



Habits We Failed To Change In 2020 And How It Shaped Our Plans For 2021

If Americans' track record for "sticking with it" in 2020 is any indication, keeping New Year's resolutions may prove more difficult in 2021 than ever before.

The average American tried to form 19 new habits during quarantine - and gave up on all but four of them, according to new research.

[Infographic at end of article]

A study of 2,000 Americans found that a new exercise routine (34%), a new hobby (31%) and a new cooking regimen (29%) were among the top new habits to try last year.

On the other hand, a new wake-up time (13%), meditation (12%) and going to bed earlier (10%) were the activities most likely to be tried and subsequently abandoned in 2020.

And the trend towards setting new health-related goals shows no sign of slowing in 2021, as eating better (39%), managing stress better (33%) and exercising more consistently (30%) were among respondents' top New Year's resolutions for 2021.

But the trend towards abandoning new healthy habits might linger, too, with the average respondent saying they usually only keep their New Year's resolution for 36 days — a little more than one month.

Conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Verv, the study also examined the longevity of the healthy habits respondents attempted to form in 2020 — and how that might impact their progress in 2021.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that, in 2020, they felt the need to improve their wellness in light of the impending public health crisis.

Yet over half of the respondents (58%), though, said that figuring out how to make new positive habits stick during this time was “next to impossible.”

In the year of the COVID-19 outbreak and “staying in,” new diets unsurprisingly fared the worst among attempted healthy habits, with the average respondent who tried one saying it lasted just 18 days.

New meditation routines fared slightly better at 20 days on average, and going to bed earlier or later, along with trying a new cooking routine, both coasted in at 21 days - the number of days that experts say is key to repeating a task in order to make it a habit.

“Part of the challenge of creating a new healthy habit, whether at the outset of the new year or at any other time, is reinforcing that action until it becomes routine,” said Luba Pashkovskaya, CEO of global fitness app Verv. “Support can be key in this process, from a friend or family member attempting to form a new healthy habit right alongside you to an app that encourages you to keep going, and helps you map your progress.”

When it came to the stumbling blocks that prevented them from forming new habits, seeing the results of their efforts (39%), tracking their progress (35%) and the difficulty of doing things consistently (32%) were among the top challenges.

But respondents were also able to identify factors that they thought would make it easier for them to keep their New Year’s resolutions this year, which included more time to focus on the goal (44%), a “resolution buddy” with the same goal (40%) and reminders (31%).

“The key to sticking with anything new, especially when it comes to your health, is being consistent. For keeping up with a fitness routine in particular, it’s also crucial to find an activity that you really enjoy doing — walking, dancing or yoga — whatever brings you endorphins,” added Pashkovskaya.

Moreover, the data showed that a third of Americans have used mobile apps to assist them in forming a habit.

“Fitness apps with a variety of content options, so you never get bored, could be your best bet for getting and staying in shape this year.”

TOP HABITS ATTEMPTED THEN ABANDONED DURING THE PANDEMIC

- A new wakeup time (13%)
- Meditation (12%)
- Going to bed earlier (10%)
- Journaling (10%)
- Checking the news (9%)

TOP HABIT FORMATION CHALLENGES

- Seeing the results of my efforts (39%)
- Tracking my progress (35%)
- The difficulty of doing things consistently (32%)
- Being held accountable (27%)
- My old habits are very ingrained (25%)

