



# Young people

## City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

Adolescence is a time of significant physical, cognitive and emotional development. Young people are growing up surrounded by technology, stagnating wages, rising underemployment, increasing exposure to online content, increasing mental health pressures and increasing concerns about climate change and their futures overall. They also have more opportunities for communication and agency through social media, youth participation and co-design, and are adapting to meet a changing employment market. Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood is becoming increasingly complex with family, peers, community, the legal system and job market playing roles in shaping this transition.

## Who lives in our municipality?

As of 2021:

- Young people (aged 12 to 24) comprised 10.8 per cent of the Port Phillip population, which is lower than the Greater Melbourne average of 15.8 per cent. This is a slight decrease from 11.1 per cent in 2016, which was also lower than the Greater Melbourne average then at 16.7 per cent.
- The percentages of young people (aged 12 to 24) within Port Phillip suburbs were fairly consistent across the municipality, with 9 out of 11 suburbs ranging from 9.5 per cent to 13 per cent. The two remaining suburbs were St Kilda with the lowest percentage of 9.2, and Ripponlea with the highest percentage of 16.1, which is more of an outlier in this case.

As of 2016:

- 27 per cent of young people aged between 12 and 25 living in Port Phillip were born overseas, relatively consistent with the proportion for Greater Melbourne at 26.4 per cent. The greatest proportion of residents born overseas were born in China (4.2 per cent), slightly less than in Greater Melbourne (5.7 per cent). Port Phillip is home to a higher proportion of young people born in the United Kingdom (4.1 per cent) and New Zealand (3.1 per cent) when compared to Greater Melbourne (1.4 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively).
- A significant proportion of young people aged between 18 and 25 in Port Phillip were living independently, either in group households (26.8 per cent), single-person households (11.1 per cent) or as a couple without children (21.6 per cent). The trend toward independent living was higher than for Greater Melbourne, where 15.2 per cent lived in share



households, 4.9 per cent in single-person households and 11.5 per cent as couples without children.

Future forecasts:

- The amount of young people aged 12 to 24 is currently anticipated to increase over time, growing from 11,413 in 2021 to 17,090 in 2026, then to 21,305 in 2041. However, the percentage that this group makes up of the whole Port Phillip population is expected to fluctuate somewhat over this time. Using 2021 data as a baseline, the forecasted growth in the population of young people (aged 12 to 24) is anticipated to increase from 11 per cent of the resident population to 13.6 per cent by 2026. However, this is currently predicted to decrease slightly by 2041, where forecasts predict that this group will make up 12.7 per cent of the population.

*Please note* – the above statistics have been gathered from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data, using the latest available information, as the ABS progressively releases its 2021 Census results (.id, 2023).

### How are young people in our municipality tracking?

According to 2016 Census data:

- 89.7 per cent of young people aged 15 to 25 were employed (compared with 85.1 per cent in Greater Melbourne), with 46 per cent employed full-time and 42.2 per cent employed part time. This was slightly less than the 2011 employment rate for this group of 91.6 per cent.
- 10.3 per cent of City of Port Phillip's labour force aged 15 to 25 years were classed as unemployed, compared to 14.9 per cent in Greater Melbourne.

Young people attending secondary schools (12 to 18 years) in the City of Port Phillip reported in a 2019 resilience survey that:

- 90 per cent felt they had the love and support of family
- 91 per cent displayed strong social skills and positive values.

However, they reported some key challenges:

- 48 per cent did not feel able to talk about things that upset them
- 52 per cent reported they were having trouble sleeping
- 45 per cent reported being self-critical and 43 per cent reported spending more time alone.

And concerns:

- Young people report mental health as a key concern. This is consistent with findings from other sources. For example, findings from the 2021 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing indicated that 16-24-year-olds were the most likely to have experienced symptoms of a mental disorder in the previous 12 months at 40 per cent out of all age cohorts. Additionally, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2020-21 National Health Survey indicate that those aged 15-24 years had the highest proportion of mental or behavioural conditions (28 per cent) out of all age cohorts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022).

- Young people reported a wish to “make our environment healthier” and for “action on climate change” (Resilient Youth Australia, 2019).

### How do outcomes vary for different population groups?

While it is hard to pinpoint sub-population effects among young people, there is significant evidence that some population groups face a greater risk of complex and interconnected social and health concerns.

- Compared with males, **female** secondary school students participating in the 2019 Youth Resilience Survey reported lower resilience. They struggled more with getting sufficient sleep, feeling tired and keeping physically active (Resilient Youth Australia, 2019).
- **LGBTIQ** youth are at a greater risk of family violence or rejection, driving higher levels of youth homelessness (Dempsey, Parkinson, Andrews, & McNair, 2020).
- **Trans and gender diverse** young people are at a particularly high risk of mental ill health, with nearly three quarters reporting to the first Australian survey of trans youth that they had been diagnosed with depression or anxiety at some time. Nearly 80 per cent had self-harmed and just under fifty per cent had attempted suicide (Strauss, et al., 2017).

### Current impacts on young people?

- As of early 2023 and this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, following the ease of restrictions, young people are adjusting to returning to ‘COVID-normal’ activities. This includes the opening and in-person attendance of schools, universities and workplaces. Pleasingly, this means increased social interactions, which were previously reported to be a concern along with social isolation during times of heavy COVID-19 restrictions. Young people with a disability or that are immunocompromised are still vulnerable to COVID-19 and its impacts, which could be ongoing or result in hospitalisation or death.
- The recent rise in cost of living has the potential to have negative impacts on young people, as they transition to establishing independence. As younger people tend to have lower salaries, increased costs of basic goods and services will have disproportionate negative impacts as they increase or maintain their independence. This may be particularly difficult for university students, who are typically living on limited budgets due to their study commitments.
- The recent rise in interest rates places financial pressure on homeowners and landlords, which has a flow on effect onto the rental market for young people, who typically privately rent rather than own property. The rental market is currently seeing a high level of competition and increase in prices, making it more difficult for young people to obtain secure housing as they try to establish independence.

### Why is supporting young people important for our community?



- When young people have their voices heard and are involved in the community, they develop skills, opportunities and are better equipped for the future which contributes to healthy and productive adults. Likewise, communities benefit through young peoples' innovations, social cohesion and understanding of young people's strengths.
- Young people make considerable contributions to the creative and cultural life of Port Phillip. They are active participants in arts-based programs, community enhancement programs and public events. This contribution needs to be maintained and enhanced.

### What is the role of Council in contributing to outcomes for young people?

For most young people, families and care givers continue to play an important role in their lives however this is a time of increasing independence and identifying with their peers. Services for young people are provided through schools, not-for-profit groups and community organisations.

Local government has a long history of engaging with and supporting young people through a range of programs including sporting and recreational facilities, events, libraries, homework clubs, youth centres, leadership programs and support programs to support the specific health and wellbeing concerns of young people in the local community.

Victorian local governments are required to promote the health and wellbeing of all its residents including young people. In addition to mandated responsibilities, over the next three years Port Phillip has the opportunity to make a more substantial contribution to outcomes for young people in the municipality by:

- Undertaking activities with reference to the Developmental Domains associated with the Transition to Adulthood and application of the Development Assets Youth Development Framework.
- Enabling youth leadership through initiatives such as the Student Leadership Program, FReeZA Committee, Youth in Chamber and the Youth Advisory Committee while also providing spaces for young people to make contributions to their community and feel heard.
- Facilitating networks for local services, educators and community groups to identify opportunities to work together to achieve improved outcomes for young people while also providing professional development opportunities to ensure the local youth sector has the knowledge and skills to manage the current issues faced by young people.
- Continuing to provide opportunities for young residents to contribute to creative activity and public events taking place across the municipality. This is achieved by Port Phillip's annual involvement with Under the Radar Film Festival (St Kilda Film Festival's youth component), Takeover Melbourne Storytelling Competition and Minus 18's Queer Formal.
- Providing youth support to assist individual young people living, working or studying in the City of Port Phillip while also funding group recreational activities supporting early intervention. This includes the breakfast club at Park Towers run by middle years, that encourages young people to engage with and use services and facilities. This can also include events occurring in the city, such as the 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament that was previously held at the St Kilda Foreshore in 2020.



- Providing recreational opportunities for young people to support early intervention and prevention through programming at the Adventure Playgrounds as well as providing referral pathways into specialist services.
- Maintaining the Youth Access Grants program to increase the provision of recreational activities in the municipality, and ensuring youth aged 12 to 18 years can access these activities, especially throughout the recovery phase of COVID-19.
- Considering diversity of events held in public space. Encouraging family friendly events and events that support youth participation.
- Improving accessibility and improving inclusion for young people, e.g. making facilities wheelchair accessible.

### Who are our partners?

In order to facilitate a comprehensive, consistent and whole of community approach to ensuring equitable outcomes for all young people, Council partners with community organizations and other levels of government to deliver community interventions. Some of our key partners include:

- Local schools and post-secondary education providers
- Local youth services
- Sport and Recreation Organisations
- Arts Organisations
- VicHealth
- YACVic
- Creative Victoria
- Sport and Recreation Victoria
- Department of Health (formerly part of the Department of Health)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (formerly part of the Department of Health)
- Victoria Police

### What may change over the next five years?

- As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing, and it is unknown exactly how it will play out in five years. We are currently in a phase of 'COVID-normal', however this could change with the development of variants and sub-variants. COVID-19 will continue to present a substantial threat to young people with disability and who are immunocompromised.



- As also mentioned, with the recent rise in the cost of living, the economic future for young people looks uncertain. As younger people tend to have lower salaries, financial constraints may have effects on their everyday lives, health and wellbeing.
- The continuous development of technology and automation of some jobs also has the potential of less employment opportunities for young people as they transition into the workforce.
- The current highly competitive nature of the housing market, whether it's for ownership or renting, could make it increasingly difficult to young people to secure their own housing as they work towards independence.

## References

- .id. (2023). *Home | City of Port Phillip | Community profile*. Retrieved from id. community | demographic resources: <https://profile.id.com.au/port-phillip>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022, 11 10). *Mental health services in Australia: Mental health: prevalence and impact - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*. Retrieved from Australian Government | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health>
- Dempsey, D., Parkinson, S., Andrews, C., & McNair, R. (2020). Family relationships and LGB first homelessness in Australia: What do we know and where should we go? *Journal of Sociology*, 212(4), 150-51. doi:10.5694/mja2.50497
- Resilient Youth Australia. (2019). *City of Port Phillip Youth Resilience Survey*.
- Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Toussaint, D. W., & Lin, A. (2017). *Trans Pathways: The Mental Health Experiences and Care Pathways of Trans Young People*. Perth: Telethon Kids Institute.