



100 Families WA

Media release

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COVID-19 affects disadvantaged families more than others, study shows.

Families on low incomes have reported feeling depressed or anxious at twice the rates of the general community, according to the findings of a study into entrenched disadvantage in WA.

The 100 Families WA COVID-19 report confirmed the pandemic's economic and social impacts on families participating in this Australian first study. Participants in the quantitative research completed the supplementary COVID-19-specific survey between May-July 2020; the only available report to examine the Coronavirus pandemic on families already in hardship.

Professor Paul Flatau, Director of the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia, said the findings from the report show a significant number of families struggling with access to medical and community services, and experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety during the pandemic.

"Almost two in five families reported depression and anxiety all or most of time in the week before the survey, but less than 1 in 5 of a general Australian sample felt the same," said Professor Flatau.

"This was consistent with the findings for financial stress, with half of families reporting stress in paying for essentials compared with a quarter of the general population."

However, the findings were not all bad as the JobSeeker supplement raised many incomes above the poverty line for the first time.

More than half of the families said the supplement improved their quality of life, reduced stress, and helped to clear their bills.

According to one participant in the survey, it made a positive impact in 'pretty much every aspect'.

"Dental, fast track mental health/counselling. I can eat better which improves my physical health.

"I can afford reliable access to the internet. I can afford to buy a new phone instead of saving for two months or wondering whether my money will be stolen or taken to pay off debt collectors."

Wanslea CEO Tricia Murray AM said the findings confirmed what many service providers had been experiencing on the frontline.

"Drastic changes have been introduced to enable us to deliver our services safely, and we've seen the difficulty faced by clients needing to access to medical appointments and other health services," said Ms Murray.

"Chronic health conditions occur at greater rates among disadvantaged families, resulting in greater need to access the healthcare system."

More than two in five families had health appointments and procedures cancelled or rescheduled due to COVID-19. It was even more pronounced for community services, with 30% of families not being able to access housing support, 50% prevented from food services, 58% unable to access employment/job search services, and 61% unable to get mental health support.

For further details please visit the full [100 Families WA COVID-19 Findings report](#).

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About 100 Families WA

100 Families WA is a collaborative research project with a vision to address the issue of entrenched disadvantage or hardship, as experienced by families living in Western Australia.

The 100 Families WA baseline report was released on 4 September 2019 and forms part of a wider study to understand entrenched disadvantage in Perth. The baseline study involves 400 families, while in-depth interviews with 100 families will continue until 2022.

The baseline report examined the domains of social, health and economic wellbeing, including demographics, family and household composition, income, material deprivation, employment, health, mental health, substance use, wellbeing and quality of life, and adverse life experiences.

WACOSS, Anglicare WA, Ruah Community Services, Wanslea, Jacaranda, Centrecare, Uniting WA, Mercycare, the UWA Social Policy Practice and Research Consortium and the Centre for Social Impact UWA are collaborative partners on the project.

#100FamiliesWA

