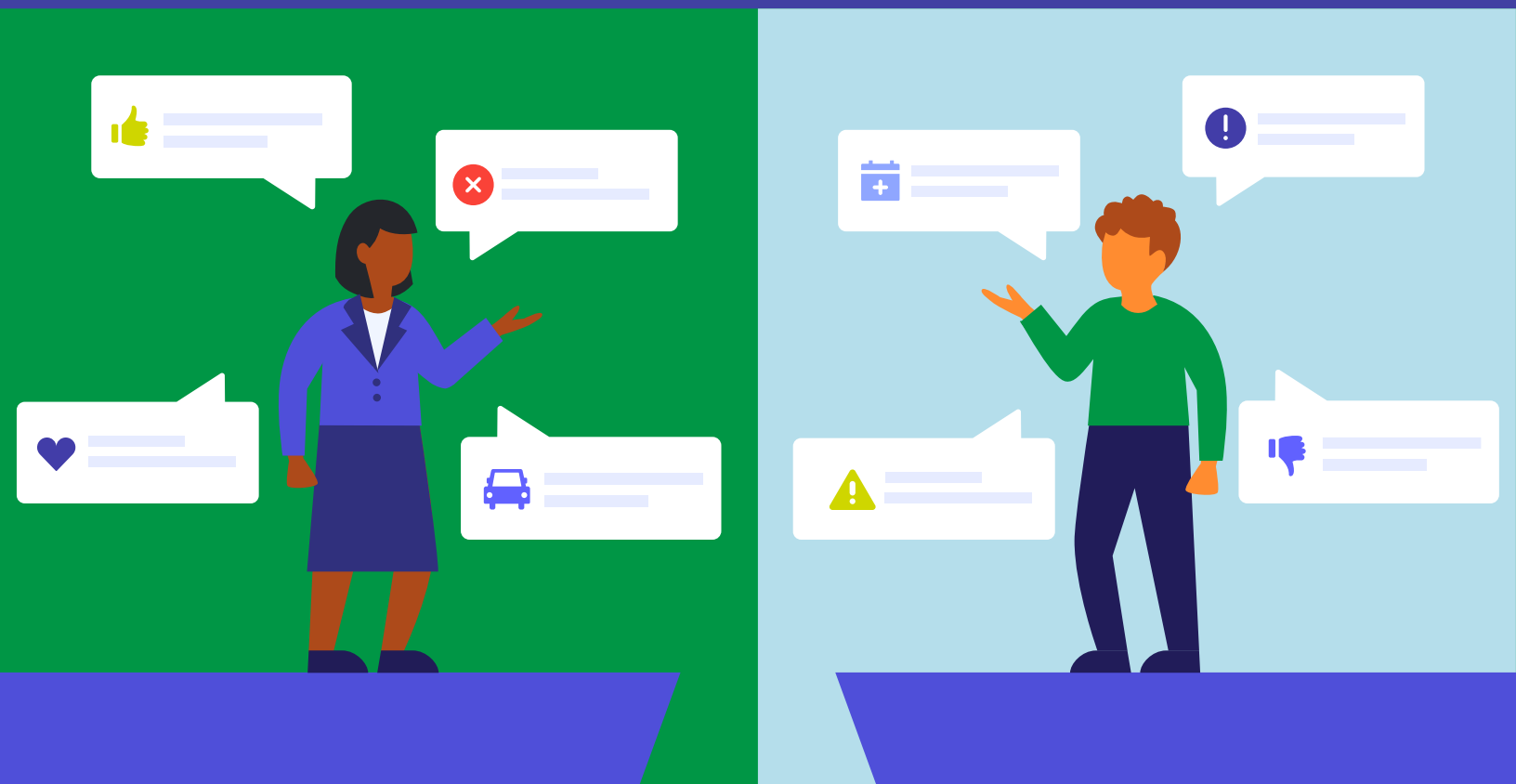


At Work: how employees and executives actually feel about the workplace



With offices open in full swing again, everyone is navigating the new landscape of work. Executives and employees are both adjusting to their own unique challenges, and they don't always see eye-to-eye on the workplace.

Gaps in how these two groups view the workplace isn't a new story. But it's become

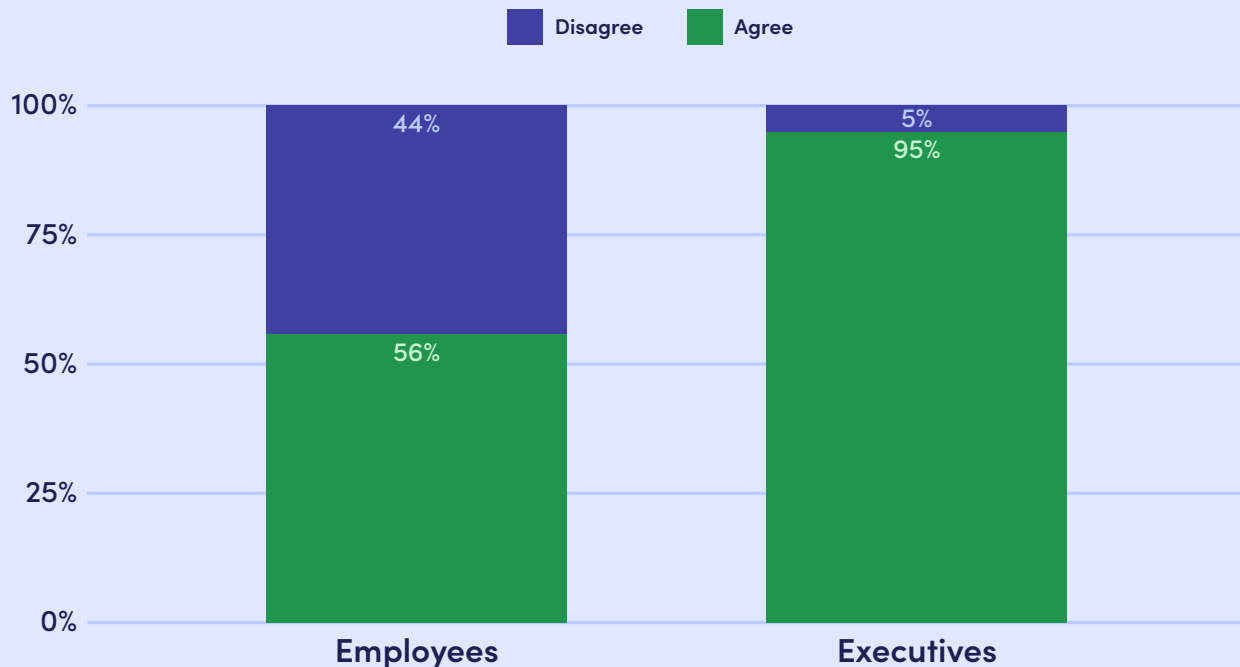
far more critical for executives to understand what the gaps are so they can create a positive workplace experience for everyone. To find out how employees and executives actually feel about the workplace, we partnered with Wakefield Research to survey employees and executives across the US and UK. Let's dive into the findings.



CHAPTER 1

Employees believe their contributions are noticed just as much when they work from home as when they work from the office. But executives admit this is far from the truth.

Do you agree that your contributions are noticed more/you notice employees' contributions more when they come into the office?



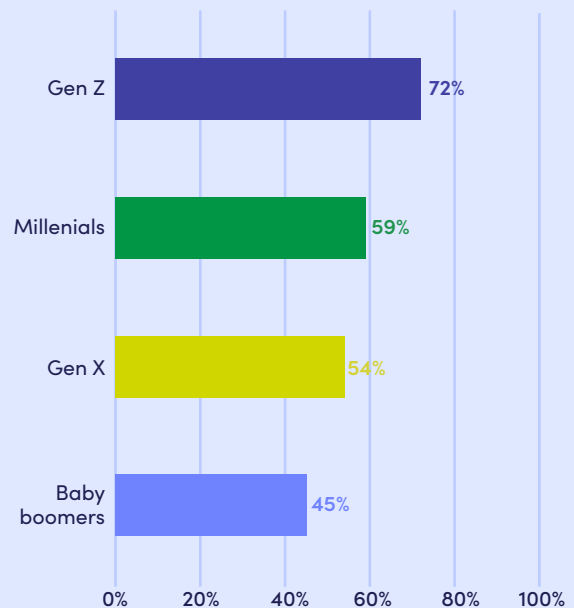
We asked employees if they come into the office because their contributions are noticed more than when they're at home and almost half said no. While 44% of hybrid or formerly remote employees believe

that their contributions are noticed at home just as much as in the office, nearly all (95%) of executives admit they notice contributions made in the office far more.

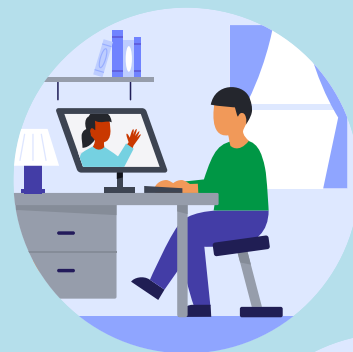
Among employees who agree that in-office contributions are noticed more than at-home contributions:

Gen Z employees seem to be the most aligned with executives. 72% of Gen Z employees think their contributions are noticed more onsite, while the rest of the generations average around 54%.

We also found that female executives were more likely to value at-home contributions than their male counterparts. 10% of female executives notice at-home contributions equally to office contributions compared to only 3% of male executives.



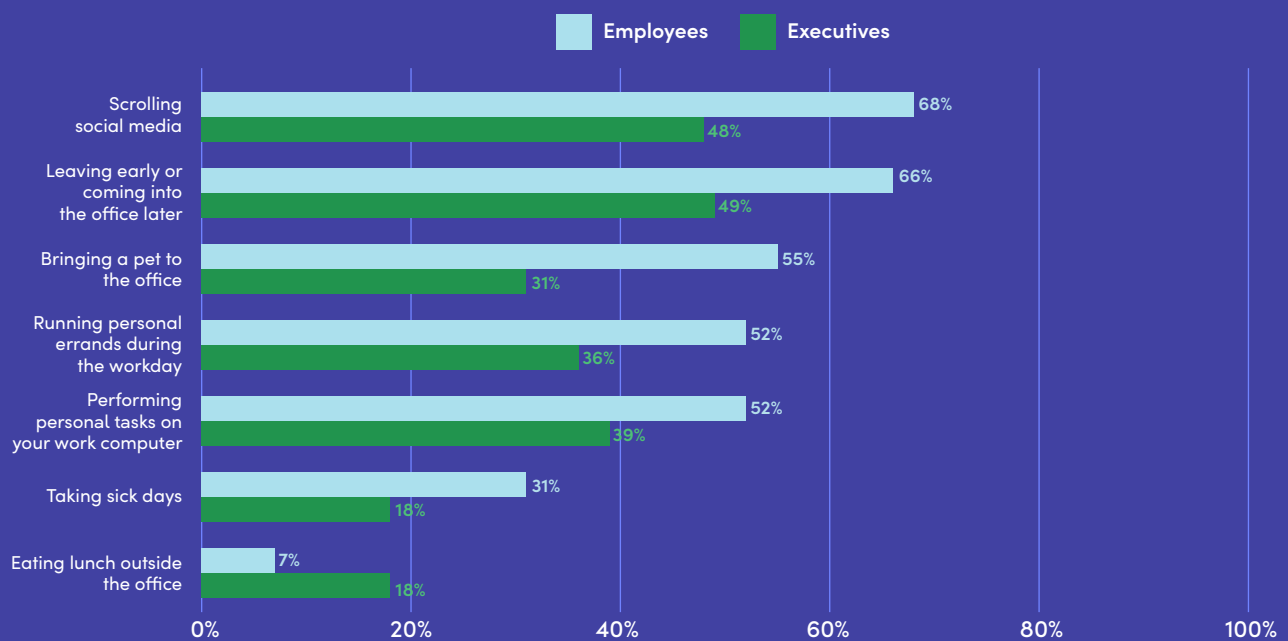
Executives are more likely to notice the work of those coming in frequently to the office, sitting and working near them, or leading onsite presentations. This is also known as proximity bias, and it's a major challenge for executives and employees to navigate. In fact, according to a [study conducted by Future Forum](#), 41% of executives cite potential inequity between remote and in-office workers as their number one concern with respect to flexible work models. While the quality of the work might be the same, the physical location of where the work is being done can have implications for career growth and development for employees.



CHAPTER 2

Most employees believe executives don't support personal time at work. But executives are actually much more understanding of flexibility in the office.

Which of the following actions do employees think are viewed negatively by executives vs which do executives actually view as negative?



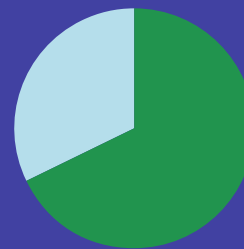
We asked employees what traditional office stigmas they believe are viewed negatively by executives, for example scrolling through social media or taking time to run a personal errand. Across each office stigma, we found that employees are much more worried about negative perceptions by executives than actually exist.

Despite increased flexibility in the workplace in recent years, two thirds (66%) of office workers say there is a stigma around leaving early or coming in later. However, less than half of executives (49%) say they would view this negatively. In our survey, we discovered a lack of flexibility to be a top 3 deal breaker for employees coming into the office. Executives' more accommodating views on flexibility may be a response to employees' strong desire for more flexible work models.

The only stigma that executives viewed much more negatively than employees is eating lunch outside the office (7% of employees vs 18% of executives). Executives have placed more emphasis on the workplace as a place for relationship building and could view lunch as the perfect socialization time.



Both groups agree that the biggest taboo is scrolling on social media while at work:

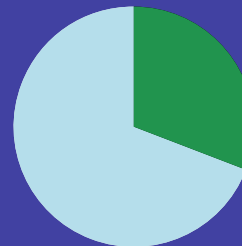


68% of employees

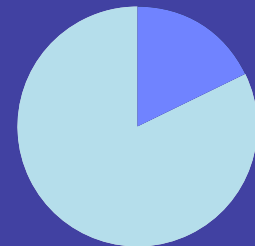


48% of executives

Despite health and safety concerns in the past few years, there is still a major difference between the way employees and executives view taking sick days. Among those who view taking a sick day as negative:



31% of employees



18% of executives

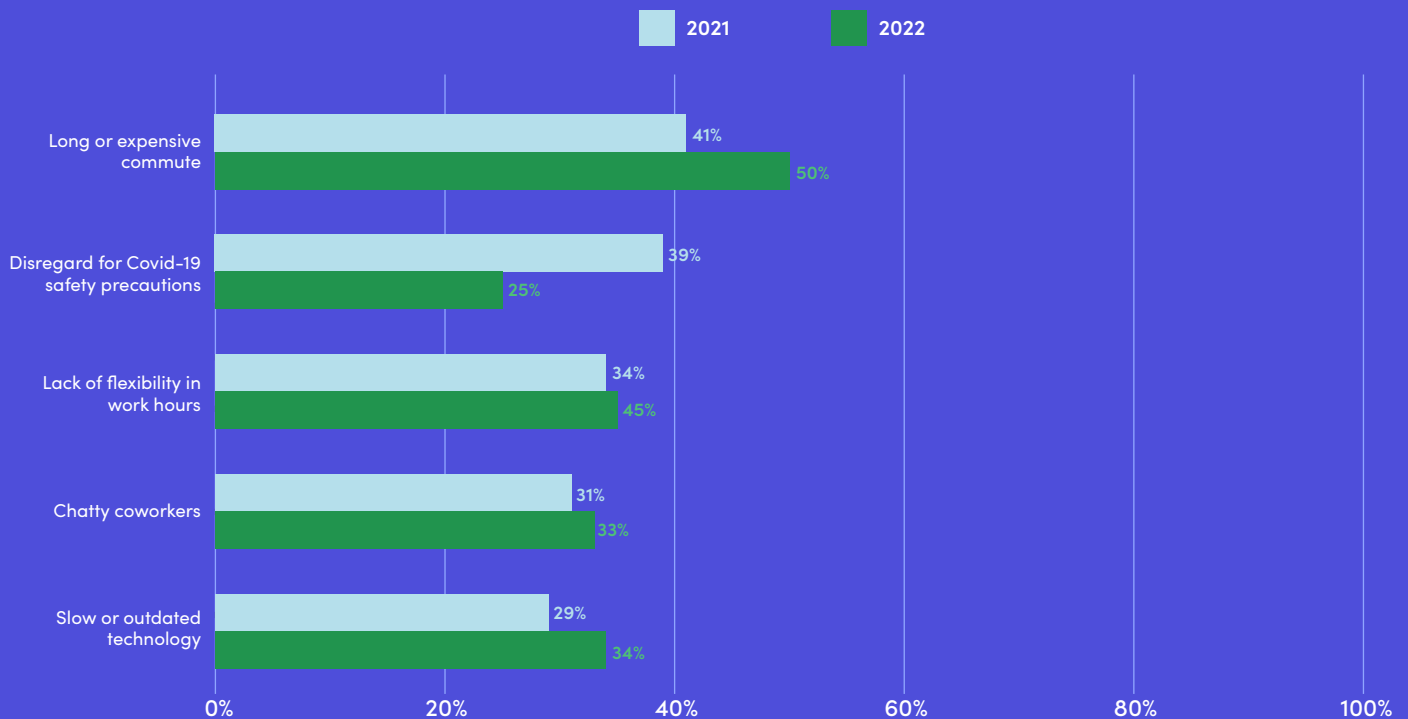
Navigating the post-pandemic office has presented challenges for both executives and employees. Employees are still figuring out what the new office do's and don'ts are when it comes to personal time, flexible hours, and creating comfort in the office. On the other hand, executives' views have changed. They've adjusted outdated views on office stigmas and are accepting new norms that empower employee comfort in the workplace.



CHAPTER 3

Executives are falling a step behind in understanding employees' deal breakers for coming to the office.

Top deal breakers for employees: 2021 vs 2022



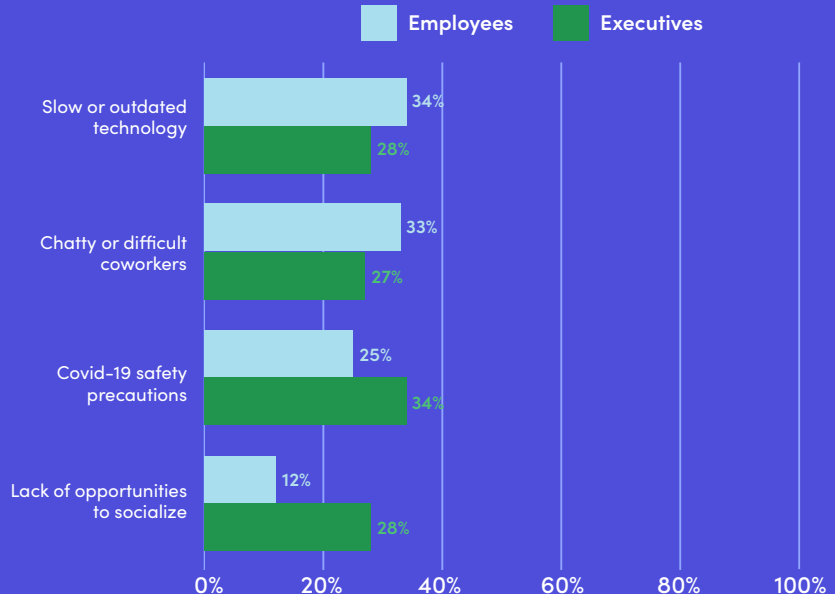
Deal breakers or hesitations for coming into the office have changed since we last interviewed employees. In our survey from late 2021, the biggest return to work deal breakers for employees were long or expensive commutes (41%), disregard for Covid-19 safety precautions (39%), lack of flexibility in work hours or days in the office (34%), and chatty coworkers (31%).

The biggest deal breakers now? Long commutes and lack of flexibility have stayed the same, but slow or outdated technology has become a more pressing concern with 34% of employees citing it as a major deal breaker. Plus, 33% of employees say chatty coworkers are a deal breaker, another increase since our last survey.

When we asked executives what they think the biggest deal breakers for their employees are, their responses closely mirrored employees' outdated deal breakers from 2021. While executives and employees both agree long commutes and lack of flexibility are the top deal breakers, executives underestimate how big of a deal slow or outdated technology and chatty coworkers are for employees. Executives are solving problems from a few months ago, rather than the deal breakers of today.

In addition, while executives think employees are concerned about lack of socialization in the office, employees really aren't that worried. In fact, employees cite chatty coworkers as a growing deal breaker.

Biggest gaps between employees' deal breakers and what execs *think* are employees' deal breakers:



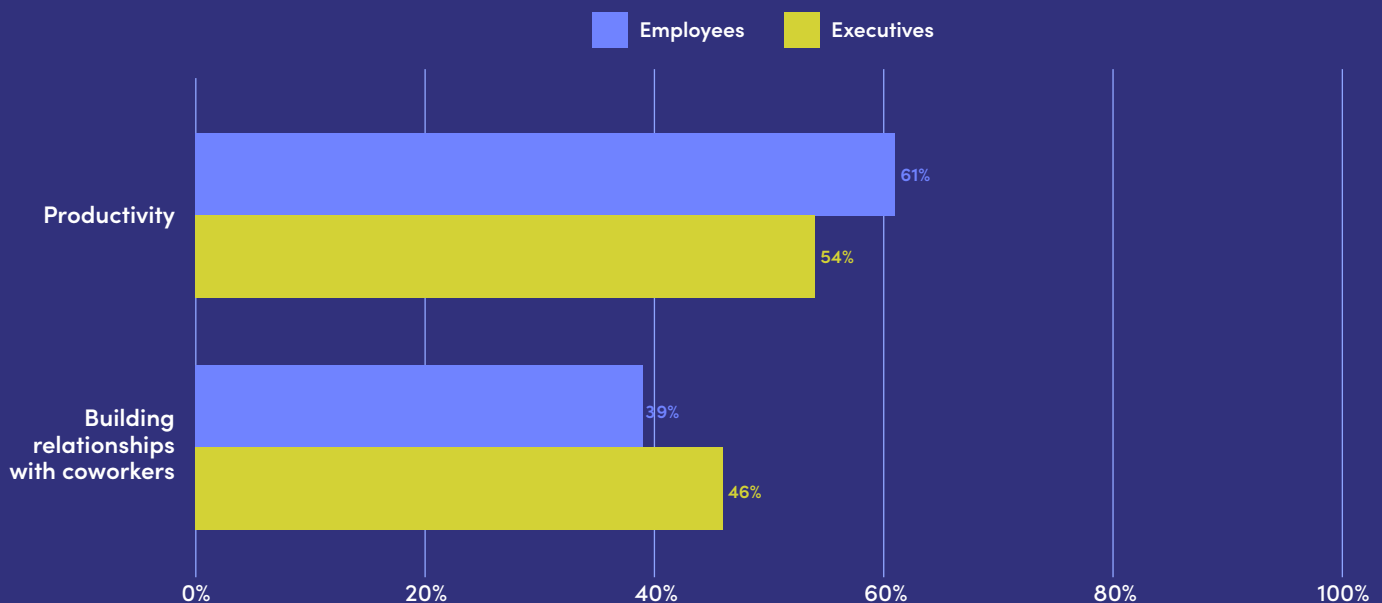
There are still hesitations and deal breakers employees face around coming into the office. However, executives aren't putting time, money, and strategy towards solving those deal breakers. That could be because executives are overestimating how concerned employees are about Covid-19 safety precautions and socialization opportunities, while underestimating how important technology and quiet spaces in the office are. These gaps among employees and executives can make or break employee retention and their experience in the office.



CHAPTER 4

Despite executives' claim that the purpose of the workplace is to build relationships with coworkers, the majority of employees and executives actually agree that productivity is more important.

Which is the more important result when working in the office?



We asked executives and employees what the most important result of working in an office is: productivity or building relationships with coworkers. Unsurprisingly, a majority of employees (61%) say productivity is more important than relationship building.

Executives across different types of companies have expressed interest in returning to the office so that employees can be together again to collaborate and build relationships. However, our data finds that

the majority of executives (54%) say productivity is the most important outcome of working in an office.

On the other hand, 46% of executives say building relationships is more important than productivity. A nearly 50/50 split. These responses could indicate there is confusion among leaders about the role of the workplace. Mixed messaging can make it difficult for employees to develop trust with executives, and leave both employees and executives unsure of how to move forward.

We also discovered that female executives, younger executives, and those greener in their position were more likely to say productivity is the most important outcome of the office.



What is the more important result in the office: productivity or relationship building?



65% of female executives think productivity is more important



50% of male executives think productivity is more important



62% of executives under 40 think productivity is more important



49% of executives over 40 think productivity is more important

Executives and employees aren't totally aligned on the purpose of the workplace. While employees maintain productivity to be the most important outcome of working in an office, executives are telling a much more complex story. This misalignment can affect how companies set up and run their offices.





The bottom line

When it comes to the workplace, employees and executives aren't totally aligned. They disagree on topics like the purpose of the workplace, deal breakers for coming to the office, new office norms, and more. And while executives are making the office a much more flexible place, they're still a bit behind in overcoming proximity bias and understanding employees' biggest deal breakers. Bridging the gap between employees and executives will require a better understanding of each other's pain points and needs. Connecting that bridge is the key to making the workplace work for everyone.

Envoy can help you solve the gaps in the workplace with technology that connects people, leaders, and workplaces.

[Contact us](#)

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Envoy partnered with Wakefield Research to survey both employees and executives separately. We received responses from 250 US executives and 250 UK executives. Executives were defined as those with a minimum seniority of director and working in a physical office at least one day per week.

We also surveyed 1,000 US office workers and 1,000 UK office workers. Office workers were defined as those employed full-time, excluding those with a seniority of director or greater, and working in a physical office at least one day per week. Survey responses were collected between Aug 8 and August 18, 2022. Both surveys used an email invitation and an online survey.

