

CWA Customer Service Worker Stress Survey

- 254 members from several telecommunications and media locals completed the survey
- Survey questions targeted job stress factors and health outcomes
- Job stress factors may be described in terms of job controls and job demands

Job control --

How much or how little control do customer service workers have over their job

- **Job security/insecurity**
- **Off-shoring, outsourcing, fear of layoffs**
- **Lack of recognition for performed work**
- **Lack of promotion opportunities**
- **Harassment**

Job demand –

Type and amount of production/performance pressures on customer service workers and quality of physical work environment

- **Forced overtime/speed-ups**
- **Electronic performance/supervisor monitoring**
- **Lack of training**
- **Inadequate physical design of work equipment and tools and overall work environment**

Schedule:

- 87% of customer service representatives work full-time schedule 37.5-40 hrs/week
- 40% indicated pressure to work overtime
- 33% worked overtime every week
- 23% worked overtime monthly

- 81% said management sets work pace/rate
- 82% reported monitoring by supervisors
- 90% reported electronic monitoring
- 88% indicated numbers, productivity, and adherence to rules and quotas were more important than doing the job properly
- 79% reported introduction of new technology led to increased workloads
- 73% said equipment/computers malfunction or need repair

Job Stress Carries Beyond the Workplace:

- 78% reported taking job stress home
- 85% come home too tired to do things they like
- 62% indicated work takes away from personal responsibilities
- 49% worried that co-workers home situations will carry over into the workplace causing disruptions or violence

Job Satisfaction:

- 90% feel stressed/burned out from their job
- 71% said workload is too high often/always
- 80% said work pressure is too high often/always
- 73% said there is an unfair division of tasks
- 84% reported management does NOT listen to worker proposals, suggestions, or ideas
- 90% indicated management does NOT consult workers regarding work operations

Training:

- 67% need more training to do job better
- 89% indicated they do not have/are not provided time to become proficient in necessary job skills
- 66% said they are not provided advance notice/training on new product offerings

Work Environment:

- 83% of customer service workers reported indoor air quality problems
- 70% said their work area is too cluttered
- 55% indicated their work area is too noisy
- 48% need more privacy at work

Health Issues:

- 79% experienced stress/anxiety
- 75% fatigue/exhaustion
- 69% sleeping problems
- 65% anger/irritability
- 63% headaches
- 50% depression

More serious health problems:

- 41% experience heartburn/indigestion
- 36% high blood pressure
- 19% chest pain
- 74% of customer service workers had seen a doctor, medical practitioner, or counselor regarding health effects associated with job stress.

The CWA Customer Service Survey was limited to a relatively small number of participants, but the identified data suggests a real need for the Union to take the issue of job stress and working conditions “head on.”

- Create local union customer service/occupational safety and health committees
- Expand job stress training
- Coordinate with National CWA Customer Service Advocate Committee for ongoing programs