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Repetitive, simplistic work fuels turnover at call centres: study

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Canadian call centres average employee turnover of nearly one-third of their staff each year, but the rate varies greatly, depending on what types of work individuals do, according to a new study.

On average, someone working in a Canadian call centre will spend just 5.5 minutes per call and handle about 100 calls per day, according to Ann Frost of Western University's Richard Ivey School of Business.

Repetitive jobs that are closely monitored and allow very little judgement on the part of the employee have turnover rates of 36 per cent, according to Canadian findings included in a Global Call Center Report that looked at operations in 17 countries.

That turnover rate slides to nine per cent for "high quality" jobs --which are defined as more complex, such as taking insurance claims -- that allow the worker more discretion with less monitoring, the study found.

Ms. Frost, co-author of the Canadian report, says Canada's growing call-centre industry is an important source of jobs that shouldn't be dismissed as a dead-end career.

Call centres operated by banks, for example, are often the first step for employees who may be promoted to other areas in the company if they perform well in their entry job, she said in a statement.

Agents earn an average of nearly \$31,500 annually, with somewhat higher rates in in-house call centres and lower pay at outsourcing centres, according to the study.

The 20 per cent of Canadian call centres that are unionized have pay rates that are significantly higher than non-union centres, the report said, adding that Canada's rate of unionized centres is lower than the global average.

Ms. Frost co-authored the Canadian report with Danielle van Jaarsveld of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business.

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