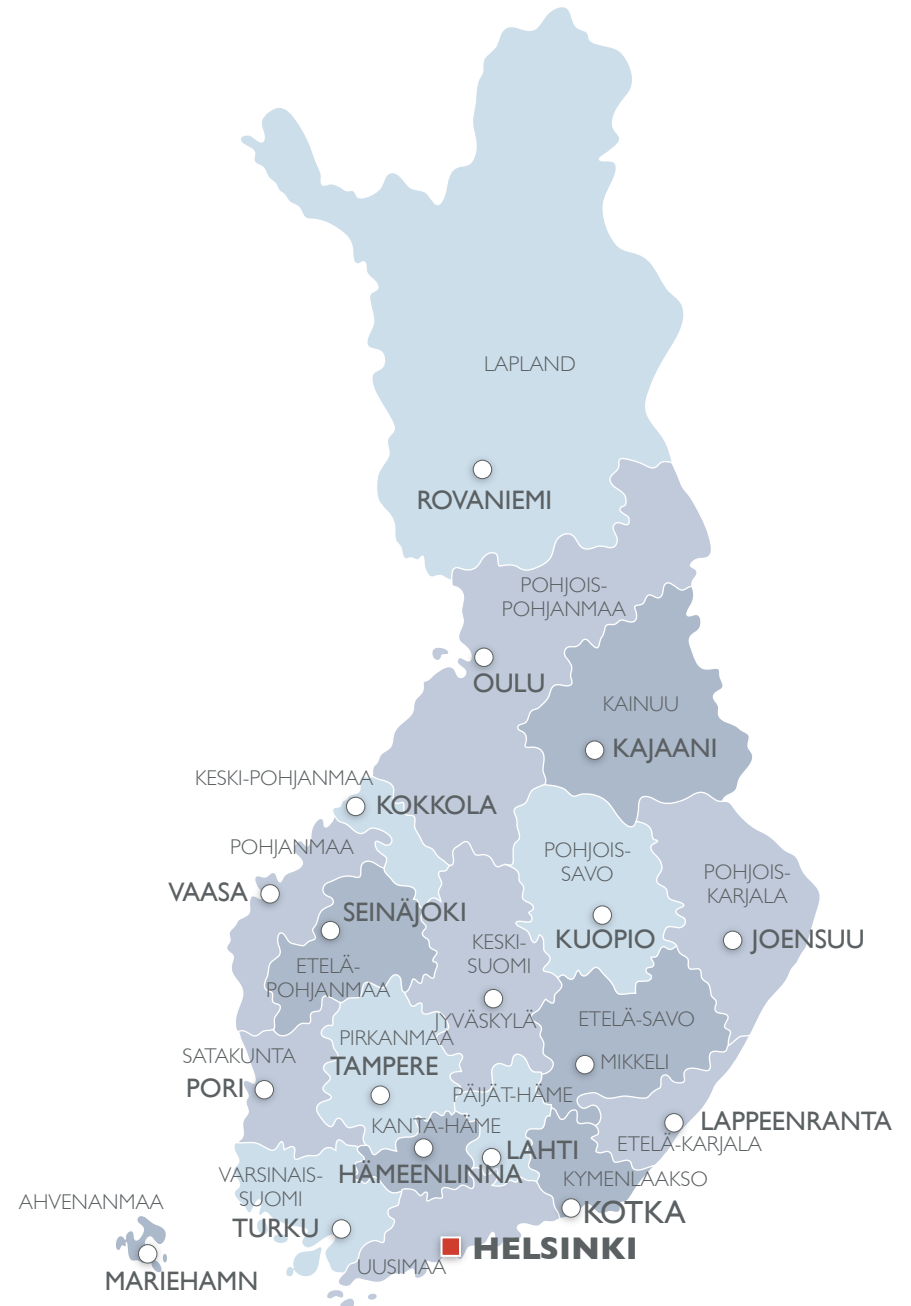
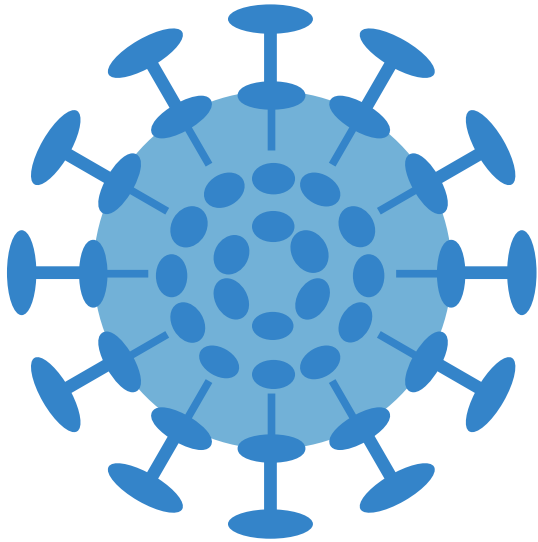


# National Remote Work Survey

## Remote Work During The Corona Crisis



# Reading Guide

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## Disclaimer

This document is created to share the results of a national remote work survey among public sector employees in Finland during the corona crisis. We do not report on a representative sample of the Finnish workforce and interpretations of the data should be made with caution. For further inquiry please consult with the researchers. This is a descriptive report of the first survey in a series of three surveys in total. We wish to improve our understanding of the impact of the corona crisis on employees' work experiences.



## Thank you

We wish to thank the ministries and unions involved in the study for their commitment. We are also incredibly appreciative of all those respondents who took the time and made the effort to share their experiences and insights.



## Research group

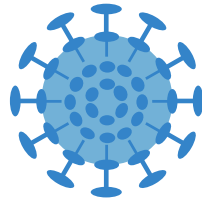
This document is created by a consortium of researchers from LUT University, University of Jyväskylä, Tampere University, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Aalto University, and the University of Eastern Finland.



# Study context, aims, and objectives

## Context

The corona-crisis (COVID-19) and the measures to contain the virus have had far-reaching consequences on the daily lives of millions of people around the world. What we do not know yet is how employees experience their changing work environment and the extent to which they are able to adjust to these circumstances.



## Approach

The study was conducted between March 26 and April 15, 2020. We specifically targeted public service employees. We collaborated with unions to solicit responses from their members and with ministries to reach out to government employees.



## Aims

A consortium of Finnish universities studies the impact of the corona-crisis on employees' work experiences. The aim is to develop a better understanding of how employees cope with the disruption of work processes during the crisis. This will help legislators and organisations to develop policies and interventions to facilitate remote work effectiveness.



## The study

The study stands to unveil how employees adjust to the corona-crisis. We seek to answer questions related to the challenges and opportunities employees experience during the crisis, as well as examine individual and contextual differences that shape these experiences. The survey was available in English and Finnish.

# Highlights

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Beyond the societal and economic impact, the corona-crisis has directly and abruptly changed the way many people work. This report describes the impact of the corona-crisis on employees' work perceptions and experiences based on a survey of 5452 mostly public sector employees in Finland. Note that data presented here is not based on a representative sample of Finnish employees. We specifically targeted public sector employees and address questions related remote work experiences, perceived disruption, and the adjustment of employees during this crisis.

## Highlights

- About 97% of the employees have started to, or increased the frequency of, remote work during the corona-crisis.
- Most employees (65%) are satisfied with remote work. They report satisfaction with productivity (54%) and ability to balance work and personal life (42%).
- Approximately 66% of the employees indicates their remote work location is less noisy and less distracting than the office location.
- Most employees reported being happy (81%) and able to concentrate on work (72%) to a similar extent, or even more than before the crisis.
- However, 74% also indicates feeling separated from colleagues and 54% feels isolated.



## Context

We first provide some study context by providing some broad demographics and respondents' reports of their current (remote) work environment



## Disruption and adaptation

We report on the extent to which various aspects of work have been disrupted and asked respondents how they adjusted to the new work reality



## Technology use and Communication

Remote work, social distancing, and uncertainty during the crisis requires adequate communication. We report on communication technology use and information provision



## Strain and productivity

Finally, we look into the implications of work disruption for perceived psychological strain and productivity



## The near future

Please reach out to the research team for further information on group differences, analytical models, and scientific work related to remote work and technology use, during and after the corona-crisis.

# Demographics

5450

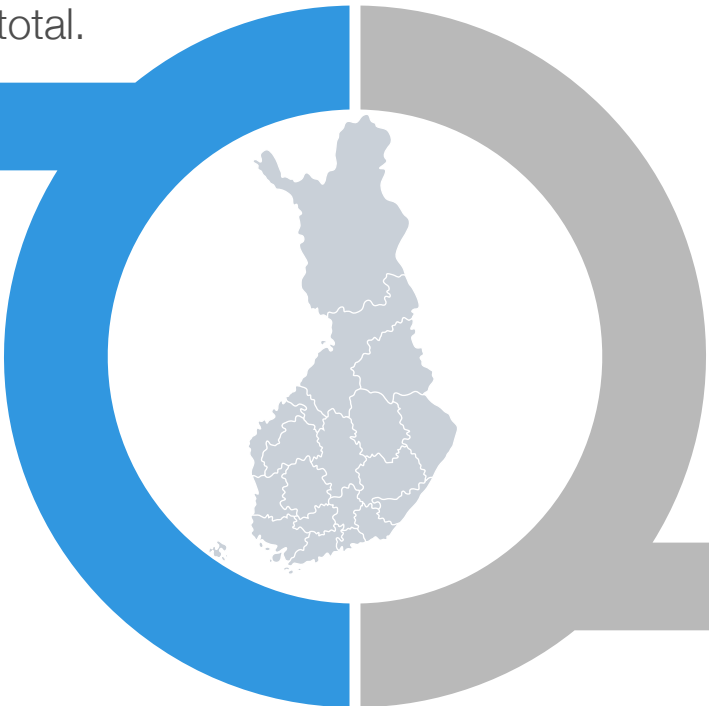
Respondents in total.

3155

Government employees participated, of which 27% from the ministry of finance, 24% from the ministry of justice, 11% from the ministry of agriculture and forestry.

60%

Of the respondents are employed by the state, or public utility services. About 25% work for private (commercial) enterprises. Others were employed by semi-governmental or non-profit organizations (9%).



## Age and Gender

The average age of the respondent is 45. About 68% of the respondents are female.



## Households

About 40% of the respondents has children under the age of 18 living at home. The majority of households are comprised of one or two people (59%)



## Employment

About 14% of the respondents holds a managerial position. The average organizational tenure is 11 years. Most employees work full time reporting an average work week of 38.5 hours

# Remote Work Environment

## Busy social context

28% are alone while working remotely. 37% has someone else present, and 34% work while multiple people are present.

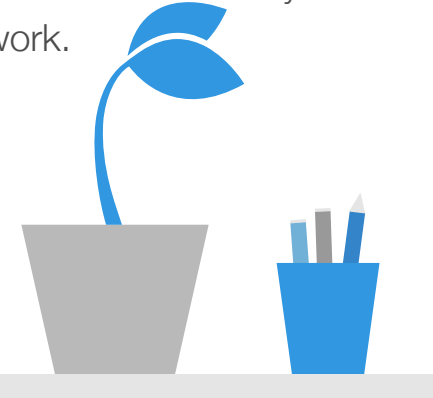
## Little earlier experience:

70% of the respondents normally do not work remotely or a maximum of one day per week. During the corona-crisis 76% of the respondents works from home five days per week.



## Good workspaces:

67% of the respondents has a separate work station or room at home where they can work.



## Less distractions

69% disagrees with the statement that it is easy to get distracted in their remote work location, while 26% disagrees with the same statement about the office location.



## Flexible tasks

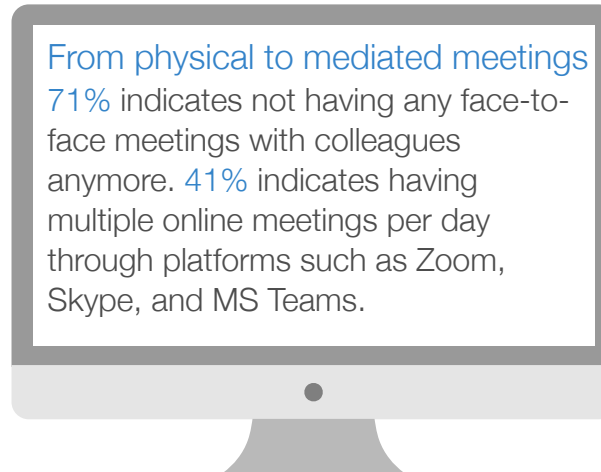
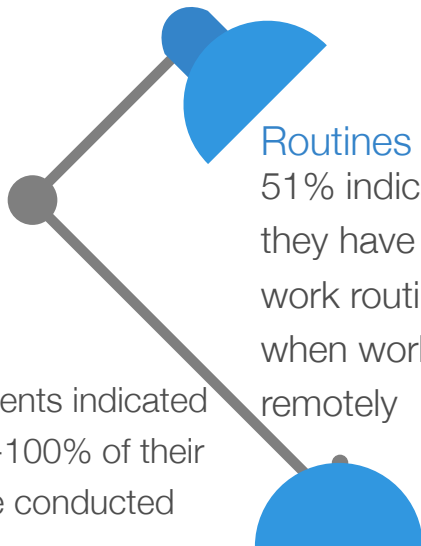
60% of the respondents indicated that as much as 81-100% of their work tasks could be conducted remotely

## Routines

51% indicated they have strict work routines when working remotely

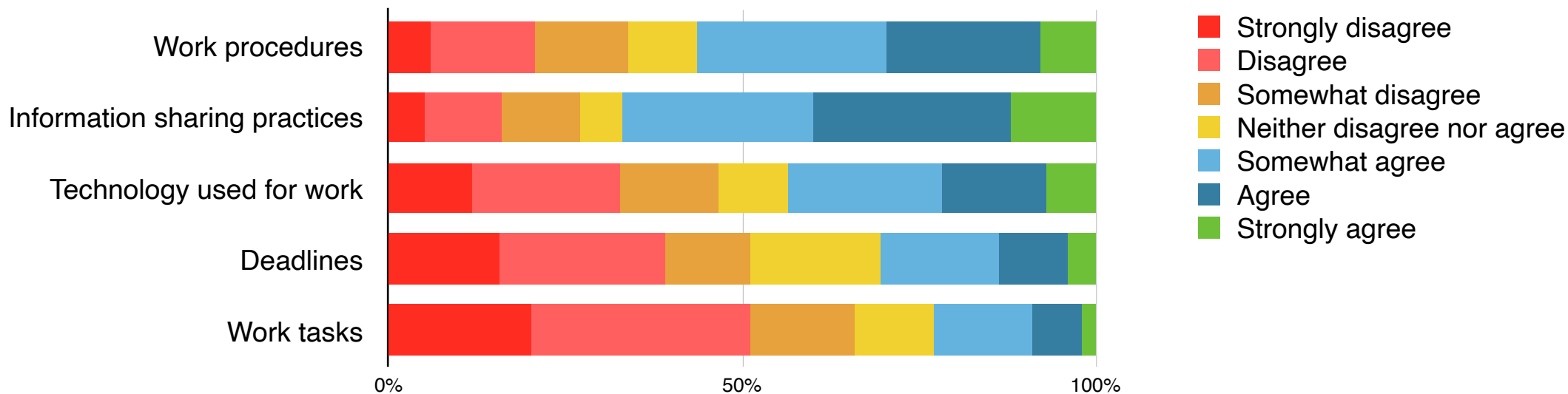
## From physical to mediated meetings

71% indicates not having any face-to-face meetings with colleagues anymore. 41% indicates having multiple online meetings per day through platforms such as Zoom, Skype, and MS Teams.



# Effects of the corona crisis on work practices

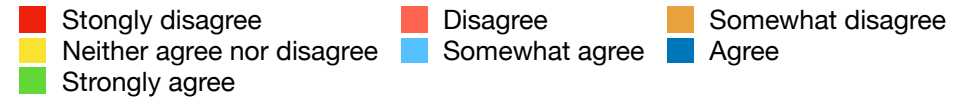
Respondents indicated the extent to which the following aspects of their work have changed as a result of the corona crisis.



The figure above demonstrates that especially information sharing mechanisms and work procedures have changed during the pandemic. In contrast, the work tasks and deadlines are less affected, suggesting a relatively small impact on the nature of work. Based on a preliminary comparison, employees working in non-governmental organizations and private enterprises report bigger disruptions in work than government employees.



# Adjustment to remote work



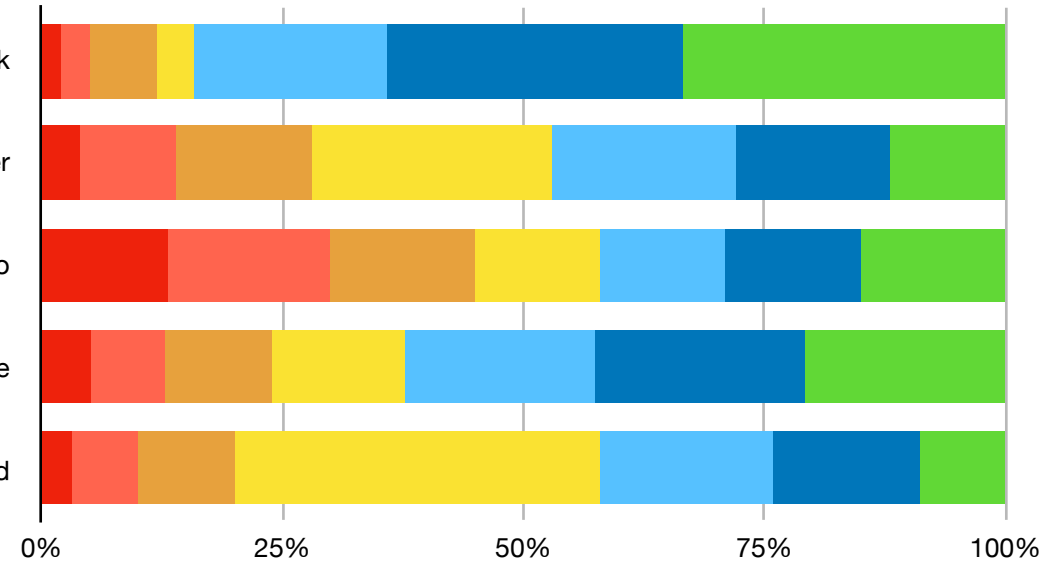
I am satisfied with remote work

Remote work allows me to perform better

If I were given the choice to return to the traditional office environment, I would be unlikely to do so

Since I started working remotely, I have been able to balance my job and personal life

Since I started working remotely, my productivity increased



01

## Experience

Respondents who regularly work remotely report higher levels of satisfaction, productivity, and balance.

02

## Work setting

The work setting is an important factor as respondents with a designated work station or separate room at home, report higher scores on remote work effectiveness.

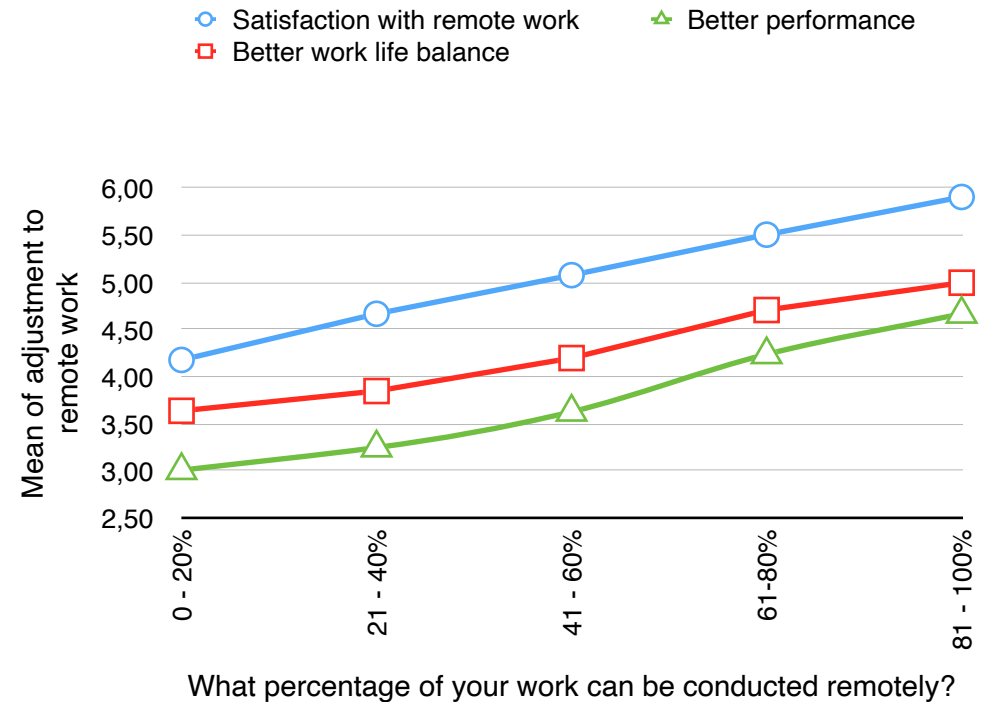
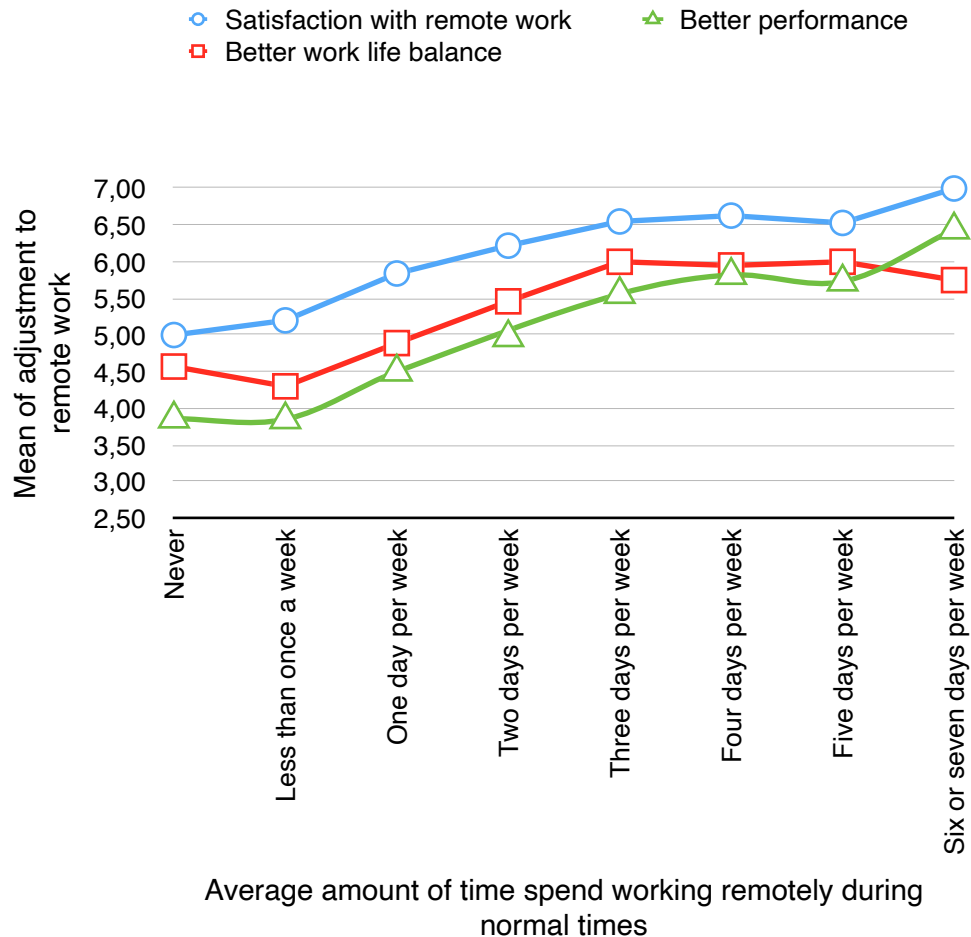
03

## Job fit

The ability of workers to adjust is largely influenced by the extent to which job tasks can be conducted remotely. Workers that report lower percentages of tasks that could be conducted remotely, are less satisfied and report lower productivity.

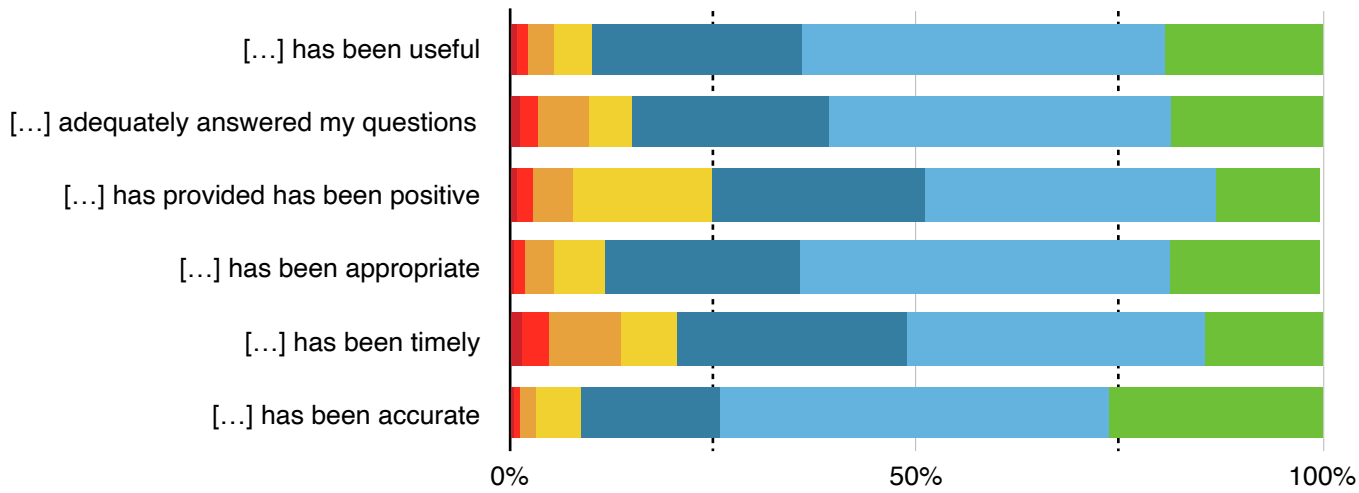
# Adjustment = Experience + Opportunity

The graphs below demonstrate the employees who have more experience with remote work are more satisfied with their work conditions during the corona crisis. They also indicate a better work life balance and higher performance than employees with less experience. In addition, the graph on the right suggests that the percentage of work that can be conducted remotely has a strong influence on perceived satisfaction, work life balance, and performance.



# Communication Quality

The communication my organization provided:



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither disagree nor agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

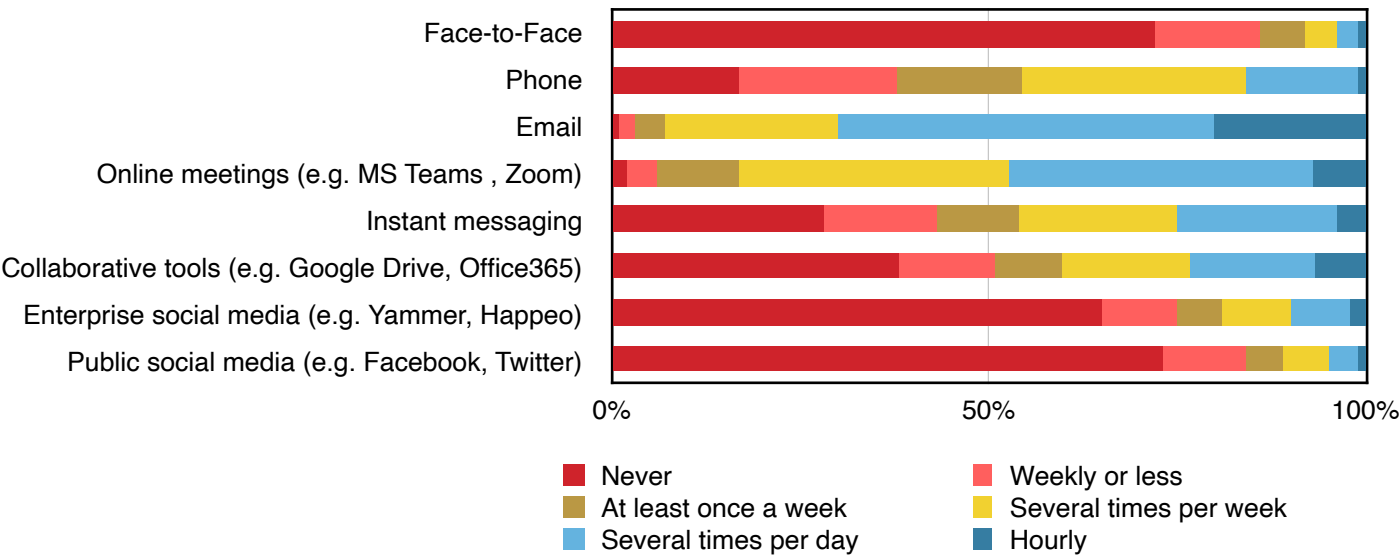


The figure shows that respondents report high levels of agreement with statements about the quality of the communication of their organizations about the changes related to the corona crisis.

**Employees who report higher levels of communication quality also report lower levels of disruption and higher ability to adjust.**

# Communication technology use during the corona crisis

How do employees communicate with their colleagues during the corona crisis?

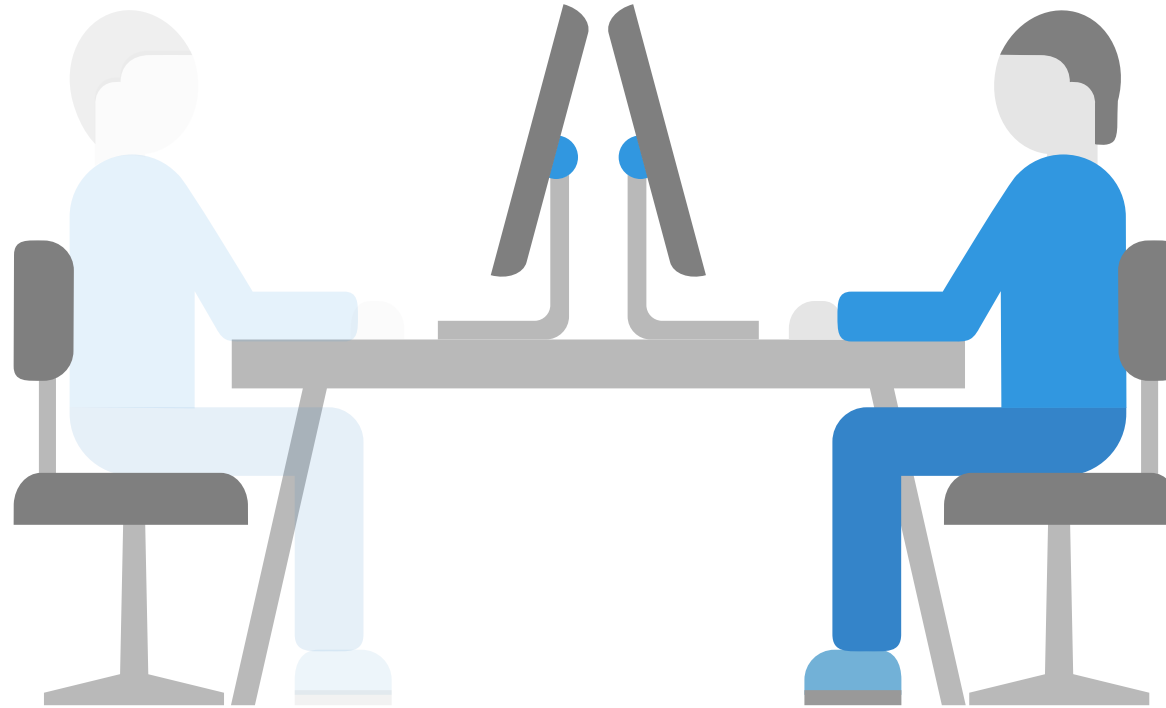


## EMAIL AND ONLINE MEETINGS

41% of the respondents indicates having multiple online meetings through platforms such as Skype and MS Teams and zoom each day. Email is by far the most frequently used to communicate with colleagues.



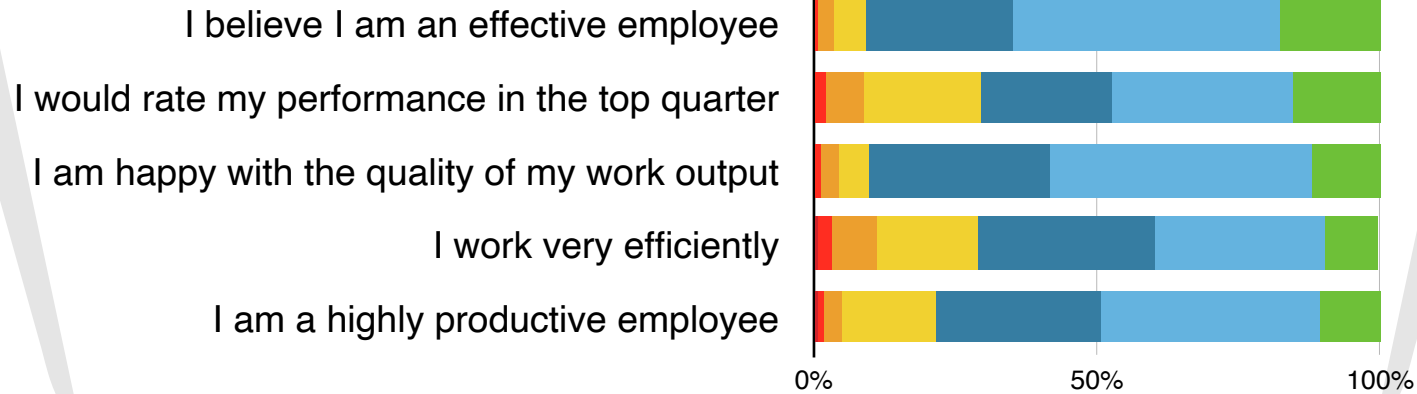
Interestingly, even these times of social distancing, enterprise social media and public social media are hardly used to stay in touch with coworkers. About 65% of the respondents indicated that they have not yet used enterprise social media to communicate with colleagues during the corona crisis. For public social media this percentage is even higher, 74%.



## Workplace Isolation and Trust

Employees increasingly work remotely during the corona crisis. As a result, employees may feel isolated from others in the workplace complicating the completion of tasks and negatively affecting mental health. **74%** of the employees indicated feeling separated from their colleagues. **54%** feels isolated and **56%** miss their colleagues. However, they also indicate they still feel close to (**60%**) and trust their colleagues and supervisors (6.0 and 5.6 on a seven-point scale).

# Perceived Productivity



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither disagree nor agree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

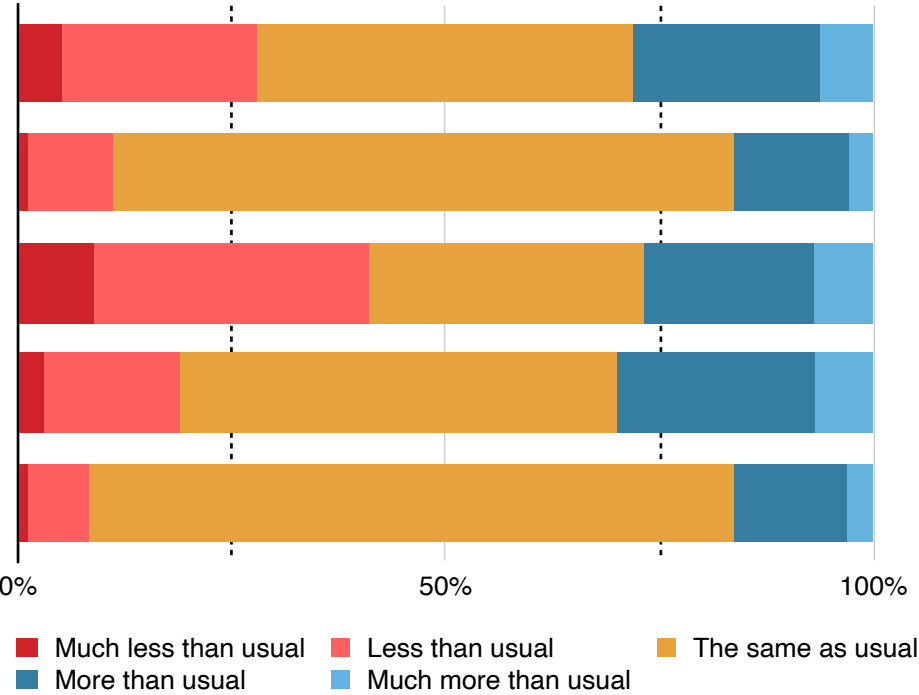
## Perceived productivity

We asked respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with several statements relating to their productivity during the corona crisis. The results indicate that the respondents still feel productive and satisfied with their work output. 91% of employees feels effective, while 73% and 71% also feels efficient and productive. Although we do not have information about productivity perceptions before the corona crisis, it seems workers are not very concerned about their effectiveness.

# Psychological strain

Respondents were asked to compare their current situation to the situation before the corona crisis

- Have you been able to concentrate on what you were doing?
- Have you felt capable of making decisions about things?
- Have you been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?
- Have you been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?
- Have you been able to face your problems?



During times of uncertainty and limited control over the situation, psychological strain may increase. At excess levels strain may have negative consequences for individual wellbeing, performance, and organizational effectiveness. The results depicted in the graph are perhaps a bit counter intuitive as they demonstrate that employees mostly report that they experience similar levels of psychological strain compared to the situation before the corona-crisis.

# Perspective



## Follow-up survey

The follow-up survey will be online between May 7th and May 21st 2020. We are very interested in your continued experiences, and welcome new participants to study to share their knowledge and insights regarding their work experiences during the corona crisis.



## Contact us

Reach out to the team for more information about the study, additional analyses, and how to participate in follow up studies.



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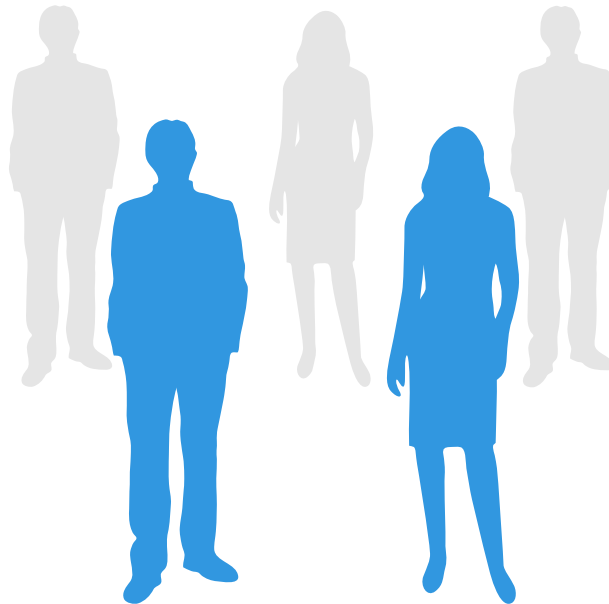
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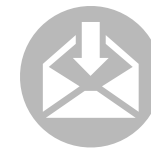
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