



Job Security

is a key driver of workplace
wellbeing

Job security refers to the stability and continuity of one's employment within an organisation. It encompasses both the objective likelihood of retaining one's job and employees' subjective perceptions of their risk of job loss, each of which plays a fundamental role in supporting workplace wellbeing.

Conversely, job insecurity, whether stemming from actual instability or perceived threat, has been linked to heightened stress, anxiety, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction.



Job Security Spotlight

Actual vs perceived job security



Objective job security refers to the objective stability of employment, such as the formal protections, contracts, or tenure that ensure continued and stable work. Examples include indefinite contracts, employment protections, union or collective agreements, statutory notice and severance requirements, and organisational policies that minimise involuntary turnover or guarantee redeployment during restructuring.^{1,2}



Perceived job security refers to an employee's subjective sense of stability and confidence in their continued employment. It is shaped less by formal guarantees and more by organisational culture, leadership communication, and the broader economic climate.^{21,22} Employees may feel secure when they trust leadership, see clear business direction, and believe their skills are valued and adaptable. Conversely, even in objectively stable roles, uncertainty about organisational change, automation, or market pressures can erode perceived security and lead to stress, disengagement, or reduced performance.^{1,3} Research shows that perceived job insecurity can have similar negative effects on engagement, wellbeing, and performance as actual job loss.¹⁻³ In modern organisations, where restructuring and technological shifts are frequent, managing the psychological dimension of security is as vital as providing contractual protection.⁴



Job Security

Interventions



Establish internal labour markets



Internal labour markets (ILMs) are organisational systems for pay and promotion decisions that prioritise providing opportunities to current employees over hiring externally, where possible. As a result, most job vacancies are filled from within, thereby creating upward job opportunities for employees and a sense of long-term job security.

A recent study of American employees working in an ILM revealed that ILMs were associated with **improved economic outcomes** for employees such as pensions, health care insurance, and job security.⁵ This study also revealed several positive side effects that can improve business performance such as **greater employee satisfaction, commitment, and effort.**

ILMs predominantly offer permanent contracts rather than temporary ones, which is perhaps the most obvious way to improve **job security** and is associated with better health and wellbeing outcomes.⁶

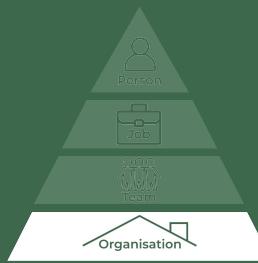


Considerations for success: Organisations should consider specialised training and education to support internal recruitment. A systematic review of such interventions revealed strong associations with employee retention, delayed retirement, and faster return-to-work from sick-leave.⁷



Job Security

Interventions



Reduce precarity by integrating contingent and outsourced workers

Contingent and precarious employment, such as temporary contracts, agency work, gig roles, and zero-hours arrangements, creates some of the lowest levels of job security across modern labour markets. Research consistently links these forms of work to poorer psychological wellbeing, heightened stress, and reduced organisational commitment.^{8,9} Large employers often rely on contingent labour to demonstrate organisational “flexibility,” yet this can unintentionally create chronic insecurity and weaken cohesion.^{10,11}

Although broader policy change is needed, organisations still have meaningful levers to reduce precarity. A key approach is to integrate contingent and outsourced workers more fully into the workforce primarily through more secure positions.



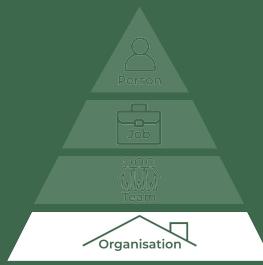
Strategies for integration

- **Insourcing key roles** where feasible to provide greater employment stability and organisational oversight.
- **Creating pathways to permanent or longer-term contracts** for high-performing agency workers.
- **Extending access to training, communication channels, wellbeing initiatives, and social activities** to ensure contract workers feel included.
- **Aligning standards and protections** - such as fair wages and safety practices - across permanent and contract roles.

Integrating contract workers is both good business sense and good for wellbeing. It signals genuine organisational commitment, strengthens loyalty, and enhances engagement.



Job Security Interventions



Utilise thoughtful change management strategies

An extensive line of research starting from the 1980s demonstrates how restructuring, mergers, and layoffs can increase employees' **job insecurity** and threaten mental wellbeing. To mitigate the harmful effects of such organisational changes on employee wellbeing, whether large or small in scale, leaders should consider thoughtful and collaborative interventions that facilitate **employee participation**.

Evidence from multiple studies demonstrates the value of employee participation during organisational restructures:

- A participatory intervention which enabled teams to prioritise the problems they believed to be most pressing during a period of major restructure in two Danish postal regions helped postal workers feel less insecure about changes to their jobs. The intervention facilitated this prioritisation through the use of employee surveys, steering committees, and workshops.¹²
- A study comparing the effects of two different downsizing strategies implemented by Swedish hospitals found significant differences in employee reactions based on the downsizing strategy used.

Reactive strategy: This hospital implemented downsizing in a more top-down manner, with fewer opportunities for employee participation.

Proactive strategy: This hospital implemented downsizing with greater flexibility and more opportunities for employee participation.

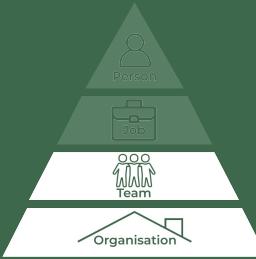
Nurses at the proactive hospital reported less job insecurity, role ambiguity, and role conflict than their colleagues at the reactive hospital, even though there were no differences in role overload. They also held more favourable perceptions of the change process, sense of organisational justice, and commitment to achieving the goals of restructuring.¹³

- A leadership training intervention designed to improve supervisors understanding of workplace stress and provide greater support to employees affected by organisational change showed reductions in job insecurity. The intervention comprised a mix of formal training sessions, seminars and peer-counselling.¹⁴



Job Security

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Practice financial transparency

Keeping employees informed about the financial health of their organisation can improve retention and alignment with performance objectives. Withholding such information, on the other hand, tends to foster a sense of job insecurity.

By disclosing financial information with employees, companies can enhance communication, build trust, and strengthen commitment. This heightened connection can foster a greater sense of belonging and community, which in turn, can help mitigate worker uncertainty and stress.¹⁵

- An analysis of survey data from British workplaces revealed a strong *negative* relationship between financial transparency and job-related distress. More specifically, a one unit increase in workplace financial transparency is associated with 3.2% reduction in job-related distress, with sense of job security explaining almost one tenth of this relationship.¹⁶
- Another study utilising the same survey showed that employees who reported that their managers were 'very good' at disclosing financial information had higher wages than those who reported 'very bad', suggesting that financial transparency helps employees to fairly negotiate their salary.¹⁷





Job Security

Interventions



Incorporate job and task rotation schemes



Job and task rotation schemes are job design techniques that facilitates periodic shifts among employees between a range of jobs or tasks within an organisation. The timing and duration of these rotations are often pre-determined by management or decided in collaboration with employees.

Incorporating such techniques can improve sense of job security through several mechanisms:⁵

- Exposure to variety can develop employee skills
- Reducing monotony can improve employee satisfaction and motivation
- Stimulating work environments can enhance engagement
- Greater labour flexibility and utilisation of organisational learning can improve organisational performance
- Reduced physical incidence of injury, strain or fatigue



A meta-analysis of 56 studies showed that job rotation was significantly associated with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career success, labour flexibility, general psychological health, individual performance, and productivity. For employees in high-intensity jobs, positive relationships between job rotation and physical health were also found.¹⁸



Many studies emphasise the importance of training employees in line with their competencies and clearly defining which job-rotation programmes are available to each worker, particularly in manufacturing settings.¹⁹



Job Security

Interventions



Develop effective return-to-work plans for employees on sick-leave

Providing employees with effective return-to-work plans following sick-leave can speed up their rehabilitation process, increase their likelihood of sustaining long-term employment without future health-related interruptions, and enhance their overall wellbeing.

A high quality systematic review conducted by the Institute for Work and Health identified effective workplace interventions to support workers with musculoskeletal, pain-related and/or mental health conditions return to work.²⁰ Their review found three different types of common practices:

- **Health service delivery** (e.g., physiotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy)
- **Service coordination** (e.g., case management, worker training)
- **Work modification** (e.g., modified duties or hours, ergonomic adjustments)

The review recommends implementing **work-focused cognitive behavioural therapy** to help reduce lost time and costs associated with mental health conditions, and **combining interventions** from at least two of the three practice areas to reduce lost time associated with musculoskeletal and pain-related conditions.

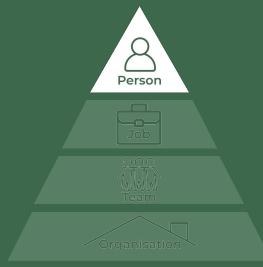
A separate systematic review exploring the factors that influence employee wellbeing during the return-to-work process found that autonomy, work-health balance, and professional support positively influenced wellbeing.²¹





Job Security

Interventions



Give employees access to financial wellness programmes



Employee financial wellness programmes (EFWPs) can help reduce short-term financial stress through voluntary services such as financial education, budgeting support, and savings incentives. While they may improve financial confidence for some employees, these programmes must be carefully designed, optional, and transparent. EFWPs can complement broader wellbeing efforts, but they are not a primary job security intervention.

Employees under financial stress are more likely to be distracted at work or take time off of work.^{22,23} These side effects not only present concerns for employees' health and safety, but also their job security. Some evidence suggests that personal financial issues can greatly impact individual performance.²⁴

Research indicates that employees enrolled in a EFWP are more likely to hold positive perceptions about their employer and feel more engaged in their work. In addition, many experience improved-psychological health arising from healthy financial behaviours including budgeting and saving.²⁵



EFWPs should complement, never replace, fair wages, job stability, and broader organisational interventions. Programmes must prioritise employee protection, privacy, and strong ethical standards.

- Low employee uptake is common, with confidentiality concerns frequently cited as a key barrier.²⁶
- Offer flexible programme designs that reflect differences in income levels, job types, and working conditions.
- Be cautious of commercial "financial wellbeing" apps that offer high-interest credit to low-wage workers, as these can increase financial precarity rather than reduce it.²⁷



Job Security

Interventions



Avoid layoffs – build organisational resilience to withstand crises

A comprehensive review of 127 studies in top management journals shows that organisational resilience is cultivated long before a crisis, through sustained investment in people, learning, and trust.²⁸ Proactive workforce planning and people-centred strategic management enhance both objective and perceived job security, strengthen adaptability, and protect wellbeing.²⁹

Plan and prepare early

Organisations that invest early in workforce capability perform better under pressure. Training employees in adaptive thinking (i.e., the ability to respond flexibly, learn quickly, and apply creative solutions in changing situations) helps them navigate uncertainty with confidence.

Developing cross-functional roles, where employees work across different departments and understand how various functions connect, builds collaboration and organisational agility.

A global study of business clusters found that firms with strong learning and development systems showed greater adaptability, maintained productivity, and protected more jobs during the 2008–09 downturn than peers that cut back on human capital investment.³⁰

Strengthen psychological safety and trust

Open communication, consistent leadership, and a culture of mutual respect reduces fear, sustains engagement, and maintains commitment during disruption.

Evidence shows that psychological safety lowers employee exhaustion and boosts performance during crises.³¹

HR systems grounded in trust and reciprocity strengthen organisational resilience, while firms with deeper social capital recover faster and maintain greater workforce stability after crises.^{32,33}

Empower employees and democratise decision-making

Empowered teams and shared decision-making drive faster adaptation and innovation, strengthening both morale and employees' sense of job security.

Research from crisis-hit firms shows that autonomy and participatory HR practices enable frontline problem-solving and resourcefulness—key factors that distinguish resilient organisations.^{28,34}

Maintain human-centric learning systems

Retaining multi-skilled employees and flexible talent pools allows organisations to absorb shocks without resorting to layoffs, helping preserve institutional knowledge and morale.²⁸

Post-crisis reflection, retraining, and knowledge sharing enhance adaptability and long-term employability by embedding continuous learning and renewal into recovery processes.³⁴

Empirical evidence shows that organisations combining learning-oriented cultures with resource flexibility recover faster and report higher employee wellbeing.³⁴



Refer also to:

- **Trust** driver



Job Security Interventions



Avoid layoffs – reinvest AI gains for workforce growth and resilience

Manage AI-driven restructuring responsibly

The adoption of Generative AI can increase productivity by 15–40% across knowledge and service roles.^{35,36}

However, a narrow focus on short-term cost savings or headcount reduction risks eroding culture, trust, and talent retention through heightened perceptions of job insecurity.^{2,37}

Recent evidence shows that organisations with stronger workforce capability and skills development are better positioned to capture the benefits of AI adoption, reinforcing the need to invest in people rather than cut jobs.³⁸

Reinvest efficiency gains into the workforce

Leaders should treat AI-related cost savings as strategic fuel for long-term growth and innovation, not merely as an expense reduction lever.

Redirect savings to fund reskilling, redeployment, and innovation pipelines, ensuring employees transition into emerging roles rather than displacement.^{39,40}

Evidence from the OECD (2024) and the *Journal of Financial Economics* highlights that firms investing in digital skills and inclusive workforce development outperform peers on innovation, revenue growth, and employee retention.^{41,42}

When AI adoption is accompanied by robust workforce development and governance, covering data security, transparency, and human–AI integration, it can enhance employee wellbeing and engagement.⁴³

Sustainable workforce strategies balance technological efficiency with workforce continuity, ensuring adaptability, wellbeing, and a durable competitive advantage.



Organisations that adopt a reinvestment mindset consistently experience stronger trust, engagement, and resilience, as well as superior financial and innovation outcomes.^{39,41,44}



Job Security

Interventions



If layoffs are inevitable, manage with care (1/3)

Layoffs affect not only those who depart, but also the employees who remain.



Survivor syndrome describes the emotional and behavioral challenges experienced by these employees, often marked by guilt, anxiety about job security, and reduced trust in leadership. This can lower morale, engagement, and performance across the organisation.

A large-scale U.S. study of 2,297 workers found that exposure to downsizing was strongly linked to poorer mental health, lower morale, and diminished organisational commitment among those who kept their jobs.⁴⁵

Importantly, research shows that these effects depend on *how* layoffs are handled. Transparent communication and perceptions of fairness significantly buffer negative outcomes, preserving trust and engagement among remaining employees.⁴⁶ Experimental and longitudinal studies further demonstrate that when employees perceive layoffs as procedurally fair and respectfully managed, they are more likely to remain committed and cooperative.⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰

Layoffs should be approached with **humanity and empathy**, recognising the real human impact rather than viewing them solely as financial or operational events. Providing adequate notice, fair severance packages, and career-transition or outplacement support demonstrates respect and compassion, while also signalling procedural and interpersonal justice, core elements shaping how employees perceive fairness.

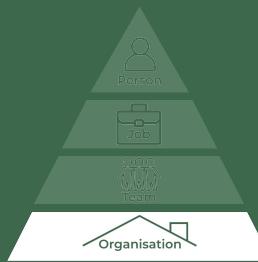
Empirical evidence shows that respectful and transparent treatment during layoffs preserves trust and morale among both departing and remaining employees. A meta-analysis of 60 studies found that organisations demonstrating fairness and respect during downsizing saw lower voluntary turnover intentions and higher post-layoff morale.⁵⁰

Similarly, a separate study showed that survivors who felt their organisation provided honest explanations and fair processes were significantly less likely to disengage or exhibit counterproductive behavior.⁵¹



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Interventions



If layoffs are inevitable, manage with care (2/3)

Ethical and legally compliant workforce transitions protect both employees and organisational legitimacy. Compliance involves adhering to national labor standards on consultation, redundancy pay, notice periods, and retraining obligations, which differ across regions but share a focus on fairness and transparency. For example:

- **In Denmark**, employers must provide formal notice and fund generous unemployment benefits, while the government supports rapid reskilling and reemployment programs. This approach helps maintain workforce mobility and minimises the long-term impact of layoffs.⁵²
- **Germany's Works Constitution Act (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz)** mandates works council consultation before any mass redundancy. Employees receive collectively negotiated severance and often benefit from *Transfergesellschaften*, temporary “transfer companies” that provide continued pay, training, and job-placement support during transition.⁵³
- **The Netherlands** requires employers to obtain approval for redundancies from the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) and mandates minimum notice and redundancy pay, supplemented by publicly funded training vouchers to facilitate reemployment.⁵⁴
- **France and Sweden** similarly enforce structured social plans (plans sociaux) requiring redeployment offers, retraining opportunities, and negotiations with worker representatives before layoffs are finalised.⁵⁵

These frameworks ensure employees are treated fairly and given time to prepare, while helping organisations avoid litigation, reputational damage, and productivity loss.

Empirical evidence from OECD countries shows that firms operating within stronger employment-protection systems experience lower turnover volatility, faster workforce reabsorption, and higher post-crisis productivity compared to those in deregulated labor markets.^{56,57}



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Interventions

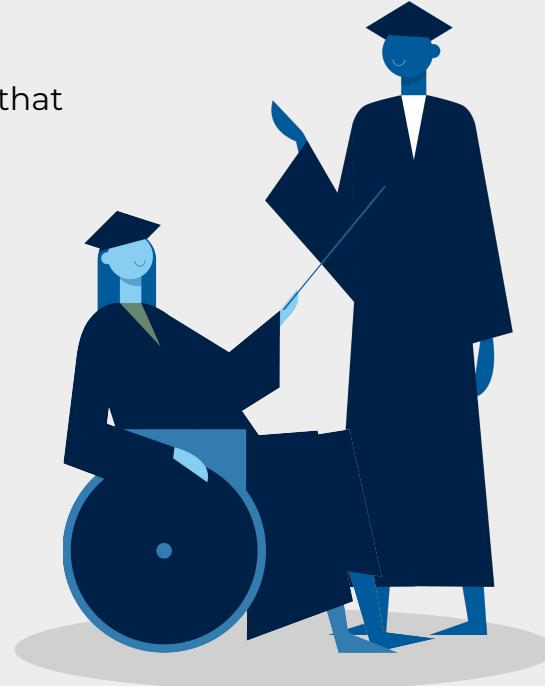


If layoffs are inevitable, manage with care (3/3)

Leading organisations **go beyond compliance** by implementing redeployment, reskilling, and outplacement strategies that minimise the long-term impact of layoffs on both people and performance.

Practical approaches include:

- Internal mobility and redeployment programs, where employees are retrained and reassigned to new business units or emerging roles rather than made redundant.
- Reskilling pathways, often developed in partnership with public employment services, vocational institutions, or universities to prepare workers for future-demand roles.
- External career-transition partnerships, offering professional coaching, job-placement support, and retraining vouchers to help employees re-enter the labour market.



Evidence shows that these interventions yield measurable business benefits.

A comparative review found that companies adopting structured redeployment and outplacement programs experienced faster reputational recovery, higher morale among remaining staff, and better retention of top talent than firms that relied on mass layoffs for short-term savings.⁵⁸ Similarly, OECD reports highlight that firms who integrate active transition measures, such as reskilling and redeployment, achieve stronger innovation performance and higher employee engagement within 12–18 months following a significant external shock or business transformation.^{59,60}



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Making the most of this resource

1 Measure

Conduct an employee survey to assess four core dimensions of employee wellbeing: **job satisfaction, happiness, stress, and sense of purpose**.

Collectively, these provide a scientifically validated, multidimensional view of how employees experience work.

Equally important, organisations should measure **the drivers of workplace wellbeing** - the underlying working conditions, relationships, and organisational factors that shape those experiences.

2 Understand

Once you've got the data, the next step is to **identify which drivers most strongly predict wellbeing outcomes within your organisation**.

Workplace wellbeing is multidimensional, shaped by a range of drivers, but not all drivers exert equal influence in every context.

By applying **data analysis at scale**, organisations can uncover which factors most powerfully explain wellbeing within their organisation.

3 Act

Once you have identified your priority drivers, the next task is to **select and implement interventions** that address them effectively.

The Playbook provides a curated selection of **evidence-based interventions** to help you act with confidence to choose interventions that are both empirically grounded and contextually feasible.

Don't forget to build **evaluation** plans into your intervention design.



Read [our guidance](#) document before getting started, to ensure you get the most out of the resources.

Sharing this resource



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Job Security

is a key driver of workplace
wellbeing



These are just some of many evidence-based interventions recommended in the Work Wellbeing Playbook.



All recommendations and academic citations, organised by driver, are available for free on our website:

www.worldwellbeingmovement.org/playbook