

Customer-initiated supervision of harassment and harmful work-related strain in 2025

Report

Summary

The occupational safety and health (OSH) authority enforces the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act on harassment and harmful work-related strain. This report describes customer-initiated supervision of harassment and harmful work-related strain in 2025.

In 2025, the OSH authority received a total of approximately 3,100 contacts regarding harassment and harmful work-related strain.

Approximately 2,200 of them concerned workplace harassment or inappropriate treatment at work. Of these, 65 involved sexual harassment.

Approximately 1,800 contacts concerned psychosocial work-related strain. Of these, 155 also addressed the threat of violence at the workplace.

Some of the contacts were about both harassment and inappropriate treatment, as well as experiences of harmful work-related strain. In addition, many contacts also concerned experiences of discrimination. Most commonly, the person contacting the OSH authority requested advice on how to handle an issue at their workplace.

The OSH authority received 311 written enforcement requests concerning harassment. Of these, five concerned sexual harassment. A total of 82 enforcement requests concerning harmful work-related strain were received. Several enforcement requests concerned both harassment and harmful work-related strain. The enforcement requests also highlighted experiences of discrimination. Based on the enforcement requests, inspectors assess whether an OSH inspection into the matter should be performed.

A total of 84 inspections were performed on the basis of the harassment-related enforcement requests. In particular, the inspectors focused on whether the employer had taken measures to stop the harassment after having been informed

of harassment experienced by the employee that constituted a health hazard. Nearly 35% of the inspections revealed that the employer had not complied with its obligations under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Most of the faults concerned inadequate or delayed investigation of the harassment and a failure to take the measures needed to end it, or inadequacy of the measures taken.

A total of 42 inspections on harmful work-related strain were performed. These inspections focused on the employer's compliance with its obligation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to investigate workload factors and to avoid and reduce the risk to employees' health after having been informed of harmful work-related strain. Nearly half of the inspections revealed that the employer had not complied with its obligations under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The faults mainly concerned either the fact that the employer had investigated the employee's workload inadequately or with a delay, or that the measures taken to prevent or reduce the workload had been insufficient. In a few cases, the employer had not taken any measures whatsoever to reduce the harmful strain experienced by the employee.

Other defects were also observed in inspections concerning both harassment and harmful work-related strain. These involved issues such as the orientation of supervisors or employees, the investigation and assessment of psychosocial workload factors, and cooperation with occupational healthcare.

The OSH authority filed nine reports of suspected occupational safety and health offences with the police. Three of the reports concerned harassment and six harmful work-related strain.

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1. Introduction

The OSH authority enforces the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act on harassment and harmful work-related strain. This report describes customer-initiated supervision of harassment and psychosocial workload factors, which are based on an employee contacting

the OSH authority and requesting an investigation into their matter (Fig. 1).

An employee may contact the OSH authority due to both harassment they have experienced and harmful work-related strain.

Supervision in matters concerning harassment and work-related strain

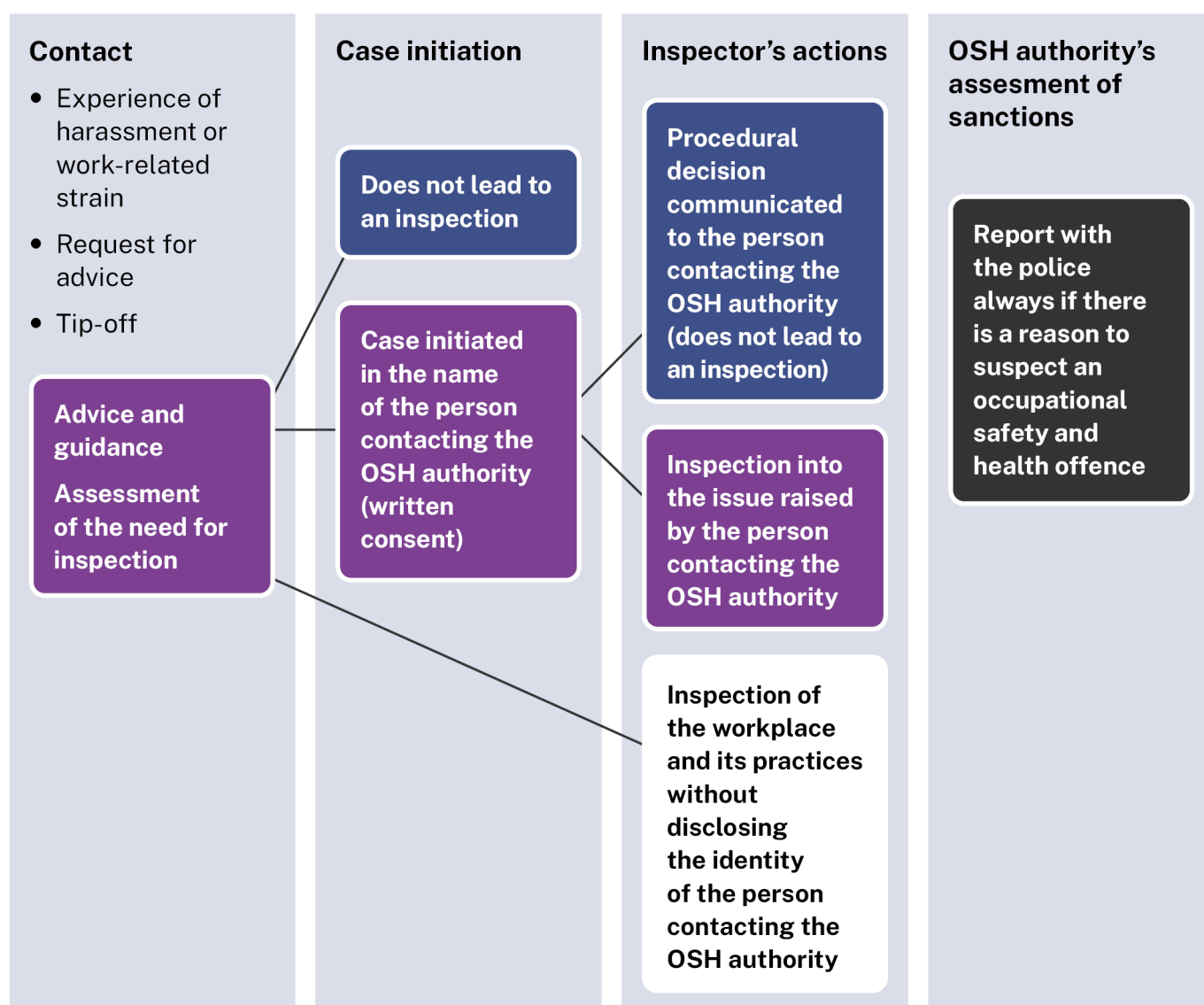


Figure 1. Assessment of the need for supervision and the progress of enforcement measures.

Supervision of harassment and harmful work-related strain

The OSH authority supervises employers' activities and advises both employees and employers on how to deal with issues relating to harassment and harmful work-related strain.

In customer-initiated supervision, special attention is paid to the employer complying with its obligations laid down in the Occupational Safety And Health Act once the employer has been informed of harassment or an employee's harmful work-related strain. The Occupational Safety and Health Act imposes specific obligations on employers relating to harassment and employees' harmful work-related strain.

Employers should be aware of the fact that the employer's general duty to exercise care also obliges employers to factor in employees' personal abilities, which may require individual occupational safety and health measures to ensure the employees' safety and health. An employee's personal abilities mean matters such as the employee's age, aging, gender, professional or language skills, or the employee's needs and limitations due to impaired capacity for work.

The duties of the OSH authority do not include assisting employees in dealing with harassment or harmful work-related strain, nor do they include mediating disputes at the workplace. Furthermore, the duties of the OSH authority do not include claiming compensation for actions that violate occupational safety and health provisions.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to take steps to prevent harassment and harmful work-related strain. The OSH authority also oversees compliance with these obligations on its own initiative in connection with workplace inspections. In such cases, issues concerning individual employees are not covered, but the focus is on the work community as a whole. For more information on the supervision of harassment and harmful work-related strain at the initiative of the OSH authority, see the 2025 Annual Report of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

From Regional State Administrative Agencies to the Finnish Supervisory Agency

The OSH authority operates as an independent supervisory authority. Until the end of 2025, the Occupational Safety and Health Divisions in five Regional State Administrative Agencies operated as independent regional OSH authorities. In this report, the Occupational Safety and Health Divisions are referred to as one whole, the OSH authority. The Regional State Administrative Agencies were abolished on 31 December 2025, and the new national Finnish Supervisory Agency started its operations on 1 January 2026. The Occupational Safety and Health Department at the Finnish Supervisory Agency acts as the national OSH authority.

Employer's obligations

The Occupational Safety and Health Act imposes specific obligations on employers in terms of harassment and employees' harmful work-related strain:

Section 28, Harassment

If harassment or other inappropriate treatment of an employee occurs at work and causes risk or hazard to the employee's health, the employer, after becoming aware of the matter, shall by available means take measures for remedying this situation.

Section 25, Avoiding and reducing workload factors

If it is determined that employees, while at work, are exposed to strain in ways that endanger their health, employers, after becoming aware of the matter, shall, by available means, take measures to analyse the workload factors and to avoid or reduce the hazard.

2. Contacts regarding harassment and harmful work-related strain

In 2025, the OSH authority received a total of approximately 3,100 contacts regarding harassment and harmful work-related strain.

Approximately 2,200 of them concerned harassment or inappropriate treatment and approximately 1,800 psychosocial workload factors. Approximately 60 contacts concerning sexual harassment were received. In addition, 155 contacts concerning psychosocial workload factors also mentioned the threat of violence. In many cases, the contact covered both treatment that was perceived as inappropriate, and harmful work-related strain.

All contacts were dealt with by phone or in writing (e.g. by email). Where necessary, the person contacting the authority was given instructions on how to submit an enforcement request.

In most cases, it is an employee who is experiencing harassment or harmful work-related strain who contacts the authority. In some cases, the person who contacts the authority is an occupational safety and health representative or a shop steward. Other parties who contact the authority include employer representatives, occupational safety and health managers, occupational healthcare providers and trade unions. Occasionally, employees whose own inappropriate behaviour has been reported contact the authority. Third parties, such as customers, next of kin or friends, sometimes contact the authority, seeking advice or wishing to provide the authority with a tip concerning psychosocial workload factors or inappropriate treatment at a workplace. (Fig. 2).

The OSH authority received approximately 3,100 contacts concerning harassment or harmful work-related strain. There was an increase of some 15% in contacts compared to the previous year.

Contacts regarding harassment and harmful work-related strain in 2025

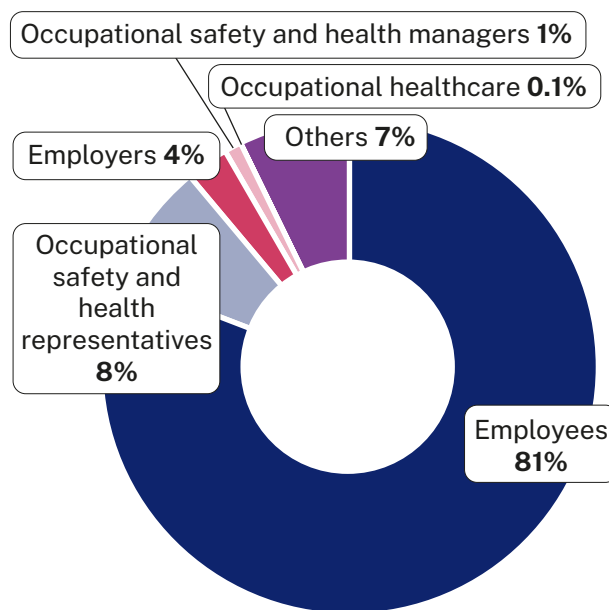


Figure 2. Contacts regarding harassment and harmful work-related strain in 2025.

The most contacts concerning harassment and work-related strain came from the healthcare and social services sector (Fig. 3). This was also the case in previous years.

Customer contacts by sector

According to the Finnish Standard Industrial Classification TOL 2008 main category

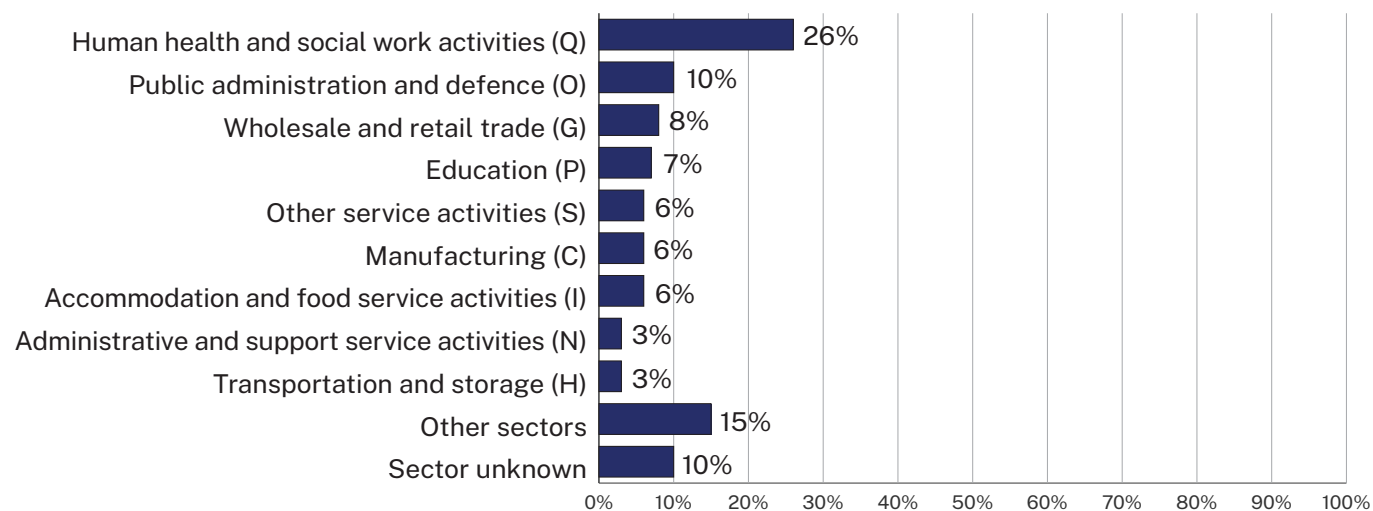


Figure 3. The share of different sectors in customer contacts concerning harassment and harmful work-related strain in 2025.

Harassment

Typically, the person who contacts the OSH authority is an employee who is wondering whether behaviour targeted at them constitutes prohibited harassment. Whether the actions could meet the statutory definition of harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act is discussed with the person.

If the matter constitutes harassment, the employee is advised to raise the issue directly with the person who has harassed them. If the harassment does not stop or if discussing it with the harasser is not possible, the person is advised to report the matter to their employer. The employee is instructed to contact the OSH authority again if the employer does not take action.

The person contacting the authority may also request concrete advice on how to handle a case of harassment at the workplace. Employees ask about matters such as how they should act, whether they can have an advocate present when the harassment matter is being addressed and who will be involved in the proceedings. There are also many enquiries about meetings at the workplace that take place when a case of harassment is being processed.

Occupational safety and health representatives, occupational safety managers and employer representatives typically request instructions and advice on matters concerning the handling of a case of harassment.

It is not always a question of harassment within the meaning of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, as not all unwanted behaviour at the workplace constitutes harassment. For example, poorly managed psychosocial workload factors can lead to experiences of inappropriate treatment. Irresponsible or bad behaviour at work can also be perceived as harassment even if it does not meet the statutory definition of harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

The person contacting the OSH authority may be advised to contact their employer, for example,

In the Occupational Safety and Health Act, harassment refers to systematic and continuous negative behaviour that causes a risk or hazard to an employee's health. Exceptions to this include sexual harassment, in which case even a single act may constitute harassment prohibited by the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

so that psychosocial workload factors affecting the entire workplace can be investigated and assessed or so that irresponsible or poor behaviour at work can be addressed.

Harassment manifests itself in very different ways at the workplace. Employees who contact the OSH authority most often experience harassment by an employer representative, supervisor or another employee.

The experiences of harassment can involve issues such as repeated disparaging remarks, constant and unfounded criticism of the employee's work and the deliberate obstruction of their work, the questioning of the employee's reputation or position, and the abuse of supervisory rights. The abuse of supervisory rights can manifest itself as repeated and unjustified interference with the employee's work, unjustified changes to the nature or volume of work duties, inappropriate use of supervisory authority or the issuing of humiliating orders, for example.

Sexual harassment at the workplace means sexually suggestive, unwanted behaviour that violates a person's integrity. Harassment on social media and harassment by a customer, an elected representative or another person outside the workplace have also been mentioned.

Work-related strain

Contacts regarding work-related strain often boil down to an excessive workload, time constraints and high demands. Issues to do with cooperation, interaction and the flow of information at the workplace are also often cited as the causes of strain. In many cases, the person contacting the OSH authority raises the issue as harassment but it becomes clear during the discussion that, rather than actual harassment, the underlying causes are psychosocial workload factors and the employee's work-related strain.

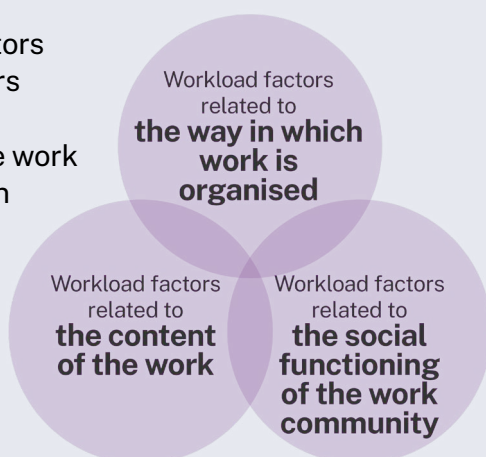
Generally, people want advice on how to deal with the matter at the workplace. If the employee has not informed their employer of the situa-

tion, they will be advised to discuss their strain with their immediate supervisor. In some cases, an employee may be referred to occupational healthcare to seek an assessment by a healthcare professional on their level of strain. Occupational safety and health representatives and managers also seek advice on how to resolve issues.

The contact may also concern a situation involving the entire work community. In such cases, guidance can be provided on matters such as how to bring the situation under control using the workplace's own resources. In some cases, the OSH authority may consider extending its supervision to cover the entire workplace.

Psychosocial workload factors

Psychosocial workload factors refer to factors related to the content of the work and the way in which work is organised as well as social functioning of the work community that may cause harmful strain to an employee.



Workload factors related to the content of the work refer to factors that depend on the nature of the work and the work duties. Examples of factors that can cause harmful strain:

- Monotonous work
- Fragmentation of work
- Continuous alertness
- Qualitative requirements associated with the work
- Excessive amount of information
- Continuous interruptions
- Unreasonable responsibility
- Repeated difficult interactions in customer service duties

Workload factors related to the way in which work is organised are factors at the workplace concerning the planning and allocation of work and work duties, as well as ensuring the necessary conditions for performing the work. Examples of factors that can cause harmful strain:

- Excessive workload or not enough work
- Excessive time constraints at work
- Adverse factors involving working hours, such as shift work, night work or work-related constraints, as well as excessive work-related travel outside of working hours
- Mobile work
- Defects in tools or working conditions
- Unclear job descriptions, objectives, responsibilities or division of labour

Workload factors related to the social functioning of the work community can include the following:

- Working alone
- Social or physical isolation
- Ineffective cooperation or interaction
- Poor flow of information
- Inadequate support from a supervisor or colleagues
- Harassment and other inappropriate treatment at work
- Unequal or discriminatory treatment

3. Enforcement requests by employees

In 2025, the OSH authority received 311 enforcement requests involving harassment experienced at work and 82 enforcement requests involving work-related strain. Five enforcement requests involving sexual harassment were submitted. Several enforcement requests involved the employee having experienced both harassment and work-related strain. Some enforcement requests also revealed experiences of discrimination.

An enforcement request does not always lead to enforcement measures

The OSH authority is obligated to ensure that the employer investigates any and all cases of harassment and harmful work-related strain brought to its attention, and that the employer takes action to stop the harassment and manage the harmful work-related strain that threatens the employee's health.

In cases where there is no suspicion of the employer having neglected its statutory obligations involving harassment or harmful work-related strain, a procedural decision is made.

In 2025, the OSH authority received more than 300 enforcement requests involving harassment and more than 80 requests involving harmful work-related strain. Many cases involved both harassment and harmful work-related strain.

However, an enforcement request does not always lead to enforcement measures. When receiving an enforcement request, the OSH authority will assess whether there is reason to suspect that the employer has failed to comply with its statutory obligations. If necessary, the OSH authority will request further information from the employee, such as concrete examples of harassment or information about how the issue has been handled at the workplace.

If there are no suspicions of the employer having neglected its statutory obligations, a procedural decision will be issued. In the procedural decision, the inspector explains to the person who submitted the enforcement request why the request will not lead to any enforcement measures. If an employee has submitted an enforcement request concerning multiple issues, only some of them may lead to enforcement measures.

Procedural decisions involving harassment

In 2025, 200 enforcement requests concerning harassment were closed with a procedural decision. A procedural decision is made in cases where the reported issue does not require any enforcement measures against the employer.

In most cases, a procedural decision is made because the statutory definition of harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act is not met. A procedural decision can also be made if the employer's actions to end the harassment are still ongoing at the time the enforcement request is made, or if the employer has taken sufficient action to stop the harassment.

The prerequisite for enforcement measures by the authority is that the employer has been notified of the harassment or inappropriate treatment experienced by the employee. If the employer has not been aware of the employee's experiences, the enforcement request will lead to a procedural decision in which the person who submitted the enforcement request is instructed to report the harassment to their employer and to address the issue in accordance with the workplace guidelines.

If the employer's measures have failed to bring the harassment under control or if the employer has refused to address the issue, the enforcement request may lead to enforcement measures against the employer. However, the OSH authority will not initiate enforcement measures if the person who submitted the request does not consent to the issue being discussed with the employer in a manner that reveals their name.

Experiences of harassment may also be caused by psychosocial workload factors affecting the entire work community which impair the social functioning of the work community. These may include excessive workload, unclear job descriptions or responsibilities, or insufficient support by a supervisor or colleagues. If psychosocial workload factors are not properly managed at the workplace, they may lead to experiences of inappropriate treatment within the work community.

Some enforcement requests made by individual employees result in a procedural decision because

What does not constitute harassment?

Not all negative behaviour occurring at the workplace constitutes harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. For example, an individual workplace conflict, work-related differences of opinion or a warning issued by a supervisor for a justified reason do not constitute harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. As a rule, the statutory definition of harassment is met if negative behaviour that is systematic and continuous causes risk and hazard to the employee's health. Exceptions to this include sexual harassment, in which case even a single act may constitute harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

a decision to carry out enforcement as an inspection covering the entire workplace has been made.

Procedural decisions involving harmful work-related strain

In 2025, there were 39 procedural decisions involving harmful work-related strain which led to the conclusion that the situation did not warrant enforcement measures against the employer in the case of the individual employee.

Most commonly, a procedural decision is made when it is considered that the employer has taken sufficient action to manage the harmful work-related strain that endangers the employee's health.

A procedural decision is also made when it is considered that psychosocial workload factors have caused strain on the entire work community. In such a case, enforcement is carried out as a workplace inspection covering the entire work community.

Employer decides on measures

The employer must ensure that workload factors which endanger an employee's health are avoided. The employer has the right to decide on the measures to be taken at the workplace to avoid or eliminate the harmful workload factors.

Inspections based on enforcement requests

When it is suspected on the basis of information provided by than employee that an employer has violated the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the inspector will initiate enforcement measures.

The inspector will send a request for information to the employer. The workplace's occupational safety and health representative will also usually be given the opportunity to express their views on the issue. The employee who has submitted the enforcement request will have the opportunity to express their views on the information provided by the employer and the occupational safety and health representative. On the basis of this information, the inspector will assess whether the employer has violated the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The inspector will prepare an inspection report, assessing the employer's actions. If the inspector observes any faults, they will require the employer to comply with the law.

Harassment

In 2025, 84 inspections were carried out on the basis of enforcement requests involving employers' obligations concerning harassment. In particular, the inspectors focused on whether the employer had taken measures to stop the harassment after having been informed of harassment experienced by the employee that constituted a health hazard.

In almost three out of four cases, the person who submitted the enforcement request had experienced harassment by a supervisor or another employer's representative. In around one in ten cases, the perceived harasser was a colleague, and in a few individual cases a person from outside the workplace.

In more than 30% of cases, the employer had not complied with its obligations under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Most of the faults concerned either the employer not having investigated the events at all or the employer's measures to stop the harassment having been insufficient. In more than a quarter of the cases, the conclusion was that the employer had investigated the harassment with a delay or incompletely, or that the employer had not taken any action to eliminate the harassment. (Fig. 4)

Shortcomings in employers' actions related to harassment

The employer had neglected its obligations in more than 30% of the inspections

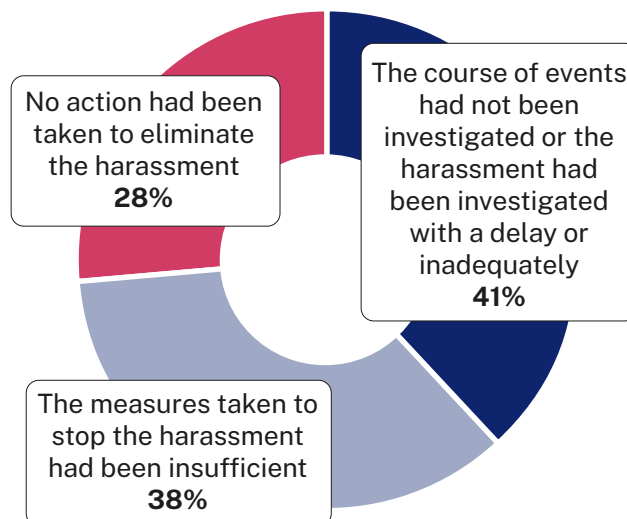


Figure 4. Shortcomings observed in inspections in 2025 in how employers had acted to identify and eliminate harassment.

Other faults were also often observed during enforcement due to harassment. For example, employees had not been provided with adequate advice and guidance on how to report harassment and what the employees' obligation to behave appropriately at work meant. Written advice on these issues were given.

Defects concerning the competence of supervisors were also observed in many cases. Supervisors had not been provided with sufficient orientation to dealing with harassment, for example. In some cases, discrimination at work or harmful work-related strain was also covered in connection with the processing of a case of harassment.

In around 65% of the inspections, no defects regarding the employer's actions or the workplace conditions were observed from the perspective of harassment as defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Typically, the inspector concluded on the basis of the information provided by the employer that the issue did not constitute harassment within the meaning of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. In some cases, the employee was of the opinion that the employer's justified supervisory actions had been inappropriate. In some cases, there were isolated or minor conflicts at the workplace.

Work-related strain

In 2025, 42 inspections were carried out on employers' obligations involving employees' harmful work-related strain. These inspections focused on the employer's compliance with its obligation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to investigate workload factors and to avoid and reduce the risk to employees' health after having been informed of harmful work-related strain. In just over half of the inspections, harassment experienced by the employee was covered in addition to work-related strain. In individual cases, discrimination experienced by the employee was also covered alongside harmful work-related strain.

In almost half of the cases, the employer had not complied with its statutory obligations. Most of the shortcomings concerned the employer's failure to investigate the causes of the harmful work-related strain or investigating them with a delay or inadequately. Many shortcomings due to insufficient measures by the employer to reduce or avoid strain were also observed. In a few cases, the employer had not taken any action at all to reduce the strain experienced by the employee. (Fig. 5)

There were also defects regarding employers' general obligations to proactively ensure that psychosocial workload factors do not cause harmful work-related strain. Employers were obligated to, among other measures, identify and assess the psychosocial workload factors, continuously supervise the work environment, ensure that the responsibilities of supervisors were met and ensure proper orientation.

There were also defects concerning statutory occupational healthcare. For example, employers were obliged to cooperate with the occupational healthcare provider to prevent employees from becoming overburdened or to investigate employees' health and ability to work. In addition,

Shortcomings in employers' actions related to work-related strain

The employer had neglected its obligations in nearly 50% of the inspections

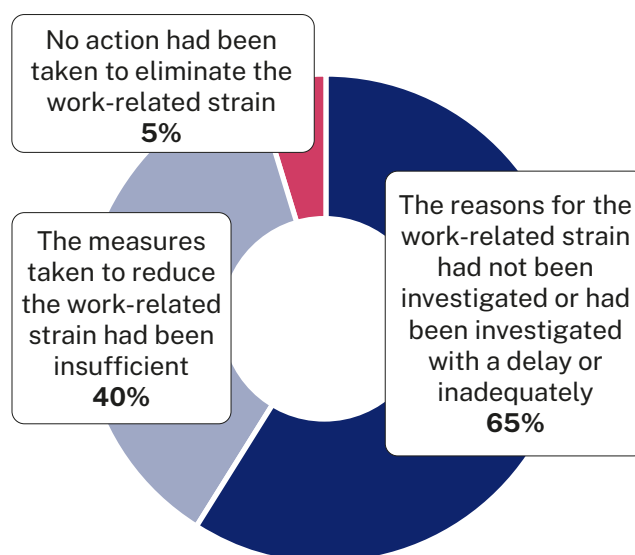


Figure 5. Shortcomings observed in inspections in 2025 in how employers had acted to identify and reduce work-related strain.

employers were obliged to supervise and promote coping at work with the help of occupational healthcare professionals and experts.

In more than 50% of cases, no defects concerning the employer's actions from the perspective of the Occupational Safety and Health Act were observed. In most of these cases, it was concluded that the employer had taken sufficient action after having been informed of the employee's work-related strain. In a few cases, the issue was still being processed at the workplace.

4. Reports to the police

Under the Act on Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement and Cooperation on Occupational Safety and Health at Workplaces, the OSH authority is obliged to submit a report to the police if there is probable cause to suspect an occupational safety and health offence. However, the duty to report is partially discretionary in that filing a report is not mandatory if the act is of minor significance considering the circumstances and the public interest does not require reporting.

When considering filing a report due to harassment, the OSH authority will assess whether the harassment or other inappropriate treatment of an employee has been such that it may, based on an objective assessment, have been a risk or hazard to the employee's health. Secondly, it will be assessed whether the employer has been informed of the issue and whether all available measures have been subsequently taken to stop the harassment. If the employer itself was the harasser, it will be assessed whether the acts of harassment were such that the employer should have understood, on the basis of its position, that its actions posed a health hazard.

When considering filing a report about harmful work-related strain, the OSH authority will consider whether the employee has been proven to have been subjected to work-related strain that poses a health hazard and whether the employer has been informed of this. It will also be assessed whether the employer has taken all available measures to identify the workload factors and eliminate or reduce the risk caused by them. Special attention will be paid to the adequacy of the employer's measures and to whether the faults that gave rise to the workload factors have been eliminated or reduced as a result of the employer's actions.

In 2025, the OSH authority filed nine reports with the police concerning suspected occupational safety and health offences: three involving harassment and six involving work-related strain.

In addition, the police and the prosecutor requested approximately twenty statements or opinions from the OSH authority regarding cases of harassment and a few statements or opinions regarding work-related strain.

An employer or a representative of an employer who intentionally or through negligence violates the occupational safety and health regulations or causes a defect or fault that is contrary to the occupational safety and health regulations or allows a situation contrary to the occupational safety and health regulations to continue, by neglecting to supervise compliance with the occupational safety and health regulations in work under his or her direction or by failing to ensure the financial, organisational or other prerequisites for occupational safety and health measures shall be sentenced for an occupational safety and health offence to a fine or to imprisonment for at most one year.

Criminal Code, chapter 47, section 1

The OSH authority participates in the investigation of employment offences and related legal proceedings under the Act on Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement and Cooperation on Occupational Safety and Health at Workplaces. The prosecutor must reserve the OSH authority an opportunity to submit a statement before deciding whether to bring charges. When a matter is heard orally in court, the OSH authority has the right to be present and the right to speak.

The OSH authority publishes information about the most important decisions concerning employment offences. You can subscribe to these press releases on the STT press release service at sttinfo.fi. The press releases are also published on the OSH Administration's website [Tyosuojelu.fi](https://tyosuojelu.fi) under [Current Issues](#).

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