

## MHCOP: People at Work in-person Workshop

### Questions and Answers

This document provides answers to the questions asked prior to, during and following the People at Work in-person workshops in Canberra on Tuesday 4 June 2024 and Melbourne on Tuesday 18 June 2024. Some of these responses have been taken from the [People at Work FAQs](#). If you have any further questions please contact [research@comcare.gov.au](mailto:research@comcare.gov.au).

#### General Questions

**Q. How long has the People at Work tool been in use?**

- A. The People at Work Project was established in 2007 as a research collaboration among University of Queensland, The Australian National University, Comcare, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, WorkCover NSW, WorkSafe Victoria, Safe Work Australia, and Beyond Blue.

In 2016, following the completion of the research project the participating jurisdictions worked collaboratively to translate the People at Work process to a self-administered set of resources. In 2020, this collaboration led to the development of the digital version of People at Work, which was launched in February 2021 and is now freely available to all Australian workplaces.

#### Psychosocial Health and Safety

**Q. What psychosocial hazards aren't addressed in People at Work?**

- A. The People at Work survey addresses 12 out of 14 psychosocial hazards in the [Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#). It does not directly address remote and isolated work or poor physical environment. However, these might be inferred from questions related to other hazards and can be asked within focus groups that are a recommended next step following the People at Work Survey. A guide on focus groups can be found on the [People at Work website](#).

**Q. Will the People at Work tool be updated to better align with the Psychosocial Model Code of Practice and include the additional hazards?**

- A. The People at Work survey was developed through an extensive validation process over many years. As such, the inclusion of additional measures into the survey must also meet a strict set of criteria and undergo a validation process to uphold the integrity of the

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People at Work Survey. Comcare and other workplace safety authorities comprise a People at Work Working Group that works towards continuous improvement of the tool, including consideration and evaluation of potential new measures.

**Q. How can People at Work fit in with a more detailed risk assessment audit that details severity/ frequency/ duration of hazards?**

A. People at Work can be used in conjunction with a detailed risk assessment. It can be used to help identify hazards and select controls in consultation with workers. It can also assist in prioritising efforts and developing an action plan. For more guidance on assessing and managing psychosocial hazards at work see the [Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#).

**Q. Can People at Work be used for incident investigation?**

A. No, an incident investigation requires a more detailed approach. The type of investigation will depend on the nature of the incident and the context in which it occurred. For psychosocial incidents, guidance is available in chapter 8 of the [Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#). For misconduct investigations under the Public Service Act, guidance is available in chapter 8 of the APSC - [Handling Misconduct - A human resource manager's guide](#). People at Work can be used in conjunction with incident investigation as it provides both lead and lag indicators for psychosocial health and safety.

**Q. What is the future of People at Work and will it continue to get development support as knowledge in the psychosocial space increases?**

A. People at Work is a national collaboration that is supported and funded by the Australian health and safety regulators. Under this current model People at Work will continue to receive support and be updated to stay relevant with the psychosocial space. Comcare is committed to supporting employers to implement People at Work and regularly pass on feedback or suggestions via the People at Work Working Group.

## People at Work and other Psychosocial Tools

**Q. How does the Psychosocial Safety Climate fit in with People at Work?**

A. The Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is a lead indicator question set that measures organisational safety climate and culture including management commitment, management priority, organisational participation, and communication. While PSC doesn't measure specific hazards, it can be used together with the People at Work tool to get a better understanding of the overall safety culture in an organisation.

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**Q. Is there any appetite to include the PSC into People at Work?**

A. The People at Work Working Group are consistently looking to improve the People at Work tool including through the consideration of new items, though the inclusion of PSC is not currently planned.

**Q. What are the differences between People at Work and ADDRESS, and can they be used together?**

A. People at Work is useful when you are trying to get a broad sense of the hazards in your workplace or in a specific part of your workplace. By collecting new data, it can highlight hotspots and guide you through developing actions to remedy them.

The ADDRESS model and resource suite is only available for APS agencies and utilises APS specific screeners for psychosocial hazards, as aligned to the [Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#). Similar to the People at Work survey, ADDRESS provides a holistic and consultative approach to the management of psychosocial hazards capturing all four stages of the identify, assess, control and review stages. It also includes resources for building manager capability to discuss and manage psychosocial risks in their teams.

People at Work and ADDRESS can be used together to get both a broad and deep picture of what's happening across your workplace. There is no one size fits all and it's important to find the right tool for your organisation. To help with this, Comcare have developed a comparison table of three psychosocial risk assessment tools (People at work, ADDRESS, PSC) on our [website](#).

## Survey Creation

**Q. Can we add our own questions to People at Work?**

A. No, questions cannot be added to People at Work. You can customise the options presented to workers in 3 specific questions: site/location, role and workgroup.

The People at Work survey is an Australian-validated psychosocial risk assessment that was developed through an extensive validation process over several years. As such, the inclusion of additional questions into the survey must also meet a strict set of criteria and undergo a validation process to uphold the integrity of the survey.

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**Q. How many response options can you have for each custom demographic question?**

A. Each custom demographic question can have up to 20 different categories/ response options. For example, 20 role types within 20 workgroups across 20 sites can be captured within one survey.

**Q. What is the length of time you can keep a People at Work survey open for?**

A. The People at Work survey can be open for a maximum of 9 weeks.

## Survey Implementation

**Q. How can you get leadership support to implement People at Work?**

A. In the first instance, you should make a business case to Senior leaders about the benefits of implementing People at Work. It's important to know your audience, what they want to hear, and align the business case to the strategic priorities of your organisation. The business case might include case studies, details about the process, and the drivers for implementing the tool.

Comcare can assist you in developing your business case, please contact [research@comcare.gov.au](mailto:research@comcare.gov.au) for more information. There are also resources on the People at Work website to help including [communication planning](#), and [developing a business case](#).

**Q. What are some of the distinct challenges for implementing the People at Work tool in both larger and smaller organisations?**

A. Both larger and smaller organisations may face different challenges when implementing the People at Work tool.

Small organisations may find it difficult to reach the minimum of 20 responses required to generate a results report, and minimum of 10 responses from a demographic group to receive group-level results. Small organisations may also have limited resources, making it more challenging to deliver and oversee the process.

Challenges for larger organisations include coordinating multiple surveys across different work groups, divisions, or locations, given a single survey can only capture 20 working groups and managing the data analysis and action planning for a large number of working groups across multiple surveys.

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**Q. How does the People at Work tool give workers in my organisation confidence the information won't be used against them?**

- A. The survey is anonymous and does not capture workers personal information such as their name. An organisation conducting People at Work only receives aggregated reports for surveys with 20 or more responses and will not have access to individual responses or raw data. The aggregated reports only provide group breakdowns where there are more than 10 responses per group.

When communicating about the People at Work survey in your organisation it's important to include messaging around the anonymity and security of survey responses. [The People at Work website](#) has an example list of frequently asked questions that can be provided to address any concerns or questions.

**Q. What percentage of people do you think respond to the survey? For example, to get the 10 minimum, should you have 15 (or more) in the group.**

- A. Standard survey response rates are typically between 10 – 30%. The response rate from the People at Work National dataset is 47%. It's worth noting, if you receive a response rate below 50% the report will be marked with the following note of caution: "Due to the response rate being below 50% results should be interpreted with caution as the results may not be an accurate representation of the workplace as a whole."

## **Results and reporting**

**Q. How often does the national benchmark get refreshed? Is it calibrated yearly? How do we know what benchmark it's based off? (i.e. 50/50 white and blue collar? Office or labour centric?)**

- A. These benchmarks reflect the average levels of the psychosocial risk factors across other Australian organisations. The benchmarking is from a sample of approximately 11,000 Australian workers between 2013 and 2015 that participated in the People at Work project. 79 organisation participated across the public and private sectors, most industries, and occupations (more detail is available in the [final People at Work project report](#)).

The most valid comparison is against your past People at Work reports conducted over a similar scope of respondents. Using your own reports and data can help you identify areas of opportunity within your business and create targeted strategies to improve the psychosocial risk profile of your organisation.



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**Q. Can the results of multiple People at Work surveys be aggregated?**

A. An Excel tool is available that can be used to aggregate the results of multiple People at Work surveys. There is no current way of doing it within the People at Work platform. For more information or access to the tool, please contact [research@comcare.gov.au](mailto:research@comcare.gov.au).

**Q. Can results for individual questions be broken down to groups levels?**

A. No, only risk level results are broken down into groups with the report. Overall results are given for individual questions.

**Q. Is there a feature for year-on-year comparisons?**

A. Not at this time.

**Q. How is the K10 reported on in People at Work?**

A. The People Work Survey utilises the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), as a measure for psychological distress. The K10 consists of 10 questions about emotional states experienced by the respondent. Each item is scored on a scale from 1 for 'none of time' to 5 for 'all of the time'. The score for each item is added up to give a final score between 10 – 50, with higher scores indicating high levels of psychological distress. The People at Work report breaks down the percent of respondents that have very high (scores of 30 – 50), high (scores of 22 – 29), moderate (scores of 16 – 21) and low (scores of 10 – 15) levels of psychological distress.

**Q. What is the relevance of the K10 in the People at Work report?**

A. Job demands and job resources have been linked to the psychological health of workers including measures of psychological distress. Although the questions may seem personal, workers bring their whole selves to work, and where they may be experiencing psychological distress personally, it can also impact their working lives. Research has linked the experience of psychological distress to workers taking significantly more sick days and having significantly lower performance as compared to those not experiencing psychological distress.

## Action Planning

**Q. Who within the organisation should be responsible for implementing actions?**

A. This may depend on the organisational context. To assist with developing a list of controls it can be useful to consider different contexts. In general, each group or team captured within the People at Work survey should take charge of setting up their own controls for psychosocial risks, as these can vary at the team level. However, the team coordinating the survey implementation can help to manage the implementation of controls at an

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organisational level, highlighting key findings, aiding in interpreting the results, pinpointing areas for action, and keeping track of addressed risks and measures across teams and groups. Involving workers in determining actions is also critical, as they are often the ones who best understand the nuances of their work and can provide valuable insights into practical improvements. There is more information available in the action planning guide on the [People at Work website](#).