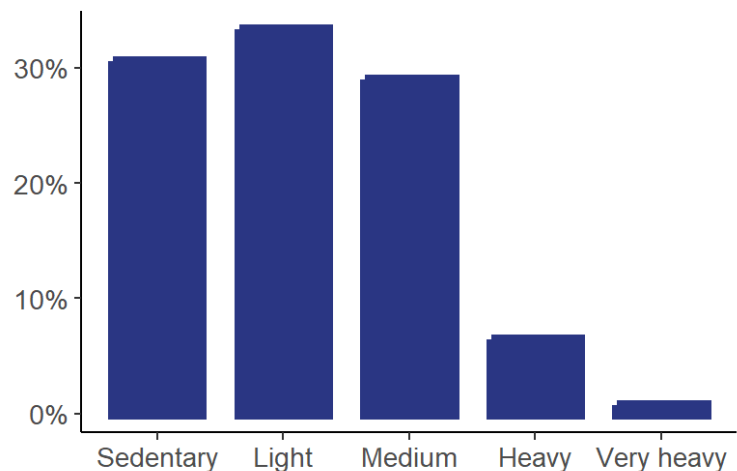


Strength levels

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.

The ORS publishes five strength levels (sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy), which are part of the published physical demands, and are calculated from the weight and duration associated with lifting, carrying, and in some cases, standing.¹

Chart A. Percentage of civilian workers by strength level, 2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Duration levels are used to calculate the amount of time spent lifting or carrying. There are four duration levels in relation to a job’s workday schedule: seldom (up to 2 percent), occasional (2 percent to 1/3), frequent (1/3 to 2/3), and constant (2/3 or more).

For example, if workers deliver items weighing between 26-50 pounds occasionally, then the job would be classified as a medium strength level. However, if they delivered slightly heavier items (51-100 pounds) or the duration of carrying or lifting 26-50 pounds increased to being performed frequently, then the job would be classified as a heavy strength level. “Negligible weight” includes anything lifted or carried weighing less than one pound. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Determining strength level based on lifting or carrying duration or percentage of the workday spent standing

| Strength level | Duration of lifting or carrying | | | | Percent of workday standing ^[1] |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------|--|
| | Seldom | Occasionally | Frequently | Constantly | |
| Sedentary work | Up to 10 pounds | Up to 10 pounds | Negligible weight ^[2] | No weight | Less than or equal to 1/3 ^[3] |

¹ See the [sitting and standing factsheet](#) for more information on these requirements.



Table 1. Determining strength level based on lifting or carrying duration or percentage of the workday spent standing

| Strength level | Duration of lifting or carrying | | | | Percent of workday standing ^[1] |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--|
| | Seldom | Occasionally | Frequently | Constantly | |
| Light work | 11–25 pounds | 11–25 pounds | 1–10 pounds | Negligible weight ^[2] | |
| Medium work | 26–50 pounds | 26–50 pounds | 11–25 pounds | 1–10 pounds | |
| Heavy work | 51–100 pounds | 51–100 pounds | 26–50 pounds | 11–25 pounds | |
| Very heavy work | >100 pounds | >100 pounds | >50 pounds | >25 pounds | |

^[1] Standing estimates includes time spent standing, walking, and in low postures.

^[2] Negligible weight includes anything lifted or carried weighing less than 1 pound.

^[3] When the sedentary lifting or carrying requirements are met, and more than 1/3 of the workday is spent standing, light work is required.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey.

Sedentary strength level

Strength is considered sedentary when none of the conditions in the strength chart are met and standing is required less than or equal to 1/3 of the work schedule or workday.

For civilian workers, 30.6 percent of workers were required to work at a sedentary strength level. Occupations with critical tasks where workers typically spend the day sitting and occasionally lift items of little weight, like a pen or a few pieces of paper, require sedentary strength. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Percentage of civilian workers with a sedentary strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Loan interviewers and clerks | >99.5 | ^[1] |
| Management analysts | >99.5 | ^[1] |
| Payroll and timekeeping clerks | >99.5 | ^[1] |
| Public safety telecommunicators | >99.5 | ^[1] |
| Switchboard operators, including answering service | >99.5 | ^[1] |
| Software developers | 99.3 | 0.7 |
| Accountants and auditors | 99.1 | 0.6 |

Table 2. Percentage of civilian workers with a sedentary strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Billing and posting clerks | 97.9 | 2.2 |
| Administrative services managers | 97.7 | 1.9 |
| Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks | 97.4 | 1.2 |
| Financial managers | 97.4 | 1.5 |
| Computer systems analysts | 95.4 | 3.4 |
| Human resources managers | 95.1 | 2.3 |
| Purchasing agents, except wholesale, retail, and farm products | 93.0 | 3.9 |
| Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants | 92.1 | 3.2 |

^[1] The standard error is not available for this estimate.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Light strength level

If the work level of an occupation does not meet the conditions for the other strength levels, including sedentary, a light strength level is required. For civilian workers, 33.3 percent of workers were required to work at a light strength level. Examples of occupations with light strength level requirements include:

- Hosts and hostesses may do activities such as carrying menus and raising and lowering pagers for customers in a queue for 2/3 or more of the workday.
- Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks might spend more than 1/3 of their workday standing.

Table 3. Percentage of civilian workers with a light strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Middle school teachers, except special and career/technical education | 95.6 | 2.6 |
| Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop | 95.2 | 3.1 |
| Phlebotomists | 93.3 | 5.4 |
| Elementary school teachers, except special education | 91.6 | 2.4 |
| Cleaners of vehicles and equipment | 90.9 | 6.1 |
| Laundry and dry-cleaning workers | 88.9 | 3.8 |
| Secondary school teachers, except special and career/technical education | 87.0 | 4.6 |

Table 3. Percentage of civilian workers with a light strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Waiters and waitresses | 85.3 | 2.0 |
| Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks | 82.9 | 4.6 |
| Food service managers | 79.7 | 6.4 |
| Special education teachers, elementary school | 77.0 | 5.9 |
| First-line supervisors of helpers, laborers, and material movers, hand | 76.4 | 12.4 |
| Security guards | 76.3 | 8.1 |
| Dental assistants | 75.9 | 5.2 |
| Library assistants, clerical | 73.2 | 7.7 |

^[1] The standard error is not available for this estimate.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Medium strength level

For civilian workers, 29.0 percent of workers were required to work at a medium strength level. Examples of occupations with medium strength level requirements include:

- Animal caretakers may lift 30 pound bags of grain to feed horses at the racetrack for up to 2 percent of the workday.

Table 4. Percentage of civilian workers with a medium strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Helpers—production workers | 91.8 | 3.7 |
| Childcare workers | 81.0 | 3.7 |
| Automotive service technicians and mechanics | 79.7 | 8.0 |
| Merchandise displayers and window trimmers | 79.5 | 16.8 |
| Construction laborers | 77.9 | 7.2 |
| Industrial machinery mechanics | 74.5 | 14.2 |
| Landscaping and groundskeeping workers | 73.6 | 9.7 |
| Stockers and order fillers | 72.4 | 5.7 |
| Maintenance and repair workers, general | 70.8 | 6.5 |

Table 4. Percentage of civilian workers with a medium strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists | 68.2 | 9.8 |
| Cooks, short order | 66.7 | 12.3 |
| Animal caretakers | 64.2 | 7.6 |
| Nursing assistants | 63.3 | 11.2 |
| Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses | 63.1 | 12.9 |
| Industrial truck and tractor operators | 61.7 | 7.9 |

[\[1\]](#) The standard error is not available for this estimate.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Heavy strength level

For civilian workers, 6.4 percent of workers were required to work at a heavy strength level. Examples of occupations with heavy strength level requirements include:

- Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists might occasionally lift truck parts weighing over 50 pounds.

Table 5. Percentage of civilian workers with a heavy strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|---|----------|---------------------|
| Butchers and meat cutters | 67.5 | 9.3 |
| Highway maintenance workers | 42.8 | 11.3 |
| Bakers | <35 | [1] |
| Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand | 34.1 | 7.4 |
| Police and sheriff's patrol officers | 32.4 | 6.4 |
| Correctional officers and jailers | 29.5 | 8.4 |
| Parts salespersons | 27.4 | 5.4 |
| Lifeguards, ski patrol, and other recreational protective service workers | 23.4 | 10.4 |
| Exercise trainers and group fitness instructors | 22.7 | 5.3 |
| Firefighters | 22.7 | 9.4 |
| Industrial machinery mechanics | 21.0 | 13.6 |

Table 5. Percentage of civilian workers with a heavy strength level by occupation, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists | 20.8 | 9.3 |
| First-line supervisors of police and detectives | 20.7 | 10.8 |
| Chefs and head cooks | <20 | [1] |
| Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers | <20 | [1] |
| [1] The standard error is not available for this estimate. | | |
| Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey | | |

Very heavy strength level

For civilian workers, 0.7 percent required a very heavy strength level, which indicates requirements beyond the conditions set for heavy work. Examples of occupational groups with heavy strength level requirements include:

- Laborers in construction and extraction occupations may lift items that weigh 50 pounds or more, like bags of cement or sheets of plywood, for more than 1/3 of the workday.

Table 6. Percentage of civilian workers with a very heavy strength level by occupational group, 2024

| Occupation | Estimate | Standard error |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Protective service occupations | 15.2 | 3.3 |
| Construction and extraction occupations | 2.5 | 0.8 |
| Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| Transportation and material moving occupations | 0.9 | <0.5 |
| Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations | 0.6 | <0.5 |
| [1] The standard error is not available for this estimate. | | |
| Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey | | |

Additional resources:

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

Articles:

- [All The Economics Daily \(TED\) articles on ORS](#)
- [Minds at work: what's required according to the Occupational Requirements Survey \(PDF\)](#)
- [A look at teachers' job requirements, employer costs, and benefits \(PDF\)](#)
- [Occupational Requirements Survey: Third wave testing report \(PDF\)](#)
- [Occupational Requirements Survey: results from a job observation pilot test](#)
- [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.