The Work Ability Index: Applications and challenges

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What is the Work Ability Index?

- provides a measure of health status
- uses factors such as the number of medical conditions
- does not go into the medical detail of conditions
- measures the worker’s own perception of his or her work ability
- it is a qualitative measure

- developed by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Safety and Health Work Ability Index survey

• Questionnaire sent to approximately 236 employees (≈ 16 on leave)
• 103 replied (47% response rate)
• 60 male (42%)
• 43 female (57%)
• 96 valid responses
• 56 anonymous responses
• 40 people requested feedback on their score
• Average age 47
• Age range 20 - 70
Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best

7 Items

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Work ability in relation to lifetime best

![Bar chart showing work ability ratings and percentage of respondents. The chart indicates that the highest rating (10) is the most commonly reported, with about 15% of respondents. Ratings of 9 and 8 also have significant representation, with 20% and 25% of respondents, respectively. Lower ratings (6, 5, and 4) have much lower representation, with 0%, 2%, and 1% of respondents, respectively.](image-url)
Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
- Work ability in relation to the demands of the job

7 Items
Work ability in relation to job

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Moderate
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

% of respondents

- Physical
- Mental

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Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
- Work ability in relation to the demands of the job
- Number of current diseases diagnosed by physician

7 Items

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
- Work ability in relation to the demands of the job
- Number of current diseases diagnosed by physician
- Estimated work impairment due to diseases

7 Items
Work impairment due to injury or disease

- Slows me down
- Some difficulty
- No hindrance
- No disease or injury

% of respondents

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Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

• Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
• Work ability in relation to the demands of the job
• Number of current diseases diagnosed by physician
• Estimated work impairment due to diseases
• Sick leave during the past year (12 months)

7 Items

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Sick leave last 12 months

- > 3 months
- 1 - 3 months
- 2 - 4 weeks
- Less than 2 weeks
- None

% of respondents
Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
- Work ability in relation to the demands of the job
- Number of current diseases diagnosed by physician
- Estimated work impairment due to diseases
- Sick leave during the past year (12 months)
- Own prognosis of work ability two years from now
- Personal resources

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Own prognosis two years from now

- >90% believe they will be able to do their current job
Own prognosis two years from now

- >90% believe they will be able to do their current job

Personal resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoy daily activities</th>
<th>&gt;80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active and alert</td>
<td>&gt;90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic about future</td>
<td>&gt;70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work Ability Index
Administered as a questionnaire

- Current work ability compared with the lifetime best
- Work ability in relation to the demands of the job
- Number of current diseases diagnosed by physician
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- Sick leave during the past year (12 months)
- Own prognosis of work ability two years from now
- Personal resources

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
## Scoring of the Questionnaire (range 7-49 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Work ability</th>
<th>Objective of measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-27</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Restore work ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-36</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Improve work ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-43</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Support work ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-49</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Maintain work ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lea Katajarinne, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Safety and Health Work Ability Results

Gender and overall distribution of completed surveys:

- **Poor**
  - Male: [Value]
  - Female: [Value]
  - Overall: [Value]

- **Moderate**
  - Male: [Value]
  - Female: [Value]
  - Overall: [Value]

- **Good**
  - Male: [Value]
  - Female: [Value]
  - Overall: [Value]

- **Excellent**
  - Male: [Value]
  - Female: [Value]
  - Overall: [Value]
Safety and Health Work Ability Results

Age distribution of completed surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age not specified</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Safety and Health Work Ability Results

Female results by age group

- 20-29 (18%)
- 30-39 (21%)
- 40-49 (28%)
- 50-59 (23%)
- 60-69 (8%)
- Age not specified (3%)

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Safety and Health Work Ability Results

Male results by age group

- 20-29 (5%)
- 30-39 (7%)
- 40-49 (28%)
- 50-59 (35%)
- 60-69 (18%)
- Age not specified (7%)

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Workability and mining
Effective workability outcomes require adjustment of work environment.

- Health functional Capacities
- Adjustment of physical work environment
- Adjustment of psychosocial work environment
- Professional competence

GOOD WORK ABILITY, HEALTH AND COMPETENCE

GOOD PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF WORK
GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING
GOOD RETIREMENT, MEANINGFUL, SUCCESSFUL, AND PRODUCTIVE "THIRD AGE"

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

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Management of effective workability involves multiple strategies.
Problems/possibilities

Individual

- Functional capacity
- Health
- Competence
- Work motivation
- Work ability
- Work exhaustion
- Unemployment

Means/Solutions

Enterprise

- Co-operation between age-groups
- Age ergonomics
- Work-rest schedules
- Flexible working times
“It is also important to note that Finland has a long tradition of institutions, expertise and networks on work health and safety”
Goal: all can enjoy their sunset years

Questions? Gerard Tiernan 07 3234 0723 or Trudy Tilbury 07 4760 7412