



ALSWH COVID-19 Survey

Report 6: Survey 6, 8 July 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 6 was deployed on Wednesday 8 July 2020. Email invitations were sent to 28,848 women: 14,001 from the 1989-95 cohort, 8,536 from the 1973-78 cohort, and 6,311 from the 1946-51 cohort. By 21 July 2020, 7003 (24%) women had completed survey 6: 2034 (29%) from the 1989-95 cohort, 2472 (35%) from the 1973-78 cohort, and 2497 (36%) from the 1946-51 cohort.

This report presents data from the 6,755 women who completed the COVID-19 Survey 6 within the first seven days of survey deployment (8 to 14 July inclusive).

Findings

COVID-19 symptoms and testing

Overall, 18% (1204) of women reported experiencing flu-like symptoms in the previous 14 days, 4% (292) reported that they thought they might have COVID-19, and 8% (513) reported having been tested for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days (see Table 1).

Table 1. Recent flu symptoms (within last 14 days) among 6755 ALSWH women

	1989-95 cohort N=1974		1973-78 cohort N=2370		1946-51 cohort N=2411	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Flu-like symptoms	560	28.4	462	19.5	182	7.6
Thought they might have COVID-19	155	7.9	107	4.5	30	1.2
Tested for COVID-19	243	12.3	185	7.8	85	3.5

Missing observations were included in the denominators.

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

Missing data for Thought they might have COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=1; 1973-78 cohort n=6; 1946-51 cohort n=11.

Missing data for Tested for COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=6; 1973-78 cohort n=9; 1946-51 cohort n=15.

At Survey 6, 17% of women reported having ever been tested for COVID-19 (n=1123). Among these women, 77% (860) of women reported one COVID-19 test, and 22% (251) of women reported more than one COVID-19 test (7 women did not report number of tests).

Alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 crisis

Change in alcohol consumption

Overall, one in ten women (10%) reported drinking less, while around one in seven women (15%) reported drinking more alcohol since the COVID-19 crisis began. A quarter of women (25%) reported that they were still a non-drinker, and half of women (50%) reported no change in their alcohol consumption since the COVID-19 crisis began.

Younger women were more likely than older women to report a change in alcohol consumption since the beginning of the COVID-19 (see Figure 1). Over a third of women aged 25-31 reported a change in their alcohol consumption, with 14% reporting that they are drinking less and 21% reporting that they are drinking more during the COVID-19 crisis. Around a quarter of women aged 42-47 reported changes in their drinking habits during COVID-19, with 7% reporting that they are drinking less and 20% reporting that they are drinking more. Women aged 69-74 reported the lowest change in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 crisis, with 10% reporting that they were drinking less and 4% reporting that they are drinking more.

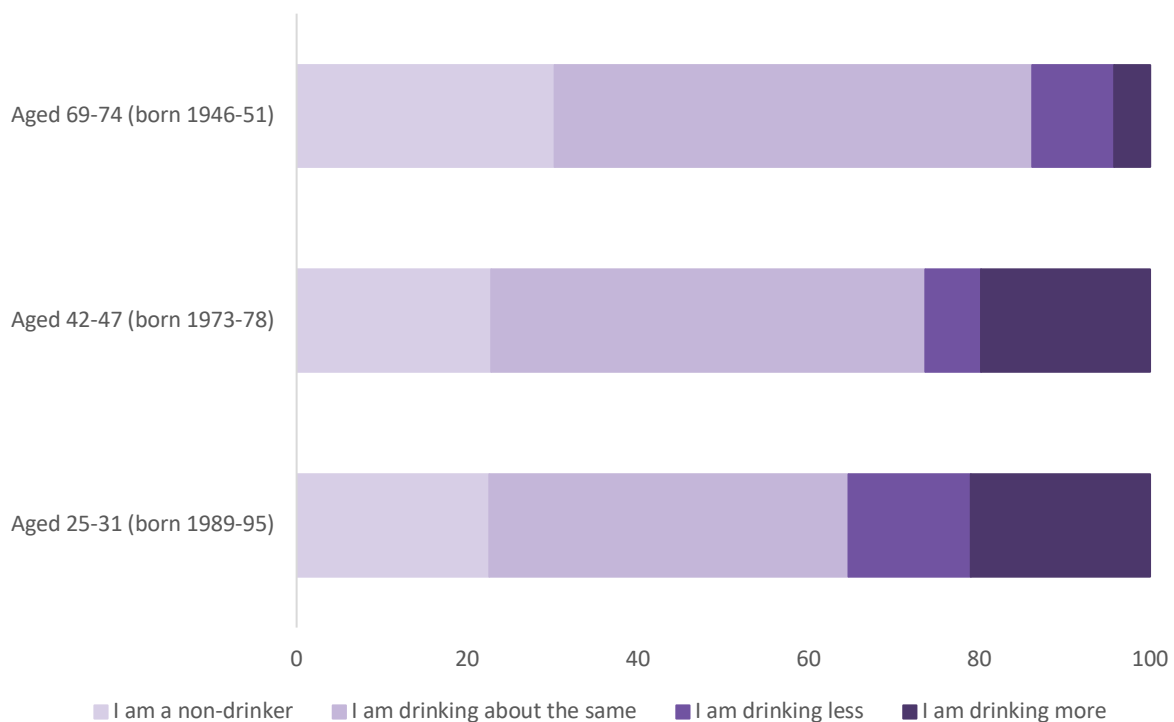


Figure 1. Change in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 crisis among women aged 25-31 (n=1973), 42-47 (n=2367) and 69-74 (n=2401).

Frequency of alcohol consumption

Older women were more likely than younger women to report consuming alcohol every day, with 11% of women aged 69-74 reporting drinking every day, compared to 5% of women aged 42-47 and 2% of women aged 25-31 (see Figure 2). Around a quarter of women from each age group (24% of women aged 25-31, 24% aged 42-47, and 31% aged 69-74) reported that they had not been drinking alcohol during the COVID-19 crisis.

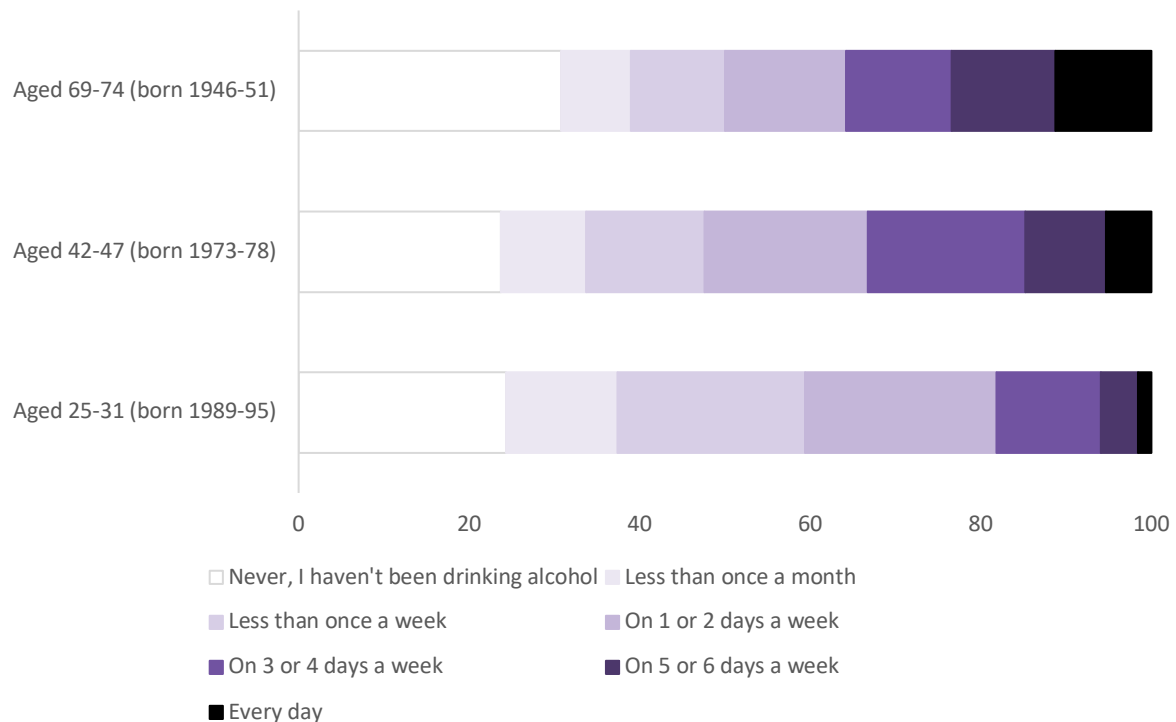


Figure 2. Frequency of alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 crisis among women aged 25-31 (n=1974), 42-47 (n=2370) and 69-74 (n=2411).

Quantity of alcohol consumption

Women aged 69-74 reported consuming lower quantities of alcohol on a day when they did drink, compared to women aged 42-47 and 25-31 (see Figure 3). Around a quarter of women aged 25-31 and 42-47 reported consuming three or more standard drinks on a day when they consumed alcohol (24% and 23%, respectively), compared to one in ten women aged 69-74 (10%).

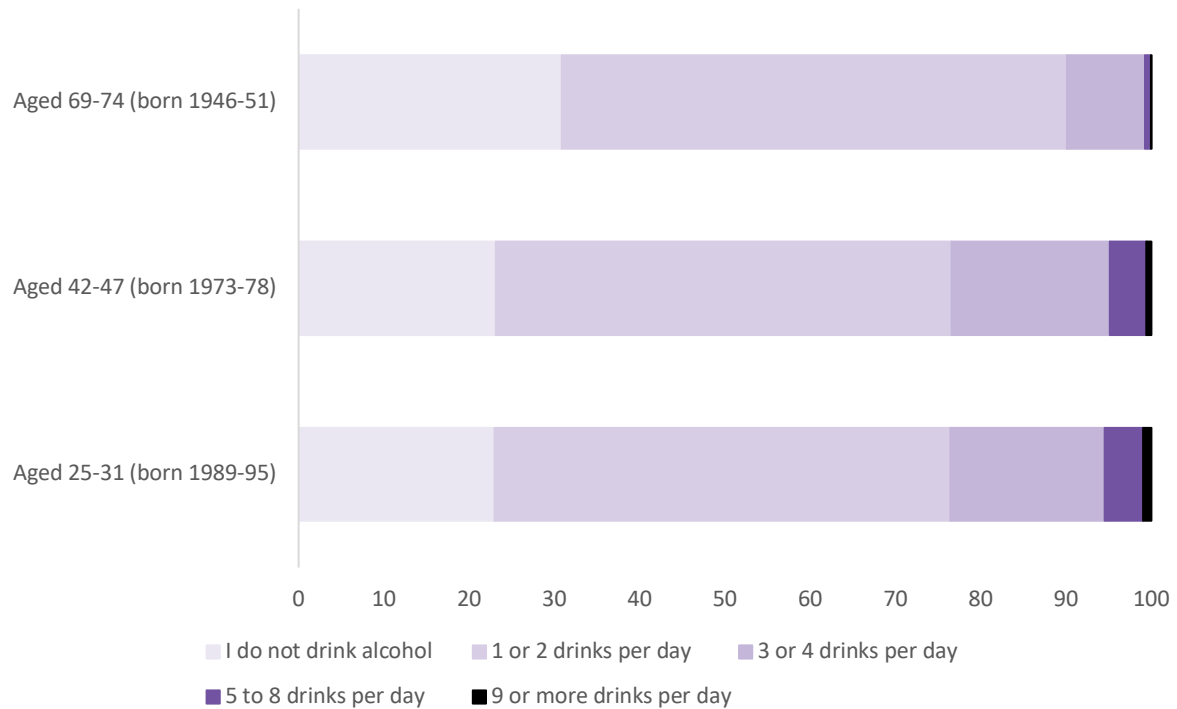


Figure 3. Reported quantity of alcohol consumed on a drinking day during the COVID-19 crisis among women aged 25-31 (n=1911), 42-47 (n=2332) and 69-74 (n=2355).

Heavy episodic drinking

Heavy episodic drinking (consuming five standard drinks or more on a single occasion) during the COVID-19 crisis was more likely to be reported by younger women than older women, with almost half (44%) of women aged 25-31 and one third (33%) of women aged 42-47 reporting heavy episodic drinking during the COVID-19 crisis, compared to less than one in ten (8%) women aged 69-74 (Figure 4). Younger women were also more likely to report a higher frequency of heavy episodic drinking than older women, with about 7% of women aged 25-31 and 42-47 reporting heavy episodic drinking on ten or more occasions during the COVID-19 crisis, compared to less than 1% of women aged 69-74.

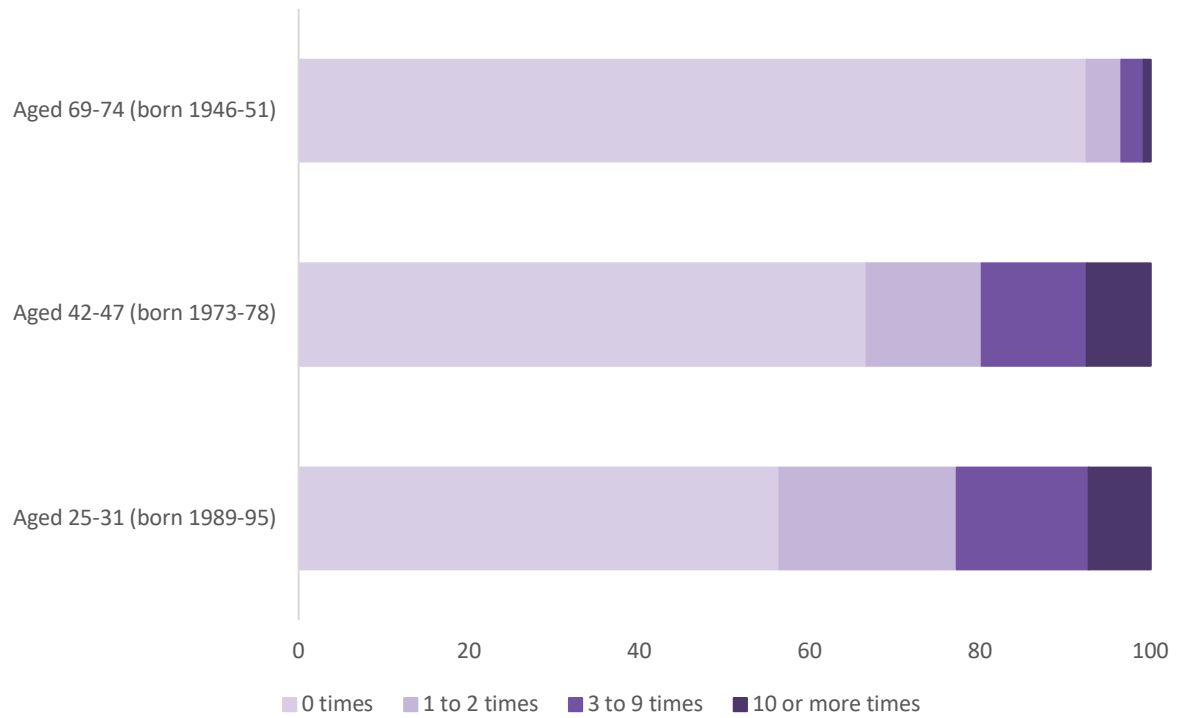


Figure 4. Frequency of heavy episodic drinking (consuming five or more standard drinks on a single occasion) during the COVID-19 crisis among women aged 25-31 (n=1920), 42-47 (n=2276) and 69-74 (n=2288).

Sleep during the COVID-19 crisis

Difficulty sleeping was commonly reported by all age groups, with nine in ten (89%) women reporting sleeping difficulties since the COVID-19 crisis began (see Figure 5). Almost half of women (43%) reported having difficulty sleeping sometimes, and more than one in ten women (13%) reported having difficulty sleeping often since the COVID-19 crisis began.

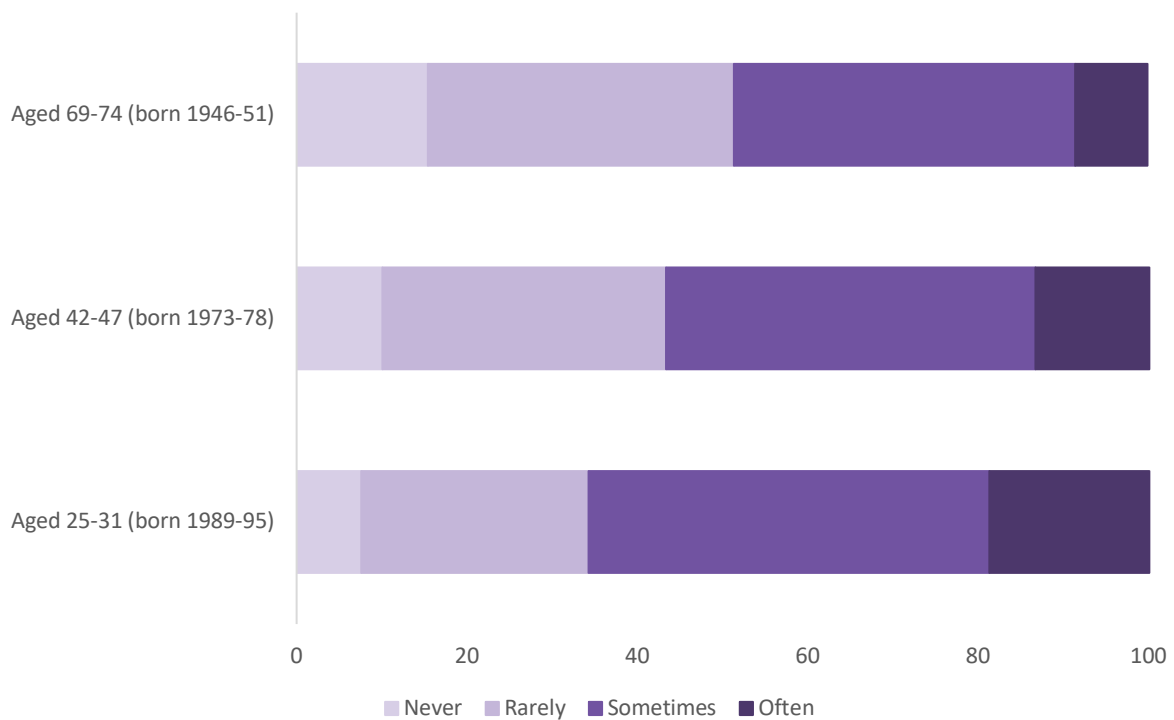


Figure 5. Difficulty sleeping since the COVID-19 crisis began among women aged 25-31 (n=1973), 42-47 (n=2358) and 69-74 (n=2399).

Younger women were more likely to report multiple sleeping problems than older women, with almost a quarter (22%) of women aged 25-31 reporting four or more sleeping problems, compared with just one in ten (12%) women aged 42-47, and one in twenty (3%) women aged 69-74.

Women aged 25-31 most commonly reported taking a long time to get to sleep (56%) and sleeping badly at night (55%; see Table 2). Women aged 42-47 most commonly reported waking up in the early hours of the morning (49%) and sleeping badly at night (39%). Similarly, women aged 69-74 most commonly reported waking up in the early hours of the morning (47%) and taking a long time to get to sleep (25%).

Table 2. Sleeping problems since the COVID-19 crisis began, among women aged 25-31 (n=1974), 42-47 (n=2370) and 69-74 (n=2411).

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, have you had any of these sleeping problems?	Women aged 25-31	Women aged 42-47	Women aged 69-74
	(born 1989-95) %	(born 1973-78) %	(born 1946-51) %
Waking up in the early hours of the morning	45.6	48.8	46.6
Lying awake for most of the night	22.0	14.3	7.2
Taking a long time to get to sleep	55.6	32.4	25.1
Worry keeping you awake at night	36.0	23.2	7.3
Sleeping badly at night	54.5	39.1	16.3

Acknowledgements

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