

ALSWH COVID-19 Survey

Report 11: Survey 11, 16 September 2020

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Background

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) has been collecting comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data from over 57,000 Australian women for 25 years (alswh.org.au). As with the rest of the population, the women in the study have never lived through anything like the current pandemic. To capture this moment in time, a series of fortnightly short online surveys was deployed via email to women in the three ALSWH cohorts born 1989-95, 1973-78, and 1946-51, commencing in late April 2020. The purpose of these surveys was to ascertain women's experiences with COVID-19 testing, their overall wellbeing, and the changes occurring for them during the pandemic.

Method

COVID-19 Survey 11 was deployed on Wednesday 16 September 2020. Email invitations were sent to 28,065 women: 13,705 from the 1989-95 cohort, 8,354 from the 1973-78 cohort, and 6,006 from the 1946-51 cohort. In total, 6,317 (23%) women completed Survey 11: 1,982 (31%) from the 1989-95 cohort, 2,172 (34%) from the 1973-78 cohort, and 2,163 (34%) from the 1946-51 cohort.

This report presents data from the 6,095 women who completed the COVID-19 Survey 11 within the first seven days of survey deployment (16 to 22 September 2020, inclusive).

Findings

COVID-19 symptoms and testing

Overall, 12% (n=720) of women reported experiencing flu-like symptoms in the previous 14 days, 2% (n=140) reported that they thought they might have COVID-19, and 6% (n=365) reported having been tested for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days (see Table 1).

Table 1. Recent flu-like symptoms (within last 14 days) among 6,095 ALSWH women

	1989-95 cohort N=1,942		1973-78 cohort N=2,079		1946-51 cohort N=2,074	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Flu-like symptoms	338	17.4	257	12.4	125	6.0
Thought they might have COVID-19	72	3.7	50	2.4	18	0.9
Tested for COVID-19	174	9.0	130	6.3	61	2.9

Missing observations were included in the denominators.

Missing data for Flu-like symptoms: 1989-95 cohort n=3; 1973-78 cohort n=4; 1946-51 cohort n=9.

Missing data for Thought they might have COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=3; 1973-78 cohort n=6; 1946-51 cohort n=16.

Missing data for Tested for COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=7; 1973-78 cohort n=12; 1946-51 cohort n=19.

Of the 741 women who reported that they had flu-like symptoms or thought they might have COVID-19 within the past 14 days, 29% of women reported that they had been tested for COVID-19.

At Survey 11, 31% of women (n=1,899) reported having ever been tested for COVID-19. Among these women, 66% (n=1,260) of women reported having one COVID-19 test, and 32% (n=615) of women reported more than one COVID-19 test (24 women did not report number of tests).

Sources of COVID-19 health information

In total, 81% of women reported that they obtained their COVID-19 health information from local, national or global news, with two-thirds (65%) of women reporting that they found information from health authority or government sources.

National or state leader/s were reported to be a source of COVID-19 health information by 31% of the women overall. A quarter (25%) of women reported that they obtained COVID-19 health information from their workplace, with 23% of women reporting that they acquired their information from family and friends. Very few (less than 1%) women reported that they did not get any COVID-19 health information from the listed sources (see Table 2).

Women aged 25-31 were most likely to report getting COVID-19 health information from health authority or government sources (82%), compared to women aged 42-47 (67%) and those aged 69-74 (49%; see Table 2). Women aged 69-74 and those aged 42-47 were most likely to report getting their COVID-19 health information from local, national or global news (89% and 77%, respectively), compared to women aged 25-31 (76%).

Table 2. Sources of COVID-19 health information among 6,095 ALSWH women

	1989-95 cohort N=1,942		1973-78 cohort N=2,079		1946-51 cohort N=2,074	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Health authority and government sources	1,583	81.5	1,383	66.5	1,005	48.5
Local, national, global news	1,473	75.9	1,610	77.4	1,851	89.3
Workplace	736	37.9	717	34.5	60	2.9
Family and friends	663	34.1	464	22.3	305	14.7
National or state leader/s	631	32.5	589	28.3	647	31.2
The World Health Organization	561	28.9	288	13.9	179	8.6
A doctor or healthcare professional	409	21.1	259	12.5	233	11.2
Scientific literature	373	19.2	186	9.0	126	6.1
Other people/groups via social media/internet	310	16.0	258	12.4	138	6.7
Community/religious/cultural leader/s	17	0.9	18	0.9	41	2.0
None of the above	13	0.7	11	0.5	3	0.1

Missing observations were included in the denominators.

Missing data for sources of COVID-19 health information: 1989-95 cohort n=1; 1973-78 cohort n=2; 1946-51 cohort n=8.

Number of sources of COVID-19 health information

Three quarters (75%) of the women overall reported that they acquired their COVID-19 health information from more than one source, with 24% reporting only one source of information (38 participants did not report a source of COVID-19 health information). Younger women were more likely than older women to report that they acquired COVID-19 health information from more than one source (see Figure 1).

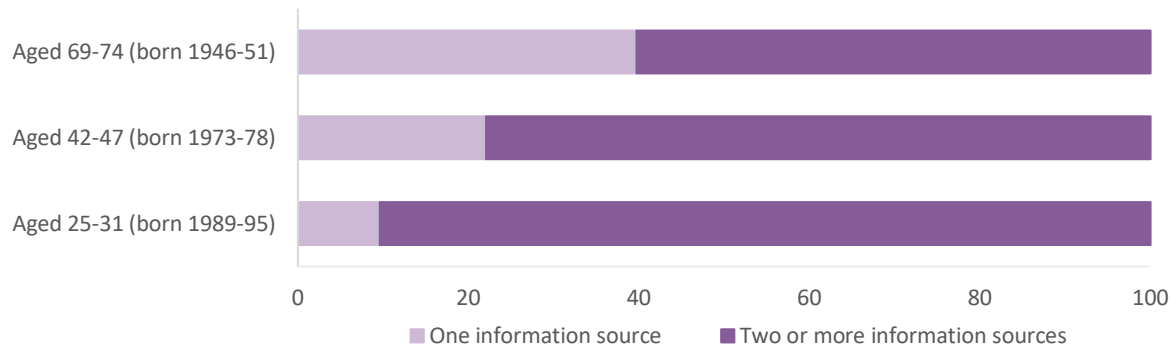


Figure 1. Number of sources of COVID-19 health information among women aged 25-31 (n=1,928) women aged 42-47 (n=2,066) and women aged 69-74 (n=2,063).

Sole sources of COVID-19 health information

Out of the 1,460 women who reported accessing only one source of COVID-19 health information, 68% received their COVID-19 health information only from news sources, with 19% relying on health authority and government sources (see Figure 2).

Women aged 25-31 were most likely to report health authority and government sources as their only source of COVID-19 health information (41%), whereas women aged 42-47 and those aged 69-74 were most likely to report utilising local, national or global news as their only source for COVID-19 health information (54% and 84%, respectively).

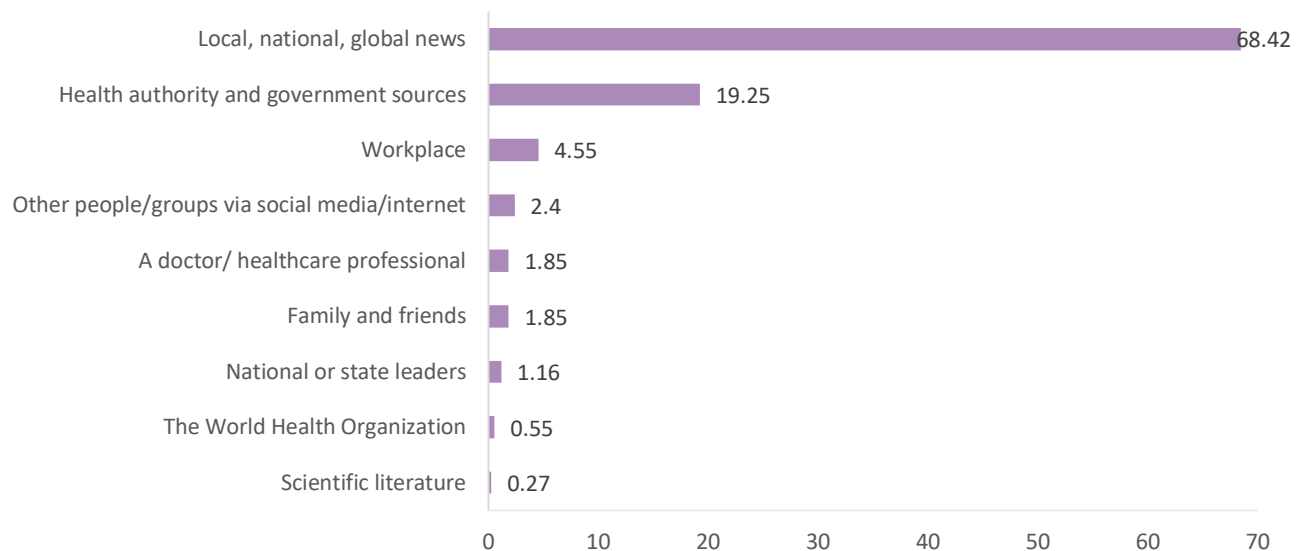


Figure 2. Sources of COVID-19 health information among 1,460 ALSWH women who reported accessing only one source for COVID-19 health information.

Acceptability of State Governments' COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations

For the 5,936 women living in Australia at the time they completed Survey 11 (16 to 29 September 2020), the majority (87%) overall reported that they believed their State Governments' restrictions and recommendations for the COVID-19 crisis at the time were at least somewhat acceptable. Conversely, 9% of these women reported that the restrictions and recommendations in their State or Territory were at least somewhat unacceptable. The degree of acceptance varied by State and Territory (see Figure 3).

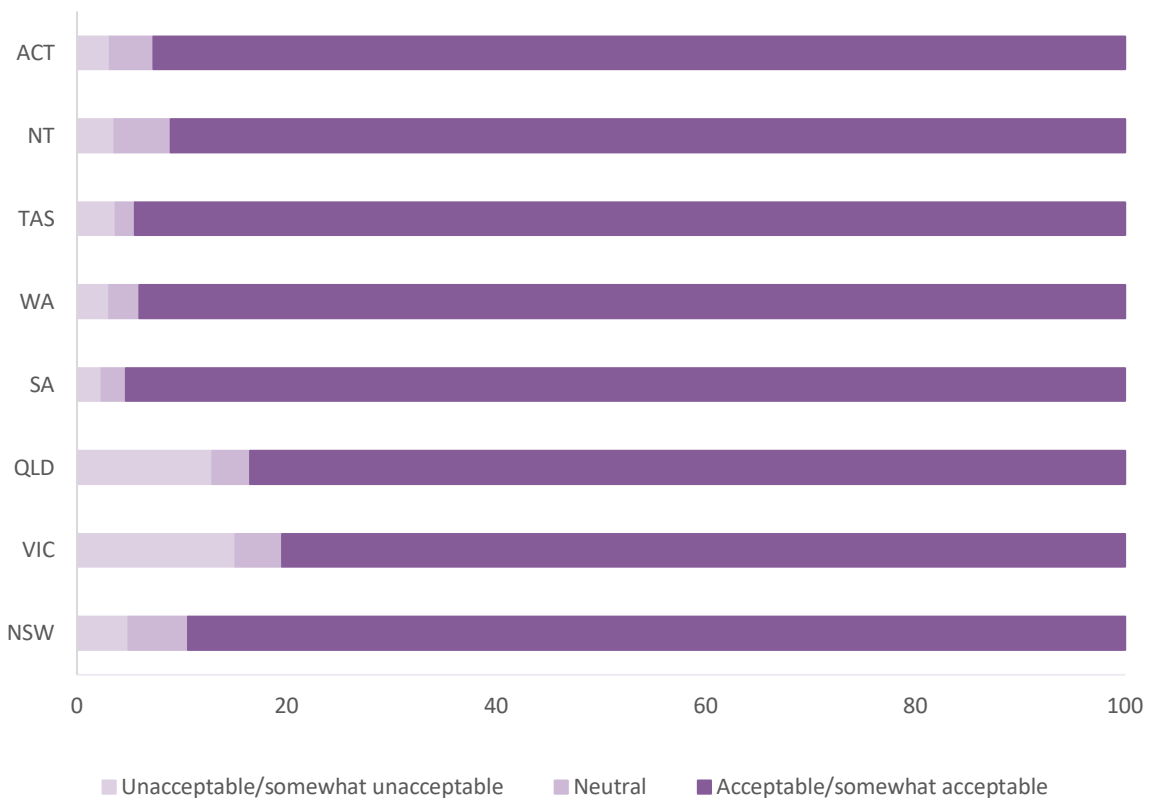


Figure 3. Acceptability of COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations between States and Territories in mid-late September 2020 among 5,531 ALSWH women.

In mid-late September, at the time of Survey 11, the Victorian Government's Stage 4 lockdown restrictions were easing. Most women in Victoria (80%) reported that they found the restrictions and recommendations at least somewhat acceptable, whereas 15% reported that they did not think they were acceptable (4% reported a neutral view).

At the time of Survey 11, Queensland's border was closed to residents of New South Wales and Victoria, with some strict exceptions. Of the women from Queensland who responded to Survey 11, 13% reported they found their State Government's COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations at least somewhat unacceptable, with 83% reporting restrictions to be at least somewhat acceptable.

On the date Survey 11 was deployed, the New South Wales was declared to be "COVID-19 hotspot free". While travel within New South Wales was discouraged at the time, residents could visit cafes, restaurants, bars and entertainment venues, with gathering limits and



physical distancing regulations still in place. Most (89%) of women in New South Wales reported that they found their State's COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations at least somewhat acceptable during mid-late September 2020, with 5% reporting the restrictions and recommendations were at least somewhat unacceptable.

Over 90% of women from all other States and Territories reported that their Governments' COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations in mid-late September 2020 were at least somewhat acceptable. Restrictions in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia had largely eased at the time of Survey 11. Travel within these States and Territories was mostly unrestricted, and travellers between some of these States and Territories were required to undertake a period of quarantine. However, the Western Australian border remained strictly closed to residents of all other States and Territories, with few exceptions. Most (94%) of the women from Western Australia reported that they found their State's COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations at least somewhat acceptable.

Opinion on State Governments' COVID-19 restrictions

Overall, most of the 5,936 women (81%) living in Australia reported that they believed their State Governments' COVID-19 restrictions in mid-late September 2020 were reasonable, while 15% reported they were too restrictive, and 4% reported that they were not restrictive enough. Women in Victoria and Queensland were the most likely to report that they thought their State Governments' restrictions in mid-late September 2020 were too restrictive (24% and 21%, respectively; see Figure 4). One in ten women in Tasmania reported that they also believed their State Government's restrictions in mid-late September 2020 were too restrictive.

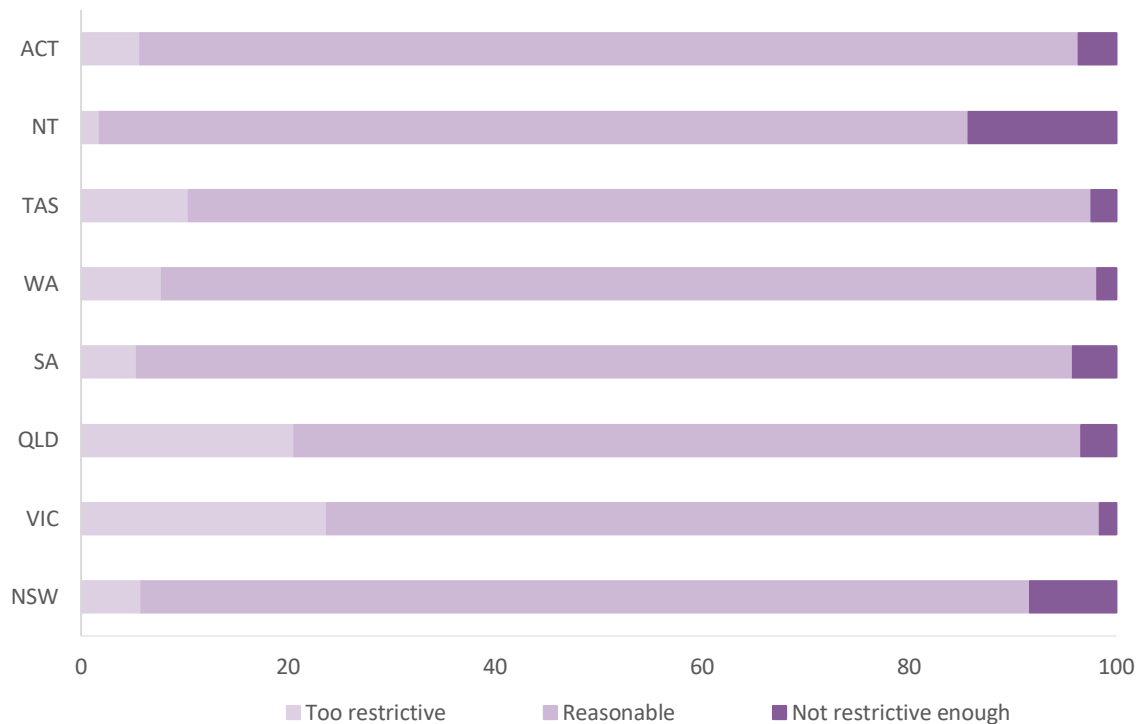


Figure 4. Opinion of COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations between States and Territories in mid-late September 2020 among 5,526 ALSWH women.

In contrast, women from the Northern Territory were the most likely to report that they thought the COVID-19 restrictions in their Territory during mid-late September 2020 were not restrictive enough (14%). Women living in Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory were the most likely to report that they thought their Governments' COVID-19 restrictions in mid-late September were reasonable (all 90%), followed by women living in New South Wales where 86% of them reported similarly.

Compliance with COVID-19 recommendations in the previous 14 days

Frequency of washing hands with soap and water in the previous 14 days

At the time of Survey 11 (i.e. mid-late September), most women (92%) reported that they washed their hands with soap and water often during the previous fortnight, with an additional 7% reporting that they sometimes washed their hands with soap and water. Women aged 25-31 were the least likely to report that they often washed their hands with soap and water in the previous 14 days (88%; see Figure 5).

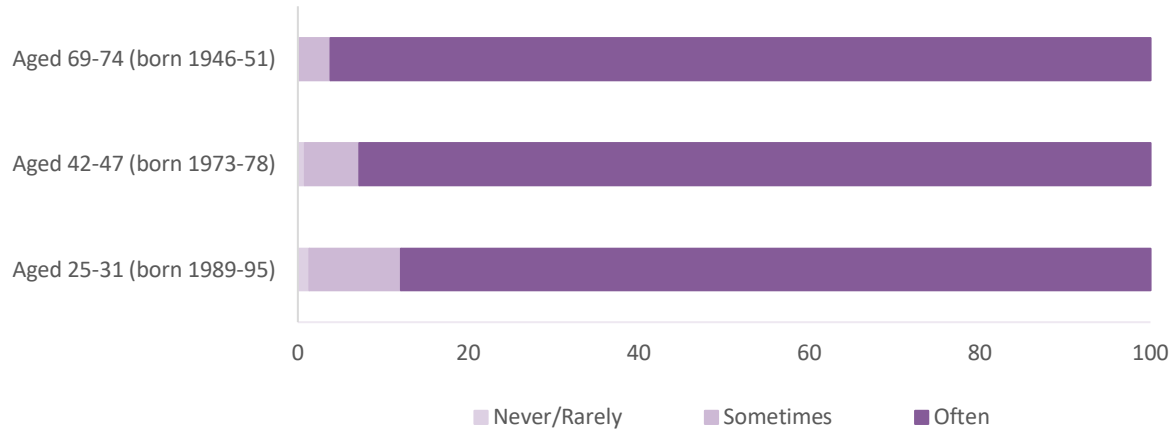


Figure 5. Previous 14-day frequency of washing hands with soap and water among women aged 25-31 (n=1,940) women aged 42-47 (n=2,075) and women aged 69-74 (n=2,069).

Frequency of using hand sanitizer in the previous 14 days

About 70% of women reported at Survey 11 (i.e. mid-late September) that they often used hand sanitizer in the previous 14 days, and 22% reported that they sometimes used hand sanitizer in that same timeframe. Women aged 69-74 and those aged 42-47 were more likely to report that they often used hand sanitiser (73% and 71%, respectively), compared to younger women (66%; see Figure 6).

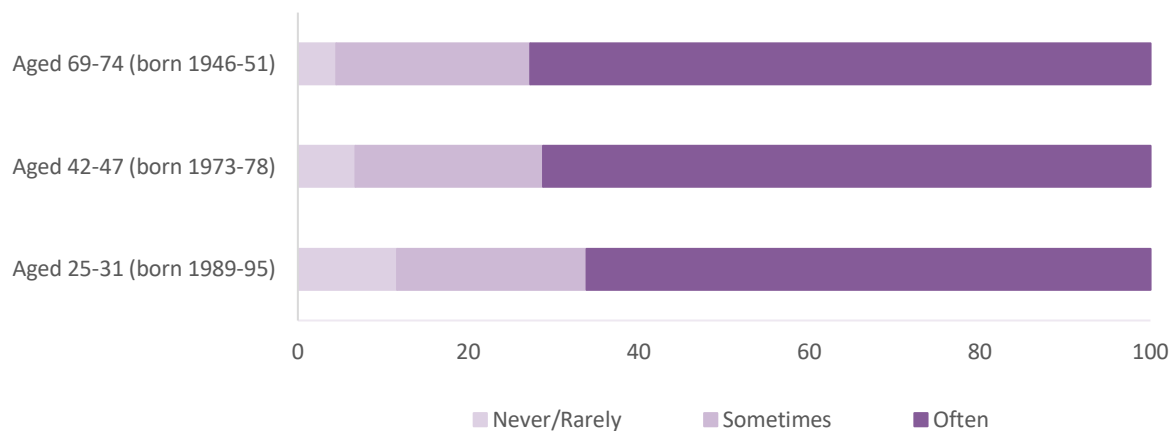


Figure 6. Previous 14-day frequency of hand sanitiser use among women aged 25-31 (n=1,940) women aged 42-47 (n=2,070) and women aged 69-74 (n=2,059).

Frequency of social distancing in the previous 14 days

In relation to the social distancing recommendation to stay 1.5 metres away from other people, 68% of women reported at Survey 11 (i.e. mid-late September) that they often complied with social distancing guidelines in the previous 14 days, with 27% reporting that they sometimes abided by social distancing guidelines during the previous fortnight. Older women were more likely to report complying with social distancing guidelines (80%), compared to women aged 42-47 (70%) and those aged 25-31 (54%; see Figure 7).

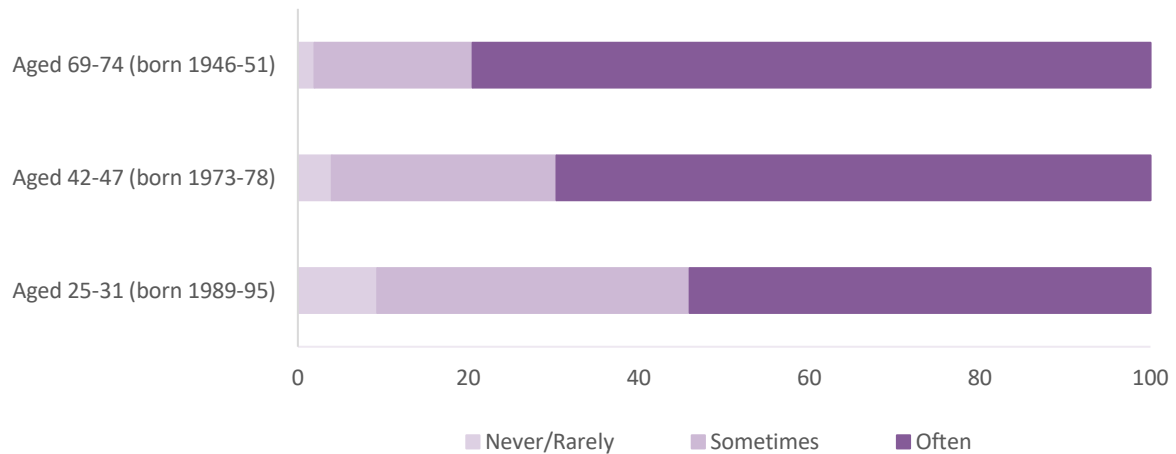


Figure 7. Previous 14-day frequency of maintaining 1.5 metre distance from other people among women aged 25-31 (n=1,931) women aged 42-47 (n=2,072) and women aged 69-74 (n=2,049).

Acknowledgements

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