

BALLARAT VitalSigns® 2025



VITAL SIGNS REPORT

This Vital Signs Report provides a snapshot of areas of vulnerability in Ballarat. The 8 areas of vulnerability investigated in the report are:

- Food security
- Mental health
- Family violence
- Youth
- Homelessness
- Gender equity and leadership
- Early childhood development
- Environmental sustainability

The Vital Signs report can be used by the community in the following ways:

- **Better understand the complex issues** that compound vulnerability
- **Reflect on assumptions** so that you can contribute differently to civic conversations
- **Donate where you can** and see where your contributions will have the most impact in the community
- **Nudge citizens into action** through volunteering or by contributing to community-based organisations in other ways



THE STATE OF THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR IN BALLARAT

Community-based and not-for-profit organisations provide a fundamental support system in Ballarat but are under strain with unprecedented demand for services. Ongoing cost of living strains are putting more families under pressure. Service organisations in Ballarat are experiencing higher rates of repeat presentations and longer waiting lists.

Not-for-profit organisations are struggling to meet demand due to changes in the donor landscape. Regional government funding streams have shrunk considerably in some areas, and there has been a decrease in the number of institutional contributions. Because the donor landscape has shrunk, some not-for-profits and community-based organisations are also struggling to keep their doors open.

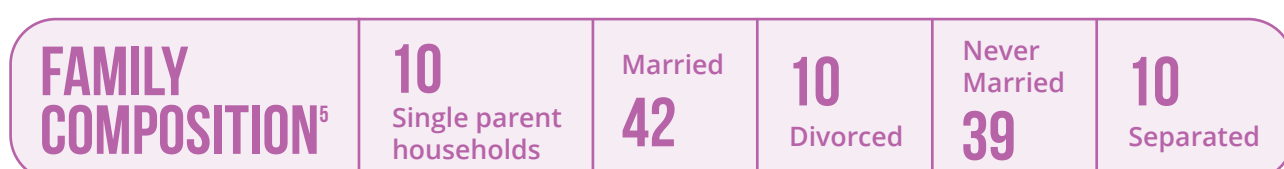
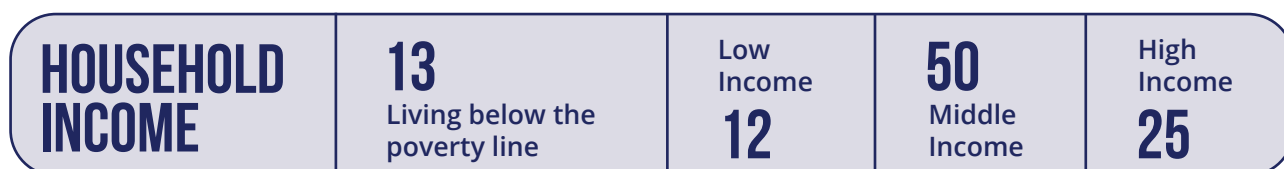
While volunteer numbers are rebounding following the post-COVID slump, participation in Victoria remains 17% lower than the national volunteering rate.¹ This means community organisations in Ballarat are forecasting volunteer shortfalls in the next three years.



INTRODUCING OUR COMMUNITY

Ballarat is home to approximately 121,050 people.² We are largely from an Anglo-Celtic background, but our cultural diversity is growing. We have moved from an ageing population to a well-balanced age distribution, although this may change in the future. Ballarat is economically comfortable comparative to other regional areas, but we have a portion of the community that are struggling. We have a stable core of engaged residents, but there is scope to broaden participation.

If we were a group of 100 people, this is what we would look like:³



FAMILY VIOLENCE

SNAPSHOT⁶

In early 2024 Ballarat was rocked by the tragic deaths of Samantha Murphy, Rebecca Young, and Hannah McGuire in a short span of time. These deaths triggered urgent calls for action on gendered violence in the region. Ballarat's story around family violence is not positive. Despite the issue being highlighted, family violence incidents are up by 28.8% in the last 12 months compared to Victoria's increase of 8.86%.

Ballarat had **3,014 family violence** incidents for the 12 months ending in March 2025, an **increase of 28.8%** compared to the State increase of 8.86%

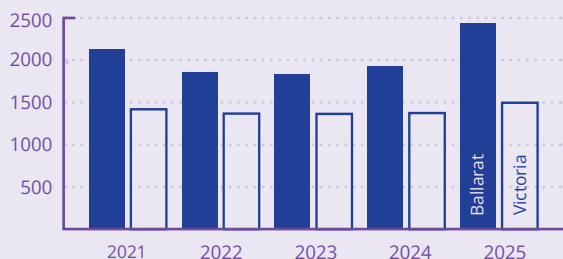
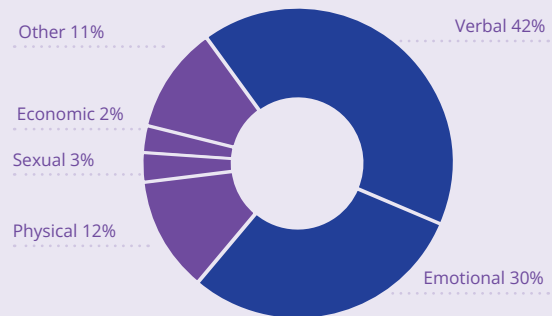


Figure 1: Family Violence Incidents (per 100,000)

Figure 2: Types of Abuse



Verbal and emotional abuse are the highest number of police reported incidences in Ballarat in the last 12 months.



As of March 2025, Ballarat has a rate of **family violence incidents 50.1% above the Victorian average.**



There were 903 **breaches of family violence** orders in the last 12 months in Ballarat, a 16.8% increase.



89% of family violence incidents in Ballarat in the last 12 months occurred at home. 2,313 family violence incidents occurred at a residential premises in the last 12 months. Only 261 incidents occurred at a non-residential location in the last 12 months.



1,266 clients received homelessness services due to family violence in Ballarat of which 21 were men and these men were perpetrators. The rest were women and children seeking general and specialist family violence homing services.



There were 594.35 common assaults and 874.21 serious assaults reported to police per 100,000 in the last 12 months in Ballarat. This represents a **15.9% increase in the last 12 months.**

WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

The community has shown resilience and unity in the face of growing public awareness around family violence.

Ballarat is trialling innovative models to address family violence prevention.

There is growing investment to strengthen local capacity and collaboration to address family violence.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

More needs to be done in the community in reducing the incidents of family violence.

Actions that support deeper cultural and structural changes are needed in Ballarat to address the root causes of family violence in the community.

We all need to be active bystanders and supportive allies and speak up against disrespectful behaviour.



Sitara Project winners Suzanne Ryan-Evers (L), Annie Dunn, Shweta Dakin (C), Hee Young Lim and community members.

WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

In response to the rising rates of family violence in Ballarat, the Ballarat Foundation established the Ballarat Women's Fund. This fund is a collaborative funding initiative focused on women's empowerment and equality. The Fund provides annual grants for initiatives to address the root causes of gender inequality in the community.

In 2024, the Women's Fund supported Raven Collective, which creates employment pathways for women who have experienced family violence. In 2025, a grant was awarded to the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council to pilot the Sitara Project, training 12 women from the Indian community to become champions against family violence and trusted contact points for those potentially at risk.

Both initiatives strengthen women's independence and recovery, providing survivors of family violence with safer pathways and access to the support they need.

HOMELESSNESS

SNAPSHOT

Cost of renting in Ballarat has increased by 5% over the last 12 months, outpacing CPI (between 2.4-2.7%) and wage increases (approximately 3.3%).⁷ Rental vacancy rates remain below the balanced market threshold of 3%, meaning increased competition for rental properties. Despite an increase in housing affordability in Ballarat,⁸ the lack of available housing is putting pressure on low-income families. The significant decrease in the number of building permits in Ballarat forecasts a growing housing problem.



In the last 12 months **housing permit approvals** have dropped from 840 to 688, a **decrease of 18.1%**.⁹



The **availability of rentals** in Ballarat dropped by **52.63%** in the last 12 months.



Ballarat **rental vacancy rates** have dropped to **0.9%** in the last 12 months.¹⁰ A 'healthy' rate of vacancies is 3%. This means Ballarat has a significantly low number of rental vacancies.



There has been **11.1% increase of women** (total 230) who are **over 50 at risk of being homeless** in Ballarat. These are women who sought assistance regarding housing from specialist homelessness services.¹¹



5.46% of renters in Ballarat are renting **homes smaller than they need**. There are 781 renting households who require one or more bedrooms in Ballarat.¹²



According to service providers in Ballarat, up to **400 people a week** are **seeking assistance** due to lack of adequate housing.¹³



The number of people **living in cars, tents and sleeping bags** fluctuates between **80 to 100 a week** in Ballarat.¹⁴



Between **30 to 40 people** are **sleeping rough** in central Ballarat, with 10 of these being habitual rough sleepers.¹⁵



The number of **building permits issued** for houses in Ballarat has **dropped by 56.5%** over the last four years compared to the state average drop of 17.4% and the national average drop of 10.2%.¹⁶

Figure 3: Percentage of Affordable Dwellings



Affordability of rentals in Ballarat is **increasing year on year** with **75.5% of all rentals** being affordable, meaning people spend less than 30% of their income on rental expenses.¹⁷

WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

The funding community has come together to launch the Zero Ballarat project to end rough sleeping in the CBD.

There is growing community mobilisation with business, philanthropy and volunteers supporting relief efforts for those doing it tough.

There is strong service coordination to ensure effective case management of the homeless.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

More affordable low-cost rentals and social housing is needed in Ballarat.

Long-term wrap around support with more permanent housing options is needed in Ballarat to address the root cause of homelessness.

Early intervention for at-risk groups continues to be needed.



Michelle Twigger from Ballarat Zero Project (CL) and Ballarat Foundation CEO, Andrew Eales (CR) with key funding partners at the project launch.

WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

In 2025, the Ballarat Foundation supported the Ballarat Zero Project, a three-year pilot led by member agencies of the Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance.

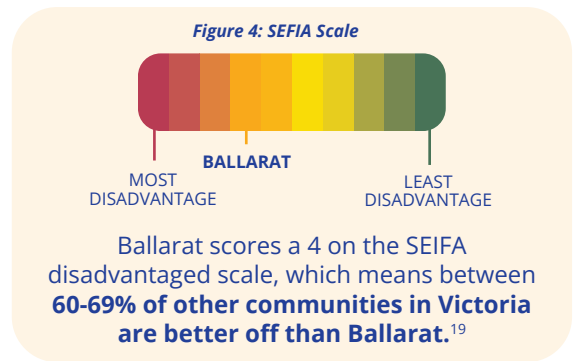
The pilot aims to achieve functional zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in central Ballarat by 2027. The project focuses on improving coordination between housing and support services, drawing on lessons from similar Zero initiatives.

Once functional zero homelessness is reached, partners will work to sustain it so that any future instances of rough sleeping in Ballarat are rare, brief, and non-recurring.

FOOD INSECURITY

SNAPSHOT

Food insecurity remains elevated in Ballarat despite easing inflation. Local relief agencies report higher demand, but there is also increased community awareness and decreased stigmatism regarding accessing food relief.¹⁸ While annual CPI has slowed, there is still pressure on household budgets. Our Victoria affordability index shows staple foods are still 7–12% less affordable than pre-COVID times. More needs to be done in Ballarat to address the root cause of food insecurity rather than relying on unsustainable food relief.



37% of households in regional Victoria experienced **limited or uncertain availability of food** in 2024 compared to 32% in metro areas and 33% nationally.²⁰



12.63% of households in Ballarat (5,642) **earn less than \$1,000/week**. Earnings of \$1,027/week for a family household is considered below the poverty line.²¹



Food relief agencies in Ballarat have seen an **11.74% increase in prepared meals being handed out** compared to 12 month ago.²² However, awareness of free food programs in Ballarat has also increased.



65% of emergency food relief participants in Ballarat are chronic users, meaning they have relied of emergency relief food for between 1-20 years.²³



There has been **14.8% increase in jobseeker** and youth allowance recipients in Ballarat over the last 12 months.²⁴



Key commodity **prices have increased around 21%** from 2019 to 2025, keeping pressure on household food budgets.²⁵

How inflation has impacted our shopping trolleys



Tip Top white sandwich loaf in 2019 cost \$3.38. It now costs \$4.40, an increase of 10.5% when factoring in Wage Price Index²⁵

2025: **\$4.40**
↑
+10.5%
2019: **\$3.38**

2025: **\$10.00**
↑
+10.5%
2019: **\$8.10**

500gms of 5-star Coles minced beef in 2019 cost \$8.10. It now costs \$10.00. This is an increase of 10.5% when factoring in Wage Price Index²⁷



2 litres of full cream milk from Coles in 2019 cost \$2.47 and now costs \$3.10. This is an increase of 12.2% when factoring in Wage Price Index²⁸

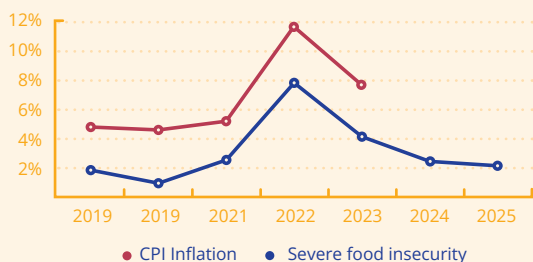
2025: **\$3.10**
↑
+12.2%
2019: **\$2.47**

2025: **\$4.50**
↑
+7.5%
2019: **\$3.50**

1kg pre-washed potatoes from Coles in 2019 cost \$3.50. It now costs \$4.50. This is an increase of 7.5% when factoring in Wage Price Index²⁹



Figure 5: Severe Food Insecurity vs CPI inflation



As of 2023, there were **7.6% of households in Ballarat that experienced severe food insecurity**, which reduced from its peak of 11.6% in 2022. We should expect to see the level of food insecurity reduce in Ballarat as inflation drops.³⁰

When factoring in wage increases, **food has become less affordable** based on average hourly wages. In 2018-2019, food was below the affordability threshold (meaning it was very affordable). **Food is still between 7-12% less affordable than before COVID-19.**³¹

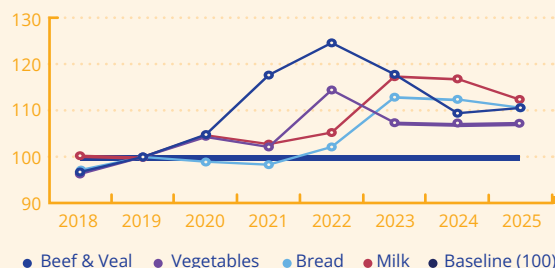


Figure 6: Affordability index (2019=100) from June 2019-2025

WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

The current food relief services in Ballarat are keeping pace with need, despite an increase of 11.7% in people seeking relief meals.

Cost pressures are easing from the peak of 2022, and food is becoming more affordable.

Severe food insecurity has fallen since 2022, which means, while people may still be worried about supporting themselves and their families, there are less people going hungry.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Food is still less affordable than prior to pre-COVID levels, despite falling inflation.

More work needs to be done on the determinants of food insecurity and providing wrap-around services alongside emergency food relief.

Although there are coordination mechanisms, such as the Ballarat Food Access Network and Ballarat Food Collective, more community groups and not-for-profits need to work collaboratively to leverage impact beyond emergency relief.

WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

The Ballarat Foundation recognises that emergency food relief alone cannot create sustainable pathways to food security. In 2023, the Foundation partnered with Ballarat Community Health to establish an edible garden and a skills-development program for people at risk of homelessness.

By building practical cooking, budgeting, and life-and-living skills, the program helped participants stretch scarce dollars, reduce waste, and prepare more nutritious meals, while strengthening self-sufficiency and confidence.

One participant, Jake, who was not keen on attending classes to begin with, ended up attending 20 cooking classes and now makes his own version of pumpkin soup. Skills development around food and household management delivers impact beyond immediate relief, supporting lasting food security and tenancy sustainment.

YOUTH SUPPORT

SNAPSHOT

Young people aged 12–24 make up about 16% of Ballarat’s population and face both opportunities and challenges. Youth unemployment has reduced by 40% and is below the State and National averages. Many young people are actively engaged in the community through part time work, study, and sports, and youth engagement in Ballarat is on par with state averages. Mental health distress for young people is above the state average and there has been an increase in youth crime over the last three years.



School **retention rates to year 12** in Ballarat are **85.88%** based on Victorian averages.³²



18.9% of all residents in Ballarat 15 years and over have **not completed a year 10 education**.³³



Youth unemployment for people 15-24 years in Ballarat has reduced by 40% in the last 12 months. **Youth unemployment is now 8.1%** in Ballarat, which is well below the Victorian average rate of 10.5% and the Australian average of 10.5% where the rate has increased for the same period.³⁴



80.3% of youth aged 15-19 in Ballarat are engaged in study or work.

This means that 19.7% of youth are not engaged in study or work. This is slightly lower than the Victoria youth engagement levels of 84.8%.³⁵



72 young people are experiencing some form of **homelessness** in Ballarat, mainly couch surfing and in supported accommodation.³⁶



8.4% of young people in Ballarat (0-24 years) suffer from a **long-term mental health condition** compared to the Victorian average of 5.42%.



A National youth survey identified that **20%** of youth aged 15-19 see **mental health as one of their main challenges**, although this is a year-on-year downward trend.³⁷



Things that **matter most** to young people are **1. cost of living (56%)**, 2. climate change and the environment (27%), 3. violence, safety, and crime (25%) and 4. mental health (23%).³⁸



Ballarat has a high youth **participation rate in sport**, with **72.1% of women** aged 15-24 participating and **71.45% of men** in the same age bracket.³⁹



28% of young people in Ballarat reported **feeling lonely** all or most of the time, which is higher than the Victorian average of 19%.⁴⁰

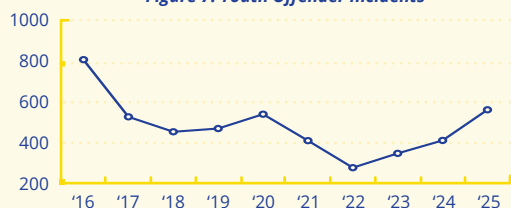


Youth **offending rates** have **increased by 36.8%** in the last 12 months. There were 565 youth offender incidents reported.⁴¹



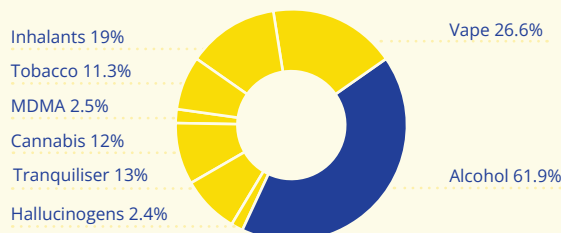
40% of young people in Ballarat **feel that they have a say** in the things that matter to them.⁴²

Figure 7: Youth Offender Incidents



Following a steady downward trend in youth offending (aged 10-17) from 2016 to 2022, the trend has been reversed with a **year-on-year increase in youth offending over the last three years.**⁴³

Figure 8: Lifetime use by Secondary School Students



Alcohol is the most abused drug by secondary students (having tried it at least once), followed by vaping and sniffing inhalants.⁴⁴

WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

Improving employment outcomes for young people.

Sports engagement is high for both male and female young adults providing good pathways for community health and lifestyles.

Youth awareness regarding the dangers of drugs and alcohol has improved and there are promising decreases in the prevalence of some illicit substances, particularly tobacco and alcohol.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Mental health and wellbeing challenges remain an issue for young people with a need for social connection.

After years of decline, the level of youth offending is increasing indicating the need for prevention programs and positive pathways for at-risk youth.

Although levels of engagement and school retention is high in Ballarat, 1 in 5 young people are still either not studying or in work indicating the need for pathways to employment.



Learner, Holly, successfully passing her test in August 2025

WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

Since 2014, the Ballarat Foundation has delivered the L2P program to support young people without access to a car or supervising driver to complete the 120 hours of practice required for their probationary licence. The program has had a profound impact, building young people's confidence and strengthening their connection to the community. A survey of L2P participants since 2014 found that 88% secured employment, 97% felt less socially isolated, and 99% reported improved road safety awareness. Remarkably, 100% said their volunteer supervising driver had a positive impact on their life and supported them to make better decisions for their future.

MENTAL HEALTH

SNAPSHOT

Ballarat residents, particularly men, face significant mental health challenges, with higher rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicide than the Victorian average. Younger adults between 25-34 are the most at risk but also the most likely to seek help. There are many underlying causes to poor mental health, including economic stresses, unemployment, homelessness, family violence, and social isolation. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions, improved service accessibility, and community-based strategies to address the underlying drivers of poor mental health.



29.9% of people living in the Ballarat region reported having **poor or fair health**, which is 29% higher than the rest of rural Victoria.⁴⁵



23.6% of people in Ballarat felt they had to **wait an unacceptable time to see a doctor** compared to 18.6% in the rest of Victoria.⁴⁶



54.5% of people in Ballarat identified access to **affordable health care as an issue** in the community.⁴⁷



People in Ballarat are **34% more likely to seek help for their mental health** compared to the rest of Victoria.⁴⁸



32.9% of people aged between 18-34 in Ballarat reported having a **low or medium life-satisfaction**, compared to 25.5% in the rest of Victoria.⁴⁹



19% of 25-34-year-olds in Ballarat have **long-term mental health conditions**, which is the highest percentage compared to other age groups.⁵⁰



The **suicide rate** in Ballarat per 100,000 is 15.2, which is **40.7% higher than the Victorian rate** of 10.8 per 100,000. More than half the deaths are people aged 30-59 and men are 3 times more likely to suicide compared to women.⁵¹



29.3% of people in Ballarat identified as **being lonely**, which is 25.8% higher than the Victorian average. The **loneliest age group is 18-24-year-olds** and there is no significant difference in loneliness by gender.⁵²



Younger adults (18-34) are significantly **more likely to seek professional help for mental health** compared to older age groups, with around 27% reporting seeking help in the last 12 months in Ballarat.⁵³

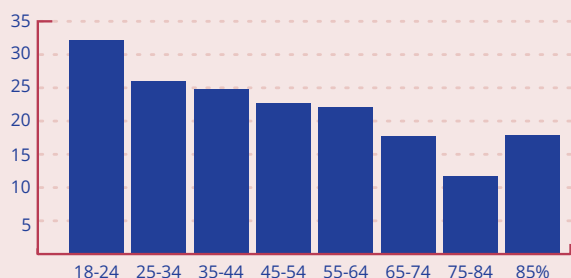


The **suicide rate for First Nations people is over 2.5 times that of non-Indigenous Australians**,⁵⁴ although there is no publicly available information available for Ballarat.



Only **22.2% of GP clinics** in Ballarat offer **bulk billing services**, which is 11.7% less than the Victorian average.⁵⁵

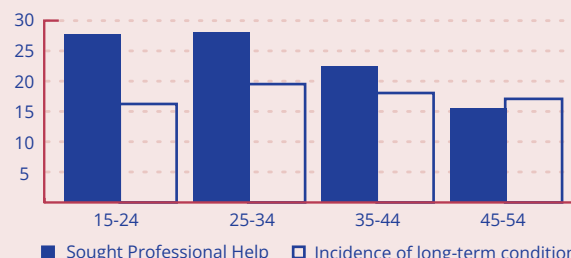
Figure 9: Percentage of people lonely



Ballarat is the third loneliest LGA in Victoria and loneliness is independently associated with poorer health, including mental health, and poorer life satisfaction.⁵⁶

17.4% of people in Ballarat have experienced depression or anxiety in the last year compared to the Victorian average of 14.9%, and is highest in age groups 25-34.⁵⁷

Figure 10: Percentage of Mental Health by Age Group



WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

People in Ballarat are 34% more likely to seek help for mental health compared to the rest of Victoria.

There is a high awareness and recognition of mental health needs in the community, particularly among women.

Ballarat has higher rates of help-seeking behaviour, particularly among youth, indicating a strong foundation for early detection and intervention, potentially reducing long-term impacts.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

We need to be better at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly for those in the 18-34 age group.

We need to continue to normalise conversations about mental health and encourage earlier help-seeking, particularly in men and middle-aged adults.

We need to support targeted prevention initiatives that address the underlying drivers of poor mental health in the community, particularly for men.



WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

In 2022, the Ballarat Foundation provided funding to Ballarat Men's Mental Health, a service established in response to the alarming reality that men in Ballarat die by suicide at rates up to eight times higher than women, with nearly half having had no contact with a health professional in the previous six months. The Foundation's funding enabled the service to continue triaging men and linking them directly to the support they need including general counselling, financial assistance, drug and alcohol counselling, or specialist referrals.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

SNAPSHOT

When compared to other areas in the state, Ballarat pre-school aged children are well positioned in terms of access to play, socialisation, and early childhood literacy. Ballarat pre-school attendance is above state and national benchmarks, with a few suburbs indicating higher levels of developmental vulnerability, although the total number of children is relatively low.



Preschool attendance in Ballarat is **97.5%**, which is higher than the Victorian benchmark of 94.7% and the national level of 89.6%.⁵⁸



Ballarat has a **1:1 ratio of children per pre-school places** available, which is more favourable than the Victorian average of 2.4 children per place.⁵⁹



Ballarat is the **second-best** place in Victoria for **childcare availability**. All suburbs in Ballarat have improved in childcare access since 2020.⁶⁰



In Ballarat **15.9%** of pre-school children (178 total) are **developmentally vulnerable**, which is higher than the Victorian average of 11.8%.⁶¹



The ratio of child to playground use (0–4-year-olds) in Ballarat is **40 children per playground**, which is far more favourable than other regional centres where averages are 185 children.⁶²



The **suburbs** with the highest number of **developmentally vulnerable** pre-schoolers are **Wendouree, Delacombe, Sebastopol, and Cardigan**.⁶³



Ballarat has **168 playgrounds**, with 17 new playgrounds built or upgraded in the last two years.⁶⁴

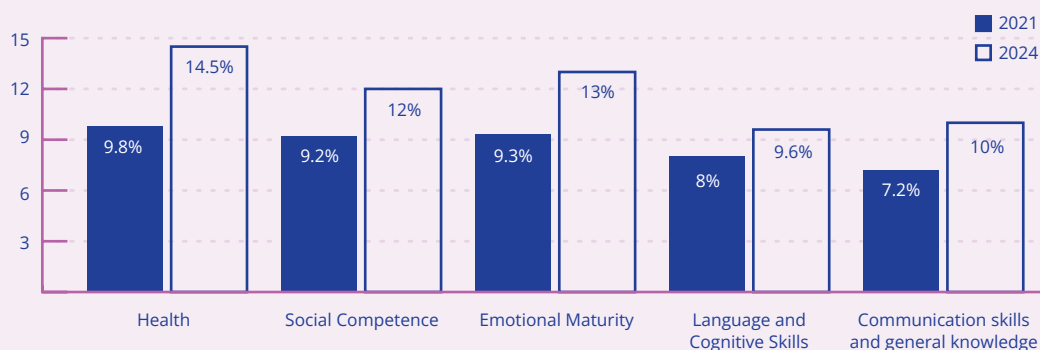


96.18% of 0–4-year-olds in Ballarat are **fully vaccinated** compared to the state average of 94.45%.⁶⁵



90.4% of children are **regularly read** to at home in Ballarat.⁶⁶

Figure 11: Change in developmental domains over time.



The development domains in which children are **most vulnerable in Ballarat is health and emotional maturity.**⁶⁷

WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

Ballarat is an oasis for preschool service provision.

Ballarat exceeds both state and national averages for preschool attendance.

Ballarat is well serviced with play equipment for pre-school children.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Some suburbs have a higher number of developmentally vulnerable preschoolers indicating a need for additional focused support in some preschools.

While most children in Ballarat are school-ready, additional work needs to be done in some suburbs to support children in improving their health and wellbeing.

While reading rates are high in Ballarat, some guardians could be encouraged to read more to their children at home.



WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

Recognising that language development is a key developmental skill for school readiness, the Ballarat Foundation established Ballarat Reads, a program run under the auspices of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This initiative provides books to children aged 0-5 years each month and resources for guardians. To date, the Ballarat Reads program has provided free books to 1,509 children in Ballarat

COMMUNITY EQUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

SNAPSHOT

Ballarat is a relatively homogenous community, with lower levels of diversity across population groups, though this trend is beginning to shift. While overall socio-economic disadvantage is on par with other Victorian regional centres, there are sharp disparities between suburbs, with some ranking among the most disadvantaged in Australia. Women are more likely than men to complete Year 12 and participate in the workforce, yet they are less likely to secure full-time employment, continue to experience pay inequity, and remain under-represented in leadership roles.



20.8% people in Ballarat have a **disability** and **7.4%** of them **need assistance for core activities**.⁶⁸



83.7% of people in Ballarat were **born in Australia**, which is 29% higher than the state average.⁶⁹



14.6% of people in Ballarat had **parents born overseas**, compared to 41.3% of people in Victoria.⁷⁰



Only **8.2%** of households in Ballarat do **not speak English at home**, which is 73% lower than the state average.⁷¹



Wendouree and Sebastopol are our **most disadvantaged suburbs** in Ballarat, falling within the 10th percentile of most disadvantaged areas nationally.⁷²



Ballarat has almost **double the number of people who identify as First Nations** compared to Victoria (1.8% compared to 1%).⁷³



There are **14.1 per 1,000 same sex couples** living in Ballarat, which is the second highest percent of same sex couples cohabiting in the Grampians region after Hepburn.⁷⁴



Ballarat's civic engagement based on **council election turnout is on par** with other regional and metropolitan regions in Victoria, at 82.4%.⁷⁵



Women now make up just **one-third of Ballarat Councillors**, a 25% drop in representation since 2020.⁷⁶



At the **City of Ballarat Council**, women occupy just over **one in three senior management positions**.⁷⁷



More females complete year 12 in Ballarat than males.⁷⁸



Three out of four companies in Australia **pay men more than women**.⁷⁹

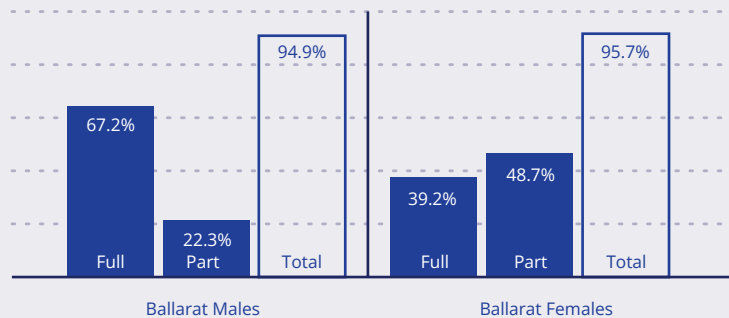


For **every dollar a man earns** in Australia, **a woman earns 78 cents** adding up to a yearly average difference of \$28,425.⁸⁰

Figure 12: Full Time vs Part Time Work by gender

Despite more women working in Ballarat, men are 1.7 times more likely to have a full-time position compared to women.

Women in Ballarat are more than twice as likely to be in part time work compared to men, with much of this being involuntary.⁸¹



WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

Ballarat has shown a high level of civic engagement in local elections, which can be leveraged in other areas.

Young women in Ballarat are driven in academic achievement, and this provides a great pool of potential leadership talent.

Ballarat has one of the highest rates of same-sex couples in the region, reflecting visible LGBTIQ+ representation.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Women are under-represented in leadership in our city.

We have large social-economic disparity in our suburbs, with Wendouree and Sebastopol ranking in the 10% of most disadvantaged suburbs in Australia.

Ballarat companies need to pay more attention to the way they pay women and work towards a gender-neutral pay gap.



Lee Martin (front) with family members

WHAT THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION IS DOING

The Ballarat Foundation, in partnership with the Committee for Ballarat provides support for emerging community leaders to participate in the Future Shapers Leadership Program. Established in 2025, the program's first 'Adrian Ohlsen Award' was presented to Lee Martin, a dedicated volunteer whose contributions range from mentoring women escaping family violence to coaching basketball. Lee noted that without the scholarship, she would not have been able to take part in the program, which offers mentoring and capacity building for Ballarat's next generation of community leaders.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

SNAPSHOT

Ballarat faces significant environmental challenges. The city has among the lowest protected land in Victoria with limited canopy cover, trailing behind other regional centres. Ballarat does have some biodiversity havens, but our biodiversity rating is low. Climate pressures are intensifying and renewable energy uptake in Ballarat lags state averages. Ballarat infrastructure is not keeping pace with the move towards more sustainable living.



Ballarat has a **low biodiversity ranking of 15-25** (out of 100) but with some areas, such as Lake Wendouree and Lake Burrumbeet scoring 100.⁸²



The **urban canopy cover** in Ballarat is **13.2%**, which is significantly lower than Melbourne's metro suburbs (25.9%) and other regional centres such as Bendigo (19%).⁸³



The Ballarat City Council **planted 1,892 trees** in 2024.



Just **0.4% of Ballarat's land is protected**, the third lowest rate in Victoria.⁸⁴



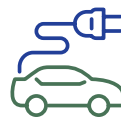
Ballarat's average **maximum temperature** in 2024 was **1.5 °C hotter** than the 116-year norm, with spring and summer months breaking records.⁸⁵



Ballarat has 12 EV charging stations, which is **1 charger per 78 EV**, more than double the recommended rate of 20-30 EVs per charger.⁸⁶



The last decade in Ballarat has been **10% drier** than the long-term historical average.⁸⁷



Ballarat's **uptake of electric and hybrid cars is one third lower** than the State average.⁸⁸



Ballarat diverts **42% of household waste from landfill**, which is 13% lower than the state average.⁸⁹



Ballarat only has **half the rate of fully electric vehicle adoption** compared to Victoria overall.⁹⁰



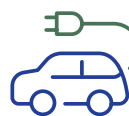
1 in 6 homes in Ballarat have **solar panels** installed compared with 1 in 3 across Victoria.⁹¹



Ballarat will need at **least 508 more EV chargers by 2030** to keep up with the current rate of EV uptake.⁹²

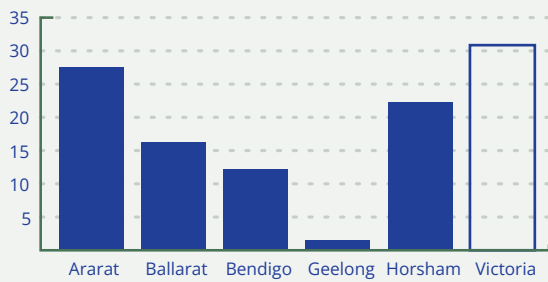


2025 is tracking to be **2.3°C hotter** than historical records.⁹³

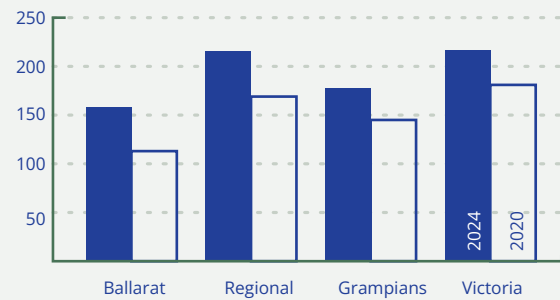


Ballarat currently has **3,503 electric or hybrid cars** on the road, which is 2.7% of all vehicles.⁹⁴

Figure 13: Cumulative solar uptake by % households in regional centre and State



Ballarat is **recycling 33% less** than the regional average and 38% less than the state average.⁹⁵



WHAT WE CAN CELEBRATE

Ballarat's tree planting efforts in the last three years is strengthening the city's long-term canopy cover.

Despite low overall biodiversity ranking, there are biodiversity havens, showing the value of strong local stewardship.

The Ballarat community is moving towards more sustainable energy sources.

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

With some of the lowest protected land in the region, Ballarat needs stronger tree planting, habitat corridors, and community-driven greening.

Ballarat's solar and EV uptake lags state averages and more needs to be done to close the gap through investing in the necessary infrastructure and incentivising the community.

More education and sector innovation is required to lift recycling and waste recovery in Ballarat.



YOUR SAY

RESULTS OF THE “YOUR SAY, YOUR IMPACT” COMMUNITY SURVEY

In 2025 the Ballarat Foundation undertook a community survey to see what topics mattered most to the citizens of Ballarat. The respondents were distributed evenly among all suburbs in the Ballarat local government area and across all age-groups (15+).⁹⁶

ON THE FOCUS AREAS, THIS IS WHAT YOU SAID



Those groups facing the most disadvantage in Ballarat in order of importance are:

1. **People experiencing homelessness (63%)**
2. Women escaping family violence (58%)
3. People suffering mental health challenges (46%)
4. People in lower income brackets (43%)

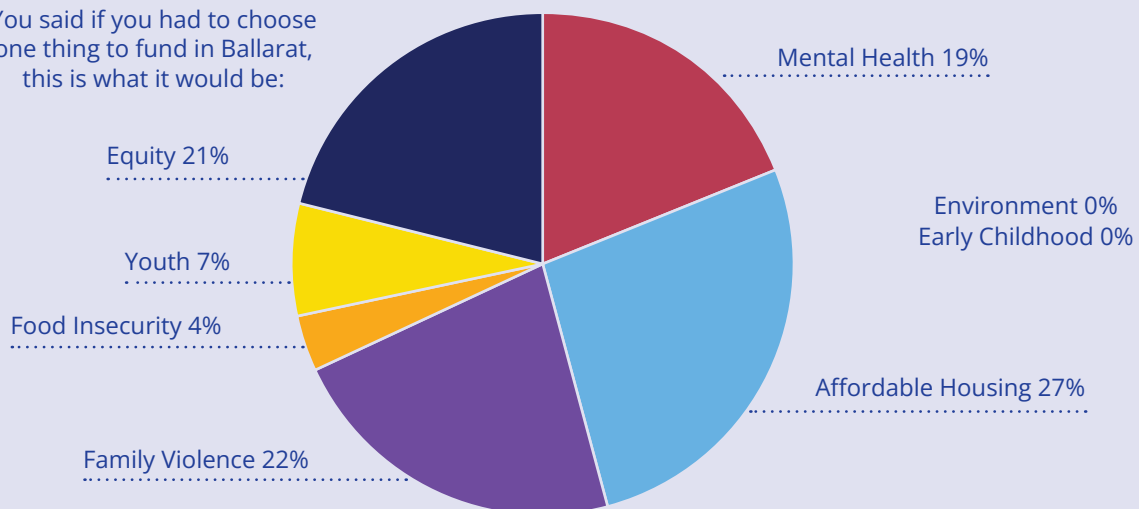


You said that other focus areas in Ballarat that need attention are: **1. Community inclusion/ Racism (18%)** 2. Drugs and rehabilitation (15.2%) 3. Infrastructure and transport improvements (15%) 4. Disability support (9%) 4. Youth volunteering (7.6%) and Community safety (7.6%)⁹⁷

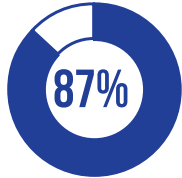


You said **adult mental health** was more important than youth mental health as an issue in Ballarat.

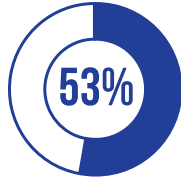
You said if you had to choose one thing to fund in Ballarat, this is what it would be:



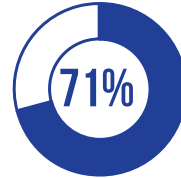
ON COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND COHESION, THIS IS WHAT YOU SAID:



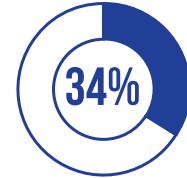
have good social connections with those around you



feel that people in the community are striving to make Ballarat a better place



feel connected within the community



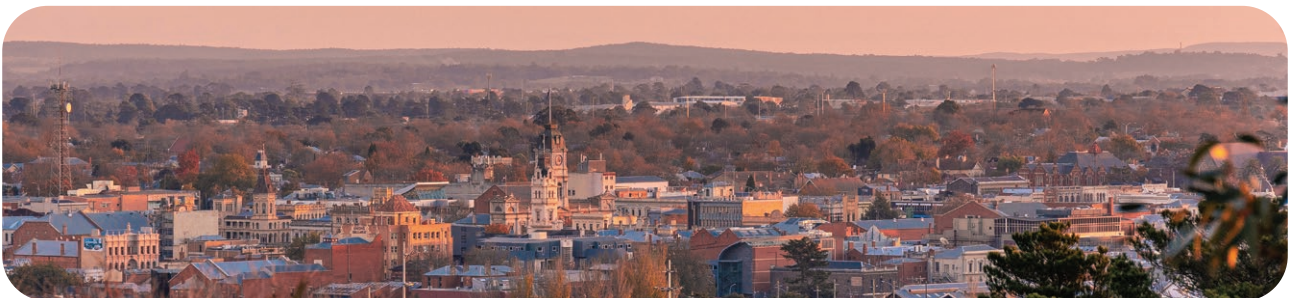
feel that Ballarat is tolerant of people from different ethnic backgrounds or different sexual orientations

“Racism and lack of social cohesion is a real problem in Ballarat”

“I don’t believe the elderly receive enough recognition or support in the community”

“It’s not so much homelessness, but the lack of affordable housing in Ballarat.”

“I don’t feel safe going on our bus system in Ballarat”



“Community building will help improve Ballarat’s future”

“Most places in Ballarat don’t seem to have consulted with the disabled community when planning their events, spaces, or buildings”

“I work for the Magistrates court and people face significant barriers to employment and volunteering because of their criminal history”

“There is a lack of volunteering opportunities for youth”



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- 4 The ABS do not publish non-binary data at LGA level to protect privacy, but we recognise that our community includes people with diverse gender identities.
- 5 Individuals may fall under one or more of these categories
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VITAL SIGNS

Vital Signs is a community driven data program used by community foundations around the world to measure the vitality of their communities and identify significant trends in a range of quality-of-life areas. We acknowledge with appreciation the work of the Toronto Foundation that has developed and shared the Vital Signs concept. The Vital Signs trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.

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The Ballarat Foundation acknowledges the Wadawurrung people, the traditional owners of the lands and waterways in our region. We recognise their diversity, resilience, and the ongoing place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold in our community. We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present, and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding, respect and reconciliation.





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