

Nature-Starved Offices Are Affecting the Health of EMEA Employees

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Working in environments with natural elements, such as greenery and sunlight, leads to a 13% higher level of well-being says study

London, UK; [The Human Spaces Report](#), commissioned by global modular flooring experts, Interface and led by Organisational Psychologist Professor Sir Cary Cooper, has today revealed EMEA employees who work in environments with natural elements report a 13% higher level of well-being and are 8% more productive overall.

Two fifths (42%) of EMEA office employees have no natural light in their working environment, over half (55%) don't have access to any greenery in their working environment and even 7% of EMEA workers have no window in their workspace. Spain reported the highest number of office employees with no window (15%), and also had the most stressed workforce. In contrast, Germany and Denmark reported the least number of workers with no windows (2% and 3% respectively), and had the happiest workforce.

The academic study looked at the impact of the physical office environment on employee well-being across 3600 office workers in eight countries throughout EMEA.

With nearly two-thirds (63%) of EMEA office workers now based in either a town or city centre and spending on average 34 hours per week in the office, their interaction with nature is becoming increasingly limited. Despite city dominated lives, the research found workers have an inherent affinity to elements that reflect nature.

Interestingly, 40% of workers across EMEA said they would feel most productive at their own desk in a solitary office, while 31% would feel most productive at their own desk in an open plan office. Flexible working was a surprisingly low preference, with just 11% of workers choosing a space that suits their needs as their productive way to work.

The top five natural elements EMEA office workers put on their wish list for their ideal office space:

1. Natural light
2. Quiet working space
3. A view of the sea
4. Live indoor plants
5. Bright colours

Commenting on the research findings, Professor Sir Cary Cooper said: "The work environment has always been recognised as essential to employee well-being and performance but often purely as a 'hygiene factor'. The Human Spaces report clearly illustrates the connection between the impact of working environments and productivity. It's no coincidence that the most modern employers now take a new view, designing environments to help people thrive, collaborate and be creative. Being connected to nature and the outside world, biophilic design, to give it its real name, is a big part of that."

Commenting on what the research findings could mean for design in the office space, Mandy Leeming, Design and Development Manager (UK) at Interface, said: "Contact with nature and design elements which mimic natural materials has been shown to positively impact health, performance and concentration, and reduce anxiety and stress. When it comes to creating office spaces that achieve this, it's about taking the nuances of nature that we subconsciously respond to, such as colours and textures, and interpreting them. Ultimately improving the well-being, productivity and creativity of the workforce is key to the success of market leading organisations."

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About Interface

Interface is the world's largest global manufacturer of commercial carpet tiles. Its flooring products combine beauty and innovation with functionality and environmental credentials to help customers bring their design vision to life.

Interface was one of the first companies to publicly commit to sustainability, when it made a pledge in the mid-nineties to eliminate its impact on the environment by 2020. Known as Mission Zero, it influences every aspect of the business and inspires the company to continually push the boundaries in order to achieve its goal.

Interface is now more than half way to reaching Mission Zero and has been widely recognised for its achievements to date. Its products have also received several awards, specifically for design and innovation, the most recent being The Athenaeum Good Design Awards for Fotosfera and Urban Retreat.

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Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE

Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, Lancaster University, Founding Director, Robertson Cooper

Cary is recognised as one of the world's leading experts on well-being and stress at work and is the media's first choice for comment on workplace issues. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, The Royal Society of Arts, The Royal Society of Medicine, The Royal Society of Health and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Editor-in-Chief of the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Management and the author/editor of over 120 books.

Cary was awarded the Lifetime Practitioner Award from the British Psychology Society in recognition of his services to the profession. He acted as Lead Scientist in the 'Foresight Review of Mental Capital and Well-Being' which influenced government policy regarding well-being in all aspects of society. He is an active member of the Robertson Cooper team, focusing on strategy, external relations and PR activity. In June 2014 he was awarded a Knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours list and was also voted the 1st Most Influential HR Thinker of 2014 by HR Magazine.

About the Human Spaces Report

Collecting responses from 3,600 office workers across the UK, UAE, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and Sweden, the research quantifies the benefits of biophilic design, specifically for well-being and productivity, and also provides a practical introduction to how to achieve those benefits. In doing so, the study adds to the existing evidence base and provides a blueprint for natural, high performing organisations.

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