



KPMG friends at work survey

Full-time professional
perspectives

Results

—

November 2024



Objectives & methodology

Objectives



To understand full-time professionals' attitudes toward and perspectives on workplace friendships.

Specifically, this survey assesses the:

- Importance and benefits of friends at work
- Presence and formation of workplace friendships
- Challenges of establishing friendships at work
- Expectations vs. reality of employers' role in facilitating friendships
- Impact of friendships on workplace dynamics

Survey methodology



- **Online survey** among **full-time, professional employees** in the U.S., fielded August 9-19, 2024
- The sample includes 1000 **professionals**, meeting the following criteria:



Employed **full-time** in an **office-based role** that requires specific skillsets and/or higher education



Job titles range from **entry level to Senior Vice President**. The C-Suite was not included.



Organizations with **at least 100 employees** and **range of annual revenue**



Organizations from a mix of industries

Key takeaways

Work friends are very important to nearly all, especially for mental health benefits and external and internal advancement opportunities. Most work friendships are formed through social events inside and outside the office.

Work friends are also important for engagement, job satisfaction and feeling connected (8 in 10 or more) and have a positive impact on job performance (68%).



One-fourth of professionals experience isolation and loneliness at least some of the time. Women are more likely than men to say they have loneliness at least some of the time at work.



Most expect employers to facilitate work friendships via extracurricular activities and Employee Resource Groups. Although employees feel that employers value work friendships, they're less convinced employers are taking action to foster friendship.

Virtually is the least common way to have met a work friend – and professionals tend to feel technology and an over-reliance on digital channels hinders close work friendships by reducing interactions that build relationships. Remote employees are slightly more likely to see technology as a challenge to friendship.

Those with work friends put in the effort to build those relationships. Work challenges/interactions are more likely to foster relationships among those in-office, while personal interests drive friendships among hybrid workers.

While most feel their managers regularly provide job-related support, fewer feel their managers know them outside of work. One third of professionals say their group leader has the biggest impact on their happiness and satisfaction at work – this is especially true for those with no work friends.



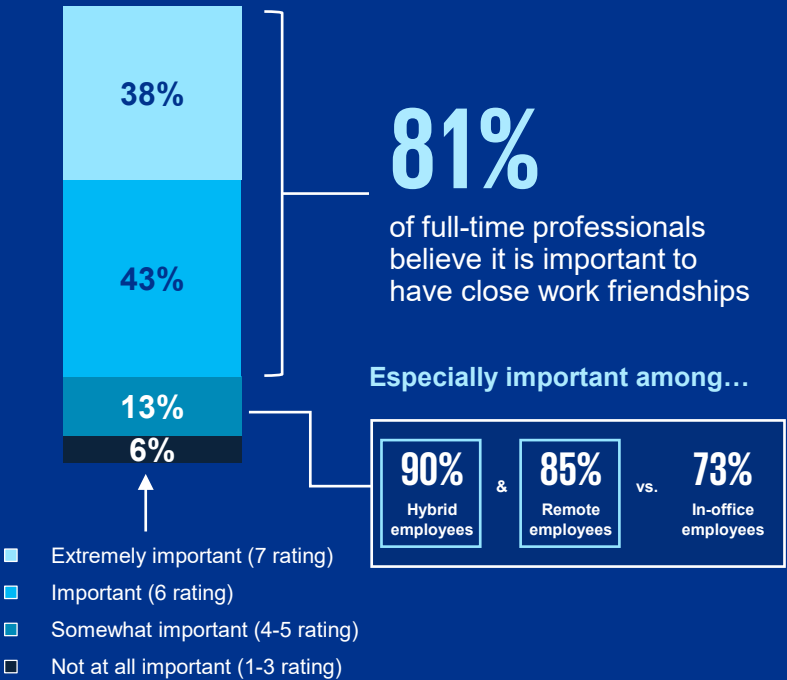
Detailed findings

Personal views on the value of close work friends



While four out of five say work friendships are very important, hybrid and remote workers place greater significance on work friends

Importance of close work friends

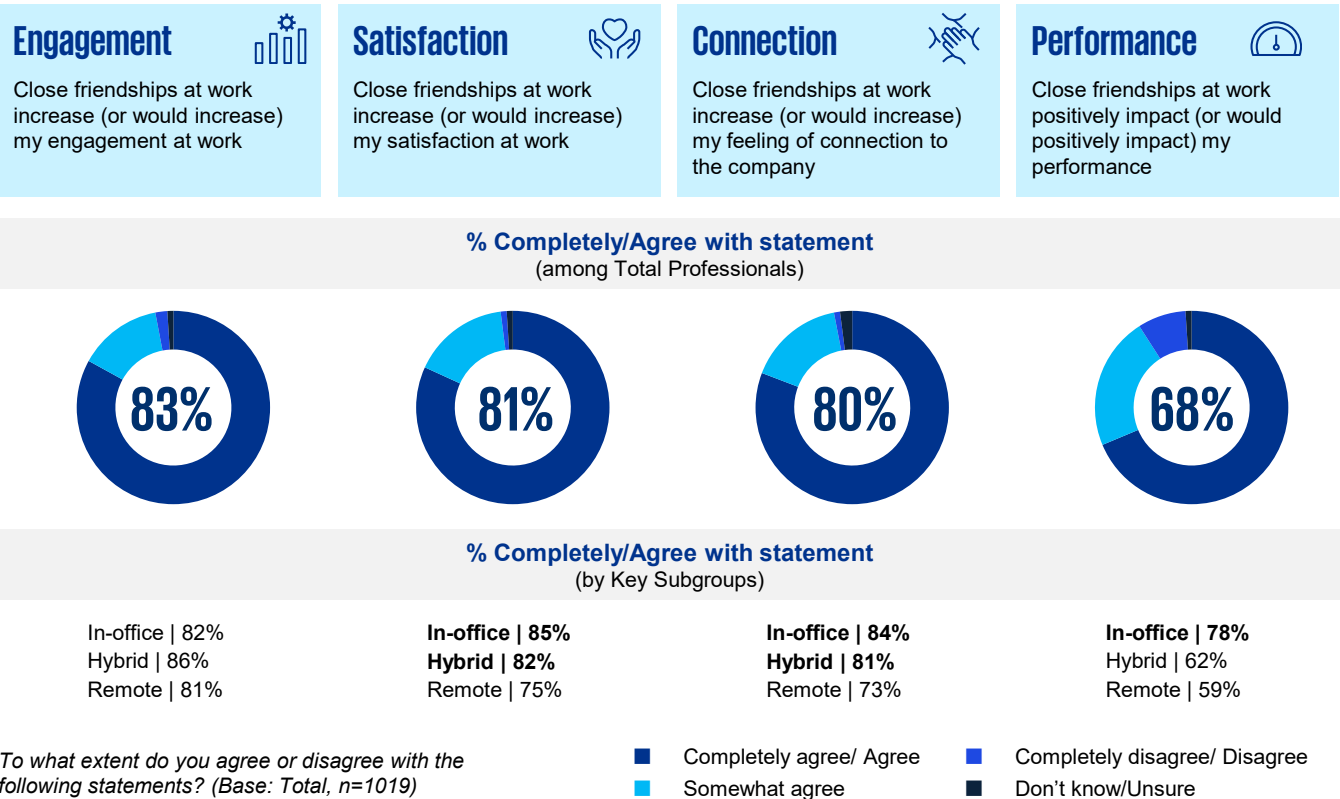


How important is it for you to be able to have close work friendships?
*See Notes for "close work friend" definition. (Base: Total, n=1019)

Most agree work friends increase engagement, satisfaction and connection. They also have a positive impact on performance

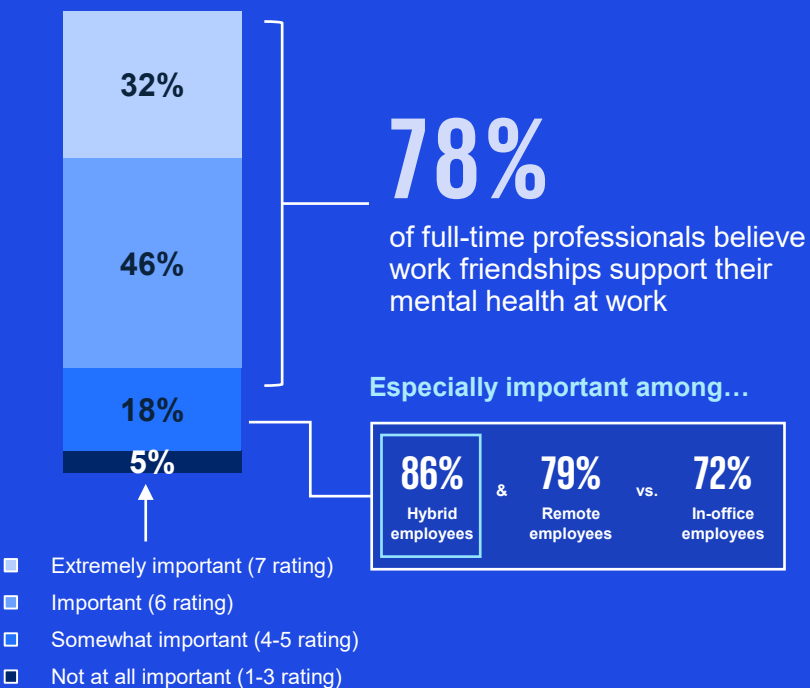
While all groups agree close work friends have the potential to increase engagement at work, those in office or hybrid environments are much more likely to see the other benefits of workplace friends than their remote counterparts.

Impact of close work friendships



Four out of five feel work friends benefit their mental health at work, with hybrid workers seeing even greater value

Importance of work friendships for mental health at work

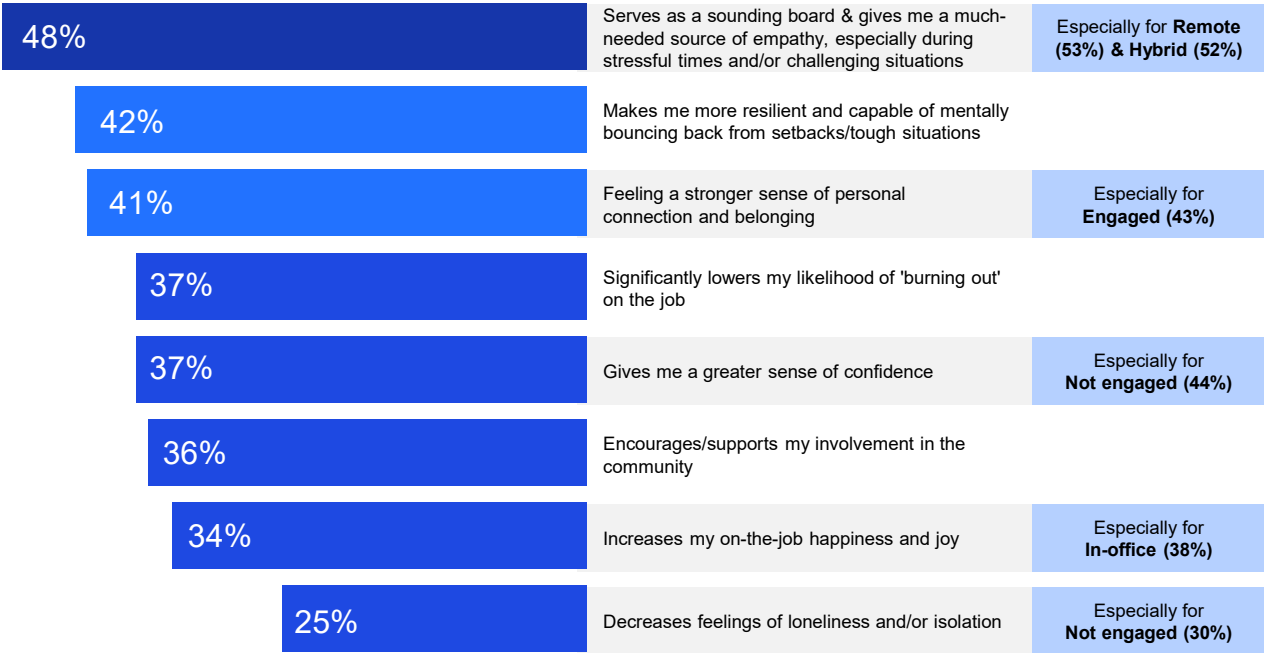


Almost half say work friends provide someone to talk to in times of need. Other key mental health benefits include resilience and connection

Those in remote or hybrid environments are even more likely to appreciate the listening ear of a work friend, while those in office settings are more likely to say work friends increase their joy at work.

Emotional or mental health benefits of close work friendships

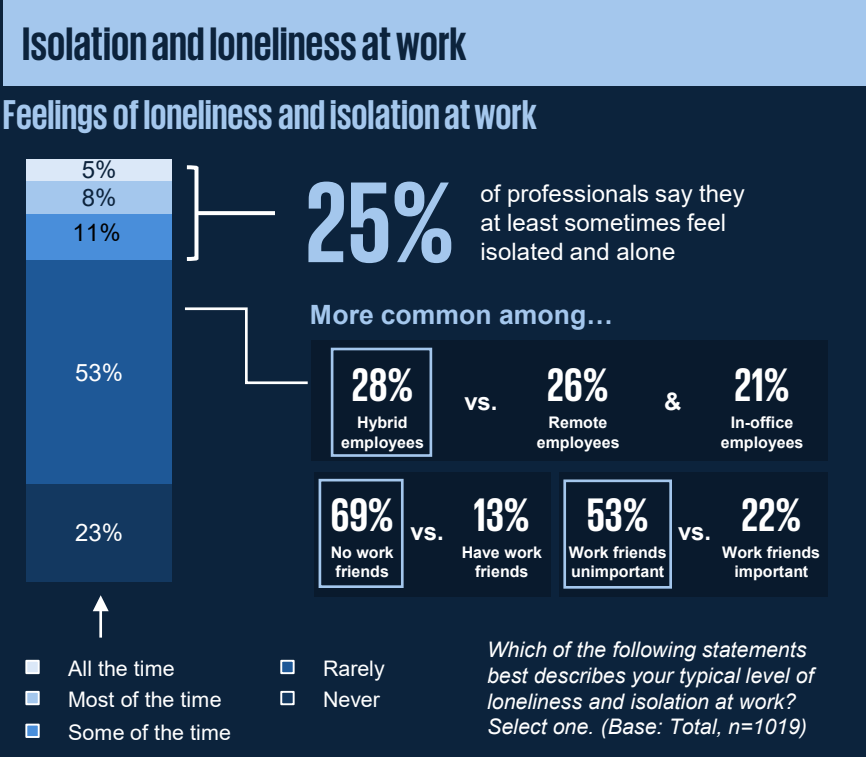
% selected as one of up to three benefits



What are the biggest emotional or mental health benefits to you in forming close work friendships? Select your top three. (Base: Total, n=1019)

Isolation and loneliness is not common, but one-fourth of professionals experience it at least some of the time

Hybrid workers are somewhat more likely than those in the office to feel lonely. Those with work friends and those who feel work friends are important are much less likely to experience isolation and loneliness than their counterparts, highlighting a benefit of work friendships.



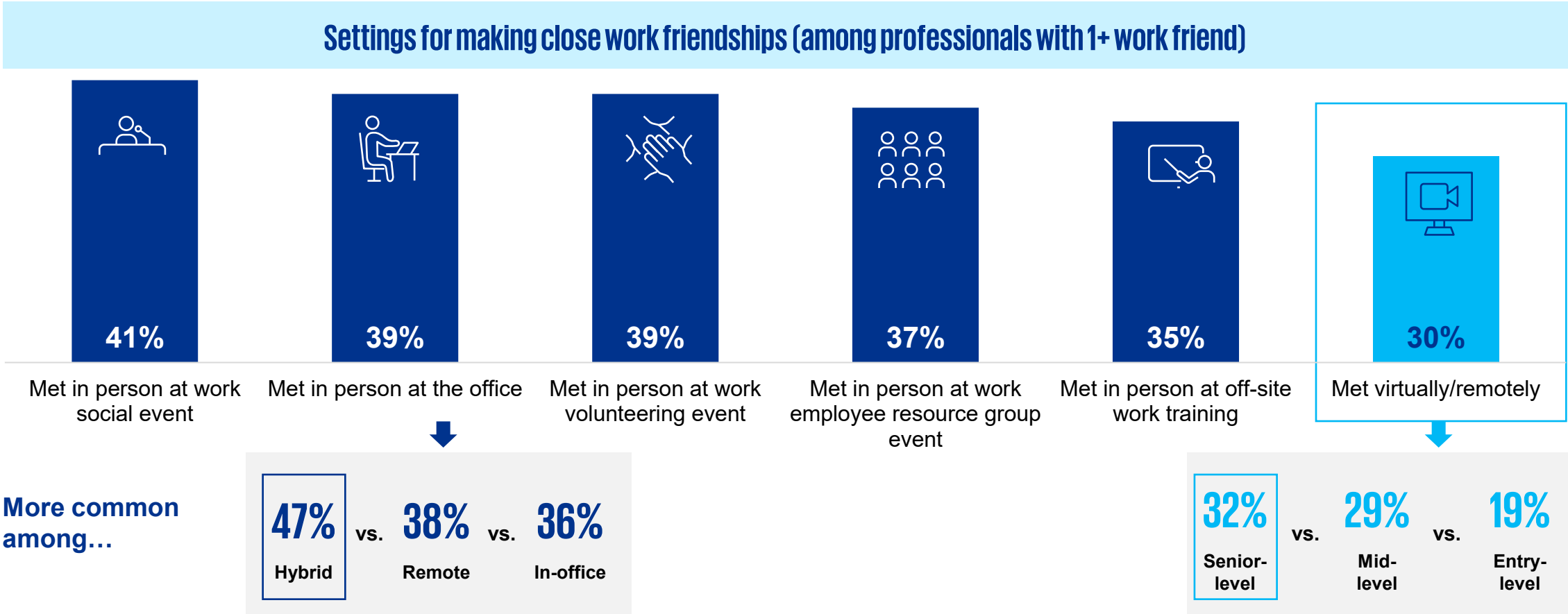
Detailed findings

Forming close friendships at work



Virtually is the least common way to have met a workplace friend

Despite working in an office setting, meeting specifically in the office is more common among hybrid or remote workers than office workers.

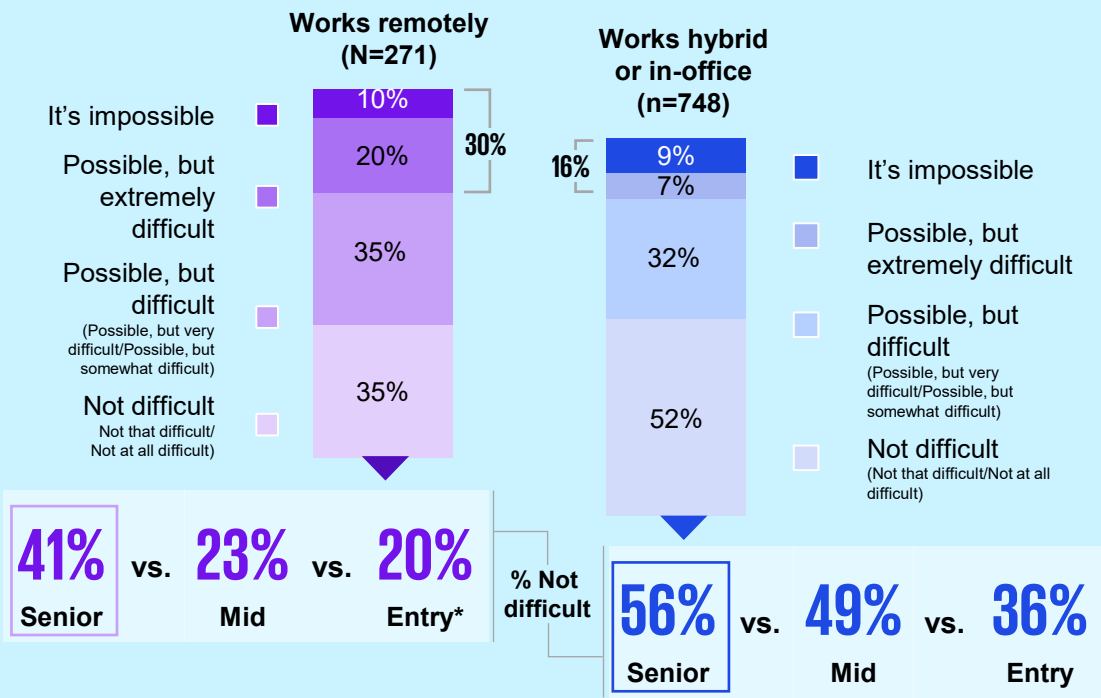


Q11. When thinking about your close work friends, in what setting(s) did you first meet them? Select all that apply. (Base: Total Have Close Work Friends, n=808)

Remote workers feel their work setting makes it harder to make friends, a difficulty not as prevalent among hybrid or in-office professionals

Senior-level professionals who work remotely have less difficulty making work friends regardless of where they or others work.

Difficulty of forming close work friendships with remote colleagues



White professionals in hybrid or in full-time settings find it less difficult to establish close work friendships with remote colleagues

Black and Hispanic professionals find it harder to form close friendships with their remote colleagues.

Difficulty of forming close work friendships with remote colleagues – for hybrid or in-office

	Gender			Ethnicity			
	Total	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Other*
It's impossible	9%	11%	8%	9%	10%	6%	20%
Possible, but extremely difficult	7%	5%	9%	7%	10%	6%	6%
Possible, but difficult (Possible, but very difficult/Possible, but somewhat difficult)	32%	34%	29%	28%	46%	46%	31%
Not difficult (Not that difficult/Not at all difficult)	52%	51%	54%	56%	34%	42%	43%

Indicates statistical differences (Other: Asian/Native American/ Alaska Native)
*Use caution, small base (n=35)

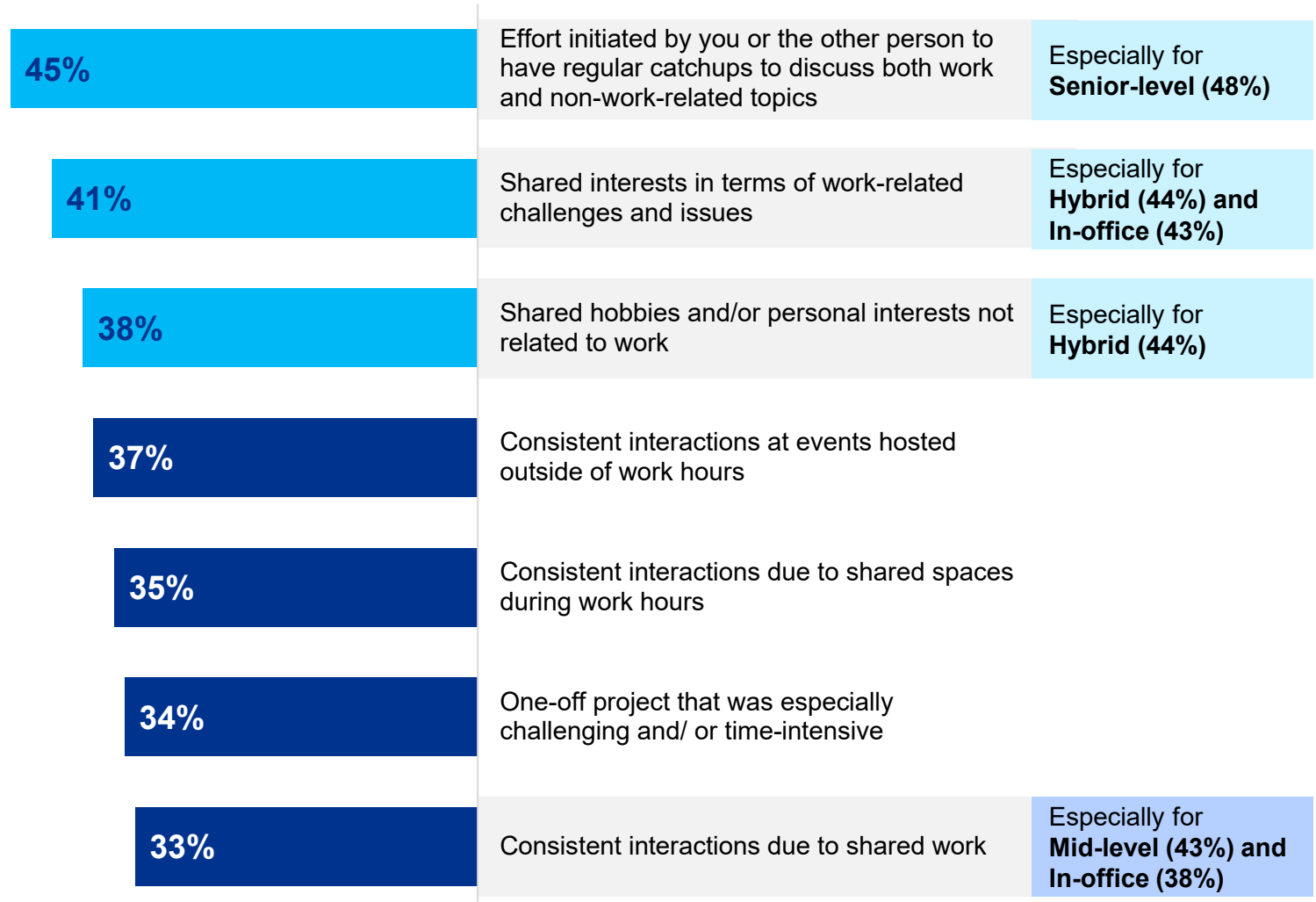
How difficult is it for you to form close work friendships with others who are working remotely full time? (Base: Hybrid or In-office, n=748)

Those with work friends put in the effort to build those relationships, which are often based on shared work or personal interests

Work challenges or interactions are more likely to foster relationships among those in the office, while personal interests contribute more to friendships among hybrid workers.

When thinking about your closest friend at work, what were the biggest contributing factors to establishing/growing your friendship? Select all that apply. (Base: Total Have Close Work Friends, n=808)

Factors contributing to establishing/growing close work friendships (among professionals with 1+ work friend)



Detailed findings

Challenges of making close friends at work



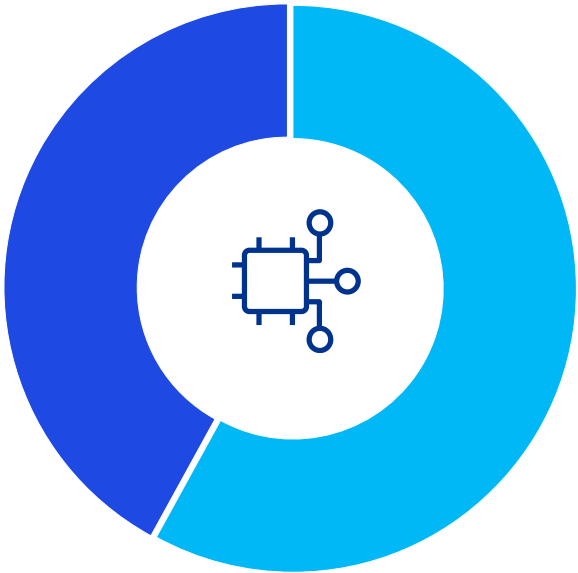
Professionals tend to feel technology hinders close work friendships by reducing interactions that build relationships

Remote employees are slightly more likely to see technology as a challenge to work friendships.

Perspective on technology in facilitating close work friendships

42%

of professionals say technologies **help employees connect with each other** to share ideas, socialize and build relationships to form stronger close work friendships



58%

of professionals say technologies are **driving an over-reliance** on digital channels and replacing the need for personal, face-to-face interactions that help form stronger close work friendships

Especially among...

62%

Remote employees

vs.

57%

Hybrid employees

vs.

56%

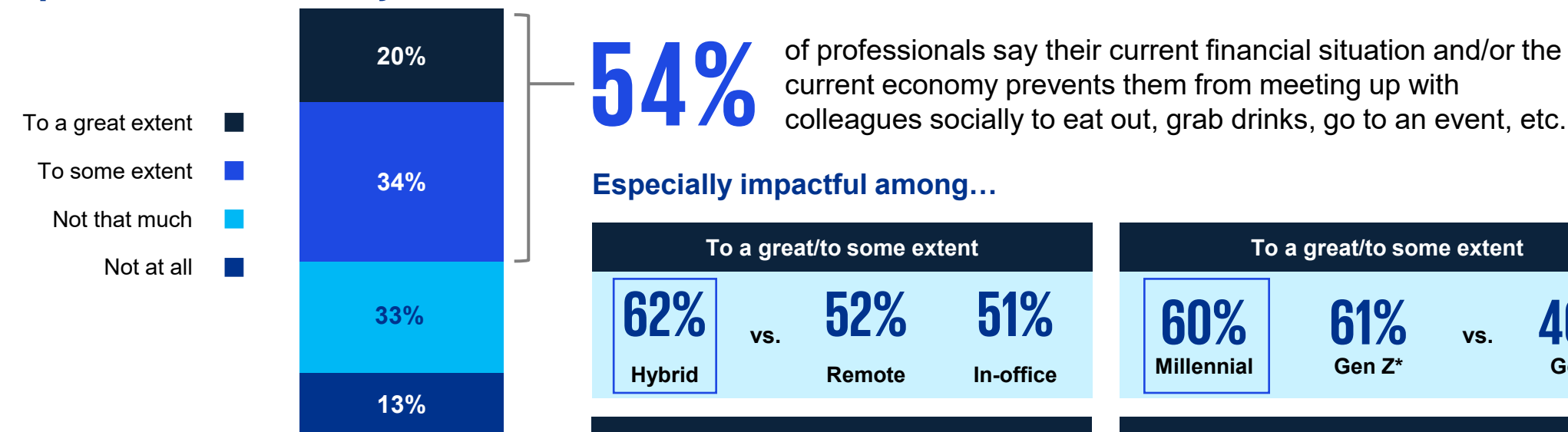
In-office employees

When it comes to technologies that enable collaboration and communication (e.g., video conferencing, instant messaging, Slack, Trello, etc.), which of the following best represents your own view? (Base: Total, n=1019)

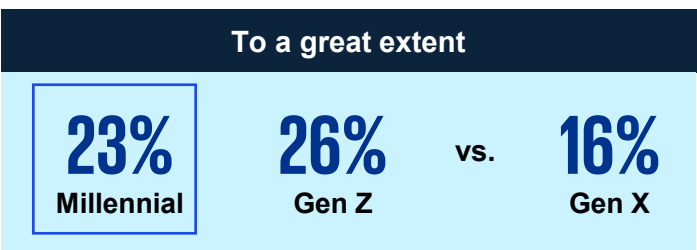
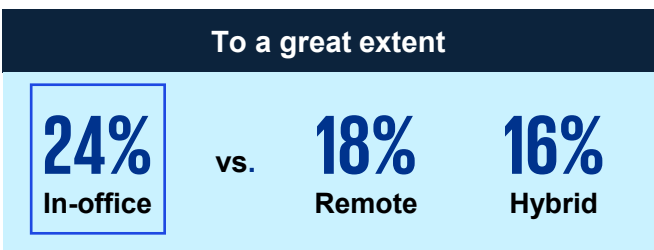
More than half of professionals feel their financial situation or the economy limits socializing with colleagues outside work

While hybrid employees are more likely to say these factors are impactful generally, in-office employees are more adamant that they have been affected to a greater extent. Millennials are also more likely to feel the effects of the economy on their ability to socialize.

Impact of current economy and individual finances on social activities



To what extent is the current economy and/or your own financial situation preventing you from meeting up with your colleagues socially to eat out, grab drinks, go to an event, etc.? (Base: Total, n=1019) *Small base (Gen Z, n=38)



Personal finances and the economy are limiting more Female, White and Hispanic professionals from socializing outside of work

Fewer Black professionals say their outside of work socialization has been limited by these economic factors.

Impact of current economy and individual finances on social activities

	Total	Gender		Ethnicity			
		Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
A great extent/some extent	54%	47%	61%	58%	25%	68%	33%
To a great extent	20%	20%	21%	21%	17%	21%	14%
To some extent	34%	28%	40%	37%	8%	47%	19%
Not that much	33%	36%	30%	30%	59%	19%	60%
Not at all	13%	16%	9%	13%	16%	13%	7%

Q16: To what extent is the current economy and/or your own financial situation preventing you from meeting up with your colleagues socially to eat out, grab drinks, go to an event, etc.?

Indicates statistical differences

(Other: Asian/Native American/ Alaska Native)

Detailed findings

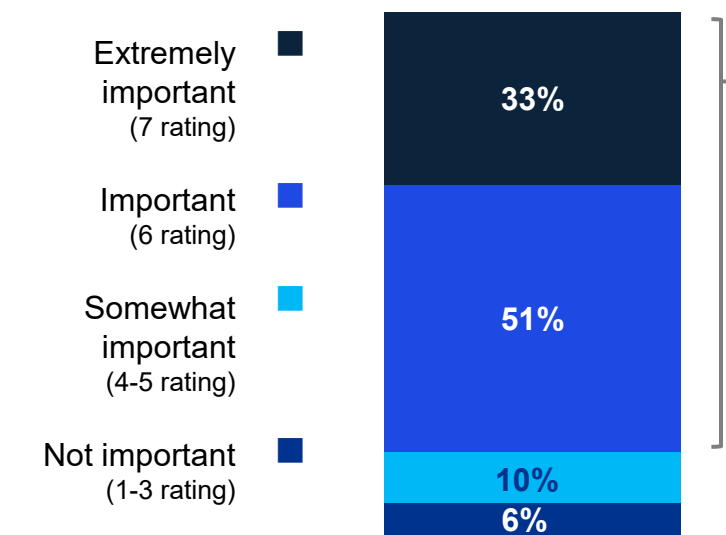
Employers' role in facilitating work friendships



Most believe it is very important for companies to facilitate personal interactions that develop close work friendships

While all agree, those in remote situations feel more strongly that companies should contribute to developing friendships than those in hybrid and in-office work settings.

Importance of company-facilitated interactions to support development of close work friendships



To what extent do you think it is important for your company to facilitate some level of personal interactions to support the development of close work friendships? (Base: Total, n=1019)

84% of professionals believe it's important companies facilitate personal interactions to help develop work friendships

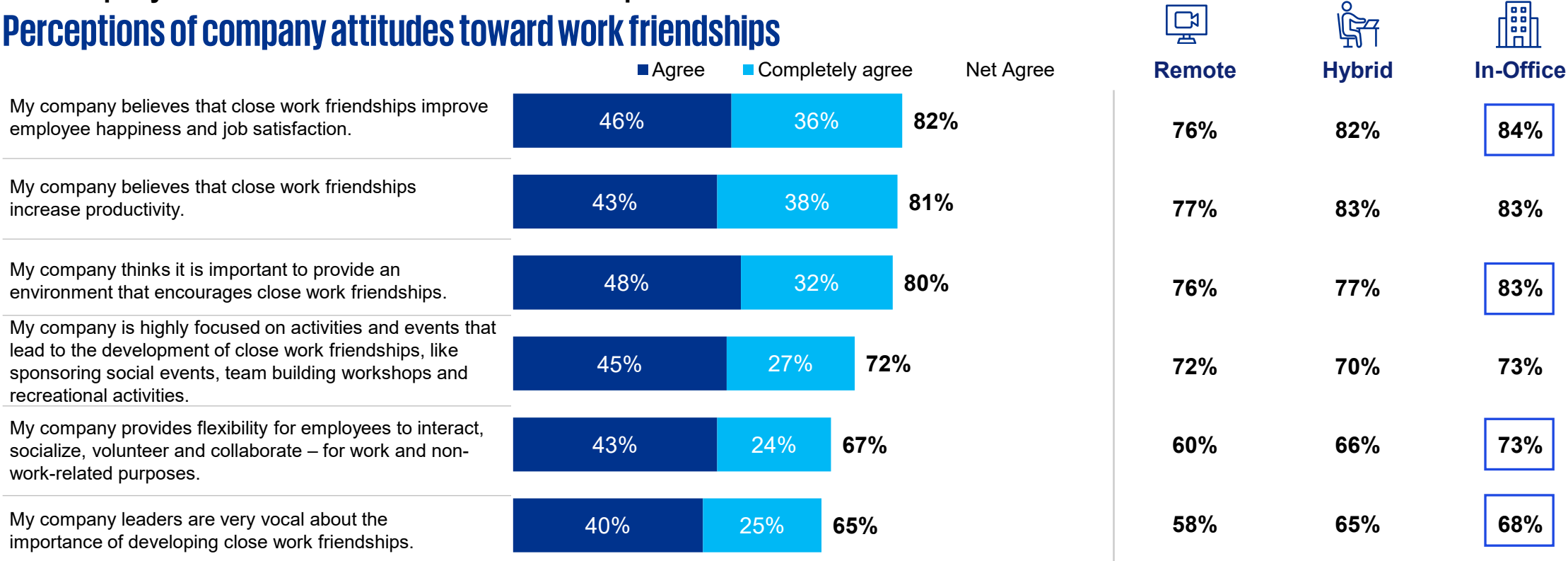
Especially important among...

	 Remote	 Hybrid	 In-office
Extremely important/ Important (6-7)	86%	93%	78%
Extremely important (7)	45%	35%	26%
Important (6)	41%	58%	53%

Professionals strongly believe companies value work friends, but do not as adamantly believe companies take action to foster friendships

Compared to hybrid and remote employees, those in the office are more likely to feel their employers are taking action to support the company views on the value of work friendships.

Perceptions of company attitudes toward work friendships

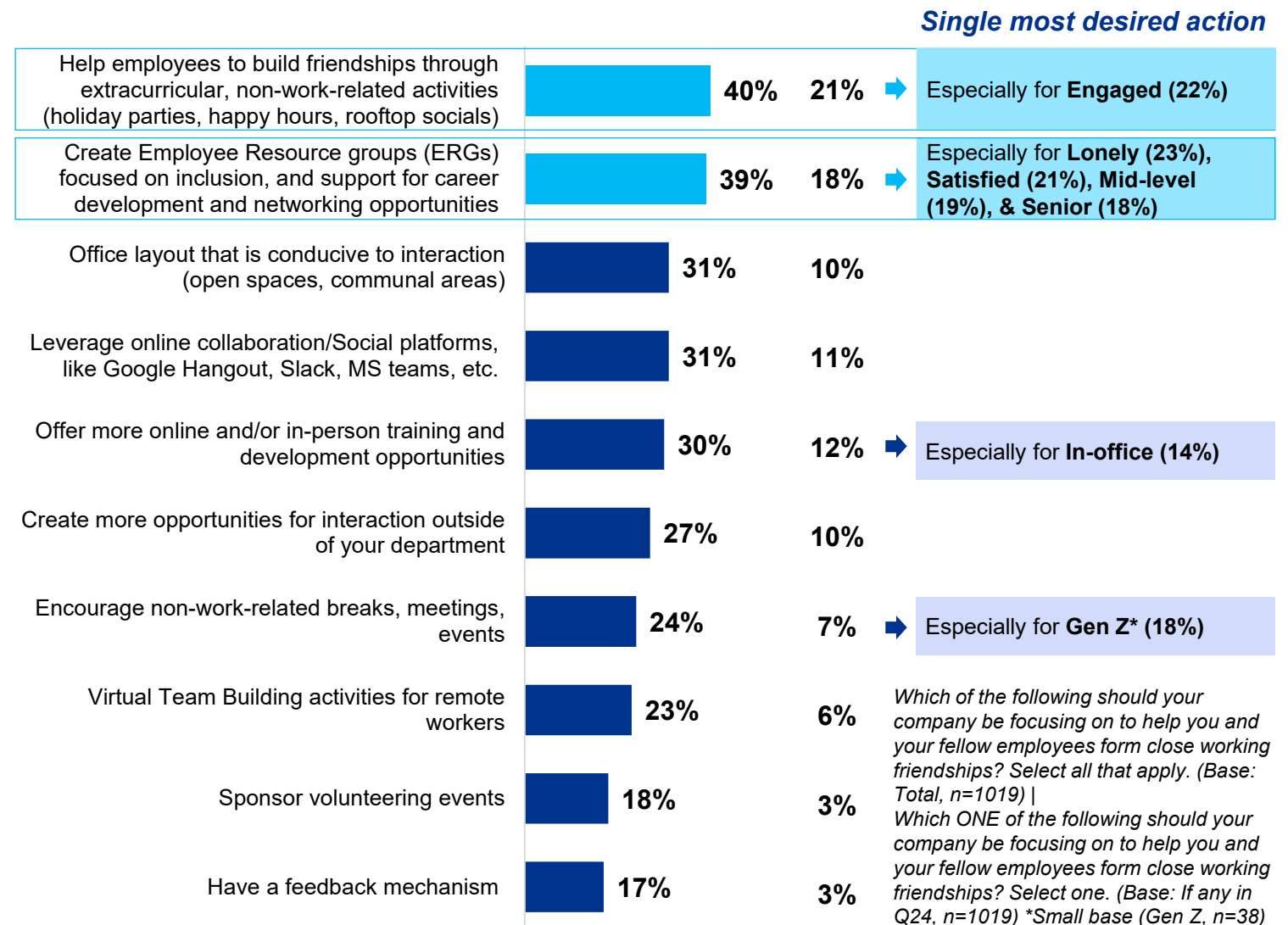


When thinking about your current company, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Base: Total, n=1019)

Professionals believe companies should facilitate work friendships through non-work-related activities and Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups are more popular among mid- and senior-level professionals, while younger Gen Z employees are more likely to wish their company would encourage non-work-related activities.

Desired company actions to facilitate close work friendships



Detailed findings

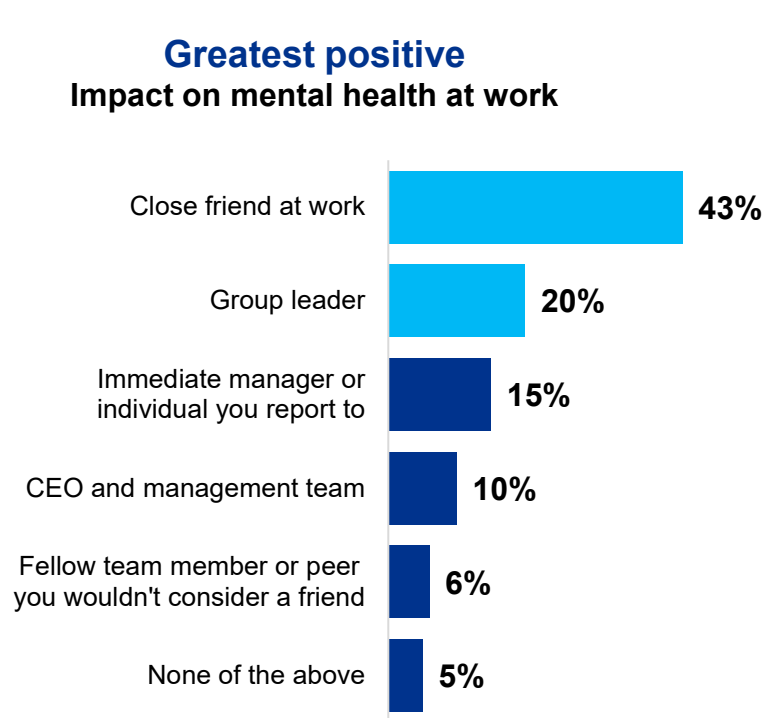
Organizational dynamics



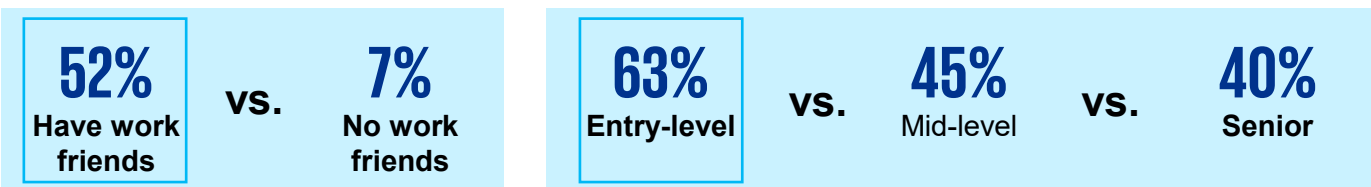
Close friends at work have the greatest positive impact on mental health, especially among those with friends and entry-level workers

However, those without a close friend at work most often look to their Group Leader for support.

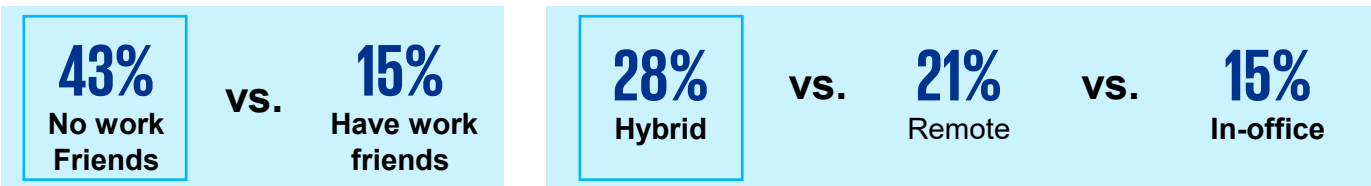
impact of key individuals at work



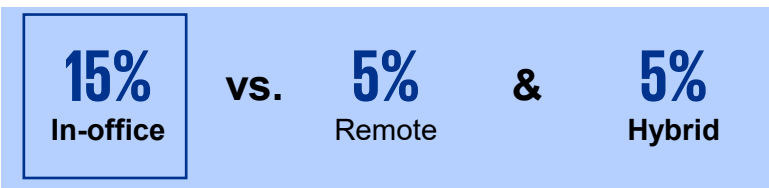
Close friend especially impactful among...



Group leader especially impactful among...



CEO and management especially impactful among...



Which person, if any, in your company has the greatest **positive impact** on your mental health at work? (Base: Total, n=1019)

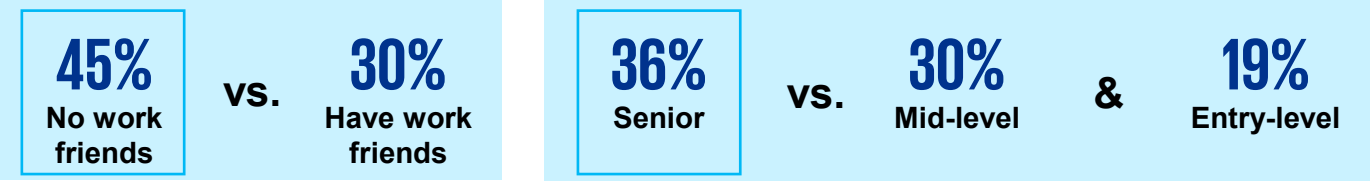
A third of professionals say their Group Leader has the biggest effect on happiness and satisfaction at work

Those with work friends are equally likely to select their Group Leader or a close work friend. However, entry-level employees prioritize work friends while senior-level say Group Leaders are more impactful.

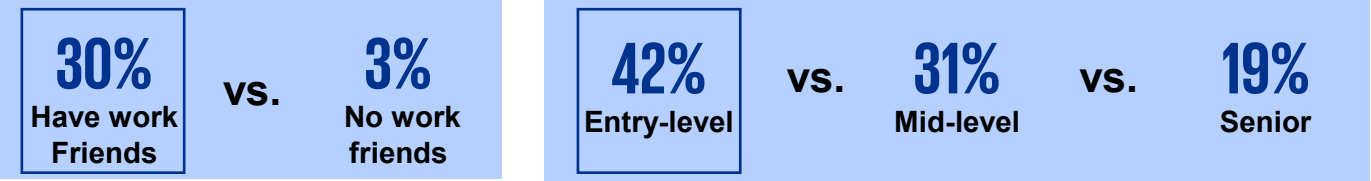
Impact of key individuals at work



Group leader especially impactful among...



Close friend at work especially impactful among...



Immediate manager or individual you report to especially impactful among...

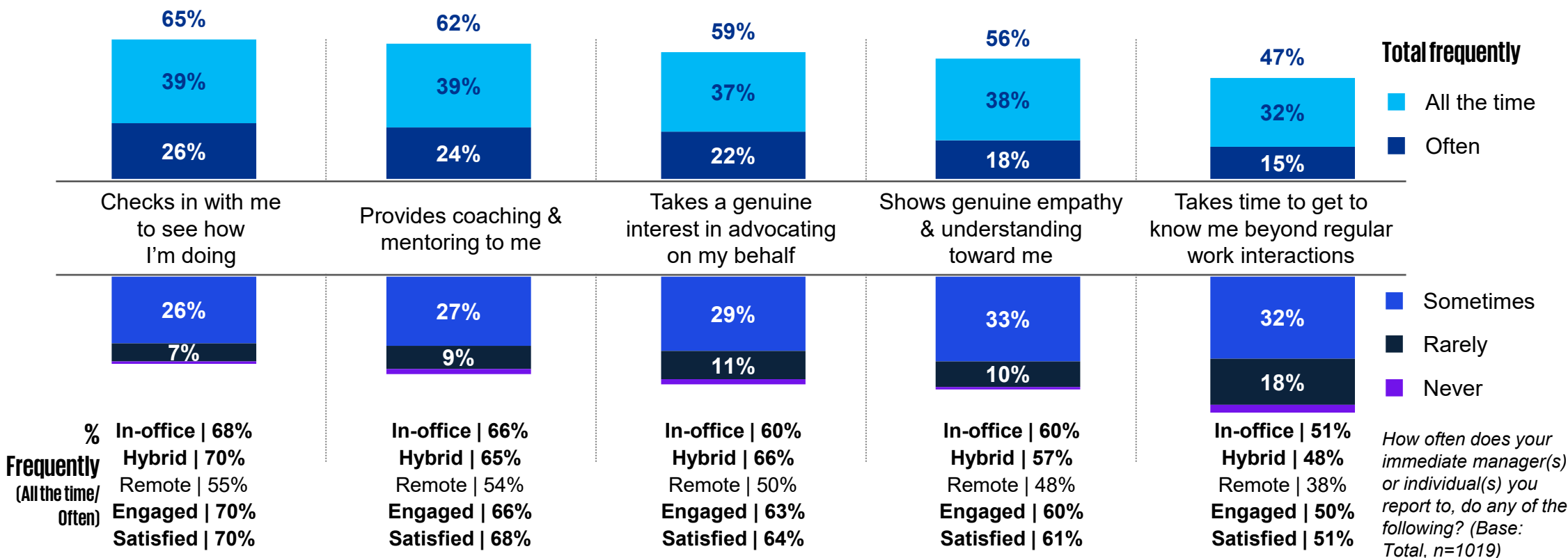


Which person, if any, in your company has the greatest impact on your happiness or satisfaction at work? Select one. (Base: Total, n=1019) *Small base (Gen Z, n=38)

While most feel their managers regularly provide job-related support, fewer feel their managers know them outside of work

Remote employees are much less likely than their hybrid or in-office counterparts to say their managers engaged in any of the actions. However, those engaged and satisfied in their roles receive this feedback and guidance from their managers regularly.

Manager engagement





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