

It's

Improving
Australian
call centres
for workers

your call.



Our survey results and report 10 years on tracks the growth of our nation's call centres and the aspirations and workplace experiences of the workers in them. As our report shows, new issues emerge and some things stay the same.

Stress was prevalent in 1999 and it remains present in our call centres today. New stresses have emerged like job insecurity fuelled by the threat of offshoring of these valuable and important jobs in our economy.

While the ASU is working on solutions to minimise stress in our call centres, the threat of offshoring can only be relieved by government intervention recognising the valuable jobs that call centres provide. No longer can our politicians say offshoring of call centres is part of globalisation – what we must hear them saying is that Australia can lead the world in this industry and the economic and policy incentives and settings must be right to attract more work, not less.

As with our 1999 survey, the ASU focus is on solutions to the issues that are raised and working with our members to make Australian call centres great places to work.

2009 Survey Report Summary

www.callcentreunion.com.au



A•S•U
Australian Services Union

The Australian Services Union conducted the 'It's your call: Improving Australian call centres for workers' survey in workplaces across Australia from November 2008 to February 2009. The total number of completed surveys was 1,549 – of these surveys 445 were completed online and 1,104 were completed on paper based surveys.



FACTS ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

The call centre industry has grown into a major employer in Australia with more than 250,000 employees working in over 3,800 call centres Australia wide and year on year growth projected for the future.

The industry is responsible for handling 77% of all customer interaction which equates to around 16 million calls a day.

Sex – 61% of those who completed the survey were women and 38% men. This represents a

change from the last survey when 74.8% of respondents were women.

Age – The average age of the call centre workers surveyed was 35 years, with 39% of the workforce aged 29 or less. The average age of the women was 37 and the men 33 years.

Length of service – survey respondents had spent an average of 6.2 years (median 4 years) in the industry with a quarter of respondents having worked between 0-2 years.

The highest ranking issues listed by call centre workers were:

Lack of variety in work (34%)

Excessive monitoring (32%)

Lack of support from managers and/or supervisors (28%)

Access to leave (27%)

Lack of training (27%)

Inadequate staffing levels (26%)

Stress is a significant issue in call centres

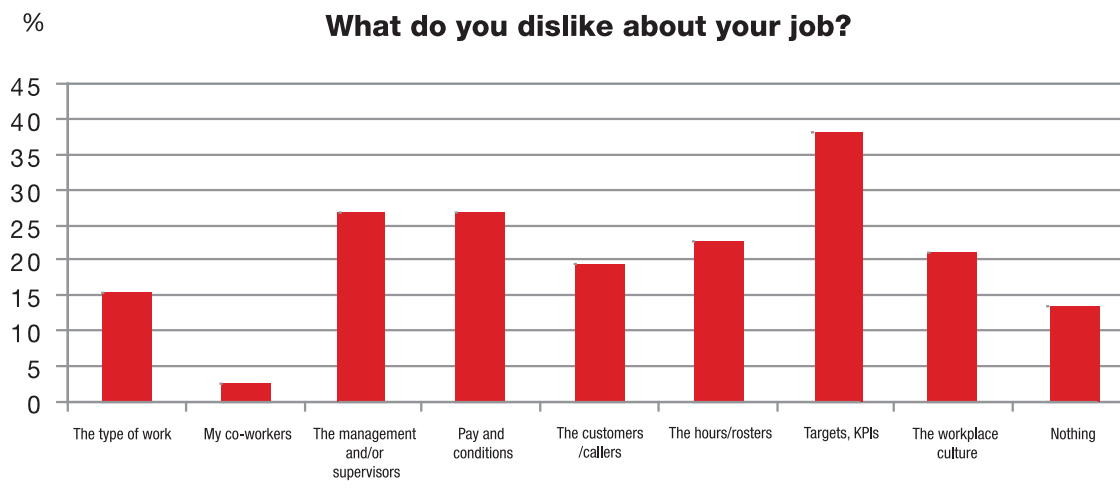
Call centre workers have their say about what causes stress in the workplace:

“I get no support or back up from my manager when I have to deal with abusive and aggressive customers”

“I feel stressed all the time at work – the unrelenting continuous calls, always being watched and having everything timed really stresses me out”

“We can never take a break from the phones because of the understaffing and unrealistic KPIs and targets we are supposed to achieve everyday”

“New programs and policies are brought in by the company all of the time that effect the customers we are trying to service yet we get no training about the changes”



Over one third of respondents mentioned they disliked targets & KPIs

45% of respondents felt their job wasn't secure

Almost a quarter of people who participated in the survey found it difficult to alter their roster

The ASU last surveyed call centre workers in 2000. Stress was prevalent then but in this year's survey report we see increased workplace stress levels.

Why stress is a bigger issue now:

- Job insecurity due to call centre work going overseas
- Global Financial Crisis
- More phone call monitoring
- Less opportunity for breaks
- Less opportunity to take annual leave
- Poor ergonomics
- Lack of training and support

Are you are feeling stressed at work?

Work-related stress is a major health and safety issue. People can experience stress when they feel they are unable to cope with the pressures or demands upon them. This feeling is a natural reaction to excessive pressure or even to excessive boredom. It isn't a disease, but if stress is excessive and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill health.

Take action against stress

Stress prevention policies should be developed jointly by employers and workers and their representatives. Employers need to provide information, training and advice to workers and supervisors. The ASU has developed many resources to assist members who work in call centres. For more information please visit our website where you can also download the WorkSafe guidelines on stress and the Good Practice Guide for Occupational Health and Safety in Call Centres.

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Join the ASU today!

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