

Employers' and employees' opinions of the Swedish Work Environment Authority's inspection activities

Questionnaire survey by the Swedish Work Environment Authority in 2007 – results in brief

Introduction

As part of its endeavour to maintain and improve the quality of inspection activities everywhere in Sweden, the Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA) has investigated perceptions of the activities on the part of employers and employees.

The survey is based on inspections carried out between January and March 2007 and leading to inspection notices with stipulations. Persons taking part in the inspections and personally meeting SWEA inspectors were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire containing about ten questions and were given the opportunity of communicating freely worded viewpoints.

999 invitations to employer and employee representatives resulted in 855 replies, giving a response rate of 86%. Inspection activities were assessed in four respects:

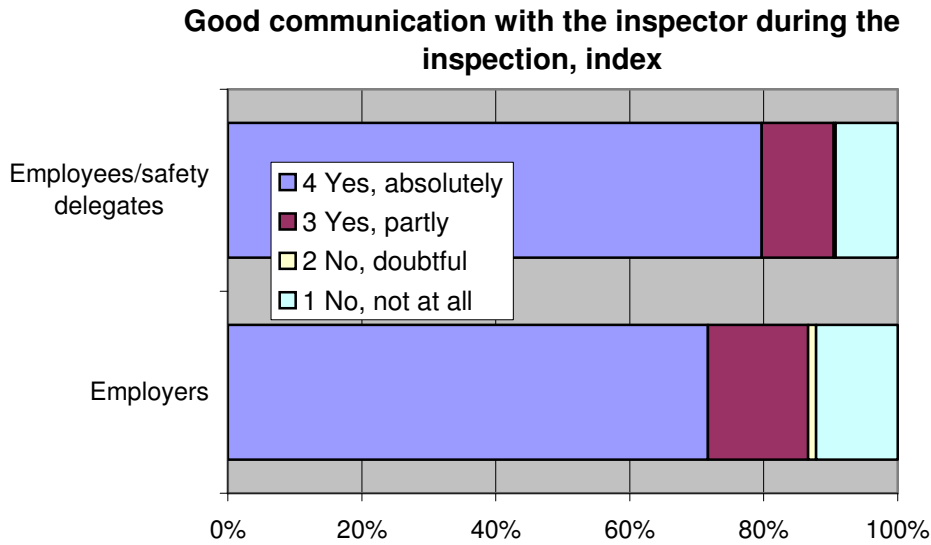
- The adequacy of communication with the inspector in the course of the inspection.
- Whether inspection notices are sufficiently intelligible and clear.
- Whether stipulations in inspection notices touch on important work environment problems.
- Whether the work environment improves when stipulations from the Swedish Work Environment Authority have been complied with.

75% of the respondents are completely satisfied with communication with the inspectors and 69% consider the inspection notices to be perfectly intelligible and clear. 40% are wholly convinced that the stipulations in the inspection notices touch on important work environment problems, and 38% that the measures taken as a result of stipulations by SWEA lead to an actual improvement in the work environment.

Communication with the inspector during the inspection

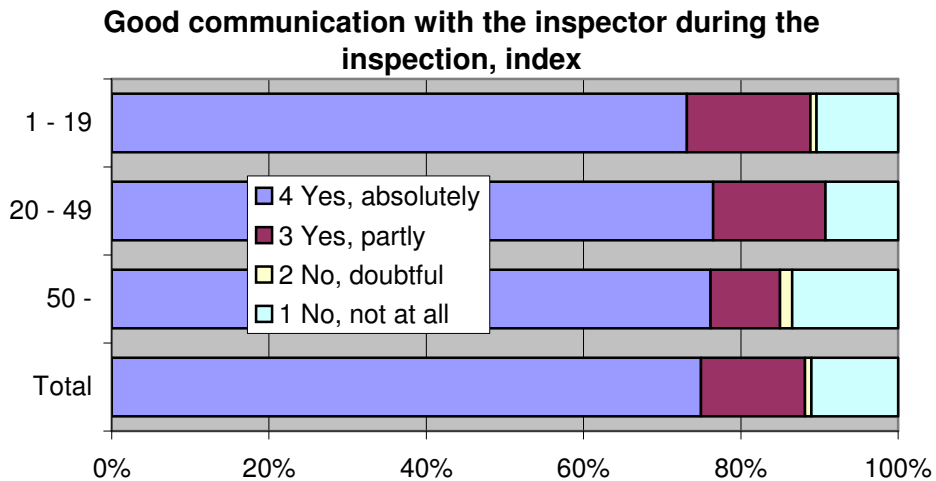
Much depends on the ability of the work environment inspector to listen and to clearly express her or his viewpoints. Some questions concerned communication with the work environment inspector during the inspection – whether the inspector had clearly explained the purpose of the inspection, whether the inspector was easy to understand and talk to, listened to practical arguments and reasons, clearly explained deficiencies found in the workplace and whether the inspector was well versed in the work environment issues which the inspection was addressing.

Diagram 1. Communication during inspection – employees and employers



80% of the employee representatives' indexed replies say that they are wholly satisfied with their communication with the inspector during the inspection. The corresponding figure for employers is 72%. Thus about 20% of employees and 28% of employers are not wholly satisfied with their communication with the inspector during the inspection. Of these, just over 9 percentage units of the employees and over 12 percentage units of the employers are seen to be very dissatisfied with their communication with the inspector during the inspection.

Diagram 2: Communication during inspection – no. employees



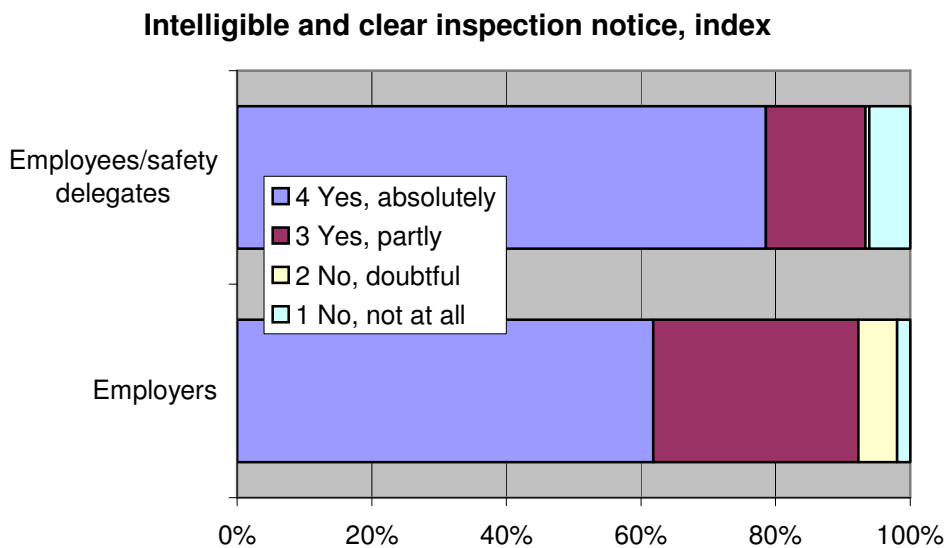
Size of workplace, in terms of the number of employees, does not appear to greatly influence assessment of the inspectors' communication during the inspection. The proportion of respondents not wholly satisfied is between 24% and 26% in all three size categories. The proportion of these who are wholly dissatisfied is between 9 and 13 percentage units.

Intelligibility and clarity of the inspection notice

After the inspection the workplace received a written inspection notice in which the Swedish Work Environment Authority stipulated work environment improvements. The persons replying to the questionnaire were asked whether the content of the inspection notice was easy to understand, whether the stipulations made in the

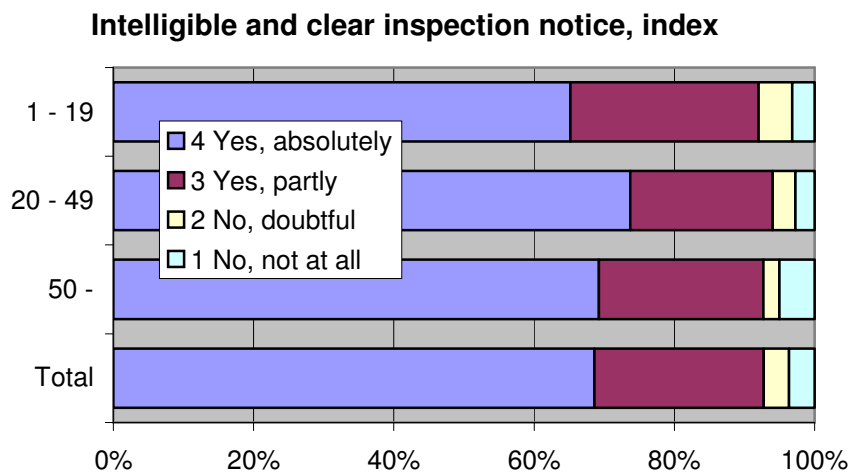
inspection notice were clear and whether deficiencies remarked on in the inspection agreed with those referred to in the inspection notice.

Diagram 3: Intelligible and clear inspection notice – employers/employees



The employee representatives' index shows 79% of the respondents finding inspection notices perfectly intelligible and clear, as against 62% of the employer representatives. Thus 21% of the employees and 38% of the employers apparently see room for improvement in the intelligibility and clarity of inspection notices. Of these, the indexing shows about 6 percentage units of the employees and just under 2 percentage units of the employers not considering inspection notices at all intelligible and clear.

Diagram 4: Intelligible and clear inspection notice – no. employees

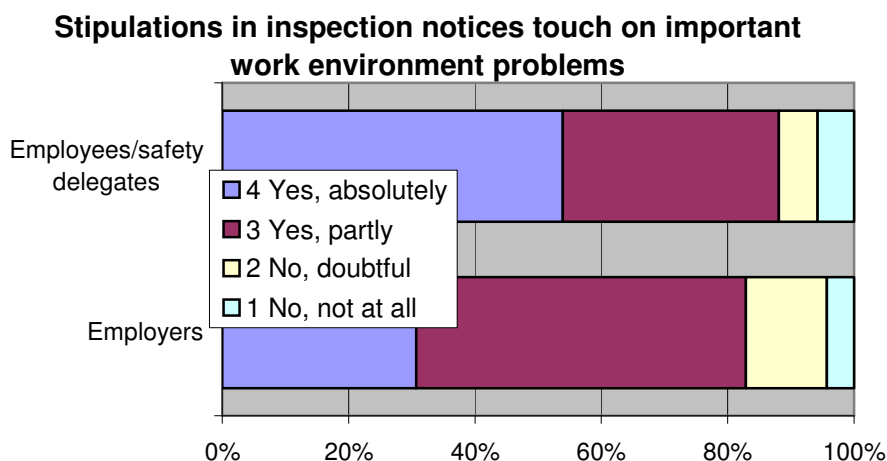


The index for inspection notices shows relatively slight differences between differently sized workplaces. Between 26% and 35% of the respondents at differently sized workplaces appear to see room for improvement of inspection notices. Of these, the respondents finding inspection notices not at all intelligible and clear is between 3 and 5 percentage units.

Whether the stipulations in inspection notices touch on important work environment problems

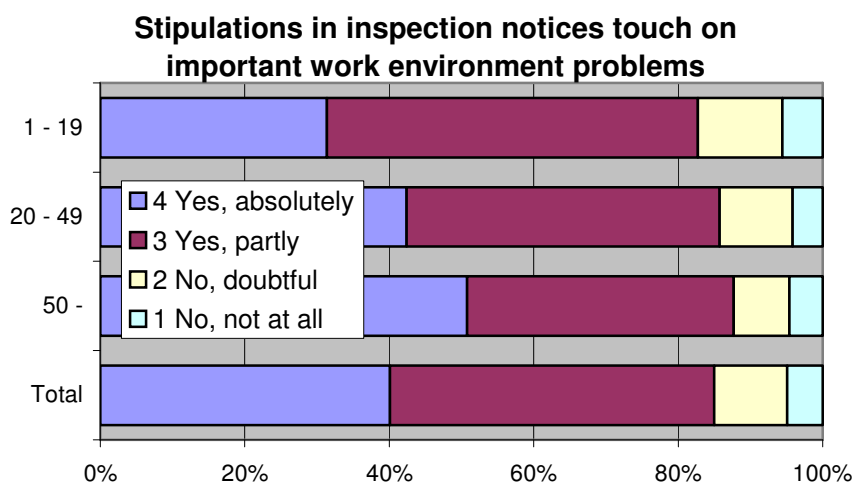
In one question the respondents were asked to assess whether the stipulations in the inspection notice touched on important problems of the workplace's work environment.

Diagram 5: Stipulations in inspection notices touch on important work environment problems – employers/employees



31% of the employer representatives and 54% of the employee representatives find that the inspection notice touches on important work environment problems. Here, then, 69% and 46% respectively apparently see room for improvements of some kind. Of these, upwards of 4 percentage units of the employers and just under 6 percentage units of the employees felt that the inspection notice did not touch on relevant problems of the work environment at all.

Diagram 6: Stipulations in inspection notices touch on important work environment problems – no. employees

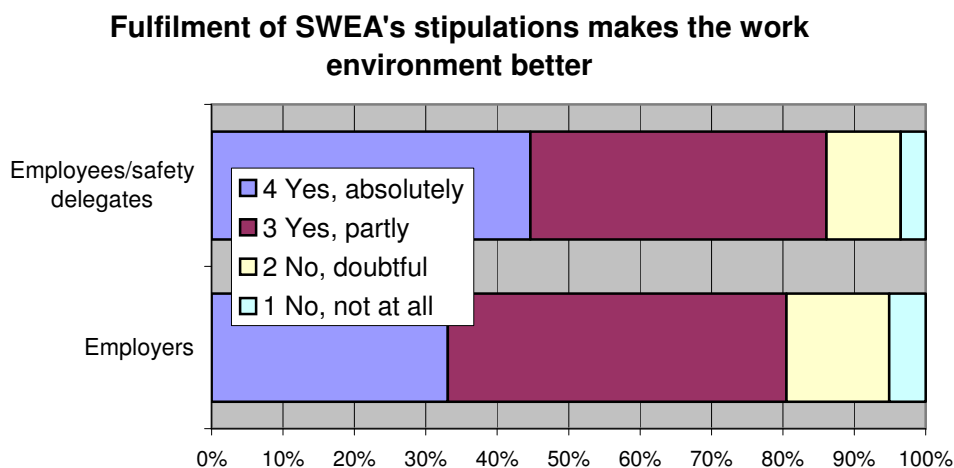


On this point, differences are visible between workplaces of different sizes. The greater the number of employees, the greater the conviction that the stipulations in inspection notices are wholly concerned with important work environment problems. The proportion of fully convinced respondents rises from 32% to 52%. The proportion feeling that the stipulations of inspection notices have absolutely nothing to do with important work environment problems varies between 4% and 6%.

Whether the Swedish Work Environment Authority's stipulations lead to a better work environment

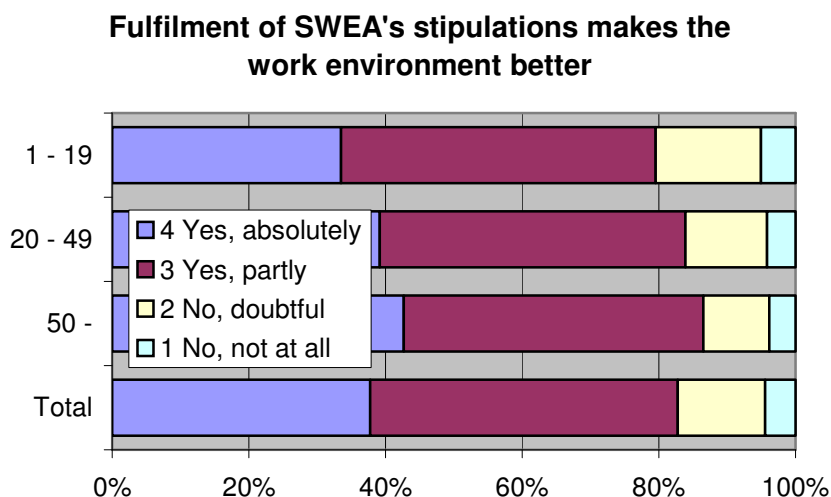
The respondents were asked to judge whether the measures which will be taken, or have been taken, following stipulations by the Swedish Work Environment Authority will lead to a better work environment in the workplace.

Diagram 7: SWEA's stipulations lead to a better work environment – employers/employees



More than half the employee representatives and two-thirds of the employer representatives see scope for improvement concerning the stipulations made by SWEA. At the same time, the proportion not finding that SWEA's stipulations lead to a better work environment at all is 4% and 5% respectively.

Diagram 8: SWEA's stipulations lead to a better work environment – no. employees



On this point there is little difference to be seen between differently sized workplaces. The greater the number of employees, the stronger the conviction that fulfilment of SWEA's stipulations leads to a better work environment. The proportion totally sceptical of the stipulations producing good effects on the work environment varies similarly between 4% and 5%.

Reference

"Arbetsgivares och arbetstagares uppfattning om Arbetsmiljöverkets inspektionsverksamhet", report September 2007, ref. ADVUS 2006/10107 (In Swedish only)