

English
summary

To be a manager

- MANAGERS' WORK SITUATION AND CHALLENGES IN 2023



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SWEDEN'S ORGANISATION FOR MANAGERS

Summary

The report “Att vara chef” (To be a Manager) is a survey of managers’ experiences of their work situation and organizational conditions.

This is the third time Ledarna has conducted this survey, which provides the opportunity to track changes over time. The previous reports were published in 2015 and 2019. In this year’s survey, over 1,600 managers answered a web questionnaire, which corresponds to a response rate of 40 percent.

Since the 2019 survey, a pivotal event has occurred: the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to restrictions that meant those who could work from home were encoura-

ged to do so. An estimated 30-40 percent of all workers in Sweden were affected by this at various times during the pandemic years 2020-2022.

According to Ledarna’s survey, 24 percent of managers reported that they worked completely remotely in March 2021, and 41 percent worked remotely at least 3-4 days per week.



This is a translated summary of the report **Att vara chef**, To be a manager.

FEWER HOURS PER WEEK AND SMALLER WORK TEAMS

This year’s survey shows that a larger proportion of managers than before estimate their weekly working hours to be no more than 45 hours and that they are much more likely than before to state that they can control the scheduling of their own working hours. This can likely be explained, at least in part, by the experiences of the pandemic years when many managers worked from home, either completely or partially. Many experienced advantages, including more efficient work and an easier time balancing their private and work lives. The hybrid work-life is here to stay, and work tied to time and space has been loosened.

Only 32 percent of managers report that they get the support they need when it comes to distance/hybrid leadership. This is a new area in this year’s survey and has been added as a direct result of the new work methods after the pandemic.

Furthermore, the results show that the proportion of managers who have a maximum of 20 employees has increased somewhat. In this year’s survey, that proportion is 69 percent, compared to 61 percent in 2015 and 62 percent in 2019.

JUST UNDER FOUR OUT OF TEN MANAGERS HAVE SOUGHT ANOTHER POSITION

Almost four out of ten managers (36%) have at least once a month in the past year considered leaving their current managerial role. Of the various alternatives they have considered, six out of ten said they would quit being a manager altogether and about half would leave for management jobs with another employer in a different industry.

Of all managers, 37 percent say they have actively sought at least one other position in the past year. The proportions are significantly higher for middle managers, managers up to and including 44 years old, and men in the public sector.

HIGH WORKLOAD AND INSUFFICIENT RECOVERY

Managers often have a high workload. Just over four out of ten managers (42 %) report that their workload is always or often unevenly distributed so that work piles up, they don't have time to complete their tasks (32 %), and they fall behind in their work (30 %). It is not surprising, therefore, that a majority feel that time is not enough to develop the business and employees. However, the proportion who believe they have enough time to do this, to a high or quite high extent, has increased somewhat since 2019, from 32 to 37 percent.

Young managers, up to and including 35 years old, respond in a significantly higher proportion that they always feel they do not have time to complete their work.

Three out of ten managers also experience their work as emotionally demanding. Young managers up to the age of 35, female managers, and women in the public sector experience this to a significantly higher extent than the total. Similarly, a higher proportion of men, men over 35, and men in the private sector perceive their work as emotionally demanding to a small or very small extent.

During the period 2014 to 2018, managers' sick leave increased by 50 %, according to figures from the national occupational healthcare provider Previa. Absence due to mental ill health increased during the same period by 500 %, most notably among female managers.

Time for recovery and being able to put work-related thoughts aside during leisure time are important aspects for preventing unhealthy stress and, in the long run, illness. Unfortunately, the results show that the conditions for recovery leave much to be desired. Only about half of the managers state that they can to a high or fairly high extent put work-related thoughts aside during their leisure time (51 %), have the opportunity to recover after periods of intensive work (49 %), and have energy to do other things after the end of the workday (47 %).

The situation seems to be worst among young managers, up to and including 35 years of age, as well as managers up to and including 44 years of age when it comes to the ability to put work-related thoughts aside during leisure time. Here, a significantly higher proportion state that they can only do this to a low extent.

How managers perceive the support they receive on different issues to manage their managerial role shows a wide variation between different areas. In most areas, about half of the managers feel that they receive sufficient support to a high or fairly high extent. The area where the largest proportion considers that they receive sufficient support is labor law issues (64 %), compared to the bottom scores of administrative support (41 %), own development/education (41 %), and the new alternative, support in distance/hybrid leadership (32%).

NINE OUT OF TEN MANAGERS ALMOST ALWAYS FIND THEIR WORK MEANINGFUL

Despite often demanding managerial positions, just over nine out of ten managers (91 %) almost always feel that their work is meaningful. This is also an increase from an already high proportion in 2019 (87 %). Women in the public sector and women over 35 years of age respond to a significantly higher extent than the total that their work almost always feels meaningful.

However, the proportion of managers who would recommend others to pursue a managerial career has decreased slightly since 2019 from 62 to 59 percent. Supervisors are the managerial group least likely to do so.

Regarding the relationship with the manager's own immediate manager, the results show a positive development in terms of the extent to which the manager is perceived as fair, available/present, and supportive. A

relationship that a previous study show can be crucial for the willingness to continue in a managerial career (Holmberg et al., 2019)*.

Finally, a positive, although weak, development can be found regarding "illegitimate work tasks", tasks that do not actually belong to the manager's role. The proportion of managers who perform this type of task at least once a week has decreased slightly since 2015 and 2019, although it is too early to determine if this is a persistent trend or not.

Here, young managers stand out again. As many as 43 percent of them wonder at least once a week whether the tasks they have are sensible and meaningful, compared to the total of 28 percent.

* Homberg, R., Djamnezhad, D., Larsson, M. (2019). Hållbara chefer 10 år senare – uppföljning av forsknings- och utvecklingsprojektet Hållbara chefer. Lunds universitet.

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