

Communications, mobility and the working world



A white paper written by the Economist Intelligence Unit sponsored by Cisco Systems

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Preface

Communications, mobility and the working world is an Economist Intelligence Unit briefing paper, sponsored by Cisco Systems.

The Economist Intelligence Unit bears sole responsibility for the content of this report. The Economist Intelligence Unit's editorial team conducted the interviews, executed the survey and wrote the summary. The findings and views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the sponsor.

Our research, undertaken in July/August 2004, drew on two main initiatives:

- We conducted an online survey into the mobile working practices and preferences of 1,500 executives worldwide.
- We conducted qualitative interviews with a number of executives about their experiences of and insights into mobile working.

Our sincere thanks go to the interviewees and survey participants for sharing their insights on this topic.

September 2004



Communications, mobility and the working world

On the move

Mobile communication tools such as e-mail and mobile phones are increasingly critical to employees' and executives' professional success—especially as they work away from their desk more frequently. Mobile workers prize the speed, reliability and availability of communication tools for their ability to increase professional efficiency and to reduce response time to problems.

But according to a new Economist Intelligence Unit survey of 1,500 executives worldwide, sponsored by Cisco Systems, the spread of mobile communications also poses a significant challenge: while many praise such tools for the added efficiency and flexibility they bring to their work, they are also concerned about blurring personal and work time. Resolving this challenge will be of increasing importance as employees and executives use mobile

communication tools more and more to accomplish the growing amount of work they do away from the office.

At the moment, employees and executives still feel most productive at their office desk: 66% of respondents say they are “very productive” working there, compared with only 36% who feel the same about working at home. Although workers predict that in two years they will spend more time working elsewhere in their companies, at other company locations and at supplier sites, only about 15% of respondents claim to feel very productive in those settings. Employees also report they are least productive while commuting, but also claim low productivity levels when working in a neighbourhood cafe or on a business trip.

But it is a fact of professional life that workers spend large amounts of time away from their own desks. Roughly one-third of the survey respondents say they spend 40% or



more of their work time away from their primary workspace (which for 88% of respondents is their office desk) and nearly one-half say they spend 20-40% of their work time away from their primary workspace. These numbers suggest a growing demand for better tools that will enable workers to improve efficiency while on the move.

Clearly, the proportion of mobile workers will continue to rise. A total of 42% of executives and employees expect to be working somewhat less or much less at their desk two years from now. An additional 42% expect to work somewhat more or much more during business travel (eg, in a plane or train), 39% expect to work more at home, and

38% expect to work more at travel stops such as hotels and airports.

Tools of preference

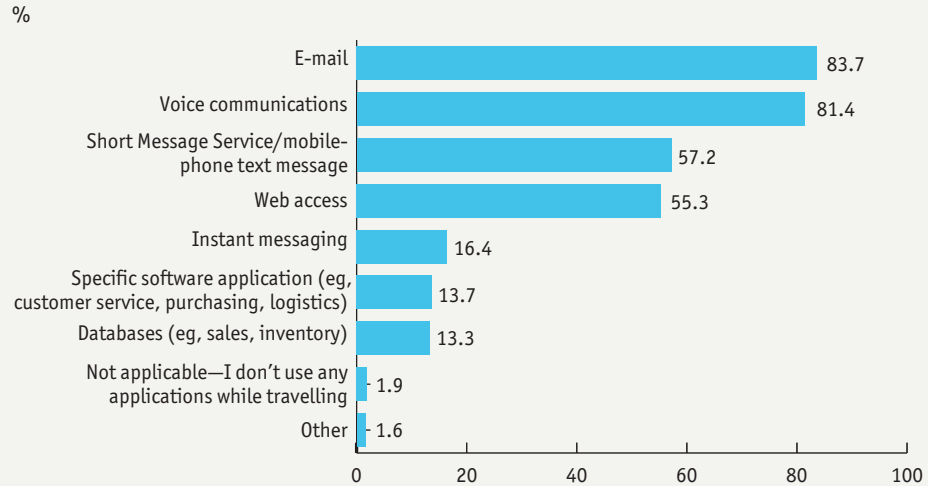
Of all the electronic-communication tools available for conducting business, e-mail is king in the eyes of survey respondents, regardless of work location. A total of 82% of respondents said that, when away from their desk but still at the office, they want e-mail close at hand, compared with 49% who want Internet access and 44% who want access to their office phone. "The company phone with my extension is important, but not as important as the combination of e-mail and Internet access," says Chris Dillon, the managing director of Exponent Asia, a Hong Kong-based corporate-communication firm.

When office workers hit the road, e-mail rules again with 84% of respondents picking it as the application they prefer when travelling on business. But people rarely pay for access to e-mail or the Internet in public locations: 43% said they never pay for mobile access to the Internet, while 27% rarely do. About 20% pay occasionally—one to four times per month—and only 10% pay for public access more than four times per month. And it's not for lack of means—46% of respondents said it is very or somewhat easy to expense mobile Internet use to their company.

About our survey

The Economist Intelligence Unit queried 1,500 computer users on their mobile working practices in July and August 2004. The respondent universe was truly global: approximately 45% replied from western and eastern Europe, 26% from the Americas and 22% from the Asia and Australasia region. Our respondents were largely from the information technology, telecommunications, banking and finance, healthcare and biotech industries, as well as from business services such as advertising and accounting. About 40% of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44. Executives from large companies with more than 10,000 employees were the most heavily represented group, at 29% of the total. Senior executives comprised a significant number of respondents: 19% were CEOs, presidents or managing directors, 16% were managers and 14% were at vice-president, senior vice-president or director level.

Which applications do you use while travelling on business (including commuting)?



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

After voice communication (the second most popular business-trip communication tool) comes Short Message Service (SMS), the phone texting service that is so widespread in Asia and Europe. Despite its popularity in those regions, however, SMS numbers for the US tell a different story. While the overall sample ranked SMS the third most preferred method of communication for doing business, American respondents ranked it sixth and only half as many Americans prefer to use SMS when working elsewhere in the company building or at supplier sites. These data suggest there is an opportunity to educate users and expand SMS services in North America.

As for the mobile devices that employees use, mobile-phone usage outstrips laptop, PDA (personal digital

assistant) or pager use whether at home, at the office or away on business. Over 80% of respondents use their mobile phone on business trips, at customer sites, at their office desk, at home, when elsewhere in their office building or while commuting. A total of 76% of respondents use laptops at home and 71% at the office desk, but much less frequently in other locations. "Cell phones are more portable [than laptops]," says Mr Dillon. "And it's often easier and faster to make a call than it is to type an e-mail. It is also easier to use a free minute—in a taxi or a client's waiting room—to make a call than it is to compose and send an e-mail." Mobile phones are already ubiquitous among the general population. The fact that they sport increasingly advanced e-mail functions



will only boost their popularity.

Survey respondents ranked pagers the least popular method of electronic communication. Instant messaging (IM) or chatting ranked just above pager use, but some see that changing. Miljenko Horvat, a venture capitalist who is president and CEO of Horvat Capital, a Vancouver-based affiliate of The Riverside Company, says he's been using IM a lot lately as an easier, more efficient and less expensive way to communicate with some contacts. "It's inevitable that IM will become more important," he says.

The good, the bad and the mobile

Whatever the application, executives and employees see access to mobile tools as key to their individual success. A total of 75% of respondents say it is very important or critical to their success and fewer than 2% consider it unimportant. Why? Some 59% of respondents cite improved responsiveness to colleagues as a key benefit of mobility, followed by being better informed in real-time (57%), faster decision-making (56%), and more flexibility about when and where to work (53%).

As a result, respondents perceive a clear value in enhanced access to communication tools. About 73% of respondents said access to mobile tools

in places where they currently have little or no access would increase their efficiency and reduce response time to problems. Expanded access, for example, allows people to segment their work and do it where it is most productive or convenient. Tim Harper, the founder and president of Madrid-based Cientifica, an international supplier of information on nanotechnology, says he sets aside the writing of research reports to be done at home, for example, because he is less likely to be bothered there by the phone. "You can be quite creative when you're away from office details," he says. Some 58% of survey respondents said expanded access to communication tools would help them make faster decisions, whereas 47% said it would help them increase customer satisfaction.

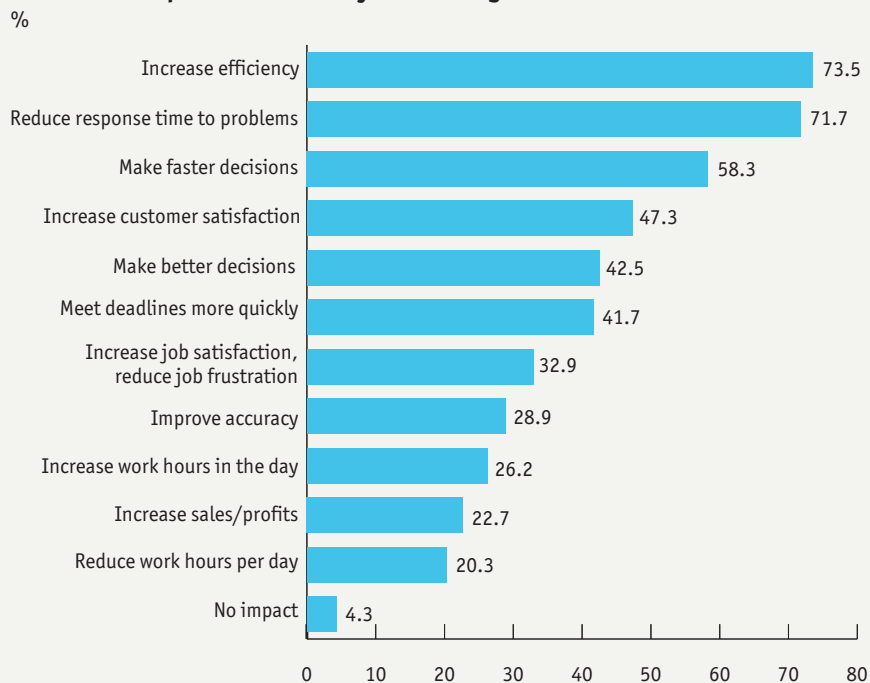
Admittedly, there are problems with communicating while on the move. Three-quarters of survey respondents cite the blurring of personal and work time as a key negative aspect of mobile communications. Survey takers commented on the drawbacks of being "on call" 24 hours a day, with less "thinking time" and "nowhere to hide".

But opinions are not uniform on this issue. While 26% of respondents said more access would increase daily work hours, another 20% said more access would reduce their daily work hours. "It would increase stress and make life





If you could have access to mobile tools (including e-mail, Internet, databases, etc.) in places where you currently have little or no access to them, what do you believe the impact would be on your working behaviour?



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

more difficult,” wrote one survey respondent, “total accessibility is not conducive to good decision-making”. Others see the glass as half-full. Mr Horvat appreciates the option to work at home, because “it makes my time more flexible”. Even if he were working, he’d rather be home when the kids arrive from school, he says, because “it enriches the fabric of my family life”.

The ubiquity of communications makes it “harder to get away”, admits Karen Bird, the strategic planning vice-president and regional controller at Destination Hotels & Resorts in

Englewood, Colorado. Ms Bird carries a phone/PDA combination device that lets her check e-mail on the move. “But if I’m stuck in line at the grocery store, I can respond right away to an e-mail from the office. It allows me to be more efficient and better prepared at the office.”

Shaping the future

Whether mobile communication tools increase or decrease working hours, employees agree about the attributes they look for in communication tools. When they’re on



Please rank the following attributes of mobile devices and applications in order of their importance to you, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important.

	Rank
Speed and reliability of connection	1
Widespread availability	2
User-friendliness of device	3
Security of data	4
International compatibility	5
Ability to integrate with other devices and software	6
Affordable usage costs	7

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

the road, employees and executives consider speed and reliability to be an application's most important attribute. "My love-hate relationship with technology centres on reliability, not intrusiveness," says Mr Dillon. "I love the flexibility that the technology offers, but hate having to configure, update and generally play with it to make it work properly."

Close behind speed and reliability comes broad availability. "What I like is widespread access," says Mr Harper, who is on the road more than four months a year. Ms Bird adds, remembering a business trip to San Francisco where she couldn't make any calls on her mobile phone for three days, "What can be really frustrating is being somewhere you don't have coverage."

A device's user-friendliness ranked as the third most important attribute, although it doesn't rank high on

everyone's priorities. Mr Horvat, who estimates he hasn't spent more than 36 hours away from online access in the past decade, says user friendliness is of little consequence. "I just want it to work," he says. "I don't care how pretty it is. Definitely speed, reliability and widespread access are key." Interestingly, price is not a key concern for survey respondents: of all the attributes of mobile devices and applications, survey respondents chose "affordable usage costs" as the least important.

About three-quarters of respondents said that if they had a single telephone number and voice mail they could use at the office, away from their desk and while travelling, it would make some, or a great, improvement to their productivity. Mobile phones partly solve this need but, like Ms Bird, many people don't want to circulate their

mobile phone number widely. "I get solicitation calls at the office and I don't want those ringing through to my cell phone," Ms Bird says, and she doesn't put her mobile number on her business card. On the other hand, she can easily forget to check her office voice mail during a hectic business trip. Mr Harper suggests a filtering tool that knows which issues a user needs to see when away from the office. "There's a lot of stuff you can leave behind at the office" until later.

Conclusion

Mobile tools and technologies have the capacity to affect every aspect of our professional lives. They can facilitate communication, keep employees informed in real-time and reduce hours once spent bound to a desk. However, along with the liberating aspects of an increasingly versatile workplace, mobility presents challenges for today's workers. Survey



respondents consistently report difficulties managing their work-home balance, and feel particular ambivalence towards mobile tools they perceive as an erosion of their personal time. They also voice concerns over mobile technology convenience and performance, such as a poor interface with intranets and the need for multiple providers.

Employees should not have to face these obstacles alone. Yet, when asked how their companies help them work while on the move, only 25% of respondents said they are very satisfied with the support they receive. This statistic reveals that companies have a long way to go to provide workers with the tools they need to thrive in the mobile workplace. With three-quarters of respondents convinced that mobile tools are a key to their job success, companies have a responsibility to enhance both access to, and use of, such technologies.

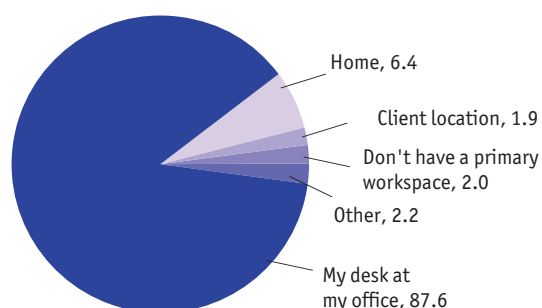
Appendix

Survey: mobility and business practices

Responses received: 1,500

1. What is your primary workspace?

%



2. What percentage of your working time do you spend away from your primary workspace, including time spent elsewhere in your office building?

Response	%
Less than 10%	7.0
10-20%	15.1
20-30%	24.6
30-40%	22.0
40-50%	17.1
Over 50%	14.1

3. When you work away from your primary workspace, how often do you engage in the following activities?

% of responses

	5 (most)	4	3	2	1 (never)	not appl.
Working at home	22.3	12.2	17.8	32.4	9.8	5.5
Working away from my desk, but elsewhere inside my company's building or campus	22.7	16.7	20.6	25.0	8.7	6.3
Visiting another company location (eg, office, branch, factory)	12.8	15.8	24.7	29.5	9.9	7.3
Visiting a customer, partner, supplier site	15.5	18.3	22.5	29.4	9.2	5.2
Travelling on business (eg, in a plane, train, bus, car)	19.3	20.7	28.5	26.6	3.3	1.6
Working at business travel points (eg, hotel, airport, train station)	10.2	14.2	20.4	36.6	15.1	3.5
Working near my home from a coffee shop, park or other public place	1.3	1.9	5.1	18.9	63.0	9.8
Commuting to or from the office	7.0	7.7	13.3	31.4	32.5	8.1
Working on the move (eg, emergency services, field service, field sales)	1.5	3.1	6.0	17.4	43.5	28.4

4. Compared to today, how much time do you expect to spend working in the following locations two years from now?

% of responses

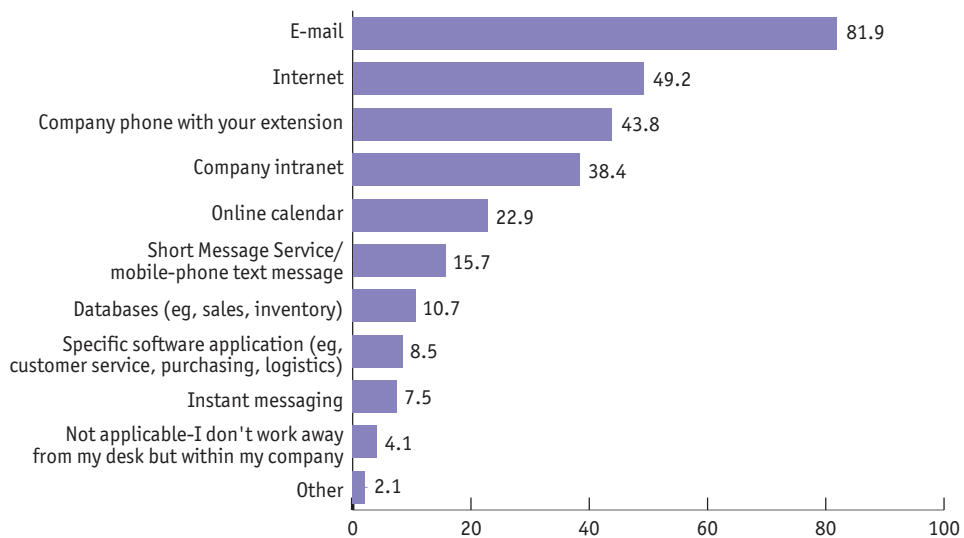
	Much more	Somewhat more	About the same	Somewhat less	Much less	Don't know/not apply
At my desk in company building	3.4	7.7	43.2	35.5	7.0	3.2
Home	4.8	34.2	45.1	7.0	3.5	5.4
Away from my desk, but elsewhere inside company building or campus	2.9	19.6	56.2	9.2	3.4	8.7
Other location of my company (eg, office, branch, factory)	4.4	28.9	43.7	8.6	2.4	12.0
Customer, partner or supplier site	5.6	28.8	46.6	7.1	3.1	8.8
During business travel (eg, in a plane, train, bus, car)	6.9	35.2	44.3	7.5	1.9	4.1
Business travel points (eg, hotel, airport, train station)	6.7	30.9	46.2	6.4	2.9	7.0
Near my home from a coffee shop, park or other public place	1.5	10.3	44.5	6.0	8.7	29.1
On commute to or from work	1.9	10.2	54.4	7.3	6.1	20.2
Working on the move (eg, emergency services, field service, field sales)	1.1	7.2	38.9	4.6	7.3	41.0

5. Please rank the following methods of electronic communication in order of personal preference for conducting business, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important.

Rank item	Rank	Points
E-mailing	1	9,718
Telephoning (including voice mail)	2	9,221
Using Short Message Service/mobile-phone text message	3	5,134
Using a collaborative workspace (eg, NetMeeting)	4	4,318
Video conferencing	5	4,203
Instant messaging or instant chat	6	4,195
Using a pager	7	2,289

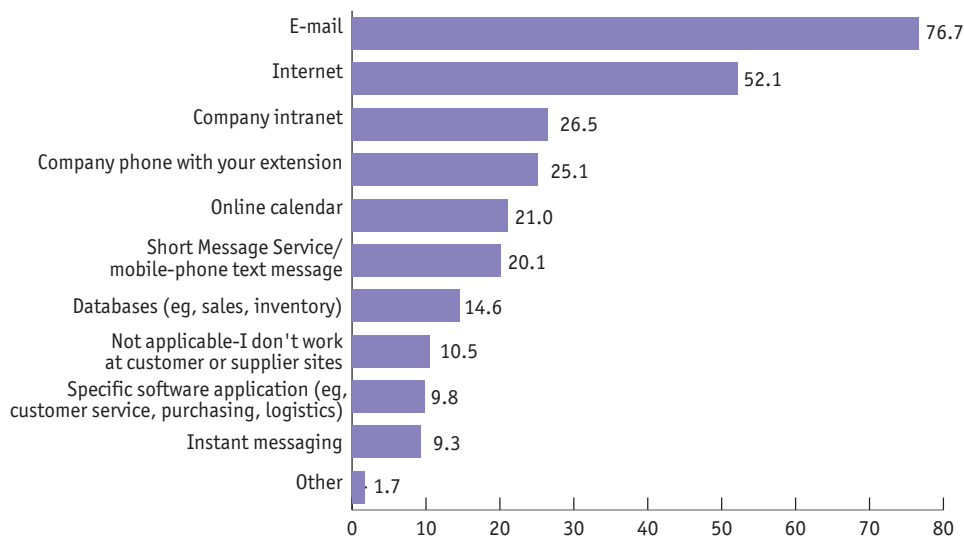
6. When away from your desk, but within your own building or in another location of your company, what are the three tools (other than your mobile phone) to which you would most like to have access?

%



7. When at a customer or supplier site, what are the three tools (other than your mobile phone) to which you would most like to have access?

%

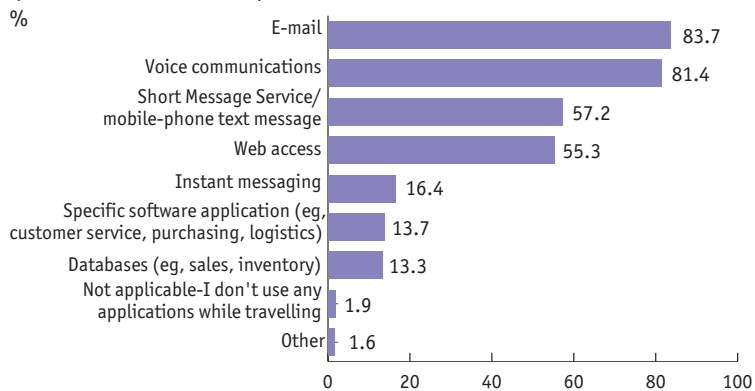


8. Please indicate what kind of mobile devices you use in the following locations.

% of responses

	Mobile phone	Handheld device/PDA	Pager	Laptop
At my desk in company building	80.3	42.2	2.7	71.1
Home	86.9	41.7	1.9	76.1
Away from my desk, but elsewhere inside company building or campus	82.9	35.7	2.2	39.4
Other company location (eg, office, branch, factory)	84.1	34.5	1.9	57.0
Customer, partner or supplier site	84.8	34.5	2.0	51.3
During business travel (eg, in a plane, train, bus, car)	87.0	37.1	1.6	64.4
Business travel points (eg, hotel, airport, train station)	87.7	36.1	1.5	64.0
Near my home from a coffee shop, park or other public place	73.6	22.4	1.4	23.2
On commute to and from work	81.2	21.7	1.6	17.5
Working on the move (eg, emergency services, field service, field sales)	62.7	18.3	1.5	22.5

9. Which applications do you use while travelling on business (including commuting)?

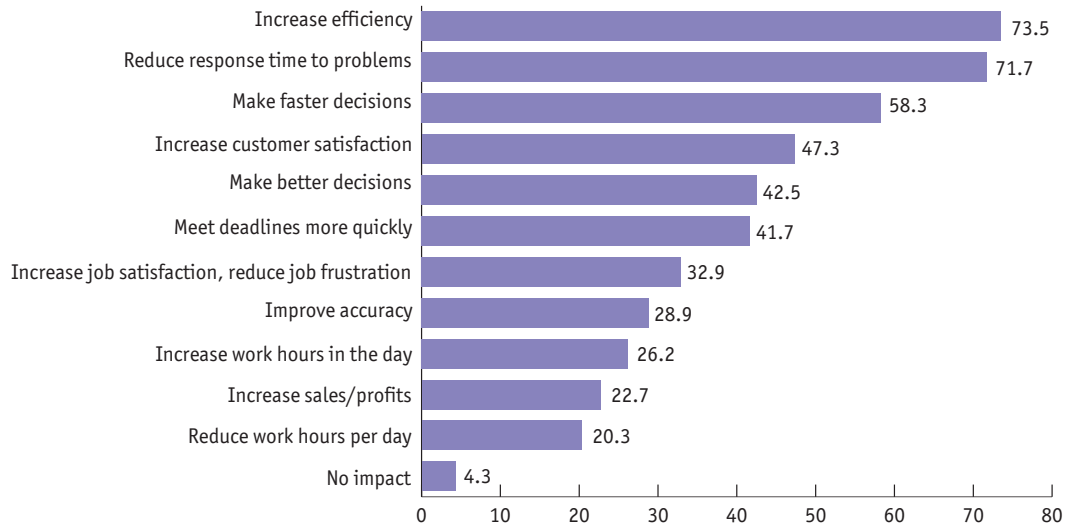


10. How often do you use applications while travelling on business (including commuting)?

	%
Frequently	62.9
Sometimes	25.8
Rarely	8.0
Never	1.1
Not applicable	2.3

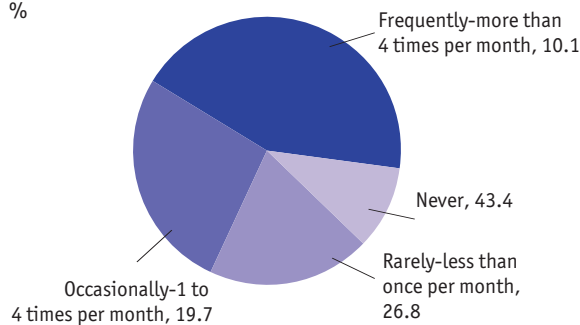
11. If you could have access to mobile tools (including e-mail, Internet, databases, etc.) in places where you currently have little or no access to them, what do you believe the impact would be on your working behaviour?

%



12. How often do you pay for public mobile access to the Internet?

%



13. How difficult is it to have public mobile access expensed by your company when you pay for it?

%

Very difficult	6.9
Somewhat difficult	14.4
Neither easy nor difficult	13.7
Somewhat easy	12.0
Very easy	34.2
Not applicable	18.8

14. If you had a single telephone number and voice mail that you could use at the office, away from your desk and while travelling, how would it affect your productivity?

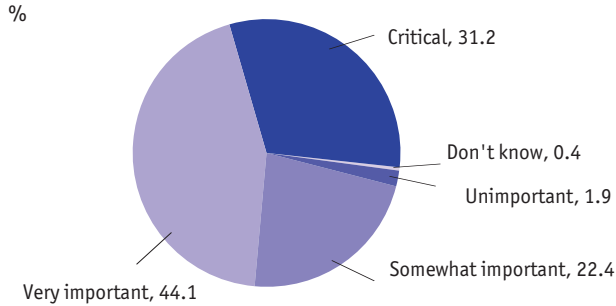
Response	%
Great improvement	30.0
Some improvement	44.0
Little impact	17.0
No impact	9.0

15. How would you rate your level of productivity in different work settings?

% of responses

	1 Not productive	2	3	4	5 Very productive	Not appl.
At my desk in company building	0.4	2.1	7.1	21.3	66.1	2.9
Home	3.3	10.2	18.9	25.5	36.0	6.0
Away from my desk, but elsewhere within company building or campus	1.6	10.5	30.2	34.0	15.8	7.8
Other company location (eg, office, branch, factory)	1.5	11.9	27.9	30.3	14.5	13.9
Customer, partner or supplier site	2.6	16.2	28.0	24.0	15.9	13.3
During business travel (eg, in a plane, train, bus, car)	8.0	31.2	32.2	16.7	7.7	4.1
Business travel points (eg, hotel, airport, train station)	7.5	26.3	31.0	20.9	7.3	7.0
Near my home in coffee shop, park or other public place	19.8	20.1	13.2	7.6	4.1	35.2
On commute to and from work	19.5	28.4	20.4	7.9	3.8	20.0
Working on the move (eg, emergency services, field service, field sales)	11.0	15.4	14.5	6.9	3.5	48.6

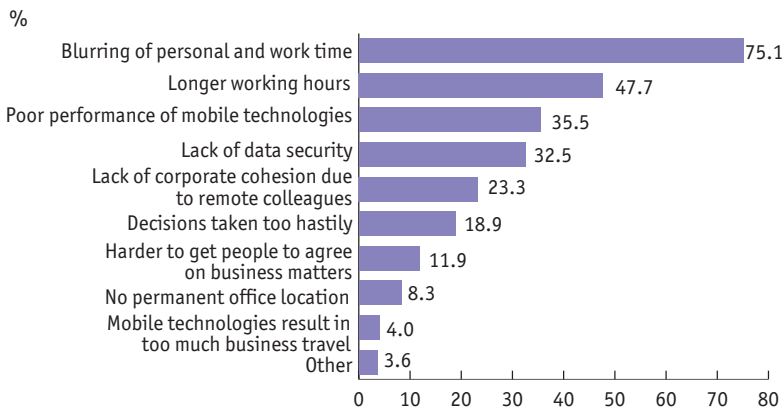
16. In your view, how important are mobility and the use of mobile technology to individual job success in your industry?



17. What are the strongest benefits of mobility, in your view?



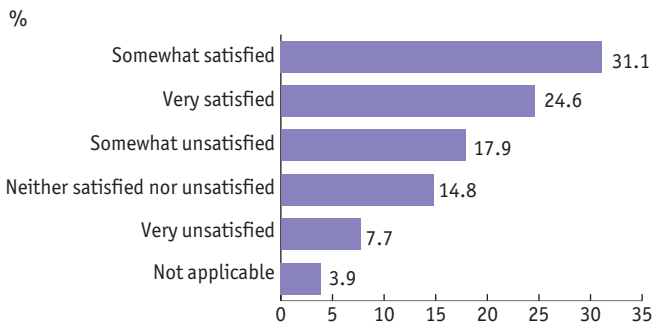
18. What are the most negative aspects of mobility?



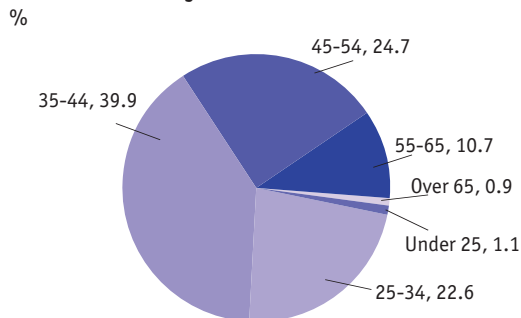
19. Please rank the following attributes of mobile devices and applications in order of their importance to you, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important.

Rank Item	Rank	Points
Speed and reliability of connection	1	8,754
Widespread availability	2	7,018
User-friendliness of device	3	5,734
Security of data	4	5,313
International compatibility	5	5,311
Ability to integrate with other devices and software	6	4,394
Affordable usage costs	7	4,227

20. How satisfied are you with the extent to which your company helps you to work while on the move?



21. How old are you?

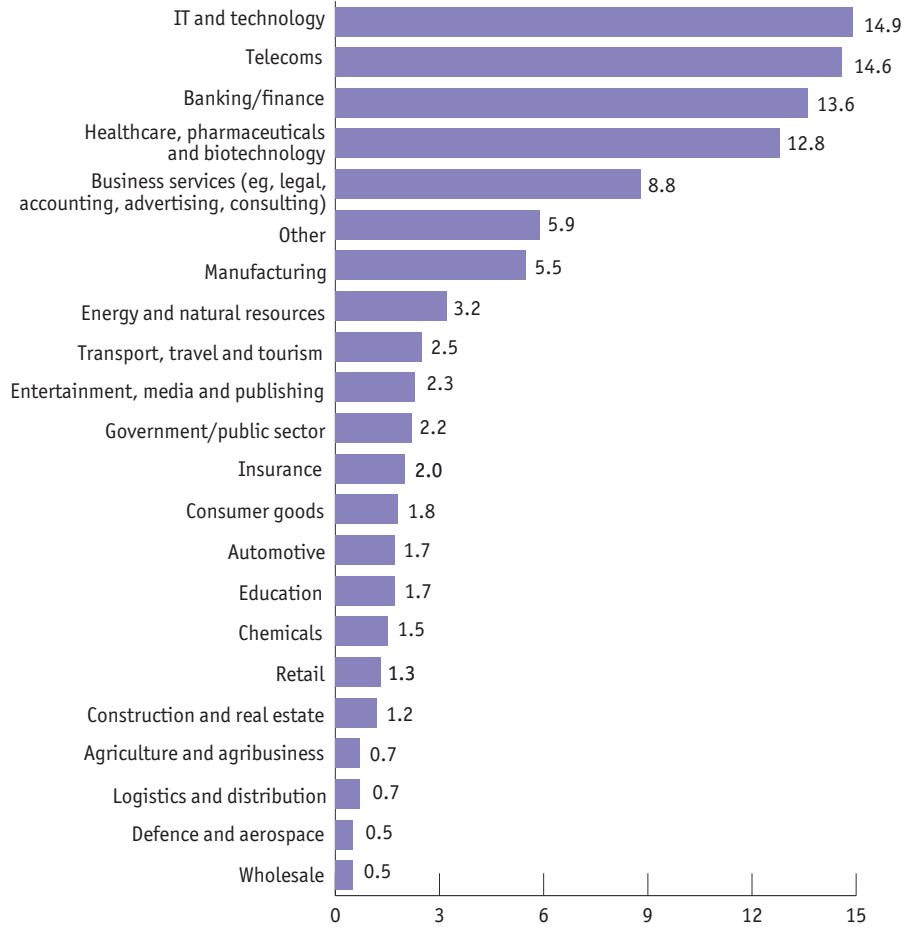


22. Are you male or female?



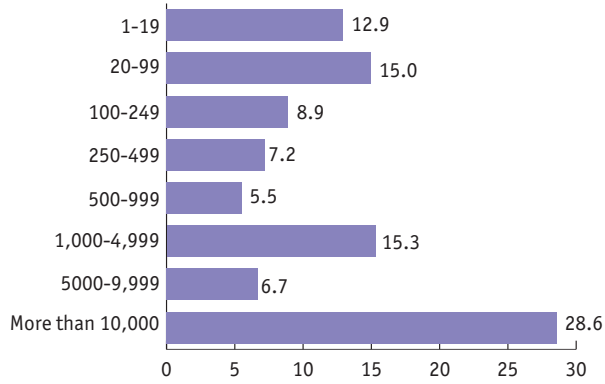
23. What is your primary industry?

%



24. How many employees does your company have worldwide?

%



25. Which of the following best describes your title?

Response	%
Board member	2.1
CEO/President/Managing director	19.1
CFO/Treasurer/Comptroller	3.4
CIO/Technology director	3.9
Other C-level executive	4.2
SVP/VP/Director	14.1
SVP/VP/Director of sales or marketing	5.8
Head of business unit	7.4
Head of sales or marketing unit	4.4
Manager	15.9
Account manager/business development	4.0
Head of department	6.9
Other	8.9

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