360°

Steelcase Global Report

Engagement and the Global Workplace

Key findings to amplify the performance of people, teams and organizations

Steelcase®

Message From Jim Keane
CEO, Steelcase Inc.

The senior business leaders we work with tell us they are building cultures that lead to more resilient organizations—constantly responding to market conditions, while also reinventing and innovating ahead of the market.

This level of resiliency demands a group of employees who are highly engaged. Businesses need people who come to work energized, ready to generate new ideas, create new strategies and make meaningful progress every day. They can't afford anything less.

But the reality is there aren't as many highly engaged workers as organizations need. In fact, the number of disengaged office workers outnumbers the engaged, which has a direct impact on the bottom line. Solving for this level of disengagement is a complex, difficult task, and many organizations have studied a variety of ways to address this important issue.

At Steelcase, we've spent decades researching work and the workplace and that's helped us to understand how the work environment can shape the behaviors of people, reinforce culture and advance business results. Driven by this curiosity about work, workers and the workplace, we wanted to understand the relationship between employee engagement and the workplace.

The Steelcase Global Report is the first study that explores the relationship between employee engagement and how people feel about their workplace. Its key findings affirm our belief that the places where people work can influence not only productivity, but also shape employee attitudes and beliefs. It demonstrates that the workplace can be part of a holistic strategy to increase engagement.

Leading organizations know that complex problems require new ideas that challenge conventional thinking. I invite you to read this report, learn from our research and work with us to explore ways your workplace can help your people become more resilient and highly engaged.

Jim Keane

Understanding the Data

Use this legend to better understand the symbols and color coding used in the charts and graphics for easier interpretation of the data.

Color Code

● Highly Engaged and Highly Satisfied Workers

● Highly Disengaged and Highly Dissatisfied Workers

● Neutral Workers (Neither Engaged nor Disengaged)

● Global Average

● Country Average

● Hyperlink Color

Symbols

◎ *Noteworthy*

▲ Highest score in the study

▼ Lowest score in the study

Hyperlinks

Text hyperlinks are underlined

About the Study

Steelcase partnered with global research firm Ipsos* for this unprecedented research effort to measure relevant dimensions of employee engagement and workplace satisfaction—both powerful indicators of worker wellbeing and organizational performance.

17 Countries
12,480 Participants
5 Key Findings

Executive Summary

Employee engagement is a serious bottom-line issue. It fuels organizations during times of economic growth and, more critically, when market conditions are uncertain and volatile.

When workers become disengaged, it costs companies money, slows projects, drains resources and undermines company goals, as well as the efforts of their engaged counterparts. This is why employee engagement is one of the key issues facing leading global organizations today.

Organizations might be able to absorb the effects of a handful of disengaged workers, but many business leaders don't realize how significant the problem is. This study found that more than one-third of workers in 17 of the world's most important economies are disengaged and another third are somewhere in the middle, not working against their companies but not driving better business results either.

Like other complex problems facing business leaders today, employee engagement has many variables that are difficult to address and slow to change. Building on decades of primary research about work and the workplace, Steelcase partnered with global research firm Ipsos to understand how the places where people work impact employee engagement. We posed these questions:

Can the office be used as a strategic lever to impact engagement?

What kinds of changes to the work environment will make the biggest impact?

The findings of this study indicate that the work environment can either augment or hinder efforts to boost employee engagement. It also identifies areas of change to the workplace that can have the most positive impact. Here are the key findings:

1. Employee Engagement Positively Correlates with Workplace Satisfaction

2. Engaged Employees Have More Control Over Their Experiences at Work

3. Fixed Technology Exceeds Mobile 2:1

4. Traditional Workstyles Persist

5. Cultural Context Influences Engagement Levels

The study found that more than one-third of workers in 17 of the world's most important economies are disengaged.

Key Finding

1. Employee Engagement Positively Correlates with Workplace Satisfaction

The data reveal high workplace satisfaction positively correlates with high employee engagement.

The data show that workers who are highly satisfied with various aspects of their workplace also demonstrate higher levels of engagement. Yet, only 13 percent of global workers are highly engaged and highly satisfied with their workplace. The inverse is true as well: 11 percent of employees are highly dissatisfied with their offices and are also highly disengaged.

The disturbing question raised by this data is given that a small number of people are doing the heavy lifting at work, could disengaged counterparts in effect cancel out their efforts? The positive finding, however, is the correlation between engagement and workplace satisfaction, which indicates that changing the work environment can be an important tool for organizations to deploy as part of a strategy to improve engagement.

ENGAGEMENT

Highly Engaged

13%

21%

SATISFACTION

29%

Highly Dissatisfied with Workplace

Highly Satisfied with Workplace

26%

11%

Highly Disengaged

11 percent of global workers are highly dissatisfied with their offices and are also highly disengaged

13 percent of global workers are highly engaged and highly satisfied with their workplace

Key Finding

2. Engaged Employees Have More Control Over Their Experiences at Work

The data demonstrate a correlation between how much control employees have in their workplace and their engagement level.

Can you choose where to work within the office based on the task you are doing?
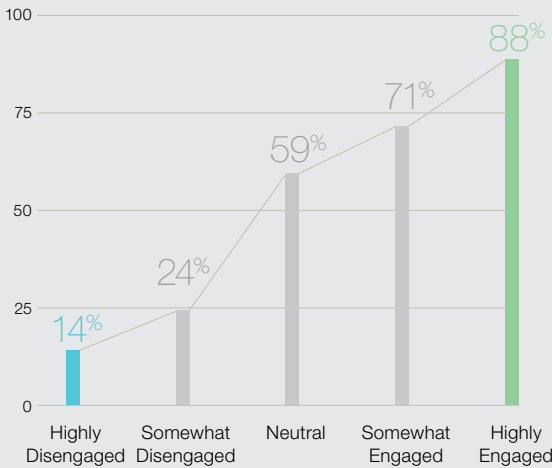
A distinguishing characteristic of engaged employees is that they have a greater degree of control over where and how they work, including access to privacy when they need it. They are empowered, both by organizational decisions and the spaces made available to them within their workplace, to make choices about where and how they work. This means they can manage their need for privacy so they can concentrate easily and work with teams without disruptions.

Engaged employees tend to work in organizations that support two-way communication: Real-time information about the company is available and people are able to freely express their ideas. This finding suggests that a key design principle for the workplace is to create a range of spaces—for groups and individuals, mobile and resident work-ers—and corresponding work policies that enable employees to make choices about the best ways to work.

Key Finding

3. Fixed Technology Exceeds Mobile 2:1

The vast majority of workers use fixed technology at work.

Does your employer equip you with:

Landline Telephone	86%
Desktop Computer	80%
Mobile Phone	39%
Laptop	39%
Tablet	14%
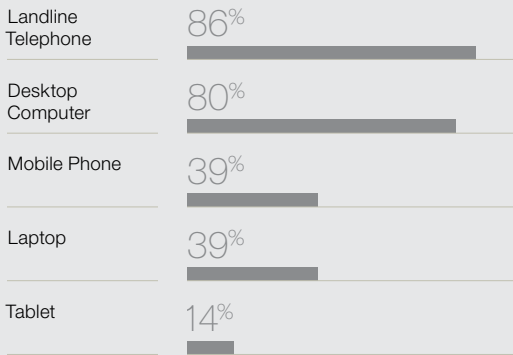
Despite the high global adoption of mobile devices for personal use, the vast majority of study participants report that their organizations provide twice as much fixed technology versus mobile options for work. This may be the result of an intentional strategy based on the type of work people are doing, or it could reflect the challenges of keeping up with constantly changing technology. Either way, employee mobility, both inside and outside the office, and people's ability to fully utilize a range of spaces in the office is influenced by the organization's technology choices.

Some jobs require people to be at their desk most of the time, for which fixed technology is a viable solution. Others, whose jobs require increased collaboration, greater degrees of interaction and more information sharing, may find that mobile technology, or technology that allows them to access information throughout the workplace, can be an enabler. People who need access to digital information for their work may feel tied to their desks and less likely to engage with colleagues who aren't physically nearby. Given the changes in how people work, organizations will want to consider how their workplace and technology strategies align.

Key Finding

4. Traditional Workstyles Persist

Nearly two-thirds of employees say they work in either individual or shared private offices.

What type of workspace do you work in?

Individual Private Offices	23%
Shared Private Offices	37%
Open Plan, Assigned Space	33%
Nomadic	8%
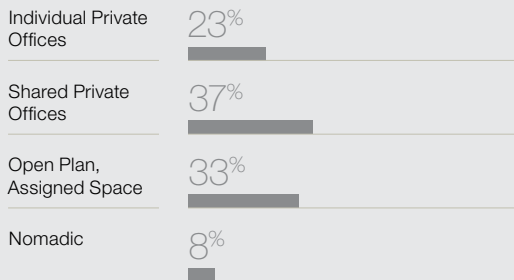
Media and popular culture may create the perception that workplaces have changed dramatically in the past decade and that offices are open, informal and collaborative. In some places this is true. But the reality for employees around the world is that most people work in traditional office environments, with an emphasis on hierarchy and desk-based individual work.

Workplace design and work experiences vary widely, even between neighboring countries, yet nearly two-thirds of employees say they work in either individual or shared private offices. Entirely open offices represent a significant portion—nearly one-fourth of the workplace landscape—but they certainly are not the norm. Neither extreme—entirely enclosed or open—is always the right solution and these findings suggest that organizations may not have adequately advanced their workplaces in ways that promote higher degrees of engagement.

Key Finding

5. Cultural Context Influences Engagement Levels

Cultural context can have a tremendous influence on engagement and workplace satisfaction.

The most highly engaged employees tend to hail from emerging economies and the least engaged often come from countries in well-established markets. Analysis of the data identified a pattern indicating that the country where employees live, its culture and the resulting expectations have an impact on how highly engaged and satisfied they are with their workplace. While there are exceptions to this pattern, the finding suggests cultural and economic context influence employee perceptions and attitudes about their organization and working environments.
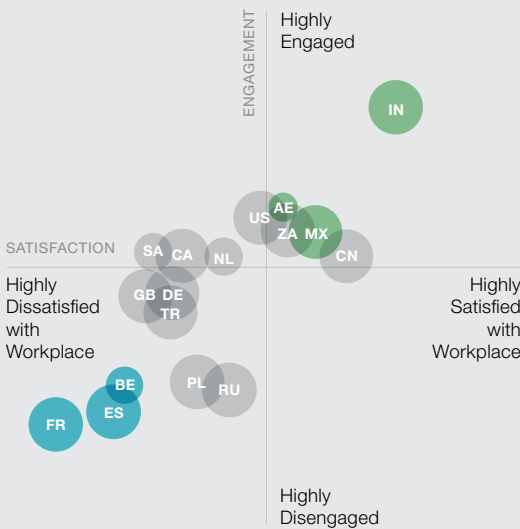
This can impact whether employees find the places where they work highly satisfactory and their work highly engaging. This finding can be valuable to multinational organizations when considering the appropriate workplace design across different company locations.

Exploring Contrasts: The Percentage of Highly Engaged and Highly Satisfied Employees at Opposite Ends of the Spectrum

● **Highly Disengaged + Highly Dissatisfied**

5% France
7% Spain
6% Belgium

● **Highly Engaged + Highly Satisfied**

28% India
22% Mexico
20% United Arab Emirates

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If you would like to learn more about how to design workplaces that help boost engagement, email us at:
engagement@steelcase.com

About Ipsos

Ipsos is an innovative, entrepreneurial, client-focused organization, providing research services to clients on a global basis. We set ourselves high standards and aim to work collaboratively in partnership with our teams in order to service our clients most effectively.

Ipsos is proud to be the only global market research company that is still controlled and operated by market researchers. We aim to remain the natural home for intellectually curious and passionate researchers.

The Steelcase Global Report is the first to explore the relationship between employee engagement and the work environment. It identifies one of the most serious issues facing leading organizations today: Only 13 percent of workers are highly engaged.

Conducted with 12,480 office workers in 17 countries, this study uncovered a correlation between employees' attitudes about their workplace and their level of engagement. Employees who are highly satisfied with their work environment are also the most highly engaged. Conversely, those who are highly dissatisfied with their work environment are the most highly disengaged.

This study also provides a snapshot of the state of the office around the world. These findings, combined with decades of Steelcase workplace research, offer organizations specific actions they can take to create a workplace that helps boost employee engagement. ○

Steelcase®

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