

# Ericsson: Personal preference for the future workplace

# How Ericsson developed employee ‘personas’ using Leesman data to create new office spaces, tailored to the people who actually use them.

“It’s not just real estate; it’s a cross functional programme. We need to connect with our people, HR, IT, in order to figure out what our workplaces should be in the future.

“That’s the starting point.”

In 2016, Ericsson began implementing a company-wide transformation strategy. Its focus over the past five years has been to ensure that the organisation is as efficient as it can possibly be, and real estate has played a key part contributing to this through active management of the portfolio and global footprint.

When Mikkel Lyngbo Nielsen joined Ericsson as vice president, chief real estate officer & head of group real estate in April 2020, workplace was already on the organisation’s agenda.

“The portfolio was extremely efficient,” explains Nielsen, “but we wanted to place a greater emphasis on the user experience in the workplace.”

Then COVID-19 arrived.

“I had only been in the headquarters twice – and mainly in the reception area – so I didn’t have that deep knowledge about the portfolio.”

For Nielsen, living in Copenhagen and unable to travel to Ericsson’s Stockholm HQ during the global pandemic, it was essential to gain a deeper understanding of employee

sentiment in order for him to begin the workplace transformation process. Ericsson’s goal was to obtain as much employee experience data that it could to inform that future strategy. The business wanted to move away from building offices based on headcount, instead using a human-centric approach to the employee experience.

Ericsson gathered its employee experience data in June 2020. Given the shift in working patterns, Ericsson chose to collect information on both home and office environments. It ran the Leesman Office survey, with four additional modules attached: Leesman Wellbeing, Leesman IT and Leesman Home Working. Data was gathered across 102 buildings globally, from more than 36,000 employees.

The data is robust, not only due to the sheer size of the sample, but also due to a commendable engagement rate. Nielsen explains Ericsson secured such a strong response rate because the buzz around the process came from Ericsson’s CEO and executive leadership team. The workplace transformation strategy was deemed the most important programme across the entire organisation, and as such, having the focus and buy-in from leadership was a critical factor.

## Key takeaways

### Sector:

Information tech, software and internet

### Survey conducted:

June 2020

### Target population:

36,000+ employees

102 buildings across 52 countries

### Workplace lifecycle stage:

Establishing the business case for strategic workplace project Global office survey



**Lmi overall score:** 72.9

**Leesman benchmark:** 63.7

**Leesman+:** 74.7



**H-Lmi overall score:** 74.5

**Leesman Home benchmark:** 74.0

# “To be asked to complete the Leesman Office and Home survey by your CEO makes a big difference.”

That call to arms was followed up with messages from direct managers or country leads, who were able to emphasise that the data gathered would specifically feed into the workplace strategy for an employee’s own office.

## Leesman results

The headline figures were good. Exceptionally good. Ericsson’s overall global Office Lmi score is 72.9. Despite Ericsson’s office employee experience sitting significantly higher than the global Leesman benchmark (Lmi 63.0), when Nielsen began comparing the office and home environment, he found that the overall home working experience scored higher (H-Lmi 74.5).

The findings confirmed to Ericsson that certain activities did not translate well virtually. For example, only 51.2% said their home working environment supported informal interactions (compared to 85.5% in Ericsson’s office data), while 71.3% said that they felt connected to their organisation when working from home.

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But it also confirmed that there was a clamour to retain home working for a portion of the week, in particular because certain activities were better supported there, such as business confidential discussions (89.2% supported at home compared to 78.9% in the office), individual, focused work (87.7% compared to 84%) and reading and creative thinking (91% compared to 68% and 86.5% compared to 66.2% respectively).

Differences in employees’ home work settings also impacted the overall H-Lmi score. More than one in five (22%) said that they worked from a non-work specific home location, such as a dining table, compared to 43% who work from a dedicated work room or office. The former subset’s H-Lmi stood at 65.7, compared to the latter’s 79.4.

## Home work settings H-Lmi difference

Ericsson’s home working experience scored well – but looking at the overall H-Lmi score doesn’t tell the story of the 22% who work from a non-work specific home location. Those employees scored an H-Lmi of 65.7, nearly 14 points lower than the 43% who were able to work from a dedicated work room or office. A third of Ericsson respondents said they had a dedicated work area in their home.



A dedicated work room or office

79.4

H-Lmi



A dedicated work area (but not a separate room)

74.9

H-Lmi



A non-work specific home location (such as a dining table)

65.7

H-Lmi



Other

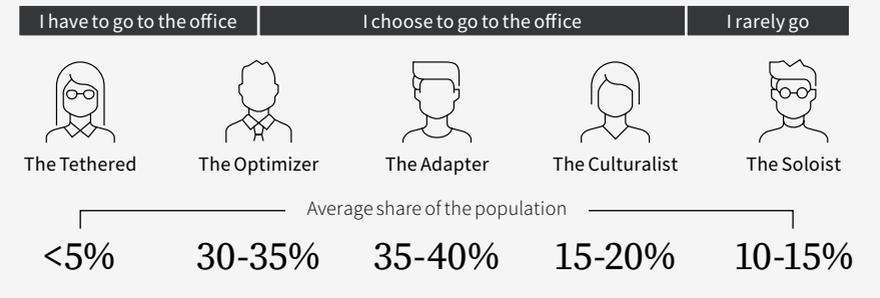
67.8

H-Lmi

H-Lmi range: 13.7

“I prefer working from home’ or ‘office’ is very black and white,” says Nielsen.

### Meet the personas



“But the data shows it’s more complex - we could see which activities were supported at home. That showed us that the future is not 100% remote.”

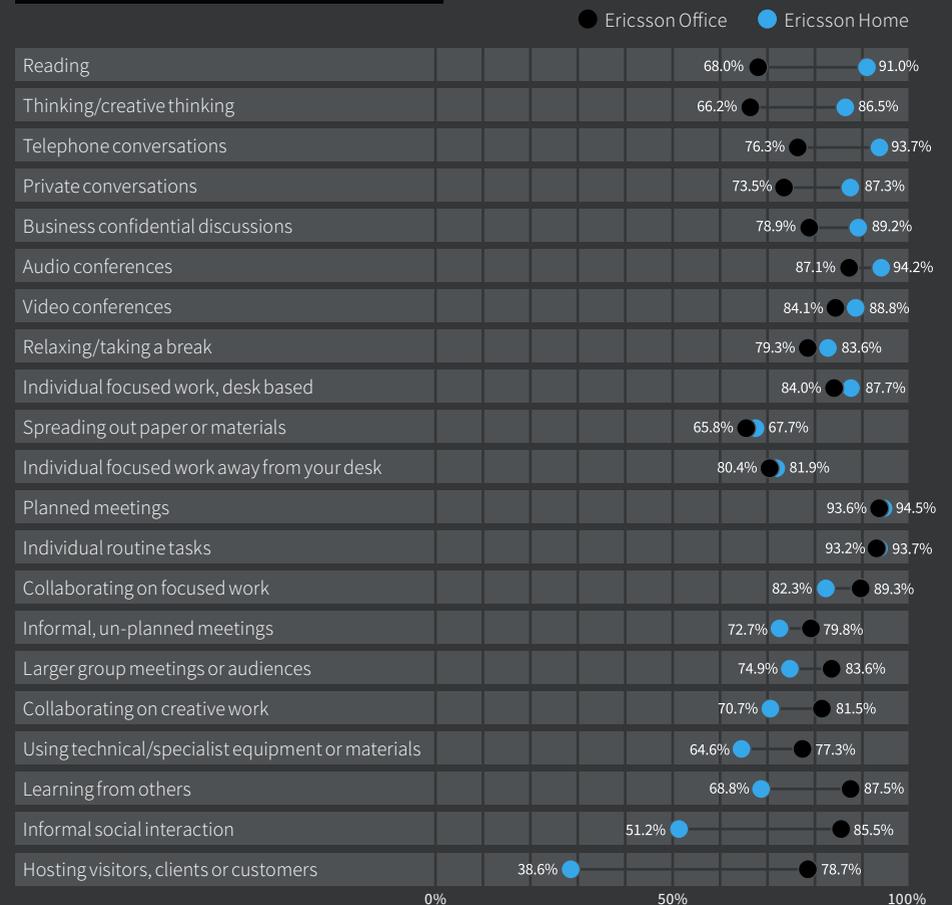
### Insights into actions

Ericsson used characteristics from the Leesman data about how people interact with their space, such as mobility and the range of work activities, to develop five employee ‘personas’ to help give an indication of each office’s future requirements. Each persona given their own persona ‘helix’, comparing how well 21 different work activities were supported at the office or at home.

For one persona, which Ericsson labelled ‘the tethered’ persona, the majority of work activities were better supported in the office, and this subset of the workforce would go to the office every day. For another – ‘the adapter’ persona, the office is the right space for them for certain activities. They can work effectively from home, but not for everything. This persona indicated that the office better supports collaborating on creative work and informal, unplanned meetings.

### Home and Office Activities Support Comparison

Ericsson took its Home and Office data, comparing support for each work activity. Nielsen used this data as a foundation for Ericsson’s ‘persona helix’ model





From this analysis, Ericsson could deduce regional differences in their workforce, understand the balance of employee personas at a single site, and understand the types of work activities that would more likely be undertaken at one particular office or at home. The specific personas consequently guided Ericsson as to what types of work space are desired, from meeting rooms to group focus spaces and desk spaces, for each office within the survey scope.



Ericsson is testing out its new space concepts across five pilot offices, taking into account the mix of employee personas, their priorities and where they prefer to undertake work activities.

### How many days per week working from home in the future?

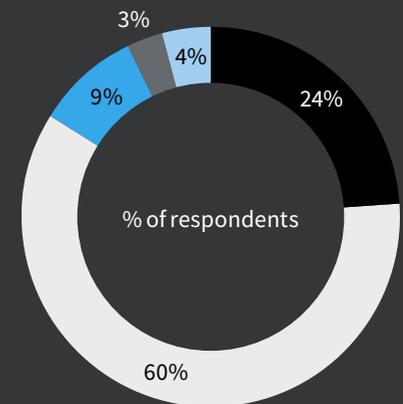
Pre-pandemic, 84% of Ericsson employees spent less than 25% of their time working from home. But 79% expressed a preference to work from home at least 2 days per week in the future

### Home Working Time Distribution

Q. "In a typical working week at your organisation, approximately what proportion of your time do you spend working at home?"

% of time spent working at home

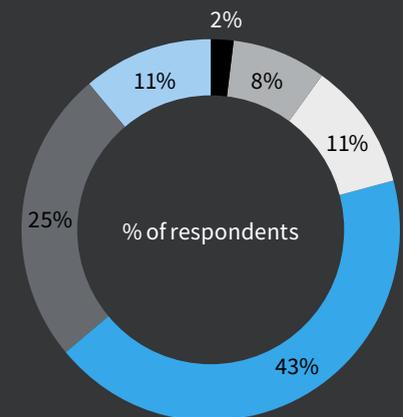
- 0% H-Lmi n/a
- 1-25% H-Lmi 72.7
- 26-50% H-Lmi 79.3
- 51-75% H-Lmi 81.1
- 76-100% H-Lmi 83.9



Q. "In the future, beyond COVID-19, how many days per week would you prefer to work from home on average?"

Preferred days working from home

- Never
- Less than 1 day per week / occasionally
- 1 day per week
- 2-3 days per week
- 4-5 days per week / almost always
- Always



“These new spaces are literally a mirror of what our employees would like their future workplace to be,” says Nielsen.

The design for one particular office included 60% of the space dedicated to focused desk-based work, but from calculating the persona split, Ericsson made the decision to reduce the desk-space to 15%. Instead, more team and socialising space would be factored into the floor plan.

This meticulous analysis has been well received all-round.

“I’ve run more than 50 sessions talking about our workplace of the future, and nobody has asked me: ‘Are you sure?’

“When you present solid research and solid data, supporting effect-based decision making, everyone can see that it’s been carefully worked through. It makes these sorts of critical questions obsolete.

For Ericsson, the value of gathering office experience data while many of their workforce were working from home was evident. Now, the focus is on ensuring that when offices do reopen, they are equipped with the right technology and spaces, tailored to the people who will be using them.

## **Our mission is to create better places to work.**

Leesman is the world leader in measuring and analysing the experiences of employees in their places of work.

Our data and insight equips executives at all levels to make informed, forward-thinking decisions that allow them to mitigate risk, plan for the future, and benefit from great employee workplace experience.

Through a series of assessment tools, Leesman captures employee sentiments on how effectively the work environments they use support them. By rating organisations’ ability to support employees in the home and in the office, performance can then be benchmarked against the world’s largest database of its kind.

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