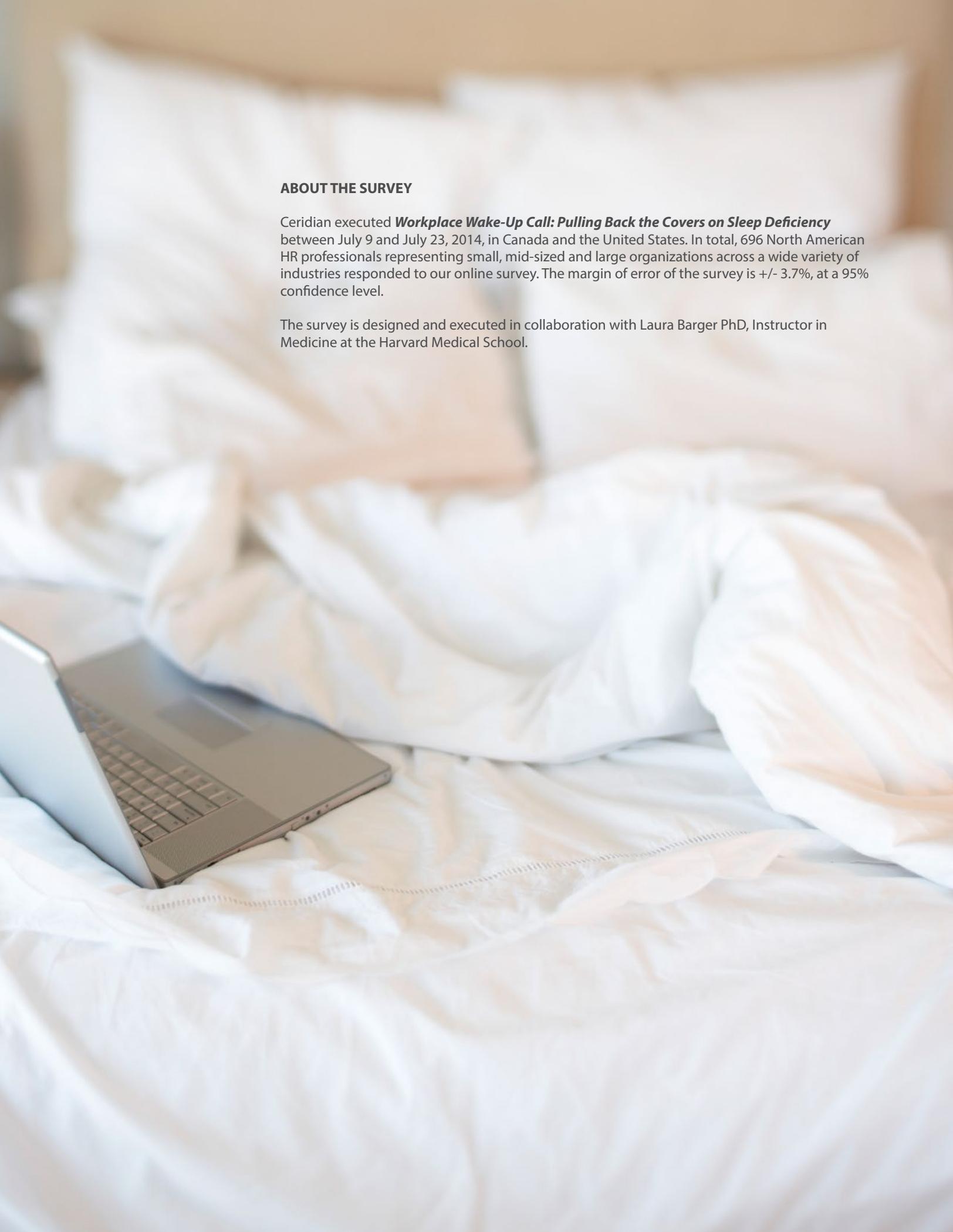




# WORKPLACE WAKE-UP CALL:

Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency

SURVEY REPORT

A silver laptop is open on a bed with white linens. The bed has a white pillow and a white blanket. The background is a light-colored wall.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

Ceridian executed ***Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency*** between July 9 and July 23, 2014, in Canada and the United States. In total, 696 North American HR professionals representing small, mid-sized and large organizations across a wide variety of industries responded to our online survey. The margin of error of the survey is +/- 3.7%, at a 95% confidence level.

The survey is designed and executed in collaboration with Laura Barger PhD, Instructor in Medicine at the Harvard Medical School.

# WORKPLACE WAKE-UP CALL: PULLING BACK THE COVERS ON SLEEP DEFICIENCY

## SURVEY REPORT:

The Institute of Medicine and leading North American sleep researchers have labelled sleep deficiency an epidemic and an unmet public health problem.<sup>1</sup>

According to Ceridian's survey of 700 North American Human Resources leaders, *Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency*, more than 30% of HR leaders have personally witnessed or heard about a coworker falling asleep on the job – and that's just in the past six months.

Our survey results demonstrate that many employees are struggling to keep their eyes open, while many other significant studies reveal that sleep deficiency contributes to:

- Shifts in mood
- Interpersonal conflict
- Impaired judgment and slowed reaction times
- Errors and accidents
- Obesity
- Adverse cardiovascular outcomes
- Mental illness and chronic health concerns

So, why hasn't sleep deficiency achieved urgent notoriety as a critical workplace issue in line with other top-of-mind concerns such as mental illness, addiction and presenteeism? Your organization may already recognize sleep health as an important workplace issue, but, if not, it may be time to open your eyes.

In *Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency*, we learned that:

- 35% believed that sleep deficiency had affected productivity in some meaningful way.
- Many organizations offering shift work are not taking advantage of the power of sleep-healthy scheduling practices, and routinely schedule or grant shifts in ways that contribute to sleep deficiency.
- Organizations that provide tools and services to support workforce wellness are less likely to report employees sleeping on the job than organizations that do not provide health and wellness tools and services.

Employers **can and should** proactively support employee sleep health to mitigate the associated risks, and protect productivity. Our recommendations champion **shared accountability between both employees and employers** – a strategy that demands:

1. Employee education about sleep health and the impact of sleep deficiency.
2. Sleep health-related workplace policies and practices.
3. Wellness services, programs and tools to support healthy sleep.

Many significant studies reveal that sleep deficiency contributes to:

- Shifts in mood
- Interpersonal conflict
- Impaired judgment and slowed reaction times
- Errors and accidents
- Obesity
- Adverse cardiovascular outcomes
- Mental illness and chronic health concerns

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine. Sleep disorders and sleep deprivation: An unmet public health problem. Colten HR, Altevogt BM, editors. ISBN:0-309-66012-2, 1-500. Washington, D.C., National Academies Press. 2006.

# HITTING THE SNOOZE BUTTON

## KEY FINDING #1: SLEEP DEFICIENCY IS A PRODUCTIVITY KILLER.

According to the Ceridian study, *Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency*, more than 30% of surveyed HR leaders have personally witnessed or heard about a coworker falling asleep on the job – and that’s just in the past six months. More than 35% of those leaders also agreed that sleep deficiency had affected workplace productivity in some meaningful way.



## SURVEY SAYS:

31%

Witnessed or heard about employee asleep on the job

35%

Reported productivity losses as a result of sleep deficiency

14%

said that sleep deficiency did not have a significant impact on productivity

50%

didn't know if sleep deficiency had affected productivity significantly

Survey respondents cited sleep deficiency as a contributing factor to:

- Errors
- Workplace stress
- Illness
- Absenteeism
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Employee self-medication
- Presenteeism

Only 14% of HR leaders said that sleep deficiency did not have a significant impact on productivity at their organizations, while more than 50% of respondents selected “I don’t know” when asked if sleep deficiency had affected productivity. This response supports our premise that a large number of employers:

- May not consider sleep deficiency to be as concerning as other workplace issues.
- Are not aware of the rates of sleep deficiency: Roughly 30% of the general population complains of sleep disruption, and approximately 10% have associated symptoms of daytime functional impairment consistent with the diagnosis of insomnia.<sup>2</sup>
- Are not aware of the extent to which sleep deprivation affects productivity, despite overwhelming scientific evidence of the relationship between them.

<sup>2</sup> National Institutes of Health. Available at: <http://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/insomnia>

### The Three Pillars of Good Health

The Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep Medicine refers to sleep as the “third pillar of good health,” based on the belief that sleep is as important to our health as regular exercise and proper nutrition.



### Sleep Deficiency and its Effect on Performance

In any given year, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem or illness<sup>3</sup>, potentially resulting in lost productivity, increased absenteeism and health care costs, and more.

Mental health and other issues related to workplace health and productivity are clearly deserving of an organization's attention, yet, sleep deficiency – believed to affect at minimum 30% of the workforce – has received little direct attention from many organizations. For instance, in our study, only 29% of respondents reported having programs in place to support workers struggling with sleep deficiency.

We propose that sleep deficiency is a significant workplace concern because its effect is two-fold:

1. **Direct:** When we're drowsy or sleepy, we don't perform as well as we would if we were well-rested.
2. **Indirect:** Sleep deficiency is a powerful, insidious contributing factor to many issues that we already know hamper workplace productivity.

Inadequate sleep:

- *Decreases mental performance.* Lack of sleep reduces concentration and focus, limiting a person's ability to learn efficiently. Researchers believe that sleep has an important role to play in the consolidation of memory, which is essential for retaining new information. Sleep deprivation also compromises mathematical capacity, logical reasoning, reaction times and hand-eye coordination, visual acuity and communication skills.
- *Affects mood.* Many of us notice that we're edgy following even one night of poor sleep, and in the workplace, irritability and reduced patience could lead to interpersonal conflict between employees or between employees and customers.
- *Contributes to errors and accidents,* which can be costly and tragic. Most accidents happen when people are biologically programmed to be asleep – between midnight and 6 AM, and between 1 and 3 PM.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Smetanin, P., Stiff, D., Briante, C., Adair, C., Ahmad, S. & Khan, M. (2011). The life and economic impact of major mental illnesses in Canada: 2011 to 2041. RiskAnalytica, on behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

<sup>4</sup> Alberta Human Resources and Employment. [Fatigue, Extended Work Hours, and Safety in the Workplace](#) in Workplace Health and Safety, June 2004, Reformatted August 2010.



of the workforce is affected by sleep deficiency (at minimum)

Sleep deficiency is also a proven contributing factor to many concerning health issues that affect productivity by causing presenteeism, absenteeism and increased disability rates. These include:

- *Compromised emotional well-being and mental health:* Researchers link sleep deficiency to a greater likelihood of developing a mood disorder such as depression, and they have correlated lack of sleep with declining levels of optimism and sociability, and with anxiety and mental distress. Evidence suggests that people with insomnia (an acute or chronic condition in which sufferers have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep), have a 10-fold risk of developing depression compared with those who sleep well<sup>5</sup>, and the impact of depression on health and workplace performance and attendance is already well-documented. Inadequate sleep has also been shown to contribute to the development of substance abuse problems, such as the misuse of alcohol.<sup>6</sup>
- *Increased likelihood of chronic diseases and conditions,* as per Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep Medicine, such as:
  - **Obesity:** The link between insufficient sleep and obesity is complex, but research demonstrates a relationship between inadequate sleep and the likelihood of weight gain. Lack of sleep is a risk factor for obesity.
  - **Diabetes:** Insufficient sleep may lead to the development of Type 2 diabetes by influencing the way the body processes glucose.
  - **Heart disease and hypertension:** Studies show that even a single night of insufficient sleep will increase blood pressure rates the following day, which may point to how sleep deficiency contributes to the development of coronary disease over time.

**Most alarming is that many studies link long-term sleep deficiency to increased risk of mortality – a shorter life expectancy.**



<sup>5</sup> Sleep. 2005 Nov;28(11):1457-64. Epidemiology of insomnia, depression, and anxiety. Taylor DJ1, Lichstein KL, Durrence HH, Reidel BW, Bush AJ.

<sup>6</sup> [Sleep and alcohol use and abuse](#). Deirdre A Conroy PhD, Author. Antonio Culebras MD, Editor. Last updated May 13, 2013.

## KEY FINDING #2: SHIFT WORKERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE.

Almost half of all Ceridian survey respondents offered shift work, and just one third of those scheduled shifts in a way that supports generally accepted principles of sleep health.

Many of our surveyed HR leaders indicated their shifts change frequently – often enough to wreak havoc on employee sleep health. In fact, 41% of employees do not have a fixed shift schedule, and 12% of employees are subject to a weekly shift schedule change.

When asked in which direction they change shifts – with or against the clock – 21% of respondents reported that their shifts move against the clock or in both directions – neither of which supports sleep health.

The reality is that it takes the majority of workers up to one full week to recover from what is just a single, counter-clockwise shift change.

### SURVEY SAYS:



Just one third scheduled shifts in a way that supports generally accepted principles of sleep health

Employees whose shift starts change in a counter-clockwise direction, or frequently switch between moving with and against the clock, are more likely to suffer from sleep deficiency. This is because a schedule that violates the natural *circadian rhythm* significantly increases the risk of sleep deficiency. This rhythm refers to the physical, mental and behavioural changes that follow a roughly 24-hour cycle, guided by light in the environment. Almost all living things, from tiny microbes, to plants, to human beings, have a circadian rhythm.

The most demanding shift work schedules include a night shift, and in fact, studies monitoring brain activity show that one shift worker in five dozes off during the shift.<sup>7</sup> Since humans are diurnal (day-active) animals, our biological clock sends a powerful signal to keep us awake during the day.

Possibly making matters worse is that, depending on organizational policy and the schedule irregularity of many part-time positions, some employees may be able to choose their own shifts or switch shifts with colleagues, without any consideration for sleep health.

Without educational resources and training, neither managers nor employees may be aware that scheduling decisions can be hazardous to alertness, performance and health, and costly to productivity. Over time, shift work that doesn't follow circadian rhythm-friendly scheduling practices can lead to an increased risk of:

- **Stress, heart attack and other health concerns:** According to the International Classifications of Sleep Disorders, shift workers are at increased risk for a variety of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and gastrointestinal diseases.
- **Workplace accidents:** A recent University of British Columbia (UBC) study concluded that those who work night and rotating shifts are almost twice as likely to be injured on the job as those working regular day shifts.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Barger LK, Lockley SW, Rajaratnam SM, Landrigan CP. Neurobehavioral, health, and safety consequences associated with shift work in safety-sensitive professions. *Curr Neurol Neurosci Rep.* 2009 Mar;9(2):155-64. Review. Available at:

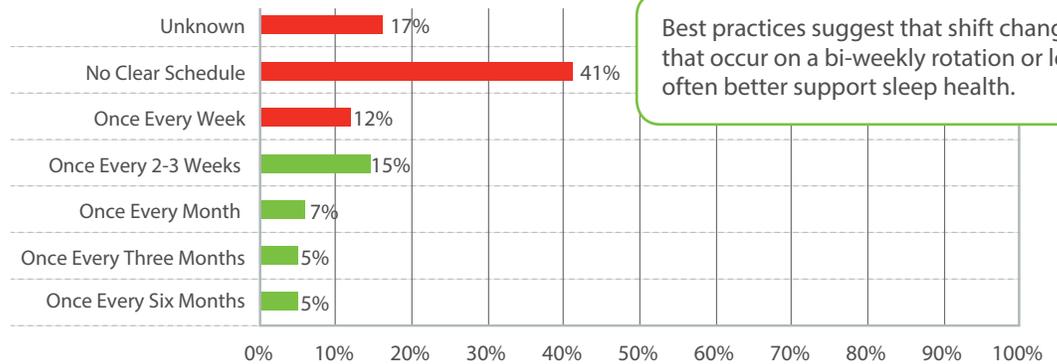
<http://canadasafetycouncil.org/workplace-safety/fatigue>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ccohs.ca/newsletters/hsreport/issues/2010/11/ezine.html#inthenews>

- **Traffic accidents while travelling to and from work:** One study of healthy, young adults found that after being awake all night, driving performance was similar to that of a driver with a Blood Alcohol Level (BAC) of 80 mg%, which is the legal limit in all Canadian provinces and territories, as well as in all 50 U.S. states.<sup>9</sup>
- **‘Shift work sleep disorder’:** Symptoms include excessive sleepiness, insomnia, disrupted sleep schedules, reduced performance, difficulties with personal relationships and irritability/depressed mood.

**SURVEY SAYS:**

**How often do your employees change shifts?**



Best practices suggest that shift changes that occur on a bi-weekly rotation or less often better support sleep health.



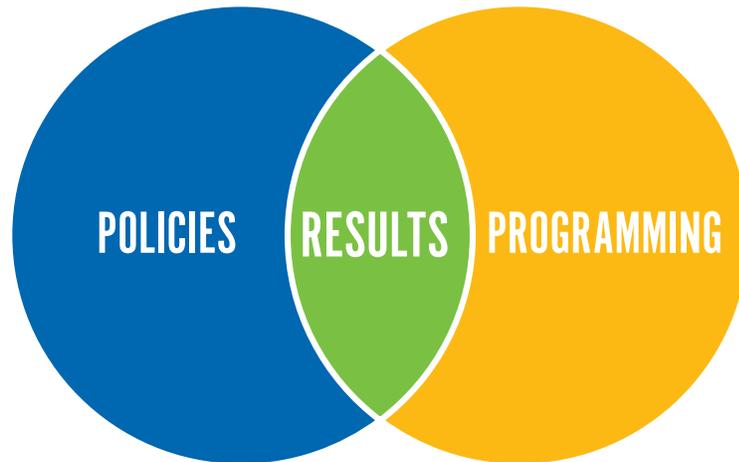
<sup>9</sup> [http://www.css-scs.ca/images/brochures/drowsy\\_driving.pdf](http://www.css-scs.ca/images/brochures/drowsy_driving.pdf)

**KEY FINDING #3: EMPLOYERS CAN AFFORDABLY ENCOURAGE SLEEP HEALTH.**

Only 29% of survey respondents reported having programs available to support employees suffering from sleep deficiency.



of survey respondents reported having programs available to support employees suffering from sleep deficiency



In correlating our survey data, we found that those who offered sleep health programming and services reported:

- **Less instances of employees sleeping on the job:**
  - **35%** of HR leaders whose organizations **did not offer** professional sleep health programming reported employees sleeping on the job whereas only **28%** of HR leaders whose organizations offered such resources reported employees sleeping on the job.
- **Lower negative impacts on productivity:**
  - Organizations that specifically offered **training programs on sleep health and services** reported **less often** that employee sleep deficiency negatively affected productivity (**62%** versus **73%**).
  - Organizations offering **any services or tools** to support or assist employees in dealing with sleep deficiency reported **less often** that employee sleep deficiency negatively affected productivity (**63%** versus **75%**).

We also asked respondents to consider their organizations, and to estimate the role played by employee sleep deficiency in a variety of adverse health and safety outcomes scientifically associated with sleep deficiency. We found that, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with one being the least significant and five being the most significant), they reported:

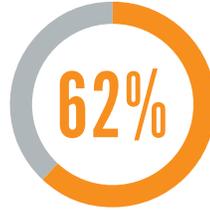
- **Less interpersonal conflicts:**
  - Organizations offering professional sleep health support and programs rated **'interpersonal conflicts'** a 4 or 5 **less often** than organizations that didn't offer professional health support and programs (**46%** versus **57%**).
- **Lower errors or mistakes:**
  - Organizations offering professional sleep health support and programs rated **'errors or mistakes'** a 4 or 5 **less often** than organizations that didn't offer professional health support and programs (**74%** versus **81%**).
- **Decreased loss of qualified workers:**
  - Organizations offering professional sleep health support and programs reported greater retention of critical employees, rating **'loss of qualified workers'** a 4 or 5 **less often** than organizations that didn't offer professional health support and programs (**29%** versus **39%**).

## SURVEY SAYS:

When asked which wellness services and tools their organizations had in place to support employees, HR leaders reported most frequently the following four solutions:



Online resources  
and tools



Wellness programs to  
support self-care



Counselling services  
(which could support  
those dealing with  
sleep deficiency)



Sleep health coaching

Surprisingly, most employers have not established the following workplace policies or practices that encourage sleep health:

- 12% have policies in place for managing after-hours workload
- 9% have policies around checking electronic devices after work hours
- 9% provide nap rooms
- 5% have policies for international travellers pertaining to the impact of jet lag
- 3% have screening programs to identify sleep disorders among employees in safety-sensitive positions.

**Employers have significant opportunities to improve productivity by promoting healthy sleep habits, and addressing sleep deficiency.**



# SOUNDING THE ALARM – OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational leaders must acknowledge that sleep deficiency is a significant workplace issue that directly affects productivity, and contributes indirectly as an undercurrent to many other concerning workplace issues.

Employees, employers and health and wellness solutions providers are all accountable for supporting workforce sleep health and reducing the impact of sleep deficiency.

## #1

## EDUCATE YOUR WORKFORCE ABOUT HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS, AND ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SLEEP DEFICIENCY.

All managers and employees need to understand the costly, risky implications of sleep deficiency. The reality is that many of us are sleep-deficient: Some 43% of Americans ages 13 to 64 said they rarely or never get a good night's sleep on weeknights, according to a 2011 poll by the National Sleep Foundation.

Although employees must take responsibility for their personal well-being and for reporting to work fit for duty, employers should offer and promote 'sleep hygiene' educational materials, as well as information about the signs and symptoms of sleep disorders.

Sleep-related education is particularly important for:

- *Managers who set employee schedules and set the tone:* Positioning sleep deficiency as a productivity-killer can help managers gain an appreciation of the value of sleep-related workplace policies and practices.

Managers should receive specialized training in ways to promote the importance of sleep health, and to encourage their direct reports to adopt good sleep hygiene. Only 19% of our survey respondents reported having training in place to educate on healthy sleep habits.

The good news is that more than half (51%) reported that they would be interested in offering sleep hygiene or fatigue countermeasures training in the future, the second most popular option following wellness programs (61% said they would like to add services to this category).

- *Shift workers whose schedules are subject to change:* If your organization offers shift work or if you have many part-time employees, it's even more crucial to educate employees about sleep health. Organizations need to identify strategies to maximize output while protecting against the effects of a non-standard or irregular schedule.
- *Executives and employees who travel frequently:* Jet lag interferes with the synchronized systems that regulate sleep and wake under normal conditions. If employees are travelling internationally or crossing multiple time zones, employers should consider a post-trip 'work moratorium' or a virtual/work from home policy to mitigate the impact of the resulting fatigue.
- *Health & safety and design professionals who wish to reduce environmental risks:* Dim lighting, high noise levels and toasty temperatures all contribute to sleepiness.



43%  
of Americans ages 13 to 64 said  
they rarely or never get a good  
night's sleep on weeknights

#2

## CONSIDER AND IMPLEMENT WORKPLACE POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT SLEEP HEALTH.

As per our findings, a significant opportunity for organizations seems to be in the development and implementation of **policies that promote and contribute to sleep health**, including:

- *Managing after-hours workload:* The blue glow – or artificial light – that emanates from electronic devices such as laptops, computers and smartphones stimulates the brain, as does striving to resolve complex or challenging work issues in the evening – particularly if an individual feels stress about the work they're engaging in. Regular performance management meetings can help to ensure that an employee's workload is manageable, but employees also need to feel comfortable voicing concerns when workloads are bleeding over into the 'life' portion of work-life fit.
- *Checking electronic devices after work hours:* A 2012 survey found that 60% of smartphone-using professionals kept in touch with work for a full 13.5 hours per day, and then spent another five hours juggling work email every weekend. That's 72 hours a week of job-related contact, and not leaving very much time to truly 'check out.'<sup>10</sup> In 2009, two-parent households in the U.S. worked 26% longer than those two and a half decades ago.<sup>11</sup> Employers may wish to consider adopting an after-hours work policy that imposes limits on device usage to eliminate the expectation that workers should be available any time, from anywhere, to manage work-related issues.
- *Napping:* According to Harvard's Sleep Health & Education Training Program, taking a nap can refresh and reinvigorate us, but experts recommend short naps (20 minutes or less) to prevent entering into deeper levels of sleep that reduce the drive to sleep later on. Some employers, Google in particular, are well-known for their 'progressive' approach to sleep health, which has up until now, been equated with installing designated nap rooms or nap pods. To effectively take advantage of a nap room, employees must also believe that their workplace culture supports napping behaviour.

60%

of smartphone-using professionals kept in touch with work for a full 13.5 hours per day

#3

## ADOPT 'HEALTHY SLEEP' SHIFT WORK SCHEDULING PRACTICES, IF APPLICABLE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Employers offering shift work should take into account sleep health when scheduling workers, as not doing so may negatively affect workforce well-being and workplace productivity.

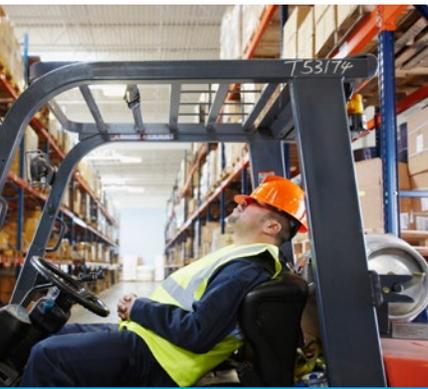
According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS), employers can make improvements at two levels (organizational and individual) to help reduce the effects of shift work, but that "satisfaction with a particular shift system is the result of a complicated balancing act that is the best compromise for personal, psychological, social and medical concerns."

**Level 1 – Organizational:** primarily through the design of shift schedules, education and better facilities/working conditions. Employers may wish to consider the following recommendations pertaining to circadian rhythm-friendly shift scheduling:

- **Fixed shift work** (comprised of regular or static shifts that can be day, evening or night shifts but always consistent for individual employees) lends itself best to the adjustment of circadian rhythms, enabling workers to adopt a consistent routine and remain on a specific schedule.

<sup>10</sup> [2012 survey by the Center for Creative Leadership](#)

<sup>11</sup> Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project



**Policies should provide employees with sufficient time to sleep between shifts.**

- If your environment offers **rotational shift work** (in which shifts change according to a schedule and workers take turns working on all shifts that are part of a particular system), determining your ideal timeframe for a shift rotation isn't a straightforward, simple process. In fact, the 'ideal shift rotation' is often disputed. The most common rotation is seven days, but some researchers recommend a longer timeframe such as 14 to 21 days (slow rotation) to enable the body's rhythms to better adjust. Still, other researchers recommend changing every two to three days (rapid rotation) to prevent the body from trying to adjust to any one particular schedule and to provide more frequent time off. European employers adopt this approach much more frequently than do North American employers.
- It is advised that **shift changes follow the sun** (or go in a clockwise direction in which morning shift moves to the afternoon/evening shift, afternoon/evening shift moves to the night shift, night shift moves forward to the day shift) and not the reverse, nor a combination of the two directions. Employers should also consider starting day shifts only after 6 AM. The body is at its lowest peak just before sunrise. Early starting times are associated with higher accident and error rates, fatigue at work and ineffective sleep.
- Policies should provide employees with **sufficient time to sleep between shifts**. An aggregate of leading policies from national and international organizations suggests a 12-hour window between shifts as the minimum standard to provide employees with the opportunity to obtain the recommended eight hours of daily sleep.
  - Employers should consider safeguards to prevent or discourage those who schedule shifts and employees who work shifts from adopting schedules that do not provide adequate time for sleep between shifts.
- Employers may also wish to consider:
  - Installing strong lighting at employee workstations
  - Providing frequent rest breaks and encouraging short naps
  - Analyzing job functions to encourage the completion of physically or mentally-demanding tasks during a particular shift when workers are at their peak

**Level 2 – Individual:** helping workers to get better sleep, eat a healthier diet and reduce stress. Shift work is a reality for three out of every 10 Canadian workers, and for nearly 15% of the U.S. workforce, with nearly 8 million U.S. shift workers regularly working during the overnight hours.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that sleep is a personal health habit, we argue that employers have a responsibility to help employees adjust to irregular work schedules. Some organizations provide shift workers with a handbook to arm them with:

- Background information about why sleep is vital to overall well-being
- Strategies to get valuable sleep
- Information about the importance of **consistency** as it pertains to circadian rhythms and the benefits of **routine** pertaining to mealtimes, waking and to-bed times, and activity timing on days off
- Tips for maintaining a healthful diet
- Ways to reduce their stress levels

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics: Workers on Flexible and Shift Schedules in May 2004. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/flex.pdf>. Accessed January 22, 2009.

## #4

**IMPLEMENT TOOLS AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT SLEEP HEALTH AND REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF SLEEP DEFICIENCY.**

Our survey asked respondents to select from a list all wellness tools and services they would **like to implement** to help support employee sleep health. Here are their most popular selections:

- 60% : additional wellness programs including yoga, walking clubs, mindfulness, support groups
- 51% : sleep health training and education
- 43% : access to supportive online tools and resources
- 36% : in-depth health coaching related to sleep habits

We recommend that employers invest in on-site facilities and services that foster a work environment that promotes sleep health. These services could include:

- *Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and work-life wellness solutions:* A comprehensive EAP should include access to information and expert resources designed to support all the issues and challenges we face, from work and life to everything in between, including sleep. If your organization has an EAP in place, you may wish to consult with your provider for information about available sleep hygiene-related content and resources to share with employees.
  - *Sleep coaching:* Just as individuals can learn to eat better, exercise better, quit smoking or reduce stress, they can also learn to sleep better. Sleep hygiene involves a series of important behaviours that individuals can adopt to increase satisfaction with the sleep they're getting. Health coaching is rooted in the important principles of motivation and taps into the power of community support, helping individuals achieve desired results.
  - *Nap rooms* (a designated space for napping with dim lighting and an alarm clock). According to the Society for Human Resource Management, 6% of American workplaces had nap rooms in place in 2011, a number that is increasing year-over-year. In a study conducted by NASA researchers, trans-Pacific flight pilots were instructed to take short naps. The pilots slept for an average of 26 minutes and experienced 34% improved performance and a 54% boost in alertness that lasted two to three hours.<sup>13</sup>
  - *Stress management programs and healthy sleep promoters* that employers may wish to consider include on-site massage, exercise facilities, yoga classes, walking clubs, resilience training, fatigue countermeasures training, sleep hygiene training, and more.
  - *Referrals to sleep disorders screening programs, particularly to assess those in safety-sensitive roles:* On an average night, 30 to 40 million Americans have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or wake earlier than they would like and cannot get back to sleep<sup>14</sup>, a sleep disorder called short-term or chronic insomnia. In a 2009 study by the Public Health Agency of Canada<sup>15</sup>, almost 900,000 Canadians reported a health professional had diagnosed them with sleep apnea, a sleep disorder in which an individual's airway becomes partially or completely blocked many times during sleep, leading to repeated awakenings to resume breathing. In someone with a severe form of sleep apnea, this may occur hundreds of times per night, interrupting breathing for 30 seconds or more during each instance.
- Obviously, sleep disorders can disrupt sleep significantly, reducing quality of life and affecting long-term health. A prompt referral to a sleep disorders screening program or sleep clinic can make a difference to an employee's quality of life.
- *Workforce management solutions:* If your organization is using an automated workforce management solution for scheduling, you may be able to receive an alert or warning when proposed schedules put employee sleep health at risk.

**We recommend that employers invest in on-site facilities and services that foster a work environment that promotes sleep health.**

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.healthcentral.com/sleep-disorders/napping-192940-5.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/getting/treatment/an-overview-of-sleep-disorders>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/sleepapnea-apneesommeil/ff-rr-2009-eng.php>

## CONCLUSION

If it is scientifically proven that sleep deficiency causes excessive sleepiness and reduced mental acuity, and in turn, lower productivity, shouldn't an awareness of the importance of sleep and sleep-health promotional strategies be commonplace in the workplace? *They should be, but they're not.*

If it is scientifically proven that sleep deficiency contributes to errors, accidents, physical and mental health problems, and more, shouldn't we be shining a spotlight on sleep-healthy practices in the workplace? *We should be, but we're not.*

If it is scientifically proven that sleep deficiency leads to weight gain, obesity, diabetes, depression, and more, shouldn't the majority of employees be aware of the significance of sleep and educated about sleep hygiene? *They should be, but many aren't.*

Despite overwhelming evidence of what sleep means to our well-being, it's still a concept somewhat shrouded in mystery, and for many of us, simply a personal behaviour that we can "catch up on later" or "something we can do when we're dead."

In the scientific journal *Sleep*, lead study author Ronald Kessler, Harvard Medical School, cites that poor job performance sparked by insomnia costs the U.S. economy \$63.2 billion annually. The reality is that sleep deficiency is costly in so many more ways than purely financial.

Employees must acknowledge the importance of sleep, and organizations must adopt a multifaceted strategy to promote sleep health and reduce sleep deficiency – one that combines education with policies, practices and programs. The good news is that our survey results point to this approach as effective in reducing the impact of sleep deficiency on productivity.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY BY ADDRESSING WORKPLACE SLEEP DEFICIENCY – FROM INFORMATION ABOUT SLEEP HYGIENE TO SLEEP HEALTH PROGRAMS – CALL US TOLL-FREE AT 1-800-729-7655 IN THE UNITED STATES OR 1-877-237-4342 IN CANADA.**

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