

No significant change seen in hearing loss among US teens

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Although there was an increase in the percentage of U.S. youth ages 12 to 19 reporting exposure to loud music through headphones from 1988-2010, researchers did not find significant changes in the prevalence of hearing loss among this group, according to a study published by *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*.

Even mild levels of [hearing loss](#) in children and adolescents can affect educational outcomes. There have been growing concerns that the prevalence of hearing [loss](#) in children and adolescents, particularly noise-induced hearing loss, is rising, possibly due to recreational noise exposure.

Brooke M. Su, M.D., M.P.H., and Dylan K. Chan, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of California-San Francisco, conducted an analysis of demographic and audiometric data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III, 1988-1994), NHANES 2005-2006, NHANES 2007-2008, and NHANES 2009-2010. The NHANES are nationally representative survey data sets collected and managed by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. This study included a total of 7,036 survey participants ages 12 to 19 years with available audiometric measurements.

The authors found that the prevalence of hearing loss increased from NHANES III to NHANES 2007-2008 (17 percent to 22.5 percent) but decreased in the NHANES 2009-2010 to 15.2 percent with no significant overall trend identified. There was an overall rise in exposure

to loud noise or music through headphones 24 hours prior to audiometric testing from NHANES III to NHANES 2009-2010. However, noise exposure, either prolonged or recent, was not consistently associated with an increased risk of hearing loss across all surveys.

The most recent survey data showed increased risk of hearing loss among participants of racial/ethnic minority status and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. "Further investigation into factors influencing these changes and continued monitoring of these groups are needed going forward," the authors write.

The researchers note that because [survey](#) participants tend to underreport information such as health care use, it's possible that the levels of [noise exposure](#) and [hearing](#)-related behaviors presented here underestimate the true prevalence.

More information: *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*, [DOI: 10.1001/jamaoto.2017.1068](#)

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