



MEDIA RELEASE

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VICTORIA'S YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT HIGH HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE IMPACT FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone across Victoria – reshaping our daily lives and dissolving our routines, but a new LiveLighter® survey has uncovered that one group experienced a significantly greater impact on their health and lifestyle than the rest of us – those aged 18-24.

The survey found that, compared to the rest of Victorian adults up to 65 years, those aged 18-24 were more likely to report the following behaviour changes:

- Increased fast food consumption – 60% compared to 36% of 25-44 year olds and 23% of 45-65 year olds.
- Increased sugary drink consumption - 54% compared to 20% of 25-44 year olds and 8% of 45-65 year olds.
- Increased ordering takeaway online - 52% compared to 33% of 25-44 year olds and 20% of 45-65 year olds.
- Increased screen time – 96% compared to 89% of 25-44 year olds and 82% of 45-65 year olds.
- Feeling so depressed nothing could cheer them up at least a little of the time - 75% compared to 51% of 25-44 year olds and 45% of 45-65 year olds.

LiveLighter® Campaign Manager and Dietitian, Emma Glassenbury, said it's concerning to see how big of an impact the pandemic has had on the health and wellbeing of young people in Victoria.

“Younger people make up a large proportion of those in tertiary education and working casual jobs, and their social lives mostly take place outside the four walls of their home. With so much disruption over the past 18 months, it's concerning to see this age group report a decline in their wellbeing on top of everything else.

“During the pandemic many food and drink companies capitalised on this increased emotional turmoil with targeted advertising and promotions for unhealthy food, sugary drink and alcohol, undermining young people's efforts to be healthy,” said Ms. Glassenbury.

With restrictions now easing across Victoria and life returning to a new sense of normal, Ms. Glassenbury is urging governments, tertiary institutions, workplaces, and other decision-makers to do more to support the health of young people in Victoria.

“The habits we develop when we're young set the foundation for our health as we get older. With almost half of young adults in Australia above a healthy weight, and this data showing the difficulties they face when it comes to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, more needs to be done to support them.”

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is one such organisation stepping up to support Victoria's young people to live happier, healthier lives, through its new Future Healthy initiative.



Kris Cooney, Executive Manager of Future Healthy at VicHealth, said we must do more to make it easier for young people in Victoria to access healthy affordable food.

“Young people have told us that having access to healthy food near home is one of the most important things to them, but for many across the state, this isn’t the case,” Ms Cooney said.

“Instead, over the past 18 months we’ve seen unhealthy food brands and food delivery platforms unfairly and aggressively target young people with harmful marketing.

“Young people are our future leaders. Through Future Healthy, we’re listening to their ideas, challenges and experiences to help us create the healthy environments they need to learn, grow and thrive.”

Get involved in Future Healthy: If you’re a young person in Victoria aged 18-25, or a parent or carer in Victoria with kids aged 0-17, share your experiences, challenges and ideas about what a healthy future means to you and your community at futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au

CASE STUDY:

19-year-old Future Healthy Community Champion Manahil has experienced and seen how the pandemic affected young people’s routines and health and wellbeing.

“During lockdowns, my friends and I found it almost impossible to avoid unhealthy food and drink marketing, and food delivery apps seemed like a quick fix for breakfast, lunch or dinner.”

Manahil, who lives in the City of Casey in Melbourne’s southeast, would love to see more opportunities for young people to learn about being healthy, such as preparing different types of food.

“A program where people come along and they cook with each other and they connect, I think that would be awesome,” she says.

“Most people are visual learners and sometimes they don't really connect through social media, or they don't really learn well through cooking videos. If they see it face-to-face and learn how they do it, I feel like they would have a better connection towards that.”

Learn more about Manahil or watch this short video [here](#).

Pictures of Manahil also available [here](#).

-ENDS-

About the survey:

LiveLighter®’s annual Shape of Australia survey, conducted throughout July and August 2021, analysed responses from more than 2,000 Australians, including over 600 Victorians aged 18-65 regarding how they have changed a number of lifestyle behaviours since February 2020.



More key findings – Victoria's population overall:

- Approximately one-third of Victorians increased their fruit and vegetable consumption
- 33% of Victorians increased fast food consumption, while 34% decreased their consumption
- 18% of Victorians increased their sugary drink consumption, while 30% decreased their consumption
- 27% increased their alcohol consumption, while 23% decreased their consumption
- 34% increased their physical activity, while 35% decreased their activity
- 44% of Victorians cooked dinner at home more
- 45% of Victorians reported snacking more
- 87% of Victorians spent more time using at least one type of screen
- 51% of Victorians reported feeling so depressed nothing could cheer them up at least a little of the time.

About LiveLighter®:

LiveLighter® is a public health education campaign which encourages Australians to lead healthier lives by making positive changes to what they eat and drink and being more active.

livelighter.com.au has plenty of tools, resources and information to help Australians make simple changes today to live a healthier life.