

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



## FACTSHEET:

### >> Gender Equity and COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Victorian men, women and gender diverse people is significant and far-reaching. It extends beyond physical and mental health consequences, impacting the very fabric of our economy, community and way of life.

The virus' impact is highly gendered. In addition to the different ways COVID-19 is affecting men and women's health, safety and wellbeing, the disease is having an unequal impact on the economic security of women, entrenching existing inequities.

**BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, AUSTRALIA WAS ALREADY GOING BACKWARDS ON THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM'S GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX – 44TH IN THE WORLD DOWN FROM A HIGH OF 15TH TWENTY YEARS AGO.<sup>1</sup> THERE IS A HIGH RISK THAT GENDER INEQUITY WILL BE WORSENERD BY THE VIRUS. ALREADY WE KNOW:**

**1 Women are at greater risk of exposure to the illness while in lower paid jobs.**

The essential service workforce keeping Victoria safe is made up of women. More women than men work in the health and social assistance, aged, disability and mental health care, early childhood education, teaching, cleaning and retail services.

Each one of these feminised industries at the frontline of exposure to COVID-19 have historically been undervalued and underpaid contributing to Australia's gender pay and superannuation gap and ultimately more women than men living below the poverty line.

**2 Family violence increases during and in the aftermath of all disasters.** During a pandemic, when people self-isolate at home without

access to support networks and services, the risk of violence is even higher.

**3 More women are unemployed as a consequence of COVID-19.** Labour force statistics show 55% of people unemployed as a consequence of COVID-19 are women.

For those still in paid work, 11.5% of women have reduced their hours compared to 7.5% of men. More women than men work as casuals with less than 12 months continuous employment making them ineligible for JobKeeper payments.

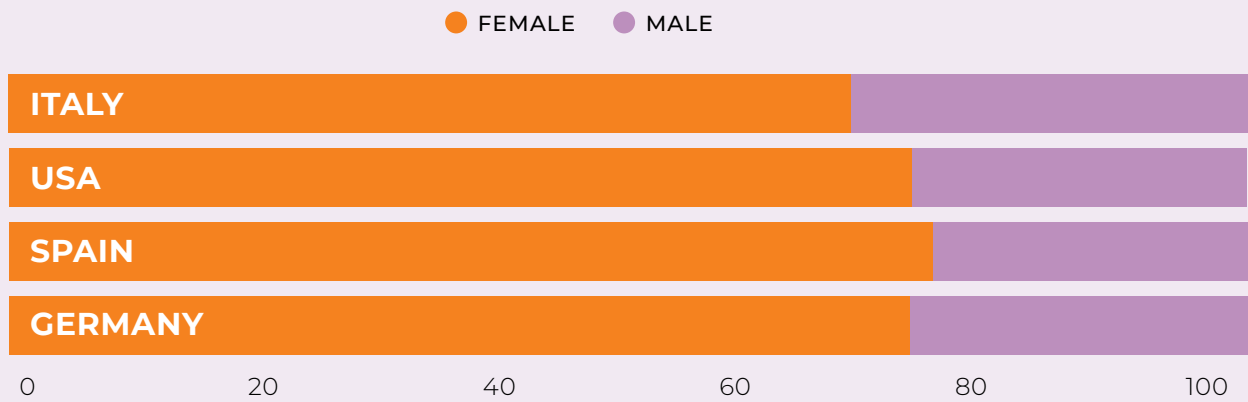
**4 Women are shouldering a bigger burden of unpaid labour in the home.** While everyone is doing more housework and childcare during the lockdown, the work isn't being divided equitably.<sup>2</sup> Caring for children, the ill and the elderly, as well as remote learning support has fallen unequally on women, with additional burden on sole parents and working women. The unpaid labour of women in Victoria has been valued at \$208 Billion – four times the value of the entire Victorian Budget – yet this work is not valued in the State's gross domestic product.

**5 Specialist women's health services are adversely affected by pandemic** as resourcing and priorities shift away from essential services such as sexual and reproductive health.<sup>3</sup>

**6 Disaster impacts different women in complex and diverse ways.** Women with intersecting attributes of disadvantage such as disability, cultural and linguistic diversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, LGBTIQ identity or socio-economic status experience gender inequity in different ways. In pandemic this can manifest in higher rates of infection and risk and the inability to access information and services.

## HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Confirmed cases among healthcare workers by sex



## 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>4</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>5</sup>

# >> Recommendations for gender equal recovery and resilience

- **Endorse the GenVic 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.”*

- **Apply a gender lens** to all rebuild efforts and investment so that women and men benefit equally from the long journey towards economic and social recovery.<sup>7</sup>
- **Support gender equal decision making** on all aspects of recovery and rebuilding.
- **Fund the *Gender Equality Act 2020* & support gender responsive budgeting** including the creation of a Gender Equity Budget Group.
- **Collect, analyse and publish the sex and gender disaggregated data** on the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

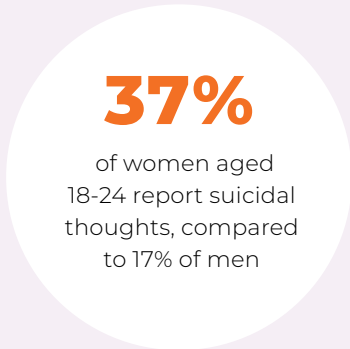
- **Ensure financial security for women now and into the future**, through gender equal pay strategies, long service leave provision and superannuation.
- **Value the care-work performed by women and in diverse families** led by sole parents and grand-parents.
- **Ensure messaging on COVID-19 targets women, including those most marginalised.** Consult representatives from indigenous communities, women’s organisations, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, family violence organisations, LGBTQI+ organisations and disability organisations to tailor messages and ensure accessibility.
- Return to work in a way that allows both men and women enough time to care for children and loved ones as well as earn a living. Engaged parenting by fathers during the pandemic must be sustained.

## References

1. [World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index \(GGGI\)](#)
2. See – Claire Cain Miller, *New York Times* May 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/upshot/pandemic-chores-homeschooling-gender.html>
3. See - CARE Australia, April 2020, *Rapid gender analysis of COVID-19 in Australia* <https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Australia-COVID-19-RGA-April-2-2020.pdf>
4. See <https://www.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-what-it-and-why-do-we-need-it>
5. UN, April 2020, *Policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 on women* <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>
6. See <https://www.genvic.org.au/focus-areas/advocacy/gen-vic-campaigns/gender-equity-womens-organisations-unite-on-covid19-disaster/>
7. GenVIC, April 2020, *Joint Statement on Gender Equality and COVID-19* <https://www.genvic.org.au/media-releases/gender-equity-womens-organisations-unite-on-covid19-disaster/>

# COVID-19 IS A GENDERED PROBLEM

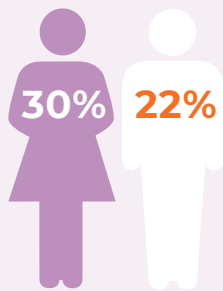
During the COVID-19 crisis, women are experiencing **higher levels** of depression, anxiety and stress than men.



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



NERVOUS



THAT EVERYTHING WAS AN EFFORT

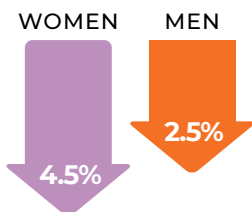


LONELY



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.

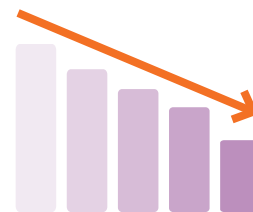


MAJORITY OF THE CASUAL WORKERS UNABLE TO ACCESS JOBKEEPER ARE WOMEN.

**\$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

**50%**

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 CHILD CARE



RETAIL WORKERS

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