

# New research finds the risk of psychotic-like experiences can start in childhood

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It has long been understood that environmental and socio-economic factors—including income disparity, family poverty, and air pollution—increase a person's risk of developing psychotic-like experiences, such as subtle hallucinations and delusions that can become precursors to a schizophrenia diagnosis later in life. Research has long

focused on young adults but now, thanks to the data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study, researchers at the University of Rochester have found these risk factors can be observed in pre-adolescent children.

"These findings could have a major impact on public health initiatives to reduce the risk of psychotic like experiences," said Abhishek Saxena, a graduate student in the department of Psychology at the University of Rochester and first author of the study recently published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. "Past research has largely focused on the [biological factors](#) that lead to development of schizophrenia spectrum disorders, but we now know that social and [environmental factors](#) can also play a large role in the risk and development of schizophrenia. And this research shows these factors impact people starting at a very young age."

Researchers looked at data collected from 8,000 kids enrolled in the ABCD study. They found that the more urban of an environment a child lived in—proximity to roads, houses with lead paint risks, families in poverty, and income disparity—the greater number of psychotic like experiences they had over a year's time. These findings are in line with past research conducted in [young adults](#), but have not been found like this in pre-adolescences.

"It is disconcerting that the association between these exposures and psychotic-like experiences are already present in late childhood," said David Dodell-Feder, Ph.D., assistant professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and lead author of this study. "The fact that the impact of these exposures may occur as early as pre-adolescence highlights the importance of early prevention."

**More information:** Abhishek Saxena et al, Explaining the Association Between Urbanicity and Psychotic-Like Experiences in Pre-Adolescence: The Indirect Effect of Urban Exposures, *Frontiers in*

*Psychiatry* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyt.2022.831089](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.831089)

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