

# “I Need a Drink!”

## Difficulty Managing Family and Personal Care and Mothers’ Use of Alcohol Since COVID-19

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# Today's Homeschool Lesson "TELLING TIME"

#HMMHOTMESSMAMA



8:00am

10:00am

12:00pm

3:00pm

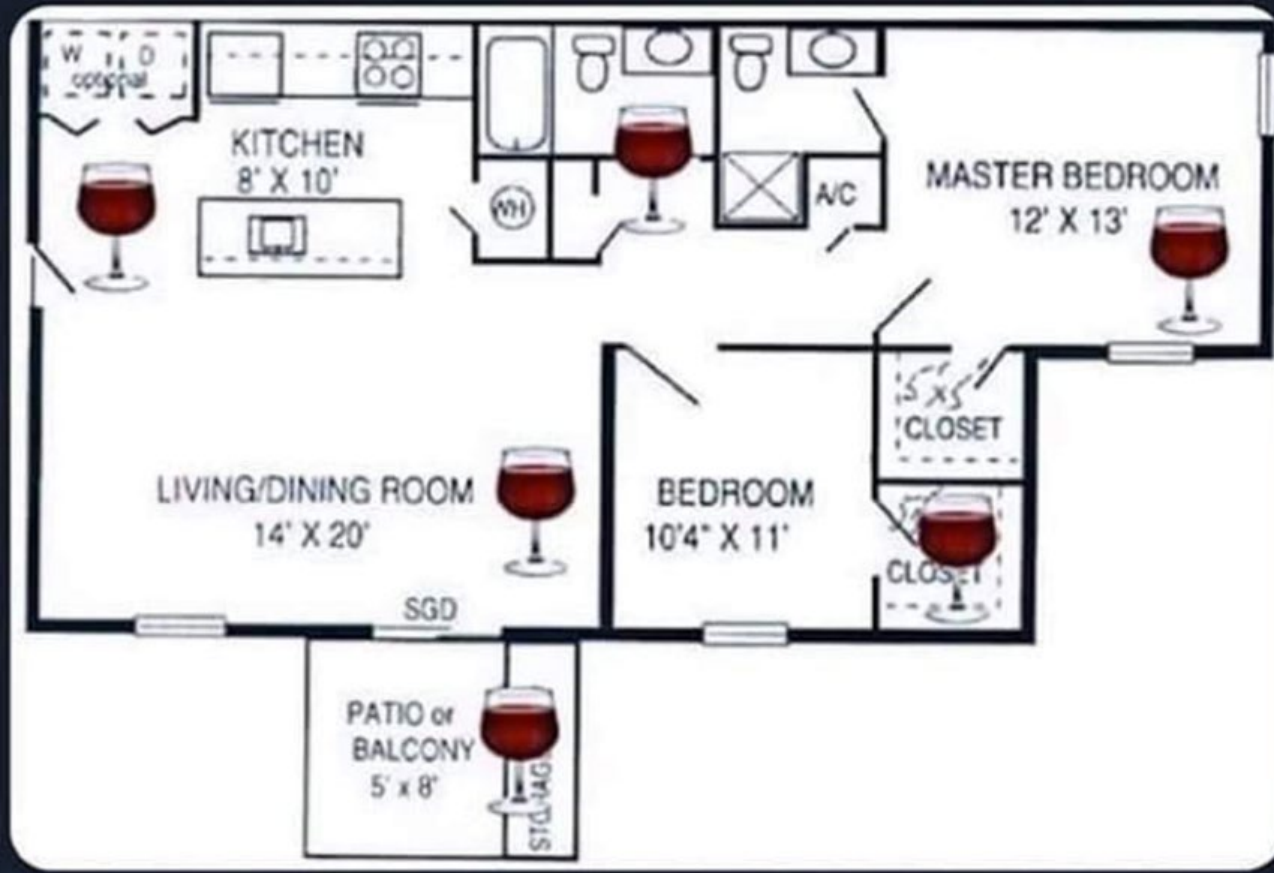
5:00pm

**HOMESCHOOLING IS GOING WELL.  
TWO STUDENTS SUSPENDED FOR FIGHTING**

**AND ONE TEACHER FIRED  
FOR DRINKING ON THE JOB.**

imgflip.com

# Planning your next wine tour made easy



# Finally a realistic Barbie



# Mothering During the Pandemic

- It is widely felt that COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on women, especially mothers
  - Employment (working from home, job loss, reduced hours, as essential workers), childcare, remote learning, eldercare, housework, “family management”
  - Spouses and partners not much help
- COVID-19 exacerbated existing role strain (chronic stress → crisis → continued ambiguity)

# COVID-19 and Alcohol Use

- Alcohol consumption (every measure) has increased since the pandemic:
  - Retail sales up 50% between 2019 and 2020
  - National surveys and smaller studies all show increased consumption
  - New research is coming out all the time
  - Unclear if drinking will return to pre-pandemic levels

# Reasons for Increased Drinking Since COVID-19

- Anxiety/depression/stress
- Social isolation
- Changes in work/caretaking responsibilities
- Boredom/unstructured time
- People cut off from support groups/treatment





# Alcohol Consumption in the U.S.

- 2/3 of Americans drink alcohol
- Average number of drinks consumed in past week:
  - 2.8 in 1996 vs. 4.0 in 2019 (3.6 in 2021)
- The gender gap is shrinking
  - 57% of women vs. 63% of men drink (2021)
- Alcohol use increased the most among midlife (white) women

# Impact of Alcohol on Society

- Alcohol is the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States
- Increase in alcohol-related deaths, esp. women
- Part of “deaths of despair” (L.E. has leveled off)
- Linked to poor mental health, cancer, liver disease, depression, relationship problems, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect
- More harmful to women’s health
- Americans are ambivalent about drinking

# Why are women drinking more alcohol?

- Normalization of alcohol in everyday activities
- Women moving into previously male-only work spaces
- Aggressive marketing of alcohol to women
- Social media glamorizes alcohol
- Daily microaggressions
- Gender inequality (“you’re a woman, your life sucks, have a drink”)

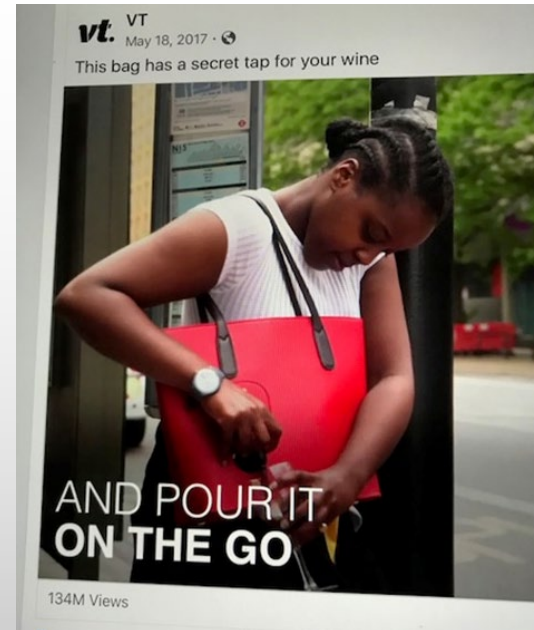


# Why are *mothers* drinking more alcohol?

- Children associated with less alcohol but the few studies there are suggest that mothers' usage is on the rise
  - Rebellion (“I’m more than just a mom”)
  - Cope with balancing work and family responsibilities
  - “intensive mothering”
  - Easy form of self-care (“me time”)
  - Normalized (and trivialized) by advertising products, and media
  - “wine mom” culture








# Importance of Studying Mothers

- Many memoirs of mothers in recovery
- Most research focuses on drinking during pregnancy and binge drinking
- Alcohol use is stigmatized among mothers and they rarely get treatment or are sent to A.A.
- Mothers primarily responsible for the health of their families and society
- Studies don't examine mothers' lives with any real complexity
- Mothers themselves *matter*



# ON THE ROCKS

A photograph of a hand holding a clear glass filled with a dark liquid, likely whiskey, with a slice of citrus fruit and ice cubes. The text 'STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT WOMEN AND DRINKING' is printed in white on the glass.

STRAIGHT  
TALK ABOUT  
WOMEN AND  
DRINKING

SUSAN D. STEWART



SUSAN: What is happening that women are drinking more?

JENNIFER: What do I think is going on? I think they're stressed out. Women have started to join the workforce, but men have not started to share the households and the emotional work of the family. Women are still doing almost a hundred percent of the housework. They're still doing a hundred percent of the cooking and grocery shopping. They're still signing the kids up for soccer and basketball and driving them places. And dads just show up. I would say in the vast majority of my beautiful, suburban, upscale, middle-class neighborhood, the dad does jack shit. He goes to work and comes home and that's enough. And the mom does everything and also works full time. So the moms feel overwhelmed and they feel like they're losing the battle no matter what they do.

—Jennifer, age 43, married, two children

TRACY: All I can think is, like, give me my iPad and don't speak to me for an hour. I just need to decompress. So those are usually moments where I'm like, "Oh, I'll just pour glass of wine." And I have a really bad habit of not being able to sit down in my own home. I'm always running around dusting and organizing. And so here I am carrying my glass of wine, you know, around the kitchen and vacuuming. And so I always seem to have this glass of wine with me. And I don't know if it's the guilt of I'm not spending time with my son, or just boredom. So I struggled with that. I'm like, "Well, is it okay that I'm drinking half a bottle of wine before dinner?" Because I've diluted it with three cans of sparkling water and a ton of ice. It's almost like I try to rationalize and compromise in my own brain.

# Research on motherhood and alcohol consumption during the pandemic

- Having children at home, “doing housework and looking after children or other persons,” and “stress over remote learning” all associated with an greater drinking
- My study: the main effect of “any children” was not significant (reduced drinking among married women); but **women with children <25 living at home full/part time** had 35% higher odds of drinking
- Not much else available



# Research Questions

1. Has COVID-19 changed mothers' alcohol consumption patterns, and how?
2. What factors are associated with greater versus less consumption?
  - Coronavirus-related anxiety, parenting stress, and parent-child closeness, *difficulty managing personal and family care*
  - Demographic and family characteristics

# Data and Methods

- On-line survey of 546 women in June 2020, recruited primarily through social media
- Analytic sample is 367 women with *any children under 25*
- Skewed toward white, college-educated, women from Midwest
- Women's retrospective reports of drinking

# Independent Variables

- Difficulty managing family and personal care scale (mean = 3.0)
- Parenting Stress (1 item); not sig.
- Parent-Child Closeness (1 item); not sig.

**Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing in your area, on a scale from 1-5 (not at all, not very, somewhat, very, extremely) how difficult has it been to: (continued**

**Alpha = .88**

	<u>Not at all difficult</u>	<u>Not very difficult</u>	<u>Somewhat difficult</u>	<u>Very difficult</u>	<u>Extremely difficult</u>	<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>Mean</u>
	<b>Percentage</b>						
Manage or help with children's schoolwork, schedules and activities ..... (n=434)	7.1	13.6	27.6	18.4	10.6	22.6	3.8
Complete tasks for work, school, care for family members or meet other obligations ..... (n=435)	6.2	16.8	33.8	17.2	17.9	8.0	3.5
Find childcare ..... (n=434)	22.6	6.7	6.7	6.2	8.5	49.3	4.2
Provide children with educational resources and things to do ..... (n=435)	9.2	16.8	30.1	14.3	7.4	22.3	3.6
Cook meals and complete household tasks ..... (n=435)	12.0	23.2	35.4	17.0	9.9	2.5	3.0
Get enough sleep ..... (n=435)	11.5	26.0	28.0	15.9	16.8	1.8	3.1
Get enough physical activity or exercise ..... (n=434)	10.1	17.5	32.7	18.4	19.4	1.8	3.2
Have "me" time ..... (n=435)	9.2	11.7	16.8	18.2	41.4	2.8	3.8
Get along with family members and friends ..... (n=435)	20.7	38.6	30.8	5.7	2.5	1.6	2.4
Maintain a positive relationship with my child(ren) ..... (n=435)	27.1	34.9	29.9	4.6	2.3	1.1	2.2
Maintain connections with friends and family outside the household ..... (n=432)	6.3	20.1	41.0	21.8	10.4	0.5	3.1
Maintain a positive relationship with my spouse or partner ..... (n=434)	15.0	30.2	30.6	10.1	4.6	9.4	2.9

**Compared to *before* the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of social distancing, I find being a parent: (n=439)**

	<b><u>Frequency</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Much less stressful .....	17	3.9
Somewhat less stressful .....	28	6.4
Neither more nor less stressful .....	108	24.6
Somewhat more stressful .....	177	40.3
Much more stressful .....	109	24.8

**Compared to *before* the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of social distancing, I find my relationship with my children is: (n=437)**

	<b><u>Frequency</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Much less close .....	5	1.1
Somewhat less close .....	22	5.0
Neither more nor less close .....	156	35.7
Somewhat closer .....	203	46.5
Much closer .....	51	11.7



Table 1. Descriptive Information on the Mothers and their Children (N=367)		
	N	Percent or Mean
Difficulty managing family and personal care		3.0
Age		
20-29	35	9.5
30-39	174	47.4
40-49	118	32.2
50-59	38	10.4
60+	2	0.5
Mean age		30.0
Race and ethnicity		
White	344	93.7
African American/Black	4	1.1
Hispanic	6	1.6
Asian/Asian Indian	1	0.3
Other or more than one race/ethnicity	12	3.3
Educational attainment		
Less than bachelor's degree	74	20.2
Bachelor's degree	159	43.3
Graduate or professional degree	134	36.5
Change in employment due to COVID-19		
Furloughed or work more/less hours	87	23.7
Work from home some of all of the time	178	48.5
Work life has stayed the same	102	27.8

Table 1. Descriptive Information on the Mothers and their Children (N=367)		
	N	Percent or Mean
Relationship status		
Single	49	13.4
Cohabiting	28	7.6
Married	290	79.0
Number of children		
One	93	25.3
Two	155	42.2
Three or more	119	32.4
Number of children of each age <sup>a</sup>		
0 to 4	335	37.0
5 to 9	231	25.6
10 to 14	157	17.4
15 to 19	116	12.9
20 to 24	63	7.0
Gender of children		
All girls	119	32.4
All boys	79	21.5
Mixture of boys and girls	169	46.1

Table 1. Descriptive Information on the Mothers and their Children (N=367)		
	N	Percent or Mean
Religious affiliation		
Catholic	67	18.3
Protestant	85	23.2
Other	63	17.2
No affiliation	152	41.4
Religious service attendance		
Weekly	86	23.4
Monthly or less	116	31.6
Do not attend	165	45.0
Consider yourself a spiritual person		
Yes	247	67.3
No	120	32.7
Region		
Northeast	27	7.4
Midwest	304	82.8
South	18	4.9
West	18	4.9
Household income in 2019		
Less than \$49,999	33	9.0
\$50,000 to \$74,999	58	15.8
\$75,000 to \$99,999	80	21.8
\$100,000 to \$149,999	99	27.0
\$150,000 or more	97	26.4
Note: Cells may not total to 100% due to rounding.		
<sup>a</sup> Categories are not mutually exclusive and equal the total number of children in the sample (N = 902)		

# Dependent Variables

## Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Drinking

- Retrospective reports of drinking more, less, or same since pandemic
  - Frequency
  - Amount
  - Binge drinking (4+)
  - Time of day
  - Type of alcohol
  - Switch from one type to another

# Summary of Results

- Mothers' alcohol consumption increased since the pandemic
  - Overall amount, frequency, number of drinks, binge drinking, time of day is earlier
- Difficulty managing family and personal care was associated with increased drinking since the pandemic (vs. same/less)
- Mothers with graduate degrees and Catholics/no aff. had lower odds of increased drinking
- Marriage, higher income, and any children age 10-14 associated with increased drinking

Table 2. Mothers' Alcohol Use Pre- and Post-COVID-19 (N=367)		
	N	Percent
<i>Before COVID-19 and social distancing began in your area, would you say you drank</i>		
Quite a bit less than I do now	93	<b>25.3</b>
Somewhat less than I do now	161	<b>43.9</b>
The same amount as I do now	82	22.3
Somewhat more than I do now	24	6.5
Quite a bit more than I do now	7	1.9
N	367	100.0
<i>If you drank the same amount then as I do now, were there ever periods of time since COVID-19 when you drank more or less?</i>		
Yes, there were times when I drank more	25	<b>30.5</b>
Yes, there were times when I drank less	7	8.5
No, I've been drinking the same amount throughout the pandemic	50	61.0
N	82	100.0
<i>Alcohol consumption post-COVID-19</i>		
Drank quite a bit less or somewhat less <sup>a</sup>	50	13.6
Consistently drank the same amount as pre-COVID-19	38	10.4
Drank quite a bit more or somewhat more <sup>a</sup>	279	<b>76.0</b>
<sup>a</sup> at any time since COVID-19		



Table 3. Mothers' Alcohol Consumption Pre- and Post-COVID-19 (N=367)		
	Pre-COVID19	Post-COVID-19
	Percent	Percent
<i>About how often do you have any kind of drink containing alcohol?</i>		
Every day	<b>2.5</b>	<b>14.4</b>
5 to 6 days a week	<b>7.6</b>	<b>20.2</b>
3 to 4 days a week	<b>21.0</b>	<b>27.3</b>
Two days a week	19.1	17.2
One day a week	18.8	7.9
2 to 3 days a month	15.5	7.6
One day a month	6.0	1.9
Less than one day a month	9.5	3.5
<i>About how many drinks would you have on a typical day when you drink?</i>		
1 drink	<b>34.1</b>	<b>28.1</b>
2 drinks	37.3	36.8
3 to 4 drinks	21.0	23.2
More than 4 drinks	<b>7.6</b>	<b>12.0</b>
<i>About how often would you say you have 4 or more drinks within a two-hour period?</i>		
Never	38.2	44.4
Less than once a month	30.8	15.0
Monthly	18.5	19.4
Weekly	<b>12.5</b>	<b>21.3</b>



Table 3. Mothers' Alcohol Consumption Pre- and Post-COVID-19 (N=367)		
	Pre-COVID19	Post-COVID-19
	Percent	Percent
<i>On days you drink, when do you usually have your first drink?</i>		
Before lunchtime	0.0	0.3
Around lunchtime	0.5	3.8
Mid-afternoon	<b>3.8</b>	<b>12.3</b>
Before dinner	<b>21.3</b>	<b>33.8</b>
With dinner	27.8	19.1
After dinner or evening	46.6	30.8
<i>On days you drink, what type of drink do you have most often?</i>		
Beer	26.4	23.7
Wine	<b>43.1</b>	<b>38.2</b>
Cocktails or Mixed drinks	26.4	30.3
Liquor or spirits (straight)	1.6	2.7
Other (e.g., spiked seltzers)	2.5	5.2
<i>On days you drink, do you tend to switch from one kind of drink to another?</i>		
Yes, I tend to switch from drinks with less alcohol to drinks with more, such as from beer to wine	<b>4.9</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Yes, I tend to switch from drinks with more alcohol to drinks with less, such as from wine to beer	3.5	3.5
No, I tend to drink beverages with about the same amount of alcohol	91.6	90.5
Note: Cells may not total to 100% due to rounding.		





Table 4. Family and Personal Care, Family Characteristics, and Change in Alcohol Use

	Drank more since COVID-19	
	Yes	No
	N=279	N=88
Difficulty managing family and personal care*	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Age		
20-29	10.0	8.0
30-39	50.5	37.5
40-49	31.2	35.2
50-59	7.9	18.2
60+	0.4	1.1
Mean age*	<b>38.4</b>	<b>40.9</b>
Race and ethnicity		
White	93.9	93.2
Non-White	6.1	6.8
Educational attainment*		
Less than bachelor's degree	21.2	17.1
Bachelor's degree	46.2	34.1
Graduate or professional degree	<b>32.6</b>	<b>48.9</b>
Change in employment due to COVID-19		
Lost job, furloughed, or work more/less hours	24.4	21.6
Yes, I work from home some of all of the time	48.4	48.9
No, my work life has stayed the same	27.2	29.6

Table 4. Family and Personal Care, Family Characteristics, and Change in Alcohol Use		
	Drank more since COVID-19	
	Yes	No
	N=279	N=88
Relationship status		
Single	12.2	17.1
Cohabiting	7.5	8.0
Married	80.3	75.0
Child Characteristics		
Number of children		
One	25.3	27.3
Two	42.2	36.4
Three or more	32.4	36.4
Any of children of each age <sup>a</sup>		
0 to 4	<b>48.4</b>	<b>37.5</b>
5 to 9	<b>46.6</b>	<b>44.3</b>
10 to 14	35.5	33.0
15 to 19	21.2	28.4
20 to 24	12.2	17.1
Gender of children		
All girls	32.6	31.8
All boys	20.8	23.9
Mixture of boys and girls	46.6	44.3

Table 4. Family and Personal Care, Family Characteristics, and Change in Alcohol Use		
	Drank more since COVID-19	
	Yes	No
	N=279	N=88
Religious affiliation*		
Catholic	<b>15.1</b>	<b>28.4</b>
Protestant	25.1	17.1
Other	19.7	9.1
No affiliation	40.1	45.5
Region		
Northeast	7.2	8.0
Midwest	84.2	78.4
South	4.3	6.8
West	4.3	6.8
Household income in 2019		
Less than \$49,999	9.7	6.8
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.7	19.3
\$75,000 to \$99,999	21.9	21.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	28.3	22.7
\$150,000 or more	25.5	29.6
Note: Cells may not total to 100% due to rounding.		
*differences between groups is significant at $p < .05$ .		
<sup>a</sup> Categories are not mutually exclusive.		

Table 5. Predictors of mothers' odds of drinking more and frequency of drinking since COVID-19

	Odds of drinking more		Frequency of drinking		
	versus same or less		since COVID-19 <sup>a</sup>		
	odds ratio	SE	b		SE
Difficulty managing family and personal care	<b>2.284</b> ***	0.212	<b>0.228</b> *		0.103
Age	0.996		-0.019		0.013
Race and Ethnicity					
White	1.150	0.060	-0.423		0.301
Nonwhite (ref.)					
Educational Attainment <sup>b</sup>					
Less than bachelor's degree (ref.)					
Bachelor's degree	1.002	0.417	0.324		0.203
Graduate or professional degree	<b>0.486</b> #	0.430	0.225		0.224
Change in employment due to COVID-19					
Lost job, furloughed, or work more/less hours	1.347	0.382	0.086		0.195
Work from home some of all of the time	1.367	0.336	0.179		0.175
Work life has stayed the same (ref.)					

<sup>a</sup>Frequency of drinking ranges from once a week or less to every day.

Table 5. Predictors of mothers' odds of drinking more and frequency of drinking since COVID-19					
	Odds of drinking more		Frequency of drinking		
	versus same or less		since COVID-19 <sup>a</sup>		
	odds ratio	SE	b		SE
Relationship status <sup>c</sup>					
Single (ref.)					
Cohabiting	1.217	0.624	0.510		0.329
Married	1.434	0.483	0.075		0.260
Number of children	0.732	0.278	0.170		0.144
Any of children of each age <sup>d</sup>					
0 to 4 (ref.)					
5 to 9	0.980	0.338	-0.300		0.169
10 to 14	1.682	0.335	<b>0.094 #</b>		0.169
15 to 19	1.177	0.399	0.021		0.212
20 to 24	1.800	0.507	-0.158		0.271
Gender of children					
All girls	0.881	0.364	-0.083		0.190
All boys	0.789	0.402	0.790		0.208
Mixture of boys and girls (ref.)					

Table 5. Predictors of mothers' odds of drinking more and frequency of drinking since COVID-19

	Odds of drinking more		Frequency of drinking		
	versus same or less		since COVID-19 <sup>a</sup>		
	odds ratio	SE	b		SE
Religious affiliation <sup>e</sup>					
Catholic	<b>0.293 **</b>	0.426	-0.321		0.221
Protestant (ref.)					
Other	1.216	0.508	0.124		0.222
No affiliation	<b>0.517 #</b>	0.389	0.226		0.188
Region					
Northeast	1.475	0.544	0.076		0.292
Midwest (ref.)					
South	0.655	0.623	0.372		0.345
West	0.821	0.611	0.078		0.339
Household income in 2019					
Less than \$49,999 (ref.)					
\$50,000 to \$74,999	0.441	0.610	0.169		0.300
\$75,000 to \$99,999	0.570	0.645	0.129		0.317
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0.815	0.656	<b>0.578 #</b>		0.319
\$150,000 or more	0.795	0.667	<b>0.605 #</b>		0.334

#p<.10; \*p < .05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p < .001.

# Discussion

- Alcohol consumption among men *and women* is a public health issue
- Mothers are increasingly drinking, exacerbated by the pandemic
- Institutional supports are few and “bad mom” stigma remains; women communicate through memes
- Important to continue to monitor alcohol use in different social contexts and periods of crises

# Next Steps

- Examine effect of difficulties on other measures of drinking
- Examine effect of other socio-emotional measures (anxiety, depression, life satisfaction)
- Further investigate child characteristics (age, residence, gender)
- Memes