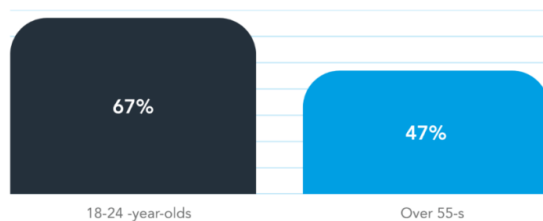


# Noisy Offices Could be Costing UK Employers Over £40bn a Year as Graduates Reject Open-plan Britain

3 hours ago

## UK's generational office divide

Percentage of office workers reporting their office environment as noisy



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

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Britain's offices are out of step with the workforce about to enter them. New research from [Oscar Acoustics](#), Great Britain's leading specialists in architectural acoustic finishes, reveals that workers lose 26 minutes of productive time each day to office noise, more than three working weeks a year. Three in five (61%) work from home specifically to escape it, and nearly half (45%) would consider leaving their job because of it.

As a result, two-thirds of under-25s describe their workplace as noisy, compared to fewer than half of over-55s, pointing to a generational divide in expectations as around 400,000 graduates (HESA, 2024/25) prepare to enter the British workforce this summer.

The study also found that two-thirds (66%) of job seekers factor acoustic comfort into their job decisions. For employers competing for graduate talent this summer, the sound of the workplace is becoming a recruitment factor in its own right.

The wider economic cost runs into the tens of billions. Poor acoustic design is estimated to drain over £40 billion a year from UK businesses through lost productivity, staff turnover and customer dissatisfaction.\*

Reducing the proportion of workers actively considering resigning by 15% (from 45% to 30%), a realistic outcome with sustained investment, could deliver annual retention savings of between £21,000 and £34,650 for 100-employee businesses.\*

Yet, despite this, employer response remains limited. Fewer than one in ten (8%) of companies have

installed acoustic treatment in the last two years, the vast majority (85%) have never assessed their workplace acoustics, and nearly a quarter (23%) of offices have no private or quiet spaces.

Ben Hancock, Managing Director of Oscar Acoustics, said: “The data shows a clear generational shift. Younger workers are walking into offices that weren’t built for focused work, and they’re not prepared to put up with it. Employers who treat acoustic comfort as an afterthought will struggle to attract and keep talent.

He added: “Acoustic environment is as fundamental to a productive workplace as lighting or ventilation. With two-thirds of job seekers now factoring it into their decisions, and a £40 billion annual bill landing on UK businesses, the companies that invest in better acoustics will have a genuine advantage in a competitive graduate market.”

Julian Treasure, sound expert and TED speaker, said: “There’s a billion young people set to join the ranks of the hearing impaired because of headphone abuse. 100 decibels going deep into your ear canals for hours a day. As we get older, our hearing degrades over time, and if you start off with hearing damage as a teenager, we may be looking at an entire deaf generation in 20 to 30 years.”

These are the same young people now entering Britain’s offices, making the acoustic environment they encounter more consequential than ever. The research points to a clear gap between employer ambition and action and a growing need for independent ways to measure and demonstrate acoustic quality.

Oscar Acoustics has partnered with Sownd Affects to launch [Sownd Certification](#), the world’s first independent framework for spaces with proven acoustic performance. The certification evaluates spaces based on real-world acoustic conditions and end-user comfort, giving employers an evidence-based way to show graduate talent and existing staff that their workplace has been designed with their comfort and inclusion in mind.

Embracing this principle ensures that spaces are designed to work for everyone. This is critical for the 60% of UK adults who are noise-sensitive, including neurodivergent individuals and those with hearing or visual challenges. But creating balanced acoustic environments ultimately benefits the entire workforce by aiding concentration and reducing stress.

For more information about the research findings, click [here](#).