How to examine and interrogate workplace data

Recognising and analysing data available within your workplace can help to identify and assess potential psychosocial hazards and factors. Sources of data can vary depending on the size of your workplace, and certain trends or patterns can indicate that there may be poor psychological health and safety in the workplace. Your People at Work survey results will work well alongside your workplace data to help you gain a more holistic picture of psychological health and safety in your workplace and to help inform a business case when you may need to invest resources to work towards its improvement.

The table below will help you identify some common areas that may provide this valuable data.

Data source	How to examine and spot patterns/trends
Records of sick leave with or without certificates	- Look at the rate of sick leave for a workgroup compared to the average across a unit, region or department and then compare this to the whole workplace. - Look for types of illness in summary information, including: - tension headaches or migraines, recurrent general ill-health (e.g. colds or flu) - digestive system ulcers - musculoskeletal disorders (e.g. tendon or muscular soreness). - Examine data frequencies for each workplace/workgroup.
Recreation leave	Look at patterns of recreational leave use such as taking a small amount of time off (i.e. one or two days off frequently), as this can be commonly associated with unpleasant working conditions and work-related stress.

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Absenteeism records	• Look at trends particularly linked to psychosocial hazards and factors. For example, absenteeism after peak work periods with long work hours and heavy workloads, workplace change,, critical incidents causing trauma or workers reporting not being supported.

Workers' compensation claims	• Look for patterns and trends recorded in workers' compensation claims, for example those that provide information about 'mental disorders claims[1]' in a workplace.
	• Examine data regarding workers' compensation claims for:
	    o work pressure
	    o exposure to violence
	    o workplace bullying
	    o exposure to trauma
	    o sexual/racial harassment
	    o other mental stress factors
	• Record the factors associated with these claims and the actions taken in the workplace to prevent further injury.

Grievance information	• Workplace grievance information can indicate issues that may give rise to stress in the workplace such as overload, harassment, discrimination, work-related violence, work-related bullying, and traumatic incidents.
Incident and injury records	• Look at dates and times of incidents or injuries that coincide with other events or trends. The pattern of small and large incidents can provide insight into the sources of stress in a workplace.
Employee assistance program	• Look at employee assistance program summary data such as the number of reports or types of issues managed.
Industrial relations records	• Look at records of industrial relations complaints. For example, complaints about pay, unfair dismissal or employment conditions.

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[1] Please note, this is the terminology used within the workers' compensation scheme.

Minutes of meetings	• Look for unresolved and reappearing issues over time, such as workload and changes in work roles by reviewing previous minutes from workplace health and safety meetings, toolbox talks and staff meetings.

Issue resolution records	• Look for workplace health and safety issues (i.e. bullying, incidents, stress reports, grievances etc.) when changing practices such as:
	   o work systems
	   o practices
	   o management
	   o responsibilities.

Employee opinion survey information	• If you have conducted any employee surveys look for employee satisfaction regarding:
	   o leadership
	   o pay
	   o management of workplace conflict
	   o reward and recognition of effort
	   o career opportunities
	   o job security
	   o working conditions
	   o workplace consultation
	   o communication and involvement in decision making
	   o control over workload
	   o work schedules
	   o work culture issues (e.g. levels of support, social or physical isolation, management style).

Turnover data	• Examine turnover data from existing surveys or exit interviews. o Data that shows higher than normal turnover rates can indicate a potential workplace problem. Specific information to look for when reviewing reasons for leaving include workload, lack of support or the mention of any bullying or conflict.

Media attention	• Any negative media attention for your business or organisation can signal the potential for increased psychosocial hazards and factors within the workplace. Use this as a catalyst to examine what is going on a little more closely.
Recruitment	• Consider the difficulty or ease with which you are able to recruit new workers. • Look at the time taken to hire, keeping in mind that some specialist roles are much more difficult to recruit for. o Sites such as glassdoor.com and employer reviews on seek.com can provide insight into an organisation's work-life balance. This may contribute to how easy you find it to recruit new employees.