



## Press Release

Friday 8 April 2016

### **Employees in overstressed, inactive and unproductive industries lose 27 days of productive time each year**

- Data from over 32,500 employees shows large productivity disparity between industries
- Employees in the healthcare and financial services sectors lose the most productive time each year
- Lost productivity due to high stress and lack of physical activity

Research from Britain's Healthiest Workplace (BHW)\*, surveying more than 32,538 workers across all UK industries, revealed that high stress and lack of physical activity are causing industries to lose up to 27 days of productive time per employee each year.

While poor diet, alcohol and cigarettes have a severe effect on long-term health, it is stress and physical activity which have biggest impact on day to day productivity.

The study, which was conducted by VitalityHealth, Mercer, the University of Cambridge and RAND Europe, found that productivity varies enormously between industries, with some industries losing almost 27 days of productive time per employee per year, compared to a national average of 23.5 days<sup>1</sup>. Healthcare and financial services lose 26.6 and 24.9 days per employee a year respectively, while high-tech loses just 18.9 days per employee per year.

The financial implications of this productivity loss are huge, with the UK losing £57bn a year on average in lost productivity<sup>2</sup>. Work-related stress plays a significant role in the productivity losses incurred, with 73% of employees nationally suffering from at least one dimension of work-related stress. Those industries with higher productivity losses typically have higher levels of work-related stress.

Physical activity levels in financial services are in line with the national average, but in healthcare fall below the average of 64.4%, with just 62.2% of workers falling into the healthy range. Transportation, shipping and logistics – the worst industry for stress and lack of physical activity and the third least productive industry – also highlight the correlation between these two factors and productivity output.

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<sup>1</sup>Figure calculated using an average work impairment of 9.3% and an average working year of 252 days. Work impairment is calculated using the Work Productivity and Activity Impairment (WPAI) scale across the 32,538 employee participants in Britain's Healthiest Workplace 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Figure calculated using ONS statistics for the period Jun-Aug 2015, and making adjustments for part-time workers. £27,000 average wage; 31.112M people in work; 7.85% cost of lost productivity (calculated from Britain's Healthiest Company 2015)

The high-tech industry, on the other hand, scores highest in the productivity stakes, losing just 19 days per employee per year. High-tech employees are the most physically active, with 71.5% of employees in the healthy range, and are also the least stressed.

**Shaun Subel, Strategy Director at VitalityHealth, comments on the research:** “Although alcohol consumption, poor diet and smoking have a significant impact on long-term health, it is clear to see that day-to-day productivity loss centres on physical activity and stress levels. Within the significant industry fluctuations, it is quite worrying to see that even in high-tech, the best-performing sector in terms of productivity, 19 days of productive time is still lost by each employee each year.

“Encouragingly we note that on an individual company basis, where there is an increased investment in health promotion, the proportion of employees in good or excellent health grows, while the costs to productivity associated with absenteeism and presenteeism reduce. We would urge all companies, and especially those in sectors suffering from acute productivity loss, to invest in the health and wellbeing of their staff. Reducing workplace stress and encouraging employees to stay physically active should help increase productivity levels and protect the business bottom line.”

**Chris Bailey, Partner at Mercer, comments:** “Modern working practices and the make-up of roles within the UK’s workforce has impacted on the health of individuals significantly. Technology has allowed a more sedentary working life to become the norm whilst the rise of the UK’s service economy has reduced the number of manual workers and physical activity. But individual employers can, and do, act to buck these trends and create competitive advantage within their peer group by doing so. It’s no surprise that new tech firms without legacy working practices have lower levels of stress, and lower lost productivity, whilst more established industries sometimes struggle to implement change and create a healthy working environment.”

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**For more information, please contact:**

Dan McMillan  
Head of PR, Vitality  
07824 604 926  
Dan.McMillan@vitality.co.uk

Gemma Dunn  
Teamspirit Public Relations  
020 7360 7877  
gdunn@teamspiritpr.com

Alistair Peck  
Principal, Mercer  
020 7178 3143  
mercero.pressoffice@mercero.com

Mags Andersen  
UK Press Office Manager, Mercer  
020 7178 3513

[merceroffice@mercero.com](mailto:merceroffice@mercero.com)

**Notes to editors:**

\* The Britain's Healthiest Workplace (formerly known as Britain's Healthiest Company) research took place between January and August 2015. It looked at a number of lifestyle, mental wellbeing, clinical risk and productivity factors amongst 32,538 employees, together with a broad view of leadership and cultural dimensions, and corporate policies, practices and facilities that could directly impact on employee health, across 112 companies.

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