

UK's Productivity Crisis: Employees Lose More Than Three Weeks a Year to Noisy Offices

3 hours ago



As the UK tussles with a long period of productivity stagnation, new research from [Oscar Acoustics](#), Great Britain's leading specialists in architectural acoustic finishes, reveals an overlooked culprit: office noise levels.

Staff report losing an average of 26 minutes of productive time daily due to noise, amounting to over three working weeks annually. And the impact doesn't stop there; nearly half of employees (44%) say their work quantity and quality within a typical month are hampered by their offices being too loud.

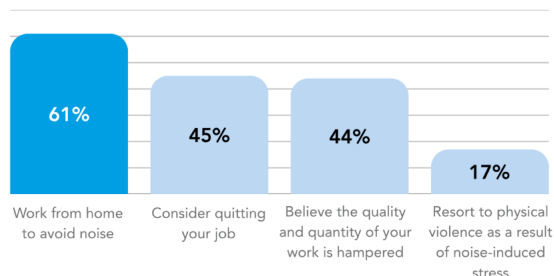
More than half (54%) of employees say their office is noisy, yet only a third of employees say their bosses take workplace noise issues seriously. These poor acoustic environments directly impact the health, comfort and engagement of 30% of the UK population who are noise sensitive, including neurodivergent individuals and those with hearing or visual challenges. But the impact doesn't stop there. Unchecked acoustics undermine focus and communication for everyone.

With remote working now an established alternative, 61% of people stay home specifically to concentrate, even beyond their scheduled hybrid days.

Despite this, employers are falling behind, with only 8% of companies having installed any acoustic treatment in the last two years, while 85% haven't even assessed their acoustic environment.

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In a typical month, how often do you do the following?



Source: Oscar Acoustics 'Campaign for Growth' 2026 survey of 2,000 UK-based office workers

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Ben Hancock, Managing Director at Oscar Acoustics, said: "You can't see it, but you can feel it. Acoustic comfort isn't a nice-to-have; it's as fundamental as lighting or ventilation. We're seeing employees vote with their feet, choosing to work from home or leave their jobs because their workspaces are too loud."

He added, "The lack of consideration for noise levels is impacting British businesses; their staff are losing time and delivering lower-quality work, all because acoustic design is an afterthought. Offices need to be designed for the comfort of the end user-rather than just focusing on aesthetics. Having appropriate lighting is considered a baseline requirement for work. Spaces designed for concentration should be too. The solution exists, yet bosses need to start treating sound as seriously as any other aspect of workplace design."

To help employers create offices where people can do their best work, Oscar Acoustics has partnered with Sownd Affects to launch Sownd Certification, the world's first independent accreditation recognising buildings with proven acoustic performance as audio-inclusive.

The certification addresses an accessibility gap in the built environment. While inclusive design has long been embedded in national planning frameworks, including the London Plan, the industry has lacked a robust method of verifying whether acoustic inclusivity has genuinely been achieved post-occupation.

Sownd Certification provides an evidence-based framework that evaluates how spaces perform in real-world conditions, rather than relying on design-stage predictions, bringing human-centric design and end-user comfort to the fore.

Find out more information about the research findings [here](#).