



Summary of
Akava Works report:

Working conditions and work ability of employees transferred to wellbeing services counties

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December 2024



Akava

Summary

The study examined how the perceived working conditions and work ability of employees who transferred to wellbeing services counties have changed as a result of the wellbeing services county reform. The material consisted of responses to well-being at work surveys conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in municipalities, hospital districts, joint municipal authorities and wellbeing services counties. The research material is an unusually large and very comprehensive sample of social welfare, health care and rescue service employees within the Finnish public sector. The study examined the situation before and after the wellbeing services county reform. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health was commissioned by Akava Works to carry out the study.

The establishment of wellbeing services counties was the largest reform carried out under the transfer-of-business principle in Finland's history. Earlier studies have found that large organisational changes have had an impact on the well-being at work of personnel. This study examined how the perceived working conditions and work ability of employees who are working in social welfare and health care have changed as a result of the wellbeing services county reform.

The research material consisted of responses to well-being at work surveys conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in municipalities, hospital districts, joint municipal authorities under the social and health care reform and wellbeing services counties. The study compares the 2021–2022 survey data (before the establishment of wellbeing services counties, N=41,651) with the 2023–2024 survey data (after the establishment of wellbeing services counties, N=71,002). The perceived work ability and working conditions were analysed as an entire dataset and by occupational groups.

The results of the study indicated changes had occurred in the work ability and working conditions of personnel as a result of the wellbeing services county reform. The perceived level of work ability had decreased during the period in review. The working conditions had also weakened for many; for example, job insecurity increased, workplace bullying increased and the organisation's decision-making was increasingly perceived as being unfair. On the other hand, work pressure was perceived as having decreased slightly and several respondents felt that their level of work management was good.

Based on the results, it seems that the transfer to wellbeing services counties has not improved the working conditions and well-being at work of the personnel. According to many indicators, the situation has even further weakened, albeit not dramatically. Work in many social and health care professions still remains very stressful, and ways to reduce the load and strain and improve coping are needed. Based on the findings of this study, focus in the wellbeing services counties should especially be placed on the development of the organisation's decision-making processes and the inclusion of personnel in those processes. In addition, there is a need to provide support for personnel within the wellbeing services counties who have a weakened work ability – and there are already a lot who fall in this category.

Research group

The research was carried out by the following employees of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health: Senior Specialist Risto Nikunlaakso, Researcher Vilja Levonius, Specialist Researcher Kirsikka Selander, Senior Specialist Pauliina Toivio and Specialist Pyy Silomaa. Nikunlaakso is the main author of the report and he planned the compilation and analysis of the research data; Levonius wrote descriptions for many of the report's diagrams; Selander designed statistical analyses and edited the report's text; Toivio compiled research data and made analyses; and Silomaa compiled research data.