

Productivity differences: Active vs. Sedentary employees Work, Move & Perf quantitative study



→ Active employees (≥ 1200 MET-min/week)

Employees who met or exceeded the WHO recommendation of 1200 MET-min/week showed substantial gains across all productivity and well-being measures:

Presenteeism:

1.56 days per month of reduced performance (19.6% lower than sedentary employees).

Absenteeism:

Stable short-term absence but markedly lower risk of long-term sick leave and work limitation (-20 – 25%).

€180.7

Total productivity cost: €180.7 per employee per month

- **Engagement score:**
3.65 (vs 3.44 among sedentary).
- **Well-being (WHO-5):**
61.5 (vs 54.2 among sedentary).
- **Happiness at Work (SHAW):**
3.61.
- **Depression risk:**
24.2% prevalence, the lowest among all activity groups.

Interpretation: Active workers are more focused, motivated, and resilient. They experience fewer mental health issues, higher engagement, and lower overall productivity loss, representing approximately €480–€500 annual savings per employee.

→ Sedentary employees (< 600 MET-min/week)

Sedentary workers demonstrated significantly poorer outcomes:

Presenteeism:

1.94 days per month of impaired productivity.

Absenteeism:

Greater likelihood of long-term absence (OR = 0.729) and twice the probability of reduced unpaid work due to health problems (OR = 1.711, $p < 0.05$).

€221.1

Total productivity cost: €221.1 per employee per month.

- **Engagement score:**
3.44, indicating lower affective connection to work.
- **Well-being (WHO-5):**
54.2, below optimal levels.
- **Happiness at Work (SHAW):**
3.48.
- **Depression risk:**
41.1%, almost double the active group.

Interpretation: Sedentary workers incur higher physical and psychological strain, display lower concentration, and cost their employers roughly €40–€50 more per month in lost productivity.

→ Comparative analysis (Active vs. Sedentary)

Indicator	Active (≥1200 MET)	Sedentary (<600 MET)	Difference	Interpretation
Presenteeism days/month	1.56	1.94	-19.6%	+12 productive days/year
Absenteeism risk	↓ 20–25%	Baseline	↓ 20–25%	Fewer long absences
Productivity cost (€)	180.7	221.1	-18.2%	€480 annual savings
Engagement score	3.65	3.44	+6%	Stronger motivation
WHO-5 well-being	61.5	54.2	+13%	Better mental balance
Depression prevalence	24.2%	41.1%	-17%	Improved psychological health

→ Conclusions

The main differences between active and sedentary workers are:

- Active employees achieve **18–20% higher productivity**, largely through reduced presenteeism and improved mental well-being.
- The economic impact equates to **€400–€500 annual cost savings** per employee.
- Sedentary employees face **nearly double the depression risk** and significantly higher presenteeism losses.
- Encouraging employees to **reach or exceed 1200 MET-min/week** yields measurable benefits in both performance and health.



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