Adaptive Spaces

Nordic Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

REPORT

CBRE RESEARCH
OCTOBER 2025

Key themes

01

Attendance gap persists

Employers continue to push for higher in-office presence, with 59% aiming for three or more days per week. However, 42% of employees currently attend less than three days, creating a persistent gap that slows improvements in overall utilisation.

02

Rising pressure for engagement

Companies are increasingly uncomfortable with current attendance levels — Nearly half expect an increase in attendance. The top challenge identified is creating a vibrant and engaging office environment (54%), signaling a need for stronger "pull" factors alongside policy-driven "push" strategies.

03

Flex space momentum on the rise

Demand for flexible workspace is accelerating, with 29% of Nordic occupiers targeting the majority of their portfolios in flex by 2027. This trend is driven by a desire to avoid capital commitments (62%) and addressing uncertain demand levels.

04

Sustainability and cost focus

Financial impact and ESG considerations remain central. Occupiers and landlords are reviewing refurbishment costs and prioritising sustainable construction practices, aligning with long-term resilience goals.

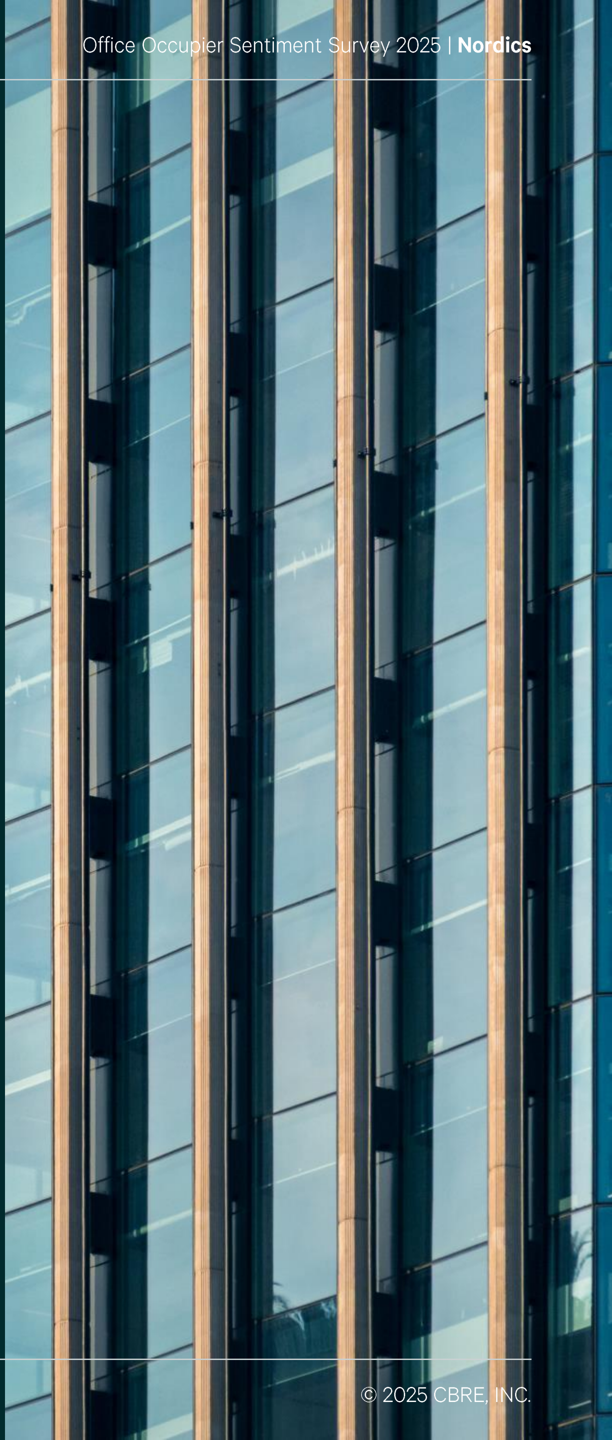
05

Space optimisation and efficiency

Unassigned desks dominate (58%), and companies are actively pursuing higher desk-sharing ratios to optimise space usage. This reflects a broader shift toward adaptive space strategies.

"Demand for premium office space is outpacing supply, and 45% of occupiers are concerned about availability–this is driving rental growth across all Nordic capitals."

Jussi Niemistö
Head of Research
CBRE Nordics



Closing attendance gaps and driving engagement

"We're seeing a clear shift: Nordic occupiers are tightening attendance expectations while creating vibrant, amenity-rich spaces that earn the commute. Nordic autonomy works when the office competes and wins on its merits, with places that pull rather than policies that push. Occupiers want flexibility and better utilisation; investors want stability and cost control. The sweet spot sits in smart design and location – buildings that adapt without losing value."

Christer Farstad
Head of Occupier Services
CBRE Nordics

Expectations versus delivery: The workplace balance

- There were only minor fluctuations in required and actual attendance compared to 2023.
- 59% of Nordic companies want employees in the office three days or more per week, but only 46% of firms are achieving that level of attendance.
- Currently, 43% of employees work from the office fewer than three days per week, while 26% of employers consider that acceptable.

FIGURE 1:
What employers are asking for

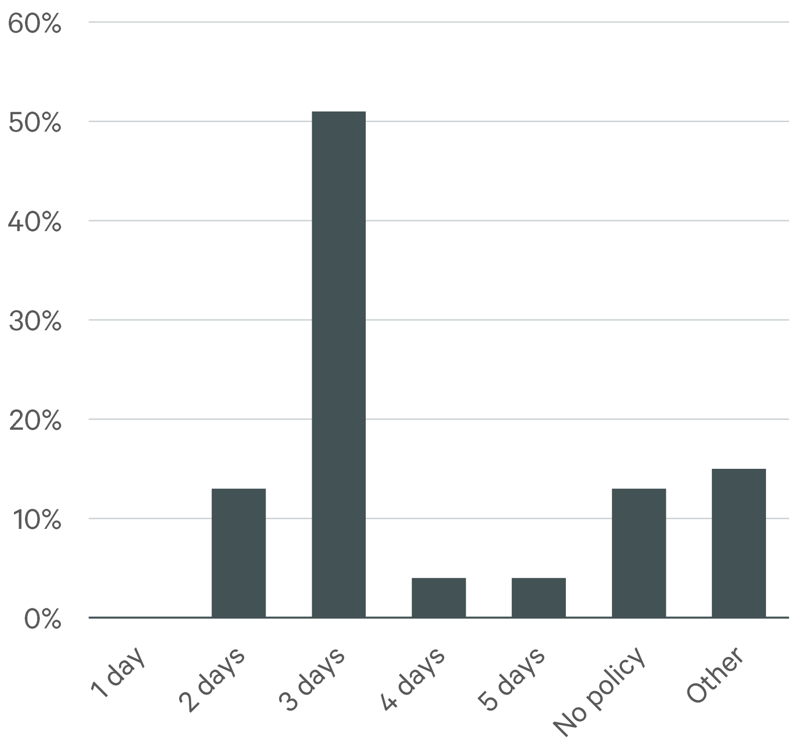
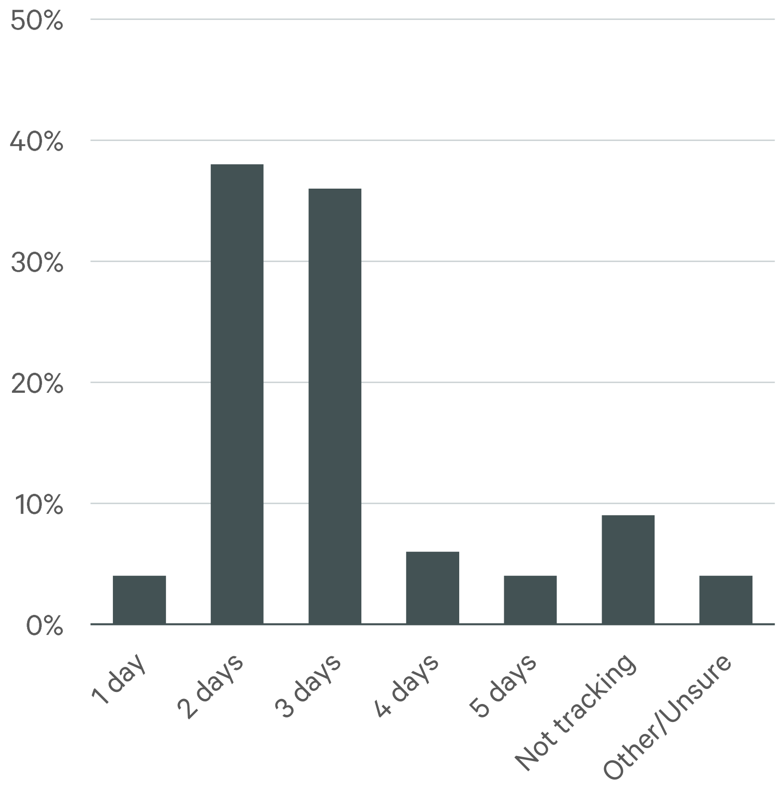


FIGURE 2:
What employees are delivering



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

"Future workplace strategies will focus on creating vibrant, collaborative environments that turn attendance challenges into opportunities."

Sanna Ridhagen
Head of Workplace Consulting
CBRE Sweden

Attendance challenges

Which challenges are you facing with respect to office attendance?

Top three challenges

Lack of vibrancy on lower-attendance days

The challenge that most concerns Nordic occupiers (54%) is the lack of vibrancy discouraging people from coming to the office; "Why go in if my team won't be there?". Companies need to provide authentic reasons to come in on Mondays and Fridays, with managers leading by example and being a draw themselves. Many organizations have started to establish designated team days to ensure alignment and collaboration.

Anticipating future space needs

The second most prominent challenge (54%) is making future space match future needs. Corporate real estate teams are navigating a tightrope walk, balancing tight budgets, (often) downsized portfolios, slight underattendance, and corporate policies on required days in the office that can and do change with very little (if any) warning.

Balancing demand across all five days

A more even distribution of demand throughout the week (50%) would simplify future space planning, as predictable occupancy patterns make forecasting easier.
This challenge is closely linked to the lack of vibrancy on lower-attendance days.
Occupiers' main challenges are a group of connected issues, all centred on how to make hybrid work effectively.

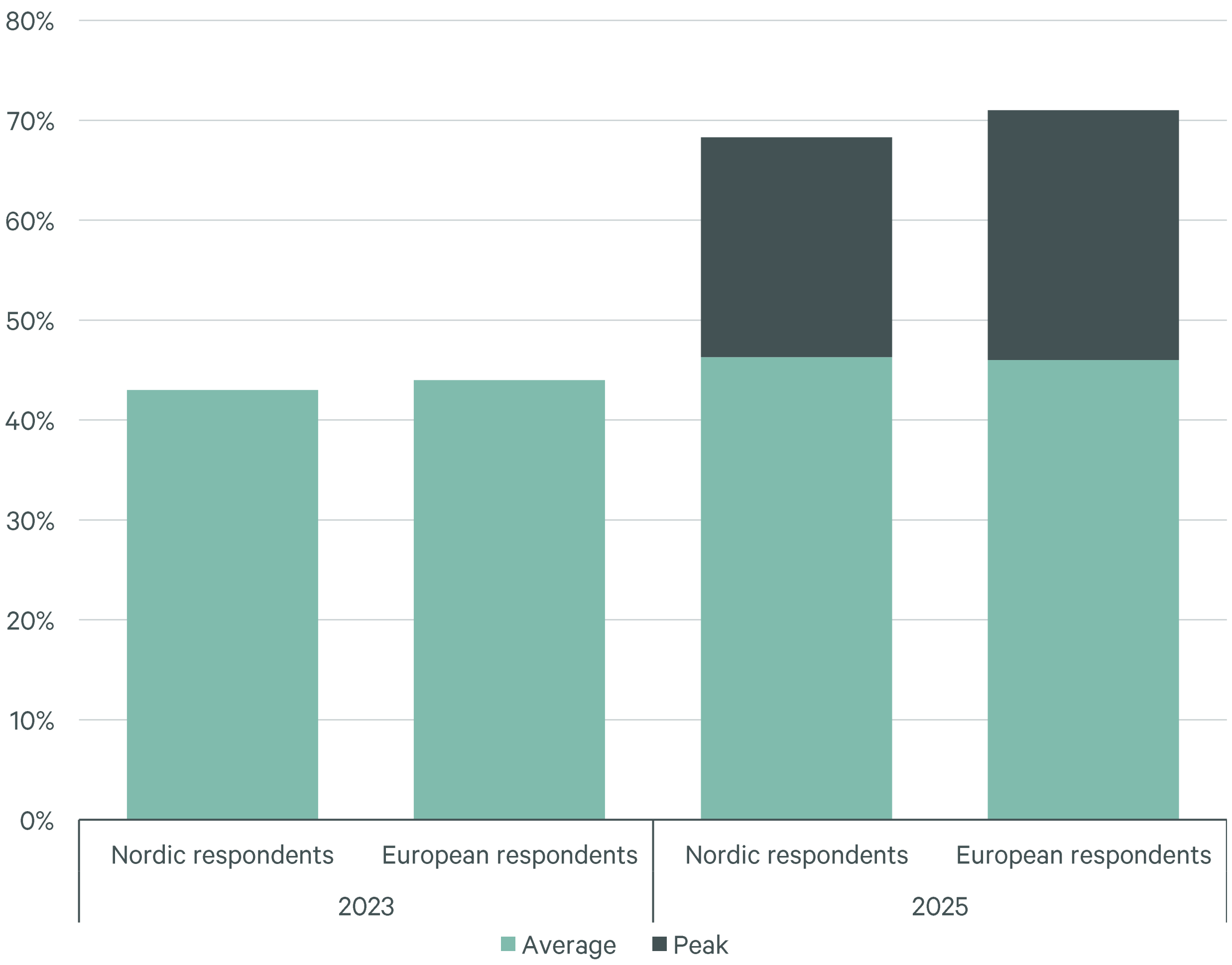
One fifth of Nordic occupiers see over 80% peak utilisation

- **Average space utilisation is at 46% for both the wider European and Nordic respondents**. The peak utilisation was slightly higher for the European results (71% vs. Nordic respondents 68%).
- **One fifth of the surveyed Nordic occupiers are seeing over 80% peak utilisation rates.**

"Sweden's more flexible COVID-strategy, compared to strict lockdowns elsewhere, led to a softer return-to-office experience than in many other countries."

Maryrose David
Head of Research
CBRE Sweden

FIGURE 3:
Typical weekly average and peak day space utilisation rates - Nordic vs. European results



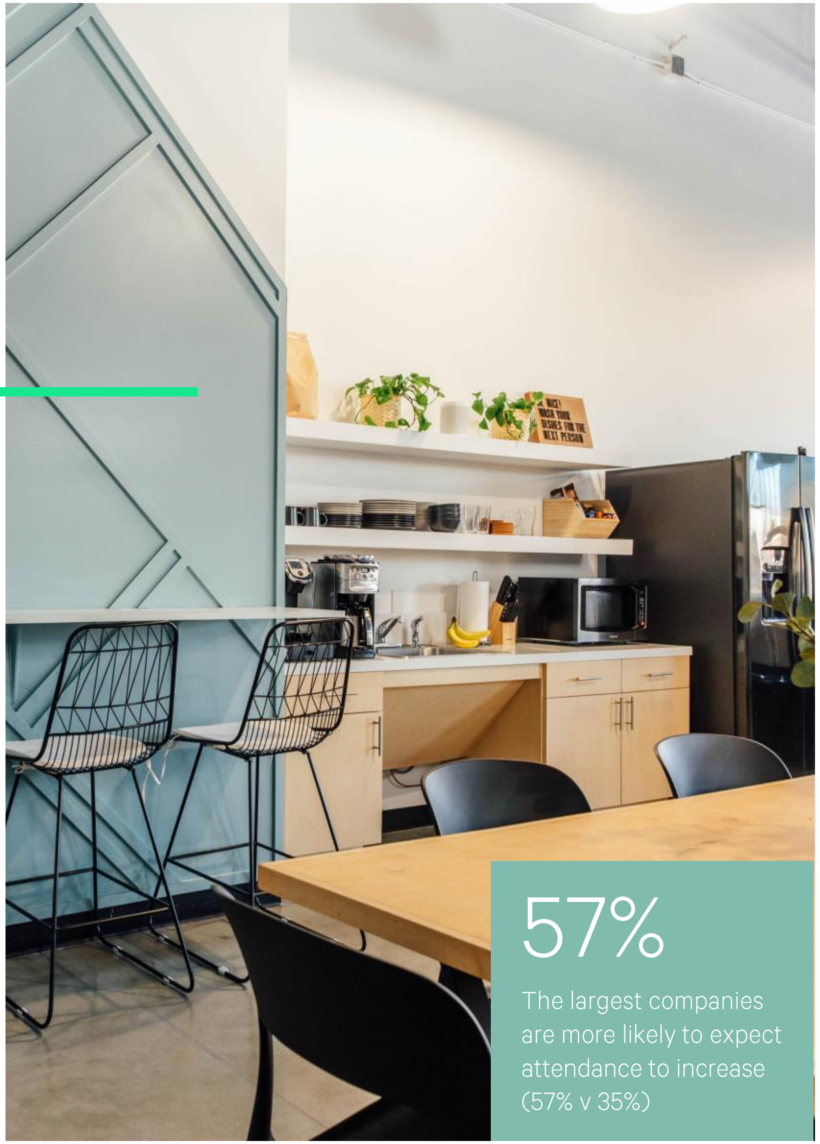
68%
peak utilisation for the Nordic occupiers in 2025, up 2%-points from 2023.

46%
average utilisation for the Nordic occupiers in 2025, up 2%-points from 2023.

Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

Office attendance expected to rise in the Nordics

- Nearly half of Nordic **firms are expecting attendance to rise.** This is highlighting the trend of tightening return-to-office and attendance policies across the Nordics.
- In the Nordics, employer requirements have shifted from a majority-in-office model of three days per week to more frequent presence - often four days. Increasingly, companies are also specifying which days employees should be on-site, for example mandating Mondays and Fridays for team alignment.
- Majority of Nordic occupiers (78%) are communicating, but not enforcing their office attendance policy, which aligns with the Nordic leadership style that emphasizes autonomy and flat organizational structures.

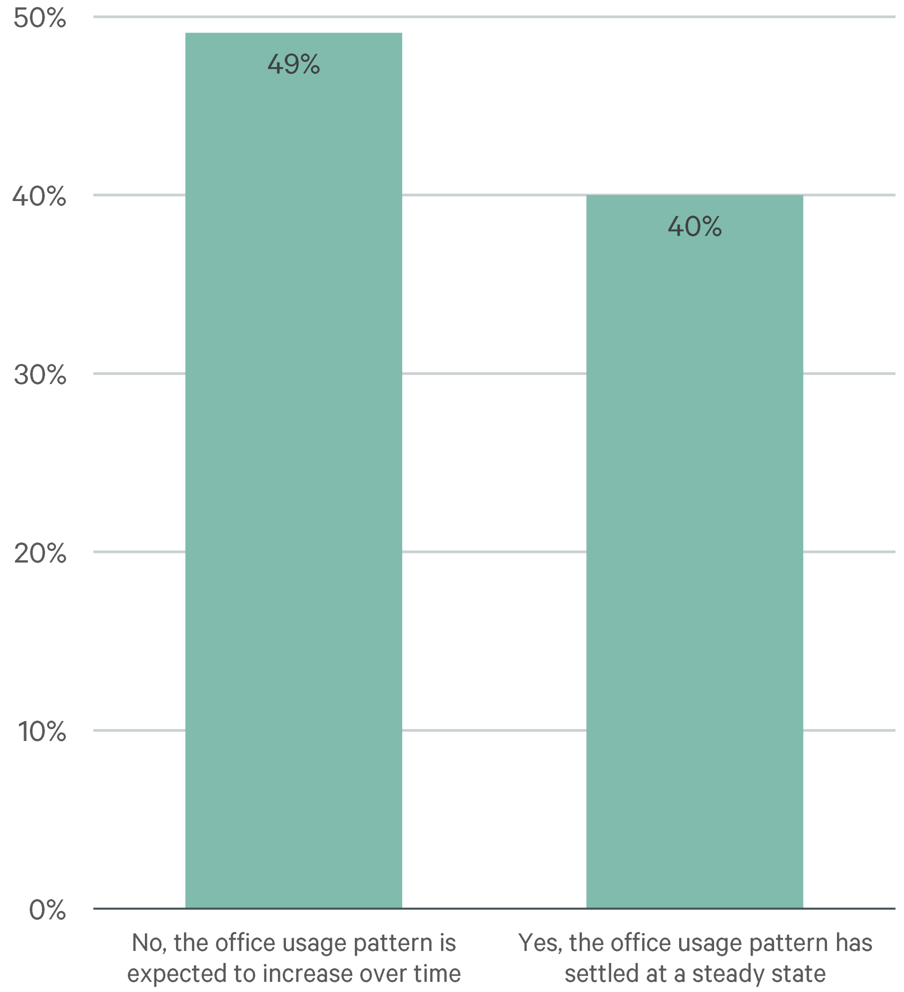


57%

The largest companies are more likely to expect attendance to increase (57% v 35%)

FIGURE 4:

Have you accepted current office attendance as a steady state position?



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

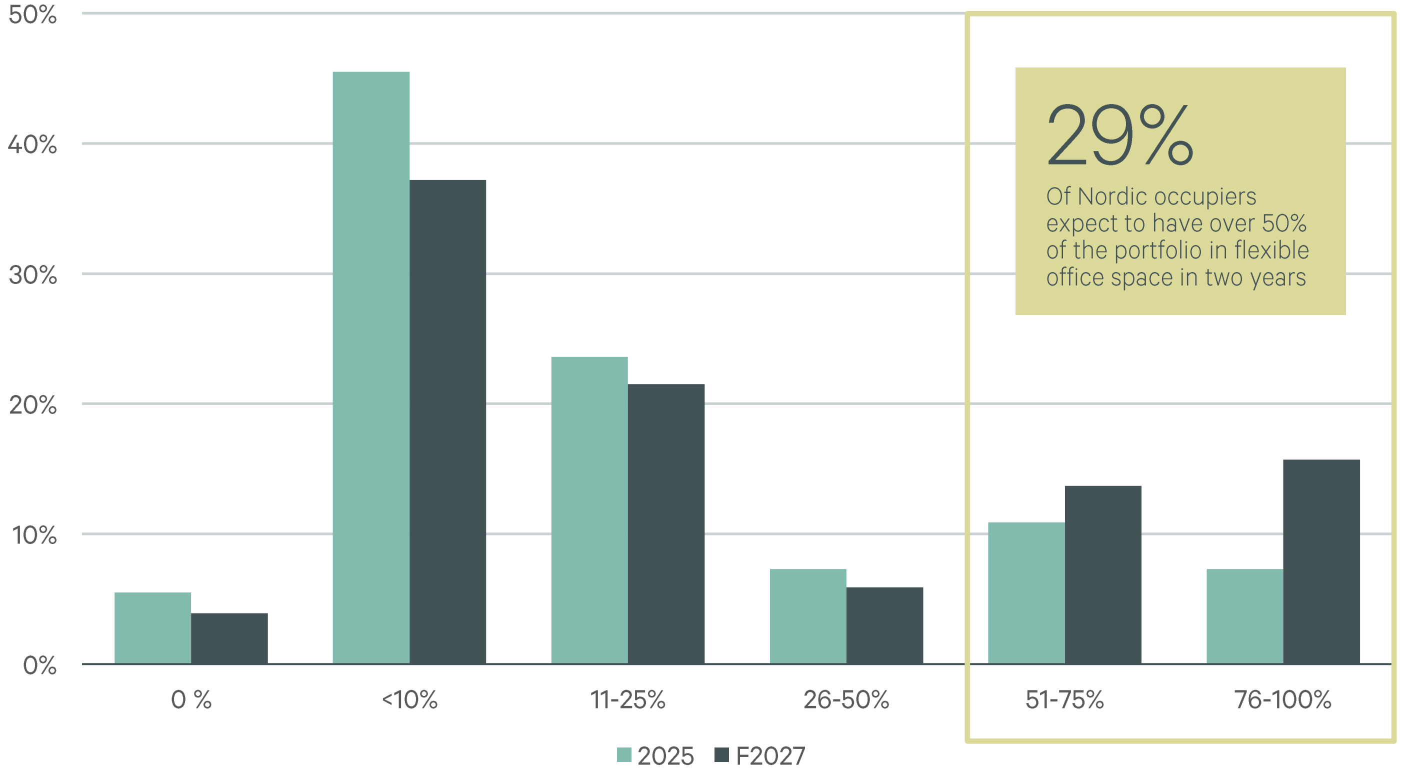
Flexibility and efficiency are reshaping workplace strategies

“In a world of constant change, adaptability will be key – making flexible space and lease structures essential to resilient workplace strategies.”

Lise Klevan Dybwad
Head of Workplace Consulting
CBRE Nordics

Clear trend towards more flex in portfolios

FIGURE 5:
What percent of your portfolio is made up of flexible office space today and in two years?



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

Nordic occupiers are increasingly seeking more flexibility in their portfolios

- The **main driver** behind the shift to flex office space is occupiers seeking to reduce **capital expenditure** (62%). The **second driver is solving for uncertain demand levels (43%)** followed by swing space during leased office construction (32%) and offering meeting and collaboration space on demand (32%).
- Concerns around **IT/security challenges** (60%), **employee perceptions** of flex (58%) and **cost** (52%) are the main hurdles. **Leadership perception of using flex space** (33%) and the overall **service quality** of flex space (31%) is also holding back uptake.
- In Sweden, many large office landlords are offering flexible space within their own office stock, combining traditional leases to flexible leases and reducing the need to turn to co-working or other flex space providers. Key barriers to wider adoption of flex space may include inefficient office layouts and concerns that employees could reduce their office attendance if they lack a dedicated workspace.

FIGURE 6:

Main reasons for use of flexible office space

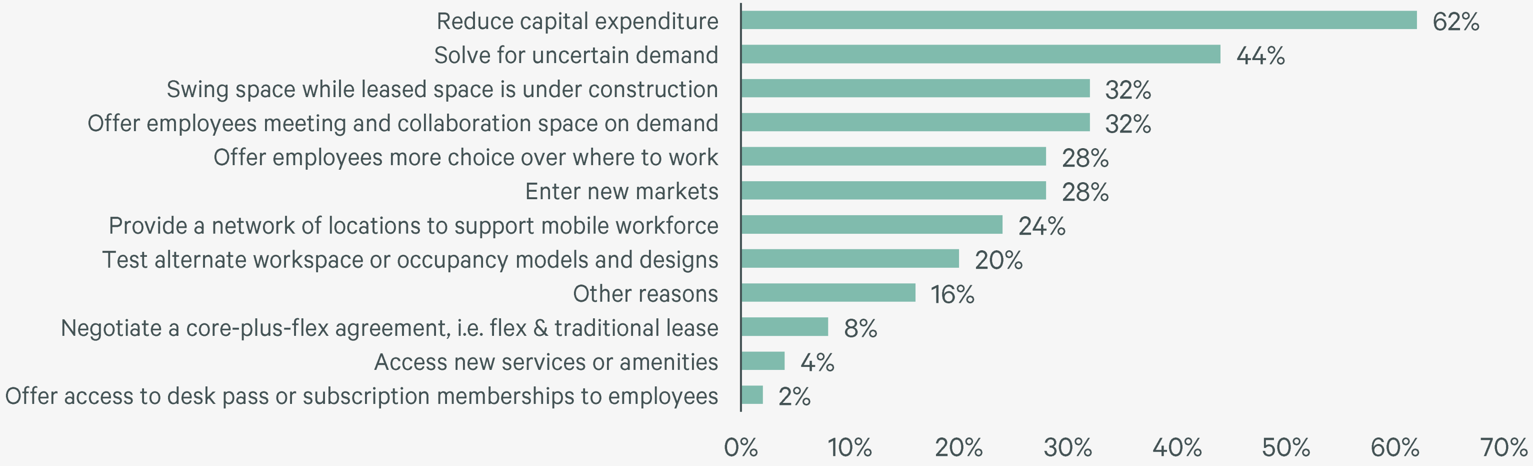
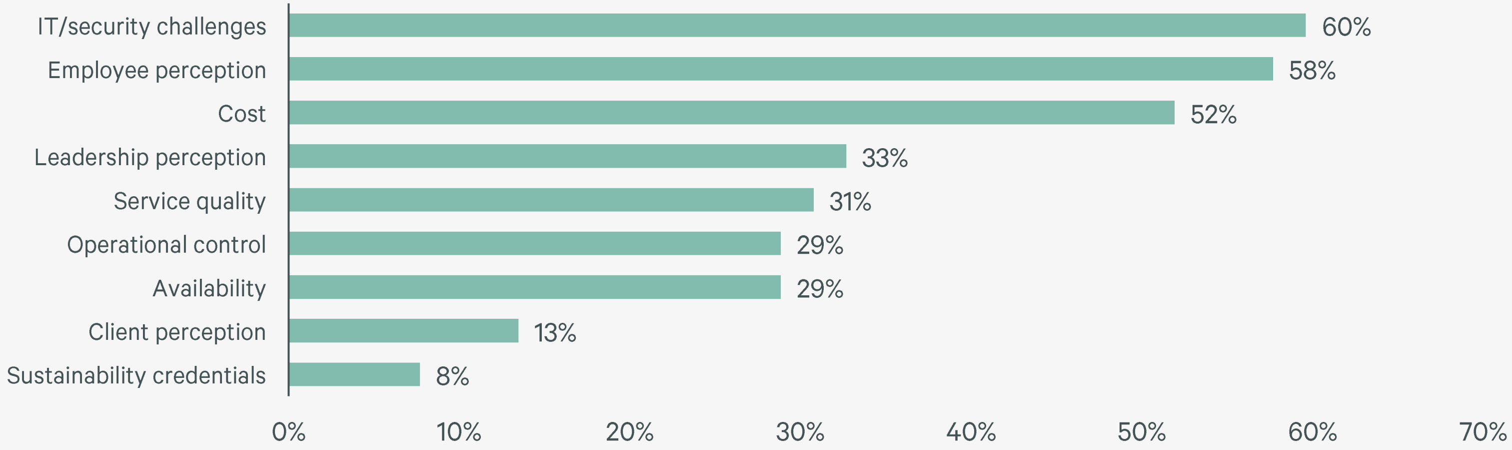


FIGURE 7:

Main challenges when considering the use of flexible office space



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

Unassigned desks the norm in the Nordics, desk-sharing ratios on the rise

FIGURE 8:
Percentage in unassigned desk environment

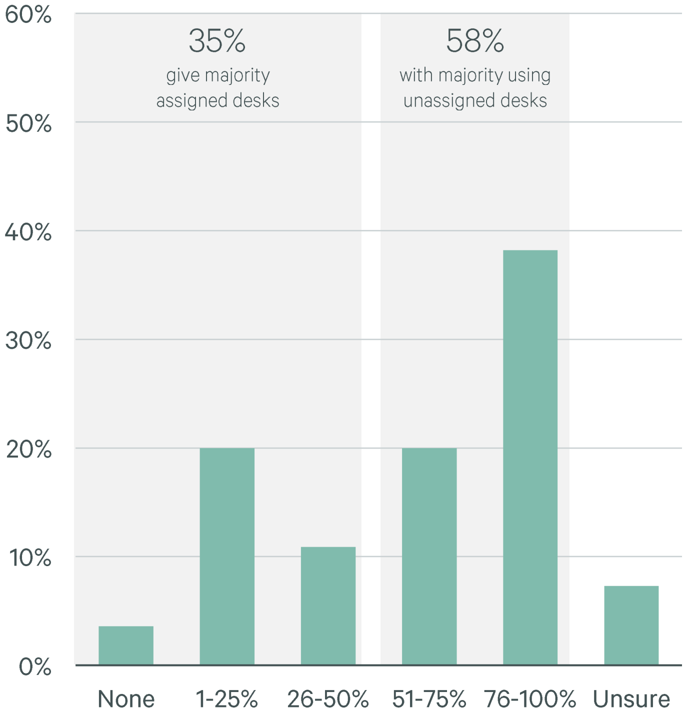
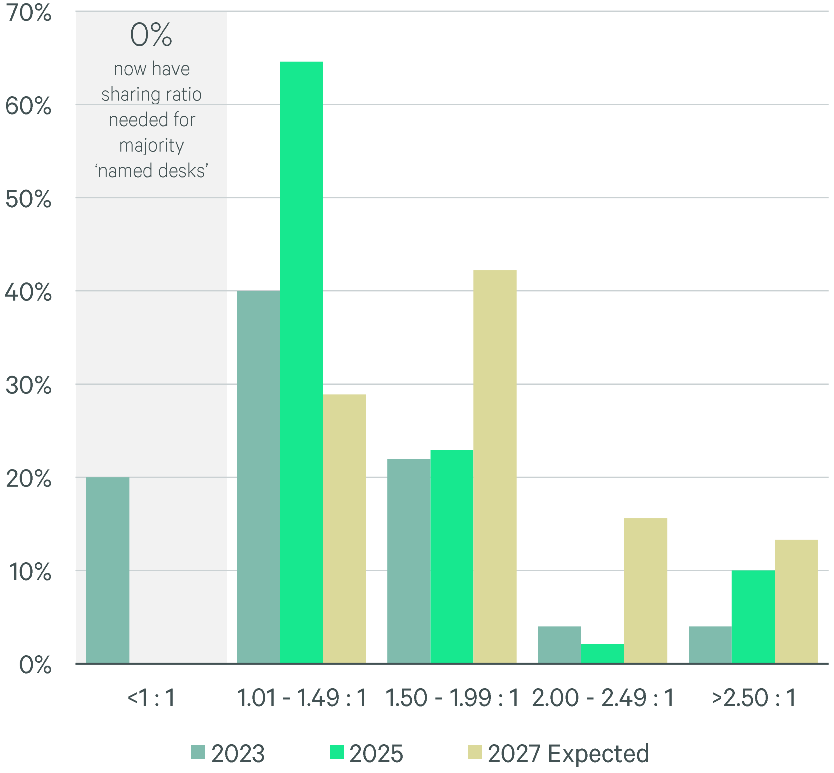


FIGURE 9:
Employee-to-desk sharing ratio today



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2023 & 2025

35%
Of Nordic occupiers still assign desks to most of their staff

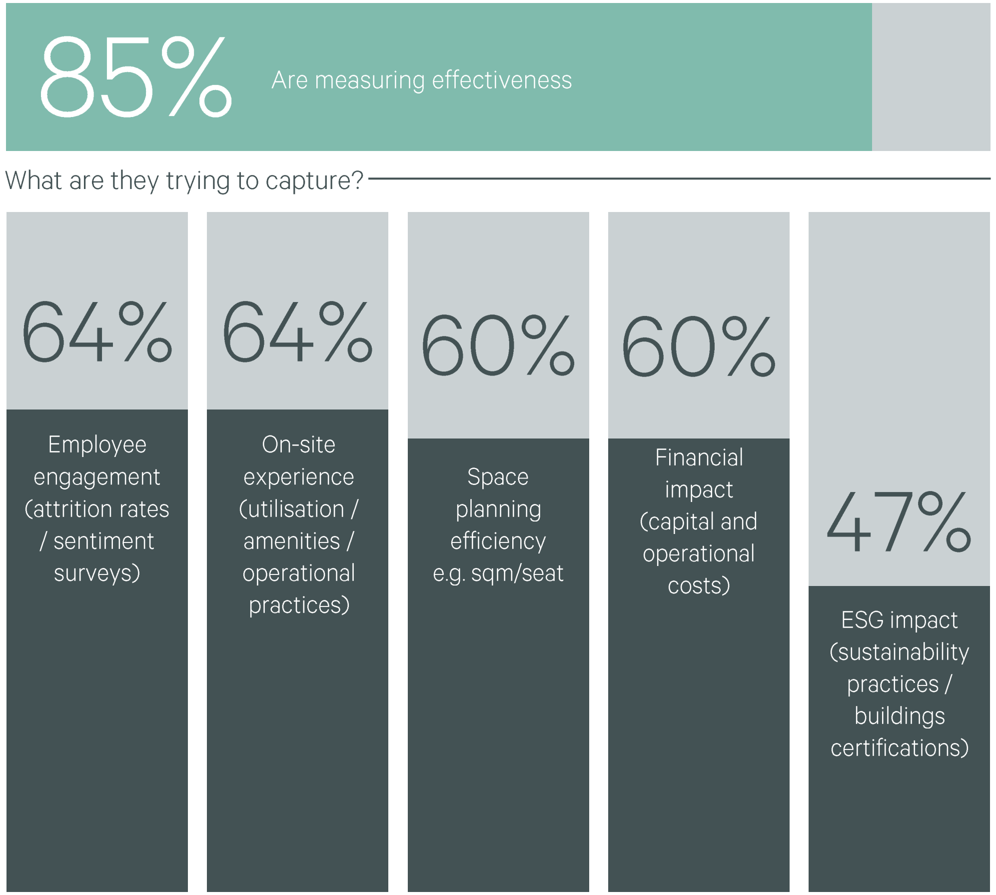
- While unassigned seating (hot desks) is now in it's third decade, **35% of occupiers still assign desks to most of their staff.**
- The desk-sharing ratios suggests that respondents are referring to temporary assigned seating (desk booking systems, rotating assignments, or team zones) **rather than "named" desks.**
- **Higher desk-sharing ratios have been implemented,** and the trend indicates further increases are likely, even among occupiers who currently assign desks to most employees.

Workplace engagement and on-site experience are in high focus

- Walking the line between cost and morale is leading more Nordic occupiers to engage more broadly with ways of tracking the impact of their decisions. 85% of Nordic occupiers are tracking their workplace effectiveness, while 64% of those companies are focusing on both employee engagement and on-site experience.
- The financial impact and space planning efficiency are in focus for 60% of Nordics occupiers, who are measuring effectiveness, while only 47% are trying to capture the sustainability impact.

FIGURE 10:

Are you measuring the effectiveness of your workplace?



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

"Sustainability is no longer optional – landlords are actively seeking ways to integrate flexible space while minimising environmental impact."

Kim Grüneberger
Head of Office Leasing
CBRE Sweden

Portfolio optimisation through cost and employee needs

"Occupiers are balancing cost discipline with employee needs –optimization is no longer optional, it's strategic."

Niko Penttinen
Head of Leasing
CBRE Finland

Portfolio downsizing continues

Approximately 20% of Nordic occupiers are consistently planning for expansion and roughly the same proportion report that they are executing those expansion plans.

Slightly over **60% of Nordic occupiers report that their portfolios have reduced** in size. 40% state that their portfolio has got smaller moderately or significantly over the last three years.

The downsizing trend looks to continue. The percentage of occupiers planning further reductions has stayed at 61%, while the expectations for moderate (10-30%) reductions has increased from 2023.

FIGURE 11:
Change to portfolio size, last three years

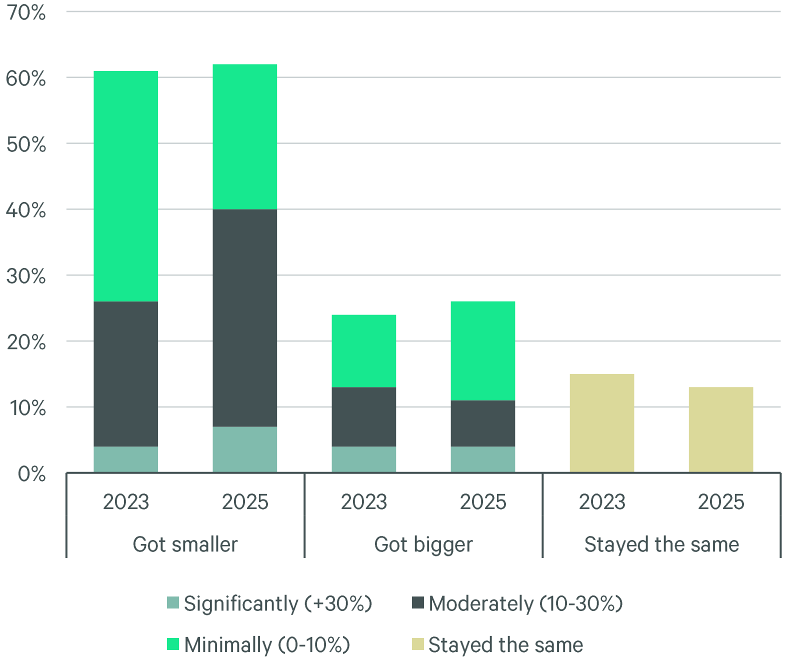
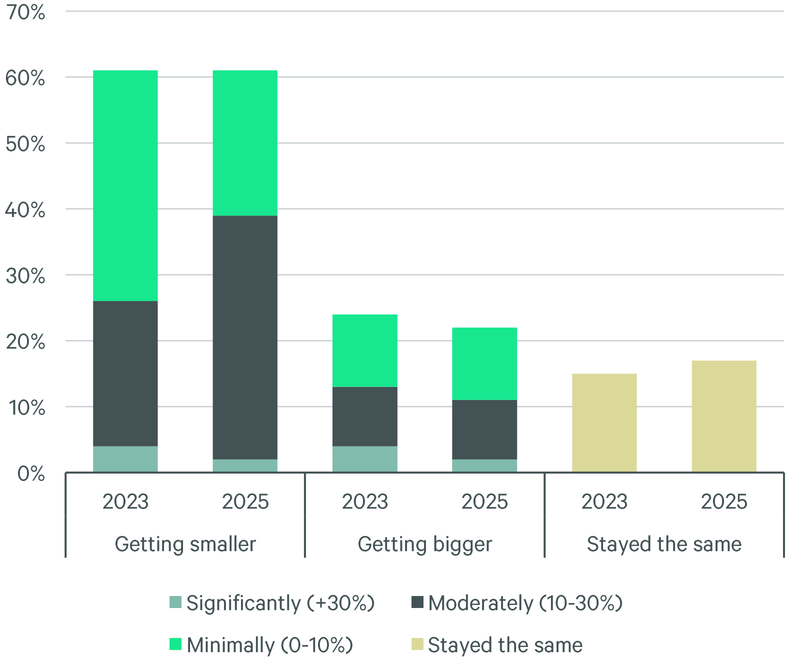


FIGURE 12:
Expectations for portfolio size, next three years



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2023 & 2025

What's driving these shifts in portfolio size?

- Portfolio shifts in 2025 are primarily shaped by business dynamics and workplace strategies.
- For expansions, business and headcount growth remain the dominant driver (92%), far outweighing prior over-contraction (17%).
- For contractions, hybrid work continues to lead, but cost considerations and headcount reductions has risen sharply since 2023. This signals a stronger emphasis on financial discipline alongside evolving work models.

"Occupiers are signaling a clear priority—expansion follows headcount, contraction follows workplace balance."

Anders Hansén
Head of Occupier
CBRE Sweden

FIGURE 13:
Reasons for expanding portfolios

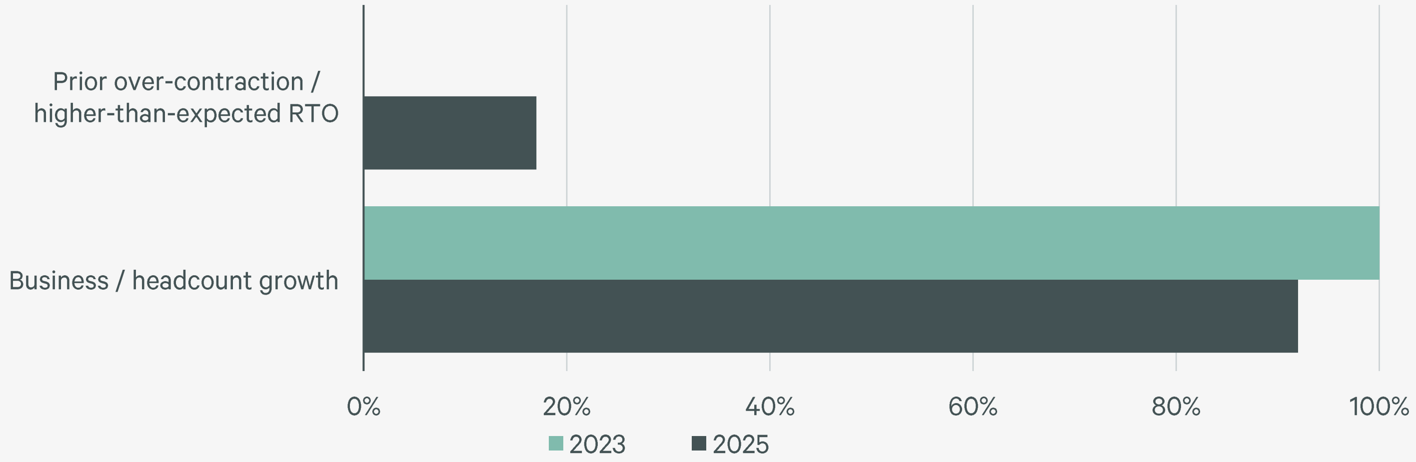
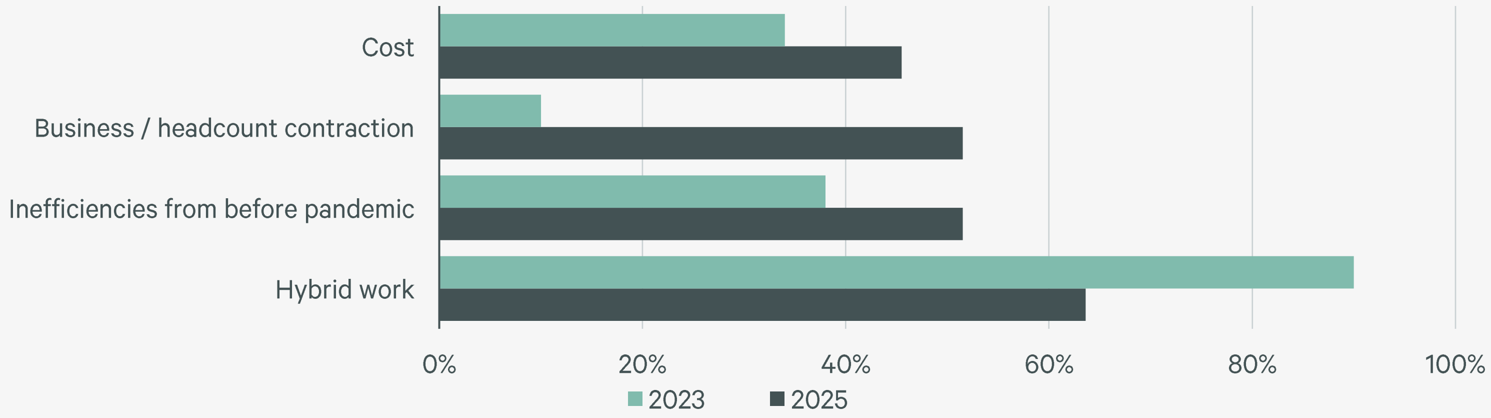


FIGURE 14:
Reasons for contracting portfolios



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2023 & 2025

What's driving 'stay-or-go' decision-making?

FIGURE 15:
Reasons for renewing

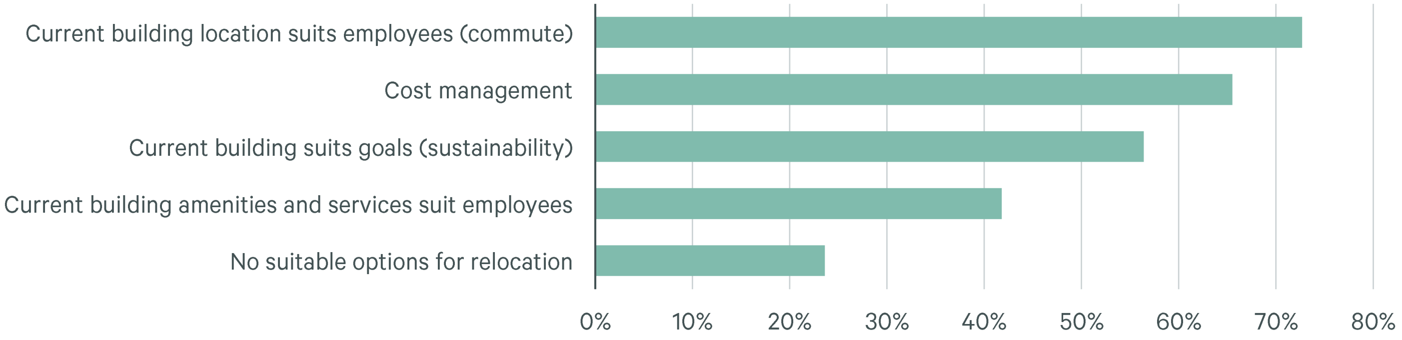
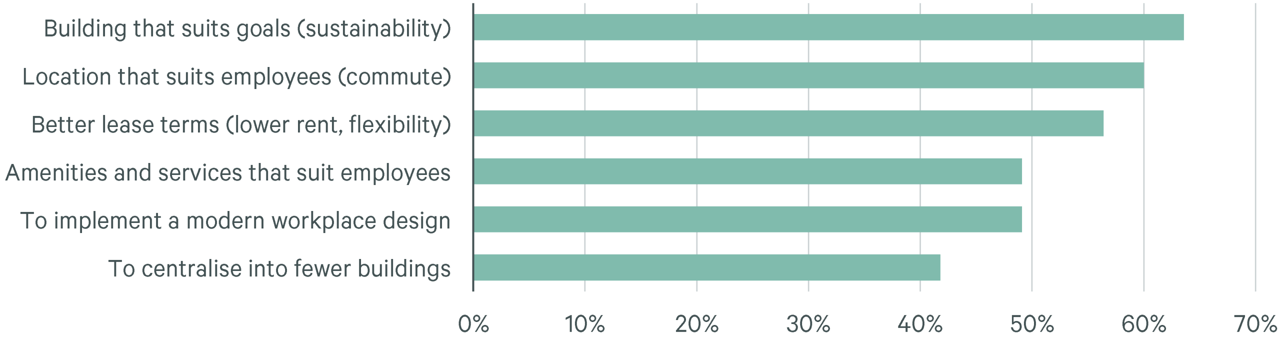
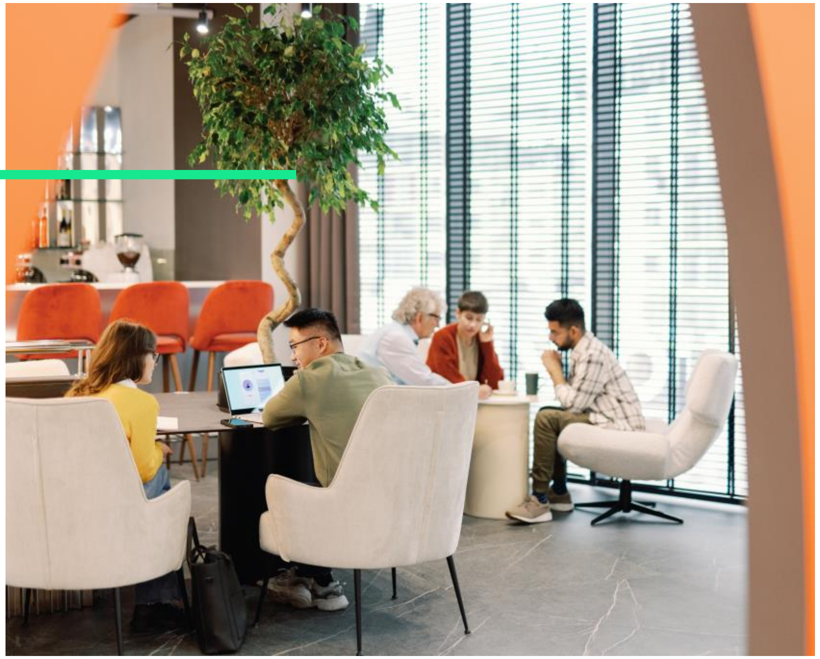


FIGURE 16:
Reasons for relocating



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

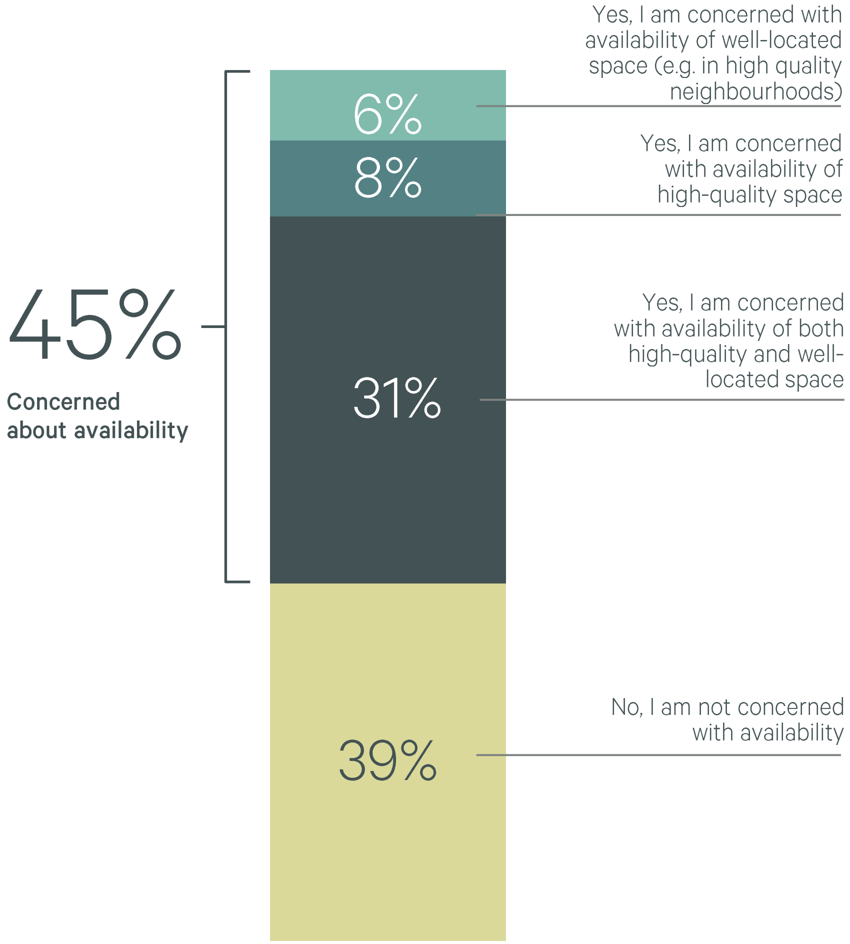


- **Stay-or-go decisions** are primarily driven by employee needs with **location** (73%), **cost** (66%), and **sustainability** (56%) the main factors behind renewals. Meanwhile, sustainability (64%), location (60%), and cost (57%) are the driving forces behind decisions to relocate.
- The importance that occupiers place on locations that suit their employees and amenities that their employees want, reinforces the **centrality of attracting and retaining talent** as core considerations.

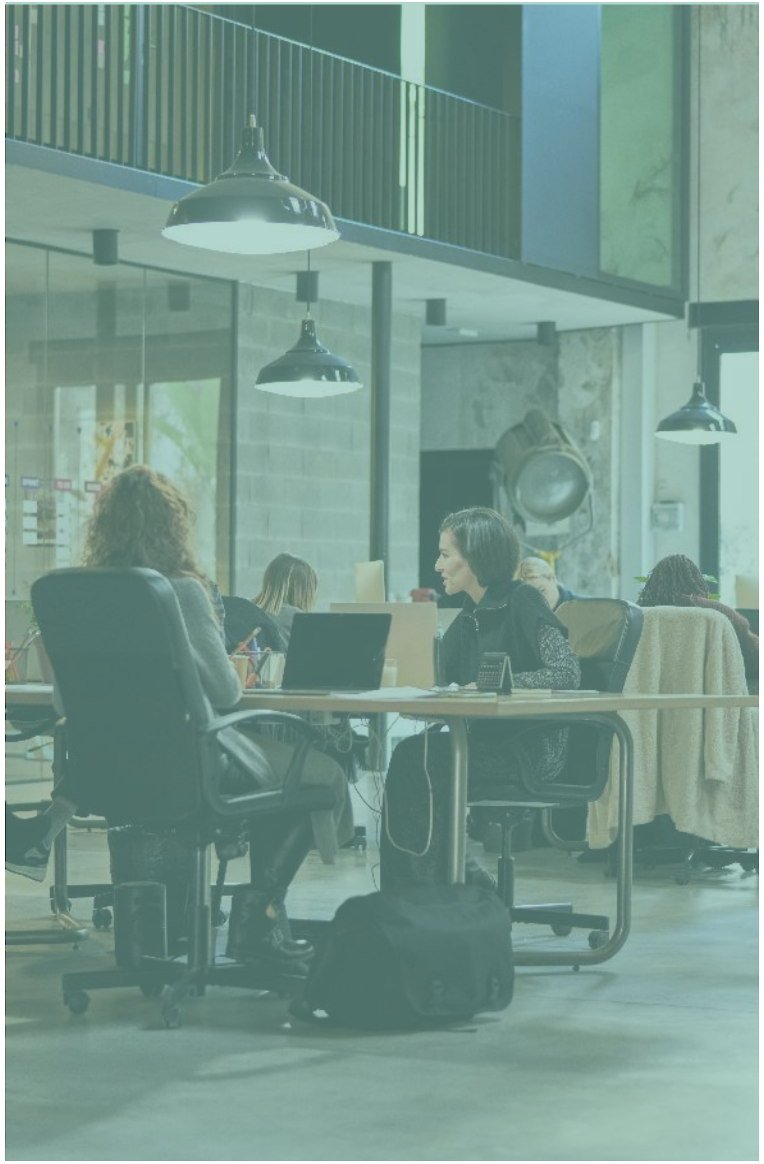
Concerns about availability of desirable space

- The ‘Flight-to-Quality’ trend in the office market has created tight market conditions for higher quality and well-located office space, and Nordic occupiers which are considering moving to new spaces in the next three years are showing concern for the availability of desirable space.
- 45% of Nordic occupiers that are considering a medium-term move are concerned about the availability of well-located and / or high-quality space.
- According to CBRE Research, the prime rental growth in the Nordic capitals has been very strong since 2019: Helsinki (+43%), Copenhagen (+26%), Oslo (+24%), and Stockholm (+19%) highlighting the intense competition for top-tier office space across the region.

FIGURE 17:
If a relocation strategy is within your three-year horizon, are you concerned about the future availability of the type of space you desire?



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025



Location and building preferences: Top factors

What are the most important factors driving your organisation's real estate decisions?

Top three decision factors

01 **Public transport accessibility and car parking**

02 **Near food and beverage options**

03 **Bicycle/scooter garage**

Ease of accessibility remains the most important factor for Nordic occupiers, as it has been since the return to office became a priority in 2023. Convenient commutes facilitate higher attendance, as an office can 'earn the commute' more readily when the commute is relatively easily. The second and third most important factors emphasise the need to provide employees a positive experience when they are in the office. Ultimately, location selection is driven by what will attract and retain talent.

Top three selection factors

01 **Sustainable building features**

02 **Amenity space**

03 **Flex office space**

The most sought-after building features reflect occupiers' key priorities: sustainability criteria, talent attraction, and cost reduction.

Up-to-date sustainability features remain paramount, followed by offering amenities within the office and the inclusion of flex space.

Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

Conclusions for Occupiers

Hybrid work benefits from strong office incentives

- Employees consistently attend the office slightly less than they are asked to.
- Incentivise attendance by offering a vibrant workspace and the shortest possible commutes.

Rising attendance to come may stretch peak utilisation

- Significantly more employers are expecting their attendance to rise.
- With attendance already focused on mid-weekdays and portfolios smaller than they were, closely monitor space utilisation.

Invest in measuring outcomes

- Ensure your workspace delivers your strategy whilst enhancing your culture by measuring effectiveness in addition to efficiency.
- Measures of user experience and sentiment can highlight your real estate's holistic impact on productivity.

Desirable features very similar for almost all

- The ideal office offers engaging, well-connected space with in-house amenities, sustainable design, flex options, and a vibrant mixed-use environment.
- Meeting these criteria often requires a rental premium or a compromise.

Engage early in the search for space

- The supply of good space in good locations is tight, and most occupiers are aware of this.
- Start the process as early as possible to secure space that complements your strategy.

Conclusions for Investors

Be micro-location led

- Focus on locations that offer short commutes and nearby amenities. Consider what it would be like to spend a typical day in the location, without a mandate to attend.

Track potential spillover demand

- Central submarkets have low development pipelines, partly because building in them is more costly, complicated, and time-consuming.
- Occupiers are aware of supply constraints for the offices they want to occupy. Close substitutes will be welcomed.

Offer low running-cost assets

- Stay-or-go decision-making contains a large element of cost-planning.
- Draw tenants in and keep them longer by including enabling technology that allows cost-saving approaches to building operations and maintenance.

Include flex office / meeting space

- Occupiers do not want to over-commit to space that is then under-utilised.
- Address occupier needs for flexibility and scalability by offering flex space, which can accelerate lease-up.

Offer sustainability future-proofed buildings

- Occupiers are generally more focused than investors on achieving sustainability metrics and are planning to do so earlier.
- Offering properties that align with these priorities is vital.

About the survey

About the survey

52

Total responses

FIGURE 18:
Respondents by sector (%)

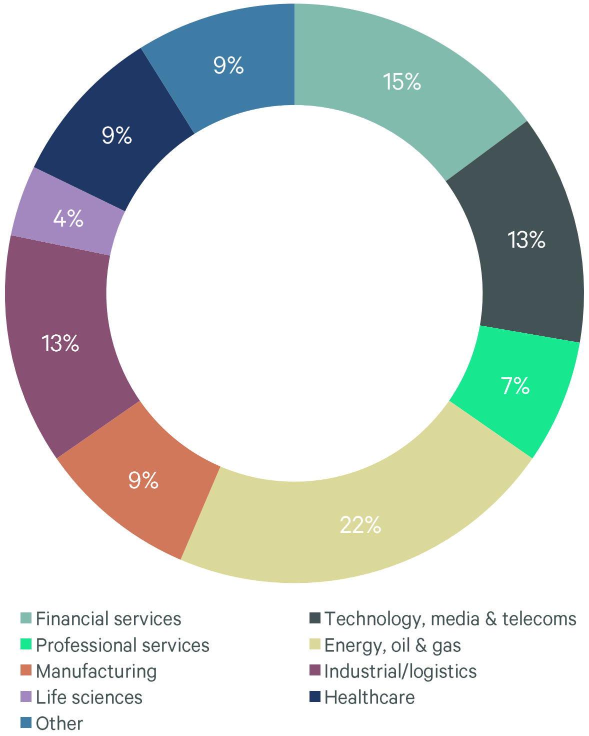


FIGURE 19:
Respondents by company size (%)

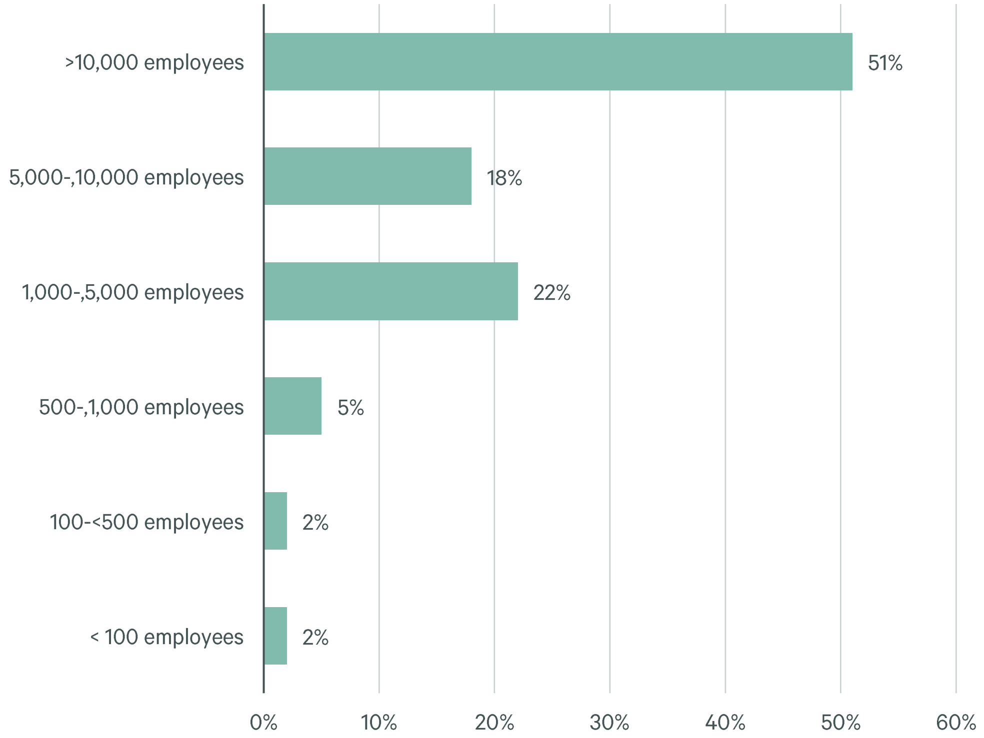
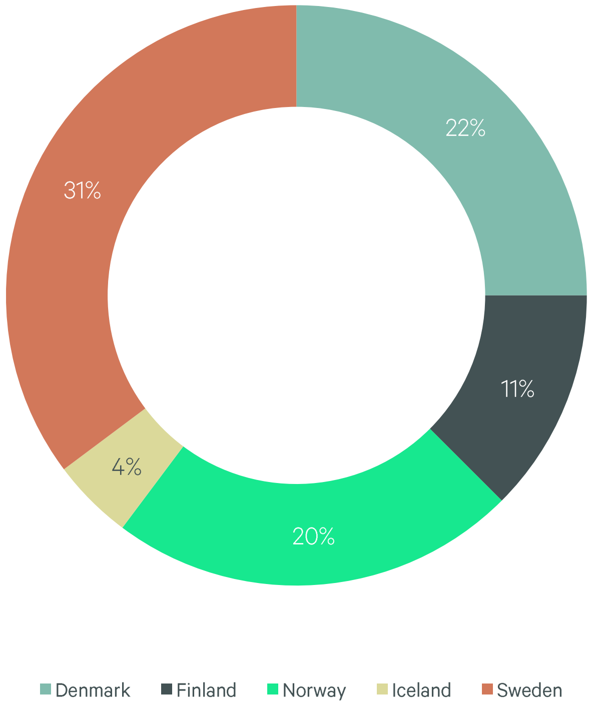


FIGURE 20:
Respondents by region (%)



Source: CBRE Office Occupier Sentiment Survey 2025

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