

# Wellbeing

## Indicator overview

### VicHealth Indicators Survey

VicHealth Indicators are used to measure community wellbeing with a focus on social determinants of health.

Survey topic areas include: wellbeing, healthy eating and sedentary behaviour, use of green space and safety, smoking policy, alcohol, using of social networking, participation in arts activities and the community, social attitudes, and work, life and time.

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### Introduction

Wellbeing is a subjective measure of an individual's quality of life. Wellbeing is a measure of a deep and enduring sense of satisfaction, as opposed to a momentary burst of happiness (Australian Unity 2012). Wellbeing is measured in the VicHealth Indicators Survey using the Australian Unity Personal Wellbeing Index (Australian Unity 2012). The Index includes ratings across seven domains: standard of living, health, achievements in life, community connection, personal relationships, safety, and future security.

### Australians' wellbeing

Normative data from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index indicates that the average Personal Wellbeing Index score for Australians is approximately 75 out of 100 (Cummins et al. 2003). At this score, most Australians are satisfied with their own lives (OECD 2010). Typical individual scores vary significantly, but are usually between 55 and 95 points. Personal Wellbeing Index scores below 50 can be an indicator of depression (Cummins et al. 2003).

### Factors influencing wellbeing

Many factors influence wellbeing including stress, pain, personal resources such as income, and the presence or absence of a partner (Mead and Cummins 2010). Low personal resources, particularly low income, are associated with health inequalities and significantly influence wellbeing (Marmot and Wilkinson 2006).

Where people live can also affect their personal wellbeing: living in an isolated community, an area of high population density or an area with high costs of living can have a negative impact on wellbeing (Mead and Cummins 2010). People in rental accommodation tend to have lower levels of personal wellbeing than those who own their own home (Mead and Cummins 2010).

### Resilience

Short-term disruptions to wellbeing are normal, as individuals face the many challenges in life. When such disruptions become prolonged, people can become depressed (Cummins 2010). Resilience relates to an individual's system of attitudes and behaviours associated with adapting to situations that might be stressful or negative (Burns et al. 2011). Research has shown that people are more resilient if they are connected with family and friends, have financial security, are involved in their communities (for example by getting to know their neighbours or volunteering), participate in activities that provide a sense of achievement, find a good work-life balance, and stay healthy by eating well and exercising regularly (Mead and Cummins 2010).

## Find out more

*Australian Unity Wellbeing Index*, Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University.  
[www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/auwbi/index.php](http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/auwbi/index.php)

*Australian Unity Wellbeing Index*, Australian Unity.  
[www.australianunitycorporate.com.au/community/auwi/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.australianunitycorporate.com.au/community/auwi/Pages/default.aspx)

*Life satisfaction*, OECD Better Life Index.  
<http://oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

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OECD 2010, *Life satisfaction*, viewed 12 Jan 2012: <<http://oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>>.