

Studio^N



Workplace Design
Report 2025/26

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The modern workplace has evolved into a multifaceted experience, bringing a sense of reinvention to the sector.

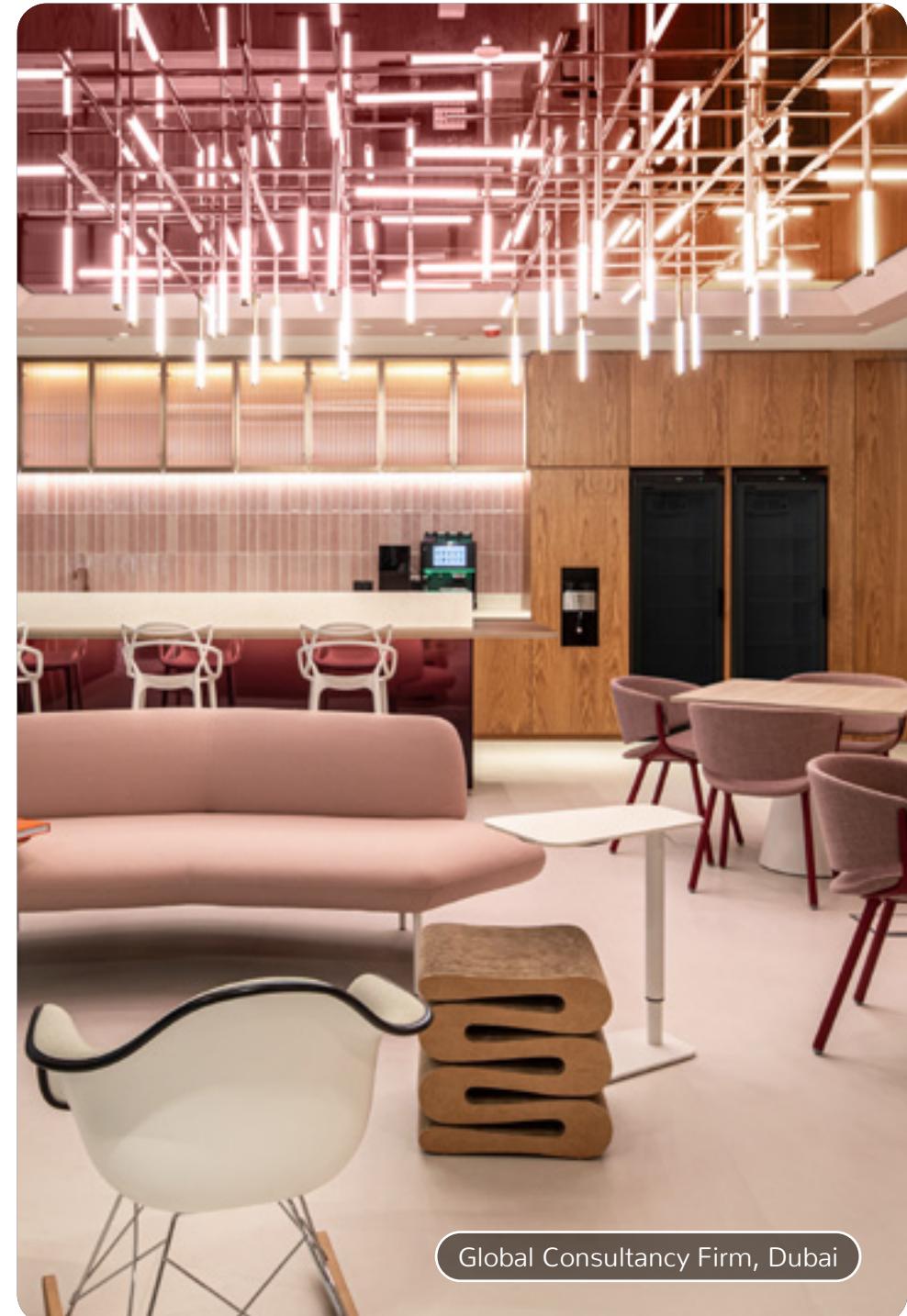
Hybrid working practices have changed the concept of 'work', creating new blueprints for how teams gather, interact and focus.

A greater emphasis on social purpose has made communal spaces the backbone of the office, giving rise to auditoriums, town halls, libraries, cafes and breakout areas.

The growing wellness trend has shifted the focus to how the office supports a person's sense of comfort and wellbeing.

Against this backdrop of transformation, lighting design has emerged as a defining element that shapes how workplaces operate on both a functional and emotional level.

Studio N's Workplace Lighting report explores the latest trends, outlining how a thoughtful, creative approach to lighting design can make modern workspaces more engaging, purposeful and aligned with how people collaborate today.



Global Consultancy Firm, Dubai

01



FUNCTIONALITY.

Agile working practices have created increased demand for spaces that flex and adapt to evolving needs.



Global Consultancy Firm, Dubai



Workspace Innovation Hub, Dubai



Personalised Work Zones

Focused work areas require a mix of lighting layers, ambient lighting for general illumination, task lighting for personalized control and vertical illumination for flattering, comfortable video calls.

Collaboration Hubs

Intelligent lighting controls allow people to adapt the mood of a space according to their needs. Employees can adjust the brightness, intensity and colour temperature of a lighting scheme to energize a brainstorming session or soften the ambience for a one-to-one discussion.

High-Tech Work Zones

Video conferencing is an integral part of the high-spec workspace, meaning every space should be call-ready. A mix of diffuse ambient light, front-facing illumination and cylindrical lighting ensures good facial recognition and a flattering quality of light. High-quality fittings reduce flicker.

Next-Gen Meeting Rooms

Presentation areas and multimedia walls require a balance of ambient and accent illumination to set the tone and highlight whiteboards and flip charts. Scene-setting controls add further flexibility, allowing users to tailor light levels for individual or group needs.

02



EXPERIENCE.

Modern workplaces now double as lifestyle hubs that mirror the warmth, vibrancy and appeal of the hospitality industry.



Ministry of Tourism, KSA

This focus on sensory-rich experiences is increasingly prevalent in the commercial sector, where beautifully curated lighting schemes enliven the visual aesthetic and encourage emotional engagement.



One Za'abeel, Dubai

Visual Storytelling

Light is an integral thread of brand storytelling, revealing the narrative of a space by highlighting the texture of local materials or drawing attention to recurring design motifs that add context and character.

Homeliness

Layers of light have replaced overly bright, uniform lighting schemes. Quality of light is achieved through ambient illumination that softens spaces, accent lighting that reveals materiality and decorative pieces that add drama.



OQ Trading, Dubai



One Za'abeel, Dubai

Community

Breakout spaces and communal areas are vital social hubs that fulfil our basic need for human interaction in the face of remote working. Light dictates the mood and rhythm of these spaces, evoking a warm, inviting, almost domestic feel.

Harmony

The shift to fluid and flexible spatial layouts presents a challenge of marrying open spaces with cosy lounges. Rhythmic lines of light are being used to bridge the gap between different spaces, creating smooth transitions and a cohesive visual language.

Drama

Now that the lines are increasingly blurred in the workplace, a spirit of playfulness has emerged. It's about how the seamless interplay between light and architecture heightens the ambience and creates a sense of flow. Think beautifully illuminated entranceways, theatrical feature ceilings and immersive circulation routes.

05



WELLBEING.



Bain & Co, Dubai

Wellness has emerged as a key differentiator in today's office schemes, creating efficient, happy places that people genuinely enjoy spending time in.

For lighting designers, this means considering every nuance of light, from circadian lighting, biophilia and access to daylight, to layering, contrast and visual comfort.

Quality of light requires a mix of ambient, task and accent light, with indirect illumination on the vertical surfaces and softer areas for moments of visual relief. It also means balancing artificial and natural light levels, accounting for shifts throughout the day.

Flicker can have a negative impact on wellbeing, resulting in headaches, eye strain or general discomfort. The best way to mitigate flicker is to specify high-quality luminaires with low flicker levels, and to not compromise on the control gear.

With more screens than ever in today's workplaces, glare is a growing concern. Since screens emit their own light, light fittings should be carefully positioned to offset the glow from screens, minimizing discomfort and visual fatigue.

Biophilic Lighting.

Our connection to nature is deep and we all benefit from exposure to daylight, plants, fresh air and natural materials and forms.

Whilst we can never replicate the full range of daylight in all its glory, designers can attempt to emulate the shifts in colour and intensity that make it so rich.

01

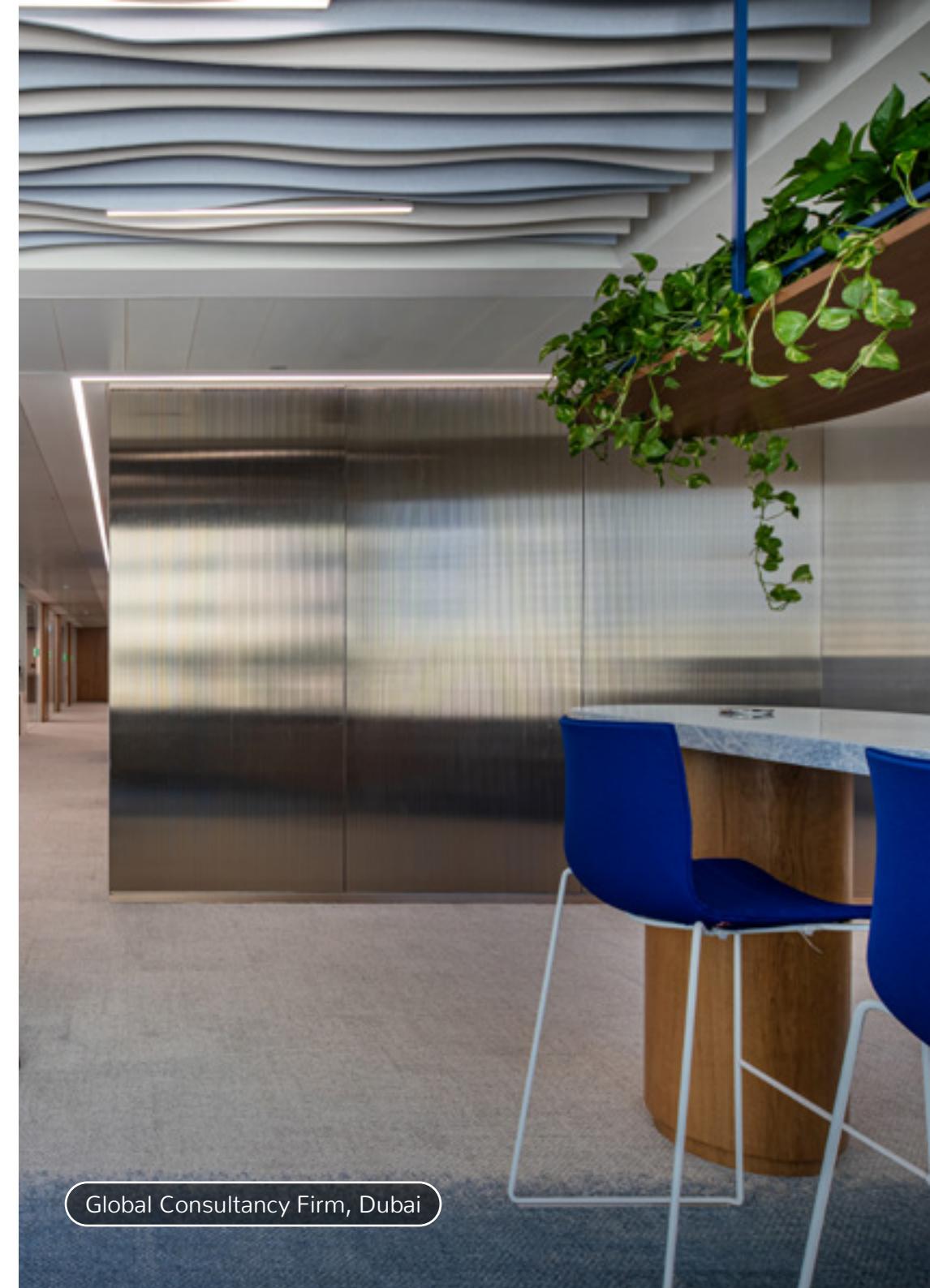
Workplace schemes need a mix of different types of light – direct and indirect, diffuse and dynamic – to emulate daylight patterns and natural circadian rhythms.

02

Artificial lighting should replicate the way that daylight changes its position through the day, with layers of light integrated in the ceiling, at eye level and lower down at the work plane.

03

Like humans, plants require the right amount of light to thrive. While pot plants are easy to introduce, green walls require a high level of exposure to daylight or artificial light, which can undermine a scheme's energy-saving goals.





Workspace Innovation Hub, Dubai

Circadian lighting.

A hot topic but an often-misused term.

There's a huge amount of new research, which has reframed the way that we think about light. But it's important to focus on the facts because circadian science is a complex topic that we're only just starting to understand.

Circadian rhythms regulate our bodies.

They influence physical and psychological responses such as sleep, body temperature, alertness, and hunger.

Light is central to circadian regulation.

Our internal 24-hour clock depends on exposure to light to stay aligned with the natural rhythms of day to night cycles.

The principle of circadian lighting sounds simple.

Cool, bright light during the day to boost alertness, and warm, low-intensity light in the evening to promote rest.

The science is more complex.

It's important to distinguish between an emotional response to light and a biological effect on the body's internal clock.

True circadian impact requires exposure to a lot of light.

Research tells us we need around 1,000 lux, for an extended period, to reset our rhythms – far more than standard office lighting provides.

What most people mean by 'circadian lighting' is tuneable white light.

Light that mimics natural daylight changes throughout the day, creating a more comfortable, nuanced workspace.

The reality is that tuneable systems can only support the body's natural rhythm.

It's hard to substantiate any claim that we can affect a person's circadian rhythm with artificial light.

Red Light Therapy.

Red light is an integral part of the broad spectrum of light found in nature.

Sunlight contains visible and non-visible spectral characteristics of light that humans are gradually less exposed to because we spend more time indoors.

Lack of exposure to daylight is something that we're becoming better informed about due to new research into the therapeutic benefits of red light and near-infrared light.

01

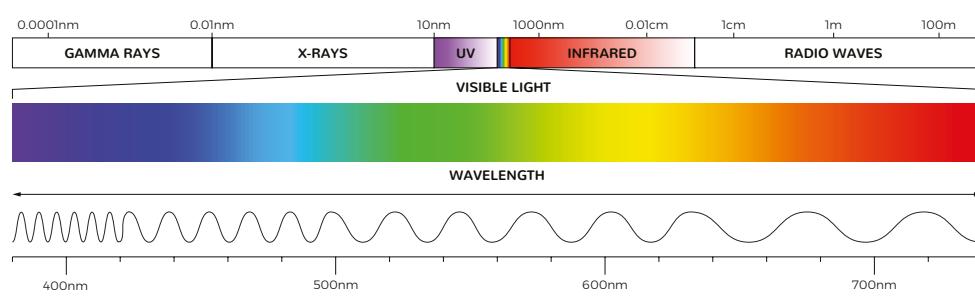
Visible red light (600-700nm) penetrates the skin's surface. It's credited for promoting collagen production and reducing wrinkles and wounds.

02

Non-visible near-infrared light (700-1100nm) penetrates deeper into tissues. There's increasing evidence that it can improve muscle recovery, reduce inflammation and support cellular energy production.

03

Red-light therapy is now widely marketed for skin health, pain relief and general wellness. However, the effectiveness of these products varies. As not all claims are supported by science, it's important to source reputable products backed by clinical studies and credible research.



04+

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INCLUSIVITY.

④

How do we design spaces that enable all people to be the best that they can be?

It's a debate that has gained real momentum over the past few years as we've become more informed about how our brains may process, learn and behave in many different ways.

Our understanding of what it means to be neurodivergent is steadily improving, but we are only beginning to grasp the sensory challenges that neurodiverse people face.

We know that *hypersensitive* people may feel overwhelmed by bright lights, glare and sudden changes in illumination.

On the other hand, *hyposensitive* individuals may need sensory input to stay engaged and focused.



Global Consultancy Firm, Dubai



We can't design for every type of person, but we can be more mindful by creating environments that are balanced and considerate, with an element of choice and personal control.

01

Offset high-illuminance areas with muted, dimly illuminated breakout spaces that provide a quiet place of refuge.

02

Carefully plan circulation routes and transition points to support those who struggle with sudden changes in light levels.

03

Provide users with choice – either control over the lighting at their own desk or the option to work in spaces with low-level lighting or no artificial light at all.

04

Incorporate fun and engaging lighting moments that are balanced by calmer, toned-down areas elsewhere.

05

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SUSTAINABILITY.

Energy reduction, along with circularity and carbon reduction, is essential for a sustainable future.



How can we implement more mindful lighting strategies in the workplace that reduce environmental impact while also enhancing occupant wellbeing and improving the building's operational efficiency?



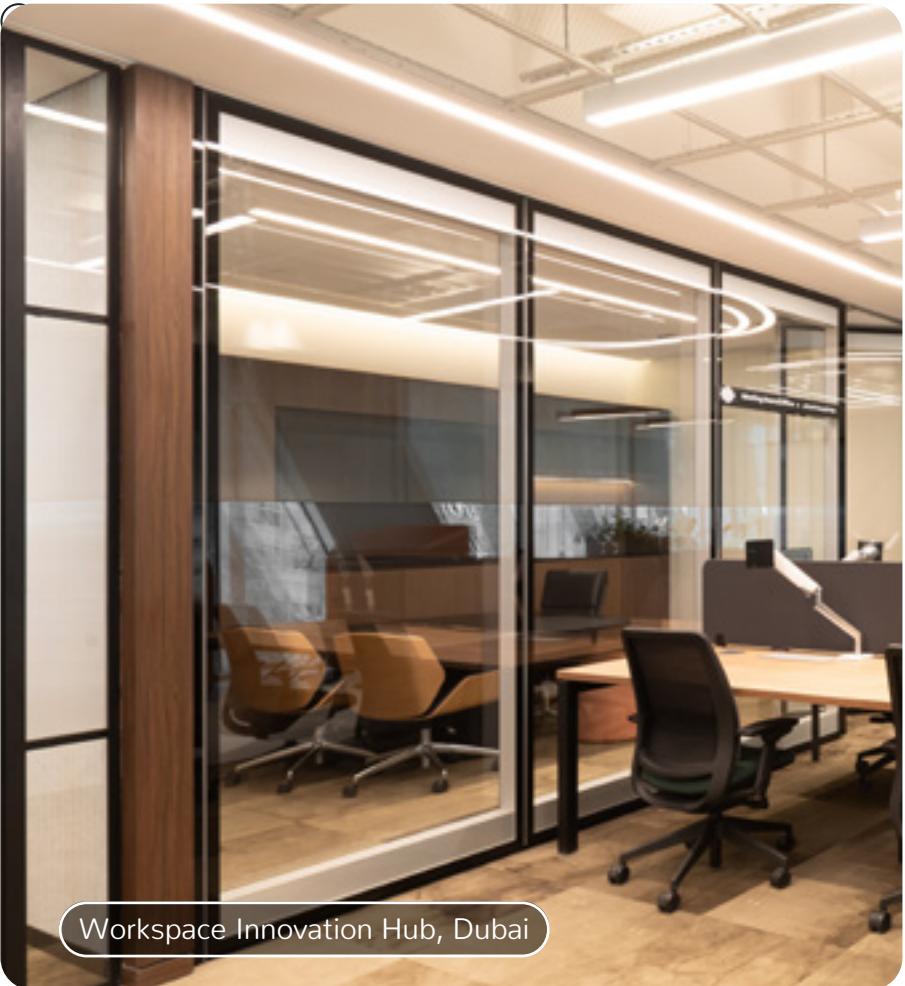
Bain & Co, Dubai

Light...with Purpose

The lighting design profession has a long-held mantra - 'the right light, in the right place, at the right time'. That philosophy matters more than ever. Rather than adhering to a certain lux level, we should focus on *quality* rather than *quantity* of light. Not everything needs to be illuminated.

Light...with Efficiency

Modern LED fixtures, with enhanced lumen per watt metrics, provide substantial energy savings. In an office environment, specifying high-performance LED luminaires can significantly reduce energy consumption, whilst improving visual comfort.



Workspace Innovation Hub, Dubai



Light...with Intelligence

As remote working has made the regular patterns of the workplace less predictable, occupancy sensors such as Passive Infrared (PIR) are essential for reducing unnecessary energy usage. They ensure that lights are only active when spaces are occupied and optimize energy usage without the need for manual intervention.

Light...with Control

Incorporating timers and dimmers can make significant energy saving gains and reduce operational costs. Daylight harvesting systems that use sensors to measure natural light levels, then automatically dim down artificial light levels to conserve energy are a smart investment.

Light...with Connection

Integrating a more advanced lighting control system with a building management system means the lighting can be aligned with a centralized network, which allows for real-time monitoring and a more efficient solution.



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Simply light.