



FAMILIES FROM THE ORIGINS PROJECT: COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND EXPERIENCES DURING A PANDEMIC

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BACKGROUND

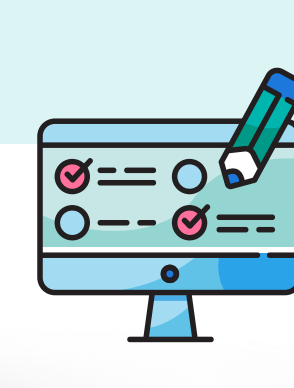
The ORIGINS Project is a prospective, longitudinal birth cohort, recruiting 10,000 pregnant women and their partners antenatally and following each family over a five-year period. Since April 2020, **The Community Wellbeing During COVID-19 Project** has collected ongoing information on the wellbeing, mental health, financial hardship, family functioning and vaccine attitudes among ORIGINS families with young children.

METHODS

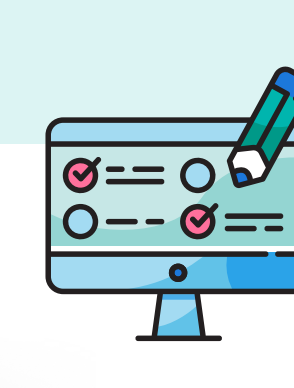
Families with children aged 0-5 years completed online questionnaires at the following timepoints:



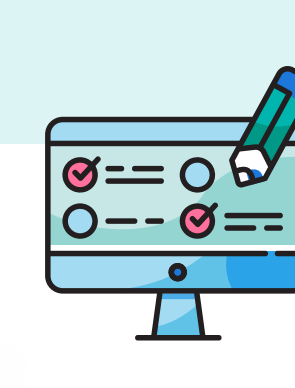
APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY
2020



JUNE | SEPT
2021



MARCH
2022



MARCH
2023

Information collected:

- Perceived stress
- General family functioning
- Financial stress & hardship
- Psychological and emotional wellbeing
- Mental health
- Worries, concerns & positive aspects of the pandemic & lockdowns
- Attitudes & perceptions regarding COVID-19 & available vaccines
- Qualitative data on the information & support needs of perinatal women

RESULTS

To date, the data has been used in the following ways:

1

Comparison of the experiences in Australia & the UK during the initial COVID-19 lockdown:

- April 2020: Data collected from 900 families: Australia & UK
- Varying geography, levels of socio-economic disadvantage and situational context during pandemic
- Both cohorts reported similar worries and challenges during the lockdown period including:
 - ☐ employment/finances
 - ☐ health anxiety
 - ☐ mental health and social isolation
 - ☐ caring for children
 - ☐ child development concerns



2

Emotional health and wellbeing and support needs of perinatal women during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- June & July 2020: Data collected from 174 pregnant and postnatal women.
- Women experienced varying levels of stress, but also reported positive experiences (e.g. more time with family).
- Positive mental health was associated with higher levels of mindfulness and self-compassion.
- Findings: meditation-based or similar training might help support expectant and post-birth mothers during times of crisis, such as a pandemic.



3

Vaccine perception among pregnant and breastfeeding women:

- September 2021: Data collected from 357 pregnant and breastfeeding women
- 43% were unsure or hadn't thought about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine
- Concerns regarding possible safety issues and/or side effects of the vaccine, as well as uncertainty regarding the long-term consequences of the vaccine on their unborn child.

4

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- March 2023: Data collected on 521 ORIGINS participants.
- 59% reported that COVID-19 had a big impact on their lives, most commonly on levels of stress and financial hardship.
- Long-term impact: 22% of respondents indicated that their mental health has been negatively impacted.
- Long-term impact: 23% of respondents indicated that their relationship with family has been impacted.



CONCLUSION

This research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on WA families, with many experiencing stress as well negative impacts on their employment and finances. In vulnerable populations, such as pregnant and breastfeeding women, vaccine uptake is impacted by concerns regarding the impact of the vaccine on their unborn child.

LONGITUDINAL FOLLOW-UP

As part of the longitudinal follow-up of families enrolled in ORIGINS, there are opportunities to assess and understand the long-term impact of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of families and young children.



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