

# ALSWH COVID-19 Survey

## Report 9: Survey 9, 19 August 2020

Authors: Deborah Loxton, Amy Anderson, Dominic Cavenagh, Natalie Townsend, Gita Mishra, Leigh Tooth, Julie Byles

Team: Anna Graves, Clare Thomson, Katherine Tuckerman, Ryan Tuckerman, Peta Forder

For more information, please contact:

Professor Deborah Loxton ([Deborah.Loxton@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Deborah.Loxton@newcastle.edu.au))

### 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](http://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 9 was deployed on Wednesday 19 August 2020. Email invitations were sent to 28,335 women: 13,824 from the 1989-95 cohort, 8,408 from the 1973-78 cohort, and 6,103 from the 1946-51 cohort. In total, 7,491 (26%) women completed Survey 9: 2,057 (28%) from the 1989-95 cohort, 2,575 (34%) from the 1973-78 cohort, and 2,859 (38%) from the 1946-51 cohort.

This report presents data from the 7,251 women who completed the COVID-19 Survey 9 within the first seven days of survey deployment (19 to 25 August 2020 inclusive).

## Findings

### COVID-19 symptoms and testing

Overall, 14% (n=1,006) of women reported experiencing flu-like symptoms in the previous 14 days, 4% (n=252) reported that they thought they might have COVID-19, and 7% (n=519) 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 7,251 ALSWH women

	1989-95 cohort N=2,012		1973-78 cohort N=2,481		1946-51 cohort N=2,758	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Flu-like symptoms</b>	470	23.4	369	14.9	167	6.1
<b>Thought they might have COVID-19</b>	141	7	69	2.8	42	1.5
<b>Tested for COVID-19</b>	250	12.4	176	7.1	93	3.4

Missing observations were included in the denominators.

Missing data for Flu-like symptoms: 1989-95 cohort n=3; 1973-78 cohort n=5; 1946-51 cohort n=17.

Missing data for Thought they might have COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=2; 1973-78 cohort n=6; 1946-51 cohort n=15.

Missing data for Tested for COVID-19: 1989-95 cohort n=1; 1973-78 cohort n=9; 1946-51 cohort n=18

Of the 1,050 women who reported that they had flu-like symptoms or thought they might have COVID-19 within the past 14 days, 30% of women reported that they had been tested for COVID-19.

At Survey 9, 26% of women reported having ever been tested for COVID-19 (n=1,857). Among these women, 70% (n=1,290) of women reported one COVID-19 test, and 30% (n=548) of women reported more than one COVID-19 test (19 women did not report number of tests).

## Physical activity during the COVID-19 crisis

### Perceived change in level of physical activity

Overall, around half (51%) of the women thought that they did about the same level of physical activity since the COVID-19 crisis began. Just over one-third (35%) reported doing less physical activity, with 14% of women reporting that they became more physically active since the COVID-19 crisis began.

Younger women were more likely to report a change in physical activity level than older women, with almost two thirds (64%) of women aged 25-31, half (50%) of women aged 42-47 and over a third (37%) of women aged 69-74 reporting some change in physical activity level since the COVID-19 crisis began (see Figure 1).

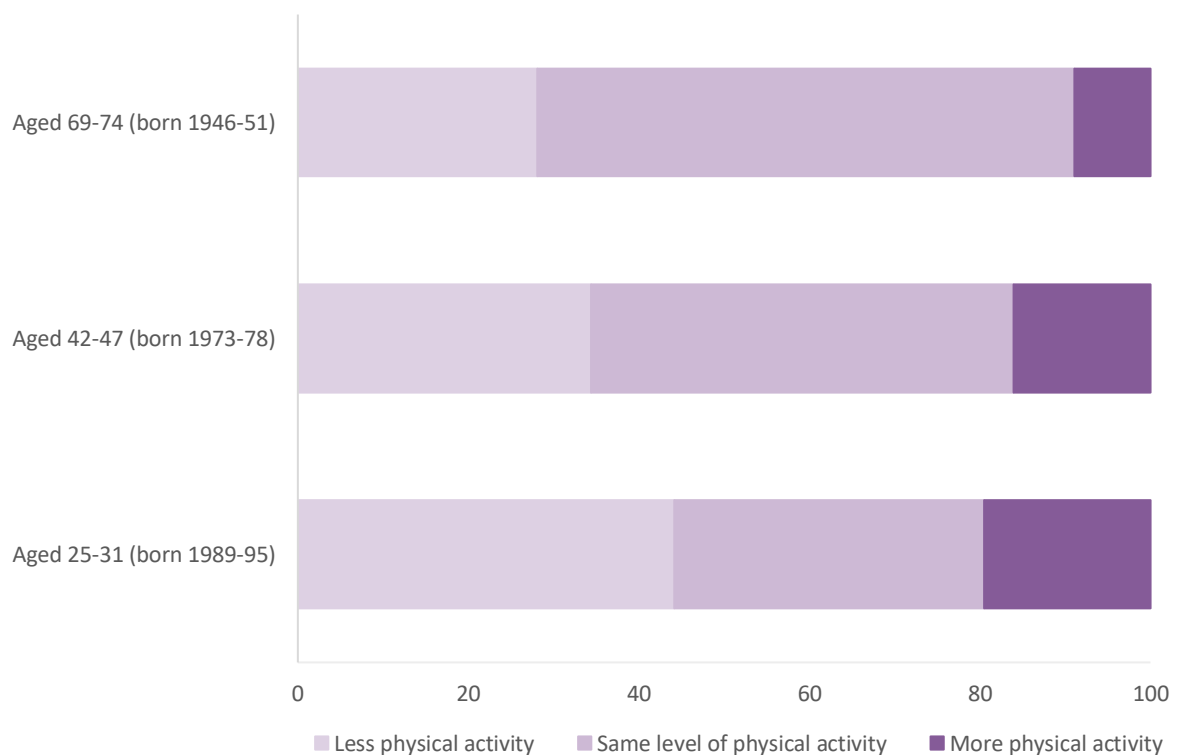


Figure 1. Perceived change in level of physical activity since the COVID-19 crisis began among women aged 25-31 (n=2,008), 42-47 (n=2,471) and 69-74 (n=2,743).

## Perceived change in intensity of physical activity

Overall, more than half (58%) of women thought that the intensity of their physical activity remained unchanged since the crisis began. Almost a third (31%) of women perceived a decrease in intensity of their physical activity since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and one in ten (10%) women thought that they were doing more vigorous physical activity.

Younger women were more likely than older women to report a change in the intensity of their physical activity since the COVID-19 crisis began. Women aged 25-31 were the most likely to report a change in intensity of physical activity (54%) after the COVID-19 crisis began, compared to women aged 42-47 (41%) and women aged 69-74 (33%; see Figure 2).

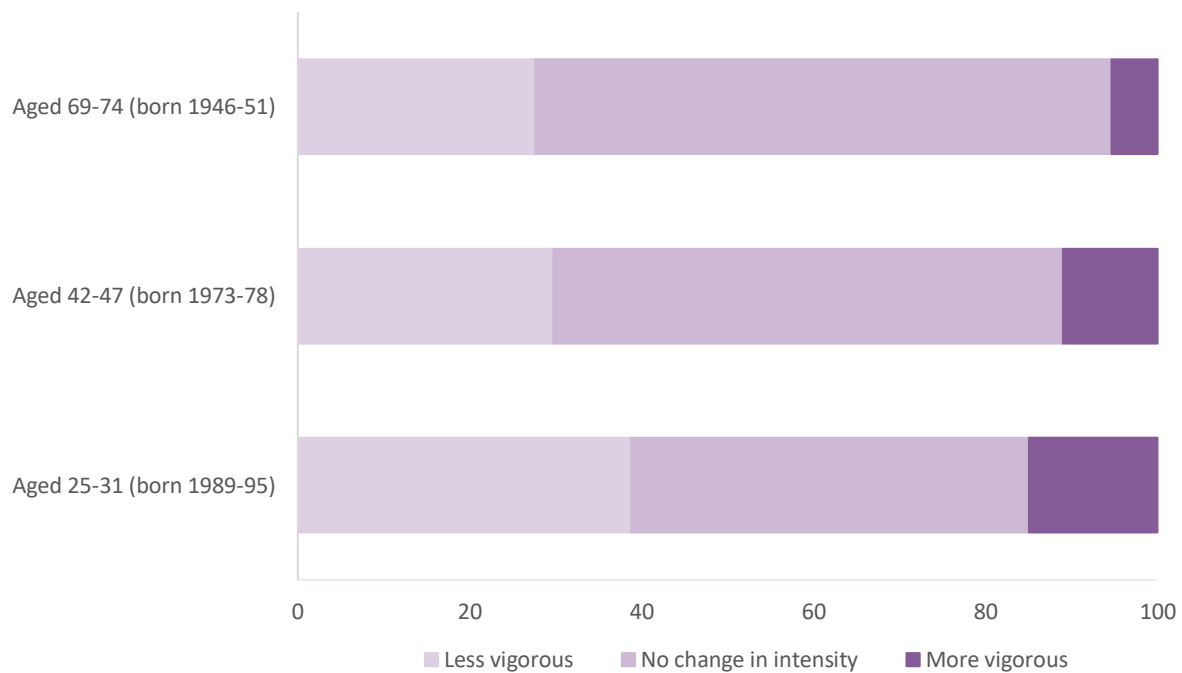


Figure 2. Perceived change in intensity of physical activity since the COVID-19 crisis began among women aged 25-31 (n=2,011), 42-47 (n=2,468) and 69-74 (n=2,742).

## Perceived change in amount of time spent being physically active

Overall, almost half (47%) of women reported spending the same amount of time being physically active after the COVID-19 crisis began. More than a third (37%) of women thought they spent less time being physically active since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, whereas 16% of women perceived that they had increased the time they spent being physically active.

Younger women were more likely than older women to report a change in the time they spent being physically active since the COVID-19 crisis began. Just over two thirds (67%) of women aged 25-31, 55% of women aged 42-47, and 41% of women aged 69-74 reported a change in the amount of time they were spending being physically active since the COVID-19 crisis began (see Figure3).

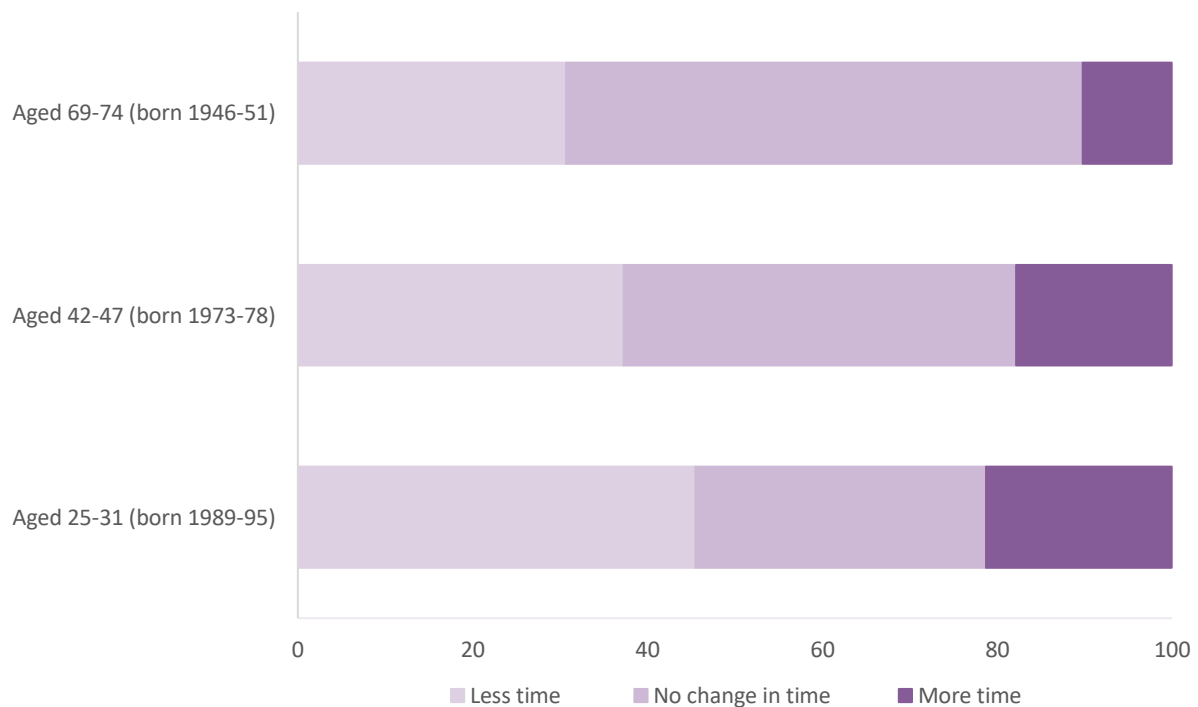


Figure 3. Perceived change in time spent being physically active since the COVID-19 crisis began among women aged 25-31 (n=2,011), 42-47 (n=2,473) and 69-74 (n=2,748).

## Acknowledgements

The research on which this report is based was conducted as part of ALSWH at the University of Newcastle and the University of Queensland. We are grateful to the Australian Government Department of Health for funding ALSWH, and to the women who provided the survey data. We thank the University of Newcastle and the Hunter Medical Research Institute for providing funding for the COVID-19 surveys.