The Inuka data library on employee wellbeing

An overview of the available data on the link between psychological distress and key business KPIs.

inuka

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Looking for data to solidify your case to invest into wellbeing of employees?

You are at the right place.

This white paper aims to give an overview of the existing scientific and business data.

We focus specifically on the link between employee wellbeing and key business KPIs such as productivity, absenteeism and turnover.

Introduction

Employee wellbeing and mental health have become an increasingly important topic on the management agenda, given the tight labor market and the lingering Covid reality where absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover rates continue to increase. Having a resilient workforce is widely recognized as a vital asset for business success. Today almost 70% of senior HR leaders rate employee well-being and mental health as a top priority, according to the **Future workplace 2021 HR sentiment survey**.

Yet, decision makers in well-being often **lack the easy access and a comprehensive overview to relevant data to make the business case and ROI interventions.** Today's decision making on well-being programmes often follows local leaders and ad hoc concepts or pilots, leading to patchy, non-strategic approaches lacking impact.
So that is what we aim for in this paper; to make solid data on wellbeing accessible on one hand and the impact on key business metrics -such as productivity, turnover and burnout rates- on the other hand. Simply, to support well being leads in their journey to professionalize employee wellbeing by implementing proven, effective approaches as part of a robust and holistic strategy.

Inuka Coaching, an Amsterdam-based social enterprise, **has made multiple business cases on investing in employee wellbeing** with e.g. Tommy Hilfiger Europe, Flynth Accountants and major healthcare organisations. In this paper we share this data and data we have collected along the way, working with practitioners and scientists in the field of occupational health, wellbeing and mental health.

We do not pretend this paper to be extensive or scientific, but so far no comprehensive paper has been written combining available insights on this subject. This paper is a start, which hopefully helps you to take a step further on your way to establish a resilient workplace where employees flourish.

What is in it for us? Well, making well-being accessible for everyone, that is what makes us tick. Sharing know how is part of that mission!

Outline

1. **Recent statistics on employee wellbeing.**
2. **Effect of psychological problems on company performance**
    1. Absenteeism
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    3. Job satisfaction
    4. Turnover
3. **Other reports and sources of interest**
4. **Making the business case for employee wellbeing**
    - Aspects to use to make the business case
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1. Recent Statistics on Employee Wellbeing

The focus of this paper is the link between employee wellbeing and business KPIs, but let's start with briefly summarize some key data and the impact of the pandemic. A more extensive literature review is available at request.

'Common mental disorders' (CMDs) is an umbrella term for depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, and stress-related ill health, which are highly prevalent in the workplace globally. Before the covid-19 pandemic, an increase in CMD and burnout problems was already visible. In 2019, the percentage of employees experiencing psychological distress was 36% [1], and In 2020, 44.6% of employed people in the EU reported facing risk factors for their mental well-being at work [2].

"Worldwide, over 1 in 4 people suffer from depression or anxiety and over 1 in 3 people experience too much stress"

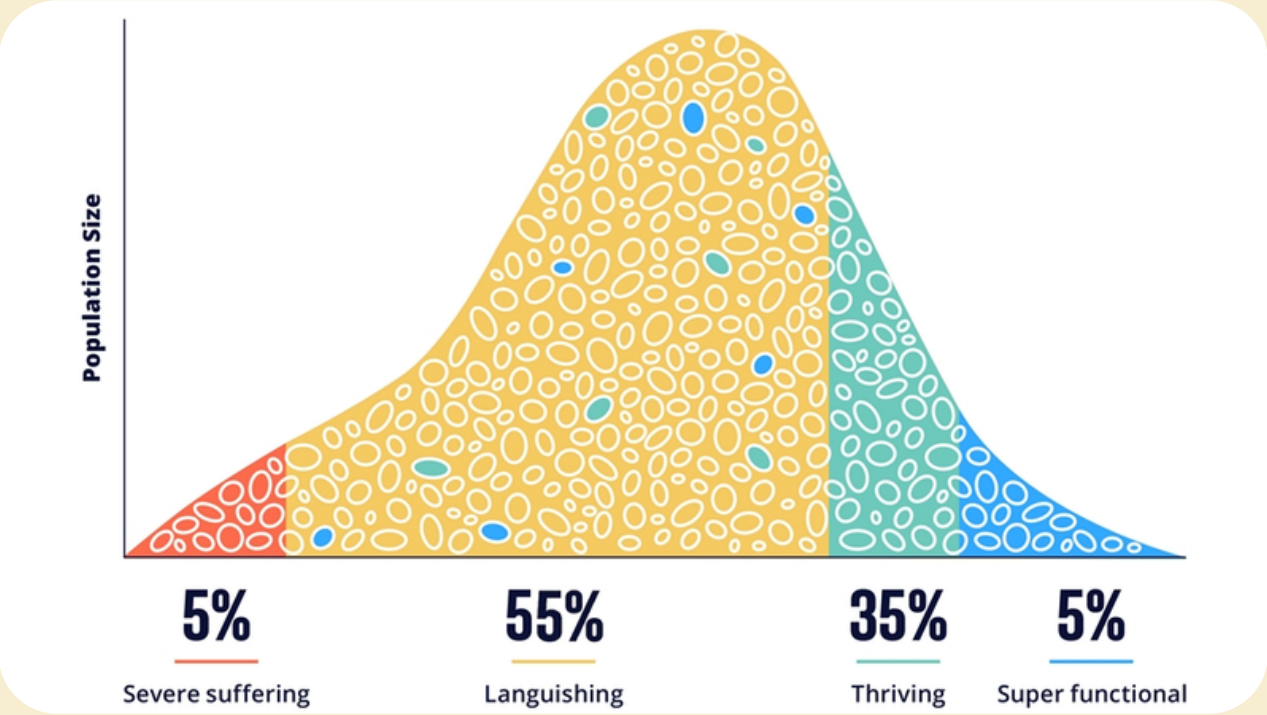
- Source: Nature, Nochaiwong et al., 2021 [2]

Understandably, the pandemic impacted mental wellbeing of the population. A published Nature study dived into it: firstly, in Europe, around 1 in 4 people suffer from depression or anxiety and nearly half of the people experience psychological distress. Secondly, in the United States, about 1 in 3 people suffer from depression. Finally, worldwide, over 1 in 4 people suffer from depression or anxiety and over 1 in 3 people experience psychological distress. [1]

As for burnouts, being forced to work from home has caused the divide between work and home life to fade. 77% of employees reported in the past year to experience burn-out [3, Forbes, 2022]. Employees feel like they have to be 'on' all the time and 40% are concerned about work-related burnout. [4] On the bright side, working from home can also lead to an increase in mental wellbeing due to an improvement in the balance between an employee's work life and private life. Additionally, bullying, intimidation and unwanted sexual attention has decreased. [5]

"I was already on edge, but the whole covid situation pushed me over the edge. The good thing is that it is suddenly OK to talk about these things. It made it easier for me to get the help I needed"

- Employee of 1.000+ tech company in Inuka coaching conversation [1]



"Not ill, but not well. The languishing of the 'massive middle' "

Source: BetterUp research, https://www.betterup.com/blog/not-ill-not-well-massive-middle (note: not a scientific source)

Further, in 2020, Work-related CMDs accounted for 51% of all work-related ill health cases and 55% of all working days lost due to ill health, totalling almost 18 million lost working days in Great Britain, and with an increasing trend [6]. The Netherlands shows a similar picture, reporting mental health problems accounting for about 43% of disabilities [7].

Mental ill-health leads to lower productivity, absence and burnout - estimated at over 600 billion EUR per year in the EU

- Source: Nature, Nochaiwong et all, 2021 [2]

'At an individual level, Common Mental Disorders cause personal suffering, risk of social isolation, stigmatisation, long-term sick leave, and a threat to personal income [8]. At a societal level, CMDs are a costly burden to health systems, health and social insurance, social security, and employers through lower productivity, absence and burnout –estimated at over 600 billion EUR per year in EU countries[9]. In the Netherlands, the cost of occupational sickness absence has been estimated at about €6.6 billion p.a. in 2015, of which the costs related to psychosocial risks from work are estimated at €2.74 billion p.a. [10]

Employers have a vested interest in protecting employee health and vitality for a number of reasons:

1. To meet their legal requirement to protect the psychosocial health of their employees – highlighted in the world's first 'Psychological health and safety at work' ISO 45003 guidance launched in 2021 [11],
2. To reduce loss of productivity from employee absence and burnout, [6]
3. To provide a strong employer brand proposition to attract top talent, [7]
4. To ensure employee sustainability and business continuity with a high percentage of roles filled and low unplanned attrition, and
5. As part of employer societal responsibility.

2. Effect of psychological problems on company performance

People who suffer from such psychological problems notice them in their personal lives, but it also has an influence on the companies they work for. For example, research has shown that burnout [1], anxiety [2] and depression [3] [4] lead to an increase in long-term absenteeism. Additionally, burnout [5] [6], anxiety [7] and depression [8] [9] lead to an increase in turnover intentions. Furthermore, burnout and stress have been linked to a decrease in productivity [10] [11] [12] and the global workforce loses an estimated $1 trillion in productivity each year. [13] Finally, job satisfaction leads to a decrease in stress [14] and an increase in stress leads to a decrease in job satisfaction. [15]

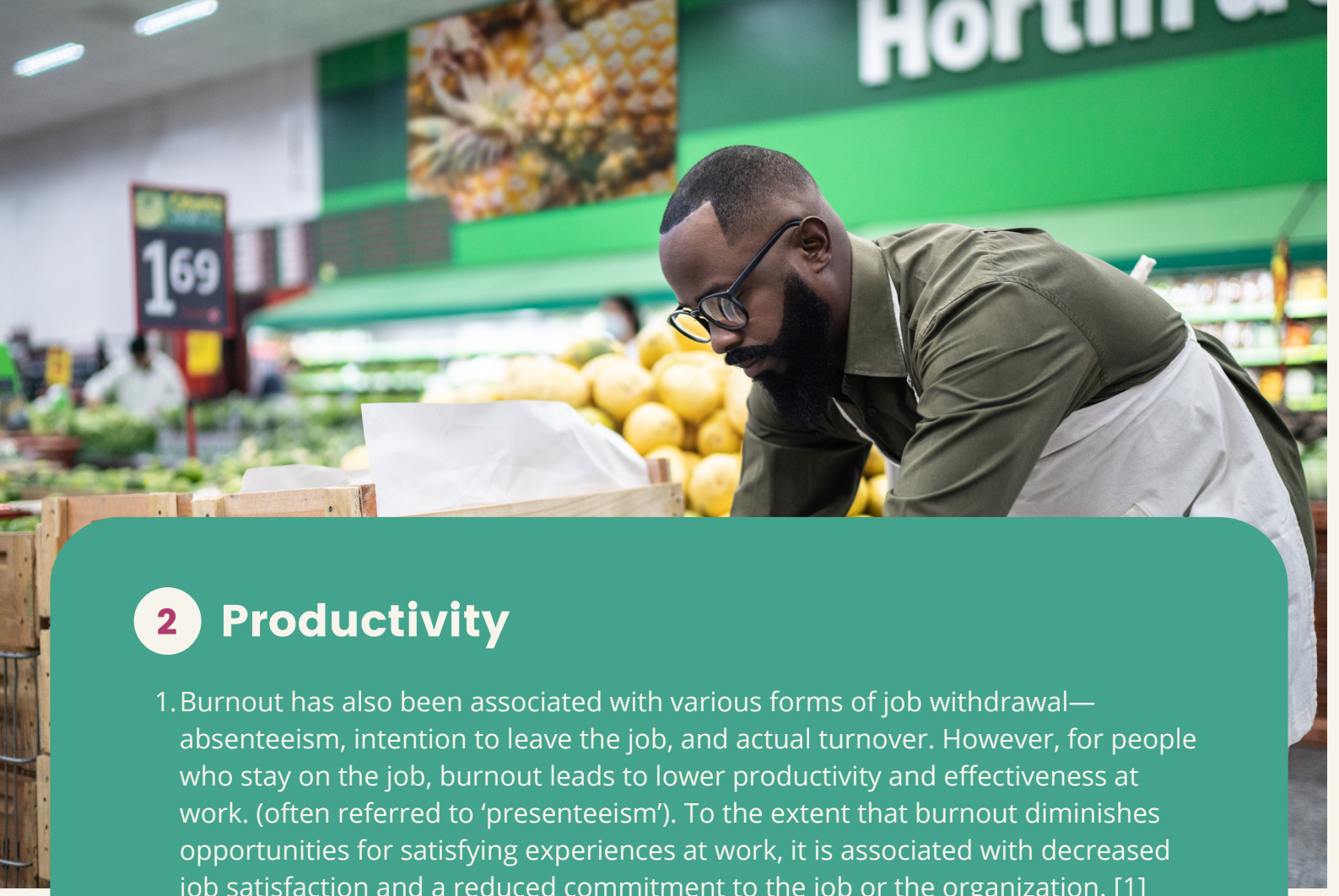
Some key numbers

1. Vital employees are on average 8 days a year less sick
2. Sick employees costs €250,-/day for the employer.
3. Burned-out employees are 2.6 times as likely to be actively seeking a different job, 63% more likely to take a sick day, and 23% more likely to visit the emergency room.

Link between psychological problems and KPIs

1 Absenteeism

1. "More sickness presenteeism scores were found to be related to higher rates of depression and absence due to mental disease in this large-scale cohort of Japanese workers." [1]
2. Sick absolute presenteeism in employees led to an 340% increase in absence due to mental disease.
3. Burnout is related to increased risk of future illness (mental and behavioral disorders, diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the respiratory system, and diseases of the musculoskeletal system). This implies that burnout prevention can reduce future absenteeism and has a major economic impact on work life and health care. [2]
4. Employees with a burnout 3.15 times more likely to develop mental and behavioral disorders, 1.89 times more likely to develop circulatory diseases and 1.29 times more likely to develop respiratory diseases.
5. Employees with a burnout are 1.08 times as likely to take a long-term sick leave (>3 days).
6. Absenteeism among university personnel was best predicted by a combination of work ability and burnout. As a result, measures to prevent absenteeism and health problems may best be aimed at improving an individual's work ability and/or preventing the occurrence of burnout. [3]
7. A high score on emotional exhaustion led to a 75% increase in exceptional absenteeism (more than 7 days more than once per year).
8. Evidence indicates a high prevalence of anxiety disorders as cause of work absenteeism and of the high demand for increasing social security costs. [4]
9. A history of – and current anxiety and/or depressive disorders were associated with increasing work disability and absenteeism over 4 years, compared to healthy controls. Long-term work disability and absenteeism were most prominent in comorbid anxiety–depressive disorder, followed by depressive disorders, and lowest in anxiety disorders. [5]
10. Absenteeism of 2 weeks or longer: 46.8% of employees with comorbid anxiety-depression disorder, 38.3% of employees with depression, 21.3% of employees with anxiety, 6.3% of healthy control employees.

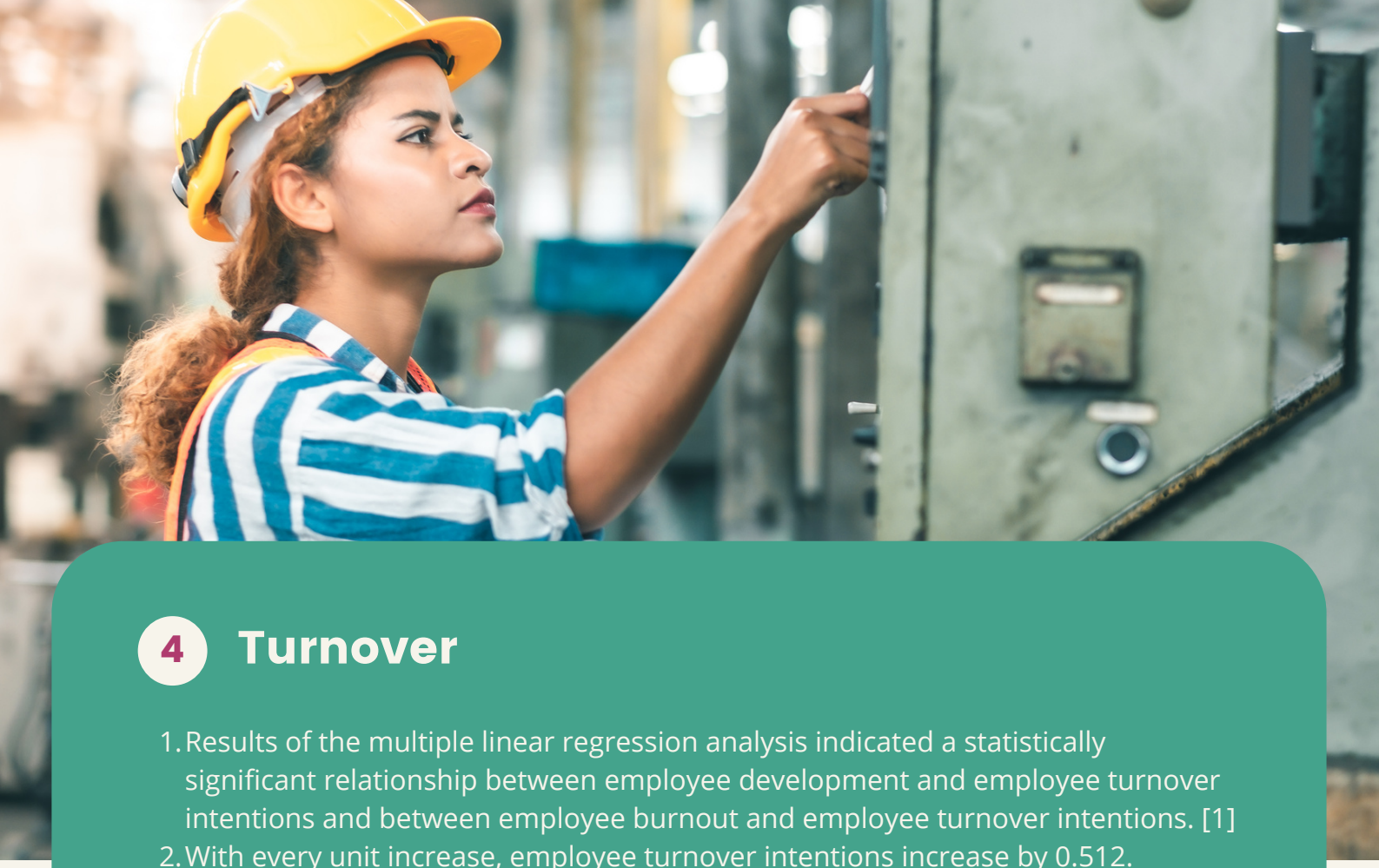


2 Productivity

1. Burnout has also been associated with various forms of job withdrawal—absenteeism, intention to leave the job, and actual turnover. However, for people who stay on the job, burnout leads to lower productivity and effectiveness at work. (often referred to 'presenteeism'). To the extent that burnout diminishes opportunities for satisfying experiences at work, it is associated with decreased job satisfaction and a reduced commitment to the job or the organization. [1]
2. Both emotional exhaustion and burnout impact negatively on the worker's productivity, being extreme forms of stress, causing energy depletion, and thus slowing productivity. [2]
3. As a conclusion of this study, is possible to affirm that worker's stress levels will cause a negative impact in productivity, especially when employees feel stressed due to organizational factors such as a lack of organizational support and stress intensity caused by organizational factors. [3]
4. The outcomes of this study indicate that for direct and indirect relationships, a toxic workplace environment negatively influences worker productivity. Moreover, the outcomes of this study also show that work depression negatively impacts worker productivity. [4]
5. For every unit increase in work depression, worker productivity decreases by 0.095-0.142.
6. Higher perceived workplace health support is independently associated with higher work productivity. [5]
7. Anxiety and depression determine the impact of perceived health promotive workplace culture on employee productivity. [6]

3 Job satisfaction

1. The data are consistent with a mediated relationship such that perceptions of supervisor solidarity increase job satisfaction; job satisfaction, in turn, causes subordinates to be more motivated and less burnt-out at work.
2. Research has further demonstrated that job satisfaction is negatively related to mental and physical ill health as well as stress. [1]
3. Burnout dimensions: exhaustion and cynicism were negatively related to job satisfaction and professional efficacy showed significant positive effects on job satisfaction. [2]
4. Correlation with job satisfaction: -.38 exhaustion, -.35 cynicism, .32 professional efficacy.
5. The results of this study showed there is no significant relationship between depression, anxiety and work stress and job satisfaction. [3]
6. As results, job stress has significantly negative effect on job satisfaction and positive effect on depression. Depression also has partial mediating effect between job stress and job satisfaction. [4]



4 Turnover

1. Results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between employee development and employee turnover intentions and between employee burnout and employee turnover intentions. [1]
2. With every unit increase, employee turnover intentions increase by 0.512.
3. Depression is prevalent among employees and is also the most frequent precursor to many negative consequences including leaving the job. [2]
4. The results of this study demonstrate that depressive symptoms, secondary traumatic stress, burnout and compassion satisfaction affect turnover intention. [3]
5. The turnover intention increased by about 2.81–4.60 times when depressive symptom was moderate or more and 1.54 times when burnout was moderate or more.
6. Fifty-four percent of nurses in our sample suffer from moderate burnout, with emotional exhaustion scores increasing by 10% and cynicism scores increasing 19% after 1 year. The impact of burnout on organizational turnover was significant, with a 12% increase in a nurse leaving for each unit increase on the emotional exhaustion scale, though it was not a factor in position turnover. [6]
7. High rates of burnout and turnover in primary care are compelling problems. Our findings provide evidence that burnout contributes to turnover among primary care clinicians, but not among staff. [7]
8. According to the findings, trait anxiety is significantly and positively related to intention of leaving. Also, the trait anxiety affects the intention of leaving and burnout of employees. [9]
9. High work-stress was associated with worse staff health (i.e., anxiety, depression, fatigue) and work outcomes (e.g., greater turnover intentions), and these associations were mediated by high perceived stress. [10]

3. Other reports and sources of interest

- Companies without systems to support the well-being of their employees have higher turnover, lower productivity, and higher healthcare costs, according to the American Psychological Association (APA). In high-pressure firms, healthcare costs are 50% greater than at other organizations. Workplace stress is estimated to cost the U.S. economy more than $500 billion dollars, and, each year, 550 million work days are lost due to stress on the job. Another study by the APA claims that burned-out employees are 2.6 times as likely to be actively seeking a different job, 63% more likely to take a sick day, and 23% more likely to visit the emergency room.[1]
- Worldwide, 615 million suffer from depression and anxiety and, according to a recent WHO study, which costs the global workforce an estimated $1 trillion in lost productivity each year. [2]
- The National Institute of Stress found that it costs U.S. businesses more than $300 billion a year in the guise of stress-related “absenteeism, turnover, diminished productivity and medical, legal and insurance costs.” This alarming rate should be a wake-up call. [3]
- With these attendant health effects, workplace stress reduces employee productivity, increases absenteeism and presenteeism, increases the number of days taken off work for doctor visits, and increases healthcare costs incurred by employers. Workplace stress is also linked to higher accident and injury rates and higher turnover rates, both of which increase administrative costs. [4]

4. The case for investing in employee wellbeing

The business case for investing in wellbeing can be made on the following key aspects:

- **Absence** - Mental health is the single biggest cause of working days lost due to illness! In the industry, 3% absence rate is considered healthy.
- **Burnout** - The human and business cost is immense - up to 2 years 70-100% salary (the Nordics/Netherlands only)
- **Productivity** - presenteeism and languishing are disastrous for business growth and productivity
- **Regretted loss** - Great people want to work for great companies. What is your attrition?
- **Attracting Top Talent** - Top talent want to be paid well AND be well. Can they thrive with you?

Anoushka Bold

Former HR director War Child & global HR director Philips Healthcare, and published author in global mental health.

Surveyed and interviewed >25 well-being leaders on how to make the case for employee wellbeing. Research to be published in Q1 2023: to get access you can sign up for Inuka's newsletter **here**.

"Companies without systems to support the well-being of their employees have higher turnover, lower productivity, and higher healthcare costs, according to the American Psychological Association (APA)."

Source: Harvard Business review, 2019

Data to calculate the ROI on investing into employee wellbeing

1. Investments in employee wellbeing yield on average 1.78% of turnover [1] PwC, 2022)
2. Work-related common mental health issues accounted for 51% of all work-related ill health cases [2]. So, if you multiply 51% by your absence salary costs you can make hard how reducing absence costs by investing in mental health directly impact your productivity and bottom line.
3. The infrastructure to run an intervention programme is 50EUR per employee, and average net benefits were found to be 2981 EUR per person. [3] Note the cost of the intervention is not included, as they should be personalised to the needs of the group, but then even if the intervention is 3k EUR per person, it still pays for itself.
4. For every dollar companies spent on wellness programs, their healthcare costs fall by approximately $3.27 and their absenteeism costs by about $2.73.[4]

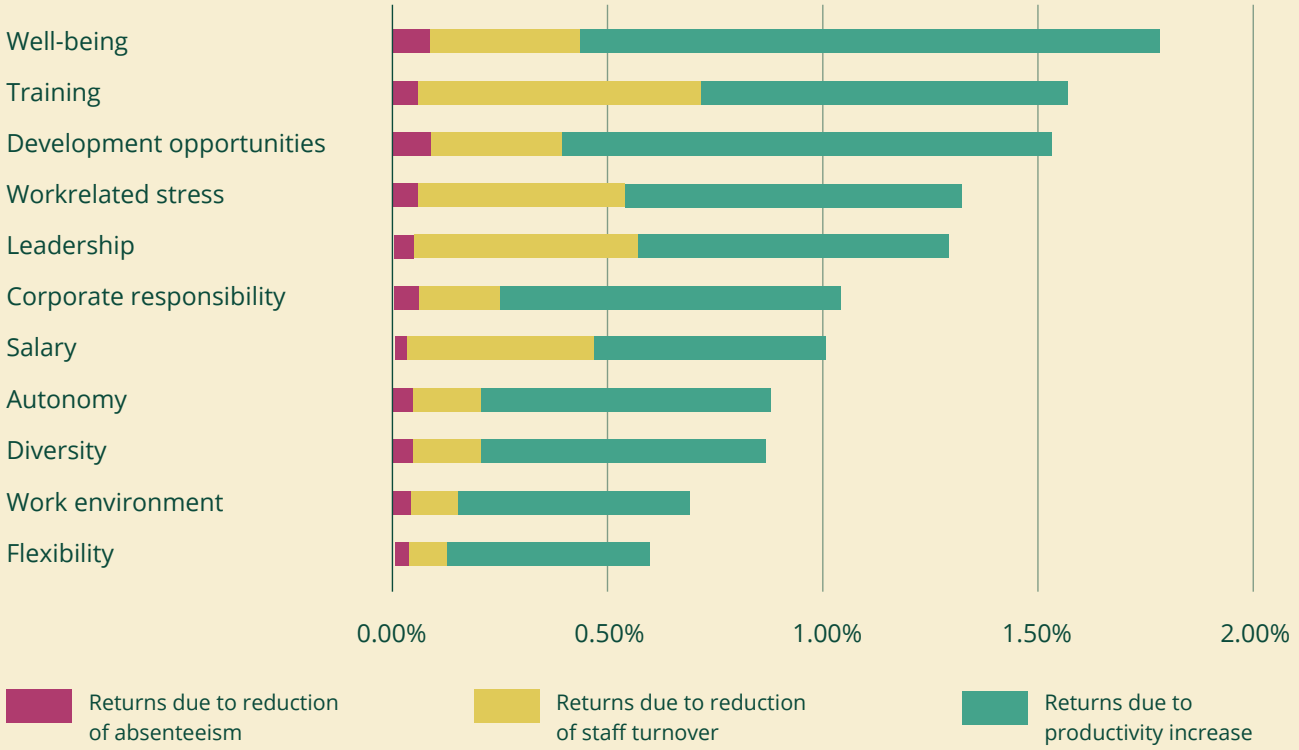
"Inuka Coaching helped us to make the business case for the board to invest in prevention and employee wellbeing for all our 2000 associates."

- Tracy Jans, Wellbeing Lead, Tommy Hilfiger Europe

5. Return on investment of investing in wellbeing vs. other employee experience investments.

To compare the business case of investing into wellbeing versus other interventions, a recent study by PWC is a great source. PWC evaluated all different employee experience investments and concluded that the investment in well-being has significantly more return on investment (due to productivity increase, reduction of staff turnover, and absenteeism) than any other employee experience, including increasing salaries, leadership or CSR activities.

Return on investments in elements of employee experience
(as a percentage of the total turnover)



Inuka Coaching

Source: PWC

"Investments in well-being can yield the most: 1.78 per cent of total turnover. Increasing salaries can lead to a yield - expressed as a percentage of turnover - of one per cent"

– Bastiaan Starink, PwC, 2021.

6. About Inuka Coaching

Everyone resilient. That is the purpose of social enterprise Inuka Coaching. Because we all face challenges in this fast-paced, complex and changing world, so it's about how you work through them - and perhaps even get out better. To accomplish this, Inuka makes top-quality coaching accessible for everyone. Even for those who cannot pay via our Inuka foundation with projects across the world.

Inuka is the **prevention partner for organizations seeking to care better for their people**. The aim is to **lower the barriers for people to seek help**, by providing an online first line of support in the organization. With a 5-minute self-scan people can see how they are doing and matched with an inuka coach and existing interventions the organizaiton already offers such as the EAP program, company coaches or wellbeing apps. People at-risk of dropping out see go back to resilience typically with 4 sessions.

This way the often **invisible at-risk group that typically does not seek help can be reached earlier**, and Inuka helps HR to bring existing interventions under the spotlight.

Inuka scanned 15.000+ people and coached 2000+ people in 9+ languages, at organisations such as Inshared, Tommy Hilfiger, Flynth Accountants, PwC, the National Police force and major healthcare organisations, fast-growing scale-ups such as Futurewhizz, published our results in scientific journals and are expanding fast.

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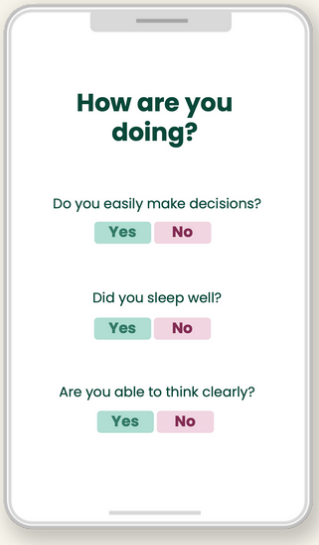
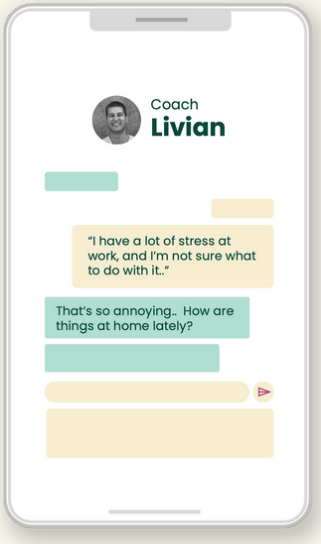
With Inuka, your employees can...

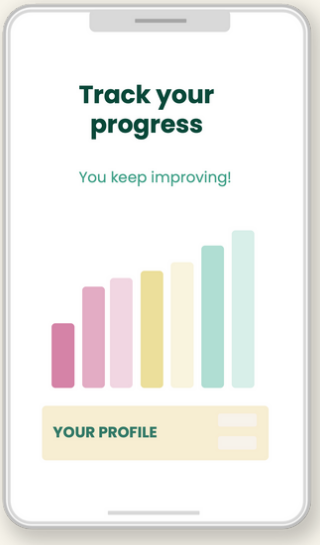
Find out how they are actually doing.



Start with a coach within 24 hours

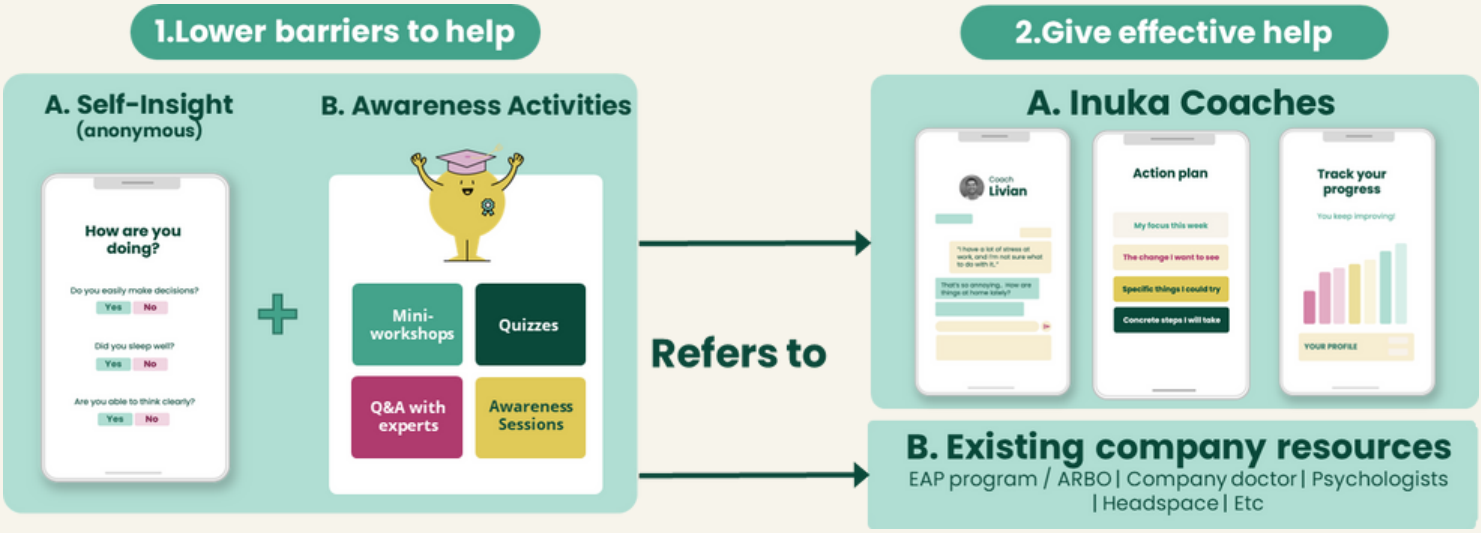


Feel better after 4 sessions*



*Our results are published in the Cambridge Global Mental Health Journal (2021)

Inuka's focus: prevention



What a client says about us

"We notice that Inuka Coaching is the new "cool" among Hilfiger employees. We didn't expect it to be such a big success. We see genuine results for struggling employees and have useful data to present to our management"

Tracy Jans
Wellbeing Lead
Tommy Hilfiger (PVH)

Curious?

Reach out for a digital cup of coffee..
.. or find more info on
inukacoaching.com.

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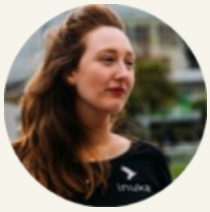

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Want to share learnings with your peers about employee wellbeing?

Inuka regularly hosts online round tables focussed on employee wellbeing & preventing dropouts, burnouts, presenteism and talent leakage.

Research shows that **connecting with peers** is an important source for inspiration on well being strategies. Identifying and sharing challenges, explore solutions resulting in tangible, actionable plan for your organization, that is what we do.

We hosted online Round Table Meetings with **HR & wellbeing directors of Tommy Hilfiger, WeTransfer, Heineken, Booking.com** and others, rated on average 4.8/5 by attendees.

We limit the participation till 10 guests operating on a senior level to ensure useful, in-depth conversations -without commercial components.

Admission is free, and only for senior HR & employee wellbeing experts.

Sign up for the next roundtable here

7. Sources

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