

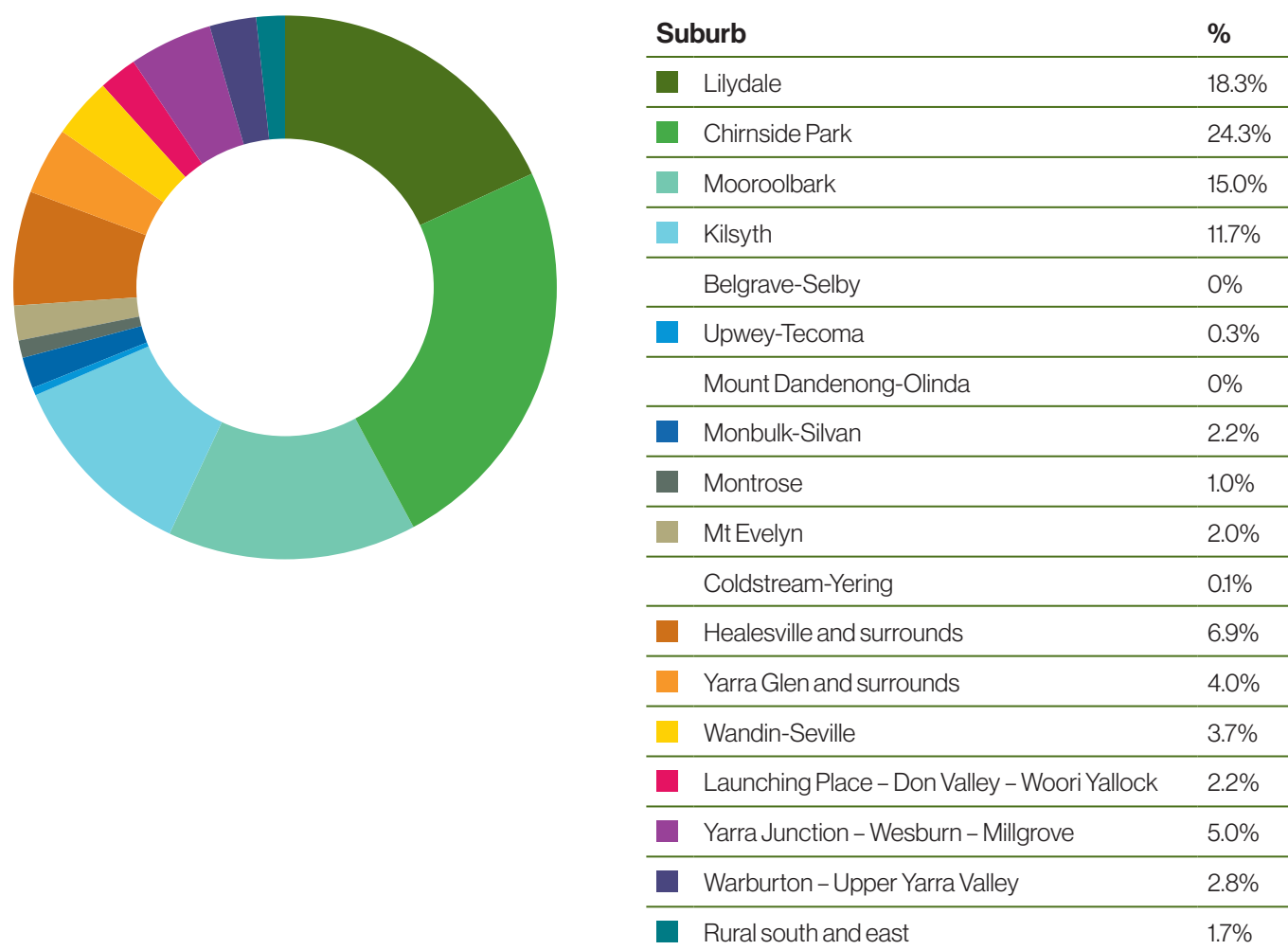
4.0 Existing Housing in Yarra Ranges

In planning for future housing needs, there is a need to first consider what type of existing housing we have, in terms of its type and location.

In the 2021 census, Yarra Ranges had a total of 61,480 dwellings, which was an additional 2,641 dwellings from the total dwelling number in 2016 of 58,839. Per annum, this is an average of 528 dwellings, or 0.9% growth per year over the five-year period.¹⁷ This is a significantly slower rate of increase than the Greater Melbourne annual rate for the period of 2.4%.¹⁸

The growth was not evenly distributed across Yarra Ranges but strongly concentrated in the urbanised areas comprising Lilydale, Chirnside Park, Mooroolbark, and Kilsyth, which together accounted for 69.3% of the total, as shown in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12. Yarra Ranges Percentage of New Dwellings by District from 2016-2021¹⁷



As a traditionally family-oriented outer suburban area, the large majority of Yarra Ranges’ dwelling stock is separate houses, at 93% as shown in Figure 13 below. This is a very high proportion of separate houses contrasted against the Greater Melbourne figure of 65%.

The urban areas of Yarra Ranges have seen increases in the number of medium density dwellings in recent years, however housing stock in other parts of Yarra Ranges has remained predominantly separate houses. Compared to Greater Melbourne, Yarra Ranges had a much lower proportion of medium and high-density dwellings in 2021 (6.1% compared to 34%)¹⁹. Figure 14 below shows that the new housing being built across the municipality is still overwhelmingly larger, detached dwellings.

An important aim of housing policy is to achieve a mix of housing types and densities, to ensure that as residents progress through their lives, there are a range of housing types available.

In Yarra Ranges, the evidence suggests that the continuing dominance of separate houses in the housing stock is not adequately providing for the needs of emerging smaller household types, such as couples without children, single-parent families and lone-person households. This is further discussed in Section 4.2 (Potential Housing Stock Mismatches) below.

Table 2: Housing types

| Housing type | Description | % of total Yarra Ranges housing stock in 2021 ¹⁹ |
|---|---|---|
|  Separate house | Stand alone, detached dwellings on private properties | 93.3% |
|  Medium density | Units or townhouses of 1 to 3 stories, which are often attached or semi-attached buildings. Average density is generally around 35-50 dwellings per net developable hectare. | 6.1% |
|  High density | More intensive forms of residential development such as apartments, which are typically at least four stories, and generally provide open space for residents on balconies and/or rooftops. Average density is generally around 75-125 dwellings per net developable hectare. | 0% |

*other dwelling types account for 0.6%



Figure 13: Dwelling structure 2021¹⁹

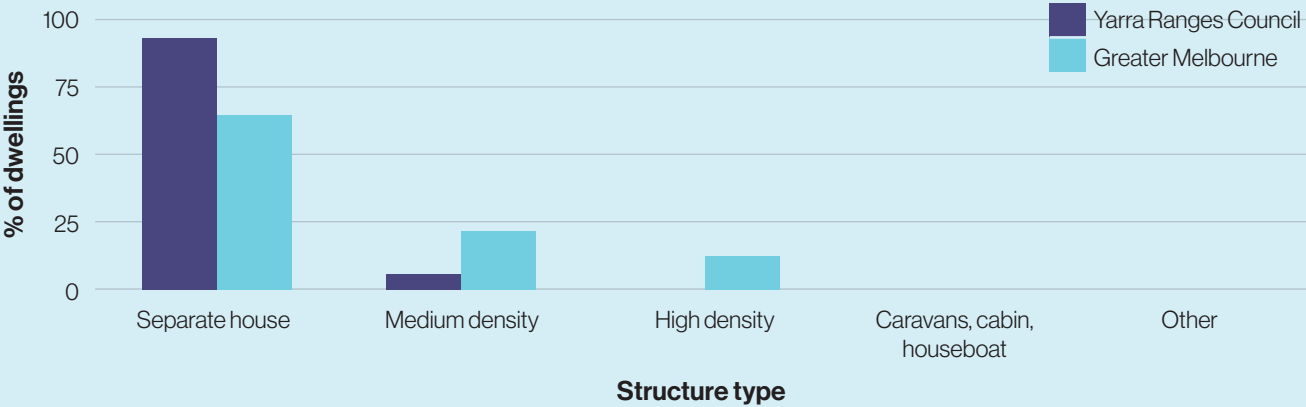
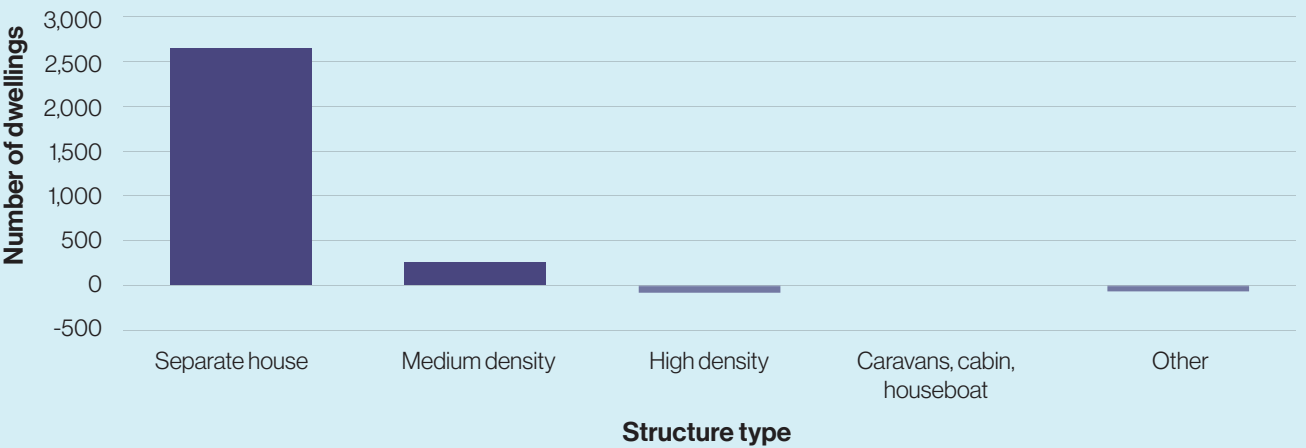


Figure 14: Change in dwelling structure 2016-2021¹⁷

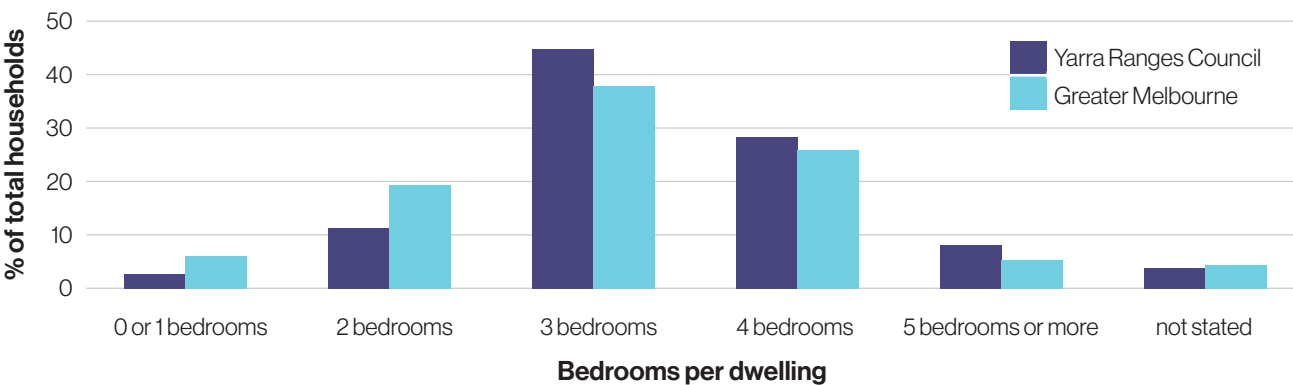


4.1 Number of Bedrooms

An understanding of dwelling sizes, and particularly number of bedrooms, is useful in seeking to identify future housing needs.

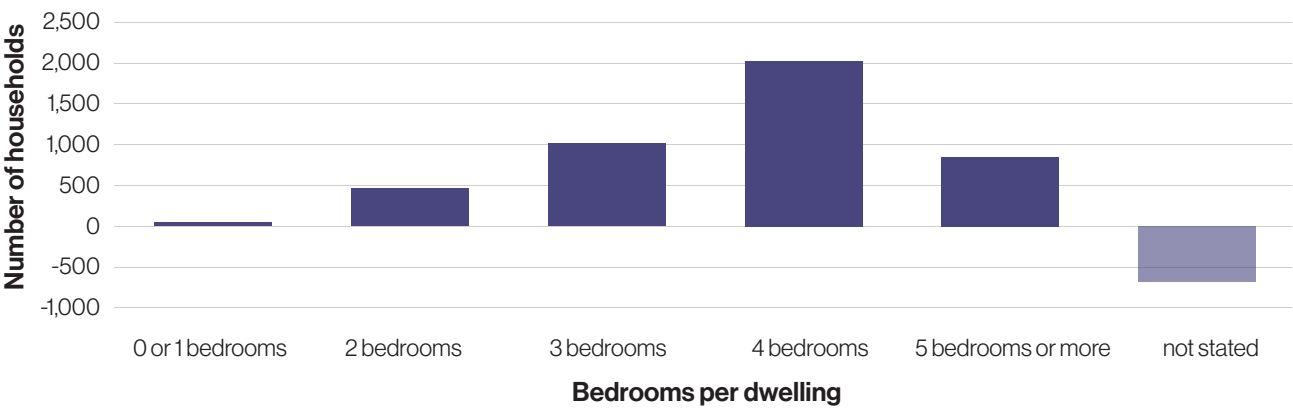
As shown by Figure 15 below, in 2021 housing stock was dominated by three and four-bedroom dwellings. Compared to Greater Melbourne, there was a scarcity of two-bedroom dwellings, and only 2.6% of dwellings in the zero or one-bedroom category.

Figure 15. Number of bedrooms per dwelling, 2021¹⁹



Census information shows that these biases in the housing stock are becoming more exaggerated with time, revealing that the largest increases for 2016-2021 are in the three, four, and five bedroom categories, as shown in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16. Change in the number of bedrooms per dwelling, 2016 to 2021¹⁹

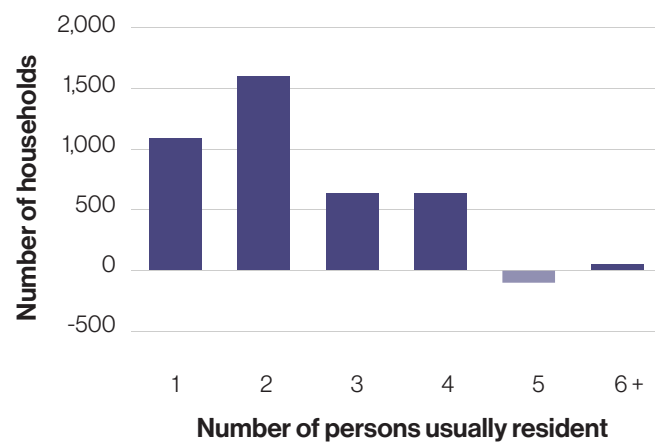


4.2 Potential Housing Stock Mismatches

4.2.1 Dwelling sizes

The preceding analysis of household types in Yarra Ranges shows a municipality that has traditionally been dominated by family households, but where demographic diversification is occurring with increasing proportions of smaller household types such as parents without children, single-parent households, and lone-person households. Between 2016 and 2021, growth has been dominated by 1 and 2 person households, as shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17. Yarra Ranges change in household size, 2016 to 2021²⁰



This shows a potential mismatch between housing demand and supply in particular:

- Housing stock dominated by separate dwellings, which is not diversifying
- Housing stock increasingly dominated by three and four-bedroom dwellings

These statistics may seem counterintuitive, by showing 1 and 2-person households have the most growth over 2016-2021, when change in the housing stock over that period is dominated by 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings. A relevant question is ‘Where are these new smaller households living?’

- There are a variety of potential explanations, such as:
- Young adults moving out of the family home, leaving one or two parents in an oversized house for their needs, and other types of family separations.
 - The effects of the pandemic, with individuals and couples moving to outer urban areas such as Yarra Ranges for a larger house to accommodate changing needs, such as working from home options.
 - Property owners seeking to adapt existing housing to their changing needs by enlarging existing dwellings, rather than relocating.

The figures are most likely the result of an interplay between multiple factors, such as rising costs of housing, pandemic impacts, an aging of the population, and other factors. However, the key finding is that the Yarra Ranges community is changing demographically and has a corresponding need for changes to the housing mix to meet its evolving needs, with a key shortfall in medium and high-density housing.

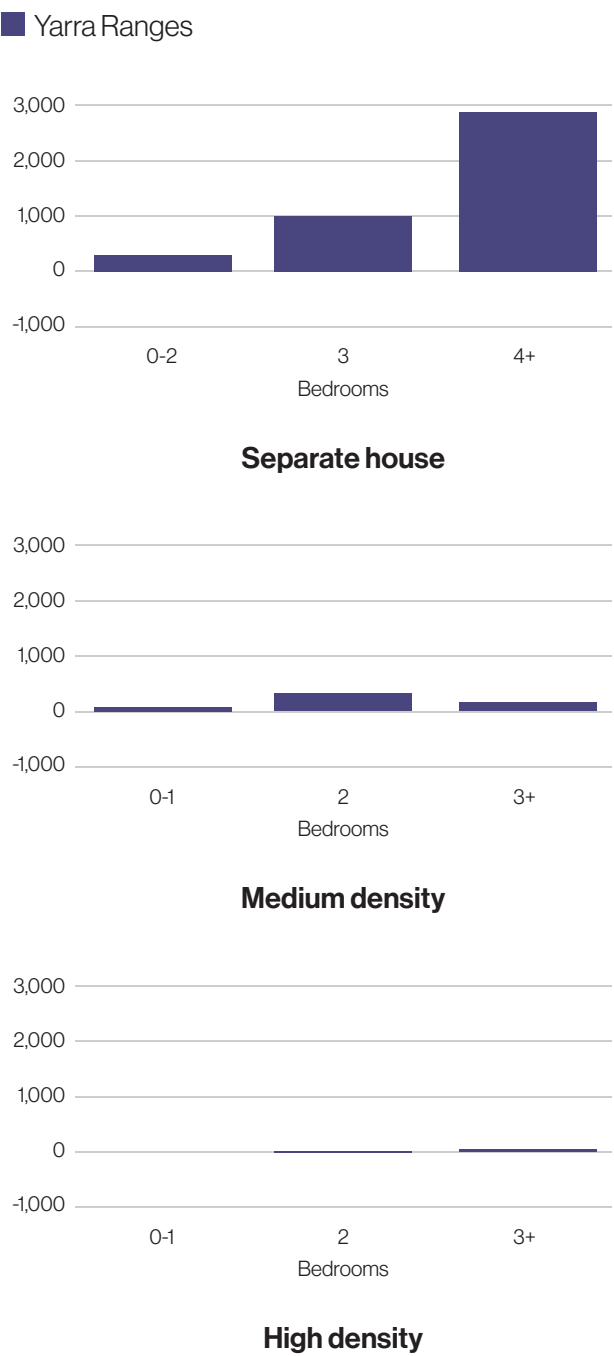
4.2.2 Medium and High-Density Housing Diversity

Within the medium and high-density housing categories, there is also a lack of diversity. While there has been some medium density development in recent years, there is still no high-density options in Yarra Ranges, as shown in Figure 13 above. This means that people wanting a more affordable, compact dwelling in a town centre, with minimal property maintenance, nearby shops and transport options, currently need to move outside Yarra Ranges to realise this.

Analysis of existing medium density stock shows there is a lack of zero to one-bedroom dwellings, as shown in Figure 18 below. This has potentially negative housing implications for several demographic groups in Yarra Ranges, and for housing affordability.

Figure 18. Change in occupied dwellings by structure and bedrooms, 2016-2021²¹

How is the mix of housing changing?
Change in occupied dwellings by structure and bedrooms, 2016-2021



4.2.3 The Role of Townships

Data shows that the rate of growth in township and rural areas of Yarra Ranges is significantly lower than within the urban area of Lilydale, Chirnside Park, Mooroolbark, and Kilsyth.

There is some uncertainty whether the low rate of growth in large townships in particular, such as Mount Evelyn, Yarra Junction, Yarra Glen and Healesville, is primarily due to housing supply issues (people not able to find the housing types and sizes they require in these areas), or alternatively, may be due to other, non-housing related needs such as to reside nearer to employment and services.

The role of these larger townships in providing housing choice and diversity is likely to be critical in order to provide options for ageing and place, not only for residents of the towns themselves but for their outlying rural-residential areas. These towns are well provided with large, detached family dwellings, which may provide useful options for multi-generational living, and can also absorb medium density housing options to diversify housing stock.