

UNIVERSITE Joseph KI-ZERBO  
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### EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS

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#### 7. The Benefits of Physical Activity for Workers

It is reasonably well established that physical activity reduces the risks of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, strokes and some cancers. And a report by Britain's Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory committee in 2018 found that engaging in around 30 minutes of exercise a day could lower the likelihood of depression by more than 40%. Rand conducted a workplace survey across seven countries, and it found that those who reported higher levels of activity (equating to 150 minutes a week of moderate exercise, or 75 minutes of vigorous workout) had better mental health on average.

Does this make them better workers? Previous studies have suggested that those who exercise more tend to earn 5.10% more on average. A number of factors could explain this, however. Those who participate in team sports may make contacts in the locker room that help them in their careers. Or it could simply be that higher earners can afford to take advantage of sports facilities, such as gym memberships.

The Rand study looks at different measures: absenteeism (when workers take time off for illness) and presenteeism (when they turn up for work but are less productive because of illness). The latter measure was self-reported by employees who were asked whether their work was adversely affected by health issues. The survey suggests that between 3 and 4.5 working days each year are lost as a consequence of workers being physically inactive. This is between 1.3% and 2% of annual working time. The bulk of this was down to presenteeism.

Another potential gain from improved fitness is reduced health-care costs. In many countries, these would accrue to the public sector. But in America, where health care is often provided through employment based schemes, firms could benefit. It is hard to know what proportion of these costs could be trimmed, but Rand estimates that total American health savings could be \$6bn a year by 2025 using the same targets for moderate or vigorous exercise as before.

Adapted from The Economist November 2019

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