

Study investigates sexual activity in lockdown

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New research indicates that only four in 10 UK adults have been sexually active during the COVID-19 lockdown—a finding that could have important physical and mental health implications.

The study, published in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* and led by Dr.

Lee Smith of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and Professor Mark Tully of Ulster University, is the first to investigate levels of sexual activity during social distancing and self-isolation.

Only 39.9% of the 868 British adults surveyed for the research had taken part in any form of sexual activity during the previous seven days. The study found that being younger, male, married and a consumer of alcohol was associated with greater sexual activity.

Previous research has shown an association between sexual activity and [physical health](#), including helping to protect older adults against cardiovascular events. Frequent sexual activity has also been associated with various mental health benefits and improved cognitive function.

The findings of this new study suggest that the UK Government's [public health](#) messaging around COVID-19 self-isolation and social distancing could include promoting sexual activity as a way of maintaining physical and mental health.

Dr. Lee Smith, Reader in Physical Activity and Public Health at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said: "When starting this research we expected there to be a high level of sexual activity while social isolating at home, but interestingly we found a very low level.

"This low level of sexual activity could be explained by people currently feeling anxious and stressed owing to the pandemic and not being in the mood to engage in the act. Moreover, those who are not married or cohabiting may not currently be able to meet up with their [sexual partners](#) and similarly those who use online apps to facilitate casual sex will currently not be able to do this.

"A lot of my previous research has shown that a frequent and trouble-free sex life is important for higher levels of enjoyment of life and

general mental health, and this is particularly true for older adults. However, this study showed that [older adults](#) were less likely than younger adults to engage in [sexual activity](#)."

More information: Louis Jacob et al, COVID-19 social distancing and sexual activity in a sample of the British Public, *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jsxm.2020.05.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2020.05.001)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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