

# How to ensure maximum impact on your employees' wellbeing

Apply the three crucial keys of employee wellbeing to your organisation and increase productivity, reduce long-term absences and count on more engaged employees.



## INTRODUCTION

# What insights will you get from this white paper?

Wellbeing is always a shared responsibility between employer and employee. In this white paper, we focus on what you as an employer or manager can do to improve the wellbeing of your employees and thus obtain economic benefits for your organisation.

## What can you expect?

This white paper not only provides a deeper look into what is happening today in the field of employee wellbeing, but also compiles applicable insights and tips from experts to shape an effective wellbeing policy. Why that matters? A strong wellbeing policy not only has a positive impact on your employees, but also on your business.

Those who bet on wellbeing have an edge in the war for talent: you attract motivated employees more easily and keep them on board longer. Logically, employees are also less likely to drop out if they are supported by a strong wellbeing policy. It goes without saying that this is invaluable for the success of your business. Just that makes this white paper a must-read for any business leader, HR manager or executive.

## What you will find out:

- How an effective wellbeing policy pays for itself
- What factors determine wellbeing in the workplace
- Why the perception of a wellbeing policy is also crucial
- The impact of psychological wellbeing on retention
- How managers play a crucial role in employee wellbeing

 Want to know more about our methodology behind this white paper? You can read all about it from page 47

You can find the table of contents here!



Strengthen your organisation's wellbeing policy with up-to-date insights from science, an analysis of our clients' wellbeing data and concrete examples you can use to get started yourself.

## Contents

<b>Wellbeing in the workplace: a shared responsibility</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. How to benefit from a strong wellbeing policy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. How to make an impact as an employer: three essential key factors</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Strong social connections as a foundation	12
2.1.1. Social connection between colleagues: from cooperation to affinity	14
2.1.2. Social connection with executives: leadership that inspires	18
2.1.3. Social connection with the organisation: from employee to ambassador	22
2.2. Balanced workload: prevent overloading	25
2.3. Work-life balance in a hybrid world: opportunities and challenges	29
<b>3. The power of perception: why wellbeing is more than just actions</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4. Conclusions</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5. Methodology, data and framework</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1. The Waldon Glasses Model a fresh look at wellbeing	48
5.2. The power of My WellRi	49
5.3. Action plan: getting started yourself with My WellRi	49
<b>6. Source list</b>	<b>53</b>

Impact is something we take very seriously at Waldon. Because we invest in people, we also invest in scientific research. That is why we collaborated with a number of experts from The VIGOR Unit, for this white paper, a spin-off of Ghent University.



Cédric  
Velghe



Rani  
Van Lijsebeth



Marijn  
Van Cauwenberghe

## FOREWORD

# Wellbeing in the workplace: a shared responsibility

Ellen De Vleeschouwer – CEO Waldon



At Waldon, we daily see how important it is for employees to feel good at work. As CEO, I strongly believe that wellbeing in the workplace is a shared responsibility. It is not something the employee has to manage on his own. We as employers also play an important role. We have a direct impact on how people experience their work, and together we can build an environment where wellbeing is centred.

In this white paper, we show what employers can do concretely to improve their employees' wellbeing. Since all sorts of claims are made about this, an evidence-based approach is still crucial for us. That is why we launched our own research to provide answers to the many challenges your organisation also faces: from a sharp rise in burn-outs and long-term illnesses to the difficult search for new talent and motivating and retaining employees.

The findings in this white paper are based on scientific research and our own Waldon Glasses Model which helps us look at wellbeing in a broad and informed way. We also used data from our My WellRi audits of medium-sized organisations.

I hope the insights we have compiled will help you create a working environment where employees not only feel good, but can actually thrive. This not only increases productivity within companies, but is also a way to tackle the problem around the still growing number of long-term sick people (already more than 500,000!). In this way, we are making not only employees and companies, but also Belgium healthy again. That is the responsibility of each of us, and with Waldon, we are happy to contribute.

**i** Want to know more about our **Waldon Glasses Model**? You can read all about it on page 48.

# 1. How to benefit from a strong wellbeing policy



# 1. How to benefit from a strong wellbeing policy

**Why investing in employee wellbeing is not only an ethical and socially responsible choice, but also brings economic benefits.**

A lot of organisations today do not know how to spark employee engagement. This is a missed opportunity. After all, research shows time and again that engaged employees are more creative, that they contribute positively to the organisation and that they stay longer. But what's even more interesting: higher wellbeing among employees also increases your company's customer satisfaction and financial performance. Hence investing in wellbeing is not a nice-to-have, but a crucial success factor.

And yet, unfortunately, the daily reality does not look promising. The number of people suffering burnout has never been higher. As much as 56% of employees are therefore willing to switch to an employer that is more committed to employee wellbeing. (1)

*"56% of employees are willing to switch to an employer that is more committed to employee wellbeing"*

## Why investing in wellbeing is much needed

### INCREASE ENTERPRISE VALUE

Companies with higher welfare scores do better in the stock market than those with a traditional interpretation of welfare policy.

### TALENT RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

A wellbeing-oriented company policy attracts employees AND sharply reduces staff turnover by 18-43%.

### INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Satisfied employees are not only more engaged, loyal, creative and motivated in their work, but also 7 to 12% more productive.

### REDUCE ABSENTEEISM

Employees of companies that successfully focus on wellbeing experience 125% less burnout (self-reported).

### INCREASE CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Companies with effective wellness policies see their customer satisfaction and loyalty increase by 10% on average.

## WHY INVESTING IN WELLBEING PAYS OFF

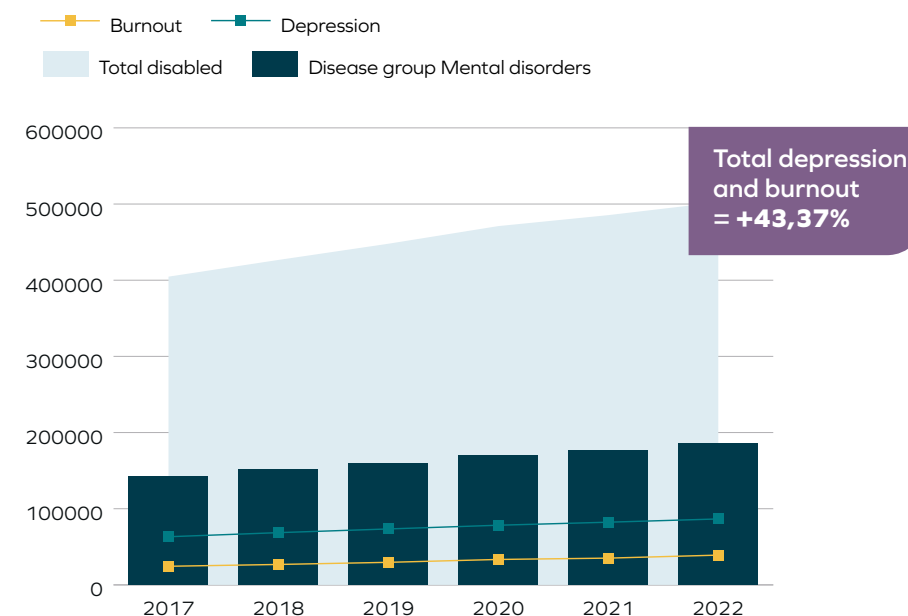
The (economic) benefits of investing in wellbeing in the workplace (43).

## Increasing number of long-term sick people

According to the NIHDI (2), between 2017 and 2022, the number of people incapacitated for more than one year due to a mental disorder increased by 30.45%. Specifically for burnout and depression, the increase is 43.37%. In total, more than 500,000 people are long-term disabled today, 36.86% of them with mental disorders. A figure that has increased by as much as 25% in five years. With these data in mind - and taking into account the fact that a policy on the long-term sick is a legal requirement in Belgium, as well as the accountability of employers around wellbeing will only increase - a bold action plan is no longer an option, but a must.

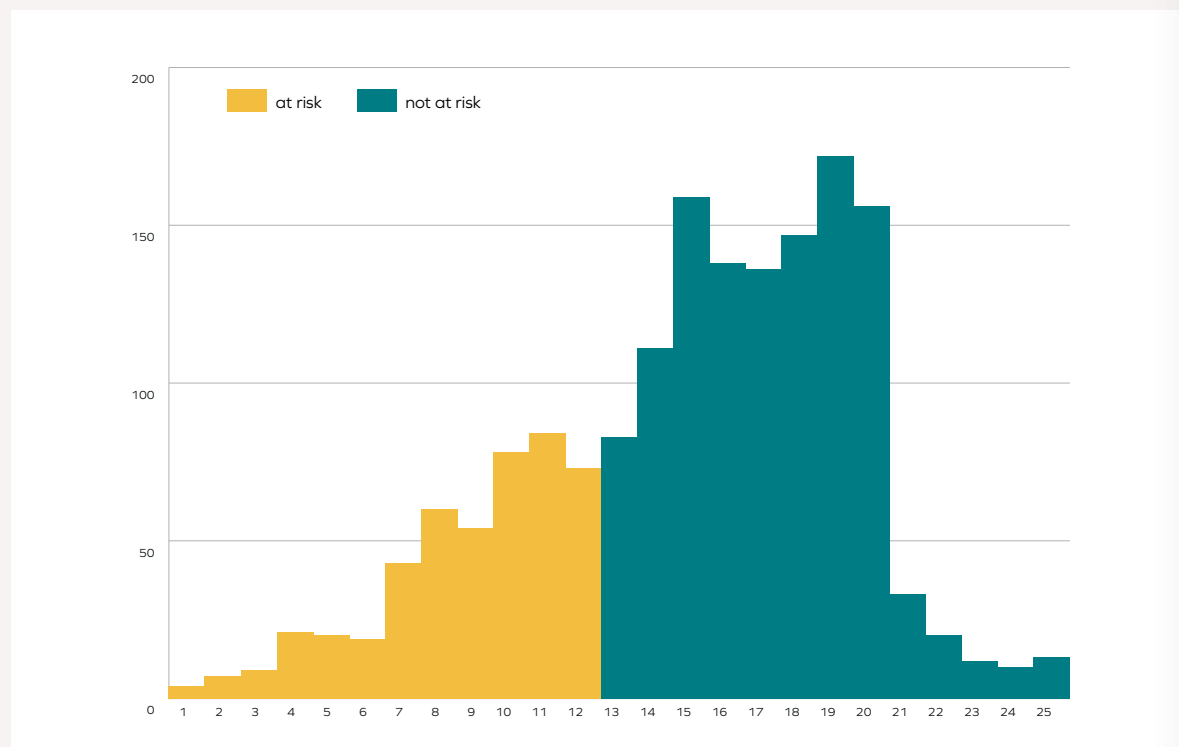
*"In total, more than 500,000 people are long-term disabled today, 36.86% of whom have a mental disorder. A bold action plan is no longer an option, but a must."*

## Number of people in disability<sup>1</sup> for depression or burnout: evolution 2017-2022 (NIHDI)



<sup>1</sup> Incapacity for work of more than one year

Even looking at our own results, we find that 3 out of 10 employees<sup>2</sup> show weak psychological wellbeing compared with a relatively high risk of mental illness.



3 in 10 workers<sup>2</sup> show weak psychological wellbeing, associated with a relatively high risk of mental illness (My WellRi).

## A furious 'war for talent'

The war for talent is raging in full force, even more so in Belgium than in other European countries (3). Almost 9 in 10 companies find it difficult to find suitable staff (4) while 36% say they struggle to retain employees (3). As a result, more than 80% of companies see retention as a top priority in their HR policy for the coming years (5). Investing in a strong employer brand with an eye for wellbeing is therefore much needed as a company. Not only to attract future employees, but also to keep current employees happy.

## Impact on customer satisfaction

Recent research (1) shows a strong link between employee and customer satisfaction. Companies that invest in wellbeing, especially in customer-facing functions, see a marked increase in customer satisfaction. This effect is strongest in sectors such as retail and healthcare. So investing in a wellbeing policy not only increases retention, but also improves customer loyalty and business results.

<sup>2</sup> Participants in the Waldon survey answer 5 questions on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 indicating low psychological wellbeing and 5 indicating high psychological wellbeing. The scores are added up to calculate a total score on a scale of 0 to 25. For the variable "psychological wellbeing", we use the limit set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Here, a score of 12 or lower is considered indicative of weak psychological wellbeing and there is a relatively high probability that the respondent is suffering from a mental disorder such as depression (44). 29.5% of all participants scored 12 or lower and are thus at risk of psychological wellbeing.

## Higher enterprise value

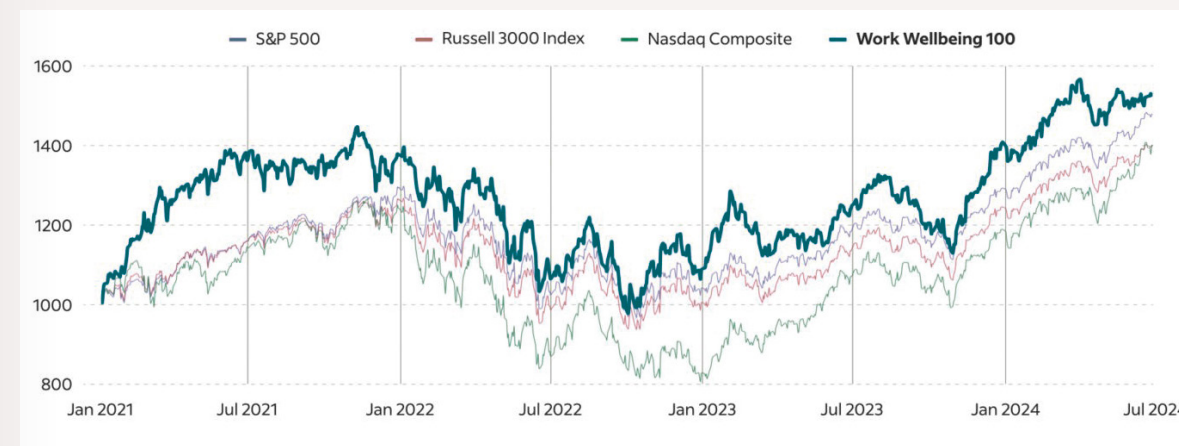
Wellbeing at the workplace still has a much bigger impact on business performance than often thought. There is scientific consensus that there is a reciprocal relationship between wellbeing, prevention and financial performance in both the short and long term. In short: wellbeing not only promotes people's happiness, but also economic growth.



One of the proponents of this vision is Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science and director of the Oxford wellbeing Research Centre. Professor De Neve's research shows that there is a strong correlation between investment in employee wellbeing on the one hand and the value, and profitability of a company on the other (43).

In a labour market climate where almost every organisation is forced to rethink its corporate culture, the message is clear: implementing a wellbeing policy is essential.

## Companies that excel in workplace wellbeing outperform other leading listed companies



Companies that excel in wellbeing at the workplace (Work wellbeing 100) also outperform other leading listed companies, even during volatile periods. (43)

[READ MORE](#)

## The Economics of wellbeing explained

Although academics have long been researching the impact of wellbeing on economic business performance, The Economics of wellbeing is a relatively new concept that not every organisation is yet familiar with. Therefore, we have summarised the key insights for you in a clear blog article.

Scan the QR code to read more about The Economics of wellbeing.



*In a labour market climate where almost every organisation is being forced to rethink its corporate culture, the message is clear: implementing a wellbeing policy is essential."*

## **2. How to make an impact as an employer: three essential key factors**



## 2. How to make an impact as an employer: three essential key factors

What is the recipe for success when it comes to wellbeing at work? And what are the biggest pitfalls? We dipped into the literature, examined wellbeing data from our clients and then drew conclusions.

### Searching for the core of employee wellbeing

When you invest in a wellbeing policy, you want to be sure that your investment pays off. A thorough analysis in advance to capture your needs and pain points is therefore crucial. Only afterwards can you prioritise, streamline your action points and achieve sustainable results.

In recent years, a lot of scientific research has been conducted on wellbeing at the workplace, which has provided many useful basic insights. But what do all these years of research and analysis suggest? What are the pillars of psychological wellbeing? And how do you apply them in your organisation's policies?

To get you started, we have identified the three most important factors for a strong wellbeing policy. We believe these pillars offer the best opportunities for organisations to improve employee wellbeing, supported by scientific research by the VIGOR Unit and our own data analysis.

1

#### The importance of social connection

The personal connection with colleagues, managers and the organisation.

2

#### The need for a balanced workload

The balance between job requirements and the resources that come in return.

3

#### Monitoring work-life balance in a hybrid world

The ability to maintain a healthy balance between work and leisure and the right to disconnect.

By taking into account these three key factors in your organisation's wellbeing policy, you can strengthen your employees' wellbeing in a sustainable way. On the following pages, we zoom in on each success factor and give tips on how to translate them into concrete, effective action points.

## 2.1. Strong social connections as a foundation

Social connection is a fundamental human need, with a significant impact on employees' psychological wellbeing. From our literature review and data analysis, it is clear how important it is for organisations to actively address these three levels of social connection:

- Between colleagues
- With executives
- With the organisation

### Need to belong somewhere

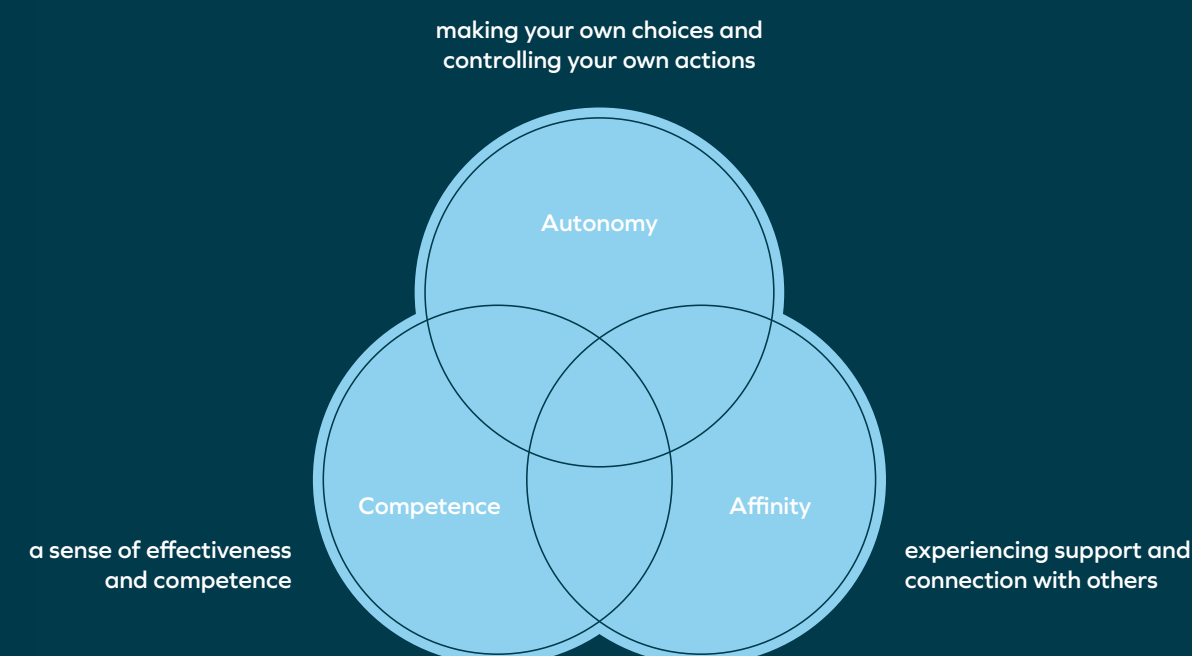


Psychologist **Roy Baumeister** argues in his Need to Belong Theory (8) that people have a natural need to form long-term, stable relationships. His research shows that a lack of social connections can have serious psychological consequences, similar to physical pain.

The Self-determination theory (9) also distinguishes between three basic psychological needs, one of which is relatedness (= social connection). The theory clearly identifies connectedness as an important condition for our wellbeing.

Fulfilling these three basic needs is consistently associated with higher scores for positive wellbeing indicators such as positive mood, engagement, satisfaction and job performance, and lower scores for negative wellbeing indicators, think stress, burnout or turnover intentions. (9)

#### Self-determination theory



## WATCH THE VIDEO

## The importance of psychological safety in the workplace

What exactly is psychological safety? How do you make a team psychologically safe? And what is the role as a leader of a team? In this Ted Talk, [Amy Edmondson](#), professor at Harvard University and a world authority on the subject, tells you all about it.

Scan the QR code to watch the video.



## 2.1.1. Social connection between colleagues: from cooperation to affinity

**What is the relationship between cooperation, trust and support among colleagues on the one hand and psychological wellbeing on the other? And which aspects of cooperation and support have the greatest impact on psychological wellbeing?**

### Key takeaways from the literature and our own data analysis

The literature clearly shows that the social connection between colleagues plays a **determining role in employee wellbeing**. This bond can be described in three ways: trust, cohesion and support.

#### > Trust

While trust among colleagues and supervisors is the basis for a healthy work environment, it does not in itself have a direct impact on employees' psychological wellbeing. However, trust is essential to foster internal cohesion and support (10-11).

#### > Cohesion

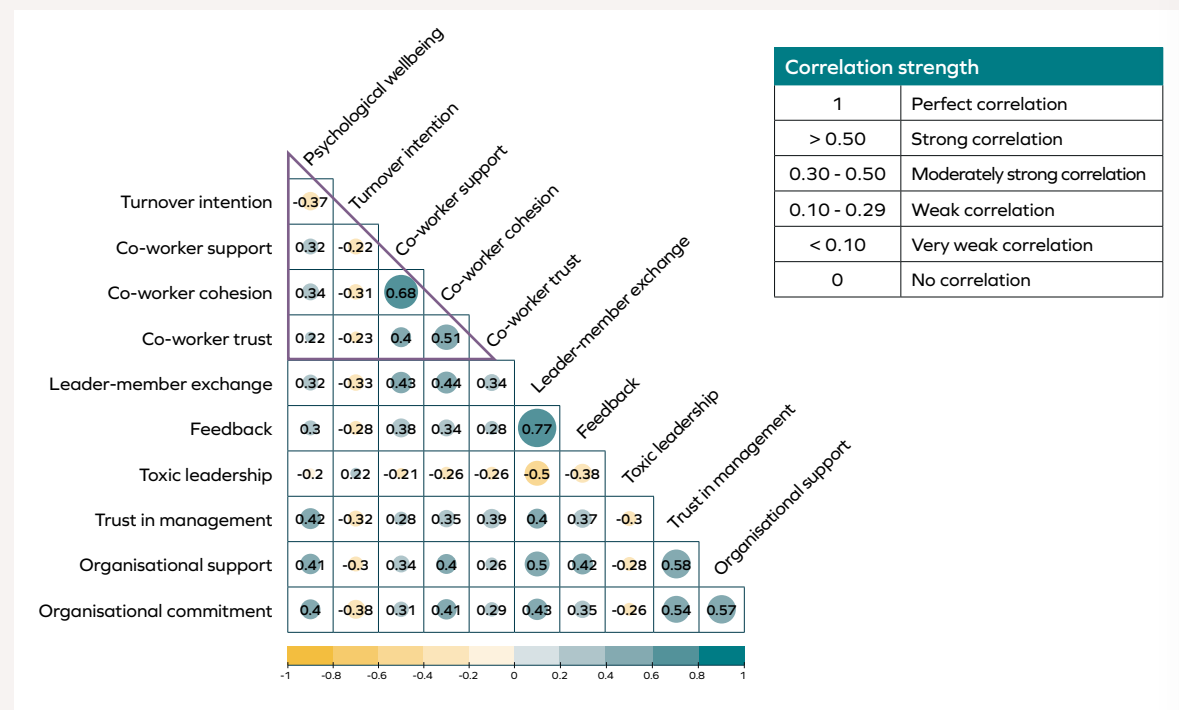
Cohesion refers to the extent to which employees value their team. High cohesion means that employees feel part of a close-knit community. This cohesion contributes to a positive working atmosphere and better cooperation (12-13).

#### > Support

Employees who feel supported by their colleagues, both practically and emotionally, show higher psychological wellbeing (14-15). This can range from help with work-related tasks to emotional support such as a listening ear or a compliment.



This is also nicely confirmed in our own data:



### How do you interpret this graph?

Throughout this white paper, you will regularly come across charts like this. They show the correlation between the different components listed. Based on the accompanying legend, you can determine to what extent the different elements are related.

In this graph, for example, we see a moderately positive correlation between co-worker support, co-worker cohesion, co-worker trust and psychological wellbeing. We can conclude that these factors are related to psychological wellbeing.

### More connection, higher wellbeing

The perception that a person experiences support from or cohesion among colleagues is associated with psychological wellbeing. For example, regular and positive feedback from the manager to employees contributes to a better work experience.

### More connection, less turnover

Employees who receive support from colleagues and experience cohesion between colleagues have a lower intention to change jobs within the year. Figures from our own data substantiate this quite nicely.

### Impact trust among colleagues possibly indirect

Employees' perceptions of trust between colleagues do not seem to be correlated with psychological wellbeing. It is possible, however, that trust indirectly contributes to wellbeing by being associated with an increase in support and cohesion between colleagues.

## What can your company do to promote social connection among colleagues?

### Based on the Waldon Glasses Model

**i** Read more about the Waldon Glasses Model on page 48.

### Implement team charters

Implement team charters to foster reflection, participation and a shared vision within your team(s). Such a team charter is drawn up by the team itself with support from the manager. That way of working helps in defining values, roles and responsibilities, giving more structure and clarity to the collaboration. A culture of open communication and collaboration can significantly improve team performance (18).

Below a template that can serve as the basis for your team charter:

## TEAMCHARTER

Team Name **Team Alpha**

Date **18/12/2024**

### People and roles

What are the names and the roles of the people in the team?

Sam - CEO  
Harry - COO  
Anthony - Operations  
Jenny - Marketing  
Tim - Development  
Jordan - Sales

### Common goals

What does the group want to achieve?

### Values

What do we stand for?  
What behaviors do we want to bring alive in our team/culture?

### Roles and skills

What are the skills that each person needs to have within their current role(s)?

### PURPOSE

Why are we doing this?  
What's the purpose?  
What direction do we want to go?

### Personal goals

The aims and aspirations of individual members of the team.

### Needs & expectations

What each of us needs to be successful.  
What the team needs to be successful.

### Strengths and assets

What are we good at doing?  
How can we pull all of our strengths together to achieve the desired results?

### Weaknesses and risks

What are the weaknesses we have as a team and individually?  
What should other teammates know about us?  
What are the obstacles that we are likely to face?

## Commit to team development with connective team building activities

Studies suggest that team building events can have a positive impact on the working atmosphere among colleagues, even long after the event (19). Please note: these should consist of connecting activities with a focus on collaboration. So don't opt for bowling, but rather go for a game or challenge where you have to work together in teams and reflect. Those who organise regular team activities in this way strengthen the sense of community among their employees.

## Engage mentors or buddies

Introduce mentorship programmes where experienced employees help new recruits integrate faster by providing practical help and sharing knowledge and experiences. These peer support programmes promote a culture of mutual support between colleagues (33).

## Encourage feedback and learning through reflection

Regular feedback moments are crucial to improve employee engagement and performance. Yet reflection is just as important as feedback. Plan regular moments, such as after a project phase or event, to discuss together what went well and what can be improved. These reflection exercises have been proven effective in improving team and individual performance (20).

[READ MORE](#)

## Feedback, where to begin?

In the article 'How to Give Feedback Effectively' you will read how effective feedback can boost both employee self-confidence and performance. Discover plenty of practical tips for giving and receiving feedback and how to install a strong feedback culture within your organisation.

Scan the QR code to read the full article.

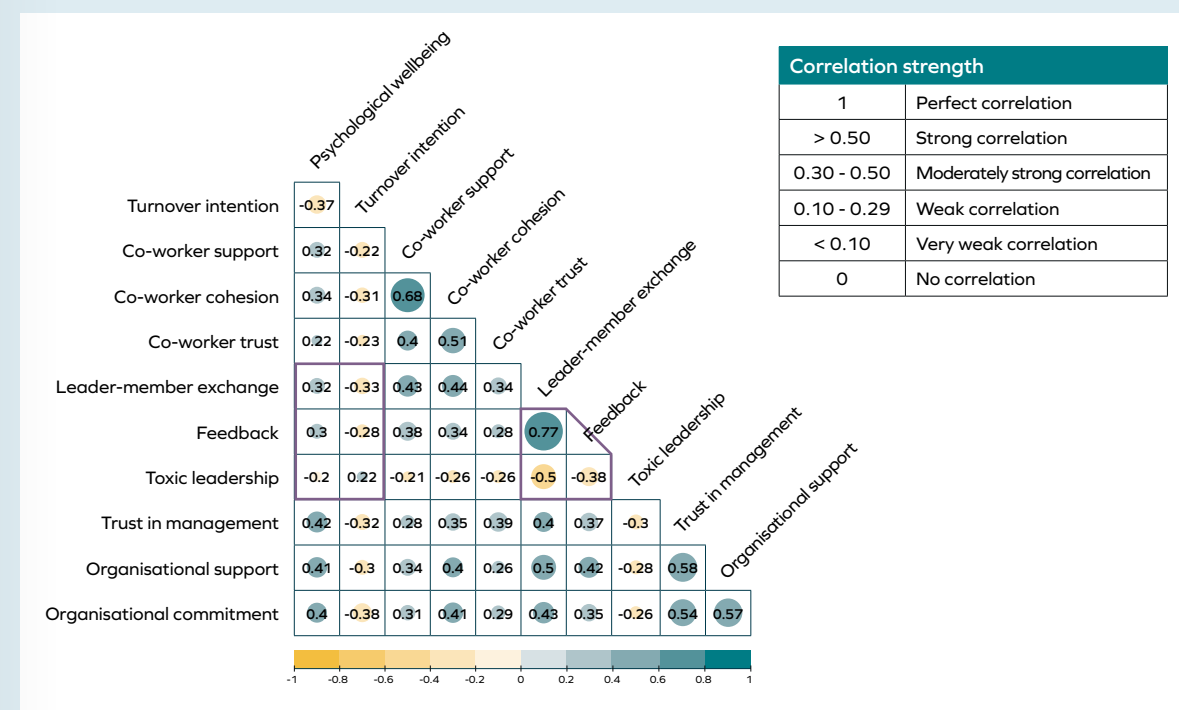


## 2.1.2. Social connection with executives: leadership that inspires

**What is the relationship between managers' support and communication and employees' psychological wellbeing? And how can managers adjust their behaviour to enhance the wellbeing of their team members?**

Data from our own wellbeing surveys show that the relationship between employees and direct managers (also known as leader-member-exchange or LMX) has a major impact on employees' feelings of satisfaction.

### Key takeaways from our own data analysis



*Insights on the relationship between employees and leaders (leader-member-exchange).*

**i** Read how to interpret this graph on page 15.

#### > A good manager = greater psychological wellbeing

A good relationship with the manager who provides useful and constructive feedback on a regular basis improves psychological wellbeing.

#### > A good manager = lower turnover intentions

A strong relationship with the manager and regular, useful feedback lower the intention to leave.

#### > Toxic leadership = more turnover

While toxic leadership does not directly affect psychological wellbeing, it does increase the likelihood of leaving. Indirectly, toxic leadership can still affect wellbeing by negatively affecting perceptions of the relationship with the manager.

**In other words, leaders who show understanding and empathy, communicate openly, give constructive feedback and adopt a supportive attitude can significantly improve the wellbeing of their team members.**

Quality of good relationship  
with supervisor



Feedback from supervisor



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

Toxic leadership



Quality of good relationship  
with supervisor



Feedback from supervisor



TURNOVER INTENTION

Toxic leadership



#### READ MORE

### How do leaders influence the state of wellbeing within the entire organisation?

To reduce burnout and the number of long-term absentees, companies must urgently develop a workplace wellbeing strategy. According to Naima El Akel (Learning & Development partner at AG Insurance) and Rémy Siddiqui (Marketing Director at Waldon), leaders have an important part to play in this as people managers. So how exactly can they improve their employees' wellbeing? Naima and Rémy discussed this in a podcast with Lisbeth Imbo of HR Magazine. You can read the highlights of the conversation in this article.

Scan the QR code to read the article.



### What can your company do to foster the connection between managers and employees?

*Based on the Waldon Glasses Model*

**i** Read more about the Waldon Glasses Model on page 48.

#### Invest in leadership training

Research shows that leadership training has a positive impact on employee wellbeing. Consider training courses that focus on developing soft skills such as communication, empathy and conflict management. Training that is staggered in time and conducted in class is more effective than digital training (22).

#### Assess the situation regularly

Tap different teams and/or team members regularly to hear about their wellbeing. This can be done, for example, by planning wellbeing interviews in advance, evaluating and adjusting job descriptions, setting concrete wellbeing goals and reporting regularly on wellbeing within the team.

You can also choose to put that process in the hands of a professional who specialises in it. They capture the relevant data for you, for example, through a psychosocial risk analysis. This includes probing interpersonal relationships at work and their quality. This is a good indicator of cohesion, trust and support among colleagues.

**At Waldon too, we regularly conduct this kind of psychosocial risk assessment under the name My WellRi. More info on that can be found on page 49.**

Other ways companies can get a view on this is through, for example, reports from an internal reporting channel or the trustee's annual report.



## Encourage psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is a process in which employees perceive themselves as **effective and capable of successfully completing their tasks**. Some of the responsibility for this also lies with the companies where they work. By investing in training, for example, by clearly defining roles and avoiding excessive task demands, you can contribute to this.

Investing in psychological empowerment has proven positive effects, such as higher organisational commitment, lower turnover intentions, reduced stress and burnout, and increased job satisfaction and motivation (34).

READ MORE

### How Hillewaere Group fully draws the map of data-driven wellbeing policy with My WellRi



Hillewaere Group had always cared for its employees, but its efforts remained isolated initiatives for a long time. To provide staff with sustainable support, the organisation joined forces with Waldon. We conducted a jointly created wellbeing survey from A to Z. The result of this data-driven approach? An organisation-wide report with valuable data, separate reporting for the different offices and an individual and confidential report for each employee.

Scan the QR code to read the full article.



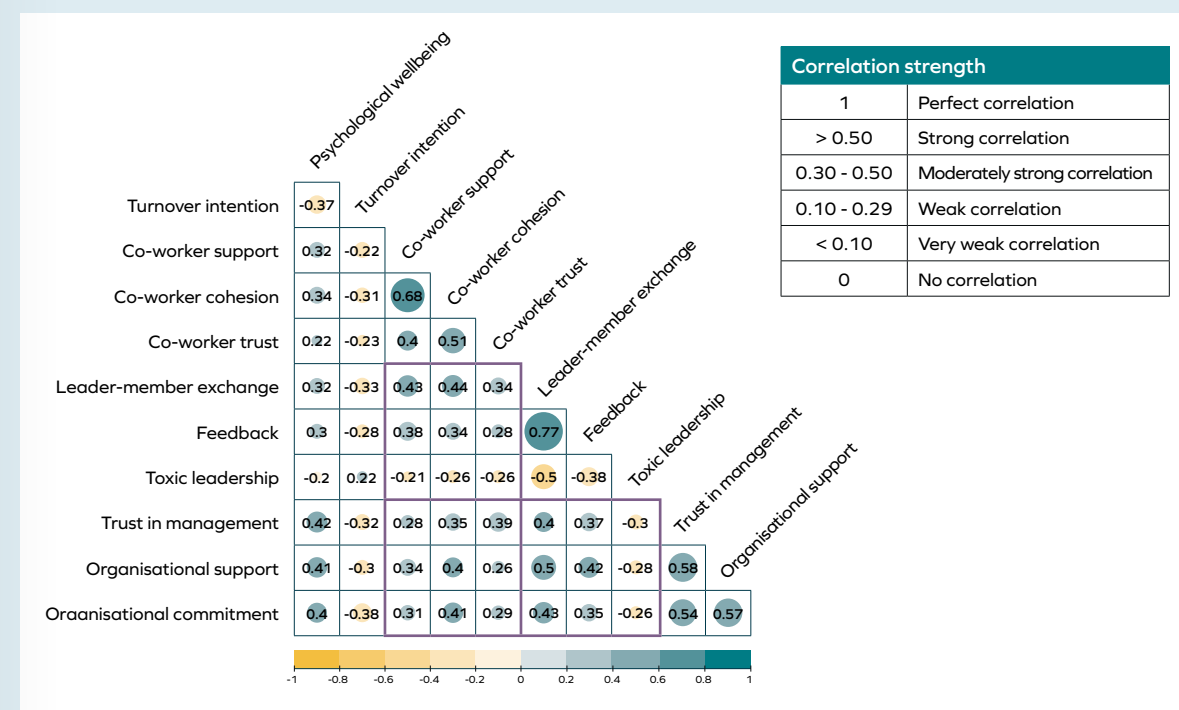
## 2.1.3. Social connection with the organisation: from employee to ambassador

**What role do an organisation's values and mission play in employee loyalty? And to what extent does employees' commitment to the organisation affect their job satisfaction and motivation?**

Literature review shows that employees who feel connected to their organisation's mission, vision and values are more likely to be committed to the organisation's long-term goals and success (21). Our own data analysis also shows that employees' strong connection or commitment to the organisation is associated with better wellbeing and fewer plans to leave.

*"Employees who feel connected to their organisation's mission, vision and values are more likely to be committed to the organisation's long-term goals and success."*

### Key takeaways from our own data analysis



*i* Read how to interpret this graph on page 15.

#### > Trust works


When employees feel there is trust between management and them, they exhibit higher psychological wellbeing.

#### > Perception of support is key

The perception that the organisation supports and treats employees fairly is associated with higher engagement with the organisation and higher psychological wellbeing.

# What can your company do to foster connection between the organisation and employees?

*Based on the Waldon Glasses Model*

 Read more about the Waldon Glasses Model on page 48.

## Bet on employer branding

**Don't set values and standards only to do nothing else with them. Also actively pursue it with employer branding.** Show that values and standards are more than a hollow concept by communicating clearly and openly about them to both current employees and the outside world. Write about them on your website, share them on your social media channels and highlight them in job postings. This makes you credible and gives extra confidence to your (future) employees.

## Provide individual support, including for non-work related issues

**Show that you appreciate your employees by supporting them, even when it comes to topics outside the workplace.** This can be done, for example, through an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), with which you support and follow up employees personally, but also respond proactively to their needs. An EAP programme offers confidential counselling, advice and guidance in areas such as mental health, stress management, addiction, relationship issues, financial concerns and legal issues.

Recent literature studies provide consistent indications that an EAP has a positive effect on wellbeing- and HR-related KPIs such as improvements in mental health, job satisfaction and productivity (17). This, in turn, helps reduce absenteeism, burnout and lost productivity.

Waldon also offers an EAP track under the name EASY (Employee Assistance and Support for You). It is a 100% confidential (phone) service for collaborators and their family members. They can contact it for useful information, practical support and counselling on many topics such as work, family, personal issues, challenges and more.



### Psychological counselling

24/7 direct access to a master-level psychologist for an immediate initial consultation, followed by structured counselling sessions.



### Practical support

Customised research on tools for an almost endless range of work-life topics.



### Life coaching

Stimulating, creative approaches to learn to cope with life's tipping points and feel good both personally and professionally.



### Legal and financial support

The service puts employees in touch with professionals, who provide non-binding and impartial general information on legal and financial topics.



### Manager Assist

In a phone interview, Manager Assist provides expert advice and tools for managers and team leaders, enabling them to manage their teams and address various concerns.



### Wellness & health coaching

Individual coaching via phone or video to ensure employees are in optimal shape.

*Waldon's EAP offer in a nutshell.*

## 2.2. Balanced workload: prevent overloading

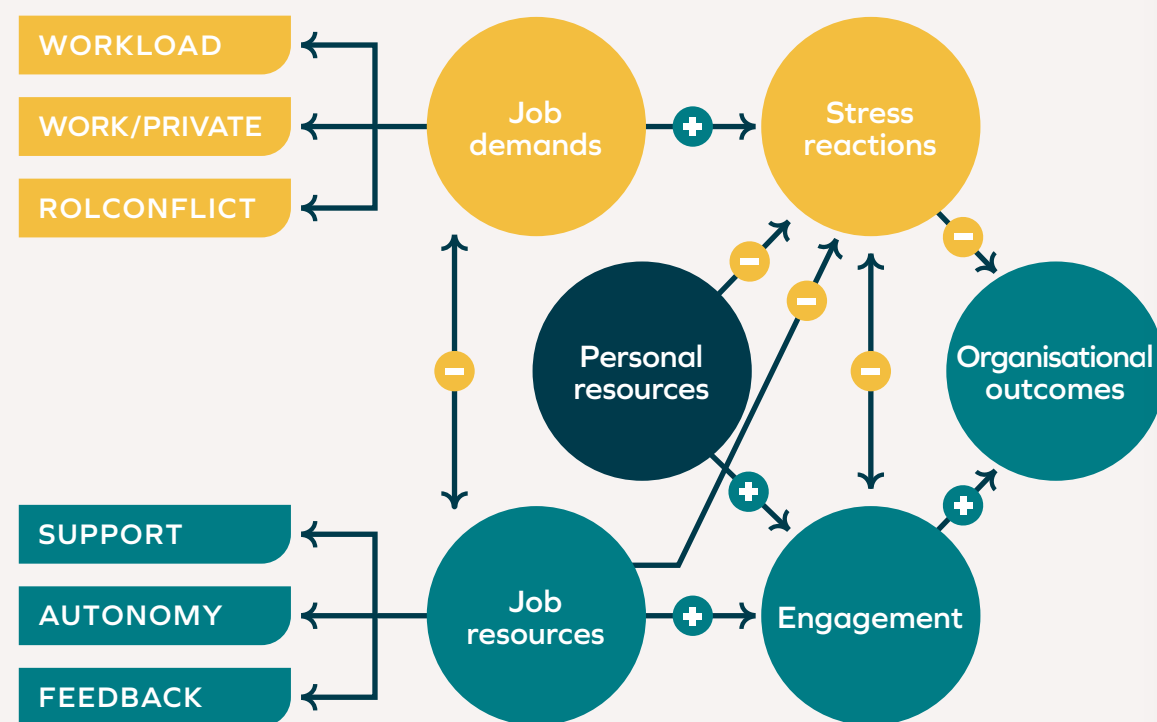
Our literature review and our own data analysis show that in addition to social connection, several job-related factors also play an important role in employees' psychological wellbeing. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R model) provides a valuable lens to understand and optimise the dynamics of these aspects.

### What is the JD-R model?

The Job Demands-Resources model, JD-R model for short, was developed by **Arnold Bakker** and **Evangelia Demerouti** (23). It argues that employee wellbeing is strongly influenced by the balance between the demands made (job demands) and the resources available (job resources).

- **Job demands** are the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects that require effort and may involve psychological and physiological costs. Classic examples are high workload, emotional strain and role conflict.
- **Job resources** are physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that are beneficial to employee wellbeing because they help achieve goals, encourage personal growth and because they can reduce the negative impact of job demands. Examples include developmental opportunities, social support and autonomy.

Job demands and job resources



## Key takeaways from the literature review and our data analysis

### Main job-related factors

Work pressure, role conflict and role clarity emerge as important factors associated with employees' psychological wellbeing.

### Offering more job resources has positive effects

The effects of increasing job resources for a team, department or the whole organisation are fairly consistent throughout the analyses. Resources such as social support, autonomy and feedback have a significant positive impact on various aspects of employee wellbeing.

### Reducing varying effects of job demands

Reducing job demands at the level of a team or department - e.g. by adjusting work processes - is not always effective. The negative effects of job requirements seem mainly personalised and vary greatly between individual employees. What is stressful for one employee may be motivating for another. So here a more individual approach is required. (26)

### Strengthen job resources: yes, but...

At group levels, interventions that focus on strengthening job resources, such as leadership training, seem to have more potential than those that focus on reducing job demands. In addition, they also enhance job performance (26).

Moreover, recent research (24) shows that high job resources often do not fully compensate for high job demands, again demonstrating the importance of pursuing a reduction in job demands among those who need it.

## What can your company do to balance its workload?

### Based on the Waldon Glasses Model

**i** Read more about the Waldon Glasses Model on page 48.

### Encourage taking breaks

Support your employees in taking regular, short breaks and let them make their own choices about how to fill them. The latter is crucial for an employee to recover from the workload for a while. Research suggests that even very short breaks can have positive effects. Frequent breaks have been linked to improved mental and physical wellbeing, especially when used for exercise, relaxation, or even a short nap (25).

Some important points to note: using social media during breaks can have both advantages and disadvantages, depending on how it is deployed. It is also advisable to avoid imposed breaks where work-related matters are discussed, as this can potentially have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the break (25).

### Reframe priorities

Clearly delineate expectations and job description. Help employees prioritise and focus on the most important tasks (36).

### Let employees (re)design their job content

In job crafting, you give employees the opportunity to actively shape and adapt their own jobs. This may mean adapting their tasks, changing the way they work or rearranging their relationships at work so that their work better suits their skills, interests and needs. Interventions aimed at job crafting showed a positive association with wellbeing indicators in most cases (35).

However, according to research by Boehnlein and Baum (27), the effects of job crafting can vary. When the employee mainly engages in reductive job crafting, i.e. reducing the scope or depth of his or her own range of tasks, this often does not lead to positive outcomes and should mainly be taken as a sign that the employee does not feel good in the job.

### The benefits of job crafting include:

- 1** Improved wellbeing: Employees feel more engaged and experience less stress when they can influence their own work.
- 2** Higher motivation: Making work more meaningful increases motivation.
- 3** Better performance: Employees who match their jobs to their strengths often show better work results.

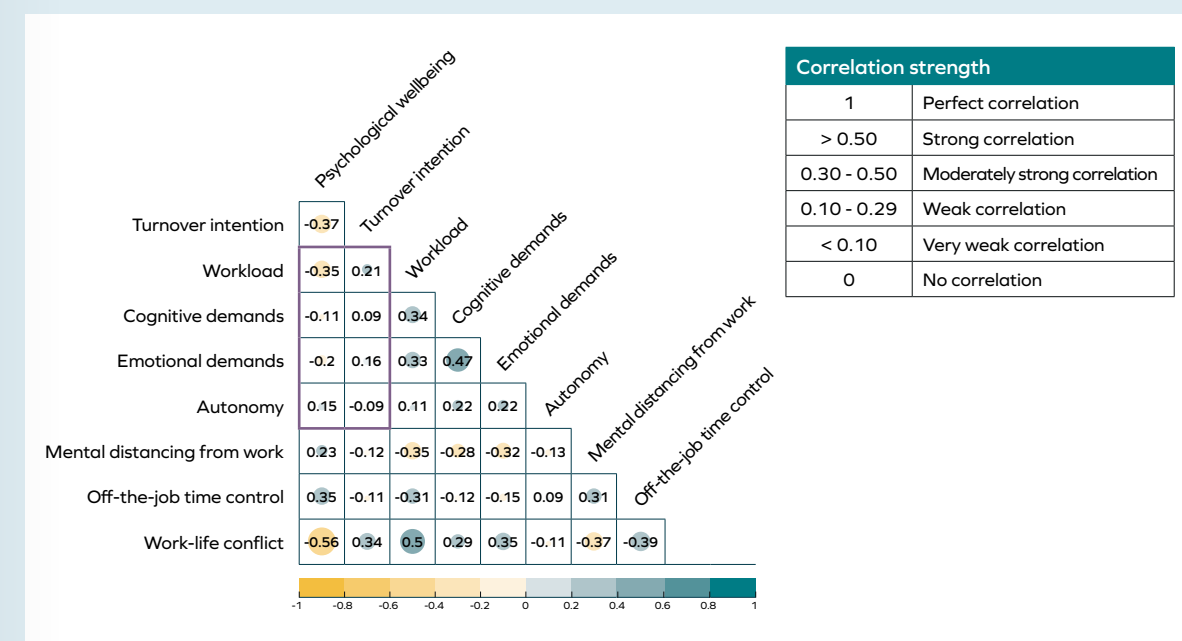
READ MORE

## The impact of job crafting on wellbeing KPIs

In the article "Playful work design, engagement and performance: the moderating roles of boredom and conscientiousness!", organisational psychologist **Arnold Bakker** discusses how job crafting contributes to increased job satisfaction, motivation and productivity based on a study of 370 employees.



Scan the QR code to read the full article.



## Key takeaways from our own data analysis

**i** Read how to interpret this graph on page 15.

**Workload is a difficult topic within many companies and HR environments. How you deal with this requires some nuance.**

**On the one hand, workload remains a matter of perception.** What is perceived as a lot of work and/or stressful by one person may be neutral to another or vice versa. On the other hand, figures from our My WellRi surveys do show a link between perceived workload and psychological wellbeing. A high workload also has a negative impact on work-life balance and disconnection from work. Those factors, in turn, can make us feel less good psychologically.

## 2.3. Work-life balance in a hybrid world: opportunities and challenges

Scientists agree that work-life balance is an essential aspect of employee wellbeing. However, the rise of hybrid working - partly at home, partly at the office - is basically causing the line between the two to become blurred. But do employees really experience it that way? And what are the real advantages and disadvantages of hybrid working?

Scientific research shows that employees who work about 40-50% from home have a better work-life balance, a stronger sense of autonomy, higher job satisfaction, experience less stress and emotional exhaustion, and have a healthier lifestyle. (40, 41)

### Key takeaways from our data analysis and literature review

#### Flexibility is key

The opportunity to work part-time or hybrid has significant positive effects on workers' wellbeing. It offers flexibility and reduces the stress associated with long commutes and rigid working hours.

#### ... but working from home can be experienced as negative

The impact of teleworking on employee wellbeing depends on, among other things, factors such as the richness of communication channels, asynchrony (i.e., communication between colleagues is simultaneous or delayed), technical complexity and flexible connectivity (e.g., internet access).

While the majority of workers experience positive effects of hybrid working, there is a small group that experiences negative outcomes, such as technostress, social isolation, less physical activity, and higher workload. Employees who combine work and private life while working from home - by looking after the children, for example - are also more likely to experience hybrid working as negative (28).

*"Although the majority of workers see hybrid working as positive, a small group experiences negative outcomes such as technostress, social isolation and less physical activity."*

## What can your company do to help monitor employees' work-life balance?

### Based on the Waldon Glasses Model

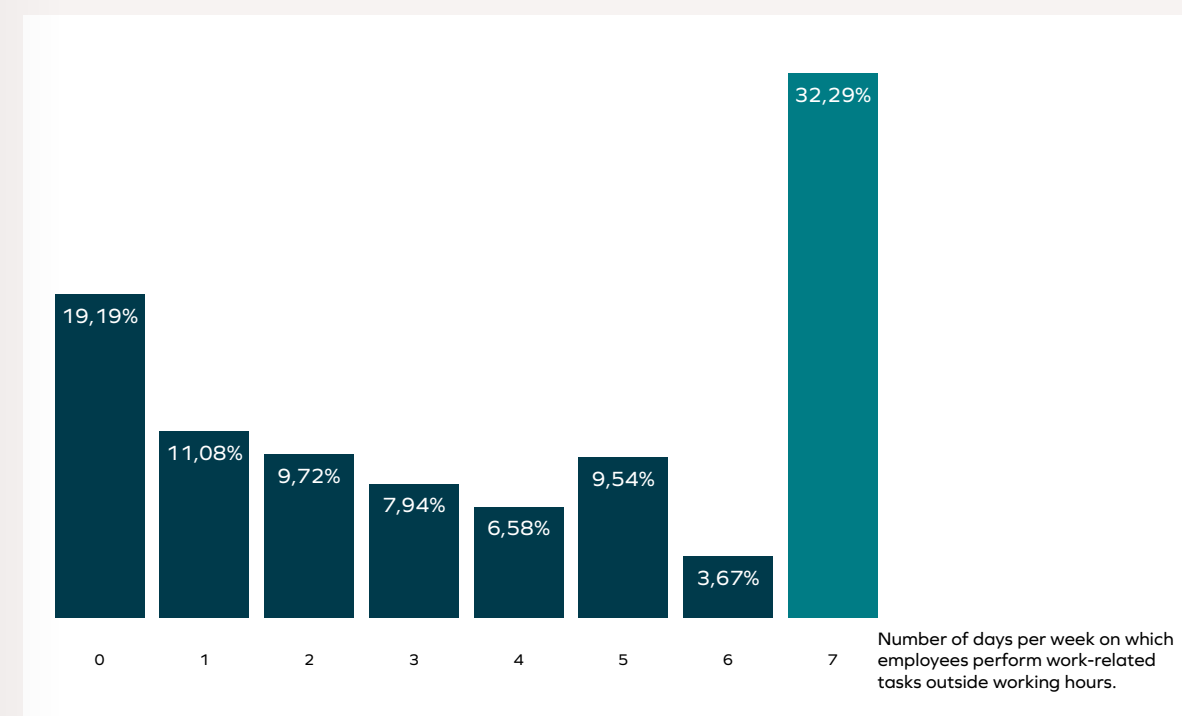
#### Sensitise employees about mobile working

Invite employees to reflect on their mobile work behaviour and inform them about the risks involved, such as blurring the line between work and private life. Mobile working refers to performing work-related tasks outside regular working hours, usually using technological tools such as smartphones, laptops or e-mail.

Mobile working thus differs from working from home because it often takes place outside working hours, such as checking e-mails before bed or answering a phone call during dinner. It is important to help employees monitor these limits and consciously manage their mobile work behaviour to avoid overworking and stress.

By educating employees about the impact of mobile working and getting them to reflect actively on their work behaviour, you can promote a healthier work-life balance.

#### Mobile working



More than 3 in 10 employees are still engaged in work outside hours every day, including weekends



### Make clear agreements

Make clear working agreements, such as the specific times when employees absolutely must be reachable and expected response times outside these moments. This reduces the pressure to be constantly available and helps employees better separate their work and private time. This is something you can also perfectly add to your team charter (cf. supra).

### Promote personal boundaries

Support employees to set personal boundaries by offering workshops or training on effectively separating work and private life. Inform them about segmentation strategies (e.g. a separate workspace for working from home, strict working hours) and offer support (e.g. childcare).

### Facilitate flexible work schedules

Give employees the opportunity to adjust their work schedules to suit their personal needs. This can range from adapted working hours to the option of working from home when needed.

### Conduct one-to-one interviews

Hold regular individual meetings with your team members to discuss their work-life balance and spot any problems early.

#### LISTEN TO

### Hybrid working scrutinised

The evidence is clear: hybrid working is good for both people and organisations. So why are big companies like Amazon suddenly asking their employees to come to the office five days a week again? In this podcast, [Anne Morris](#) (founder of The Leadership Consortium) and [Frances Frei](#) (professor of Technology and Operations Management at Harvard Business School) debate what Amazon's new back-to-office policy means for the company's future.

Scan the QR code to listen to the podcast.



### **3. The power of perception: why wellbeing is more than just actions**

### 3. The power of perception: why wellbeing is more than just actions

It is not only the effective actions a company takes that have an impact on employee wellbeing. Employees' perceptions towards the employer as a function of wellbeing also contribute to this. When employees have a negative perception of the wellbeing climate in the organisation, their psychological wellbeing is also more likely to be weak and therefore they will consider leaving the organisation.

The wellbeing climate refers to the extent to which the organisation is committed to employee health and wellbeing (and rolls out actions or measures around this). Factors such as open communication, the visibility of wellbeing programmes, management commitment to stress prevention and the level of support from managers, can strongly contribute to a positive or negative perception of this wellbeing climate (42).

Elements such as managerial support, policies and programmes, and access to facilities such as healthy food and fitness options, contribute to a positive health culture. Research suggests that a strong health culture positively correlates with wellbeing indicators, highlighting the need to actively support both prevention and promotion of wellbeing (29).



#### Key takeaways from our data analysis

##### Major influence of perception

The perception of the wellbeing climate within an organisation seems to have a greater influence on employees' intention to stay than their actual psychological wellbeing. When employees perceive the organisation as committed to their health and wellbeing, they tend to score higher on psychological wellbeing - a correlation that appears to be remarkably strong in our data.

In particular, feeling that the organisation is actively involved in supporting their health and wellbeing, that resources and opportunities are provided to maintain them, and that management takes problems seriously and resolves them, plays an important role.

In addition, it appears that when employees perceive this dedication, they are also more motivated and feel more confident to participate in wellbeing initiatives. Although this effect is smaller, especially the perception that the organisation encourages participation in wellbeing programmes has a major impact on motivation. The organisation's commitment to wellbeing also helps increase employees' self-confidence to participate in these initiatives.



## What can your company do to promote perceptions around wellbeing?

### Based on the Waldon Glasses Model

 Read more about the Waldon Glasses Model on page 48.

### Make wellbeing negotiable

Create participation and communication mechanisms that discuss psychosocial risks and mental health through surveys, confidants and awareness campaigns. Ensure that communication on wellbeing topics is proactive, frequent and continuous.

Seasonal and personalised campaigns can be effective here. For example, you can choose to focus on a theme each month or quarter to which you link one or more initiatives. May, for example, is Mental Health Month, the ideal time to find out about the mental health of your employees via an anonymous survey or self-test.

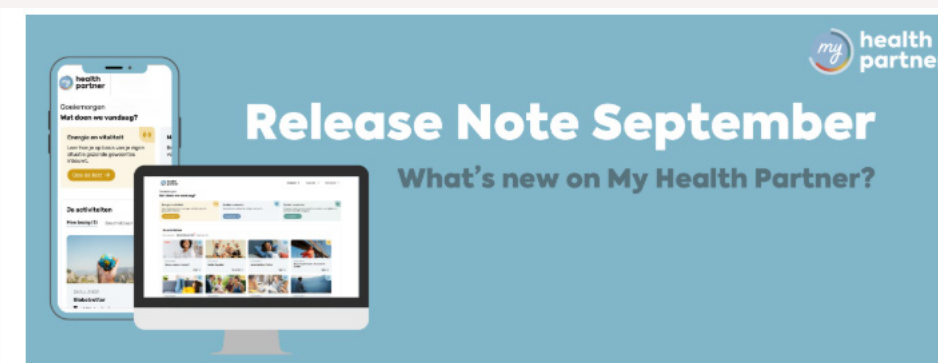
<b>Energy and vitality</b> Learn how to build in healthy habits, based on your own situation. <a href="#">Take the test →</a>	<b>Mental resilience</b> Assess and improve your current resilience level. <a href="#">Take the test →</a>	<b>Social connections</b> Evaluate your communication with others and receive pointers on how to truly connect with them. <a href="#">Take the test →</a>
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*Through our My-Health-Partner platform, employees can easily gauge the status of their energy and vitality, mental resilience and social connectivity. Based on the results, they receive personalised tips and advice.*

## Communicate clearly and sufficiently

Communicate clearly around wellbeing programmes and make sure employees understand how these benefit them. Regular updates and open communication channels are crucial to effectively promote your wellbeing climate (30). Send regular communications about the initiatives you have planned and also put them in the (digital) agenda, so that welfare stays top of mind within your company.

For example, end users of our own wellbeing platform My Health Partner receive info on a regular basis about the available wellbeing tracks they can participate in.



**Hi, Lola!**

### Quarterly focus: stress

**Keeping your stress levels under control is essential to live a healthy and balanced life.** That's why we offer you a full circle stress management experience on My Health Partner.

#### Interview with neuroscientist Steven Laureys

We had the honor to interview globally recognized neurologist Steven Laureys about this topic. **We navigated the way stress works in our brain and how we can cope with it in different effective ways.** Curious? The full video is now available on My Health Partner.

Next to the interview, you'll find more inspiring resources on your [insights page](#) such as **articles, books, videos and some fun extras.** Go check them out!



## Set a good example

Promoting wellbeing does not work if you set up a one-off action and then never speak about it again. If you expect to see long-term results, lead by example. As a company, send a clear signal that you stand behind your initiative because, as we mentioned here earlier, perception matters.

### One way you can do that is by adapting the office environment to wellbeing principles.

Four design principles play an important role here:

1. **Comfort:** Provide ergonomic furniture, good lighting, noise reduction and individual control of the workplace. Factors such as climate, air quality and privacy also contribute to wellbeing.
2. **Recovery:** Create spaces with plants, natural daylight and views of greenery to promote recovery and relaxation.
3. **Social wellbeing:** Give employees the opportunity to personalise their workplace and provide small, shared spaces for collaboration.
4. **Healthy behaviour:** Encourage movement with sit-stand desks, use of stairs and centralised facilities such as kitchens and toilets.

In addition, studies consistently show that landscape offices can have negative effects on wellbeing. Support workers with quiet spaces such as phone boxes, meeting boxes and project rooms, and divide the workspace into smaller shared areas to improve productivity and wellbeing (31).

## WATCH THE VIDEO

### How our client AG remains a top employer

**Jan Heyvaert**, Chief HR & Sustainability Officer at insurer AG, explains in this video how the company offers employees an optimal working environment. AG's Campus, a learning and innovation centre, takes centre stage as a meeting place where colleagues exchange ideas and create new projects. This philosophy was carried through into their renovation programme, which earned them the Belfa Award audience award for 'Facility Project of the Year'. This case again illustrates the importance of a thoughtful office environment.

Scan the QR code to discover AG's successful approach. Automatically generated English subtitles are available.



*"Our philosophy, we are extending today into the rest of our renovation programme. To receive the Belfa Award as best 'Facility Project of the Year' reinforces my conviction that we made bold and right choices. With this project, we are well placed for the coming years."*

**Jan Heyvaert**  
Chief HR & Sustainability Officer  
at insurer AG



## 4. Conclusions

## 4. Conclusions

Analysis of wellbeing data at our clients and insights from scientific research highlight the crucial role of a well thought-out wellbeing policy within organisations. It is clear that investing in the wellbeing of employees is not only ethically and socially beneficial, but also economically rewarding.

An integrated approach is essential for your wellbeing policy to succeed. You need to take into account the different sub-sections of the work experience: from social connection and work-life balance to the overall wellbeing climate within your organisation. This holistic approach is most effective in improving the (psychological) wellbeing of employees.

Managers also play an important role in this. Their support and feedback appear to have a direct impact on their team members' experience of workload, motivation and satisfaction. So as an organisation, you need to be aware that engaged executives make a significant contribution to employee wellbeing.

In addition, flexibility in working hours and workplaces is also an important factor in promoting psychological wellbeing. Hybrid working can have positive effects, but it requires a careful balance to avoid negative side effects such as technostress and social isolation.

Finally, a structural, consistently applied approach is necessary to reap the benefits of your efforts. Above all, remember that a wellbeing policy should be broad in scope, and it is best to consider both social and work-related aspects. The success of a welfare policy depends on a lot of factors, but scientific foundation, committed leaders, and providing flexibility and space for personal development are a must. Only then will you have a sustainable impact on both the wellbeing of your employees and the success of your organisation.

## 5. Methodology, data and framework

## 5. Methodology, data and framework

In this reference work, we combine insights from our own data research (My WellRi) and analyses of client wellbeing data with recent insights from 42 scientific studies. The focus here is mainly on meta-analyses, meaning that the results of previously conducted studies are combined to make a more precise statement about a particular phenomenon. For this, we focused on data published in the last 5 years.

Our own data comes from 9 My WellRi wellbeing surveys of medium-sized organisations in a variety of sectors, covering 1,688 people. In doing so, we focus on dates from 18 February 2022, after the end of COVID-19, to paint the most up-to-date picture of current challenges.

### Practical information

#### Survey:

- Contains 63 variables
- Ability to ask company-specific questions
- Takes +/- 25 minutes and is available in EN, FR & NL
- Survey availability: +/- 3 weeks

#### Communication and follow-up:

- Invitation & reminders
- Including response rate
- Individual report to increase response rate

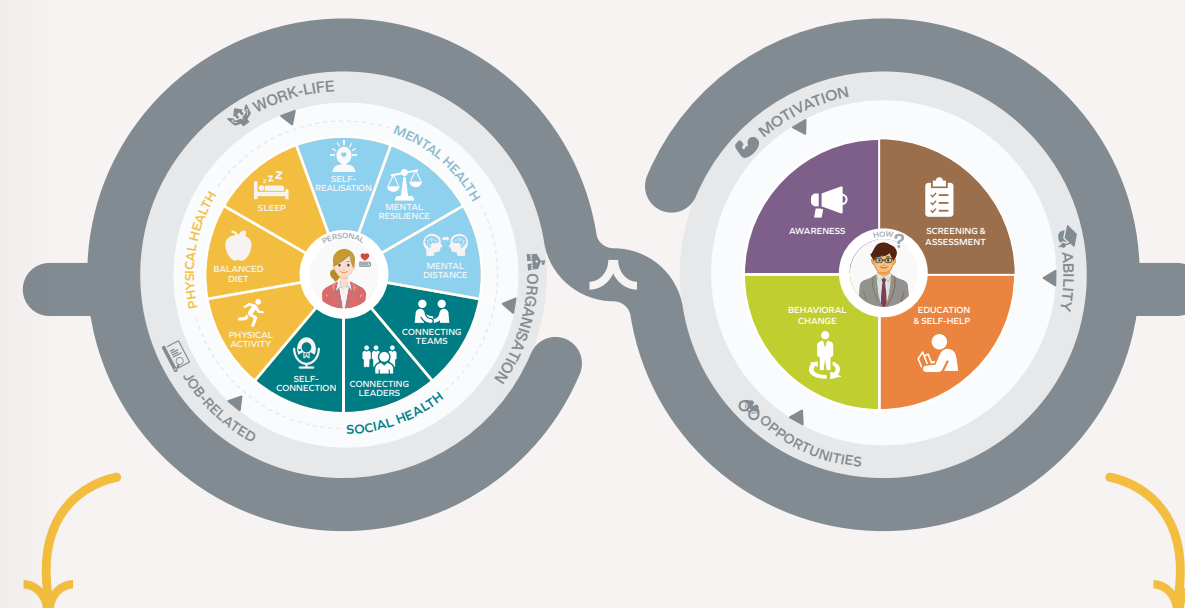
#### Reporting:

- Quick dashboard access
- Key insights report

## 5.1. The Waldon Glasses Model a fresh look at wellbeing

Employees are the heart of any successful business. Waldon supports companies to enhance employee wellbeing, increasing their productivity and job satisfaction. We do so using up-to-date insights and a scientifically based tailor-made approach. But what specifically does the Waldon Glasses Model entail?

To make insights applicable, we use the Waldon Glasses Model. This evidence-based framework provides clear guidance for developing an effective wellbeing strategy. It focuses on four success factors: awareness, screening, education and behavioural change.



The **left glass** represents the collection and analysis of wellbeing data, focusing on physical, mental and social wellbeing.

The **right glass** focuses on targeted welfare initiatives, with a focus on sustainable behavioural change and measurability, so that we can monitor the progress of initiatives and adjust the approach if necessary.

By integrating this model into our strategies, we can offer wellbeing programmes that perfectly match the specific needs of each organisation we work with.

This model was developed in collaboration with **The VIGOR Unit**, a spin-off of Ghent University. This centre of expertise helps organisations make informed HR decisions on workplace wellbeing, through systematic research of scientific literature and statistical analysis of HR and organisational data.

## 5.2. The power of My WellRi

This white paper is partly based on proprietary data we gathered from clients in the form of a My WellRi audit. Through a My WellRi wellbeing audit, we make a comprehensive assessment of wellbeing policies within an organisation. This audit helps to identify increased wellbeing risks early and take preventive measures so that these risks do not lead to absenteeism from work, high staff turnover or burnout.

This in-depth audit consists of a questionnaire, which helps organisations identify and track the different aspects of employee wellbeing, as well as the personal, job-, organisational- and work-life-related factors that may affect their wellbeing.

The underlying model is based on the scientific research of The VIGOR Unit. It thus forms the basis for a sustainable vision of wellbeing, a focused strategy and a concrete action plan, which goes far beyond the legal requirements around the mandatory psychosocial risk assessment.

## 5.3. Action plan: getting started yourself with My WellRi

Do you really want to see change? Then focus on the success factors that matter, with an evidence-based approach. My WellRi offers in-depth risk analysis that reveals pain points with crystal clarity. This is not just wellbeing - this is wellbeing that transforms your organisation.

With My WellRi, you make wellbeing concrete and measurable. No empty promises, but an approach with impact.

- Strengthen your employees' and leaders' wellbeing
- Reduce absenteeism, burnout and staff turnover
- Save on recruitment costs and avoid productivity losses

**This is the stepping stone to a stronger organisation. Get started!**



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## 6. Source list

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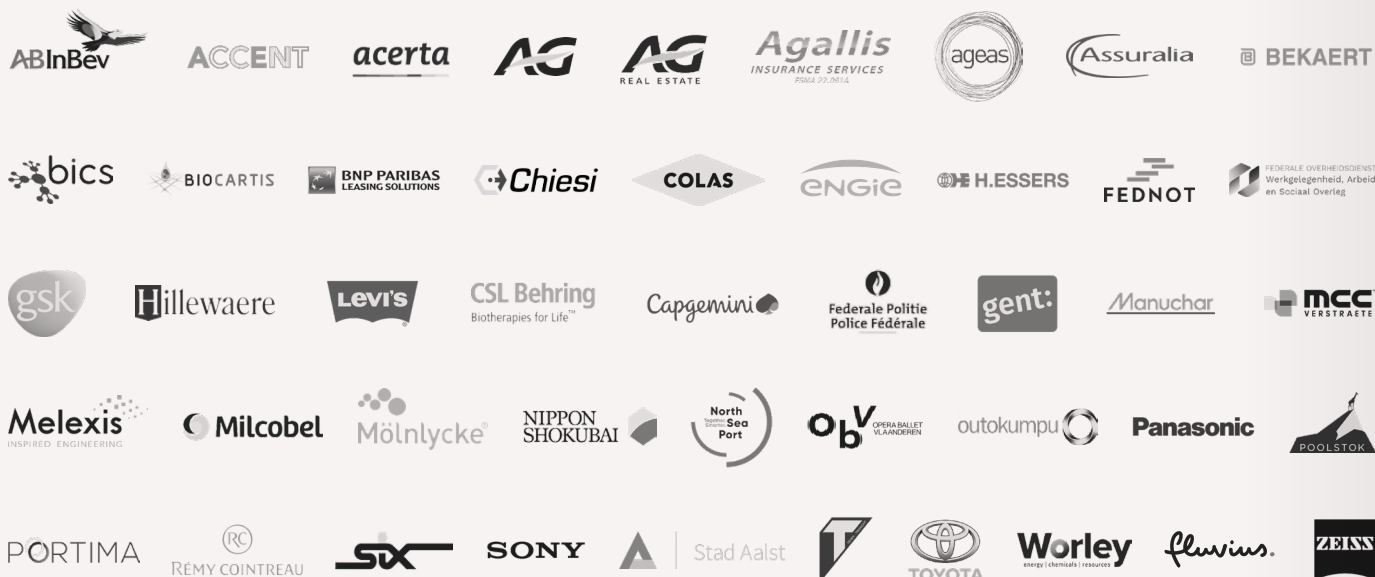
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What about yours?



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