



JUST EAT
for business

More than a meal:



***How food is
shaping workplace
culture in 2025***

Workplace Food Trends report
from Just Eat for Business

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Foreword by Dr Audrey Tang,

Chartered Psychologist
(CPsychol) and multi
award-winning business
author and broadcaster

The role of the psychologist is threefold - to understand a behaviour, to explain it, and to impact positive action through that learning. As such, it is always a privilege to collaborate with organisations who seek to do just that. Moreover, with the significant role food plays in human interaction - in my own heritage, the question that shows the most love is not “Are you OK?”, but “Have you eaten?” - it is a pleasure to be, again, writing the Foreword for the More Than a Meal report with Just Eat for Business.

In and of itself, food - the natural nutrients, healing properties, and sustenance it holds - is conducive to wellbeing. As we nourish our body, brain and immune system, we finely tune our ability to function effectively in what can be, at times, a challenging environment. However, food brings a further, emotional influence - connectivity.

In every culture, food plays a significant role throughout our lives that goes beyond subsistence. Family occasions, religious or cultural practices, and simply ‘meeting for dinner’ bring ritual and reverence around the act of eating together. Polly Jaman, one of the founders of Mental Health First Aid (England), reminds us that one’s own history is often wrapped up and passed down through traditions around eating - with particular tastes and aromas being ‘an invitation back to ourselves’. As such, despite the fast pace of life, preserving our meal times can yield benefits personally which then reflect in professional performance.

While organisational research often cites the productivity benefits of the lunch break - a time to recharge which impacts positively on afternoon focus; an opportunity to debrief or discuss team issues; improvement in morale and satisfaction, especially where lunch can be eaten on site, is provided, or

subsidised by the organisation - this report also seeks to recognise the benefits food brings to personal wellbeing.



The Importance of Lunch Time

Organisations would be wise to appreciate, and perhaps enhance, the humble lunch break. Food is a delicious opportunity for organisations to connect culturally and personally with their teams, making people feel seen and valued as individuals. Imagine seeing the availability of a dish you thought you’d have to fly continents for, done well in the canteen; or vegan or vegetarian options that aren’t ‘nut roast’ or ‘beetroot falafel; or even an on-site café that stays open for a hot meal after sunset in certain months of the year.

While the pace of the ‘to do list’ is unrelenting, mental health professionals are always advocating the importance of ‘stopping - just for a moment’. Lunch time is a built-in stop - why not elevate and celebrate this opportunity to refuel our body, and our soul.

Introduction

Lunch breaks are a universal feature of British workplaces, yet as our views are often limited to our own individual habits, many of us remain unaware of the ways that workplace food culture is evolving. The small, seemingly unconscious decisions we make about our midday meals - whether that be grabbing the usual sandwich or trying something different, to eating alone or with colleagues - reveal notable shifts in workplace dynamics when examined collectively.

At the quarter-century mark, the modern office is at an interesting crossroads. The traditional structures that once defined workplace dining are being reimagined by a new generation of workers who don't view food solely as food, but as a fundamental component of positive workplace culture and personal wellbeing.

The *More Than a Meal* report presents comprehensive research into how British workers are approaching lunch in 2025, unveiling generational divides, regional differences, and industry-specific trends that are reshaping the modern workplace landscape. Through analysis of extensive survey data from UK office workers and insights from Just Eat for Business' platform, we uncover the complex, but important, relationship between our food choices and workplace productivity, satisfaction, and company culture.



Our findings challenge many of the conventional assumptions about workplace dining. While the past few decades have seen the gradual erosion of the traditional lunch hour, younger generations are now reclaiming the full break as a non-negotiable part of their working day. Meanwhile, the demand for communal dining experiences is also resurging as businesses continue to recognise food's unique role in fostering collaboration and team connection.

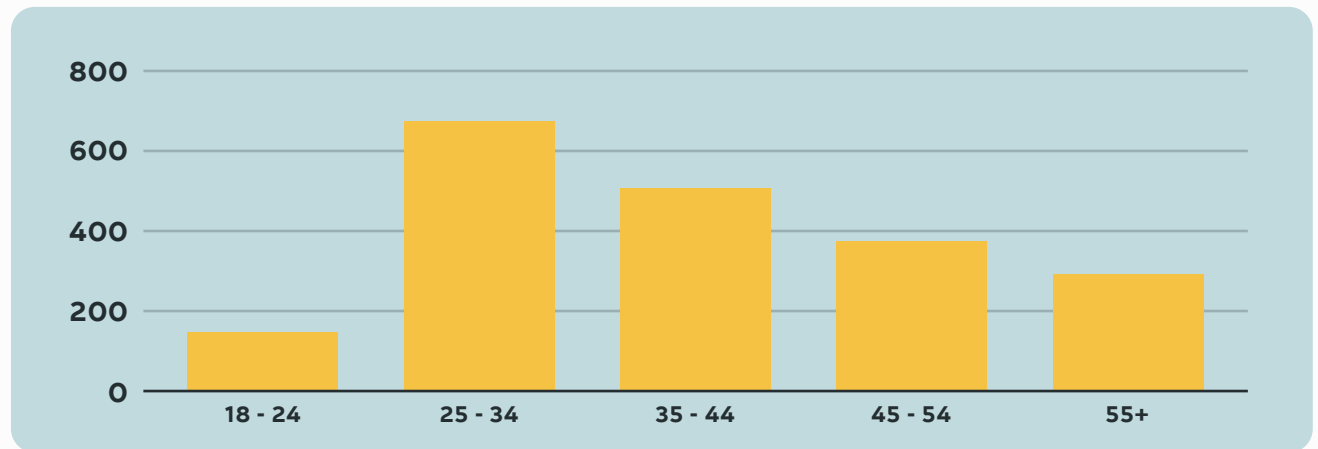
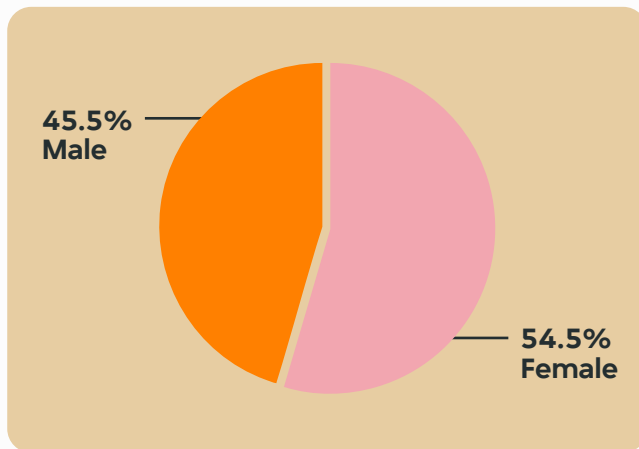
As businesses navigate ongoing discussions about remote work policies and employee retention, one thing is evident - the stakes have never been higher for businesses to get workplace food culture right. Our research demonstrates that food strategies can play a vital part in the workplace, impacting everything from retention and loyalty, to daily productivity. The businesses that understand and respond to these evolving expectations will gain a competitive advantage and put them above the rest when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent.

This report examines not only what we eat at work, but also when we eat, how we eat, and critically, why these patterns matter when striving for business success. Through understanding the psychology behind workplace lunch choices and their implications, leaders can create environments that truly nurture both individual wellbeing and business success.



Methodology and research approach

This report is based on results from a comprehensive survey of 2,003 UK office workers across diverse demographics, industries, and regions. The nationally representative sample comprised 912 male and 1,091 female respondents, with age distribution including 152 participants aged 18-24, 672 aged 25-34, 505 aged 35-44, 390 aged 45-54, and 284 aged 55 and over.



Findings were analysed using multiple demographic and professional splits, including generation, location, company size, seniority, and industry, among other areas of interest.

The survey research was supplemented by Just Eat for Business' proprietary ordering data from 2024, revealing compelling trends in workplace food consumption patterns. Expert insights from leading workplace food consumption patterns Dr Audrey Tang, as well as testimonials from restaurant partners, further informed the findings for this report. All data and quotes in this study are from these sources, unless otherwise noted.

A man wearing a white cap with an orange diamond logo and glasses is seated at a wooden table, eating. He is holding a piece of bread in his right hand. In front of him is a plate with food, including what looks like meat and vegetables, and a glass of water. Other people are visible in the background, also eating.

The Evolution of Workplace Lunch Culture

Our research has revealed a momentous shift in workplace lunch culture across different generations, and by culture, we not only mean the foods that we eat, but also the way that we eat. This is immediately evident through our choices to take a lunch break or not, and for how long.

Lunch breaks have, over decades, been shrinking. As far back as the 19th century, companies offered their employees longer communal dining experiences; 'desk lunches' were relatively uncommon. But with the emergence of 'fast food', as well as employers' attempts to shorten working days, lunches have shortened.

Now, newer generations are reinstating employees' claim upon longer, communal lunches. Our research shows that Gen Z is the most likely to take a full break with over half (56%) doing so, which is the highest of any generation. This compares to only 36% of Gen X that take a full lunch break and fewer than a quarter (22%) of Baby Boomers. The results also reveal that Millennials are the most likely to eat lunch at their desk (28%) versus any other generation.

It's impossible not to look at this shift through the lens of Gen Z's ambition to establish stricter boundaries between their work and personal lives. *"It's no secret that younger generations have become more conscious of their relationship with work,"* says Matt Ephgrave, Managing Director at Just Eat for Business. *"This new research reveals just how much consciousness influences their actual decisions while at work."*



56%

of Gen Z take their
full lunch break



28%

of Millennials are most likely
to eat lunch at their desk

“

The beauty of the lunch break is a shift in focus,” says the workplace psychologist Dr Tang. “Research has shown that even short breaks significantly improved participants’ focus on long tasks, as well as their overall performance. It’s worth considering, however, that breaks will be more effective for people who take active rest, instead of spending them queuing to order food.

”



This difference in breaking habits at lunch is not only determined by people's ages, but also by location, industry, and even season. 63% of office workers in Plymouth break for the full period of their lunches, the highest percentage in Britain, whereas just a third are likely to do so in Birmingham - the least likely. Just over a half (53%) of people in London report taking their full lunch breaks.



These results reveal the country's diverse cultural landscape, which determines not only the way we speak or the sports teams we support, but also the way we lunch.



“Employers and facilities managers should be aware of the unique practices of their employees and the professional fields in which they operate,” says Dr Tang. “HR professionals might have more structured timetables with set times to take lunch, for example, whereas those in marketing or media might eat around conventional times because they’re working with people in foreign timezones. The same goes for people working in the arts, who may not have a fixed workplace at all!”

You are who you eat with

Lunch doesn't only offer a moment to rest from work and refuel, but also an opportunity to socialise with colleagues. In fact, the majority of office workers (58%) now prefer to socialise over lunch than the traditional after-work mixer: drinks at a bar or pub. It's clear that its role as a catalyst for colleague relationships is becoming more important.

The pandemic changed everything when employees worked entirely remotely for months during lockdowns. When those lockdowns ended, many companies operated more flexible catering arrangements, which disrupted the previous culture of shared lunches at work.

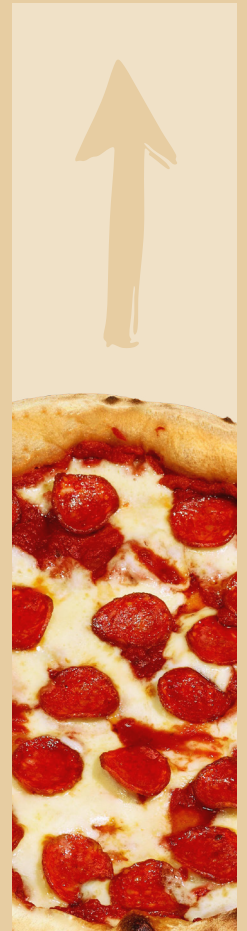
Now, our research suggests that the demand for that culture is returning. This is clear from our internal data that shows communal lunches are becoming more popular. Orders for buffet and platter meals rose by 42% across 2024, with pizza orders rising by 37%.

Matt Ephgrave, Managing Director at Just Eat for Business, says: *"It's interesting to see how the rising demand for communal lunches connects to current discussions about work-from-home policies. While the benefits of remote work are evident, it's also clear that many office workers crave the social engagement that they've lost since 2020. A lunch eaten with colleagues at work is just one of those timeless moments so many of us enjoy."*

42%



37%



2024



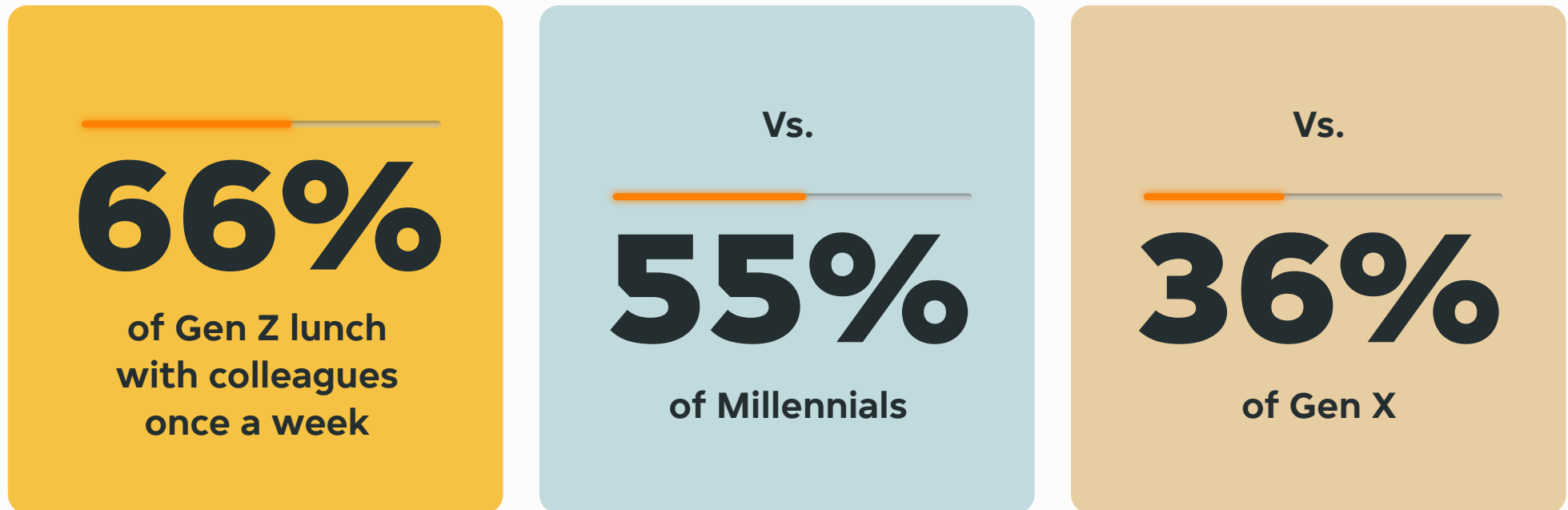
“

There are several benefits associated with lunching with colleagues,” says Dr Tang, the workplace psychologist. “Eating with colleagues can strengthen relationships, which in turn lead to better performance (Kniffin et al 2015)*, while also offering an opportunity to talk about workplace issues. Research shows that interpersonal conversation, even just about the meal itself, could lead to a greater sense of co-operation and connectivity.

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*Kniffin, K. M., Wansink, B., Devine, C. M., & Sobal, J. (2015). Eating Together at the Firehouse: How Workplace Commensality Relates to the Performance of Firefighters. *Human Performance*, 28(4), 281–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959285.2015.1021049>

This demand for opportunities to socialise over lunch is especially strong among younger generations. 66% of Gen Z participants report eating with their colleagues at least once every week. That compares to 55% of Millennials and 36% of Gen X. Only 8% of Gen Z never eat with colleagues, whereas 24% of Gen X do not.



However, don't be too quick to associate this with younger generations' tendency to take longer breaks over lunch: our research shows that people in the most senior positions at companies - those who are likely to be older than other employees - are some of the most sociable of all.

70% of C-level executives lunch with colleagues at least once per week, compared to only 38% of entry-level employees. Overall, business owners lunch with colleagues 10 or more times every month, compared to entry-level staff who do so only six times.

This suggests that staff in positions of mid-level seniority are missing out on something that entry-level and the most senior staff deem beneficial - whether for the same reasons or not. Dr Tang, the workplace psychologist, says: *“Whether it’s through psychological, sociological, or anthropological research, scientists tend to unanimously agree on the importance of communal meals. When we look at society in all its wonderful and diverse forms, it’s easy to see how most important social events and rituals involve some kind of food. And that’s no mistake.”*

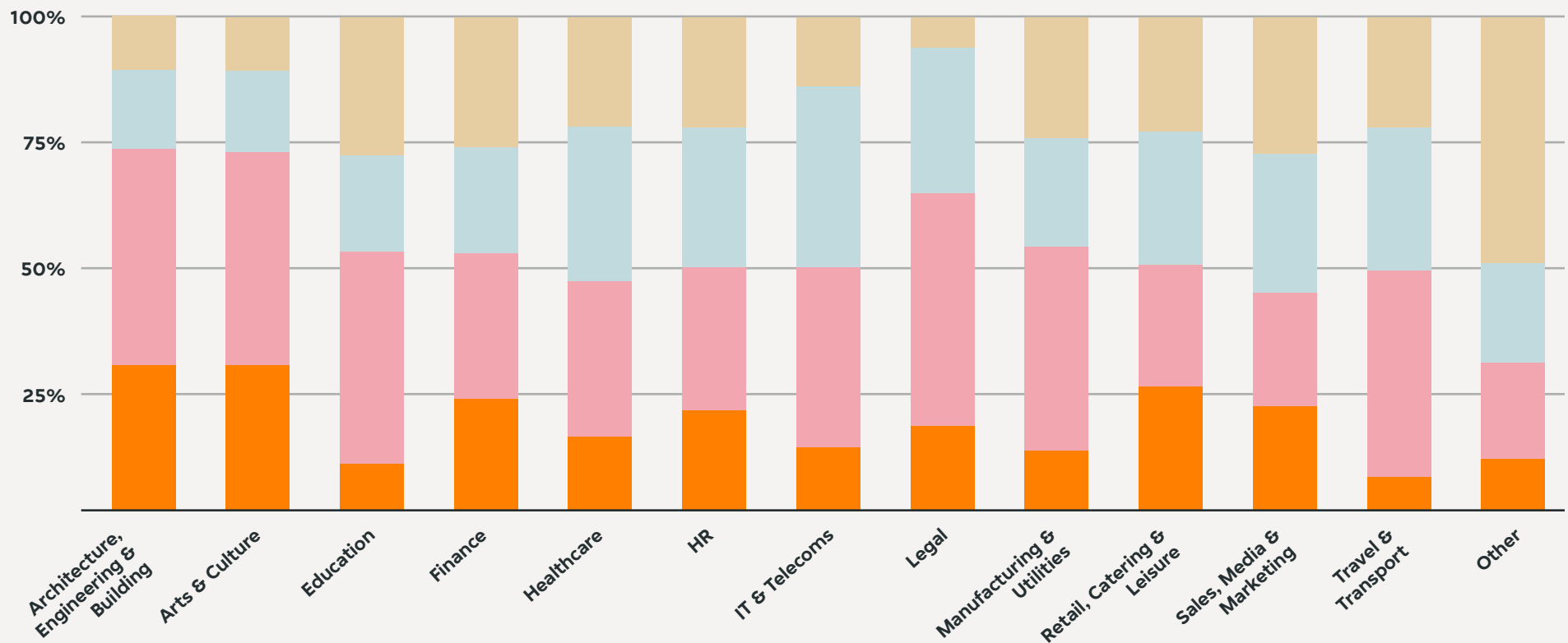
As with the lengths of break they take, people’s sociability over work lunches isn’t only determined by their ages. It’s staff in mid-sized companies (50-249 employees) who report being the most sociable at lunch, eating with their teams at least 25% more frequently than those at small or very large firms (500+ employees).



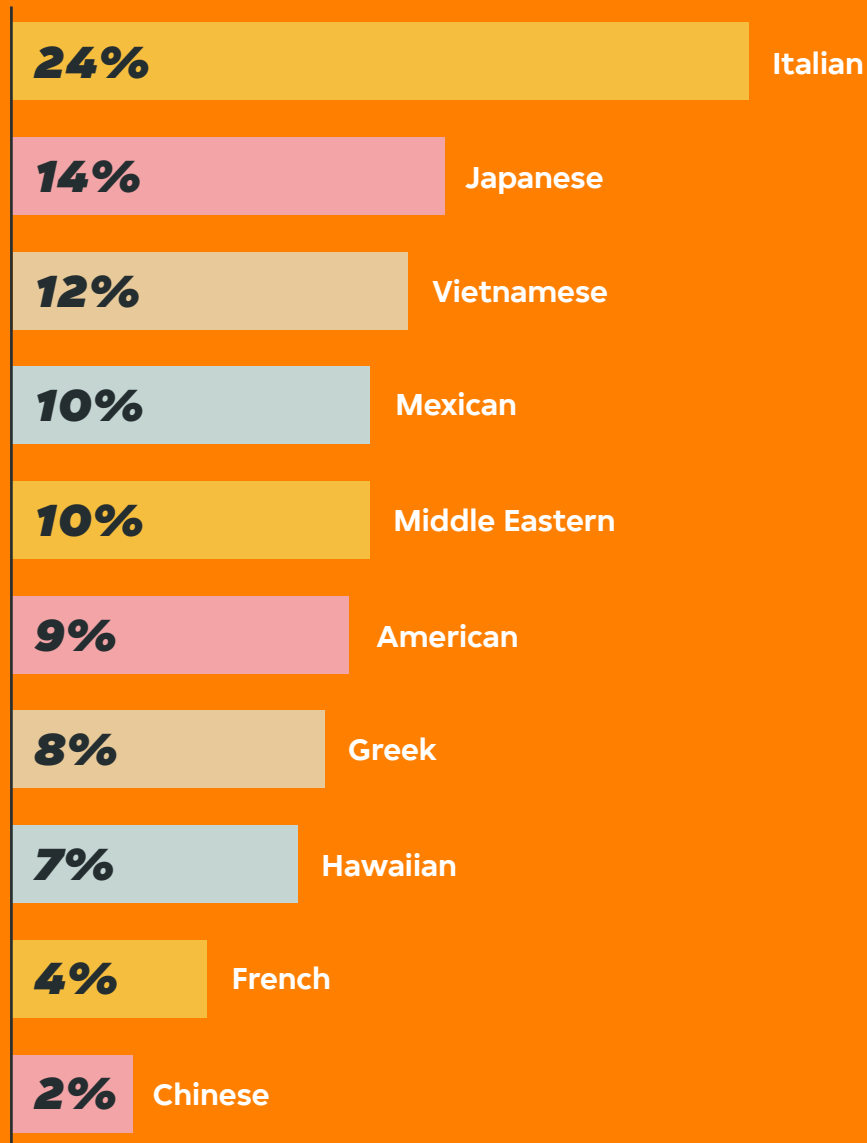
How often colleagues eat lunch together

How often do you have lunch with colleagues away from your desk?

Never Sometimes Frequently Everyday



The top 10 most-loved cuisines are:



What we eat

Research into workplace lunch culture wouldn't be complete without revelations about the lunch itself. And what we've discovered might surprise you.

Our new research shows that people's lunchtime favourite is, in fact, British cuisine. The majority (52%) of people chose this as their preferred shared meal at work, and our internal data suggests that it's becoming more popular too, since sandwich orders in 2024 were 33% higher than in 2023.



Nick Philpot, Founder of Yolk, one of Just Eat for Business's restaurant partners, says: *"The sandwich has always been the ultimate work lunch - portable, satisfying, and endlessly adaptable. But expectations have changed: people want genuine quality and flavour in their busy lives, and the old fridge-triangle just doesn't cut it anymore. At Yolk, we're on a mission to show what a proper sandwich can be - bold, ingredient-led, and freshly made throughout the day."*

People who work through their lunches are the most likely to choose British cuisine (59% do), when compared to those who take proper breaks (the sandwich is, after all, a convenient and versatile meal). Those in London are 50% more likely to choose Japanese cuisine than the nation as a whole.

“Since 2015 research has noted a growing trend in the Japanese Bento Box as a preference for lunch (Nishimoto et al 2015)” says Dr Tang. “While this may be because of its health conscious content, London has certainly appeared to have fallen in love with the cuisine as reflected in a review of Google searches for “Japanese Food”, in 2023 as well as the growing popularity of Japanese restaurants. Sushi by its very nature is healthy fast food (fast in that it can be pre-packed but also best eaten at time of purchase!) and, notes Ben McCormack (2024)* in his review of restaurant trends - can be purchased easily in London!”*

The popularity of diverse cuisines in the workplace has created opportunities for restaurants to tailor their offerings specifically for office environments. Pizza, for instance, has become a cornerstone of workplace dining due to its communal nature and broad appeal.

Tom Smith, Operations Director at Pizza Pilgrims said: *“As a team that eats a lot of pizza, we know that great pizza fuels*

great work. Pizza is the perfect partner for workplace dining - it’s made for sharing, it’s interactive, and there’s a pizza on our menu to suit everyone! We make it easy for offices with bundles and packages designed for large groups, which are simple to order and cover a range of dietary requirements, including gluten free, vegan, and halal options.”

PIZZA PILGRIMS



*Nishimoto, Hiroyuki & Hamada, Akemi & Takai, Yuka & Goto, Akihiko. (2015). Investigation of Decision Process for Purchasing Foodstuff in the “Bento” Lunch Box. Procedia Manufacturing. 3. 472-479. 10.1016/j.promfg.2015.07.210.

*Ben McCormack (2024) <https://www.standard.co.uk/going-out/restaurants/japanese-cooking-influence-fusion-london-restaurants-b1147688.html>



Meanwhile, as broader societal trends around health and wellness continue to gain momentum, the growing focus on workplace wellness has driven demand for healthier options that don't compromise on taste or convenience.

Angelina Harris, Brand Director at Tossed: *"At Tossed, we only serve food to make you feel good, and with that believe that a healthy lunch in the workplace is more than just nourishment - it's essential for enhanced productivity, sustained energy, and overall wellbeing. By choosing meals that are high in veggies, clean protein and low GI carbs, we can help your teams to perform at their best all day and foster a happier, healthier, work environment."*



The Significance of Mealtimes - Dr. Audrey Tang

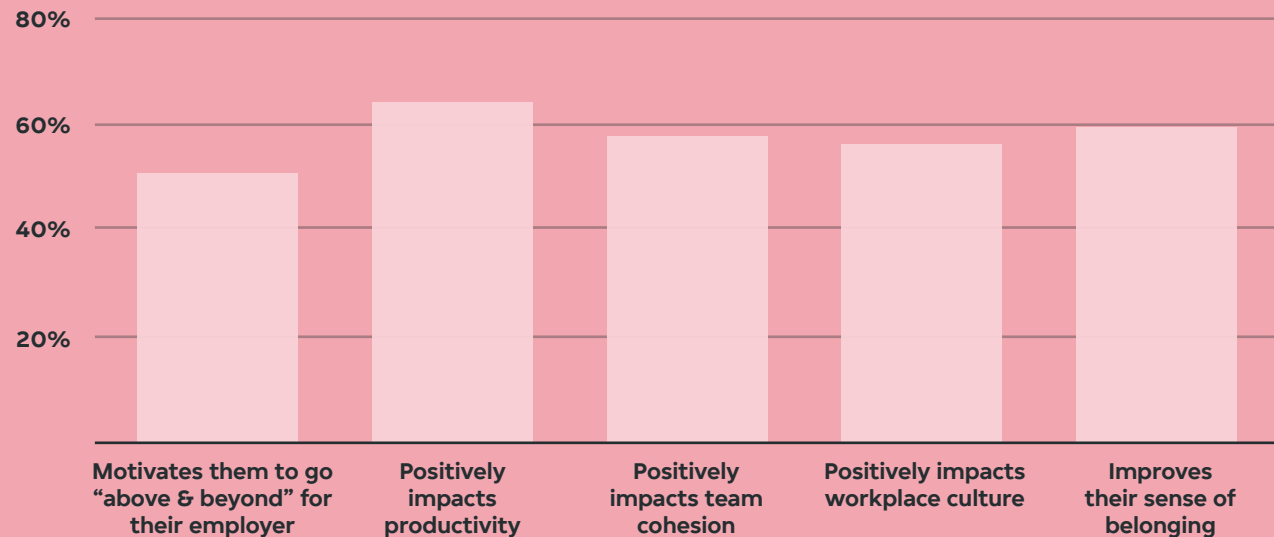
“Why does any of this matter?” one might ask. Well, the way we eat at work actually has a significant influence on the work itself. The results of our research, provided below, highlight just how much understanding of food’s role in employee wellbeing and productivity.



Dr Audrey Tang,

Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol) and multi award-winning business author and broadcaster

The impact of workplace lunch arrangements extends far beyond just nutrition, directly influencing key business



Food is a need that represents far more than sustenance in the workplace - it's a fundamental building block of human connection and organisational culture. As the very first rung of the Maslow Hierarchy, food is often the centrepiece of significant events, and can bring people together not just for the shared experience, but the lasting memories that are created within that moment. For many, we connect with our heritage through food - and our friends through sharing our foods with others!



The psychological impact of food extends beyond nutrition. Eating comfortably sends a signal to our bodies that we're not under pressure - activating our parasympathetic nervous system, often called 'rest and digest' which is the opposite of our 'fight or flight' response.



It is through food and the meaning we can place on it that allows us to deepen our connection with each other.

Food is also a great way to show understanding of individual needs. Offering diverse options - whether gluten free, vegan, or halal choices - it sends a powerful message that everyone is considered and valued. These aren't just dietary accommodations; they're statements of organisation values.

From a practical standpoint, having quality food readily available can give productivity a boost by eliminating



consumption of meals which in and of themselves help our immune system, improve bone density, or boost mood - but the act of eating is itself a fundamental social occasion to connect and share - not just a moment - but sometimes a significant part of who we are. While countless research papers have found “the family that eats together is the family that stays together”...perhaps the same can be said of teams.

We can draw distinct connections between workplace lunch culture and common metrics that contribute to business success. This shows just how important it is for businesses to think carefully about the way they support their employees at this time of the day.

decision fatigue and reducing the time spent away from important projects. Of course, that does not mean that ‘working through lunch’ should be normalised, but there

are times when the need arises and having easy access to good food helps to maintain focus and momentum without the distraction of lengthy food sourcing.

Ultimately food - whether it is what is on offer, or what we consume - while a basic need, can also be a huge opportunity for nourishing more than just your body. Nutritionists and dieticians will all celebrate regular



Food in the workplace - Why it matters for businesses

The business case for thoughtful workplace food provision has never been clearer. Our research reveals that companies investing in employee dining experiences are seeing measurable returns across several key performance indicators.

Despite the clear link between workplace lunch culture and business success, companies employ a wide range of different policies depending on their location, size, and industry.



**Manchester
offices provide food
7x per month**



**Plymouth
offices provide food
<2x per month**

Companies in Manchester, for example, appear to support their employees the most when it comes to food offerings, paying for more frequent office lunches than any other city in the UK - almost seven times per month. Companies in

Plymouth, on the other hand, pay for the least - at fewer than twice per month.

The difference between industries is even more stark. People working in IT and telecoms receive free lunches from their companies almost eight times per month, which is almost four times as many as people who work in education, who receive the fewest with just over two free lunches per month.

Interestingly, our research challenges the assumption that food provision is simply a matter of budget constraints. Small businesses with revenues smaller than £10,000 per year are almost twice as generous with free lunches than large corporations with revenues over £500 million per year (7 per month vs. 4.5 per month). This suggests that smaller companies may maintain a better, more empathetic understanding of their employees' needs, and they benefit from this closer relationship as a result.

However, it's important to consider that smaller companies may pay less in salary compensation, with perks such as free food being a useful tool to boost the overall employee package.



Ed Walker, founder and CEO of Fika Catering: *"The shift we're seeing isn't just about feeding people - it's about understanding that food provision is a strategic business tool. Companies that*

recognise this are using catering to solve real workplace challenges by bringing teams together, creating shared experiences, and demonstrating genuine care for employee wellbeing. The businesses getting this right aren't just ticking a box, they're using food as a competitive advantage to attract talent and build stronger, more connected teams."

Stress reduction:

63%

agree that employer-provided food would relieve stress from their working day

Feeling valued:

67%

of employees would feel more valued if their employer provided lunch/food

Attraction & retention

57%

of workers would be more likely to go into the office if their employer provided lunch/food

Employee advocacy:

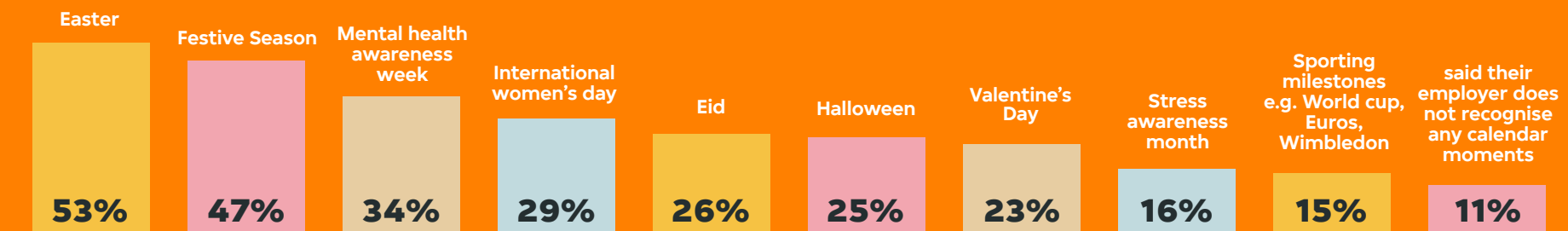
59%

would be more inclined to recommend their workplace to others if food was provided

These findings demonstrate that food provision isn't just a 'nice-to-have' perk - it's a strategic investment in employee engagement, retention, and company culture. The relatively modest cost of providing quality food options delivers returns across multiple areas that are often more difficult and expensive to influence through other means.

Furthermore, food becomes particularly important during key calendar moments and cultural celebrations. Companies that recognise and celebrate diverse cultural occasions through thoughtful food choices demonstrate cultural awareness and inclusivity, strengthening their employer brand and creating memorable experiences that bring teams together.

What calendar moments, if any, does your employer/company recognise?



However, as Dr Tang's insights make clear, quality and choice are crucial. Food that lacks variety or quality - or cultural sensitivity during calendar moments - can actually do more to harm employee satisfaction. The most successful food solutions offer diverse, high-quality options that recognise the varied tastes and requirements of modern workforces. It's not about providing the cheapest option available - but rather making thoughtful investments that enhance the employee experience in a meaningful way.

Looking Ahead and Recommendations

As we look towards the future of workplace food culture, several key trends are emerging that forward-thinking businesses should prepare for. The landscape is shifting rapidly, driven by evolving workplace patterns, and a growing understanding of food's role in employee wellbeing and productivity.

'Food as a culture' will continue to rise

Younger generations are viewing food in the workplace not as a simple necessity but as an expression of company values and care for employee wellbeing. This trend will drive businesses to move beyond basic provision, towards curated food experiences that reflect their employer brand and culture.

Hybrid working patterns will continue to reshape lunch culture

As workers split work time between home and the office, companies will need to make in-office dining experiences more compelling for their employees. This will drive demand for higher-quality and more convenient food options that workers can enjoy in social environments.

Health and wellness integration

The connection between nutrition and productivity will drive demand for food choices that actively support employee wellbeing - from brain-boosting ingredients to energy-sustaining meals.

Recommendations for Employers

From the research findings and from our own industry insights, there are several strategies that businesses can look to to optimise their workplace food culture:



Quality over quantity

Employee feedback consistently shows that poorly executed food programmes can actually harm satisfaction. It's better to offer fewer, higher-quality options than alternatives that leave employees feeling unsatisfied.

Prioritise midweek food initiatives

Our 2024 internal data shows Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays to be the most popular days for corporate food orders - emphasising how employers are recognising the need to support employees through the challenging middle of the work week. Focus your premium food offering and team dining experiences on these days for maximum impact.



Strategically balance comfort with nutrition

Strategically balance comfort with nutrition
While pizza remains incredibly popular for team events and casual social dining, successful food programmes combine beloved comfort foods with healthy options. This approach allows employers to satisfy different employee preferences while continuing to support overall wellbeing goals.

Tailor approaches to your workforce demographics

The results show that lunch preference varies depending on demographics - with Gen Z employees more likely to expect full lunch breaks and social dining opportunities, while more senior employees may prefer efficient, high-quality options. Modern workforces are diverse in their cultural backgrounds, dietary requirements and personal preferences. Successful programmes offer variety and accommodate for different needs, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach.

The organisations that recognise food as a strategic tool for building culture, increasing retention, and improving productivity - rather than solely a necessary expense - will gain significant competitive advantages when it comes to attracting and keeping top talent in an increasingly competitive employment market.





About Just Eat for Business

Just Eat for Business is the UK's leading office food delivery marketplace and part of Just Eat Takeaway, the world's largest food delivery company.

Specialising in corporate catering, Just Eat for Business makes it easy for companies to provide delicious, high-quality meals for their teams, whether in the office or beyond. With a diverse selection of dishes from popular restaurants and caterers all in one place, it's the go-to platform for team lunches, meetings, and office events. Named Service Provider of the Year at the Office Management Awards 2024 through public vote, Just Eat for Business is renowned for its excellence in delivering seamless catering solutions to businesses of all sizes

Each week, Just Eat for Business serves over 30,000 employees across 600+ companies, delivering flexible and reliable food solutions tailored to modern workplaces. With a network of 500+ trusted restaurants and caterers across London and the UK, Just Eat for Business offers a wide variety of cuisines to suit every dietary need.

Committed to quality and safety, Just Eat for Business is STS accredited, and all their partners maintain an FSA hygiene rating of 3 or higher, ensuring every order meets high standards of excellence.