interim results report –

Impacts of Covid-19 on

local women\*

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| community engagement - interim results summary |

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a difficult time for everyone. Employment and financial worries, social isolation and the uncertainty of the pandemic itself have all contributed to high levels of stress in our region and indeed across the world.

National and international research has highlighted that women\* appear to have experienced significant impacts from the pandemic. Between February and March 2021, The City conducted an engagement project with local **cis women, transgender women and gender non-binary people** to seek a better understanding about these impacts and what strategies, projects and services Council can provide or change to better support our local community.

370 responses were received from women\* via the City’s online survey. They shared their experiences during this pandemic and the different ways they’ve been impacted – both positively and negatively.

14 interviews and two workshops were also undertaken seeking more detail about the pandemic’s impact on women and non-binary people’s lives.



**30**

Women\* took part in workshops or interviews



**370**

Women\* took part in the survey



**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**7,992**

Reach/Impressions

**441**

Actions (Clicks, reactions,  
shares, comments etc.)

**36 DAYS**   
of engagement

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| what we heard – survey results |

The responses we received highlighted that:

* + in **ALL** areas surveyed respondents reported **both positive and negative** impacts.
* The three areas of education, housing and experience of violence and abuse appear to be areas of relatively low impact with between 70% and 84% of respondents reporting “no impact for me” in these areas.
* Responses about the impact of the pandemic on women’s community engagement and connection, whilst more positive than negative, were spread across the spectrum from positive (30.4%) to negative (63.8%), to no impact (21.0%).
* An almost equal proportion of women report experiencing a positive (49.3%) and negative (52.9%) impact in relation to their home and family life.
* In terms of women’s financial situation, a similar proportion of women reported positive (32.9%), negative (43.6%) and no impact (31.6%) on their finances.
* Responses re the impact on women’s physical health appear also present a mixed picture with 68.4% reporting a positive impact; 31.6% a negative impact and 12.4% no impact.
* Mental health and emotional wellbeing is clearly an area of significant negative impact for women, with three quarters of women reporting a negative impact in this area. However, it should be noted that at the same time, just under a quarter experienced a positive impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing and one tenth reported no impact.
* Employment also stands out as an area of significant impact, both positive and negative, for the majority of women. Comments made by survey respondents (and supported by interview and focus group responses) illustrate that women overwhelmingly endorsed the benefits (albeit mentioning many of the drawbacks) of working remotely and from home. Many women report that this has made it easier for them to manage the multiple roles they play at home, as parents and in the workforce at the same time as challenging them as they juggle these multiple roles.

**Table 1: Online Survey Responses from Women\* re Impact of the pandemic**

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| **Impact area** | **Some Positive Impact** | **Some Negative Impact** | **No Impact for me** |
| Employment (N=279) | 39.3%    N=91 | 65.8%    N=150 | 16.7%    N=38 |
| Education (N=235) | 13.3%    N=30 | 20.4%    N=46 | 70.7%    N=159 |
| Finances (N=243) | 32.9%    N=74 | 43.6%    N=98 | 31.6%    N=71 |
| Housing (N=232) | 10.3%    N=23 | 17.9%    N=40 | 75.4%    N=169 |
| Physical health (N=253) | 31.6%    N=71 | 68.4%    N=154 | 12.4%    N=28 |
| Mental and emotional health (N=247) | 22.8%    N=51 | 76.3%    N=171 | 11.2%    N=25 |
| Home and family life (N=265) | 49.3%    N=110 | 52.9%    N=118 | 16.6%    N=37 |
| Experience of violence and abuse (N=229) | 9.3%       N=21 | 8.0%       N=18 | 84.4%    N=190 |
| Community engagement and connection (N=258) | 30.4%    N=68 | 63.8%    N=143 | 21.0%    N=47 |

**Key points from the survey**

Three quarters of women\* report having experienced negative impacts on their mental health and emotional wellbeing as a result of the pandemic.

Many women\* described how flexible working from home arrangements enabled them to better manage the challenges of their multiple roles and work and family commitments; which, while increased due to the pandemic, were also ordinarily demanding and in many ways made easier by the flexibility of working from home.

The negative experience for women\* was exacerbated when there was more than one pre-existing challenge such as lack of affordable housing, family violence, mental illness, isolation due to age, disability, limited English language, limited digital literacy or access to communication infrastructure, limited mobility or transport.

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| what we heard – workshop and interview results |

Nine main areas of impact emerged from the literature review and the local consultations: employment; education; financial and economic circumstances; housing; physical health; mental health and emotional wellbeing; violence and abuse at home, at work or school and in community; home and family life and community engagement and connection.

The interviews focus groups and the survey explored these nine areas in some depth and the results are described below in Table 2 with illustrative quotes drawn from the written and verbal responses of women.

This rich source of material indicates that both positive and negative impacts were experienced in all areas, often representing different sides of the same coin. As noted above in section 2, it must be remembered that this research does not claim to be statistically representative of women living in Greater Geelong; however, it does provide insight into the experiences of many local women\*.

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| what women and NON-BINARY people would like council to consider |

This research has highlighted ways in which Council could underpin its post-pandemic recovery plans to address the impact that the women\* of Greater Geelong experienced over the last year.  The women\* of Greater Geelong have asked us to value their feedback.

*“Listen to us; hear what we need and act on our experiences and our advice; work with the agencies that know us and support us; give us good advice, information, services and support so we can raise our families, be healthy, and get assistance when we need it; help us to share our heavy loads and our many roles at work, at home and in the community.”*

Through the feedback process, the community has encouraged Council to;

* Listen and integrate women’s\* views and experiences into research, policy, planning and services, especially the voices of women\* who are most vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged.
* Adopt a gender lens in all that it does; this will not only inform and enable compliance with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020, but will also support Council to recognise the range of positive and negative impacts of the last year and the ways in which women\* are disadvantaged, ignored or unsupported and hindered from full participation in and contribution to their community.
* Partner, collaborate with and support agencies that have specific and specialised knowledge of women’s experiences and needs. and support new ways for women to access opportunities, networks and services through outreach and digital platforms. Provide and fund services, local infrastructure and natural environments that are designed *with* women’s\* input and that will meet women’s needs.
* Educate and promote new thinking and behaviours about women’s\* roles at home and at work that emphasize a sharing of domestic, caring, parenting and bread winning roles.
* Consider Council’s own policies, practices and research and plan for new/amended policies and practices that take the above into account.
* Advocate for local, state and federal recovery thinking and action that takes the above into account.

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| Next Steps |

The results and feedback of this engagement project will be reviewed and analysed and form the basis for the Gender Covid-19 Impact Analysis Research Report.

Report findings, recommendations and a 12-month action plan will be presented in a report to Council in July 2021 to inform deliberation and decision-making.

The Council report and findings will be shared with the community via the City’s web sites.

**NOTE**: Women\* in this report refers to;

* cis women are women whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.
* Trans women can refer to either a woman who was assigned male at birth, identifies as a woman, but does not wish to undergo physical changes, or a transsexual woman.
* Gender non-binary / gender diverse are terms for gender identities that are neither male or female that is people who identity that are outside the traditional gender binary.