



YOUTH PROFILE 2022





Max Evans

'Youth Allowance'

Max Evans
Age: 18
📷 **@max_led.jpeg**

"A depiction of youth and our abilities to overcome struggle and stress."

Acknowledgement of Country	4
Introduction	5
What do young people value and what are their issues of concern?	6
What political issues are important for young people?	7
1. Demographics	9
Where are young people migrating from?	11
Cultural diversity	12
First Nations population	12
Where do young people live in Ballarat?	13
2. Housing, Family and Social Support	15
Living arrangements	18
Child protection services	19
Homelessness	19
Affordable housing	20
Young parents	21
Disability	21
Social support	21
3. Learning and Earning	23
School retention rates	25
Absentee days	25
Connection with school	25
Flexible learning	26
Post-school destinations	26
Disengaged youth	28
Labour force status	29
Underemployment	30
Employment industries	31
Future employment projections	32
Future skills	32
Young entrepreneurs	33
4. Health and Wellbeing	35
Prevalence of mental health disorders	37
Relationships	39
Mission Australia Youth Survey 2019 – Ballarat sample	41
Loneliness	42
Bullying	42
Cyberbullying	42
LGBTIQ – Gender identity	43
Volunteering	43
Physical Health	45
Alcohol, smoking and illicit drugs	45
References	47

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Ballarat Acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognise their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.



STATEMENT OF RESPECT

As an organisation, the City of Ballarat is committed to raising awareness about reconciliation, demonstrating this commitment and raising the profile of reconciliation in our community.

We recognise and value the work and teachings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their communities across the nation.

We need to develop an understanding of and reflect on the injustices that continue to impact our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The City of Ballarat believes in raising awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture and that through ongoing learning and education we will deepen our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Through working together, we can collectively build our understanding for a better future, based on stronger relationships between all Australians.

View our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) at ballarat.vic.gov.au

As an organisation, the City of Ballarat is committed to supporting the vision, voices and creativity of young people.

Young people in Ballarat are a dynamic and diverse community who contribute significantly to the vibrancy and creativity of the city.

Adolescence and young adulthood are critical transition periods where people experience significant change in areas of education, employment, housing and relationships. An increased level of independence also provides more opportunity for decision-making on risky behaviours and is a key time for setting up positive habits which support good physical and mental health throughout life.

The Youth Services unit of the City of Ballarat provide programs to support young people aged 12 to 25 using a positive youth development framework; a framework which is based on the belief that young people have great potential. The team works closely with young people, and often in conjunction with other local organisations, identifying aspirations and strengths, and building skills to produce positive experiences and achieve developmental outcomes.

The Youth Profile has been prepared to provide an understanding of the concerns and circumstances of young people in Ballarat. This base of knowledge is essential for future planning to ensure programs are relevant and appropriate to support the local community into the future. Information has been developed from various sources and the Youth Profile should be used along side consideration of the policies and activities of organisations, Local, State and Federal governments.

The information contained in this document has been obtained from reliable sources and is reflective of the time period up to and including June 2022.

What do young people value?

The Mission Australia Youth Survey 2021¹ asked young people aged 15-19 years, what do you value? There were 4,601 respondents who were living in Victoria. The top seven responses from Victorian young people were:



85%

Friendships other than family



81%

Family relationships



73%

Mental health



69%

School or study satisfaction



68%

Physical health



55%

Financial security



41%

Getting a job

Issues of personal concern

The same Victorian responders outlined their issues of personal concern.

Top three answers:



50%

Coping with stress



46%

Mental health



42%

School or study problems

Issues important in Australia today

The same Victorian responders were asked to list their top issues important in Australia today:

Top four answers:



48%

COVID-19



43%

Environment



37%

Mental health and Equity and discrimination

What activities are young people involved in?

Top three answers:



72%

Sport (participating)
64% (as spectator)



44%

Arts, cultural or music activities



36%

Volunteer work

Sources of help

The same Victorian responders outlined where they go and who they turn to for help with important issues:

Top three answers:



82%

Friends



71%

Parents or guardians



52%

Relative or Internet



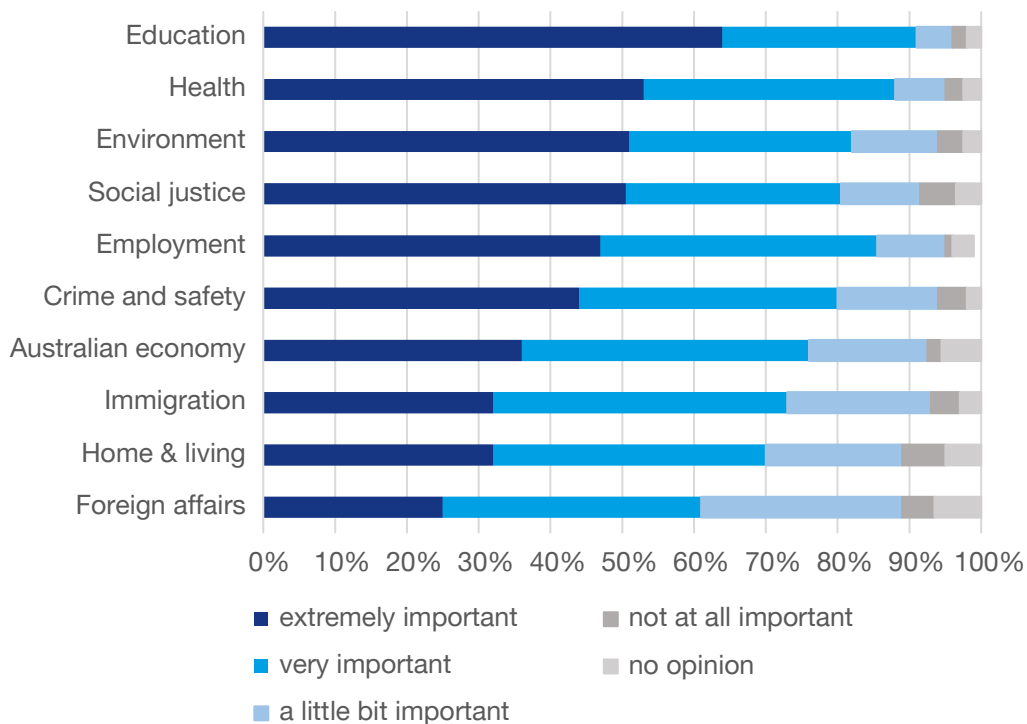
What political issues are important for young people?

In the lead up to the 2016 federal election, Youth Action and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) surveyed **young people aged 12-25 to determine the issues they wanted addressed in the election and to rank the most important federal policy areas**. There were 3369 respondents to the survey, 21% were from Victoria and 30% were from non-metro areas.²

The top 10 election issues for Victorian respondents (in order of most responses) were:

- Pro asylum seeker policies
- Pro marriage equality
- Pro climate change
- Pro education policy
- Lower unemployment
- Tax policy
- Pro environment policy
- Mental health
- Higher education funding
- Better health policy

Victorian respondents aged 12-25 ranked federally relevant policy areas by importance



What does this tell us?

Education ranked the highest followed closely by health, environment, social justice and employment.²



Mana

'Tree Of Life'

Mana Florentine

Age: 12

© @official_mana.f

"An acrylic painting representing that there will always be bad times and good times"

DEMOGRAPHICS

D

E

N

O

G

R

V

P

H



DEMOGRAPHICS

YOUNG PEOPLE
IN BALLARAT 2022

16.4%

of Ballarat's total population



9000

Aged 12-17

10,000

Aged 18-24

530

young people in Ballarat who identify as **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**.



Most common languages
(other than English) spoken
at home in Ballarat

**MANDARIN
PUNJABI**



Over a five year period

1311

Young people (aged 12-17)
moved to Ballarat
(620 moved away)

2478

Young people (aged 18-24)
moved to Ballarat
(1912 moved away)

1260

INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT
ENROLMENTS

in Ballarat educational institutions



Majority coming from

INDIA

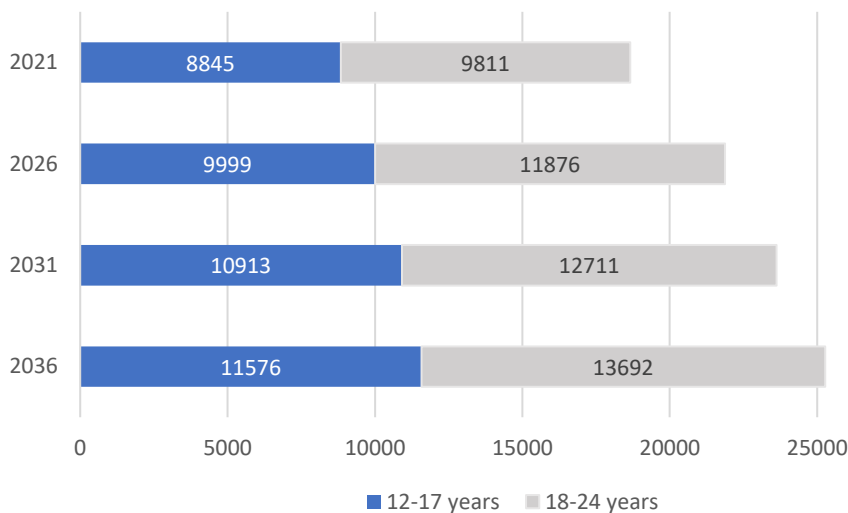


Demographics

Ballarat is currently experiencing growth at the rate of around 1.8% adding close to 2000 residents each year. The total usual resident population was 113,763 at the 2021 census. At this time, there were **18,656 young people aged 12-24 living in Ballarat which was 16.4%** of the total population, a proportion which is slightly higher than the state average.³

Even though the number of young people in Ballarat aged 12-24 years is expected to increase by **over 5400 people in the next 15 years** and a further 3400 in the 10 years up to 2036, the proportion of young people living in Ballarat will decrease slightly. This is due to the larger percentages of young homebuilders (aged 35 to 49) who are expected to move to the new estates and seniors (aged 70-84) who move into Ballarat from neighbouring farming areas.⁴

Growth in the number of young people of Ballarat over the next 15 years



Where are young people migrating from?

Migration into Ballarat from **neighbouring local government areas** is a key reason for the increase in population, with young people moving for better access to education, employment, housing and services. The types of families attracted to Ballarat are heavily influenced by the new housing opportunities in the Ballarat West Growth Area which attract predominantly young couples and families, which will increase the numbers of young people into the future.⁵

As outlined in the next section the rise in international students attending Federation University will also impact on these figures. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions limiting student migration, Federation University had 30% international students with the number attending the Ballarat campus increasing substantially since the 2016 census.

³ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

⁴ Forecast id: Ballarat

⁵ Forecast id: Ballarat



In the five years leading up to 2021:



Cultural Diversity

Due to an influx of international tertiary students across the state, the total number of young people living in Ballarat who were born overseas has changed substantially since the 2016 census. Although heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, in 2021 there were 1264 international student enrolments across all educational institutions in the Ballarat region (SA4 area), the majority (92%) in higher education courses, with the remainder enrolled in VET courses at schools and in English language intensive courses.⁶ Appropriate and affordable housing options will be essential to encourage students to live in Ballarat while studying. Although these students are all living in Australia it is difficult to determine how many of these students are living in Ballarat.

As a regional option for study, and apart from Geelong where 3,931 international students had enrolled, Ballarat was clearly the next most popular choice for international students with other regional towns only having quite small numbers: La Trobe - Gippsland (242), Bendigo (168), Hume (95), North West (77), Shepparton (67) and Warrnambool (50).

The international students were mainly from India (47%) and China (16%) with smaller numbers from Nepal (9%), Saudi Arabia (3%), Pakistan (3%) and Vietnam (2%). In total the students had enrolled from 46 different countries.

At the last census in 2021, 2209 other residents in the 12-24 age group who were born in another country. There is estimated to now be close to 2120 residents aged 12-24 who speak a language other than English at home. The most common languages other than English spoken at home in Ballarat are likely to be Mandarin and Punjabi, followed by Malayalam, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish, Filipino, Tagalog, Nepali and Sinhalese.

First Nations Population

There were 530 young people aged 12-24 from Ballarat who identified as Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) in the last census, which comprised 25% of the total ATSI population of Ballarat. The median age of Ballarat residents who identify as ATSI is 22, whereas the median age for the rest of the population is 39.⁷ Ballarat has 1.8% of the total population who identify as ATSI which is higher than the state level of 1%, and Geelong (1.3%), but lower than other regional areas including Bendigo (2.3%), Shepparton (3.9%), Mildura (4.6%), Warrnambool (2%) and Latrobe (2.1%).

⁶ Dept of Ed - International student enrolments by SA4 region

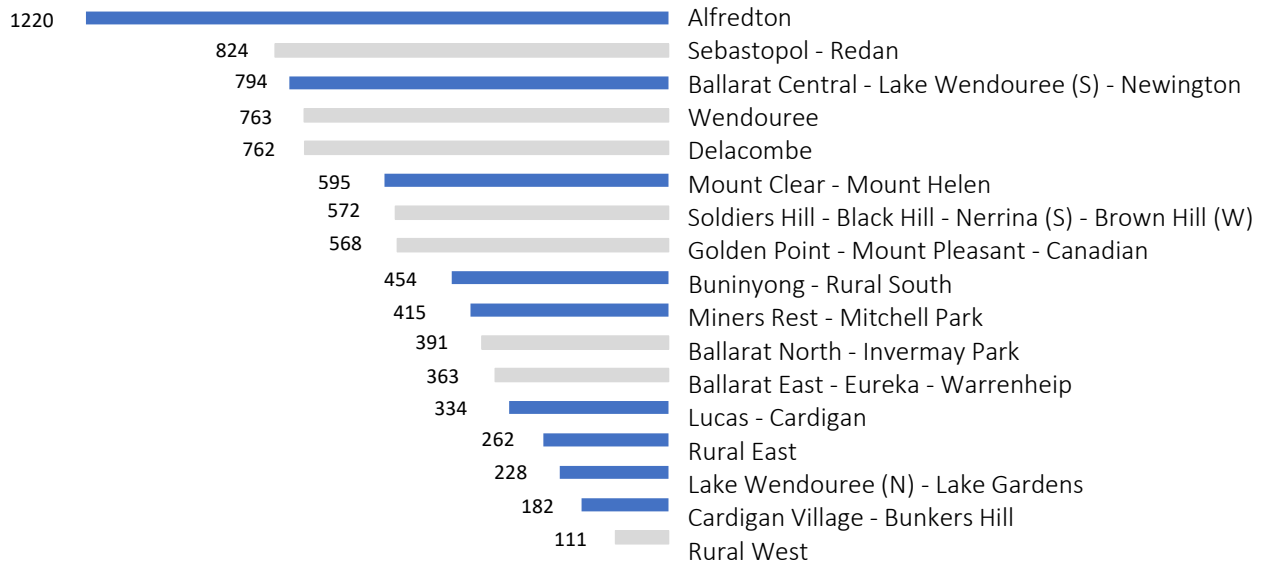
⁷ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile



Where do young people live in Ballarat?

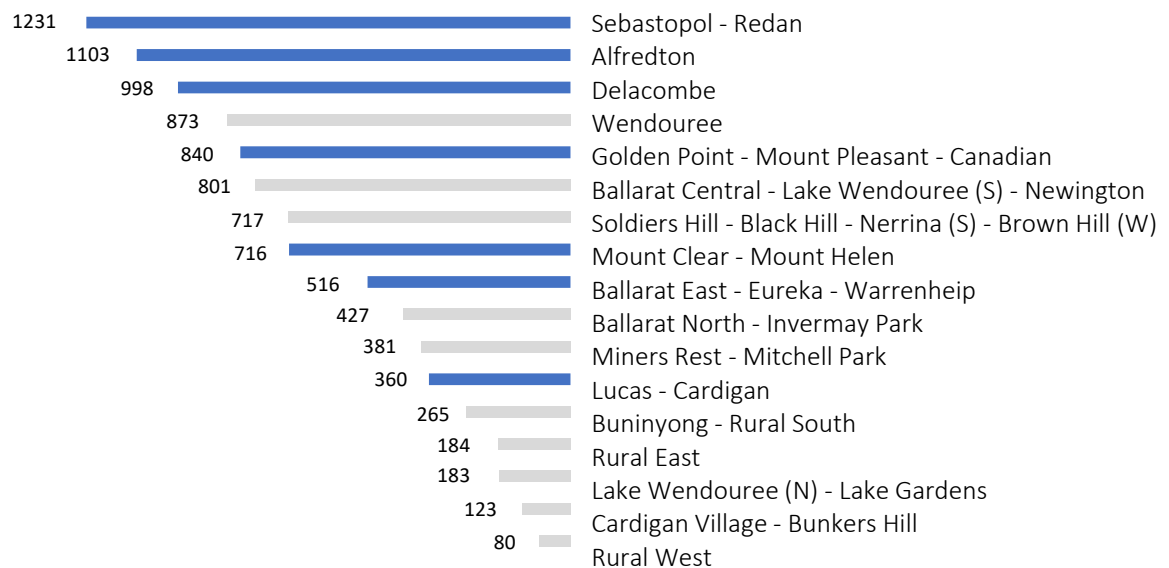
Across Ballarat there were 8845 young people aged 12-17 which accounts for 7.8% of the population. There is a higher percentage of young people in the suburbs highlighted in blue.⁸

Ages 12-17 years



Across Ballarat there were 9,811 young people aged 18-24 which accounts for 8.6% of the population. A higher percentage of young people live in the suburbs highlighted in blue.⁹

Ages 18-24 years



⁸ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

⁹ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile



Nyagak Yang

'The Depth'

Nyagak Yang

Age: 19

📍 @nyagakartsofficial

"This artwork illustrates the personal relationship and connection with yourself."

HOUSING, FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

FOR OWNERS



HOUSING, FAMILY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT



23% OF HOMELESS PEOPLE
ACROSS VICTORIA ARE
YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12-24

Key reasons for becoming homeless due to family violence or insecure housing



IN 2019-2020 AROUND

12,700

VICTORIAN CHILDREN
IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

Indigenous children receiving child protection services was ten times higher than non-indigenous children.



PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG
PARENTS IN BALLARAT
HAS REDUCED.

(10 births per 1000 women aged 15-19)

However still **twice the rate**
of state levels.

955

BALLARAT RESIDENTS
AGED 12-24
NEED ASSISTANCE
DUE TO PROFOUND
OR SEVERE DISABILITY

63%

of young people in Ballarat
aged 15-24 live with one or
both parents.

Next most common households are as a partner in a de facto marriage (11%) and group households (10%).

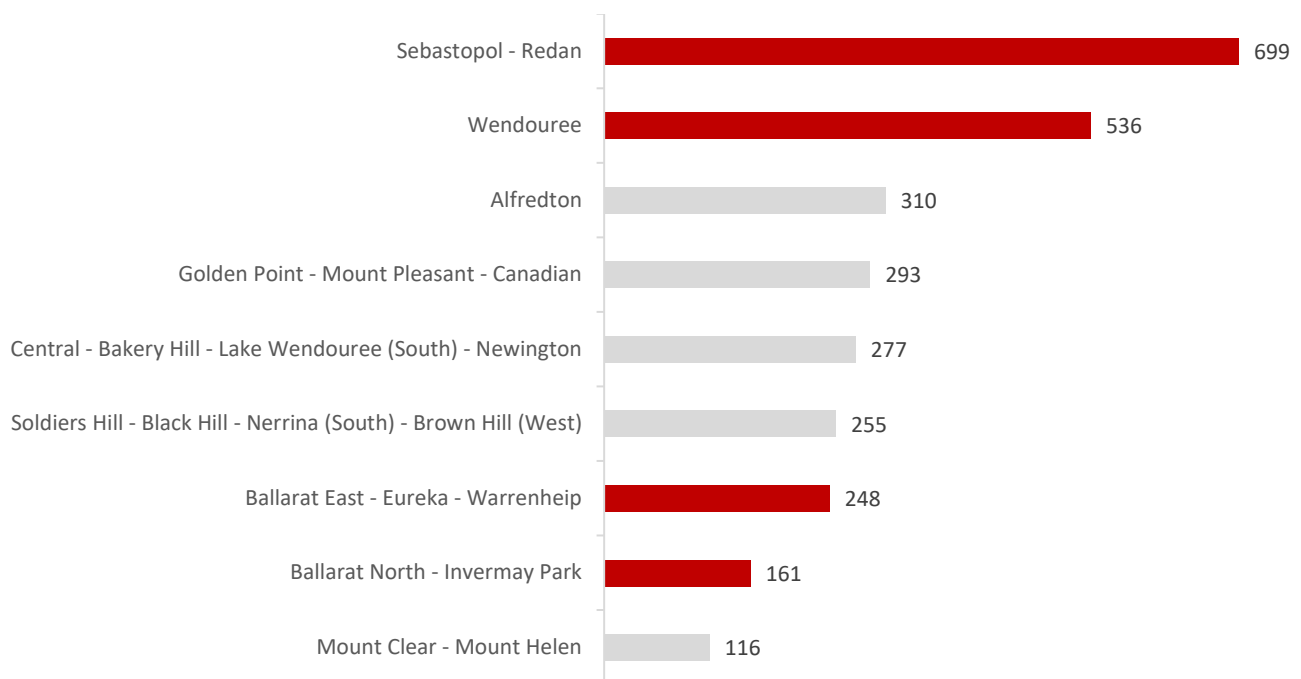


Housing, Family and Social Support

Young people are particularly affected by the lack of access to affordable housing due to low incomes, discrimination and poor or no rental history. The 2018 Mission Australia youth survey found the three most commonly cited barriers for young people moving out of home were housing costs, financial stability and availability of housing.¹⁰ In Ballarat **85% of houses are detached houses**, and the majority of these have **three or more bedrooms**. This lack of housing diversity can create issues of housing stress particularly for young people, and for separated and low-income families.¹¹

Housing stress can be defined as households with the lowest 40% of incomes paying more than 30% of their usual gross weekly income on housing costs.¹² In 2021 there were nearly 3800 households in Ballarat which had low income (less than \$1250 per week) but were paying more than 30% of household income on rental costs. This represents 27% of all rental households in Ballarat. The graph below shows the areas with the largest numbers of households in rental stress in Ballarat, with the coloured areas having a higher proportion of households under rental stress than the Ballarat average. These rates of housing stress are lower than for metropolitan areas, however can still have a negative influence on household relationships, children's preparedness for school and young persons living arrangements.

Rental Stress. Nearly 3800 low income households in Ballarat were experiencing rental stress in 2021 with areas in orange having a higher than average proportion of rental stress



10 Mission Australia: Youth Survey Report 2018

11 ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

12 AHURI Final Report No 192

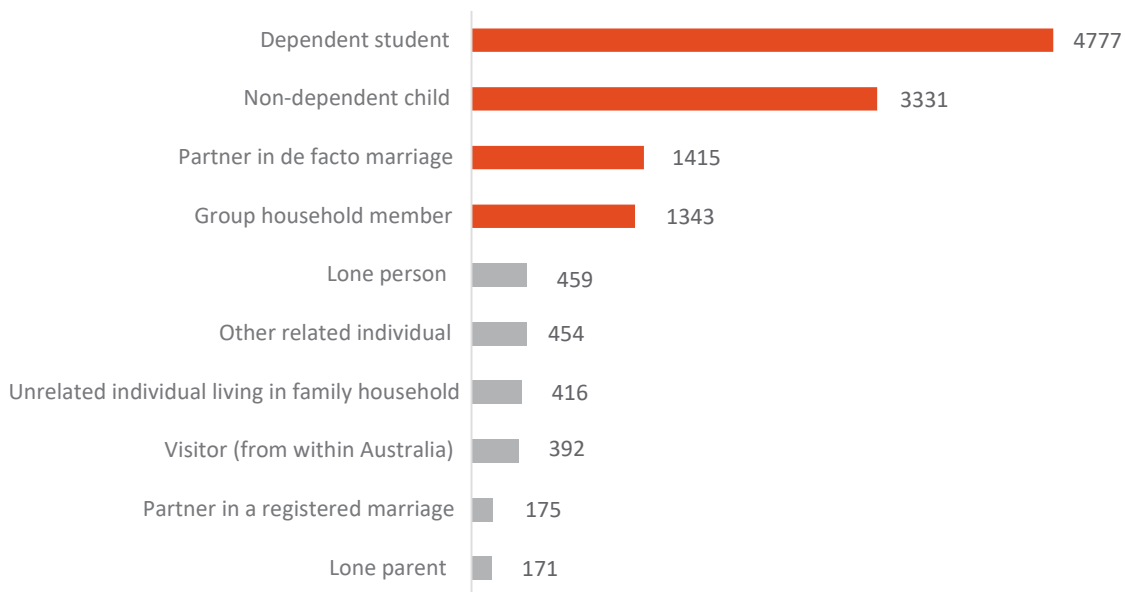


Living Arrangements

The majority (63%) of young people aged 15-24 in Ballarat who are living in private dwellings are living with one or both parents either as a dependent student or as a non-dependent young person. Since 2011 the proportion of young people choosing to remain living at home once they have finished secondary school has increased slightly while the **number of young people in group households has decreased**.¹³

This trend has potentially been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

Young people aged 15-24 and their **relationship** to other household members (in private dwellings)



The Mission Australia Youth Survey 2018 reported the key barriers to moving out of home for young people (15-19 years) from regional areas were housing costs (68%), financial stability (61%), availability of housing (39%) and security or safety (21%).¹⁴



Child Protection Services

Victoria has the highest rate of children (aged 0-17) receiving child protection services compared to all other states and territories at a rate of 31.9 per 1000 children ('services' include an investigation, which may result in care and protection orders, or out-of-home care), which equates to over 45,600 children in 2019-20. **The number of Victorian children in out-of-home care was just over 12,700 in 2019-20.** The rate of Victorian Indigenous children receiving child protection services is around 288 per 1000 children, which is ten times the rate of non-indigenous children.¹⁵

The Family Matters 2021 report states approximately **one-third of Aboriginal children under five years of age in Victoria have had contact with the child protection system.** The Family Matters report outlines the structural drivers and barriers to service access which have contributed to these particularly high rates including intergenerational trauma, poverty, disadvantage, exposure to violence, lack of access to affordable and safe housing, mental illness, drug and alcohol-related issues.¹⁶

Homelessness

Across Victoria it has been estimated that **young people aged 12-24 account for 23% of all homeless people.** The key reasons for homelessness in Victoria are domestic violence and family relationship issues, followed by unemployment or low income, and housing affordability. Other issues include transition from care or custody, a lack of support and discrimination. Issues of drug and alcohol abuse and mental health as a reason for people experiencing homelessness are less prevalent however people experiencing long term homelessness are more at risk of developing physical and mental health illnesses.¹⁷

It is difficult to get an accurate figure of people who are homeless, however the Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS) have made **an estimate of 413 people in the Ballarat Local Government Area (LGA) as homeless** when the census was collected in August 2016. This was only a slight increase from the figure of 403 at the 2011 Census.¹⁸ However the ABS also clarifies that **homeless youth numbers are often underestimated** due to the number likely to be 'couch surfing'.¹⁹ A large national survey of young people aged 15-19 years reported 16% of respondents having experienced a type of homelessness, either time spent with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation or time spent couch surfing.²⁰ Around 30% of young people aged 15-24 who present to specialist homelessness services had been couch surfing or staying in a home without tenure with the most common reasons due to family violence or insecure housing.

15 Child Protection Australia 2019-20

16 Family Matters 2021

17 Youth Homelessness in Australia 2016

18 ABS Census: Estimating Homelessness 2016

19 ABS: Youth Homelessness 2016

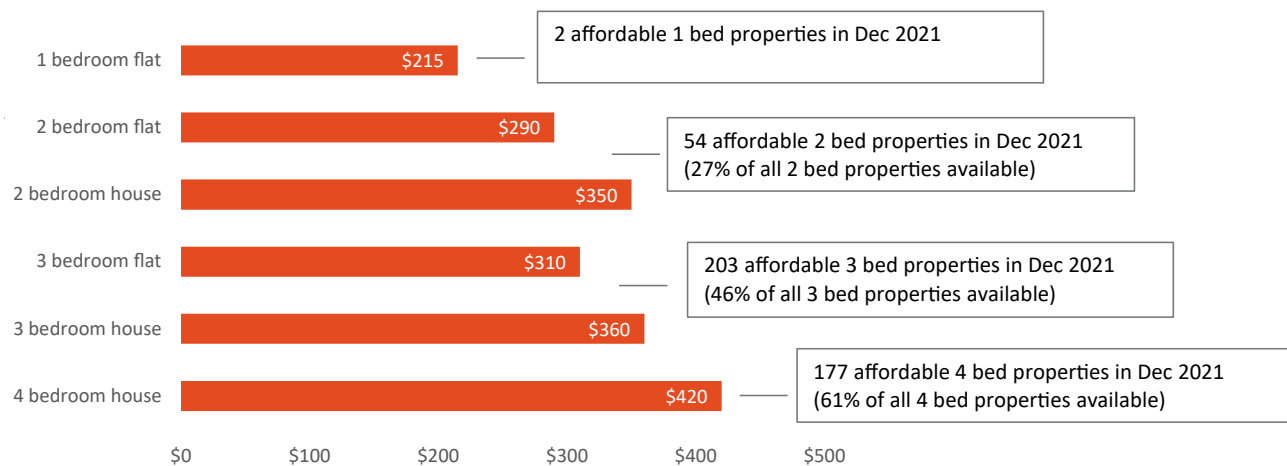
20 Mission Australia Young People's experiences of homelessness 2017



Affordable Housing

In December 2021 the **median rent for Ballarat across all property sizes was \$360 per week** which has gradually increased (five years ago it was \$280 per week), while the number of available properties has gradually decreased. The **rental vacancy rate was only 1.1%** which is very low (3% indicates a balanced rental market) and indicates that landlords are in a stronger position than tenants to negotiate on rents. At this time, there were **436 affordable rental properties which was 43.9%** of all properties available. In March 2021 only 39% of all available properties for rent were considered affordable which is the **lowest percentage of affordable properties** since records were started in 2000. Also 87% of these properties were three and four bedroom which may be too large for many young renters unless they are able to go into a group house.²¹

In December 2021 the median rent for Ballarat properties ranged from \$215-\$420 per week.



Rent Assistance

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is the most common form of housing assistance received by Australian households.²² The number of young people in Victoria aged 15-24 receiving CRA has **steadily decreased in recent years however did increase during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic**. In December 2017 there were 1250 recipients of rent assistance and in December 2021 to 788 recipients. At December 2021 there were 449 single females (may or may not have dependents), 250 single males, and 89 couples (one partner at least aged 15-24) who received CRA.²³

²¹ DFFH Rental Report Dec 2021

²² AIHW: Housing assistance in Australia 2021

²³ DSS – Information request



Young Parents

Young parents are vulnerable to poverty and long-term welfare dependency, with poorer health outcomes and difficulty completing education or securing employment.²⁴ In 2019 there were **35 children born to women aged 15-19 in Ballarat**, which is a rate of 10 births per 1000 women of that age. This birth rate is considerably higher than the state average of 5 per 1000 but has gradually dropped since the year 2000 when the rate was 17 per 1000. The difficulties are compounded because 43% of mothers in Ballarat aged between 15 and 22 are lone parents and 83% are unemployed.²⁵ As at December 2021 there were 239 young people aged 15-24 receiving the single parenting payment in Ballarat (97% female) and a further 52 receiving the partnered parenting payment.²⁶ These rates have steadily reduced over the past three years. Women tend to have their children at a younger age in Ballarat than the state average with the rate for women **aged 20-24 at 49 births per 1000 women**, considerably higher than the state average of 35 births per 1000 women.

Disability

In 2021 there were 955 residents aged 12 to 24 who had need for assistance due to a profound or severe disability, which was 5.1% of this age group. As disability rates increase markedly with age, it is not surprising this percentage is lower than the rate for the whole population (7.4%). The rate has **increased since the 2011 Census when there were only 2.5%** of young people requiring need for assistance.²⁷ There is also a definite gender difference in need for assistance with **61% of this figure being due to young males** having a profound or severe disability. This is a common trend seen across all Australian populations. As at December 2021 there were 440 young people in Ballarat aged 15-24 receiving a disability support pension, of these 62% were male and 38% female. These figures has remained steady over the past 5 years. At the time of the 2021 Census there were **351 young people aged 15-19 and a further 468 young people aged 20-24** who were providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability.

Social Support

Financial assistance is available in the form of a youth allowance for people aged 16-24 and studying full time or looking for work. Eligibility and amount depend upon studying, working and living circumstances. The number of recipients on the 'students and apprentices' youth allowance can change throughout the year depending upon the enrolments into courses. The numbers have also reduced due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2021 there were 415 males and 724 females in Ballarat receiving the youth allowance for students and apprentices, however by December 2018 this had dropped to 243 males and 394 females. In December 2021 there were a further 250 males and 289 females on the other youth allowance which supports job seekers.²⁸

In March 2020 in response to COVID-19, the JobSeeker Payment replaced the Newstart Allowance, providing financial assistance for young people aged at least 22 years old, unemployed and looking for work. In December 2018 there were 275 males and 234 females in Ballarat aged 22-24 receiving a Newstart Allowance and this reached a high of 855 young people receiving JobSeeker during lockdowns in June and September 2020. However by December 2021 the number of young people aged 22-24 receiving JobSeeker had reduced to 269 males and 203 females.²⁹

24 Aust. Human Rights Commission 2017

25 Profile of young women who have children 2016

26 DSS – Information request

27 ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

28 DSS – Information request

29 DSS – Information request



Sloda Art

'Copper Dragon'

Brodie Kamp

Age: 22

© @sloda_art

"A digital painting of a reimagined copper dragon from dungeons and dragons. It's inspired by the more unique pictures of dragons in medieval illustrations."

LEARNING AND EDUCATION

LEARNERS



LEARNING AND EDUCATION



1234

STUDENTS COMPLETED YEAR 12 across ballarat (in 2020)



Approximately

400

secondary students in Ballarat are engaged in a form of flexible learning

offered at 10 different organisations which assist students find alternative pathways to employment or further education.

Key employment industries for young people



23% Food and accommodation services



20% Retail trade



10% Construction

Young people in the labour force in Ballarat (2021)

3880

17% Full time work

61% Part time work



5700

43% Full time work

43% Part time work



Underemployment and the casualisation of the work force is a growing problem.

Nationally in 2021

18% of young people **aged 15-19** were underemployed

12% of young people **aged 20-24** were underemployed



Learning and Earning

Completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification has become the norm for Victorian students, which intensifies the negative consequences for those students who disengage prematurely from education.³⁰ Once disengaged from education, young people are less likely to make a good transition to employment or further education.

School Retention Rates

Across the state, retention rates had increased to a peak at 2016 and then decreased over the past five years, currently at 84.9% for Years 10-12 in government schools. The **South Western region has the lowest retention rate for government schools at 81.6% for Years 10-12 in 2021**. However, this large region includes widely varying local government areas of western Melbourne through to the SA border, hence a large range of retention rates would be expected, and the average is not necessarily reflective of Ballarat. Retention rates for Years 10-12 are generally higher for non-government schools (Catholic 88.6% and independent 95.7%) across the state.³¹

Ballarat has a larger proportion of students attending non-government secondary schools with **54% of secondary age students living in Ballarat attending either a Catholic or independent school**. State-wide there are only 44% of students attending non-government schools, hence the apparent retention rate in Ballarat could be higher than other areas of the South Western region due to the proportion of young people attending non-government schools. However, it is not reported at LGA levels.³²

Absentee Days

Students attending government schools in regional areas tend to have more absentee days (both truant and approved) than students in metropolitan areas. In the Central Highlands area in 2016, the **average annual number of absence days per full-time student in Years 7-12 was 22, and eight of these were unapproved (truant)**. However, between 2015 and 2016 the **Central Highlands had the biggest drop of any region in average unapproved absences (3.1 days)**. Over the past five years the proportion of students which had more than 30 days absent in a year (chronic absenteeism) has gradually been increasing. For the Central Highlands the rate is now 13%, which is similar or less than other regional areas.³³ Chronic absenteeism is more common among students who report: being bullied, negative attitudes to attendance, low levels of resilience, low sense of confidence in their ability as a learner, and low sense of connectedness to their school.

Connection with School

Students in government schools are surveyed annually on how connected they feel to their school. In Ballarat there was a wide range of variation between schools. In the primary schools with the lowest sense of connection only 55% felt connected, compared to the highest with a 94% of students reporting a sense of connectedness to school. In the secondary schools the range was typically between 50% to 53% of students reporting a sense of connectedness to school.³⁴

30 The State of Victoria's Children 2018

31 Apparent Retention and Transition Rates July 2021

32 ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

33 The State of Victoria's Children 2016

34 School Annual Reports



Flexible Learning

There are currently nine flexible learning options for students in Ballarat who may be disconnected from the more traditional school settings but want to continue education or try alternative pathways to further education, training or employment.³⁵

Student numbers vary in each of these programs, but it is likely more than 400 local students would be taking on a form of flexible learning each year in Ballarat. Programs are offered at a range of mainstream schools, through the VET system, and by stand-alone services, and are clearly diverse in both their delivery and the types of students attracted to each program.

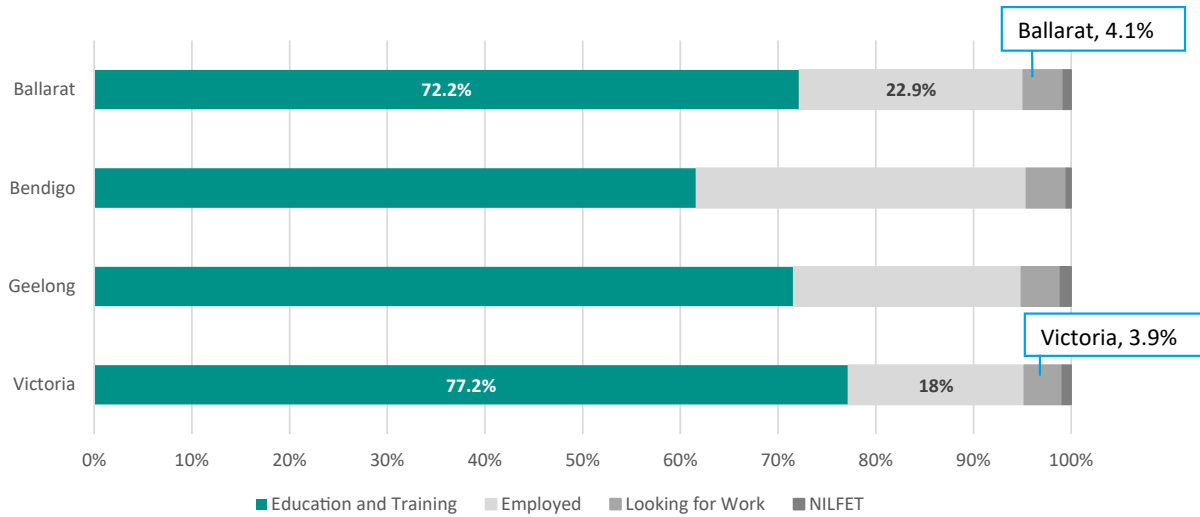
Flexible Learning Program	Organisation
FLIP – Flexible Learning Intervention Pathway	Ballarat High School – lead school Yuille Park Community College Phoenix P-12 Community College Mt Clear Secondary College Beaufort Secondary College
DOTS – Developing Other Talents and Skills	Phoenix P-12 Community College
POD 4	Yuille Park Community College
Young Parents Program	Yuille Park Community College
LinkUp	Ballarat Secondary College
Federation College	A faculty of Federation University
Berry Street School	Berry Street - Sebastopol
Indie School	Indie School
SEDA	SEDA Group

Post-school Destinations

The On Track survey collects information on post school destinations for young people who either completed or did not complete Year 12, or an equivalent. There were **1234 young people who completed Year 12 in 2020** (VCE, IB or VCAL Senior or VCAL Intermediate) and 51% of these participated in the survey 6 months after the end of Year 12.³⁶ The chart following is based on the responses from this survey. **10% of students** were offered a place at a tertiary institution but **deferred study**, and they are included in the group either employed or looking for work.



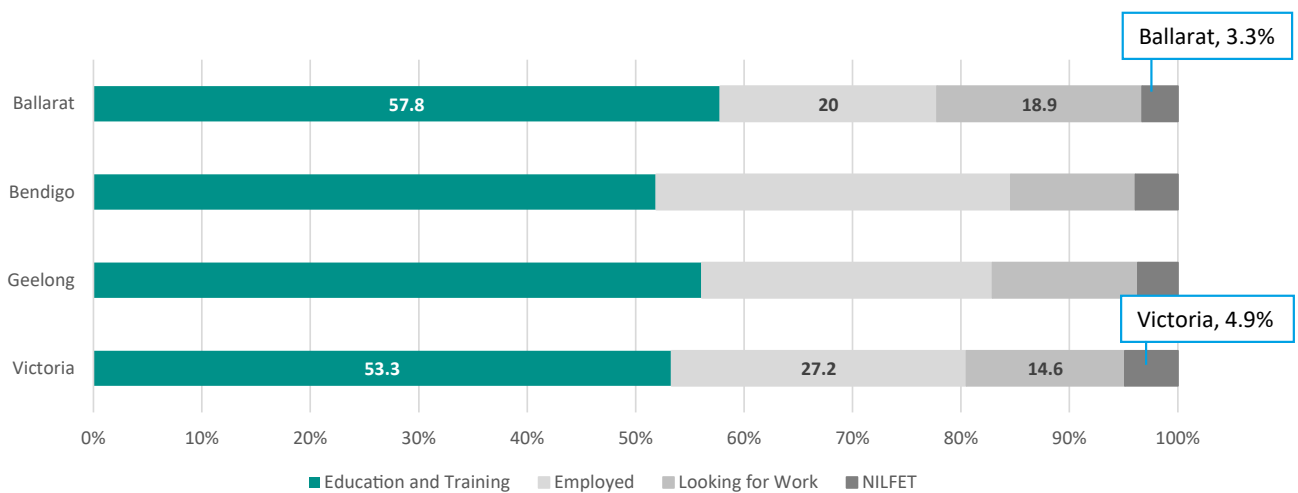
In Ballarat 23% of students who completed Year 12 in 2020 went into employment in the following year



NILFET: Not in the labour force, employment or training

There were a further **499 young people** who had enrolled in either an IB program or VCE or VCAL unit at a Ballarat education institution but **left without completing the certificate**. So the data outlined below may include students who were in Years 10, 11 or 12 when they left. **The return rate for this part of the survey was only 18%, hence the data below should be interpreted with caution.**

In Ballarat 58% of young people who did not complete Year 12 went onto further education or training



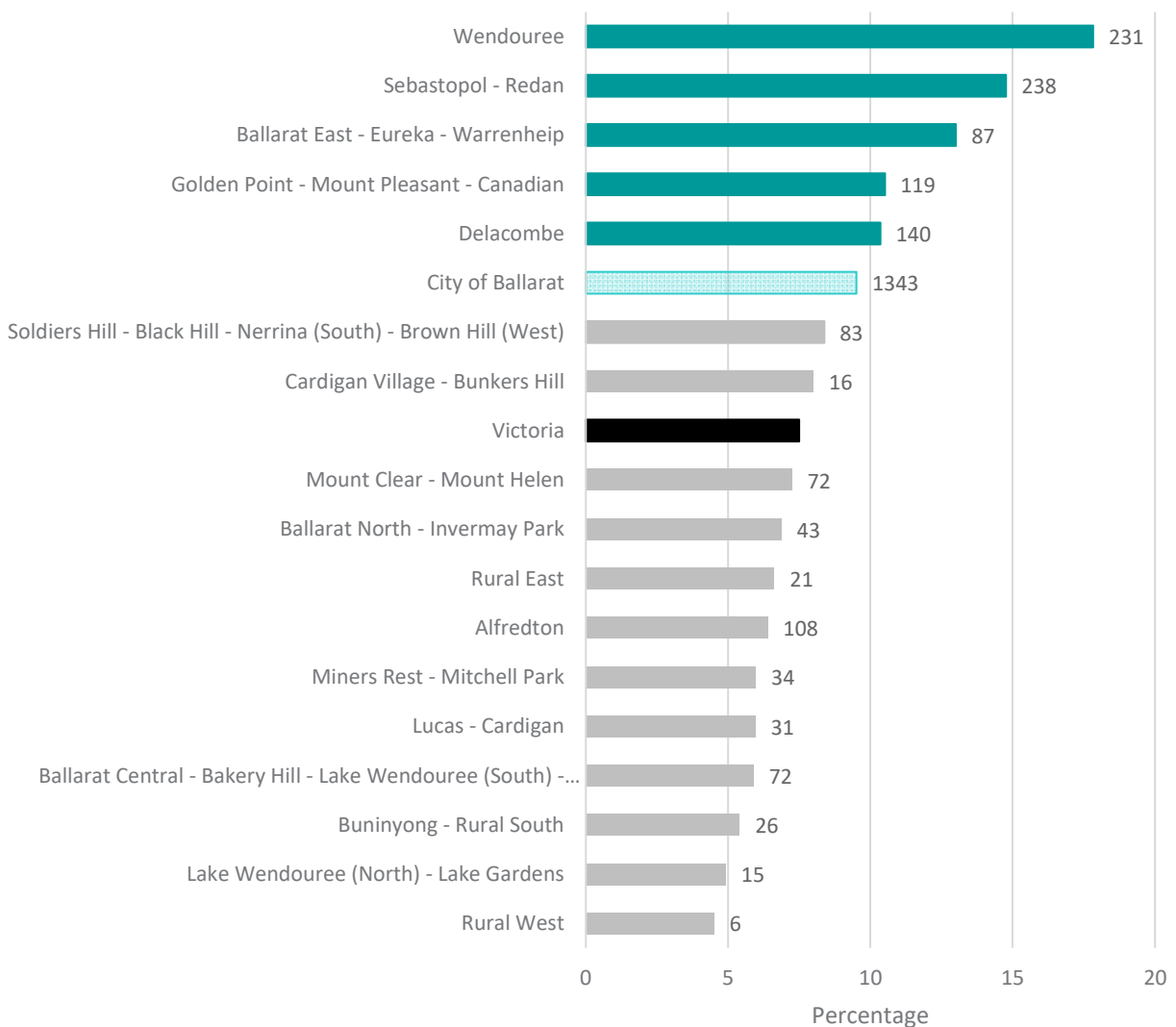
NILFET: Not in the labour force, employment or training



Disengaged Youth

Young people aged 15-24 are generally expected to be employed or looking for work, studying or a combination of both. If a young person has not engaged with either the employment or education system, they are in a particularly vulnerable position and may need targeted social support services.³⁷ As Ballarat has a high percentage of young mothers, this would also add to the percentage of people ‘not in the labour force, employment or training’ (NILFET). In 2021 there were **1343 young people in Ballarat aged 15-24 who were considered disengaged from the labour force or education.**

Percentage and number of **disengaged youth** (15-24) -2021

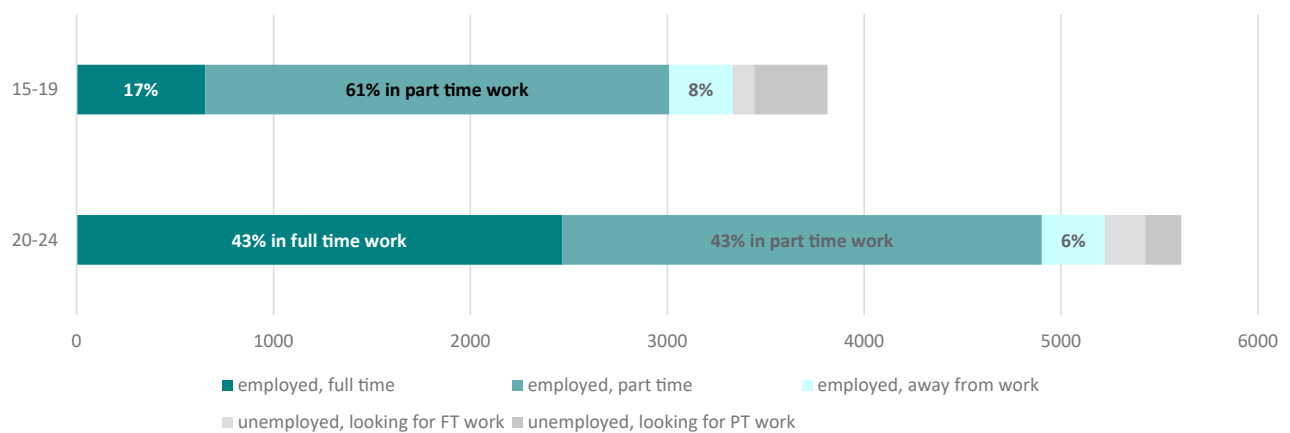




Labour Force Status

In 2021 there were **3880 young people aged 15-19, and a further 5700 people aged 20-24 in the labour force** in Ballarat, **either working or looking for work**. A further 3811 young people aged (15-24) were not in the labour force. At this time there were 316 young people unemployed and looking for **full time work**, which is 2.2% of this age group, and 3.3% of the 15-24 year old labour force. There was also a further 554 young people unemployed and looking for **part time work** which is 3.9% of this age group, and 8.4% of the 15-24 year old labour force.³⁸

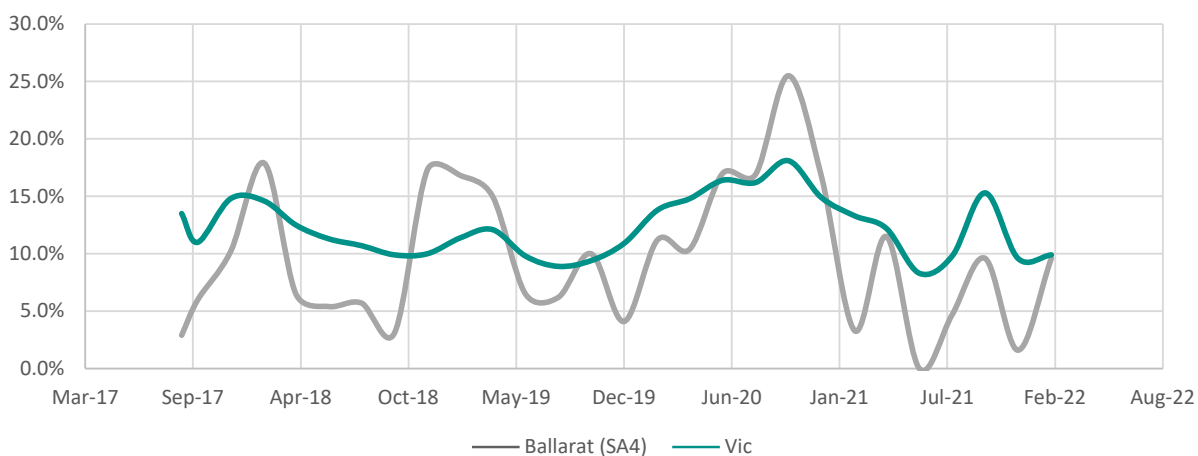
In 2021, 316 young people in Ballarat were looking for full time work and a further 554 were looking for part time work





The ABS run a Labour Force survey every month which is reported at SA4 level (for **Ballarat SA4 this includes neighbouring towns** of the Ballarat region: Maryborough, Avoca, Daylesford and Beaufort). This survey is based on a much smaller number of respondents compared to the census (0.32% of the population, hence about 500 people (across all ages) for Ballarat SA4). A monthly survey highlights the **seasonal differences in unemployment** for this age group which peaks as the school and tertiary year finishes.³⁹

Unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 can vary significantly during the year in Ballarat (SA4) - note effect of COVID-19 lockdowns and special government support payments (from end March 2020)



Underemployment

National labour force figures are released monthly which showed in February 2022 the seasonally adjusted **unemployment rate nationally was 4%**, the lowest rate since August 2008. However, even if a worker is paid for only one hour of work they will be included in the employed figures, which **hides the increasing issues of underemployment**. Underemployment is defined as workers not able to fill the number of hours of work they are seeking. At a national level the underemployment rate was 6.6% and for specific population groups can be far higher. For younger workers aged between **15–19 the underemployment rate is 17.5% (nationally)** but prior to COVID-19 restrictions has been above 20% since 2014. For workers aged **20–24 the underemployment rate is 12%**.⁴⁰ The national rate of underemployment has dropped considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic, due to restrictions on international arrivals.

There has been a **large national increase in the proportion of part time jobs compared to full time employment, with key factors being a large increase in the number enrolled in full-time education**, personal preference, and child care, along with more flexible business models and an increased dominance of service industries such as health, education, tourism and hospitality. The **participation rate of young Australians in the workforce is high** in comparison to other OECD countries however it has declined in recent years. High rates of young people studying and working has also increased rates of part time work above other countries. This increase in workers with available hours is one of the factors which has kept wage rises low in recent times.^{41,42}

39 ABS Labour Force Survey - Data Cube RM1 - Feb 2022

40 ABS 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, February 2022

41 RBA: The rising share of part-time employment

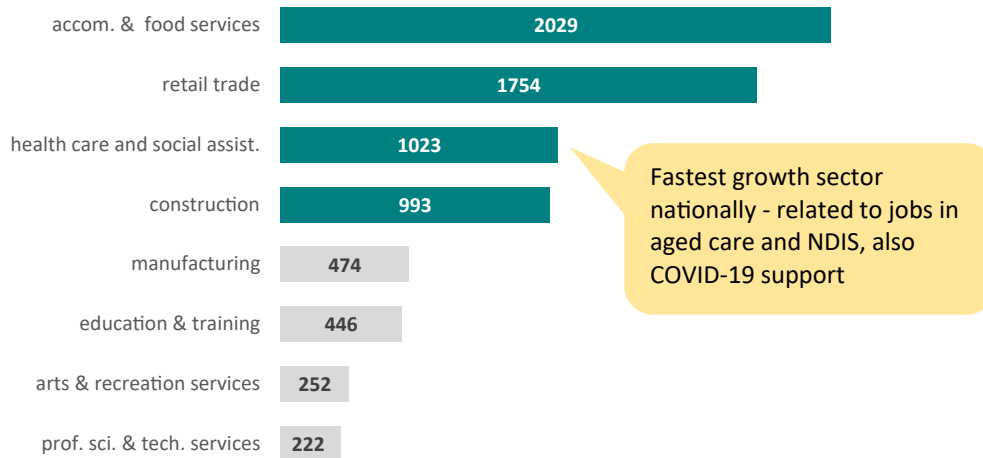
42 RBA: Labour market outcomes for younger people



Employment Industries

The major employers of young people in Ballarat are businesses in the **food services and retail area, which employ 23% and 20%** of all young people aged 15-24 respectively. The next major employment areas for young people are **health care and social assistance with 12% of jobs and then construction with 11% of jobs.**⁴³

Over 40% of all young people employed in Ballarat are working in either food services or retail (top eight industries listed)



The Mission Australia Youth Survey 2021 reported the **key barriers to achieving study or work goals** for young people (15-19 years) from Victoria were:

Females

- mental health – 58%
- academic ability – 45%
- COVID-19 – 37%
- financial difficulty – 20%
- admission or job requirements – 20%
- family responsibilities – 19%
- lack of school support – 14%⁴⁴

Males

- COVID-19 – 43%
- mental health – 37%
- academic ability – 36%
- admission or job requirements – 17%
- financial difficulty – 14%
- family responsibilities – 14%
- lack of information – 13%⁴⁴



Future Employment Projections

Federal government predicts increased employment broadly across all industries and occupational groups however **9 in 10 new jobs are projected to require post-school education**. There are four service industries which are likely to provide more than 60% of employment growth:

- Health care and social assistance
- Accommodation and food services
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Education and training

The largest growth in jobs nationally is likely to be at Skill Level 1 (Bachelor degree or higher qualification – 13.5% growth) followed by Skill Level 4 (Certificate II or III – 8% growth).^{45,46}

The occupations (all age groups) which will see the most employment growth nationally up till 2026 are: **aged and disabled carers, software and applications programmers, registered nurses**, general clerks, database and systems administrators and ICT security specialists, management and organisation analysts, solicitors, human resource managers, welfare support workers and accountants.⁴⁷

Future Skills

Traditional linear pathways of training for work and moving into a career are changing. Globalisation, automation and increasing flexibility have altered the types of work and where and how we work.⁴⁸

With new technologies changing our economy and society, young people with a set of skills referred to as **21st century skills will be considered highly valuable to employers**. These skills include **critical and creative thinking, communication, collaboration and teamwork, personal and social skills, and ICT skills**. Research shows employers are increasingly valuing these skills over traditional academic performance, which is driven by the technological change and these skills being tasks that machines cannot perform.⁴⁹

Research and surveys undertaken by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) has **identified key accelerators to help young people find work more quickly, with the most influential being ‘building enterprise skills (problem solving, communication skills and teamwork) in education’** which could reduce the average time taken looking for full time employment by 17 months, the next most influential accelerator was **‘relevant paid employment’**, followed by **being employed in ‘future focussed clusters’ and having an ‘optimistic mindset’**.⁵⁰

The FYA also identified **seven key job** clusters which require similar and transferable skills which may be used to increase the employability of young people. These clusters include:

- **Artisans** jobs require skills in manual tasks related to construction, production, maintenance or technical customer service
- **Carers** jobs seek to improve the mental or physical health or wellbeing of others
- **Coordinators** jobs involve administrative and process or service tasks
- **Technologists** jobs require skilled understanding and manipulation of digital technology
- **Informers** jobs involve professionals providing information, education or business services
- **Designers** jobs require knowledge of science, maths and design to construct or engineer products or buildings
- **Generators** jobs require a high level of interpersonal interaction in retail, sales, hospitality and entertainment

45 Employment Outlook to Nov 2026

46 Bright Futures: Megatrends impacting the wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years - 2018 update

47 Employment Outlook to Nov 2026

48 The new work mindset in action: South West Victoria

49 Ready or Not: Equipping young people for the future working world

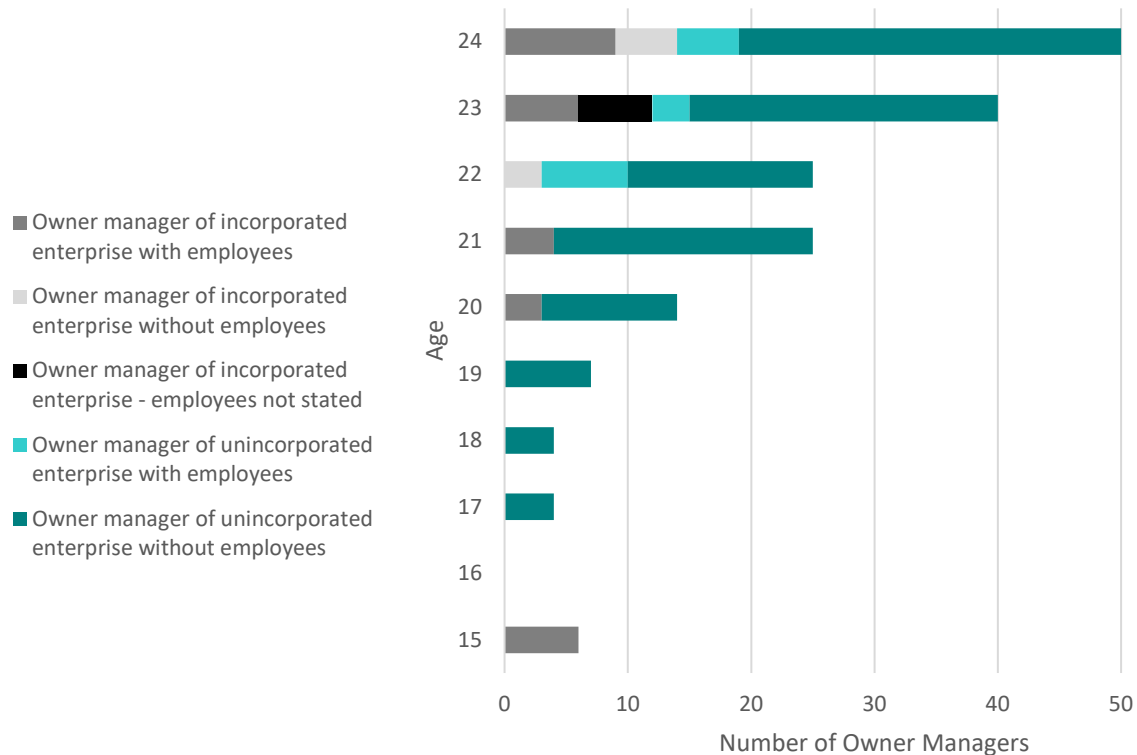
50 FYA - The New Work Reality



Young Entrepreneurs

The changing work environment has **encouraged the growth of young entrepreneurs** along with supportive programs and organisations developing entrepreneurial skills in students. From the 2021 census, there were **30 residents aged 15 to 25 who were the owner or manager of an incorporated enterprise**, and there were a further **103 residents aged 15 to 25 who were the owner or manager of an unincorporated enterprise**. Recent research by the Inner North (Melbourne) Youth Employment Taskforce shows, in that area, the typical 16-24 year old entrepreneur is the business founder of an establishing social enterprise, is motivated by social purpose, studying and/or working part time or casually and participates in other social enterprises either to improve skills, as an intern, as business leader or in community led initiatives.⁵¹

In 2021 there were **133 residents in Ballarat aged 15 to 25** who were the **owner manager of either an incorporated or unincorporated enterprise.**





Kawaiikeekee

'Pastel Mood-Board'

Keegan Guidotti

Age: 21

© @kawaiikeekee

"A mood-board of my original character, Kazumi. It shows her colours, her likes and general characteristics about her as a character."

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**HEALTHY
LIFE**



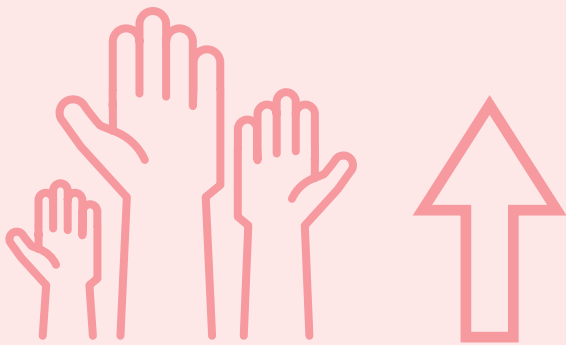
HEALTH AND WELLBEING



82%

OF 12-17 YEAR OLDS HAVE NEVER SMOKED

However, vaping rates among young people are increasing rapidly.



VOLUNTEERING

Young people in Ballarat volunteer at higher rates than the state average

Younger age groups (15-19) volunteer at higher rates than those aged 20-24 and females volunteer at higher rates than males.

Alcohol consumption amongst young adolescents has reduced over the past 20 years.

However when surveyed,

1 in 2

adolescents had
been drinking
in the previous month.



In the 2018 National Health Survey,
young people (aged 15-24)
who had reported a **current**
or **long term mental health**
or **behavioural condition.**

30%

 of females

21%

 of males

most prevalent being
anxiety followed by
depression.



The rate of **overweight** and **obesity** increases through adolescence

By the age of 18-24

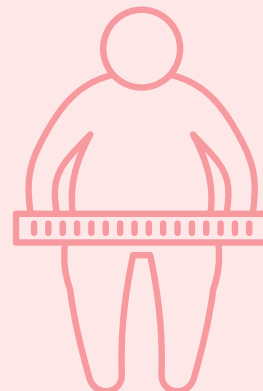
53%

 of Australian males

40%

 of Australia females

are either **overweight** or **obese.**





Health and Wellbeing

Issues of mental and physical health feature prominently in surveys of young people as key issues of personal concern, and as areas which they value highly. Young people also see mental health as a major area of concern for Australia generally. Other major issues of personal concern include coping with stress, body image and mental health.⁵²

There are **significant gender differences when comparing personal concerns of young people, twice as many** young females as males were concerned about coping with stress (61%), mental health (55%), school or study problems (51%) and COVID-19 (46%) and **nearly three times as many were concerned with body image** (48%). Personal safety is another area with major gender differences with more than twice the number of young females reporting feeling extremely or very concerned (25%) and **a notably higher promotion of young Victorian females felt lonely 'all or most of the time' (27%) compared to young males (17%)**.⁵³

VicHealth produced the Bright Futures report in 2015 which discussed the megatrends impacting the mental health of young Victorians.⁵⁴ The work was further updated in 2018.⁵⁵ The megatrends included:

- **The Rising Bar** rising education and skill levels are making the jobs market more competitive and costs of living are increasing particularly rent
- **Global Reach** digital technology and globalisation are changing how businesses and society operates, offering new ways of connecting with each other and accessing services
- **Life's richer tapestry** Australian society is becoming increasingly diverse however discrimination has increased. Young people have greater engagement on climate change
- **Overexposure online** the virtual world is presenting new challenges and opportunities for young people with increased levels of fake news and misrepresentation online. Declining levels of physical health due to unhealthy diets and sedentary behaviour
- **Out of the shadows** scientific research is improving the understanding and treatment of mental health, with increased use of peer-to-peer support services. Homelessness rates are increasing particularly in young adults

Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders

In the 2021 Census there were **800 males (11.3%) and 1445 females (20.5%) aged 15-24 who reported having a long term mental health condition**. These rates are higher than state averages but reflect the same level of gender disparity with female rates twice as high as male rates.⁵⁶ The **most prevalent condition was anxiety** which had **increased substantially over the past three years to 25% of females and 14% of males**. **Depression or feelings of depression had also increased since 2015 with 15% of females and 9% of males** being recorded as having this condition. It is common for anxiety and depression to co-occur with about 6% of all Australians having both conditions. There is a broad scale of the severity of mental health issues, with around **6% of young people having moderate to severe mental health problems**. Importantly **75% of all mental health problems first appear in people aged under 25**. However, recent research shows only one in four children aged 12-13 who were identified as having a mental health issue had seen a health professional within the following 18 months.⁵⁷

⁵² Mission Australia Youth Survey 2021

⁵³ Gender gaps: Findings from the Youth Survey 2018

⁵⁴ Bright Futures - Megatrends impacting the mental wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years

⁵⁵ Bright Futures: 2018 update

⁵⁶ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile

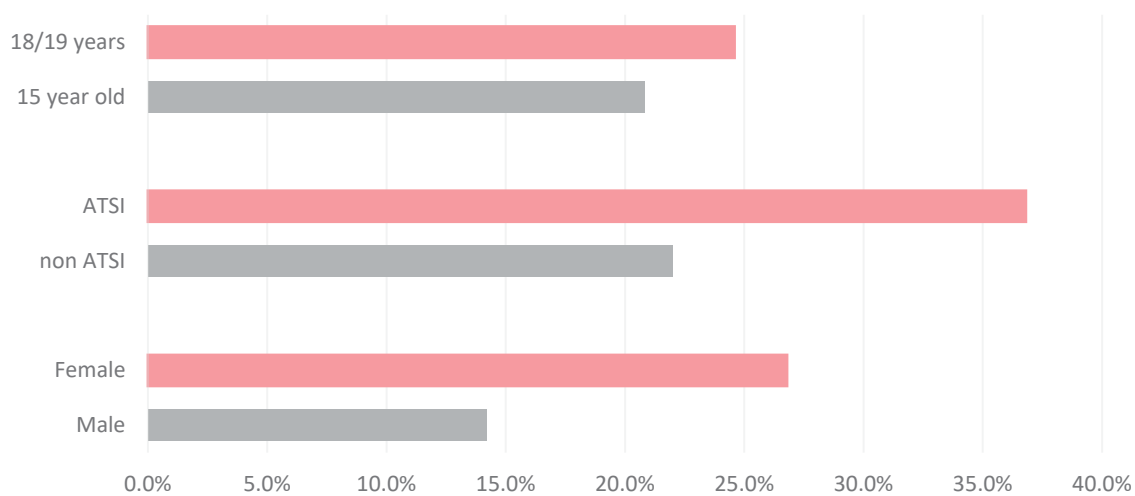
⁵⁷ The Conversation: Mulraney and Hiscock, June 2019



A recent youth mental health report which compared annual survey results from 2012 to 2018 showed the number of **young people aged 15-19 experiencing psychological distress has been increasing each year** since 2018 to now reach significant disparity between certain groups (see graph following).⁵⁸

The **gender difference is particularly high with nearly twice as many young females experiencing psychological distress compared to males**, and the rate of increase since 2012 (when the level was 21.8% for females and 11.9% for males) has also been higher for females.

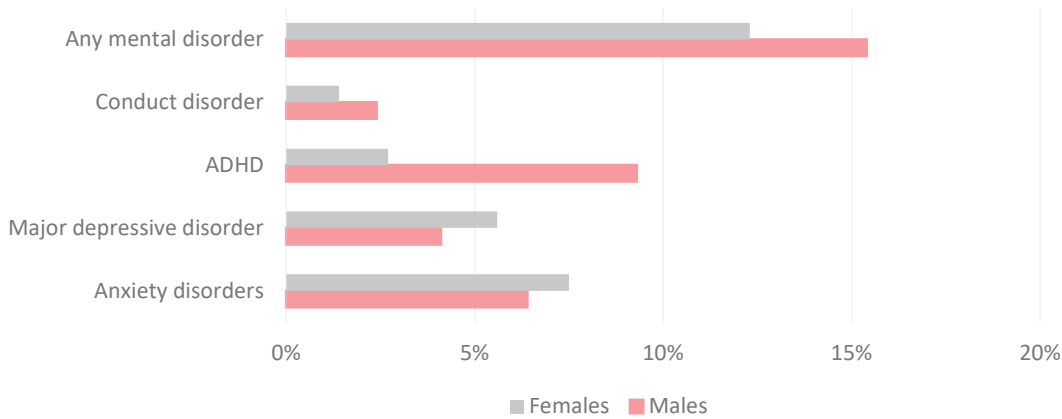
Mental health issues more prevalent in females, older adolescents and young people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Victorian results)



Prevalence of mental health issues in **younger age groups** was reported through the Young Minds Matter survey which was undertaken on children and young people in 2014. In the 12 months prior to the survey **15.4% of male students and 12.3% of female students in Years 7-12 experienced a mental disorder**. The most common disorder for **males was attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with 9.3%**, and for **females was anxiety disorders 7.5%**. In older adolescent girls, major depressive disorder was the most common mental health disorder.⁵⁹



Prevalence of mental disorders in students Years 7-12 by gender.



Mission Australia surveyed young people following the extended lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They found negative mental health impacts were reported in higher proportions by particular groups of people including young female (62% impacted) and gender diverse (70% impacted) respondents. Some young people were impacted in multiple domains from reducing participation in normal activities through to education, employment, mental and physical health, family, and housing. They estimate around 53% of respondents reported impacts on at least the top 3 affected domains of participation in activities, mental health and education.⁶⁰

Relationships

Stable and positive relationships are conducive to good physical and mental health at any age, but particularly for adolescents and young people who must navigate several key life transitions and require extra support and advice from family and peers. As children become teenagers, they have less dependence upon parents and develop strong relationships with peers. The physical, emotional and social changes adolescents experience can result in increased levels of conflict and reduced closeness with parents.⁶¹

‘Growing Up in Australia: the longitudinal study of Australian children’ (LSAC) **reported a declining enjoyment of time spent with parents between the ages of 10 and 15 and a reduced level of closeness to parents between the ages of 12 and 15.** This would obviously influence the likelihood of a young person going to their parents when they experience problems and this was shown to decrease with age as well. Adolescents also spend an increasing time alone on both school days and weekends and interestingly the time spent with peers does not increase substantially between the ages of 10 to 15.

60 Mission Australia: Clusters of COVID-19 impact
61 Growing Up in Australia: Annual Statistical Report 2017



Strong peer attachments have been associated with better psychological wellbeing. The LSAC measured the quality of peer relationships for students starting secondary school and again two years later, scoring the level of trust, communication and overall peer attachment. Generally, 80-90% of students had good friends who they trusted, who respected their feelings and listened to what they say. However, girls had higher levels of communication (70-80%) with peers telling friends about problems, being encouraged to talk about difficulties and talking about issues when they arise, with only 50-70% of boys doing the same.

Adolescents are heavily influenced by the behaviour of peers. The LSAC reported that adolescents with poorer peer attachments (low levels of trust and communication) were more likely to report that their friendship group is characterised by high levels of risky behaviour and low levels of positive attitudes.

The LSAC reported that the **probability of being a victim of bullying at age 14-15 was halved for those who had high peer attachments and also for those whose friendship group was characterised by high levels of moral behaviour and reduced by 30% for those whose friends valued academic achievement.** Alternatively, the probability of being bullied was twice as high for adolescents whose friends were engaged in high levels of risky behaviours.⁶²

As parental detachment increases it is important to understand who adolescents go to for help. The Mission Australia Youth Survey 2018 asked participants (aged 15-19) where they would go for help with important issues in their lives, which is outlined in the table below showing the difference between young people with a high level of psychological distress compared to others.⁶³

Where young people aged 15-19 go for help with important issues, by psychological distress, 2018.

	Participants with psychological distress (%)	Participants without psychological distress (%)
Friend/s	75.9	87.4
Parent/s or guardian/s	54.8	82.8
Internet	53.3	48.2
GP or health professional	49.9	55.3
Relative/family friend	44.3	65.0
Brother/sister	40.4	57.2
School counsellor	31.9	37.4
Teacher	29.3	40.1
Social media	19.2	13.3
Telephone hotline	17.6	17.3
Books/Magazines	15.5	12.8
Community agency	12.3	13.8

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option.
Source: Can we talk? Seven year youth mental health report - 2012-2018



Mission Australia Youth Survey 2019

Ballarat sample

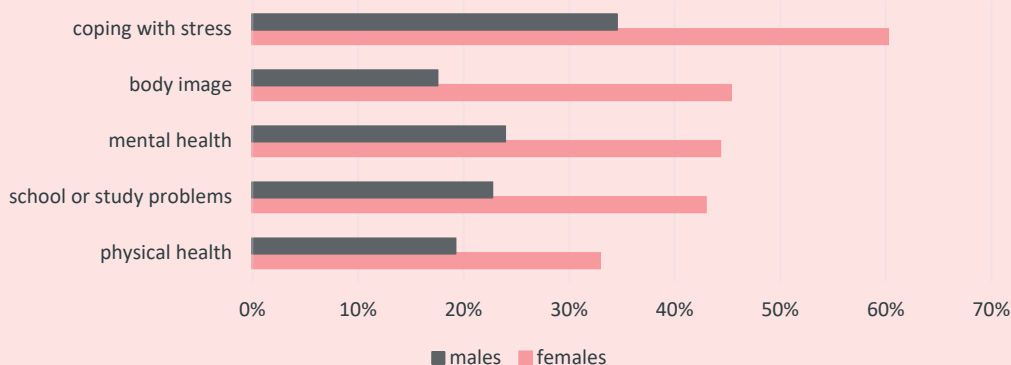
In 2019, 354 young people aged 15-19 from the Ballarat region participated in the Mission Australia Youth Survey.⁶⁴ The results from respondents living in regional areas are outlined at the start of this report. There are some differences between the results of the Ballarat sample and the wider Victorian community (including regional and metropolitan areas) which are presented below. It is important to be aware survey results are influenced by a number of factors including awareness of the survey amongst various groups and promotion of the opportunity to participate, which would bias the results towards these samples.

The Ballarat sample included 60% female respondents, although this is similar to the Victorian sample which had 66% female respondents, hence results have been reported by gender and many show a strong gender bias.

The national survey reported some changes to previous years including the huge rise in ranking of **'the environment'** as an important issue for young people. It ranked first on the list for the Ballarat sample and second on the list nationally, whereas in 2018 it was ranked eighth. **Mental health** ranked a close second as an issue of importance for Ballarat responders, and also ranked as the most important issue nationally. **Equity and discrimination** was the third most important issue reported by nearly a quarter of Ballarat respondents.

When asked about issues of personal concern the Ballarat sample was quite similar to the Victorian sample but is listed here to show the response from females who were clearly more concerned about most of the key issues listed (top five of 17 concerns shown below).

More females from Ballarat were extremely or very concerned about personal issues than males.



When asked what activities young people were involved in, the top three were sport (as a participant), sport (as a spectator) and volunteer work, which was the same as the larger Victorian sample. However, there were generally lower levels of participation across all activities compared to the Victorian sample, and females participated more than males. In particular, females were more involved in volunteering, student leadership activities and arts/cultural/music activities.



Loneliness

Loneliness is a subjective experience of social isolation, related to the quality of a person's relationships, and is often associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. Loneliness is not the same as being alone or socially isolated, as someone can be socially connected but still lonely. It is more a sign that relationships may be inadequate or failing to meet expectations.⁶⁵ An adequate relationship is one which is reciprocal with both involved sharing a sense of happiness, satisfaction and self-worth. The Young Australian Loneliness Survey reported **problematic levels of loneliness by one in six adolescents (aged 12-17) and one in three young adults (aged 18-25), with young women reporting higher levels of loneliness, social anxiety and depressive symptoms than young men.**⁶⁶

Researchers suggest young adults are finding the critical life transitions of moving home and finding work more problematic than adolescents who may still have relatively stable supportive structures of family and school during transition periods. They suggest **young people around the age of 20 seem to favour the quantity of relationships over the quality of social interactions** which leaves them more vulnerable to feeling lonely. Researchers also found adolescents (12-17) who are lonelier reported an elevated risk for mental health (12% for social anxiety and 20% for depression) compared to lonely young adults, aged 18-25 (10% and 16% for social anxiety and depression respectively).

Bullying

Bullying is intentional and repeated aggressive behaviour towards a peer that causes them harm. **Boys are more likely to experience physical aggression and girls are more likely to experience social aggression such as isolation and gossip.**⁶⁷ Respondents to the Growing Up in Australia study aged 14-15 cited the most common acts of bullying for both genders were people saying mean things or name calling, followed by being physically hit, kicked or shoved for boys and isolating behaviour for girls. Surveys taken in 2018 show **26% of Ballarat students in Years 7-9 had experienced bullying**, which was **higher than state levels (17.5%) and other regional cities.**⁶⁸

Cyberbullying

The prevalence of **cyberbullying**⁶⁹ amongst young people in Years 5, 8 and 11 in the **Central Highlands in 2016 was 33.6%** which had increased in the past two years and was slightly higher than state levels. Across the state generally the prevalence was **higher for older students** (Year 11) than younger students (Year 8), **higher for females** compared to males, and **higher for young people from one parent families** compared to couple families.⁷⁰ ReachOut Australia report cyberbullying is on the rise with rates of cyberbullying in young people aged 14 - 16 doubling from 18 to 36% between 2017 and 2018. However, **young people aged 17 - 19 experience the highest prevalence of online bullying** with 43% of all bullying towards this age group happening online.^{71,72}

65 The young Australian loneliness survey: A report prepared for VicHealth

66 The Young Australian Loneliness Survey: Research Summary

67 Growing Up in Australia - Annual Statistical Report 2017

68 Attitudes to School Survey - 2018

69 NSW Parliamentary Research Service 2016: Cyberbullying of Children

70 Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing Survey - 2018

71 ReachOut: Bullying and young Australians - Research Summary

72 Cyberbullying rates have doubled in the past year



LGBTIQ – Gender Identity

While most people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning (LGBTIQ) lead fulfilling and healthy lives, **research indicates that the LGBTIQ community generally have poorer health outcomes** when compared to the total population. Key health issues include **poor mental health due to stigma and discrimination, higher rates of illicit drug use, smoking and alcohol abuse, HIV for gay men, higher rates of sexually transmissible infections for gay men and bisexual women, and higher rates of breast and cervical cancer for lesbians.**⁷³

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as gender, race, class or disability as they apply to an individual and the overlapping layers of discrimination or disadvantage due to these interdependent categories. In recent government strategies **intersectionality is now being recognised as a key area to address in terms of discrimination and mental health**, but also in terms of **recognising and respecting the diversity of the LGBTIQ community.**⁷⁴

The report ‘From Blues to Rainbows’ was developed in 2014 following engagement with **gender diverse and transgender young people aged between 14 to 25**. There were 189 young people involved in the consultation and of these **two thirds had experienced verbal abuse in response to their gender presentation or non-conformity, and one fifth had experienced physical abuse**, particularly at school and in public sites. Nearly half had been diagnosed with depression and 38% had suicidal thoughts. One in three participants did not feel supported by their family, 66% had seen a health professional for their mental health in the past year, but 25% avoided medical services due to their gender presentation.⁷⁵

Volunteering

Young people in Ballarat volunteer at slightly higher rates than the Victorian average. Generally, the **younger age groups of 15-19 years volunteer at higher rates than 20-24 years, and females volunteer at higher rates than males**. Volunteering rates of regional areas tend to be higher than metropolitan suburbs but lower than rural towns.⁷⁶

Volunteering Rates (%)					
		2021		2016	
	Age	Ballarat	Victoria	Ballarat	Victoria
Male	15-19	13.3	10.4	20.3	17.6
	20-24	10.0	10.6	18.1	15.7
Female	15-19	17.6	13.6	26.0	22.1
	20-24	14.6	15.0	22.8	20.9

Source: ABS Census 2021

As the 2021 Census was collected during a lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic volunteering rates were lower than those measured in 2016.

⁷³ Victoria's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2014-18

⁷⁴ National LGBTI Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy

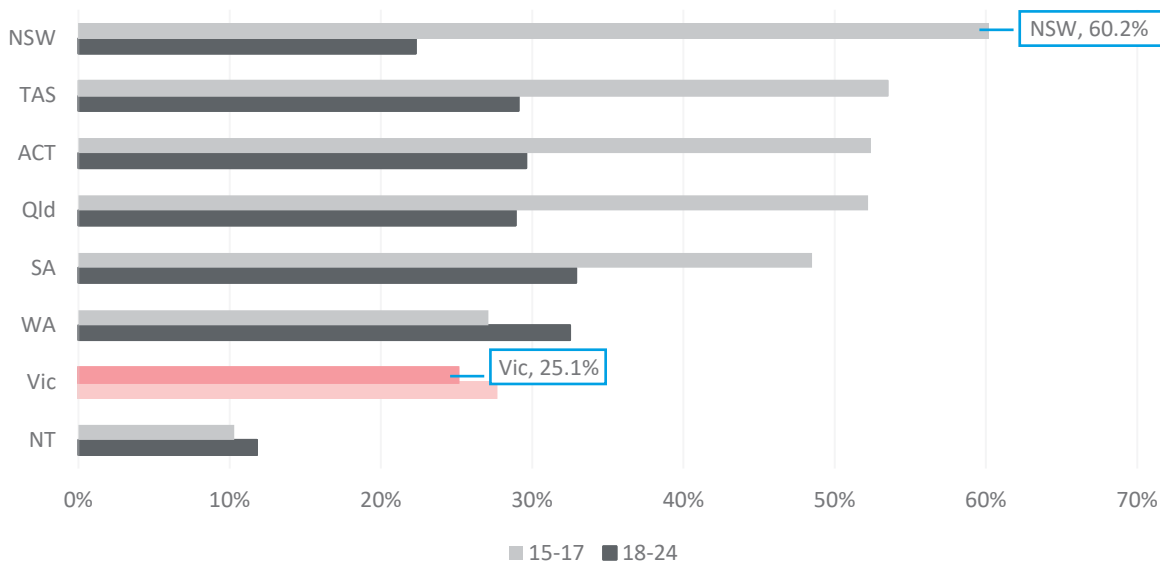
⁷⁵ From Blues to Rainbows – the mental wellbeing of gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia

⁷⁶ ABS Census 2021: Ballarat LGA - General Community Profile



The key organisations people volunteer for are sports and physical recreation clubs, education and training groups, welfare or community groups, religious, health and other groups. The graph below shows there is clearly opportunity to increase volunteerism amongst young people aged 15-17 in Victoria as **the rate of volunteering for that age group is generally less than half that of most other states.** Typically, most of these volunteer roles would be for sporting clubs, tasks which are taken on by older volunteers in Victoria.⁷⁷

Rates of volunteering by Victorian young people aged 15-17 is less than half the rate of other states.



Source: ABS Social Survey 2014

A recent review of youth volunteering claims current measures do not adequately capture the rich and varied ways which young people volunteer, such as through social enterprises or other forms of social participation. Researchers also note organisations need to understand the individual functional motives and needs of volunteers to ensure a positive experience. This includes engaging with social media, systems of recognition and supporting youth-led projects.⁷⁸

77 ABS General Social Survey 2014

78 Youth Volunteering in Australia: An evidence Review (ARACY)



Physical Health

The National Health Survey (2017-18) reported on health behaviours and risk factors for children and adults. **The rate of overweight and obesity in children has increased significantly in the past generation however has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years. Older teenage boys and young adult males have markedly higher overweight and obesity rates than females.** Sugar sweetened drinks and discretionary foods with low nutritional value are key target areas for health promotional messaging which is a particular problem for young males.⁷⁹

Other health behaviours which can have a negative effect on both physical and mental health of young people include a nutritionally poor diet, particularly due to low vegetable intake, excessive alcohol intake and low rates of physical activity.

Health factors		12-15 years	16-17 years	18-24 years
Overweight or obese	Male	20.4%	32.3%	52.4%
	Female	21.4%	24.7%	39.9%
		12-13 years	14-17 years	18-24 years
Two or less serves of vegetables per day	Male	73.7%	65.8%	67%
	Female	71.9%	66.7%	65.8%
more than one cup of sugar sweetened drinks per day	Male	8.1%	15.6%	25.5%
	Female	2.4%	2.9%	11.8%
			15-17 years	18-24 years
150 minutes or more of physical activity per week	Male		78.9%	77.6%
	Female		59.0%	69.5%
Current smoker	Male		3.4%	20.9%
	Females		2.1%	11.5%
Alcohol – exceeded guidelines for single occasion risk in past year	Male		10.6%	66.9%
	Female		7.6%	54.5%

Source: National Health Survey (2017-18)

Alcohol, smoking and illicit drugs

The 2017 Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD) reported that the trends in overall substance use has shown substantial change with **decreased prevalence of smoking, drinking (including at risky levels) and cannabis use amongst young people.**⁸⁰

The percentage of young people **aged 12-17 who have never smoked has risen to 82%** from 77% in 2011. The prevalence of smoking during the past month was 4% for students aged 12-15 and 14% for students aged 16-17. Although daily smoking for older students has dropped to 2% of those surveyed. However, the decline in smoking in this age group is threatened by novel products such as e-cigarettes, smaller factory-made cigarette pack sizes and roll-your-own tobacco pouches and crushball cigarettes (flavoured filters).⁸¹

79 National Health Survey - physical activity

80 Australian Secondary School Students Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey 2017

81 Trends in substance use among Australian Secondary School Students 1996-2017



The rates of daily smoking in young adults aged 18-24 has also dropped considerably over the past 15 years and is now 12.3% for males and 10.8% for females. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities tend to have much higher rates of smoking, but this has also recently dropped to 31% of daily smokers within the 15-24 age group.⁸²

People who use e-cigarettes have been shown to be 3 times more likely to take up smoking cigarettes than those who have not. Most e-cigarettes have been shown to contain nicotine even if labelled nicotine-free. One e-liquid pod can contain as much nicotine as a packet of cigarettes. Nicotine exposure during adolescence can harm brain development with detrimental impacts on learning, memory, attention and increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.⁸³

Alcohol consumption amongst young adolescents (12-15) has reduced over the past 20 years, however **there is continued substantial prevalence of drinking amongst older adolescents (49% in the previous month when surveyed in 2017).**⁸⁴

There are known associations between substance use with alcohol playing a pivotal role. Students identify smoking as a common negative consequence of consuming alcohol. Exposure to alcohol is also likely to be a key factor in other drug use.

The prevalence of illicit substance use is relatively low amongst secondary students however regional areas are known to have issues with methamphetamine (ice) due to availability. **Cannabis is clearly the most commonly used illicit substance** among secondary students with approximately 3% of 12-15 years and 9% of 16-17 years having used in the past week. **However these rates have significantly reduced over the past 20 years.**

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019 reported the **age of initiation has increased by around 18 months for illicit drugs and alcohol and by two years for tobacco, in the past 20 years.**⁸⁵

In 2019 the most likely age group to use illicit drugs was 20-29, and the percentage of males in this age group using recently had significantly increased from 29% in 2016 up to 34% in 2019.

82 AIHW: Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia 2019

83 E-cigarettes and teens 2020

84 Trends in substance use among Australian Secondary School Students 1996-2017

85 National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019

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