

THE AGEING OFFICE POPULATION

Age and the physical work environment



Introduction¹

- The office population (demographics) is getting older
 - Large babyboom generation is reaching retirement age
 - Active work population will shrink
 - People will have to work longer (e.g. intention to raise retirement age in many EU countries)

➔ How can the office environment help to retain older workers by supporting their productivity and maintaining their satisfaction?



Introduction²

- Older people can experience stress at work as a consequence of physical, cognitive and health changes (*Hansson, Robson & Limas, 2001*).
- Older people can experience more problems with vision (e.g. Mital, 1994; Pew & van Hemel, 2004) hearing (e.g. Mital, 1994; Wegman & McGee, 2004) and attention (*Sharit & Czaja, 1994; Mani et al, 2005*)
- Older people are more sensitive to auditive and visual distractions (*Stenlund, 2004; Hasher et al., 1998*)
- However, older employees report less work stress than younger employees (*Hansson, Robson & Limas, 2001*) so the possibility to compensate for the challenges seems to be important

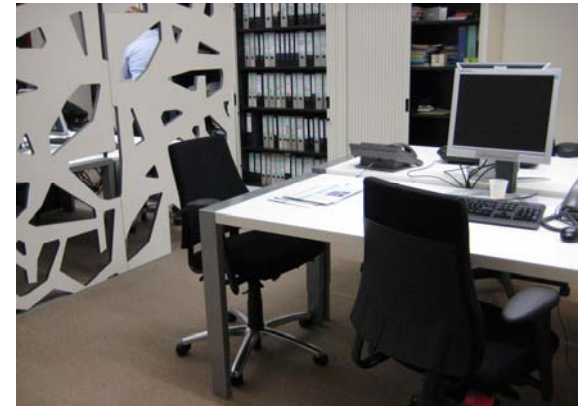
→ Are there differences in satisfaction with the work environment and perceived productivity between age groups?



Introduction³

- Offices in the Netherlands are changing
 - Popular in NL: ‘the new (flexible) way of working’
 - Promoting flexibility (in work process and work environment)
 - Way to cut costs (reduce m², reduce internal moves, etc.)
 - New office types are implemented

➔ Which office type is most supportive for the productivity and satisfaction of older workers?



Methods

- Work environment diagnosis instrument WODI Classic and WODI Light
- Measured aspects
 - Satisfaction
 - Perceived support of productivity
 - Perceived importance of aspects
- In total 8.913 respondents (64 cases) gathered over 4 years
- SPSS (ANOVA, post hoc and Chi Square)
Significance level: $p \leq 0.05$
- Five age groups: < 31 year, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51-60 years, >60 years

		Total sample N = 8.913
Gender	Male	63,2%
	Female	36,8%
Age	<31 years	12,6%
	31-40 years	25,0%
	41-50 years	33,4%
	51-60 years	26,6%
	> 60 years	2,3%
Education	MO	9,7%
	MBO	21,7%
	HBO	34,2%
	WO	32,7%
	Other	1,3%



Results¹

'how satisfied are you about...'

<i>Satisfaction with</i>	1 <31 years	2 31-40 years	3 41-50 years	4 51-60 years	5 >60 years
Organization	3.61 ³⁴⁵	3.55 ³⁴	3.46 ¹²	3.40 ¹²	3.36 ¹
Content and complexity of work	3.88 ³	3.93	3.98 ¹	3.96	3.95
Sharing own ideas about work environment	3.22	3.22	3.20	3.15	3.36
Accessibility of the building	3.84	3.74 ⁴	3.77	3.85 ²	3.87
Architecture and look of the building	3.29	3.25 ⁴	3.24 ⁴⁵	3.37 ²³	3.45 ³
Subdivision of the whole building	3.24 ³	3.18	3.14 ¹⁴	3.22 ³	3.28
Number, diversity and funct. of workplaces	3.16 ³	3.08 ⁵	3.06 ¹⁴	3.14 ³⁵	3.31 ²³⁴
Adjacency and locality spaces	3.43 ²³	3.34 ¹	3.29 ¹⁴⁵	3.37 ³	3.45 ³
Openness and transp. work environment	3.40 ²³⁴	3.28 ¹	3.27 ¹	3.31 ¹	3.40
Privacy	3.09 ²³⁴	2.97 ¹	2.97 ¹	2.93 ¹	3.05
Functionality and comfort workplace	3.41	3.40	3.32	3.36	3.44
Ambiance and look of the interior	3.06 ⁴⁵	3.11 ⁴⁵	3.13 ⁴⁵	3.26 ¹²³	3.42 ¹²³
Possibilities for concentration	3.13 ²³	3.00 ¹	3.01 ¹	3.05	3.21
Possibilities for comm. and social interaction	3.78 ³⁴	3.68 ³	3.60 ¹²	3.63 ¹	3.65
Archive and storage facilities	3.17 ³⁴⁵	3.12 ³⁴⁵	2.97 ¹²	2.97 ¹²	2.90 ¹²
ICT and supporting services	3.42	3.38	3.34	3.35	3.49
Facilities and facility management	3.46	3.48	3.43	3.43	3.50
Indoor climate	2.86 ⁵	2.76 ⁴⁵	2.88 ⁴⁵	3.07 ²³	3.31 ¹²³
Lighting	3.51	3.41	3.55	3.52	3.60
Acoustics	3.26 ²³	3.12 ¹	3.12 ¹	3.18	3.25
Possibilities for remote working	3.06 ⁴⁵	3.07 ⁴⁵	3.09 ⁴⁵	3.24 ¹²³	3.41 ¹²³

*ANOVA is significant ($p \leq .05$)

Sample N = 8.913



Results²

'how productive do you feel...'

<i>Support of productivity</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	< 31 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	>60 years
Support of the workplace environment to the own productivity	* 3,28 ²³⁴	3,12 ¹	3,12 ¹	3,11 ¹⁵	3,25 ⁴
Support of the workplace environment to the productivity of the team as a whole	* 3,27 ²³⁴	3,16 ¹	3,11 ¹⁵	3,12 ¹⁵	3,26 ³⁴
Support of the workplace environment to the productivity of the organization as a whole	* 3,17 ²³⁴	3,09 ¹³	3,04 ¹²⁵	3,06 ¹⁵	3,19 ³⁴

*ANOVA is significant ($p \leq .05$)

Sample N = 6.504 (WODI Light)



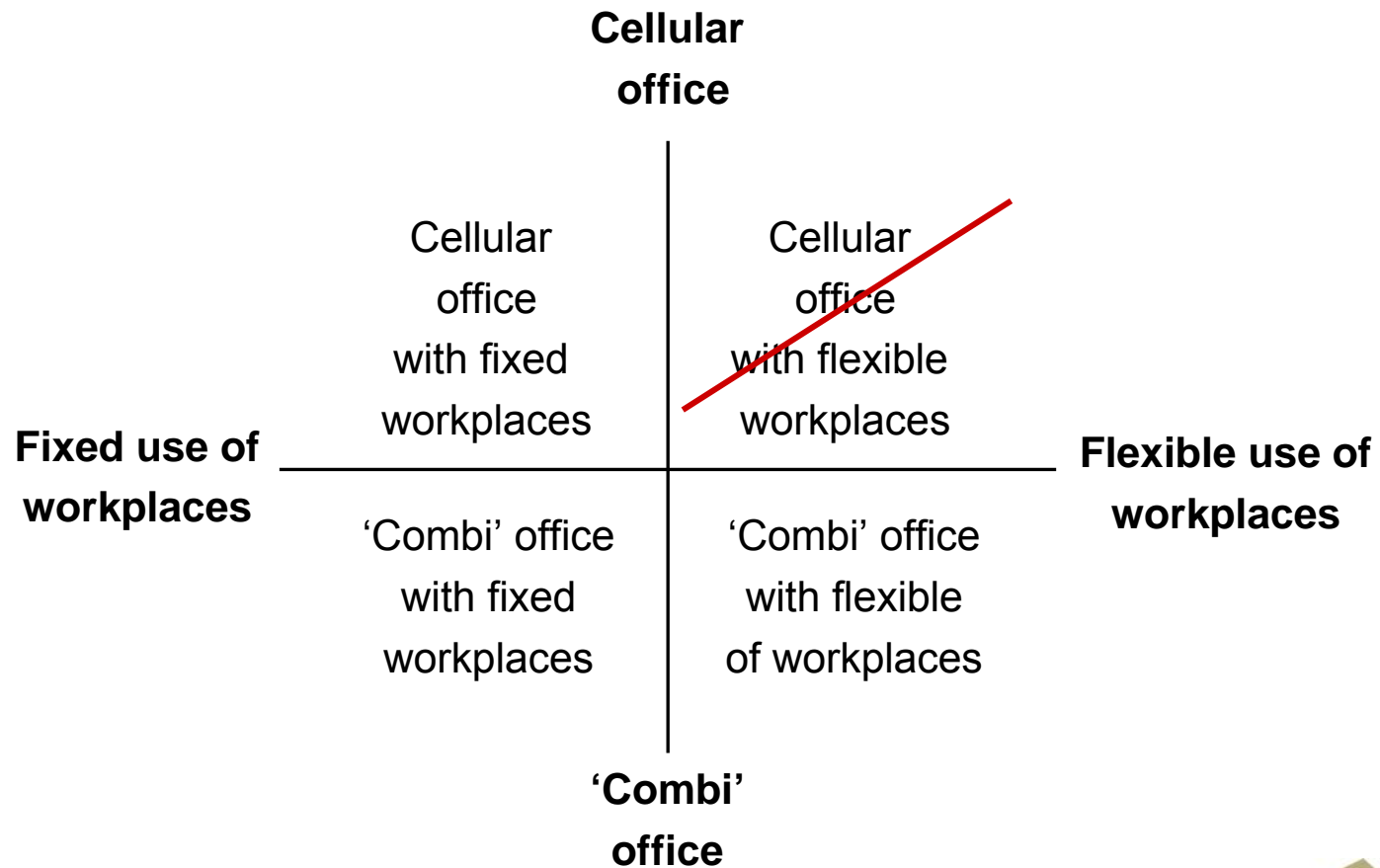
Results³

'what is the most important aspect...'

<31 years		31 - 40 years		41 - 50 years		51 - 60 years		> 60 years	
Functionality and comfort workpl.	58,80%	Functionality and comfort workpl.	53,80%	Functionality and comfort workpl.	49,00%	Functionality and comfort workpl.	52,80%	Functionality and comfort workpl.	50,00%
Possibilities for concentration	39,80%	Possibilities for concentration	40,20%	Possibilities for concentration	39,20%	Accessibility of the building	42,90%	Accessibility of the building	45,20%
Possibilities for communication	31,80%	Possibilities for communication	32,00%	Possibilities for communication	31,50%	Possibilities for concentration	35,00%	Possibilities for concentration	29,80%
Accessibility of the building	27,00%	Indoor climate	30,50%	Accessibility of the building	27,70%	Possibilities for communication	25,90%	Indoor climate	21,40%
Indoor climate	21,30%	Accessibility of the building	27,50%	Indoor climate	25,80%	Indoor climate	22,20%	Possibilities for communication	19,00%



'what is the best office type...'



'what is the best office type...'

- Overall people are most satisfied with combi-office with fixed workplaces, except for concentration and privacy (cellular office)
- The combi-office with fixed workplaces is also perceived as the most supportive for productivity
- Group 51-60 years show in general the same pattern
- Group > 60 years show less significant differences between office types (e.g. no difference for concentration and team/organization productivity) nevertheless combi-office with fixed workplaces is the most supportive for the own productivity and satisfaction (except for privacy)



Conclusions¹

→ Are there differences in satisfaction with the work environment and perceived productivity between age groups?

- Oldest and youngest employees are in general more satisfied with aspects of the office environment and feel more supported in their productivity
- Age group 41-60 is most critical (U-shape)
- Older employees are more satisfied than the other groups with the interior of the office, indoor climate and remote working.
- Older employees are less satisfied than younger colleagues about the organization in general and the archive facilities
- Furthermore, older workers give more importance to the accessibility of the building



Conclusions²

→ Which office type is most supportive for the productivity and satisfaction of older workers?

- A combi-office with fixed workplaces seems to be the most supportive for the productivity and satisfaction of the older workers (except for privacy)
- Office type seems to have less influence on the satisfaction and productivity of the oldest age group (>60 years) in comparison with the other age groups



Discussion

- It is remarkable that there are noticeable differences between the 51-60 and >60 age groups
- To get more insight in the reasons for found differences in satisfaction and productivity, further research is needed



"I hate this chair. I hate this desk.
I hate this lighting. Now, what
do you want?"

