

Discover the 10 components of workload

REFERENCE GUIDE



Workload is a fundamental factor that can negatively affect mental health and well-being at work if it is not well-managed or balanced.

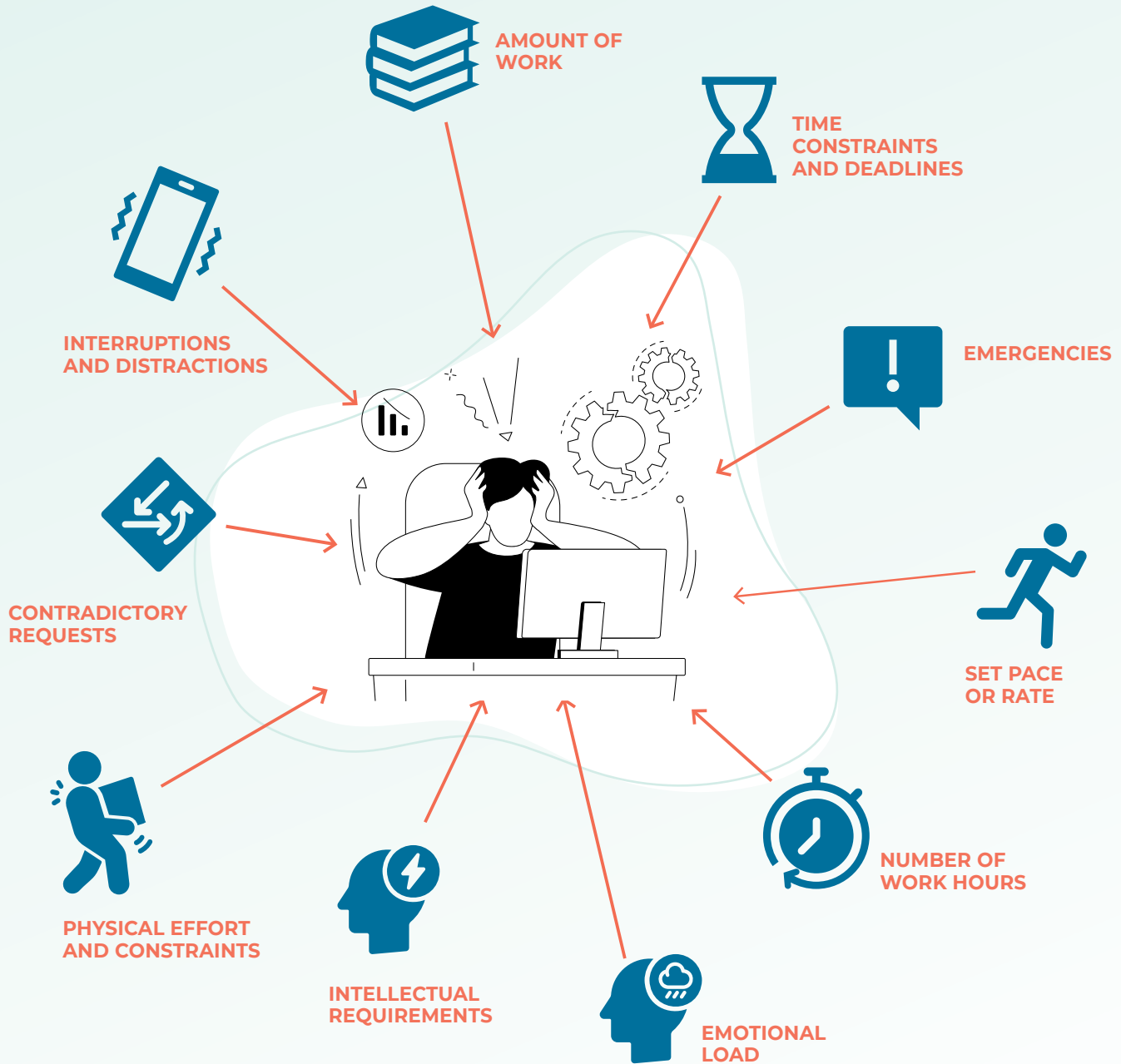
What do science and practice have to say about workload? This tool will help you learn about the 10 key components of workload so that you can act appropriately to promote sustainable well-being in your organization.

When we talk about assessing workload, it is often the quantitative aspects—meaning those that are more easily measured and identifiable—that are taken into consideration. These are unavoidable and significant, since they allow us to objectify workload through precise measurements. However, we must not neglect all the more qualitative or subjective aspects, which in most cases must be measured by evaluating employee perceptions through things like questionnaires, group interviews and team or individual discussions. By analyzing these aspects, you will be able to paint a more accurate and precise picture of the workload in your organization, which will ultimately allow you to address the real problems.

Global-Watch conducted a review of the relevant literature and selected and analyzed some 30 scientific and grey literature references to identify and explain these 10 components, in addition to considering feedback from companies with which Global-Watch collaborates.

The components of workload

Global-Watch (2023)



Here is an overview of the 10 components of workload



AMOUNT OF WORK TO BE DONE

The amount of work is often measured using the job description, in which tasks and assignments are assigned and specified, along with some one-time requests.



TIME CONSTRAINTS AND DEADLINES TO BE MET

Assigning a project or task can be done under favourable conditions, including realistic deadlines. But very often, the deadlines set are difficult to meet. In addition, there are partner or employee time constraints, vacations and time off, the hiring of new resources, etc.



EMERGENCIES

Emergencies often strike when we least expect them and make it necessary to put our “regular” work aside to devote all our energies to them. They are a frequent occurrence in some teams and require special attention to reach an agreement on how to deal with them: is it really an emergency? Should we prioritize it over the rest of our tasks? Do we have criteria to “categorize” emergencies?



NUMBER OF WORK HOURS

The number of hours worked can often be greater than the number of hours specified for the job. Why? To be able to complete all tasks and meet deadlines or due to lack of personnel. Many studies report the link between working long hours and negative impacts on health.



SET PACE OR RATE OF WORK

In many workplaces, it is necessary to maintain a fairly high pace or rate of work to achieve objectives and meet deadlines (e.g. back-to-back meetings, simultaneous projects, collaborative assignments that require part of the work to be completed at specific times, assembly-line work, specific schedules to be maintained, etc.).



INTERRUPTIONS AND DISTRACTIONS AT WORK

Interruptions, disturbances and distractions in the workplace are becoming increasingly common and come from a variety of sources. Interruptions are usually involuntary and beyond our control. They can be of any kind, and the existence of various technological platforms has increased them considerably in recent years. It may be a question of receiving different notifications, emails or calls that need to be answered, technical problems that need to be solved or interactions with a colleague or associate.



CONTRADICTIONARY REQUESTS

Requests may come from the manager, a colleague, a partner or an associate, customers and so on. They may concern performance objectives, established rules, deliverables, relationships and more. They can lead to confusion, delays and even conflict if the people involved perceive the situation differently.



PHYSICAL EFFORT AND CONSTRAINTS

Physical effort and constraints, whether they involve handling heavy loads, performing repetitive tasks or even working in a sedentary position for long periods of time, contribute to the mental demands of work. It's no surprise, given that physical health and mental health are so closely connected. At the same time, physical constraints can be increased by other facets of the job, such as time constraints.



INTELLECTUAL REQUIREMENTS

The intellectual requirements and complexity of work can increase the cognitive load. For example, there is a need to concentrate intensely during long work hours, to follow clear and sometimes complex processes, to perform tasks that require a lot of thinking and research and so on. These factors are often overlooked in the overall assessment of workload.



EMOTIONAL LOAD

Emotional load is increasingly present in various sectors, particularly among managers. It can be characterized by working with a difficult client base, being exposed to aggression, feeling compassion fatigue or being afraid of making mistakes or not having all the skills to do the job.

In conclusion ...

Remember! Every situation is different, as are the workload components, which can vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the teams. As such, it is essential to assess all the components to ensure a complete picture of the workload that reflects the reality of each situation and team. To achieve this, as the HR manager in your company, your role is to encourage open dialogue on the issue and to assist managers in communicating with their teams.

You should also know that various protective factors, like the conditions in which work is performed, the resources available and social support, can be used to limit the adverse effects of a high workload on health.

Depending on the profile of each team and the various circumstances, you will be able to implement appropriate actions to balance the workload and thus foster significant and lasting results.

For more information

➔ CORPORATE CONFERENCES:

Request the conference **Beyond the prescribed workload: a shared responsibility for better understanding and managing the actual workload.** To train your managers or your employees on workload, including many possible courses of action.

➔ SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATIONS:

We encourage you to read these three Global-Watch scientific interpretations about different workload components, available at [global-watch.com](https://www.global-watch.com):

- **How work interruptions affect employees' well-being at work**
- **Pointless and unreasonable: Tasks that spoil work**
- **Service with a smile: Easier said than done!**

TO CITE TO THIS TOOL:

"Global-Watch. (2023). *Discover the 10 components of workload*, available at www.global-watch.com."