

# TELECOMMUTING IN KOREA

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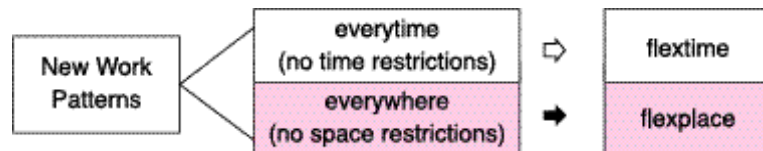
## Changing work patterns

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The rapid expansion of the Internet and digitalization throughout Korea has affected employee work patterns. IT technology has allowed a wide variety of work patterns to emerge, allowing workers some leeway in the time and location. Workers can choose their own patterns and companies can accommodate highly skilled workers who cannot work in the usual schedule. Networks can connect companies to their workers, allowing flexibility in task completion as well as quality control. In Korean companies, technology such as wireless Internet has helped overcome distance restrictions and is creating an environment where work can be done at any time and any place.

The main characteristic of telecommuting is that restrictions of time and space are being overcome.

Figure 1. New Work Patterns

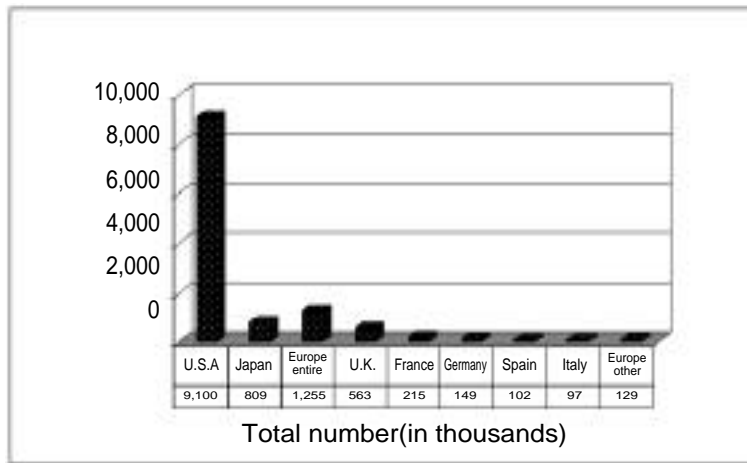


## Forms of telecommuting

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“Flexitime” and “flexiplace” indicate the removal of work from the traditional workplace through telecommunication. The term telecommuting includes working from home, working at a location that is closer to home, and working while changing locations. In the concept of “telework” which emerged in the 1960s, work was a medium between the organization and the worker, and it was not restricted to one location, and networks could connect the worker to the organization. With the introduction of the Internet in the mid 1990’s however, this concept went beyond the

Figure 2. Telecommuting around the World



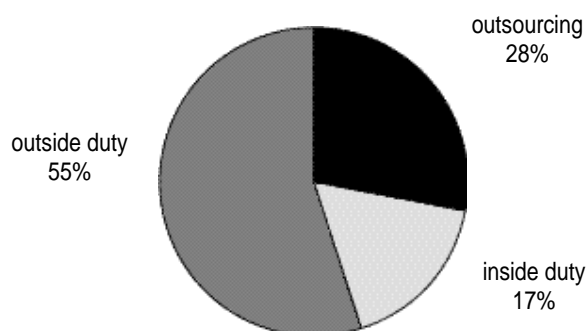
Source: <http://tic.etri.re.kr/ejournal-bin/EJBView?recno=0901011371&src=00>

idea of remote location to become a key factor in changing methods of task completion as well as the functioning of both workers and organizations.

Although companies are not expected to immediately adopt telecommuting as common procedure, it is expected to become more widespread. For example, offline and online may coexist within a corporation. In addition, it will probably increase

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Figure 3. Work Patterns at IBM Korea



Source: <http://www.kisdi.re.kr/publishing/view.html?id=2379&db=kis05new>

employment flexibility for Korean firms, which are undergoing continuous restructuring after the financial crisis. Telecommuting is expected to be much more common in the future as a standard rather than an irregular form of work.

In the late 1980s, Korean companies used irregular employees who worked from home for relatively simple tasks such as data entry for databases. Currently, working from home is the main example of “flexiplace” in Korea, but an increasing number of industries are adopting remote offices or mobile offices. In countries where home offices are common, telecommuting is no longer unusual, but a regular work pattern.

### Future prospects

For telecommuting to be possible, overall living standards should be improved throughout society. In a society with high living standards, digitalization will be advanced and individuals will demand the flexible work hours and free time offered by telecommuting. Telecommuting also allows groups such as females, the elderly, and the disabled (who may not be able to work under the usual conditions) to work. In addition, telecommuting can reduce the costs of running a traditional-style office.

Measures should be taken to prevent possible negative effects associated with telecommuting. If telecommuting is adopted without a set of regulations, it can hinder communication and teamwork, decrease sense of belonging, make evaluation difficult, reduce productivity, increase stress, and create a lack of incentives.

For telecommuting to be adopted at a company, the new system should harmonize with the industry’s characteristics, so that effective regulation or evaluation will be possible. The success rate of telecommuting is much higher in industries where results are visible and can be measured concretely.

Although telecommuting in Korea is mostly done by irregular workers performing simple tasks, the distinction between regular and irregular workers is expected to become irrelevant if telecommuting becomes widespread. This is because professionals are expected to have a strong desire for control over their time, and it will be increasingly difficult to procure highly-skilled employees

Telecommuting increases the possibility of hiring highly-skilled workers, and is an effective tool for increasing internal consumer satisfaction. Companies should focus on achieving synergy among workers by creating a personnel and organization operating system, and such systems need to use information technology to innovate tasks and create value-added. **VIP**

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