

# How Artificial Intelligence is Impacting CWA Customer Service Professionals

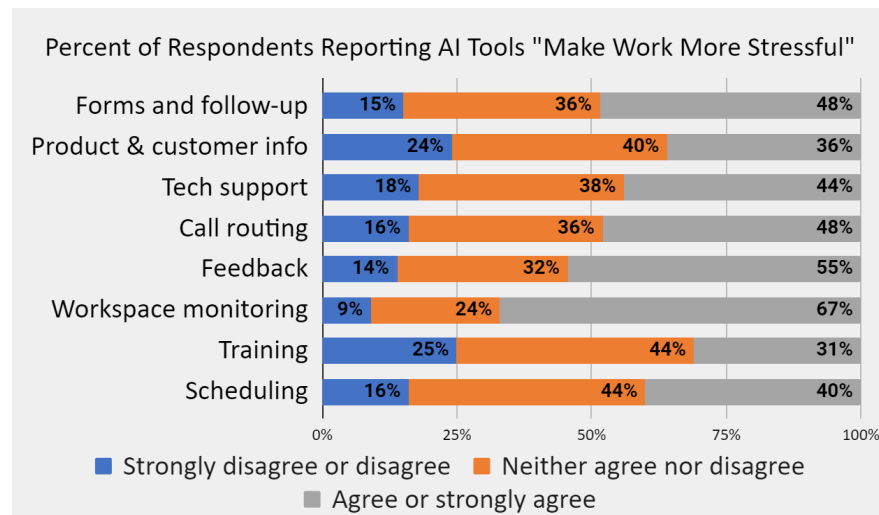
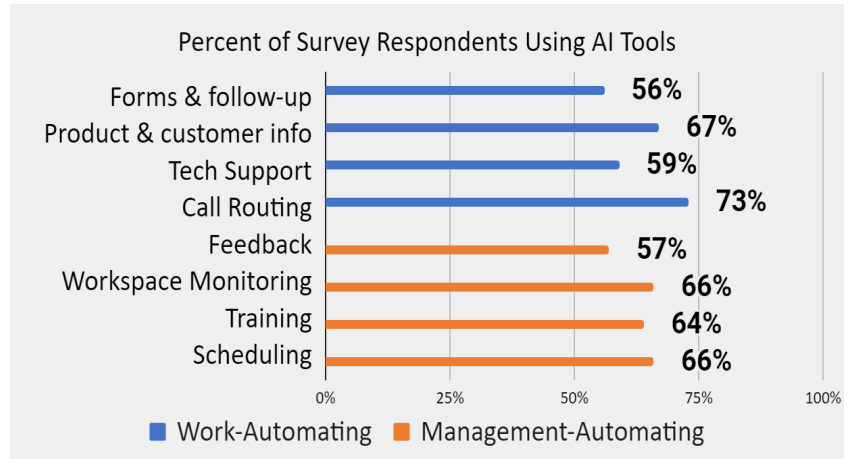
This factsheet highlights key findings from a survey of 2,891 CWA-represented call center employees conducted from December 2022 to January 2023 in collaboration with scholars at Cornell and McMaster University.

## Respondents Report A Variety of AI Tools Used

Majorities of respondents reported that AI tools performing all of the functions covered in the survey were used in their workplace:

Management-Automating Functions: (1) Scheduling hours and breaks; (2) training and development; (3) workspace monitoring; and (4) feedback on voice tone, pace, and script or call content

Work-Automating Functions: (1) Routing calls based on fit or performance; (2) finding or fixing network or equipment faults; (3) finding product or customer information; and (4) filling-in online forms or follow ups



## AI Monitoring and Feedback Increase Workplace Stress

Majorities of respondents felt that management-automating AI tools that provide automated feedback and monitoring do not make work more fair, easier, or interesting and do not improve customer service. Respondents felt that automated feedback and monitoring tools had a negative impact on stress in the workplace. Respondents' views of monitoring tools' impact on stress were 67% negative, 24% neutral, 9% positive, with similar views on tools used for feedback (55% negative, 32% neutral, and 14% positive).

Survey respondents were more favorable about AI tools that supplemented their work. For example, AI

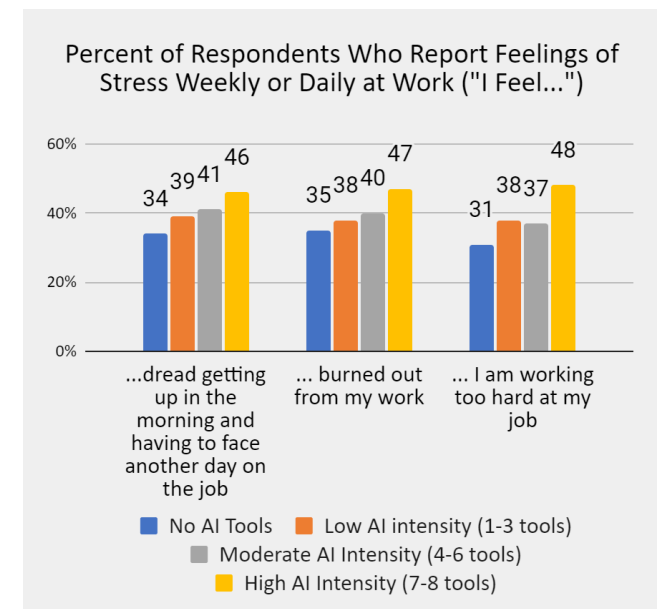
tools that find info during calls and support training were less likely to be associated with workplace stress. Majorities reported that AI tools that find information had a positive impact on customer service (53% positive, 26% neutral, 21% negative).

## Higher AI Intensity is Associated with Decreased Employee Well-Being and Less Time Off Calls

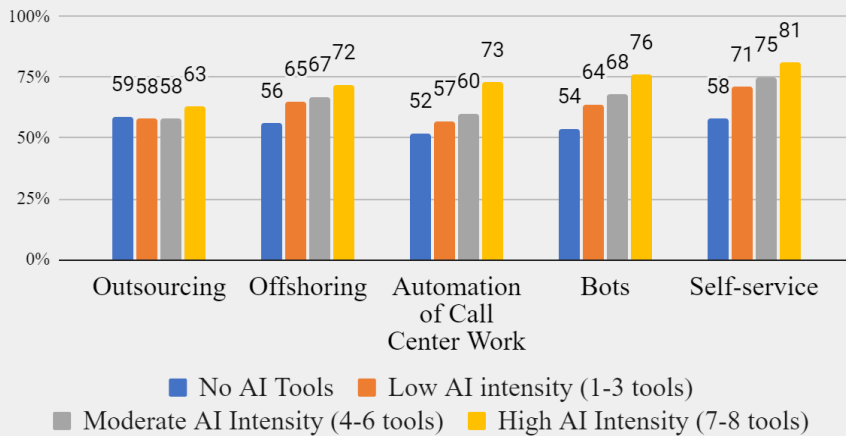
"AI intensity" is a measure that captures the number of AI tools respondents report are used in their workplace. High intensity workplaces use the highest number of AI tools (7 – 8). Low intensity workplaces use the fewest (1 - 3), while some respondents report no tools in use. High AI intensity was reported by 14% of respondents, 32% reported moderate AI intensity, 42% reported low AI intensity, 12% reported no AI tools in use.

Higher AI intensity is associated with more customer abuse, lower job satisfaction and increased work intensity. As shown in this chart, self-reported stress and emotional exhaustion increase with AI intensity.

Higher AI intensity is also associated with less work time between calls, less paid break time, and more overtime. For example, those reporting high-intensity AI use average 48 minutes of closed key time per week as compared to 107 minutes reported by those who report no AI intensity.



Percent of Respondents Reporting Layoffs Somewhat or Very Likely As a Result of...



### Higher AI Intensity is associated with increased monitoring and greater layoff fears

On average, those with high-intensity AI use report 6.3 monitoring tools in use, compared to 4.9 for those working without AI tools. Among respondents with high AI intensity, 80% report that voice interactions with customers are monitored often during the day or constantly.

Higher AI intensity is also associated with increased concern about future layoffs resulting from new technologies (automation and bots), self-service, outsourcing and offshoring.

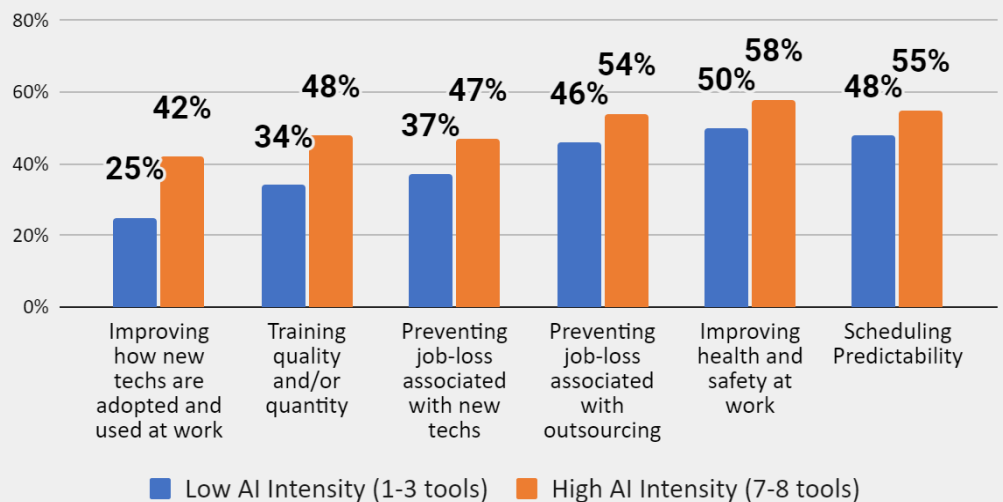
### Union Efficacy and Protest Intentions

Across all issues, survey respondents with high AI intensity were either more likely or equally likely to report that the union's activities were somewhat or extremely helpful, when compared to respondents with low AI intensity. Respondents with high-intensity AI use were most likely to find union activities helpful in protection from discipline and unfair dismissal (62%), improving health and safety at work (58%), keeping schedules predictable (55%) and preventing job-loss from outsourcing (54%).

Across all levels of AI use, survey respondents report that the union is least helpful with improving how new technology is adopted at work (32%) and training quality and or quantity (28%).

AI intensity does not have a significant effect on respondents' willingness to protest. The majority of respondents report a willingness to protest across a range of issues, with issues of highest priority being: rights to work from home (79%); protections against abuse of electronic monitoring (76%); and protections of worker data and privacy (75%).

Percent Respondents Who Find Union's Activities 'somewhat or extremely helpful' by 'Low' and 'High' AI Intensity



### Survey Findings: Key Takeaways

- AI tools that supplement agent work, specifically tools that assist in training and development and finding product or customer information, have the potential to improve call center jobs. Agents need a voice in the implementation of these technologies and control over how they're used in their day-to-day workflow.
- AI tools that automate management functions and limit worker discretion result in worse outcomes for respondents. Bargaining language should focus on protections against these systems and limiting their adoption.
- Existing contract language preventing abusive monitoring should be used to prevent the misuse of AI technologies, as increased monitoring enabled by these tools is associated with higher stress levels.
- Respondents are interested in mobilizing on issues related to work from home, abusive monitoring, and data privacy.
- Technology adoption that impacts working conditions is a mandatory subject of bargaining and unions should negotiate with employers over both the design and implementation of new technologies in the workplace.