

# Is working from home bad for our health?

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UK employees who work from home are more likely to eat indulgent foods, snack between meals, and work longer hours than their workplace-based colleagues, reveals new research from [Compass Group](#), the world's leading food services company, and global market intelligence agency Mintel.

## Healthy eating expectations and realities

Analysing insights from 35,000 workers across 26 countries, Compass Group's Global Eating at Work Survey 2023 found that the vast majority of workers in the UK recognise the productivity, health and wellbeing benefits of maintaining a healthy diet during their working week.

- 60% say that what they eat and drink at work has a direct impact on their productivity
- 66% say that the food and drink they consume has a direct impact on how they feel
- 73% agree that eating and drinking healthily is essential to promoting long-term health

Despite this, more than half of the UK workforce say they struggle to maintain healthy diets whilst at work, with employees who work from home finding it hardest to resist temptation.

- 52% of UK home-based and hybrid workers admit regularly eating indulgent foods during their working day
- Men who work from home were found to snack on average 3 times per day – twice as often as their work-based peers
- Employees who work from home are more likely to eat high-calorie snacks such as chocolate during their breaks (31% of home workers vs 25% of work-based employees)

In contrast, two thirds (67%) of UK hybrid workers said they make a concerted effort to eat more healthily on days when they go into the workplace, while calling for more guidance and support from their

employers to achieve this.

- *65% of employees with a staff restaurant expect food outlets in the workplace to help them make healthier choices*

Across all age groups, younger UK workers are most interested in healthy eating at work and how the food they eat impacts their productivity.

- *UK Millennials are most likely to choose a healthy snack during their breaks (40% vs 28% of Baby Boomers)*
- *Gen Z snack more than any other UK demographic, averaging 4 per day when WFH, often replacing a main meal*
- *Baby Boomers are most likely to grab a quick sandwich for lunch, whereas younger generations favour a hot meal*
- *70% of Gen Z agree what they eat and drink at work directly impacts their productivity (vs just 45% of Baby Boomers)*

#### Work-life balance

UK employees who work from home report having more frequent and higher quality breaks than in the workplace, with 57% of hybrid workers saying they can truly relax during breaks at home compared to 44% for breaks in the office.

The research also found that UK home-based workers are:

- *nearly four times more likely than workplace-based colleagues to take exercise during the working day*
- *three times more likely to go outside and spend time in nature during their work breaks than work-based employees.*
- *better at avoiding screen-time during breaks (39% have a break from screens vs 27% of work-based employees)*

However, 6 in 10 UK hybrid workers said they tend to work longer hours when working from home, while 60% of home-based workers eat lunch alone (compared to 45% of workplace-based employees), increasing feelings of isolation. The research also highlighted that UK hybrid workers miss the opportunity to socialise with colleagues during their working day, with half wishing they could eat lunch with colleagues more often.

Morag Freathy, Managing Director, Eurest (part of Compass Group UK & Ireland), said:

“It’s clear that workers everywhere want to adopt healthier lifestyles. But, with snacks readily available in the kitchen cupboard and the pressure to plan and prepare balanced meals for themselves, employees who work from home are finding it hardest to maintain healthy eating habits during their working day.

“Knowing that hybrid workers want to catch up with colleagues and eat more healthily on days when they go into the office, UK employers have a real opportunity through their food offerings, breakout spaces and wellbeing initiatives to enhance the health and wellbeing of their teams, while also encouraging them back into the workplace more often.”

Ryan Holmes, Culinary Director, B&I, at Compass Group UK & Ireland, commented:

“Workers across the UK are increasingly looking to their employers to help them make healthier choices, by providing healthy, sustainable, and innovative food experiences in the workplace, which they can’t easily replicate at home. This includes premium ingredients at reasonable prices, interesting new flavour combinations, more plant-based options, and a wider variety of healthy snacks.

“Snacking is on the rise. Younger generations especially are trading down from meals into smaller bites, preferring to graze throughout the day rather than eat at set times, which better suits their ‘on-the-go’ lifestyles and smaller budgets. With workforce demographics shifting towards Gen Z and Millennials, this snacking trend is here to stay.”

Nicky Martin, Director of Nutrition and Wellbeing at Compass Group UK & Ireland, added:

“We’re changing the way we approach nutrition and wellbeing in the workplace, integrating food service and behavioural science to gently nudge consumers towards healthier choices. For clients, this means expanding the variety of healthy food options we offer in office settings, optimising portion sizes, cutting ultra-processed foods from menus, and introducing more slow-release energy snacks to boost employee productivity throughout the day.

“Clients are increasingly exploring new ways to help their employees eat more healthily at home too. We’re helping clients organise pop-up events from nutritionists, producing recipe cards to inspire home cooks, and even introducing urban farms into offices, to grow healthy, fresh produce that employees can take home with them.”