

# Multicultural populations in Central Victoria

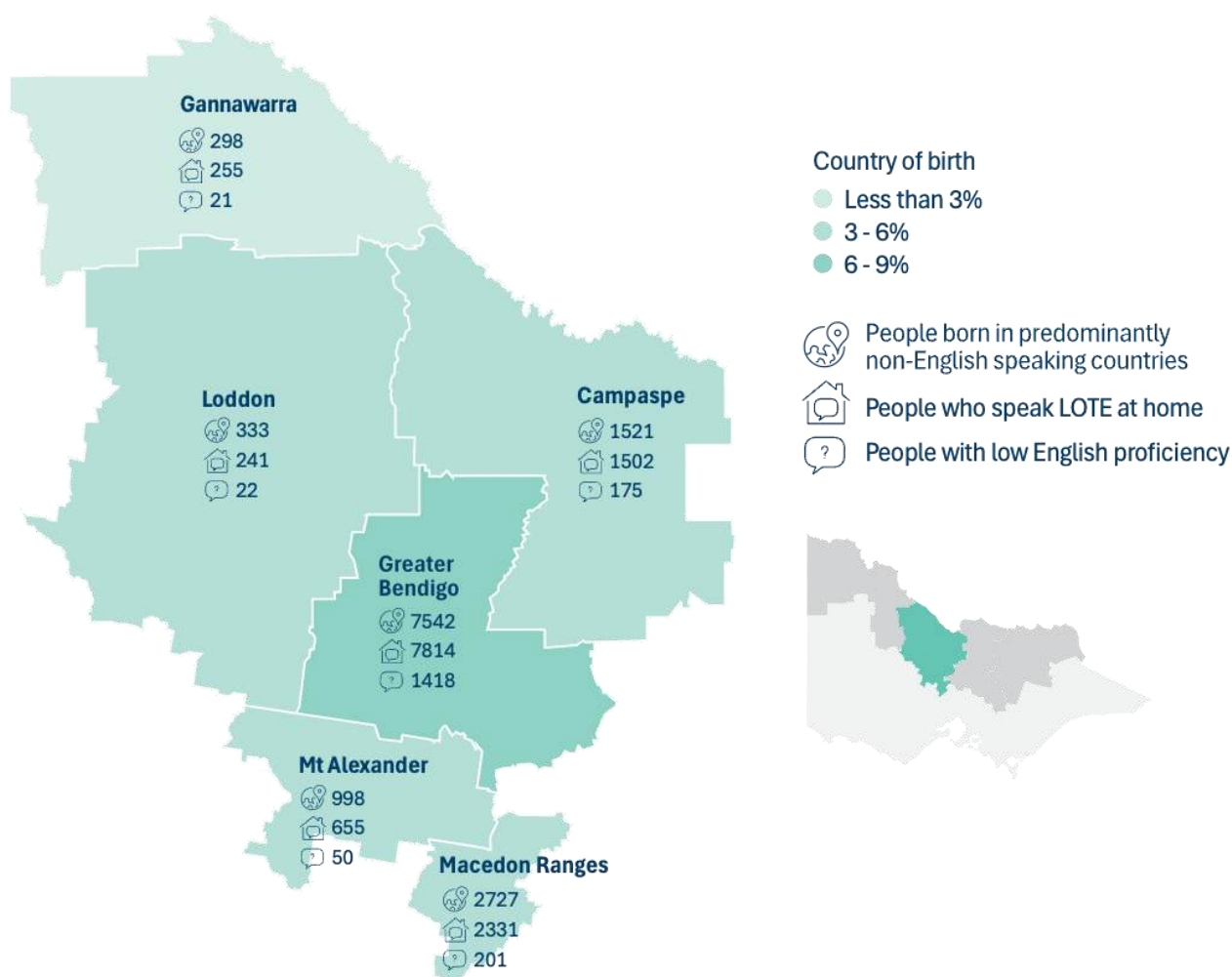
Central Victoria, and particularly Bendigo, has become a significant resettlement area for refugee and migrant populations. Central Victoria has become home to minority ethnic refugee populations such as the Karen from Myanmar, Hazara (Afghanistan), Dinka (South Sudan) and others. Anecdotally, services report that the Bendigo area is home to around 4000 Karen people and 300 Hazara/Afghanis.

To support the settlement and health of refugee and other humanitarian entrants in the region, Bendigo Community Health Services is funded to deliver Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) services, while Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, also based in Bendigo, is sub-contracted by AMES Australia to deliver SETS services in the region. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations considered especially vulnerable to poor health outcomes in Central Victoria include refugee and asylum seekers, migrant workers and elderly CALD people, especially those living alone.

## Country of birth

Central Victoria is made up of six local government areas (LGAs) and has a total population of 250,379 people, of which only 13,419 (5.4%) were born overseas in predominantly non-English speaking (NES) countries.

**Figure 1: Population born in NES countries in the Central Victoria sub-region by LGA<sup>1</sup>**



**Table 1 - People born in predominantly non-English speaking countries in the Central Victoria sub-region by LGA (by proportion of LGA population)<sup>1</sup>**

Rank	LGA	Count born in NES country	Proportion of all overseas born	Proportion of LGA population	Proportion of Murray PHN region total born NES country
1	Greater Bendigo	7542	64.4%	6.2%	14.4%
2	Macedon Ranges	2727	40.6%	5.3%	5.2%
3	Mount Alexander	998	39.9%	4.9%	1.9%
4	Loddon	333	50.2%	4.3%	0.6%
5	Campaspe	1521	53.0%	3.9%	2.9%
6	Gannawarra	298	50.5%	2.8%	0.6%

### Languages spoken

Key insights about languages spoken in Central Victoria (CV):

- Total of 12,798 people speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home
- This is 5.1 per cent of all residents in the CV sub-region and 23.1 per cent of all people who speak a LOTE across the Murray PHN catchment.

**Table 2 - People who speak a LOTE at home in the Central Victoria sub-region by LGA (by proportion of LGA population)<sup>1</sup>**

Rank	LGA	Count	Proportion of LGA population	Proportion of all Murray PHN region LOTE speakers
1	Greater Bendigo	7814	6.4%	14.1%
2	Macedon Ranges	2331	4.5%	4.2%
3	Campaspe	1502	3.9%	2.7%
4	Mount Alexander	655	3.2%	1.2%
5	Loddon	241	3.1%	0.4%
6	Gannawarra	255	2.4%	0.5%

**Table 3 - Top 10 languages spoken at home in the Central Victoria sub-region (by count of persons)<sup>1</sup>**

Rank	Language	Count	Proportion of LOTE speakers in CV region
1	Karen	1597	12.5%
2	Mandarin	881	6.9%
3	Italian	719	5.6%
4	Punjabi	631	4.9%
5	Malayalam	590	4.6%
6	Filipino	486	3.8%
7	Tagalog	454	3.5%
8	Greek	435	3.4%
9	German	411	3.2%
10	Arabic	353	2.8%

## English proficiency

**Table 4 - People with low English proficiency in the Central Victoria sub-region by LGA**

(by proportion of LOTE speakers)<sup>1</sup>

Rank	LGA	Count	Proportion of LOTE speakers	Proportion of LGA population	Proportion of Murray PHN region total
1	Greater Bendigo	1418	18.4%	1.2%	14.8%
2	Campaspe	175	11.9%	0.5%	1.8%
3	Loddon	22	10.0%	0.3%	0.2%
4	Gannawarra	21	9.2%	0.2%	0.2%
5	Macedon Ranges	201	8.9%	0.4%	2.1%
6	Mount Alexander	50	8.5%	0.2%	0.5%

**Table 5 - Top 10 language groups with low English proficiency in the Central Victoria sub-region**

(by count)<sup>1</sup>

Rank	Language used at home	Count (low English proficiency)	Proportion of language speakers
1	Karen	694	43.5%
2	Mandarin	281	31.9%
3	Non-verbal, so described	90	76.3%
4	Vietnamese	59	23.6%
5	Italian	56	7.8%
6	Greek	48	10.9%
7	Punjabi	47	7.6%
8	Malayalam	41	6.9%
9	Thai	39	17.7%
10	Dari	38	48.1%

**Table 6 - Top 5 languages spoken in each LGA in the Central Victoria sub-region**  
(within LGA by count of persons)<sup>1</sup>

LGA	Rank	Language
Campaspe	1	Italian
	2	Filipino
	3	Tagalog
	4	Mandarin
	5	Sinhalese
Gannawarra	1	Filipino
	2	Punjabi
	3	Greek
	4	Tagalog
	5	Malayalam
Greater Bendigo	1	Karen
	2	Mandarin
	3	Malayalam
	4	Punjabi
	5	Tagalog

LGA	Rank	Language
Loddon	1	Filipino
	2	Tagalog
	3	Bisaya
	4	Malayalam
	5	Italian
Macedon Ranges	1	Italian
	2	Mandarin
	3	German
	4	Greek
	5	Spanish
Mount Alexander	1	German
	2	Greek
	3	Spanish
	4	French
	5	Dutch

**Table 7 - Self-reported rates of long-term health conditions in the Central Victoria sub-region by people who speak a LOTE at home compared to the total population (rate per 1000 people)<sup>1</sup>**

Health condition	Rate of self-report per 1000 people	
	Speaks LOTE at home	Total population
Arthritis	49	116
Asthma	50	99
Cancer	17	37
Dementia	7	8
Diabetes	43	50
Heart disease	26	48
Kidney disease	7	11
Lung condition	8	22
Mental health condition	53	112
Stroke	6	11
Other long-term condition	71	88
No long-term health condition(s)	747	534

\*Crude rates are not adjusted for age profiles of the populations which may vary substantially and explain differences between groups.

**Table 8 - Self-reported rates of long-term health conditions in the Central Victoria sub-region for the 10 most common spoken languages**  
(rates per 1000 people)<sup>1</sup>

Health condition	Top 10 language groups Central Victoria sub-region									
	Karen	Mandarin	Italian	Punjabi	Malayalam	Filipino	Tagalog	Greek	German	Arabic
Arthritis	12	16	182	16	5	14	26	117	105	68
Asthma	26	39	103	5	29	70	42	64	41	57
Cancer (including remission)	6	8	53	5	0	0	7	34	39	0
Dementia (including Alzheimer's)	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	24	0
Diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes)	27	39	103	17	32	33	66	51	29	65
Heart disease (including heart attack or angina)	12	15	82	0	5	0	22	30	71	54
Kidney disease	8	0	13	0	0	0	0	9	7	25
Lung condition (including COPD or emphysema)	4	9	42	0	0	0	0	21	0	14
Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	17	22	125	0	0	6	37	80	131	51
Stroke	5	3	22	0	0	0	0	25	0	0
Any other long-term health condition(s)	50	45	92	27	34	56	59	106	114	110
No long-term health condition(s)	843	839	498	897	907	763	738	566	608	654

\*Crude rates are not adjusted for age profiles of the populations which may vary substantially and explain differences between groups.

Cells highlighted red indicate higher rates of ill health compared to whole population

## Other health issues

Stakeholders reported the following health issues were concerns specific to CALD communities in the Central Victoria (CV) sub-region:

- Alcohol and other drug (AOD)
- Chronic pain and back pain
- Late health and cancer screening/diagnoses, particularly in the Karen population
- Poor nutrition and diet and associated risk of dietary related chronic disease
- Homelessness
- Disability.

## Service strengths, gaps and opportunities

### Strengths

- Several formal health and settlement services are available in the CV sub-region, including the Refugee Health Program, Health System Navigators, Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS). These services are delivered by Bendigo Community Health Services, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and Intereach.
- Bendigo Community Health Services was noted as an exemplar in providing culturally safe services. Noted examples of good practice included:
  - Employment of bilingual staff from local CALD groups
  - Use of written, audio and video translated health resources
  - Strong connections and engagement with local CALD community groups.
- The co-location of settlement and health services at Bendigo Community Health Services supports the streamlining of health referral pathways, prioritises healthcare access and supports individualised case management and other settlement objectives e.g. education, employment, English language.

### Service gaps and opportunities

- Language remains a major barrier in Central Victoria, especially for Karen refugees with low levels of English proficiency and literacy in their first language
- Difficulties accessing GP appointments and long wait times in Bendigo
- Inconsistent use of interpreters and translated health resources across the wider primary health landscape.

## References

1. Source: ABS (2021). Public data: accessible to all audiences