



DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021

KEY FINDINGS:

- Disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within Victoria, with 5% of locations accounting for close to a third of the most disadvantaged rank positions across all indicators measured.
- These communities experience a complex web of disadvantage that make it challenging to improve life opportunities.
- While most disadvantage was found outside Melbourne (25 of the 40 most disadvantaged areas on the index ranking, particularly in the north-west and far east of the state), some of the most extreme disadvantage was found within the capital.
- Six of the 10 areas of highest disadvantage were in Melbourne.
- Layered and persistent disadvantage go together, whether in Melbourne or outside Melbourne. Once an area is experiencing disadvantage on multiple fronts, the challenges are more difficult to overcome. A significant number of communities have remained disadvantaged for long periods.
- Common problems in multiply-disadvantaged locations in Victoria were jobless parents; low income; youth not in employment, education or training; and leaving school before Year 10.

**SIX OF THE
10 AREAS
OF HIGHEST
DISADVANTAGE
WERE IN
MELBOURNE.**

LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IS CONCENTRATED

**ABOUT 1% OF
LOCATIONS,
ACCOUNTED FOR
9% OF THE MOST
DISADVANTAGED
RANK POSITIONS
ACROSS ALL
INDICATORS.**

A limited number of communities account for a disproportionate number of 'top ranked' (ie most disadvantaged) positions across the various indicators:

- Five areas, about 1% of locations, accounted for 9% of the most disadvantaged rank positions across all indicators. This is a nine-fold overrepresentation, mirroring the 2015 result.
- 24 SA2s (5% of total) yielded more than 29% of the most disadvantaged rank positions. This is a five-fold overrepresentation.

The disproportionate distribution of disadvantage within the state is seen most clearly when the incidence of particular factors among those living in the 3% most disadvantaged areas (13 communities in Victoria) is compared with the rest of the state. Those living in the 3% most disadvantaged SA2s in the state are:

- 3.1 times more likely to be living in public housing
- 2.9 times more likely to have high levels of prison admissions or families with jobless parents
- 2.7 times more likely to experience child maltreatment
- 2.5 times more likely to experience overcrowding and 2.4 times more likely to be exposed to family violence.

LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IS PERSISTENT...

The persistent nature of locational disadvantage is demonstrated when we compare findings of this 2021 study with previous studies undertaken between 1999 and 2015.

All the locations in the top 10 in 2021 were also in the 2015 list of the 40 most disadvantaged locations.

Of those in the top 40 disadvantaged areas in 2021, most (31 out of the 40) were also in the top 40 disadvantaged areas in 2015 (see table on page 4). Many of these locations were also in the same band – six of the top ten in 2021 were also in Band 1 in 2015. Five of the top ten were in the most disadvantaged 40 in both 2007 and 2015. Some have been disadvantaged since the early studies were undertaken in 1999 and 2004.

THE LOCATIONS IN THE TOP 10 IN 2021 WERE ALSO IN THE 2015 LIST OF THE 40 MOST DISADVANTAGED LOCATIONS.

THERE IS IMMENSE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COST TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF SUSTAINED DISADVANTAGE

...AND OCCURS ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

Disadvantage is difficult to shift when it occurs across multiple areas of life, as these challenges combine to create what can seem to be insurmountable hurdles.

In Victoria, 24 areas (5% of the SA2s) had eight indicators or more in the top 5% most disadvantaged. These 24 areas accounted for 29% of all possible indicator positions.

This was similar to the results in 2015, which used larger areas (postcodes) and found that 27 postcodes (4% of the total postcodes) accounted for 29% of the top rank positions. The results in 2007 were similar – 44 postcodes (6.6% of the total) accounted for 35.3% of the top positions.

Different areas ranked highly on different indicators, highlighting the diversity of disadvantage between communities and the need to explicitly consider the individual community context when designing programs to address disadvantage and the impacts of disadvantage.

Place-based approaches that recognise the multi-faceted nature of disadvantage, and the particular types of disadvantage prevalent in any community, will have better prospects of success.

There is immense social and economic cost to the entire community as a result of sustained disadvantage, which perpetuates inequality and constrains life opportunities for significant sections of society.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS CAN PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DISADVANTAGE

Dropping off the Edge included environment indicators for the first time in 2021. These considered aspects such as heat vulnerability, air pollution and green canopy. While environmental factors are often not front of mind when we consider disadvantage, it is clear from the data that there is a strong relationship between poorer quality natural environments (eg where air pollution is high) and other indicators of disadvantage.

INTERGENERATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

The research also examined indicators of intergenerational disadvantage for the first time. These indicators – teenage pregnancies and families that reported neither parent in employment – frequently coexisted with other forms of disadvantage.

DROPPING OFF THE EDGE INCLUDED ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2021



HEAT VULNERABILITY



AIR POLLUTION



GREEN CANOPY

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS - SWAN HILL AND MELTON

Qualitative analysis of select communities – Swan Hill and Melton in Victoria – has been incorporated in the 2021 report for the first time. Researchers consulted with community members in these locations to understand how they experience disadvantage in the area and what they felt could address these issues.

While quite different communities – Swan Hill is a regional town with an ageing population while Melton sits in a key growth corridor on the western fringe of Melbourne – these case study locations highlighted the importance of consulting community and taking a long-term place-based approach to addressing disadvantage.

Key themes that emerged in discussions with these communities included the need for good leadership as well as the effective provision of services. High quality and

easily accessible shared spaces for locals to come together was identified as being important for building local cohesion. The intergenerational nature of disadvantage, as well as the impact of inadequate technology, were also highlighted. (see report for further details)

CASE STUDY LOCATION: SWAN HILL

Swan Hill was selected as a case study due to its regional location, high level of disadvantage (top quintile) and its ageing population. Swan Hill has a high proportion of houses with no internet at home - more than 1.5 times the national average. The town saw movement against several indicators between the 2015 and 2021 reports, with improvements against some and persistent disadvantage on others.

“ [Impacts of poor internet access] got amplified with COVID when we resorted [to] video conferences and telephones, but we couldn't reach a lot of the young people in [regional areas] and places like that as they just don't have internet.”

“... you see these teenagers, then they are just 'What's the point? What's the point of trying? What's the point because I've been labelled because my dad did this'. You hear that all the time. ... that hopelessness, 'I'm stuck...'”

CASE STUDY LOCATION: MELTON

Melton has seen considerable change over recent decades and was selected as a case study location due to the mix of indicators staying the same and moving over time. Melton includes three SA2 locations and study participants were recruited from across all of them. The three SA2s - Melton, Melton South and Melton West were all in the most disadvantaged quintile.

“ It's intergenerational, ... and not being able to get the support when they need the support and, due to it being really difficult to navigate.”

“ You'd have to wait [at] least four to five months before getting an appointment with family services for Melton Council. But then if you haven't got money to pay, to go to a private provider, just don't go. And if you're waiting on the public system, five to six months.”

“ There's lots of services that are working... but I still think a lot of the services are working in silos rather than working together.”

“ So rather than providing all these activities for kids that the kids are not going to, because it's just not interesting to them...let's do a focus group ... with the kids to say... what do you guys want?”

PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

Place-based approaches tailored to address particular types of complex and interrelated disadvantage in place will have a better chance of achieving sustained change. The voices from the two case study communities illustrate and reinforce the importance of solutions based in local experiences of both community disadvantage and community strengths.

MOST DISADVANTAGED POSTCODES IN VICTORIA

- COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS

(Bands illustrate the severity of disadvantage experienced by a location with Band 1 being most severe. Locations listed alphabetically within bands.)

List of 40 most disadvantaged locations in Victoria

BAND	SA2 NAME	POPULATION	LOCATION	IN LIST IN 2007	IN LIST IN 2015
MOST DISADVANTAGED LOCATIONS					
1	Broadmeadows	14,512	Greater Melbourne	Y	Y
	Campbellfield - Coolaroo ¹	16,989	Greater Melbourne	Y	Y
	Corio - Norlane	27,622	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Dandenong	34,199	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Doveton	12,433	Greater Melbourne	Y	Y
	Maryborough (Vic.)	8,006	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Meadow Heights ²	15,732	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Mildura - North	18,690	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Morwell	14,004	Rest of Vic.		Y
	St Albans - North	21,624	Greater Melbourne		Y
2	Bendigo	14,703	Rest of Vic.		
	Cobram	6,426	Rest of Vic.		
	Kings Park (Vic.) ³	14,550	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Moe - Newborough	16,844	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Mooroopna	8,137	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Robinvale	3,302	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Seymour	6,439	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Shepparton - South	24,829	Rest of Vic.		Y
	St Albans - South	18,403	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Thomastown	21,510	Greater Melbourne		Y
3	Benalla	10,492	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	California Gully - Eaglehawk	13,252	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Lalor	25,249	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Mildura - South	15,229	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Red Cliffs	5,991	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Roxburgh Park - Somerton	25,372	Greater Melbourne		
	Sunshine North ⁴	12,525	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Sunshine West	20,207	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Wendouree - Miners Rest	15,173	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Yarriambiack	6,536	Rest of Vic.		
4	Frankston North	19,894	Greater Melbourne		Y
	Kerang	3,815	Rest of Vic.		
	Loddon	7,003	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Maryborough Region	5,323	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Merbein	4,854	Rest of Vic.		Y
	Newcomb - Moolap	15,089	Rest of Vic.		
	Noble Park - West	20,153	Greater Melbourne		
	Orbost	6,461	Rest of Vic.	Y	Y
	Rushworth	4,057	Rest of Vic.		
	Yarrawonga	8,504	Rest of Vic.		

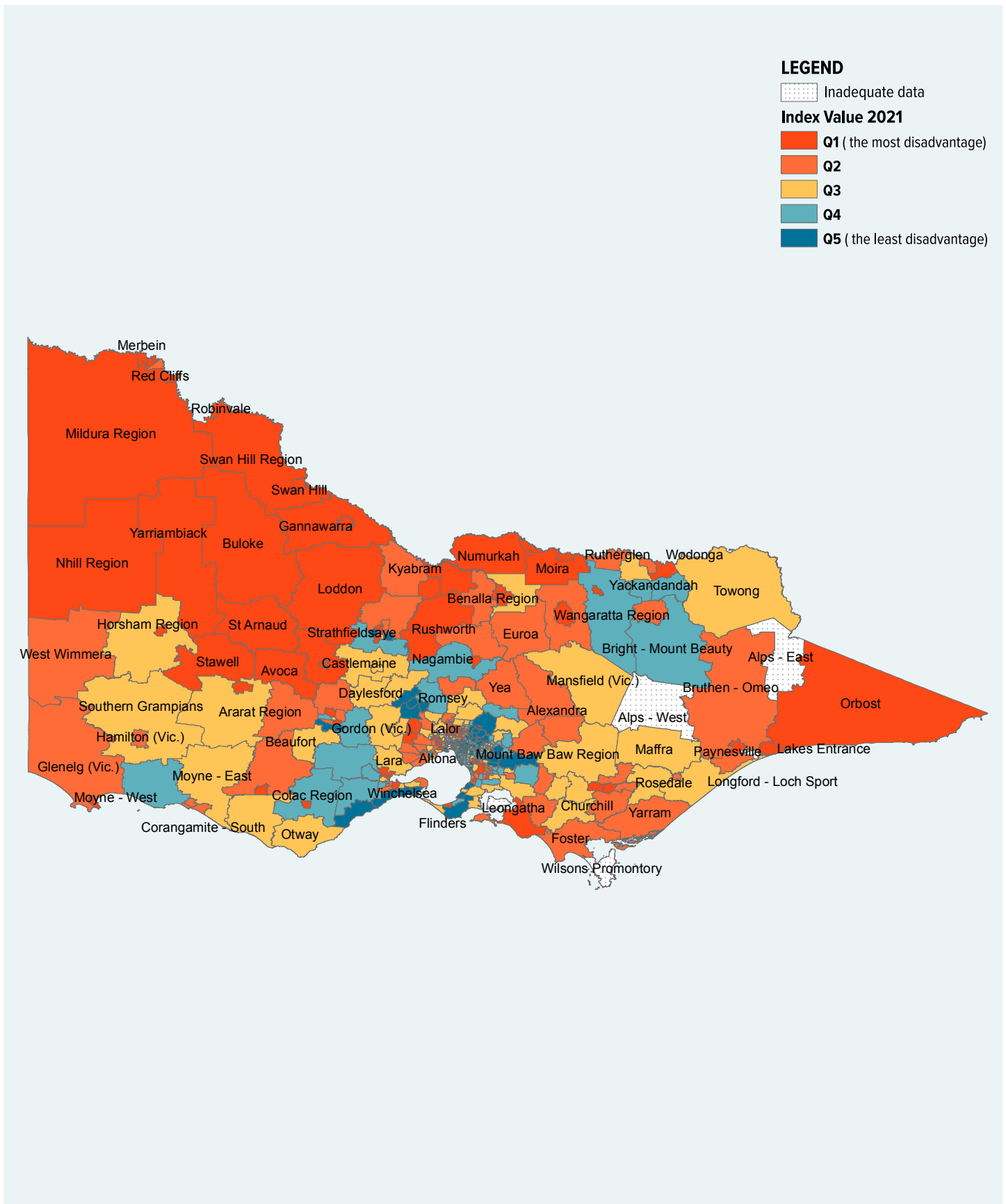
¹ 60% of Broadmeadows and 40% of Campbellfield-Coolaroo are in postcode 3047 – Broadmeadows in the 2015 report

² 82% of Meadow Heights SA2 is within postcode 3048 – Coolaroo in the 2015 report

³ This was part of postcode 3021 – St Albans in the 2015 report


⁴ Sunshine North and Sunshine West are part of the postcode 3020 – Albion in the 2015 report

MAP OF INDEX FOR VICTORIA








MAP OF INDEX FOR GREATER MELBOURNE

LEGEND

 Inadequate data

Index Value 2021

-  Q1 (the most disadvantage)
-  Q2
-  Q3
-  Q4
-  Q5 (the least disadvantage)



DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021

examines 454 locations (SA2s or “statistical areas”) in Victoria across 37 different **indicators of disadvantage**. The indicators, based on statistics collected from a number of government agencies, reflect factors that may limit life opportunities in the broad areas of social wellbeing, health, community safety, economic factors and education. In addition, for the first time, the 2021 report also includes environment indicators and indicators of intergenerational disadvantage.

An index was created that lists areas in bands according to their level of disadvantage. For each area we are able to identify the key drivers of disadvantage.

The report also considers every indicator separately, paying special attention to locations with eight or more single indicators where the area ranked in the top 5% of disadvantage. These areas are grappling with disadvantage on **multiple fronts**, and we can identify what those fronts are.

Comparing the index ranking over the years of the report series, as well as performance against a particular indicator over time, provided insights into where and what type of disadvantage is **persistent**.

Qualitative analysis of disadvantaged communities – Swan Hill and Melton in Victoria – has been incorporated in the latest report to add to the quantitative analysis.

DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021

builds on similar reports released in 2015, 2007, 2004 and 1999.