

# Social Isolation and Loneliness

## Snapshot



100 Families WA

*“I need secure housing, contact with the community and cultural interaction that is stimulating”*

### People need People

People who experience disadvantage are often socially isolated, with a restricted ability to be active in their communities due to lower financial resources (Krivo et al., 2013). Not surprisingly then, social isolation was a strong theme that came through in many of the families' experiences.

Having support available, from someone to lend an ear, to someone to lend a hand, is a critical component of wellbeing. The psychological comfort of knowing that there's someone to call on cannot be underestimated.

This snapshot highlights the social isolation and loneliness experiences of families living in disadvantage. Findings have been extracted from the **100Families WA Full Report, Baseline Survey Report and COVID-19 Report**.

## Social Isolation and Disadvantage



More than  
**1 in 5** families  
are not able to ask someone outside their household for advice (21%)



Almost  
**1 in 3** families  
do not have emotional support outside their household (30%)



**1 out of 3** families  
do not have support outside their household in the incidence of serious illness or injury (34%)



Almost  
**Half** of families  
do not have external support to help with maintaining their family or work responsibilities (46%)

A lack of material goods can further socially isolate families and compound their experience.



**1 in 3** families cannot afford to internet access



**9%** of families cannot afford a telephone, while almost all Australians can



**34%** of families do not have a motor vehicle (compared to less than 2% of Australians)



## Support and Wellbeing

Stories of isolation, loneliness, and the absence of positive social support, from family, friends and neighbours were linked to increased ill mental health.

Family members reported lower wellbeing and quality of life than the average Australian (WHO-5 score of 53 verses Australian average of 72). However, for those families eligible to receive the Coronavirus supplement payments in April and July 2020 (effectively doubling their income benefits and taking them above the relative poverty line) **52% reported an improved quality of life.**

**“Not under the poverty line anymore. Able to go out lasts two weeks”**

**We asked family members if they could ask someone that does not live with them for support in a time of crisis.**



**Mind a child for a brief period?**

**67%**



**Help with moving or lifting objects?**

**66%**



**Help out when you are sick or injured (e.g. the flu or a sprained ankle)?**

**60%**



**Borrow tools or equipment?**

**63%**

**Around 1 in 3 family members had no-one to turn to for support in a time of crisis.**

Family members had a keen awareness of the public discourse on poverty and disadvantage. Political slogans like ‘the age of entitlement is over’ and media portrayals of people dependent on support services as ‘dole bludgers’ deeply affect family members and sapped their self-esteem and sense of wellbeing.

Greater personal and organisational awareness and responsibility is required on how policy and practice looks and feels to families, including how and what language is used.

Families told us that while formal support services were valued and often helped them to survive, their preference in many cases was to meet their needs through informal support systems, which often played an essential role in their lives.

With this in mind, the public and community sector should consider what they can do to support families to reach their goals through these less formal means.

**“We are not stupid, we are not useless, we are not out to rip off the country. We have our challenges, like everyone else, but we want the best for our families. We want to be involved in developing the sort of supports that will help us move forward.”**

Krivo, L. J., Washington, H. M., Peterson, R. D., Browning, C. R., Calder, C. A., & Kwan, M. P. (2013). Social isolation of disadvantage and advantage: The reproduction of inequality in urban space. *Social forces*, 92(1), 141-164. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sot043>

**To learn more about the project visit [www.100familieswa.org.au](http://www.100familieswa.org.au)**