



 officeguru

Tackling RTO in the correct way

State of Office Management 2025

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Letter from the CEO

At Officeguru, we believe the workplace should be a place where people feel at home, where they can connect, share, and belong. Because when people are together, they share more, trust more, and build more than they ever could alone.

For us, the office is one of the last places where real connection still happens - where strangers become colleagues, and colleagues turn into friends for life. When people feel that sense of belonging, work becomes more than routine. It becomes something they want to be part of.



The State of Office Management 2025 explores the data behind this belief and reveals why many Return-to-Office (RTO) strategies are still missing the mark. The reason is simple: too much policy, not enough purpose.

At Officeguru, we connect the people who run workplaces with the people who bring them to life. We partner with those who take pride in their craft, and we deliver services designed not just to function, but to make people feel something.

The insights in this report will help leaders move beyond enforcement and toward experience beyond return-to-office and toward belonging-at-work.

Daniel Wilk, CEO & Co-founder, Officeguru

Executive summary

The modern workplace is a bit of a battleground. On one side, companies want people back in the office. On the other, employees — especially the younger ones — have a whole new set of expectations.

We've pulled together the latest research from top consulting firms and combined it with insights from over 104 office managers and HR pros in Copenhagen and Berlin. The big takeaway? The return-to-office (RTO) trend is real. The number of people working in the office at least four days a week has more than doubled since last year.

But there's a problem: a huge intentionality gap. Leaders see the office as a place for collaboration, but employees often feel differently. The core finding is simple: the reason for being at work is far more important than the physical location where the work occurs.

So, is the office still relevant? **Yes.** Our data shows that businesses see the office as a key tool for driving employee engagement. And when it comes to culture — which, as we know, eats strategy for breakfast — **over 81%** of our surveyed professionals agree that the office is a positive catalyst.

Let's dig into how your company can tackle RTO and build a stellar office culture.

The future of work is a human-centered one, shaped by Gen Z and Millennials who want a trifecta of financial security, meaningful work, and personal well-being. They're not against the office — in fact, they crave the social connection and mentorship it offers. But they want it on their terms: with flexibility. This generational shift is reshaping everything, from how we communicate to the importance of corporate values.



Part I: The State of Return-to-Office (RTO) – The Policy vs. The People

The fight over where work happens has gone from a temporary post-pandemic experiment to a full-on strategic battle for companies everywhere. The data is clear: there's a big push to get people back to the office, often thanks to a new company policy, but this trend is more complicated than it seems.

The Inevitable Return: Data Don't Lie

Big-name research firms are backing up what we're all seeing: the return to the office is happening, and it's happening fast. According to McKinsey's talent surveys, the number of people in the office at least four days a week has **more than doubled**, jumping from 34% in 2023 to a whopping 68% in 2024 [2, 3]. And this isn't just a handful of industries; we're talking about everyone from retail to healthcare [2].

Similarly, the EY Future Workplace Index shows that fully remote work is now basically extinct, **dropping from 34%** of the workforce in 2022 to a **measly 1%** in 2023 [4, 5]. The new standard? Hybrid work, which usually means two or three days in the office. This isn't a suggestion anymore; it's a mandate from big players like Amazon, JPMorgan Chase, and Nike [3].

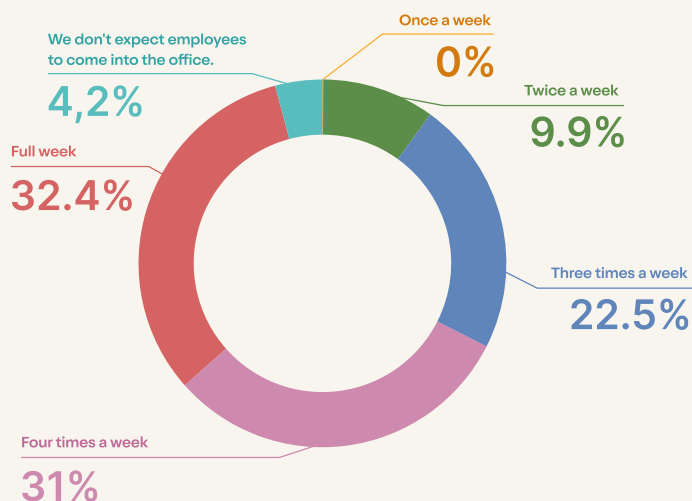
Danish and German statistics

Our own surveys in Denmark and Germany confirm this global movement. However, Danish companies are way more into it, **with 85.9%** encouraging employees to come in three or more days a week, compared to just 40% in Germany. Interestingly, both countries are on the same page when it comes to leadership.

In both Denmark and Germany, RTO is a high priority for management, with over 30% of companies putting it in their top business priorities. In fact, over 70% of companies in both countries say it's a priority for leadership. Which makes you wonder: if it's so important to German companies, why aren't their leaders mandating more days.

How often do you invite employees to come into the office?

Danish questionnaire



German questionnaires

How often do you encourage Employees to Come to the Office?



This data confirms there is no single, fixed demand for office attendance; instead, hybrid is the new normal. The vast majority of companies encourage a flexible routine, with 65.7% asking employees to come in one, two, or three days per week. The most common single expectation is Once per week (25.7%).

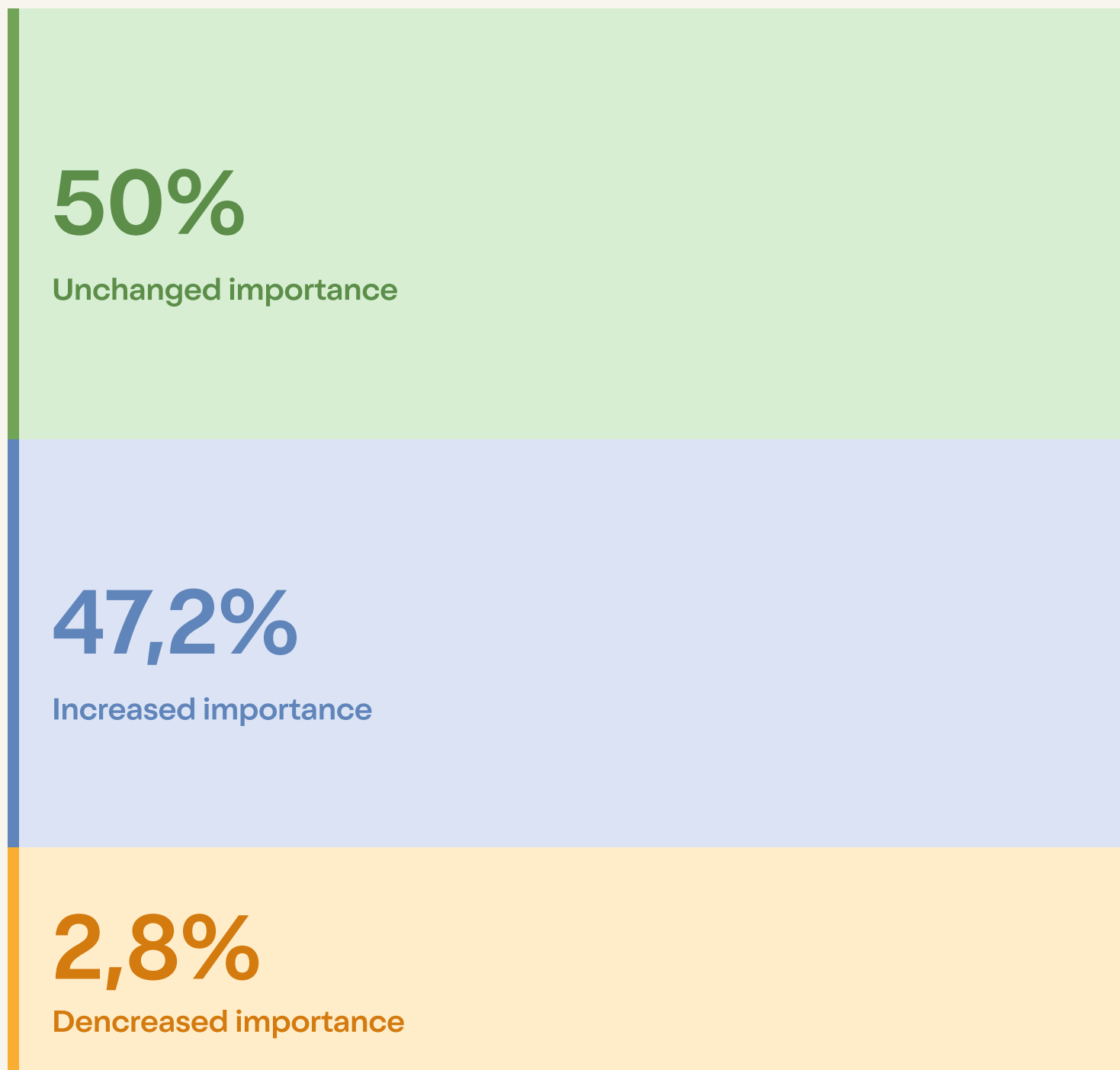
But here’s the kicker: Even though RTO is high priority for leaders across the board (we’re talking 70%+), the mandates are wildly inconsistent. The Danes are way more aggressive, pushing for three-plus days a week, while the Germans are holding back. This tells us the real issue isn’t whether leadership cares—it’s whether they have a clear strategy for what happens when people are there.

The extremes are stark but equal: 14.3% of companies still demand attendance on all weekdays, while an equal 14.3% have no expectation at all.

Flexibility is the price of admission into the modern workplace. If you demand a full-time presence, the office experience must be demonstrably better than the commute.

Danish questionnaires

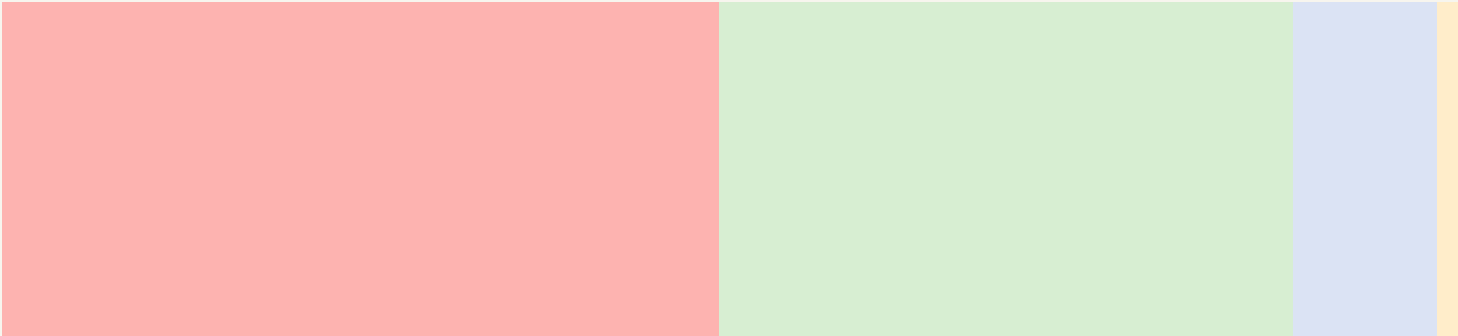
How do you expect the role of the office to change in your company over the next 3-5 years?



The diagram clearly shows that companies do not expect the office's role to diminish in the near future. The vast majority of respondents (97.2%) anticipate the office's importance will either remain unchanged (50%) or increase (47.2%) over the next 3-5 years. Only a tiny fraction (2.8%) foresees a decline. The strong consensus is that the physical office will continue to be a strategic asset for the business.

Danish questionnaires

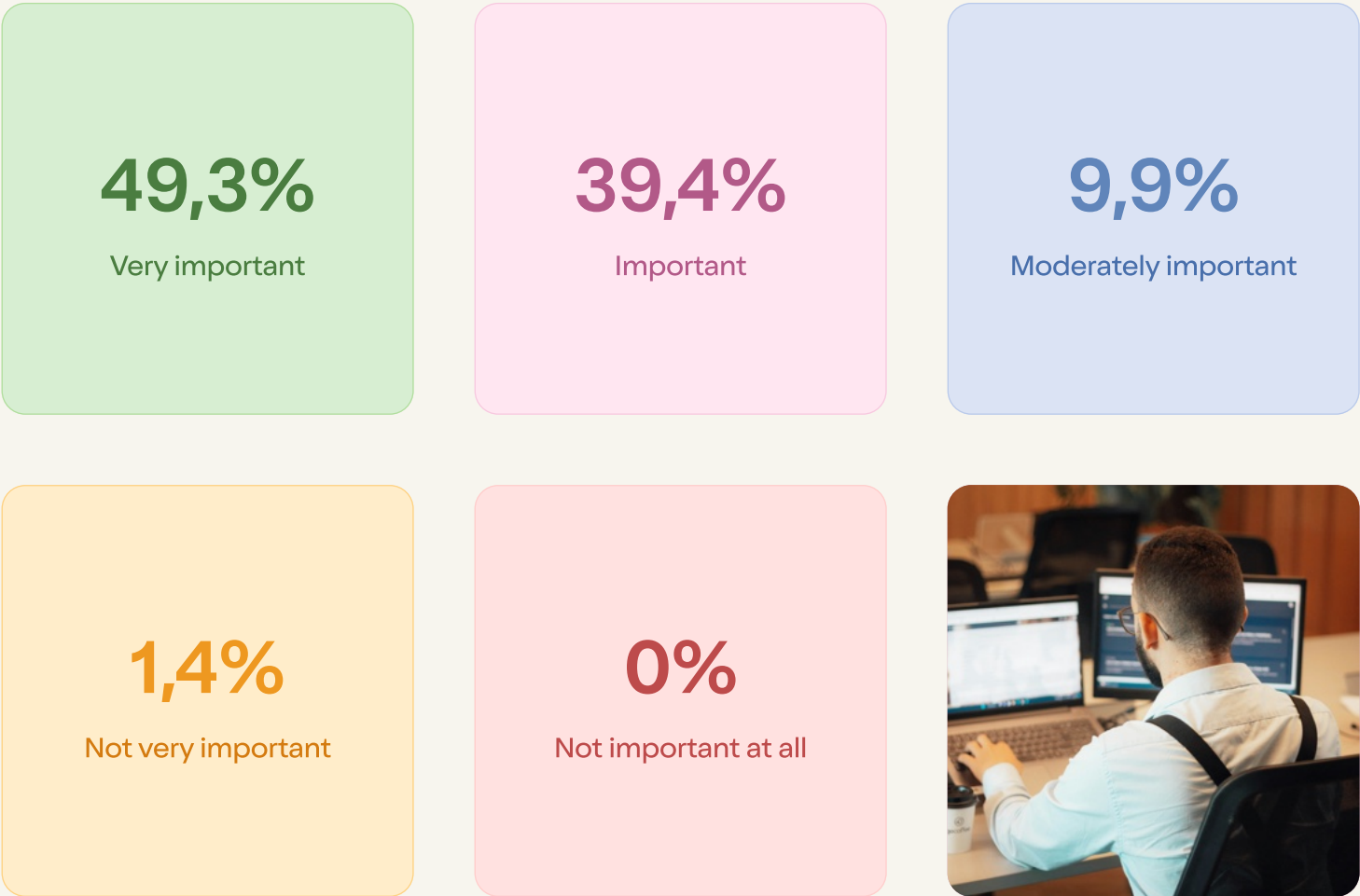
How do you rate the office's role in promoting employee engagement?



The data is crystal clear

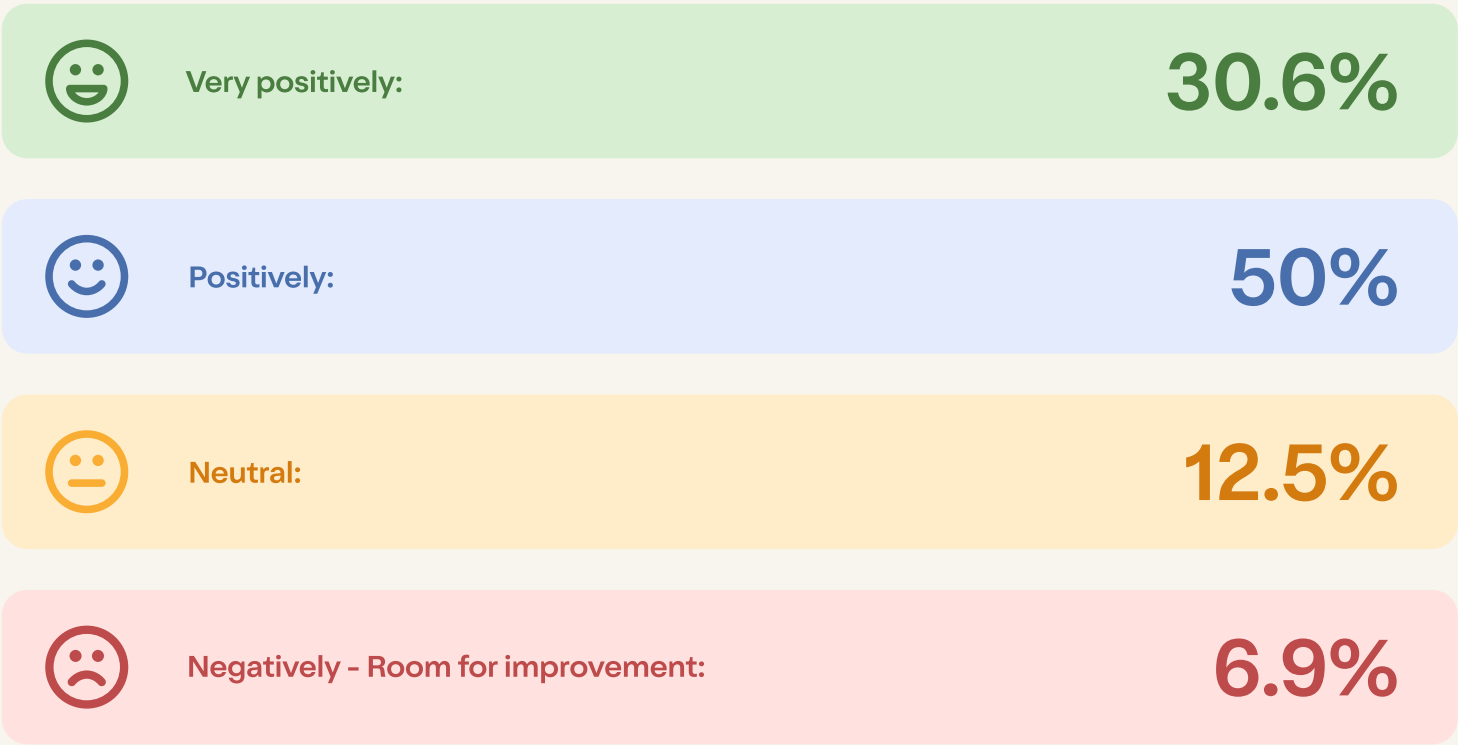
The office is not an optional extra; it's a vital strategic asset for employee engagement. An overwhelming 88.7% of respondents rate the office's role as either Very Important (49.3%) or Important (39.4%). This is a massive endorsement.

You won't solve world peace by the coffee machine, but the numbers show that the physical space is essential for fostering a connected and engaged team.



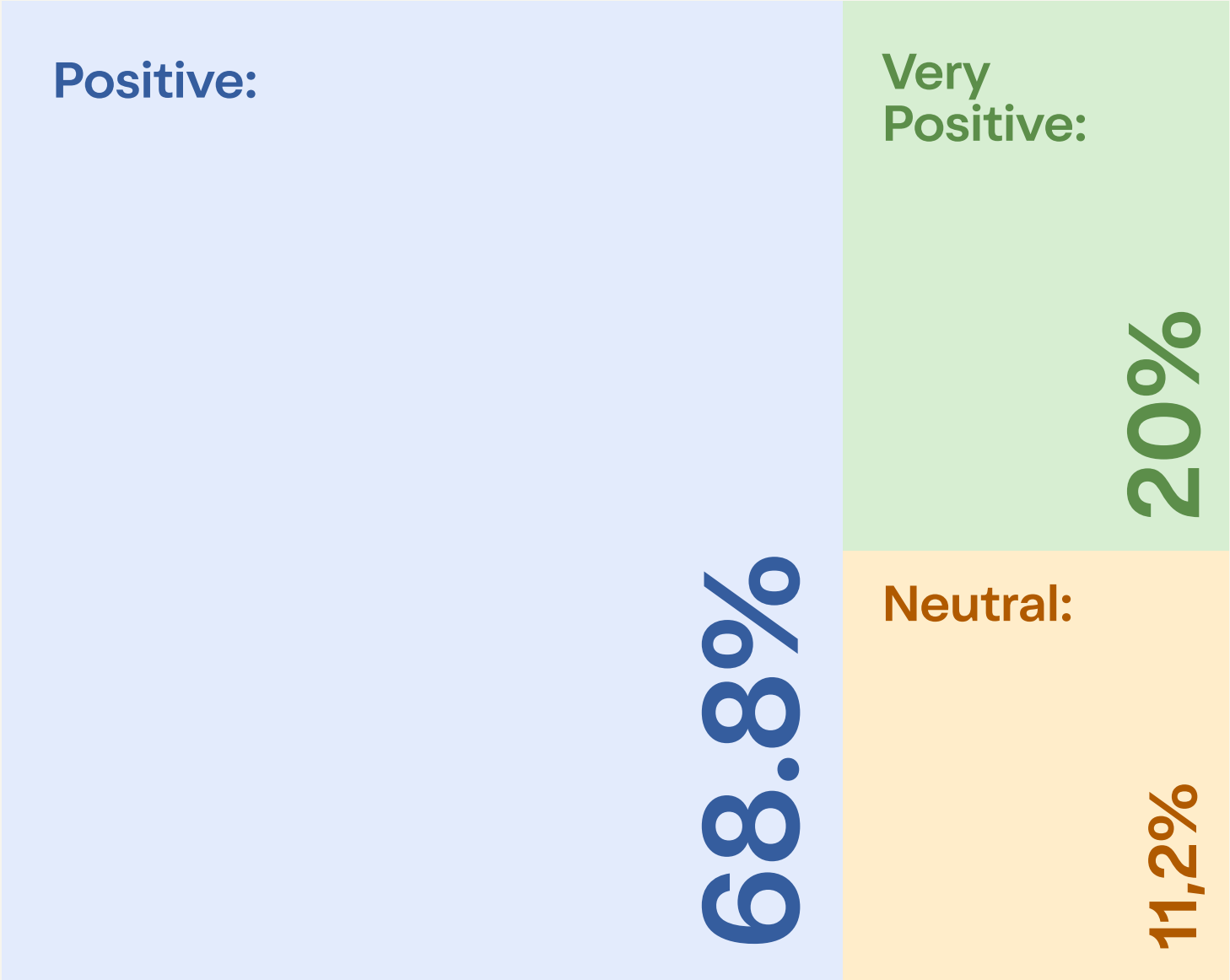
Danish questionnaires

How does the office environment contribute to your company's culture?



German questionnaires

How does the office environment contribute to your company's culture?



Environment contribute to company's culture

This data provides a powerful validation of the office's cultural impact. An overwhelming 88.6% of respondents feel the office contributes positively (68.6%) or very positively (20%) to their company culture.

The takeaway here is that the physical space is a proven asset in shaping your culture. It's working—which is why it's so important to protect it. Notably, 0% of respondents reported a negative contribution.

Your investment in the office is clearly yielding returns in terms of culture. The focus now shifts to safeguarding this success, because a great culture relies on positive daily experiences. Don't let the small details compromise this critical asset.

So, How Are Companies Actually Tackling RTO?

This aggressive push is often driven by the belief that in-person work boosts productivity, collaboration, and overall company health.

But here's the thing: a policy-first approach is like putting a band-aid on a much bigger problem [3, 6]. The data from all these big-name consulting firms agrees on one key point: the policy itself is a lot less important than the intentionality behind the in-office experience.

Office Experience

“

"It doesn't matter where you ask someone to be. What matters is what you do with them once they're there." [2]

McKinsey



This highlights a common mistake:

Leaders are focused on a simple, easy-to-measure metric—the number of days in the office—instead of the harder-to-measure stuff like company culture, mentorship, and actual collaboration.

A policy-driven strategy without a compelling reason for the commute is a recipe for disaster. It can alienate employees who have built their lives around flexibility and can lead to the kind of high turnover (around 39%) we're seeing across all work models [3, 6].

Our survey also shows that only

35,3%
of Danish
companies

21,1%
of German
companies

are using a policy as their main tactic. So what are they doing instead? The answer is simple: flexibility and social activities.



“

“It’s a real freedom to work from home when you need focus, but I prefer to be in the office for meetings. You just get more from being in the same room.”

Tina, HR professional
Skole og Forældre

The Productivity Paradox: The Disconnect Between Leaders and Employees

The RTO debate gets even messier when you look at the major perception gap between leaders and employees, especially when it comes to productivity.

The EY Future Workplace Index found that while over half of remote workers (54%) felt much more productive working from home, a tiny fraction of leaders (just 28%) agreed.

In fact, nearly a third of leaders (29%) believe that forcing people back to the office is the best way to boost productivity.

This disconnect is also evident in PwC's research, which confirms that remote or hybrid work boosted productivity in most workplaces, a fact that leaders should acknowledge given the lived experience of the pandemic [10, 11].

And it’s not just productivity. This disconnect is everywhere. McKinsey’s research shows that 90% of leaders think their company is great at fostering a sense of connection, while only 67% of employees feel the same way [3].

The same goes for collaboration, innovation, and mentorship—employees consistently rate their company's performance lower than leadership does [3, 6].

This chasm in perception, combined with a rigid, policy-driven RTO approach, shows a fundamental lack of intention. **When leaders mandate a return based on a productivity boost that employees don’t even believe is true, it breaks the trust that holds a good company culture together and puts a serious “shadow on leadership.”** [5]. Bain's research sums it up perfectly: a high level of connection and trust is a “critical ingredient for effectively operating complex businesses.” [12].

Toward a New RTO Strategy: Intentionality as the Core Principle

The most successful RTO strategies move beyond simple mandates and instead focus on creating a purpose-driven, intentional in-office experience. As McKinsey argues, the solution lies in addressing the five core practices that drive a healthy organization: collaboration, connectivity, innovation, mentorship, and skill development [3, 6].

This requires a fundamental shift from focusing on policy to prioritizing practice. Leaders must actively reinforce behaviors that support teamwork, such as structured brainstorming sessions and regular check-ins, while also creating opportunities for informal engagement like coffee chats [6].

As Helene from Rambøll explains

“We don’t have desks for everyone to be here at the same time, and that’s by design. We focus on creating a steady flow so the office is well used, not overcrowded or empty. And when people are here, everything they need is in place, from the essentials to social activities that keep our team happy and connected.”

RTO Trends and Perceptions

1

In-Person Work Trend (2023 vs. 2024)

McKinsey: Percentage of employees working in person four+ days a week doubled from 34% in 2023 to 68% in 2024 [2, 3].
EY: Full-time remote work dropped from 34% in 2022 to just 1% in 2023 [4, 5].

2

Productivity Perceptions (Remote vs. In-Office)

EY: 54% of remote workers reported being more productive remotely; only 28% of leaders agreed [9].

3

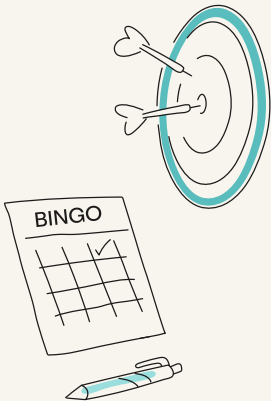
Perception of Organizational Practices McKinsey

Perception of Organizational Practices
McKinsey: 90% of leaders believe connectivity is effective, but only 67% of employees agree [3].
McKinsey: Leaders’ views on the effectiveness of collaboration, innovation, and mentorship are much higher than those of employees [3, 6].

4

Employee Attrition

McKinsey: Overall intention to leave is 39%, a figure comparable to the pandemic high and similar across all working models [3, 6].



Part II: Decoding the Modern Workforce – The Generational Divide

The modern workforce is undergoing a major shake-up, led by the new priorities and expectations of Gen Z and Millennials. They're basically rewriting the rules of the old-school employment game and forcing companies to rethink their whole approach to work.

The Gen Z "Trifecta": Redefining Career Motivation

According to a Deloitte survey, Gen Z and Millennials are driven by a "trifecta" of three interconnected factors: money, meaning, and well-being [14]. This isn't just a buzzword—it's a critical change. While a decent paycheck is still a major factor in why someone might leave a job, for Gen Z, staying in a job is about more than just money. They prioritize workplace flexibility, meaningful work, and career development over compensation. That's a huge shift from Baby Boomers, who see compensation as the top reason to stick around [15]. This generational difference is something every leader needs to pay attention to.

This focus on meaning and well-being isn't a sign that they're "soft" or "unprepared." [16]. It's actually a completely rational response to a unique set of pressures. Deloitte's research links financial insecurity directly to poor well-being—a feeling shared by almost half of Gen Z and Millennials, and that number is growing [14]. This financial stress, combined with the fact that two-thirds of Gen Z feel burned out at work, is the driving force behind their demand for better well-being resources and work that actually has a purpose [16, 18]. It's a clear sign of the "mounting psychological strain" that young people are dealing with [19].



The new social contract they're looking for is one where work isn't just a way to pay the bills, but a source of identity, community, and personal growth. As Bain's research suggests, younger generations might be turning to their careers to find the social connection and sense of purpose that used to come from traditional community and religious groups [12].

The New Social Contract: The Deep Need for Human Connection

Annette from Nil Tech notes, "When people come in, it's not just about working side by side, it's about creating shared moments that make the commute worthwhile."

The user's ezCater report and a broader range of consulting research confirm a consistent theme: despite being digital natives, Gen Z deeply craves in-person connection.

The ezCater report finds that younger generations "yearn for more in-person connection" [1] and that over half of Gen Z (56%) expect their company to provide opportunities for socialization [1].

This is not a contradiction but a strategic choice. They want the office for the things a screen cannot fully replicate: collaboration, informal learning, and friendships. Research shows that having close friends at work makes employees feel more engaged (86% of Gen Z) and helps them collaborate more effectively (80% of Gen Z) [1].

The ezCater report also notes that fully remote workers are 41% more likely to feel lonely and nearly 4 in 10 report feeling lonely at work [1]. McKinsey adds a critical layer to this, noting that Gen Z craves mentorship [15]. The office serves as the physical crucible where these relationships and invaluable knowledge transfers can occur.

The "old-fashioned watercooler chats" and impromptu meetings that Gen Z missed during their formative career years are not just about socializing; as one expert notes, they are "incredibly formative" moments of observing leadership and decision-making that are difficult to replicate on Zoom [1]. The presence of older workers, such as Baby Boomers who are delaying retirement, provides a unique opportunity for this mentorship [15].

The success of a multi-generational workforce, therefore, hinges on a company's ability to design in-office time specifically for these types of interactions, justifying the commute and maximizing the value of being together.

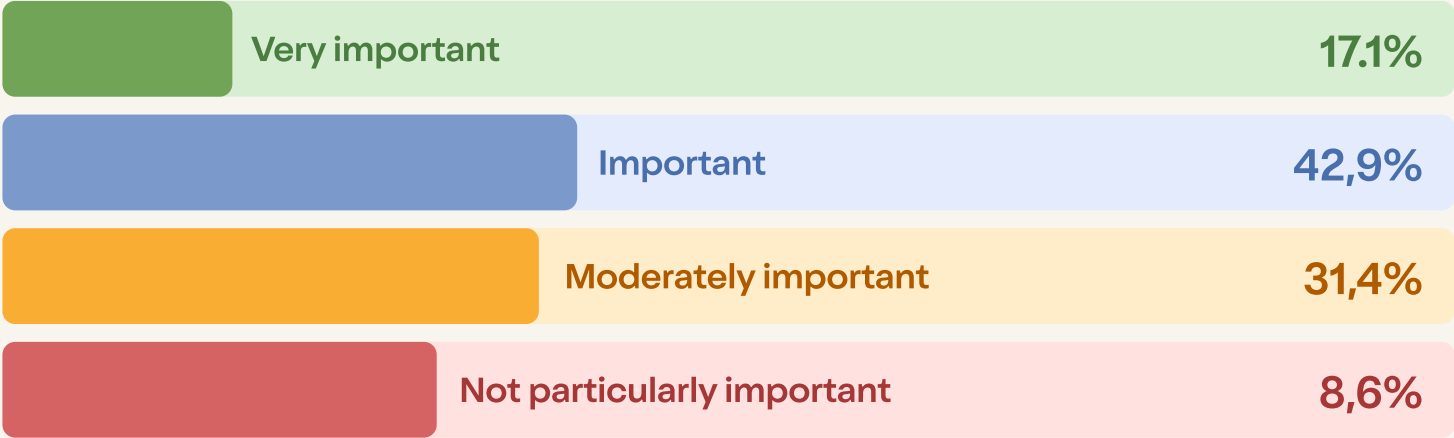


Seeing colleagues on a screen is just not the same as looking them in the eye. Being together in person, whether it's for a Monday town hall, Friday breakfast, or a social event, builds a connection you can't replicate remotely.

Tina from Skole og Forældre

German questionnaires

How do you rate the role of the office in promoting employee engagement?



This data shows a near-universal acceptance of the office's value, though it rarely rates as an absolute necessity.

A powerful 70% of respondents rate the office's role in promoting engagement as Important (42.9%) or Very Important (17.1%). This is a massive consensus—the office is a key tool.

However, a large segment (31.4%) rates it as only Moderately Important. This suggests that while the office is crucial for certain activities (like collaboration), many companies view it as a supportive, rather than primary, driver of engagement.

The office is an undeniably vital asset for engagement, but its function is becoming specialized. Companies must ensure their workplace investment directly supports the activities that truly require face-to-face interaction to validate the commute. Don't let your office become just another workspace.



Beyond the Stereotypes: Expectations of a New Generation

Gen Z's demands are also shaping how managers need to act and how we communicate. While they get a bad rap for being "fragile" or "unprepared," the data shows a more complex picture. They might not be less resilient, but they are definitely more vocal about what they need [20]. They want their managers to be caring, listen to their ideas, and provide regular feedback and mentorship [14, 21]. This is a clear shift away from the old-school, top-down leadership model and toward something much more collaborative.

When it comes to communication, it's a bit of a paradox. While a lot of Gen Z (49%) prefers to use instant messaging for quick work chats , they also say that in-person interactions are the most effective way to communicate (39% [21, 16]. This shows they're being smart about using tech for efficiency while still understanding that you can't beat face-to-face time for building real relationships and understanding complex stuff. The following table gives you a clear look at what this new generation wants.



Gen Z Workplace Preferences



Career Motivation

Prioritize flexibility, meaningful work, and career development over compensation for staying in a job [15].



Well-being

92% of Gen Z graduates would like to discuss mental health at work [16]. 60% expect managers to care about their well-being [16]. 35% are more likely than older generations to wish for more well-being resources [1].



Socialization & Connection

56% expect their company to provide opportunities to socialize [1].
68% prefer a hybrid work model [1].
86% feel more engaged when they have work friends [1].



Mentorship

Gen Z actively craves mentorship from senior colleagues [15].



Communication

49% prefer instant messaging platforms [16].
39% feel in-person interactions are the most effective way to communicate [21].

Danish questionnaires

Is it on the management's agenda to get employees to come into the office more often?

30%

Yes, it is a high priority for management

37.1%

Yes, but it is not a top priority

30%

No, it is currently not a priority

2.9%

I am uncertain about management's agenda on this topic

Divided opinions

This data reveals that management is divided and, for the most part, is not making mandated office attendance a top-level priority. Only 30% view getting employees back into the office more often as a high priority. The majority of respondents fall into the "soft push" or "no push" categories: 37.1% see it as a priority, but not a top one, and an equal 30% say it is currently not a priority at all.

This fractured approach suggests that leadership is balancing a desire for team cohesion with the need for talent retention. They want you back, but they won't necessarily fight for it. If leadership can't agree on a mandate, the office experience itself must be good enough to validate the commute.

Part III: Reimagining the Workplace – From Physical Spaces to Digital Tools

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It's about balance. The office should feel alive but never overcrowded, and when you're here, you should have every reason to enjoy it.

As Helene from Rambøll says



The modern workforce's demands for connection, collaboration, and purpose are fundamentally reshaping the physical and technological tools of the workplace.

The office is no longer merely a place to complete tasks; it is a strategic asset for building culture and fostering innovation.

The Office Redux: From Cubicles to Collaborative Hubs

The era of the cubicle is over, with fewer than one in ten employees citing a partitioned workstation as ideal [1]. The new office must be a destination that people genuinely want to spend time in [1].

The most popular option across all generations is a "mixed office" space, which combines open-plan areas with private offices and communal spaces[1].

This design philosophy reflects the evolving purpose of the office, which most workers (60%) now see as a central hub for collaboration, meetings, and connection[1].



Answers

Flexible working hours:

44 responses (64,7 %)

Increased social activities:

26 responses (38,2 %)

Policy regarding the extent of remote work, e.g., 3 days per week:

24 responses (35,3 %)

Better facilities (e.g., lounge areas, fitness, table tennis):

20 responses (29,4%)

Free lunch or other meals:

17 responses (25 %)

More meeting rooms:

13 responses (19,1 %)

Increased communication about the benefits of coming to the office (in plenary and 1:1):

10 responses (14,7 %)

Division of the office into zones, e.g., quiet zone

9 responses (13,2 %)

We do not work from home:

1 responses (1,5 %)

Nothing:

1 responses (1,5 %)

Have never offered employees a home workplace. They are allowed if it is a big task they need to concentrate on, or if they need some quiet, or if something at home needs to be taken care of:

1 responses (1,5 %)

Only office employees have the option to work from home and only to a limited extent. It is not part of our culture:

1 responses (1,5 %)

We pay 80% of lunch and provide breakfast every Friday:

1 responses (1,5 %)



Diagram from the danish questionnaires

What initiatives have you taken to make the office more attractive for employees compared to the home workplace?

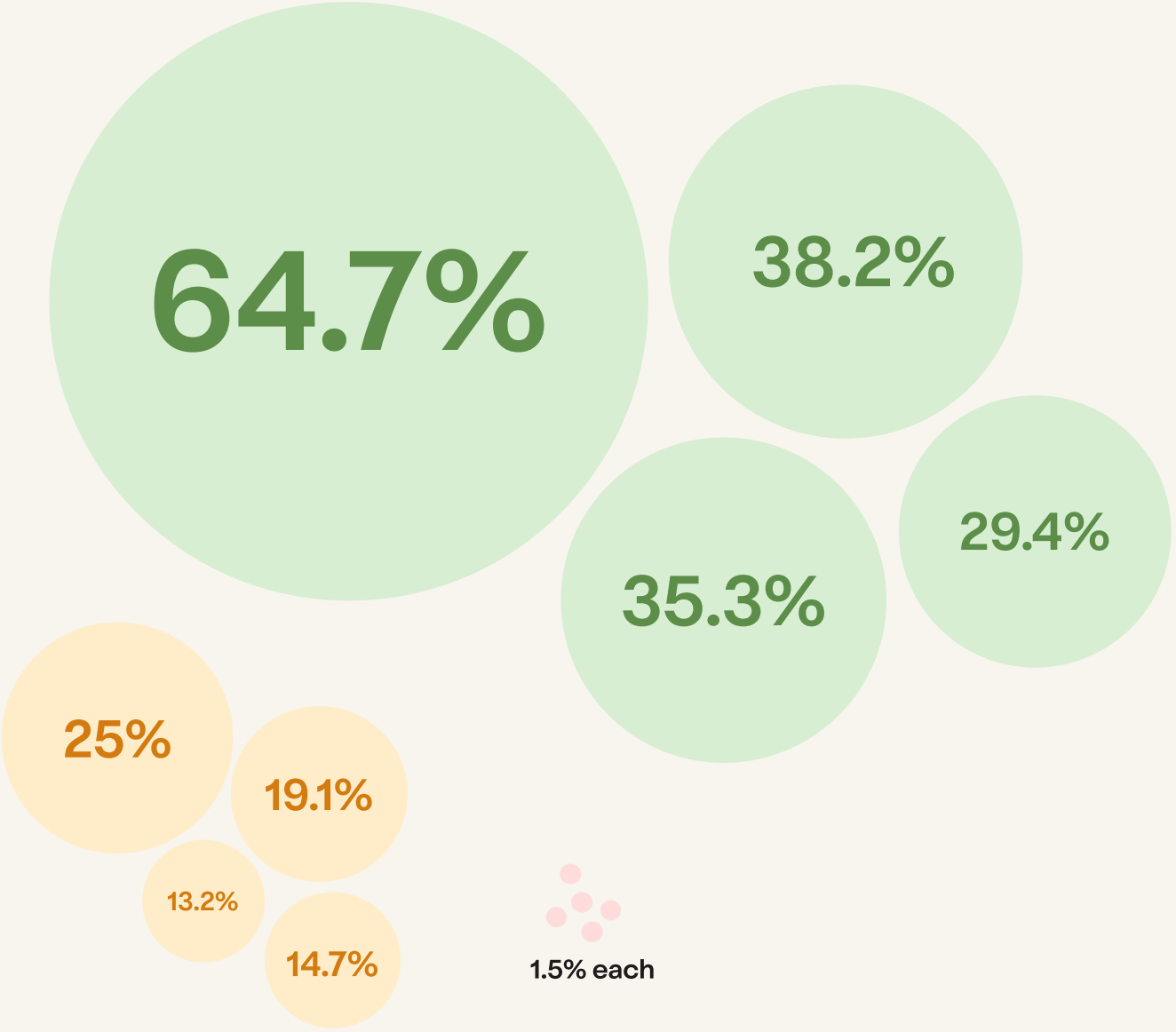
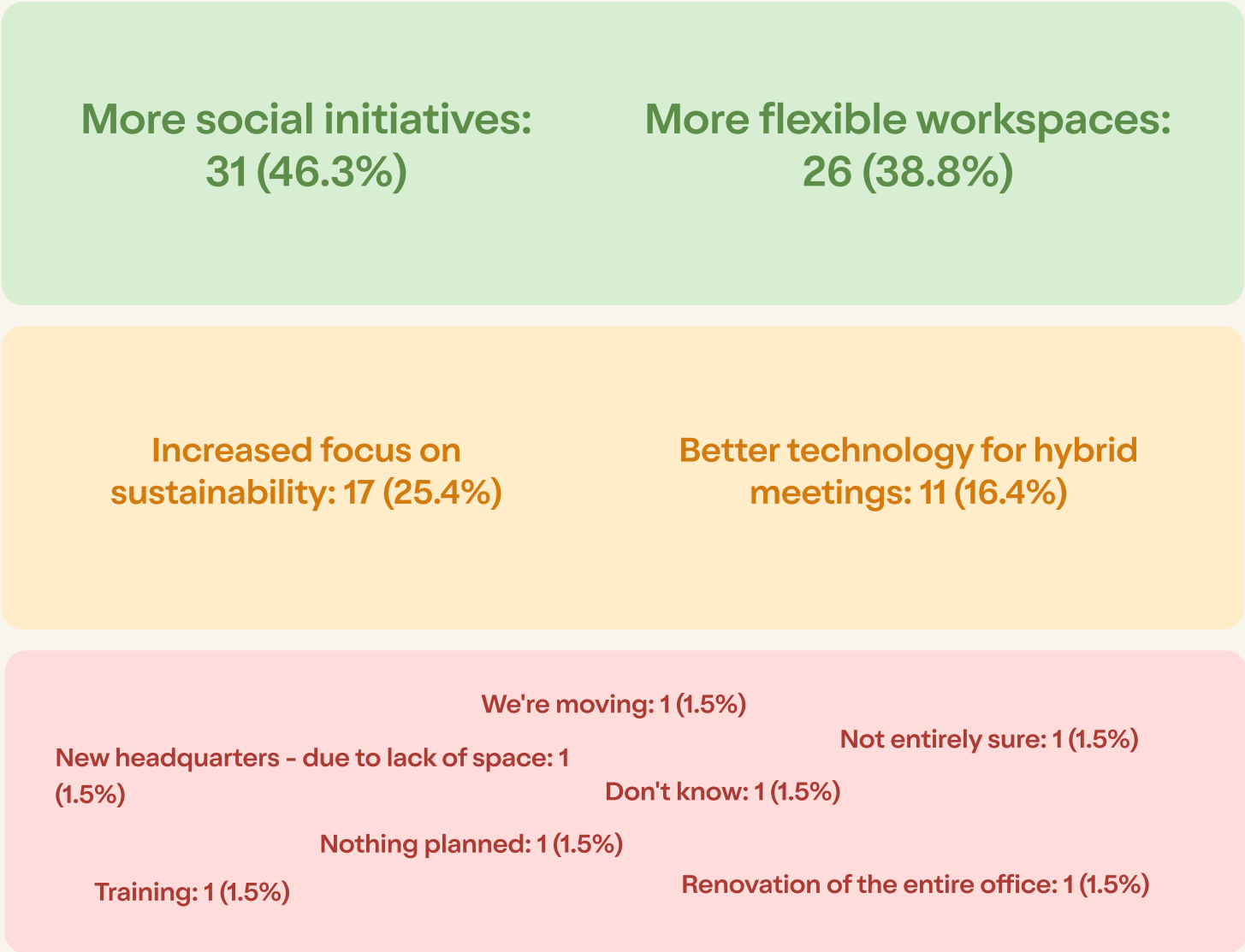


Diagram from the danish questionnaires

What new initiatives are you considering implementing in the office to improve the employee experience?



This data highlights a clear strategy among companies to focus their resources on employee experience drivers, primarily social connection and workplace adaptability.

The top initiative considered is “More social initiatives” (46.3%), emphasizing the office's new role as a hub for team bonding and culture. This is followed by “More flexible workspaces” (38.8%), confirming that static desks are out and adaptable environments are in.

Companies are not focused on minor technical upgrades (like hybrid meeting tech at 16.4%). Instead, they are prioritizing investments that fundamentally change the office's value proposition, ensuring it serves as a powerful magnet for collaboration and community. If the office isn't about connection, employees won't come.

Workplace design is on the agenda

German companies, in particular, are focused on upgrading their physical spaces, giving their offices a deliberate, modern makeover.

1

Space for fun and bonding:

And with over 30% investing in better common areas, we're talking about more than just lounges and the almost-mandatory foosball table. It's about creating a place where people can genuinely bond.

2

Space for focused work:

People who need to get things done should have a quiet space to do it. 24.2% of German offices are dividing their space into different zones, making sure a lack of quiet space isn't a reason to stay home.

3

Space for collaboration:

30.3% are establishing more meeting, collaboration, and conference rooms. The idea is that when people are at the office, they are there to collaborate, so the space should reflect that.



"The office still plays an important role, but it needs to offer more than just a place to work. It should be inviting, support collaboration, and provide value beyond the tasks at hand. We don't have fixed attendance rules; people work from home one or two days a week by agreement with their manager, but when they're here, the environment should make it worth the trip."

Gritte from Croda

Experts from EY emphasize

Thoughtful workplace design is critical in a hybrid environment [1]. The most desired features on the future workplace wish list include small group gathering spaces, breakrooms, eating areas, lounges, and outdoor spaces. These "human-centered designs" are essential for fostering a sense of community, rebuilding trust, and creating the spontaneous "watercooler conversations" that remote work has diminished [1].

Leaders are beginning to recognize this, with larger companies reducing their office footprints but enhancing the quality of their space, technology, and amenities [4]. This is not just about saving money; it's a strategic choice to make the office a more inviting and productive environment, giving you a serious competitive advantage in attracting and keeping top talent [1].

Annette from Nil Tech explains

"It's all about creating a good atmosphere. Small things like music in the background or a shared breakfast make people curious, bring them together, and strengthen relationships, and when relationships improve, the work improves."



And while Danish lunch culture is a whole thing—with about 80% of Danish companies with more than 10 employees offering a subsidized lunch in the form of a canteen or a two-course buffet—food is definitely something companies in Berlin are also investing in.

In our survey, 18.2% of businesses are offering free meals, and even more are planning to.



The Power of Perks: Food as a Catalyst for Connection

The US food for work giant ezCater's recent report has a central finding: food perks are the number one incentive for encouraging on-site attendance [1]. This isn't a frivolous observation; it's a powerful strategic tool.

This preference is particularly strong among younger generations; on average, 28% more Gen Z and Millennials wish their company offered food-related perks than older generations [1]. For remote or hybrid Gen Z workers, food perks were even more popular than education benefits or generous vacation time as a reason to come into the office [1].

The power of food as a perk is rooted in its ability to act as a social catalyst. **More than half of all workers (54%) would rather eat with other people than alone, and 72% agree that work events centered around food help them feel more connected to their coworkers.** When used with intention, food perks facilitate the in-person connections that the workforce desires. Case studies show that pairing free lunch with learning and networking opportunities can triple attendance on those days, transforming a simple perk into a driver for engagement and knowledge transfer [1].

Food perks, therefore, are not a bribe to get employees into the office; they are a strategic investment in organizational health and culture, providing a low-stakes environment for connection that can combat the loneliness reported by remote workers [1].

German questionnaire

Does your office policy focus on promoting responsibility (e.g., sustainability, diversity, inclusion, workplace health)?

17,1%

Yes, to a great extent

57,1%

Yes, to some extent

11,4%

No, but we are working on it

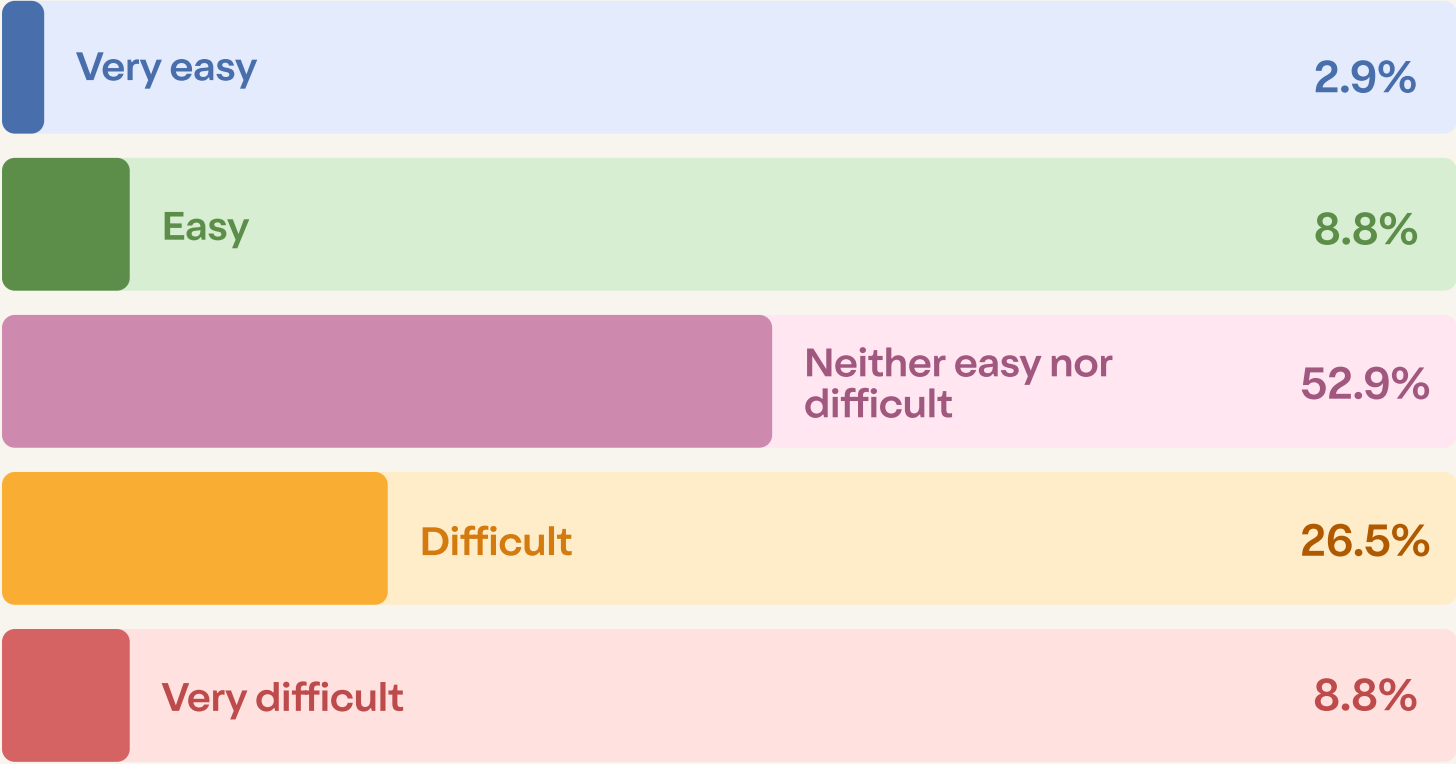
14,3%

No, we do not



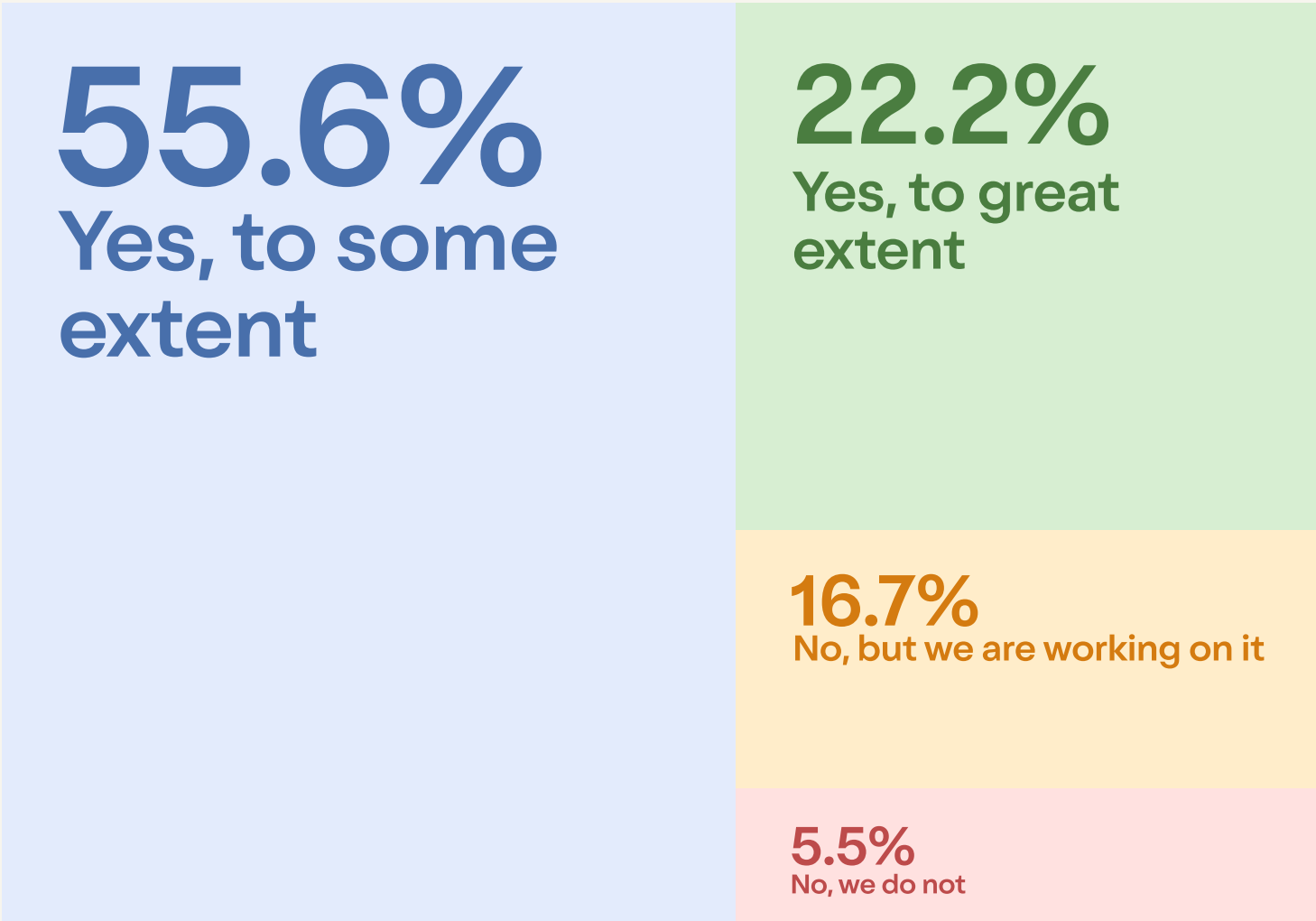
German questionnaire

How easy or difficult is it for your Office to verify the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and sustainability documentation of their suppliers ?



Danish questionnaire

Does your office policy focus on promoting responsibility (e.g., sustainability, diversity, inclusion, workplace health)?



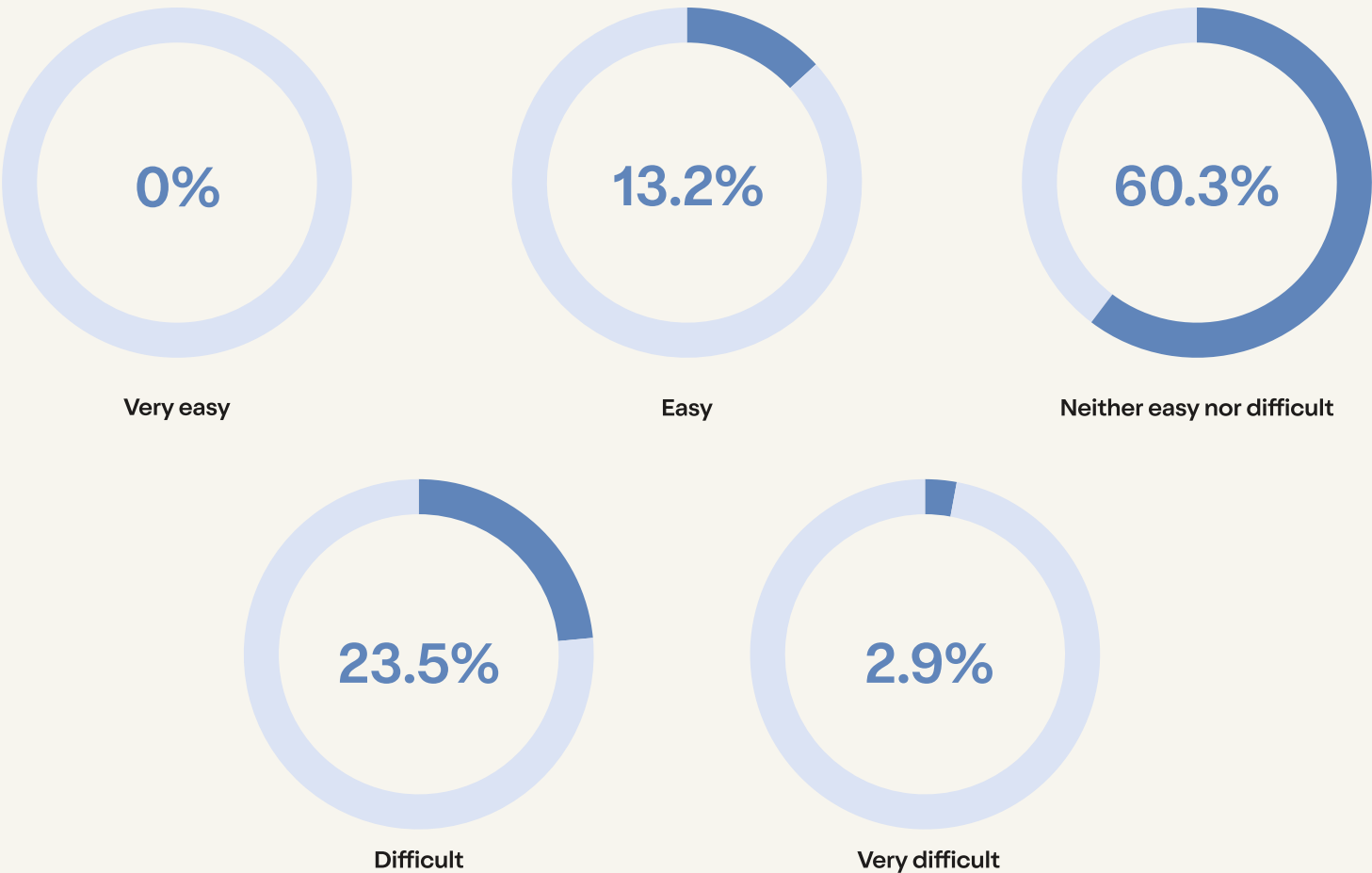
This data shows that promoting workplace responsibility—covering sustainability, diversity, and health—is now standard practice, but rarely a core focus. A strong majority of 77.8% state that responsibility is addressed in their office policy to at least some extent. This demonstrates high organizational intent across the board.

However, only 22.2% prioritize these initiatives to a great extent. This reveals that while responsibility is considered a necessary component, it is often treated as a supporting role rather than a structural mandate.

Companies have the right intentions, but few are making social responsibility a primary directive in their office policy. **The challenge now is moving from acknowledging the importance to implementing deep, actionable change.**

Danish questionnaire

How easy or difficult is it for your Office to verify the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and sustainability documentation of their suppliers.?



The process of verifying supplier sustainability documentation is a major administrative bottleneck for organizations. A striking 60.3% classify the task as "Neither easy nor difficult," which signals a cumbersome, manual effort that consumes significant time and resources. This challenge is compounded by the 26.4% who find it difficult or very difficult (with 0% finding it very easy).

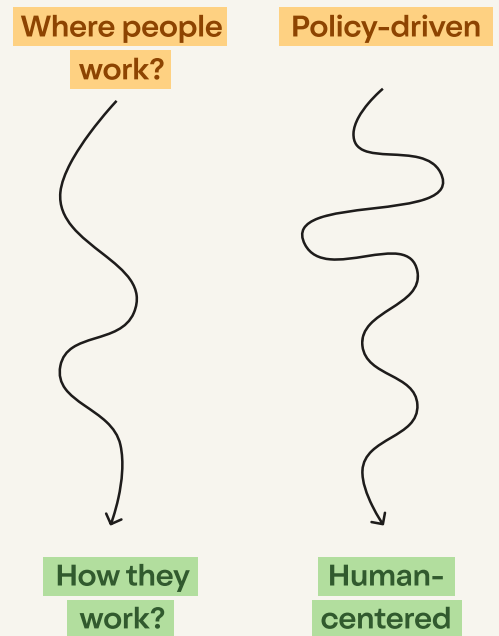
Compliance is far from simple. The administrative complexity of ESG verification is a significant organizational burden. Companies must look for ways to streamline or automate this process to free up resources from time-consuming paperwork.

Part IV: Strategic Recommendations for Future-Proofing Your Organization

Your peers are putting their money where their mouth is

When asked what they will be investing more in, the answers are clear. In Germany, a significant 64.7% of companies are planning to invest more in social activities, compared to 46.3% in Denmark. They are also focusing on creating more flexible workplaces and better technology for hybrid meetings.

The findings of this report provide a clear roadmap for leaders seeking to build a resilient and competitive organization. The future of work is not about where people work, but how. The following recommendations offer a phased strategic framework for leaders to move from policy-driven mandates to a human-centered, intentional approach. But before you walk into the CFO's office, we recommend that you take the lead on using this framework to define or redefine your company's office strategy.



46,3%
of Danish
companies

64,7%
of German
companies



Phase 1: Redefine the Office's Purpose with Intentionality

Leaders must pivot from enforcing a return-to-office policy to creating a purpose-driven reason for being there. This involves three key actions:

Communicate the Why:

Be transparent with employees about the specific, purpose-driven reasons for an RTO policy. This communication should clearly articulate how in-person time will be used to foster collaboration, mentorship, and innovation, and how this will benefit both the organization and the individual [5].

Design for Connection:

Re-imagine office spaces to prioritize a balance of private and communal areas that facilitate impromptu gatherings and collaboration [1]. This includes investing in breakrooms, lounges, and outdoor spaces that serve as the new "watercooler" for conversation and connection.

Leverage Catalysts for Community:

Implement strategically designed perks, such as food, to act as a catalyst for spontaneous connection and socialization. By pairing meals with learning (e.g. AI learning) or networking events, companies can intentionally build the kind of culture that Gen Z and Millennials crave, leading to improved engagement and retention [1].

Workplace design:

"Whether it's the tools, the space, or the culture, the office should give people everything they need to work well together, so they leave feeling their time was well spent."

Gitte from Croda

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Phase 2: Tailor a Multi-Generational Strategy

A one-size-fits-all approach is a critical mistake in today's multi-generational workforce. Leaders must adopt a personalized strategy that acknowledges the diverse motivations of their employees.



Acknowledge the Trifecta:

Build a culture that prioritizes the interconnected "trifecta" of money, meaning, and well-being, particularly for younger generations. This can be accomplished by offering competitive compensation, providing purpose-driven initiatives, and investing in genuine well-being resources - among this, an office that creates well-being and belonging.



Foster a Culture of Mentorship:

Create formal and informal mentorship programs that pair junior and senior employees. The physical office provides a unique opportunity for this cross-generational learning and knowledge transfer, which is a key priority for Gen Z [1, 15].

A Human-Centered Future

The future of work is not about a rigid policy but about a renewed focus on the human experience. The most successful organizations will be those that master the art of blending physical and virtual spaces with genuine care and intentionality, creating a culture of trust, connection, and purpose.

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The data says it all

RTO policies will succeed not because they are mandated, but because the workplace experience they create is compelling enough to justify the commute.

Ask yourself: "Do we earn their commute"

This is not a passing trend but a fundamental shift that will define organizational health and competitive advantage for decades to come. By prioritizing intentionality, embracing the "trifecta" of modern workers, and empowering a digital native workforce, leaders can build a workplace that is not only ready for the future, but that is actively creating it.



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