



# Culture & Identity

## City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

Port Phillip is enriched by the presence of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. We are home to people from over 163 different birthplaces, with our residents speaking 114 different languages. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

### What is culture?

**Culture** refers to the shared characteristics of a group of people and their way of life, including their place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, ideas, social behaviours, customs, art, literature and music. Cultures may be big or small and have their own values, beliefs and origins. The nature of cultures may change over time, especially as cultures mix in a globalised world (National Geographic Society, 2023).

### Who resides in Port Phillip?

According to the most up to date Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data:

- In 2021, 33 743 people who were living in the City of Port Phillip were born overseas, with 27 per cent of those arriving in the 5 years prior. 36.6 per cent of the overseas born population arrived before 2001, and 27 per cent arrived during or after 2016, compared with 40.2 per cent and 19.7 percent for Greater Melbourne respectively.
- A higher proportion of the Port Phillip population was born overseas when compared with Victorians. In 2021, 33.1 per cent of Port Phillip residents were born overseas, compared to 30 per cent for the Victorian population. This is a slight increase from 31.4 per cent in 2016, where the Victorian percentage was also lower at 28.3 per cent. The Greater Melbourne percentage however is slightly greater than Port Phillip, with 35.7 per cent of Greater Melbourne being born overseas in 2021, an increase from 33.8 per cent in 2016.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people residing in Port Phillip who were born overseas increased by 11.9 per cent. The largest proportion were aged between 25 and 39 years old.
- In 2016, the largest proportion of new arrivals were born in the United Kingdom (18.2 per cent) followed by New Zealand (10.6 per cent), India (9.1 per cent), China (7.1 per cent) and Ireland (5.9 per cent).



- As of 2021, 21 per cent of Port Phillip residents spoke a language other than English at home, a slight increase from 20.5 per cent in 2016. The top four languages spoken were Greek (2.5 per cent), Mandarin (2.1 per cent), Spanish (1.9 per cent) and Italian (1.2 per cent).
- As of 2021, Port Phillip has a small Indigenous community with 505 people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, representing 0.5 per cent of the population. The local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is diverse and is made up of Boon Wurrung Traditional Owners, Aboriginal people from regional Victoria, Torres Strait Islander peoples from Queensland and from all states and territories of Australia (.id, 2023).

Other data sources indicate that:

- In the 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey, 84 per cent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that “the City of Port Phillip is a welcoming and supportive place for everyone including people from varied cultural and religious backgrounds, ages, gender and sexualities”. Men and younger residents (aged 18-34 years) perceive the city as more welcoming and supportive for everyone than women and people aged 65 years and over (City of Port Phillip, 2022).
- Census data on the LGBTIQ+ community was not collected in the most recent Census in 2021, making it difficult to determine exactly what their presence is in the community. However, some estimates indicate that one in four adult residents living in Port Phillip identify as LGBTIQ+. This has been calculated via the following method:
  - In the publication, ‘The health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer population in Victoria: Findings from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017’, it was found that approximately 5.7% of persons 18+ identified as LGBTIQ+ (Victorian Agency for Health Information, 2020). Other research has come up with far higher estimates (approximately 14% of 16-69 year olds identifying as LGBTIQ+). By using this figure to adjust municipal estimates from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017, it is estimated that 26 per cent of the adult population identify as LGBTIQ+.

### Valuing cultural diversity: Why is it important?

- Valuing cultural diversity is critical to achieving social cohesion. This involves building shared values, reducing inequalities and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community (O'Donnell, 2022). A cohesive society, which values how diverse groups of people live, is fundamental to health at the individual and community levels.



- Building a culture that values diversity is pivotal in preventing the emergence of various types of discrimination, such as racial discrimination. Discrimination is associated with stress, anxiety and depression.
- People from diverse cultural backgrounds consistently have higher levels, and greater numbers, of socially determined risk factors for mental health problems, including social isolation and racism (Mental Health in Multicultural Australia, 2014).
- There is substantial evidence that in Victoria, race-based discrimination makes children susceptible to anxiety, depression and psychological distress (VicHealth, 2014). Aboriginal Australians exposed to incidents of race-based discrimination were more likely to suffer from psychological distress, and the extent of the distress was worsened by more exposure (Ferdinand, Paradies, & Kelaher, 2013).

While there is inadequate data to indicate the levels of social cohesion, or alternatively, discrimination existing in Port Phillip, it is clear that:

- Cultural identification is an important factor in determining health and wellbeing.
- Recognising and valuing the distinct identities and cultures of varying groups residing in Port Phillip is vitally important for the health and wellbeing of all residents and in particular Aboriginal Australians.
- Port Phillip is a culturally rich municipality. If emphasis is placed on proactively supporting social cohesion and reducing discrimination, the negative impacts of a fragmented community are likely to be avoided.

### Current impacts on culture and identity

COVID-19 is still impacting on many different cultural groups, particularly those who may be more vulnerable to its negative health impacts. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are more prone to the negative consequences of COVID-19. Barbecues run by the Council specifically for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Port Phillip have been continually cancelled or postponed due to the threat of COVID-19. This limits cultural meetings that were previously held, where people could access health services and support.

Discrimination is an ongoing issue. One recent public example of this was seen at a protest outside the Victorian Pride Centre at the end of 2022, that caused the cancellation of an event for queer youth.

International students have begun returning to Australia post COVID-19 lockdowns, as universities are making online classes less available and changing them to on campus.

### What is Council's role?

Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is mandated to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district. Council can build respect and trust the local community and encourage cultural identification by:



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- Advocating for the needs of diverse groups and work in partnership to develop opportunities and recommendations to inform input to decision-making by all citizens.
- Providing spaces for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to build social connections and identify with.
- Responding to diverse community needs and tackling the disadvantage, stigma and discrimination that affect health and wellbeing.
- Promoting positive community relationships and providing services and advice to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Celebrating the varying cultures which comprise the City of Port Phillip through supporting arts, food and cultural events and festivals.
- Continuing to contribute to a national reconciliation movement and acknowledging the contribution of the Boon Wurrung Traditional owners and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

In addition, in 2022 the City of Port Phillip joined the Welcoming Cities network and signed a commitment to the Welcoming Cities Standard. Welcoming Cities is an initiative of Welcoming Australia, a national network of municipalities committed to an Australia where everyone can participate in social, cultural, economic and civic life. Welcoming Cities supports local councils to become more welcoming and inclusive of their diverse communities.

### Who are our partners?

- Local multicultural organisations
- Local culturally and linguistically specific welfare services
- Ethnic Community Council of Victoria
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organisation
- The Torch Aboriginal Arts Organisation
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- AMES Australia
- Migrant Resource Centres
- Multicultural Advisory Committee



## What may change over the next five years?

- The uncertain economic future, where inflation and the increase in cost of living could continue to rise, could cause the social and economic disparities between groups in Port Phillip to widen. Some groups may be more privileged or have a higher socioeconomic status than others.
- While Australia has entered a post-lockdown and 'COVID-normal' period, COVID-19 is likely to continue to disproportionately impact some cultural groups. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a higher risk of being negatively impacted by contracting it. Future waves or rises in cases, as well as the development of variants or subvariants, may impact these groups and the cultural activities they're able to undertake.
- The City of Port Phillip has begun the process of establishing a Gathering Place for First Nations people. This will be a physical space for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people to meet and engage in cultural activities, receive support and contact services as they need (e.g. health services).



## References

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