

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE



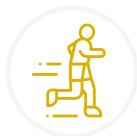
## **Regular physical activity can contribute to positive health and wellbeing outcomes across a person's lifespan.**

It can assist with weight management, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, prevent musculoskeletal conditions and improve mental wellness. In large urban centres such as the City of Melbourne, the level of engagement in physical activity can be impacted by factors such as availability of green space, access to public transport, the range of facilities providing health and fitness services and perceptions of safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the levels and types of physical activity undertaken within the City of Melbourne. Anecdotal evidence suggests the closure of recreational facilities such as pools and gyms has diverted users to other forms of active recreation such as cycling, walking, running and scooting. More people are also reported to be using local paths, streets and parks, highlighting the important role of public open spaces in promoting physical and mental health.

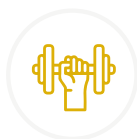
There are also growing concerns about the long-term impact of social isolation on children's physical activity levels. Evidence suggests that children are less active and more sedentary, with less consistent sleep patterns on days they are not physically at school. If left unchecked, long-term impacts for children could include lower vitamin D levels, the onset of myopia and poorer mental health. Ensuring older adults remain physically active during social isolation is also important to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, weakened muscle and frailty.

# How are we tracking?



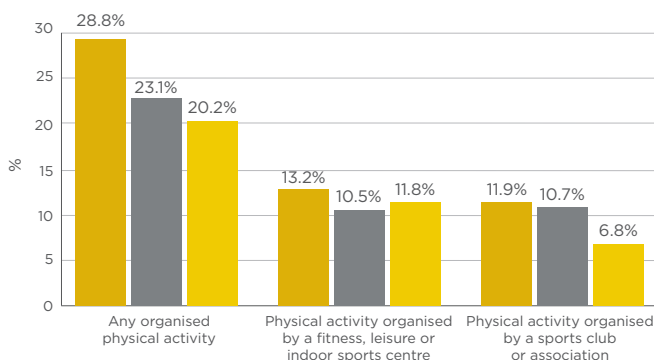
## Recommended amount of physical activity

In 2020, just under half of city of Melbourne adults surveyed (47.3 per cent) engaged in the recommended amount of physical activity (30 minutes or more, 4 days a week) compared to 47.5 per cent in 2019 and 52.3 per cent in 2018. The 2020 figure is also lower than the latest reported figures (2017) for Victoria (50.9 per cent) and neighbouring municipalities such as Port Phillip (59.9 per cent), Yarra (54.9 per cent) and Stonnington (54.1 per cent).



## Organised physical activity

The proportion of adults in the city of Melbourne participating in organised physical activity decreased from 28.8 per cent in 2018, to 20.2 per cent in 2020.



### Key

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

**Figure 1.** Proportion of city of Melbourne residents who participated in organised physical activity, 2018 to 2020.

Source: City of Melbourne Social Indicators Survey



## Sedentary lifestyle

On an average weekday, around one fifth (22 per cent) of adults residing in the city of Melbourne spend more than eight hours sitting, mirroring the Victorian population (22 per cent). On an average weekend day, just under one quarter of adults (23 per cent) spend between two and four hours sitting, which is significantly lower than the Victorian population (34 per cent).

Levels of inactivity (participation in 0 days of physical activity per week) varies across different groups within the City of Melbourne. Consistent with past research showing that levels of physical activity decline with age, pensioners (63.3 per cent) were more likely to be inactive compared to the general city of Melbourne population. Young people living alone (22.9 per cent), international students (25 per cent) and less economically advantaged groups such as low income households (21.7 per cent) and people living in public housing (32.3 per cent) were also more likely to be inactive compared with the general population. Compared to residents who spoke only English (26.5 per cent), residents who spoke a language other than English (LOTE) were more likely to be inactive (13.9 per cent).



## Active transport

In 2018, walking made up more than one third (37 per cent) of all trips within the municipality, while cycling made up around 4 per cent. These proportions are slightly lower than in 2016 but are higher compared to Victoria (18 per cent for walking and cycling). Evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased uptake in recreational cycling across Melbourne, with weekend cycling numbers increasing by over 50 per cent from February to May 2020. It will be important to support this shift towards more active forms of transport in the community to retain the associated health benefits.



## How is the City of Melbourne responding?

- ▶ The **City of Melbourne Transport Strategy 2030** aims to transform Melbourne into Australia's leading bicycle city.
- ▶ The City of Melbourne has been able to **fast track the installation of 40 kilometres** of bike lanes while there has been less traffic heading into the city during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lanes will make it safer for cyclists to travel across the municipality.
- ▶ The City of Melbourne operates a variety of facilities providing recreational opportunities to the community including **5 recreation centres** offering a range of health and fitness services.