

It's 10 a.m. Do You Know Where and How Your Employees are Working?

Shattering Telework Myths and Solving Open Office Struggles

About the Research

In December 2013, the Flex+Strategy Group / Work+Life Fit, Inc. engaged ORC International to conduct a telephone survey of a national probability sample of 556 full-time U.S. employees with a +/- 4 percent margin of error.

This research is the most recent installment in a biennial series of “reality checks” that have monitored the national progress of issues related to work life flexibility from the individual’s point of view since 2006.

For the survey, “work life flexibility” was defined as having flexibility in when, where and how you work. It allows you to flexibly allocate time and energy between your work life and personal life.

The findings from this survey, along with additional research and client experiences, will be released in a series of issue reports, beginning with this one which focuses on where we work, why it matters and why organizations need to change and adapt to today’s new work reality.

The Short Story

In this report, we explore both telework and the growing open office trend and find that the way full-time employees work today has changed dramatically in recent years. Our findings shatter common myths about “who” is working “where” and reveal new realities, along with new struggles, about how full-time work gets done. These struggles are in part due to the wide gap that obviously exists between today’s new work reality and the traditional definition of “work” that continues to drive most organizational strategy and individual behavior.

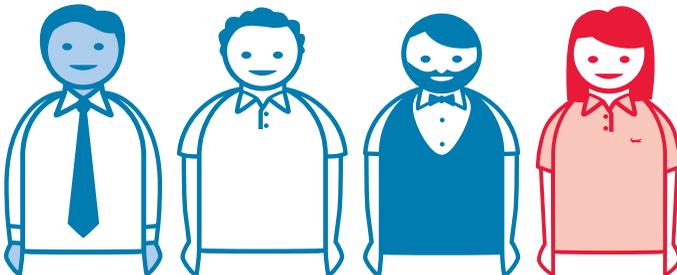
Failure to understand how and where work gets done and by whom, and failure to support these operational strategies with the attention and resources warranted—including training and guidance—puts the performance and wellbeing of both the organization and the employee at serious risk.

KEY FINDINGS: Almost one-third (31%) of full-time workers in the U.S. do most of their work from a remote location.



That means it's in homes, coffee shops and other remote locations where nearly one third of full-time employees get their work done yet far too many corporate leaders still treat remote work, commonly called telework or telecommuting, as a disposable option as in the case of Yahoo last year.

Further, Telework Stereotypes Don't Match Reality



TELEWORK STEREOTYPES DON'T MATCH REALITY

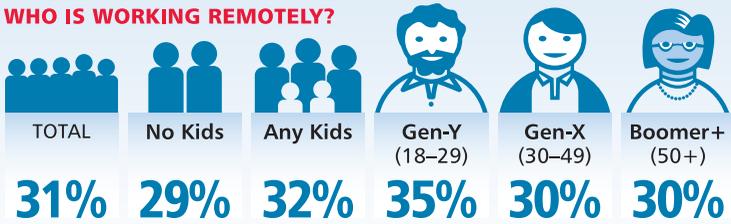
Nearly **3 out of 4** teleworkers are **men.**

No significant **difference** between remote workers **with or without kids.**

No significant **difference** in the **age groups** of remote workers.

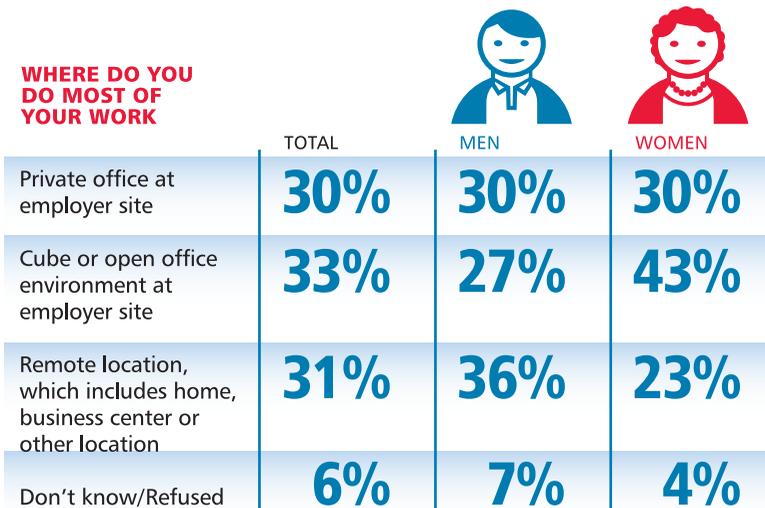
The research dispelled several common telework stereotypes. The typical full-time remote worker is:

- NOT a woman. Men outpace women by a wide margin when it comes to telework.
- NOT significantly more likely to be a parent.
- NOT significantly more likely to be a Gen-Y/Millennial.

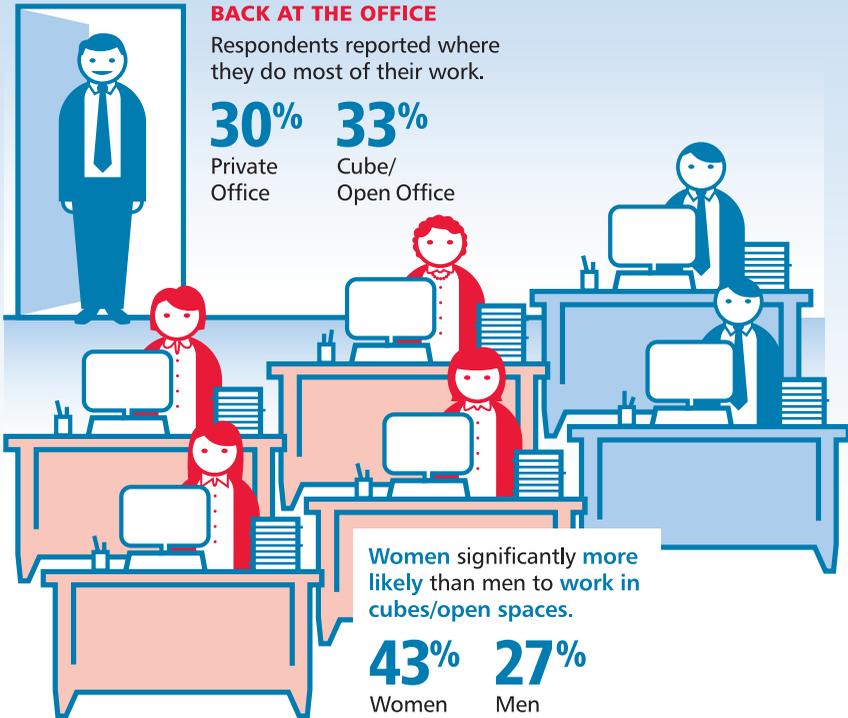


Lingering, outdated stereotypes about who works where likely contribute to the lack of alignment between today’s “work” reality and the organizational attention and resources available. If left unchallenged, inaccurate perceptions can become an excuse to avoid making the effort to adapt and change. Too many organizations falsely assume that it’s just moms or Gen-Y/Millennials that are interested in working remotely and, as such, too often it’s considered a perk or a program that’s offered—and taken away.

Telework must be viewed as far more than a human resources benefit. Working from a location other than an employer’s office is clearly an operational strategy that’s a core component of the business model of many organizations (whether they realize it or not). Think of it as anything less and compromise the optimal performance of both business and employees.



Back at the Office—A Growing Struggle



Back at the employer site, respondents reported doing most of their work either in a private office (30%) or a cube or open office space (33%) with women (43%) significantly more likely than men (27%) to work in cubes/open spaces.

Overall, Cube/Open Office Workers Struggle the Most

Among those reporting less work life flexibility now than at this time last year, cube/open office workers were the largest group.



STRUGGLE WITH WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY

Among those reporting "I have less work life flexibility now than at this time last year:"

42%

Cube/Open Office Workers

31%

Remote Workers

22%

Private Office Workers

Those who said they did most of their work in a cube/open office space were significantly more likely to say they didn't "use or improve their work life flexibility" because "it might hurt your career/others think you don't work as hard" when compared to remote workers.

Cube/open office workers also struggle with how much control they have over their work life flexibility. Among those who reported that their employer controls their work life flexibility, the largest percentage (42%) was cube/open office workers.

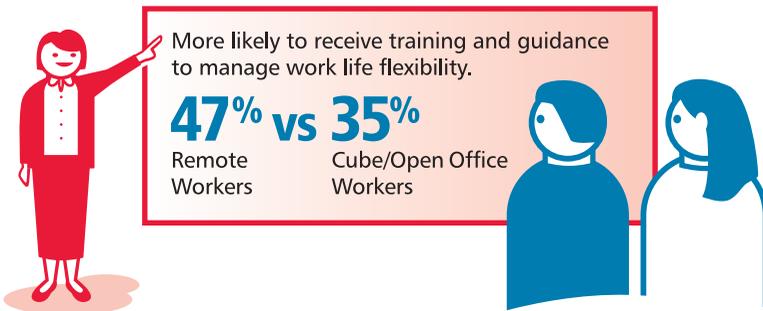
WORK LIFE FLEXIBILITY

Where do you do most of your work?	Employer controls work life flexibility	You control your work life flexibility	You and your employer control your work life flexibility
Private office at employer site	30%	30%	31%
Cube or open office space	42%	29%	31%
Remote location	20%	36%	34%



Lack of Training or Guidance to Manage Work Life Flexibility

The struggles of employees working in the cube/open office environment may be in part due to limited support provided by their employers on these issues. Our research found that cube/open office workers received the least amount of training and guidance to help them manage their work life flexibility. Remote workers (47%) were significantly more likely to receive such guidance compared to those in cubes/open spaces (35%).



This lack of training makes it difficult for individuals to learn the skills and get the tools they need to sustain their performance and work life well-being in this new work reality. Interestingly, our research found that those who reported they **did not** receive training or guidance from their employer were significantly more

likely (28%) to say “your employer controls your work life flexibility,” than those who said they **did** receive training (17%).

As organizations continue to squeeze more people into less square footage, they will be increasingly confronted with the limitations of open office plans and forced to accept that work life flexibility is a solution to where, when and how employees can get their work done with greater focus and performance.

While reconfiguring the workplace to fit more people in the same amount of space saves money, challenges to productivity and concentration are real, especially for employees who are easily distracted. One solution is to encourage people who work in cube /open office spaces to flexibly do their job based on how, when and where they will be most productive—in the office, at home, or at another remote location.

However, that strategy will succeed only if organizations make a special effort to train and guide employees who currently do most of their work in a cube/open office space to more confidently take control of the work life flexibility they need for optimal performance both on and off the job.

Since cube/open office workers are significantly more likely to be women, employers need to make sure women have equal access to the work life flexibility that makes sense for their jobs, along with the training to take control and use that flexibility without the fear of a mommy track stigma or people questioning their work ethic and commitment.

Whether they work remotely or together on site, we need to help all employees develop the critical skill set they need to manage their work life fit so that they can successfully capture the best of collaborative and remote work environments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Flex+Strategy Group/Work Life Fit has shown hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals new ways to manage work, life and business. Founder Cali Williams Yost is an internationally recognized flexible workplace strategist and author that has been shaping the global dialogue on these issues for nearly two decades. Learn more at www.worklifefit.com. For news release and media interviews, please contact pam@superpear.com.

This research was made possible with support from Quest Diagnostics, the world’s leading provider of diagnostic information services, a premier provider of lab-based employer wellness services, and an award-winning healthy employer of more than 40,000 people. Quest recognizes that the way we live and work is changing, and that how well we each manage that change can affect health, well being, and business performance. With a better understanding of this new reality, employers can empower their people to take personal accountability and action for success and develop informed strategies that suit the unique needs of their business and their workforce.

