

Books, tools and software to educate and protect employers and workers

- online culture and assessment tools
- mobile application
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Work-related stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them’.

Employees feel stress when they can’t cope with pressures and other issues placed on them. Employers should match demands to employees’ skills and knowledge. For example, employees can get stressed if they feel they don’t have the skills or time to meet tight deadlines. Providing planning, training and support can reduce pressure and bring stress levels down.

Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age or disability may all affect whether an employee can cope.

HSE developed the Management Standards which are six main areas of work design that can affect stress levels. They are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change

Benefits of managing work-related stress:

- significant cost savings
- improved worker morale
- enhanced productivity
- higher worker retention
- improved reputation
- compliance with international standards
- increased worker engagement levels
- continuous quality improvement

Learn how the HSE Stress Indicator Tool can help organisations understand, assess and manage risk.



Stress Indicator Tool

The Stress Indicator Tool helps you understand the causes of work-related stress and take action to protect your people and your organisation.

It is an online 35-question survey centred around the six key areas of work design: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.



Workers complete the survey anonymously, giving honest feedback on their experiences and perceptions of stress at work. The results can be used as part of the risk assessment process in HSE's Management Standards approach.

There is an additional set of questions, developed with the University of Hull, for people who work partly or fully from home. This covers stress, anxiety, and depression and reflects changes in working practices and technology.

Once the survey has been completed, the analysis report is generated automatically. It summarises workers' views, highlights areas for improvement, and provides recommendations, without the need for manual data entry. This ensures accurate, reliable information to support action on work-related stress.

Key benefits

- Evidence-based assessment – it is built on the HSE Management Standards, ensuring alignment with recognised best practice.
- Comprehensive insight – it helps organisations identify the root causes of work-related stress across the six areas of work design.
- Worker voice – it provides a structured and GDPR-compliant way for workers to share their views and experiences anonymously.
- Action-focused reporting – automated reports summarise results, highlight priority areas, and offer recommendations for improvement.
- Improved well-being and performance – by addressing stress factors, organisations can reduce sickness absence, increase engagement, and enhance productivity.
- Compliance support – helps employers meet their legal duty to assess and manage risks to workers' health and well-being, while also supporting accreditation to standards such as ISO 45001 and ISO 45003.
- Exclusive HSE benchmarking – results can be compared internally over time or against other organisations to track progress and benchmark performance.

Learn more: books.hse.gov.uk/stress-indicator-tool-sit

Example of the Management Standards findings

The following chart shows Sample Organisation's mean scores for each of the six domains covered by the Management Standards, against the benchmarks for the public sector. The red line indicates the 25th percentile score and the green line indicates the 75th percentile score for the comparative sample. This means that in comparison to the benchmarks, organisations scoring below the red line scored less well than 75% of organisations; Organisations scoring between the red and green line scored within the middle 50% of organisations. Scores above the green line are better than 75% of organisations.

Demands - this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to have achievable deadlines, adequate demands in relation to hours of work and systems in place to respond to individual concerns.

Control - this refers to how much say the person has in the way they do their work. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to encourage autonomy and initiative, with clear systems for employees to influence their own work and work patterns.

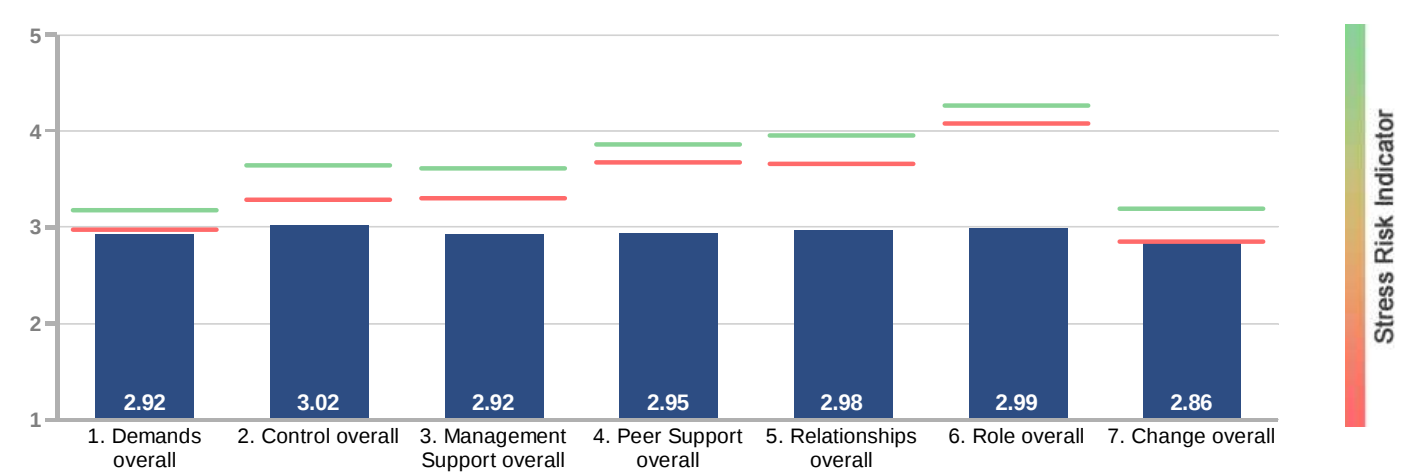
Support - this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues, and can be separated into two subdomain scores for 'Management Support' and 'Peer Support'. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to have clear systems which enable and encourage managers to support their staff and provide regular and constructive feedback. They are also likely to have helpful and compassionate teams, with systems which facilitate respect and peer support.

Relationships - this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to promote positive working and effectively deal with conflict and unacceptable behaviour.

Role - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to promote clear duties, goals and responsibilities and have systems in place to address role conflict.

Change - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation. Organisations performing well in this area are likely to have effective change management systems which ensure change is appropriately consulted, thoughtfully implemented and well-communicated.

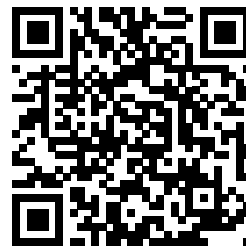
The six areas are reported as seven factors because 'Support' is broken down into two factors: Managers' Support and Peer Support. The scores range from 1 (poor) to 5 (desirable).



For further information

This catalogue highlights some of the key publications and products from Great Britain's health and safety regulator.

For a full list of official publications available and to purchase the hard-copy versions, visit: books.hse.gov.uk or download the official HSE health and safety mobile app from the iOS and Google Play stores.



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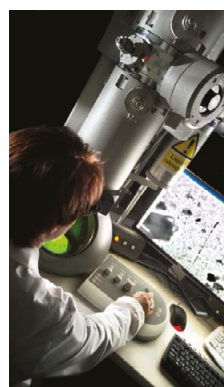
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