



FACT SHEET PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, WELLBEING & PRODUCTIVITY IN EUROPEAN WORKPLACES

1. Study context

Project: *Work, Move and Perform (WMP)* – funded by the European Union.

Sample: 1,164 employees and volunteers from 20 European countries.

Period: November 2024 – December 2025.

Instruments used:

- Global Physical Activity Questionnaire (GPAQ): Developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to assess frequency, duration, and intensity of physical activity in work, transport, and leisure domains (Armstrong & Bull, 2006).
- Shortened Happiness at Work Scale (SHAW): Measures workplace happiness, satisfaction, and engagement (Salas-Vallina et al., 2017).
- WHO-5 Wellbeing Index: A validated five-item tool assessing subjective well-being (Topp et al., 2015).
- iMTA Productivity Cost Questionnaire (iPCQ): Assesses productivity loss due to absenteeism and presenteeism (Bouwman et al., 2015).
- Physical activity thresholds:
 - <600 MET-min/week = Low level
 - ≥1200 MET-min/week = Optimal level

Exploring Physical
Activity's impact on
Workplace Performance.

2. Main results



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2.1 PA levels

- 93.6% of respondents reported no vigorous physical activity at work; only 6.4% engage in intense workplace exercise.
- 69.2% participate in moderate recreational activity; 64% in vigorous activity.
- Active transport (walking or cycling): 65.8%.
- Average daily activity: 139.5 minutes active vs. 320 minutes sitting.

2.2 Wellbeing and happiness

- Average happiness score: 3.57/5.
- General well-being (WHO-5): 59.23/100 → slightly below the healthy threshold of 60.
- Employees achieving ≥ 1200 MET-min/week showed 15–20% improvements in happiness, job satisfaction, and well-being.
- Active participants reported greater vitality, enthusiasm, and affective commitment.

2.3 Productivity

- Low activity levels (< 600 METs) are associated with:
 - +50% higher risk of depression
 - Lower happiness and organizational engagement
 - Increased absenteeism and presenteeism
- Active employees (> 1200 METs):
 - Fewer days limited by physical or psychological issues
 - Higher cognitive and emotional performance

3. Key correlations (Odds Ratios)

Indicator	OR (< 600 METs)	Interpretation
Depression risk	1.503	+50% higher likelihood of poor well-being
Global happiness	1.839	+84% significantly lower happiness
Work engagement	1.795	+80% reduced energy and motivation
Affective commitment	1.839	+84% lower sense of belonging
Productivity	1.624	+62% more days with work limitations

Conclusion: Achieving ≥ 1200 METs/week is the critical threshold for maximizing mental, emotional, and work-related benefits.

4. Relevant sociodemographic factors

- Gender: Women report more recreational physical activity and less presenteeism.
- Age: Older adults show lower vigorous activity but higher overall well-being.
- Education: Postgraduates demonstrate greater recreational activity and happiness.
- Parental status: Parents report higher overall well-being, though less time for vigorous activity.
- Regional differences:
 - Eastern Europe: Higher physical activity and well-being
 - Central/Western Europe: Lower well-being and higher presenteeism
 - Northern Europe: More recreation, but also more sedentary behavior

5. Implications and recommendations

For companies and policymakers:

Integrate physical activity programs in workplaces (e.g., active breaks, incentives, wellness infrastructure).

- Tailor interventions by age and gender to maximize participation and impact.
- Promote active transport and healthy work environments.
- Set ≥ 1200 METs/week as a corporate benchmark to reduce depression risk and improve productivity.
- Invest in active workplace environments → a cost-effective strategy for well-being and organizational sustainability.

6. Conclusions

Evidence from the WMP project confirms that regular physical activity:

- Enhances mental health and emotional well-being
- Increases engagement and job satisfaction
- Reduces absenteeism and presenteeism
- Strengthens productivity and organizational sustainability

Key takeaway: *Promoting an active lifestyle at work is a strategic investment in employee health, happiness, and organizational performance across Europe.*

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



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