

Employees want to sit down less and walk more during work days

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Desk-based workers would like to spend less time sitting down and more time walking or doing physical activity as part of their working day, research published in the open access journal *BMC Research Notes*

suggests. To match these preferences, health promotion activities to reduce sitting time in the workplace should not only offer options for employees to stand up more, but also offer opportunities for walking, according to researchers at German Sport University Cologne and colleagues.

Dr Birgit Sperlich, lead author of the study said: "To our knowledge this is the first study to investigate how long desk-based workers actually want to sit, stand, walk and be physically active. So far, plans to increase [physical activity](#) in the workplace primarily focus on [health](#) outcomes without asking the target group what they prefer. Interventions to reduce sitting time may need to include more options for walking rather than only for standing."

Participants reported spending 73% on average of their working day sitting down, 10.2% standing, 12.9% walking and 3.9% doing physically demanding tasks. However, they wanted to spend 53.8% of their working day sitting down, 15.8% standing, 22.8% walking and 7.7% doing physically demanding tasks. The desire of employees to spend about half of their working day (4.0 hours) sitting differs considerably from the time they actually report to spend sitting (70% or 5.4 hours). On average, employees wanted to spend an additional 46 minutes per eight-hour working day walking and an additional 26 minutes per eight-hour working day standing.

The researchers interviewed 614 desk-based workers across Germany by phone to find out about their actual and desired levels of sitting, standing, walking and doing physically demanding tasks at work. They found that the more hours per day a person spent working, the greater the differences between the actual time they spent sitting down and the time they wanted to spend sitting down, indicating that the longer an [employee](#) spends working, the less time they want to spend sitting down. By contrast, the longer employees spent working, the smaller the

difference between the time they actually spent standing and the time they wanted to spend standing.

The authors caution that the findings rely on self-reported data and employees may not have correctly estimated the 73.0% of time they reported to spend sitting during working hours and that the study did not assess pre-existing health conditions that could influence desired sitting time which would need to be addressed in future studies.

Nonetheless, the findings suggest that health promotion activities to reduce sitting time in the workplace are supported by desk-based workers, which could be a helpful foundation when implementing strategies to enhance wellness in the workplace.

The authors of the study conclude: "Our results lend some support to the recommended reduction of sitting time to 50% of the work day which seems feasible in light of workers' preferences for sitting, standing and walking that we have identified. Alternatively, these results may reflect respondents' awareness of recent guidance about occupational sitting time. Either way, interventions that take into account workers' personal preferences for sitting, walking and physical [activity](#) could help reduce the risk for various negative [health outcomes](#)."

More information: Birgit Wallmann-Sperlich et al, Self-reported actual and desired proportion of sitting, standing, walking and physically demanding tasks of office employees in the workplace setting: do they fit together?, *BMC Research Notes* (2017). [DOI: 10.1186/s13104-017-2829-9](#)

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