Working life information and solutions to support work ability

Supervisory work

Summaries
→

Everyday working life
– general information about expert and knowledge work
→

Load factors and resources
→

Phenomena and trends
→

Solutions for work
→

Statistics and graphs
→

This series on working life information and solutions to support work ability is a compilation of the working conditions, load factors and work ability resources that are typical of the tasks, occupations and sectors of our client companies.

The contents are based on statistics, expert information and research data, Elo's data and open data from research institutes.
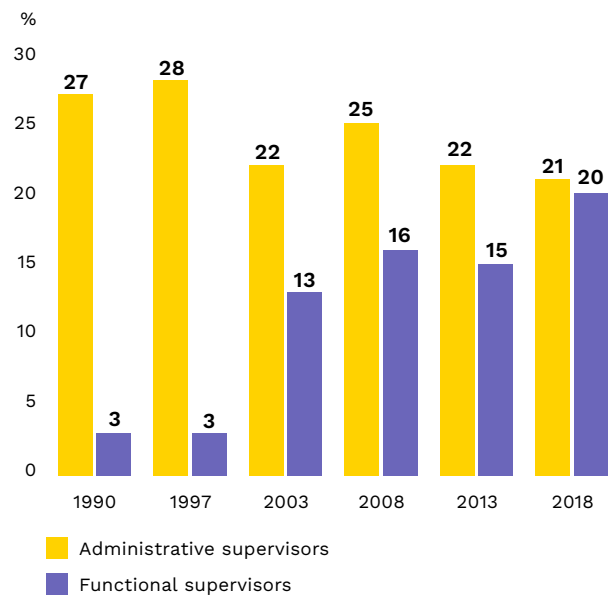
Summary – everyday working life

Supervisors and managers often have quite a broad job description. The work is usually largely independent and self-directed. The work tasks can involve, for example, HR management, administrative tasks, decision-making, organisational development and operational planning. Furthermore, the work often involves participation in other expert or customer work in the workplace alongside the actual management duties. In addition to their management role, their responsibilities include taking care of the well-being and safety of the employees they supervise.

Each professional sector sets its own requirements for supervisory work. For example, in the technology sector, a supervisor is often required to have technical skills, while in the social and health care sector, an understanding of the specifics of social welfare and health care is emphasised. The job description is also affected by whether the management role is at the level of a first-line supervisor, middle management or top management. Under the umbrella of work management, it is also possible for a supervisor to serve, for example, in the capacity of a team leader without having an administrative supervisory role. In this case, we are talking about the role of functional supervisors. The work of functional supervisors involves different aspects of leadership, such as work organisation, task distribution and the monitoring of work functionality. According to Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, the share of administrative supervisors has decreased during the 21st century and the share of functional supervisors has increased correspondingly. It is important for functional and administrative supervisory work to agree on clear expectations with regard to the promotion of work ability and well-being of employees and to clarify specific responsibilities, when necessary.

According to Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, the share of administrative supervisors among salary earners has decreased over the past thirty years, while the share of functional supervisors has increased over the same period of time.

The share of administrative supervisors

Source: Statistics Finland, Working conditions in the midst of changes – Results of the Quality of work life survey 1977–2023 (2024)
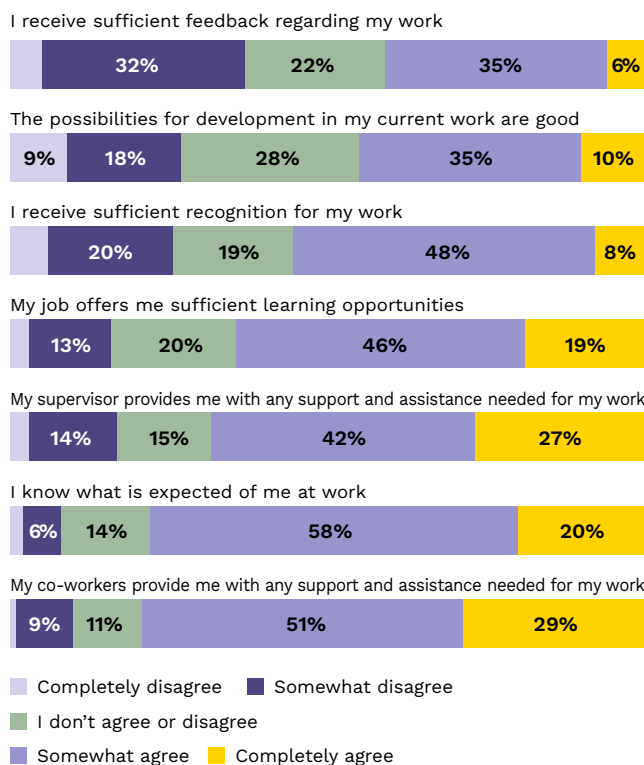

Legend:
- Administrative supervisors
- Functional supervisors

Read more about everyday working life >

Summary – important resources for supervisory work

Important resources for supervisors and managers include, for example, a balance between work and other aspects of life, work recovery, opportunities to influence work, effective interaction with top management and support from the work community. Rewarding aspects of the work can include, for example, personal development opportunities and meaningful work in a leadership role.

Supervisory work can offer abundant resources to counterbalance workload strain

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

I receive sufficient feedback regarding my work

| 32% | 22% | 35% | 6% |

The possibilities for development in my current work are good

| 9% | 18% | 28% | 35% | 10% |

I receive sufficient recognition for my work

| 20% | 19% | 48% | 8% |

My job offers me sufficient learning opportunities

| 13% | 20% | 46% | 19% |

My supervisor provides me with any support and assistance needed for my work

| 14% | 15% | 42% | 27% |

I know what is expected of me at work

| 6% | 14% | 58% | 20% |

My co-workers provide me with any support and assistance needed for my work

| 9% | 11% | 51% | 29% |

- ▪ Completely disagree
- ▪ Somewhat disagree
- ▪ I don't agree or disagree
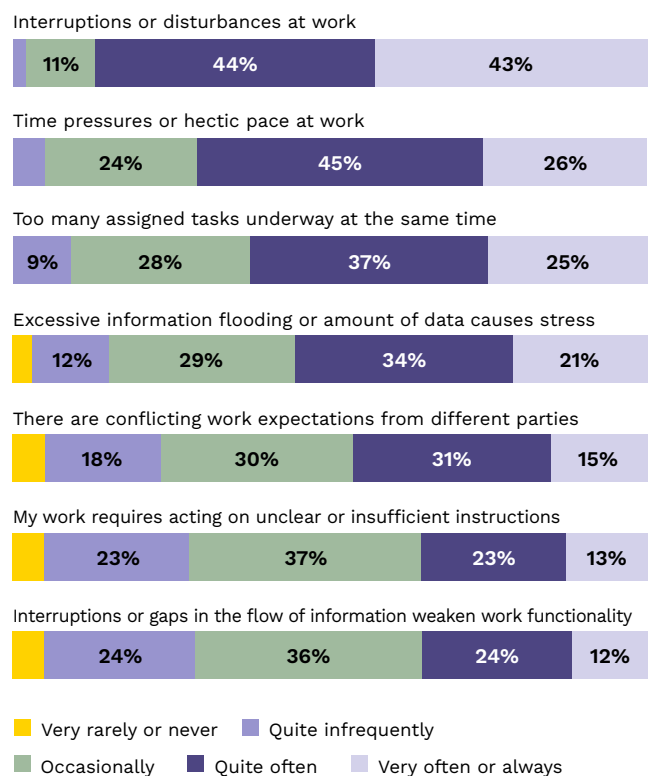- ▪ Somewhat agree
- ▪ Completely agree

Load factors in supervisory work

The load factors involved in supervisory work are often associated with its broad job description and the diverse expectations placed on the work. Typical load factors include, for example, the overlapping of tasks, a hectic pace and time pressures, work interruptions and information flooding. Although managing people often brings with it resources that support work ability, possible challenging interaction situations can also cause emotional strain. Harmful stress is prevented by a balance between load and resource factors at work.

Work interruptions, a hectic pace, overlapping of tasks and conflicting expectations are typical load factors in the everyday life of supervisors

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

Interruptions or disturbances at work

| 11% | 44% | 43% |

Time pressures or hectic pace at work

| 24% | 45% | 26% |

Too many assigned tasks underway at the same time

| 9% | 28% | 37% | 25% |

Excessive information flooding or amount of data causes stress

| 12% | 29% | 34% | 21% |

There are conflicting work expectations from different parties

| 18% | 30% | 31% | 15% |

My work requires acting on unclear or insufficient instructions

| 23% | 37% | 23% | 13% |

Interruptions or gaps in the flow of information weaken work functionality

| 24% | 36% | 24% | 12% |

- ▪ Very rarely or never
- ▪ Quite infrequently
- ▪ Occasionally
- ▪ Quite often
- ▪ Very often or always

Read more about load factors and resources >

Summary – phenomena and trends

Changes in working life, such as increasing efficiency requirements, cognitive loading, a prevalence of multi-location work, learning requirements and expectations for the self-direction of employees, are also visible in the everyday life of supervisors.

The importance of people-oriented management is increasing

Servant leadership is one suitable management approach for modern working life. The number of studies on servant leadership has increased steadily in the 21st century and the growth has intensified from 2020 onwards. Increasing studies also show that servant leadership is closely linked with work engagement (positive emotional and motivational states at work), trust, work performance and a lower rate of burnout.

Managing multi-location work

In multi-location or hybrid work, the importance of leadership that supports communality, the collective identity of the work community and the sense of belonging is emphasised. The following acts of leadership are important aspects of a management style that advances the identity of the work community.

A manager who supports the collective identity of the work community:
- creates an understanding of what it means to be a member of the work community
- highlights the unique characteristics of the team
- promotes the team's common interests
- affects members' perceptions of group values
- organises activities that bring the group together
- develops structures, events and activities that lend value to the existence of the team

Change management within an evolving working life

Companies operate under constant change and organisations need to be able to adapt to the change pressures of their environment in order to continue to operate. Organisational changes particularly affect supervisors, since they often play a key role in implementing the changes in their work communities. The way organisational changes are implemented has a significant impact on their success. Successful implementation of the changes requires careful planning, effective change management and support for the work ability of employees affected by the changes. The key perspectives in terms of change management are, for example, an assessment of the readiness for change, effective change communication, giving the employees an opportunity to be heard and participate in the change process, competence support for the change and the monitoring of the impacts of the changes.

Read more about phenomena and trends >

Summary – solutions to support supervisory work

Work ability and work functionality are affected by a supervisor's individual resources and activities to support work ability, smooth co-operation between different levels of management, common workplace operating models and tools that support management work, as well as organisational structures and culture.

Structures and culture that support the well-being of supervisors

- Top management ensures the development of a culture in which a natural part of everyday work ability management involves talking about the work functionality of supervisors.

- The conditions necessary for the knowledge work carried out by first-line supervisors are assessed in the workplace and focus is placed on managing information flooding.

- Guidelines are provided to prioritise supervisory work and sufficient time is ensured for people-oriented management.
- In the workplace, the networking of supervisors and sharing of peer support are promoted.

Tools and clear operating models for supervisory work

In the workplace, it is important to draw up commonly agreed operating models and practical instructions, for example, for the following situations related to supervisory work:
- Early support
- Support for an employee's return to work, e.g., after a sick leave
- The addressing of inappropriate treatment, bullying or conflict situations in the work community
- Action models for work adaptation
- Change situations in the workplace

Smooth collaboration between different levels of management
- Leadership is divided appropriately.
- Opportunities to influence the work are assessed at different management levels and are added to the job description in appropriate ways.
- Top management diversely offers feedback to first-line supervisors and the feedback is given in the form of dialogue.
- Sufficient discourse is held to clarify the expectations for the work of the supervisors and the number of separate task areas. Top management assists supervisors, when necessary, in prioritising their work.

Individual tools for supervisors and managers

Everyone has the opportunity to influence well-being at work through their own activities. Personal methods include, for example:
- Prioritising and planning your own work in advance
- Delineating work and raising issues with your own supervisor when needed
- Consciously taking a distance from work during time off, striving for a balance between work and other life
- Assuring work recovery through relaxation, enjoyable hobbies and meaningful leisure activities
- Using stress management tools

Read more about solutions to support supervisory work >

Everyday working life – general information about supervisory work

The work of supervisors and managers is characterised by a broad job description, independence and the need for self-direction and initiative. The work tasks can involve, for example, HR management, administrative tasks, decision-making, organisational development and operational planning. As representatives of employers, supervisors play a key role in developing working conditions that support well-being, safety and productivity. According to the mandate of the job description, the work is guided by various laws such as the Employment Contracts Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Working Hours Act and the Occupational Health Care Act.

Each professional sector sets its own requirements for supervisory work. For example, in the technology sector, a supervisor is often required to have technical skills, while in the social and health care sector, an understanding of the specifics of social welfare and health care is emphasised. In addition to management work, supervisors often carry out expert tasks or participate in customer work. In addition, the content of the work depends on whether the management role is at the level of first-line management, middle management or top management.

Within a management role, one may also act, for example, in the capacity of a team leader without having an administrative supervisory role. In this case, we are talking about the role of functional supervisors. The work of functional supervisors includes leadership in different ways, such as work organisation, task distribution and the monitoring of work functionality.[1] According to Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, the share of administrative supervisors has decreased during the 21st century and the share of functional supervisors has increased correspondingly[2]. It is important for functional and administrative supervisory work to agree in a clear way on the expectations for the promotion of work ability and the well-being of employees and to clarify specific responsibilities, when necessary.

At its best, management can contribute positively to the work functionality and well-being of employees in multiple ways. As part of their management role, supervisors distribute work tasks among employees, agree on work objectives, decide on training and development opportunities, assess the bases for remuneration, provide support for problem-solving, encourage and give feedback on work, monitor work functionality and workload strain, and ensure a healthy and safe work environment through their management role.[3,4] The positive impacts of leadership that supports the work ability of employees are beneficial for daily supervisory work, as a healthy and productive work community also acts as a resource

for supervisors[5,6]. Leadership is first and foremost an interaction between supervisors and employees. Each member of the work community is responsible for maintaining a good working atmosphere and effective interactions. When members of the work community support their supervisor, the supervisor will, in turn, have a better capacity to support the work functionality and well-being of the employees they supervise.

The work ability and well-being of supervisors are often supported by the same factors as for other members of the work community. Work should provide a sense of control, meaningfulness and communal experiences.[7,8] Often, the work of supervisors and managers provides a lot of resources that contribute in a positive way to work ability. At the same time, factors that increase workload strain can occur in abundance and the balance between work and other aspects of life may be tested. The independent work of supervisors does not negate the importance of support from the work community and top management. This article examines the resources for supervisory work, work-related load factors, the management of employee well-being and research data on supervisory work in general. Sector-specific features of everyday work are discussed in other publications within Elo's Work ability information bank.

According to Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, the share of administrative supervisors has decreased over the past thirty years, while the share of functional supervisors has increased over the same period of time.

Source: Statistics Finland, Working conditions in the midst of changes – Results of the Quality of work life survey 1977–2023 (2024)

Legend:
- Administrative supervisors
- Functional supervisors
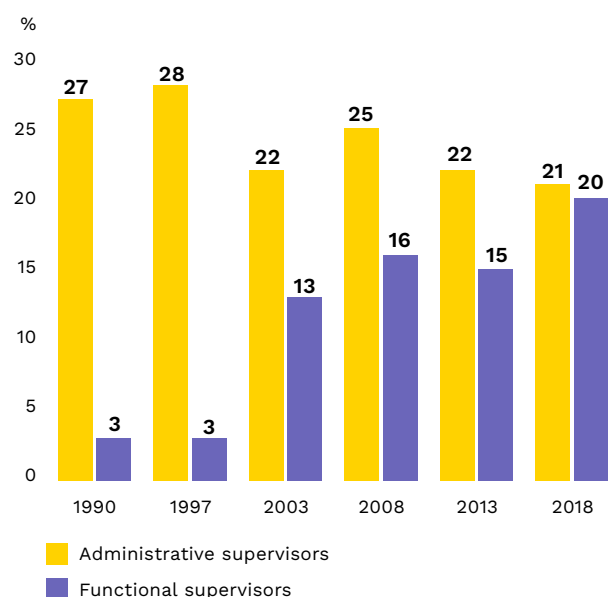
SOURCES – EVERYDAY WORKING LIFE

Reading guide concerning sources

For the purposes of this report, when the reference number is within a sentence, the reference only refers to the portion of the text preceding the specific reference number in question. If the reference number comes after the full stop at the end of a sentence, the source reference applies to the whole paragraph or to the sentences from the previous to the current reference number. A full source reference is given in the source list when the source first appears. When the same source is referenced again, only the (primary) author's surname and year of the source publication are given as well as, if necessary, more specific identification information, such as the name of the source.

[1] Järvensivu, A, Kervinen, H, Syrjä, S. (2011) Esimiehen työhyvinvointi. Tampere: Työelämän tutkimuskeskus. Tampereen Yliopisto

[2] Sutela, H, Viinikka, J, Pärnänen, A. (2024) Työolot murrosten keskellä – Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977–2023. Tilastokeskus.

[3] Inceoglu, I., Thomas, G., Chu, C., Plans, D., & Gerbasi, A. (2018). Leadership Behavior and Employee Well-Being: An Integrated Review and a Future Research Agenda. The Leadership Quarterly, 29, 179-202.

[4] Decuypere, A. and Schaufeli, W. (2020), "Leadership and work engagement: exploring explanatory mechanisms", German Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol. 34, pp. 69-95.

[5] Nielsen, K., & Taris, T. W. (2019). Leading well: Challenges to researching leadership in occupational health psychology—And some ways forward. Work & Stress, 33(2), 107–118.

[6] Tóth-Király I, Katz-Zeitlin E, Houle S.A, Fernet C, Morin A.J (2024). Managerial leadership behaviors: A longitudinal investigation of the role of job demands and resources, and implications for managers' own well-being Applied Psychology, 73 (1) (2024), pp. 157-184.

[7] Vogt, K., Jenny, G.J., & Bauer, G.F. (2013). Comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness at work: Construct validity of a scale measuring work-related sense of coherence. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA

[8] Coxen, L., van der Vaart, L., Van den Broeck, A., & Rothmann, S. (2021). Basic Psychological Needs in the Work Context: A Systematic Literature Review of Diary Studies. Frontiers in psychology, 12.

Load and resource factors

Introduction

It is useful to examine the well-being and work ability of supervisors in terms of the demands and resources inherent to their work. Work demands refer to the emotional, social and physical requirements of work that cause workload strain.[1] A moderate workload does not pose a risk to work ability when work recovery is sufficient, work and other aspects of life are in balance and the work provides sufficient resources to counterbalance the load. On the contrary, a suitable amount of demanding work actually supports an individual's work ability. Excessive work demands or deficiencies in work resources pose a risk, however, to work ability, especially when the state of workload strain is prolonged.

The resources from the work are those that support work ability, development and work functionality. Examples of such resources include support from the work community, the support of a supervisor, opportunities to influence the work, as well as clear expectations and sufficient competence to carry out the work. Work resources help supervisors to face up to the demands of the work and reduce the harmful load caused by them.[1] A hectic pace and time pressures are examples of load factors that are typical for supervisory work. Good opportunities to influence work is one resource that increases the meaningfulness of work and helps supervisors to manage their work situation. Having a balance between load and resource factors at work helps to safeguard one's work ability.

Within the work of supervisors and managers, psychosocial loading is a key load factor. Based on rehabilitation application data, diagnosis distributions for supervisors and managers are similar to those for expert work, with mental health disorders being among the most common causes for rehabilitation applications.

In the rehabilitation applications of supervisors, the share of diagnoses represented by mental health disorders is higher and the share of musculoskeletal disorders is lower than for all rehabilitation applications. The diagnosis distribution of supervisors largely follows the diagnosis distribution of those involved in expert and knowledge work. **Source:** Elo's data (2020–2024)

Diagnoses in rehabilitation applications of supervisors

29% 23% 48%

Diagnoses in all rehabilitation applications

29% 40% 30%

- 🟡 Musculoskeletal disorders
- 🟢 Mental health disorders
- 🟣 Other diseases
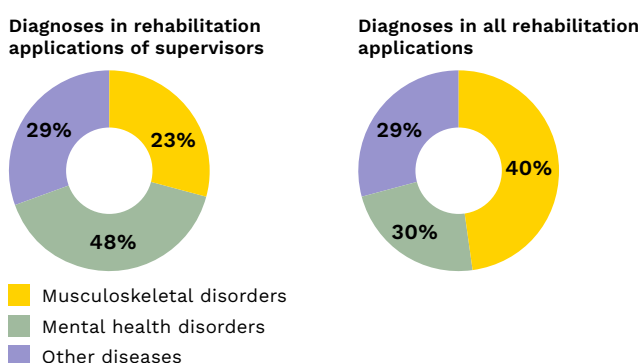
Typical load factors in supervisory work

The load factors involved in the work of supervisors are often related to the responsibilities and broad range of tasks associated with the work. Changes in working life have been shown to include an increasing demand for work efficiency, intensifying network collaboration and an emphasis on cognitive loading [2]. Changes in working life are also reflected in the everyday work and work requirements of supervisors. Typical load factors include, for example, the overlapping of tasks, a hectic pace and time pressures, work interruptions and information flooding at work. Managing people is often rewarding and boosts work satisfaction, but challenging interaction situations can also cause emotional strain.[3,4]

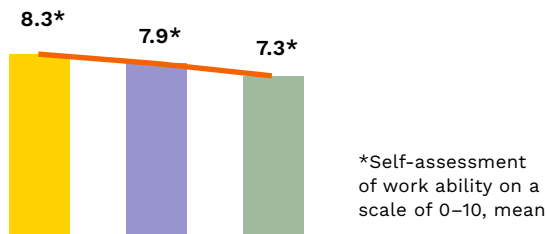### A wide range of expectations is often placed on supervisory work

The job description of supervisors often consists of many task areas, which optimally gives the work diversity. At the same time, the risk of overlapping tasks may increase, time management may become more difficult and the principles for prioritising work may be more difficult to determine. An unreasonable number of separate and parallel task areas can reduce the work functionality of supervisors and managers and increase the risk of overload. The risk of overload can particularly be generated in situations where several high priority tasks need to be carried out at the same time. The overlapping of separate tasks and challenges related to prioritisation can also lead to a situation that is detrimental for the entire work community, particularly if there is not enough time left for management duties.

Supervisory work is often subjected to expectations from employees, stakeholders, potential customers and the company's top management. Role conflicts can arise if the expectations set by different parties are not uniform. There is a proven connection between conflicting expectations for work and the risk of burnout[5]. Experiences of conflicting expectations are often more common at the first-line management level, where work is guided by the policies of top management and, at the same time, interactions on the employee level bring expectations for the work from the employees[6]. The management of conflicting expectations is supported by smooth interactions between the different levels of management, support for the supervisor from top management for the purpose of prioritising the work, and good opportunities to influence work decisions.
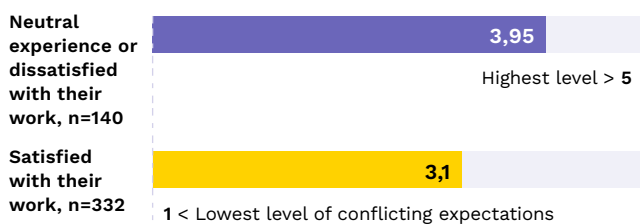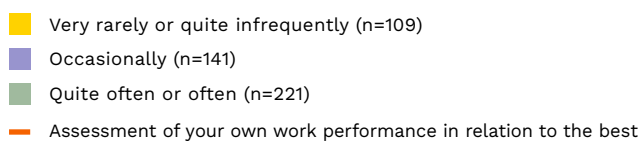
The conflicting expectations experienced by first-line supervisors are directly linked to work ability, job satisfaction and the balance between one's own work potential and work done.

8.3*   **7.9***   **7.3***

*Self-assessment of work ability on a scale of 0–10, mean

There are conflicting expectations for my work from many different parties...

- 🟨 Very rarely or quite infrequently (n=109)
- 🟪 Occasionally (n=141)
- 🟩 Quite often or often (n=221)
- 🟧 Assessment of your own work performance in relation to the best

Neutral experience or dissatisfied with their work, n=140	3,95	
	Highest level > **5**	
Satisfied with their work, n=332	3,1	
1 < Lowest level of conflicting expectations		

Continual work interruptions can cause workload strain

Accessibility is a common requirement for those doing supervisory work. Accessibility means that the supervisor is able to easily be reached and is ready to provide support and make decisions as needed. During the working day, the demand for accessibility can increase the number of interruptions in the supervisor's work. Work interruptions increase workload strain when the individual is forced to shift their focus and then return to their original task. Work interruptions can be harmful and cause workload strain, particularly when the interrupting task is different from the original task in terms of material content. With the requirement of accessibility, interruptions to work cannot always be avoided. However, the work of supervisors and managers does include tasks that are cognitively demanding and require concentration. In this case, it is important to create the possibility and conditions for undisturbed work.

Information flooding is a common aspect of daily supervisory work

Cognitive loading refers to loading brought on by knowledge work and brainwork. Cognitive loading arises from the receiving, processing and remembering of information, the production of new information,

learning and decision-making based on knowledge. Digital tools make work more efficient, but they can expose one to an excessive amount of information. Cognitive loading has been generally increasing in working life, and changes are also visible in the work of supervisors and managers. Information flooding means that the amount of information and the number of things to remember at work increase to such an extent that it is difficult to manage the work situation and adopt new information.[7]

Supervisors often act in the role of information provider, so the cognitive load caused by a flood of information might even be further emphasised in supervisory work. According to Elo's research, dealing with information flooding is a common aspect of the everyday work of first-line supervisors[3]. The nature of the work includes active and multi-channel data acquisition, the processing of information for employees they supervise and knowledge-based decision-making. The work often involves working with networks and a lot of co-operation within the organisation as well as with different stakeholders. Supervisors are at the hub of information flows, which can increase the number of communication channels to monitor and the amount of information to manage.

An excessive amount of information at work has been proven to increase mental loading[8]. In the workplace, it is important to assess the conditions for the knowledge work carried out by supervisors and to manage information flooding within their work. As AI develops, new technologies can be used to improve the accessibility, filtering, processing and management of work-related information.
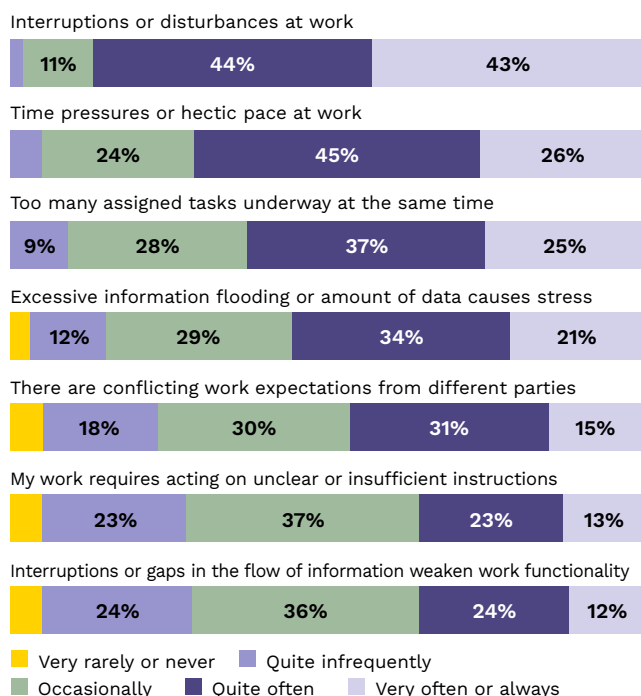
Hectic pace and time pressures

Reasonable time pressures can improve work efficiency as long as the individual also has the possibility to influence their work and sufficient support for the work[9]. A hectic pace that is prolonged and excessive has been shown to increase the risk of burnout5. Studies show that on average, supervisors experience an excessive workload more often compared to employees[10]. The hectic pace experienced by supervisors is often due to overlapping tasks caused by their wide range of task areas and responsibilities. Elo's research shows that the everyday life of supervisors may include project work, expert tasks or customer service work in addition to their management work. According to the study, the hectic pace experienced by supervisors is often increased by HR challenges, for example, in connection with absences due to illness or the recruitment of personnel. Those who participated in the study felt that there was not always enough time left for supervisory work, which was perceived as affecting the quality of their management work and own ability to cope.

The most effective way to deal with a hectic pace is often to develop the working conditions of the supervisors. In this case, support from top management and work limits that enable supervisors to moderate time pressures will play an important role. The management of a hectic pace can be affected by establishing a suitable balance in the work time devoted to expert, project and customer work as well as to actual supervisory work. The work situations of supervisors vary, so the workload and the demands of the work should be discussed regularly by the supervisors and top management. It is important for supervisors and top management to discuss the amount of work and task areas in order to reach a common understanding of what is essential in terms of supervisory work, how the work might be prioritised and how it could be limited when necessary. Self-directed and independent work also emphasises the individual's own skills and competence in terms of time management, the handling of diverse expectations and prioritisation of the work. The individual's level of competence can be further supported with workplace guidelines and recommendations, coaching and training.

Work interruptions, a hectic pace, overlapping of tasks and conflicting expectations are typical load factors in the everyday life of supervisors

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

Interruptions or disturbances at work

| 11% | 44% | 43% |

Time pressures or hectic pace at work

| 24% | 45% | 26% |

Too many assigned tasks underway at the same time

| 9% | 28% | 37% | 25% |

Excessive information flooding or amount of data causes stress

| 12% | 29% | 34% | 21% |

There are conflicting work expectations from different parties

| 18% | 30% | 31% | 15% |

My work requires acting on unclear or insufficient instructions

| 23% | 37% | 23% | 13% |

Interruptions or gaps in the flow of information weaken work functionality

| 24% | 36% | 24% | 12% |

■ Very rarely or never ■ Quite infrequently
■ Occasionally ■ Quite often ■ Very often or always
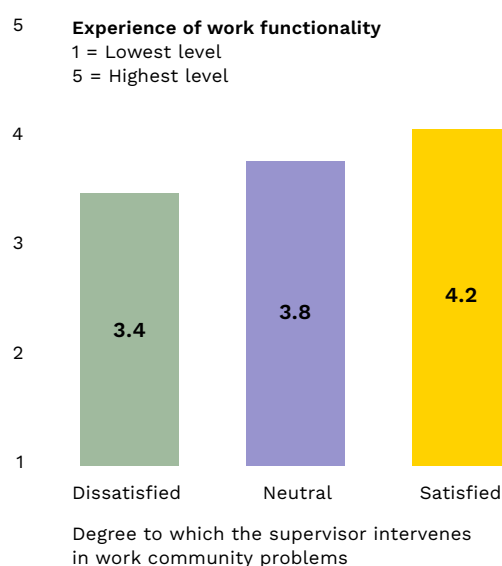
Challenging situations when managing people

At its best, a functioning and healthy work community serves as a resource for the work of supervisors. In a leadership role, a supervisor can, however, also face challenging interaction situations that cause emotional strain[11]. Stressful interaction situations can refer to situations that involve resolving internal conflicts within the work community, change negotiations or dealing with the work ability challenges of employees. Commonly agreed and clear operating models in the workplace support supervisory work in challenging interaction situations, promote work functionality and reduce the workload strain from challenging situations.

The role of the supervisor involves addressing any issues or problems observed in the workplace. Early support prevents problems from getting worse. Situations and observations must be addressed, especially when they interfere with work, affect well-being, cause conflicts in the work community or weaken motivation. Elo's data from Finnish workplaces indicates that the supervisor's way of handling issues in the workplace is reflected in the level of work functionality.

On average, the level of work functionality is higher when the supervisor intervenes in the problems of the work community when necessary.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2023–2024)

5 **Experience of work functionality**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

Degree to which the supervisor intervenes in work community problems

The management of challenging situations has been found to affect the well-being of supervisors[12]. In crisis and conflict situations, managers are forced not only to deal with the increase of individual problems and concerns in the work community[13], but also to regulate their own emotions to communicate stability and maintain a positive mood, which can be demanding for them[14,15]. The well-being of supervisors has also been shown to affect the well-being of the team[16,17,18]. It is, therefore, important that supervisors have the opportunity to express their own feelings and thoughts, for example, with their own supervisor and colleagues and to receive support from occupational health if necessary. More attention can also be paid to strengthening emotional skills as part of supervisory training[19].

Key resources for supervisory work

Key resources that support the work ability of supervisors include, for example, a balance between work and other aspects of life, sufficient work recovery, good opportunities to influence work, possibilities for development, effective interaction with top management and support from the work community.

Work recovery and balance between work and other areas of life

Work recovery refers to the process of allowing your body and mind to recuperate from workload strain. Working conditions that support recovery are key for work ability. The amount of work should be reasonable to ensure effective recovery after a workday. Recovery should, however, also take place already during the workday. This will prevent the workload strain from accumulating and allows for proper recovery during time off[20]. The individual's lifestyle and enjoyable leisure activities also support work recovery[21,22]. The recovery process requires physiological recovery, including sleep and rest, as well as psychological recovery. Both types of recovery are closely linked to one another. If physical recovery is insufficient, it will be reflected in mental well-being and, correspondingly, an inability to mentally detach from work can also lead to physical issues as a result of stress[23].

According to studies[22], experiences with recovery, especially in accordance with the Dramma model, contribute positively to psychological recovery from work. The core message of the model is that, in addition to relaxation and rest, recovery from work is promoted by engagement in meaningful hobbies, the sense of autonomy and mastery that new learning brings, investing in things that are meaningful to you during your time off, and experiences of connection and close relationships. The most important factors for psychological recovery can vary in different work and life situations. When the level of workload strain is particularly high, relaxation and mental detachment from work, for example, can help to recover better than learning new hobbies. From the point of view of psychological recovery, it is necessary to identify methods that will be suitable for yourself and your own situation.
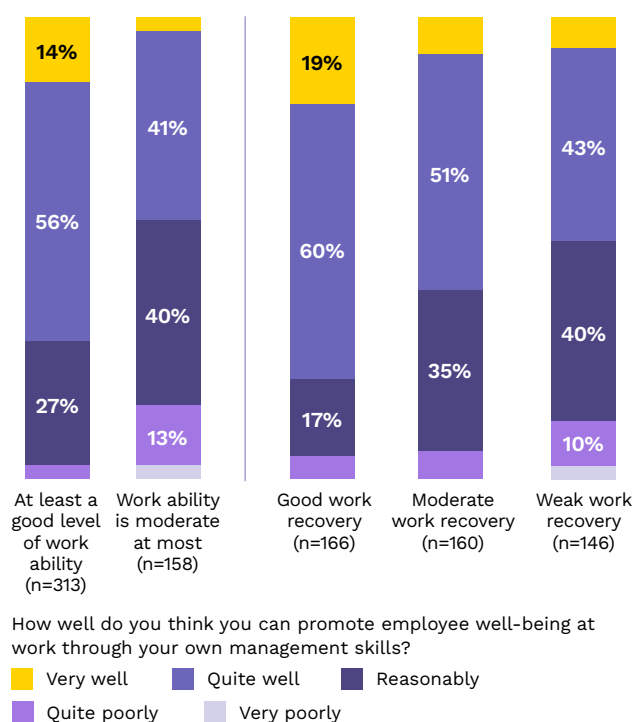
Work recovery may be compromised if the boundary between work and leisure is blurred, thereby challenging the ability to mentally detach from work. Detachment from work becomes more difficult if one should be constantly available by phone or through communication apps during their time off from work. According to studies, the demand for accessibility experienced by supervisors is also linked with presenteeism[24]. Excessive work requirements and, in particular, emotionally stressful work situations can also make it difficult to mentally detach from work[25]. When there is distance between work and leisure, work-related problem-solving or planning does not burden the mind.

This is a good way to ensure better conditions for work recovery.[26, 27] In the responsible work of supervisors and managers, it is important to ensure a balance between work and other aspects of life, and to pay attention to detachment from work and work recovery. When a supervisor or manager assures that they have a healthy balance between work and other areas of life, they are essentially implementing one aspect of work ability management through their own example.

It is important to promote the balance between work and other aspects of life in the workplace, for example, by specifying the times when a supervisor or manager should be expected to be available and ways to ensure adequate detachment from work. Top management's own example of a healthy balance between work and leisure is also essential. The skills required for work detachment can also be strengthened through coaching. Coaching helps to identify potential needs for changes in everyday life, provides tools for consciously taking distance from work, promotes the balance between work and other aspects of life, and thus creates the conditions for well-being as well as for stronger leadership. Adequate recovery is reflected in the well-being of managers, the well-being of the work community and the quality of leadership[25,26]. Elo's research shows that about 80% of the first-line supervisors who recover well from work had confidence about their own capacity to promote the well-being of their employees. For those who recover moderately from work, this proportion was about 55% and for those who had weak recovery, it was only about 45%.[3]

The successful work recovery of first-line supervisors is reflected in the management of employees' well-being.

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

How well do you think you can promote employee well-being at work through your own management skills?

- Very well
- Quite well
- Reasonably
- Quite poorly
- Very poorly

Ample opportunities for influence support work ability

From the point of view of well-being at work and work functionality, it is important that the decision-making power and possibilities to influence one's own work are appropriate for the nature and demands of the work[28]. The work of supervisors is independent expert work, and the smooth execution of work tasks requires good opportunities to influence, for example, the planning and prioritisation of the work, as well as decisions concerning the work. Having demanding work with limited possibilities for influence poses a risk in terms of work ability[29]. Possibilities for influence are a vital resource that supports work ability in supervisory work[30].

Senior white-collar workers' experiences of opportunities to influence their work are, on average, better than that of other categories of employees[31]. It has also been pointed out in the studies that, despite the high degree of autonomy, supervisors are not able, in all situations, to influence the workload and content of their work[32]. Work that closely involves co-operation with networks is subject to expectations by top management, employees and possible other parties, in which case the personal decision-making power concerning the work and the amount of work to be done may be weaker at times.

The perceived degree of possibilities for influence can vary between the top management, middle management and first-line supervisors[33]. First-line supervisors are often responsible for the work productivity of their team, but the work is also subject to constraints presented by top management. First-line supervisors often also participate in customer work, which can bring unpredictability, work interruptions and unexpected situations. This can reduce the possibilities to influence, for example, the workload and prioritisation of the work. It is important for the functioning of the entire management chain to ensure that first-line supervisors also have opportunities to influence their work.

The work of supervisors and managers often comes with decision-making power as regards the work. Possibilities to influence one's work are a key resource for supervisors.
Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

I can affect my working hours

8%	18%	45%	26%

I can influence decisions that are important for my work

11%	28%	43%	16%

I can influence my workload

24%	37%	28%	7%

■ Very rarely or never ■ Quite infrequently
■ Occasionally ■ Quite often ■ Very often

Support from the work community supports work functionality and well-being

Social support from one's supervisor and co-workers has been proven to promote well-being and work functionality[34]. Support from the work community may include practical advice on work, knowledge sharing, support for problem-solving, appreciation, feedback, encouragement and emotional support[35]. As per their job description, supervisors are key sources of support for those employees they are supervising. Studies show that their support is linked with employees' well-being and work performance[36].

It is also important to pay attention to the amount and quality of support offered to supervisors, as this will affect company productivity and the work ability of the employees. Top management can support the organisation's supervisory work by providing feedback, encouragement and backing for decisions, and by arranging for resources that support leadership work. Supervisory work is also supported by dialogue between different levels of management on the priorities of the work, when necessary. Elo's research on the work functionality and well-being of supervisors shows the importance of functional interactions between the supervisor and top management. The results indicated that supervisors experience fewer conflicting expectations when they receive sufficient support from their own supervisors. It is important to reduce conflicting expectations for work and provide support to manage them, since conflicting expectations have been shown to increase the risk of burnout. Smooth co-operation and communications between first-line supervisors and top management can help when seeking to reduce or delineate the work and to manage the various expectations for the work in general.[3]

The support of the first-line supervisor's own supervisor is linked to the experience of conflicting expectations
Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

Positive assessment of support from own supervisor

29%	33%	38%

Dissatisfied or neutral assessment of the support from own supervisor

10%	23%	67%
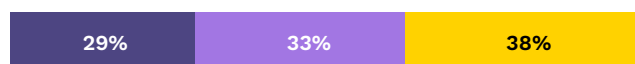
■ Very rarely or quite infrequently
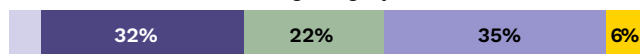■ Occasionally ■ Ganska ofta eller ofta

The level of work support people receive is linked to their social networks. Social networks provide and exchange information and advice that are important for work[37]. Enabling networking and promoting peer support between supervisors are key ways to support the work functionality and well-being of supervisors[3].

Peer support also involves collegial discussion, the exchange of experience as regards management work, tips on solving problems faced in management work, competence sharing and shared learning. According to studies, the peer support received by supervisors is linked to their own well-being and a lower risk of burnout in the employees they supervise. Peer support reinforces supervisors' own stress management and, on the other hand, provides practical information, support and tips that promote overall management work[38].
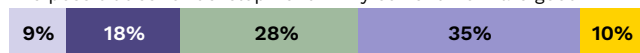
Supervisory work can offer abundant resources to counterbalance workload strain

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

I receive sufficient feedback regarding my work

| 32% | 22% | 35% | 6% |

The possibilities for development in my current work are good

| 9% | 18% | 28% | 35% | 10% |

I receive sufficient recognition for my work

| 20% | 19% | 48% | 8% |

My job offers me sufficient learning opportunities

| 13% | 20% | 46% | 19% |

My supervisor provides me with any support and assistance needed for my work

| 14% | 15% | 42% | 27% |

I know what is expected of me at work

| 6% | 14% | 58% | 20% |

My co-workers provide me with any support and assistance needed for my work

| 9% | 11% | 51% | 29% |

- Completely disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- I don't agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Completely agree

Personal development opportunities

There are many different paths that lead to the role of supervisor. Some people transfer to supervisory work from other positions within the same organisation, some enter the organisation directly into a supervisory position. When considering the personal development opportunities of a supervisor, it is a good idea to take their background into consideration. What are their strengths as a supervisor and do they have areas that could be further developed? The results of personnel surveys can also provide support when drawing up a personal development plan for a supervisor. It is good to make sure that each supervisor has a personal development plan, which is also regularly updated. According to research, the leadership skills of the supervisor have been found to affect the performance of the team they are supervising.

Supervisors that engage in personal development have a better ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment, both in terms of changes within and outside the organisation[39].

SOURCES – LOAD AND RESOURCE FACTORS

Reading guide concerning sources

For the purposes of this report, when the reference number is within a sentence, the reference only refers to the portion of the text preceding the specific reference number in question. If the reference number comes after the full stop at the end of a sentence, the source reference applies to the whole paragraph or to the sentences from the previous to the current reference number. A full source reference is given in the source list when the source first appears. When the same source is referenced again, only the (primary) author's surname and year of the source publication are given as well as, if necessary, more specific identification information, such as the name of the source.

Introduction – Load and resource factors

[1] Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., Demerouti, E., Euwema, M. C. (2007). An organisational and social psychological perspective on burnout and work engagement. Teoksessa M. Hewstone, H. A. W. Schut, J. B. F. De Wit, K. Van Den Bos, & M. S. Stroebe (Toim.), The scope of social psychology: Theory and applications (pp. 227–250). Psychology Press.

Typical load factors in supervisory work

[2] Mauno S, Herttalampi M, Minkkinen J, Feldt T, Kubicek B. (2022) Is work intensification bad for employees? A review of outcomes for employees over the last two decades. Work & Stress. 2022;1-26.

[3] Park, H. H., & Faerman, S. (2019). Becoming a manager: Learning the importance of emotional and social competence in managerial transitions. The American Review of Public Administration, 49(1), 98–115.

[4] Aluehallintovirasto. Esihenkilötyön psykososiaalinen kuormitus hallintaan. Verkkoseminaari 12.12.2023.

[5] Hakanen, J.J., Kaltiainen, J. (2022). Työuupumuksen arviointi Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)-menetelmällä. Työterveyslaitos: Helsinki.

[6] Hales, C. (2006). Moving down the Line? The Shifting Boundary between Middle and First-Line Management. Journal of General Management, 32(2), 31-55.

[7] Kalakoski, V., Lahti, H., Paajanen, T., Valtonen, T., Ahtinen, S., Kauppi, M., Turunen, J., Ojajärvi, A., Luokkala, K. (2022) Viisi avausta aivotyöhön – Viisikko: Tutkimushankkeen loppuraportti. Työterveyslaitos.

[8] Misra, S., Stokols, D. (2012). Psychological and health outcomes of perceived information overload. Environment and Behavior, 44(6), 737–759.

[9] Puttonen, S., Hasu, M & Pahkin, K (2016) Työhyvinvointi paremmaksi: Keinoja työhyvinvoinnin ja työterveyden kehittämiseksi suomalaisilla työpaikoilla. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki.

[10] Työterveyslaitos. Miten Suomi voi? -tutkimus. Tuloskooste, Työhyvinvoinnin kehittyminen kesästä 2021 loppuvuoteen 2023. Luettu 27.2.2025.

Challenging situations when managing people

[11] Park, H. H., & Faerman, S. (2019). Becoming a Manager: Learning the Importance of Emotional and Social Competence in Managerial Transitions. The American Review of Public Administration, 49(1), 98-115

[12] Inceoglu, I., Arnold, K. A., Leroy, H., Lang, J. W. B., Stephan, U. (2021). From microscopic to macroscopic perspectives and back: The study of leadership and health/well-being.Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 26(6), 459–468.

[13] Michael D. Mumford, Tamara L. Friedrich, Jay J. Caughron, Cristina L. Byrne (2007) Leader cognition in real-world settings: How do leaders think about crises?,The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 18, Issue 6, Pages 515-543.

[14] Sy T, Côté S, Saavedra R (2005). The Contagious Leader: Impact of the Leader's Mood on the Mood of Group Members, Group Affective Tone, and Group Processes. Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol 90(2), Mar, Pages 295-30.

[15] Bono JE, Ilies R (2006). Charisma, positive emotions and mood contagion, The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 17, Issue 4, Pages 317-334.

[16] Byrne A, Dionisi AM, Barling J, Akers A, Robertson J, Lys R, Wylie J, Dupré K (2014). The depleted leader: The influence of leaders' diminished psychological resources on leadership behaviors, The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 25, Issue 2, Pages 344-357.

[17] Harms PD, Credé M, Tynan M, Leon M, Jeung W (2017). Leadership and stress: A meta-analytic review, The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 28, Issue 1, Pages 178-194

[18] Kaluza, A. J., Boer, D., Buengeler, C., van Dick, R. (2019). Leadership behaviour and leader self-reported well-being: A review, integration and meta-analytic examination. Work & Stress, 34(1), 34–56.

[19] Hintsa, T., Aronen, A., Hietaranta, E, Kokkonen, M (2021) Hyvinvointia, työkykyä ja palautumista edistäviä tunnetaitoja työelämään: ohjelma esihenkilöille, rehtoreille ja urheiluvalmentajille. Itä-Suomen yliopisto. Publications of the University of Eastern Finland Reports and Studies in Education, Humanities, and Theology No 22.

Key resources for supervisory work

[20] van Hooff, M. L. M., & de Pater, I. E. (2017). Let's have fun tonight: The role of pleasure in daily recovery from work. Applied Psychology: An International Review, 66(3), 359–381.

[21] Hemiö, K., Lindström, J., Peltonen, M., Härmä, M., Viitasalo, K., & Puttonen, S. (2021). High need for recovery from work and sleep problems are associated with workers' unhealthy dietary habits. Public health nutrition, 24(8), 2185–2194.

[22] Kujanpää, M., Syrek, C., Lehr, D., Kinnunen, U., Reins, J. A., & de Bloom, J. (2021). Need satisfaction and optimal functioning at leisure and work: A longitudinal validation study of the DRAMMA model. Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being, 22(2), 681–707.

[23] Zijlstra FRH, Sonnentag S (2006) After work is done: Psychological perspectives on recovery from work. European journal of work and organizational psychology, Vol. 15 (2), 129–138.

[24] Funk S (2024) Sick of leading? Supervisory responsibility and its consequences for sickness absenteeism and sickness presenteeism, Journal of Business and Psychology, published 23 August 2024.

[25] Wendsche, J., Lohmann-Haislah, A. (2017). A meta-analysis on antecedents and outcomes of detachment from work. Frontiers in Psychology, 7, Article 2072.

[26] Sonnentag S, Schiffner C (2019) Psychological Detachment from Work during Nonwork Time and Employee Well-Being: The Role of Leader's Detachment

[27] Brückner H, Wallot S, Horvath (2024) Effectiveness of an online recovery training for employees exposed to blurred boundaries between work and non-work: Bayesian analysis of a randomised controlled trial, et al. BMJ Ment Health 2024;27:1–7.

[28] Joensuu, M. (2014) Job control as a Predictor of Mental and Cardiovascular Health – a Prospective Multicohort Study. Työ jaihminen, tutkimusraportti 106. Helsinki: Työterveyslaitos.

[29] Niedhammer I, Bertrais S, Witt K. Psychosocial work exposures and health outcomes: a meta-review of 72 literature reviews with meta-analysis. Scand J Work Environ Health. 2021;47:489–508.

[30] Li, W, Xie, J.L, Schaubroeck, J,Keller, A. C. (2018). Is being a leader a mixed blessing? A dual pathway model linking leadership role occupancy to well-being. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39(8), Pages 971-998.

[31] Sutela H, Pärnänen A, Keyriläinen M. Digiajan työelämä – Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977–2018. Tilastokeskus, Helsinki 2019.

[32] Toivanen, M., Yli-Kaitala, K., Selander, K & Laitinen, J (2024). Työn rajaaminen ja vaikutusvalta hoitotyön esihenkilötyössä. Työelämän tutkimus, 22 (1).

[33] Hales, C. (2006). Moving down the Line? The Shifting Boundary between Middle and First-Line Management. Journal of General Management, 32(2), 31-55.

[34] Skakon, J., Nielsen, K., Borg, V., & Guzman, J. (2010). Are leaders' well-being, behaviours and style associated with the affective well-being of their employees? A systematic review of three decades of research. Work & Stress, 24(2), 107–139.

[35] Jolly, P. M., Kong, D. T., & Kim, K. Y. (2021). Social support at work: An integrative review. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 42(2), 229–251.

[36] Hämmig O (2017). Health and well-being at work: The key role of supervisor support. SSM - population health, 3, Pages 393–402.

[37] Palonen, T., & Hakkarainen, K. (2014). Social network analyses of learning at workplaces. In C. Harteis, A. Rausch, & J. Seifried (Eds.), Discourses on professional learning: On the boundary between learning and working (pp. 293–315). Springer Science + Business Media.

[38] Tafvelin S, Nielsen K, Schwarz UvT, Stenling A (2019). Leading well is a matter of resources: Leader vigour and peer support augments the relationship between transformational leadership and burnout. Work & Stress, 33(2), Pages 156–172.

[39] Reichard RJ, Johnson SK (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy, The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 22, Issue 1, Pages 33-42.
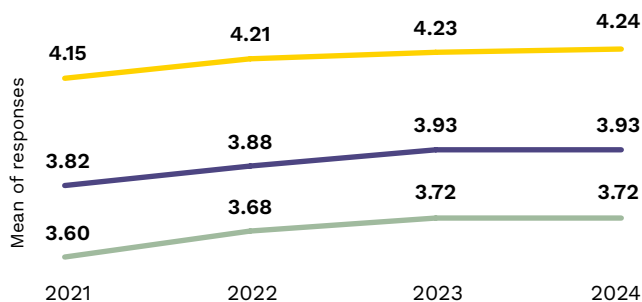
Phenomena and trends

Introduction

Change trends in working life include the advancement of digitalisation, the increasing amount of knowledge work, the increasing prevalence of multi-location work, the emphasis on self-direction and the increase in the importance of individualised leadership[1,2]. Changes in working life are reflected in different ways in supervisory work and the leadership approach of supervisors.

Employee experience regarding supervisory work

According to the results of Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, experiences of supervisory work have developed in a positive direction between 2018 and 2023[3]. In particular, improvements at many workplaces included encouragement for employee development and open communications about workplace issues. In 2023, 25% of wage and salary earners were very satisfied and 45% quite satisfied with the leadership style of their supervisor. Elo's data also indicates that between 2021 and 2024 there was a slight positive development in the experience of the workplace as regards supervisory work. The analysis was based on follow-up data from the same workplaces (110 workplaces). When comparing the experiences with the sub-categories of supervisory work, it was found that satisfaction with the sufficiency of feedback is slightly lower in different years than trust between supervisors and employees. The development of supervisory work is supported by the continuous accumulation of new research data on leadership methods that promote work ability and productivity, as well as actions in the workplace that are based on this data.

On average, the personnel experience of supervisory work has remained at nearly the same level during the years 2021–2024. In the long term, there has been a slight positive development. Number of companies included in the review: 110.
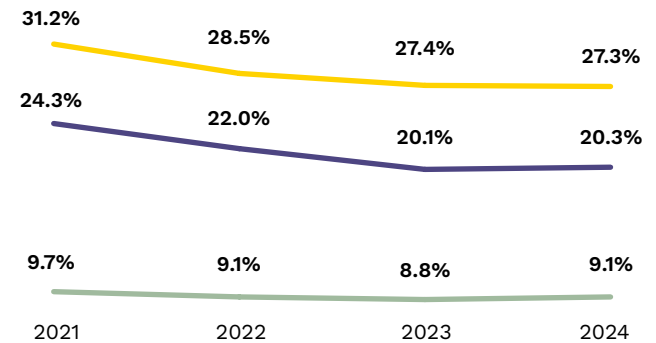**Source:** Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

Employee experience (1–5), 1 weakest and 5 strongest
- Degree to which the supervisor intervenes in work community problems
- Level of trust shown by the supervisor
- Sufficiency of feedback received from the supervisor

According to Elo's data, the share of those who feel they need to develop their supervisory work has decreased slightly during the four years in review.
Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

- Need to develop the sufficiency of feedback from the supervisor
- Need to develop the level of trust shown by the supervisor
- Need to develop the degree to which the supervisor's intervenes in work community problems
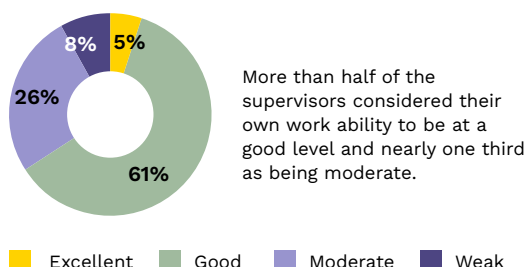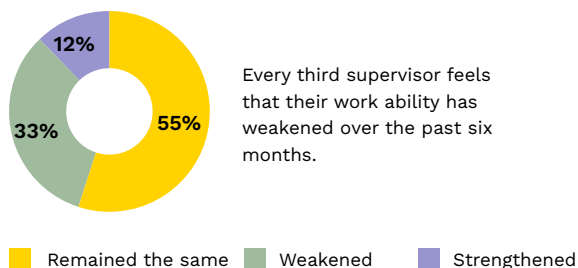
The annual results illustrate the share of respondents to Elo's Work community survey that feel the need to develop areas of supervisory work.

The well-being of supervisors

From the perspective of research, employee experiences of supervisory work have remained quite the same for several years and have even shown positive trends. At the same time, the results of studies focusing on the well-being of supervisors and managers have identified clear areas of concern. According to the 'How is Finland doing?' study conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the number of supervisors and managers suffering from likely cases of burnout has tripled between 2019 and 2024[4]. More than half of the respondents to Elo's 2024 survey (Elo, 2024) rated their work ability as being at a good level (61%) and felt that they were performing well in their jobs (65%). However, one third felt that their work ability was moderate at most and estimated that it had weakened over the last six months. One third also experienced an imbalance between their own work potential and the work done. A higher level of stress was associated, in particular, with a hectic pace and excessive workload, information flooding and overlapping tasks.[5]

One third of the participants in the survey conducted by Elo in 2024 felt that their work ability had weakened over the past year and estimated that their level of work ability was moderate at most.

12%
33%
55%

Every third supervisor feels that their work ability has weakened over the past six months.

- ▇ Remained the same   ▇ Weakened   ▇ Strengthened

8%   **5%**
26%
61%

More than half of the supervisors considered their own work ability to be at a good level and nearly one third as being moderate.

- ▇ Excellent   ▇ Good   ▇ Moderate   ▇ Weak

An excessive workload poses a risk to the work ability of supervisors and managers. Studies have highlighted the fact that excessive workload strain may impair a supervisor's ability to implement aspects of management that support the well-being of employees[6,7]. If supervisors are experiencing workload strain, this may result in a more laissez-faire attitude towards leadership, which manifests as withdrawal or the avoidance of decision-making and actions or situations requiring leadership[8,9]. Avoiding leadership situations is one means of protecting the supervisor from burdens associated with workload management, but studies show that it can lead to unclear expectations for the work, a weakening in the work performance of the work community and lower job satisfaction[10]. The lack of leadership can create a negative spiral, in which the diminishing functionality of the work community in turn complicates the supervisor's work and increases workload strain[11].

Management work within a changing work environment

The positive impacts of good leadership are beneficial for daily supervisory work, as a healthy and productive work community also acts as a resource for supervisors and the everyday working life of the entire work community functions more smoothly.[12,13] A management style that promotes work ability and productivity is always dependent on the specific situation and focal points of working life. The concepts of management and leadership in the 21st century emphasise the promotion of interaction, inspiration, interpersonal skills and

the importance of individualised leadership[14]. As the importance of self-direction grows and the prevalence of multi-location work increases, management work is increasingly required to be able to take individual situations into account, to strengthen trust and to build dialogue with and among those being supervised. Servant leadership is viewed as one of the management methods that addresses the focal points of modern working life, and the number of studies on management styles has steadily increased in the 21st century. Research shows that servant leadership is closely connected with work engagement, trust, work performance and a lower rate of burnout[16]. As multi-location work becomes more common, leadership that strengthens the social identity and communality of the work community is emphasised. Working life is also characterised by constant change. Ensuring the employees' work ability in the face of organisational and work-related changes requires investments in change management.

Servant leadership

Servant leadership can be viewed as an umbrella concept for a number of people-oriented management methods[17]. Servant leadership methods focus on the basic psychological needs of a person: a sense of autonomy, belonging and competence. Servant leaders strive to empower and strengthen employees' faith in their own abilities. They support the professional development of employees by providing feedback, showing appreciation and offering suitable challenges. Servant leadership also involves supporting employees' capacity for self-direction and enabling them to assume independent responsibility, which requires clarifying the expectations for the work and being assertive, when necessary. It is also important to clarify the long-term goals of the workplace and to show the direction for future activities[18,19].

Management actions that are in line with servant leadership[20]:

- Sharing of versatile feedback
- Expressing appreciation to employees
- Defining clear job expectations
- Assertiveness when needed
- Showing the direction for future activities
- Building a culture of dialogue and trust
- Taking employee strengths and individuality into consideration
- Offering employees suitable possibilities for development and challenges
- Having the courage to challenge conventional practices

One of the focal areas of servant leadership is the giving and receiving of feedback. Positive feedback helps employees to understand the impacts of their own work, which reinforces their feelings of ability and

achievement. Feedback is useful for showing employees that their work is valued, but it also serves to steer work performance and clarify expectations about the work. Receiving positive feedback helps employees to improve their work performance, and feedback intended to enact changes helps employees to identify their need to change their own activities. It may be especially difficult for new and young employees to recognise their own successes, since they have minimal work experience against which to compare their own work performance. When work or tasks change, feedback also provides confirmation to the employee that they are moving in the right direction. The significance of a positive feedback culture in the workplace can be even greater when it comes to multi-location work, since feedback is also a means of promoting communications between the supervisor and employees being supervised. Feedback is a message to the employee that their work input has been noted and that they play an important role in the work community.

The sufficiency of feedback received from the supervisor is directly linked to the clarity of expectations about work and perceived capability.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

5 **Clarity of work expectations**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

Dissatisfied: 3.5
Neutral: 4.0
Satisfied: 4.4

Experience of the sufficiency of feedback

5 **Perceived work capability**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

Dissatisfied: 3.7
Neutral: 4.0
Satisfied: 4.3

Experience of the sufficiency of feedback
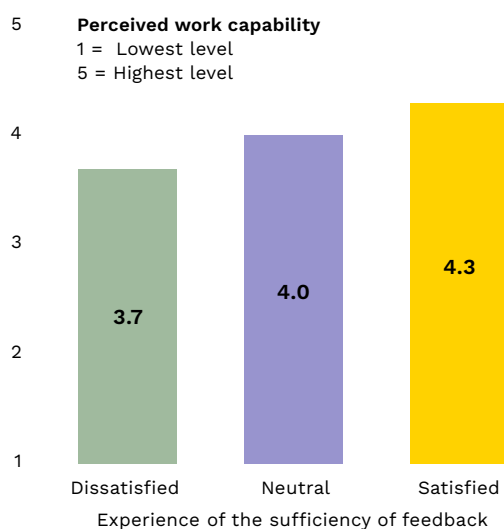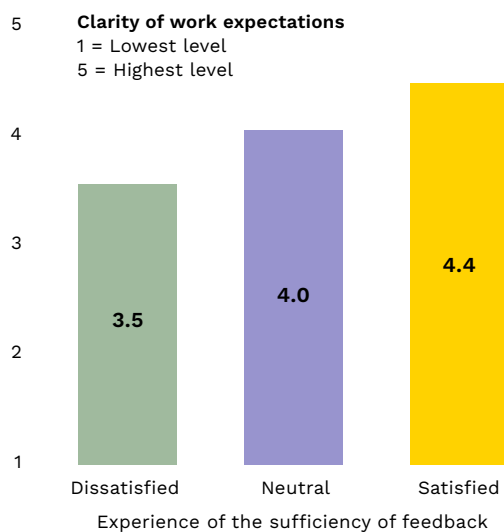
Managing multi-location work

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the prevalence of remote working and accelerated the transition to multi-location work in Finnish working life. Multi-location work means that part of the work is carried out at the workplace and part is carried out remotely at another location, often chosen by the employee.[21] In multi-location work, the importance of leadership that supports communality, the collective identity of the work community and the sense of belonging is emphasised. Research shows that leadership that reinforces the social identity of the work community supports well-being in remote work and promotes communality. The following acts of leadership are an integral part of a management style that reinforces the social identity of the work community[22,23,24].

A manager who is nurturing the social identity of the work community:

- creates an understanding of what it means to be a member of the work community

- highlights the unique characteristics of the team

- promotes the team's common interests

- modifies team members' perceptions of the group's values

- organises activities that bring the group together

- develops structures, events and activities that lend value to the existence of the team

New and young employees particularly need in-person meetings where, in addition to getting to know the community, it is possible to receive tacit information that will support their work performance. In multi-location work, the importance of self-direction is often emphasised. However, self-direction does not mean that employees are left on their own. In multi-location work, it is increasingly important to define clear expectations and goals for the work and to regularly monitor the achievement of these goals. Regular dialogue about work functionality also helps to identify early signals of the need for support regarding work ability. There is no single correct model for managing multi-location work. The guidelines and framework for work management should be made in accordance with the nature of the work community and work itself. However, a management approach that takes into account the individual situations of employees and strengthens social identity in a way that promotes communality will create a solid foundation that supports work ability.

Change management

Companies operate under constant change and organisations need to be able to adapt to the change

pressures of their environment in order to continue to operate. Organisational changes can be motivated by many reasons, such as changes in the market situation, technological developments, improving competitiveness or strategy reforms. Organisational changes may include, for example, the outsourcing of operations, mergers of companies, technological reforms, an expansion of operations and work restructuring or a reduction of activities that requires a reduction in the labour force.[26,27]

From an employee perspective, organisational change can mean, for example, changes in working methods, work content, work organisation and co-operation within the work community. The role of supervisors is often challenging, as they are simultaneously the targets and implementers of changes.[28] During organisational changes, supervisory work involves the promotion of change through leadership, support for employees affected by the change and the ability to adapt personally to the changes. The changes can be seen as a positive move among employees if investments are made in change management and special attention is paid to the well-being of the employees affected. Research shows, however, that organisational changes are often accompanied by psychosocial stress and the numbers of absences due to illness may increase[29,30,31].

> Typical impacts of organisational change on the way that working conditions are perceived:
> - Work requirements and pace increase
> - Employees feel they have less influence on their work
> - Expectations about work are unclear
> - The risk of internal conflicts in the work community increases
> - Uncertainty about work increases
> - Dissatisfaction with supervisory work increases.[32]

During organisational changes, it is also important to use leadership, inclusion, communication and training to create conditions that enable employees to feel that the changes are as consistent and clear as possible in terms of their own work and workplace collaboration and give them a sense of control. Psychological security creates a safe space for questions about the changes and for sharing experiences related to the changes. Important perspectives in terms of change management include the assessment of and support for change readiness, effective change communication, opportunities for employees to participate in the change process and monitoring of the impacts of the changes.[26,33]

1 Assessment of change readiness

A continuous assessment of organisational change readiness is an important aspect of change management. Change readiness in an organisation refers to the ability of a company to implement changes successfully. Change readiness is affected by, for example, organisational resources, an organisational culture and structures that support change, employee attitudes and their individual capacity for change.[34]

The assessment of change readiness should be initiated well in advance of the actual change measures:

- A situational picture of resource needs. What is needed to effectively implement the change?
  - Time resources
  - Financial resources
  - Necessary competence to implement the change
  - Necessary competence for the future form of the organisation
  - Information on the internal functioning and operating environment of the organisation that are necessary for the change
  - Human resources needed for the change
  - Technological resources
- Assessment of the resource situation: Does the organisation have the resources to implement the change effectively?

BThe assessment of change readiness will be continued throughout the change process in order to undertake whatever support measures are needed and to support the development of the different sub-areas of change readiness.

Support for change readiness promotes work ability. Support measures for change readiness include:

- Change communication that helps to understand the reasons and need for change
- Joint discussions on changes involving employees
- Conversations between the supervisor and employees and provision of support
- Supervisory training on change management
- Training of employees regarding future competence needs
- Targeted and enhanced support measures for employees specifically affected by the change
- Different forms of support from occupational health care, if necessary

2 Change communication

Multichannel communication about the change is one way to help employees to understand the change and reduce uncertainty. Clear and open communications encourage the work community to engage in dialogue on thoughts, concerns and development ideas concerning the change. Communications provide management with information on potential development targets and support needs that are key to helping the change progress. Change communication should be implemented broadly through various channels as well as within the individual work teams. Different types of changes may require different management approaches, and practical solutions that will effectively support employees must always be designed in a way that meets the specific needs of the workplace. Generally, change communication should reinforce the sense of control, help employees to understand the change and emphasise the reasons for the change by answering the following questions.

Common employee concerns::

- What changes are taking place and can be expected?
- Why are the changes happening?
- Why do changes need to be implemented (e.g., for reasons related to the operating environment, competition or the internal functioning of the organisation)?
- What are the changes seeking to achieve, i.e. what is the goal or vision behind the change?
- What are the benefits of the changes?
- Who will be affected by the change?
- How will the change proceed?
- What will change in our everyday working life and workplace co-operation?
- What is expected of the employees?
- How will collaboration within the work community change?
- Will the employees need to acquire new skills for their work and where can they get support for the necessary competence development?
- What are the possibilities for employees to influence the content of the change?
- What support will be offered for dealing with the changes and to whom can employees turn with their questions? [26, 35]
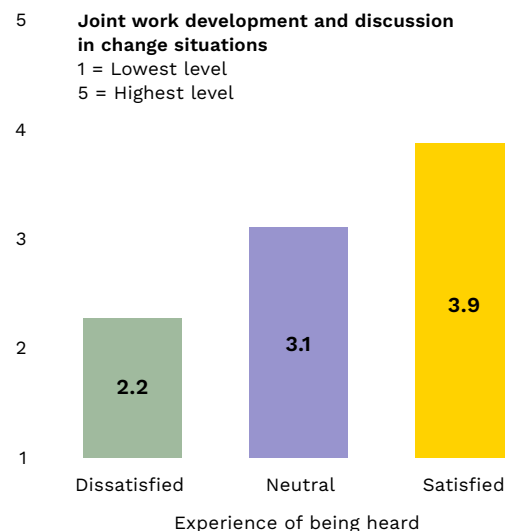
3 Including employees in the process

Opportunities of employees to participate in organisational change and to be heard will support their work ability and well-being throughout the organisational change process[36]. The possibility to ask questions, give feedback, request additional information and present development proposals for the new work situation and work organisation can reduce uncertainty and stress during the change process. Various surveys and online communication tools can be used to involve employees. Often, participation can be promoted by forming a working group of employee representatives to compile employee ideas and experiences related to the change. Based on the employee experience of more than 25,000 respondents, Elo's analysis shows that employees are more active in joint work development when the atmosphere of the workplace is characterised by a willingness to hear what the employees have to say.

When the workplace atmosphere supports the feeling of being heard, the work community's motivation for change is stronger and the employees are more interested in discussing the impacts of the changes on their work.
Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

Joint work development and discussion in change situations
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

Dissatisfied: 2.2
Neutral: 3.1
Satisfied: 3.9

Experience of being heard

4 Assessing and monitoring the impacts of changes

From an employee perspective, organisational change can signify changes in working methods, work content, work organisation and co-operative operating models. When done properly, changes in the work will be seen as positive development, but they may also bring an increase in psychosocial load. An important part of change management is the assessment of the risks associated with the changes.

Throughout the change process, it is important to pay particular attention to the functioning of workplace co-operation, changes in workload, clarity of work objectives and expectations, as well as to reduce uncertainty through change communication and inclusion. As the changes are taking hold, for example, there may be a period during which old and new tasks will sometimes need to be done simultaneously, which inevitably creates an unreasonable workload.

In addition, new forms of co-operation may require getting used to, so it is worth trying to anticipate the possible effects on the work community early on in the process and to monitor the impacts of the changes on the practices and functioning of the co-operation. Monitoring employee experiences regarding work resources, well-being and workload strain, for example, through more frequent short pulse surveys, will facilitate the follow-up on change impacts.

SOURCES – PHENOMENA AND TRENDS

Reading guide concerning sources

For the purposes of this report, when the reference number is within a sentence, the reference only refers to the portion of the text preceding the specific reference number in question. If the reference number comes after the full stop at the end of a sentence, the source reference applies to the whole paragraph or to the sentences from the previous to the current reference number. A full source reference is given in the source list when the source first appears. When the same source is referenced again, only the (primary) author's surname and year of the source publication are given as well as, if necessary, more specific identification information, such as the name of the source.

Introduction to phenomena:

[1] Ranki, S. (2023) HELP-katsaus: Työelämän muutosnäkymät. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

[2] Mauno, S., Herttalampi, M., Minkkinen, J., Feldt, T. and Kubicek, B. (2023), "Is work intensification bad for employees? A review of outcomes for employees over the last two decades", Work & Stress, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 100-125.

Employee experience of supervisory work:

[3] Sutela, H., Viinikka, J & Pärnänen, A (2024) Työolot murrosten keskellä – Työolotutkimuksen tuloksia 1977–2023. Tilastokeskus. Helsinki.

The well-being of supervisors:

[4] Työterveyslaitos (2024) Miten Suomi voi? -tutkimus. Tuloskooste, työhyvinvoinnin kehittyminen loppuvuoden 2019 ja kesän 2024 välillä. Luettu 27.2.2024

[5] Työeläkeyhtiö Elo. Esihenkilöiden työkyky ja kuormitus muuttuvassa työelämässä.Tutkittua tietoa ja ratkaisuja. Elon työkykytietoa 1/2025.

[6] Skakon, J.; Nielsen, K.; Borg, V.; Guzman, J. Are Leaders' Well-Being, Behaviours and Style Associated with the Affective Well-Being of Their Employees? A Systematic Review of Three Decades of Research. Work Stress 2010, 24, 107–139.

[7] Diebig, M., Poethke, U., & Rowold, J. (2017). Leader strain and follower burnout: Exploring the role of transformational leadership behaviour. German Journal of Human Resource Management: Zeitschrift für Personalforschung, 31(4), 329–348.

[8] Nielsen, M. B., Skogstad, A., Gjerstad, J., & Einarsen, S. V. (2019). Are transformational and laissez-faire leadership related to state anxiety among subordinates? A two-wave prospective study of forward and reverse associations. Work & Stress, 33(2).

[9] Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J. (1990) Developing Trans-formational Leadership: 1992 and Beyond. Journal of European Industrial Training, 14, 21-27.

[10] Zheng, S., & Li, L. (2024). Navigating the double-edged sword: How and when laissez-faire leadership affects Employees' challenging behavior. Acta psychologica, 250, 104549.

[11] Tóth-Király, I., Katz-Zeitlin, E., Houle, S. A., Fernet, C., & Morin, A. J. S. (2024). Managerial leadership behaviors: A longitudinal investigation of the role of job demands and resources, and implications for managers' own well-being. Applied Psychology: An International Review, 73(1), 157–184.

Management work within a changing work environment:

[12] Nielssen & Tarris, 2019

[13] Tóth-Király ym. 2023

[14] Megheirkouni, M., & Mejheirkouni, A. (2020). Leadership deve-lopment trends and challenges in the twenty-first century: rethinking the priorities. Journal of Management Development, 39, 97–124.

[15] Hu, D., Thien, L. M., Ahmi, A., & Mohamed, A. (2023). The 100 Most-Cited Research Publications on Servant Leadership: A Bibliometric Analysis. Sage Open, 13(3).

[16] Kaltiainen, J., & Hakanen, J. (2022). Fostering task and adaptive performance through employee well-being: The role of servant leadership. BRQ Business Research Quarterly, 25(1), 28-43.

[17] Hakanen, J., Harju,L., Seppälä, P, Laaksonen, A. & Pahkin, K. (2012). Kohti innostuksen spiraaleja. Innostuksen spiraali – innostavat ja menestyvät työyhteisöt tutkimus- ja kehittämis-hankkeen tuloksia. Tampere: Juventus Print.

[18] van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. Journal of Management, 37(4), 1228–1261.

[19] Kaltiainen, J., & Hakanen, J. (2022). Fostering task and adaptive performance through employee well-being: The role of servant leadership. BRQ Business Research Quarterly, 25(1), 28-43.

[20] Työterveyslaitoksen internetsivut: https://www.ttl.fi/teemat/tyohyvinvointi-ja-tyokyky/johtaminen/palveleva-johtaminen-tyopaikan-kulttuuriksi luettu 27.2.2025.

[21] Ranki, S. (2023) HELP-katsaus: Työelämän muutosnäkymät. Työterveyslaitos.

[22] Kaltiainen, J., Suutala, S & Hakanen, J (2024) Johtaja yhteisöllisyyden rakentajana hybridityössä. Tutkimushavaintoja Hyvinvointi ja yhteisöllisyys monipaikkatyön ytimessä -hankkeesta.

[23] Steffens, N. K., Tatachari, S., Haslam, S. A., Wilson-Lemoine, J. E., Maskor, M., van Dick, R., Kratzer, B. E., Christensen, J., & Kerschreiter, R. (2024). Introducing and validating a single-item measure of identity leadership: The Visual Identity Leadership Scale (VILS). British Journal of Social Psychology, 63(4), 1658–1680.

[24] Shi, J., Feenstra, S., & van Vugt, M. (2024). Connecting work teams in a remote workplace: An identity leadership perspective. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 33(5), 643–657.

[25] Kebede, S., & Wang, A. (2022). Organizational Justice and Employee Readiness for Change: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support. Frontiers in psychology, 13, 806109.

[26] Pahkin K, Mattila-Holappa P, Nielsen K, Wiezer N, Widerszal-Bazyl M, de Jong T & Mockallo Z (2011). Mielekäs muutos – Kuinka tukea työntekijöiden hyvinvointia organisaatiomuutoksen aikana? Helsinki: Työterveyslaitos.

[27] Sijbom, R.B., Koen, J., Peijen, R., & Preenen, P. (2024). The impact of workplace changes and supervisor support on employee learning: a nonlinear perspective. Human Resource Development International.

[28] Työterveyslaitoksen internetsivut: https://www.ttl.fi/teemat/tyoelaman-muutos/organisaatiomuutos/mielekkaan-organisaatiomuutoksen-periaatteet, luettu 24.2.2025.

[29] Oreg, S., Vakola, M., and Armenakis, A. (2011). Change recipients' reactions to organizational change A 60-year review of quantitative studies. J. Appl. Behav. Sci. 47, 461–524

[30] Kivimäki, M., Vahtera, J., Pentti, J., Thomson, L., Griffiths, A., and Cox, T. (2001). Downsizing, changes in work, and self-rated health of employees: a 7-year 3-wave panel study. Anxiety Stress Coping 14, 59–73.

[31] Bamberger, S. G., Vinding, A. L., Larsen, A., Nielsen, P., Fonager, K., Nielsen, R. N., et al. (2012). Impact of organisational change on mental health: a systematic review. Occup. Environ. Med. 69, 592–598.

[32] Fløvik, L., Knardahl, S., & Christensen, J. O. (2019). The Effect of Organizational Changes on the Psychosocial Work Environment: Changes in Psychological and Social Working Conditions Following Organizational Changes. Frontiers in psychology, 10, 2845.

[33] Sijbom, R.B., Koen, J., Peijen, R., & Preenen, P. (2024). The impact of workplace changes and supervisor support on employee learning: a nonlinear perspective. Human Resource Development International.

[34] Rafferty, A. E., Jimmieson, N. L., & Armenakis, A. A. (2013). Change Readiness: A Multilevel Review. Journal of Management, 39(1), 110-135.

[35] Weiner B. J. (2009). A theory of organizational readiness for change. Implementation science : IS, 4, 67.

[36] Egan, M., Bambra, C., Thomas, S., Petticrew, M., Whitehead, M., & Thomson, H. (2007). The psychosocial and health effects of workplace reorganisation. A systematic review of organisational-level interventions that aim to increase employee control. Journal of epidemiology and community health, 61(11), 945–954.

Solutions for work

When endeavouring to promote the work ability and work functionality of supervisors, it is important to focus the relevant measures on the structures of the workplace, tools that support supervisory work, co-operation between different levels of management, management supervision, and to encourage the use of personal methods that support work ability.

1

Structures, tools and a culture that support supervisory work

The structures and common operating models of the workplace form the foundation for smooth work functionality for supervisors.

- Top management shall develop a culture in which a natural part of everyday work ability management involves talking about the coping of supervisors.

- Workplaces shall recognise the role of the supervisors as information providers, assess the conditions necessary for the knowledge work carried out by first-line supervisors and focus on managing information flooding.

- Consider work that requires concentration as part of work planning.

- Promote the networking of supervisors and sharing of peer support within the workplace.

- Provide clear operating models and guidelines to support supervisory work, as well as tools to be used on the practical level. For example:

  - Implementation of early support for employees and a process description of the early support process

  - Practices that support employees when returning from sick leave

  - Common operating models for the prevention, investigation and resolution of work community conflicts

  - Models for assessing the need for work adaptation as well as for the planning and implementation of work adaptation measures

  - Instructions for supervisors on how to approach and handle organisational changes.

2

Smooth collaboration between different levels of management

Interaction between different levels of management is important as a means of ensuring that any feedback essential in terms of work functionality and organisational learning reaches the ears of the relevant managers.

- Divide the areas of leadership appropriately.

- Assess the possibilities to influence the work at different levels of management, identify possible obstacles and consider ways to improve possibilities for influence.

- Work together to brainstorm ways to make better use of the existing possibilities for influence. Add possibilities for influence to job descriptions in appropriate ways.

- Share feedback diversely between different levels of management. Favour dialogue as a means of providing feedback: What kind of feedback do supervisors want regarding their own work and activities as a leader? What kind of leadership do they feel they need in order to succeed in their management work?

3

Prioritising supervisory work

As an aspect of supporting the work ability and work functionality of supervisors, it is important to maintain an up-to-date situational picture of the workload required for their broad job description and to support the prioritisation of the work.

- Engage in regular discussions about the amount of work and task areas of the supervisors.

- Define the key tasks for supervisory work. Identify the other tasks on which time is being spent. Estimate the working hours being spent on different work areas, and the adequacy of working time for management.

- Discuss the responsibility limits of first-line supervisors. Reduce the workload if necessary.

- Discuss the expectations for the work of the supervisors, identify possible conflicts as regards, e.g., the use of working time, and discuss together the principles underlying the work prioritisation process.

4

Personal methods that support work ability and well-being

Everyone has the opportunity to influence their personal well-being through their own activities. In self-directed and independent work, it is important to pay attention to work recovery and the balance between work and other aspects of life, to address, when necessary, any concerns related to workload or work ability at an early stage, and to focus attention on methods to support personal stress management.

Work recovery during the workday

- Reserve transition time between meetings. Even a brief moment of relaxation or separation from the work often supports recovery.
- Plan timetables so that there is room for breaks during the workday.
- Variation between in heavy and lighter tasks supports work recovery throughout the working day.

Limiting the work and discussing work situations when necessary

- Limit or reduce the work if necessary.
- Focus on work prioritisation, scheduling and advance planning.
- Hold discussions concerning the workload or work prioritisation solutions together with top management.

Psychological recovery from work in free time

According to studies[1] there are 6 different recovery experiences (Dramma) that support mental well-being and recovery from workload strain. The Dramma model for recovery comes from the English words detachment, relaxation, autonomy, mastery, meaning and affiliation. According to the model, mental well-being and psychological recovery are particularly promoted by:

- Detachment from work and the process of consciously taking distance from work.
- Relaxation and rest
- Engagement in meaningful hobbies and leisure activities
- Engagement in new learning that is interesting and suitably challenging
- Using free time in an independent way that is personally rewarding and enjoyable
- Reserving time for things that are personally meaningful during time off from work
- Spending time with family and friends

Psychological recovery can be promoted in a variety of ways. Often, psychological recovery is best realised in a suitable balance between relaxation and meaningful activities that counterbalance work.

Exercising stress management

According to studies[2] well-being at work is particularly supported by problem-focused stress management, which involves stress management methods for assessing the situation, planning actions and problem-solving.

Perspectives on stress management

1. **Recognition of stress signals**
   - The ways in which stress is expressed is always individual. Stress can take the form of, for example, physical signs or changes in mood or behaviour.
   - Identifying the signs of stress at an early stage will provide better opportunities to affect the situation and keep the stress level from escalating.

2. **Assessing the situation causing the stress and planning independent activities to reduce stress**
   - Assess how personal actions can directly affect the matter causing the stress.
   - Rely on peer support and the support of supervisors for the purpose of assessing the situation and defining solutions. Joint discussions about the situation causing the stress can provide new perspectives and help to identify solutions.
   - Defining appropriate solutions for the situation that pay attention to possibilities for personal influence and planning of personal actions to resolve the stressful situation.

3. **Take direct action to reduce stress**
   - Attempt to influence the source of stress directly and modify the stressful situation through personal actions or indirectly through other parties. For example, when the workload is perceived as being unreasonable, a direct method would be to raise the issue of the workload and work prioritisation with one's supervisor. In difficult situations related to HR management, a direct method might be to address the problems directly with the employees.

4. **Use of stress-alleviating measures**
   - Have compassion for yourself.
   - Psychological recovery from work using the Dramma model alleviates stress.
   - Also, methods that alleviate stress can be an effective part of stress management, but they will not eliminate the actual stress factors. However, measures that alleviate stress are often complementary to direct measures, and are particularly important in situations where the possibilities for direct influence are limited[3,4].

SOURCES – SOLUTIONS FOR WORK

Reading guide concerning sources

For the purposes of this report, when the reference number is within a sentence, the reference only refers to the portion of the text preceding the specific reference number in question. If the reference number comes after the full stop at the end of a sentence, the source reference applies to the whole paragraph or to the sentences from the previous to the current reference number. A full source reference is given in the source list when the source first appears. When the same source is referenced again, only the (primary) author's surname and year of the source publication are given as well as, if necessary, more specific identification information, such as the name of the source.

[1] Kujanpää, M., Syrek, C., Lehr, D. et al. (2021) Need Satisfaction and Optimal Functioning at Leisure and Work: A Longitudinal Validation Study of the DRAMMA Model. J Happiness Stud 22, 681–707.

[2] Rantanen, M., & Mauno, S. (2010). Auttavatko yksilölliset stressinhallintakeinot työstressin hallinnassa? Laadullinen katsaus 2000-luvun tutkimuksiin. Psykologia, 45(3), 216–233.

[3] Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer.

[4] Rantanen, M., & Mauno, S. (2010). Auttavatko yksilölliset stressinhallintakeinot työstressin hallinnassa? Laadullinen katsaus 2000-luvun tutkimuksiin. Psykologia, 45(3), 216–233.

Statistics and graphs

According to Statistics Finland's Quality of work life survey, the share of administrative supervisors has decreased over the past thirty years, while the share of functional supervisors has increased over the same period of time.

Source: Statistics Finland, Working conditions in the midst of changes – Results of the Quality of work life survey 1977–2023 (2024)

%

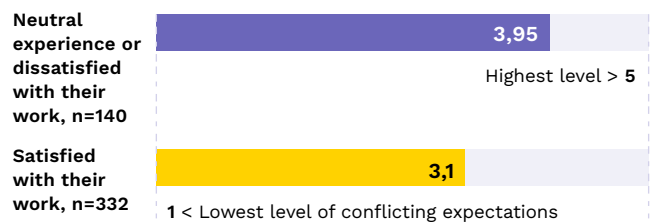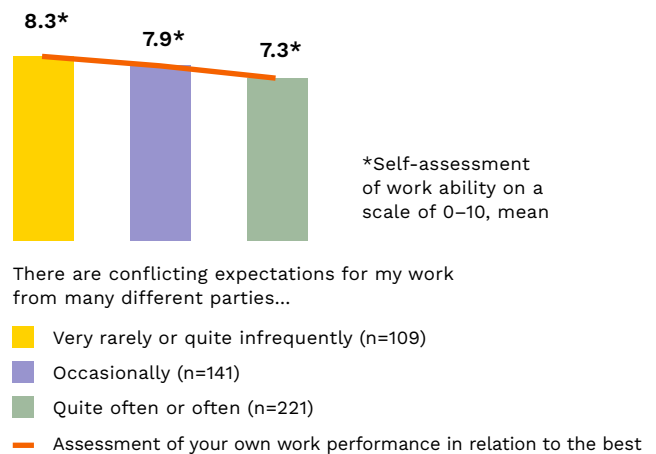| Year	Administrative supervisors	Functional supervisors
1990	27	3
1997	28	3
2003	22	13
2008	25	16
2013	22	15
2018	21	20

■ Administrative supervisors
■ Functional supervisors
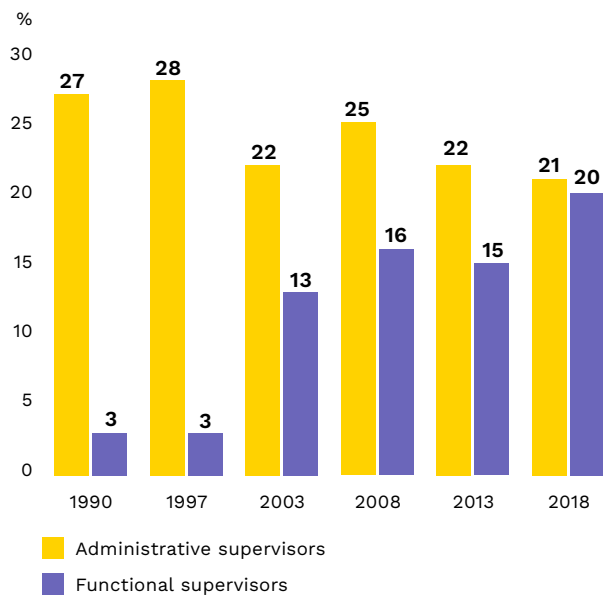
The conflicting expectations experienced by first-line supervisors are directly linked to work ability, job satisfaction and the balance between one's own work potential and work done.

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

8.3*   7.9*   7.3*

*Self-assessment of work ability on a scale of 0–10, mean

There are conflicting expectations for my work from many different parties...

■ Very rarely or quite infrequently (n=109)
■ Occasionally (n=141)
■ Quite often or often (n=221)
— Assessment of your own work performance in relation to the best

Neutral experience or dissatisfied with their work, n=140	3,95
	Highest level > 5
Satisfied with their work, n=332	3,1
1 < Lowest level of conflicting expectations	

In the rehabilitation applications of supervisors, the share of diagnoses represented by mental health disorders is higher and the share of musculoskeletal disorders is lower than for all rehabilitation applications. The diagnosis distribution of supervisors largely follows the diagnosis distribution of those involved in expert and knowledge work.

Source: Elo's data (2020–2024)

Diagnoses in rehabilitation applications of supervisors

- Musculoskeletal disorders: 23%
- Mental health disorders: 48%
- Other diseases: 29%

Diagnoses in all rehabilitation applications

- Musculoskeletal disorders: 40%
- Mental health disorders: 30%
- Other diseases: 29%

■ Musculoskeletal disorders
■ Mental health disorders
■ Other diseases

Work interruptions, a hectic pace, overlapping of tasks and conflicting expectations are typical load factors in the everyday life of supervisors

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and work-load strain within a changing work environment (2025)

Interruptions or disturbances at work

11%	44%	43%

Time pressures or hectic pace at work

	24%	45%	26%

Too many assigned tasks underway at the same time

9%	28%	37%	25%

Excessive information flooding or amount of data causes stress

	12%	29%	34%	21%

There are conflicting work expectations from different parties

	18%	30%	31%	15%

My work requires acting on unclear or insufficient instructions

	23%	37%	23%	13%

Interruptions or gaps in the flow of information weaken work functionality

	24%	36%	24%	12%

- Very rarely or never
- Quite infrequently
- Occasionally
- Quite often
- Very often or always

The successful work recovery of first-line supervisors is reflected in the management of employees' well-being.

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and work-load strain within a changing work environment (2025)
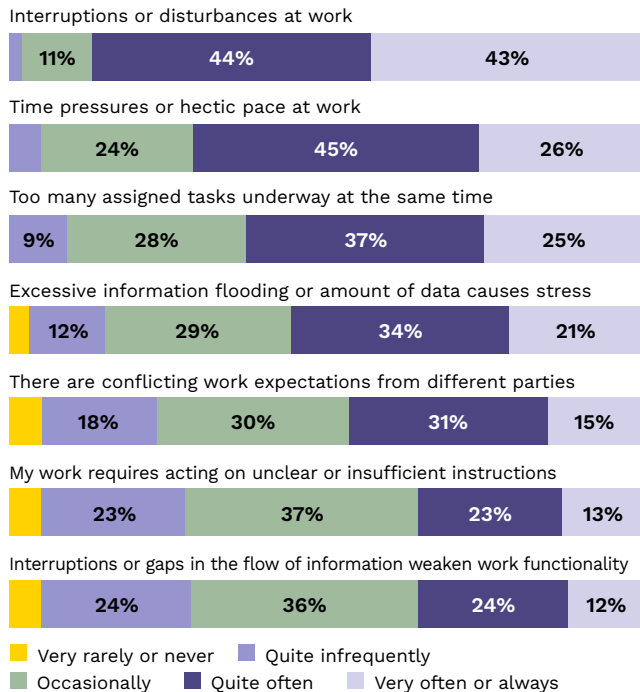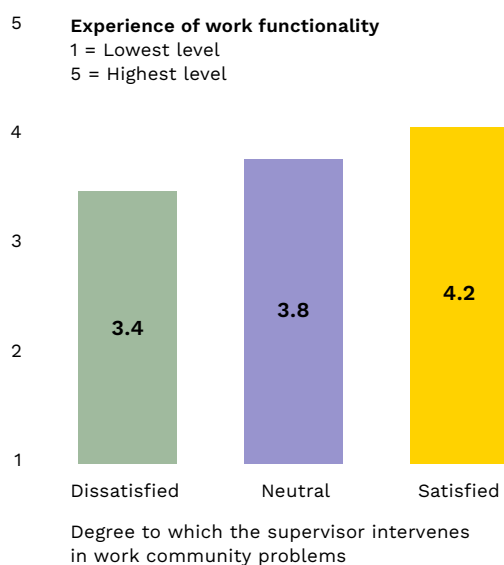

At least a good level of work ability (n=313): 14%, 56%, 27%
Work ability is moderate at most (n=158): 41%, 40%, 13%
Good work recovery (n=166): 19%, 60%, 17%
Moderate work recovery (n=160): 51%, 35%
Weak work recovery (n=146): 43%, 40%, 10%

How well do you think you can promote employee well-being at work through your own management skills?

- Very well
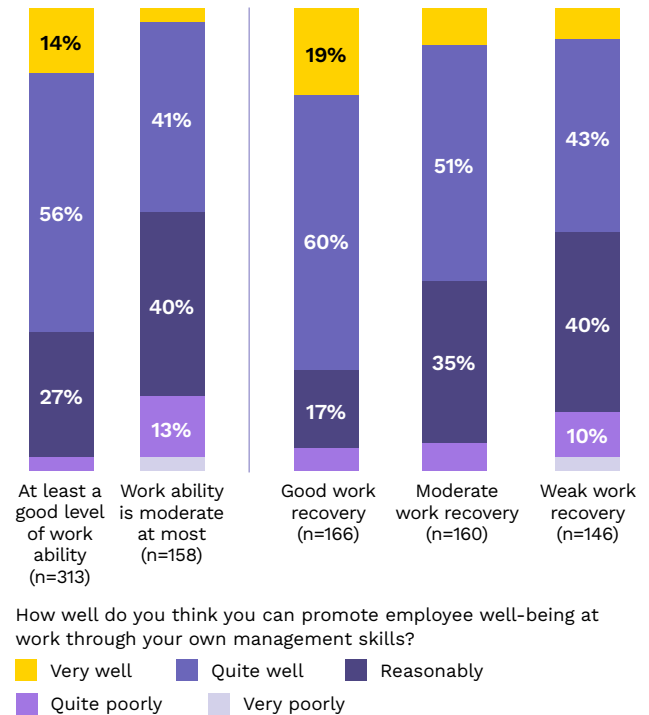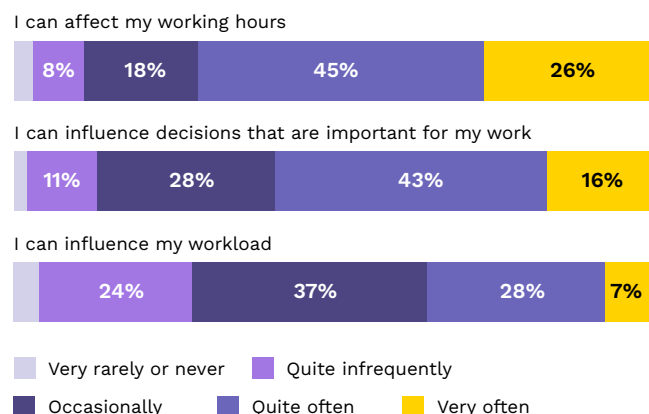- Quite well
- Reasonably
- Quite poorly
- Very poorly

On average, the level of work functionality is higher when the supervisor intervenes in the problems of the work community when necessary.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2023–2024)

Experience of work functionality
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
3.4	3.8	4.2

Degree to which the supervisor intervenes in work community problems

The work of supervisors and managers often comes with decision-making power as regards the work. Possibilities to influence one's work are a key resource for supervisors.

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and work-load strain within a changing work environment (2025)

I can affect my working hours

8%	18%	45%	26%

I can influence decisions that are important for my work

11%	28%	43%	16%

I can influence my workload

	24%	37%	28%	7%

- Very rarely or never
- Quite infrequently
- Occasionally
- Quite often
- Very often

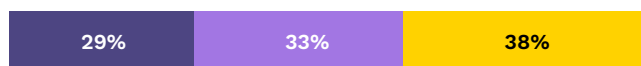## The support of the first-line supervisor's own supervisor is linked to the experience of conflicting expectations

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and work-load strain within a changing work environment (2025)

Positive assessment of support from own supervisor

29%	33%	38%

Dissatisfied or neutral assessment of the support from own supervisor

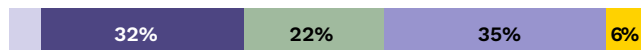| 10%	23%	67%

- ■ Very rarely or quite infrequently
- ■ Occasionally
- ■ Ganska ofta eller ofta

Supervisory work can offer abundant resources to counterbalance workload strain

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and work-load strain within a changing work environment (2025)

I receive sufficient feedback regarding my work

	32%	22%	35%	6%

The possibilities for development in my current work are good

9%	18%	28%	35%	10%

I receive sufficient recognition for my work

	20%	19%	48%	8%

My job offers me sufficient learning opportunities

	13%	20%	46%	19%

My supervisor provides me with any support and assistance needed for my work

	14%	15%	42%	27%

I know what is expected of me at work

6%	14%	58%	20%

My co-workers provide me with any support and assistance needed for my work

9%	11%	51%	29%

- ■ Completely disagree
- ■ Somewhat disagree
- ■ I don't agree or disagree
- ■ Somewhat agree
- ■ Completely agree

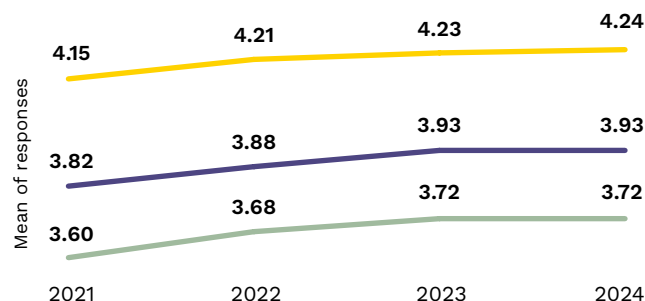## On average, the personnel experience of supervisory work has remained at nearly the same level during the years 2021–2024. In the long term, there has been a slight positive development. Number of companies included in the review: 110.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

Mean of responses

	2021	2022	2023	2024
	4.15	4.21	4.23	4.24
	3.82	3.88	3.93	3.93
	3.60	3.68	3.72	3.72

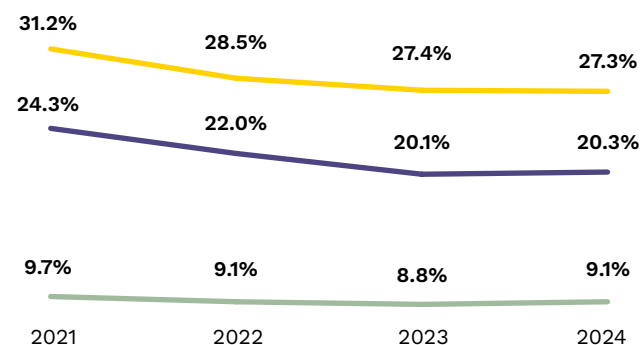**Employee experience (1–5), 1 weakest and 5 strongest**
- ■ Degree to which the supervisor intervenes in work community problems
- ■ Level of trust shown by the supervisor
- ■ Sufficiency of feedback received from the supervisor

According to Elo's data, the share of those who feel they need to develop their supervisory work has decreased slightly during the four years in review.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
	31.2%	28.5%	27.4%	27.3%
	24.3%	22.0%	20.1%	20.3%
	9.7%	9.1%	8.8%	9.1%

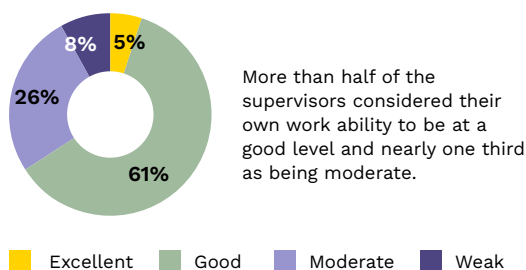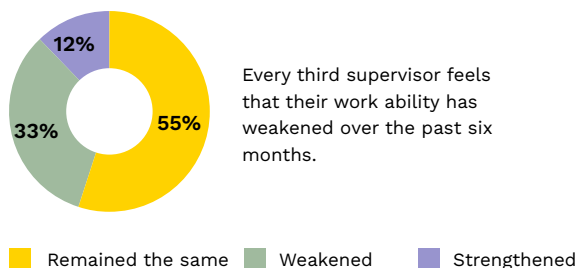- ■ Need to develop the sufficiency of feedback from the supervisor
- ■ Need to develop the level of trust shown by the supervisor
- ■ Need to develop the degree to which the supervisor's intervenes in work community problems

The annual results illustrate the share of respondents to Elo's Work community survey that feel the need to develop areas of supervisory work.
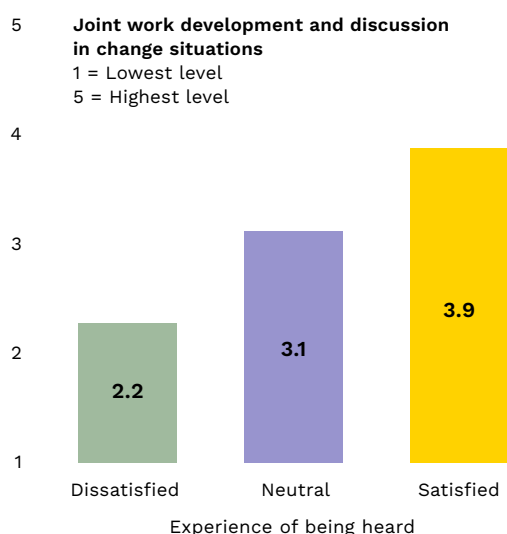
One third of the participants in the survey conducted by Elo in 2024 felt that their work ability had weakened over the past year and estimated that their level of work ability was moderate at most.

Source: Elo's research report, Supervisors' work ability and workload strain within a changing work environment (2025)

12%
33%
55%

Every third supervisor feels that their work ability has weakened over the past six months.

■ Remained the same   ■ Weakened   ■ Strengthened

8% **5%**
26%
61%

More than half of the supervisors considered their own work ability to be at a good level and nearly one third as being moderate.

■ Excellent   ■ Good   ■ Moderate   ■ Weak

When the workplace atmosphere supports the feeling of being heard, the work community's motivation for change is stronger and the employees are more interested in discussing the impacts of the changes on their work.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

5   **Joint work development and discussion in change situations**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

4

3

2

1

2.2 (Dissatisfied)   **3.1** (Neutral)   **3.9** (Satisfied)

Experience of being heard

The sufficiency of feedback received from the supervisor is directly linked to the clarity of expectations about work and perceived capability.

Source: Elo's Work community survey (2021–2024)

5   **Clarity of work expectations**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

4

3

2

1

3.5 (Dissatisfied)   **4.0** (Neutral)   **4.4** (Satisfied)

Experience of the sufficiency of feedback

5   **Perceived work capability**
1 = Lowest level
5 = Highest level

4

3

2

1

3.7 (Dissatisfied)   **4.0** (Neutral)   **4.3** (Satisfied)

Experience of the sufficiency of feedback