

VOICES OF LOUDOUN WOMEN



2021 SURVEY SERIES

LCWAG Research & Impact Hub

Introduction

WHY WE'RE LISTENING



Across the Commonwealth and the nation at large, women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and economic impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated existing disparities. Prior to the onset, Virginia had a narrowing gender wage gap and despite a higher percentage of women with bachelor's degrees, a larger share of the Commonwealth's women lived in poverty. The national "she-cession" caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has created economic instability for women and has been observed in Loudoun County.

University of Virginia School of Law Professor Naomi Cahn has stated that "women made up 46% of the labor force before COVID-19, women have disproportionately lost jobs, and account for 54% of job losses. This is due not just to women's particular jobs, but also to factors like women's responsibility for child care."

Loudoun Coalition on Women and Girls (LCWAG) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting leadership development and building a healthy community for Loudoun's women and girls through education, empowerment and collaboration.

In fall 2019, LCWAG had begun to outline a community assessment series to identify solutions for policymakers and design nonprofit programs that addressed existing inequities in the county. When COVID-19 spread around the world, it became clear that the community assessment plan required a focus specific to the health crisis and understanding its disproportionate impacts on local women.

LCWAG's community assessment series identifies and periodically monitors unmet needs for state and local leaders. Our findings are also presented with corporate partners to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in STEM and other workforce areas recruitment efforts. Over 600 responses total have been collected to date from women residing in Loudoun County. The three top needs have been consistently identified as: **child care support, employment connections, and access to health care**. The LCWAG Research & Impact Hub continues to monitor these challenges and identify the policy and program solutions each demands.

Summary

FINDINGS OVERVIEW

One third of surveyed women living in Loudoun County reported experiencing one or more major challenges. This level of unmet need has persisted throughout consecutive survey sample periods.

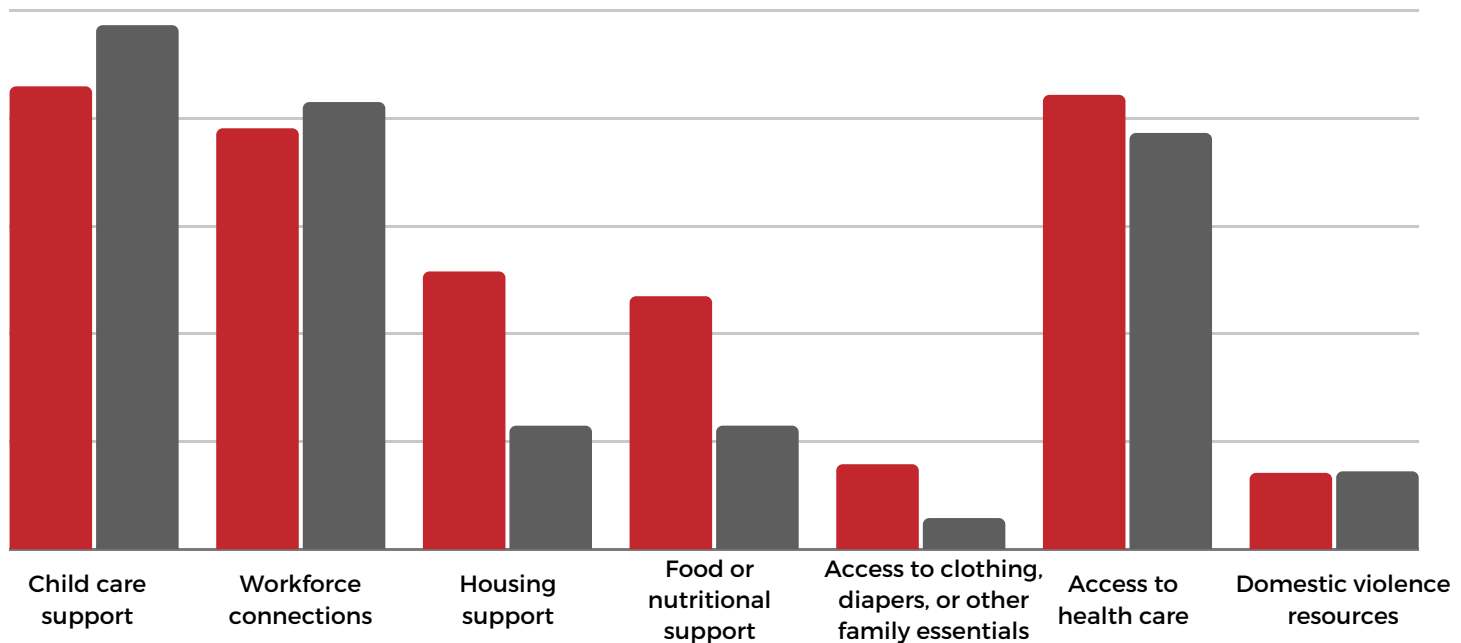
18

zip codes represented

1 IN 3

experience challenges

■ Winter 2020 ■ Spring 2021



Women were surveyed to understand the programs needed to address challenges in their households. The top three major challenges were consistent in both rounds: **child care support, workforce connections, and access to health care**. The chart above illustrates the demand for seven types of support needed, as reported by the women surveyed with at least one major challenge.

Over 600 responses total were received from women residing in Loudoun County over the winter 2020 and spring 2021 sample periods. More than half of respondents are over the age 40 and hold a bachelor degree or higher education. One-third of respondents identified as teachers and other educators. Additional data collection is underway to further understand the solutions recommended by women themselves across our community.

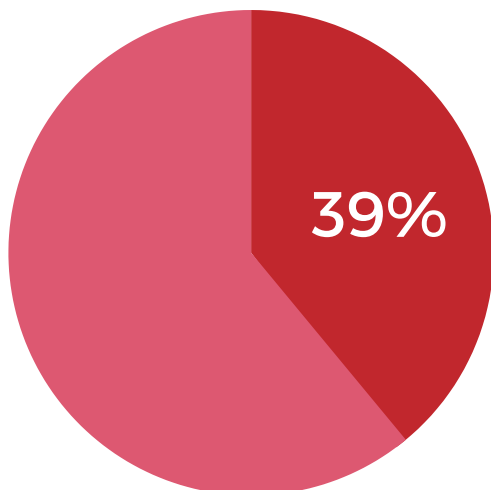
Issue Summary

CHILD CARE SUPPORT

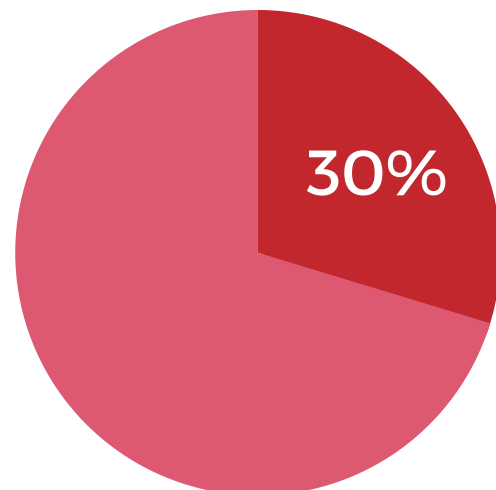
Child care support is one of the main barriers for women trying to reenter the workforce, keep employment or advance in their careers, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

44%

Percentage of Loudoun women surveyed with school-age children who report child care as an unmet need



39% of U.S. working mothers stated it was harder to balance work/family during the coronavirus outbreak.



30% of Loudoun women surveyed with children under 18 stated they struggled to balance work.

Nearly half of women who reported child care as an unmet need in spring 2021 did not have current child care arrangements. One in four women with unmet child care needs stated that being unable to afford child care was an obstacle. Challenges unique to the pandemic, such as limiting COVID-19 exposure and balancing remote working with simultaneous caregiving, were some of the other concerns noted by women surveyed.

Nationwide, 39% of working mothers surveyed by Pew Research Centers stated it was harder to balance work and family responsibilities during the coronavirus outbreak.

For the Loudoun survey respondents with children school age or younger, about one-third reported that they struggled to balance work, and 44% reported access to affordable child care support as an unmet need.

Issue Summary

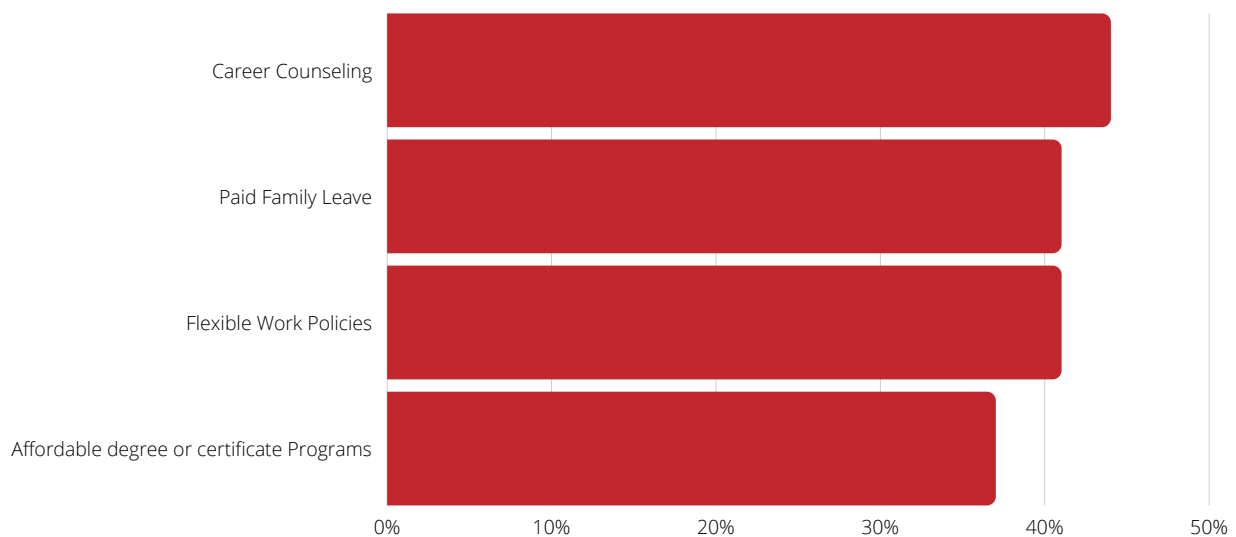
WORKFORCE SUPPORT

The national “she-cession” caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has created economic instability for women and has been observed in Loudoun County.

50%

More than half of Loudoun women surveyed reported increased family responsibilities and the struggle to balance work as the major factors that have impacted their career

Most beneficial programs identified by Loudoun women seeking employment connections in spring 2021:



One in ten Loudoun women surveyed in spring 2021 reported needing connections to employment or other workforce support.

Almost two-thirds of women with this unmet need as of spring 2021 stated that due to COVID-19, they had either lost their job, or were working fewer hours and/or earning less income than in February 2020 due to caregiving demands.

Among women surveyed who identified programs needed for workforce connections in their household, the most beneficial solutions reported were: career counseling (44%), paid family leave or flexible work policies (41%), and affordable degree or certificate programs (37%).

Issue Summary

HEALTH CARE ACCESS

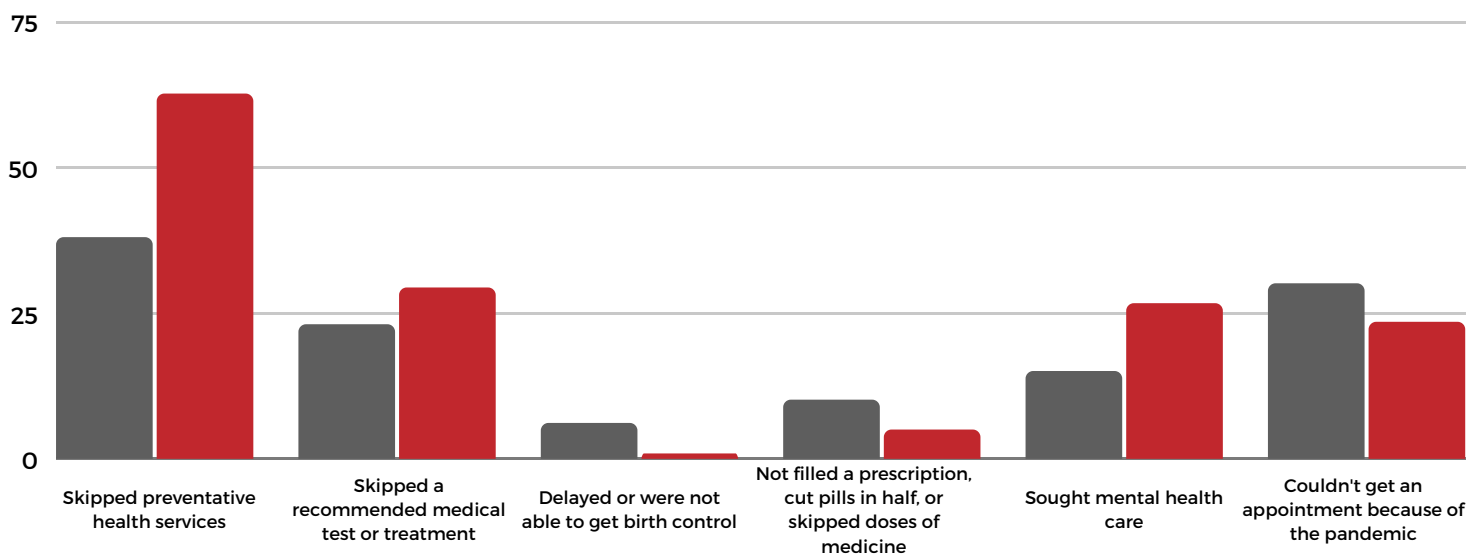
Receiving preventative health care and recommended medical procedures can significantly impact the rate of diagnosis and minimize complications.

63%

Percentage of Loudoun women surveyed who reported skipping preventative health services

Since March 1, 2020, have you experienced any of the following because of the pandemic?

■ U.S. Women ■ Loudoun Women



National data from the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that women are more likely to have persisted through the pandemic without recommended preventative health care, as compared to men.

Unfortunately, nearly one-third of women surveyed in spring 2021 had skipped a recommended medical test or treatment because of the pandemic.

And 63% of Loudoun women surveyed had skipped preventative health services, a significantly higher rate than the overall national average reported by the Kaiser Family Foundation, wherein 38% of women nationally had skipped preventative health services (such as a yearly checkup or routine test).

Issue Summary

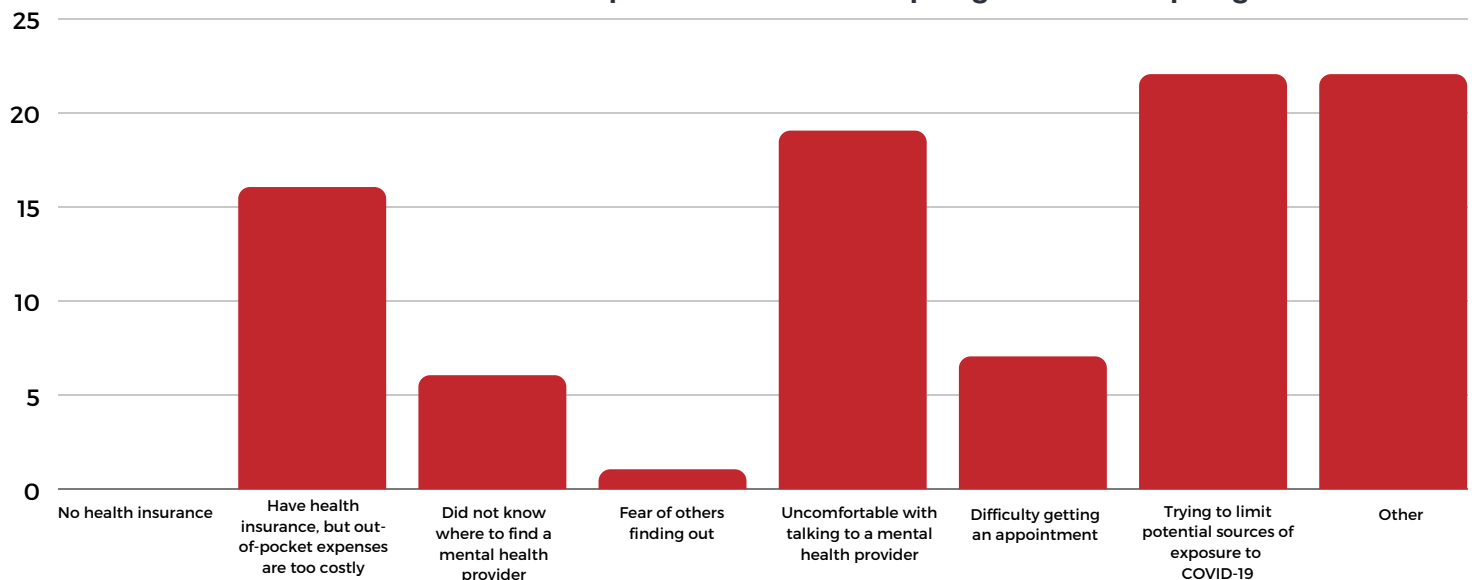
MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

Women reported increased stress and other mental health issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2/3

More than 2/3 of women surveyed reported that COVID-19 impacted their mental health, of which 80% reported that it impacted them moderately to majorly.

Reasons why Loudoun women with moderate or major mental health impacts had not seen a mental health care provider between spring 2020 and spring 2021:



Over half of Loudoun women with mental health impacts had not seen a mental health care provider in the period since the onset of COVID-19. This is consistent across the Commonwealth overall, where just over half of adults experiencing a mental health illness receive no treatment, according to data from Mental Health America. For women with moderate or major mental health impacts who had visited a mental health care provider during the pandemic, telehealth visits were five times as popular as in-person visits.

One-quarter of Loudoun women with moderate or major mental health impacts stated that they had not seen a mental health care provider during the pandemic because out-of-pocket expenses were too costly. For Virginians with a PPO plan, behavioral health office visits are more than seven times as likely to be out-of-network than primary care office visits. This disparity is higher than the national out-of-network utilization rate, according to a 2019 report by Milliman, Inc.

Conclusion

VOICES IN ACTION



LCWAG launched its assessment series as a tool to align the nonprofit organization's programming with community needs, while simultaneously providing local leaders with information to address the impacts of COVID-19. The community assessment series will continue to be shaped by these three perspectives.

Align programs with the needs of our community. While running data collection and analysis, LCWAG has simultaneously organized no-cost events for women and girls using survey insights to create or adapt in-demand resources.

The annual **Girl emPower Summit**, launched in 2020 and held again in 2021, is a leadership development event where young women ages 12-18 years old interact with leading experts on topics including entrepreneurship, financial independence, and mental health. A key event sponsor, Amazon Web Services, also engages with Girl emPower Summit attendees to help inform the future of the company's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

LCWAG's **fall 2021 Employment Event** provided women with an opportunity to connect with actively-hiring employers, while also receiving coaching for interviewing and resume writing. Participating employers included Loudoun County Public Schools, Northwest Federal Credit Union, Salamander Resort & Spa, and Wegmans.

Continue to broaden community outreach. LCWAG is working to increase the representativeness of its assessments to ensure that survey samples reflect the county's demographics. Future surveys are planned to be translated into Spanish. LCWAG will work with its growing base of community partners to build trust and response rates among underrepresented populations. As funding allows, LCWAG will seek to increase the number of languages offered and expand into multi-modal data collection practices.

Educate and build awareness. LCWAG will continue to identify and monitor the issues that impact women through collaboration with policymakers, corporate partners, and other community leaders.

LCWAG is dedicated to promoting leadership development and fostering an inclusive community for Loudoun's women and girls through education, collaboration, and empowerment.

Leadership

Angela Mitchell, Chair

Ferri Riar, Vice Chair, Report Co-Author

Lorna Campbell Clarke, Secretary

Carol Barbe, Treasurer

Mahsa Riar, Board Member

Melanie Scoggins, Board Member

Amber Styles, Board Member, Report Co-Author

