

Statistical bulletin

How people spent their time after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, UK: March 2022

How people in the UK spent their time in March 2022 compared with before the coronavirus pandemic, using Time Use Survey data from 2022 and Time Use Study data from 2014 to 2015.

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1 . Main points

- Despite the majority of legal coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions ending by March 2022, the way people spent their time remained different when compared with 2014 to 2015, with people travelling to and from locations less and working habits and patterns continuing to change.
- Women continued to carry out more unpaid household work and childcare in March 2022, but when compared with the pre-pandemic period of 2014 to 2015, the gender gap had narrowed; on average, women spent 51 minutes more per day doing unpaid work in March 2022, whereas in 2014 to 2015, it was 98 minutes more.
- In March 2022, people aged 60 years or over spent 55% (eight minutes) less time on unpaid childcare when compared with 2014 to 2015 (17 minutes); this continued behavioural changes in this age group seen during the first coronavirus lockdown in March 2020.
- People spent 31 minutes socialising on average per day in March 2022, compared with 13 minutes in March 2021.
- Time spent watching or streaming television in March 2022 was the lowest seen since the start of the pandemic at 149 minutes.
- The average time spent keeping fit in March 2021 was 30 minutes, the most time spent on these activities over the last seven years; in March 2022, this had slightly decreased to 25 minutes, but was still significantly higher than in 2014 to 2015, when this figure was 19 minutes.

2 . How people's time spent in March 2022 was different from 2014 to 2015

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have seen many changes to how people spent their time when compared with the decades leading up to it. We have explored these changes in detail in some of our previous releases (see the [Related links](#) section). Estimates since the pandemic have been re-derived in this release, so for more up to date and accurate estimates, use our accompanying datasets.

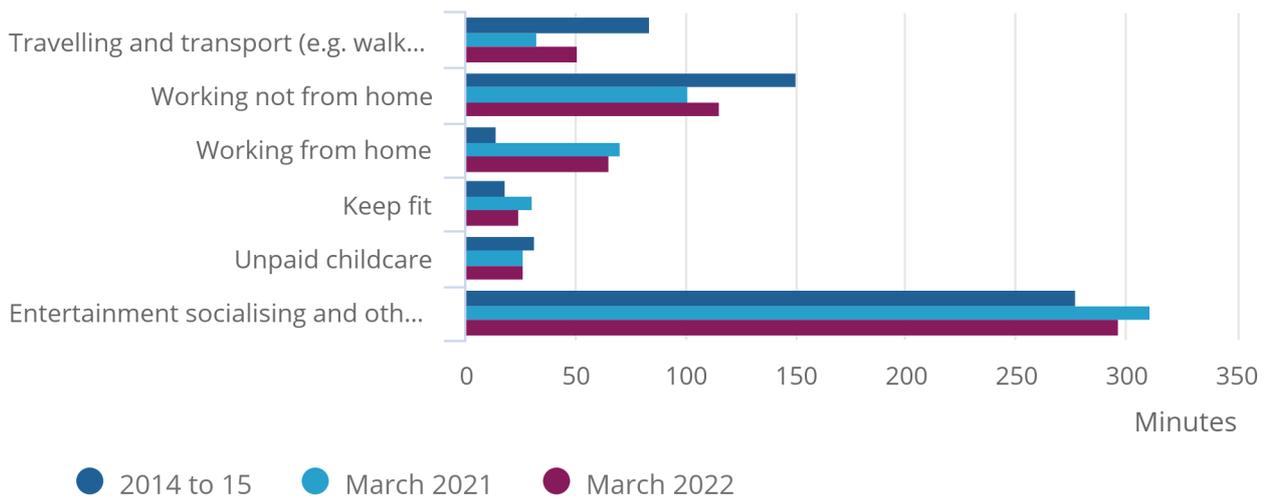
By March 2022, most of the coronavirus restrictions in the UK had been lifted, making it a good reference period for looking at new normal behaviours. There were still significant differences in how people spent their time since restrictions were lifted compared with before the pandemic in 2014 to 2015.

Figure 1: People spent more time on keeping fit and working from home in March 2022, while they still travelled less than before the pandemic

Average daily time in minutes spent on selected grouped activities, 2014 to 2015, March 2021 and March 2022, Great Britain for March 2021, and UK for 2014 to 2015 and March 2022

Figure 1: People spent more time on keeping fit and working from home in March 2022, while they still travelled less than before the pandemic

Average daily time in minutes spent on selected grouped activities, 2014 to 2015, March 2021 and March 2022, Great Britain for March 2021, and UK for 2014 to 2015 and March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Online Time Use Survey

Notes:

1. There are significant differences between the time spent doing all activity groups shown between March 2022 and 2014 to 2015.
2. The activity groups "working from home", "working away from home" and "unpaid childcare" do not have significant differences between the time spent doing them for March 2021 and March 2022.
3. For more information about the activity groups, please see the [Glossary](#) or our accompanying [dataset](#).
4. Numbers in the chart are to one decimal place but comments in the article are rounded to the nearest whole minute, so they may not fully match.

In 2014 to 2015, people aged 40 years and over spent significantly less time keeping fit than those aged under 40 years. However, in March 2022, all age groups spent similar amounts of time keeping fit.

For those in paid employment, people worked from home 79 minutes more per day. They spent 62 minutes less working not from home in March 2022 when compared with 2014 to 2015.

At the same time, the average time people spent doing other activities in March 2022 reverted to pre-pandemic levels. There was not a significant difference between the time spent on them in March 2022 and 2014 to 2015. For example, in 2014 to 2015, people spent 194 minutes per day on unpaid work compared with 197 minutes in March 2022.

However, the average time spent doing unpaid work still differed between sexes. In March 2022, the average time spent on unpaid work was 222 minutes for females, down from 243 minutes in 2014 to 2015. For males, the average time spent on unpaid housework was 171 minutes in March 2022, up from 145 minutes in 2014 to 2015. This has resulted in the gender gap for unpaid work halving from 98 minutes in 2014 to 2015 to 51 minutes in March 2022. More detail on gender differences and other differences across demographics can be found in our [accompanying datasets](#).

3 . How people's time spent changed between March 2021 and March 2022

Despite differing levels of restrictions between March 2021 and March 2022, the average daily time people spent on many activities was not significantly different between the two periods. Some of these include unpaid childcare, working from home and working away from home. This could be linked to many workplaces still practicing hybrid working and schools remaining open. There also was not a significant difference between these two time periods for the examples given when you consider someone's sexuality, ethnicity or disability status.

There were some significant differences in activities between March 2021 and March 2022. For example, people spent less time on entertainment, socialising and other free time (15 minutes less on average per day). This was offset by a significant increase in the time spent travelling (19 minutes) such as to go out, see family and friends, or go to work.

4 . Time-use data

[Differences in time use after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, UK: March 2022](#)

Dataset | Released 9 August 2022

Time-use survey data explaining differences between how people in the UK spent their time in March 2022 compared with the 2014 to 2015 UK Time-use study (the most recent comparable data from before the pandemic). These data also contains estimates on how people spent their time throughout the pandemic and estimates by different demographics, including by sex, ethnicity, income and disability status.

5 . Glossary

Socialising

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

Travelling and transport (for example, driving and cycling)

Includes travelling to and from locations, escorting others, or being escorted yourself, such as by taxi or bus.

Keeping fit

Includes walking or hiking as a form of exercise, going to the gym or exercise classes, and playing other sports (including team sports). Going for a walk was added in 2021 as a separate activity, however, in previous waves going for a walk or hiking was captured within Playing other sport and exercising, including hiking. More details of the activities in this category and how they have changed over time can be found in our [accompanying datasets](#).

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

Mainly includes working from home, but also selling things online or showing people around your home to sell it.

Unpaid childcare

Includes unpaid feeding, washing, dressing or preparing meals for children; reading to children, playing with children or helping children with homework (and home-schooling); and supporting, comforting or cuddling children.

Unpaid Work

Includes activities like domestic housework activities (such as cleaning and making food), unpaid childcare, gardening and DIY, caring for, playing with or walking pets, food shopping, and sorting out bills. This activity excludes travel. More details of the activities in this category and how they have changed over time can be found in the [Measuring the data section](#) and our accompanying datasets.

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. These are the UK Time-use study covering the UK for 2014 to 2015, and the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Online Time-use study covering Great Britain for 2020 to 2021, and the United Kingdom for 2022.

The 2020 to 2022 study consists of four waves of data collection and was carried out exclusively for adults aged 18 years and over, both 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 for 12 to 20 March 2022, when restrictions had mostly eased. These studies can be used to understand the likely impact of the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions on what people in Great Britain were 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 comparison of different time periods in this release is done using a non-parametric hypothesis test, and the data has been weighted to be representative of the adult population. For more information about the different samples and the comparisons we make between them, please see the [accompanying datasets](#).

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, only activities that respondents regarded as their main activity were used here.

Throughout the bulletin, time is reported in average minutes per day. These averages are useful as they give a good indication of a group's time taken up by a type of activity. However, 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.

Unpaid work estimates

Average time spent on unpaid work in this release has been calculated in two ways. In most of the article including the text, it is by combining the average times for the following activity groups in our accompanying datasets: unpaid childcare, gardening and DIY, and unpaid household work (excluding travel and childcare). In addition, average times are shown for London specifically in the associated datasets, and there unpaid work includes travel. This is different from previous releases, where the three activity groups have been explored separately. More details on the activities included in these groups (and all other activity groupings) and how they have changed over time can be found in our [accompanying datasets](#).

7 . Strengths and limitations

2014 to 2015 data

The lower-level activities in the 2014 to 2015 UK Time-use study differ from the lower-level activities in the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Online Time-use survey. A result of this is that direct one to one comparisons of lower-level activities is not possible. However, it is believed that the grouped activity categories (see the [Glossary](#) and our [accompanying datasets](#) for more information) represent the same type of activity for all periods of data used in the bulletin, and that they all have similar coverage of the activities that fall in them, unless otherwise specified.

Reweighting

Data in this bulletin have been created using weights that consider non-response from the sample, which more accurately represents all adults that the sample represents. In previous ONS releases of the Online Time-use survey, weights that do not take this into account have been used, apart from our [Families and the labour market, UK: 2021 article](#). Therefore, similar estimates from previous time use releases will differ slightly and estimates quoted within previous articles may not be as accurate.

8 . Related links

[How people with a vaccine spent their time – one year on from the first UK lockdown: Great Britain, March 2021](#)

Article | Released 23 June 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.

[Families and the labour market, UK: 2021](#)

Article | Released 22 July 2022

The employment rates and employment practices of men and women with dependent children in the UK, based on data from the Labour Force Survey, Annual Population Survey and Time-use survey.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.