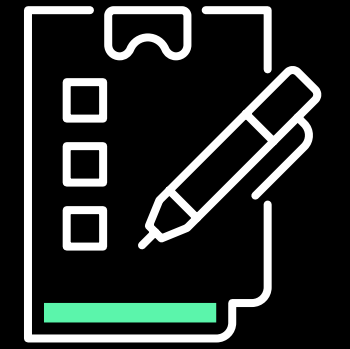


Morgan Lovell



Survey:

Social capital in the workplace

It's been ten months since COVID-19 first affected the way we work. How important is the workplace to people today? What impact does face-to-face working have on our productivity and a business's success?

What is Social Capital?



It is the combined value of your people, their networks and their interactions with one another. It's the value your people create through positive interactions with one another, their ability to relate in different scenarios, to understand the values of others and most importantly, to foster a deep sense of trust throughout your organisation.

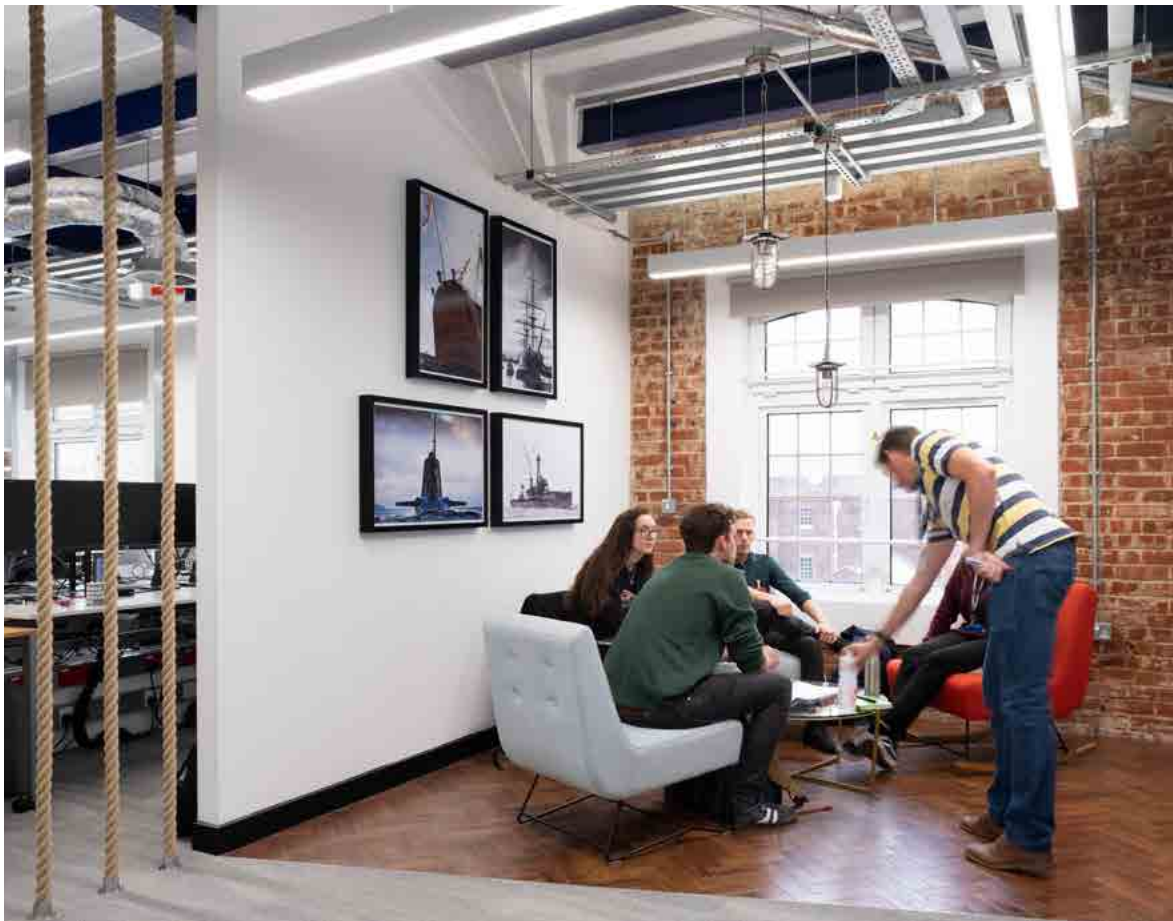
Using OnePulse, 1,000 people, many who have been working remotely since the start of the pandemic, responded to a second survey in December 2020 telling us how their attitude to the office has evolved – what they missed about it and what a post-Covid office could look like. We've analysed the results, allowing us to understand how people's perceptions have changed since we last polled them in June 2020.

What do you miss most about the office?

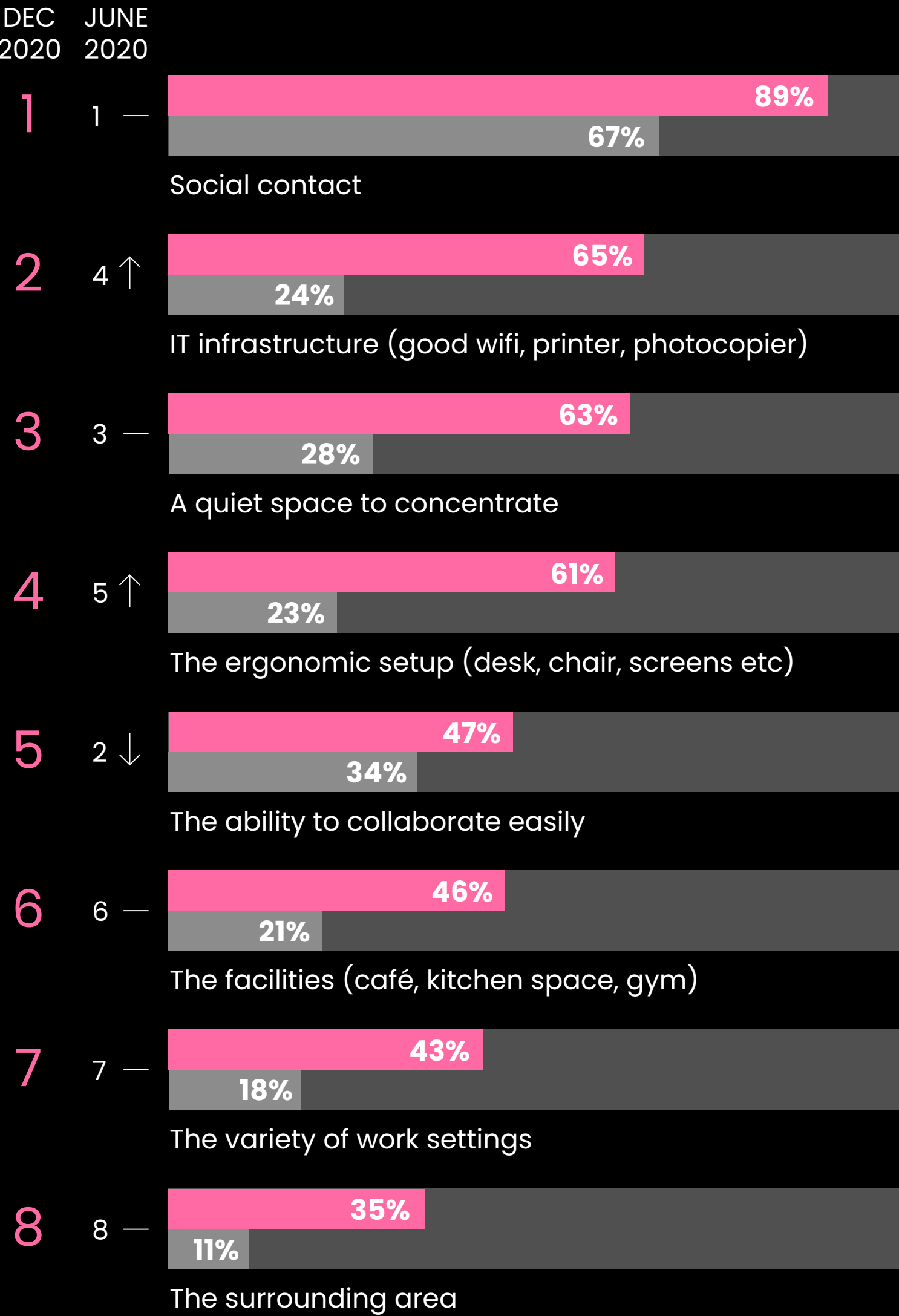
Social contact, IT infrastructure such as good WiFi, printer and photocopier, together with a quiet space to concentrate were the three things that people missed most about the office in December. This differs slightly from six months before. Social contact still topped the list then, but the ability to collaborate easily came a firm second, followed by a quiet space to concentrate. This indicates that many people will have become more accustomed to collaborating using online tools, but continue to struggle with IT challenges such as WiFi while working at home.

Interestingly, the importance of social contact has risen considerably in that time with 67% citing it as a key thing they missed in June

2020, and 89% in December, demonstrating the isolating impact of lockdown. Overall, people missed more from the office in December than they had in June. Absence definitely does make the heart grow fonder.



What do you miss most about the office?





While both sexes missed social contact the most (90% of women; 89% of men), men put a quiet space to concentrate (65%) and good IT infrastructure (64%) as their second and third preferences; while women missed the IT infrastructure (66%) and ergonomic set-up (63%). This is broadly similar to the picture back in June.

There were also some differences between the age groups. Those aged 18-20 missed a quiet space to concentrate (80%), almost as much as they missed the social contact of the office (90%), perhaps because they live in shared houses without dedicated work space. The ergonomic set-up offered by the office was also more important to younger people. The older the respondent, the more likely they are to miss the ability to collaborate easily in the office, possibly because at their advanced career level they recognise the benefit social capital offers in idea and strategy development.

18-20 year olds miss a quiet space almost as much as they miss social contact in the office

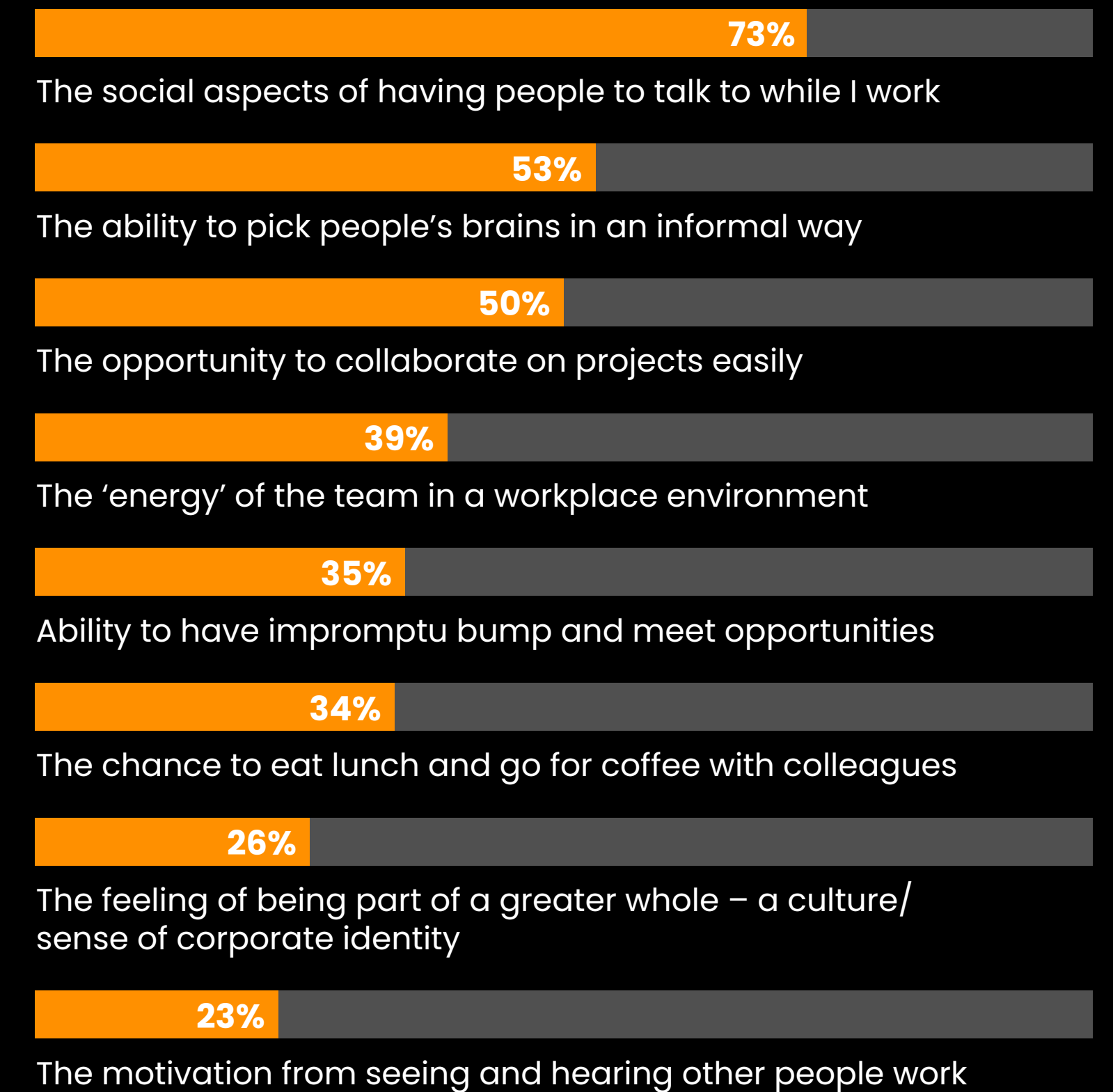
What do you enjoy about working in the same physical space as other people?



We asked those who had missed the social contact in the office what they most enjoyed about working in the same physical space as other people. The social aspects of having people to talk to while they work was the main thing, followed by the ability to pick people's brains in an informal way and the opportunity to collaborate on projects easily. Overall, it's the informal opportunities to collaborate provided by the office environment that people miss the most 10 months into the pandemic.

73% like the social aspects of having people to talk to at work

What do you enjoy about working in the same physical space as other people?

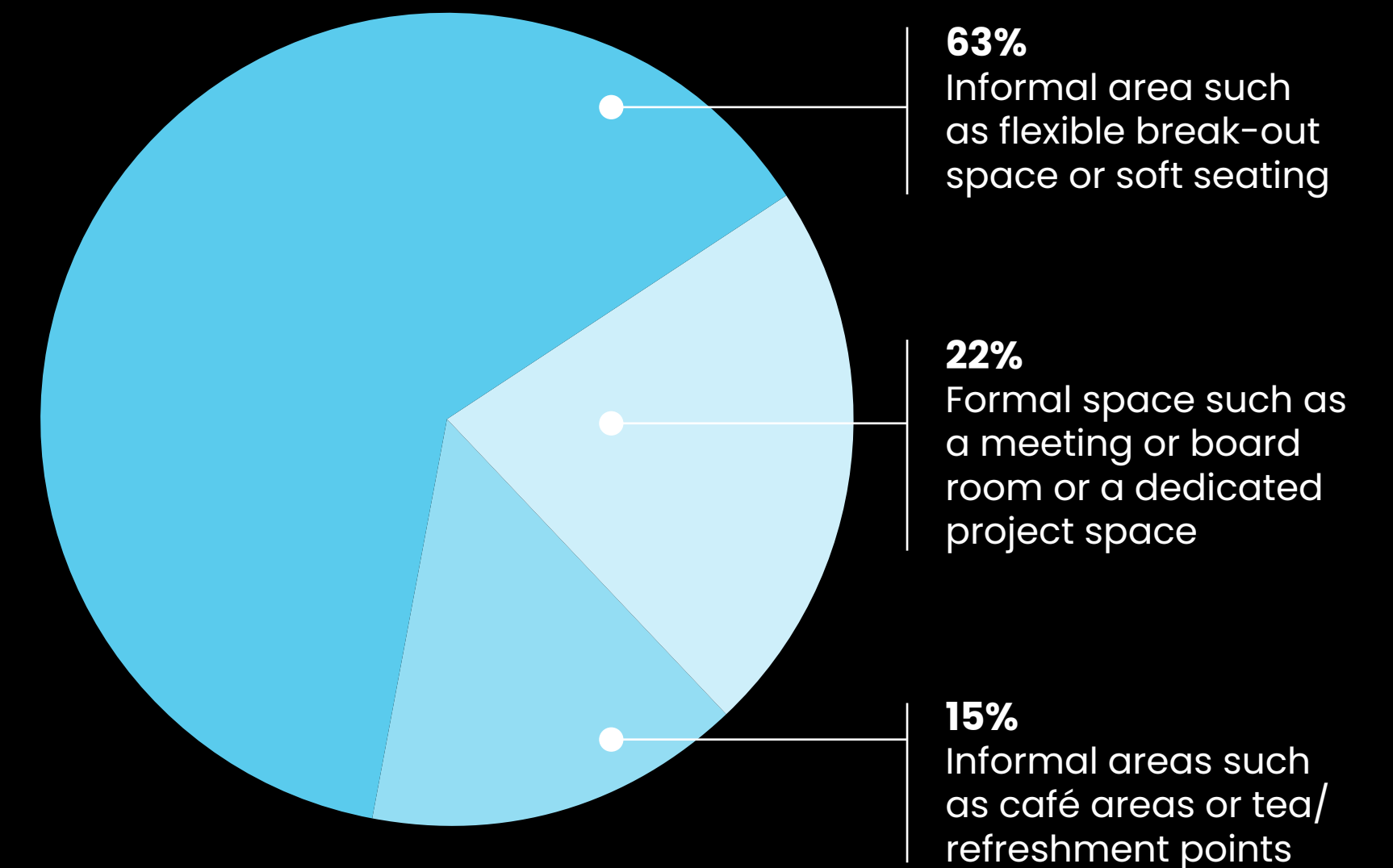


Collaborative environments

With such an obvious desire to get back to collaborating face-to-face with colleagues, we asked respondents in which sort of environment they prefer to collaborate in. The results are a clear vote of confidence for informal areas with 63% voting for flexible break-out space or soft seating; while just 22% prefer formal space such as a meeting or board room or dedicated project space. This supports the previous finding that formal collaboration is relatively straightforward to achieve online, it's the informal collaborative opportunities which people miss most about the office. Only 15% voted for café areas or tea/refreshment points.



In which sort of environment do you prefer collaborating with colleagues?



A clear vote of confidence for informal, flexible breakout space

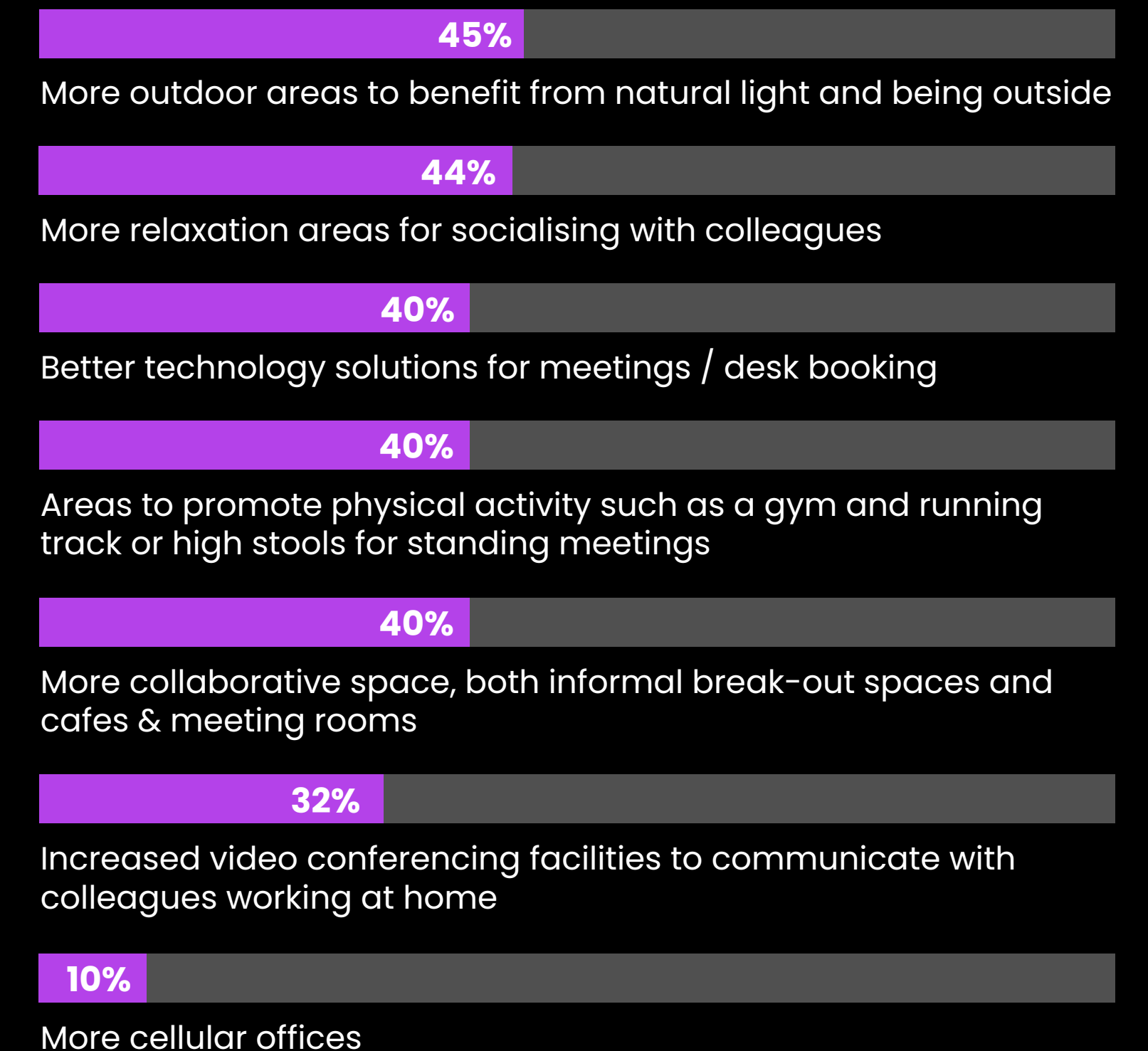
The post-Covid workplace

When asked how people wanted to see their office change post-pandemic, there was an understandable focus on more outdoor areas to benefit from natural light and being outside. The discourse around the pandemic has focused on the benefits of being outside to reduce transmission which complements a wealth of research showing the health and productivity benefits of being outside, or having a view of nature. This was closely followed by more relaxation areas for socialising with colleagues, better technology solutions for meetings / desk bookings and areas to promote physical activity. More collaborative space, both informal break-out spaces and cafés and meeting rooms were also popular. The pandemic has highlighted the negative

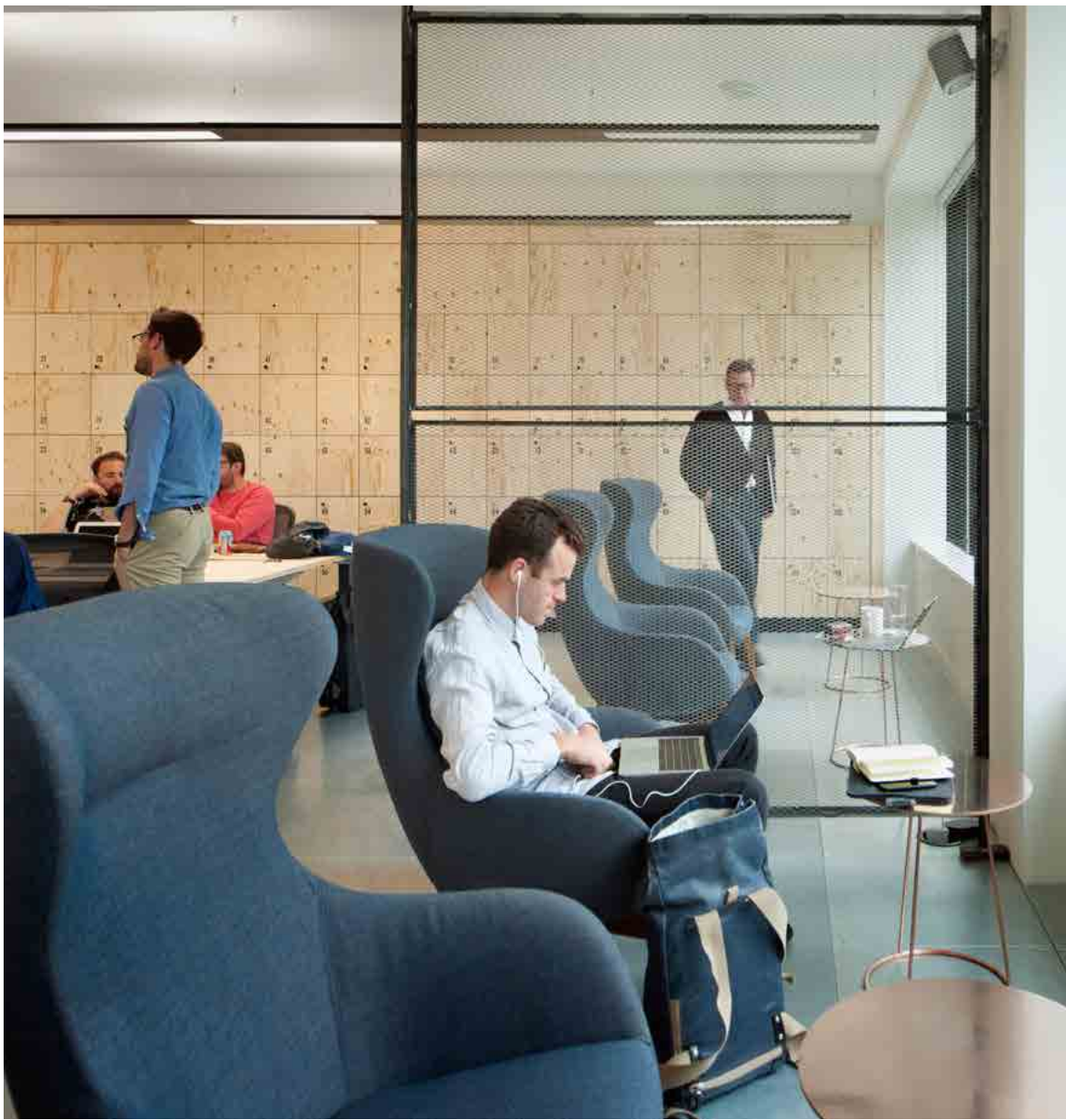
impact of isolation on our wellbeing. This is apparent in the type of workspaces we want to return to; just 10% wanted to see more cellular offices underlining the need to collaborate and feel part of a greater cultural whole.



If you could redesign your office environment for a post-Covid future, what would you include?



Continuing the future focus, we asked people how, if they can work flexibly, they plan to use the office in the future and how often they would like to be there. The results show a significant change from people’s views since June when many were itching to get back to the ‘old’ ways. Now people want to come back to the office to collaborate and socialise with colleagues, but are less focused on performing day-to day work there.



The top three reasons for going to the post-Covid office are all focused on collaboration, to get team work done, to meet up and socialise with colleagues and to create and share ideas with the team. A close fourth was to have meetings. Focusing on individual work was the bottom of the list.

There was some differences between the sexes. Men were more likely than women to want to use the office to focus on individual work (23% against 17%), and also to conduct more formal team activities such as getting team work done and to have meetings. While women planned to use the workplace for more informal team activities such as meeting and collaborating with colleagues.

There were also some differing views across the country. Respondents in London, the south-east, the north-east, Yorkshire and the Humber, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland see the office as number one a place to meet up, collaborate and socialise with colleagues, while that’s a lesser priority for those in the East of England, Midlands, south-west and north-west.

If you can work more flexibly after the pandemic, how would you like to use the office?



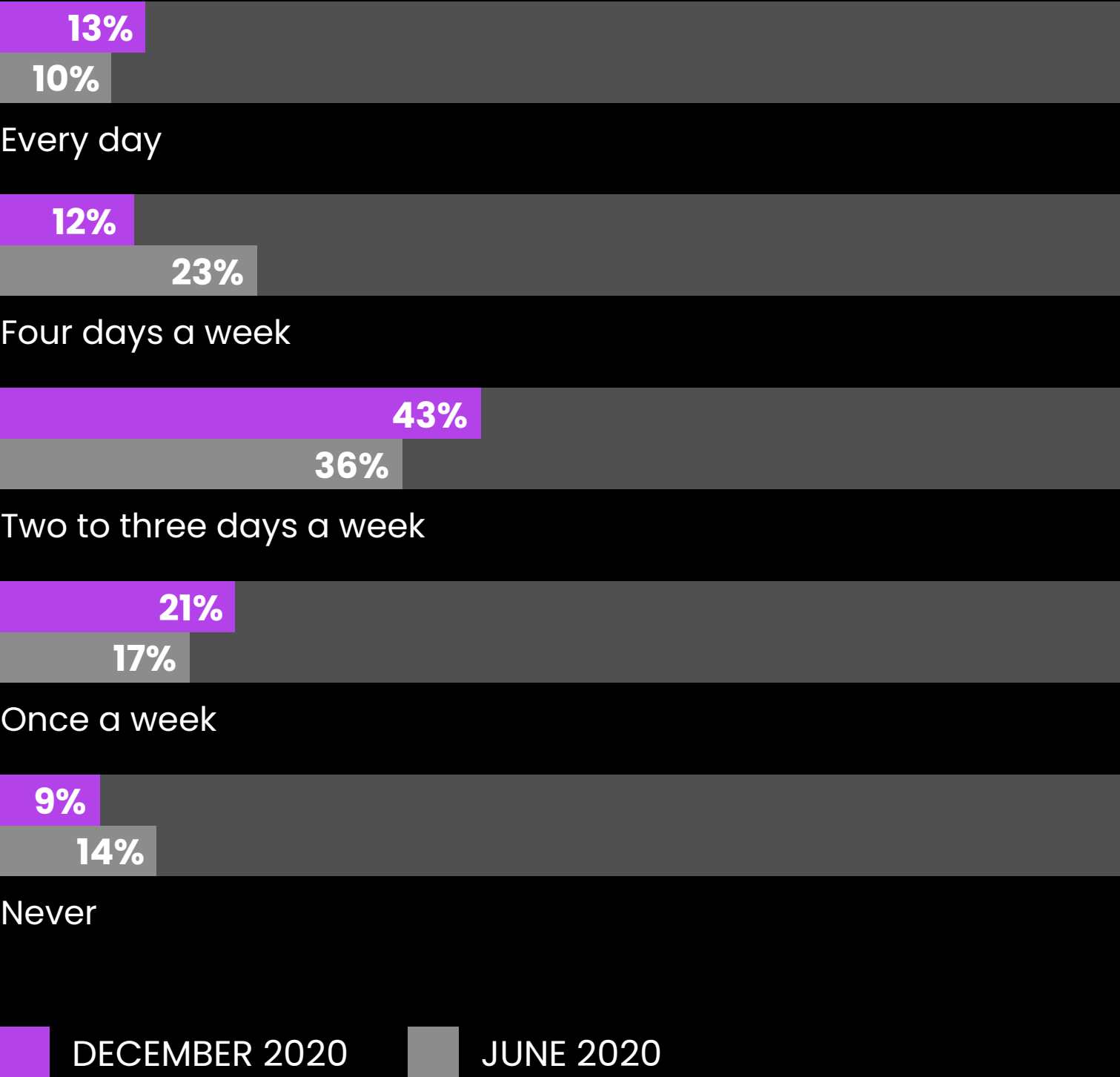
Despite missing the office, 86% of the more than 1,000 office workers we polled, would like to retain some element of home working in the future. But the office remains the place they want to spend the majority of their working time with 68% wanting to spend between two and five days a week there. The results have shifted slightly since we asked a similar question in June. The comments on the survey appear to show that people will use the office depending on the nature of their work – they may work from home for focused activities and come to the office if they have more collaborative work.

The data also suggested that men are keener to spend more time in the office compared to their female colleagues – 29% of men wanted to spend four or five days a week in the office, while 20% of women say the same. 68% percent of women would prefer to work in the office one to three days a week, while 59% of men say the same.

One of the most notable changes between the two polls is the decrease in people who never want to spend time in the office; down to 9% from 13%. A key indicator that the social capital of the office is turning even some of the harden home or remote workers opinion in favour of the office.



After the pandemic, I would like to come to the office...



Morgan Lovell

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the workplace remains a key draw for office workers of both sexes and all ages, chiefly for the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, both informally and formally. It's this aspect which office workers have most missed during the pandemic – both back in June and then ten months on. What's

changed since June is that people recognise that their work can be completed elsewhere – often at home– and that they'd like to use the office on a more flexible basis. Despite that the vast majority of office workers want to spend the bulk of their working lives in a formal workplace.

London

16 Noel Street
London
W1F 8DA

T 020 7734 4466

Southern

Maxis 1, Western Road
Bracknell Berkshire
RG12 1RT

T 01344 353 800

morganlovell.com

