Wellbeing in figures: What investing in employees' mental health can do for you



Study by Jonas Steel, Martijn Schouteden,
Suzy Timmermans, Sofie Vandenbroeck and Lode Godderis.

February 2026

idewe
OPTIMISING WORK ENVIRONMENTS

17996-2.0-202602-21646

Summary

IDEWE has researched whether investing in psychosocial support has a positive impact on employee wellbeing.

In doing so, we combined **two data sources**:

1. The **RAPSi surveys** of employers (carried out by IDEWE in 2014 and 2025). These surveys map out wellbeing and psychosocial risks, such as stress, the risk of burnout, satisfaction and engagement, within organisations. We analysed 37 organisations that completed at least two RAPSi surveys, which allowed us to track trends over time.
2. **Investments in psychosocial support** by the same 37 organisations between 2018 and 2024. The support covered a wide range of topics such as stress, sickness absence, alcohol, traumatic events and aggression. The approach ranged from consultancy and policy support to risk assessments and training courses.

By combining these two data sets, IDEWE researched whether organisations that invest more in psychosocial interventions actually see an improvement in their employees' wellbeing.

What are the key findings?

Organisations that invest more in psychosocial support achieve better results when it comes to wellbeing. We see positive effects in the areas of:

- job satisfaction;
- engagement (motivation);
- aggression;
- burnout;
- absence due to mental or physical complaints.

What stands out is that even limited investments, such as up to €100 per employee, often lead to a noticeable positive impact. For 'predicted absence', for example, spending €100 per person results in a decrease of -0.69 (26.95%) on a scale of one to five. The effects gradually decrease at higher amounts, in a phenomenon known as 'diminishing returns'[1]. The impact also depends on the industry, age, gender and level of education. However, the study's design does not allow for a causal interpretation of effects.

In brief

Summary 2
- What are the key findings? 2

About us 3

What has IDEWE researched? 4
- Objective 4
- RAPSi: Psychosocial risks and wellbeing 5
- Psychosocial support from IDEWE 5

Investing in wellbeing pays off 6

Strengths, limitations and further research 8

Are you ready to work on mental wellbeing in your organisation? 8

1. Examples: If you spend €1 per person on psychosocial interventions, the model estimates the self-predicted absence rate to be 2.56 (on a scale of one to five). If you spend €10 per person, it is 1.87. If you spend €100 per person, it is 1.69. If you spend €200 per person, it is 1.67.

About us



With 11 regional branches and more than 1,000 qualified employees, IDEWE supports over 35,000 employers and almost 880,000 employees in creating safe and healthy working environments.

IDEWE's **Knowledge, Information and Research Centre (KIR)** conducts practical scientific research based on three strategic pillars:

1. **Research consultancy.** KIR's consultancy goes far beyond providing advice. At the Creative Connect Centre, we work on innovative solutions together with clients and partners. We combine co-creation, data analysis and impact studies to turn complex issues relating to wellbeing into tangible results. We offer organisations support every step of the way, from prototypes to implementation, to ensure insights are not left behind in reports, but add real value in practice.

2. **Information and knowledge.** KIR makes evidence-based information accessible to support organisations with prevention and wellbeing. The focus lies on sharing relevant knowledge and study results, enabling clients to make well-informed decisions and improve their policies.

3. **Research and added value that supports strategy.** KIR focuses on innovations that enhance IDEWE's strategy. Our focus lies on adding value by converting the study results into tangible applications, working with knowledge institutions and technology partners to do so. The 'Return on Prevention' project shows IDEWE's social and economic impact.

In short: KIR is your partner for evidence-based innovation, consultancy and knowledge sharing. Together, we create science-based, efficient and user-friendly solutions to help your organisation take prevention and protection at work to the next level.

What has IDEWE researched?



Objective

32% of Belgian employees experience emotional exhaustion, one of burnout's core components. In addition, 15% had already experienced aggression at work. This is why psychosocial wellbeing in the workplace requires significant attention.[2] Even so, many employers are rightly asking the question: What can you do to improve it? **And does investing in psychosocial interventions really pay off?**

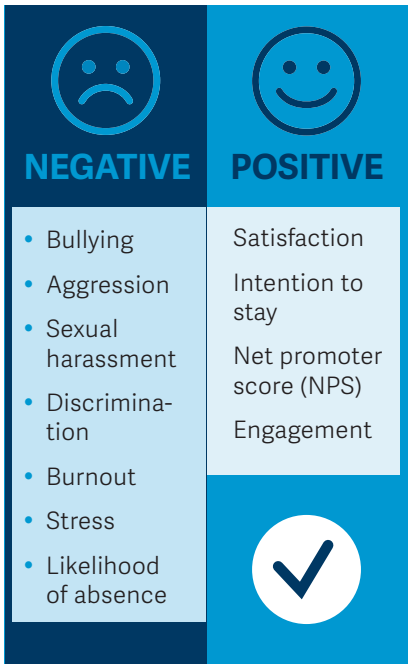
IDEWE seeks answers to these questions in this report. We researched whether expenditure on psychosocial interventions (such as training, support in the event of stress or sickness absence, and discussions with a prevention advisor on psychosocial aspects) contributes to employee wellbeing within organisations.
In short: does investing more in psychosocial interventions also lead to better mental health among employees?

Expressing the impact of preventive measures purely in monetary terms is a complex, challenging task.[3] Nevertheless, it is important to do this exercise given the limitations and nuances that are associated with it. We are currently taking the initial steps and conducting the first exercises to achieve this transformation. Despite the level of difficulty, we have made a conscious decision to invest in collecting relevant data and developing methodologies so we can demonstrate that prevention actually pays off and adds value, even if the value cannot be measured from a financial perspective straight away or easily. This approach allows us to make the social and economic importance of psychosocial interventions tangible.

2. https://www.idewe.be/en/offer/mental-wellbeing/psychosocial-risk-assessment
3. Jeroen Luyten, Jonas Steel and Lode Godderis. "Economic Evaluation of Occupational Health Services: Necessary, Challenging and Promising." Occupational and Environmental Medicine 74, No. 11 (2017): 847–48.
Jonas Steel, Lode Godderis and Jeroen Luyten. "Methodological Challenges in the Economic Evaluation of Occupational Health and Safety Programmes." International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 15, No. 11 (2018): 2606.

RAPSi: psychosocial risks and wellbeing

The RAPSi survey (IDEWE's Risk Assessment of Psychosocial Aspects) was developed by IDEWE and KU Leuven. The content of the survey is based on scientific literature and was drawn up in consultation with the research group on occupational and organisational psychology at KU Leuven. The questions are selected from scientifically validated scales as far as possible.



We use RAPSi to map out **psychosocial wellbeing** using both positive and negative indicators, including bullying, aggression, sexual harassment, discrimination, burnout, stress and predicted absence. We also measure satisfaction, engagement, intention to stay and whether you would recommend your employer to friends or family.

After the survey, employees receive individual feedback and we suggest actions that employers can take. Employers receive specific recommendations when several employees report undesirable behaviour, for example, and we also recommend targeted actions (such as coaching paths for managers, team diagnoses and support) or training courses (on psychosocial stress and more).

In this study, we used data from all RAPSi surveys collected between 2014 and 2025. We selected 37 organisations that had at least two surveys carried out during that period, which enabled us to map trends in their wellbeing data.

Psychosocial support from IDEWE

IDEWE supports organisations facing psychosocial challenges in a range of ways, including following the results of the RAPSi survey. The organisations in this study invested in different types of services:

- **Interventions on resilience, stress and burnout**, such as short-term support, training courses or guidance to shape the policy on psychosocial load.
- **Interventions on undesirable behaviour at work** (UUBW), such as training courses, individual consultations or establishing policies on respectful behaviour, inclusion or value-driven codes of conduct.
- In addition, the organisations invested in guidance on absenteeism policies, alcohol, medication and drug use policies, individual and collective care after traumatic events, aggression policies, respectful behaviour at work, risk assessments, confidential counsellors, coaching programmes, team diagnoses and guidance, job crafting and more.

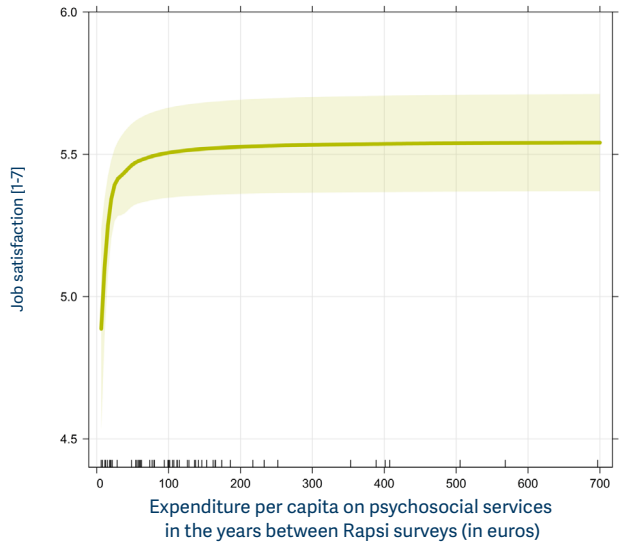
Read more about our services at https://www.idewe.be/en/offer/mental-wellbeing.

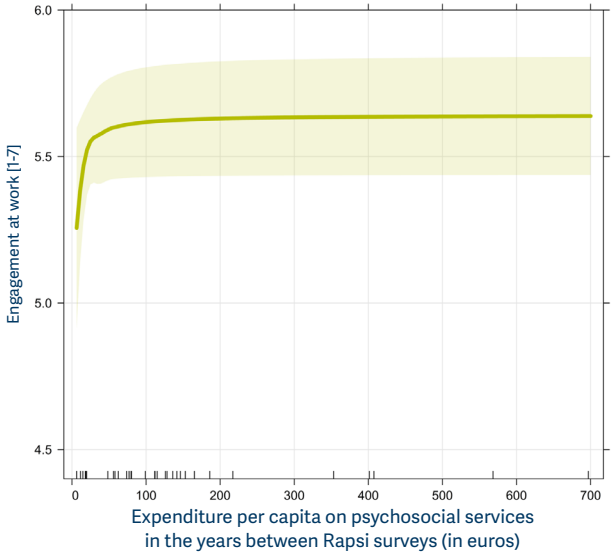
Investing in wellbeing pays off

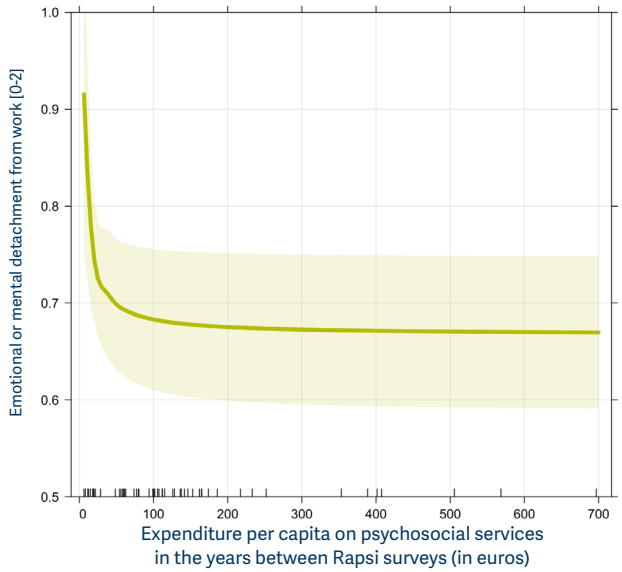
In the study, IDEWE compared the wellbeing indicators from the RAPSi surveys with the investments in psychosocial support across the 37 organisations involved. We examined the impact of investments in psychosocial interventions on bullying, aggression, sexual harassment, discrimination, burnout, stress, predicted absence, satisfaction, intention to stay, net promoter score (NPS) and engagement. We have only included the effects with statistical significance in the results below.

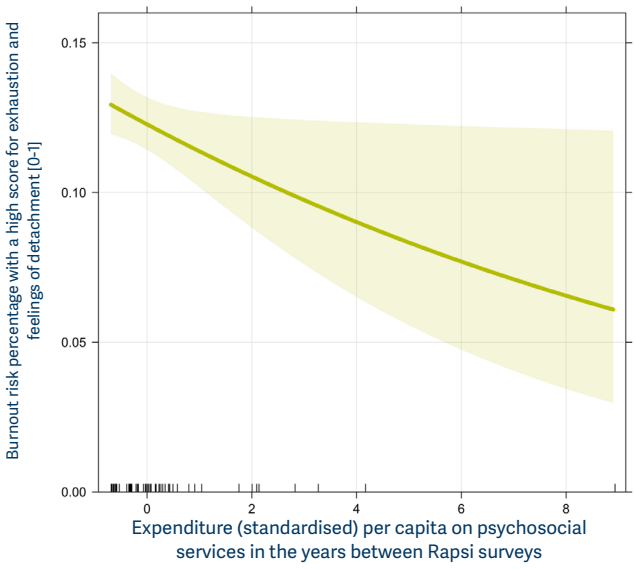
The graphs below show **a clear link between the number of organisations that invest in psychosocial support and how employees feel at work**. This applies across a range of metrics: satisfaction, engagement, emotional or mental detachment from work, risk of burnout, aggression and absence. We also took into account age, gender, sector, education level and the time of the measurements.

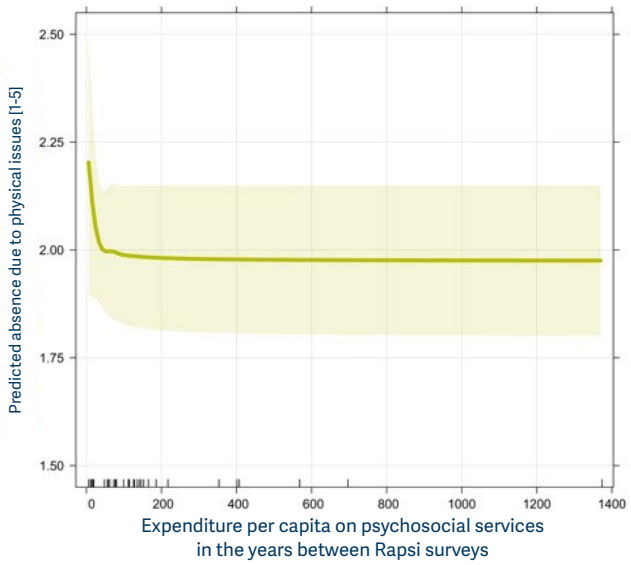
Predictor effect graphs: The impact of expenditure per capita on psychosocial services on the results

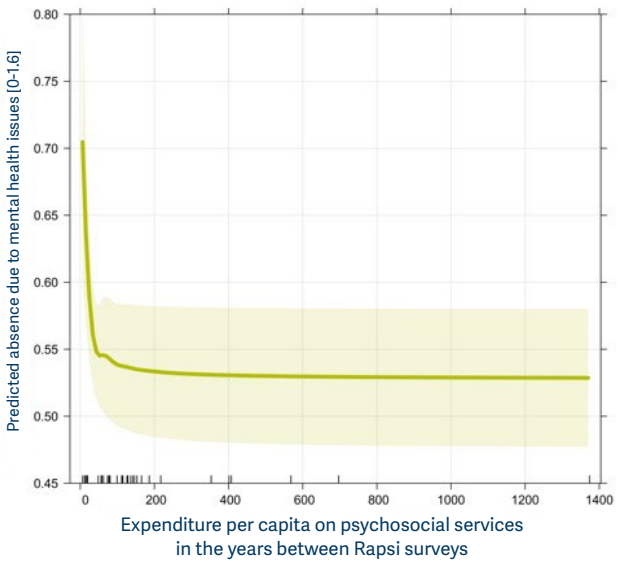


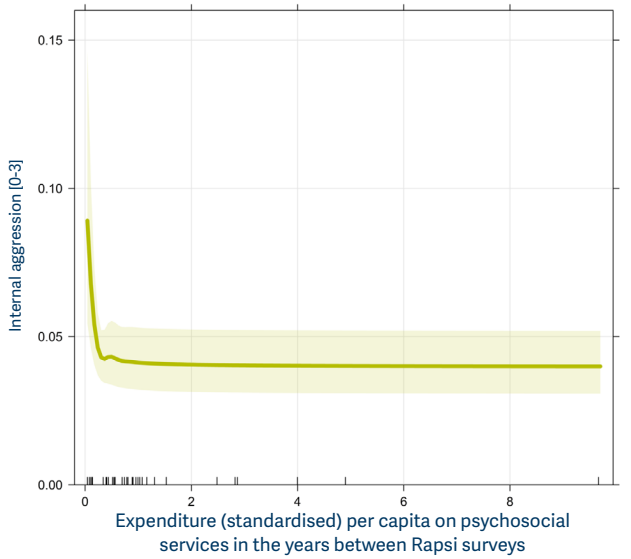


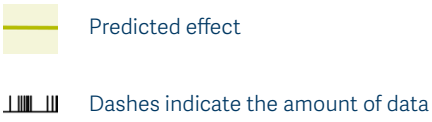












How should I interpret these graphs?

These predictor effect graphs are a graphical summary of the effect of expenditure on psychosocial issues (on the X-axis) on the results metrics (on the Y-axis). Each figure reflects the impact on a different results metric: satisfaction, engagement, emotional or mental detachment from work, risk of burnout, predicted absence due to physical issues, predicted absence due to mental health issues, and internal aggression. The **green line** represents the average relationship between the two factors (x-axis and y-axis), the **green band** represents the confidence interval or the uncertainty. Depending on the model, the X-axis ranges from €0 to €1,400 (all 37 organisations), €0 to €700 (36 organisations), or 0 to 8.

For some metrics (such as the risk of burnout), the effect is linear. This means that every euro has more or less the same effect, regardless of how much you are already spending. However, for other metrics, the relationship between the indicator and investments is not as straightforward. In the case of absence due to mental health issues, for example, we can see that a small investment (up to around €100 per person) already provides a significant improvement. Additional investments see the positive impact increase at a slower pace – we call this 'diminishing returns'.

A practical example:

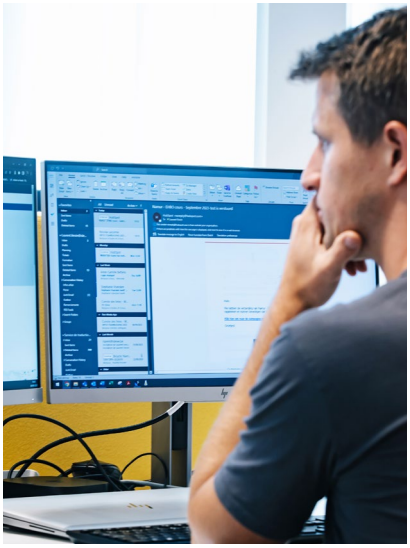
- If you spend €1 per person on psychosocial interventions, the model estimates the self-predicted absence rate to be 2.56 (on a scale of one to five).[4]
- If you spend €10 per person, it is 1.87.
- If you spend €100 per person, it is 1.69.
- If you spend €200 per person, it is 1.67.

To understand the impacts, we must look at the graphs, which show how the impact changes depending on the amount spent.

In summary, greater spending generally leads to better results. Given that not many organisations spend more than €200 per person, the impact is less certain at this level, and therefore translates into wider confidence intervals.[5]

Strengths, limitations and further research

- This study was carried out on a data set of 37 organisations, representing more than 10,000 employees.
- This is an observational study on retrospective data. Regression analyses isolated the impact of investments in psychosocial services on results metrics from other impacts, such as age, gender, time effects, degree, sector and company size (number of employees). However, it is possible that other issues that we did not observe also had an impact on the results metrics, such as interventions carried out by third parties or the company itself without IDEWE's involvement.
- We tested several non-linear relationships, which revealed the current significant results.
- There are more organisations with a lower expenditure than organisations with a higher expenditure. This increases the uncertainty about the relationship when expenditure is higher.



Are you ready to work on mental wellbeing in your organisation?

IDEWE will support you every step of the way..
We can help you with:

- **RAPSi surveys** to measure psychosocial risks and wellbeing;
- **support in the event of stress** and the risk of burnout, at an individual or organisational level;
- **interventions in the event of aggression or undesirable behaviour at work**;
- **the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**, a complete solution for psychological support;
- **training and coaching** for managers and teams.

Explore the full range of options at www.idewe.be/en/offer/mental-wellbeing

4. Self-predicted absence is surveyed as follows: *"How likely do you think it is that you will be absent in the next six months due to work-related, psychosocial reasons (such as stress, burnout, bullying, conflicts or traumatic events)?"*, with the answer options being 'Not at all likely' to 'Very likely'.
5. A confidence interval (CI) gives a lower and upper limit of an unknown population parameter, such as the mean. The CI (usually 95%) indicates how often this interval would contain the actual parameter if the study were repeated. Example: If we say a score is between 70 and 90, it means that we are reasonably sure that the actual result lies somewhere in that range. The wider the interval, the less accurate the estimate.