





## A summary

Many workplaces are heading back to the normal after 1,5 years of continuous telecommuting. However, we are beginning to understand that the normal we know is being subsided by the new normal. At Miltton we have both personally and through our clients noticed that no one knows exactly what is coming so we decided to find out and outline it for all of us.

In May 2021 we arranged a survey to Miltton's client organizations and to a wide range of working-age people in Finland and Sweden. A survey to Miltton's client was conducted through Webropol and it got 275 answers. The larger survey in Finland and Sweden was conducted as a panel survey by Bilendi and there were altogether 966 answers from Finland and 940 from Sweden.

The survey studied people's attitudes towards remote work, coming back to the office and their views on how work life could be made better in the future – especially when many of us will continue working remotely or following some kind of a hybrid work model.

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# The basics

According to the survey 40% of the respondents in Finland and 39% in Sweden worked remotely during the pandemic either full time or partly. On the other hand, 58% of the Finnish respondents ja 51% of the Swedish respondents were unable to telecommute due to the nature of their work.

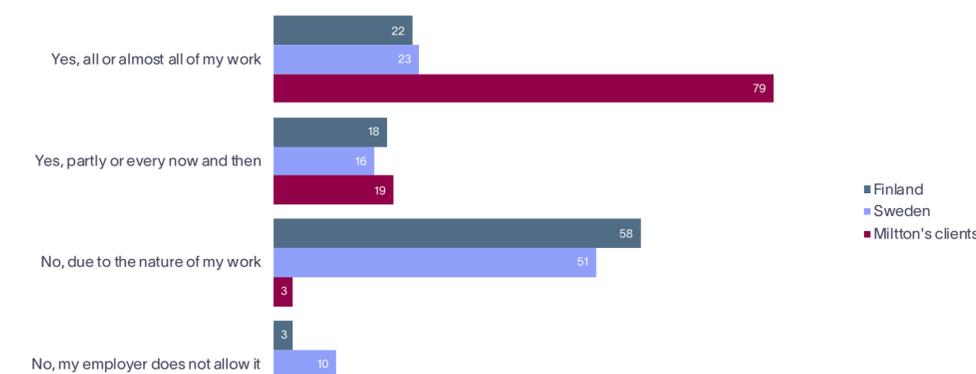
The percentages shifted in case of Miltton's clients. Only 3 percent of them were unable to work remotely during the pandemic. Up to 79% of them worked remotely full time and 19% partly.

This can be explained by the fact that most of Miltton's clients were represented in the survey by members of management teams and other directors and supervisors whereas people answering the country-specific survey were mostly white-collar workers, subordinates, and employees whose job demanded time at the office or workplace.

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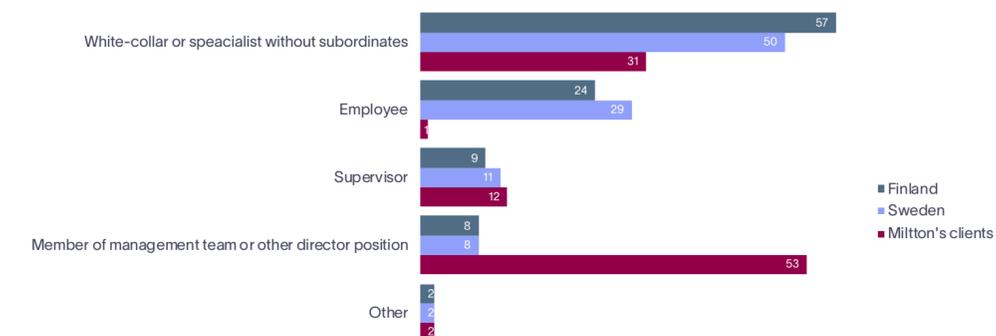
## Working remotely

Are you currently telecommuting in your current job? // Numbers are percentages, % // n=4830 (FIN+SWE), n=275 (Miltton's clients)



## Background information

Which of the following best describes your position in the organization? // Numbers are percentages, % // n=1906 (FIN + SWE), n=275 (Miltton's clients)



# Remote work is enjoyable and maybe even too efficient

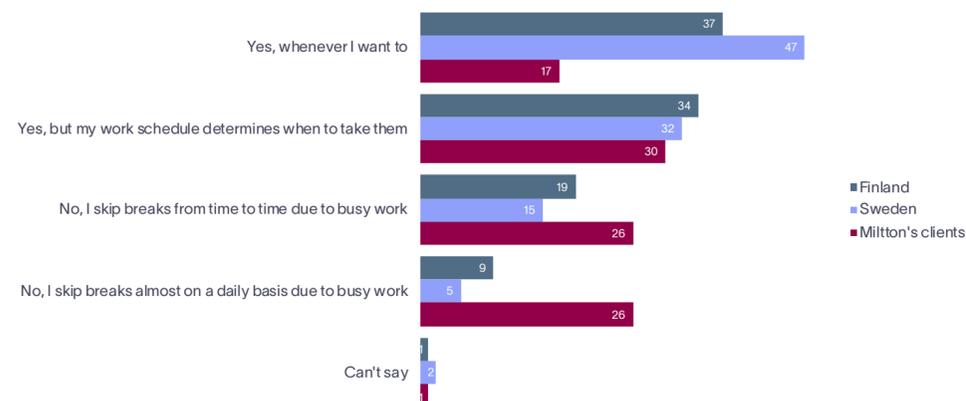
Most of the respondents in Finland and Sweden saw remote work as enjoyable or neutral. However, the experience on remote work was perceived as slightly more negative among Milton's clients.

In general, remote work was seen as being more effective than work done at the office. Altogether 53% of the Finnish respondents and 50% of the Swedish respondents experienced remote work as significantly or slightly more efficient than office work. Among Milton's clients the same percentage was 49.

On the other hand, the survey unveiled some real shortcomings in working remotely. For example, about third (Finland 29%, Sweden 33%, Milton's clients 28%) of the respondents revealed that they had been working while ill during the past year even though they know they should have been resting. In addition, up to 52% of Milton's clients told they had skipped breaks during workdays either daily or from time to time because of a busy schedule.

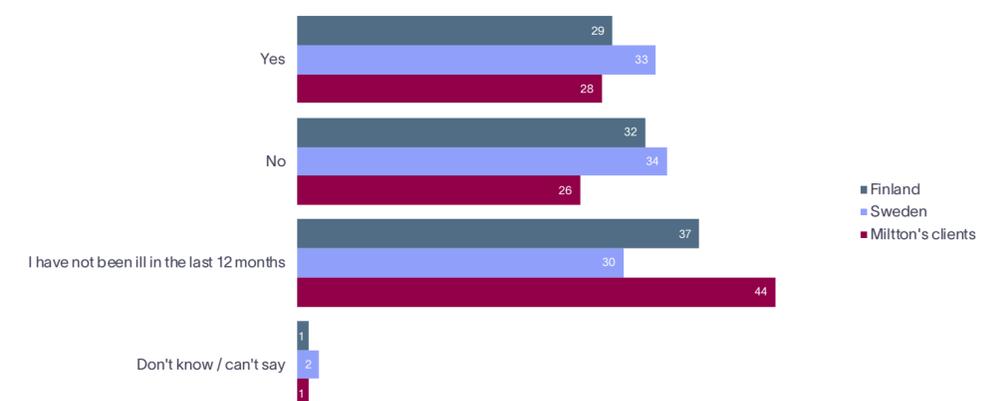
## Ability to take breaks during the day

Can you take all statutory breaks (coffee and lunch breaks) during your working day? // Numbers are percentages, % // n=1906 (FIN + SWE), n=274 (Milton's clients)



## Working while ill

Have you worked while ill during the previous 12 months? (Having a condition when you should have rested instead of doing work) // Numbers are percentages, % // n=1906 (FIN + SWE), n=275 (Milton's clients)



# Well-being calls for breaks, clear communications and adequate tools

Remote work has also put a spotlight on our meeting and remote interaction skills and routines. 70% of the Finnish and 75% of the Swedish respondents and 87% of Milton's clients believed that the number of remote meetings will continue to increase in the future.

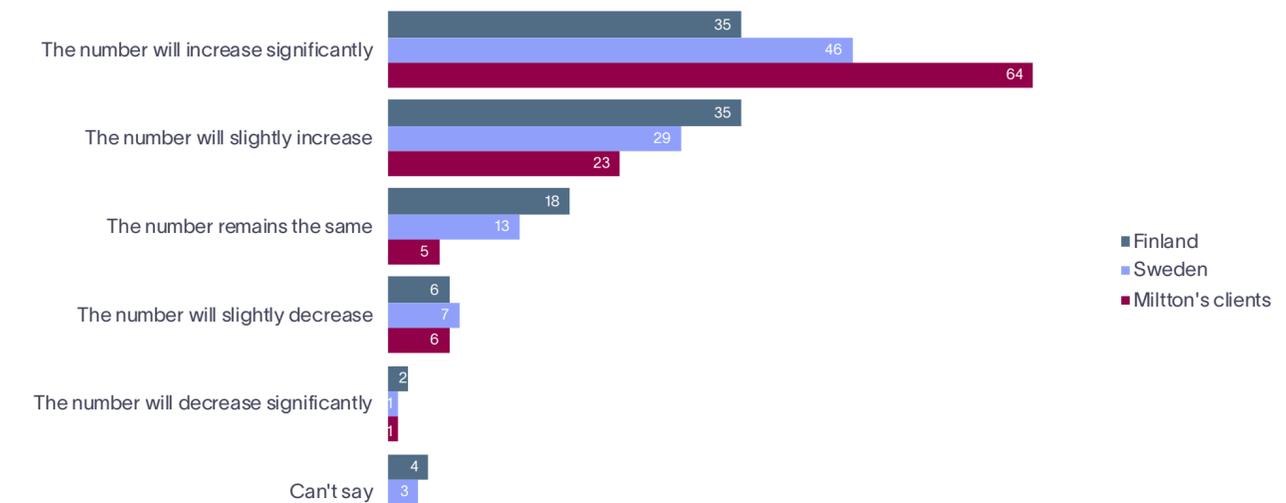
Being able to attend back-to-back meetings without leaving your desk might tempt filling your calendar up to the brim but among the respondents there was a clear need for having sufficient breaks between meetings and a wish for shorter and more efficient meetings in general. There was also a need for clear guidelines and ground rules for remote meetings. In particular, 'cameras always on' was a popular demand.

The priorities of employees for development both on the organizational and personal level contain a mix of structural and psychological factors. Clarity in internal communication, feedback skills, presentation and meeting skills, adequate digital tools and personal well-being were seen vital in all respondent groups.

Working normal hours and finding ways to separate work and free time were considered crucial for promoting well-being while working remotely. Many respondents also wished for common guidelines on for example when meetings are allowed to take place, and at what time it is okay to send messages and emails. In addition, the respondents often mentioned importance of self-management, as well as having the freedom to arrange work in one's own way.

## Number of remote meetings in the future

*How do you think the number of remote meetings will change in the future compared to the time before the coronavirus pandemic (either all participants or some participants remotely)?// Numbers are percentages, % // n=1906 (FIN + SWE), n=274 (Milton's clients)*



# Trust, engagement and shared team spirit are not automatic

Remote work has also ruthlessly revealed whether organizations and team leaders have the skills and routines to build trust, engagement, and a shared team spirit. The open replies show how things that might be considered superficial or frivolous are in fact vital for well-being and productivity. The respondents noted for example that Team-meetings for shared coffee breaks, venting and just all-around chitchat were a nice way to lift spirits during remote work.

"The best thing of all has been when a colleague has asked me how I'm doing, and we've been able to chat without any rush."

"Having virtual coffee breaks with no formal agenda but mostly to exchange views and experiences and to learn more about each other."

"Teams meeting just before Christmas, after a tough autumn each member of our organization took time to describe their feelings. [As an] emotional work community – there was no lack of feeling. Definitely a welcomed moment for several people."

"Teams meetings where time has been booked to talk also about 'other things'."

However, from some of the open replies it could be interpreted that some organizations had failed in trying to lift the spirits or hadn't even tried in the first place. The replies reflected disappointment and even bitterness. And even though most respondents saw remote work as enjoyable or as neutral compared to office life, some respondent's feelings were quite the opposite.

"None that succeeded."

"Our organization has had no actions that have supported the community spirit."

"Team meetings are important, but we don't have those. I have seen other companies sending over dinner/drinks/snacks to employees for virtual team days – something small that also our team would appreciate every now and then. A sense of belonging – but this is really a question of what kind of a team leader you have – one that cares about these small things or not."

"This remote work as the only work mode is like an open prison and the jokes are running out. The best thing has been one 4 x 2h training session with colleagues that you couldn't really prepare for in advance."

# The end of an open space office?

As remote work was in general seen as enjoyable or neutral and efficient compared to office work it is natural that most of the respondents wanted to continue working remotely at least partly after the pandemic. 80% of the Finnish respondents, 80% of the Swedish respondents and 70% of Milton's clients wanted to work remotely more often than or as much as at the office.

For many of the respondents there would have to be a specific reason for going to the office such as a face-to-face meeting or a workshop. Also meeting people and being able to innovate in the same room was considered a reason for going to the office.

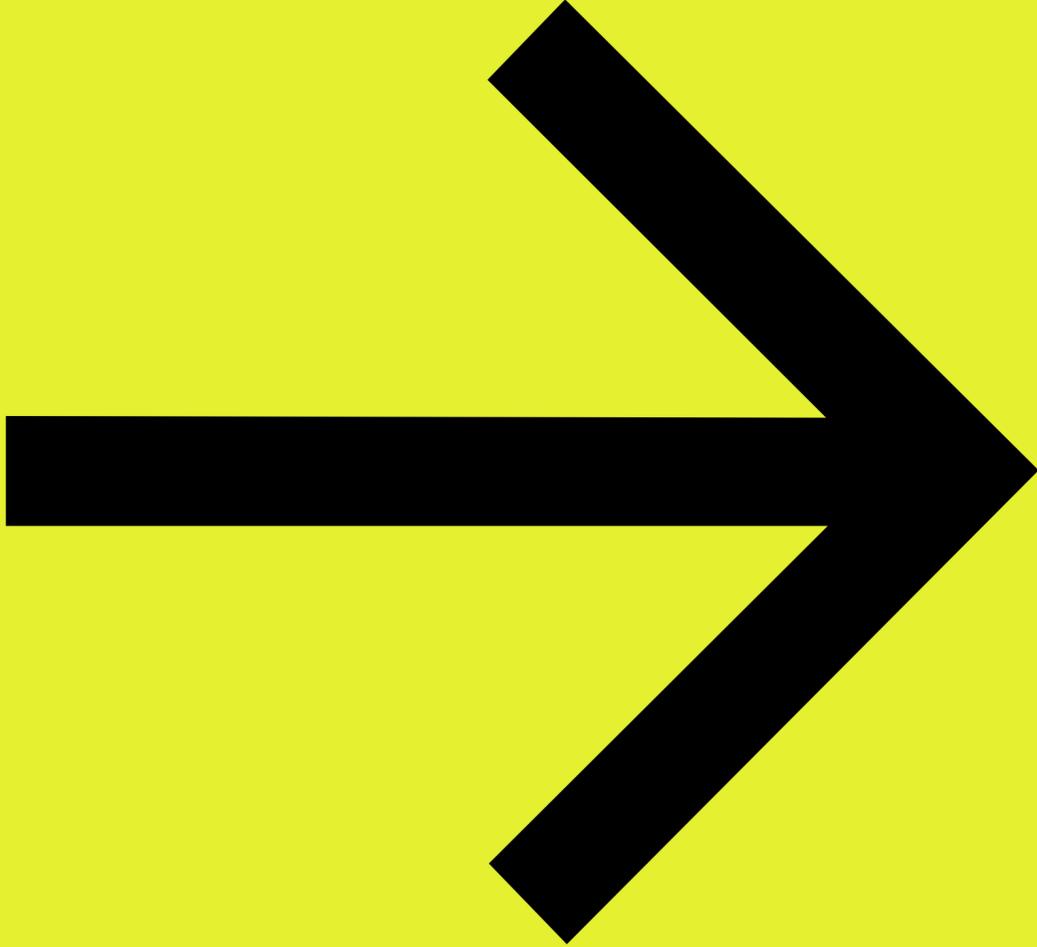
However, as office work was not considered a given anymore, respondents set clear wishes for making the offices more comfortable to work at: among the mentioned were better facilities, nice surroundings, and a quiet place to work at. A common wish that stood out was to get rid of open space offices.

This makes it clear that if organizations want people to come happily back to the office, they must work for it, but they also must work for those employees who continue working remotely. The pandemic has shown us that above all people need people. Working remotely at this scale is something new to us and the skills to ensure a happy, hybrid organization need to be developed both on organizational and personal level.

## Preferred way of working after the pandemic

Where would you like to work in the future (after the coronavirus pandemic)? // Numbers are percentages, % // n=1906 (FIN + SWE), n=267 (Milton's clients)





**W** milton