Lifting during COVID-19

In May & June of 2020, we distributed a survey via social media to see how COVID-19 affected exercise routines.

503 people completed this survey

74% of respondents were female

83% of respondents were white

Ages ranged from 19-79 yrs
The average respondent was 39 yrs. old

Over 51% of respondents lifted weights in a gym prior to the pandemic

1 How were gym lifters affected by the pandemic?

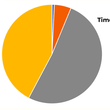
Before COVID-19

- 52% of gym lifter exercised 2-5 times per week.
- 42% of gym lifters exercised more than 5 times per week.
- Meaning, 94% of gym lifters exercised more than twice per week.

During the COVID-19 Shutdown

- Gym lifters exercised less.
- Just over 68% of gym lifters exercised more than twice per week.
- Of that, just over 34% of gym lifters exercised more than 5 times per week.

Weekly Exercise Frequency



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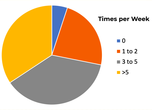
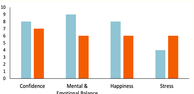
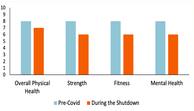


Lifters Felt Worse during the COVID-19 Shutdown (1-10 scale)



Lifters Experienced Worse Health during the COVID-19 Shutdown (1-10 scale)



In Summary...

- **During stay at home orders, lifters did worse on all of our metrics from mental health & well being to physical health & fitness.**

2 Were gym lifters more affected than everyone else?

Side-by-side comparisons of gym lifters & everyone else

Confidence

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"Exercise gives me confidence that my body can do what it needs to do to keep going. I feel better after time spent outside..."

Mental & Emotional Balance

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"I can tell I have been more irritated & quick to snap at those close to me since I have not been able to lift in a gym."

Happiness

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"If I don't move my body I will just sit on the couch & get lazy & depressed & eat junk food which is not good for any of the above."

Stress

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"Weight lifting was a stress reliever for me. I can't wind down more and find myself stressed more often to the point I just want to break down in tears."

Strength

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"I have lost about 5lbs since COVID (SAHO) started. I know it is not because of fat loss, but I think it is a loss of muscle mass as I have not been lifting weights as normal."

Mental Health

Gym Lifters

Everyone Else

"Not being able to lift is really negatively affecting me mentally because I don't have a way to relieve anger or stress."

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

During the stay at home orders, folks who almost exclusively lifted at the gym faired worse than everyone else for every measure

3 How can gym lifters better cope during future shutdowns?

Just 30%!

You don't need a lot of heavy weights!

Lifting to **failure** at 30% of your 1 rep max still leads to protein synthesis.

Explore!

Hiking, especially with a heavy pack, can work legs & core while also improving cardio fitness.

Uncouple

Uncouple your mental health from you gym activity.

Discover & develop new hobbies that don't involve the gym.

Work on Weaknesses

Use this time to address lingering injuries, accessory muscle weakness, & tightness with cheap equipment like resistance bands.

Routine

Whatever you do to get moving, develop a routine & stick with it.

Those who had routines faired better than those who didn't.

Get a Partner

Lack motivation? Miss your gym partner?

Check in virtually with a buddy to support & hold one another accountable.

Resilience

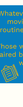
You may be missing gains & competitions, but not all is lost.

Focus on the things going well such as overall health & complimentary gains.

This research was conducted by:

Dr. Cara Ocobock
University of Notre Dame Department of Anthropology

- cocobock@nd.edu
- Dr. Ocobock's Website



Contact us with questions!

Dr. Katie Rose Hejtmanek
Brooklyn College, CUNY Department of Anthropology

- khejtmanek@brooklyn.cuny.edu
- Dr. Hejtmanek's Website

For us, it's personal!

Ocobock is a powerlifter and Hejtmanek is an Olympic weightlifter. We conducted this study because of our own pandemic experiences and with a desire to help others.

This study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Notre Dame and Brooklyn College, CUNY.