

women's health matters !

Media Release: New Women's Health Matters research shows health inequalities in women who have a disability barriers to employment, social events, transports and health services.

Women's Health Matters, new report, *"I have to ask to be included..."*, captured the experiences of women with disabilities about their health and wellbeing, their access to health services, supports and health information.

Amber Hutchison, the project officer running the research at Women's Health Matters said

"Last year the COVID-19 ACT lockdown helped to highlight significant health disparities for women with disabilities, they appeared to be forgotten in terms of supports and services. And had limited access to the essential supports they needed."

"Even though it was such a hard time (and we seem to be back there again) COVID-19 brought some positives. Supports, such as Telehealth, that make health services more accessible for women with disabilities were valued and need to be continued into the future."

The research shows that women with disabilities access health services more than the general population of women. They access more specialists, dentists and fill scripts more often. And because they are accessing more services they are highly impacted by barriers to those services such as affordability, wait times and appointment availability. Low access to services is likely to reduce their health outcomes.

The report complimented previous research done by Women's Health Matters and has identified specific health and wellbeing issues for ACT women with disabilities. Our research showed they are more likely to rate their physical and mental health poorer, experience exclusion from society, and experience barriers to employment including disability related discrimination.

Amber Hutchison said that:

"Many of the women we talked to had trouble maintaining their employment due to lack of flexible work arrangements and reduced access to supports. 37% of the women were not in the workforce, which had impacts on their financial situation and on their ability to afford

health care. It also meant they missed out on social interaction at their workplace and so felt socially excluded.”

This research highlighted the complexity women with disabilities live roles, health and the health system, and how they influence each other. We hope that this report will contribute to improving strategies and policies that impact women with a disability in the ACT.