



The impact of remote work on employees' well-being

How well-being is experienced in remote work and how it can be promoted in an accounting firm

Noora Ärilä

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Ärilä, Noora

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Abstract

Remote work has become increasingly popular in recent years. The COVID-19 outbreak forced a large part of the world to work remotely which has raised questions on how this affects employees. It is important to find out how remote work may affect employees' well-being and how well-being can be supported in remote work.

The objective was to find out how employees in the commissioner's organisation have experienced remote work and whether it is something worth continuing in the future. First, the aspects of well-being that can be most affected by remote work and what type of effects can be experienced were researched from existing data. How well-being was affected by remote work in the commissioner's organisation was then investigated and suggestions for how to promote well-being were made.

Data were collected with a qualitative survey. In the first part of the survey statements made about remote work and well-being and respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree. In the second part, they were given open-ended questions from which answers were thematised. This resulted in finding out that job satisfaction and work-life balance were most affected by remote work in a positive way. The aspects that were most positively affected were psychological strain, disconnecting from work, and time management. Lastly, ergonomics was the only aspect that was affected negatively. The employer has a big effect on how remote work is experienced by employees and with proper management remote work may improve the well-being of employees.

The results show that remote work was experienced to have mainly a positive impact on well-being and respondents hoped to continue working mostly remotely. Presential work was only seen necessary for certain occasional tasks and socialising, whereas day-to-day work was preferred to be done remotely. Organisations can improve and maintain well-being by creating practices such as regular check-ins with employees, providing opportunities for social interaction, as well as providing ergonomic workstations for home offices.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

well-being, remote work, distance work, telework, job satisfaction, work-life balance, commuting

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

Ärilä, Noora

Etätyön vaikutus työntekijöiden hyvinvointiin. Miten hyvinvointi koetaan etätyössä ja miten sitä voidaan edistää kirjanpitoyrityksessä

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Tiivistelmä

Etätyöstä on tullut entistä suositumpaa viimeisten vuosien aikana. Koronapandemia pakotti suuren osan maailmasta etätyöhön, mikä herätti kysymyksen siitä, miten tämä vaikuttaa työntekijöihin. On tärkeää selvittää, miten etätyö vaikuttaa työntekijöiden hyvinvointiin ja miten hyvinvointia voidaan tukea etätyössä.

Työn tarkoitus oli selvittää, miten työntekijät ovat kokeneet etätyön toimeksiantajan organisaatiossa sekä kannattaisiko etätyötä jatkaa tulevaisuudessakin. Ensin tarkasteltiin, mihin hyvinvoinnin osa-alueisiin etätyö vaikuttaa eniten ja minkälaisia vaikutuksia on löydetty olemassa olevan tiedon mukaan. Seuraavaksi tutkittiin, miten hyvinvoinnin osa-alueet koettiin etätyössä toimeksiantajan organisaatiossa. Lopuksi tehtiin suosituksia hyvinvoinnin edistämiseen.

Dataa kerättiin kvalitatiivisella kyselyllä. Kyselyn ensimmäisessä osassa esitettiin etätyöhön ja työhyvinvointiin liittyviä väittämiä kysyen vastaajilta ovatko he samaa vai eri mieltä. Kyselyn toisessa osassa vastaajat saivat vastata avoimiin kysymyksiin, joiden vastaukset teemoiteltiin. Tuloksena löytyi, että kaikista positiivisimpia vaikutuksia koettiin työtyytyväisyyden sekä työn ja muun elämän tasapainon osalta. Hyvinvoinnin osa-alueet, joissa nähtiin positiivisimpia muutoksia olivat työn psyykinen kuormitus, työstä irtaantuminen sekä ajankäytönhallinta. Ergonomia oli ainut osa-alue, joka huononi etätyön seurauksena. Organisaatiolla on suuri vaikutus siihen, miten etätyö koetaan ja hyvällä johtamisella etätyö voi edistää työntekijöiden hyvinvointia.

Tulokset näyttävät, että etätyöllä on enimmäkseen positiivisia vaikutuksia hyvinvointiin ja vastaajat toivoivat voivansa työskennellä pääosin etänä. Toimistotyö nähtiin tarpeelliseksi vain ajoittain joidenkin työtehtävien osalta sekä sosiaalista kanssakäymistä varten. Tavanomaiseen päivittäiseen työhön etätyö koettiin mieluisaksi. Organisaatiot voivat parantaa ja ylläpitää hyvinvointia järjestämällä hyvinvointikaritoituksia, järjestämällä mahdollisuuksia sosiaaliselle kanssakäymiselle kollegoiden kanssa sekä pitämällä kotitoimistojen ergonomiasta huolta.

Avainsanat (asiasanat)

hyvinvointi, etätyö, työtyytyväisyys, työtasapaino, työn kuormitus, työmatka

Muut tiedot (salassa pidettävät liitteet)

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1 Introduction

During past years there has been a developing trend for different types of work. A growingly popular way to work is to work remotely. What makes the topic of remote work even more current is the recent COVID-19 outbreak during which employees all over the world had to resort to working from their homes and adapt to the new circumstances. It is safe to assume many companies are now wondering what impact working remotely has had on their employees. Furthermore, many companies may have been left wondering if remote work is something worth implementing in the future as well.

This is also the case for the commissioner of this thesis. They are a company based in Jyväskylä and Helsinki offering accounting services. Since Finland implemented restrictions on in-office working, the company's employees have been working remotely. In the future when restrictions are lessened, the question arises whether people should return to the office as before or should remote work be considered in the future. To make this decision it is important to research what existing evidence suggests about the impact of remote work on employees' well-being and also to investigate how people in the company have experienced this.

The objective of this research is to find suggestions as to what the commissioner should do about their remote work policy. In the future when the COVID-19 outbreak is under control working from the office as done traditionally will be possible. However, the commissioner feels working from home has been quite a positive experience and wishes to know what their employees would prefer and how deciding to continue remote work may affect their employees.

The problem this thesis aims to solve is how remote work affects the well-being of employees as this is unknown to the commissioner and needs to be solved to make an informed and educated decision about whether to continue remote work in the future. This brings up the research questions:

What are the experiences of employees in remote work?

What aspects of well-being are especially affected by working remotely?

How can management support employees' well-being when working remotely?

The research questions will be answered by investigating first how these aspects are affected in general, for which information will be gathered from existing data. Secondly, data will be collected to find out how the employees of the commissioner's organisation have been affected. The assumption based on current data is that there are multiple considerable benefits to working remotely but there are not many Finnish studies done on the issue. This thesis proposes suggestions also on how management can improve the well-being of remote workers. Management must know how to detect and understand employees' needs when working remotely to enjoy the positive impact remote working can create. This research is conducted to fill the need of the commissioner and the final goal of this thesis is to give suggestions to the commissioner as to what type of actions they may want to take considering the evidence presented and how to support well-being when working remotely.

There are also benefits to the knowledge working community in general because remote working is an issue everyone in that community has been facing. It can be stated that any new research will provide invaluable information to companies everywhere as to how employees may be affected by working remotely and what in general remote work may mean for the well-being of an employee. Previously there was very little research done on how remote work can affect well-being until the COVID-19 pandemic made it a more pressing issue and new studies have been coming out in the last two years. Research done in earlier years can soon become outdated due to fast changes in circumstances, technology, and attitudes. The number of companies allowing employees to work remotely has also exponentially increased in the last two years which allows for the collection of more data from new sources. Existing data shows there are multiple benefits to working remotely but also considerable threats which come down to the circumstances of the individual and the way the workplace manages remote work.

In this thesis, the focus will not be on the concept of well-being at work as a whole and it will only examine well-being when it comes to the aspects of remote work. What aspects are connected to remote work will be explained. Additionally, possible challenges brought on by remote work and how they may be overcome will be considered.

2 Theoretical frame

In this chapter, a theoretical background is established for the research. The aim is to expand on the topics investigated and define relevant terms by relying on existing literature. The topic is not narrowed down to any specific geographical area and will be reviewed using international sources. The sources used include books, theses, previous research, and online articles. The use of articles brings valuable current views on the topic as it has been discussed in the news lately, but it must be done with care and warranties being critical of the source. Only reputable news sources or organisations' websites are used. Books, theses, and previous research are only used if they are from recent years, or it can be argued that the information still applies in today's world. Online information sources include Finna online library, Google scholar, and EBSCO. Only studies that were accessible with existing credits and for free were used. Also, other official sources such as government agency websites were used. Search terms used to find relevant studies and books include well-being at work, work comfort, job satisfaction, motivation, mental well-being, experienced well-being, physical well-being, remote work, flexible work, life management, stress management, work efficiency, work burden, stress, and psychological strain. As the topic is not well-being at work as a whole, results were narrowed down to those that relate directly to remote work.

The goal was to find relatively recent data and it could be thought that COVID-19 is a dividing factor in the topic. The newest data is usually thought to be the most relevant and although there is a lot of fresh data coming out constantly, studies both before and after the COVID-19 outbreak are included. It created rather unique circumstances for remote working as the transition was not planned or well-organised for many companies due to the quickly changing circumstances and this is a big factor bringing an unusual perspective to a lot of the recent research. To gain a well-rounded perspective as to what previous studies indicate, international studies were included in the material combined with Finnish sources that are also relevant for the commissioner's Finnish organisation. From all data found with the described search parameters, studies were used that seemed the most relevant to this thesis' objective.

2.1 Definitions

Presential work

Presential work means the traditional way of working where an employee shows up in the agreed location and works there for the agreed amount of time during the agreed-upon hours.

Remote work

Remote work is sometimes also referred to as distance work. Statistics Finland defines distance work as paid work that could be performed at a place of work but is instead done outside the workplace for example at home, a summer cottage, or some other location. The use of information technology is a big part of distance working. (Distance work n.d.) The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health agrees with this definition and adds that remote work may happen in one or more places and may vary in length and frequency. Remote work may require some strictly and carefully agreed-upon details, whereas some practices may shape during remote work on their own; an important factor is to move from a controlling work culture to one of trust. (Joustava työaika n.d.)

Remote work brings about new considerations for everyday work. More proactiveness and initiative are required from employees to carry out their work. Communicating with the team and supervisors needs additional attention to ensure the flow of information. Also, breaks and other work-related scheduling does not happen as instinctively as it would in an office environment, and matters such as this and work ergonomics must be maintained by oneself. (Guidelines for remote work 2020.) It is important to consider what these changes mean for employees' well-being.

Hybrid or flexible work

Although many definitions specify that work does not have to be solely conducted remotely for one to be considered doing remote work, there is another definition that can be used to distinguish full-time remote work from remote work changing in frequency. In the flexible work model employees can choose the place and time of work (Flexible work n.d.). In this model, individual

employees may change between working remotely and working from the office or there may be some employees that are working fully remotely and some that work only from the office.

Well-being

There are many different theories as to what well-being is and how to measure it. One well-known term is subjective well-being which is the combination of “the frequent experience of positive affect, the infrequent experience of negative affect, and positive cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction” (Chen & Cooper 2014, 10). According to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health well-being specifically at work means safe, healthy, and productive work that is done by a skilful workforce in a well-managed organisation in which workers feel that their work is pleasant and rewarding and that it supports their life management (Työhyvinvointi n.d.). In other words, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health says well-being at work is affected by how safe and enjoyable work is, how proficient employees are, and how motivating management is. This reduces the strain work may put on an employee and increases productivity and work engagement. (Työhyvinvointi n.d.)

2.2 Well-being in the context of remote work

The factors of well-being at work that are possibly affected by remote work are introduced in this chapter. To determine these one must think about what changes when working remotely as opposed to working at the office. The only practical differences are not going there and not being there - making the only real differences be commuting and social contact. Nevertheless, the issue is not so simple, and brings about multiple consequences. To determine what these consequences are i.e., what are the factors that affect well-being, it is useful to look at what has been determined in previous studies. Studies used in this thesis are presented in the following figure.

Study	Hansson et al 2011	Bloom et al 2015	Künn-Nelen 2015	Henke et al 2016	Nijp et al 2016	VanderElst et al 2017	Hanna et al 2019
Topic							
Job satisfaction		x			x		
Stress	x	x			x		
Commuting	x		x				
Recovery					x		
Social aspects						x	
Psychological aspects	x		x			x	
Physical aspects	x		x	x	x		x
Work-life-balance		x				x	

Study	Dryselius et al 2020	Oakman et al 2020	Spagnoli et al 2020	Toscano et al 2020	Virtanen 2020	American Psychiatric Association 2021	Sandoval-Reyes et al 2021
Topic							
Job satisfaction	x			x	x		x
Stress		x	x	x			x
Commuting							
Recovery							
Social aspects		x		x	x	x	
Psychological aspects	x	x	x		x		x
Physical aspects		x	x		x		
Work-life-balance	x	x					x

Figure 1. Studies on remote work and what factors were studied

It is interesting to note that many of these sources approached well-being and remote work through the aspects mentioned in the above figure and ended up mentioning that remote work influences either productivity, motivation, or both. Since a number of sources looking into well-being have found a correlation between remote work and increased productivity and motivation, it could be determined that increased motivation and productivity can be possible results of well-being at work.

Only factors of well-being that are observed to be the most impacted by remote work are discussed in this thesis. These factors are gathered from studies that study the relation between remote work and well-being. Based on previous research the most researched and therefore relevant aspects are those found in Figure 1. When researching the topic, one finds that all these aspects overlap and it might be impossible to separate them from each other as individual factors. To provide clarity, the figure below demonstrates how the aspects are categorised in this thesis.

Areas affected by remote work	Job satisfaction	Work-life balance	Support from surroundings	Role of the employer
Aspects under main effects	Productivity	Recovery	Loneliness	Policies
	Motivation	Overworking	Being alone with work tasks	Communication
	Stress	Physical effects		Adjusting leadership
		Commuting		Resources and training

Figure 2. Division of aspects of well-being in remote work

2.2.1 Job satisfaction

Productivity

A Chinese study found that job satisfaction and productivity increase when working from home. Conducting a study on a call centre, the researchers saw an increase in the number of calls made and time worked per day which resulted in a productivity increase calculated between 20 to 30 per cent. They added that management and work practices affect how successfully working from home can increase productivity. (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying 2015.) To support these findings, Beckmann (2016) found that self-managed working time increases productivity and that giving employees autonomy over their working time and location results in better performance. He also states that his results contradict common concerns about employees possibly taking advantage of their autonomy by working less, stating that the motivation gained from such autonomy is a key factor in improving productivity.

Productivity is an indicator of a motivated workforce with a high level of well-being i.e., job satisfaction can be measured with productivity and is an indicator of motivation. A study by Aalto University and the University of Tampere found that a healthy employee is 25 % more productive (Wellbeing at work has a significant impact on productivity in the banking sector 2018). Similarly, a study by LUT University found that employees felt their work performance got better while working remotely because there were less distractions (Suomalaiset ovat etätöissä tuotteliaita ja tyytyväisiä, mutta työyhteisön fyysinen etäisyys nakertaa jaksamista – uusia työtapoja tarvitaan 2020). Both studies targeted knowledge workers and help in concluding that a knowledge worker

doing remote work results in higher productivity. This can be an indicator of higher job satisfaction.

These findings are backed up by a two-year investigation by Great Place to Work where 800,000 employees at Fortune 500 companies were interviewed. The following graph shows productivity improved when working from home and the reason for this was reported to be additional attention to company culture and leadership. (Kazi & Hastwell 2021.) Management plays a big role in how remote workers' well-being is shaped and maintained.

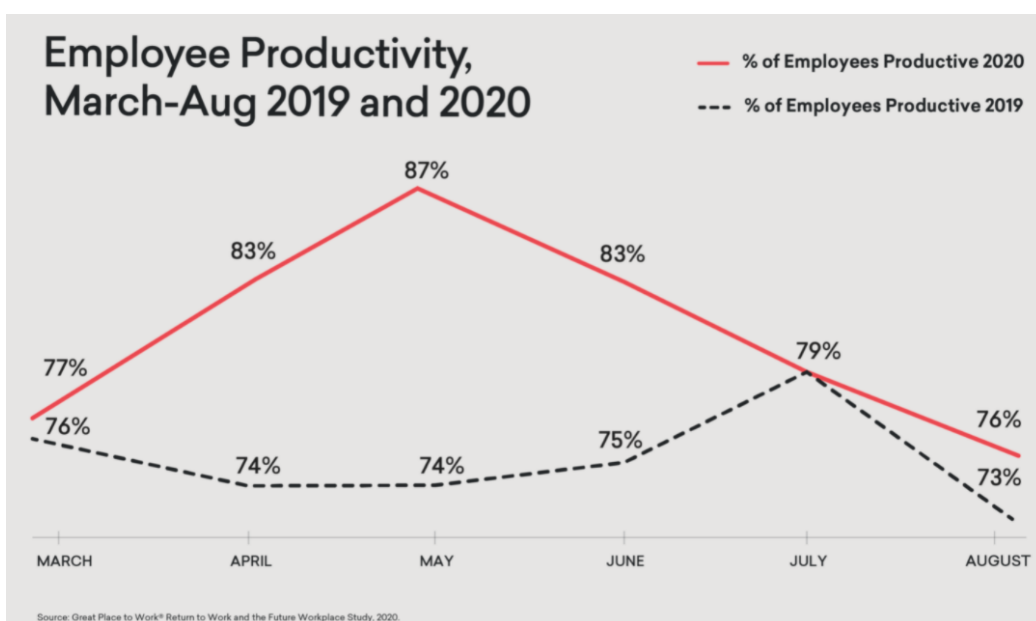


Figure 3. Productivity comparison by GPTW (2021)

Kazi and Hastwell (2021) speculate that the big increase in productivity after starting remote work was due to fear of possible unemployment. As productivity started to decrease, the study found one concept to rise above others. To make the workplace better employees answered that they want experienced *coaches* and *leaders* and felt their supervisors were there to order them around or perform for their own benefit, not to support their teams. Organisations labelled as “supportive” kept productivity at a sustainable level by paying extra attention to self-care, balance, and support.

Motivation

A survey conducted in Finland found that 44 % of the respondents were “extremely satisfied” and 48 % “quite satisfied” when asked their general level of satisfaction regarding remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Työolobarometri 2020 2021, 80). Mind Source’s research found similar results within their company with 20 % of employees going as far as to say they would be willing to receive a smaller salary if in turn they would be allowed to work from home in the future (Remote vs Presential Work 2020). This evidence suggests that employees are satisfied with remote work and are very likely willing to continue at least to some extent.

Another study conducted in a Finnish company found that motivation is one of the most positively affected factors in remote work. Motivation can also be used to measure job satisfaction as a satisfied worker equals a motivated one. 44 % of survey respondents reported a positive impact, 24 % a somewhat positive impact, 28 % a neutral impact, and only 4 % somewhat negative. No one gave a fully negative answer. (Virtanen 2020.) Remote work requires workers to be more self-leading and employees must practice self-awareness when it comes to their own strengths and weaknesses (Dryselius & Pettersson 2021, 49). This means asking for help in areas where one might lack skills and being able to work proactively. Motivation can see a drop if one doesn’t feel capable of working autonomously enough and does not receive or request the necessary help.

Stress

Stress is an extremely important health measure as it can cause not only serious mental health issues like anxiety, irritation, aggression, restlessness, depression, memory issues, indecisiveness, and problems sleeping but also physical issues such as headaches, light-headedness, heart palpitations, stomach issues, nausea, excessive sweating and urinating, back pain, and chronic flu (Mattila 2018). Stress being a huge factor in overall well-being, it is important to know how it affects remote workers. A study on how remote work affected workers in Latin America during the pandemic found that remote work increased work engagement which in turn increased stress and this resulted in reduced work-life balance and work satisfaction (Sandoval-Reyes, Idrovo-Carlier & Duque-Oliva 2021). On the other hand, Nijp, Beckers, van de Voorde, Geurts and Kompier (2016)

found in their study a small short-term decrease in fatigue but no effect on stress. Finding no effect is still an important result because it shows remote work could be on the same line as present work when it comes to stress. In any case, negative impacts to stress levels are not reported when remote work is managed well by the organisation, this is also noted by Sandoval-Reyes et al. (2021) as they mention

“the use of teleworking increased ... but the extent of this increase is not level with an increase in developing competencies to manage remote teams or manage one’s own remote work”.

The findings of this study raise the question of whether remote work-induced stress was the result of poor management and unpreparedness which are issues that the organisational culture and management can mitigate. Negative impacts should also not be found when remote work does not mean additional work tasks and work time. It should be kept in mind that when studying remote work, some studies factor in taking home unfinished work and working overtime on the evenings and weekends which does undoubtedly cause stress.

2.2.2 Work-life balance

Recovery

To maintain a healthy work-life balance one must be able to recover from work sufficiently to maintain a life outside of work. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health states “Recovery from work means letting your brain, body, and mind take a break from work and recuperate. Recovery from work is essential for having the energy to do one’s job well and live a full and balanced life.” (Recovery from work – online coaching n.d.). If one does not make the effort to recover from work, stress may accumulate and lead to worsened job performance and even adverse health effects.

Some may find it hard to recover from work because, what Ohlin (2021) calls detachment-recovery, isn’t possible. To properly recover it is necessary to psychologically detach and not think about work. This may be hard with a designated workstation and all the work equipment right at our

homes and even the sight of it may bring a sprout of distress reconnecting our brain to work. For some, it may also be difficult to stop working altogether.

Depending on the terms agreed with the employer, remote work may on the other hand aid in recovery by allowing “workations”. With new types of work come new terms with no official definitions just yet, but workation is used in articles to describe a combination of work and vacation. The term has been used to describe “a vacation that allows you to work remotely while integrating elements of leisure that let you unwind, relax, and be more productive” (Writer 2019). This allows employees to work their hours but enjoy their free time at their selected location. This type of freedom and ability to disconnect after the workday facilitates enjoying life outside of work and aids in recovery.

Overworking

Having all the necessary equipment may provoke so-called workaholics to overwork and not allow themselves to recover. Spagnoli, Molino, Molinaro, Giancaspro, Manuti and Ghislieri (2020) define workaholism as working excessively hard and at the same time not finding a healthy balance between work and private life. Their study found that workaholics are more prone to being addicted to staying connected to work through technology which produces technostress: stress-induced by using ICT. (Spagnoli et al. 2020.) This is accentuated by the fact that remote work is done mainly using ICT.

Physical effects

There are some downsides when it comes to physical health and remote work. Grace (2020) mentions how remote work results in moving less which can make people more susceptible to different diseases both physical and mental. The National Health Service of England reports that according to multiple studies, sitting too much increases the chances of being overweight by way of slower metabolism, having unhealthy blood pressure, accelerated bone and muscle loss, aging, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and even early death (Why we should sit less n.d.). However, Henke, Benevent, Schulte, Rinehart, Crighton and Corcoran (2016) found in their study that people who did

not participate in working remotely at all had a statistically greater risk of obesity, unhealthy alcohol and tobacco use, and physical inactivity whereas people who worked remotely only 8 hours or less per month were much less likely to be affected by depression.

Remote work may reduce moving even further because commuting, walking to the office lunch area or even the toilets is eliminated and replaced by much shorter walking distances inside the employee's own home. Consequently, there is more responsibility on the employee themselves to consciously make an effort to stay healthy. Exercise could be done during the time saved from commuting or during work by standing at the desk, walking during phone calls and meetings, and setting reminders to move throughout the day (Safe and Healthy Teleworking 2020). Additionally, an ergonomic workstation should be built. Office workers who frequently use computers and sit for more than 2 hours a day are more likely to suffer from lower back, upper back, and neck pain (Hanna, Daas, El-Shareif, Al-Marridi, Al-Rojoub & Adegboye 2019). These issues are present in presential work but highlighted by the possible increased lack of movement from working remotely.

Commuting

When it comes to work-life balance, it must be realised that not only time spent at work actively working should be considered, but also time preparing for work, as this is an undeniable part of performing one's work. Remote work offers the opportunity to minimise time preparing and commuting. After the COVID-19 confinement, a study done by Mind Source found that of their employees 64 % reported saving between one to three hours per day when working from home and 52 % of employees started to work one to two more hours per day. (Remote vs Presential Work 2020.) It seems that when time is not spent on commuting, more time and energy can be directed into actual work.

Several studies support the claim that commuting decreases well-being noticeably. Brown University found that longer commutes are associated with less time exercising, preparing food, and sleeping. Having less time translates to less physical activity and eating more processed foods that are fast to prepare. Interestingly, it was found that people working 12 hours with minimal commuting time are healthier than people working 10 hours with a one-hour commute each way

(Lowrey 2011). This contradicts concerns about remote work possibly having a negative effect on well-being due to possibly longer days, as commuting is potentially even more harmful.

A Texan study found that longer commutes also affect mental well-being. Employees with long commutes worry more about the previous day and the ratio of positive emotions to negative was especially low during commuting. (Crabtree 2010.) Additionally, Dr. Putnam from Harvard found that commuting reduces social capital and simplified his findings as “Every ten minutes of commuting results in ten per cent fewer social connections.” (Paumgarten 2007). By social capital he means connections and networks among people and mutual trust and exchanges that come from them (Kiechel 2000).

A Swedish study measuring health impacts of commuting found that poor sleep quality, exhaustion, stress, and low self-rated health were more pertinent the longer one’s commute is (Hansson, Mattisson, Björk, Östergren & Jakobsson 2011). Similar results were found by Künn-Nelen (2015) stating that while objective health is not so much affected by commuting, employees’ self-perceived health and outpatient visits to general practitioners increased with longer commuting times. These results suggest that commuting is experienced as a stressor and employees’ well-being and productivity would see a positive change when eliminating the strain of commuting.

2.2.3 Support from surroundings

In a recent survey by the American Psychiatric Association, when asked if remote work makes employees feel lonely, 17 % answered “always”, 48 % “sometimes” and 35 % “never” (APA 2021 Public Opinion Poll: Workplace 2021). Working remotely can result in either negative or positive impacts on mental well-being depending on one’s circumstances. Affecting factors include but are not limited to the remote work environment, how much support the employee receives from their organisation, and social life outside work. (Oakman, Kinsman, Stuckey, Graham & Weale 2020.)

One big difference remote work opposes to presential work is the lack of face-to-face interactions. Toscano and Zappalà (2020) found that this may increase stress and consequently reduce job satisfaction. They made an important specification and pointed out that people who were already more concerned about external factors found remote work and the lack of contact more difficult, whereas people who were laxer about external stressors, in this case the COVID-19 pandemic, did

not suffer such a negative effect from isolation and remote work. They suggest that social interaction can be had either at work or outside of it and in both cases it results in people being more satisfied with remote work and reduced stress at work.

It can be pointed out that remote work during the pandemic had a disproportionately big negative effect on social interactions and increased distress both at and outside of work because remote work was coupled with other restrictions and thus people had fewer interpersonal interactions during free time as well. Therefore, it can be argued that remote work in the presence of a healthy social life outside work may not leave such a craving for interactions at work and thus not affect job satisfaction as it has during the time of the pandemic.

Having fewer interactions during the day also results in having fewer distractions and being able to focus on work better. An American study on the future of remote work found that one of the greatest perceived benefits of working remotely is fewer distractions with 41 % of respondents agreeing with this. However, the same study reported that 32 % of respondents had more distractions at home compared to the office. (Ozimek 2020.) From this, it can be concluded that depending on one's home environment remote work can either increase focus or possibly bring more distractions. With fewer interruptions by co-workers as well as fewer meetings, interruptions may come from the people sharing the home. Fried, Hansson and Heiskanen (2014, 59-61) remind that it is an employee's responsibility to make sure work gets done and for this, the employee must find a place either at home or some other location so that they are able to do so.

2.3 The role of the employer in supporting well-being in remote work

Even when working remotely the responsibility of the health and safety of the employee falls on the employer but the ability to ensure employees' well-being and evaluate any changes is limited (Rauramo 2020). Actions that management can take to promote well-being are creating policies, enforcing communication, providing leadership, and giving the right resources and training.

2.3.1 Maintaining well-being

The Centre for Occupational Health says that for safe remote working management is required to provide clear tasks and objectives for work, training, feedback, guidance, and they must track results, time spent working and the mental load of work. Additionally, communication regarding well-being, motivation, and work itself is important. It is also recommended that policies on how to track well-being are put in place. It is important to instruct on policies regarding sick leave and what health care options employees may utilise. (Etätyössä turvallisesti n.d.) The Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment recommend companies to create policies to help support well-being. They recommend training that promotes work-life balance, having some form of support for well-being e.g., offering health care, and informing employees of the possible risks to make them more knowledgeable of them. (Remote Working Checklist for Employers 2021.)

As managers do not see their teams it is up to the employees to inform if their mental workload is getting too much. To lower the barrier to reporting decreased well-being, a clear policy on how this is done, and an appropriate channel could be created. One possibility to make sure employees report decreased well-being would be to perform an evaluation either in the form of a meeting or a survey. The Centre for Occupational Health offers a model that, to summarise, provides questions regarding time spent working, whether the workers feel they have enough time to recover, how employees experience their workload, how their work environment is, how communication works, and if they have adequate resources and skills (Etätyössä turvallisesti n.d.).

2.3.2 Communication

Vander Elst, Verhoogen, Sercu, Van der Broeck, Baillien and Godderis (2017) suggest that remote work can decrease well-being due to decreased social support and participation in making decisions, although they do also recognise that the autonomy remote work allows for is a positive for well-being and they add that as mentioned, organisational support is the key factor affecting the extent of well-being both at the office and when working remotely. When colleagues and supervisors are not physically there, a conscious effort must be made to establish functioning communication. Appropriate channels for communication need to be established so that employees feel they are looked after and part of the organisation.

Organisational structure and culture affect what is expected communication-wise and how these expectations are met by using different media and which medium is chosen for a specific type of communicational need (Lorenzo & Denowski 2015, 399). An organisation needs to define which channel is to be used for what type of communication and make sure it fits the culture of the organisation and the people in it. This ensures remote workers can reap the benefits from existing communication technologies and not grow frustrated by not knowing what is expected of them.

Monitoring performance and offering support can be more difficult for managers of remote teams and it is important that the team leader succeeds in engaging the team into their set goals and effective communication. Leaders should also change the way they communicate as it is not possible to just walk by someone's desk to ask how they are doing. More people may need to be included in correspondence to maintain information flow. All communication needs to be planned and concise so that there is enough communication and no misunderstandings. During online meetings, the leader should have a clear plan on how to get the team involved in the conversation. (Phillips, 2021.)

Röcker (2012) found that informal communication usually forms a larger portion of communication at work. Informal communication improves well-being by facilitating collaboration and providing social interaction as well as creating a sense of community in remote workers. Unfortunately, informal communication is minimised during remote work. It forms an important part of finding out how employees are doing so opportunities for this must be created.

2.3.3 Promoting employees' well-being through leadership

Maslow created a hierarchy of needs which is much used in describing human motivation both in the field of psychology and business. His theory describes how humans have needs; these start from deficiency needs where the individual feels deprived of a basic need and go towards growth needs which are not due to the lack of something but the desire of the individual to gain something (McLeod 2018). These can be seen in figure 2. This theory can also be applied to the context of well-being as not having these needs met ultimately results in decreased well-being.

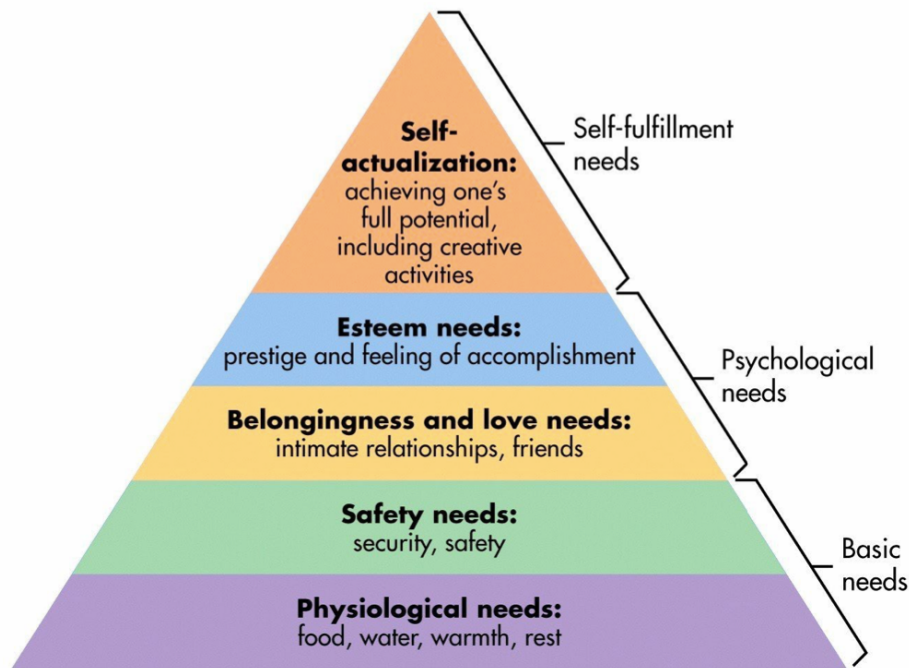


Figure 4. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod 2018)

In the best case, remote work can create the highest level of well-being and let the individual reach self-actualisation where they can use and further develop their skills and simply enjoy what they are doing. However, in the worst cases, remote work may diminish the sense of belonging, create instability at work or even affect the well-being of employees. The level of well-being is affected by how remote work is managed.

Remote work can make it more challenging to oversee employees' actions during the workday. As it is harder to evaluate employees' input it may be more useful for managers to focus on their output when it comes to performance and productivity, although current technology may aid in keeping an eye on employees and allow managers to monitor them rather closely. Nevertheless, remote work may bring managers to realise they should not keep such a close eye on e.g., how many hours one has worked but what was accomplished during the day. (Productivity gains from teleworking in the post-COVID-19 era: How can public policies make it happen? 2020.) This requires management to adopt a less authoritarian management style. Statistics Finland report that when only a third of employees receive information on changes that affect their work already at the planning phase, among remote workers, this is true for over 50 per cent. As a remote worker, one is more likely to have a part in the planning of their own work. (Lehto & Sutela 2006, 40.) It

appears that remote workers are enjoying more power in decision making and managers are adopting a more inclusive method in their leadership which in turn has the potential to increase well-being as work becomes more manageable to employees.

According to remote work researcher Dr. Soga from Henley Business School (Laker 2021), remote work requires managers to understand each employees' circumstances and through communication come to an agreement about what each individual's needs are and how they can be met. This may mean that some need to start work later to take their children to school or some may want a daily check-in with their supervisor when a weekly meeting suffices to the rest. Special needs are not to be seen as "slacking off" by managers, but as opportunities to ease an employee's daily life and by doing so keeping them healthy and productive.

Moisalo (2011) argues that the thought that good results are made by simply working as hard as possible is antiquated and harmful to well-being. As demands at the workplace change new types of skills and attitudes are needed. If management sees that some workers are constantly at the limits of their capabilities, are unable to perform necessary tasks, or management feels the need to delegate only "easier" tasks to some, the opportunity to train the workforce and lead improvement has not been taken (ibid., 366-367). Management must continuously assess the skill levels of their teams to ensure employees feel comfortable enough doing their jobs without too much stress. Another old way of managing is to think that a manager must be there to "herd" employees and keep vigil that they are in fact hard at work. Rather, a manager should understand what their team needs to be successful, be a creative problem solver for the team's problems, and delegate tasks to team members to ensure good quality regardless of where the work is done. (Fried, Hansson & Heiskanen 2014, 179.)

2.3.4 Resources

As mentioned by The Centre of Occupational Health remote workers should be able to maintain the same health and safety conditions as presential workers. To do this, the employer should make sure the employees have the appropriate equipment. The [Occupational Safety and Health Act](#) describes how employers must try to prevent threats to employees' well-being and this law is equally applicable to remote work (Työturvallisuuslaki 23.8.2002/738, 5 §). Employees could be given ergonomically designed furniture as well as ergonomics and safety guidelines. Additionally,

remote workers should be given common office materials such as pens, paper, folders, etc. as they would not be expected to pay for these when working at the office.

Management can directly affect employees' well-being by providing training that aids in their work. Employees with the necessary skills to perform their tasks at work tend to have increased motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction (Rodriquez & Walters 2017). Remote workers rely heavily on using programs and applications so appropriate training to these must be given. Employees may be given a computer with needed software, internet access, a printer, a phone, and other ICT tools. Having the appropriate tools for work is the bare requirement for employee well-being. Problems in the workflow must be identified soon so that support can be given quickly to reduce possible stress caused by not being able to perform work tasks efficiently.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research approach

When doing research, the process starts from having a research problem and appropriate research questions through which the solution will be sought. The research questions affect which research method is used by determining what type of data needs to be collected and how (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 15).

In quantitative research, the quantity or amount of something is measured. This type of research can be used when investigating something that can be expressed numerically. Research aimed to discover how participants feel or what their thoughts are surrounding a specific subject is qualitative research (Kothari 2004, 3). Qualitative research gives results that are not in quantitative form or that cannot be put under meticulous quantitative analysis (ibid., 5).

(Brannen 2016, 15) suggests that the line between qualitative and quantitative research is often drawn when it comes to the research method. This means the data collection process and how the data is recorded and analysed define whether one is conducting qualitative or quantitative re-

search. She then goes on to mention that combining methods where appropriate may bring additional value when considering the best method for the research that is to be conducted. In this research, such a combination will be utilised. The benefit of using a quantitative method is easy collection and analysis of data as it does not require much time from the researcher. However, with smaller sample sizes it is not wise to conduct a primarily quantitative piece of research as reliability and applicability of data would suffer. Therefore, alongside the quantitative angle, a qualitative method is used where more descriptive data can be gathered.

According to Jason and Glenwick (2016, 233-234), studies that use a mix of both methods have the benefit of maximising benefits and minimising the weaknesses of both methods while gathering answers by different means. They mention how quantitative and qualitative research have often been thought of as opposites of each other. This supposition has been called paradigm wars where paradigm refers to the set of ideologies that are so ingrained in researchers that they inherently think the world works in a certain way and do not question this. However, combining methods may bring about multiple views and bring added benefits.

3.2 Data collection

For this research, a qualitative survey is used to collect data. The benefit of using a survey is that it can be sent to a bigger number of people in multiple ways, they are more anonymous as answers are not given face-to-face, answers are standardised making comparisons easier, results can be used to develop further research, and there are tools that make analysing survey data rather easy compared to data from other types of research. Weaknesses of surveys include the researcher lacking training on conducting surveys which may affect survey design or data interpretation, having too many open-ended questions making data very complex to analyse, not getting enough responses, and not being able to ask follow-up questions. (Wilson 2013.)

There is a benefit to combining both research methods in the survey. With a quantitative approach, it is possible to find how many people feel a certain way and see where the majority stands. With a qualitative approach, however, the number of answers is not what gives value to the findings as qualitative research can be conducted even with one single subject (Kananen 2014, 95). Even one comment can bring a whole new perspective on the issue by revealing something new. When respondents are given the chance to expand their thoughts freely, it is even possible

that new relevant information that the researcher did not think to ask comes to light which creates an added benefit. This allows a deeper analysis of the issue and its aspects.

A survey is usually thought of as a quantitative research method. What makes the survey qualitative is open-ended questions. The qualitative take allows for more in-depth data and allows to examine the respondent's view on the topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006, 7). This helps to better understand the issue at hand rather than just plainly reporting it with numerical data. Respondents may give reasons as to why they are answering a certain way and conclusions may be drawn with more confidence. This method is supported by Palinkas, Aarons, Horwitz, Chamberlain, Hurlburt, and Landsverk (2011) as they suggested that quantitative methods may be used for creating models and ideas and qualitative methods to conduct a more in-depth assessment. The survey for this thesis consisted of 12 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions. The survey was kept short to try and increase response rate while still being able to collect all the needed data.

To make the survey produce reliable data there are multiple angles to consider. Questions need to be relevant to the research problem and the objective of the research. It is important to word the questions correctly to avoid any misunderstandings or leading the respondent to answer a certain way. (Raine & Aarnos 2018.) The structure of the survey questions plays a role as well and it must be evaluated when it is appropriate to use closed, open, or mixed questions. Question order may also play a role in how the respondent answers and how likely a respondent is to answer. Biases from leading questions, central tendency bias where respondents do not want to give extreme answers, and primacy or recency bias where respondent chooses the last or the first option can also affect survey results. (Morgan 2013.) The survey was created together with the commissioner. All questions except for one were relevant to the research questions. This was added as it was a question the commissioner wanted answers to as well.

For the closed-ended part, the questions were created as statements, and answers were given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "I disagree", "I somewhat disagree", "I cannot say", "I somewhat agree" to "I agree". "I cannot say" was included so that people who had not thought of the issue or were not sure what to say would not just pick any answer which would affect reliability. As the first two research questions are *what the experiences of employees in remote work are* and

what aspects of well-being are especially affected by working remotely, the statements in the survey listed aspects found from already existing research to find out how these aspects were experienced in the commissioner's organisation. At the same time, from these answers it can be seen whether the change was positive or negative. The benefit of using a Likert scale is that it allows the researcher to turn language into numerical data and organise responses based on the level of agreement (Mittaaminen: Muuttujien ominaisuudet 2007) and thus analyse responses with less effort. A five-point Likert scale is used for this thesis as it is the original design from Likert himself, although sometimes researchers have been seen to use scales ranging from two up to eleven answer options (Taherdoost 2020). A question related to the last research question of *how management can support employees' well-being when working remotely* is included in the open-ended questions.

For this survey, all employees of the organisation are questioned including all team members from both Helsinki and Jyväskylä teams. The whole organisation only includes 33 people which makes it possible to include and get input from everyone, and even include open-ended questions, because data analysis will not require too many resources with a small number of participants. Not leaving anyone out by having to sample increases the reliability of the study. The reliability of a survey means that the data is accurate and wouldn't change if retested (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 186). Since all of the employees are included, no answers are excluded that could alter the data. Another factor to consider is validity. There are multiple angles to validity as described by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 187-188); it must be evaluated whether the research investigates what it is supposed to, that conclusions are correct, that the researched phenomenon is not caused by something entirely different, and that the results can be generalised.

The target group this research aims to benefit is employees of the commissioner's organisation. The survey is conducted online using Microsoft Forms. A link will be shared on the companywide Teams chat from where employees may access the survey. The time frame for the completion of the survey will be 2 months and reminders will be sent during this time to try and get the maximum number of answers. A benefit to an online survey is that all respondents are asked the same questions in the same order (Vilkkä 2007, 28). This way there is no interviewer who could affect the respondents' answers with their behaviour. Data collection is also less time-consuming for the

person conducting the research and the anonymity of respondents is maintained since the beginning.

3.3 Data analysis

When analysing quantitative data, the method for the analysis is chosen based on whether only one factor is under investigation or whether it is necessary to find relationships between different variables (Vilkka 2017, 119). As the purpose of this research is to find out the experiences of employees as a whole, it is not relevant to know their age, gender, or other identifying factors, and answers are not analysed based on these variables. For example, it does not matter whether men or women have higher job satisfaction when working remotely, as what this research sets out to do is to find out how this organisation has experienced remote work and how they should continue in the future. To analyse the quantitative data collected from closed-ended questions, data will be exported to Excel from Microsoft Forms and organised to see percentages of each answer for each question. This data will then be transformed into graphical form for easier analysis. Graphs will be generated using Excel as well.

The open-ended answers provide qualitative data which will be analysed by thematising the answers. Morgan (2011, 33-35) explains the process as follows. It starts by looking at collected data to find similarities within the answers. These similarities are grouped as themes. When starting the analysing process, repeating features are noted and can be used to construct preliminary themes. It is worth noting that themes do not include only answers that are completely identical but rather the idea is to group answers that form a pattern and support the notions of the preliminary themes. Quotations will be taken from the collected research material to support the themes and the themes will be named. After having enough preliminary themes to cover the data, it is important to try and find new themes, subthemes, and even contra points to the created preliminary themes. This can result in creating more support for the existing thematisation or having to rethink existing themes considering new evidence. (ibid., 33-35.)

Morgan (2011, 36) suggests that only the primary researcher should be involved in the thematising process and when it comes to its end findings are presented for a group evaluation for a fresh view. As this study is only conducted by one person, there is a danger for bias where the researcher thematises data based on their own opinions. This would distort the data. In an attempt

to overcome this, findings from closed-ended questions are used to compare and contrast the findings after open-ended questions are thematised. This can lead to again having to restructure created themes or it can lead to confirming that the created themes are sensible.

4 Results

The survey was sent to 33 employees of which 24 answered the survey, making the answer percentage around 73 percent. When creating the survey, Forms automatically evaluated it to take 4 minutes to respond. In reality, the average response time was 19 minutes. It must be noted that 4 respondents took longer than 30 minutes and it is likely that in these instances the respondent left the survey open while doing something else which grew the average response time. Respondents clearly took the time to think about their answers and filled it thoroughly. No background information regarding the respondents was asked as it was not of interest to separate departments, genders, or age groups but the goal was to discover how the experience of remote work has been in this company as a whole. Also, the fact that the survey had to be anonymous prevented asking any identifying information as the organisation is small enough to possibly guess who answered what.

The open-ended questions asked what an appropriate amount of remote work would be, what they most and least like about remote work, what they hope from their employer concerning remote work, and what they hope would be taken into consideration when returning to the office. In addition to the aspects already introduced in the closed-ended questions, giving the respondents the ability to answer freely resulted in the following mentions: commuting, saving time, meeting co-workers, ergonomics, breaks, interruptions, and freedom of choice. To organise all aspects these are categorised in the next chapter under job satisfaction, work-life balance, and support from organisation. Answers from all questions are placed under appropriate categories and later discussed in conclusions.

4.1 Job satisfaction

The first theme is job satisfaction. Demand and psychological strain of work are included in this chapter.

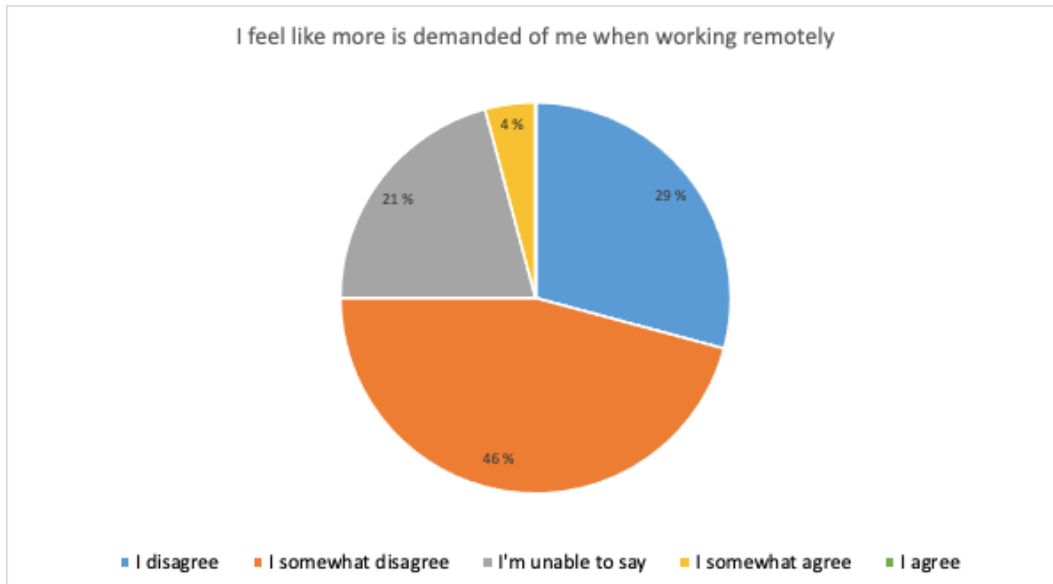


Figure 5. Question 1j

75 % of respondents disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement that remote work is more demanding. 4 % feel that remote work demands more of them which can contribute to more stress and worsen work-life balance.

One respondent said that “challenging subjects may be difficult to go through on Teams”. This might indicate that work can be more demanding at times, for example, when dealing with a project or a particular issue where it would be easier to have the co-workers together.

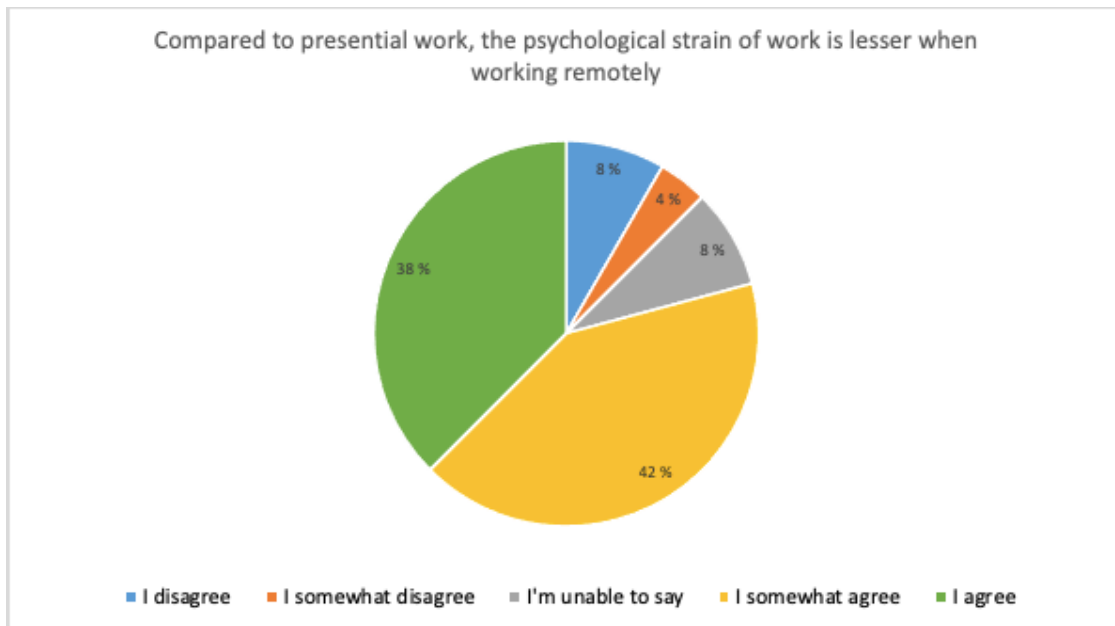


Figure 6. Question 1h

Another question that indicated remote working may improve well-being was related to psychological strain with 80 % agreeing or somewhat agreeing it is lesser when working remotely. Contrary to most questions, this also received a few disagreeing answers. It seems that most of the employees have found remote work to help with stress management and recovery, which is positive to note, but a few individuals may need additional support. When asked what respondents wish from their employer for remote work one respondent said:

That they listen carefully to how people are doing. Exhaustion etc. is difficult to recognise on the phone.

External factors such as other people can also have an effect on how psychologically demanding a job is. More on this in the next chapter.

4.2 Support from surroundings

This theme includes outside factors that may affect an employee's work. Factors include focus and other people. Even if not seeing colleagues is considered a negative, there is also something positive that comes out of not being in too close contact with others.

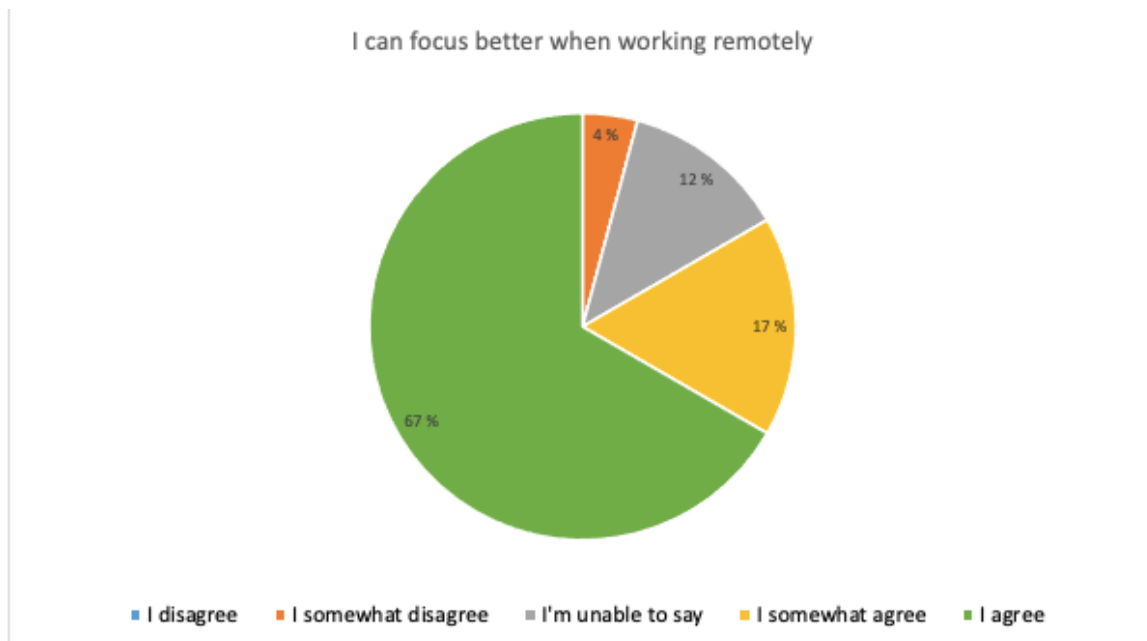


Figure 7. Question 1f

84 % of respondents felt they could focus better when working remotely as can be seen from the figure below. This is a highly important issue because half of the respondents especially mentioned in the open-ended portion being able to focus better and having more peace and quiet to work. Answers included statements such as

I can focus better and because of that be more productive.

In remote work the surroundings are calmer than at the office, the noise (people talking on the phone or to each other) is often distracting when I should be doing a careful job.

Being able to focus better can lessen psychological strain as work requires slightly less effort when the surroundings are favourable. On the contrary, one respondent reported that there can be more distractions at home. A few respondents mentioned loneliness, lack of human contact, and “having it too quiet at times”. Respondents were missing casual coffee breaks and lunch breaks for socialising.

Some also feel like work is handled more privately, indicating the sense of community has decreased. One might make comments about work tasks when passing by a co-worker at the office, but this type of communication is not happening so naturally when working remotely. One respondent said their least favourite aspect of remote working is

Pushing forward alone, meaning that the work community is not physically present, and lack of exchange of thoughts on work matters with colleagues.

One respondent said it feels like they are making an effort alone because they physically do not have others around. Employees must remember that even if they are alone at their home office, they are not alone with their workload as clearly demonstrated by answers from question 1c.

4.3 Work-life balance

This theme includes time management, work-life balance, productivity, disconnecting from work, and taking breaks.

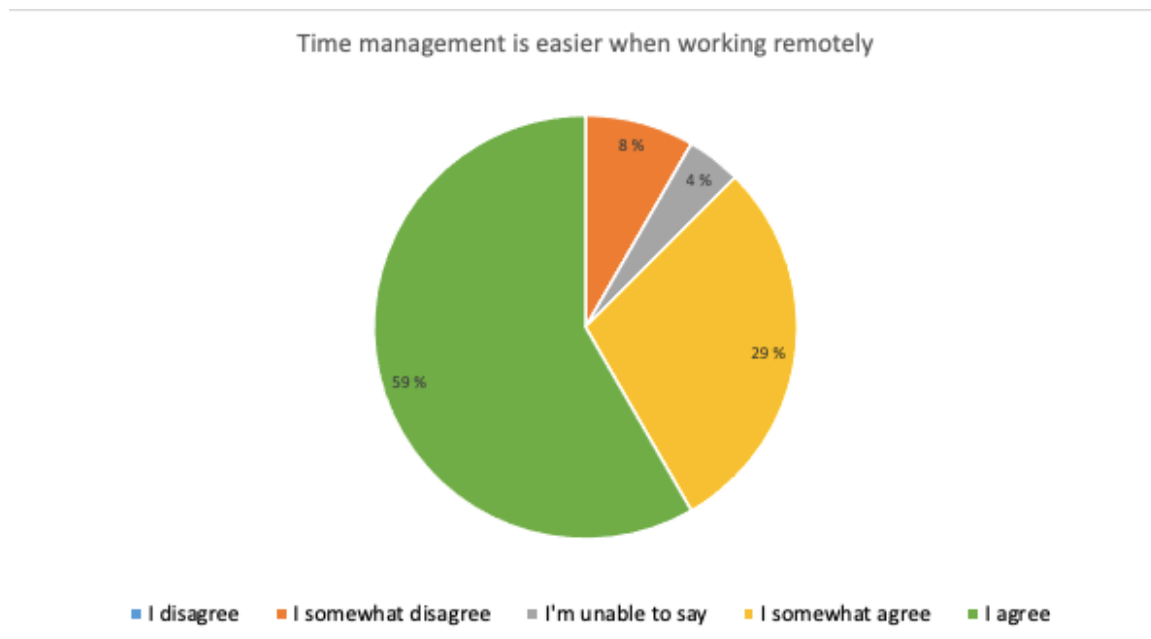


Figure 8. Question 1a

88 % of respondents gave a positive answer to time management when working remotely. As other mentions related to time did not come up, it can be concluded that this is a direct result of not commuting. A total of 18 respondents especially mentioned not having to commute as something they enjoy about remote working in the open-ended questions. One respondent mentioned time is saved in other "practicalities" too. This might mean for example that one doesn't have to stop at home after work before going to a later engagement and time is saved by making fewer trips.

When asked what employees most like about remote work one thing rose above others and that is saving time because of not having to commute. Respondents reported having more time for exercising as well as more family time. Following comments were made:

When working remotely I have spent around an hour every day on outside activities whereas during office days I spend around 2 hours sitting in the car.

Remote work increases relaxation when time is not spent on commuting and this way there is more free time in the day.

Time saved on commuting supports coping because the time spent on commuting can be spent on personal well-being.

More sleep and more time with family.

It can be seen that eliminating the commute can have a direct positive effect on employees' physical health, which in turn promotes mental health. This combined with having more time with family can create a better work-life balance. Additionally, it was mentioned that when not commuting respondents may utilise that time for sleeping more which also helps both physical and mental well-being.

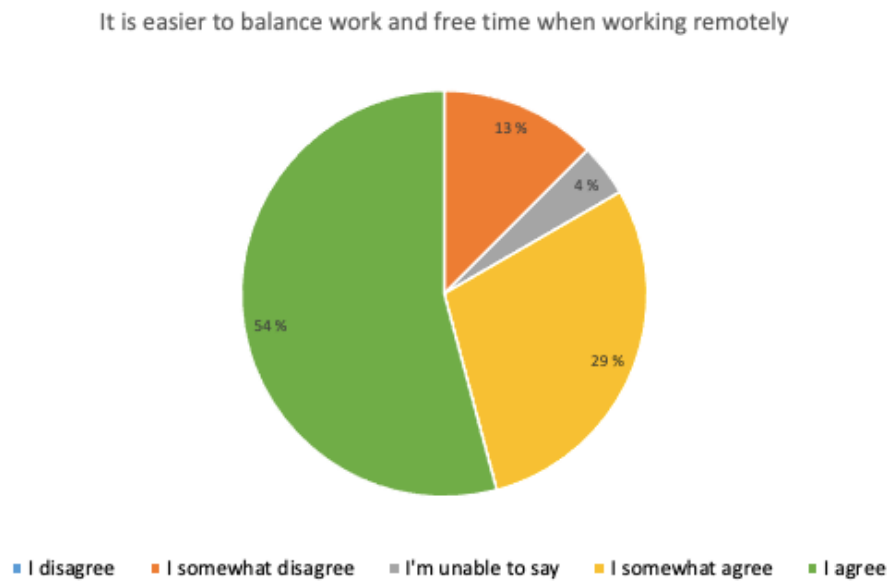


Figure 9. Question 1b

Another aspect that received an 83 % of positive answers was balancing work and free time. This may once again be a result of saving time from the commute or it can be related to being able to manage time and activities in a different way.

Interesting notions that came up in the open-ended answers were that if not feeling productive in the morning one can e.g., go for a jog and work later in the evening and that it is even possible to take a nap and divide the workday in a way that makes work performance better and increases productivity and happiness at work. Being able to tailor working hours to one's needs supports mental well-being and prevents burnout. Answers on what respondents most liked about remote work included:

I often have a better focus on important things... For example, if my focus is lost in the morning, I can work later when my mind is sharp and even go for a refreshing jog in the morning.

Freedom to for example take a nap if I'm tired. Freedom to continue working in the evening if I feel like it.

Scheduling work is more independent. It fits me.

Fitting free time with work.

Another point was made that if there is an appointment the employee needs to get to during the day, they can happily go and finish their work in the evening at home. One respondent also mentioned “I can work from anywhere”. This allows for visiting friends and family or taking “workations” which, as mentioned earlier, helps balance work and free time.

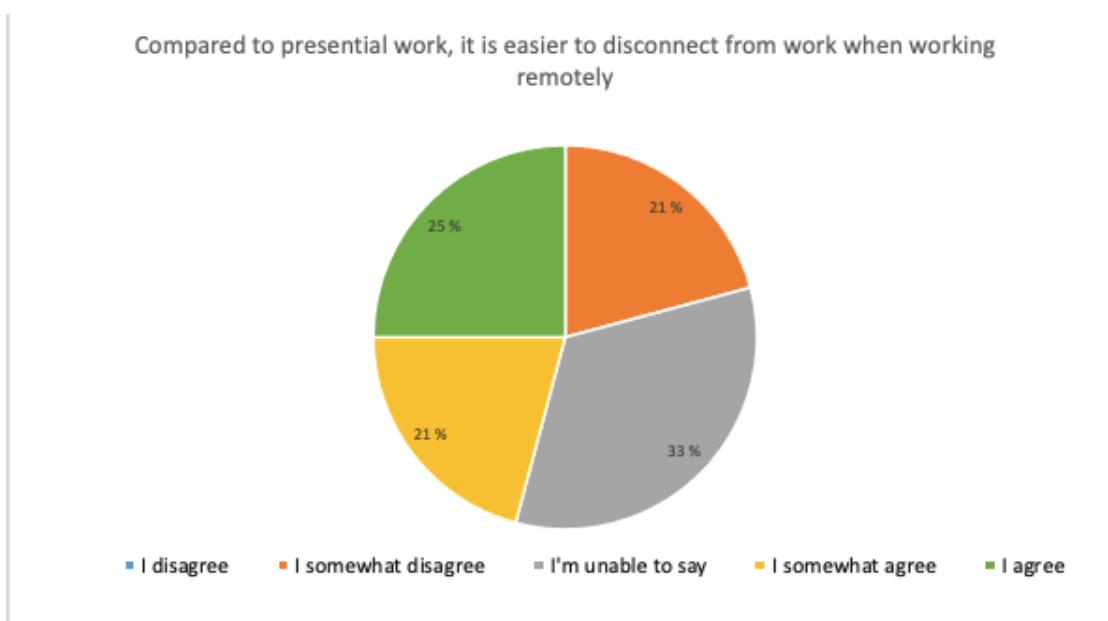


Figure 10. Question 1g

The question in the figure above divided respondents a bit more with both somewhat agree and somewhat disagree getting 21%. There is clearly a divide here as some people might find it easy to disconnect whereas others may be tempted to work longer days when having the possibility to do so. 25% agreed fully, making this question receive a majority of positive answers too. One open-ended answer mentioned directly that “Disconnecting from work is easier, I focus better.”

33% did not know what to say which is quite a big number of people who may not have made up their minds yet. It is positive to note that no one fully disagrees and that 25% find it easier, but it

cannot be ignored that 21 % has not found a positive impact on recovery from remote work. One respondent said:

Working can bother other family members especially when the day stretches.

The answer does not specify if working late is a rare occurrence and happens occasionally when a certain task has to be finished or whether working late is a consequence of finding it hard to disconnect when work equipment is at home.

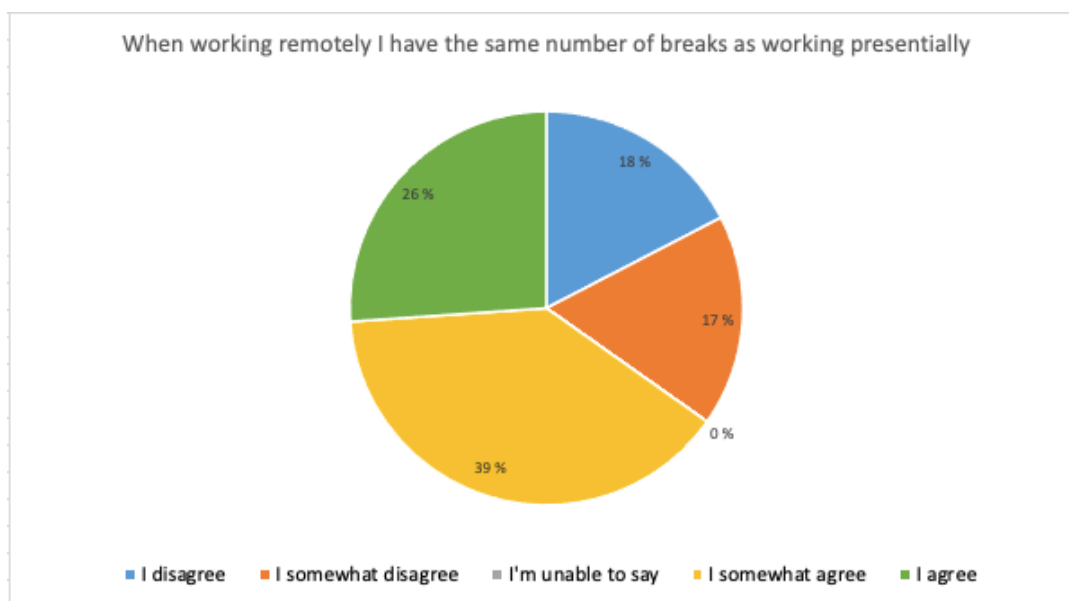


Figure 11. Question 1e

35 % of respondents do not have the same number of breaks when working remotely. A concerning issue is that employees have fewer breaks when working remotely. One respondent answered that what they least like about remote work is that “I should remember to have breaks” which shows that working remotely can make managing workload throughout the day harder. Similarly, another respondent reported that workdays may accidentally get longer because the computer is always readily available. Oppositely, another respondent said that they are heavily reminded of taking breaks and that they do take them.

One employee mentioned that

Sometimes [I get] a feeling that more should be done than what time allows. Be it as it may, this is a thought that I have created for myself and that should be gotten rid of.

As an opposing view, two respondents said

Setting breaks is easier at home than at the office where there aren't really facilities/possibilities to "get away."

In my experience, I can set breaks in a much smarter way when working remotely.

4.4 Considerations for management

This theme includes factors that are more in the control of the management. This includes support from organisation, skills of employees, and ergonomics.

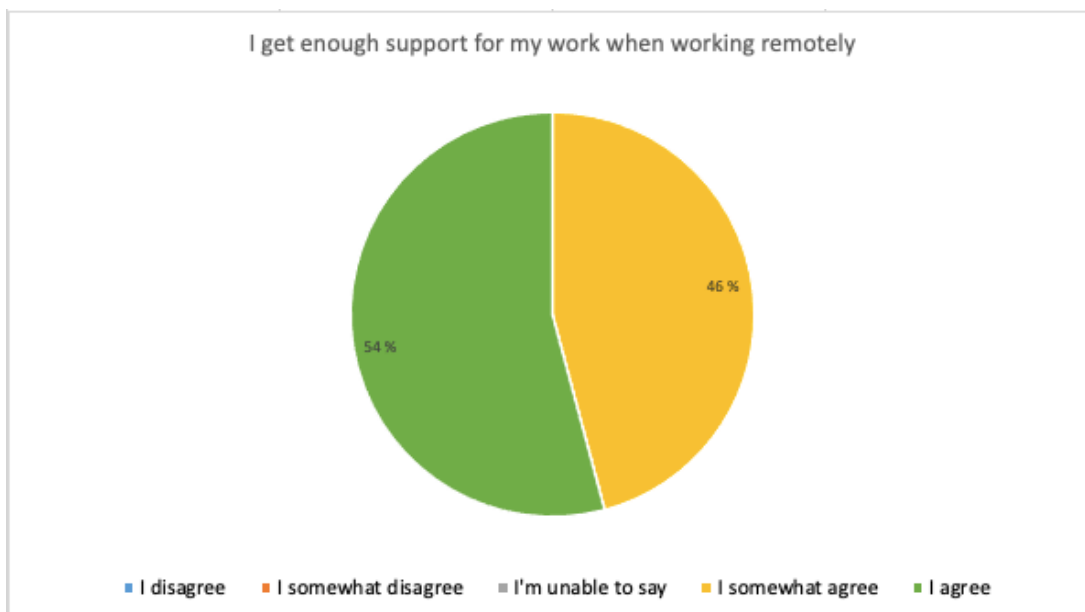


Figure 12. Question 1c

All respondents answered that they get enough support for their work. This question received only positive answers and was not further mentioned in the open-ended questions by anyone. As there

were no negative answers or other mentions, it can be concluded that the organisation provides enough help and resources to support employees' well-being at the moment.

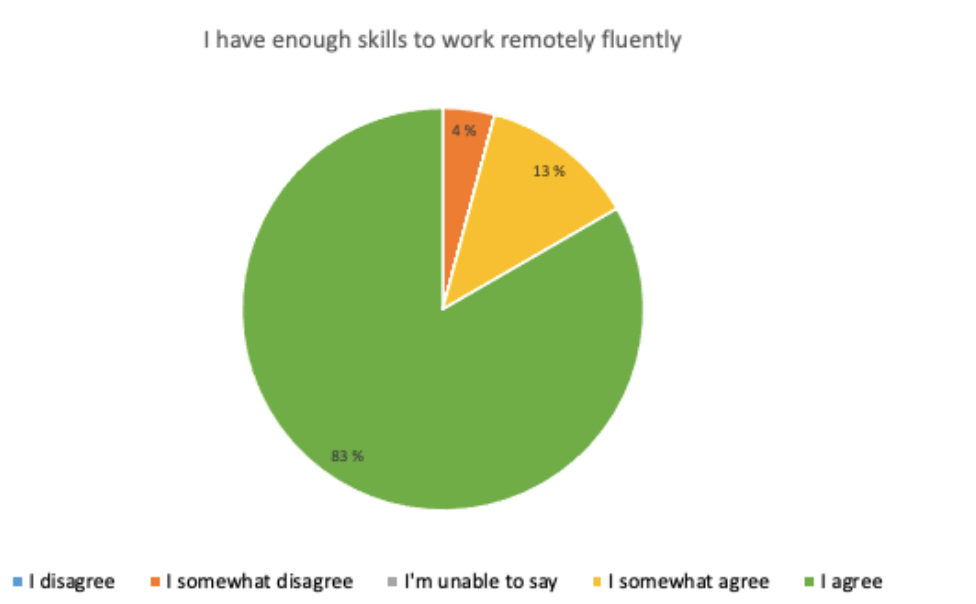


Figure 13. Question 1d

Almost everyone agreed that they have enough skills to work so that being out of the office is not an issue. No mentions were made in open-ended answers about negative aspects of remote work due to the inability to perform tasks either. One respondent mentioned that more complex work tasks might be more difficult to solve on Teams and proposed that when these occur the team could organise an in-office meeting. In other words, some tasks could be done at the office as a preference, but there is not a lack of skills that would hinder work performance.

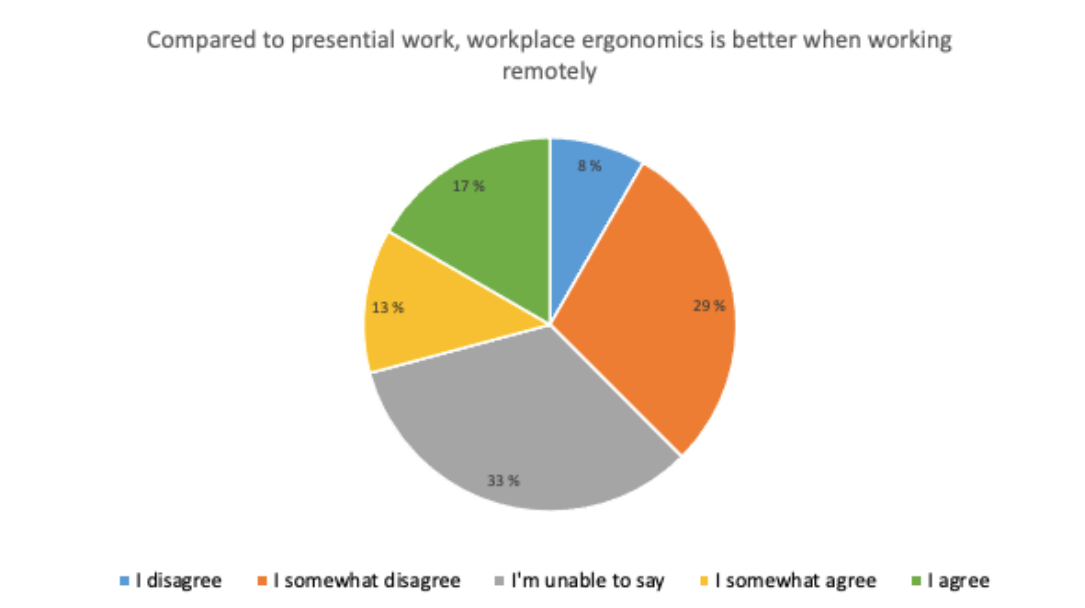


Figure 14. Question 1i

Work ergonomics was mentioned as a point that needs improvement. While other questions received largely positive answers, in this instance 37 % of respondents disagreed or somewhat disagreed. 33 % did not know what to say, maybe indicating that conditions in remote work are quite like those at home since they were not able to notice a difference. On the other hand, 30 % of people said ergonomics were even better at home. It may be that these people have better equipment for themselves than what is offered at the office.

In open-ended questions, 8 respondents mentioned the term “ergonomics”, which is usually interpreted as actual equipment used for work like a chair, table, monitors, a mouse, and keyboard as these are usually what is referred to with “ergonomics” in office work. They hoped that the employer would buy equipment for home use, give discounts for buying it, or in some other way help promote ergonomics in the future if remote work continues. One respondent answered:

[From my employer I wish for] break exercises, constant inspections on the condition of work equipment and equipment that supports ergonomics.

It was not mentioned that anyone was harmed or concerned by a lower level of ergonomics but rather that employees wished for improvements. Most answers on ergonomics were written under the category of what employees wish from their employer going forward. An answer that was in the answer category for negative aspects of remote work said:

Work ergonomics is not quite the same as at the office

4.5 Demand for remote work

Finally, as the goal is to determine whether remote work is something to consider in the future, it is important to ask the employees what they want.

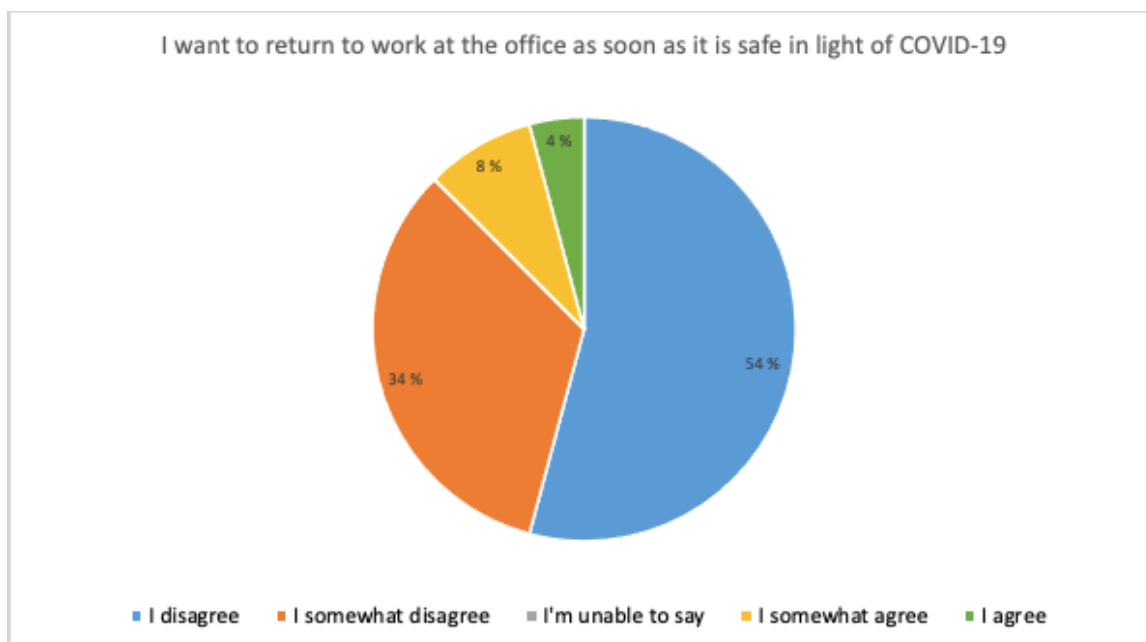


Figure 15. Question 1k

It is clear that remote work has a lot of demand as 88 % disagree with wanting to return to the office. When asked what respondents hope from their employer regarding remote work multiple answers did not specify anything but rather took this opportunity to state they hope they have the possibility to continue remote working in the future. In a similar manner, when asked what they hope regarding returning to the office, respondents continued to advocate for remote work. They hoped for “flexibility” regarding the option to work remotely, they hoped that remote work could

be done according to “personal needs” and “employees’ own wishes” and that they maintain the “freedom of choice” to work remotely as they feel fit.

Respondents were asked to determine an appropriate amount of remote work and instructed this could be given as days per week or they could freely describe what factors determine an appropriate amount in their opinion. Some answers were given as date ranges such as 1-3, 2-3, or 3-5 days and some gave explanations about what they would prefer to do. To make it possible to combine these answers into a representation that is easy to interpret, answers are categorised followingly. Answers mentioning a number of days below or up to three are categorised as “a few days”. Responses that gave a range of days starting from three up to either four or five days as well as answers that describe they mostly prefer remote work are categorised as “mostly/as needed”. Comments from this category are for example:

As necessary, mostly remotely and sometimes at the office.

Sometimes. No policies on how often one should go but everyone could do as they see fit.

Big projects that require a lot of discussions could be done together at the office.

Other tasks could be done as everyone wants either remotely or presential.

The last category is “always” and includes answers that did not indicate any need or want to go to the office.

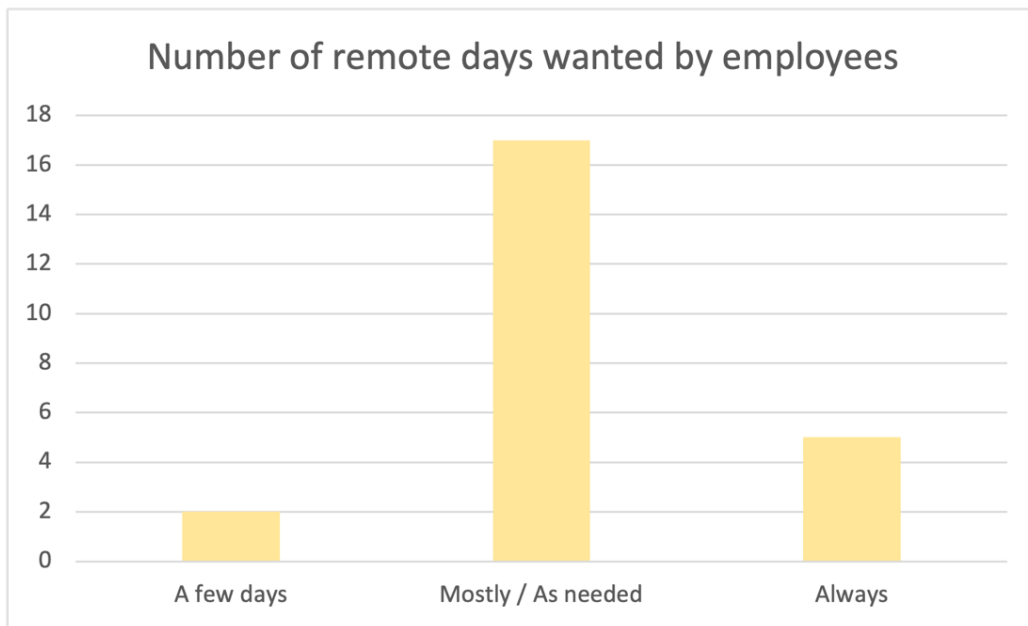


Figure 16. Appropriate number of remote days per week as per employees

It is worth noting that three respondents, one from the group “a few days” and two from the group “mostly/as needed”, stated they would hope for one mandatory office day per week for weekly meetings. Contrarily, three respondents explicitly mentioned they do not feel it is a good idea to make any specific rule regarding the amount and two more mentioned it is important that everyone has free choice. Most respondents did not feel presential work is necessary for doing their work, but it was preferred rather for social interaction.

To me, remote work could even be a full-time permanent solution. Of course, it might be good to have some headquarters where colleagues can be met sometimes.

Being at the office does not affect my work ... Of course, it is nice to see and talk with colleagues sometimes.

It is rather clear the organisation’s employees heavily lean towards working remotely in the future. When asked for least favourite things about remote work, one respondent said “I cannot think of anything. The thought of not having the possibility anymore.”

4.6 Other findings

This chapter discusses findings that were not considered by the researcher beforehand but came up in the open-ended questions and provided interesting points. Remote work allows one to personalise lighting and temperature which were mentioned as positives and are also related to ergonomics. Individual differences are great in what type of lighting feels adequate, differences varying from the direction, colour, brightness, and luminance of the light to how much natural light is wanted and how even the lighting is. These need to be in a balance with the work and the worker. (Launis and Lehtelä 2011, 266.) When resting a comfortable temperature only has a range of a few degrees and it is different for each individual (ibid., 283). One respondent said they enjoy being able to set the temperature to their liking at the home office, whereas two others said they do not enjoy being too hot in the summer or not having air conditioning. These answers may be a consequence of having performed the survey during summer and it can be questioned whether this is a topic that in reality carries a lot of weight regarding remote working.

Another topic that divided opinions was food. Some respondents said they enjoy remote work as they have more options for eating out as well as healthier and more affordable food at home. On the contrary, some said it makes life more difficult not having food ready, having to cook between work, and having to pay for their own coffee and tea. Excluding the latter, these issues can be overcome by preparing on the previous day.

One respondent also mentioned they enjoy not having to be in a cubicle but instead having a pleasant view of the forest when working from home. Many others also appreciated having their own office room as opposed to working in an open office.

One respondent answered that they wished the employer would provide insurance for remote work. This is a point to consider because the obligatory insurance that covers accidents at work has a narrower coverage when working remotely; it only covers accidents that happen while working at the workstation (for example if one falls off their chair) but stops when the employee gets up and leaves the room (for example to get coffee) (Kuka korvaa, jos etätyöpäivän aikana sattuu tapaturma? Vakuutuksen kattavuus voi tulla työntekijälle yllätyksenä 2018; Mitkä ovat työnantajan velvollisuudet etätyössä? 2021). Knowing that possible accidents during the workday are covered by the employer might make employees feel more at ease.

One respondent also mentioned that they are glad their pets do not need to spend so much time alone. This could be considered as another aspect of having more family time which promotes happiness and well-being. Although this might be true for all employees, one mentioned that they are saving money by not having to drive to work every day. Saving on gas money or bus fare daily can add up to a nice albeit small monthly amount and so support employees' financial well-being.

5 Conclusions

The main research question of how does remote work affect employees' well-being was answered; remote work has mostly positive effects on well-being. Time management and work-life balance improved which have effects both at and outside work. Also, respondents were able to focus better, and the psychological strain of work was experienced to have lessened, possibly as a consequence. The second research question of what aspects of well-being are affected was also answered and the effect to these aspects was discussed in the results. The research also reached its goal of finding a recommendation on what the commissioner should do regarding remote work policy in their organisation which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

The following categorisation follows the same division made earlier in the thesis. It is a result of comparing data found from thematised responses to aspects found when researching data for the theory part of the thesis. The figure below shows aspects of well-being, what topics fall under each aspect and what the possible outcomes are based on theory and respondents' answers.

Main effects of remote work discussed in theory	Job satisfaction	Work-life balance	Support from surroundings	Role of the employer
Aspects under main effects discussed in results	How demanding work is	Better work-life-balance	Being alone with work tasks	Support and resources from organisation
	Psychological strain	Time saved from commuting	Loneliness	Ergonomics
		Disconnecting from work		
		Time management		
Consequences	Possible increase in stress	Possibly less breaks/longer days	Possibly less collaboration	Having skills to perform work tasks
	Productivity	Can organise the day better	Can focus better	Physical health
	Motivation	More sleep		
		More exercise		
		Productivity		
	Motivation			

Figure 17. Division of aspects of well-being in remote work and their consequences

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction depends on how demanding work is and how much psychological strain it puts on the employee. If work feels too demanding when doing it remotely, this can increase stress but if the work is not causing too much strain, job satisfaction is maintained and as a consequence, the employee is more productive and motivated. Remote work removes the commute and allows for more time for activities that promote well-being which also improves productivity both at work and outside of it. As explained by Beckmann (2016), this increased autonomy improves motivation. Some may find it hard to disconnect from work which in turn can reduce well-being. Another aspect that can reduce well-being is having less human contact, but this in itself can be seen as a positive too, as fewer distractions mean it is less taxing to the brain to perform work tasks.

75 % said they do not feel more is demanded of them when working remotely, although some reported they feel they do not have enough time to do everything they feel they are supposed to. A study done by Statistics Finland which found that remote workers estimated levels of hurry and

tightness of schedule to be the same as those of presential workers (Lehto & Sutela 2006, 40). Remote work itself should not increase the number of tasks that are to be performed so an argument could be made that more is not demanded but in fact, this feeling is a result of stress. However, respondents did not report increased levels of psychological stress. It requires further studying to find out why employees feel they need to put extra effort when working remotely. One possible aspect to consider is whether workload feels harder to handle as there are more ICT tools involved and this feels inconvenient or less natural to some. This may affect motivation negatively.

Only 4 % felt more is demanded of them when working remotely which shows actual work tasks and performing them is not that different when doing them remotely for the majority. It was also found by Nijp et al. (2016) that remote work does not affect job demands. This suggests that when working remotely, the challenges do not lie in doing the work itself but are elsewhere and have more to do with how working is *experienced* by individuals. Psychological stress from remote work can be due to a variety of factors and more research is needed to find out exactly what those factors are, to determine how to alleviate that stress. One respondent mentioned that close attention to how employees are coping is hoped from management. It could be suggested that management has the most important role in creating a low-stress environment. This can be done by delegating, managing their team's workload, steering away from a culture of overworking and authoritarian leadership, and having an ongoing open two-way conversation with employees.

Many respondents reported they can focus and perform better when working remotely because of fewer distractions. This may explain why respondents also reported a decreased level of self-observed psychological stress. As there is less stimulus to the brain it does not require as much to focus and mental fatigue is minimised. As Dr. Brockis explains it, our increasingly busy working lives are filled with activity from start to finish and our brain consumes relatively much more energy than the rest of the body. Not giving the brain time to rest prevents learning, forming long-term memories, and making rational thoughts. (Brockis 2019, 146-147.) Minimising distractions allows employees to process what they are doing which prevents mental stress. This in turn increases productivity.

Work-life balance

Time management and therefore also work-life balance were observed to improve when working remotely. A big factor in improving time management was the time gained from eliminating commuting which improved employees' well-being by allowing them more time to sleep, exercise, and be with family. These findings are nearly identical to those of Dryselius (2021). This could be argued to be the most significant positive effect remote work has to offer as sleep and exercise are crucial to physical well-being and being with loved ones is an important part of mental well-being. What is more, these are found directly from Maslow's hierarchy of needs and therefore are fundamental to one's well-being. Remote work also allows employees to organise their day better and work when they feel most productive. This freedom creates a more motivated workforce and better-quality work for the organisation.

Some found it difficult to manage workload and may accidentally work too long days or not have enough breaks, although most of the respondents reported they did not have fewer breaks when working remotely. Having the same number of breaks goes against the reported trend where remote workers forget to have their breaks as reported in a multitude of articles and company-specific research that came out after the world transferred to remote work during the COVID-19 outbreak. It was found that the organisation encourages employees to have breaks, and this might explain why employees in this particular case take care of this aspect of well-being more than average. A supervisor shows example of what is allowed and acceptable. By talking about the work environment and well-being, a culture is created in which work issues are allowed to become secondary at times to focus on employee well-being (Kuusela 2015, 113-114). The type of organisational culture management creates directly affects the well-being of employees.

Different respondents taking a different number of breaks shows that having them comes down to the employees themselves. Working remotely gives the employee more freedom to plan their work and as a result, depending on the individual, this can create more balance and healthier habits or do the opposite. It appears that leadership and management have an influence on how well employees take care of themselves. This raises the question of whether a more hands-on or strict management style would ensure well-being, but numerous studies indicate taking freedoms away from employees would only have negative effects on well-being. This conclusion is supported by

Spagnoli et al. (2020) where they found that an authoritarian leadership style in remote work increased the effects of workaholism and created more stress.

Most employees did not feel it is easier to disconnect from work when working remotely with many respondents answering they did not know how to answer. One aspect needing improvement and further investigating is how to help those with workaholic tendencies to let go of work both mentally and in the sense of not working extra hours even when the equipment is at home.

Support from surroundings

The purpose of contrasting the findings of this thesis to Maslow's hierarchy is to show that the aspects affected are ones that influence well-being on such a foundational level. Therefore, such a simple fact as having more time with family can have a massive effect on one's well-being. When it comes to the social level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, while sense of belonging and inclusion suffer in relation to the work community, these improve in relation to family. Oakman et al. (2020) found that social connections outside of work affect the individual's well-being when working remotely. Human contact is necessary for psychological well-being. As some respondents suggested, it may be a good idea to arrange meetings at an agreed-upon time occasionally, so those who want to see their colleagues have their needs met but at the same time those who prefer remote work do not feel pressured into going to the office for what feels unnecessary to them.

While having interpersonal contacts and conversations cannot entirely be made the responsibility of a workplace, an effort could be made to organise meetings at the office as well as gatherings outside of work if employees so wish. One respondent suggested that meetings could be organised for more complex tasks or projects as they might be easier face to face while daily work can be handled well remotely. Many respondents reported they can focus better when working remotely so remote work could be set as the preferred method to handle ordinary work tasks. This means adopting a hybrid model where work is a mix of both presential and remote work.

For more informal exchange of thoughts about work or even just socialising, one possible solution is to establish a "virtual water cooler" – an informal chat room where casual conversation can be had which is what some respondents missed. What is more, the need for being loved can be met

even better by spending more time with loved ones. In fact, Fried, Hansson and Heiskanen (2014) suggest that interactions had with a spouse, children, family, friends, and neighbours are even more fulfilling than those had with colleagues. However, if one feels the desire to work among people, there are always coworking spaces available. Afterwork activities that allow one to be among people and be more social are also an option. (ibid., 119.)

Ergonomics

Physical well-being is another aspect from Maslow's hierarchy that is heavily affected by remote work. Ergonomics suffered the biggest negative impact and many respondents hoped that the employer would aid in making home offices more ergonomic. Most of the respondents heavily favoured remote working and if the organisation decides to follow this demand, focusing on ergonomics might be something to consider.

Respondents gave positive mentions to lighting and temperature. Temperature can be manipulated with clothing at the workplace but at home it is possible to completely individualise the temperature of the surroundings to one's liking. Another thing that can be personalised at home is lighting. Office lights may be cold and harsh and people prone to migraines or visual fatigue in general may enjoy setting the lights on a warmer and softer tone. Remote work had a positive effect on these two, but it may be a good idea to offer employees more support when it comes to ergonomics. This can be done by lending equipment from the office or acquiring more equipment as needed to home offices to avoid any possible physical strain as researched by Hanna et al. (2019).

5.1 How management can support remote workers

It is established that remote work should be continued due to its popularity and the effects it has had on well-being in the commissioner's organisation. Next, it is important to look at how the organisation can support remote workers for two reasons: to tailor remote working to suit the employees' needs and to mitigate possible negative effects remote work may have on some aspects of well-being. Recommendations on how management can improve the well-being of employees when working remotely are gathered in the following table. The table functions as a summary of the points already presented earlier in the thesis.

Table 1. Suggestions on how management can support well-being in remote work

Suggestion	Comments
Presential meetings or presential workdays	Can be organised when needed e.g. to work on projects or when the team feels they want to see each other in person. Manager / team leader finds out when needed, sets a date, and is flexible to remote workers' needs and schedules.
Ergonomic workstations	A status update on employees' working conditions could be made. Employees can be asked periodically how their equipment is functioning and if they have encountered any issues. Teams could have exercise breaks together (e.g. by using platforms made for this).
Doing regular well-being check-ins	More meetings that are centered around well-being and not work or performance. Addressing the level of well-being and possible concerns through conversations or surveys. Periodical questionnaires to inspect the level of well-being.
Promoting a healthy number of breaks and a healthy length for the workday	More discussion and encouragement related to work-life balance. Organising and delegating tasks so that team members do not have to work overtime too often and have time for breaks.
Providing training and support for work tasks and technology	Addressing what tasks team members need to perform and what are the most efficient ways to do those. Providing technology and training to be able to adopt new efficient ways.

Informing employees and increasing awareness	Providing information on preventative care and health care options as necessary. Advising what to look for and how to self-evaluate.
----------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

All in all, every single respondent agreed that they want to continue remote work. Differences were found in the amount of remote work that the employees found the most fitting, with the two furthest opinions being one mandatory office day per week and going only when agreed upon and if convenient. Considering that many aspects of well-being experienced a positive effect from remote work and that employees explicitly expressed their willingness to work remotely, the natural conclusion is to continue mainly remote work and organise presential meetings as needed to ease some tasks as well as get face to face time with colleagues. A strict model describing a mandatory number of days for presential work was thought by respondents to be unnecessary or even harmful to well-being and as mentioned by respondents, it should be left to the teams to determine when presential meetings are needed and wanted.

Respondents felt they had enough skills to work remotely, and no one specifically mentioned needing more training or equipment (other than in relation to ergonomics). However, as recommended by the Centre for Occupational Health, it is recommended to conduct check-ins on how employees are doing. Support from the organisation is essential in creating a well-functioning workforce and productive working conditions whether it be in the form of resources such as computers, monitors, or any type of help for daily tasks. As mentioned by Vander Elst et al. (2017), how remote work is organised and how the organisation supports remote work, may limit the extent to which it affects employees' well-being. In conclusion, the employer has to provide resources, training, and regular check-ins to evaluate the level of skills and well-being of their employees. Without knowing the needs of their employees, the organisation cannot provide adequate support. As many companies have struggled to make employees feel motivated during the sudden need for remote work, it is a positive sign that employees feel they have the needed resources and help to make remote work just as pleasant of an experience as presential work when it comes to doing actual work tasks.

5.2 Addressing negative responses

As results were mostly positive and the view adopted in the thesis is that remote work has mostly positive impacts, it is important to take a closer look into where negative opinions may have risen and what can be learnt from them. In this chapter negative answers in closed-ended questions are contrasted to what the respondents said in open-ended questions in an attempt to find what the cause of negative responses may be and to make any other possibly interesting findings. 10 respondents gave no negative answers and 14 out of 24 respondents gave some negative responses in the closed-ended questions towards an aspect of well-being. "I cannot say" answers were not counted as positive or negative. Answers 1a-1i were considered here as the rest were not questions directly about aspects of well-being.

Six of these respondents only gave one negative answer and in four instances it was related to ergonomics, which has already been established as a negative and discussed separately. One of the six answered negatively regarding time management but in open-ended questions mentioned in remote work they most enjoy saving time from commuting. This creates the question whether respondents did not consider that time saved from commuting allows for better time management by having more time. Another possibility could be that this time was spent on something the respondent feels is unproductive and therefore perceived time management did not improve when commuting was switched to some other activity. The sixth respondent gave a negative response to having breaks and in closed-ended questions reported they feel there are too many tasks for the time they have.

There were three respondents who gave two negative answers. Two of these respondents gave negative answers to work-life balance and having breaks. In closed-ended questions, one of them mentioned they are able to organise the workday and breaks at home in a much more convenient way as well as having more time for family and both of them mentioned as a positive that time is saved from commuting. These yet again seem like contradicting answers, although one of them mentioned that days may be longer because it is tempting to continue work when the equipment is at home which may provide an answer as to why work-life balance has not seen an improvement. Yet again it can be seen that breaks are thought to be easier to organise in remote work but they are actually not had. The third respondent gave negative answers to disconnecting from work and ergonomics and in closed-ended questions told that they do not remember to have enough

breaks. It could be interpreted that at home there are no co-workers around that have breaks or distract from tasks and it is easy to stay working without disconnecting during the day.

Three respondents gave three negative answers. All of them gave negative answers to ergonomics and having breaks and two of them to disconnecting from work and one to psychological strain. Similar to previously mentioned responses, one of these respondents mentioned in open-ended questions that having breaks is easier at home. It could be concluded that the facilities for having breaks are better at home as one can leave the “office” by going to the living room and have a more relaxing break as one would have normally in the office break room but despite having the possibility of relaxing breaks people tend to not have them.

One respondent gave four negative answers, and these were regarding having breaks, disconnecting from work, psychological strain, and feeling like more is demanded of them in remote work. In open-ended questions, they mentioned having peace for working. It could be theorised that having more peace would ease the psychological strain so there appear to be other factors that create difficulties.

The last one of the fourteen gave seven negative answers. These were regarding time management, work-life balance, having enough skills for remote work, being able to focus better, disconnecting from work, psychological strain, and ergonomics. This respondent mentioned saving time as a positive and ergonomics as a negative in open-ended questions, but other explanations were not given. Considering there seem to be contradicting answers as well as negative responses for which reasons could not be detected from open-ended answers, it could be useful to conduct further research. This will be discussed in chapter 6.3.

6 Discussion

6.1 Validity and reliability

In qualitative research, saturation is reached when new answers would not bring new information or add any new value to the research (Kananen & Gates 2011, 53). It cannot be confidently stated

that saturation was reached because, although there were many similar and repetitive answers, it cannot be predicted whether the individuals who did not answer the survey would not have said something that had not already come out. However, since in this research qualitative methods were combined with a quantitative approach, it could be said that enough responses were received to make valid conclusions as the response percentage was high enough (73 %). Depending on multiple factors such as sample size, time restrictions, informing respondents, topic etc., response percentages may vary greatly. In general survey answer percentages lay around 50 per cent (Vehkalahti 2014, 44). This conclusion is also due to the qualitative nature of the survey because as mentioned, qualitative research does not depend on the number of subjects (Kananen 2014, 95).

To evaluate reliability, as already mentioned, it must be evaluated whether the same results would be gotten if the research was repeated or if the research was done by someone else. There were no answers that left room for interpretation and that could have been misunderstood or manipulated. It can be stated that other researchers would receive the same responses as gathered with the survey that was conducted for this thesis. What could change with another researcher are how themes were created and the way data was organised.

The planning of the thesis was documented and objectives as well as how to arrive at them were planned out. Subsequently, the implementation was documented, and finally, the success and limitations of the research were evaluated. This allows the reader to assess each part of the research and helps deliver transparency which is needed to determine whether this research can be applied in other cases i.e. if the results have transferability. Generalisation may not be possible per se, as the research was conducted in a specific population in specific circumstances. However, transferability means that the results have validity in a similar setting (Kananen & Gates 2011, 68) and this can be said to be achieved.

6.2 Ethicality

No information should be made public that the commissioner wants to keep private about their organisation, employees, or practices. The survey conducted for this thesis was anonymous meaning that subjects answering the survey will remain anonymous and their answers cannot be linked to them. As the sample size is relatively small, the decision was made not to ask for any identifying

information in the survey regarding age, gender, job position etc. as there is a possibility of recognising the respondent from this data. When conducting research, it is not generally appropriate to publish data that allows respondents to be recognised (The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland 2019, 57) and therefore this information is not gathered, and the name of the organisation is not released. The commissioner was made aware that a thesis is a public document and that it will be published online. The commissioner was made aware of and consulted on what data regarding the commissioner is included in the thesis and they were given a reasonable amount of time to review the thesis before its publication.

Vilkka (2007, 164) writes that when respondents are given the promise that the survey is confidential, this has to be maintained throughout the research including in the report. The respondents are answering with the precedent that they can be honest, and their answers do not trace back to them and the researcher has an ethical duty to maintain this promise. This was maintained because no identifying information was asked from which a respondent could be recognised. No one was asked whether they had already answered during the period the survey was live or after. Forms provide a timestamp from when a response came in but as no one was asked whether they had participated, the time stamp did not provide any information on who had answered and what.

Respondents were also informed of the purpose of the research and that their answers will be both used for this thesis and to provide a base for the upcoming decision about remote work in the company they work at. This was communicated at the beginning of the survey in written form and orally in a companywide meeting prior to going live with the survey. The commissioner was given an opportunity to review questions before the survey launched and the final survey was drafted in cooperation.

6.3 Limitations and future considerations

Questions were worded in a way that may have hindered getting the most accurate data. For example, when making a statement that is positive in nature e.g. "Time management is easier when working remotely", it is hard to know if people who disagreed did so because they think it is harder or because it simply isn't easier. Some questions may have been clearer if worded as negatives, in this particular case "Time management is *more difficult* when working remotely". This way

it could have seen if some find it harder and answers that disagree would mean that it is either not harder or it is easier. This wording has a similar problem as it could not be determined which of the two disagreeing respondents would mean, but the benefit would have been that it could have been ruled out whether time management can actually be affected negatively as opposed to now knowing it may not be affected or possibly even be affected negatively. The benefit to current wording is knowing it has a positive effect on some, however, negative experiences are not explored enough. The current wording was used because it was agreed with the commissioner that the questions should have a positive connotation to them.

Interviews could be conducted to get further information and to clarify and elaborate on the points made. The data collected in this thesis could serve as a good baseline for a thematised interview. With the information that is now known, it is easier to create more specific questions and it is possible to find more in-depth data as there is already data that could now be broken down even further. It is already established rather successfully what aspects are impacted positively by remote work. This thesis focused on *what* aspects were impacted as perceived by employees and *how*. What could be done next is further explore *why* some aspects did not improve or why they received somewhat negative responses. This could be done to find more ways for management to support those aspects or find out what employees can do themselves.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Original survey in Finnish

Työhyvinvointi etätyössä

Kyselyn tarkoitus on kartoittaa, miten etätyö on koettu tulevaisuuden toimintamallia ajatellen. Kyselyn vastauksia käytetään myös kyselyntekijän opinnäytetyön materiaalina. Kysely on anonyyminen. Kyselyn arvioitu vastausaika on 5 minuuttia.

* Pakollinen

Etätyöhön liittyviä väittämiä

1. Valitse vastausvaihtoehto, joka on lähinnä omaa kokemustasi. *

	Olen eri mieltä	Olen jokseenkin eri mieltä	En osaa sanoa	Olen jokseenkin samaa mieltä	Olen samaa mieltä
a Etätyössä ajankäytönhallinta on helpompaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b Etätyössä työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapaino on parempi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c Saan tarpeeksi tukea työntekooni myös etätyössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d Taitoni riittävät sujuvaan etätyöhön	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e Etätyössä tuotan työtä saman verran kuin lähityössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f Pystyn keskittymään etätöissä paremmin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g Etätyössä työstä irtaantuminen on helpompaa kuin lähityössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h Etätyössä työn psyykinen kuormitus on pienempi kuin lähityössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i Etätyössä työergonomia on parempi kuin lähityössä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j Tuntuu, että etätyössä minulta vaaditaan enemmän	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k Haluan palata työskentelemään toimistolla heti, kun se on koronaturvallista	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Olen eri mieltä	Olen jokseenkin eri mieltä	En osaa sanoa	Olen jokseenkin samaa mieltä	Olen samaa mieltä
I Toimiston toimitilat soveltuvat hyvin toimistolla työskentelyyn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Avoimia kysymyksiä

2. Sopiva määrä etätöitä on mielestäni... *(voit antaa vastauksen muodossa pv/vko tai kertoa vapaamuotoisesti, mikä määrittelee sinulle toivomasi etätöiden määrän)* *

3. Mieluisin asia etätöissä on... *

4. Epämieluisin asia etätöissä on... *

5. Työnantajalta toivoisin etätyötä varten... *

6. Toimistolle paluussa toivoisin huomioitavan... *

Tämä ei ole Microsoftin luomaa tai suosittelemaa sisältöä. Lähettämäsi tiedot lähetetään lomakkeen omistajalle.

 Microsoft Forms

Appendix 2. Survey questions in English

Työhyvinvointi etätyössä

Well-being when working remotely

Kyselyn tarkoitus on kartoittaa, miten etätyö on koettu tulevaisuuden toimintamallia ajatellen. Kyselyn vastauksia käytetään myös kyselyntekijän opinnäytetyön materiaalina. Kysely on anonyyminen. Kyselyn arvioitu vastausaika on 5 minuuttia.

The purpose of this survey is to find out how remote work has been experienced in order to determine a working model for the future. The answers of this survey are also used as material for the survey maker's thesis. The survey is anonymous. The estimated time to complete the survey is 5 minutes.

* Pakollinen

* Mandatory

Etätyöhön liittyviä väittämiä

Statements on remote work

1. Valitse vastausvaihtoehto, joka on lähinnä omaa kokemustasi. *

Choose the answer that is closest to your experience

	Olen eri mieltä <i>I disagree</i>	Olen joksikin eri mieltä <i>I somewhat disagree</i>	En osaa sanoa <i>I cannot say</i>	Olen joksikin samaa mieltä <i>I somewhat agree</i>	Olen samaa mieltä <i>I agree</i>
a Etätyössä ajankäytönhallinta on helpompaa <i>Time management is easier when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b Etätyössä työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapaino on parempi <i>It is easier to balance work and free time when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c Saan tarpeeksi tukea työntekooni myös etätyössä <i>I get enough support for my work when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d Taitoni riittävät sujuvaan etätyöhön <i>I have enough skills to work remotely fluently</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e Etätyössä tauotan työtä saman verran kuin lähityössä <i>When working remotely I have the same number of breaks as working presentially</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f Pystyn keskittymään etätyössä paremmin <i>I can focus better when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g Etätyössä työstä irtaantuminen on helpompaa kuin lähityössä <i>Compared to presential work, it is easier to disconnect from work when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h Etätyössä työn psykkinen kuormitus on pienempi kuin lähityössä <i>Compared to presential work, the psychological strain of work is lesser when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i Etätyössä työergonomia on parempi kuin lähityössä <i>Compared to presential work, workplace ergonomics is better when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j Tuntuu, että etätyössä minulta vaaditaan enemmän <i>I feel like more is demanded of me when working remotely</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k Haluan palata työskentelemään toimistolla heti, kun se on koronaturvallista <i>I want to return to work at the office as soon as it is safe in light of COVID-19</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Olen eri mieltä	Olen jokseenkin eri mieltä	En osaa sanoa	Olen jokseenkin samaa mieltä	Olen samaa mieltä
I Toimiston toimitilat soveltuvat hyvin toimistolla työskentelyyn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The office facilities are good for working at the office

Avoimia kysymyksiä

Open-ended questions

2. Sopiva määrä etätöitä on mielestäni... *(voit antaa vastauksen muodossa pv/vko tai kertoa vapaamuotoisesti, mikä määrittelee sinulle toivomasi etätöiden määrän)* *

In my opinion, a good amount of remote work is... (you may give your answer in the form of days/week or freely discuss what defines the amount of remote work you would like)

3. Mieluisin asia etätöissä on... *

What I most like about remote work is...

4. Epämieluisin asia etätöissä on... *

What I least like about remote work is...

5. Työnantajalta toivoisin etätyötä varten... *

What I wish from my employer for remote work is...

6. Toimistolle paluussa toivoisin huomioitavan... *

In returning to the office I hope it is taken into account that...