



People at Work

What is *People at Work*?



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People at Work is a psychosocial risk assessment process. It aims to help organisations identify and manage workplace risks to the psychological health of all workers, volunteers and persons at the workplace.

Organisations that undertake People at Work will have access to:

- the People at Work *survey*, a risk assessment tool that is available to Australian organisations at no cost
- all materials required to administer and report on the People at Work survey, including a paper based survey, administration instructions, a spreadsheet for reporting, template for communication and project plans, and tips on how to optimise benefits resulting from undertaking the assessment
- additional resources to support organisations implementing a psychosocial risk management approach and evaluating the effectiveness of chosen interventions.

Why manage risks to psychological health?

In Australia, all jurisdictions are covered by work health and safety legislation, of which the general principle is that employers, so far as is reasonably practicable, are required to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, including psychological health. For further information about this, refer to your local work health and safety regulator or Safe Work Australia's [website](#).

Apart from legislative requirements, it makes good business sense to prevent or minimise risks to psychological health. Work environments that contain these risks can have significant human and financial costs.

In particular, this can lead to:

- poor worker health, both physical and psychological
- breakdown of individual and team relationships
- poor morale and erosion of worker loyalty and commitment
- reduced efficiency, productivity, and profitability
- poor public image and reputation
- increased costs associated with counselling, worker assistance, mediation
- increased absenteeism and staff turnover
- increased costs with recruitment and training of new workers
- increased workers' compensation claims and legal costs.

Will People at Work help me meet my work health and safety duties?

Employers have duties under health and safety legislation to eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, risks to worker health (see the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)). Risk management processes are used to identify and assess risks, and take action. The overall aim of the People at Work survey is to help employers understand risk in their organisations through the identification of high levels of psychosocial hazards and factors that may not be effectively managed, and to understand the potential implications for work psychological wellbeing. This information then

assists the risk management process for psychosocial hazards and factors in the workplace by identifying hazards and assessing potential consequences and the likelihood of these occurring.

What does the People at Work survey measure?

The People at Work survey is based on a comprehensive review of the job demands and job resources that have been studied in the occupational health literature. High levels of job demands and low levels of job resources increase the risk of psychological harm, and include:

Job Demands

Role overload
Role ambiguity
Role conflict
Cognitive demand
Emotional demand
Group task conflict
Group relationship conflict

Job Resources

Job control
Supervisor support
Co-worker support
Praise and recognition
Procedural justice
Change consultation

In addition to measuring these psychosocial hazards and factors, the People at Work survey also considers exposure to workplace bullying using the agreed upon national definition. Experiences both as a target and a witness of harmful behaviour in the workplace are captured.

The remainder of measures included in the survey cover a range of outcome factors, which have been shown through extensive research underpinning this survey to be associated with the hazards listed above. The outcomes measured include:

- musculoskeletal symptoms
- job burnout
- sleep disturbances
- absenteeism
- turnover intentions
- job dissatisfaction.

What are the benefits of implementing the People at Work survey?

A key benefit of implementing the People at Work survey is that organisations have access to a free, valid and reliable assessment for determining high prevalence rates of psychosocial hazards as compared to Australian benchmarks. Resources are provided to assist organisations to understand what the results of the survey mean, and what actions can be taken to address survey results.

Additional benefits for organisations, managers, and workers include:

- a focus on reduction of work-related psychosocial risk factors and prevention of psychological injury
- communication of a clear message to workers that their organisation values their health and wellbeing
- taking positive steps towards complying with health and safety laws in relation to psychological health.

What is involved in implementing the People at Work survey?

The key steps involved in undertaking the survey are:

1. Preparing your workplace by communicating the purpose of the survey and engaging managers in supporting the process.
2. Determining your risks by having your workers complete the survey.
3. Engaging your workers in the outcomes of the survey, consulting them on proposed actions and strategies to address any hazards and risks identified.
4. Implementing actions to control the risks identified.
5. Reviewing and improving risk controls.

Because risk management is not a one-off exercise, it is recommended that organisations repeat the assessment on a regular bases (e.g. annually). This allows assessment of the effectiveness of chosen interventions.

For further information on administering the People at Work survey, please see the *People at Work Survey implementation guide*.

How long does it take to complete the People at Work survey?

The time it takes to complete the survey will depend on the individual respondent. Depending on the speed at which the individual reads and reflects on survey items, it is expected that the survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, providing there are no distractions.

Frequently asked questions

For further information about implementing the People at Work survey in your organisation, please refer to the "Survey FAQs" page.