

ACTIVE LIVING CENSUS 2014 Topline Report

December 2014

Prepared for:

City of Greater Bendigo
195-229 Lyttleton Terrace
Bendigo VIC 3552

Prepared by:

Graham Challice, Eugene Siow, Leon Head
The Social Research Centre
Level 1, 262 Victoria Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
Ph: (613) 9236 8500 Fax: (613) 9326 4060
www.srcentre.com.au info@srcentre.com.au

Version: 2 Date: 12 December 2014

Executive summary

The City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) is the second largest municipality by population in regional Victoria, however, CoGB residents have consistently rated low on a range of health behaviour indicators. To satisfy government funding initiatives and Council's planning requirements, the Active Living Census 2014 (ALC 2014) was developed, with the requirement that all residential households in Greater Bendigo would be approached to participate in the survey.

E1 Achieved sample profile

In total, 17,437 individual responses were received to the ALC 2014, with most responses received via a hardcopy form. Responses were received from every suburb and town in the municipality, across males and females of all ages.

Older respondents, female respondents and respondents residing in urban subregions were over-represented in the achieved sample distribution. Associations between socio-economic status of regions and response rates were also noted. The achieved sample distribution differed slightly on other demographic characteristics compared to population benchmarks, so results should be interpreted with care.

E2 Health indicator population benchmarks

External health behaviour benchmarks (sourced from Department of Health VPHS 2008 benchmarks) were calculated for ALC 2014 respondents where possible. Rates of smoking and meeting previous fruit dietary guidelines had improved, while ratings of self-reported health had remained stable since 2008 (although comparisons should be interpreted with care).

Around one-in-seven (15.4%) Greater Bendigo residents were at risk of short-term harm from alcohol consumption (i.e. drinking more than 4 standard drinks in one sitting), while fewer than one-in-four (22.9%) residents reported undertaking 30 minutes of exercise each day.

E3 Health behaviours

Eight-in-ten (82.0%) respondents rated their health status as either 'excellent,' 'very good,' or 'good'. Almost one half (46.8%) of Greater Bendigo residents reported meeting fruit dietary guidelines and less than one-in-ten (9.5%) reported meeting the vegetable dietary guidelines. Respondents most often mentioned cost and being time poor as the main reasons for not consuming at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables per day.

Males, rural residents and residents meeting fruit and vegetable dietary guidelines were more likely to report exercising daily, compared to the total sample. Younger residents, residents meeting fruit and vegetable dietary guidelines, residents meeting physical activity guidelines and non-smokers were most likely to report excellent or very good self-rated health, compared to the total sample.

E4 Use of off-road walking and cycling tracks

Around three-in-ten (29.3%) of Greater Bendigo residents reported being ‘heavy users’ of off-road walking and cycling tracks (used off-road walking and cycling tracks once per week or more), although over one-third (36.7%) had not used any off-road walking and cycling tracks in the last 12 months.

Residents with lower self-reported health (e.g. ‘very poor / poor’ health ratings) reported lower usage of off-road walking and cycling tracks in Greater Bendigo. The most often mentioned reasons for using off-road walking and cycling tracks were ‘health and recreation’ and ‘me time / getting back to nature’, while commuting for school / work was mentioned at low levels.

E5 Use of open spaces

‘Heavy’ usage rates of open spaces i.e. using open spaces once a week or more, were at high levels for younger residents (aged 3 to 17 years old) and residents providing higher ratings of self-rated health. The main reasons for using open spaces were ‘social gatherings’ (particularly among female residents) and ‘health and fitness’ (particularly among various urban regions).

Improvements to open spaces mentioned by ‘light users’ i.e. using open spaces less than once a month were ‘toilets’, ‘walking tracks / trails’, ‘parks / facilities being closer to home or more accessible’, and ‘cover / shade / shelter and seating’.

E6 Participation in physical recreation activities

Nine-in-ten (91.9%) residents reported using at least one recreational facility in Greater Bendigo in the last 12 months. Reported usage rates of recreational facilities were at high levels for younger respondents and residents rating their health as ‘very good / excellent’, and at low levels for rural residents. Reported usage rates for recreational facilities were highest for open spaces, followed by off-road walking and cycling tracks, and sport grounds / ovals / clubrooms.

Four-in-five (80.1%) respondents reported participating in at least one physical recreation activity, and over one-quarter (28.1%) reported participating in three or more activities, during the last 12 months. Rural respondents, respondents with lower self-rated health and older respondents reported high rates of non-participation in the last 12 months.

The most popular activities undertaken in the Greater Bendigo region were walking (32.2% of all respondents) and swimming (17.5%). Activities with high rates of ‘heavy’ participants (participating in an activity once per week or more often) were netball, fitness / gym and basketball, while activities with high proportions of ‘light’ participants (participating in an activity less than once a month) were fishing, waterskiing / powerboating and golf. Activities undertaken most often in respondents’ local suburb were walking, jogging / running, cycling / BMXing and bushwalking.

Among respondents who had not participated in activities as often as they would like, the most commonly mentioned barriers to increasing participation related to time, personal issues (e.g. not motivated, feel embarrassed, poor health) and cost.

The most popular mode of transport to activities was a motor vehicle – a higher proportion of respondents without a motor vehicle reported not participating in any activities in the last 12 months than respondents with a motor vehicle.

Among residents who travelled outside the City of Greater Bendigo to participate in activities, the most frequently mentioned reasons for doing so were competition (especially for lawn bowls and soccer), social reasons (especially for walking and golf) and the activity not being available in Greater Bendigo (especially for jogging / running and motorsports).

E7 Quality and accessibility of facilities

Activities with high ratings of facility quality were personal training, fitness / gym, golf, lawn bowls, basketball and yoga. Jogging / running, golf, lawn bowls and personal training facilities were rated highly for accessibility. Waterskiing / powerboating, fishing and cycling / BMXing facilities were rated low for both quality and accessibility, while swimming pools were also rated low for accessibility.

Quality and accessibility ratings for individual facilities were calculated on relatively low base sizes, and represent the opinions of respondents answering the survey (not of all Greater Bendigo residents). Mean quality and accessibility ratings were generally positive (the lowest mean rating was 3.4 for both quality and accessibility).

The best rated facilities for quality were the lawn bowls facilities in Kangaroo Flat and East Bendigo. Other highly rated facilities for quality were in West Bendigo for basketball, Epsom for soccer and Strathfieldsaye for Australian Rules football. Golf facilities in Eaglehawk and Axedale were also highly rated for quality. The lowest rated facilities for quality were located in Kangaroo Flat for cricket, Eaglehawk for Australian Rules football and Eppalock for waterskiing / powerboating.

The best rated facility for accessibility was in Kangaroo Flat for lawn bowls, as well as facilities in Eaglehawk for aerobics, dancing / ballet and bushwalking. Waterskiing / powerboating facilities in Eppalock and cricket facilities in Kangaroo Flat were lowly rated for accessibility. Fishing facilities in Eppalock and Kangaroo Flat were lowly rated for accessibility.