

HSE INDICATOR TOOL USER MANUAL

Background

The Indicator Tool is a 35-item questionnaire relating to the six primary stressors identified in the Management Standards on Work Related Stress. The items are based on the best available evidence linking work design to health outcomes

It has been designed to support the process described in the Management Standards by providing a broad indication to organisations of how their workforce rate their performance in managing the risks associated with work related stress.

The Indicator Tool can be used as a standalone measuring device or alternatively the items can be included in another question set, such as a pre-existing staff survey. It is recommended that the HSE Analysis Tool be used to score the responses, regardless of whether it is used as a standalone measuring device or incorporated into a wider staff survey. If you use these questions in another survey, it is important that you retain the same question text, question order and response scale. You must do this if you wish to analyse the responses using the HSE analysis tool and to compare your data with others who have.

The HSE Analysis Tool allows for the input of up to four items of demographic information to help you analyse responses. When conducting your survey, you may find it useful to ask respondents to indicate their location, department, job type etc. You should avoid doing this if using a very small sample as anonymity may be compromised.

It is recommended that the Indicator Tool is not used as the only measure of stress within an organisation. The results from the Indicator Tool should be confirmed by discussing the findings with employees and also by considering other data that is available within the organisation, such as sickness absence rates, employee turnover etc.. See Step 3 of the website for further guidance.

This User Manual provides general guidance on various aspects of using the Indicator Tool in a survey to gather the opinion of the workforce.

Areas covered in this User Manual include the following:

- Selecting a sample
- Getting a good response rate
- Analysing the results.

Additional resources are included in the Appendices including:

- An example covering letter for a staff survey
- A checklist for using the Indicator Tool.

Selecting a Sample

There are several issues to consider in selecting a survey population:

1. What lists of workers can be used;
2. How many workers do you need to sample; and
3. How to select a sample of workers.

List of workers

If you are selecting a sample of workers or all workers in your organisation you will need to be sure that you have an up to date list of workers in your organisation who are selected for the survey. The list may be the payroll list, staff records, site security records or similar source. It is important that the list of workers you use is up to date and accurate to ensure all those in your sample receive their questionnaires. This will help maximise your response rate making the survey as reliable as possible.

Recommended minimum sample size

A survey including all your workers will always provide a more precise picture than a sample. The advantages of conducting a survey among the smallest recommended sample size is that it keeps costs to a minimum, and also limits the staff time required. The minimum sample sizes have been calculated to ensure that the survey findings will give a statistically representative picture of the views of all staff in your organisation.

The advantages of using a larger sample size include the possibility of more detailed sub-group analysis (e.g. by occupational group) and give more of your staff the opportunity to give their opinions. The disadvantages of this are greater costs in terms of resources and time.

Recommended sample sizes are given in the table below.

Total number of workers	Recommended Sample size ¹ to provide data accurate to at least $\pm 5\%$ ²
500 or fewer	All Workers
501-1000	500
1001-2000	650
2001-3000	700
Over 3000	800

¹ Assumes a response rate of 50%

² Relates to \pm percentage of the score

How to select a sample of workers

If you are selecting a sample of workers, it is important that these are selected at random from your list. Random sampling provides a statistically valid way to gather data. It allows you to take results from the sample and use them as a best estimate of what represents the views of the whole workforce.

By far the quickest way to select a random sample of workers is to use a spreadsheet software package:

1. Export your list or copy and paste it into a spreadsheet program, if not already in one.

2. If you are planning subgroup analyses, then you should also include details such as occupation, staff group etc. as well as workers names.
3. In an adjacent blank column create a list of random numbers using the functions of the spreadsheet package or other means.
4. Sort the whole list on these random numbers and take the cases ordered sequentially from the top or the bottom as your sample.

It is also possible to do your random selection manually:

1. Number your list of workers sequentially e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc.
2. Generate a set of random numbers equal to your sample size in the range 1 and your total number of workers. For example: if you have 2000 workers you need to generate a list of 650 random numbers between 1 and 2000. The list of random numbers can be acquired from a spreadsheet program, from statistical tables or via the Internet where there are several sites available that generate random numbers.
3. Manually select, from your list of workers, cases of numbers that correspond to the random numbers generated. These are your *sample population* to whom you send your questionnaire.

Getting a good response rate

Obtaining a high response rate is important to ensure your results are representative of the population you are investigating. As a very crude rule of thumb for a survey of this nature a response rate of over 50% could be considered adequate, over 60% reasonable and over 70% good and more than 80% very good.

There are several things you can do to increase your chances of a good response rate before you start. Employees should feel the questionnaire is important, and that their views matter and will be acted on:

- Publicise the survey within your organisation, including endorsements from senior management and employee representatives before it is distributed.
- It is important to explain to all staff:
 - The purpose of the survey;
 - How actions will be taken to address survey findings;
 - How and when staff will be receiving a questionnaire; and
 - How and when staff will get feedback on results.
- Ensure anonymity of responses. This will encourage employees to give frank and accurate responses. A formal statement of anonymity at the beginning of the survey is the best way to do this.
- Use up to date and accurate records to distribute questionnaires to ensure they do not go to the wrong locations.
- Give people enough time to complete and return questionnaires.
- Ensure managers consider that the process is important and encourage their staff to take time to complete questionnaires.
- It is worth noting that those organisations that allow staff surveys to be completed in work time get a much better response rate.
- Have one or two reminders before the completion date.
- Indicate on the material accompanying the questionnaire when and how the results will be communicated to all staff.
- Provide appropriate instructions on completion and a contact for support for completion if required.
- Consider what the best medium is for distributing, and returning the survey to your staff (e.g. paper based, staff intranet). If possible, it may be useful to offer different formats so individuals can select the most convenient for them, while maintaining their anonymity.
- If possible, provide some sort of incentive for completing the survey.

An example covering letter that can accompany the questionnaire is provided in **Appendix A**.

Analysing The Results

The scores provided by the HSE Indicator Tool are based on employee responses to the questionnaire. They indicate how you are performing against each of the Management Standards (see *HSE Analysis Tool Summary of Results* page). A lower score indicates poor performance, or a potential problem area. The scores range from 1 to 5. The information is presented in the form of average scores and charts providing:

- Your organisation's score on each of the six Management Standards colour coded to highlight potential problem areas;
- A suggested interim target in each of the six areas, based on where you are now; and
- A suggested longer-term target based on the scores of the top 20% of respondents in a nation wide survey to determine how organisations are performing in terms of managing work related stress. These figures are being used as a benchmark to enable HSE to monitor improvements in stress management. Our aim is to get more workers and organisations to where the top 20% are now (2004).

(For more detailed information, see the HSE Analysis Tool and the HSE Analysis Tool User Manual.)

You can use this data in a number of ways to compare your performance:

- Against previous survey(s) you have undertaken, with the aim of measuring progress;
- Across different parts of your organisation; and
- Against the national picture, to provide some external benchmarks against which to judge your performance and to set achievable organisational goals.

It is important to remember that the results only provide an indication of performance against the Management Standards. You will need to share and discuss the outcomes of the survey with employees, and explore the issues raised in more detail, for example in focus groups. (Refer to Step 3 on the website for guidance on *How to run focus groups*)

A combination of results from the survey, other relevant data and formal or informal auditing of existing management systems should be compared against the Management Standards.

The intention is that the data can be used to achieve a system of continuous improvement. HSE has conducted many studies over the years that examine how much progress can be made by implementing organisational interventions. These are given in the section of the main guidance dealing with sources of further information and help (See *Links* page on main stress website)

Appendix A

Example of a covering letter to be sent to employees with the questionnaire

[It is recommended that you send the covering letter out to a named individual on appropriately headed/official paper. The quality and professionalism of the covering letter has been shown to have an effect on response rates.]

Company name
Company address
Date

Dear [employee's name],

[Name of company] are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that work-related stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of tackling the causes of stress in our workplace.

The attached questionnaire consists of 35 simple one-line questions. It is designed to find out how you feel about various aspects of working conditions here. We do not ask for any information that would identify you. We are asking you and your colleagues to do this now to be sure that we are doing all we can to make this a good place to work.

When the questionnaires have been analysed the results will be discussed with employees and employee representatives. The next stage in the process will be to organise employee groups to discuss and confirm the results, decide what the key issues are, and reach agreement on appropriate action.

Please take the time to complete the questionnaire. It will provide an indication of how well we are performing and it will give an indication of where any problem areas might be.

<p><i>Your responses to this questionnaire will remain anonymous and only group data will be presented. It will not be used as an evaluation of your work or capabilities.</i></p>

The questionnaire will take approximately 13 minutes to complete. For each question tick the box that most accurately reflects how you feel about your job at the moment. **Please only tick ONE box for each question.**

Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to *[enter name of person or department]* by *[enter return date]*. If you have any questions concerning completion of the questionnaire please contact *[enter contact name/phone number]*.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix B

CHECKLIST FOR USING THE INDICATOR TOOL

The following checklist suggests the steps you will need to complete, and the order in which you will need to complete them, if you are using the Indicator Tool.

Step 1: Distribute the Indicator Tool (questionnaire) to your employees. Include a covering letter stating where you want the questionnaire returned to and by what date. Appendix A contains an example of a covering letter that you could send with the Indicator Tool. Please feel free to change the style and add any additional information as you see fit.

Step 2: Collate your data: When all the completed Indicator Tools have been sent back to you, enter the data into the Analysis Tool.

Step 3: Analysis Tool output: this will tell you how your organisation is performing for each of the sources of stress (e.g. Demands, Control, Support etc.). Alongside your performance figure, the analysis tool will also give you a comparison figure to ultimately work towards and an interim target to enable you to continuously improve your management of work related stress.

Step 4: Take further action: inform staff, employee representatives and other stakeholders of the results from the Indicator Tool. At this point you will also need to be planning the arrangements for discussing the findings with staff, for example, by running focus groups.

Step 5: Consult with your staff: HSE recommends that you hold some focus groups to confirm the results of the Indicator Tool and explore further any topics that were highlighted as needing further action.

Step 6: Summarise the focus groups discussions: highlighting those issues that were of concern to the majority and the actions identified to help reduce them. Issues of concern to small groups and individuals should also be noted and addressed separately (refer to the website for guidance).

Step 7: Feedback: inform staff of the main outcomes of the staff consultation, detailing action plans you have drawn up to improve stress management in your workplace.

Step 8: Review: your standards of stress management. Conduct the process again after a suitable period of time to assess whether there have been changes / improvements.