

Sitting and standing

The Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) publishes job-related information on physical demands; environmental conditions; education, training, and experience; as well as cognitive and mental requirements. The job requirements reflect those necessary for workers to perform critical tasks in support of the critical job functions, and not the capabilities of individual workers. Sitting and standing estimates are physical demand requirements.

Sitting and standing estimates have three separate components: sitting, standing, and the choice of sitting or standing.

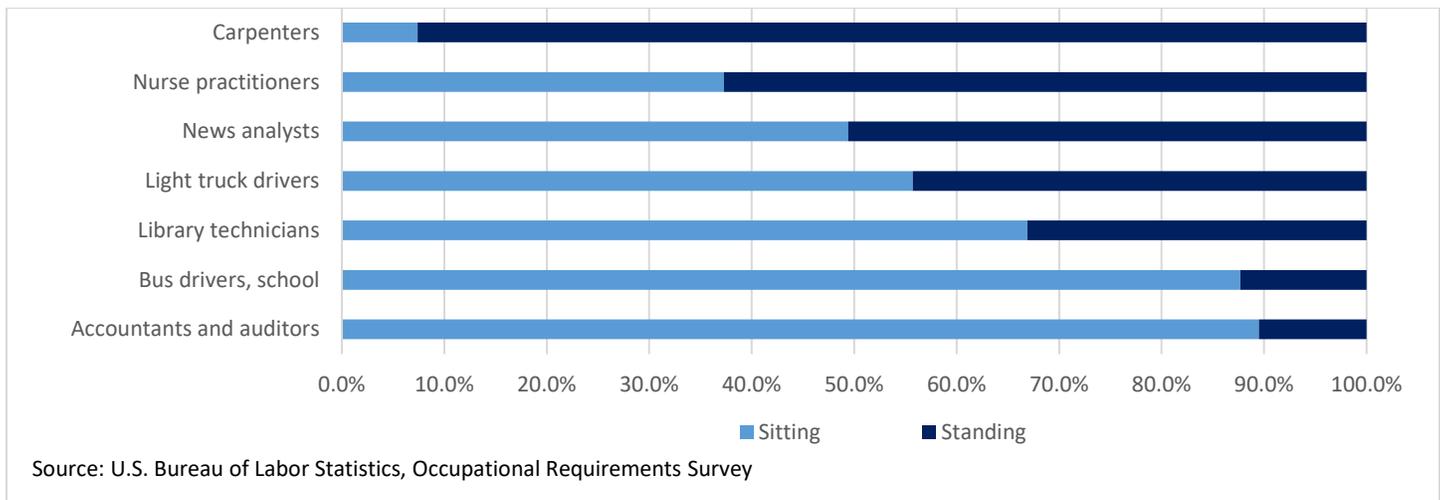
For the purposes of time and percentage of workday, workers are always considered to be sitting or standing. The workday includes all time spent in the workplace, not just the time spent performing critical tasks in support of the critical job functions. The total amount of time sitting and standing sums to the full workday. For example, if workers sit for 4 hours and the workday consists of 10 hours, then the percentage of the workday sitting is 40 percent. If the workday consisted of 8 hours, workers would be sitting for 50 percent of the workday.

Sitting is present when workers either remain in a seated position or are lying down. Includes:

- Active sitting. For example, a police officer riding a bicycle to patrol traffic or a landscaper mowing a residential lawn in a seated mower.
- Active lying down. For example, a mechanic lying on a dolly working underneath a vehicle is sitting.
- When workers may choose between sitting and standing, that work time is included in sitting for the hours and percentage of workday estimates.

Accountants and auditors are required to sit (on average) for 89.5 percent of the workday, while carpenters are required to sit for 7.4 percent of the workday. (See Chart A.)

Chart A. Percentage of the workday required to sit or stand by occupation, 2020



Standing is present when workers are not sitting or lying down. Includes:

- Walking. For example, tellers walk to escort customers to a safety deposit box.
- Climbing. For example, electricians climb ladders to reach wires placed in ceilings.
- Low postures such as stooping, crawling, kneeling, and crouching. For example, pest control workers crawling in an attic to apply pesticides.
- Workers who stand their entire shift except during paid breaks.

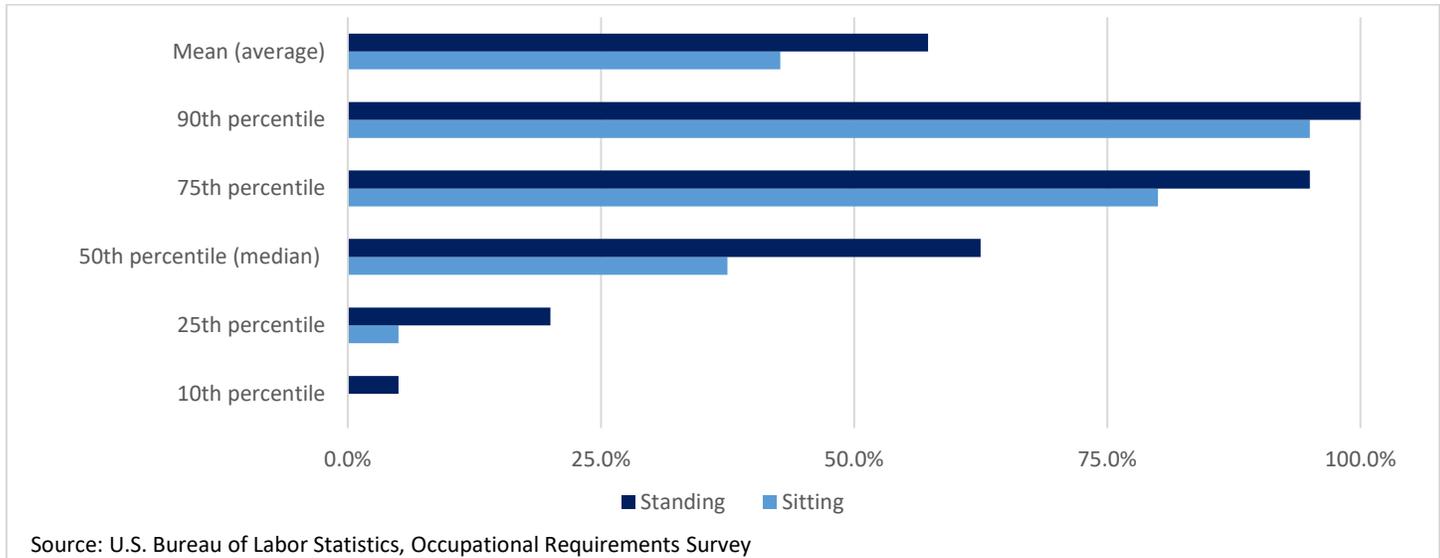
Chart A includes occupations where workers have a job requirement of standing. Nurse practitioners were required to stand (on average) for 62.7 percent of the workday, while accountants and auditors were required to stand for 10.5 percent of the workday.

Duration of sitting and standing

In addition to the average percentage of the workday spent sitting or standing, the ORS also publishes the percentile distribution of the percentage of the workday spent sitting and standing as well as the percentile distribution of total hours spent performing these physical requirements.

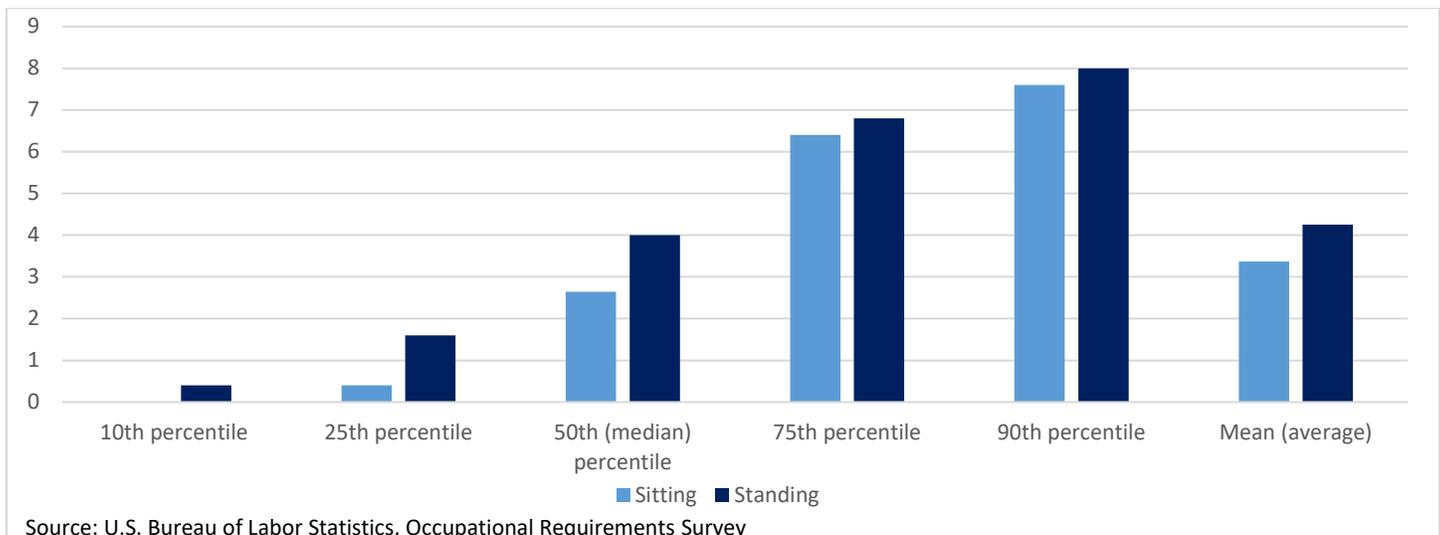
On average civilian workers spent 42.7 percent of the workday sitting and 57.3 percent standing. Percentile estimates provide a range of requirements among workers. For example, at the 10th percentile, workers were required to stand for 5.0 percent of the workday while at the 90th percentile, workers stood for 100.0 percent of the workday. The 50th percentile, or median, showed 50 percent of civilian workers fall below that estimate and 50 percent had a requirement above that estimate. At the median, workers spent 37.5 percent of the workday sitting and 62.5 percent of the workday standing. (See Chart B.)

Chart B. Percentage of the workday required to sit or stand for civilian workers, 2020



In 2020, civilian workers spent an average of 3.37 hours sitting and 4.25 hours standing. Hours ranged from 24 minutes of standing for the 10th percentile and 8 hours for the 90th percentile. (See Chart C.)

Chart C. Hours of the workday required to sit or stand for civilian workers, 2020

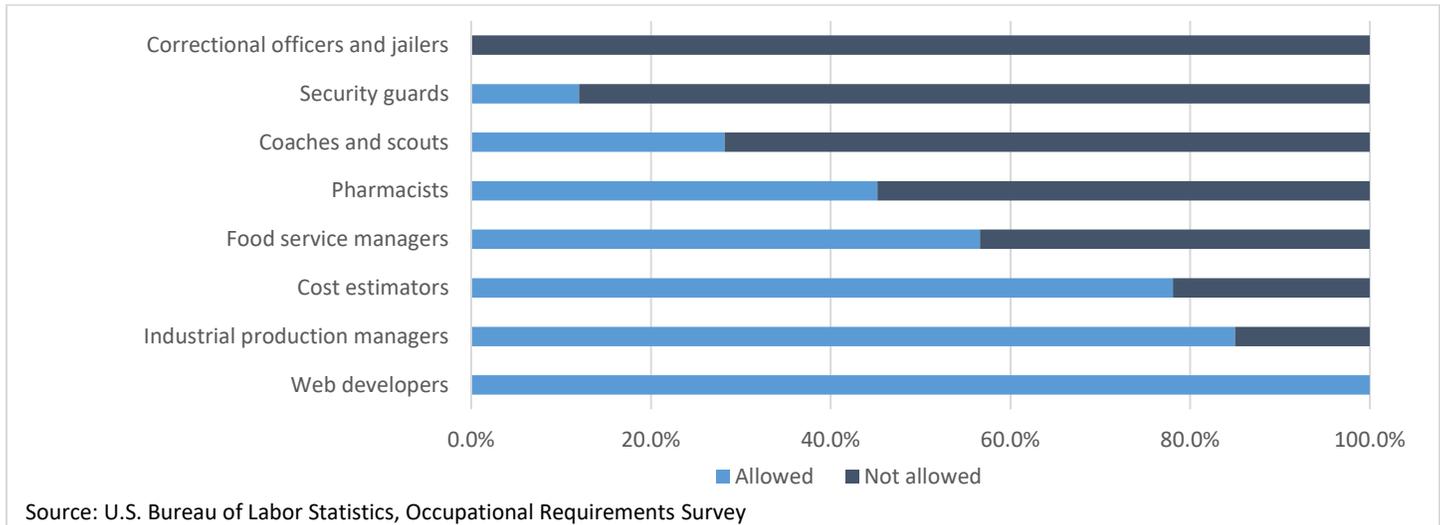


The choice of sitting or standing is present when workers can alternate between sitting and standing. Choice of sitting or standing is present when the following conditions exist:

- Workers typically have the flexibility to choose between sitting and standing throughout the workday.
- There is no assigned time during the day to sit or stand.
- No external factors determine whether an employee must sit or stand.

If workers can determine when to perform that specific critical task, then they may have the ability to choose to sit or stand. The choice of sitting or standing was available to 100.0 percent of web developers while the choice was not available to 100.0 percent of correctional officers and jailers. (See Chart D.)

Chart D. Percentage of workers with choice of sitting or standing, 2020



Additional resources:

- [Latest news release](#)
- [Archived ORS news releases](#)
- [Handbook of Methods](#)
- [Collection manuals](#)
- [Factsheets](#)

Articles:

- [Sitting and standing requirements in 2020](#)
- [Job requirements for animal caretakers on National Mutt Day](#)
- [Three-fourths of workers had to interact with the public in 2019; 4.3 percent worked around crowds](#)
- [Physical requirements in food preparation and serving jobs](#)
- [Job requirements and wages for auto mechanics in 2018](#)
- [Occupational requirements and benefits for nurses in the United States in 2018](#)
- All [The Economics Daily](#) (TED) articles on ORS
- [A look at teachers' job requirements, employer costs, and benefits \(PDF\)](#)
- [The Occupational Requirements Survey: estimates from preproduction testing](#)

For additional information on occupational requirements see the [ORS homepage](#) or download the [ORS complete dataset](#) to explore the latest estimates.