

How long do lockdowns keep people at home?

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(HealthDay)—Lockdowns keep people home for a few weeks, but they lose their luster after a few months, claims a new study that comes as many countries consider a return to lockdowns to slow the renewed

spread of [COVID-19](#).

The findings could be used by [policymakers](#) when deciding whether to impose lockdowns, the researchers said.

For the study, the investigators analyzed data gathered by Google from mobile device users in 93 countries who agreed to share their history on where they went and how long they stayed in a location.

The researchers analyzed data collected in the first five weeks of 2020—before lockdowns were imposed—and after lockdowns took effect.

Compared to pre-[lockdown](#), people's mobility fell by 36% at the start of lockdown and declined another 18% during the first two weeks of lockdown.

But after two weeks, people's mobility started to go back up, even when a country was still in lockdown. About a month after the start of lockdown, one-third of the reduction in mobility was lost.

"About four months into a lockdown, all the effects of the lockdown are washed away," said study author Yogesh Joshi, an associate professor of marketing at the University of Maryland.

The study was published online recently in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

"What this research is essentially finding is that lockdowns are effective at getting mobility down and reducing it for a few weeks or so, but then after that point, mobility starts climbing back up," Joshi said in a university news release.

The study didn't examine why lockdowns eventually lose effectiveness,

but restlessness and the need to get back to work may be among the reasons why, Joshi noted.

"There's definitely a role for lockdowns," Joshi said. "They do have an impact. They definitely reduce mobility. But policymakers and [decision makers](#) have to recognize that the effects start diminishing after a while, and lockdown fatigue kicks in."

That means that "policymakers probably then need to start thinking about other things that can be done—things like incentives that would keep people at home, wage incentives, activities to combat lockdown fatigue—if they want people to stay home," he added.

More information: Yogesh V. Joshi et al, Lockdowns lose one third of their impact on mobility in a month, *Scientific Reports* (2021). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-021-02133-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-02133-1)

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