

One in five refuse to use their office toilets according to Essity's research

Nearly one in five employees refuses to use the toilet at work because of poor hygiene, a study has revealed.

A lack of cleanliness, sanitary supplies, and toilet paper or hand towels means many workers go elsewhere or hang on until they get home.

Meanwhile 22 per cent avoid the kitchen because of splattered food and mountains of dirty dishes.

The survey of 2,000 office workers was commissioned by global hygiene and health company Essity which provides a Tork Office Hygiene package found 45 per cent believe their workplace is a "breeding ground for bacteria", with kitchens and toilets the worst offenders.

Restroom facilities were deemed offensive for 30 per cent, while 34 per cent claim the work kitchen leaves much to be desired.

Communal areas are also disliked by 24 per cent, and just under six in 10 (57 per cent) are irritated by the state of their surroundings.

Gareth Lucy, spokesman for Essity, said: "During the Covid era it felt as though everyone took their personal hygiene, and the safety of others, far more seriously, but oh how quickly things change.

"At one point, every desk and meeting room in the office had hand sanitisers for staff to use, as well as frequent reminders to wash hands.

"This survey demonstrates a serious drop in office cleanliness, at a time when this should still be a number one priority.

"And workers are understandably frustrated at the conditions in which they are expected to function well in."

Respondents were concerned about a number of 'touch points' within the office – with door handles, toilet flushes and keyboards considered to harbour the most germs.

Toilet door locks and lids, telephones, computer mouses, and light switches are also likely to pick up dirt.

While the office microwave (20 per cent), fridge (17 per cent) and bins (17 per cent) were among the biggest office gripes.

It transpires exactly six in 10 people polled feel more productive in a workspace which is spick-and-span – and yet 39 per cent admit they will regularly have to clean it themselves when in the office.

In addition to a spot of unwanted cleaning, 37 per cent of those questioned by OnePoll insist on using their own mugs or crockery when at work, while 36 per cent still sanitise hands regularly.

And other habits gained when Covid-19 was at its peak – such as making food and drinks solo rather than joining rounds (35 per cent) and changing out of work clothes as soon as returning home so as not to spread bacteria (18 per cent) are also commonplace today.

As a consequence, 22 per cent have complained to either management or HR about the state of their surroundings – although 70 per cent believe it is the responsibility of the hired cleaners to make sure things are up to scratch.

While employers should be in charge of how eco-friendly the workspace is, according to 59 per cent.

Those in charge have also been spoken to about the temperature of the building (27 per cent), switching lights off (14 per cent) and getting the appropriate recycling bins in place (13 per cent).

Others have grumbled about the continued use of single use items like plastic cups (10 per cent) and wanting more recyclable things such as paper towels or sanitary products (nine per cent).

The study also delved into how office conditions change across different professions – and found those working in business consulting and I.T. were most satisfied with the cleanliness of their workspace, rating it an eight out of 10.

While employees in public services and administration were left dismayed at the lack of hygiene in their offices, scoring them less than seven.

Those in I.T. are also most likely to enjoy ‘green’ workspaces, while transport and logistics staff claim theirs are below average.

Gareth Lucy for Essity said: “It is the responsibility of all to ensure a workplace is a hygienic, welcoming and clean place for everyone to be.

“But workplaces need to provide the right facilities that enable high standards of hygiene throughout all areas of the office.”

ENDS