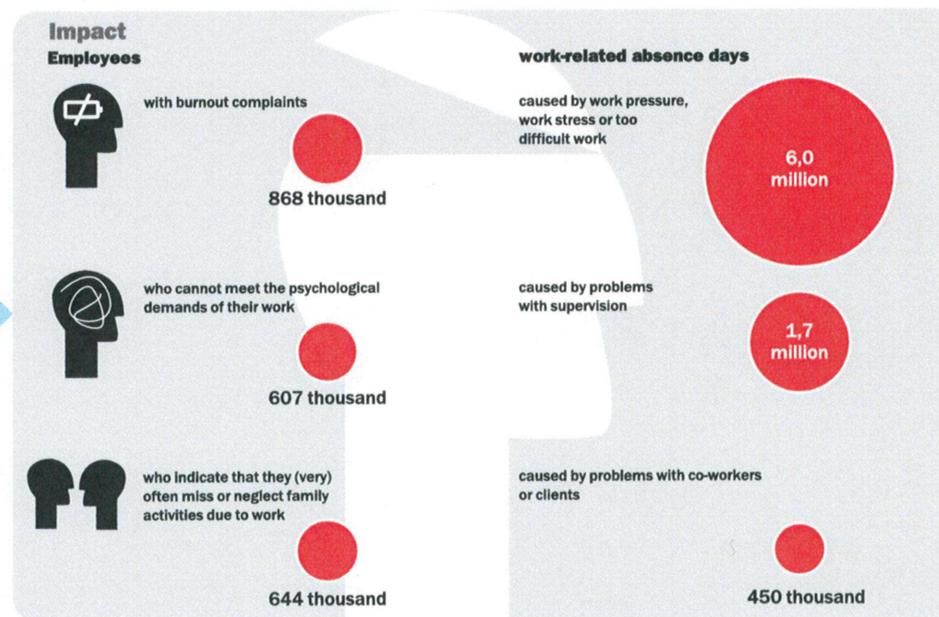
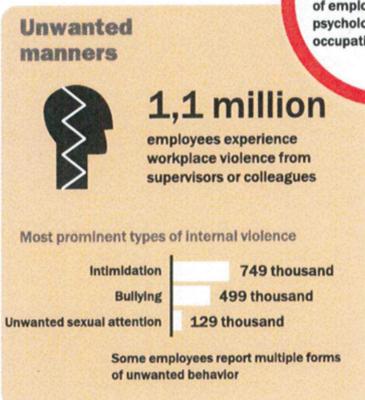
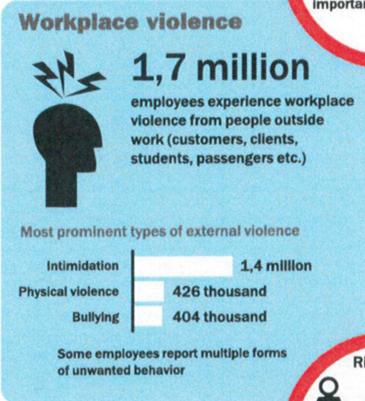
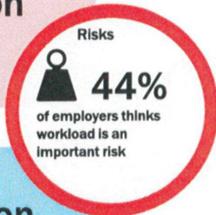
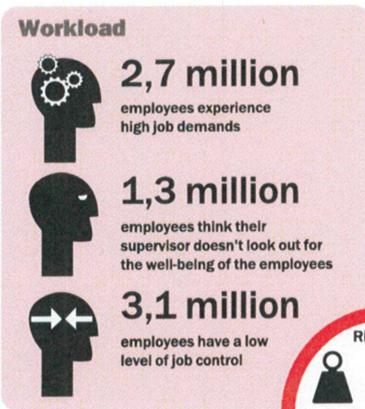


Netherlands Facts & Figures

Every year nearly 1 million people
risk suffering from burnout



The numbers in this factsheet are based on the NEA-Nationale Enquete Arbeidsomstandigheden 2013 and the WEA-Werkgevers Enquete Arbeid 2012. The NEA is a large-scale and representative study of employees and their working situation, employability and health, conducted yearly by TNO and CBS. The WEA is a large-scale study of Dutch employers, their labor policies and the effect of these policies on business results and absenteeism. The WEA is conducted by TNO. More information about the results of these researches is located at www.monitorarbeid.nl. The occupational disease number is an estimate based on the Peilstatie Intensief Melden (PIM) 2013 of the NCvB.

“A feeling that it’s no longer possible to meet the demands of work.”

Workload and work-related stress reduce Job satisfaction

When asked “how’s things?”, employees are increasingly likely to answer by stating “busy” or “under stress”. Work pressure and work-related stress have become part and parcel of our everyday language. But how does pressure at work actually affect an employee? And what does an employer understand by this? When it comes to alleviating workload and work-related stress, differences of opinion are hindering the dialogue between employer and employee. With this in mind, we aim to set out what the differences appear to be between work pressure and work-related stress, how work-related stress can be identified, and what its most common causes are.

Work-related stress as a result of workload, aggression or bullying

Professor Wilmar Schaufeli of the University of Utrecht describes work-related stress as “a negative psychological condition which results from overwork. This causes a feeling that it’s no longer possible to meet the demands of work.” Although everyone expresses stress in different ways, we can differentiate between three types of symptoms:

Box 1. Identify work-related stress on the basis of these signals

1. Psychological symptoms, such as: absent-mindedness or reduced concentration levels, difficulty in processing information, lack of interest in work, or cynicism.
2. Physical symptoms, such as: headaches and fatigue, rapid breathing, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, musculoskeletal pain (e.g. in the neck), and ultimately, cardiovascular disorders.
3. Behavioural symptoms, such as: restlessness, mistakes in one’s work, social isolation, and absenteeism.

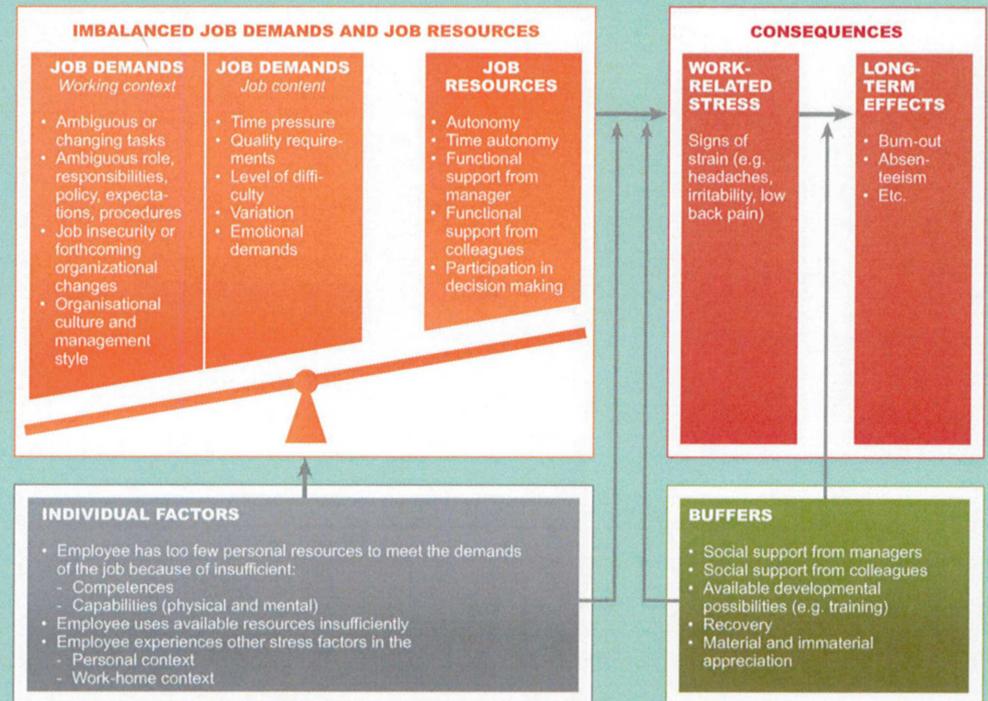
Workload as the most important cause of work-related stress

In addition to aggression, violence and bullying, the most important cause of work-related stress is the workload pressure. TNO describes this as an imbalance, which manifests itself when an employee - over a longer period of time - is no longer able to meet the requirements of the job nor do anything to alter this situation. If an imbalance persists between the demands which are made on the employee (job requirements) and what he or she is able to offer in return (control options), this is seen as negative, because it impacts detrimentally on his or her health. It’s also negative because the employee can no longer deliver the quality required. The causes of this imbalance lie in the content of the work, the context of the work, and the lack of control options (see box 2).

Box 2. The causes of work pressure

1. The content of the work, such as: the amount of work, quality requirements, and the level of difficulty. A large amount of work in itself doesn’t necessarily have to be a problem.
2. The context of the work, such as: ill-defined or changing responsibilities, interruptions, ill-defined procedures or policies, job insecurity, and organisational culture.
3. The lack of control options in the work, such as: autonomy, functional support from colleagues or management, and say in decision-making

The personal qualities of an individual employee can help redress the balance between job demands and control options, or conversely, upset the balance even more. These personal characteristics can equate to, for example, competences, personality traits, or the personal situation.



Job satisfaction as buffer against work-related stress

Based on the premise of sustainable employability, both Schaufeli and TNO suggest that job satisfaction must be taken into the equation. Sources of positive energy, such as a good working environment, the support and appreciation from colleagues, and favourable development prospects, are key factors. These ‘buffers’ not only help to prevent causes of stress, but also improve the workplace in such a way that growth and development are possible. A study by the University of Utrecht concludes

that adopting a positive approach to employees often has a quick return on investment. Employees who are happy in their job, are not only physically and mentally stronger, they sleep better and are less susceptible to absenteeism. Within the organisation, customer satisfaction levels are higher, fewer mistakes are made and there are also fewer accidents. Profit and working productivity are higher in these organisations. “It has been scientifically proven,” Schaufeli argues, “that individuals who are inspired are much less vulnerable to stress.” So, why stop at stress-prevention and not go one step further?”