

# Bringing wellness to America's workforce

# Working in America

## *A History of Work and Well-being*

There was a time when we thought we'd work less. Between 1900 and 1950, the average American's working hours fell by almost 25 percent. In 1960, only 20 percent of mothers worked. So it's no surprise that by the end of the 20th century, pundits believed the trend would continue.

*But they were wrong.*

Today, Americans work more than anyone in the industrialized world. More than the English and the French, significantly more than the Germans or Norwegians, and now, even more than the Japanese.

Not only do we work more, we also take less vacation, work longer days, and retire later in life. And, when it comes to family-oriented workplace policies such as maternity leave and paid sick days, we lag far behind virtually all other wealthy countries.

But as our dedication to work has risen, the mental and physical health of US workers has declined.

The number of sedentary jobs has increased by 83 percent since 1950. In fact, only 26 percent of Fitbit users surveyed spend more than two-thirds of their day on their feet. In the 1950s, fewer than 15 percent of the adult population was obese. Today, over 35 percent of adults are obese.

The only thing expanding as quickly as our waists is our level of stress. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, affecting 40 million adults, or 18 percent of the population.

Americans are more stressed, anxious, depressed and unhealthy than ever before.

# Which countries work hardest?

Statistics show the US is leading the charge when it comes to hours worked per year.

1 US: 1,788

2 NEW ZEALAND: 1,760

3 ITALY: 1,752

4 JAPAN: 1,735

5 CANADA: 1,706

6 AUSTRALIA: 1,676

7 UK: 1,669

8 FINLAND: 1,666

9 AUSTRIA: 1,623

10 SWEDEN: 1,607

11 SWITZERLAND: 1,585

12 FRANCE: 1,489

13 DENMARK: 1,411

14 NORWAY: 1,408

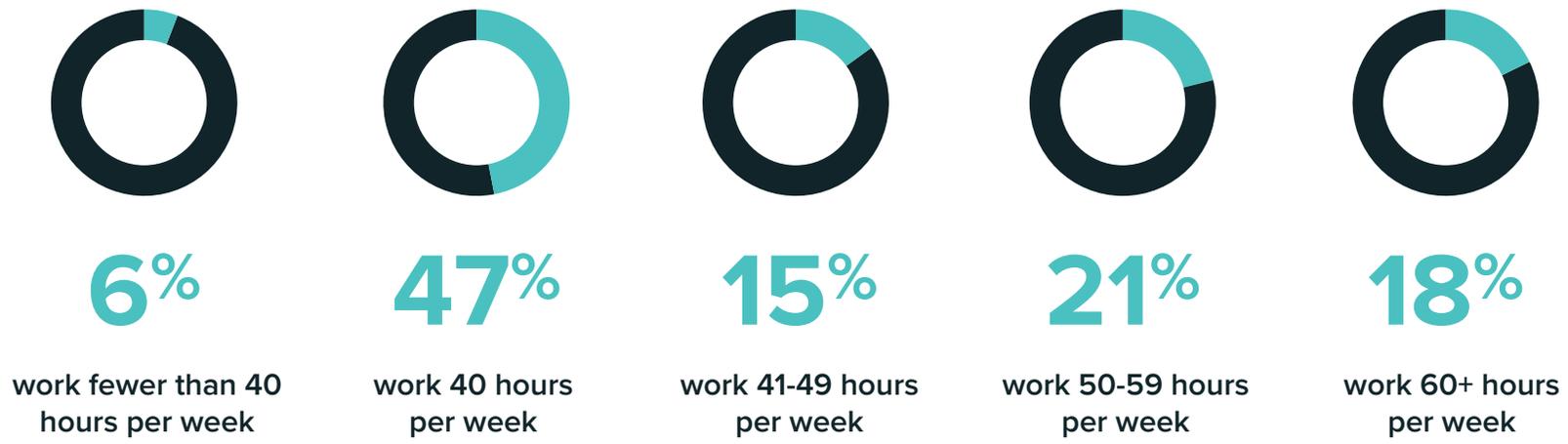
15 GERMANY: 1,388



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's 2013 statistics

# How much do people work?

Four in 10 workers put in a standard 40-hour workweek, but many others clock in even longer than that—nearly one in five work 60 hours or more. Self-reported data shows:



Source: Gallup's 2014 Work and Education poll

# The Modern US Worker

## *Exploring the Relationship Between Workplace and Health*

Guilty of eating lunch at your desk, or sending emails to the person sitting next to you? You're not alone. Statistics show that nearly 70 percent of full-time American workers hate sitting, yet 86 percent do it all day, every day—whether it's at their desks, on the couch, or in the car, as fully 73 percent of Fitbit users surveyed commute by car.

This sedentary lifestyle has serious health implications. It has been shown to double the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity, and increase the risks of colon cancer, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, lipid disorders, depression and anxiety.

But sitting is only half the issue. The other side of the coin is stress.

There's a mounting body of evidence linking chronic job stress and lack of physical activity with being overweight or obese. Stress has been indirectly linked to inactivity and the consumption of too many fatty or sugary foods. It's also known to affect the neuroendocrine system, resulting in abdominal fat, and may cause a decrease in sex hormones, which often leads to weight gain.

Recently, researchers discovered that employees working in the most high-strain conditions had almost one BMI unit more of weight than people who worked in more passive roles.

Even employees themselves have reported their weight gain. Recent surveys have shown that 44 percent of American workers have gained weight at their current job. 26 percent gained over 10 pounds and 14 percent gained a whopping 20.

While these numbers may seem to focus on doom and gloom, your employees are becoming increasingly aware that they need to take action in improving their health. Three-quarters of Americans know that sitting too much could lead to an early death. And the number of Americans getting sufficient exercise has increased steadily over the last few years.

# Tactics for a Happier, Healthier Workplace

*Four Ways To Help Your Organization Make a Change for the Better*

1

## Set Realistic Goals

Foster a focus on health and wellness in your workplace by helping employees set realistic goals. Remind people to take a five-minute break to stand up and stretch. If you implement a wellness program, be sure to keep employees engaged by starting with easy goals that are just above average. For instance, the average American walks 5,000 steps per day. If you do a step challenge, consider making the first benchmark or goal 6,500 steps per day—which is a difference over half a mile!

2

## Empower Managers

Remember, you don't have to do this alone. Rally key advocates at various levels of the company. A recent study in the American Journal of Public Health has shown that employees who help shape their wellness programs lose weight more easily.

Provide a wellness slush fund for group managers to use for creating initiatives and experiences that fit the tempo of their teams. Engage your senior leadership team by helping them draft email memos to the rest of the company. The more you treat employees as stakeholders, the more they'll feel invested in your program's success.

3

## Get People Moving

Every step counts. As little as 75 minutes per week of light physical activity could reduce cardiovascular risk by as much as 14 percent.

Encourage behaviors that promote moving, such as walking meetings or making stairs easy to access.

Set up higher tables in a public area and invite employees to do some brainstorming or email-sending there for a change of pace and environment. Or, if you have a bigger budget, invest in standing desks for employees.

4

## Encourage Community & Support

The more you encourage health behaviors outside of work, the more likely it is to be sustainable. If you offer health and wellness-related discounts for your employees, consider extending that to their spouses or partners. If there's a local fitness-related activity, such as a walk-a-thon or 5K race, help boost participation by offering to sponsor employees.

# What jobs do active people have?

We surveyed Fitbit users that walk an average of 10,000 steps per day to find out which occupations top the list. Here's what we found:



**Teacher**  
24% Most Active

In spite of the recent stats showing teachers have among the most sedentary jobs, teachers and professors topped our list of most active jobs. Whether it's making trips to the chalkboard or checking for cheating students, educators in the Fitbit user base end up walking several miles a day.



**Health Care Professional**  
23% Most Active

With days spent checking on patients in huge hospitals and filling prescriptions, it's no surprise that health care professionals like doctors, nurses and pharmacists spend the majority of their days on two feet.



**Programmer/  
Software Developer**  
20% Most Active

Think tech and I.T. employees are glued to their screens, getting up only to grab soda and snacks? Think again. These days, they're embracing the quantified-self movement—utilizing standing desks, treadmill stations and staying active off the clock.



**Administrative/  
Clerical Worker**  
18% Most Active

With a task list that includes everything from mail delivery and food service to guest greetings and more, administrators rarely get locked to their desks. They're the Jacks and Jills of all trades and have the step count to prove it.



**Salesperson**  
15% Most Active

Traveling salespersons of old racked up thousands of steps selling products door-to-door. These days, it's not much different, as people in sales rarely stay put for large periods of time—traveling between multiple cities and taking care of business.

Source: Fitbit's 2015 user survey

To learn more about how Fitbit Health Solutions can help you develop successful programs, create engaging challenges and improve employee health, contact us at [www.healthsolutions.fitbit.com](http://www.healthsolutions.fitbit.com). WP-001-D

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**Fitbit Survey on Occupations of Users Who Average 10,000 Steps Per Day, February 2015.**