



SOUNDGUYS

2024
AUDIO INDUSTRY
REPORT

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2024 WRAPPED

△ LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At SoundGuys, we test and review hundreds of audio products every single year. Whether it's the latest wireless earbuds, headphones, speakers, microphones, or other audio gear, chances are that our team has tried it out. With an annual global audience of over 28 million website viewers, 10 million YouTube viewers, and millions more across social media platforms, we have a passionate community of audio consumers and enthusiasts to discuss the latest trends in the world of audio.

With an extensive database of products tested in our lab, an eye on what content is trending, an ear on what the community wants, and frequent communication with all of the largest audio brands in the world, many brands we talked to this year were curious to know:

“What do the SoundGuys think is next in the world of audio?”

With that in mind, we have put together this comprehensive report on the state of the audio industry entering 2025. Inside, you'll find the collective knowledge of our team, standout testing data from products we put through our lab this year, consumer reports data from polling our audience, and insights on the future of the audio industry.












This is our first time putting together such a report, so please reach out to us with any feedback on what data would help your organization the most in the future! For further analysis and data, please inquire about our custom testing and consulting services.

Cheers to a great 2025, and as always, happy listening,



*Chase Bernath
Managing Editor
SoundGuys
chase.bernath@soundguys.com*

THE MOST POPULAR AUDIO CATEGORIES OF 2024

-  **1** Wireless Earbuds
-  **2** Over-Ear Headphones
-  **3** Speakers
-  **4** Gaming Headsets
-  **5** Music Streaming
-  **6** Microphones
-  **7** Audio technology
-  **8** On-Ear Headphones
-  **9** Wired Earbuds
-  **10** Accessories
-  **11** Hearing Aids

DATA VIA [SOUNDGUYS.COM](https://www.soundguys.com)

WHAT ARE PEOPLE WATCHING?

Top products watched on the SoundGuys YouTube channel in 2024
BOSE QUIETCOMFORT ULTRA EARBUDS
BOSE QUIETCOMFORT ULTRA HEADPHONES
APPLE EARPODS (USB-C)
AIRPODS 4 / AIRPODS 4 WITH ANC
NOTHING EAR (OPEN)
SAMSUNG GALAXY BUDS3 PRO
SONY WH-1000XM5

BEST BUDGET OPTIONS

Among the top 10* most popular videos published by SoundGuys in 2024, three of the videos were composed of product best lists/roundups that show viewers the best headphones and earbuds available in 2024, separated into three different price points: best budget (under \$100), best mid-tier (under \$200), and best overall (any price; usually above \$200). The most popular best-list we published was “Best Noise-Canceling Headphones of 2024”, published in May 2024. In our best-list videos, the data shows us that audience engagement is at its peak during sections of the video that showcase the best budget option. This suggests that more and more consumers are increasingly searching for headphones and earbuds with the best bang for their buck, typically under \$100, rather than investing in more premium options that often cost more than \$200.

*Top 10 product-based, long-form videos. This excludes any tutorial-style videos, partnered hands-on videos, or the channel trailer.

OLD IS NEW

Long-form video traffic peaked in November and December 2024, which coincided with the holiday shopping season, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday. We also saw an uptick in viewership for our review videos of older products, such as the Bose QuietComfort Headphones (2023). This resurgence of consumer interest is likely because these headphones were available at a discount of over 50% during Black Friday. The top five brands that were watched the most on the SoundGuys YouTube channel in 2024* are as follows: Bose, Apple, Samsung, Nothing, and Sony.

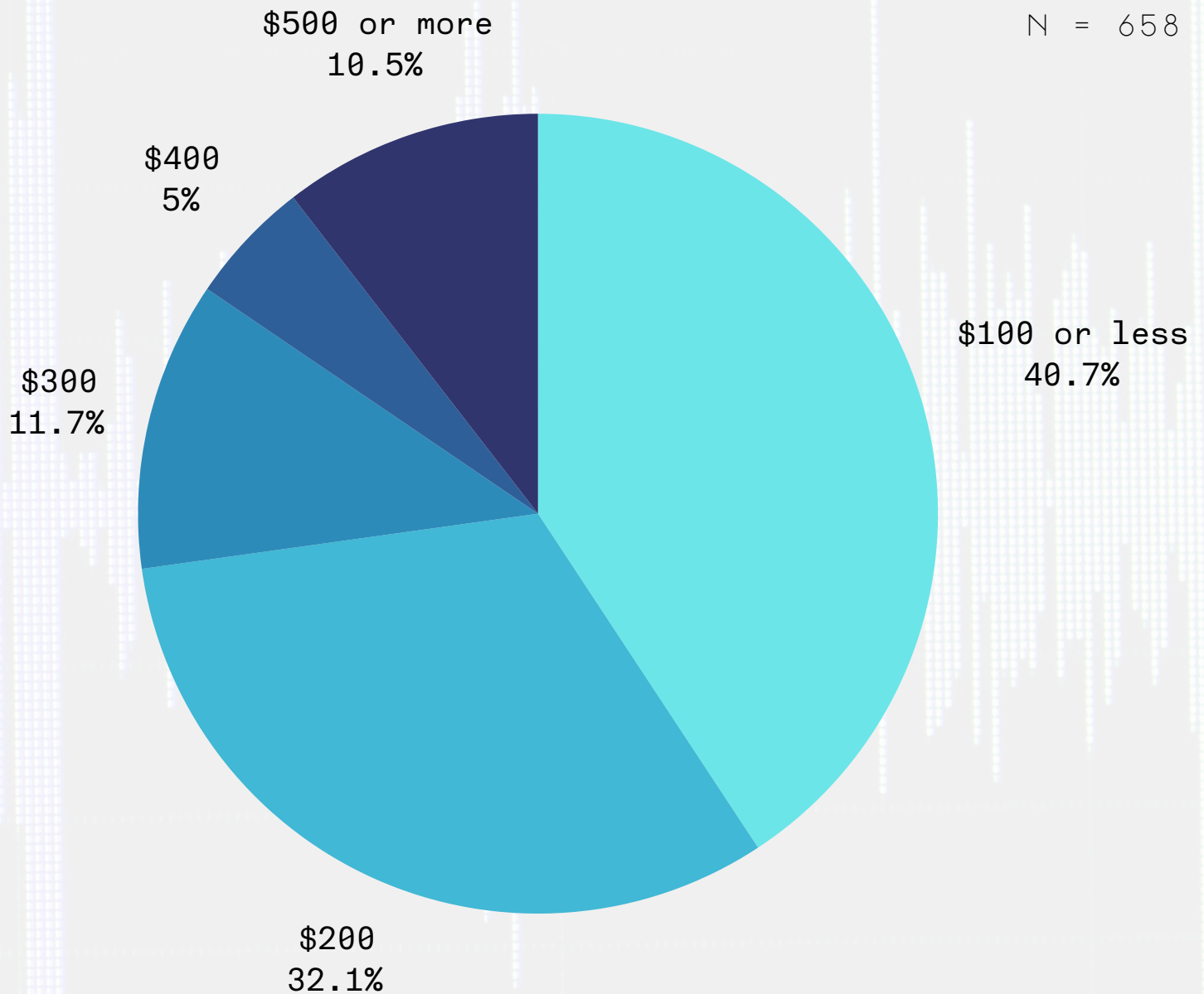
*This list includes data from videos published before 2024.

Meet our video expert...

Harley is a writer, director, and film composer from Manila, Philippines. Over the years he's gained experience as a location sound mixer, freelance film composer, video editor and camera assistant. When he's not dabbling in film, you can find him browsing through Omnisphere presets, baking a cake, or hittin' the gym.



HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SPEND ON HEADPHONES OR EARBUDS?



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM



EARBUDS REPORT



THE **E**ARBUDS WITH THE BEST SOUND QUALITY RELEASED IN 2024



Nothing Ear



Bose QuietComfort Earbuds



JBL Live Beam 3



Soundpeats Capsule3 Pro+



JBL Tour Pro 3



Creative Aurvana Mimi



Bowers and Wilkins Pi8

How do we
determine the
best
sound quality?



We test products in our lab on the Bruel & Kjaer 5128 head and torso simulator. We use the Multi-Dimensional Audio Quality Score (MDAQS) algorithm in partnership with HEAD acoustics to rate sound quality on a scale from 1-5 based on average listener preferences.

THE **E**ARBUDS WITH THE BEST NOISE CANCELING RELEASED IN 2024

85%	Jabra Elite 10 Gen 2
84%	JBL Tour PRO 3
83%	Sennheiser MOMENTUM True Wireless 4
82%	Bose QuietComfort Earbuds
82%	Bowers & Wilkins Pi8
81%	Jabra Elite 8 Active Gen 2

How do we determine the best noise canceling?



We test products in our lab on the Bruel & Kjaer 5128 head and torso simulator. We measure the average reduction in loudness across the audible frequency spectrum.

2024 **E**ARBUD **B**REAKTHROUGHS AND **T**TRENDS

HEARING HEALTH

While we've seen OTC hearing aid solutions for a while now, the release of hearing aid functionality on the AirPods Pro 2 brought hearing health into the mainstream and removed much of the stigma around hearing aids. We've also seen an increased focus on biometric tracking features built into earbuds, such as the heart rate and body temperature sensors on the Sennheiser MOMENTUM Sport Earbuds. Expect consumers to increasingly demand health and wellness functions in their daily driver earbuds in the future.

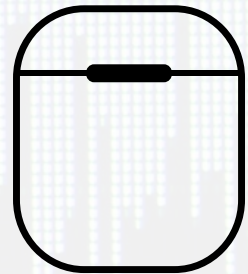


STAYING Δ WARE

Open Earbuds and Bone Conduction Earbuds have seen a sharp rise in popularity in 2024. We've gone from receiving a few open-style earbuds a year to receiving dozens of units to test out this year. For the more traditional style of earbuds, a good transparency mode is now a must-have feature.

Δ ADVANCED **C**HARGING **C**ASES

We saw a surge this year in earbud charging cases that do a lot more than just charge. Some, like the Jabra Elite 10 Gen 2, work as a transmitter to send audio from analog sources to the earbuds. Others, like the Anker Soundcore Liberty 4 Pro, have a small display to access functions typically found in the app. With so many earbud options to choose from on the market, the charging case has become a key point of differentiation.



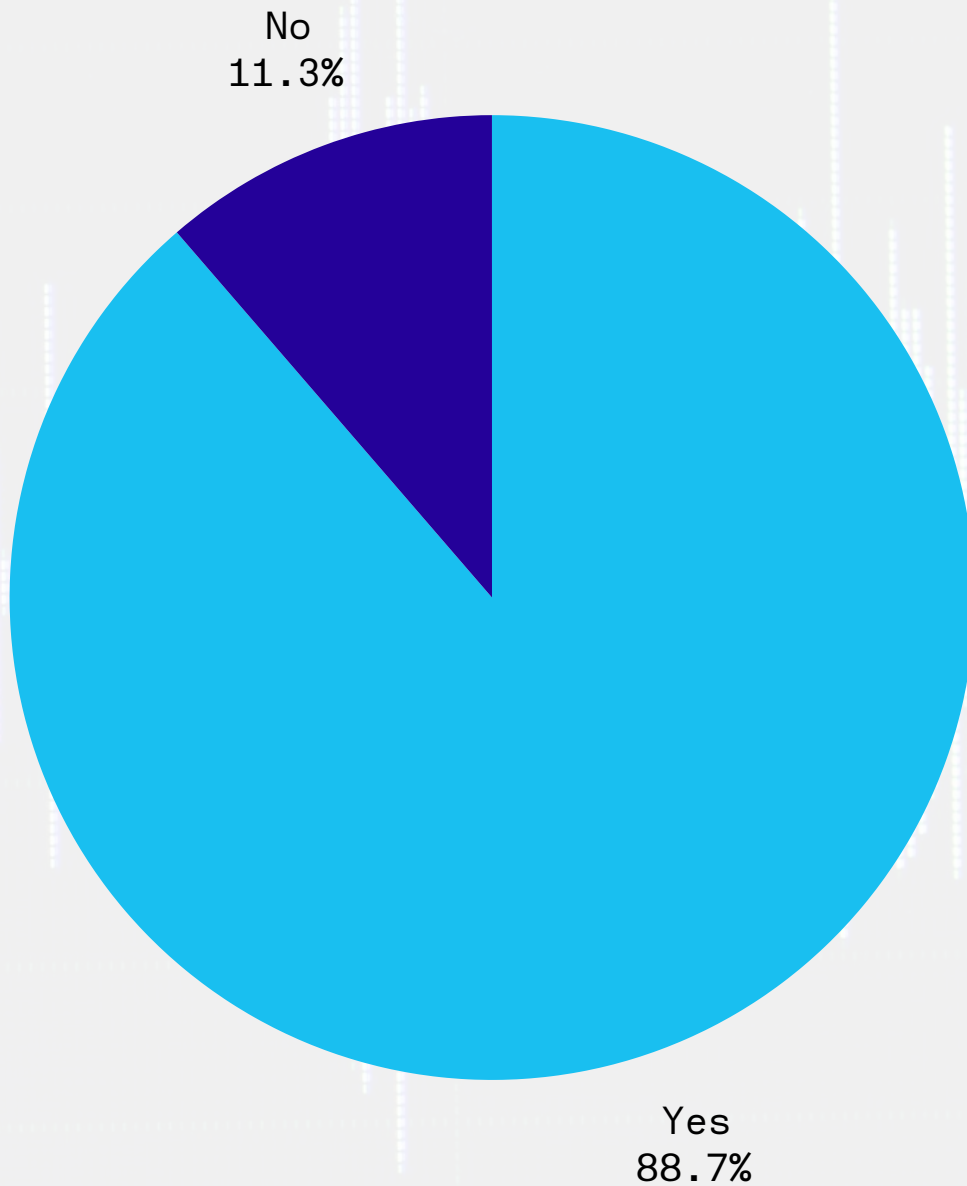
Meet our earbud expert...

Chase Bernath is the Managing Editor at SoundGuys. He studied Commerce and Applied Music Technology at the University of British Columbia, and has been producing music for nearly a decade. He has tried out over 100 different wireless earbuds during his time at SoundGuys. He is currently rocking the Creative Aurvana Ace Mimi earbuds as his daily driver.



DO YOU VALUE THE AIRPODS PRO 2'S HEARING HEALTH FEATURES?

N = 653

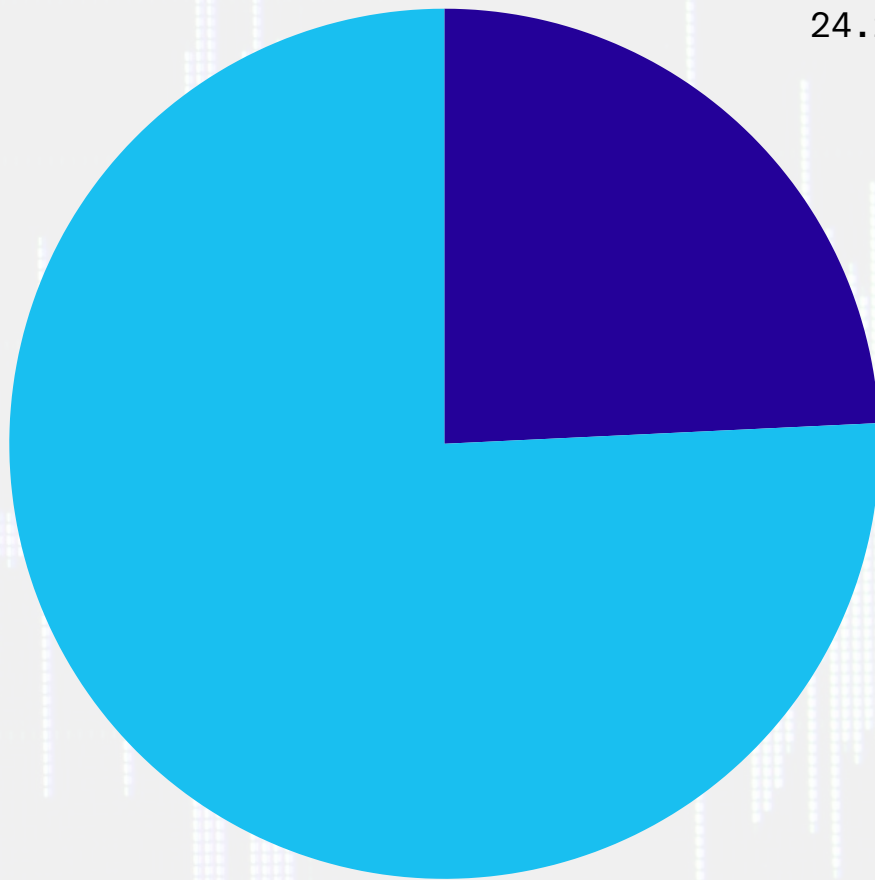


DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT AI FEATURES IN THE PIXEL BUDS PRO 2?

N = 320

I'm all-in on AI
24.2%

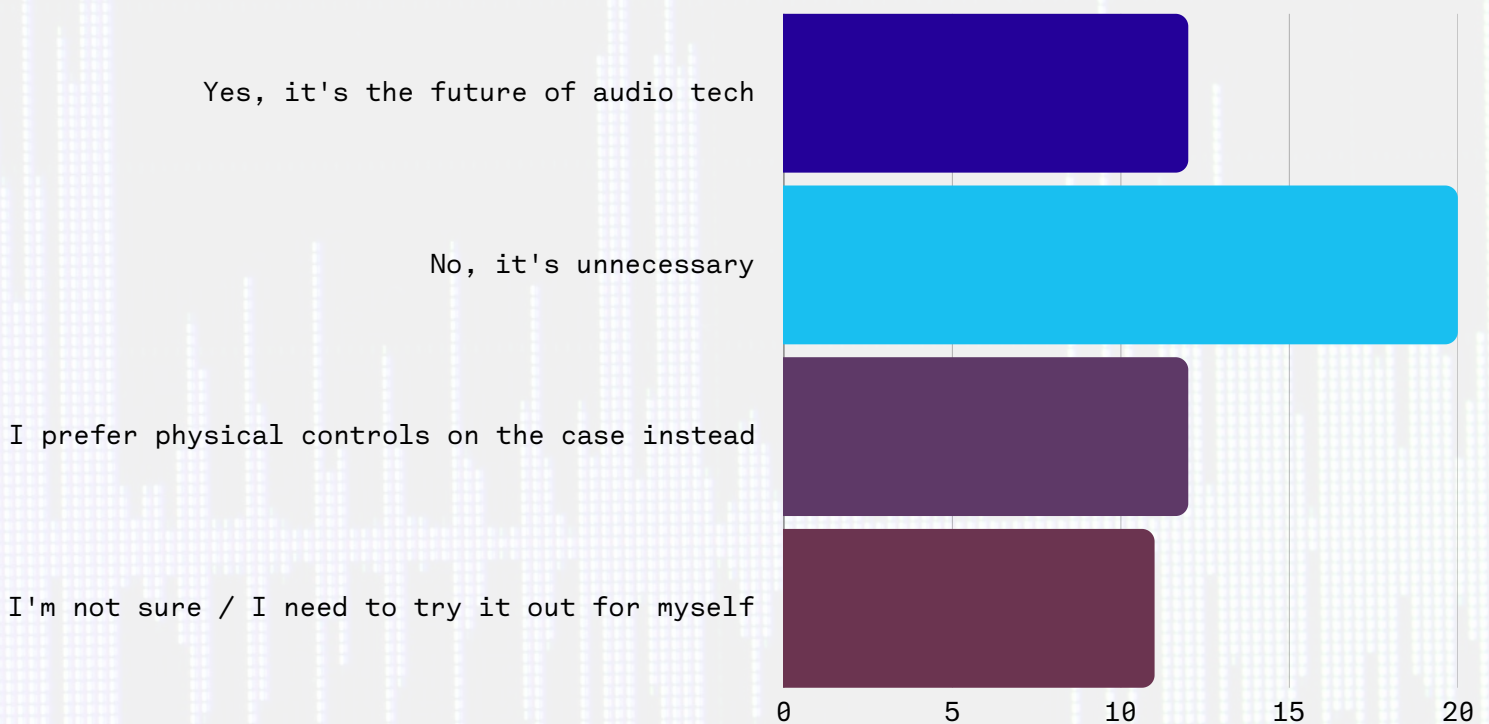


I just want earbuds that perform well
75.8%

DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

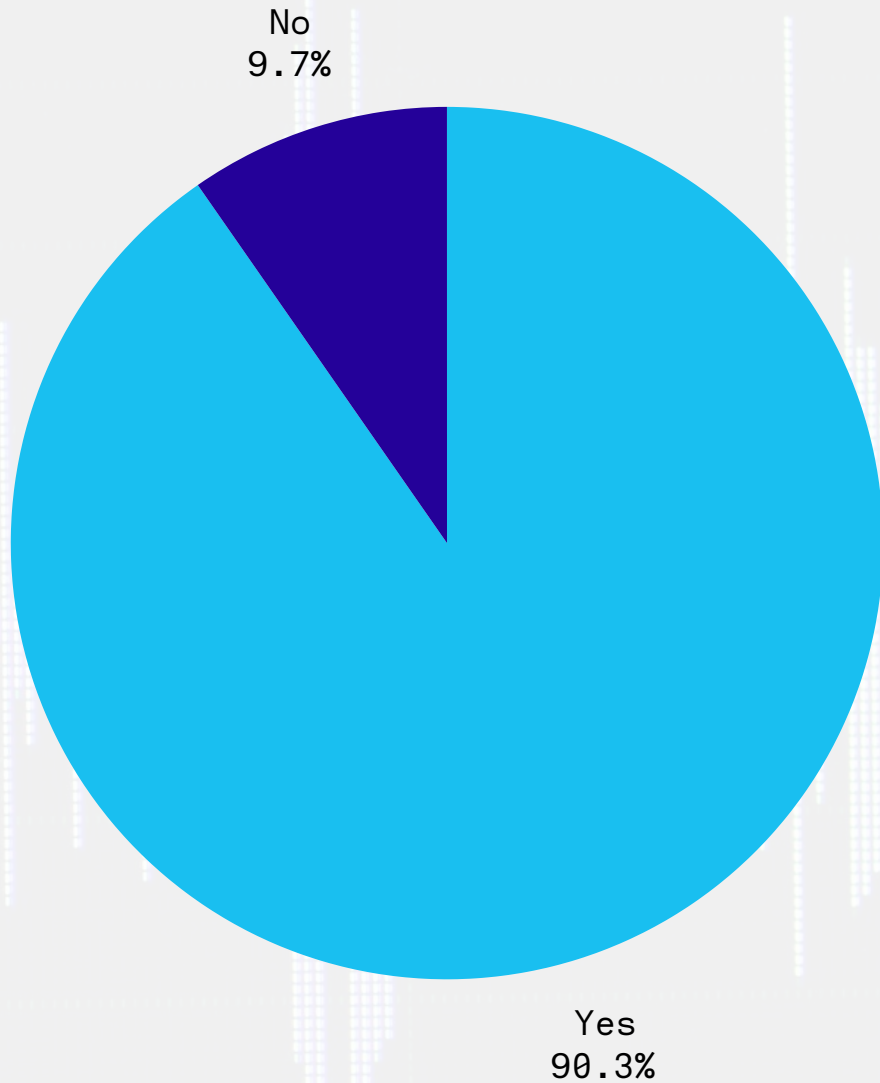
DO YOU WANT TOUCHSCREENS ON YOUR EARBUD CASES?

N = 55



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

DO YOU THINK A TRANSMITTER CASE IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE?



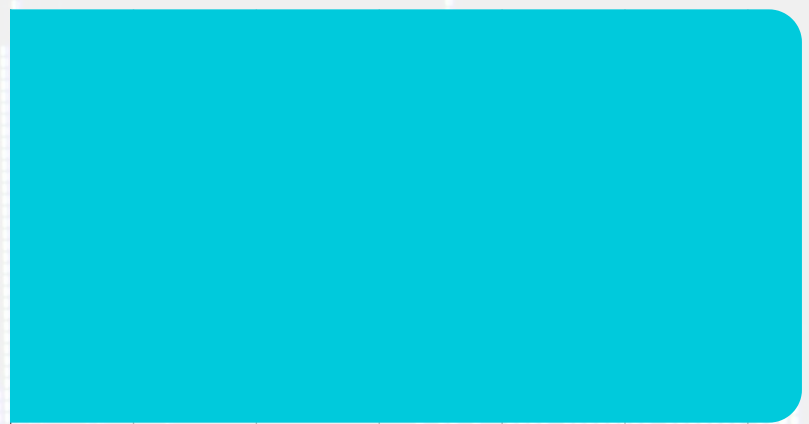
N = 62

DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

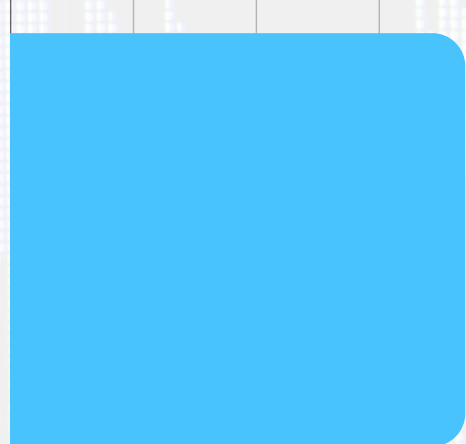
WHICH VERSION OF THE NEW AIRPODS WOULD YOU BUY?

N = 507

I want the AirPods 4 with ANC



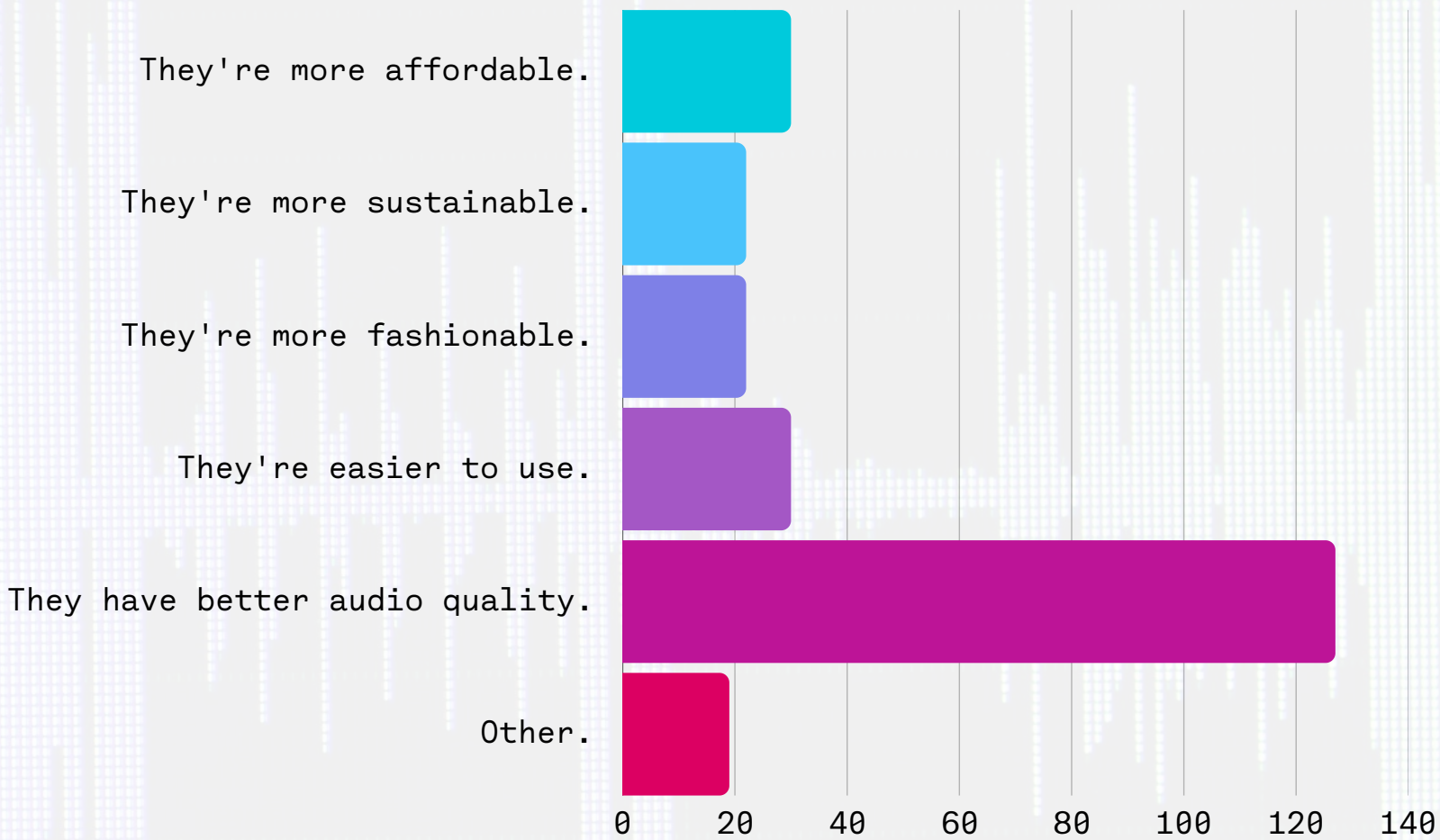
I'm buying the regular AirPods 4



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

WHY DO YOU USE WIRED HEADPHONES AND EARBUDS OVER WIRELESS ONES?

N = 250

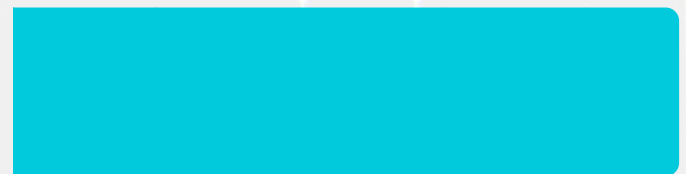


DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

SHOULD MAJOR BRANDS ADOPT MORE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR WIRELESS EARBUDS?

N = 103

Yes, it's crucial for the environment.



Yes, but only if it doesn't increase costs.



No, performance and features are more important.



I don't care about sustainability in earbuds.

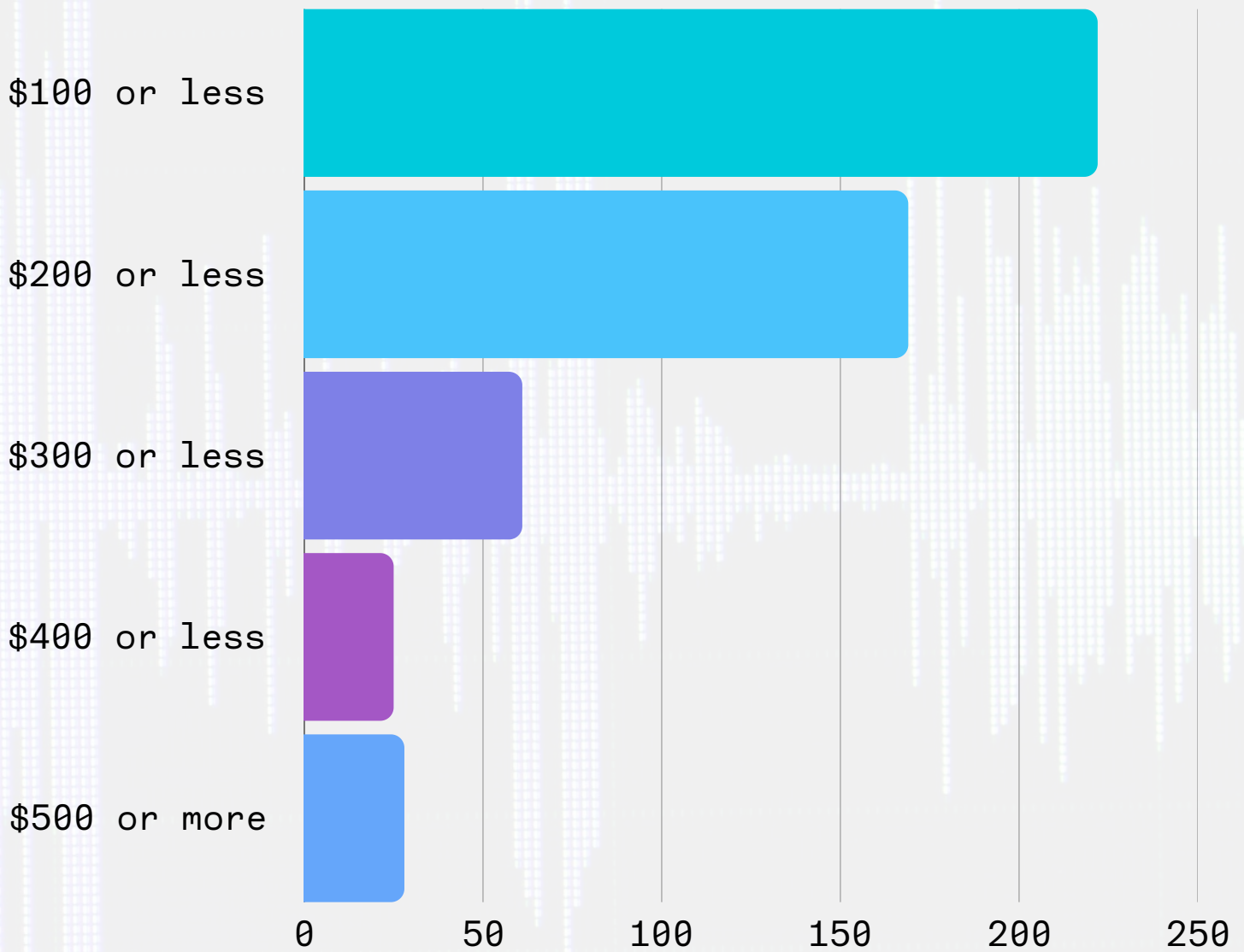


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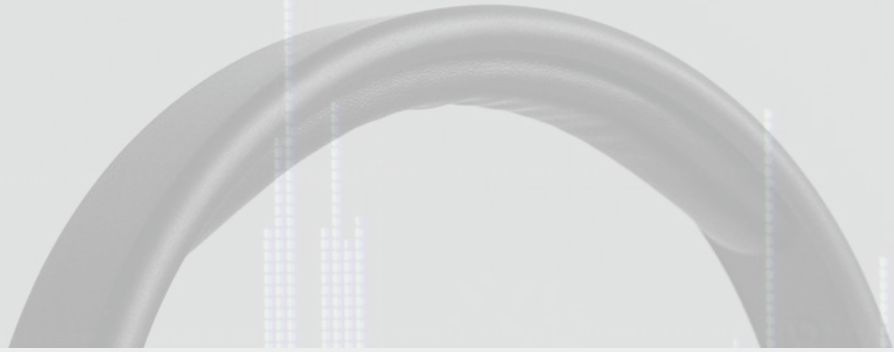
DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SPEND ON WIRELESS EARBUDS?

N = 505



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM



HEADPHONE REPORT



THE WIRELESS HEADPHONES WITH THE BEST SOUND QUALITY RELEASED IN 2024

4.8

JBL Tune 520BT

4.5

JLab JBuds Lux ANC

4.3

Sonos Ace

4.2

Bowers & Wilkins PX8

4

Sony ULT WEAR

How do we
determine the
best
sound quality?



We test products in our lab on the Bruel & Kjaer 5128 head and torso simulator. We use the Multi-Dimensional Audio Quality Score (MDAQS) algorithm in partnership with HEAD acoustics to rate sound quality on a scale from 1-5 based on average listener preferences.

THE HEADPHONES WITH THE BEST NOISE CANCELING RELEASED IN 2024

85%	Anker Soundcore Space One Pro
84%	Bowers & Wilkins PX8
84%	Sony ULT WEAR
81%	JLab JBuds Lux ANC
80%	Beyerdynamic AVENTHO 300
74%	Sonos Ace

How do we determine the best noise canceling?

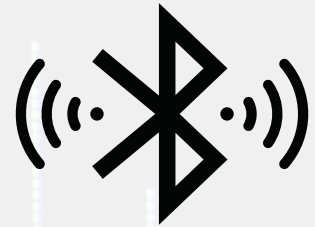


We test products in our lab on the Bruel & Kjaer 5128 head and torso simulator. We measure the average reduction in loudness across the audible frequency spectrum.

2024 HEADPHONE BREAKTHROUGHS AND TRENDS

BLUETOOTH LE ADOPTION

Bluetooth LE has now become a standard feature amongst wireless headphones. With widespread adoption of this technology taking place, we are excited to see support in more venues for Auracast. Expect to soon be able to walk into a bar and choose which TV you want to listen to, or hear announcements from your gate at the airport right to your headphones. Anyone with headphones that don't have this feature will be left dissappointed.



AFFORDABLE LUXURY

This year, we were impressed by budget wireless headphones that deliver almost all of the same features as much more expensive options. Sub-\$100 headphones such as the JLab JBuds Lux ANC provide a similar experience as premium options, for a fraction of the price. While we also saw some new entrants to the premium headphone market, there was a noticeable absence of mid-range wireless headphone options in the \$200-300 price range.

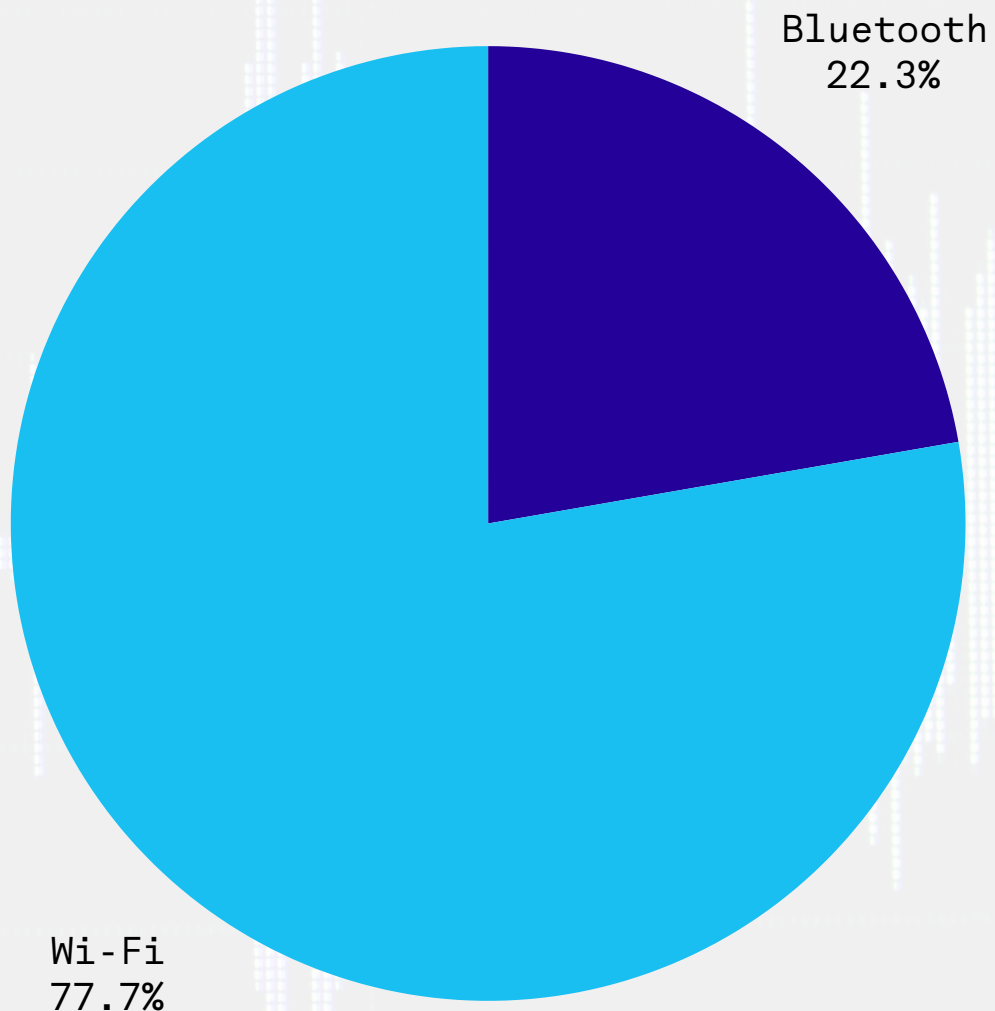
Meet our headphone expert...

Christian is a seasoned journalist of over a decade, having served as an imaging, audio, and storage tech specialist for several major outlets including Android Authority, USA Today, StoraReview.com, and Reviewed.com. Chris was the Executive Editor from 2017 to 2022, and brought SoundGuys from a blog to what you see today. Back as our Editor-at-Large, Chris handles our data, testing, and research efforts.



WOULD YOU PREFER WI-FI OR **B**LUETOOTH CONNECTED HEADPHONES?

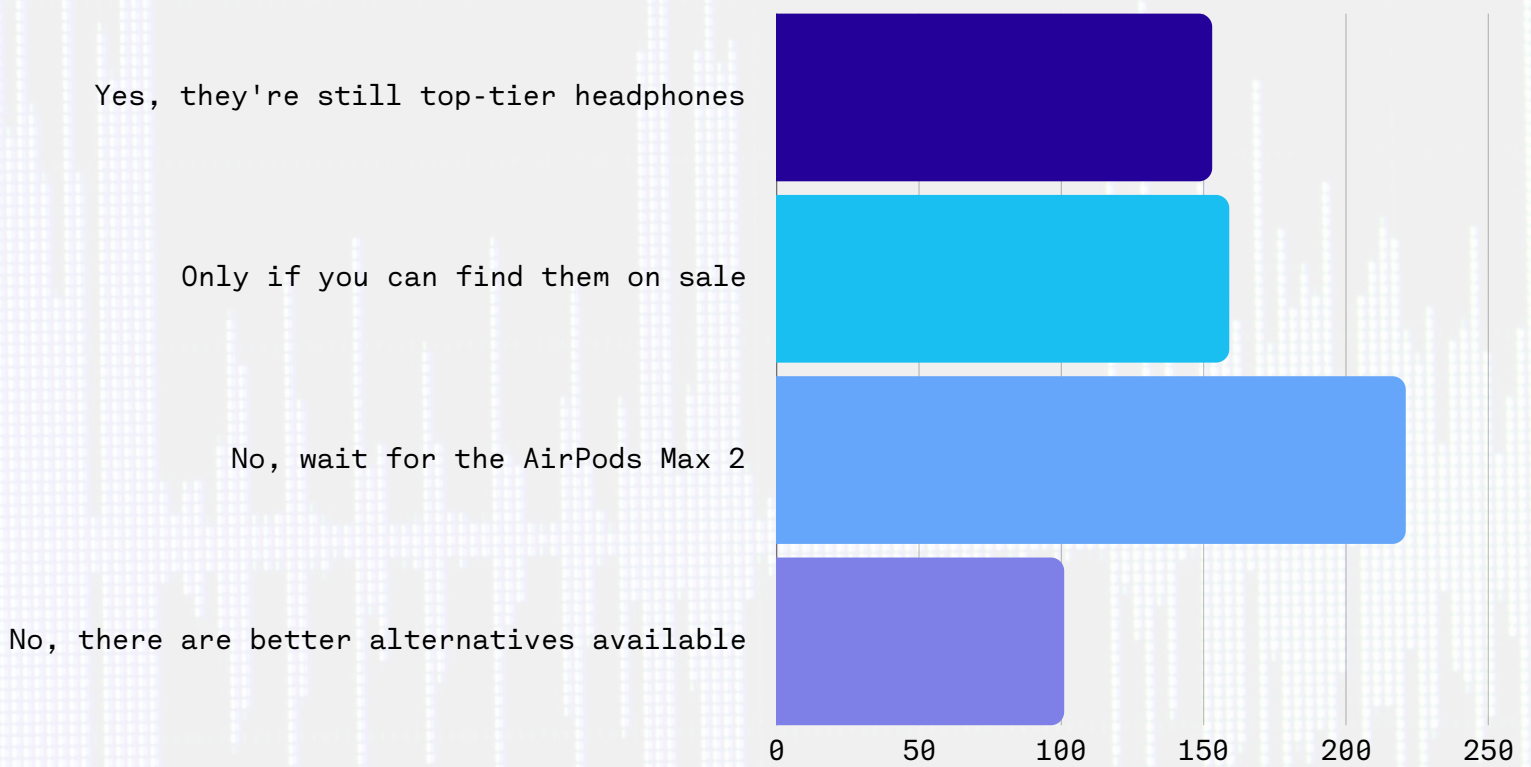
N = 274



DATA VIA POLL ON [SOUNDGUYS.COM](https://www.soundguys.com)

DO YOU THINK THE AIRPODS MAX ARE WORTH BUYING IN 2024?

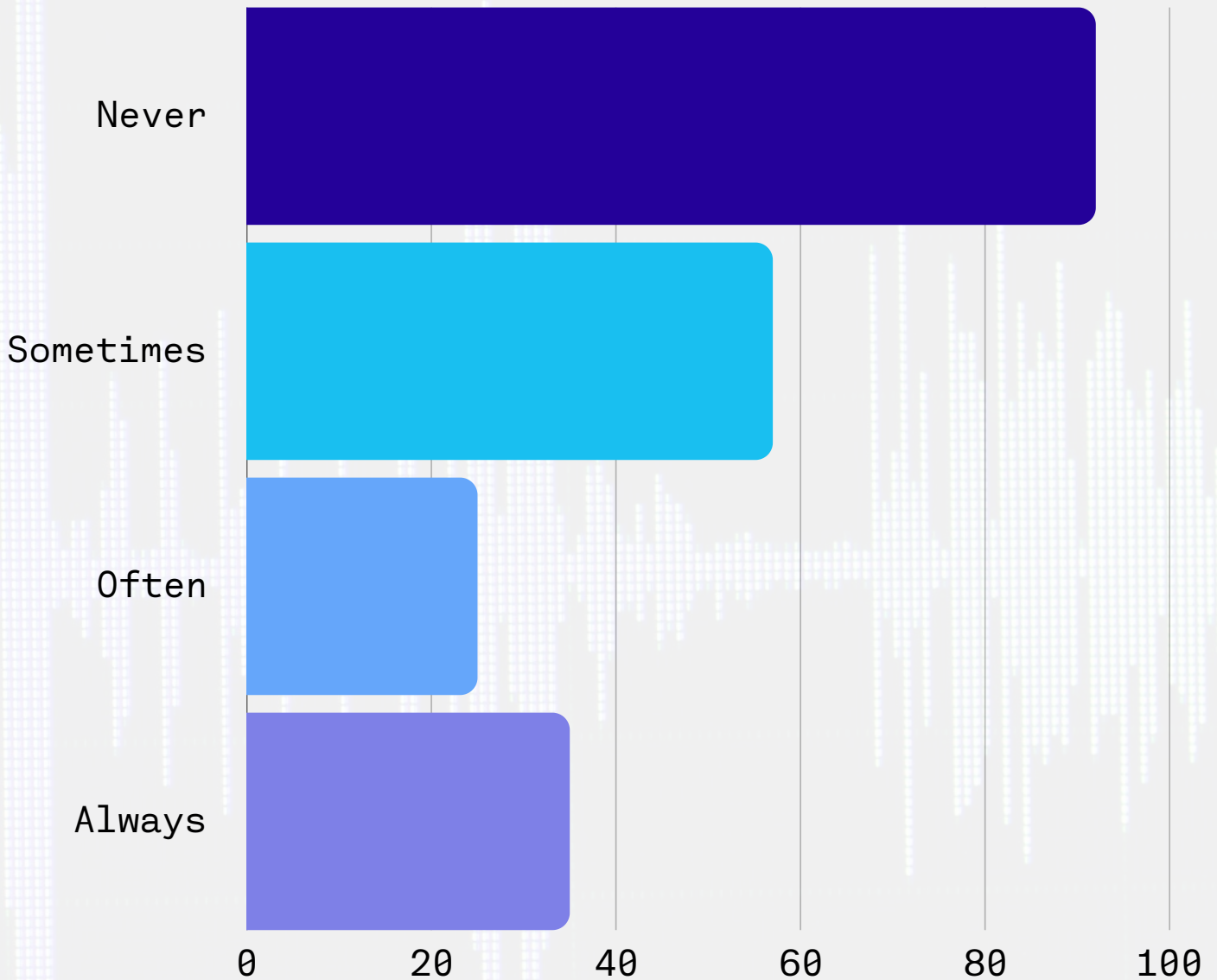
N = 634



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

DO YOU USE SPATIAL AUDIO?

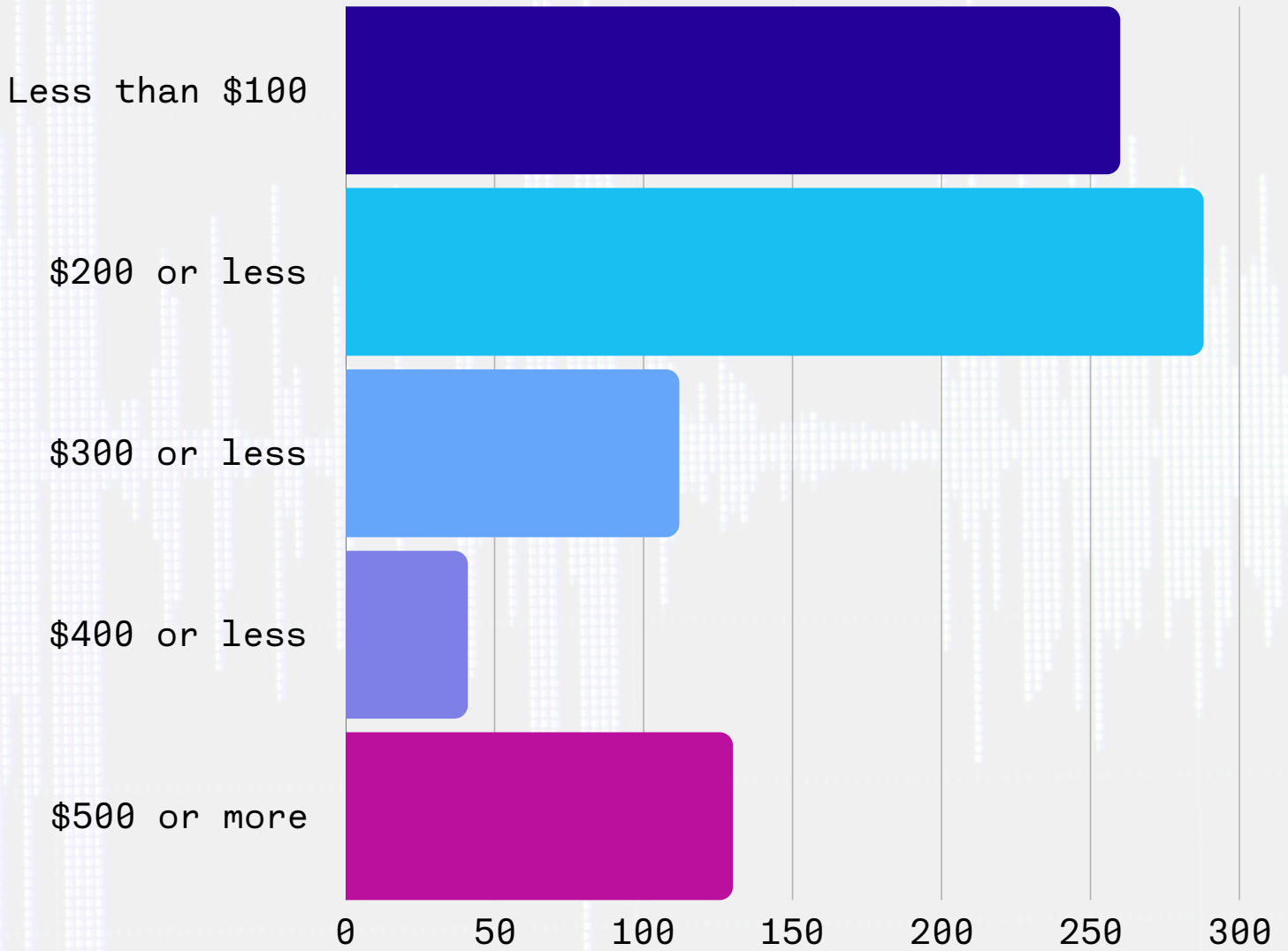
N = 209



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SPEND ON GOOD HEADPHONES?

N = 831



DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM



GAMING HEADSET REPORT

2024 GAMING HEADSET BREAKTHROUGHS AND TRENDS

PLATFORM UNIVERSALITY IS FINALLY HERE

Cross-platform compatibility became the real deal in 2024, even if companies still aren't always upfront about it. Pretty much every company's "Xbox" headset worked with everything else - you'd have to try really hard to buy the wrong version (unless you're one of the few Xbox owners in 2024). This matters because most gamers now own multiple systems - maybe a PS5 and a Switch or a gaming PC and a Steam Deck. Dual connectivity (Bluetooth + 2.4 GHz) is now standard and basically expected, and the next big thing is clearly going to be true multi-connectivity where you can use both at once, like what Sony's doing with the Pulse Elite and Explore. Being able to hear your game and take a phone call at the same time is going to be possible for 2025 gamers.

GAMING HEADSETS GOT SERIOUS ABOUT LOOKING PROFESSIONAL

The whole "gamer" look is finally dying out—even Razer's toning it down. Gone are the days of in-your-face colors, sharp edges, and RGB everything. 2024's headsets went minimal with clean lines and simple black or white options. This makes sense since everyone's using these for Zoom calls and WFH now. People want gear that can transition seamlessly from gaming sessions to work meetings without screaming "I'M A GAMER" to their colleagues. ANC is still pretty rare in gaming headsets, but a few premium models are starting to include it for those who need to block out the home office chaos.

SOUND TECH ACTUALLY GOT SMARTER

The big tech leap was AI algorithms cleaning up mic input and noise rejection. It might finally be the end of hearing your teammates munching chips or their dog barking in the background. While most headsets are still shipping with that V-shaped sound profile (which, let's face it, works well for most games), we're seeing way more EQ options in the companion apps. SteelSeries jumped ahead by adding game-specific EQ presets, and you can bet other companies will follow with game and genre-specific tuning in 2025. This is crucial because different games have vastly different audio needs - competitive FPS players need to hear footsteps crystal clear, while RPG enthusiasts might want more immersive bass for those epic soundtracks. One-size-fits-all tuning just doesn't cut it anymore for gamers in 2025 who switch between different genres. Another big shift is spatial audio support trickling down to more affordable headsets - though you'll still need to download an app to enable it, and sometimes it's frustratingly limited to just PC software. Still, it's progress toward making immersive 3D audio more accessible to everyone. Overall, the state of gaming headsets in 2024 is less gamer-y, more practical, and finally getting smarter about how we actually use them.

Meet our gaming headset expert...

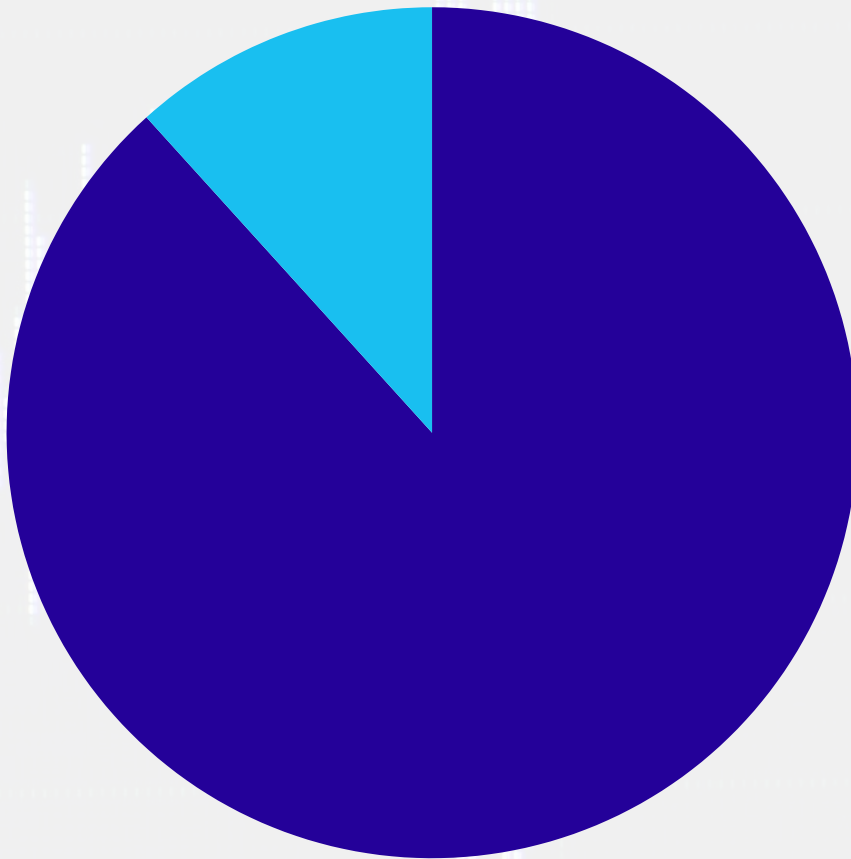
Adam oversees all of gaming headset reviews and best lists. Formerly a writer for Android Authority, he's now the gatekeeper for product approval and acquisition at SoundGuys. Armed with a BA in Cognitive Science, Adam goes beyond surface-level reviews to dissect the science of sound. He's an advocate for hearing health, especially when it comes to young ears, and a proponent for the psychological uplift music can offer.



IS ACTIVE NOISE CANCELING AN IMPORTANT FEATURE FOR GAMING HEADSETS?

No, I don't need ANC at home.
11.7%

N = 111



Yes, give me more Turtle Beach, JBL, and Razer ANC gaming headsets.
88.3%

DATA VIA POLL ON SOUNDGUYS.COM



SPEAKERS REPORT



2024 **S**PEAKER **B**REAKTHROUGHS AND **T**RENDS

LIGHT UP THE **P**ARTY

One of the more notable trends of 2024 was the addition of built-in RGB or LED lights to a variety of party speakers. While this feature has been a staple with bigger Bluetooth speakers like the JBL PartyBox series, we're seeing it more and more in more medium-sized and more portable and affordable "Boombox" style speakers like the SoundCore Boom 2 and EarFun UB00M X. While these beat-synced and often customizable party lights are the quickest way to deplete your battery, you can't argue that you bring a little something extra to your party, especially after the sun goes down.

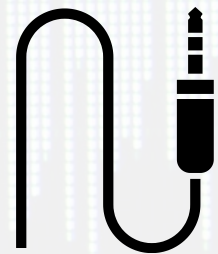


EVERYONE WANTS TO **S**ING

Of course, what's a party without some karaoke? We're also seeing a market for karaoke features at more affordable prices. At CES, Soundcore announced the Rave 3S party speaker, which includes built-in lights, two wireless microphones, and an AI Feature designed to remove the vocals from your favorite sing-along songs. I don't doubt we will see more of these packages available in 2025 and beyond; it's a great way to entertain your family and friends around the house or in the backyard.

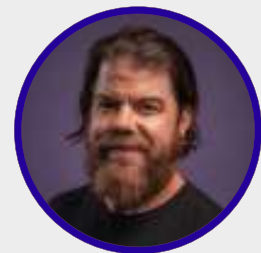
VARIETY OF **I**/O OPTIONS

While plenty of speakers on the market today fit these requirements, there's still a steady stream of comments from listeners like "What, no AUX in?" or "No codec options for Hi-Res audio?" While the lack of a 3.5mm aux in is a valid complaint (or lack of audio over USB-C while we're on the topic), manufacturers not including higher bitrate listening options is understandable, especially if we're talking about compact, mono speakers meant to enhance the hangout vibes, not be the center of attention.



Meet our speakers expert...

Dave Carr is a lifelong musician with over 20 years of experience performing, recording and touring. When he's not bringing his real world, hands on audio experience to SoundGuys, you'll find him rehearsing with his progressive metal band Neck of the Woods, quoting endless movie lines and biking around Vancouver's seawall.



SOUNDGUYS WRAPPED 2024



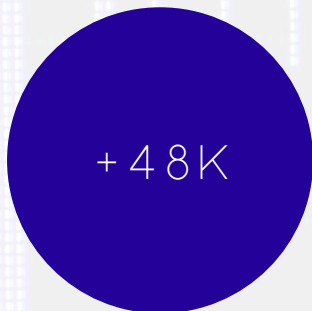
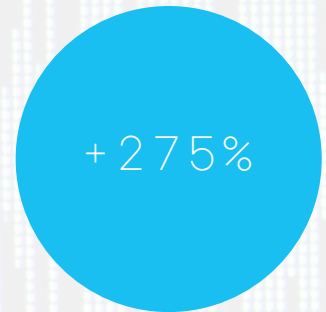
Articles published on soundguys.com this year

Products tested and reviewed in 2024



YouTube videos published this year

Increase in annual YouTube views



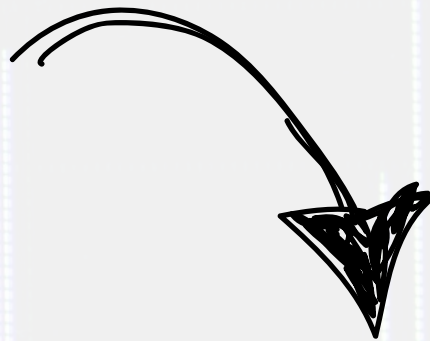
YouTube subscribers gained this year

Increase in annual TikTok views



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Reach out to us



contact@soundguys.com