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WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY REPORT

FIFA World Cup 2026 | Productivity Impact Analysis

WORLD CUP COMES TO AMERICA: ONE DAY OFF FOR EVERY WORKING SOCCER FAN COULD COST U.S. EMPLOYERS \$30.2 BILLION; HOST CITIES FACE \$8.2 BILLION HIT

CHICAGO, June 9, 2026 – The FIFA World Cup returns to the United States for the first time in 32 years, with 11 American cities hosting 78 matches between June 11 and July 19, 2026, including the tournament final at MetLife Stadium. Soccer's biggest stage will collide head-on with the American workday, and employers should expect a productivity hit measured in the billions, according to a new analysis from global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

If every employed American who enjoys soccer took a single day off to watch a marquee match, the cost to U.S. employers could reach **\$30,201,458,700** in lost productivity. One hour of distraction across the workforce would cost roughly **\$4,402,545,000**.

In the 11 host metros alone, where stadium traffic, security perimeters, and watch-party crowds will magnify disruption, a single missed workday could cost employers **\$8,235,995,093**, with New York/New Jersey (\$2.14 billion) and Los Angeles (\$1.26 billion) carrying the largest exposure.

“The World Cup is a once-in-a-generation moment for American fans, and matches falling squarely inside U.S. working hours will show up in absenteeism, in network traffic, and in the long lunch that becomes a long afternoon,” said Andy Challenger, workplace expert and chief revenue officer for Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

“Smart employers won't try to fight it. They'll build it into the schedule. The companies that turn this into a team-building moment, like providing a watch party, flexible hours, or brackets, will protect morale and probably get more real productivity out of the day than they would have otherwise,” Challenger added.

HOW BIG IS THE EXPOSURE IN EACH HOST CITY?

Across the 11 U.S. host metros, more than 42.4 million people are employed, of whom an estimated 31.8 million identify as soccer fans (75%, according to the [Harris Poll's Rise of Soccer Fandom report \(July 2025\)](#)). Applying each metro's average hourly wage from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program, the cost of one hour of missed productivity across the host markets totals **\$1.2 billion**. A full 6.86-hour workday, the BLS average weekly hours of 34.3 divided by five, pushes the host-city total to **\$8.2 billion**.

Host Market	Stadium	Employed Workers	Soccer Fans (75%)	Avg. Hourly Wage	Cost / 1 Hour	Cost / 1 Day (6.86 hrs)
New York/New Jersey	MetLife Stadium	9,950,000	7,462,500	\$41.85	\$312,305,625	\$2,142,416,588
Los Angeles	SoFi Stadium	6,510,000	4,882,500	\$37.60	\$183,582,000	\$1,259,372,520
Dallas	AT&T Stadium	4,280,000	3,210,000	\$33.95	\$108,979,500	\$747,599,370
Boston	Gillette Stadium	2,870,000	2,152,500	\$41.50	\$89,328,750	\$612,795,225
San Francisco Bay Area	Levi's Stadium	2,490,000	1,867,500	\$47.20	\$88,146,000	\$604,681,560
Houston	NRG Stadium	3,510,000	2,632,500	\$32.70	\$86,082,750	\$590,527,665
Philadelphia	Lincoln Financial Field	3,080,000	2,310,000	\$35.40	\$81,774,000	\$560,969,640
Atlanta	Mercedes-Benz Stadium	3,180,000	2,385,000	\$33.80	\$80,613,000	\$553,005,180
Miami	Hard Rock Stadium	3,180,000	2,385,000	\$30.95	\$73,815,750	\$506,376,045
Seattle	Lumen Field	2,220,000	1,665,000	\$41.10	\$68,431,500	\$469,440,090
Kansas City	GEHA Field at Arrowhead	1,180,000	885,000	\$31.10	\$27,523,500	\$188,811,210
TOTAL — 11 HOST MARKETS		42,450,000	31,837,500	—	\$1,200,582,375	\$8,235,995,093

Sources: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics (employment); BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (wages); Challenger, Gray & Christmas analysis. Soccer-fan share per cited 2025 Harris Poll (75%).

THE MORE LIKELY HIT: DEDICATED AND OBSESSED FANS, BY GENDER

Calling off every working fan is an extreme upper bound. A more realistic absentee pool is the share of fans the Harris Poll identifies as the most committed. These are fans who self-describe as “obsessed” or “dedicated.” Harris finds that 58% of male soccer fans (27% obsessed + 31% dedicated) and 32% of female soccer fans (14% + 18%) fall into this group. If every obsessed or dedicated fan called off work for one match day, the cost to U.S. employers would total **\$15.7 billion**.

The gender wage gap concentrates the cost on the male side of the workforce. Using BLS Q1 2026 median weekly earnings of \$1,362 for men and \$1,098 for women (full-time wage and salary workers), converted to hourly rates over the 34.3-hour private-sector workweek, men account for **\$13.0 billion** of the one-day exposure and women for **\$2.7 billion**.

Group	Employed Fans	Obsessed / Dedicated Share	Obsessed / Dedicated Fans	Median Hourly Wage	Cost / 1 Hour	Cost / 1 Day (6.86 hrs)
Men	82,110,000	58%	47,623,800	\$39.71	\$1,891,067,510	\$12,972,723,120
Women	38,640,000	32%	12,364,800	\$32.01	\$395,817,796	\$2,715,310,080
TOTAL	120,750,000	—	59,988,600	—	\$2,286,885,306	\$15,688,033,200

Sources: Harris Poll, “The Rise of Soccer Fandom” (July 2025), Figure 4 (base: U.S. male soccer fans n=264; U.S. female soccer fans n=258); BLS Usual Weekly Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers, Q1 2026; BLS Current Employment Statistics, April 2026; Challenger, Gray & Christmas analysis.

WHY THE NUMBER IS SO LARGE

Two factors push this figure well beyond past productivity-disruption estimates Challenger has produced for events such as the 2017 solar eclipse (\$694 million) or the annual NCAA March Madness tournament. First, the World Cup runs over 39 days, not a single afternoon, giving employees repeated opportunities to step away. Second, while the tournament final on July 19 falls on a Sunday, the U.S. Men's National Team opener at SoFi Stadium on June 12 and the knockout rounds, quarterfinals, and semifinals are all scheduled across weekday afternoons.

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

Challenger recommends employers consider the following:

- Host viewing parties for USMNT matches and the knockout rounds; turn forced distraction into team-building.
- Offer flexible start and end times on heavy match days, particularly around the June 12 USMNT opener and the July 19 final.
- Run an office bracket or prediction contest with a small prize.
- In host cities, allow PTO without friction — traffic, transit congestion, and security perimeters will disrupt commutes regardless.
- Communicate expectations early. Workers want to know whether they can watch without penalization.


“A lost hour of productivity isn't really lost if you get it back in goodwill, retention, and a team that actually wants to come in on Monday. Engagement is the asset; productivity is the byproduct,” said Challenger.

NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY MATH

U.S. civilian employed population (16+)	161,000,000
Employment-population ratio (BLS, Apr 2026)	59.7%
Share of Americans who enjoy soccer (2025 Harris Poll)	75%
Employed soccer fans (national)	120,750,000
National avg. hourly earnings, private (BLS, Apr 2026)	\$36.46
Average weekly hours, private (BLS, Apr 2026)	34.3
Average workday length (34.3 ÷ 5)	6.86 hrs
Cost per worker — one hour	\$36.46
Cost per worker — one day (6.86 hrs)	\$250.12
NATIONAL COST — ONE HOUR	\$4,402,545,000
NATIONAL COST — ONE FULL WORKDAY	\$30,201,458,700

METHODOLOGY

Challenger's calculation multiplies the number of employed soccer fans in each market by the local average hourly wage to derive the cost of one hour of missed productivity, then multiplies by 6.86 hours, the BLS average weekly hours (34.3) divided by five workdays, to estimate a full called-off workday. The model assumes that 100% of self-identified soccer fans would take a full day off if they chose to do so. This is an upper-bound scenario meant to illustrate the scale of potential



disruption, not to predict actual absenteeism. Real-world losses are expected to be a fraction of this figure, but will still register in the billions of dollars given the 39-day length of the tournament and the concentration of host markets in major U.S. employment centers.

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