

---

# Teleworking Life of Disabled Workers in Sweden – Promoting Autonomy and Emancipation, or not?

Elisabet M. Nilsson\*<sup>1</sup>, Jörgen Lundälv\*<sup>2</sup>, and Magnus Eriksson\*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Malmö university – Suède

<sup>2</sup>University of Gothenburg – Suède

<sup>3</sup>RISE Research Institutes of Sweden – Suède

## Résumé

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affected all areas of life. Working life underwent major transitions; a re-evaluation of so-called essential work, prevarication of employment, and a transition towards increased remote working arrangements (Martel et al. 2021). Teleworking, which has become the "new normal" includes spending less time in conventional office settings and more time working from home offices using telecommunication technologies. The technological advances of teleworking hold potential to be implemented post-pandemic as a strategy to increase accessibility and promote autonomy and emancipation for people with disabilities (McNamara & Mason Stanch 2021).

While teleworking can be advantageous for disabled workers, they face many obstacles when accessing and using technologies for completing work tasks (Jashinsky et al. 2021). Fewer people with disabilities report being users of digital technology in comparison to others, leaving a digital divide between people with and without disabilities (Anderson & Perrin 2017). There is also the question of how to ensure social protection and resilience among teleworking disabled workers to counteract social isolation, exclusion and unrealistic expectations from employers and colleagues.

The multidisciplinary project (Project name) (reference anonymised for blind review) aims to explore the potentials and challenges of teleworking for people with disabilities to see what to bring with us to the post-pandemic world.

## METHODS

The project assumes participatory research and design research approaches and builds on a collaboration with a network of disability organisations and people with disabilities. In the first phase of the project, online semi-structured interviews with 27 respondents (teleworking disabled workers) were conducted. In the coming phases, other participatory research methods will be applied such as photovoice, home assignments and co-design workshops.

## RESULTS

The interview transcripts are currently being analysed using a thematic analytical approach. A series of themes has emerged, whereof some address the potentials of teleworking to increase the accessibility for disabled workers to the labour market. However, major challenges have also been identified, such as social isolation, reduced influence at the workspace, increased stress and limited support and understanding from employers. This indicates the

---

\*Intervenant

importance of policy development and an increased awareness among both employers and employees about how to ensure social protection and resilience.

#### REFERENSES

Anderson, M, Perrin, A. 2017. Disabled Americans are less likely to use technology. Pew Research Center.

Jashinsky, T L, King, C L, Kwiat, N M, Henry, B L, Lockett-Glover, A . 2021. "Disability and COVID-19: Impact on Workers, Intersectionality With Race, and Inclusion Strategies." *The Career Development Quarterly* 69(4): 313–325.

Martel, A, Kirsten Day, K. 2021. "Beyond the pandemic: the role of the built environment in supporting people with disabilities work life." *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* 15(1): 98–112.

McNamara, K A, Mason Stanch, P. 2021. "Accommodating workers with disabilities in the post-Covid world." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene* 18(4-5): 149–153.