



Making Employee Satisfaction and Mental Health **Measurable**

How to make employee satisfaction measurable and set up an early warning system for psychological strain

The Objective of the Employee Mental Health Survey

The following survey provides companies with a practical tool to measure employee satisfaction and mental well-being within teams. In addition to the “classic” approach of assessing satisfaction, it also evaluates mental well-being.

This allows organizations to better understand the impact of mental health challenges on employee satisfaction. For a thorough analysis, it is recommended to conduct the survey quarterly and document the results.



More on the use of eNPS on page 10

By doing so, changes in workplace climate can be detected early and addressed proactively. Timely interventions in response to negative shifts in the eNPS score help prevent high opportunity costs caused by absenteeism or talent loss.

Furthermore, the scientifically based analysis of the results enables companies to assess the long-term positive effects of initiated such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

How is the Employee Mental Health Survey Designed?



The survey is conducted anonymously, inclusively, and location-independently via common online tools, allowing all employees to participate conveniently. If the results are statistically representative, they are comparable and provide a basis for deriving actionable recommendations.

A small note in advance: survey results can be influenced by various factors that limit their statistical validity. These include measurement errors arising from the composition of the surveyed group or the distribution of responses. Such factors should always be interpreted with care.

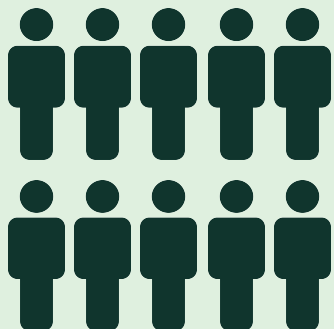
Additionally, response patterns such as social desirability or acquiescence – the tendency to agree with questions – can introduce further bias. These deviations may stem from individual personality traits as well as situational factors. It is also likely that not all employees participate in the survey, meaning the results are based on a sample. A sample represents only a portion of the entire workforce.

Sample selection is often done randomly, for example, when the survey is distributed via email. It is important to ensure that no large groups are excluded, such as employees on vacation or with limited email access.



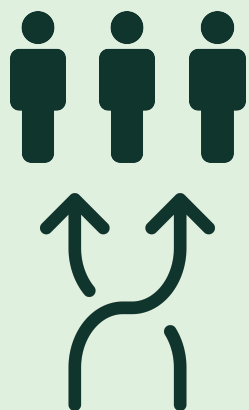
The Formula for an Optimal Result

When sample selection and survey execution are carefully planned, the responses can generally be used to draw conclusions about the entire workforce, **provided the results meet two criteria:**



The sample is large enough

To make valid inferences from the sample to the entire workforce, the sample should include at least 30 participants. For more meaningful results, a sample size of around 100 participants is ideal.



The sample is “representative”

A representative sample reflects the characteristics of the entire workforce. This means its composition (e.g., gender, education level, or job position) should match the overall population. This is usually achieved through random selection, ensuring that all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the survey.



The Employee Mental Health Survey – How to Implement it

The online survey serves as a valuable measurement tool for you and the entire People & Culture team. Ideally, you would use an internal online survey tool. If your company does not yet have one, there are various providers online that meet different requirements and budgets.

To support implementation, we provide free templates that you can customize. You can, of course, add questions or adapt the template to the specific needs of your company.

Option 1: Copy the template

Click the link next to this text and copy the survey template: click the three dots in the top right corner and then select “Make a copy” from the dropdown menu.

You now have your own survey in your workspace, which only you can edit – giving you full control over your data.



> Google Form: Copy template

Next, you can personalize the survey, change colors and add your company logo, and then distribute it to your employees. If you have additional questions, here is a guide on how to use Google Forms:



> Google Form: Preview

Instructions for analyzing the survey results can be found in the following chapters.

Option 2: Create the survey yourself

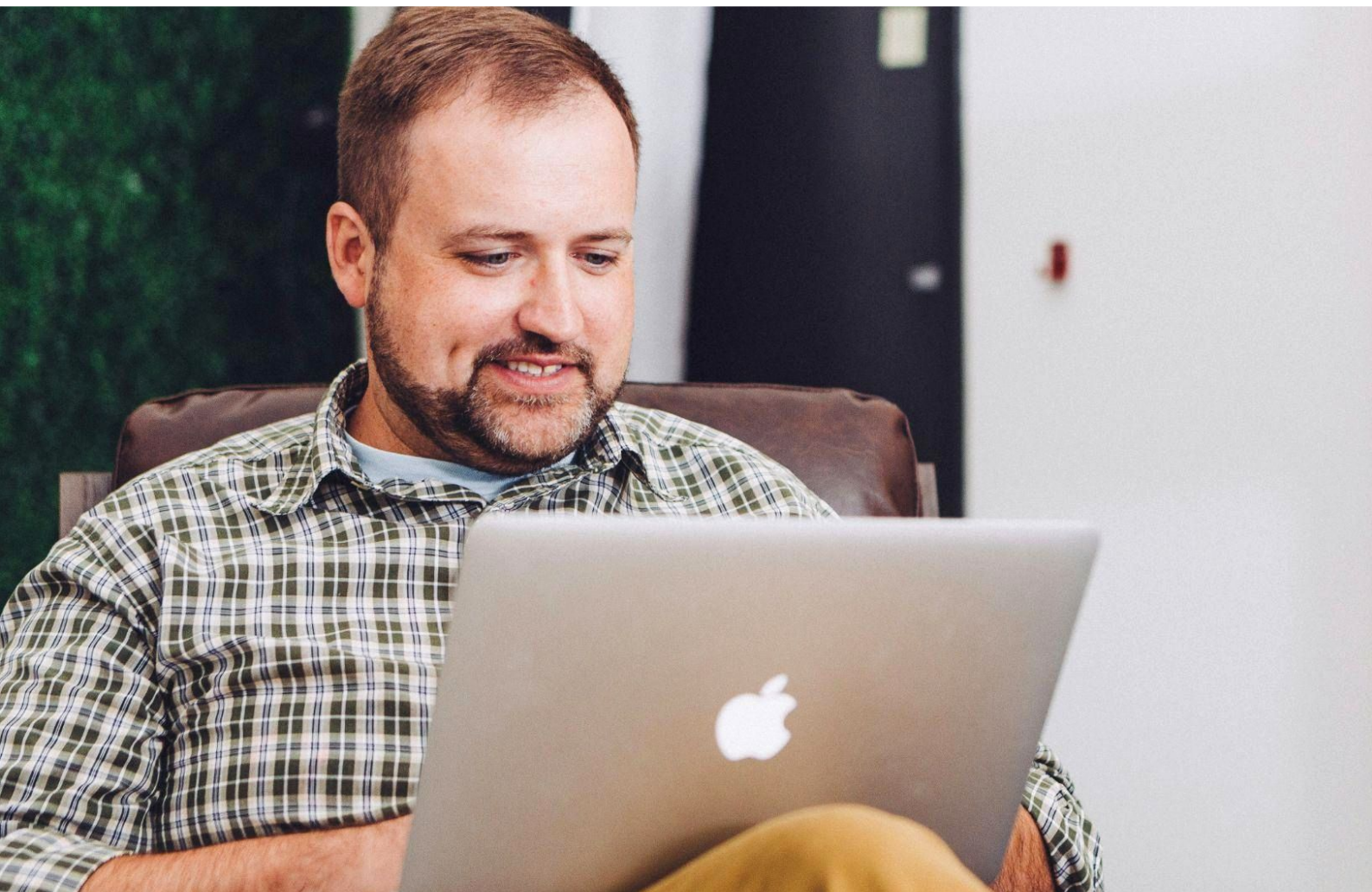
Below are the questions and scales that will be included in the survey. The introduction should be written as personally as possible, explicitly pointing out that the study is anonymous and will not be used for performance evaluation in any way.

Use this template to create the survey in the tool of your choice. Once the survey is complete, you can send the link to the participant group – either via email, company chat, or a QR code displayed in a common area such as the cafeteria. This allows employees to access the survey conveniently and securely.



The survey is divided into two parts:

- ✓ **Part 1:** Evaluated current employee satisfaction, providing a snapshot of how your team feels about work, environment, and leadership.
- ✓ **Part 2:** A scientifically validated short test called PHQ-4, which makes it possible to quickly identify anxiety and depressive symptoms in respondents.



Question	Scale / Field Value
How satisfied are you currently at \$\$companyname\$\$?	0 – 6 - very unsatisfied – very satisfied
What currently makes you particularly satisfied or dissatisfied?	free-text response (optional)
How likely is it that you would recommend \$\$companyname\$\$? as an employer to a friend or acquaintance?	0 – 10 - very unlikely – very likely
What do you particularly like or dislike?	free-text response (optional)
How often have you felt affected by the following feelings over the past two weeks? Please select how frequently you experienced these feelings using a Likert scale.	
I feel nervous, anxious, or on edge	- Not at all - Several days - More than half the days - Nearly every day
I was unable to stop worrying or control my anxiety	- Not at all - Several days - More than half the days - Nearly every day
I felt down, depressed, or hopeless	- Not at all - Several days - More than half the days - Nearly every day
I had little interest or pleasure in doing things	- Not at all - Several days - More than half the days - Nearly every day

Analysis of the Survey

Measuring overall employee satisfaction

The question *“How satisfied are you with the company right now?”* aims to capture your employees’ subjective satisfaction. Because it is asked at the very beginning of the survey, it provides a clear framing and allows for a spontaneous, intuitive response.

Compared to the shortly following eNPS question (likelihood to recommend), most respondents answer the satisfaction question with their overall work situation in mind. The eNPS question, by contrast, focuses more specifically on work climate and team collaboration.

For analysis, it is helpful to look closely at the distribution of numerical responses. This allows you to see what percentage of employees are generally satisfied with their workplace and to identify areas where action may be needed.



Open-ended responses for deeper insights

The questions *“What currently makes you particularly satisfied or dissatisfied?”* and *“What do you like or dislike most?”* are ideally optional and can be skipped by employees, or removed entirely depending on your survey design.

Keep in mind that open-text responses are generally not representative, as people tend to respond either very positively or very negatively. Nevertheless, it is worth reviewing the responses carefully. Are there recurring topics or statements? If you identify a specific problem or area for development, you can include a targeted question in the next survey to gather feedback from the broader workforce.

For visualizing open-ended responses, creating a word cloud is recommended. This provides a quick overview of frequently mentioned terms and topics. Numerous free tools are available online that make word cloud creation simple and user-friendly.

Making Employee Satisfaction Comparable Through eNPS



How does eNPS work?

Employees rate their likelihood to recommend the company on a scale of 0 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely), Responses are then divided into three groups:

Detractors (0–6 points):

These employees are dissatisfied and may spread negative opinions about the company. They may have already mentally “checked out” and often show lower motivation and a higher likelihood of leaving.

Passive (7–8 points):

These employees are neutral, neither particularly loyal nor critical

Promoters (9–10 points):

These employees are highly satisfied and engaged. They actively support the company through recommendations.

The **eNPS score** is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. The result ranges from -100 (all Detractors) to +100 (all Promoters):

$$\text{eNPS} = \% \text{ Promoters} - \% \text{ Detractors}$$

For example, in a company with 100 employees, if there are 20 Detractors, 30 Passives, and 50 Promoters, the eNPS would be +30.

Why is eNPS relevant?

eNPS is a valuable tool for measuring loyalty, satisfaction, and engagement across the workforce. A high proportion of Detractors can indicate deeper issues in company culture, such as low motivation or an active desire to leave. Over time, this can negatively affect productivity and business success.

Improving eNPS utilization

A targeted analysis of Detractors provides detailed insights and help address concerns highlighted by the eNPS. By looking beyond the net score and analyzing Detractors separately, you can identify potential problem trends early and take focused action.

Regularly tracking eNPS and analyzing changes over time allows you to identify key developments in employee satisfaction. This enables you to respond to your workforce’s needs proactively and improve company culture sustainably.

Measuring Employee Mental Strain with the PHQ-4

Depression and anxiety are common challenges that often occur simultaneously, significantly affecting both the quality of life and work performance of those affected. Such mental strain can lead to longer absences and a decline in productivity.

The **PHQ-4** (Patient Health Questionnaire-4) is a scientifically validated screening tool specifically designed to assess depression and anxiety. It is highly psychometrically reliable and offers an efficient way to measure these mental health challenges in a corporate context.

Calculation and interpretation of the PHQ-4

The PHQ-4 consists of four questions, with responses summed to produce a total score. Each employee's total score can range **from 0 to 12**. Each answer is assigned a specific point value that contributes to the overall score.

- **Low scores** indicate little to no mental strain.
- **Higher scores** may indicate moderate to severe mental strain and could require further measures or a more detailed assessment.

Response	Score – added up
Not at all	0
Several days	1
More than half the days	2
Almost every day	3

The results of the PHQ-4 can help HR teams and managers better understand employees' mental well-being and, if needed, provide targeted support measures.

Based on the total score, the current level of psychological strain can be assessed. The first two questions focus on potential signs of depression, while questions three and four indicate possible anxiety-related stress.

Depression

Score for: I have felt down, depressed, or hopeless.

Score for: I have had little interest or pleasure in doing things.

Anxiety

Score for: I have felt nervous, anxious, or in edge.

Score for: I could not stop worrying or control my anxiety.



Normally, the PHQ-4 is used for individual patient assessments. In our case, it is applied as an anonymous group survey. For analysis, the calculation is as follows:

**Total of all scores / number of respondents
= average score**

Interpretating the PHQ-4 Score

Based on the PHQ-4 score, employees' psychological distress can be categorized:

- **None:** 0–2
- **Mild:** 3–5
- **Moderate:** 6–8
- **Severe:** 9–12

A sum score above 3 per category indicates potential issues.

For evaluation, it is recommended to look at the percentage of affected employees (score >3) and compare it with external benchmarks.

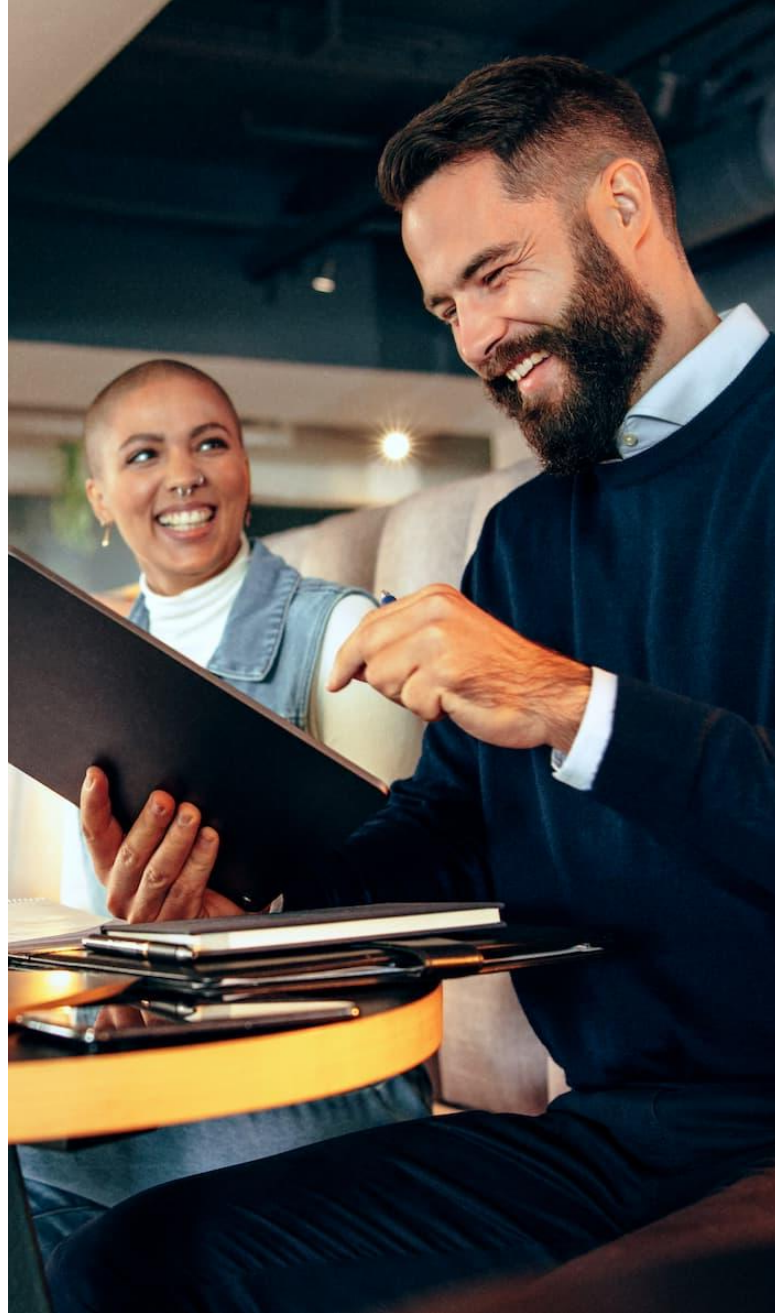
In Germany, studies show that about **27.8% of the adult population** experience mental health conditions each year. If your company exceeds this proportion, immediate action is needed. Even lower percentages, combined with low employee satisfaction, signal the need for intervention.

Actions and Monitoring

Flexible offerings, such as access to mental health counseling (e.g., via platforms like nilo), can help support employees. Comparing scores over time allows you to document the effectiveness of these measures and track progress in reducing mental strain.

Support your employees with the leading workplace mental health platform

nilo gives your team easy access to mental health support: one-on-one sessions with psychologists, self-guided exercises and tools, group programs, and workshops that strengthen both your team and your company culture.



Looking for more ideas to improve well-being in your organization?

[Let's talk!](#)

Let's create a safe
space for **mental health**
in your company