

# Flexible working hours and work-time control

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For affiliations and more information please see:

<https://www.ttl.fi/en/research-and-development-projects/wow/>

Here, we focus on employee-oriented flexibility related to working hours, i.e. the time-related autonomy that individuals have over their working hours with respect to the number of hours worked (duration), when the hours are worked (timing) and work tempo (hastiness, intensity). In WOW we confirmed the existence of two underlying factors of work-time control: control over taking time off and control over daily working hours.

## Recommendations

- ✓ Work hour flexibility and work demands should have limits that reflect individual capacity and the need to maintain boundaries between work and leisure time.
- ✓ Workplaces and occupational health care should prioritize early identification of workers at risk of self-imposed excessive working hours.
- ✓ Guidelines on flexible working practices should be tailored according to age, gender, work ability and the type of work.
- ✓ Increase of work-time control is a potential and feasible way to improve health, well-being and work participation.
- ✓ Interventions should target workers with especially low levels of control to guarantee the availability of a minimum level of autonomy.

## Flexible working hours and work-time control in association with health and wellbeing

Flexible working hours are generally linked to better health, well-being, and work/life balance. Flexibility may, however, also lead to blurred boundaries between work and leisure time, and consequently to prolonged working hours. Daily working hours and recovery during nonwork hours influence each other simultaneously on a day-to-day basis.

Good work-time control is positively associated with:

- work satisfaction and work-life balance
- musculoskeletal and mental problems and accident risk
- sickness absence, disability pensions and decision on retirement

Good work-time control seems to be most beneficial among women and employees of older age and those with reduced work ability.