

Offices with open floor plans tied to more sick days

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Comparing data from nearly 2,000 people in seven different office designs, researchers found that those who worked in offices with one of three open floor plans took more time off for sickness. Women in these settings were especially likely to take short sick-leave spells. In flex-offices—open-plan layouts without individual workstations but with some meeting rooms—men had higher rates of short sick-leave spells and individual sick days.

According to researcher Christina Bodin Danielsson and colleagues at Stockholm University, the link between open-plan offices and worse health has long been suspected by the employees who work there, but the reasons aren't entirely clear. It may be that in addition to the risk of infection, the types of jobs performed in open workspaces, as well as the lack of privacy and control over personal space, could all play a role in this higher rate of [sick leave](#). The risk for presenteeism may also be a factor, because of the group dynamics involved.

"A prospective study of the office environment's effect on employees is motivated by the high rates of sick leaves in the workforce," the authors write. "The results indicate differences between office types, depending on the number of people sharing workspace and the opportunity to exert personal control as influenced by the features that define the [office](#) types."

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