

# Short social media breaks do not reduce boredom or fatigue: study

July 7 2021, by Bob Yirka

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A team of researchers at Radboud University's, Behavioral Science Institute in The Netherlands, has found that workers using their smartphone to take short breaks do not find reductions in boredom or

fatigue. In their paper published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, the group describes experiments they conducted with Ph.D. candidates at the university and what they learned from them.

The advent of the smartphone has had a profound impact on society—not only are they used to make calls or send text messages, they are also used to engage with a wide range of small applications. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that people use their phones in other ways as well, such as to alleviate boredom or to reduce stress. In this new effort, the researchers noted that many people use their smartphones to take short breaks from their work—they wondered if doing so actually helped with boredom or reduced stress.

To find out, the researchers enlisted the assistance of 83 Ph.D. candidates at Radboud University. Each was asked to report their level of boredom and [fatigue](#) every hour while they were working. Each also had an [smartphone app](#) that logged its usage.

In comparing phone usage with self-reported levels of boredom and fatigue, the researchers were able to track the volunteers' use of their phones to deal with boredom or fatigue. They found that not only did using their phones in such manner not alleviate boredom or fatigue, it actually made things worse in many cases. They also noted that the volunteers who described themselves as more bored or more fatigued than others in the study did not take longer [smartphone](#) breaks than those feeling less bored or fatigued.

The researchers note that their effort was just one small study but their results suggest that workers might consider alternatives when looking to reduce their fatigue or boredom. They note also that some prior research has shown that [boredom](#) can sometimes be alleviated by engaging in activities that bring some degree of joy. They suggest that if workers use their phones for such purposes, that they find ways for it to bring them

joy, such as by looking at pictures of loved ones, instead of mindlessly scrolling.

**More information:** Jonas Dora et al, Fatigue, boredom and objectively measured smartphone use at work, *Royal Society Open Science* (2021).

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