

SURVEY REPORT | APRIL 2024 | 2nd Edition

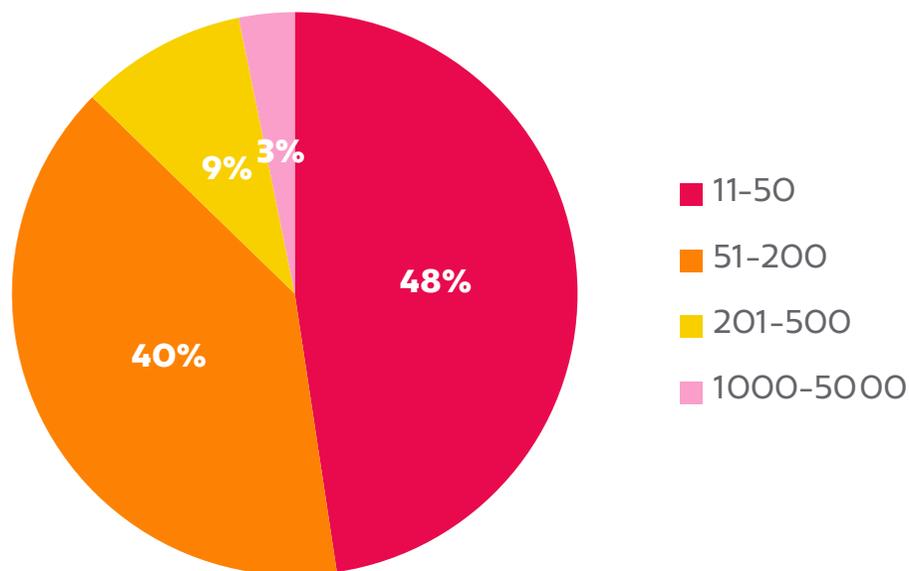
THE ROLE OF FOOD IN THE WORKPLACE



Before we begin the survey

Let's get to know the participants

Company size based on headcount:

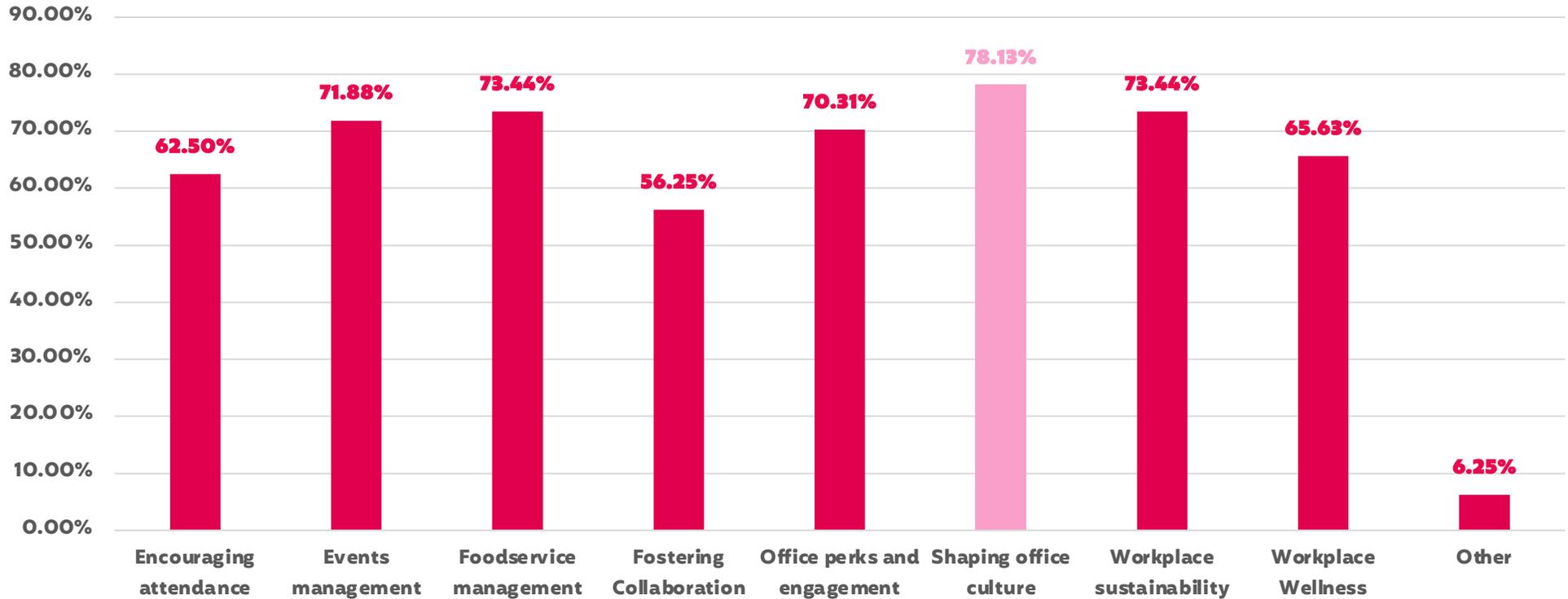


Most survey respondents are employed by companies with 11-50 and 51-200 employees, making up 88% of all participants. As a result, the insights presented in this report primarily reflect the perspectives of individuals in small to medium-sized businesses.

In a nutshell:

- We had 25 eligible participants in our survey between June and August 2023
- We ran the survey for a second time from February to early March 2024, with 39 eligible participants
- This report combines both sets of data from 2023 with 2024, with a total of 64 eligible participants
- 9 participants held business leadership roles, including co-founders, directors, business managers and CEOs
- 48 participants held workplace professional roles, including office, facilities, workplace experience and foodservice managers
- 7 participants held operations or organisational roles, such as operations managers and senior administrators

What responsibilities fall under the participants' remit? (% of total participants who responded to multiple-choice selections)



Our analysis:

This chart reflects the percentage of participants who selected each responsibility. The data reveals that the most common responsibility is 'shaping office culture'.

Other significant areas of our participants' duties include workplace sustainability, event management, and food service management. These top responsibilities reveal a modern focus on fostering unity in the workplace, and the relationship between office and people management.



Foreword by Cristina Covello, Head of Strategic Growth



The workplace has experienced significant transformations in the 2020s (so far). Following the pandemic, the shift to hybrid working models was immense, now a countermovement to bring staff back to the workplace is building momentum.

This report examines how London's offices feed their teams and how workplace professionals and business leaders value their food service.

Some of the results surprised us. Respondents didn't focus on food service to retain or hire talent. Instead, the drive for office food focuses on bringing teams together and boosting collaboration.

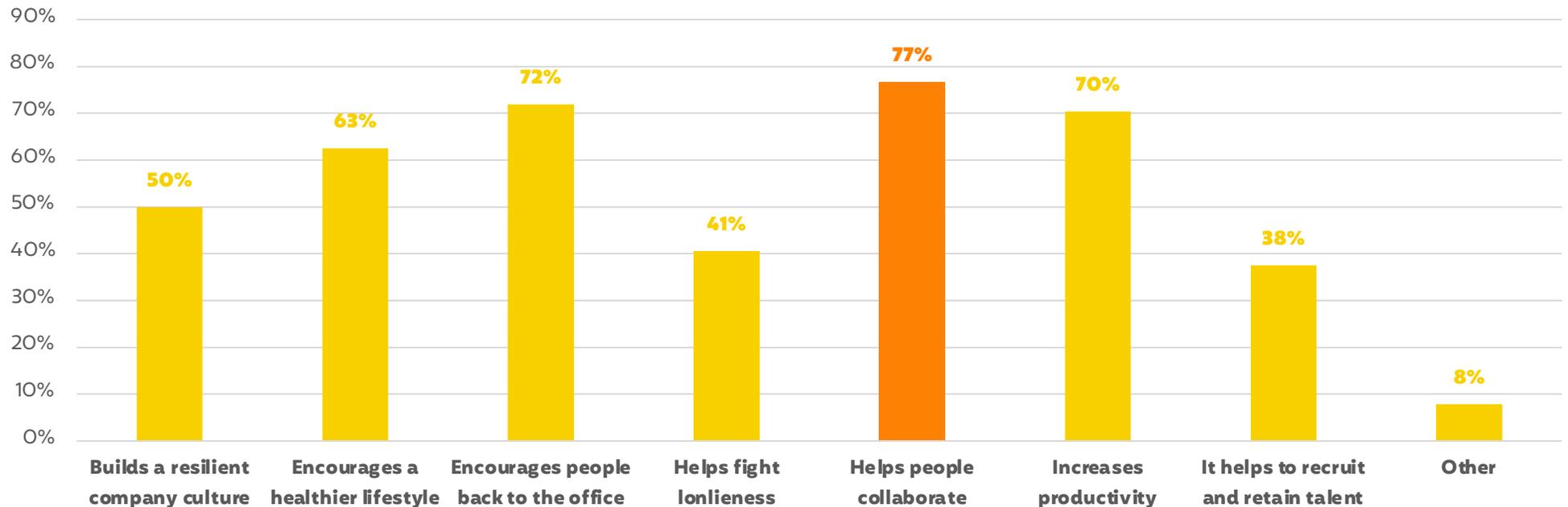
To business leadership and workplace professionals today, foodservice is more than keeping employees fed; it's about community building and creating an environment where teams can find purpose, wellbeing and connection.

PART 1

Survey Feedback

Why do you think food is important in the workplace?

(% of total participants who responded to multiple-choice selections)



Our analysis:

So, what does this data tell us? Participants believe that sharing food enables better collaboration (77%).

Following that, leadership and workplace professionals are motivated by encouraging people to return to the office and increasing productivity.

Participants view mealtimes as more than just a necessity. They see them as opportunities to revolutionise the modern workplace.

By offering an appealing food selection, we can naturally draw people into the office, fostering interactive and productive workdays. This approach subtly but effectively enhances office culture.

Recruitment and retention: not a big deal

Another noteworthy observation from the data is how one of the least selected answers is "it helps to recruit and retain talent" (38%). Participants scored this issue as their lowest concern in our statement scoring section, listed on the next page.

Leadership and workplace professionals are not using office food as a recruitment and retention tool. Instead, they use it to support staff and to make workplaces thrive.



But what about productivity?

Interestingly, one of the top 3 selected reasons for people believing that food is important at work was increased productivity. Yet, when asked about the main reason for providing free food at work, factors relating to productivity were very low (4%) (please see page 12 for reference).

This discrepancy might be due to:

- Workplace professionals have different priorities to their company.
- It's important to note that elements like 'collaboration' and 'employee wellbeing' are the building blocks of productivity. Whilst productivity is scored lower in other questions, options that are related to it are scored highly (such as teamwork or wellness type answers).

We asked participants to rate a selection of statements about food from 1 (totally disagree) and 10 (totally agree). Here are the results:

**Score:
9.1**

"Food at work is a good way to bring employees together"

**Score:
8.5**

"Good food in the office is a great way to build company culture"

**Score:
8.5**

"Shared meals at work encourage collaboration amongst colleagues"

**Score:
8.1**

"Good food in the office is an important perk for your staff"

**Score:
7.60**

"Job satisfaction is improved by good food in the office"

**Score:
7.6**

"Job satisfaction is improved by good food in the office"

**Score:
7.4**

"Good food in the office helps people be more productive"

**Score:
6.6**

"My colleagues are happy with the variety of food choices available at the office"

**Score:
6.6**

"Hybrid working has made it difficult to plan food at work"

**Score:
6.4**

"Job candidates are more likely to accept a job offer if good food is available in the office"

We asked participants to rate a selection of statements about food from 1 (totally disagree) and 10 (totally agree).

Our analysis:

- No statement was rated below a score of '5' in the averages. The results show a consensus that food at work has multiple benefits.
- The top three highest-rated statements relate to food supporting collaboration and office culture. This should be no surprise because participants state that their most significant responsibility is shaping office culture.
- The three statements that participants agreed with the least were related to hiring and retaining talent, the difficulty of catering to a hybrid workplace, and issues with the variety of food.
- This is consistent with participant responses when asked what improvements they'd most like to see. The lack of variety in workplace meals is an issue holding back foodservice from reaching its full potential in many offices.



PART 2

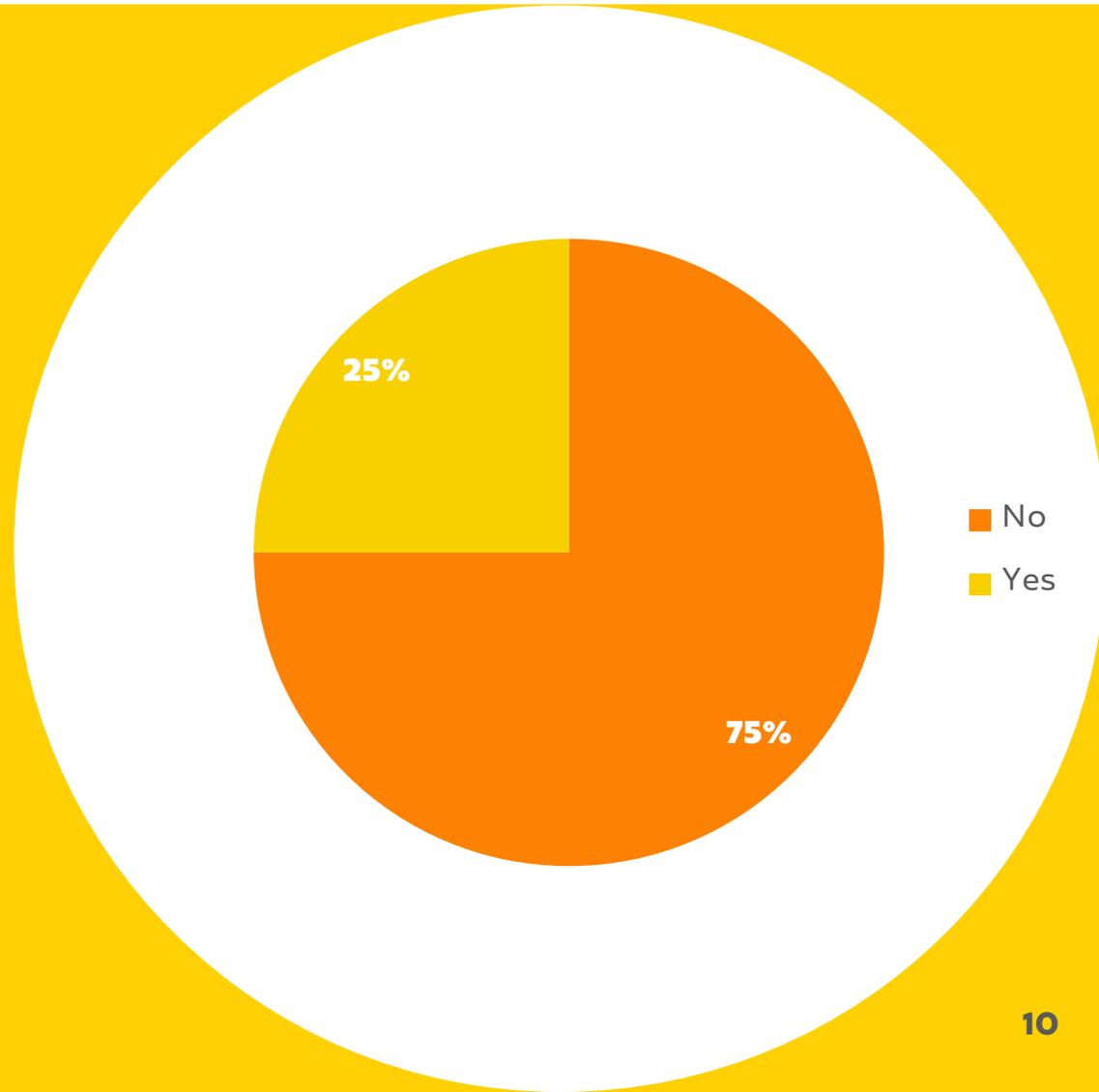
Food at work, right now



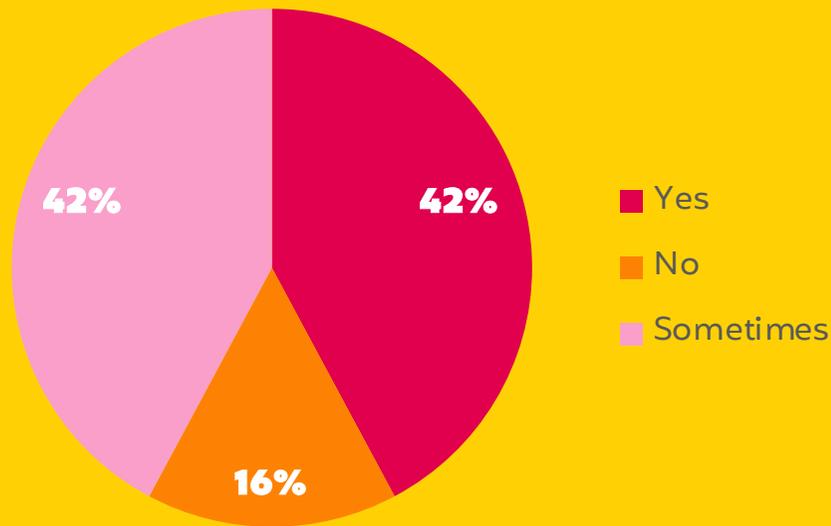
Do you currently have a contract with a catering provider?

Our analysis:

75% of participants responded that they do not have a contract with a catering provider. This could be for any number of reasons, including in-house catering, lack of catering facilities, budget constraints or use of aggregator foodservice providers (such as Just Eat, Deliveroo for Business).



Does your company offer free food as a perk?

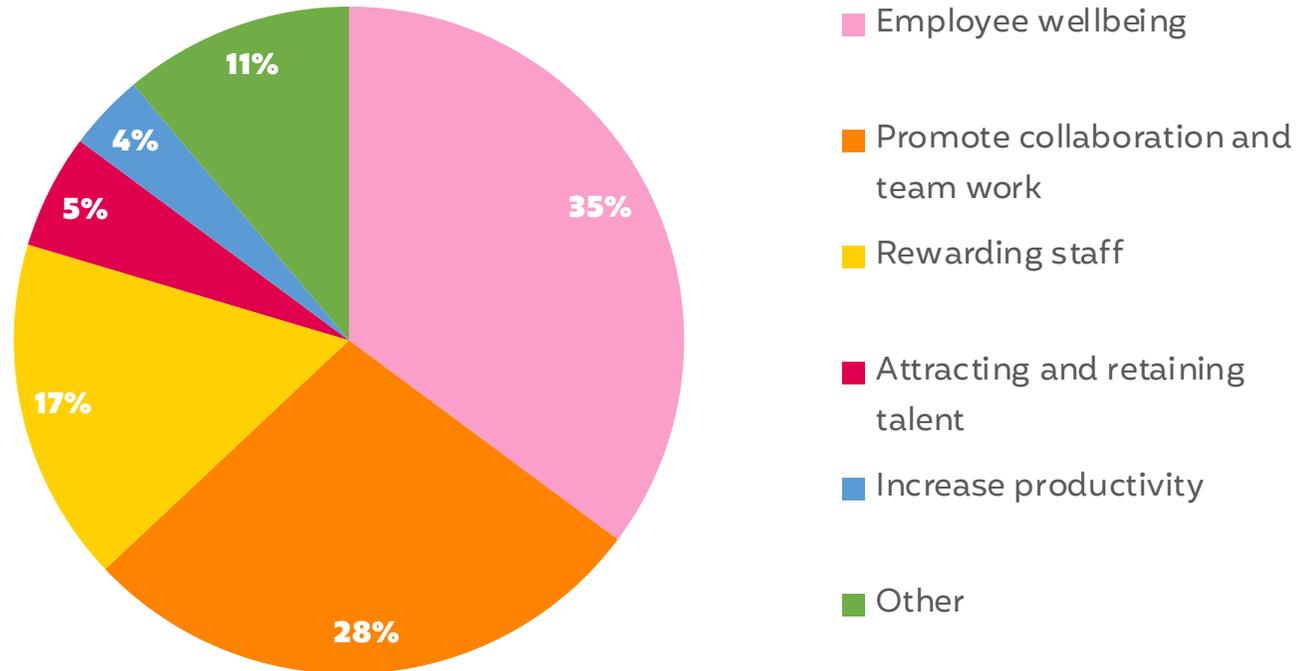


Our analysis:

Despite 75% of offices not having a catering provider, 82% of respondents offer free food in their workplace in some form. This emphasises that whilst many workplaces may not have sourced a catering provider, most organisational philosophies see a free food offering as a component of a thriving workplace.



What is your company's main reason for providing free food at work?



In a nutshell:

Employee wellbeing:

Companies want to feed their teams good food to support their wellbeing.

Promoting collaboration:

Providing free food fosters teamwork and collaboration in the workplace.

Rewarding staff:

Companies demonstrate appreciation and care for their teams with on-site food.

What is your company's main reason for providing free food at work?

Analysis

For those participants who offer free food at work, the biggest priority is to look after employees' wellbeing; 35% of participants saw this as the most significant factor. Following that, promoting collaboration and teamwork was almost as significant, with 28% of participants selecting it as a top priority.

The responses from the participants suggest that companies with free food understand that projects are completed more effectively when a team's wellbeing is cared for, and they feel more familiar and integrated.

Wellbeing

A healthy team provides businesses with a competitive advantage. Put simply, there is a wellbeing benefit from looking after employees. Free food can play a major part in a company's wellbeing strategy.

Sharing food together is the binding force of families, friends and partnerships, and goes hand-in-hand with wellness. Social moments are important for our mental, and even physical health.

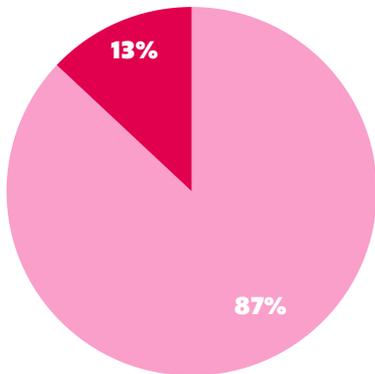


Summary: The role of food today is less about attracting, rewarding and retaining talent. This is a stark difference from how it was before the pandemic, based on our experience speaking with clients.

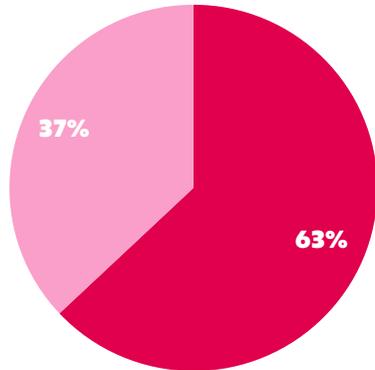
Currently, companies are working hard to help employees achieve a work/life balance and provide the social and collaborative culture that employees yearn for.

What free food does your company provide?

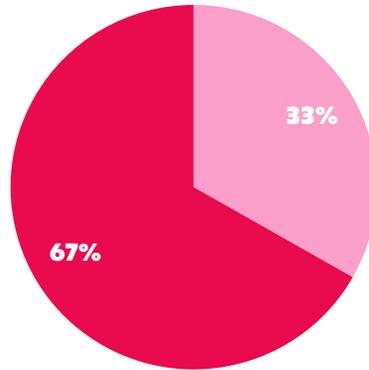
Snacks and Drinks



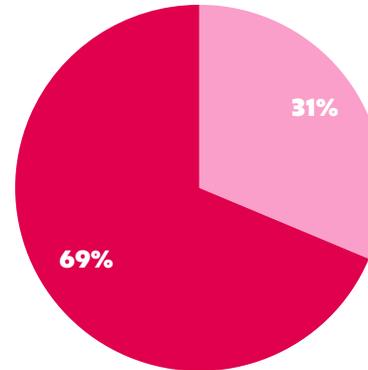
Lunch



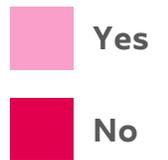
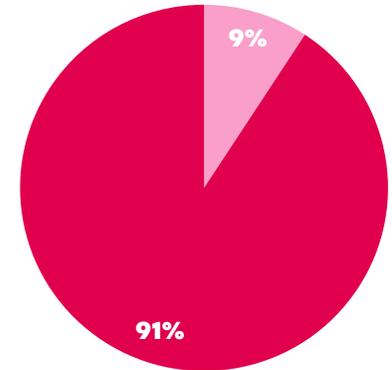
Only at free events and socials



Breakfast



Dinner



What free food does your company provide?

Our analysis:

- **Snacks are a top choice due to accessibility:**
87% chose 'yes'

This is a good option for businesses to explore the benefits of 'free service' offerings for staff without getting into major contract or budgetary commitments.

- **Free lunch services can bring people together:**
37% chose 'yes'

There's no better way to encourage employees to take a proper break from work whilst connecting with their teams. Whilst not an overwhelming majority, it's still impressive that over one third of participants have committed to offering free lunch.

- **Free food at events and socials**
33% chose 'yes'

One third of participants offer their teams free food at events and socials. Events and socials allow companies to test the waters of more substantial free food offerings and reward their teams with a thrilling experience.

- **Breakfasts offering value:**
31% chose 'yes'

Whilst not as favoured as offering a free lunch service, it's worth noting that there is only a 6% difference between the two. Not only does breakfast energise staff at the start of the day, it's also a cost-effective way of providing a free food offering (compared to lunch catering costs).

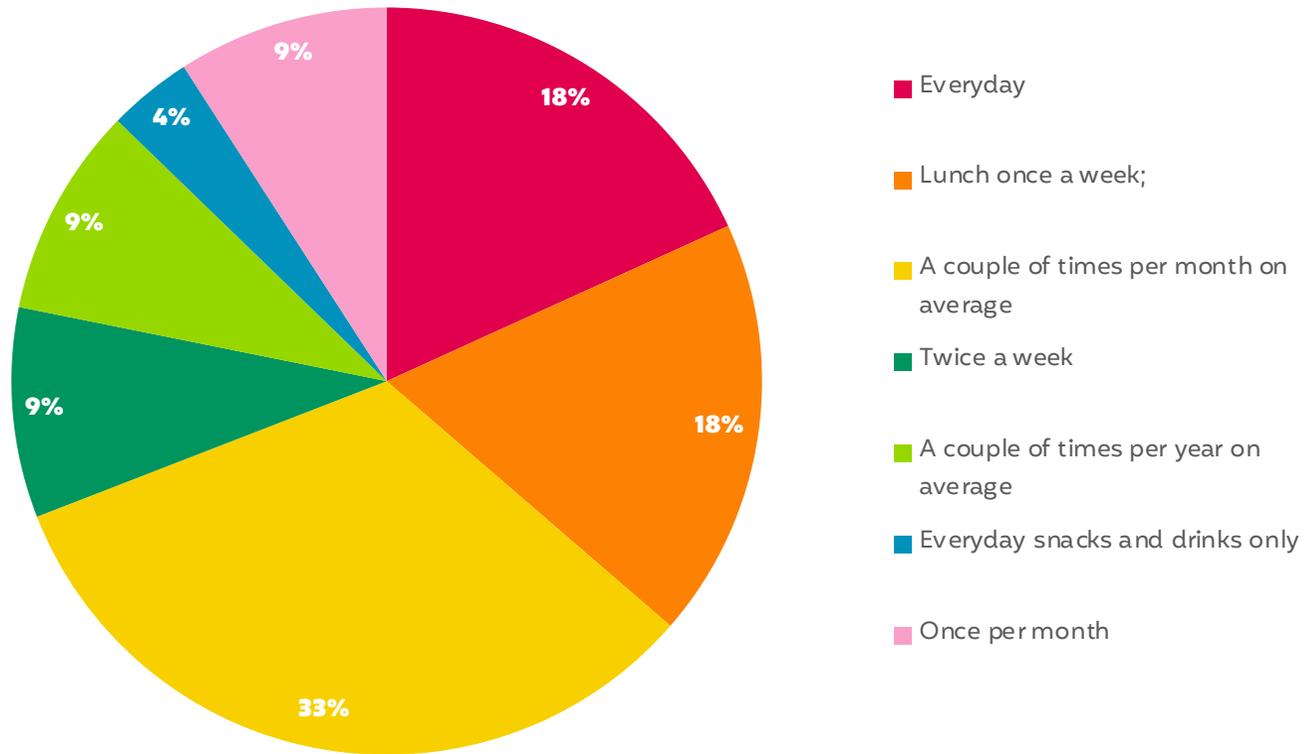
- **Dinners, a niche offering:**
9% chose 'yes'

Only 9% of participants offer their employees free dinners, and no wonder - this is a niche and premium offering that won't suit all office cultures.

This perk saves time for employees and supports activities like exercise or evening classes, making it a particularly appealing perk within fast-paced environments. Not to forget, international businesses in London may need to work later because of time zone differences.



How often does your company provide free meals?



Our analysis:

Justifying free daily meals can be difficult for those who have yet to experience the benefits.

The response to this question demonstrates that companies are waking up to the power of free workplace food, with 76% of participants providing some degree of free meals.



What improvements would you like to see made to the food at your workplace?

Analysis

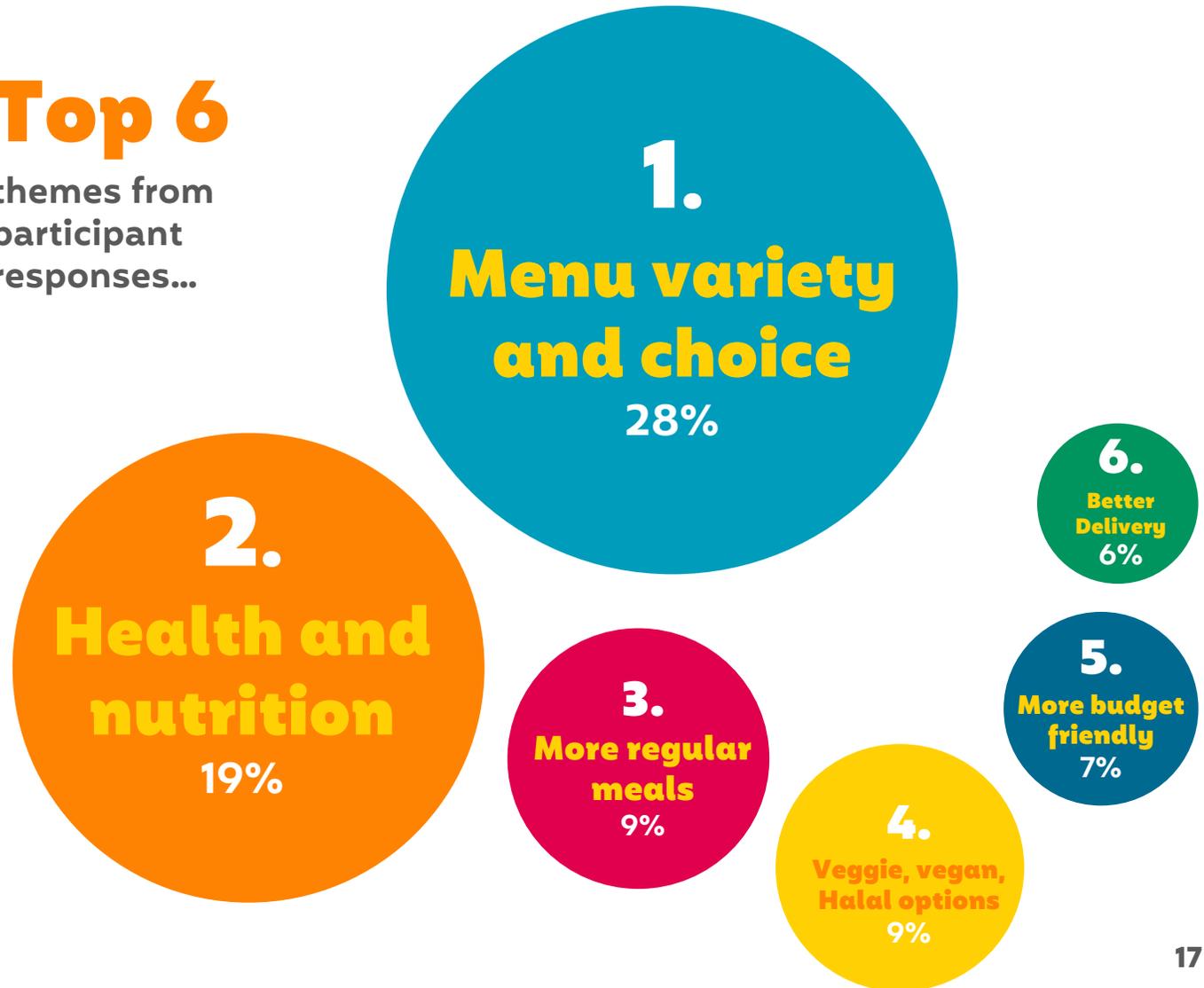
Participants indicated a wide range of ways they'd like to improve their workplace, selecting eleven desired improvements overall. However, the most desired quality was the need for more extensive variety and choice in the menu offerings: being the favoured improvement for 28% of participants.

With so many food preferences, requirements and tastes, participants require a foodservice with a diverse offering to feed their teams happy. This trend also provides an explanation as to why 9% of participants listed 'veggie, vegan and Halal' as a key area for improvement.

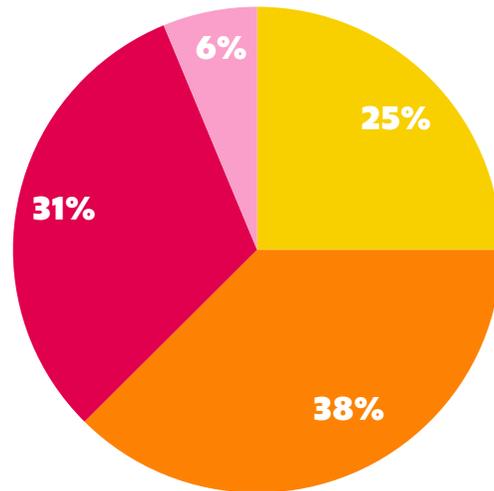
19% of participants stated that health and nutrition was a key area for improvement, indicating that employee health and wellness is a central issue to leadership and workplace professionals.

Top 6

themes from participant responses...



Why doesn't your workplace offer free food?



- Senior leadership doesn't understand the value
- We don't have the budget
- It's too hard to predict when people will be at work
- Other

16% of survey participants work at companies that do not offer free food. The main reasons given were relatively evenly split, with only a 13% difference between the highest and lowest scoring points. Budget, predicting in-office headcounts, and lack of senior leadership are all significant barriers to staff enjoying a free-food offering.

It's a tough sell to argue that free food is a worthwhile budget item. After all, evidence-based research that directly links food to productivity or workplace culture is scarce.

Workplace professionals play a crucial role in advocating for free food, demonstrating that it is an investment that will bring a positive return rather than just a 'nice-to-have' office perk. Similarly, caterers must step up and show how they can help overcome the barriers preventing free food in the office.

As workplaces continue to embrace wellness and hybrid work models, the benefits of free food may become more apparent, leading to changes in strategies and budget allocation. Discover more about the connection between food and culture in our ['Catering for Culture'](#) guide.



It's a wrap!

This report asked workplace professionals and business leaders whether or not food in the workplace is significant. The overall response was a resounding yes; food is an invaluable tool for supporting a thriving office environment.

Foodservice is seen primarily as a vehicle for wellness, collaboration and positive culture, above job retention and office attendance (still significant).

It's important to recognise that the role of food in the workplace is an integral part of protecting employee wellness; provide a free lunch and an employee is encouraged to take their

complete lunch break. Lunch breaks help fight loneliness by creating meaningful moments with work friends.

This survey shows a decreased demand for on-site kitchens, with most companies opting for delivered food options. Moreover, the variety of food in the workplace is critical for a successful foodservice.

With 84% of participants providing some form of free meals in the workplace, the power of food is becoming recognised as a meaningful way of helping teams develop and support their success.





Psst.

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Fooditude's delivered
office catering?

Get in touch