The Barwon-South Western Region is located in the South-West of Victoria and as of June 30 2007, had a population of 359,560 with adults comprising 76.1% of the population, compared with 77.1% for Victoria. More than one-third of the residents (34.6%) were aged 50 years or older, compared with 30.9% for Victoria. There was a greater percentage (36.0%) of low income households (combined annual income of less than $33,500) compared with 30.6% for Victoria. Female Life Expectancy at birth in 2006 was 84.8 years, which was similar to the Victorian figure of 84.3 years, however male Life Expectancy at birth in 2006 was 79.1 years, lower than the Victorian figure of 80.0 years.

The Victorian Population Health Survey is an annual state-wide survey that the Department of Health undertakes to collect information on the health of the adult Victorian population (18 years or older). This is the first time that the sample size has been expanded to allow detailed analysis at the local government area level.

This fact sheet presents major findings from the 2008 survey. For more information see: www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/vphs.htm

### Smoking status

Current smokers are defined as those who smoke daily or occasionally. Smoking patterns between the Region and Victoria were similar. In 2008, 21.3% of males and 15.8% of females in the Region were classified as current smokers, similar to Victorian males and females (21.4% and 16.9% respectively).

### Alcohol consumption

The Australian Alcohol Guidelines specify the risks of short and long-term alcohol-related harm by level of alcohol consumption in males and females.

The patterns of alcohol consumption were similar between the Region and Victoria for females. However, the percentage of males in the Region who consumed alcohol at least weekly (18.8%) and at least monthly (22.5%) at a risky or high risk level for short-term harm was higher than Victorian males (13.6% and 15.8% respectively). Males in the Region were also more likely to consume alcohol at a risky or high risk level for long-term harm (8.2%) compared with Victorian males (4.3%).

### Percentage of persons at short-term risk of alcohol-related harm, 2008

Note: abstainers are not included in the assessment of short-term risk levels.

### Percentage of persons at long-term risk of alcohol-related harm, 2008
Overweight and obesity

Being overweight or obese is an important risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, certain cancers, sleep apnoea and osteoarthritis. It is typically measured by calculating a person's Body Mass Index (BMI), which is their weight in relation to their height\(^4\).

In 2008, 41.3% of males in the Barwon South Western Region were overweight, whilst 19.2% were obese, similar to Victorian males (39.9% and 17.3% respectively). More than one in four females in the Region (29.3%) were overweight, higher than Victorian females (24.2%), whilst 17.7% of females in the Region were obese, similar to Victorian females (16.1%). Males in the Region were also more likely to be overweight compared with females in the Region.

### Percentage of overweight and obesity in adults, 2008

![Graph showing the percentage of overweight and obesity in adults in the Barwon South Western Region](image)

Physical Activity

In 2008, 62.2% of males and 62.7% of females in the Region met the physical activity guidelines\(^1\), similar to Victorian males and females (61.0% and 59.7% respectively). There were no differences in physical activity levels between the Region and Victoria overall or between males and females in the Region.

![Bar chart showing levels of physical activity in the Barwon South Western Region](image)

Psychological distress

Poor mental health is a significant risk factor for poor health outcomes. The Kessler 10 (K10) scale is a set of ten questions designed to categorise the level of psychological distress over a four week period.

In 2008, 64.0% of males and 61.7% of females in the Region were classified as having a low level of psychological distress, similar to Victorian males and females (65.3% and 59.7% respectively). There were no differences in distress levels between the Region and Victoria overall or between males and females in the Region.

### Levels of psychological distress, 2008

![Bar chart showing levels of psychological distress in the Barwon South Western Region](image)

Nutrition

In 2008, 14.1% of females in the Region met the dietary guidelines\(^7\) for vegetable consumption, higher than Victorian females (10.7%), whilst 5.4% of males in the Region met the dietary guidelines for vegetable consumption, similar to Victorian males (5.0%). More than half of females (55.7%) and 46.5% of males in the Region met the dietary guidelines for fruit consumption, similar to Victorian females and males (53.5% and 41.0% respectively). Females in the Region were also more likely to meet the dietary guidelines for consumption of vegetables and combined fruit and vegetables compared with males in the Region.

### Percentage of adults who met guidelines for the number of serves of fruit and/or vegetables per day, 2008

![Bar chart showing the percentage of adults who met guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption in the Barwon South Western Region](image)


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1. Service Planning, Department of Health (DH).
3. ABS, 2006 national census.
4. LGA estimates are considered to be higher or lower than the Victorian estimate based on statistical significance, determined by comparing the 95% confidence intervals (CI) between estimates. Where the 95% CI of estimates do not overlap there is strong evidence that the estimates are different. Where they overlap, the estimates are deemed to be similar.
5. Health Intelligence Unit, DH.
6. The LGA estimates are age-adjusted to the 2006 Victorian population.
7. The 2008 VPHS survey questions on alcohol consumption captured the risks of alcohol-related harm based on the current 2001 Australian Alcohol Guidelines. New guidelines were released in March 2009 and will be reflected in the 2009 VPHS.
8. NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) 2001.
10. The Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults recommend five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit daily for adults, aged 19 years and older, to ensure a healthy diet. NHMRC 2003. For persons aged 12 to 18 years, the recommendations are for three serves of vegetables and three serves of fruit.
11. The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on most, preferably all days in persons aged 19 years and over. DoHAC (Department of Health and Aged Care) 1999, Canberra.