

# Poor psychosocial work environments may contribute to heart problems

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A psychosocially poor work environment means that employees experience highly demanding requirements but have little ability to control their work or not feel sufficiently appreciated for the contributions they make.

A dissertation at The Sahlgrenska Academy, Gothenburg University, shows that men who have recently suffered a [heart attack](#) or angina and who feel that they have a poor psychosocial work environment see a relationship between their heart disease and their work situation.

"These men often believe that it would take longer for them before they could return to work," says Mia Söderberg, the doctoral candidate who wrote the dissertation.

## Warning signs

Men who do not have heart problems but who experience poor psychosocial work conditions often have warning signs for [coronary artery disease](#), such as [high blood pressure](#) and high cholesterol values. Mia Söderberg can also draw the conclusion that these men more often change jobs, and points out here a difference between women and men.

"We could only see this connection with men, which may depend upon the labor market being segregated by gender and on woman and men generally working within different work categories where the capacity to

influence ones work environment differs", Mia Söderberg says, and continues:

"For women the combination of job-related stress and household work may also have a greater influence on health and various health-related behavior than it has with men."

## **New focus on psychosocial factors**

The [labor market](#) is no longer dominated by industry, but work instead deals more and more with knowledge processes and contact with other people.

"In [work](#)-related illness, we have also seen a shift from a focus on physical risk factors to a greater need to examine [psychosocial factors](#)," Mia Söderberg says.

The dissertation is based upon answers from 509 persons in Western Götaland with acute coronary symptoms, which encompasses all conditions in which arterial calcification has suddenly caused the heart not to have enough blood. 2492 randomly chosen residents of Greater Gothenburg and 75,236 male Swedish construction workers also answered surveys.

**More information:** [Link](#) to the dissertation Psychosocial work conditions - cardiovascular disease, perceptions and reactive behavior.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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