

A mixed-methods study of work location choices in hybrid work

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Abstract

Purpose – With the increase of hybrid working, it is important to understand workers' choices between remote and onsite working. Yet, few studies have investigated remote working and user experiences of offices together. The purpose of this study is to profile hybrid workers in terms of the factors in remote and onsite working that are perceived as important for work location choices. The other aim is to explore the role of office design in perceiving onsite working as attractive.

Design/methodology/approach – This cross-sectional mixed-methods study involves four Finnish organizations. Data was collected in 2023–2024. Survey data ($n = 533$) was analyzed using cluster analysis to identify profiles of work location choices. Theme interviews ($n = 71$) were analyzed qualitatively.

Findings – Five profiles of work location choices are identified, showing that most workers combine remote and onsite working flexibly, although with different emphasis. Two profiles prefer either remote or onsite working. Interviews reveal that agreements and practices concerning meeting arrangements are important for work location choices. Having better conditions for work requiring concentration at the office and certainty that colleagues will be present increase willingness to work onsite.

Practical implications – Hybrid work models, the meeting culture and office design should be developed together, with the recognition of the variety of needs and behavioral patterns among employees.

Originality/value – This study provides novel evidence and perspectives on work location choices and the role of the office in hybrid work.

Keywords Teleworking, Remote workers, Hybrid work, Office, Organizations, Workplace

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Following the increased remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are facing new challenges (Razzetti, 2023). The proportion of workers who work more remotely than at the workplace has increased in many countries (Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2024; Eurostat, 2024). Remote working is, thus, no longer only an individual flexible arrangement but can have wider effects in organizations where the individual choices lead, collectively, to low presence rates at the office. This phenomenon could affect, for example, the amount of office space and the types of workspaces needed, the role of the office, organizational tasks that rely on communication, employee well-being and the leadership and management of work – all relevant to organizational productivity (Lindeberg *et al.*, 2024; Ruiz de Castañeda Altuna *et al.*, 2025). On the other hand, optimal models of hybrid work (work combining remote and



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onsite working) can also support organization's success (Razzetti, 2023). Consequently, the work location choices and motives of hybrid workers pose a new question for research as well as for organizations, with various potential implications on hybrid work models and strategies, leadership and office design.

1.1 Literature review

Remote working and the user perceptions of offices have long been separate topics of research, although their interconnections have been noted in, for example, studies on multilocal work (Vartiainen *et al.*, 2007), and more widely following the COVID-19 pandemic (Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024; Haapakangas *et al.*, 2025; Yang *et al.*, 2023; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022). With regard to reasons to work remotely, studies show both work-related and nonwork-related motives (Thompson *et al.*, 2022). Common reasons include better productivity, work-life balance, such as tending to family and other nonwork demands (Stephens and Szajna, 1998), and avoiding commute (Bloom *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2024; Thompson *et al.*, 2022; Borzikowsky *et al.*, 2023). Remote working can also reflect attempts to cope with negative experiences at the workplace, such as office distractions (Kaarlela-Tuomaala *et al.*, 2009) and psychosocial stress (Shao *et al.*, 2021; Fonner and Roloff, 2010). Most employees have more than one motive for working remotely but, on the other hand, remote work is not favored by all (Thompson *et al.*, 2022). Remote work also has risks, such as isolation (Gajendran *et al.*, 2024) and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life (Palumbo *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the existing knowledge on remote work points to the importance of understanding individual differences in remote work motives.

Another line of research that can shed light on potentially important factors in hybrid work choices has focused on workspace choices at the workplace (Haapakangas *et al.*, 2023; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2011; Hoendervanger *et al.*, 2019). Contemporary office design often relies on the assumption that workers choose a workspace depending on their activity, e.g. concentration or communication (Masoudinejad and Veitch, 2023). Empirical findings, however, show a more complex reality as a reluctance to switch workspace (Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2011; Haapakangas *et al.*, 2023) and a mismatch between activity and workspace type are also common (Hoendervanger *et al.*, 2019). Practical difficulties in moving to a suitable workspace, indoor climate (Kim *et al.*, 2016; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2011), social relations (Bäcklander *et al.*, 2021) and psychological needs (Gaudiino *et al.*, 2024) also affect workspace choice. Furthermore, worker's own behavior in choosing workspaces to meet his/her needs is a key in explaining the benefits of the work environmental design (Hoendervanger *et al.*, 2019; Gerdenitsch *et al.*, 2018). These various motives and behaviors suggest that workspace choices are likely also complex when they extend to remote work options.

Several studies have explored work location preferences in hybrid work in recent years, focusing mostly on task-related needs (Shao *et al.*, 2021; Rücker *et al.*, 2024; Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022). These studies show that the office is generally preferred over remote working for interactive needs and activities (Shao *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2023; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022; Rücker *et al.*, 2024). Although the locations preferred for focused work are less clear (Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024; Yang *et al.*, 2023), distractions are generally an important determinant of work location choices (Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022; Asmussen *et al.*, 2023), and sufficient privacy at the office may make onsite working more appealing (Haapakangas *et al.*, 2025). Services near the office, such as restaurants and exercise facilities, might be another reason to favor onsite work (Castellum, 2023). Daily stress factors also affect the choice of work location (Shao *et al.*, 2021). Thus, various types of motives appear to regulate hybrid working.

Taken together, the literature on work location choices lacks a balanced perspective that encompasses both work- and non-work-related motives across remote and office environments. Another gap concerns individual differences in hybrid working. Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.* (2022) identified two employee segments that differed in preferences of office- and home-based working, but this investigation was limited to work tasks and workplace conditions. Wang *et al.* (2024) found five profiles of remote work motives, but did not cover motives to work onsite. Both studies were also conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic meaning that they may not apply to post-pandemic hybrid work.

Theoretically, the concept of *job crafting* can be applied to work location choices, viewing them as a self-regulation strategy in hybrid work (Biron *et al.*, 2023; Demerouti, 2025). *Job crafting* refers to individuals' proactive behaviors to "balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs" (Tims *et al.*, 2012). Work environments include resources that help achieving work goals and demands that require sustained effort leading to physiological and/or psychological costs (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). Thus, hybrid work can enable individuals to regulate the resources and conditions relevant to their daily work and non-work goals across remote and onsite work environments (Demerouti, 2025). Although the majority of literature on *job crafting* concerns psychosocial work environment, several concepts extend it to the choice of physical workspace or location, including *time-spatial job crafting* (Wessels *et al.*, 2019), *environmental crafting* (Roskams and Haynes, 2021), *physical or spatial job crafting* (Randel *et al.*, 2024) and *task-environment crafting* (Bäcklander *et al.*, 2021). As most of these concepts have focused on crafting within the office, *job crafting* of the hybrid work environment represents a new avenue of research.

To address the gaps identified above, our aim is to explore individual differences in work location choices with a balanced approach that includes work- and non-work-related reasons related to both remote and onsite working and to identify factors related to office design that are perceived to make onsite work more attractive. The aims were addressed using survey and interview data from four organizations.

2. Methods

2.1 Design and data collection

This cross-sectional mixed-methods study involved four Finnish organizations (Figure 1). The study was a part of a larger project concerning the best practices, opportunities and risks in hybrid work. Each organization had facilities in multiple locations in Finland and one included also a branch office in Sweden. Two of the organizations were city organizations and two IT companies. The organizations participated in the project because of their interests to learn from research data and each other and to develop their hybrid work models.

Survey data was collected electronically between November 2023 and February 2024 ($n = 533$, response rate 59%) (Table 1). We also conducted semi-structured theme interviews ($n = 71$) between May and September 2023. The survey and interviews targeted the same groups of employees in each organization. As selection criteria, we included employees who did hybrid work and could decide their work location independently. We also gathered documents on workspaces (e.g. layout drawings, workplace guidelines), and a systematic inspection was conducted to a representative sample of the workspaces of the target groups in each organization's headquarters in Finland.

The study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Helsinki, Finland on April 14, 2023, and followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK. All participants provided their written or recorded informed consent to participation.

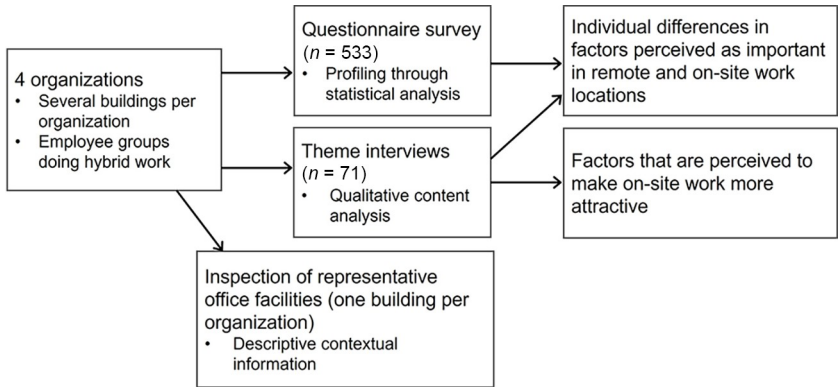


Figure 1. Overview of data sources and methods of the study
Source: Authors’ own work

Table 1. Percentage (%) distributions for gender, age and supervisory position in the survey and interview data

Variable	Category	Survey (n = 533)	Interviews (n = 71)
Gender	Male	49	51
	Female	51	49
Age	Under 35	19	–
	35–49	52	–
	50	29	–
Supervisory position	No	78	80
	Yes	22	20

Source(s): Authors’ own work

2.2 Organizations and their office spaces

Most organizations (A, B and C) had very flexible telework arrangements with no compulsory organization-wide minimum for working onsite. One organization (D) had a policy of a maximum of 12 remote working day per month.

All the organizations had facilities in multiple locations, in different cities or within the same city. The inspected workspaces in each organization’s Finnish headquarters were environments for knowledge work. All offices included break rooms or working cafés, support spaces (printing, mail, etc.) and meeting rooms for internal and external meetings. Organizations A, B and C had activity-based offices (ABOs) with mainly unassigned workstations. Organization D’s office consisted of a combination of open-plan office and private and team rooms with assigned workstations. This office included only a few meeting rooms or enclosed workspaces for those working in the open-plan office. The ABOs in turn had a varying amount of enclosed non-assigned rooms for individual work, project or team rooms or areas and informal collaboration spaces or areas. In Organizations B and C, the ABOs also had separate silent working areas.

Three of the organizations (B, C and D) also had some special-purpose facilities (e.g. production and machine facilities) or customer service functions onsite. Organization A’s

office had a strong emphasis on social and meeting spaces, as many employees also worked regularly at their customers' premises.

Organization C's inspected office had been built entirely very recently (2023). Organization A and B's offices had been largely renewed in the 2010s. Organization D's office was visually close to its original 1990's condition, but furniture and equipment at the premises were relatively new. In all the facilities, at least some improvements or changes (technical, functional, general comfort and coziness, use of space) had been made in recent years before the study. The design of the ABOs was mostly modern and of good quality.

2.3 Survey measures

The questionnaire, covering several themes in hybrid working, was developed based on previous findings (Thompson *et al.*, 2022; Stephens and Szajna, 1998; Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2023; Asmussen *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2024), recent commercial reports (Castellum, 2023) and the preliminary interviews of the study. For this study, we analyzed two questions on work location choices. Of remote work, respondents were asked "At the moment, how important do you find the following pull factors in terms of drawing you to work remotely," followed by nine items which were separately rated (see Table 2). Of onsite working, respondents were asked to rate ten items with a similar question in which "work remotely" was replaced with "work at your primary onsite location" (see Table 2). The response scale was 1 = Not at all important, 2 = Not particularly important, 3 = Fairly important and 4 = Very important.

Table 2. Final cluster centers for five cluster solutions (survey data). Clusters are presented using standardized variables to ease the interpretation

Variables	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Cluster4	Cluster5
<i>Questions related to working remotely</i>					
Savings from the time spent commuting	0.51	-0.22	0.06	-1.07	0.14
Various care responsibilities	0.26	-0.43	0.09	-0.28	-0.02
Other day-to-day running	0.45	-1.03	0.27	-0.66	0.19
My hobbies	0.50	-0.77	0.18	-0.52	-0.01
Maintaining my well-being at work	0.59	-0.52	0.39	-1.47	-0.03
Good work ergonomics and environment	0.75	-0.25	0.43	-1.60	-0.32
Good technological equipment	0.56	-0.20	0.57	-1.50	-0.54
Good opportunity to concentrate on work	0.41	0.07	0.41	-1.98	-0.03
Greater efficiency	0.52	-0.02	0.37	-1.79	-0.12
Many members of my work communities work in different locations	0.32	-0.60	0.16	-0.70	0.14
<i>Questions related to working onsite</i>					
Meeting with colleagues	-1.14	-0.69	0.37	0.50	0.52
Joint ideation and getting support in problem situations	-1.00	-0.76	0.36	0.55	0.34
Ease of learning and information exchange	-1.05	-0.67	0.40	0.54	0.37
Spontaneous encounters	-0.99	-0.67	0.31	0.56	0.40
Good work ergonomics and environment	-0.94	-0.42	0.79	0.34	-0.48
Good technological equipment	-0.84	-0.35	0.80	0.18	-0.59
Good opportunity to concentrate on work	-0.69	-0.39	0.77	0.12	-0.54
Greater efficiency	-0.78	-0.43	0.67	0.58	-0.51
Good nutrition, exercise, etc., well-being services	-0.72	-0.52	0.58	0.16	-0.19
Source(s): Authors' own work					

2.4 Interview methods

In addition to the general selection criteria (Section 2.1), the organizations were asked to find interviewees, including both women and men, different ages and including also managers. These pre-set criteria were filled quite well in the final group of interviewees. The researchers emailed invitations for the interviews to a target group agreed with each organization. Volunteers from this group could reserve an interview time online until the desired participant number was reached in each organization.

The structure of the interviews followed an agreed protocol, starting with basic background information and followed by main themes (personal and work community remote work practices; office work environment and remote work environment; digital tools and digital support; wishes and good practices). The main themes were divided into sub-themes and guiding questions. For this study, we limited the interview material to the sub-themes and questions that were related to the choice of work location (work or private life factors) and factors that might encourage the interviewees to work more at the office, including improvement wishes for the office environment (see Supplementary material). Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the interviews.

Sixty-nine of the interviews were conducted in Finnish and two in English. Most of them were conducted remotely via Teams, but six were conducted face-to-face. The interviews lasted on average approximately one hour each and were audio-recorded and transcribed in the full.

2.5 Data analysis

To analyze survey data, we used K-means clustering to categorize various work location motives. K-means clustering is an unsupervised machine learning technique that is especially useful when researchers want to classify variables into groups that are as similar as possible without prior knowledge of the group division (Ikotun *et al.*, 2023). Before cluster analysis, variables were standardized to make the interpretation of cluster centers easier. When assessing the total number of clusters, we compared solutions ranging from two to ten clusters. Based on Akaike (AIC) and Bayesian (BIC) information criteria, adding clusters continuously improved the model up to ten clusters, but interpretation became increasingly challenging after five clusters, leading us to choose the five-cluster solution. Based on the variance analysis, group differences between clusters in work location choice variables were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Tamhane's T2 test was used to analyze paired differences between clusters since the assumption of equal variances was rejected. Analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 27.0 and RStudio.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis of interviews was to produce more detailed and practical information on factors related to onsite working. Thus, we used the same items of remote and onsite working as in the survey to code and categorize interviewees' answers that described the factors affecting their work location choices. Answers that did not fit any of these categories were sorted under "other: remote" and "other: office." The answers describing factors that might encourage the interviewees to work more at the office were coded and categorized into work-environment-related and other factors. The categories were then compared quantitatively to see, which categories were mentioned the most by different interviewees. The most-often-mentioned categories were also analyzed for re-occurring themes within one category.

3. Results

3.1 Hybrid work profiles variety based on survey

Table 2 illustrates cluster centers for the five-cluster solution of different workspace motivations based on survey results. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 3. Figure 2 shows the variety between clusters in how

Table 3. Means, standard deviations (SD) and *F*-statistics for clusters in each location choice variable (survey data). Clusters are presented using original scales of the variables (1 = not at all important – 4 = very important)

Variables	All	Cluster 1 (<i>n</i> = 86)	Cluster 2 (<i>n</i> = 63)	Cluster 3 (<i>n</i> = 158)	Cluster 4 (<i>n</i> = 60)	Cluster 5 (<i>n</i> = 95)	F-test	Tamhane's T2 test
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	F (<i>p</i> -value)	Paired comparisons between clusters at significance level (<i>p</i> < 0.05)
<i>Items related to working remotely</i>								
Savings from the time spent commuting	3.38 (0.92)	3.85 (0.47)	3.17 (0.89)	3.44 (0.88)	2.38 (1.18)	3.51 (0.74)	29.32 (<0.001)	1 > 2,3,4,5; 2 < 1 and 2 > 4; 3 < 1 and 3 > 4; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1 and 5 > 4
Various care responsibilities	2.21 (1.24)	2.53 (1.29)	1.68 (1.08)	2.32 (1.26)	1.87 (1.11)	2.19 (1.16)	6.12 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4; 2 < 1,3; 3 > 2; 4 < 1
Other day-to-day running	2.87 (0.98)	3.31 (0.83)	1.87 (0.83)	3.13 (0.89)	2.23 (0.87)	3.06 (0.78)	41.21 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4; 2 < 1,3,5; 3 > 2,4; 4 < 1,3,5; 5 > 2,4
My hobbies	2.55 (1.07)	3.08 (1.10)	1.71 (0.77)	2.73 (1.02)	1.98 (1.03)	2.54 (0.92)	23.67 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4,5; 2 < 1,3,5; 3 > 2,4; 4 < 1,3,5; 5 < 1 and 5 > 2,4
Maintaining my well-being at work	3.27 (0.91)	3.80 (0.46)	2.79 (0.95)	3.62 (0.57)	1.93 (0.86)	3.24 (0.80)	82.57 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4,5; 2 < 1,3,5 and 2 > 5; 3 > 2,4,5; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1,3 and 5 > 2,4
Good work ergonomics and environment	2.93 (0.99)	3.66 (0.57)	2.68 (0.88)	3.35 (0.68)	1.35 (0.55)	2.61 (0.84)	117.45 (<0.001)	1 > 2,3,4,5; 2 < 1,3 and 2 > 4; 3 < 1 and 3 > 2,4,5; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1,3 and 5 > 4
Good technological equipment	3.01 (1.03)	3.59 (0.62)	2.81 (0.95)	3.61 (0.62)	1.47 (0.68)	2.45 (0.92)	116.76 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4,5; 2 < 1,3 and 2 > 4; 3 > 2,4,5; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1,3 and 5 > 4
Good opportunity to concentrate on work	3.50 (0.82)	3.84 (0.43)	3.56 (0.64)	3.84 (0.40)	1.88 (0.80)	3.47 (0.60)	151.56 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4,5; 2 < 1,3 and 2 > 4; 3 > 2,4,5; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1,3 and 5 > 4
Greater efficiency	3.29 (0.88)	3.74 (0.54)	3.27 (0.70)	3.62 (0.59)	1.72 (0.74)	3.19 (0.69)	112.59 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4,5; 2 < 1,3 and 2 > 4; 3 > 2,4,5; 4 < 1,2,3,5; 5 < 1,3 and 5 > 4
Many members of my work communities work in different locations	2.37 (1.10)	2.72 (1.12)	1.71 (0.85)	2.55 (1.07)	1.60 (0.79)	2.53 (1.05)	19.47 (<0.001)	1 > 2,4; 2 < 1,3,5; 3 > 2,4; 4 < 1,3,5; 5 > 2,4

(continued)

Table 3. Continued

Variables	All	Cluster 1 (n = 86)	Cluster 2 (n = 63)	Cluster 3 (n = 158)	Cluster 4 (n = 60)	Cluster 5 (n = 95)	F-test	Tamhane's T2 test
<i>Items related to working on site</i>								
Meeting with colleagues	3.47 (0.72)	2.64 (0.78)	2.97 (0.72)	3.73 (0.50)	3.83 (0.38)	3.84 (0.37)	85.34 (<0.001)	1 > 3,4,5; 2 < 3,4,5; 3 > 1,2; 4 > 1,2; 5 > 1,2
Joint ideation and getting support in problem situations	3.17 (0.85)	2.31 (0.72)	2.52 (0.78)	3.47 (0.67)	3.63 (0.52)	3.45 (0.65)	67.85 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4,5; 2 < 3,4,5; 3 > 1,2; 4 > 1,2; 5 > 1,2
Ease of learning and information exchange	3.02 (0.86)	2.12 (0.69)	2.44 (0.76)	3.36 (0.69)	3.48 (0.60)	3.34 (0.61)	72.77 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4,5; 2 < 3,4,5; 3 > 1,2; 4 > 1,2; 5 > 1,2
Spontaneous encounters	3.06 (0.90)	2.17 (0.81)	2.46 (0.67)	3.34 (0.76)	3.57 (0.59)	3.42 (0.75)	59.71 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4,5; 2 < 3,4,5; 3 > 1,2; 4 > 1,2; 5 > 1,2
Good work ergonomics and environment	2.82 (1.03)	1.85 (0.79)	2.38 (0.79)	3.63 (0.55)	3.17 (0.87)	2.33 (0.92)	99.43 (<0.001)	1 < 2,3,4,5; 2 > 1 and 2 < 3,4,5; 3 > 1,2,4,5; 4 > 1,2,5 and 4 < 3; 5 > 1 and 5 < 3,4
Good technological equipment	2.79 (1.04)	1.92 (0.75)	2.43 (0.95)	3.63 (0.55)	2.98 (1.00)	2.18 (0.86)	91.52 (<0.001)	1 < 2,3,4; 2 > 1 and 2 < 3,4; 3 > 1,2,4,5; 4 > 1,2,5 and 4 < 3; 5 < 3,4
Good opportunity to concentrate on work	2.47 (1.09)	1.72 (0.90)	2.05 (0.99)	3.30 (0.79)	2.60 (1.01)	1.88 (0.76)	67.33 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4; 2 < 3,4; 3 > 1,2,4,5; 4 > 1,2,3,5; 5 < 3,4
Greater efficiency	2.42 (1.00)	1.64 (0.70)	1.98 (0.92)	3.09 (0.75)	3.00 (0.92)	1.91 (0.73)	72.61 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4; 2 < 3,4; 3 > 1,2,5; 4 > 1,2,5; 5 < 3,4
Good nutrition, exercise, etc., well-being services	2.48 (1.05)	1.73 (0.87)	1.94 (0.93)	3.09 (0.85)	2.65 (0.97)	2.28 (0.93)	40.20 (<0.001)	1 < 3,4,5; 2 < 3,4; 3 > 1,2,4,5; 4 > 1,2 and 4 < 3; 5 > 1 and 5 < 3

Note(s): Italics indicate the highest and lowest average for each variable
Source(s): Authors' own work

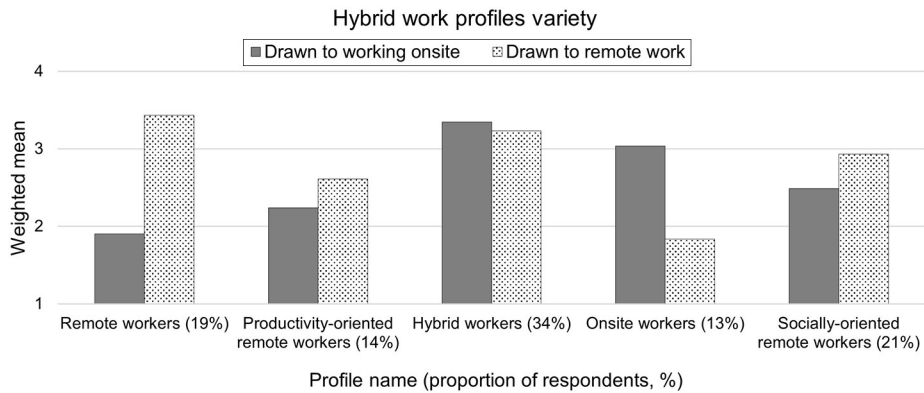


Figure 2. The average appeal of remote and onsite work locations in different profiles across different motives of remote and onsite working. The mean is weighted to account for varying number of items per type of motive. Scale: 1 = not at all important – 4 = very important
Source: Authors' own work

strongly remote and onsite work are favored, averaged across different motives of remote and onsite working.

The first cluster ($n = 86$, 19%) represents those who were least motivated by the office work items and most motivated by nearly all remote work items. They were named as “remote workers.” The second cluster ($n = 63$, 14%) represents those who were drawn to remote work because of its efficiency and ability to focus, but not as much as the first group by day-to-day running activities, hobbies or care responsibilities. They were named as “productivity-oriented remote workers.” The third cluster ($n = 158$, 34%) represents those who were most motivated by office facilities, such as ergonomics, technological equipment, opportunities to concentrate, better efficiency and nutrition. On the other hand, they also valued most of the benefits of remote work. They were named as “hybrid workers.” The fourth cluster ($n = 60$, 13%) describes employees who were least motivated by remote work and most of all by onsite opportunities for joint ideation, ease of information exchange, spontaneous encounters with colleagues and greater efficiency at the office. They were named as “onsite workers.” The last cluster ($n = 95$, 21%) represents those who were motivated by all aspects of remote work to some extent, but most of all by meetings with colleagues in the onsite premises. Other aspects of onsite work, such as efficiency or technological equipment, were not that important for them. They were named as “socially-oriented remote workers.”

3.2 Interview results

Most interviewees reported that they were able to choose very independently whether to work remotely or onsite at the office. Some restrictions were set by the organizations' general remote work policies and the requirements for customer service at the office or working together with customers at their premises.

When asked about how the interviewees chose the location where they work at any given time (work- or private life-related factors), they described a large variety of factors relating to workplace agreements, work task-related needs and work conditions at home or at the office.

The reasons for work location choices are summarized in [Table 4](#) in more detail (see column “Simple expression”).

Well over half ($n = 46$) of the interviewees mentioned at least one reason for coming to the office that was related to meeting colleagues. Many of these reasons were connected to established practices or agreements within the workplace community. Although meeting others and meetings in general was a common factor to choose to work at the office, a large number of remote meetings was also mentioned as a reason to work remotely by several interviewees ($n = 11$).

Common reasons for choosing remote work included personal life considerations, such as savings from time spent commuting ($n = 21$) and everyday convenience in taking care of day-to-day running ($n = 22$), as well as opportunity to concentrate on individual work ($n = 17$) when working remotely.

Some described either working remotely or working at the office as a clear basic setting, where choosing another setting requires a specific reason. Others described the choice as flexible depending on work tasks. Going to the office for a specific reason could also mean working there the whole day, for half a day or a small part of the day (e.g. going there for a specific task or meeting and then returning home). Some interviewees did not identify a particular reason to choose one or the other location. Going to the office or staying at home was simply a habit or the easier option.

The factors described in the interviews that could motivate the interviewees to work more at the office are described in detail in [Table 5](#). Other development wishes for the work environment and hybrid working policies were also described in the interviews, but only the ones that the interviewees stated could affect their choice of location, if changed, are included in the table.

More than half ($n = 39$) of the interviewees recognized factors in which certain changes could motivate them to come to the office more often. Several ($n = 18$) also said that the presence of other people at the office would motivate them to come there more often. Some found value in just meeting people in general, but others wished also for more pre-planned activities together.

Close to half of the interviewees ($n = 28$) found that changes to the physical environment at the office would motivate them to come there more often. Sixteen interviewees found that improvements (or in a few cases deterioration) on the conditions for concentrated work would affect their motivation. They brought up the need to have more peaceful and disturbance-free workspaces at the office but also shared office rules to reduce disturbances. Twelve interviewees stated that having more enclosed spaces available for virtual or face-to-face meetings, teamwork or concentrated work would motivate them to come to the office more. Several interviewees ($n = 18$) also reported having very good office spaces currently. Some already worked at the office almost daily.

4. Discussion

This study provided new insights into work location choices in hybrid work. Our balanced approach covered both work- and non-work-related issues in remote and onsite working. Thus, these results capture the reasons regulating hybrid work choices more comprehensively compared with recent studies that have emphasized either remote work ([Wang et al., 2024](#)) or the office ([Haapakangas et al., 2025](#); [Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022](#)). The results also highlight individual differences in the resources of remote and onsite working employees are drawn to ([Wang et al., 2024](#)). Such differences are important to consider in organizations’ hybrid work models because, to be successful, hybrid work should combine benefits for both the organization and individuals (cf. [Gohoungodji et al., 2023](#)).

Table 4. Remote work and office-related reasons for work location choices (from interviews). The numbers in the subcategory field indicate the number of interviewees whose responses included the subcategory theme

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
Remote	Savings from the time spent commuting 21	The extra time is valuable Long commute Faster morning routine Time commuting cannot be used for working With early morning meetings the time saving is extra beneficial	“That time is very valuable to me. I cannot measure that in monetary terms. That’s the primary and I would say only reason why I’m working from home”
	Various care responsibilities 9	Keeping company to and caring for a pet In everyday life with children remote work gives extra flexibility and time Being there for kids when they leave for or return from school	“Depending on when my wife is on a business trip, I’m at home taking care of the cat”
	Other day-to-day running 22	Taking care of doctor’s visits or home maintenance needs, etc. is easier Fitting household chores into the daily schedule is more flexible Going to after work activities right after the workday is easier or more relaxed	“If my son needs to be picked up or needs a lift somewhere or something like that. Or if there’s workmen coming to the house or something”
	My hobbies 5	Going to hobbies right after the workday is easier or more relaxed	“I coach sports and the practices are weekly. I like to work remotely then, so I can leave quickly, since they start at five”
	Maintaining my well-being at work 8	Possibility to sleep longer Making a busy timetable a bit more relaxed Possibility to work a part of the day in case of temporary inability to work (e.g. migraine)	“If I can’t get to bed at a decent time, I set my alarm so that I can get eight hours of sleep. Then I don’t always make it to the office by nine, which is my personal deadline to start working”
	Good work ergonomics and environment in remote work 4	Ergonomic workstation that is better or equal to the office setup	“During corona, I bought all kinds of ergonomic products, so I have the same setup at home as I do at the workplace”
	Good technological equipment 3	Work equipment is set up and ready to use Technological equipment required for work is personal, and therefore more easily accessible Collaboration virtually, via screen-sharing, feels easier than working together in a shared space	“All the equipment is connected and ready there”

(continued)

Table 4. Continued

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
Office	Good opportunity to concentrate on work 17	Easier to concentrate, because there are interruptions at the office (noise in open areas, people asking questions) No need to be in an enclosed space like at the office, but relax on a sofa at home, etc.	“Of course, if there’s a situation where I need to fully concentrate on something, then I prefer to do it at home. There aren’t as many interruptions that way”
	Greater efficiency 17	Multitasking during remote meetings A ready workstation setup at home Work runs smoothly When it is busy, it feels easier to get a lot done Interacting with others at the office makes working there less efficient than remote work	“In a remote meeting, it’s easy to also do other tasks when possible while I’m participating in the meeting, as I’m already at the computer”
	Many members of my work communities work in different locations 1	Everyone being remote in meetings instead of a hybrid setup feels more equal to all participants	“And now that we’ve kind of switched to fully remote work, it has actually balanced and equalized the work for those working in other locations”
	Other: remote 34	Large amount of virtual meetings Remote working has become a habit Going to the office requires an effort Work-related events that are easier to organize Bad experience from working at the office when there was no-one there Convenience	“If you have a schedule packed with meetings all day long; it’s just the same to be at home remotely as trying to go through these meeting rooms here at the office”
	Meeting with colleagues 46	Agreed or recommended onsite meetings or workshops Training activities Interaction that benefits from being face-to-face Agreed or recommended office days Getting to know colleagues as a new employee Meeting people outside own team Knowing there will be other people there	“Sometimes we might have some workshops that we’ve agreed with the team are better done in person, so then we come to the office”
	Joint ideation and getting support in problem situations 9	Sparring and talking face-to-face with colleagues is easier, especially as a new person Ideation and planning are easier in person	“Sometimes I need help with brainstorming and stuff, and I prefer doing that face to face, although of course, I end up doing a lot of it remotely too”
	Ease of learning and information exchange 8	Informal and spontaneous interaction face-to-face are needed for easy information exchange Information exchange especially outside one’s own team	“I primarily come to the office to meet people. When there’s no low-threshold chitchat, the flow of information in general slows down”
			(continued)

Table 4. Continued

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
	Spontaneous encounters 8	Spontaneous conversations that might not happen online Spontaneous encounters outside own team at enable information flow Encounters with other people make work more efficient Spontaneous encounters contribute to mental well-being Getting to know other people and networking	“It’s easier at the office to grab a coworker by the sleeve. Sometimes you have conversations that might not have happened if you’d only worked remotely. You wouldn’t have bumped into the person and spontaneously talked about something”
	Good work ergonomics and environment 12	Ergonomics is good, or at least better than at home The spaces at the office are overall good	“The other thing is that I don’t have any ergonomic setup at home... I just don’t have room for it”
	Good technological equipment 6	Better or more screens at the office than at home Better or more stable network connection than at home (no need to worry in meetings)	“My facilities here at the workplace are better. I have two screens, and I work nine times faster here”
	Good opportunity to concentrate on work 5	It is easier to concentrate at the office, when there is disturbance at home It is easier to stay on task and concentrate for longer periods It is in general easy to concentrate due to having a private office or a quiet work area	“If the kids come home from school at noon, and my husband is also working remotely, the quiet space at the office can be more peaceful”
	Greater efficiency 6	Better overall facilities and/or equipment make working at the office more efficient Other people around make work more efficient	“I have a large screen here and all the people nearby whom I can ask things, so work goes much faster”
	Good nutrition, exercise, etc., well-being services 4	Food served at the office Sports or well-being program at the office	“Usually on Fridays, people are kind of enticed to come to the office. There is breakfast provided by the company at the office”
	Other: office 49	Compulsory office days Customer service tasks where someone must always be reachable Physical material or tools that the work requires For work-related events that are easier to organize onsite For meeting interest groups As needed, for a specific reason Hobbies that are easier to reach from the office	“I go to the gym with a friend downtown, so since we have our office there, it’s easy to go from there”

(continued)

Table 4. Continued

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
		Other day-to-day running that is easier to take care of from the office When own schedule is roomier Easier to have breaks at the office Separating work and free time Being an example to others Routine or habit or to change routine Convenience	

Source(s): Authors' own work

4.1 Variation in hybrid work profiles

Most survey respondents appeared flexible in combining remote and onsite working, although with different emphasis (Figure 2). This is compatible with the assumption that work location choices reflect job crafting (Wessels *et al.*, 2019; Demerouti, 2025) where workers actively take advantage of the resources of different environments to create work conditions that match their daily needs. Interestingly, only “hybrid workers” appeared to value various resources in both the office and remote work environment and found both locations to support their productivity. On the other hand, two profiles suggest a general preference of one location over the other, namely, “remote workers” and “onsite workers.” The interviews suggest that such employees might perceive work conditions as unsuitable at the other location, for example, due to having small children or no workspace at home or being dissatisfied with the office environment. These observations are in line with previous studies (Haapakangas *et al.*, 2025; Gohoungodji *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2024). In addition to the actual resources available at different locations, the differences between profiles may also reflect individual skills in flexible working or factors constraining the choice, e.g. remote work policies, job characteristics or conditions in personal life (Gohoungodji *et al.*, 2023). Further research on individual differences and their significance to successful hybrid working is, thus, warranted. Future studies could also address differences between managers’ and employees’ profiles as managers may be less drawn to remote work (Borzikowsky *et al.*, 2023).

Our results also contribute to the complex questions regarding hybrid workers’ productivity (Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024; Razzetti, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2024). As in previous research (Wang *et al.*, 2024; Thompson *et al.*, 2022), remote working was valued for multiple reasons (better productivity, the possibility to concentrate, saving from commuting time and day-to-day running), whereas the main reasons for coming to the office were social (Tables 3 and 4). Work location choices appear to provide means for job crafting that enables employees to meet their daily work and non-work goals, supporting their work engagement and productivity in hybrid work (Demerouti, 2025; Wessels *et al.*, 2019). The finding that most participants are attracted to the office by social encounters and collaborative work is in interesting contrast with the result that most survey respondents did not find working at the office to support their productivity. Thus, while collaboration is seen as key for organizational productivity in knowledge work (Haas and Hansen, 2007), the workers perceive their productivity as more closely related to their individual focused work

Table 5. Factors that could motivate to work more at the office (from interviews). The numbers in the subcategory field indicate the number of interviewees whose responses included the subcategory theme

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
Work environment	Interaction 9	More enclosed spaces available for meetings: face to face, virtual or hybrid; planned or <i>ad hoc</i>	“Getting meeting rooms can be challenging at times. There should be more of them. Enough rooms so that I could just take a room <i>ad hoc</i> with a colleague and go discuss a topic”
		More enclosed spaces available for working together as a team	“I don’t miss having a private office, I have one at home. But having more team rooms could be a good. You’d have your coworkers around, but without all the extra noise”
		More dynamic environment to accommodate gatherings	“If a call or something else comes up quickly, there might not necessarily be a place to go” “Probably the development of the workstation. Eliminating those distractions Otherwise, I am satisfied with my work. That’s the biggest factor”
	Concentrated work 16	More enclosed spaces for phone calls or ease of taking phone calls in general	
		More spaces for quiet work with less interruptions or disturbances	
	Functionality 10	Private enclosed room Better sound insulation or acoustics	
		Better technical equipment Workstation or general conditions at the office than at home	“Having better tools and workstations at the office than at home would definitely motivate me to come”
	Use of space 9	More workspace in general Better ergonomics in meeting rooms	“Sharing tables, it’s not ideal, because people like me, we’d like to have our setting, I like my settings I don’t like to rearrange things” “So that everyone would appreciate each other, and there would be common ground rules that everyone should follow”
		Assigned personal workstation or team home base	
	Other 6	Office rules that everyone follows	
Other factors	Interaction and community 19	Other physical location of the office – shorter commute or other reason	“The more the people I work with are at the workplace, the more likely I am to be there at the office as well”
		Better access to amenities More cozy environment	
		More space with natural light Seeing other people or my team members at the at the office (knowing they will be there)	

(continued)

Table 5. Continued

Main category	Subcategory	Simple expression	Excerpts
		A new person starting in my team More sense of community Activities together	“Of course, if there is even more community spirit and some activities there”
		Specific work-related activity	“Work-related activities. When there is something like that, I’m quite happy to participate”
		Someone else wishing for your presence	“If someone feels like they want to have the group there in person, then I’m happy to go and be present”
	Other 14	(Changes in) work tasks Lower risk of catching an illness at the office Services on site, such as a gym Free meals and beverages	“For example, a gym in the same building, or some other kind of activity like that”
		A specific reason Something extra	“More often, it’s just a choice of where it’s comfortable to work or if there’s some reason to come to the office other than just to work”

Source(s): Authors’ own work

(Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, the social motives of coming to the office demonstrate that employees also recognize the importance of connectedness and communication, which is in line with companies’ interests in pursuing a successful hybrid workplace (Razzetti, 2023). Although hybrid work does not appear to be a general risk to work performance (Bloom *et al.*, 2024; Demerouti, 2025), future studies should investigate whether different profiles of hybrid working are more beneficial or detrimental to important employee outcomes, such as productivity and well-being.

4.2 The role of office design in making onsite work attractive

Our study also contributes to understanding the changing role of office design. Both the survey profiles and interviews show that workers differ in whether and how much they value workspaces for focused work, ergonomics and equipment, social encounters and activities and services at the workplace (e.g. restaurant, gym). Thus, offices should be designed to support various tasks and needs (Bergefurt *et al.*, 2024; Leesman, 2023), even when the main objective of the organization is to facilitate onsite activities relying on social interaction. In particular, many workers perceived that having better conditions for concentration at the workplace would increase their office attendance, which is in line with the recent studies (Appel-Meulenbroek *et al.*, 2022; Asmussen *et al.*, 2023; Haapakangas *et al.*, 2025). The offices of the study were mainly activity-based or even open-plan offices, in which distractions and lack of privacy are often an issue (Masoudinejad and Veitch, 2023). Thus, improvements in privacy might be decisive in attracting workers to come to the office also for interaction and collaboration. It is also possible that office design is more important for workers whose location choices are task-based, but this would require further research.

In addition, the interviews revealed that meeting arrangements were important for the perceived value of working onsite. Agreements on onsite presence (e.g. for meeting or office days) were an important prerequisite for the appeal of the office as a place of social encounters because employees preferred certainty that they would meet colleagues if going to the office. Likewise, having many online meetings during the day was perceived to decrease the benefits of going to the office. These results highlight the role of office facilities as an integral part of the organizational system that need to be considered in relation to the organizational structure, culture and strategy (Ruiz de Castañeda Altuna *et al.*, 2025; Haapakangas *et al.*, 2025; Razzetti, 2023).

4.3 Limitations

As limitations, we could not link survey responses with interviews which might have provided more insight into the importance of office design for location choices among different profiles. We also did not inspect all facilities of the organizations and could not link survey and interview results directly to specific buildings and workspace designs. The study was conducted in Finland, meaning that differences in work cultures, remote work policies and office design may limit generalization to other contexts.

4.4 Practical implications

Hybrid work practices and workplace design should be developed side by side in organizations, considering the needs and preferences of different employee groups. Organizations should consider the role of onsite encounters and factors that promote and hinder them, including the office design and meeting culture. Identifying similar hybrid worker profiles in organizations or dominating motives of work location choices may be useful in recognizing issues needing improvement and in developing hybrid work policies and office design. Organizations and employees could also benefit from training programs that increase job crafting skills in hybrid work (Demerouti, 2025).

To accommodate both meetings with colleagues and individual and concentrated work at the office, it is important to ensure both activities are acoustically separated. Enclosed spaces of different sizes are also needed to accommodate virtual and hybrid meetings. Technological solutions that help track occupancy, view space availability and even colleagues' presence at the office could also be useful to help employees make informed choices on coming to the office and give the certainty that the people and spaces they need are available. Effortless switches between workspaces can enhance the experience of the office. Attention should be paid to user-friendly and unified technology and easily adjustable furniture and environment (lighting, etc.). Visible instructions and jointly agreed office rules can also accommodate a fluent experience.

5. Conclusions

This study contributed to understanding individual variety in the factors of remote and onsite work that hybrid workers are drawn to when making work location choices. Among the five profiles that were identified, remote working is generally popular and preferred for various reasons, whereas onsite working is preferred dominantly for social reasons and perceived to support work efficiency less. While most employees combine remote and onsite work flexibly, some have a more categorical preference of either remote or onsite work. The results are in line with the assumption that work location choices provide means for job crafting in hybrid work. Hence, the results also contribute to the theoretical development of this area of research, particularly in applying the concept of job crafting and, more specifically, time-spatial job crafting (Demerouti, 2025).

The study also provides novel insights into the role of office design in hybrid work, supporting the need to consider the office as an integral part of the whole organizational system. In practice, the general meeting culture of the organization includes both hindering and facilitating factors for the willingness to come to the office. A large number of online meetings can decrease the perceived value of onsite work while having certainty that colleagues will also be present at the office increases the appeal of the office. Office design should support various tasks and include appropriate workspaces for individual and quiet work, even when the main goal is to increase face-to-face encounters, in order to meet different individual needs related to workspaces.

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Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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