

Bus drivers' health at risk due to sedentary behaviour, Loughborough research reveals

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A new pilot study into bus drivers' sedentary behaviour (prolonged sitting) during and outside working hours.

Bus drivers are typically sitting for more than 12 hours a day due to the demands of the job – three hours longer than office workers.

Led by researchers at Loughborough University as part of the Leicester-Loughborough Diet, Lifestyle and Physical Activity Biomedical Research Unit (BRU), the pilot study into bus drivers' sedentary behaviour (prolonged sitting) during and outside working hours is the first of its kind to directly measure periods of [inactivity](#) in a sample of drivers using an activPAL3 [accelerometer](#).

A total of 28 volunteer bus drivers provided valid data as part of the study on at least three [workdays](#) and one non-workday. These results were included in the analyses and showed that the drivers were sedentary for more than 12 hours a day on workdays, dropping to just under nine hours a day on non-workdays. This meant that the drivers' daily sitting time on workdays was up to three [hours](#) greater than that seen in [office workers](#) using the same device.

Meanwhile, 74% of bus drivers who took part in the study were defined as being overweight or obese, and at increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Participants were also found to have accumulated higher volumes of sitting time during non-workdays (62%) than seen in other occupations, which could be due to a knock-on effect of time spent sitting during the working day.

PhD student Veronica Varela Mato, from Loughborough University's School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, part of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine East Midlands, said the study's findings indicated that urgent interventions are needed to boost the health of bus drivers who are considered 'at risk' as a

direct result of their jobs.

"The findings of this pilot study suggest that bus drivers' health is suffering due to lengthy periods of sedentary behaviour which tends to dominate the working day," she said.

"This is why health interventions are needed sooner rather than later, not only to help increase bus drivers' movement during scheduled breaks, but also to boost drivers' levels of physical activity during leisure time.

"This study should serve as an incentive for more thorough research in occupational settings like these, with larger and more diverse groups of drivers. Regularly breaking up periods of [sitting](#) has been linked to health benefits, so a feasible approach to improving bus drivers' overall [health](#) and wellbeing could be, for example, to introduce pedometer-based walking challenges."

More information: Veronica Varela-Mato et al. Time spent sitting during and outside working hours in bus drivers: A pilot study, *Preventive Medicine Reports* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2015.11.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2015.11.011)

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