

Summary of Akava Works report 3/2025

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

The establishment of wellbeing services counties was the largest transfer of business in Finland's history. Earlier studies have shown that large organisational changes like this have had an impact on the wellbeing at work of personnel. This study examined the changes in the perceived work ability and working conditions of employees working within social welfare and healthcare services after the establishment of the wellbeing services counties.

The study material consisted of responses to surveys conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health on wellbeing at work in municipalities, hospital districts, joint municipal authorities within social welfare and healthcare and wellbeing services counties. The study compares the 2021–2022 survey data (before the wellbeing services county reform, N=41,700) with the 2023–2024 (approximately one year after the reform, N=71,000) and the survey data from autumn 2024 (just under 2 years after the reform, N=39,800). The perceived work ability and working conditions were analysed for the entire dataset and by occupational groups.

The study results indicate that changes occurred in the work ability and working conditions of the personnel of wellbeing services counties after the wellbeing services county reform. Initially, the perceived work ability showed weakening in the 2023/2024 survey but improved almost to the level seen before the reform in the autumn 2024 survey. The working conditions of many employees weakened. The share of those experiencing uncertainty of work, workplace bullying and lack of possibilities to influence increased. Furthermore, the organisations' decision-making was perceived as being unfair more often than before, although the situation improved slightly in the autumn 2024 survey. Positive changes were also seen; for instance, there was slightly less experience of disproportion between investment and reward, and fewer employees than before worked more than 40 hours per week.

Based on the results, it seems that the transfer to wellbeing services counties has not improved the employees' working conditions or wellbeing at work. According to some indicators, the situation has even weakened, albeit not dramatically. Although there are significant resource factors in work within the social welfare and healthcare sector, work in many social and health professions still remains very stressful, and measures are needed to reduce the stress and loading and to improve coping. Based on the findings of this study, wellbeing services counties should especially focus on reducing uncertainty of work, listening to the personnel in decision-making and developing the organisation's decision-making. In addition, support is needed within the wellbeing services counties for employees with weakened work ability – there are a lot of them.