

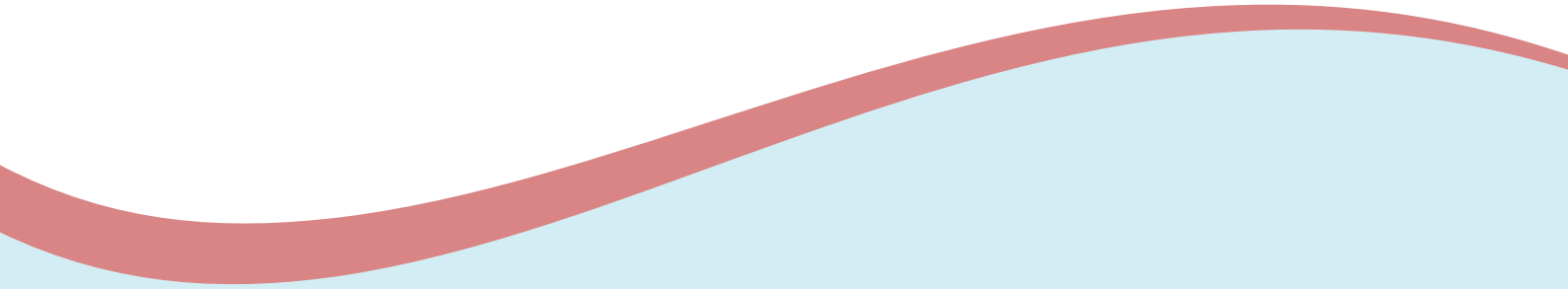
SOUTH GIPPSLAND

DRAFT Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

2025 to 2029



South Gippsland
Shire Council

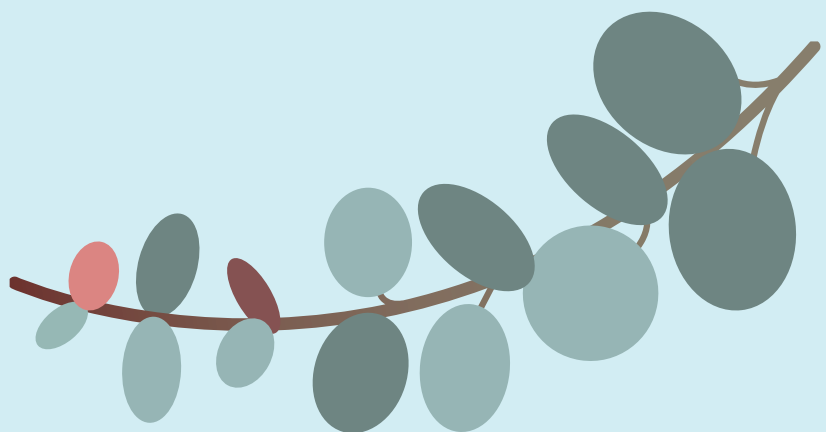


We acknowledge the strength, resilience and community values of First Nations people, and their rich history as the world's oldest living culture as we strive for better health and wellbeing across South Gippsland.

Acknowledgment of Country

South Gippsland Shire Council

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.



Eucalyptus, (genus Eucalyptus)

Plan at a Glance

A healthy and well community is one that is resilient, and where people have a sense of belonging. It is where economic and social opportunities exist and there is a clean environment where we can be protected from impacts on our environment, including climate change.

This Plan aims to improve health and wellbeing by addressing the broader influences on health, aiming to reduce inequalities, including access to health, and by empowering individuals and communities.

Healthy South Gippsland Strategic Framework

The following Framework will guide our work over the next four years.

PRIORITY	GOAL	STRATEGIES
 Preventing all forms of violence	Safe, respectful and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the prevention of family violence through awareness campaigns, training and community activities. Increase community understanding of respectful, safe and equitable relationships. Support opportunities to increase the involvement of men and boys in violence prevention actions. Increase gender equity in work, education and recreation settings. Improving access and advancing inclusion in our communities. Actively celebrate community diversity including race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.
 Improving wellbeing	Connected communities that are healthy, engaged and empowered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase opportunities for social connectedness by improving access for all people to be included in community life, work, education and recreation. Decrease social isolation through supporting community groups, volunteers and participation in art, culture, environment and recreation. Enhance through partnership Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and cultural connectedness. Promote mental health and resilience in individuals by increasing knowledge and promoting opportunities for wellbeing improvement. Reduce harm from gambling, alcohol, tobacco and drugs through policies, programs and partnerships. Reducing stigma associated with mental illness across South Gippsland. Improve and advocate for accessibility of support services for all people across South Gippsland.
 Increasing active living	Connected and inclusive places and spaces which promote movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, deliver and support parks, open spaces and public spaces for active living for all ages and abilities. Support, through a partnership approach, the increase of social prescribing* across health care services. Support initiatives that encourage participation in active movement and reduce sitting time for all people. Increase participation of women and girls and other groups experiencing barriers in sport and active recreation via providing support to clubs, groups and facilities. Advocate for active travel through improved road, pedestrian and bike safety and accessibility, including by provision of appropriate infrastructure.
 Eating healthy	Local, affordable food and healthy choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support healthy food and drink choices through policies, programs and awareness campaigns in work, education and public settings. Support and attract investment through local food production industries and businesses. Support collaborative local community approaches to production and access to healthy food. Reduce food insecurity in South Gippsland, with targeted support to vulnerable population groups. Make drinking tap water easy and accessible in public places.
 Tackling climate change and its impact on health	A valued environment with supported resilient communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of, and mitigate the risks of climate change and its impact on health. Increase community resilience to prepare, respond, and recover from the effects of severe weather events. Support community and business capacity in adopting sustainable practices and renewable energy by actively engaging with communities and providing education and resources. Work towards future proofing South Gippsland to safeguard quality of living and wellbeing. Preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment across South Gippsland.

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Partners

Our Community

Acknowledgements

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of this Plan, and to those who will contribute to its implementation over the next four years. Your partnership is invaluable as we strive to continually improve health and wellbeing for everyone in South Gippsland.

Introduction from South Gippsland Shire Council

The health and wellbeing of our community is the responsibility of many different organisations, and the communities and people they serve. This Plan describes our unique municipality and the specific challenges we face. As we work together on this Plan, we focus on access and inclusion to ensure no one is left behind.

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan has been developed alongside the Council Plan. By doing this we have ensured a strong alignment between these overarching Council documents and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. It has clear links to the themes of the Council Plan, and these themes have been considered throughout the development of this Plan.

South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 - 2029

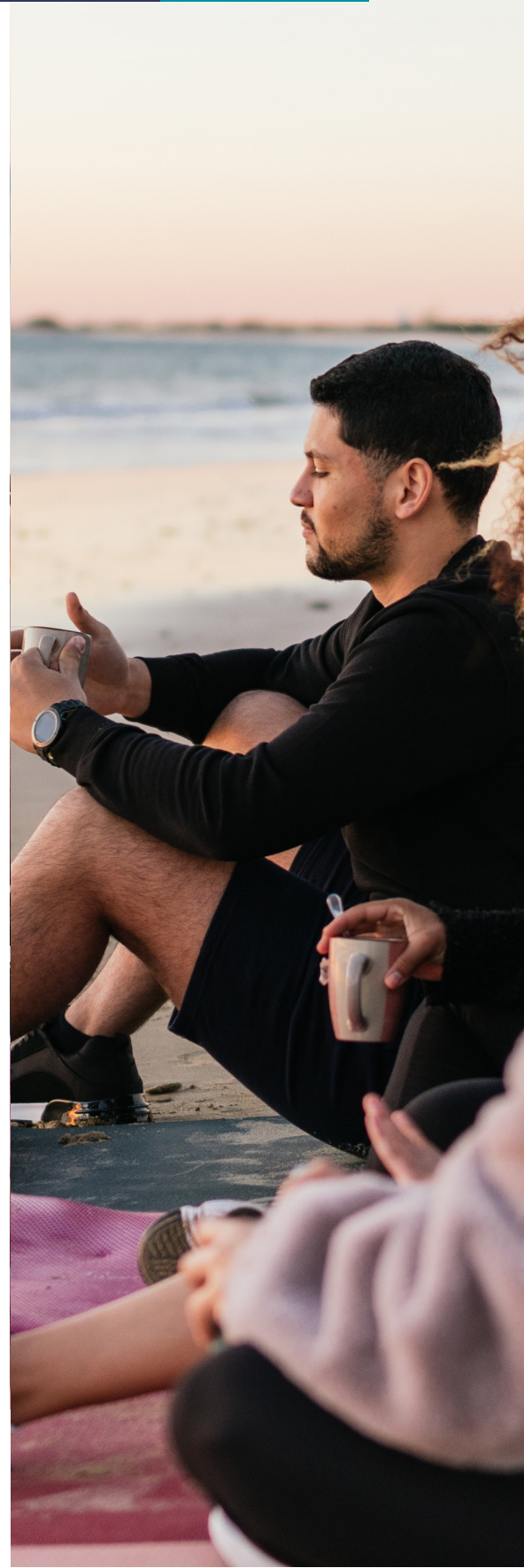
Context

This Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan sets the priorities and goals for the next four years, aimed at protecting, improving and promoting the health and wellbeing of the South Gippsland community.

Required by the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, this Plan provides a roadmap for addressing the specific health and wellbeing needs of our local community. It aims to ensure that all members of the community have access to necessary services and support, while focusing on improving the health outcomes for groups who may be facing challenges.

The health and wellbeing of our community is a shared responsibility, involving a wide range of organisations and residents. While Council takes the lead in developing and overseeing the Plan, its success depends on the collective efforts of the entire community.

This Plan is grounded in the principles of accessibility, equity, sustainability and inclusion. The South Gippsland Shire Council – Council Plan themes of; developing a sustainable future, leading with integrity and empowering communities are in line with these principles, which will guide the approach to enhancing health and wellbeing in South Gippsland.



Developing the Plan

The development of this Plan has considered a variety of factors, and has been a collaborative process, involving both the community and local organisations.

Extensive consultation took place in 2022, identifying four key priority areas:

- Improving Mental Wellbeing.
- Increasing Active Living.
- Tackling Climate Change.
- Healthy Eating.

Further community input gathered in 2025 reaffirmed these same priorities, with the addition of:

- Reducing all forms of Violence.

Extensive community engagement to develop Council's key strategic documents also identified factors the community of South Gippsland believed would improve their health and wellbeing, such as more parks and green spaces, reduced health support costs, increased safety, better public transport, healthier food options, and more accessible mental health services. Key challenges to improving health and wellbeing were lack of time, limited local and accessible services and pressures from workplace and home.

A key element of developing this Plan was the consultation with key partner organisations and groups from across South Gippsland and beyond, whose work impacts health and wellbeing.

Local health data and the priorities set in the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan were also referenced, ensuring the Plan reflects both community needs and broader State health objectives.



What impacts our health and wellbeing?

When we think about health and wellbeing, we need to consider many factors, most of which are not medical.

This includes a mix of genetic factors, personal health behaviours, access to quality healthcare, and social conditions. Research has shown that these social conditions make up the largest relative impact to our health and wellbeing, followed by our health behaviours, healthcare and the healthcare system, and our genetics (Marmot and Allen 2014)

Health is closely linked to how people live, work, play, learn and age, and all these elements interact to influence health and wellbeing.

This diagram shows some of the different types of factors and how they interact to influence a person's health and wellbeing.

This Plan recognises the following priority population groups as stated by the Australian Beaus:

- Early Years (0 - 5)
- Young People (12 - 25)
- People with disability
- LGBTQIA+
- Older people (particularly 70+)
- Women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people
- People in remote/isolated areas
- People experiencing family violence
- Low income/financially disadvantaged people

The social determinants of health

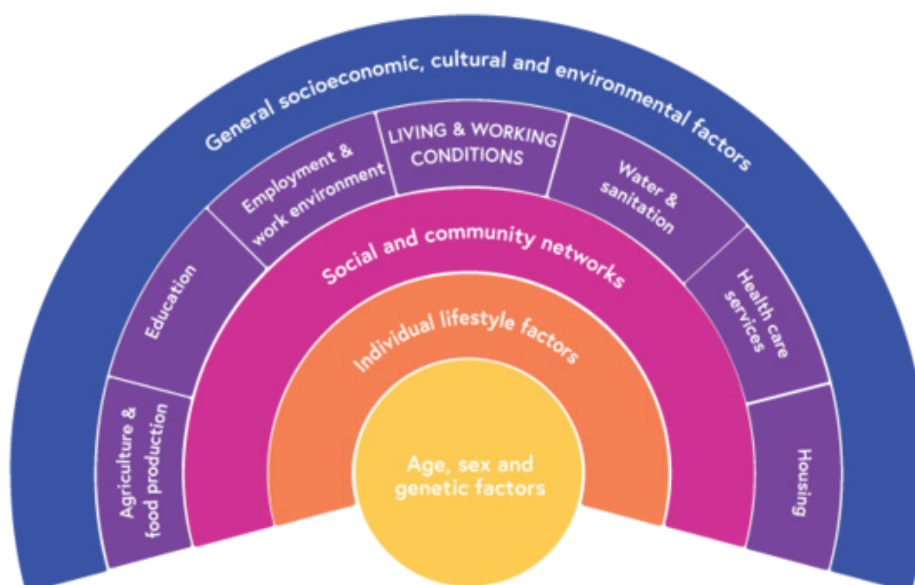


Diagram courtesy of the Institute for Future Studies, Stockholm

Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead 2021

Equality vs Equity?

It is important to understand that equity is different from equality in that, unlike equality, which strives for all people to have the same opportunities, allowances or resources, equity is being fair and considers that all people start from a different place.

Considering this in health and wellbeing planning is one way of being equitable .

Just as many factors influence and interact to affect a person's health, there are factors which, when combined, will lead to cumulative disadvantage (intersectionality) and poorer health outcomes.

Strategies to address inequity in health often require an additional focus, or different, targeted approaches for some population groups who may experience higher levels of disadvantage or be of higher health risks.

Implementation

To action the Priorities and Strategies outlined in this Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, a detailed Action Plan will be developed.

The Action Plan will consider accessibility, equity, sustainability and inclusion, alongside actions and solutions appropriate for local challenges and opportunities.

Whilst the overarching Plan is a legislated requirement of Council, ownership and responsibility for the Plan is shared by wide range of organisations and groups working to improve the health and wellbeing of our community. The Action Plan will be developed through extensive and meaningful consultation with these partners.

The Action Plan will consider the ongoing monitoring of actions, review, modification, and reporting on the effectiveness, success and impact of our work.

Reporting on the South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan will include an annual report to South Gippsland Shire Council.



What we know

Households and Families

Partly related to ageing and other social changes, the household types with the biggest growth have been sole person households and couples without children.

From 2001 to 2021 we added about 1,300 sole person households and 1,200 couples without children households. Couples with children households declined by 65.

This means mean that more housing stock is required to house the same number of people. More services will be required to support people and there may be a reduction in community connectedness.

Ageing Population

There has been a significant reduction in our birthrate over the last two decades. The age at which residents choose to have children is shifting to older age groups.

Crime

In many areas we are lower than other localities but violent crime, petty crime, theft and vandalism has been rising. One in three women have been victims of family violence and in the finishing March 2024, 600 family incidents were reported by VicPol in South Gippsland.

The number of Family Violence incidents reported to Victoria Police increased by 11.94 per cent from 2023-2024 in South Gippsland



Strategic Priorities 2025 to 2029





Preventing all forms of violence

People who experience violence are affected in all areas of their health and wellbeing, including poorer physical, sexual and reproductive health outcomes, reduced mental wellbeing and sometimes loss of life.

Violence takes on many forms including physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual violence. It also includes coercive control, intimate partner violence, elder abuse or actions that limit someone's freedom and independence.

Some groups are at higher risk of all types of violence. This may be due to social beliefs and practices, gender stereotyping, norms and structures, including economic inequality between men and women.

A safe, respectful and inclusive community.

Our Strategies

- Promote the prevention of family violence through awareness campaigns, training and community activities.
- Increase community understanding of respectful, safe and equitable relationships.
- Support opportunities to increase the involvement of men and boys in violence prevention actions.
- Increase gender equity in work, education and recreation settings.
- Improving access and advancing inclusion in our communities.
- Celebrate community diversity including race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.



Improving wellbeing

By prioritising good mental health and wellbeing, we reduce stigma, increase social connection, improve physical health, promote productivity and create safer environments. Our mental health and our physical health are linked. People experiencing poor mental health may be at increased risk of poor physical health and developing chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease. Similarly, people with poorer physical health may be more likely to experience poorer mental health.

Wellbeing is a key determinant of overall health, and is a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. A strong sense of wellbeing contributes to good mental health. Actions that support high levels of wellbeing are a major driver of social and economic prosperity, contributing to better learning, increased creativity, greater productivity, better quality relationships, improved physical health and longer life expectancy.

Connected communities that are healthy, engaged and empowered.

Our Strategies

- Increase opportunities for social connectedness by improving access for all people to be included in community life, work, education and recreation.
- Decrease social isolation through supporting community groups, volunteers and participation in art, culture, environment and recreation.
- Enhance through partnership Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and cultural connectedness.
- Promote mental health and resilience in individuals by increasing knowledge and promoting opportunities for wellbeing improvement.
- Reduce harm from gambling, alcohol, tobacco and drugs through policies, programs and partnerships.
- Reducing stigma associated with mental illness across South Gippsland.
- Improve and advocate for accessibility of support services for all people across



Increasing active living

Active living supports everyone, at all stages of life, to live healthy, engaged and purposeful lives.

Regular physical activity is a well-known protective factor for preventing and managing chronic disease including cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes and certain cancers. Physical activity also plays an important role in improving quality of life, managing and decreasing pain, and promoting mental wellbeing.

Only half of Victorian adults meet the physical activity guidelines for sufficient physical activity (53.0 per cent of women, and 48.7 per cent of men).

Connected and inclusive places and spaces which promote movement

Our Strategies

- Plan, deliver and support parks, open spaces and public spaces for active living for all ages and abilities.
- Support, through a partnership approach, the increase of social prescribing* across health care services.
*Social prescribing involving the referral and connection of patients to non-medical activities, groups and services that improve health and wellbeing.
- Support initiatives that encourage participation in active movement and reduce sitting time for all people.
- Increase participation of women and girls and other groups experiencing barriers in sport and active recreation via providing support to clubs, groups and facilities.
- Advocate for active travel through improved road, pedestrian and bike safety and accessibility, including by provision of appropriate infrastructure.



Eating Healthy

Good nutrition is essential for health and wellbeing because it helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight, protects against chronic disease (including cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes, dementia, and certain cancers), and supports a healthy immune system.

Local, affordable food and healthy choices.

Our Strategies

- Support healthy food and drink choices through policies, programs and awareness campaigns in work, education and public settings.
- Support and attract investment in local food production industries and businesses.
- Reduce food insecurity in South Gippsland, with targeted support to vulnerable population groups.
- Support collaborative local community approaches to production and access to healthy food.
- Make drinking tap water easy and accessible in public places.



Tackling climate change and its impacts on health

Climate is a key determinant of health that affects other determinants and health equity. Climate change affects health in many ways – both directly and indirectly. Direct impacts include morbidity and mortality associated with extreme events such as heatwaves, floods, drought and bushfires. Indirect impacts are associated with ecological and land-use change (including changes in the spread of infectious diseases), along with worsening air, food and water quality.

A valued environment with supported resilient communities.

Our Strategies

- Build understanding of, and mitigate the risks of climate change and its impact on health.
- Increase community resilience to prepare, respond, and recover from the effects of severe weather events.
- Support community and business capacity in adopting sustainable practices and renewable energy by actively engaging with communities and providing education and resources.
- Work towards future proofing South Gippsland to safeguard quality of living and wellbeing.
- Preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment across South Gippsland.

On the Horizon

A Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan needs to adapt to changing needs and developments. Forecast changes to the South Gippsland built, natural and social environment are included to ensure South Gippsland can consider future challenges within this Plan.

Projections

South Gippsland is expected to maintain steady population growth.

The region's ageing population trend will continue. Between 2025 and 2035, the number of people of retirement age is projected to rise by 30.5 percent, with those aged 70+ expected to comprise 26 per cent of the population by 2035, up from 20.3 per cent in 2021. These demographic changes will likely increase demand for health and aged services, as well as create challenges in accessibility, transport, and the workforce.

There has been a growing number of sole-person and childless couple households in South Gippsland since 2001. This trend may impact housing demand, as fewer people per household will require more housing stock to accommodate the same population.

During the life of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

During the lifecycle of this plan, there are several major projects planned across South Gippsland. These have the potential to significantly influence workforce, diversity rates, area demographics (with workers arriving from out of area), and have flow on effects to housing, particularly rental availability and affordability.

These major projects and changes include:

- Operations at the Victorian Livestock Exchange Saleyards Koonwarra has expanded substantially following the closure of the Pakenham saleyards in June 2024. Future growth in this site would make it one of the largest saleyards in Victoria.
- Delburn Windfarm will commence construction in late 2025.
- Marinus Link Electricity and Telecommunications Interconnector project is planned to commence early 2026, with construction set to last throughout the plan period.
- Bass Strait Oil and Gas rig decommissioning is proposed to commence in 2027, with preparation works proposed to commence prior to this in Barry Beach Marine Terminal.
- The proposed development of several offshore wind projects in Gippsland, later in this decade and into the 2030's, is likely to increase demand for planning and preparatory works, workforce attraction and housing demand in South Gippsland.

Partners

The success of this Plan depends on partnerships and collaboration across our region.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of this Plan, and to those who will contribute to its implementation over the next four years.

We particularly acknowledge the following groups for their collaboration within the development stage of this Plan. Including Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault, Gippsland Family Violence Alliance, Gippsland Pride, Gippsland Primary Health Network, Gippsland Region Public Health Unit, Gippsland Southern Health Service, GippSport, Headspace, Latrobe Community Health Service, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Leongatha Community House, MyLi, Salvation Army, South Coast Prevention Team, South Gippsland Hospital and Victoria Police.

A partnership approach is vital to the continual improvement of health and wellbeing for everyone in South Gippsland.

The next four years will see further engagement with organisations, services and groups as we work together to improve health and wellbeing across South Gippsland.

Our Community

What we heard from our community:

We asked our community to tell us about what health and wellbeing issue were of greatest importance. We heard from 94 people. Of those 94 people, 68 per cent identified as female, 28 per cent identify as male and 4 per cent preferred not to say. 12 per cent of respondents identified as having a disability.

The responses indicated that people had the most concern for all forms of violence, community connectedness and mental health, and eating healthy, which was equally followed by physical activity and climate change impacts on health.

When identifying ways to improve health and wellbeing, the community highlighted reduced cost of health and wellbeing services, more parks and green outdoor spaces, and feeling safe, both physically and emotionally.

Barriers that contribute to improving health and wellbeing as outlined by the community include limited local and accessible health, medical and support services, lack of time for self-care and looking after health, and pressures from workplace, home and/or family.

"I'm concerned that the most marginalised people in our community are being left behind. Extra efforts need to be made to reach these groups. The prevalence of violence is really concerning."

"Leadership from our community leaders is required to make our area safe, improved health services (and education). [...] Many people struggle with new technology, especially the older, people with disabilities."

"I think we need to look after our community because if we don't have health and well being in our community we do not function well."

"More inclusive and accessible recreation (not necessarily structured sport); parks, trails, swimming pools."

Appendix



Appendix One: Statistic Sources

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South Gippsland
Shire Council