

SURVEY REPORT | SEPT 2023

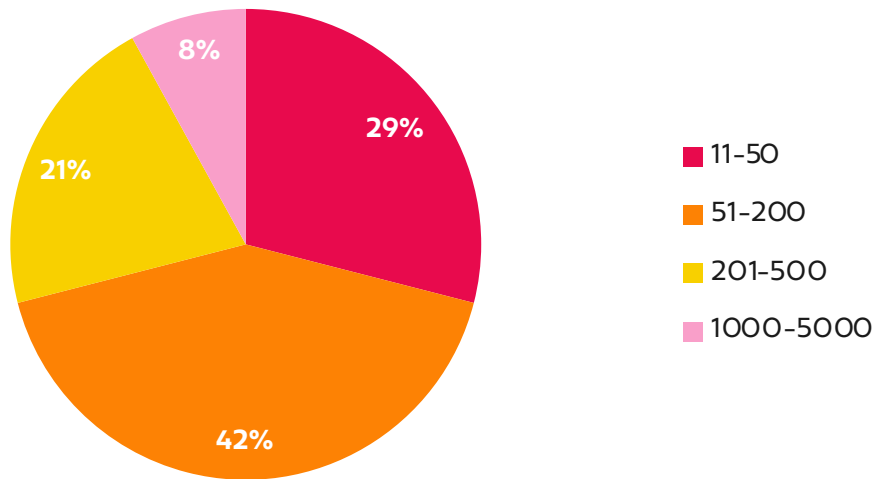
THE ROLE OF FOOD IN THE WORKPLACE



Before we begin the survey

Let's get to know the participants

Company size based on headcount:



The majority of people who responded to our survey work for companies between 51-200 employees, which are considered in the UK to be small to medium-sized enterprises.

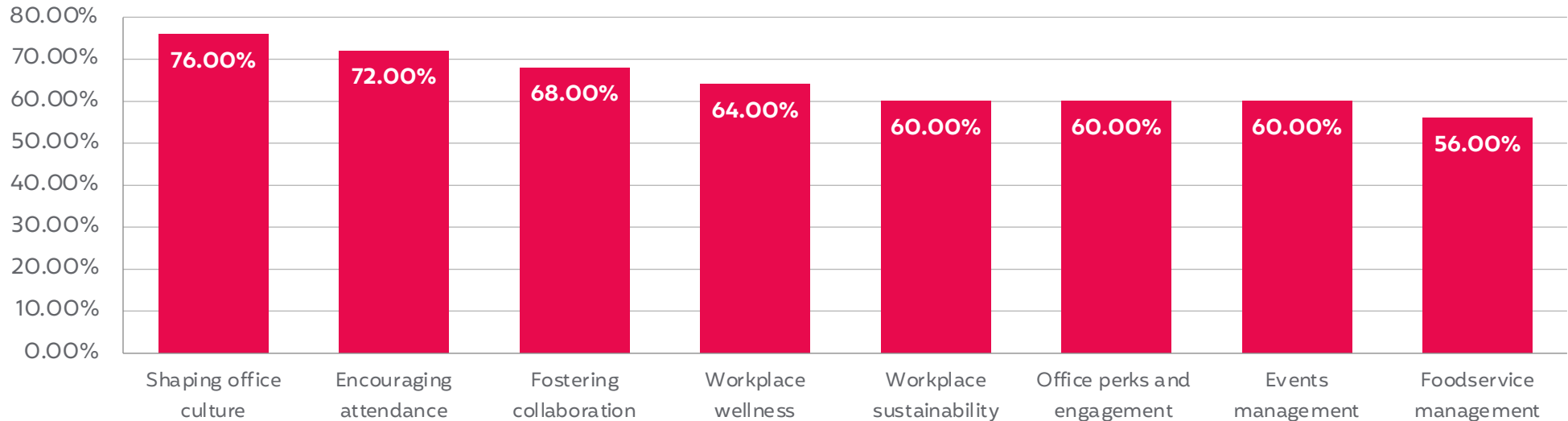
For the remaining participants, there was an equal percentage of 29% working for companies with under 50 employees and 29% working for companies with over 201 employees.

In a nutshell:

- We had 25 eligible participants in our survey between June and August 2023.
- 8 participants held business leadership roles, including co-founders, directors, business managers and CEOs.
- 17 participants held workplace professional roles, including office, facilities, workplace experience and foodservice managers.

What responsibilities fall under the participants' remit?

(percentage breakdown of multiple-choice selections)



Our analysis:

The results show a diverse range of responsibilities that fall under participants' duties. There is a strong emphasis on office culture, encouraging attendance and fostering collaboration.

The three top responsibilities in the poll suggest that companies have tasked their leadership and workplace professionals with creating a stronger sense of togetherness and community within their office environments.



Foreword by Cristina Covello, Head of Strategic Growth



The workplace has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. With the rise of hybrid work models, businesses are rethinking how they provide food and beverage services to their employees. But, what exactly are they thinking?

This report looks at how London's offices feed their teams and how workplace professionals and business leaders value their foodservice.

Some of the results surprised us. Respondents didn't focus on foodservice as a way to retain talent; something that was often seen [as one of the primary benefits pre-pandemic](#). Instead, fostering collaboration and creating a positive workplace culture was perceived to be more critical.

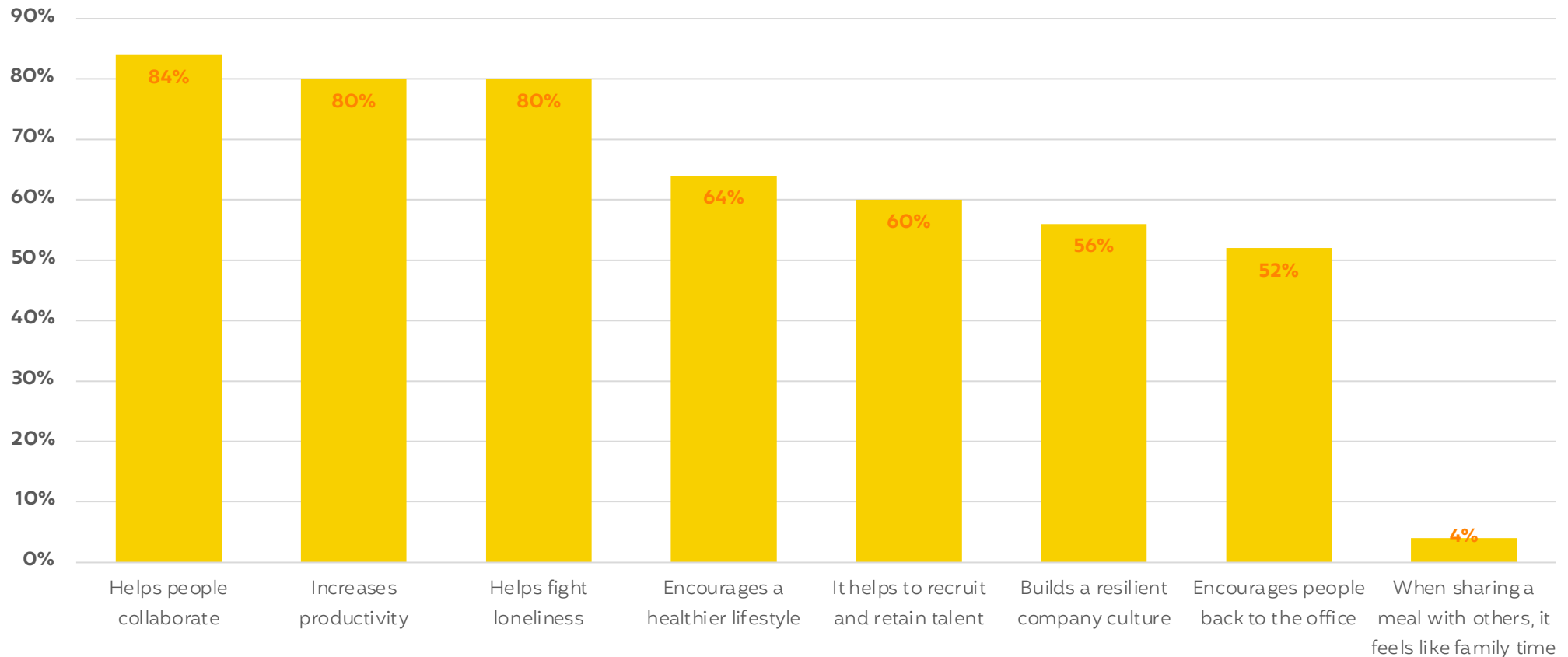
To business leadership and workplace professionals today, foodservice is more than keeping employees fed; it's about community building and creating an environment where teams can find purpose in a hybrid working world.

PART 1

Survey Feedback

Why do you think food is important in the workplace?

(percentage breakdown of multiple-choice selections)



Our analysis:

So, what does this data tell us? Participants believe that sharing food brings people together in the workplace, leading to collaboration, productivity and reduced loneliness.

With 84% of participants believing that food helps people collaborate, and 80% agreeing it increases productivity and fights loneliness: there is a strong indication on what motivates leadership and workplace professionals to provide food in the office. **Mealtimes are seen as opportunities for creating a more social environment** that lends itself to collaboration.

Considering that the Red Cross reports that over one-in-ten workers often or always experience aspects of loneliness at work, this data suggests that participants view mealtimes as part of the solution for making people feel more connected.

Another noteworthy observation from the data is how one of the least selected answers is "encouraging people back into the office". While office attendance remains a concern, it is considered less of an issue compared to the other factors to why food is important.



But what about productivity?

Interestingly, one of the top 3 selected reasons for people believing that food is vital 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.

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:
9.36**

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

**Score:
8.88**

"Shared meals at work encourage collaboration amongst colleagues"

**Score:
8.88**

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

**Score:
8.56**

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

**Score:
8.40**

"Good food in the office is a perk that helps retain talent"

**Score:
8.36**

"Good food entices my staff to come into the office more often"

**Score:
8.08**

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

**Score:
7.88**

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

**Score:
7.64**

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

**Score:
7.24**

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

**Score:
6.56**

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

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

Our analysis:

- There wasn't much difference between the scores. However, the results show where participants are aligned in their thinking and illustrates a consensus that food at work has multiple benefits.
- The top three highest-rated statements relate to food supporting collaboration and office culture. Considering that **participants state their most significant responsibility is shaping office culture**, this should come as no surprise.
- Variety of food in the office scored lowest. This is consistent with participant's 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.
- No statement scored below six. Overall, this suggests that participants agree that food influences vital aspects of the workplace, including; **recruitment** (7.24 score for 'job candidates are more likely to accept a job offer'), **improving office attendance** (8.36 score for 'Good food entices my staff to come into the office more often') and **productivity** (7.88 score for 'Good food in the office helps people be more productive').



PART 2

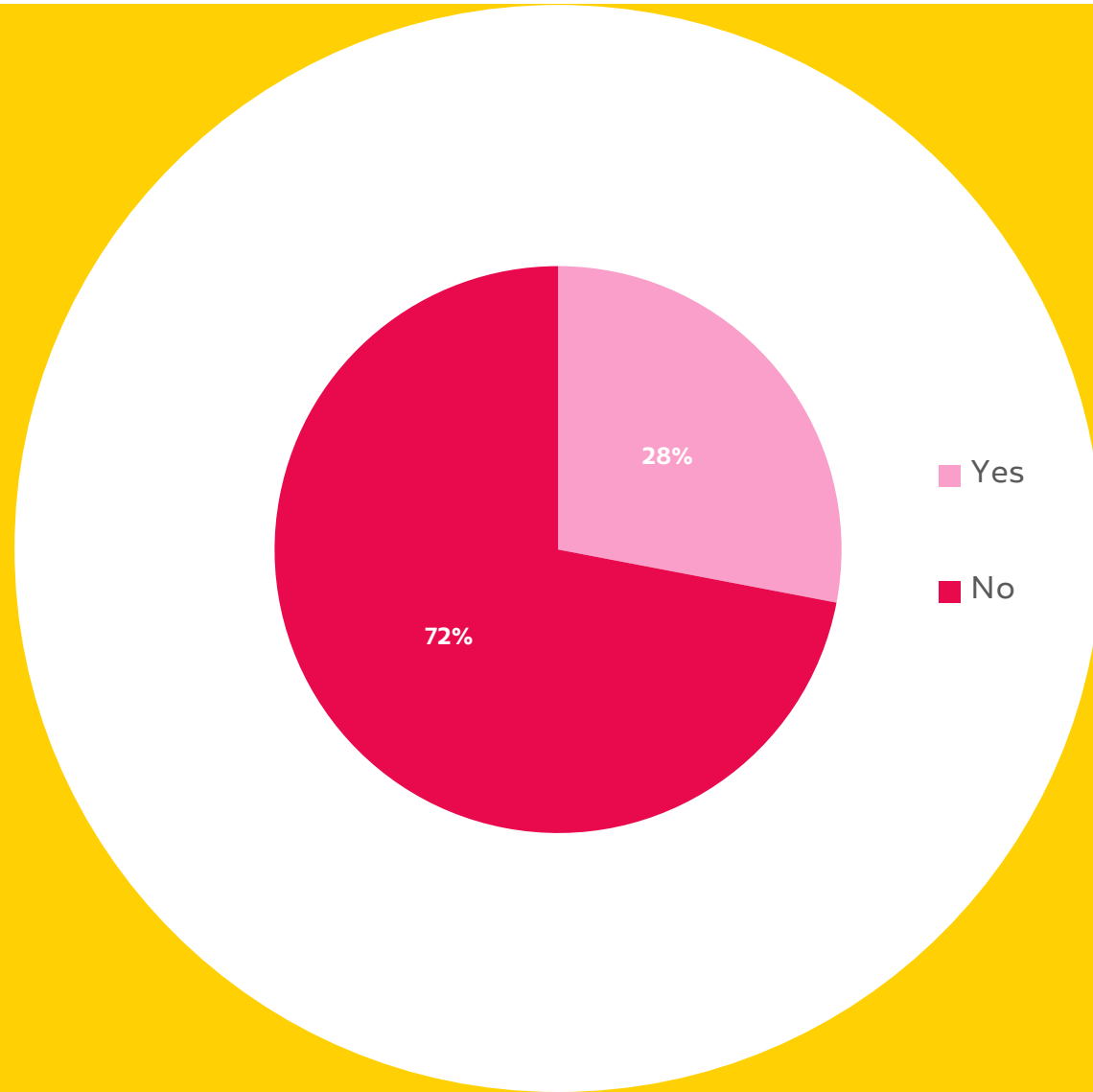
Food at work, right now



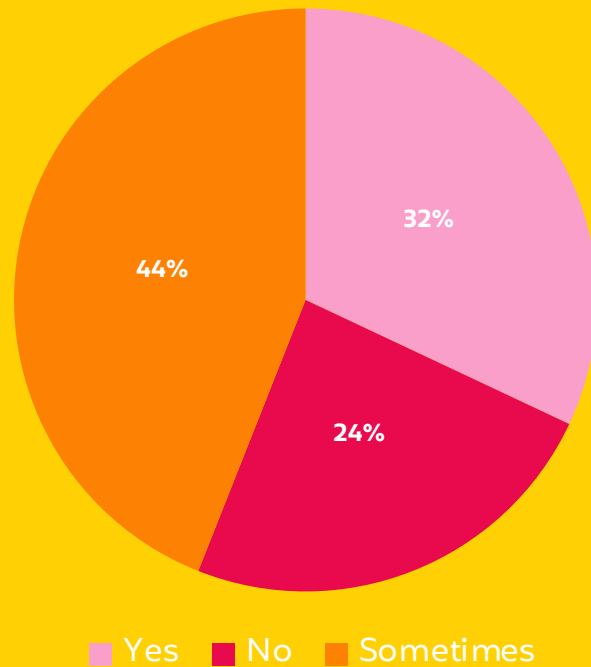
Do you currently have a contract with a catering provider?

Our analysis:

72% 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?

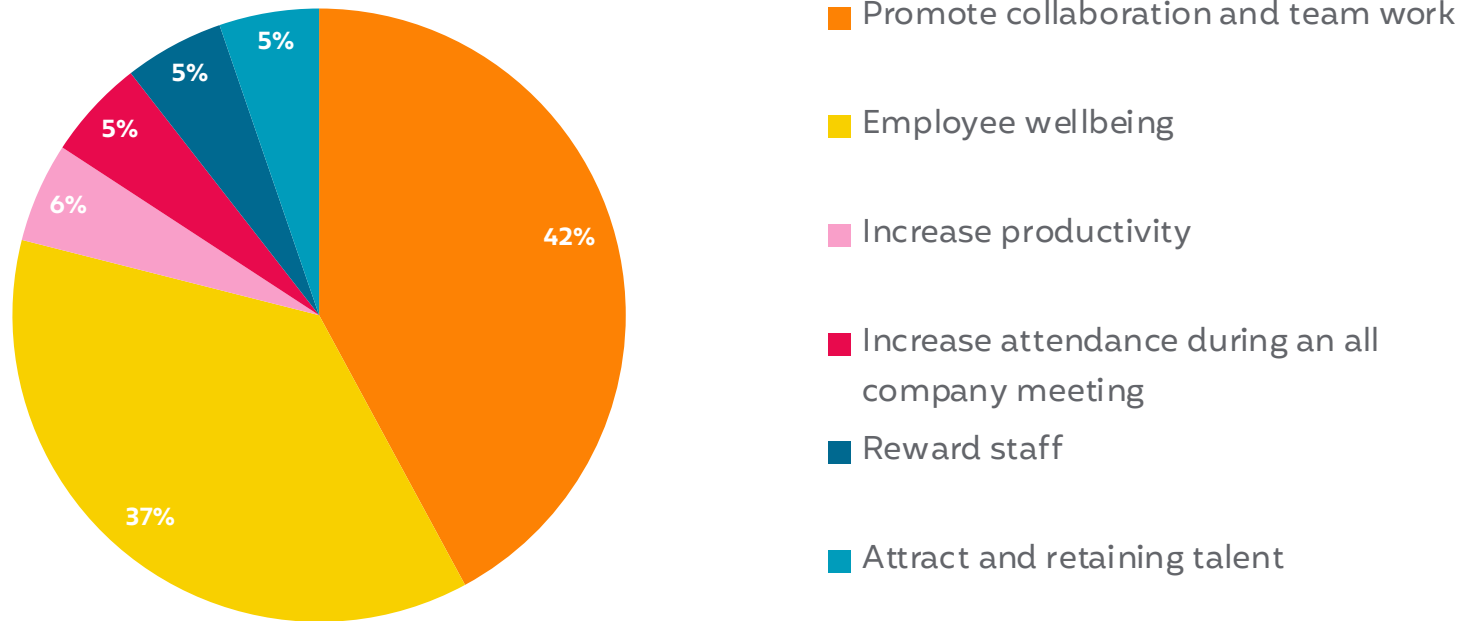


Our analysis:

Despite 72% of offices not having a catering provider, 76% 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:

Promoting collaboration:

Providing free food fosters teamwork and collaboration in the workplace.

Employee wellbeing:

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

Food as catalyst:

Bringing people together during mealtimes builds a stronger office culture.

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

Analysis

For those participants who offer free food at work, a big priority is to promote collaboration and teamwork within the workplace; 42.1% participants saw this as the most significant factor. Following that, considerations for employee wellbeing are almost as significant with 36.8% 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 teams are more familiar and integrated.

Sharing food together is the binding force of families, friends and partnerships, and now some companies are turning to the power of food as a catalyst for successful teamwork.

Since Fooditude started catering for innovative workplaces in 2005, we have found that our diners' wellbeing, food and productivity are inextricably linked. Therefore, participants choosing 'employee wellbeing' over 'increased productivity' makes sense. If happiness is prioritised when serving food, productivity, engagement and satisfaction will follow.

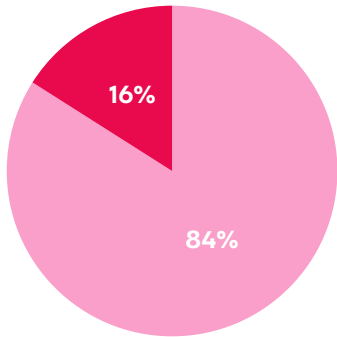
Summary: The role of food today is less about attracting, rewarding and retaining talent. This is a stark difference from how it was before the pandemic, based on our experience speaking with clients.

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

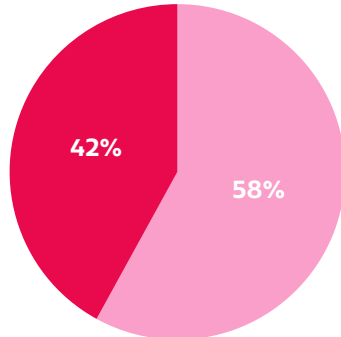


What free food does your company provide?

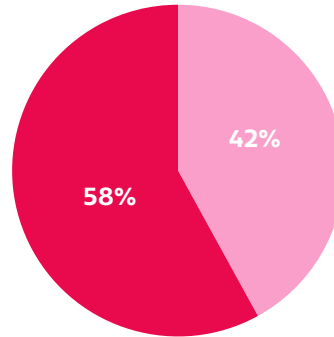
Snacks and Drinks



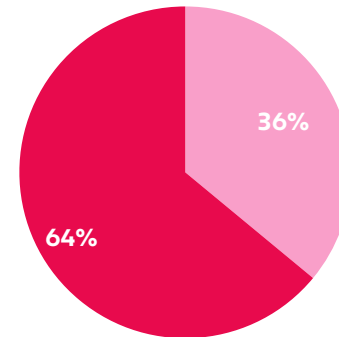
Lunch



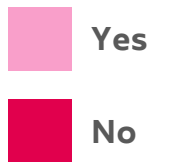
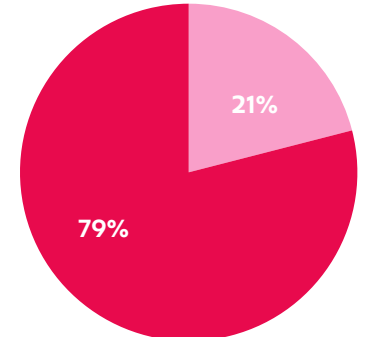
Breakfast



Only at free events and socials



Dinner



What free food does your company provide?

Our analysis:

- **Snacks are a top choice due to accessibility:**
84% chose 'yes'

This is a great way 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:**
58% chose 'yes'

There's no better way to encourage employees to take a proper break from work whilst connecting with their teams. No wonder free lunches were a popular choice amongst participants.

- **Breakfasts offering value:**
42% chose 'yes'

Whilst not as favoured as offering a free lunch service, a considerable 42% of surveyed companies offer free breakfasts. Not only is this a great way to energise staff at the start of the day, **it's also a cost-effective way of providing a free food offering to teams** (compared to lunch catering).

- **Free food at events and socials**
36% chose 'yes'

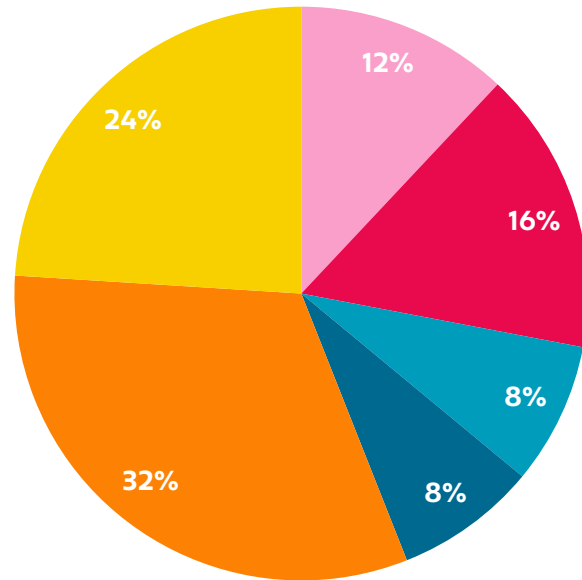
Only 36% of participants offer their employees free food at workplace events and socials. Not all workplaces have a culture where employees want to be social outside of working hours, and workplaces may prefer to focus on their daily offerings instead.

- **Dinners, a niche offering:**
21% chose 'yes'

Only 21% 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?



- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Every day
- Every couple of months
- A couple of times per month
- No free meals

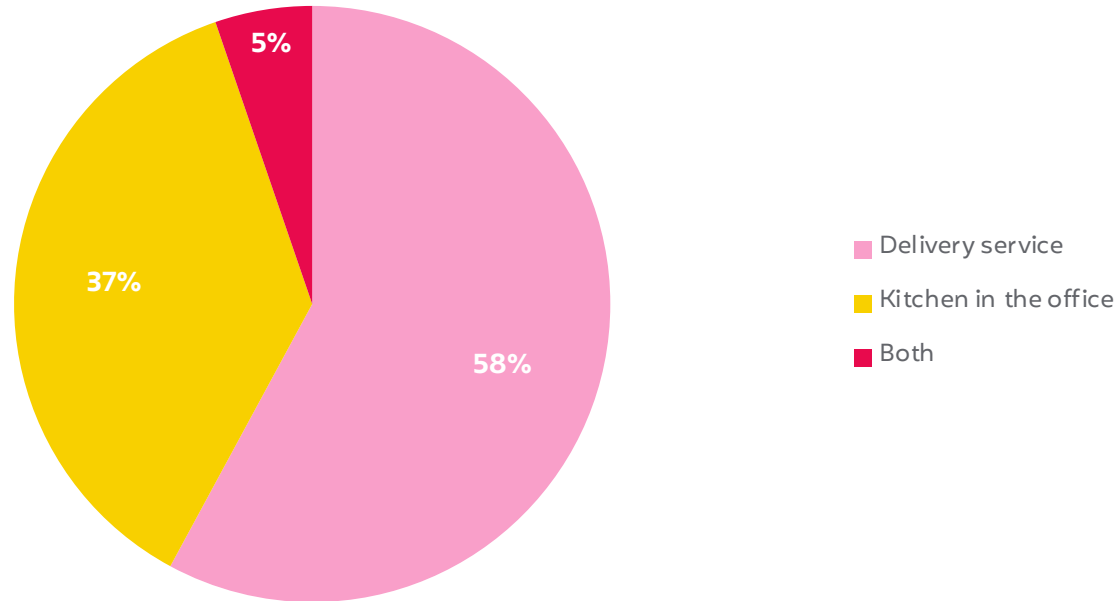
Our analysis:

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.



Does your company have a kitchen in the office or do you rely on delivery services?



Our analysis:

Workplaces are turning to delivery services to feed their teams, with over 57.9% of participants relying on delivery services, demonstrating a move away from traditional 'on-site' kitchens. Where most companies have adopted hybrid working models, a delivered type of catering can provide a more flexible way of providing food. Companies are looking to avoid the risks and burdens associated with on-site kitchens, such as running costs during low-occupancy days in the office.

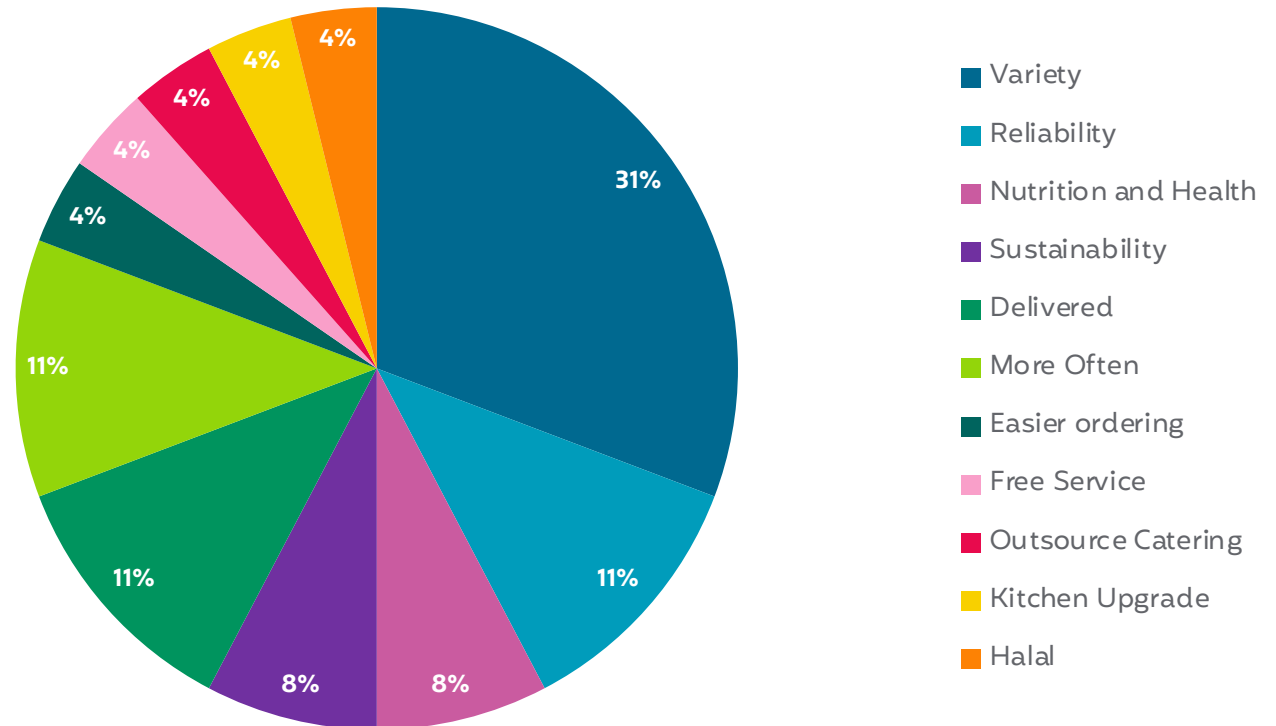
What improvements would you like to see made to the food at your workplace?

Analysis

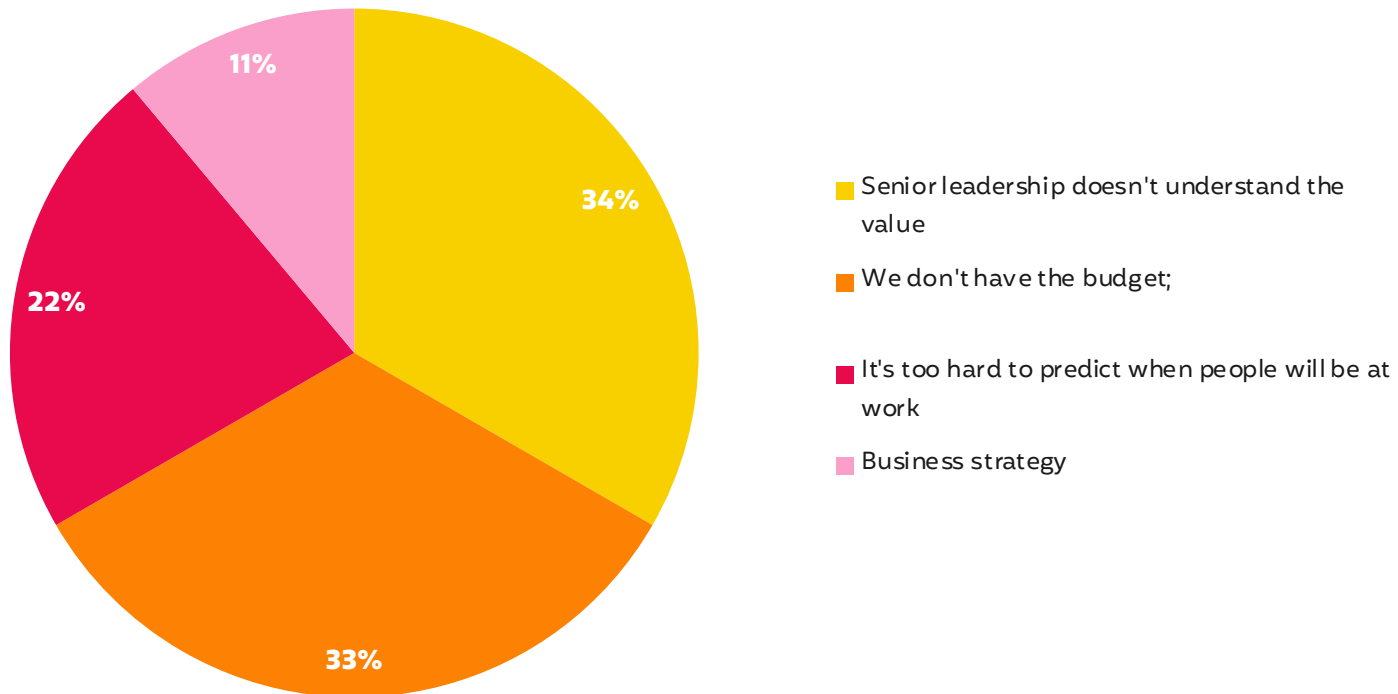
Participants indicated a wide range of ways they'd like to improve their workplace, selecting eleven desired improvements overall. However, the most desired quality was the need for more extensive variety in the menu offerings: being the favoured improvement for 30.8% of participants.

With so many food preferences, requirements and tastes, participants require a foodservice with a diverse offering to feed their teams happy.

Participants felt that reliable food was the second biggest concern: this matches with our experience as office caterers – where clients require consistency they can depend on. Employees want to know that when they come into work, they are guaranteed to enjoy a great standard of food.



Why doesn't your workplace offer free food?



According to this survey, two thirds of workplaces without free food cite the lack of understanding from senior management and budgetary constraints as key issues.

There is little evidence-based research to support the link between food and productivity or even workplace culture. Therefore, workplace professionals struggle to show that food is an investment that will bring a positive return, rather than just a 'nice-to-have' office perk.

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.

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 collaboration and positive culture, above job retention and office attendance (still significant).

It's also 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 76% 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.

Want to hear about
Fooditude's delivered
office catering?

Get in touch