

Alone Together

Families living in housing insecurity and their experiences of community during the COVID 19 lockdown.

Easy-English Version

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Our study

We asked families living in housing insecurity about their experiences of community during the COVID19 shutdown.



Why we did our study?

We know that families living in housing insecurity experience hardship and social isolation.

We wanted to know how these families managed during the COVID-19 restrictions.

We wanted to know about the supports they received, what helped them cope, and what they recommended if the shutdown happened again.



What did we do?

We worked with a Specialist Homeless Services (SHS) to recruit housing insecure families for interview.

We spoke to five female heads of households and their families, which included four First Nations women (A mother, daughter and the mother's sister, and another mother), one migrant mother, one Australian born mother and her two teenagers, and one refugee mother.

We spoke to families at the SHS, or in their current accommodation.



We asked them about their experience of community during lockdown.

During our conversations, we also made drawings, took notes, and digitally recorded what was said.

The recordings of the conversations were written up, and compared alongside the notes and drawings and discussed between the research team.

What did we find out?



Theme 1 – The welfare agency is my community

Housing insecurity during lockdown led to fragmented social ties with family, friends and to social institutions such as school and health services.



All participants identified the SHS or similar welfare agency as their key community link during the pandemic.

This was partly explained by this charity organisation not going into lockdown, as they sought status as essential service provider so they could continue to visit the families and assist them.



Theme 2 - Community as place and space

Children in these families had their access to their regular institutions and peer groups restricted so their community essentially collapsed, as schools and childcare centres closed.



For the First Nations participants, COVID-19 restrictions intruded on their community, both in terms of their ability to attend funerals and to meet other cultural obligations.

Advice for the future

Conversations with housing insecure families identified the importance of charity organisations during disasters, including:

- Helping with essential needs such a food.
- Provide linkages to help clients access other welfare and health services.
- Assist clients to access government benefits.

For these reasons, these agencies should be supported in their role.

