

# Qualitative Data

David Fitzgerald, June 2019

All researchers using the ALSWH qualitative comments must follow the ALSWH guidelines. These are in the ALSWH Qualitative Processing Protocols.

Every ALSWH survey has a section at the end of the questionnaire asking 'Have we missed anything' or similar. This includes a space for any comments the respondents wish to write. These comments make up the qualitative data. These comments are not included in the main ALSWH analysis datasets, instead they are kept separate and must be requested separately.

Variables on the Qualitative data

Variable	Description
IDalias / IDproj	Identifier
Comments	The text as written with some names and proper nouns removed, anonymised.
Cohort	The ALSWH birth cohort
SurveyNum	The survey number / wave the comment was from
LenQual	The length of the comment. This is important to check that the comment has not been truncated
MaxLength	The maximum comment length within the particular survey wave. This can be important when working with the comments to avoid accidental truncation.
Source	Where relevant, 1 = Paper survey 2 = Online survey This can be relevant because the paper surveys may request: "Please specify on page 30' for example, where page 30 is the comment page and the specifications get mixed in with the comments. The online surveys usually have a separate variable for each particular specification.

The ALSWH survey data should have a variable COMIND, comment indicator, which indicates whether there is a comment for that record.

In some of the early surveys there was truncation of comments. This only happened with a few of the very longest comments.

## Proxy comments

The final question before the comments in most ALSWH surveys is the proxy question asking if someone helped fill in the survey and if so, 'What was the MAIN reason for your needing help to fill in this survey?' These qualitative comments are removed from the survey data and are available on special request but they are not usually part of the qualitative comments datasets.

## **Other comments**

The questionnaires have some other qualitative comments. Some of these, such as the 'please specify if none of the above' questions may be kept in the main survey datasets.

Some qualitative comments, such as country of birth, are categorised into a small number of categories and the qualitative data are not made available. Also, some comments may be considered identifiable and are only released on special request.

Some surveys have a section of free text medications usages. These data are kept on the Medications datasets.

## **Online and Paper**

The later 1973-78 and 1946-51 cohorts were collected both as paper and online surveys. The paper surveys have some questions such as, "Please specify on page ...", and the direction was to write the response within the comments. These responses therefore ended up with the comments, often with the question number alongside it. The online surveys were different in that the 'please specify' questions had their own direct variables for the responses and they were not part of the comments. The source variables indicates whether it was a paper survey, source is 1, or an online survey, source is 2.

The paper survey comments have been transcribed with names and other facts anonymised. The online survey comments have not been anonymised. The researcher must strictly follow the ALSWH protocols and not identify any respondents.