

# ISO 45003: The rising significance of psychological health and wellbeing in the workplace

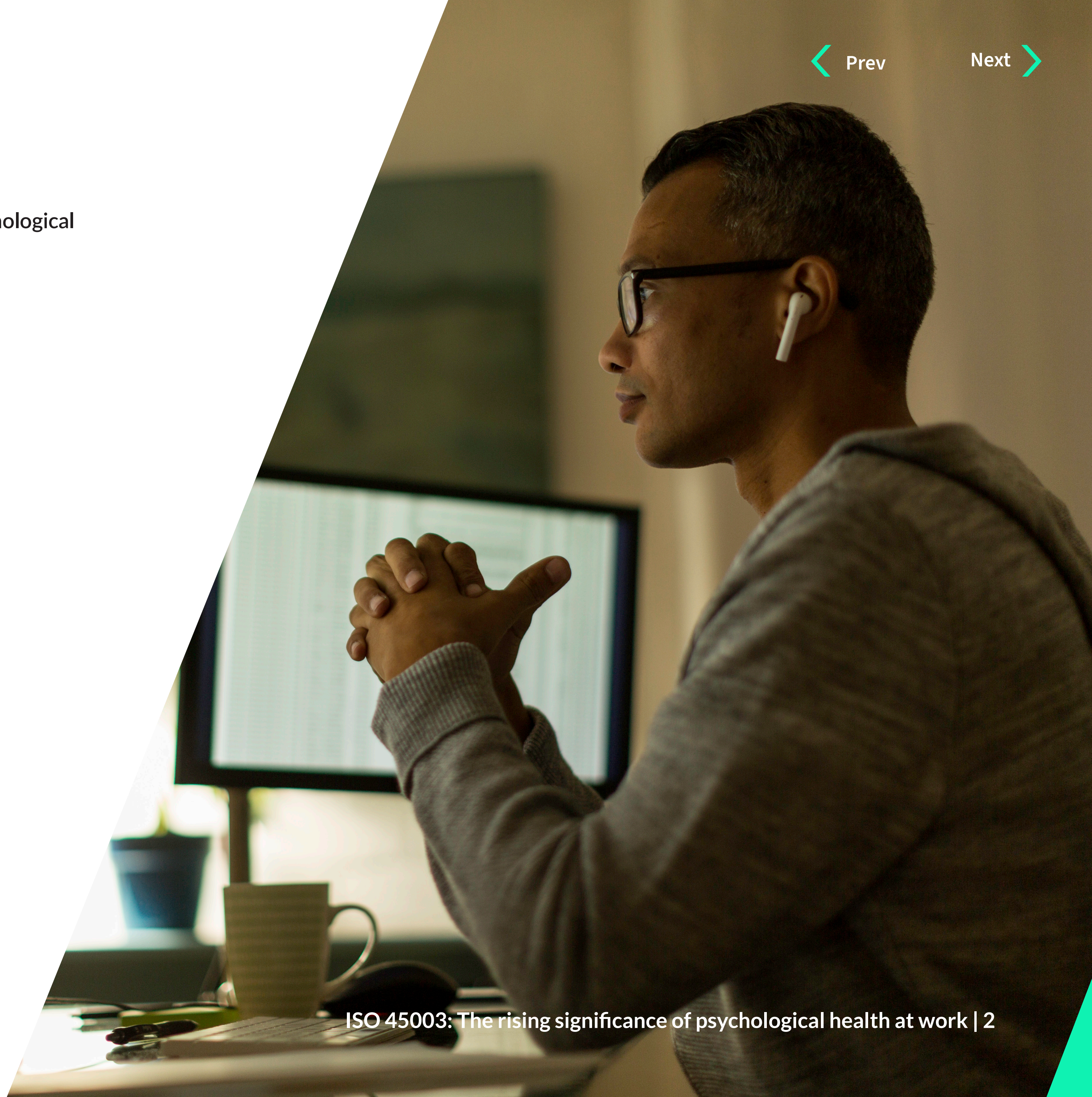
Tackling psychological health, safety,  
and wellbeing at work



# What is ISO 45003?

Published in 2021, ISO 45003, is the first international standard addressing psychological health safety, and wellbeing at work.

<p>A guidance standard providing recommendations (not requirements).</p> 	<p>For organisations of any type, size, and in any sector.</p> 
<p>Can be used as a stand-alone guidance document.</p> 	<p>Can also be used to guide to help an organisation meet the ISO 45001 requirement to manage the psychological health and safety of workers.</p> 



# Why psychological health, safety, and wellbeing at work is important for organisations

Historically, many organisations have been hesitant to address psychological health and wellbeing, due in part to the taboos and the stigma associated with mental ill-health.

However, the impact of work on people’s psychological health was a significant issue long before the COVID-19 pandemic. It was already causing significant harm – and causing significant costs for organisations – and it was already on an upward trend.

Psychosocial risk is therefore becoming an ever more important part of the risk to which many workers are exposed, so organisations now need to address it effectively.

As organisations become more effective at managing physical risks in the workplace, psychosocial risks can become more a significant component in overall OH&S risk.



In the service sector psychosocial risks are often more significant than those from physical hazards. This includes jobs that have particular vulnerability to psychological harm – such as the emergency services.



Today’s workers, and especially the younger generation, are more aware of their psychological health and expect their employer to support their psychological health and wellbeing. Organisations need to address these expectations, to ensure they can attract and retain the talent they need to sustain their activities.

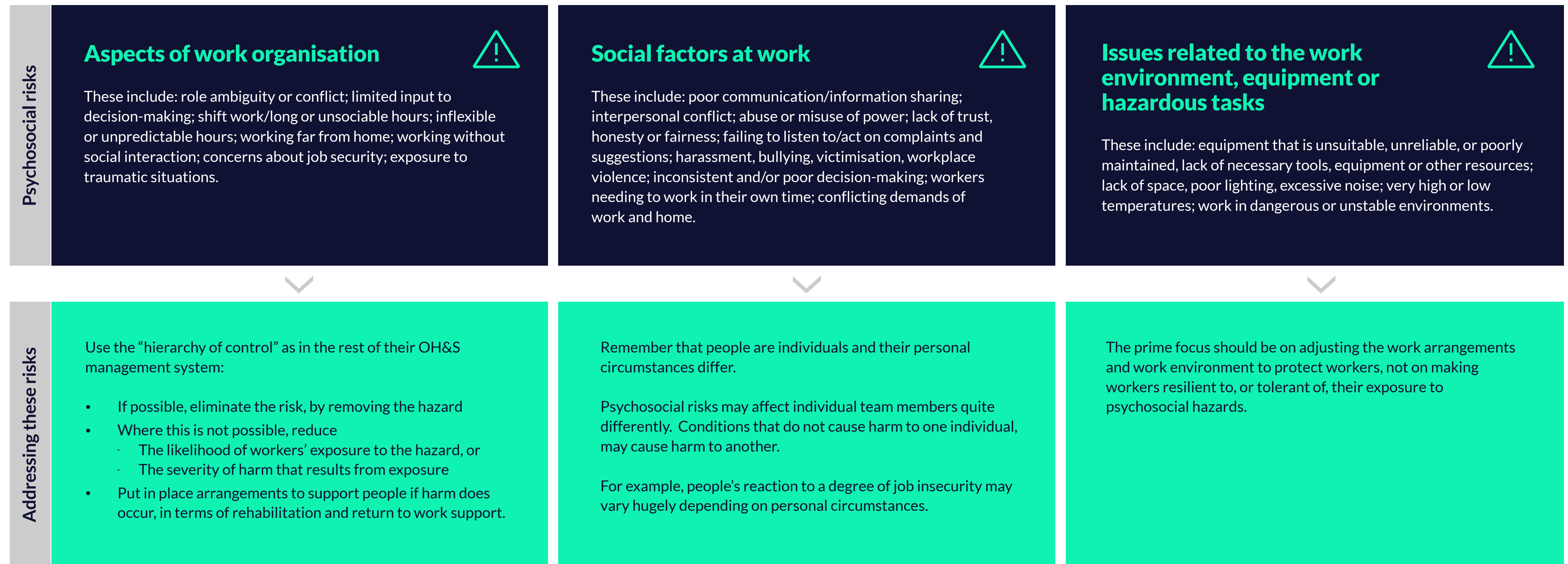


Workers subject to psychological risks such as stress, insecurity or trauma are more likely to make mistakes, including errors that lead to accidents causing physical harm either to themselves or to others.



# What are psychosocial risks, and how are they addressed?

Psychosocial risks are those which can arise from exposure to work-related hazards of a psychosocial hazard. The risk is the combination of the likelihood of exposure to such a hazard and the severity of the injury or ill-health that it causes. Hazards of a psychosocial nature fall into three categories:



# How can we get started and how do we measure progress?

There are strong parallels with the ways we manage physical OH&S risks.

Measuring progress usually involves a blend of leading and lagging indicators:

<p><b>Visible and active support from top management is an important enabler - providing any necessary resources and personally setting an example.</b></p> <p>Leaders who authentically share their own experience of psychological health and wellbeing issues can play a key role in encouraging other workers to do so.</p>	<p><b>Worker consultation and participation is also key to success, whether via health and safety committees or directly with workers.</b></p> <p>Organisations should provide opportunities for workers to feedback on psychosocial risks and the effectiveness with which they are being managed.</p>
<p><b>Systematically review work activities to understand which psychosocial hazards exist in the organisation.</b></p> <p>Employee surveys can be helpful here, providing anonymised feedback.</p> <p>Encouraging and gathering feedback from team discussions can also contribute.</p>	<p><b>Review available data, including for example:</b></p> <p>Sickness absence records; complaints or grievance cases; comments made in exit interviews; incident and accident investigations.</p>

<p>Leading indicators</p>	<p><b>Leading indicators help measure the proactive steps the organisation is taking to improve workers' psychological health and wellbeing.</b></p> <p>Examples could include: the progress in assessing psychosocial risks across the organisation, progress in the actions arising from those risk assessments, take-up of any support we've put in place, such as resilience training, or access to any on-line platforms or remote support.</p>
<p>Lagging indicators</p>	<p><b>Lagging indicators looking for the evidence that an actual improvement has taken place.</b></p> <p>Examples could include: employee feedback on the effectiveness with which psychological health and wellbeing are managed; sickness absence due to psychological ill-health; staff turnover; data on, and from, incident and accident investigations.</p>



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LRQA  
1 Trinity Park  
Bickenhill Lane  
Birmingham  
B37 7ES  
United Kingdom