



Young people, health and wellbeing strategy

VICHEALTH'S STRATEGY TO PROMOTE
YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

2017–19

About VicHealth

Established 30 years ago as the world's first health promotion foundation, VicHealth is a pioneer in health promotion. We work with partners to discover, implement and share solutions to the health problems facing Victorians. We seek a Victoria where everyone enjoys better health and wellbeing.

VicHealth's [Action Agenda for Health Promotion](#) has defined five key goals for 2013–23, in areas with the largest potential to reduce disease and deliver the greatest measurable benefits for the health of all Victorians: promoting healthy eating; encouraging regular physical activity; preventing tobacco use; preventing harm from alcohol; and improving mental wellbeing. As a statutory body of the Victorian Government, our work across all these areas contributes to the strategic directions of the [Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015–2019](#).

Our ambition is for one million more Victorians to have better health and wellbeing by 2023. To achieve our ambition, our actions need to focus on the underlying forces driving health and equity in Victoria. Under the [2016–19 Action Agenda update](#), VicHealth will focus efforts on three critical areas where the social determinants of health meet: gender, youth and community.

This strategy outlines how we will approach the youth theme for the remainder of the three-year cycle to June 2019, as set out in the Action Agenda update.

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Overview of VicHealth's Young people, health and wellbeing strategy

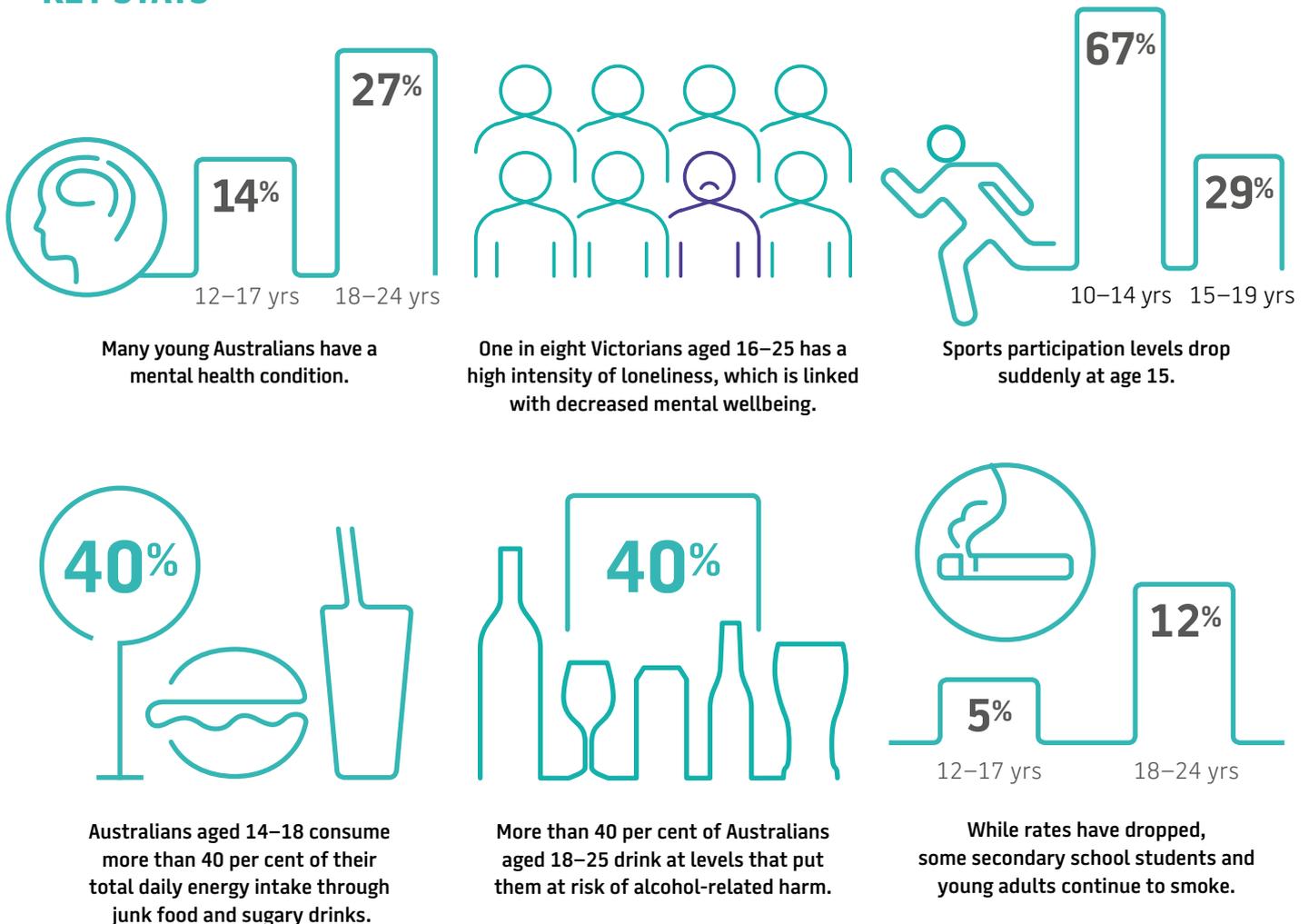
VISION

A Victoria in which every young person is able to reach their full potential for mental and physical health and wellbeing.

AIMS

- To create the environments and conditions that increase the resilience and social connection of young Victorians aged 12–25, protect them from harms to their health, and promote healthy attitudes and choices now and into the future.
- To work directly with young people to help transform the way VicHealth achieves its goals.

KEY STATS



Introduction

VicHealth's vision for young Victorians

VicHealth's vision is a Victoria in which every young person* is able to reach their full potential for mental and physical health and wellbeing. By working with young people and our diverse partners, we aim to create the environments and conditions that increase the resilience# and social connections of young people aged 12–25, to support them to be safe from harms to their health, and to promote healthy attitudes and choices now and into the future.

As young people enter their teens and early twenties, they begin a phase of life that is full of transitions and new beginnings. When navigating this life stage, young people interact with the people and places that can provide them with the vital components of a healthy life: positive family relationships, a sound education, strong social connections, respectful intimate relationships, meaningful work, enjoyable leisure activities and a healthy lifestyle. These components can provide the foundations for a fulfilling adulthood, in which young people not only enjoy good health, but in which they flourish and can bounce back from life's adversities.

Social, economic, political and technological changes mean that young Victorians live in a rapidly evolving world. They are constantly exposed to new opportunities and challenges that can enhance, protect or damage their health and wellbeing. VicHealth's role is to work with young people and our partners to ensure they all have the best chance to achieve good health and wellbeing.

We recognise and celebrate the diversity of young people – their cultural background, religion, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, Aboriginality, education, occupation, place of residence and more. Unfortunately, not all young Victorians enjoy good health and wellbeing. Many experience barriers to improved health, including discrimination, exclusion and lack of access to opportunities. VicHealth will work to address these barriers so all young people can participate equally in society and reach their full potential.

As an organisation, we have a long history in promoting young people's health and wellbeing. But we know that we don't hold all the answers to what works. Young people's involvement in finding solutions and designing strategies to improve their own health and wellbeing is essential, and harnessing their knowledge, skills and creativity will be key to our success and that of our partners.

VicHealth is committed to working with young Victorians to achieve our vision for their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Our work will help build a strong, healthy and resilient Victoria today and into the future.

Why focus on young people?

VicHealth defines 'young people' as those aged between 12 and 25 years old. We focus on this age range because it is a critical period for individual development, one that is characterised by important transitions. During this time, young people are developing physically, intellectually and emotionally, while forming autonomous identities, building independent social networks and initiating intimate relationships. Many are transitioning between primary, secondary and tertiary education, or from education to work, and navigating shifts away from the family home.¹

Some young people may experience disadvantage or other challenges that can compromise health and wellbeing. It can be a period of high risk for the development of mental illness among young people, and a time when some young people may experiment with risky drinking, smoking or illicit drug use, become less active or eat more unhealthy food and drinks.²

Periods of transition offer promising opportunities for better health and wellbeing, and can help create healthy patterns that continue into the future.³ For example, young people's experiences and social norms around gender, sexuality and intimate relationships provide a foundation for relationships in adulthood.⁴

The key transitions, settings and contextual factors influencing young people's health and wellbeing during this life stage are outlined in Figure 1.

* In this strategy 'youth' and 'young people' are used interchangeably to refer to people aged 12–25.

Underlined terms are defined in the glossary of key terms on page 14.

Figure 1: Major influences on the health and wellbeing of young people aged 12–25



VicHealth recognises that as well as improving young people’s health and wellbeing, actions outlined in this strategy have the potential for broader health, economic and social benefits for Victoria as a whole. For instance, action to decrease risky alcohol consumption among young people can lead to lower levels of public violence, drink driving and injury – thereby benefiting the Victorian community, our health system and the economy.⁵

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

VicHealth believes that every young person should have a voice in identifying problems and finding solutions that impact their health and wellbeing. A central component of this strategy is action to support young people to take power in decision-making. VicHealth will do this by seeking and valuing their contribution to the design, delivery and governance of our initiatives.

VicHealth aligns with the vision of the Victorian Government’s [Youth policy](#) for ‘an inclusive society where all young people are empowered to voice their ideas and concerns, are listened to and are recognised for their valuable contributions to Victoria’.⁶

We are currently working with young people and peak organisations to strengthen our existing knowledge and skills in youth engagement, and to develop dedicated engagement platforms and mechanisms so young people can have a say about the issues that matter to them. Over the duration of this strategy, we will build on this work by trialling different approaches to engagement and integrating the most promising ones into our practice.

We will seek the input and insights of organisations working in the youth sector and young people themselves on effective and meaningful engagement. As with all of our work, we are committed to sharing our learnings with our partners so they can also improve their engagement approaches.

To reflect the importance of youth engagement to our work, we have a dedicated Action Area within this strategy that focuses on empowering young Victorians to be involved in the design, delivery and governance of VicHealth initiatives, and sharing our knowledge in this area.

Background and context

Priority health areas

This strategy aims to capture VicHealth’s key actions that evidence suggests will have the greatest impact on improving young people’s health and wellbeing during 2017–19. These actions include those that directly target people aged 12–25, or include them as one of their key target populations.

Our work focuses on five strategic imperatives: promoting healthy eating; encouraging regular physical activity; preventing tobacco use; preventing harm from alcohol; and promoting mental wellbeing.

A focus on primary prevention

Victoria is home to a world-leading health system, which covers the spectrum of preventive health interventions shown in Figure 2. VicHealth focuses on primary prevention – that is, action to prevent ill health from occurring in the first place.

VicHealth champions positive influences for health and seeks to reduce negative influences. We focus on creating the conditions in which good health can flourish – from better public policy and healthy urban environments, to more inclusive and respectful communities.

As well as avoiding health costs for individuals, primary prevention reduces the burden on the Victorian health system as well as the social and economic costs to Victoria as a whole. This complements the efforts of partners in the wider health system, such as those working in early intervention to identify people at risk of or showing emerging signs of ill health, and those that treat mental or physical illness.

Our partnership approach

VicHealth’s contribution to government and cross-sectoral action to promote young people’s health and wellbeing builds on our 30 years of leadership in health promotion and our track record in developing evidence-based practice.⁸ Our success is based on our strong network of partners in health, government, human services, sport, business, digital/online, research, education, human rights, media, the arts and the broader community.

Under this strategy, we will continue to work with existing partners as well as forge new partnerships to help build the evidence and to test and implement new approaches to create better health for all young Victorians.

Figure 2: Spectrum of health interventions⁷

Level of prevention	Aim
PRIMARY	Widespread changes that reduce the average risk in the whole population. Reduction of particular exposures among identified higher risk groups or individuals.
SECONDARY	Prevent progression to disease through early detection and intervention.
TERTIARY	Reduce the consequences of established disease through effective patient management, so as to reduce the progress or complications of established disease and improve patient wellbeing and quality of life.

Building the evidence base

A key part of this strategy is building the evidence on what works to improve young people's health and wellbeing, and to share this with our partners across a range of sectors. VicHealth will work with young people to undertake research, co-design health promotion activities, and evaluate their effectiveness. This will be achieved through investigator-driven research to identify and address gaps in knowledge; commissioned research to source additional evidence and test promising ideas, including program evaluations; and knowledge translation activities that seek to embed these findings into policy and practice.

Policy context

There is a wide range of local, state, federal and international policies related to the health and wellbeing of young people across each of our strategic imperatives and the many settings and sectors we work with. Where possible, VicHealth aligns with these policies so that our action complements government initiatives and vice versa.

At the state level, VicHealth's work aligns with the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015–2019, which covers all age groups. Local governments' municipal public health and wellbeing plans support the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan*. Our work also enhances the activity of the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under their policies and strategies that relate to our strategic imperatives and key themes for action, as well as particular groups of young people.

The Victorian Government's commitment to meaningfully engage young people aged 12–24 years is outlined in its Youth policy: Building stronger youth engagement in Victoria. The policy aims to enable young people to provide input into government services, programs and policies that are important to them. It includes a Youth Engagement Charter that specifies the principles that will guide the government's engagement with young people. VicHealth's actions to increase youth engagement align with this policy and its principles.

Other key policies, strategies and contextual factors are outlined in Appendix 1.

Other VicHealth initiatives impacting young people's health and wellbeing

Initiatives focused on older age groups or the whole Victorian population

We also recognise that many of VicHealth's initiatives outside this strategy will support our key actions to promote young people's health and wellbeing. This can include programs that focus on the whole Victorian population, or those that target a different or wider age range (for example, people aged 18 and over).

Examples of programs that impact young people's health that are not captured in this strategy include:

- our major investment in Quit Victoria. While we do fund Quit's activity that specifically targets young people (see action 3.2 on page 12), most of our funding supports activity that focuses on the Victorian population as a whole. This includes social marketing activity; advocacy for smokefree areas; restrictions on the sale, advertising and promotion of tobacco; smoking cessation support; and advocacy for higher pricing and taxation. These approaches reduce the prevalence, visibility, affordability, accessibility and attractiveness of smoking, leading to fewer young people taking up the habit⁹
- our salt reduction initiative, which aims to reduce high salt intakes using a combination of public education, policy change, industry partnerships to drive food reformulation, and research and evaluation. While the initiative does not specifically target 12–25 year olds, it will benefit young people as they are at an age when they start making independent food choices, and the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks is heavily targeted at this group
- the research trials we are conducting through our Leading Thinkers initiative to address unconscious gender bias, promote positive female stereotypes and role models, and change social norms relating to gender equality across a number of settings, including the media and the workplace. This will benefit young women as they transition to various life stages.

Further information on our initiatives is available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects.

In addition, the *Young people, health and wellbeing strategy 2017–2019* aligns with other key VicHealth strategies that influence young people's health and wellbeing, such as the Gender equality, health and wellbeing strategy 2017–2019, Health equity strategy 2017–2019, Mental wellbeing strategy 2015–2019, Alcohol strategy 2016–2019, Tobacco strategy 2016–2019, Healthy eating strategy 2017–2019 and Physical activity strategy 2018–2023 (in development).

Initiatives focused on children

VicHealth recognises the vital importance of promoting health for children from birth to age 11. Infancy and childhood are critical stages in building the foundations for a healthy and fulfilling life, particularly within the home and school settings. While this strategy focuses on actions targeting Victorians aged 12–25, VicHealth supports a number of programs outside this Strategy that focus on younger age groups. Examples include:

- our annual Walk to School campaign, which helps children and their families establish active transport routines for life, and supports primary schools, local councils and communities to make active travel easy, safe and accessible
- our support for the Australian advocacy group Parents' Voice, an online network of thousands of Australian parents and carers who are interested in improving the food and activity environments of Australian children.

VicHealth's action to promote young people's health and wellbeing

Achieving health equity

VicHealth aims to ensure all Victorians have the means for a good and healthy life, as outlined in our [Health equity strategy 2017–2019](#). A [health equity](#) approach aims to redress unequal health outcomes through action to address the underlying drivers of health differences.

These drivers are described in [Fair foundations: The VicHealth framework for health equity](#) as three 'layers of influence': the socioeconomic, political and cultural context; daily living conditions; and individual health-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. It recognises that people's health is associated with markers of social position such as income, occupation type, education levels, gender identity, sexuality, race/ethnicity, Aboriginality, disability and place of residence.¹⁰

While most Victorians – including young people – enjoy good health and wellbeing, these are not distributed evenly across the population. Young people from lower-income households, those with lower levels of education or working in unskilled occupations, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal people, women and girls, people with a disability, people living in rural or regional areas and lesbian, gay, bisexual, [trans](#), [intersex](#), [non-binary](#) and [gender diverse](#) (LGBTI) people often experience poorer health and wellbeing than the rest of the population.¹¹

These groups experience different types of health inequities and can have different cultural concepts of wellbeing.¹² Nonetheless, underpinning these inequities are similar socioeconomic, political and cultural factors, such as discrimination and the unequal distribution of power, economic resources and prestige.¹³

VicHealth's commitment to health equity means we consider the diversity of young Victorians in our actions, and tailor our efforts to improve health outcomes for those with the poorest health. This recognises the importance of action across the life course, as the effects of social disadvantage accumulate and interact throughout a person's life, from birth through to old age.¹⁴

The health status of young Victorians

Key evidence that informs our work on young people's health and wellbeing is summarised below:

- Resilience has a strong and direct impact on health and is associated closely with an individual's overall wellbeing.¹⁵ High levels of mental wellbeing have been found to be associated with increased learning, creativity and productivity, more pro-social behaviours, positive social relationships and improved physical health and life expectancy.¹⁶
- Fourteen per cent of adolescents aged 12–17 have a mental health problem.¹⁷ This rises to 27 per cent among young adults aged 18–24, which is the highest prevalence rate across the lifespan.¹⁸

- One in four 16–25 year olds have limited access to social support in a time of need, and one in eight report having a very high intensity of loneliness – both of which are associated with lower levels of mental wellbeing.¹⁹
- Certain groups of young people are disproportionately affected by mental ill health. These can include young people who are Aboriginal, LGBTI, living in out-of-home care, experiencing homelessness, living with a disability, from low-income households, and/or living in rural and remote areas.²⁰
- VicHealth and CSIRO research has identified long-term changes affecting societies, governments or economies permanently (called megatrends) that can significantly impact young Victorians' mental wellbeing in the future. They include trends towards: more competitive job markets; increased digital technology and globalisation; a more diverse culture, society and consumer market; increased exposure to online content; and improved understanding and treatment of mental health and wellbeing.²¹
- In Victoria, nearly a third of 10–14 year olds²² and over half of 18–24 year olds²³ are overweight or obese. Levels of obesity are highest among young people living in low socioeconomic status areas.²⁴
- Consumption of [junk food](#) and sugary drinks can have a range of health impacts, including increased levels of obesity and tooth decay. On average, young Australians aged 14–18 consume over 40 per cent of their total daily energy intake through junk food and sugary drinks.²⁵
- Levels of physical activity and participation in organised sport decrease throughout adolescence. Sports participation levels drop suddenly at age 15, with only 29 per cent of 15–19 year olds playing – compared to 67 per cent of 10–14 year olds.²⁶
- While young Victorians aged 18–24 are the most active segment of the adult population and the most likely to participate in sport every week, they tend to move in and out of periods of being regularly active more frequently than older adults.²⁷
- Alcohol use is declining among Victorian teenagers. In 2014, the proportion of secondary school students drinking five or more drinks on one occasion in the preceding seven days (putting themselves at risk of alcohol-related harm) was significantly lower than in 2011 and 2008.²⁸
- However, of all age groups, Victorians aged 18–24 are most likely to put themselves at risk of alcohol-related injury. Over 40 per cent reported drinking five or more drinks on a single occasion at least once a month in 2016.²⁹
- In 2014, the proportion of students aged 12–15 who had smoked in the previous month was lower than at any other point since monitoring commenced in 1984.³⁰
- Despite this, it is estimated that five per cent of Australian secondary school students³¹ and 12 per cent of young adults aged 18–24³² are current smokers.
- Some young people may undertake other risky behaviours for the first time during this life stage, such as illicit drug use, unsafe sexual activity, dangerous driving, risky online activity and other behaviour that causes injury.³³
- Young people aged 16–24, particularly young men, are more likely than older adults to have attitudes that justify, excuse, minimise or trivialise [violence against women](#).³⁴

Our role

This strategy will contribute to better health and wellbeing in Victoria through the range of actions outlined below. VicHealth's broader body of work outside this strategy will support these actions at a whole-of-population level.

VICHEALTH'S VISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A Victoria in which every young person is able to reach their full potential for mental and physical health and wellbeing.

AIMS OF OUR ACTIONS TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- To create the environments and conditions that increase the resilience and social connection of young people aged 12–25, protect them from harms to their health, and promote healthy attitudes and choices now and into the future.
- To work directly with young people to help transform the way VicHealth achieves its goals.

Our action

ACTION AREA

1

Meaningfully involve young people in the design, delivery and governance of VicHealth initiatives, and support our partners to increase youth engagement in their work

ACTION 1.1 Identify and implement best practice approaches to youth engagement and co-design methods that enable young people to have a meaningful role in decision-making, development and implementation of health promotion initiatives.

ACTION 1.2 Collaborate with organisations that are already effectively engaging with young people in conversation and debate. We will learn from their experiences and support their work to amplify young people's voices.

ACTION 1.3 Based on what we learn from actions 1.1 and 1.2 and in partnership with young people, to continue to develop a co-design toolkit to guide the design of VicHealth's youth-focused initiatives. We will disseminate the toolkit to our partners to help build their capacity in working meaningfully with young people.

ACTION 1.4 Use online platforms to directly engage with young people to inform better design, implementation and evaluation of projects relevant to this target group.

ACTION 1.5 Deliver a youth engagement initiative that encourages young Victorians to develop their own creative communications to highlight different aspects of alcohol-related harm.

ACTION
AREA

2

Build the evidence base and share our knowledge of what works to improve young people's health and wellbeing

ACTION 2.1

Invest in research to help us understand the factors impacting young people's health and wellbeing, and identify effective approaches to improve it, such as research into:

- the transition from education to employment; workplace health; co-design of health promotion initiatives; participation in physical activity and sport; gender inequality; online pornography and sexual imagery; [digital literacy](#); and the [social determinants](#) of mental and physical health and wellbeing.

ACTION 2.2

Evaluate our investments under this strategy to build the evidence of what works to improve young people's health and wellbeing, and to inform VicHealth's program design and delivery in the future.

ACTION 2.3

Inform evidence-based policy, practice and program delivery by disseminating and translating findings generated through actions 2.1 and 2.2. We will share our knowledge with our diverse stakeholders in Victoria, Australia and internationally, as well as draw on their evidence to inform our research and practice.

ACTION
AREA

3

Support our partners in designing and delivering programs to improve the health and wellbeing of diverse groups of young Victorians

ACTION 3.1

Prevent alcohol-related harm among young people by working with them, local governments, universities and other organisations to improve [alcohol cultures](#) among diverse groups in settings such as late-night entertainment precincts, rural areas, and universities and residential colleges.

ACTION 3.2

Prevent the uptake of smoking among young people and reduce young people's exposure to second-hand smoke in public places. This includes our major investment in [Quit Victoria](#) and its social marketing campaigns that aim to reduce smoking uptake among young people.

ACTION 3.3

Promote young people's mental wellbeing by forging new partnerships with sectors that can make a difference to the resilience and social connection of young Victorians, and by expanding our existing partnerships. Some specific projects under this action include:

- fund local councils to involve young people in co-designing solutions that tackle emerging challenges to their mental wellbeing within their local area through our [Bright Futures for Young Victorians Challenge](#)
- build physical activity, resilience and social connection in the settings in which young people spend their time: education, workplaces, digital/online, the arts and sport
- develop and implement innovative strategies by building new partnerships with the creative industry and other sectors, including business, philanthropy and technology.

ACTION
AREA

4

Provide evidence-based policy advice to governments and partners to help create the policy and regulatory environments that support young people's health and wellbeing

ACTION 3.4

Increase young people's participation in physical activity through active travel, active recreation and sport, and harness the power of the sport setting to promote healthy cultures and behaviours via a number of programs and campaigns. We aim to make physical activity fun, social and local for young people by funding sports clubs, councils, and regional, state and national sports organisations to design and deliver:

- initiatives that focus on those experiencing high socioeconomic disadvantage, women and people living in regional and rural areas
- initiatives that focus on social or flexible sports opportunities, challenging gendered social norms around physical activity and/or breaking down common barriers to participation.

ACTION 3.5

Support young Victorians to eat healthily by addressing the barriers that prevent them from accessing nutritious food and drinks, and supporting and encouraging healthier choices. This includes:

- supporting young people to choose healthy food and beverages in key settings, such as sports clubs and facilities
- reducing the exposure of young people to junk food promotion via sports sponsorships by building the business case and community support for junk food-free sports sponsorships
- funding the Obesity Policy Coalition to influence policy change to prevent obesity.

ACTION 3.6

Working with our partners to build support and enable action for gender equality and primary prevention of violence against women. This includes:

- exploring the factors that influence people to identify, speak out or engage others to respond to incidents of sexism, discrimination or violence against women
- increasing equality in employment and sport by partnering with local governments, statutory authorities, the media, corporate organisations and workplaces
- supporting the delivery of Respectful Relationships in Victorian schools.

ACTION 4.1

Continue to provide policy advice to local, state, federal and international governments across a range of policy issues relevant to young people and the creation of regulatory environments that support their health and wellbeing. Our priorities are outlined at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/policy.

Measuring progress

By implementing the actions outlined in this strategy, VicHealth will continue to support young people's health and wellbeing, and more effectively reach and engage with them. Combined with the outcomes of our broader body of work, achieving the objectives of each action in this strategy will help us reach our 2016–19 targets across our Action Agenda for Health Promotion.

Some of the results of our activity will be seen within this strategy's timeframe, while others will take longer, particularly those actions that aim to build healthy habits that carry on into the future, or that aim to shift rigid social norms.

VicHealth will evaluate and monitor the specific actions of our strategy by:

- monitoring and evaluating our own programs, including our specific projects, resources and campaigns, and ensuring we measure differential impact
- monitoring the use of our resources, the uptake of our policy recommendations, and the adoption or scale-up of our programs by other organisations and communities
- monitoring the population health and wellbeing of young people in Victoria by analysing datasets such as the VicHealth Indicators Survey (Victorians aged 18–25), the Victorian Population Health Survey (Victorians aged 18–25), the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (Australians aged 15–25), the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (Australian students aged 12–17), the Victorian Smoking and Health Survey (Victorians aged 18–25), the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (Victorians aged 14–25), AusPlay (Australians aged 15 and over, and parents/guardians of Australians aged 0–14) and other statewide and national surveys as relevant*
- using other data sources that measure the drivers and outcomes of the health and wellbeing of young people, as they are identified and become available.

Insights gathered through these mechanisms will be shared extensively to enhance design and delivery of other local and international health promotion initiatives.

* At the time of publication, there is no single fit-for-purpose population-level data source that would provide data on a sufficiently wide range of health and wellbeing indicators for Victorians in the 12–25 age group.

Key terms

Co-design

The process of designing and delivering solutions to key issues by working together in a partnership between funders, funded organisations, other key partners, and the people impacted by the initiative (in this case, young people). The relationship must be equal, reciprocal and collaborative to effectively engage people and result in benefits for all.³⁵

Differential impact

The socially determined impact of health interventions. Since interventions do not impact all people in the same ways, it is important to evaluate the differential impact of interventions, to measure impact across different groups in the population.³⁶

Digital literacy

The competencies required to find, evaluate, create and disseminate digital information. It requires critical thinking skills to understand the social implications of that information.

Gender equality

The equal chances or opportunities for groups of women and men to access and control social, economic and political resources, including protection under the law.³⁷

Gender diverse, non-binary and trans

Gender diverse and non-binary refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man (see 'gender identity' below). Some people may identify as agender (having no gender), bigender (both a woman and a man) or non-binary (neither woman nor man). Transgender (often shortened to 'trans') refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not align with their sex assigned at birth.³⁸

Gender identity

The way in which a person understands, identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics within a particular sociocultural context. A person's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.³⁹

Health equity

The notion that everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential if it can be avoided.⁴⁰

Intersex

A term that refers to people who are born with genetic, hormonal or physical sex characteristics that are not typically 'male' or 'female'. Intersex people have a diversity of bodies and identities.⁴¹

Junk food

A collective term referring to discretionary foods and drinks that are not necessary for a healthy diet and are too high in saturated fat, added sugars, added salt or alcohol, and/or low in fibre. These foods and drinks can also be too high in kilojoules (energy) and tend to have low levels of essential nutrients. They include sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks and sports drinks.⁴²

Layers of influence

The drivers of health difference which allocate power and resources based on social position. The three layers are: socioeconomic, political and cultural context; daily living conditions; and individual health-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.⁴³

Population health

As an outcome, it refers to health outcomes of a group of individuals (for example, Victorians), including the distribution of health within that group. As an approach, it aims to reduce the incidence of preventable illness and mortality.

Resilience

The ability to cope with or bounce back from adversity. It is a dynamic quality that develops over time through the interaction between people and their environment.

Setting

The place or social context in which people engage in daily activities in which environmental, organisational, and personal factors interact to affect health and wellbeing. Examples of settings include schools, workplaces, sports clubs, transport, health services, communities and local government.⁴⁴

Social determinants of health

The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. They are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.⁴⁵ Examples are education, income, working conditions, unemployment, housing, early childhood development and social exclusion.

Social norms

The informal rules that govern the behaviour of individuals in groups, communities, cultures and societies. They are the behaviours that are socially acceptable and expected in that environment.

Unconscious bias

In recruitment, unconscious bias occurs when unintentional assumptions are made about job applicants based on features such as their age, gender, culture, religion or other background.

Violence against women

Gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. Primary prevention initiatives seek to prevent violence before it occurs by addressing its underlying drivers.⁴⁶

Appendix 1: The Victorian policy and practice context

Priority health areas

Our work focuses on five strategic imperatives: promoting healthy eating; encouraging regular physical activity; preventing tobacco use; preventing harm from alcohol; and promoting mental wellbeing.

We recognise that a number of health conditions and risk factors have an impact on young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. Illicit drug use, sexual and reproductive health, online safety, gambling and other issues can significantly impact young people's lives. While actions under this strategy do not directly address those issues, we strongly support the efforts of the Victorian Government, our partners and other peak bodies working in the area.

In addition, our work has the potential to enhance their activity, particularly where there are common risk factors. For example, social support is a protective factor for both mental ill health and illicit drug use. Therefore our action to increase young people's positive social connections to improve mental wellbeing will complement that of other organisations focused on the same area for the purposes of reducing illicit drug use.

Policy context

At the state level, VicHealth's work aligns with the [Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015–2019](#), which covers all age groups. Our work contributes to the Victorian Government's strategic priorities in: healthier eating and active living; tobacco-free living; reducing harmful alcohol use; improving mental health; preventing violence; and maintaining healthy environments. Where possible, our work complements their other priorities (e.g. sexual and reproductive health, illicit drug use and climate change), as discussed above.

Under the [Victorian public health and wellbeing plan](#), councils support these priorities at the local level, through their *municipal public health and wellbeing plans*. Their plans can include specific goals and actions for young people, and are often supported by youth strategies and/or charters which guide the councils' work with young people.

Our work also enhances the activity of the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under their policies and strategies related to mental health; nutrition; alcohol; tobacco; sport and physical activity; health equity; education; gender equality, respectful relationships and family violence; the arts; employment and workplaces; disability; digital/online environments; and health care. Key examples at the state level include:

- [Victoria's 10-year mental health plan](#)
- [Active Victoria: A strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria](#)
- [Education State](#)
- [Safe and strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy](#)
- [Creative state: Victoria's first creative industries strategy 2016–2020](#)
- [Health 2040: Advancing health access and care.](#)

Other relevant policies and strategies are those that include a focus on particular groups of young people, such as women and girls; Aboriginal people; people with a disability (including those experiencing mental illness); LGBTI people; culturally or linguistically diverse communities; people from low socioeconomic backgrounds; people experiencing family violence; people from rural and regional areas; and groups at critical life transitions, such as adolescents who are in or leaving out-of-home care.

The Victorian Government's commitment to meaningfully engage young people aged 12–24 years is outlined in its [Youth policy: Building stronger youth engagement in Victoria](#). The policy aims to enable young people to provide input into government services, programs and policies that are important to them. It includes a Youth Engagement Charter that specifies the principles that will guide the government's engagement with young people. VicHealth's actions to increase youth engagement align with this policy and its principles.

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Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
PO Box 154 Carlton South
Victoria 3053 Australia
T +61 3 9667 1333 F +61 3 9667 1375

vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au
vichealth.vic.gov.au
twitter.com/vichealth
facebook.com/vichealth

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