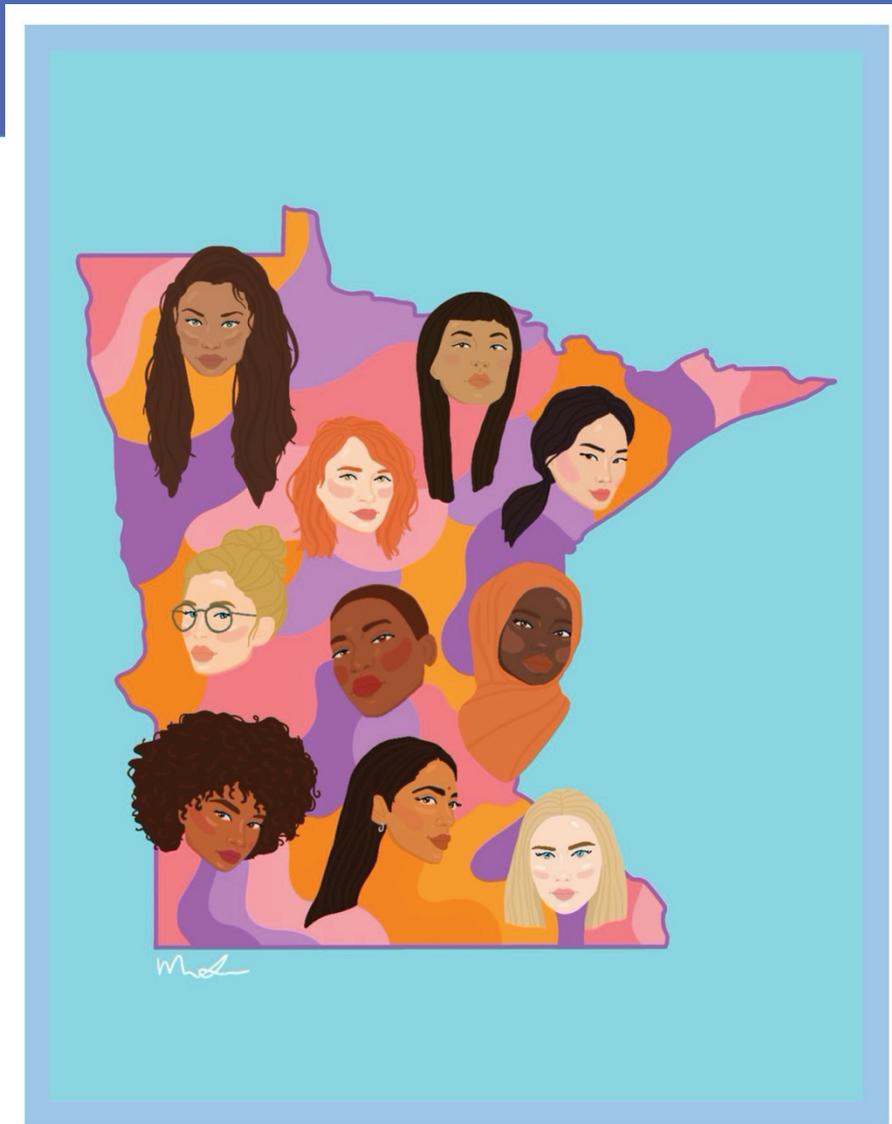


SAFE, SURVIVING, & THRIVING

*A report on the impacts of COVID-19 on young women
in Minnesota by the Young Women's Cabinet*

SEPTEMBER 2020



The Young Women's Cabinet is a dynamic group of 31 young women and youth leaders (ages 16-24) from across Minnesota dedicated to gender and racial equity. In partnership with the Women's Foundation and the Governor's Office, the Young Women's Cabinet is charged with centering the leadership and solutions of young women of color to improve equity and opportunity for young women in Minnesota. The Cabinet has engaged in leadership development, been trained as policy advocates, and has directed nearly \$1 million in grants to nonprofits and individuals to advance equity.

Introduction & Purpose

Since the advent of COVID-19, we have abruptly transitioned into new ways of continuing the ever more present need to center the needs of young women and girls in our state. We, like many young women and girls across the state, occupy many different roles in our communities. We are essential workers, first-generation graduates, caregivers, providers, and even heads of households. Despite the turmoil COVID-19 has brought to many of our communities, we feel a tremendous sense of urgency to support, organize, and share resources so that young women can not only survive, but **thrive**.

COVID-19 is impacting young women and girls across our state in unique and distinct ways. For some of us, this means taking on additional caretaking roles; others are facing economic, housing, and food insecurity and other gender, race, place and ability-based discrimination that is especially amplified during this time. In response, we launched a series of actions so that young women can be:

- **Safe:** Young women have access to feel safe and free from all forms of violence at home, work, and in the community.
- **Surviving:** Young women have access to basic needs (i.e. food, housing, financial support) to survive.
- **Thriving:** Young women have access to resources for healing, creativity, well-being, and transformation.

Today, we are releasing the results from our state-wide COVID-19 survey that collected the needs and experiences of young women from all eight of our communities: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, Latina, Disabilities, Greater Minnesota, and LGBTQ+ youth. The findings from this research illuminate a truth we know to be true: Young women were leaders in our families and communities before the crisis and they are leading now as caretakers, providers, essential workers, and even heads of households. However, young women remain overlooked and neglected in services to address their basic needs from mental health support to housing.

When the peak of the outbreak recedes and we as a country are called to heal and rebuild our society, young women must be front and center in the decisions of how we are going to rebuild our nation. Through deep critical reflection of the past, community leadership, and bold and courageous policy proposals, the possibilities of a world beyond the present is ever the more achievable. It is our hope that the voices and stories, outlined in the pages below lend to collectively building a Minnesota where every young woman can thrive.

Methodology

Our survey asked participants a series of questions revolving around our three themes: Safe, Surviving, and Thriving. In each section, we asked respondents questions that were both multiple-choice and structured. In our multiple-choice questions, we asked young women to simply check the choices that applied to their circumstances. In our open-ended questions, we analyzed each response to develop overarching themes across all respondents. [See Appendix for full list of questions.](#)

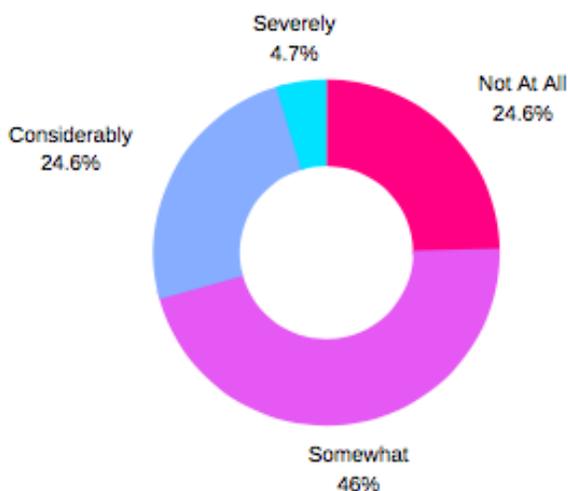
In total, our survey had 126 respondents (aged 14-24) and young women from all eight of our community groups: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latinx, LGBTQ+, young women with disabilities, and young women from Greater Minnesota.

Findings

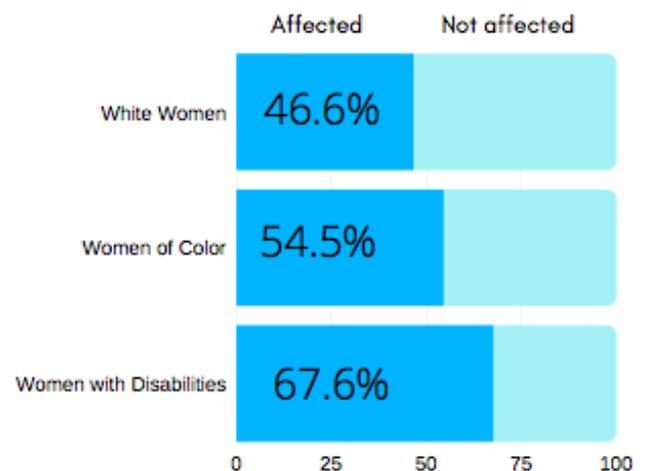
Our findings reveal the distinct impacts of COVID-19 on young women in Minnesota. Young women, and especially young women of color, young women with disabilities, immigrant women, young women from Greater Minnesota, and LGBTQ+ youth are facing heightened levels of concerns of accessing basic needs such as: food, shelter, Wifi, medication, and mental health support.

Of all young women surveyed, **75.4%** stated their access to safety has been impacted due to COVID-19. *See Graph 1.* Of women of color, young Latina women had the highest rate of impact with **57.9%** reporting their access to basic resources was affected. *See Graph 2.* In addition to these responses, young women also wrote responses to the following open-ended questions asked.

Graph 1:



Graph 2:



What is your message or "call to action" to decision makers during this time?

Young women had powerful messages rooted in a sense of urgency for decision makers. Many young women responded with an overarching call to center the perspectives, lived experiences, and wisdom of marginalized communities (BIPOC, disabled, tribal, LGBTQ+ communities, etc.). They articulate the necessity for designing policy that begins with assuring basic needs (food, shelter, safe environment) and operates from a place of care, not charity. Policy examples include:

- Rent relief/moratorium
- Protection of essential workers (additional compensation, safety precautions, etc.)
- Relief from student debt
- Broadband internet access
- Expanded access to healthcare
- Inclusion of students in COVID-19 economic relief packages

One young woman stressed the importance of harnessing this moment for long-lasting change in our communities. She states: "Let's take this as an opportunity to make real, necessary structural change in our communities to right the wrongs and inequities that have been allowed to persist for far too long." Another young woman echoes this sentiment and states: "We should all be doing what we can to mitigate this so [inequities] are less prevalent in our society after COVID-19."

What kind of world do you want to live in post COVID-19?

When asked about their vision for a world after the pandemic, young women emphasize both immediate policy solutions and a call to action. Many young women described the world they want to live in post COVID-19 as one filled with empathy, connectedness, compassion, and justice. In addition to these values, young women point to a world that prioritizes their basic needs and responds to issues as a community, as opposed to individually.

Has your role changed in the household? If so, how?

Many young women are having to financially and emotionally support their households amidst COVID-19. Young women spoke about additional caretaking duties including taking care of siblings, purchasing groceries, and supporting the financial stability of their entire household. One young woman states, "I have to make sure my younger brother is keeping up with his schoolwork and I have to make him meals. I also have to keep the house tidy as well. Even though I am at home, I still have responsibilities." This illustrates the layered responsibilities of young women who are carrying the burden of both in-house and out of house labor.

What are some things keeping you positive during COVID-19?

Young women listed a multitude of activities, practices, and experiences that are bringing them joy. See *image below*.

GARDENING making masks for the community STUDYING
baking **RUNNING** Spending time with pets
creating art yoga **PRAYING** READING
TAKING CARE OF FAMILY **writing** **MEDITATING**
Having virtual zoom parties and game nights working

Conclusion

The findings from this report indicate young women in Minnesota, especially young women of color, young women with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately impacted by the effects of COVID-19. As the virus continues to spread in our communities, it is imperative we develop the infrastructure and policy solutions we need led by the people most impacted. Young women have identified their needs, solutions, and their vision post-COVID-19, it is up to us to make this a reality so all young women in Minnesota can be **safe, survive, and thrive**.