

Survey:
**Workplace
culture**
May 2021

As Covid restrictions began to ease and organisations started to think about welcoming people back into their offices, Overbury used OnePulse to poll 1,000 office workers in mid-April to find out how they felt about their organisation's culture – how important it is to them, and how their workplace reflects their organisation's culture.





What is workplace culture?

Culture is an organisation's character or personality. Created by its values, rituals, attitudes and behaviours, it's 'the way things are done around here'. It can be both a positive and a negative force and can shift with changes in the leadership team, financial performance, systems and processes, people and the design and use of the workplace itself. It's what makes one organisation different from another.

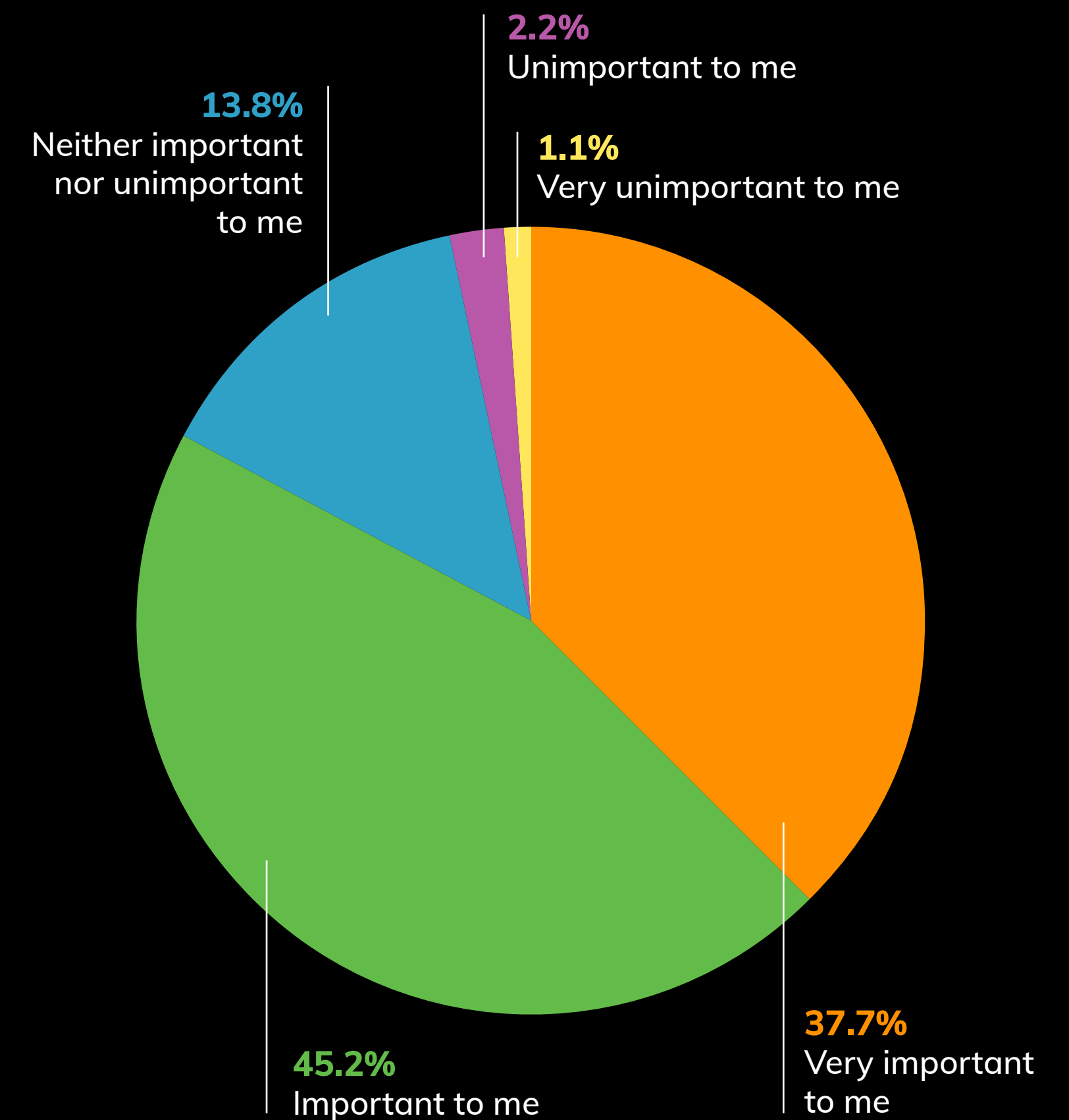
Is an organisation's culture important to employees?

Is culture important to employees? The answer is a resounding yes. More than 80 per cent (82.9) said their organisation's culture was very important or important in their decision to join or stay with their employer, with just 3.3% saying it was unimportant or very unimportant.

Those aged 18-20 were least interested in organisational culture with just 29% citing it as very important to their decision to join or stay with a company. But people became more focused on this area as they got older with 35% of 25-34 year olds saying it was very important to them, and 41% of 35-44 years olds saying the same.



How important is an organisation's culture to your decision to join/stay with an employer?



Culture is most important to those in the south-east, London and Scotland; with 89% of those in the south-east saying it was very important or important to them, 88% in London and 86% in Scotland. Fewer workers in the East of England, Northern Ireland and north-west scored as very important or important to them.

The size of the organisation seems to make very little difference to whether people feel culture is important but there is a difference in the views of workers in different industry sectors. Culture is more important in the science/pharma, recruitment/HR and not-for-profit sectors, than for those in the legal, public sector and education world.

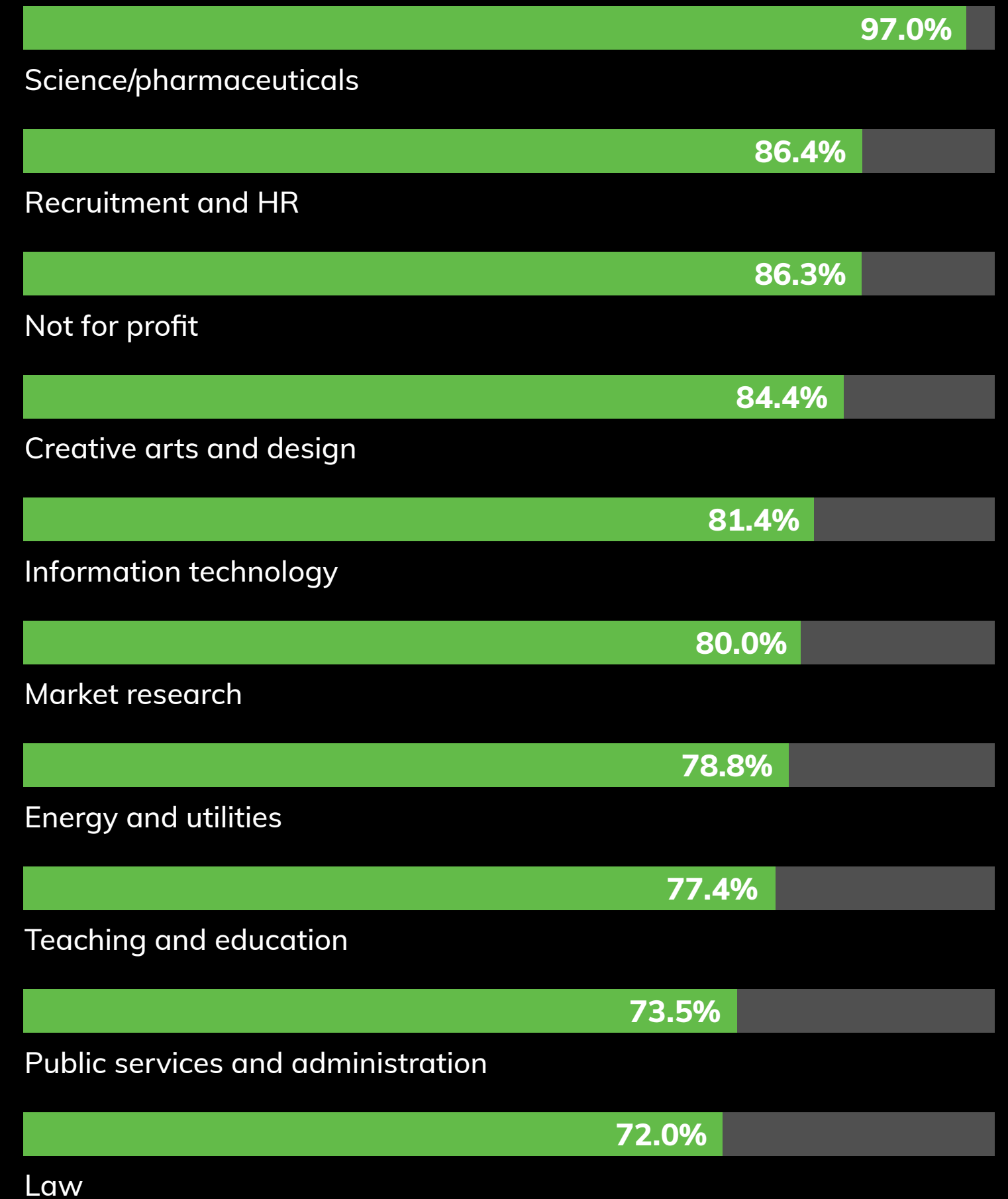


Sectors where employees said the workplace culture was linked to their decision to join/stay with an employer:

% of respondents who said their organisation's culture was very important or important to them



Respondents by sector who said their organisation's culture was very important or important to them



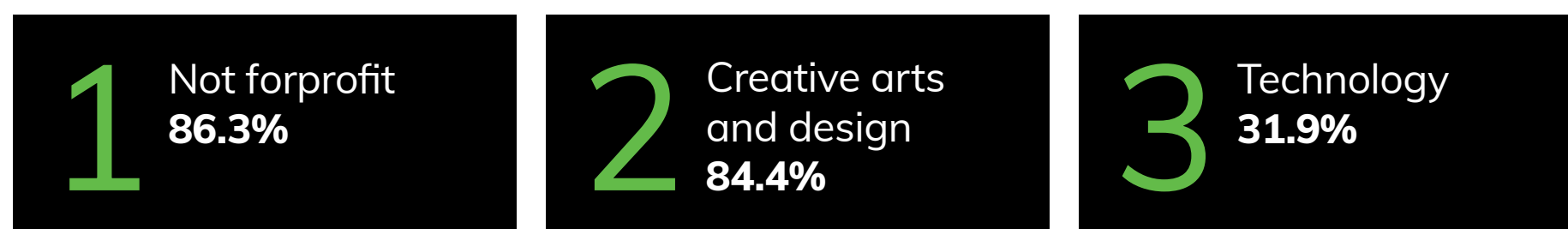
Does your workplace environment reflect your organisation's culture?

Bearing in mind how important organisational culture is to employees, it's disappointing that almost half of the 1,000 respondents felt that their workplace partially reflected this culture. Only a quarter felt that their workplace environment enhanced the culture.

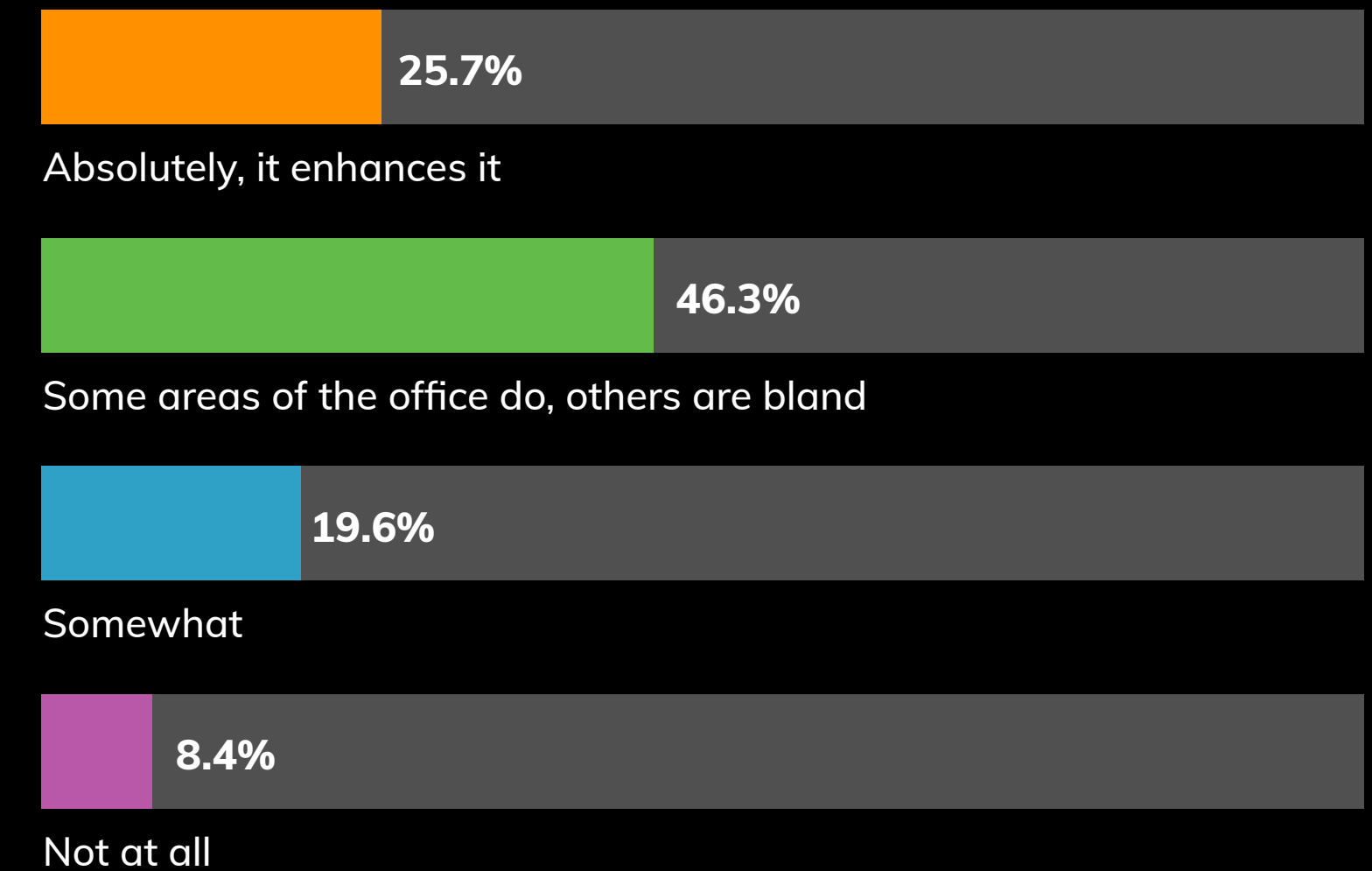
People working in the not-for-profit, creative and technology sectors were most likely to report that their workplace enhanced their organisational culture, while those in the market research, legal and public sector felt their workplaces did little to support their employers' culture.

Top sectors for environments which enhance organisational culture:

% of respondents who said their workplace enhanced culture



Does your workplace environment reflect your organisation's culture?



There was also a difference in experience across the different parts of the UK, with workers in Yorkshire and Humber and Wales feeling that their working environment enhanced their culture, while those in the East of England less likely to report that was the case.



Top regions for environments which enhance organisational culture:

% of respondents who said their workplace enhanced culture

1 Yorkshire & the Humber **33.3%**

2 Wales **32.0%**

3 Greater London **29.7%**

4 South-west **28.6%**

5 North-east **26.7%**

6 South-east **26.5%**

7 Scotland **26.3%**

8 West Midlands **22.2%**

9 East Midlands **21.2%**

10 North-west **18.4%**

11 East of England **17.0%**

12 Northern Ireland **12.5%**

How can a workplace create and communicate culture?

With the previous question in mind, we asked our 1,000 respondents to rank in importance the office areas they feel help to create and communicate a strong workplace culture. The result was strongly in favour of collaboration spaces – both informal and more formal meeting rooms. This is understandable as these are the areas where people gather and create social capital – the glue that brings an organisation together.

What's most interesting is that corridors and staircases – spaces which many organisations pay little attention to, rank so highly, coming fourth in our ranking. These empty spaces are where many serendipitous conversations

take place, where people meet colleagues they might not usually work with, or junior team members have the chance to chat to more senior leaders. These water cooler moments are an essential part of creating an organisation's culture. Just over a third of people (35%) in a survey we conducted earlier in the spring missed the ability to have impromptu bump and meet opportunities with other people in their organisation. Subliminal design touches such as adjacent casual one-to-one seating or even the location of key areas such as supporting tea points and coffee bars around these corridors and can help to support and encourage these interactions – and therefore the organisation's culture.





Which spaces in an office do you think help to create and communicate a strong workplace culture?

- 1 Collaboration spaces: informal break-out spaces
- 2 Collaboration spaces: formal meeting rooms
- 3 Individual desk layouts
- 4 Communal areas like corridors or staircases
- 5 Refreshment areas such as staff restaurant, kitchen or tea-points
- 6 Quiet zones
- 7 Reception area
- 8 Wellbeing spaces including gyms, Pilates studio etc

Overall, these results show that employees value highly their organisations' culture – it's a key reason why they choose to work for a company and why they stay there. As most people have worked largely from home over the past year, organisational culture has been significantly impaired which is likely to have a detrimental impact on people's motivation, engagement and productivity. As people start to return to the workplace post-pandemic, organisations will need to work hard to regain that social capital. With many people feeling that their workplace environment fails to reflect their organisations, the workplace should be a key area of focus for companies wishing to regain their culture.





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