

Yarra Ranges **Council**

# **Health and Wellbeing Data Profile of Yarra Ranges: Summary Report**

**Document prepared by:** Social Infrastructure Planning team 2024/25



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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## Disclaimer

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### The data published in this report has derived from various sources, including:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022). *Yarra Ranges 2021 Census All Persons QuickStats*.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). *Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Interactive data on risk factor burden*.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). *Australia's health*.
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## What health issues are we seeing in Yarra Ranges?

Yarra Ranges is a large municipality with numerous different communities, set in extensive green space in outer eastern Melbourne. It has a high level of community involvement in volunteering and carer roles. Incomes are above average, and housing is more affordable than in inner Melbourne. Many residents work locally. Yarra Ranges is very safe, with low crime rates and a high level of civic trust. Most residents feel that multiculturalism makes life in the area better, and there is a low level of reported racism. Yarra Ranges has good maternal and infant health and also has good health status amongst its older residents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Yarra Ranges had the lowest level of COVID-19 deaths in metropolitan Melbourne, and a low level of serious illness from COVID-19.

However, the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 exacerbated a range of health and social issues, particularly for young people; and may have contributed to poorer mental health status and educational outcomes. Emergencies such as the June 2021 storms and the cost-of-living crisis have since placed further stresses on the community. Key health and social issues include:

1. **Very high and rising levels of mental health problems.**
2. **Poor health and wellbeing amongst children and young people.** Issues include poor mental health, rising disability and developmental delay amongst children, falling levels of participation in school and tertiary education, rising youth unemployment, ill-health amongst Year 12 students, increased social disconnection, rising child crime, rising sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), transport injuries, lack of access to housing, and lack of access to further education and employment opportunities.
3. **The health and wellbeing impacts of climate change,** natural disasters and environmental degradation. Potential direct impacts include ill-health, injuries and deaths due to heat stress, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases, hypothermia, food poisoning, allergies, mental health issues, injuries, drownings and malnutrition. Indirect impacts include reduced water quality, food security and safety, and air quality; and increases in infectious diseases. The socio-economic impacts include effects on employment, personal and business finances, housing, transport, and social connections; and access to open space, services, infrastructure, information and communications, and power and water. Yarra Ranges has the highest bushfire risk in the country, the second-highest level in Melbourne of properties at high or medium risk from climate change, the third-highest ranking in Victoria for storm hotspots, and the second-highest national ranking for seeking assistance for recovering from disasters.
4. **Chronic and infectious diseases, and health risk factors.** Some physical health issues and risks have worsened since the pandemic. Factors such as diet and exercise are longstanding national public health challenges, although locally, sports participation appears to be recovering. Screening for chronic diseases has fallen. Dementia is a growing health issue for

older residents - it is the number two cause of death in Yarra Ranges, and hospital admissions have tripled over the past few years. Yarra Ranges has a high rate of deaths from heart failure, respiratory and lung disease, accidental falls, and some forms of cancer. The level of some antibiotic-resistant infections is rising, with diseases appearing which were unseen locally before 2020.

5. **Lack of access to human services** - including accessibility, availability, affordability and use of health screening. Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of nearly every type of health worker, ranking 3<sup>rd</sup>-highest in Melbourne for its workforce shortfall. It also has a very low level of childcare access, with implications for early childhood development and education.
6. **Community safety**, including family violence, falls amongst older residents, and a high level of road deaths and injuries. Drownings are also increasing, although local-level data are limited.

Health status varies by suburb and township within Yarra Ranges, with some areas having much worse health and less access to services. These variations tend to be linked to socio-economic characteristics, such as income, housing affordability, insurance and utility costs, food security, transport access, health service access, and education and employment levels.

**Community strengths include:**

- Yarra Ranges has a low and falling total level of crime, and a very low level of hospital admissions for assault. It has a below average rate of family violence.
- During the height of the pandemic, Yarra Ranges had the lowest level of deaths in Melbourne from COVID-19, with a low level of cases and hospital admissions.
- Yarra Ranges tends to have a low level of infectious diseases. It avoided the upwards spike in respiratory infections such as influenza and pneumonia, which occurred across Australia during 2022. It has also avoided the national trend for significant growth in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- After years of rapid growth in the level of residents with diabetes, the rate has stabilised and remains below the national average.
- Maternal and infant health is good. Children in Yarra Ranges have high levels of childhood immunisation. Over the past few years, the level of pre-term births, low birthweight babies and small-for-age babies has fallen considerably. Vaccine-preventable infectious childhood diseases have been declining over the past few years.
- Older residents also have very good health, with low or average levels of hospital admissions for most diseases. Their main health risks are dementia, falls and pneumonia.
- Indigenous residents in Yarra Ranges have below average hospital admissions, compared both to non-Indigenous residents, and to Indigenous residents across Victoria.

- High-level health indicators are good, with total hospital admissions falling over the past four years, and a below average level of deaths. Total deaths amongst under-75s have fallen.
- Smoking rates amongst adults in Yarra Ranges have remained stable over the past few years and are below the Victorian average.
- Yarra Ranges has a very high level of tree canopy cover, protecting against the health impacts of urban heat.

## Snapshot of health status in Yarra Ranges

### Mental health

- 26% of adults with high/very high psychological distress (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the state) 2023
- 10.3% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Melbourne with 13% females and 8% males) 2021
- 22.1% of adults experiencing loneliness, compared to 23.3% in Victoria 2023.

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions	10.3%	8.8%	2021
% of adults seeking professional help for a mental health problem in past 12 months	24%	20%	2023
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds * <b>Note</b> this data covers a period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.	40% ↑		2019/20 to 2022/23

### Children and young people

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Increase in number of 5–14-year-olds with a disability	47% ↑		2016-2021
Change in number of sexually transmitted disease notifications, 15–24-year-olds	9.1% ↑		2019-2023
Growth in teenage birth rates, 15–19-year-olds	36% ↑	-10%	2019 to 2020

## Climate impacts

- 26% The number of hospital admissions for heat stroke for 2022/23 exceeded 450

## Chronic diseases & health risk

- 8.9% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, compared with 8% in Victoria (2023)
- 23% of Yarra Ranges adults with fair/poor dental health, compared with 27% in Victoria (2023)
- 61% of Yarra Ranges adults with insufficient weekly exercise, compared with 64% in Victoria (2023).

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with at least one long-term health condition	35%	31%	2021
% of residents with diabetes	4.7%	6.1% (AUS)	March 2023
% of adults overweight or obese	57%	54%	2023
% of adults who smoke daily	8%	10%	2023
% of adults who vape daily	7% (3 <sup>rd</sup> highest)	4.5%	2023
Risk of increased harm from alcohol-related disease or injury	17%	13%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	19%	19.5%	2023

## Safety and inclusion

- 35% increase in change in crimes amongst 10–17-year-olds in Yarra Ranges from March 2019 to March 2024
- 16% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced discrimination, equal to Victoria (2023)
- 3% of Yarra Ranges adults experienced racism, compared to 7% in Victoria (2023)

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Family violence incidents per 100,000	1,224	1,366	2022/23



Crime rate per 100,000	<b>3,042</b>	5,536	2023
Deaths from accidental falls, rate per 100,000	<b>11.5</b>	9.7 (AUS)	2017-2021 combined

## Demographic snapshot for Yarra Ranges, 2021

Census 2021 indicators	Yarra Ranges	Victoria
Estimated resident population (2023)	<b>158,694</b>	
Indigenous residents	<b>1.1%</b>	1.0%
Born in Australia	<b>79.4%</b>	65.0%
Adults LGBTIQ+	<b>11.0%</b>	11.0%
Residents with a disability	<b>5.4%</b>	5.9%
% aged 65+	<b>17.2%</b>	16.4%
% aged 0-24	<b>30.6%</b>	30.2%
Providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability or health condition	<b>14.7%</b>	12.9%
Doing voluntary work through an organisation or group (2021)	<b>15.5%</b>	13.3%
Family households	<b>76.7%</b>	70.1%
Attending tertiary education	<b>20.6%</b>	24.5%
Level of separate houses	<b>93.7%</b>	73.4%
Households with a mortgage	<b>48.2%</b>	36.1%
Level of properties being rented	<b>14.0%</b>	28.5%

## How is health changing in Australia?

The lifespan of Australians is increasing, supported by the medical system's growing capacity to detect and treat health issues. However, 60% of Australians have at least one long-term health condition, and Australians are now spending more years living with ill-health. Treatments are continuing to increase in cost, creating economic challenges in responding to public health issues. The primary health care system is also responding to an ageing population, an increase in mental illness, and growing prevalence of complex multiple health conditions.

Australia's main health challenges over the past five years include the impacts of COVID-19, increasing chronic illnesses (including mental health) and climate change. Heart disease, dementia, COVID-19, cancer and other long-term illnesses were the main causes of death during this period. The impact of dementia will continue to grow as the population ages. Indigenous Australians continue to have worse health than other Australians. Vaping is a rapidly growing health issue, especially for young people. The level of people struggling to maintain a healthy weight continues to rise. The impact of climate change is forecast to increase exponentially, particularly extreme heat and storms. Other community health and wellbeing issues include cost of living - including the lack of affordable housing - and lack of access to health services for prevention and treatment.

There is a range of emerging health risks whose future health impacts are unknown. These include rising levels of vaping, changing in the prevalence and transmission of infectious diseases, ultra-processed foods accounting for most foods consumed, micro-plastics throughout the food chain and ecosystem, shifts in how social media and technology are used, growing concern about how social media and internet access impact social attitudes and concentration, and rising impacts of misinformation on civic trust and health literacy.

But despite these challenges, Australians have very high life expectancy, and this is increasing. Health screening has vastly improved cancer survival rates. COVID deaths in Australia were much lower than in most other high-income countries. Australians have very good access to health care compared to many areas of the world. Thus, communities have the capacity to mitigate many of the health risks facing them.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) does a two-yearly report on Australia's health and what has changed. This includes an overview of high-level health issues and changes in health status, summarised below.

### **Australians' life expectancy has fallen for the first time in 30 years**

*Australia's Health 2024* shows that Australians have lost a month from their life spans. For the first time since the mid-1990s, the life expectancy has decreased, falling by 0.1 years for both males and females between 2020 and 2022. This change is most likely to be due to the impact of COVID-19. In 2022, there was an increase in the total number of deaths, and nearly half of these were from the

virus. COVID-19 became the third leading cause of death in Australia in 2022 – the first time in more than 50 years that an infectious disease has been in the top five causes of death.

However, life expectancy is still trending upwards, with life expectancy in 2020-2022 higher than it was in 2017-19. Other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom saw much larger drops in life expectancy, of up to two years. Australian's life expectancy at birth is the fourth highest among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. A boy and a girl born in 2020–2022 can expect to live an average of 81.2 years and 85.3 years respectively.

## **Chronic conditions: heart disease still the biggest killer**

Chronic conditions have contributed to 90% of deaths over the past twenty years. As the population ages, the number of years that Australians spend in ill-health has increased from 8.7 years to 9.7 years in men, and from 10.2 to 11.5 years in women. Around three in five Australians are estimated to live with at least one long-term (chronic) health condition.

Coronary heart disease remains the leading cause of death in Australia; cancer is also a key cause of death. Over the past 20 years, the number of new cancer cases increased by 88% and deaths increased by 41%. Population growth and ageing is a key factor in rising cancer prevalence, along with dietary and other risk factors. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men.

Five-year cancer survival rates have improved, from 53% in 1990-1994 to 71% in 2015–2019. Screening has had an enormous impact on survival rates – for example, cervical cancer death rates have halved since the National Cervical Screening Program was introduced in 1991.

## **Dementia forecast to double over the next 35 years**

Dementia is expected to affect almost every Australian over the course of their lives. A 2023 AIHW survey found that two in every three people had a family member or friend living with dementia, and that one in four had cared for a family member or friend living with dementia. The AIHW predicts that the number of Australians with dementia will more than double over the next three decades, affecting 533,800 women and 315,500 men.

## **Indigenous Australians – Some improvements**

Death rates amongst Indigenous Australians have fallen for most age groups over the past decade. However, infant and child death rates have not improved.

Cancers are now the most common cause of death for Indigenous residents, taking over from cardiovascular disease. There continue to be large differences in social determinants and health risk factors between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

## Other health indicators

General practitioner (GP) attendances have been increasing steadily. Most Australians (86%) had a GP visit in 2022/23 which was subsidised by Medicare. Tobacco smoking has decreased but vaping has increased. More people are overweight or living with obesity, with this figure increasing by 10% over the past few decades.

## Community adaptation to climate-related health risks

### Key climate change risk indicators for Yarra Ranges

Indicator	Yarra Ranges	Time Period
Number of hospital admissions for heat stroke	>450	2022/23
National ranking for assistance seeking national disaster recovery funding	2nd highest	2006/07-2024
Victorian ranking for storm hotspots	3rd highest	2023
Number of properties at high risk from bushfire	10,317 (accounting for 3 of the top 10 areas in Australia)	2024
Forecast level of properties at high or medium risk from climate change	65% (2nd highest in Melbourne)	2030

Climate change has both direct and indirect health impacts. Direct impacts are caused by exposure to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves. They include hypothermia, hyperthermia, heat stress, injury, drownings, trauma and death. For example, extreme heat has a major impact on health via heat stroke, exhaustion, cardiac conditions, respiratory illnesses and falls due to dehydration. Heatwaves are responsible for more deaths each year than any other type of disaster, including bushfires.

Indirect impacts include increases in infectious diseases; food and water insecurity; mental health issues; and impacts of existing chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. The social determinants of health are also affected, including cost of living (particularly due to rising food, insurance and power costs), housing, employment, income, transport, access to services and infrastructure, workplace safety, recreational opportunities, and social support networks.

Many of the health impacts of climate change apply across the state and the country. But they tend to have more impact in areas which are hotter, more prone to fire/flood/storms, and have high levels of vulnerable residents.

## Impacts so far

In 2023, impacts of extreme weather events included flooding or heavy rain, hail, extreme wind, cyclones and bushfires. Most Australians (84%) say they have been directly affected by at least one climate-fuelled disaster since 2019. More than 70% are concerned about climate change impacts including food and water security, more bushfires, more extreme events, higher insurance costs, more high heat days, and general health impacts.

- **Disasters.** Yarra Ranges has the second highest level of assistance seeking from national disaster recovery funding – it has sought and received assistance 42 times since 2006/07. Assistance was mostly sought due to storms (27), floods (17) and bushfires (5), with some events involving multiple hazards at the same time (e.g., bushfire and storm). Drownings in Victoria due to storms and disasters have increased by 1900% over the past ten years.
- **Storms.** Yarra Ranges ranks third in Victoria for storm hotspots. The impact of the June 2021 storms included: damage to and destruction of homes, businesses and roads; loss of power and internet for extended periods; fallen trees; blocked access to services and infrastructure; loss of communication, including the ability to contact emergency services; disruptions to schools, health services and transport; and loss of access to public space.
- **Food insecurity.** Food insecurity is gradually increasing (9% of adults in 2023). During the pandemic-related lockdowns in 2020, Yarra Ranges had the fourth-highest level of food insecurity in metropolitan Melbourne. Both cost of living issues and natural disasters are contributing to food insecurity.
- **Bushfires and high heat.** The 2019/20 bushfires saw a spike in respiratory and mental health issues amongst residents, an indication of what can be expected with future increases in high heat and bushfire risk days. There was a large spike in asthma admissions in 2022/23; this group is particularly at risk from smoke and fires. Yarra Ranges has the highest bushfire risk in Australia. Upper Yarra Valley, Mount Dandenong-Olinda and Belgrave-Selby are in the top ten local areas for risk across the entire country, with more than 10,000 properties considered at high risk.
- **Heat and cold.** Already, 39% of Victorians feel too cold in their home during winter and 44% feel too hot in their home during summer. There were more than 450 hospital admissions for heat stroke amongst Yarra Ranges residents in 2022/23. Residents have also experienced frequent impacts from heating or cooling failing due to power outages, as were seen in the 2019/20 extreme heat and the June 2021 storm impacting the Dandenong Ranges.

## Forecast impacts

Over the coming decades, Yarra Ranges can expect two to three times the number of days with temperatures above 35°C, lower annual rainfall with more storm events, and longer fire seasons with 42% more high fire danger days.

By 2030, 65% of properties in Yarra Ranges are forecast to be at high or medium risk from climate change (under a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario). This is the second-highest level in Melbourne - only Nillumbik has a higher risk (68%). The main type of risk is bushfire - 30.5% of properties were considered at medium to high risk for bushfire, rising to 43% by 2050 and 56% by 2100. Most suburbs had 20% to 100% of properties at medium to high risk. The areas with the highest risk are located in the Dandenong Ranges. These areas also have the lowest level of amenities, public transport and pedestrian infrastructure (note that these data were not available for most of the Yarra Valley).

Local human services expect that increased climate-related disasters and extreme weather events will impact service demand (51%), with access to climate resilient housing a challenge for low income households.

Council has a major role in supporting communities to adapt to the health impacts of climate change, and also in preparing for and responding to the impacts of emergencies.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Tackling climate change and its impacts on health*

## What changes do we want to see?

**Residents have the information and resources needed to protect against climate-related health and wellbeing risks**

- Reduced risk of climate-related ill-health, especially from heat.
- Everyone in the community has the climate risk information that they need.
- A high level of resident's view Council as a trusted source for information on how to protect against the health impacts of climate change.

**All aspects of Council work are adapted to function in changing conditions and emergency events**

- Council buildings, facilities, services and communications are prepared for the impacts of changing weather and extreme events.

- Open spaces and outdoor infrastructure are designed to reduce heat health risks and be usable in hotter summers.
- Nature-based solutions are used to reduce urban heat.
- The people and places at greatest risk from climate-fuelled disasters are protected.

#### The community is prepared for climate impacts and emergency events

- Residents and businesses are prepared for various types of disruptions (including loss of power/gas, loss of internet/phone, water contamination and transport disruptions).
- The community has improved understanding of on appropriate home insurance.

#### The community is protected from emerging public health issues and health hazards

- Reduced risk of health impacts from emerging public health issues and hazards (including infectious diseases, vector borne diseases, food poisoning and water contamination).
- Work towards these outcomes will be through the lens of age, gender, cultural diversity and place.

## Mental wellbeing and social connection

### Key mental health indicators for Yarra Ranges

Indicator	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of adults with high/very high psychological distress	<b>26% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	19%	2023
% of residents with diagnosed mental health conditions	<b>10.3% (7<sup>th</sup> highest in Melbourne)</b> <b>13% of females, 8% of males</b>	8.8%	2021
% of adults seeking professional help for a mental health problem in past 12 months	<b>24% (9<sup>th</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	20%	2023
Growth in rate of intentional self-harm hospital admissions, 0–24-year-olds	<b>25.5% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2020/21
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds * <b>Note</b> this data covers a period during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.	<b>40% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2022/23

Yarra Ranges has a connected community with a strong sense of place, and relatively high levels of involvement in community activities such as volunteering. But the COVID-19 pandemic has hit some groups in the community much harder than others, both triggering and worsening a range of mental health and other health issues. Young people and females have a much higher level of long-term mental health conditions, along with indigenous residents, persons with a disability and low income residents. Overall, Yarra Ranges has a high level of residents with high psychological distress. Disability related to mental health affects 10% of local NDIS recipients; two-thirds of NDIS recipients are aged less than 25. More than one in five adults are lonely, nearly one in four have low or medium life satisfaction, and one in eight do not feel valued by society. Residents have high and rising usage of mental health medication and services; and high use hospital admissions and emergency department treatment for mental health issues, including self-harm and attempted suicide. These issues affect children, teenagers and young adults the most.

High school students and school leavers have also experienced reduced connection with education and employment since the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, and worse educational outcomes. Older residents have experienced a large rise in hospital admissions for dementia over the past few years. Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of mental health referral and treatment services, such as general practitioners and psychiatrists, despite a very high level of need.

Yarra Ranges has a relatively high level of:

- Residents with long-term mental health conditions (10%) - Yarra Ranges ranks seventh highest across Melbourne. Mental health is the most prevalent long-term health condition amongst Yarra Ranges residents, particularly amongst women, teenagers and young adults.
- Adults with high psychological distress (26%) – Yarra Ranges is ranked third in Victoria.
- Adults seeking professional help with a mental health problem (24%) – Yarra Ranges is ranked ninth highest in Victoria.
- Mental health hospital admissions amongst children, teenagers and young adults.
- Young people on prescription medications for mental health issues. Yarra Ranges ranks second highest in Victoria for 0–17-year-olds receiving prescriptions, and sixth highest for 18–24-year-olds.

The past five years (since 2019) have also seen large increases in:

- Mental health-related hospital and emergency department use amongst young people.
- Hospital admissions for youth self-harm, and emergency department use for attempted suicide amongst children and young adults.
- Young people being prescribed mental health medications.
- Adults with high psychological distress.



- Families with young children who need emotional counselling.
- Use of psychiatrists, and use of mental health services by existing patients.
- Hospital use for dementia – there was a nearly 300% increase in admissions for Alzheimer’s disease.

Lack of access to services is contributing to poor mental health in Yarra Ranges. Being unable to see a GP when needed, or having no private health insurance, is associated with higher levels of psychological distress. Yarra Ranges lacks preventative and referral services such as general practitioners and psychiatrists.

Other factors associated with high psychological distress in Victorian local government areas include food insecurity, poor general health and life satisfaction, and not feeling socially connected (e.g., being lonely, not feeling valued by society, experiencing discrimination). Being in a couple or family with children household was a strong factor in protecting against mental health issues. This is in line with research during the pandemic, which found that three key issues linked to better mental health were: adequate income, social connection, and sufficient access to services.

Council works across these determinants of mental health. It is involved in projects to improve access to appropriate affordable food; advocacy and partnership work to improve service access; and a wide range of projects and grants aiming to improve social connection, and health and wellbeing. Its economic development work supports local employment and educational opportunities; these in turn support household income. Council grants, projects and partnership work all support emergency relief and other projects assisting disadvantaged communities.

#### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving wellbeing*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **People have better access to mental health supports and services**

- Increased access to and knowledge of available mental health supports.

### **People have better access to emergency, social and affordable housing**

- Community members in need, are supported to access suitable housing.

### **People feel a sense of belonging and have strong community connections**

- Council facilities are fit for purpose to support people of all ages and abilities to participate in community activities and build strong connections.

- Council's holistic planning with communities increases amenity, liveability and sustainability of our townships.
- Council's role in strengthening communities is articulated in its Community Strengthening Strategy.
- Increased mental wellbeing through community connection and participation in civic life.

## Community capacity to lead healthy lives

### Key indicators for chronic diseases and health risk in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of residents with at least one long-term health condition	<b>35% (38% of females, 32% of males)</b>	31%	2021
% of residents with diabetes	<b>4.7%</b>	6.1% (Australia)	March 2023
% of adults overweight or obese	<b>57%</b>	54%	2023
% of adults consuming sugary drinks daily or a few times per week, during the past week	<b>37%</b>	34%	2023
% of adults who experienced food insecurity in past 12 months	<b>8.9</b>	8%	2023
% of adults with gum disease	<b>23.9% (6th highest)</b>	20.3%	2023
% of adults with fair/poor dental health	<b>23%</b>	27%	2023
% of adults with insufficient weekly exercise	<b>61%</b>	64%	2023
% of residents participating in sport	<b>16%</b>	n/a	2022
% of adults who smoke daily	<b>8%</b>	10%	2023
% of adults who vape daily	<b>7% (3rd highest)</b>	4.5%	2023
% of adults at risk of increased harm from alcohol-related disease or injury	<b>17%</b>	13%	2023
Rise in hospital admissions for dementia	<b>286% ↑</b>	17%	2018/19-2022/23
% of adults with no private health insurance	<b>49%</b>	45%	2023

% of adults who delayed visit to dentist due to cost, during the past 12 months	<b>30%</b>	32%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	<b>19%</b>	19.5%	2023

## Prevalence of chronic diseases

Chronic (long-term) diseases and lifestyle risk factors are a major cause of ill-health in all areas of Australia. In Yarra Ranges, 35% of residents had at least one long-term health condition, compared to 31% of Victorian residents. Mental health issues, asthma, arthritis, diabetes and heart disease are the most common conditions in Yarra Ranges, and residents were above average for mental health conditions, asthma, arthritis and cancer. Dental health is also an issue – Yarra Ranges has a high level of residents with gum disease. Females and older residents aged 65 plus were much more likely to have chronic health issues.

Chronic diseases are also the main cause of death for most residents. These include coronary heart disease (10.5% of deaths in Yarra Ranges), dementia (8%), lung cancer (6%), cerebrovascular disease (6%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD - 4%) and colorectal cancer (3%). Yarra Ranges has experienced a rising level of avoidable deaths amongst men aged less than 75. Yarra Ranges has a high rate of deaths from heart and lung disease, accidental falls, some forms of cancer, and influenza and pneumonia. Hospital admissions for dementia nearly tripled in the four years to 2022/23. There was also growth in emergency department use for conditions including heart issues and pneumonia. Local cancer screening rates dropped during the pandemic.

## Risk and protective factors

Eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and not smoking/vaping/drinking regularly, all help to reduce the risk of chronic disease. People do not need huge improvements in diet, exercise and sleep to reduce our health risks. The first ever study to examine the minimum improvements across all three behaviours required for measurable improvements in health outcomes, found that slight changes substantially reduce the risk of early death. The risk of premature death was reduced by at least 10% if people slept for 15 minutes more a day, plus did an additional 1.6 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day and ate an additional one and a half pieces of fruit or half a serving of vegetables a day. This is if people make slight improvements across all three behaviours. For people whose sleep, physical activity and diet were poor, combined increases of 75 minutes a day of sleep, 12.5 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and a 25-point improvement in

diet (five points equating to one less serving of processed meat a week, or an extra half serving of vegetables or a piece and a half of fruit) halved their all-cause mortality risk.

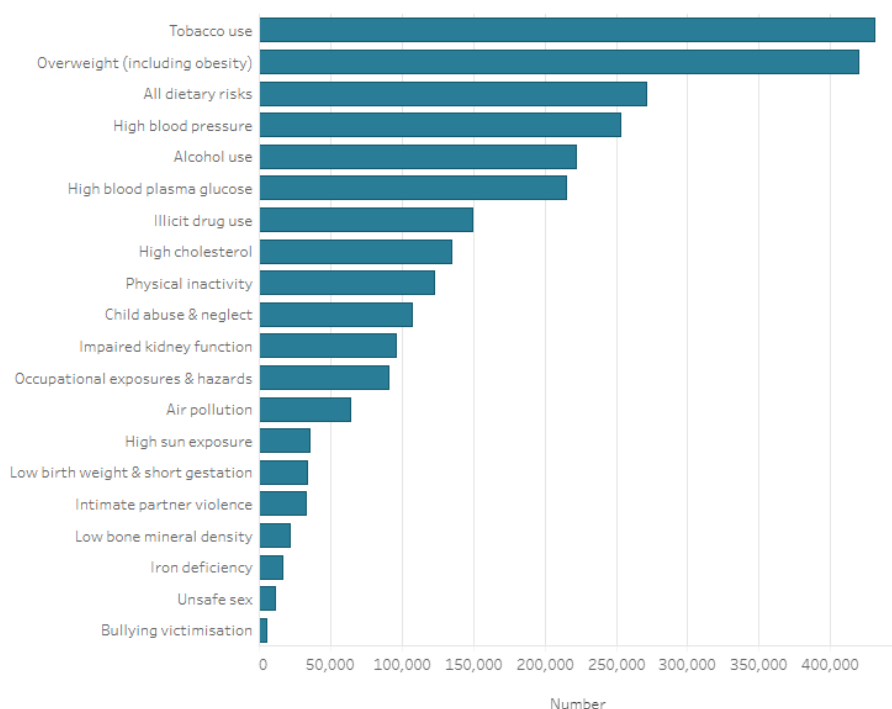
In Yarra Ranges, residents have an average level of physical inactivity and being overweight, and a high level of vaping and alcohol consumption.

In 2023:

- 37% of adults drank sugary drinks daily or a few times a week.
- 61% of adults did not exercise enough each week.
- Nearly 60% of adults were overweight or obese.
- Yarra Ranges had a relatively high level of adults who vaped daily (7%) - Yarra Ranges was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria for vaping. A below average level (8%) were daily smokers.
- 8% of adults had been sunburnt several times in the past year.
- 17% of adults were at increased risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, above the 13% Victorian average. Alcohol treatment and hospital admissions rose substantially during the pandemic.
- Nearly 1 in 10 residents were food insecure – i.e., they ran out of food at some point in the past year and could not afford to buy more. The level was 8.9% for adults in Yarra Ranges (up from 8% in 2020), compared to 8% across Victoria. 10.5% had been worried about becoming food insecure.

## Leading risk factors contributing to disease burden in Australia, 2018

DALY= Disability-adjusted life years; YLD= Years lived with disability; YLL= Years of life lost  
ASR= Age-standardised rate per 1,000 population



### Notes:

Rates were age-standardised to the 2001 Australian Standard Population and expressed as per 1,000 population.

The risk factors high blood plasma glucose, air pollution, and low birth weight & short gestation were not estimated for all reference years.

Source: AIHW Australian Burden of Disease Database. <http://www.aihw.gov.au>

## Infectious diseases

Yarra Ranges has had a huge jump in local cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in 2024. It now has the highest level of whooping cough cases in Victoria, mostly amongst children and teenagers. Yarra Ranges is also experiencing a rising level of infectious diseases resistant to antibiotics.

Council is involved in a range of project and joint work supporting healthier lifestyles in terms of physical activity, healthy diet, food security, alcohol and drug use, disability access, healthy active ageing, and infectious disease prevention. It also advocates for better access to preventative services and treatment services. It plays an important part in providing community health warnings for weather-related hazards.

### Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:

*Improving wellbeing*

*Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use*

*Increasing healthy eating*

*Increasing active living*

*Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use*

*Decreasing antimicrobial resistance across human and animal health*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **The community has increased capacity to access healthy affordable food**

- Increased consumption of minimally processed foods and reduced consumption of discretionary foods.
- Reduced levels of food insecurity.

### **Neighbourhoods provide a wider range of accessible options to participate in physical activity**

- The community has increased opportunities to participate in physical activity.

### **The community has access to substance-free spaces and activities**

- Reduced risk of harm from alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes.

# Safer and more inclusive communities

## Key community safety indicators for Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Family violence incidents per 100,000	<b>1,224</b>	1,366	Year to Sept 2022/23
Hospital admissions for assault, rate per 100,000	<b>24</b>	36	2022/23
Crime rate per 100,000	<b>3,042</b>	5,536	2023
Deaths from accidental falls, rate per 100,000	<b>11.5</b> <b>19% above average</b> <b>(28% above average males, 7% females)</b>	9.7 (Australia)	2017-2021 combined
Change in number of presentations for tendency to fall	<b>377.3% ↑</b>	70%	2018/19-2022/23
% of adults who experienced discrimination	<b>16%</b>	16%	2023
% of adults who experienced racism	<b>3%</b>	7%	2023

Yarra Ranges is a relatively safe community, with low total crime rates. But there remain community safety issues which particularly affect older residents, young people and people affected by family violence. The main community safety issues in Yarra Ranges include family violence, falls, transport accidents, drowning and youth crime.

## Falls

Yarra Ranges has an above average rate of hospital admissions for accidental injuries; falls amongst elderly are likely to be the main contributor. Over the past four years, emergency presentations for tendency to fall have increased nearly fourfold (up 377% between 2018/19 and 2022/23). Frail aged residents by far the most likely to go to hospital for unintentional injury, mostly due to falls. Yarra Ranges also has a very high rate of deaths from accidental falls amongst older males; its total rate of deaths from accidental falls is 19% higher than the national average.

## Road safety

Yarra Ranges has a relatively high number of road deaths and hospital admissions for serious road injuries. Across Victoria, Yarra Ranges has the highest number of hospital admissions for serious road injuries of any LGA - children and young people have the highest rate of admissions. The number of road deaths jumped by 50% in 2023 to 11 lives lost.

## Family violence

Yarra Ranges has a below average rate of family violence. Family violence increased by 18% during the pandemic but fell in 2023. Most victims of family violence were female, and most offenders were male. However, Yarra Ranges has had high growth in family violence victims aged 55 plus, over the past four years. There was also a large shift in the age profile of perpetrators. The number aged 55 plus more than doubled (a 103% increase), and the number aged 0-17 rose by 72%. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, the number of maternal and child health mother/family counselling sessions for domestic violence nearly tripled, rising from 36 to 99.

## Drowning

Yarra Ranges ranks 12th out of 31 LGAs for its number of drowning deaths in the past ten years. Victoria-wide, the number of people who died from drowning has increased since the pandemic.

## Crime

Yarra Ranges has a below average crime rate, and the rate has been trending down over the past four years. However, crime rates amongst 10–17-year-olds have been rising.

Council has a role in reducing health issues such as falls, traffic accidents and family violence through work including healthy active ageing, gender equity work, roads maintenance, L2P driver education, community safety information and a range of programs run by Council's Community Safety Team.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Preventing all forms of violence*

*Reducing injury*



## **What changes do we want to see?**

### **Our community works together to prevent all forms of violence**

- Reduced levels of violence against women and children.
- Improved sexual and reproductive health.
- Reduced levels of elder abuse.

### **Community members are protected from accidental injury**

- Fewer falls amongst older residents.
- Safer roads for all users.
- Reduced risk of drowning.

### **Our community has equitable access to spaces where everyone feels welcome and included**

- Increased access to safe, accessible and inclusive Council spaces.

# Healthy children and young people

## Key health indicators for children and young people in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
Rate of whooping cough cases	<b>194.4 per 100,000 (highest in Victoria)</b>	67.4 per 100,000	Sept 2024, year to date
Growth in number of NDIS participants with developmental delay	<b>36% ↑</b>		Dec 2022 to Sept 2023
Increase in number of 5–14-year-olds with a disability	<b>47% ↑</b>		2016-2021
Change in number of sexually transmitted disease notifications, 15–24-year-olds	<b>9.1% ↑</b>		2019-2023
Growth in rate of intentional self-harm hospital admissions, 0–24-year-olds	<b>25.5% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2020/21
Growth in mental health admissions amongst 15–24-year-olds	<b>40% ↑</b>		2019/20 to 2022/23
Change in level of students who attended school at least 90% of the time	<b>15% fall ↓</b>		2019 to 2023
Year 12 completion rates	<b>6% fall ↓</b>		2018 to 2020
Youth unemployment	<b>15.1% (Outer East)</b>	11.9%	March 2024
Change in crimes amongst 10–17-year-olds	<b>35% ↑</b>		March 2019 to March 2024

Children and young people have tended to be the most vulnerable age group in Yarra Ranges for health and wellbeing. Post-pandemic, they have continued to have a wide range of health issues and risk factors. Mental health is the standout issue, including high and rising hospital use for: stress, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, psychosis, self-harm and attempted suicide. Young people have high use of prescription medications for mental health issues. There is also a high level of emotional counselling amongst families with young children, family mental health issues for children starting school, and ill-health amongst school leavers.

Health issues go beyond mental health. Children and young people in Yarra Ranges also have a very high level of hospital admissions across many other conditions. Disability is a growing issue amongst children - there was a 47% jump in the number of 5–14-year-olds who needed assistance with daily

living activities, between 2016 and 2021. Children and teenagers account for most NDIS recipients in Yarra Ranges, particularly due to autism, intellectual disability, developmental delay, and psychosocial disabilities (i.e. disabling levels of mental illness). The number of NDIS recipients aged grew by 11% over the year to September 2023, and most of this growth has been amongst 0–24-year-olds.

Educational attachment also seems to have fallen on measures including school attendance, Year 12 retention and completion, educational outcomes, and post-school study. Youth unemployment is increasing. Young people are experiencing rising teenage birth rates and number of STDs. Child crime is rising. The level of families with children who need homelessness services is growing, in concert with falling housing affordability, rising living costs increase and rising numbers of family violence incidents. All of these issues vary across Yarra Ranges townships, with children and young people in some areas much more affected by expanding health, education and social challenges.

Yarra Ranges Council has an active role in the health of children and young people, with dedicated teams supporting these age groups. It has roles spanning social connection, maternal and child health, school retention, advocacy for access to services and affordable housing, improving access and inclusion for person with a disability, gender equity, and economic development.

**Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving sexual and reproductive health*

*Improving wellbeing*

*Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use*

## **What changes do we want to see?**

The goal for the health and wellbeing of children and young people is that children and young people have a healthy start to life, and can participate fully in education, employment and society. Specific plans for children and young people are currently being developed, which will target the key issues for children and young people.

## Accessible health services

### Key indicators for chronic diseases and health risk in Yarra Ranges

	Yarra Ranges	Victoria	Time Period
% of adults with no private health insurance	<b>49%</b>	45%	2023
% of adults who delayed visit to dentist due to cost, during the past 12 months	<b>30%</b>	32%	2023
% of adults unable to see a GP when needed in the past 12 months	<b>19%</b>	19.5%	2023
% of adults who had cancelled medical appointments			2023
➤ Cancelled surgery	<b>6% (2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	3%	
➤ Cancelled/postponed cancer screening	<b>5% (2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	3%	
➤ Cancelled/postponed medical appointment, test or procedure	<b>14% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Victoria)</b>	11%	
% of emergency presentations where no disease was found	<b>13.5%</b>	2%	2022/23
Change in level of emergency department presentations where no diagnosis made	<b>866% ↑</b>	8% increase	2018/19-2022/23

Service access is a long-term issue for residents, partly due to Yarra Ranges being located in the urban fringe area. Issues include a lack of GPs and health professionals, residents having a very high tendency to go to emergency departments when unwell, lack of private health insurance, a high level of adults cancelling medical appointments, struggles with the cost of health services, falling levels of cancer screening, and challenges in getting a GP appointment when needed.

### Service needs

The ability to access services where and when they are needed is crucial to community health and wellbeing. However, Yarra Ranges residents experience significant challenges when trying to access local human services. An analysis of service usage data and survey data shows that most services have had rising demand over the past four years and have often been unable to meet community demand.

Human services are currently facing a range of barriers to providing services. The key barriers include lack of staff and volunteers; long waiting lists and waiting times; lack of sufficient services, combined with a reduction in the number of services and programs; lack of suitable space; lack of transport to services; lack of GPs, who are often the first step in referring patients to a specialist service; rising

costs of service provision; and difficulties with referring clients to other services. Problems with referrals include waiting lists, services not accepting new clients, lack of available services or no local services. Service data also showed major shortages for all types of medical specialists, and that workers are not available in the areas that need them the most, contributing to the workforce shortages identified in the survey. Recent data shows that Yarra Ranges has a major shortage of medical workers, ranking third highest in Melbourne for its workforce deficit. It had a shortage of 1,297 nurses/midwives, 488 medical practitioners and 428 allied health workers. Wandin-Seville has the lowest number of childcare places per child in Melbourne and the fifth-lowest number in Victoria, whilst Upper Yarra Valley has no childcare access.

At the same time, most services have experienced rising demand over the past four years. And clients are presenting with more numerous and complex conditions, more advanced health problems (e.g., advanced skin cancer), worse mental and physical health, higher service needs per person, and issues such as family violence and lack of affordable housing.

## **Service usage**

Yarra Ranges has a high proportion of hospital admissions where the person was unwell, but no disease was found (13.5% in 2022/23, compared to 2% across Victoria). And over the past few years, there has been a 170% increase in these presentations (compared to 52% across Victoria). There has also been a large increase in emergency department use where no diagnosis was made, at 866% growth in Yarra Ranges, compared to 8% across Victoria. This may be linked to lack of access to GPs in Yarra Ranges, meaning that people have had to attend emergency to have their health concerns investigated. In 2023, Yarra Ranges had a high level of adults who had cancelled medical appointments over the past year:

- 6% cancelled surgery, ranking Yarra Ranges 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the state.
- 4.7% cancelled or postponed cancer screening, ranking Yarra Ranges 2<sup>nd</sup> highest.
- 14% cancelled or postponed a medical appointment, test or procedure, ranking Yarra Ranges 3<sup>rd</sup> highest.

In 2023, 19% of adults had been unable to see a GP when needed over the past twelve months (the same as the state average). Of this group, 26% were unable to see a GP due to cost and nearly one-third felt that they waited an unacceptably long time to see a GP.

Bowel cancer screening rates in Yarra Ranges dropped 6% in 2020/21, after five years of steady increases. This fall in screening is likely to be linked to lockdown impacts on service access and usage. The level of older women having breast cancer screening fell by 16% in 2019/20, despite only the final quarter of that year being affected by lockdowns. Victoria-wide, there was also a substantial fall in participation in 2020/21.

The level of potentially avoidable deaths (PAD) has risen amongst males. These are deaths amongst people aged under 75, from conditions which could be prevented through individualised care, or are treatable through primary care and hospital care.

During COVID, there was a drop in usage of antenatal care in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy amongst women in Yarra Ranges. The level who had at least one antenatal visit in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy fell from 94% in 2019 to 90% in 2021, whilst the level increased Victoria-wide. The level of women leaving hospital less than one day after giving birth rose by 50% across Victoria, but nearly doubled in Yarra Ranges, with a 95% increase.

## Service cost

In 2023, 49% of adults surveyed in Yarra Ranges had no private health insurance, compared to 45% across Victoria. The average out-of-pocket cost to see a GP has risen from \$35.32 in December 2019 to \$43.28 in June 2024, and the level of services which are bulk billed has dropped from 83.6% to 75%. At the same time, demand for GPs has surged, with appointment numbers increasing by 17%, whilst the population stayed the same. In 2023, nearly one-third of adults had avoided or delayed a dental visit due to the cost.

Council is a direct service provider for services such as immunisation. It also works with service providers, service network, and state and federal government, to advocate for and improve access to services. It provides a crucial role in supporting funding applications by partner organisations.

### **Links to Victorian state health and wellbeing priorities:**

*Improving wellbeing*

*Increasing healthy eating*

*Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use*

## What changes do we want to see?

Council's key goal in this space is that essential health and human services and infrastructure are accessible to all groups within the community. The desired outcome would be improved access to health screening, prevention and treatment services.

This is a key advocacy action for Council, rather than a stand-alone priority.

# Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority
<b>ACSC</b>	Ambulatory care sensitive condition
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>AMR</b>	Antimicrobial resistance
<b>AOD</b>	Alcohol and other drugs
<b>ATSI</b>	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
<b>Census</b>	ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing
<b>Chronic health condition</b>	A long-term health condition (e.g., asthma, cancer)
<b>COPD</b>	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
<b>COVID</b>	Refers to the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns in 2020 and 2021
<b>CSA</b>	Crime Statistics Agency
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health (Victoria)
<b>EMPHN</b>	Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
<b>EMR</b>	Eastern Metropolitan Region
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner
<b>Hospital data</b>	The statistics on hospital admissions and emergency department presentations are for Yarra Ranges residents, unless otherwise specified
<b>HSNA</b>	Human Services Needs Analysis
<b>iGAS</b>	Invasive group A streptococcal disease
<b>LGA</b>	Local government area
<b>LSV</b>	Life Saving Victoria
<b>MCH</b>	Maternal and child health
<b>NDIS</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>NDSS</b>	National Diabetes Services Scheme
<b>NEC</b>	Not elsewhere classified
<b>Neoplasms</b>	Cancer

<b>NEPHU</b>	North Eastern Public Health Unit
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PAD</b>	Potentially avoidable deaths
<b>Rate ratio</b>	A rate ratio compares rates between two groups. The rate ratio for mortality (death) rates compares deaths in Yarra Ranges to deaths across Australia, where 1 means that Yarra Ranges has the same rate as the average. A high rate ratio means that Yarra Ranges is above average – a rate ratio of 1.2 places Yarra Ranges 20% above average. A low rate ratio means that Yarra Ranges is below average – a rate ratio of 0.9 places Yarra Ranges 10% below average.
<b>RSV</b>	Respiratory syncytial virus
<b>S</b>	Shire
<b>SA2, SA3</b>	Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3s) are geographic areas built from whole Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s). They are designed for the output of regional data including Census data. They tend to align with LGAs.
<b>SEHQ</b>	School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ)
<b>STD</b>	Sexually transmitted disease
<b>TAC</b>	Transport Accident Commission
<b>VAED</b>	Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset
<b>VAHI</b>	Victorian Agency for Health Information
<b>VEMD</b>	Victorian Emergency Management Dataset
<b>VHISS</b>	Victorian Health Information Surveillance System
<b>VPHS</b>	Victorian Population Health Survey
<b>VRE</b>	VanA vancomycin resistant enterococcus



# Map of local areas in Yarra Ranges

