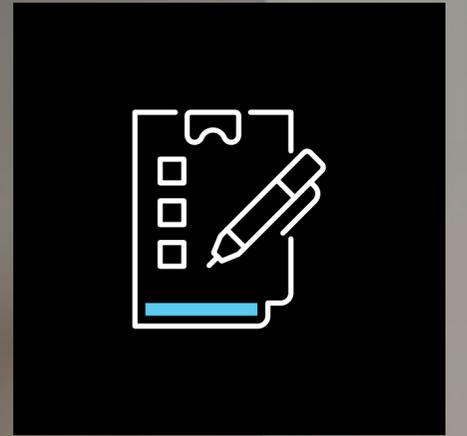


Morgan Lovell



Survey:

Returning to the workplace

We've polled 500 office workers to find out what they missed most about their office, and uncover what they'd like to see from their post-pandemic workplace.

The findings

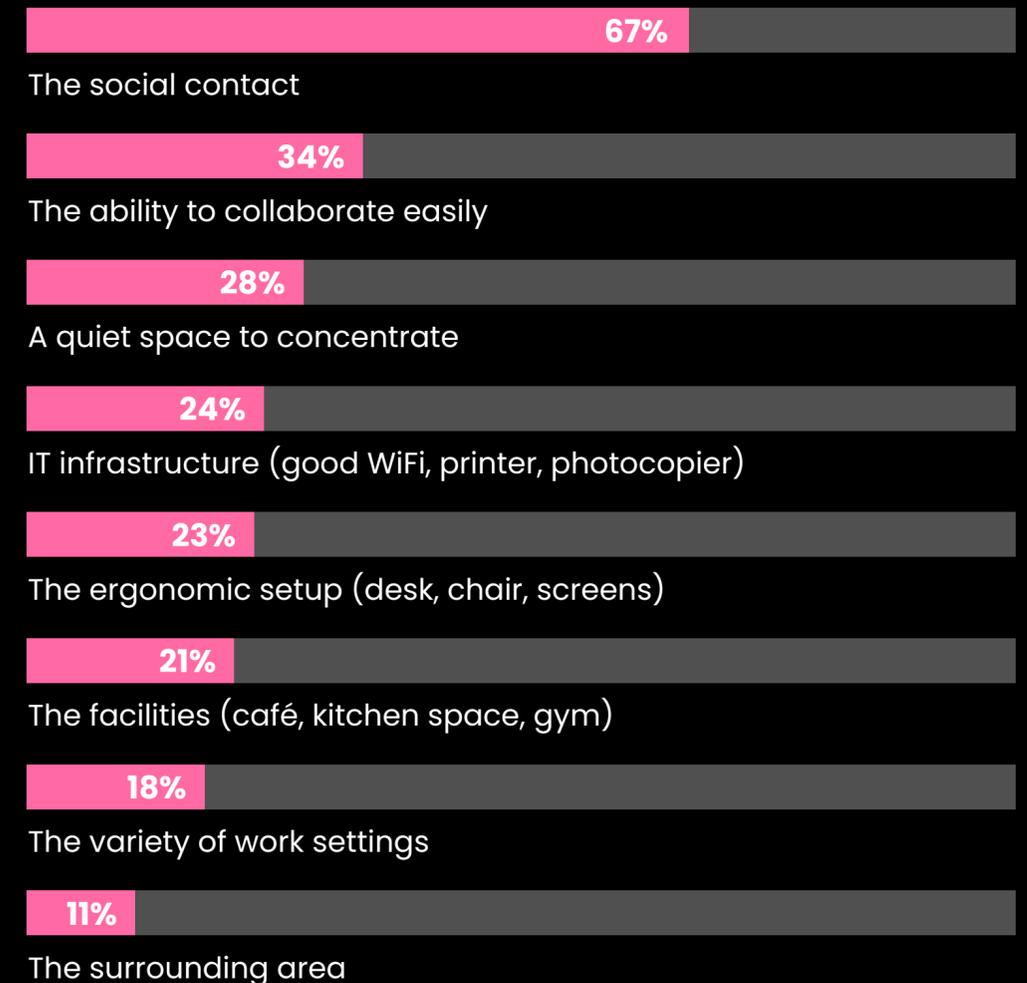
Social contact (67%) and the chance to collaborate with colleagues (34%) are the two key things that office workers have missed most over the past few months of working from home, with a quiet space to concentrate being a close third (28%). Good IT infrastructure including WiFi was also important (cited by 24% of respondents) as was the workplace's ergonomic set-up – mentioned by 23% of people. Less important were the office facilities (including café, kitchen and gym) (21%), the variety of work settings (18%) and the surrounding area (11%).

While both sexes had the same top three preferences, the number of men missing the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and craving a quiet space to work

was much higher than women – 41% against 29% on collaboration and 32% against 25% for quiet space. Women tended to miss the ergonomic set up and variety of work settings more.

There were also some differences between the age groups. A quieter space to work, for example, was missed more by younger people and becomes steadily less important as people get older perhaps because more mature people may have a dedicated work area at home. A workplace's facilities – such as gym and café – was missed more by younger people than their older colleagues.

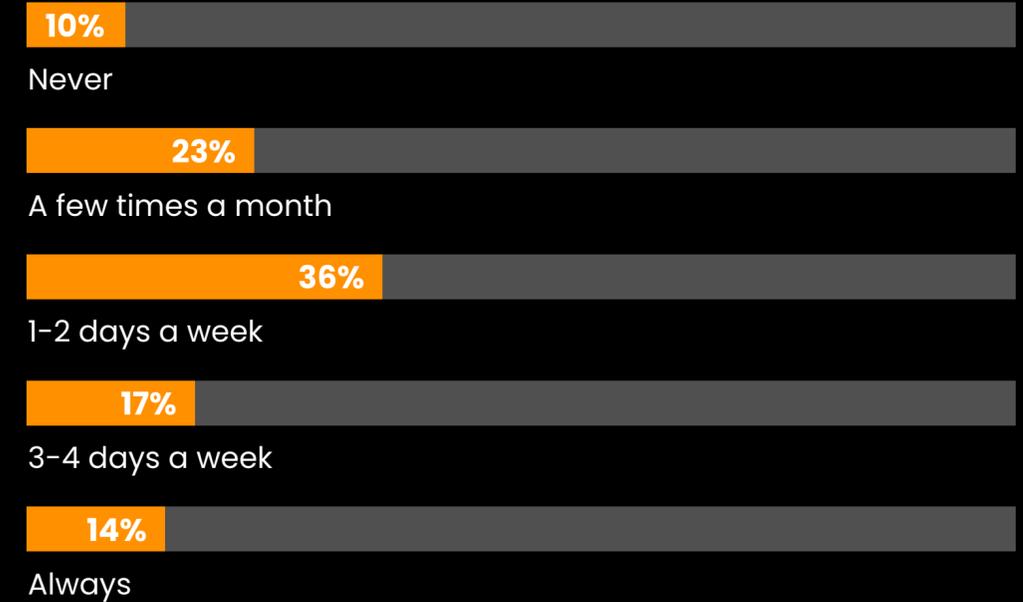
What do you miss most about the office?



Social contact (67%) was missed most by office workers working from home.

Despite missing the office, more than 90% of the office workers we polled, would like to retain some element of home working in the future. However the office remains the place they want to spend the majority of their working time with 69% wanting to work in the office at least three to four days a week. The data also suggested that the older the office worker, the keener they are to work from home more. This is possibly because they have the benefit of a dedicated home work space and perhaps because of concern over being more susceptible to the virus.

How often would you like to work from home in the future?



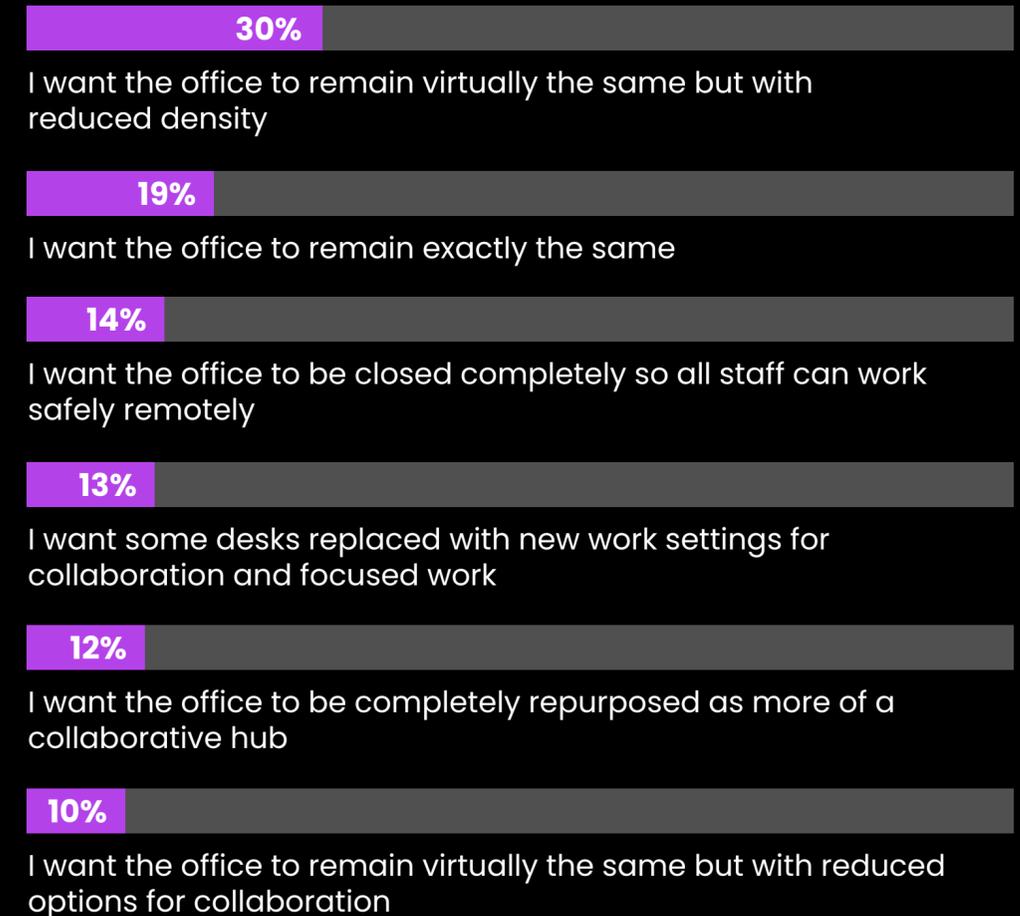
More than 90% would like to retain some element of working from home.

The majority (30%) wanted the office to remain virtually the same but with reduced density.

When asked how people wanted to see their office change post-pandemic, just 14% wanted the office closed for the long-term so people could work safely remotely, reflecting confidence in organisations to make the workplace safe to use. The majority (30%) wanted the office to remain virtually the same but with reduced density while almost a fifth wanted no changes made at all. Fundamentally repurposing the workplace to make it more of a collaborative hub received only 12% of votes. Other suggestions respondents offered included more partitions and a reduction in open plan; more outdoor offices; and less equipment sharing.

The older the person, the far more likely they are to want their office closed for the long-term and people allowed to work remotely – 23% of those 45 and above wanted the office closed compared to 12% of 18-24 year olds. There was little difference between the sexes although men were more likely to want the office to remain the same, while women had a greater preference than men for some desks being replaced with new work settings for collaboration and focused work.

How do you want to see your workplace change post-pandemic?



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The conclusion

Overall this research demonstrates that the workplace remains a key draw for office workers of both sexes and all ages. It's seen as a place to socialise and collaborate with colleagues and it's this aspect which office workers have most missed during the pandemic. While some people enjoy home-working, many find it difficult to concentrate on work and find the lack of IT infrastructure and the lack of a proper work environment

challenging at times. Home working will no doubt continue into the future, but the vast majority of office workers want to spend the bulk of their working lives in a formal workplace. And most are not expecting their employers to drastically change that environment to keep them safe. Reducing office density is seen as sufficient to get them back to work and feeling safe and supported.

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