



The Road to Wellbeing: How Commutes Impact Employee Happiness

October 2024

لبيه أعمال
Labayh Business



Labayh Medical Care Company

Why Labayh?

+1,000

Professionals

+2.9 Million

Active users

2017

Since

+73 Million

Minutes of appointments

+100

Employees

+2 Million

Minutes of social responsibility

+120

Countries

+425 Thousand

Rating Count in app

98%

Satisfaction rate

Worldwide toolset

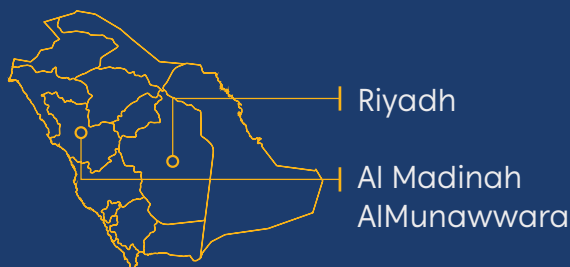
Based in Madinah & Riyadh with delivery capability throughout the Kingdom and across the globe.

Qualified and experienced

Saudi MOH approved platform. Management and delivery team with a wealth of experience in the region and beyond.

Bilingual Capability

- Design, delivery and support in Arabic and English and in some cases other languages.
- Tools for assessment, design and delivery from some of the best in the world used by accredited practitioners.



Labayh has two main branches in the Kingdom one in Al Madinah AlMunawwara and the other one in Riyadh.

A Saudi Company

Tools for assessment, design and delivery from some of the best in the world used by accredited practitioners.



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Executive Summary

This report explores the significant impact of workplace commutes on employee wellbeing, highlighting how the daily journey to and from work affects both physical and mental health, as well as overall life satisfaction. As urbanization continues and job opportunities draw workers from various regions, commuting has become a substantial part of modern working life.

Long commutes are identified as a major source of daily stress, contributing to diminished wellbeing. The report provides statistics and research findings that underline the severity of the issue: **17 percent of Americans spend nearly 16 days per year commuting, with commute length being the third most common reason employees leave their jobs.** Furthermore, research reveals that longer commutes are associated with increased stress, lower job satisfaction, and adverse health outcomes, including heightened risks for cardiovascular problems and chronic stress.

The report also examines different types of commutes, the factors influencing their impact, and the various ways they can detract from employees' quality of life. Strategies for mitigating these negative effects are discussed, including both organizational approaches like flexible working hours and remote work options, and individual strategies such as engaging in physical activity or relaxation techniques during the commute.

Ultimately, this report emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach to address the challenges posed by workplace commutes, aiming to enhance employee wellbeing and job satisfaction by reducing the physical, mental, and emotional toll of commuting.





Introduction

This report talks about **the relationship between workplace commutes and employee wellbeing**, exploring how the daily journey to and from work can impact both physical and mental health, as well as overall life satisfaction.

Commuting, often seen as a mundane part of the day, can have far-reaching effects on an employee's life. It influences not just the time spent away from home but also the quality of that time, **affecting stress levels, physical health, and mental resilience**. For many, the commute is a source of daily stress, with long hours spent in traffic contributing to a diminished sense of wellbeing.



Statistics and numbers

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, **17 percent** of Americans spend nearly **16 days per year** commuting to and from work. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, the average commute in the U.S. now exceeding **26 minutes** each way, that totals more than four hours per week. This equates to 10 percent of a standard **40-hour workweek**, this is all wasted time that could be used more productively. Research from ADP reveals that commute length is the third most common reason employees leave their jobs, following low pay and long hours.

Long commutes are a significant deterrent for employees, with many willing to pay to shorten their travel time. LinkedIn reports that **85 percent** of U.S. professionals would accept a pay cut to reduce their commute. Additionally, researchers at the University of West England found that an **extra 20 minutes** of commuting each day has the same impact on job satisfaction as a 19 percent annual pay cut!

A study from Occupational Health Science shows that employees who commute for more than **60 minutes** each way experience higher levels of stress. This prolonged stress exposure can lead to chronic health issues, such as hypertension and cardiovascular problems. Another study found a direct correlation between commuting distance and absenteeism. For example, workers with a one-way commuting distance of 50 km are predicted to have **22%** more absent days for health reasons and **30%** more for other reasons compared to those with a commuting distance of 15 km.

Another study collected data **from 30,000 workers from 35 European countries**. The effect of commuting on overall wellbeing was found to be negative, with each additional hour of weekly commuting time associated with a small but statistically significant decrease in wellbeing. Commuting was also linked to lower scores in both physical and mental health.



01

Understanding Workplace Commute

Understanding Workplace Commute

The nature and characteristics of a commute can vary greatly depending on factors such as distance, mode of transportation, geographic location, and individual circumstances. Understanding the nuances of workplace commutes is crucial, as they play a significant role in shaping employees' physical health, mental wellbeing, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

Types of commutes

There are several types of workplace commutes, each with its unique characteristics and implications for employee wellbeing. The most common types include short vs. long commutes, urban vs. rural commutes, and commutes that involve different modes of transportation, such as driving, public transportation, biking, or walking.

Short commutes

Typically involve travel times of 30 minutes or less and are often associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and wellbeing.

Long commutes

Can extend beyond an hour each way, are generally linked to higher levels of stress, lower job satisfaction, and greater physical and mental health challenges.



The distinction between **urban and rural commutes** also highlights important differences. **Urban commuters** often deal with challenges such as traffic congestion, overcrowded public transportation, and higher levels of pollution. These factors can exacerbate the stress and fatigue associated with commuting. In contrast, **rural commuters** might face longer distances and less frequent public transportation options, but their commutes might be less stressful due to lower traffic levels and a more pleasant environment.



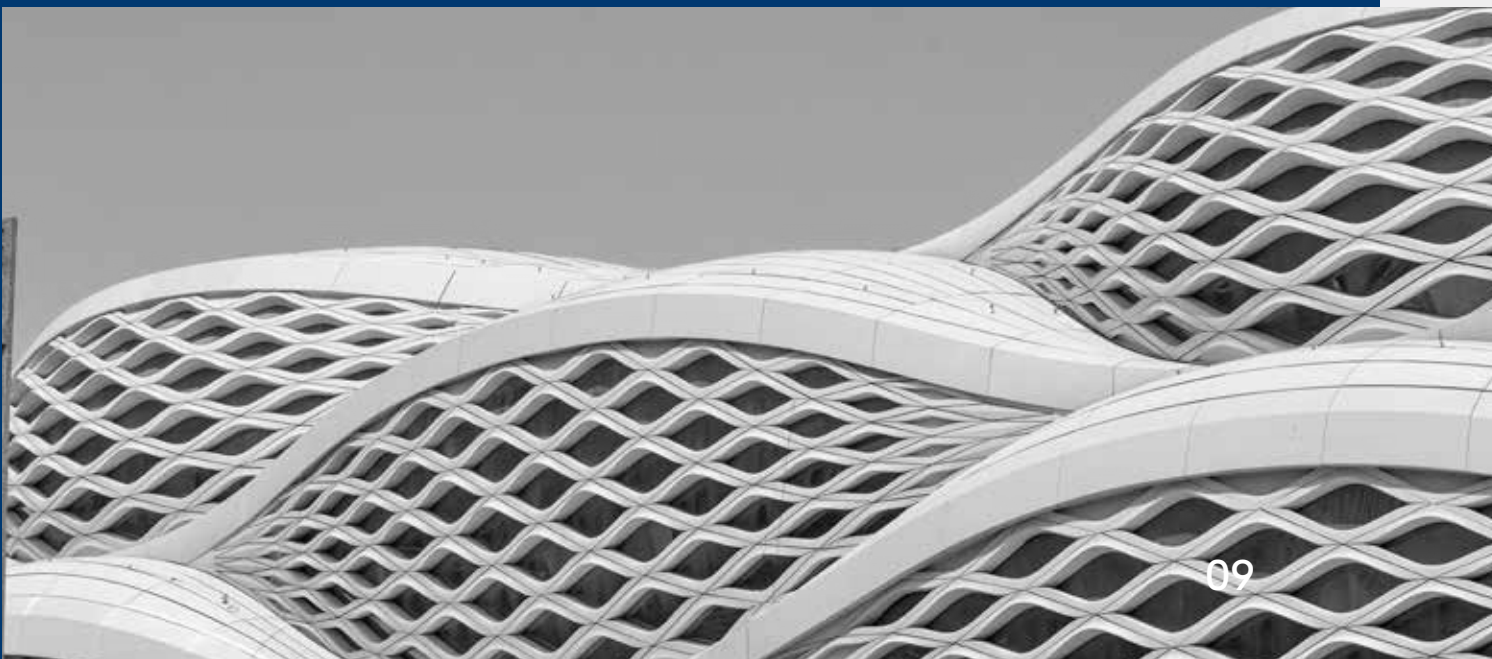
Modes of transportation play a crucial role in determining the nature of a commute. **Driving** is one of the most common modes, especially in areas where public transportation is limited. While driving offers flexibility and convenience, it can also lead to stress due to traffic, high fuel costs, and the physical strain of long hours behind the wheel.



Public transportation, including buses, trains, and subways, offers an alternative to driving and can reduce the stress of navigating traffic. However, public transportation systems can also be unreliable, crowded, and time-consuming, which can negatively impact an employee's wellbeing.



Active commuting, such as walking or biking, is often associated with higher levels of physical activity and better overall health. It also allows employees to enjoy the benefits of outdoor activity and can lead to improved mood and reduced stress.



02

Effects of Commute on Employee Wellbeing

Effects of Commute on Employee Wellbeing



The effects of commuting on **wellbeing** are multifaceted, encompassing physical health challenges, mental stressors, and disruptions to work-life balance.



One of the most evident effects of commuting is on **physical health**. Long commutes, particularly those involving extended periods of sitting in cars or public transportation, contribute to a sedentary lifestyle. This lack of physical activity is linked to a range of health issues, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and musculoskeletal problems. Employees who spend a large part of their day commuting often have less time and energy to engage in physical exercise, further exacerbating these health risks. Additionally, the stress of navigating through traffic or crowded public transport can lead to increased blood pressure and chronic stress, which are significant risk factors for heart disease and other stress-related conditions.



Mental health is another area where commuting takes a significant toll. The stress associated with long and unpredictable commutes can lead to higher levels of anxiety and depression among employees. The unpredictability of commute times, especially in urban areas with heavy traffic or unreliable public transport, can cause employees to feel a lack of control over their daily lives. This sense of helplessness can contribute to chronic stress and mental fatigue, reducing overall mental resilience and increasing the likelihood of burnout. Moreover, the mental strain of a difficult commute can carry over into the workplace, reducing productivity and increasing the likelihood of errors.



Social wellbeing is also affected by commuting, particularly in terms of work-life balance. Long commutes reduce the amount of time employees have to spend with their families, pursue hobbies, or engage in social activities. This reduction in leisure time can lead to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction with life, as employees struggle to find time for personal and social fulfillment.

03

Factors Influencing the Impact of Commutes

Factors Influencing the Impact of Commutes



Commute Duration

The length of time spent commuting is one of the most significant factors affecting employee wellbeing. Longer commutes are generally associated with higher levels of stress, fatigue, and lower overall life satisfaction.



Mode of Transportation

For instance, driving in heavy traffic can be highly stressful and lead to physical discomfort, while public transportation, though less physically demanding, can be mentally exhausting due to overcrowding and delays. Active commuting, such as walking or biking, is often associated with better physical and mental health outcomes, but has its own problems such as infrastructure and weather.



Environmental Factors

Environmental conditions such as weather, traffic congestion, and the quality of infrastructure can significantly influence the commuting experience.



Geographic Location

Urban areas often have better access to public transportation but may suffer from high traffic congestion. In contrast, rural areas may offer more pleasant commuting experiences with less traffic but might require longer travel distances and a lack of public transport options.



Workplace Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements, such as the option to telecommute or adjust work hours to avoid peak traffic times, can reduce the negative effects of commuting on employee wellbeing.

04

Case Studies and Research Findings

Case Studies and Research Findings

One study titled "Commuting and Wellbeing: A Critical Overview of the Literature with Implications for Policy and Future Research" provides an in-depth analysis of how commuting affects subjective wellbeing. **The paper highlights that mood and stress levels during commuting are critical factors affecting overall wellbeing.** Commuters often experience lower mood during their journey compared to other daily activities, with stress commonly induced by congestion, crowding, and unpredictability.

Longer commute durations are generally associated with lower satisfaction in various life domains, including job satisfaction and social/leisure participation. However, the paper notes that there **is not a consistent link between commuting and overall life satisfaction.** This indicates that individuals may be willing to trade off the disadvantages of commuting, such as stress and time investment, against other benefits like better housing or employment opportunities.

Another study titled "A cross-sectional study: exploring the relationship between commuting time and subjective wellbeing in the UAE" investigates how commuting time affects the subjective wellbeing of individuals in the United Arab Emirates. The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey method, targeting a sample of 5,476 adults across the seven Emirates. The findings of the study indicate that longer commuting times are significantly associated with poorer subjective wellbeing. Specifically, individuals who commute for more than 60 minutes have an adjusted a ratio of **2.24** more times for experiencing poor wellbeing, compared to those with commuting times of **less than 15 minutes.**



05

Mitigating the Negative Effects of Commutes

Mitigating the Negative Effects of Commutes

Mitigating the negative effects of commuting on employee wellbeing requires a multifaceted approach that involves both organizational strategies and individual efforts. These strategies can significantly reduce the physical, mental, and emotional toll that long or stressful commutes often impose on employees.

Organizational Strategies



Flexible Working Hours

Allow employees to start and end their workdays at times that suit them best. This flexibility can help them avoid peak traffic hours, reducing commute stress.



Remote Work Options

Offering the ability to work from home, even part-time, can significantly cut down on the number of commutes employees must make.



Public Transportation Incentives

Provide subsidies or incentives for employees who use public transport. This can alleviate the stress of driving and reduce the environmental impact of commutes.



Wellbeing Programs

Implement wellbeing programs focused on managing commute stress, such as mindfulness training or access to counseling services.



Subsidized Housing or Relocation Assistance

For employees who face particularly long commutes, offering assistance with relocation closer to the workplace can significantly reduce travel time and improve their overall wellbeing.



Individual strategies



Listen to Audiobooks or Podcasts

Turning the commute into a time for learning or entertainment can make the time feel more productive and less tedious.



Practice Relaxation Techniques

Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or listening to calming music can help reduce stress during the commute.



Physical Activity

If possible, incorporate some physical activity into your commute, such as biking or walking part of the way. This can boost your mood and energy levels.



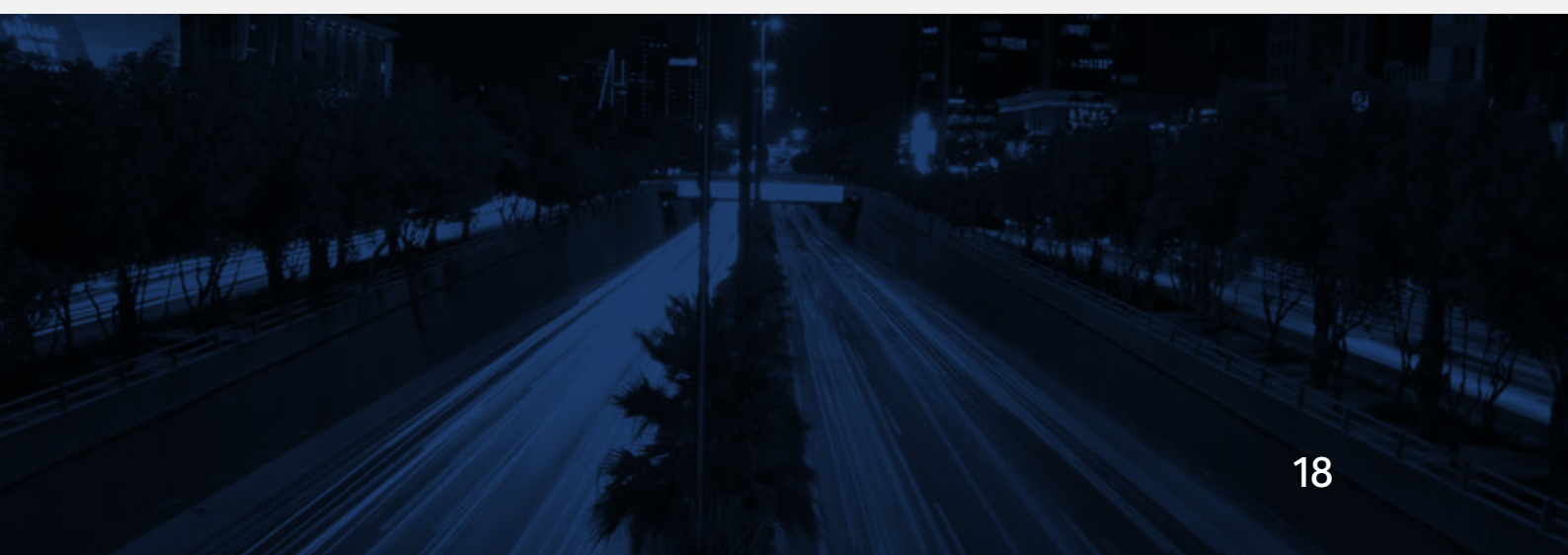
Set Boundaries

Establish a clear distinction between work and personal time by using the commute as a buffer. This could involve setting a ritual, such as listening to a favorite song at the start and end of the day, to mentally transition in and out of work mode.



Make the Commute Productive

You can spend the time commuting to plan, strategize and do some low-effort tasks as well.



06

What can
Labayh Business Offer?



What can Labayh Business Offer?

Labayh Business offers several solutions to address the challenges posed by commuting, which can significantly impact both physical and mental health. Here's how Labayh can support employers and employees in mitigating the negative effects of commutes:



Wellbeing Programs

Labayh can set up on-site wellbeing programs that focus on stress management, physical activity, and mental health, helping employees cope better with the stresses of commuting.



Coaching

Labayh offers coaching to employees which can help guide them on dealing with commutes and how to make them more productive.



Workshops

Labayh provides workshops on managing stress, maintaining work-life balance, and improving mental health, all of which are crucial for employees dealing with long or difficult commutes.



Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Labayh's EAPs provide confidential counseling and support services to help employees manage the emotional toll of long commutes. These programs can include stress management, mental health support, and practical advice on work-life balance.



Nafas

Nafas is an app that offers employees access to meditation sessions, sleep stories, and mood trackers, which can be particularly beneficial for those who need to unwind after a taxing commute. This digital resource supports mental and emotional wellbeing, helping employees manage the stress of daily travel.



07

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