

GenV Focus Area Survey Final Report

Executive Summary

(See [full paper](#))

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Abstract

The GenV Focus Area Survey was developed to engage with policymakers, researchers and practitioners in order to road test its six proposed Focus Areas and to ensure that GenV was developing an inclusive data platform that could meet the needs of a wide range of users. An online survey was conducted and found that mental health and wellbeing (particularly mothers' and babies') were the most important priorities. The diversity of interests align with GenV's Lifecourse approach.

Keywords

Content Areas, Priorities, Consultation, Cross-sectional survey, Cohort, Design, GenV

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Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we are situated. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Generation Victoria (GenV) is the largest birth cohort study ever planned in Australia (n>100,000). Its primary objective is to create very large, whole-of-state birth and parent parallel cohorts for discovery and interventional research that accelerate research to improve the health of children and their families. To achieve this objective, GenV needs to focus on outcomes that are important to families, services and policymakers and supports research that maximises the benefit of a large birth cohort.

GenV Focus Areas

GenV has developed a Focus Area Framework to summarise the six defined areas that broadly impact on children, parents and families (Figure 1). This framework considers 'Inequity and Vulnerability' across all focus areas, and initially concentrates on the 'Mothers and Babies' life stage.¹ The six areas encompass child and parent biology, physical and mental health, and the built and social environments in which children and their families live, work and play.

Figure 1: Focus Areas



Methods

GenV Focus Area Survey

The GenV Focus Area Survey was developed to engage with policymakers, researchers and practitioners, to road test the six proposed Focus Areas and to ensure that GenV was developing a data platform that could meet the needs of a wide range of users.

An online REDCap survey was sent to practitioners, service providers/managers, researchers, policymakers and project managers through GenV's partners and some peak bodies between September and November 2019. Respondents were asked which focus area was most relevant to their work. They were then asked to think about the focus area in relation to the first 1000 days of a children's life and the top three priorities needing solutions within the focus area. Statistical analyses were performed in Stata V.15.0.

Results

A total of 176 participants responded to the survey; they comprised a broad range of users.

Respondents worked across different sectors but predominantly the health sector (77 per cent). The work of most respondents was based in the state of Victoria (n=66), but all states and territories were represented.

- The top two priorities nominated by respondents related to mental health and wellbeing in families, specifically mothers and babies.
- This was followed by priorities related to early childhood development and education, environmental factors impacting on health, prevention of childhood obesity, and access and engagement with services.

Discussion

There were two key findings:

- 1. The diversity of the top five priorities**
- 2. Top priorities were similar across sectors and primary roles.**

The top five priorities reflect some of the complex issues of our time but they also reflect the complex interplay between the individual, their family, their community and society more broadly. The diversity of interests across health and education is well reflected and aligned with [GenV's Lifecourse](#) approach. The fact that these issues were identified across sectors supports the breadth of GenV and highlights the need for multi-disciplinary and multi-sector approaches to help solve these complex issues.

The survey's findings have implications for GenV's data collection and engagement across sectors. One of the purposes of conducting this survey was to find out what priorities were important to our users so GenV can collect data that addresses them. The challenge for GenV will be how we collect data on these five broad priorities, including the top priority of mental health, to meet the needs of our users.

Addressing complex issues requires working together across sectors focused on a common goal. An important role and principle of GenV is to ensure there is high quality data that can facilitate these collaborations and partnerships to help solve the complex issues affecting today's children and adults. These key findings will inform future work with researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

Strengths and limitations

- **Limitation:** By design, the sample was not representative, so the priorities listed by respondents were unlikely to be representative of the general population. Respondents worked predominantly in the health sector (77 per cent).
- **Strength:** The survey successfully engaged a relatively large number of diverse respondents working across sectors, states and primary roles (n=176).

Conclusion

The Focus Area Survey was an important element of GenV's initial engagement with a large number of researchers, practitioners and policymakers across sectors and states. This report finds that families' mental health and wellbeing (particularly that of mothers and babies) was the most important priority identified. The diversity of interests across health and education is well reflected and aligned with GenV's Lifecourse approach.