

# Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) Job Factors

## Definitions Sheet

Each job has elements unique to the tasks or demands required. Job-specific psychosocial factors (job factors) impacting workers' psychological responses may be categorized by job demands, job controls, and job supports.

To learn more about identifying and assessing risk of psychological harm at the job level, understand what controls mitigate risk, and find suggestions for potential solutions for factors of concern, please inquire into Radius ([www.pshsa.ca/radius](http://www.pshsa.ca/radius)), a web-based application, and connect with your PSHSA Consultant. Participation and engagement by the JHSC with respect to Radius integrates their knowledge of work, organization, as well as occupational health and safety, to gain insight on job factors.

### Job Demands

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1. **Working Time:** Working time is any period of time that a person spends doing paid labour and carrying out work-related activities and duties. Long working hours with limited recovery time may have a detrimental impact on sleep, leading to fatigue, physiological strain, decreased work performance, negative health behaviours, diminished cognitive functioning, and job dissatisfaction.
2. **Workload:** Workload is the amount of work or working time expected or assigned to a worker. Investing time and energy to cope with an increased workload may result in depletion of energy required to balance work and family demands, decreased quality of sleep and subsequent decline in mental wellbeing.
3. **Effort-Reward Imbalance:** Effort reward imbalance occurs where there is an imbalance between workers' efforts and associated rewards and recognitions. Higher effort and lower reward are associated with adverse outcomes to mental health. Some occupations are at higher risk of effort-reward imbalance (e.g., nurses), resultant mental health impairment and burnout, and compassion fatigue.
4. **Cognitive Demands:** Excessive cognitive workload can lead to chronic stress, and subsequent detrimental effects on physical and mental health. Excessive cognitive workload impacting cognitive resources.
5. **Physical Demands:** Physical demands refer to the level and/or duration of physical exertion generally required to perform job tasks. Requirement to perform physical job demands that exceed the worker's capacity/capabilities and/or repeated exposure to inadequately controlled physical demands may contribute to worker mental stress or otherwise adversely impact worker mental health.
6. **Working Alone, Remote Work, Working in Isolation:** A person is "alone" at work when they are on their own where they cannot be seen or heard by another person. Working alone includes all workers who may not have direct contact with a co-worker for a substantial period. Working alone may cause or contribute to feelings of isolation and lack of support.



7. **Physical Exposures:** Physical exposures are exposures to physical hazards in the workplace such as biological and chemical substances, noise, temperature, vibration, radiation and other safety hazards. Exposure to inadequately controlled physical hazards may be associated with increased risk of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.
8. **Exposure to Workplace Violence:** Exposure to Workplace Violence occurs where workers witness or experience verbal and/or physical abuse/assault such as being spat at, bitten, hit, or threatened, where a worker or worker's family, staff or friends are threatened with harm. Workers who have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence are at increased risk of developing mental health challenges.
9. **Exposure to Workplace Incivility or Harassment:**
  - **Workplace incivility** is characterized as low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.
  - **Workplace harassment** is defined as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.
10. **Direct Exposure to Traumatic Events:** A traumatic event is a shocking, scary, or dangerous experience that can affect someone emotionally and physically. Single or repeated exposures to traumatic events in the workplace may result in chronic or traumatic mental stress injuries.
11. **Secondary Exposure to Traumatic Events:** Hearing about firsthand traumatic experiences of others during work-related activities may result in secondary traumatic stress, i.e., emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.

## Job Control

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12. **Autonomy:** Workplace autonomy is the power of a worker to shape their work and environment in ways that allow optimal performance. An autonomous workplace is based on trust, respect, dependability, and integrity. Lack of autonomy can result in low engagement and low motivation.
13. **Working Outside Scope of Work:** Scope of work is an agreement between the employer and the worker defining the requirements of the job and job tasks to be performed. A requirement or expectation (real or perceived) to work outside of the scope of work, as defined by either a regulatory college (scope of practice) or as identified in the job description, may lead to mental stress.
14. **Working Outside Morals, Ethics and Values:** Morals are standards of behaviour or beliefs about what is and what is not acceptable. Ethics are a set of moral principles: a theory or system of moral values. Values are the basic framework and guiding principles and beliefs that motivate actions.





Moral injury occurs across occupations and is a psychological response to witnessing or participating in workplace behaviours that contradict one's moral beliefs in critical or inflexible situations. Moral distress may include feelings of guilt, shame, anger, worthlessness, loss of self-trust, reduced empathy, self-isolation, and negative self-beliefs.

## Job Support

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15. **Employer Support – Job Resources:** Employers are required to provide adequate and appropriate job resources and training to enable workers to perform job tasks safely and effectively. Workers should be provided with (and know how to access) the equipment, materials, tools, and practical resources necessary for completion of job tasks. Chronic under-resourcing may contribute to job stress.
16. **Employer Support – Knowledge, Skills, Training, & Ability:** Workers should have adequate knowledge, skills, and abilities to complete their job tasks. Lack of knowledge and uncertainty in judgment may result in poor decisions, with potentially negative consequences for the worker, the employer, and/or the community.
17. **Supervisor Support:** Supportive leaders strive to ensure that team members have the necessary skills, tools, and resources to complete their assigned job tasks autonomously, while feeling comfortable seeking support when needed.

Psychologically safe leaders are competent in the following domains:

- Communication and collaboration
- Social intelligence
- Problem solving and conflict management
- Security and safety
- Fairness and integrity

18. **Coworker Support:** Co-worker support is a workers' global belief about their co-workers' attitudes toward them. Co-worker support enables navigation through workplace stressors, including exposure to job factors that can lead to psychological harm.

Support of co-workers may be evidenced by:

- Normalized discussions on mental health in the workplace
- Adequate informal or formal peer support program

