

Is no commute the best commute of all?

Commuting between home and work tends to have a negative impact on health. It takes up time which could be better used for health-promoting activities such as sport, healthy eating, sleep or time with one's family or partner. Regular commuting also increases feelings of stress.

Individual commuters demonstrate unhealthy behaviour due to increased stress by intensifying their digital media use and/or eating fast food¹, while active commuting on foot or by bicycle can have a positive impact on health². Commuting can play an important role in terms of defining the boundary between work life and private life.

In Switzerland, the average commute is 30 kilometres and takes 62 minutes³. Over one year, this amounts to several working days. Those who reduce their commute gain time that they can use for their own health and their family.

Active commuting is beneficial

Around half of Swiss people commute by car, just under a third by public transport, and 15% on foot or by bicycle. Short commutes not only save time, but also have a positive environmental impact. Those who have to commute should try to do so on foot or by bicycle. This active form of commuting is associated with improved physical wellbeing, reduced absences due to illness and a lower BMI⁴. At the same time, motorised commuting is associated with significantly worse health outcomes in the form of more physical complaints. There is also an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases and more frequent sick leave¹. Reduced motorised commuting therefore is associated with better physical and mental health.

Sources

¹ Häfner, S., and Kächele, H. 2011

² Donaire-Gonzalez, D., et al. 2015

³ Bundesamt für Statistik 2018

⁴ Flint, E., and Cummins, S. 2016

⁵ Redmond, L., and Mokhtarian, P. 2001

Facts

- Compared to motorised commuting, active commuting by bicycle or on foot leads to significantly better mental wellbeing, higher levels of life satisfaction and enjoyment of life, and reduced feelings of stress.
- When it comes to motorised commuting, using public transport is less stressful than driving.
- If people are working from home and therefore no longer actively commuting, this can lead to less exercise. The boundary between work life and private life also disappears.

Commuting helps to draw boundaries

If commuting is not necessary, there is no boundary between work life and private life. A study⁵ of more than 1,000 employees concluded that the ideal one-way commute time is 16 minutes. Only 1.2% of respondents want no commute time at all. Commuting plays a key part in boundary management by making the boundaries clear. Depending on each individual's personality, there may be a negative impact on personal wellbeing for those who no longer commute. Single people can make social contacts on their way to work. If their commute is cancelled, this can lead to increased feelings of isolation.

Relevant OHM offers

- Nutrition and exercise
- Resilience
- Stress
- Sleep
- Healthy immune system