



PERCEIVED BARRIERS AND BENEFITS



Introduction

The workplace can present barriers to being physically active; however, employers and employees can both also benefit from physical activity opportunities. Understanding barriers and beliefs may assist in physical activity promotion at the workplace, both through the removal of barriers and in reinforcing or addressing beliefs. This section examines workplace barriers to being active, the relationship between workplace physical activity programs and recruitment and turnover, and employee beliefs about the benefits of physical activity to their working life. Finally, an examination of absenteeism is presented. The data are analyzed by respondent age and sex, region, education and household income levels, marital status, community size, and physical activity levels. Data are also analyzed by the employment characteristics of hours of work, type of work, employment sector, and company size. The section concludes with an overview of the findings and policy and program recommendations.

Barriers to being active

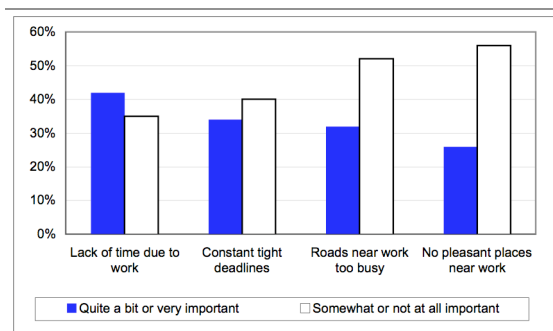
Although there are a number of tools that workplaces can use to motivate their employees to be physically active, the stress, various obligations, and inherent attributes of work often serve as overwhelming obstacles to activity. Indeed, more than one-third (34%) of working Canadians report that constant tight deadlines at work are an important barrier impeding their physical activity, and 42% report that lack of time due to work is an important barrier. Just over one quarter (26%) of working Canadians indicate that the lack of pleasant places to walk, bicycle, or be active near their workplace is an important barrier, while nearly one-third (32%) indicate that the roads near their workplace being too busy to walk or bicycle safely poses an important barrier.

Age and sex Barriers to being active appear to be uniformly reported regardless of age or sex, as there are no significant differences between genders and age groups.

Region Employees in Quebec are less likely than the average Canadian worker to report that a lack of time due to work is an important barrier, yet are more likely to indicate that a lack of pleasant places to walk, cycle, or be active near work prevents them from being more active. Northern Canadians are less likely than the average Canadian to report busy roads as a deterrent to physical activity.

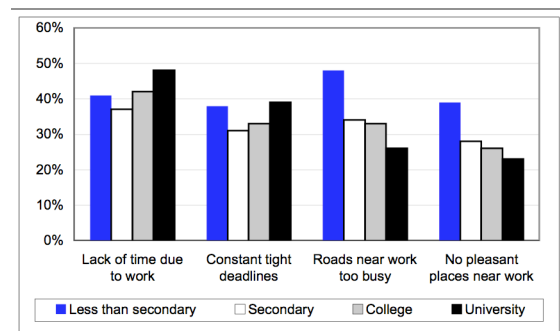
Socio-demographic and -economic characteristics University graduates are less likely than those with less than a secondary level of education to indicate that both a lack of places to walk, bicycle, or be active and excessively busy streets are barriers to more physical activity. There are differences among various levels of reported earned income in the likelihood of reporting that busy roads near work prevent them from being more active, that is employees with household incomes of \$30,000 to \$59,999 are more likely than those with higher incomes to report this (\$100,000 or more). Employees living in the smallest communities (fewer than 1,000 residents) and mid-sized communities (10,000 to 74,999 residents) are less likely than those in the largest communities (with 300,000 residents or more) to report that constant tight deadlines prevent them from being more active.

BARRIERS TO BEING ACTIVE
working Canadians



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BARRIERS TO BEING ACTIVE
by education



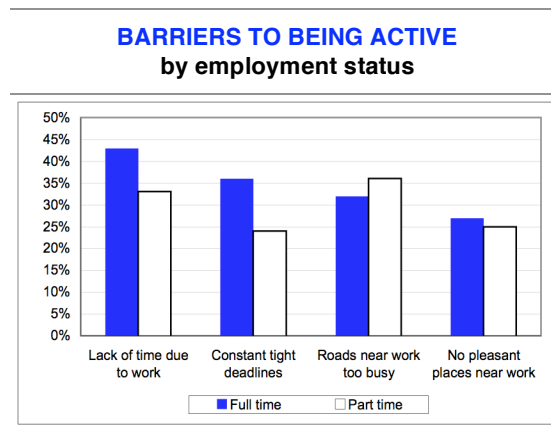
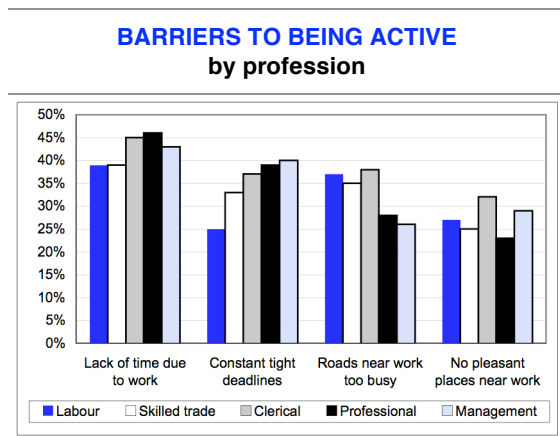
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Barriers to being active (cont'd)

Activity level There are no significant differences in terms of activity level and the likelihood of reporting barriers to physical activity.

Employment characteristics Part-time employees are significantly less likely than full-time workers to report that constant tight deadlines at work are an important barrier to being active. Those working in professional or management positions are more likely than those in labour positions to report that constant tight deadlines are an important barrier to their physical activity. However, those in clerical and labour positions are more likely than those in management positions to report that busy roads near their workplace pose a barrier. Employees in clerical positions are more likely than those in professional positions to cite busy roads as barrier. Not-for-profit employees are more likely than workers in other sectors to report that a lack of pleasant places for walking, cycling, or exercise is a significant barrier to physical activity.

Trends Overall, the prevalence of barriers has not changed significantly among Canadian workers over the past five years, with one exception – employees are now slightly less likely to indicate that work deadlines are an important barrier.³⁴ The age-related and sex-related differences that appeared in 2001 are no longer evident. The occupation of the employee was associated with certain barriers in 2001 and this relationship generally persists in 2006. While employment sector was formerly associated with a lack of time (that is, those in the government and public sector were more likely to report this as a barrier), this relationship does not appear in 2006.



Potential influence on recruitment and turnover

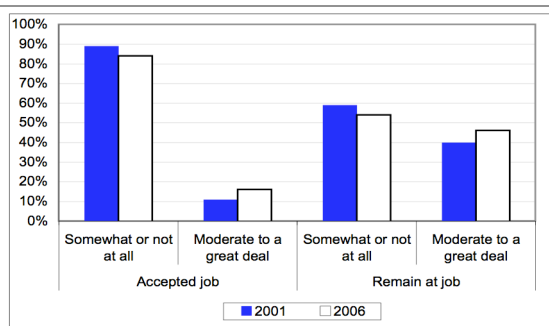
When asked the extent to which the physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities offered by their workplace actually influenced their decision to *accept* a position with their current employer, the majority (84%) of Canadians indicate that they were only somewhat influenced or not influenced at all. Significantly fewer indicate that they were moderately influenced (7%), or influenced quite a bit or a great deal (9%). A greater influence is seen on a person's decision to *remain* with a company: 54% report that the physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities offered by their workplace have only somewhat influenced or did not influence their decision at all, while 21% report that they have been moderately influenced and 25% report that they have been influenced quite a bit or a great deal.

Age and sex The age and sex of Canadian workers generally does not appear to influence the importance of physical activity opportunities in the decision to accept or maintain employment at a company, with two exceptions: male employees are more likely than females to state that the opportunities, programs, and facilities moderately influenced their decision to remain with the company; employees aged 45 to 64 are less likely than younger employees (25 to 44 years) to have been moderately influenced to accept a position in the company.

Region There are no significant regional differences associated with the influence of physical activity options at work for choosing to accept or maintain a position, with one exception. Employees in the Northwest Territories are slightly less likely than the average Canadian employee to say that the physical activity opportunities at work only somewhat influenced or did not influence at all their decision to accept a position in the company.

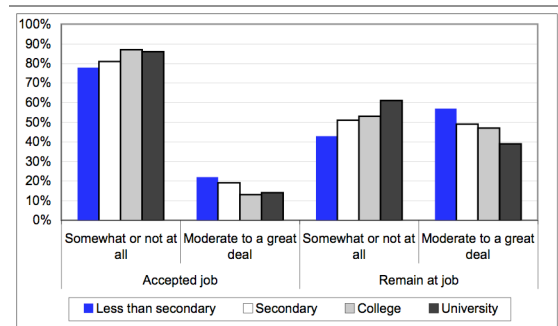
Socio-economic and demographic characteristics Canadians with a university education are more likely those with less than a secondary level of education to report that their workplace's physical activity options did not influence or only somewhat influenced their choice to *maintain* a position. There is a relationship between income and the influence of physical activity opportunities on the decision to remain with a current employer; those with household incomes of \$20,000 to \$29,999 are more likely than the highest income earners to be influenced quite a bit or a great deal to remain with the company. Additionally, those in the highest (\$100,000 or more) and lowest (\$20,000 or less) annual income categories are more likely than those who earn \$20,000 to \$29,999 to state that they are influenced by physical activity opportunities a little or not at all in maintaining current employment. Employees who are widowed, divorced, or separated are more likely than those who are married to be influenced quite a bit or a great deal to remain with their company.

RECRUITMENT AND TURNOVER
by overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 and 2006 Physical Activity Monitors, CFLRI

RECRUITMENT AND TURNOVER
by education level



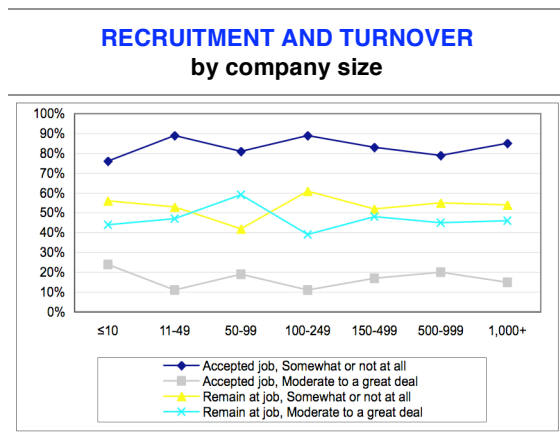
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Potential influence on recruitment and turnover (cont'd)

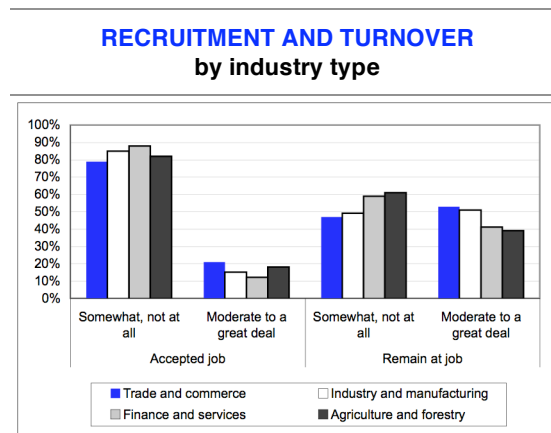
Activity level Reported activity levels do not appear to affect the likelihood that physical activity opportunities and programs will influence a decision to accept or maintain an employment position.

Employment characteristics There are some differences among employees of workplaces of various sizes in the likelihood of reporting the influence of their employer's physical activity options on their decision to *accept* a position; employees of very small companies (10 or fewer employees) are less likely than employees of some larger companies (11 – 49 employees or 100 – 249 employees) to report that physical activity opportunities played little to no role in accepting their current position. Employees of these very small companies are more likely than those working for companies with 11 to 49 employees to say that it greatly influenced (quite a bit or a great deal) their decision to accept a position. Employees of companies with 50 to 99 workers are more likely than employees of companies with 100 to 249 workers to report that opportunities to be active influenced the decision to maintain their current employment quite a bit or a great deal. Finance and service employees are less likely than those in industry or manufacturing to have been moderately influenced to remain at their company.

Trends Since 2001,³⁴ there have been slight decreases in the proportions of Canadians who report that the physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities offered by their workplace only somewhat influenced or did not at all influence their decision to accept or maintain a position with their current employer; likewise, there have been slight increases in the proportions who report that physical activity opportunities have considerably influenced (quite a bit or a great deal) their decisions to *accept* or *maintain* a position with their current employer. University-educated adults continue to be more likely to state that the physical activity opportunities only somewhat influenced or did not at all influence their decision to *remain* with an employer. The relationships that appeared with activity level in 2001, however, no longer exist in 2006. In 2001, workplace characteristics were not associated with the decision to accept or maintain a position in the company, while, relationships now appear regarding company size and industry in 2006.



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2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

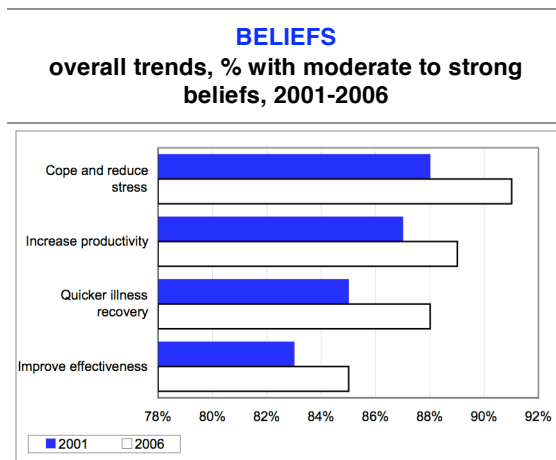
Beliefs about work-related benefits of physical activity

Most Canadians (91%) agree quite a bit or a great deal that regular physical activity helps people to cope with and reduce their workplace stress, and 89% agree that regular physical activity helps employees to be more productive. A similar percentage (88%) reportedly agree to the same extent that regular physical activity helps in recovering from minor illnesses more quickly, while 85% agree to this extent that regular physical activity helps people do their work more effectively.

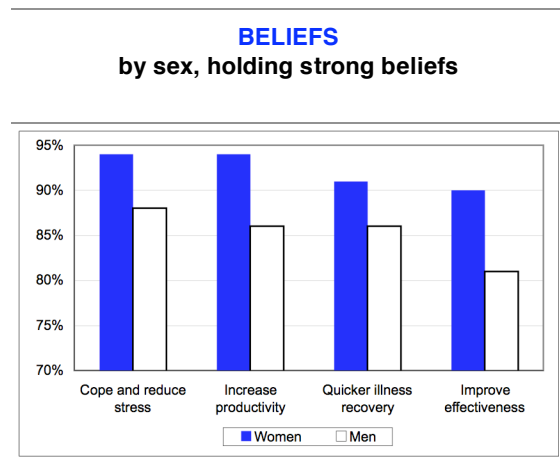
Age and sex Overall, women are more likely than men to indicate that they strongly agree (quite a bit or a great deal) that regular physical activity helps in improving productivity and recovering from minor illnesses more quickly, and helping people do their work more effectively. Women aged 25 to 44 are more likely than men of any age to strongly agree that physical activity helps productivity.

Region There are no significant regional differences for reporting beliefs about the work benefits of physical activity.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics Adults with less than a secondary level of education are least likely to strongly agree (quite a bit or a great deal) that regular physical activity helps in coping with and reducing workplace stress. Furthermore, those with less than a secondary education are also less likely than those with a college or university education to state that being regularly physically active helps a great deal or quite a bit in recovering from minor illnesses. Similarly, university-educated employees are more likely than those with less than a secondary education to strongly agree that regular physical activity helps in working more effectively. Strong positive beliefs about regular physical activity are also associated with income: people who earn less than \$20,000 per year are significantly less likely than those with some higher incomes to strongly agree that activity aids in minor illness recovery and in coping with job stress. Those living in communities with 10,000 to 74,999 residents are more likely than those in the smallest communities (less than 1,000 residents) to strongly agree that physical activity helps people to work more effectively.



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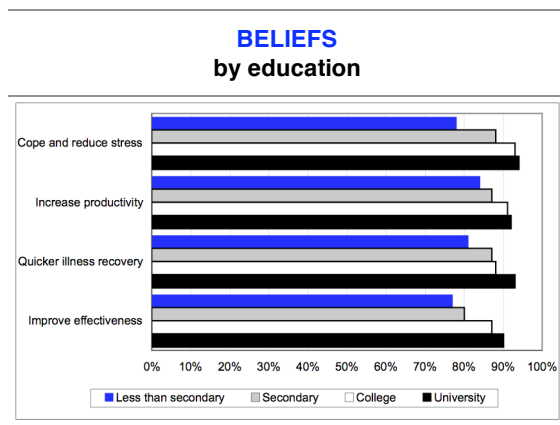
2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Beliefs about work-related benefits of physical activity (cont'd)

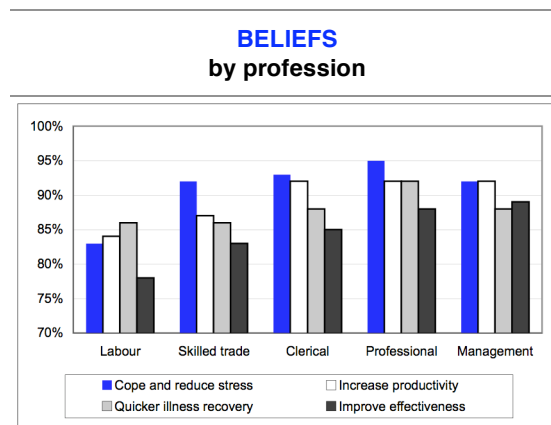
Activity level Active Canadian employees are more likely than those who are less active employees to strongly agree that regular physical activity aids in recovering from minor illnesses. Active workers are also more likely than those who are sedentary to indicate that they strongly agree (quite a bit or a great deal) that regular physical activity helps in coping with and reducing workplace stress and improving productivity.

Employment characteristics Employees working in the non-profit sector and those in education, health, and social services are more likely than the average Canadian to strongly agree that regular physical activity helps in speedily recovering from minor ailments. Fewer labourers than professionals strongly agree that regular physical activity helps with stress levels; labour workers are also less likely than managerial employees to strongly agree that work effectiveness increases with regular physical activity. Those working for companies with 50 to 99 employees are more likely than those working for the smallest companies (10 or fewer employees) to strongly agree that physical activity helps productivity. Those working for the largest companies (with 1,000 or more employees) are more likely than those working for the smallest companies to strongly agree that physical activity helps in coping with and reducing stress.

Trends The overall proportion of Canadians expressing strong beliefs about the potential work-related benefits of regular physical activity has remained high over time.³⁴ Several other relationships persist over time. Women continue to be more likely than men to hold strong positive beliefs. Those who have higher incomes continue to be more likely to say that physical activity helps in coping with and reducing stress; these individuals are also more likely to say that it helps in recovering from minor illnesses more quickly. Those in education, health, and social services remain optimistic in 2006 about the benefits of regular physical activity in reducing recovery time during minor illness, while employees of not-for-profit workplaces have newly emerged in 2006 as strongly agreeing with this benefit.



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2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Absenteeism

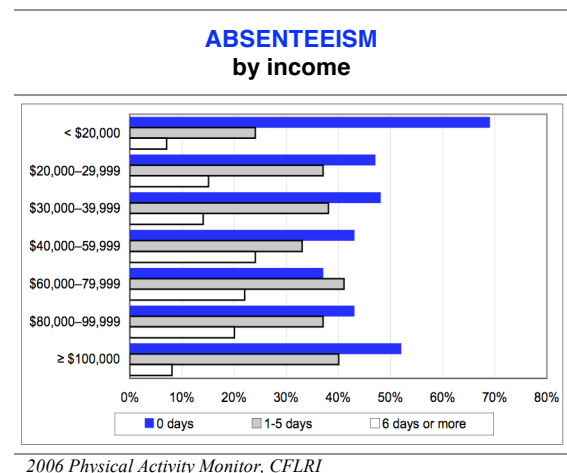
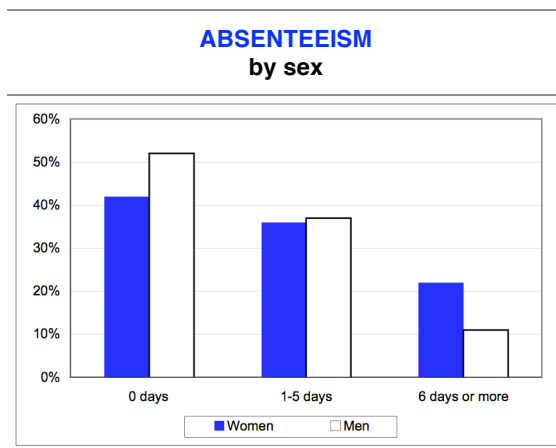
When asked how many days of work they have missed in the past year due to sickness, injury, or disability, 47% of Canadian employees report having missed no days of work, while 37% report having missed one to five days, and 16% report having missed six or more days.

Age and sex Overall, men are more likely than women to report missing no days of work. Women are more likely than men to say that they have missed six or more days; however, only those women aged 25 to 44 are significantly more likely than men of the same age to report having missed six or more days. Compared to workers aged 45 to 64, employees aged 25 to 44 are more likely report one to five days absent and less likely to report no days.

Region Workers in Northern Canada are significantly less likely than the average Canadian employee to report zero days of sick absence, whereas those in British Columbia are less likely to report missing one to five days of work. Manitoba and Saskatchewan employees are more likely than the Canadian average to report being away from work due to illness for six or more days.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics Adults earning less than \$20,000 per year are more likely to say that they have missed no days of work, compared to those earning higher incomes (\$40,000 to \$99,999). However, those with annual incomes of \$100,000 or greater are less likely to report having missed six or more days compared to those with less income (\$40,000 to \$99,999). Education, community size, and marital status do not appear to be associated with absenteeism due to illness, injury, or disability.

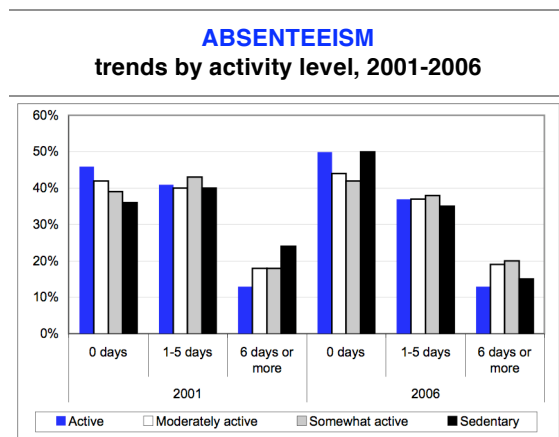
Activity level Employees who indicate that they are somewhat active are more likely than those who are active to be absent from work for six or more days due to illness or injury.



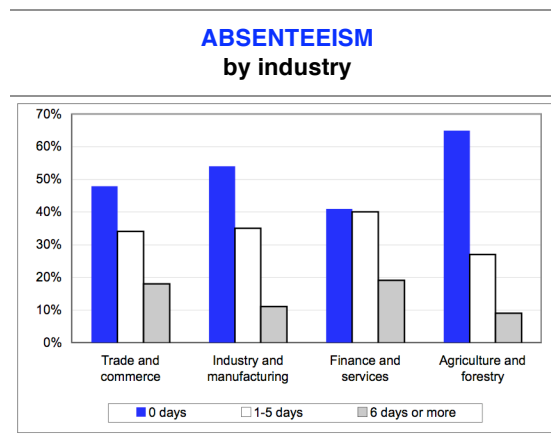
Absenteeism (cont'd)

Employment characteristics Canadians working for the private sector are more likely than those in the public sector to say that they have not missed any days of work. Conversely, those working for the government or public sector are more likely to report having missed one or more days than those in private businesses. Adults working in the finance and service industry are less likely to report missing no days of work compared to industry, manufacturing, agricultural, and forestry workers, and are generally more likely to report missing six or more days than industrial workers. Compared to the national average, those working in construction are more likely to say that they have not missed any days of work and those in government services are more likely to have missed six or more days. Employees working for very small companies (with 10 or fewer employees) are generally the most likely to say that they have missed no work days, and are less likely than those working for some larger-sized companies to report missing one to five days (1,000 or more employees) and six or more days (250 to 499 employees).

Trends The overall rates of absenteeism have changed slightly since 2001; employees in 2006 are more likely to state that they have missed no days of work, and are slightly less likely to say that they have missed 1 to 5 days.³⁴ The same gender differences that previously appeared—with men being more likely than women to say that they have missed no days of work, and women being more likely to report six or more days of absence—persist in 2006. Construction workers continue to be more likely than the national average to say that they have not missed any days. Those working in government or public sectors continue to be less likely to report missing no days of work.



2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI



2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Workplace injury, illness, and stress

Difficult circumstances and adverse conditions at work can contribute to any number of problems for employees; 12% of Canadians report having been injured while at work, and 11% report having become physically ill because of work. Nearly twice as many (20%) report suffering from stress or some other mental or emotional condition because of work.

Age and sex While there are few differences in terms of age and sex in encountering workplace incidents, it can be noted that 45 to 64 year olds are more likely than 18 to 24 year olds to report never being injured or becoming ill due to work conditions. When examining by gender, this age relationship persists only among men.

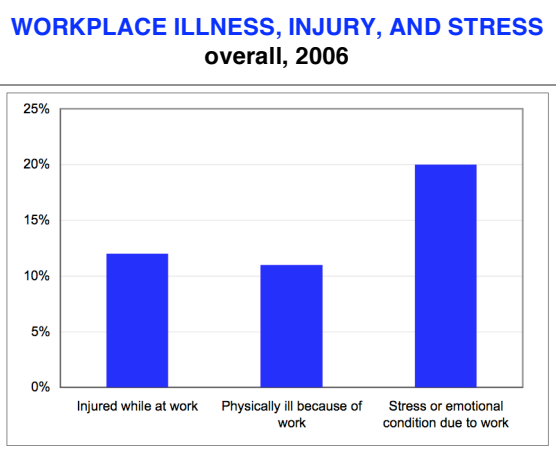
Region Workers in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island are more likely to not report stress and other mental conditions due to work than the average Canadian worker.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics University-educated employees are less likely than others to report being injured at work. Those who are married or in a common-law relationship are less likely than those who have never been married to report a physical illness due to working conditions. Employees from communities with 5,000 to 9,999 residents are less likely to report that they have never fallen ill due to work conditions than are those from other communities (with fewer than 5,000 or greater than 74,999 people), and are more likely to report workplace injuries than are residents of communities with 300,000 people or more. There are no significant socio-economic or demographic differences for reporting workplace stress.

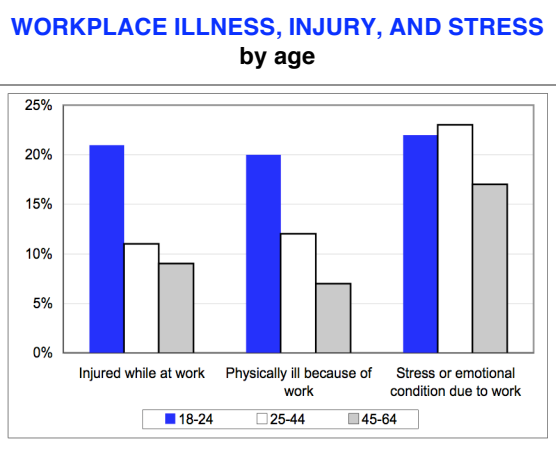
Activity level There are no relationships between activity level and reported workplace injuries, illnesses, or stress.

Workplace injury, illness, and stress (cont'd)

Employment characteristics In comparison to the national average, adults working in construction are more likely to indicate that they have not fallen ill due to work conditions. Employees in financial and business services or in hi-tech industries report a greater avoidance of workplace injuries than others. Clerical, professional, and managerial employees are more likely than labourers to report no injuries in the workplace, and managers are more likely than most other professions (except those in clerical positions) to report never falling ill at work due to conditions. Those working for companies with 1,000 or more employees more frequently avoid injuries on the job than employees of companies with 50 to 499 employees, while workers at very small companies (with 10 or fewer employees) are more likely than the Canadian average to report that they have not fallen ill due to work conditions. Workers in the agriculture and forestry industry are less likely than those in finance and services to report stress or mental or emotional conditions due to work.



2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI



2006 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Summary

Data collected in the 2006 Physical Activity Monitor reveal the following barriers to physical activity at work:

- 42% of working Canadians report a lack of time due to work,
- 34% report constant tight deadlines at work,
- 32% say the roads near their workplace are too busy to walk or bicycle safely, and
- 26% of working Canadians indicate that there are no pleasant places to walk, bicycle, or be active near their workplace.

Beliefs about benefits also include an increased ability to cope with workplace stress and recover from illness, in addition to increased productivity and effectiveness. As such, the majority of Canadian workers strongly agree (quite a bit or a great deal) with the listed beliefs about the benefits of physical activity, as follows:

- 91% of working Canadians strongly agree that regular physical activity helps people to cope with and reduce their workplace stress,
- 89% strongly agree it helps employees to be more productive,
- 88% strongly agree it helps in recovering from minor illnesses more quickly, and
- 85% strongly agree it helps people do their work more effectively.

The table below summarizes the socio-economic, demographic, and workplace characteristics associated with a greater likelihood of citing various barriers and beliefs about the benefits of physical activity, as they pertain to the workplace.

Likelihood of reported barriers and beliefs about benefits by socio-economic, demographic and workforce characteristics

	Socio-economic and demographic characteristics			Workforce characteristics	
	Age and sex	Activity level	Education and Income	Profession and status	Industry and Sector
Barriers					
Constant tight deadlines at work				Professionals & management Full-time workers	
Lack of time due to work					
Lack pleasant places to be active			Less than high school		Not-for-profit
Too busy roads near work			Less than high school Lower incomes (\$30,000-\$59,999)	Labourers and clerical positions	
Beliefs—“Regular physical activity helps people to...”					
Cope with & reduce workplace		Active	Higher educated	Professionals	Larger companies

stress					
Be more productive	Women	Active			
Recover from minor illness more quickly	Women	Active	Higher educated Higher income		Not-for-profit Education, health and social services
Do work more effectively	Women		University educated	Managers	

The perceptions of barriers have generally remained stable over the past five years, as have the overall proportion of Canadian workers expressing strong agreement with some of the potential work-related benefits of regular physical activity during this time period. Key relationships have persisted over time: women and higher income adults continue to hold strong positive beliefs about the benefits of physical activity as they pertain to work.

Employee physical activity can benefit both employers and employees. There is some indication that workplace physical activity opportunities, programs, and facilities assist in employee recruitment and retention:

- 16% of working Canadians indicate that such opportunities influenced their decision to *accept* a position with their current employer moderately, quite a bit, or a great deal.
- 20% report that they have been moderately influenced by these opportunities to *remain* with a company and 25% report that they have been influenced quite a bit or a great deal.

When asked how many days of work they have missed in the past year due to sickness, injury, or disability, just under half of Canadian employees (47%) say that they have not missed any days, while 37% report having missed one to five days, and 16% say they have missed six or more days. Compared to 2001, these rates represent a 4% decrease in the number of employees who have taken one to five days, and a 5% increase in the number of workers reporting no sick days.³⁴ About one in ten Canadians report having been injured while at work, and the same number report having become physically ill because of work, whereas almost twice this proportion report suffering from stress or some other mental or emotional condition because of work.

Results from this section indicate those who work in construction, in the private sector, and those who work for employers with 10 or fewer employees are the least likely to take a day of absence from work. Possibly, these qualities represent employees who are less likely to be paid if they take a day off. Smaller companies also may include the self-employed or those where there are no unions and perhaps lower levels of benefits, and therefore may also be workplaces without paid days of absence. On the other hand, government service employees are more likely to report six or more days of absence due to sickness, injury, or disability in the past year.

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Results from this section reveal that relatively few Canadians (16%) indicate that the workplace opportunities for physical activity influenced their decision to *accept* a position in their company, whereas significantly more Canadians (45%) say that these

opportunities have influenced their decision to *remain* with their company. This is consistent with other Canadian studies that have demonstrated reduced employee turnover among participants involved in physical activity or fitness programs. The Public Health Agency of Canada's Business Case for Active Living at Work³⁵ cites numerous case studies with lower turnover rates among company fitness program participants as compared to non-participants. Though our findings may not indicate that more active people are more likely to be influenced by the existence of physical activity programming, the Business Case for Active Living at Work suggests that the promotion of fitness programs may be an important consideration. The promotion of corporate active living programs to prospective employees by tailoring the physical activity information and activities towards those who are less active may be useful. For example, providing programming that focuses on activities generally preferred by less active people may be more attractive than activities that are unusual, or require high developed skill sets or expensive equipment. For the same reasons, the existence of facilities such as bicycle racks, showers, or nearby trails may also be attractive to prospective employees. Family-oriented physical activity events or programs may be attractive to those who desire to increase their activity levels but are struggling to fit work, family life, and physical activity into their lives.

The potential impact on both recruitment and turnover of physical activity and broader wellness programs merits further consideration by employers as a way to attract and retain their workforce. The Conference Board of Canada³⁶ suggests that wellness programming can be a component of a larger corporate initiative to attract and retain top talent. It states that some businesses view workplace health programs as a key component of their business strategy for identification as an 'employer of choice'. It further comments that today's organizations are being asked to prove their worth as contributors to social well-being. In response to this, many organizations use 'triple bottom-line reporting', where they focus on three elements of organizational sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. Workplace health programs play an integral role in achieving success on the social bottom line.

Statistics Canada estimates that work time lost for personal reasons (employee illness or disability and other personal and family demands) was about 9.6 days per worker in 2005.³⁷ An analysis of 1997 data, where an average of 7.4 days per employee were missed, estimated the cost of this absenteeism in a 1,000 workforce company to be \$1.4 million per year,³⁵ and these costs would certainly be estimated as higher today. Factors contributing to increases in absenteeism over time include the aging of the workforce, the growing share of women in the workplace, especially mothers with young children, high stress among workers, and the increasing prevalence of generous sick and family-related leave at the workplace.³⁷ The finding that women are less likely to report that they had not missed any work days is consistent with findings from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which reports that men who work full time lost fewer days than women.³⁷ In addition, it reports that families with at least one preschool-aged child lost a greater number of days, which may account for the greater likelihood of younger women missing days found in the data collected in this survey. However, the LFS suggests that the gap between the sexes with respect to work absences for personal or family responsibilities has narrowed considerably in recent years.

Findings from analysis of LFS data include the fact that full time employees in the public sector lost more work time for personal reasons than their private sector counterparts³⁷; this is consistent with findings from this survey. As seen in the current survey, the LFS also reports that the number of days missed is associated with workplace size. It suggests this may be related to the likelihood of higher union rates in larger workplaces.

Data collected in this survey give support to other research that has demonstrated a relationship between physical fitness, absenteeism, and job satisfaction.^{38,39} The Public Health Agency of Canada's Business Case for Active Living at Work cites numerous examples of corporate economic benefit from the investment in workplace wellness programs.³⁵ These benefits include reduced absenteeism in terms of sick days and short term disability days, as well as reduced employee turnover, both leading to improved employee health, productivity, and employee satisfaction. Other research has indicated that higher cardio-respiratory fitness is related to work quality⁴⁰ and productivity.³⁸ Employer initiatives that may help workers deal with stress are presented in an earlier section of this report.

Health promotion programs in the workplace provide both employees and employers with a host of benefits, including improved corporate image, improved job satisfaction, improved employee morale, reduced staff turnover, increased ability to handle job stress, and decreased conflicts at work,²⁹ all of which have the potential to improve corporate cultural health and the bottom line. Research into employee participation in overall physical activity has found a relationship with perceived general health benefits of physical activity.⁴¹ Indeed, data from this section reveal that most working Canadians say that physical activity regularly helps one to cope better and reduce stress, to be more effective and productive, and to recover more quickly from minor illnesses. The likelihood of holding these beliefs is high among women and those with higher levels of education – the same groups who have also been identified as more likely to cite higher levels of life and workplace stress (see earlier section in this report). Reduced stress, recovery from illness, and increased on-the-job effectiveness and productivity may each lead to stronger bottom lines for employers. Those working Canadians who are active are more likely to hold these beliefs, suggesting that they may well be already reaping these benefits from their activity. Reinforcing the benefits of physical activity may also assist in motivating employees to address their own barriers.

Workplace barriers that prevent physical activity, such as tight deadlines and demanding work, can have health consequences in addition to those related to physical inactivity. Analysis of data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health⁴² survey indicates that employees who increased their hours of work from a standard work week over time (between 1994-95 and 1996-97) increased the risk of negative health behaviours. These behaviours included an increase in cigarette consumption, unhealthy weight gain in men, higher alcohol consumption in women, and higher incidence of depression in women.

Tight deadlines and work demands are more frequently cited as barriers to physical activity by professionals, managers, and residents of larger communities. Professionals and managers may be more likely to work in occupations where deadlines are present as compared to those who work in labour, service, or clerical occupations. On the other hand, those who work as general labourers are faced with different barriers preventing

them from being more active, as they are more likely to say that busy roads near their workplace pose a barrier. This may be related to a higher likelihood of working on construction sites, and to moving from job site to job site, workplaces that have far different characteristics than office buildings.

To address barriers, reinforce beliefs, promote a healthier workforce, and potentially reduce rates of illness, stress, absenteeism, and injury, workplaces can take an active role in promoting health and well-being among their employees. The Alberta Centre for Active Living offers practical solutions for physical activity promotion at work.⁴³ It provides tools, information on benefits, step-by-step guides, and practical ideas for employers, employees, workplace wellness coordinators, and human resources advisors to encourage physical activity at work. For example, it suggests workplace policies such as flexible hours to help employees manage work demands and hours and fit physical activity into their daily routine. Employers can also adopt policies that allow employees to telecommute and job share to assist them to overcome the barrier of lack of time. Other suggestions provided by the Centre to address lack of time as a barrier to being active include: avoiding scheduling meetings over the lunch hour, encouraging active breaks instead of coffee breaks, holding walking meetings, and providing child care and other family-friendly amenities during after-hours physical activity.

In addressing barriers, employers can determine those perceived by their own workforce through an employee survey. The findings will assist in identifying areas for action, and in tailoring those actions to the particular needs of the workforce and subpopulations. For example, the barriers cited by women may be different than those cited by men, and those cited by young or unmarried workers may be different than those cited by older workers or those with families. For those workplaces with programs in place, such an investigation can determine what appeals to members of the workforce and even perhaps why some workers do not believe that the program meets their particular needs. Adjustments can be made to strengthen popular facets and refocus others. The Alberta Centre's website offers sample surveys in the needs assessment section of their step-by-step guide (see <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/index.html>).

Employers can address the perceived lack of safe places to walk near the workplace through a number of means, including advocating with city planners and public works departments for pleasant places to walk or bicycle near work, and ensuring adequate lighting and maintenance of facilities such as sidewalks, lanes, and trails. One study suggests that a trail with favourable environmental factors (i.e., pleasant, convenient, and safe), provides employees in a nearby industrial park with a good opportunity to walk or exercise during the work day. It also found that this trail was used most frequently during the weekdays, early in the morning, and during the late afternoon.⁴⁴ In addition, arranging for walking buddies or a walking club may help address the concerns about safety, while also providing social support for walking. Finally, walking "trails" can be designated throughout the building where employees feel safe.