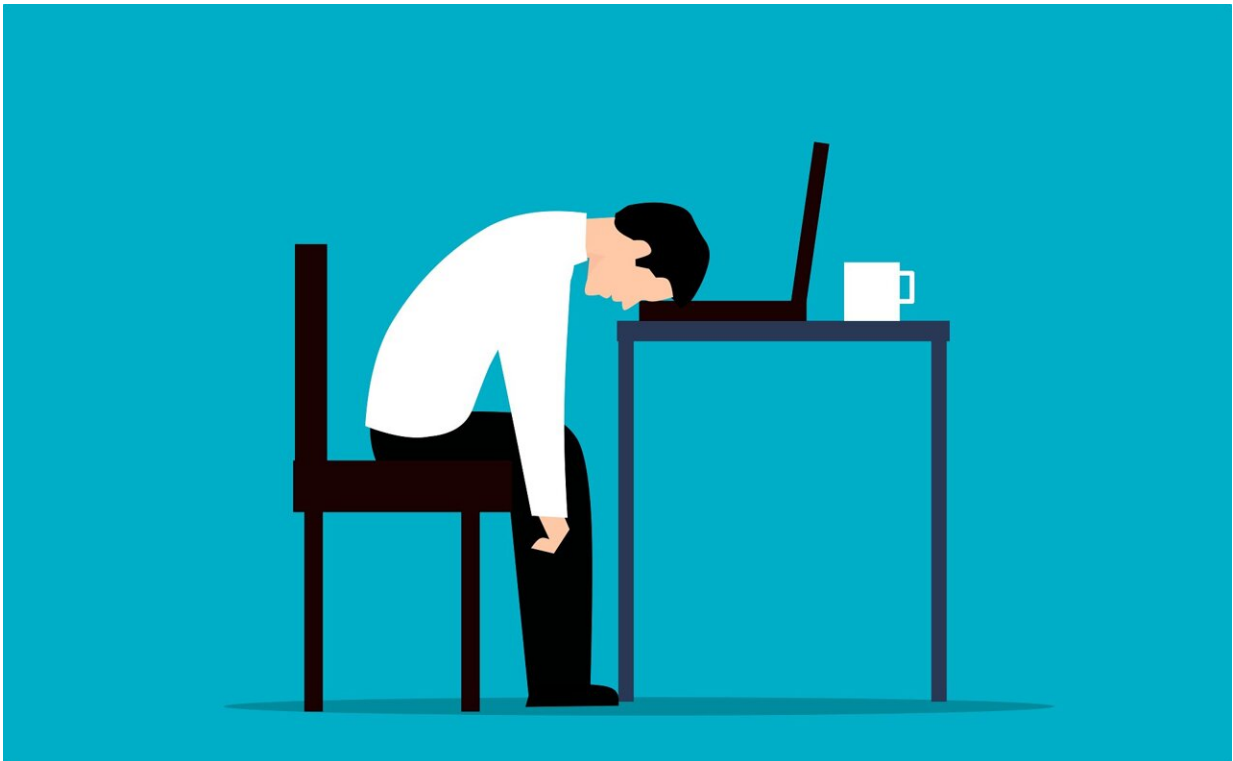


Do workers with a recent history of burnout make different career choices?

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Previous research showed that clinical burnout complicates career resumption because employers are less inclined to hire or promote previously burned-out workers. Researchers Philippe Sterkens, Stijn Baert, Eline Moens, Joey Wuyts and Eva Deroos now studied the

opposite perspective: Do workers with a recent history of burnout make different career choices?

To answer this question, the interdisciplinary research team had a representative sample of Belgian workers participate in an experiment in which they evaluated fictitious job offers with varying characteristics. The results are [published](#) in the *Journal of Population Economics*.

From their experiment, we learn that workers with a recent history of clinical burnout were relatively more attracted to jobs in which there were more telecommuting [opportunities](#) and [feedback](#) was provided regularly. Surprisingly, they also valued [jobs](#) with training opportunities less than workers without a recent history of clinical burnout.

"From previous research we know that burnout can be explained by excessive work demands and too [limited resources](#) that can buffer these demands (such as appreciation in the workplace). Our recent analyses now indicate that job demands and resources are similarly important in explaining the [career choices](#) made by individuals who experienced burnout.

"Specifically, feedback opportunities are perceived more strongly as a job resource by workers who recently experienced clinical burnout," says Philippe Sterkens, doctoral researcher in economics and psychology.

These findings are consistent with [previous research](#) among formerly burned-out workers showing that supervisor support is a crucial determinant of a successful return to work.

Policy perspectives

The researchers link the following policy advice to their study results.

"First, it appears that job crafting is a valuable instrument for workers with a history of burnout who are looking for sustainable re-employment. Arranging opportunities for feedback would be an example of a potent job crafting intervention," says Philippe Sterkens, doctoral researcher in economics and psychology.

"Second, following up on and encouraging the professional training of burned-out [workers](#) remains crucial because learning opportunities are positively related to mental health outcomes. All this, of course, within the constraints of recovery requirements."

More information: Philippe Sterkens et al, I won't make the same mistake again: burnout history and job preferences, *Journal of Population Economics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1007/s00148-024-00980-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-024-00980-6)

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