THE OPUS CENTRE
FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK

Beyond Compliance

White Paper: On Lead Indicators for Psychosocial Risk Management

The Opus Centre for Psychosocial Risk 2025

The Beyond Compliance White Paper draws on comprehensive data collected by the Opus Centre for Psychosocial Risk, encompassing 15,778 workers across 132 work groups within 17 organisations over the period from 2022 to 2025. The participant cohort reflects a diverse cross-section of roles and sectors, spanning health, education, finance, construction, telecommunications, logistics, electricity, gas and water supply, public administration, not-for-profit organisations, and local government. This broad representation enhances the reliability of findings and allows for meaningful insights into psychosocial risks across varied Australian workplaces.

Introduction

"Our ability to predict wind conditions is so precise, planes now wait for the perfect moment to take off, confident they'll land smoothly, saving fuel because circling runways is no longer required. In psychosocial safety, lead indicators are like the first clouds on the horizon, warning us before the storm begins. They show how small changes can grow into bigger risks if ignored. That's why acting on these early signs isn't optional—it's essential for productivity sustainability and success. Organisations must move from reactive to proactive, using evidence based tools to act early, take smart action, and build workplaces where people feel safe, supported, and ready to thrive. The time to act is when the signals start, **not wait until after the damage is done**."

Dr Tessa Bailey

CEO & Principal Psychologist,
The Opus Centre

The Challenges

Top 4 Factors with the Greatest Potential to Harm Worker Health

High Mental Demands (19%)

Excessive Emotional Demands (19%)

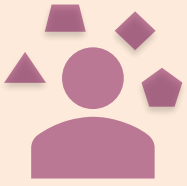
Poor Change Management (15%)

Poor Supervisor Support (13%)

Top 3 Mental Demands Impacting Worker Health

High Volume of Work (22%)

Client Interactions (25%)



Juggling Multiple Tasks (25%)

Top 3 Emotional Demands Impacting Worker Health

Interpersonal Interactions (22%)

Inappropriate Behaviour (25%)

Client/ Customer Aggression (15%)

Executive Summary

Lead indicators are proactive measures that signal potential problems before they fully manifest. In the context of workplace mental health and safety, lead indicators include metrics like employee perceptions of the work climate, completion of risk assessments, or uptake of training and wellbeing programs. These stand in contrast to lag indicators which include health outcomes such as injury claims, sickness absence or poor engagement, which only provides a signal after there is an issue. Focusing on lead indicators is crucial for psychosocial risk management because it allows organisations to intervene early and prevent psychological harm, rather than merely reacting after the damage is done. Just as traditional safety management tracks near-misses to avert accidents, modern work health and safety (WHS) practitioners monitor psychosocial conditions (like leader support, perceptions of work pressure, and team climate) to head off issues before they escalate.

For WHS systems and practitioners, this represents a strategic shift. New regulations and standards (such as ISO 45003 and national codes of practice) increasingly require employers to identify and control psychosocial hazards in a preventive manner. An Auditor-General's review in 2025 (Audit Office of NSW, 2025) underscored that failing to monitor the root causes of psychological injuries seriously undermines prevention efforts. In that case, a large public agency was tracking only high level stress claims (a lagging metric) but not analysing contributory factors like workload, vicarious trauma, or management practices. As a result, their wellbeing initiatives were missing the mark and weren't targeting the real issues. The lesson is clear: without lead indicators, psychosocial risk management is lacking the knowledge needed to create change.

Lead indicators make the intangible aspects of mental health and organisational culture tangible. For example, measuring a team's psychological safety (the comfort in speaking up about problems) or an organisation's Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) (management's commitment to mental health) provides concrete data that practitioners can track over time. By doing so, they can spot negative trends, such as

a decline in psychological safety scores, which allows an organisation to act before stress claims, errors or resignations surge. In short, lead indicators function as an early warning system for psychosocial hazards, enabling a preventative approach to protecting employees' mental health and, in turn, sustaining productivity.

Globally, over 1 billion people live with a mental health disorder, with estimates suggesting that depression and anxiety contribute to $1 trillion in lost productivity and 12 billion working days annually (WHO, 2024). Despite growing awareness, only 13% of employees feel comfortable discussing mental health at work, while 42% worry that disclosure could harm their careers. Meanwhile, in any team of five people, it is likely that at least one person has experienced clinical symptoms of a psychological disorder within the past 12 months. Did you miss it?

Recent shifts in Australian and international regulatory requirements for psychosocial risk management are a testament to the increasing need for protecting worker mental health. These latest regulations and associated guidance reflect a growing body of evidence that practical and reasonable methods to minimise exposure to psychosocial risks and reduce harm associated with psychosocial hazards are beneficial for workers, employers, and the community alike.

A recent global report found that 93% of business leaders understand that psychological safety boosts performance, reporting a return on investment of between 6-20% in their initiatives (WPO & IIRSM, 2024). However, clarity on how to apply the latest knowledge and evidence continues to be a barrier to achieving tangible outcomes.

Evidence and Research on Psychosocial Lead Indicators

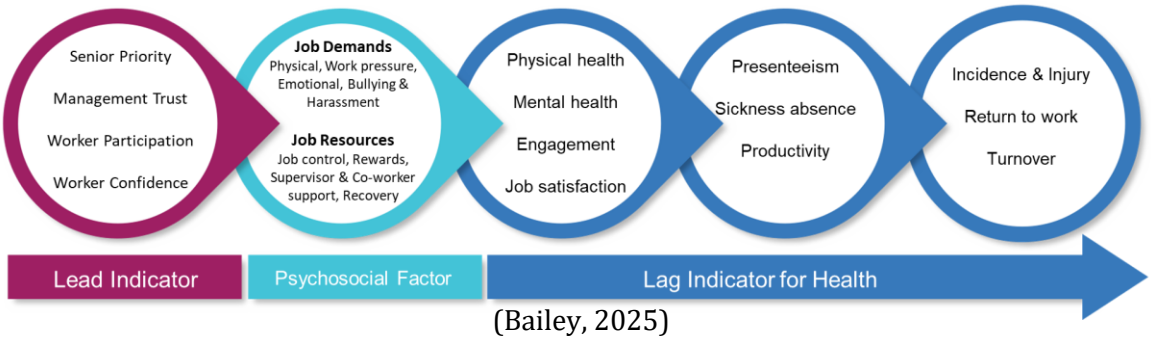
Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)

An Organisational Commitment to Mental Health

One of the most studied lead indicators is Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC). PSC is an organisation level measure defined as the shared perception of management's commitment and priority for workers' psychological health and safety (Dollard et al., 2019). In a workplace with a strong PSC, employees believe that senior leadership values their wellbeing, will address psychosocial issues, and won't sacrifice health for short term results. In a low PSC environment, the message (implicit or explicit) is that productivity trumps people and concerns about stress, workload or bullying may be dismissed by management. PSC is typically assessed via surveys (such as the PSC-12 questionnaire (Hall et al., 2010) that cover senior management support, the priority given to mental health vs. production, open communication about psychosocial issues, and worker participation in solving them.

Extensive research shows PSC to be a powerful leading indicator for a range of outcomes. Psychosocial scientists describe PSC as the "cause of the causes" of work stress, meaning it influences all the downstream factors (workload, control, support, etc.) that in turn affect employee health. A high PSC climate creates a kind of protective umbrella: when leadership genuinely prioritises mental health, employees tend to have more manageable workloads and better support. Indeed, a 2025 scoping review (Karatuna et al., 2025) found that high PSC environments consistently had lower job strain and higher job resources, whereas low PSC settings were characterised by excessive demands, poor support, and higher distress and turnover. Notably, PSC can buffer stress, for example even when work pressure is high, employees in a high PSC workplace experience fewer negative effects because management provides support and corrective action.

Perhaps most compelling, PSC has been linked to actual rates of psychological injury and illness. The 2025 scoping review references numerous studies that found direct associations between PSC and individual health outcomes or factors likely to negatively impact one's health such as emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, poor sleep, PTSD and poor well-being (Karatuna et al., 2025). Longitudinal studies likewise show that high PSC predicts lower future levels of burnout, emotional exhaustion and depression, as well as higher engagement and job satisfaction (Becher & Dollard, 2016; Idris et al., 2014; Zadow et al., 2021). In other words, if we measure PSC today, it gives a strong indication of what mental health outcomes to expect tomorrow or warning signs for potential problems ahead.



(Bailey, 2025)

From a productivity standpoint, high PSC pays off too. Research finds higher PSC is associated with better work performance and lower turnover rates (Becher & Dollard, 2016; Amoadu et al., 2023). For example, in healthcare settings, units with high PSC reported less workplace bullying and higher team morale, which translated into better patient care and fewer intentions to quit (Amoadu et al., 2025). Conversely, a low PSC climate often breeds problems like chronic absenteeism, errors, and talent loss (Becher & Dollard, 2016). In high PSC hospitality workplaces, one study noted that reducing stress and harassment through strong PSC led to increased affective commitment (employees' emotional loyalty to the organisation), which is crucial for service quality (Teo et al., 2019).


Professor Maureen Dollard, founder and Director of the PSC Global Observatory.

Measuring PSC gives senior leaders a clear, actionable metric. Many organisations now include PSC scores in their safety or HR dashboards. If a survey shows, say, that "Senior management acts quickly to correct work stress problems" is scoring poorly, that is a lead indicator of trouble signalling that without change, you may later see a rise in stress leave or a reduction in productivity. Acting on PSC results might involve visible leadership engagement (e.g. executives openly championing mental health), revising workloads or targets, and involving employees in solutions. A focus on PSC is essentially a focus on fixing systemic, upstream issues. Improvement of these domains has been shown to initiate a cascade of positive changes such as healthier team climates and fewer psychosocial hazards.

Case Study One

May Young Loh et al, (2024): The study reported a public sector agency that deliberately set out to improve their PSC scores. The Agency implemented comprehensive programs centred on the four PSC pillars: management commitment, prioritising health, open communication, and participation. This included leadership training on mental health, integrating well-being objectives into business plans, regular internal communications about stress issues, and forming joint labour-management working groups to address psychosocial risks.

Over three years the public sector organisation showed a significant increase in PSC scores. Specifically, the organisation raised PSC scores from the medium PSC range to the high PSC range. As a result of the interventions employees perceived that management was more supportive and serious about mental health than before.

Alongside this, the organisation noted benefits such as a reduction in stress related sick leave and an increase in employees seeking help via support programs (a sign of reduced stigma).

These changes occurred before any major spike in injuries or turnover, suggesting that improving the lead indicator (PSC) helped prevent those lagging outcomes. The case study illustrates that PSC is not only measurable but changeable and that implementing targeted interventions can lead to a healthier, more resilient workplace.

Workplace Culture vs. Climate

Workplace culture refers to the deeply ingrained values, beliefs, and norms that shape behaviour within an organisation over time. It is the underlying ethos that persists and influences how people think and act, often remaining stable even as individuals come and go. In contrast, workplace climate describes the current shared perceptions and experiences of employees regarding their working conditions. Much like the weather, climate is more immediate and can shift relatively quickly in response to changes in leadership, policies, or events. While culture is the foundation that guides long-term behaviour, climate reflects the present atmosphere and how employees feel about their work environment at any given moment.

Understanding both concepts is essential: culture provides the enduring context, while climate offers a snapshot of how that culture is being shaped right now. Effective psychosocial risk management requires attention to both, ensuring that positive values are not only espoused but also felt and lived by employees day to day.

Psychological Safety - Trust and Openness at the Team Level

While PSC looks at culture from the top down, psychological safety zooms in on the team level. This term, popularised by Harvard professor Amy Edmondson (Edmondson, 1999), refers to a team climate where individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks. In practical terms, people can admit mistakes, ask for help, or offer innovative ideas without fear of embarrassment or reprisal. High psychological safety means high mutual trust and respect among team members (and between staff and their immediate leader).

Psychological safety is a crucial lead indicator for team performance and wellbeing. Research over two decades has shown that teams with higher psychological safety are more effective on multiple fronts:

Error Prevention and Safety: Psychologically safe teams engage in more learning behaviours and are more likely to speak up about errors, enabling earlier detection and future prevention. A recent meta-analysis found psychological safety helps people share information better due to not feeling retribution for speaking up (Frazier et al., 2017). While some of these effects may be attributable to direct line managers, psychological safety indicated a greater likelihood of admitting errors and speaking up with ideas (Edmondson, 2002, 2003). In contrast, if people are afraid to speak up, small issues go unreported until they turn into serious incidents. Thus, psychological safety is a lead indicator of tomorrow's safety outcomes. A drop in psychological safety is a red flag that critical issues might be suppressed rather than solved.

Innovation and Problem Solving: Teams that feel safe encourage idea sharing and constructive dissent, which are the lifeblood of innovation. Studies (including Google's well-known "Project Aristotle") have found a strong correlation between psychological safety and measures of team innovation and agility. A recent meta-analysis reported psychological safety fosters creativity (Frazier et al., 2017). Therefore, measuring psychological safety gives insight into a team's capacity for learning and adapting; low scores may predict stagnation or a "yes-man" culture that hurts competitiveness.

Engagement and Retention: Individuals in a psychologically safe environment tend to be more engaged and satisfied with their jobs. A highly cited meta-analysis reported psychologically safe environments produced greater engagement, satisfaction and organisational commitment (Frazier et al., 2017). Feeling valued and heard drives people to invest more effort and form stronger commitment to the team. Findings show that psychological safety can be an important resource for employees and acts as a mediating factor in high demand workplaces particularly in women (Malinen et al., 2025). In other words, when employees feel safe, they're roughly half as likely to want to leave. This makes psychological safety a lead indicator for retention: if team safety deteriorates, voluntary turnover often follows suit (with all the associated costs of recruitment and lost productivity).

Mental Wellbeing: A threatening team atmosphere (full of blame or fear) is inherently stressful. Recent studies show psychological safety is associated with lower burnout among team members (de Lisser et al., 2024, Bahadurzada et al., 2024). Teams that encourage open communication can address workload problems or conflicts early, preventing chronic stress. A review found low PSC predicted higher levels of emotional exhaustion and job strain (Amoadu et al., 2023). By tracking psychological safety levels, organisations can detect where employees might be silently suffering and intervene before it turns into sick leave or disengagement. In short, a safe team today means higher retention and sustained team performance down the line.

Many organisations gauge psychological safety via periodic pulse surveys or as part of larger engagement surveys (with questions like "Members of my team are able to bring up problems and tough issues"). Team leaders can then receive feedback on their team's climate. If a particular team reports low psychological safety, that is a signal for targeted action: perhaps coaching the manager on accepting feedback, establishing ground rules for respectful dialogue, or in extreme cases swapping out a toxic leader. Importantly, psychological safety often boils down to leadership behaviour. Leaders who admit their own mistakes, actively invite input, and reward people for speaking up tend to cultivate higher safety on their teams. Thus, improving this lead indicator frequently involves leadership development, which is a very actionable lever.

It's worth distinguishing psychological safety from trust. Trust usually describes an individual's belief in another's reliability, while psychological safety is a shared team property about norms of interaction. Both are positive indicators, but psychological safety is broader. From a risk management view, psychological safety is ideal to track because it captures the overall climate of openness. A team might have generally high trust between certain individuals, yet still have a culture where it's not okay to question the boss. Trust alone wouldn't flag that, but a psychological safety measure would.

Early Warnings vs. Aftermath

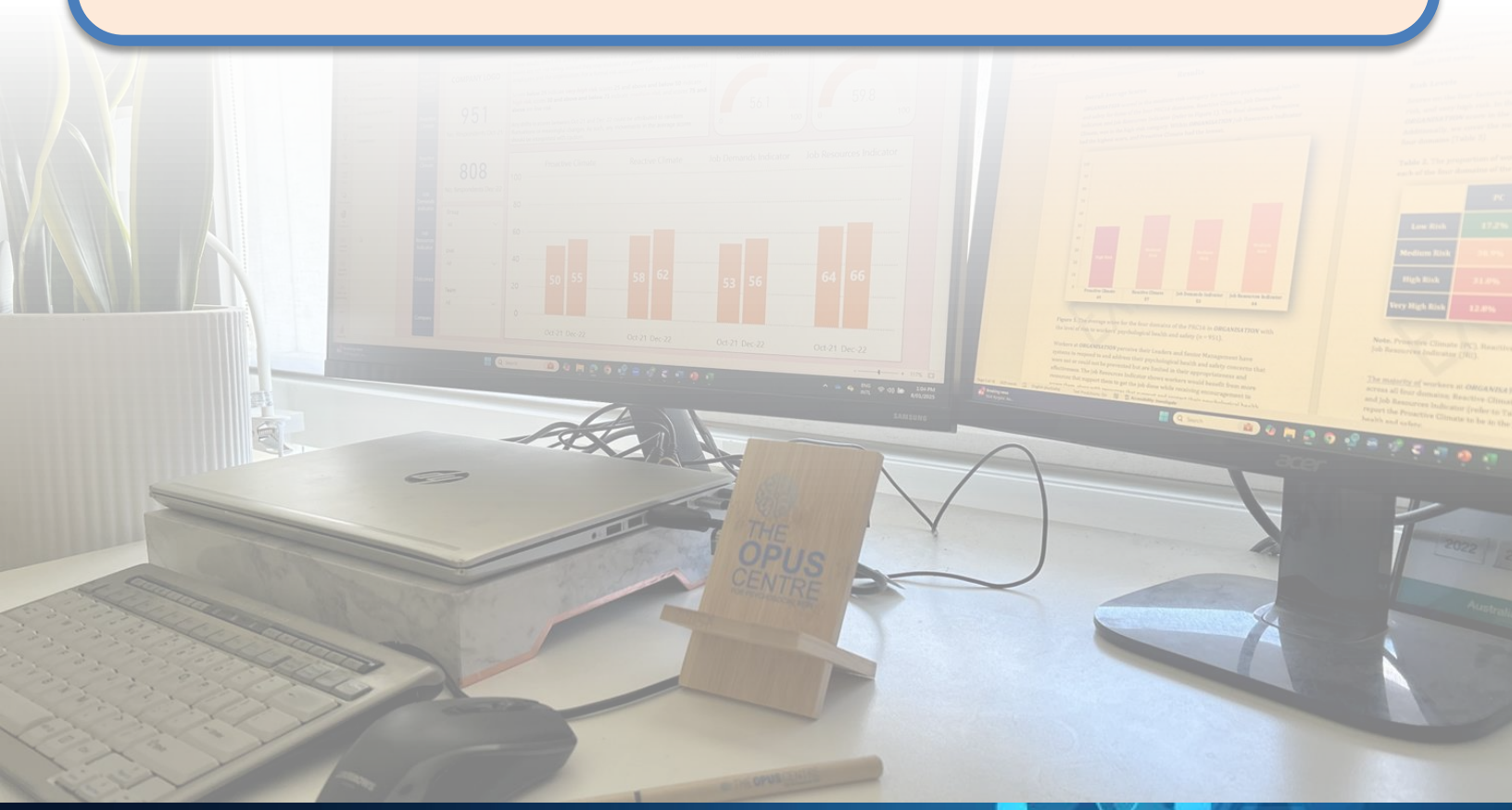
Lead indicators (e.g. stress climate scores, workload levels) serve as early warnings of risk, whereas lagging indicators (e.g. claims, burnout cases) only appear after harm occurs. Emphasising the former lets organisations fix issues before they escalate.

Part of WHS Systems

Modern WHS frameworks integrate psychosocial metrics. A 2025 audit found that lack of data on causes of mental injury hampered prevention; it recommended regularly reporting on those causal factors as part of the WHS performance reviews.

Business Benefits

Organisations with a positive psychosocial climate see tangible benefits – Higher engagement and innovation, better staff retention, and fewer absences. In essence, what's good for employees' mental health is also good for the bottom line.



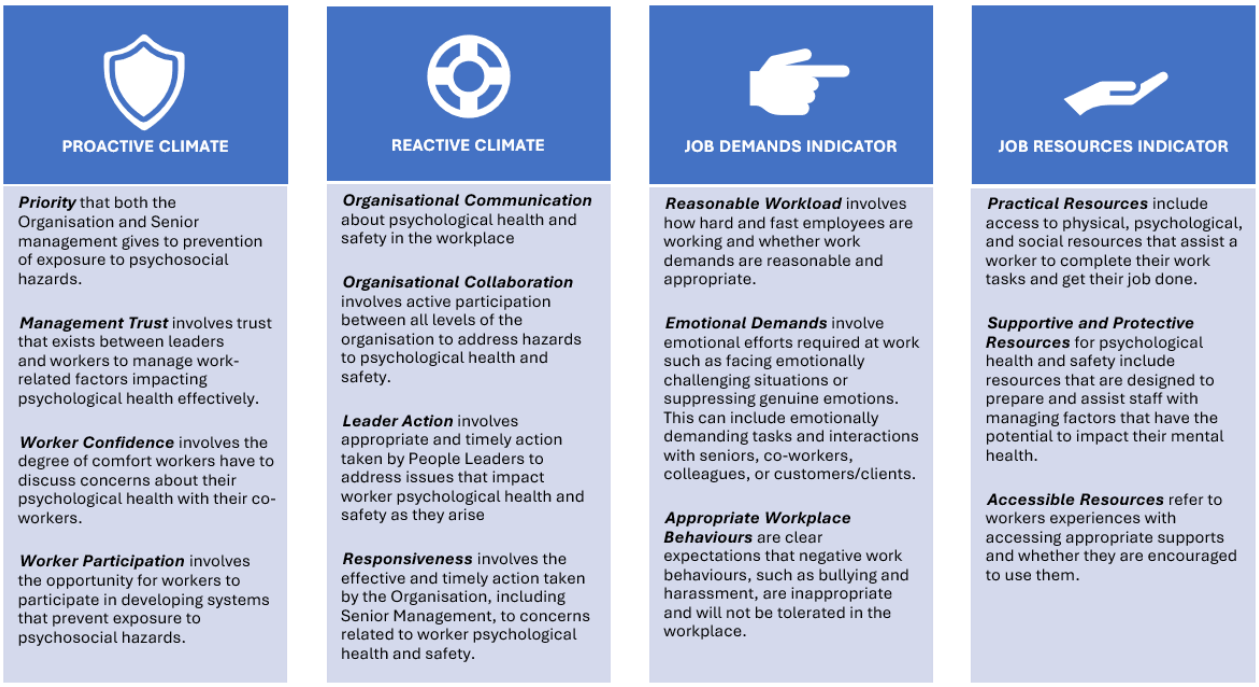
The Proactive Reactive Climate Tool

A Comprehensive Lead Indicator Approach

One innovative approach to psychosocial lead indicators is the Proactive Reactive Climate (PRC) tool, known in one form as the PRC16 survey. This is a concise, 16-item psychosocial risk assessment developed using decades of academic research and industry application.

The PRC tool stands out because it combines psychological safety and psychosocial safety climate concepts with psychosocial hazard assessments in one concise instrument. In other words, it integrates measures of the work environment's systems to prevent psychosocial hazard (the "Proactive climate") and ability to respond to minimise harm if psychosocial hazards do occur (the "Reactive Climate) with checks on specific work-related risk factors (like workload or practical resources) to provide a holistic risk profile.

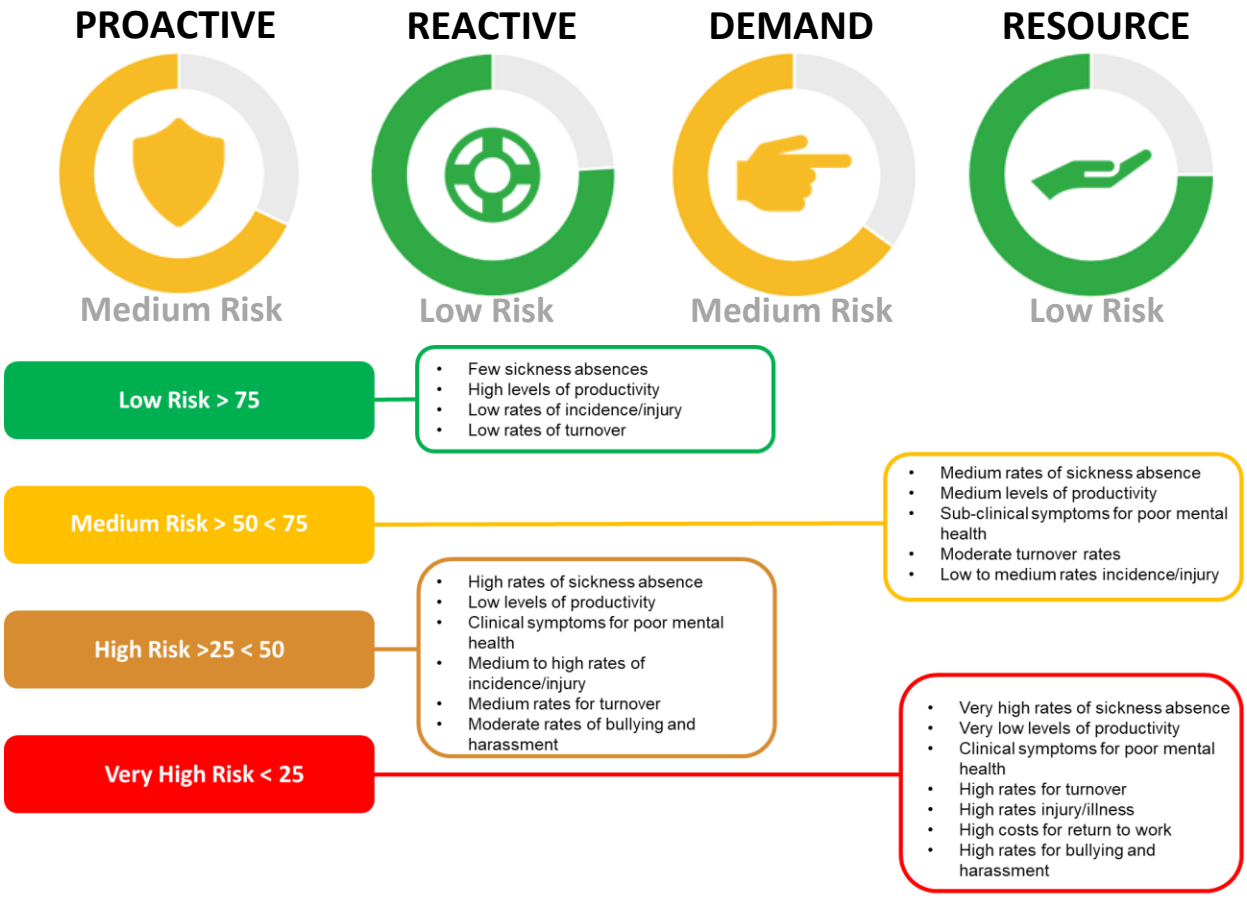
Unlike many surveys that focus on either general climate or individual stressors, the PRC tool covers four key domains that together give a comprehensive picture of psychosocial risk: Proactive Climate, Reactive Climate, Job Demands, and Job Resources.



By covering both proactive and reactive "climate" elements and the presence of psychosocial hazards (job demands/job resources), the PRC tool effectively merges the concepts of psychological safety, and psychosocial safety climate with psychosocial hazards. The proactive and reactive climate scores indicate the strengths and weaknesses of existing systems for psychological health and safety. For example, do employees trust management to keep them safe and feel confident to raise concerns? Which is akin to combining PSC and team psychological safety notions. Meanwhile, the demands and resources scores identify specific hazard areas.

This dual focus means that a PRC assessment not only tells you if there is a hazard, but also the risk of it occurring (frequency) and impact (severity) on worker health. For instance, it might reveal that a team's climate is generally positive, but they have extremely high emotional demands and insufficient support, pointing to very targeted interventions around workload pressure and recovery, rather than broad culture change. Conversely, it might show generally low proactive climate (management not seen to prioritise mental health or act in a timely manner) even if current demands appear normal, a warning sign to improve leadership behaviours before demands increase.

Crucially, the PRC tool provides a risk rating tied to psychological health outcomes. Rather than just giving raw scores, it benchmarks results against known outcome data like levels of exhaustion, depression, and distress.



This enables more accurate identification of risk level. For example, it can classify whether a score indicates low, moderate, high or very high risk to mental health, based on predicting outcomes over time.

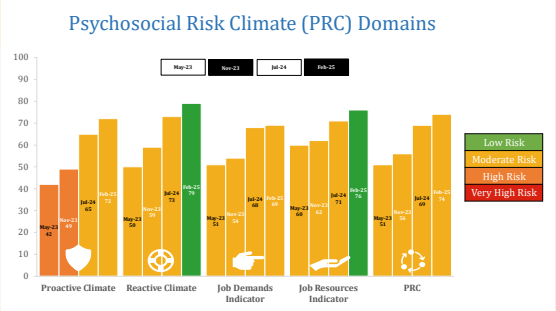
In practical terms, if an organisation scores in the high risk range on, say, Job Demands, it signifies a strong likelihood of negative health outcomes (burnout, etc.) if nothing is done. This calibrated approach helps prioritise actions for specific factors for specific groups based on their risk rating.

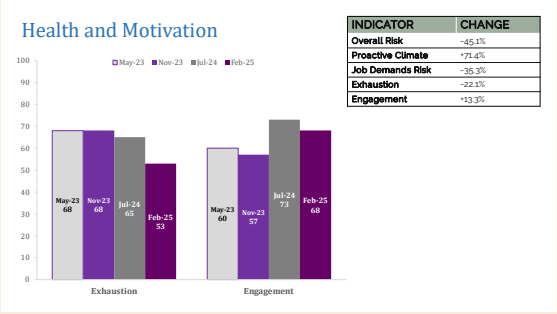
Case Study Two

A medium sized environmental services organisation, with 70 workers across nine diverse groups with minimal policies, limited training, and the absence of dedicated psychosocial safety processes. A PRC16 psychosocial risk assessment revealed low scores in senior priority, management trust, and leader action, alongside high levels of workload and emotional demand, and moderate risk for inappropriate workplace behaviors.

Remediation efforts included a one-day, face-to-face workshop with key representatives and following wider consultation the resulting action plan focused on updating policies to include psychosocial risk, integrating psychosocial topics into town hall meetings, establishing wellbeing champions, and aligning resources with workload demands.

Outcomes were substantial: a 45.1% reduction in overall risk, a 71.4% increase in proactive climate, a 35.3% decrease in job demand risk indicators, over time this led to a 22% decrease in exhaustion and 15% increase in engagement.





INDICATOR	CHANGE
Overall Risk	-45.1%
Proactive Climate	+71.4%
Job Demands Risk	-35.3%
Exhaustion	-22.1%
Engagement	+13.3%

Another benefit is that the PRC results are actionable and holistic. A typical output from a PRC assessment might highlight strengths and weaknesses across the domains. For example, one organisation's report found strengths in "Trust in leaders to manage risks" and "Workers confidence to raise concerns" (indicating a good proactive climate), as well as strong "Collaboration across levels" and "Practical resources for support".

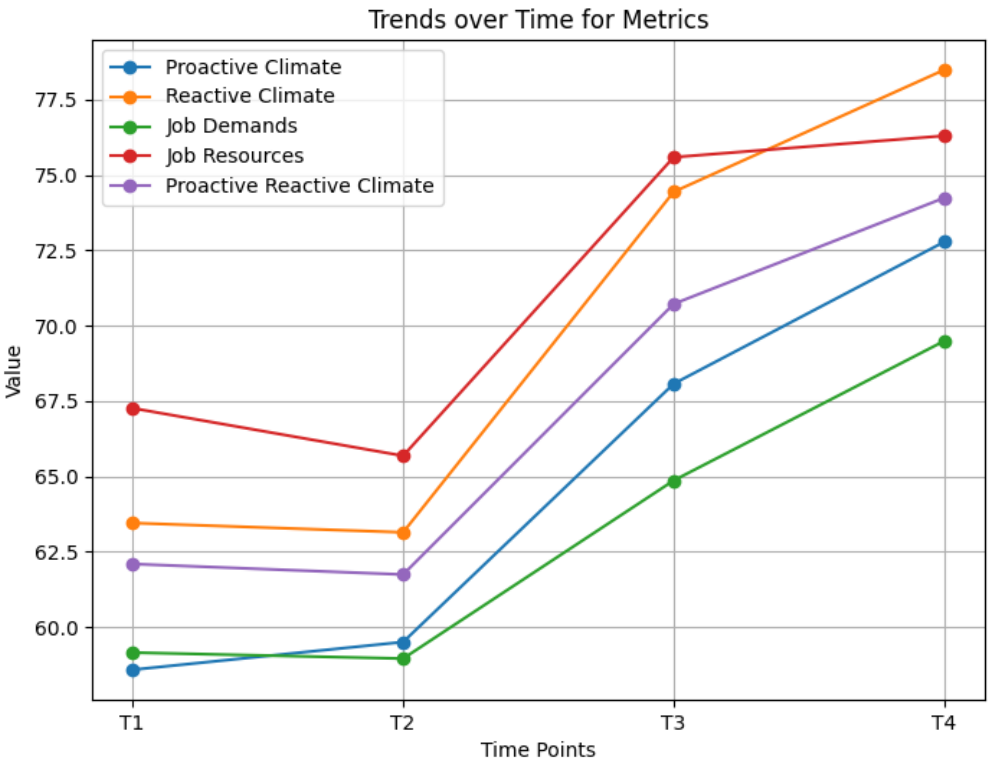
However, the lowest scoring items were "Excessive workloads" and "Emotional demands" for certain groups, alongside some concerns about "Senior management priority for prevention" and "Communication about psychological safety". With these insights, the organisation could celebrate and maintain the things going well (trust and support) while focusing controls on the hazards of workload and emotional strain, and improving top level commitment and communication. In essence, the tool provided a roadmap: it identified specific psychosocial hazards (like workload) and specific climate issues (like insufficient priority from senior management) that needed addressing.

The PRC tool was designed with real world application in mind. It is evidence-based and meets regulatory requirements for psychosocial risk assessment. For instance, UK, European and Australian regulations require that employers consult with workers to identify psychosocial hazards and implement a prevention plan. PRC fulfills this by involving employees through its survey and delivering a report with clear recommendations for a prevention plan. It speaks in plain language and can be customised to different industries, making it accessible to both workers and leaders.

Furthermore, because it's only 16 core questions, it is far less burdensome than some surveys (others often have 50–80+ items). This conciseness encourages higher response rates and the ability to repeat assessments periodically (e.g. quarterly or annually) without survey fatigue.

PRC Data Description

Data from 2021-25



The data collected by Opus researchers reveals that, at the initial assessment, participants typically report stronger results (i.e. lower risk) in the areas of Job Resources and Reactive Climate. In contrast, Proactive Climate and Job Demands indicators (such as workload pressure, emotional demands, and appropriate behaviour) tend to score lower, signifying higher risk in these domains. The second assessment point (Time 2) serves as a pivotal opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of actions implemented after the first risk assessment across different teams within the organisation.

Following this initial review, key organisational representatives gain much greater clarity regarding which risk controls are working to reduce hazards and which strategies are falling short. This enhanced insight empowers all organisational levels to approach risk management with increased confidence. Over time, as systems become more integrated and consistently applied, the data shows that outcomes related to psychosocial risk and workplace wellbeing improve significantly.

Analysis shows Reactive Climate (RC) and Job Demands Indicators (JDI) consistently emerged as the strongest predictors of both exhaustion and engagement across all measurement intervals. Notably, at Time 4, the dominant predictors for exhaustion shifted to Job Resources Indicators (JRI) and JDI, while engagement was most strongly associated with Proactive Climate (PC) and Reactive Climate. Results are consistent with evidence of climate extended JDR pathway predicting both health and motivation outcomes. Regarding longitudinal changes, the most statistically significant shifts occurred between Time 1 and Time 4, with all observed differences yielding large effect sizes. These findings suggest that sustained commitment to prevention and response over time is a critical factor in driving meaningful change.

Psychosocial Risk Tool comparison

How the PRC tool improves on traditional measures: Many existing tools have notable limitations. For example, the PSC-12 survey is an excellent gauge of organisational climate but does not pinpoint specific hazards (it won't tell you if workload vs. bullying is the issue). On the other hand, surveys like "People at Work" produce a broad risk assessment of various factors but do not distinguish clearly between proactive vs. reactive factors or provide an overall climate gauge.

Some risk assessments simply average scores or give a laundry list of stressors without indicating which are most critical. The PRC tool bridges these gaps. It provides both a climate perspective (split into proactive and reactive, acknowledging that prevention and response are both crucial) and a breakdown of hazard categories (demands/resources), all in one survey.

This integrated approach means it can differentiate lead indicators vs. lag outcome and systemic issues vs. specific issues in a single framework. As a result, it offers a more nuanced risk profile than one-dimensional tools. In the earlier example, the organisation learned that workload was a hazard (specific issue) but also that leadership needed to walk the talk on prevention (systemic climate issue). Traditional tools might have revealed one or the other, but not both together.

By providing a "360° view" of the psychosocial risk landscape, the PRC tool has been praised as one of the most comprehensive lead indicator instruments available in this field. Researchers and consultants who developed it note that it drives more targeted controls and effective interventions, leading to better outcomes.

Case Study Three

The PRC tool has proven highly effective and practical for organisations, helping them to prioritise targeted actions for mental health improvement. A large logistics company utilised the PRC16 assessment across 20 teams, enabling each group to develop tailored action plans based on their specific risk profiles. Initiatives included meeting free periods, skip-level meetings to boost trust in senior management, and roster adjustments for better work life balance. These bespoke interventions were well-received and led to measurable improvements: 75% of teams showed significant progress on PRC16 indicators, with enhanced perceptions of workloads, emotional demands, worker confidence, leadership actions, and senior management prioritisation. Some groups saw worker participation increase from high risk to low risk levels, engagement and productivity rose, early health-seeking behaviours improved, and unplanned leave dropped by 10%.

The Head of HR reported a dramatic shift in team meeting participation, with employees now actively sharing ideas and opinions to improve psychosocial safety.

In summary, the PRC tool exemplifies the next generation of psychosocial lead indicators: it is evidence-based, succinct, and holistic. By combining measures of climate (proactive and reactive) with measures of specific psychosocial hazards, it provides a wholistic, actionable risk profile. This allows WHS practitioners to see both the forest and the trees – the overall cultural conditions and the individual stressors – rather than getting an incomplete picture. As such, the PRC tool is increasingly regarded as a best practice instrument for comprehensive psychosocial risk management, helping organisations not only comply with legal duties but truly protect their workers' mental health and enhance productivity in the long run.

Conclusion

Both academic research and applied practice experiences have consistently shown that lead indicators are essential for effective psychosocial risk management. These proactive measures allow organisations to identify and address workplace factors that contribute to psychosocial hazards, helping prevent harm to both employee well-being and organisational performance. By adopting lead indicators such as the PRC and other relevant metrics, organisations can establish a baseline risk profile that pinpoints which factors and groups require targeted interventions.

Lead indicators help assign risk levels, prioritise the most affected groups, guide the focus of preventive strategies, and evaluate effectiveness of controls. When these indicators show consistent positive trends, it signals that employees are experiencing manageable job demands, sufficient resources, and strong support systems leading to a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce. Conversely, when lead indicators trend negatively, they serve as an early warning to take corrective action. Responsive measures such as reallocating workloads, enhancing communication, or training leaders, and providing appropriate supports, can effectively minimise harm and maximise employee engagement.

To summarise the key points:

Lead indicators (proactive metrics) like climate surveys and risk assessments are leading predictors of outcomes, whereas lagging indicators (injuries, illnesses) show past health and safety outcomes. Managing risk utilising lead indicators is akin to preventive healthcare, reducing the likelihood of potential hazards occurring or causing injuries.

Proactive Reactive Climate (PRC) Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) and psychological safety are predictive indicators. High scores indicate a work environment where mental health is protected, which research links to lower stress claims and better performance. Psychological safety within teams predicts everything from error rates to innovation and staff turnover. These are measurable and case studies show, improvable with concerted effort.

Specific work factors (demands, control, support, civility, etc.) offer granular lead indicators. Monitoring these provides actionable insights. For example, if workload is rising, you can intervene by redistributing tasks or hiring, or if inappropriate behaviour spikes, you can reinforce training and oversight on civility and respect. Ignoring these signals can lead to poorer health, safety and organisational outcomes such as sickness absence, presenteeism, and turnover down the line.

Successful implementations in various sectors have demonstrated that using lead indicators is feasible and effective. Organisations that acted on improving the climate were able to prevent more serious consequences and improve outcomes like retention, productivity and job satisfaction. These examples serve as models that others can adapt.

Best practices for integrating these indicators involve making them a normal part of business data, getting leadership on board, encouraging employee voice, and continually refining the approach. It's not a one off project but an ongoing process of learning and improvement, much like any other aspect of quality or safety management.

Ultimately, prioritising psychosocial lead indicators is about shifting from a reactive stance to a proactive, learning-focused culture. It aligns with the broader evolution in safety and health towards prevention and holistic well-being. Organisations that excel in this are not only safer and healthier, but also often more successful, because a workplace that protects and values mental health is one where people can perform at their best.

When employees thrive in a safe, supportive environment, the organisation thrives as well, it's a true win win situation.

Reference List

Amoadu, M., Ansah, E. W., & Sarfo, J. O. (2023). Influence of psychosocial safety climate on occupational health and safety: a scoping review. BMC Public Health, 23(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16246-x

Amoadu, M., Agyare, D. F., Doe, P. F., & Abraham, S. A. (2025). Examining the impact of psychosocial safety climate on working conditions, well-being and safety of healthcare providers: a scoping review. BMC Health Services Research, 25(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-12254-2

Bahadurzada, H., Edmondson, A., & Kerrissey, M. (2024). Psychological Safety as an Enduring Resource Amid Constraints. International Journal of Public Health, 69. https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2024.1607332

Bailey, T. (2025, February). The Safety Evolution – from Physical to Psychosocial hazards. *WSH Asia e-Magazine*. Retrieved from https://wshasia.com/e-magazine-mobile/2025-02/

Becher, H., & Dollard, M. (2016, November). Psychosocial safety climate and better productivity in Australian workplaces: Costs, productivity, presenteeism, absenteeism | Safe Work Australia. Www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au. https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-and-publications/reports/psychosocial-safety-climate-and-better-productivity-australian-workplaces-costs-productivity-presenteeism-absenteeism

de Lisser, R., Dietrich, M. S., Spetz, J., Ramanujam, R., Lauderdale, J., & Stolldorf, D. P. (2024). Psychological safety associated with better work environment and lower levels of clinician burnout. Health Affairs Scholar, 2(7). https://doi.org/10.1093/haschl/qxae091

Dollard, M. F., Dormann, C., & Idris, M. A. (2019). Psychosocial Safety Climate: A New Work Stress Theory and Implications for Method. Psychosocial Safety Climate, 3–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20319-1_1

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Edmondson, A. C. (2002). The Local and Variegated Nature of Learning in Organizations: A Group-Level Perspective. Organization Science, 13(2), 128–146. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.13.2.128.530

Edmondson, A. C. (2003). Speaking Up in the Operating Room: How Team Leaders Promote Learning in Interdisciplinary Action Teams. Journal of Management Studies, 40(6), 1419–1452.

Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017). Psychological Safety: A Meta-Analytic Review and Extension. Personnel Psychology, 70(1), 113–165. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183

Hall, G. B., Dollard, M. F., & Coward, J. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate: Development of the PSC-12. International journal of stress management, 17(4), 353.

Idris, M. A., Dollard, M. F., & Yulita. (2014). Psychosocial safety climate, emotional demands, burnout, and depression: A longitudinal multilevel study in the Malaysian private sector. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 19(3), 291–302. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036599

Karatuna, I., Jönsson, S., Dollard, M. F., & Muhonen, T. (2025). The associations of the psychosocial safety climate with human service workers' job demands, resources, and work-and health-related outcomes: A scoping review. Safety Science, 191, Article 106949. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2025.106949

Malinen, S. K., Naswall, K., Annick Masselot, & Clarke, E. (2025). Safe to stay: The role of leader behaviors and psychological safety in employee retention in high-demand workplaces. German Journal of Human Resource Management Zeitschrift Für Personalforschung, 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/23970022251337643

May Young Loh, Dollard, M. F., McLinton, S. S., & Brough, P. (2024). Translating Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) into real-world practice: Two PSC intervention case studies. PubMed, 66(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/joccuh/uiae051

WHO. (2024, September 2). *Mental Health at Work*. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work

WPO and IIRSM team up for study addressing psychosocial risks. (2024). IIRSM. https://www.iirsm.org/knowledge/articles/impact-psychologicalsafety-report

Zadow, A. J., Dollard, M. F., Dormann, C., & Landsbergis, P. (2021). Predicting new major depression symptoms from long working hours, psychosocial safety climate and work engagement: a population-based cohort study. BMJ Open, 11(6), e044133. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-044133