



Health & Wellbeing Insights Report

City of Melbourne
October 2024



SGS
Economics
& Planning



About this report

Health and wellbeing is shaped and sustained by complex and interrelated factors that go beyond an individual's lifestyle choices. These factors encompass the social, economic, physical, and natural environments in which we are born, grow, learn, work, live, and play.

Local governments in Victoria are required to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) every four years that seeks to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of their communities.

The City of Melbourne has prepared this Health and Wellbeing Insights Report to understand how we're tracking across the many aspects of health and wellbeing. Leveraging analysis from around 200 indicators, the report provides a comprehensive evidence base that will guide the development of the next MPHWP and Council Plan.

Health and wellbeing domains

Health and wellbeing insights are set out across nine domains. Each one contains analysis of indicators that are a mix of both what we've heard (feedback from community surveys administered by the City of Melbourne) and what we've measured (other statistical data sources). Insights are also broken down for key neighbourhoods and population cohorts, to understand how aspects of health and wellbeing are tracking within different communities.



Health and wellbeing domains

Built Environment and Services

- Access to infrastructure and services
- Density and connectivity
- Waste management

Socioeconomic Wellbeing

- Food security
- Energy poverty
- Income and disadvantage

Homelessness & Affordable Housing

- People experiencing homelessness
- Housing stress
- Public and community housing

Social Belonging and Connection

- Social capital
- Civic participation
- Diversity & inclusion
- Digital inclusion

Employment and Educational Participation

- Employment
- Education
- Youth participation
- Early years participation

Personal Health and Wellbeing

- Health conditions
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Communicable disease
- Infant and childhood development
- Self-reported health satisfaction

Climate and the Natural Environment

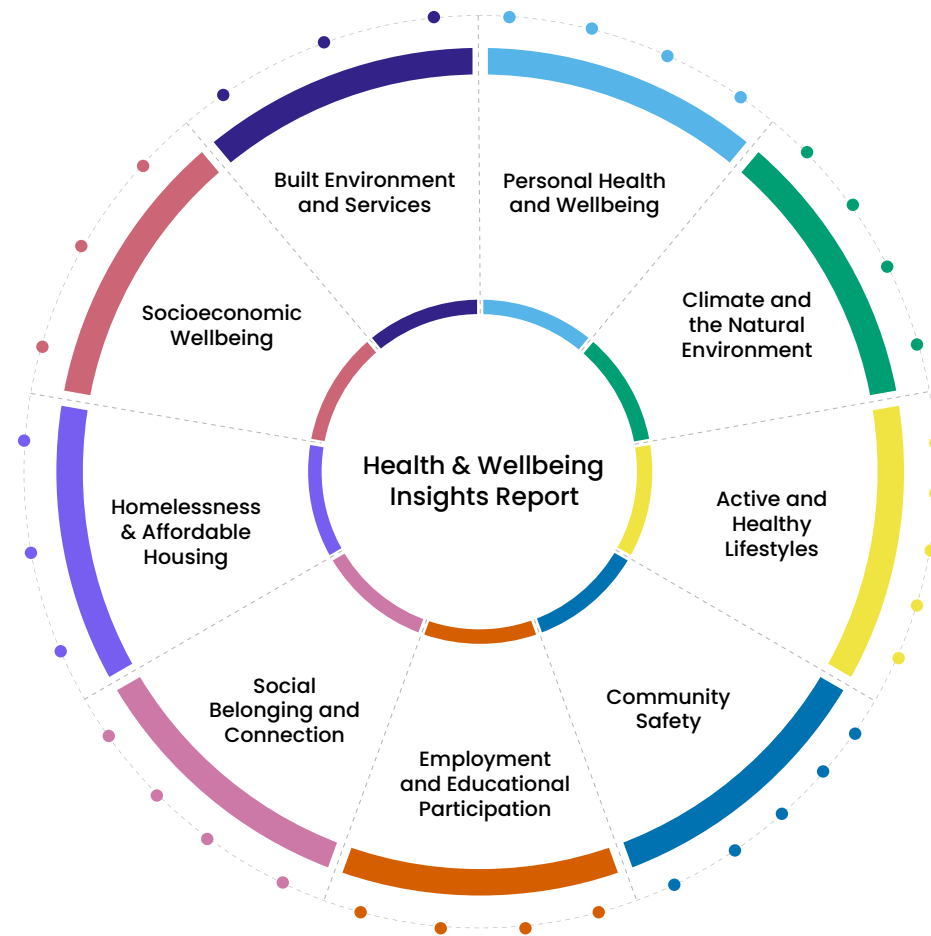
- Air quality and noise
- Urban greening
- Climate change shocks and stressors
- Access to public open space

Active and Healthy Lifestyles

- Physical activity
- Healthy eating
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Gambling
- Smoking and vaping

Community Safety

- Crime rates
- Family violence
- Cybercrime
- Road & transport safety
- Perceptions of safety



Health and wellbeing priorities

Health and wellbeing domain	Key insights
Community Safety	<p>Crime incidents have increased and there has been a decrease in the perception of safety across the municipality over the past 12 months.</p>
	<p>Everyone has the right to being and feeling safe. Currently women and younger adults are disproportionately impacted by family violence, and do not feel as safe as other community members, particularly at night or on public transport.</p>
	<p>Alcohol can increase violence and assaults. Following COVID-19 there has been an uptick in the amount of alcohol related assaults during the day.</p>
Employment and Educational Participation	<p>Despite a gradual increase in First Nations employment over the years, this indicator significantly lags behind non-First Nations employment. A gender workforce gap also remains, alongside a pay gap.</p>
	<p>Unemployment is already higher for young persons, and in Carlton, Parkville, and the CBD. Youth disengagement has also increased over the last 10 years. These trends could have long-term implications for the economy and community.</p>
	<p>Local opportunities must meet the diverse needs and interests of different ages, abilities, and skillsets. But over one-third of community members do not report feeling comfortable participating in local economic, education, and social activities; in Fishermans Bend it is less than half. More is needed to understand barriers to participation.</p>
Social belonging	<p>A large portion of the community did not feel like they could rely on their neighbours in an emergency or felt connected to their neighbourhood. Low satisfaction with feeling a part of the community is also rising, particularly in Southbank.</p>
	<p>Satisfaction with community consultation and Council decisions have declined in recent years. While more residents are participating in local decision-making post-pandemic, fewer feel they can influence the process.</p>
	<p>Belief in the benefits of multiculturalism has declined, especially among men and public housing tenants. Recognition of the importance of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people has also declined.</p>
Climate and Natural Environment	<p>While Council continues to increase canopy tree coverage, more is needed to combat rising temperatures and protect vulnerable community members from extreme heat events.</p>
	<p>While many residents enjoy access to walkable open space, there are pockets within the municipality that do not have sufficient access. Population growth will exacerbate these existing gaps and place more demand on existing spaces.</p>
	<p>Public open space should be accessible to all, offering recreation and leisure opportunities for all different needs, abilities, and interests. Currently, women and older persons are using public open space at slightly lower levels than other groups.</p>

Active Lifestyle	<p>An active lifestyle reduces risk of disease and is key to overall health and wellbeing. Although overall participation in sports and exercise is on the rise, less than half of the City of Melbourne community meet the recommended amount of physical activity each week. Females and young adults 18-34 exhibit even lower levels of physical activity.</p> <p>Healthy lifestyles and habits are key to good physical health. But only 7% of City of Melbourne residents eat the recommended minimum daily fruit and vegetable intake. Smoking and vaping are also prevalent, especially among young adults, males, and community members in East Melbourne and Kensington/Flemington.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of alcohol and illicit drug related hospitalisations increased significantly.</p>
Built Environment and Services	<p>The Docklands neighbourhood has poorer access to infrastructure and services, poorer street connectivity to enable walkability, and lower levels of satisfaction with Council services and support.</p> <p>Residents and workers/business owners are the least satisfied with their access to Council support and services. More is needed to understand how services are falling short, and how Council can better target their needs.</p> <p>Access to social infrastructure (culture and leisure, community and sport, education, and health services and facilities) is improving, but many City of Melbourne neighbourhoods scored less than 12 out of 16. As the population grows, so too will demand for infrastructure, which will likely exacerbate existing gaps.</p>
Personal Health and Wellbeing	<p>There is a city-wide emerging mental health crisis among the younger generations, and community members are feeling less optimistic about the future. Greater intervention is needed to ensure people are forming strong connections and getting the support they need.</p> <p>Growth in some sexually-transmitted infections is outpacing population growth. Men and young women are particularly impacted by this issue.</p> <p>While the majority of children are on-track developmentally, some remain vulnerable. Communication and general knowledge skills lag behind other domains, which may hinder their ability to connect with others and their environment.</p>
Socioeconomic Wellbeing	<p>Wealth inequality and poverty are higher in the municipality than in Greater Melbourne. Disadvantage is experienced unevenly across the City of Melbourne's neighbourhoods; it is severe in Carlton.</p> <p>A sizeable proportion of people in the City of Melbourne are finding it hard to make ends meet. Almost 1 in 2 (48.2%) residents indicated that they have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, and almost a third are skipping meals or eating less. Over 40% are reducing energy use to inadequate levels to save on bills.</p>
Homelessness and Affordable Housing	<p>Demand for social and affordable homes continues to grow, with a widening gap between what's needed and what's provided. Many more in community will require support to access more affordable rentals and home ownership.</p> <p>Rates of homelessness and those at risk are higher than 10 years ago, and the City of Melbourne estimates that the number of rough sleepers is also rising. While more long-term solutions are being planned and delivered, crisis accommodation and wrap-around support services are needed in the interim.</p> <p>Key workers provide essential services for the health and wellbeing of all community members, yet many cannot afford to live close to their place of work. There may be a need for innovative, targeted responses that provide dedicated housing for this group.</p>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a roadmap for global efforts to achieve sustainability by 2030 and beyond.

The City of Melbourne recognises the importance of sustainability. It's about how we balance ecological, social and economic factors in the work we all do in order to protect the planet, halt climate change and promote social health and wellbeing for present and future generations.

The City of Melbourne has taken the lead and is the first Council in Australia to conduct an SDG Voluntary Local Review (VLR) on the city's progress towards the Goals.

This report has mapped each of the Health and Wellbeing domains to the relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



The City of Melbourne community

Neighbourhood framework

The City of Melbourne's Neighbourhood Planning Framework recognises the 11 unique neighbourhoods that make up the central city - Carlton, Parkville, East Melbourne, West Melbourne, North Melbourne, Kensington, Docklands, South Yarra, Southbank and the CBD. Each one has its own characteristics, needs, and priorities. Where possible, this report identifies insights and priorities specific to these neighbourhoods.

Population

The city is home to more than 177,000 residents. By 2043 the population in the municipality is expected to grow to 292,000

As a capital city centre, our daily population also swells each day with visitors who come for study, work, or travel.

Community characteristics

The residents that make up our community are highly diverse, with representation across a wide range of backgrounds, characteristics, beliefs, and lifestyles.

- 0.5% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Around 1 in 10 live with a disability
- An equal 50/50 share of households speak English vs. another language at home
- 55% of our residents were born overseas – with the top countries represented being China, India, and Malaysia
- 4% are in a same-sex couple – more than twice the rate of Greater Melbourne
- Members of more than 40 religions – with the largest representation from Western (Roman) Catholic, Buddhism, and Hinduism



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities define and experience health and wellbeing differently.

“For First Nations people, self-determination and empowerment, cultural identity, family and kinship, Country and caring for Country, knowledge and beliefs, language and participation in cultural activities and access to traditional lands are also key determinants of health and wellbeing.”

The diagram shown in Figure 1 depicts the holistic view of health held by Aboriginal people, which includes physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. It reflects that an individual’s health and wellbeing is dependent on the strength of relationships and connections and is also affected by the political, historical, social and cultural determinants of health.

Health issues that impact the general public often disproportionately impact Aboriginal communities. For example, in 2021, approximately 46% of City of Melbourne Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents live with a long-term health condition, compared with 22% of the overall population. This insights report highlights these disparities where possible, but their occurrence and extent are not consistently measured.

Moreover, data that can provide insights into Aboriginal perspective and experience of community health – social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing – is limited.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Summary Report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024 included analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics health surveys for 2017–18 and 2018–19 which showed that an “estimated 35% of the total health gap between First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians was explained by social determinants (e.g. employment, income, education, housing), and a further 30% by selected health risk factors (e.g. smoking). Around 35% of the gap was unexplained, reflecting factors that could not be included in the analysis. These factors are likely to include access to affordable and culturally appropriate health care services, connection to Country and language as well as actual and perceived racism.”

This is indicative of the various systemic barriers to health and wellbeing that Aboriginal communities face. Under colonisation and dispossession, healthcare services and providers have historically fallen short of recognising and embedding Indigenous cultural values, strengths and differences. Many continue to do so, and more is needed to address racism and inequity and transform the health system into one based on cultural respect and safety.

Council recognises that for any health policy or intervention for Aboriginal people in the City of Melbourne to successfully address these challenges, it must first be developed on principles of self-determination – with Aboriginal communities themselves defining responses that are targeted, community-based, and culturally safe.

Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing



Source: Gee et al (2013)

Community Safety

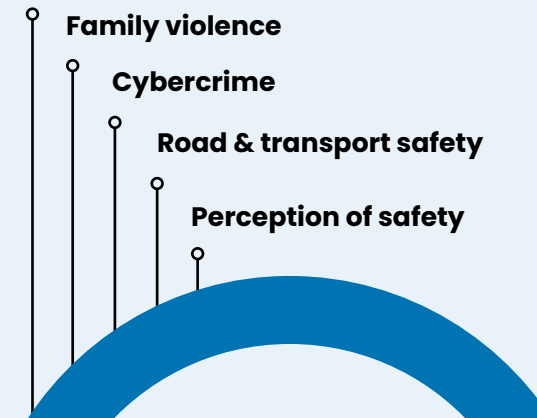
Community safety is defined as protection from harm, whether by accident or from others, in the home, in the digital world, and in the public realm. It considers personal safety, such as from family and domestic violence, crimes against property, injuries and fatalities within the transport network, and safety concerns relating to alcohol and drug abuse, harassment, or threatening behaviour.

Safety, both real and perceived, can significantly impact health and wellbeing outcomes – either directly, through personal harm, or indirectly through a feeling of discomfort, fear, or avoidance of environments. It therefore has the potential to influence a persons' social engagement, relationships, employment outcomes, and physical and mental health.

Council can influence community safety outcomes through its policies, programs and infrastructure upgrades that aim to discourage crime and promote safer, more inclusive public spaces. Council could also foster greater community engagement and collaboration with law enforcement, businesses, transport providers and community organisations.

Wellbeing Indicators

Crime rates



Sustainable Development Goals



Gender Equality

Ending violence and discrimination against women and girls and making sure they have equal opportunities in all areas of life.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Keeping people safe and making sure that government works effectively and fairly.

Melbourne is generally safe to live, work, and visit, but not everyone feels safe, and some are at higher risk.



The total number of criminal incidents in the municipality has increased by 11% in the past 12 months.



Perceptions of safety during the day, night and on public transport have decreased over the past 12 months.



Daytime hours are seeing an increase in alcohol-related assaults, when they were already more likely to occur.



Road safety is improving for all users—drivers, cyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians—with injuries and fatalities from crashes down 15% since 2012.



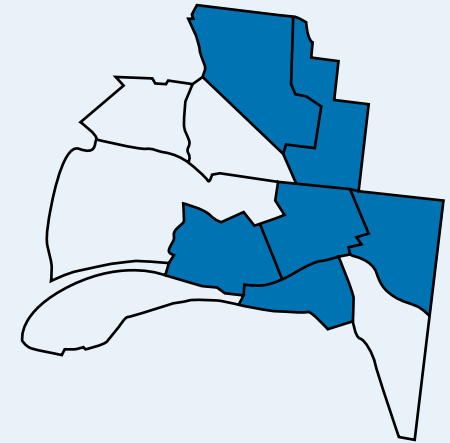
Cybercrime is a relatively new form of crime that impacts most computer users, and victimises a number of vulnerable groups at higher rates.

Key neighbourhoods

The **CBD** had the highest number of criminal incidents in 2024, accounting for around half of all incidents in the municipality.

Parkville, Carlton and **Melbourne** have the lowest levels of perceived safety.

Improved local safety was identified as a top priority for community members in the **CBD, Southbank, Carlton, Docklands,** and **East Melbourne.**



Key cohorts

At night, **females and young people** (aged 18–24) are more likely to feel unsafe than safe, and especially on public transport.

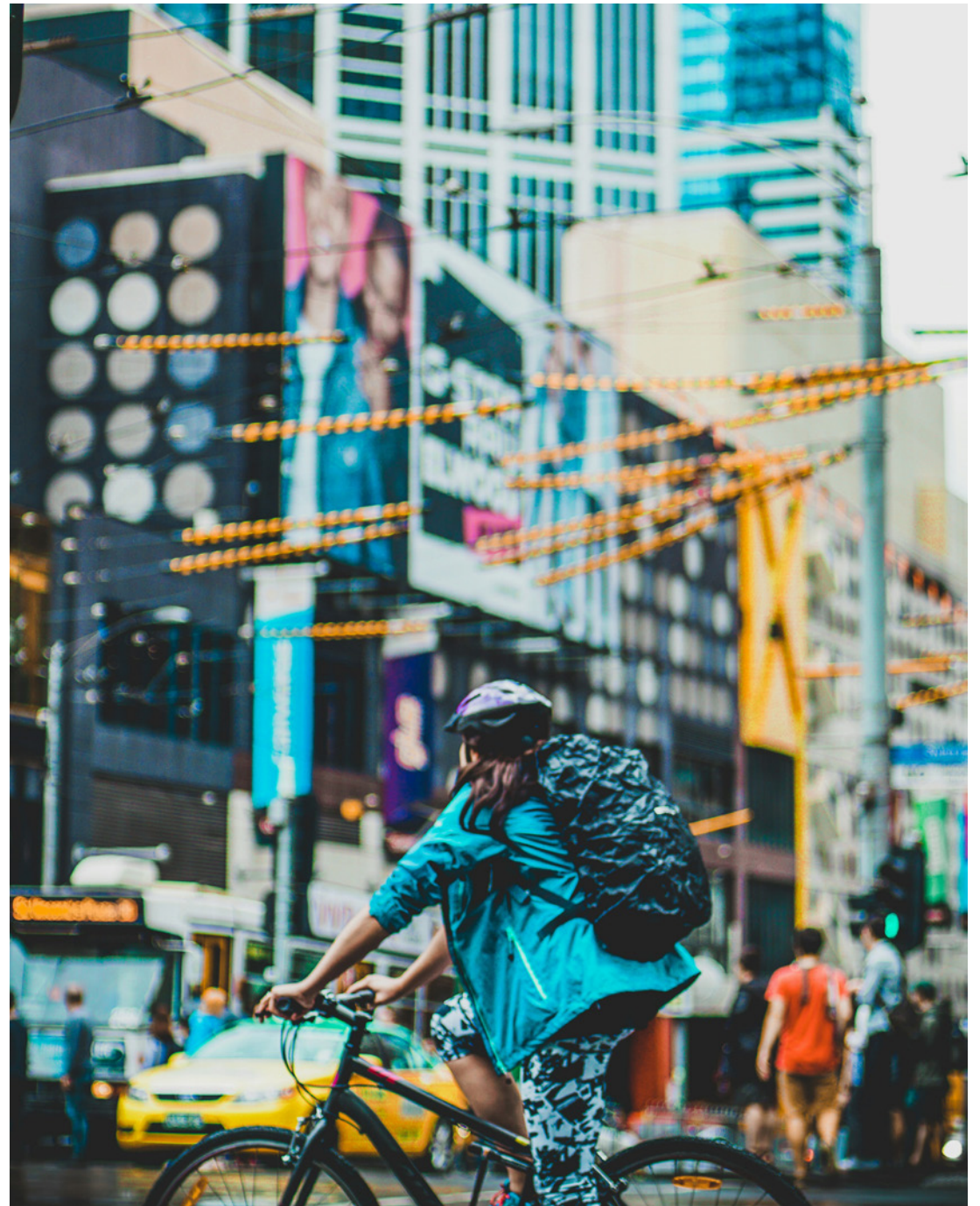
75% of family violence incidents committed in the year to March 2023 were against **women.**

Approximately one-third of family violence incidents were committed against **25–34 year-olds**, followed by **35–44 year-olds** (27%).



Key insights

- ▶ **Crime incidents have increased and there has been a decrease in the perception of safety across the municipality over the past 12 months.**
- ▶ **Everyone has the right to being and feeling safe. Currently women and younger adults are disproportionately impacted by family violence, and do not feel as safe as other community members, particularly at night or on public transport.**
- ▶ **Alcohol can increase violence and assaults. Following COVID-19 there has been an uptick in the amount of alcohol related assaults during the day.**



Employment and Educational Participation

Income, employment, and educational attainment are social determinants of health and wellbeing.

Access to stable income and quality employment shapes one's mental and physical wellbeing in various ways. These factors provide the means for people to access quality health care in a timely manner, to participate productively in society, and to engage with others for personal and professional development.

As a person's income increases, they are more able to access nutritious food, housing, health services, and a greater range of activities and services that shape overall health and wellbeing. Conversely, unemployment is associated with poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes, diminishing a person's general sense of self and presenting barriers to civic engagement.

Councils have an important role in shaping the health and wellbeing outcomes of their communities. Councils can support local job creation and facilitate vocational training and skill development programs working with community organisations, local businesses, and those seeking further education.

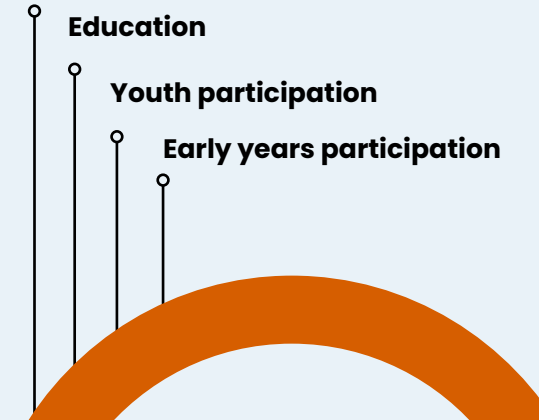
Wellbeing Indicators

Employment

Education

Youth participation

Early years participation



Sustainable Development Goals



No Poverty

Reducing poverty and ensuring that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage have equal rights to resources, protections, services and measures.



Quality Education

Ensuring equal and unfettered access to information and education to break the cycle of poverty, improve life outcomes, and reduce inequalities.



Gender Equality

Ending violence and discrimination against women and girls and making sure they have equal opportunities in all areas of life.



Decent work and economic growth

Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all.

Melbourne is home to a diverse, skilled, and engaged workforce, yet more is needed to recognise and overcome educational and employment inequities.



54% of Melbourne's residents had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher in 2021, compared to 30% in 2001



The unemployment rate in 2021 for the City of Melbourne was 7.5% of the workforce, compared with 5.3% in Greater Melbourne.



The rate of First Nations employment has increased from 49% in 2016 to 59% in 2021

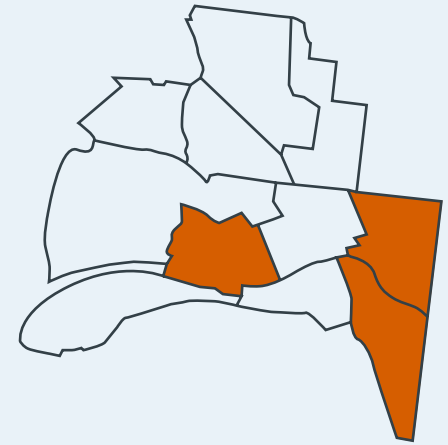


63% of City of Melbourne community members strongly agreed or agreed that they 'feel comfortable taking part in local economic, education, and social activities'.

Key neighbourhoods

Unemployment in 2021 was highest in **Carlton** (11.5%), **Parkville** (10.1%), and the CBD (9.5%) – all neighbourhoods with large student populations.

Fishermans Bend community members were least likely to agree that they 'feel comfortable taking part in local economic, education, and social activities' (only 43% strongly agree/agree).



Key cohorts

At 15%, the unemployment rate in 2021 for those **aged 15-24** was twice that of the total population.

From 2011 to 2021, youth disengagement (from work or study) rose from 4.0% to 4.7%.

Between 2016 and 2021, the Indigenous employment gap widened; there is now a 11% difference in the workforce participation of **Indigenous persons** (59%) vs. **non-Indigenous persons** (70%).

Women in the City of Melbourne participate in the workforce at lower rates (4% difference in 2021) and are paid less (17% difference in 2021).



Key insights

- ▶ **Despite a gradual increase in First Nations employment over the years, this indicator significantly lags behind non-First Nations employment. A gender workforce gap also remains, alongside a pay gap.**
- ▶ **Unemployment is already higher for young persons, and in Carlton, Parkville, and the CBD. Youth disengagement has also increased over the last 10 years. These trends could have long-term implications for the economy and community.**
- ▶ **Local opportunities must meet the diverse needs and interests of different ages, abilities, and skillsets. But over one-third of community members do not report feeling comfortable participating in local economic, education, and social activities; in Fishermans Bend it is less than half. More is needed to understand barriers to participation.**



Social Belonging and Connection

Social belonging and connection is a reflection of how people feel in their community and is an important determinant of health and wellbeing.

Feelings of loneliness can be detrimental to a person's mental and physical health, increasing feelings of low self-esteem, depression, and even coronary heart disease. As Australians are increasingly living alone, it is more important than ever that there are opportunities to form connections.

Social connection is critical for community health and wellbeing because it fosters a sense of identity, reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness, and provides support networks that enhance mental and emotional health. Strong social ties contribute to better overall health outcomes by building trust and resilience, contributing a greater sense of safety, civic participation and pride.

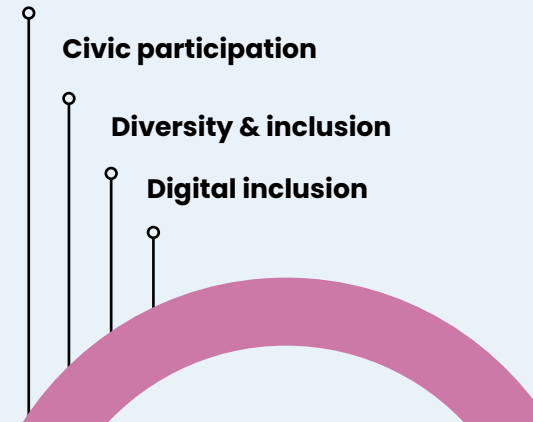
There is strong evidence suggesting that strong social connections can help to insulate people from other forms of disadvantage and encourage healthier lifestyle behaviours.

Councils play a major role in fostering social connection through the activities, programs and events that it designs and delivers. Councils also provide community spaces and facilities for interaction, inclusion and connection within the community.

It is important to note that the length of residency in the municipality is relatively short compared to Greater Melbourne, with nearly half of the residents having lived there for less than five years, and a quarter for less than 12 months (Figure 32). While a more mobile population might typically lead to lower levels of trust and connection due to disrupted social ties, the trends presented for the City of Melbourne in this domain suggest otherwise.

Wellbeing Indicators

Social capital



Sustainable Development Goals



Reduced Inequalities

Enabling a just, inclusive, and sustainable society where communities are empowered to engage, participate, and shape their city.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Keeping people safe and making sure that government works effectively and fairly.

Some neighbourhoods have strong social connections (volunteering, decision-making, events), but this varies by area and group.



Almost half (46%) of community members do not feel they can influence local decision-making, and community satisfaction with consultation and council decisions have both declined since 2021.



Trust in others is high in the municipality, with 43% of survey respondents in 2020 agreeing that they 'definitely' felt that most people could be trusted', compared with 36% in Greater Melbourne.



There has been a decline in the proportion of City of Melbourne who view a multicultural society as a good thing, from around 95% in previous years to 87% in 2024.



Only 58% of respondents felt they could rely on their neighbours for help in an emergency.



Satisfaction with feeling a part of the community is declining, with all age groups except those aged 25-34 recording a drop in their average satisfaction between 2018 and 2024.



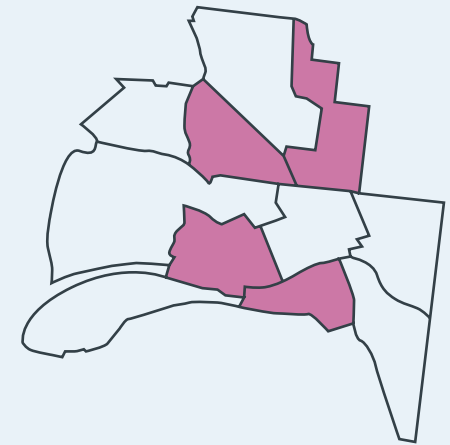
Digital inclusion (access, affordability and digital ability) is improving, and in the City of Melbourne it is consistently higher in comparison with the Victorian and national averages.

Key neighbourhoods

Carlton, North Melbourne and Docklands residents all reported an increase in low satisfaction with feeling part of the community in 2024, while **Southbank** residents have consistently reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Southbank community members also reported feeling the least connected to their local neighbourhood in 2024.

Docklands residents were the least likely to agree that a multicultural society is a good thing (only 77% in 2024, down from 89% in 2018).



Key cohorts

Male community members and those in public housing were less likely to agree/strongly agree that it a multicultural society is a good thing (83% and 68% respectively, in 2024).

Male community members are more likely than female community members to participate in activities in the City of Melbourne to influence government decision-making (46% vs. 36%, respectively).

Community members who agreed that the relationship between **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** and other Australians is very important or fairly important fell from 93% to 87% just in the last year.

Digital ability is improving among Australians **over 65 years-old**, but is still lower than the national average.



Key insights

- ▶ **A large portion of the community did not feel like they could rely on their neighbours in an emergency or felt connected to their neighbourhood. Low satisfaction with feeling a part of the community is also rising, particularly in Southbank.**
- ▶ **Satisfaction with community consultation and Council decisions have declined in recent years. While more residents are participating in local decision-making post-pandemic, fewer feel they can influence the process.**
- ▶ **Belief in the benefits of multiculturalism has declined, especially among men and public housing tenants. Recognition of the importance of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people has also declined.**



Climate and the Natural Environment

Our climate and natural environments shape health and wellbeing outcomes through their impacts on pre-existing health conditions, health outcomes gaps, and exposures to environmental health risk factors.

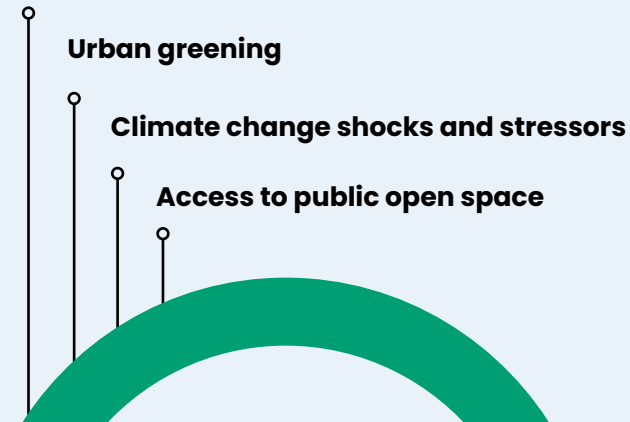
There are many health-related benefits of protecting the natural environment and mitigating climate risk, such as:

- Clean waterways and other blue infrastructure play a key preventative role in many aspects of health, provides opportunities for recreation, and has a cooling effect that can help mitigate rising temperatures.
- Increasing tree canopy coverage and other urban cooling programs provide relief from the heat in summer.
- Reducing particulate matter in the atmosphere reduces respiratory health risks.
- Access to public open spaces has benefits for mental and physical health, providing residents and visitors with spaces to exercise, socialise, and relax.

Council plays a key role in the provision of green infrastructure and in protecting and improving the natural environment. By planning, delivering, and managing these spaces and infrastructure to align with the needs of residents, Council positively shapes community health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing Indicators

Air quality and noise



Sustainable Development Goals



No Poverty

Reducing poverty and ensuring that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage have equal rights to resources, protections, services and measures.



Sustainable Cities & Communities

Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.



Climate Action

Tackling climate change and its impacts through policy, resilience planning, community education, and institutional capacity building.



Life on Land

Protecting our natural resources, biodiversity and wildlife.

While Melbourne excels in some aspects of environmental health and climate action, it faces ongoing challenges that affect community health and wellbeing.



The municipality generally has 'Good' air quality, the highest rating in a statewide classification.



Heat is the most frequent cause of extreme weather-related injury hospitalisations and deaths in Australia, and in Victoria. From 2019 to 2021, there were 410 hospitalisations across the state due to extreme heat, significantly more than were related to any other natural hazard.



83% of City of Melbourne residents are within 400m of an open space.



Since 2012, an average of over 3,000 trees planted each year to increase the canopy coverage and mitigate extreme heat.



38% of community members prioritise more plants, trees, and improved open spaces over the next 4 years, making it the top selection alongside affordable housing and homelessness support.



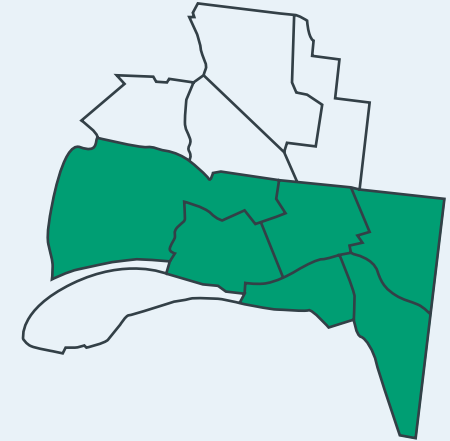
Noise complaints in the City of Melbourne have become less prevalent over the past four years; the largest share continue to be related to building or construction works.

Key neighbourhoods

Community members from **Docklands, Southbank** and **West Melbourne** most frequently identified more plants, trees and improved open spaces as a top priority for the next 4 years.

South Yarra and **CBD** residents use open spaces with slightly less frequency than residents of other neighbourhoods, but **South Yarra** residents are also most likely to use open spaces for extended periods (5 or more hours).

East Melbourne and **Southbank** residents have poorer access to public open spaces than residents of other neighbourhoods.



Key cohorts

Women use public open space slightly less regularly than **men**, and those **aged 65+** slightly less regularly than other age groups.

Some community groups are more vulnerable to extreme heat, including **older persons**, **young children**, and **people with certain illnesses** and **chronic health conditions**.



Key insights

- ▶ **While Council continues to increase canopy tree coverage, more is needed to combat rising temperatures and protect vulnerable community members from extreme heat events.**
- ▶ **While many residents enjoy access to walkable open space, there are pockets within the municipality that do not have sufficient access. Population growth will exacerbate these existing gaps and place more demand on existing spaces.**
- ▶ **Public open space should be accessible to all, offering recreation and leisure opportunities for all different needs, abilities, and interests. Currently, women and older persons are using public open space at slightly lower levels than other groups.**



Active and Healthy Lifestyles

Living an active and healthy lifestyle is about maintaining a holistic approach to overall health and wellbeing.

It is important to create spaces for structured and unstructured activity, including recreation settings. This includes access to well designed and safe neighbourhoods with footpaths, bike paths, and green spaces, as well as access to affordable and appropriate health services, fresh food, and public transport.

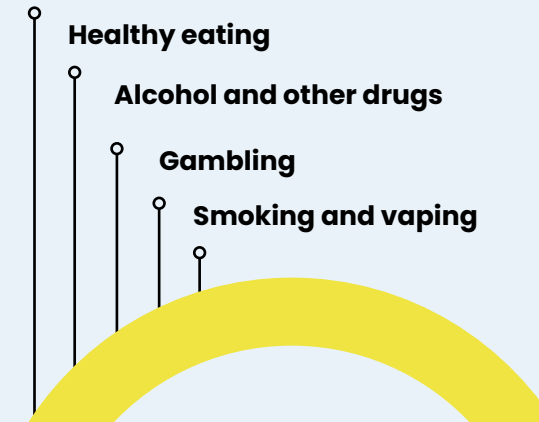
Access to an enabling environment can support communities to be physically active and make healthy choices as they age. This can support both mental and physical health over the longer-term, protecting against chronic illness and disease. Physical activity is also shown to improve cognitive function as one ages.

The harmful effects of alcohol, drugs, smoking, vaping and gambling can impact overall health and wellbeing. Research illustrates that these substances (and harmful activities in the case of gambling) can contribute to an array of negative health effects over the short- and long-term.

Councils play a key role in providing well-planned and accessible community infrastructure to support active lifestyles. In addition, they can undertake research and advocacy to improve access to affordable fresh food and health services. Furthermore, they can play a regulatory role in minimising harms and access to alcohol, smoking, and gambling.

Wellbeing Indicators

Physical activity



Sustainable Development Goals



Good Health & Well-Being

Helping people to live long and healthy lives.

Participation in sport and exercise is on the rise, however engagement with other active and healthy lifestyle behaviours is lagging.



69% of community members participate in sports and exercise activities, which is roughly the same as in 2018.



Only 7% of the community meet the daily recommended minimum for fruit and vegetable consumption.



Only 41% of the community do a recommended 30+ minutes of physical activity on 4+ days each week, down from 53% in 2018.



The rate of illicit drug related hospitalisations has more than doubled between 2012-13 and 2021-22 to 370 per 100,000 residents, rising most sharply during the pandemic.



Over \$95 million was lost in Electronic Gaming Machines in FY23/24 surpassing pre-COVID-19 levels.

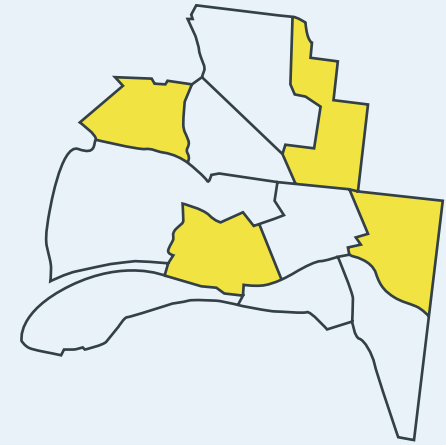


15.5% of community members smoke daily or occasionally, an increase of almost 1% since 2022.

Key neighbourhoods

In 2024, **Carlton** had the lowest rate of participation in exercise (52%), and **Docklands** had the lowest rate of participation in sport (14%).

Rates of daily or occasional smoking and vaping are higher in **Kensington/ Flemington** and **East Melbourne**.



Key cohorts

Lower shares of **young adults** aged 18-24 and 25-34 are meeting recommended minimum levels of physical activity each week (only 37% and 40%, respectively).

Female community members are more than three times more likely than males to meet the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables

Male residents consistently account for more than double the number of alcohol-related hospitalisations as females.

The proportion of illicit drug-related hospitalisations in the City of Melbourne that are **females** has risen from 28% in 2012-13 to 41% in 2021-2022.

Smoking and vaping are most prevalent among those **aged 25-34**, and the rates of both are rising among **male** community members.



Key insights

- ▶ **An active lifestyle reduces risk of disease and is key to overall health and wellbeing. Although overall participation in sports and exercise is on the rise, less than half of the City of Melbourne community meet the recommended amount of physical activity each week. Females and young adults 18–34 exhibit even lower levels of physical activity.**
- ▶ **Healthy lifestyles and habits are key to good physical health. But only 7% of City of Melbourne residents eat the recommended minimum daily fruit and vegetable intake. Smoking and vaping are also prevalent, especially among young adults, males, and community members in East Melbourne and Kensington/Flemington.**
- ▶ **During the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of alcohol and illicit drug related hospitalisations increased significantly.**



Built Environment and Services

The built environment refers to the human made settings where people live, work, and play. The design of the built environment shapes health and wellbeing by influencing lifestyle behaviours and opportunities for connection.

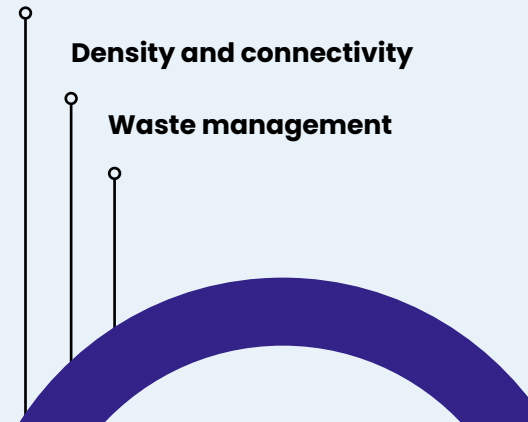
A well-designed built environment should encourage community uptake of physical activity, promote access to healthy foods, and provide opportunities for social interaction and connection.

Council shapes a healthy built environment and equitable access to community infrastructure through:

- The provision social infrastructure for building social connections, supporting personal development, and leisure and recreation.
- Delivery of urban services and other programs to ensure residents and business owners are supported, and the public realm is clean and tidy.
- The provision of cycleways, quality streetscapes, and active transport options that promote multi-modal transport and which enable walkability, alongside public transport connections.
- Zoning and regulation that supports food security, healthy food production systems and an appropriate retail mix.
- Built form controls which improve amenity for residents, e.g. access to natural light fresh air, thermal comfort, quiet, and privacy.
- Designing for equity and inclusion, including safe spaces, so that all community members can participate.

Wellbeing Indicators

Access to infrastructure and services



Sustainable Development Goals



Sustainable Cities & Communities

Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Overall, the City of Melbourne provides good physical amenity and digital connectivity, however, more could be done to improve access to Council services and support.



The municipality's walkability index improved from 8.9 to 10.4 between 2018 and 2021, based on a measure of street connectivity, dwelling density and access to daily services.



In 2024, 64% of the community indicated that they could access the Council services and support they need.



The municipality achieved a score of 11.7 out of 16 for access to social infrastructure, up from 11.2 in 2018.

Key cohorts

Higher shares of **workers/business owners** and **residents** said that they did not have good access to Council services and support (both around 12%) compared with **students** (6.7%) and visitors (5.6%).



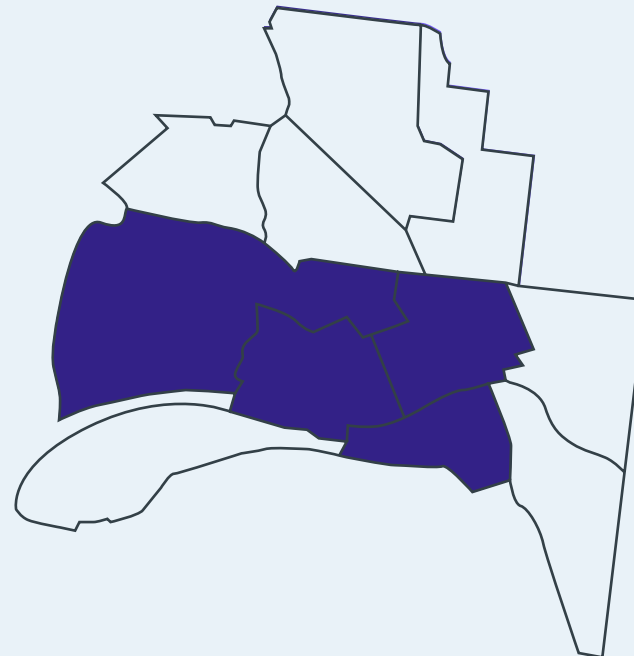
Key neighbourhoods

The communities of **Southbank** (16%), **West Melbourne** (14%), **Docklands** (14%) and the **CBD** (12%) had the highest percentage of survey respondents who strongly disagreed and disagreed that they 'feel they can access councils and support required'.

Cleaner streets, waste and graffiti removal is higher a priority to community members in the **CBD** and **Southbank** than other neighbourhoods.

Docklands performs more poorly than any other neighbourhood for street connectivity, which inhibits its walkability.

Docklands also has the lowest levels of access to social infrastructure (score of 8 out of 16).



Key insights

- ▶ **The Docklands neighbourhood has poorer access to infrastructure and services, poorer street connectivity to enable walkability, and lower levels of satisfaction with Council services and support.**
- ▶ **Residents and workers/business owners are the least satisfied with their access to Council support and services. More is needed to understand how services are falling short, and how Council can better target their needs.**
- ▶ **Access to social infrastructure (culture and leisure, community and sport, education, and health services and facilities) is improving, but many City of Melbourne neighbourhoods scored less than 12 out of 16. As the population grows, so too will demand for infrastructure, which will likely exacerbate existing gaps.**



Personal Health and Wellbeing

There are many dimensions to overall health and wellbeing: physical, mental, social and emotional. Health and wellbeing is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

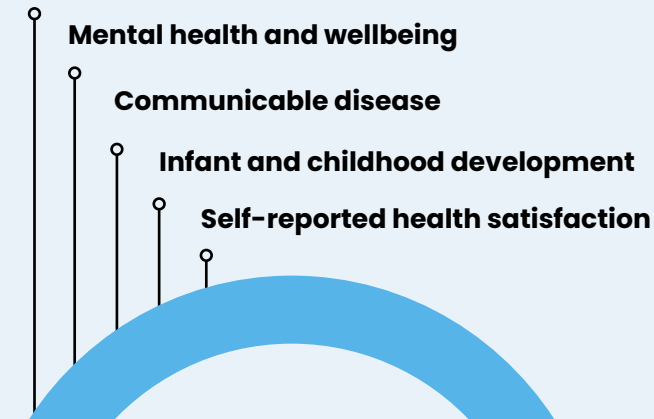
Our health and wellbeing plays an important role in quality of life and the ability to contribute to and participate in society. Individuals living with chronic illness may find it difficult to remain in study or employment. Individuals with poor mental health may also experience social isolation and refrain from seeking support. Individuals with poor emotional health may find it more challenging to cope with and build resilience to stressful life events.

There are numerous indicators used to assess health and wellbeing, including an individual health status or the performance and demands on the health system.

Councils have several roles in providing and supporting personal wellbeing. This includes the delivery of health services, such as Maternal Child Health, understanding and advocating for community needs, partnering with health services, delivering community development programs and services, and a regulatory role through public health officers.

Wellbeing Indicators

Health conditions



Sustainable Development Goals



Good Health & Well-being

Helping people to live long and healthy lives



Gender Equality

Ending violence and discrimination against women and girls and making sure they have equal opportunities in all areas of life.

Most residents enjoy good physical health, but mental health is a growing challenge and health satisfaction is declining.



In 2021, 22% of the municipality's population had at least one long-term health condition, the most common being mental health conditions.



Self-reported health satisfaction among community members declined between 2018 and 2024. Safety is the highest-scoring aspect of wellbeing, while future security and feeling a part of the community are the lowest.



Rates of infectious disease have been increasing since 2014, and peaking in 2023 at 6,626 events per 100,000 population. Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, and Influenza have consistently been most the most common conditions reported.



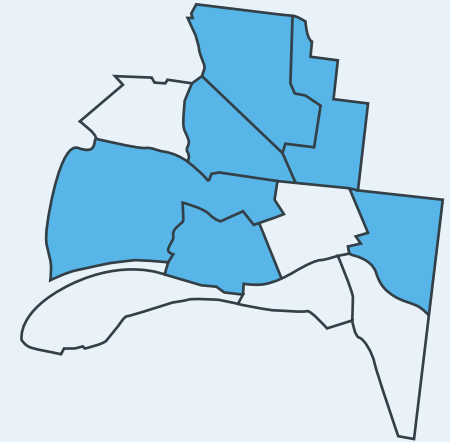
Infant vaccinations and the percentage of children developmentally on-track across emotional, social, physical, and skills domains continue to increase.

Key neighbourhoods

East Melbourne is the only neighbourhood that reported having better mental health than physical health.

The lowest levels of good or excellent mental and physical health were reported in **Docklands, Parkville, and North Melbourne/ West Melbourne.**

Residents of **Carlton and East Melbourne** were more likely to identify health, inclusion and wellbeing as a neighbourhood priority.



Key cohorts

There is a gender divide in wellbeing, with **females** reporting lower satisfaction with mental and physical health. However, the rate of disease was higher among **males**, across all age groups 20-24 years and older.

Younger people (18-24 years) self-reported poorer mental health than other age groups in 2024.



Key insights

- ▶ **There is an emerging mental health crisis among the younger generations, and community members are feeling less optimistic about the future. Greater intervention is needed to ensure people are forming strong connections and getting the support they need.**
- ▶ **Growth in some sexually-transmitted infections is outpacing population growth. Men and young women are particularly impacted by this issue.**
- ▶ **While the majority of children are on-track developmentally, some remain vulnerable. Communication and general knowledge skills lag behind other domains, which may hinder their ability to connect with others and their environment.**



Socioeconomic Wellbeing

Measures of socioeconomic wellbeing reflect the social and economic factors that shape one's health and access to services.

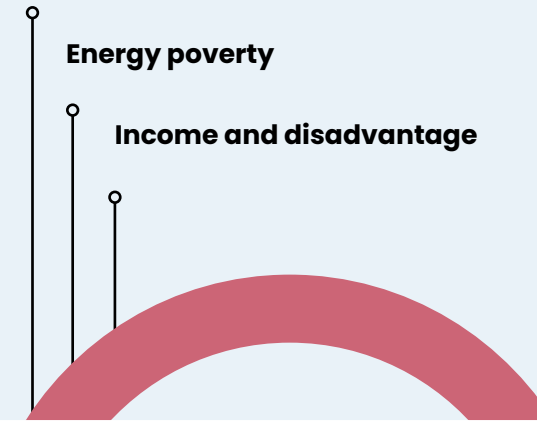
Financial security and independence, employment status, educational attainment and housing are just some of the factors that shape overall health and wellbeing. Individuals who are more disadvantaged on one or more of these factors are less likely to be able to afford basic needs, such as nutritious food, utilities, and access to health care.

Prolonged periods of hardship in any of these areas can negatively impact health and wellbeing. Over the longer-term poor socioeconomic wellbeing also erodes an individual's ability to cope with and build resilience to major life events.

There are many ways that councils can strengthen the socioeconomic wellbeing of their communities. This includes through understanding the key needs of vulnerable communities, providing an equitable delivery of services based on highest need, supporting the development and delivery of local jobs and education.

Wellbeing Indicators

Food security



Sustainable Development Goals



Zero Hunger

Ending food stress for all and supporting sustainable food production systems and supply chains.



Affordable & Clean Energy

Improving energy efficiency in infrastructure and buildings and ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy.



Reduced Inequalities

Enabling a just, inclusive, and sustainable society where communities are empowered to engage, participate, and shape their city.

Although the municipality performs well on national indices of relative advantage, some community members are experiencing the impacts of cost of living pressures, food insecurity, and energy poverty.



48% of residents indicated that they have experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, up from 32% in 2023.



26% of residents indicated that they had accessed emergency food relief services in the past 12 months, significantly increased from 7.5% in 2023.



In 2021, 15% of residents were living below the poverty line, compared to 13% in Greater Melbourne.



9% of residents rely on government benefits and allowances as their main source of personal income.



38% of residents agreed or strongly agreed that energy bills reduced their ability to cover other essentials in the past 12 months.



High energy costs have led to 43% of residents intentionally reducing energy consumption to inadequate levels.



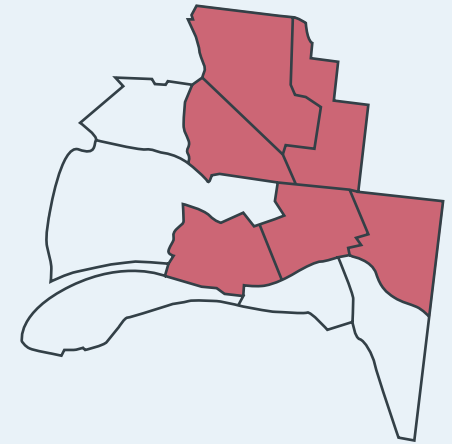
Overall, the City of Melbourne has lower levels of disadvantage than the national average, but disadvantage is not experienced evenly across neighbourhoods.

Key neighbourhoods

Carlton, North Melbourne and **Melbourne CBD** are more disadvantaged, based on their Socio-economics indexes for areas (SEIFA) scores.

Residents in **East Melbourne, Docklands** and **Melbourne CBD** were most affected by energy bills reducing their ability to meet other basic needs.

A higher proportion of **Carlton** and **Parkville** residents said they experienced food insecurity.



Key cohorts

Younger people (18–34 years) are experiencing higher rates of energy poverty, food insecurity and are accessing food relief more regularly.

Females are more likely than males to experience food insecurity (51% vs. 43%).

Tenants of public housing and **young adults** aged 25–34 were more likely to have trouble paying energy bills in the last 12 months.



Key insights

- ▶ **Wealth inequality and poverty are higher in the municipality than in Greater Melbourne. Disadvantage is experienced unevenly across the City of Melbourne's neighbourhoods; it is severe in Carlton.**
- ▶ **A sizeable proportion of people in the City of Melbourne are finding it hard to make ends meet. Almost 1 in 2 (48.2%) residents indicated that they have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, and almost a third are skipping meals or eating less. Over 40% are reducing energy use to inadequate levels to save on bills.**



Homelessness and Affordable Housing

Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is a core foundation for health and wellbeing.

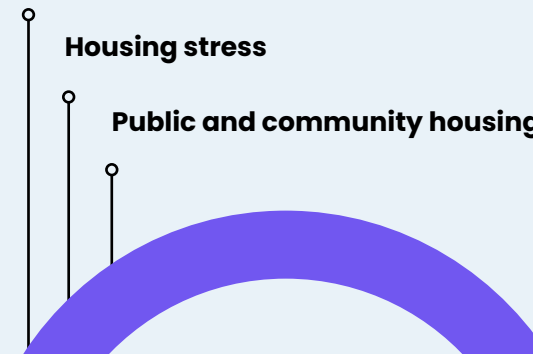
The links between access to affordable and appropriate housing to health and wellbeing are well established. Housing provides shelter from the elements and protects against illness and disease. Housing also provides a stable base that supports individuals to participate in education and job opportunities. This has positive flow-on effects for people's ability to accrue wealth, improve income mobility, plan for the long-term, and participate in society.

Housing must be affordable. Where rental or mortgage payments are too high in relation to incomes, residents and tenants are forced to make financial trade-offs between housing and other basic needs, such as food, utilities, and even health care. For some, it means that they experience homelessness. This can take numerous forms, but simply means that a person does not have access to safe and suitable accommodation.

Affordable housing can take many forms and include social housing, build to rent schemes, and a wide variety of subsidies and programs in the private rental market. Council has a role in facilitating a diversity of social and affordable housing options in their community. This can be through the planning scheme, partnerships with housing providers, advocacy to other levels of government, and using Council land to provide affordable housing.

Wellbeing Indicators

People experiencing homelessness



Sustainable Development Goals



No Poverty

Reducing poverty and ensuring that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage have equal rights to resources, protections, services and measures.



Sustainable Cities & Communities

Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

The affordability of living in the City of Melbourne continues to diminish, especially for renters and key workers.



Rates of homelessness in the municipality grew by 54% between 2014 and 2022, from 1,414 per 100,000 people to 2,177 per 100,000.



A slightly higher share of renters in the City of Melbourne experience rental stress (30%) compared to Greater Melbourne (27%).



21% of the municipality's key workers live more than 30km away due to housing affordability constraints, and the majority of these workers are interested in moving into the City.



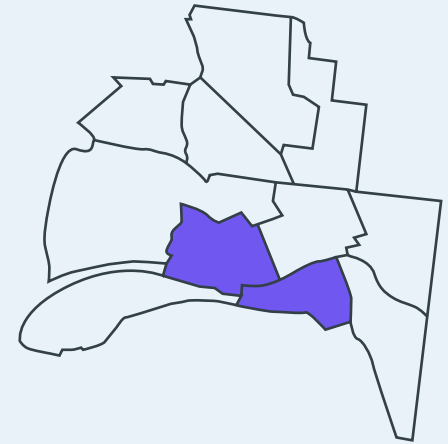
By 2036, the shortfall in social and affordable housing is expected to be 23,200 dwellings.



38% of community members identified affordable housing and homelessness support as top priority, making it the top selection alongside more plants, trees, and improved open spaces.

Key neighbourhoods

Docklands and **Southbank/South Wharf** are the least affordable to renters.



Key cohorts

Homeowners report higher levels of overall life satisfaction than renters, especially those who own outright.

Rental units in the City of Melbourne are unaffordable to **student share houses, single income households, hospitality workers, and people on benefits.**

Renters in the City of Melbourne are almost 3x as likely as **homeowners** to experience housing stress (spending more than 30% of income on housing costs).



Key insights

- ▶ **Demand for social and affordable homes continues to grow, with a widening gap between what's needed and what's provided. Many more in community will require support to access more affordable rentals and home ownership.**
- ▶ **Rates of homelessness and those at risk are higher than 10 years ago, and the City of Melbourne estimates that the number of rough sleepers is also rising. While more long-term solutions are being planned and delivered, crisis accommodation and wrap-around support services are needed in the interim.**
- ▶ **Key workers provide essential services for the health and wellbeing of all community members, yet many cannot afford to live close to their place of work. There may be a need for innovative, targeted responses that provide dedicated housing for this group.**

