

The efficient worker

A new survey shows that workers are less efficient in the afternoon and that the average time taken for lunch at work in Britain is now shorter than ever. What can employers do to ensure that workers stay productive?

1 Answer the three questions in the following workplace questionnaire. Compare your answers with a partner.

How many hours do you work in a typical day?
How much time do you spend commuting each day?
How long do you usually take for lunch?

2 Scan this article and compare your answers to exercise 1 with the average figures in the UK.

The 'siesta syndrome'

A survey of 1,000 people working in London found that three in every four believe they work less efficiently in the afternoon. The main reasons for this are tiredness, boredom and hunger. The 'siesta syndrome' makes 14.00–16.00 the worst hours, while productivity is best at 12.00pm. More than half of the number of people interviewed said they made more mistakes in the afternoon! Last year, a Bangladeshi entrepreneur in New York started a 'sleep centre' for corporate employees wanting a 'power nap'!

It seems that people in Britain are taking less time for lunch – with the average being just 27 minutes. Only one in five people take their full lunch hour, with many people working straight through. An office worker in Barcelona, Spain, takes between 90 minutes and 2 hours for lunch.

In another survey, one fifth of people said they had too much work to do – and were becoming ill as a result. Britons do sometimes work long hours, although not as long as in other parts of the world. In Hong Kong, the six day week is normal. Britons also spend longer than anyone else in Europe commuting – 49 minutes being average, compared to 47 in Germany, 37 in France and just 20 in Italy!

One work psychologist thinks the reason for the increase in work is that more people are being judged on their targets and results. 'People who do not make money can be sacked!' Another reason for increased workloads is a rise in e-mails! However, longer hours do not lead to more productivity. As one manager said, 'we should encourage workers to take regular breaks and eat healthier food. If not – productivity suffers'.

3 Read the article again. What are the main points discussed in the article?

4 Write in the adjectives next to the nouns below. Create sentences with some of these nouns and adjectives.

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|----------------|------------------|------------------|-------|
| (a) efficiency | <u>efficient</u> | (e) productivity | _____ |
| (b) tiredness | _____ | (f) stress | _____ |
| (c) boredom | _____ | (g) health | _____ |
| (d) hunger | _____ | (h) power | _____ |

5 How can you increase the productivity of workers in your company? Read the list of recommendations made by a consultancy company and select three. Can you add any more? Present your ideas to the class.

Encourage staff to take more regular breaks	Change the canteen menu to include healthier food	Encourage employees to start and finish early	Buy vending machines selling healthy snacks
Shorten the working day	Reduce employees' workload	Provide more sources of water	Allow employees to 'power nap'