

Evidence Brief: Why Engagement Surveys Are Not Enough

CultureIQ Labs Research Series | 2026

The Problem

Most organizations measure engagement annually and call it culture measurement. They survey employees about satisfaction, intent to stay, and discretionary effort. Then they build action plans around the results.

The problem is not the intent. The problem is the construct. Engagement and psychological safety are different things — and treating them as interchangeable leads to interventions that address symptoms while missing root causes.

Engagement vs. Psychological Safety

DIMENSION	ENGAGEMENT SURVEY	PS ASSESSMENT
What it measures	Sentiment, satisfaction	Safety to take risks
Level of analysis	Individual aggregated	Team-level (ICC validated)
Construct type	Attitudinal	Perceptual/behavioral
RTW connection	None	Direct (weighted risk factor)
Compliance value	Low	High (CSA Z1003 aligned)
Action pathway	General action plans	Specific training + scoring
Longitudinal rigor	Year-over-year trend	Wave-over-wave with ICC

The Measurement Gap

Only **3.6%** of published studies measure psychological safety correctly at the team level (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Most use individual self-report scores and aggregate them to the team — the statistical equivalent of averaging individual blood pressure readings and calling it “team health.”

What Engagement Surveys Miss

- No team-level statistical validation (ICC) of whether scores represent shared perception
- No connection between culture data and return-to-work outcomes
- No compliance tracking against CSA Z1003 or Z1011 standards
- No leadership development pathway linked to assessment results
- No longitudinal wave-over-wave comparison with independent ICC validation
- No response validity checks (straight-lining, attention checks, consistency)
- No proprietary risk scoring that connects culture to operational outcomes

The CultureIQ Labs Approach

- 1 ASSESS** — ICC-validated team-level psychological safety measurement
- 2 CERTIFY** — Evidence-based leadership and RTW supervisor training
- 3 SCORE** — Proprietary 20-factor RTW risk scoring engine
- 4 TRACK** — CSA Z1003 + Z1011 compliance with full audit trail

REFERENCES

- Edmondson, A.C. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383.
- Newman, A., et al. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27(3), 521-535.
- Frazier, M.L., et al. (2017). Psychological safety: A meta-analytic review. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113-165.
- LeBreton, J.M., & Senter, J.L. (2008). Answers to 20 questions about interrater reliability. *Organizational Research Methods*, 11(4), 815-852.