



Local identity & participation

Moreland City Council Health Profile

December 2020

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Overview

Local identity and participation cover a wide range of activities that help to increase social cohesion and strengthen community connections. Healthy connections are extremely beneficial for physical and mental health. These connections might be with friends, family, work colleagues, pets, spirituality, culture or nature. People who have a strong sense of local identity and participate within the community are likely to have a healthy sense of belonging and better health outcomes.

Communities are formed in many ways and may be created through shared locations, common causes, hobbies, or lived experiences. Communities provide a sense of belonging and purpose, while also giving people a space to connect and expand their social support networks. Social connection contributes significantly to emotional wellbeing and can lower levels of anxiety, depression and increase self-esteem (Department of Health, 2019). Social connectedness can occur in many forms but essentially is about meeting with others or participating in an activity with others. This can be as simple as a phone chat, offering help to a neighbour or joining a sporting team or singing in a choir.

Volunteering is a way that people can develop their local identity and participate in the community. Many find volunteering a rewarding experience and it can help to develop skills and increase employability, give a sense of purpose and achievement, and provide an opportunity to meet new people. The health benefits of volunteering can reduce levels of stress, loneliness and social isolation (Heath Direct, 2019).

Loneliness is harmful to both mental and physical health (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Social isolation, living alone and not being in a relationship are risk factors for loneliness, however, it is important to recognise that just because an individual may be living alone or not in a relationship does not determine that this person is classified as lonely. Disconnect from an immediate community is another risk factor of loneliness which is why developing local identity and enhancing participation is crucial for health and wellbeing. Loneliness is associated with many health concerns and is linked to premature death (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Loneliness is a serious health concern as current reports state one in four Australian adults are lonely (Beyond Blue, 2019). Rates of loneliness in young people are continuing to rise and have been linked to the use of social media which has begun to replace physical connection and participation (VicHealth, 2015). Older Australians (aged 75 and above) are also more likely to feel lonely (VicHealth, 2015) as social connectedness is reduced due to access issues.

Participating in the community has health benefits, as it supports mental health and emotional wellbeing and lets people live more fulfilling lives. Enhancing opportunities to be involved in community groups gives purpose and a sense of belonging which are essential for good health. Following COVID-19 lockdowns, it will be important to re-establish many of these connections and groups to allow people to once again reconnect and contribute to their communities.

Moreland context

The majority of Moreland residents (89%) feel part of their community and this has steadily increased since 2014. There is also a high proportion of people (94%) that feel they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it, however this substantially decreased during the pandemic.

Loneliness is an increasing public health issue that has been exacerbated by Covid-19 restrictions. Social isolation support was the second highest community need in Moreland during the pandemic and was more prevalent in certain population groups including older people, people with a disability, international students and/or temporary visa holders and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Almost a quarter of households are people living alone, which is higher than Greater Melbourne, with the highest proportion in Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy. Of all households in Moreland, 16% have no access to the internet, however this rises sharply for some demographics such as people aged over 65 (46% without internet), and low-income households (38% without internet), as well as a strong correlation generally with vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. More than half of all households without internet access are people living alone. While not directly correlated to loneliness these may be contributing factors to isolation, particularly during Covid-19 restrictions.

Positive contributing factors to wellbeing include participation and volunteering, with two thirds of residents (64%) using arts and culture services, over half of residents participating in community groups and 17% volunteering. These factors have been negatively affected by Covid-19 and need to be monitored as the situation unfolds to understand the ongoing impacts on Moreland's community.

In summary, key issues include:

- Loneliness and social isolation, especially in relation to Covid-19
- A high proportion of people living alone in Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy
- No internet access for 16% of households, especially in Glenroy and Coburg
- Significant impacts on the arts and culture industry since Covid-19 and the ability to participate in volunteering or community activities.

Key insights

Feeling of belonging

- Overall, 89% of residents felt a part of their community in 2018. Feeling of belonging has steadily increased from 80% in 2014 to 84% in 2016 and 89% in 2018.
- Of those who did not feel a part of their community, one third of respondents stated the reason for their response was that they keep to themselves or that others keep to themselves.

Social connection

- In 2018, 94% of people in Moreland said that they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it. However, there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of people who felt they could get help from family, friends or neighbours reported in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, with only 79% strongly or slightly agreeing.

Loneliness

- There are more than 16,000 people living alone in Moreland, and approximately 5,000 people living alone in Moreland without Internet access. It should be noted that living alone does not directly equate to loneliness as people who live alone may not be lonely and people who do not live alone may be lonely.

Participation in arts & cultural events

- In 2019, nearly two thirds (64.9%) of residents reported that their households currently use arts and culture services.
- In 2017-18, nearly one third (29%) of people in Wills electorate (covering portions of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Pascoe Vale, and Pascoe Vale South) reported being involved in creative activities themselves, such as performing, singing or playing a musical instrument, dancing, writing, visual art and craft.

Participation in community groups

- Over half (54.3%) of residents in Moreland reported participating in community groups. The community groups most commonly participated in are sports clubs (18.4%), gyms or exercise (17.3%), and volunteer/welfare (7.5%). This is lightly higher than in 2017 and 2015.

Volunteering

- In 2016, 16.7% of the Moreland population reported doing some form of volunteering. The Moreland volunteering rate is lower than Greater Melbourne with 17.6% of the population volunteering.
- In 2016, one quarter of volunteers in Moreland were in their twenties.
- In 2016, the majority (57.5%) of volunteers in Moreland are female.

Access to Internet

- There were over 9,500 households with no access to the Internet in 2016, or 16% of households.
- Glenroy and Coburg were the suburbs with the highest number of households with no access to the Internet, each with approximately 1,500 households with no access.

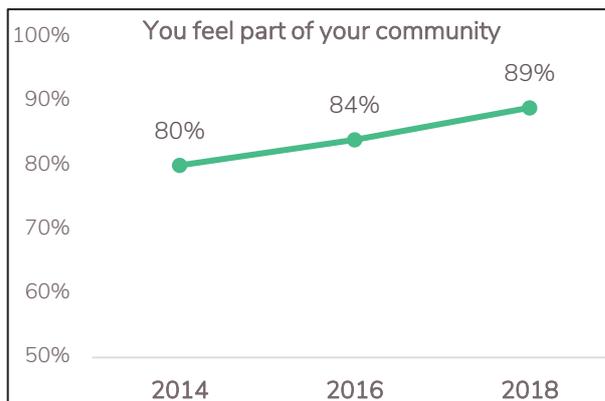
Feeling of belonging

Measure: People who feel part of the Moreland community

Overall, 89% of Moreland residents felt a part of their community in 2018. This is an increase from 2016 when 84% agreed that they felt a part of the Moreland community.

In addition to the 89% of residents who agreed that they felt part of their community, 9% disagreed with the statement, and 2% were neutral.

Of those who did not feel a part of their community, one third of respondents stated the reason for their response was that they keep to themselves or that others kept to themselves.



Source: Moreland City Council Community Indicator Survey 2018



PANDEMIC

VicHealth research has shown that groups that were feeling less connected during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions include those with a self-reported disability (33%), those who were unemployed (36%), those in a lower income bracket (30%), and young people aged 18 to 24 who were more likely to report that they have had difficulties staying connected with others (39%). Those speaking a language other than English at home (39%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (51%) were also more likely to report difficulties maintaining connections. Restrictions on movement and social interactions due to Covid-19 is also likely to disrupt these connections and may decrease the number of positive social interactions that LGBTQIA+ people experience (VicHealth, 2020).



PRIORITY GROUPS

The proportion of LGBTQIA+ individuals who did not feel valued by society was higher (17%) than others (12%), though other perceptions of connection with the community were similar to the average for all survey respondents (Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017).

Social connection

Measure: People who feel they can get help from family, friends, or neighbours when they need it

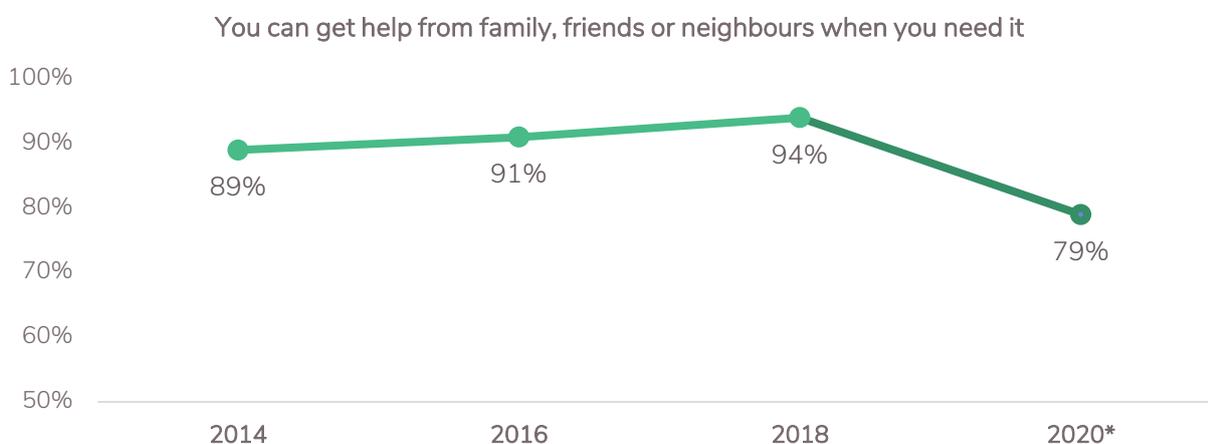
In 2018, 94% of people in Moreland said that they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it. However, there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of people who felt they could get help from family, friends or neighbours reported in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, with only 79% strongly or slightly agreeing.

In addition to the 94% of residents who agreed that they could get help from family, friends, or neighbours when they need it, 5% disagreed and 1% were neutral.

Table. People who feel they can get help from family, friends, or neighbours when they need it

Year	People who agree they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it	
2014	89%	*2020: In 2020 a COVID-19 Secondary Impact Analysis Community Survey was conducted to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the Moreland community. This same question asked in the Community Indicator Survey was asked in this survey, and results showed a decrease in the number of people who agree they can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it.
2016	91%	
2018	94%	
2020*	79%	

Source: Moreland City Council Community Indicator Survey 2018, Moreland City Council COVID-19 Secondary Impact Analysis Community Survey 2020



PANDEMIC

Social isolation support was the second highest community need in Moreland during the pandemic and was more prevalent in certain population groups including older people, people with a disability, international students and/or temporary visa holders and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Moreland City Council, 2020). Additionally, Australians over 65 are the most digitally excluded population group and are the least able to use digital technologies for social connection and service access (Thomas, et al., 2017).



PRIORITY GROUPS

Some aspects of social connection were lower for people who identify as LGBTQIA+. Being able to get help from family and neighbours when required was much lower, however there no significant difference in getting help/assistance from friends when needed (Victorian Agency for Health Information, 2017).

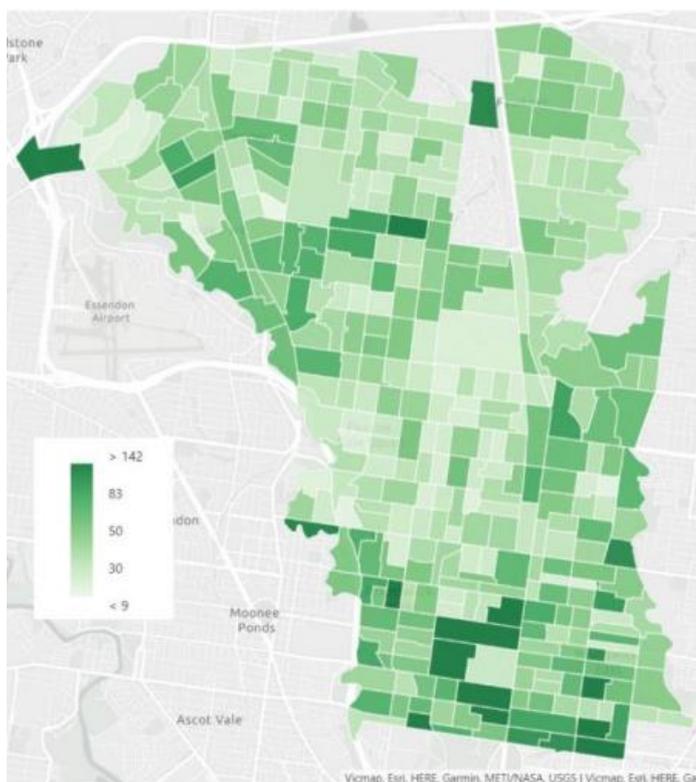
People living alone

Measure: People living alone

There are more than 16,000 people living alone in Moreland, and approximately 5,000 people living alone in Moreland without Internet access.

For more information on people living alone in Moreland, view the [Moreland City Council People Living Alone Brief](#).

Suburb	People living alone	% of all households
Brunswick	3,000	25%
Coburg	2,280	21%
Glenroy	2,043	23%
Brunswick West	1,945	28%
Pascoe Vale	1,846	25%
Brunswick East	1,598	27%
Fawkner	1,044	20%
Pascoe Vale South	715	18%
Coburg North	654	21%
Hadfield	591	25%
Oak Park	527	21%
Gowanbrae	203	19%
Total	16,446	23%



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2016



PANDEMIC

Loneliness and social isolation are increasingly concerning issues facing communities. Recent research has identified that loneliness is the most commonly experienced personal stressor related to Covid-19, with 22% reporting high levels of loneliness and one in two (50%) people reporting that they feel lonelier since the pandemic begun (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Lim, et al., 2020).

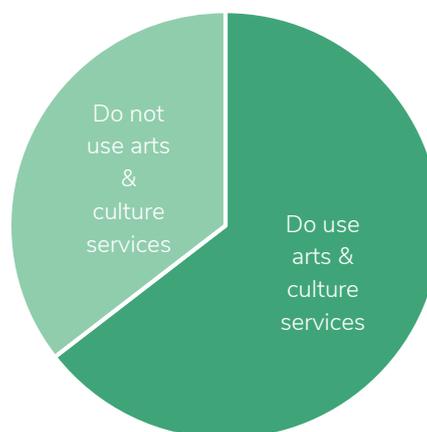
Participation in arts & cultural activities

Measure: Engagement in arts and cultural activities

In 2019, nearly two thirds (64.9%) of residents reported that their households currently use arts and culture services.

Table. Breakdown of arts and cultural services reported by residents

Activity	%
Total residents who reported using arts & culture services	64.9%
Library service	43.5%
Music events	25.2%
Theatres	20.5%
Art galleries	20.2%
Do not use arts & culture services	35.1%



Source: MCC Household Survey 2019

Measure: Involvement in creative activities (in Wills electorate)

Note: The Australia Council for the Arts collects data by electorate, which does not correspond with the boundaries of Moreland City Council. The Wills Electorate covers Brunswick West, Pascoe Vale South, and parts of Brunswick East, Coburg, Coburg North, and Pascoe Vale. It also includes several suburbs not in Moreland City Council.

In 2017-18, nearly one third (29%) of people reported being involved in creative activities themselves, such as performing, singing or playing a musical instrument, dancing, writing, visual art and craft.

Table. Involvement in creative activities themselves in Wills 2017-18

Cultural venue or event	%
Involved in creative activities themselves (performing, singing or playing a musical instrument, dancing, writing, visual art and craft)	29%
Not involved in creative activities themselves	71%
Total	100%

Source: Australia Council for the Arts 2017/18



PANDEMIC

Arts and cultural activities have been significantly impacted during the pandemic lockdowns with many being forced to close or shift online (Moreland City Council, 2020).

Participation in community groups

Measure: Participation in community groups

Over half (54.3%) of residents in Moreland reported participating in community groups. The community groups most commonly participated in are sports clubs (18.4%), gyms or exercise (17.3%), and volunteer/welfare (7.5%). This is lightly higher than in 2017 and 2015.

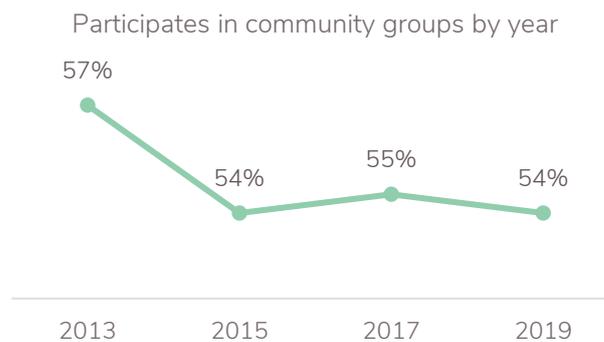
Table. Participation in community groups

Activity	%
Do participate in community groups	54.3%
Sports clubs	18.4%
Gym or exercise	17.3%
Volunteer/welfare	7.5%
Arts & cultural	6.6%
Religious groups	6.1%
Kids' playgroups	4.4%
Community support	4.2%
Adult learning	3.1%
Do not participate in community groups	45.7%

Source: MCC Household Survey 2019

Table. Participation in community groups over time

Year	Participates in community groups
2019	54.3%
2017	54.8%
2015	54.3%
2013	57.2%



Source: MCC Household Survey 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019

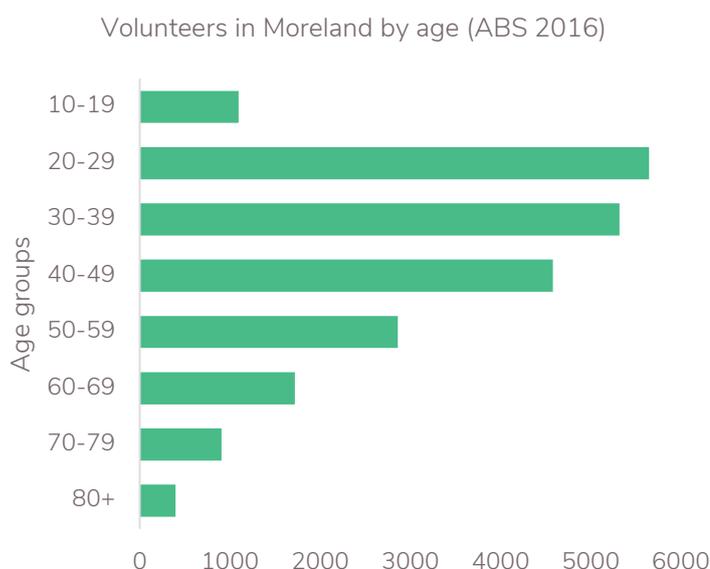
Volunteering

Measure: Rates of volunteering

In 2016, 16.7% of the Moreland population reported doing some form of volunteering. The Moreland volunteering rate is lower than Greater Melbourne with 17.6% of the population volunteering. The majority (57.5%) of volunteers in Moreland are female. One quarter of volunteers in Moreland are aged 20-29 years.

Table. Volunteers in Moreland by age

Age	Number of volunteers	% of population
10-19	1,097	4.9%
20-29	5,649	25.1%
30-39	5,322	23.6%
40-49	4,581	20.3%
50-59	2,861	12.7%
60-69	1,721	7.6%
70-79	907	4.0%
80+	398	1.8%
Total	22,537	100%



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2016

Table. Volunteers in Moreland by sex

Sex	Number of volunteers	% of volunteers
Female	12,965	57.5%
Male	9,572	42.5%



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2016



PANDEMIC

There has been an increased demand for skilled volunteers during the pandemic to provide support and food relief to the Moreland community. Volunteers with knowledge of specific languages and with skills in food relief have particularly been in demand (Moreland City Council, 2020).



PRIORITY GROUPS

LGBTQIA+ adults have significantly higher rates of volunteering in local community groups compared to non-LGBTQIA+ adults (Victorian Agency for Health Information, 2017).

Equitable access to Internet

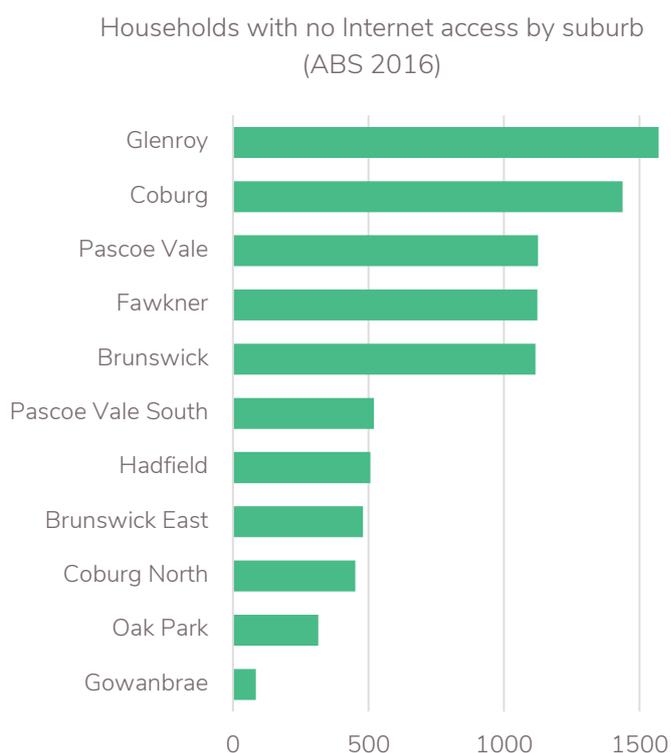
Measure: Population who have access to Internet from the dwelling

Internet access is defined as including internet access using desktop/laptop computers, mobile or smart phones, tablets, music or video players, gaming consoles, smart TVs etc., and includes Internet access through any type of connection including ADSL, fibre, wireless, satellite and mobile broadband (3G/4G).

There were over 9,500 households with no access to the Internet in 2016, which is 16% of all households in Moreland. Glenroy and Coburg were the suburbs with the highest number of households with no access to the Internet, each with approximately 1,500 households with no access.

For more information, see the [Moreland City Council Households without internet access Brief](#).

Suburb	No access to Internet (households)	% of total households
Glenroy	1,570	21%
Coburg	1,438	15%
Pascoe Vale	1,125	18%
Fawkner	1,123	26%
Brunswick	1,116	11%
Pascoe Vale South	520	15%
Hadfield	507	25%
Brunswick East	480	10%
Coburg North	451	17%
Oak Park	315	14%
Gowanbrae	84	9%
Total	9,521	16%



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2016



PANDEMIC

Access to internet at home has become increasingly important to remain socially connected and participate in work and education during the pandemic. This has exposed and exacerbated the digital divide with the need for IT support being in the top issues reported in Moreland's Service Provider Research throughout the period of April-October 2020. Older residents, those with a disability, families (especially mothers) and those on low incomes reported being most impacted (Moreland City Council, 2020).



CLIMATE CHANGE

The projection that extreme weather events will increase in frequency in the future puts a strong demand on the need for equitable access to information. During such events it is vital for all residents to have access to information that can help keep them safe. Language and cultural barriers will need to be a focus in information distribution to ensure equity.



PRIORITY GROUPS

The percentage of households that do not have internet access in their home rises sharply for some demographics such as people aged over 65 (46% without internet), and low-income households (38% without internet), as well as a strong correlation generally with vulnerable and disadvantaged populations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Data sources

For a full list of references, please refer to the [Moreland Health & Wellbeing Profile 2020](#)

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2016

The ABS Census of Population and Housing is a nationwide census of all households and residents. It is conducted every five years. The census collects data about the population including age, gender, relationships within households, usual residence, country of birth, language spoken at home, ancestry, education, employment, wages and religion. It also collects a small amount of household data. The most recent data is 2016.

Australia Council for the Arts

The Australia Council for the Arts provides data on arts and culture in each of Australia's 151 federal electorates. It presents ABS cultural attendance and participation data for each federal electorate.

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership COVID-19 and mental health: Environmental scan 2020

The purpose of this environmental scan is to provide an overview of research and policy on COVID-19 and mental health to identify gaps and reduce duplication in the mental health space. The most recent data is 2020.

Moreland City Council Community Indicator Survey 2018

The Moreland Community Indicators Survey is a bi-annual survey undertaken by Moreland City Council which asks residents to rate their level of agreement (or disagreement) with various statements. The data gathered concerns residents' perceptions of such issues as Council services, their local area, public transport, housing, economic circumstances, the environment and parks. The most recent data is 2018.

Moreland City Council: Understanding community need in a pandemic 2020

Qualitative data collected and analysed from community service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand level of service provision, community need, and organisational. The most recent data is October 2020.

VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study 2020

A survey of 2,000 Victorian adults to explore how their health and wellbeing was affected during the first lockdown of 2020. The survey covered general wellbeing, social connection, healthy eating, physical activity, financial hardship, smoking, alcohol consumption, as well as working and home life. The most recent data is from 2020.

Victorian Agency for Health Information 2020

Safer Care Victoria and VAHI were created as a part of government reforms to improve quality and safety across Victoria's public healthcare system.

Victorian Population Health Survey 2017

The Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) provides an annual assessment of the health status and wellbeing of adults living in Victoria and provides data for key population health indicators. The most recent data is 2017.