UK Workplace Haves & Have-Nots
Can we make UK office environments work better for everyone?

WHAT WE DID
We surveyed a panel-based sample of over 1,200 UK office workers in 11 industries to gauge current state of the UK workplace and uncover opportunities to improve employee performance and experience. Our goal was to uncover detailed insights into the connection between workplace design and organisational innovation, and identify key strategies to improve UK office environments. Similar to surveys launched in the U.S. and Asia, we gathered responses using Gensler’s proprietary Workplace Performance Index® (WPI) online survey tool. Respondents represented all the generations and seniority levels in the workplace, companies of various sizes, and were geographically spread across the UK.

THE CONTEXT
Just after Gensler’s last UK Workplace Survey in 2008, the UK entered a period of economic decline that saw UK GDP drop by a staggering 2.6 percent in the first quarter of 2009. The recession has had a significant impact on the workplace, as companies have been forced to reduce their costs while maintaining or even improving productivity levels. Many have become smarter in their use of space and have developed new, more efficient ways of working, while others have not. As UK productivity continues to lag behind other nations, it is critical that the physical work environment performs at maximum effectiveness to support how work happens today, and to meet changing needs in the future.

Despite being in a period of economic recovery, the latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that UK GDP per worker is lower than all other G7 nations, with the exception of Japan.

### Job satisfaction by role:

- **C-suite & Partner / VP:** 3.9
- **Manager:** 3.9
- **Professional / Technical:** 3.5
- **Admin / Support:** 3.3

### Innovation by role:

- **C-suite & Partner / VP:** 3.8
- **Manager:** 3.8
- **Professional / Technical:** 3.4
- **Admin / Support:** 3.3
**THE RESULTS**

The UK workplace significantly favours those in management positions. It may come as no surprise that employees in leadership positions have higher-performing workspaces, but the gulf between the haves and the have-nots in the UK workplace is dramatic and it poses a significant challenge for organisations looking to innovate. The starkest representation of the difference is in the allocation of private offices—89 percent of those in senior leadership have private offices, compared to 23 percent at lower levels of the organisation—and the impact shows across all performance and experience metrics.

**Effectiveness ratings by work setting:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Setting</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Office</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Office</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room with 3 or More</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstation with High Panels</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstation with Medium Panels</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstation with Low Panels</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk or Bench without Panels</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Choice versus no choice:**

- **70%** Do not have choice in when and where to work
- **30%** Have choice in when and where to work

**Legacy workplace behaviour and lack of choice are a drag on performance.** Having not only variety, but also the freedom to work wherever and whenever it’s most effective, are key performance drivers for UK workers and workers across the world. Employees who rate their organisations highly on innovation measures also report having greater choice, and use a wider range of workspaces to get their work done. Working this way requires not only the right spaces, but also the right behaviours—change management can help the transition to open environments and activity-based work settings achieve greater success.

**WHAT THIS MEANS**

We need to take a more considered approach to the open plan. Effective workplaces must support both individual and group work, and open plan environments without access to a range of alternative settings and enclosed spaces are challenged to do both. If adopting an open strategy, the right—and separate—spaces for individual and collaborative work are key. And for some organisations, becoming more open may not be the best option. The enclosed office is not necessarily the enemy, but one size very much does not fit all.

**WHAT’S NEXT**

We continue to analyse data gathered via this survey and other, individual WPI surveys to uncover industry and client-specific insights into how best to leverage workplace design to maximise organisational performance and innovation.

**Overall workplace satisfaction:**

- **Average overall workplace satisfaction score from staff reporting having to work in the same space / a variety of spaces**
  - **4.1**

- **Average overall workplace satisfaction score from staff reporting having to work in the same space / a variety of spaces**
  - **3.7**

**Scores are out of 100**

**Scores are out of 5**

**Scores are out of 5**
References
Grahame Allen. "Recession and recovery." House of Commons Library Research, 2010


Retrieved from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures on 07/06/16 at 11:00hrs

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Gensler’s Research Program supports research investigations important to our firm, our clients, and to the ongoing learning and development of Gensler professionals. Research projects are practitioner-led with involvement across the globe. Our teams bring thought leadership to the table as we seek to solve our clients’ and the world’s most pressing challenges by creating high-performance solutions that embrace the business and world context in which we work, enhance the human experience, and deliver game-changing innovation.

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