

The demographics of flexible working.

Regus – June 2015

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Flexible workers need a professional environment to thrive and be productive. This is the finding of recent research commissioned by Regus which found that home workers are afraid of getting lonely, overweight and stale. Home workers also long for a chance to mix with other professionals.

Flexible working from professional and fully equipped environments can play a key role in helping the economy grow.

This sees them, for example, opting to pop out of the house regularly for a change of scenery, among other strategies to regain concentration. Another important drawback faced by home workers is the irritation felt by family members who often consider the home worker is taking over too much domestic space in the house. Additionally, the family can cease to respect a home workers' need for professional workspace as too much closeness breeds contempt.

Working from home is certainly not all it's cracked up to be. In contrast, flexible working from professional and fully equipped environments can play a key role in helping the economy grow. Business people think that governments should increase awareness of flexible working rights and report that they feel flexible working should be directly incentivised. Business people globally confirm that government intervention would result in an overall economic benefit as capital freed up

from inflexible leases and under-used offices would instead be invested in growth and employment. Flexible working is also seen as critical to encouraging under-represented demographics to remain in the workforce. Specifically, it is key to attracting returning mothers, benefiting both individual firms and overall GDP.

Working mothers are a demographic greatly valued by firms for their experience and skills as well as their time management ability, and respondents report their businesses will be hiring larger numbers of them in 2015 than the previous year. But flexible working is also seen as critical to encouraging older workers and carers to remain in the workforce and to help curb youth unemployment by reducing the cost of per-head fixed office space.

Key Findings and Statistics.

- Over 44,000 workers globally were asked about their concerns over home working and whether flexible working should be promoted or incentivised by governments. They were also asked about the impact of flexible working on workforce participation specifically in relation to returning mothers, older workers and youths.

- In spite of this, flexible working, when carried out in a professional environment, is regarded as having great potential in helping drive growth and increase workforce participation as 81% of respondents think that money saved on expensive leases and under-occupied office space, would instead be invested in growth initiatives, in turn helping increase GDP and occupation levels.

Respondents report they value returning mothers for their experience and skills (55%) and see them as more reliable (30%) and organized (31%) than regular staff.

- Specifically, 52% of professionals report that they work outside the office more than half the week, but confirm that working from home is not always a desirable alternative.
- 29% of respondents say that their family resent that they have sectioned off a space in the family home and two fifths (39%) think family members take their work less seriously because they work from home.

81%

report that awareness of flexible working options should be increased

- In addition to this, 62% say they feel they are getting stale, 38% 'get lonely' and 64% miss mixing with other professionals. 32% are afraid of getting fat as they snack throughout the day.

- As a result business people believe that governments should be promoting flexible working by offering firms tax incentives (86%) and fully 79% of respondents believe that flexible working should be financially incentivized by government.
- Specifically, the reasons national governments should promote flexible working are closely linked to economic growth: 83% believe more flexible working would help increase female participation in the economy and 59% believe that it would help curb youth unemployment.
- 88% believe it would also help workers who care for family members to remain in the workforce.
- 26% of firms report they will be hiring more returning mothers in 2015. This is good news for GDP as increased participation of women in the labour force is a driver for the economy.



- Respondents report they value returning mothers for their experience and skills (55%) and see them as more reliable (30%) and organized (31%) than regular staff.
- As retirement age is lifted higher and higher across Western economies, and populations everywhere age, the proportion of those needing to remain in employment, and fit and willing to do so, is also increasing. 84% of respondents also see flexible working as key to keeping older workers in the economy.

Introduction.

Flexible workers are often envied by fixed office workers who imagine their freedom to entail lounging about the house in tracksuits or pyjamas and interspersing the day with a good dose of personal activities such as personal phone calls, supervising the plumber or taking the dog for a walk. In reality though, being able to manage where they work allows employees to improve their work-life balance, a requirement for 70% of workers who report they are struggling with balancing work life and family life according to the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.¹

But there are some drawbacks to flexible working, especially when workers use their home as their remote office. One such issue is that workers often find the fridge too hard to resist, leading them to unhealthy snacking. In reality though, studies show that working from the main office can be just as bad for the waistline as workers report that aside from sitting most of the day (56%) and eating because of stress (35%), they eat out regularly (26%) and are tempted by the office candy jar (17%) or have to skip meals because of time constraints (17%). They also have to take part in workplace celebrations (17%) and feel pressure to eat food co-workers bring in (9%).²

Lack of stimulation from colleagues and fellow professionals is another common complaint of home workers and, although a recent study by Stanford University and Chinese company Ctrip has shown that remote workers are 13% more productive, they also tend to get promoted at half the rate of office based colleagues confirming that an

60%

of part-time workers said they would work more hours if they could do so flexibly

'out of sight- out of mind' mentality is still pervasive.³ In addition to this, according to another study by Sigal Barsade and Hakan Ozcelik, feelings of loneliness can lead to withdrawal from work, weaker productivity, motivation,

and performance.⁴ Recent research by Regus also found that home working is often unproductive as it is disturbed by children or family demanding attention, difficulties concentrating, as well as family and pets disturbing telephone calls.⁵

Although working from home is certainly not all it's cracked up to be, flexible working carried out in a professional environment closer to home is well acknowledged to be a key driver of employment. Specifically, a study by Citrix and Centre for Economics and Business Research reported that an increase in flexible working could save UK workers £7.1 billion in commuting costs and over half a billion hours spent travelling. This same study on knowledge workers also reports that if flexible working were taken up by all willing employees GDP could increase by 0.7% as available working hours would be used



more productively and not be wasted on commuting or travelling to and from meetings. If flexible working was used to encourage unemployed people to return to the workforce a GDP increase of 4.7% could be achieved.⁶

The report also shows that well over half of unemployed retired people, carers, disabled, long-term sick or full time house-husbands and wives would return to work if flexible working were an option. Similarly 60% of part-time workers said they would work more hours if they could do so flexibly. Proportionally the additional labour provided by these two groups could increase UK GVA (Gross Value Added) by £78.5bn and £1.6bn.⁷

¹ National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Changing Work and Work-Family Conflict: Evidence from the Work, Family, and Health Network, 2014.

² CareerBuilder, Reachers, Engineers and Scientists Among Most Likely to Gain Weight on the Job, CareerBuilder Survey Finds, May 2013.

³ N. Bloom, Does working from home work?, 2014.

⁴ Sigal Barsade and Hakan Ozcelik, Work Loneliness and employee performance, 2011.

⁵ Regus, The hidden perils of working from home, November 2012.

⁶ Citrix and Cebr, The productive value of the untapped workforce: A study into the potential economic impacts of a flexible working culture, November 2014.

⁷ Citrix and Cebr, The productive value of the untapped workforce: A study into the potential economic impacts of a flexible working culture, November 2014.



It is undeniable that one group that are too often pushed out of work by lack of flexibility is returning mothers. Across the OECD area, the participation of women in labour is 57% with peaks in Iceland (78%) and Denmark (70%), while Greece (42%) and Mexico (45%) struggle behind.⁸ The OECD recently analysed the participation of women in labour in the Asia Pacific region and revealed that with the exception of Japan, Korea and Singapore a large gender gap can be still found in areas of entrepreneurship, labour force participation, salary, and the share of part-time employment. The OECD advises governments to act as a role model in advancing equality, but promoting new ways of working could also help bridge this gap. In its 'Achieving stronger growth by promoting a more gender balanced economy' paper the OECD confirms that: "Measures supporting the reconciliation of work and family life are also critical for men and women to equally participate in the labour market."

But it is not just parents and working mothers that want flexible working, a recent report by Working Mother Media found that nearly 80 % of men said they not only worked flexible schedules but that they felt comfortable doing so. Only 3% felt very uncomfortable suggesting it was seen as unsuitable for men to request to work flexibly.⁹

"Measures supporting the reconciliation of work and family life are also critical for men and women to equally participate in the labour market." OECD

With so much demand for it, it's not surprising that national and local governments across the globe have acknowledged the importance of flexible working to the economy and to improving citizen work-life balance and are acting to promote it. The Australian Fair Work Ombudsman, for example, sets out the conditions for this right

to be exercised in the Fair Works act of 2009, whilst the Singapore Ministry of Manpower promotes measures for improving work-life balance, including flexible work, and in the UK all employees have the right to request flexible working arrangements, provided they have been with the company at least 26 weeks. All this points to the increasing importance of flexible working in changing the make-up of the workforce and of workplace behaviours towards a more fluid, but much wider participation in the world of work.

⁸OECD, Labour market statistics: Labour force statistics by sex and age: indicators, OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database).

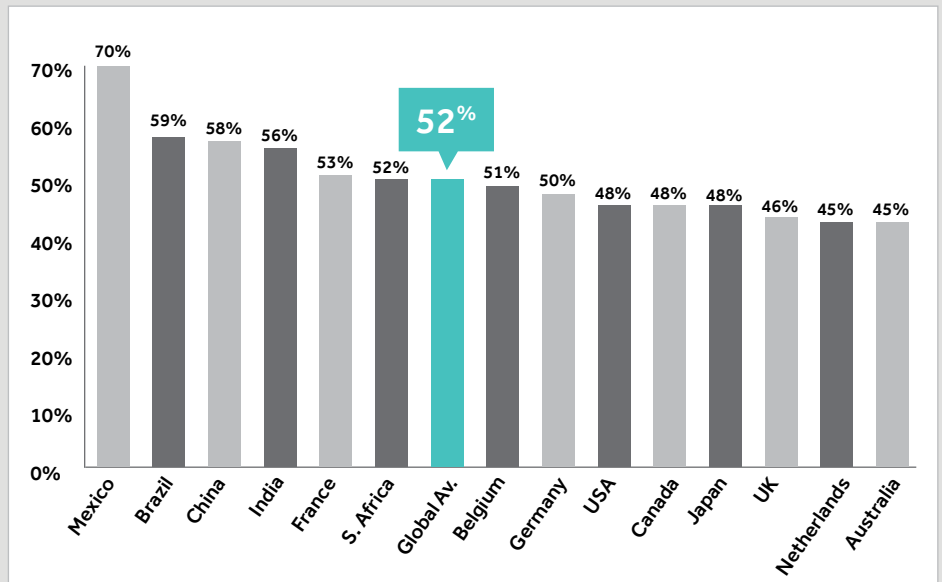
⁹ Working Mother Media, How Men Flex, 2014.

Results.

a snapshot of existing working habits and flexible working trends



Proportion of professionals that work outside the main office 2.5 days a week or more



In order to provide businesses with a snapshot of existing working habits and flexible working trends against which they can benchmark themselves, Regus commissioned research canvassing over 44,000 senior managers and business owners asking them about their remote working habits and for their views on the role of flexible working in the wider economy.

The survey also analysed the role of flexible working in driving up employment among returning mothers and older workers.

61%

of global professionals report they have a home office

The loneliness of the long-distance home worker

The survey confirms how popular and pervasive flexible working has become with 52% of professionals reporting that they work outside the office more than half the week. Unfortunately though flexible working is still largely seen as synonymous with home working and the majority of professionals globally report that they have a home office (61%).

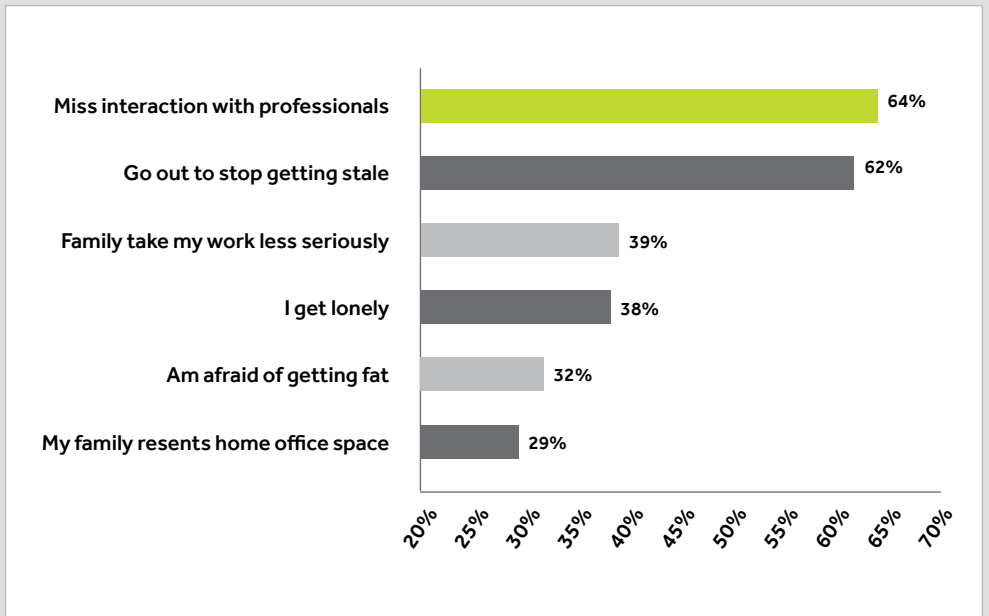
But the portrait of homeworking that respondents paint is far from rosy with reports that it makes them feel lonely, stale and fat as they snack throughout

the day. One solution to the lack of interaction with professionals is regular trips out of the house, which may also help defuse tensions created in the family home by the fact that flexible workers monopolise some portion of family space. In fact, almost a third of respondents say that their family resent that you have sectioned off a space in the family home and two fifths (39%) think family members take their work less seriously because they work from home.



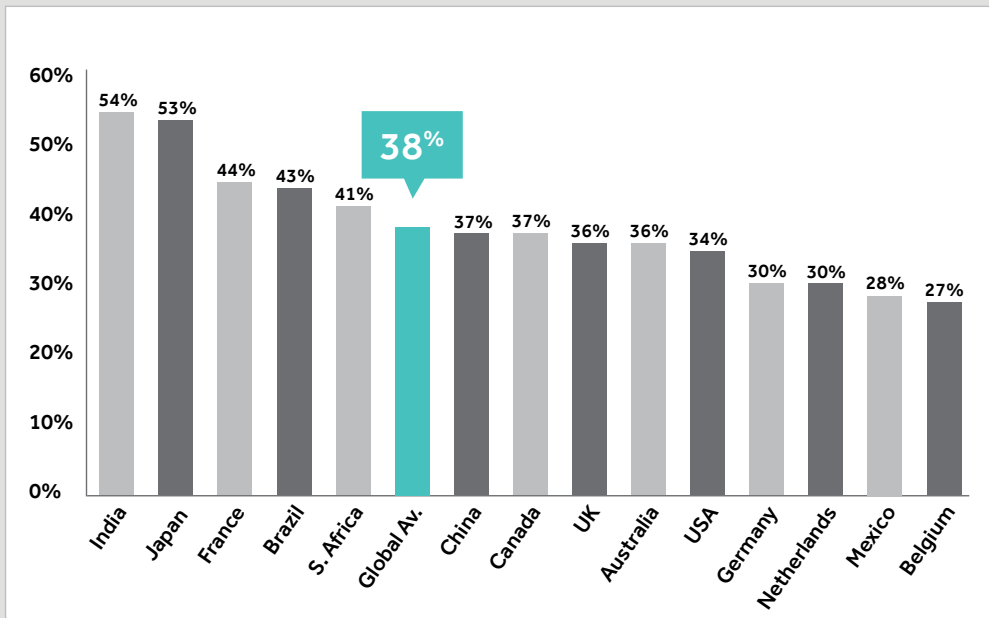
Home worker concerns

64%
miss interaction with professionals



Respondents that report they get lonely when working from home

38%
globally feel lonely working from home



Flexible working creates jobs

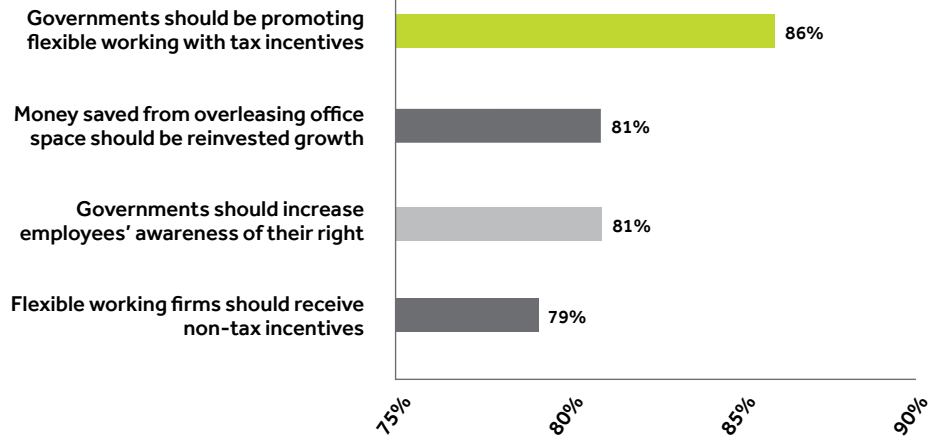
Professionals globally believe that flexible working has a key role to play in the overall economy by helping reintegrate workers into the labour force, which results in an increased GDP. Specifically, business people report that governments should be promoting flexible working by offering firms tax

incentives or other financial incentives (79%) such as access to grants and credit schemes for example. From an employee perspective, respondents also think that national governments should be more active in promoting the availability of flexible working options.

Respondents' views on government intervention in promoting flexible working

86%

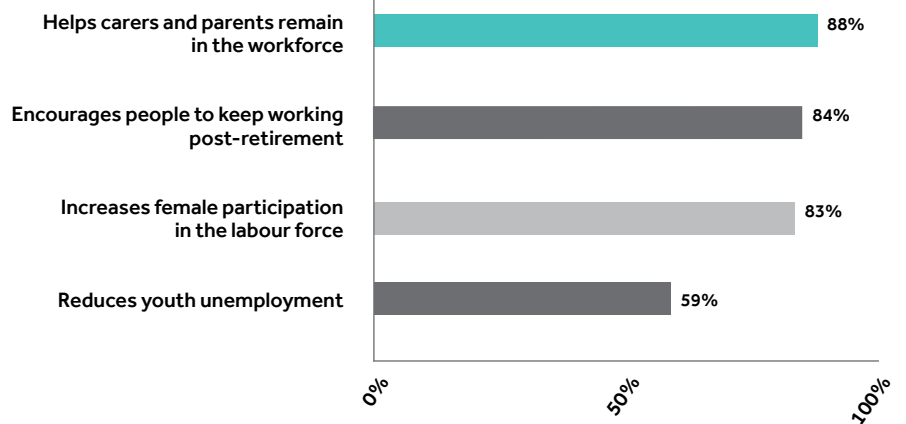
believe governments should be promoting flexible working with tax incentives.



Global respondent views on flexible working and the labour force

88%

believe flexible working helps carers and parents remain in the workforce.

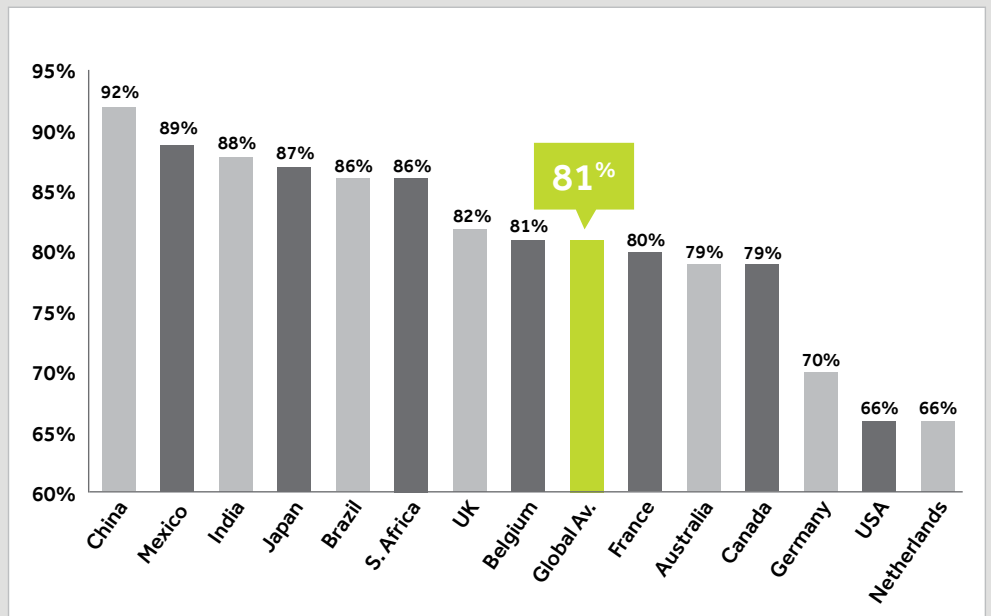


81%
confirm that money saved should instead be invested

The reasons national governments should promote flexible working are closely linked to economic growth. Four fifths believe greater access to flexible working would help increase female participation and also help workers who care for family members remain in the workforce, whilst over half say that it would help curb youth unemployment.

81% confirm that money saved on expensive leases and under-occupied office space should instead be invested in growth initiatives and more hiring.

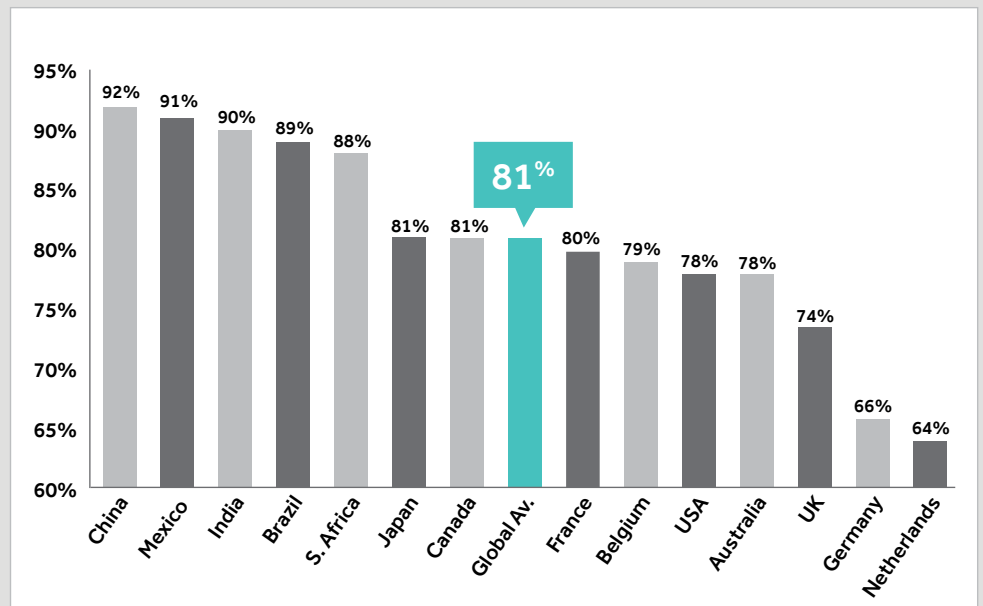
Respondent's view on whether governments should increase awareness of flexible working rights



81%

globally think governments should increase employees' awareness of right to work flexibly

Proportion of respondents that think savings from over leasing should be invested in growth initiatives



Returning mothers

As more and more businesses make flexible working part of their benefits and perks package, just over a quarter also report that they will be hiring more returning mothers in 2015. Booz & Co reports that raising female employment

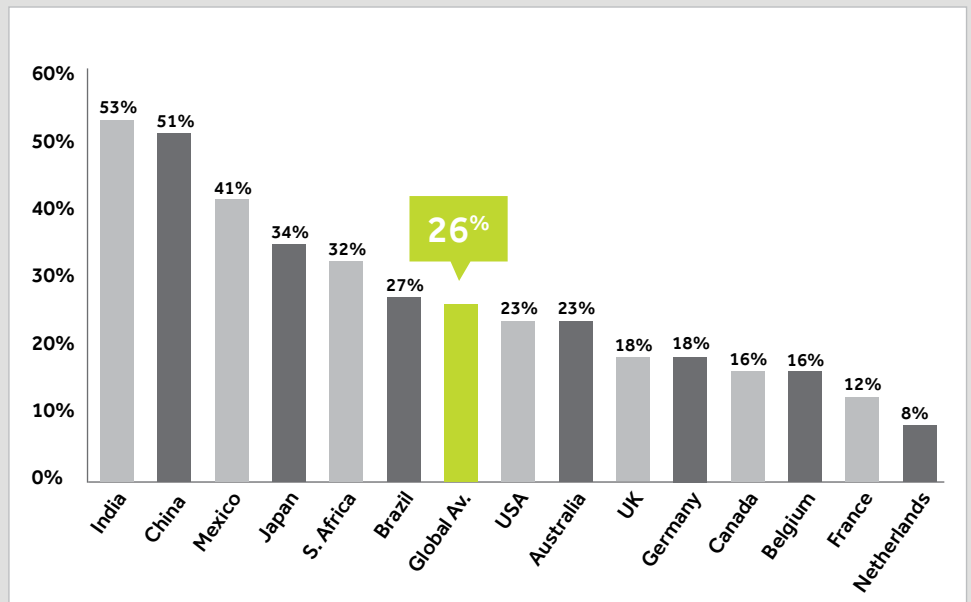
to male levels could have a direct impact on GDP, increasing it for example by 34% in Egypt, 12% in the United Arab Emirates, 10% in South Africa, and 9% in Japan.¹⁰



26%

globally plan to hire more returning mothers in 2015

Respondents reporting their firm plans to hire more returning mothers



But there are also far more practical reasons as to why returning mothers are valued by businesses and in fact professionals report that they especially appreciate their experience and skills.

In addition to this, businesses globally report that they see returning mothers as more reliable and organised than regular staff. They are also regarded as better time managers, perhaps they are seen as better practised at juggling

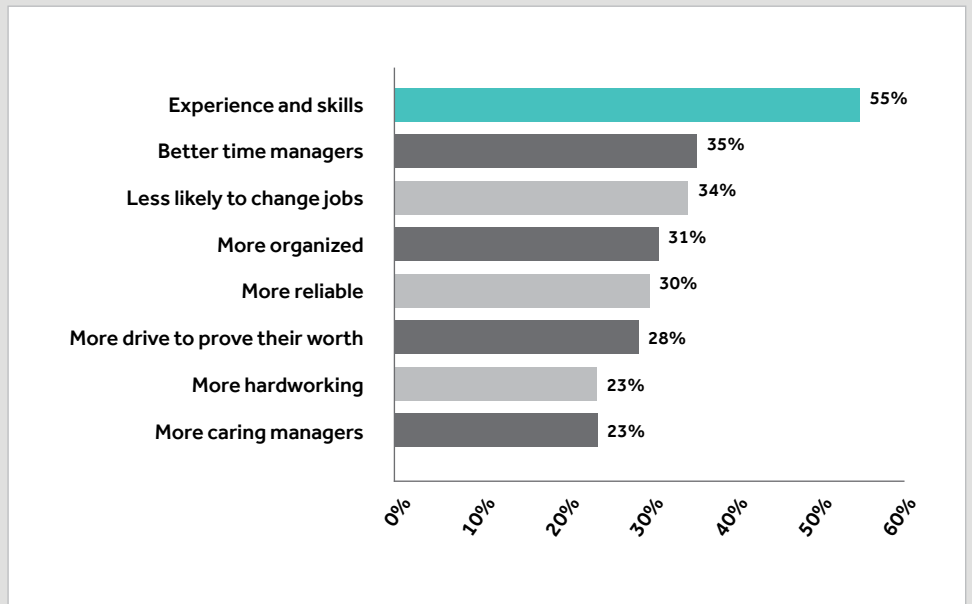
personal duties with work demands as the OECD reports that women still spend 273 minutes per day cooking, cleaning or caring compared to only 141 spent by men on the same task. Returning mothers are also seen as less likely to change jobs saving their firms the cost of hiring someone new and of re-training. They are also thought to have a particularly strong drive to prove their worth.

¹⁰Booz & Co, Empowering the Third Billion Women and the World of Work in 2012, 2013.

55%

of firms value returning mothers' experience and skills

Global respondent view on popular reasons why firms value returning mothers



Work cut out for an ageing population

Professionals globally also confirm that flexible working is key to keeping older workers in the economy. As the retirement age is lifted higher and higher across Western economies, and populations everywhere age, the proportion of those needing to remain in employment, and those fit and willing to do so, is also increasing. But many have the responsibility of caring for

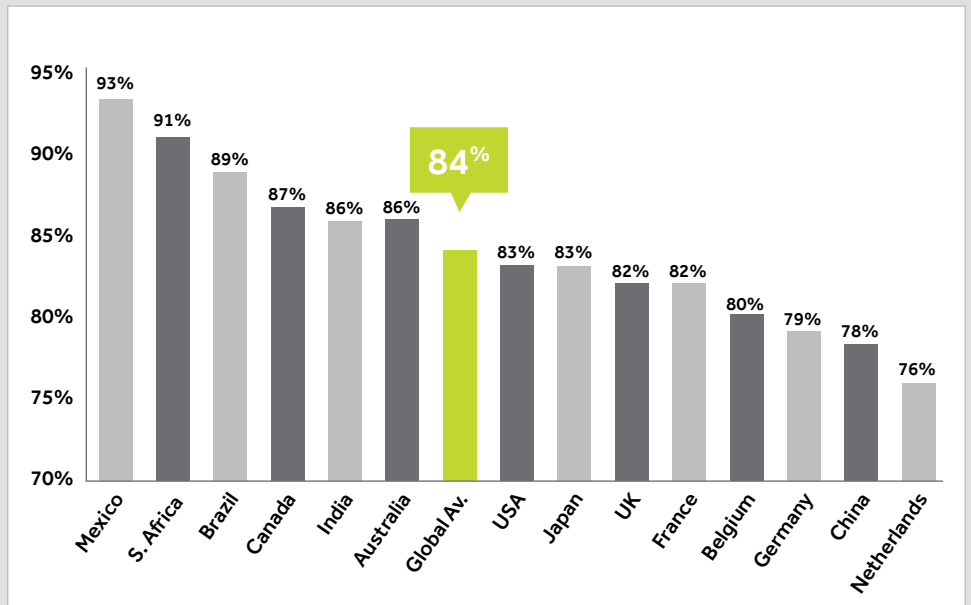
their relatives and cannot afford, or simply do not feel healthy enough to take on lengthy commutes away from home. There is huge consensus among respondents that flexible working is key to keeping carers and post-retirement workers in employment so that they can better juggle the demands of their family and their professional life.



84%

globally believe flexible working encourages people to work post-retirement

Respondents that think flexible working is a major factor in encouraging people to keep working post-retirement



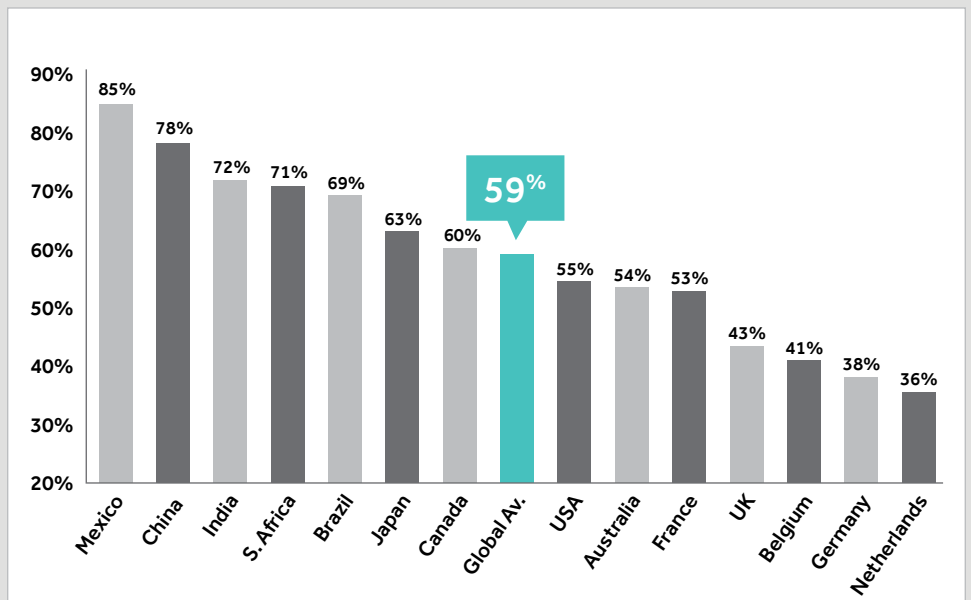
At the very opposite end of the spectrum respondents report that flexible working, possibly thanks to the capital it helps to free up from under-occupied space, can play a part in helping reduce youth unemployment.

By reducing the cost of office space and freeing up cash for investments, for example, businesses can afford more staff and help young people enter the job market.

59%

globally think flexible working helps reduce youth unemployment

Respondents that think flexible working can play a part in helping reduce youth unemployment



Conclusion.

Home workers are not happier workers, in fact they feel stale, lonely and unproductive. But this is not a faithful portrait of the whole flexible worker category as those that are able to work from a fully equipped professional environment are able to thrive on interaction with fellow professionals, reduce their commute time and be productive without getting cabin fever or sparking off territorial arguments with the family.

So, while home workers are afraid of getting fat and under-stimulated, they also report that popping out of the house is a way of regaining concentration and feeling refreshed. This confirms that professional work locations closer to home could provide the right distance from the home for workers to feel they are getting a change of scene without involving a lengthy commute into the main office.

Analysts and professionals globally agree that flexible working has a key role to play in helping the economy grow as it encourages large groups of people that find it hard to fit into the workforce because of their family commitments or health, re-enter the labour force. Like carers and older workers, returning mothers are one such category that firms report they will be hiring more of and that are valued for their experience and skills as well as their time management ability.

Workers globally agree that governments should increase their efforts in raising awareness of flexible working rights and benefits to businesses and workers and many feel that flexible working should be directly incentivised through tax exemptions of access to credit. Should capital be freed up from lengthy leases many respondents confirm it could be invested in growth and employment helping curb youth unemployment and increase GDP.



Country Highlights.

France

44% of respondents report that they get lonely when working from home.
53% of respondents work outside the main office 2.5 days a week or more.

UK

65% of workers report that they miss interaction with fellow professionals when working from home.
36% of UK respondents report that they get lonely when they work from home.

Canada

48% of Canadian respondents report that they work from outside the main office 2.5 days a week or more.

Mexico

41% of Mexican professionals report that their business plans to hire more returning mothers in 2015 than in 2014.

Brazil

59% of Brazilian professionals report that they work outside the main office 2.5 days a week or more.
68% of respondents miss interaction with other professionals when working from home.

Belgium

81% of Belgian respondents say that governments should increase employees' awareness of their right to work flexibly.

The Netherlands

45% of Dutch respondents work outside the main office 2.5 days a week or more.

Germany

47% of German respondents report that they value returning mothers as they are more organised.

USA

40% of respondents say that they feel their family takes their work less seriously when they work from home.

South Africa

67% of South African workers report that they miss interaction with fellow professionals when working from home.

China

51% of Chinese professionals report that their family resents the space they take up within the house with their home office.

Japan

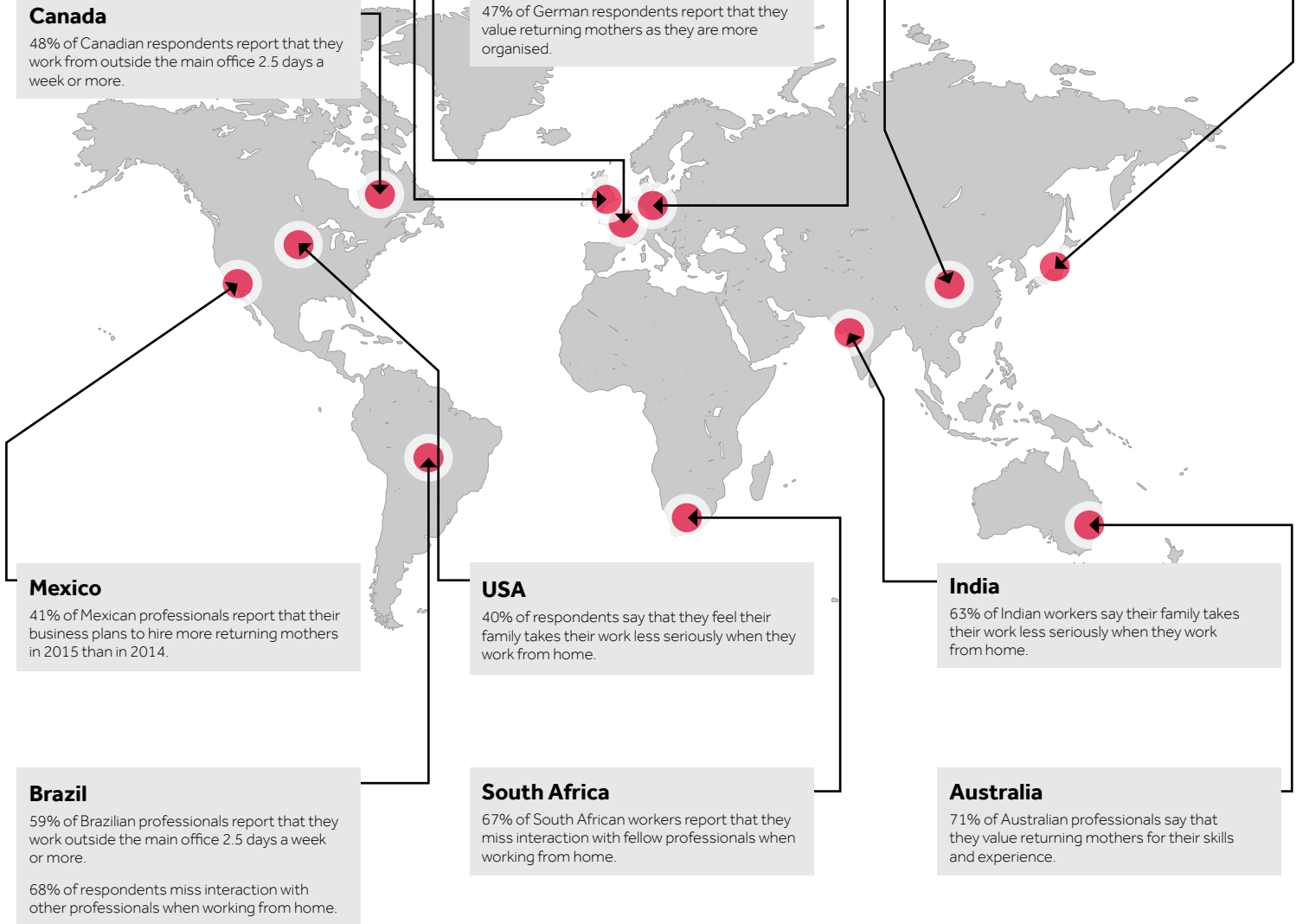
63% of Japanese workers think flexible working can help reduce youth unemployment.
34% of respondents say their firm plans to hire more returning mothers.

India

63% of Indian workers say their family takes their work less seriously when they work from home.

Australia

71% of Australian professionals say that they value returning mothers for their skills and experience.



Methodology.

Over 44,000 business respondents from 105 countries were interviewed via an online survey during January 2015. These were sourced from Regus' global contacts database of over 2 million business-people worldwide which is highly representative of senior managers and owners in business across the globe. Respondents were asked if they usually work half the week or more out of the office and if they have a home office. Their view on home working were

canvassed and they were also asked about the role of government incentives towards flexible working. The survey also investigated respondent thoughts on the role of flexible working to keep returning mothers, carers and older professionals in the work force.

The survey was managed and administered by the independent organisation, MindMetre Research.

44,000

business respondents
interviewed from
105 countries



About Regus.

Regus is the global workplace provider.

Its network of more than 2,300 business centres in 105 countries provides convenient, high-quality, fully serviced spaces for people to work, whether for a few minutes or a few years. Companies like Google, Toshiba and GlaxoSmithKline choose Regus so that they can work flexibly and make their businesses more successful.

The key to flexible working is convenience and so Regus is opening wherever its 2.1 million members want support - city centres, suburban districts, shopping centres and retail outlets, railway stations, motorway service stations and even community centres.

Founded in Brussels, Belgium, in 1989, Regus is based in Luxembourg and listed on the London Stock Exchange. For more information, please visit: www.regus.com



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