

# Physical Activity Patterns and the Way the World Moves Alters during Stay at Home Orders

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Written by: Gretchen Zirgaitis, Undergraduate Student; Rachel Beilfuss, Graduate Student

Edited by: Dr. Sandra Hunter, Toni Uhrich, and Mike Haischer

## Key Points

- **Big data (Fitbit and Garmin) indicates daily step count decreased by 12% worldwide during the stay at home orders.**
- **While incidental activity levels may be down, more structured exercise such as indoor cycling increased.**
- **Structured exercise is essential during the COVID-19 pandemic to offset the decrease in incidental activity levels and maintain overall health.**

According to several big data sources there was a 12% decrease in daily step count worldwide ([Garmin](#)) and in the US ([Fitbit](#))<sup>8,6</sup>. These numbers varied widely within the US and across countries. Whether this large decline will cause a spike in prevalent comorbidities associated with decreased physical activity such as an increased risk for cardiovascular complications remains relatively unknown<sup>5</sup>. Despite this 12% decrease in total daily steps, additional data from Garmin users shows an astonishing 24% increase in activity pertaining to structured purposeful exercise<sup>8</sup>. These numbers indicate that there has been a general shift in the way people are moving and may not reflect an overall decrease in general activity. Many people may be stuck at home during the day, but are still finding the time and the motivation to exercise. One popular exercise people are utilizing to keep moving at home is indoor cycling.

For Garmin users, the US has shown a large increase in indoor cycling compared with other structured exercises including walking, outdoor cycling, yoga, and running (Figure 1). For example in March, Garmin indicated that virtual cycling activity increased 64% as compared to the previous year<sup>7,1</sup>. What is it about indoor cycling that makes it the “go-to” exercise when it comes to staying in shape at home? One reason for the recent trend may be found in a modern piece of exercise equipment that has gained popularity across the country – the Peloton. Due to many gyms closing, people are void of their normal interactive workout experience and are turning to this luxury bike to fill those gaps<sup>2</sup>. A recent article in *Forbes* noted that Peloton subscriptions have increased by 94%<sup>4</sup>! Peloton bikes have provided an avenue where people can stay fit, safe, and connected all at once.

Although not everyone has access to indoor exercise equipment, there are still numerous, cost-effective methods to stay fit and healthy at home. These include walking, running, exercise guided by fitness apps, utilizing household items for weights during resistance exercises or YouTube body-weight workouts<sup>3</sup>. The benefits of exercising are infinite and have been shown to reduce the risk of viral infection, symptoms of psychological disorders, cardiovascular issues, and chronic disease<sup>3, 5</sup>. No matter how you choose to move during the Covid-19 pandemic, what matters most is that you keep moving.

ACTIVITIES WITH LARGEST INCREASE  
APRIL 2020 VS. APRIL 2019

CYCLING INDOOR	●	WALKING	●	CYCLING OUTDOOR	●	FITNESS EQUIPMENT	●	HIKING	●	GOLF	●
RUNNING INDOOR	●	RUNNING OUTDOOR	●	YOGA	●	MOUNTAINEERING	●	WINTER SPORTS	●		●



**Figure 1:** The US has shown the largest increase in indoor cycling activity compared to other activities . Graphic: <https://www.garmin.com/en-US/blog/fitness/the-impact-of-the-global-pandemic-on-human-activity-part-iii/>

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