



Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek Health & Wellbeing Profile

August 2024



Merri-bek Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek.

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Introduction

The Merri-bek Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024 provides a comprehensive analysis of data and research on health and wellbeing in Merri-bek. Considering the social determinants of health, liveability and urban resilience across 77 data measures, this profile identifies priority areas to inform planning, strategies and projects.

Health and wellbeing is shaped by individual genetics and behaviour but also by the wider determinants of health. These are the social, economic and environmental factors that affect our daily lives (AIHW, 2020). Local government is ideally placed to influence many determinants of health, both through the environments that people live, work, learn and play, as well as supporting individual choices and reducing health inequalities (DHHS, 2020).

Legislative context

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Under section 26 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, local governments in Victoria are required to take responsibility for public health and wellbeing planning on behalf of their community. Every four years, Victorian Councils must develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP). They must also include an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipal district. The Merri-bek Health and Wellbeing Profile fulfils this legislative requirement and should be used to inform the MPHWP and Council planning processes.

How to use this information in your work

This document serves as a reference document for staff across Council to assist with their work. Some of the ways to use the data in this report are:

- Provide supporting data for grant applications and advocacy documents.
- Identify what to advocate for.
- Rationale to triage projects.
- Evaluate whether a program has made a difference.
- Identify communities in need of support (isolation etc.).
- Fine-tune targeting of communications.
- Enhance content of communications.
- Policy and strategy development.
- Project and service development.

Region definitions

Throughout this document the following regions are used, where data is available. A useful tool to see all of the different region definitions on a map can be found at <https://maps.abs.gov.au>

Region	Description
Northern Metropolitan Region	Northern Metropolitan Region includes the local government areas (LGAs) of Merri-bek, Hume, Whittlesea, Darebin, Yarra, Banyule & Nillumbik.
Metropolitan	The urban / built up area of Melbourne.

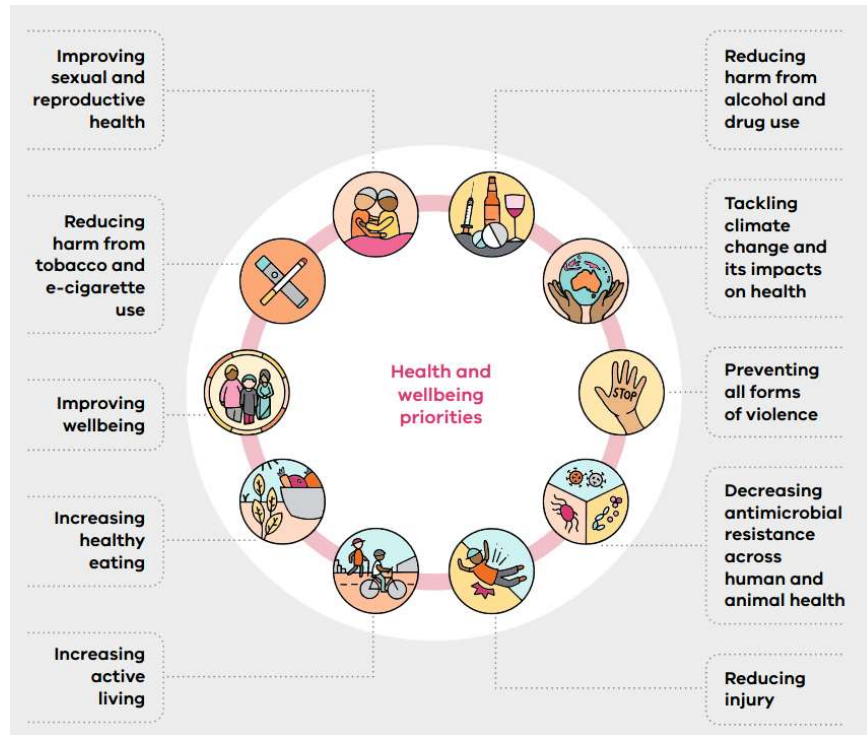
Glossary

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
Error margin	The margin by which a percentage could vary. When two figures fall within each others' error margin then the difference is not statistically significant.
LGA	Local Government Area / Local Council area.
LOE	Language other than English
Statistically significant	Indicate that the difference between two percentages is meaningful, when taking into account error margins due to sample size.
VPHS	Victorian Population Health Survey

Frameworks

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-27

The [Victorian Health and Wellbeing plan](#) puts forth the 10 overarching public health and wellbeing priorities in Victoria. They have been chosen due to their contribution to the modifiable burden of disease and because they are key drivers for ill-health across the lifespan. These priorities represent areas where sustained action can have the biggest impact on health and wellbeing.



Social determinants of health

The Social Determinants of Health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life (WHO, 2020). They have an important influence on health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health outcomes and life expectancy across groups in society. Social determinants may include:

- Income and social protection
- Education
- Unemployment and job insecurity
- Working life conditions
- Food insecurity
- Housing, basic amenities and the environment
- Early childhood development
- Social inclusion and non-discrimination
- Structural conflict
- Access to affordable health services.

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health is fundamental for improving health within the community and reducing longstanding inequities (WHO, 2020).

Priority Groups

The below groups experience health inequities due to institutional and structural discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice and access barriers. They are at greater risk of exclusion from social, economic and political life. However, these communities demonstrate strengths and valuable lived experiences. Their diversity, mutual support networks, and collective resilience are integral to wellbeing. We recognise these groups and give priority to their needs.

First Peoples

In 2021, there were 1,088 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Merri-bek, representing a 34% increase from 2016. While this indicates significant growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, it should be noted that this makes up 0.6% of the Merri-bek population, with a substantially larger population who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

As the First Peoples of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have additional key determinants of health and wellbeing include cultural identity, family and kinship, connection to country and the responsibility of caring for it. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are the Traditional Owners of these lands and waterways, and Merri-bek is home to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from diverse family and community groups across Australia, representing various moiety, kinship, and language groups. Living Elders and knowledge holders, as well as their ancestors, are central to the social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of their communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have never ceded sovereignty of their lands and have continuously cared for their country for over 60,000 years, carrying forth the legacy of being the world's oldest living culture. Maintaining strong ties to traditional lands through cultural activities, language preservation, and participation in community-based programs is crucial. Access to traditional lands, even in an urban context, helps maintain a sense of connection and contributes to their overall health and wellbeing, highlighting the importance of these interconnected cultural determinants in health, identity, and sense of belonging.

Race and racism have been central to the structure of Australian society since European colonisation began in 1788. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured the harshest effects of colonisation and have a unique experience of racism. This history, combined with ongoing racism, continues to impact First Peoples today. The legacies of colonisation, along with the ideologies that supported it, continue to shape Australian society in the present.

Today, First Peoples continue to confront systemic discrimination and social inequities, which manifest as barriers to accessing quality education and employment opportunities. Additionally, high rates of incarceration and the over-policing of Indigenous communities highlight ongoing issues of racism and inequality.

In Victoria, the health landscape for First Peoples presents both challenges and areas of progress. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) leads efforts to

improve health outcomes. While many Aboriginal Victorians enjoy good or excellent health, significant disparities persist compared to non-Indigenous Australians. Aboriginal Victorians face higher rates of psychological distress, diabetes, and homelessness compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians. However, there are positive developments, such as higher childhood immunisation rates for Aboriginal children. The Victorian Government has implemented targeted strategies, including the Korin Korin Balit-Djak plan, to address these disparities and promote self-determination in healthcare.

Furthermore, Victoria is leading efforts towards Australia's first Treaty with Aboriginal Victorians, aiming to enhance self-determination and improve health outcomes. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the need for culturally appropriate, community-led approaches to address the complex social determinants of health affecting Aboriginal Victorians.

Migrant, Refugee and Faith Communities

In 2021, 33% of Merri-bek residents were born overseas. 35% of Merri-bek residents spoke a language other than English. The top countries of birth were Italy, India, England, Nepal, Greece and New Zealand. The number of people from Italy, Greece and Pakistan is decreasing over time, whilst the number of residents from Nepal, England, the Philippines and Columbia is increasing.

The largest religious groups were Western (Roman) Catholic (22.9% of all people), Islam (9.8%), Greek Orthodox (5.4%) and Hinduism (3.6%), while 41% of people had no religion.

Migrant, refugee and faith communities in Australia face numerous challenges rooted in the country's history of racial discrimination. This includes policies like the 'White Australia' policy, which lasted until the 1960s and restricted migration from non-European countries. Such historical injustices, along with the legacy of colonisation, continue to perpetuate white privilege, often defined as the advantages held by individuals of European descent who identify as white.

In recent years, events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Christchurch terrorist attacks, the war on Gaza, and rising incidents of Islamophobia, antisemitism, and racist extremism have underscored the persistent harm caused by racism and religious discrimination. In Victoria, the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 makes it unlawful to publicly vilify a person or group based on their race or religion. This law is supported by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for resolution and enforcement. Despite these protections, racism and chronic stress adversely impact individuals' health, wellbeing, mental health and participation in society. This highlights the importance of having appropriate support services and reporting mechanisms in place not just for legal or procedural purposes, but to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of culturally and racially marginalised communities.

Beyond overt racism, migrants, refugees, people on temporary visas, asylum seekers, international students and tourists, encounter significant structural barriers that limit their access to basic rights and opportunities. Challenges include language, literacy and cultural barriers, lack of education and economic opportunities, a lack of trust in service providers, and difficulties navigating complex

service systems, all of which hinder access to effective healthcare and supports. An additional example, is that income and settlement support often have narrow eligibility criteria, leaving many ineligible for federal and state housing assistance.

People with disability

In 2022, approximately 38,000 people live with a disability in Merri-bek.

People with a disability often experience discrimination, both directly and indirectly. The impact of ableism – discrimination that favours able-bodied people – has led to significant disparities in quality of life and access to necessary support. People with disabilities frequently face systemic, physical and attitudinal barriers that limit their access to community life, often through indirect discrimination.

While there have been advancements in disability rights, substantial gaps still exist in health, social, employment, economic, justice and housing outcomes which impacts quality of life for people with disabilities compared to those without. Addressing these disparities requires ongoing to promote equal opportunities and dismantle barriers to ensure full participation in society.

LGBTIQA+ Communities

In 2023, 19.5% of Merri-bek adults indicated that they identify as LGBTIQA+

Merri-bek has a large and diverse LGBTIQA+ population, making up approximately 20% of our community. People from the LGBTIQA+ communities play a central role in the social, creative and political vibrancy of the municipality. While it is well documented that some health outcomes for LGBTIQA+ people are lower than the wider community (Rainbow Realities, 2024). It should be noted that LGBTIQA+ people are also hyper connected, resilient and have a strong sense of belonging in their chosen communities.

People from the LGBTIQA+ communities are active users of a range of Council services. This is reflected in programs delivered in the early years, youth, aged services, libraries, arts and culture and aquatics and leisure areas of Council.

There are many unique lived experiences under the LGBTIQA+ umbrella and therefore the population should not be treated as a homogenous group. While some issues are shared there are many unique challenges faced by individual communities.

Despite improvements, LGBTIQA+ people still face discrimination in legislative, social and health settings. Heteronormative and cisgender practices which promote rigid structures around sexual orientation and gender continue to drive poorer health outcomes for LGBTIQA+ people.

Some within the LGBTIQA+ communities face greater risk of negative health outcomes. This is due to compounding drivers or other forms of discrimination which may intersect.

- LGBTIQA+ young people
- Transgender and gender diverse people
- LGBTIQA+ people with a disability

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+
- Intersex people
- LGBTIQ+ people from refugee, asylum seeker, migrant or faith communities

Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities

Women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals in Australia face significant challenges rooted in historical gender discrimination and societal norms. Despite progress toward gender equality, systemic barriers persist, limiting their rights and opportunities, including issues like unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership roles, issues in healthcare delivery and medical research. Gender is a key determinant of health experiences and outcomes. For example, women and gender-diverse people often encounter sexist health experiences, including dismissive attitudes from healthcare providers, delayed diagnosis and overprescribing. These experiences have detrimental impacts on women's health and wellbeing.

Challenges faced by women and gender-diverse people, including gender-based violence and access to appropriate health services, have gained increased attention in Australian community and media and support from State and Federal Governments. Many still underestimate the significance of gender inequality. but there is a link between gender inequality and gender-based violence, rooted in unequal power dynamics that position women and girls subordinate to men and boys. This connection is not widely understood and is a barrier to improving gender inequality and preventing gender-based violence.

Cultural and institutional biases, as well as patriarchal norms, not only privilege cisgender men, but also pressure individuals to conform to traditional gender roles in various environments, leading to further inequities.

An age and lifespan lens, with attention to children, young people and older people

Children, young people, and older adults can experience discrimination, both directly and indirectly, based on their age. Ageism – defined as the stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination towards others based on age, can lead to significant disparities in quality of life and access to essential services. Different age groups have unique developmental needs that are critical at different life stages. These age groups face different, but systemic and structural barriers that limit their participation in community life and age-related discrimination can exacerbate existing inequalities felt by other priority groups.

For children and young people, advancements in child safety measures have been implemented, aiming to protect them from abuse and harm and understanding of the prevalence and impacts of child maltreatment has also improved. However, there are still barriers that prevent their voices from being heard, including being often excluded from voting and other democratic processes due to age, limiting their agency in decisions that affect their lives. Children have the right to express their opinions, yet these are often overlooked in various contexts.

Young people, facing transitional challenges into adulthood, require equitable access to education and employment opportunities to thrive. Societal attitudes often dismiss the significance of their needs, perpetuating age-related discrimination.

Similarly, older people face biases that can lead to exclusion in the workplace and accessing vital services. Ageism not only affects their participation in society but also contributes to elder abuse, which can be physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, financial or neglectful, which has significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of older people. Promoting healthy ageing involves fostering and sustaining the functional abilities that enhance wellbeing in later years, while also challenging ageist attitudes that undermine the dignity and capability of older adults. Moreover, the effects of child maltreatment can persist throughout the life course, significantly impacts older people's health, wellbeing, participation and opportunities throughout life.

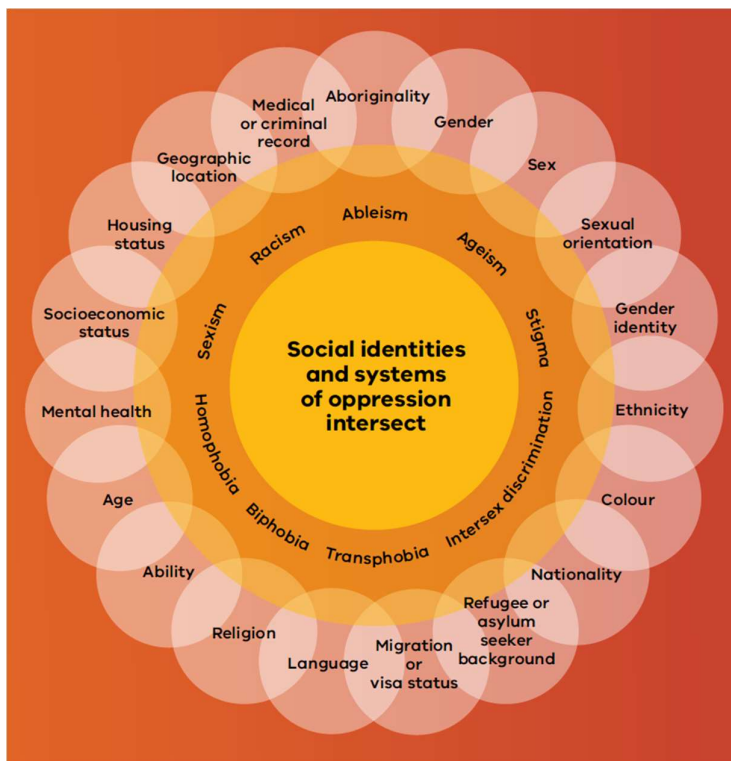
Intersectionality

Individuals are complex and are shaped by interactions between different personal attributes such as ethnicity, gender identity, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, migration status and religion.

Intersectionality is a concept that explains that the causes of discrimination or disadvantage do not exist independently, but intersect and overlap with each other, which can increase the severity and frequency of these challenges while also raising barriers to support.

Everyone has different, intersecting identities. For some, these identities might offer certain privileges, while for others, they can lead to increased discrimination, such as racism, class oppression, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, or ableism.

Addressing the disadvantage faced by one group does not necessarily resolve the discrimination by all other groups equally. Therefore, addressing one type of inequality should not be done without considering other forms of discrimination as well.



Source: Victorian Government (2021). Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement

Liveability

Liveability refers to the degree to which a place, be it a neighbourhood, suburb or city, supports quality of life, health and wellbeing for the people who live, work or visit. Cities considered to have a high degree of liveability tend to have a high level of, and widespread accessibility to, amenities such as open and green space; educational, social, cultural and recreational facilities (SOAC, 2015).

The way cities are planned and built can therefore influence the behaviours and physical and mental health of those living within them (Gunn, 2020). A liveable community is one that is: safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, and environmentally sustainable; with affordable and diverse housing linked via convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to employment, education, public open space, local shops, health and community services, and leisure and cultural opportunities (Lowe et al, 2013). Importantly, liveability must consider the unique needs of all age groups and abilities. Healthy and liveable communities provide the basis for social equity, harmony, economic resilience and environmental and social sustainability (Gunn, 2020).

Document structure

The following table puts forth the document structure. This framework has been developed to present the information in a way that fits with other frameworks, as well as the key themes of the Council Plan.

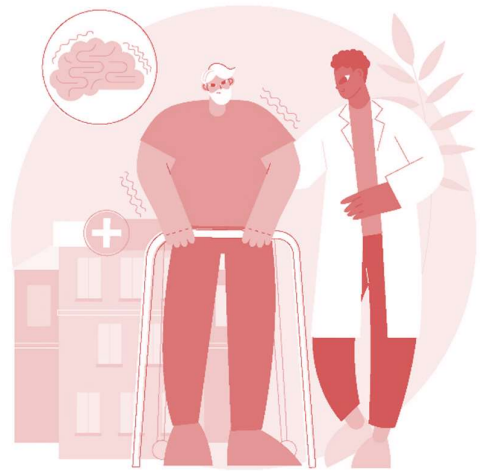
Healthy and caring			Moving and living safely		Spaces and places			Environmental	
<u>Demographics</u>	<u>Caring</u>	<u>Healthy</u>	<u>Transport</u>	<u>Safety</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Public amenities</u>	<u>Economy</u>	<u>Climate Change</u>	<u>Open space</u>
<u>Children</u>	<u>Disability</u>	<u>Physical health & active living</u>	<u>Active and public transport</u>	<u>Crime rates</u>	<u>Household type</u>	<u>Gambling</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Emissions</u>	<u>Tree canopy</u>
<u>Youth</u>	<u>LGBTIQA+</u>	<u>Sexual health</u>	<u>Transport accidents</u>	<u>Family violence incidents</u>	<u>Household income</u>	<u>Recreation and leisure participation</u>	<u>Businesses</u>		<u>Access to open space</u>
<u>Older adults</u>	<u>Multicultural communities</u>	<u>Active living</u>			<u>Housing tenure</u>	<u>Public services</u>	<u>Learning</u>		
	<u>Racism</u>	<u>Injury / falls</u>			<u>Affordable housing & homeless</u>		<u>SEIFA</u>		
	<u>First Peoples</u>	<u>Healthy eating & food insecurity</u>							
	<u>Gender equality</u>	<u>Alcohol and drug use</u>							
	<u>Resilience</u>	<u>Smoking & vaping</u>							
	<u>Volunteer</u>	<u>Mental health / wellbeing</u>							

Key insights

Healthy and caring

The Merri-bek community Vision for 2031 aims for community members to have healthy bodies and minds. Some of the unique challenges for Merri-bek when supporting the health and wellbeing of the diverse community are:

- A **declining birth and fertility rate** may have an impact on Council services and infrastructure provision for early years services including Maternal Child Health, and kindergartens.
- The population aged 0-24 years old is **forecasted to increase** from 27% in 2021 to 28.7% by 2031.
- There are increasing levels of **youth disengagement** in employment and/or study amongst males, particularly in Hadfield.
- **Developmental vulnerability** was highest amongst children in Fawkner (42.9%), Glenroy (33.6%) and Hadfield (33.3%).
- Of Merri-bek children beginning primary school, 69.4% reported to have attended a Maternal & Child Health Centre for the **3.5-year-old-check**.
- Of Merri-bek children aged 4 years, 97% participated in **kindergarten**, and the 3-year-old participation rate was 91%.
- It is estimated that Merri-bek will have one of the highest **increases in people with dementia by 2054**, with a forecast 107% increase (+2,902 people, compared to 101% increase across Victoria).
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** residents more often experience long-term mental health issues (23%) and/or asthma (17%).
- There is a higher than average proportion of **LGBTIQA+ residents** in Merri-bek (19.5%, Victorian average 11%). Same sex household data from the Census suggests that there are more LGBTIQA+ people in Brunswick and Brunswick West.
- Merri-bek is experiencing an increase in **appreciation of multiculturalism** over time. However, 8% surveyed in the VPHS survey reported experiencing **racism**, and 17% had experienced **discrimination**.
- Italian, Greek and Arabic are the three main languages where **translations** would be beneficial for the greatest number of people.
- 26% of Merri-bek adults are classified as **lonely**.
- Sedentary lifestyles are common, with 34% are **sitting for more than 8 hours a day** on weekdays.
- There is a risk or reduced long term health as only 36% are doing the recommended amount of vigorous exercise a week.



- Health issues are potentially not being addressed in a timely manner, which can lead to poorer health outcomes. 20% are **missing GP appointments**, and 29% report **longer than acceptable wait times** to see their GP. Furthermore 38% are **avoiding or delaying dental appointments** due to cost.
- In the last 2 years, the number of cases of **Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea** in Merri-bek have been on the rise, increasing by 75% from 2021 to 2023.
- Merri-bek shows a higher than average rate of residents being **hospitalised for falls** (1,024 per 100,000 population), particularly amongst females and 80+ year olds.
- 7% had **run out of food and couldn't afford to buy more**, and are therefore experiencing food insecurity.
- In 2021-22 there was an uptick in the rate of Merri-bek residents being **hospitalised for illicit drug use** (310 per 100,000 population), with the rate being much higher than the Melbourne Metropolitan average (247).
- Since 2020, the rate of **smoking and/or vaping has increased**, and is now at 23% (up from 15% in 2020), with 10% smoking cigarettes daily.
- 11% of Merri-bek residents have a long term mental health condition, with this being more common amongst females than males, and particularly high amongst **18-34 year old females** (20%).

Moving and living safely



Being able to move around the area safely is a key aspect of liveability. Providing safe facilities for use of public and active transport can lead to improved health outcomes through increased exercise, as well as a decrease in air pollution from car travel. Furthermore, providing safe methods of travel will reduce traffic accidents that can cause injury.

In Merri-bek:

- The southern suburbs have good access to public transport and walkability, however there are pockets with limited access, specifically in the North West.
- Merri-bek experiences a **higher than average rate of road accidents**, particularly amongst youth (15-24 year olds) and males. This is likely due to there being more **pedal cyclist accidents** than the metropolitan average. It will be particularly important to provide safe cycling options to reduce this figure.

Spaces and places

Housing is considered to be a key need to help facilitate all other aspects of physical and mental health maintenance (Housing first approach). Furthermore, having access to public amenities can both hinder (e.g. poker machines) and enhance (e.g. recreation and leisure facilities) liveability.

In Merri-bek:

- There are pockets of more **households on a low income** in Fawkner and Hadfield.
- The proportion of households who are renting is on the rise, particularly in Oak Park and Glenroy. **Brunswick and Brunswick East** currently have high instances of renters.
- 13% of households are under **mortgage or rental stress**. The incidence of being under housing stress is more common amongst one parent and lone person households, and in Brunswick West.
- Only 2% of rentals in Merri-bek in March 2024 **were affordable to those on a low income**.
- Poker machine losses in Merri-bek has increased in the last couple of years, and is currently at **\$383 per adult population**.
- There is a good level of access to **community and sport infrastructure** through Brunswick and Coburg. However there are clear pockets of low levels of community and sport infrastructure access along the south west border of Merri-bek, and in the North West.
- The **unemployment rate** is higher in Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield. These suburbs also have a **lower SEIFA index** than other areas of Merri-bek.
- Merri-bek scores poorly with regards to people being able to **work local to where they live**.



Environmental

Environmental aspects of an area can contribute to health and wellbeing through a reduction in pollution (climate change impact), and provision of trees and open space, which can filter the air, reduce the ambient temperature and provide residents with a place to exercise, recreate and socialise.

The key environmental findings for Merri-bek were:

- Whilst emissions from electricity are falling, **transport and gas emissions remain high**. Residential sources contribute 76% of Merri-bek's gas related Co2 emissions.
- The proportion of tree canopy and shrub cover in Merri-bek is low (15.3%) but increasing.



Healthy and caring

The Merri-bek community Vision for 2031 aims for community members to have healthy bodies and minds. This section covers a range of topics relating to physical and mental health. It also presents an overview of the varied demographic groups within Merri-bek, to assist in ensuring services are tailored to the needs of the diverse community.

Key items for consideration emerging from the analysis of data within the Health Profile include:

Caring and diverse

Merri-bek is a unique community within Melbourne, with pockets of diverse groups, and an appreciation for multiculturalism.

- The number of **births and fertility rate** are decreasing over time. This is in line with state-wide trends and should it continue may have an impact on Council services and infrastructure provision for early years services including Maternal Child Health, and kindergartens.
- The population aged 0-24 years old is **forecasted to increase** from 27% in 2021 to 28.7% by 2031.
- There has been a recent swing towards **partial breastfeeding at 6 months**.
- There are increasing levels of **youth disengagement** in employment and/or study amongst males, particularly in Hadfield. 7% of Merri-bek young people were disengaged from work or study.
- **Developmental vulnerability** was highest amongst children in Fawkner (42.9%), Glenroy (33.6%) and Hadfield (33.3%).
- Of Merri-bek children beginning primary school, 69.4% reported to have attended a Maternal & Child Health Centre for the **3.5-year-old-check**.

- Of Merri-bek children aged 4 years, 97% participated in **kindergarten**, and the 3-year-old participation rate was 91%.
- It is estimated that Merri-bek will have one of the highest **increases in people with dementia by 2054**, with a forecast 107% increase (+2,902 people, compared to 101% increase across Victoria).
- Increasing numbers of **young adults with a disability**, particularly females.
- There were 4,148 **NDIS recipients** in Merri-bek as at Q4 2023/24, 41% of whom were under the age of 18.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander** residents more often experience long-term mental health issues (23%) and/or asthma (17%).
- There is a higher than average proportion of **LGBTIQA+ residents** in Merri-bek (19.5%, Victorian average 11%). Same sex household data from the Census suggests that there are more LGBTIQA+ people in Brunswick and Brunswick West.
- Merri-bek is experiencing an increase in **appreciation of multiculturalism** over time. However, 8% surveyed in the VPHS survey reported experiencing **racism**, and 17% had experienced **discrimination**.
- Italian, Greek and Arabic are the three main languages where **translations** would be beneficial for the greatest number of people.
- 26% of Merri-bek adults are classified as **lonely**.
- There are increasing proportions of **lone person households** in Brunswick, Brunswick East and Brunswick West. Whilst being a lone person household doesn't automatically classify someone as lonely, they are at higher risk of loneliness.
- The rate of **volunteering fell notably** in 2021 (13%, down from 17% in 2016). This decline in volunteering was driven by those aged 18-69. Rates amongst youth (12-24 year olds) increased during this period, and older adults stayed constant.

Physical health and active living

There are a variety of behaviours that can improve an individuals' physical health and in turn reduce the risk of disease or injury. In Merri-bek the instances of not meeting behavioural guidelines to optimise physical health is generally in line with the state average, and there has been limited change over time. Many of these behaviours take a system-wide approach to influence, with collaborative efforts across a range of services and industries. Council is well placed to advocate for programs and services, and in some cases can provide services to support behaviour change.

- **Self-reported health** is back up to pre-COVID levels. Whilst this is on par with the state average, there are still one in six (17%) who rate their health as fair or poor, and 16% don't do any form of **rigorous exercise**.
- 34% are **sitting for more than 8 hours a day** on weekdays.
- Only 36% are doing the recommended amount of vigorous exercise a week.
- 20% are **missing GP appointments**, mostly due to appointments not being available when needed.
- 29% report **longer than acceptable wait times** to see their GP.
- 38% are **avoiding or delaying dental appointments** due to cost. There has been no improvement in this area when compared to 2017.

- **Cervical screening rates** were observed to be declining in 2019, sitting at a rate lower than average.
- In the last 2 years, the number of cases of **Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea** in Merri-bek have been on the rise, increasing by 75% from 2021 to 2023.
- Merri-bek shows a higher than average rate of residents being **hospitalised for falls** (1,024 per 100,000 population), particularly amongst females and 80+ year olds.

Healthy eating and food security

Healthy eating is key to overall improved health outcomes. With the potential to reduce the risk of disease or injury and improve mental health. Council is in a position to influence healthy eating outcomes by planning for access to healthy food sources, and limiting access to unhealthy food options.

- 29% drink **sugar sweetened drinks** once a week or more often. This can lead to tooth decay, which was earlier established as potentially problematic for some due to the prohibitive cost of seeing a dentist.
- There are pockets of Merri-Bek with close access to **fast food outlets**; specifically Brunswick, Coburg and Oak Park.
- Gowanbrae is a unique suburb in much of the geographic data, with residents having to travel longer distances for both fast food and supermarket access.
- Oak Park has closer proximity to fast food, but no close proximity to a supermarket.
- 7% had **run out of food and couldn't afford to buy more**, and are therefore experiencing food insecurity.

Alcohol, drugs and smoking

Alcohol consumption is considered to be a risk to health and wellbeing through potential injury whilst under the influence, as well as an increase in risk of disease long-term, and negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. In Merri-bek there is widespread **close-proximity access to alcohol outlets**, particularly in the southern suburbs.

In 2021-22 there was an uptick in the rate of Merri-bek residents being **hospitalised for illicit drug use** (310 per 100,000 population), with the rate being much higher than the Melbourne Metropolitan average (247).

Since 2020, the rate of **smoking and/or vaping has increased**, and is now at 23% (up from 15% in 2020), with 10% smoking cigarettes daily. Whilst vaping laws have been introduced throughout the last 12 months to try and curb smoking rates, the challenge for Council going forward will be to identify retailers selling illegal vaping equipment.

Mental health and wellbeing

11% of Merri-bek residents have a long term mental health condition, with this being more common amongst females than males, and particularly high amongst **18-34 year old females** (20%). During COVID, the proportion of residents experiencing psychological distress increased, but has since returned to pre-COVID levels.

Demographics

Children

Births

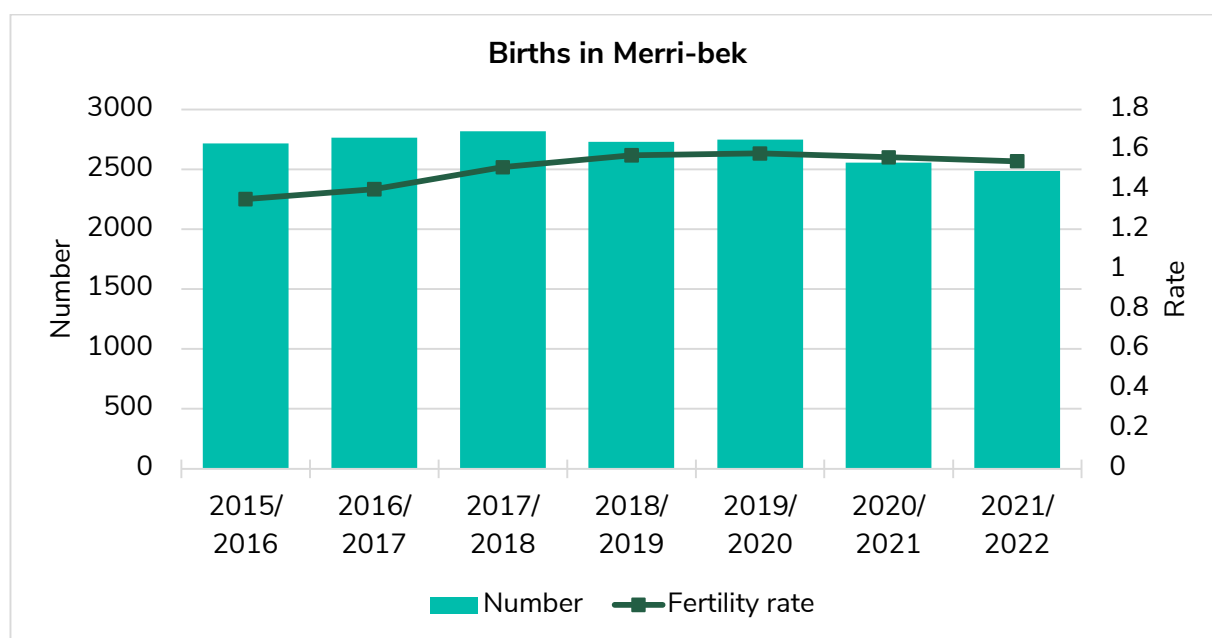
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Birth notifications	Council MCH	2022	Provided by Council staff
Fertility rate	ABS 33010DO003	2022	Number of babies born per women of reproductive age
Population forecast	ABS, Quantify Strategic Insights	2024	

In 2021/22:

2,486 children were **born** in Merri-bek. (Council)

1.54 fertility rate in 2022, lower than the replacement rate of 2.1. (ABS)

The number of babies born in Merri-bek has been declining since 2019/202, however this is not uniform across the municipality.



In 2021

27% of the population are aged 0-24 years old, and this is forecasted to increase to 28.7% by 2031. (ABS)

Breastfeeding

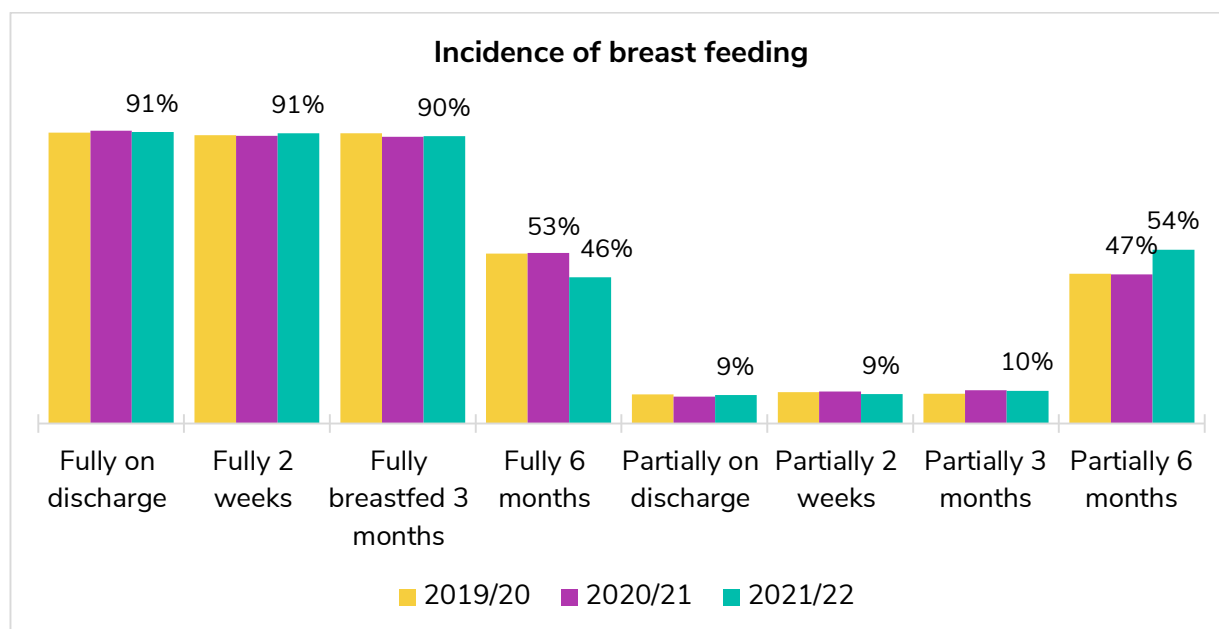
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Breastfeeding rates	Council MCH	2022	Provided by Council staff

In 2021/22:

91% of Merri-bek children born were breastfed on discharge from hospital. This has remained relatively constant over time. (Council)

46% of Merri-bek children aged 6 months were being breastfed. This represents a drop when compared to previous years (53%). (Council)

There has been a recent swing towards partial breastfeeding at 6 months.



Vaccinations

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Vaccination rate	Australian immunisation register	2022	

In 2021/22:

95% of Merri-bek children in the Brunswick – Coburg area of Merri-bek were fully vaccinated at 12-15 months. This is a similar proportion to 2019-20 (95.6%). (Immunisation Register)

94.2% of Merri-bek children in the Northern area of Merri-bek (Moreland – North) were fully vaccinated at 60-63 months. This is a lower proportion than 2019-20 (96%). (Immunisation Register)

Notable variations in vaccination when comparing 2019/20 to 2021/22 were:

- Decrease in Varicella (12-15 months) in Moreland – North, from 94.5% to 91.6%.
- Increase in Hep (24-27 months) in Moreland – North, from 96.8% to 98%.
- Decrease in Polio (60-63 months) in Moreland – North, from 96.2% to 94.3%.

Development

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Developmental Vulnerability	Australian Early Development Census	2021	

In 2021

20%

of Merri-bek children reported being developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. This is consistent with the Victorian average (19.9%). Developmental vulnerability was highest in Fawkner (42.9%), Glenroy (33.6%) and Hadfield (33.3%).

Maternal and Child Health Key Age & Stage

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
3.5 year-old check	School entrants health survey	2021	

In 2021

69.4%

of Merri-bek children beginning primary school, reported to have attended a Maternal & Child Health Centre for the 3.5-year-old-check.

Kindergarten Participation

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Kindergarten participation	The Department of Education	2023	

In 2023

97%

of Merri-bek children aged 4 years participated in kindergarten, and the 3 year old participation rate was 91%.

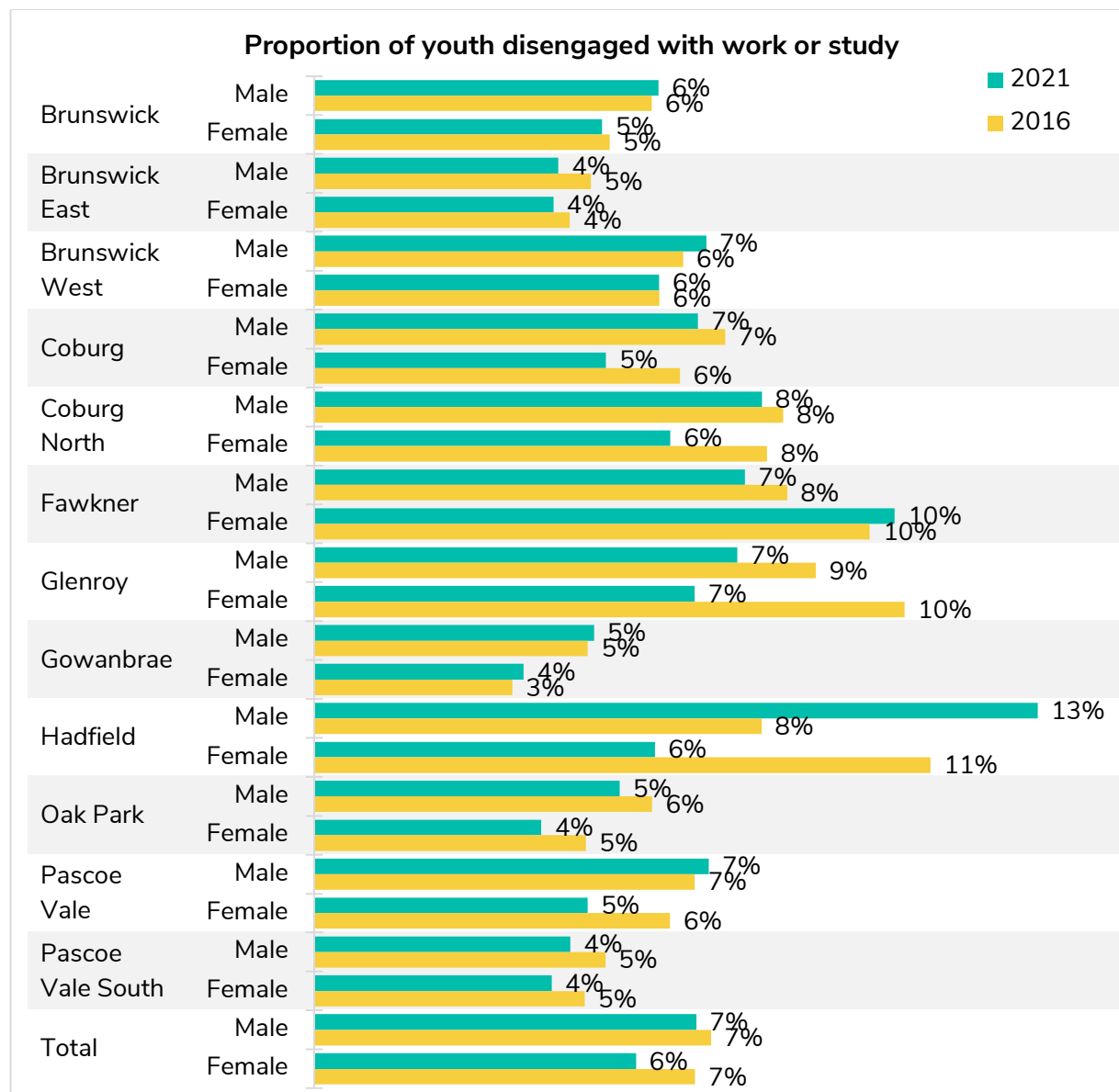
Youth

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Disengaged with work or study	Census	2021	Variable generated by the ABS. Youth defined as 12-24 year olds

2021:

7% of Merri-bek young people were disengaged from work or study. (2021 Census)

Disengagement varies by suburb, with higher instances of disengagement amongst young males in Hadfield and young females in Fawkner.



Priority groups



In the 2021 Census a higher proportion of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people** were classified as disengaged (15%, compared to 7% others).

Helpful documents and further reading

- Australian Early Development Census (formerly the AEDI)
- Our promise, Your future: Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022-2027
- The State of Victoria's Children Report, 2016
- Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS - lots of indicators, but most are out of date)

Older adults

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Dementia forecast	Dementia Australia	2024	https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/Dementia-Prevalence-Data-LGA.pdf

By 2054:

5,613

Merri-bek residents are forecast to have dementia. This is an increase of +2,902 over the current 2024 number (2,711, 107% increase). This is the highest percentage change of all Victorian LGAs. (Dementia Australia)

Helpful documents and further reading

- Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)
- Aged Care Act 1997
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act
- Dementia.org research - <https://www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/dementia-facts-and-figures>

Caring and diverse

Disability

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
People living with a disability	Census	2021	Defined as someone who needs assistance with self-care, body movement or communication activities.
Difficulty or restriction that affects participation	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample \pm 5% error margin
NDIS recipients	NDIS data	Q3 2023/24	

In 2021:

6% of Merri-bek population had a **severe disability for which they needed assistance**. (2021 Census)

11,000 Merri-bek residents were living with a **severe disability for which they needed assistance**. (2021 Census)

21% of those surveyed in the 2023 VPHS survey indicated they experienced a difficulty or restriction that affects their participation in work, education, social and community life, or doing daily activities, related to a long-term health condition or impairment. (VPHS)

4,148 NDIS recipients in Merri-bek in Q3 2023/24, up from 3,855 in Q4 2022/23. This increase has mostly been in young people. (NDIS)

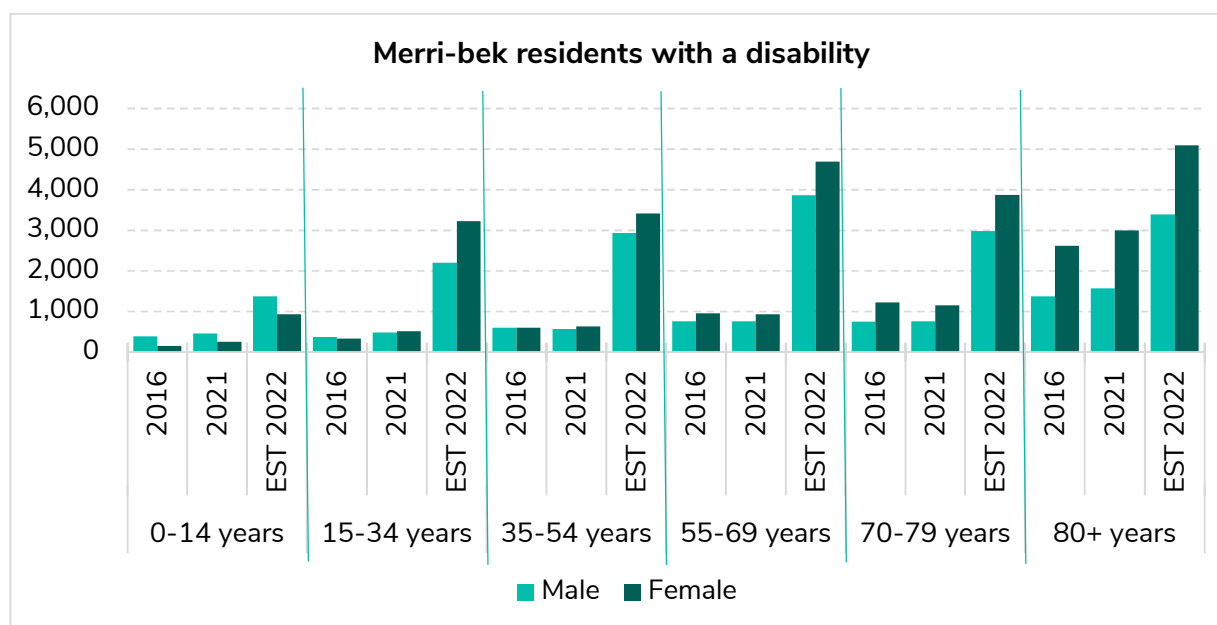
41% Of NDIS recipients in Merri-bek are under the age of 18. (NDIS)

29% Of NDIS recipients in Merri-bek are classified as having autism, and 15% are CALD. (NDIS)

Within the Census data, from 2016 to 2021 the number of 15-34 year old females with a disability almost doubled. Furthermore, there were more male than female children living with a disability where they need assistance; conversely for 55+ year olds there were more females than males living with a disability where they need assistance.

	Male		Female		Total	
	2016	2021	2016	2021	2016	2021
0-14 years	380	457	155	251	532	708
15-34 years	368	475	328	515	699	994
35-54 years	597	569	601	637	1,198	1,212
55-69 years	750	756	950	929	1,694	1,674
70-79 years	742	754	1,221	1,154	1,962	1,904
80+ years	1,365	1,567	2,623	2,997	3,988	4,569
TOTAL:	4,202	4,578	5,878	6,483	10,073	11,061

The Census data is often criticised for under-reporting the number of residents with a disability. Therefore an estimate (EST) has been generated using the 2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC)¹. According to this estimate, in 2022 there were 21,200 females and 16,700 males living with a disability in Merri-bek (Approximately 38,000 people).



Priority groups



In the 2021 Census a higher proportion of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** reported having a disability for which they need assistance (7.5%, compared to 6.5% average). (2021 Census)



A higher proportion of **females** live with a disability than males in all adult age groups. (2021 Census)



Some people with a disability can be more impacted by heat related illnesses. Furthermore in extreme weather events, people with a mobility disability may require additional assistance to manage evacuation.

Helpful documents and further reading

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) established in 2013
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992
- Disability Services Act 1986
- Absolutely everyone 2017-2020 (Victorian Government)
- Victorian Government's Disability Plan 2021-2024
- Disability Act 2006 (Victoria)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition Amendment Act 2019
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

¹ 2022 SDAC counts by age and gender were compared to 2021 Census disability counts for Australia. The proportion disparity was then applied to the 2021 Census data for Merri-bek to estimate total persons living with a disability by age and gender.

LGBTIQA+

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Identify as LGBTIQA+	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin
Same sex household	Census	2021	Proportion of families

In 2023:

19.5% of Merri-bek adults surveyed in the VPHS survey indicated that they identify as LGBTIQA+. This is significantly higher than the Victorian average (11%). (VPHS)

In 2021:

3% of Merri-bek families were classified as same sex couple households. This proportion was higher in Brunswick (7%) and Brunswick West (5%), and lower in Gowanbrae (0%). (2021 Census)

Helpful documents and further reading

- Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 (Federal)
- Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) amended in 2017 following a Australian Marriage Law Postal survey
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (2010)
- Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 (Federal)

Multicultural communities

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Country of birth, language spoken at home and English proficiency	Census	2021	
Multiculturalism makes life better	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin

In 2021:

33% of Merri-bek residents were born overseas. This is higher than the state average (30%) yet lower than the metropolitan Melbourne average (36%). (2021 Census)

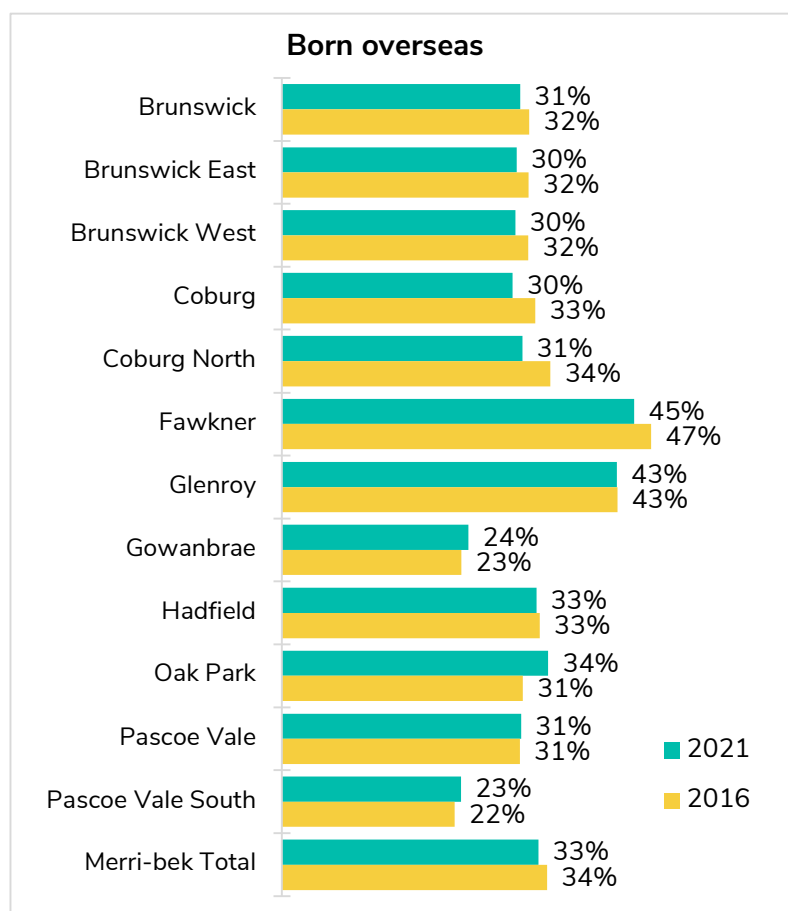
35% of Merri-bek residents spoke a language other than English. This is higher than the state average (28%) yet similar to the metropolitan Melbourne average (34%). (2021 Census)

In 2023:

83% of Merri-bek adults surveyed in 2023 said that multiculturalism definitely makes life in their area better. This has been increasing over time and is higher than the Victorian average (67%). (VPHS)

In 2021, the top countries of birth were Italy, India, England, Nepal, Greece and New Zealand. The number of people from Italy, Greece and Pakistan is decreasing over time, whilst the number of residents from Nepal, England, the Philippines and Columbia is increasing.

From 2016 to 2021, Gowanbrae and Oak Park had an increase in the proportion of the population born overseas, whereas other suburbs experienced a decrease.

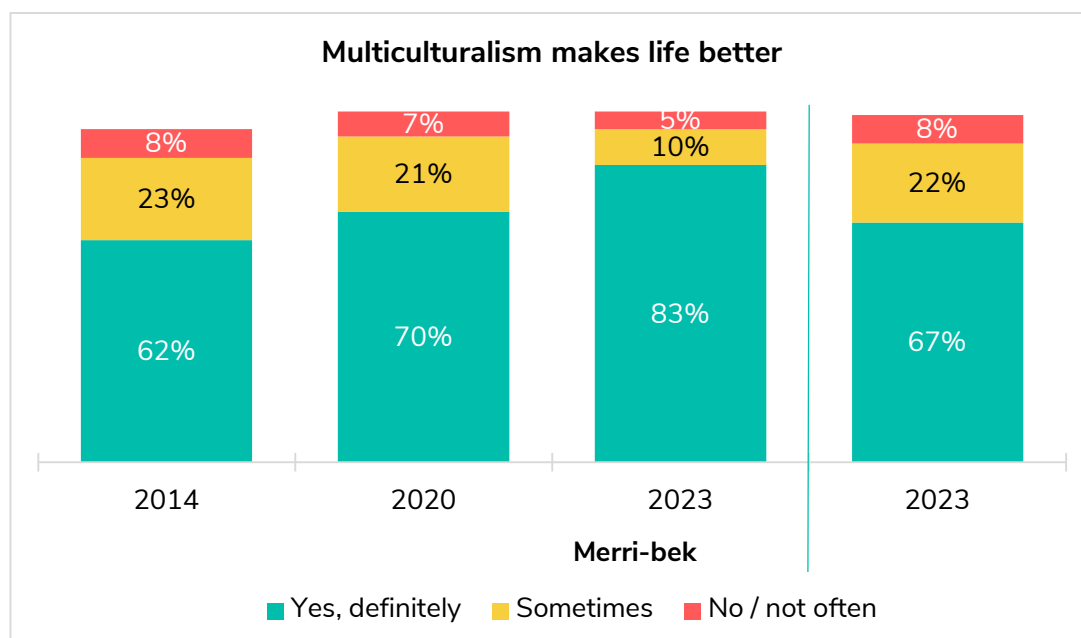


Some languages are more common amongst older adults aged over 60: Italian (57% of speakers); Greek (44% of speakers); and Maltese (79% of speakers).

In 2021, the suburbs with higher proportions of residents who speak a language other than English were Fawkner (58%), Glenroy (49%), and Hadfield (42%).

In 2021, the languages with the highest numbers of poor English speakers (languages to cover with translations) were Italian, Greek and Arabic. It should be noted that this measure of English proficiency is relating to spoken English; it may vary with regards to written English.

Languages other than English		Poor English proficiency	
Language	Count	Language	Count
Italian	9,974	Italian	1,975
Arabic	7,767	Greek	1,544
Greek	6,789	Arabic	1,139
Urdu	3,813	Mandarin	637
Nepali	3,738	Turkish	633
Turkish	3,065	Vietnamese	334
Mandarin	2,857	Urdu	307
Spanish	2,003	Cantonese	212



Helpful documents and further reading

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) (Federal)
- Federal multicultural statement: Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (State)
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 (State)

Racism

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Discrimination and racism	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin

In 2023:

17% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported they had experienced discrimination in the 12 months prior to interview. This is in line with the Victorian average (16%). (VPHS)

8% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported they had experienced racism in the 12 months prior to interview. This is in line with the Victorian average (7%). (VPHS)

First Peoples

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Census	2021	Small cells are randomised to maintain anonymity

In 2021:

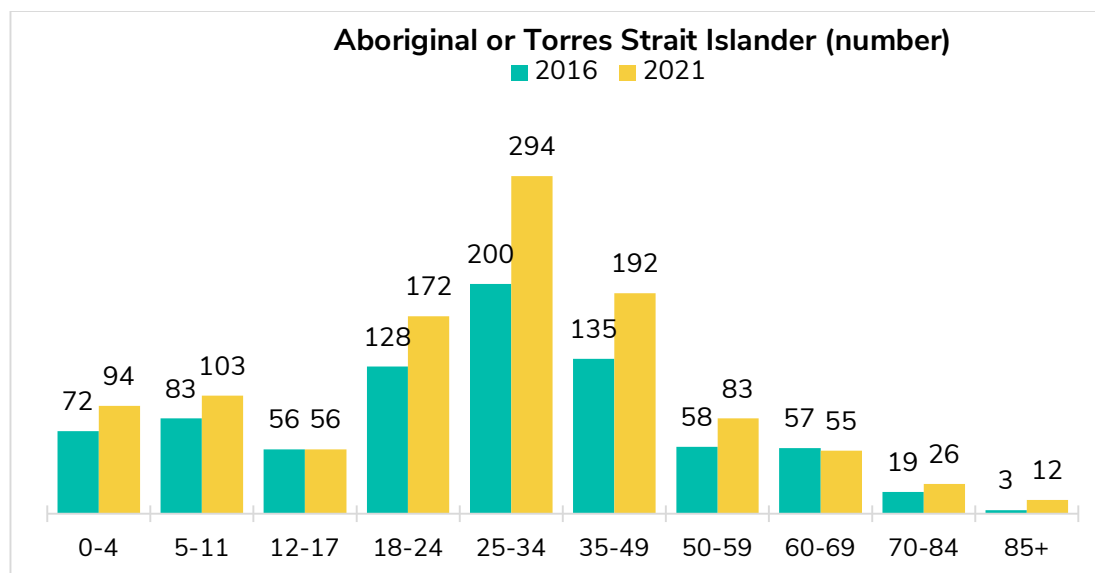
34% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Merri-bek from 2016-2021. This increase was mostly amongst those aged 18-49. (2021 Census)

39% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Merri-bek are aged 0-24 years old. (2021 Census)

23% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Merri-bek indicated they have a long term mental health condition (compared to 11% others). (2021 Census)

17% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Merri-bek indicated they have Asthma (compared to 9% others). (2021 Census)

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Merri-bek are aged under 35.



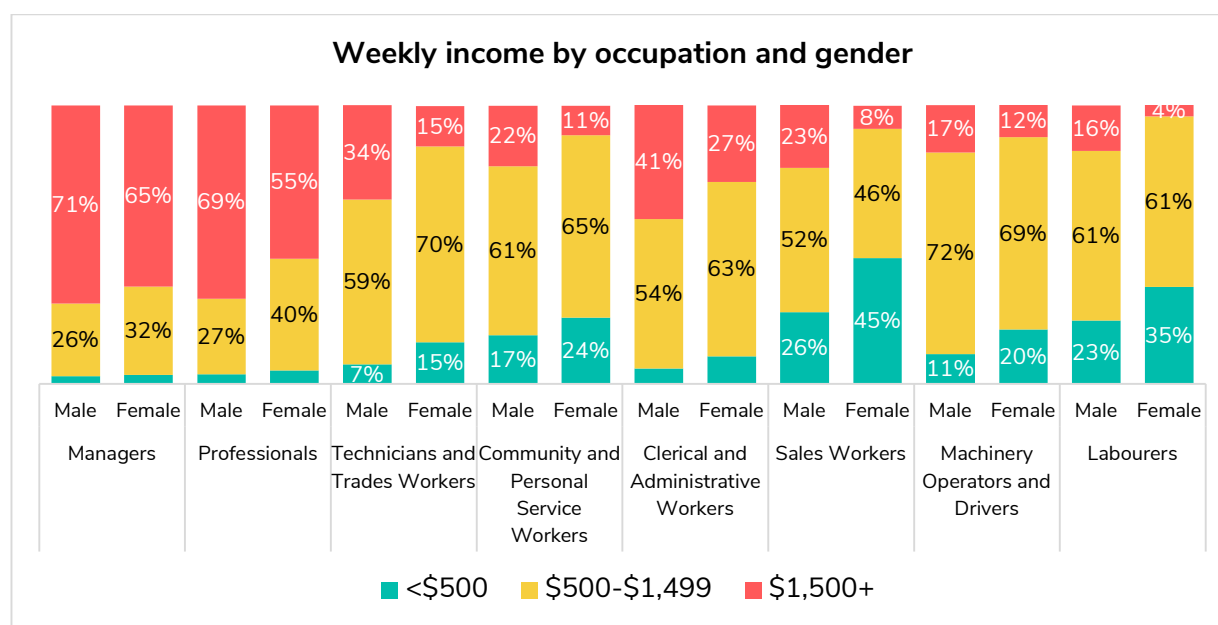
Helpful documents and further reading

- Closing the Gap (Federal Government)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023
- National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023
- Indigenous Advancement Strategy (Federal Government)
- Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023

Gender equality

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Weekly income by gender and occupation	Census	2021	Small cells are randomised to maintain anonymity

One way to understand gender equality is to assess weekly income by gender within the same occupation. In Merri-bek there is a notable pay gap for females in community and personal services, sales and labourer industries.



Helpful documents and further reading

- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Federal)
- Safe and Strong (Victorian Government)
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (2010)

Resilience

Can get help from others

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Agree that they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it	Council community indicators survey	2020	Xx sample size?
Agree they have close friends or family who they talk to regularly	VPHS	2020	n=400 sample ±5% error margin

In 2020:

79% of Merri-bek adults surveyed by Council agreed that they could get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it. This is a significant decrease when compared to the 2018 finding of 94%, although may be due to COVID. (Council)

94% of Merri-bek adults surveyed in the 2020 VPHS survey agreed that they have close friends or family who they can talk to. This is similar to the Victorian average (95%). (VPHS)

Loneliness

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Incidence of loneliness	VPHS	2023	UCLA loneliness scale
Live alone	Census	2021	

In 2023:

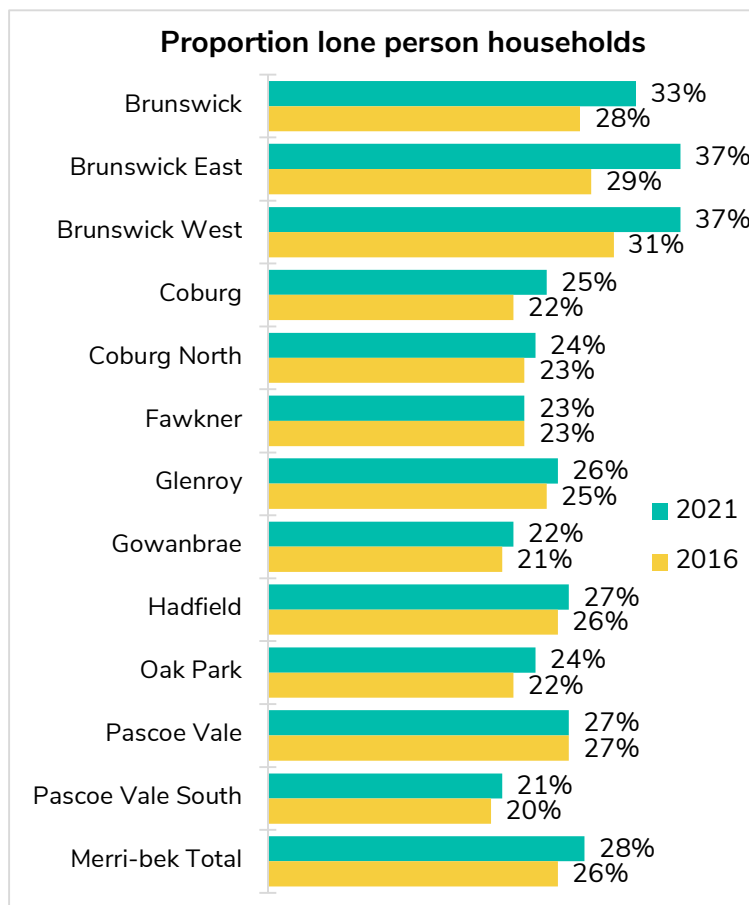
26% of Merri-bek adults surveyed in the 2023 VPHS survey were classified as lonely. This is similar to the Victorian average (23%). (VPHS)

28% of Merri-bek households were one person households in 2021, up from 26% in 2016. (2021 Census)

Suburbs experiencing the greatest increases in one person households, and therefore are at risk of higher levels of loneliness are Brunswick East, Brunswick West and Brunswick.

Number of lone person households

Suburb	2016	2021
Brunswick	2993	3801
Brunswick East	1630	2556
Brunswick West	1987	2512
Coburg	2231	2586
Coburg North	675	761
Fawkner	1047	1123
Glenroy	1993	2342
Gowanbrae	221	251
Hadfield	588	676
Oak Park	539	632
Pascoe Vale	1827	1998
Pascoe Vale South	728	826
Merri-bek	16517	20058



Can get help from others

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Feel valued by society	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin

In 2023:

46% of Merri-bek adults surveyed said that they definitely feel valued by society. This is similar to 2020 (45%) and the Victorian average (48%). (VPHS)

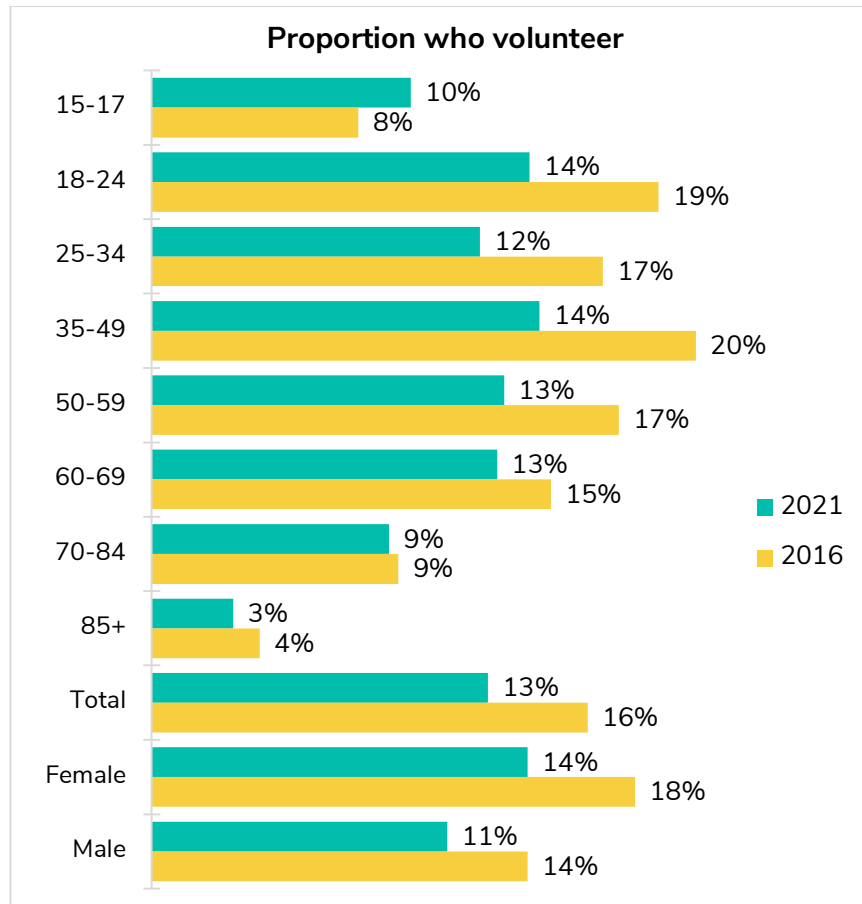
Volunteer

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Volunteer	Census	2021	

In 2021:

13% of Merri-bek adults (over the age of 15) said that they volunteer. This is lower than pre-COVID (17%). This fall during COVID was experienced across the state. (2021 Census)

This decline in volunteering rates was mostly across those aged 18-69. Overall, females show a higher rate of volunteering than males.



Healthy

Physical health

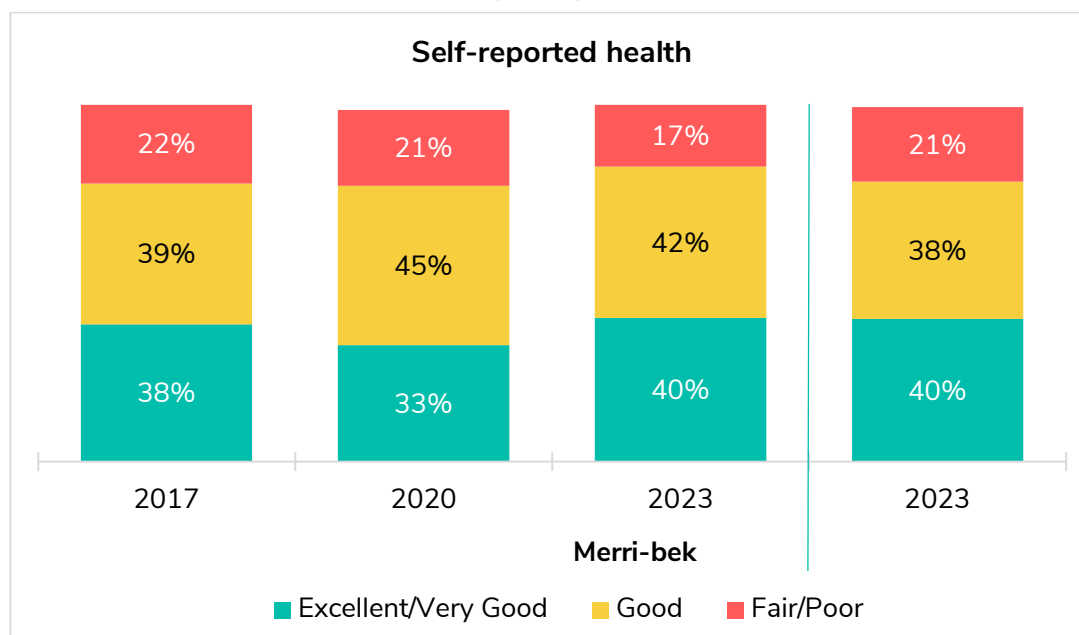
Self-reported health

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Self-reported level of health	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin

In 2023:

40% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported their health as **excellent or very good**. This is in line with the Victorian average, and shows a return to pre-COVID levels. (VPHS)

17% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported their health as **fair or poor**. This is within error margins when compared to the Victorian average (21%), and is lower than that recorded in 2017 and 2020. (VPHS)



Priority groups

Given the limited sample size this data is not available broken out by demographics. However, data and research available at a broader geography (not just Merri-bek) highlights a range of trends for priority groups:



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians show lower rates of self-reporting their health as good (Korin Korin Balit Djak, 2017).



LGBTIQ+ adults in Victoria showed a lower rate of self-reporting their health as excellent or very good in the 2017 VPHS survey.

People with a disability in 2020 showed a higher incidence of rating their health as poor or fair (42%) than those without a disability (7%) (AIHW, 2020).

Physical exercise

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Level of physical activity	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin. Measure generated using multiple questions regarding physical activity. Initial 2023 data release not comparable to 2017.

In 2023:

16% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported that they don't do any form of vigorous physical activity. This is similar to the Victorian average (16.8%). (VPHS)

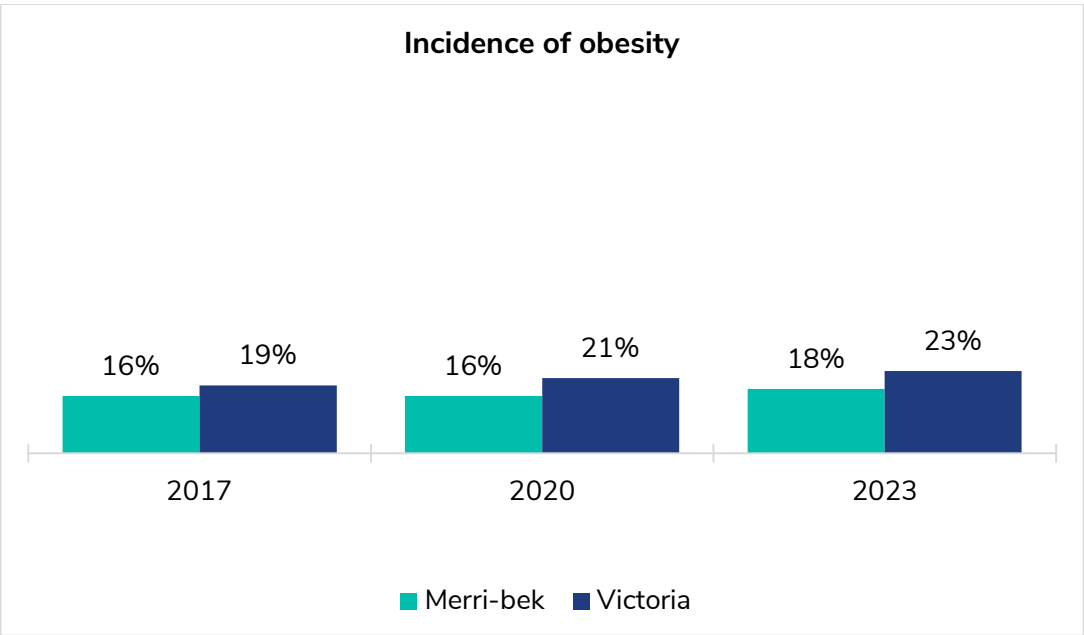
Body weight

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
BMI > 30kg/m ²	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin

In 2023:

18% of Merri-bek adults surveyed had a BMI classified as **obese**. This within error margins when compared to the Victorian average, and is similar to previous years. (VPHS)

46% of Merri-bek adults surveyed had a BMI classified as **pre-obese or obese**. This is lower than recorded in 2017 (50%) and notably lower the Victorian average (54%). (VPHS)



Priority groups

Given the limited sample size this data is not available broken out by demographics. However, data and research available at a broader geography (not just Merri-bek) highlights a range of trends for priority groups:



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians show higher obesity rates (Korin Korin Balit Djak, 2017).

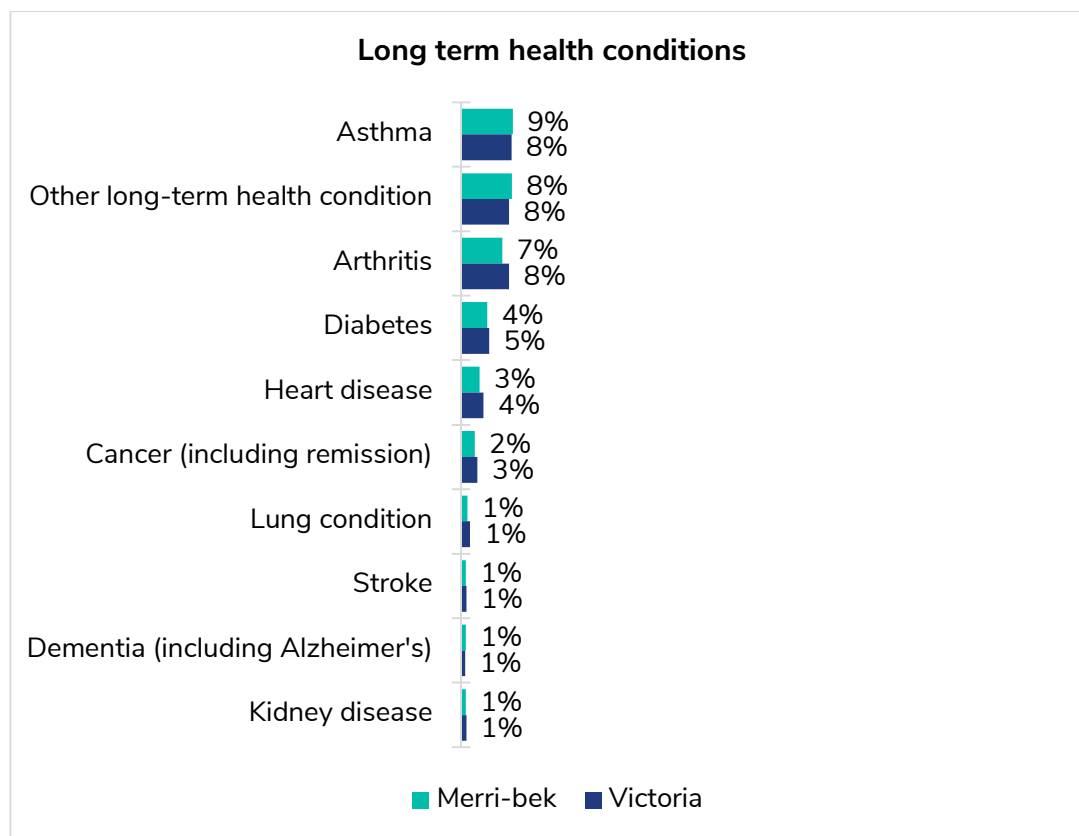
Chronic conditions

Measures:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Long term health condition	ABS Census	2021	New question in 2021
Diagnosed with selected diseases	VPHS	2020	2023 data not yet released n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin

In 2021:

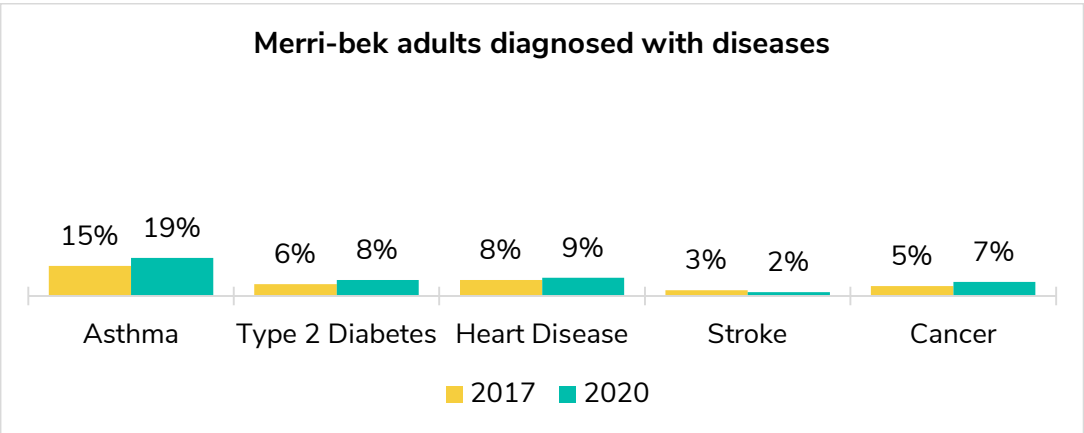
32% of Merri-bek population had a **long-term health condition diagnosed by a medical professional**. This is similar to the Victorian average (31%). (2021 Census)

Rates of long term health conditions in Merri-bek are similar to statewide averages.




Female Merri-bek residents show higher instances of arthritis (10%) and/or asthma (10%) than males (4% and 8% respectively).


The 2020 VPHS data suggests that the incidence of Asthma and Type 2 Diabetes may be on the rise in Merri-bek. Release of the 2023 data will allow for identifying if this is a trend.




Priority groups



Chronic disease is responsible for 64 per cent of the disease burden of Aboriginal Australians, with presentations to Victorian hospital emergency departments double the rate for non-Aboriginal people (Korin Korin Balit Djak, 2017).
Aboriginal people are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to have diabetes (Korin Korin Balit Djak, 2017).



A higher proportion of **females** report having arthritis and/or asthma. (2021 Census)



People who live with chronic conditions are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Heat stress, bacterial infections, asthma attacks and respiratory complications are all set to increase in frequency with current climate projections.

Health check-ups

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Deferral of health treatments & private health insurance	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin
Cervical screening	Women’s health in the North	2019	Data is quite old

In 2023:

- 20%

of Merri-bek adults surveyed said that there was a time in the 12 months prior to interview they or someone in their household were unable to see a GP when needed. This is in line with the Victorian average (20%). This was mostly due to not being able to get an appointment when needed (42%). (VPHS)
- 29%

of Merri-bek adults surveyed said they had waited longer than they felt was acceptable to get a GP appointment (in line with 33% Victorian average). (VPHS)
- 50%

of Merri-bek adults surveyed said they have private health insurance (in line with 52% Victorian average). (VPHS)

Distance to a GP

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Average distance to closest GP	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies. Presented in meters.

In 2021:

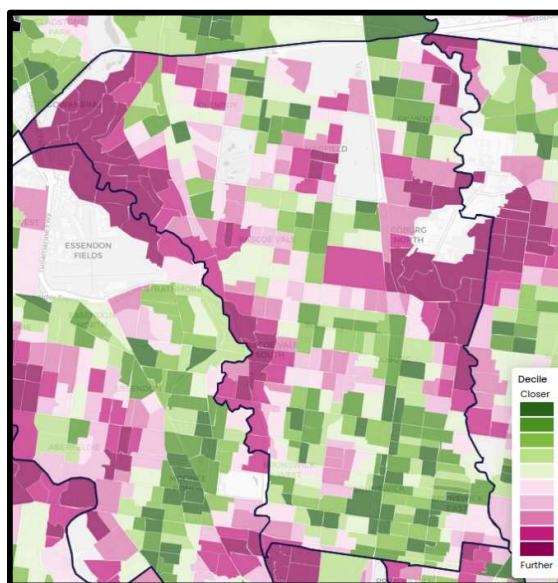
691m

Was the average distance Merri-bek residents would have to travel from home to reach their nearest GP clinic. This is an improvement on 744m recorded in 2018. (AUO)

There are clear pockets of disadvantage in terms of convenient access to a GP, specifically in Coburg North and Gowanbrae.

Average meters to closest GP

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	461	445
Brunswick East	501	426
Brunswick West	587	477
Coburg	665	633
Coburg North	1185	1240
Fawkner	880	698
Glenroy	762	725
Gowanbrae	1839	1917
Hadfield	1360	752
Oak Park	1027	1032
Pascoe Vale	652	679
Pascoe Vale South	899	861
Merri-bek	744	691



Self-reported dental health

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Self-reported level of dental health, gum disease and delayed dental care	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin

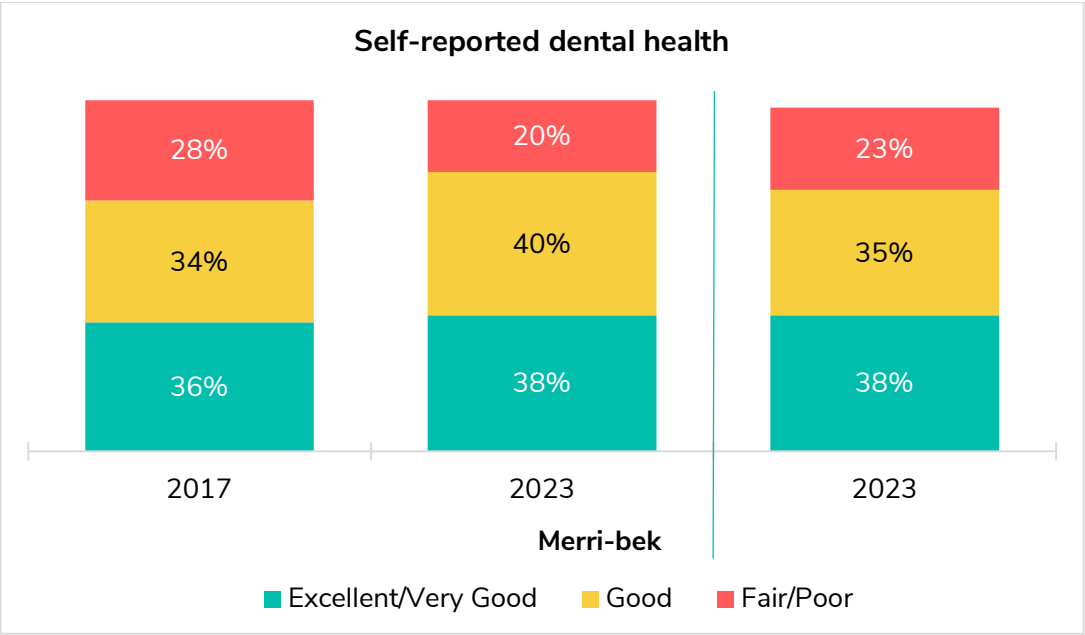
In 2023:

20% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported their dental health as **fair or poor**. This is in line with the Victorian average (23%). This is a notable decrease when compared to 2017. (VPHS)

20% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported they had experienced loose teeth, bleeding or painful gums in the 12 months prior to interview (same as Victorian average). (VPHS)

38% of Merri-bek adults surveyed reported they had avoided or delayed visiting a dental professional because of the cost in the 12 months prior to interview (similar to the Victorian average, 32%). This is the same proportion as that recorded in 2017. (VPHS)

Since 2017, the proportion of Merri-bek adults self-reporting fair or poor dental health has decreased.



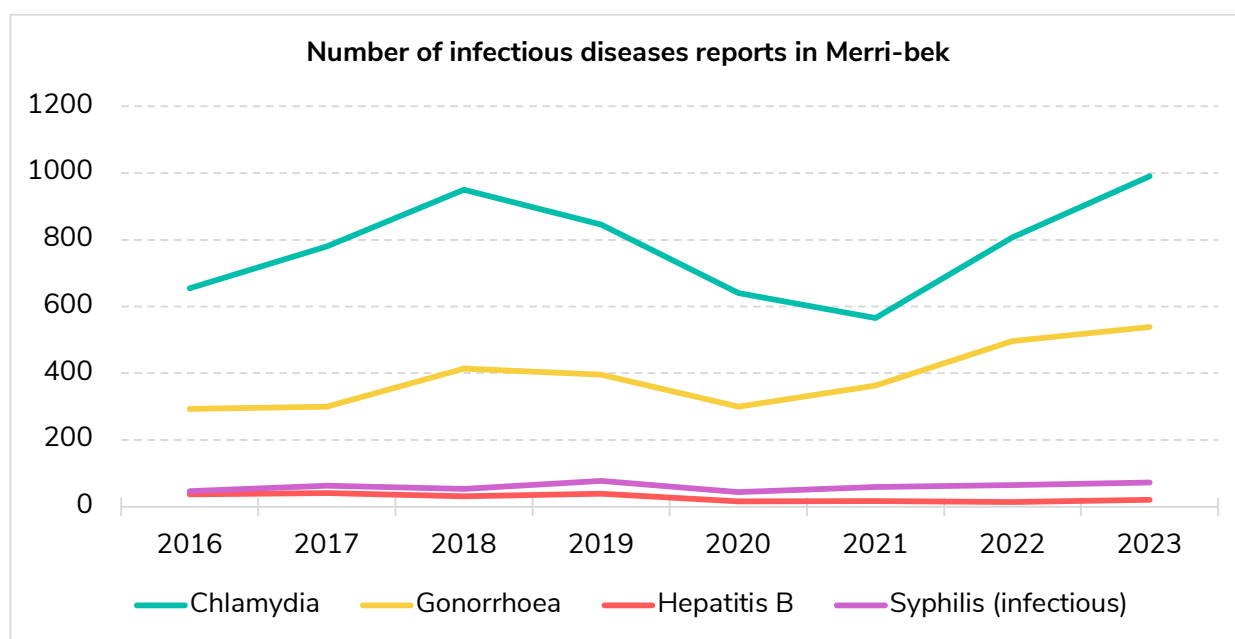
Sexual health

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Cervical screening	Women's health in the North	2019	Data is old and therefore may not be accurate
Infectious diseases	Victorian department of health infectious diseases surveillance report	2023	2024 data not included as only partial year

In 2019:

44% of Merri-bek women had participated in cervical screening. This is lower than the North Metro Region average (48%) and represents a decrease compared to 2014/2015 (59%). (Women's Health of the North)

The number of cases of Gonorrhoea in Merri-bek has been increasing over time, and there has been a notable increase in chlamydia cases since 2021.



Helpful documents and further reading

- Victorian women's health atlas: <https://victorianwomenshealthatlas.net.au>
- Victoria, local public health areas and local government areas surveillance summary report <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/local-government-areas-surveillance-report>

Active living

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Level of physical activity	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin.

In 2023:

36% of surveyed Merri-bek adults did at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. This is similar to the Victorian average (35%). (VPHS)

34% of surveyed Merri-bek adults spend more than 8 hours sedentary on an average weekday. This is within error margins when compared to the Victorian average (28%). (VPHS)

Injury / falls

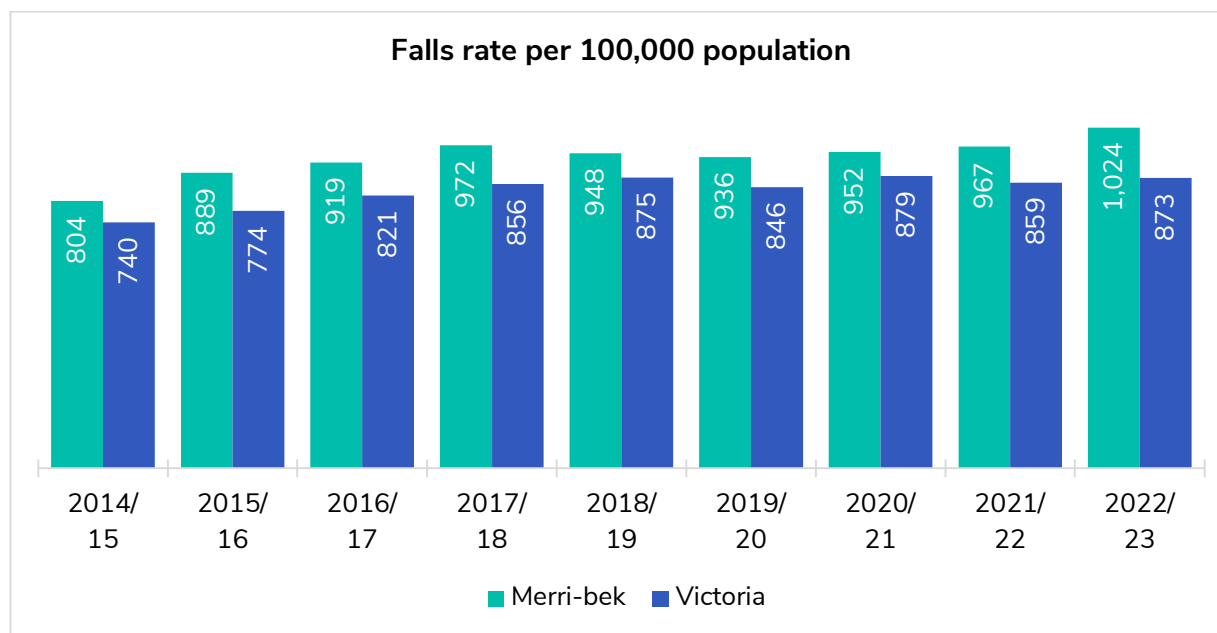
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Falls hospitalisation rate	Injury Atlas	2022/23	Rate per 100,000 population

In 2022/23:

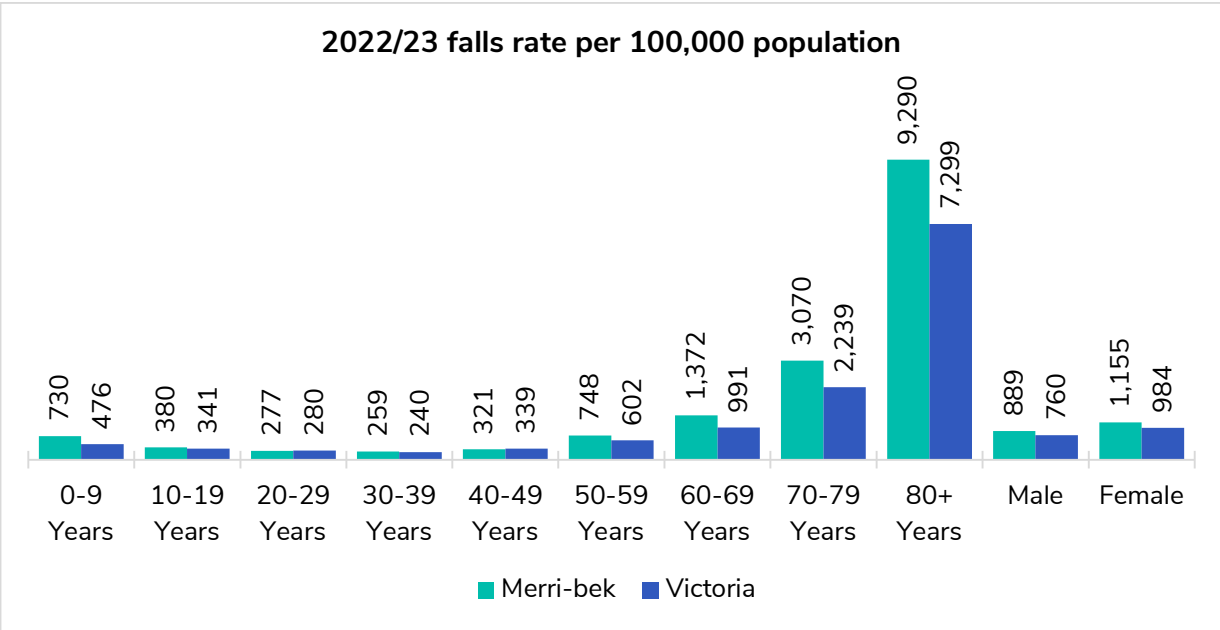
1,024 per 100,000 Merri-bek residents were hospitalised for a fall. This is higher than the average rate for Victoria (873). (Injury atlas)

The most common injury types amongst Merri-bek residents who had experienced falls in 2022/23 were:


- Fractures – 56%
- Open wounds – 12%
- Superficial injury – 7%



The rate of falls increases significantly with age is higher amongst females.



Priority groups



The rate of falls is higher amongst females. (Injury Atlas 2022/23)

Helpful documents and further reading

- National Injury Prevention Strategy 2020-2030
- Victorian Injury Prevention Program
- <https://vicinjuryatlas.org.au/falls/>

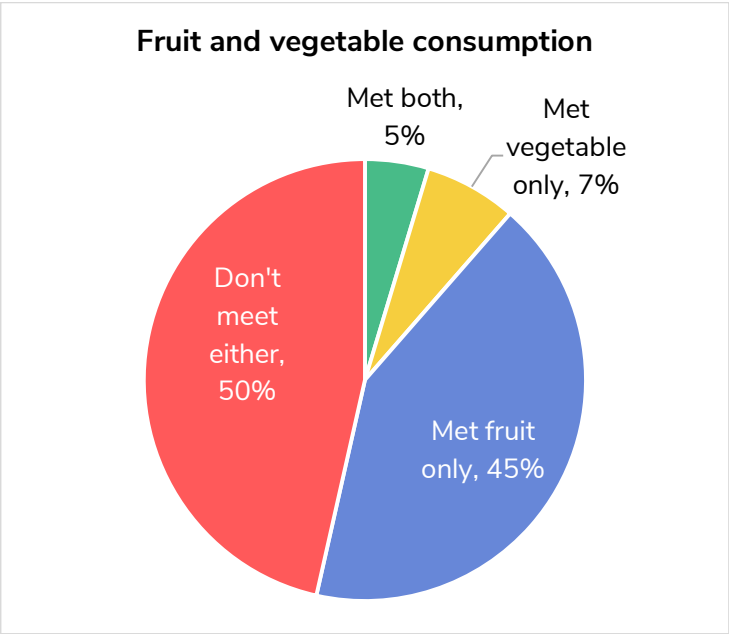
Healthy eating & food insecurity

Fruit and vegetables

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Fruit and vegetable compliance	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin. 2023 data will be available in 2025.

In 2017:

50% of Merri-bek adults did not meet neither fruit nor vegetable consumption guidelines. This is in line with the North division (52%) and Victorian averages (52%). (VPHS)



Fast food and sugar sweetened drinks

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Consume sugar-sweetened drinks	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin. Comparable 2023 data will be available in 2025.

In 2017:

9.4% of Merri-bek adults indicated that they drink sugar-sweetened drinks daily. This was in line with the North division (9.5%) and Victorian average (10%). (VPHS)

In 2023:

29% of Merri-bek adults indicated that they drink sugar-sweetened more than once a week. This was within error margins when compared to the Victorian average (34%). (VPHS)

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Average distance to closest fast food outlet	AUO	2021	

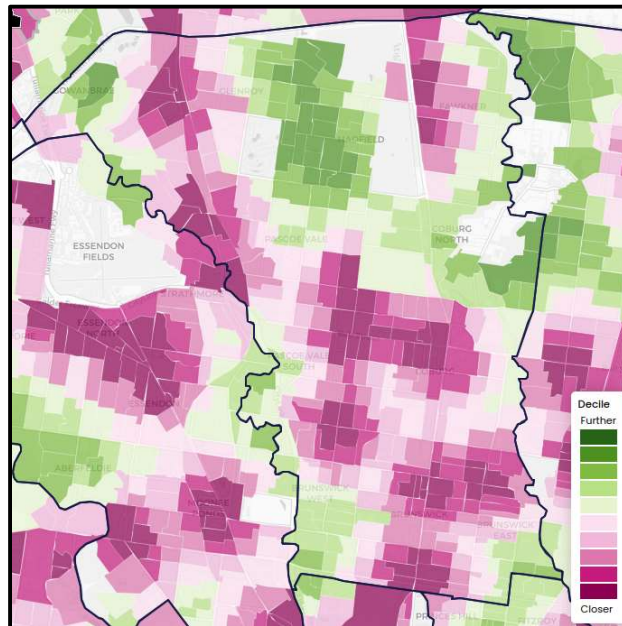
In 2021:

1.2km average distance to a fast food outlet. (AUO)

There are clear pockets of close proximity to fast food outlets, specifically in Brunswick, Coburg and Oak Park.

Average km to closest fast food outlet

Suburb	2021
Brunswick	745
Brunswick East	1,178
Brunswick West	1,296
Coburg	890
Coburg North	1,948
Fawkner	1,142
Glenroy	1,352
Gowanbrae	1,870
Hadfield	2,278
Oak Park	922
Pascoe Vale	1,237
Pascoe Vale South	1,099
Merri-bek	745



Access to fresh food

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Percentage of dwellings within 1km of a supermarket	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

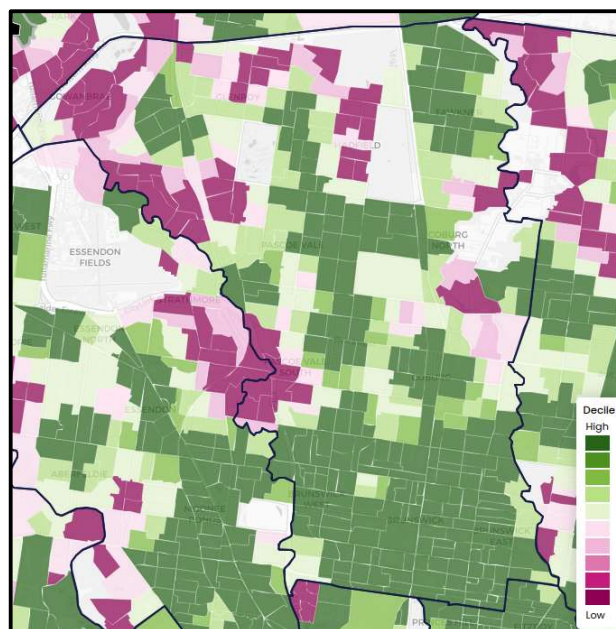
In 2021:

74% of Merri-bek households were within 1km of a supermarket, compared to 72% in 2018. (AUO)

When compared to 2018, Coburg North has experienced a notable increase in residents being close to a supermarket, whilst Gowanbrae and Oak Park continue to be food deserts.

% within 1km of a supermarket

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	99%	99%
Brunswick East	95%	99%
Brunswick West	95%	94%
Coburg	73%	78%
Coburg North	65%	81%
Fawkner	83%	82%
Glenroy	51%	49%
Gowanbrae	2%	0%
Hadfield	49%	46%
Oak Park	3%	2%
Pascoe Vale	83%	84%
Pascoe Vale South	46%	49%
Merri-bek	72%	74%



Food insecurity

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Ran out of money to buy food	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample $\pm 5\%$ error margin.

In 2023:

7%

of Merri-bek adults surveyed said they had ran out of money to buy food in the 12 months prior to interview. This is within error margins when compared to Merri-bek in 2020 (5.2%) and the Victorian average in 2023 (8%). (VPHS)

Priority groups



Sustainable food systems assist in mitigating emissions and provisions the consumption of fresh food. Ensuring food availability and access has co-benefits for population and environmental health such as reduced waste and landfill and correct nutrition to support a healthy life (Department of Health & Human Services 2019)

Helpful documents and further reading

- Australian dietary guidelines - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/the-australian-dietary-guidelines>
- Australian Physical Activity Guidelines (Department of Health)
- Victorian Population Health Survey - <https://vhiss.reporting.dhhs.vic.gov.au/>
- VicHealth Indicators Survey - <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/vichealth-indicators-survey>
- Foodbank National Food Security Strategy

Alcohol and drug use

Alcohol use

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Average distance to closest off-license alcohol outlet	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

543m average distance to an off-license alcohol outlet. (AUO)

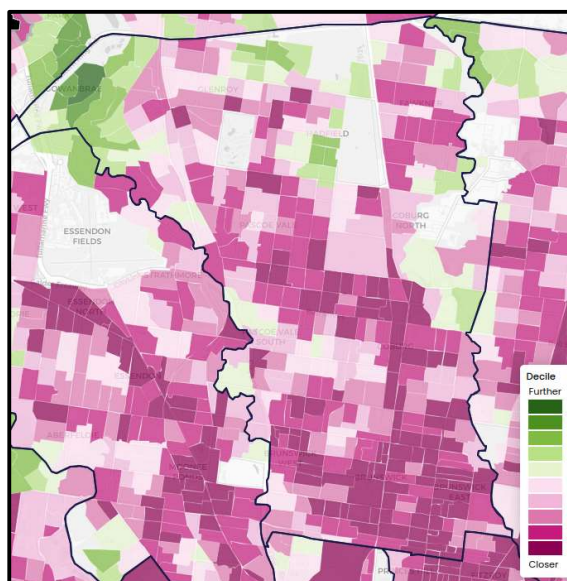
Southern areas of Merri-bek show greater access to alcohol outlets than those in the North.

Furthermore, from 2018 to 2021 there was an increase in the number of on-license outlets within 800m in many of these areas.

Number of on-license within 800m

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	9	12
Brunswick East	7	9
Brunswick West	2	3
Coburg	2	3
Coburg North	1	1
Fawkner	1	1
Glenroy	1	1
Gowanbrae	0	0
Hadfield	1	1
Oak Park	1	1
Pascoe Vale	2	2
Pascoe Vale South	1	2
Merri-bek	3	4

Average distance to off-license alcohol outlet



Drug use

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Hospital admissions for illicit drug use and pharmaceutical drug use	AODstats	2021	Rate per 100,000 population

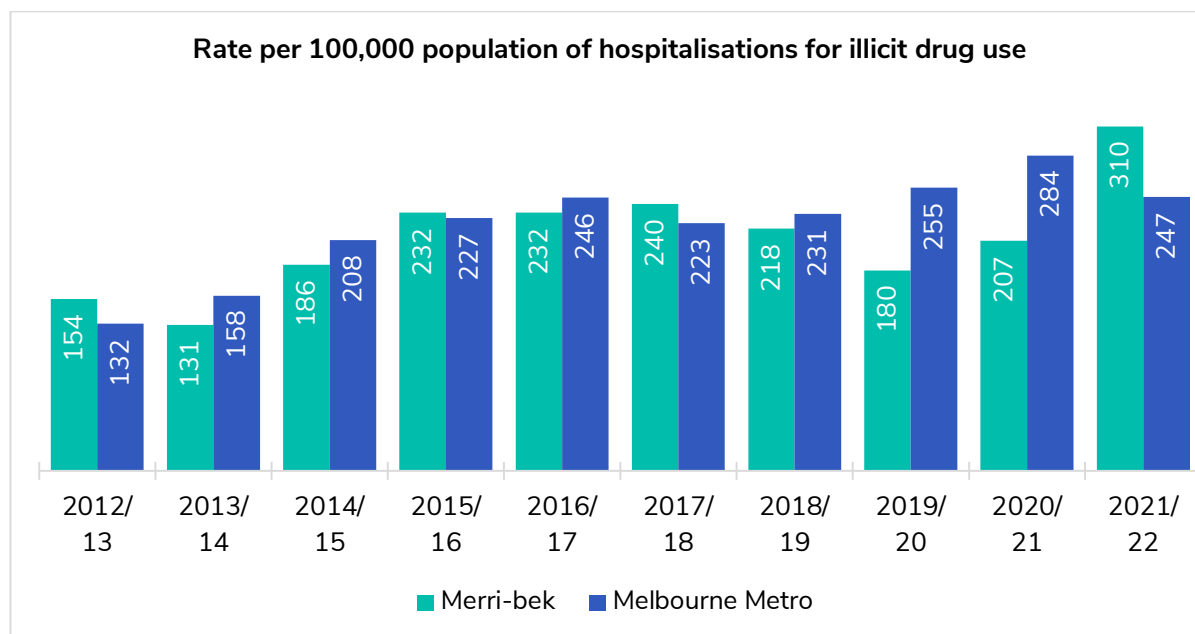
In 2022:

310 per 100,000 residents in Merri-bek were hospitalised for illicit drug use. (AODstats)

362 per 100,000 **male** residents in Merri-bek were hospitalised for illicit drug use, compared to 259 females. (AODstats)

328 per 100,000 **female** residents in Merri-bek were hospitalised for pharmaceutical drug use, compared to 274 males. (AODstats)

The rate of hospital admissions for illicit drug use in Merri-bek increased in 2021/22. This takes it to a rate higher than the Melbourne Metropolitan average, and is the opposite of the Melbourne trend.



Priority groups



The rate of hospitalisation for pharmaceutical drug use is higher amongst females (328 per 100,000 population) than males (274). (AODstats)

Helpful documents and further reading

- AODstats - <https://aodstats.org.au/>
- Severe Substance Dependence Treatment Act (Victoria)

Smoking & vaping

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Smoke or vape	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin. Updated in 2023 to include vaping.

In 2023:

23% of Merri-bek adults surveyed indicated that they are a current smoker, including vaping. This is within the error margin when compared to the Victorian average (19%), although is notably higher than that recorded in 2020 (15%). (VPHS)

10% of Merri-bek adults surveyed indicated that they smoke cigarettes daily. This is in line with the Victorian average (10%) and within error margins when compared to Merri-bek in 2020 (9%) and 2017 (13%). (VPHS)

Mental health / wellbeing

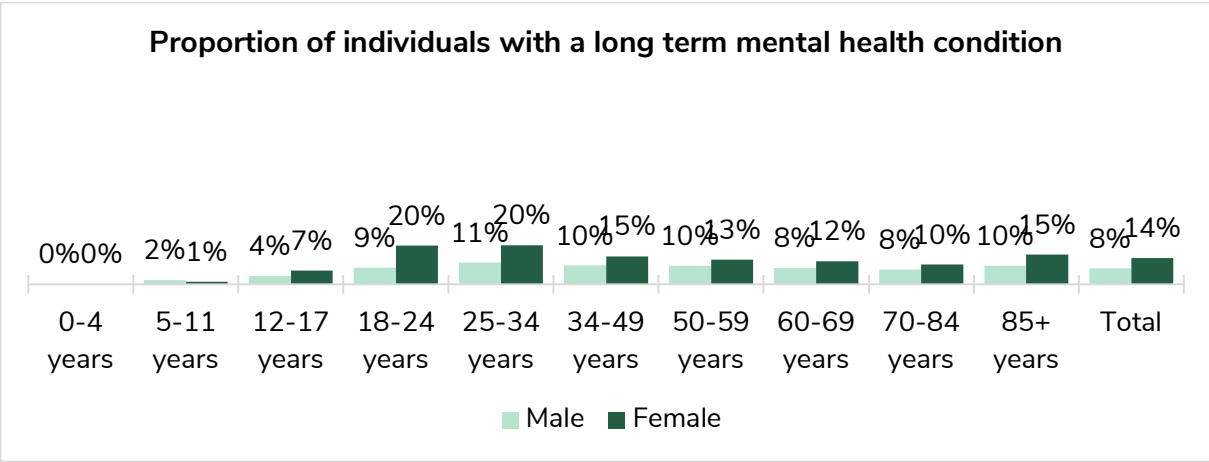
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Long term health condition	Census	2021	New question in 2021

In 2021:

11% of Merri-bek population had a **long-term mental health condition diagnosed by a medical professional**. This is higher than the Victorian average (9%). (2021 Census)

The incidence of Merri-bek residents having a long term mental health condition is higher amongst females, particularly those aged 18-34.

Mental health conditions were the most common reported long-term health condition for young people aged 15-24 years.



Priority groups



The rate of specifying a long term health condition is higher amongst females (14%) than males (8%) (2021 Census).

Higher heat days can lead to increased rates of stress, anxiety and harmful behaviours, including more incidents of domestic violence.

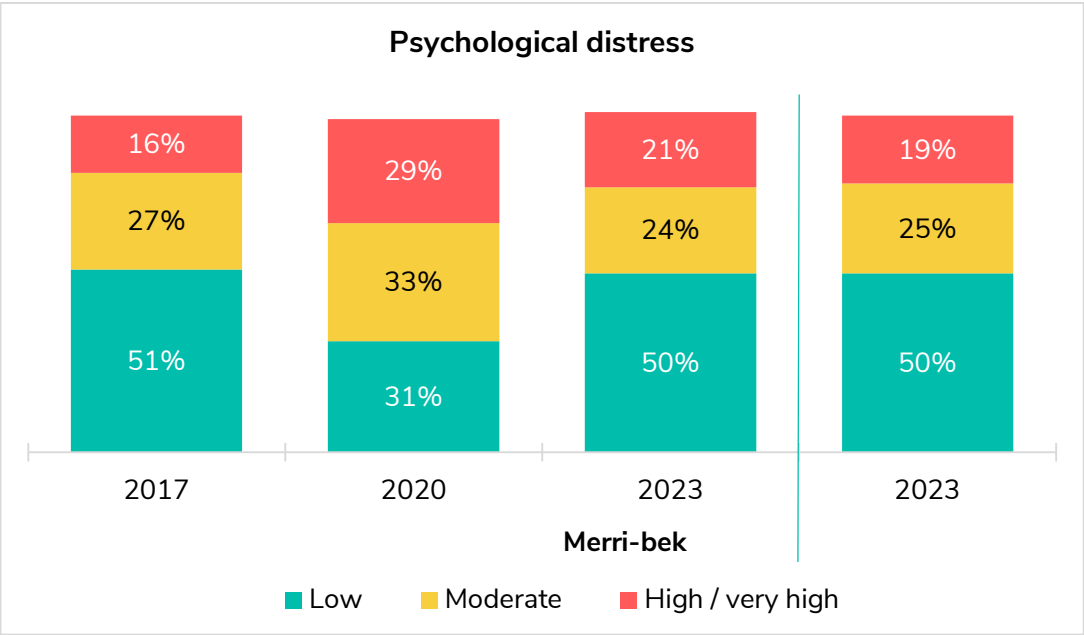
Psychological distress

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Psychological distress	VPHS	2023	n=400 sample ±5% error margin. Calculated using Kessler 10 questions

In 2023:

21% of Merri-bek adults surveyed were classified as having high or very high levels of psychological distress. This is in line with the Victorian average (19%), and lower than that recorded for Merri-bek in 2020 (29%). (VPHS)

28% of Merri-bek adults surveyed said they had sought help for a mental health problem in the 12 months prior to interview. This is significantly higher than the Victorian average for 2023 (20%) and shows an increase when compared to 2017 (21%). (VPHS)



Priority groups



Females more often indicated that they had sought help for a mental health issue (23%, compared to 19% males – 2017 VPHS data, 2023 data not yet available by gender).

Helpful documents and further reading

- Wellbeing in Victoria: A Strategy to Promote Good Mental Health 2024–2034 (Wellbeing Strategy)
- National Mental Health Strategy (Federal)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention strategy (Federal)
- Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (2017-2022) (Federal)
- Victoria’s 10-Year Mental Health Plan
- Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System (2019)



Moving and living safely

Being able to move around the area safely is a key aspect of liveability. Providing safe facilities for use of public and active transport can lead to improved health outcomes through increased exercise, as well as a decrease in air pollution from car travel. Furthermore, providing safe methods of travel will reduce traffic accidents that can cause injury.

In Merri-bek:

- The southern suburbs have good access to public **transport**, however there are pockets with limited access, specifically in the North West.
- Likewise, **walkability** in the southern suburbs of Merri-bek is very good, yet the North East has pockets of low walkability. Gowanbrae is a particular area of concern, with a negative walkability score.
- Method of **travel to work via active or public transport** decreased during COVID, due to people switching to working from home, and anecdotally, the fear of getting sick when in public. Future Census surveys will show if this change in behaviour has remained after COVID. Use of public or active transport to travel to work is more common in the southern suburbs.
- Merri-bek experiences a **higher than average rate of road accidents**, particularly amongst youth (15-24 year olds) and males. This is likely due to there being more **pedal cyclist accidents** than the metropolitan average. It will be particularly important to provide safe cycling options to reduce this figure.
- The **rate of crime** in Merri-bek is lower than the state average, although it has increased slightly in 2024, when compared to 2022 and 2023.
- The **rate of family violence incidents** in Merri-bek has recently fallen (938 per 100,000 population in 2024, down from 1,131 in 2023), and is much lower than the state average.

Transport

Active and public transport

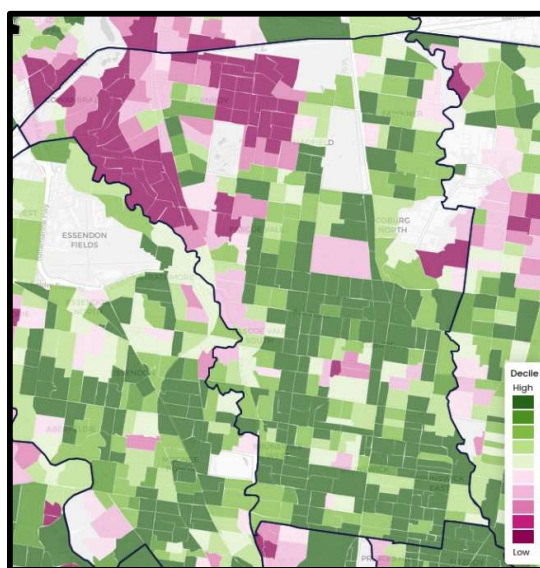
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Percentage of dwellings within 400m of public transport with a regular 30 minute weekday service.	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

73% of Merri-bek households were within 400m of public transport with a regular 30 minute weekday service. This is lower than that recorded in 2018 (83.9%). (AUO)

Access to public transport is fairly comprehensive in the southern areas of Merri-bek. However, there is a notable lack of public transport in the North West, particularly in Gowanbrae, Oak Park, and Hadfield.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	96%	92%
Brunswick East	98%	98%
Brunswick West	98%	97%
Coburg	86%	88%
Coburg North	90%	70%
Fawkner	88%	86%
Glenroy	66%	21%
Gowanbrae	25%	28%
Hadfield	73%	40%
Oak Park	70%	23%
Pascoe Vale	85%	71%
Pascoe Vale South	72%	78%
Merri-bek	84%	73%



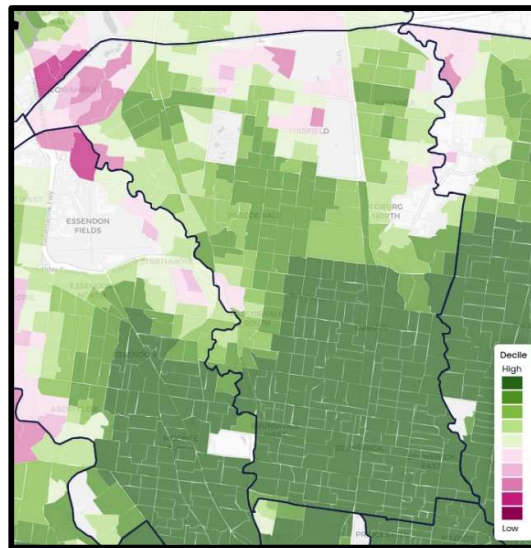
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Walkability index	AUO	2021	Takes into account something to walk to, a way to get there and dwelling density. Positive numbers are above average, whereas negative numbers are below average. Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

3.3 Walkability score was calculated for Merri-bek, representing a slight decrease when compared to 2018 (3.4). (AUO)

Walkability is reasonable in Brunswick and Brunswick East, yet poor in Gowanbrae.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	7.3	7.1
Brunswick East	7.6	7.6
Brunswick West	5	4.8
Coburg	4.4	4.8
Coburg North	1.6	1.4
Fawkner	0.9	0.7
Glenroy	0.4	0.2
Gowanbrae	-1.3	-1.3
Hadfield	0.4	0.3
Oak Park	0.4	0.3
Pascoe Vale	2.3	1.8
Pascoe Vale South	1.6	1.9
Merri-bek	3.4	3.3



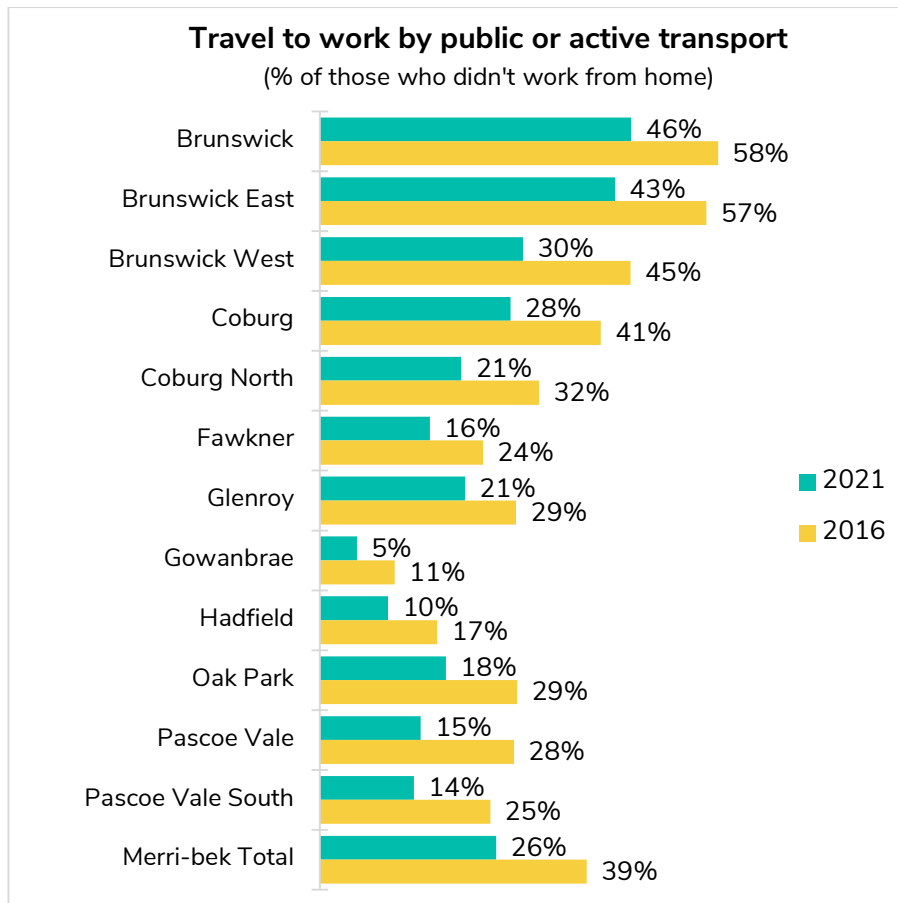
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Travel to work	Census	2021	Travel to work behaviours were significantly impacted by COVID work from home directives.

In 2021:

9% Of Merri-bek workers indicated that they travel to work via public transport. This is down significantly from the 2016 figure (26%) due to people working from home during COVID (48% working from home in 2021, compared to 12% in 2016). (2021 Census)

5% Of Merri-bek workers indicated that they travel to work via walking or riding. This is down from 8% in 2016, likely due to the reasons specified above. (2021 Census)

If calculating as a proportion of those who didn't work from home, 2021 still shows a decrease in use of public and active transport (likely due to fear of getting sick in public).



Helpful documents and further reading

- VicRoads crash statistics

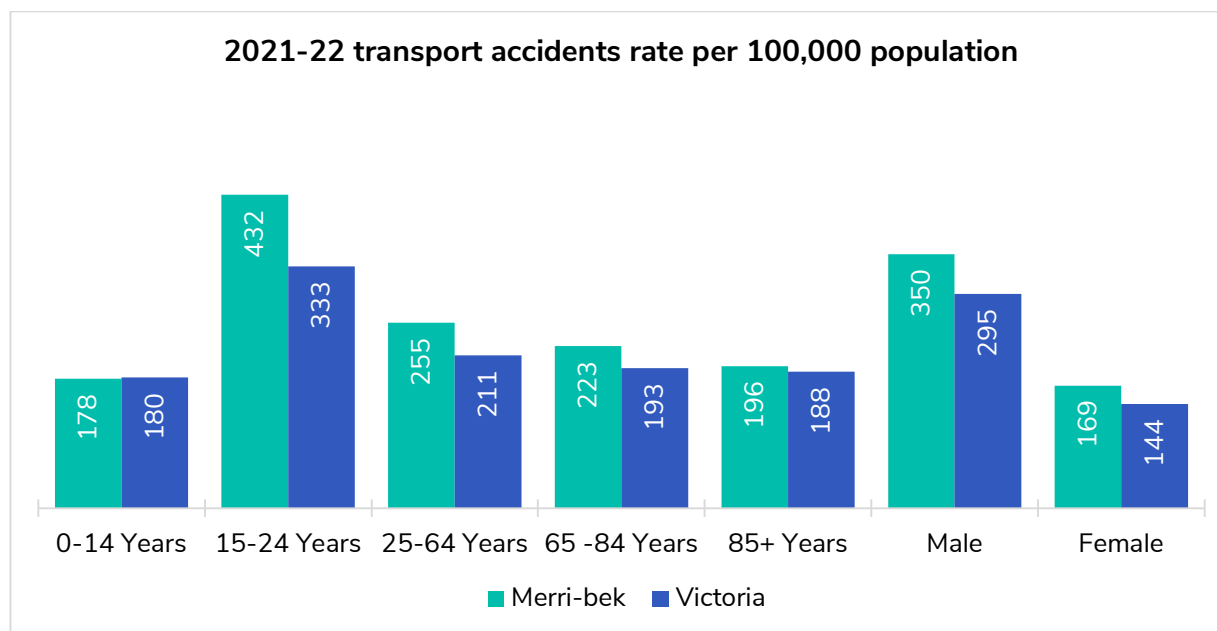
Transport accidents

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Transport injuries	Injury Atlas	2022	Rate per 100,000 population

In 2022:

240.9 per 100,000 Merri-bek residents were hospitalised for a transport injury. This is higher than the average rate for Victoria (204.8). (Injury atlas)

In Merri-bek the rate of transport accidents is much higher than the state average amongst 15-24 year olds.



The majority of transport accidents in Merri-Bek in 2021-22 were as follows, with higher than average accidents involving cyclists:

- Pedal cyclists (42%, compared to 29% average for Metropolitan Melbourne)
- Car occupant (27%, compared to 39% average for Metropolitan Melbourne)
- Motorcycle (17%, compared to 19% average for Metropolitan Melbourne)
- Pedestrian (10%, compared to 8% average for Metropolitan Melbourne)

Priority groups



Males more often experience transport accidents (350 per 100,000 population, compared to 169 per 100,000 population for females). (Injury atlas)



Encouraging people to switch to active transport is part of the suite of behaviour change strategies to reduce climate impact. Merri-bek experiences a notably higher rate of transport accidents with cyclists, and therefore this shift to more sustainable travel may be accompanied with an increase in injuries.

Safety

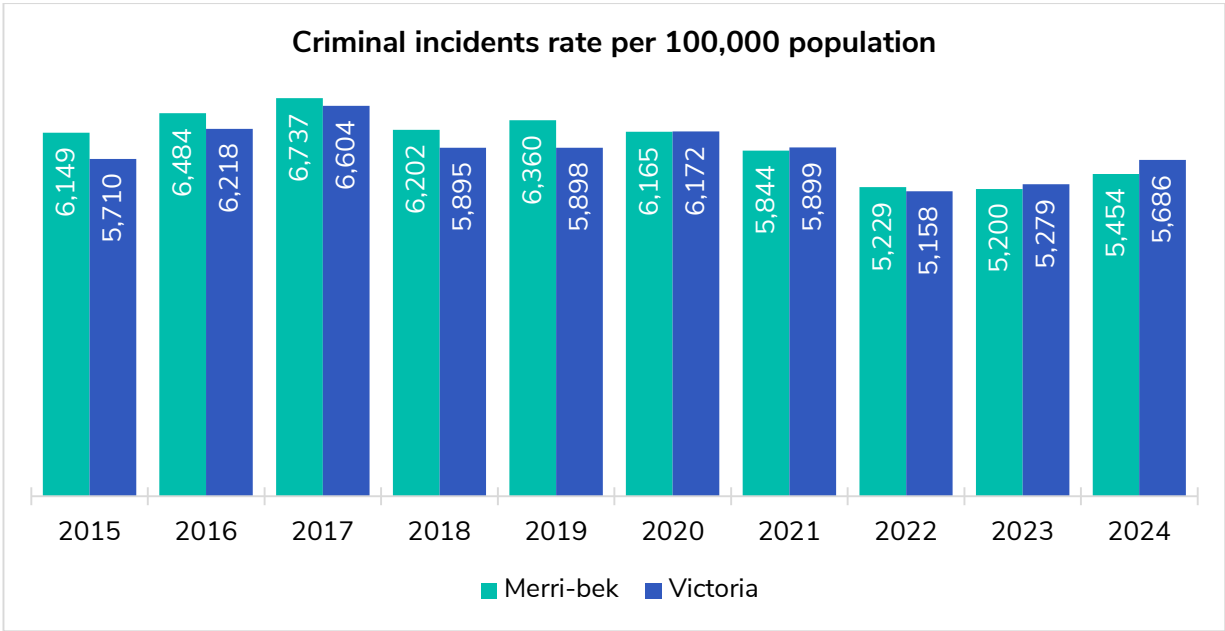
Crime rates

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Criminal incidents	Crime Statistics Victoria	2024	Rate per 100,000 population, year ending March.

In 2024:

5,454 Criminal incidents were recorded amongst Merri-bek residents per 100,000 population. This is slightly lower than the Victorian average. (Crimestats)

Prior to 2024 the rate of criminal incidents was declining, but has recently increased, in line with state-wide trends.



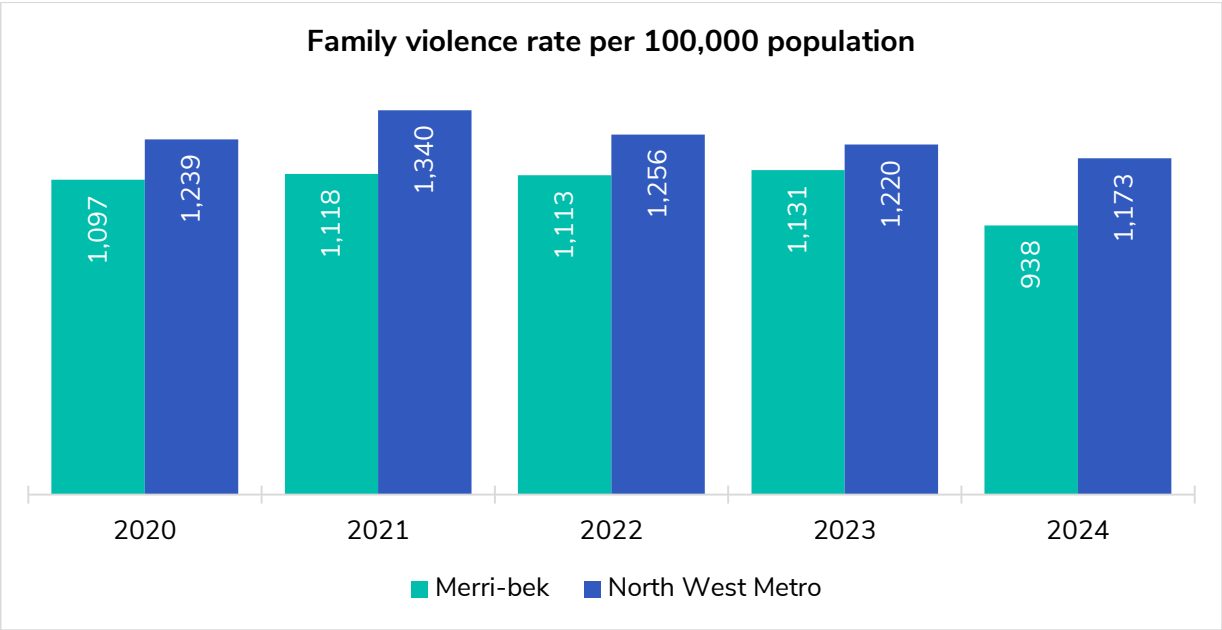
Family violence incidents

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Family violence incidents	Crime Statistics Victoria	2024	Rate per 100,000 population, year ending March.

In 2024:

938 Family violence incidents were recorded amongst Merri-bek residents per 100,000 population. This is lower than the North West Metro average. (Crimestats)

The 2024 rate is the lowest recorded in the last 5 years.



Priority groups



Females represent 75% of those effected by family violence in Merri-bek (crimestatistics).

Helpful documents and further reading

- <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au>
- Victorian Crime Prevention Strategy
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022
- Ending Family Violence – Victoria’s Plan for Change
- Free from Violence Victorian primary prevention strategy
- Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy



Spaces and places

Housing is considered to be a key need to help facilitate all other aspects of physical and mental health maintenance (Housing first approach). Therefore it is important to understand the housing stock available in Merri-bek, and how suitable it is for the population, so that people can continue to live in a location close to their social and service networks. Furthermore, having access to public amenities can both hinder (e.g. poker machines) and enhance (e.g. recreation and leisure facilities) liveability. The economic parameters of an area underpin this connection to place, specific to opportunities for working and shopping local to home.

In Merri-bek:

- There are pockets of more **households on a low income** in Fawkner and Hadfield.
- The proportion of households who are renting is on the rise, particularly in Oak Park and Glenroy. **Brunswick and Brunswick East** currently have high instances of renters.
- 13% of households are under mortgage or rental stress. The incidence of being under housing stress is more common amongst one parent and lone person households, and in Brunswick West.
- Only 2% of rentals in Merri-bek in March 2024 were affordable to those on a low income.
- Poker machine losses in Merri-bek has increased in the last couple of years, and is currently at **\$383 per adult population**.
- There is a good level of access to **community and sport infrastructure** through Brunswick and Coburg. However there are clear pockets of low levels of community and sport infrastructure access along the south west border of Merri-bek, and in the North West.
- The **unemployment rate** is higher in Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield. These suburbs also have a **lower SEIFA index** than other areas of Merri-bek.
- Merri-bek scores poorly with regards to people being able to **work local to where they live**.

Housing

Household type

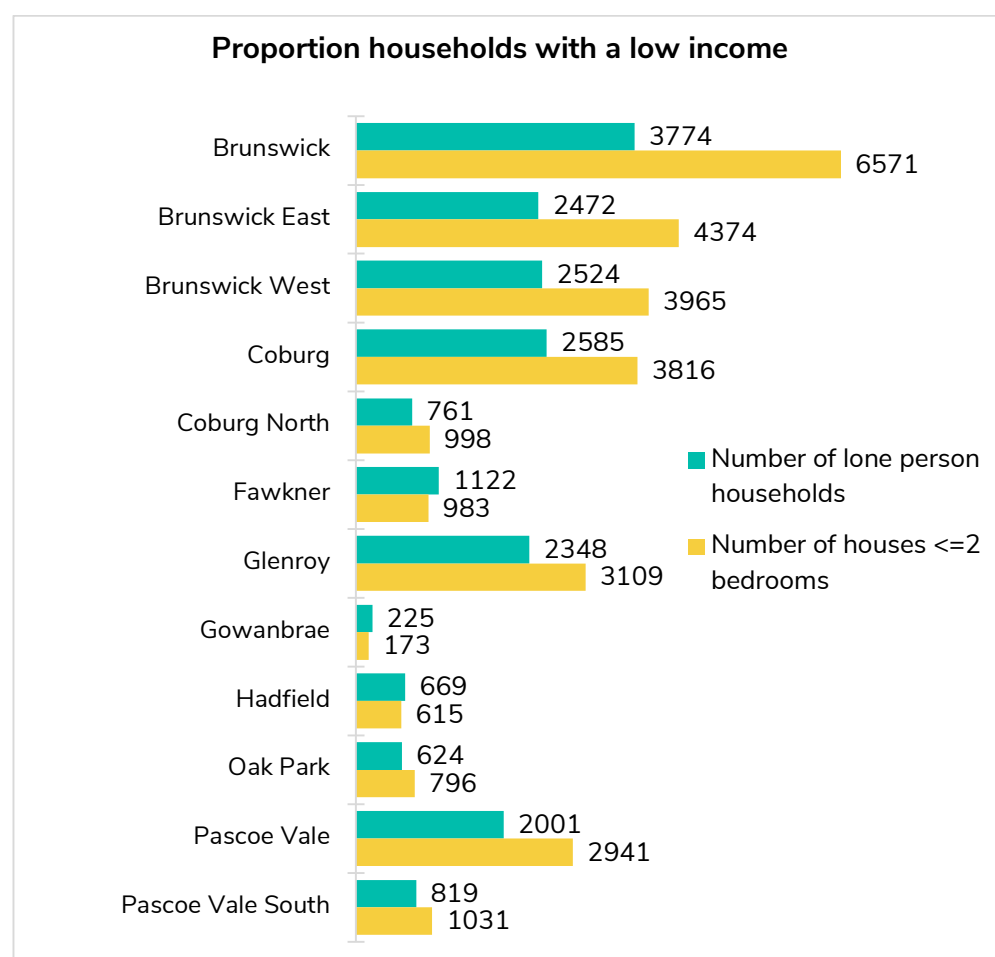
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Household size and type	Census	2021	

In 2021:

29,000 houses with 2 bedrooms or less were located across Merri-bek, which is enough supply to service the 19,935 lone person households. (2021 Census)

26% of households were couples with children, which is lower than the Melbourne metropolitan average (33%). (2021 Census)

All suburbs in Merri-bek except Fawkner, Glengowrie and Hadfield have enough small housing stock to provide for the number of lone person households.



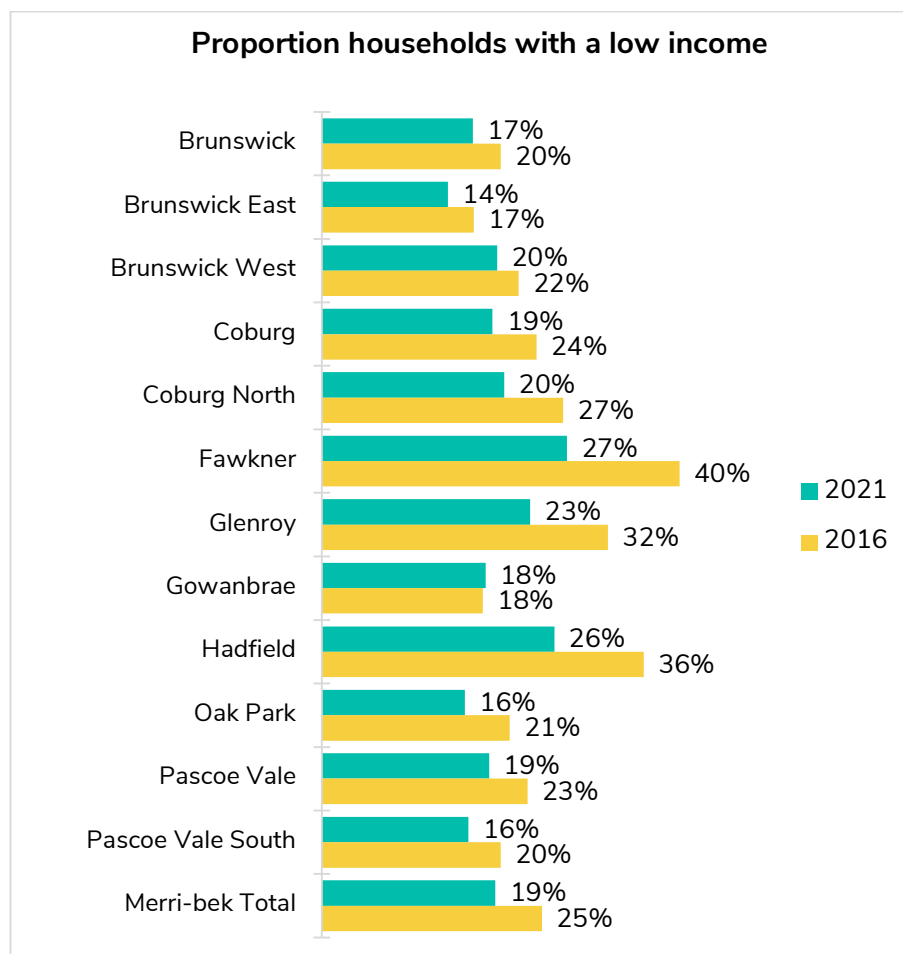
Household income

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Household Income	Census	2021	In 2016 low income was classified as <\$500 a week, then in 2021 it was classified as <\$800 a week.

In 2021:

19% of Merri-bek households had a household income of less than \$800 a week, down from 25% on an income of <\$500 a week in 2016. This is the same proportion as recorded for the Greater Melbourne area. (2021 Census)

Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield have shown a notable decrease in the proportion of households on a low income.



Despite a drop in the proportion of low income households, due to an overall population increase, the number of low income households has actually increased in some areas, notably Brunswick East (+158), Brunswick West (+103) and Brunswick (+93).

Housing tenure

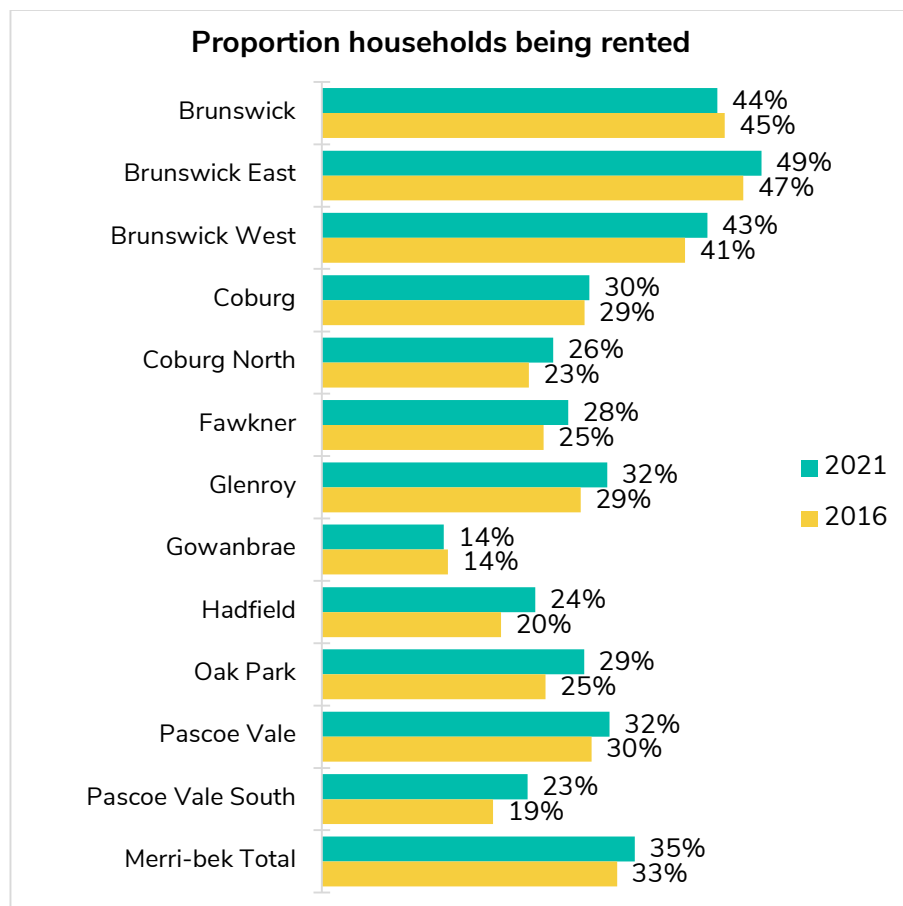
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Household Tenure	Census	2021	

In 2021:

35% of Merri-bek households were rentals, up from 33% in 2016. (2021 Census)

35% Increase in the number of lone person rental households (from 5,800 in 2016 to 7,800 in 2021). (2021 Census)

Most suburbs have experienced an increase in the proportion of rentals with the exception of Gowanbrae.



Affordable housing & homelessness

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Households under mortgage stress	Census	2021	Generated by ABS – RAID and MAID variables in tablebuilder
% of households in the bottom 40% spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs.	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.
Homeless estimates	ABS	2021	Based on variables in the Census
Rental report – Quarterly affordable rentals by LGA	Homes Victoria	2024	
Specialist homelessness services	AIHW	2022-23	Government funded homelessness services counts

In 2021:

13% of Merri-bek households were spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs (rent or mortgage). (2021 Census)

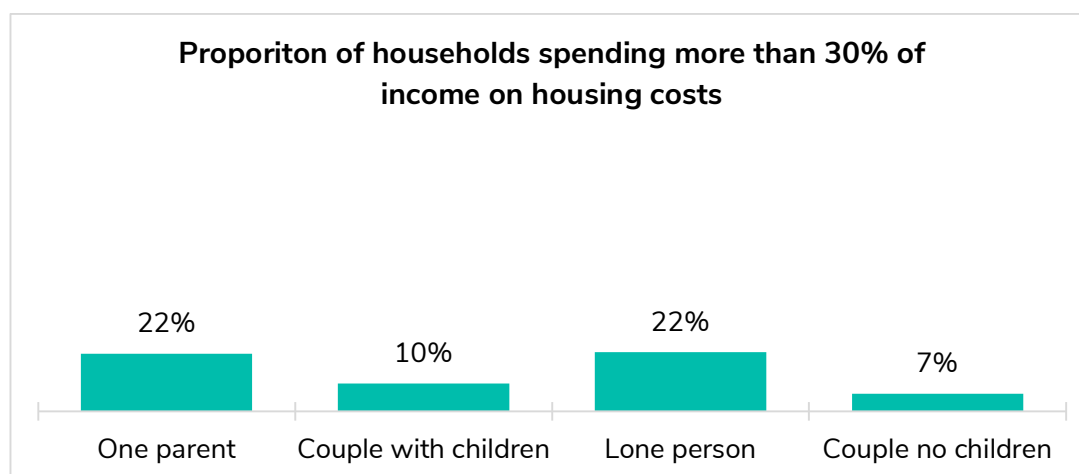
916 Merri-bek residents were living in crowded dwellings, down from 1,094 in 2016. 63% of these were aged 18-34 in 2021. (2021 Census)

42 per 10,000 Merri-bek residents were classified as homeless, up from 48 per 10,000 in 2016. Most commonly these people are living in boarding houses (26%), severely over-crowded dwellings (26%) or supported housing for the homeless (22%). (2021 Census)

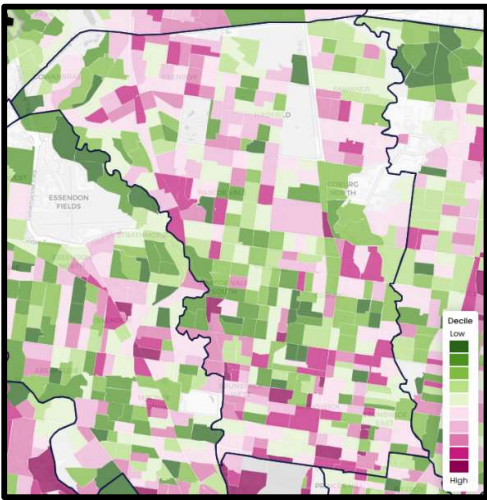
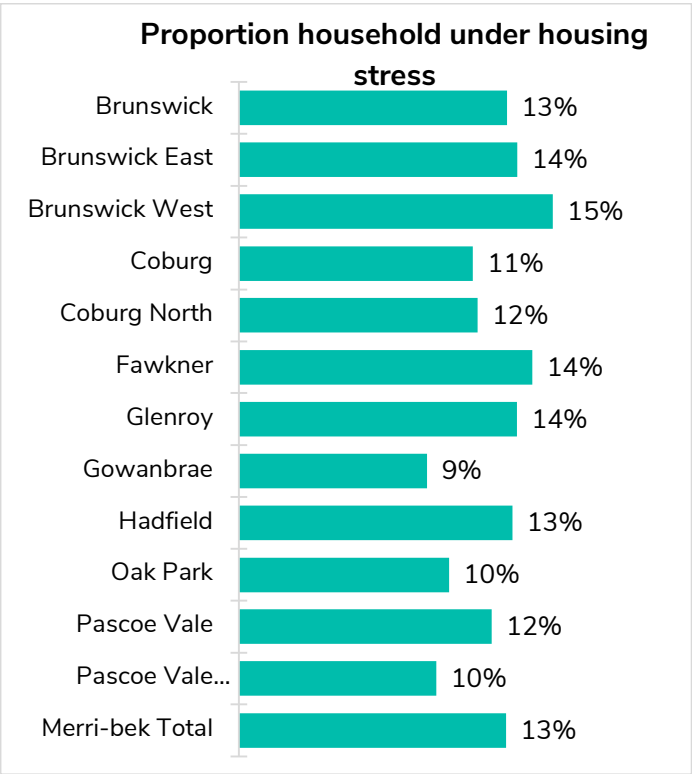
2% of rentals in Merri-bek in March 2024 were affordable to those on a low income. (Homes Victoria)

1,399 Residents of Merri-bek sought homelessness services through government funded agencies in 2022/23, down from 1,461 in 2021/22. In 2022/23 58% were aged 20-49 and 57% were female. (AIHW)

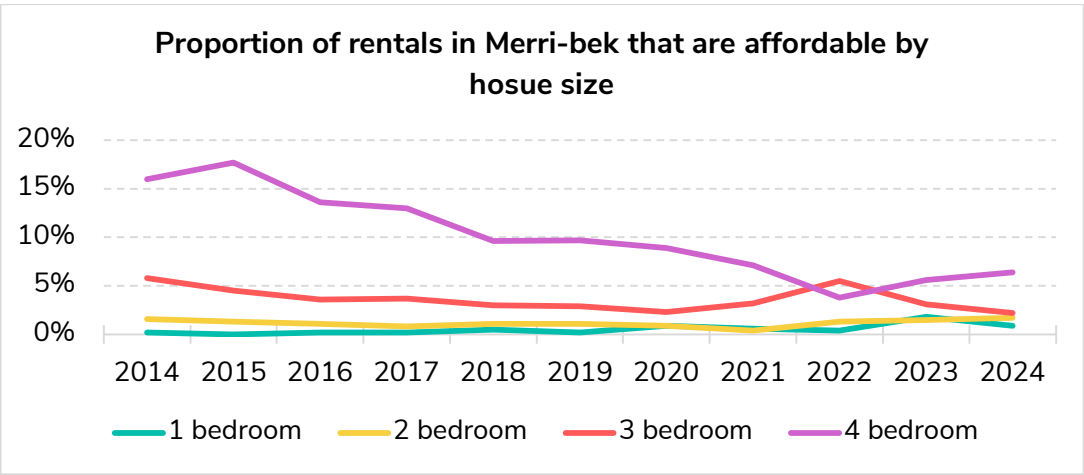
One parent and lone person households show higher rates of experiencing housing stress.



Higher rates of housing stress are experienced in Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Fawkner and Glenroy.



The lack of smaller affordable rentals has been an issue in Merri-bek for at least a decade. In the last 3-4 years there has also been a significant decline in the number of affordable larger houses for rent.



Helpful documents and further reading

- Victoria’s housing statement
- Victoria’s homelessness and rough sleeping action plan
- Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter

Public amenities

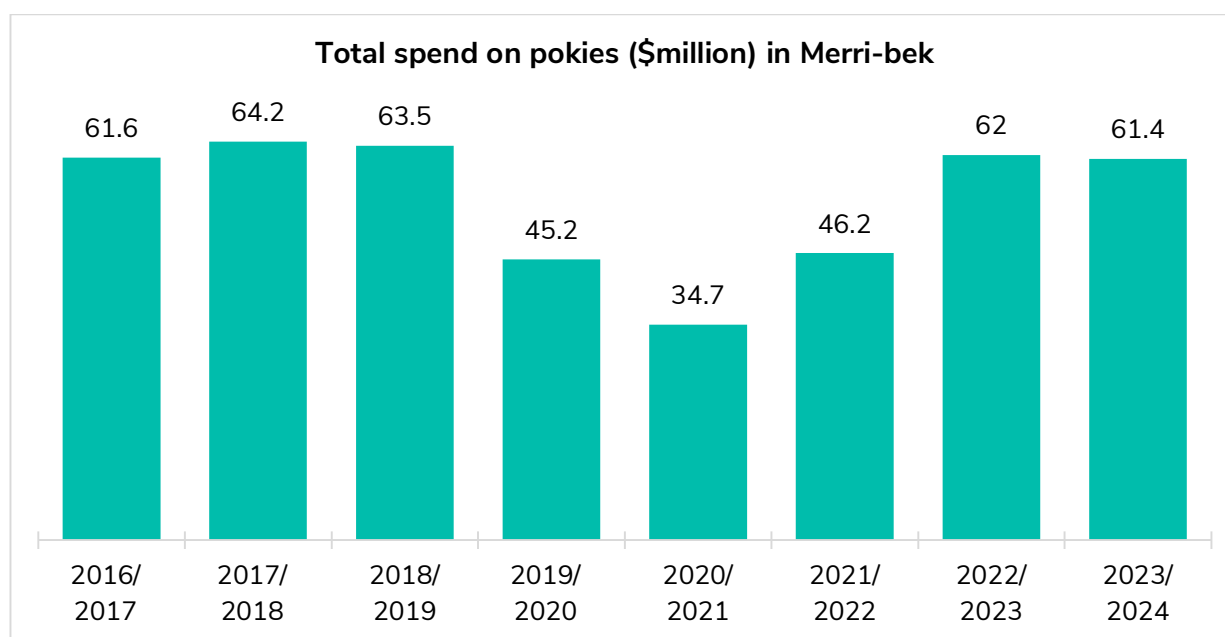
Gambling

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
EGM and gambling figures	VGCCC	2023	Released annually

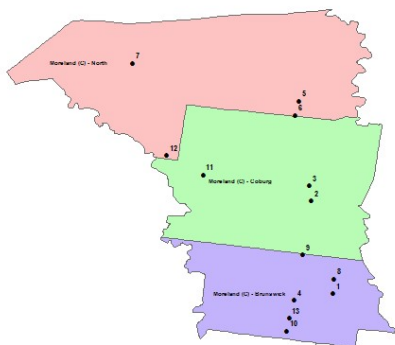
In 2023:

\$383 Was lost per adult in the population of Merri-bek. This is an increase from \$289 per adult recorded in 2021/22 and \$221 per adult in 2020/21. However, this was lower than the losses across metropolitan Melbourne, which averaged \$548 per adult population. (VGCCC)

There are 12 venues in Merri-bek that currently offer Poker machines, half of which are clubs and half are hotels. Total expenditure was higher in 2023 and 2024 than recorded in the three years previous.



The spend per machine is more than double in hotels (\$128,700) compared to clubs (\$50,500).



Helpful documents and further reading

- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

Recreation and leisure participation

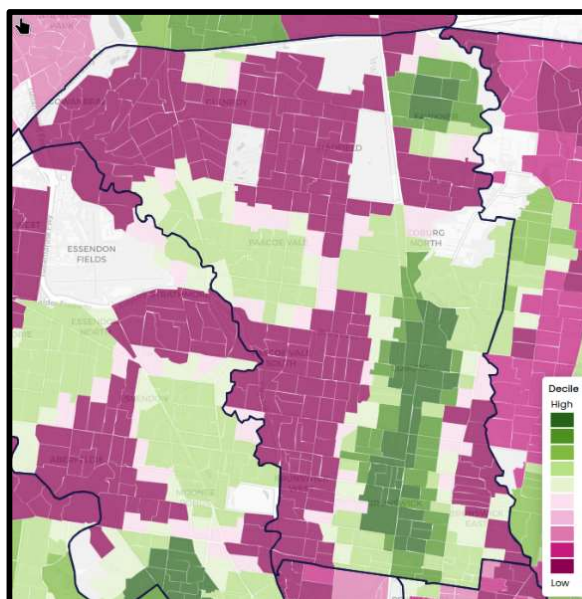
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Access to social infrastructure index – community and sport	AUO	2021	minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 3. Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

1.6 Average index score was achieved by Merri-bek for community and sport infrastructure. This is similar to the score achieved in 2018 (1.6). (AUO)

There are clear pockets of Merri-bek with greater access to community and sport infrastructure, in particular Brunswick and Coburg. The suburbs falling behind are Gowanbrae, Glenroy, Hadfield and Brunswick West.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	2.1	2.4
Brunswick East	2.4	1.5
Brunswick West	1.6	1
Coburg	1.9	1.9
Coburg North	1	1.8
Fawkner	0.6	1.8
Glenroy	0.6	0.9
Gowanbrae	1	0.7
Hadfield	0.4	1
Oak Park	0.7	1.5
Pascoe Vale	1.5	1.5
Pascoe Vale South	2.2	1.1
Merri-bek	1.5	1.6



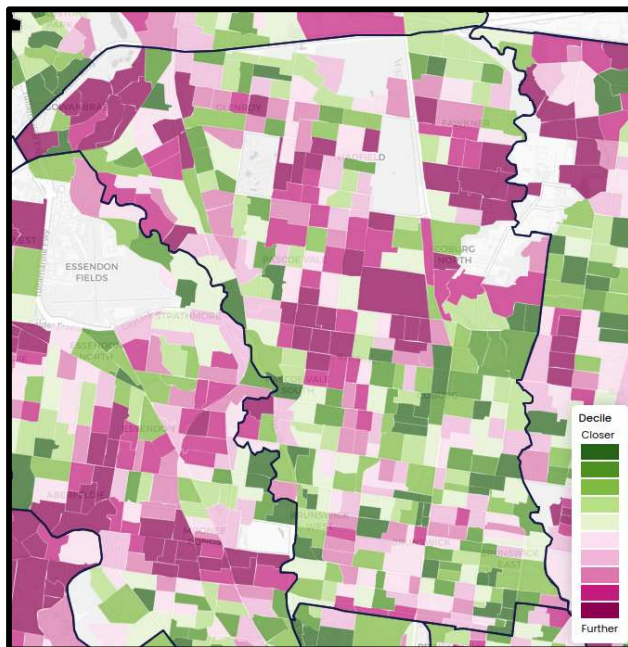
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Average distance to a playground	AUO	2021	Average presented in meters. Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

430 Average meters from households to a playground. This is an improvement on 464m average recorded in 2018. (AUO)

Convenient access to playgrounds is varied across Merri-Bek, with pockets of reduced access in Gowanbrae and Fawkner.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	442	383
Brunswick East	309	317
Brunswick West	405	376
Coburg	405	384
Coburg North	452	465
Fawkner	504	506
Glenroy	567	464
Gowanbrae	669	616
Hadfield	511	480
Oak Park	524	458
Pascoe Vale	485	481
Pascoe Vale South	507	480
Merri-bek	464	430



Public services

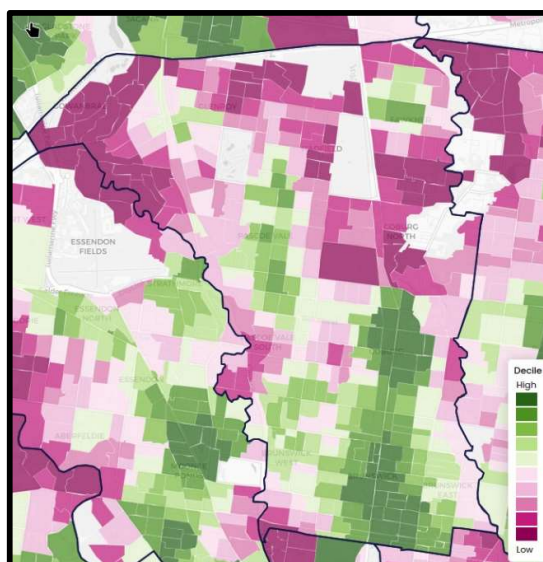
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Social infrastructure index	AUO	2021	Calculated based on access to health, education, community, sport, cultural, playground, and GP services. It is represented as a score out of 16, the higher the score the better. Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

9.4 Social infrastructure score was assigned to Merri-bek, up from 8.4 in 2018. (AUO)

Brunswick and Brunswick East score highest, whilst Gowanbrae received a very low score.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	11.2	12.3
Brunswick East	10	11.2
Brunswick West	9.9	9.9
Coburg	9.3	10.6
Coburg North	5.8	6.9
Fawkner	6.7	7.8
Glenroy	7.7	7.4
Gowanbrae	2.9	2.6
Hadfield	6	7.6
Oak Park	5.4	6.5
Pascoe Vale	7.7	9.8
Pascoe Vale South	6.7	9.1
Merri-bek	8.4	9.4



Economy

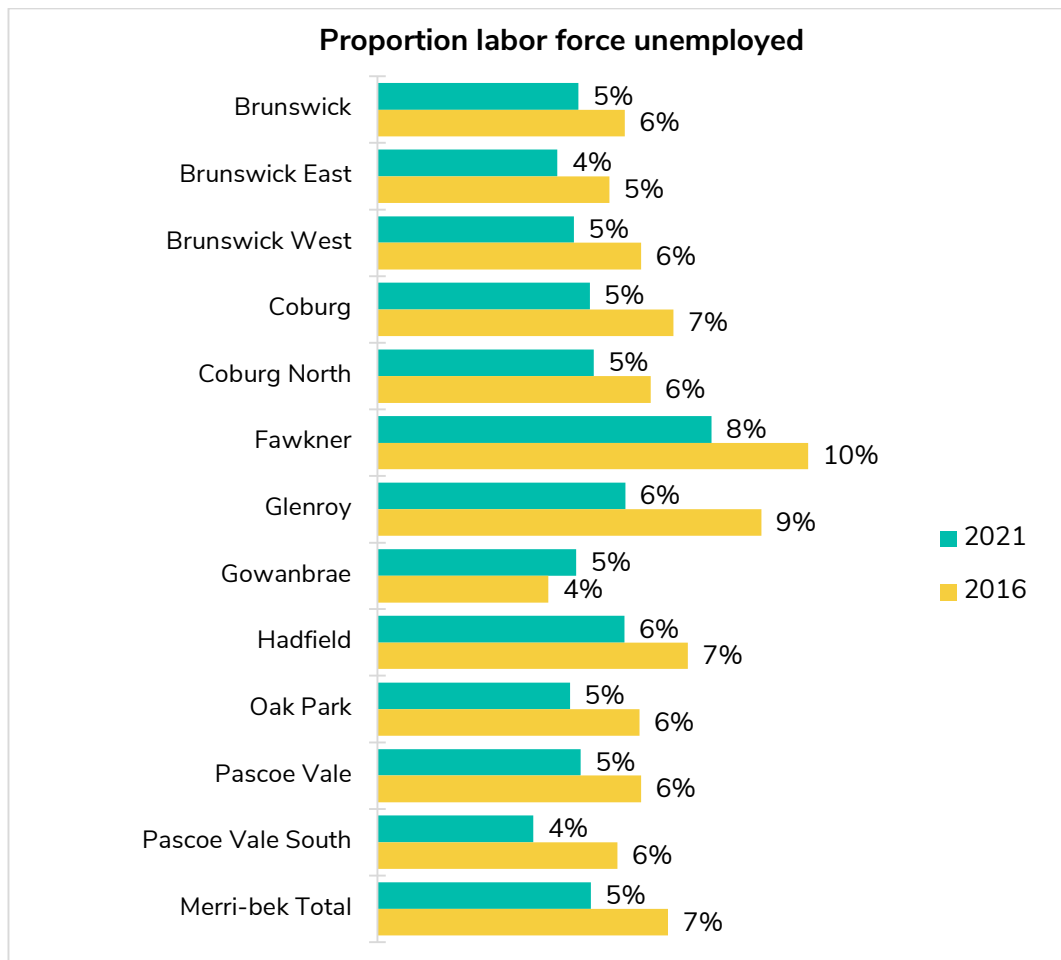
Employees

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Unemployed	Census	2021	Proportion of those in the labour force (15+ year olds not retired or in full time study).
Live and work in the same area	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

In 2021:

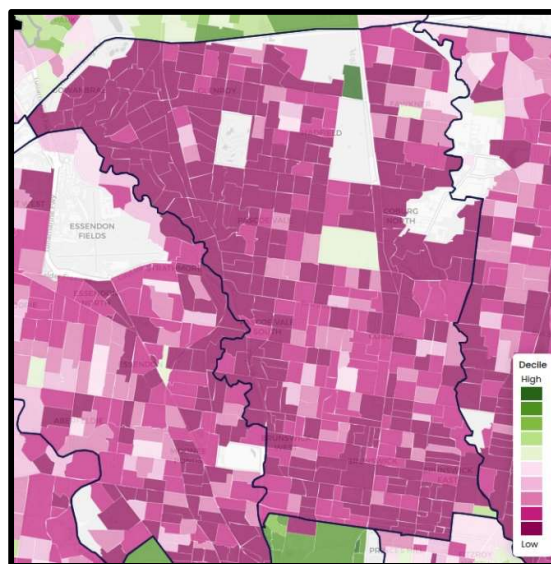
- 5%** of Merri-bek adults in the labour force were unemployed. This has increased since 2016 (64%) and is greater than the Greater Melbourne average (64%). This is lower than that recorded in 2016 (6.9%) and the 2021 rate for Greater Melbourne (5.3%). (2021 Census)
- 11%** of Merri-bek's labour force aged 15-24 years were unemployed. This is lower than the 2021 rate for Greater Melbourne (12.2%). Although unemployment was lower overall, it was higher in some areas, particularly Coburg North (14.2%) and Fawkner (13.6%). (2021 Census)
- 17%** of Merri-bek adults live and work in the same local area (up from 15% in 2018). (2021 Census)

The unemployment rate is higher in Fawkner, Glenroy and Hadfield.



The rate of working locally is relatively low across Merri-bek, although there are small pockets of more local workers in Coburg and Fawkner.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	14%	17%
Brunswick East	14%	15%
Brunswick West	15%	17%
Coburg	18%	20%
Coburg North	12%	14%
Fawkner	18%	19%
Glenroy	15%	16%
Gowanbrae	9%	11%
Hadfield	20%	18%
Oak Park	12%	13%
Pascoe Vale	13%	14%
Pascoe Vale South	15%	16%
Merri-bek	14%	17%



Businesses

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
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Average distance to an activity centre	AUO	2021	Presented in meters
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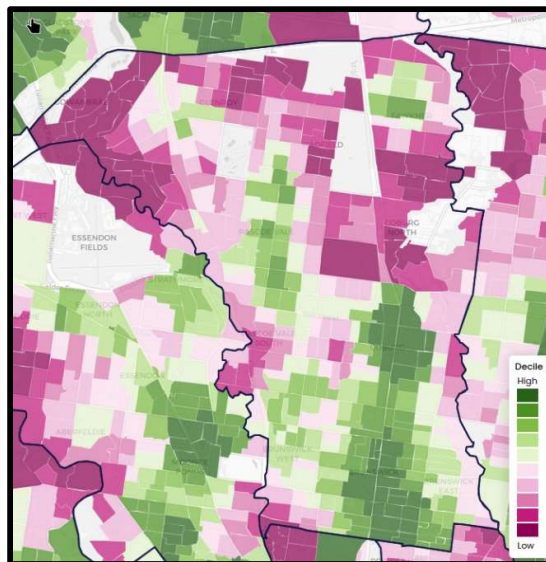
In 2021:

810m

Was the average distance from households to the closest activity centre, down from 812m in 2018. (AUO)

Brunswick and Brunswick East have the closest access, whereas Gowanbrae and Oak Park households have to travel over 1.5km to reach an activity centre.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	505	477
Brunswick East	530	458
Brunswick West	613	540
Coburg	880	757
Coburg North	869	721
Fawkner	677	691
Glenroy	991	1006
Gowanbrae	1867	1883
Hadfield	997	1005
Oak Park	1521	1511
Pascoe Vale	685	1090



Learning

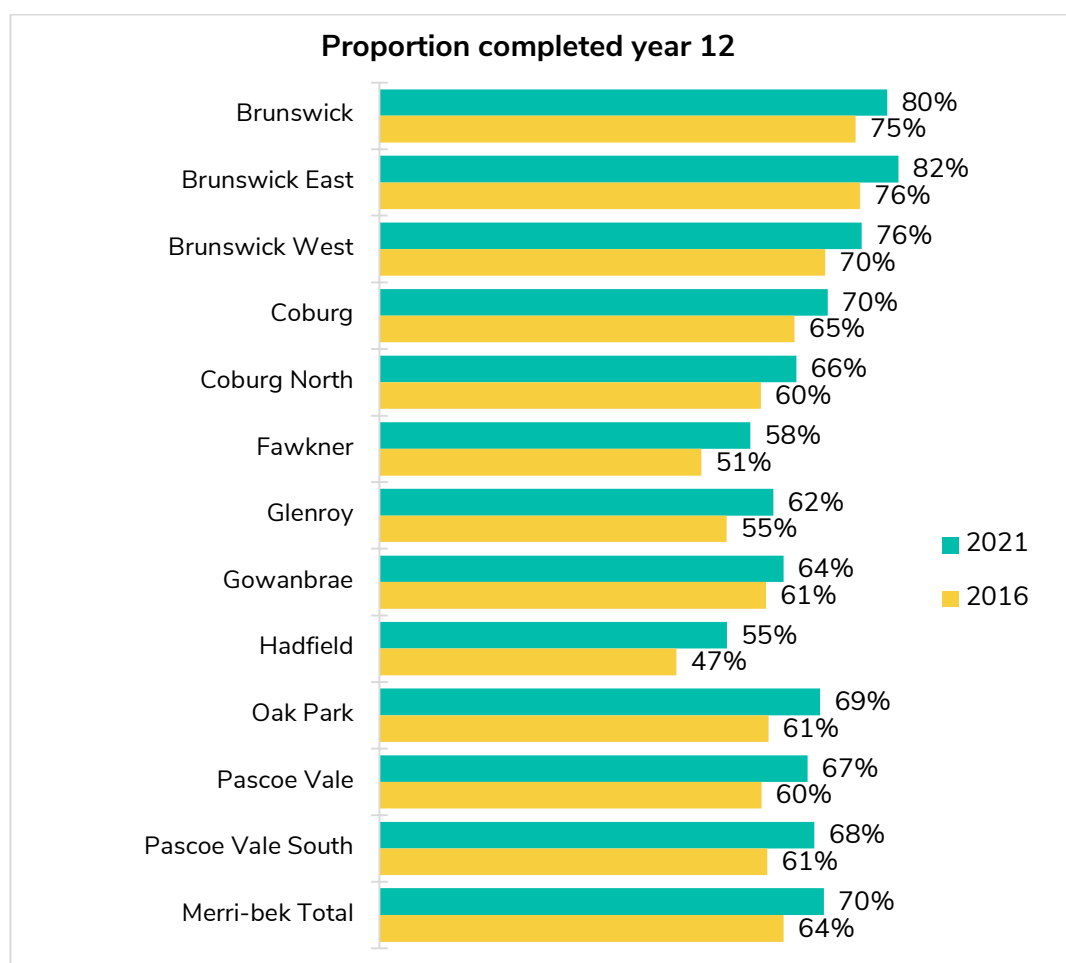
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Secondary school completion	Census	2021	
Highest qualification achieved	Census	2021	

In 2021:

69% of Merri-bek adults had completed year 12 or equivalent. This has increased since 2016 (64%) and is greater than the Greater Melbourne average (64%). (2021 Census)

41% of Merri-bek adults had completed a bachelor degree or higher. This has increased since 2016 (34%) and is greater than the Greater Melbourne average (33%). (2021 Census)

Year 12 completion varies across Merri-bek, with high instances of completion in Brunswick and Brunswick East, and low levels in Hadfield and Fawkner.



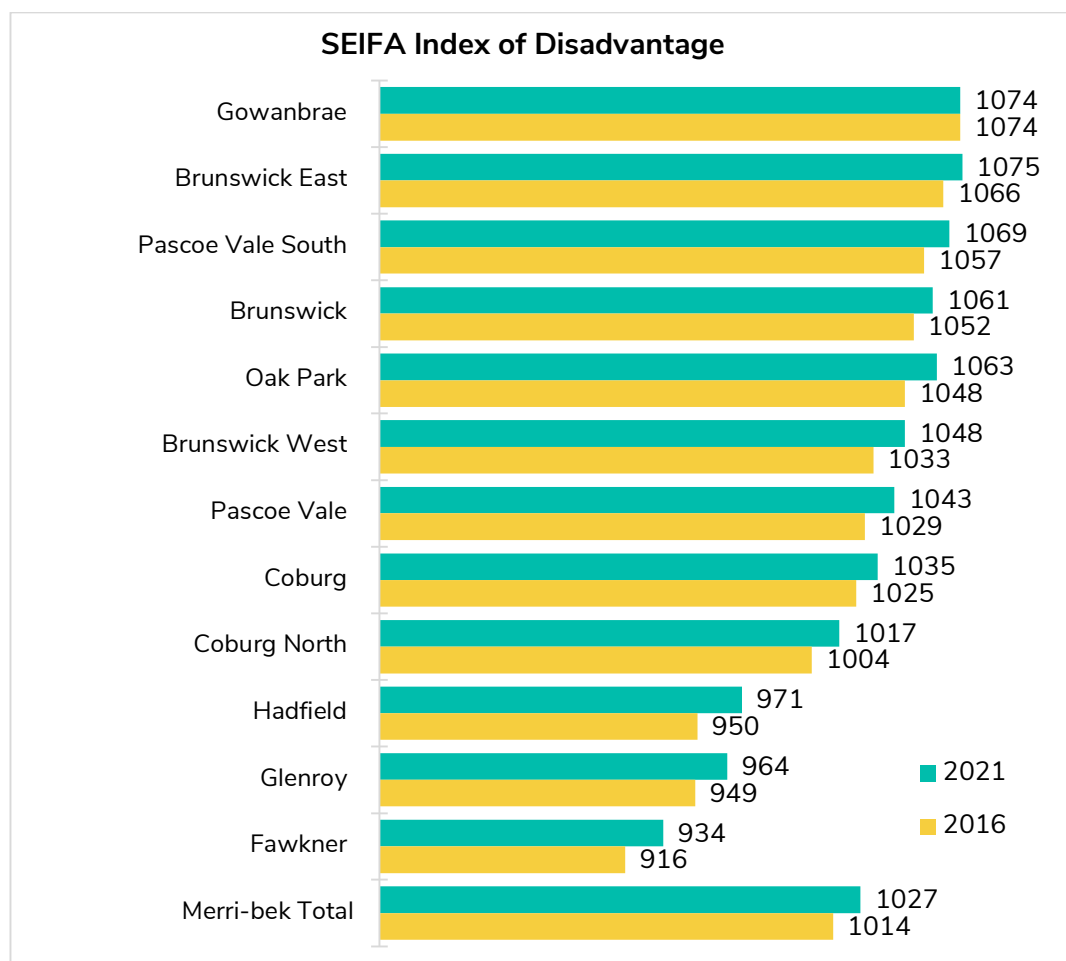
SEIFA

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
SEIFA index	Census	2021	Generated by ABS. Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage. 1,000 is average across the state. Anything higher than that is above average, whilst scores lower than 1,000 are below average.

In 2021:

1027 was Merri-bek's index of relative socio-economic disadvantage, up from 1,014 in 2016. (2021 Census)

SEIFA scores increased across all suburbs, except for Gowanbrae.



Environmental

Environmental aspects of an area can contribute to health and wellbeing through a reduction in pollution (climate change impact), and provision of trees and open space, which can filter the air, reduce the ambient temperature and provide residents with a place to exercise, recreate and socialise.

The key environmental findings for Merri-bek were:

- Whilst emissions from electricity are falling, **transport and gas emissions remain high**. Residential sources contribute 76% of Merri-bek's gas related Co2 emissions.
- The proportion of tree canopy cover in Merri-bek is quite low (5.8%) but increasing.
- Access to large public open spaces varies significantly across Merri-bek, with no clear pattern, aside from a notable lack of close proximity to large open space for those living in Pascoe Vale South and Hadfield.

Climate change

Emissions

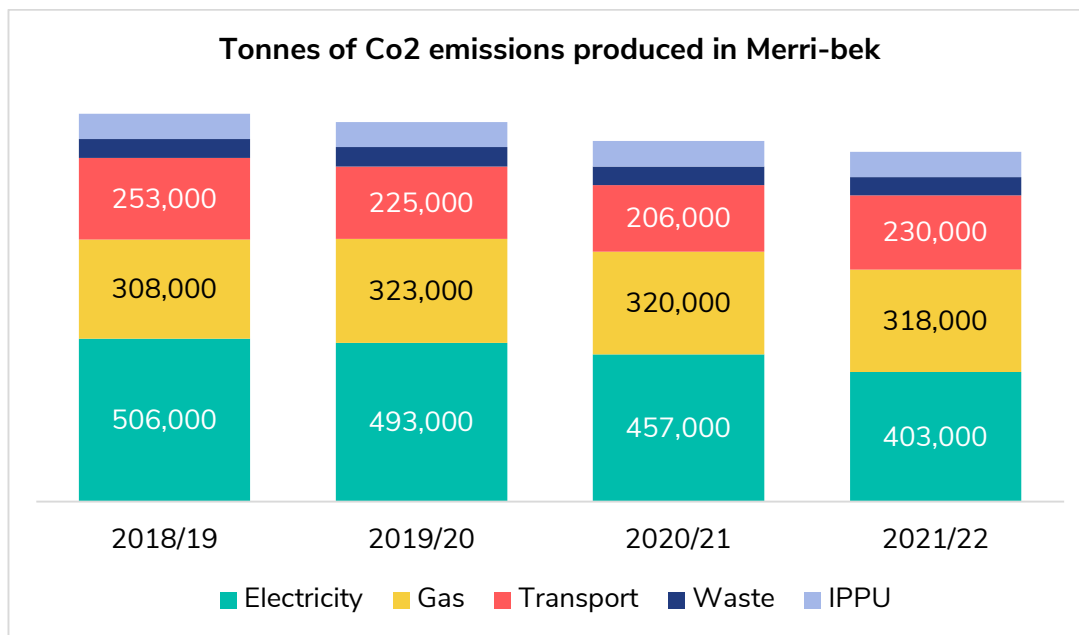
Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Municipal emissions	Snapshot Climate	2022	www.snapshotclimate.com.au

In 2021/22:

23% of electricity emissions in Merri-bek were residential. (Snapshot climate)

76% of gas emissions in Merri-bek were residential. (Snapshot climate)

Electricity emissions have been decreasing over time, however there has been limited progress in terms of gas emissions, transport or industrial processes.



Helpful documents and further reading

- National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy
- Victoria's Climate Change Framework
- Climate Change Act 2017 (State Government)
- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through MPHWP - Guidance for local government 2020

Open space

Tree canopy

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Percent of canopy cover	Council	2021	Urban Forest Strategy Update 2022
Percent tree canopy and shrub	Greener Spaces	2020	www.greenerplacesbetterplaces.com.au

In 2021:

5.8%

of Merri-bek land area was covered by tree canopy, up from 4.3% in 2016.
(Council)

In 2020:

15.3%

of Merri-bek land area was covered by tree canopy and shrub, which was higher than Maribyrnong (8.6%) yet lower than Darebin (24.6%). (Greener spaces)

Access to open space

Measure:	Source:	Currency:	Notes:
Percentage of dwellings within 400m of public open space larger than 1.5ha	AUO	2021	Changes over time may be due to improvement in data collection and analysis methodologies.

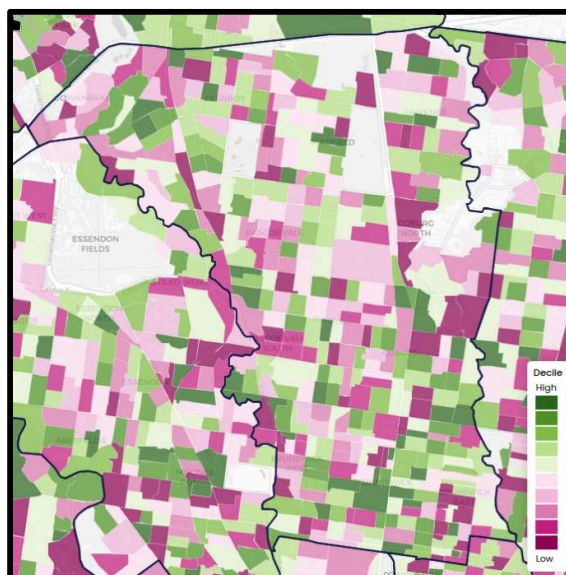
In 2021:

23.6% of Merri-bek households were within 400m of public open space larger than 1.5ha, compared to 21.6 in 2018. (AUO)

82% of Merri-bek households were within 400m of open space of any size, a similar proportion to that recorded in 2018 (81%). (AUO)

Suburbs with the most households with close access to large open space are Gowanbrae and Coburg North. There is limited to no close proximity to large open space in Hadfield and Pascoe Vale South.

Suburb	2018	2021
Brunswick	14%	15%
Brunswick East	24%	24%
Brunswick West	11%	11%
Coburg	18%	18%
Coburg North	79%	81%
Fawkner	52%	53%
Glenroy	7%	11%
Gowanbrae	100%	100%
Hadfield	0%	0%
Oak Park	24%	39%
Pascoe Vale	20%	27%
Pascoe Vale South	1%	1%
Merri-bek	22%	24%



Outdated data

The following summary presents data where no updates have been provided at local government level within the last 5 years. Data older than 5 years has not been included in this report unless included in a time series with more recent data.

Measure	Source	Year	What it showed us
Life expectancy	ABS 3302055011DO002 (Recent data available by SA4 but not LGA)	2015	2015 Merri-bek 84.4 for females and 79.1 for males. Females equal to Victoria, males a little lower (80.3 for Victoria)
Health check-ups	VPHS	2017	Not asked since 2017 so no newer data is available at this time.
Subjective wellbeing	Vichealth Indicators survey	2015	Not asked since 2015 so no newer data available at this time.
Anxiety or depression	VPHS	2017	Data at LGA level not released since 2017. Was asked in 2023, but it is not clear if it will be released by LGA.
Resilience	Vichealth Indicators survey	2015	Not asked since 2015 so no newer data available at this time.
Take-away meals and snacks	VPHS	2017	Not asked since 2017 so no newer data is available at this time.
Participation in organised & non-organised physical activity	Vichealth Indicators survey	2015	Not asked since 2015 so no newer data available at this time.
Participation in recreation activities	Moreland City Council household survey	2019	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Feeling part of the community	Moreland Community indicators survey	2018	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Engagement with arts and culture	Moreland City Council household survey	2019	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Involvement in creative arts	Wills Victoria	2018	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Participation in community groups	Moreland City Council household survey	2019	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Access to the internet	Census	2016	Question no longer asked since 2016.
Kindergarten participation rate	VCAMS	2019	No longer released at LGA level.

Measure	Source	Year	What it showed us
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Opportunities for learning and development	Moreland Community indicators survey	2018	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Safety during the day and night	Moreland Community indicators survey	2018	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Gender equality score	Vichealth Indicators survey	2015	Not asked since 2015 so no newer data available at this time.
Self-reported housing stress	Moreland City Council household survey	2019	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Insecure rental agreements	Moreland City Council household survey	2019	Survey hasn't been repeated. It is likely this has changed significantly since COVID.
Unmet affordable housing need	A Home in Moreland	2018	Projection calculated in 2016. There were significant changes during 2020-21 (COVID) that wouldn't have been taken into account with this forecasting.

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). Social Determinants of Health. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-of-health>

Department of Health and Human Services (2020). Planning for healthy environments. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/population-health-systems/municipal-public-health-andwellbeing-planning/healthy-environments>

UN-Habitat & World Health Organisation (2020). Integrating health in urban and territorial planning: A sourcebook. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003170>

Demographics and caring

Topic	Source and currency	Location	Update due
Births, breastfeeding	Council, 2023	Provided upon request by Maternal Child Health team	Annual
Fertility rate	ABS Births, Australia, 2022 33010DO003, 2022	https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/births-australia/latest-release#data-downloads	Annual
Population forecast	ABS, Quantify Strategic Insights Forecast, 2024	https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/quantify.strategic.insights/viz/QuantifyReportMerribek/HomePage	Annual
Vaccinations	Australian immunisation register, 2024	https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/australian-immunisation-register	Annual
Dementia	Dementia Australia, 2024	https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/Dementia-Prevalence-Data-LGA.pdf	Unknown
Disability	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 2022	https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release	Unknown
Need for assistance	NDIS recipient data, 2023-24 Q3.	https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data	Quarterly

Disability, LGBTIQ+, multiculturalism, talk to friends, loneliness, valued, discrimination and racism	VPHS (Victorian Population Health Survey), 2015, 2017, 2020 & 2023	https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey	2025 (2023 data)
Can get help from family / friends	Council community indicators survey		Unknown
Disengaged with work and study, disability, same sex households, country of birth, language spoken, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, income by gender, live alone, volunteer	ABS Census, 2021	https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml	2028 (2026 Census)
Physical health	Korin Korin Balit Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027 (2017).	https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/aboriginal-health/korin-korin-balit-djak	None
Developmental Vulnerability	Australian Early Development Census, 2021	https://aedc-gov-au-static-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/community-profiles/20052.pdf	Every 3 years, 2027
3.5-year-old check	School entrants health survey	https://www.vic.gov.au/school-entrant-health-questionnaire	Annual
Kindergarten participation	Kindergarten Census	https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-update-july-2023/2023-annual-kindergarten-census	Annual

Healthy

Topic	Source and currency	Location	Update due
Sexually transmitted diseases, Infectious diseases	Victorian Local Government infectious diseases notifiable conditions reporting dashboard (LGSR), 2024	https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/local-government-areas-surveillance-report	Annual
Cervical screening	Women's Health in the North		Unknown
Self-reported health, healthy eating, physical activity, BMI, mental health, tobacco and alcohol, disease diagnosis, deferral of treatment, dental health, food insecurity, smoking, psychological distress	VPHS (Victorian Population Health Survey), 2015, 2017, 2020 & 2023	https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey	2025 (2023 data)
Distance to a GP, Distance to supermarket, Distance to alcohol outlet	Australian Urban Observatory (AUO), 2021	https://auo.org.au/portal/metadata/social-infrastructure-mix-index/	Unknown
Alcohol and other drugs hospitalisations	AODStats, 2021	https://aodstats.org.au/	Unknown
Long term health conditions	ABS Census, 2021	https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml	2028 (2026 Census)
Falls	Injury atlas, 2022	https://vicinjuryatlas.org.au/	Annual
Food insecurity	Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). Health and human services climate change adaptation action plan 2019-21.	https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/building-victorias-climate-resilience/our-commitment-to-adapt-to-climate-change/health-and-human-services-adaptation-action-plan	None

Moving and living safely

Topic	Source and currency	Location	Update due
Distance to public transport, walkability, housing stress, social infrastructure, distance to playground, live and work in same area, distance to activity centre	Australian Urban Observatory (AUO), 2021	https://auo.org.au/portal/metadata/social-infrastructure-mix-index/	Unknown
Travel to work, household income, housing tenure, housing stress, homelessness, unemployed, education, SEIFA	ABS Census, 2021	https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml	2028 (2026 Census)
Cost of living	Affordable lettings by LGA (DFFH), 2024	https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/rental-report	Quarterly
Specialist homelessness services	AIHW, 2022/23	https://dataexplorer.aihw.gov.au/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml	Annual
Transport accidents	Injury atlas, 2022	https://vicinjuryatlas.org.au/	Annual
Criminal incidents, family violence	Victorian Crime Statistics Agency (Crimestats), 2024	https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/	Quarterly
EGM expenditure	Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC), 2024	https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/	Unknown

Environmental

Topic	Source and currency	Location	Update due
CO2 emissions	Snapshot Climate, 2021	https://snapshotclimate.com.au	Unknown
Tree Canopy	Council, 2021	Urban Forest Strategy Update, 2022	Unknown
Tree canopy	Greener spaces, 2020	www.greenerspacesbetterplaces.com.au	Unknown
Distance to public open space	Australian Urban Observatory (AUO), 2021	https://auo.org.au/portal/metadata/social-infrastructure-mix-index/	Unknown