

May 2026

The Gen Z Workplace Report

What over 500 Gen Z office workers told us about focus, wellbeing, and office design



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Executive Summary

A new survey of 503 UK office workers reveals a growing disconnect between how workplaces are designed and what the next generation of workers actually need. The findings point to a clear, fixable problem.

66%

office supports
focus

53%

more productive
at home

29%

stress-related
absence

50%

prefer alcohol-
free socials

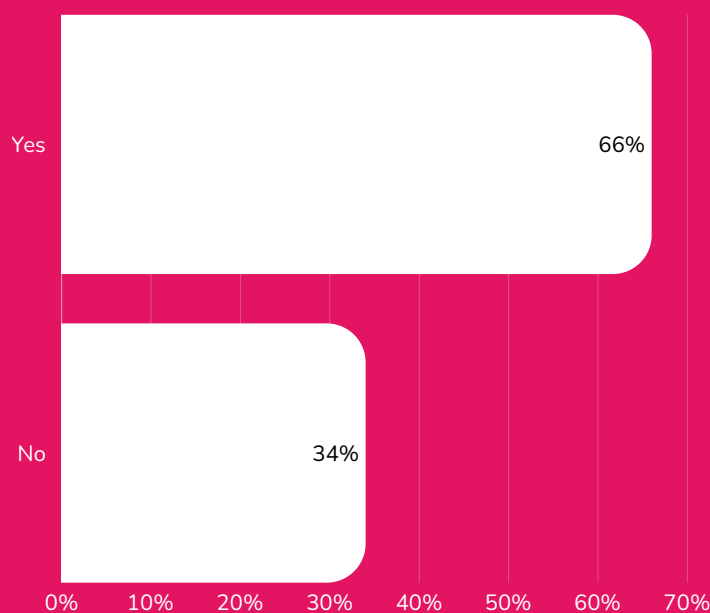


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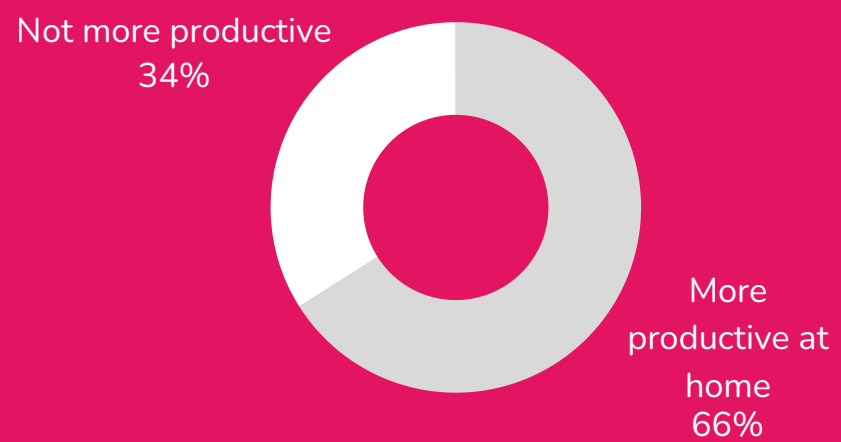
One in three workers say their office gets in the way

When we asked 503 UK office workers whether their workplace design allows them to focus effectively, 34% said no. That is not a minority concern. In a team of 10, three people are working against their environment every day.

Q1. Does your workplace design allow you to focus?



Q2. More productive working from home?



"These two numbers need to be read together. The majority of Gen Z workers feeling more productive at home is not evidence that the office has failed. It is evidence that too many offices were never designed for how people actually work. Noise, lack of privacy, poor lighting, these are solvable problems. They are not a verdict on office life."

Hannah Prescott, Interior Designer, Diamond Interiors

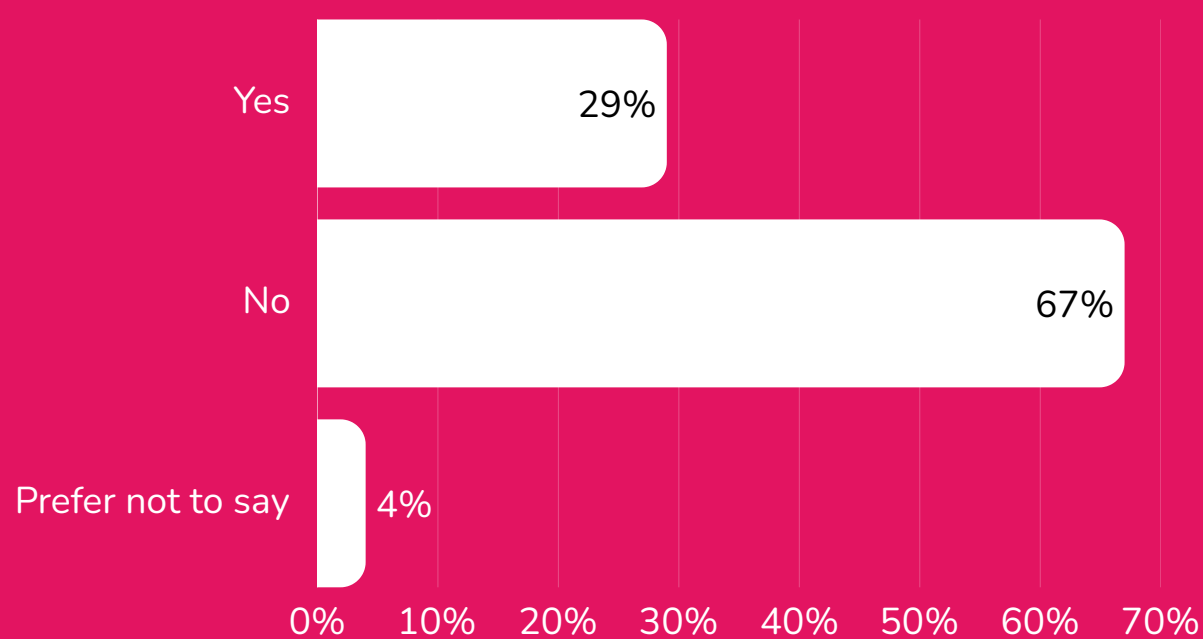


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Nearly a third of Gen Z workers have taken stress-related absence

29% of respondents confirmed they have taken time off work due to stress or mental health reasons. A further 4% declined to answer, a group whose responses, had they been shared, would almost certainly push the real figure higher.

Q3. Have you taken time off due to stress or mental health?



147

respondents in every 503 surveyed have experienced stress-related absence. In a 200-person business, that is roughly 58 people.

"Wellbeing in the workplace is not a nice-to-have. The physical environment plays a direct role, acoustic comfort, access to natural light, quiet spaces, and the ability to control your surroundings all have measurable effects on stress levels. When we design an office, we are not just deciding where the desks go. We are deciding how people feel when they come to work."

Rebecca Waller, Head of Design, Diamond Interiors

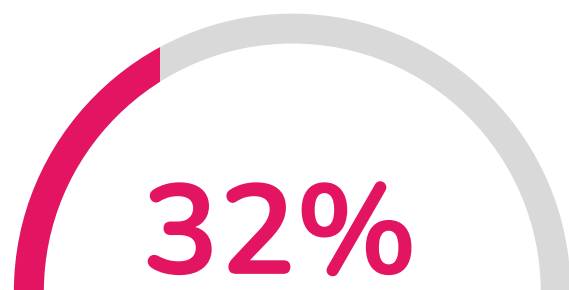


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What Gen Z expects beyond the desk

Two further findings reveal the cultural expectations shaping how this generation relates to their employer. One in three feel pressure to work outside contracted hours, and the workforce is evenly split on whether work social events should involve alcohol.

Q4. Pressure to work outside hours



feel pressure to overwork

Q5. Prefer alcohol-free work socials

50% Yes

50% No

Pictograph: 1 icon = 10% of respondents



"The 50/50 split on alcohol-free socials is the kind of finding that should prompt a real conversation in HR. It tells you that a significant proportion of your workforce could either be excluded from or feel uncomfortable at social events that have alcohol at their centre. An inclusive workplace culture is not just about policy - it is about the choices employers make around how they bring people together."

Rebecca Waller, Head of Design, Diamond Interiors



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The office can win Gen Z back. But it has to earn it.

The data from this survey does not suggest Gen Z has written off the office. It suggests Gen Z has written off offices that are not designed for them. The distinction matters - because it means the problem is solvable. Organisations that invest in purposeful, people-first workspace design are not just improving productivity metrics. They are making a statement about what kind of employer they intend to be.

Key takeaways

- 1 34% of Gen Z workers say office design prevents focus, a direct productivity cost for employers.
- 2 53% feel more productive at home, but the cause is fixable poor design, not a preference for isolation.
- 3 Nearly 1 in 3 have taken stress-related absence. Environment and wellbeing are inseparable.
- 4 Half prefer alcohol-free socials, a signal that workplace culture needs to broaden its definition of inclusion.

"We commissioned this research because we kept hearing the same thing from clients: 'our people say they prefer working from home but we are not sure why.' The answer, more often than not, is that the office was not designed to compete. That is the conversation we want to start with this data."

Rebecca Waller, Head of Design, Diamond Interiors

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About Diamond Interiors

Diamond Interiors is a workplace design and fit-out specialist based in the North West of England. We work with businesses across the UK to create workplaces that perform, from initial strategy and space planning through to design, build, and handover.

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