NowyStyl

YOUR OFFICE YOUR SAY

THE OFFICE AS EMPLOYEES SEE IT

SURVEY REPORT

2024/25

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An office isn't just an empty space to be filled with furniture. It's a dynamic environment that supports, motivates, sparks creativity and constantly affects how we feel and function at work. Over time, its appearance and functionality have evolved to meet shifting trends, requirements, and expectations. But decisions made by office and facility managers are often shaped by more subtle factors we're not always aware of – from changing regulations and design trends to hidden employee needs and unexpected operational challenges.

Global trends

Fashion, direction, and inspiration from how others do it – what's trending and what's considered "best practice." These are the behaviours we notice across various areas of life. One such trend – the shared economy – has been around for a while and is becoming more visible in the workplace, particularly through desk sharing.

The present global landscape

Following global trends comes with certain limitations – we have to stay flexible and ready to adapt to the changing situation around the world. Economic and political shifts are increasingly influencing decisions around leasing, relocation, downsizing, and budgeting for office furniture and equipment.

Employee and organisational needs

The final factor shaping office space could be seen as the main moderator guiding our actions. It's all about the specific needs and expectations of employees – and the organisation as a whole. An office shouldn't just be eye-catching or on-trend; above all, it should be effective – tailored to the activities and working styles of its users, as well as to the values that drive the organisation. This approach helps create a space that supports both everyday tasks and the company's long-term goals.

The new world of work is no longer new – we're finding our feet in a hybrid environment that's become part of everyday life.

At the same time, certain decisions are being made that shape how office spaces function and evolve. Nowy Styl carried out the survey titled "Your Office. Your Say." to better understand the perspective of those who use the office most – the employees.

The aim of the survey is to help clients create spaces that meet employees' needs and expectations, providing both comfort and an inspiring place to work.

Utila, bSpace

Nowy Styl's survey

"Your Office. Your Say."

The survey: "Your office. Your Say." (2024) set out to explore employees' expectations and needs within the context of a rapidly changing world of work. It was conducted using a quantitative approach, with over 275 respondents taking part via the platform www.webankieta.pl, which ensured a high level of data security. The questionnaire was available in four language versions – Polish, English, French, and German – and included various types of questions (single choice, multiple choice, and others). The survey was fully anonymous, meaning no information about respondents' locations or employers was collected.
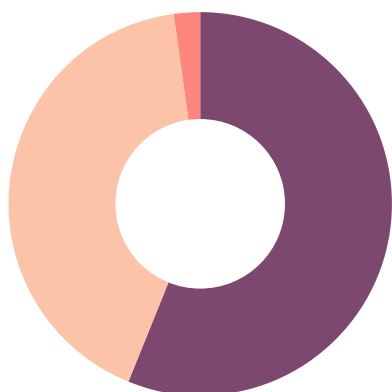
Gender distribution:

Women: **56%**

Men: **42%**

Prefer not to say: **2%**

Respondents by job level:

Board member: **2,50%**

Management: **35%**

Specialists: **62%**
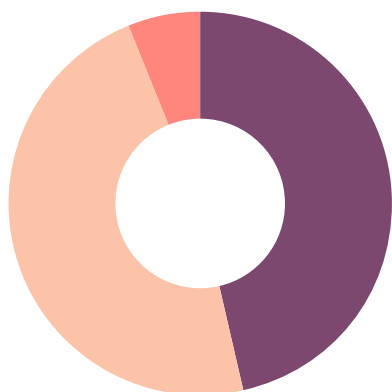
Working patterns reported by respondents:

Hybrid work: **47%**

Office-based work: **47%**

Remote work: **6%**

What matters in our workplace?
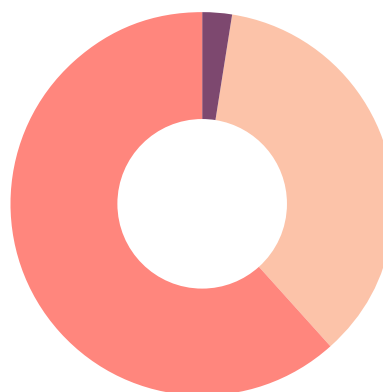
The office itself plays a major role in shaping employees' everyday experience. Its design and character often reflect how the organisation operates and what it stands for – acting as a kind of mirror for the entire company. The aesthetics, functionality, and overall atmosphere of a workplace can not only enhance comfort and productivity, but also help position the employer as modern, innovative, and genuinely people-focused. Our survey confirms this: 85.66 % of respondents said that an attractive office is an important factor when choosing an employer. Interestingly, this view remained consistent across all age groups – the result was similar at both ends of the age spectrum. This clearly shows that investing in office space – and adapting it as needs and working conditions evolve – is well worth it.

Do you think an attractive office is an important factor when choosing an employer?

YES
86 %

NO
10 %

NO OPINION
4%

100%
YES
Baby Boomers

87%
YES
Generation X

83%
YES
Generation Y

85%
YES
Generation Z
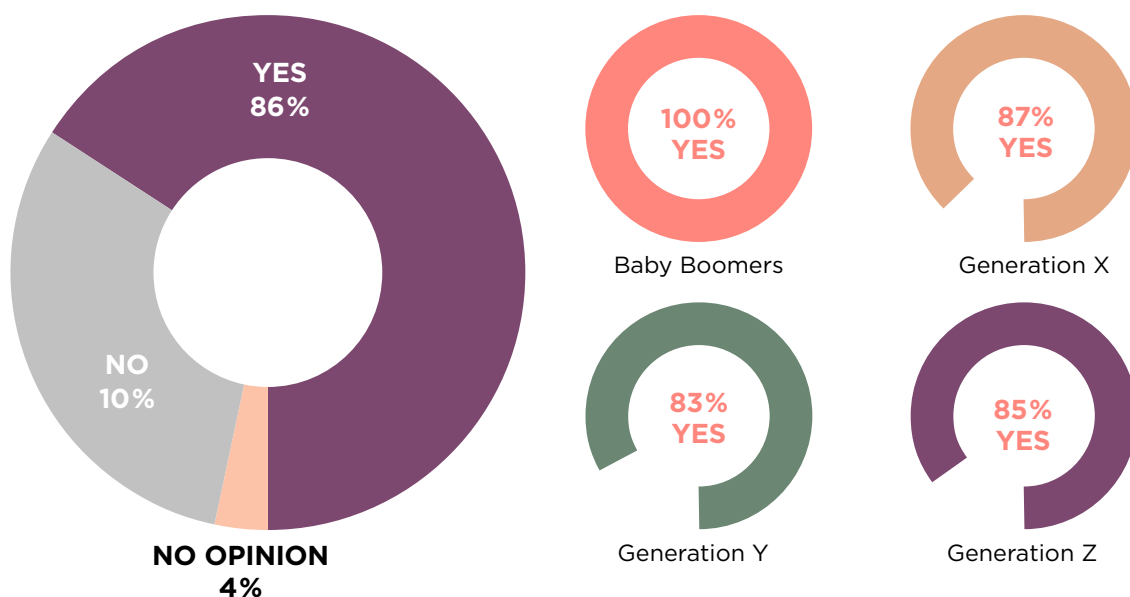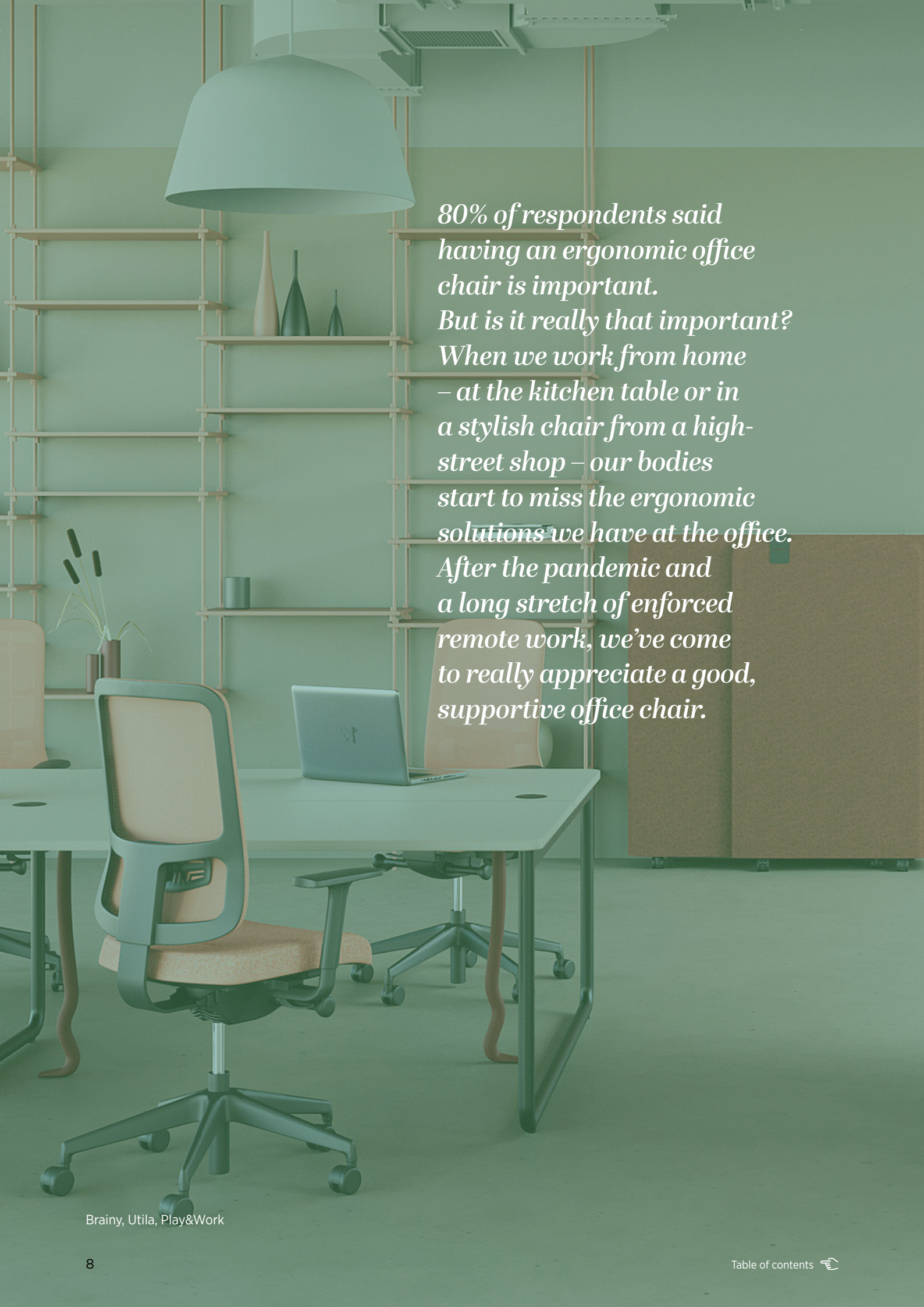
For 86% of all respondents, an attractive office is an important factor when choosing an employer.

What makes an office more attractive?

80% Ergonomic office chairs

76% Access to natural light

74% Design and aesthetics of the office space

72% Stable internet connection – smooth online meetings

71% Height-adjustable desks

65% A variety of zones to support different work activities

64% Office location

53% Spaces for collaboration and social interaction

53% Free coffee and tea

36% Audiovisual systems
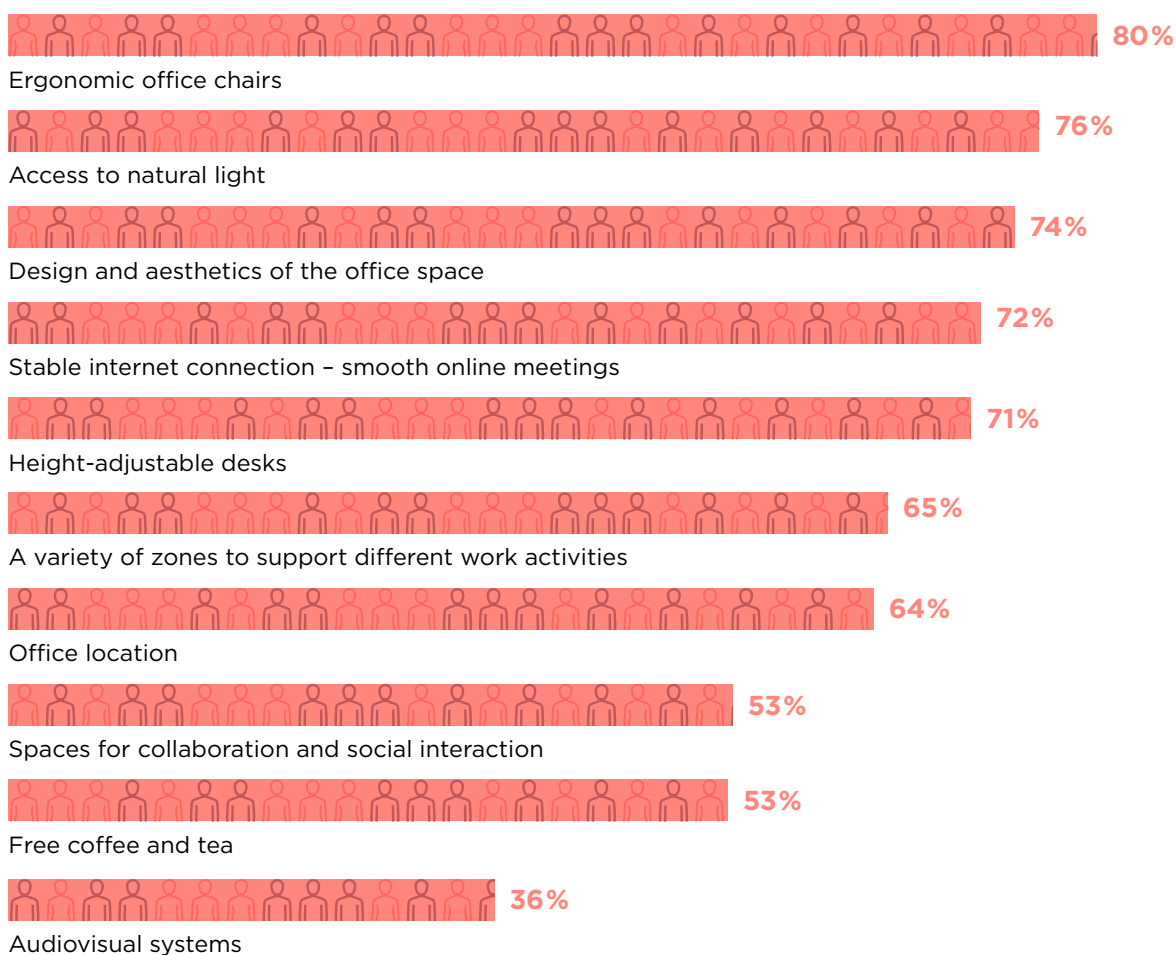
Understanding how important the office is in employees' lives – and how it influences their choice of employer – makes it essential to know which factors make a workspace more appealing. Our survey has provided valuable insights, helping us better understand what makes an office a more welcoming and desirable place to work.

80% of respondents said having an ergonomic office chair is important.
But is it really that important?
When we work from home – at the kitchen table or in a stylish chair from a high-street shop – our bodies start to miss the ergonomic solutions we have at the office.
After the pandemic and a long stretch of enforced remote work, we've come to really appreciate a good, supportive office chair.

Brainy, Utila, Play&Work

Office appeal across generations

Top 3 by age group

Generation Z

1. Ergonomic office chairs
2. Height-adjustable desks, stable internet connection, free coffee and tea
3. Office location

Generation Y

1. Ergonomic office chairs
2. Access to natural light and greenery
3. Design and aesthetics of the office space

Generation X

1. Design and aesthetics of the office space
2. Access to natural light and greenery
3. Ergonomic office chairs

Baby Boomers

1. Ergonomic office chairs and access to natural light
2. Stable internet connection – smooth online meetings
3. Height-adjustable desks, office design and aesthetics

1940   1960   1980   2000   2020

Office must-haves

Holistic ergonomics:

The two highest-rated features – ergonomic office chairs (80.29 %) and access to natural light and greenery (75.99 %) – highlight the importance of holistic ergonomics. Ergonomic chairs support a healthy posture, while natural light and greenery positively impact wellbeing and productivity by reducing eye strain and lifting mood. Height-adjustable desks (70.97 %) also contribute to employee health, allowing individuals to tailor their workstation to their needs and preferences, and encouraging movement t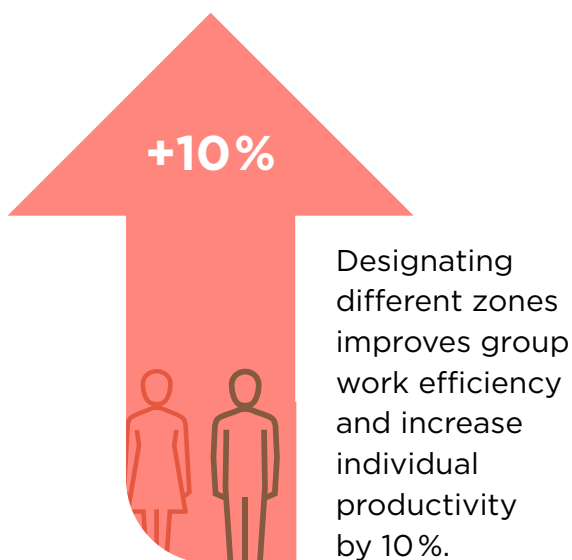hroughout the working day. In open-ended responses, participants also pointed to other important aspects, such as ceiling height and the location of the office within the building. Ceiling height can also affect how we feel – spaces that are too low can feel oppressive and, on a psychosomatic level, may even make breathing feel more difficult, leading to discomfort. The office's location within the building also plays a role. An office located in a basement or another less appealing part of the building can create negative associations and affect employees' motivation to come in each day. These kinds of factors, although not always obvious at first, can have a real impact on employees' overall wellbeing and comfort.

Holistic ergonomics means designing a workplace in a comprehensive way – taking into account both physical factors (temperature, ventilation, acoustics, ergonomic workstations) and psychological aspects of comfort (regular movement, rest, healthy habits).

+10 %

Designating different zones improves group work efficiency and increase individual productivity by 10 %.

Source: Blok, M., De Korte, E., Groenesteijn, L., Formanoy, M., & Vink, P. (2009). The effects of a task facilitating working environment on office space use, communication, concentration, collaboration, privacy and distraction.

Tailoring office design to the way we work

High ratings for office design and aesthetics (74.19 %), as well as for varied zones that support different types of work (64.87 %), highlight the importance of a well-thought-out office layout. Attractive design and aesthetics don't just enhance the overall look and feel, but also help create an environment that supports productivity. Spaces designed for different functions – such as quiet zones, collaboration areas or creative spaces – cater to diverse employee needs, which in turn improves comfort and boosts productivity. Like it or not, part of our professional lives has now shifted online. This shift – and the change in how we communicate – is reflected in how much value respondents place on a stable internet connection: 71.68 % highlighted it as important.

67%

Research conducted by the brand Leitz found that, according to 67 % of office workers feel that formal internal meetings are much less productive than the informal last minute and 'corridor' meetings that drive collaboration.
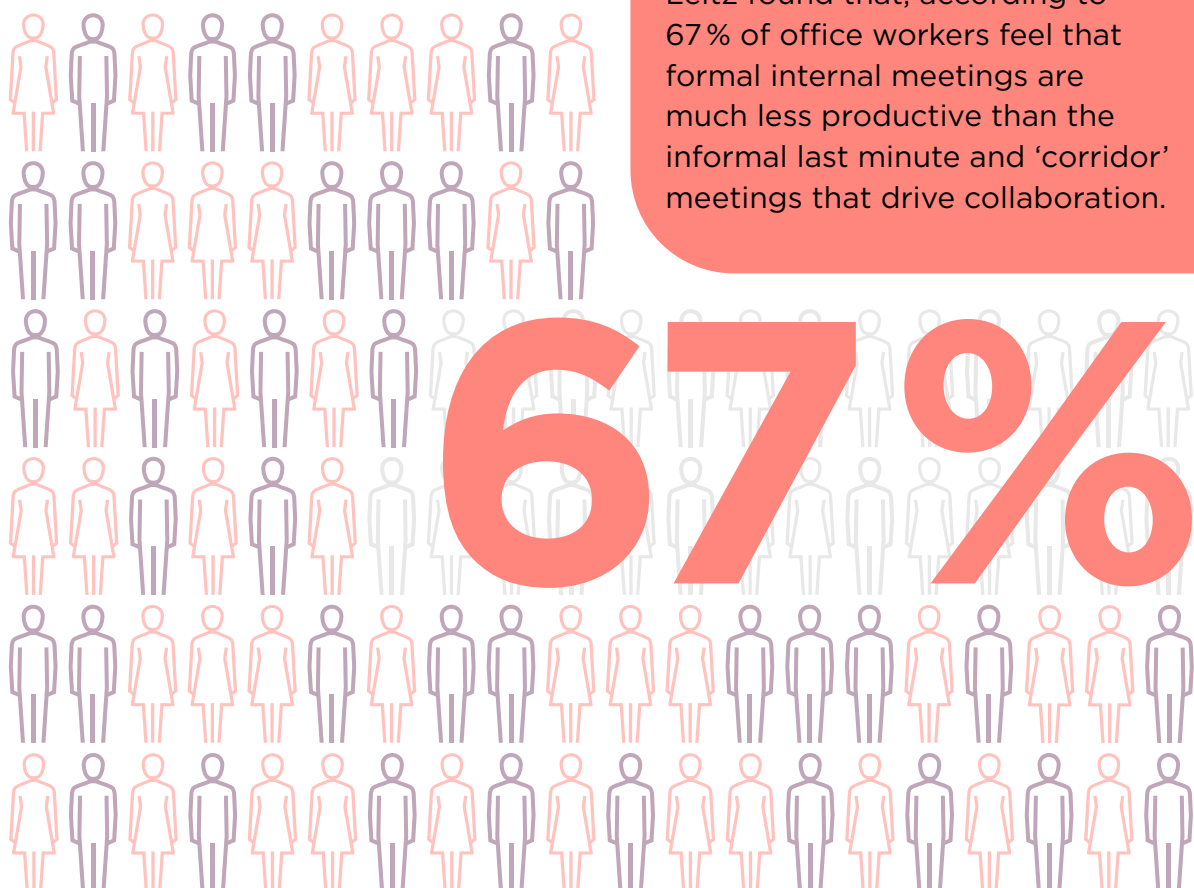
Source: Crosthwaite, A. Leitz. (2015). Work Smart. Work Mobile. A white paper reviewing mobile working and the tools required to support the mobile worker of today – and the future. 5(1).

Blending work and personal life

The office's location (63.80 %), spaces for conversation and team interaction (53.41 %), and free tea and coffee (53.05 %) all highlight how important it is to support the balance between work and personal life. A convenient location and access to spaces that encourage social interaction make everyday communication easier and help foster stronger team connections. Perks like free drinks add small comforts to the day, while dedicated areas for conversation and interaction help build relationships – and sometimes even lifelong friendships.

The data confirms that noise, chatter, and distractions are the biggest challenges of working in an office. That's why it's essential to focus on acoustics and equip the space with sound-absorbing solutions that can significantly improve working comfort.

Tilkka, MeeThink, Vapaa

Office "traps"

Just as there are factors that make an office more attractive in the eyes of employees, there are also elements that make it harder to work in.

Overstimulation and noise

Noise and chatter (83.51%) and an excessive number of distractions (63.44%) are challenges that may point to a wider issue of sensory overload. What's more, these were the top-rated difficulties across all age groups of respondents. In today's world of rapid digital development, we're increasingly bombarded with information, which leads to sensory overload. Extra sources of noise and visual or auditory distractions become even more irritating in that context. The rise of hybrid working – and the shift of some responsibilities to the home – means many people have lost the habit of dealing with a noisy, high-energy office. That makes the return to such environments feel even more uncomfortable. Because of this, it's more important than ever to invest in proper office acoustics and sound-absorbing solutions – such as acoustic panels – that can significantly improve comfort and focus.

Top challenges in the office environment

84%
Noise and chatter

63%
Too many distractions

56%
Limited access to natural light

51%
Non-ergonomic workstations

49%
Lack of diverse work zones

43%
Uninspiring design

42%
Not enough space per employee

40%
Close supervision by managers (a sense of being watched)

31%
No greenery

19%
Not enough storage space

13%
Poor signage and unclear communication
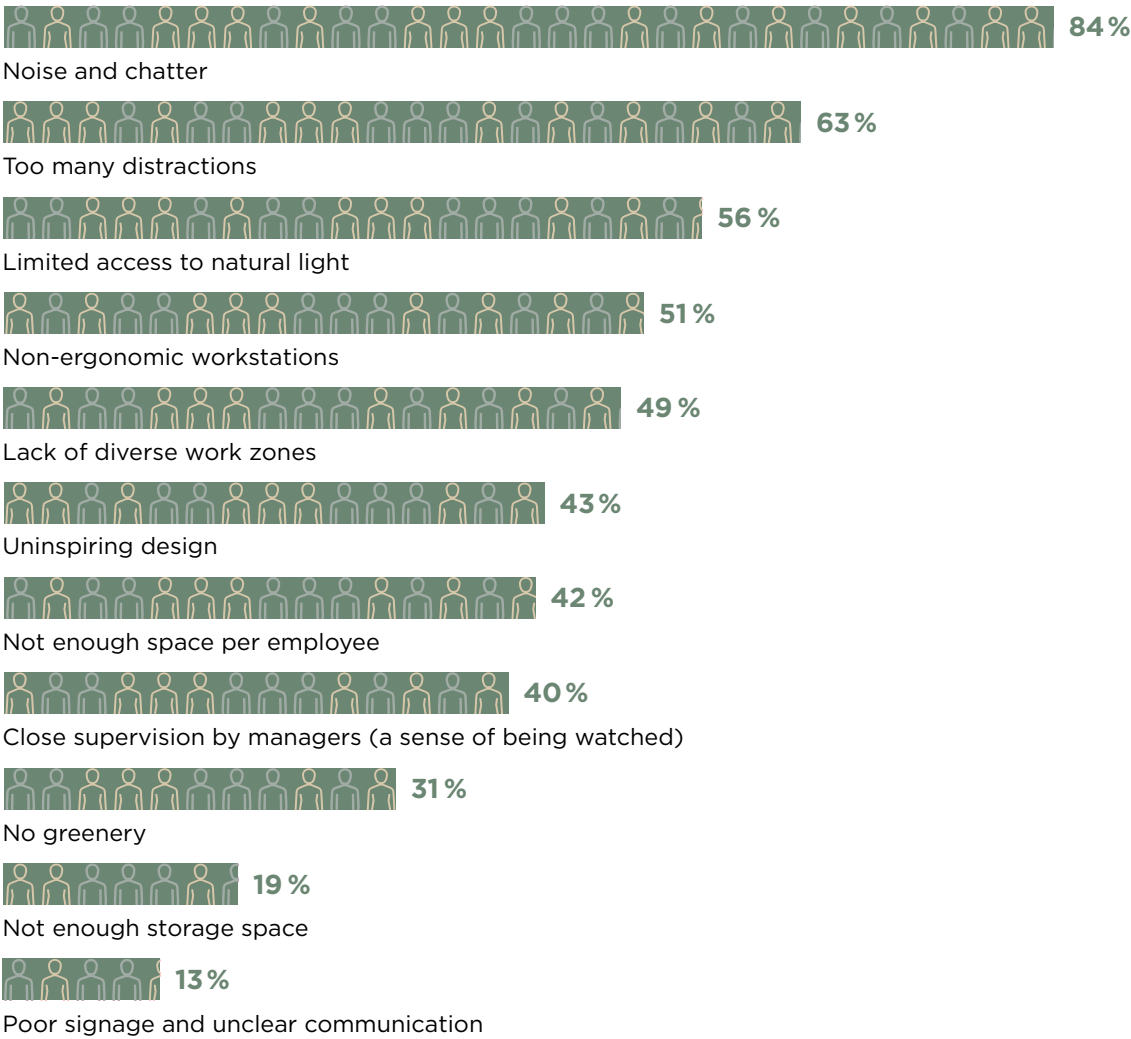
What functions should the office serve?

Regardless of the office layout – whether cellular, zoned, or open-plan – every workspace fulfils seven key functions. What changes over time is the balance between them.

In the past two years, the hierarchy of importance among these functions has shifted slightly. One clear change is the strengthening of the office's role as a social hub – a place that supports communication and team integration.

At the same time, the need for concentration has become more prominent. Employees expect the office to support both social interaction and focused, independent work. That's why it's essential for offices to strike a balance between social spaces and areas for effective individual work. To meet these expectations, improving acoustics and carefully zoning the space to match different working styles and activities will be key.

The office functions ranked by importance, according to respondents:

Cultural   Regenerative   Administrative   Representative   Concentration   Cooperation   Social
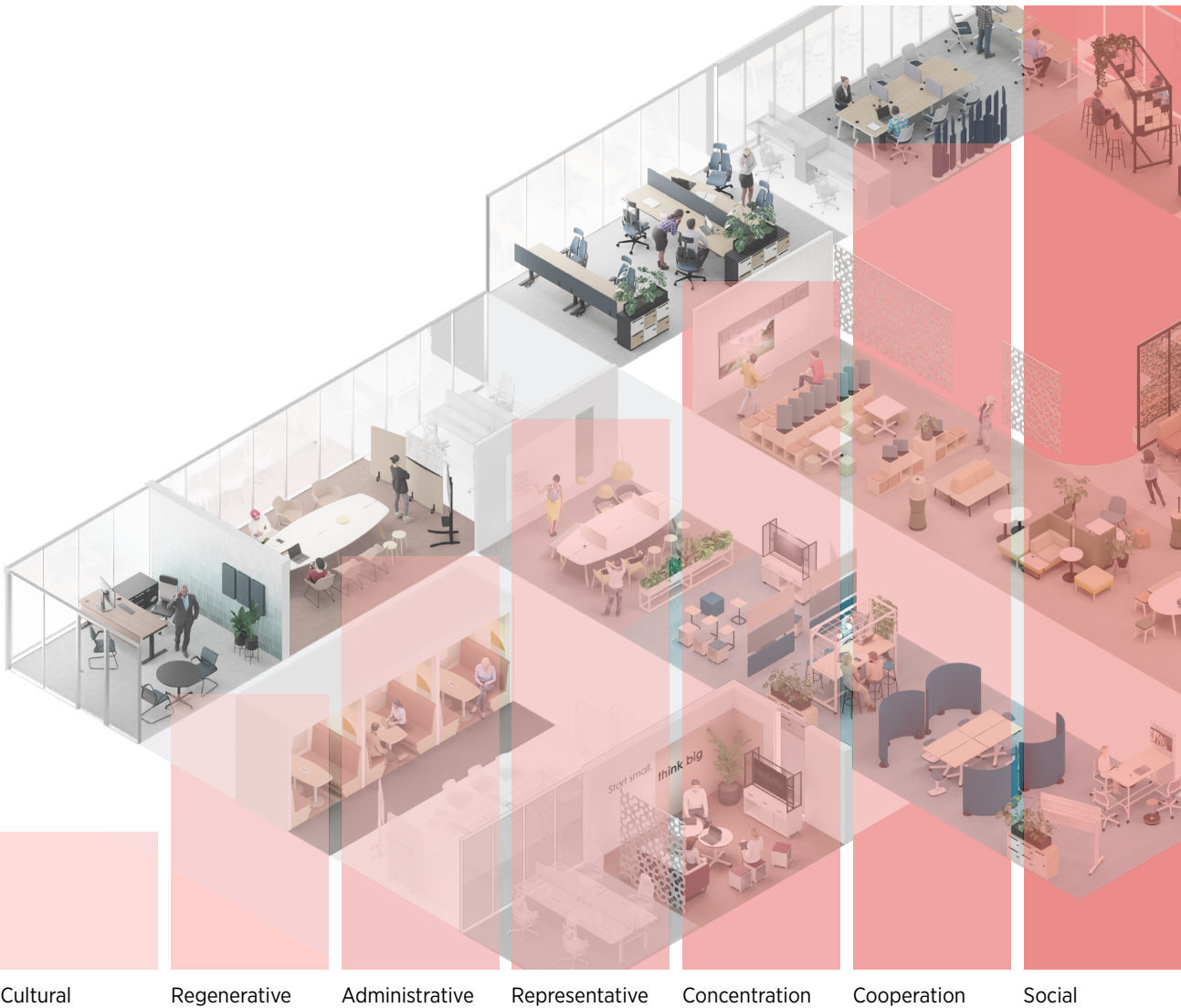
Office vs. out-of-office activities

We asked survey respondents which professional activities they would prefer to carry out in the office, and which ones they'd rather do in any other setting – for example, at home.

The results clearly confirm that the role of the office has changed. According to respondents, tasks based on interaction, communication and collaboration are far more likely to be done in the office. By contrast, activities that are more individual and don't require colleagues' input – such as learning and reading (89.03%), video meetings (69.68%), or replying to emails (65.16%) – are generally preferred outside the office, in any suitable location. For employees, being physically present in the office should primarily be an opportunity for meeting and consulting with colleagues (93.89%), as well as for onboarding new team members (86.17%) – helping them understand how the company and different departments work. It's also the preferred setting for client meetings (74.6%), brainstorming sessions (80.65%), and creative meetings (74.19%) – all of which require a different kind of setup, and above all, a strong sense of energy and flow to be effective. Interestingly, the results showed no major differences across age groups.

We go to the office for meetings, collaboration, and relationship-building. At home, we tend to focus on individual work.

Some particularly interesting findings came from respondents who described themselves as needing clear, precise communication, who find it difficult to build relationships or adapt to changing environments. When it comes to work activities, tasks based on interaction and creative processes are associated with the office – although, compared to other personality types, this group prefers informal meetings to take place outside the office (62.5%). This result may be linked to the need for a change of environment in order to effectively switch from work mode to personal mode.

Office		Other spaces	
94%	Meetings and consultations with colleagues	91%	Studying and reading
87%	Onboarding process	71%	Video meetings
80%	Brainstorming sessions	66%	Replying to emails
75%	Client meetings	65%	Phone calls
75%	Creative/idea-generation meetings	61%	Creating materials (e.g. presentations)
58%	Informal work-related conversations	61%	Graphic design work
56%	Operational tasks (e.g. processing documents, completing forms, handling settlements)	50%	Training sessions
50%	Training sessions		

The most important office microzones

Over the years, the way we work and the way offices are arranged have changed significantly. We've moved away from static work and routine, and towards mobility and creativity – which often requires collaboration with colleagues. As a result, a desk and a chair are no longer enough. To work effectively, we now need access to a variety of microzones. What's more, these diverse zones that support different types of tasks are one of the key elements that make an office more attractive to employees.

The office functions rated most highly by respondents are clearly reflected in their choice of the most important microzones. **There's nowhere better for a chat than over lunch or a cup of coffee – so with the office's social function growing, 81% of employees said they can't imagine a workplace without a variety of social spaces.** These areas, which once served mainly for rest and recovery, now play a vital role in relationship-building – both formal and informal. For many employees, they've become places to strengthen bonds and even form friendships that last a lifetime. Next in importance were meeting rooms. Larger enclosed meeting rooms (for 6–8 people) were selected by 55.20% of respondents, while smaller ones (for 2–4 people) were chosen by 47.67%. This shows

Social zones and enclosed meeting rooms were identified by respondents as the most important microzones in the office.

a clear need for private, focused spaces for team meetings, brainstorming sessions and project discussions. Focus rooms followed, chosen by 37.99% of participants.

As expected, respondents who described themselves as quiet and calm were much more likely to select the quiet zone (over 35%) than those who saw themselves as energetic and outgoing (22%) – the lowest score recorded in that group. The same pattern was seen with group and team work zones (not necessarily enclosed rooms). This type of microzone was chosen much more often by respondents who described themselves as energetic and team-oriented (38.24%) than by those who prefer individual work (25%). Along with quick consultation spots (e.g. high tables or soft seating and sofas), which scored 22.92%, these were the two lowest-rated zones among this group.

It's not only the type of work we do that influences the spaces we choose, but also our individual preferences – and this plays a crucial role in both comfort and effectiveness at work. That's why it's essential to create a variety of work settings, so that everyone can find a space that suits their needs.

81%

Social zones

55%

Large enclosed meeting rooms (for 6–8 people)

48 %

Small enclosed meeting rooms (for 2–4 people)

38%

Focus rooms

36%

Creative meeting rooms

33%

Phone booths

33%

Cosy informal meeting areas

33%

Quiet zones

33%

Group and team work areas

23%

Quick consultation spots

Employees' preferred office design and aesthetics

n a question about office layout preferences, we asked respondents what kind of office they would most like to work in. While preferences were fairly evenly spread across cellular, zoned, hybrid, and "reunion" models, the open-plan office received just 4.30 % of the votes. Open-plan offices – typically open layouts with only a few microzones (mainly meeting rooms) – are often viewed negatively. The main issues are a lack of privacy and poor acoustics, which make it difficult to concentrate and reduce overall productivity. In such open spaces, it's often hard to find a quiet place to focus – which is why many employees now prefer other office layouts. What's more, employees are increasingly placing value on a variety of work zones, which not only support productivity but also add interest and diversity to the office environment. These zones make the workspace more engaging and allow people with different working styles and preferences to find a spot that suits them.

Thanks to their inclusivity, such offices are becoming more functional and appealing – and

What kind of office layout or design style would you find most appealing?

%	Style
49%	Biophilic
17%	Pastel
15%	A design with a clear, consistent theme (e.g. company colours).
9%	Industrial
7,5%	Classic (Premium)
2%	Mineral
0,4%	Digital
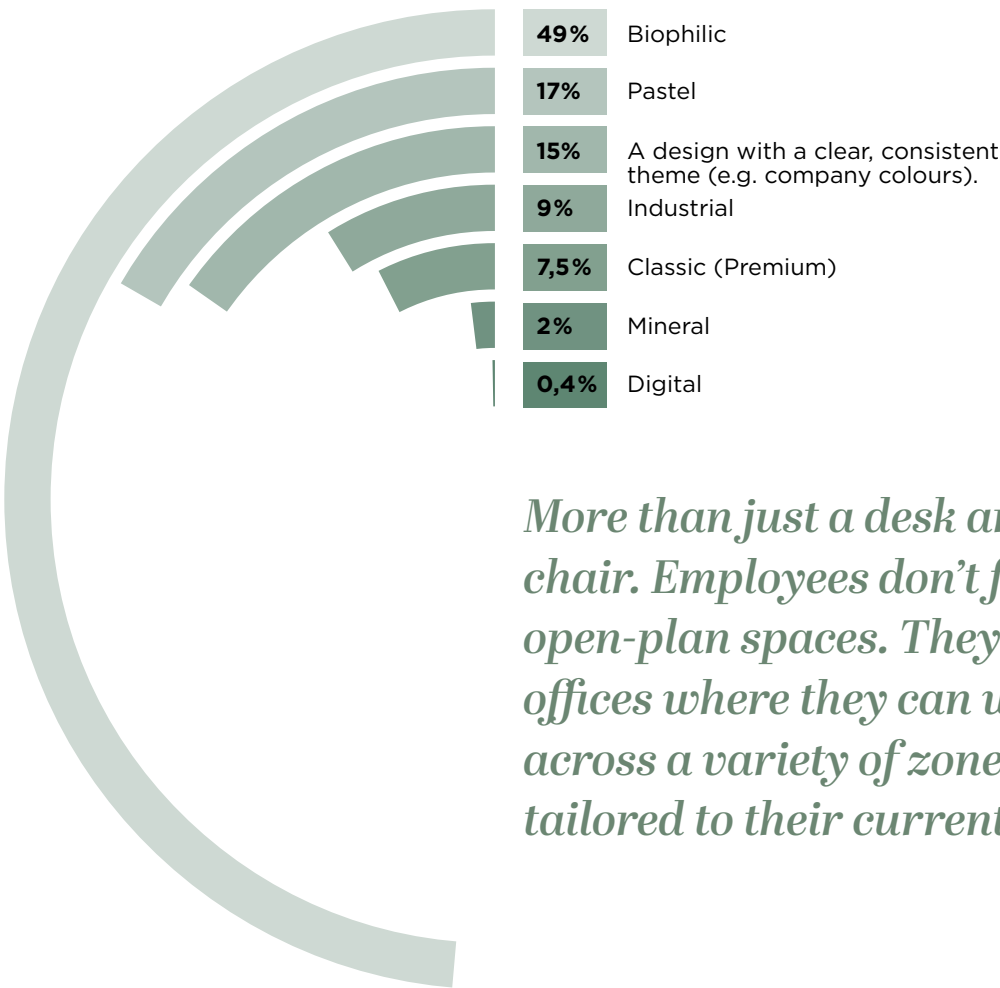
More than just a desk and a chair. Employees don't favour open-plan spaces. They want offices where they can work across a variety of zones, tailored to their current needs.

In today's fast-paced, tech-driven world, full of constant stimulation, we're increasingly drawn to spaces that let us switch off, unwind, and recharge.

So, what kind of office would you most like to work in on a daily basis?

40%	A cosy, homey, café-style office
16%	An office reflecting the latest design trends
16%	A neutral, toned-down office without extras
15%	An office aligned with the company's branding
11%	An office packed with additional attractions
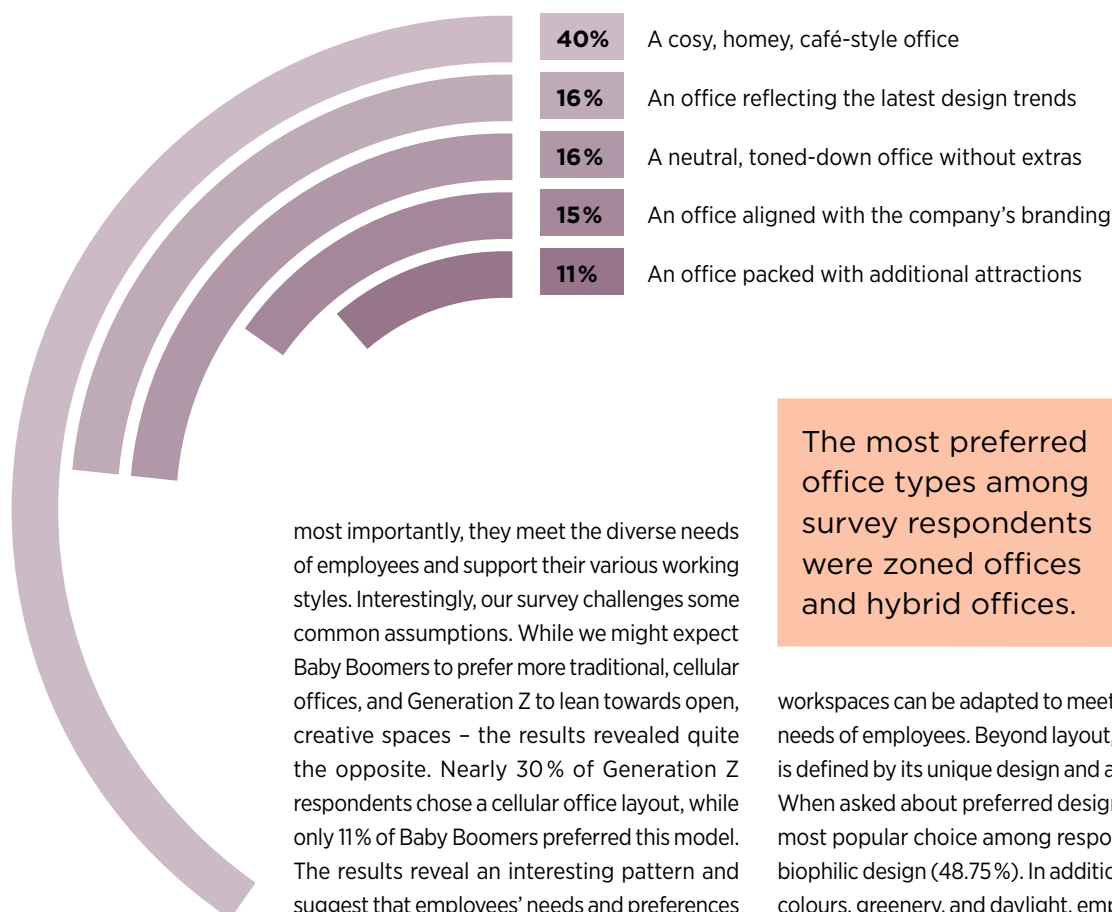
most importantly, they meet the diverse needs of employees and support their various working styles. Interestingly, our survey challenges some common assumptions. While we might expect Baby Boomers to prefer more traditional, cellular offices, and Generation Z to lean towards open, creative spaces – the results revealed quite the opposite. Nearly 30% of Generation Z respondents chose a cellular office layout, while only 11% of Baby Boomers preferred this model. The results reveal an interesting pattern and suggest that employees' needs and preferences around office space may be more complex than originally assumed. This divergence in preferences is worth exploring further to better understand what influences the choice of office layout across generations – and how

The most preferred office types among survey respondents were zoned offices and hybrid offices.

workspaces can be adapted to meet the diverse needs of employees. Beyond layout, each office is defined by its unique design and atmosphere. When asked about preferred design styles, the most popular choice among respondents was biophilic design (48.75%). In addition to natural colours, greenery, and daylight, employees also favour spaces with a cosy, homey, café-like feel (40.14%). This kind of design helps to break down barriers between colleagues and can also reduce stress levels, creating a more relaxed and informal atmosphere.
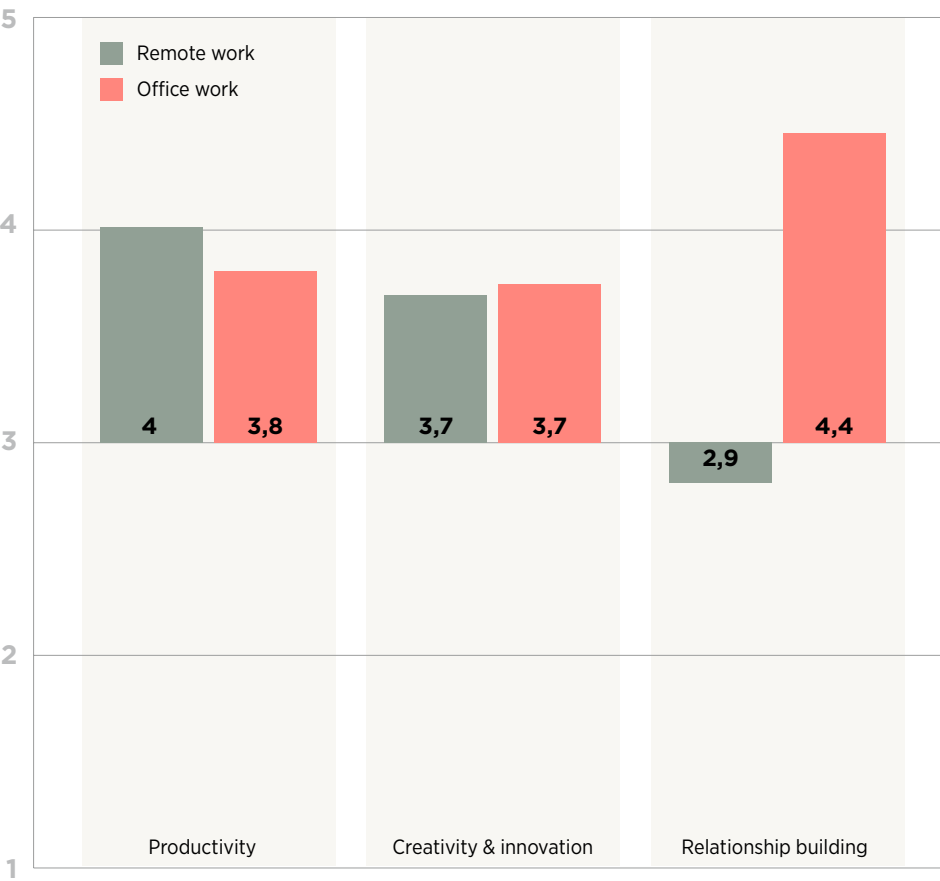
How working style impacts three key aspects of professional performance

Our professional performance rests on three essential pillars: **productivity** – how much we can achieve within a set period, **innovation and creativity** – our ability to come up with new solutions and think outside the box, **relationship-building** – the sense of connection, quality of interaction, and strength of bonds between colleagues. Each of these dimensions plays a vital role. That's why, when designing office space and setting organisational principles, we shouldn't focus on just one of them. High productivity without strong relationships can lead to high staff turnover. Relationships without efficiency result in poor performance. And a lack of innovation leads to stagnation – and

ultimately falling behind the competition.

In our survey, we asked respondents to rate their performance across each of these three areas, comparing how they feel when working from the office versus working outside the office (e.g. from home). This gave us valuable insight into the impact of different work environments. Looking at the aggregated results, there were no major differences in how respondents rated their productivity and innovation – both were viewed positively, whether working in the office or remotely. However, we saw a clear difference in the relationship-building dimension. Respondents rated their connection with colleagues during remote work at 2.86 (negative), whereas

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = very low, 5 = very high), how would you rate your levels of... during:

Legend: Remote work / Office work

	Productivity	Creativity & innovation	Relationship building
Remote work	4	3,7	2,9
Office work	3,8	3,7	4,4

The three dimensions of work vs. age of respondents
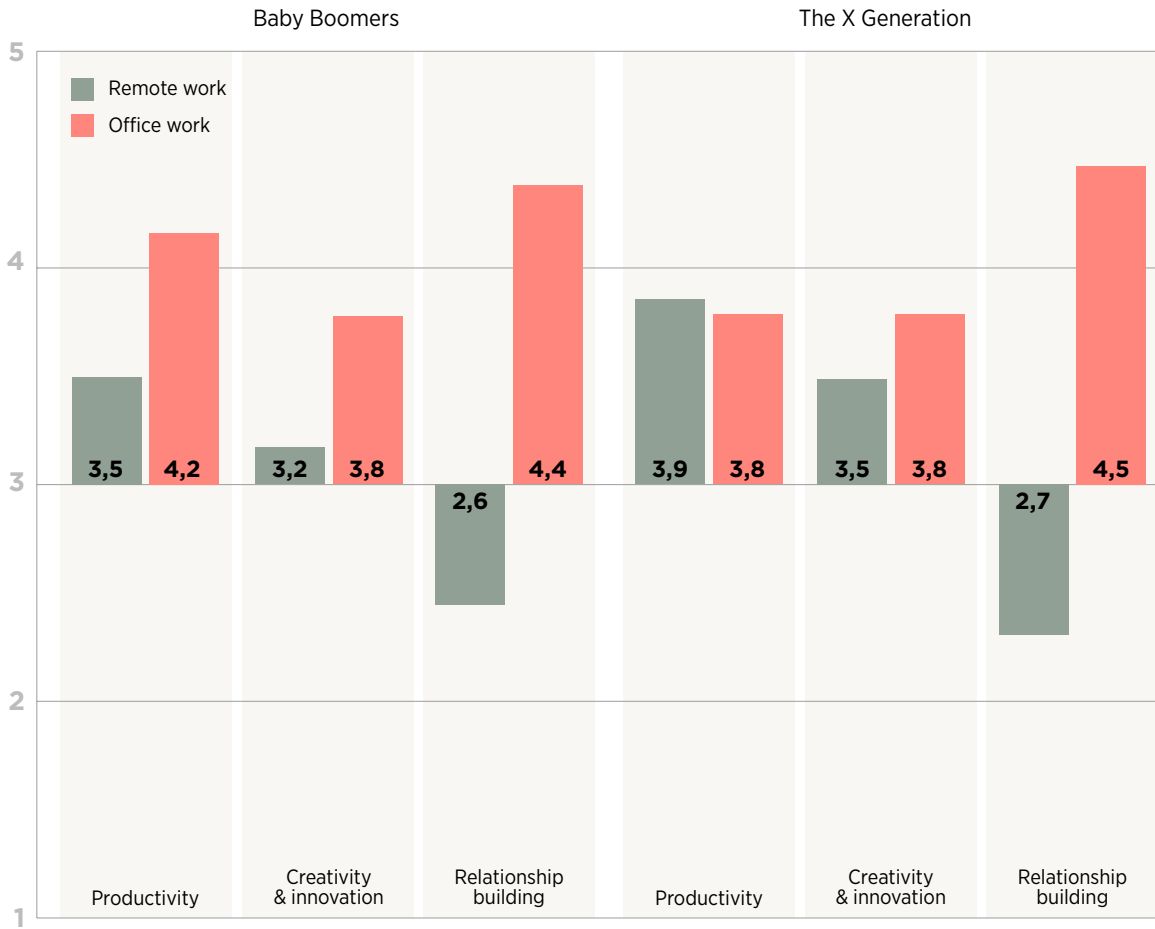
working from the office scored a much higher 4.45 (positive).

The difference in ratings may stem from the fact that in-person interactions, spontaneous conversations, and shared experiences in a physical office help foster closer, more meaningful relationships. Remote work, while it can be effective, often limits these natural interactions. And although online communication is convenient, it can't fully replace the quality of face-to-face encounters – which can weaken the bonds between colleagues over time. We also observed some interesting trends when analysing responses by age group. The Baby Boomer generation (born 1946–1964) gave higher scores across all three areas – productivity, innovation/creativity, and relationship-building – when working from the office. The next group, Generation X, reported no major differences in their ratings, regardless of where they worked.

Generation Y, on the other hand, indicated higher productivity while working remotely. And Generation Z rated remote work more favourably in terms of productivity, creativity, and innovation. This could reflect differences in life and career experiences, as well as the technological environments each generation grew up in. Baby Boomers began their careers at a time when technology was in its infancy and traditional office work was the norm. The internet, though launched in 1969, had little to no impact on their professional lives in the early decades of their careers. So, for them, working from the office was standard – and the use of technology for remote work was minimal. Generation X, who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s, witnessed the rapid rise of computers and the internet. Though technology was becoming more prominent, remote work was still in its early stages and far from the everyday option it is today.

The three dimensions of work vs. age of respondents

The Y generation | The X Generation

Legend:
- Remote work
- Office work

	The Y generation			The X Generation		
	Productivity	Creativity & innovation	Relationship building	Productivity	Creativity & innovation	Relationship building
Remote work	4,1	3,8	3,2	4,0	3,8	2,7
Office work	3,8	3,8	4,4	3,6	3,4	4,4
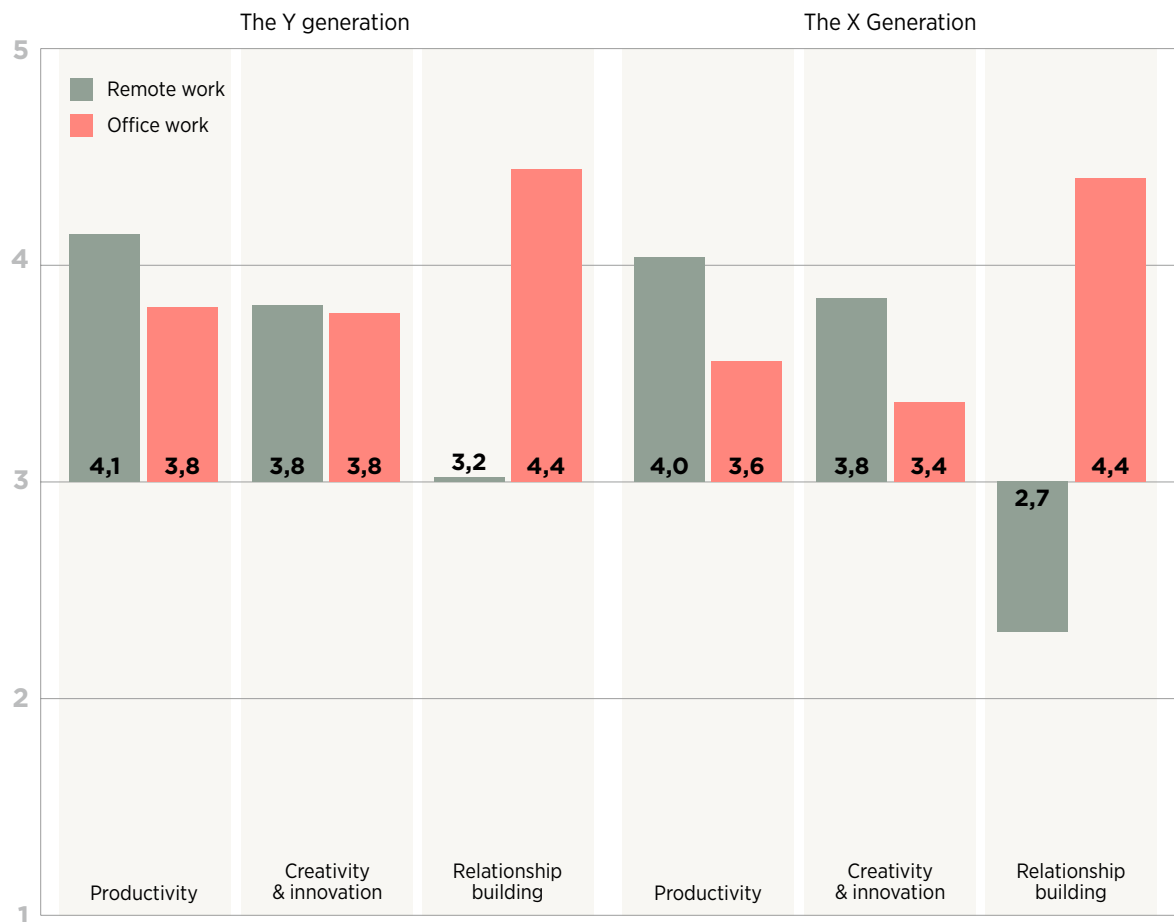
Although Generation X had access to new digital tools, their day-to-day work wasn't yet fully shaped by them – meaning the impact of technology wasn't strong enough to significantly affect how they rated productivity and innovation. Generation Y, who grew up during the rise of the internet and mobile tech, entered a world where remote work became more natural and widely available. Thanks to advanced communication and collaboration tools, Gen Y employees are able to work remotely more efficiently – which is reflected in their higher productivity scores. Generation Z, on the other hand, raised in a fully digital world, is even more integrated with technology and remote working environments. For them, using digital tools to collaborate and develop innovative solutions comes naturally – leading to higher ratings for both productivity and creativity/innovation in remote settings. However, the lack of shared experience across generations – between those who worked in the office-dominated 1980s and 90s and those raised entirely in the digital age – can result in intergenerational tensions, misunderstandings, and a lack of trust in certain areas. Younger generations tend to value self-development, experiences, and exploring the world, which influences their strong preference for working from anywhere. As a result, new types of roles and jobs are emerging – ones that didn't exist before. That's why solutions that once worked well for older generations may now feel outdated and could even hinder productivity today. To reduce such friction, it's worth investing in intergenerational training, encouraging open communication, and creating shared spaces and initiatives that support integration and mutual understanding.

Bound

Fruit Thursdays and free pizza aren't everything

Employees come into the office to meet colleagues and build relationships.

Despite differences in work styles and technologies across generations, one thing remains clear: all age groups agree that direct contact with colleagues plays a key role in strengthening workplace relationships. The opportunity to meet with colleagues (79.93 %), a positive, friendly atmosphere and overall company vibe (67.38 %), and informal interactions and relationship-building (58.78 %) are the key factors respondents consider most imporstant when choosing to work from the office. This shows that regardless of where people prefer to work, being physically present and having real-life interactions are still vital for creating strong bonds and effective collaboration. Interestingly, extra perks like fruit Thursdays or free company pizza ranked lowest, with just 17.56 % of respondents naming them as a reason to work from the office.

So how can companies encourage people to come in? Let's look at what makes people want to avoid the office. Respondents pointed to three main categories: logistics, atmosphere, and focus. The factors that respondents said most discourage them from coming into the office can be grouped into three main categories: logistics, atmosphere, and focus.

Logistics: The most common issue was a long commute (68.82 %), followed by lack of flexible working hours (42.65 %). Today, with the lines between work and home increasingly blurred, people need flexibility and mobility to manage both effectively. That's why long commutes and rigid working hours have a significant impact on employees choosing to work remotely instead. Tackling this issue largely comes down to internal policies and working rules, as well as making thoughtful decisions when it comes to office renovations or potential relocation.

Atmosphere: An unpleasant office atmosphere was flagged by 50.54 % of respondents – a strong reminder that the human factor matters. One way to address this issue is by introducing more spaces for meetings – such as open-plan team areas and additional conference rooms – as well as creating cosy, homey café-style zones that encourage connection and help break down communication barriers. Combating an unfriendly atmosphere also means giving employees opportunities to socialise and spend time together – for example, over meals.

Focus: Issues related to acoustics (47.67 %) and distracting factors (56.99 %) scored highly among respondents, highlighting just how much these elements affect productivity in the office. To improve focus, it's worth considering acoustic solutions such as sound-absorbing panels or phone booths, and creating zones that minimise distractions and make it easier to concentrate. Internal guidelines also play an important role in supporting a more harmonious and comfortable working environment – for example, limiting conversations in open-plan areas or holding meetings in designated rooms. On top of that, work zones should be arranged in muted colours and consistent shapes and patterns to avoid visual clutter, which can also distract and reduce work efficiency.

What encourages you to work from the office?

%	
80,0 %	Meetings and collaboration with colleagues
67,0 %	A positive, friendly atmosphere & company vibe
58,8 %	Informal chats and relationship-building
50,0 %	An ergonomic workstation
48,0 %	Access to office equipment and materials
36,0 %	Face-to-face contact with your manager
32,0 %	Office design and aesthetics
28,6 %	A stable internet connection
26,2 %	Free coffee and tea
25,5 %	A variety of work zones (microzones)
22,2 %	Office location
20,8 %	Acoustic conditions – noise/silence levels
17,6 %	Extra perks like Fruit Thursdays

Mollen

What makes you avoid working from the office?

68,8%	A long commute
57,0%	Too many distractions
50,5%	An unpleasant atmosphere
47,7%	Acoustic conditions – noise/silence levels
42,6%	Lack of flexible working hours
36,9%	Office location
36,2%	Poor working conditions
28,7%	Insufficient amenities
28,3%	Lack of growth and promotion opportunities
28,3%	Uninspiring office design and aesthetics
15,4%	Management-related issues

Smile, Creva

Summary

The results of the survey highlight the crucial role office space plays in creating an environment that supports both productivity and employee relationships. Employees expect offices that are tailored to their needs – including ergonomic solutions, flexibility, and spaces that allow for both focus and collaboration. At the same time, the office remains a key factor in fostering company culture and a sense of connection. Adapting office space to meet these expectations is becoming essential to support innovation, productivity, and team integration in an increasingly dynamic working world.