

# The rise and rise of Activity Based Working

Reshaping the physical, virtual and behavioural workspace

**Research Investigation:**

Activity Based Working is increasingly synonymous with those organisations openly embracing the era of unprecedented business transformation. But is it delivering to its promise, or is its real potential not yet even realised?



# Leesman Data

In 2010 Leesman set out with a singular objective: to provide anyone involved in the management, design and delivery of a corporate workplace a standardised workplace effectiveness evaluation technique. It would examine, at a depth and consistency never attempted, exactly how corporate workplaces support employee and organisational performance. Since then, we've done nothing else, offering no consultancy or advisory services whatsoever.

This uniquely focused approach has allowed us to collect data on how more than 1,700 workplaces in 63 countries support 220,000+ employees in the work they are employed to do.\* And in so doing, we have collated the largest ever research and benchmark database of workplace effectiveness

data, positioning Leesman as one of the world's leading workplace performance think tanks. Central to this development is a standardised online employee survey. It gives clients a quick, inexpensive and systematic approach to the collection, analysis and benchmarking of workplace performance data.

The survey generates a simple, transferable KPI of workplace effectiveness we call the Leesman 'Lmi'. This 'Lmi' gives clients and their consultants an unrivalled ability to compare their operating results against hundreds of others and is now widely recognised as the global standard measure of workplace effectiveness. The Leesman Lmi is calculated from two out of the five areas of analysis in the Leesman Index

analysis, namely Workplace Impact (the overall impact the workplace has on employee sense of pride, productivity, community etc) and Work Activities (which activities are important to an employee in their role and how well each is supported). A score is then reported on a simple 0-100 scale.

As our database continues to grow at a significant rate, it allows us to easily probe specific topics at a pace and depth never seen before. Relevant questions are added to the core survey and a considerable number of responses are then speedily amassed. This research project uses this speed and reach to examine how activity based workplaces are performing in direct comparison to other strategies.



\*1 As at 31.01.2017

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# Mission Statement

Delivering insights that drive  
better workplace strategies

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We do one thing one way: measure how workplaces support those who use them. With the amassed data we collect, we challenge assumptions, confront outdated standards or norms and foster an open, collaborative investigation into the role of workplace infrastructures in employee and organisational performance.

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# Foreword

Across the world, businesses of all sizes are seeking to understand the potential benefits of creating agile, more flexible workplaces. For the brave, the principles and promises of Activity Based Working are becoming increasingly appealing and leading organisations are embarking on far-reaching projects to realise the benefits. But is it really working? Does it create a more effective workplace? And perhaps most importantly, does it better support individual productivity?

Sweden has seen a flurry of high profile ABW schemes, delivered with varying results. The International Facility Management Association (IFMA) Sweden was keen to provide its members with greater information and guidance on both the benefits and risks. After exploratory discussions, Leesman agreed to undertake a global reach investigation into the topic. This research project was financially supported by Tenant & Partner, the Sweden-based tenant representation practice.

So a series of additional questions, designed to probe flexible and mobile working, were added to the Leesman workplace effectiveness survey. During a 12-month period, more than 70,000 employees responded. Over 11,000 of the respondents were based in workplaces their employer described as an ABW environment. Drawing on this vast pool of data, the study explores the potential organisational benefits of mobile and flexible working, and ABW in particular. It further identifies the most crucial building blocks to support flexible working and demonstrates the impact behaviour and adoption of flexible work styles have on employee effectiveness.

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**The data consistently supported industry claims that ABW increased staff collaboration, productivity, pride and effectiveness. But also uncovered a series of failings and challenges that should act as important warning signals to any organisation considering an ABW workplace project.**

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Is ABW delivering on its promise? The data consistently supported industry claims that ABW provides far greater flexibility in where and how an employee chooses to work – and in so doing, increases staff collaboration, productivity, pride and effectiveness. But it also uncovered a series of substantial failings and challenges that should act as important warning signals to any organisation considering embarking on an ABW project.

This publication seeks to capture the results and present the findings in an impartial, unbiased and objective way. We have no vested interest in ABW other than to further the understanding of the subject and to encourage deeper debate, fuelled by statistically robust, diverse and contemporaneous data.

**Dr Peggie Rothe**  
Leesman Development Director  
& Head of Insights and Research

# Activity Based Working

It seems ABW is as much talked about as it is misunderstood. Too often we found that it was confused with simple flex-office, desk-sharing solutions and in more than one instance, heavily sold as a space-saving strategy. It may well include aspects of other simpler objectives, but our research suggests ABW should be seen as a transformational business strategy, not a workplace strategy. ABW provides employees with purposefully designed settings to best support the many different activities that are undertaken in a workplace, but that is just part of the equation.

Rather than forcing individuals to carry out the majority of their work at a single allocated desk or cubicle, ABW encourages employees to recognise that different work activities can be better supported by spaces and features designed specifically for that task. Spaces are designed to create opportunities for different activities, from intense, focused work and solo telephone calls to impromptu meetings or more formal collaborative work. But ABW strategies also need similarly different approaches to technology, people and culture, operational process and business practice. All will need some level of re-design.

At the centre of the Leesman workplace effectiveness survey tool sits an activity analysis. Respondents tell us which, out of a list of 21 possible activities, they undertake in their work; they then indicate whether their workplace supports each they have selected. Across all 220,000+ employees in the database so far, 45% have selected 11 or more activities as important to them in their

role. This shows how varied the typical workflow of the modern knowledge worker can be and how ABW could offer them significant benefits.

It is worth noting ABW is not a new idea. American architect Robert Luchetti first talked about the concept of "activity settings based environments" and "multiple settings to support the variety of performance modes" in the late 1970s. But it took another 15 or so years before the components of ABW became recognisable in major projects, with London-based designer Sevil Peach's work for Barclays Capital Holdings and Netherlands-based Erik Veldhoen's work for Interpolis being two of the first.

In 1995, Veldhoen published what would become a milestone book on the subject, "The Demise of the Office", and Veldhoen + Company were seen as the "originators" of the modern ABW idiom. Veldhoen and Peach later collaborated on the design of Microsoft's much publicised and photographed Dutch HQ in Amsterdam. It was a seminal project in the global awareness of, and interest in, ABW.

Perhaps one of the critical challenges to understanding the business benefits ABW offers is that landmark projects are so visually appealing. It means most of the publicity they attract tends to come from specialist design media rather than business media. ABW requires a different approach to workplace design and this often results in visually stimulating spaces. But it also needs an equally different approach to technology and management/staff behaviour.

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## Characteristics

- Deep analysis of the activities that employees undertake
- Highly varied workplace with diversity of settings for each activity
- Greater alignment of workplace with creative and cultural objectives
- Lower paper dependence and greater digital teamwork
- Extensively unallocated environment, encouraging place independence



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## Claimed Benefits

- Healthier, more engaged and motivated employees
  - Greater employee empowerment and self determination
  - Better collaboration, knowledge transfer and learning
  - Faster and more efficient decision making
  - Flexible physical infrastructure that can better adapt to business change
-

# Executive Summary

We believe our study into the performance of ABW to be the largest independent statistical analysis of its kind, ever undertaken. Viewing the data at macro level, significant benefits of ABW environments are difficult to see. Comparing them on mass to a control group of non-ABW workplaces, they show higher pride agreement, marginally higher Leesman effectiveness scores, but lower productivity agreement. Presented with these results in isolation, it could be difficult to build a case for ABW adoption.

However, at a micro level, the image is entirely different. The averages mask a dramatically diverse picture showing how ABW environments deliver significant performance improvements on multiple measurement lines for employees who modify behaviours to their new surroundings. But almost always, these employees are dramatically outnumbered by those who maintain distinctly traditional workstyles, putting them in conflict with their new environment.

This split story is of pivotal importance. Employees were asked to select one of four mobility personas that best describes their workstyle, ranging from static and sedentary to predominantly itinerant activity based. By comparing those who have adopted the most activity based working styles within ABW environments to co-workers who have yet to, we can identify the extent of the potential failings, risks and gains.

This report highlights where the operational and organisational gains are at their greatest, but consequently perhaps raises more questions as to why so few employees are embracing the opportunities being offer to them in ABW spaces.

## 01

Activity Based Working can deliver significant operational benefits for those employees who use the environments provided for them.

## 02

The more an employee uses multiple work locations within the workplace, the more they report that the space enables them to work more effectively.

## 03

The more complex an employee's daily work profile, the more beneficial it is for them to work in a mobile way that utilises multiple settings.

## 04

Poor adoption of appropriate behaviour in activity based workplaces is a significant problem that limits widespread organisational benefits.

# Research Methodology

This report's findings are based on data gathered with the standardised Leesman workplace effectiveness survey, along with a supplementary question set written specifically to assess the mobility of employees and test the performance of ABW principles.

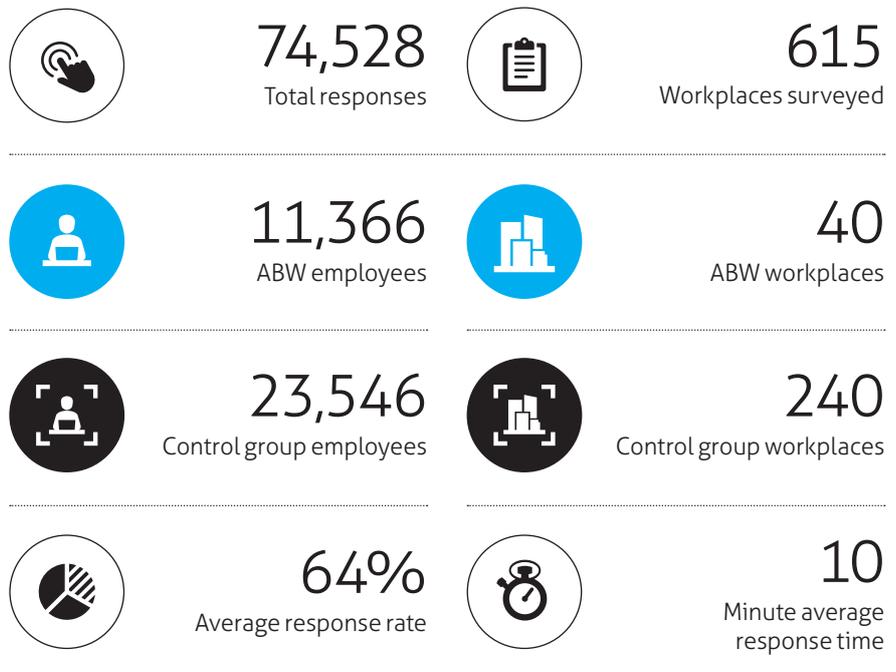
These additional questions were attached to the questionnaire in March 2015 and offered to almost all Leesman survey respondents over a 12-month period, whether in an ABW environment or not. In this time, 70,675 responses were obtained, out of which 7,513 were from employees in ABW environments. Additional ABW data was collected until the end of 2016, giving a total of 11,366 responses from employees in 40 different ABW environments.

This is perhaps where Leesman's research potential is at its strongest – not just that we can gather subject-specific data quickly and efficiently, but that we can also collect parallel data to offer in contemporaneous comparison. In this study we seek not just to examine how ABW spaces perform for employees, but to compare their performance to the range of other workplaces surveyed during the same period.

The comparison group consists of all workplaces we measured during the initial data collection period, excluding those that were surveyed pre-occupancy. These projects were excluded simply to create a fair comparison to the ABW group, which quite naturally mainly consists of post-occupancy evaluations conducted within a year from project completion, or as standard annual surveys later in the workplace lifecycle.

The control group therefore consists of 23,546 respondents from 240 different workplaces – all of which were surveyed post occupancy or as standard workplace health checks.

The 40 ABW spaces surveyed provided a diverse sample, covering multiple industries, countries, population sizes, building stock and age since delivery. Table 1 ranks the spaces by Leesman Lmi.



# Headline Comparisons

On average, the entire ABW respondent group reports slightly higher workplace effectiveness (Lmi 65.1) compared to the control group (Lmi 63.8). But the individual ABW workplaces show a large range of Lmi effectiveness scores, with a lowest score of Lmi 52.9 and highest at Lmi 87.9. There is no evident pattern based on population size, which shows that both small and large locations can and have achieved low and high scores. On mass, the ABW respondents further show higher pride agreement but lower productivity agreement, compared to the control group.

**Table 1: ABW Locations**

	Respondents	Lmi	Survey purpose
1	60	87.9	Post
2	30	82.4	Post
3	25	80.5	Post
4	21	80.2	Pre
5	95	79.2	Post
6	23	78.2	Pre
7	84	75.5	Post
8	256	75.2	Standard
9	80	74.7	Post
10	673	71.7	Post
11	256	71.6	Post
12	950	71.5	Standard
13	157	71.2	Post
14	61	71.1	Post
15	91	70.4	Post
16	76	69.6	Post
17	15	68.7	Post
18	131	68.5	Post
19	145	67.8	Post
20	395	66.7	Post
21	583	66.3	Standard
22	17	66.1	Post
23	1,743	65.6	Post
24	35	64.8	Post
25	95	64.4	Standard
26	55	64.3	Post
27	526	63.4	Standard
28	62	63.2	Post
29	98	63.1	Pre
30	71	62.7	Standard
31	359	62.3	Standard
32	94	62.3	Post
33	146	61.6	Post
34	933	60.9	Post
35	465	60.2	Post
36	654	59.7	Standard
37	1,438	58.9	Post
38	61	57.2	Post
39	262	56.2	Standard
40	36	52.9	Post

## Overall group Lmi



## Productivity agreement



## Pride agreement



## Sense of community agreement



## Sharing ideas / knowledge amongst colleagues agreement



# Mobility Adoption

The ability to choose from a variety of settings, each tuned to the activity one is undertaking, is the central tenet of ABW. But making the settings available to employees is only part of the equation. It is necessary to understand the extent to which they are used.

To capture the level of mobility within the office, employees were asked to select one of four internal profiles that best describes how they were using their workplace, ranging from a static, traditional workstyle to a predominantly mobile, activity based one.

- 1 I perform most/all of my activities at a single work setting and rarely use other locations within the office
- 2 I perform the majority of my activities at a single work setting but also use other locations within the office
- 3 I perform some of my activities at a single work setting but often use other locations within the office
- 4 I use multiple work settings and rarely base myself at a single location within the office

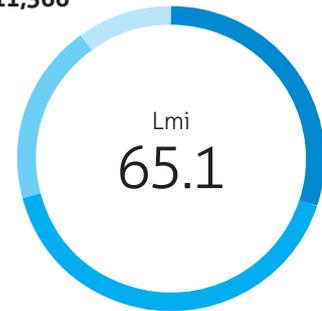
Comparing the workplace experience of these different mobility profiles shows a dramatically diverse user experience within ABW environments. Many ABW spaces are populated by large numbers of employees retaining traditional workstyles and in doing so, are working at odds with the new environment. This results in performance headlines and averages that conceal a split story.

When looking at ABW workplaces, comparing those who have adopted the most activity based working styles to colleagues yet to modify their behaviour shows how ABW can deliver significant benefits when the environment is used to its full potential. It also shows how other employees are left with a less than optimal workplace experience. And a closer look at the data can identify the extent of those potential failings and gains.

This brings us then to question why it is that 71% of the 11,366 ABW workplace employees who responded said they anchored themselves to a single desk. This seems a catastrophic failure. These environments and organisations have been wholly unsuccessful in mobilising anywhere near the number of employees needed to realise the full benefits on offer.

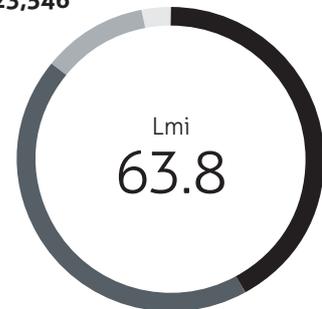
Two distinct possibilities then need to be considered. The first is that these employees are missing a key workplace feature or functionality that is limiting their ability – or willingness – to adopt more mobile workstyles. These might be physical or technological but could also be organisational and cultural. The second is that perhaps the work they are undertaking is in itself somehow less suited to the adoption of more mobile working.

**ABW Group**  
n=11,366



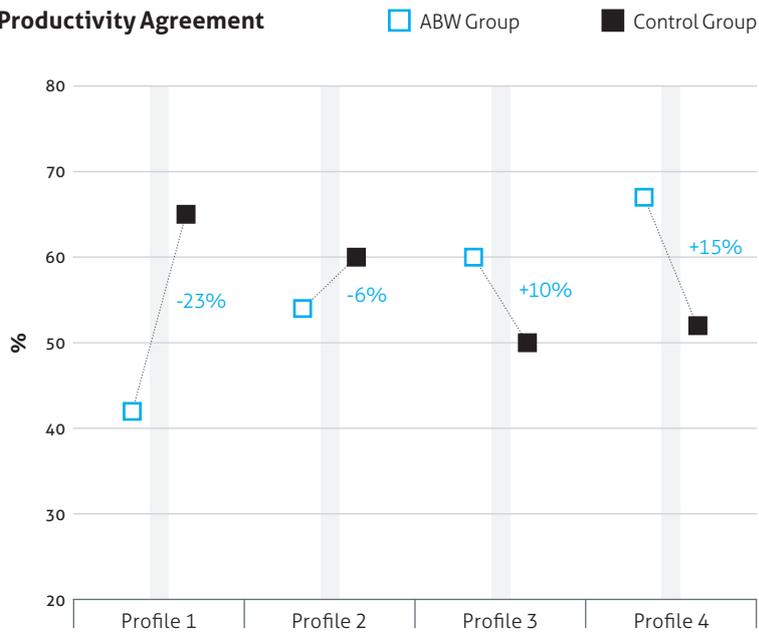
Profile 1	30%
Profile 2	41%
Profile 3	19%
Profile 4	10%

**Control Group**  
n=23,546

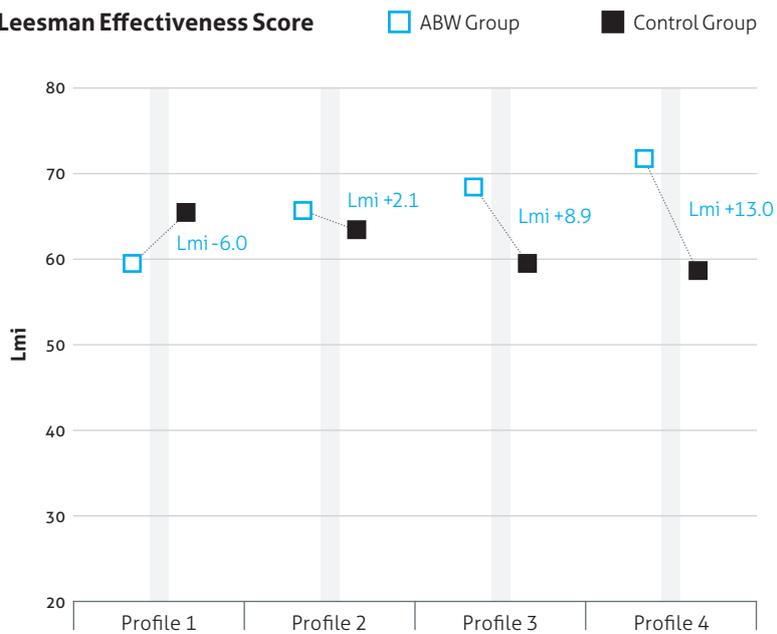


Profile 1	42%
Profile 2	44%
Profile 3	11%
Profile 4	3%

### Productivity Agreement



### Leesman Effectiveness Score



# The Challenge of Employee Inertia



Lmi 59.6

## Mobility profile 1 – The camper / squatter

I perform most/all of my activities at a single work setting and rarely use other locations within the office



Lmi 65.7

## Mobility profile 2 – The timid traveller

I perform the majority of my activities at a single work setting but also use other locations within the office



Lmi 68.4

## Mobility profile 3 – The intrepid explorer

I perform some of my activities at a single work setting but often use other locations within the office



Lmi 71.9

## Mobility profile 4 – The true transient

I use multiple work settings and rarely base myself at a single location within the office

10%

# 01

Activity Based Working can deliver significant operational benefits for those employees who use the environments provided for them.

# 02

The more an employee uses multiple work locations within the workplace, the more they report that the space enables them to work more effectively.

Are some employees struggling to adopt activity based behaviours because their daily work profile is so simple that the benefits are limited, or because there are specific tasks that occupy a large proportion of their time that are simply better suited to a traditional work setting? The youngest employees are the ones least likely to adopt a more mobile behaviour: 84% of the under 25s belong to mobility profiles 1 and 2.

# 30%

Or has the "what's in it for me?" benefit case not been made to those employees, and is the reason for changing to ABW inadequately communicated? These employees could be seeing themselves as the victims of corporate cost or space reduction strategies.

# 19%



Productivity agreement



Pride agreement



Productivity agreement



Pride agreement

**Intrepid Explorers** are well progressed in their investigation of the central concepts of ABW and have adopted a progressive and mobile approach to space use. Within the ABW sample they account for 19% of employees with above average (60%) productivity and excellent (81%) pride agreement. **True Transients** are the most mobile, but are few in number. Even across the ABW sample workplaces they represent just 10% of respondents. However, they report the highest (67%) productivity and outstanding (86%) pride agreement.

# 03

The more complex an employee's daily work profile, the more beneficial it is for them to work in a mobile way that utilises multiple settings.



# 04

Poor adoption of appropriate behaviour in activity based workplaces is a significant problem that limits widespread organisational benefits.

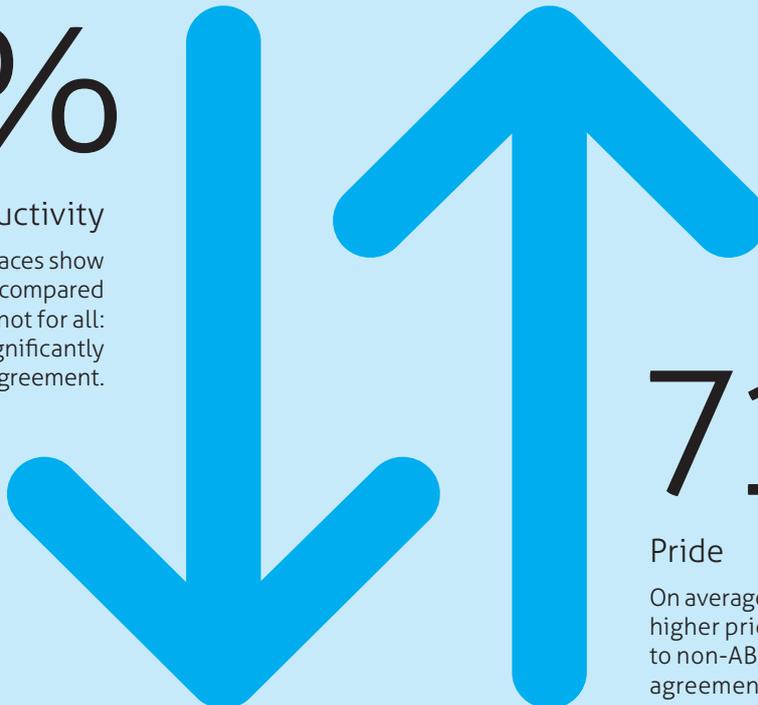
**Camper / Squatters** are truly anchored to their workstation and are not finding other spaces elsewhere. Within the ABW sample workplaces, they still represent 30% of employees. While the **Timid Travellers** remain strongly attached to their single workstation, they are starting to experience other spaces for some of their work. Across the ABW sample workplaces, they represent the majority of employees – 41% – clearly showing ABW environments struggle with employee inertia.



# 53%

Productivity

On average, the ABW workplaces show lower productivity agreement compared to non-ABW workplaces. But not for all: those in Profiles 3 & 4 have significantly higher than average agreement.



# 71%

Pride

On average, the ABW workplaces show higher pride agreement compared to non-ABW workplaces, with 80%+ agreement in Profiles 3 & 4.

## Matching benefits with objectives

Statistically the best ABW environments deliver valuable employee satisfaction gains on many key workplace activities and significant improvements with several physical and service features. When executed well, the benefits far outweigh the minor losses, but need to be matched to organisational objectives.

Creativity



Focus



Informal meetings



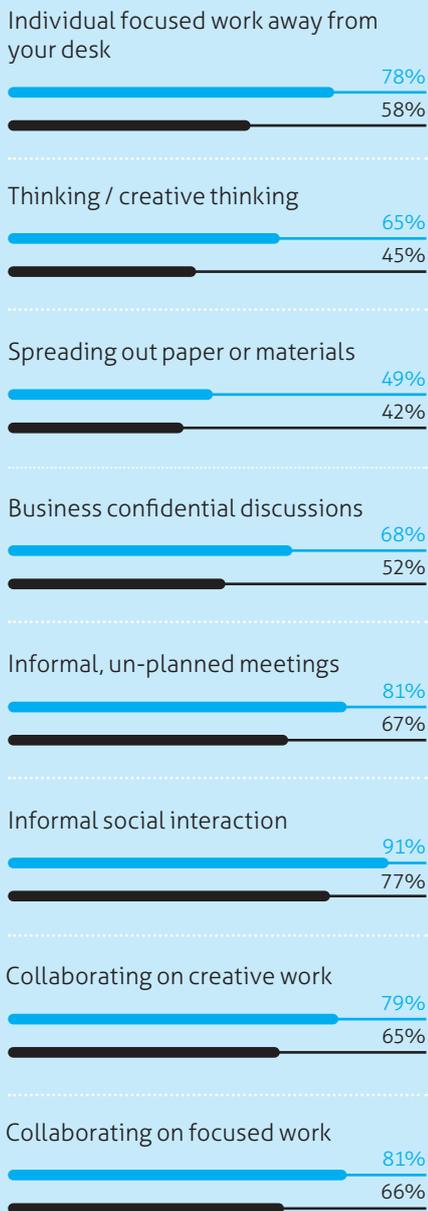
Paper



### How internal mobility drives ABW benefits

— Profile 4 – high mobility  
— Profile 1 – low mobility

#### % satisfaction



# 01



### Individual focus

While ABW environments perform less well from an employee satisfaction perspective for "individual focused work, desk based", for those with higher mobility profiles that is compensated for with the gains in satisfaction in "individual focused work away from your desk".

# 02



### Creative thinking

Here ABW environments outperform other environments for those employees with higher mobility profiles. But those with a less mobile profile are left with a lower perceived support compared to the control group environments.

# 03



### Informal meetings

This is an area where ABW spaces consistently excel, delivering higher employee satisfaction averages across all four mobility profiles. If this forms part of a project objective, this is an area where ABW has the potential to bring employees real benefit.

# 04



### Collaboration

Here the performance difference between ABW and non-ABW spaces is starting to narrow. Creative collaboration performance remains higher in the ABW environments across all mobility profiles, but there is no significant benefit for focused collaboration overall.

# 05



### Paper

Almost all ABW spaces record lower than average satisfaction figures for "spreading out paper and materials". Organisations moving to ABW need to assess the importance of this activity to their employees and decide if reducing reliance on paper is appropriate or achievable.

# 06



### Confidentiality

Overall, the ABW spaces perform marginally lower for "business confidential discussions" than for those in other workplaces. But for employees in the highest mobility profile, once again, ABW workplaces deliver higher support.

# ABW Benefits and Challenges

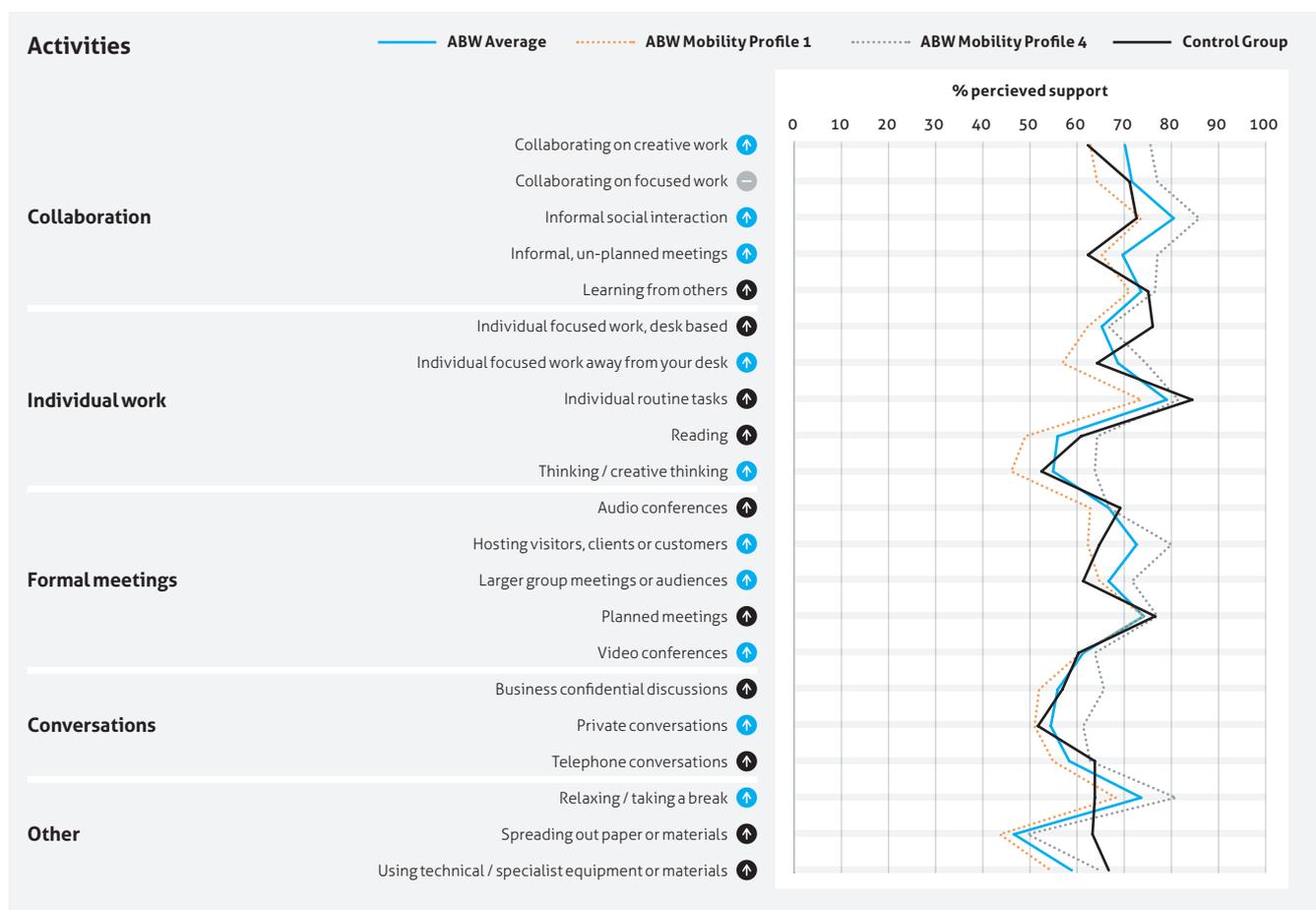
Compared to the control group, the ABW locations score higher in perceived support in 10 out of the 21 Leesman activities analysis, lower in 10 activities, and are on par in one remaining activity. But looking at the scores based on the respondents' mobility shows different experiences.

Employees in ABW workplaces who report the highest level of mobility (profile 4) are more likely to perceive 15 of the 21 activities to be supported, compared to the control group. And compared to their least mobile colleagues (profile 1), the mobile respondents are more likely to perceive all activities to be supported, with differences up to 20 percentage points. Planned meetings and video conferences are on the other hand activities where

the data suggests that level of mobility brings the smallest benefit. In addition to better support of their activities, the employees with higher mobility are also generally more satisfied with their various workplace features, compared to the least mobile respondents.

For example, the mobile employees report much higher satisfaction with indoor environment quality: +17 percentage points on air quality, +18 points on office lighting, +19 points on temperature control and +22 points on noise levels. And while they are more likely to find variety of workspaces important (34% importance for profile 1 compared to 61% for profile 4), they are also more likely to be satisfied with it (+35-point difference).

The less mobile employees are more likely to want to personalise their workstation (61% importance for profile 1 compared to 43% for profile 4) and are also more often dissatisfied with the ability (or inability) to do so.



**Features**

— ABW Average    - - - - - ABW Mobility Profile 1    - - - - - ABW Mobility Profile 4    — Control Group

**Individual**

- Ability to personalise my workstation ⬆️
- People walking past your workstation ⬆️
- Space between work settings ⬆️
- Dividers (between desks / areas) ⬆️

**Collaboration**

- Accessibility of colleagues ⬆️
- Meeting rooms (small) ⬆️
- Meeting rooms (large) ⬆️
- Desk / Room booking systems ⬆️
- Audio-Visual equipment ⬆️
- Computing equipment, mobile (laptop, tablet, etc.) ⬇️

**Mobility**

- WiFi network connectivity in the office ⬆️
- Remote access to work files or network ⬆️
- Variety of different types of workspace ⬆️
- Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs ⬆️
- Informal work areas / break-out zones ⬆️

**Technology**

- Computing equipment, fixed (desktop) ⬆️
- Wired in-office network connectivity ⬆️
- Printing / copying / scanning equipment ⬆️
- Telephone equipment ⬆️
- IT Service / Help desk ⬆️

**Hospitality**

- Tea, coffee and other refreshment facilities ⬆️
- Restaurant / canteen ⬆️
- Hospitality services ⬆️
- Reception areas ⬆️
- Guest / visitor network access ⬆️

**Facilities and services**

- Mail & post-room services ⬆️
- General cleanliness ⬆️
- General tidiness ⬇️
- Shower facilities ⬆️
- Toilets / W.C. ⬆️
- Leisure facilities onsite or nearby ⬆️
- Security ⬆️
- Health and safety provisions ⬆️
- Access (e.g. lifts, stairways, ramps etc) ⬆️
- Internal signage ⬆️
- Parking (car, motorbike or bicycle) ⬆️

**Furniture and design**

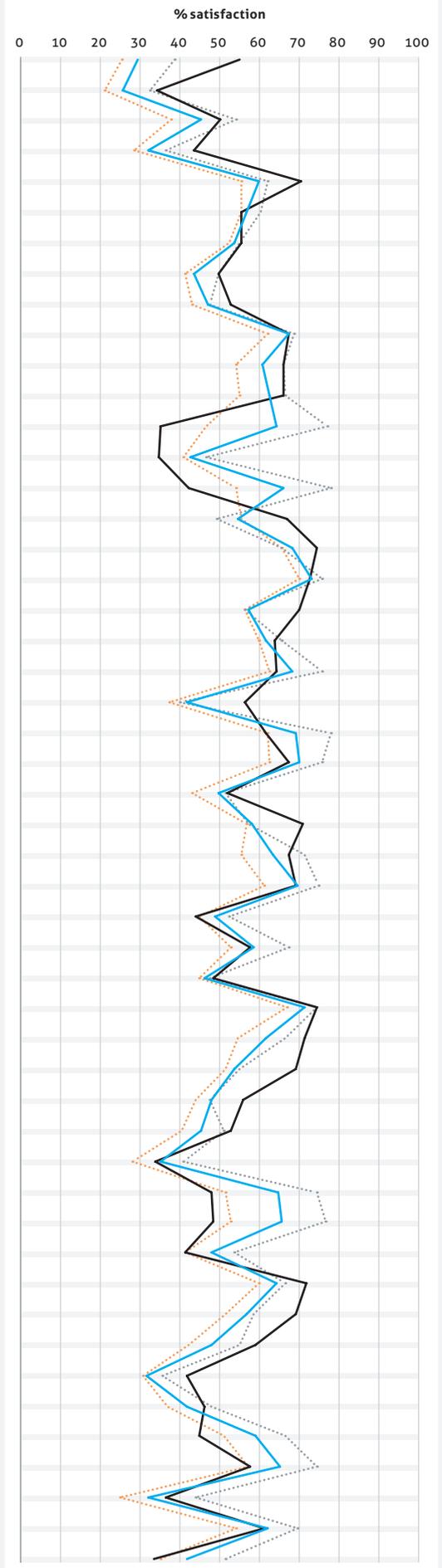
- Art & Photography ⬆️
- Atriums and Communal Areas ⬆️
- General Décor ⬆️
- Plants & Greenery ⬆️
- Desk ⬆️
- Chair ⬆️

**Storage**

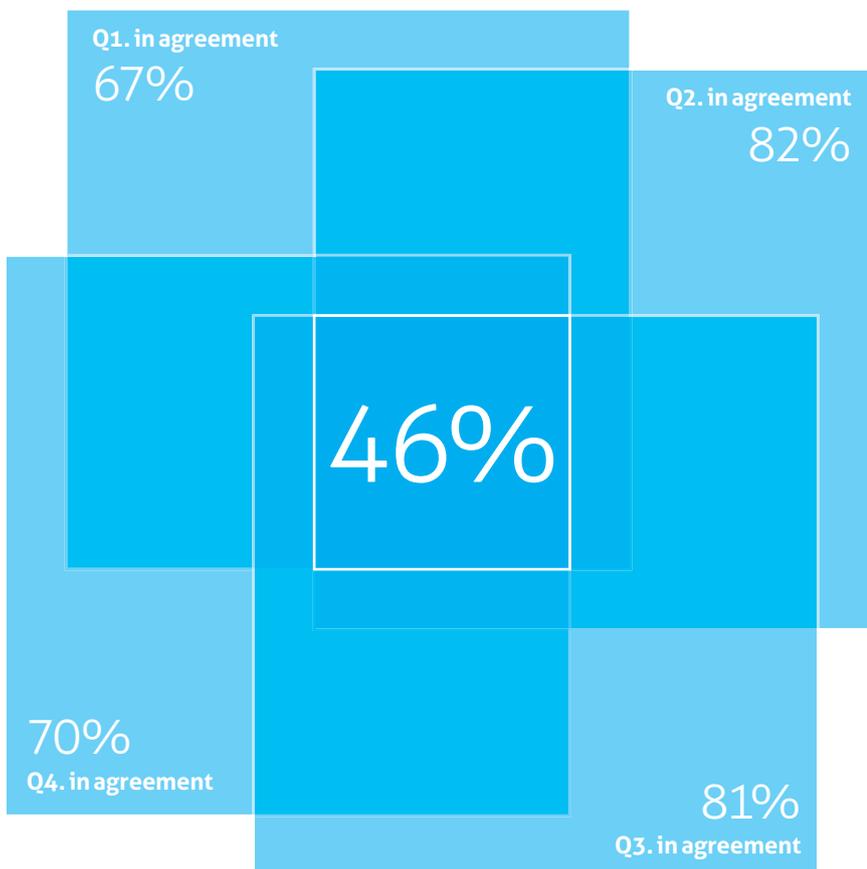
- Personal storage ⬆️
- Archive storage ⬆️
- Shared storage ⬆️

**Indoor environment quality**

- Air quality ⬆️
- Natural light ⬆️
- Noise levels ⬆️
- Office lighting ⬆️
- Temperature control ⬆️



# Supporting ABW



So 82% agreed they had technology and infrastructure that enabled them to work across different locations within the office. Further, 70% felt they had access to training and support to help them work in a flexible way, while 81% agreed that the culture in the organisation is supportive of a mobile and flexible way of working.

Even the majority of the employees in mobility profile 1 agree with most of these statements. Although only 52% perceive that the design of the workplace encourages them to choose a setting that best fits their activity, 73% agree that they have the required technology to work in a mobile way within the office. So the question remains, why do some employees adopt a new way of working while others don't?

There's again a risk of averages masking a different reality because only 46% of respondents agree with all four statements that would have an impact on one's mobility within the office. So perhaps a failure in even just one of these can lead to some employees not adopting a more mobile way of working. In fact, only 32% of the most sedentary group of respondents agree with all four statements, compared to 56% of the most mobile group.

This raises further questions around why more employees are resisting the move to activity based workstyles. If less than half of respondents can agree with all statements, is there a critical success level that training and support structures must meet? Or is it perhaps the opposite: that since for the majority of respondents, three or four out of four of the questions met with a positive response, they are resisting adoption despite the support structure put in place. If this is the case, then the efforts of employers to provide 'support systems' remain important, but other factors are having a greater bearing. These will be explored in the next sections.

- 1 The design of my workplace encourages me to choose work settings/locations that best support the different tasks I am undertaking
- 2 I have the technology tools and infrastructure that enable me to work across different locations within the office
- 3 The culture of the organisation is supportive to working in a mobile/flexible way
- 4 I have access to training/support that helps me work in a mobile/flexible way

The benefits of ABW are clear for those who work in a mobile activity based way, using the environment in the manner it is designed and configured for. But with the majority of ABW respondents remaining sedentary and not utilising the settings provided, we need to understand the key obstacles and get a clearer picture of who these respondents are.

Four additional questions were added to the survey to test the extent to which the resistance might be the result of physical, technological, cultural or educational obstacles. At face value, the results were confusing, appearing as though employees had few if any of the stated reasons for not adopting the new workstyle.

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### Question Agreement



Agree with 0 questions	5%
Agree with 1 question	9%
Agree with 2 questions	15%
Agree with 3 questions	25%
Agree with all 4 questions	46%

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The question still remains, why do some employees adopt a new way of working while others don't? Perhaps a failure in even just one of the basic support systems can lead to some employees not adopting a more mobile way of working?

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# Demographics

Previous analysis across the entire Leesman database has shown a few interesting differences in workplace experience between employees of different demographics, though most often the differences are marginal.

**Gender:** There is no discernible difference in workplace effectiveness scores within the ABW group between male and female employees. This mirrors results across the wider Leesman database.

**Age:** In general, the youngest age group tend to report that their workplace is more effective than their older colleagues. Despite generational stereotyping in the popular media, we have found these differences are more likely due to a simpler work profile with less variation in the activities they perform. This almost certainly stems to their career progression.

The same applies within the ABW workplaces in this study. The average Lmi for those aged under 25 across the ABW respondents is Lmi 72.2 while those aged 55 or over have the lowest Lmi for any age group, Lmi 61.9.

Interestingly though, the youngest employees are the ones least likely to adopt a more mobile behaviour: 84% of the under 25s belong to mobility profiles 1 and 2. Even though higher mobility means a higher Lmi also for the under 25s, what sets them apart from their older colleagues is that they have a high Lmi even if they're not highly mobile (Lmi 70.9 for profile 1). In comparison, those aged 35-44 in profile 1 have an Lmi of 58.3 while profile 4 has an Lmi of 72.9.

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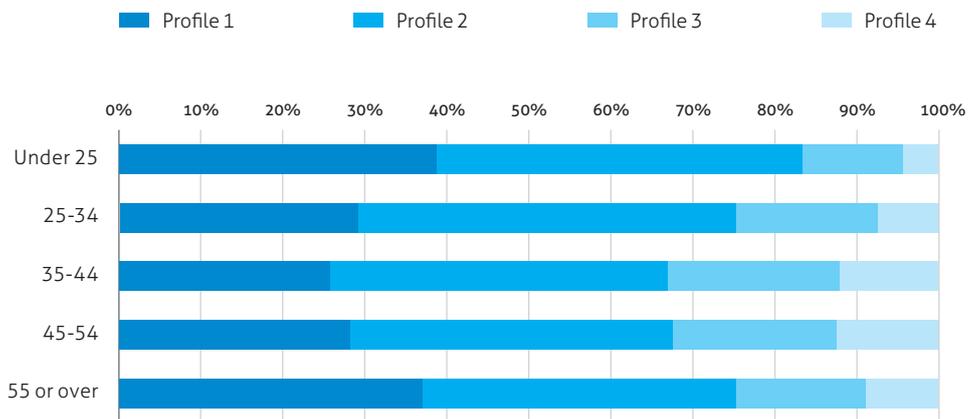
**The youngest employees are the most sedentary and least likely to adopt a more mobile behavior with 84% of the under 25's belonging to mobility profiles 1 and 2.**

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**Length of Service:** Interestingly, there is no significant difference in mobility adoption based on length of service. Those who have been with the organisation for a short time are just as likely to adopt a more mobile way of working in ABW environments than those who have been with the organisation for a longer time.

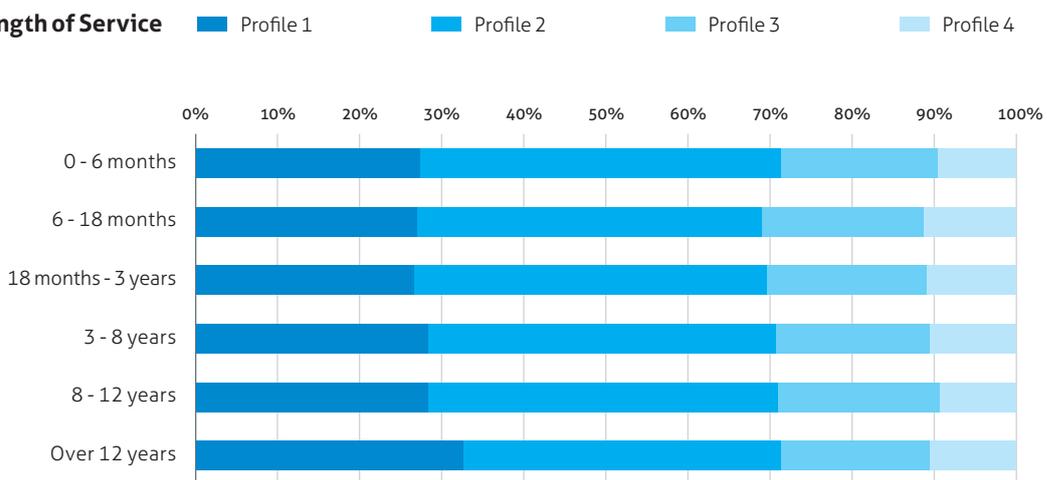
Generally speaking, those who have been with their organisation for a longer time have a lower average Lmi, and the same applies to respondents in ABW organisations. Here, the group who have been with their organisation for less than 6 months (which generally would be after transition to ABW as the post measurement would usually have been done 6 months after project completion) have the highest Lmi at 71.6; those who have been with their organisations for 8-12 years have the lowest, at Lmi 62.4. Based on the data, longer length of service means a lower average Lmi.

### Age



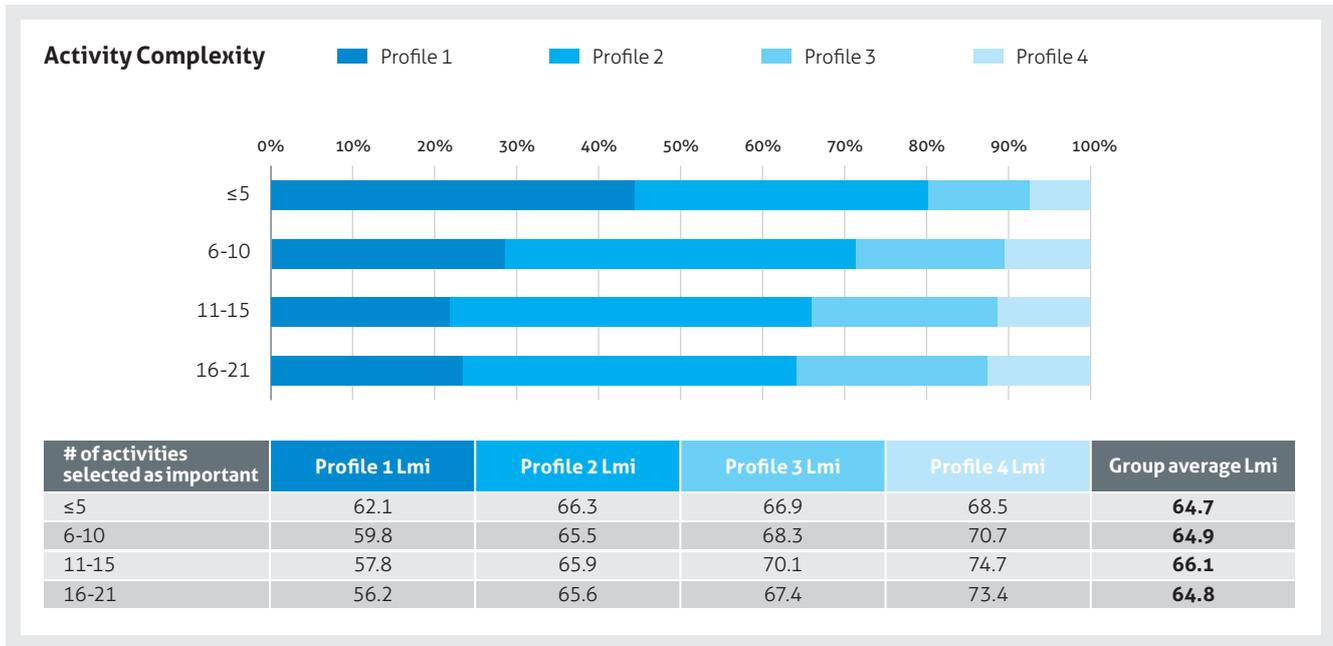
Age	Profile 1 Lmi	Profile 2 Lmi	Profile 3 Lmi	Profile 4 Lmi	Group average Lmi
Under 25	70.9	72.7	73.2	76.7	<b>72.2</b>
25-34	64.1	68.8	70.7	73.6	<b>68.1</b>
35-44	58.3	64.7	68.2	72.9	<b>64.8</b>
45-54	57.8	64.4	67.6	71.2	<b>64.0</b>
55 or over	56.6	63.7	66.4	68.7	<b>61.9</b>

### Length of Service



Length of Service	Profile 1 Lmi	Profile 2 Lmi	Profile 3 Lmi	Profile 4 Lmi	Group average Lmi
0 - 6 months	69.2	71.6	73.2	75.5	<b>71.6</b>
6 - 18 months	63.2	69.4	71.0	73.8	<b>68.5</b>
18 months - 3 years	60.5	67.0	71.3	73.7	<b>66.8</b>
3 - 8 years	60.1	65.1	68.6	72.4	<b>65.1</b>
8 - 12 years	56.7	63.1	66.3	68.7	<b>62.4</b>
Over 12 years	57.1	63.9	65.7	70.5	<b>62.7</b>

# Activity Complexity



The data suggests that adopting mobile behaviour becomes even more crucial in achieving high effectiveness when the activity profile becomes more complex – in other words, when it includes a wide variety of activities.

When asked which of the 21 activities are important, 19% of the ABW respondents indicate only 5 or less to be important as part of the work they do. Another 41% found 6-10 of the activities important, 22% selected 11-15 activities while 18% have a highly complex activity profile with 16 or more activities important to their work. And the way these groups of employees use and experience their workplace is quite different.

The respondents with a simpler activity profile tend to be more likely to base themselves at a single work setting (44% of these respondents belong to mobility profile 1 and 36% to profile 2). They do not adopt more mobile behaviour – perhaps as the nature of their work is not especially diverse and therefore does not require a multitude of settings. By far the most important activity for these employees is in fact "individual focused work,

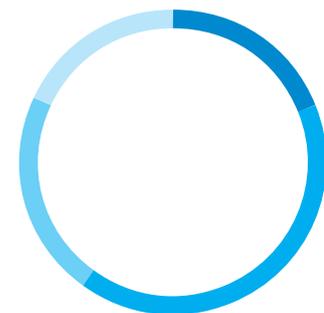
desk based", which was selected as an important activity by 81% of these respondents. Only 8% consider "individual focused work, away from the desk" to be important.

The other activities most commonly selected sit quite far behind desk-based focused work in importance. These are planned meetings, selected by 48% of these respondents, followed by telephone conversations, important to 38% of the employees with a less complex work profile.

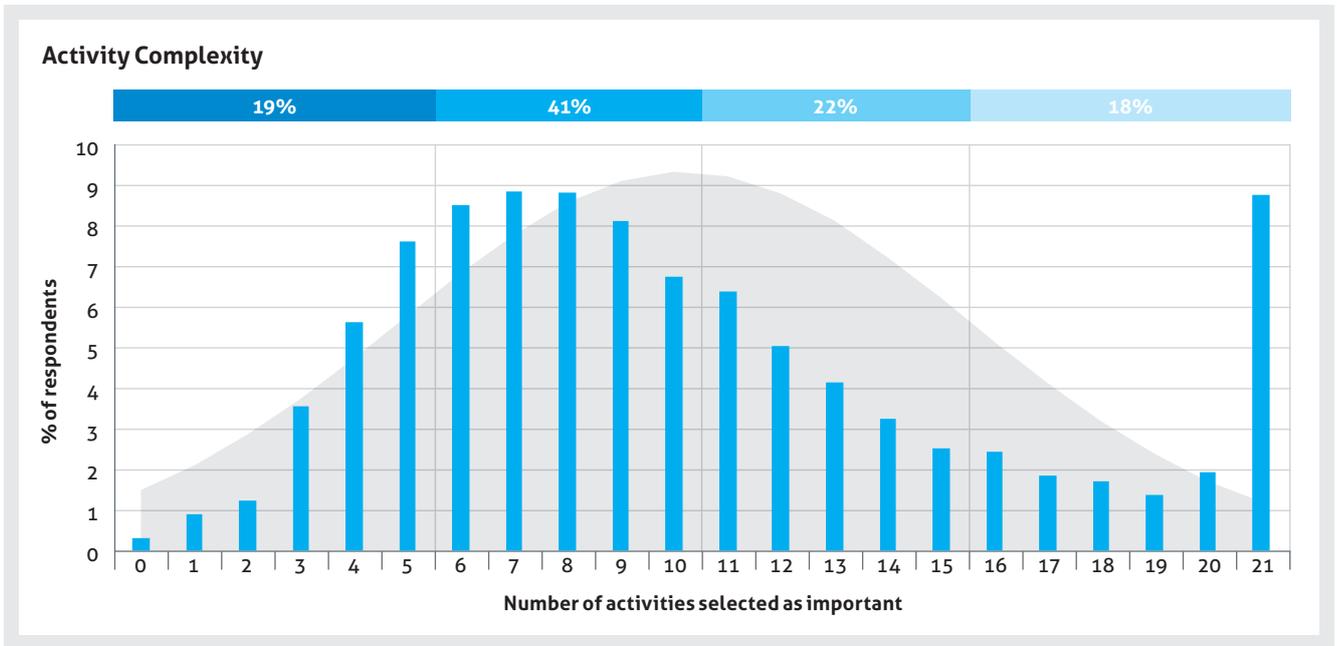
Compared then to employees with a simpler work profile, respondents with the highest activity complexity are more likely to be more mobile within the workplace. Out of everyone with over 16 important activities, we found 24% in profile 1 basing themselves at a single work setting, which is a significantly smaller proportion than the 44% of the low-complexity respondents.

But for those 24%, it can prove quite difficult to perform the 16 or more different activities at a single work setting, which is also what the Lmi effectiveness scores discloses.

## Distribution of Activity Complexity Groups n=11,366



≤5	19%
6-10	41%
11-15	22%
16-21	18%



In fact, the more complex an employee’s work profile is, the more crucial it is to use the workplace in a mobile way. The Lmi of the group of employees with a simple work profile ranges from Lmi 62.1, for the least mobile group, to 68.5 for the most mobile. But the Lmi for those with a highly complex activity profile ranges from as low as Lmi 56.2, for the least mobile employees, to Lmi 73.4 for the most mobile.

This suggests that employees with a simpler activity profile in the studied ABW environments struggle to find their environment highly effective, regardless of their level of mobility. It further shows that employees with high activity complexity are the ones who could benefit the most from a well-designed ABW environment – if they use it to its full potential. But it also reveals that these employees are equally the ones who will experience the largest disadvantage if they are not mobile within the workplace.

# 10.2

## Average number of selected activities

**Employees with a high activity complexity are the ones who benefit the most from a well-designed ABW environment – But these employees are equally the ones who will experience the largest disadvantage if they don’t.**

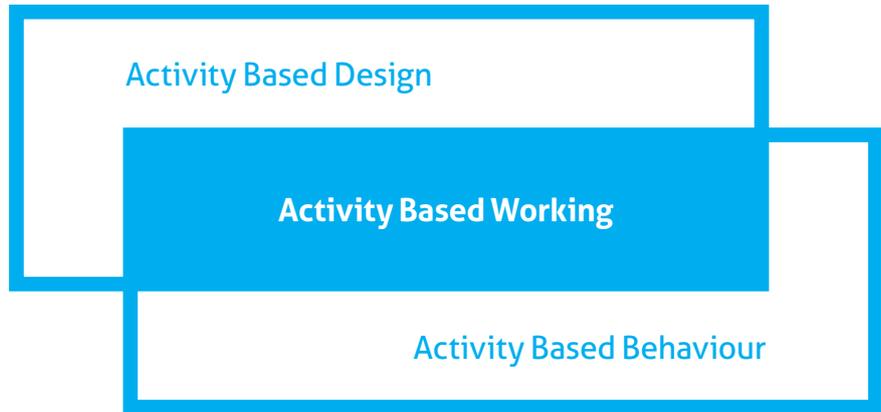
# Conclusions

This study has shown that employees who work in a highly mobile activity based way, in environments developed to support that workstyle, see significant personal and operational benefits.

Central then to any decision of whether ABW would benefit an organisation, is having a thorough understanding of the activity complexity of employees. Organisations, or parts of organisations, with low activity complexity may derive limited if any benefit from an ABW environment and will prove the hardest to mobilise. Conversely, businesses, or parts of businesses with greater activity complexity, could gain considerably and should find employees more amenable to adopt the necessary new behaviours.

There are many conclusions that could be drawn from the data, though the headline facts remain: adoption of activity based behaviours in ABW spaces is woefully low and greater internal mobility delivers benefits for all, especially those with a more complex work profile. But as a research investigation it also raises many further questions.

- 1 Are some employees struggling to adopt activity based behaviours because their daily work profile is so simple that the benefits are limited, or because there are specific tasks that occupy a large proportion of their time that are simply better suited to a traditional work setting?
- 2 Can a failure or poor delivery of one or two key infrastructure items (say WiFi or room booking systems) breed distrust and disengagement in the new strategy from employees who are new to digital self-service environments and no longer have digital native team members within arm's reach to solve their every problem?



- 3 Has the "what's in it for me?" benefit case not been made to those employees, and is the reason for changing to ABW inadequately communicated? These employees could be seeing themselves as the victims of corporate cost or space reduction strategies.
- 4 Have middle and senior management not been adequately trained or coached in the challenges of directing distributed teams? Faced with the loss of line of sight leadership, have they reverted to micromanagement?
- 5 Have the levels of freedom, self-governance and autonomy offered by ABW left some employees adrift, yearning guidance, instruction and the direct feedback offered by more traditional management styles?
- 6 In larger spaces, especially so when spread across multiple floors, has it become logistically more challenging to seek out the range of different spaces necessary to support higher mobility patterns? So if the café is 9 floors away, are you less inclined to consider it a location for impromptu collaboration?

Our study raises a series of important questions and we would urge organisations evaluating the benefits of ABW to debate these among their leadership teams and consultants. They should fully appreciate that an ABW project is a transformational business strategy and as such, a major undertaking. The project will need ABW management specialist, technologists and behavioural change experts. Then perhaps the promise of greater team collaboration, healthier more engaged employees and faster and more efficient decision making, stand a significantly higher chance of manifesting.

# What About The Building

How is it some workplaces work and some don't? And how do some – around 5% – manage to deliver outstanding workplace effectiveness performance figures of Lmi 70 and above?

It is this question that now occupies much of our thinking. We have the largest collection of workplace effectiveness data ever amassed and it's a researcher's dream. It is a kaleidoscope of questions and answers more colourful than most can imagine.

It's rare of course to be able to pin one individual failing on the poor performance, or one outstanding feature on high performance. But what if we could map our 18 million lines of employee importance and satisfaction data to the physical real estate – not just in terms of the service and physical features employees have told us are important but to the fabric of the building and the occupation strategy deployed by the client. In June 2016 we formally launched a new research initiative that will invite any client who undertakes a Leesman workplace effectiveness survey to share their real estate data with us.

It is a simple proposition. Share with us a series of additional data points that relate to the physical architecture and the way the building is operated. The more clients who do it, the quicker we will be able to assess the impact these attributes are having on the experience of the employees using those spaces. So does occupant density impact employee productivity, or does the vertical distribution of employees across floors impact sense of community or learning from others? Do desk sharing ratios have a tipping point of effectiveness and what benefit do those central atria offer?

This is not a complex challenge. It is a simple bipartisan promise to all involved in the design, delivery and management of the workplaces we are measuring with our Leesman workplace effectiveness survey: provide us with as many of the following additional data points as you can and we commit to undertake the most wide-reaching research project of its kind ever undertaken. We will then freely share the findings with you and the wider workplace management community.

Our hope is that we can gather parallel Leesman Index and occupation strategy data on 250 workplaces by spring 2018 and have our findings published in the summer. We will be particularly keen to see if the successful delivery of ABW is linked to aspects of the building fabric or occupation strategy.

# Impact Code

On these two pages, we offer the overall performance figures across the entire ABW group, the control group and the Leesman+ buildings against all core elements of the Leesman workplace effectiveness survey, reporting on agreement, importance and satisfaction figures.

ABW Group n=11,366 | Control Group n=23,546

## Q1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the design of your organisation's office?

		% Agreement ABW	% Agreement Control group	% Agreement Leesman+
1	The design of my workspace is important to me	81.2	86.0	88.8
2	It's a place I'm proud to bring visitors to	70.8	58.8	79.6
3	It creates an enjoyable environment to work in	64.8	61.0	77.4
4	It contributes to a sense of community at work	59.9	60.0	72.1
5	It enables me to work productively	53.3	60.5	71.3

## Q2. What impact do you think the design of your workspace has on the following elements of your organisation?

		% Positive ABW	% Positive Control group	% Positive Leesman+
1	Corporate Image (for visitors, clients, potential recruits etc.)	74.4	62.7	83.9
2	Environmental Sustainability	63.2	50.5	69.4
3	Workplace Culture	63.1	61.0	76.5

## Q3. Which activities do you feel are important in your work and how well is each supported?

		% Importance ABW	% Satisfaction ABW	% Importance Control group	% Satisfaction Control group	% Satisfaction Leesman+
1	Individual focused work, desk based	90.5	67.3	93.1	79.5	85.7
2	Planned meetings	80.8	77.6	76.2	80.4	82.7
3	Telephone conversations	73.0	59.3	73.0	65.6	77.8
4	Informal, un-planned meetings	67.0	72.5	61.6	63.9	81.8
5	Collaborating on focused work	58.9	74.5	57.5	74.1	86.4
6	Audio conferences	50.6	68.8	53.7	71.6	82.8
7	Relaxing / taking a break	49.1	76.8	53.6	65.5	80.9
8	Reading	49.0	56.6	50.4	62.4	75.1
9	Informal social interaction	48.7	84.7	47.2	75.6	87.4
10	Private conversations	43.5	54.9	46.4	51.7	63.6
11	Collaborating on creative work	43.4	73.1	40.5	64.0	78.9
12	Thinking / creative thinking	42.9	55.4	45.2	52.6	69.6
13	Business confidential discussions	42.3	56.7	43.3	57.8	68.8
14	Learning from others	41.5	76.8	43.4	78.6	84.9
15	Individual routine tasks	41.1	83.0	51.4	89.3	92.2
16	Video conferences	40.1	62.9	34.7	61.3	76.0
17	Hosting visitors, clients or customers	36.5	76.0	38.6	66.7	79.5
18	Larger group meetings or audiences	35.4	68.8	37.6	62.7	74.5
19	Individual focused work away from your desk	33.3	71.3	34.7	66.1	81.2
20	Spreading out paper or materials	29.7	45.8	37.3	65.0	65.7
21	Using technical / specialist equipment or materials	22.3	59.6	24.0	68.8	75.5

**Q4. Which physical / service features do you consider to be an important part of an effective workspace and how satisfied are you with each?**

		% Importance ABW	% Satisfaction ABW	% Importance Control group	% Satisfaction Control group	% Satisfaction Leesman+
1	Meeting rooms (small)	86.8	57.4	84.5	56.0	69.1
2	Desk	82.8	66.4	87.0	75.0	75.7
3	Chair	81.5	57.4	85.5	71.9	72.8
4	IT Service / Help desk	80.6	63.0	82.0	65.7	69.1
5	Tea, coffee and other refreshment facilities	79.0	71.0	82.4	66.0	78.3
6	Meeting rooms (large)	77.3	54.1	76.7	56.2	66.3
7	WiFi network connectivity in the office	77.0	62.1	75.1	68.2	64.1
8	General cleanliness	76.7	65.4	79.9	69.6	81.2
9	Temperature control	76.7	40.4	82.0	30.7	38.3
10	Noise levels	75.5	29.0	73.9	34.1	40.6
11	Personal storage	74.8	47.4	71.0	60.0	57.9
12	Toilets / W.C.	74.0	59.6	78.4	58.5	66.6
13	Natural light	71.8	67.3	74.2	58.6	73.4
14	General tidiness	71.4	72.4	73.3	71.8	82.5
15	Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs	70.4	41.2	63.7	32.0	46.4
16	Air quality	69.9	60.0	73.5	43.7	56.2
17	Printing / copying / scanning equipment	69.5	76.4	75.8	76.1	78.4
18	Desk / Room booking systems	68.3	42.4	60.8	49.4	51.1
19	Computing equipment, mobile (laptop, tablet, etc.)	67.9	69.6	68.4	69.6	75.4
20	Restaurant / canteen	65.8	40.4	76.8	57.3	56.3
21	Office lighting	63.3	63.7	69.4	62.6	73.6
22	Access (e.g. lifts, stairways, ramps etc)	61.4	54.1	57.1	71.7	71.6
23	Accessibility of colleagues	60.8	61.0	56.1	73.3	76.4
24	Telephone equipment	58.7	58.3	67.7	72.8	78.0
25	Remote access to work files or network	55.6	64.3	60.1	68.3	66.9
26	General Décor	55.5	67.9	56.8	48.2	71.3
27	Informal work areas / break-out zones	53.2	68.5	57.0	40.7	69.2
28	Security	52.9	74.4	65.4	78.0	81.4
29	Ability to personalise my workstation	51.8	26.1	59.3	55.8	45.3
30	Plants & Greenery	49.6	47.3	53.6	39.6	47.3
31	Mail & post-room services	49.4	59.0	55.2	74.1	77.6
32	Wired in-office network connectivity	48.1	70.8	54.8	77.8	76.8
33	Hospitality services	47.3	72.0	42.1	63.0	68.9
34	People walking past your workstation	45.7	21.7	50.1	31.8	37.7
35	Variety of different types of workspace	45.6	66.2	37.5	32.6	61.0
36	Health and safety provisions	44.7	62.9	54.6	74.4	77.0
37	Space between work settings	44.5	44.6	51.2	49.9	58.0
38	Parking (car, motorbike or bicycle)	44.5	44.5	61.9	53.2	58.5
39	Leisure facilities onsite or nearby	43.3	45.3	48.8	47.7	50.9
40	Reception areas	42.3	72.8	47.9	69.9	81.3
41	Dividers (between desks / areas)	41.8	29.1	48.2	42.4	44.0
42	Atriums and Communal Areas	41.7	66.7	44.1	47.6	74.4
43	Audio-Visual equipment	38.1	46.5	40.6	52.8	63.7
44	Art & Photography	37.6	32.7	44.6	31.0	41.6
45	Shared storage	35.2	40.4	37.4	45.2	47.0
46	Internal signage	33.7	47.7	37.0	56.6	60.4
47	Guest / visitor network access	32.1	49.4	36.7	52.0	54.0
48	Shower facilities	32.1	48.5	37.4	42.8	46.4
49	Computing equipment, fixed (desktop)	30.2	55.0	45.1	69.3	74.8
50	Archive storage	24.9	28.6	30.3	40.5	39.2

# Leesman®

Leesman does one thing, one way: measure how workplaces support the employees they accommodate – nothing else. Our standard tool has now been adopted by leading global organisations positioning us as one of the world's leading independent workplace performance think tanks.

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This research project was conducted in partnership with IFMA Sweden in response to the huge growth in interest in Activity Based Working across Scandinavia. IFMA Sweden is the Swedish chapter of IFMA and has a mission to bring together, support and develop the Facility Management industry in Sweden.

[www.ifma.org](http://www.ifma.org)



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This research project was financially supported by Sweden based tenant representation practice Tenant & Partner. Formed in 1992, Tenant & Partner is now the market leading tenant representation in Sweden, helping clients maximise the benefits of their premises while minimising the costs.

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