

Attitudes in the American Workplace VII

The Seventh Annual Labor Day Survey

Telephone Polling for The Marlin Company by Harris Interactive

Summary of the findings:

Stress: More than a third of workers (35%) say their jobs are harming their physical or emotional health and 42% say job pressures are interfering with their personal relationships; half say they have a more demanding workload this year than last.

The Workplace Stress Scale™: The Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress have created a quick test for people to measure their job stress levels and compare themselves with the rest of the American work force.

Bullying: It goes hand in hand with anger and stress and low job satisfaction – and 19% of us say it's happened in our workplace in the last year.

The American Dream? 73% of American workers say they would NOT want their boss's job!

Note to Media: The telephone survey was conducted by Harris Interactive from May 31 to June 17, 2001. The sample consisted of 751 American workers, 18 or older, employed either full- or part-time. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

Major findings:

The vast majority of American workers say they are stressed, more than a third say that their job is harming their physical or emotional well-being, 42% say job pressures are interfering with their family or personal lives, and half report more demanding workloads than they had a year ago.

Those are among the main conclusions of “*Attitudes in the American Workplace VII*,” the seventh annual Labor Day poll by The Marlin Company, a North Haven, CT, workplace communications firm that publishes motivational, educational and safety materials for companies throughout North America.

The telephone survey, conducted by Harris Interactive, also showed that roughly half of workers (48%) say that they at least sometimes have too many unreasonable deadlines and/or too much work to do and that 42% feel they sometimes, rarely or never have adequate control or input over their work duties.

- **Bullying:** One worker in five (19%) is aware of physical or verbal bullying in his or her workplace in the last year. Those who said they are aware of it reported higher anger and stress levels, lower satisfaction levels and generally more negative views of the workplace than those who said they were not aware of it. And on our annual question about whether in the past year a respondent had been angered by a co-worker to the point where he or she felt like striking the other person but didn't, 15% said yes, virtually the same as last year. But among those who said they were aware of bullying, the percentage of those who said yes was 38%, as opposed to 10% of those who said they were *not* aware of it.

“Half of American workers say that they have a more demanding workload this year than they did a year ago, and 38% say they are feeling more pressure at work this year,” said Frank Kenna III, President of The Marlin Company. “Stress has become the emotional toothache of the workplace. It leads to serious impairment that can cause big mistakes and serious injuries. As the economy worsens, we need the equivalent of a root canal – employers need to help educate their people on how to fight the infection and ease the pain.”

Take this quiz

The Workplace Stress Scale™

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and the American Institute of Stress, Yonkers, NY**

Thinking about your current job, how often does each of the following statements describe how you feel?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
A. Conditions at work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5
B. I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well being.	1	2	3	4	5
C. I have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
D. I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superiors.	1	2	3	4	5
E. I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
F. I have adequate control or input over my work duties.	5	4	3	2	1
G. I receive appropriate recognition or rewards for good performance.	5	4	3	2	1
H. I am able to utilize my skills and talents to the fullest extent at work.	5	4	3	2	1

To get your score, add the numbers you answered to all of the eight questions and see how you compare.

Interpreting Workplace Stress Scale™ scores

Total score of 15 or lower (33% of us are in this category): Chilled out and relatively calm. Stress isn't much of an issue.

Total score 16 to 20 (35%): Fairly low. Coping should be a breeze, but you probably have a tough day now and then. Still, count your blessings.

Total score 21-25 (21%): Moderate stress. Some things about your job are likely to be pretty stressful, but probably not much more than most people experience and are able to cope with. Concentrate on seeing what can be done to reduce items with the worst scores.

Total score 26-30 (9%): Severe. You may still be able to cope, but life at work can sometimes be miserable. Several of your scores are probably extreme. You could be in the wrong job, or even in the right job but at the wrong time, and might benefit from counseling.

Total score 31- 40 (2%): Stress level is potentially dangerous – the more so the higher your score. You should seek professional assistance, especially if you feel your health is affected, or you might need to consider a job change.

Workplace Stress Scale™ scores by demographic:

Overall: 18.4.....Men: 18.6.....Women: 18.1
Ages 18-34: 17.6.....Ages 35-49: 19.2.....Ages 50+: 18.4

SOME USEFUL TIPS ON REDUCING STRESS

- Analyze all the items showing high stress levels and figure out how to rein them in, particularly if you feel your health is being significantly affected. But keep in mind that any such scale, along with its categories, is subjective and that some stressors, such as deadlines, can actually have positive consequences.
- Remember that stress differs for all of us. Things like bungee jumping that are distressful for some may be pleasurable for others. Similarly, no stress-reduction technique works for everyone. Jogging, meditation or yoga are great for some but can actually prove stressful when arbitrarily imposed on others. Find out what works for you.
- Don't automatically assume that your headaches or other complaints are stress-related just because you have a high job stress score. A physician should always be consulted if you experience new symptoms, or if past problems seem to be getting worse, because they may be due to something else that is much easier to treat in its early stages.
- Finally, although stress is difficult to define, the feeling of having little control is always distressful. Anything you can do to gain more control over your daily activities will provide powerful stress reduction rewards.

Detailed results of the survey, by category

Stress

- 82% of workers report that they are at least a little stressed at work: 6% extremely stressed, 12% quite a bit, 34% somewhat, 30% a little, and 18% not at all.
- 50% say they and their fellow workers have a more demanding workload than they had a year ago.
- 38% say they are feeling more pressure at work this year than they were a year ago.
- 35% say their job is negatively affecting their physical or emotional well-being: 20% sometimes, 8% often and 7% very often.
- 48% say they have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines: 27% sometimes, 14% often and 8% very often.
- 42% say that job pressures interfere with their family or personal life: 25% sometimes, 10% often and 7% very often.
- 42% say they at least sometimes do not have adequate control or input over their work duties: 8% never, 8% rarely and 26% sometimes.
- 30% say that conditions at work are at times unpleasant or even unsafe: 18% sometimes, 6% often and 6% very often.
- 36% say they at least sometimes find it difficult to express their opinions or feelings about their job conditions to their superiors: 19% sometimes, 8% often and 9% very often.
- What causes the majority of stress in your life? 28% said workplace demands; 21% family or personal demands; 42% said both equally; 8% said neither, and 2% said they don't feel stressed. Those who said that workplace demands cause the bulk of their stress are much more likely to have high (i.e., negative) scores on the Workplace Stress Scale™ than those who say more of their stress comes from family or personal demands.
- 26% said they rarely or never receive appropriate recognition or rewards for good performance (11% never, 15% rarely). And 30% said only sometimes. Fewer than half said they are recognized or rewarded frequently (26% often and 18% very often).
- 30% disagreed (8% of them strongly) with the statement that the management where they work is sufficiently sensitive to the needs, conflicts or other problems that are stressful for employees. And 27% disagreed (8% of them strongly) that management is sufficiently helpful in resolving such needs, conflicts or other problems.

Bullying

- 19% say that in the past year, they have witnessed or been aware of bullying – that is, physical or verbal bullying – in their workplace.
- Those who reported lower job satisfaction levels, higher anger levels, higher stress levels and more demanding workloads were more likely to say they were aware of bullying.
- Bullying is tied to attitudes: 35% of those who said negative attitudes are more likely to spread in their workplace than positive attitudes said they were aware of bullying, compared with 8% of those who said that positive attitudes were more likely to spread than negative attitudes.
- Bullying and stress: 46% of those who said they were aware of bullying also said that the majority of their stress comes from workplace demands (as opposed to 23% of those who said they were *not* aware of bullying).
- Regarding those who were aware of bullying vs. those who were *not* aware: Those who were aware of it had higher (more negative) scores on the Workplace Stress Scale™ and also were more likely to say that they are feeling more pressure at work this year than they were a year ago and have more demanding workloads than they had a year ago; are more than three times more likely to say that they had been angered by a coworker in the past year to the point where they felt like striking him or her but didn't; and are more than twice as likely to disagree with the statements that management is either sufficiently sensitive to, or sufficiently helpful in resolving, the needs, conflicts or other problems that are stressful for employees.

“A bully poisons the well of the entire workplace,” said Frank Kenna, III, President of The Marlin Company. “Where bullying exists, workers report higher stress and anger levels, lower job satisfaction and more negative attitudes. The lesson for managers is that if you have a bully, deal with him or her right away. Develop standards on acceptable – and unacceptable – behavior, and create a non-threatening method of reporting abusive behavior. It’s too easy to rationalize and to think, ‘I need this person. I’m going to hope this goes away.’ Fifty people under that person may be miserable and **THEY may go away.”**

Want your boss's job? No way!

Seventy-three percent of workers in the survey said they would NOT want the boss's job.

Unmarried people, those with children under 18, and younger workers were slightly more inclined to say they'd want it, as were those who were only marginally less stressed, less angry and more satisfied. But the desire – or lack thereof – for the boss's job had virtually nothing to do with type of occupation, education level or whether the workload had increased in the last year. Those with the highest incomes, more than \$75,000, were most likely to say they wanted the boss's job (37% of them said they'd want it, as did 29% of those earning less than \$20,000 a year; 19% of those earning \$20,000 to \$34,999; 25% of those at \$35,000 to \$49,999, and 22% of those between \$50,000 and \$74,999.

“What exactly IS the ‘American Dream’ these days?” asked Frank Kenna, III, President of The Marlin Company. “Traditionally, many of us think of climbing the corporate ladder as the path to success. But our findings soundly refute this. Today, people find it important to strike a balance between dedication to their professional lives, spending time with their families and pursuing personal goals. The lock-step march toward corporate advancement has been pushed aside by a desire to live life to the fullest.”

Added Ed LaFreniere, Managing Editor of The Marlin Company: “The economic expansion of recent years has enabled many workers to find jobs for which they are well-suited, both economically and temperamentally. The question people are asking is, ‘Why should I make myself miserable in a job I hate – especially if it will mean more hours and more headaches in a no-win situation? Why shouldn't I continue to feel a sense of accomplishment while enjoying a reasonable comfort level – and still save a lot of energy for the things that matter most outside of work?’”

The questions

NOTE: Following are the overall raw-data responses to the questionnaire. Percentages may total slightly less or more than 100 because of rounding.

1. Thinking about your current job, please tell me how often each of the following statements describes how you feel. Please think of a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents “never,” 2 represents “rarely,” 3 represents “sometimes,” 4 represents “often,” and 5 represents “very often.” How often does the following describe how you feel:

1A. I have adequate control or input over my work duties.

Never.....8%
Rarely.....8%
Sometimes..... 26%
Often.....29%
Very often.....29%

1B. Conditions at work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe.

Never.....48%
Rarely.....23%
Sometimes.....18%
Often.....6%
Very often.....6%

1C. I receive appropriate recognition or rewards for good performance.

Never.....11%
Rarely.....15%
Sometimes.....30%
Often.....26%
Very often.....18%

1D. I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well-being.

Never.....45%
Rarely.....21%
Sometimes.....20%
Often.....8%
Very often.....7%

1E. I have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines.

Never.....29%
Rarely.....23%
Sometimes.....27%
Often.....14%
Very often.....8%

1F. I am able to utilize my skills and talents to the fullest extent at work.

Never.....6%
Rarely.....9%
Sometimes.....22%
Often.....30%
Very often.....33%

1G. I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superiors.

Never.....42%
Rarely.....22%
Sometimes.....19%
Often.....8%
Very often.....9%

1H. I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life.

Never.....37%
Rarely.....21%
Sometimes.....25%
Often.....10%
Very often.....7%

2. In general, how satisfied do you feel at work?

Extremely.....21%
Quite a bit.....32%
Somewhat.....30%
A little.....11%
Not at all.....5%

3. In general, how angry do you feel at work?

Extremely.....2%
Quite a bit.....7%
Somewhat.....18%
A little.....30%
Not at all.....43%

4. In general, how stressed do you feel at work?

Extremely.....6%
Quite a bit.....12%
Somewhat.....34%
A little.....30%
Not at all.....18%

5. Are you feeling more pressure at work this year than you were a year ago?

Yes.....38%
No.....59%

6. Would you say that you and your fellow workers have a more demanding workload than you had a year ago?

Yes.....50%
No.....46%

7. How concerned are you about losing your job in the next six months?

Very concerned.....7%
Somewhat concerned.....13%
Not very concerned.....21%
Not at all concerned.....59%

8. In the past year, have you witnessed or been aware of bullying, that is, physical or verbal bullying, in your workplace?

Yes.....19%
No.....80%

9. In the past year, have you been angered by a co-worker to the point where you felt like striking him or her but didn't?

(*Please note that 2001 survey was done by Harris Interactive. Prior surveys were done by the Gallup Organization.)

<u>2001*</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>
Yes.....15%	Yes.....14%	Yes.....16%
No.....84%	No.....86%	No.....83%

10. Which of the following causes the majority of stress in your life?

Workplace demands.....28%
Family or personal demands.....21%
Both equally.....42%
Neither.....8%
Don't feel stressed.....2%

11. Which of the following statements best describes your workplace?

Positive attitudes are more likely to spread among employees.....55%
Negative attitudes are more likely to spread among employees.....40%
Not sure.....5%

**12. Thinking about management where you work, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:
The management where I work is sufficiently sensitive to the needs, conflicts, or other problems that are stressful for employees:**

Strongly agree.....19%
Agree.....50%
Disagree.....22%
Strongly disagree.....8%

**13. Thinking about management where you work, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:
The management where I work is sufficiently helpful in resolving needs, conflicts, or other problems that are stressful for employees:**

Strongly agree.....21%
Agree.....51%
Disagree.....19%
Strongly disagree.....8%

14. Would you want your boss's job?

Yes.....24%
No.....73%