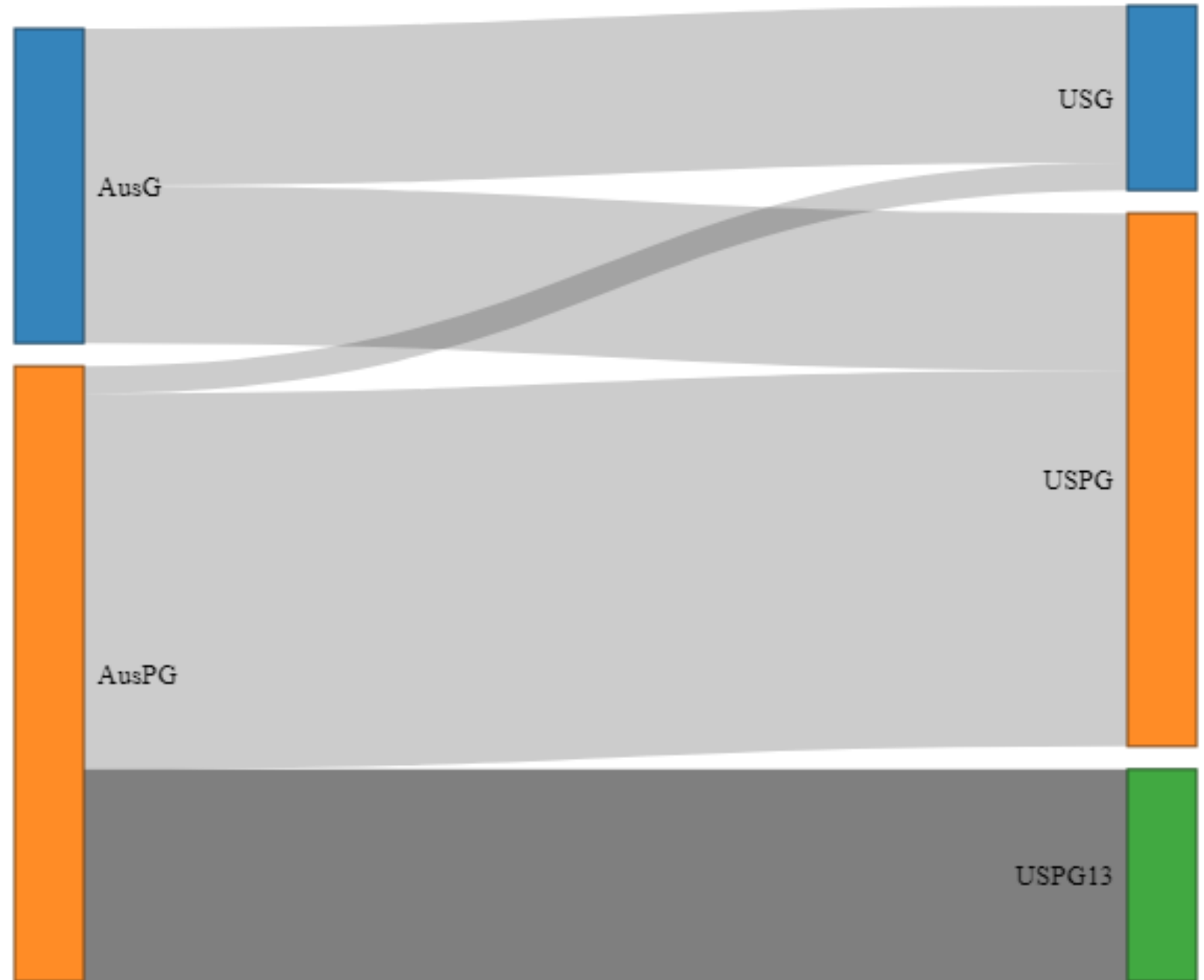
39.1% of G films show alcohol

83% of PG films show alcohol

Although only 39% of G films show alcohol, they show alcohol on average 10 times

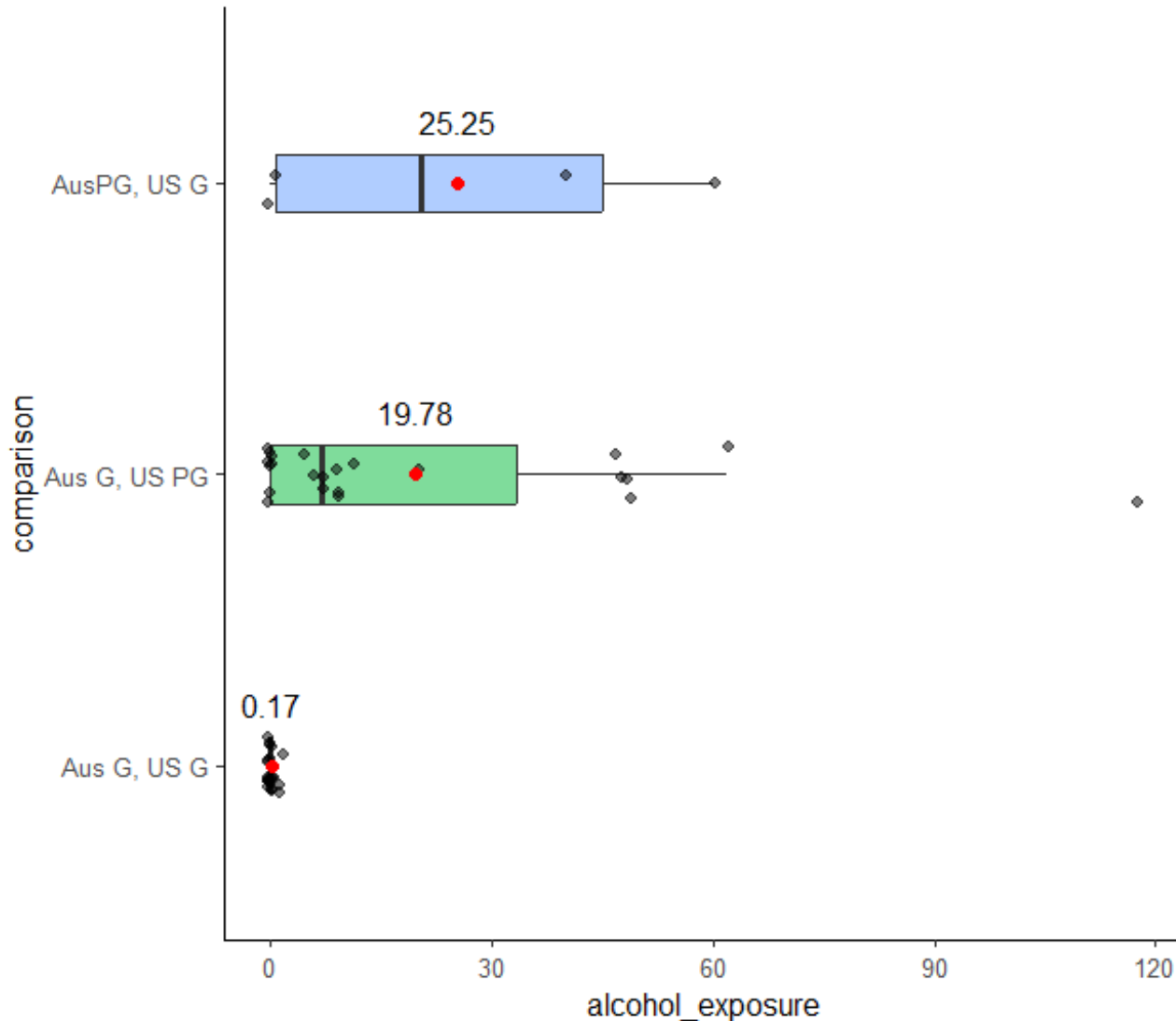
On average, there is more exposure in PG films, where alcohol is seen on average 44 times

**Results:  
The US  
classification  
is stricter**





# Results: Is the US stricter for G films?

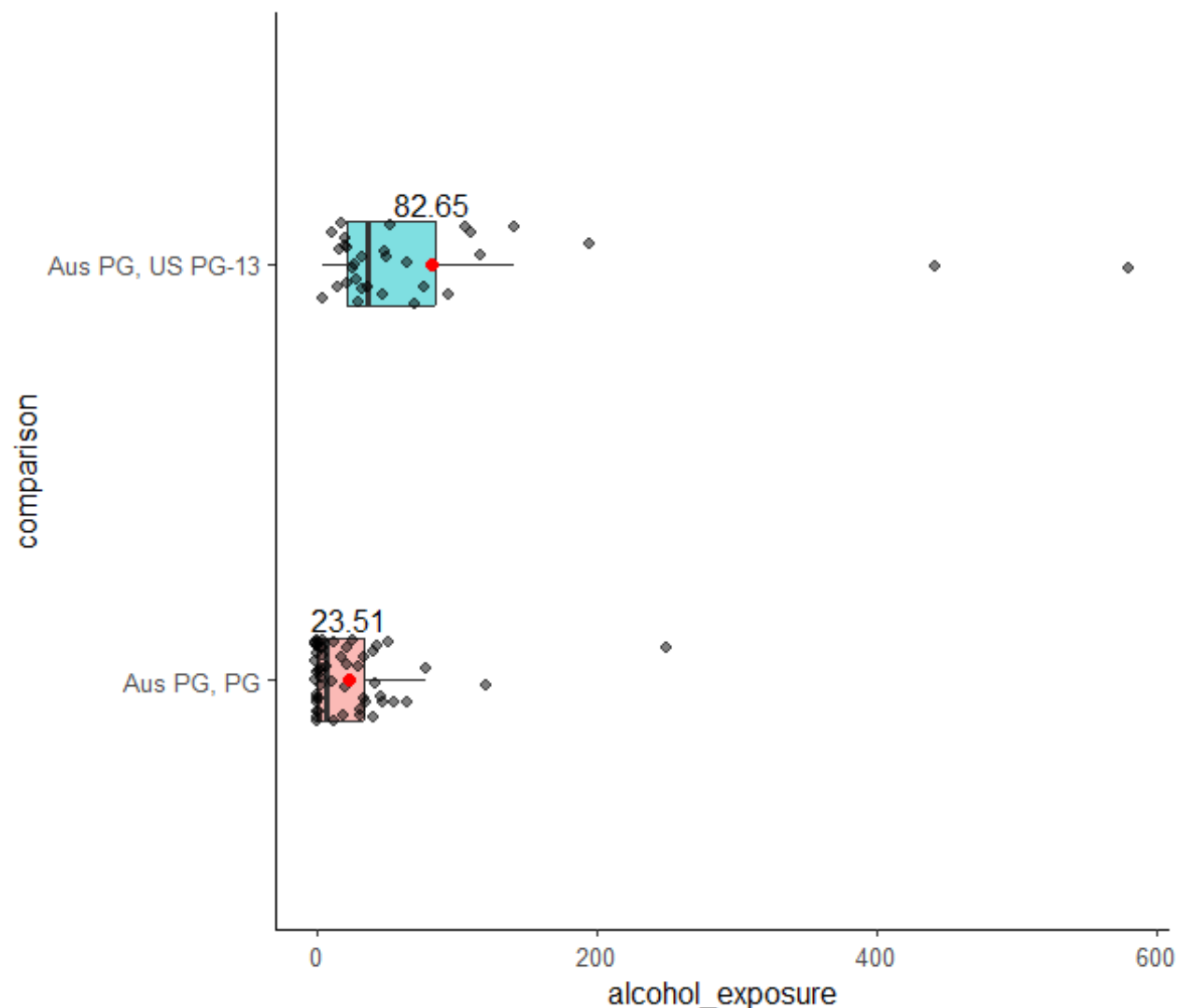


The 23 films that are G in both countries show alcohol on average 0.17 times.

There are 23 films rated G in Aus and PG in the US and they have significantly more alcohol shown (19.78).

There are only 4 films that are G in the US and PG in Aus. Although they include more alcohol (25), they are not significantly different.

# Results: Is the US stricter for PG films?



55 films are PG in both and show alcohol on average 24 times.

There are 31 films rated PG in Aus and PG-13 in the US and they have significantly more alcohol shown (83).

# Discussion

- PG films in Australia depict more alcohol exposure than in G films, at over 80%. However, nearly 40% of Australian G films still show alcohol exposure.
- Unfortunately, Australia appears more lenient than the US in classifying films as G and PG, and thus appropriate for children , and this is particularly in the case of alcohol in G films.
- To better inform viewers, we need a more robust approach to classification of films that contain alcohol, whether branded or generic, in both Australia and the US.
- In Australia -- greater weight should be given by the Australian Classification Board to the impacts of alcohol content in films on viewers, with the possibility of alcohol becoming an independent 'classifiable element', requiring stand-alone consideration by classification bodies, and not just part of the 'themes' element.

# Next steps

- Problem: Current evidence small-scaled and quickly outdated
- Content analysis and manual annotation is very burdensome
- ARC DP project: Development of a Deep Learning algorithm able to automatically identify alcoholic beverages in films
- Evidence on 1000 films in 2025
- Copyright law barriers remain