

COVID-19 lockdowns lead Aussie and UK women to drink more

June 9 2021



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Feelings of anxiety, pessimism and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic led middle-aged women in both Australia and the UK to stock

up on alcohol, which was associated with drinking more, a new Flinders University-led study has found.

The research, led by Dr. Emma Miller in Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health, also found women in the UK were more likely to drink at risky levels than their Australian counterparts during lockdown, and were more likely to have stockpiled [alcohol](#).

Despite these differences, the research found the emotional responses to COVID-19 that predicted stockpiling behavior were strikingly similar between countries.

"What our findings point to is an urgent need to address the [mental health issues](#) associated with the pandemic, to avoid an onslaught of alcohol-related [health](#) issues later down the track," says Dr. Miller.

"As we have seen with Victoria these past few weeks, the pandemic and its associated lockdowns haven't gone away just yet and the ongoing mental health impacts will be felt for many years to come."

The study, published in *Frontiers in Public Health*, surveyed over 2400 women in the UK and Australia aged 45 to 64 years, asking them about their drinking habits as well as their alcohol stockpiling behavior. The survey was delivered twice: first in May 2020 in the early days of restrictions and again in July 2020, by which point some restrictions were beginning to ease.

"We found those that were struggling to get through the COVID-19 lockdowns in both Australia and the UK increased their drinking and those same [negative feelings](#) led people to buy more alcohol as well," says Dr. Miller.

"Previous research of ours has also shown women shift their perception

from long term uncertainties, such as the dangers of alcohol, to refocus on the more pressing need to 'get through' the [pandemic](#)—deciding that what they perceive as short term benefits, outweigh the long-term health risks.

"While lockdowns have an important role to play in curbing the spread of COVID-19, we need to be mindful of their wider impact to best prepare our health system for the future ahead."

More information: Emma R. Miller et al. COVID-19, and alcohol consumption and stockpiling practices in midlife women: repeat surveys during lockdown in Australia and the United Kingdom. *Frontiers in Public Health*. (2021) [DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.642950](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.642950)

Provided by Flinders University

Citation: COVID-19 lockdowns lead Aussie and UK women to drink more (2021, June 9)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-covid-lockdowns-aussie-uk-women.html>

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