

Office usage: Disparity between employees' preferences and actions

There is a growing gap between what employees say and do when it comes to office working, according to Linda Trim, director at workplace design consultancy, Giant Leap.



Image source: CoWomen from [Pexels](#)

“In the four years since the start of the global pandemic, work and workers have permanently changed in all ways,” said Trim.

“Employers quickly transitioned data to the cloud to enable remote work, teams leveraged technology to collaborate virtually across geographies and time zones, and individuals learned how, where, and when they work best — both solo and with each other.

“Now, we are starting to see new work patterns emerge and a clear disconnect between what employees say and do when it comes to office work and office ‘vibes’.”

Trim points to new research by Gensler, a global architecture, design, and planning firm, which found that while employees say they ideally need the office two-thirds of a typical work week, they are only coming in half of the time.

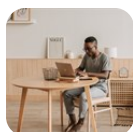
The study was based on 14,000 office workers across nine countries and 10 industries.

The study also found that employees are willing to return to the office more often for a new mix of experiences.

“This suggests that employers need to rethink the office to make it more attractive to employees, and to better accommodate their diverse needs and behaviors,” Trim noted.

“There is a new awareness that employees are unique individuals at various life stages who may have diverse living conditions, family arrangements, and commuting patterns,” said Trim.

“As we reimagine a new workplace for the future, it’s time to design people-centric environments that are flexible and tailored to workers’ diverse needs and behaviors.”



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The study’s key findings include:

- Employees come into the office half of their time, but say they ideally need the office two-thirds of a typical work week for their productivity.
- Younger generations (Gen Z and millennials) have the largest gap in what they say and do. They come into the office 43-44% respectively but say they ideally need the office 64-65% of a typical week.
- Workers living with children under the age of 12 report a preference for full and extended days in the office beyond 9am–5pm, while office workers living with children above the age of 12 have a stronger preference for partial days.
- Office workers with 45-minute or longer commutes currently come into the office the least but the majority stay for full or extended days. Those office workers who live less than 15-minutes from the office report working at the office 63% but ideally needing to be there slightly less than they are currently.

The study also there is a mismatch of ‘vibe’ in the office between what employees have and their ideal, with most employees wanting what they don’t have. Vibes range from quiet offices with fewer people, to spaces that are “buzzy,” to active spaces with lots of people.

The implications for future workplace design include:

- The need for more flexible and tailored office spaces that can accommodate the diverse needs of workers.
- A move away from universal planning, where all work settings have a uniform layout.
- A greater recognition of the unique needs of individual workers, including their life stage, living arrangements, and commuting patterns.

“Workplaces must evolve and be ever-changing, consistent with the dynamic nature of work and the changing needs of the people who use them,” said Trim.

“This will create not only a more inclusive work environment, but one that recognises and celebrates that we are unique individuals working collectively to learn, grow, and do great work together.”

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