

How Work From Home Arrangements are 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.

A Majority of Respondents Report Working From Home

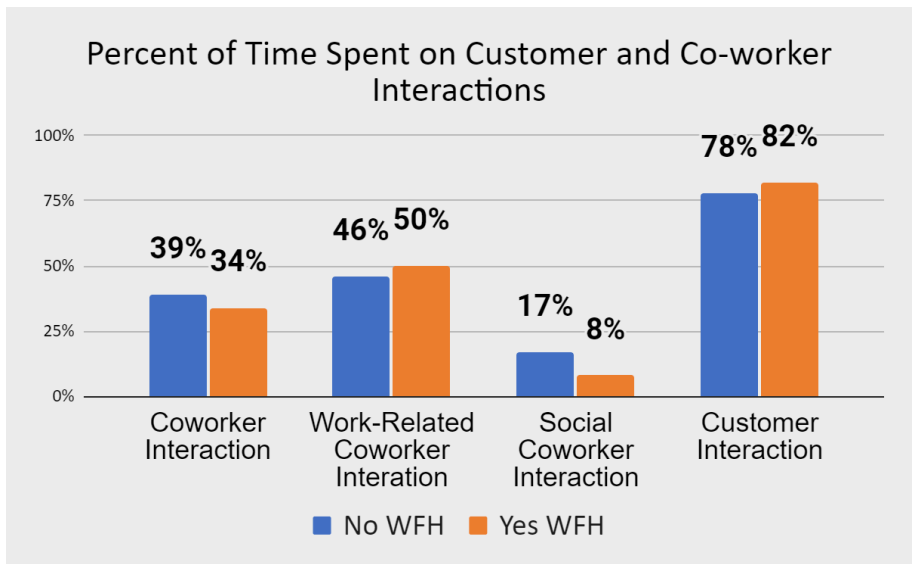
60% of survey respondents reported working from home (WFH). Of these 12% were hired into WFH positions, 58% were given the option to WFH by supervisors, and 30% said supervisors required them to WFH. Of the remaining 40% working in a call center, 44% chose to remain at the center, 40% said WFH wasn't a possibility for their job or location, and 16% said that WFH was a possibility for others at their job or location but they were not given the option by their supervisor.

69% of WFH respondents reported it's somewhat or very unlikely they'll return to a call center. Only 14% reported that it is somewhat or very likely they'll return to a call center.

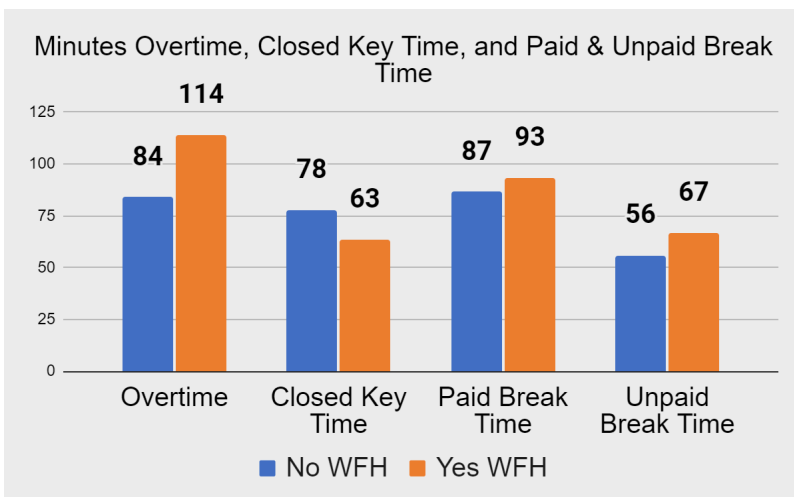
WFH Associated with Less Coworker Communication and More Customer Interaction

WFH survey respondents reported spending more time interacting with customers and less time interacting with co-workers. More of their time interacting with co-workers was spent on work-related topics, and less time was spent socializing.

A majority of respondents didn't report overall changes to levels of communication and support as a result of WFH. Majorities reported their ability to receive union support (67%), their ability to speak up and organize co-workers (54%), their ability to get help from supervisors or co-workers (53%), and their communication with supervisors (54%) was 'the same.'



Among survey respondents who reported a change in the level of communication and support they received as a result of WFH, communications with co-workers was most likely to have been reported as significantly or slightly worse (32%) and communication with supervisors was most likely to have been reported as significantly or slightly improved (30%).



Intensity of Work is Higher in WFH Arrangements

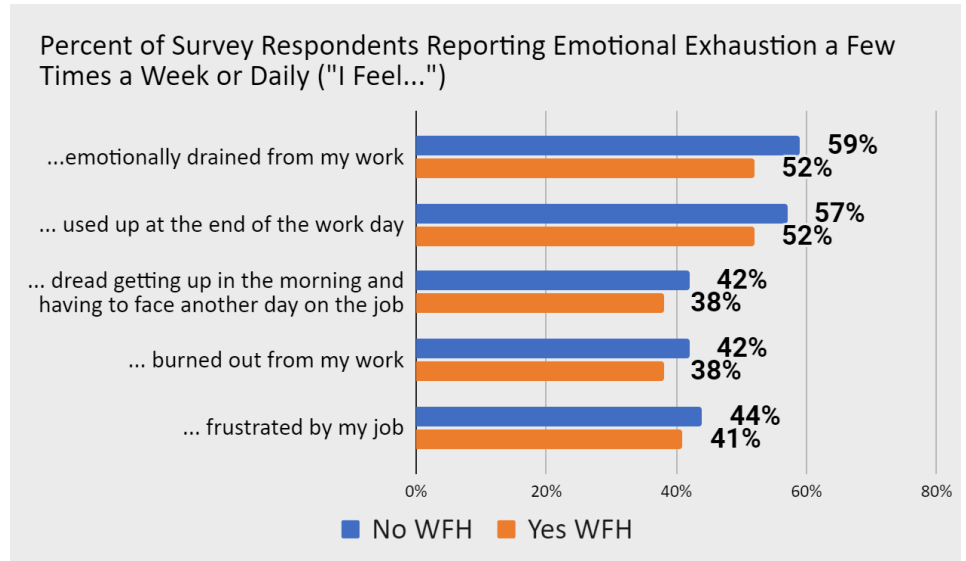
WFH respondents reported more overtime hours and less time off calls for other work. The longer and more intense workday was offset somewhat by a reported increase in both paid and unpaid break time.

WFH members reported less monitoring on most measures, except they reported slightly higher recording of voice interactions. 73% of WFH respondents reported voice monitoring occurs often during the day or constantly, as compared to 69% of center-based respondents. WFH respondents reported slightly higher discretion in making customer-related decisions and about the same experience with discipline.

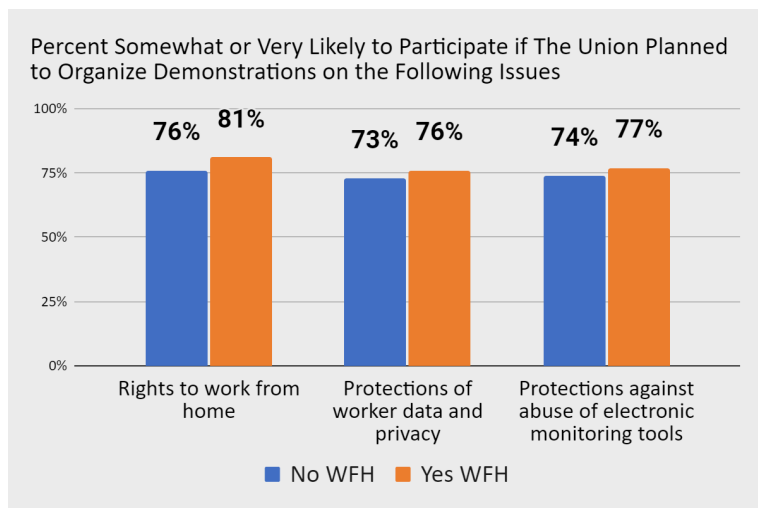
WFH Is Associated with Improved Employee Well-Being and Job Satisfaction

WFH members reported some negative aspects of their work environment. They were slightly less likely to report metrics were reasonable (21% WFH vs. 24% non-WFH), that they had enough time between calls (18% vs. 21%) and that their schedules were flexible (20% vs. 22%).

On the other hand, WFH members reported better outcomes across a range of measures of emotional exhaustion, including feeling less burned out, feeling less dread about work and feeling less emotionally drained. WFH members were more likely to report slightly better perceptions of their working environment compared to call center-based employees, strongly or slightly agreeing that compensation is fair (32%), workers conform to ethical standards (56%), and workers' privacy is protected (44%).



WFH respondents tended to report they thought layoffs were less likely, except due to self-service where 72% of both WFH and center-based respondents reported layoff due to self-service were somewhat or very likely. As compared to center-based members, WFH respondents reported lower turnover intention, slightly lower rates of stress, slightly higher job satisfaction, and slightly lower incidence of customer abuse.



Union Efficacy and Protest Intentions

Compared to center-based respondents, more WFH respondents reported that the union was somewhat or extremely helpful preventing job losses from outsourcing (52% WFH vs. 40% non-WFH), preventing job losses from new technology (43% vs. 35%) and addressing health and safety in the workplace (55% vs. 47%).

Results indicate that WFH respondents were just as willing to protest on important issues as center-based respondents. WFH respondents reported similar, or slightly higher protest intentions across issues. The top three issues WFH respondents were willing to protest over are: rights to work from home (81%), protections of worker data and privacy (76%) and protections against abuse of electronic monitoring tools (77%).

Survey Findings: Key Takeaways

- Survey respondents show a preference for work from home arrangements, reporting higher job satisfaction and improved well-being outcomes. However, WFH arrangements also appear to increase work hours and work intensity.
- Overall, respondents report slightly less monitoring in WFH roles, with the exception of voice recordings.
- WFH respondents report less communication amongst co-workers which can present challenges for keeping members connected and informed on union activities.
- However, WFH doesn't have to mean less union engagement. WFH respondents have similar levels of interest in protesting on important issues, including WFH rights, privacy, and protecting against abusive monitoring.