



# The ELSA Covid-19 Substudy

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*English  
Longitudinal  
Study of Ageing*

ELSA

# ELSA Covid-19 Study

- To understand effect of Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown and social distancing on the lives of older adults
- Two waves of mixed mode (web + telephone) data collection
- c.30 minute questionnaire. All ELSA respondents invited to participate
- Funded by ESRC via UKRI Covid-19 Rapid Response Call

# Context

- ELSA Wave 9 fieldwork: June 2018-2019
- National Lockdown: End March 2020 – May 2020
- ELSA Covid-19 wave 1: June/July 2020
- ELSA Covid-19 wave 2: November 2020
- ELSA Wave 10 fieldwork (planned): April 2021

# Wave 1 fieldwork

- Invitation letter sent by post
  - Web-survey link, or offer to book a telephone interview
- Web-survey open from 3<sup>rd</sup> June
- Postal, email reminders
- Telephone interviews carried out late June-end July
  
- 9,524 invited; 7,040 participated (74%)
- 5,773 web (82%), 1,267 telephone (18%)

# Wave 1 content

- Pre-pandemic circumstances
- Covid-19 illness
- Mental health
- Labour market
- Physical health
- Financial situation
- Social support and contact

# ELSA Covid-19 study

- Consultation with other UK Studies
  - National Core Longitudinal Studies Collaborative
  - Also discussions with CLS Cohorts and USoc
- But prioritizing longitudinal comparability to other ELSA waves where possible given time constraints
- **First wave available for analysis**
  - **Download from UK Data Service, as with other ELSA data**
  - Short briefing papers to government departments and policy makers
- Wave 2 questionnaire finalized for implementation November 2020

# Some early descriptive papers out now

<https://www.elsa-project.ac.uk/covid-19>

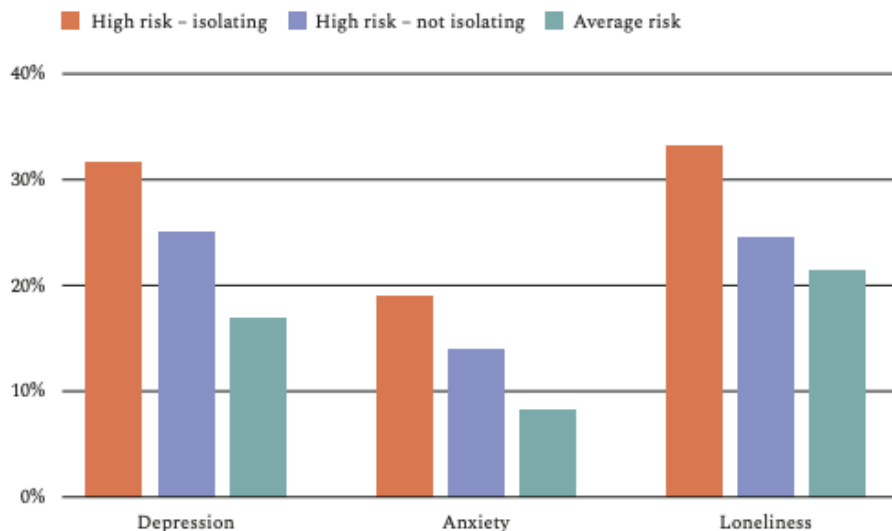
- Financial consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for older people
- The experience of older people instructed to shield or self-isolate during the Covid-19 pandemic
- The experience of older people with multimorbidity during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Changes in older people's experiences of providing care and of volunteering during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Adapting fieldwork during the Covid-19 outbreak: a methodological overview of the ELSA Covid-19 study

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/bn>

- The coronavirus pandemic and older workers

Full/deeper analyses underway

**Figure 1. Mental health, shielding and self-isolation**



Source: ELSA COVID-19 Substudy (June/July 2020). Weighted data

17% of core sample (n=979) had been told by GP/NHS they were in vulnerable high risk group

**Table 2. Experiences of COVID-19**

	High risk - isolating	High risk - not isolating	Average risk group	P <sup>1</sup>
One or more core symptoms	9.1%	11.1%	9.1%	n.s.
Hospitalisation for COVID-19	15.0%	13.0%	3.0%	<0.001
Hospitalisation of household member	2.0%	0.2%	3.0%	n.s.
Positive test for COVID-19 (household)	8.0%	10.0%	10.0%	n.s.
Death of family member or friend	10.0%	14.2%	6.5%	<0.001
Worried about not having enough food <sup>2</sup>	12.2%	7.1%	5.6%	<0.001
Worried about having other essentials <sup>2</sup>	16.1%	10.7%	9.5%	<0.001

<sup>1</sup> Significance of differences between groups after adjustment for age, sex, number of people in the household, and marital/partnership status

<sup>2</sup> Additionally adjusted for household wealth in wave 9 (2018/19)

Source: ELSA COVID-19 Substudy (June/July 2020). Weighted data



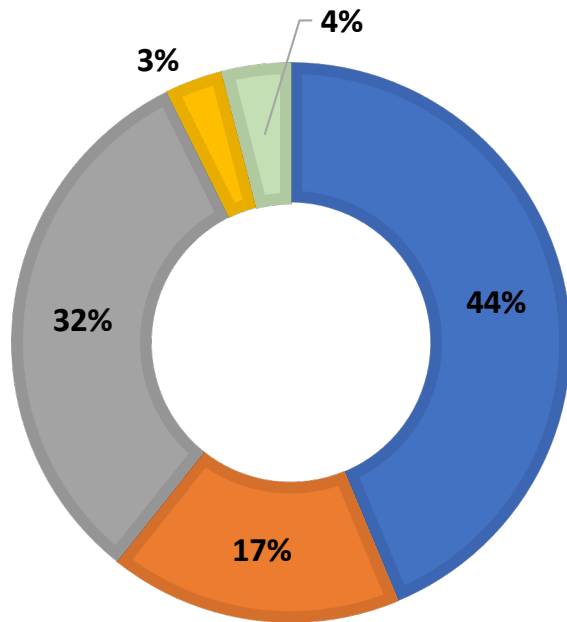
# But 'older adults' also affected by labour market issues

- Around 40% of ELSA sample, and 70% of those 54-65 were in work before the pandemic
- As with other working age groups, labour market consequences of pandemic worse for lower income/wealth and health groups
  - e.g. shutdown sectors, self-employed, working from home etc.
- Older workers will have less time to recover pre-retirement
- Complex and nuanced effects on future job security, retirement plans
  - 13% of older workers had already changed retirement plans by June, some later some earlier

# Employment status in June 2020, if in paid work pre-pandemic, by pre-pandemic earnings

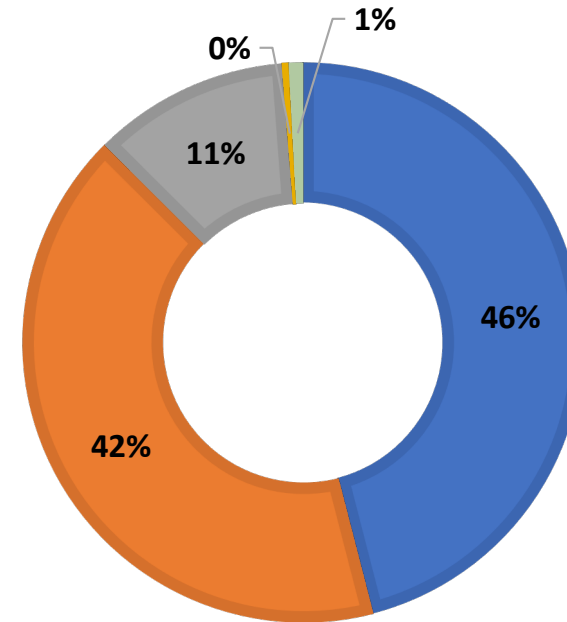
## LOWEST EARNINGS QUINTILE

- Working
- Working from home
- On leave
- Retired
- Other

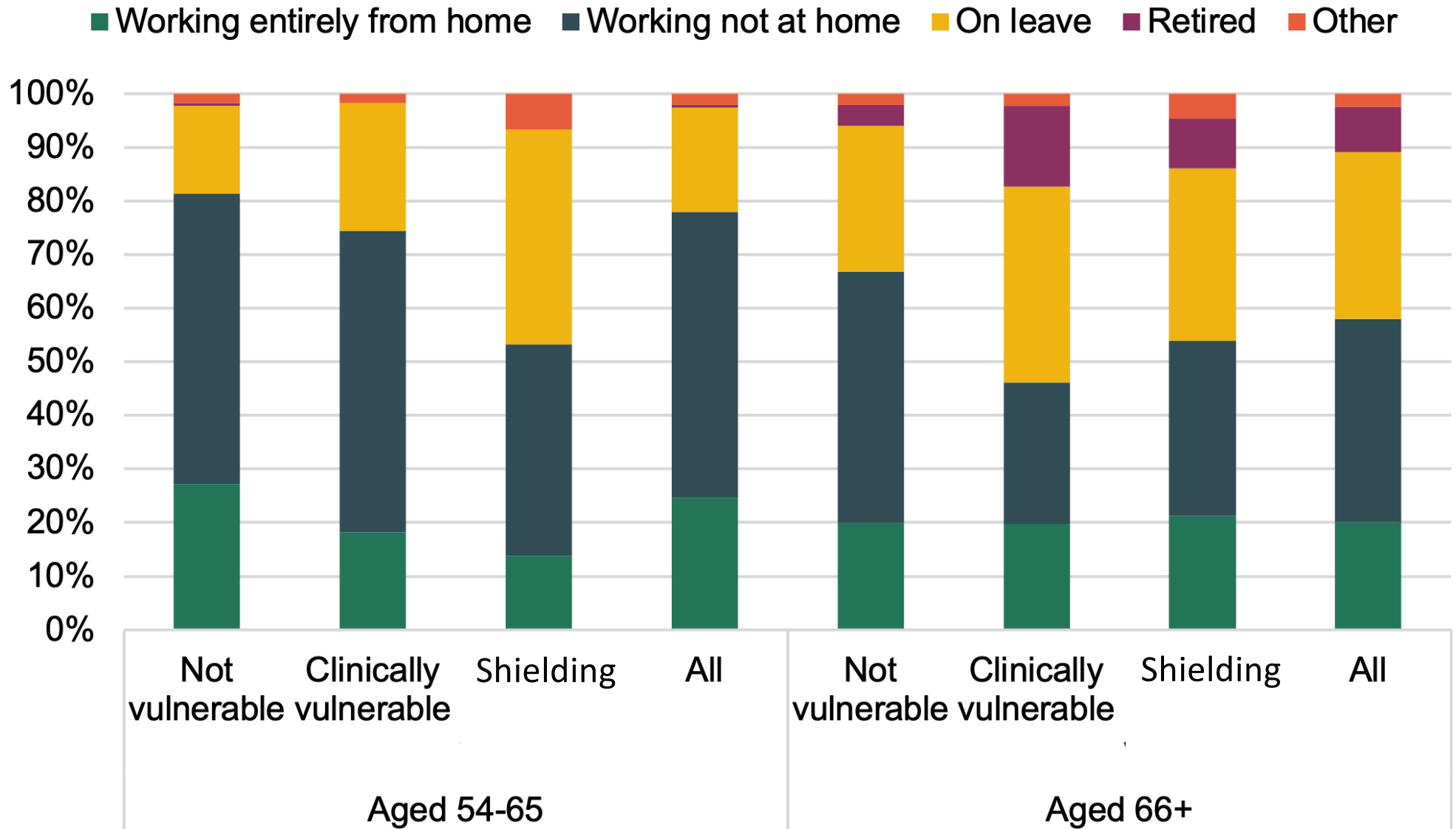


## HIGHEST EARNINGS QUINTILE

- Working
- Working from home
- On leave
- Retired
- Other



**Figure 2.3. Work status (for those working before the crisis), by clinical vulnerability**



**Figure 3. Respondents who are at least somewhat worried about future financial situation, by pre-crisis economic activity and wealth**



# Looking forward

- Covid-19 wave 2 questionnaire and fieldwork
- Additional edits to Wave 10 core questionnaire for April 2021
- Analysis by broader ELSA user community to understand Covid-19 experiences in context of pre (and ultimately post) pandemic trajectories

# Further information

- <https://www.elsa-project.ac.uk/covid-19>
  - Documentation (including sample design, weighting, and questionnaires)
  - Early Briefing Papers
- <https://www.elsa-project.ac.uk/training-resources>

Data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) were made available by the UK Data Archive. ELSA was developed by a team of researchers based at the National Centre for Social Research, University College London University of Manchester and the Institute for Fiscal Studies with funding provided by the National Institute of Aging in the United States, a consortium of UK Government departments including Department of Health, Department of Work and Pensions, Department of Transport, and the Economic and Social Research Council.