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Mental health risk factors, 2016

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Mental health risk factors, 2016

Overview

In 2016, nearly one-quarter of employees in Canada reported having been exposed to at least one mental health risk factor at work. Women were more likely to have experienced harassment or bullying, as well as violence or the threat of violence than men, and a smaller proportion of younger employees (aged 15 to 24) had faced severe time pressure than older employees. At the same time, employees in health occupations; in education, law and social, community and government services occupations; and in management occupations, were most at risk of exposure to mental health risk factors at work.

Workers may experience a number of mental health risk factors. This indicator examines three types of risks: severe time pressure or overload of work, violence or the threat of violence, and harassment or bullying. Severe time pressure or overload of work is based on self-reported measures of the degree to which employees believe their workload is manageable, and if they are able to complete their assigned workload during regular working hours. Violence or the threat of violence is captured by self-reports of physical violence or threats to the person experienced at work during the previous 12 months. Finally, harassment or bullying is measured by examining whether an employee reports having been subject to verbal abuse, sexual harassment, or humiliating behaviour at work during the previous 12 months. The three indicators are combined to identify employees who faced one or more mental health risk factors at their work.

Historical trends

Statistics Canada data from the General Social Survey (GSS) on the three mental health risk factors are currently available for one year.

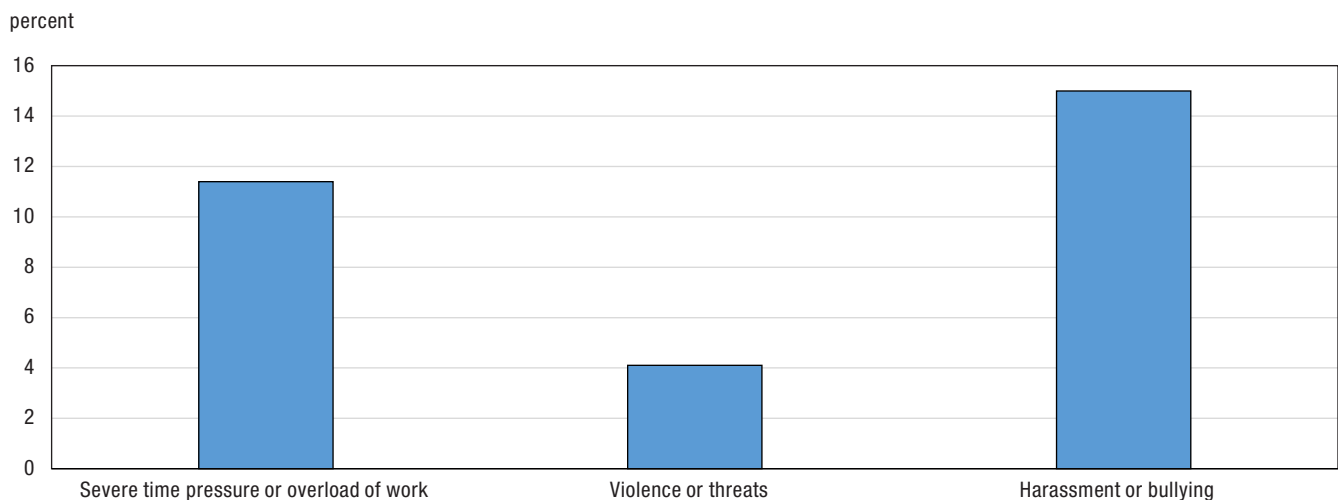
A recent snapshot

In 2016, 24.8% of employees in Canada had been exposed to at least one of the three mental health risk factors at work in the previous 12 months.

The most common type, harassment or bullying, was experienced by 15.0% of employees. Approximately 1 in 10 (11.4%) had been exposed to severe time pressure or overload of work, and 4.1% to violence or the threat of violence.

Chart 1

Percentage of employees 15 years and over exposed to mental health risk factors at work, Canada, 2016



Note: Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, custom tabulation.

Female employees were more likely to have been exposed to mental health risk factors at work than their male counterparts (28.1% compared with 21.8%). The difference between the two groups was mostly attributable to women's greater exposure to harassment or bullying than men (18.6% compared with 11.6%). In addition, female employees were more likely to have experienced violence or threats than male employees (5.0% compared with 3.4%).

There was little difference in the proportion of employees who had faced mental health risk factors at work overall in 2016 between younger employees (aged 15 to 24), core-aged employees (aged 25 to 54) and older employees (aged 55 and over). However, younger (17.9%) and core-aged employees (15.3%) were more likely to have experienced harassment or bullying than older employees (11.5%). At the same time, the rate of exposure to severe time pressure or overload of work was higher among older employees (12.9%) and core-aged employees (12.1%) than among younger employees (5.9%). As noted by the indicator on long working hours, the proportion of core-aged and older workers who usually worked 49 hours per week or more was more than double the rate recorded among younger workers in 2021.

Exposure to mental health risk factors also varied at the level of broad occupational categories. Employees working in health occupations (38.1%); education, law and social, community and government services (36.4%); and management occupations (31.1%) were the most likely to have experienced mental health risk factors at work in 2016. Management occupations (21.0%) and occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (20.6%) had the highest rates of exposure to severe time pressure or overload of work. At the same time, employees in health occupations were the most vulnerable to harassment or bullying (25.7%), as well as violence or the threat of violence (13.7%).

In addition, a greater proportion of full-time employees reported that they had faced a mental health risk at work than part-time employees (25.3% compared with 21.6%) in 2016. The difference was largely explained by exposure to severe time pressure or overload of work, which was experienced by 12.3% of full-time employees compared with 6.2% of part-time employees.

Data are also available for violence or the threat of violence, as well as harassment or bullying, for the self-employed. While the proportion of self-employed workers who had experienced harassment or bullying was lower than for employees in 2016, (9.5% compared with 15.0%) there was little difference between the two groups in terms of exposure to violence or the threat of violence.

Information on the indicator

Description or definition

The **mental health risk factors** indicator is the proportion of employees who report experiencing either severe time pressure or overload of work, violence or the threat of violence, or harassment or bullying.

Exposure to “severe time pressure or overload of work” is measured as the proportion of employees who rarely or never consider their workload to be manageable, or who report that they rarely or never complete their assigned workload during regular working hours.

Exposure to “violence or the threat of violence” is the proportion of employees who report experiencing either physical violence or threats to their person at work during the previous 12 months.

Exposure to “harassment or bullying” is the proportion of employees who report experiencing verbal abuse, sexual harassment, or humiliating behaviour at work during the previous 12 months.

Source

Statistics Canada, General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home, 2016 (Cycle 30).

Information for interpretation

The mandate of the General Social Survey (GSS) Canadians at Work and Home is to explore people’s views about work, home, leisure and well-being, and the relationships between these life domains. For more information on the methodology and collection, please consult [General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home \(GSS\)](#).

Occupations are coded according to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016.

As the GSS is based on a sample, all estimates are subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

Other related information

Data on mental health risks at work from the GSS are included in the Statistics Canada publication: [Assessing Job Quality in Canada: A Multidimensional Approach](#).

The publication [Harassment in Canadian Workplaces](#) also examines the incidence of harassment across of number of demographic groups and workforce characteristics using data from the 2016 GSS.

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Mental health](#)