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# HEALTH & WELLBEING

# Health & Wellbeing

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# Health & Wellbeing

## Introduction

The health and wellbeing of Australians requires holistic thinking across a range of domains including physical health, mental health, physical activity, life expectancy, healthy weight, healthy behaviours, age appropriate development, service access and use and prevention and early intervention.

This document provides a snapshot of the main trends and statistics shaping the health and wellbeing for Australians and highlights the key needs for future work in these areas. More in depth information can be found via the list of official sources.

Filmmakers can use this guide as a starting point for research on their issue area, including pressing health needs, concerns and progress over time. In addition, where appropriate, the data sources can support filmmakers to track health and wellbeing outcomes for their films and impact campaigns.

Overall, Australians are living much, much longer than we used to. In fact, we are living 25 years longer than those born a century ago! Australians are drinking and smoking much less than 20 years ago. The majority of Australians are satisfied with their health, and rate it as excellent or very good. Rates of immunisations are quite high, and this has led to reduced rates of vaccine-preventable diseases. Children's language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge and emotional maturity are making considerable improvements overall.

However, despite reduced levels of alcohol consumption, Australian adults and young adults are still exceeding recommended guidelines for healthy consumption. Neither Australian adults or children are meeting the recommended guidelines for physical activity, fruit and vegetable consumption, water consumption and sleep duration. Mental health is on the rise at a notable rate. In fact, rates have doubled in the last 20 years and mental ill-health is the leading chronic health condition for Australians aged between 15-44 and tragically, suicide is now the leading cause of death for this age bracket. Chronic health conditions are on the rise too, with almost half of Australians experiencing one or more conditions. Levels of obese and overweight adults and children are increasing. Despite overall improvements in the development of children, there are significant gaps between between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, children who live in remote and rural areas compared to children who live in cities, and children who live in areas of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. There is also still a 9.3 year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.



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## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### Key statistics:

- Over half (56.4%) of Australians self-rate their health as excellent or very good. This is small decrease from 10 years, when 56.6% of Australians self-rated the same way.<sup>4</sup>
- 74% of people were satisfied with their health in 2018. This is a slight decrease over time, from 76.1% in 2003. <sup>2</sup>
- The number of Australians living with chronic diseases has risen significantly to almost half (47.3%) of the population in 2017-18, compared to 42.2% of the population in 2007-08. <sup>2</sup>
- In 2018, 4.4 million (17.7%) of Australians were living with a disability. This is a decrease from 18.3% of Australians in 2015. <sup>7</sup>
- Rates of heart, stroke and cardio-vascular disease have remained stable in the last 10 years, and is actually down .4% from 2007-08 levels. <sup>2</sup>
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has identified that the biggest risk factors for physical health are tobacco use (9.3% of total burden), overweight and obesity (8.4%), dietary risks (7.3%), high blood pressure (5.8%) and high blood plasma glucose (including diabetes) (4.7%). <sup>4</sup>

**Almost half of all  
Australians live  
with a chronic  
disease <sup>2</sup>**



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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### Key statistics:

- Only one in seven children are meeting the Australian guidelines for physical activity of at least 60 minutes per day. <sup>10</sup>
- More than half of adults are not participating in sufficient physical activity, which according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is 'at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each week'. <sup>4</sup>
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has identified that 2.5% of all disease burden in Australia could be offset if all Australians were sufficiently active. <sup>4</sup>
- They have also identified major health impacts of low levels of physical activity are significantly higher risks of developing cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and dementia. <sup>4</sup>

**Only half of adults and one in seven children are doing enough physical activity <sup>10 4</sup>**

## HEALTHY WEIGHT

### Key statistics:

- 12.5 million of Australian adults are overweight or obese. This is over 66% of our total population and is an increase from 56.3% in 1995. <sup>2</sup>
- Almost 1 in 4 children aged 5-17 were overweight or obese. <sup>8</sup> This is only 66.6% of Australian children in a healthy weight range. <sup>10</sup>

**12.5 million Australians are overweight or obese <sup>11</sup>**



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## HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS

### Key statistics:

- Australians are not eating enough vegetables- only 1 in 20 men and 1 in 10 women and children are eating the recommended 5 a day servings of vegetables. <sup>4</sup> <sup>10</sup>
- Australians are smoking much less today than compared to 30 years ago. 13.8% of adults are smoking daily- but this is less than half the rate in 1991 (25%).<sup>2</sup> <sup>5</sup>
- Young adults are smoking less too. 75.3% have never smoked before which is up 6% from 2014. Between 2001 and 2014, smoking rates of young adults decreased from 28.2% to 16.3%. <sup>2</sup>
- Only half of 16-17 year olds are getting enough sleep. <sup>10</sup>
- 65.4% of 10-11 year olds are not meeting the recommended guidelines for daily water consumption. <sup>10</sup>
- 33-45% of adults aren't getting adequate sleep duration or quality and 20% of adults suffer from insomnia. <sup>12</sup>
- Australians are drinking less, but it is still at concerning levels according to the ABS. On average, one in six adults consume more than two standards drinks per day, which exceeds the lifetime risk guideline. However, this is a noticeable 4.8% decrease from 2007-08, when 20.9% of adults exceeded this guideline. <sup>2</sup>
- Teenagers and young adults are putting themselves at risk of harm- with more than one in three 15-24 year olds drinking to excess <sup>2</sup>

## LIFE EXPECTANCY

### Key statistics:

- Australians born today are living, on average, 25 years longer than those from over a century ago. <sup>4</sup>
- The average for males born in 2016-18 was 80.7 years, compared to 55.2 years for those born between 1901-10. <sup>4</sup>
- For females born in 2016-18, life expectancy was 84.9 years, up from 58.8 years for those born between 1901-10. <sup>4</sup>
- Indigenous Australians, however, are expected to live 9.2 years less than non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australian males born in 2015-17 are expected to live 71.6 years. Indigenous Australian females born in 2015-17 are expected to live to 75.6 years.

**Australians are smoking half as much they did in 1991**

**Australians born today are living 25 years longer than those born a century ago**

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## MENTAL HEALTH

### Key statistics:

- The prevalence of mental health for Australians has sadly doubled in the last 20 years. <sup>2</sup>
- In the last 2018 census, 20.8% of Australians said they suffered from a mental health condition, compared to only 9.6% in 2001. <sup>2</sup>
- Currently, 1 in 5 Aussies suffer from a mental health condition <sup>2 5</sup>.
- Nearly HALF of all Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>
- Mental and behavioural conditions are the most common chronic health conditions for people aged 15 to 44. <sup>4</sup>
- The most common forms of mental illness are anxiety, affective disorders, especially depression, and substance use disorders, especially alcohol use.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2017 to 2018, 2.4 million adults experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress, which is an increase from 2.1 million in 2014 to 2015. <sup>2</sup>
- The Centre for Social Impact has identified that Indigenous people, people with a disability, and those that live in disadvantaged areas are more likely to experience psychological distress. <sup>6</sup>
- Every year over 65,000 people make a suicide attempt. <sup>16</sup>
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians between 15 and 44 years old. <sup>16</sup>
- In 2018, 3,046 deaths by suicide were registered in Australia. <sup>16</sup>
- Rural and remote areas have significantly higher suicide rates than metropolitan areas and this trend is increasing. <sup>16</sup>
- People in rural populations are 2 times more likely to die by suicide.<sup>16</sup>

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## AGE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

### Key statistics:

- According to the *The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)*, the number of developmentally vulnerable children has decreased significantly.<sup>1</sup>
- Children's **language and cognitive skills** have improved the most; between 2009 and 2018 developmental vulnerability decreased by 2.3% and levels of developmentally on track children increased by more than 7%.<sup>15</sup>
- There have also been improvements in children's **communication skills and general knowledge**, with 77.3% of children developmentally on track in 2018, compared to 75% in 2009.<sup>15</sup>
- Small improvements have been seen in children's **emotional maturity**, with vulnerability decreasing by .5% between 2009 and 2018, and developmentally on track children increasing by a similar percentage.<sup>15</sup>
- Domains that Australian children are not making major improvements in are **physical health** and **social competence**, which have remained relatively stable over the last 11 years.<sup>15</sup>
- **Despite these general improvements overall, there are some concerning gaps growing between certain groups of children.**
- In the domain of **physical health**, a gap has been widening since 2012 between the percentage of children living in very remote Australia who are developmentally vulnerable, compared to children living in major cities.<sup>15</sup>
- There has also been reported vulnerability gaps in both **physical health** and **language and cognitive skills** widening between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children.<sup>15</sup>
- Another concerning gap is widening between the **social competence** of girls and boys. Boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be developmentally vulnerable in this domain.<sup>15</sup>
- There is also currently a 31% gap in vulnerability in this domain between children who are not proficient in English, compared to children who are.<sup>15</sup>
- In the domain of **language and cognitive skills**, is a widening gap between the extreme ends of social economic areas. Children in socio-economically disadvantaged areas are 4.6 times as likely to be vulnerable than those in the least disadvantage areas. This gap is at it's widest since reporting began in 2009!<sup>15</sup>

The level of developmentally vulnerable children has been decreasing significantly <sup>1</sup>

However there are concerning gaps growing between groups of children



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## SERVICE ACCESS AND USE

### Key statistics:

- Services are struggling to keep up with demand- reports from the community sector claim that there are more people needing help than services can provide. <sup>13</sup>
- Australians living in rural or remote communities experience the most disadvantage when accessing services. <sup>4 5 13</sup>
- Some of the biggest hindrances to accessibility are affordability and cost of living pressures, housing pressures and homelessness, and inadequate rates of income support. <sup>13</sup>
- Levels of poverty and disadvantage are increasing- 68% of community sector staff say that people accessing their services are experiencing increasing levels of disadvantage- 23% of this is reported as 'increasing significantly'. <sup>13</sup>

**Access to health and community services are showing signs of strain<sup>13</sup>**

## IMMUNISATION

### Key statistics:

- 95% of 5 years olds in 2019 were fully up to date with their immunisations. <sup>4</sup>
- Reduced rates of diseases due to the introduction of vaccines, such as the one for HPV, lead to a one-third decrease of the 'burden of disease due to vaccine preventable diseases' between 2005 and 2015. <sup>4</sup>
- The rates of young people vaccinated against HPV are high: in 2017, 80% of girls turning 15 were immunised and 76% of boys were immunised. <sup>4</sup>
- Just 5 vaccine preventable diseases (VPD) take up almost 95% of the total VPD burden on the population- HPV, influenza, pneumococcal disease, shingles and meningococcal disease. <sup>14</sup>

**The introduction of vaccines has lead to a one third decrease in disease <sup>4</sup>**



# Where to find out more

## SOURCES

- 1- Australian Early Development Census <https://www.aedc.gov.au/early-childhood/findings-from-the-aedc>
- 2- Australian Bureau of Statistics <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4364.0.55.001>
- 3- Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/mental-health>
- 4- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/2aa9f51b-dbd6-4d56-8dd4-06a10ba7cae8/aihw-aus-232.pdf.aspx?inline=true>
- 5- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/128856d0-19a0-4841-b5ce-f708fcd62c8c/aihw-aus-234-Australias-health-snapshots-2020.pdf.aspx>
- 6- Centre for Social Impact <https://amplify.csi.edu.au/8domains/domains/health/>
- 7- Australian Bureau of Statistics <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4430.0Main%20Features52018>
- 8- Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/obesity-and-overweight>
- 9- Australian Centre on Quality of Life <http://www.acqol.com.au/uploads/surveys/survey-035-report.pdf>
- 10- Australian Institute of Family Studies <https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/lsac-asr-2018-chap3-health.pdf>
- 11- Centre for Social Impact [https://amplify.csi.edu.au/documents/16/Health\\_-\\_Australias\\_Social\\_Pulse\\_.pdf](https://amplify.csi.edu.au/documents/16/Health_-_Australias_Social_Pulse_.pdf)
- 12- The Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health <https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/pdfs/surveys/SleepHealthFoundation-Survey.pdf>
- 13- Australian Council of Social Service <https://www.acoss.org.au/the-profile-and-pulse-of-the-sector-findings-from-the-2019-australian-community-sector-survey/>
- 14- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/immunisation/burden-of-vaccine-preventable-diseases-summary/contents/summary>
- 15- Australian Early Development Census <https://www.aedc.gov.au/Websilk/Handlers/ResourceDocument.ashx?id=c3cf2764-db9a-6d2b-9fad-ff0000a141dd>
- 16- Lifeline <https://www.lifeline.org.au/resources/data-and-statistics/>