

# Younger workers driving positive changes for all in the workplace

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Younger generations of workers across the UK are calling for enhanced wellbeing, sustainable and digital workplace practices more than any other working-age demographic and are willing to look at alternative employers if their needs aren't met, new research reveals.

Published today by Compass Group, the world's leading food services company, and global market intelligence agency Mintel, the *Global Eating at Work Survey 2023* is one of the largest inter-generational surveys of its kind, analysing insights from 35,000 global workers across 26 countries on their workplace preferences, including employee views on eating at work, sustainability, digital adoption, health, and mental wellbeing.

The research reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global cost of living crisis have made UK employees more mindful of what they want and deserve from an employer.

- Across all age groups, 46% of UK workers say they are scrutinising employee benefits more closely than they used to, peaking at 59% among Gen Z.
- 36% of UK workers say they feel less loyal towards their employer since COVID-19, jumping to one in two (50%) among Gen Z employees and 47% for Millennials.
- 68% of UK workers say employers should be doing more to support employees with the cost-of-living crisis, peaking at 76% for Gen Z and Millennials.
- 71% of UK Gen Z say having a staff restaurant on-site shows an employer cares about its employees.

The list of UK worker demands from current and prospective employers is evolving, with food provision at

work viewed as a major asset in the war for talent, especially among younger workers.

- Across all age groups, flexible working is considered the most appealing non-monetary benefit that employers can provide, followed by health insurance, discount schemes and having a staff restaurant at work.
- 65% of UK Gen Z say an on-site cafeteria would positively influence their decision to join a prospective employer, compared to 46% average across all age demographics, and 29% for Baby Boomers.
- 63% of UK workers (and 70% of Millennials) that have a staff restaurant in their workplace say they speak more highly of their employer to others outside of their organisation, compared to 54% for employees without any food provision at work.

Providing a sustainable and healthy food offer at work is paramount, especially for Millennials.

- 66% of UK workers say that employers have a responsibility to pro-actively promote sustainability in the workplace, peaking at 73% for Millennials.
- All age groups expect food outlets should help them make healthier food and drink choices through the food they serve, peaking at 68% among Millennials.
- Younger generations are driving a meat-free revolution in the workplace, with more than half of Gen Z and Millennials happy to eat vegan or vegetarian meals compared to around a third of Baby Boomers.

Of any generation, Gen Z and Millennials are also most open to digital foodservice innovations that can improve their productivity and health at work.

- 77% of UK Gen Z and Millennials say that taking a proper lunch break makes them more productive when they return to work, compared to 67% among Baby Boomers.
- 69% of Gen Z and Millennial workers in the UK are happy to order food and drinks via apps, compared to less than half of Gen X (48%) and only a quarter (26%) of Baby Boomers.
- 48% of Gen Z workers say they like to stay on top of their calorie intake by tracking their diet via an app, versus 30% among the wider working-age population in the UK.

Morag Freathy, Managing Director, Eures said:

*"With Gen Z and Millennials soon to make up the largest proportion of the UK workforce, their influence in the workplace is on the rise. For employers battling higher wage demands, productivity pressures, and retention and recruitment challenges as the war for talent continues, matching workplace initiatives with the preferences and values of these younger demographics is more important than ever."*

*"Since the pandemic, the lines between workers' personal and professional values have become increasingly blurred. Empowered Gen Z and Millennial workers have made it clear that they want to associate themselves with companies who share their values, provide a safe, comfortable working environment, and support their health and wellbeing. And they are willing to look elsewhere if they feel their needs aren't being met."*

*"Employers today need to use every tool at their disposal to attract, retain and motivate the best talent. As our research has shown, a staff restaurant is one of the most effective ways for employers to show that"*

*they care for their staff, while positively influencing employee loyalty and their willingness to speak positively about their employer. Meanwhile, enabling workers to have proper breaks with quality food and drink is shown to give workers a chance to properly reset and recharge, decreasing work-related stress while increasing productivity.”*

Matt Thomas, Managing Director, Restaurant Associates, added:

*“Gen Z are digital natives, born in the era of on-demand culture, and as a result they have a greater interest in and expectations of technology for foodservice in the workplace. This presents exciting new opportunities for workplace dining facilities to meet Gen Z’s growing demand for ‘right here, right now’ with dedicated apps for anything from ordering, payment, and delivery, to tracking nutrition and the carbon footprint of the meals they choose.*

*“The whole eating at work “journey” needs to be as smooth, quick, and efficient as possible to harness employees’ productivity. Tech-enabled options make it easy for employees to order exactly what they need, when and where they need it, seamlessly integrating refuelling into their personal work schedule. Just as importantly, employers need to emphasise these benefits across their entire workforce to ensure a similar proportion of older employees enjoy the improved workplace experience that digital can bring.”*

Eurest and Restaurant Associates are two of Compass Group UK & Ireland’s leading brands, providing catering to thousands of employees in the workplace, across the UK.