Demographic characteristics of communities

within the

Melbourne Investigation Area

Report prepared for the
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation

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Technical Note: Geographical scales used in this report

Demographic data is available at a number of different scales:

Local Government Areas (LGAs) represent the municipalities of Victoria and are therefore administrative units as well as geographical units for which the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides statistical information. Tabular data in this report is presented at the LGA level.

Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) are smaller than LGAs and are a geographical unit for which the ABS also supplies data. In this report the SLA is used to provide a more detailed profile of the Investigation Area.

Suburbs are both a statistical unit used by ABS as well as having common usage among the community to identify particular locations. Suburb-level data is more detailed than SLA data and is used in this report to present information on house prices – the most detailed level at which such data is available.

Census Collection Districts are the smallest unit for which the ABS provides data. It is used in this report to display population density so that detailed differences can be identified within local areas.
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Introduction

The Melbourne Investigation Area covers most of metropolitan Melbourne1. It comprises 29 Local Government Areas and an area of 5,640 square kilometres (figure 1).

By world standards metropolitan Melbourne is a low density, sprawling city. Founded in 1836, the colonial town established itself as a port. With the advent of the 1850s gold rush, it developed rapidly as the port through which many new migrants arrived on their way to the goldfields. The 1880s saw further development and a large amount of urban subdivision and land speculation took place at this time (figure 2). It came to an abrupt halt with the depression of the 1890s and many of the speculative subdivisions lay vacant for many decades.

The 20th century saw continued expansion of the city which, at the end of the Second World War had a population of around 1.2 million. Following the war, the city expanded greatly due to: strong overseas migration; the post-War baby boom; and growing personal mobility brought by wider levels of car ownership. As a result metropolitan Melbourne expanded rapidly, especially towards the east and south east. By 1976, the population had grown to 2.7 million (figure 3).

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1 In this report, the term ‘metropolitan Melbourne’ includes the VEAC Investigation area as well as the municipalities of Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges.
The beginning of the new century saw concerns being raised about this ongoing expansion of the city and its suburbs. By 1996, metropolitan Melbourne’s population had reached 3.3 million and its physical breadth was around 90 kilometres (Werribee to Pakenham). In 2002 an Urban Growth Boundary was introduced as part of the Melbourne 2030 metropolitan plan. An extension to this occurred in 2005 and another proposed in 2009 due to unexpectedly rapid population growth (figure 4).

Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Melbourne Investigation Area vary in size from Yarra and Port Phillip, which are around 20 square kilometres in area, to outer municipalities of Melton Wyndham and Hume each around 500 square kilometres in size. The largest LGA, however, is Cardinia which has an area of 1280 km². (Refer Appendix for detailed data).
Population

Population density

Population density is highest in areas that have been settled the longest and contain predominantly residential land uses. Suburbs developed after World War Two tend to be of lower density due to the greater accessibility of areas made possible through widespread car ownership and use. The influence of Melbourne’s rail and tram systems is evident in the higher densities found along these lines of accessibility (figure 5).

Areas along the Yarra Valley have lower population densities due to the constraints created by flooding and land conservation while many areas to the west and around Monash show a ‘patchy’ pattern of settlement density due to the presence of large areas of commercial and industrial land. Another feature of Melbourne’s planning and development is the location of ‘green wedges’ which act as breaks between corridors of urban development. Each of these wedges is evident on the population density map.

Population distribution

The Investigation area had an Estimated Resident Population (ERP\(^3\)) of 3,459,140 in 2006. This represents 67.5 per cent of Victoria’s population.

Municipalities with the greatest share of this population tend to be large in size and are located in outer or fringe areas, notably Casey, Monash and Brimbank. Boroondara in the eastern suburbs is relatively large and densely settled. In contrast, a municipality such as Nillumbik has lower population density (figure 6).

Central parts of the Investigation Area tend to have a smaller proportion of the population for two reasons – first, their smaller size and second, the fact that many other land uses (commercial, industrial) reduce the overall population density.

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\(^3\) Estimated Resident Population is one type of population count published by the ABS. Other population counts include Census (Usual Resident) counts and Census (Enumerated) counts.
**Indigenous population**

According to the 2006 census, the Investigation Area was home to around 12,600 Indigenous persons, representing 0.4 percent of the Area’s total population. The strongest cluster of Indigenous residents is in the municipality of Darebin, particularly around the suburb of Preston. Northcote to the south and Whittlesea to the north are also home to relatively high proportions of Indigenous people (figure 7). Other than these locations, Indigenous people are found in greater proportions in outer suburbs of Melbourne.

**Population change**

The strongest population growth has occurred in outer suburbs (new housing estates) and in central Melbourne (high density apartment style development in locations such as Docklands and Southbank). Growth has been steady in most other suburban areas although several bands of population decline can be seen in outer suburbs to the east, west and north west (figure 8). This coincides with suburbs that were developed in the 1970s and 1980s and attracted large numbers of young families (as fringe suburbs still do today). Since the mid 1990s these suburbs have experienced a loss of young adults leaving home – thus leaving a population of ‘empty nesters’. With household sizes diminishing as a result of this out- movement of young adults, such suburbs experience population decrease. Over time such suburbs will see an ageing and dying off of older populations and a renewal as new households move into the area.
**Future population growth**

Population projections prepared by the Victorian Government indicate continued strong population growth in central Melbourne and in fringe suburbs designated for future urban development (figure 9). Areas of lower growth can be found in middle and outer suburbs and areas to the north east. No municipality in the Investigation Area is projected to experience population decline over the coming two decades.

Population growth in an area may involve increased areas of land used for housing. Alternatively it may involve increased density of population - the example of Melbourne City Council is a case in point where the density is projected to double in the 20-year period to 2026. This may place increasing demand on public land and facilities in the central city area. Note however, that such assets already cater for a population much greater than their resident population due to the large numbers of daytime visitors (commuters) and tourists attracted to central Melbourne.

**Housing**

Housing demand has increased more strongly than population growth in recent decades. This is largely because of declining household size (fewer people per house). Even a population which is not growing strongly is likely to need an increasing number and diversity of houses (figure 10).
Although household size is decreasing, the size of new houses across most of Melbourne is increasing. This can reflect increasing real wealth as well as changing lifestyles – for example, the need for home office space or the desire to have home theatres and other activity space (figure 11).

**Price of Housing**

Generally, house prices are higher in central and inner suburbs where access to the Central Business District is greater. However, suburbs further from the central area with high amenity values (for example, proximity to Port Phillip Bay, Yarra Valley or Dandenong Ranges) have higher house values. The central eastern suburbs around Stonnington and Whitehorse also have high house prices because of access to private education facilities (figure 12).

**Housing and public land**

As a community, we are consuming more land than in the past and this has an effect on the expansion of the urban area into previously rural areas. Urban consolidation is one policy which aims to lessen the impact of urban sprawl. Higher density housing may increase population in some areas, potentially increasing demand or use of public open space and public facilities. Provision of open space in high density locations may be challenging due to limited available space, however innovative urban design approaches can enhance and maximize public space opportunities in such locations.

**Age structure**

**Age structure and public land**

Different age groups have different use of public land and different needs in terms of public facilities (eg. playgrounds for children, sports ovals for teenagers, walking pathways and seating for seniors).

**Age structure in the Investigation Area**

The age structure of municipal populations varies greatly across the Investigation Area, reflecting the lifecycle of suburban development and the specific function of certain areas such as the central business district.

One way of displaying age structure is through the use of population pyramids (figure 13). These bar charts show the number or proportion of people in particular age groups and is divided by sex as well as age. The shape of the pyramids can be an important indicator of the characteristics of particular locations. Central Melbourne for example shows an extreme age profile dominated by young adults. The location of education facilities, jobs and entertainment is an attractor for young people to this area.
Outer suburbs, by contrast, show the presence of family age groups with parents (30-49) and children (0-19) more dominant. Such an age profile is evident in suburbs that have been recently developed with young families being a major market for new housing. Established areas usually show a mix of features as they have experienced waves of development, redevelopment and population turnover. Because of this, their age profiles have relatively even representation across all age groups.

**Older age groups**

Communities with relatively old populations are found in a ring of established suburbs at a distance of approximately 10 to 15 kilometres from central Melbourne. The median age of municipalities such as Bayside and Manningham is over 40 years, compared to the Melbourne average of 36 years. The proportion of people aged 65 years or more is generally greater than 15% in this ring of municipalities (figure 14).
Younger age groups
Young adults tend to locate in central and inner suburbs. For this reason the median age of central Melbourne is less than 30 years and proportions of people aged 65 years and over is less than 7%. Some outer areas also have very low proportions of older people as young families tend to locate in newly developed suburbs such as Melton and Wyndham.

Projected age structure
While Melbourne’s population is projected to grow strongly over the coming decades, particular age groups will increase to a greater extent than others (figure 15).

The large number of people born in the post World-War Two baby boom period are reaching retirement age and they will contribute to large numbers of people aged 55 years and over between 2006 and 2026.

High levels of overseas migration will contribute to greater numbers of people in their 20s and 30s which are peak years for having children. Hence, by 2026 there is a large number of families (adults aged 25 to 40) and children (aged 0-15) in the population. These age groups will lessen the impact of population ageing on Melbourne’s population structure.
Ethnicity

**Ethnicity and public land**

Some survey research has been undertaken in relation to usage of parks and public facilities by ethnic groups. Conclusions from such research is not always consistent. The Sydney Parks Group has undertaken regular community surveys of public park usage in the Sydney metropolitan area (Environmetrics 1998, 2001 and Taverner Research 2004). Findings suggest little difference in park usage between overseas born and Australian born, although those speaking a language other than English at home were less likely to have visited a park in the week preceding the survey. Another survey conducted by the Monash Tourism Research Unit in 2008 suggests lower rates of park use by first generation migrants.

**Overseas born**

The highest proportions of overseas born are found in locations around Footscray-Maribyrnong in the west, Preston-Coburg in the north and Dandenong-Springvale in the south-east (figure 16). These patterns reflect many waves of post-World-War-Two migration.

The locational pattern of recent migrant arrivals (since 2001) shows a somewhat different pattern than the total overseas born population (figure 17). Central areas of Melbourne show very high concentrations of recent migrants, many of whom would be overseas students or skilled migrants. There is also relatively high proportions of recent arrivals in south Werribee and Dandenong.

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4 Croy, G. and Glover, P. 2008 “Ethnic communities’ use and non-use of Melbourne parks”, Monash Tourism Research Unit Seminar
Socio-economic status

Income

Income is a critical factor in determining choices and opportunities for people. Those on low incomes may face constraints in terms of access to facilities or services that are costly or that involve transport costs. On the other hand, public open space can provide low-cost recreational opportunities especially when it is located within reasonable distance from those on low incomes.

Within the Investigation Area, areas of highest income are found to the east (Boroondara, Stonnington, Yarra, Port Phillip) and to the west in Werribee South (Sanctuary Lakes and Point Cook). Areas of lowest income include a band in the western and northern suburbs from Footscray through to Broadmeadows and in the south east areas around Dandenong and rural areas in the southern part of Cardinia (figure 18).

Disadvantage

Disadvantage usually refers to multiple factors which together reduce the opportunities, life chances or health of individuals or communities. Like the indicator of income, it can suggest greater or lesser choices or opportunities for some communities than others and this can be important when considering access to open space or recreational opportunities. Given that health status is a part of the measure of disadvantage, the potential benefits of access to public land for recreational purposes may be important.

The types of factors recognised as being important in determining advantage or disadvantage include:

- Income;
- Education and skills;
- Employment;
- Housing costs;
- Health; and
- Geographic isolation

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The ABS has developed Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) which combine these and other factors. The SEIFA Indexes are widely used as a measure of advantage and disadvantage.

An Index of Disadvantage of 1000 represents the Australian average. Scores lower than this represent areas of greater disadvantage.

Within the Investigation Area, areas of greatest disadvantage are found to the west in Hobsons Bay, Brimbank and Maribyrnong, to the north around Broadmeadows and to the south east in Dandenong (figure 19).

Those not in the labour force

While unemployed persons are defined as those seeking employment, the category of “not in the labour force” (NILF) includes people of working age (15 to 65 years) who are not actively seeking work. This may include stay-at-home parents or carers or people without the economic need to work. These people may have specific needs in terms of their use of public open space (for example children’s playgrounds).

In the Investigation Area, a ring of high NILF can be seen around the outer suburbs, corresponding with suburbs having high proportions of family households (figure 20).
Journey to Work

The ABS Census collects information on how people travelled to work on the day of the census. For those who travelled to work, the type of transport used is recorded. Overall, the Investigation Area shows that car travel is by far the most common form of transport used (81.5%), followed by public transport (11%) (figure 21).

Residents in middle and central suburbs of Melbourne have a greater diversity of transport modes available, and proximity to major employment centres (such as the central business district) also allow walking or cycling to be a viable travel option for many commuters (figure 22). Numbers of people using public transport, walking or cycling are much greater in central areas, although car use still accounts for the highest proportion of commuting trips. Car travel is lowest for the municipality of Melbourne where 37.5% of journeys to work were made by car (as driver or passenger) and 35% were made by walking.
Diurnal populations

Because of the daily mobility of people, the population of Melbourne municipalities will vary during the course of a day. This has particular implications for public land because the location of people at different points during a day will create particular recreational or other demands on public land resources.

The most extreme case is in the central city of Melbourne where weekday populations can be as high as 300,000 during daytime working hours whereas the resident population is less than 50,000 (figure 23). Because of this, the public land resources located in the central city are likely to service a much higher population than local resident numbers would suggest.

Residential suburbs outside the central city often display the opposite pattern, with population numbers dropping during the day. This would tend to occur during the working week as commuters travelled out of the suburb. Populations are likely to be more stable in these suburbs on weekends.

Figure 23
Number of people at home, work or undertaking other activities
Average week day for selected LGAs, 1994-1998

Source: DPCD Spatial Analysis and Research Unit based on VISTA data
APPENDIX: Summary data for Local Government Areas in the VEAC Melbourne Investigation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area (LSA)</th>
<th>Land area (sq km)</th>
<th>Population Total (2016)</th>
<th>Population density (persons per sq km)</th>
<th>Indigenous %</th>
<th>Population growth 2016–2026</th>
<th>Projected LGA pop2026 as % of MLA pop2026</th>
<th>Projected LGA pop2026 as % of MLA pop2016</th>
<th>Projected annual growth rate 2006–2026</th>
<th>Projected 2026 pop2026 density (persons per sq km)</th>
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</table>

Source: ABS Census 2006 Basic Community Profile

NOTES
1. Density refers to overall density (population/area). SAR are currently in the process of determining residential density which will be a more accurate figure as it will exclude areas such as industrial and open space
2. SEIFA Index of 1000 is Australian average. Scores below this represent greater levels of disadvantage. Numbers highlighted in red indicate greatest disadvantage as measured by the Index

All data are 2006 unless otherwise stated