

# The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people

Summary of secondary  
research

Compiled August 2020

[activityalliance.org.uk](https://activityalliance.org.uk)



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# Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has caused significant challenges for many people, affecting our health, lifestyles, and wellbeing.

Disabled people face additional barriers in many areas of life, including being physically active.

This document, using a review of recent research, outlines the social impact of the pandemic and restriction measures on disabled people, and the impact on their physical activity levels. References to the relevant research reports can be found in the notes pages of this document.

This is updated regularly with new figures. Last updated: 13/8/2020

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Wellbeing and support

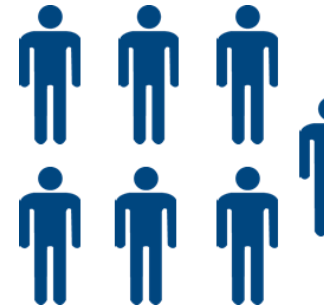
# Disabled people are more likely to die from coronavirus



For every one non-disabled woman who dies  
11 disabled women die



For every one non-disabled man who dies  
6.5 disabled men die



# Disabled people are more worried about the impact COVID-19 is having on their lives

**73%**

July 2020

Three quarters of disabled people are "very" or "somewhat" worried about the effect that coronavirus is having on their life

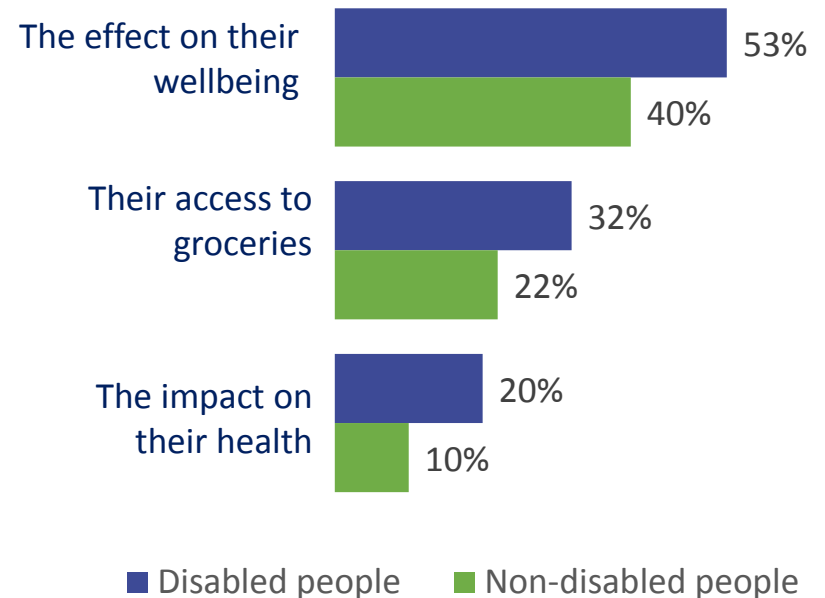
**x2**

People with a health condition are twice as likely to feel lonely than the overall population.

**22%**

Over one fifth of disabled people say COVID-19 has impacted their mental health

## Disabled people are more worried about...



July 2020

# COVID-19 is having a negative impact on disabled children and their parent's health



Parents of disabled children report worsening emotional and mental health for both their children and themselves



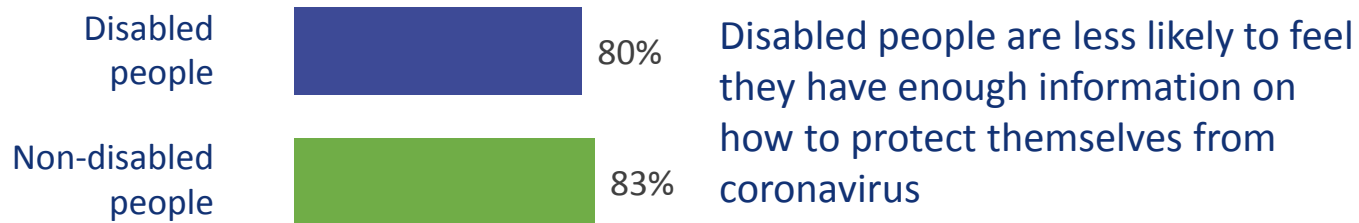
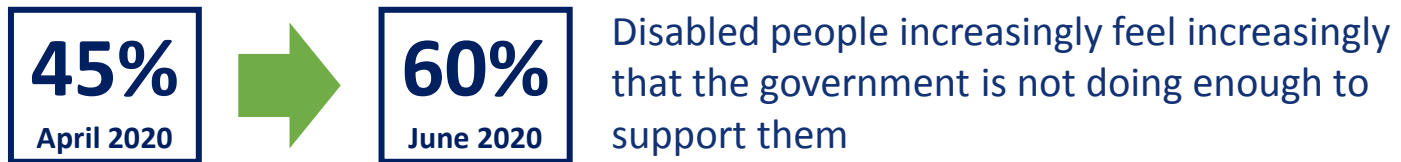
Nearly half (45%) say their disabled children's physical health has declined

With just over half (54%) saying the same about their own health



Over two thirds (68%) say a health or social care assessment has been delayed due to the lockdown.

# Disabled people are feeling unsupported and unsure of how to keep themselves safe





# Disabled people are being left without the care they need

“The emergency coronavirus legislation relaxed the duty of care on local authorities. It also reduced the duty on local authorities on ECHP and the timeliness of assessments. Consequently, some disabled adults and children may be left without the care and support they need.” Scope, June 2020

**51%**

Over half of disabled adults who previously received care are no longer receiving home visits from health care professionals. (June 2020)

**31%**

Almost one third of disabled people are concerned about the level of care they are currently receiving and how it is provided. (June 2020)

**28%**

Over a quarter of disabled people feel forgotten during the pandemic (June 2020)

# Parents of disabled children are frustrated at the impact COVID-19 has had on support



## Compared to pre lockdown:

**8%**

Less than 1 in 10 parents say support from local councils / NHS has stayed the same

**76%**

Three quarters say all support from local council / NHS has stopped

**72%**

Over 7 in 10 parents are having to do a lot more care

## Since lockdown has eased:

**51%**

Over half of parents said short breaks / respite have not resumed

**71%**

More than 7 in 10 have said their child's therapies have not restarted

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Shielding and self isolation

# Disabled people are more likely to be socially isolating or shielding

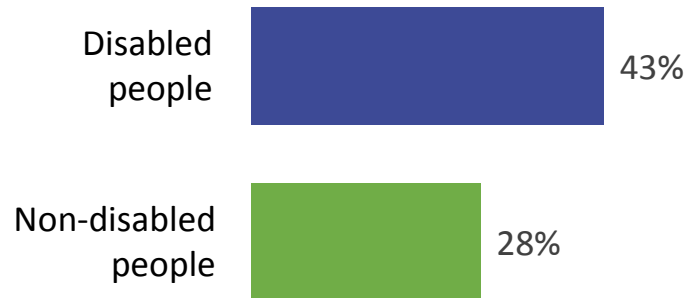


**2.2 million people** were classed as clinically extremely vulnerable by the government.



**63%**

Almost two thirds were completely shielding in early June 2020.



Disabled people were much more likely to feel unsafe or very unsafe when outside their home

July 2020

# Despite the easing of lockdown, disabled people are still more likely to remain indoors

The number of disabled people not leaving their home has reduced as lockdown eased



## But....

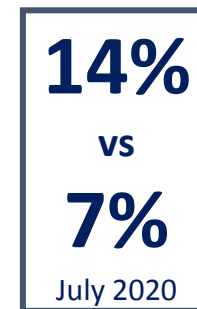
Many disabled people still feel uncomfortable leaving their homes



Over four fifths of people who were shielding felt unsafe leaving their house when lockdown eased.



In the following two weeks, only two-fifths of people had the confidence to go outside.



By July, people with a health condition were still twice as likely as those without to not have left their home in the last 7 days for any reason.

# Parents of disabled children are cautious about relaxing shielding



**71%**

Despite changes in rules, 7 in 10 parents will continue to shield their children

**91%**

9 in 10 parents have had no advice from health professionals on shielding

**69%**

7 in 10 have been unable to acquire PPE for themselves or their child's carers



**21%**

Only one fifth of parents are confident about the return to school in September

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Finances and benefits

# Disabled people often use benefits to support them day to day



3.5 million disabled people of working age receive benefits. This support helps them to meet day-to-day practical challenges as well as participate more fully in society

**65%**

Almost two thirds of disabled rely on benefits to be active

“Disabled people have, for a long time, had poor experiences using the welfare system. Difficulty in accessing benefits and delays in payments have often left disabled people financially insecure. The crisis has further highlighted existing flaws in the system and the introduction of temporary changes creates uncertainty.”

**x2**

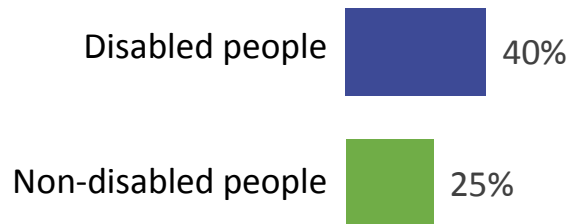
A disabled working-age adult is more than twice as likely to be in poverty than a non-disabled adult

**£538**

Disabled people face over £500 a month in extra costs related to their impairment or condition



# Disabled people are more likely to be affected by the financial impact of coronavirus



During the pandemic, disabled people were much more likely to say they would be unable to pay an unexpected expense of £850



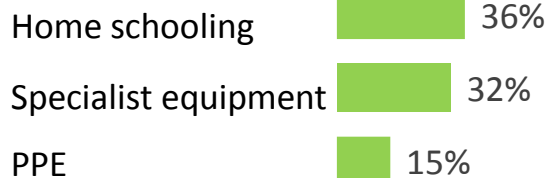
Parents of disabled children are facing many financial pressures



With one fifth believing they will end up in debt

**61%**

6 in 10 had seen an increase in costs



**39%**

Almost two fifths had seen a reduction in income

**76%**

Over three quarters have had no increase in benefits

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Impact on physical activity

# Activity levels among disabled people were increasing before COVID-19: they remain lower than for non-disabled people

Disabled people had seen an increase in activity levels, with a 2.5% increase on the previous 12 months. However they are still almost twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people

**Proportion of people who are inactive (doing less than 30 mins of physical activity per week)**



The most popular physical activities that disabled people participate in are:



Walking for leisure and travel



Fitness activities



Cycling for leisure and sport



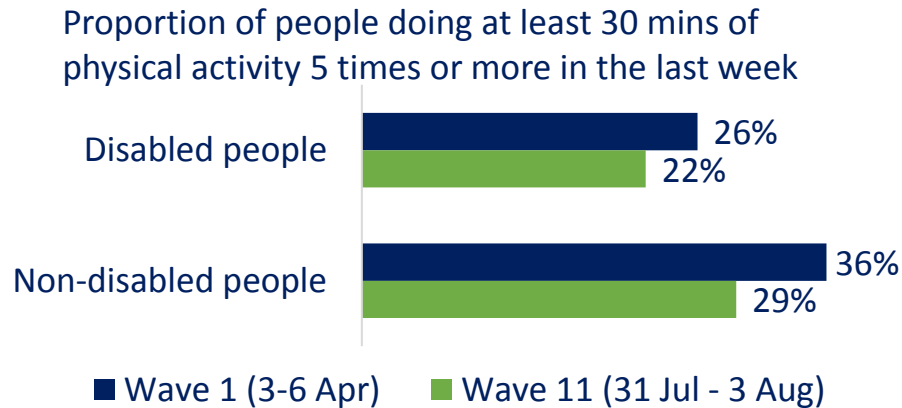
Swimming



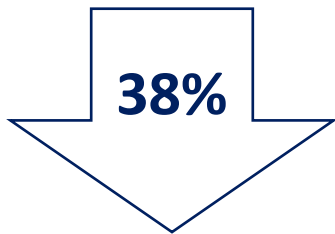
Fitness classes

# During lockdown disabled people were less likely to be active

**Over the course of lockdown, everyone has seen their activity levels drop:**



**After lockdown eased, in late June:**



Almost two fifths of disabled people said they were doing less activity than prior to lockdown



However almost 3 in 10 disabled people said they were doing more activity

# The inequalities in activity levels have worsened during COVID-19

The activity gap has widened for many groups:



Between men and women and social grades

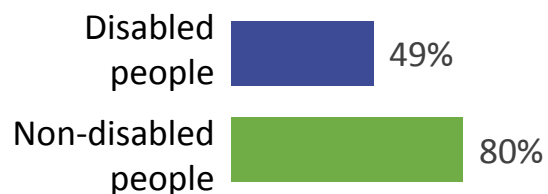


Disabled people and people from BAME ethnic backgrounds continue to be the least active groups



People who live alone, those without access to outdoor space, and people living in urban also showed inequalities in activity levels

# Disabled people are less likely to feel they have the ability to be active because of coronavirus



Disabled people are half as likely to agree they have the ability to be physically active

**Disabled people were less likely than non-disabled people to:**

Have found new ways to be active

Be using exercise to manage their physical or mental health

Have more time for physical activity

# Coronavirus is making disabled people concerned about keeping active

**63%**

Almost two thirds of disabled people agree its important for them to exercise regularly



**70%**

7 in 10 says it helps manage their physical health



**64%**

Two thirds say it helps manage their mental health

However...



**33%**

One third were moderately or extremely concerned about being able to keep active

# Coronavirus is an important additional barrier to activity for people with health conditions

## Barriers to being active:

**40%**

My health issue causes pain

**38%**

I am worried about coronavirus

**32%**

I am too tired/don't have enough energy

**29%**

My condition is unpredictable/makes it hard to commit

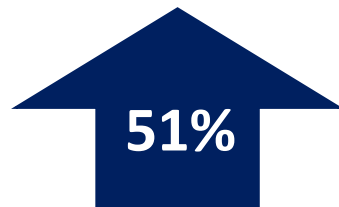
**20%**

I worry about making my condition worse

Those with a lung or mental health condition are more likely to say coronavirus is a barrier.



# Disabled people want to be more active after lockdown



Over half of disabled people want to increase the amount of activity they do post lockdown

## What concerns you about returning to physical activity?

Social distancing




Cleanliness and hygiene when returning to the gym / swimming

Catching the virus

# Some activity levels did increase during lockdown, however disabled people are still less active



During lockdown, levels of running, walking, and cycling increased for both disabled and non-disabled people, although levels of participation among disabled people were much lower

		% of disabled people who completed each activity in the last week (June 19-22)	% of non-disabled people who completed each activity in the last week (June 19-22)
Running		13%	26%
Walking		55%	67%
Cycling		12%	18%

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# Overcoming COVID-19 challenges: Case study and examples

# Geddington Newton Bowls Club (Northamptonshire)

## The offer:

“We realised that several of our members were self-isolating either for health reasons or because they were unsure about mixing outside of their household. We have offered them “extra safe sessions” so they can feel safe and get back to playing bowls.”

Jeanette Humphreys, Club President

- Following the easing of lockdown and the re-opening of the club, the committee realised many of their members were fearful of a return to bowls due to being highly vulnerable or unsure of mixing outside their own household.
- Therefore ‘extra safe’ bowling sessions were offered:
  - Members could have the bowls green to themselves.
  - The gates were opened ready for their arrival
  - Equipment was put out and disinfected to minimise the need to touch any surfaces.
- Sessions have proved hugely popular with many feeling so satisfied with the safety measures in place that they have felt confident enough to book a regular session.
- A video has been made to demonstrate all the safety measures that have put in place at the club:  
<https://geddingtonbc.wixsite.com/bowls/gallery>

# Geddington Newton Bowls Club (Northamptonshire)

## The impact:

- The club has enabled its members to return to the sport at their own pace, whilst gaining confidence to leave their homes and socialise in a safe environment
- The number of extra safe sessions being booked has now reduced as members feel comfortable with the safety measures in place
- A 'Buddy Scheme' has now been introduced, for individuals who want an opponent to be paired up
- Other clubs have implemented similar 'extra safe' models in order to encourage members who are wary of returning to the sport
- Committee members continue to meet regularly via Zoom so as to assess the club's progress and any arising issues

“So far everyone who has played has thoroughly enjoyed getting back on the green after being in “lockdown” for so long and we are encouraging feedback so we can improve as we go along.”

Jeanette Humphreys, Club President

# Get Out Get Active, Activity Alliance (UK wide)

Get Out Get Active (GOGA) is a programme that runs across the UK. It supports the very least active disabled and non-disabled people to enjoy being active together.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the different activities GOGA provides, but the teams across the country have come up with some helpful ways to continue to support people being active

## Examples of what has been offered:

- Personal telephone calls to offer words of encouragement and listen to what individuals have been doing to keep active.
- Weekly emails with information on home workouts (sourced locally or nationally)
- Exercise postcards mapping suitable exercise programmes for people to follow from their home.
- Social media accounts sharing exercise suggestions and online classes and activity challenges
- Delivering equipment to care homes and individuals to help them be active (adapted bikes /badminton / foot golf)

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