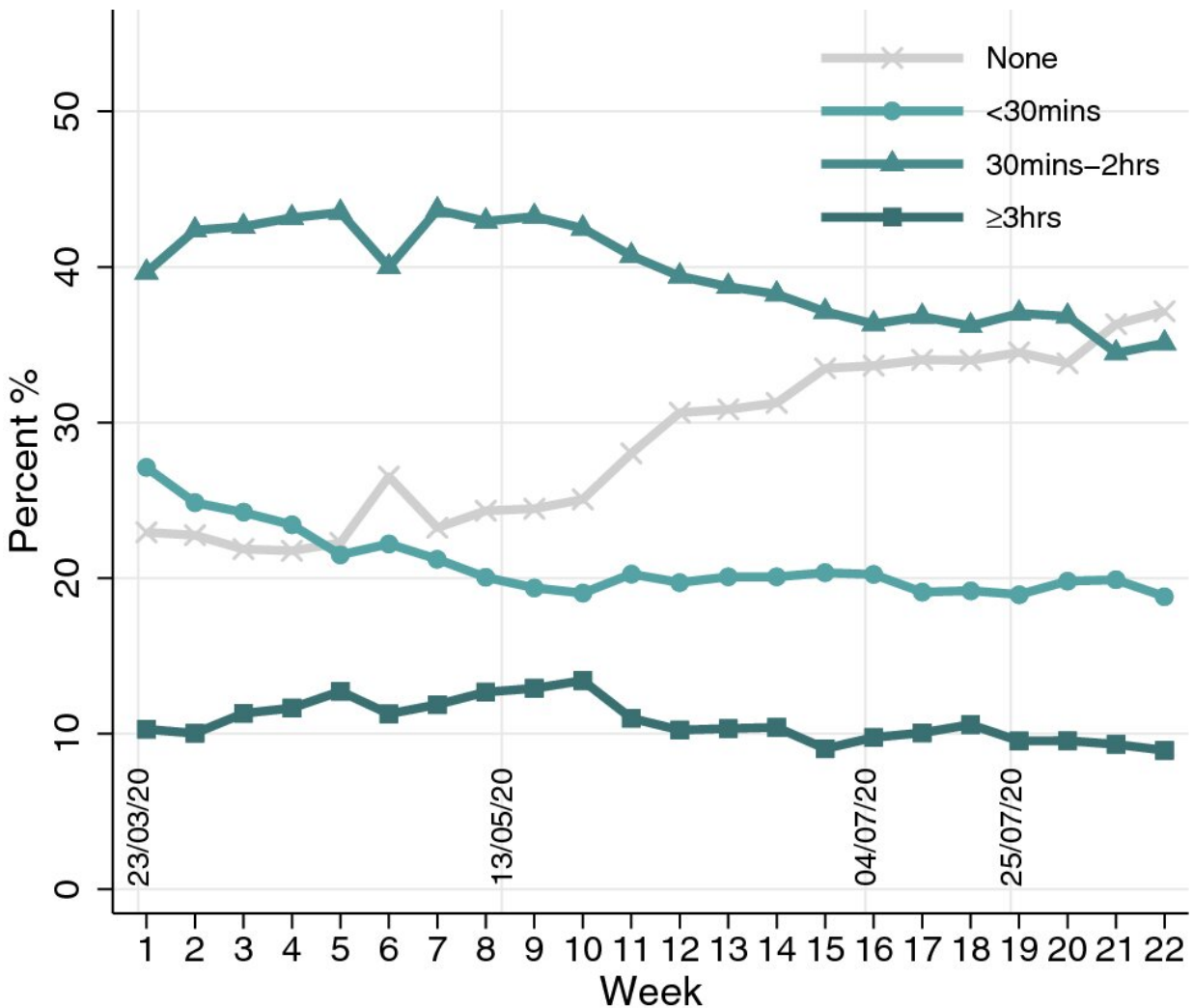


One in three people are less active during lockdown and its aftermath

September 3 2021



Descriptive changes of physical activity over 22 weeks. On March 23, 2020, the first lockdown commenced in England. All non-essential businesses, including gyms, outdoor sports amenities, and playgrounds were closed. On May 10, 2020,

it was announced that strict lockdown was being eased, with unlimited outdoor exercise being allowed from May 13, 2020. On July 4, further public amenities were reopened, including outdoor gyms and playgrounds. On July 25, 2020, indoor gyms and swimming pools reopened. Credit: DOI: 10.1038/s41598-021-97065-1

Nearly 29% of participants reduced their levels of physical activity during and after the first lockdown in England (March to August 2020), according to a study involving 35,915 adults, published in *Scientific Reports*. The findings also show that amongst the people whose physical activity levels did not change, 19% (12% of total participants) were consistently inactive. More public health efforts may be needed to promote physical activity for the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Feifei Bu and colleagues analyzed data on 35,915 adults in England, collected as part of the UCL COVID-19 Social Study, from 24 March to 23 August 2020, a [period](#) encompassing a strict lockdown followed by the easing of restrictions.

During this period, the authors observed a steady increase in the percentage of people who reported not having done any physical activity on the previous working day. They found that 28.6% of participants showed either declines in physical activity or increased physical inactivity, while 9% of participants showed increased physical activity. Other participants showed little change in their levels of physical activity over time: those with a high probability of physical inactivity ("inactive," 11.6%); those with a moderate probability of doing physical activity for short (under 30 minutes) and medium (30 minutes to 2 hours) durations ("fairly active," 22.2%); and those with a high probability of exercising for 30 minutes to 2 hours ("highly active," 28.6%).

The authors also identified factors associated with different patterns of physical activity over time. People who were older, more educated, had a higher household income, shared a household with others, and those without long-term physical and [mental health problems](#), were less likely to be persistently inactive.

The authors suggest that, given the known [health](#) benefits of physical activity, understanding changes in [physical activity](#) habits, and associated factors, is essential for informing healthcare policy in the aftermath of COVID-19.

More information: Bu, F., Bone, J.K., Mitchell, J.J. et al. Longitudinal changes in physical activity during and after the first national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in England, *Scientific Reports* (2021). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-021-97065-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-97065-1)

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