

# Headspace & Ericsson



**Headspace helped Ericsson employees experience better sleep, feel less stressed, and be more engaged during work.**

## BACKGROUND

Ericsson is one of the leading providers of Information and Communication Technology. Headquartered in Stockholm, Ericsson supports employees across Europe and the globe. Headspace invited Ericsson employees to participate in a scientific study evaluating the effects of a 10-day mindfulness program on heart rate variability (HRV), stress, and sleep quality.

## HEADSPACE APPROACH

It's difficult for most people to recognize the extent to which stress impacts the body throughout the day, and even during sleep. People don't necessarily sense when their bodily resources are depleted, and many don't have regular practices like mindfulness and meditation to help restore them.

HRV, an objective, real-time measurement, is superior to self-reported outcomes in measuring stress-recovery balance during the day and night, physiological stress, and sleep quality.<sup>1</sup> Continuous measurement through HRV provides a fine-tuned objective assessment of a person's state of mind at any given moment, even during sleep. As mindfulness practice has been shown to have profound effects on the HRV response, HRV can be used to determine how and when mindfulness is exerting an impact.

The Headspace Science team provided heart rate monitors for 13 employees (eight women and five men, average age 43.6 years) to measure HRV across a 3-day period, which the employees used both before and after a 10-day mindfulness program with the Headspace app. After the study, the participants received a personalized HRV report, which included insights into their stress-recovery balance and sleep quality.

<sup>1</sup> Kirk U, Axelsen JL (2020) Heart rate variability is enhanced during mindfulness practice: A randomized controlled trial involving a 10-day online-based mindfulness intervention. PLoS ONE 15(12): e0243488. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0243488>

10%

decrease in physiological stress after 10 days of Headspace.

10%

increase in physiological sleep quality after 10 days of Headspace.

64.8%

increase in *parasympathetic dominance*<sup>2</sup> during work time.

5.5%

increase in *parasympathetic dominance* during leisure time.

#### RESULTS

The study allowed the participating employees — and the Ericsson corporation at-large — to understand how mindfulness physiologically impacts their sleep quality, resilience to stress, and overall well-being. Levels of physiological stress declined and sleep quality increased, showing that Headspace is an effective tool for managing stress.

When employees have access to digital mindfulness tools, their well-being improves through decreased stress and increased sleep quality, allowing them to become more present and engaged in their life including at work. Objective, real-time measurements such as HRV allow us to capture insights into stress-recovery balance, supplementing knowledge gained from self-reported questionnaires.

In this study of mindfulness through the Headspace app, paired with real-time measurement of HRV, the employer and employees gained insights into their mental health, and importantly became empowered to build healthier habits around mental well-being.

<sup>2</sup> The parasympathetic system of the brain can be understood as a brake that slows down bodily activity and helps restore balance (homeostasis). Increased parasympathetic dominance causes the heart rate and respiration to slow down and increases heart rate variability (HRV). Essentially parasympathetic dominance establishes a bodily relaxation response.