

# GENDER, DISASTER AND RESILIENCE: TOWARDS A GENDER EQUAL RECOVERY



## FACTSHEET:

### >> Preventing violence against women

When communities experience natural disasters – like a pandemic or bushfire - rates of family and other forms of gendered violence against women and children rise.<sup>1</sup>

#### Family Violence stats in lockdown:

Ominous reduced calls to safesteps

**200+**

CALLS A WEEK TO VICTORIA POLICE

**50%**

INCREASE TO MAGISTRATES' COURT

**94%**

INCREASE TO MENS SERVICES

This is because it is common for men and women to revert to traditional gender roles during disaster, where men are expected to be 'tough'; the providers and decision makers for their families.<sup>2</sup> Women are expected to be nurturing and act as caregivers. These rigid stereotypes can put women and children at risk of violence as women have less autonomy, and men may exercise control at home to fulfil societal expectations of themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Other factors also contribute to an increased risk of violence against women during disaster. Men are experiencing financial stress due to unemployment, isolation and lack of access to friends and sporting activity. They're at risk of increased substance use and mental health problems.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, factors that might have been protective for women and children have also reduced, such as access to friends and family, financial independence, and the ability to access confidential support.

Compounding forms of disadvantage contribute to the inequalities in times of crisis. Rates of violence against women with a disability, members of the LGBTIQ community, First Nations people, migrant women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are much higher. Likewise, there are higher risks of lost employment and risk of poverty.

**GENDER INEQUALITY - ENTRENCHED ATTITUDES, IDEAS AND BEHAVIOURS ABOUT HOW WE VALUE MEN AND WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY - SHAPE THE RIGIDITY OF GENDER STEREOTYPES. DURING DISASTER, THESE EXISTING INEQUITIES WORSEN AND DRIVE FAMILY AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE.**

# Know the signs of family violence during COVID-19

Stopping you from communicating with loved ones outside the home

Losing their temper and blaming you or your children for their feelings of frustration

Not giving you privacy to speak to your friends and family on the phone

Giving false information about coronavirus to scare you

Refusing to drive you to an appointment

Controlling your movements, such as going for a walk

Withholding money for essential items such as food, medicine, clothing, phone credit

Taking away your phone or computer



THESE ARE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE



## We need Gender Equity to be at the heart of our recovery

WHEN PEOPLE OF ALL GENDERS AND BACKGROUNDS HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES EVERYONE BENEFITS- WOMEN, MEN, TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.<sup>5</sup>

- Gender equality is a human right, but it is also essential for economic prosperity. Research from across the world has shown gender equity delivers greater productivity, higher profits and economic growth. It prevents violence against women and girls and diminishes corruption. Societies that value women and men as equal are safer and healthier.

- COVID-19 is an opportunity to rebuild our lives and economy with gender equality at the heart of everything we do. Recovery must lead to a more equal world.<sup>6</sup>

# >> Recommendations for gender equal recovery and resilience

- **Endorse the GEN VIC Joint Statement on Gender Equality and COVID-19<sup>6</sup>**

*“Gender equal decision making is critical to achieving gender equality before, during and after disaster. Women, girls and gender diverse people must be seen, have their voices heard and their needs met.”*

- **Promote women in positions of power** to ensure decisions are made that reflect the experiences and issues of women

- **Challenge rigid gender roles**

- *encourage men to take on care work and schooling at home*
- *demonstrate how men and women are equal and essential to economic recovery*

- **Do not excuse aggressive attitudes** towards women as ‘stress’ during times of crisis.

- **Understand how some women are disproportionately affected** - for example women on temporary visas will have even less financial independence, older women who have carers will be more at risk of isolation and exploitation.

- **Fund Gender and Disaster Workers.** We recognise that there is a lack of research in this country into the gendered impacts of disaster and how it links to violence against women.<sup>7</sup> We ask that more funding be given to support the work of gender and disaster workers in metropolitan, rural, regional, and remote areas across the state, who can work within communities to deliver violence prevention initiatives.

- **Boost family violence prevention and response activities to cope with an increased demand for support in the community:** research

shows that the pressure on families during and following a disaster is significantly increased due to rigid stereotypes and economic and financial crisis. As a result, we have seen an increase in the rates of family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic which have been further exacerbated by social isolation restrictions.

- **Access to and protection of obstetric, gynaecological, sexual and reproductive health services from COVID-19:** we recognise

that women, girls and people with a uterus need safe access to birthing and pre and post natal care, as well as to abortion services. We know that there were higher rates of maternal and infant mortality during the Ebola pandemic as health services became stressed under the weight of the emergency response; and we also recognise that during times of uncertainty, many more women may choose not to remain pregnant.

- **Commence gender-based planning for post-pandemic reboot of the Victorian economy:** No

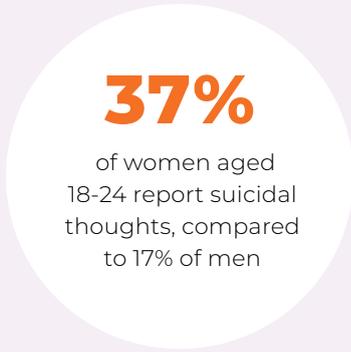
one should be disadvantaged because of their gender, but disasters impact women, non-binary and gender-diverse people differently. We need to ensure that they are at the centre of economic recovery efforts following COVID-19.

## Resources

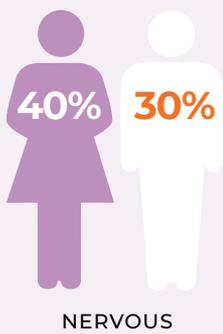
- *safe steps* 1800 015 188 [www.safesteps.org.au/](http://www.safesteps.org.au/)
- *1800RESEPECT* [www.1800respect.org.au/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/)
- *Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic)* (03) 9921 0828 [www.dvvic.org.au/](http://www.dvvic.org.au/)
- *Gender Equality Victoria* (03) 9418 0921 [www.genvic.org.au/](http://www.genvic.org.au/)
- *No to Violence* 1300 766 491 [www.ntv.org.au/](http://www.ntv.org.au/)
- *Our Watch* [www.ourwatch.org.au/](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/)
- *Victorian Council of Social Services* (03) 9235 1000 [www.vcross.org.au/](http://www.vcross.org.au/)
- *WIRE* [www.wire.org.au/](http://www.wire.org.au/)

# COVID-19 IS A GENDERED PROBLEM

During the COVID-19 crisis, women are experiencing **higher levels** of depression, anxiety and stress than men.

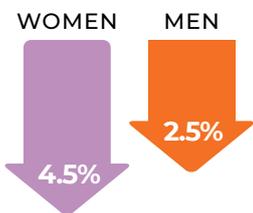


DURING LOCKDOWN, WOMEN ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO HAVE FELT:



TO THE WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC AT THE ALFRED HOSPITAL IN ONE MONTH.

**55%** of job losses due to COVID-19 are women.



WOMEN ARE DEPLETING THEIR SUPERANNUATION AT A HIGHER RATE THAN MEN WHEN WITHDRAWING EMERGENCY COVID-19 FUNDS.

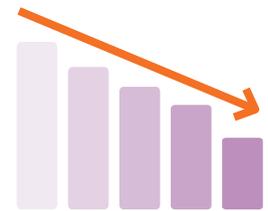


MAJORITY OF THE CASUAL WORKERS UNABLE TO ACCESS JOBKEEPER ARE WOMEN.

**\$205 BILLION**

VALUE OF UNPAID LABOUR BY VICTORIAN WOMEN

DELOITTE REPORT 2019



THE PAYROLL IMPACT ON WOMEN HAS BEEN GREATER THAN MEN ACROSS MANY INDUSTRIES.

**Family Violence stats** in lockdown:

**200+**

CALLS A WEEK TO VICTORIA POLICE

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INCREASE TO MAGISTRATES' COURT

**94%**

INCREASE TO MENS SERVICES

The majority of essential workers have been women and are in the **lowest paid jobs**.



CLEANERS



TEACHERS



EARLY  
CHILDCARE



RETAIL  
WORKERS

**A GENDER EQUAL RECOVERY  
REQUIRES GENDER EQUAL SOLUTIONS**