Article

How people with a vaccine spent their time - one year on from the first UK lockdown: Great Britain, March 2021

Time Use Survey data explaining differences between how people in Great Britain spent their time during coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in March and April 2020 and March 2021.

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Notice

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Please read our statement on Errors identified in ONS online time use survey (OTUS) data which affects this release.

Table of contents

1. Main points

2. How time spent under lockdown has changed, one year on

3. Time spent on activities according to vaccine status

4. Time use data

5. Glossary

6. Measuring the data

7. Related links

1 . Main points

- How we spent our time changed substantially between the first lockdown (March to April 2020) and March 2021; we spent less time on indoor activities and more on outdoor activities and socialising in person, according to new analysis of Time Use Survey data.

- The behavioural changes over this period were largely related to changes in government restrictions and adapting to living in a pandemic, even when factoring in whether someone had a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine dose by March 2021; for example, those without a vaccine spent 10 more minutes socialising, while those who received a vaccine spent 7 more minutes socialising.

- The main difference in changes in behaviour from 12 months ago between those with or without a vaccine dose were in changes to time spent working, explained by differences in age and occupation.

- Among the non-vaccinated (more likely to be younger and employed in jobs outside of healthcare) there was an increase in time spent working, whereas there was little change for people with at least one vaccine dose.

- While most home-based activities shifted back closer to patterns seen before the pandemic (such as watching less TV), we spent more time working from home compared with the first lockdown.

- Longer hours spent working may explain why non-vaccinated people were sleeping about 35 minutes less than in the first lockdown; in comparison, those who had received a vaccine slept for a similar amount of time but spent more time resting, possibly as they were recovering from their vaccine.

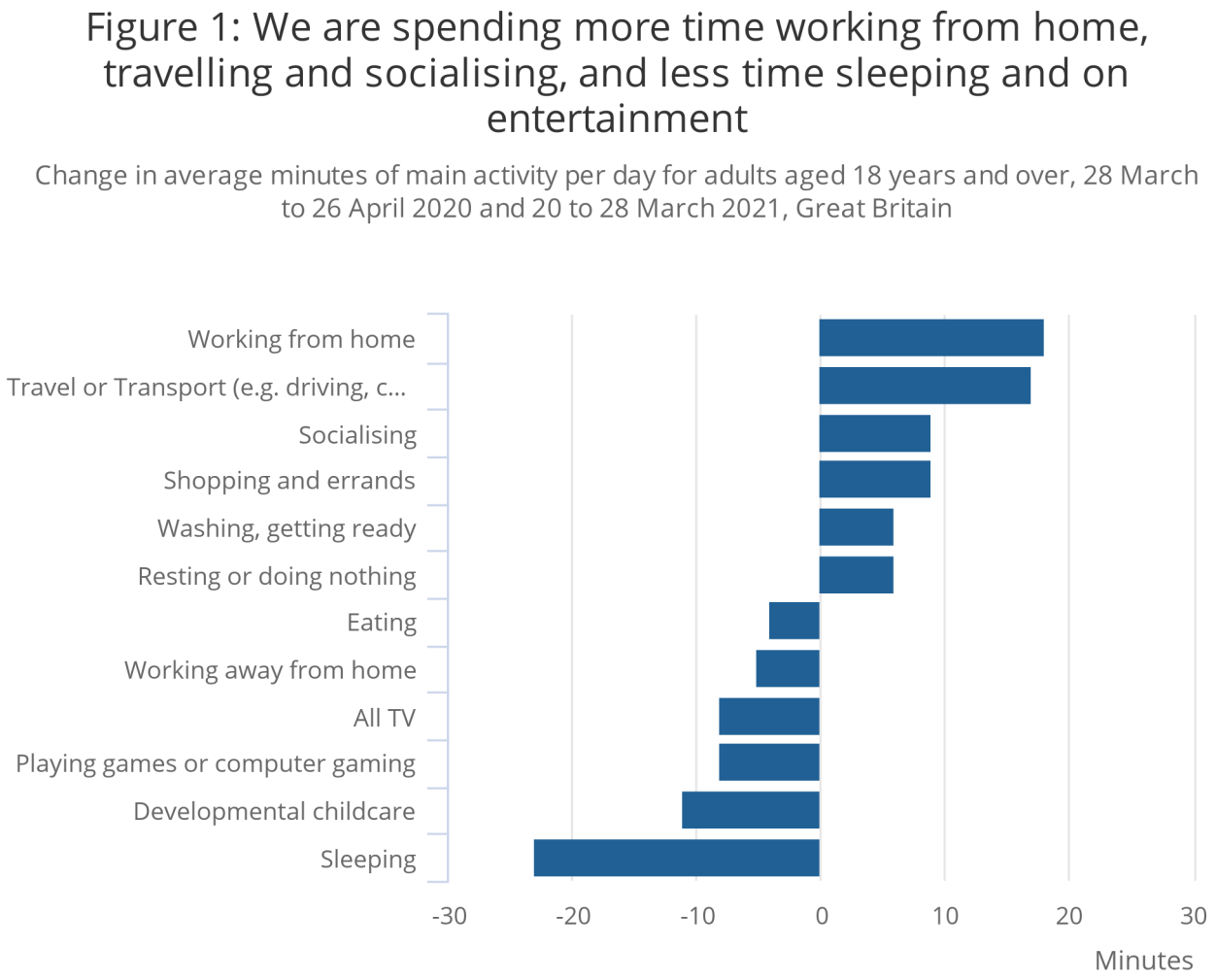
- The impact of schools reopening coincided with the time parents spent on childcare decreasing by over 30%, which appeared to free up more time for working; this change particularly applied to those who had not yet received a vaccine, who were more likely to be parents.

- The gender gap in unpaid work was smaller than it was before the start of the pandemic but was still substantial; in March 2021, women spent an average of 56 minutes more time per day on unpaid household work than men.

2 . How time spent under lockdown has changed, one year on

Figure 1: We are spending more time working from home, travelling and socialising, and less time sleeping and on entertainment

Change in average minutes of main activity per day for adults aged 18 years and over, 28 March to 26 April 2020 and 20 to 28 March 2021, Great Britain



Source: Office for National Statistics – Time Use Survey

Notes:

1. The categories which are grouped together are defined in the Glossary section.
2. Only things that people refer to as their main activity at any given point are shown in this figure.
3. Only select categories have been chosen, showing the biggest changes from a year ago.

In March 2020, lockdown measures meant we were staying at home and restricted from meeting others, but 12 months on these restrictions had slightly eased. With the exception of household and support bubbles, socialising with others was limited to meeting one person outside, for example, having a coffee on a bench together in England. This led to us spending more time outside, whether travelling, socialising or shopping. The average adult spent an extra 17 minutes per day travelling (excluding walking) compared with the previous year, and an extra 9 minutes per day shopping or doing errands.

There was a decrease in the time spent sleeping, which returned to similar levels reported before coronavirus (COVID-19), after having increased during the first lockdown in March to April 2020. Alongside this, we spent less time reading, playing with, or helping children with homework, which is likely to reflect the reopening of schools. Parents in particular spent 30 minutes less on childcare overall. We also spent less time on indoor entertainment, which was a very popular activity during the first lockdown. For example, the average person watched or streamed 8 minutes less of TV or other video entertainment, at 2 hours and 45 minutes on average in March 2021.

Despite the easing of some restrictions, everyone who could work from home was still advised to do so in March 2021, which is reflected in the increase in time spent working from home by 18 minutes. This increase was only for men, who saw an increase of 36 minutes, compared with no significant change for women. Men also increased their time on unpaid household work to levels not seen since the first lockdown, but the gender gap in unpaid household work remained persistently high, with women doing over 40% more than men at over 3 hours on average per day.

3 . Time spent on activities according to vaccine status

Figure 2: We spent more time socialising and on other outside activities in March 2021 compared with the first lockdown, regardless of vaccination status

Change in minutes of main activity per day for vaccinated and non-vaccinated adults aged 18 years and over, 28 March to 26 April 2020 and 20 to 28 March 2021 for Great Britain

Notes:

1. The categories which are grouped together are defined in the Glossary section.
2. Only things that people refer to as their main activity at any given point are shown in this figure.
3. Only select leisure and free time categories have been chosen, showing the biggest changes from a year ago.

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In this section, unless stated otherwise, we compare the same people who responded in March to April 2020 and March 2021, rather than comparing differences in time spent on activities in March 2021 between those who were or were not vaccinated. This means we can examine differences in individual responses over time, depending on whether they had received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccines. Comparing the same people allows greater control between demographic differences across groups. This is because the same individuals across time will likely have similar characteristics such as age, job and health status. For more information see Measuring the data.

For context, approximately 30 million people in the UK had received their first vaccine by the end of March 2021. This included 92% of people over the age of 50 years who had received at least one vaccine dose at this point.

Overall, there were no substantial differences in the change in behaviour between those who had and had not received a dose of the vaccine.

Regardless of vaccine status, we switched to spend more time on activities outside the home – like travelling, volunteering, and socialising in person – and less time on indoor entertainment, such as watching TV and virtual socialising.

People with at least one vaccine dose, which included older people, reduced their time spent on home-based activities more. However, their lifestyles meant they still spent more time on home-based activities overall compared with the unvaccinated group, at 4 hours and 40 minutes on average per day in March 2021. By contrast, the unvaccinated group spent 2 hours and 45 minutes on these activities, which included watching TV, gardening or DIY.

The general rise in socialising corresponds with the Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 6 April 2021 release, which showed that over the period 24 to 28 March 2021, 36% of adults reported meeting up with someone outside of their household, support bubble or childcare in the past seven days. These figures were slightly higher for the over 70s (41%) and people aged 16 to 29 years (38%). This could suggest some groups were more comfortable socialising in March 2021 compared with March 2020, regardless of vaccination status.

Most people did not seem to change their lifestyles much after receiving a vaccine, even as the vaccination programme expanded to cover younger age groups. More recent data by the beginning of June 2021 from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) showed most people with a vaccine reported they did not see others from outside of their household any more frequently than they did before they received their vaccine.

Figure 3: Those without a vaccine spent less time sleeping than 12 months ago as they increased their time spent working, while people with a vaccine did not change how much they worked or slept from the March to April 2020 lockdown

Hours spent on main activity per day for people who received at least one vaccine dose and non-vaccinated adults aged 18 years and over, 28 March to 26 April 2020 and 20 to 28 March 2021 for Great Britain

Notes:

1. The categories which are grouped together are defined in the Glossary section.
2. Only things that people refer to as their main activity at any given point are shown in this figure.
3. Only select categories have been chosen, relating to paid or unpaid work, as well as resting activities.

Download this chart

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While our use of free time did not greatly differ between individuals who had and had not received a vaccine, our paid and unpaid work activities, and how we rested did show some signs of being affected. Those who received a vaccine were resting for an average of 9 extra minutes per day, whereas there was very little change for the non-vaccine group. This could be down to some respondents experiencing side effects from the vaccine and needing rest to recover.

There was also a big difference in the 12-month changes in time spent working. Those who had not received a vaccine worked roughly an extra hour per day, whereas there was virtually no change for the vaccinated group. Individuals without a vaccine worked more regularly, and for longer on a working day, compared with a year ago.

These differences in working times are likely explained by the different jobs both groups worked in. Healthcare professionals, who were extremely busy in the first lockdown, had predominantly received at least one vaccine dose, whereas those without a vaccine were much more likely to include professions like teachers, who could not work as much during the first lockdown. The extra working time for non-vaccinated individuals likely influenced their sleep – they slept 35 minutes less than a year ago, compared with no significant change for those who were vaccinated.

4 . Time use data

Differences in time use between lockdowns, by vaccine status and other demographics, Great Britain
Dataset | Released 23 June 2021
Time Use Survey data show changes in how people spent their time during coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in March and April 2020, September to October 2020 and March 2021, as well as before the pandemic. It also includes Opinions and Lifestyle Survey data on behaviours following vaccination in Great Britain from 19 May to 13 June 2021.

5 . Glossary

Socialising

This includes socialising, spending time with friends, family, neighbours and colleagues, and/or just talking with spouse, children or parents, family, friends or neighbours.

Travelling and transport (for example, driving and cycling)

Travelling and transport includes travelling to and from locations, escorting others, or being escorted yourself, including by taxi or bus, for example. For the data presented in the draft, walking as a mode of travel has been excluded and added into a separate category.

Walking and other sport

This includes walking as a mode of travel for example to work or the shop, and playing other sports, which includes hiking or just going for a walk as exercise.

Working away from home

Working away from home includes working in locations outside of the home, such as undertaking taxi or delivery services, or working from an office.

Working from home

Working from home includes working either from home or cafés and selling things online or showing people around your home to sell it.

Developmental childcare

Developmental childcare includes reading to children, playing with children or helping children with homework, and homeschooling.

Unpaid childcare

Unpaid childcare includes unpaid feeding, washing, dressing or preparing meals for children; reading to children, playing with children or helping children with homework (or homeschooling); and supporting, comforting or cuddling children.

Shopping and errands

This includes buying something, shopping, browsing things to buy later, banking, household errands, appointments including GP and dentist.

Volunteering and caring for adults

This includes volunteering as part of a group, organisation, charity or sports club, and/or helping and caring for other adults.

Home-based activities

These include watching or streaming TV or videos, reading, hobbies and other leisure, telephoning, video calling, emailing, texting, or writing letters with friends and family and gardening or DIY.

6 . Measuring the data

How we measure time in this release

Times are taken from the two most recent time use studies in the UK: the 2014 to 2015 UK Time Use Study covering the UK and the 2020 to 2021 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Online Time Use Study covering Great Britain. The 2020 to 2021 study was carried out exclusively for adults aged 18 years and over, under coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions (28 March to 26 April 2020, 5 September to 11 October 2020, and 20 March to 28 March 2021) and can be used to understand the likely impact of the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions on what people in Great Britain are doing with their time.

The 2014 to 2015 study shows what people did with their time before the coronavirus pandemic; however, it is important to recognise that changes between the two studies could be unrelated to the coronavirus pandemic and instead reflect longer term changes in society.

The measures of time in this bulletin are made up of activities that have been recorded by respondents in a time-diary study. Respondents can record doing more than one activity at a time, but for comparability, activities that respondents regarded as their main activity were used here.

Throughout the bulletin, time is reported in average minutes per day and week. These averages are useful as they give a good indication of a group's time taken up by a type of activity, but it should be recognised that this average will include people that do not engage in certain types of activities on a given day. Therefore, it should not be confused with the average amount of time taken to do an activity, as there are differences between the two definitions.

We have also used Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) data within this release. For more information on this dataset see the Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 18 June 2021 release.

Types of activities in this report

To report on changes in how people use their time in this report, a range of time categories have been defined. For more information on these please see the Glossary and the associated dataset.

Use of longitudinal data

For the analysis in Section 3, we have contacted the same sample of respondents twice, meaning we have been able to link participants whose data were collected from 28 March to 26 April 2020 and also collected from 20 March to 28 March 2021 to create a longitudinal dataset. When significance testing the longitudinal data, we provide two versions: a weighted Mann-Whitney U test and an unweighted Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. For a result to be deemed significant it is required that both tests are significant.

Feedback and future publications

Your feedback will be very valuable in making our results useful and accessible. If you have any questions, please email economic.wellbeing@ons.gov.uk.

7 . Related links

A “new normal”? How people spent their time after the March 2020 coronavirus lockdown
Article | Released 9 December 2020
During the first national coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown, many people in Great Britain were forced to make changes to their lifestyles. But it appears that some of those changes may not have lasted long.

Parenting in lockdown: Coronavirus and the effects on work-life balance
Article | Released 22 July 2020
Parents in Great Britain who have been able to work through the coronavirus lockdown have adapted their working patterns around caring for their children. There were some clear trends in how that childcare was delivered.

Coronavirus and how people spent their time under lockdown: 28 March to 26 April 2020
Bulletin | Released 27 May 2020
Experimental results of the pilot Office for National Statistics (ONS) Online Time Use Study (collected 28 March to 26 April 2020 across Great Britain) compared with the 2014 to 2015 UK Time Use Study.

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 18 June 2021
Bulletin | Released 18 June 2021
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 9 to 13 June to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the different effects on men and women in the UK, March 2020 to February 2021
Article | Released 10 March 2021
Analysis of previously published data from across the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the government highlights the different effects on men and women throughout the first year of the coronavirus pandemic in charts.

Homeworking hours, rewards and opportunities in the UK: 2011 to 2020
Article | Released 19 April 2021
Working from home in the UK between 2011 and 2020, including the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Looking at indicators of productivity and work success such as pay, hours worked, bonuses, promotions and more, with industry, region and demographic breakdowns. Part of the Economic review: April 2021.