

Media Release

**Strictly embargoed until
15 November 2016**

Victorians' wellbeing higher than national average but more can be done for disadvantaged groups

The majority of Victorians have higher than national average wellbeing, but deep inequalities are resulting in poorer health for disadvantaged communities according to a major new population survey conducted by VicHealth.

Results from the VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015, published today (15 November) reveal Victorians have a higher than national average wellbeing (77.3 out of 100 compared with 75.7).

These results show that a significant improvement in the Victorian average wellbeing score has been maintained from the first VicHealth Indicators Survey in 2007 (76.6 in 2007 and 77.5 in 2011).

The survey, based on telephone interviews of almost 23,000 Victorians, found significantly higher wellbeing among those living in regional areas, on higher incomes or of older age.

However the 2015 survey also found significantly lower levels of average wellbeing among those on lower incomes and living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

Its findings provide critical localised data to Victorian councils, primary health care providers and community health services to assist them with health and wellness planning for the future.

Other key findings include:

- Three out of four Victorians agree that people in their neighbourhood are willing to help each other out but in inner metropolitan areas only two thirds of people agree
- Seven out of 10 Victorians agree that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted
- Four out of ten women surveyed said they felt safe walking after dark compared with seven out of ten men
- Almost half as many women participate in organised sport compared to men (7.0% v 12.8%)
- People living in the most disadvantaged areas are 11% less likely to take part in organised physical activity than people in the least disadvantaged areas
- Victorians are only eating 2.2 serves of vegetables in a usual day, less than half of the recommended 5 serves
- Victorians with low household income eat fewer vegetables than Victorians in the highest income category (2.0 v 2.5 serves in a usual day)
- One in 10 Victorians eat take-away meals three or more times per week and twice as many men than women eat take-away meals three or more times per week (14.4% v 6.1%)
- Each month 3 in 10 Victorians drink alcohol at levels that put them at risk of short-term harm
- Twice as many men than women drink alcohol at levels that put them at risk of short-term harm each month (40.1% vs 19.1%)
- Half of all young people aged 18–24 think getting drunk to the point of losing balance every now and then is okay.

VicHealth Indicators supports the creation of opportunities and development of infrastructure to enable people to make healthier choices. Local Government Action Guides have been developed to empower community healthcare services and councils with information to help drive change in the areas where Victorians live, learn, work and play.

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Victorian Minister for Health Jill Hennessy welcomed the release of the data, which will support the Victorian Government's recently released Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework.

"The Andrews Labor Government is working hard to support all Victorians - regardless of where they live - to be as healthy as they can be," Ms Hennessy said.

"This information will give us, and local councils, the information we need to see where things are improving, and where we need to work harder."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the data would help local councils plan for the future.

"This data will be invaluable to local governments currently developing Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, while also providing an opportunity for Victorians to assess their individual health and wellbeing with that of their local community, and identify ways they can live even healthier lives," Ms Rechter said.

"The data shines a light on a number of health indicators that can be improved, so we've created a unique website where Victorians can compare their health to the rest of their community and, where possible, make changes to improve their health and wellbeing and prevent chronic disease.

"It's important to provide people with evidence-based information about how to stay well, so that Victorians can make informed choices to help them live healthier, happier lives. Our new Health Snapshot website gives Victorians an idea about the health and wellbeing of their community. It's all part of VicHealth's plan to get one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing by 2023.

"Small changes over time can make a big difference. Setting simple achievable goals, like eating one extra piece of fruit or vegetables per day or going for an additional walk each week, with a view to increasing those goals over time, can make major differences to our health and wellbeing in the long term."

Victorians can visit www.healthsnapshot.com.au to see how their health and wellbeing measures up against the average ratings for the rest of the state and their local community.

For a copy of the 2015 VicHealth Indicators Survey visit <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/indicators>

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NOTES TO EDITOR

The 2015 VicHealth Indicators Survey collected information on a range of factors known to influence individual and community wellbeing. These included life satisfaction, general wellbeing, perceptions of safety and neighbourhood connectedness, resilience, physical activity levels, consumption of fruit, vegetables, water and alcohol, and attitudes to gender equality as well as intoxication from alcohol. A range of socio-demographic data was also gathered to enable a comprehensive health equity analysis.

The 2015 VicHealth Indicators Survey was based on telephone interviews of 22,819 Victorian adults aged 18 years and over. The survey sample was derived from a random selection of approximately 300 individuals from each of the 79 local government areas (LGAs) in Victoria. It provides a snapshot of the situation in Victoria at a particular point in time, October to December 2015.

Data reported has not been age standardised so differences between local government areas may be due, at least in part, to the differing age profiles.

The 2015 survey and a suite of related products have been specifically developed to inform local government Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans, currently being developed by councils across Victoria, and to track VicHealth's progress toward the 10 year goals of our Action Agenda. This survey complements other major public health surveys conducted in Victoria, most notably the Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS).

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