

Statistical bulletin

Time Use in the UK: March 2023

Average daily time spent by adults on activities including paid work, unpaid household work, unpaid care, travel and entertainment. Experimental statistics.

Contact:
Lynsey Brown, Aaron Moseley,
Sally Wallace, Adel Hussein
hhsa@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 456736

Release date:
4 July 2023

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

- After sleep and rest, adults in the UK spent an average of 3 hours and 44 minutes each day on entertainment, socialising, and other free time activities in March 2023 (including 2 hours and 16 minutes watching television); this was less than the average of 4 hours and 30 minutes in March 2020.
- Around 9 in 10 adults spent at least 10 minutes each day doing unpaid household work (92%) and engaging in entertainment, socialising, and free time activities (89%) in March 2023, while almost two-thirds (64%) spent at least 10 minutes a day travelling and one-quarter (25%) took part in exercise, sporting, or well-being activities.
- Among adults who did some form of unpaid childcare (10.2 million, 20%) or adult care (1.7 million, 3%) as a main activity in March 2023, they spent a daily average of 2 hours and 15 minutes and 1 hour and 36 minutes doing these activities, respectively.
- The pattern of time use over the average 24-hour day in March 2023 was broadly similar between employed men and women (though men spent more time doing paid work and women spent more time doing unpaid household work and care), but there was a lot of variation in time use among economically inactive adults according to the main reason for their inactivity and age.
- Among working-age adults who were economically inactive because of retirement, after sleep and rest, on average most of their time was spent doing unpaid work (3 hours and 51 minutes), entertainment and leisure activities (3 hours and 16 minutes), and watching television (3 hours and 1 minute).
- Economically inactive adults aged 50 to 64 years spent more time each day doing unpaid household work (4 hours and 2 minutes) and watching television (3 hours and 32 minutes) but less time travelling (46 minutes) than economically inactive adults aged 18 to 34 years (2 hours and 17 minutes, 1 hour and 12 minutes, and 1 hour and 19 minutes, respectively).

Estimates are based on the main activities that respondents reported doing during their diary day. Time spent doing secondary or passive activities is not included.

2 . Average time use and participation in daily activities

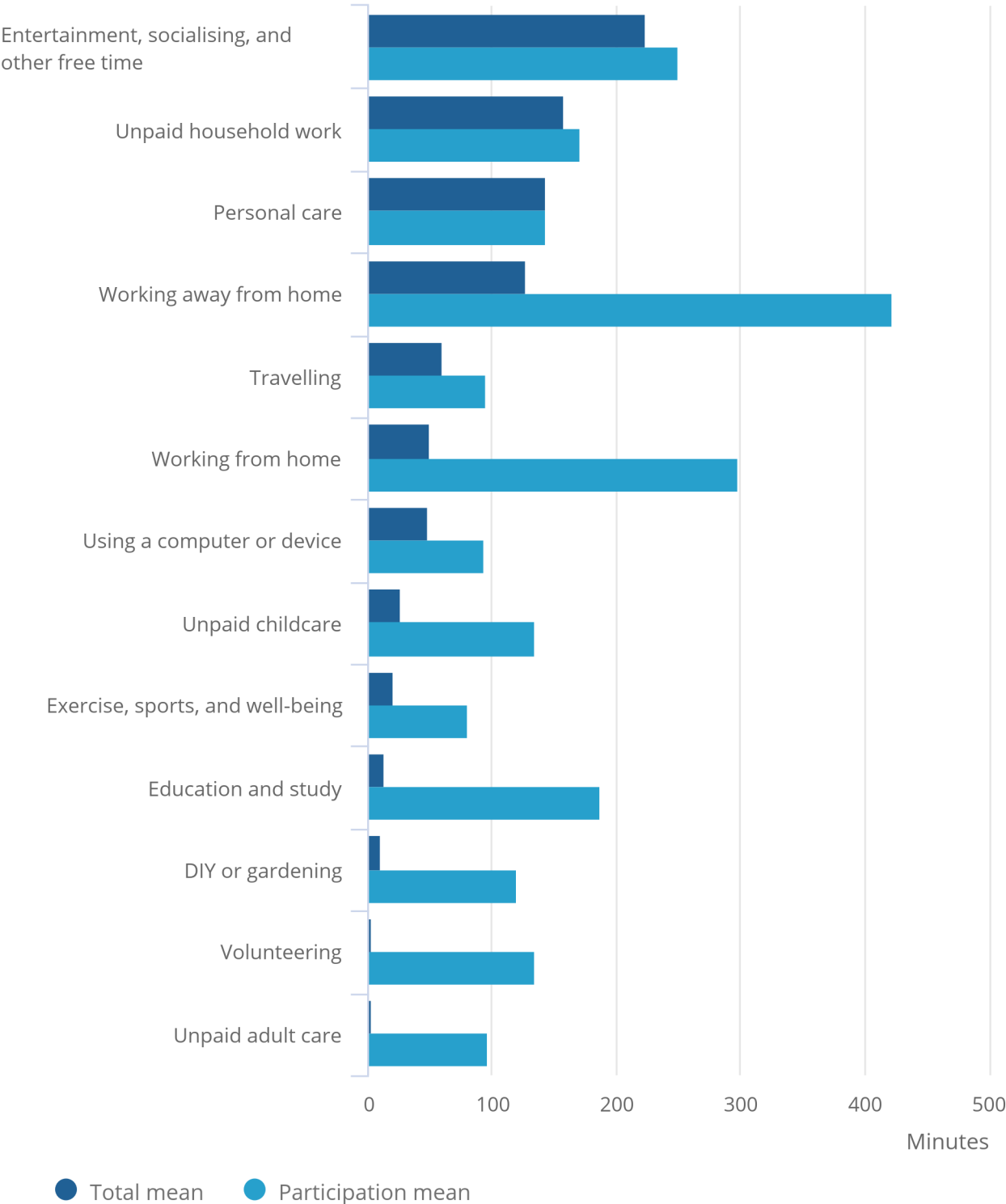
The amount of time that adults aged 18 years and over spent on daily activities (excluding sleep and rest) in March 2023, as an average of all adults in the UK (total mean) and as an average of adults who did each of the activities (participation mean), is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Among all adults, most time was spent on entertainment, socialising, and free time activities, but looking at those who did each activity, most time was spent working

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities, by all adults, and by adults who participated in the activities, UK, March 2023

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Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities, by all adults, and by adults who participated in the activities, UK, March 2023



Notes:

1. Estimates for sleep and rest and other activities are excluded from Figure 1 but can be found in the accompanying datasets.
2. The total mean is based on all adults and the sum of the total mean for all activities is equal to 24 hours (or 1,440 minutes).
3. The participation mean is based on adults who reported doing the activity only, so the sum of the participation mean will not equal 24 hours.

After sleep and rest (8 hours and 56 minutes), UK adults spent most of their time on entertainment, socialising, and other free time activities (3 hours and 44 minutes). This comprised mostly of watching television (2 hours and 16 minutes) and spending time with other people (33 minutes).

Across all adults, the least amount of time was spent on volunteering (3 minutes) and adult care (3 minutes). However, this changed considerably when looking at the average time spent on these activities by those who participated in them.

Among adults who volunteered as part of a group, organisation, charity or sports club, they did this for a daily average of 2 hours and 14 minutes. Similarly, among adults who spent time caring for other adults, the average daily time they spent doing this was 1 hour and 36 minutes.

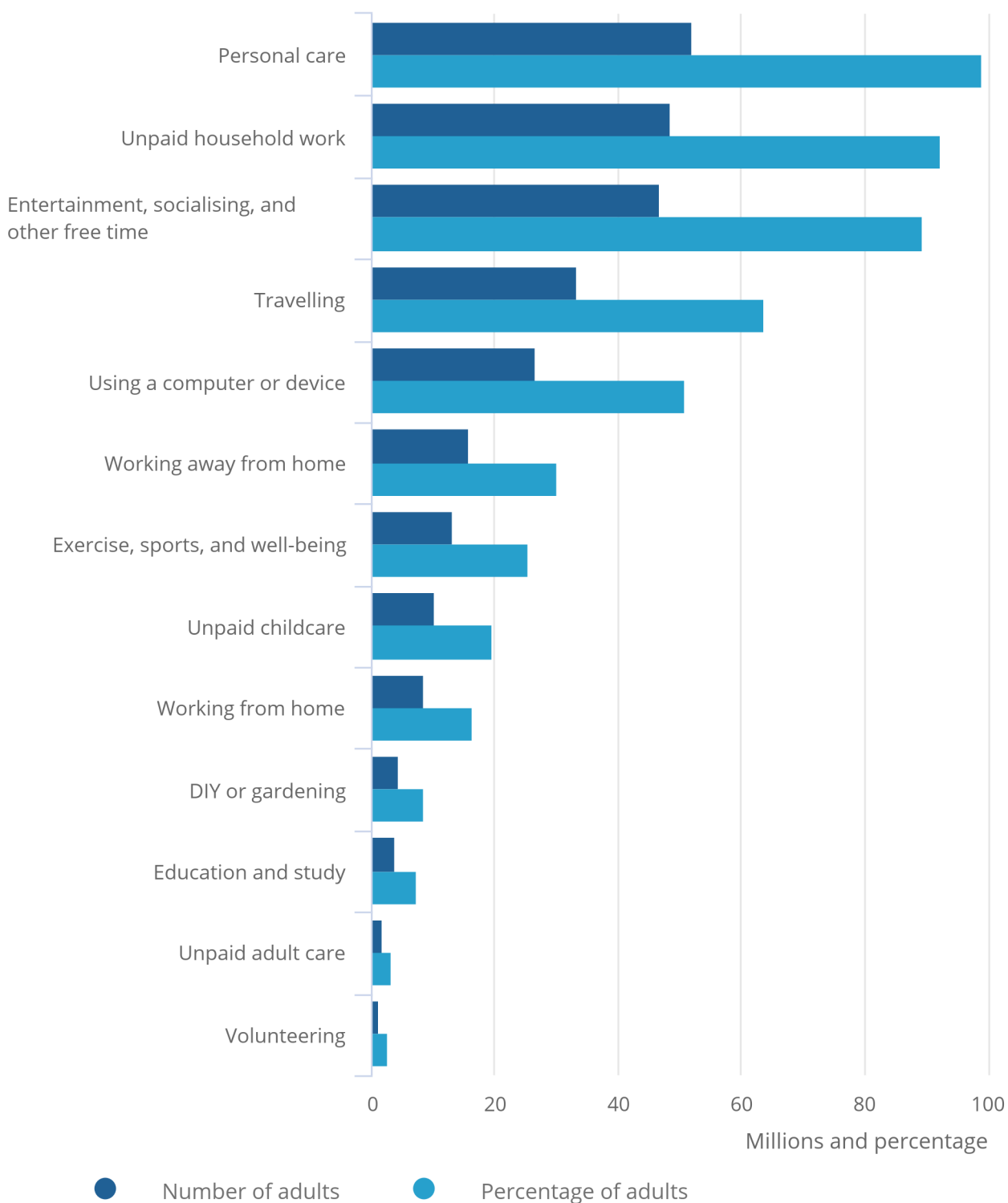
Figure 2 shows the number and proportion of adults who reported doing each activity as a main activity in March 2023.

Figure 2: Around 9 in 10 adults spent at least 10 minutes each day doing unpaid household work and engaging in entertainment, socialising, and free time activities

Number and proportion of adults who participated in each activity, UK, March 2023

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Number and proportion of adults who participated in each activity, UK, March 2023



Source: Time Use Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Almost two-thirds of adults spent 10 minutes or more each day travelling (33.4 million, 64%) and around half of adults spent at least 10 minutes using a computer or digital device (26.7 million, 51%).

Among adults who did some form of childcare (10.2 million, 20%), they did this for an average of 2 hours and 15 minutes.

To understand how time was used across a typical 24-hour day in March 2023, Figure 3 shows the proportion of adults who were doing activities at different times during weekdays and weekends.

Figure 3: Around 1 in 10 adults (11%) were sleeping or resting at 9:00am on weekdays, compared with around 1 in 4 (27%) at weekends

Percentage of adults doing specified activities at specified times during an average weekday and weekend day, UK: March 2023

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

On weekdays, a large proportion of adults engaged in paid work during the daytime, and there are distinct periods in the afternoon and evening when people were doing personal care activities, including eating and drinking.

At weekends, the proportion of adults doing paid work was much smaller, and a greater proportion were spending time on unpaid household work and entertainment and leisure activities. The pattern of sleep during the weekend was also slightly different, with more adults waking later and going to sleep later.

3 . Time use among adults who were employed and economically inactive

In the [Spring Budget 2023](#), the government announced a series of [Labour Market Measures](#). The measures were designed to support people to enter work, including help with childcare, help for disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and support for older workers.

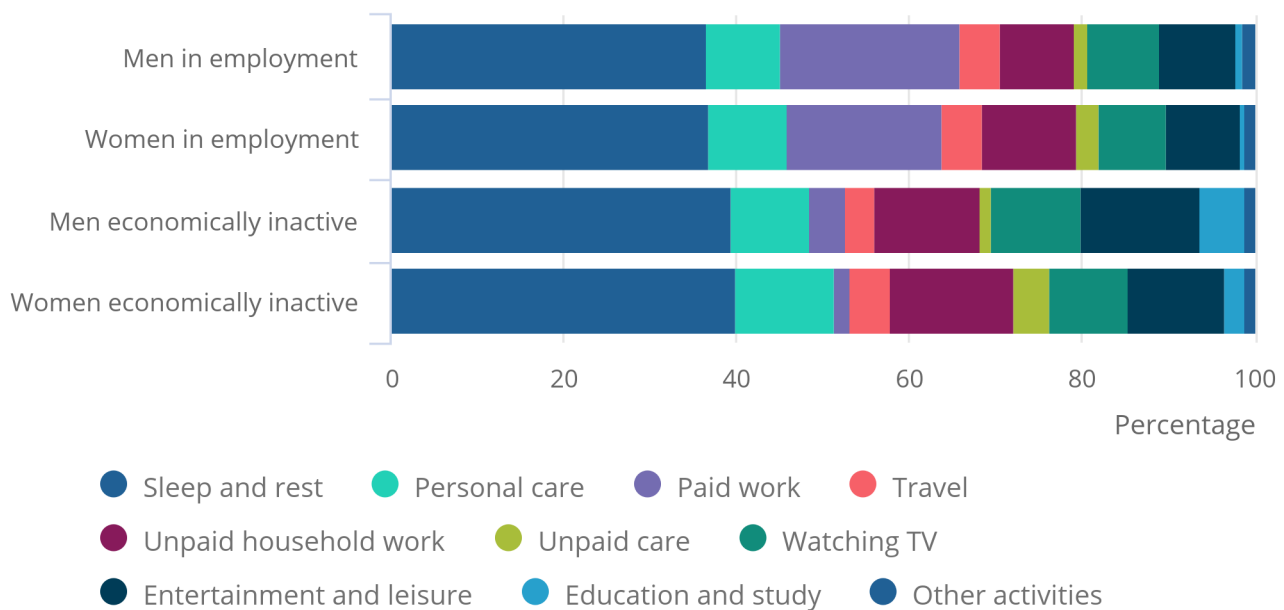
Figure 4 shows patterns of average daily time use between men and women aged 18 to 64 years in the UK who were employed and who were economically inactive in March 2023.

Figure 4: Daily time use among employed adults was broadly similar, with women doing more unpaid household work and care, while there was variation among economically inactive adults

Proportion of time spent on daily activities over an average 24-hour period by adults aged 18 to 64 years: by employment status and sex, UK: March 2023

Figure 4: Daily time use among employed adults was broadly similar, with women doing more unpaid household work and care, while there was variation among economically inactive adults

Proportion of time spent on daily activities over an average 24-hour period by adults aged 18 to 64 years: by employment status and sex, UK: March 2023



Source: Time Use Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Differences between men and women in employment

In February to April 2023, the [employment](#) rate for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated to be 79.6% for men and 72.3% for women, compared with 79.0% and 72.3%, respectively in February to April 2022.

For further information on the estimated employment rate for males and females aged 16 to 64 years, see our [Male employment rate \(aged 16 to 64, seasonally adjusted\) time series](#) and our [Female employment rate \(aged 16 to 64, seasonally adjusted\) time series](#).

The pattern of daily time among employed men and women of working age in March 2023 was broadly similar. Men spent more time on paid work than women (21%, 5 hours and 1 minute compared with 18%, 4 hours and 18 minutes, respectively). However, the amount of time women spent on average doing unpaid household work (10.9%, 2 hours and 37 minutes) was significantly higher than the amount of time spent by men doing unpaid household work (8.4%, 2 hours and 2 minutes).

Employed women also spent significantly more time on unpaid care (2.7%, 39 minutes) than employed men (1.8%, 26 minutes).

Differences between men and women who were economically inactive

In February to April 2023, the [economic inactivity](#) rate for people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK was 17.0% for men and 24.9% for women, compared with 17.7% and 24.9% respectively in February to April 2022.

For further information on the estimated economic inactivity rate for males and females aged 16 to 64 years, see our [Economic inactivity rate: UK: Male: Aged 16 to 64 time series](#) and our [Economic inactivity rate: UK: Female: Aged 16 to 64 time series](#).

In March 2023, economically inactive men and women of working age spent more time doing unpaid household work on average (12.4%, 2 hours and 59 minutes and 14.2%, 3 hours and 25 minutes, respectively) than those in employment. Economically inactive women spent 4.2% (60 minutes) of their daily time on unpaid care (significantly higher than employed women), while economically inactive men spent an average of 1.2% (18 minutes) of their daily time on unpaid care.

A small proportion of adults who reported that they were economically inactive also reported that they undertook some form of paid work during their day. Paid work includes both formal and informal jobs, such as doing cleaning, odd jobs, using your own vehicle to earn money, or selling personal items. Almost one quarter (24%) of adults who specified they were a full-time student (and were therefore categorised as economically inactive) reported that they spent time doing paid work.

Differences in time use among economically inactive adults

Previous Office for National Statistics (ONS) analyses have shown that overall increases in activity since 2019 are constituted largely by a rise in the prevalence of work-limiting health conditions, as shown in our [Health, demographic and labour market influences on economic inactivity, UK: 2019 to 2022 release](#), and the changing age profile of the population, as shown in our [Population changes and economic inactivity trends, UK: 2019 to 2026 article](#).

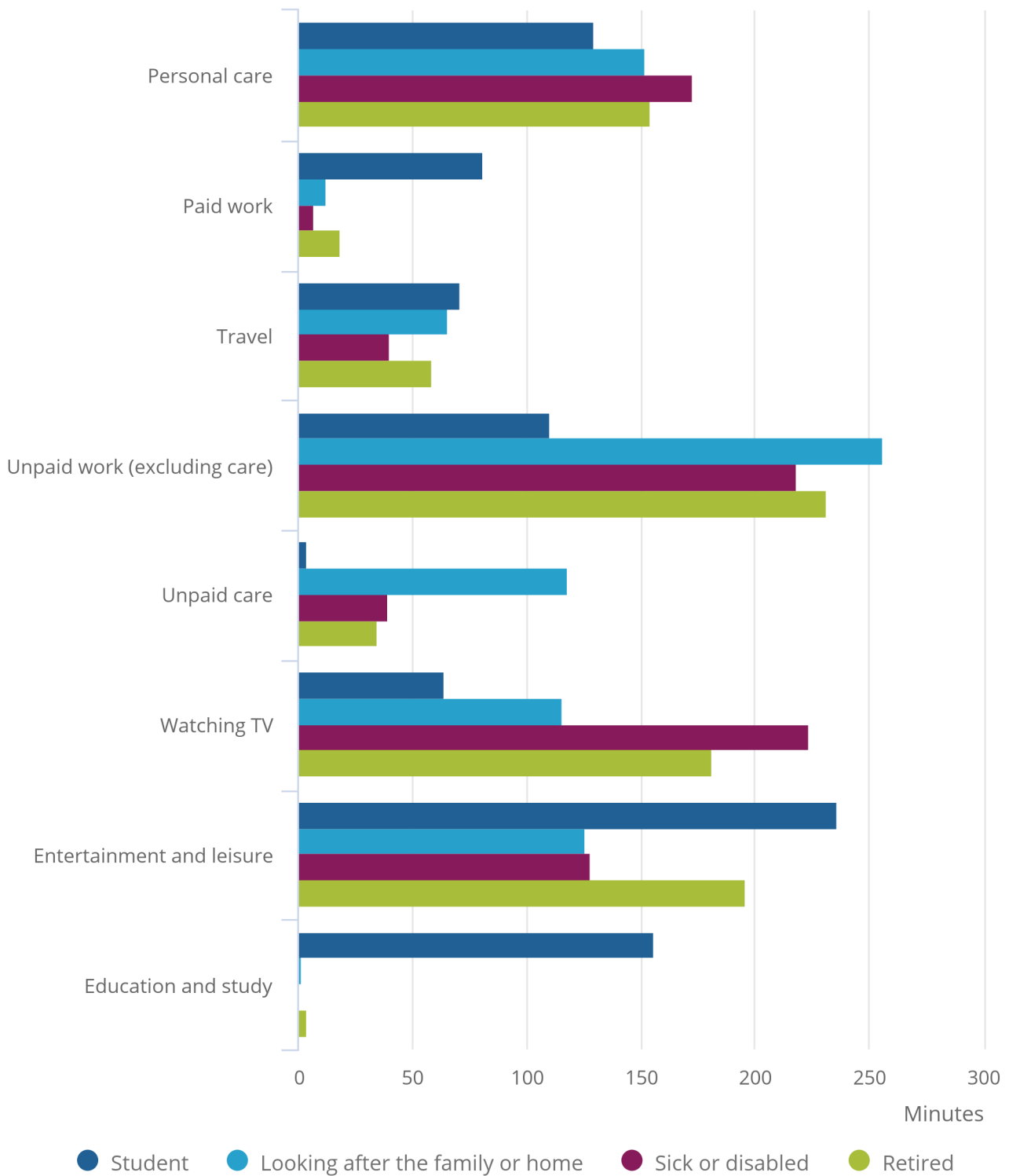
Figure 5 shows the average daily time spent on activities in March 2023 by those who were economically inactive, according to the main reason for their inactivity.

Figure 5: There was a lot of variation in time use among economically inactive adults, according to the main reason for their inactivity

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities by economically inactive people aged 18 to 64 years: by reason for inactivity, UK, March 2023

Figure 5: There was a lot of variation in time use among economically inactive adults, according to the main reason for their inactivity

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities by economically inactive people aged 18 to 64 years: by reason for inactivity, UK, March 2023



Source: Time Use Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Among those who were sick or disabled, after sleep and rest, most time was spent watching television (3 hours and 44 minutes), doing unpaid household work (3 hours and 38 minutes) and on personal care (2 hours and 53 minutes).

The largest group of economically inactive people were retired. Among those, most time was spent doing unpaid work (3 hours and 51 minutes), entertainment and leisure activities (3 hours and 16 minutes) and watching television (3 hours and 1 minute).

In the context of labour market pressures in the economy, previous ONS analyses have also explored attitudes, reasons and barriers for not working, as shown in our [Early insights from the Over 50s Lifestyle Study, Great Britain: 1 March 2022 bulletin](#) and [Returning to the workplace - the motivations and barriers for people aged 50 years and over, Great Britain: August 2022 article](#). Related analysis also found age to be a strong predictor of people aged 50 and over being inactive, as shown in [Section 5 of our Worker movements and economic inactivity in the UK: 2018 to 2022 article](#).

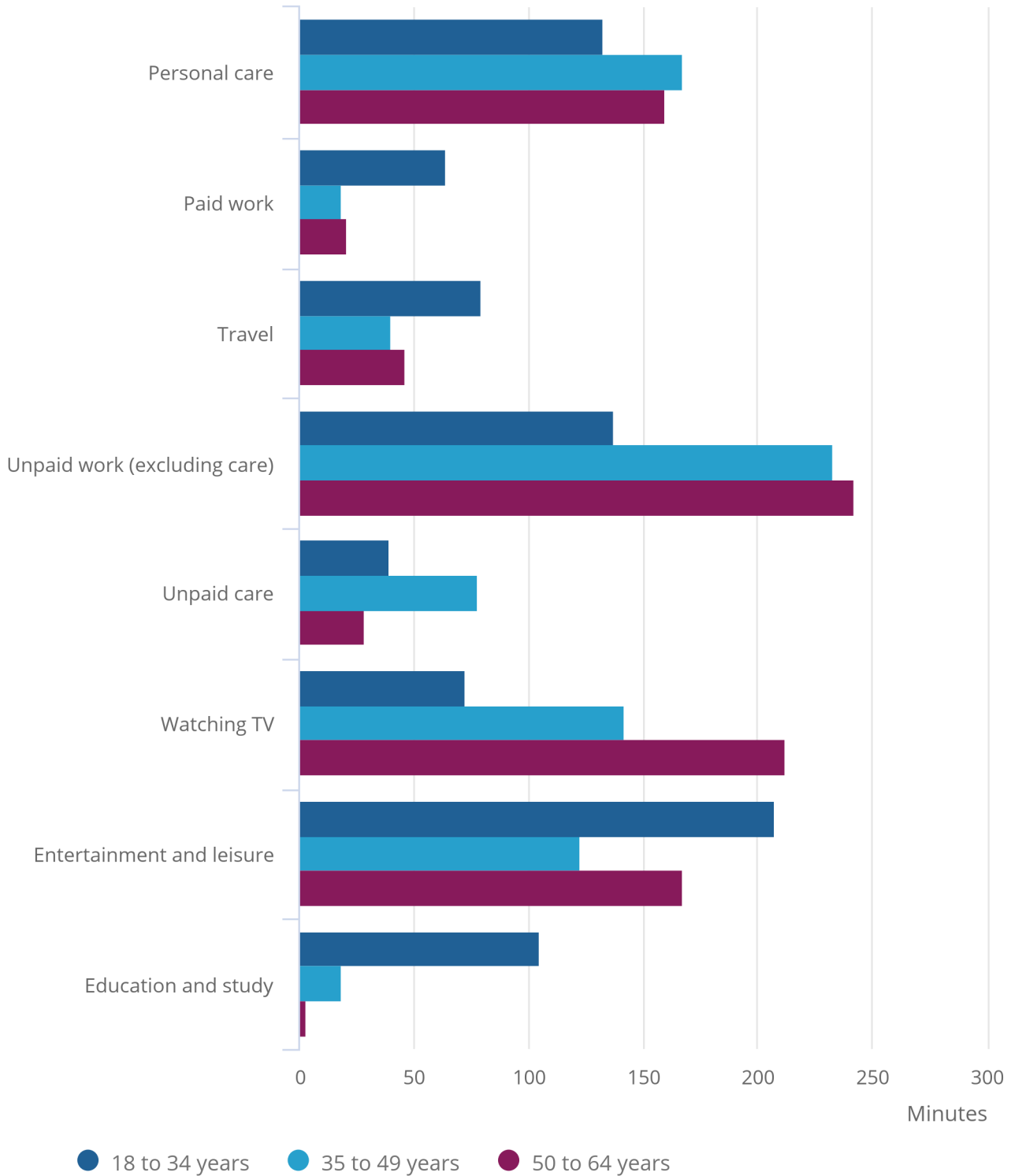
Figure 6 shows that in March 2023, economically inactive people aged 50 to 64 years spent most of their time doing unpaid household work (4 hours and 2 minutes), watching television (3 hours and 32 minutes) and on entertainment and leisure activities (2 hours and 47 minutes). On average, 29 minutes were spent doing unpaid childcare or adult care.

Figure 6: Economically inactive people aged 50 to 64 years spent more time doing unpaid household work and watching television but less time travelling than those aged 18 to 34 years

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities by economically inactive people: by age group, UK: March 2023

Figure 6: Economically inactive people aged 50 to 64 years spent more time doing unpaid household work and watching television but less time travelling than those aged 18 to 34 years

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities by economically inactive people: by age group, UK: March 2023



Source: Time Use Survey from the Office for National Statistics

4 . Changes in time use since March 2020

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Office for National Statistics (ONS) analyses of time use in recent years have focused on how people spent time during periods of lockdown and during periods after restrictions had eased. For further information see our [Coronavirus and how people spent their time under lockdown: 28 March to 26 April 2020 bulletin](#) and our [How people spent their time after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, UK: March 2022 bulletin](#).

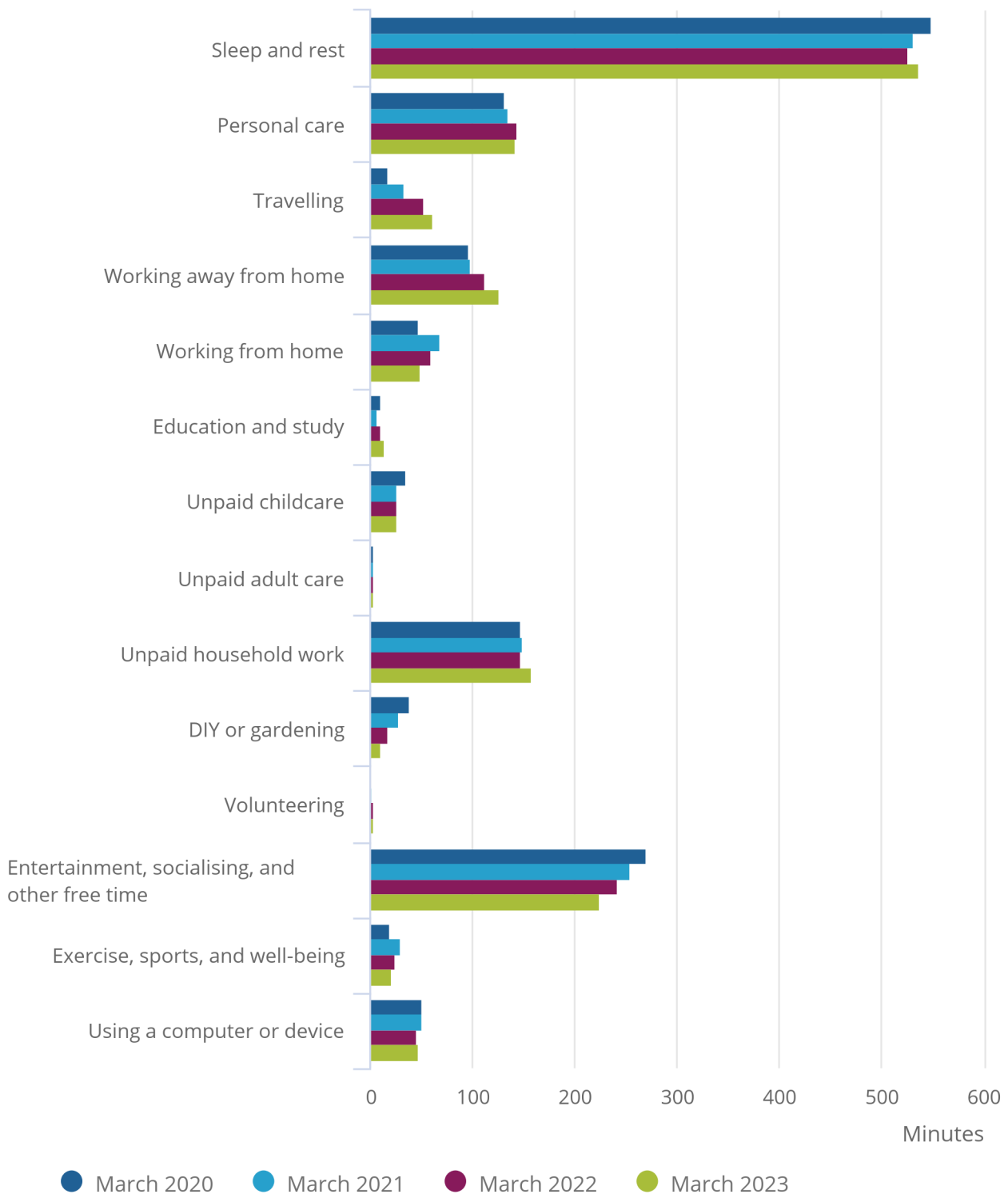
Figure 7 shows how average daily times spent by adults on different activities have changed each year from March 2020 to March 2023.

Figure 7: Adults spent more time travelling, working away from home, and on personal care but less time on entertainment activities in March 2023 compared with March 2020

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities, adults aged 18 years and over, Great Britain: March 2020 and March 2021, UK: March 2022 and March 2023

Figure 7: Adults spent more time travelling, working away from home, and on personal care but less time on entertainment activities in March 2023 compared with March 2020

Average daily time (minutes) spent doing specified activities, adults aged 18 years and over, Great Britain: March 2020 and March 2021, UK: March 2022 and March 2023



Notes:

1. The estimate for volunteering in March 2020 has been suppressed because of a low sample size.

Travel and paid work

There were significant increases in the average daily time spent travelling each year, rising from 17 minutes in March 2020 to 61 minutes in March 2023. There were also significant increases between these two periods in the time spent working away from home (from 1 hour and 36 minutes to 2 hours and 7 minutes).

The average time spent working from home in March 2020 was 47 minutes. This peaked in March 2021 at 1 hour and 9 minutes, but then decreased significantly by March 2023 to 49 minutes.

Unpaid work

The average daily time spent doing unpaid household work was slightly higher in March 2023 (2 hours and 38 minutes) compared with the lowest average time in March 2020 (2 hours and 27 minutes), though this was not significant.

There were year-on-year significant decreases in the average time spent doing "Do It Yourself" (DIY) tasks and gardening, falling from 39 minutes in March 2020 to 10 minutes in March 2023.

Entertainment, exercise and other free time activities

Between March 2020 and March 2023, there was a significant fall in the average daily time spent on entertainment, socialising and other free time activities, such as reading and checking social media, from a total of 4 hours and 30 minutes to 3 hours and 44 minutes.

The average daily time spent doing exercise, sports and well-being activities was highest in March 2021 at 30 minutes, but this fell significantly to 20 minutes in March 2023.

5 . Time use data

[Time Use in the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 04 July 2023

Estimates of average daily time spent by adults on activities including paid work, unpaid household work, unpaid care, travel and entertainment, split by various characteristics. Includes data from March 2020 to March 2023. Experimental statistics.

6 . Glossary

Entertainment and leisure

Includes socialising, listening to music and other media, reading, playing games, going to the cinema, theatre, sporting evenings and other cultural activities, using a computer or device to check social media or do other things online, taking exercise, playing sports or doing other well-being activities. Also includes watching television, unless presented separately.

Paid work

Includes working outside of the home, working from home, providing childcare, cleaning or doing odd jobs for pay, leasing or renting things you own, using your private vehicle to earn money (such as delivery services), showing your property to potential buyers, and selling things.

Participation

Adults who are identified as participating in a particular activity are those who undertook and reported doing the activity (as a main activity) on their diary day.

Personal care

Includes washing, dressing, using the bathroom, taking medication or other health-related care, eating, drinking and snacking.

Travel

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

Unpaid care

Includes caring for children and doing tasks such as making meals and feeding, washing and dressing, playing with children, reading with children, and helping with homework. Also includes helping, caring for or looking after adults.

Unpaid household work

Includes domestic housework activities (such as cooking, cleaning or doing the laundry), caring for pets, shopping and household administration (such as paying bills). Also includes "Do It Yourself" (DIY) tasks, gardening and volunteering, unless presented separately.

7 . Measuring the data

This release contains data collected in the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Online Time Use Survey \(OTUS\)](#), which has been carried out six times on an [experimental](#) basis since March 2020.

Participants were issued with two pre-allocated diary days (one weekday and one weekend day) and asked to record the activities that they undertook during the whole 24-hour periods in an online diary tool. This included their main activities (in 10-minute periods) and up to five secondary activities (in 5-minute periods). Estimates in this release are based on reported main activities only.

The full set of time use estimates and accompanying 95% [confidence intervals](#), broken down by various characteristics, are included in our accompanying datasets.

Where comparisons are made between estimates, confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences.

Sampling and response

The survey uses a representative sample of UK participants selected from the [National Centre for Social Research NatCen Panel](#) using a probability-based sampling approach.

In the March 2023 survey, 7,000 adults aged 18 years and over were sampled (5,000 across the UK plus an additional 2,000 in Scotland), resulting in 14,000 diary days being issued. Of these, 5,600 (40%) were completed with 23 hours or more of activities recorded.

Weighting

Prior to weighting, the quality of diaries was assessed according to the amount of time and number of activities recorded. Only diaries of sufficient quality were weighted and used in the production of estimates.

The OTUS weighting process takes account of non-response and individual diaries are calibrated with calibration controls applied for age and sex groups, geographical regions, ethnicity, and employment. Diaries are split into two subsets for weekdays and weekends, respectively, which are each calibrated separately. They are then recombined and rescaled using a ratio of 5:2 (weekdays:weekends). In this way, the diary data are made representative of how the UK adult population spends time over the course of a week.

8 . Strengths and limitations

Comparability with previous estimates

Estimates included in this release for March to April 2020, September to October 2020, March 2021 and March 2022 are not comparable with those included in our previous time use bulletin, [How people spent their time after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, UK: March 2022 bulletin](#), originally published on 9 August 2022.

In the previous release, weighted diaries, which included a total of 75 minutes or more of the following, were not included in the calculation of means:

- time spent completing the time use diary
- time spent on Other activities
- missing time

In this release, time spent on the activity of completing the time use diary and missing time are both included in the Other activities category.

Additional diaries have also been included in data for March 2022, where it has been possible to calculate weights for respondents who did not complete the demographic questionnaire issued alongside their diaries, but whose information relating to sex, age, region, ethnicity and economic activity was available from the NatCen Panel data.

9 . Related links

[How people spent their time after coronavirus restrictions were lifted, UK: March 2022](#)

Statistical Bulletin | Released 9 August 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.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 04 July 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Time Use in the UK: March 2023](#)

