

Addressing Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

CSSEA AGM and Conference – Sparking
Innovation

October 9, 2025

WELCOME and INTRODUCTION



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Prevention Services

The operational priority for Prevention Services is to prevent workplace injury, disease, and death by engaging employers and workers in workplace health and safety.

We engage employers and workers to reduce risks and keep workplaces healthy and safe through **education**, **consultation**, and **enforcement**.

WorkSafeBC – Who we are

- Promote occupational health and safety to create safer workplaces through consultation, education, enforcement, and investigation
- Support workers, provide compensation, facilitate recovery and safe return to work, and reduce disability
- Run a sustainable no-fault insurance system



At **WorkSafeBC** we partner with workers and employers to prevent injury, disease, and disability.

• **280,000+** registered employers • **500,000+** workplaces in BC • **2.7 million** workers covered

Objectives

- Understand psychological health and safety and how it impacts workplace culture
- Explore strategies for managing psychological health and safety in the workplace
- Learn practical steps to prevent psychological injuries and empower leadership

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- Slide 1: QR code
- Slide 2: Poll question: "How would you rate the CSSEAn 2025?"
- Slide 3: Poll question: "Did your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety..."

Mental health by the numbers

1 in 5

1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental health problem

500,000 a week

500,000 Canadians a week are unable to work due to their mental health

#1 cause

Mental health is the **#1 cause of disability claims** in Canada

\$50 billion

Poor mental health costs the Canadian economy over **\$50 billion a year**

75% of workers

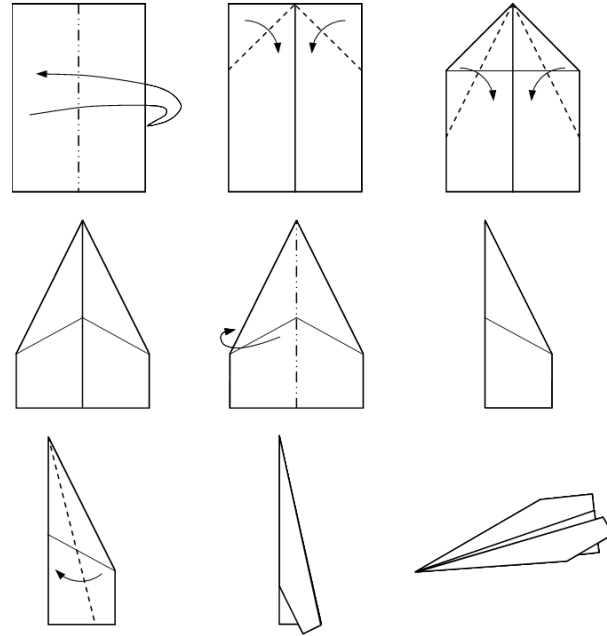
75% of working Canadians would be reluctant to disclose a mental health condition to their boss or co-worker

71% of employers

71% of employers with front-line employees believe they do a good job supporting mental health; **only 27% of front-line workers** agree

Psychological Health and Safety

What does it mean?

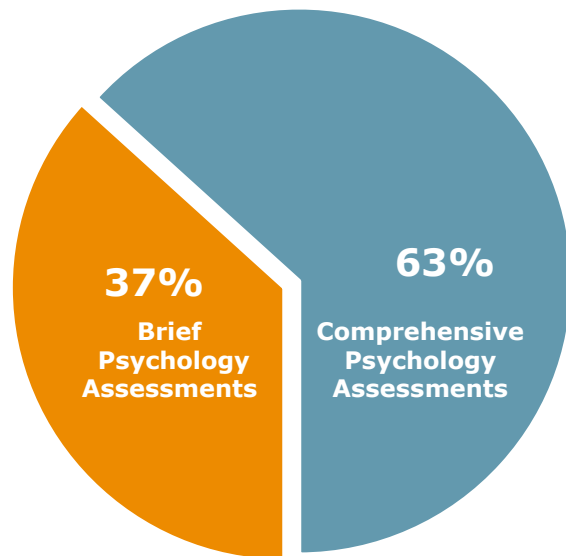


**Current state of mental health
claims at WorkSafeBC**

The bottleneck: Assessment access

Comprehensive wait drives duration; decisions are fast once reports arrive

2024 YTD Jul



2024 YTD: 63% of injured workers had a Comprehensive Psychology Assessment and 37% had a Brief Psychology Assessment completed.

Median Calendar Days to Appointment

Brief Psychology Assessment

↓6%

(-1 day)

2023: 16 days

2024 YTD: 15 days

Comprehensive Psychology Assessment

↓22%

(-23 days)

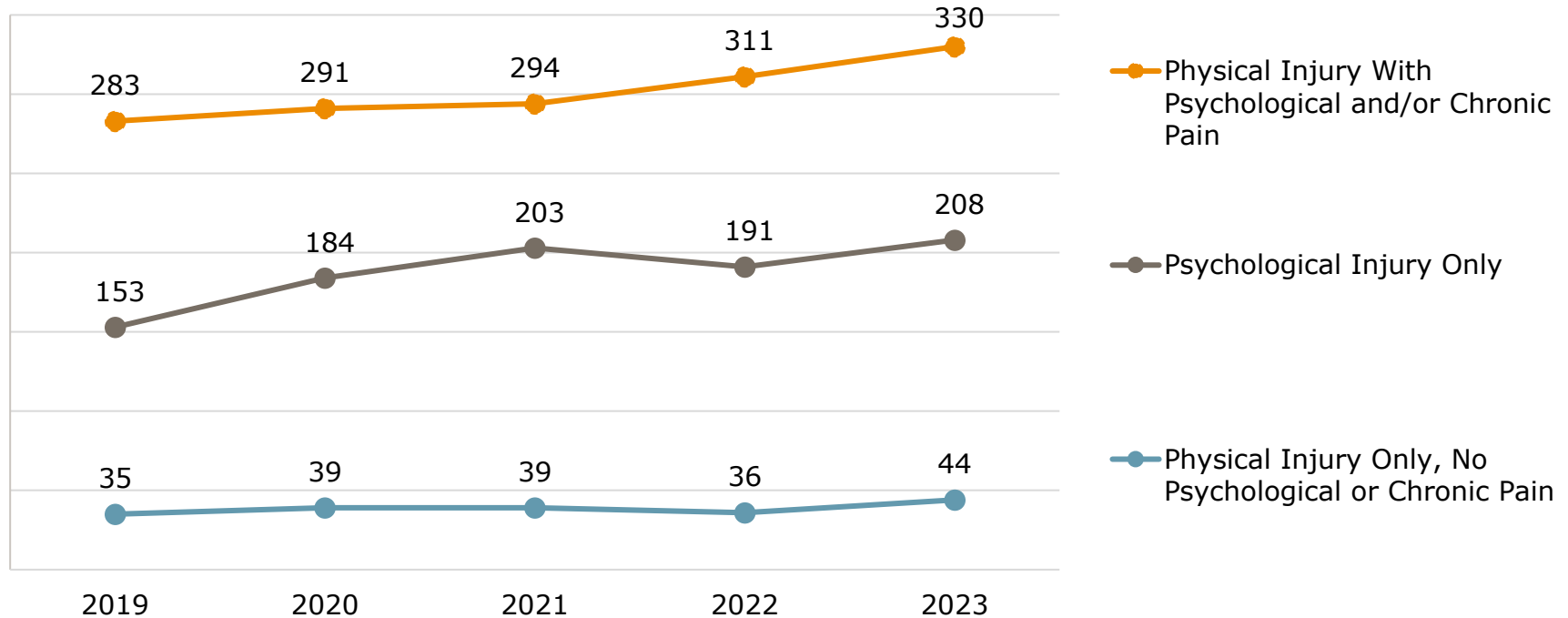
2023: 105 days

2024 YTD: 82 days

From 2019-2023, a claim eligibility decision was made 5 calendar days following receipt of the assessment report.

Short-term Disability (STD) Duration

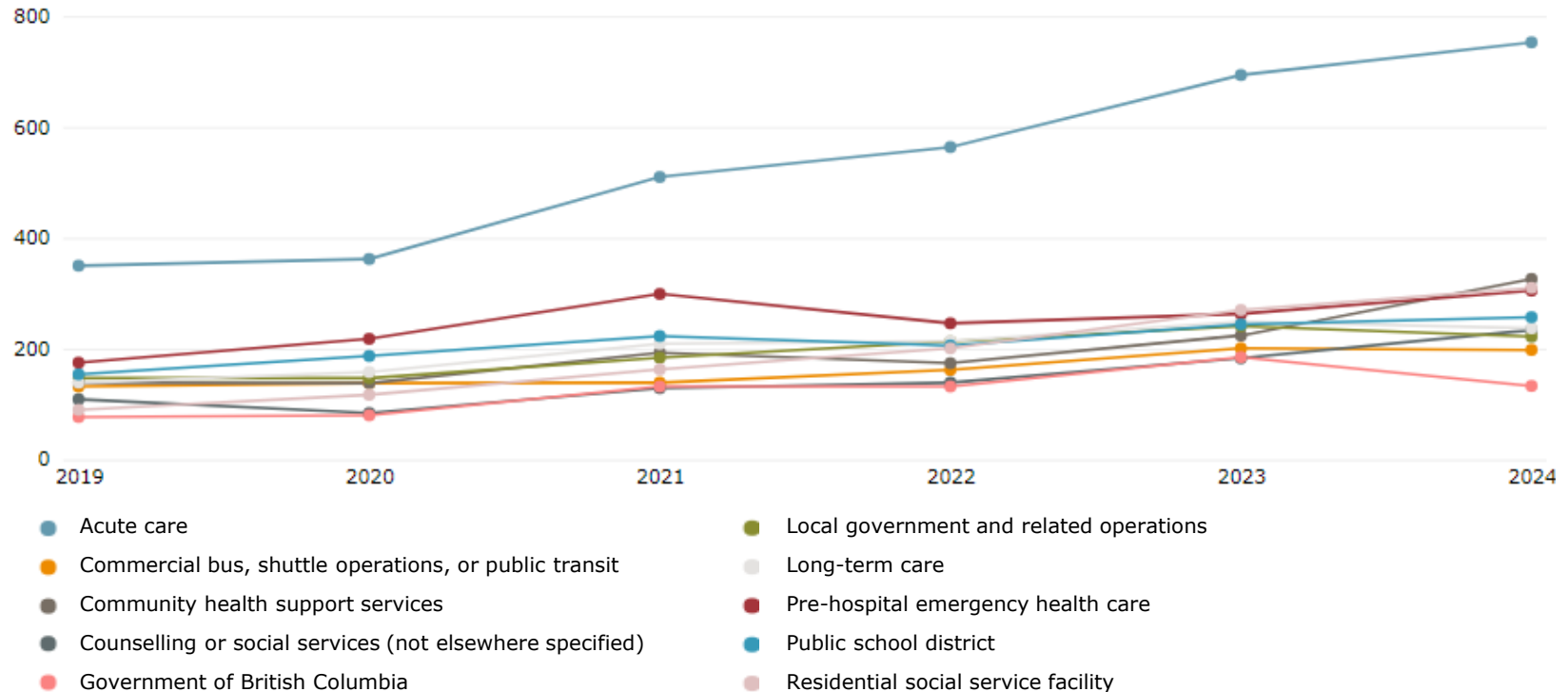
By claim types



Psychological injury-only claims reported

By top classification units — YTD

Psychological injury-only mental disorder claims reported — by industry (YTD)



Psychological injury only claims

By industry subsector and CU, 2020 - 2024

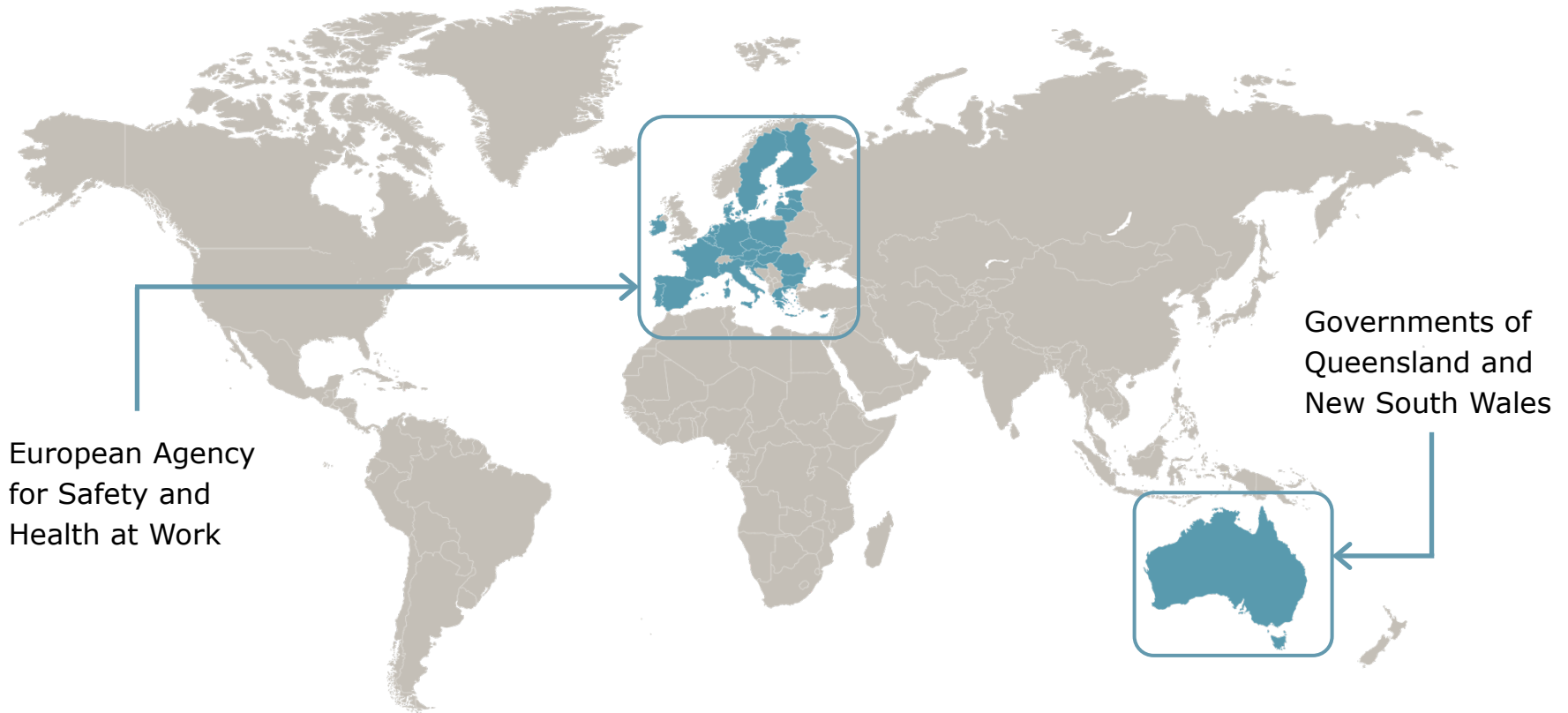
Five-Year Summary, listing industry subsector and classification units with more than 25 psychological injury only claims accepted in 2024.

	Psychological injury only claims reported					Psychological injury only claims first allowed in year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total - All Sectors	4,437	5,449	5,889	6,773	7,258	1,624	1,739	1,977	2,192	2,437
Health Care and Social Services	1,760	2,319	2,491	2,972	3,374	785	874	945	1,092	1,241
Acute Care	533	762	872	1,021	1,075	219	244	298	322	335
Pre-hospital Emergency Health Care	322	427	358	366	482	233	260	242	218	238
Residential Social Service Facility	176	236	293	391	421	103	104	121	171	224
Community Health Support Services	229	280	301	355	495	72	87	83	133	155
Counselling or Social Services	145	185	212	268	341	60	68	76	110	118
Long-Term Care	239	285	314	361	357	64	68	71	91	104

Visit: [Psychological Injury Claims \(Mental Disorder Claims\) 2020 to 2024](#) | WorkSafeBC

Psychological health and safety

Global landscape of psychological health and safety



Standards

- CSA Standard Z1003-13 Psychological health and safety in the Workplace released in 2013
 - Voluntary
 - 13 Psychosocial Factors

Psychological Support; Organizational Culture; Clear Leadership and Expectations; Civility and Respect; Psychological Job Demands; Growth and Development; Recognition and Reward; Involvement and Influence; Workload Management; Engagement; Work/Life Balance; Psychological Protection from Violence, Bullying, and Harassment; Protection of Physical Safety; Other Chronic Stressor As Identified By Workers

Standards

- ISO Standard Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks released in 2021
 - Global standard
 - 3 categories of psychosocial hazards

Work Organization; Social Factors; and Work Environment and Hazardous tasks

What framework does Canada rely on?

CSA factor	ISO focuses
Organizational culture	Leadership, organizational/workgroup culture, recognition and reward
Clear leadership and expectations	Leadership, roles and expectations
Civility and respect	Civility and respect, violence at work, harassment, bullying and victimization
Psychological competencies and requirements	Job demands, workload and work pace
Growth and development	Career development
Recognition and reward	Recognition and reward, career development
Psychological support	Support
Involvement and influence	Job control or autonomy, interpersonal relationships, supervision
Workload	Work/life balance, workload and work pace
Engagement	Recognition and reward, career development
Balance	Work/life balance, workload and work pace
Psychological protection	Organizational change management
Protection of physical safety	Work environment, equipment, and hazardous tasks

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Using the three principles, which is the one we are operating on with focus oil?

Workplace Culture

- The shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape how work gets done.
- Culture emerges in language, actions, and unwritten rules—not just policies.
- In social services, culture influences emotional safety, collaboration, and resilience.

Leadership's Role in Shaping Culture

- Leaders set the tone through behavior, communication, and recognition.
- Culture change requires modeling compassion and challenging harmful norms.
- “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” – Peter Drucker

BC Human Rights Tribunal Test for a Poisoned Work Environment

- *A poisoned environment is based on the nature of the comments or conduct and the impact of these on an individual rather than on the number of times the behaviour occurs. Even a single egregious incident can be sufficient to create a poisoned environment.*
- *A poisoned environment can be created by the comments or actions of any person, regardless of his or her position of authority or status in a given environment.*
- *(Brar Decision at para. 741)*

Recognize Stigma & Promote Resilience

- **Stigma:** “a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person”
 - Self-stigma – negative views about self around mental health
 - Social stigma – negative stereotypes held by society about mental health issues and the people who have mental health issues
- **Resilience:** “The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress and the ability to “bounce back” from difficult experiences”

High Performing, Healthy Workplaces Emphasize:

Improving Competencies	vs	Proving Competencies
Serve the collective mission	vs	Protect your ego
Collaborative Care Culture	vs	Contest culture

Managing Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

What does it mean?

Definition

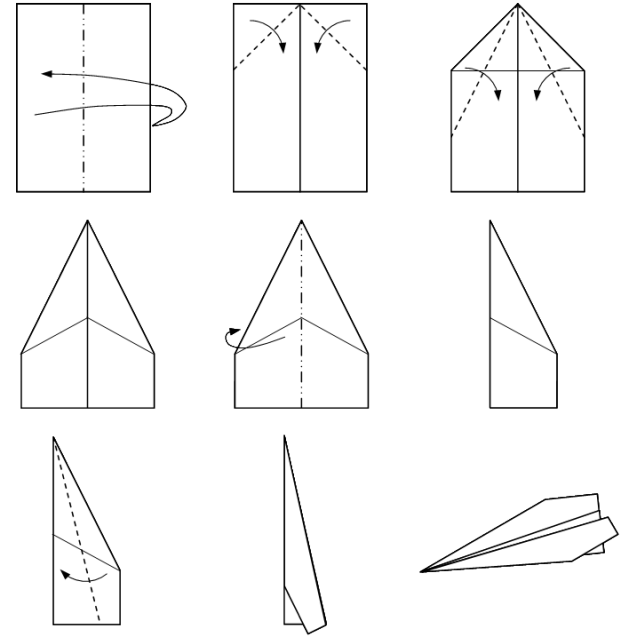
- **Psychological Safety**

- A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.

- **Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace**

- A workplace that promotes workers' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm. Embedded in the way people interact with one another on a daily basis and is part of the way working conditions and management practices are structured and how decisions are made and communicated.

**What do you think
Psychological Health
and Safety means
now?**



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Did your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety...

Improve.

2.5

Stay the same.

2.8

Hard to say.

1.3

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree



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How would you rate your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety?



Did your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety...



From the three principles, which three were most important to you?

Current State of PHS

Building a culture of psychological health and safety



Principle 1 - Show Leadership Commitment

- Leaders need to set the tone by demonstrating their commitment to psychological health and safety.
 - PH&S Policy in Place
 - Ensure access to necessary resources.
 - Ensure job demands are manageable.
 - Prioritize prevention activities such as conducting psychosocial risk assessments.
 - Communicate openly and encourage worker participation.
 - Integrate psychological health and safety policies into the overall occupational health and safety program required by sections 3.1–3.3 of the Regulation.
 - Lead by example.

Principle 2 - Develop Supportive Managers and Supervisors

- Managers and supervisors often have the most influence in shaping workplace culture.
 - Enhancing relationships with workers
 - The quality of relationships between managers and workers can make the difference in workers feeling comfortable voicing concerns or reporting mistakes or risks.
- Ways to develop skills and characteristics in managers and supervisors:
 - *Choose key items from list on page 3*

Team psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences.

Dr. Amy Edmundson, Harvard Business School



Principle 3 - Ensure Worker Participation

- Worker participation means employees are included in discussions, decisions, and initiatives about workplace factors that affect their mental well-being.
 - Contributing to psychosocial risk assessments
 - Participating in prevention activities
 - Voicing concerns with the joint health and safety committee or worker representative
 - Offering or receiving peer support
 - Offering encouragement and positive reinforcement
 - Removing barriers to participate
 - Providing time, training, and resources to actively participate
 - Integrating discussions of well-being into regular manager and worker interactions

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From the three principles, which is the one your organization will focus on?

0

Show Leadership Commitment

0

Develop Supportive
Managers/Supervisors

0

Ensure Worker Participation



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Forecast what comes to mind when you hear 'health and safety'?



Did your understanding of Psychology of Health and Safety...

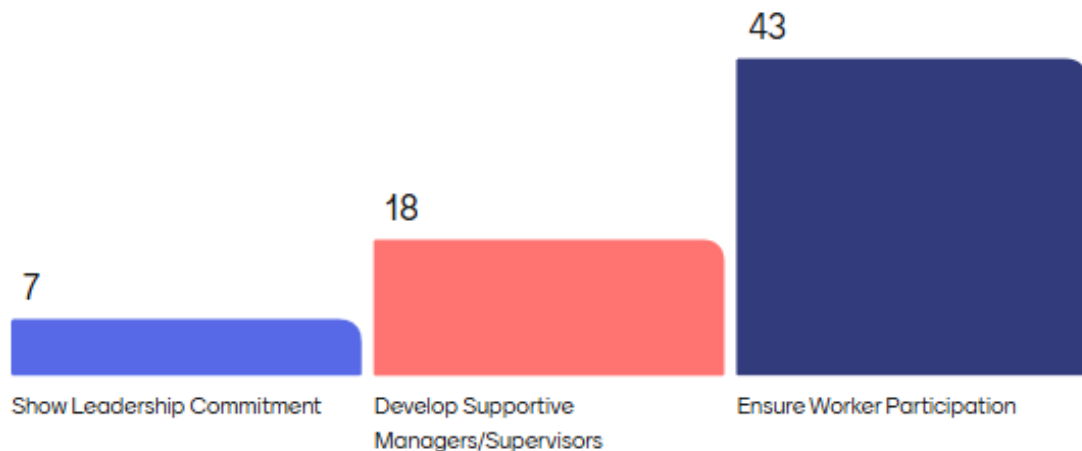


From the three principles, which one do you think your organization will focus on?

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Which of the three principles will be the most challenging to follow?



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Forward what comes both in when we have 'teamplace culture'?



Did your understanding of Psychology of Health and Safety...



From the three principles, which three was your organization focused?

COFFEE BREAK

Definitions Continued

- **Psychosocial Hazard**

- Social, behavioural, or psychological conditions within the workplace or work we do that can negatively affect our psychological and physical health.

Managing risk is a continual process



Risk Management Model - Understand

- **identifying hazards**

A hazard is any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects on something or someone, under certain conditions at work, such as chemicals, electricity, equipment or psychosocial hazards.

- **assess the risks**

Risk is the chance that somebody could be harmed by these hazards, as well as the potential severity of harm.



A Framework for Success

Psychological Safety: A Framework for Success describes five categories of psychosocial hazards and provides examples of control measures that can help reduce their potential effects on the psychological health and safety of workers.

- Interpersonal environment
- Job design
- Workplace conditions
- Need for employer supports
- Exposure to traumatic events



**Psychological health and safety:
A framework for success**

Managing psychological health and safety in the workplace is as important as managing physical health and safety. A psychologically healthy and safe workplace prevents harm to workers' mental health and promotes mental well-being.

While many factors outside the workplace can affect mental health, it is an employer's responsibility to address the factors that are within the control, responsibility, or influence of the workplace. These three principles help to create, support, promote, and maintain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace:

1. Show leadership commitment
2. Develop supportive managers and supervisors
3. Ensure worker participation

Many employers already operate according to these principles, which are outlined in more detail in this document. Those who effectively promote psychological health and safety have greater productivity and employee engagement. Their workers experience less conflict and higher morale, and are less likely to leave.

Risk management model

The approach to managing psychological health and safety is similar to the approach for managing risks to physical health and safety: understanding risks, implementing safety measures, communicating safety information, and monitoring measures for effectiveness.

Begin by identifying the psychosocial hazards in your workplace, which are conditions that have the potential to cause psychological harm. There are five categories of psychosocial hazards, which are described in more detail later in this document:

- Interpersonal environment
- Job design
- Workplace conditions
- Need for employer supports
- Exposure to traumatic events

1 | Psychological health and safety: A framework for success

WORKSAFE BC

From psychosocial hazard to psychological injury

Psychosocial hazards often stem from:

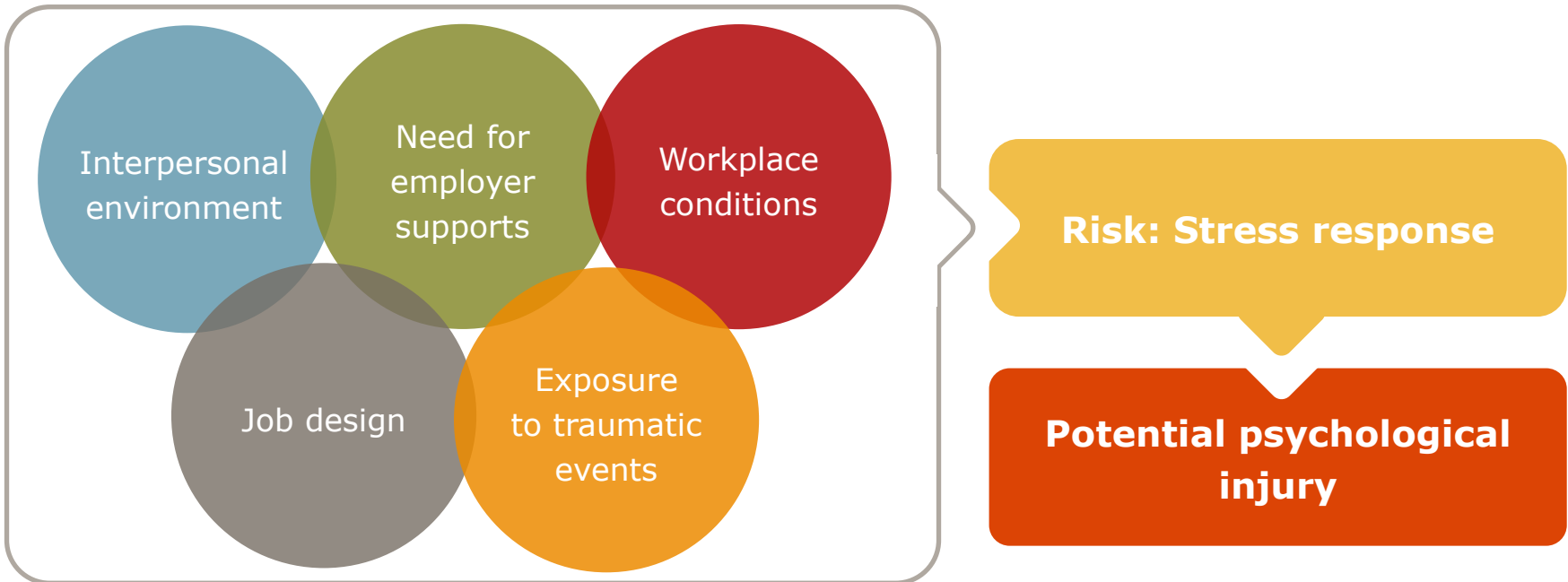


TABLE DISUCSSION
**BRAINSTORM – what Social,
behavioural, or psychological
conditions that are a negative
impact to psychological safety
are most present in your
workplace?**

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Which psychosocial hazards are present in your workplaces?

Harassment

Lack of management training

Interpersonal conflict between staff

Work /life balance or balance between working multiple jobs

Performance over relationship focus in operations

Management not dealing with interpersonal issues with staff

Interpersonal conflict

Short staffing-will cause staff to not want to call in sick because it pits pressure on others

Dealing with aggressive behaviours

Lack of understanding around different cultures

Societal acceptance of hatred

People High stress crisis situations Lack of understanding



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Increased what comes to mind when you hear 'workplace culture'?



Did your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety...

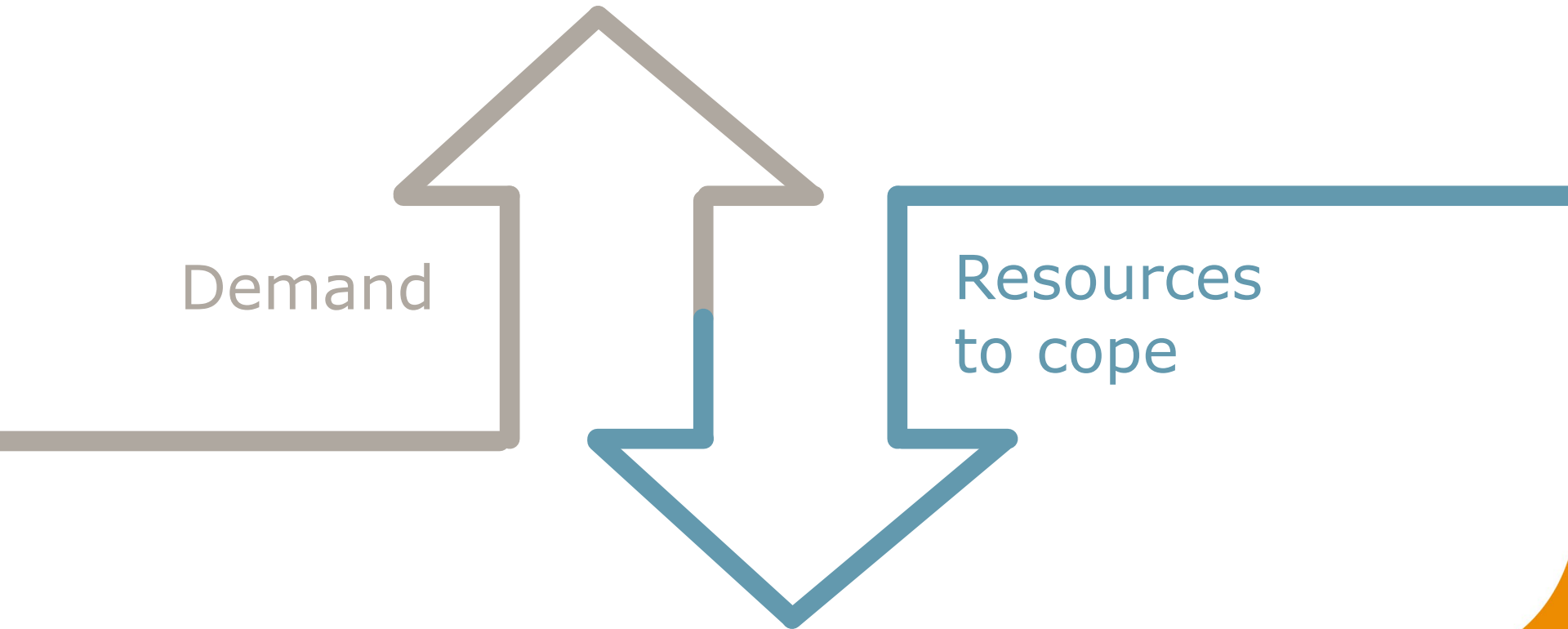


From the three topics, which three was your operational focus?

- Lack of supervisor support
- Unclear leadership and expectations
- Absence of a psychological health and safety policy
- Limited access to mental health resources
- Inattention to equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Low role clarity
- Poor job fit
- Low job control
- High or low job-task variety
- High or low job demands
- Prolonged, unreasonably excessive workload
- Inadequate occupational health and safety program
- Unsafe physical environment
- Lack of equipment available, including personal protective equipment
- Inadequate communication about health and safety
- Lack of pre-traumatic event support and education
- Lack of post-traumatic event support and education
- Cumulative and single-incident trauma exposures
- Lack of mental health resources

Next Steps

Psychological injury



Bill 41

Return to Work Obligations

New return-to-work duties for workers and employers



As of January 1, 2024, changes to the *Workers Compensation Act* legally require workers and employers to cooperate in timely and safe return to work. Some employers are also required to maintain employment with their injured workers in specific circumstances.

The new amendments are designed to:

- Encourage connection and collaboration between workers and employers by laying out formal return-to-work responsibilities in the event of a work-related injury or illness.
- Reinforce the value of return to work and promote positive outcomes for workers.

WORK SAFE BC

New return-to-work duty changes

Workers and employers: The **duty to cooperate** creates obligations for an injured worker and their employer to cooperate with each other and with WorkSafeBC to identify suitable work. The employer must make the suitable work available to the worker in a timely and safe manner, and the worker must not unreasonably refuse the work. The duty to cooperate applies to claims with injury dates on or after January 1, 2022.

Some employers: The **duty to maintain employment** applies only to certain employers. If an employer regularly employs 20 or more workers and has employed the injured worker for at least one year before their injury, the employer has an obligation to maintain that worker's employment, to the point of undue hardship. The duty to maintain employment applies to claims with injury dates on or after July 1, 2023.

Learn more

Visit worksafebc.com/returntoworkduties or scan the QR code to learn more about what these new duties mean for you, and to access resources related to return to work.



Questions?

Please visit gems.online.worksafebc.com/emailus and select "Duty to cooperate and Duty to maintain employment" to submit your questions.

WORK SAFE BC

Mental Health

Legislation & Policy History

May 17,
2018

- Bill 9: Mental Disorder Presumption Clause (Mental Disorder Policy)
- Correctional Officer, Emergency medical assistant, Firefighter, Police Officer, Sheriff

April 16,
2019

- Expansion of Mental Disorder Presumption
- Emergency response dispatcher, Health care assistant, Nurse

June 10,
2024

- Expansion of Mental Disorder Presumption
- Community Integration specialist, Coroner, Harm reduction worker, Parole officer, Probation officer, Respiratory therapist, Shelter worker, Social worker, Transition house worker, Victim service worker, Withdrawal management worker

Mental health treatment and supports



Individual counselling



Multidisciplinary treatment



Concurrent treatment



Critical Incident Response (CIR)



Occupational therapy



Online cognitive behavioral therapy



Social Work: Outreach & Transition Services



Psychiatry

ROI of a culture of psychological health and safety

\$1.62

Average ROI
of mental health programs

235%

Amount company stocks appreciated — versus 159% — over 6 years

Non-financial benefits

- Retention rates
- Talent attraction
- Employee engagement
- Effective risk management
- Alignment with shareholder priorities

International evidence

Studies from around the world consistently show that promotion, prevention, and early intervention **can provide positive ROI**

Employers supporting PH&S

Employers can actively promote psychological health and safety (PH&S) by making it part of the culture:

- Form a PH&S committee/make a standing item in safety meetings
- Educate and train supervisors/managers – equip leaders with necessary skills
- Identify psychosocial risks/hazards – ensure workers participation
- Make mental health resources accessible and known to workers
 - EFAP, extended benefits providers, WorkSafeBC – CIR, social work/outreach, PSS

Taking Action

What is one action you can put into practice in your organization to champion psychological health and safety?



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Forecast what comes to mind when you hear 'health care culture'?



Did your understanding of 'Psychology of Health and Safety'...



From the three principles, which three your organization will focus on?

Resources

WorkSafeBC Resources:

- Crisis Support Line: support for if you or your family is in emotional crisis available 24 hours/7days a week. 1-800-624-2928
- Critical Incident Response Program: support for if you witnessed a workplace accident or fatality. Available 9am-11pm, 7 days/week.
1-888-922-3700
- Claims Call Centre: if you have experienced a workplace injury; access to information on eligibility and claims processes. 1-888-WORKERS
- Prevention Information Line: access to information about occupational health and safety law and processes. 1-888-621-7233

How can we help?



Psychological health
and safety: A framework
for success



New return-to-work
requirements:
Employer resources



How to support workers
who experience
psychological injuries



Recover at work starter
toolkit for employers



New return-to-work
requirements:
Worker resources



Return to Work
Education and Services
Support Line

Thank You! / Questions?

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Ask your questions here...

No questions from the audience!

Incoming questions will show up here so that you can answer them one by one.

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In one word, what comes to mind when you hear "workplace culture"?

Did your understanding of Psychological Health and Safety...

Organize
Communicate
Monitor
Improve

From the three principles, which is the one your organization will focus on?