



Amazon: What's it like where you work?



This report presents the key findings from Wave 1 and 2 of the Amazon Warehouse Employee survey, led by Amazon Associates from the BHX1 warehouse using the Organise Platform.

Wave 1 of the survey was carried out in December 2017 - January 2018 (Amazon's peak period), and Wave 2 was carried out in February - March 2018. Wave 1 consisted of 139 Amazon warehouse employees across England, and Wave 2 is a survey of a further 102 Amazon warehouse employees. In total 105 of the respondents are from the BHX1 warehouse.

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Executive Summary:

In Wave 1, stories came to light of forced standing through 10-hour shifts, timed bathroom breaks and abusive management at Amazon. But the thing that came up again and again was the impact of high (and ever increasing) targets. Unreasonable targets meant that people are constantly working in fear with the threat of being fired if they fell behind.

Many of these problems have been around for years, but warehouse employees had never had the tools to communicate without fear and learn about what their co-workers wanted to change. Once the workers came together on the Organise platform, dozens of them decided to take action and it lit a spark. Now, over 500 employees (and growing!) across the country are demanding fairer targets at work through a petition.

As more and more Amazon workers team up, they can speak up, recognise what change needs to happen for fair, secure work and make it happen. Amazon is a data-driven company, this data should be the start of a full dialogue with warehouse employees at every level, to understand the negative impact of their high targets on the health and long-term productivity of their employees.

Note: Quotes have not been edited and appear as written by the worker.

In Wave 2, employees shared more quantitative data on their experiences. This supports the trends we saw in Wave 1:

- “[Targets] have increased dramatically. I do not drink water because I do not have time to go to the toilet.”
 - In fact, 74% of employees avoid using the toilet for fear of missing their target and receiving a warning point.
- “[The targets] are still being increased every few months with disregard to the fact that some employees might not be able to keep the pace or what kind of long term effect they can have on health”
 - 55% of employees have suffered from depression since working at Amazon.
- “Everyone fear for their jobs. Honestly I never knew this is how this company is I will never have left my previous job. Amazon fulfilment centre is the most terrify place to work.”
 - 57% have been ‘a lot more anxious’ since starting as an Amazon employee
 - 81% of Amazon employees would not apply for a job there again
- “I got points being ill in pregnancy”

- 55% of employees reported receiving points or warnings that they felt were unfair. Another employee said: “from their [Amazon’s] point of view, we don’t have the right to be ill.”

About Organise

Organise is an online community of people working to help every person in the UK get a fair deal at work. Anyone can start a campaign for free on Organise using our platform, and our staff and volunteers will help you every step of the way.

Through the Organise platform, as an employee, you can collect data about the problems you and your colleagues face. As well as ideas on how to fix them. The platform allows people to be anonymous, giving staff the security to share their experiences honestly. You can analyse and package the results to take to the company leadership or potentially the press.

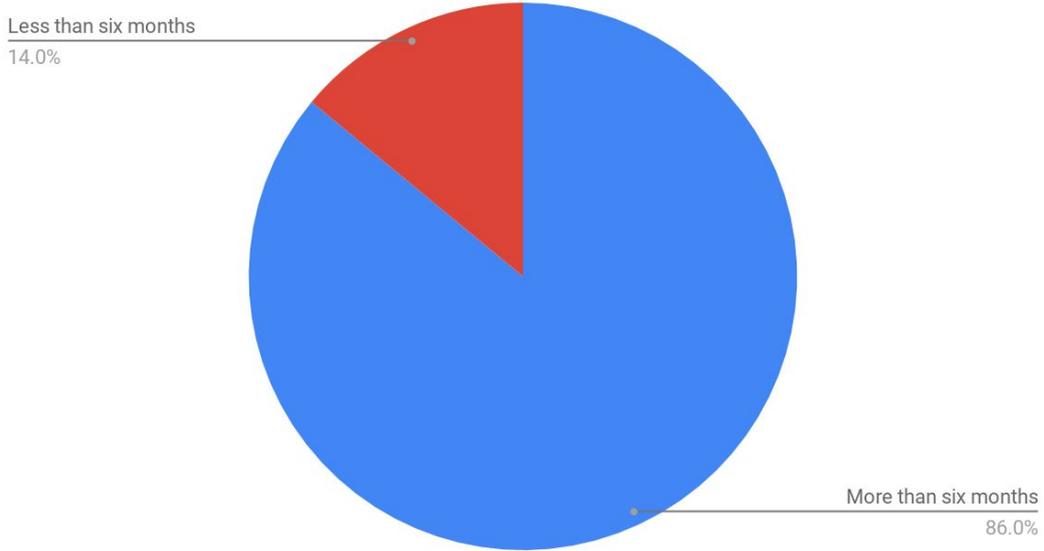
People taking part in the surveys and petitions join the Organise community, giving employees the safety in numbers to push for change and a safety net if they face any challenges. We’re helping companies listen to their workforce, increasing their retention of talent and creating a better workplace for everyone.

Organise members run dozens of workplace specific campaigns as well as big national campaigns. There are now over 20,000 of us taking action with Organise.

February - March 2018: Wave 2 results

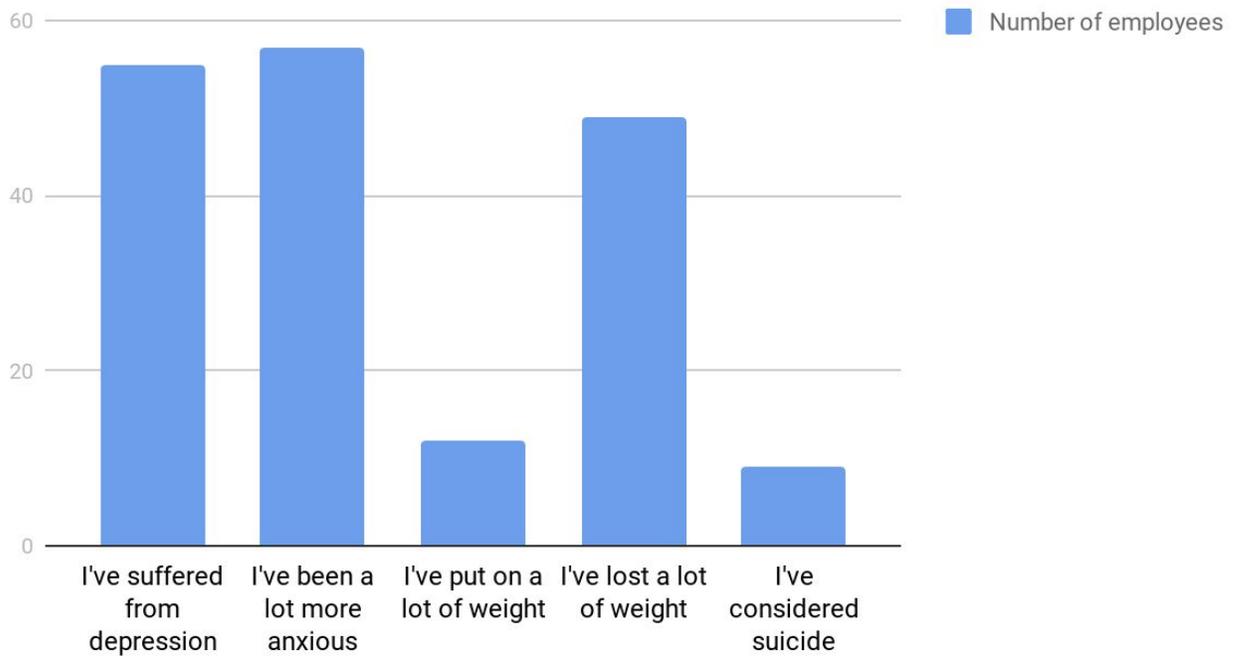
How long have you worked at Amazon?

How long have you worked at Amazon?



How has your health changed since working at Amazon?

How has your health changed since working at Amazon?



How have your targets changed recently?

73% of BHX1 employees have seen an increase in targets. Here is how they describe the changes in targets at the BHX1 warehouse:

"[Targets] have increased dramatically. **I do not drink water** because I do not have time to go to the toilet."

"From 60-70 units per hour on prep at 110-120 per hour that including alcohol pack of six witch it's really havy, boxing, bubble rap and from 250/300 per hour at 400 and more on receive. that's it's on my department which is Inbound. **It's sad and stressful because always I hit my targets before now not anymore waiting to be fired as well because of that.** Less work on the line, targets higher and how many back of six alcohol which is a hard process because you need to billd the box and what it's coming in the middle of the bottles and each one is 6-7 litre...my question is how many can you do/lift to hit your insane target... **my back is hurting but still I couldn't done enough for them.** Just sad!" - A employee who is also a carer

"My targets are same, I'm doing more than 100%, but I really need to work, if i stop 5 min or **I'm going to the toilet my performance is going down** (this doesn't stop me anyway , if I need to go to the toilet I'm going , not just in breaks) but all time I have more than 100%... I don't know how they are thinking , there are working older associates , and they really can't do more. They should drop off with 15%"

"A few weeks ago they increased the target by 5%. **Since they increased the target it became more impossible to hit the target.**"

"**They couldn't provide enough work to can reach my target.** 4 hours I didn't work at all and they calculate my productivity including this 4h of out off work. **So my feedback was negative** for first time in 3 years. They should exclude the out off work times from our feedback "

Quotes from workers in other warehouses around the country, about how their targets have changed:

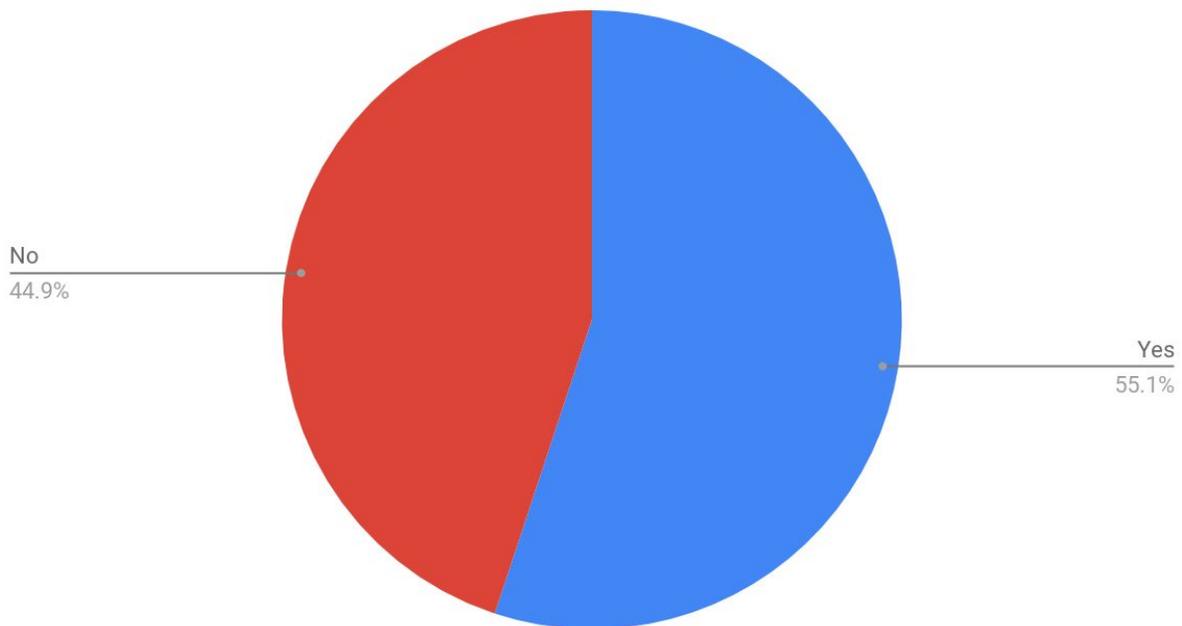
"About 1.5 year ago I use to work on Packing and I was doing my target all the time. 2 months ago, during the pick time **we use to be send regularly on packing because they where short of people.** That is when I use to have problems achieving my targets. After receiving negative feedback for productivity I ask my manager what is happening? **He said that the targets go up with 20% so basically if before I use to do 100% now I was doing just 80%.** He try to speak with Operation Managers and change the targets, especially for people like me, coming from different departments but it seems that was not possible." - An employee from LTN2

“[Targets increased] Ever so slightly but still unobtainable unless your super human / robot” - An employee from the Manchester MAN2 warehouse

Have you ever got a point for being ill that you thought was unfair?

Amazon uses a point system to keep track of infractions. If an employee gets a certain number of points, they're out of a job. Points are also referred to as 'warnings' or 'strikes' by employees.

Have you ever got a point for being ill that you thought was unfair?



Here are some cases of what happened to employees at BHX1:

“I got points being ill in pregnancy” - A new mum who has been working there for over 6 months

“I was ill and unable to come in, and was spoken to like dirt upon return.”

“I felt very tired, irritated, fatigued, **i couldn't eat and sleep properly because of the physical tiredness** and i got to a point when i was feeling very dizzy and weakened all the time during the Peak time when we had 55 hours compulsory. I think is unfair because we should have the opportunity to chose if we want/can work all those hours.”

"I turned up for my shift even though I felt like shit, managed 2 hours then I just could not do anymore. Told my supervisor and was signed off sick, I had a gastric bug (sickness and diarrhoea, very bad) saw my doc' Got a sick note with an explanation, but still got a strike."

"Bassicaly of you're feeling ill and you're leaving work or not comming in you're Gonna be penalised and you will have a meeting with HR to give explanation about your absence. Meetings after meetings .. **from their point of view we don't have the right to be ill.**" - A parent from BHX1

"I think if you physically feel not very well and they see it, they should not give you point for this. I had a meeting for being ill with presented sick note."

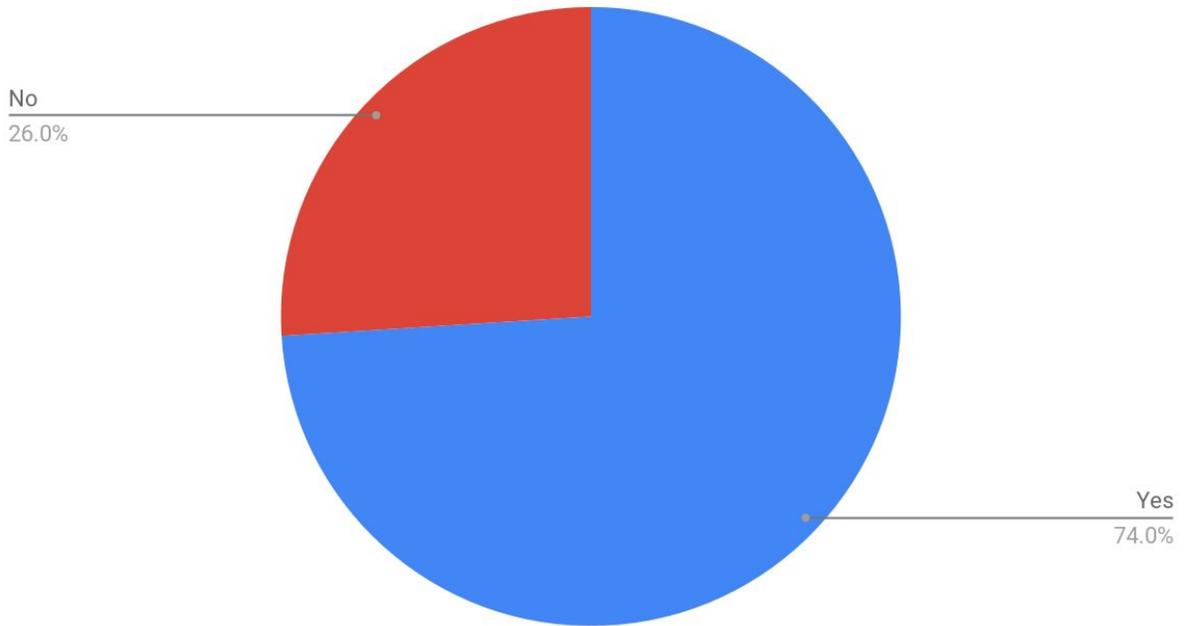
Other cases from around the country:

"I had a **fit at work and was taken to hospital. The next day someone rung me and asked why I was not in work I explained to them but it was still marked no call no show**" - An employee at MAN2

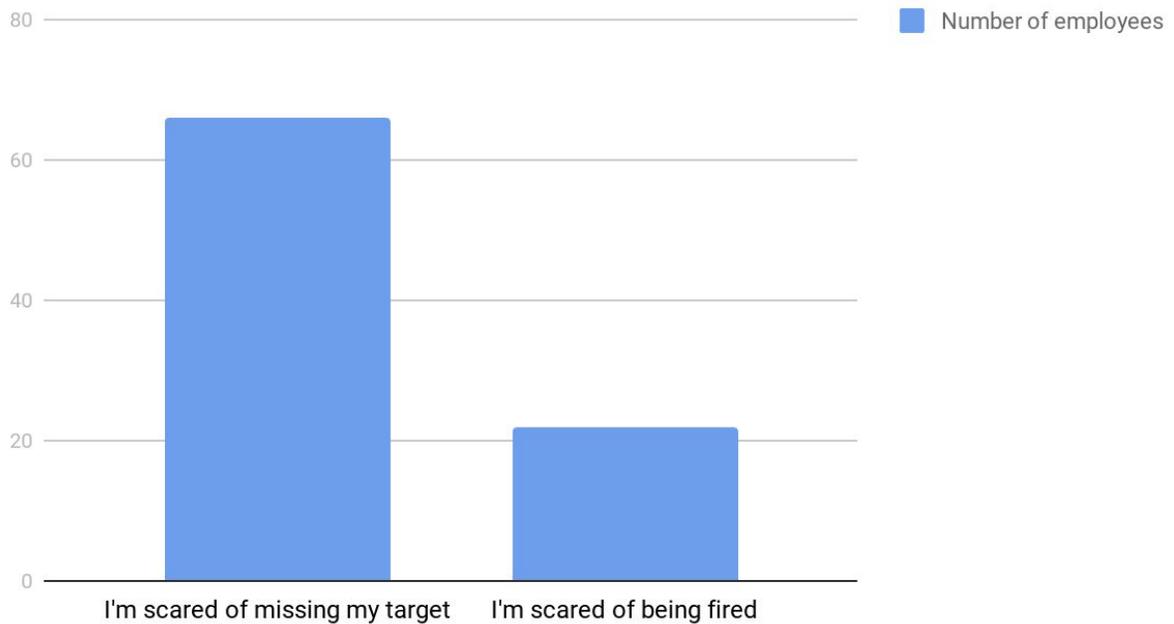
"I had a few days booked off and approved for my surgery .. my shifts are wed to sat ... got told I had to have a meeting with my manager because somehow they had my shifts was Tuesday to Friday ? My shifts have never been anything but wed to sat !!! They said why have I not been turning up for work on Tuesdays and was going to be receiving a written warning for this ... Wouldn't listen even when my manager had dealt with it !! So got points for that and told they would stay on my record for their cock up?? Not impressed !!! I have done nothing wrong" - An employee at MAN2

Do you ever avoid going to the toilet at work?

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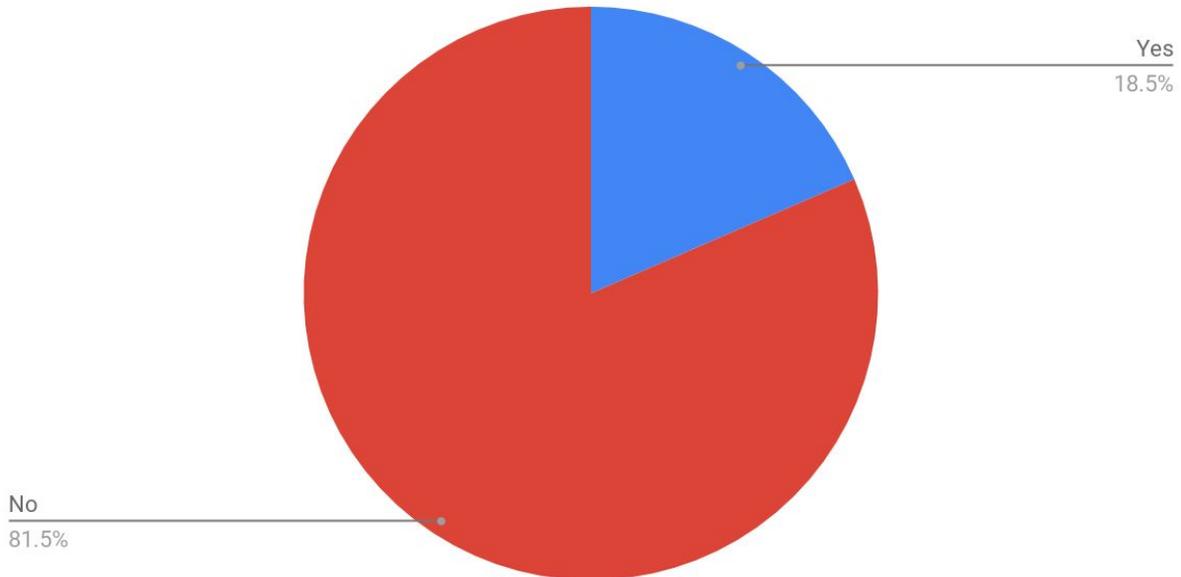


Why do you avoid going to the toilet on your shift?



Now that you know what working at Amazon is like, would you apply for a job there again?

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“My target was good from October till January in one department that I was assigned to work but they change my department and my target has been low since then and have had a formal warning this week because of that and after this warning another warning leads to dismissal. We were all treated like a robot. **Everyone fear for their jobs. Honestly I never knew this is how this company is I will never have left my previous job. Amazon fulfilment centre is the most terrify place to work.**” - Amazon employee at LCY2

Here’s what some BHX1 employees said when asked why they wouldn’t apply for a job at Amazon again:

“Since I’m pregnant i realised more. And even if im pregnant they don’t care, they say i still have to hit my target, when I actually am 6 months pregnant. So why would I go there again when I can’t wait to dismiss? There is no fun, no joy of working in that place. Sometimes is worse than a prison.”

“I don't think this is a good work place. You don't feel valued at all. For me this place looks more like a school yard where nothing is serious apart from the rates [targets]. That's the only thing managers care for.”

“I worked very hard every day to fight for the target and for the best results sometimes gave up the break and going to the toilet because of fear of my target. Which in return I received a dismissal from work.

“Workers treated as a slave, robots. No respect, no rights. No work conditions, dirty or broken toilets, always could water, no toilets on levels except ground floor. Not enough space in canteen, not food enough for different breaktimes. Not respecting health and safety and push workers to work fast and to use damaged carts or trolley which in time they broken our back and legs”

December 2017 - January 2018: Wave 1 results

What are breaks usually like in the BHX1 warehouse?

“You have 3 breaks in a day. 1 unpaid (30 minutes) , and two 15 minute breaks which are paid. Before the 30 min break u have 3 minutes walking time from ur station to get to the canteen and 3 minutes to come back.

But with the 15 minutes break is different, because is 15 mins from scan to scan, which means 3-4 minutes walking time when u go and another 3 when u come back. But sometimes u are more far from ur location so u have to walk more. But it's usually about 9 minutes left for u.”

“2 X 15 mins break, which is actually less as it takes about 6 mins to walk to canteen from where I work in FC and another 6 to get back. They have to be quick otherwise you will have conduct warning.”

“Breaks are usually sad, we are trying to make the most of it but nobody is truly happy, you see people struggling to come with the demanding environment, soar back, feet, hands , headaches.”

What are the targets like in the BHX1 warehouse?

“They just increased the targets (by almost 200%) - they want to get rid of many permanent workers and temp ones at the end of december.” - employee for over three years

“Targets are twice as much as they were before, people give their all and by that I mean even their lives. Several people died in BHX1, and hundreds more collapsed during work.” - employee for over 3 years in six departments.

“The target grows every year. I do not have two more legs yet to make the 100% to pick, where you actually need to run and go to the toilet just during the break. Packing 120 products per hour is terribly heavy. You have to pack two products per minute. You do not have time to drink water because you go to the toilet after every evening sends messages to the scanner with the target and tells you to hurry. Informs us 20 minutes before the break that we need to take the break later. They're gonna make us collect the garbage from the shelves.” - employee for 18 months

Other warehouse:

“For picking, the target is around 100 units per hour which means we have to pick 100 units within 60 minutes from anywhere across one floor of the Fulfilment Centre. This for normal days. And during peak time its 120 to 140 units per hour, which is near on impossible.

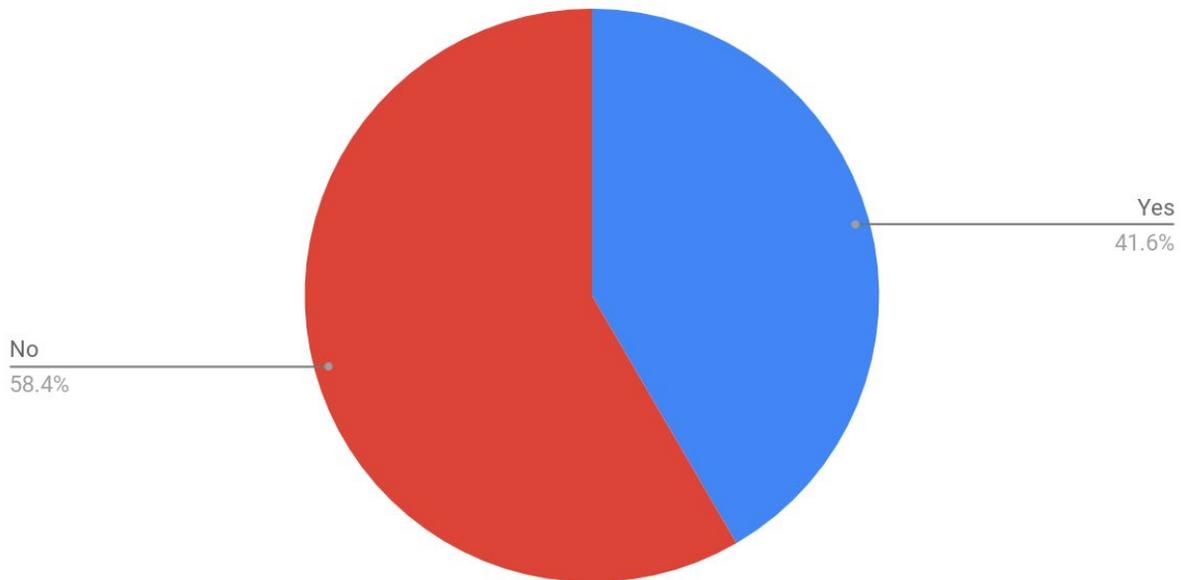
During these tasks if any printing machine or tape machine stops working it will affect your ability to hit the target. Amazon may say these short gaps won't affect your overall target, but Amazon don't understand that we're not robots, humans get tired after they've been working for hours. Only robots can work as per Amazon's concept. If any human worked like Amazon insists for more than a year, I believe that person has some supernatural power or more likely they'll get very sick.

Amazon should see Associates as human beings rather than a non stop working robot which works 10 hours flat. And they should reduce the target of 100 units per hour.”

- Hemel Hempstead LTN2

Have you ever seen bullying or harassment in your warehouse?

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Here are some of the experiences employees have around bullying or harassment:

“I was working few weeks in other city amazon fc [fulfillment centre] it was new building and I was there to train new peoples, I didn't clock in first day there, because we didn't know where is clocking machines, when I back to my home fc, and try to explain situation my manager said maybe I was in the pub that day, because he couldn't know I was at work or no (even I wasn't alone there, was other peoples from our fc and the same problem for them was fixed easy way and they can also prove I was working that day) that managers opinion and situation make me depress all winter and spring last year because amazon didn't pay for that day for me 4 months I shoul fight with them all those 4 months also I was writing complain about manager...I dont want to remember that again have a lot negative experience in amazon, but I'm still with them because of money.” - Worker at LTN2 and MAN1, Amazon employee for over 2 years

“Some of the leadership are stalking new girls hoping that if they give them a good position in the Fulfilment Centre, the leadership will get something else in exchange.” - Rugeley BHX1

“I have been told that I cant take any days or hours off because I will loose my job. I was off 3 times in 6 months and its the most we are allowed to be off for 6 months.” -

“Manager says that we work well, when the trial period ends, we find out that we work badly, we do not make a target. They are not interested in the fact that the lines are broken and that's why we do not have how to do it. They are only interested in numbers. If we do not make a target, they want to get us out of work. I do not trust them at all.”

“An associate who was in her home department (Packing) was sent home by management as she was not fit to work in another department (Picking). She did not understand English very well and was bullied into signing a piece of paper which she had no understanding of. This was very distressing and embarrassing for the associate.”

Recommendations

- Listen to the hundreds of Amazon employees who have signed the petition asking for targets to be reduced
- Give employees at every level of the warehouse the ability to confidentially report problems and challenges with changes in targets and other workplace policies
- Allow workers to bring union representatives into meetings with management
- Adapt your break policy to allow employees their full 30 minute breaks
- Give workers the ability to pause targets while they visit the bathroom
- Lower all employee targets when technical problems occur with the production line