
What is the Coalition on New Office Technology?

The Massachusetts Coalition on New Office Technology (CNOT) is a statewide coalition of over 40 unions, women's and community organizations (see Appendix A for a list of members). CNOT welcomes all groups and individuals who share the common goal of making sure employees benefit from the introduction of new computer technology.

The Coalition has proposed legislation in Massachusetts aimed at preventing abuses of electronic monitoring in the workplace.

Acknowledgements

This report was written with assistance from many, many individuals and organizations. Special thanks go to:

- ☆ The many union locals that distributed the survey questionnaire— locals of AFGC, AFSCME, APWU, CWA, IBEW, NAGE, NTEU, OPEIU, SEIU, TCU, and UWUA
- ☆ Jenny Luray, Julie Rosen, Karen Van Kooy and Janet Wilder for their assistance with every step of this project
- ☆ Barry Shuchter, for his assistance with computer artwork and design
- ☆ Robert Rosofsky, for his assistance with statistical analysis
- ☆ The many academic and other professional researchers who provided their advice and expertise
- ☆ The Boston Women's Fund, which provided partial financial support for the survey project.

What Kinds of Jobs Are They In?

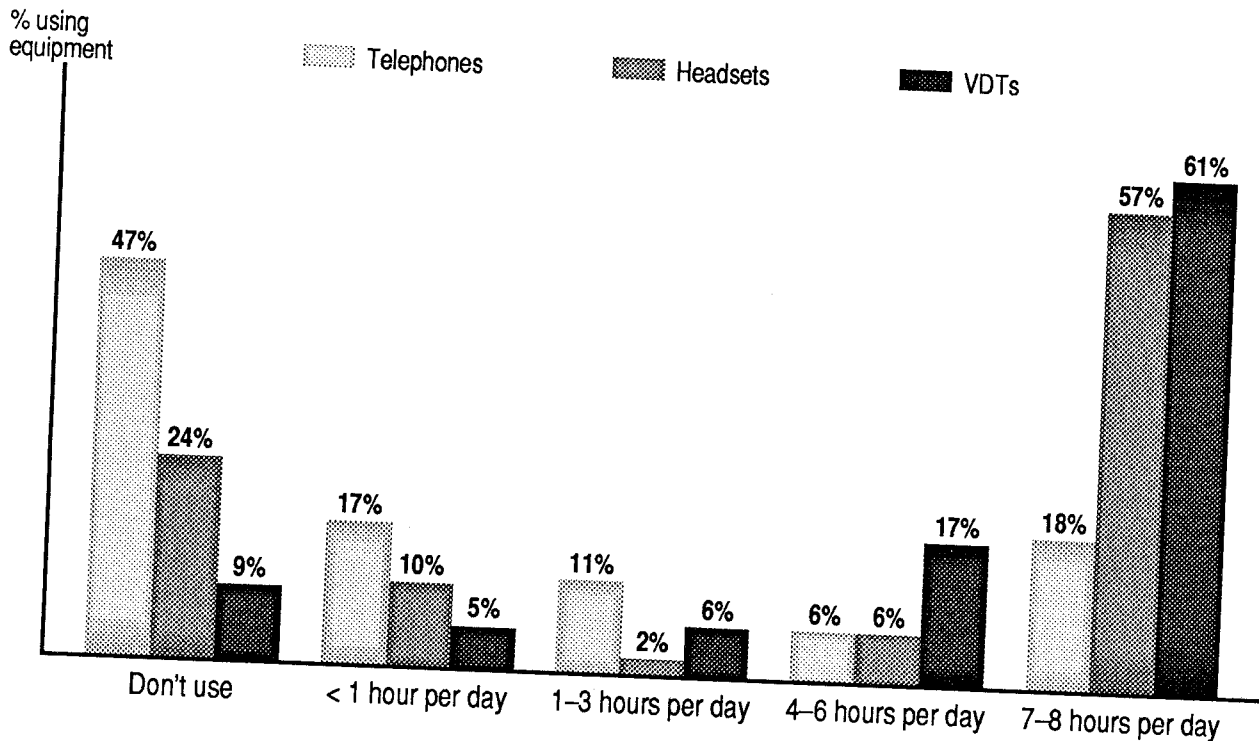
Listed below are some of the jobs which are most common among survey respondents:

Accounting/Billing Clerk
 Claims Representative
 Computer Programmer
 Customer Service Representative
 Data Entry Operator
 Mail Sorters

Sales Representative (Phone sales)
 Secretary/Administrative Assistant
 Service Order Clerk
 Social Worker
 Telephone Operator
 Word Processor

Over 60 job titles in all were listed on the questionnaires.

Most respondents either use a VDT or are on the phone—usually with headsets—for the majority of their work day.

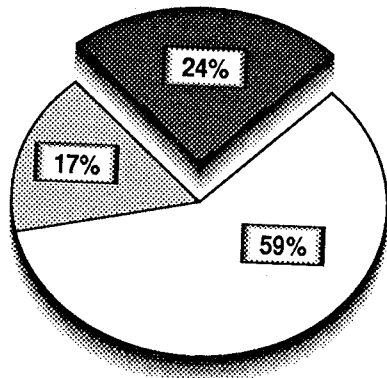


The remaining few work more than an average of 8 hours/day on the VDT or phones.

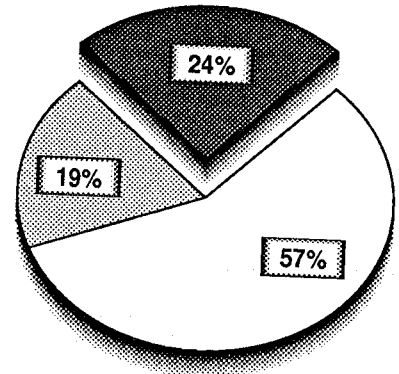
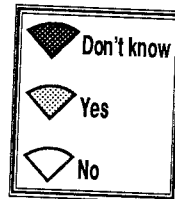
57% are at the VDT and using headsets for their full work day.

The information described below is primarily collected through **telephone call accounting**.

Number of personal calls



Who you are calling



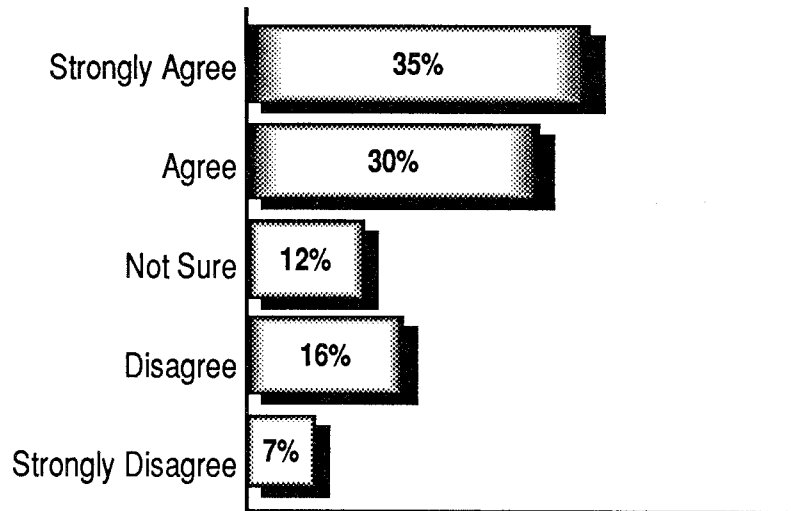
The third form of electronic monitoring, **service observation**, is a supervisory tool used to observe an employee's tone of voice and content of information being given. (It may also be the case that service observation is occasionally used to monitor who you are calling).

Better Service?

Computer monitoring often goes hand in hand with an emphasis on quantity and speed. Employees report that the emphasis on quantity means that quality suffers.

"I can't do a quality job because I have to work too fast."

65% agree.

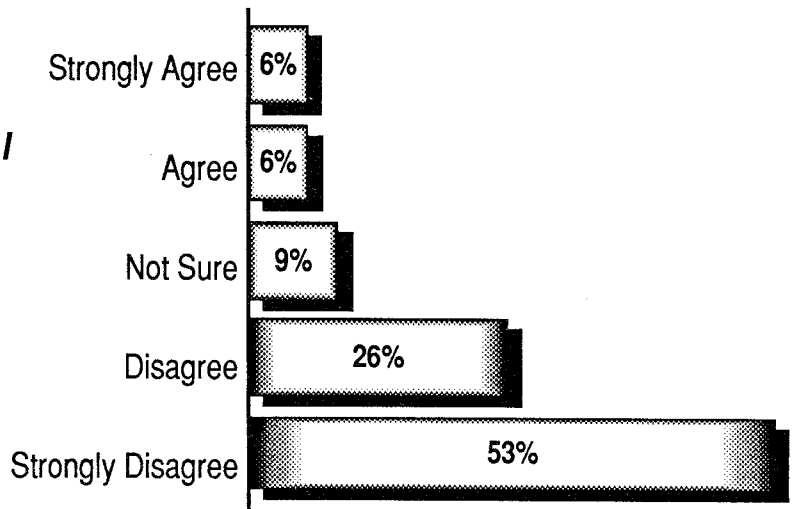


A full 71% of those for whom monitoring is the *main basis* of evaluation say they can't do a quality job because they have to work too fast.

In some jobs and industries, such as insurance and data processing, computer monitoring makes it possible to pay clerical workers on a piece rate or incentive pay system (for instance, words processed per hour). Even the prospect of being paid a higher rate for higher production does not compensate for the pressure to work faster.

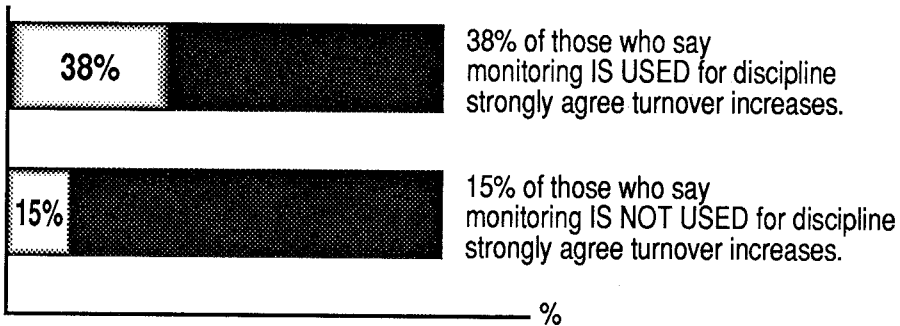
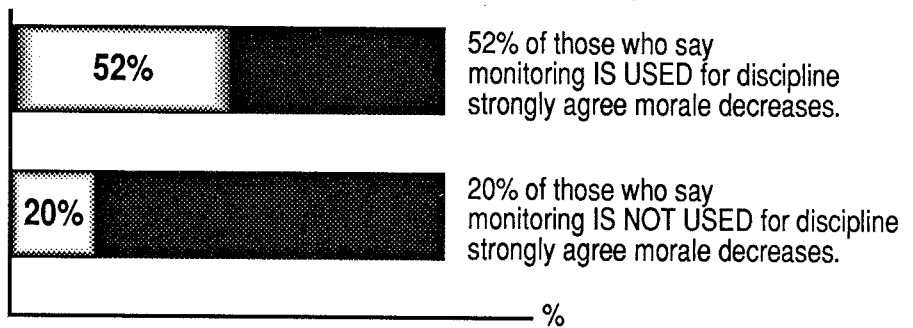
"I like knowing I'll be paid more if I work faster."

Nearly 80% disagree.



And where electronic monitoring is used as the basis for disciplinary action employees are 2 1/2 times more likely to feel strongly that...

Morale decreases...



...and turnover increases.

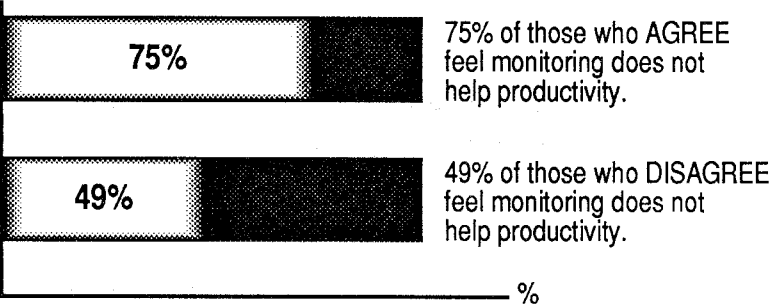
Productivity Suffers

In sum, employees say that with electronic monitoring, quality of service suffers, employee satisfaction suffers, and work is not measured fully and fairly. The consequence is that productivity suffers as well.

When Quality Suffers

Employees are 53% more likely to report that monitoring does not help productivity when they agree that ...

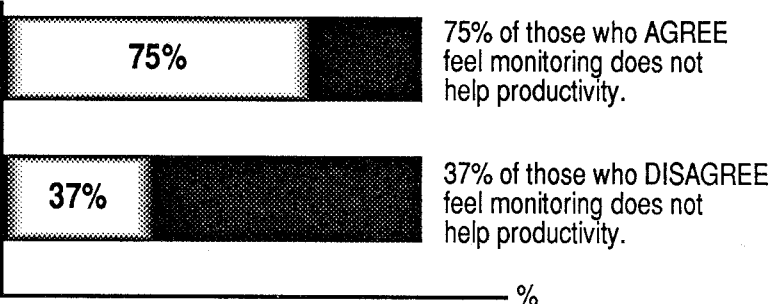
"I can't do a quality job because I have to work too fast."



When Employee Satisfaction Suffers

Employees are twice as likely to report that monitoring does not help productivity when they agree that ...

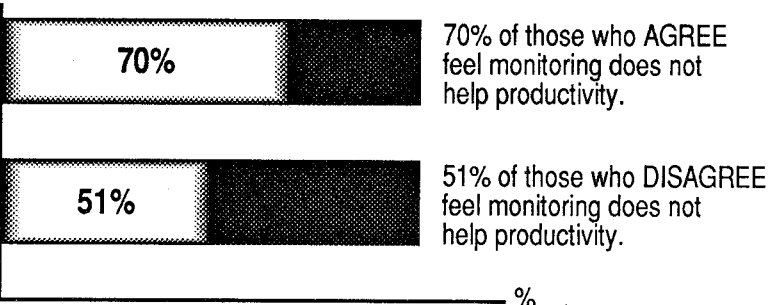
"Electronic monitoring lowers morale."



When Work is Not Measured Fairly

Employees are 37% more likely to report that productivity is not helped when they agree that ...

"Electronic monitoring does not allow for normal ups and downs."



The Right to Privacy

75% of respondents say "Electronic monitoring makes me feel like I'm being spied on."

Are they being spied on?

45% say their headsets can pick up conversations between co-workers. 21% don't know if they can.

(The mouthpiece on a headset is a microphone. Anyone listening in can hear conversations in the office, as well as phone conversations.)

Do supervisors ever use service observation to listen in on personal phone conversations?

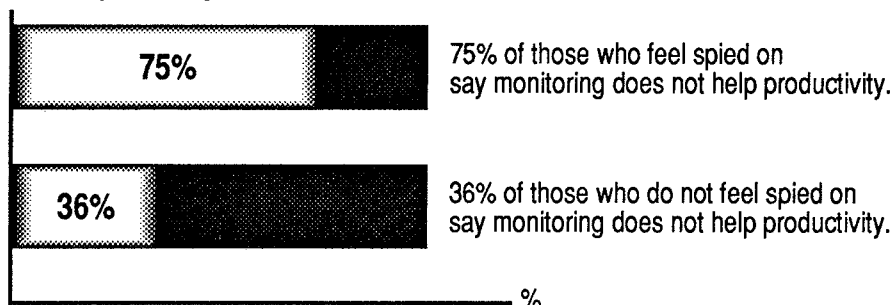
58 respondents said YES! And a full one-third do not know.

Following is a list of the companies where those 58 people work:

AT&T	Eastern Airlines
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	John Hancock Distributors
Boston Financial Data Services	NET
Boston Edison	NYNEX
Conrail	Social Security Administration
Delta Airlines	State Gov't., Merit Rating Board

Is productivity affected when employees feel like they're being spied on? Employees certainly think so.

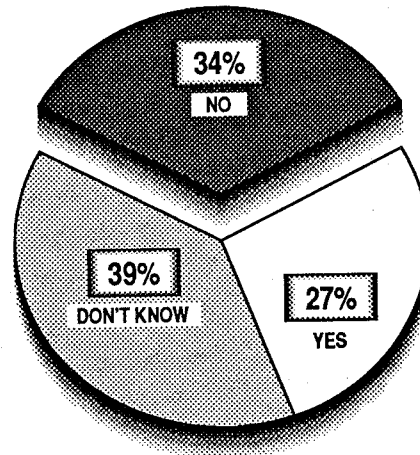
Employees are more than twice as likely to report that monitoring does not help productivity when they feel spied on.



The Right to Due Process

What if the computer statistics don't accurately reflect the circumstances under which you are working? What if a supervisor disciplines you after overhearing a personal conversation?

Is there an official procedure for employees to challenge the accuracy of information collected through monitoring?*



Where electronic monitoring is used as a basis for discipline, an employee's right to due process is at particular risk. The data below reflect responses from those employees who say monitoring is used as a basis for discipline in the companies where they work.

Where monitoring is used to discipline...

Shouldn't employees receive prior notification of monitoring?

63% did not. (And 25% of respondents do not know if monitoring is used as a basis for disciplinary action).

Shouldn't work standards take unexpected problems into account?

68% say they do not.

Shouldn't employees understand how the production standard system works?

40% do not.

*There is no substitute for a grievance procedure where an employee has the right to be represented by their union. However, charges based on monitoring pose special problems, and additional protections may be needed. Is the computer assumed to always be right? Do employees have guaranteed access to all printouts and other records from monitoring? What if by the time an evaluation based on computer statistics is made you can't remember what was going on that particular day? What rights do employees have if monitoring is used in a discriminatory manner? What if you suspect a supervisor of eavesdropping but aren't sure?

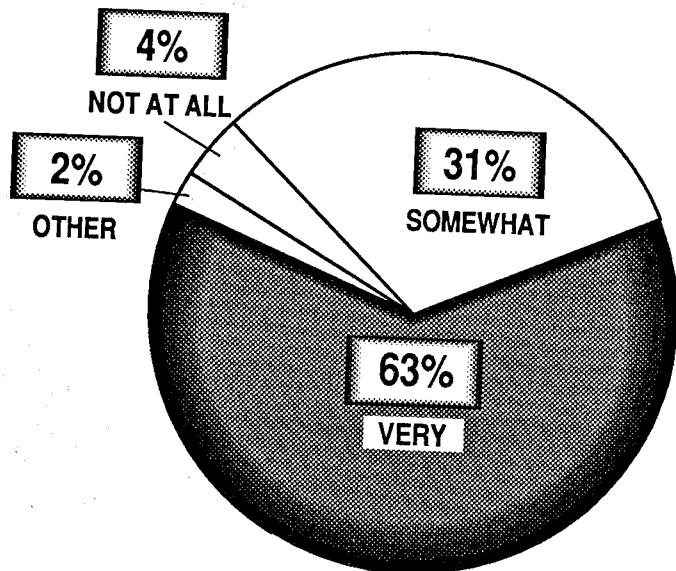
Stress

Is your job stressful?

63% of respondents say their job is very stressful.

31% say their job is somewhat stressful.

4% say their job is not at all stressful.



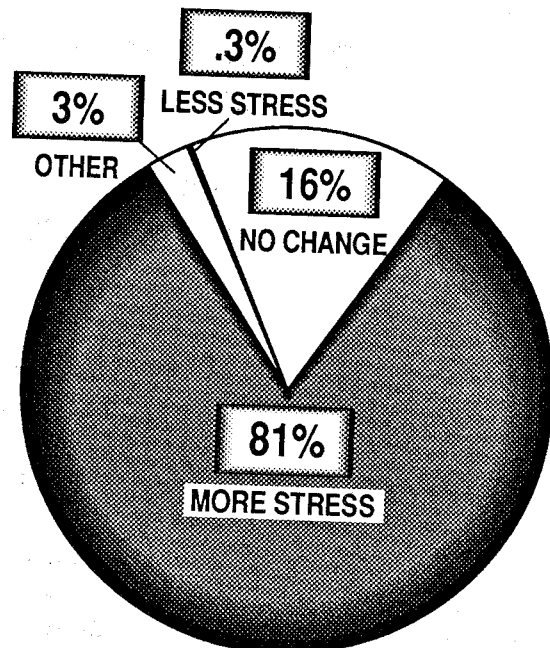
Does electronic monitoring affect stress?

81% of respondents say electronic monitoring makes their job more stressful.

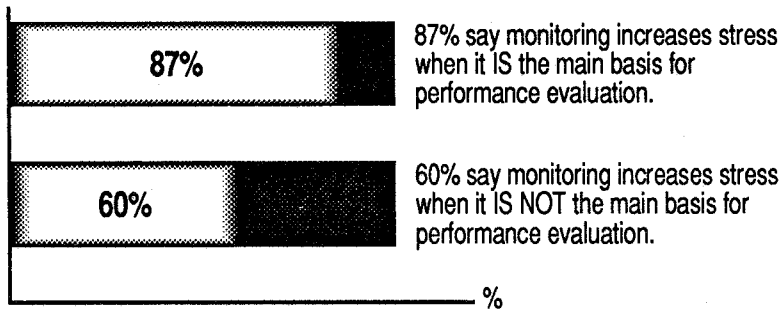
16% say there is no change in stress with or without monitoring.

Less than 1% say monitoring makes their job less stressful.

(3% wrote in their answer. Most wrote extremely stressful.)



Employees are 45% more likely to say monitoring increases stress when it is used as the main basis for performance evaluation.



And employees are 75% more likely to say monitoring increases stress when it is used as a basis for discipline.

