

# HOW NOT TO EAT IN A MODERN MEETING: THE NEW WORKING LUNCH GUIDE



**JUST EAT**  
for business

After nearly two years of uncertainty around the office return, many businesses have now found their feet, with hybrid work becoming the norm. Yet while it has been well received, with 80% of workers<sup>1</sup> now preferring a hybrid model with home and office options, it has brought about some new issues - namely the “hybrid divide”. Teams are working longer hours and becoming isolated when at home, while others struggle with the office, overwhelmed by the whole experience.

Before the pandemic, work was filled with casual interactions between colleagues - like grabbing a coffee in the kitchen, or throwing around ideas over the water cooler - and this will quickly return for those that are back in the office. However, we mustn't forget those who are working from home.

One area of our working life that has become slightly more complicated with the hybrid approach is the team lunch. While food is a great way to connect teams, with two out of three employees believing that eating lunch together develops great work culture, it can bring about a whole host of anxieties and questions which, when you're behind a screen, can become more exacerbated.

Eating in meetings is often a taboo and divisive subject, with some people tucking straight in while others watch the clock waiting to

escape to their own private feast. Throw in a video call and suddenly you also have to consider whether you can eat on camera or turn it off.

With Christmas approaching and many businesses remaining cautious about committing to plans due to changeable circumstances, we ran a survey on 180 UK companies to understand the challenges and concerns they had around the hybrid team lunch and what the new office lunch looks like.

Source: Just Eat for Business November Survey

**1 in 10**

don't feel included in office activities when working from home

**1 in 10**

feel left out when working from home

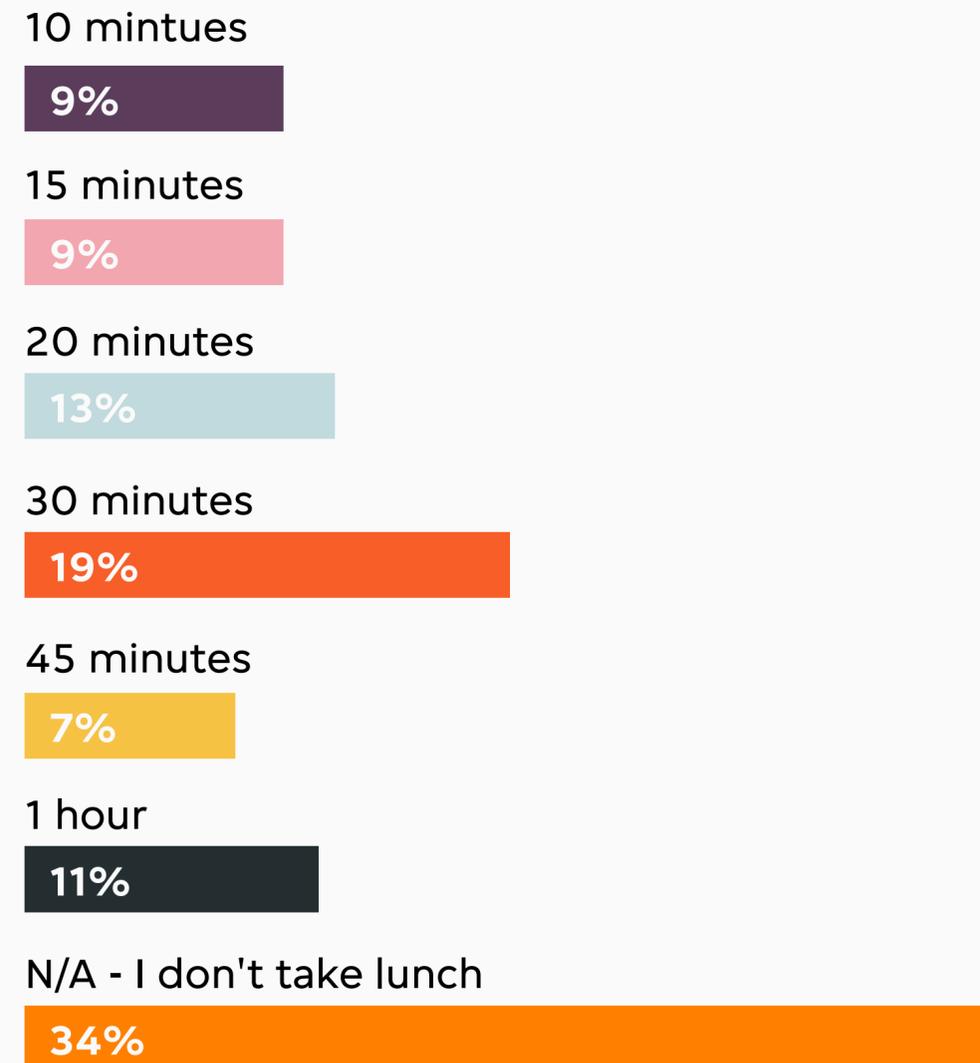
# THE RESULTS

**OFFICE WORKERS MAKE TIME  
IN THEIR DAY FOR A BREAK,  
WHILE THOSE AT HOME  
WORK FROM THEIR DESK**

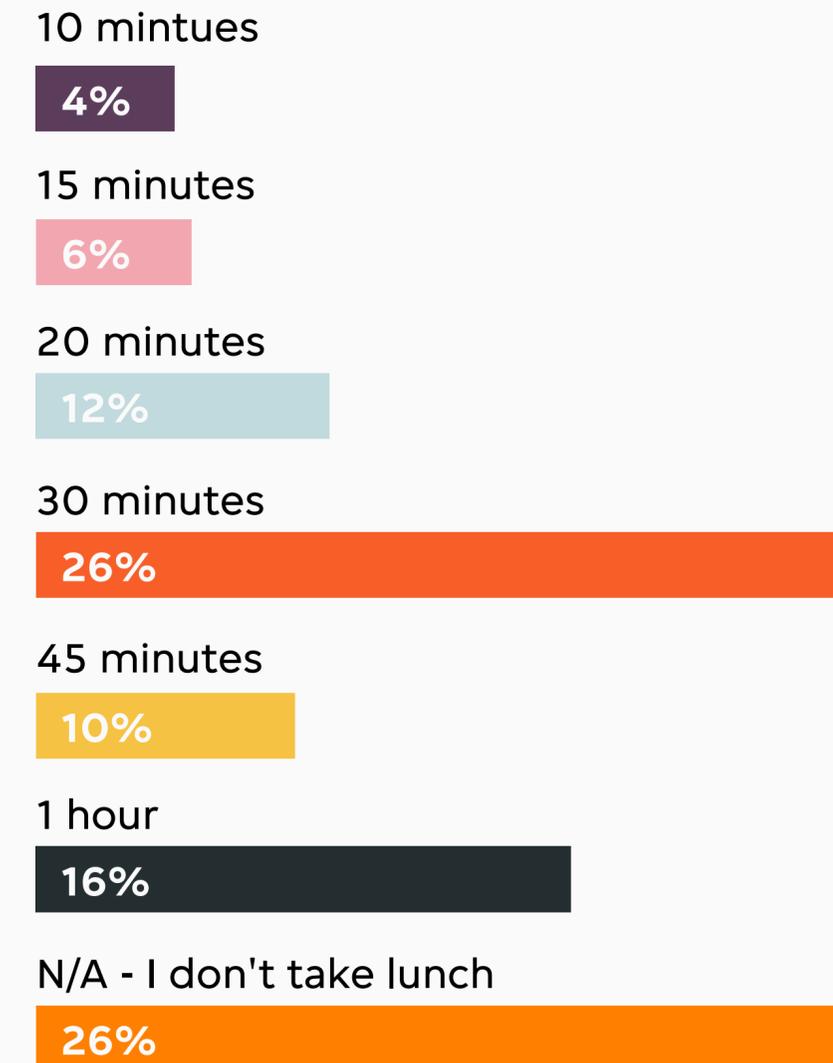
Many teams continue to work through lunch when at home, with a third not taking lunch at all. Their office counterparts, however, tend to take a break, with 30 minutes proving the most popular.

One of the biggest obstacles getting in the way of people taking a break is the pesky lunch time meeting. Over a third of people have something put in their diary over their break and an unfortunate 4% have one every day of the week!

## How much time do you take for lunch when working from home?



## How much time do you take for lunch when working in the office?



# Teams still struggle to navigate Zoom lunch meetings, with the majority feeling uncomfortable eating on camera.

Despite **81%** of businesses believing it is important to provide parity between in-office and at-home staff, many are still struggling to come to terms with the on /off camera lunches.

**85%**

don't feel comfortable eating on camera in general

**41%**

think it's rude to eat on camera

**68%**

don't feel comfortable eating on camera in a meeting

**1 in 5**

have changed their lunch choices because of eating on camera

**45%**

have skipped lunch because they felt uncomfortable eating on camera

**61%**

of people switch their camera off when eating in a meeting

**1 in 10**

companies have implemented rules around eating on camera

**20%**

of people wait for their boss to start eating before they do

**19%**

don't eat in meetings at all

# THE SOLUTION

To help teams navigate the tricky landscape that is the hybrid lunch, we've partnered with British Etiquette expert Jo Bryant to create some golden rules to surviving office eating.

Whether you're sitting up straight in the boardroom or relaxing in the break-out area, eating with bosses and colleagues has always been an important part of working life. Brainstorming, socialising, celebrating, rewarding, bonding... food can bring us together for a whole host of reasons.

Post-pandemic, many of us are getting used to more flexible working models. There may be some of us in the office and some of us at home, but food can still play its part. From dining in-real-life or logging-in for lunch on-screen, follow these top tips to get it right, every time.



**Jo Bryant**

## Food chain

When arranging a get together over food, people need guidance on what to expect. What's the occasion? Work or social? Is it a formal lunch, or a quick catch-up over shared platters? Clear communication from bosses or organisers will make people feel at ease and make things run more smoothly.

*FYI: This is especially important now – with some people working from home, word-of-mouth and water-cooler chat is a less efficient method of spreading the word.*

## In the picture

With blended working, some people may be eating together in the office, and others WFH and joining on-screen. It's important to make sure everyone feels involved, so those gathering in-real-life should go to extra lengths to make sure the digital joiners know what's happening. Kick off with plenty of small talk and make sure the remote diners get time to talk.

*Faux pas: For those together IRL, signalling or communicating to each other out of view of the camera is not only unprofessional, but unkind and disrespectful.*

## Food for thought

Before you plan a remote on-screen team lunch, think about whether it is the right thing for everyone. Zoom fatigue is a real thing, and a screen-free lunch is often a welcome break. By having to log-in for lunch, people can soon find themselves at their desk, on-screen, all day – a fun foodie idea can quickly lack appetite.

*Research: Try choosing a day when there are fewer meetings, or ask what works best for everyone before setting a time.*

## Feast or famine

Many bosses find that food relaxes people and improves productivity, but whether it's face-to-face, hybrid or remote, eating as a group requires direction. Managers need to help people feel at ease by setting the pace and taking the lead (for example, "Shall we start?"). It's important to keep things flowing, whether there's an agenda to follow, a brainstorm to kick off or just some social chit-chat to enjoy.

*Etiquette essential: Don't be too slow or too fast – try to finish eating at roughly the same time as everyone else.*

## Ready and waiting

When you are eating with colleagues remotely, it is essential to be organised. Make sure you order or prepare your food in good time, and have everything ready before you hit 'Join' (don't forget cutlery). Don't get so distracted by the food that you forget the usual checks (lighting, screen name, filters, background etc).

*You choose: Curry, fish, fast foods – dining on-screen allows you to go for stronger smelling food that may not be so social in an office environment.*

## Model behaviour

Eating on camera, while not getting distracted and watching yourself, is a tricky business. Bring your tidiest table manners and to really think about how you are eating. Ensure your standards don't slip or you'll quickly revolt, rather than impress, your colleagues.

*Top tip: Everything on camera is exaggerated, so choose something easy to eat – this isn't the time to be slurping noodles or battling with a messy burger.*

## In plain sight

It may be tempting to switch off your camera when you eat, but it's best to consider the context and company first. If you are grabbing a working lunch with colleagues, then it's probably fine to switch off and tuck in (just tell them what you are doing, and be sure to be present with a few interactions/comments). For smaller, more personal meetings or special get-togethers, it may be more polite to stay on camera and eat, or delay eating until afterwards.

## Lighten up

Embrace and enjoy the new flexibility of hybrid working, as well as the endless food choices that can arrive at our desks, wherever that may be. Be social and keep up with colleagues (and clients) – mixing business and pleasure (the right way) can be the secret to professional success and make the Monday to Friday routine a little more enjoyable.

*Detail: Remember to say thank you; a quick email to the boss after a team lunch will never go unnoticed.*

*Be aware: Some companies have a camera-on policy, so check if there are any rules before you black out.*

## Noises off

When eating on-screen, hit mute before you start munching; it's also a good idea to turn on the noise cancellation feature. For group on-screen dining, 'gallery view' is most social and flattering – 'active speaker view' may accidentally enlarge someone on screen if they chew or crunch loudly.

*Don't forget: Make sure your phone is switched to silent, and double-check you're on mute before you make any 'off-camera' comments.*

# THE BEST HYBRID LUNCH OPTIONS

In addition to following Jo's tips, teams can also avoid the unnecessary stress by giving employees the power to choose their own lunches, rather than trying to find an option that works for everyone.

We realised that in a hybrid world, trying to find food that can be enjoyed the exact same way in the office as at home could be challenging. Therefore, we launched Just Eat Pay - a flexible solution that allows businesses to provide employees with a daily or monthly digital food allowance, to order a meal from a wide variety of food options via Just Eat's 58,000+ restaurant partners.

Taking the hassle out of juggling multiple orders and dietary requirements, Just Eat Pay offers the same service for those working at home and at the office, with contact-free delivery or collection options available.

For more information, please visit [just-eat.co.uk/business](https://just-eat.co.uk/business)

