

# “What”

The most  
expensive  
word in  
business

Understanding  
Sound Experiences,  
2020 report



EPOS



At EPOS, we pride ourselves on helping our clients to reach their goals by perfecting audio experiences. With this survey we aim to provide you with insights and tools to help you put the “What?” out of business. The report examines the current state of audio in modern working environments and aims to help you draw insights that will allow you to banish bad audio, amplify results and unleash the human potential in your organization.

# Bad Audio is Bad Business

Audio as it relates to work

## Have you heard...

Think back to the last conference call you joined, or the last time a customer or colleague called you. Did you clearly hear everything that was said? If you had to ask someone to repeat themselves due to bad audio, then you're not alone. People working in organizations worldwide are mishearing each other on a daily basis, and bad audio is to blame. Not only does this lead to

frustration, confusion and wasted time, but it costs money. Serious money. In fact, **“What?” is one of the most expensive words in business today.**

The contemporary workplace has porous boundaries. People work, and therefore make and receive calls from a wide range of places: open plan offices, call centers, meeting rooms and remote locations such as coffee shops and their own homes.



End users spend an average of 5 hours and 18 minutes daily on activities related to sound and meetings, whether virtual or face-to-face. Each of these interactions can be plagued by phrases such as “Can you hear me?” and ‘Sorry, can you repeat that please?’. If the sound or audio is not at its best.

In fact, the average audio solution end user loses **29 minutes per week** due to

poor sound quality on voice calls. For businesses, the cumulative cost of this wasted time is huge. It is also compounded by other expensive issues that can be caused by poor communication – critical instructions being missed or misunderstood is one example. Negative customer experiences that impact company reputation is another. A fifth of end users have experienced dissatisfied clients due to poor sound quality.

# We need to talk about audio

The sound-related pain points within organizations are many and varied, but they are also alarmingly universal. Almost every decision maker and end user in our survey (95%) says that their concentration and efficiency at work has suffered due to sound issues. Disruption caused by loud colleagues is the most commonly-raised issue, with 50% of respondents citing it as a problem. A generally loud working environment and interruptions from colleagues follow closely behind, experienced by 48% and 46% respectively. Overall, these factors

contribute to a total of 29 minutes per week that the average end user spends on extra work – time taken away from more productive tasks.

The fact that intrusive audio isn't confined to office environments exacerbates the problem. Remote working is becoming a more commonplace and necessary facet of our working lives. With colleagues on-the-go seemingly at all times, the number of telephone calls, conference calls and teleconferences that take place has increased.



95%

of today's modern workers  
admit that their concentration  
and efficiency at work has  
suffered due to sonic setbacks

69%

Spend **extra time** on  
their work tasks due to  
poor sound quality



37%

Over a third of decision makers say that the ‘freedom to work from anywhere’ is one of the most important reasons for using video meetings and conference calls.

Technology makes such working practices possible in theory, but for many there are endless difficulties in practice: 87% of end-users say they have experienced at least one pain point due to poor sound quality during calls or virtual meetings. The most common problems include excessive background noise (42%), having to repeat themselves (34%) and asking

for information to be repeated (34%). But there are numerous further examples: bad connections on the line that cut off speech, recipients of calls having to ask for information to be repeated and the need to send follow-up emails to clarify key points. All result in frustration and wasted time.

As well as the extra time spent on work and the associated business cost, there is an emotional impact for end users:

- 35% feel frustration, irritation and annoyance due to bad audio
- 25% experience moments of stress
- 15% even feel embarrassment or a lack of confidence.

Bad audio experiences cause harm not just to organizations but the individuals working in them; they must be addressed as a barrier to personal wellbeing as much as corporate performance.

The sound-related pain points within organizations are many and varied, but they are also alarmingly universal.



Is feeling disrupted by loud colleagues



35%

Feel frustration, irritation and annoyance due to bad audio

48%

Is disturbed by a noisy working environment



Experience moments of stress

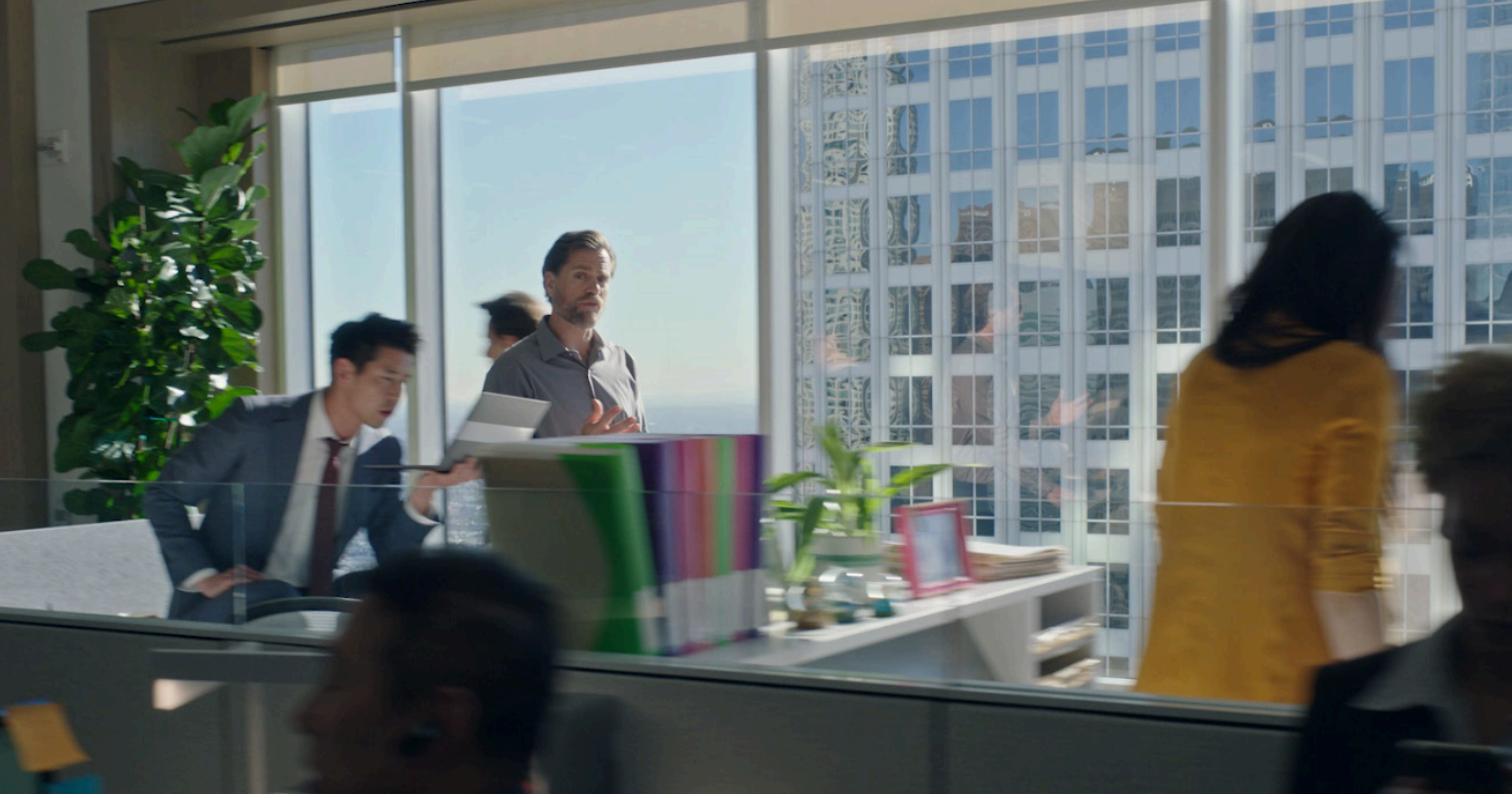


## Collaborate with video

Our insight also shows that decision makers' and end users' electronic communication issues are not limited to audio. They are also prevalent in video conferencing, an increasingly popular tool to boost levels of collaboration and connection for remote workers, as well as a means to combat loneliness. Video provides a level of interpersonal interaction that is much closer to a face-to-face conversation. It allows users to convey sentiment through body language and make use of visual aids to enhance meaning.

Video can facilitate collaboration that can rarely be achieved through audio alone, and enables effective decision making that can optimize your business. As well as the time and cost savings of not travelling to meetings, decision makers say that video calls or meetings help them

- feel closer to their teams (27%)
- maintain personal relationships while working from elsewhere (24%)
- establish trust in working relationships (23%).



Yet technological and technical hurdles may be holding back wider adoption of video conferencing:

- 32% of decision makers say technology issues are the main obstacle to using video as part of meetings and calls.
- 27% pointing to app issues.
- 22% a room not being designed for video meetings.

This is despite the huge breakthroughs that have been made in video technology in recent years. A video conference today is a completely different experience to its equivalent in the recent past. Current, high-end video conferencing technology can feel like meeting a colleague or customer in person from the moment you dial into a call. With the right tools in place, it represents the next stage of evolution in many people's working lives.



A fifth say that they cannot easily setup a video meeting without AV/IT support.

The most common problems  
that decision makers and end-users  
encounter include



**34%**

having to repeat  
themselves



**42%**

excessive  
background noise



**34%**

asking for information  
to be repeated

# Loss of productivity. Loss of revenue.



## Poor quality audio is expensive

For employers, reduced productivity due to audio problems carries significant cost repercussions. For example, looking at the average annual UK / US / DE / FR wage according to OECD data, 29 minutes per week equates to £389.48 (UK) / \$725.21 (US) / €497.15 (DE) / €443.86 (FR) of wasted expenditure per employee per annum. Organizations that employ over 100 people risk losing over £30,000 per annum in lost revenue. / over \$70,000 (US) / almost €50,000 (DE) / almost €45,000 (FR). If you're running a call centre consisting of 250+ operators or similar, it is easy to see how these costs can skyrocket.

The cost of bad audio goes beyond employee productivity. Worryingly, around one in five decision makers said it has also caused the following outcomes:

- Dissatisfied clients (23%)
- Financial loss due to incorrectly undertaking a task (18%)
- Losing a key piece of work or a deal resulting in financial loss to the company (18%)
- Losing a pitch or tender (19%)

Needless to say, these financial outcomes could be far more serious than those 29 lost minutes of time.



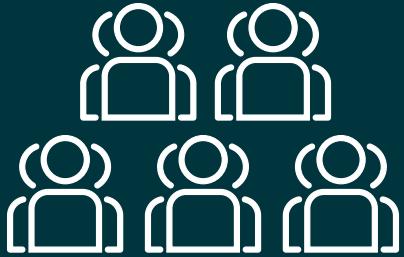
Organizations that employ  
over 100 people risk losing over  
**\$70,000 (US)**  
per annum in lost revenue.



**0:29:00**

For the average full-time worker losing  
29 minutes per week equates just over three  
days of lost time due to poor sound quality  
on voice calls per year

# Bad audio outcomes...



**23%**  
Dissatisfied clients



Financial loss

**18%**  
Loss of a key piece  
of work



**19%**  
Loss of pitches



## Your audio format is outdated

Most organizations are taking steps to accommodate changes to the ways we work, such as adapting office environments and encouraging remote working. But often, communication technology is difficult to for end users to access. Just over half (51%) of decision makers say that headsets or headphones can only be ordered by certain teams in their organization, or require special authorization to order.

This can leave end users either without the requisite technology or with outdated solutions that are unable to cope with the requirements of the modern workplace.

**“** And if workers aren't provided with all the tools they need to perform their roles effectively, this breeds frustration and can even foster a cultural resistance to innovation – outweighing the benefits of increased collaboration. **”**



## Forward thinking companies stay put

If communications solutions are optimized, much business travel becomes a needless expense. Often, an effective audio or video call can facilitate an international meeting at a fraction of the cost of train or plane tickets. Among decision makers we surveyed, 45% cited time savings and 41% cost savings as among the three most important reasons for using video meetings or calls.

The cost of unnecessary travel also extends beyond profit margins – the environmental implications are equally unpalatable.

In an age where urgent action is required to mitigate the impact of climate change, forward thinking organizations are implementing green initiatives as part of broader corporate social responsibility commitments. Allowing end users to connect globally from their own locality is a great place to start.

Already in 2020, remote working has become part of everyday life for many people. As a result, access to good quality video and collaboration tools is more important than ever before. In many cases these solutions are the only viable option for communicating and staying in touch with colleagues, partners and customers.



# 79%

Of those experiencing pain points perceive good audio equipment as a solution



# 37,2%

Think that the right audio tools can reduce misunderstandings

# The appetite for change

## Breaking up with bad audio

Given the numerous issues that bad audio can create for businesses, it is not surprising that there is an appetite for change. An overwhelming majority of business decision makers (79%) are aware that good audio equipment (including headsets, headphones and speaker phones) can provide the solution. But this is far from the only motivation to do things differently.

The other top driver for considering new audio solutions is a desire to keep up with the latest technology, according to 34% of decision makers. This is reinforced by additional motivations including replacing older equipment and providing more options for employees to complete daily tasks. As such, an average 93% of decision makers plan to purchase new audio equipment in the next 12 months.

## Getting on the same wavelength

End users are of the strong opinion that good quality audio solutions can alleviate their communication pain points.

- Over a third (37%) think that the right tools can reduce misunderstandings to a great extent.
- 40% feel that they would significantly reduce the need to repeatedly clarify information.
- Perhaps most significantly, 37% believe good audio would prevent participants from missing critical information to a great extent.



## Responding to different demands

Understandably, provisioning plans vary depending on the specific roles of the audio decision makers and their end users. Call centric decision makers prioritize headsets and headphones that can be connected to a PC or softphone (34%), followed by headsets and headphones that can be connected to a mobile phone (31%).

## Making all the right noises

End users believe that effective audio solutions hold the key to relieving their communication headaches. 76% of end users report that key audio pain points are alleviated by good audio to a great or moderate extent, this includes disturbances caused by others sitting nearby, interruption from colleagues and poor sound when making internet calls. The good news is that these are largely the same issues they identified as having the most significant impact on productivity – offering business decision makers a seemingly simple solution.

# >50%

From the perspective of decision makers, more than half believe that effective audio solutions will mitigate issues such as time loss due to misunderstanding between colleagues, and the financial implications of workers incorrectly undertaking a task.

They are also of the opinion that reduced efficiency, reduced productivity and client dissatisfaction caused by poor audio could be alleviated with an effective audio solution.

Ready to put “What,”  
out of your business?



# The solution is clear

This research underlines that communication and collaboration in the workplace are undermined by a host of issues arising from poor quality audio.

**“ There is a strong consensus among decision makers and end users alike that effective audio solutions provide the answer to this productivity drain and source of frustration. ”**

By taking swift action, decision makers can have an immediate impact on current problems within their organization, as well as reducing the likelihood of issues that could occur at a later date.

## Straight talking

According to decision makers, the most important functionalities they prioritize when choosing headsets are comfort, excellent outgoing sound clarity, and being easy to use and connect. In terms of speaker phones, they are also looking for excellent sound quality (both inbound and outbound) and usability. For end users, this is mirrored exactly – coveted headset functionalities also include comfort, excellent outgoing sound clarity, ease of use and connectivity, and craftsmanship.

Given that decision makers and end users are aligned on their understanding of bad audio pain points and their impact on productivity, it stands to reason that they would be looking for solutions that address these problems directly.



## Remove ambiguity from audio

At EPOS, we truly believe that we can make humans go even further, perform even better and experience even more. We strive to unleash human potential by perfecting audio experiences, and deliver premium solutions to help individuals and teams reach their goals and achieve more.

Our audio devices empower you to not only hear, but fully understand everything being said – from explicitly stated information to implicit details carried by pauses and tone of voice. EPOS solution users can also be confident that their message is being delivered loud and clear to the recipient, thanks to noise cancelling microphones that filter out background noise and enhance speech.

Our audio technology is created for those who insist on excellence from their audio devices. We craft solutions with high-quality materials that are built to last. They provide the perfect balance of excellent audio and comfort.

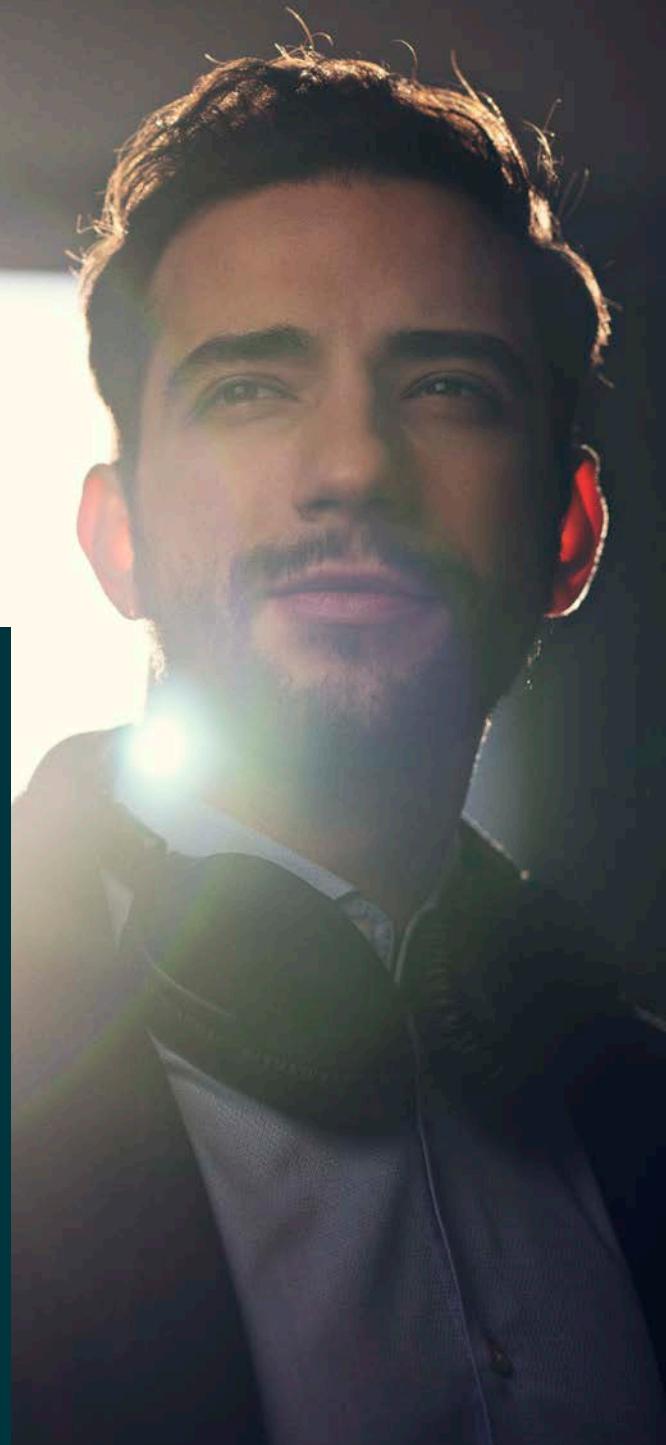
Our EPOS team prides itself on delivering premium customer service and aftercare for all our products. If you have come to the realization that bad audio is bad business for your organization, get in touch now to find out how we can help.

Request a complementary product trial and learn more about EPOS at [eposaudio.com](http://eposaudio.com)

## ABOUT EPOS

### Pioneering audio experiences

EPOS use the most advanced audio and collaboration technologies to improve how businesses communicate and collaborate. Our enterprise ranges are designed to meet the needs of every professional user, from those who are constantly on the go to distributed teams that need to work seamlessly across borders and timezones, and specialists for whom audio clarity is not a benefit but an absolute necessity.



# EPOS product lines

## The ADAPT Line

Work your way

Demand audio experiences you can personalize, powered by EPOS AI™ – technology that adapts to your sound environment and boosts working performance. Communicate and concentrate according to your working needs with flawless calls and Adaptive ANC.

## The IMPACT Line

When talks matters

Ensure excellent customer experiences with a line of premium audio tools for optimal comfort, easy call handling and rich, natural sound. Reliable, intelligent technologies filter out unwanted noise, enhance audio and boost your efficiency.

## The EXPAND Line

Seamless collaboration

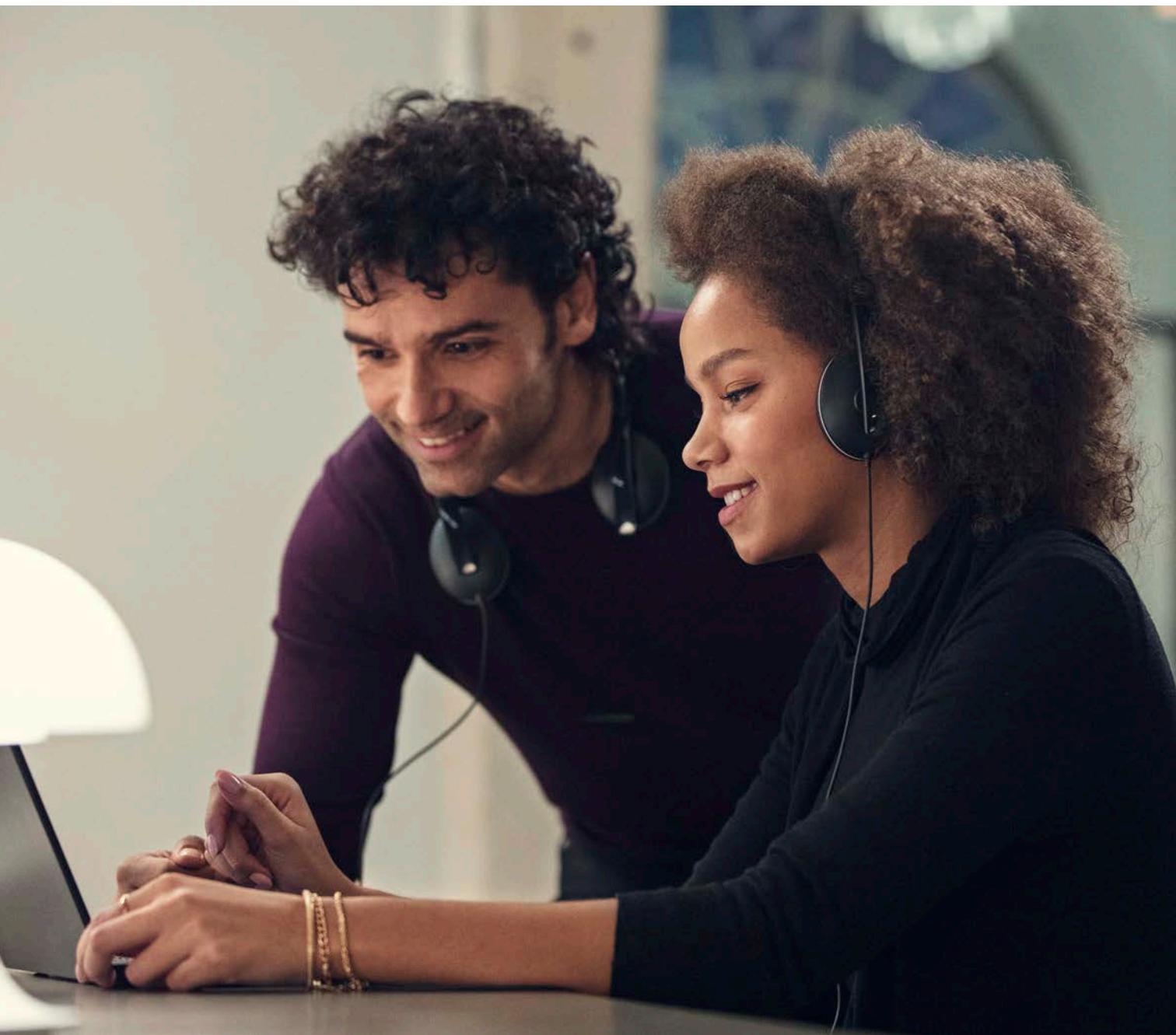
Expand your ability to collaborate across workspaces, locations and time zones. Simply plug-and-play and experience conference calls with unrivalled clarity, enabling you to participate and engage with the same confidence as being there in person.

## The COMMAND Line

Always in control

A line of premium headsets designed for the challenges of ATC and C3 workplaces, when consistent operational excellence is a must. Reliable EPOS solutions deliver the audio and design quality that enable professional performance at the highest level.

The real magic happens when users experience the purity of sound, clarity of speech, and the difference they make to anything the user sets out to achieve.



# About the research

This research was conducted by IPSOS Denmark on behalf of EPOS. The data was collected using Online Computer Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI) between the end of January and mid February 2020.

**The main target sample consisted of respondents:**

- From the US, UK, France, Germany, Hong Kong and Singapore
- Males / females 18–65 y
- Working in companies with 50+ employees\*
- Decision makers and end-users of audio solutions
- Working a minimum 20 hours per week

## Target Definitions

Throughout the report, the respondents are categorized and referred to as follows:

### Decision Maker (DM) Call Centric

Decision makers responsible or sharing responsibility for purchasing headsets for: employees who spend most of their time at their desk receiving and/or making calls with customers, suppliers and colleagues.

### Decision Maker (DM) Office/Mobile

Decision makers responsible or sharing responsibility for purchasing audio solutions for: employees who do much of their work at their desk, but also have meetings and other activities OR are highly mobile within the office/workplace or outside.

### End User (EU) Call Centric

Spend most of their work receiving and/or making calls with customers, suppliers or colleagues. 63% are using headset / headphones at work that were bought separately. 37% are using both corded headphones from a smartphone at work and a headset that was bought separately.

### End User (EU) Office/Mobile

Do much of their work at their desk, but also have meetings and other activities OR are highly mobile within the office/workplace or outside. 68% are using headset / headphones at work that were bought separately. 32% are using both corded headphones from a smartphone at work and a headset that was bought separately.

### Potential End User (EU) Office/Mobile/Call Centric

100% do not use separately bought headset / headphones at work. 13% are using headphones that came with a smartphone at work.

\*Due to a very low incident rate for end-users call centric in all countries, the criteria for company size was relaxed and companies with 10–49 employees accepted. 40 respondents (2%) out of the total sample.

THE POWER OF AUDIO

**EPOS**

EPOS Group A/S  
Industriparken 27  
2750 Ballerup, Denmark  
[eposaudio.com](http://eposaudio.com)