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Threats to mental health and workplace violence among OHS risks faced by frontline workers

A new survey conducted for the ACTU shows that mental health continues to be the fastest growing challenge to the safety of working people in their workplaces, as well as appalling rates of workplace violence experienced by frontline workers who continue to protect the community from the pandemic.

17 per cent of workers say they have experienced mental health injuries as a result of their work, with 10 per cent saying they were regularly bullied.

The picture the data paints of our frontline healthcare workforce is shocking. 56 per cent of healthcare workers say that understaffing in their workplace causes overwork, leading to stress. 30 per cent of workers say they skip entitled meal or rest breaks, the highest in any industry.

47 per cent of healthcare workers say they or their colleagues have been exposed to violence or threats of violence in the workplace. 76 per cent of healthcare workers say they or their colleagues experience traumatic events, distressing situations or aggressive clients at least some of the time, the most of any industry.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“This research shows Australian workers – but especially those in frontline healthcare – under immense pressure, dealing with significant levels of mental ill-health and shocking rates of violence in the workplace.

“Frontline workers who have carried our country through the pandemic should be able to rely on a safe workplace and robust OHS policies which protect their mental and physical health.

“The pandemic has brought into sharp focus how important it is that all working people are safe in their workplace. But Australian workers face a multitude of risks beyond the threat of COVID-19.

“The Morrison Government can and must do more to ensure that Australian workers do not suffer injuries or experience trauma as a result of their work. Everyone deserves to come home safe.”

Media contact: Kleo Cruse 0433 021 999