



Physical Health and Activity

City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

Most Port Phillip residents have high levels of self-reported health and life satisfaction and are participating in health promoting behaviours like physical activity. Regular physical activity such as walking, bike riding, or dancing has significant benefits for health. It reduces the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers as well as contributing to mental well-being. Participation in physical activity also increases opportunities for making friends and feeling part of the community. Increasing active living is one of the four focus areas identified by the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

What is physical activity?

Physical activity refers to all movement. Popular ways to be active include walking, bike riding, wheeling, sports, active recreation and play, and can be done at any level of skill and for enjoyment by everybody (World Health Organization, 2020).

What are the rates of physical activity in the Port Phillip community?

Port Phillip adults report high rates of participation in physical activity.

In 2015:

- 59.9 per cent met the physical activity guidelines (higher than the Victorian average of 50.9 per cent).
- 85.7 per cent participated in non-organised sporting activity (higher than the Victorian average of 70.5 per cent) and approximately 50 per cent of residents participated in sport and recreation daily.
- 53 per cent of residents engaged in physical activity four or more days per week (again higher than the Victorian average of 41.3 per cent).

In 2017:

- 10.2 per cent of Port Phillip adults were obese (significantly lower than the Victorian average of 19.3 per cent) (Department of Health and Human Services, 2017)
- Over the past ten years, how people engage in physical activity and sport participation has changed. More people are involved in social sporting activities and less in traditional, club-based sport (VicHealth, 2017).



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- The three most popular non-organised physical activities in Port Phillip were walking (54.6 per cent), cycling (25.2 per cent) and jogging or running (19.9 per cent) (Department of Health and Human Services, 2017).

How do physical activity levels differ for some groups in our community?

While data on the participation of specific sections of our communities in physical activity is unreliable, global, national, and state research indicates that rates of physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles are not evenly distributed across communities.

- From early adulthood onwards, people with lower levels of education, on lower incomes or living in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods are less likely to participate in physical activity and more likely to live sedentary lifestyles.
- Access to physical activity opportunities within schools, workplaces and other key settings, and availability of social support for activity from family, friends, peers or health professionals is important in encouraging lifelong physical activity. People with less access to opportunities to engage in sport and other forms of activity tend to be less active.
- Aboriginal Australians are significantly less likely to be physically active.
- Women are less active than men throughout their lifespan.
- There is emerging evidence of the links between a person's socio-economic status and certain sedentary behaviours, including increased screen time.
- Those who experience social isolation and lack civic and social engagement are less likely to be active.
- Physical activity levels vary significantly across workplaces. Individuals with a lower socioeconomic status are more likely to hold jobs that involve a relatively high level of occupational activity. However, high levels of occupational activity are also associated with lower levels of leisure time and physical activity, and higher levels of sedentary behaviours.
- People living with disabilities often face social and attitudinal barriers to physical activity (VicHealth, 2015).

How has COVID-19 affected community physical health?

Victorians in the first coronavirus lockdown of 2020 tended to remain physically active (VicHealth, 2020), but there were some limiting factors:

- 37 per cent exercised less in the first lockdown compared to the previous month (February 2020).
- 27 per cent were physically inactive.
- Almost 1 in 5 people who reported exercising less in lockdown said they had no one to exercise with or did not feel safe exercising outside.
- 1 in 3 who were more active during lockdown were motivated by wanting to improve their health, to get out of the house and/or have more free time.



- Overall, for some people COVID-19 led to an increase in use of IT and home gym equipment to sustain physical health whilst for others it has led to adoption of sedentary lifestyles.

Why is managing physical activity important for our community?

Less than a third of Australians are getting enough physical activity to benefit their health. This can lead to increased risks of chronic disease and mental ill health and has been estimated to cost the Australian economy a total of \$13.8 billion each year (VicHealth, 2019).

Increasing participation in physical activity has health, social and economic benefits. As well as the health gains to be made by preventing chronic disease, the benefits include promoting mental wellbeing, social connections and self-confidence; increasing workplace productivity; and positive changes to the environments we live and play in, such as reduced traffic congestion and safer neighbourhoods (VicHealth, 2019).

How are the State and Commonwealth supporting physical health?

Commonwealth and State governments work to increase participation in physical activity by establishing policies and programs which include:

- Establishing regulatory frameworks which seek to ensure that built and natural environments enhance opportunities for physical activity.
- Resourcing development of sporting facilities and supporting the work of National and state sporting organisations across sporting codes.
- Resourcing the work of Peak Health and Arts organisations to develop evidence-based resources and programs which increase participation in physical activity at the local level.

What is the role of the Port Phillip City Council in supporting community physical health?

Council can make an impact on their residents' physical health and activity by delivering on its mandated responsibilities to provide immunisation services. It can also encourage physical activity by providing public amenities and coordinating work across areas such as:

- Infrastructure, street facilities, paths, and trails.
- Open spaces and the natural environment.
- Active recreation, community programs and participation in community events.
- Promoting walking, riding and scooting to school

Over the next three years we can:

- Facilitate a strategic approach to the provision of recreation and sporting facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community now and in the future.



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- Design neighbourhoods and create environments that encourage healthy lifestyles, 20 minute neighbourhoods for daily needs, connected communities and support participation in physical activity.
- Support and partner with government and non-government organisations to enable an active community.
- Identify informal recreational opportunities to assist our community to be more active.
- Enhance access to places for physical activity, including walking paths, parks, recreational facilities, and shared-use facilities among all community members, with a focus on areas of disadvantaged.
- Explore a range of economic strategies that have the potential to address inequities in access to resources used for physical activity including provision of deductions, subsidised or low-cost council-run facilities, and incentives for private facilities or clubs to offer programs and services that target a broader range of people from different social groups.

Who are our partners?

By undertaking work in partnership with cross sector organisations such as sports, active travel and recreation agencies, the arts, and workplaces, local governments have the capacity to create opportunities for their residents to make physical activity a part of their daily lives. Some of our key partners include:

- Star Health
- Community General Practitioners
- Sport and Recreation Victoria
- Women's Health in the South East
- State Sporting Associations
- Community Sporting Clubs, walking and bike riding organisations and local community groups
- Vic Health
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Registered Personal Trainers
- Commercial recreation operators



What may change over the next five years?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has seen many people changing their usual behaviours and activities including staying at home more and self-isolating. It is too early to predict the long-term physical health impacts of COVID-19.
- Increased importance of socialisation through recreational activities

References

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