

Fitness levels of young people are reduced during recessions

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

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The fitness levels of young people are reduced during recessions, according to new research from Bradford School of Management.

The study was completed with the goal of understanding how labour market conditions affect fitness. They did this by analyzing the fitness levels of people partaking in 'Parkrun' events which take place all over the UK. To do this, Professor Papps and his colleagues focused on the running times of individuals. They base their analysis on the time it takes each person to run 5km.

The links between fitness and unemployment are interesting. Unemployment of course means a fall in income, which will reduce fitness due to people being forced to cut back on healthy food or gyms. But people's fitness may actually rise if people have more time available to exercise. Which effect dominates depends on a person's age, with younger people likely to gain relatively little time when they lose their jobs, due to the demands of household work and job search.

Previous research into the impact of the labor market on health focused on mortality and serious health conditions. Professor Papps and his colleagues wanted instead to focus on the impact on physical exercise.

They examined data for 16 years, from the low unemployment of the mid-2000s through the 2008 recession and the subsequent recovery. They followed individual runners over time, so their results are not explained by changes in the average fitness of runners who participate in Parkrun.

Concluding their research, the professors established that recessions saw an improvement in running times among male and female participants over 50, whilst men aged 20-49 and women aged 20-29 had worse results.

Professor Papps said "These age differences appear to be associated with movements into unemployment from employment, rather than by runners exiting the labor market entirely."

This study was published by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, and can be found here.

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If you would like to speak with Professor Kerry L. Papps, or to see a copy of the paper, please contact Kate at kate@bluesky-pr.com