

Television characters SpongeBob SquarePants and Hannah Montana still firm favourites with 6 to 12 year olds

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A study carried out by the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) among a representative sample of 734 children aged between six and twelve years has revealed that SpongeBob SquarePants and Hannah Montana remain children's favourite television characters in Germany.

As last year, Hannah Montana (SuperRTL) and SpongeBob (Nickelodeon) top the list of children's favourite television characters. Barbie, who can be seen in a number of different roles in animated films – "Barbie as Rapunzel", for example – comes next, followed by superheroes such as Ben 10 and Batman, as well as the brash Bart Simpson. The popularity of the Mouse from the "Programme with the Mouse" means that a character from a classic, publicly-funded quality television programme also finds itself in the list of children's most favoured television characters. Indeed, the Mouse, together with characters such as Bibi Blocksberg, Tabaluga, and Vicky the Viking, represents a new trend on last year: television characters from publicly-funded television programmes are increasingly cited as children's favourites.

1. SpongeBob
2. Hannah Montana
3. Barbie (films)
4. Bart Simpson, Ben 10
5. Batman
6. The Mouse (The Programme with the Mouse)
7. Kim Possible, Princess Lillifee
8. Charlie (Two and a Half Men), Tabaluga, Vicky the Viking

Children's favourite characters, 2011

Girls look for strong girl characters with a sense of social responsibility

As in recent years, Hannah Montana, alias Miley Cyrus, is by far and away the favourite character among girls. A reception study carried out by IZI among her fans shows that girls are attracted to Hannah less because she is a rich star famous the world over than for the fact that Miley always gives her best, and because she *too* has problems. As such, Hannah, as Barbie, Princess Lillifee, Kim Possible or Bibi Blocksberg, typifies those strong girls who can easily marry social responsibility with success.

Boys seek fun-loving boy characters, and superheroes

The chaotic SpongeBob sits 'squarely' at the top of the boys' popularity scale, a finding common to the last decade. Reception studies carried out by IZI demonstrate that he sees the world through a child's eye, and loves to act on impulse. He also survives crises with great humour, without actually identifying them as such. It is these particular traits which explain the strength of his appeal

	Boys	Girls
1.	SpongeBob	Hannah Montana
2.	Batman	Barbie
3.	Bart Simpson	SpongeBob
4.	Ben 10	The Mouse, Princess Lillifee
5.	Charlie, Bob the Builder	Kim Possible
6.	Homer Simpson	Bibi Blocksberg, Tabaluga

Children's favourite characters by gender, 2011

among boys and his function as role model to them. In a similar fashion to Bart and Homer Simpson, SpongeBob is able to inspire with his demands for fun and free time, and his highly playful rule-breaking. In addition to these "comical no-hopers", the young superheroes Batman or Ben 10 – with his "watch" (Omnitrix) that can help him change into ten different monsters – also find themselves among the favourites.

Whereas younger children prefer characters from children's television programmes, ten-to-twelve-year-old boys show an interest for characters from adult television. Charlie from "Two and a Half Men", for example, is most popular with this age group, as are stars such as Dieter Bohlen and Stefan Raab. However, whatever the age of the child, it is SpongeBob and Hannah Montana who still top the table!

These are the key findings from "Favourite Characters 2011", a study of a representative sample of 734 German children aged between six and twelve years carried out by Iconkids & Youth for the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television.

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