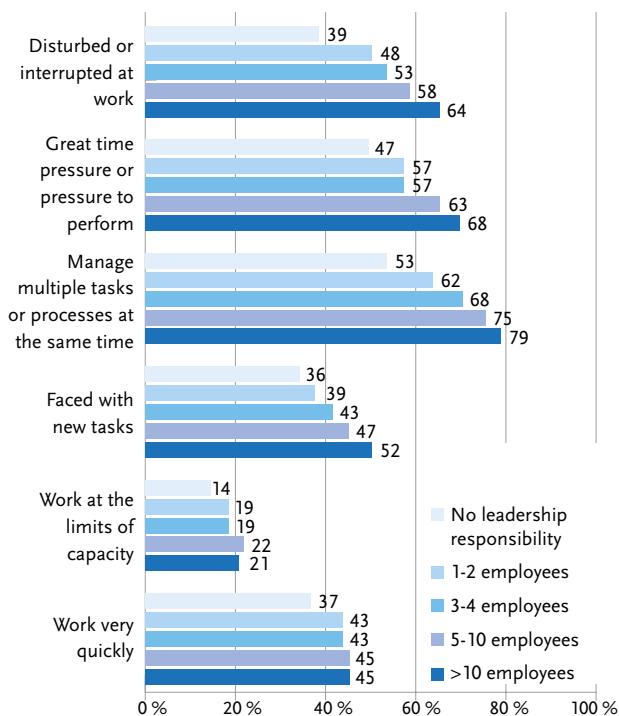


# Higher demands, more resources – Working conditions of leaders

## 22 baua: Facts

Leaders are exposed to high demands at work, but they have many resources at their disposal. The picture is even more nuanced depending on the number of employees managed. For example, those with wide-ranging leadership responsibilities more frequently work under pressure to meet deadlines or performance goals but also have a larger decision latitude than supervisors with less leadership responsibility. Despite the available resources, high demands often lead to psychosomatic symptoms, such as exhaustion or sleep disorders. These are the results of the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2012.

When it comes to health-conscious management, leaders have an important function. Healthy leadership is more likely to emerge if executives themselves find a favourable work and health situation. This was analysed using data from the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2012. The calculations only include employees subject to social insurance requirements.



**Fig. 1** Frequent work demands of employees subject to social insurance requirements with and without leadership responsibility (in %)

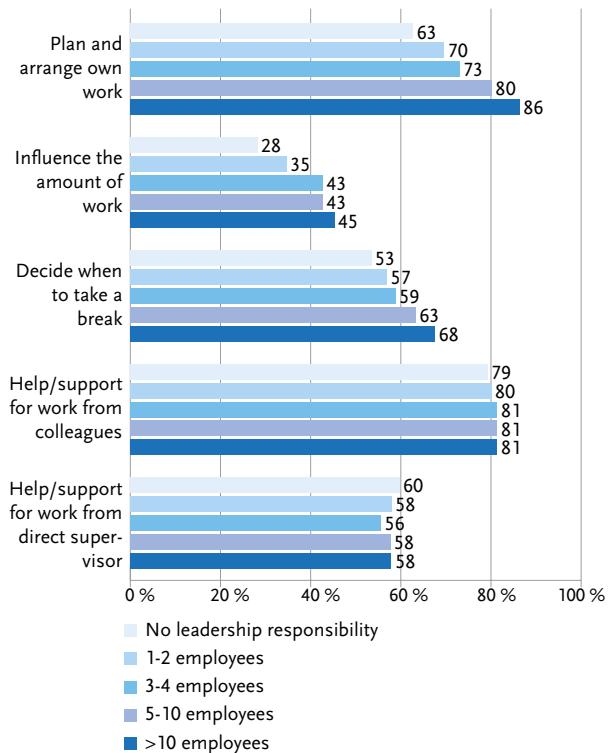
### Demands

Leaders are more likely to face high work demands than employees without leadership responsibility, see Figure 1. They are also more likely to experience mental stress, such as being disrupted and interrupted at work, working under strong pressure to meet deadlines or performance goals, or managing multiple tasks or processes simultaneously. The more leadership responsibility they have, the higher the work demands they face. For example, 48 % of executives managing one to two employees are frequently disturbed and interrupted at work. 64 % of supervisors are affected by this if they manage more than ten employees. Demands that rise with the degree of leadership also include being frequently confronted with new tasks (52 % vs. 39 %), working at the limit of capacity (21 % vs. 19 %), and working very fast (45 % vs. 43 %).

### Resources

Compared to employees without leadership responsibility, leaders have more resources at their disposal, as Figure 2 shows. These resources are important when dealing with high work demands. Leaders have a larger decision latitude, meaning they have more discretion to plan and divide their work independently, more influence on the amount of their work, and more freedom to decide when to take a break. The higher the degree of leadership, the more often these resources are mentioned. 70 % of supervisors managing one to two employees say they are often able to plan and allocate their work independently, compared to 86 % among those who manage more than ten employees. With respect to receiving social support from employees and direct superiors, the numbers are almost

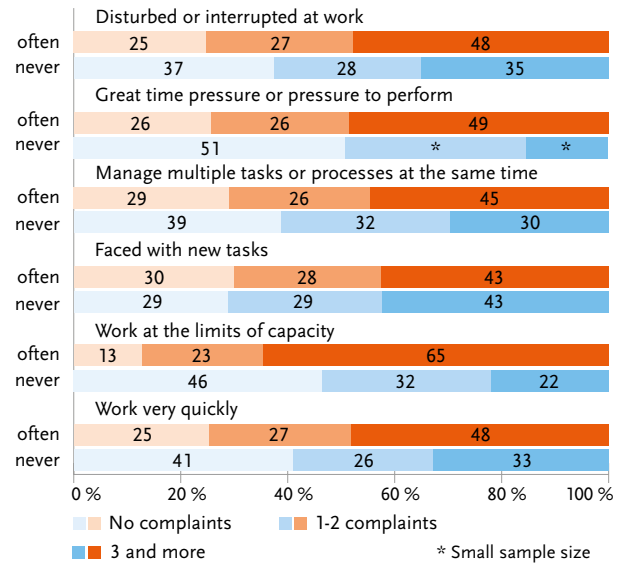
the same for leaders and employees without management responsibility. Even when looking at groups with higher or smaller leadership responsibilities, the differences in support are negligible.



**Fig. 2** Frequent resources of employees subject to social insurance requirements with and without leadership responsibility (in %)

**Health complaints**

Leaders facing higher demands at work are also more likely to have health problems. Figure 3 shows psychosomatic complaints of executives who are frequently or never exposed to selected job demands. These psychosomatic complaints include symptoms such as irritability, exhaustion, fatigue, or sleep disorders. In particular, frequently working at the limit of one’s capacities is associated with more psychosomatic complaints: 65 % of leaders who frequently report this working condition state that they suffer from three or more complaints simultaneously. Of those not exposed to this stress factor, only 22 % report three or more complaints. In addition, almost half of all leaders often working under strong pressure to meet deadlines or performance goals have three or more complaints. The same applies to those who are often disturbed and interrupted at work, or those who have to work very quickly. Executives not exposed to these working conditions generally have fewer psychosomatic complaints.



**Fig. 3** Frequent work demands and psychosomatic complaints of leaders subject to social insurance requirements (in %)

**Conclusion**

Leaders are exposed to higher demands at work than employees without leadership responsibility, but they also have more resources. These resources notwithstanding, however, increased demands often go along with health complaints. This may affect the management behaviour of executives. Unfavourable requirements, little room for action, lack of support, and psychosomatic complaints can produce an unhealthy leadership style. To promote the health of all employees, the following measures should be taken: companies should limit work requirements, enable independent action, and strengthen exchanges among staff.

**Further Information**

- 1 I. Rothe, L. Adolph, B. Beermann, M. Schütte, A. Windel, A. Grewer, U. Lenhardt, J. Michel, B. Thomson, M. Formazin, 2017: Mental Health in the Working World - Determining the current state of scientific evidence. 1. edition. Dortmund: BAuA. Available at: [www.baua.de/dok/8732366](http://www.baua.de/dok/8732366)
- 2 T. Rigotti, T. Holstad, G. Mohr, C. Stempel, E. Hansen, C. Loeb, K. Isaksson, K. Otto, U. Kinnunen und K. Perko, 2014. Rewarding and sustainable health-promoting leadership. Dortmund: BAuA. Available at: [www.baua.de/dok/5670154](http://www.baua.de/dok/5670154)