

# Working conditions and health at call centres in Sweden

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## Research principal

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## Description

There are a range of problems associated with job on call centres. A range of problems associated with the job have become apparent, with time pressure, performance monitoring via computer, monitoring of phone calls, ergonomic deficiencies and musculoskeletal problems amongst the problems reported. An earlier study of a call centre in Sweden found inadequate working conditions and signs of ill health amongst a high percentage of the population in their 20s who had only been working for 2-3 years. The situation was worse there than amongst older employees in other industries with computer-intensive jobs.

Inadequate working conditions and the high incidence of medical complaints amongst young employees may mean that call centres are failing to provide the sustainable work opportunities that many are counting on, e.g. in rural areas. Scientific studies of call centres are few and the state of knowledge of working conditions and health there is deficient.

A cross-sectional study into working and health conditions at call centres in Sweden was conducted with the aim of contributing to a sustainable development of call centre work. The project was conducted in partnership with the Ergonomics Programme at the National Institute for Working Life, Occupational Medicine North, Sundsvall Hospital, and the Institute for Psychosocial Factors and Health at the Karolinska Institute.

Data were collated at social, corporate and individual level from 15-20 larger call centres with different operating spheres, ownership structures and geographical location. Data were collected on work organisation, content and times, physical and psychosocial working conditions, and health and well-being with the aid of questionnaires, observations, measurements, medical examinations and company registers (including the computerised monitoring system). A total of approximately 1,500 people were included in the study. Models were tried out in order to evaluate the effects of ill health and inadequacies in working conditions at the company's expense.

## Data contains personal data

No

## Language

[Swedish](#)

## Unit of analysis

[Individual](#)

## Sampling procedure

A total of 38 call-centres with at least 50 employed was invited to participate in the study. The company were selected to represent both internal and external call centres. 16 companies represented 28 different workplaces, 16 internal and 12 external agreed to take part in the study.

## Time period(s) investigated

2001 – 2003

## Number of individuals/objects

1531

## Response rate/participation rate

77%

## Data format / data structure

[Numeric](#)

## Geographic spread

Geographic location: [Sweden](#)

## Responsible department/unit

Work and Health

## Funding

- Funding agency: Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research

## Research area

[Working conditions](#) (CESSDA Topic Classification)

[Medical and health sciences](#) (Standard för svensk indelning av forskningsämnen 2011)

[Occupational health and environmental health](#) (Standard för svensk indelning av forskningsämnen 2011)

[Health](#) (CESSDA Topic Classification)

[General health and well-being](#) (CESSDA Topic Classification)

## Keywords

[Physical examination](#), [Musculoskeletal system](#), [Risk factors](#), [Work](#), [Workload](#), [Cumulative trauma disorders](#), [Ergonomics](#), [Health](#), [Drug utilization](#), [Observation](#), [Mental fatigue](#), [Pain](#), [Social environment](#), [Stress, psychological](#), [Sleep](#), [Fatigue](#), [Rest](#), [Occupational exposure](#)

## Publications

Norman K, Wigaeus Tornqvist E, Toomingas A. Working conditions in a selected sample of call centre companies in Sweden. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics.2008;14:2,177-94  
[Till lärosätets \(kth\) databas](#) | [Till lärosätets \(oru\) databas](#)

Norman K, Floderus B, Hagman M, Toomingas A. Musculoskeletal symptoms in relation to work exposures at call centre companies in Sweden. *Work*.2008;30(2):201-14

If you have published anything based on these data, [please notify us](#) with a reference to your publication(s). If you are responsible for the catalogue entry, you can update the metadata/data description in DORIS.

### **Accessibility level**

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Access to data is restricted

### **Use of data**

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### **Versions**

Version 1.0. 2006-01-01

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