

A DEEPER LOOK INTO STRESS AND
WORKLOAD IN THE
BC PUBLIC SERVICE

WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY 2009

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CONTACT INFORMATION

This paper was prepared by Erika Schrader and Angela Matheson. If you have any questions about the information in this report, please email angela.matheson@gov.bc.ca or phone 250-387-6744.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While some improvement has been found each year since 2007, stress and workload remains one of the biggest areas of concern expressed by employees in the BC Public Service to date. At first glance, scores from the stress and workload driver appear to have “improved” two points in 2008, averaging at 57 points (out of 100 points), and two more points in 2009 averaging at 59 points. However when scores were analysed from only employees who gave responses in both survey cycles, scores increased one point, from 57 points in 2008 to 58 points in 2009. Furthermore, an analysis of employee comments identified stress and workload as the second most important issue they wanted their organizations to focus on for the next 12 months to improve their work environments.

Employees’ feedback on this topic, combined with only moderate year-to-year improvements, reinforces the need for a deeper awareness on what makes work-related stress and workload challenging to manage. This report takes a deeper look into employee perceptions using available data gathered from the *Work Environment Survey (WES) 2009*, as well as the *Exit Survey* in 2008-2009. The key findings that emerged from this study are summarized below.¹

Stress and workload issues are linked to engagement and turnover.

There are two important reasons to address stress and workload issues. First, stress and workload is linked to employee engagement; as stress and workload become more manageable for employees, their engagement increases. Second, there is a link between stress and workload and turnover; one in four respondents who left the BC Public Service during the 2008-2009 fiscal year identified workload issues as their main reason for leaving.

Stress and workload issues are not felt equally by all employees.

There is considerable variation in stress and workload scores across occupational groups. Stress and workload issues were found to be least manageable for employees in health, education and social work (51 points) and enforcement and corrections (54 points), while employees in strategic leadership and executives reportedly had more manageable workload and stress levels (66 points).

Stress and workload issues can also vary widely across work units. Sixty-one points separated the highest scoring work unit from the lowest (90 and 29 points, respectively). Such variation reveals a diversity that can serve as an opportunity for learning, particularly from those work units at the higher end of the range.

A number of factors impact stress and workload.

Stress and workload is influenced by four other drivers in the *Employee Engagement Model*: executive-level management, supervisory-level management, respectful environment, and physical environment and tools. When employees reported high scores on all four of these drivers, their work-related stress and workload was

¹ Keep in mind while reading the remainder of this report that a reverse relationship exists between scores on the stress and workload driver, and *levels/amounts* of stress and workload. That is, when driver scores are low, employees are experiencing high levels of stress and unmanageable workloads. Conversely, high driver scores reflect lower levels of stress and more manageable workloads.

manageable, as reflected by an average score of 76 points.² On the other hand, survey responses reveal more stress and heavier workloads among individuals who reported low scores on the very same drivers. These results suggest that improving employee perceptions on at least one of these four model drivers will have a beneficial effect on their experiences in managing work-related stress and workload.

The analysis identified a number of other factors that can also improve stress and workload driver scores. Stress and workload scores were higher when employees had support at work to provide a high level of service, access to workplace procedures that allow them to use their time effectively and sufficient information to get the job done.

More innovative work environments facilitate better management of stress and workload.

BC Stats has developed an innovation index that identifies innovative work environments based on two key WES measures: the encouragement of innovation and the ability to implement new ideas.³ There was a strong connection between innovative work environments and the management of work-related stress and workload. Employees whose workplace scored at the low end of the innovation index felt more burdened by high levels of stress and heavier workloads (average score of 33 points). Conversely, employees who worked in a highly innovative environment reportedly had substantially lower levels of stress and more manageable workloads (average score of 83 points). These results illustrate that, in an environment in which employees feel encouraged to offer and implement new ideas, they are better able to cope with other challenges such as high workload and stress.

Where to go from here?

The good news is that there are many avenues for resolving work-related stress and workload problems, especially at the local work unit level. As this report points out, key levers for reducing workload-related stress can be found by considering executive and supervisory level management actions and characteristics reflecting a respectful and well-equipped environment. Workplace methods and supports should also be examined in an effort to harness productivity, improve information flow, and develop more innovative workplaces in general.

While this paper outlines some initial guidance, more targeted and effective approaches can be developed by:

1. Identifying occupation-specific drivers of workplace stress. For instance, some occupational groups may face greater stress due to workplace processes and procedures, while others feel it due to the client groups they deal with.
2. Pursuing further research into the best practices across government for specific occupational groups. While some may consider the diversity of results across government a challenge, the success stories provide an opportunity to gain valuable guidance for other organizations.

² High scores refer to survey results 75 points and above. Low scores include 25 points and below.

³ BC Stats (2008). *The BC Public Service as an Innovative Work Environment: A Preliminary Analysis*. Report prepared for the BC Government.

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Introduction

BC Stats' analysis of opinions from 23,574 employees who responded to the *BC Public Service Work Environment Survey (WES)* in 2009 found employees' perceptions of managing stress and workload to be an important driver impacting their level of engagement.⁴ Views on the nature of their stress and workload are measured using two *WES* survey topics that make up this driver, and these are listed below.

MY WORKLOAD IS MANAGEABLE.

MY WORK-RELATED STRESS IS MANAGEABLE.

According to responses to these two survey questions, managing workload and work-related stress continues to be a challenge for BC Public Service employees in 2009. Just two in every five employees believed their workload and work-related stress was manageable.

Results further indicate minimal year-to-year improvement in scores. Since 2007 when the average score was 55 points (out of 100 points), overall respondent population trends show scores on this driver improved only four points, averaging at 57 points in 2008 and 59 points in 2009. This moderate four-point gain is dampened however when scores were examined from only those who gave responses in 2008 and 2009 survey years. In that case, views changed only slightly, averaging at 57 points in 2008 and 58 points in 2009. In addition, a thematic analysis of respondent comments continued to identify stress and workload as the second most critical issue employees wanted their organizations to focus on to improve their work environments.⁵

Employees' feedback on this topic, combined with minimal year-to-year improvements, reinforces the need for a deeper awareness of what makes work-related stress and workload challenging to manage. BC Stats decided to dig deeper by examining available data through the lens of five research questions.

1. How does stress and workload factor into the employee engagement model?
2. What role does stress and workload have in employee turnover?
3. Who is experiencing unmanageable workloads and work-related stress?
4. What can be done to make stress and workload more manageable?
5. What is the connection between innovative workplaces and workload stress?

⁴ BC Stats (2009). *Overall Results: Exploring Employee Engagement in the BC Public Service*. BC Stats. Report prepared for the BC Government.

⁵ BC Stats (2008, 2009). *BC Public Service Overall: Improving your Work Environment—Comments from Within*. Report prepared for the BC Government.

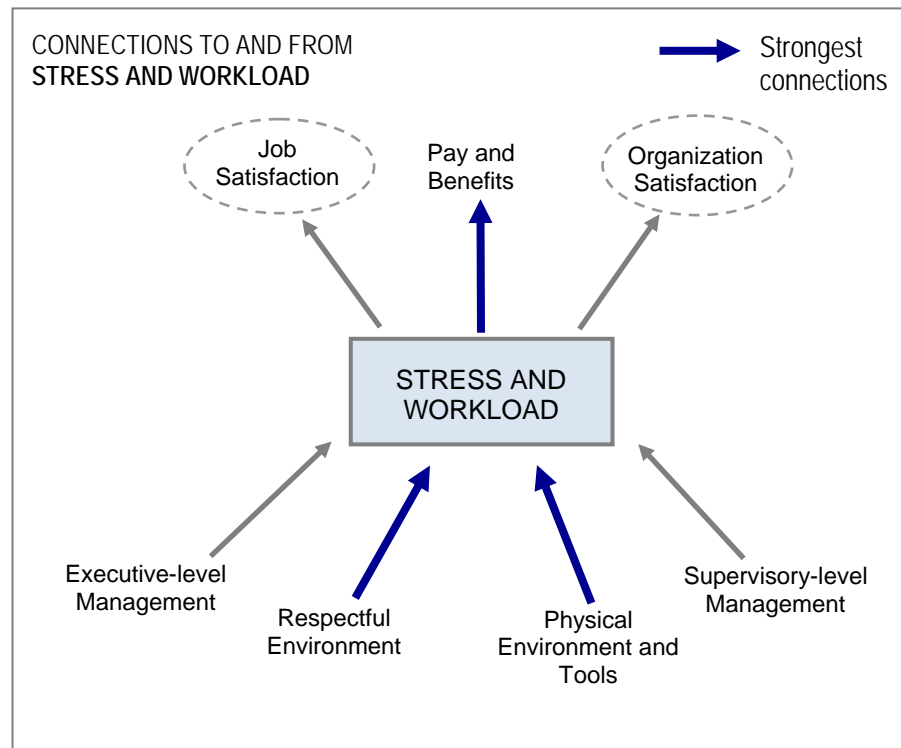
Key Findings

1. How does stress and workload factor into the employee engagement model?

The *BC Public Service Employee Engagement Model*, which is based on analysis of the findings of the *WES*, illustrates the linkages between aspects of the work environment and how they interact to produce higher or lower levels of employee engagement.

The stress and workload driver is a workplace function that has dynamic connections with seven other drivers in the *Employee Engagement Model*. Figure 1 illustrates how these drivers interact in the model.

FIGURE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF TWO WORKPLACE FUNCTIONS AND BOTH LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT AFFECT EMPLOYEES' ABILITY TO MANAGE THEIR STRESS AND WORKLOAD, WHICH IN TURN DRIVES THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF PAY AND BENEFITS AS WELL AS THEIR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR JOB AND ORGANIZATION.



Employees' ability to cope with stress and heavy workloads is strongly influenced by the respectfulness and physical make-up of their working environment, as well as the tools at their disposal.

A respectful environment is defined as a healthy environment where trust and mutual respect exist, diversity is valued and discrimination and harassment are absent. The driver physical environment and tools is defined as an environment where employees believe their physical surroundings are satisfactory, and they have the technology and/or equipment to do their job well. As seen in the above figure, the model

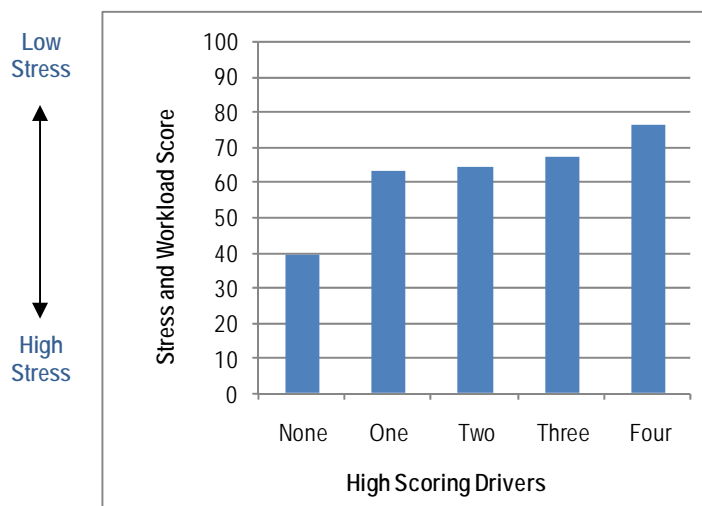
illustrates that a strong relationship exists between these two workplace functions and experiences of work-related stress and workload pressures. Therefore, if scores are low on stress and workload (reflecting unmanageably high levels of stress), the respectfulness of the environment, the physical surroundings and/or the tools with which employees work are the first areas to assess and potentially intervene.

Perceptions of management also drive stress and workload scores.

Managing workload and work-related stress is influenced by what employees perceive to be happening at the supervisory and executive management level. That is, how well employees manage their stress and workload depends on whether they believe the person they report to keeps them informed and consults them on decisions that affect them. Coping with stress and workload also depends on whether employees believe their executives are providing a clear direction for the future, and whether there is timely communication around decisions.

Focusing efforts on these elements of the management-staff relationship, creating a respectful environment and ensuring that employees have suitable surroundings and resources to do their job well will enable employees to better handle their work-related stress and workload. For example, survey results show that when respondents' scores were more than 75 points (out of 100 points) in all four of these driver areas, their work-related stress and workload was manageable (76 points). Conversely, low scores on the same four drivers resulted in substantially unmanageable work-related stress and workload levels (17 points), reflecting a striking 59-point spread. In fact, employees' stress and workload is so strongly affected by these four drivers that as scores for one or more drivers drop below the threshold level of 75 points, stress and workload scores also become more problematic, as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: AS THE NUMBER OF HIGH-SCORING DRIVERS INCREASES, STRESS AND WORKLOAD SCORES LIKEWISE IMPROVES.



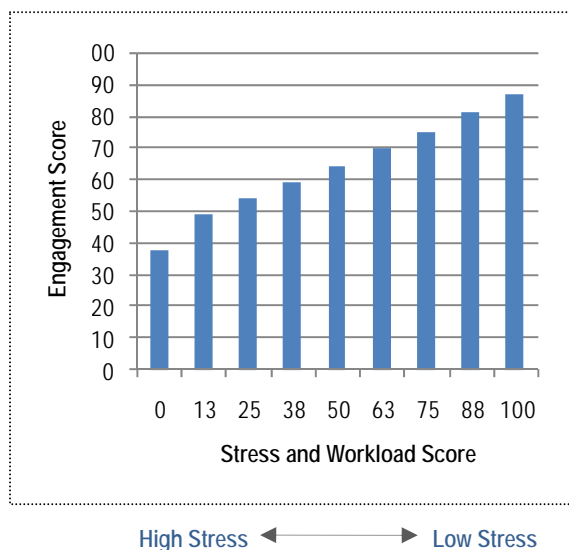
Employees’ impressions of pay and benefits are influenced by stress and workload.

In the same way that stress and workload are driven by the three aforementioned drivers, stress and workload, in turn, directly and strongly influences perceptions of pay and benefits. A simple way to understand the effect of stress and workload on the pay and benefits driver is to think about one of the questions that make up this driver: "I am fairly paid for the work I do." If an employee consistently works additional hours without compensation, it will begin to affect their view of whether or not they are fairly paid. Survey results show that individuals who were satisfied in the area of pay and benefits (75 points or more) scored an average of 69 points on the stress and workload driver, while those who were reportedly less satisfied with pay and benefits (25 points or less) scored an average of 44 points on stress and workload, a difference of 25 points.

Stress and workload affects overall engagement by driving job satisfaction and organization satisfaction.

The importance of maintaining manageable levels of work-related stress and workload is even more pronounced when we see that engagement in general is influenced by stress and workload through job and organization satisfaction. Remember that job satisfaction and organization satisfaction are two of three engagement characteristics in the *BC Public Service Employee Engagement Model*, along with BC Public Service commitment and are, therefore, two of the defining elements of engagement. As Figure 3 shows, as the stress and workload driver score improved, the employee engagement score improved as well. That is, an employee who reported having considerable unmanageable work-related stress and workload (score of 0 points out of 100 points) had an average engagement score of 38 points. In comparison, an employee who believed they had a very manageable level of workload stress (100 out of 100 points), had an average engagement score of 87 points.

FIGURE 3: AS STRESS AND WORKLOAD BECOMES MORE MANAGEABLE FOR EMPLOYEES, THEIR ENGAGEMENT INCREASES.



2. What kind of role does stress and workload have on turnover?

Stress and workload can trigger resignations and retirements.

Results from the *BC Public Service Exit Survey* show that workload is one of the top reasons employees voluntarily left the BC Public Service.⁶ Among retirees, the strains of a heavy workload pushed 17% of respondents into retiring sooner than they might have otherwise. For these employees, comments focused on overwhelming or large workloads, not having enough time for the amount of work they had, work-life balance issues, a desire to reduce working hours and slowing down. Among employees who resigned their position with the BC Public Service, 22% cited that workload contributed “a lot” or “a great deal” to their decision to leave. Comments from this group described increases in workload caused by co-worker resignations, co-workers’ lack of competency, increases in project-load, poor management skills and lack of additional staff as reasons for their departure.

Inter-organizational migrations may be prompted by stress and workload.

There is also a relationship between stress and workload and internal migration—the movement to a new employment opportunity in a different ministry or government organization. While stress and workload issues by themselves do not have an easily discernible effect on patterns of migration in the same way as engagement scores, nor can they be said to *cause* migration, their relationship can be seen by comparing the stress and workload scores of employees before and after they have changed positions. Table 1 demonstrates the role stress and workload plays for employees in 2008 that migrated to a new government organization by the time the 2009 survey was administered.

TABLE 1: MORE RESPONDENTS WITH UNMANAGEABLE WORK-RELATED STRESS AND WORKLOAD EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS WHEN THEY MOVE TO DIFFERENT ORGANIZATION.⁷

2008 Stress and Workload Score	Percentage of Respondents whose 2009 Stress and Workload Score .was...			Respondent Count
	... More Positive	... The Same	... More Negative	
0.0	89%	11%	N/A	37
12.5	96%	4%	0%	26
25.0	72%	17%	11%	53
37.5	80%	4%	16%	55
50.0	63%	22%	16%	128
62.5	47%	20%	33%	55
75.0	16%	43%	41%	201
87.5	22%	8%	70%	37
100.0	N/A	33%	67%	73
TOTAL	43%	25%	32%	665

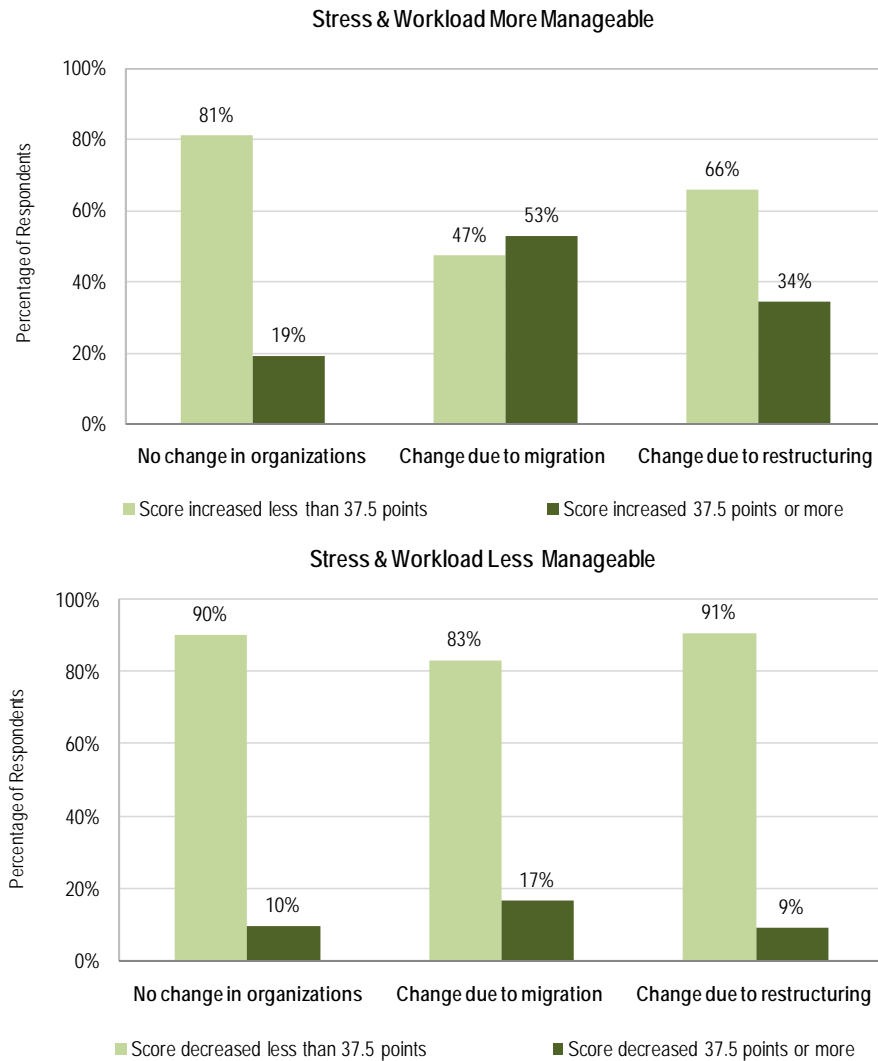
⁶ BC Stats (2009). *Annual Report on Employee Resignations: Raising Awareness and Taking Action/Annual Report on Employee Retirements: Raising Awareness and Taking Action*. Reports prepared for the BC Government.

⁷ Findings do not include any organizational changes due to BC Public Service restructuring.

Forty-three percent of respondents, who had unmanageable stress and workload in 2008 and then migrated to a different organization, experienced improvements the following year. This pattern is most pronounced among employees at the high end of the stress spectrum (below 50 points on the 2008 stress and workload driver score), where between 72% and 96% of respondents who changed organizations reported lower levels of stress and workload in 2009.

This group also showed the highest rate of improvement from year to year—53% of the employees in this group gained 37.5 or more points on the stress and workload driver between 2008 and 2009 (Figure 4). Of note however, are the rates of improvement reported by those who changed organizations due to BC Public Service restructuring. Over one in three respondents with unmanageable stress and workloads in 2008 reported an increase of 37.5 points or more in their score in 2009.

FIGURE 4: MORE RESPONDENTS WITH UNMANAGEABLE WORK-RELATED STRESS AND WORKLOAD IN 2008 REPORTED IMPROVEMENT WHEN THEY VOLUNTARILY MIGRATED TO DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION IN 2009.⁸



⁸ The 2009 results are based on those from the lower end of the distribution (scores 37.5 points or lower in 2008) and the upper end of the distribution (scores 62.5 points or higher in 2008). Those who scored 50 points in 2008 were excluded because the majority of those who scored 50 points in 2008 did not gain or lose more than 37.5 points in 2009 and rates did not vary by organizational change.

In general these findings provide strong evidence that stress and workload issues may trigger resignations, retirements and internal-organizational migrations as employees seek some relief from unsatisfactory conditions in their current position.

3. Who is experiencing unmanageable workloads and work-related stress?

Stress and workload are more challenging in some occupations than others.

Two important observations come from an analysis of stress and workload by occupation (see Table 2). First, there is substantial variation between occupation groups (a 13-point spread from the lowest-scoring to the highest-scoring occupations in 2008 and a 12-point spread in 2009). Second, while gains have been made across the board, front-line service occupations directly exposed to more challenging populations (e.g., enforcement and corrections along with health, education and social work groups) continue to report the lowest scores on stress and workload for the third consecutive year in a row. It should be noted, however, that enforcement and corrections had one of the biggest gains on the stress and workload driver compared to all other occupational groups.

TABLE 2: ON AVERAGE, EMPLOYEES FROM HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK ALONG WITH ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS EXPERIENCE THE MOST CHALLENGES IN MANAGING THEIR WORK-RELATED STRESS AND WORKLOAD.

Occupational Group	Respondent Stress and Workload Score (out of 100 points)		Difference (in points)
	2008	2009	
Health, Education and Social Work	49	51	+2
Enforcement and Corrections	50	54	+4
Science and Technical Officers	55	57	+2
Information Technology	57	59	+2
Legal Counsel	56	60	+4
Business Leadership	57	61	+4
Senior Administration and Research	60	61	+1
Applied Leadership	61	63	+2
Finance and Economics	61	63	+2
Administrative Support	62	63	+1
Trades and Operations	62	63	+1
Strategic Leadership and Executives	61	66	+5

Stress and workload can be a divisional issue.

Twenty-three divisions, which together employ 43% of all government employees, have scores at or below the government average of 59 points, further emphasizing how widespread an issue stress and workload is throughout the BC Public Service.

Note the large 19-point range between the lowest (40 points) and the highest (59 points) of these divisions (see Table 3).⁹

TABLE 3: THERE ARE 23 DIVISIONS WHERE MANAGING STRESS AND WORKLOAD WAS A CHALLENGE IN 2009.

Organization	Division	Respondent Stress and Workload Score (out of 100 points)	Respondent Count
Environment	Compliance Division	40	132
Housing and Social Development	Regional Services Division	47	1,311
Environment	Water Stewardship	49	125
Children and Family Development	Vancouver Island	51	463
Attorney General	Court Services Branch	52	1,173
Environment	Environmental Stewardship	52	457
Children and Family Development	Interior	52	559
Tourism, Culture and the Arts	Tourism Division	53	93
Children and Family Development	North	54	352
Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources	Mining and Minerals	54	90
Public Safety and Solicitor General	Corrections Branch	55	1,702
Children and Family Development	Fraser	55	853
Environment	Environmental Protection	56	245
Finance	Corporate and Ministry Support Services	56	143
Citizens' Services	Accommodation and Real Estate Services	56	269
Agriculture and Lands	Strategic Industry Development Division	57	147
Finance	Provincial Treasury and Registries	57	158
Integrated Land Management Bureau	Regional Operations Division	58	266
Integrated Land Management Bureau	GeoBC Division	58	143
Housing and Social Development	Management Services	59	290
Forests and Range	Tenure and Revenue	58	120
Forests and Range	Corporate Services Division	59	171
Children and Family Development	Provincial Services	59	458

Stress and workload is a localized issue.

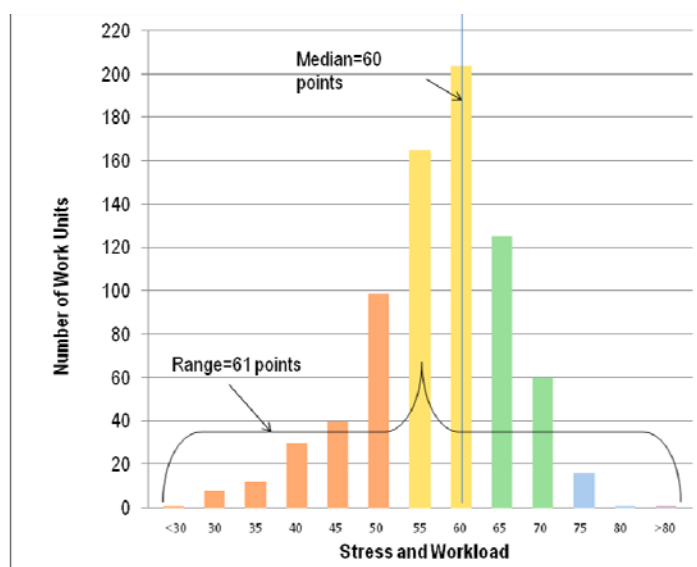
There is an enormous 61-point range in stress and workload scores across 761 government work units, from 29 points at the lowest end of the range to 90 points at the highest.¹⁰ A closer look at the descriptive statistics shown in Figure 5 reveals that

⁹ Divisions employing less than 100 people were excluded from this list. It is important to note that there is considerable differentiation within a division. There are smaller units within divisions (e.g. regions, branches and offices) that are performing above and below the divisional average.

¹⁰ The analysis is based on the 2009 work unit structure and definitions. To allow for maximum coverage, work units were not mutually exclusive. This resulted in 761 work units containing 26,981 or 98% of all employees who participated in the BC Public Service Work Environment. A work unit was included if it contained at least 10 respondents and 20 employees in the population. The remaining 2% of the population work in units smaller than 10 respondents/20 employees, and therefore were excluded from this analysis.

the median score for work units is 60—that is, half the scores are higher than 60 points and half are lower. The mode, or most frequently occurring score, is slightly higher, at 61 points. Keeping in mind that the stress and workload score for the entire BC Public Service is 59, these results suggest that, overall, scores are about average at the work unit level.

FIGURE 5: THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL VARIATION ACROSS GOVERNMENT WORK UNITS IN 2009.



The colours in Table 4 link the results back to the *Employee Engagement Model*. As you may recall, orange represents the *Address Your Challenges* category that includes scores of 54 points or lower. As displayed below, one-quarter (25%) of work units fall into this category, meaning they are reportedly experiencing a substantial amount of stress and heavy workloads. The largest proportion (49%) of the BC Public Service falls within the yellow category, *Focus on Improvements*. For this group, stress levels and workload are more manageable but would still be considered high. These results are further detailed in Table 4.

TABLE 4: ROUGHLY ONE IN TWO WORK UNITS REPORT SCORES AVERAGING WITHIN THE 55-TO-64-POINT SCORE CATEGORY—*FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENTS*.

Colour Code	Range	Score Category	Proportion of Work Units in the BC Public Service
Orange	54 points or lower	Address your challenges	25%
Yellow	55 to 64 points	Focus on improvements	49%
Green	65 to 74 points	Leverage your strengths	24%
Blue	75 to 84 points	Celebrate your successes	.02%
Purple	85 points of higher	Model your achievements	.001%

Compared to 2008, scores have improved only slightly among work units. That is, there has been only a small increase in the overall average score, from 57 in 2008 to 59 in 2009. The level of variation among work unit scores, combined with only moderate improvement since last year, highlights the need for both general and localized approaches to addressing stress and workload issues. However, it should be noted that this level of variation can also be seen as a positive, in that it provides the possibility of best practices research to develop approaches to managing stress and workload.

4. What can be done to make stress and workload more manageable?

An evaluation of the qualitative data from 2009 reveals that stress and workload continues to dominate as one of the most important areas of concern for employees. In 2009, nearly one in four respondents who provided comments on the 2009 WES (26%, up 6% from 2008) identified stress and workload as the key issue to be addressed by organizations.¹¹

In addition to identifying this largely-held concern, employees also provided a wide variety of suggestions for mitigating their high workloads and stress levels, including:

- more on-the-job training
- professional development opportunities for new and seasoned employees, particularly in terms of stress-management and skills development
- keeping skilled employees by offering competitive salaries and benefits packages
- consultations with front-line employees on how to address workload expectations and workplace processes
- opening up more opportunities for innovation
- providing support for employees' ideas on how to increase productivity.

Among all of the suggestions provided, one factor in particular was implicated most as a major contributor to unmanageable amounts of work and stress for employees: staffing levels. In fact, among those who identified stress and workload as the key issue to be addressed by government, one-third of respondents (9% of all comments) felt that, by increasing staffing levels, their workload and stress would be substantially reduced. In addition to staffing levels, four other areas for reducing stress and workload predominated survey comment themes which are listed below

<p>INCREASE STAFF/COVERAGE</p> <p>REVIEW WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS</p> <p>BE FLEXIBLE/PROMOTE WORK-LIFE BALANCE</p> <p>IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY</p> <p>MANAGE WORK-RELATED STRESS</p>

¹¹ This rate is based on 63% of respondents who provided comments in 2009.

Given current constraints on staffing budgets for the majority of organizations, increased attention must be paid to the other four areas of major concern cited above if the BC Public Service intends to make strides to improve the unmanageable amount of work and stress experienced by employees. In particular, BC Stats explored the concept of productivity through an examination of the survey results.

There are two ways that gains in productivity are can be approached; either by providing greater incentives and recognition for hard work or by providing a workplace that has all the necessary tools, procedures and supports for high levels of productivity, and by extension, reducing workload-related stress. In order to analyze these relationships, BC Stats examined the average scores on the stress and workload driver according to whether or not respondents agreed or disagreed with specific *WES* topics related to recognition or having the necessary tools, procedures and supports for fostering productivity. The findings are shown in Table 5. The table also highlights the difference between the agree/disagree scores in order to illustrate how stress and workload are affected by the presence or absence of workplace supports.

TABLE 5. STRESS AND WORKLOAD SCORES ARE MORE POSITIVE WHEN EMPLOYEES HAVE THE SUPPORT, PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION NEEDED TO DO THEIR JOB WELL.

WES Question Topic	Agreement with Topic	Stress and Workload Score (out of 100 points)	Difference (in points)
I have support at work to provide a high level of service.	Disagree	34	36
	Agree	70	
My workplace procedures allow me to use my time as effectively as possible.	Disagree	37	32
	Agree	69	
I have the information I need to do my job well.	Disagree	38	29
	Agree	67	
I receive meaningful recognition for work well done.	Disagree	41	27
	Agree	68	
When needed, members of my team help me get the job done.	Disagree	37	26
	Agree	63	
In my work unit, recognition is based on performance.	Disagree	43	25
	Agree	68	
I have the tools I need to do my job well.	Disagree	41	24
	Agree	65	

As the table demonstrates, for all topics, there is a notable difference in the stress and workload scores when employees believe they have the necessary tools, procedures and supports to do their job. In particular, employees who felt that they had the support they need to provide a high level of service scored 36 points higher on stress and workload than employees who did not feel sufficiently supported. Similarly, a 32-point difference was found between employees who felt that their workplace procedures allow them to use their time as effectively as possible, compared to those who did not. These results suggest that ensuring employees have the support, procedures and information they require has the potential to help keep work-related stress and workload at a manageable level.

5. What is the connection between innovative workplaces and work-related stress?

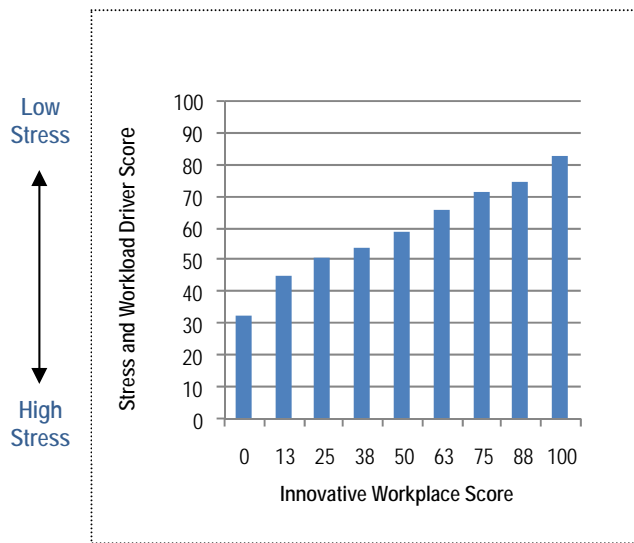
Innovation is another way of reducing workload-related stress. By innovating, work units can find new ways of reducing workload pressures and limiting barriers to productivity.

BC Stats has recently developed a preliminary model of innovative workplaces using an index of two WES measures featured below.¹²

I AM ENCOURAGED TO BE INNOVATIVE IN MY WORK.
I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES I NEED TO IMPLEMENT NEW IDEAS.

Figure 6 shows how scores on the innovation index correspond to scores on the stress and workload driver.

FIGURE 6. EMPLOYEES WHO WORK IN INNOVATIVE WORKPLACES HAVE MORE MANAGEABLE WORK-RELATED STRESS AND WORKLOAD.



The figure clearly shows that the more innovative the workplace is perceived to be, the more positive the score on stress and workload. Those who scored at the high end of the innovative workplace index scored an average of 83 points on stress and workload, while those at the low end, scored an average of 33 points on stress and workload. These scores reflect a large 40-point spread, highlighting that by supporting innovation, major gains can be achieved in reducing levels of workload-related stress.

¹² BC Stats (2008). *The BC Public Service as an Innovative Work Environment: A Preliminary Analysis*. Report prepared for the BC Government.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Stress and workload is one of the biggest areas of concern expressed by employees in the BC Public Service. This is an important topic because employees' ability to manage their work-related stress and workload has an impact on their job and organizational satisfaction, perceptions of fair pay and benefits, overall employee engagement and decisions to leave their employment for more promising work environments.

The good news is that there are many avenues for resolving work-related stress and workload problems, especially at the local work unit level. As this paper points out, key levers for reducing workload-related stress can be found by considering executive and supervisory level management actions and characteristics reflecting a respectful environment and suitably-equipped surroundings. Other ways dig deeper into workplace methods and supports that harness productivity by enhancing workplace processes and procedures, improving information flows, and developing more innovative workplaces in general.

While this report has outlined some initial guidance, more targeted and effective approaches can be developed by:

1. **Identifying occupation-specific drivers of workplace stress**—for instance, some occupational groups may face greater stress due to workplace processes and procedures, while others feel it due to the client groups they deal with.
2. **Pursuing further research into the best practices across government for specific occupational groups**—while some may consider the diversity of results across government a challenge, the success stories provide an opportunity to gain valuable guidance for other organizations.

By identifying the key levers for occupational groups across government and by learning from the leaders across government for each occupational group, targeted approaches can be developed that will improve the overall management of work-related stress and workload.

If you have any questions
about the information in this report,
please contact
BC Stats.
250-387-6744

