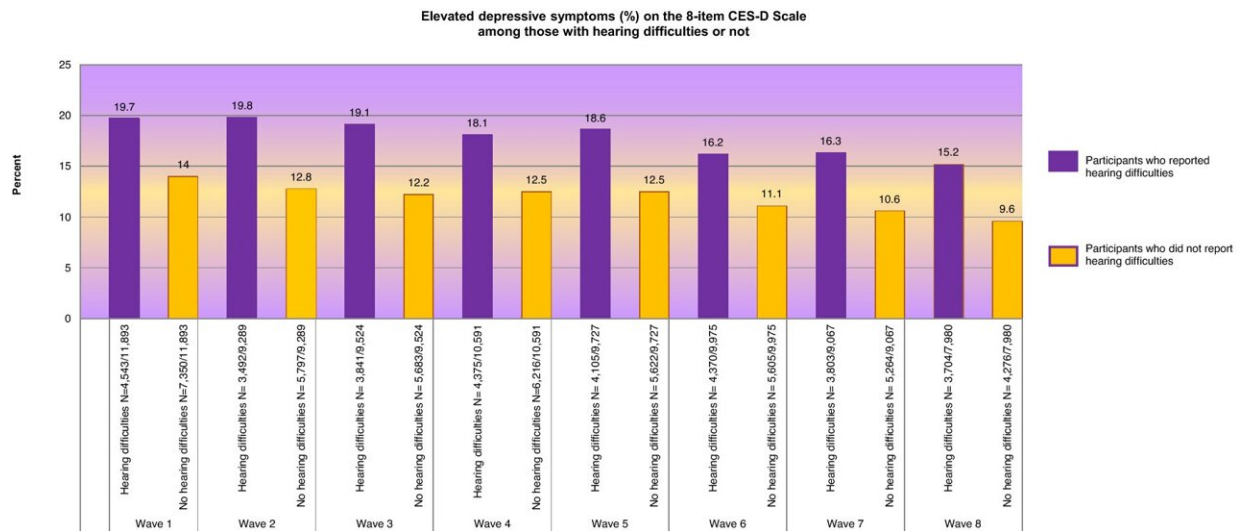


Hearing loss could be cause of depression in older people

August 19 2021, by Mike Addelman



Clustered stacked bars for the probability (%) of elevated depressive symptoms a (on the eight-item CES-D Scale) among those with self-reported HL b or not in the eight Waves of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). a Elevated depressive symptoms: the cut point of the eight-item dichotomous response scale (greater than or equal to four symptoms on the Scale) (8CES-D \geq 4). b Self-reported HL (hearing difficulties): the sum of those that rated their hearing as fair or poor on a five-point Likert scale (excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor), or responded positively in the question whether they find it difficult to follow a conversation if there is background noise (such as TV, radio or children playing). Credit: DOI: 10.1007/s00127-021-02155-0

University of Manchester researchers have discovered that hearing loss

may act as a cause of depression in older people. And those in the lowest wealth groups, they found, had up to twice the relative risk of developing depression than those in the highest wealth quintiles, as hearing loss disproportionately affected their quality of life.

Published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, the landmark study goes some way in laying to rest more than 40 years of research on whether hearing loss causes [depression](#).

The data also showed that hearing aids have a stronger effect in alleviating symptoms of depression in poorer socio-economic groups than in wealthy ones.

And improved symptoms of depression were more pronounced among those using their hearing aids 'most of the time' than those using them 'some of the time.'

The researchers analyzed longitudinally the entire dataset of participants aged 50–89 years in 8 Waves of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), from 2002 to 2017, examining 74,908 people.

The findings for the first time revealed that hearing loss affected people according to their socioeconomic position.

Dr. Dalia Tsimpida, from The University of Manchester who led the study, said: "Our study shows that hearing loss poses a substantial risk for depressive symptoms in older adults, especially those who experience socioeconomic inequalities.

"We also think that hearing aids could support the most vulnerable people who already lacked life opportunities compared to the most affluent.

"That way they were able to take more control of their lives and keep participating actively in society."

Dr. Tsimpida, a Chartered Psychologist and postdoctoral researcher based in the University's Division of Medical Education, added: "We think it's reasonable to identify hearing loss as a causal factor because we used advanced statistical techniques called dynamic cross-lagged path models (CLPMs) to estimate hearing loss and depression's relationship over time.

"We argue the early detection of hearing loss by primary care professionals in routine assessments may not only promote better hearing health but also prevent or delay the onset of depression.

"Increasing the hearing loss treatment rate could be one effective strategy for risk reduction of depression, given the high prevalence of hearing loss in older age and its low treatment levels."

Co-author Dr. Maria Panagioti said: "The existing evidence on the association between hearing loss and depression was conflicting; our study now adds to this body of knowledge by identifying for the first time the socioeconomic pattern in their relationship."

"Focusing primarily on the role of the socioeconomic position may satisfactorily explain the causal, temporal and graded relationship between hearing loss and depression over time, which differs according to people's status in the social hierarchy.

"Our study has important and novel clinical implications, as it adds to the understanding of the interrelationship between [hearing](#) loss and depression, and the potential impact of interventions with [hearing aids](#) for people's mental health."

More information: Dialechti Tsimpida et al, The dynamic relationship between hearing loss, quality of life, socioeconomic position and depression and the impact of hearing aids: answers from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s00127-021-02155-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-021-02155-0)

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Hearing loss could be cause of depression in older people (2021, August 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-08-loss-depression-older-people.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.