



Ways of Working Survey 2023

The Results

Highlights

In 2022, we conducted our first survey into firms' approaches to hybrid working. One year on and keen to find out what (if anything) had changed, we re-ran the survey, with interesting results.



59%

of respondents take an informal approach to hybrid working.



56%

of respondents have a policy that allows UK-based employees to work abroad.



11%

of respondents consider time spent in the office when reviewing salaries or bonuses.



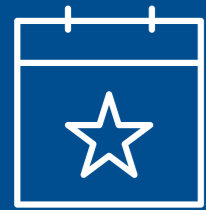
43%

of respondents believe productivity has improved as a result of hybrid working and a further **43%** consider that it has had a neutral impact.

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Approaches to hybrid working

Hybrid working continues to be the dominant model, with **96% of respondents offering it to employees**. However, what hybrid working looks like differs significantly from organisation to organisation.

Respondents have a formal written policy

41%

Respondents have an informal approach

59%

Days a week the most popular expectation for office attendance

3



64%

of respondents do not have set office days rather these are decided on a team/business basis.



29%

of respondents revealed that Mondays and Fridays are the quietest in the office with 37% reporting that Tuesday through to Thursday are the busiest days.



The survey also revealed a **tendency amongst employees to work from home if unwell**, rather than taking the day off.

There was also a recognition from some respondents that their approaches were becoming more formal and “office-centric” (a trend we have seen more broadly in the market).



“We have a flexible policy that allows employees and managers to agree on the best approach for them as a team.”

“We allow colleagues to use their judgement as to when it is most productive for them to be in offices.”

“We reserve the right to ask people into the office when required.”



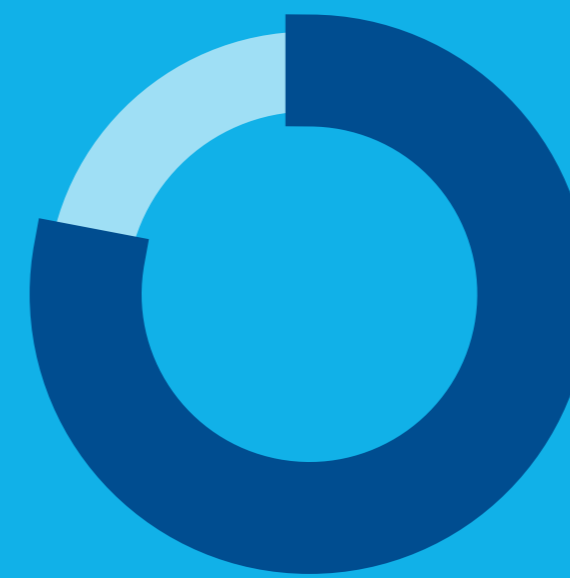
“We have steadily increased days expected in the office from 3 to 4 days. Firm strongly believes that we are more productive, innovative and collaborative with a predominantly office based culture.”

“We’re gently moving toward higher office attendance, but choosing a carrot instead of stick approach. Making it more attractive to come in, opposed to mandating attendance.”



Incentives for office attendance

A key theme last year was that employers were taking a 'soft' approach to getting employees back into the office, focusing on incentives rather than enforcement. This trend has broadly continued.



78%
of respondents to this year's survey say that they do not enforce their hybrid working policies.



"Our approach is less around enforcement and more about understanding why individuals make the choices they do, and encouraging them to consider being in the office more where necessary."

"If someone regularly fails to attend the office for a set-piece event they are given feedback".



56%

of respondents cite commuting as the top obstacle in employees returning to the office.



26%

noted a preference amongst employees to be at home for remote meetings.



7%

listed other colleagues not being in the office as a key barrier to returning to the office.



4%

identified childcare as a barrier to coming into work.

Some employers were also continuing to incentivise employees back into the office:

Offer free meals

9%

Offer subsidised meals

9%

Offer subsidised travel

3%

Offer in-office social events

43%

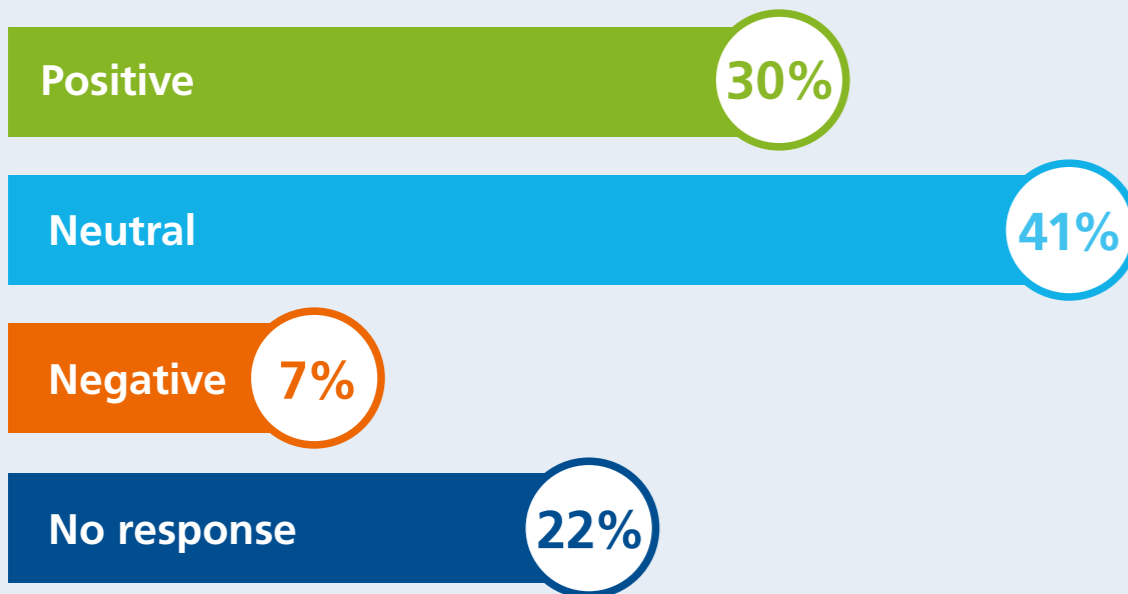
Do not offer any incentives for returning to the office

30%



Recruitment and retention

Respondents views of how hybrid working has impacted retention:



85%

of respondents reference their hybrid working policy during the recruitment process.



30%

have seen an increase in applicants from outside their usual catchment area.



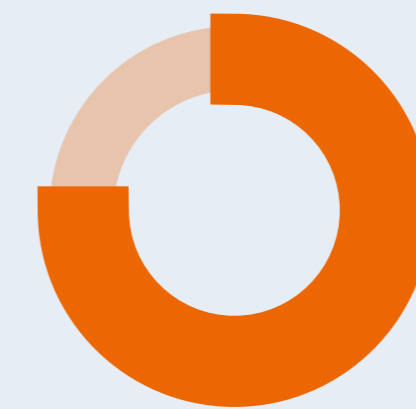
"It allows us to recruit from broader, more diverse talent pools."

"We proactively talk about the ability to work flexibly both in terms of location as well as hours when recruiting. Colleague feedback has been very strong on the value of this sense of empowerment and flexibility"

"We've set up virtual onboarding groups so that those who start on the same day can create an informal buddying group – part of our efforts to help forge connections that may have happened had everyone been in an office environment."

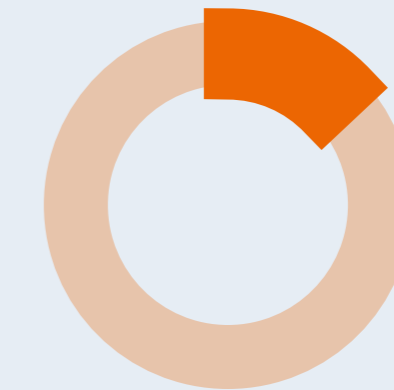


Pay



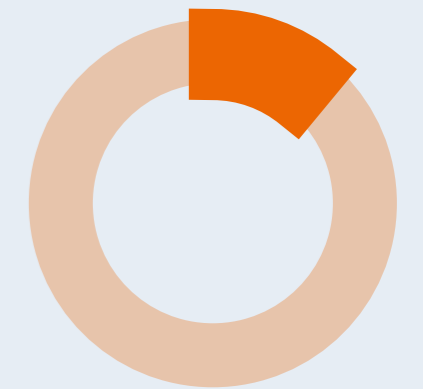
75%

of respondents are not considering reviewing salary uplifts in light of increased hybrid working.



13%

of respondents, however, are.



11%

of respondents consider time spent in the office when reviewing salaries or bonuses.

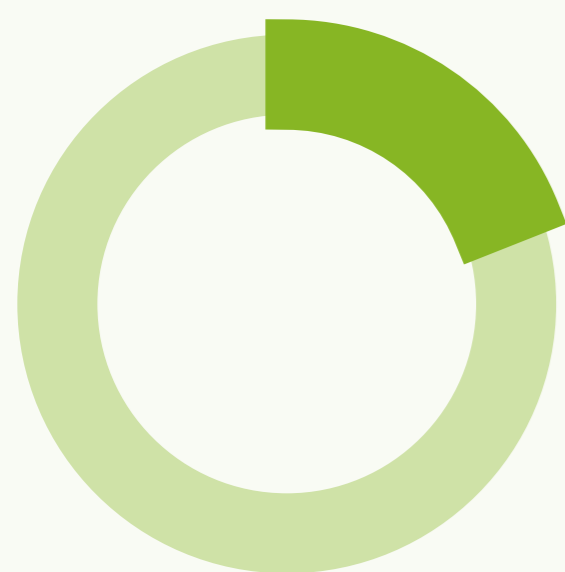


"Persistent offenders not meeting their office attendance will receive a lower bonus, at discretion of the business area"

"We are keen to reward office presence and team collaboration as well as mentoring and supporting other colleagues."



Diversity and Inclusion



Only **19%** of those surveyed believe that hybrid working has made their organisation more diverse and inclusive.



52% reported a neutral impact.

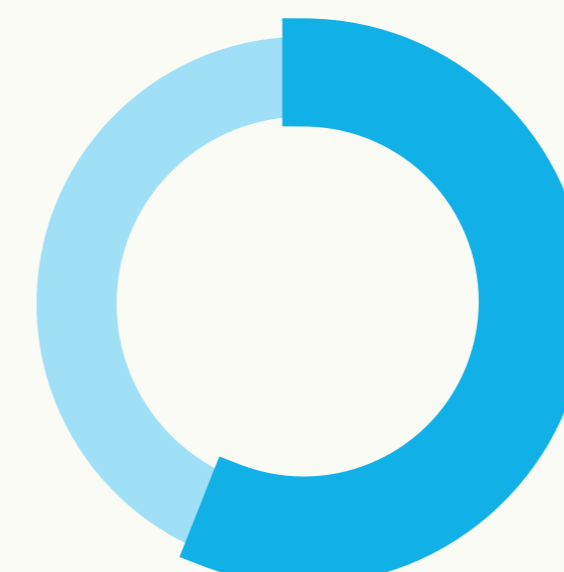


"It encourages better work life balance and attracts a much wider group of people to apply for roles."

"Our flexible working approach allows those workers with caring responsibilities to go for promoted positions and so we have seen more successful applications from managerial and leadership positions. In addition we are working with our colleague affinity groups to help them understand how our approach can help them celebrate their cultures and traditions, for instance taking days/time off for prayer/religious celebration/pride marches etc."



Working abroad



56% of respondents have a policy that allows UK-based employees to work abroad.

However, there were conditions on this:



"There is a limit to 30 days working remotely abroad".

"We allow people to work up to 3 weeks in most countries with prior permission."

"Restricted to time and jurisdiction. Also the employee's right to work in the jurisdiction"



Productivity

Respondents believe productivity has improved

43%

Respondents think it has not changed

43%

Respondents think it has decreased

14%



Monitoring office attendance



56%

of respondents measure office attendance, largely through key card entry data but also through daily sign ins, desk bookings and 'whereabouts sheets' available in the office.

This is largely to help employers spot trends and at macro/divisional levels, rather than monitoring how often teams or individuals are coming into the office:



"Only for facilities management. It is not shared at a Partner or team level."

"This data has allowed us to rationalise our office estate and saved over £1m/annum."

"Mainly to help our team co-ordinate with colleagues on when they will be in the office, but also to have individual conversations with people where we see patterns begin to emerge that are not in line with our flexible working policy."



Methodology

The survey was sent to all SFE members and completed at a firm level between 4 October and 17 November 2023. We had 28 responses. All responses were anonymous unless information was provided by the respondent for further research purposes. This report provides an overview of the results.



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