

When faced with higher prices, swimming is the activity most likely to take a dive

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Experts agree that it's a great way of staying fit and healthy at any age, but when faced with higher prices people are likely to swim less often, while other forms of physical activity such as working out or walking are barely affected.

According to a study by Brunel University London's Health Economics Research Group (HERG), swimming is the individual activity that most people would drop if they faced higher prices.

The study included interviews with 1,683 people, 83% of whom took part in [physical activity](#) in some form. It found that people facing 10% higher entry fees to [swimming pools](#) were 29% less active, once other variations such as their [age](#) and differences in income were taken into account.

A similar 10% higher price of a gym workout would hardly dent enthusiasm, with participation dropping by just 3%. In the case of brisk walking, the expected drop would be even less at 2%.

Prof Julia Fox-Rushby, Professor of Health Economics at Brunel's HERG, said: "Among those surveyed there was a very clear understanding that physical activity is a means of getting healthy, losing weight and having fun.

"But, we have shown for the first time in England, that engaging in physical activity costs you real money and people make a trade-off

between whether to go to a leisure centre and how much it would cost them."

The study supports the view that positive financial incentives, such as subsidising the price of participation, could generally lead to an increase in the quantity of physical activity people participate in.

However, it also suggests that a policy of subsidising an individual activity such as swimming could be more effective than a blanket implementation on all forms of physical activity.

More information: The paper 'Economic analysis of participation in physical activity in England: implications for health policy' by Nana Anokye, Subhash Pokhrel and Julia Fox-Rushby was published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* on 14th September 2014.

Provided by Brunel University

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