

The Employee Assistance Program/UniSA Research Project

Frequently Asked Questions

How would you describe the project?

This research project is co-designed by the Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia (Inc) (EAPAA) and experts from the University of South Australia (UniSA) at the Psychosocial Safety Climate Global Observatory (PSC GO). In a world-first research project, we are working to support and strengthen the organisational approach of Employee Assistance Program providers (EAPs) to inform, evaluate and improve psychosocial risk management systems within client organisations, using the Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) measures, to improve staff psychological health, work engagement and productivity outcomes.

What is PSC? Why should my organisation improve their PSC?

Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) is a term used in organisational psychology that refers to the shared belief held by workers that their psychological health and safety is protected and supported by senior management. Organisations who have high PSC are in the practice of putting people first, where psychological health and safety is seen and actioned as a priority.

Improving PSC can have numerous benefits for employees:

- Poor PSC is a mental health risk and increases the risk of employees developing new depressive symptoms within one year by 200%.
- Elimination of low range PSC is related to a 14% reduction in job strain and a 13% reduction in employee depression.
- A 10% increase in PSC should lead to a 4% decrease in job demands, a 4.5% decrease in burnout, an 8% increase in job resources, and a 6% increase in engagement.

Why should I take part?

The importance of worker health and wellbeing is becoming increasingly recognised. PSC is recognised as a leading indicator of levels of psychosocial risks for employees and of employee health and productivity outcomes.

Improving PSC can have numerous potential benefits for employees. For example, greater organisational PSC is associated with greater job and life satisfaction, social support, family-supportive supervisor behaviours, and work-life balance. Additionally, increased PSC has also been related to decreased technostress, time-based work interference with family, perceived stress, mental health issues, burnout, and sleeping troubles.

This study allows employees the opportunity to be heard and provide feedback about your organisation to:

- Inform positive changes within your workplace to promote the psychological health and productivity of employees;
- Contribute to internationally recognised research to inform strategies to help workplaces improve the protection of the psychological health of employees.

What are the project aims?

- Implement a new initiative so that EAPs can support your organisation to build the PSC improving the psychosocial health and safety of staff.
- Ensure that EAPs are able to provide organisational level psychosocial and mental health initiatives which are matched to what staff need, are evidence based and effective.
- Collate, analyse and report back on the project results to ensure that your EAP is able to provide your organisation with information to measure the impact of psychological health initiatives and psychosocial risk over time.
- Develop an evidence base which demonstrates that EAP engagement can help improve PSC through intervention at the client organisational culture level and staff psychological health and engagement.

What will participation involve?

Employee participation will involve:

- Agreeing to participate in the research project.;
- Committing to undertaking surveys that will take approximately 10 minutes each. There will be a total of three individual surveys to be completed over the course of eight months.;
- An opportunity to work with your EAP provider who may deliver intervention strategies to improve your organisation's PSC.

What is the anticipated project timeline?



What is the time commitment?

- Employees will need to undertake three surveys that will take approximately 10 minutes each.
- You will be encouraged by your organisation to undertake these surveys during your designated work hours.

What surveys will be used?

We will survey employees on psychosocial risk and psychological health using three (3) scales:

1. Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC-12 and PSC-4)
2. Burnout Scale (BAT)
3. Engagement (UWES)

The PSC-12 (Hall et al., 2010) and PSC-4 (Dollard, 2019) measures policies, practices and procedures within the organisation to support psychological health and safety.

The Burnout Scale uses three (3) items from the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT; Schaufeli et al., 2020). These items ask about an individual's current psychological health and physical wellbeing.

The Engagement Scale uses three (3) items from the Utrecht Work and Well-being Survey (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2006). These ask about an individual's recent feelings of engagement with their work.

How will my results be used/shared?

Your participation is voluntary and your anonymous responses will be assigned a unique identifying code. This unique code cannot be used to identify you and will only be used to match your responses across surveys.

Aggregated results will be shared with senior leadership via reports presented by EAP providers. Individual responses will not be reported, and your organisation will not have access to the dataset or any individual data.

How will the data be managed? /Who will see my responses?

We will store raw data on a secure UniSA password protected server. Any publication of the results will only use the de-identified grouped (10 participants or more) data. All de-identified data will be stored on secure computer servers at UniSA for seven (7) years.

What are the risks and benefits for employees?

Possible benefits:

- Psychosocial safety climate is an evidence based leading indicator for working conditions, employee mental health and engagement. We aim to demonstrate the importance of EAP engagement and intervention in improving PSC within organisations.
- Your organisation may benefit from feedback, resources and education materials regarding your organisation's PSC, which in turn, may inform positive changes within the workplace.

Risks:

- It is not anticipated that there are any risks to participation in this study beyond those encountered during everyday life.
- The risk is not zero though, and should you feel upset, distressed, or experience any negative outcomes while participating in this research project, you will be encouraged to discontinue participating and seek support.
- There are very low privacy or security risks given the research is being conducted externally, with all identifiable data managed by UniSA.
- Research will be conducted in line with UniSA's Human Research Ethics guidelines.

Who should I contact if I require help with my mental health/wellbeing?

If you require support of any kind, we encourage you to utilise the following support services:

- EAP provider details:
- Urgent 24/7 helplines: Call **Lifeline** 13 11 14 or **Beyond Blue** 1300 220 636

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is the permission participants give prior to taking part in a research study. When participants provide informed consent, they indicate that they understand participation is voluntary and they accept the possible risks, benefits, and outcomes of participating. If you choose to participate, you will have the right to withdraw at any point during the research. Please note that should you choose to withdraw from the study, you have one (1) week to do so after the closure of the survey. Withdrawing from the study will not affect your relationship with your employer, the researchers, or UniSA, now or in the future.

What is a control group?

- The educational materials and survey will be available for all staff within your organisation
- Following the survey, and as negotiated with each organisation, your EAP provider may recommend additional intervention activities for specific groups of staff.

- The survey results over time may be able to identify differences between staff who have completed the interventions and staff who have not (control group).
- Control groups are commonly used in psychological research to identify the impact of a certain treatment or intervention to improve the efficacy of future interventions.

How can I find out more about ethics information?

We have obtained ethics approval from the UniSA Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol number: 203720). If you have any ethical concerns about the project, questions about your employees' rights as participants, or you or any third parties wish to lodge a complaint about the study or the way it is being conducted, please contact:

Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee

UniSA **T:** 08 8302 6330 **E:** humanethics@unisa.edu.au

Who do I contact with feedback/questions about the survey/intervention?

Your EAP provider will be the main contact for this project and they will be able to provide feedback to the researchers.

Your EAP provider details are: [Insert EAP provider details here]