

'Crazy-busy' Canadians under pressure on the job

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Having more control in the workplace can have negative consequences for individuals but it depends on the form of job control, according to new research out of the University of Toronto.

[Sociologist](#) Scott Schieman measured a range of work conditions using data from a [national survey](#) of 6,004 Canadian workers. To measure levels of job pressure, he asked [study participants](#) questions such as: "How often do you feel overwhelmed by how much you had to do at work?" "How often do you have to work on too many tasks at the same time?" and "How often do the demands of your job exceed the time you have to do the work?"

He found that roughly one-third of Canadian workers report that they "often" or "very often" feel overwhelmed by work or that the demands of their job exceed the time to do the work. Four out of 10 workers report having to work on too many tasks at the same time "often" or "very often."

"Excessive job demands have detrimental effects," says Schieman. "We know that workers who report higher scores on these indicators of job pressure also tend to experience more problems navigating work and family roles, more symptoms of physical and [mental health problems](#) and they tend to be less satisfied with their work."

The study found that having control over one's work schedule and job autonomy are associated with lower levels of job pressure. However,

challenging work in which one is required to keep learning new things, engage in creative activities, use skills and abilities and handle a variety of tasks, is associated with higher levels of job pressure as is being in a position of authority where one is supervising or managing others.

Three key indicators of higher [socioeconomic status](#) (SES) – [education](#), higher status [occupations](#) (executives or professionals) and income – were each independently associated with greater job pressure. "However, those with high SES face greater pressure mostly because of their more challenging work and greater levels of authority," says Schieman.

"These findings speak directly to the idea of the stress of higher status. People talk these days about being 'crazy busy' and not having enough time to do all the things at work that need to get done. But being 'crazy busy' isn't randomly distributed in the population. This study demonstrates an unexpected price for higher SES and more control at work –and that price is excessive pressure in the workplace."

Job-Related Resources and the Pressures of Working Life, is published in the journal *Social Science Research*.

Provided by University of Toronto

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