



Understanding the Impact of Conference Calls on Business



Introduction

Each day, we get distracted, side-tracked or pulled into something we didn't plan for, and according to research it can take nearly 20 minutes¹ to get your brain back to where it was before you were pulled off track.

When it comes to conference calls, many business people have come to accept regular distractions and often anticipate challenges connecting to and managing these calls. While conferencing has become an essential part of conducting day-to-day business for many, these frustrations have remained the same for decades.

In 2015, Research Now surveyed business users on their experience on conference calls – from time spent on setup to functionalities used – in hopes of better understanding the challenges they face trying to conduct business in remote meetings and the impact this can have on overall productivity.

With 68% of respondents reporting they joined anywhere from 1-5 calls each week, and another 20% joining between 6-10, a picture begins to unfold of the inefficiencies typical to the traditional conference call experience – and the stark translation into the bottom line.

So how does all of this equate into the bottom line?

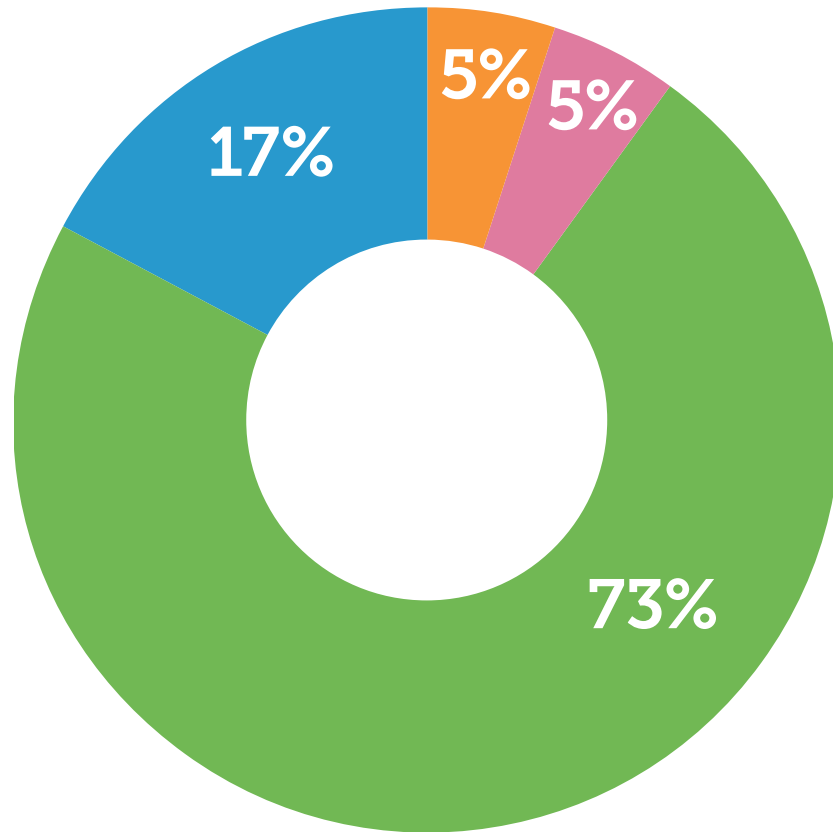
According to Wainhouse Research², businesses in the U.S. spent a total of 96.6 billion minutes, and those in the U.K. another 17.4 billion, on conference calls.

With an average call length of 38 minutes³, our research found that about 13 of those minutes (more than 33% of every call) is wasted on average dealing with distractions and interruptions – roughly 38 billion minutes wasted on distractions alone across both regions.

Calculating the average cost of staffing set against time lost, that's more than £14B/\$16B thrown away each year - and that's just on getting things set up and running in most calls.

Let's take a look at what business respondents had to say about their habits in joining and facilitating remote meetings. The following report presents data from 1,092 respondents out of both the United States (558) and United Kingdom (534).

**Most insights are calculated on a weighted average basis, set against individual response averages for the scenarios in question.*



■ 1-5 ■ 6-10 ■ 11-15 ■ 15+

Calls per week (US + UK)

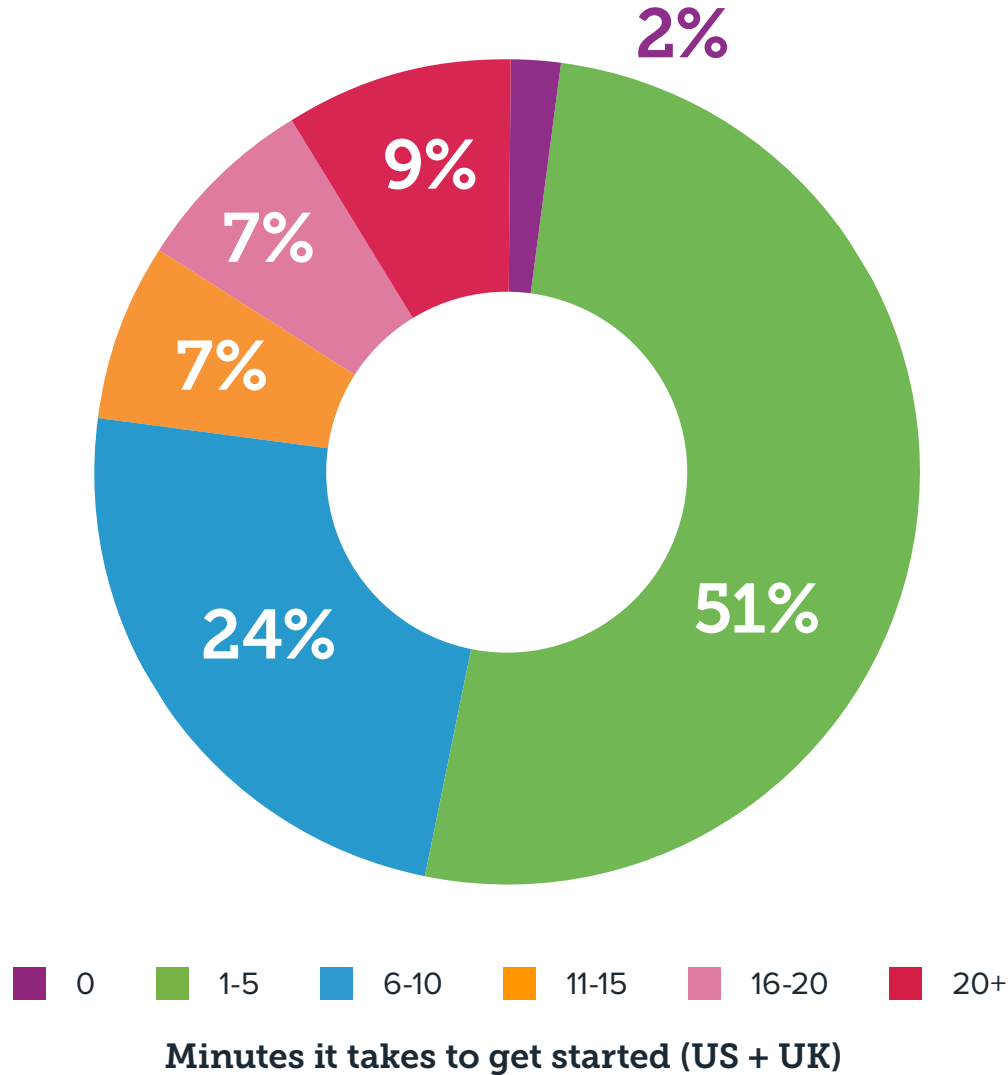
Number of calls attended

On average, respondents typically participated in five conference calls each week.

When coupled with the time lost on distractions and call setup, this can add up to hours of wasted time for businesses on a weekly basis **(page 7)**.

Regional Data

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+
UK	68%	19%	7%	6%
US	78%	16%	2%	4%

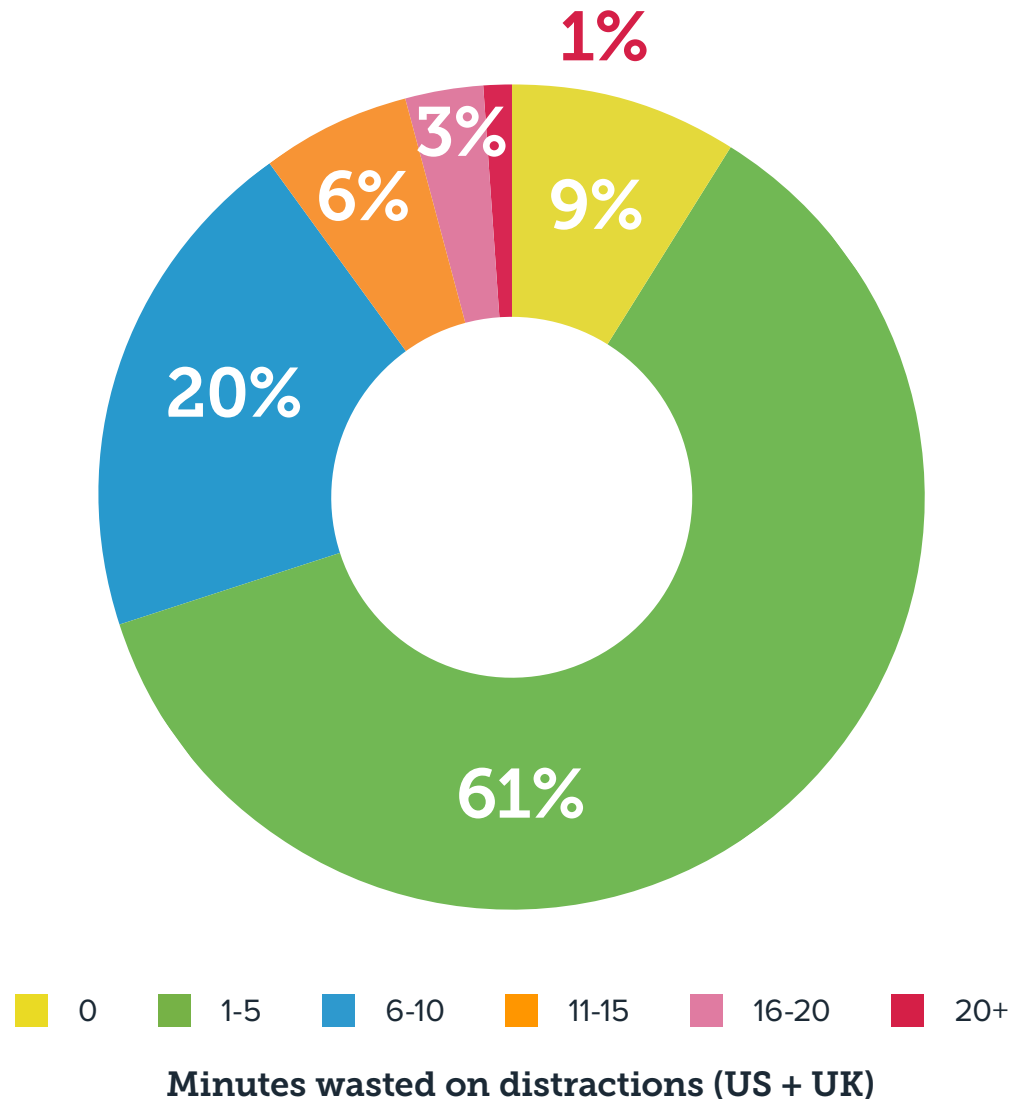


Getting Meetings Started

Respondents on average said they saw around **8 minutes** typically wasted getting meetings started, with time being spent asking who's on, tracking down late arrivers, etc.

Should additional distractions derail the meeting once things get started, this can lead to a another **1-10 minutes** of lost time per call, according to survey responses.

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
UK	1%	49%	25%	10%	7%	8%
US	3%	53%	22%	5%	6%	11%



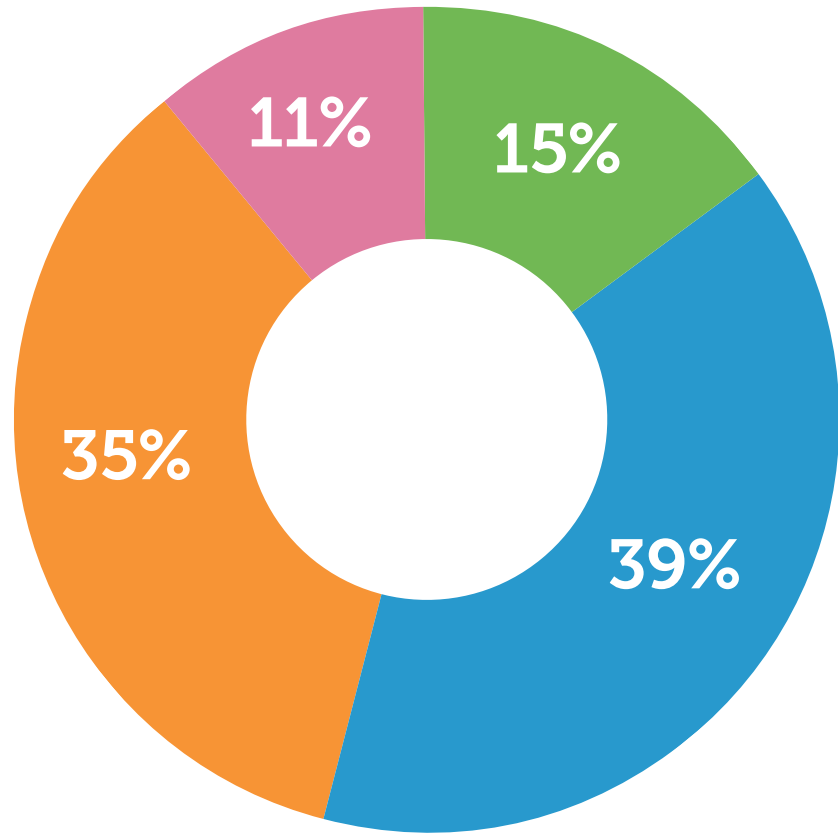
Time on Distractions

According to respondents, an average of five minutes typically went wasted by in-call distractions such as background noise and late joiners.

Due to those distractions, at least **1/3** of respondents saw moderate to major negative effects on the overall productivity of their calls. **(page 7).**

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
UK	7%	60%	21%	7%	4%	1%
US	11%	60%	20%	5%	2%	2%

The Cost of Conferencing:
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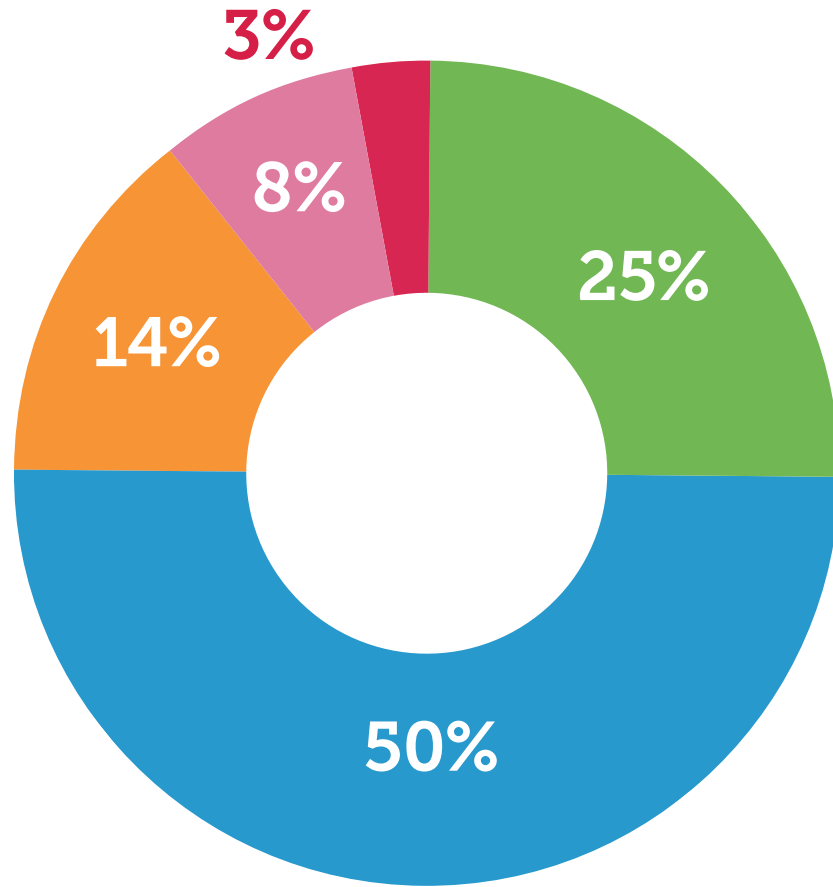
- No negative impact
- Slight negative impact
- Moderate negative impact
- Major negative impact

Negative impact of frustrations on conference calls (US + UK)

Impact on Productivity

85.3% of respondents recognized the negative impact of distractions on conference calls, either on meeting productivity, ability to get through an agenda, enthusiasm to participate or ability to concentrate.

	No negative impact	Slight negative impact	Moderate negative impact	Major negative impact
UK	25%	45%	25%	5%
US	32%	43%	21%	4%



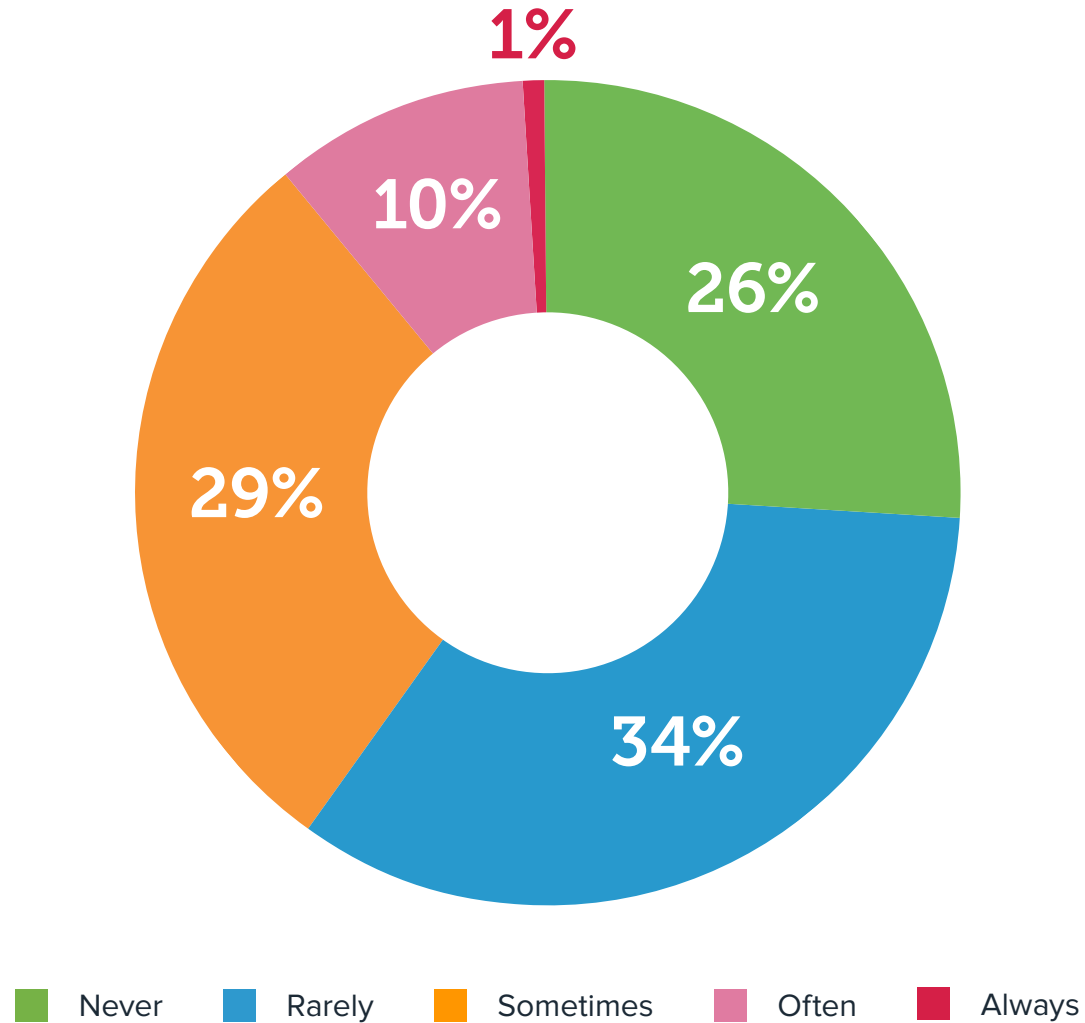
■ Polycom (in meeting room) ■ Desk phone
■ Mobile device ■ VOIP software ■ Other

Type of device used to meet (US + UK)

Device Use in Meetings

75% of respondents still use landline phones to participate on conference calls. Unlike for regular person-to-person calls, mobiles are a **14%** minority. VOIP usage also remains low, though UK users claimed twice the adoption (**10%**) over US users (**5%**).

	Polycom (in meeting room)	Desk phone	Mobile device	VOIP software	Other
UK	26%	45%	16%	10%	3%
US	24%	55%	14%	5%	2%



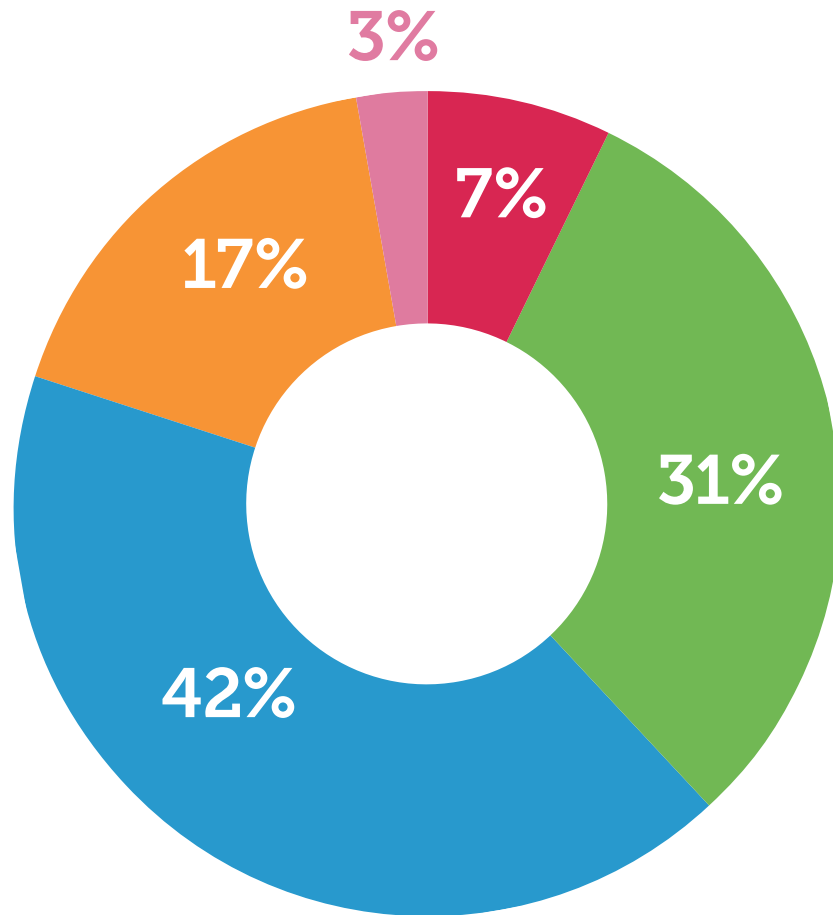
Frequency of knowing who's on call (US + UK)

Conference Call Security

99% of respondents admitted to hosting conference calls where they're not sure who's on. For **60%**, this lack of security was the norm.

The implications are concerning considering that **93%** of respondents said that they have shared confidential information on a call, with **20%** doing so frequently. **(page 6)**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
UK	28%	32%	30%	9%	1%
US	23%	37%	28%	11%	1%



■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

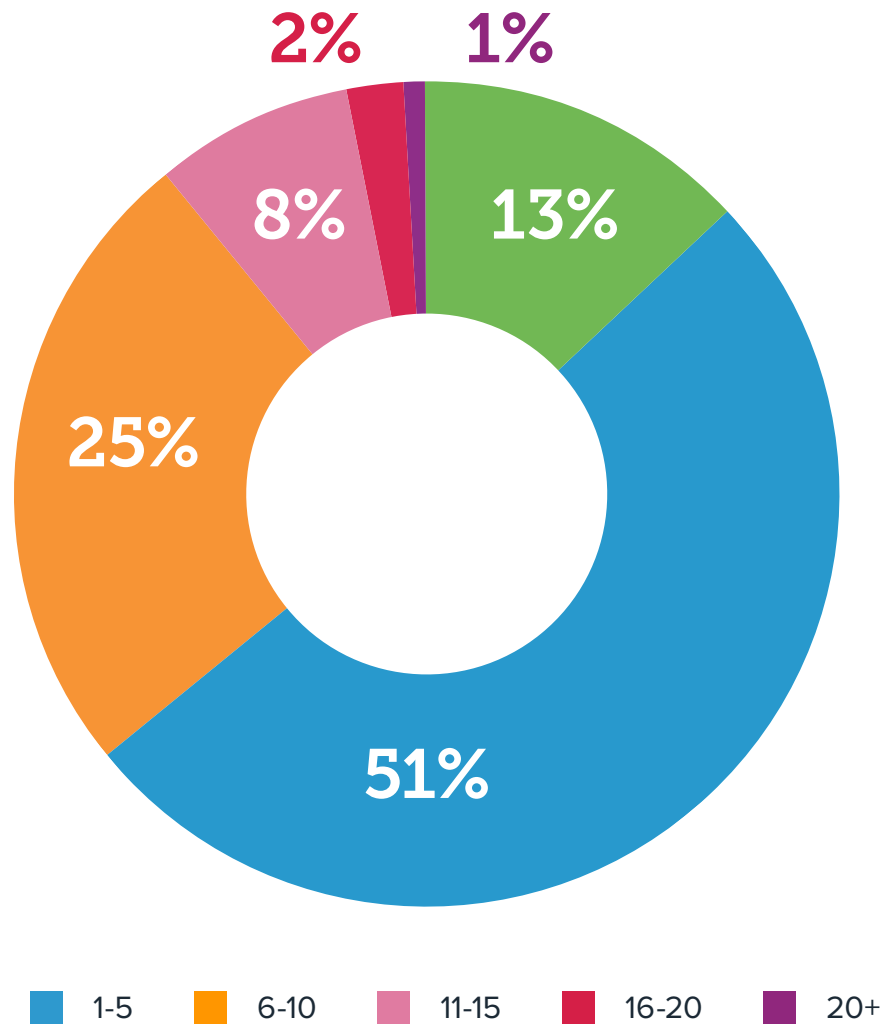
Frequency of confidential information shared on a call (US + UK)

Sharing Confidential Data

While **93%** of respondents admitted to having shared confidential information on a call, **20%** said they do so frequently.

This is alarming considering that **60%** of people also said that they rarely/never knew the identity of all callers in attendance. **(slide 11)**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
UK	6%	32%	44%	16%	2%
US	8%	30%	40%	18%	4%

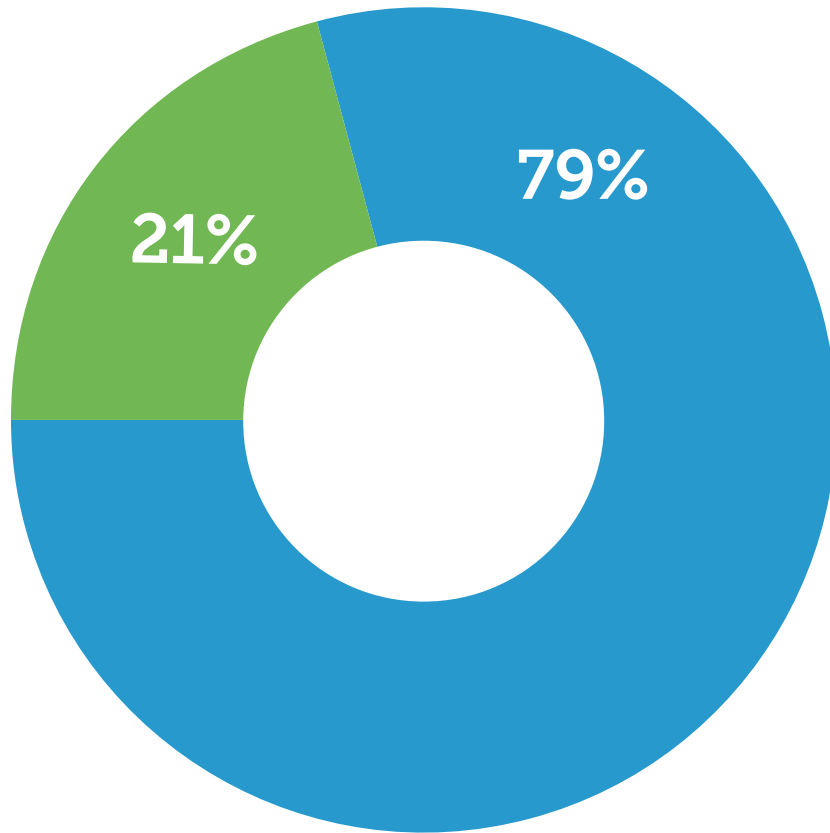


Screen Share Setup - Time

On a weighted average basis, respondents said that roughly five minutes on average were typically wasted trying to get screen sharing up and running for guests.

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+
UK	14%	47%	26%	9%	3%	1%
US	12%	55%	22%	8%	2%	1%

Minutes taken to set up screen sharing on-call (US + UK)



■ Yes ■ No

Would you use screen sharing if it were easier to set up? (US + UK)

Screen Share – Use

Nearly **80%** of respondents said they would be more willing to use or increase their use of screen sharing during calls if the process were made as easy as sending out slides ahead of time.

	Yes	No
UK	82%	18%
US	77%	23%

Conclusion

The need for virtual meetings in the digital workplace is an unavoidable reality for the everyday business user, but it's one that comes at a cost. More than 30% of time on these calls is wasted on common disruptions all too prominent in the typical conference call.

Background noise, not knowing who's on or who joined...the list goes on...all adversely affect the efficiency of important, day-to-day business on conference calls. Distractions deplete an average of 13 minutes of every call, and with the average user joining approximately five calls each week, the time begins to add up. Furthermore, when set against staffing and other costs of doing business, that wasted time getting started and dealing with distractions equated to £14B/\$16B of lost revenue in 2015 alone.

Additionally, while many business users are keen to incorporate more collaborative technologies into their meetings, such as screen sharing, the labors of launching most solutions are wasting time and restricting usage. Almost 80% said they would be more apt to screen share if it were easier to launch and set up.

It's clear that there are still many hindrances and limitations to using common conferencing platforms. But by eliminating the fundamental issues impacting conferencing and focusing on overall meeting experience – we might start to see a new evolution in collaboration just yet.

Endnotes

¹ Article: <http://lifehacker.com/how-long-it-takes-to-get-back-on-track-after-a-distract-1720708353>

² Wainhouse Research, 2015

³ Average length of call based on LoopUp user data

⁴ Estimate derived from overlaying salary data from Bureau of Labor Statistics and Office for National Statistics