

# Nearly 1 in 5 UK adults may have misophonia, experiencing significant negative responses to sounds

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The authors found that significant symptoms of misophonia can include feeling trapped or helpless around these sounds, as well as blaming yourself for the strong reactions and missing out on things because of the impact of sounds.

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Around 18% of the UK general population may have misophonia, decreased tolerance to certain sounds, according to a study published March 22, 2023 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Silia Vitoratou from King's College London, UK, and colleagues.

People with misophonia have strong negative reactions when hearing certain common sounds, such as chewing or sniffing. There's little research on the prevalence of misophonia in a [general population](#), though previous studies have reported estimates ranging from 5-20% within specific samples, such as university students.

Here, the authors surveyed a sample representative of the UK general population. Of the 768 people surveyed, 51% identified as women, 48% as men, and four identified as non-binary/other. The mean age was 46.4. 13.6% of the sample was aware of the term misophonia prior to the survey, with 2.3% self-identifying as having misophonia.

The authors' survey asked about common "trigger sounds" and asked respondents to describe their [emotional response](#) and its intensity using a 10-point scale. The authors also asked people about how these sounds affect their life, the way they see themselves, their personal and professional relationships.

They conducted interviews with 26 self-identified individuals with misophonia and 29 individuals from the general survey pool to establish a cut-off score for significant symptoms of misophonia. The new questionnaire allows researchers and clinicians to measure these aspects of misophonia and see how things change over time.

The authors found that 18% of their sample appeared to have significant symptoms of misophonia, which can include feeling trapped or helpless around these sounds, as well as blaming yourself for the strong reactions and missing out on things because of the impact of sounds. Furthermore,

the most common negative reaction to these sounds in the general population was irritation, while the individuals with misophonia reported that they felt trapped or helpless when they could not get away from these sounds.

While there were no significant differences in the prevalence of misophonia based on gender, the authors found individuals above the threshold for misophonia were an average 3.3 years younger than those below the threshold, a small but significant difference.

Though these results are specific to the UK, so may not be generalizable across countries and cultures, the authors suggest their survey tool may be useful to clinicians working in the misophonia field.

Silia Vitoratou from King's College London, UK, adds, "It is important that our study revealed that 1 in 5 people in the UK experiences significant misophonic reactions, but only a small fraction was aware of the term. This means that most people with misophonia do not have a name to describe what they are experiencing. Our team works hard to raise the condition's profile and to provide clinicians with the tools they need to understand and assess misophonia effectively."

Jane Gregory from the University of Oxford, UK, adds, "Our [survey](#) captured the complexity of the condition. Misophonia is more than just being annoyed by certain sounds, it's about feeling trapped or helpless when you can't get away from these sounds and missing out on things because of this. It's about feeling like there's something wrong with you for the way you react to sounds, but also not being able to do anything about it. It can be such a relief to find out that you are not alone, that other people react this way to sounds too. To find out that there is a word for what you are experiencing."

**More information:** Misophonia in the UK: Prevalence and norms

from the S-Five in a UK representative sample, *PLoS ONE* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0282777](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282777)

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