

Noisy Offices Push Workers to Breaking Point this Christmas

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The soundtrack of the office Christmas season is taking a darker turn this year, as research from [Oscar Acoustics](#), leading specialists in architectural acoustic finishes, reveals that soaring workplace noise is driving conflict, denting productivity and, in some cases, leading to physical altercations.

According to the study commissioned by Oscar Acoustics, 56% of UK office workers describe their workplace as noisy, with the uptick of seasonal socials, music and celebrations only adding to the strain. Nearly one in five employees (19%) admit they have snapped at a colleague due to noise, and almost one in ten (9%) say they have even snapped at their boss out of sheer frustration. As a result, 16% say noise has damaged relationships among colleagues, while 8% have resorted to leaving passive-aggressive notes.

Most concerningly, 5% of workers report that they have been involved in physical violence in the workplace as a direct result of being overwhelmed by noise, a striking escalation in what is often dismissed as a minor office irritation.

The research also shows that employees are taking matters into their own hands to cope with the racket. 41% of workers now use headphones in the office to block out distractions, which is almost double the 2022 figure, while over a third (36%) say they work from home more frequently just to escape the noise. Almost 30% have shifted their working hours to early mornings or late evenings to find some peace, and a growing proportion are simply avoiding noisy colleagues altogether.

Beyond tempers, the data highlights a serious impact on mental health and performance. Almost half (46.5%) of employees struggle to concentrate because of noise, while 36% report irritability and 30%

experience stress directly linked to disruptive sound levels. Nearly a third (29%) say their productivity suffers, and 26% believe noise reduces the quality of their work. A further one in 14 workers (7%) now fear that prolonged exposure is damaging their hearing.

The impact on employee wellbeing and performance is also stark, with 46.5% struggling to concentrate, 36% feeling irritated, and 30% suffering stress directly linked to sound levels. Nearly a third (29%) lament its effect on their productivity, a quarter (26%) say it impacts work quality. One in 14 (7%) are even fearful that the ongoing noise exposure is causing hearing damage.

The research also reveals a disproportionate impact on neurodivergent employees, who make up more than 15% of the UK population. Among those with dyspraxia, 71% say their workplace is too noisy, with similar findings for workers with ADHD (67%), dyslexia (66%), and autism (62%).

For many, these environments are not just distracting but debilitating. In fact, a quarter of those with ADHD and dyspraxia say that access to more acoustically considered quiet spaces would immediately improve their productivity, a growing priority among architects embracing neurodiversity-inclusive design.

Ben Hancock, Managing Director of Oscar Acoustics, said, “The research clearly shows that noise in the office is not just an annoyance but a major workplace issue – one that can escalate conflicts, undermine productivity, and damage employee wellbeing, especially during the high-pressure festive season.

“By prioritising improvements such as acoustic treatment, designated quiet zones, and better workspace design, businesses can reduce tension, improve collaboration, and protect their workforce from stress and burnout.

“Addressing office noise should be seen as a strategic business imperative. Organisations that invest in acoustic design will not only enhance employee satisfaction during peak seasons but build resilient and productive workplaces throughout the year.”

The study also reveals what employees believe would make the biggest difference. More than a third (34.6%) want access to dedicated quiet spaces for focused work, while 29.35% say improved acoustic absorption would help. Others call for better provision of meeting rooms, breakout areas and desk dividers. A notable 25% say that simply telling noisier colleagues to lower their voices would improve the atmosphere.

With festive celebrations, end-of-year deadlines and busy office social calendars set to converge over the coming weeks, noise levels are expected to rise further. Oscar Acoustics is urging employers to adopt noise-management strategies to avoid preventable tension, burnout and productivity loss not just during the Christmas season, but all year round.

To support businesses in managing noise at work, the company recently published its 2025 Whitepaper: [Shaping Future-Ready Workspaces for the Great Return to the Office](#), which offers practical guidance for designing out noise to protect culture and productivity.

To learn more, download the whitepaper [here](#).