



FACT SHEET

Shiftwork

What is shiftwork?

While there is no precise definition of what shiftwork is, most studies on shiftwork classify shiftworkers as anyone working outside regular daytime hours (i.e. between approximately 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday). Under these definitions, shiftworkers include all people working evening shift, night shift, rotating shifts, split shifts, or irregular or on-call schedules both during the week and on weekends.

Who usually works shiftwork?

- Shift work is more common among unskilled workers.
- Men are more likely to work shifts than women, however this pattern is changing due to increased labour force participation by females.
- A greater proportion of younger workers (less than 30 years of age) work shifts, compared to older age groups.
- Shiftworkers are more likely to be single than married and less likely to have children.
- Women with children, who work shiftwork, are more likely to be single mothers.
- Shiftwork is more common in the manufacturing, health care, hospitality and transportation industries.
- Shiftwork is more common in larger firms than smaller ones.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on work schedule type in the Canadian Labour Force. Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) - 1998. Weighted Estimates – row totals equal 100%

	Regular Daytime Shift (%)	Shift Work (%)	Irregular, on-call, other (%)
Gender			
Male	68.8	18.9	12.2
Female	71.6	14.6	13.8
Age			
Less than 30 yrs	60.0	20.6	19.4
31 – 50 yrs	75.3	15.3	9.4
50+ years	74.7	14.1	11.2
Marital Status			
Married/Common law	74.9	15.2	9.8
Formerly married	71.7	16.9	11.4
Single (never married)	60.5	20.0	19.5
Education			
Not completed	61.6	20.3	18.0

secondary			
Completed secondary	66.2	19.2	14.6
Completed post-secondary	75.5	14.2	10.3
Industry (NAICS)			
Agriculture	65.9	6.6	27.4
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil and Gas	67.2	18.8	13.9
Utilities	88.0	9.9	2.1
Construction	90.6	1.9	7.5
Manufacturing	69.4	25.4	5.2
Trade	63.2	17.1	19.7
Transportation and Warehousing	60.4	20.0	19.6
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	87.5	5.3	7.2
Science and Technical Services	87.0	2.4	10.6
Management, Administration and Other Support	64.5	22.3	13.2
Educational Services	87.5	6.3	6.2
Healthcare and Social Assistance	61.8	25.8	12.4
Information, Culture and Recreation	61.2	17.7	21.1
Accommodation and Food Services	37.6	34.4	28.1
Other Services	79.6	6.4	14.0
Public Administration	78.7	13.7	7.6
Number of employees			
Less than 20	72.3	10.5	17.2
20 – 99	73.8	15.2	11.0
100 – 499	69.4	18.9	11.7
500 – 999	67.5	21.0	11.5
1000 and over	68.2	20.3	11.5

What is the prevalence of shiftwork in Canada?

The number of people working shiftwork has grown over the last 20 years due to the increased demand for service provision around the clock. Results from the Survey of Labour of Income Dynamics show that the prevalence of shiftwork (evening, night, rotating or split-shift, or on-call or irregular schedule) is around 30 per cent of the labour force, and that between 1993 and 1998 the proportion of the labour force working shiftwork has been stable.

Table 2: Type of working hours in main job. SLID 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, and 1998.

	1993 SLID		1994 SLID		1996 SLID	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Regular daytime schedule	10,200,764	66.8	10,665,202	67.8	9,057,107	68.4

Shiftwork	2,756,623	18.0	2,894,702	18.4	2,400,792	18.1
Irregular, On-call, other	2,144,366	14.0	1,998,429	12.7	1,700,174	12.8
Don't know/refusal	178,789	1.2	174,978	1.1	88,105	0.7
Total	15,280,542	100.0	15,733,311	100.0	13,246,178	100.0
	1997 SLID		1998 SLID			
	N	(%)	N	(%)		
Regular daytime schedule	9,409,963	68.4	9,850,485	69.6		
Shiftwork	2,335,298	17.0	2,369,960	16.8		
Irregular, On-call, other	1,870,595	13.6	1,824,164	12.9		
Don't know/refusal	135,474	1.0	103,519	0.7		
Total	13,751,330	100.0	14,148,128	100.0		

- * 1993 data based on 18,959 responses
- ** 1994 data based on 20,167 responses
- *** 1996 data based on 35,248 responses
- **** 1997 data based on 36,289 responses
- ***** 1998 data based on 37,530 responses

What are the health and safety effects of shiftwork?

Research on shiftwork and its effect on health primarily focuses on sleep disturbances, digestive problems, cardiovascular disease, unhealthy behaviours, social exclusion and work-family conflict.

The Institute has a number of experts who can discuss shiftwork issues. Contact Kathy Knowles Chapeskie (kchapeskie@iwh.on.ca) at 416-927-2027 ext. 2115 or Katherine Russo (krusso@iwh.on.ca) at 416-927-2027 ext. 2148 to arrange a media interview or for more information.

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to research and promote new ways to prevent workplace disability, improve treatment, and optimize recovery and safe return to work. The Institute has been providing research and evidence-based practical tools for clinicians, policy-makers, employees and managers since 1990. It operates with the support of the Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board.