

Psychosocial hazards workplace risk assessment



A psychosocial risk assessment identifies the workplace factors that may pose a risk to employees' mental and social well-being. It's not a diagnostic tool, but a collaborative process to evaluate work conditions and inform improvements.

Who completes the risk assessment?

Employers are required to complete the risk assessment of psychosocial hazards at the workplace in consultation with:

- The committee at the workplace.
- The representative at the workplace.
- When there is no committee or representative, the workers at the workplace.

In any circumstance where the employer is required to assess risk or conduct a risk assessment under the Workplace Safety and Health Act or the regulations, they have the duty to make sure that the assessment is made by a competent person.

In Manitoba, a "competent person" for conducting a risk assessment under the Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulations is someone who has the necessary knowledge, training and experience to identify, evaluate and control workplace hazards and risks. This individual must be familiar with the Act, its applicable regulations and be able to make sure that work is performed safely.

Key aspects of competency:

- **Knowledge:** A competent person understands the hazards and risks associated with the specific work being assessed.
- **Training:** They have received the necessary psychosocial training to recognize, evaluate, and control these hazards and risks.
- **Experience:** They have practical experience in performing similar risk assessments and implementing control measures.
- **Familiarity with legislation:** They are knowledgeable about the relevant sections of the Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulations.
- **Ability to maintain safety:** They can make sure the work is performed in a way that does not endanger the health and safety of workers.

The risk assessment is designed to be completed in consultation with the health and safety committee members, the safety representatives or the workers and the employer at the workplace. For employers with multiple roles/positions and/or multiple sites, employers should consider doing a risk assessment for each respective role/position and/or job site, as psychosocial hazards will be different for different roles and sites.

Employers can use the psychosocial hazards in the workplace risk assessment tool as a sample risk assessment.

Please note this risk assessment tool is one of many ways to assess the workplace for psychosocial hazards. This tool could be complemented by a worker survey to evaluate hazards and tips to reduce harm to workers.

STEP 1: Identify hazards

In collaboration with workers and supervisors/managers/leaders, or in partnership with the workplace safety and health committee, go through each psychosocial factor and its respective psychosocial hazards, and the listed examples (e.g., Support, Leadership, Workload).

Read the examples provided for each psychosocial hazard and ask, “Do these conditions exist in our workplace?”

STEP 2: Evaluate the hazard

It is understood that there are no objective criteria by which this can be measured for psychosocial hazards (unlike physical hazards). The intent of these questions is to gain a better understanding of employees' perceptions about the hazards in their workplace. The committee and employer should then evaluate the answers.

For each item marked “Yes,” assess the following three elements and choose the most appropriate category for each.

Probability of harm: The likelihood of the hazard resulting in harm.

High = 3 (a high likelihood of exposure to the hazard)

Medium = 2 (Exposure to the hazard occurs occasionally, indicating a moderate likelihood of harm)

Low = 1 (Exposure to the hazard is rare or well-controlled, and there is no history of harm, indicating a minimal likelihood of harm)

Frequency: How often are workers exposed to this hazard?

Constant = 3 (daily or more)

Often = 2 (a few times per month)

Occasional = 1 (infrequently)

Nil = 0 (rare or never)

Impact: What is the potential severity of the hazard?

Catastrophic = 4 (death or major loss)

Critical = 3 (serious injury or significant disruption)

Moderate = 2 (noticeable harm or injury)

Minor = 1 (minor or localized issue)

Nil = 0 (no noticeable impact)

STEP 3: Calculate the total score

For each “Yes” item, add the scores from Probability (1–3), Frequency (0–3), and Impact (0–4). Add a cumulative total risk score for each psychosocial factor. The higher the total, the higher the priority.

STEP 4: Assessing the results

Use the completed risk assessment to guide workplace improvements and safety planning. Use the total scores to list your psychosocial factors in priority order on the accompanying psychosocial hazard priority list. The psychosocial factors with the highest totals should appear at the top of the priority table and become the first focus areas when implementing psychological safety control measures.

Consider solutions such as improving policies, training, supports, communication, workload distribution and/or leadership practices.

If the concern involves violence, trauma, or harassment, consult your human resources team or workplace safety and health professionals immediately for guidance on building appropriate controls to manage and monitor those psychosocial hazards. Consider surveying workers to get real-time assessments of worker perceptions on psychosocial hazards.

All controls should be evaluated in conjunction with the workplace safety and health committee.

Additional tips

- Complete the assessment with input from both workers and leadership for the most accurate picture.
- For employers with multiple sites and/or departments, additional assessments may be required to address specific hazards within each location or working group. It is recommended to evaluate psychosocial factors and hazards based on the departments or locations of the employer to accurately capture how psychosocial factors and hazards can vary among employees within a single employer.
- Be realistic and specific when rating hazards.
- Review and update the assessment periodically, after a major organizational change or if circumstances at a workplace change in a way that poses a risk to the safety or health of workers at the workplace.
- The most important part is acknowledging that a factor is a hazard. The scoring of the hazard is secondary.

After completing the risk assessment and each of the psychosocial hazards has been reviewed and assessed by the committee, safety representative or workers, the results can be collated into the psychosocial hazard priority list. Use the table to determine the priority of preventative measures, involving employees in the process.

Employees will be able to bring their knowledge, experience and understanding of the workplace. They will understand exactly how the work is carried out and will look at it from a different perspective than their manager or supervisor. With the prioritized list, identify if there are already existing controls for each respective risk factor that has been identified on the risk assessment tool.

Barriers for workers

Like physical hazards, certain barriers can place some workers at greater risk of psychosocial hazards. This means there is a greater likelihood or severity of harm for these workers. For example:

- Workers with limited experience in the workplace (e.g. young workers).
- Workers with barriers to understanding safety information (e.g. literacy or language).
- A perceived barrier to raising safety issues (e.g. power imbalance or stigma).
- Workers who have had previous exposure to a hazard.

The committee, safety representative or workers must take barriers into consideration when completing the risk assessment form.

Department/employee group evaluated: _____

Assessment completed by: _____

Date: _____

Workplace Safety and Health Committee review date: _____

Psychosocial factor	Psychosocial hazard	Examples	Do any of these hazards exist in your workplace?		If yes, rank the probability, frequency and impact of the factor to help prioritize how to implement control measures for the listed psychosocial hazards.			
			No	Yes	Probability What is the likelihood of the hazard resulting in harm?	Frequency How often are workers exposed to the hazard?	Impact What is the highest level of damage from the hazard?	Total Use the highest totals to guide what factors need control measures sooner.
 Psychological support	Support	Lack of support from supervisors and co-workers. Lack of access to support services. Lack of information/training to support work performance.						
		Lack of access to culturally competent support in the workplace.						
	Fear and/or stigma	Employees might fear that seeking help for psychosocial hazards will negatively impact their career progression.						
	Proficiency of managers/supervisors in psychosocial hazard management	Managers/supervisors are often poorly equipped with the skills and knowledge to address psychosocial hazards, engage in sensitive conversations and effectively guide employees towards appropriate support resources.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

Psychosocial factor	Psychosocial hazard	Examples	Do any of these hazards exist in your workplace?		If yes, rank the probability, frequency and impact of the factor to help prioritize how to implement control measures for the listed psychosocial hazards.			
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 Organizational culture	Organizational/ working group culture	Lack of definition of, or agreement on, organizational objectives.						
		Allowing conflicts to escalate without intervention or failing to help workers find solutions to workplace conflicts.						
		Inconsistent and untimely application of policies and procedures, unfair decision-making.						
		A workplace culture that does not actively acknowledge systemic barriers to inclusion at the workplace.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

 Clear leadership and expectations	Roles and expectations	Conflicting, unclear or changing reporting lines. Missing or incomplete task information. Uncertainty about, or frequent changes to job tasks and/or work standards.						
		Expectations within a role that undermine one another (being expected to provide good customer service but also not spend a long time with customers).						

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 Clear leadership and expectations (continued)	Roles and expectations (continued)	Lack of clarity about work priorities (e.g. which tasks or stakeholder relationships are most important).						
	Leadership	Lack of clear vision and objectives. Management style unsuited to the nature of the work and its demands.						
		Failing to listen or only casually listening to complaints and suggestions. Withholding information. Inconsistent and poor decision-making practices.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

 Civility and respect	Interpersonal relationships	Poor communication, including poor information sharing. Poor relationships between managers, supervisors, co-workers, clients or others that workers interact with (interpersonal conflict).						
		There is a general lack of understanding about workers' identities or acceptance of identities and the unique challenges of those workers in the workplace.						

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 <p>Civility and respect (continued)</p>	Team dynamics	Lack of trust, honesty, respect, civility and fairness. Lack of respect and consideration in interactions among workers, as well as with customers, clients and the public.						
		Subtle or overt forms of disrespect and discrimination including microaggressions, biased language and/or exclusion from decision-making processes.						
	Bullying	Repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety. This includes bullying by workers, clients, patients, visitors or others in the workplace.						
	Targeted harassment, including sexual harassment	Exposure to repeated unwanted, offensive, intimidating behaviours which relate to one or more specific characteristics of the targeted individual, including: race, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability and/or age.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

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 Psychological job fit	Job demand, control or influence	Workload management and job autonomy are not aligned to the workers within the role. Employees are excluded for decision making processes.						
	Use of skills and competency	Employee skills are underutilized for the role they are in.						
	Stress, burnout and/or trauma	There is a lack of opportunity for rest and recovery between high workload demands.						
		There are fewer applicants in the recruitment and training process, and a higher rate of turnover.						
	Lack of enjoyment and engagement, poor productivity, and/or conflict.							
Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.								

Cumulative total risk

 Growth and development	Career development	Career stagnation and uncertainty, under-promotion or over-promotion, lack of opportunity for learning and skill development.						
		Opportunities for advancement are limited for diverse workers (2SLGBTQI+ and/or BIPOC).						

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 Growth and development (continued)	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							
	Cumulative total risk							

 Recognition and reward	Unfair or inconsistent acknowledgement of employee's work	An imbalance between workers' efforts and formal or informal recognition and reward.						
	Recognition and reward	Lack of appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of workers' efforts in a fair and timely manner.						
	Ineffective performance management system	Creating a culture of fear. Focus on blame instead of improvement.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							
Cumulative total risk								

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 Involvement and influence	Supervision	Lack of communication, or constructive performance feedback and evaluation processes. Lack of fairness throughout department and/or organization.						
		Lack of encouragement, acknowledgement, and support/resources to facilitate improvements in performance.						
		Misuse of digital surveillance.						
	Culture of silence	Workers feel uncomfortable expressing concerns, challenging the status quo or seeking support.						
	Organizational change management	Lack of practical support provided to assist workers during transition periods. Prolonged or recurring restructuring.						
	Job control/ autonomy	Workers have little control over aspects of the work, including how or when the job is done. Workers have limited ability to adapt the way they work to changing or new situations. Workers have limited ability to adopt efficiencies in their work.						
Workers have tightly scripted or machine/computer-paced work. Prescriptive processes which do not allow workers to apply their skills and judgement.								

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 <p>Involvement and influence (continued)</p>	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

 <p>Workload management</p>	Workload, work pace and/or job demands	Workload over a prolonged period that is excessive or unusual in intensity.						
		High levels of time pressure or repetitive work (unreasonable deadlines or computer/machine paced work).						
		High level of repetitive work.						
	Working hours and schedule	Long, irregular or unpredictable work hours.						
		Shift work or mandated overtime. Long or unsociable hours.						
		Inflexible work schedules or unpredictable hours.						
		Continual requirements to complete work at short notice or being unable to recover.						
		Not having opportunities to use leave entitlements.						

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 Workload management (continued)	Working alone or in isolation	Work locations are far from home, family/friends, and/or usual support network.						
		Working alone in non-remote locations (one worker closing site alone or working from home).						
		Working alone in private homes (providing care or domestic roles in other people's homes).						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

 Engagement	Reduced safety compliance	Views that safety procedures are a low priority. Safety shortcuts and non-compliance exist.						
	Reactive safety and health program	Less observant or less motivated to report safety concerns. Employees feel disengaged from the safety process.						
	Social isolation in the workplace	Any worker in the workplace who feels or is made to feel isolated or a lack of belonging with their co-workers.						

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 Engagement (continued)	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

 Work/life balance	Work/life balance	Work tasks, roles, schedules or expectations that cause workers to continue working on their own time.						
		Work that impacts the workers' ability to recover, overtime and short recovery periods between shifts.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							
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 Psychological protection	Violence and aggression	Workplace incidents that involve an explicit or implicit challenge to health, safety or well-being at work. The violence can be internal, external or client-initiated.						
		Workplace incidents that involve exposure to abuse, threats or gender-based violence						
		Workplace incidents that involve verbal, physical or sexual assault.						
	Fear of reprisal	Hesitation to report or express concerns, ask questions or admit mistakes for fear of negative consequences.						
	Burnout	Employees are physically, emotionally and psychologically exhausted due to prolonged exposure to work-related stress, especially due to a lack of necessary resources, support or understanding to cope with their demands or exhaustion.						
		Workers feel the need to 'code-switch'. Workers feel the need to justify their presence in the workplace.						
		Cynicism and reduced professional efficacy overflow. High turnover or understaffing.						

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 Psychological protection (continued)	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

 Protection of physical safety	Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks	Poor workplace conditions such as lack of space, poor lighting and/or excessive noise.						
		Lack of the necessary tools, equipment or other resources to complete work tasks safely.						
		Working in extreme conditions or situations, such as very high or low temperatures, or at height or depth.						
	Other workplace hazards related to this factor that may exist but are not listed here.							

Cumulative total risk

Once the cumulative scores for each respective factor are totalled, list them in the Psychosocial Hazard Priority List.

Sources

[Mental Health - Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace](#) (2023)
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

[Psychosocial hazards](#) (2023)
Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

[Psychosocial Hazard Self Assessment](#)
Government of British Columbia

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[ISO Standard](#) (2021)

Glossary of terms

Hazards of a psychosocial nature include aspects of work organization, social factors at work, work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks.

Probability is the extent to which an event is likely to occur. The probability of harm may also be referenced as the likelihood of harm.

Psychosocial risk is a combination of the likelihood of occurrence of exposure to work-related hazards of a psychosocial nature, and the severity of injury and ill-health that can be caused by these hazards:

High: A high likelihood of exposure to the area of concern.

Medium: A medium likelihood of exposure to the area of concern.

Low: A low likelihood of exposure to the area of concern.

It is understood that there is no objective criterion by which this can be measured for psychosocial risk factors (unlike physical risk factors). The intent of this criterion is to gain a better understanding of employee and/or workplace safety and health committee member perceptions about the hazard(s) within the workplace.

Frequency is how often the hazard occurs at the workplace:

Constant: A regularly recurring factor, either daily or multiple times a day.

Often: A factor that occurs a few times per month.

Occasional: A factor that occurs at irregular or infrequent intervals.

Nil: A factor that hardly or never occurs.

Impact is the severity of the consequences if a risk event occurs:

Catastrophic: A factor that results in death or a major system loss.

Critical: A factor that results in severe injury or major system loss.

Moderate: A factor that results in moderate injury or damage.

Minor: A factor that results in minor injury or damage.

Nil: A factor that results in minimal or no injury or damage.